
Rethinking the Late Paleolithic of Bohemia: A Comparative Perspective on Lithic Material Selection and Transport

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Résumé

Understanding changes within Pleistocene hunter-gatherer communities can be difficult, and the economy of raw material transport is often the best means through which this can be observed. This is the case throughout the prehistory of Central Europe, and particularly in Bohemia where there is a lack of high quality lithic material. In some periods, raw material was important from distant sources; other periods are marked by a shift to lower quality local sources. In this paper, we focus on the Late Paleolithic, and analyze the composition of raw material types represented in published assemblages. Comparing observed patterns to preceding and consecutive periods provides insight on shifts in mobility and production strategies. During the Upper Paleolithic, longer blade production required the import of high quality materials. During the Mesolithic, production of microliths was dominated by locally available material. We shall demonstrate that the Late Paleolithic, which lasted about 2000 years, marked a very different pattern altogether, and will track the origins of this shift. Late Palaeolithic raw material use is generally characterised by combination of Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic composition. Focus on the well dated collections should help us to pinpoint the spot, when this change appeared. The paucity of C14 dates associated with the Late Paleolithic of Bohemia, we argue, has suppressed understandings important changes in regional interaction and local production practices. Tracing shifts in material choices, as a result, may be an important starting point to new understandings of developmental trajectories immediately prior to the Holocene.

Mots-Clés: Late Palaeolithics, Raw material sourcing, Central Europe, Bohemia, Longue Durée

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