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# Settlement spatiality reflecting spirituality. Searching for higher order cultural expressions of Final Palaeolithic communities in Northwestern Europe.

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## Abstract

Throughout Western Europe, marvelous examples of artistic and spiritual expression are known from the Upper Paleolithic, most notably the Magdalenian. With the exception of some rare figurines and simply decorated pebbles, evident expressions of higher order cultural performance seem to overall disappear from the archaeological record during the subsequent Final Paleolithic period. In the same vein, *Federmesser* and Azilian lithic industries are simplified, less structured and generally of a lower complexity as compared to Magdalenian and other Late Upper Paleolithic industries. Final Pleistocene climatic and ecological changes will presumably have influenced hunter-gatherer subsistence strategies and hunting techniques, as well as the related material culture, but what about imagination and beliefs? Did art, ritual and spirituality simply disappear? Or is higher order cultural behavior just less easily visible archaeologically than during the previous period? This paper explores and demonstrates how hitherto little acknowledged patterns of spatiality in *Federmesser* sites, with well-defined areas of projectile piece production isolated from the overall encampment activities, likely reflect ritualistic behavior. Preparing equipment that was eventually destined to kill was presumably connected with a set of ritual prescriptions and spiritual experience. In a more theoretically oriented viewpoint, the paper also assesses the effect of a historically grown gap in research traditions with regard to cognitive archaeology of the Upper and Final Paleolithic respectively. Has this possibly led to a bias in our perception and appraisal of these traditions and should this be amended? Finally, we explore whether more aspects of spiritual life may be perceived through the spatial layout of artefact manufacture, use, repair, and discard of lithics in settlement sites and landscapes.

**Keywords:** ritual behaviour, spiritual expression, Federmesser, hunting, spatial analysis, arched backed piece complex, research history, cognitive archaeology

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