
Technological variability and settlement dynamics of the Neanderthal groups of the Ciota Ciara cave (Borgosesia, VC, north-western Italy)

Sara Daffara^{*†1,2,3,4}, Marta Arzarello^{1,4}, Gabriele Luigi Francesco Berruti^{1,4}, Giulia Berruto^{1,4}, Antonella Di Roma⁵, and Carmela Vaccaro⁵

¹Dipartimento di Studi umanistici, Università degli Studi di Ferrara (UNIFE) – Corso Ercole I d’Este, 32 Ferrara (FE), Italie

²Àrea de Prehistòria, Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV) – Av. de Catalunya 35, 43002 Tarragona, Espagne

³Institut Català de Paleoecologia Humana i Evolució Social (IPHES) – Zona educational 4 (Edifici W3), Campus Sescelades URV, 43007 Tarragona, Espagne

⁴Associazione culturale 3P - Progetto Preistoria Piemonte – Via Lunga, 38 - San Mauro Torinese (TO), Italie

⁵Dipartimento di Fisica e Scienze della Terra, Università degli Studi di Ferrara (UNIFE) – Via Giuseppe Saragat, 1, 44122 Ferrara, Italie

Résumé

The Ciota Ciara cave opens on the west side of Monte Fenera (Borgosesia, VC, north-western Italy) at 670 m a.s.l. and at today it represents the only Middle Palaeolithic site systematically investigated through a multidisciplinary approach in north-western Italy. The technological analysis and the study of the supply areas of lithic raw materials have been recently completed, leading to relevant results concerning the technological and economic behaviour of the Neanderthals which occupied the site during Middle Palaeolithic. The lithic assemblage of all the archaeological levels investigated is dominated by vein quartz associated with the exploitation of a local bad quality flint (spongolite) available in primary and secondary deposition on the top of Monte Fenera. Levels 14 and 15 show the presence of two different and good quality raw materials brought to the site as finished tools: a reddish rhyolite available close to the Sessera stream (~2,5 km in a straight line) and a reddish-brownish radiolarite collected close to primary outcrops located on the Lombard side of Lake Maggiore (Lombardian Radiolarite Group, ~30 km in a straight line). On the other hand, a specific methodology has been elaborated for the identification of the supply areas of vein quartz in secondary deposition. The technological study of the lithic assemblage allows instead to make some interesting consideration about technological variability, conditioning of the raw materials and more generally on the criteria useful for the identification of Levallois and discoid reduction sequences. The results obtained allow for the first time to define the economic behavior and the land use dynamics put into action by the Neanderthal groups present between Piedmont and Lombardy during Middle Palaeolithic.

*Intervenant

†Auteur correspondant:

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