
Evolutionary dynamics of armatures in southern France in the 2nd Mesolithic and Early Neolithic

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Abstract

The use of weapons, and therefore of arrowheads, is structuring in the technical, economic, social and cultural fields. In the technical sphere, projectile armatures, emblematic tools, are often considered to be highly charged with cultural values and the expression of the identity of human groups. In addition to the culturalist approach, the study of their variability, in time and space, can shed light on the mechanisms of mutation and innovation that may result of adaptative strategies and cultural choices.

During the 7th and 6th millennia, the renewal of weapons and arrowheads corresponds to important changeover in lithic equipment, both in terms of function and production. Between the Second Mesolithic and the Early Neolithic, there is a diversification of the arrowhead shapes and an evolution of represented types. These observations enrich interpretative scenarios, especially around the question of know-how transfer, techno-economic renewal and neolithisation.

Our paper proposes to study these evolutions from the sequence of the Baume de Montclus site, a key Mesolithic and Early Neolithic site in Southern France. The selected sequence covers 1.5 millennia of occupation, roughly from 6500 to 5000 BCE cal., with a corpus of geometric bitruncations of about 650 pieces, distributed in about fifteen archaeological layers, making it one of the richest sites in Southern France. The cross-study of traceological (residues, micro and macroscopic analyses), technological and typological data allows a detailed interpretation of the manufacturing processes, hafting method and function. Beyond typological considerations, these analyses make it possible to approach the diversity of quivers, to identify specific technical traditions and to characterize techno-functional ruptures throughout this sequence. These results will be integrated into a wider, regional and extra-regional context, especially in the question of the emergence of the blades and trapeze industries complex and the neolithisation of the western Mediterranean basin.

Keywords: arrowheads, bitruncations, use, wear analyses, typo, technological study, technical traditions, neolithisation, Baume de Montclus

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