Session 9

"Other than Glassy Stones": The Selection of Biotic and Abiotic Raw Materials in Hunter-Gatherers

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Ethnographic and archaeological evidences showed that hunter-gatherers adaptive capacity was expressed, among other things, by strategy of raw material selection and diversification. The variability of lithic raw materials used included resources such as limestone, quartz, schist, and other highly inhomogeneous and less isotropic stone resources. Furthermore, hunter-gatherers used organic raw materials such as shells, ivory, and bones among others. The study of raw material selection was in many occasions biased by “high-quality” lithic materials such as, for example, obsidian and fine-grained chert. Nevertheless, the concept of what should be considered as “high-quality” could be questioned and investigated taking into account functional, economic, and social parameters of technical behaviour. In this session we intend to highlight the techno-economic behaviour related to those apparently less valuable raw materials, including both biotic and abiotic. Particular attention will be devoted to the meaning of these evidences to understand human-environment interaction, cost-benefits strategies, mobility, and technological concepts. Ethnographic, archaeological, and experimental data are all welcome.