

## Opening of the meeting

Arthur GICQUEAU

---

Hello and welcome everyone, and thank you for coming to the first day of this conference on intergroup armed conflicts in societies without a state and without wealth.

Firstly, C. Darmangeat, J.-M. Pétilion, N. Teyssandier and I would like to thank the University of Toulouse Jean-Jaurès and the Traces laboratory for agreeing to host this event here at the Maison de la Recherche. We would also like to thank them for their financial support, as well as the LADYSS laboratory, the SMP3C team, the UFR and the Department of History, Arts and Archaeology. Finally, thanks to the Société Préhistorique Française, which has included this event in its annual cycle, is also providing financial support for this conference and will publish it online in its 'Séances de la SPF' collection.

The organising committee and I are therefore very pleased to welcome a group of colleagues whom you will hear over these two days of conferences, which will be rich in information, exchanges and, no doubt, debates. We are very happy to see them here in Toulouse, as some have come from far away: the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Paris and even Vendée... A huge thank you to them!

The purpose of this meeting is to examine the origins of war and collective armed conflict in our species, *Homo sapiens*. More specifically, we will discuss this topic in relation to societies without wealth or a state, i.e. societies without economic inequalities, where goods and property play a secondary role. These are societies of hunter-gatherers who do not store food, have no explicit political command structure, meaning no significant hierarchy. It is generally believed that this type of society characterized the nomadic human groups of the Palaeolithic era.

For several decades, at least in France, the prevailing hypothesis was that intergroup armed conflict originated relatively recently, coinciding with the Neolithic period or even the beginning of protohistory. However, in recent years, evidence has emerged, suggesting probable intergroup clashes around the twentieth millennium and actual

mass killings around 10,000 years ago, challenging this view.

Before we dive into the heart of the matter, a few words about the program for this conference. First of all, you will no doubt have noticed the overwhelming male majority among the speakers. Naturally, this is not the result of any selection on our part; in fact, two female scholars whom we had invited to participate in this event were unfortunately unable to attend. This is obviously due to the fact that the topic of intergroup armed conflict is a field of research that remains “gendered”, with a much higher number of male researchers. We noticed this when organising this conference, and we hope that this bias will be corrected in the future.

Another point that should be emphasised is the presence of several presentations that will focus on subjects quite different from societies without wealth, covering topics ranging from Neolithic societies to non-human primates. This is, of course, intentional for two reasons. On the one hand, certain observations and methods used to characterise intergroup conflicts and identify their causes are applicable regardless of the type of society under consideration and must therefore be taken into account when analysing these phenomena in the societies that are of particular interest to us. On the other hand, we consider it essential to adopt a relatively broad comparative approach to understand what was specific about Palaeolithic conflicts, reasoning by analogy but also by contrast.

We hope that this approach will enable us, at the end of this conference, to move towards a common typology of intergroup conflicts in non-state societies, where the concept of “war” is still poorly defined. For example, the Larousse dictionary defines war as ‘an armed struggle between states’. But what about societies without a state? According to ethnologist P. Clastres, so-called “primitive” societies, such as certain Amerindian societies he studied in Paraguay and Brazil, are in a permanent state of war; people avoid fighting but remained prepared, with the idea that war is constantly present in the background. We are therefore a far cry from the image of the peace-

ful hunter-gatherer, as still portrayed by some scholars in works intended for a wider audience.

Since Clastres' work, research in social anthropology has demonstrated the fundamental role of war in various sub-contemporaneous non-state societies. Several researchers working on this topic are here today, and we will have the opportunity to hear them speak in a session dedicated to ethnographic cases. This session will offer an overview of the diversity of forms of intergroup armed conflict and their motivations within traditional societies in Australia, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and the Amazon. We will also see how armed conflict appears in the myths of certain non-state societies and what they mean to them. This session will show how complex and different the motivations behind these conflicts can be compared to those in state societies.

The motivations that drove certain human groups to fight each other during prehistory in the broad sense are extremely difficult to identify. This is why it is important for prehistorians and paleoanthropologists to be familiar with data from social anthropology, so that they can consider hypotheses that they would never have been able to infer from the limited evidence at prehistoric sites. This is

one of the main reasons for this meeting: to foster a rich discussion between social anthropology and archaeology on intergroup conflicts in prehistoric human societies. These exchanges will take place tomorrow, at the end of the morning session, during which we will be presented with Palaeolithic and Neolithic archaeological cases from north-eastern Africa and central and western Europe.

We will then take a step back to have broader view and examine the origins of intergroup conflict within the genus *Homo*, and even within the Hominidae family. We will see how primatology, and ethology in general, can provide some answers to this question with findings from observations of wild chimpanzees in West Africa and a presentation of a recent book comparing human societies to other animal societies. Finally, in order to discuss our own perception of collective armed conflict in societies different from our own, we will listen to a presentation on the conception of war among the ancient Greeks and Romans and see to what extent we have inherited from them.

With that, I wish you an excellent conference!