
The technological system of the maritime hunter-fisher-gatherers of the Atlantic façade: a preliminary approach through use-wear analysis on knapped industries

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Résumé

The adaptation to the coastal environment of the maritime hunter-fisher-gatherer populations has been long time discussed by the archaeologist as a human and non-human relationship, in which the technological system is the link and the way to understand the human choices facing those particular biotopes. Indeed, archaeological and ethnographical data shows that specific techniques are implemented by these groups and are one of the motors of their socio-economical system and subsistence strategies. The question that arises then is if these choices are only due to a proper response to the coastal environment, different from the inland areas, or if there is also a cultural input foundation to these techniques. In this research we aim to address the question of the maritime hunter-fisher-gatherers technological choices, through the functional study of their knapped industries.

In the Atlantic European façade, around the Bay of Biscay, the Tévécien (Brittany, France) and the Asturian (Cantabrian region, Spain) Mesolithic cultures are good laboratories in which approach these questions. Using the methodology of the use-wear analysis based on the macro and microscopic examination of a large number of samples, the lithic assemblages from several shell-middens from Brittany (Beg-er-Vil, Tévécien and Hoëdic) and Asturias (El Mazo and El Toral III) have been studied. Furthermore, analytical experimentations were carried out in order to infer the mechanics of the formation of the archaeological use-wear in those contexts.

This study has led us to numerous functional results of these knapped industries. For example, the work of the vegetal matters seems to be as present as in other Mesolithic terrestrial contexts, but with a certain variability of these wears. As for the tools associated to the animal resource activities, the hunting and butchering of large mammals were carried out with particular productions, with, again, certain variability in the patterns of the wears. No clear use-wear pattern could be related to the fishing or shell-fishing techniques. These variabilities observed in the use-wears are the basement of the discussion around the technological choices of the maritime hunter-fisher-gatherer groups.

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Mots-Clés: Mesolithic, shell middens, technology, lithics, functional analysis