

## Acts of the XIVth UISPP Congress, University of Liège, Belgium, 2–8 September 2001. Section 5: The Middle Palaeolithic. General Sessions and Posters

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This volume contains papers presented in Section 5 at the 14th UISPP Congress in Liège in 2001, entitled, “The Middle Palaeolithic.” It included three General Sessions along with several posters. Fans of the UISPP will know that it is mainly a forum for presenting new results from old or ongoing excavations and as such, the proceedings usually take the form of site reports. From the unpretentious title one might guess that BAR 1239 is a straightforward series of reports, but the size of the volume alone (34 papers) makes it a valuable addition to any library. More than just a few contributions make the book worthwhile for my shelf.

As is the standard for UISPP proceedings published by the Secretariat, all participants of a session are automatically invited to contribute a paper. These are often then published in the same order as they were presented in the conference. I cannot confirm whether this is the case for Section 5, but I suspect it was, due to the arrangement of papers in this volume. The result of simply publishing a Proceedings is that you end up with the arbitrary session divisions of the conference, which are not always logical. Although the papers are listed in clusters in the table of contents under “Chaînes opératoires,” “Paléoriental,” “Regional studies,” and “Posters” following the titles of the General Sessions, the book’s pages contain no separating markers to indicate transitions between these parts. The first part (Session 5–I) is a homogeneous collection of site descriptions focusing on lithics analyzed French-style to uncover reduction sequences of the various tool types (‘analyse technologique’). The second and third parts (Sessions 5–II and 5–III) are much more varied than the first, with a wide variety of approaches ranging from refits and technological analysis to Bordian typology, and spanning a much larger geographical range. Finally, six posters from Section 5 are written up in the last part.

Few of the data presented here are as well-known and as widely-cited as those of Riparo Tagliente (Arzarello and Peretto, pp. 169–175) and Scladina (Loodts and Bonjean, pp. 47–55). Therefore it is useful to have many little-known sites gathered in one place. This collection of papers is valuable as a snapshot of Middle Paleolithic sites covering a wide geographical range (i.e., from Iberia to Siberia). Most of the authors are “the usual suspects” (such as Moncel, Derevianko, Carbonell, Vermeersch, Mania, or Bar-Yosef, to name a few). In Part I, the volume opens with a well-rounded paper by Moncel in which she considers raw materials, lithic reduction, fauna, and habitat types to infer

occupation modes. In the next paper, Bernard-Guelle uses a strongly contrasting approach by drawing conclusions about behavior solely from the *chaînes opératoires* at the Jiboui site. Similarly, *chaînes opératoires* are presented with excellent drawings by Cauche et al., Pasty, Gagnepain et al., Vande Walle, and Matilla and Debénath. The paper by Mourre asks whether the percussion features of anvil flaking can be recognized, using knapping experiments. His review of the problem is thorough and entertaining, covering the historical aspects of past research.

The Part II papers are united by their geographical range. Sites in the Altai Mountains are presented by Rybin (with wonderful images), Anokin and Postnov, and Derevianko and Postnov. With its regional approach, the latter paper would have fit into Part III of the book (Regional Studies). Something has gone seriously wrong with the punctuation in Anokin and Postnov’s paper because the full stops (periods) and colons have all disappeared from the text on pages 98 and 100–103. Thankfully the commas are still in place, making the text still readable. Other errors (probably caused by an unsupervised spell-checker) are more hilarious than annoying, such as ‘Cornu Altai’ (pp. 103 and 106). The paper by Nehoroshev, about the lithics from the Shlyakh site in Russia, would have fit into Part I of the book, since it is a technological analysis. Sites from further south are dealt with in Beliaeva’s paper about the Gubs Canyon sites in the North Caucasus and two papers on the Korolevo site in Ukraine by Koulakovska and Usik. It is worth pointing out that Usik spells ‘Koulakovska’ as ‘Koulakovskaya’ in his references. Finally, Karavanić describes Mujina Pećina Cave, Croatia, and Mester applies Bordian typology to the lithics of Suba-lyuk Cave, Hungary.

Part III of the book contains many papers which are not “regional studies” but rather site reports. In particular, Arzarello and Peretto describe the typo-technology at Riparo Tagliente; Jarry et al. focus on the *schémas opératoires* at Les Bosses; Bringmanns et al. write about the Veldwezelt-Hezerwater locale of sites; Rebmann reports on the fauna and flora at Mutzig-Felsbourg; Darlas and de Lumley describe Kalamakia Cave, including fauna, flora, hearths, habitation structures, lithics, and shells; Cârciumară et al. present Cioarei Cave; and Bosquet et al. discuss Remicourt. The outstanding graphics in Bringmanns et al. are exemplary, as are the lithics photographs and graphics in Rebmann’s contribution and the four related posters which are tacked onto the end of his paper.

Despite its title, only three contributions in Part III

would I consider to be proper regional studies. The paper by Canals et al. summarises the extensive work of the Vendimia Archaeologica Project in the Extremadura region of Spain. Brühl et al. discuss the middle Elbe-Saale region of Germany, and provide an overview of human occupation by “cultural groups” which are defined by lithic industries. Meignen and Bar-Yosef use Kebara and Ksar Akil as a starting point to discuss internal variability in the Middle to Upper Paleolithic transition. They argue that Upper Paleolithic technology in the Near East was not a “cultural revolution,” but rather represented a stabilization and intensification of earlier innovations in new combinations.

To close the book, six posters are written up at the end by three sets of authors (two each). Boscato and colleagues present two Italian sites; Carbonell et al. present more data from the Extremadura; and Giunti writes about the typotechnology of two Italian sites.

A volume of this size is not easy to edit, and the Congress Secretariat has produced an extremely presentable book. However, the editors should not have accepted certain images for publication. Some of these are so bad that they only waste space in the book. Of especially poor quality are Beliaeva’s table in Figure 4 (p. 95) which is barely legible, the absurd photo of 25 raw material types in Rebmann’s Figure 7 (p. 202) which is too dark to be of any use, and the map in Canals et al.’s Figure 1 (p. 158) and the tool-types graph in Arzarello and Peretto’s Figure 2 (p. 171) which are totally illegible.

While the writing in this volume is for the most part excellent, certain papers would have benefited from better English proofreading. For example, the language in Canals et al.’s paper is comprehensible but hard to take seriously, e.g., “This vegetable scenery would be conditioned by a mild climate with summery hydric deficit” (p. 167). The papers that I found most engaging were Mourre’s chapter for his rigorous experimental approach and complete discussion of an understudied feature, and Usik’s for his thorough analysis and refitting work. Bosquet et al.’s paper

stands out as well because it is the only paper in the volume to present use-wear results in addition to spatial distribution maps. Bosquet et al. studied wear traces on 186 artifacts from their site, which is impressive. I found Rybin’s discussion of potential population migrations as revealed by cultural continuities especially stimulating. Similarly, Bringmanns et al. offer an excellent discussion of how climate fluctuations can affect changes in North-Western Europe blade technology. Meignen and Bar-Yosef’s contribution also is likely to be well-appreciated because they delve into sensitive theoretical questions of variability and transitions, topics that have been growing in recent years.

The UISPP has always been dominated by West European archaeologists, particularly the French. This Section has a high proportion (one-third) of English-language papers. However, as usual, all papers about sites in France are written in French. This follows tradition, which in my opinion helps perpetuate the disconnection between French and Anglo-Saxon archaeology. Session 5-I contains nine papers in French, presenting seven sites from France and one each from Belgium and Italy. The second part comprises mostly English papers, from colleagues in the Slavic-language countries and Hungary. The third part is again mostly in French but describes sites from France, Spain, Greece, Italy, Belgium, Germany, Romania, and the Near East. Finally, the posters are from Italian and Spanish contributors. I am not sure how much non-French readers can gain from the text in this BAR, but the copious graphics and lithics drawings should be sufficient for reference. Unfortunately, only one author (Moncel) bothered to write English translations of her French figure captions. Helpfully, almost all chapters have abstracts in French and English, as is the norm for UISPP volumes. I would recommend this book as required reading for anyone interested in the Middle Paleolithic or even in the Paleolithic in general, with its combination of detailed site reports, regional overviews, and theoretical discussions of important topics in Paleolithic archaeology.