
The lithic technology at Maomaodong Rockshelter, southwestern China: diversity and creativity of the cobble tool industry in a sub-tropical environment during the late Late Pleistocene

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Abstract

Since the 1940s when Hallam L. Movius divided the Paleolithic cultures into two contrasting regions across the old world, the lithic technology in East Asia was usually considered as a different and independent phenomenon compared with its western counterparts. In particular, the persistence of the cobble tool industry dominated by chopper-chopping tools in southern China from the Early Pleistocene to the Early-Middle Holocene gives researchers an impression that lithic technology in this area is very simple, primitive, changeless and lack of creativity. However, with much fieldwork and research in the past 20 years, such impression was largely changed due to remarkable progress including the discovery of the bifacial industry in Bose, Guangxi, and the finding of Hoabinhian sites in Yunnan Province, which enriched our understanding about the diversity of the cobble tool industry in this region. As one part of our research project on the technology of the lithic industry in southern China, a new technological analysis on the lithic assemblage of Maomaodong Rockshelter on the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau has revealed certain creativity and diversity about the lithic technology, especially the abundant bipolar products resulting from the concept of *split (bipolar flaking on strictly selected cobbles and pebbles)*. This site dates to the Late Pleistocene-Early Holocene transition while similar technology had been reported at other sites, among which the earliest could be traced back to about 50 ka in this region. The new analysis creates new possibility to discuss the origin of a new technological concept in southwestern China under a sub-tropical environment during the late Late Pleistocene and its influence on the nearby regions.

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