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Paléontologie humaine et préhistoire (Archéologie préhistorique)

### Productions lithiques et comportements techno-économiques de groupes humains acheuléens et moustériens en région liguro-provençale

*Lithic productions and techno-economic behaviours of Acheulean and Mousterian human groups in the Liguro-Provençal region*

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#### RÉSUMÉ

Les occupations humaines à l'origine des productions lithiques acheuléennes et moustériennes ont laissé de nombreux vestiges en région liguro-provençale. Certains gisements témoignent de la transition entre le Paléolithique inférieur et moyen, livrant des industries où le façonnage de bifaces se poursuit conjointement à un débitage déjà en partie Levallois et l'élaboration d'un petit outillage retouché déjà de facture moustérienne. Dans les sites plus récents, les productions lithiques moustériennes montrent ensuite un développement des débitages Levallois et parfois laminaires, alors que le façonnage disparaît. L'apport d'artefacts en matières premières lithiques aux sources parfois très lointaines existe déjà dès la fin de l'Acheuléen et l'exemple de l'utilisation du jaspé illustre ici un aspect des comportements techno-économiques et de la mobilité de ces groupes humains. Cet apport de supports en jaspé d'origine lointaine va ensuite se développer dans certains sites moustériens en Ligurie, mais avec cette fois des activités de débitage et de retouche au sein même des sites d'occupation.

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#### ABSTRACT

Acheulean and Mousterian human occupations left an abundant record of lithic productions in the Liguro-Provençal region. Certain sites show the transition between the Lower and Middle Palaeolithic, yielding industries in which the shaping of bifaces continued along with partial Levallois reduction and the development of light-duty, retouched Mousterian tools. In the more recent sites, Mousterian lithic productions show further development in Levallois reduction techniques and sometimes blade production, while shaping techniques disappeared. The transport of artefacts of exotic lithic raw materials from sometimes very distant sources had already occurred by the end of the Acheulean, and the example of the use of allochthonous jasper illustrates an aspect of techno-economical behaviours and the mobility of these human groups. Such transport of jasper blanks from distant sources became further developed at certain Mousterian sites in Liguria, but with the addition of knapping and retouching activities at the occupation sites.

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## Abridged English version

### Introduction

In the Liguro-Provençal coastal region, which includes the Alpes-Maritimes, Monaco, and the Italian Liguria, many Middle and Upper Pleistocene sites have yielded abundant lithic assemblages attributed to the Acheulean and Mousterian complexes, enabling us to have a synthetic view of the development of these industries and human behaviour. Such developments can be distinguished through techno-typological and techno-economic analyses of the lithic assemblages, as well as examination of the means of exploitation of raw materials and their origins. During the various periods of occupations of the sites, local lithic raw materials were exploited, associated with the presence of lithic blanks from more distant origins, such as jasper, the source of which may also be an indicator of the territorial range. We present the characteristics of the Acheulean-Mousterian transition here, based particularly on the sequence of Lazaret Cave, before considering specific Mousterian characteristics revealed by the numerous more recent sites.

### The Acheulean characteristics

The main Acheulean sites are in Nice (Terra Amata and Lazaret Cave), Monaco (*Observatoire* Cave) and Italy (Prince Cave). The latter two sites have yielded only a few lithic artefacts, which did, however, include bifaces. Both Terra Amata and Lazaret Cave have yielded abundant lithic and faunal material in well-dated stratigraphic context. The open air site of Terra Amata, dated to about 400,000 years BP (MIS 11), has been interpreted as a hunting camp for elephant and deer, occupied by a group who had mastered the use of fire and produced an industry where the dominant shaping technique co-existed with essentially unipolar or orthogonal reduction (not yet Levallois). The heavy-duty tools include abundant choppers/chopping-tools, but also picks, bifaces and cleavers, essentially shaped on marly limestone pebbles collected directly at the site. There was, however, a preference for siliceous limestone to produce flakes and as blanks for light-duty retouched tools, as well as non-local flint and even rhyolite which came from rather distant sources, more than 60 km away in the *Haut-Var* for certain flints (Lumley et al., 2008) and about 40 km away for the *Esterel* rhyolite.

### The Acheulean-Mousterian transition

The coastal Lazaret Cave contains an important stratigraphic sequence deposited during MIS 6, and has yielded abundant lithic and faunal material from the Acheulean-Mousterian transition, of which fairly little is known elsewhere. Bifaces are common in the lithic assemblages, but tend to disappear in the upper levels. Macro-tools also include rarer choppers (Fig. 2) and cleavers. Levallois flaking, already present in the lower levels, remains infrequent, but nevertheless well mastered (Darlas, 1994; Lumley, 1969; Lumley et al., 2004), associated with orthogonal and discoidal flaking techniques. Light-duty tools,

well elaborated and diversified, are already of Mousterian types. These various characteristics reflect the transition toward the Mousterian technocomplex, a transition that has already been established at some open air sites in the *Vaucluse* and *Alpes-de-haute-Provence* (Lumley-Woodyear, 1969; Slimak et al., 2004). The origin of some microquartzites is more than 70 km away (Lumley et al., 2004), and for the red jasper, more than 180 km away, in the northern Italian Apennines (Monte Lama zone, Castellaccio, Pràbera [Negrino and Starnini, 2003; Porraz and Negrino, 2008]), north of the city of Chiavari (Fig. 1). Only one full *débitage* flake in jasper, retouched as a scraper, was discovered in 2007 at Lazaret Cave, among more than 3000 lithic objects in archaeo-stratigraphic unit UA 27. This dark red, brilliant jasper is not known from other outcrops, and cannot be confused with the lithophyses of the *Esterel* area. We cannot be sure, however, that this retouched artefact was acquired in its original context. A mineral origin of more than 180 km from the occupation site has not yet been established for Lower Palaeolithic human occupations, over a period of about 160,000 years (Lumley et al., 2004). On the other hand, the presence of one or two retouched artefacts in the same jasper is known from at least two Mousterian sites in the Nice region (Porraz, 2005, 2010).

### The Mousterian peculiarities

Mousterian sites in the Liguro-Provençal arc demonstrate the presence of Neandertals during the Upper Pleistocene, from the beginning of MIS 5 to MIS 3. The Mousterian industries show the replacement of heavy-duty tools by more elaborate and standardized light-duty tools, in parallel with much more frequent use of *Levallois* flake production, as well as laminar production that reaches 30% in some assemblages, for example at *Barma Grande* (Bulgarelli, 1974; Lumley-Woodyear, 1969; Yamada, 1997) and in layers D and E at Prince Cave (Laworsky, 1961, 1962; Lumley-Woodyear, 1969; Yamada, 1993). Near San Remo, the Mousterian site of Madonna dell'Arma also has lithic assemblages with very frequent *Levallois* production, including laminar, in intermediate layer I/II at the end of MIS 5 (Cauche, 2007; Cauche and Lebègue, 2008; Cauche et al., 2004). In the city of San Remo, the San Francesco station yielded an industry with particularly high *Levallois* and laminar indices, attributed to MIS 6 or 5 or to the Final Mousterian (Bietti and Negrino, 2007; Isetti, 1961; Lumley and Isetti, 1965; Pirouelle, 2006; Tavoso, 1988).

The presence of two retouched pieces in jasper from a single outcrop in the northern Italian Apennines was described for each of the Mousterian sites of *Piè Lombard* (*Alpes-Maritimes*, France) and the *ex-Casino* (*Ventimiglia*, Italy). This techno-economic aspect of the exploitation of jasper thus already existed during MIS 6 at Lazaret Cave and confirms its attribution to the Acheulean-Mousterian transition. This rare presence of finished products in jasper in the Nice region seems to mark the western borders of jasper diffusion.

Two Mousterian cave sites (*Arma delle Manie* and *Caverna delle Fate*) (Figs. 1 and 2), closer to the jasper outcrops of the Apennines (around 90 km), have more jasper artefacts (Table 1) and these reflect different phases of the

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