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# Are the notches intentional or not? An exploration of artefacts from Tabon Cave with the help of use-wear analysis.

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## Abstract

Prehistoric stone tools in Southeast Asia are characterised, broadly speaking, by simple production techniques and the paucity of tool types. Among the assemblages, there are some exceptions, such as denticulates, which appear occasionally in the case of Philippine sites. These can thus be seen as unusual testimonies of the willingness of tool makers to control the shape and the properties of lithic implements. Nevertheless, plant processing experiments that we conducted showed that splitting plants such as bamboo, rattan, or palms creates large micro-scars on the edge of unretouched tool edges, making them look like intentionally retouched tools, especially denticulates. Here we will present the analysis of a selection of lithic artefacts with notches from Tabon Cave, Philippines. Use-wear is here a useful approach to intent to determine if these implements correspond to stone tool types, i.e. were intentionally retouched by the tool makers, or if they are in fact involuntary by-products of plant processing activities. This research is also an exploration of the antiquity of the concept of lever, as the plant processing technique mentioned above which is based on ethnoarchaeological observations implies the mastery of such a concept.

**Keywords:** use, wear, retouch, intentionality, plants, lever, Southeast Asia

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