

Stone Age Sites In The Making: Experiments In The Formation And Transformation Of Archaeological Occ

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A MIDDLE STONE AGE ASSEMBLAGE WITH DISCOID LITHIC TECHNOLOGY FROM ETEMBA 14, ERONGO MOUNTAINS, NORTHERN NAMIBIA

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Abstract

Etimba 14 was excavated in two seasons (1988 and 1984) and yielded a stratigraphic sequence with Later Stone Age (LSA) and Middle Stone Age (MSA) material. Human remains discovered among material of the first excavation had been assigned to the MSA complex. The diachronic analysis of material from the second excavation showed that 1) the transition correlates with the sedimentological change from Unit IV to V; contrary to previous interpretations; 2) the interface most probably reflects a considerable time span; 3) the human cranial fragments belong to the LSA complex; 4) an undisturbed MSA layer was identified at the base of the second excavation.

A technological analysis of the MSA assemblage showed that discoidal reduction was the prevailing concept, independent of the raw material used. Cores made out of quartz show additionally a simple, unipolar reduction. Pointed flakes (pseudo-Levallois points) are frequent; blades are irregular and very scarce. The reconstruction of the chaîne opératoire allows some suggestions about the activities that took place on site. Early MSA assemblages from the south-western part of Namibia show similar technological features. Whether the discoid technology used at Etimba 14 is a chronological marker or a local expression of functional or economic needs requires further research.

Résumé

Etimba 14 a été fouillé pendant deux saisons (1988 et 1984) et a livré une séquence stratigraphique avec un niveau du Late Stone Age (LSA) et Middle Stone Age (MSA). Les restes humains, découverts ultérieurement dans le matériel de la première fouille, ont été attribués au complexe du MSA. L'analyse diachronique du matériel de la deuxième fouille a permis de montrer que : 1) contrairement aux interprétations précédentes, la transition (MSA-LSA) correspond au changement sédimentologique d'unité IV à unité V; 2) il paraît hautement probable que la surface de séparation représente un laps de temps remarquable; 3) les fragments du crâne humain appartiennent à la séquence du LSA; 4) une couche intacte du MSA a été identifiée à la base de la deuxième fouille.

Une analyse technologique du complexe MSA a montré que la réduction discoïde était la méthode la plus courante, indépendamment de l'amatériau première utilisée. En outre, quelques nucléus de quartz portent les stigmates d'une réduction simple et unipolaire. Les éclats-crêtes (Pointes pseudo-Levallois) sont fréquents; les lames, très gutulières, sont rares. La reconstruction de la chaîne opératoire a permis de formuler quelques hypothèses sur les activités pendant l'occupation. Les assemblages technologiques dans des accumulations du Early MSA, trouvé au sud-ouest de Namibie, sont comparable avec celles trouvées à Etimba 14. Déterminer si la technique discoïde, utilisée à Etimba 14, peut constituer un marqueur chronologique ou une expression locale liée à de besoins fonctionnels ou économiques nécessitera de nouvelles analyses.

Keywords: Middle Stone Age, Namibia, lithic analysis, chaîne opératoire, discoid concept

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