
Diachronic Trends in Occupation Intensity of the Epipaleolithic Site of Neve David (Mount Carmel, Israel): A Multi-proxy Approach

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Résumé

The shift from mobile hunting-gathering lifeways to sedentism has been a major research topic for more than a century, and the Natufian culture (ca. 15,000-11,600 cal. BP) has been commonly recognized as the earliest sedentary or semi-sedentary society in the Levant. Historically, the remarkably rich Natufian material remains, combined with certain research biases, turned this culture into a somewhat "scene-stealer" in the big picture of the Levantine Epipaleolithic sequence. However, data from earlier Epipaleolithic sites continuously suggest a more complex scenario. Neve David (ND), a key site of the Middle Epipaleolithic Geometric Kebaran entity (ca. 18,000-15,000 cal. BP) located in Mount Carmel (Israel), is now under renewed excavations. Here, we use the ND lithic assemblage from a meter-deep section, totaling 6,085 pieces without counting debris, to explore diachronic trends in occupation intensity. Drawing upon the classical theoretical frameworks of cultural transmission and technological organization, we employed four main indices as proxies: 1) lithic volumetric density, 2) burnt artifacts volumetric density, 3) microlith shape variation, and 4) tool/blank ratio. Three of the four indices indicate a general trend of increasing occupation intensity in ND through time, while the fourth (tool/blank ratio) does not provide a clear-cut trend, the reason for which will also be briefly discussed in our paper. Despite inherent archaeological sampling biases, we suggest that our results may indicate the summed human staying time at ND was gradually increasing during the depositional time of this section. Meanwhile, the high-resolution dating and related geoarchaeological studies are also in progress, which will help us understand the site formation process and thereby setting a limit on the level of generalization of our results.

Mots-Clés: Site Occupation Intensity, Lithic Assemblages, Neve David, Levantine Epipaleolithic

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