

Paléontologie humaine et préhistoire / Human palaeontology and prehistory

Une occupation humaine au Pléistocène inférieur sur la bordure nord du Massif central

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Résumé

Le site paléolithique de « Pont-de-Lavaud » se trouve sur la commune d'Eguzon-Chantôme (Indre). Plusieurs sols archéologiques empierrés, inclus dans la base partiellement cryoturbée d'une très haute nappe alluviale de la Creuse, y ont été exceptionnellement conservés et une abondante industrie archaïque sur galets et filons de quartz y a été récoltée. L'âge moyen de la formation alluviale, obtenu par la méthode de résonance paramagnétique électronique (RPE) appliquée aux quartz fluviaux optiquement blanchis, est de 1,1 Ma. « Pont-de-Lavaud » est contemporain de la vague de peuplement, actuellement reconnue en Eurasie au Pléistocène inférieur et témoigne de la présence de l'Homme dans le Centre de la France dès cette période dans des conditions climatiques de type périglaciaire. *Pour citer cet article : J. Despriée et al., C. R. Palevol 5 (2006).*

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Abstract

A human presence during the Early Pleistocene on the northern edge of the Massif central (France). The 'Pont-de-Lavaud' prehistoric settlement is located on the Eguzon-Chantôme locality (Indre department, France). Several archeological pavements included in the partially cryoturbated bottom of a very high terrace of the Creuse River, were particularly preserved and numerous artefacts of archaic lithic industry were excavated. The age average of the alluvial formation, obtained by Electronic Spin Resonance (ESR) method applied to optical bleaching fluvial quartz, is 1.1 Ma. The 'Pont-de-Lavaud' site is contemporary with the early human populating actually recognized in Eurasia during the Lower Pleistocene and is an evidence of a human presence in the middle of France during this period in spite of periglacial climatic oscillations. *To cite this article: J. Despriée et al., C. R. Palevol 5 (2006).*

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Keywords: Archaic industries; Fluvial deposits; ESR dating; Lower Pleistocene; Prehistoric settlements; Earliest occupation of Europe; Centre France area

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Abridged English version

Five fossil alluvial formations were identified in the middle Creuse valley on the northern edge of the Massif central. The well-preserved remnants of the sheet D (+90/+110 m relative altitude) were observed on about 15 km along the two sides of the valley. Downstream the Eguzon dam, these outliers, 15 m thick, are sandy. Upstream, significant erosion has reduced the thickness of the rare outcrops, which still exist in hollows in the crystalline substratum, than 2 m. Only the pebbly base of the sheet, in which periglacial cryoturbations are observed, is preserved [4,5].

The 'Pont-de-Lavaud' prehistoric site (district of Eguzon, Indre) was discovered in one of these remains. Two archaeological levels were unearthed during fieldworks programmes from 1984 to 1995. The area of the excavations was about 100 m². In the upper level, two anthropic pavements are observed. They were built with blocks of vein quartz and well-rounded quartz pebbles, 10- to 30-cm long, brought from the base of the pebbly alluvial deposit where most of them are stocked in contact with alterites of crystalline bed. These pavements are about 8-m long and 3,50-m wide, with west east orientation. The edges of the pavements are evident

with lined up blocks. On the northern edge of 'Pont-de-Lavaud' pavement No. 1, about 10 wedgings of possible pegs and the concomitant accumulation of pebbles and quartz artefacts on this boundary make a top brandoofing, as an awning, very plausible.

About five thousands quartz artefacts, tools, flakes and fragments were scattered in, on and outer the pavements. The raw materiel is the quartz locally picked up and cutted by percussion with hammerstone or broken on an engine block as shown by numerous opposite impacts.

The pebble-tools, choppers and chopping-tools, are rare. The flakes production use orthogonal surfaces on blocks and debris of vein quartz, but centripetal modality is also observed on pebbles. The striking platforms are cortical or plane (Fig. 4). Generally, the trimmed pieces are denticulated but many has been used without trim.

About 30 pebble-tools are also found in the base of the sheet, at the contact with the alterites, some centimetres above the substratum. No fluvial weathering was observed and some reassemblings are evidence of a possible human presence as soon as the end of the river incision.

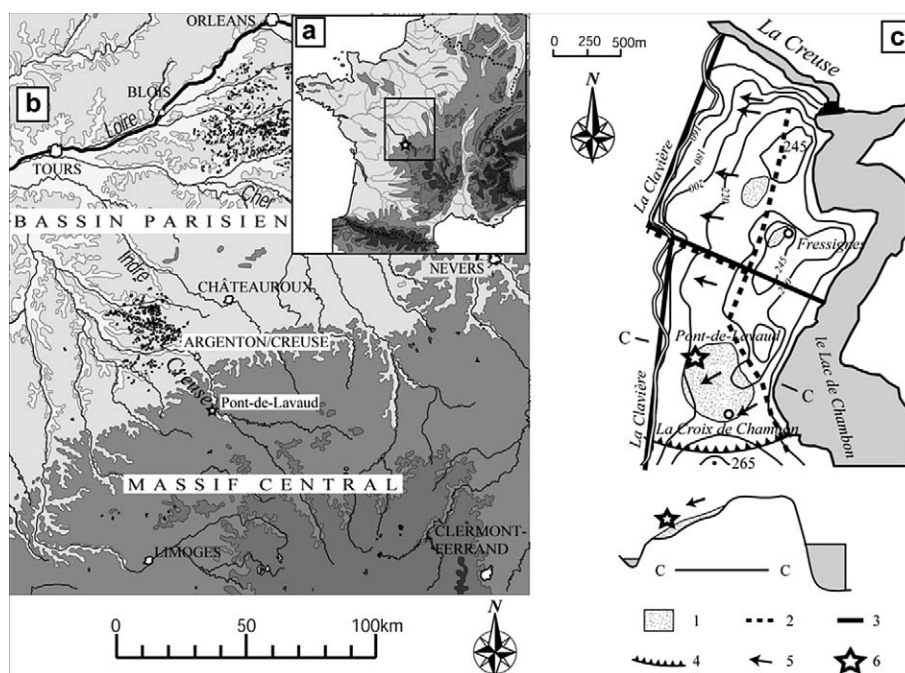


Fig. 1. Localisation (a et b) et situation (c) du gisement préhistorique de « Pont-de-Lavaud » sur l'interfluve Creuse/Clavière. 1. Témoin de la nappe alluviale D (+90/+110 m relatif). 2. Rejeu de failles anciennes. 3. Failles récentes. 4. Chevauchement de Chambon. 5. Sens du basculement. 6. Site préhistorique.

Fig. 1. Location maps (a and b) and position (c) of the 'Pont-de-Lavaud' prehistoric site on the Creuse/Clavière interfluve. 1. Outcrop of the terrace D (+90/+110 m relative). 2. Old fault recent reactivation. 3. Recent faults. 4. Chambon's overlap. 5. Tilting direction. 6. Prehistoric site.

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