
Economy and mobility during the Mesolithic of south-western France: the place of expedient production in the technical and economic strategies of the last hunter-gatherers, contribution of functional analysis.

Camille Berthier*¹

¹Travaux et recherches archéologiques sur les cultures, les espaces et les sociétés (TRACES) – Université Toulouse 2, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique : UMR5608 – Maison de la Recherche, 5 allée Antonio Machado 31058 TOULOUSE Cedex 9, France

Abstract

Compared to Palaeolithic and Neolithic, Mesolithic appears as a singular period of European prehistory. Its originality is due in particular to its lithic industries, in which standardized arrow coexist with less invested tools, involved in activities generally described as "domestic".

These less invested tools, well identified in recent decades for Palaeolithic (De Bie&Caspar, 2000; Bicho&Gibaja, 2006; ...) and Neolithic (Perlès et al. 1990; Bostyn&Allard, 2006; ...), are just beginning to be identified in Mesolithic assemblages. This "expedient" production, however, seems to be an integral part of the technical and economic background of these last nomadic hunter-gatherer societies (Guilbert et al. 2006; Guéret, 2013; Stefanis et al. 2016). The goal of my research is in this sense to define its place within the Mesolithic panoply, but also within the economic registers and strategies of occupation of the territory.

These objectives take place in a limited context in the south-west of France, a sector made dynamic by the many fields currently invested (petrography, typology-technology, paleoenvironmental approaches...), making it possible to consider these populations from a palethnographic angle (Valentin, 2008). In this sense, traceology is a powerful analysis tool since it allows us to penetrate into the heart of prehistoric techno-economic strategies.

The first traceological results will be presented, namely the analyses of the lithic collection from the open-air site of Creysse (Dordogne), occupied during a very early sauveterrian phase (cal BC 9810 to 9380). The site delivered two locuses rich in lithic material, and particularly in untouched tools (Tallet et al. 2012). These results will allow us to support some of the functional data that already exist, which already make it possible to envisage its very probable domestic status, including the transformation of animal and plant resources, which makes it all its originality for the period (Chesnaux, *in* Tallet et al. 2012). My thesis also includes an experimental part focused on these domestic expedient tooling issues, including several experiments in butchery using unretouched tools, which allow us to consider ways of using and operating these tools.

*Speaker

Understanding the status of this open-air site within the Mesolithic landscape of the Causses of Quercy, by means of a comparison with two other sheltered sites (Le Cuzoul de Gramat, Lot; Roquemissou, Aveyron) should be an additional key to identifying the patterns of occupation of this territory with its rich and compartmentalized resources.

Keywords: Mesolithic, technology, traceology, domestic economy, expedient technology