

Aïn Maarouf Prehistoric Site of El Hajeb Region, (Moroccan Middle-Atlas): A Scientific Patrimony Almost Desappeared

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In the Elhajeb area, (Meknes district), an important prehistoric site delivered a very varied fauna of vertebrates mainly composed by Perissodactyla, Artiodactyla, carnivores, hominids, probosidians, reptiles etc...They are old excavations (J Margat, 1950). Collected pieces are part of fossils vertebras collection of the Faculty of Science of Reduction.

Our work was focused more particularly on Equidae fossils whose specimens were firstly indexed and itemized by us (teeth and metapodes). These perissodactylas allowed us to underline the old character of this deposit, which dates from the whole beginning of average Pleistocene (Bouzid, 1991), i.e. an age as primitive as that of the famous algerian deposit of Tighennif.

Later works (Geraads, Amani, and Hublin, 1992; Geraads and Amani, 1997) confirmed our conclusions, using hominids and the others remainder vertebrates.

The man of Aïn Mâarouf is a Homo erectus archaic, probably the oldest human fossil known in our country (0.7- 0.8 M.A.).

Thus, Aïn Maarouf is, as far as we know, the most important prehistoric site by its ancient age, and its fossiliferous content, existing inside the moroccan lands and even in the hole North Africa. Unfortunately, this site is today completely damaged because of the lack of de sensitizing toward local population and authorities. So, its patrimonial value is lost for ever and only the remainder fossils collected before, will remember us his existence.

The same risks are threatening several other Moroccan prehistoric sites. They must be recognized as a national scientific patrimony, emphasized and be protected from natural and anthropogenic degradation.

Key words: Morocco, average Pleistocene, Vertebrate, Perissodactyla, prehistoric patrimony.