
Contribution to the definition of the Protoaurignacian: the comparison of archaeological materials from Dufour, Le Piage and le Bois de Milhac (France)

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Résumé

Protoaurignacian was first defined by G. Laplace decades ago and then revisited for the years 2000s. It is now widely recognized as part of the main techno-complexes that testify to the beginning of the Upper Palaeolithic from Europe and Near and Middle East. Until now most of the studies have been focused on typological, technological and morphometrical analyses of retouched bladelets, in order to compare material from Europe and the Levantine corridor. The hypothesis of Ahmari origin for Protoaurignacian that supports the migration wave of Anatomically Modern Human from Africa is still based almost only on typo-technological comparison. Moreover in Occidental Europe, links between Protoaurignacian and the techno-complexes that are before and after in stratigraphy are still widely misunderstood. Finally, Protoaurignacian remains poorly described regarding articulations between its different technical systems: what about the territorial organization, the significance of different ornaments types or nomadism ways? We would like here to participate to the characterization of this techno-complex in South-Western France before considering cross-regional comparisons. We will base our analysis on three sites: Dufour, the eponym site of "Dufour bladelet", as well as le Piage that is currently excavated and presents a rich archeostratigraphy including protoaurignacian level, and le Bois de Milhac that has been recently excavated and has delivered for its main sector lithic industry, faunal remains and ornaments exclusively related to Protoaurignacian. First we present the comparison of lithic industries from these three sites, discussing commonalities and differences. Based on both petroarchaeological and typo-technological analyses, we discuss economy and territory and georesources management. Secondly, we cross these results with other technical systems including data from archeozoology and ornaments studies. We then raise the issue of the anthropological signification of these technical and material characteristics.

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