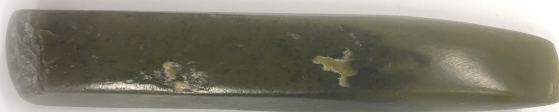


## The Jade of Europe during the neolithic

The use of jades ( jade-jadeite, and by extention omphacitite, fine grained eclogite and certain amphibolites) -extremely tough stones that are luminous, often translucent and capable of taking a magnificent polish- to make polished Neolithic objects has been known since the 19th century. The high italian Alp, and above all the Mont Viso massif, where proposed as source area ba Alexis Damour from as early as 1881, and this hypothesis was presented in more detail by Secondo Franchi, who mentionned in particular the massif of Mont Beigua, above Genoa.



0828 *Jadeite chisel*



0827 *Polished Jadeite Axe.*

Alpine jade were exploited from 5300 BC until practically the end of the Neolithic, with most of the objects produced beeing worktools, that is small polished axe and axeheads. The extraction methods initially involved fire-setting and flaking, and then, from the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium, fire-setting and laborious sawing using plaques of wood, sand and water, in order to produce longer objects and to make most economical use of a rare raw material. In comparison with the time needed to manufacture a flint axehead between 15 and 20 cm long ( 12 to 20 hours ), the time required to make an axehead of similar size from Alpine jade is much longer ( 30 to 70 hours ).



0825 *Axe polished and bushhammered on the cutting edge, omphacite*



0820 Encased jade axe, Lattrigen Nidau.



0821 View of the edge of a small jadeite axe

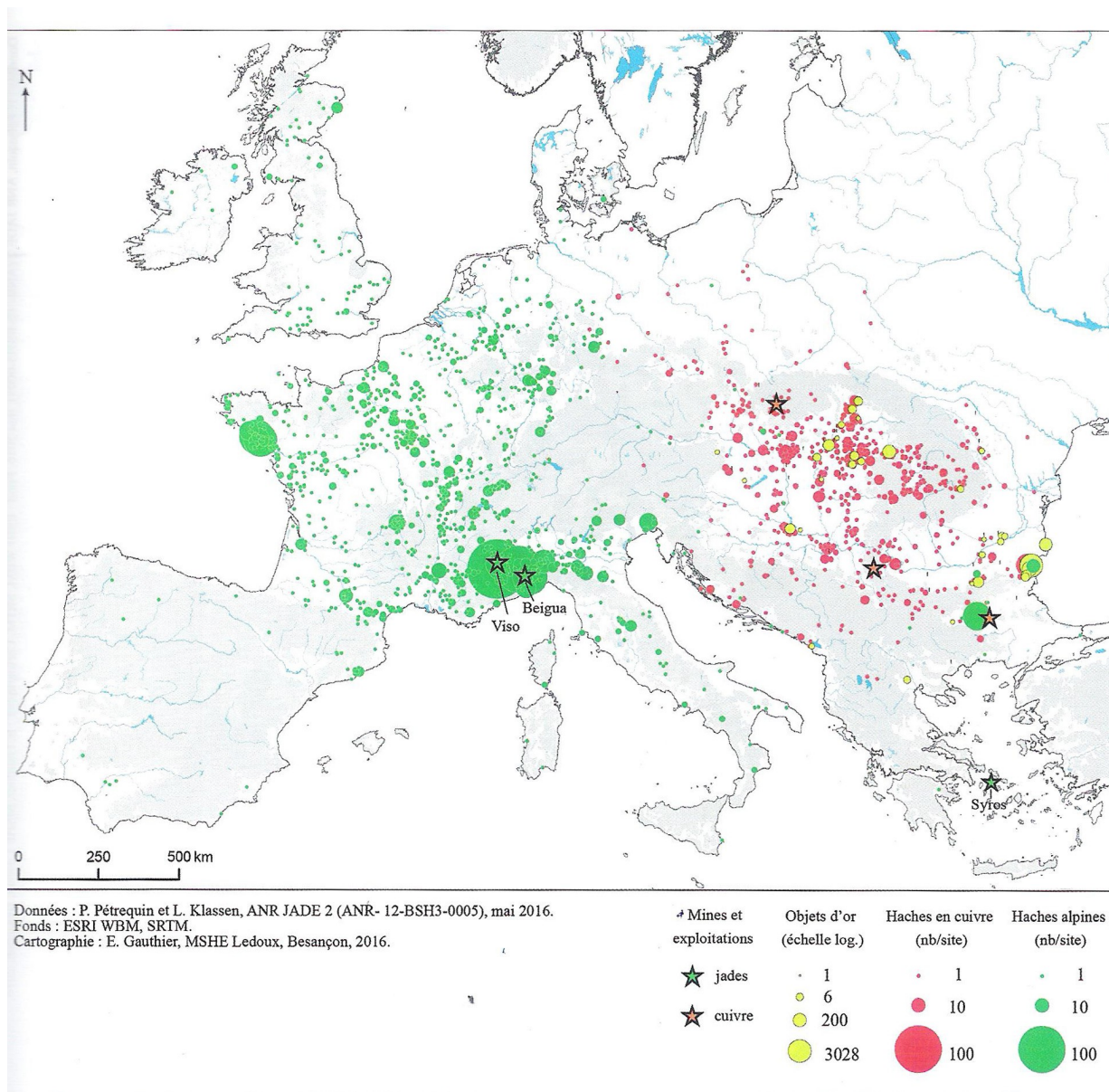


2- Bloc de pierre verte déjà scié, Forel VD.

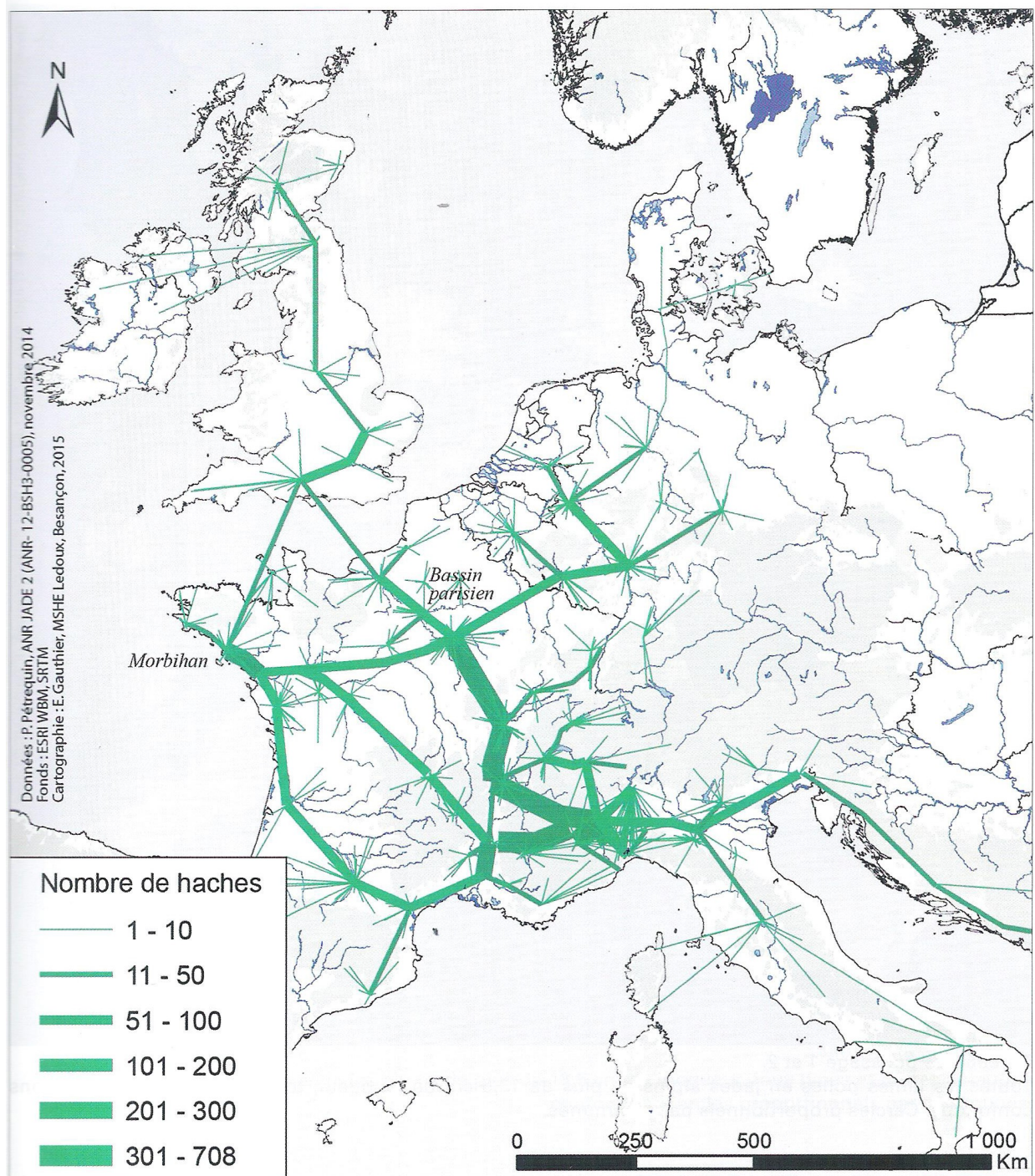
Gesägter Felsgestein, Forel VD.

0815 Use of the jade sawing technique already in the Neolithic period in Switzerland (i.e. around -3500-5000 BC).

These jade axeheads, which were far tougher than those of other rocks, were circulated in large numbers at distances up to 400 km. Beyond that, it appears that they circulated concurrently with other axeheads made of poorer quality. However, despite diminishing drastically in number beyond 400 km from source, some small axeheads of Alpin jade continue to circulate as far as the Atlantic and the North Sea to the north-west, and to similar distance to the east, to the shores of the Black Sea, where they are represented in the cemeteries of Varna and Durankulak in Bulgaria.



L'Europe du jade et l'Europe du cuivre.



Carte des flux, tous types et toutes datations confondus. Le Mont Viso a été pris comme point de départ.

*Source: Images (anciennes collections du Musée de Bienne)*

*Objets néolithiques en jade provenant des citées lacustres des lacs de Neuchâtel et Bienne  
Photographié par Peter Thomet et Michel Gratier.*

*Source: Texte et graphiques*

*JADE Objets-signes et interprétation sociales des jades alpins dans l'Europe néolithique.*

*Sous la direction de Pierre Pétrequin, Estelle Gauthier et Anne-marie Pétrequin.*

*Presses universitaires de Franche-Compte, Centre de recherche Archéologiques de la Vallée de l'Ain.*