

The rhythm of stones striking stones

While I can only imagine watching the early hominins from afar, I can easily place myself among these early Homo people. Crouching in a circle, we are all glancing back and forth, not merely imitating one another's work, but watching for strokes made with the authority of how it should be and always had been done. We all instinctively know the familiar rectitude of wisdom flashing alternatively among us, making small adjustments with constant mutual recognition until general specifications are satisfied: the precise technique of striking, the proper size and form, sharpened all around the edges.

The essential unity of these far-flung artifacts bears witness to the collective sources of their creation rendered deeply from within the same sacred way of life. There was no planning or knowing outside the moment of being submerged within the midst of their communal movements, one leading right on to the next in a rhythm of stones striking stones that were the sounds and motions all from within thousands of tiny, separate groups all animated by a single, eternal Will. It is meaningless to assert that these people were religious, but it could be said they lived their lives inside the mind of a naturally evolved deity.

Whether it be from one day, week, or century on into the next, the memory of what to do and when to do it was not stored in any individual brain. Rather, this knowledge was mixed into and among a given group—and all groups—in bits and pieces, which, when the moment arose, fell together in collective animation. Diffusing through time and space and linked by long repeating chains of unbroken mutual experience, this hallowed ritual, the emblem of a sacred tribe, scattered far and wide out into their diaspora from Africa out and across the vastness of Eurasia. Although individuals drifted from one group to another, small bands dissolved, and new ones reconstituted, these diurnal chains of communal functioning wove an unbroken fabric for 50 thousand generations across the expanse of entire continents.