
Documenting the diversity of the treatment of the dead: the case of Cuzoul de Gramat (Lot, France, 2nd Mesolithic)

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Abstract

The treatment of the dead during Mesolithic in the north-western Mediterranean area and its margins is still very poorly known. An overview of practices reveals that the corpus of data appears to be under-exploited due to non-systematic analyses. It also reinforces the hypothesis put forward by various studies of a significant variability in the funerary gesture; variability whose interpretation has so far remained unsuccessful, due to the lack of precise decoding.

Deposition in individual, isolated or grouped primary burials seems to be the most widespread, or, at least, the most documented. Rare cases of cremation also have been reported. While it seems highly likely that body manipulations were carried out, the presence of scattered human remains is preferentially interpreted as resulting from the disruption of poorly buried burials.

After a quick presentation of this diversity, we propose to illustrate it with the case of Cuzoul de Gramat (Lot, second Mesolithic). Two very different deposits of human remains had been discovered during the excavations conducted by R. Lacam in the first half of the 20th century. These are an individual burial and cranial remains on which we have recently identified artificial modifications. A frontal bone, also bearing incisions, has been discovered in place in 2017 by N. Valdeyron. This confirms the existence of manipulations of corpses during the second Mesolithic in the south of France, of which we will present some details.

Keywords: north, western Mediterranean, Mesolithic, primary burial, scattered bones, artificial modifications, manipulations of corpses, Cuzoul de Gramat.

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