
Functions and issues of Maldidier cave inside networks of places during the Early Upper Palaeolithic in South-Western France

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Résumé

Territories of Palaeolithic groups could be approached like networks linking key-places inside geographical space. The best known types of archaeological sites are habitat sites in cave or under rock shelters, raw materials collect points and hunting camps that are most of the time one single event record. Maldidier cave (Dordogne) seems to present however a very particular profile concerning anthropic occupations that does not fall within one of the previous types. It is a small cavity opened on the Dordogne valley. Several excavation seasons have been conducted and typical materials from Aurignacian and Gravettian have been collected. Thanks to the last excavations (directed by M. Boudadi-Maligne and J.-B. Mallye) and the study of the previous material we have now a better understanding of the different occupations occurring during the Early Upper Palaeolithic. We present here the results of the lithic industry study. The assemblage is very particular regarding both the typology and the techno-economy and this observation constitutes then the base of our discussion. Several pieces could be considered as part of specific knapping method and then testify of different phases of Aurignacian and Gravettian. These very artefacts however do

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not fit perfectly with typological definitions ("grattoir Caminade" with questionable direct retouch, intermediate "Caminade" or "Roc-de-Combe" bladelet clearly coming however from "burin busqué" production...). These pieces lead a few questions: What about the variability recovered by typological definitions? And what about the chrono-cultural diagnostic we realize based on these types? Moreover, it seems that only a small part of knapping sequences is realized in the cave whatever the method for both Aurignacian and Gravettian. How this segmentation of the "chaîne opératoire" is integrated inside the global socio-economy of these groups and what the functions of Malvidier cave in the different networks of places during the Early Upper Palaeolithic? Comparing the results of lithic study with the analyses carried out on the other artefacts from the cave we discuss the complexity of activities and individuals at Malvidier. Finally, we situate the site inside geographical space and networks of places known for Aurignacian and Gravettian and we discuss about the functions of Malvidier cave at regional scale and over time during the Early Upper Palaeolithic.

Mots-Clés: Malvidier Cave, Aurignacian, Gravettian, Function of site, lithic industry