Assemblage size, composition, and mobility patterns in the Romanian Carpathians Paleolithic

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In this poster I will explore the variability in artifact assemblages at a series of Paleolithic cave sites in the area of Romanian Carpathians Basin. Assemblage variability through time and space will be explored and explain in terms of assemblage size and changing group mobility. Most of these assemblages are dominated by informal components. I demonstrate in my poster that theoretical models generally used to explore change through formal assemblage components can be applied to informal components, and allow inferences to be extracted in respect with changing settlement systems. The data set is represented by three significant Paleolithic sites from the region of the Romanian Southern Carpathians.

Results and discussion
The results presented here (see graphs 2-7) show that in general terms, the sites involved in this study can be conceived time averaged palimpsests, deposited on a span of several hundred or thousands of years of repeated occupations. This involves their understanding from a long-term perspective variability analysis. Although some obvious similarities are evident in respect with the technological patterns applied to coarse-grained raw materials, there is however a certain degree of variability. For instance, assemblages recovered from the sites of Pestera Muierii and Bordu Mare, seem to fit within the system of logistical mobility, as defined by Kuhn or to Kuhn’s locales provisioning system. The large number of artifacts, the relatively elevated degree of fragmentation, the cortical component, as well as the presence of reduction by-products, give the image of sites frequently occupied over time, for both raw material provisioning, but also resource consumption, both lithics and animal resources (as the presence of fauna seems to suggests).

Duration of occupation is a relative concept and approaching it works best when assemblages from a number of locations are compared.

It is possible that the differential access to better quality raw materials was one of the main reasons (Fig. 2) for the raw materials proportions variability in the studied occupational layers. Even when there are no limitative natural factors in terms of raw materials availability, their access may have been varied according to several variables such as mobility and occupation span of a site. It is possible to evaluate the significance of these variables through the use of several technological measures relative to the intensity of artifacts reduction process (Fig. 3-7).

Artifact assemblages at Pestera Muierii, Nandru and Bordu Mare

Fig. 2 Ratio of the raw materials by site (Q=Quartz(ite); FG=Fine Grained)
Nandru I-II Bordu Mare III Pestera Muierii

Fig. 3 Flake to core ratio. Filled bars represent coarse grained raw material; patterned bar fine grained.

Fig. 4 Non cortical to cortical cores ratio

Fig. 5 Non cortical flakes to cortical flakes ratio

Fig. 6 Flakes to tools ratio

Fig. 7 Complete retouched flake surface area to complete flake area

Conclusion
The results presented here, which represents only a part of the whole, casts serious doubts on the assumption, that the archaeological deposits represent a relatively undistorted sample of prehistoric settlement systems. Given the results reported here, which add to more other of the same sort, published recently (Holdaway et al. 2009; Barton et al. 2002; Shott 2010), it becomes obvious that the study of prehistoric record with techniques derived from theories based on the analysis of the present is inadequate.

References List