

LE PALEOLITIQUE SUPERIEUR DE ROUMANIE EN CONTEXTE DU PALEOLITIQUE SUPERIEUR EUROPEEN, COLLOQUE INTERNATIONAL, IAȘI, 8-10 MAI, 2019.

Several international conferences dedicated to the Palaeolithic period were organized by Dr. Vasile Chirica in Iași over the last decades, establishing a veritable tradition. Such events are definitely important, especially if the overall state of Romanian Palaeolithic research is considered. With only a handful of active researchers, few academic centres truly maintain and perpetuate the interest in Palaeolithic studies in Romania and it is fair to say that the Institute of Archaeology in Iași is one of them.

The latest international colloquium dedicated to Palaeolithic studies was organised within the Prehistory Department of the Iași Institute of Archaeology in Mai 2019, once again at the initiative of Dr. V. Chirica. The theme of the colloquium, as suggested by its title (*Le Paleolitique superieur de Roumanie en contexte du Paleolitique Superieur Europeen*) was quite generous, but entirely justified. The need to evaluate and reassess the character of the Upper Palaeolithic in Romania within the wider European Upper Palaeolithic frame is constantly felt. After decades of partial isolation under the communist regime, the Romanian Palaeolithic research is slowly reattaching itself to the European trends, revealing many discrepancies and ambiguous data which require a specific response.

The colloquium, held between 8th – 11th of May, gathered Romanian, Belgian, and French researchers, reflecting the work of national and international projects focused mainly on the Eastern European area. Unfortunately, due to personal issues, not all the announced participants were able to attend the event. Hopefully, the results of their studies will be presented within the pages of the upcoming volume.

The first day of the event, the 8th of May, was dedicated to the arrival of the participants, the evening ending with an informal dinner which proved a great opportunity to strengthen old relations and set the tone for new collaborations.

The official opening of the international colloquium was marked by Dr. Al. Rubel, the director of the Institute of Archaeology in Iași, with the traditional welcoming speech. Dr. V. Chirica, the main organizer, also addressed a few words, presenting the outline of the event, as well as the envisioned short and long term results. Following these proper introductory remarks, the first section of the colloquium, moderated by P. Noirret (University of Liege, Belgium) was started. The first presentation (*Mitoc-Malul Galben: la fin de l'Aurignacian en Moldavie*; presenting author: **Tim. Libois** – University of Liege, collaborating authors: **P. Noirret; Ph. Nigst**) was centred on the topic of the late Aurignacian occurrences in the area east of the Carpathians, where the site from Mitoc – *Malu Galben* plays a key role. The next presentation (*Reassessing the formation processes of open-air Paleolithic settlements in the Eastern Carpathians. Case studies in the Ceahlău Basin*; presenting author: **M. Anghelinu** – Valahia University, Târgoviște, collaborating authors: **L. Niță. C. Cordoș, G. Popescu, D. Veres, U. Hambach, G. Murătoreanu, M. Haendel**) brought forward the issue of sync- and post-depositional processes which shaped the aspect of Upper Palaeolithic sites in the Bistrița Valley. With evident discrepancies between the old and new data, it seems obvious that previous interpretations significantly underestimated such site formation processes. The following intervention (*A worked stone with ochre traces from Mitoc – Malu Galben*, author: **C. Cordoș**, Iași Institute of Archaeology) was dedicated to a non-knapped stone artefact discovered in Mitoc- Malu Galben, which showed multiple signs of use, such as various impact traces, a polished edge and potential ochre residues, artefact which definitely enlarges our perspective on the repertoire of tools used by Palaeolithic hunter-gatherers. Unfortunately, **Th. Obadă** (Institute of Zoology, Republic of Moldavia) was unable to participate. However, we hope that his new data

regarding the Palaeolithic sites on the Middle Prut Valley (*Nouvelles données sur les site paléolithiques de la vallée du Prut Moyen*) will shortly be available to the public.

After a brief intermission, the second session moderated by M. Anghelinu was started. Due to some unforeseen circumstances, the official schedule was slightly modified, thus the second part commenced with a presentation given by **M. C. Lazarovici** (Iași Institute of Archaeology) and **Gh. Lazarovici** (Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu) (both authors presenting: *Large themes in the Romanian rock art and their connections. An ethnoreligious study*), which reviewed the most important prehistoric rock art discoveries in Romania, highlighting the major represented themes and their potential interpretation. The topic of the following presentation was on a similar page, as **M. Cazacu-Davidescu** (Iași Institute of Archaeology) gave a generous presentation of recurrent decorative elements in European Paleolithic art, (*Considerations on motifs and ornaments encountered in Paleolithic art*), emphasizing once again the complex behaviour and creativity of Upper Palaeolithic communities. The third communication of the session (*The status of mammoth in human groups during the Upper Pleniglacial in the Dniester valley/Le statut du mammouth au sein des groupes humains du Pléniglaciaire supérieur dans la vallée du Dniestr*, presenting author: **L. Demay**, collaborating authors: **T. Obadă, S. Péan, M. Patou-Mathis, L. Koulakovska, S. Covalenco, M. Otte**) brought forward another interesting aspect, namely the role of mammoths in the subsistence strategies employed by Upper Palaeolithic groups in the Dniester Valley, at least two sites in the area (Valea Morilor and Climăuți II) revealing a significant presence of mammoth remains.

The last intervention (*La présence des lamelles Dufour dans les technocomplexes du Paléolithique supérieur d'Europe*, presenting author: **V. Chirica**, collaborating author: **Val. C. Chirica**) was dedicated to the presence of Dufour bladelets in Romanian Upper Palaeolithic sites. This presentation generated a constructive discussion in regards to the various techno-typological definitions encountered in the specialised literature, stressing the need to re-evaluate the characteristics of several specific types of lithic artefacts.

With two other notable absences (**Monica Mărgărit** – Valahia University Târgoviște and **Marcel Otte** – University of Liege) and some conflicting schedule for some of the other participants, the organisers took the decision to merge the last two sections of the colloquium. Therefore, all presentations were completed on the 9th of May. Each participant had approximately 30 minutes at their disposal. As expected, some sparked a lot of interest, leading to quite lengthily and fruitful discussions. After such a long and eventful day, the evening was concluded in a casual manner, over a glass of Moldavian wine. Due to inappropriate weather conditions, the trip to Mitoc scheduled for the 10th of May was replaced with a tour of Iași and some of its iconic landmarks.

This international colloquium dedicated to the Romanian Upper Palaeolithic was, undoubtedly, a good opportunity to present the results of several national and international research projects. The variety of raised topics (such as art, lithic technology and typology, site formation processes, subsistence strategies, and the use of non-knapped tool), prove once again the complexity of Palaeolithic research and the importance of strong collaborations among specialists. Also, during the long argumentations and discussions, it became obvious the several site, such as Mitoc – Malu Galben, are still pivotal in understanding the Eastern-European evolutions. Also, the need to reassess older information remains crucial for present generations, as all future endeavours should be grounded on a better understanding of the available data.

As a closing remark, in the name of all participants I would like to thank Dr. V. Chirica for organizing the event, as well as for the kind invitation to attend it. Hopefully, the tradition of international scientific gatherings in Iași will continue for many years to come!

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