
Specialization and access to technical knowledge: knapping learning at Casa Montero (Spain) and Jablones (France) Neolithic mines

Nuria Castañeda*¹

¹Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM) – Ciudad Universitaria de Cantoblanco · 28049 Madrid,
Spain

Abstract

The aim of this work is to compare of the learning processes between two different lithic productions: Ancient Neolithic blade production at Casa Montero (Spain) and axe production at the Middle and Late Neolithic flint mines of Jablones and Flins-sur-Seine (France). Although both productions took place in the context of flint extraction, they represent two substantially different historical frameworks.

Our hypothesis is that the increase in production specialization is associated with limited access to technical knowledge and that those limitations would be reflected in mining contexts. From a methodological point of view, the criteria for recognizing skills are not universal and they have been adapted to both productions, taking into account the need for comparability. Besides the selection and execution mistakes due to lack of skill that are present in both mines, the main difficulty that novice knappers had to confront at Casa Montero was the premature abandonment of the core reduction. However, in axe production from Jablones and Flins-sur-Seine, the challenge was to deal with three dimension symmetry and size.

This work also considers aspects of knapping learning such as the age of initiation and whether it is possible to recognize different social positions between knappers and the rest of the group. In comparison with Casa Montero, a more ancient mine, with a moderately specialized blade production, a less complex communitarian social context and a more generalized access to technical knowledge, the analyzed French mines allow consideration about which factors were responsible for restrictions in the access to knowledge.

Keywords: Neolithic, knapping learning, flint mines, blade production, stone axes

*Speaker