



ministère de la Culture
et de la Communication
ministère de
l'Enseignement supérieur
et de la Recherche

Inrap
Institut national
de recherches
archéologiques
préventives



Press Release
29 January 2008

A neolithic "mother-goddess" from Auvergne?

The fragment of a ceramic feminine statuette has been found during the excavation of a Middle Neolithic site in Pont-du-Château (Puy-de-Dôme), by a team from the National Institute for Preventive Archaeological Research (Inrap). The excavation is curated by the Regional Archaeology Service.

The Pont-du-Château site

One of the characteristics of this site is a line of hearths filled with burned stones. Nearby, two individual graves and several silos have been found. Pottery sherds in different shapes and forms (bottles, jars, carinated cups, bowl, plates and a disc "bread-platter) were found on the ground. They are characteristic of the Chassey Culture (4500-3700 BC).

In one of the pits, used as a midden, a female statuette had been thrown out with other ceramic objects.

In the round and rounded

The figurine fragment is 5.8cm high and 4.8cm wide. It is the upper part of the body (neck, breast upper part of the abdomen), the ensemble treated in the round. The neck is pierced with two mortises to enable a pegged head to be fitted. The interest of the discovery lies in the rarity of such items in Chassey Culture assemblages, its artistic quality and the quantity of anatomical details.

Fairly similar ceramic figurines belonging to different Neolithic cultures exist in France. They have wide shoulders and hips, accentuated breasts and a slim waist, while the pubes is not shown.

A "Mother-goddess"?

Some archaeologists consider these figurines to be signs of a primitive matriarchal society, hence their nickname "Mother-goddesses", but there is no formal archaeological proof.

The rarity and the careful production of these Chassey Culture figurines, all of which are female, demonstrate decorative continuity during the European Neolithic. They show, in a society which was becoming more complex that the traditional Neolithic ideology, with its mainly female representations, was deep-rooted.

L'Inrap

With more than 2,000 collaborators and researchers Inrap is the largest French archaeological organization and one of the foremost in Europe. A public research establishment, it carries out most of the archaeological evaluations and excavations in France, in partnership with private and public developers: i.e. about 2,500 sites a year in mainland France and in the overseas departments.

Developer: Société d'Équipement d'Auvergne (SEAU)

Curation: Regional Archaeology **Service** (Drac Auvergne)

Archaeological Research: Inrap

Site Director: David Pelletier, Inrap,

To contact us

Mahaut Tyrrell

chargée de communication médias

Inrap, direction du développement culturel et de la communication

01 40 08 80 24 – mahaut.tyrrell@inrap.fr

Christel Fraisse

chargée du développement culturel et de la communication

Inrap, direction interrégionale Rhône-Alpes

04 72 12 90 77 – christel.fraisse@inrap.fr