
Early Middle Stone Age occupations in the atlantic southern Morocco and implications for the origins of modern human behaviour

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Résumé

Recent survey work in the south of Morocco has revealed the presence of many MSA open air sites which though not well dated (Arzarello et al., 2013) may correlate with the relatively humid conditions that prevailed 130,000 years ago (Coulthard et al., 2013). A previous survey in the southeast of Morocco clearly shows palaeo-rivers, which could have acted as corridors for human migrations.

This new project in Essaouira area allows for the first time an evaluation of a site with a deep, well-stratified sequence in southern Morocco and place it within an environmental context that includes river systems, past shorelines and associated ecosystems. Significant results could be obtained concerning the trans-Saharan contacts since the cave is only 500 km from the border of the Sahara. The sites in the southern Atlantic Morocco provide well-preserved evidence on the archaeology of early *Homo sapiens* and this new project focuses on the how environmental factors such as proximity to the coast or a river or climate change influenced early human movements and distributions. Archaeological sites are placed in context to past sea level variations and proximity to water and ecological resources to better understand human-landscape interactions and this data base will allow for an evaluation of site distribution in southwestern Morocco. In this paper we will also present issues concerning the changes in the lithic assemblages within the MSA technology to test if they are related to changes in climate and environment or to lithic raw material procurement.

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Mots-Clés: Early Middle Stone Age, occupations, atlantic southern Morocco, origins, modern human, behaviour