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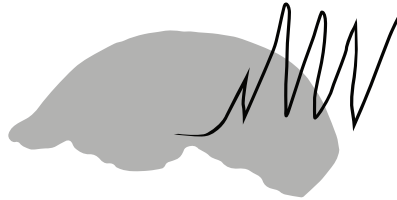


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The lithic assemblage and bone tools from the Lower Palaeolithic site of Marathousa 1, Megalopolis, Greece: first results

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The Middle Pleistocene lithic variability in South-East Europe is poorly understood due to the scarcity of well-preserved, excavated assemblages. In this paper, we present preliminary results from the study of cultural material unearthed at the Lower Palaeolithic site of Marathousa 1 (MAR-1), Megalopolis, Greece, during the excavations of three field seasons (2013-2015). The MAR-1 lithic assemblage is associated with elephant and other faunal remains bearing cut-marks. It is composed of small-sized flakes and flake fragments, retouched tools, cores that are commonly small and exhausted, as well as many debris and retouch products, such as shattered pieces, chips and re-sharpening or retouch flakes. So far, there are no indications of bifacial debitage and a key aspect of the material refers to the small size of the blanks. The MAR-1 industry fits well in a group of important European sites with flake-based, “small-tool” non-handaxe industries, such as Isernia, Ficoncella, Bilzingsleben, Schöningen, Vértesszőlős and La Polledrara, many of which, like MAR-1, have yielded evidence of elephant or other mega-fauna exploitation. Based on the on-going analysis of the lithic material from three field seasons, we discuss aspects of assemblage composition and the role of raw material types, the main technological and typological traits of the industry, as well as the potential contribution of the MAR-1 evidence in broader discussions about Middle Pleistocene lithic techno-complexes and subsistence strategies in Europe. With regard to the MAR-1 toolkit, there seems to be an emphasis on blanks with a sharp, potentially working edge, which typically occurs opposite to a backed edge. In this respect, the evidence from Marathousa 1 and the focus on backed pieces recalls traits and morphologies that appear also in much younger, Middle Palaeolithic industries of Central Europe, such as that from Tata (Hungary). The technological objectives behind the production of the MAR-1 small blanks and tools, as well as their function, are issues that remain to be further investigated. Finally, we briefly present bone flakes, and faunal material with flake and impact scars. These specimens suggest that hominin exploitation of the carcasses was not restricted only to defleshing, marrow extraction and bone processing for nutritional needs, but included also the knapping of bones, potentially with the aim of using the knapped products as tools.

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