
Mesolithization, Mesolithic and Neolithization in the South-West of France: contribution of the Cuzoul de Gramat (Gramat, Lot, France) to the establishment of a new chronocultural framework between the Pyrenees and the Massif Central (XI-VI millennia cal BC).

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Abstract

First explored in the 1920s and 1930s by Raymond Lacam, the Cuzoul de Gramat deposit has been since one of the major stratified sites of the French Postglacial Period, one

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of the very rare sequences covering all the early Holocene. If the discovery of a burial in 1927 ensured its reputation, it was the monograph published in 1944, that has made it a key deposit, documenting in particular the evolution of lithic industries (Lacam et al., 1944). This one was perceived by Lacam as linear and continuous from the Azilian to the end of the Mesolithic (supposed to last until the beginning of the Bronze Age) and has long served as a frame of reference

With the resumption of work on the site since 2005 (Valdeyron et al., 2015; Constans et al., 2019) the stratigraphical and chronological data have been considerably renewed. Now reconstructed from reliable observations, the sequence covers the extreme end of the Tardiglacial and the ancient Holocene, with levels reported successively to Azilian, Laborian, Sauveterian, Montclusian, Recent Mesolithic and Late Mesolithic occupations. The early Neolithic is present but only in disturbed position. Supported by a rereading of the stratigraphy and reliable C14 dating, the sequence slicing is now based on a techno-typological analysis of the lithic industries. This analysis underlines the lack of continuity between Azilian and Sauveterian and shows a major and brutal break in the technical traditions between the 1st (Sauveterian and Montclusian) and the 2nd Mesolithic (Late Mesolithic and Final Mesolithic), which takes place around 6200 cal BC. This rupture raises questions about the nature of the replacement process and the elements that may have favoured it. Moreover, the spread of the final stage of the Mesolithic in Cuzoul during almost the entire 6th millennium cal BC raises the question of possible relations with the Early Neolithic of Cardial tradition developed at the same time on the Languedoc coast.

Therefore, the aim of this communication is to establish the first data synthesis acquired in recent years, from the Azilian to The Early Neolithic, with particular emphasis on the new chrono-cultural phasing of the Mesolithic sequence of Le Cuzoul de Gramat. The framework for the application of this new phasing largely exceeds the causses of the Quercy. It concerns in fact a large quarter of southwestern of France, between the Pyrenees and the Massif Central, at least.

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