Watching the river flow: a small-scale survey of the floodplain deposits in the Vézère Valley


The Vézère valley has produced several large floods; difference of about 6.5 m

incising of river into cliffs created five different terraces+floodplain

overbank deposits = metres of loam and loamy sand

looking at the floodplain image on p.3 suggests it might be useful to calculate the proximity of sites to large floodplain areas

tributaries largely infilled, and are green, humid sometimes swampy areas

several side valleys show evidence of deep Holocene deposits

"Some archaeological sites that nowadays are more or less at the level of the river valley...were several metres above the valley bottom during the (Late) Weichselian" p.4 doesn't affect Medieval deposits but important to remember

high limestone cliffs (falaises) border river

two fault lines: 1. La Cassagne; 2. Saint Cyprien (SE-NW)

2 synclines: 1. Sarlat; 2. Montignac

number of fords influenced Paleolithic locations...how about medieval/Roman?

semi-continuous rock shelter horizon between Middle and Upper Coniacian

Vézère erodes ancient valley fill

"present river course appears to be dominated by courser overbank deposits and to have incised in older overbank loams" at Tursac p.8

despite narrower valley constrained by towering cliff faces some evidence of river meandering within these geologic confines

paleochannel uncovered at Lespinasse

OSL samples from channel base give younger than Iron Age, while C14 suggest Iron Age for sedimentation of channel

Late Glacial and Early Holocene Age for sediments on terrace at Lespinasse

evidence of "incision and a change to a more energetic system, dated roughly to the Iron Age" corroborated by transects at Bout-du-Monde, Lespinasse, and Tursac p. 10

smaller tributaries less sensitive to climate or hinterland change this might make them attractive in times of climate change?

much younger age for incision in Tayac transect but still provides overall late date for final incision of river

Pleistocene--formation of terraces

final phase Lat Pleistocene--erosive;
Holocene–depositional; several meters of overbank loam deposited on Pleistocene terraces

final incision phase around Iron Age or later; since then energetic deposits with sand and levees

"The finds from this fluvial matrix were probably "displaced" from the abri deposits by the (Holocene) activites of the Vézère" p. 15-16

evidence of iron ore processing in sediments near Laugerie-Haute Est

Holocene erosional activities, probably from high river levels, deposited rock shelters debris within fluvial deposits at base

Paleolithic tributaries were much deeper and some may have been canyons

majority of current floodplain deposits mostly Holocene

large parts of Pleistocene deposits destroyed by erosion but some maybe be in place