specialized local tradition linked to, but not identical with, those from adjacent areas.


ARTICLES

THE PREHISTORIC SOCIETY SPRING CONFERENCE 1982: AN AFTERVIEW

by Roger Jacobs

So far I have not only one lithic analyst who claims not to have been at this meeting on 'The Archaeology of Hunter-Gatherers' held at the Museum of London on the 20th-21st March. Other faces whom I did not see could easily have been lost among the more than two hundred people whose names appeared on the list of delegates. Perhaps this will be remembered as the 'Year of the Conjoins'. A competition clearly won by Tony Marks with the reduction sequences from his remarkable site at Boker Tachit in the Negev. The papers presented can perhaps best be grouped under a number of topical headings.

Home and 'near Home'

Nick Barton and Chris Bergman gave the first results of their work at the Mace/Campbell site. They reported conjoins, not in the expected sequence. They stressed the individuality of the microlithic populations from Lough Boora and Mount Sandel, both dated about 9000 years ago, and the change that came over Irish lithic industries at about 8000 bp towards a 'larger blade and flake' technology. They suggested that this transformation mirrored a population that had built itself up to such a level - by analogy with Tasmania perhaps as high as a thousand - that necessary contact with an outside world had become minimal. He incorporated into this Irish 'social territory' the Isle of Man, further away than adjacent parts of Scotland, but too small to have maintained a viable population structure in isolation.

Recent work in Northern Ireland suggests the activities of task groups in procuring raw materials from coastal sources for use inland, with the redistribution of flint helping towards an estimation of annual territory size.

Relevant also to the British Isles was perhaps the most speculative paper to be offered at the Conference - 'Living with the bears: regional variation in the European palaeolithic', by Clive Gamble. In this contribution he developed a scenario 'Down by the riverside' within which man played a bit-part instead of his more accustomed role as superstar. A rarity of large carnivores and human fossils in riverside deposits in western Europe - 'Swanscombe' is one of two exceptions - is a reflection of the high competition in this part of the landscape. Rather than being consumed at a riverside kill, prey was transported back to dens to be enjoyed at leisure, or at least in peace. Handaxes, both as artefacts and as predictable sources of flakes, allowed man the speed to take advantage of reindeer butchery and natural mortalities. In the second part of his paper, permafrost was taken as encouraging the incidence of cave use for 'denning' in late Devensian Europe. A high incidence of denning correlated with the interpretation of faunas from pliistocene findspots, especially those of distinguishing between the various potential agents of accumulation, she argued that the butchery patterns observed on the Ossom's Cave reindeer were fully consistent with human (springtime) activity. Taking the discussion onto a more regional level, she speculated on annual patterns of reindeer movement at this time, doubting the hypothesis that the populations of reindeer which summered in Britain in the late Devensian were the same as those which wintered in northern Germany and Denmark. The light weight of reindeer made it probable that these might be brought back to site for dismemberment, while other potentially greater meat contributors would be butchered at the kill and away from where archaeologists would be likely to excavate. Reindeer economies?

A similar point was made by Peter Woodman in a paper entitled 'Mobility and territoriality in the Irish mesolithic'. He hypothesized that with curtailment of artefacts, discard on the uplands of Northern Ireland might be too low to register archaeologically. Peter stressed the individuality of, but similarities between, microlithic populations from Lough Boora and Mount Sandel, both dated about 9000 years ago, and the change that came over Irish lithic industries at about 8000 bp towards a 'larger blade and flake' technology. He suggested that this transformation mirrored a population that had built itself up to such a level - by analogy with Tasmania perhaps as high as a thousand - that necessary contact with an outside world had become minimal. He incorporated into this Irish 'social territory' the Isle of Man, further away than adjacent parts of Scotland, but too small to have maintained a viable population structure in isolation.

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with a low discard of artefacts - if other carnivores were 'having it hard' this far north in Europe, so too was man!

Physical anthropology and the middle to upper palaeolithic transition

Professor Yves Coppens summarized recent physical anthropological data deriving from current work in East Africa. Particularly significant were two claims: firstly, for *A. afarensis* at the base of the Omo sequence; secondly, for the identification of *Homo* at Kanapoi and Hadar up to four million years ago. Tool-making becomes apparent between three and two and a half million years ago. Reassuringly, *Homo* may still be seen as the most likely candidate for the activity!

At the other end of the hominin spectrum, Chris Stringer discussed recent work on the 'Neanderthal Problem' and detailed the fossil evidence for the evolution of a Neanderthal morphology in Europe and southwest Asia. Clearly simple models that regarded Neanderthals as locally evolving toward modern man in both Europe and southwest Asia appear inappropriate, particularly when some Neanderthal-type fossils such as that from St Césaire can be shown to be later in date than fossils of modern man from elsewhere in Europe. Recent work also discounts facile correlations between hominid morphology and technology. A consideration of the chronology of the earliest known 'modern' fossils from southern Africa suggests these to be considerably older than their earliest grade equivalents in southwest Asia or Europe. Taken with Trinkhaus' demonstration that in limb proportions the earliest modern man fossils from Europe are warm-climate adapted, and Stringer's conclusion that the distance between European Neanderthal and Cro Magnon fossils is greater than between Skhul and Qafzeh and Cro Magnon fossils, these South African fossils take on new significance. It remains to clarify the chronology and technological associations of the earliest modern man fossils in Europe.

Clearly, however, preceding such modern man fossils, and indeed seemingly of Rissian age, was the use of the Pinogord site of the Abri Vaufrey discussed by Jean-Philippe Rigaud in his contribution to the Conference. Distant from a local source of water, facing west, and except for the afternooned dark and cold, the Abri Vaufrey with its Mousterian-type tool-kit is seen as a task-specific site, perhaps satellite to the more advantageously placed Combe Grenal within which was discarded an Acheulian flint assemblage. Consistent with such a model is the import of finished artefacts knapped elsewhere and a rarity of firespots and artificial features.

While Rigaud described a site used when a Neanderthal morphologically still evolving, the open site of Boker Tachtit in the Negev was occupied only some 45,000 years ago at the time of, or more probably after, modern-type man had appeared in southwest Asia. Here Tony Marks was able to conjoin 22% of the tool-kit pieces, reconstructing some 250 artefacts in 270 sequences from four occupation levels and with up to 50 to 90 removals being fitted to a single core. This con-

joining revealed a pattern within which, while in the lower levels of the site cores were being brought and taken away, in the upper levels it was removals from these that were being so treated. This change is linked to a pattern of increased mobility with the introduction of tools developed on removals rather than of cores.

The reduction strategy used resulted in the production of Levallois points from bipolar cores initiated by the removal of between one and three crested pieces. Removals were converted into Bâlevré points, scrapers, truncations, and burins on truncations, the technology of Boker Tachtit is thus far more convincingly transitional between the middle and upper palaeolithic than the Emir of the late Professor Dorothy Garrod, made up of an actual mixture of older and younger palaeolithic artefacts.

New Continents

For North America Richard Morlan discussed the finding of fractured bones in the Alaskan Old Crow Basin, believed to be of human creation and up to 80000 years in age. Sceptics could turn to recent articles on bone pseudo-artefacts and plausibly argue that the earliest convincingly human tool from Alaska was a caribou tibia fleshed dated to about 27000 years ago - if this is not developed upon fossil bone, Stone artefacts - burins on blades - appear at the Blue Fish Caves at least 18000 years ago. Settlement of Alaska by 80000 years ago leaves unexplained the absence of carved stone artefacts in the archaeological debris on the Russian side of the Bering Straits, while the lack of accompanying stone artefacts on the Alaskan side appears curious.

For Australia James O'Connell discussed the operation of patch choice among Alyawara-speaking kangaroo-hunters - that is the way in which the exploitation of patches, when resources are differently distributed in time and abundance, varies with yield and distance from base sites. Areas of highest resources will be exploited first, with patches with low returns being used only when yields from the better patches fail. While considered in its Australian context, the patch-choice may help to explain the extremely discrete distribution of early mesolithic material in the British Isles.

General

Both Diane Gifford and Kathy Schick discussed site formation using modern examples as pointers to what may have happened in the past. Kathy Schick in particular discussed the separation of artefact populations into size and shape groups as a result of fluvial activity, and one was left wondering how much of the variability detected between populations of lower palaeolithic artefacts in northwestern Europe could be so generated.

Polly Wiessner discussed the way style among metal projectile points employed by Kalahari San bushmen conveyed information about the user. Style supported identity and major
Stylistic variations are between the level of linguistic groups. Such stylistic variation appears not dissimilar to that recognised by a number of workers among European post-glacial arrowheads.

The impression left by the Conference was of the disparity of approaches to the prehistoric past being pursued. Its success was that each of these approaches had something to offer in tackling the problems of European and even British early archaeology. The participants felt well satisfied.

Quartzite pebble-chopper-tools from coastal sites in South Devon

By Ted Masson Phillips

The object of this short paper is to draw attention to some pebble choppers of quartzite which occur on coastal sites in the South Hams area of Devon, and which are concentrated in the immediate vicinity of Lannacombe Beach (SX 802372) where at least thirty examples have been found in the ploughsoil of small fields on the low cliffs formed from thick deposits of 'head', resting upon a wave-cut schist platform at 3.5m O.D., attributed to the Epi-monastirian or first interstadial of the last glaciation (Zeuner 1959, 234; 1964, 242). The 'head' is believed to represent the periglacial solifluction deposits of the ensuing cold period or periods (Mottershead 1961).

At Lannacombe a copious stream provides fresh water, and this may account for the numerous finds on the small fields on either side of the beach. In addition these artefacts may be found all along the coast from Prawle Point to Start Point; on an inland site (SX 772367) close to a spring at 130m O.D. and about a mile from the sea, to the west of the village of East Prawle; and on a coastal plateau at 120m O.D. at Bolberry Down (SX 685385) west of Bolt Head. It is, of course, possible that they occur in other places along the coastal belt but their presence only becomes known at those points where small fields, subject to ploughing, have been established. These fields were actively worked for early vegetables during and after the last war, but are no longer cultivated and have returned to grassland. A complete description of the Lannacombe sites, with an account of the geomorphology of the area and details of the chopper-tools found, has been published by the author (Phillips 1959).

Fig. 1 illustrates a typical example of a bifacially-flaked chopper-tool from Lannacombe (east), made from a discoidal pebble of quartzite from a local beach. The ultimate source of these pebbles, which occur in some quantity on the beaches, is apparently the Bunter pebble-beds of the Trias, exposed in the floor of the English Channel, to the south-west of the area. Fig. 2 illustrates a primary waste flake, also from Lannacombe (east), detached in the manufacture of a pebble chopper. Such flakes occur in the ploughsoil with the choppers themselves and demonstrate that the tools were made in situ. It should perhaps be emphasised that, in spite of careful search, no artefacts have been found in the exposures of 'head' below the soil layer.