
Teviec revisited: new insights on a Late Mesolithic Coastal Atlantic Cemetery

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Abstract

After the excavations of M. and S. -J. Péquart between 1928 and 1930, followed by an exemplary monograph published in 1937, the shell midden of Téviec, in the south of Morbihan (France), became one of the legendary sites of the European Mesolithic. With 10 graves (23 individuals), the cemetery cut into a shell layer that in turn helped preserve the skeletal remains. The study of the excavated materials (human and artefactual) has continued since the excavations. However, the dispersal of the collections between several institutions, the outbreak of World War II and neglect of the archive has led to a reduction in the quantity of data. The CIMATLANTIC research program (World of the Dead / World of the Living in Atlantic France: From the Anthropology of Populations to the Prehistoric Identities) made it possible to create an inventory of surviving materials and carry out new specialised studies. The grave goods have been reconsidered after technological and functional studies. Reappraisal of the body ornaments informs on their selection, manufacture and use, and their function as a vector of social information is discussed. Flint tools appear to have had a limited life history, suggesting they were commissioned for the grave. A critical examination of the depositional practices at the site allows for new understanding on the social organisation. The study of faunal remains, which have remained unpublished, allows us to refine our understanding of the economic networks of these marine hunter-gatherer populations. Finally, new radiocarbon dating places this site at the temporal heart of the cultural dynamics of Late Mesolithic Atlantic Europe.

Keywords: Mesolithic, burial, grave good, radiocarbon

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