Re-examination of "old fossils". The Mid-Twentieth discovered specimens from the Late Middle Pleistocene Montmaurin caves (South-west of France).

Amélie Vialet*[1], Benoit Bertrand , Clémentine Champalle , José María Bermúdez De Castro , Mario Modesto-Mata , María Martinón-Torres[2,3], Marina Martinez De Pinillos , Cecilia García Campos , and Thomas Colard

[1]Muséum National dḢistoire Naturelle (MNHN) – Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle – 57, rue Cuvier - 75231 Paris Cedex 05, France

[2]University College London - London's Global University (UCL) – Gower Street - London, WC1E 6BT, Royaume-Uni

[3]Laboratorio de Evolución Humana Departamento de Historia, Geografía y Comunicación – Edificio I+D+i Plaza de Misael Bañuelos s/n, 09001, Burgos, Espagne

Résumé

In 1945, the activity of the quarries settled near the village of Montmaurin, 75km south-west from Toulouse in France, led to the discovery of several caves filled by archeological deposits. After the visit done by H. Begoúen and the Abbey H. Breuil, L. Méroc started excavations from 1946 to 1961 mainly in the Coupe-Gorge cavity which has yielded a lot of lithics and bones. Among them, there were human remains: a juvenile partial mandible (corresponding to the symphyseal part), a right maxillar bearing P3 and P4 and 4 isolated teeth (2 canines, P4 and M1). In a very closed vertical gallery called La Niche, one complete adult mandible bearing its molars, 2 vertebras and one fragmentary tibia were also discovered. All these fossils, except the 3 latter ones, where published in details. But, due to the lack of radiometric dating, such fossils were less and less included in the studies. This is the purpose of this paper to re-examine these human remains which are relevant to discuss the emergence of the Neandertal lineage in Europe. Indeed, the mandible from La Niche, dated to the OIS7 based on biochronology, is not fully Neandertal but it shows a combination of archaic and derived features, respectively on the bone itself and on teeth, which keeps open the discussion.

Mots-Clés: Neandertal lineage, Homo heidelbergensis

*Intervenant