

THE GROTTÉ DU PLACARD AT **150**

NEW CONSIDERATIONS ON AN EXCEPTIONAL
PREHISTORIC SITE

edited by

Christophe Delage

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Human skull modified into 'a cup', according to A. de Maret and H. Breuil (after Breuil and Obermaier 1909, Fig. 6);

Schematic human carving (Laurent 1971, Fig. 2).

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FOREWORD

We are the heirs of a remarkable heritage in the Charente.

Our challenge is to make visible this past and especially the sites of which the Department is the owner: the Roman Baths in Chassenon, the Roman Theatre of Les Bouchauds in Saint-Cybardeaux, the prehistoric rockshelter of La Chaire-à-Calvin in Mouthiers-sur-Boëme, and finally, for earlier periods, the Cave of Le Placard in Vilhonneur which was discovered 150 years ago.

The Department of Charente has the purpose to preserve these sites but also to ensure the diffusion of knowledge to future generations. That is why part of the collection is now kept in the Center of Conservation and Archaeological Studies in Magnac-sur-Touvre near Angoulême and is accessible to all researchers.

More particularly, the Cave of Le Placard, a landmark in the history of archeology where an engraved cave wall was discovered, testifies to the presence of Paleolithic art in the valleys of the Charente. The display at the entrance to the park illustrates the history of the site; a path in front of the engraved wall facilitates a controlled and secure access both for researchers and for the public, while at the same time preserving these artworks.

This publication will, I am sure, have a wide audience and allow the better appreciation of the discoveries regarding the presence of humans over several thousand years.

François Bonneau
President
Department of the Charente

FOREWORD

A rich collection of objects from the first excavations of the cave of Le Placard, carried out by J. Fermond at the dawn of the 1870s, is housed and exhibited at the Museum of Angoulême. It is a reflection of what was one of the most renowned prehistoric sites, and which played its part in the foundation of prehistoric science in the nineteenth century and was thought to belong to the past of research.

Unique in the prehistory of the Charente, the cave of Le Placard, which was believed to be in ashes, was concealing a fire that had been incubating for more than a century. Inspired by unexpected discoveries, it now lights up our knowledge of Upper Paleolithic cultures with a new passion.

As is often the case with early studies conducted only superficially, Le Placard was about to reveal surprises at the end of the twentieth century with new discoveries in the cave, which thereby revived the attention of the scientific community in a site negligently forgotten during the first half of the century.

To mark the 150th anniversary of the discovery of the site, a group of authors, under the direction of Christophe Delage, has focussed on the history of this research and presents a remarkable documented synthesis.

Even if it increases our regrets for a site discovered too early and punctuated by destructive investigations, it is fairly obvious that this site contributed to the development of European prehistoric research.

Moreover, in a manner similar to the latest field research, studies of material excavated in the nineteenth century show that ancient collections can still yield scientific information.

Now the property of the Department of Charente, protected and open to the public, it is certain that the cave of Le Placard will still reveal knowledge of Paleolithic cultures for future generations of scholars.

Jean-François Tournepiche
Curator-in-chief
Museum of Angoulême

BIOGRAPHIES

Marta Alcolea holds her PhD at the University of Zaragoza (2017). As specialist in Archaeobotany, she has experience in the study of archaeological objects manufactured with perishable and plant-based materials. She has made research stays at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (Spain), University of Montpellier (France) and University of Roma La Sapienza (Roma). At present, her fieldwork focuses on the cave with Mousterian occupation of P5 (Aguilón, Zaragoza).

Pierre Cattelain received his MA in Art History and Archaeology (Specialization in Prehistory) from the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) in 1978. In 1980, he was given the equivalence with a third-cycle doctorate at the Université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne for his work on Paleolithic spearthrowers. Affiliated to the Research Centre in Archaeology and Heritage (CREA-Patrimoine) of the ULB and the Prehistory Department of the Université de Liège (Belgium), he is co-founder as well as scientific director of the Centre d'Études et de Documentation Archéologiques (Cedarc) and the Musée du Malgré-Tout in Treignes. He is also Curator of the Écomusée du Viroin (ULB). Specialized in all that concerns hunting in Prehistory, he has been directing excavations in the South of the Entre-Sambre-et-Meuse region (Wallonia, Belgium) since 1980. He is Vice-president of the Commission de nomenclature de l'industrie de l'os préhistorique.

Bruno Delage is passionate about archeology and is a speleologist, member of the *Association Spéléologique Charentaise*.

Christophe Delage (Ph.D., 2001, University of Paris 1-Sorbonne) is a specialist of lithic raw material sourcing and chipped stone industries. He has been working in the Southern Levant (Israel and Jordan) for 25 years and in Southwest France (Charente and Vienne) on the Magdalenian for about 10 years. He is currently affiliated with the Department of Prehistory, National Museum of Natural History (Paris).

François Djindjian is an archeologist, specialist of theory and methods in archeology, as well as of the European Upper Paleolithic. He is Professor at the University of Paris 1-Panthéon-Sorbonne) and affiliated with the UMR 7041 «ArScAn» (Maison René Ginouvès, Archéologie-Ethnologie, Nanterre); he is also President of the Union internationale des sciences préhistoriques et protohistoriques (UISPP) and Vice-President of the Conseil international pour la philosophie et les sciences humaines (CIPSH, Unesco).

Carlos García-Benito is a prehistorian and a musicologist and has combined both specialisms in his PhD (2015) at the University of Zaragoza. He has participated in 5 research projects, two of them international and made research stays at Autonomous University of Madrid (Spain), Université de Bordeaux 1 (France) and Eberhard Karls Universität de Tübingen (Germany). He is Chairman of the Working Group on Musical Archeology of the Spanish Society of Musicology and Coordinator of Archaeology area of the Centro de Estudios Turiasonenses since 2015.

Claudine Gravel-Miguel is a postdoctoral research associate for the Institute of Human Origins at Arizona State University. She studies the inter-relationship of social constructs and their environment in the Upper Paleolithic of Southwest Europe. She uses GIS, agent-based models, and ecological models to explore the impacts of the local environment on hunter-gatherers' mobility, and see how these impacts affect cultural transmission.

Brian Hayden is a Research Associate at the University of British Columbia. In addition to excavating sites on three continents, he has conducted ethnoarchaeological research in Australia, British Columbia, Guatemala, Mexico, Polynesia, and Southeast Asia. These studies have resulted in new models of domestication, feasting, social inequalities, and ritual and religion. Hayden has been recognized for this pioneering work as a member of the Royal Society of Canada. Some of his other works include: *The Power of Feasts* (2014), *A Prehistory of Religion* (2003), and *Archaeology: The Science of Once and Future Things* (1993).

Michelle C. Langley is an ARC DECRA Research Fellow in the Australian Research Centre for Human Evolution, Griffith University. Her research revolves around the use of osseous and shell technology in early human communities around the globe. Currently she is focused on Australian bone technology, bone and shell technology in Island Southeast Asia, and the identification of children in the Paleolithic archaeological record. Previous research foci include: Investigating the maintenance (resharpening, repair, reuse, recycling) of Magdalenian (European Upper Paleolithic) barbed and unbarbed osseous projectile points; and exploring the evidence for advanced and symbolic cognition in the Pleistocene archeological records of Eurasia (primarily Neandertals) and Sahul (Greater Australia). Issues surrounding the development and use of symbolic behaviour and social signalling technologies within Pleistocene Neandertal and Modern Human populations remains the underlying focus of her research.

Carlos Mazo is a professor of Prehistory at the University of Zaragoza where he holds a PhD (1989). He has made research stays at different universities in Spain and Centro Austral de Investigaciones Científicas (Argentina). Specialist in Palaeolithic studies and use wear analysis, he has worked in numerous archaeological sites in the Ebro basin (NE Spain) like Peña Miel (La Rioja), El Pontet (Teruel), the Forcas I and II (Huesca) or Abauntz (Navarra). At present, he leads a national research project and his fieldwork focuses on the cave with Mousterian occupation of P5 (Aguilón, Zaragoza). With an extensive trajectory related to Experimental Archaeology, he also is Director of the AExC course (Caspe, Zaragoza) since 2005.

Born in Soyaux (Charente), in spring 1972, **Anne-Paule Mousnier** left the geometric forms of the urbane world for the harmonious curves of South Charente, 20 years ago. Her sources of inspiration come from her observations on Interpretations of Relationships between Man; Art and his Environment,

Prehistoric Art, Earth Art... Her chosen themes emphasise particularly, the vision of Woman in her entirety; her origins; her aesthetics; her roles ... and the links between art and spirituality. (www.annepaulemousnier.fr)

Philippe Roux, born in 1957, holds a Ph.D. in Prehistory, Ethnology and Anthropology, and is an associate researcher at the University of Bordeaux, UMR 5199 PACEA, and a member of the *Société d'Anthropologie de Paris*.

Catherine Schwab is a specialist of Prehistoric Archeology in Western Europe. She has been curator at the Museum of National Archeology in Saint-Germain-en Laye, since 2001, in charge of the Paleolithic and Mesolithic collections.

Pierre Vauvillier has been for decades a leading speleologist, discovering, exploring and mapping numerous caves and karstic networks. He founded the *Association Spéléologique Charentaise*.

PREFACE

In the relatively short history of serious prehistoric research in Europe, there have been many 'martyred' sites which were -- as seen with hindsight -- found far too early. Altamira, for example, is still one of the best two or three decorated caves of the Upper Paleolithic ever found; when its art was discovered in 1879, it was considered far too sophisticated to have been made by primitive Stone Age savages, and was rejected vehemently by most prehistorians of the time, with a few noteworthy exceptions. If the cave had merely contained a simple drawing of a bison or horse, it might have been much easier to accept at that time. Lascaux itself, the finest of all decorated caves, was found at a very unfortunate time (1940); its archeological layers were 'massacred' in the late 1940s, and the mass tourism to which it was subjected caused terrible damage to the equilibrium of its images by the early 1960s, an episode followed by even worse damage around 1999 due to bureaucratic incompetence.

Where excavations are concerned, there are countless examples of major sites which were dug, often very badly, by scholars employing unskilled labourers. Many finds were made but, owing to the crude methods employed, vast amounts of information on precise location and context were lost for ever. As major examples, one could mention 'supersites' such as Isturitz or Le Mas d'Azil, or the work at El Castillo which was interrupted by the First World War. Certainly Le Placard represents a classic case of this kind -- an important site, originally dug by a remarkable pioneer, Arthur de Maret, whose work has remained neglected and little-known by most archeologists. Yet it played a very prominent role in some of the crucial debates about Upper Paleolithic prehistory, such as the chronological position of the Solutrean, the 'Bataille aurignacienne', and the phases of the Magdalenian. As with some of the sites mentioned above -- and especially El Castillo -- the astonishingly rich collection of lithic and osseous material from Le Placard has been scattered far and wide, with much of it remaining unknown or unpublished.

Finally, Le Placard has also turned out to be one of those cave sites which was long thought to be undecorated -- it contained portable art, and massive evidence of occupation and tool-working, but had nothing on its walls. This was eventually proved untrue by the discovery of parietal engravings -- and again, in this, it exemplifies a phenomenon that has become increasingly common in recent years as new eyes have searched the walls of known caves, and have unexpectedly discovered engraved images in sites such as Parpalló (Spain), La Marche (France), Creswell Crags (England), and numerous caves in the Spanish Basque Country. It is increasingly obvious that all known Upper Paleolithic caves should be re-examined by people with experienced eyes, with the assistance of good lighting and new techniques.

In the chronology of Upper Paleolithic art in France, a number of major anomalies remain to be resolved satisfactorily -- not least the bizarre early dates proposed for the Grotte Chauvet -- and one of these concerns the 'aviform' signs (or 'chimney' signs, as I prefer to call them). These are unquestionably Gravettian, not Solutrean, at the well-dated caves of Cougnac and Pech Merle. So how can this be squared with the situation at Le Placard where they have been claimed to be Solutrean? Is it simply a question of when the fragments of engraved wall in Placard fell off onto layers that are more recent?

It may be possible to resolve this issue, and others, when the fullest information is made available from the modern work at the site in the 1990s. It is fervently to be hoped that the most recent excavator will recognize his responsibilities and not only publish his work completely but also allow unrestricted access to the materials by other scholars; and similarly, that full details of the most recently obtained radiocarbon dates are also made available. Until then, this important book, containing many fine, useful and important studies of the material from Le Placard, will stand as a crucial preliminary volume, a clear testimony to this site's international significance.

Paul G. Bahn

INTRODUCING LE PLACARD

Christophe DELAGE

ABSTRACT

The prehistoric site of Le Placard is known since the second half of the 20th century. It has been the subject of 150 years of explorations and studies by several generations of scholars. This chapter introduces the general and salient features of the various phases of Paleolithic occupations, from the Mousterian to the Magdalenian; and it exposes several debates in which Le Placard was involved throughout this century and a half of research.

KEYWORDS

Prehistory; Le Placard; historiography; Solutrean; Badegoulian; Magdalenian

WHAT IS THE PREHISTORIC SITE OF LE PLACARD?

The Tardoire, which is a small tributary of the Charente, has its source on the western foothills of the Massif Central. Between the two small towns of La Rochefoucauld and Montbron, this river valley has very particular geological, geomorphological and topographical features, consisting of a complex karstic and hydrographic network with losses and resurgences, known as the 'Karst de la Rochefoucauld.' It has long fascinated researchers and amateurs, and it continues to be the subject of multiple studies, and of geological and speleological explorations (Dandurand 2011; see also the contribution by Vauvillier *et al.*, this volume).

Such an area lends itself perfectly to the formation of underground networks consisting of galleries and cavities. And many of these cavities have been visited and occupied for a very long time by prehistoric peoples. Nevertheless it is a rare phenomenon to find such a concentration - for the region - of Paleolithic sites (Fermond 1894: 254). Around the town of Vilhonneur, the famous sites of Montgaudier and Fontéchevade (townland of Montbron), the caves of La Chaise (Vouthon), and Les Pradelles (Marillac-le-Franc) may be encountered (Figure 1). But it is in Vilhonneur itself that we find the most important concentration. On the territory of this small town there are about twenty prehistoric sites, spread over several 'mounds'. 'Fermond speaks of the "seven hills" of Vilhonneur' (Balout 1959: 14) (Figure 2).

When we arrive in Vilhonneur from the east, from the small town of Saint-Sornin, just after crossing the Tardoire river, stands before us an imposing cliff, named Rochebertier. In this karstic massif are located numerous caves ('Group I', Balout 1959: 15), some of which were occupied at different prehistoric times: *Grotte de*

l'Ammonite, *Grotte des Déblais*, *Grotte du Sureau*, and of course Le Placard,¹ which is the subject of our attention in this volume (Balout 1959; Debénath 2006, 2014) (Figure 3). Just behind Rochebertier is the small massif of Les Garennes, where there are also many cavities: among these, we may mention the *Grotte de l'Abbé* (or *Grotte des Laurines*) which yielded a remarkable Magdalenian osseous industry (Langley *et al.* 2015), but especially the *Aven du Charnier*, where remains of human activities (i.e., cave paintings, human burial) dated to Gravettian were discovered (Airvaux *et al.* 2006; Henry-Gambier *et al.* 2007). A few hundred meters to the south-east, but on the other side of the Tardoire, is the *Massif du Roc plat* (better known as *Le Bois-du-Roc*) where some well-known sites ('Group IV', Balout 1959: 15) are located: *Abri du Bronze*, *Abri André Ragout*, *Abri du Chasseur*, *Abri des Fadets 1 & 2*, *Cave Chaude*, etc. Finally, in front of the *Massif du Roc plat* but on the other river bank, two small contiguous massifs, Le Pinier and La Robinière, are located, which yield some prehistoric sites ('Group III', Balout 1959: 15): *La Cave*, *Grotte du Moulin*.

The cave of Le Placard is thus located on the left bank of the Tardoire river. This cavity opens to the east. It consists of a large main room (approximately 18m

¹ In the 1850-70, the site that is currently called 'Grotte du Placard' was named Grotte (or Caverne) de Rochebertier (or Roche-Berthier). It appears that way in the first writings of Jean Fermond (1873, 1874) or in the publication of the abbés Bourgeois and Delaunay (1875). Edouard Piette, who was in close contact with Fermond, still speaks of the cave of Rochebertier, in 1907. On the other hand, Arthur de Maret uses the expression of Le Placard, already in his first writing in 1878. He would be the first to use this expression. He even suggests that this site has always been known by the name of Grotte du Placard (de Maret 1880: 162), which is surprising. Thus what happened around 1875-1877 that justified this change of name? And then what made its legitimation and acceptance by everyone, since even Jean Fermond, in his last writing on the subject in 1894, had forgotten the name of Rochebertier and was speaking of Grotte du Placard? We currently have no information to help answer these questions.

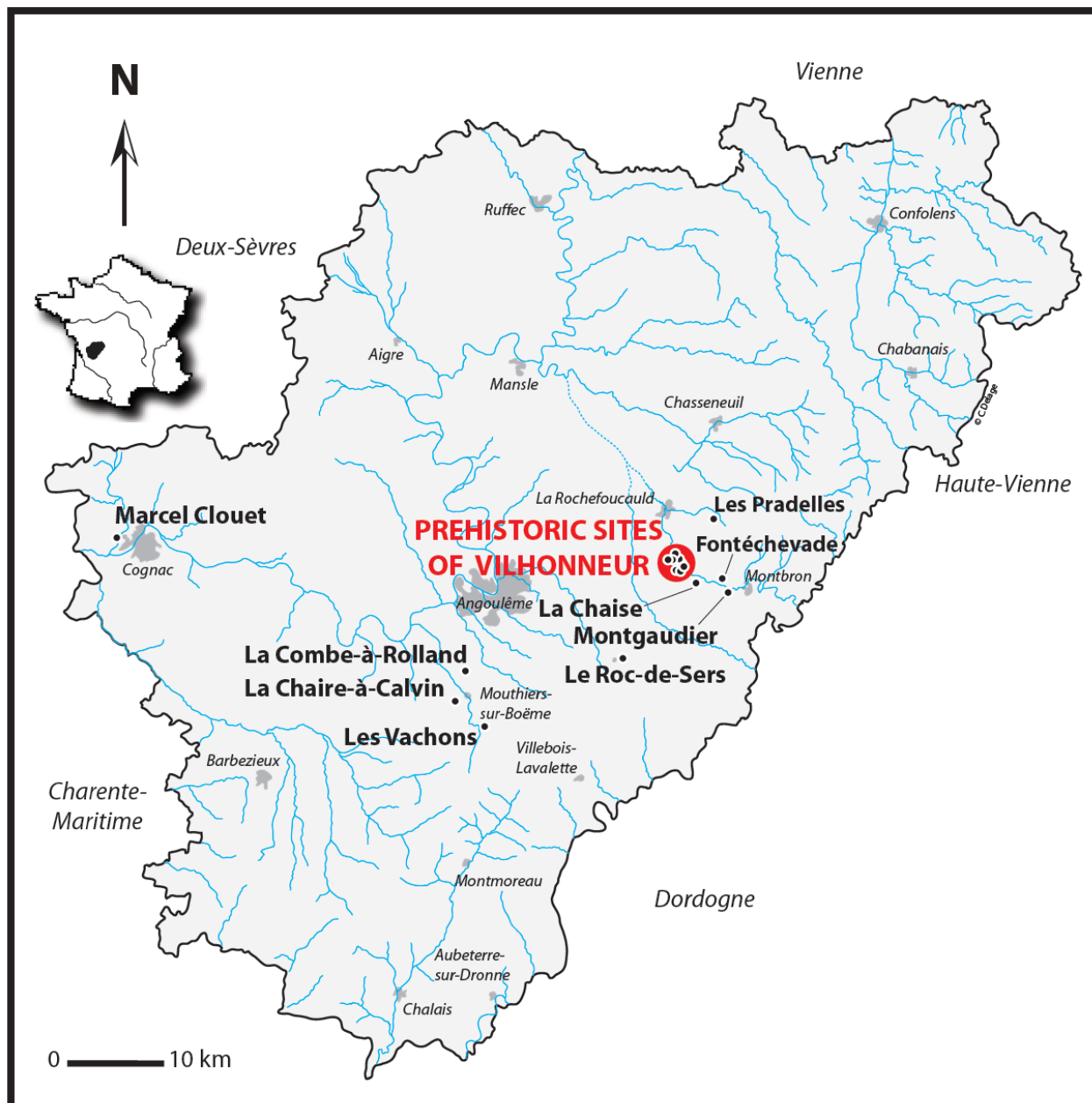


Figure 1. Location map of the Paleolithic sites in Vilhonneur (see Figure 2) and the contemporary sites in the department of Charente.

long, 10m wide and 10m high) which continues with various narrow galleries (including the Louis Duport Gallery [GLD] and the *Couloir René Laville* [CRL]) some of which have been partly explored over a few meters (Figure 4); but in part only because their exploration has stopped at places where these diverticula are blocked by rocks and concretions (Airvaux *et al.* 2001: 48; Roche 1963a: 263, 1963b: 75, 1972: 253). A large porch, located at the entrance to this cavity, consists of a thick limestone slab whose vault is overlooking it. After a few meters, this porch continues into a huge steep slope that descends to the Tardoire river (Airvaux *et al.* 2001: 48; Fermond 1873: 5). Moreover, there is a lower underground network. And it is highly probable that in this complex karstic massif there are still hidden

and clogged galleries to discover (see the contribution by Vauvillier *et al.*, this volume).

In the end, the term ‘cave’ has always been used to describe this site of Le Placard. But, as the first large room is in fact a large shelter open to the outside and the day light and that we also have here a whole complex network of underground galleries, it would be more judicious to speak of a ‘rockshelter-cave’ to qualify this site (Vauvillier *et al.*, this volume; see also Clottes *et al.* 2010: 345).

This year we are celebrating 150 years of exploration and research devoted to this site of Le Placard (see below; see also Appendice). We know that many archeological

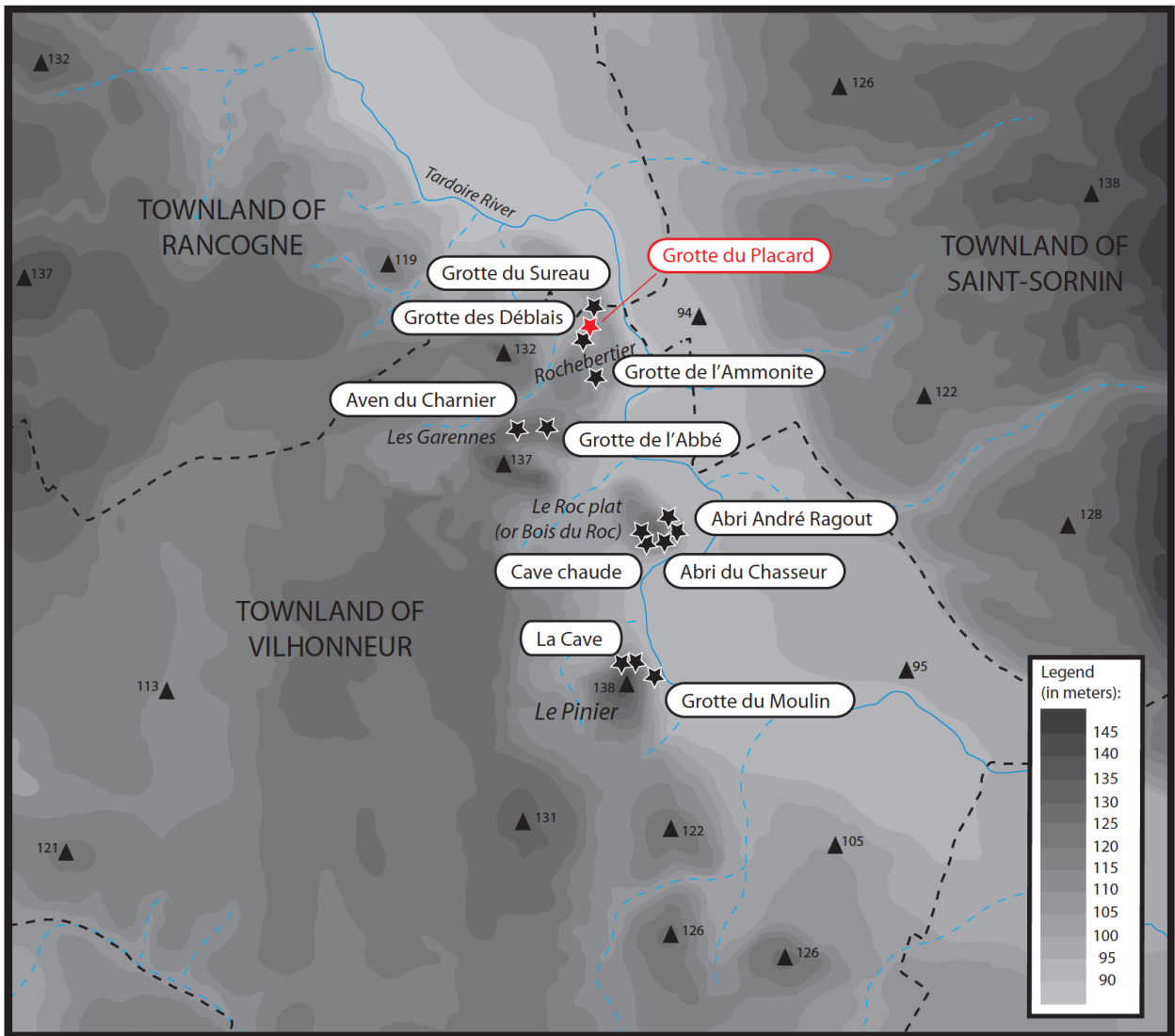


Figure 2. Location map of Le Placard and the other main Paleolithic sites in the townland of Vilhonneur.

remains, of very varied nature, were exhumed in this rockshelter-cave. But it is very difficult at present to assess their precise amount and diversity (Clottes *et al.* 2010: 348). During the first hundred years, the site was the subject of constant looting, which largely fueled private collections. Then, it was customary at the time (especially by Fermond and de Maret) to exchange or give to eminent researchers or institutions, beautiful pieces illustrating the richness of this site (see Octobon 1926: 233; Patte 1941: 55; Roche 1963b: 75). Moreover, the important collections of Fermond and de Maret were split into lots and sold to public institutions (such as museums), but also to private individuals (collectors, dealers, etc.) (Debénath 2014: 122; Duport 1990: 190; see also the contributions by Roux and by Schwab, this volume). Finally, the most recent collections from Roche's and Clottes's excavations are not currently accessible to researchers (Debénath 2006: 149, note 1, 2014: 155). Such a tumultuous history in

the management of the archeological collections of Le Placard (which is not unique to this site, unfortunately) prevents - certainly forever - the formulation of a clear and precise idea of the extent of the activities that have been take place at this site.

Moreover, the various researchers who worked at Le Placard have published very little, if we are to consider the expectations that such a site should arouse. Furthermore, these publications are generally very brief and partial, focusing on certain very specific aspects, such as (mobiliary and parietal) art in particular (see Balout 1959: 14).

Anyway, we may try to draw up the general setting for the cultural development that took place in this settlement. The archeological ensemble is of course dominated by the lithic industry and the faunal remains. The lithic industry is made up of all the technological categories, from the



Figure 3. Views of the cavity of Le Placard at different times: (A) Drawing by Jean Fermond, 1880 (de Mortillet Archives, Saarland University, Sarrebrücken, Germany); (B) Postcard, beginning of the 20th century (Collection Jean-Yves Garnaud); (C) Postcard, beginning of the 20th century (Collection Jean-Yves Garnaud); (D) Current view (photo: Bruno Delage).



Figure 4. Inside view of the cavity of Le Placard (photo: Nathalie Guillaumin).

knapping chips (debris, flakes, blades, bladelets, cores) to the very diversified tools, which can be attributed to different periods of occupation: burins, scrapers, backed bladelets, notches and denticulates, *raclettes*, Solutrean points (laurel leaves, shouldered points), Mousterian points and scrapers (Plisson and Geneste 1989; Roche 1963a; Smith 1966). Moreover, the siliceous raw materials used reveal a great variety of rocks and geological origins, with rock crystal, chalcedony, jasper, as well as very diverse cherts.

The animals hunted are varied: reindeer and horse dominate. Also present are; *Bison priscus*, *Saïga tatarica*, *Canis lupus*, *Canis vulpes*, *Lepus timidus* (quite numerous), *Cervus elaphus*, *Capra ibex* (Gaudry 1880; de Maret 1880a: 175, 1880b: 16-17). Birds are also present.

Cervids, and mainly reindeer, provided the material (bone and antler) for the manufacture of tools (and other more unusual objects). But the presence of fragments of Mammoth tusks and ivory artifacts is also attested. The successive studies make it possible to draw up the following inventory (without it being complete): very many spear points, *baguettes demi-rondes*, *navettes*, borers, scissors, spearthrowers, eyed needles, harpoons (with one or two rows of barbs), hooks, etc.; as well as more specific objects interpreted as ‘*bâtons de commandement*’, ‘spatulas’, ‘whistles’, ‘needle cases made out of a bird bone’, and ‘rings’ (Chauvet 1910; Denis 1933; de Maret 1879: 33, 1880a: 167-170; A. de Mortillet 1906, 1907a; Roche 1963a: 274; see also Cattelain 2004, this volume; Chech 1974; Douche 2004; Garcia Benito *et al.*, this volume; Langley and Delage, this volume; Leroy-Prost 1977; Lompré 2003; Mons 1976, 1980; Mons and Stordeur 1977) (Figure 5).

Among this osseous equipment, a large number of artifacts carry various notches and incisions, as well as engravings (Figure 6). In the 1940s, Raoul Daniel (1942: 117), while admitting this situation, also noted the absence - surprising according to him - of portable art on stone. In the 1990s, the work of J. Clottes and his colleagues uncovered more than 600 limestone slabs bearing fine engravings. However, these researchers did not reach the conclusion that it was a mobiliary art related to the Magdalenian. They thought instead that these engraved blanks were the result of the desquamation of the cavity wall; thus the cavity would have been covered with fine engravings all around, in the Upper Solutrean (Airvaux *et al.* 2001 : 53 ; Clottes *et al.* 1990, 1991, 1997, 2010). The portable art consisted mainly of bones and reindeer antlers that had been fashioned into *bâtons de commandement* decorated with engravings; engraved bone pendants; engraved bone plates; incised flat bones (or ‘*contours découpés*’). These engravings correspond especially - according to Breuil and de Saint-Périer (1927) - to numerous depictions of fish, either realistic or schematic; yet carved antlers

representing, in a stylized way, bovine heads and a human head, are also worth noting (Bourgeois and Delaunay 1875; Chauvet 1910, 1915: 39; Daniel 1942; Denis 1933; A. de Mortillet 1906, 1907a; Patte 1939; Roche 1963a: 277-280, 1963b).

Personal adornment items are also very abundant. They are present as recent and fossil shells (*Cardium*, *Pecten*, *Cyprina islandica*, *Sismondia occitana*, etc.); perforated animal teeth (bear, shark, caprids, etc.); pearls and pendants made of bird bones; ivory bracelets; as well as some pierced human teeth (Fermond 1873: 7; Fischer 1878-79; de Maret 1880a, 1881: 229; A. de Mortillet 1906, 1907c; Chauvet 1892; see also Breuil 1909a: 211; Patte 1941: 53; Roche 1963a).

Stone material (of limestone, sandstone) has been interpreted as lamps, but also as grinding artefacts (Chauvet 1882: 129, 1886a; Roche 1963a: 272). Some of these items yield indeed traces of reddish pigments. And ochre nodules and pencils were also found in the various archeological levels.

Structures (pits, hut walls, post holes, burials, etc.) in the habitat have hardly been identified at the time of the ‘excavations’, because of the techniques used, but this should not reflect their absence in prehistoric times. Only hearths were recognized in the Magdalenian and Mousterian units. In the Magdalenian they consist of relatively large concentrations (more than one meter in diameter) of burned material and ashes, associated with many pebbles (Fermond 1873: 8, 1874: 9; Roche 1963a, 1972).

After about a century and a half of research, the numerous studies and the resulting knowledge allow us to better appreciate the chrono-cultural specificities of this extraordinary site: an imposing stratigraphic sequence attributed to the Mousterian, to the middle and upper Solutrean, to the Badegoulian, and to a good part of the Magdalenian (Figure 7).² We will now

² The succession of archeological layers is perfectly established and accepted. However, the chrono-cultural attribution of these different prehistoric occupations still poses many problems. In addition, the terminology used to name the different layers varied according to the authors, which caused much confusion in the literature. The following synthetic table makes it possible to establish the correspondence of archeological layers between these different scholars:

Chronology	de Maret	Chauvet/Breuil	A. de Mortillet
Neolithic	A	1	8
Middle-Upper(?)	B	2	7
Magdalenian			
Middle Magdalenian	C	3	6
Magdalenian (Badegoulian-Lower Magdalenian?)	D	4	5
Lower Magdalenian (Badegoulian)	E	5	4
Upper Solutrean	F	6	3
Middle Solutrean	G	7	2
Mousterian	H	8	1

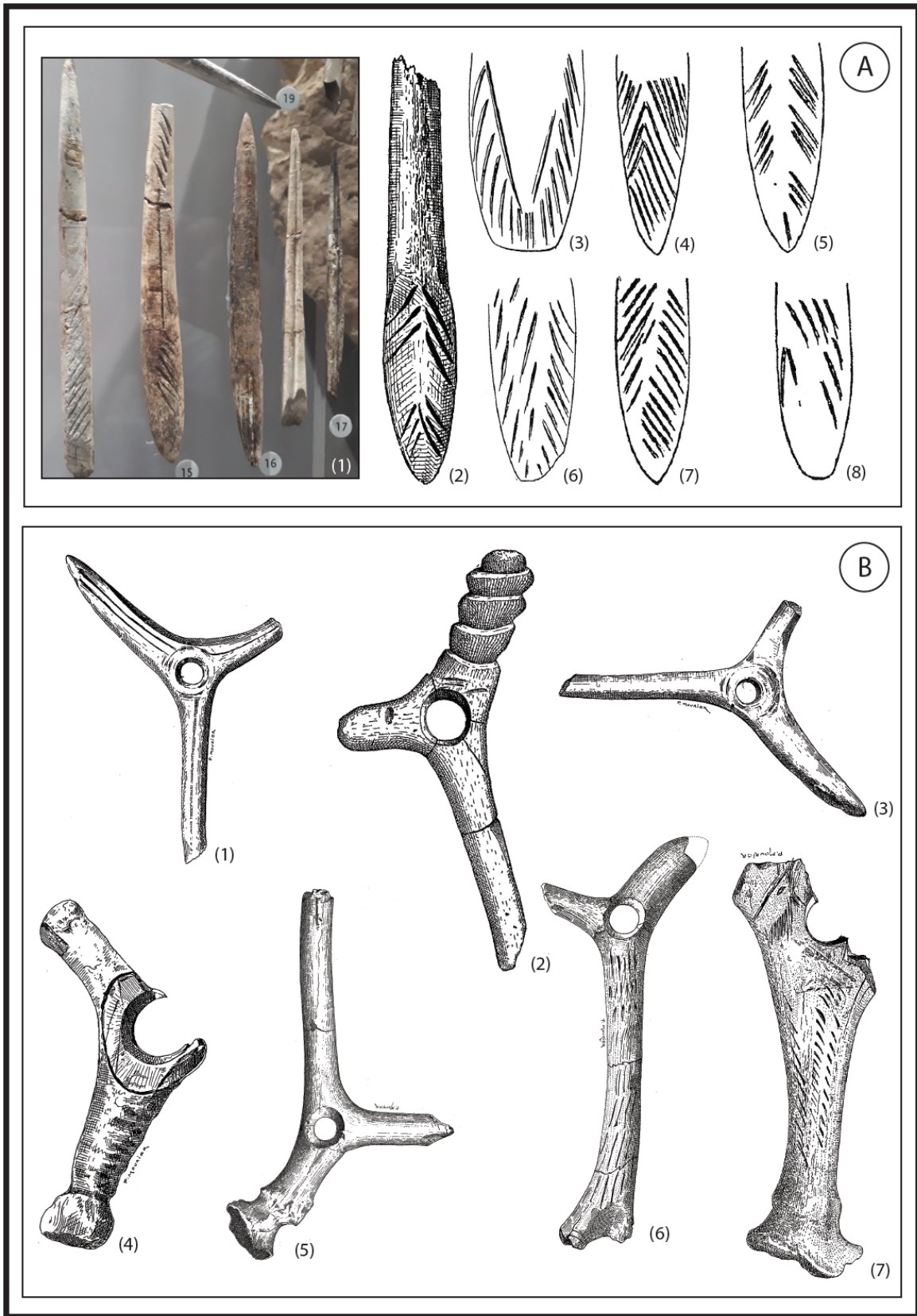


Figure 5. Osseous Artifacts. A: *Sagaies* made in reindeer antler and different types of incisions on the bevel (1: Showcase, Museum of Angoulême; 2: Chauvet 1910, Fig. 66; 3: Breuil and de Saint-Périer 1927, Fig. 10, no.4; 4: *idem*, Fig. 10, no.7; 5: *idem*, Fig. 10, no.9; 6: *idem*, Fig. 10, no.6; 7: *idem*, Fig. 10, no.8; 8: *idem*, Fig. 10, no.10); B: *Bâtons percés* or *Bâtons de commandement* (1: Chauvet 1910, Pl. I, Fig. 1; 2: G. and A. de Mortillet 1881, Fig. 218; 3: Chauvet 1910, Pl. I, Fig. 2; 4: *idem*, Pl. III; 5: *idem*, Pl. II; 6: *idem*, Pl. V, Fig. 1; 7: *idem*, Pl. IV, Fig. 1).

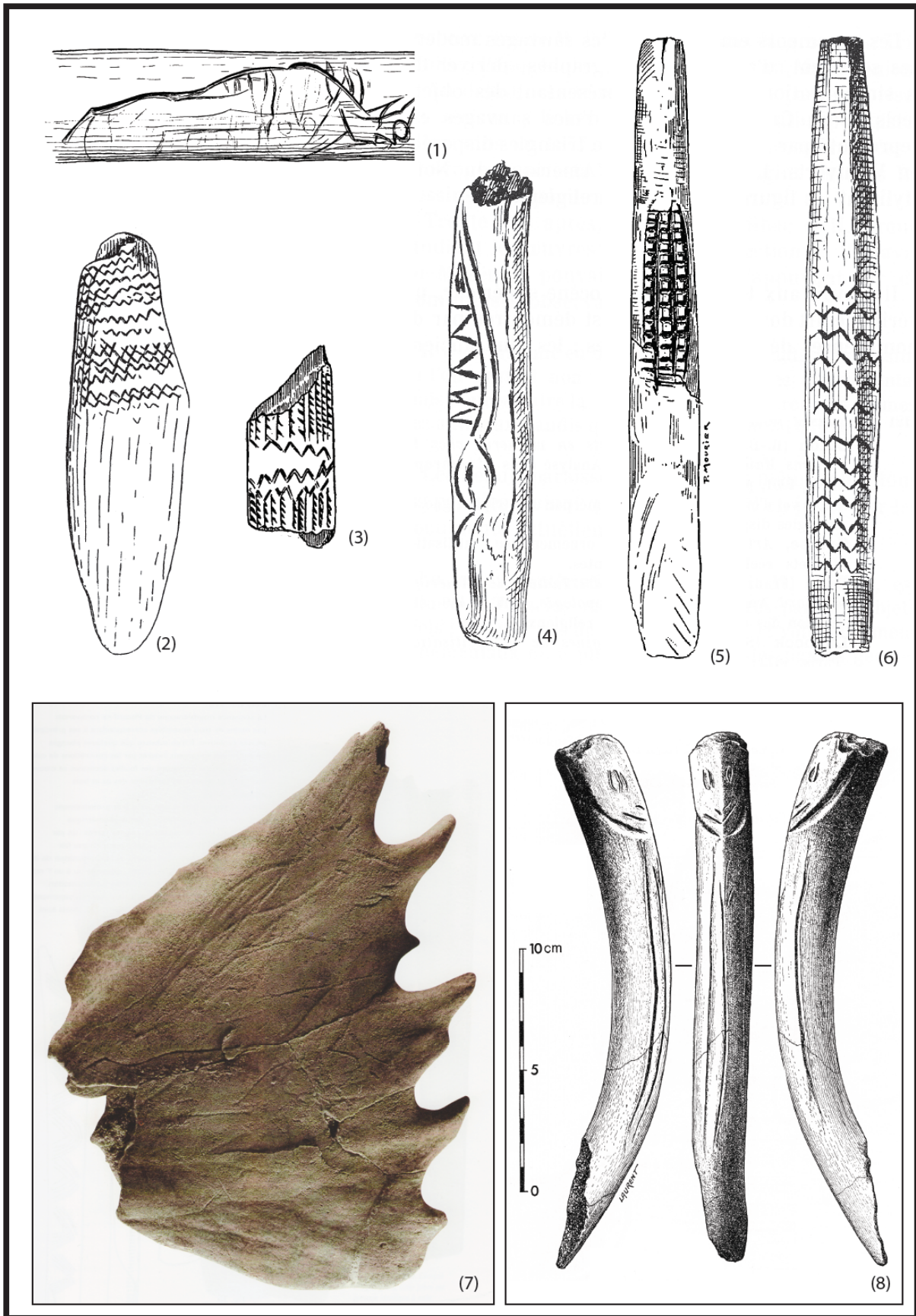


Figure 6. Figurative and non-figurative engravings and incisions (1: Breuil 1958-59, Fig. 1; 2: Breuil and de Saint-Périer 1927, Fig. 27, no.7; 3: Chauvet 1910, Fig. 122; 4: *idem*, Fig. 100; 5: *idem*, Fig. 108; 6: *idem*, Fig. 102; 7: Airvaux *et al.* 2001, Fig. 28; 8: Laurent 1971, Fig. 2).

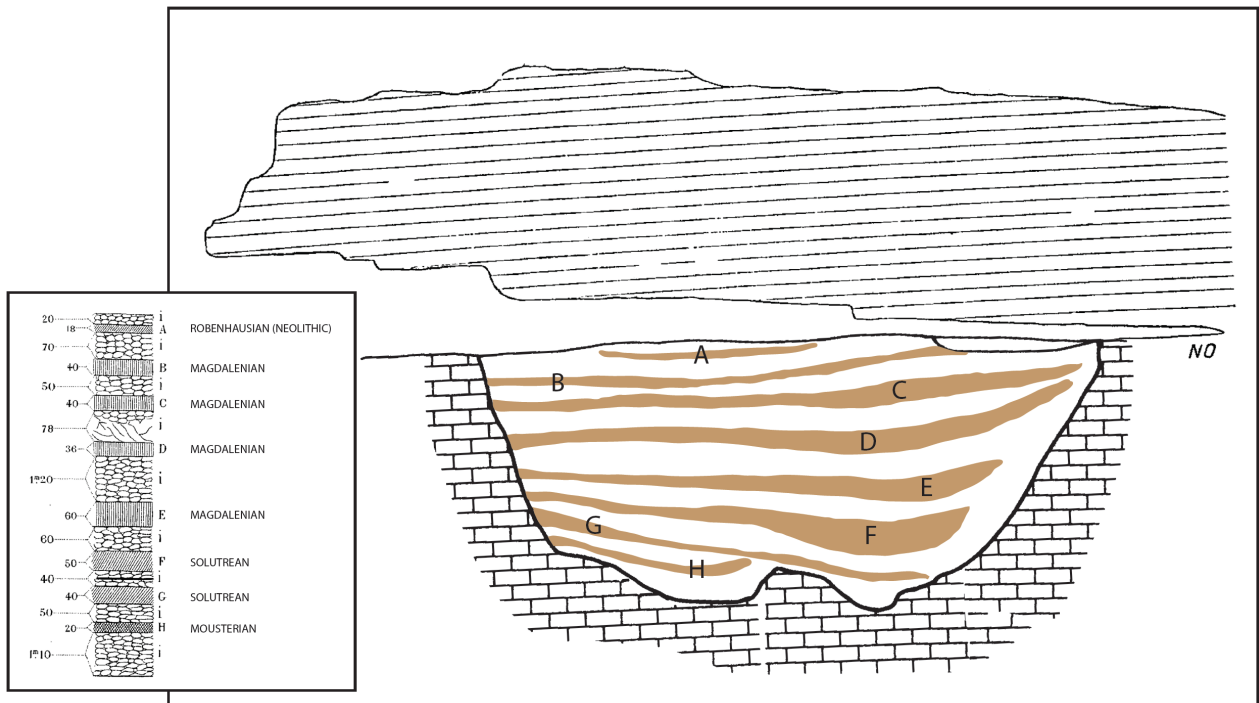


Figure 7. Archeo-stratigraphic succession of the prehistoric human occupations, based on de Maret's excavations, 1877-1888 (modified after A. de Mortillet 1907).

try to translate and organize the different categories of remains we just briefly reviewed according to the different periods of occupation of the site.

At the base of the sequence, the Mousterian ensemble is poorly developed at the back of the cavity, while it is particularly thick on the slope, where a subdivision of the deposits in several layers was carried out by Jean Roche during excavations of the 1960s. This sedimentary sequence is punctuated by several hearths. Associated with a fauna consisting of horse, ox, reindeer, cave bear, mammoth, rhinoceros (etc.), a lithic industry typical of the Charentian facies (including the Quina type), but also a typical Mousterian and a denticulate Mousterian, were identified. Moreover, several teeth, which belonged to adult Neandertals, were discovered by J. Roche and studied by E. Genet-Varcin. J. Jaubert roughly dates this ensemble to between - 70,000 and - 50,000 BP (Debénath 2006, 2014; Duport 1990: 201; Genet-Varcin 1962, 1972; Jaubert 2010, Fig. 1; Masfrand 1903; A. de Mortillet 1907a: 242-244; Roche 1972).

The locale is then abandoned - for unknown reasons - for several tens of millennia, during the early stages of the Upper Paleolithic. Indeed, in this same town of Vilhonneur, thus close to Le Placard, *Abri du Chasseur* at *Le Bois-du-Roc* testifies to occupations during the Châtelperronian, then during the Aurignacian and the Gravettian; this latter period would also be known at *Abri André Ragout*, *Les Fadets 2* and *Aven du Charnier* (Balout 1959; Debénath 2006, 2014) (Figure 2).

With the (Middle) Solutrean, perhaps 28,000 years ago (cal BP), the human occupation resumed. The inhabitants exploited abundantly siliceous rocks at the site, leaving behind numerous knapping by-products (chips, flakes, cores), as well as some very typical tools, such as the laurel leaf points (of which one - complete - could have measured about 35cm), associated with burins, scrapers, etc. The hunted fauna consists of Reindeer, Horse, Aurochs. There is no 'official' osseous industry for this unit, but, according to Phillip Smith, if there had been a bone industry, A. de Maret would have placed these artifacts in the upper level of Solutrean, in accordance with Gabriel de Mortillet's views (A. de Mortillet 1907a: 244-245, 1912: 410-418; Smith 1966: 258, 259).

The nature of the place changed profoundly with the Upper Solutrean. It seems indeed that this unit 'was of an incredible richness' (Balout 1959: 25) (Figure 8). We just need to take as an example some lithic tool types like the shouldered points to become aware this new situation. According to Abbé Henri Breuil's accounts, more than 5000 of these points - either complete or not - would have been discovered only during de Maret's excavations. Willow leaf points are also very common. These different artifacts may reflect a 'high degree of specialization in stone working' (Clottes *et al.* 1988: 875). The exploitation of animal hard materials (bone, reindeer antler, and ivory) is no less rich. It is illustrated by spear points with a round section and a pointed base, sometimes slightly curved; borers; awls; smoothers;

etc. Incised bones are not uncommon, especially those bearing series of parallel notches (Figure 8, D-G). Personal adornments, numerous and varied, correspond to pearls and pendants in stone, bone, and ivory; perforated animal teeth and shells; as well as several ivory rings or bracelets. The use of pigments is also attested by the presence of ochre-stained stones, as well as ochre fragments and crayons. Moreover, more than 600 engraved slabs were recognized in the backfill on the slope during the fieldwork of the 1990s, and attributed by J. Clottes and his team to this time period. However, for them, these slabs would not correspond to some sort of ‘mobiliary art’, but they would have been detached naturally from the walls of the cavity. The cavity thus would have been covered all along with fine engravings. And the panel of almost five meters in length on the left wall of the cavity where engravings were uncovered was one of the rare fragments ‘lucky’ to be preserved in place (Figure 9). It is an ‘art’ of very fine, superficial and often intertwined engravings which are generally difficult to decipher; identifiable subjects represent animals, such as small horses, and ‘tectiform’ signs renamed ‘Le Placard-type signs’ (see below) (de Maret 1880a: 165, 1880b; Daniel 1942: 118-119; Masfrand 1903; see Breuil 1913: 195, 197, 1925: 537; Clottes *et al.* 1988: 875, 2010; A. de Mortillet 1907a: 245-253, 1907b: 637-639, 1912; Patte 1941: 52; Smith 1966: 259-260; Vialou 2004: 1085).

In the following period (i.e., Badegoulian), ca. 23-22,000 years ago (cal BP), Le Placard still seems intensely occupied, but the practices are very different from previous centuries. Flintknapping has generally aroused a certain disdain on the part of researchers, for the (often ‘ungrateful’) production of flakes dominates, compared to the very careful technological know-how of the previous period. In this sense, the characteristic tools, namely the *raclettes*, the *pièces esquillées*, the burins, can hardly attract the attention and interest of the non-specialist. Another specificity of this horizon (according to recent re-interpretations proposed by D. Gambier and B. Boulestin) concerns the very particular treatment applied to certain human skulls, which are partially broken to be shaped into cups (Figure 10). Such extraordinary practices (present only in Isturitz and Gough’s Cave, probably dated to later phases of the Magdalenian) have of course provoked numerous reflections, particularly in relation to possible ritual cannibalism (see below; see also the contribution by B. Hayden, this volume). Otherwise, the osseous industry continues the tradition initiated in the previous period with the intensive exploitation of reindeer antlers for the many spear points, with a round section and a base either pointed (or conical) or simple bevelled (often incised); the rest of this equipment consists of borers, ‘daggers’, ‘smoothers’ or scissors, etc. And many of these artifacts yield fine

incisions. Moreover, we may observe - for the first time in this level - the appearance of eyed needles and the famous *bâtons percés* (also called *bâtons de commandement*) some of them featuring carved animal heads (Figure 5). Regarding the engravings on bone that could be related to this period, Breuil and de Saint-Périer (1927) have highlighted the abundance of (especially abstract and stylized) depictions of fish. There are also some ‘curious’ pieces, according to Adrien de Mortillet’s expression, which feature representations of ‘human genitals ... partially carved and partly engraved’ (de Mortillet 1906: 432, Figs. 1-3). Personal adornments correspond mainly to perforated animal teeth and shells. Finally, pigments, such as ochre, are also attested (Clottes *et al.* 1988: 875; de Maret 1880a, 1880b; A. de Mortillet 1906, 1907a: 254-257). Overall, how can groups that can produce such an ‘unorganized’ lithic industry conceive at the same time - among other more ‘complex’ behaviors - an art like that of Lascaux (see the contribution of F. Djindjian, this volume) and mortuary and symbolic practices as singular as those of Le Placard? This is the main challenge faced by researchers in addressing this period.

Based on current available data, the following archeostratigraphic unit is expected to be attributable to the Lower Magdalenian around 21,000 years ago (cal BP), but it has not yet been documented at Le Placard, other than by the - very ambiguous - presence of two radiometric dates (see the contribution of C. Delage, this volume).

The next unit, dated to the Middle Magdalenian, is much better established, although it is now confirmed that the tens of centimeters that made up this level at the time of the early explorations actually cover several chrono-cultural entities, in particular the facies with *navettes* and with Lussac-Angles spear points (see below). Breuil made it his Magdalenian III based on the material resulting from Layer C of de Maret’s excavations. This assemblage is characterized, as far as the osseous industry is concerned, by many spear points, including single-beveled and longitudinally grooved points, but also *navettes*, *baguettes demi-rondes*, smoothers, borers, eyed needles, *bâtons percés*, etc. There is also an abundant fauna and lithic industry; the latter consisting of burins, scrapers, backed bladelets, notches and denticulates, etc. Hearths, with relatively large diameters, were easily recognized by the concentration of ashes and pebbles. Portable art, exclusively on bone, corresponds to figurative engravings (animal heads or profiles) or of stylized nature. Stones for grinding pigments, as well as pieces of ochre, are also present. Several osseous artifacts (long bones or phalanges) with holes have been interpreted as possible musical instruments,

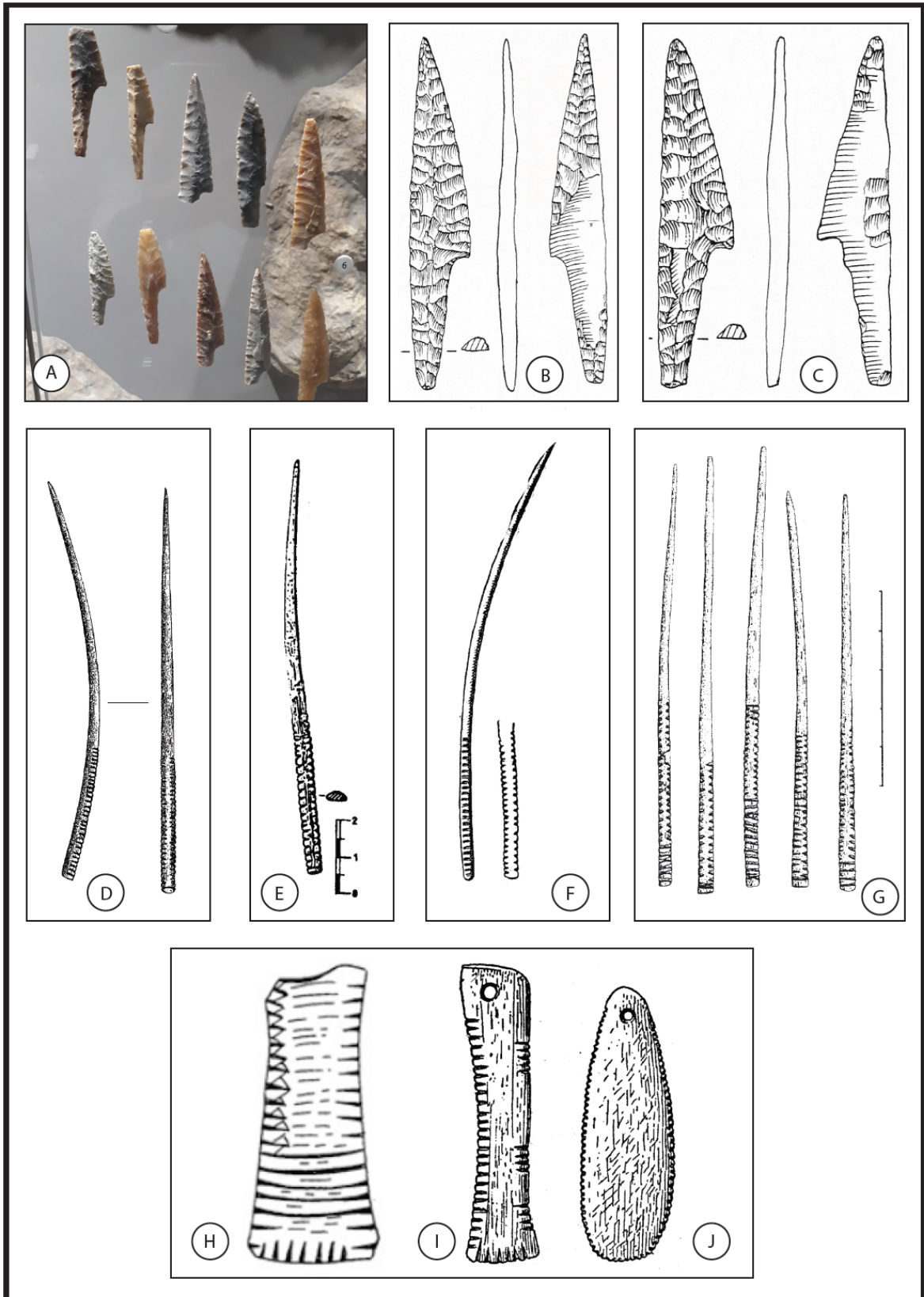


Figure 8. Upper Solutrean of Le Placard: (A) Shouldered points (photo: C. Delage; Showcase, Museum of Angoulême); (B) Shouldered point (Plisson and Geneste 1989, Fig. 9, no.2); (C) Shouldered point (*idem*, Fig. 9, no.1); (D) Needle with a series of parallel incisions (de Maret 1880a, Fig. 9); (E) Needle with a series of parallel incisions (Leroy-Prost 1977, Fig. 5, no.9); (F) Needle with a series of parallel incisions (A. de Mortillet 1907a, Fig. 11); (G) Needle with a series of parallel incisions (Airvaux *et al.* 1999, Fig. 93); (H) Incised bone pendant (Smith 1966, Fig. 68, no.5); (I) Incised bone pendant (A. de Mortillet 1907a, Fig.16); (J) Incised bone pendant (A. de Mortillet 1907a, Fig. 17).

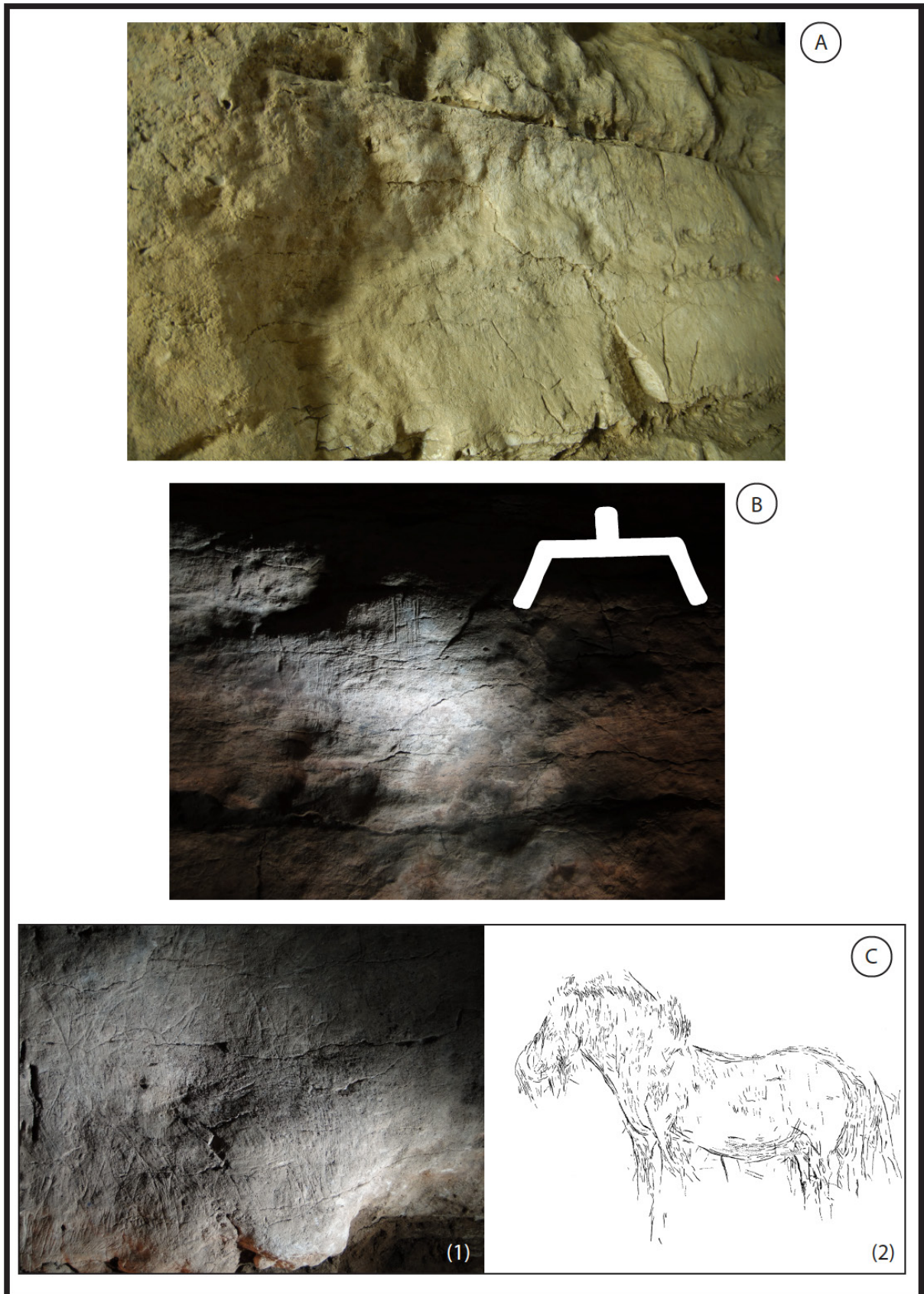


Figure 9. Parietal art at Le Placard, dated to the Upper Solutrean. (A) Engraved cave wall panel (photo: C. Delage); (B) Engraved 'Le Placard-type Sign' (photo: C. Delage) and schematic morphology of such a sign (based on original drawings by L. Duport and V. Feruglio); (C) 1: Fine engravings depicting a horse (photo: C. Delage); 2: Drawing by V. Feruglio (Airvaux *et al.* 2001, Fig. 20).

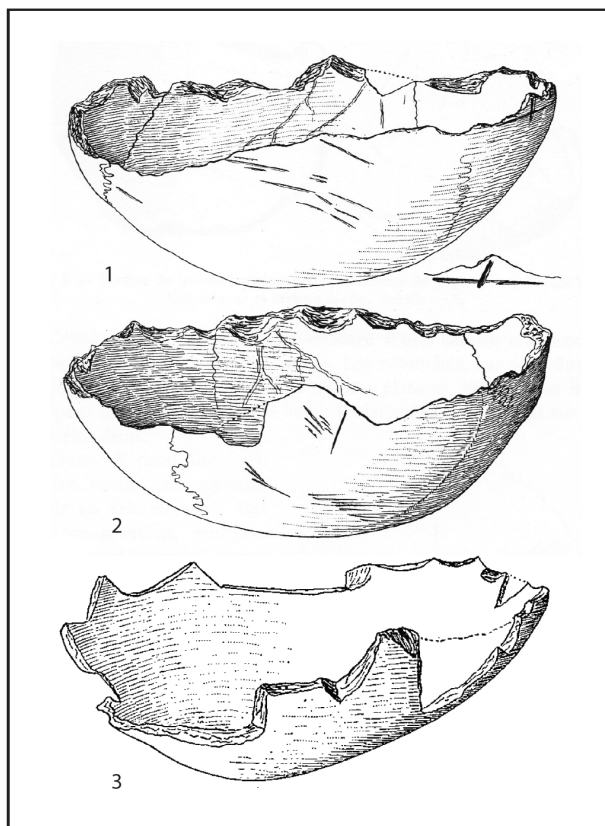


Figure 10. Human skulls modified into 'cups', according to A. de Maret and H. Breuil (after Breuil and Obermaier 1909, Figs. 5-6).

whistles (see the contribution of C. Garcia Benito *et al.*, this volume). Finally, personal adornments are also very abundant, with pierced animal teeth, perforated shells, pendants made of bone, reindeer antler and ivory, an ivory plaque with a suspension hole (Fermond 1873: 8; de Maret 1880a, 1880b; A. de Mortillet 1907a: 257-261).

The Paleolithic sequence would end with the tenuous occupation attributable to the Upper Magdalenian (Layer B of de Maret's excavations). Alongside similar objects as in the underlying Magdalenian level C and remains (notably pottery sherds) that can be traced back to the Neolithic level, the most characteristic artifact of this horizon is the harpoon, some fragments of which are reportable to specimens with one or two rows of barbs (de Maret 1880a: 168-169; A. de Mortillet 1907a: 259; Roche 1963a).

In all, there is no doubt, given this long and complex cultural history of the site, that the activities practiced there and the nature of the habitat have changed over the millennia. Some eras in the history of Le Placard could correspond to seasonal occupations by small nomadic groups, repeated over relatively long periods of time: the remains attributed to the Middle Paleolithic, the Middle Solutrean,

the Lower Magdalenian, the Upper Magdalenian could attest to such cultural configurations. On the other hand, the remains of the Upper Solutrean (and certainly also those of the Badegoulian and the Middle Magdalenian) could reflect profound novelties in the nature and organization of the habitat, the demographic composition of the group, and an increased complexity of the human behaviors associated.

A KEY SITE FOR THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE PAST 150 YEARS OF PREHISTORIC RESEARCH

Le Placard was not the first cavity discovered in the 19th century in Charente. In the middle of this century, Édouard Lartet and Abbé Delaunay seem to have been the first 'prehistorians' to pass through the Tardoire valley and to briefly explore the Montgaudier and La Chaise caves (Bourgeois and Delaunay 1875; Fermond 1873: 5, 1874: 6; see Debénath 2014: 122).

However, Jean(-Louis) Fermond (1816-1911) was the first local amateur to devote part of his time to explore the Tardoire valley, resulting in the discovery of about twenty cavities (Figure 11). At the time, he was town clerk in La Rochefoucauld. In 1850, he began his explorations of some of the numerous caves of the Tardoire valley between La Rochefoucauld and Montbron. He seemed to have initially focused his attention on the Montgaudier cave, followed by the caves of La Chaise. But he seemed to have little time to devote to his passion for the 'dark origins of man' (Fermond 1873: 5). 'His activity and his confidence in the future of new research increased towards 1862' (Chauvet 1911: c). That same year he became a member of the Archeological and Historical Society of Charente. In the spring of 1868 there seemed to be something happening in his personal life that allowed him to spend all his spare time to the task of exploring the cavities of the region (Fermond 1873: 4-5, 1874: 5-6; see also Balout 1959: 13; Chauvet 1911: xcix-c; Debénath 2014: 121-122; Duport 1990: 189; Malvesin-Fabre 1950; Octobon 1926: 233; Pierron and Gomez de Soto 2005: 519).

Among these cavities was the 'curious cave-workshop of Rochebertier' (Fermond 1873: 5, 1874: 6), which will later become Le Placard (1). Fermond's writings are very laconic about the date of discovery of this site. By 'reading between the lines' of his first publication on the subject (Fermond 1873: 5), we may propose, with all the necessary precautions, the year 1868 (see Merle 2009). The fact that the rare syntheses on the prehistoric explorations of the region in the years 1863-1865 (e.g., de Vibraye 1864; Trémeau de Rochebrune 1866) mention Montgaudier, La Chaise, La Combe-à-Rolland, etc., but do not ever cite Rochebertier (or Le Placard),

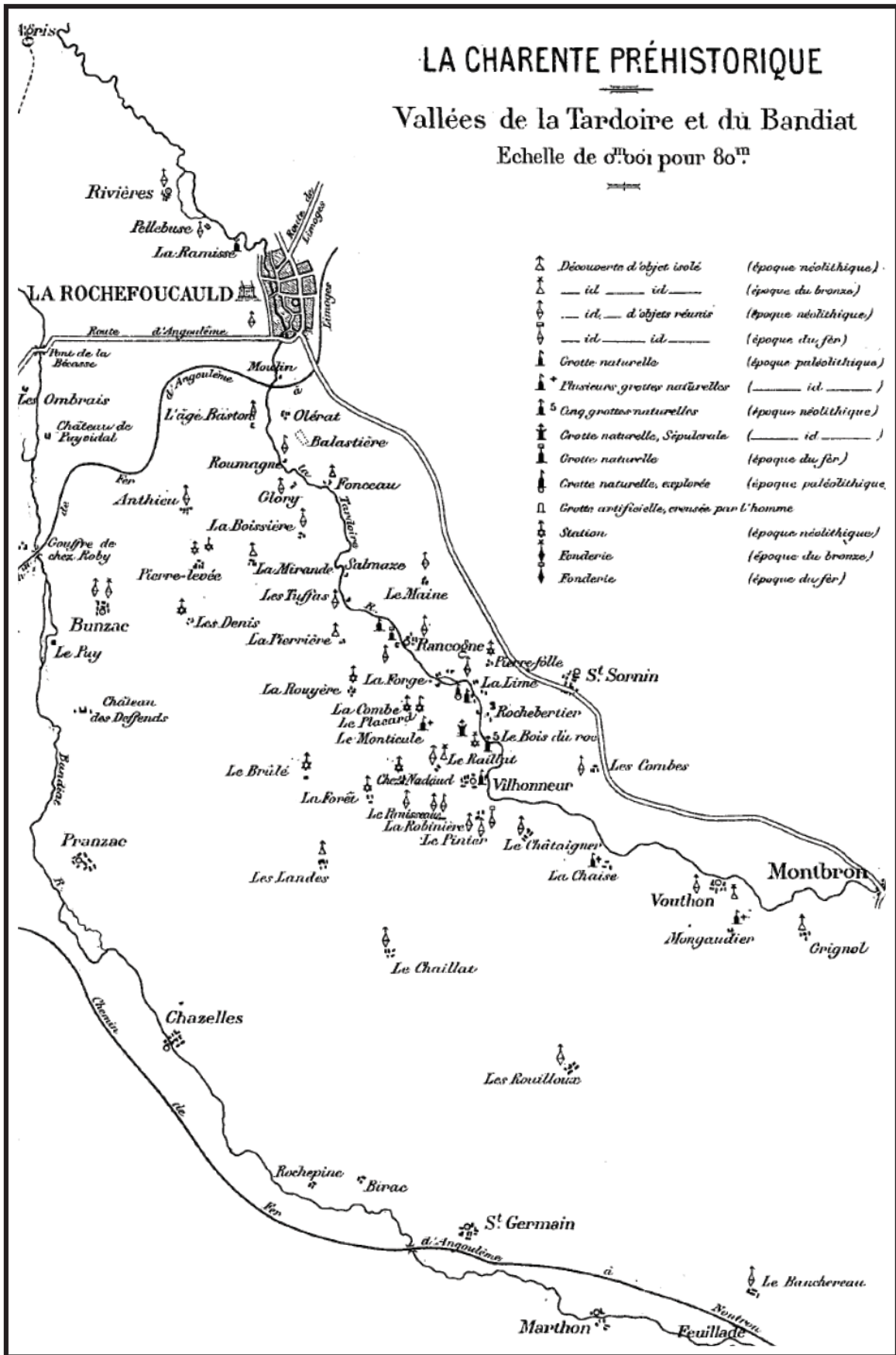


Figure 11. Map of the prehistoric sites of the Tardoire valley between La Rochefoucauld and Montbron, discovered by Jean Fermond in the mid-19th century (Fermond 1894).

could comfort this date of 1868.³ Jean Fermond would have thus begun to explore the cavity of Le Placard as early as 1868 (Balout 1959: 13). His work continued for several years, without the end date being assured (1880?), once again.

Since 1868, many researchers have visited and conducted explorations at Le Placard, some of local and almost anonymous background (such as P. Ballon, A. de Maret, A. Favraud, A. Masfrand, A. Martin, A. Hurtel), others foreign to the area and famous (like Adrien de Mortillet and Henri Breuil).

I took the position here not to present a complete and detailed history of these various explorations and studies (for an overview of these works, see the 'Timetable' in the appendix). Moreover, such an effort finds its ambitions limited by the fact that many researchers have not left written and tangible traces of their explorations and works. The interested reader can however refer to the following very good introductions and valuable syntheses on the subject: Chauvet 1896; de Mortillet 1907a, 1907b; Octobon 1926: 233-235; Patte 1933c, 1941; Balout 1959; Debénath 1974: 351-358; Duport 1990; Airvaux *et al.* 2001.

The viewpoint adopted in this chapter aims at showing the central role held by Le Placard in multiple debates throughout these 150 years of prehistoric research, a rare enough phenomenon to be documented and emphasized here.

Debate Topic 1: Placement of the Solutrean (19th century)

When Jean Fermond approached the cave of Le Placard for the first time in 1868, it was full of sediments that had never been touched (Fermond 1873: 6). In 1872 he had explored sediments over 'nearly three meters deep' (Fermond 1873: 5, 1874: 6). If he still investigated the cavity for nearly ten years after his first publications, it is reasonable to think that he went much lower than the 3 meters reached in 1872. He was also the first to recognize several superimposed layers, which yielded chipped flints and faunal remains by the thousands, as well as personal adornments, pigments, engravings on bones and reindeer antlers, etc., corresponding to an

ensemble exclusively attributable to 'the Epoch of La Madeleine' (Fermond 1873, 1874, 1894).

At about the same time (more precisely from 1877 to 1888), Arthur de Maret conducted explorations in the same cave, then on the slope in front. It seems that A. de Maret made, at first, a sounding of about 5m deep in the cave. Given the success of this operation (since he discovered several levels also attributable to the Epoch of La Madeleine), he decided to start, at the end of August, a large-scale excavation. He hired two workers who descended to a depth of six meters in a few months! This represented a huge volume of sediments and a certainly phenomenal quantity of archeological material. During the second season, they explore 1.80m more of sediments. After four seasons they had reached a depth of 9 m. In the late 1880s, they had finished investigating the Mousterian layer, about 10 meters deep (de Maret 1878, 1880a, 1880b, 1881; see Debénath 2006: 145).

De Maret thus descended much deeper than Fermond in the sequence of the cave: he first recognized a greater thickness of Magdalenian deposits, for a total of about 5m; he then shed light on underlying sediments that were previously unknown, including two Solutrean levels and, at the base, a Mousterian ensemble (de Maret 1880a, 1880b; see also A. de Mortillet 1907b: 631). In sum, the sequence reconstructed by A. de Maret extended from the Mousterian to the Neolithic (Figure 7).

On the other hand, the stratigraphic sequence that de Maret established based on his exploration of the *in situ* ten-meter-thick deposits in the cavity struck the minds of the time (A. de Mortillet 1907a: 241; G. & A. de Mortillet 1910: 544). Why? In the second half of the 19th century, the succession - even rough - of chronological periods within the Paleolithic era was not yet firmly established (e.g., Beyls 1999: 67-80; Piette 1907); and different theories were opposed to each other, supported by famous scholars. Among these researchers, Gabriel de Mortillet was one of the greatest prehistorians of the time (Cartailhac 1898; Breuil 1907: 175; see also Beyls 1999; Bon 2009: 37-39; Perpère 1972: 388; Roux 2008). Moreover, the de Mortillet 'clan' (Gabriel, and his sons Adrien and Paul) was very influential and had a considerable impact on prehistoric research in France for several decades, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Beyls 1999; Bon 2009: 39; Roux 2008).

One of the debates concerned in particular the situation of the Solutrean within this Paleolithic chronology, namely before or after the Magdalenian (G. de Mortillet 1878: 348). Le Placard was, with Laugerie-Basse and the contemporaneous work of Elie Masséna (see de Maret 1878: 46-47, note 1), the best site to document the place of the Solutrean between the Magdalenian above and

³ Very few recent histories of research agree on the date:

Year	Authors
1853 (or around)	- Jean Roche (1963a: 263, 1963b: 75, 1972: 253) - Louis Duport (1973: 40, 1980) - André Debénath (1974: 352)
1858	- Octobon (1926: 233)
1863	- Lionel Balout (1959: 13)
1864 (or around)	- Jean Airvaux (<i>et al.</i> 2001: 48) - Jean Clottes (<i>et al.</i> 1990: 15, 1997: 199, 2010: 347) - Louis Duport (1990: 189)
1873	- Louis Duport (1989a: 104, 1989b: 23)
1874	- Jean Clottes (<i>et al.</i> 1997: 875) - Denis Vialou (2004: 1084)

the Mousterian below (de Maret 1878: 47, 1880a: 165, 1880b: 6; see also Breuil 1909b: 230, 1913: 165, 1954: 59; A. de Mortillet 1907a, 1912; G. de Mortillet 1878: 348; G. & A. de Mortillet 1881, Pl. XXIX). The de Mortillet family thus found in Arthur de Maret an indefectible ally and in his observations on the Le Placard stratigraphy an ideal confirmation of their propositions on the evolution and succession of human occupations during the Paleolithic (G. de Mortillet 1873, 1883: 369; see Breuil 1913: 165; Clottes *et al.* 2010: 348; Guillomet-Malpassari 2005; Hurel 2011: 151-155; Roux 2008: 21, 189-200, Fig. 70). De Maret and Le Placard then became an indispensable tool for spreading the ideas of the de Mortillet clan (A. de Mortillet 1907b: 630; see Breuil 1909b: 230). De Maret was very proud that his own works could be one of the best examples - if not the best (A. de Mortillet 1907a: 262, 1912: 409; G. & A. de Mortillet 1881, 1910; Pittard 1907: 113) - to support G. de Mortillet's theories (de Maret 1878: 46, 1880a: 178, 1881: 232-233; A. de Mortillet 1907a: 242, 262, 1907b: 631).

And, for the first time, A. de Maret's work made it possible to recognize a subdivision into two phases within the Solutrean ensemble (G. de Mortillet 1883: 369-370; G. & A. de Mortillet 1910: 544). In this regard, de Maret, 'fervent disciple of G. de Mortillet' (Smith 1966: 258) made sure certain results of his own excavations fit perfectly to the 'dogma' of the Master, according to which 'the working of bone only appeared at the end of the Solutrean' (*idem*). Phillip Smith claimed (based on Abbé Suard's explorations at Le Placard, reported by Abbé Breuil) that 'any tool made of bone, reindeer antler or ivory found in [the Lower Solutrean] level was replaced in the Upper Solutrean by de Maret' (*idem*). These results on the Solutrean of Le Placard were far from being unanimously accepted upon at the time. In the first catalog of the archeological museum of the Archeological and Historical Society of the Charente (1885), Gustave Chauvet mentioned Le Placard as a 'main Magdalenian station', but not for the Solutrean, which was illustrated by La Combe-à-Rolland and La Chaire-à-Calvin (Chauvet 1884-85: 9). A few years later, Chauvet was still not convinced of the position of the Solutrean within the general chronology and its relation with the Magdalenian (Chauvet 1892: 617).

Debate Topic 2: 'Aurignacian Battle' (20th century)

As a result of these various works, Gabriel de Mortillet succeeded in convincing the scientific community of the true place of the Solutrean within the evolution of Paleolithic cultures, between the Mousterian and the Magdalenian. By contrast, the debates appeared much more tendentious and virulent at the beginning of the 20th century with regard to the place of a new period in the Paleolithic chronology, i.e., the 'Epoch of Aurignac'. The sequence of events and quarrels will later receive the name 'Aurignacian Battle'. I will not dwell much on this particular moment in the history of prehistoric research. I refer the

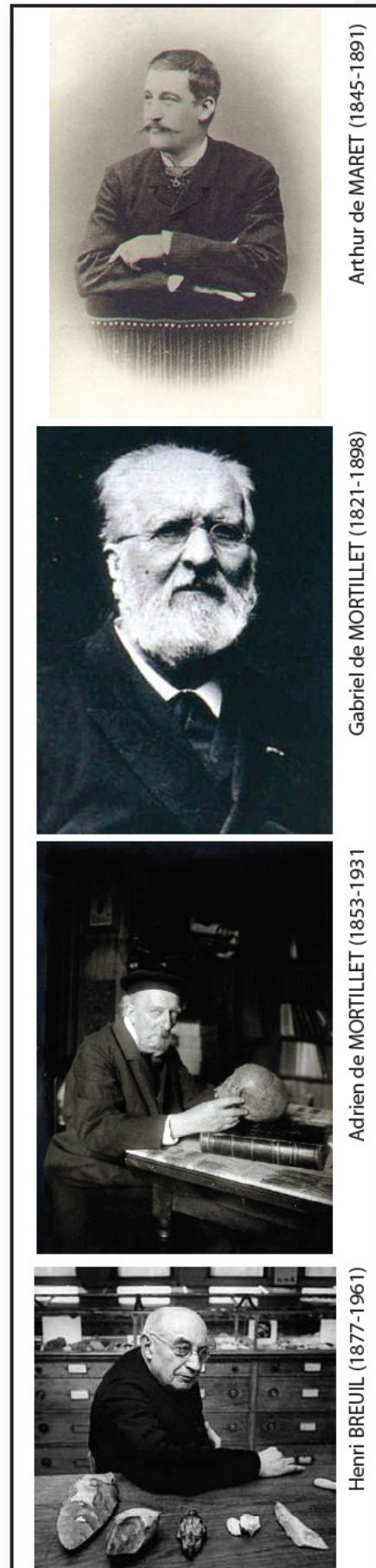


Figure 12. Main characters of the prehistoric research on Le Placard (Open Archives).

reader who is interested in a detailed presentation on this subject to the contribution by Philippe Roux (this volume). I would just like to reiterate the strengths of this quarrel in this introductory presentation.

With regard to Le Placard, the two main protagonists were Adrien de Mortillet (1853-1931), then eminent professor at the School of Anthropology of Paris and son of (perhaps) the most famous prehistorian of the 19th century, Gabriel de Mortillet; and Abbé Henri Breuil (1877-1961), then associate professor at the Faculty of Sciences of Fribourg (Switzerland) (Figure 12).

At the beginning of the 20th century, A. de Mortillet worked a lot on the archeological collections of de Maret, particularly those related to the Solutrean period, and his publications are still essential for anyone who wants to study this site (de Mortillet 1906, 1907a, 1907b, 1907c, 1912). It is reasonable to imagine that he had planned to analyze and publish other layers and their associated materials from Le Placard (A. de Mortillet 1907a: 241). But it did not happen. His 1912 paper was the last one on the prehistory of Le Placard. It is likely that all of his hopes and ambitions on this subject vanished following his quarrels with Abbé Breuil.

Indeed, at the beginning of the 20th century, a rising figure of prehistory, Abbé Breuil, decided to tackle

Gabriel de Mortillet's ideas concerning the classification of prehistoric periods and their evolution, and more particularly the position of the 'Aurignacian epoch' in relation to the Solutrean (Breuil 1906, 1907, 1909a, 1909b; see A. de Mortillet 1907a: 262). This situation seemed unacceptable to Gabriel's son, who could not let this happen without saying or doing anything. Like Eugène Pittard (1907: 114) and others, he decided to support Paul Girod's ideas and research, and joined him in this fierce 'battle'. Unlike Girod, who became a valuable ally because of his own research in the Vézère valley, de Mortillet developed his argument - to counter Breuil (but also Cartailhac, Capitan, Peyrony, and others) - exclusively from the cave of Le Placard, drawing on the stratigraphy and certain features of the Solutrean 'industrial culture' (A. de Mortillet 1907b: 632). In fact, de Mortillet father and son thought that the osseous industry was a complex phenomenon that appeared only very late in the history of humankind, precisely with the Upper Solutrean (see Breuil 1909b: 230-231). This period, wonderfully illustrated by layer 3 at Le Placard, yielded indeed a richness and a diversity of remains and activities, which contrasted clearly with previous epochs, even with the Lower Solutrean (A. de Mortillet 1907a, 1912). Yet, since the Aurignacian was then known for its beautiful osseous industry, especially the split-based spearpoints (Figure 13), it could only be of recent age, and more precisely contemporary to the

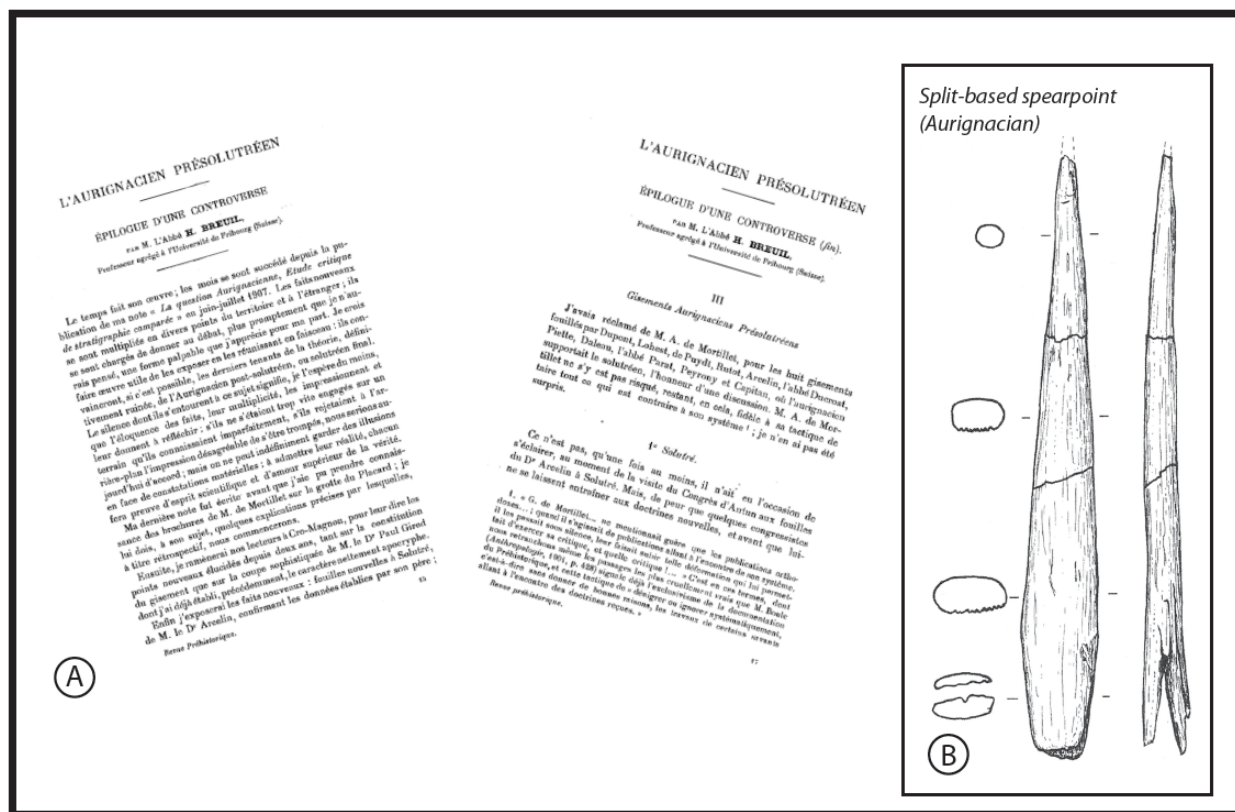


Figure 13. The 'Aurignacian Battle' about Le Placard. A: 1909 Publications by Abbé Breuil sealing the end of the debates (Breuil 1909a, 1909b); B: Split-based spearpoint, characteristic tool of the Aurignacian, but missing at Le Placard (after Cattelain 2010, Fig. 5).

Upper Solutrean, thereby representing an independent and parallel evolutionary phylum (A. de Mortillet 1907a: 262-263, 1907b: 639-642, 1908, Pl. 4; see Arnould 2011: 61; Breuil 1907: 180-181, 1909b: 230-232; Dubois and Bon 2006: 135-137; Guillomet-Malmassari 2005: 711). A. de Mortillet recognized that he had at Le Placard a stratigraphic sequence which did not yield any 'level of Aurignac' since it 'lacks, in the Upper Solutrean of the Charente cave, only the split-based spearpoints as characteristic artifacts of the Aurignacian' (de Mortillet 1907a: 263). Nevertheless, with these arguments alone, supplemented by assumptions and cultural analogies that were not always valid, A. de Mortillet produced the *tour de force* of claiming to counter the 'Aurignacian presolutrean' of Abbé Breuil (Bouyssonie 1954: 50; see Clottes *et al.* 2010: 348). He maintained his position in his book *La Classification palethnologique (The Palethnological Classification, 1908)*; but in vain... the Aurignacian battle was lost (Breuil 1913: 167-168, note 1, 1937; see Bon 2009: 63-64; Dubois and Bon 2006; Perpère 1972: 390-391). Abbé Breuil had been very successful in countering de Mortillet's arguments on this question, particularly with regard to Le Placard, and finally ousting them (Breuil 1909b: 230-245) (Figure 13).

With time and distance, Marie Perpère considered A. de Mortillet's attitude with more lightness and philosophy than Lionel Balout: Balout said indeed that de Mortillet was of 'notable bad faith' (1959: 14, note 3), while Perpère wrote a little later: 'It is necessary to recognize, however, that A. de Mortillet's arguments can only make us smile' (1972: 391).

Debate Topic 3: Human remains and mortuary practices (19th-21th centuries)

Numerous human remains corresponding to all anatomical parts of the body and to both sexes were discovered during the many explorations of Le Placard (Hamy 1891: 432-439, Fig. 12, Table 1; Hervé 1893: 177-179, Fig. 35; see Boule 1923: 291, 297, Fig. 189). Yet it is quite impossible to draw up a complete inventory of these remains (see, however, some efforts in this direction: W. and A. Quenstedt 1936: 320-321; Bouvier 1971b; Akazawa 2007).

A few isolated teeth (premolar and molars) and a jaw fragment were recovered from the Mousterian levels and attributed to Neandertal (Genet-Varcin 1962, 1972; Pintaud 1961; Roche 1963a, 1963b; see also Debénath 2006: 157; Piveteau 1965: 180). But what is of interest to us here corresponds to the osteological remains attributed to *Homo sapiens*, and dated to the Upper Paleolithic. Indeed, some of them bear witness to behaviors that are out of the ordinary, and that have been and continue to be debated in relation to the interpretation of the associated behaviors. These remains include, on the one hand, bones (e.g.,

maxillary bones) that bear incisions and cutting marks and, on the other hand, skulls shaped into 'bowls' or 'cups', which also yield cutmarks, as well as traces of ochre and burning (de Maret 1880a: 177, 1881: 229, 232; Breuil 1909a; Breuil and Obermaier 1909: 523; see also Bouvier 1971a; Luquet 1926: 192; Patte 1932: 435, 446-447, 452, 1941: 54; Smith 1966: 262; Wernert 1936: 39, 40-42, Fig. 2) (Figure 10).

These remains prompted questions associated with 'cannibalism' and Paleolithic burial practices, which were particularly delicate subjects regarding such early prehistoric periods, at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century (see Bon 2009: 45-49; Patte 1932: 435; Roux 2008: 202-205). At the time, Gabriel de Mortillet did not accept the idea of burials and funerary practices in the Paleolithic (G. de Mortillet 1883: 388-392, 471-472, 474-476; G. and A. de Mortillet 1910: 314). For him, when a scholar proposed this type of interpretation, the stratigraphic considerations had not been correctly addressed and the presence of pseudo-burials was generally the result of mixtures, that is to say of overlying Neolithic (or other more recent periods) intrusions. In fact, the use of these stratigraphic arguments was only the facade to more uncompromising philosophical views. G. de Mortillet truly thought that 'during the Paleolithic, there was no respect for the dead, no religious idea' (G. and A. de Mortillet 1910: 315). As another illustration of his views, de Mortillet wrote, with regard to the Le Placard incised reindeer antler 'which represents a human figure' (Bourgeois and Delaunay 1875, Figs. 75-76; see Laurent 1963, 1971) (Figure 6, no.8), some remarks not very laudatory toward the Magdalenian man: 'All that can be concluded... is that the men of that time must have had a narrow bottom of the face and the expression as gay as intelligent' (G. de Mortillet 1897: 246). Philippe Salmon, followed by Adrien de Mortillet, would also support and defend the ideas of the 'master' (Salmon 1886: 490).

In this context, it is rather remarkable that Arthur de Maret, as soon as he discovered the modified human skulls, interpreted them as 'cups' and attributed them without question to the Magdalenian and the Solutrean (see Breuil and Obermaier 1909: 524). While de Maret had faithfully followed Gabriel de Mortillet's thinking about the chronological placement of the Solutrean, he had a totally different opinion about these human remains and associated funerary practices. The de Mortillet were, of course, to consider these remains as derived from the overlying Neolithic (i.e., Robenhausian) (G. & A. de Mortillet 1910: 315, 336-337). This hypothesis, not retained by A. de Maret, was also criticized by G. Hervé and E. Cartailhac - among others -, who accepted funerary practices already in the Paleolithic (Cartailhac 1886: 465, 1889: 112; Hamy 1891: 434; Hervé 1893: 178; see

Déchelette 1908: 288, note 1). At the beginning of the 20th century, Henri Breuil began the study of the material from de Maret's excavations, housed in particular in the Museum of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, by these same human skulls, and he was immediately convinced of the validity of Arthur de Maret's interpretations and conclusions (Breuil 1909a; Breuil and Obermaier 1909). His pioneering work on these human remains contributed greatly to making them known; this analysis has been, with good reason, widely quoted since. It reinforced the idea of complex funerary behaviors already in the Paleolithic, thus undermining the obsolete views of de Mortillet on the subject (Luquet 1926: 192; Patte 1932: 435, 446-447, 452; Wernert 1936: 39, 40-42, Fig. 2).

This topic of funerary customs - among which the ever-enigmatic shaping of human skulls - became fashionable again at the end of the 1970s. Françoise Le Mort worked, as part of her doctoral thesis, on the practices of artificial degradation and dismantling of human bones. In this perspective, she worked on the osteological material of Le Placard (Le Mort and Gambier 1991, 1992). At the time, such human cups were known at Le Placard and Isturitz (Buisson and Gambier 1991; Le Mort and Gambier 1992: 29). In recent years, the re-analysis of the archeological collections from Gough's Cave (Somerset, England), including the osteological material, has made it possible to find these very particular practices of post-mortem shaping of human skulls into cups. The authors now propose to see it as an ancient manifestation of ritual cannibalism (Bello *et al.* 2011, 2015, 2016, 2017).

These remains were thus attributed at the time by A. de Maret, then by H. Breuil, to the Solutrean and the Lower Magdalenian; and they have continued to be interpreted in this way until late. Recent analyzes of previously discovered human bones provided new data on the original chrono-stratigraphy of these remains, particularly new radiometric dates. The osteological remains with a black patina would be connected to the Middle Magdalenian (Henry-Gambier and Fauchoux 2012: 57); those covered with a red-brown coloring gave a date corresponding to the Badegoulian (Henry-Gambier and Fauchoux 2012: 59-60). The 'cups' would then be related to the Badegoulian and thus constitute the oldest practices of this kind. However, we must remain cautious insofar as these new proposals have not yet been published in detail and have been the subject of very vague mentions (Boulestin 2012: 36; Henry-Gambier and Fauchoux 2012, note 6).

Thus the debate is still open concerning their interpretation in terms of past human behaviors (Bello *et al.* 2016, 2017; Boulestin 2012; see also the contribution by B. Hayden, this volume).

Debate Topic 4: Subdivision of the Magdalenian (20th-21st centuries)

Since the mid-19th century, prehistorians wondered how far the chronological refinement and division of the Paleolithic could be pushed. Gabriel de Mortillet was one of the first to pave the way by proposing a subdivision of the Paleolithic into Mousterian, Solutrean, Magdalenian. However, a few decades later, some scholars, such as J. Déchelette (1908: 154-155) or M. Boule (1907: 649, 650), were rather skeptical about further progress: they thought it would be rather hazardous and unrealistic, with the available data, to continue in this way of chronological refinement.

Regarding Le Placard, Adrien de Mortillet, however, proposed an age to the sub-units of the Magdalenian ensemble identified by A. de Maret. According to him, the two lower levels (which he had renamed 4 and 5, while in A. de Maret's terminology these were layers D and E; A. de Mortillet 1907b, Fig. 2) should be attributed to the Lower Magdalenian, while the two upper layers (6 and 7; B and C for de Maret) were to be dated to the Upper Magdalenian (de Mortillet 1906: 431, 1907a). Abbé Breuil was also among those who thought that one could always do more and better in this domain of chronological refinement. In collaboration with L. Capitan, he proposed to subdivide into two phases the end of the Magdalenian characterized by harpoons, depending on whether there were more harpoons with single or double rows of barbs in the sites/levels considered. Thus the 'Gourdanian', when harpoons with single rows were predominant, was anterior chronologically to the 'Lorthetian', with more abundant harpoons with two rows of barbs (see Déchelette 1908: 154-155). Similarly, Gustave Chauvet, in his important memoir on *Bones, ivories and worked reindeer antlers from the Charente* (Chauvet 1910), brought some stratigraphic precisions about Le Placard, which he had not provided in a previous contribution on the subject, in 1892. The two stratigraphic sections revealing the succession of layers were identical, but, compared to 1892, Chauvet, in 1910, was able to place certain objects in a specific sub-level of the Magdalenian (Chauvet 1892, 1910: 33). Following A. de Mortillet (1907a), he confirmed the presence of the spearpoints with a simple bevel and a longitudinal groove (Chauvet 1910, Fig. 31), exclusively in the uppermost level of the Magdalenian sequence (see below). He also extended this approach to several other tool types to characterize the three lower levels of the Magdalenian (Chauvet 1910: 33).

At that time, the 'Aurignacian battle' had just ended and Abbé Breuil was just beginning - and without any knowledge, it seems, of the work done by Chauvet - a study in the same direction on the material of Le Placard (de Maret's excavations) curated in the Museum of Saint-Germain-en-Laye (see C. Schwab's contribution,

this volume). He observed patina and sediments, of different colors and nature, still attached to some items of the osseous industry, which seemed to connect them to the various layers of the Magdalenian. Such differences were also found on the rest of the collection. He then developed a completely original classificatory approach by focusing precisely on these sedimentary features (Breuil 1954: 60, 1958-59: 268-269). He tested his hypothesis on spearpoints, harpoons and *baguettes demi-rondes*. Le Placard was then used to define and illustrate the first stages of the Magdalenian (I-III), while other Magdalenian assemblages (from the Périgord and the Pyrénées in particular) served to document the following phases (IV-VI). In all, Breuil was convinced that such a division was possible and that the one he put forth was going in the right direction. Above all, he was offering here some working hypotheses, even if they were supported and illustrated with numerous archeological examples. This work of Abbé Breuil has had a remarkable posterity. It is now considered, in most historiographies on the Magdalenian, as the unavoidable founding event for the division of this cultural horizon into sub-phases. In this regard, most research histories retrospectively consider a single publication of Abbé Breuil as the founding act of this effort, namely the publication that followed the paper he gave at the International Congress of Anthropology and Prehistoric Archeology (IAAP) in Geneva, in September 1912 (Breuil 1913). There is no doubt that this publication was an important moment. However, the presentation and publication of the results that Breuil proposed in 1912-1913 were not as explicit and direct as can be seen in recent histories. Indeed, Breuil presented the results of his pioneering work in a very fragmentary and pointillist manner, at the 1912 Congress (see Delage, *Abbé Breuil...*, this volume). He presented a more mature and thoughtful version of his work more than a decade later (Introduction, in Breuil and de Saint-Périer 1927; see also Breuil 1937):

‘we have used, to organize our documents through time, a subdivision of the Magdalenian that he [the reader] cannot find exposed anywhere and on which some clarifications are consequently necessary’ (Breuil and de Saint-Périer 1927: 3).

Therefore it would be more appropriate to consider these two publications as equal and complementary; and any reference to this pioneering work of Abbé Breuil should mention both of them together.

The momentum initiated by Breuil for this type of approach was carried on in the decades that followed. Several generations of researchers have been able to produce numerous in-depth studies which, combined with sustained debates, made it possible to single out a specific phase, the Badegoulian, between the Solutrean and the Magdalenian, and then to better identify the

different sub-phases of the Magdalenian: Lower, Middle and Upper. Several recent academic theses have already clarified the chrono-cultural characteristics of some of these phases (e.g., Ducasse 2010; Langlais 2007; Sécher 2017).

Le Placard still played a role - informatively - in the initial definition of the Badegoulian (called Proto-Magdalenian at the time) (see below), but it quickly and permanently lost its central documentary position. Researchers of the time irrevocably dismissed this site on the pretext that it had been badly «excavated» and therefore that its scientific value was very low.

Debate Topic 5: The Badegoulian (20th-21st centuries)

At the beginning of the 20th century, Abbé Breuil had consciously put aside the lithic industry, which did not seem to him likely to provide good typological candidates for achieving his archeo-stratigraphic objectives (Breuil 1913; see Lwoff 1962: 278; Peyrony 1946: 197). His bold framework for the chronological subdivision of the Magdalenian was based exclusively on the evolution of certain types of osseous tools. At Le Placard, which was one of the very few sites in which the sequence of the first stages of the Magdalenian (Magdalenian I and II) was particularly developed, Breuil had thus emphasized the spearpoints to characterize the three lower levels (Magdalenian I-III).

Yet, lithic artifacts were not totally forgotten by researchers of that time. In particular, Denis Peyrony encountered special tools at Laugerie-Haute and Badegoule, which he initially named ‘blades-scrapers with abrupt retouch’ (*lames grattoirs à retouches abruptes*). A few years later, Octobon and Delage collected similar tools at Le Placard (Cheynier 1930: 483, 1939: 381), before André Cheynier definitively accepted their presence in the de Maret collection housed in the Museum of Saint-Germain (Cheynier 1930: 483, 1939, Pl. XIII-XIV).

Nevertheless, the greatest confusion was still present at the time concerning the chrono-stratigraphic value and the place of these tools within the Magdalenian sequence. Few sites had yielded some and their chronology was not always precisely known. Cheynier had noted however, as a result of his own research at Badegoule (Dordogne), that these tools seemed present only in the Lower Magdalenian. He then defined them as a new lithic tool that took the name of ‘*raclette*’ and he proposed, as a working hypothesis, to raise them to the rank of *fossile directeur* of this horizon (Cheynier 1930). In this context, when Raoul Daniel found, in 1938-39, very characteristic *raclettes* in the backfill on the slope of Le Placard (thus coming from disturbed contexts), he could now reasonably attribute these pieces to the lower levels of the Magdalenian sequence (Daniel 1942: 118-119).

In an important work on the subject published in 1939, Cheynier was now convinced of the validity of his initial hypothesis and could therefore move forward by proposing to group together into a single entity the lower two or three levels of the Magdalenian at Le Placard, which he called 'Lower Magdalenian with *raclettes*' (Cheynier 1939: 394) or 'Primitive Magdalenian' (Cheynier 1939: 395), or 'Proto-Magdalenian' (*idem*). Characterized therefore, in terms of the lithic industry, by 'the exclusive presence of special tools, *raclettes* with abrupt retouch' (Cheynier 1939: 354), but also 'by the abundance of certain shapes on flakes' like 'burins with notches', 'multiple borers' and 'complex tools' (*idem*), this cultural ensemble constituted, according to Cheynier, 'a very marked individuality' (*idem*) compared to the upper layers, characterized by the abundance of backed bladelets, 'with all their variants (denticulated bladelets, scalene triangles, etc.)' (Cheynier 1939: 396). Cheynier even ventured to distinguish three sub-units, which could correspond to the levels of Breuil's Magdalenian I, II and III in the Cave of Le Placard. In sum, in Le Placard, Magdalenian I would be characterized by many *raclettes*, associated with a multitude of 'tools on flakes and in particular burins with notches' (*idem*). In the second level, the *raclettes* would decrease in number (such a phenomenon would be reversed in Badegoule). Finally, the third level would be considered transitional, with a residual presence of *raclettes* and the appearance of backed bladelets.

A few years later, Denis Peyrony, drawing on his rich experience in Périgord and the state of knowledge on the Magdalenian of Southwest France, considered it appropriate to modify the definition and understanding of the first stages of the Magdalenian, and particularly what he called the 'facies with flakes modified by abrupt retouch' (Peyrony 1944: 127, 1946: 197-198). Peyrony considered that the two true levels with *raclettes* at Le Placard (but also at Badegoule) only should constitute the Magdalenian I. He would thus include in his Magdalenian I the two lower levels attributed by Breuil to Magdalenian I and II. As a result, where did his Magdalenian II, characterized by the scalene triangles, fit in the sequence of Le Placard? Did he place it towards the end of Breuil's Magdalenian II and in transition with Magdalenian III, or was it absent at Le Placard? The next phases of the Magdalenian according to Breuil would remain unchanged for Peyrony, with the horizons III, IV, V and VI still defined by osseous *fossiles directeurs* (Peyrony 1946: 197-198).

In the 1950s, André Cheynier (1951, 1954) and Raoul Daniel (1952) continued to reflect on the chrono-cultural subdivision of the Magdalenian. The term 'Proto-Magdalenian' seemed to be the most consensual term at the time. The chronology was refined, but it was still associated with much hesitation and confusion: the facies with *raclettes*, namely Peyrony's Magdalenian I,

which corresponded to Breuil's Magdalenian I and II, became Cheynier's Proto-Magdalenian I (Cheynier 1951: 192), subdivided into Ia, Ib and Ic (Cheynier 1951: 190, 1954: 65-66). Cheynier's Proto-Magdalenian II (facies with backed bladelets) (Cheynier 1951: 190) (which he would divide a few years later into Proto-Magdalenian IIa and IIb; Cheynier 1954: 65-66) corresponded to Daniel's Proto-Magdalenian IIA (Daniel 1952: 277), while Daniel's Proto-Magdalenian IIB (facies with scalene triangles) corresponded to Cheynier's Proto-Magdalenian III.

By contrast, Breuil's Magdalenian III seemed to group together a complex of techno-cultural entities corresponding to Peyrony's Magdalenian II, Daniel's Proto-Magdalenian II and Cheynier's Proto-Magdalenian II and III (see below).

Despite - and in part because of - these serious difficulties of correspondence between all these proposals, Le Placard lost - from the 1950s on - its status and value in the reflections and discussions on the Magdalenian and the Badegoulian. The lithic material was considered mixed and different authors, like Raoul Daniel, suggested to ignore it (Daniel 1952: 275).

Since the 1960s, the ambiguous and confusing terms of 'Proto-Magdalenian' (compared to the 'Proto-Magdalenian' coined by D. Peyrony for the Final Gravettian at Laugerie-Haute), or 'Lower Magdalenian', 'Primitive Magdalenian', 'Initial Magdalenian' have been abandoned. The expression of 'Badegoulian', proposed by E. Vignard (1965) in reference to A. Cheynier's work at Badegoule, was widely accepted later on and now seems to be unanimous for the techno-complex on flakes which may be easily singled out between the Solutrean and the Magdalenian (Vignard 1965; see Cretin 2001). The techno-typological and geographical variability of this entity has been the subject of recent detailed studies to better characterize it (Ducasse 2010; Lafarge 2014).

Debate Topic 6: Definition of the Middle Magdalenian (20th-21st centuries)

In terms of the history of research and ideas, Le Placard was a major site for the recognition of the definition criteria of the 'Middle Magdalenian'. Authors such as Arthur de Maret and Adrien de Mortillet had individualized and then proposed the first definition of some very typical items, such as the «*navette*» and the single-beveled and longitudinally-grooved spearpoint (de Maret 1878: 43-44, Fig. 3, 1879: 34; see also Allain *et al.* 1985: 37-38) (Figure 14). However, they did not make them some sort of *fossiles directeurs*, as were the shouldered points and laurel leaf points for the Solutrean of Le Placard. Adrien de Mortillet

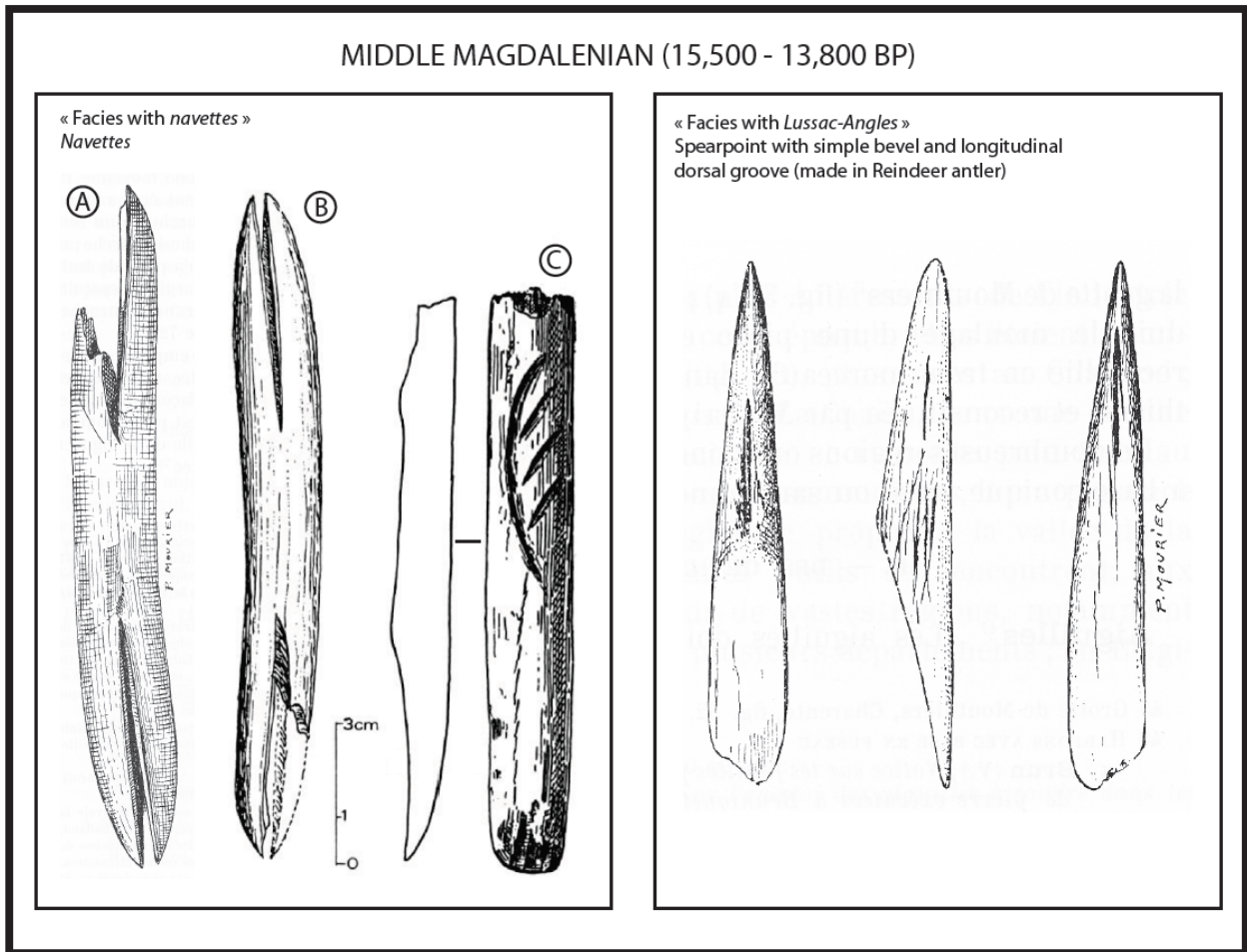


Figure 14. Characteristic tools of the two main facies of the Middle Magdalenian (Facies with *navettes*: A- Chauvet 1910, Fig. 70; B- Allain *et al.* 1985, Fig. 31, no.2; C- *idem*, Fig. 31, no.3; Facies with *Lussac-Angles*, after Chauvet 1910, Fig. 31).

tried nevertheless to distinguish sub-levels within the thick Magdalenian unit of Le Placard, and then to correlate certain artifacts to a specific sub-level. In particular, he proposed that the spearpoint with a single bevel and a longitudinal groove (A. de Mortillet 1907a, Fig. 25; G. and A. de Mortillet 1910, Figs. 54-55) was characteristic exclusively of the most recent Magdalenian level of the Placard sequence, namely his layer 7. He was thus the first to carry out such a work of typological and stratigraphic correspondence.

In his 1910 memoir, Gustave Chauvet confirmed the presence of the single-beveled and longitudinally-grooved spearpoints (Chauvet 1910, Fig. 31) exclusively in the uppermost level of the Magdalenian sequence. Yet how could Chauvet link certain well-defined artifacts to a specific level of the Magdalenian, drawing exclusively on the Fermond collection he had bought? We know that Fermond did not distinguish sub-layers within his Magdalenian ensemble. In these circumstances, Chauvet was not referring here to Fermond's work, nor to that of other excavators, like Masfrand (1903). He certainly benefited from his

own field observations of 1886. This is probably why the number of items for which he could propose a stratigraphic attribution was so small.

At the beginning of the 20th century, as part of his ambitious work to subdivide the Magdalenian, Breuil correlated the osseous artifacts preserving gray ashy sediments to de Maret's layer C and made it his Magdalenian III (or 3) (Breuil 1954: 60, 1958-59: 269). Relying on de Maret's and de Mortillet's intuitions, he retained the small *sagaies* with a single bevel and a longitudinal groove as discriminant elements of this level, which he nevertheless considered as 'somewhat disturbed' (Breuil and de Saint-Périer 1927). However, in addition to these tools, his Magdalenian III included *navettes* 'with some slight traces of the later levels with harpoons', as well as lithic assemblages with backed bladelets and scalene triangles (Cheyrier 1954: 66; Roche 1963a: 281).

This upper unit in the Le Placard sequence was the subject of rather critical comments by Stéphane Lwoff in the 1960s. Lwoff, who was the excavator of the La

Marche cave (Vienne), disputed the use of certain tools raised to the rank of *fossiles directeurs*, which he considered somewhat abusive, to characterize specific archeo-stratigraphic horizons, such as the Magdalenian III. His research seemed to provide observations to contradict A. Cheynier's Protomagdalenian III=scalene equation, since, at La Marche, a 'typical site of the Magdalenian III', there were no scalenes (Lwoff 1962: 278-279). Forced to clarify his views, A. Cheynier decided to split his Protomagdalenian III into three sub-phases and, within this ensemble, his horizon C, the most recent, was supposed to correspond at best to Breuil's Magdalenian III.

The confusion concerning the definition of the Magdalenian III lasted a few more decades. In the 1980s, Jacques Allain, who had been excavating the caves on the hillside of La Garenne (Saint-Marcel, Indre) since the 1950s, proposed, with some colleagues, the definition of a new techno-complex within the middle Magdalenian, which would quickly take the name of 'facies with *navettes*' (Allain *et al.* 1985). This facies was characterized by *navettes* and double-beveled spear points. These features were also present at Le Placard in the same layer C (de Maret), but they were associated with *sagaies* with a longitudinal groove, *baguettes demi-rondes*, harpoons, etc. At Le Placard (as in other sites, e.g., Laugerie-Basse), did the fact that all these well-defined tools were present in the same layer mean that they were really associated and contemporary? Of course not. Allain critically examined the Le Placard material and concluded that we were dealing with a deeply mixed unit. The layers were thick; and their 'excavations' were not systematic, taking place at an early stage of prehistoric research. According to Allain, it was very likely that thin layers were grouped without any distinction at the time. Phillip Smith had already expressed similar doubts and criticisms about the Solutrean levels (Smith 1966: 258).

Thus Allain recommended to be cautious about the Le Placard sequence, and more particularly the Magdalenian III according to Breuil's definition (Allain *et al.* 1985: 62-64, 94, 111, Figs. 30-32).

Jacques Allain and his colleagues opened a debate on the definition of Breuil's Magdalenian III, and more generally the Middle Magdalenian, which is still relevant in the 21st century. Since the 1980s, the *navettes* have been confirmed as one of the *fossiles directeurs* of a facies of the Middle Magdalenian, whereas the longitudinally-grooved *sagaies* (which have been called '*sagaies of Lussac-Angles*') represent one of the main components of another facies (Figure 14). Research continues to better characterize these different facies, and most notably to establish their temporal relationship (Bourdier *et al.* 2017 [eds]; Sécher 2017).

Debate Topic 7: The Parietal Art (20th-21st centuries)

Up to the 1980s, the site of Le Placard was considered of little scientific interest to the community of French prehistorians (see Balout 1959). The emphasis seemed to lean on the fact that the early excavations had completely sacked the archeological deposits of the cavity. This negative attitude seemed to be concretely manifested by a disdain and a forced forgetfulness, whereas this site had been the object of so many praises during the preceding decades. Moreover, the scientific community was fundamentally convinced that everything had been explored in this cavity, that it was totally exhausted, and that there was nothing original to say about it (Clottes *et al.* 1990: 47; Duport and Clottes 1994: 192). However, some passionate local archeologists (i.e., Louis Duport, assisted by René Laville and his sons) were going to modify this picture forever.

The cave of Le Placard and the slope in front were known to conceal 'a profusion of remains of lithic industry and fauna... because of the richness of this site and its multiple excavations' (Pintaud 1961: 116). In this context, R. Pintaud suggested that '... it would be highly desirable for the backfill of Le Placard to be explored in a serious, controlled and followed manner' (Pintaud 1961: 118). These vows were heard by L. Duport a few decades later (see Debénath 2014: 195). From 1987 to 1989, Duport was going to coordinate the cleaning of the site and the sieving of the backfill on the slope. This sieving first took place in 1987 and 1988, both in the cave and on the slope. At the time, the cave was completely filled with sediment. But it was known that these were highly mixed sediments, which had been repeatedly moved back and forth between the cavity and the slope during the previous century (see Clottes *et al.* 1997: 204). The cavity was completely emptied of its contents in a few months... once again! This work of clearing and cleaning of the cavity allowed to uncover a gallery about 40 m long, on the left (west) of the main room (Galerie Louis Duport, GLD). This gallery, which still contained a 'thick filling in place' (Clottes *et al.* 1988: 876, 1990: 17), was a kind of 'archeological reserve' left *in situ* by Abbé Roche during his excavations (Debénath 2014). In this area, surprisingly, was discovered in July 1988 on a rock panel, 'over a length of 6m and a height of 1.50m' (Duport 1989b: 23), 'a series of engravings... finely executed' (Duport 1989a: 107, Figs. p. 108-109, 1989b: 23; see Clottes *et al.* 1997: 200) (Figure 9). During this 1987-88 field work, Duport was, apparently, searching for portable art. He was able to uncover numerous 'incised and decorated bone fragments' (Duport 1990: 224), among which the now famous 'engraved reindeer antler' with a depiction of 'aurochs on each side' (Duport 1989a: 104, Fig. p. 108, 1989b, Fig. 8; see also Airvaux *et al.* 2001, Fig. 28; Clottes *et al.* 1997: 200) (Figure 6, no.7). However, if he could not suspect the existence of parietal art, it is hard to believe

though that he did not make the effort to seek them voluntarily as the engravings on this panel are very fine and impossible to see without an informed eye.

Following these major discoveries, a large multidisciplinary team conducted new research from 1990 to 1993, and then in 1995. The most notable contribution of their work obviously concerned the art, primarily as parietal art, but also as engraved blocks. Indeed, more than 600 engraved limestone slabs were recovered in the backfill (Clottes *et al.* 2010: 354). A great deal of study of these aesthetic and symbolic manifestations was carried out under the responsibility of V. Feruglio. Observations were particularly complicated by the fineness of the engraved lines and their superposition. This art is characterized by figurative depictions of animals (horse, deer, ibex, aurochs), but also by very particular signs that took the name of ‘Le Placard-type signs’ (as a result of this research), and a multitude of indeterminate fine lines (Figure 9). In terms of the spatial organization of this decoration within the habitat, Clottes and his team believed that the engraved limestone blocks were not by themselves items of mobiliary art but came from the decorated cave walls eroded by the frost (Airvaux *et al.* 2001: 53; Clottes *et al.* 1990: 21, 1991: 123, 1997: 204, 205). In all, the entire cave of Le Placard was certainly decorated with engravings, and eventually paintings. Moreover, these engravings decorated the walls within the living habitat of this large shelter in the daylight, so that the inhabitants could, it seems, live by and observe them all day long.

This parietal art, and most notably the Le Placard-type signs, have strong stylistic affinities with the Gravettian art of the Pech-Merle and Cougnac caves in Quercy (Lorblanchet *et al.* 2010). However, several radiometric dates, considered reliable by the laboratory and by Clottes, situate the parietal art of Le Placard in the Upper Solutrean (see Delage’s contribution, this volume). Such results therefore raise serious problems of chronological relationship between the two regions that have not yet been resolved (Djindjian 2013: 277, note 1; Lorblanchet *et al.* 2010: 223, 312; Petrognani 2009: 60, 215-216, 251-252; see also Djindjian’s contribution, this volume).

In sum, it is undeniable that this discovery of parietal art at Le Placard was a major event for the region. It gave a new dimension to this site and brought to it a sudden renewed attention and interest. Clottes even dared to say that ‘by the quality of the drawings and the importance of the signs, this frieze constitutes, without any doubt, one of the major works of French Paleolithic art’ (Clottes *et al.* 1997: 203). He also believed that this parietal art may alter forever our perception of this site (Clottes *et al.* 1990: 47-48; Duport and Clottes 1994: 193).

Debate Topic 8: Nature of the prehistoric habitat (20th-21st centuries)

This is not necessarily one of the themes we think from the start regarding Le Placard, especially in the French academic and scientific tradition, but it would be very tendentious to omit it from current and future debates on this topic, since this cavity could provide the material and be the perfect illustration for it.

During the century and a half of research, few scholars have ventured to comment and propose an interpretation of the nature and function of the successive prehistoric occupations in Le Placard. The first excavator, Jean Fermond, spoke immediately of a ‘curious cave-workshop’ (Fermond 1873: 5, 1874: 6). This impression was certainly that of an excavator who had encountered an uncommon density of archeological remains. From this rich collection of artifacts, he featured the most beautiful pieces (as well as many faunal remains; Patte 1941: 53), at the Exhibition of Fine Arts of Angoulême, in May 1877 (Chauvet 1910: 52, note 49f). However, the reader now finds it difficult to feel these same impressions by reading Fermond’s writings, which contain only brief and concise descriptions.

Nearly a century later, American archeologist Phillip Smith, as part of his doctoral dissertation at Harvard University, undertook a considerable work of critical revision of the French Solutrean. Le Placard held of course a place of choice for the Southwest region. Among other interests of this work, he would be the first to correlate the archeological wealth of the Upper Solutrean with a high concentration of population and a possible phenomenon of sedentarization (Smith 1966: 262, 268-269, 271). Such an interpretation, emphasizing a long-term occupation of Le Placard (as at some other Solutrean sites: Laugerie-Haute, Fourneau-du-Diable, Combe-Saunière) was taken up more recently by C. Castel and his colleagues (2005; see also Djindjian 2013: 291).

By contrast, Bryan Gordon (1988) interpreted this site as an intermittent settlement seasonally occupied over several years. The dental cement study of some reindeer teeth provided him with occupations in the Spring during the Magdalenian (Gordon 1988: 208-210), but he considered that such patterns of occupation should be found in the other periods of occupation at the site, particularly in the Upper Solutrean and the Badegoulian (pers. comm., nov. 2016). This cavity, according to him, was thus inhabited, seasonally (Spring), by families of Magdalenian hunters who intercepted herds of reindeer that were heading towards the highlands of the Massif Central. More recently, L. Mons and D. Kandel were of the same opinion: because of the considerable number of *sagaies*, they thought that the ‘cave of Le Placard was... a strategic place favorable to hunting activities’

or 'serve as a manufacturing workshop' (Mons and Kandel 2000: 376).

Faced with such an abundance and diversity of archeological remains at Le Placard, if other past researchers had ventured to publish their opinion and/or if we were to ask others now on the nature of human activities that took place in this cavity, one could certainly get an even wider range of viewpoints, but all would agree that Le Placard 'was a special locale for industrial and artistic activities in the Solutrean and the Magdalenian' (Clottes *et al.* 1997).

To move forward with our reasoning, it is essential to ask whether Le Placard reflected a common phenomenon or was standing out of the ordinary, for these Paleolithic periods. To get a more precise idea, this site could be compared to other known sites in the region: open-air sites, cave entry sites, and rockshelters. Among the open-air sites, we may mention some small stations that yielded only lithic industry: Chassenon; Dirac; *La Petite Courrière* in Torsac; *chez Fiacre* in Saint-Hilaire-du-Bois (Chauvet 1896; Patte 1941; Surmely and Gaillard 1993). The cave entry sites are more numerous, but they also correspond to brief seasonal occupations with few preserved remains. Without being exhaustive and certain of their attribution to this category, one may mention the following stations: the cave of *Côte de l'Oiseau* in Saint-Angeau; *Les Renardières* in Les Pins; the *grotte de l'Ammonite* in Vilhonneur; the caves of La Chaise in Vouthon; *Les Moradies* in Marthon; the cave of Gavechou in Edon; the *Grotte de la Papeterie* in Puymoyen; the *grotte de la Trache* in Châteaubernard; the cave of Hurtebize in Jonzac; the caves of *Les Vachons* (Airvaux *et al.* 1999: 112-113; Bourgeois and Delaunay 1875; Chauvet 1896; Dujardin 2001; Octobon 1926; Patte 1941; Trémeau de Rochebrune 1866). We are not going to dwell here on the last category, i.e., the rockshelters, because it may be more instructive now to organize these various sites according to the supposed nature of the human activities that took place there; and, in this reasoning, the rockshelters hold a privileged place. First, we may find some Magdalenian stations that could be interpreted as large workshops, in Coussay-les-Bois, Verlet, Les Genêts, Les Marineaux, in the northeast of Vienne (Foucher 1994; Foucher and San Juan 1991, 1994; Patte 1941). Then, several very characteristic pieces (i.e., laurel leaf points at different manufacturing stages) attributed to the Solutrean, which were discovered together in specific localities (e.g., La Guittière, La Trimouille, Saint-Pierre-de-Maillé, and Leugny in Vienne; as well as Belluire and Épargnes in Charente-Maritime; and on the Plateau of Clergon in Puymoyen in Charente; Patte 1941; Smith 1966), raise the question of possible caches. Furthermore, no prehistoric station could be interpreted as a seasonal hunting site, in particular because the taphonomic conditions are not always favorable to the preservation

of faunal remains in the region. Some sites, such as La Marche for example (Pales and Tassin de Saint-Péreuse 1969-89), have been considered as art workshops, but these proposals do not take into account the wide range of activities that may have taken place in these places (see below); in fact, we do not know any stations purely dedicated to the production of art works. Nor are there any cemeteries or ceremonial-ritual centers, strictly speaking. On the other hand, the *Aven du Charnier*, very close to Le Placard, could correspond to the category «decorated cave» (Airvaux *et al.* 2006). The «seasonal occupation site» type, to the extent that it is commonly used in the specialized literature, could include many localities, where relatively abundant and varied remains have been exhumed. Some of the most representative sites could be: *La Piscine*, *Le Taillis des Coteaux*, *Bois-Ragot* in Vienne; *Abri André-Ragout*, *Abri du Chasseur*, *La Combe-à-Rolland* in Charente; *Grotte du Gros-Roc* in Charente-Maritime (Airvaux *et al.* 1999; Balout 1959; Chollet and Dujardin 2005 eds; Delage 2011; Patte 1941; Primault *et al.* 2010; Trémeau de Rochebrune 1866). Le Placard does not fit exactly any of these types separately and individually, but it draws its originality from the presence - in one place - of most of these categories at once.

Moreover, there are some localities - like Le Placard - in the region which pose a whole series of problems of interpretation as they stand out in the atmosphere that one usually encounters for the Paleolithic periods. These localities correspond, in the Vienne, to *Le Roc-aux-Sorciers* (in Angles-sur-l'Anglin), *Le Vallon des Petits-Moulins* (i.e., Les Fadets, La Marche, Réseau Guy-Martin, Les Terriers, in Lussac-les-Châteaux), the Chaffaud Caves (i.e., Le Puits, *Grotte intermédiaire*, *Grotte de la Fontaine*, in Savigné); in Charente, Montgaudier (in Montbron), *Vallon du Roc* (i.e., *Grotte du Parc*, *Grotte du Roc*, *Grotte de la Fontaine*, in Sers), *La Chaire-à-Calvin* (in Mouthiers-sur-Boëme) (Airvaux *et al.* 1999, 2001; Bouvier and Crémadès 1989; David 1935; Duport 1987; Iakovleva and Pinçon 1997; Lwoff 1962; Martin 1928; Pales and Tassin de Saint-Péreuse 1969-1989; Patte 1941; Pinçon 2009 ed; Trémeau de Rochebrune 1866; Tymula 2002).

Le Placard, like these sites, may have been a flintknapping workshop (illustrated most notably by more than 5000 shouldered points in the upper Solutrean level) and a place with caches, but also - and at the same time - an occupation site, a local of (parietal and mobiliary) art, a cemetery, a ceremonial center... There is no longer any doubt that this was a very special site in the Upper Solutrean, and then in the Badegoulian and the Middle Magdalenian. But Le Placard is even richer (both qualitatively and quantitatively) than all these other regional sites. In fact, it has always been recognized as an 'exceptional', 'extraordinary' prehistoric habitat by all successive generations of researchers (Balout 1959: 14; Breuil

1958-59: 269; Clottes *et al.* 2010: 345). Therefore it could only be put in relation with a few rare sites also out of the ordinary, such as Laugerie (Haute-Basse) or La Madeleine, in Dordogne.

In the course of these reflections and debates, scholars have generally forgotten the geo-sedimentological and taphonomic dimensions of the deposits they attribute to a Mousterian ensemble, two Solutrean levels, and four Magdalenian levels at Le Placard. However, these layers are all very thick, around 30-40cm thick, at a minimum. In this regard, Phillip Smith would be one of the first to recognize that such a thick layer mentioned by the original excavators could in fact bring together several stratigraphic units and that the old excavations were not particularly thorough and rigorous (Smith 1966: 258; see Clottes *et al.* 1988: 875). The last excavations carried out in the 1990s provided a very clear answer to this question. The work of the Clottes team was able to distinguish 17 layers in the Badegoulian ensemble and about twenty layers over about one meter thick for the horizon of the Upper Solutrean (Clottes *et al.* 1990: 21, 1991: 129, 2010: 349; Duport and Clottes 1994: 192). We are therefore dealing with complex archeo-stratigraphic units roughly corresponding to the main Paleolithic periods (Mousterian, Middle and Upper Solutrean, Magdalenian). Therefore, we also know that a more detailed excavation would have made it possible to subdivide these horizons and to solve the archeo-stratigraphic confusions that still exist today (see above). Finally, we must not forget that these deposits can be the result of repeated frequentations of the locale, which could correspond to what are called ‘palimpsestes’ in the current archeological jargon.

The question then is whether this site has been occupied with all these functions and activities at the same time or, because of the palimpsest, whether it corresponds to different seasons of occupation, different time periods, perhaps even different groups, of which the archeological visibility is considerably impoverished and biased by the taphonomic conditions of the site, the ancient excavation techniques, etc. In other words, what subtype of site are we talking about? Zooarcheological research has shown that in the Middle Magdalenian at *La Marche* (Pradel 1960) and *Le Roc-aux-Sorciers* (Valensi and Boulbes 2018), and in the Upper Magdalenian at *La Madeleine* (Fontana 2017), the human groups were relatively sedentary. Data in this sense are still missing for Le Placard. But it is within such research design in mind that we must establish our intellectual comfort zone (see also Simonet 2017). We therefore believe that the answer can only be sought in the framework of a reflection on the nature of the mobility patterns and the demographic structure of the human groups concerned.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Is that all there is to remember in a few words of a century and a half of research and discoveries at Le Placard? Is that all that could be said about this site? The answer to these questions - which are relatively simple - may vary dramatically depending on the academic and scientific tradition of the scholar concerned. The vast majority of researchers of the French tradition - who are the only ones to have been involved so far in the research and analysis of the vast body of data concerning Le Placard - would answer by the affirmative.

In sum, this history of research and the state of knowledge can cause the reader to experience a triple frustration (see Clottes *et al.* 1997: 199; Roche 1972: 253):

- the main explorations, which emptied the cavity of most of its Paleolithic deposits, took place during the first century of research (1868-1958), when 1) the excavation techniques had no scientific rigor, and the objectives were far from the same as ours nowadays; 2) the stratigraphy and archeological context of the exhumed remains were not respected; 3) the management of the site and the archeological material was once again not the same as now, leading to the dislocation of the collections, even the disappearance of some lots; and 4) the study of the material, as well as its publication, were not the subject of particular attention and efforts, leading to a weak diffusion of knowledge (‘a dust of notes and scattered indications’, Balout 1959: 14);
- as a result, the work on the collections has mostly consisted of locating them since they had been dispersed, then drawing up an inventory and cataloging them in a manner as detailed and exhaustive as possible; but the archeological ambition here was very weak. In fact, the site and the collections are now virtually ignored, because these assemblages are considered of little scientific value, ‘lost to science’. On the other hand, the discovery of parietal art, which brought a new dimension to this prehistoric site, is now the only feature to be put forward and exploited;
- finally, the relatively unconcerned attitude of contemporary scholars in their treatment of the publications and available knowledge, on the one hand, and the very ‘sectarian’ attitude concerning the access to collections for study and the publication of recent works, on the other hand, do not move in the direction of a better scientific and heritage development of this site, which is yet still considered (in a somewhat contradictory way) as exceptional.

In fact, this site may also give rise to hope that everything has not yet been studied and written; and to

humbly say that there may still be much more to learn and understand about it. The most satisfactory option intellectually and scientifically is then to go forward, to explore new avenues of research, because this site really deserves more studies, more detailed analyzes on the material, as well as more global and comprehensive studies.

In this sense, Adrien de Mortillet, who had drawn up 'an inventory a little more detailed than that contained in A. de Maret's publications' (A. de Mortillet 1907a: 241), already advocated at the beginning of the last century 'a complete description, accompanied by many figures, representing the main artifacts..., whose publication would be of great service to prehistoric studies' (*idem*). Half a century later, Lionel Balout still regretted the absence of a full-scale 'monograph' (Balout 1959: 14) on Le Placard. Fortunately, the situation was to change a few decades later with the appearance, in a Parisian circle of researchers around the *Musée des Antiquités Nationales* (M.A.N.) and the *Musée de l'Homme*, of a new mind state to reassess this site and its archeological collections. Christiane Leroy-Prost thus wished 'that a monograph could bring them together so that the knowledge of one of the richest stations of the Upper French Paleolithic would not be lost' (Leroy-Prost 1977: 494). The management team of the M.A.N. must have had these goals in mind when they decided, in the 1950s, to start the precise inventory of the de Maret collection, and they also supported and encouraged various specialized studies in the 1970s (Schwab's contribution, this volume). Lucette Mons and the small team of collaborators (H. Delporte, C. Leroy-Prost, Y. Taborin) she gathered around her did not spare their time and efforts in this direction (Delporte 1970: 13). The de Maret collection at the M.A.N. thus became the 'type collection' (Breuil 1958-59: 267) for the Le Placard site. Nevertheless, despite Lucette Mons's investment for several years toward a collective work of a certain size and ambition, the publication of a site monograph never saw the light. Was this project too ambitious? or premature? Arguments are currently lacking to explain this quite relative failure. The same is true of the project carried out by Jean Clottes and Valérie Feruglio at the beginning of the 1990s, for which the comprehensive publication of the site and its occupations is still awaited 25 years later.

Such a monograph is never easy to conceive and achieve. It requires important means and resources (research personnel, funding, etc.) and a very specific intellectual context over a certain period of time to succeed. The task to be accomplished is not only to study the material from the old excavations; a task already considerable in itself with regard to Le Placard. Before that it also requires to think of the research design and the questions that must guide the process of observation and analysis. This latter task is complicated

by the fact that we are dealing here with an exceptional site - in the same way as La Madeleine-Villepin, Laugerie-Haute/Basse, etc. - which had to be the setting of a much richer and diverse collective life than in many temporary and specialized sites, and thus had to hold a very special place in the territory and the human environment. It could only be a 'community center' of some importance (which some would call 'aggregation site') or a sedentary settlement (i.e., hamlet or village). How else to interpret the abundance and variety of archeological remains unearthed?

In this context, if the reader expects to find with this present edited book *THE* final and complete monograph on the site of Le Placard, s/he will only be disappointed. Even the monograph directed by J. Clottes and V. Feruglio could not achieve such an ambition. In their case, it would only be the publication of their own fieldwork at this site in the early 1990s. In the current state of affairs, such a general monograph is not possible, due to the initial exploration techniques, the dislocation of the collections, etc. (see above). Such an effort would be very long and delicate, and it would be difficult to assess the degree of exhaustiveness achieved.

However, we believe that it is still possible to write about this site, to produce a rigorous scientific discourse and significant archeological knowledge. This volume is here to testify. From the start, we knew that it would not be possible to achieve a certain coherence and homogeneity to all the collected contributions. But this challenge was also interesting to expose a certain diversity of approaches and viewpoints at work concerning such a site. This could only be the case because of the topics addressed in the various chapters which are not all reconcilable at the same narrative and epistemological level⁴ (4).

Within the book, the focus is first on the history of research and studies since the 19th century, with several contributions (C. Delage, P. Roux, C. Schwab) that address and develop the role of some characters in this story: Arthur de Maret, Gabriel de Mortillet, Adrien de Mortillet, Henri Breuil (Figure 12). Based on the example of Le Placard, these contributions are also an opportunity to explore more precisely certain key moments of prehistoric research, such as the debates around the recognition and definition of the Aurignacian, the chronological division into sub-periods of the Magdalenian, etc. These contributions are more relevant than ever to better understand the progress and current directions of prehistoric research.

⁴ In this spirit, the coordinator of this collective work is not responsible for the ideas expressed in each chapter; furthermore, each contribution author/s is/are only responsible for the content of his/her/their own contribution.

The chapter by Anne-Paule Mousnier reflects the work of this artist to revive the site in our contemporary world. To better understand the context, let us go back a few decades. The site of Le Placard was classified as a historical monument on March 3rd, 1989. At about the same time, it is bought by the Department of Charente. As a result, it was gradually the subject of serious efforts of protection and conservation. First it was isolated and very effectively protected from looters and external natural agents (heat, sun, humidity) by a double protection (mesh and black cloth) (Figure 3, D). In order to welcome a large group of prehistorians in June 2010, during the excursions related to the Prehistoric Congress of France, the Department made new arrangements to access the site and, inside the cavity, to approach the engraved wall (Figure 9, A). Since the Summer of 2008, guided tours have been organized every summer. In this context, new arrangements of the cavity are regularly made to improve the conditions of visit. In 2013, the Department wanted to innovate by involving a visual artist, A.-P. Mousnier, to offer a different aesthetic vision and experience to the spectator. Her contribution plunges the reader into the atmosphere that may have surrounded her reflection.

The natural environment of the site is then developed. In the contribution of P. Vauvillier and his colleagues, topographical and geological considerations complete new data on the lower karstic network (Le Placard 2) which was revealed by a recent speleological exploration. On this topic, we can also refer to the contribution of C. Gravel-Miguel which exposes - among other things - the biotic availability around the site, during the Last Glacial Maximum. The chronological framework (contribution by C. Delage) is considered from the angle of the published radiometric datings, the value and reliability of which are evaluated and critically confronted with the archeo-stratigraphic sequence of the site and our current knowledge of the dating of Solutrean, Badegoulian and Magdalenian entities. This contribution does not encompass the history of the human occupations of this site as a whole. Indeed, Le Placard was first occupied in the Middle Paleolithic by Neandertals. Then, the site seems abandoned for several tens of thousands of years before being re-occupied by *Homo sapiens* in the (middle) Solutrean, and then - apparently - continuously up to the Upper Magdalenian. Why this locale was avoided or abandoned from the end of the Mousterian to the Solutrean, while the surrounding territory of Vilhonneur yields vestiges of the early Upper Paleolithic in several sites, is currently a mystery.

The following contributions focus on archeological remains themselves. Some go more in depth about the categories of artifacts already known but not studied for themselves and in detail, also using the experimental referent, such as the musical instruments (contribution of Carlos Garcia Benito *et al.*) or the spearthrowers

(contribution of P. Cattelain). On the other hand, the contribution of M. Langley and C. Delage provides new observations on largely unpublished materials, housed in the Museum of Fine Arts and the Museum of the Archeological and Historical Society of the Charente, both in Angoulême.

The following two contributions go beyond the strict chrono-cultural framework of Le Placard to explore its place in the socio-ecological context and the territory of the Badegoulian (C. Gravel-Miguel), or to place its art in the Solutrean context of Western Europe (F. Djindjian). The last contribution, by B. Hayden, immediately places some of the human societies that have occupied Le Placard among the complex hunter-gatherers and puts forward new interpretations about their socio-political organization with regard to the presence of an elite and secret societies.

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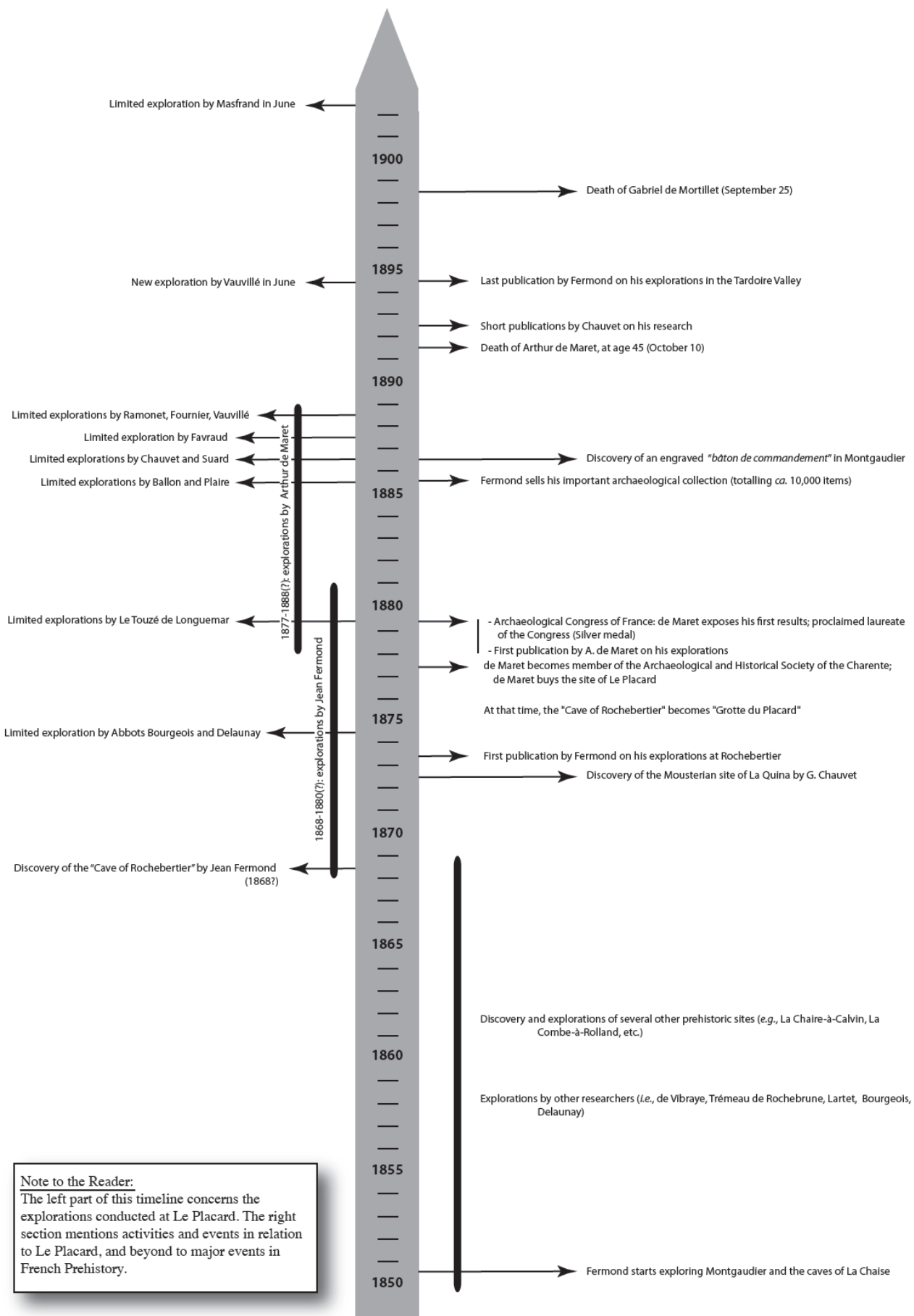
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Note to the Reader:
 The left part of this timeline concerns the explorations conducted at Le Placard. The right section mentions activities and events in relation to Le Placard, and beyond to major events in French Prehistory.

