

EXCAVATIONS AT FRANCHTHI CAVE, GREECE, 13: DU NÉOLITHIQUE ANCIEN AU NÉO- LITHIQUE FINAL, 3: LES INDUSTRIES LITHIQUES TAILLÉES DE FRANCHTHI (ARGOLIDE, GRÈCE)

BY CATHERINE PERLÈS. PP.VIII + 336, FIGS. 45, CHARTS 28, TABLES 138, PLANS 2.
INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS, BLOOMINGTON 2004. \$75. ISBN 0-253-21737-7 (PAPER).

The present book is the 13th fascicle in the level-one series on the Franchthi Cave published by Indiana University Press. It is also the third volume by Perlès on the study of the lithic industries. Volumes 1 and 2 (fascicles 3 and 5) dealt with the study of the chipped artifacts from the Paleolithic and the Mesolithic with initial Neolithic. As a continuation, this volume presents the study of the chipped industries from the Early to the Late Neolithic. Published in 2004, after an interruption of almost 17 years, this long-awaited book is based on a study completed in the 1980s. Despite the long publication gap, the book lacks an introductory chapter that would have presented the site, the excavations, and the Neolithic levels. The volume also lacks a site location map and a stratigraphic profile showing the different levels and how they relate to one another. For these reasons, the book does not stand on its own, and the reader will need to refer to previous fascicles.

The book is divided into 17 concise chapters written in clear French. Chapter 1 outlines the principles of the study and how it differs, in its broad lines, from the Paleolithic and Mesolithic studies. While the overall objectives are to define chronological phases and to understand the technological and cultural changes that occurred over time, Perlès adjusts her methodology to adapt to the new data and period. Consequently, she opts for several interrelated temporal levels—periods, phases, and subphases—defined according to technological, typological, and raw material use criteria. Chapter 2 highlights the importance of raw material procurement during the

Neolithic, showing that unlike the obsidian imported from Melos, the honey-flints remain of unknown origin.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 make up part 1, which emphasizes the diachronic approach. To distinguish the periods, Perlès relies on the modalities of knapping, especially those applied to obsidian. It is worth noting how many important findings arose from this technological level. First, Perlès documents obsidian pressure knapping as early as 8000 b.p., a timeframe comparable to other regions in the Mediterranean Basin. Second, for the honey-flints, she identifies lever pressure techniques at the beginning of the Neolithic, thus documenting its earliest appearance in the region and in Europe. Third, thanks to the systematic analysis of blanks, Perlès recognizes a shift in the exploitation of obsidian, which demonstrates the knowledge of copper pressure tools by Late Neolithic groups. The tool typology is then used to separate chronological phases among periods. While one can agree on the variability of Neolithic typology, which lacks standard and normalized tools, the identification of “used tools,” an important feature of Neolithic industries, is based only on subjective criteria, and one would have preferred a more reliable method based on binocular or microscopic observation. Perlès relies on the ceramic phases and on tool distributions, association, and relative abundance to identify the different lithic phases. Whereas their identification is not founded solely on tool frequencies, the criteria chosen lack scientific significance, and she could have validated these phases by

simple statistical tests since the phases are then considered as a chronological framework for the Neolithic of Franchthi and even extended to all of Greece.

Following Jacobson's recommendation, part 1 of the book is devoted to the establishment of chronological divisions for the Neolithic. The significance of Perlès' three-dimensional subdivision is pertinent since it is determined through the careful analyses of the lithic industries. But would these categories be valid in other regions of Greece? While Perlès maintains they are, she does not provide convincing evidence, since this would be judged beyond the scope of the book. However, in defining chronological phases for the Neolithic of Greece, one would appreciate a more complete analysis based on various sites and taking into account the variability within each site.

In part 2 Perlès presents a detailed analysis of the lithic material from the successive phases using the *chaîne opératoire*. Each phase is defined by its stratigraphic occurrence, its chronology, and the lithic and spatial organization of the chipped industries leading to further interpretation of the site function. In the description of the phases and the "inter-phases," one is struck by how many times the word "contamination" occurs, highlighting a taphonomic problem within the Neolithic deposits of Franchthi. While the phases are considered consistent, some caution was undertaken in the interpretation of the inter-phases, which are more likely mixed layers than transitional phases. Though one can congratulate Perlès for this prudent approach, the importance of disturbance should be more important for the Early Neolithic and even the Late Mesolithic deposits. This is supported by the complete heterogeneity of the dates from the Early Neolithic (70) and the inversed order of the radiometric set of the Middle Neolithic (90), which clearly points to disturbance. This is also supported by refitting of a lithic artifact between the Early and Middle Neolithic phases (102) and refitting of ceramic artifacts, which distinguish overlapping disturbed layers. This part of the book underlines at the same time the complexity of the strategies of raw material exploitation and methods of production and the complexity of the Neolithic deposits.

The last part, entitled "Thematic Approaches," is mostly interpretive and touches on many significant issues that emerged from the lithic analyses. Through answers to key questions, Perlès attempts to shed light on the

very complex Neolithic economic and social organization. While she concludes that the obsidian was obtained via indirect procurement in both the Early and Late Neolithic, most of the evidence is compatible with direct procurement during the Late Neolithic, which would have been embedded in diverse activities by mobile groups. In the Neolithic technological system, the lithic component played an important role, and Perlès demonstrates how the technical productions were dependent on social and cultural choices as well as on technical factors.

As shown by its title, the book is explicitly about the lithic study of Franchthi Neolithic industries. To do this, Perlès applies the *chaîne opératoire* to reproduce the European first-farmers' behaviors related to stone knapping. When identifying the techniques, she calls on the help of specialists such as Jacques Pelegrin, which adds a strong point to this book. Perlès' work documents the common use of pressure knapping and even more complicated techniques such as lever pressure and the emergence of craftsmanship as early as 8000 b.p. Given the mostly descriptive style of the lithic analysis and the absence of statistical analysis and diagrams, North American lithic specialists might be disappointed, and thus the book may perhaps gain more attention from the Francophone audience. Nevertheless, part 3, which stresses social changes, provides insights into the complexity of Neolithic society from a lithic technology point of view and is refreshing. Without questioning the author's eminent background, some imperfections, such as the absence of exact citations when specific assumptions are made, are recurrent. For example, when asserting, "Notons en particulier, l'interprétation fréquente que nous montre l'ethnographie entre pratiques rituelles et domestiques, où objets votifs et déchets de la vie quotidienne peuvent se trouver intimement liés" (116), no reference is quoted.

Despite a few weaknesses, this book has many strengths and is highly recommended for lithic technology specialists faced with methodological problems, for Neolithic specialists trying to integrate the lithic component in their work, and for archaeologists looking for data on the Neolithic of Greece.

NOURA RAHMANI

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
PAS BUILDING ROOM 2012
WATERLOO, ONTARIO N2L 3G1
CANADA
NRAHMANI@WATARTS.UWATERLOO.CA