
Bladelet production in the Initial Upper Paleolithic in the Levant: examination of bladelet frequency, technology, and raw material economy

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Résumé

Carinated technology and bladelet production characterize lithic assemblages of the Early Upper Paleolithic (EUP, including the Ahmarian and the Levantine Aurignacian) in the Levant. However, we know little about how these technologies emerged and became widespread in the Levant. The Ahmarian technology is generally considered to have originated from the preceding Initial Upper Paleolithic (IUP) on the basis of techno-typological continuity represented by Upper Paleolithic tool types (e.g., end-scrapers and burins) and prismatic core technology for blade production. On the other hand, there are yet few studies about bladelet technology in the Levantine IUP and its relevance to the EUP bladelet technology. In this presentation, I will first present quantitative data showing the increase of bladelets from the IUP to the EUP by using the data sets of frequencies and dimensions of blade/lets from ca. 20 assemblages in the Levant. Several Middle Paleolithic assemblages will also be used for comparison to characterize the bladelet occurrences in the IUP. I will then examine more specific technological characteristics for bladelet production in the IUP by presenting several bladelet cores-on-flakes that includes examples called ‘burin-cores’. Because EUP bladelet cores (whether carinated pieces or narrow fronted cores) are often made on flake blanks, it would be reasonable to hypothesize that the IUP bladelet cores-on-flakes represent one of technological predecessors of the fully fledged bladelet technology in the EUP.

Finally, I will discuss changes in mobility patterns since the late MP to the UP as possible conditions, in which miniaturization of blade blanks became beneficial. The employment of bladelet technology is likely to have facilitated the transportability of tools/blanks and the efficient consumption of raw material, which were implemented flexibly in response to variable conditions of raw material availability, mobility, and provisioning strategies.

Mots-Clés: Levant, Upper Paleolithic, Lithic technology, Bladelet

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