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# TECHNOLOGY AND FUNCTION OF LITHIC AND ORGANIC TOOLS IN PREHISTORIC ISLAND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Alfred Pawlik\*<sup>†1</sup> and Riczar Fuentes\*<sup>‡2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of the Philippines Archaeological Studies Program – Philippines

<sup>2</sup>The Role of Culture in Early Expansions of Humans, University of Tübingen (ROCEEH) – Germany

## Abstract

*Recent traceological studies of Late Pleistocene and early Holocene assemblages in Island Southeast Asia show that seemingly simple lithic flakes were used for a large variety of complex tasks, including plant processing and as hafted armatures for composite tools. In addition, shell tools made from marine gastropods and bivalves, and the presence of bone technology and polished bone tools suggest an efficient use of alternative raw materials to complement or even replace stone tools in areas without, or with limited, chert sources. Fishing tools made of shell and bone in form of hooks and gorges as well as fully ground bone points appear from the Late Pleistocene onwards and c. 35,000 years ago until the early/mid Holocene across Island Southeast Asia while the first edge-ground shell adzes have been dated to the early Holocene and are found in sites ranging from the western Philippine islands to Island Melanesia and as far as the Bismarck Archipelago. This paper presents the traceological analysis of artefacts from several sites near the coast in Sulawesi and the Philippines and discusses their uses in a functional and regional context. The identified traces suggest an increase in the technological and behavioural complexity of the people occupying those sites since the Late Pleistocene. This development is associated with a new and distinct set of activities and the appearance of an organic and lithic technology that might reflect an increasing adaptation to maritime environments. The intentional tool preparation specifically for the purpose of plant processing and the increasing intensity of those activities during the Terminal Pleistocene and Early Holocene is quite extraordinary and distinctive for prehistoric technologies and activities in Island Southeast Asia.*

**Keywords:** Southeast Asia, usewear, missing types, specialization, plant processing, organic tools

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\*Speaker

<sup>†</sup>Corresponding author: [afpawlik@gmail.com](mailto:afpawlik@gmail.com)

<sup>‡</sup>Corresponding author: [riczarfuentes@gmail.com](mailto:riczarfuentes@gmail.com)