40,000-year-old bracelet made by extinct human species found

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In what is quite an amazing discovery, scientists have confirmed that a bracelet found in Siberia is 40,000 years old. This makes it the oldest piece of jewelry ever discovered, and archeologists have been taken aback by the level of its sophistication.

The bracelet was discovered in a site called the Denisova Cave in Siberia, close to Russia's border with China and Mongolia. It was found next to the bones of extinct animals, such as the wooly mammoth, and other artifacts dating back 125,000 years.

The cave is named after the Denisovan people — a mysterious species of hominins from the Homo genus, who are genetically different from both Homo sapiens and Neanderthals.

The Denisovan cave in Siberia

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We know that the Denisovans migrated out of Africa sometime after the first wave of Homo erectus, and well before us, Homo sapiens.

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The Denisovans were unique in many ways, having branched away from other humanoid ancestors some 1 million years ago. Indeed, the recent discovery of a female Denisovan finger bone and various teeth shows that they had no morphological similarities to either Neanderthals or modern humans.

However, tens of thousands of years later, and prior to becoming extinct, they did coexist with us and the Neanderthals for a period, and skeletal remains of hybrids, and genetic studies confirm that they also mated with our forebears and the Neanderthals.

Strangely, however, DNA evidence also suggests that, at some point, the Denisovans must have interbred with an as yet unknown and undiscovered species of humans beings.

Skeletal remains show that the Denisovans were probably far more robust and powerful than modern humans, and were, until now, assumed to be a more primitive, archaic type of humans than us.

But, the discovery of the bracelet suggests this was far from true. Amazingly, the skill involved in making this adornment shows a level of technique at least 30,000 years ahead of its time.

Until now, scientists had believed that such skills had only evolved among humans in the Neolithic period, which began at about 10,000 BC. Indeed, originally, they believed that the bracelet had somehow become mixed up with materials dating from a later period.

However, experiments have now definitely ruled that out, and they confirm that it could not have been made by homo sapiens or Neanderthals. After 7 years of analysis, the scientists are confident that the piece was made 30,000 years before the beginning of the Stone Age.

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General reconstruction of the view of the bracelet and compraison with the moders bracelet

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The Daily Mail quotes the head of the Museum of History and Culture of the

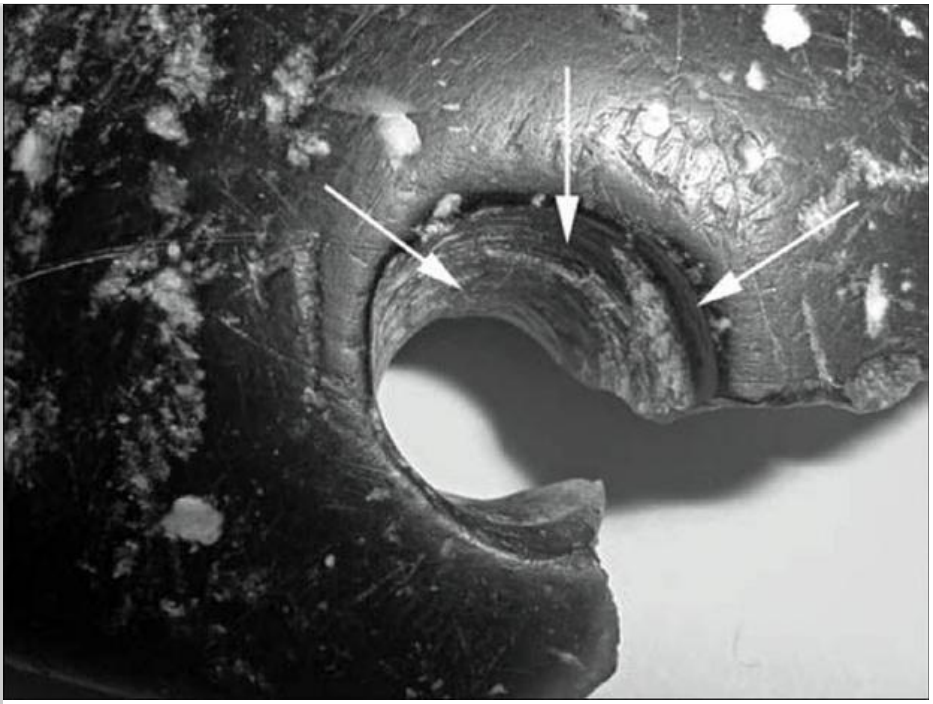
"The skills of its creator were perfect. Initially we thought that it was made by Neanderthals or modern humans, but it turned out that the master was Denisovan."

Mikhail Shunkov, deputy director of the the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography in Novosibirsk, part of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, suggested that the find indicates that the Denisovans were more advanced than Homo sapiens and Neanderthals.

What is incredible is that the craftsman who made the adornment, seems to have used something similar to a modern drill.

The Siberian Times quotes Dr Derevyanko, who wrote in the Russian magazine, Science First Hand, that when they studied the diameters of the bracelet, they found that the rotational speed of the drill must have been quite high, and with minimal fluctuations.

"The ancient master" he said, "was skilled in techniques previously considered not characteristic for the Palaeolithic era, such as easel speed drilling, boring tool type rasp, grinding and polishing with a leather and skins of varying degrees of tanning."



Drilling marks on Denisovan bracelet

Anatoly Derevyanko and Mikhail Shunkov, Vera Salnitskaya

Held in place by what they believe was a leather strap, the bracelet itself was made from a type of stone called chlorite, which could only have been imported from some 200km (125 miles) away.

The bracelet was very delicate and was probably worn at special occasions by some important person, such as a Denisovan princess.

Shunkov explains;

"All jewellery had a magical meaning for ancient people. Bracelets and neck adornments were to protect people from evil spirits, for instance."

"But this item, given the complicated technology and "imported" material, obviously belonged to some high ranking person of that society."

Commenting on its beauty, Anatoly Derevyanko added;

"The bracelet is stunning. In bright sunlight it reflects the sun rays, at night by the fire it casts a deep shade of green."

The archeologists are reported to have also found a ring made of marble, but they have not yet disclosed any findings about it.

More about 40000, year old, bracelet, found, extinct

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