

Tool use and hafting in the Middle Palaeolithic of North Africa: preliminary results of an on-going use-wear analysis on the Mousterian/Aterian assemblages of Ifri n'Ammar (Morocco)

The rock shelter of Ifri n'Ammar has a remarkable stratigraphy with alternating Mousterian and Aterian occupations within more than 6 meters of sediments dated from MIS 6 to 5a. The stratigraphy attributed to the Middle-Palaeolithic is divided in two units, separated by a calcareous crust, where upper and lower Aterian occupations can be identified.

Previous studies have characterised Aterian and Mousterian cultures on a typological and technological basis. Functional data on lithic industries from the Middle Palaeolithic in northern Africa is at present very scarce and detailed studies of the production, hafting and use of tools, particularly tanged pieces, have not yet been conducted.

Preliminary results of an on-going use-wear analysis of Middle Palaeolithic stone tools from the site of Ifri n'Ammar will be presented. Both low and high magnifications are combined for examining the macro- and microscopic wear traces on the stone tools. The interpretation of the archaeological material is based on comparisons with an experimental reference collection. The long-term goal of the study is to understand how stone tools were used, whether hafted stone tools existed at the site and how these functional parameters compare to the typo-technological characteristics of the different assemblages and how they may have influenced assemblage variability.

Keywords: Middle Palaeolithic, Ifri n'Ammar, Aterian, Mousterian, use-wear, hafting, tanged tools