
New fashions, new cherts: the emergence of Evaporitic varieties in the Ebro Basin

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Résumé

The Ebro Basin is one of the richest regions for the exploitation of siliceous raw materials in SW Europe. In the central plains massive quantities of good-quality Neogene chert (Monegros variety) are easily available both in primary and secondary position. As a matter of fact, it was intensely exploited in prehistoric times, but also in recent periods when industrial-scale gunflint production took place. This chert was employed since the Paleolithic to knap selected tools (burins, projectile points) in distant contexts where not-so-good local varieties were exploited for common lithic elements. But in the central territory of the Ebro Basin, sometimes in the very locations where Monegros chert appears, there is another variety whose exploitation only start in the Early Neolithic: the Evaporitic chert. More tenacious than the Monegros type, it was frequently exploited to obtain blades that eventually were transformed in the characteristic double-bevelled geometric microliths that became fashionable at the same time than the first examples of pottery. The frequent thermal treatment that those blades and microliths present suggests that Evaporitic chert was chosen by prehistoric knappers for its good response to pressure retouch after that treatment. This communication presents the results of an experimental protocol that tries to discern if, as supposed, Evaporitic cherts are better than Monegros chert for making double-bevelled microliths from heated blades.

Mots-Clés: Ebro Basin, Lithic raw materials, Evaporitic chert, Experimentation, Heat treatment, Double, bevelled microliths

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