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# LOMMEL-VOSVIJVERS 3, A LATE MESOLITHIC SETTLEMENT

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In October 1934 Theo Caris discovered a prehistoric settlement at Lommel at a place called "Vosvijvers" (Hamal-Nandrin, Serwais, Louis, 1935 : 6). This site was situated on the territory of the ammunition-factory Poudreries Réunies de Belgique. It was called Lommel 2, but for clearness' sake I would like to call it Lommel-Vosvijvers 1. When I studied the Caris collection at the Museum Kempenland in Lommel, I noticed that the collection Lommel-Vosvijvers 1 was composed of a mixture of Epi-Palaeolithic and Mesolithic artefacts. The Mesolithic part of the collection was at least as important as the Epi-Palaeolithic one. Trapezia formed the most numerous group of microliths, next came the backed bladelets. Points with surface-retouches were also important (Geerts, 1981 : 23-67).

During the 1960s and 1970s the same site was repeatedly visited by Robert Foblets. The collection of artefacts he found, got the name Lommel-Vosvijvers 2. It almost exclusively contained Epi-Palaeolithic elements. Typical Mesolithic artefacts were lacking (Geerts, 1981 : 8 -22).

In the last few years, numerous surveys were carried out in the area "Vosvijvers". We noticed that the area was very rich in prehistoric remains but a true concentration of Mesolithic artefacts was only discovered in September 1982 on a recently ploughed strip of heather.

The site is situated S.W. of the spot where Theo Caris and Robert Foblets collected their finds, just beyond the top of a S.W. - N.E. orientated dune, about 60 m away from the Molse Nete (51°11'41" N - 5°16'4" E).

For 7 weeks, the *Laboratorium voor Prehistorie* of the *Katholieke Universiteit te Leuven* excavated the site with the aid of volunteers.

Three small concentrations, closely connected with each other, were excavated. Each of them contained a charcoal-hearth. Two out of three concentrations had an oval shape (II : 3 x 1,5 m; III : 4 x 1,5 m). The precise shape of the third concentration could not be noticed.

Soil-disturbances were caused by earlier digging. One disturbance was a drainage-ditch of recent age. The ditch was dug out up to half-way the eluvial horizon of the podsol. The precise cause of the other disturbances could not be determined. Perhaps, they were caused by earlier "excavations". They always stopped in the illuvial horizon of the podsol. Very little archaeological material was obtained by sieving the disturbed soil.

It seems that earlier digging did not disturb the settlement pattern too much, as we can conclude from the horizontal distribution of the artefacts on the site. Flint-artefacts and Wommersom-quartzite-artefacts were equally dispersed over the site. There was no separate place for the debitage of Wommersom-quartzite. However, in concentration I, Wommersom-quartzite was less present than in the other two concentrations.

About 15 % of the artefacts were fire-cracked. This percentage mounts to 30 % and more, where quartzite and sandstone fragments are concerned. No specific concentrations of fire-cracked material could be noticed, not even related with the charcoal-hearths, exception made for small quartzite and sandstone-fragments found nearby the hearth in concentration III.

Only the top of the eluvial horizon of the podsol was damaged by ploughing. Since most artefacts were situated in a small zone of about 20 cm in the center of the eluvial soil-horizon, the sieving of the AP-layer did not yield many prehistoric remains. There were very few finds in the illuvial soil-horizon.

Flint, used for making flakes, bladelets and tools, was of a bad quality. It was obtained from small rolled nodules. Only 10 % of the artefacts were made out of Wommersom-quartzite. Wommersom-quartzite cores hardly occurred. Wommersom-quartzite bladelets had a very regular shape. Thus, we can speak of a Montbani-style of debitage.

Tools belonging to the ordinary tool-kit were very rare. Only some end-scrapers and retouched flakes were found.

Concentration I contained as microliths particularly points with unretouched base. Further on, all groups of microliths, exception made for trapezia, were present. Nearly all microburins were found in concentration I. Concentrations II and III mostly yielded trapezia, next to some points with unretouched base. Compared with the collection of Lommel-Vosvijvers 1, containing especially trapezia and backed bladelets, the lack of backed bladelets at Lommel-Vosvijvers 3 is very remarkable.

In order to confirm our interpretation of a chronological difference on typological base between concentration I, especially yielding points with unretouched base, and concentrations II and III, especially yielding trapezia, two charcoal samples, drawn from the hearths of concentration I and concentration III, were cleaned of rootlets and sent for dating to the Isotope Physics Laboratory at Groningen. The results were rather surprising : 3.390 $\pm$ 70 B.P. (GrN-11.865) and 3.170 $\pm$ 35 B.P. (GrN-11.866), two Middle Bronze Age dates, not bringing us any step closer to the solution of the dating-problem. Neither during the survey, nor during the excavation, any Bronze Age remains were ever found. The archaeological sites Lommel-Kattenbos and Weyerkense Bergen, where Bronze Age remains were found, are nearly 4 km away from the site Lommel-Vosvijvers 3. Several in-

terpretations of these dates are of course possible, for example : either the dates can be associated with the archaeological remains and so we obtain a very young datation of a Mesolithic industry (but this seems very improbable); either we twice deal with an unnoticed disturbance from Bronze Age men.

To conclude, we can state that :

- first, the concentrations bear evidence of a brief occupation (a small amount of material, horizontally as well as vertically dispersed over a small area) with a specific economic goal, namely hunting (tools belonging to the ordinary toolkit are scarce, whereas armatures are plentiful)
- second, there is a difference on typological base between concentration I and concentrations II and III. This difference could be a chronological one. Our effort to solve this problem by radiocarbon-dating did not succeed. But the difference could also be due to different activities carried out simultaneously by prehistoric man. Refitting now seems to be the proper method to prove whether the concentrations are to be associated to one another or not.

REFERENCES

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