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# The settlement system of Mount Carmel (Israel) at the threshold of agriculture as reflected in Late Natufian flint assemblages

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## Résumé

The Late Natufian culture played a pivotal role in the transition from hunting-gathering to agricultural economies and sedentary settlements in the Levant. Among the rich material remains, the flint assemblages are commonly used to define Natufian phases, as well as to reconstruct daily activities at the sites and to a certain extent landscape use and settlement patterns.

El-Wad Terrace (a habitation site) and Raqefet Cave (a burial site) are two Natufian sites located on Mount Carmel, Israel, at the heart of the Natufian 'core area'. Although the two sites are located on the same mountain range they are situated in different ecological niches. It has been frequently held that all contemporaneous Natufian sites in Mount Carmel belong to one social framework.

The purpose of the current study is to examine the Late Natufian settlement system in Mount Carmel as expressed by similarities and differences between the el-Wad Terrace and Raqefet Cave flint assemblages (two case studies). The analysis focuses on selected technological characteristics, raw material classification and sourcing, and indices of breakage and trampling.

Preliminary results show a general resemblance between the two assemblages, with both encompassing all the *chaîne opératoire* stages and the same tool types. However, apparent differences between the assemblages are observed. First, although the same raw materials are used at both sites, the frequencies of each vary considerably. Second, there are apparent differences in the reduction sequences used at each site. Third, the amount of secondary processing and frequencies of the final products (tool types) also show marked differences. Fourth, breakage frequencies and trampling also reflect profound differences.

Although the contemporaneous habitation site (el-Wad Terrace) and burial cave (Raqefet Cave) are rather close geographically, the clear differences in their flint assemblages are discussed not only in terms of site function, but also in the wider context of whether they were part of the same social network and sharing the same territory.

**Mots-Clés:** Natufian culture, Mount Carmel, flint assemblages, Settlement system

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