
Understanding Palaeolithic social identity in the Eastern Adriatic through the lens of technological, use-wear and residue analyses. The case of Vlakno cave (Dugi otok, Croatia)

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Résumé

Over the last four decades, archaeologists have widely explored different aspects of prehistoric symbolic technology and, particularly, the evolutionary implications of the use of bodily ornamentation (e.g. beads, pendants, appliqués and pigments) in ancient forager societies. In the Eastern Adriatic region different types of ornaments were recovered at Palaeolithic and/or Mesolithic sites, most of which are located in Croatia. Out of these sites, Vlakno cave on the island of Dugi otok yielded the richest collection of portable art in the whole Eastern Adriatic region. The rich and unique repertoire of symbolic technology from Vlakno cave is composed of decorated tools, ornaments and small carved anthropomorphic figurine. Beads and pendants made out of animal teeth, marine and freshwater gastropods shells are the most abundant findings. Yet forager symbolic behavior at Vlakno cave is also outlined by other types of findings such as two engraved fragments of chert nodules dated to ca.14 500 cal. BP. So far, these decorated stones are the first expressions of symbolic behavior in this part of Adriatic region. Furthermore, during the last field research anthropomorphic figurine carved with regular linear motifs was found at Vlakno. Vlakno figurine has a perforation on the top upper part, suggesting its possible use as pendant. This kind of pendants are already known from the Gravettian sites like Dolni Vestonice (Czech Republic), or Mal'ta (Russia), and linear engravings resembles ones on Predmosti (Czech Republic) Venus. So far this is the only Palaeolithic figurine of this type in the Adriatic region. The authors would like to present the results of a techno-functional analysis carried out on the repertoire of symbolic technology from Vlakno, including this interesting figurine described above, and discuss their implications for understanding modalities of production and transmission of forager social identity in the region.

Mots-Clés: ornamental assemblage, Eastern Adriatic, Pleistocene, Holocene, technological, use, wear and residue analyses

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