
Exploring the Middle Paleolithic blade and bladelet production: new evidence from the Bau de l'Aubesier rock shelter (MIS 7 to MIS 5) southeastern France.

Leonardo Carmignani*†¹

¹Leiden University, Human Origins Group, Faculty of Archeology, The Netherland. – Einsteinweg 2, 2333 CC, Leiden (The Netherlands), Netherlands

Abstract

The appearance of the blade phenomenon in Europe is part of a broader technological change which marks the shift from the Lower Paleolithic to the Middle Paleolithic - roughly 350,000 to 200,000 B.P. In Europe, first evidences of blade production are located in the northern European Plane during MIS 8 and 7. Blade technology then reappears more clearly during MIS 5. The end of the Middle Paleolithic (MIS 4 – 3) sees the appearance of bladelet production, while the blade phenomenon spreads to a wider area, including southern and eastern Europe. We report new evidence of blade and bladelet production found at Bau de l'Aubesier. The lithic industries, analyzed by a technological approach, highlighted a co-variation in both flake and blade reduction strategies. Our results show: **(a)** that blade production at Bau de l'Aubesier is not an epiphenomenon but covers a time-span of 100 ka from the end of MIS 7 to MIS 5; **(b)** that blade production observed throughout the sequence shows a large variability of reduction strategies that cannot be reduced to a univocal model; **(c)** that the diachronic change in flake and blade production at Bau de l'Aubesier indicates a complex evolutionary trajectory; **(d)** that an unexpected production of bladelets found in level IV temporally extends the first evidence of this type of production to the MIS 5 period. The implications of these emerging data from Bau de l'Aubesier contributes to renovate the debate about the Neanderthal technological behavior.

Keywords: Blades, Bladelets, Middle Paleolithic, Lithic Technology

*Speaker

†Corresponding author: l.carmignani@arch.leidenuniv.nl