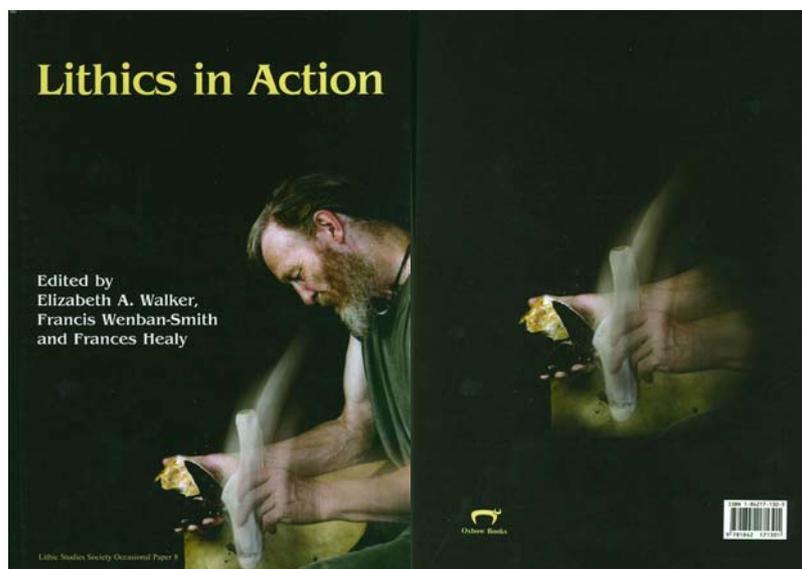


Walker, E.A., F. Wenban-Smith & F. Healy. Eds. 2004. *Lithics in action. Papers from the conference 'Lithic studies in the year 2000'*. – Oxford, Oxbow Books (Lithic Studies Society Occasional Paper No. 8)

Book review by E.N.A. Heirbaut



'Lithics in action' is the outcome of the conference 'Lithic studies in the year 2000', held in Cardiff in September 2000. At this conference work on individual sites and regional studies as well as new developments in the analysis of lithic material were presented. Five themes were selected: behaviour and cognition in the Lower and Middle Palaeolithic, raw material studies, Bronze Age and later lithics, lithics in transportation and use-wear and residues. In this book, three of these themes have been included. Most of the papers presented at the conference are published here, with some additional papers of authors who were unable to attend. Each theme corresponds with a section in the book, and is prefaced by one of the editors.

The first section deals with behaviour and cognition in the Lower and Middle Palaeolithic and covers seven chapters. Most of them reflect on the role of refitting lithic material in the study of human behaviour, as lithics are the primary and sometimes the only source of evidence for reconstructing past human behaviour. Almost all papers deal with undisturbed sites. The papers of Valin & Masson (chapter 2) and Hallos (chapter 3) for instance illustrate that refitting of lithic artefacts at such sites can indeed be used to clarify the intra-site dynamics and organisation of the *chaîne opératoire*, and by so also the past human behaviour, but also to better understand the site's taphonomy. Ashton on the other hand (chapter 6) concentrates more on the general issue of the value of lithic refitting as an investigative method.

In the second section papers related to 'rocks, residues and use-wear' demonstrate the important role of understanding the significance of raw material in the interpretation of the relationship between sites in the landscape and their human use. The section covers 12 papers, of which the first one (by Walker) is a general introduction. All papers present innovative techniques which will lead to new interpretations in the understanding of raw material. Harding, Trippier & Steele (chapter 9) for example demonstrate that palynological techniques, based on the study of organic-walled microfossil assemblages within the flint nodules, can be used for determination of the provenance of flint artefacts. In order to realise the potential of this technique, a complete knowledge of the characteristics of all potential source outcrops and secondary deposits is needed. The paper by Rots & Vermeersch (chapter 18) deals with experimental characterisation of hafting traces and their recognition in archaeological assemblages. They move the focus from the traces visible on the working edges of lithic artefacts towards an approach which implies a study of the entire artefact and all traces, resulting from technology, production, prehension and hafting. Another paper (by Pawlik, chapter 19) on identification of hafting traces and residues by scanning electron microscopy and energy-dispersive analysis of X-ray, discusses the results of the study of Mesolithic and Neolithic lithic material and the use of birch tar for hafting.

The last section covers nine papers and is dedicated to the use of lithic material in the periods after hunter-gatherers, when lithics were not the solely used raw material but one of many. As can be noticed in the table of contents, this section covers wide-range topics going from Mesolithic-Neolithic Switzerland to Poland in the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, to the Bronze Age in Jordan. Nielsen (chapter 21) discusses the transition from Mesolithic to Neolithic in Switzerland, which can be seen in the development of early Neolithic arrowheads from late Mesolithic microliths. Larsson (chapter 22) examines the transformation of axe heads by

fire at two sites in southeastern Scania, Sweden, and links the burning of flint to ritual practices. Two other chapters (23–24) examine the exchange networks, the first covering the study of the origin of the Funnel–Necked Beaker Culture flint industry in the north European plain, and the second the study on the social conditions of flint–working during the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age in Poland and eastern Europe.

Overall said, the contents of the papers are appealing to anybody who is studying Lower and Middle Palaeolithic behaviour, or Palaeolithic in general. The high quality of the various papers make it a highly recommended book. It is extensively illustrated, although it is unfortunate that most of these illustrations are of a poor quality.

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