



Human palaeontology and prehistory (Prehistoric archaeology)

Tools for production, goods for reproduction. The function of knapped stone tools at the Neolithic necropolis of Can Gambús-1 (Sabadell, Spain)

Des outils pour la production, des biens pour la reproduction. La fonction de l'outillage en silex de la nécropole néolithique de Can Gambús-1 (Sabadell, Espagne)

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the results of a functional study of the stone tools found with the burials at the Neolithic necropolis of Can Gambús-1 (Sabadell, Spain). In this study we aim to reconstruct the activities carried out with the stone tools, made from several raw materials, among which the so-called "honey flint" is especially important at this site. Although this is an interim report, we identify a double trend in the preparation of the grave goods for the buried individuals. Whereas in some cases tools were specifically produced to be deposited as offerings without any previous use, on other occasions implements that had been used in everyday activities were recycled and given a final funerary function.

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article présente les résultats de l'étude fonctionnelle de l'outillage lithique associé aux sépultures de la nécropole néolithique de Can Gambús-1 (Sabadell, Catalogne, Espagne). Cette étude vise à identifier les activités réalisées avec les outils taillés sur différentes matières premières, parmi lesquelles le silex « blond » tient une place prépondérante. Malgré le caractère préliminaire de cette étude, deux tendances se distinguent dans la constitution des mobiliers déposés à côté des individus inhumés. Tandis que dans certains cas on constate une production spécifique d'outils en vue de leur dépôt comme offrandes, sans usage préalable, dans d'autres cas des outils utilisés antérieurement dans des activités quotidiennes sont recyclés pour une dernière fonction, funéraire.

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1. Introduction

Since the mid 1990s, use-wear analysis has been slowly applied to Neolithic sites in the Iberian Peninsula. Stone tools found at settlements (such as Ca n'lsach, Cueva del Toro, Cabecicos Negros, and Valada do Mato), at burials (for example, at Bòbila Madurell, Camí de Can Grau, and Sant Pau del Camp), and even in contexts with a specialised function such as mines exploiting flint (Casa Montero Mine) and variscite (Gava Mines) have been studied in order to know what they were used for and what activities Neolithic communities performed. These analyses have taken place within a wider context aimed at reconstructing the production and use of knapped flint tools during the Neolithic in the Iberian Peninsula (Bosch et al., 2010; Gibaja, 2003; Gibaja et al., 2002, 2005; Rodríguez, 1999, 2004; Terradas and Gibaja, 2001, 2002).

In recent years, one of our priorities has been to study the function of stone tools found in burials. With this aim, we have studied the implements from the Neolithic necropolises at Sant Pau del Camp, Bòbila Madurell and Camí de Can Grau, all located in the Province of Barcelona (Spain). These sites are attributed to the end of the Early Neolithic and the Middle Neolithic, dated between the late fifth millennium and the middle of the fourth millennium cal BC (Martí et al., 1997; Molist et al., 2008; Pou et al., 1996). This is an especially interesting period because a significant change is seen in the funerary practices of the Neolithic communities that inhabited northeastern Iberia.

The few tombs at the start of the Early Neolithic and their absence in the Mesolithic contrast with the presence of burials and necropolises in the final centuries of the Early Neolithic and above all during the Middle Neolithic. These burials were placed in pits, in cists and dolmen chambers, and have been found in several places in northeastern Iberia. In most cases they are individual burials, and therefore the grave goods can be related to the age and sex of the deceased, so issues such as the organisation of labour or the social structure of the group can be approached.

2. The Necropolis of Can Gambús-1 within the “Pit Grave Culture”

The present study examines the function of the stone tools deposited together with the deceased in one of large necropolises that have been excavated in the northeast Iberian Peninsula: Can Gambús-1 (Roig and Coll, 2007, 2010; Roig et al., 2010). Located in the municipal district of Sabadell (Barcelona, Spain), it is in the Vallès-Penedès tectonic rift, between the littoral and pre-littoral mountain ranges (Fig. 1). This rift forms a natural corridor allowing this part of Catalonia to be crossed, following a northeast–southwest direction parallel to the coast.

During construction of a large urban development, preventive archaeological work in the Can Gambús-1 sector uncovered a large necropolis, attributed to the Middle Neolithic so-called “Pit Grave Culture” (Muñoz, 1965). This necropolis forms part of a larger archaeological complex,



Fig. 1. Location of Can Gambús-1. Aerial photograph of Bòbila Madurell-Can Gambús showing the different archaeological work carried out and the researchers who directed the excavations.

Fig. 1. Localisation de Can Gambús-1. Vue aérienne de Bòbila Madurell-Can Gambús, sur laquelle sont mentionnés les différentes campagnes archéologiques réalisées et les archéologues qui ont dirigé ces fouilles.

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