Evolution of stone tool hafting in the Palaeolithic

From 2013-01-01 to 2017-12-31, closed project

Objective

“Palaeolithic stone tool hafting has been considered important for decades, both in terms of technological and cognitive evolutions, but it has been hard to design methods that allow detailed insight into the appearance of hafting and its evolution through time. The main reason is that handles were manufactured from organic materials and these are only rarely preserved. The issue thus appears to largely escapes us, but as finds become more and more numerous, promising new techniques have also been developed, which allow a more detailed investigation of hafting. It has been demonstrated that a microscopic investigation of stone tools allows a distinction between tools that were used in the hand and those that were mounted in/on a handle, as well as an interpretation of the hafting arrangement. Knowing whether and how stone tools were hafted provides crucial data for improving our understanding of past human behaviour. It is invaluable for a better comprehension of technological evolutions, it provides insight into the organic tool component that is rarely preserved, and it allows understanding the complete life cycle of stone tools. The goal of this research project is to gain insights in the appearance, regional and chronological variability, and evolution of Palaeolithic stone tool hafting in Europe and the remaining Old World through a comprehensive functional investigation of key sites, which includes the analysis of wear traces and residues, bio/physico-chemical analyses, next to an elaborate experimental program. The proposed project starts from the conviction that many of the changes observed during the Palaeolithic can be understood based on functional data. Consequently, this research project will contribute significantly to our understanding of archaeological assemblages and their variability, and of past human behaviour and its evolution through time.”

Related information

Report Summaries

Final Report Summary - EVO-HAFT (Evolution of stone tool hafting in the Palaeolithic)

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