

12th International Symposium on Knappable Materials

Budapest, 18th - 22th November 2019

Session Proposal: Ancient lithic trade and economics

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Abstract:

One of the primary objectives of lithic studies is the reconstruction and understanding of prehistoric trade, and economic systems. Trade and economics tells us a lot about the interactions of individuals, households, and settlements across wide geographic areas. These interactions may be between people of a similar cultural group, or even represent inter-cultural interactions. When conducting large scale research, covering multiple sites, we may look at social interactions not only as practical acquisition but also as a social phenomenon, in particular the lines of contact that join people and groups, lines through which other products, knowledge, and people themselves may have moved.

In archaeology, we often seek to better understanding the strategies of ancient peoples regarding how and where (sources) they acquired the raw materials and worked products found at archaeological sites, and how these strategies were influenced by cultural preferences, traditions, logistics, and available resources. We ask questions regarding preferences for certain raw material characteristics - functional or aesthetic - and whether different values were placed on specific materials. We often also look at how these phenomena change over time. Regarding trade and economics, some prehistorians investigate the appearance and development of specialised occupations related to lithics.

This session will look at topics such as (but not necessarily limited to) trade routes, use of imported versus local materials, differential selection of specific types of raw materials, and specialised occupations related to lithic materials in prehistory.