Exploring the early and Middle Pleistocene archaeological record from South-West Turkana Basin: New Evidence from Kanimangin and Kamilikol

Sol Sanchez-Dehesa Galan*[1,2], Marjolein Bosch[3,4], Céline Vidal[5], Mikel Arlegi[6,7], Alexis Nutz[8], Justus Erus Edung[9], Hugo Hautavoine[10], Cécile Chapon-Sao[11], Hema Achyuthan[12], Jean-Jacques Bahain[10], Robert Foley[13,4], Jean-Luc Schwenninger[14], Emmanuelle Stoetzel[15], Ann Van Baelen[16], Juan Marín[17], Fredrick Kyalo Manthi[18], Marta Lahr[4,13], and Aurélien Mounier[4,6,19]

[1]Universidad de Salamanca [España] = University of Salamanca [Spain] – Espagne
[2]Technologie et Ethnologie des Mondes Préhistoriques – Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Université Paris Nanterre, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne : UMR8068, Université Paris Nanterre : UMR8068, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique : UMR8068 – France
[3]Austrian Archaeological Institute, Austrian Academy of Sciences – Autriche
[4]Turkana Basin Institute, Nairobi, Kenya – Kenya
[5]Fitzwilliam College, Department of Geography, University of Cambridge, UK – Royaume-Uni
[6]Histoire Naturelle des Humanités Préhistoriques (HNHP, UMR 7194), PaleoFED, MNHN/CNRS/UPVD, Musée de l'Homme, Paris, France – Musée de l'Homme – France
[7]McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge, UK – Royaume-Uni
[8]CEREGE, Aix-Marseille Université, CNRS, IRD, INRAE, Aix-en-Provence, France – Aix-Marseille Université, CNRS ESPACE UMR 7300 – France
[9]National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya – Kenya
[10]Histoire Naturelle des Humanités Préhistoriques (HNHP, UMR 7194), PaleoFED, MNHN/CNRS/UPVD, Musée de l'Homme, Paris, France – Musée de l'Homme – France
[11]Histoire Naturelle des Humanités Préhistoriques (HNHP, UMR 7194), PaleoFED, MNHN/CNRS/UPVD, Musée de l'Homme, Paris, France – Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle (MNHN), Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique - CNRS – France
[12]Department of Geology, Anna University, Chennai – Inde
[13]Department of Archaeology, University of Cambridge, UK – Royaume-Uni
[14]School of Archaeology, University of Oxford, UK – Royaume-Uni
[15]Histoire Naturelle des Humanités Préhistoriques (HNHP, UMR 7194), PaleoFED, MNHN/CNRS/UPVD, Musée de l'Homme, Paris, France – Musée de l'Homme – France
[16]KU Leuven Academic and Historial Heritage Office – Belgique
[17]Departamento de Prehistoria y Arqueología, UNED, Madrid, Spain – Espagne
[18]National Museums of Kenya – Kenya
[19]CNRS, UAR 3129 – UMIFRE 11 3 Maison Française d'Oxford, Oxford, UK – Royaume-Uni

*Intervenant

Résumé

The south-west part of the Turkana Basin remains one of the least explored areas in terms of Pleistocene archaeology. Marked by intense erosional processes, the region exhibits a complex geological history that directly impacts the preservation and visibility of Early and Middle Pleistocene archaeological records.
In this context, recent surveys conducted by the TRANS-EVOL team have led to the identification of two significant archaeological localities: Kanimangin and Kamilikol, situated 9 km apart. Despite their proximity, these sites present markedly different lithic assemblages and depositional contexts.

Kanimangin is characterized by an extensive surface scatter of lithic artifacts ranging from the Lower Paleolithic to the Later Stone Age. Although some elements are well-preserved-with instances of refitting-test excavations yielded mostly sterile results, suggesting extensive erosion of the original deposits. An exception is Trench AT4, which revealed approximately 62 lithic artifacts within sandy sediments and reddish-brown pockets surrounded by sandstone fragments. Faunal remains, primarily recovered from the surface but occasionally in situ, include aquatic and terrestrial taxa such as *Loxodonta adaurora*, *Palaeoloxodon recki*, *Panthera* sp., *Hyaena hyaena*, *Canis* sp. *Orycteropus afer*, *Equus grevyi*, *Kolpochoerus heseloni, Phacachoerus aethiopicus, Hippopotamus* spp. *Ourebia ourebi, Syncerus caffer*, *Aepyceros melampus*, *Alcelaphus buselaphus*, and various reptiles, fish, and amphibians.

In contrast, Kamilikol-located southwest of Kanimangin-presents a dense concentration of handaxes and cleavers, constituting the first major accumulation of large cutting tools recorded in the western part of the basin. Hammerstones, shaping flakes, and evidence of core and flake production have also been documented, consistent with an Acheulean occupation and suggesting a relatively constrained chronological span, with no indication of earlier or later components. Preliminary excavations confirm a stratified context originated from successive debris flows. Most faunal specimens were recovered from the surface and include both aquatic and terrestrial taxa-such as such as *Equus* sp., *Hippopotamus* sp.,*Alcelaphalus* sp., and various reptiles and fish, -without signs of anthropic modification.
This paper presents a comparative analysis of both sites to examine formation processes and assess their relevance to Early and Middle Pleistocene human occupation in the south-west part of the Turkana Basin.

Mots-Clés: Pleistocene, Archaeology, Taphonomy, site formation