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Research Project

Functional studies of stone tools from the Mousterian site of La Roche-Cotard in Langeais (Indre-et-Loire, France).

Project funded by own resources

Project title Functional studies of stone tools from the Mousterian site of La Roche-Cotard in Langeais (Indre-et-Loire, France).

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Project Website <https://duw.unibas.ch/de/forschungsgruppen/integrative-biologie/ipnaintegrativepraehistorisch-naturwissenschaftlichearchaeologie/forschung/urgeschichtliche-archaeologie/palaeo-mesolithikum/projekte/>

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Status Completed

The site of La Roche-Cotard is located on the right bank of the Loire valley, about 20 km down-river from Tours. The site, discovered in 1846, was excavated in 1912, and again from 1975 to 1978 and a third ongoing excavation was opened in 2008. The discovery of the “Mask of La Roche-Cotard,” different marks, punctuations and traces of painting in a cavity make this site significant. After the original occupation by Neanderthals the cave’s entrance was naturally sealed making it inaccessible to *Homo sapiens* until 1846. The site includes at least four inhabited loci where hominids left traces of their occupations in the form of lithic and bone artefacts, fireplaces and small structures of stone blocks. Mousterian hunters visited the site several times despite the absence of good quality raw material for the tool production in the vicinity but still left behind hundreds of flint artefacts. The functional study of these is the topic of this paper, which will contribute to our knowledge of the early resident’s different cave activities, not only artistic. From a wider perspective, the subsistence strategies of Neanderthals in the region can also be investigated.

All examined stone tools come from 4 locis and have been selected on the condition of their preservation. For this study, a series of experiments were conducted including working a variety of contact materials such as hide, antler, and bone, wood, „tuffeau chalk” and chert.

Keywords Neanderthal, use-wear, prehistoric art

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