
Environmental context of Badegoulian and Magdalenian activity in Late Glacial Switzerland

Hazel Reade^{*1}, Sophy Charlton², Jennifer Tripp¹, Denise Leesch³, Werner Müller⁴, Sonja Grimm⁵, and Rhiannon Stevens¹

¹UCL Institute of Archaeology – 31-34 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PY, Royaume-Uni

²The Natural History Museum [London] – Royaume-Uni

³Laboratoire d'archéozoologie, Université de Neuchâtel – Suisse

⁴Laboratoire d'archéozoologie, Université de Neuchâtel – Suisse

⁵Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology (ZBSA) – Stiftung Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseen Schloss Gottorf, Schlossinsel 1, D-24837 Schleswig, Germany, Allemagne

Résumé

Chronological and palaeoenvironmental evidence suggests human presence in Switzerland during the final phase of the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM) and the Late Glacial was more likely mediated by the structure of local plant and animal communities, rather than being directly controlled by climatic events (Leesch et al., 2012). Here we discuss the ecological and environmental context of this human presence, based on stable isotope analysis of archaeological fauna remains.

Radiocarbon dates on cut-marked reindeer from Kastelhöhle Nord and Y-Höhle indicate that humans were utilising the ice-free area of northwest Switzerland during, or immediately after, the Last Glacial Maximum. This Badegoulian presence (assigned based on lithic characteristics at Kastelhöhle Nord) occurred less than 50km north of the ice sheets, in a region where vegetation was presumably sufficient to sustain reindeer herds, at least seasonally. The breakdown of the ice sheets, following the LGM, provided newly accessible landscape, particularly in the Swiss Plateau. However, the recolonisation of these new landscapes was likely delayed until plant communities were sufficiently established to support large herbivore populations (Leesch et al., 2012).

Here were present stable isotope data from horse, reindeer, and bovids, from Kastelhöhle Nord, Y-Höhle, and Monruz. Carbon, nitrogen, and sulphur isotope data is discussed in relation to the chronology of human presence, environmental change, and landscape development. Data is compared to adjacent regions, such as the French Jura (Drucker et al., 2012) and south west Germany (Drucker et al., 2011).

References

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*Intervenant

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Mots-Clés: isotopes, collagen, Switzerland, Magdalenian, fauna, Late glacial