

REVIEW OF

Tool Types and the establishment of the later prehistory cultural taxonomic system in the Nile Valley (A. Leplongeon)

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This paper offers a detailed reconstruction of the history of research about the Late Palaeolithic in the Nile Valley, emphasizing the limitations of the approaches that have been used in the past while highlighting the research potential on the topic.

The focus is on the Late Paleolithic studies, beginning from the end of '800 to the present day. One of the main biases identified is that the study of the Late Palaeolithic of the Nile Valley was based, in the last century, on the definitions elaborated for the French Upper Paleolithic.

After decades of subjective criteria and use of non-standardized description, Leplongeon acknowledges that around the 1960 both Tixier's typology and a typology elaborated by Marks and Shiner were in use and contributed to the individuation of five Late Palaeolithic industries. It is with the work of the Combined Prehistoric Expedition (CPE) the idea that each "industry" became considered as the product of a specific social group. The author agrees with Close that other factors than socio-cultural aspects may explain the typological differences and the application of up-to date analytical methods should be promoted in order to overcome the biases of the rigid taxonomic units used in the past. Another aspect that, in my opinion, could strongly affect the composition of a lithic assemblage and his characteristics, is the function itself of the archaeological site where the assemblage has been found. At this regard, very little has been done in the past (Longo, 1997; Becker & Wendorf, 1993) and it may worth to integrate the future projects with the information about the function of the site.

Leplongeon has focused on the latest Pleistocene lithic complexes, remaining loyal to their definition as Late Palaeolithic. However, considering that the terminology originally elaborated for sub-saharan Africa is now widely accepted and used also in the Maghreb and in other North-African countries (Barton et al., 2013; Garcea, 2009; Inglis et al., 2018), it may be useful, from this moment forward, to define the Late Pleistocene cultures of Egypt as Late Stone Age, to avoid any confusion with the European Late Palaeolithic.

Overall this paper represents a useful synthesis for scholars and students and an excellent critical point of view to set the future researches on the Palaeolithic of the Nile Valley.

References

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