
New Investigations on Holocene Settlements in the far northeastern Algeria

Latifa Sari*^{†1}, Leila Soudani², Saida Bensadok², Louiza Aoudia², Abderrezak Djerrab³,
and Muriel Ruault-Djerrab³

¹Centre National de Recherches Préhistoriques, Anthropologiques et Historiques (CNRPAH), Alger – Algérie

²Centre national de recherches préhistoriques, anthropologiques et historiques (CNRPAH). Alger, Algérie. – Algérie

³Université de Guelma, Département d’Histoire et d’Archéologie, Guelma, Algérie. – Algérie

Résumé

So far, the knowledge on the prehistoric settlements in the far northeastern Algeria has been limited to the fieldwork investigations of J. Morel in the fifties. This researcher reported only open-air settlements mostly concentrated in forest clearings or wadi shores and belonging to different prehistoric times. Moreover, the few test pits that he carried out in the region lacked radiometric dating and reliable stratigraphic units which deprive the region from any consistent chronocultural assessment.

The recent fieldwork investigations initiated for the first time by a multidisciplinary research team, as part of a project directed by L. Sari under the aegis of CNRPAH, allowed the discovery of new open-air and sheltered sites in the far northeastern Algeria. Here, we present the results of the multidisciplinary analyses carried out at locus 2, a rockshelter site in Kef Fedda massif in the Bougous valley (El Tarf wilaya). This rockshelter is a small pseudo-karstic solution cavity dug into the sandstone of Kef Fedda massif with easy access to forest food resources and Oued Bougous. The archaeological deposit is stratified into four superimposed stratigraphic units rich in charcoal decreasing from the top to the base of the sequence. Several sediment analyses (granulometry, endoscopy, quantification of the coarse fraction, DRX, XRF and magnetic susceptibility) have made it possible to better understanding the site formation. Organic remains were not preserved, due to the acidity of the sediment. The combination of sediment analyses and archaeological study allowed to better situating the chronocultural assessment of the recovered archaeological remains. The analysis of the artefacts indicated the occurrence of specific lithic components, which show both Iberomaurusian peculiarities and Caspian affinities. The attribution of the artefacts to the Epipaleolithic is enhanced by radiometric dating obtained on charcoal carefully collected during fieldwork. The Epipaleolithic occupations are topped by a funerary structure containing a young adult buried on the belly and very contracted limbs. Lithic artefacts and an ostrich egg-tested threading washer were placed on the corpse and smaller stones loaded the body. The structure is composed of several blocks of stones arranged in staggered so that each block overlaps with the next one by surrounding the corpse. Other stone blocks, more or less bulky, covered the structure. Bone collagen taken from the latter yielded a radiocarbon date from middle Holocene.

*Intervenant

[†]Auteur correspondant: sari.latifa@cnrpah.org

These results confer to the site a prominent key role in the understanding of the techno-economic behaviors of the Epipaleolithic and Neolithic populations in the region and update the knowledge on the funerary practices of the Neolithic populations in the far northeastern Algeria.

Mots-Clés: Far northeastern Algeria, Kef Fedda, Epipaleolithic, Neolithic, human settlements.