
WHERE'S THE FIRE? : Spatial analysis of the distribution of burnt lithics from the Aurignacian in Šalitrena cave, Serbia

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Résumé

Fire was developed very early in human history, it is multifunctional and important for various aspects of human life. Because of this, it is important to study combustion features at an archaeological site, just as much as any other cultural remains that we may find. However, detecting in-situ combustion features can be difficult. Postdepositional processes and the geology of a site may contribute to the destruction of these features, thus making them invisible to archaeologists. Excavation techniques can also reduce the visibility of combustion features at an archaeological site.

However, fire is a destructive artefact, everything that was touched by this artefact is changed forever and is thus recognizable in the archaeological material. The study proved that analyzing spatial distribution of the burnt artifacts can detect invisible ghost” hearths. It has also been proven that it is a good way of determining combustion feature spread area, as it is sometimes missed during excavation or not defined precisely enough.

Analyzing the lithics from Aurignacian layer in Šalitrena cave (western Serbia), this paper has two goals. First of them is to detect combustion features on the site and areas occupied around them through spatial distribution of technological categories, with special attention on burnt artefacts. The results of this analysis are compared with the situation recorded during excavation where the lines of the combustion features are detected. The second one is to reconstruct technological behavior, and what kind of behavior/s Aurignacian communities practiced around combustion features. The results are discussed in the light of the methodology used on excavations.

Mots-Clés: combustion features, spatial analysis, technology, behavior, Aurignacien

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