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# Preliminary taphonomic study of the faunal assemblage from Sirogne Cave (Rocamadour, Lot). Evidence for a new site prior to the last Interglacial in Quercy.

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## Résumé

Until now, the early phases of the Middle Palaeolithic in Quercy have only been scarcely documented from an archaeological and palaeoanthropological point of view. However, the Cave of Sirogne, located in the Alzou Valley at Rocamadour, Lot, is an exception to this. Indeed, the site, investigated since 2013, has produced a large corpus of Neanderthal remains, dental, osteo-dental and infra-cranial, associated with faunal remains, potentially prior to the isotopic stage 5. Though, severe disturbances to the initial deposits from ancient excavations have been noted. Because of the ubiquity and the great diversity of faunal remains identified, the aim of this study was to assess the potential of this material to better understand the formation of the site and the accumulation of this material and human remains. Based on a sample of more of 2600 remains, a threefold analysis was conducted, combining methods in paleontology, taphonomy and zooarchaeology. Thus, it is now possible to bring out several steps in the complex history of the cave. Our analyses highlighted a broad faunal spectrum. In fact, the location served principally both as a cave bear den for some generation of cave bears, particularly for females and their offspring during the low season, but also as a shelter for prehistoric people and their hunting activities, as a crossing point for carnivores or even as a sheep pen cave during its more recent phases. If it is still difficult today to put clearly the site in the context of the Quercy, it stands out as of now by two main aspects: the seniority of its filling, in part prior to the Last Interglacial, with the identification of tahr (*Hemitragus* sp.) and also by the amount of Neanderthal remains, associated with intervention marks. Despite its intense disturbance, the site presents a practically unprecedented documentary potential for the region and more globally for early phases of the Middle Palaeolithic, about its protagonists, their means of subsistence and their cultural practices.

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**Mots-Clés:** Taphonomy, Early Middle Palaeolithic, Quercy, cave bear, tahr, zooarchaeology, Neanderthal remains