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New chrono-cultural data on the Cro-Magnon and Combe-Capelle human remains (Dordogne, France): consequences for the biocultural origins of modern humans in Europe

D. Henry-Gambier¹, and R. White²

¹ *CR, CNRS UMR 5809 , Laboratoire d'Anthropologie, Université de Bordeaux I, Avenue des Facultés, 33405 Talence, France.*
d.gambier@anthropologie.u-bordeaux1.fr

² *Center for the Study of Human Origins, Department of Anthropology, New York University, 25 Waverly Place, New York, NY 10003, U.S.A.*
randall.white@nyu.edu

The question of the age of the Cro-Magnon and Combe-Capelle human fossils is clearly of considerable importance. Hominid specimens from both sites have played a critical role in the development of current perspectives on modern human origins in Western Europe.

The Cro-Magnon skeletal remains, discovered in 1868 near les Eyzies-de-Tayac by workmen and excavated by L. Lartet are routinely attributed to the Aurignacian culture. An AMS C14 date ($27\,680 \pm 270$ BP, Beta — 157439) of a shell associated with the human remains as well as cultural indications, demonstrates that these specimens postdate 28000 BP. The Cro-Magnon burials should not be attributed to the earliest Aurignacian, but rather to the Gravettian.

The Combe-Capelle skeleton was discovered by O. Hauser at the beginning of the twentieth century. According to him, the burial occurred at the interface between a Mousterian and an early Aurignacian (i.e. Châtelperronian) level. The supposedly Châtelperronian age of the skeleton (and the very authenticity of the skeleton itself), and its

morphology, have long been the subject of debate. As the remains had until recently been thought to have been lost or destroyed during the last war, it was impossible to check the original data.

In 1990, the Combe-Capelle remains were rediscovered by A. Hoffmann and D. Wegner at the Museum für Vorund Frühgeschichte, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin(RFA). The morphological study of the Combe-Capelle skull, the analyses of associated shell ornaments and of available archives provide some new insight into the probable age of this specimen. This new analysis has quite important implications for our understanding of cultural and biological processes at the beginning of the Upper Paleolithic in Europe.