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# Going through the change: The acculturation process of the Eastern Maghreb communities. The case of Kef Hamda, Makhtar, Tunisia

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## Résumé

Kef Hamda is an open-air site located on a terrace along the el Garia crest of the Tunisian Ridge, ca. 20 km south from Makhtar. The site was discovered and firstly investigated in 1973 by Jamel Zoughlami who attributed it to an Upper Capsian horizon. In order to better define its chrono-cultural sequence, the site was reinvestigated in 2014 in the framework of works carried out by the Tunisian-Italian Archaeological Project in Northern Tunisia. Two trenches were excavated revealing a 120 cm stratigraphic sequence, made up of eleven occupational layers, containing remains of different structures and features remains related to possible domestic activities. *Quercus* sp. acorns and *Pinus halepensis* seeds excavated from the deposit were radiocarbon dated from the end of 10th / beginning of the 9th to the first half of the 8th millennia cal. BP. The poorly preserved faunal remains revealed the presence of wild species only; among these, small and medium-size bovinds, Alcelaphini, gazelles, and some leporids are present. The presence of eggshell sherds suggested some exploitation of ostriches. Helicidae shells, likely consumed as food, are present throughout the sequence. The systematic analysis of charred seeds and wood charcoal (see the other presentation in this session by Morales et al.) only revealed the presence of wild taxa. The lithic products, primarily manufactured using flint, show a marked unidirectional lamellar production for manufacturing backed bladelets, geometric tools, notches, and denticulates. Pressure technique is definitely present from layer 2 of the sequence. A local variety of limestone was also exploited, mainly through a hard hammer direct percussion technique for the production of more expedient tools on flake. An obsidian flake, possibly from Pantelleria,

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was also recovered. The last three layers of the sequence, dated to the first half of the 8th millennium BP, also yielded pottery. When preserved, the surfaces are well finished, slipped, smoothed, and burnished. Only one sherd, coming from the uppermost layer, was decorated. Seven sherds underwent organic residue analysis, with results from three sherds suggesting the processing of ruminant carcass products in two vessels and mixed ruminant and non-ruminant animal products in the third. Whilst the exploitation of food resources did not highlight any particular trend or change over the sequence, the analysis of the material culture from Kef Hamda revealed a clear acculturation process of the local Upper Capsian communities of hunter-gatherers, who adopted pressure technique for lamellar production from the beginning of the 9th millennium BC, and pottery from the first half of the 8th millennium BP. Far-flung, possible maritime, contacts are also witnessed by the presence of obsidian artefacts from Pantelleria.

**Mots-Clés:** Epipalaeolithic, Upper Capsian, Acculturation, Hunting gathering economies