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- à l'assemblée générale annuelle – L'assemblée générale se réunit en début d'année, en région parisienne, et s'accompagne toujours d'une réunion scientifique. Elle permet au conseil d'administration de rendre compte de la gestion de la Société devant ses membres et à ceux-ci de l'interpeller directement. Le renouvellement partiel du conseil se fait à cette occasion.

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MESOLITHIC PALETHNOGRAPHY

RESEARCH ON OPEN-AIR SITES
BETWEEN LOIRE AND NECKAR

PROCEEDINGS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL ROUND-TABLE MEETING
IN PARIS (NOVEMBER 26–27, 2010)

as part of sessions organised by the Société préhistorique française

Published under the direction of

**Boris VALENTIN, Bénédicte SOUFFI, Thierry DUCROCQ,
Jean-Pierre FAGNART, Frédéric SÉARA, and Christian VERJUX**



**The series
“Séances de la Société préhistorique française”
is available on-line at:**

www.prehistoire.org

Cover drawing by Marie Jamon

Persons in charge of the “Séances de la Société préhistorique française” : Sylvie Boulud-Gazo and Jean-Pierre Fagnart
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Société préhistorique française (reconnue d'utilité publique, décret du 28 juillet 1910). Grand Prix de l'Archéologie 1982.
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This publication has been supported by the French Ministry of Culture and Communication,
the Centre national de la recherche scientifique,
the Institut national de recherches archéologiques préventives (INRAP),
and the laboratory “Ethnologie préhistorique”, UMR 7041 “ArScAn” (Nanterre).

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ISSN 2263-3847
ISBN 2-913745-51-2 (on-line)

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Mesolithic Pale ethnography
Research on open-air sites between Loire and Neckar
Proceedings from the international round-table meeting, Paris, November 26–27, 2010
Boris VALENTIN, Bénédicte SOUFFI, Thierry DUCROCQ, Jean-Pierre FAGNART,
Frédéric SÉARA & Christian VERJUX (eds.)
Paris, Société préhistorique française, 2013
(Séances de la Société préhistorique française, 2-2)
p. 208–216
www.prehistoire.org
ISSN 2263-3847 – ISBN 2-913745-51-2 (on-line)

Mesolithic burial practices in the northern half of France: Isolated burials and their spatial organisation

Gabrielle BOSSET and Frédérique VALENTIN

Abstract: Thirty-six Mesolithic graves, mainly primary inhumations of a single individual, were identified from 15 sites in the northern half of France. We present here a synthetic description of these graves which sheds light on the variety of funerary rites and practices. These graves are spread across the space occupied by these groups in two ways: grouped together or isolated. The chronological and spatial demarcation of 14 of these graves suggests that at least three of them represent a specific behaviour shared by certain Middle Mesolithic groups who occupied the Paris Basin.

NEW DISCOVERIES beyond the Loire in the northern half of France, together with associated radiocarbon dates and descriptions based on the principles and methods of field anthropology (Duday, 1990; Duday et al., 1990), renew our understanding of Mesolithic burials and their context (Duday, 1976; Rozoy, 1978; Newell et al., 1979; May, 1986; Verjux, 2007; Meikeljohn et al., 2010). Available information for 36 graves from 15 sites dated to between 9500 and 6000 BP forms the basis for a synthetic description of burial practices designed to “oversee what becomes of the corpse” (Thomas, 1980) and an examination of how these seemingly isolated graves were integrated within the space occupied by human groups. However, given the size of the data set, it is difficult to consider the Mesolithic phase by phase, even though certain phenomena would suggest they belong to its middle phase.

MESOLITHIC BURIAL PRACTICES FROM THE NORTHERN HALF OF FRANCE

The 36 graves currently known from the studied area (fig. 1), whose distribution and associated radiocarbon dates are summarised in table 1, reflect both the diversity and complexity of funerary practices and treatments of the body. This variability is evident in the differ-

ent ways the corpse was treated, the inclusion of objects with the deceased and the construction of the grave itself, although the majority represent primary inhumations of a single individual within pits that were occasionally lined with stones.

Treatment of the body

The cremation of the body, followed by the gathering of the remains and their association with various objects, is evident in three structures discovered at three different sites in the studied area. At La Chaussée-Tirancourt, the remains of three cremated individuals were found deposited in a pit along with burnt perforated gastropod shells, faunal remains, a deer antler bevel and abundant stone tools (fig. 2; Ducrocq and Ketterer, 1995; Ducrocq et al., 1996; Ducrocq, 1999). At Concevreux, the remains of at least two cremated individuals were placed, along with stone artefacts and ornaments, in a pit containing a concentration of various elements including deer antler tines. At Rueil-Malmaison, an analogous practice is indicated by a concentration composed of the remains of a cremated individual mixed with ashes, heated stones and generally un-burnt animal bones, yet it is difficult to establish whether this feature represents an actual burial (Valentin et al., 2008).

Un-burnt human bones were also manipulated and transferred to the place of burial, such as those from the

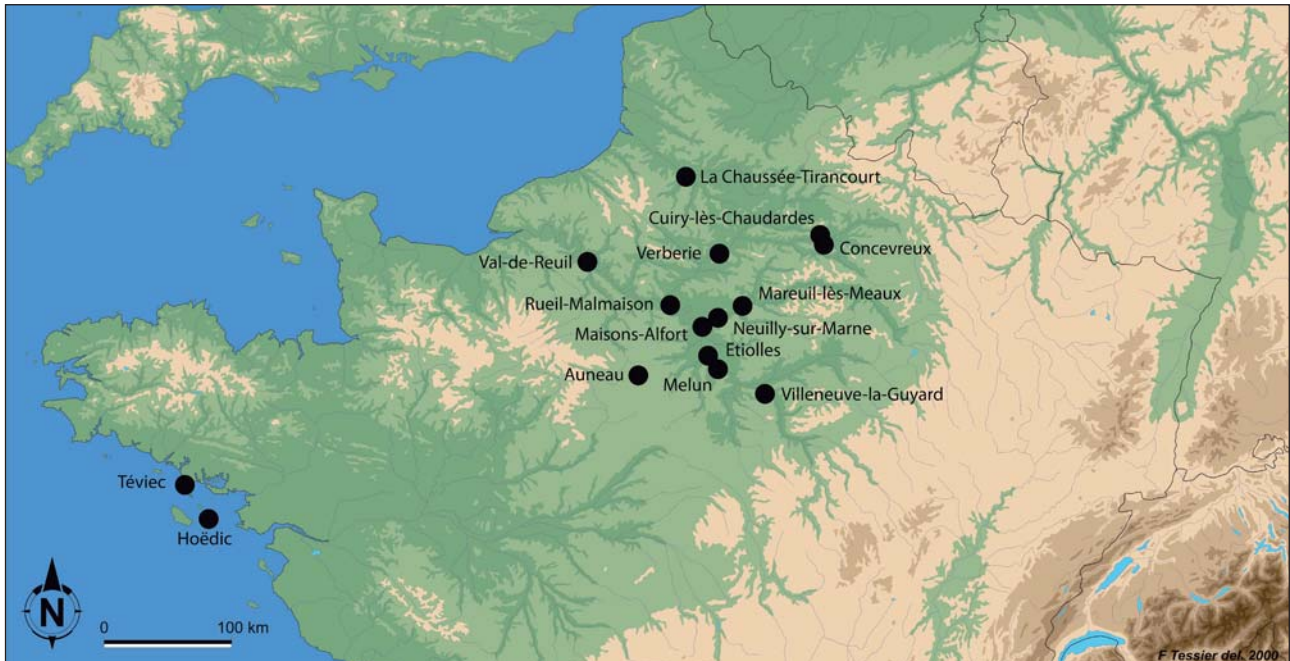


Fig. 1 – Location of Mesolithic sites with burials.

only example of a secondary Mesolithic burial discovered at the site of La Chaussée-Tirancourt in a pit containing a single animal remain and a near complete but disarticulated and rearranged male skeleton (fig. 3; Ducrocq et al., 1996; Valentin and Le Goff, 1998a). These remains suggest that a form of ‘double funeral’ was possibly practiced during the Mesolithic (cf. Hertz, 1907). Other treatments of bones, revealing a different type of mortuary behaviour, have been documented for several burials containing the remains of several individuals or ‘plural’¹ burials at Val-de-Reuil (Billard et al., 2001), Tévéc and Hoëdic (burials H and K from Tévéc, C from Hoëdic; Péquart and Péquart, 1954; Péquart et al., 1937) and indicate reductions and successive phases of inhumations in the same grave.



Fig. 2 – La Chaussée-Tirancourt (Somme). Example of a secondary cremation burial: pit F1 (photo T. Ducrocq).



Fig. 3 – La Chaussée-Tirancourt (Somme). Example of a secondary cremation burial: pit F4 (photo T. Ducrocq).



Fig. 4 – Mareuil-lès-Meaux (Seine-et-Marne). Example of a contracted position (photo D. Casadei).

Definitive inhumation was however the most extensive funerary practice in the northern half of France, represented by 20 individual burials and 7 multiple burials. While these multiple burials most often associate an adult and a child (burials D, E, J at Tévéc, burial J at Hoëdic), they can also group two children (burial C at Hoëdic), two adults (burial A at Tévéc) or three adults and a child (Villeneuve-la-Guyard; Prestreau, 1989). The bodies were generally deposited in a contracted position, except for the individual at Val-de-Reuil who was laid out with legs extended (Billard et al., 2001) and, in another particular case, the individual at Auneau placed in a sitting position, also with the legs extended (Verjux and Dubois, 1996; Verjux, 1999). Of the 40 burials for which it was possible to reconstruct the body's original position, 20 had been placed in supine positions at Tévéc, Hoëdic and Cuiry-les-Chaudardes, 6 on either their right or left side at Auneau, Villeneuve-la-Guyard, Maisons-Alfort and Mareuil-lès-Meaux (fig. 4), one in a prone position at Auneau, 13 in sitting positions at Villeneuve-la-Guyard, Tévéc (fig. 5), Hoëdic, Verberie, Rueil-Malmaison and Neuilly-sur-Marne and 2 on their knees or in a crouching position at Melun and Étioilles, with elbows, hips and knees tightly flexed (Péquart and Péquart, 1954; Péquart et al., 1937; Ilett, 1998; Verjux,

1999; Prestreau, 1992; Valentin et al., 2008; Audouze et al., 2009; Bosset, 2010).

Artefacts and ornaments

Artefacts and ornaments are rare or absent in the majority of burials from the northern half of France. Nonetheless, we are able to draw up the following inventory: a pike vertebrae necklace from Cuiry-les-Chaudardes (Ilett, 1998), two bone awl fragments, pieces of mother-of-pearl derived from a single shell, and flint blades from Auneau (Verjux and Dubois, 1997), a few flint flakes and a pebble from Rueil-Malmaison, a blade fragment and two laminar flakes from Maisons-Alfort (Valentin et al., 2008) and nine worked flints from Val-de-Reuil (Billard et al., 2001). This apparent dearth of grave goods contrasts with the richness of several other graves. The burial at Concevreux, for example, produced some fifty perforated red deer canines, flint microliths, six *suidae* tusks, of which one was shaped, and antler tools (Robert and Naze, 2006). At Tévéc and Hoëdic, tools made in flint or hard animal materials, ornamental elements in the form of perforated shells and bone awls (interpreted as toggles for clothing or a funerary shroud) were identified in several different burials (Péquart et al., 1937; Péquart and Péquart, 1954).

Moreover, the inclusion of ochre in graves now seems to be a variable practice in northern France. Although this practice is well-known from western sites, frequently occurring at Tévéc and Hoëdic (Péquart and Péquart, 1954; Péquart et al., 1937) and present at Val-de-Reuil (Billard et al., 2001) or Étioilles (Le Grand and Brunet, 1994), it has not been identified from eastern sites.



Fig. 5 – Tévéc (Morbihan). Example of a sitting position: burial D (photo archives of the Carnac Museum of Prehistory).

Burial pits and their construction

The deceased, whether buried or cremated, were placed in oval or circular burial pits of limited size. The largest ones are the multiple burials at Val-de-Reuil and Villeneuve-la-Guyard which measure 0.80 m by 2 m and 1.80 m by 2.30 m respectively (Billard *et al.*, 2001; Prestreau, 1992). Certain examples had a stone arrangement around their edge and/or at their base. At Tévéc and Hoëdic, they were bordered by stones, while at Maisons-Alfort stones were placed at the bottom of the pit (Valentin *et al.*, 2008). The individual from burial 3 at Auneau was placed on a rectangular pavement (Verjux, 1999) in the same way as the individual from burial K at Tévéc (Péquart *et al.*, 1937).

The infilling of the pit seems to have occurred soon after the deposition of the body at Rueil-Malmaison (Valentin *et al.*, 2008), Étioilles (Bosset, 2010), Verberie (Audouze *et al.*, 2009), Val-de-Reuil (Billard *et al.*, 2001) and in the three burials at Auneau (Verjux, 1999), since decomposition took place within a filled space (cf. Duda, 1990). Conversely, the infilling of the grave at Neuilly-sur-Marne does not seem contemporaneous with the placing of the body (Valentin *et al.*, 2008). In

certain cases, such as Rueil-Malmaison, Maisons-Alfort, Mareuil-lès-Meaux, Neuilly-sur-Marne and Auneau (burial 7), the burials seemed to have been backfilled with sediment extracted from the pit (Valentin *et al.*, 2008; Verjux, 1999). In other cases, different sediment was used like at Melun and Auneau (burial 6). In the latter, the body was covered by waste from a hearth and 300 kg of stone (Verjux and Dubois, 1996). The skeletons at Hoëdic were also found in contact with remarkably large stones, as well as smaller slabs (burials B, C, J and K; Péquart and Péquart, 1954).

These stone could have had multiple functions; at Auneau, they did not form a visible above-ground feature (Verjux and Dubois, 1997; Verjux, 1999), whereas stone or cervid rack surface structures overlying the graves of Tévéc and Hoëdic may have served as surface markers (Péquart and Péquart, 1954; Péquart *et al.*, 1937). A similar surface structure composed of burnt red deer, roe deer and bovid skulls was also associated with the grave at Val-de-Reuil (Billard *et al.*, 2001), located, like the aforementioned cases, in the western part of the region under consideration. The easternmost graves do not show traces of similar features. Furthermore, hearths were associated with all but one of the ten graves at Tévéc and two of

Place name	Site	Department	Number of burials	Type of treatment	Dates ¹⁴ C		Bibliography
					Age BP	Age cal. BC.*	
Port-Nehue	Hoëdic	Morbihan	9	inhumations	7165±60 (sép. A) to 5750±35 (sép. B)	6123-5769 (sép. A) to 4662-4370 (sép. B)	Schulting et Richard, 2001 Schulting, 2005 Marchand <i>et al.</i> , 2007
Saint-Pierre-Quiberon	Tévéc	Morbihan	10	inhumations	6740 ± 60 (sép. M) to 6322 ± 40 (sép. B)	5704-5475 (sép. M) to 5336-5076 (sép. B)	
Le Petit-Marais	Chaussée-Tirancourt	Somme	2	inhumation and cremation	9020 ± 100 (F4) to 8460 ± 70 (F1)	8533-7833 (F4) to 7597-7355(F1)	Ducrocq <i>et al.</i> , 1996
Le Parc du Château	Auneau	Eure	3	inhumations	8350 ± 105 (sép.6) to 6655 ± 90 (sép. 3)	7582-7090 (sép.6) to 5730-5471 (sép. 3)	Verjux et Dubois, 1996
Les Fontinettes	Cuiry-lès-Chaudardes	Aisne	1	inhumation	Unpublished		
Les Jombras	Concevreux	Aisne	1	cremation	6440 ± 30	5479-5343	Robert, 2008
Les Falaises de Prépoux	Villeneuve-la-Guyard	Yonne	1	inhumation	6070 ± 110	5293-4725	Prestreau, 1992
179 du Quai Voltaire	Melun	Seine-et-Marne	1	inhumation	8540 ± 100	7935-7346	Valentin <i>et al.</i> , 2008
Les Varennes	Val-de-Reuil	Eure	1	inhumation	8715 ± 310	8635-7066	Billard <i>et al.</i> , 2001
Les Vignolles	Mareuil-lès-Meaux	Seine-et-Marne	1	inhumation	8320 ± 90	7547-7084	Valentin <i>et al.</i> , 2008
La Zac d'Alfort	Maisons-Alfort	Val-de-Marne	1	inhumation	8030 ± 50	7121-6708	Valentin <i>et al.</i> , 2008
La Haute-Île	Neuilly-sur-Marne	Seine-Saint-Denis	1	inhumation	8540 ± 100	7935-7346	Valentin <i>et al.</i> , 2008
Les Closeaux	Rueil-Malmaison	Hauts-de-Seine	2	inhumation and cremation	8870 ± 130	8282-7613	Valentin <i>et al.</i> , 2008
Les Coudray	Étioilles	Essonne	1	inhumation	8990 ± 50	8293-7974	Bosset, 2010
Le Buisson-Campin	Verberie	Oise	1	inhumation	8740 ± 50	7954-7606	Audouze <i>et al.</i> , 2009

*Calibration values of all sites are from IntCal 09 du logiciel OxCal 4.1, except calibration values of Hoëdic and Tévéc using the reservoir correction values (Marchand *et al.*, 2007)

Tabl. 1 – Number of burials and dates.

the nine graves at Hoëdic (Péquart and Péquart, 1954; Péquart et al., 1937), whereas this combination is rare in eastern sites. Only Villeneuve-la-Guyard produced possible evidence of such a feature: a depression containing ashes and small charcoal fragments in the centre of the burial pit (Prestreau, 1992).

Number of burials per site and their distribution

Finally, two aspects related to the spatial organisation of graves and the funerary area equally draw our attention: the number of burials per site and their spatial distribution in the area excavated. The number of mortuary deposits by site is ten times less in the Paris Basin than in Brittany. The sites of Tévéc and Hoëdic have yielded 10 and 9 burials respectively, while 10 sites from the Paris Basin have produced only one Mesolithic burial each (table 1). Furthermore, while graves are grouped together at both sites in Brittany, 14 from the Paris Basin are apparently isolated within their respective sites. Does this ‘isolation’ constitute part of Mesolithic funerary behaviour?

ISOLATED BURIALS

J.-G. Rozoy (1978, p. 1115) in *Les derniers chasseurs* was the first to discuss isolated burials “generally found in caves”, that he contrasted with the famous ‘cemeteries’ of Hoëdic and Tévéc, as well as isolated human remains. This term has also been used to describe burials that are not grouped together (Duday, 1976; Verjux, 2007; Valentin and Le Goff, 1998b; Valentin et al., 2008). Moreover, certain researchers considered these graves to be “related to the living space” (in southern France: Valentin and Le Goff, 1998b, p. 183) while for others they represent individuals who were “buried away from living spaces” (Ghesquière and Marchand, 2010, p. 144). Consequently, several parameters mediate the evaluation of a grave’s isolation: the physical distance between two contemporaneous graves, the temporal separation between two neighbouring graves and the relationship between graves and living spaces.

Questions of distance and temporal separation: isolated burials *versus* grouped burials

To guarantee the singular nature of a grave, both its spatial and chronological isolation from another grave must be established. In order for this to be achieved, theoretically, the maximal distance (allowed) between two contemporaneous graves (i.e. with overlapping calibrated dates at two standard deviations) from a group of graves must be known. In the present case, this reference distance has been estimated from four French Mesolithic sites with more than three burials: Tévéc, Hoëdic, La Vergne and Auneau. Available data

indicates that the maximal distance is on the order of 10 m. Indeed, the ten Mesolithic burials at Tévéc are grouped together over a surface of around 36 m² (Péquart et al., 1937), separated by distances ranging from 0.5 m (burials H-J and K-L) to more than 6 m (burials H-M and C-E). At Hoëdic (fig. 6), the graves are generally set apart by approximately 1 to 2 metres, while others (burials A and B) appear removed from the other graves found in the western part of the site, roughly 10 metres from burial L (Péquart and Péquart, 1954). At La Vergne (Charente-Maritime), burials are very close to one another; graves 7 and 10 are separated by 0.25 m, while graves 7 and 3 have around 2.5 metres between them (Duday and Courtaud, 1998). Finally, approximately 9 metres separate burials 3 and 7 at Auneau (Verjux and Dubois, 1997).

Chronological isolation may be considered established if two dates (calibrated at two standard deviations) from two neighbouring graves do not overlap. However, the possibility of long-term use of the funerary area complicates the matter. At La Vergne, burials 7, 10 and 3 are dated respectively to 9070 ± 70 BP (8536-7990 cal. BC), 9215 ± 65 BP (8607-8293 cal. BC) and 9075 ± 65 BP (8536-8011 cal. BC), indicating that their deposition took place over a very short period, if not concurrently (Schulting et al., 2008). Tombs 3 and 7 at Auneau, dated to 6655 ± 90 BP (5730-5471 cal. BC) and 6825 ± 90 BP (5968-5562 cal. BC) also have overlapping calibrated radiocarbon dates (at two standard deviations). On the other hand, at Tévéc and Hoëdic, use of the funerary area was spread over a long duration of 700 and 2,000 years respectively (Schulting and Richards, 2001; Schulting, 2005; Marchand et al., 2007). Five of the ten graves at Tévéc were dated and present overlapping dates at two standard deviations. However, it appears that graves B and M were constructed, respectively, before and after the deposition of K and H. At Hoëdic, the six dated burials present a maximal chronological range of 2,000 years, while deposits B and K, on the one hand, and deposits H and C, on the other, may be contemporaneous.

Data set and biases

As of 2010, ten sites in the Paris Basin have produced lone Mesolithic burials (fig.1): Neuilly-sur-Marne, Mareuil-lès-Meaux, Maisons-Alfort, Melun, Verberie, Val-de-Reuil, Étioilles, Concevreux, Cuiry-lès-Chaudardes and Villeneuve-la-Guyard. Rueil-Malmaison, which has produced two structures containing Mesolithic human remains, constitutes a particular case in the sense that the funerary nature of the deposition of burnt remains has yet to be demonstrated (Valentin et al., 2008). To this collection of sites can be added the two secondary deposits at La Chaussée-Tirancourt (Ducrocq et al., 1996), whose associated radiocarbon dates (calibrated at two standard deviations) do not overlap and burial 6 at Auneau dated to the Middle Mesolithic, whereas burials 3 and 7 at the same site have been attributed to Late Mesolithic (Verjux and Dubois, 1996).



Fig. 6 – Hoëdic (Morbihan). General view of grouped burials (photo archives of the National Museum of Natural History).

However, several biases impede the verification of the actual isolation of these burials. The lack of published information precludes us from knowing if the graves excavated at Maisons-Alfort, Melun, Cuiry-lès-Chaudardes and Concevreux are indeed isolated. Additionally, the location of the graves in the excavated area complicates discussions concerning the spatial isolation of three other graves—Mareuil-lès-Meaux, Neuilly-sur-Marne and Villeneuve-la-Guyard. In these three cases, the burials are found respectively at the limits of the excavated area (Valentin et al., 2008), 2 metres (Lanchon and Le Jeune, 2004) or six metres from it (Prestreau, 1992). They therefore fall within the maximum theoretical distance allowed between two contemporaneous graves, estimated here at 10 metres. The spatial ‘isolation’ of these three burials is thus unclear. Finally, temporal intervals between grouped graves at Auneau (1,300 to 2,000 years) and La Chaussée-Tirancourt (200 to 1,200 years) are problematic as they are similar to those at Tévéc and Hoëdic. These graves which, at first glance, appear chronologically isolated within the site, could in fact belong to a long-term funerary group—perhaps spanning different cultural stages—whose intermediate components may be missing.

Based on the criteria defined here, only four of the fourteen burials surveyed can ultimately be considered as absolutely isolated—those at Rueil-Malmaison,

Étiolles, Verberie and Val-de-Reuil. The burial at Rueil-Malmaison is found to the south-west of the excavated zone (approximately 1.5 hectares), some 10 metres from the eastern limits and more than 20 metres from the southern, western and northern limits (Lang, 1977). In the case of Étiolles, extensive exposure of the area surrounding the grave (> 10 m) did not result in the identification of any similar feature in the 6.7 hectares excavated (Le Grand and Brunet, 1994). Similarly at Verberie, the excavation of a considerable area around the burial did not reveal other nearby Mesolithic graves (Audouze, pers. comm.) and at Val-de-Reuil only one Mesolithic grave was discovered in the 4 hectares excavated (Billard et al., 2001).

Isolated burials and living spaces

A grave’s isolation also depends on its relation with living spaces as evidenced by hearths, pavements, pit features and/or lithic and faunal concentrations. At Val-de-Reuil, identification of the reopening of the grave and the presence of a surface marker suggest the site was used at different times however, based on available information, it is impossible to confirm or invalidate the possibility that the burial was linked to a living space. Conversely, at Rueil-Malmaison, there exists no evidence of a strict association between the burial and domestic remains: the



Fig. 7 – Étiolles (Essonne). General view of the burial: feature 11 (photo Y. Le Grand and P. Brunet).

test excavation in sector VIII, over 20 m away and attributed to the Middle Mesolithic, has yielded the nearest evidence of a living space while other concentrations of contemporaneous material are over 80 m away. Étiolles presents a similar case; a relatively large zone exposed (approximately 1,200 m²) around the burial produced no evidence of nearby domestic features (Le Grand and Brunet, 1994). A concentration of material initially attributed to the Mesolithic was identified around 300 metres from this grave, however a recent re-evaluation of this material reassigned it to the Final Palaeolithic (Olive and Valentin, 2007). The situation is the same at Verberie, where no Mesolithic artefacts have been recovered (Audouze, pers. comm.)

Ultimately, only the three burials at Rueil-Malmaison, Étiolles and Verberie, all dated to the Middle Mesolithic (table 1) appear totally isolated within the site. No overlap of these funerary features with a living space was noted. On the contrary, these graves do indeed seem to be separated from occupied living areas.



Fig. 8 – Rueil-Malmaison (Hauts-de-Seine). The burial in sector 3 (photo L. Lang).

Isolating graves: a funerary choice?

Does the spatial exclusion of burials at Rueil-Malmaison (fig. 8), Étiolles (fig. 9) and Verberie (fig. 10) express a funerary choice? In terms of funerary practices, we note that the three burials are all primary inhumations of a single individual (table 2). The bodies were placed in extremely contracted positions, without any non-perishable grave goods, and immediately covered with sediment. Differences exist in the degree of limb flexion and could correspond to accommodating the body to the dimensions of the pit. These very narrow, simple pits lack any stone



Fig. 9 – Étiolles (Essonne). The burial: feature 11 (photo Y. Le Grand and P. Brunet).



Fig. 10 – Verberie (Oise). The burial (photo F. Audouze).

arrangement and never exceed 1 metre in diameter. Such characteristics suggest an economy of actions interpretable in different ways. Does it indicate a period of high group mobility as proposed by several researchers (Ghesquière and Marchand, 2010)? Could it relate to certain ‘duties’ specific to a particular cultural group? Does it mark the social status of the buried individuals? These questions remain open, however it seems, at least for the moment, that this funerary practice is proper to the Paris Basin, compared to the rest of the studied region, and may have been reserved for particular individuals: a

child of 1 or 2 years at Verberie (Audouze et al., 2009), a gracile woman at Rueil-Malmaison (Valentin, 1997) and a very gracile adult at Étioilles (Bosset, 2010). We may include the burial at Melun to this set, provided its isolation is confirmed, which contains a female individual buried with the same low level of investment (Valentin et al., 2008).

CONCLUSION

The 36 graves surveyed from 15 sites in the northern half of France supply evidence for Mesolithic funerary practices that are both complex and diverse. This is especially evident in the various ways the body was treated, ranging from simple individual primary inhumations to more complex procedures indicating the transfer of dry and cremated remains occasionally involving several individuals. We also observe variability in the original burial positions, often bent or sitting, and the inconsistent inclusion of grave goods. This diversity can also be extended to the arrangement of the grave which may be simple to particularly elaborate, sometimes including the construction of surface structures.

Mesolithic graves in the northern half of France articulate with the space occupied by groups according to two modes: grouped together or isolated. The critical evaluation of the 14 apparently isolated graves confirms that only three, dated to the Middle Mesolithic, are genuinely isolated: Rueil-Malmaison, Verberie and Étioilles, to which we can add the burial at Melun. These four burials, excluded from domestic zones, reflect similar funerary behaviours and practices, revealing the same low level of funerary investment. The desire to isolate certain social groups seems to have existed during the Mesolithic. Does this behaviour represent a particular conception of funerary space during this period?

Acknowledgements: We would like to warmly thank Françoise Audouze, Paul Brunet, Richard Cottiaux, Thierry Ducrocq, Laurent Lang, Emmanuelle Vigier, Amélie Vialet and Denis Vialou for the information they provided, as well as for allowing us to use photos of the

Site	Type of inhumation	Number of individual	Decay modalities of the corpse (cf. Duda, 1990)	Size of the pit (in meter)		Artefacts associated to the burial	Sex determination	Age-at-death estimation
				Length	Width			
Rueil-Malmaison	primary burial	1	filling space	0,65	0,65	none	female slender	adult
Etiolles	primary burial	1	filling space	0,7	0,55	none	unknown very slender	adult
Verberie	primary burial	1	filling space	0,6	0,4	none	-	subadult 1-2 years old
Melun	primary burial	1	filling space	0,8	0,8	none	female	Adult

Tabl. 2 – Synthetic description of isolated burials.

graves. We also wish to thank the committee that organised this session of the SPF: Bénédicte Souffi, Boris Valentin, Thierry Ducrocq, Jean-Pierre Fagnart, Frédéric Séara and Christian Verjux. Finally, we are sincerely grateful to the two reviewers of this article for their comments.

NOTES

- (1) Graves containing the remains of several individuals are, according to J. Leclerc, 'plural'. This supra-category com-

prises 'multiple' burials resulting from the simultaneous deposition of several bodies in the same place, 'collective' burials resulting from the successive deposition of several bodies in the same place and burials containing several individuals whose depositional chronology cannot be established.

- (2) This notion "groups all obligations and prohibitions constituting the elementary structure in which funerary practices must take place" (Bocquentin et al., 2010, p. 3).

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MESOLITHIC PALETHNOGRAPHY

RESEARCH ON OPEN-AIR SITES BETWEEN LOIRE AND NECKAR

Proceedings from the international round-table meeting in Paris (November 26–27, 2010)

as part of sessions organised by the Société préhistorique française

Published under the direction of

**Boris VALENTIN, Bénédicte SOUFFI, Thierry DUCROCQ,
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‘Mesolithic Pale ethnography...’: part of this volume’s title represents a sort of methodological and theoretical mission statement designed to convey the idea that research concerning the last hunter-collectors is today in desperate need of this type of insight. Since the beginning of the 1990s, a spectacular crop of occasionally vast open-air sites has emerged, one of the notable contributions of preventive archaeology. Several long-term excavations have also added to this exponentially increasing body of information that has now come to include a growing number of well-preserved sites that have allowed us to address pale ethnographic questions. This volume represents a first step towards revitalising Mesolithic research. Here we have focused on occupations from the 8th millennium cal BC, currently the best documented periods, and limited the scope to Northern France and certain neighbouring regions. The first part contains several preludes to monographs highlighting potential future studies as well as various patterns in the structuring of space and the location of camps. These, as well as other complementary discoveries, provide material for the second part of the volume dedicated to new data concerning the functional dynamics of Mesolithic camps.



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préventives



ISBN 2-913745-51-2 (on-line)
ISSN : 2263-3847

ISBN: 2-913745-51-2



9 782913 745513