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Subscription Information

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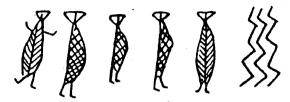
Subscriptions for 1990 are due.

From the Editor

Please remember to contribute to this newsletter. If you enjoy reading about the work of others, chances are they will enjoy reading about yours. Mesolithic Miscellany publishes research reports, book reviews, national synopses of recent excavations and research, statements for debate, conference summaries, important radiocarbon dates, announcements and summaries or abstracts of recent publications to inform readers of current developments in the field. Recent Publications is a catergory that is particularly important and particularly difficult to keep up-to-date. Reprints or simple citations of your work would be most useful. Please prepare a brief abstract of the article or publication if one is not included in the text. We always need more reports, reviews, and papers from you, the reader. The deadline for the November issue is 31 October 1990. You may also give me your manuscript at the Symposium in Leuven in September. I look forward to seeing many of you there!

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Leuven 1990

The Fourth International Symposium on the Mesolithic in Europe will be held in Leuven, Belgium, from September 18 through 23, 1990, at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. The Symposium will open at 9:00 on Tuesday, September 18. Participants should arrive on the afternoon of Monday 17 September. The final session will end on Sunday 22 September at 18:00. More than 100 papers have been submitted to the Symposium. Presentations will be organized into regional sessions to be presented during four days of the meeting. One day will be used for an excursion to visit archaeological sites in Belgium and the south-

ern Netherlands. The publication of many of the conference papers is planned prior to the meeting. All enquiries regarding the IV International Symposium on the Mesolithic in Europe should be directed to the organizer, Prof. P.M. Vermeersch, Laboratorium voor Prehistorie, Redingenstraat 16 bis, B-3000, Leuven, Belgium, as soon as possible.

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RESEARCH REPORTS

The Function of Microliths
Evidence From Smittons and Starr, SW Scotland

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Department of Archaeology
University of Edinburgh

The sites of Smittons (NX 639918) and Starr (NX 483939) were excavated by the late Tom Affleck (Affleck 1986), who kindly made material available for functional analysis. Full site reports will be published soon. Both sites are inland upland sites, with retouched tools dominated by narrow blade microliths, typical of the late Mesolithic in Scotland, Such sites are generally assumed to be hunting camps (Mellars 1976, Myers 1987). The method of functional analysis used was developed as part of a postgraduate research project at the University of Edinburgh (Finlayson n.d.).

The functional analysis uses all available information, from gross tool morphology to microscopic traces. It does not attempt to provide detailed descriptions of individual tool use, but instead to build up a general pattern of use. Different levels of interpretation are employed, depending on the amount of information present on each tool. Some pieces will provide no information, as a result of burning, patination or other post depositional effects. Some pieces will provide limited information, for example the location of use. Only a small number of pieces will have sufficient information present to allow detailed analysis of their use, and that analysis will rarely include specific worked material. By analysing the overall patterns of traces much useful information can be derived, including use rates, general categories of use motion and intensity of use. Large samples of chipped stone, including beach pebble flint and the local chert, were examined from both sites.

Experimental tool manufacture and use were conducted with both materials. This paper is concerned with only a part of the functional analysis of pieces from Smittons and Starr, the microlithic component. Most of the evidence is based on the location of traces, and the broad types of motion indicated. The results of blind tests, conducted both by other analysts (Keeley 1980, Gendel and Pirnay 1982, Grace 1989) and during the course of the current research project suggest that the degree of accuracy from this level of information should be good. The evidence is presented here in extremely abbreviated form. Both this evidence and a more complete discussion will be given in the site reports.

All the microliths from the sites were examined: 27 from Smittons (12 flint, 15 chert); 27 from Starr 1 (17 flint, 10 chert); and 12 from Starr 2 (8 flint, 4 chert).

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Smittons (Table 1): All evidence on the microliths either indicated use as armatures, or at least did not conflict with that interpretation. The primary evidence for this is the presence of long feather terminating scars initiated from the distal tips and linear polish features running over the tool surface parallel (or in one case at 45°) to the long axis (see Fig. 1) (cf., Fischer 1989). Of the eight pieces with use traces, only three have clear evidence of armature use, two as barbs, one as a point. Three have less clear evidence, but are still indicative of projectile use. Two have poor traces, suggesting longitudinal motions, but whether they are the result of projectile use is unclear.

Table 1. Smittons: Used Microliths

#	Type	Motion	Interpretation
300	Backed	Impact	Projectile Projectile
355	Crescent	Impact	Projectile
357	Scalene	Impact	Projectile
18	Backed	Long	•
22	Backed	Long	
264	Backed Frag	Long	Projectile Projectile
364	Rod Frag	Long	Projectile Projectile
369	Scalene	Long	Projectile

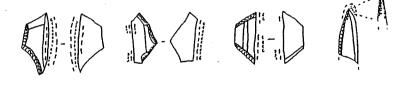
Starr 1 and Starr 2 (Table 2): All evidence on the microliths pointed to non-projectile use. The primary evidence for this consists of the overall location of the traces, the bifacial polish patterns forming rounded bevels on the edges of the tools, and bifacial edge damage typically associated with longitudinal cutting (or in several cases bidirectional sawing) motions (see Fig. 1). Two pieces have evidence indicating use as piercers.

Table 2. Starr Sites: Used Microliths

Starr 1			
#	Type	<u>Motion</u>	Interpretation
300	Scalene	?	Multiple
835	Oblique Trunc	?	
361	Oblique Trunc	Bidirectional	Saw
368	Scalene	Bidirectional	Saw
765	Trapeze	Bidirectional	Saw
367	Scalene	Long	
371	Crescent	Long	Cut
778	Scalene	. Long	
988	Fragment	Long	Groove
755	Frag	Pierce	
754	Scalene	Pierce	Shave
Starr 2			
45	Backed	Pierce	
55	Scalene	Long	Cut
52	Scalene	?	
53	Backed	? .	



Smittons: Microliths with evidence of projectile use: linear polish features and impact fractures.



Starr. Microliths with evidence of non-projectile use: cutting and piercing.

edge-damage

polish

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There is one other sample of Scottish microliths that has been examined for function, the material from Inverness, 13-24 Castle Street (Bradley 1985). Unfortunately the study of these pieces was severely limited by the degree of cortication present. Three microliths had traces that Bradley tentatively suggested might be associated with archery, but suggests that the interpretation of these traces is at least partly guided by the assumed function of the microliths.

Dumont examined 31 microliths from Star Carr, and found no functional traces. He examined a large sample (157) microliths from Mount Sandel. Of these 14 had possible projectile use traces, 5 various hatting traces, and 3 had non-projectile use traces. The projectile evidence is poor. He states that the traces on the triangles were insufficient for functional interpretation, but not "inconsistent with the usual assumption" of armature use. The rods were "assigned 'functions' based on the correspondence of the available traces (including the impact fractures) to the presumed [original emphasis] use of these tools as projectile tips or barbs" (Dumont 1988: 250). This interpretation, based on poor evidence, is not supported by any experimental work with either microliths or archery. As with Bradley's interpretations, there is a circular trend to the argument. The evidence presented for non-projectile use is more convincing. It appears that the majority of microliths are unused, with small numbers used for armatures and various other tasks. The nature of projectile traces might suggest that only a minimum number of uses have been observed.

The results from Starr demonstrate that microliths should not be viewed as a simple broad "type-group" with a single function. They cannot be used as consistant direct evidence for hunting. The ramifications of this are widespread, affecting simple site function descriptions (Mellars 1976, Jacobi 1978), analysis of changing economy (Myers 1987), and analysis of style and derived social information (Gendel1984). Although functional analyses of archaeological materials remain comparatively rare and are dispersed both geographically and chronologically, and although the techniques are still surrounded by controversy (Newcomer et al. 1986, Moss 1987, Bamforth 1988, Hurcombe 1988, Newcomer et al. 1988), now that techniques for such analysis exist, tool function should cease to be simply assumed.

Further work has commenced on the functional analysis of other mesolithic material, and is being pursued in relation to material, technological, and typological studies, as it is believed that it is only through this integrated approach will it be possible to assess both economic and social evidence.

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A Large Maglemosian Winter House?

Ole Grøn Langelands Museum Denmark

In Mesolithic Miscellany 1987 (1), I outlined the results of my analysis of the artefact distributions related to the dwelling-areas of the Maglemose culture (Grøn 1989). The central assumption is — on the basis of the available ethnographic information — that the location of individuals, and thus of the activities, within dwelling areas (central living-areas protected by dwellings, encircled by wind screens, or just by symbolic markers) in huntergatherer societies are always organized spatially in accordance with a set of culture specific rules that reflect their relative social relations and status (Grøn 1987b: 64-65). The existence of such rules of spatial behavior appears to be a so-called "cultural universal", like the existence of initiation rites, incest taboos, etc. which are found in all societies. Two patterns (Fig. 1) of spatial organization were distinguished. Pattern A consists of relatively small concentrations of material (10-15 m²) with one concentration of microliths and one fireplace. Pattern B consists of somewhat larger concentrations of material (normally approximately 24 m²) with two concentrations of microliths and, in a number of the cases, also two fireplaces symmetrically arranged around a line perpendicular to the shore. The sites are often located only a few meters from the shores of lakes or streams.

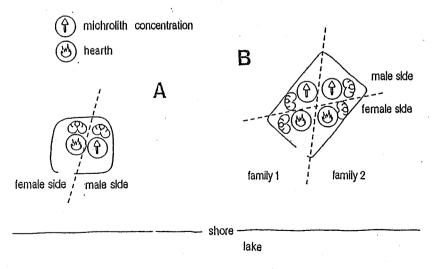


Fig. 1. A model for the organization of dwelling space on the basis of the locations of microlith concentrations, hearths, and dwelling traces, and the orientation of the pattern relative to the shoreline.

The two patterns are represented by equal numbers of examples. There is a marked tendency that the A-units — the smaller ones — chronologically are Preboreal, while the larger B-units are Boreal. If the interpretation is correct, that we are dealling with one- and two-family dwelling units respectively (Grøn 1987b, 1989), this does not necessarily imply that the settlements became larger, that population density increased, or the like. We need more information on settlement size and organization to draw such conclusions (Grøn 1987a). The number of dwelling units per settlement may for instance have decreased.

The dwelling units are distinguished by a number of features: (1) In nearly all cases they appear as marked concentrations of worked flints, less than 10 m in diameter. Only concentrations of an apparently typologically pure character have been considered. (2) In a number of cases, floors of bark and branches are preserved, and in a few cases what appear to be stakes from the dwelling structure itself have been found. (3) With sites on sand it is normal to see a lenticular thickening of the "dwelling-area", consisting oi homogeneous grey sand. This seems to indicate that a shallow pit was made for a dwelling area. The homogeneous sandy lenses likely consist of a mixture of charcoal, organic waste, and sand that has been sieved through a floor of boughs and/or bark. Where more of these features appear in connection with one dwelling unit, they coincide.

In 1987 I suggested that the late Preboreal Flaadet site should represent a large winter dwelling of the Maglemose culture (Grøn 1987a:311-315). The arguments for this were; (1) The unit was located 20-25 m from the prehistoric shore. A distance of 3-5 m is normal for known dwellings on the shores of lakes, used from April to October. The proposed explanation is that this withdrawal from open water was made to avoid the layer of cold air that forms just above the ice of frozen lakes in winter. The location of the settlement was approximately 1.5 m above the water level at that time (Skaarup 1979: p1an 1). Comparable behavior has been observed in several ethnographic cases (Grøn 1987a:311-312). (2) The site was located on the northern part of a little island in the prehistoric lake. According to Frydendahl's reconstruction of the climatic situation, northerlies were the least common winds during winters (Grøn 1987a:317-318). Thus a position oriented to the north would be beneficial in winter. Ethnographically this phenomenon is quite well known from winter sites in colder regions. (3) The internal structure of the site fits into the B pattern.

The only difference is the size: where this pattern in the other cases is connected to structures measuring approximately 4 by 6 m, it takes up an area which in this case according to the analysis of the distributions measures something like 7 x 8 m. The two concentrations of microliths normally take up one or two adjacent square meters each. In this case, they are considerably larger, and of the shape oi two crescents symmetrical around the axis perpendicular to the nearest shore. Their concave sides are directed away from each other (Fig. 2B). Likely they represent waste accumulated around two persons. A variation in the dwelling space available per person in summer and winter is often found with huntergatherers. The smaller units are in a number of cases known to have been in use between April and October.

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It is always interesting to test a theory in practice. If the interpretation of the Flaadet site as a large winter dwelling is correct, one would expect a construction of that size to have left some structural traces such as post holes. One of the weaker methodological aspects of traditional excavation in squares is the difficulty in observing and registering faint structures and discolorations in the surface. Since the special geological conditions on this site made it likely that traces of structural remains could have escaped observation during the 1973 excavation, a "re-excavation" was carried out for Langelands Museum in August 1989.

The original measuring system was reconstructed and the plough soil removed mechanically down to untouched underground. Immediately four grey oval to circular structures, approximately 50 cm in diameter, appeared on the central line of the rectangle postulated in 1987 (Fig. 2) (Grøn 1987a:313). The northernmost one was located 10 cm southeast of the middle of the postulated northwestern gable, the southernmost one did precisely touch the southeastern gabel line from the inside (Fig. 2).

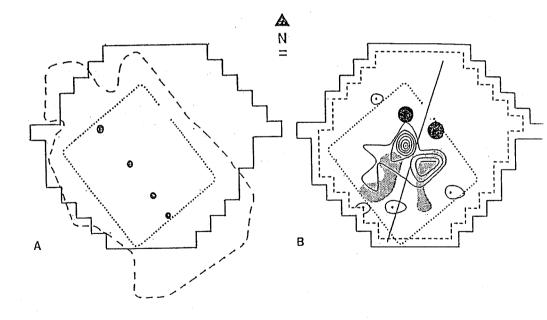


Fig. 2. Dwelling outline postulated in 1987: dotted line. Border of 1973 excavation: line. Square size = 1 m². (A) Post holes(?) excavated in 1989: black areas. Border of 1989 excavation: dash line. (B) Microlith concentrations: hatched areas. Concentrations of burnt flints (hearths?): black areas. Concentration of scrapers: contour lines (interval=1). Border of interpolation: dashed line.

To explain the structures, it is necessary to describe the original geological features of the locality (Fig. 3): (1) The underground of the island consisted of light brown and stiff sandy moraine clay. (2) In 1973 a compact layer of 10-20 cm large stones with sand/ gravel between them was observed directly above the underground. This is typically a layer of stones and sand/gravel originating from the top of the little hill, from which the cla*y has been washed away by wave activity during a relatively high water stage. The stone-layer had a thickness of 15-20 cm within the excavation area. (3) Above the stone layer was registered remains of an approximately 5 cm thick layer of white stiff lime-gyttja of late Preboreal origin (Skaarup 1979: 31). (4) The stratigraphical position of the culture layer was not registered exactly, since it was the destruction of this layer by ploughing that led to the discovery and excavation of the site. But it was located just a few centimeters above the lime-gyttja. (5) According to observations made in other parts of the little island/hill, the Maglemose material was covered by a protective layer of Atlantic peat, until this was destroyed by plowing (Skaarup 1979: 17-34).

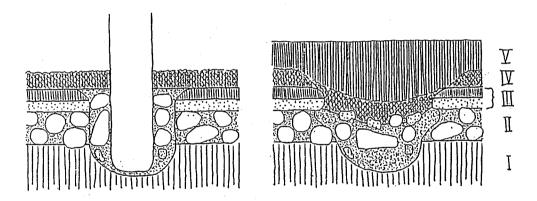


Fig. 3. Stratigraphy at Flaadet with hypothetical changes in post-holes.

In 1989 the stone layer had been removed by heavy plowing. Excavation showed the circular/oval structures observed in the top of the underground to be 12-15 cm deep regular pits in the clay, with evenly rounded bottoms, and a content of sand/gravel. Diameters varied between 40 and 50 cm. In the top of this sand, were traces of 10-20 cm large stones removed recently by plowing. The stones and the sand/gravel probably fell into the pits from the stone layer. The four pits until 1973 were covered by a culture layer containing at least 500-1000 pieces of worked flint per m². That they did not contain even small pieces of worked flints strongly indicates that the pits were made before the culture layer accumulated. This leaves us with three possibilities, The structures observed may be periglacial phenomenon.

This possibility is rejected by all geologists with whom I have discussed the matter. The general geological situation of the location, the regular and uniform shape of the structures and the fact that they are found on a line but lack "symmetrical" counterparts vithin a distance of a few meters, seems to exclude this possibility. The structures may be cultural features originating from an earlier settlement on the site. Meanwhile such a hypothetical palaeolithic/late-palaeolithic one has left no traces in the existing material. One very small piece of lime (less than one cm in diameter) was found near the top of the sand/gravel in one of the pits, in a area with no worm traces (these were easily observable as dark channels filled with peaty plow soil in the light sand/gravel). This piece must originate from the lime-gyttja and points to an origin of the structures after the formation of the lime-gyttja layer in late Preboreal (Skaarup 1979: 31). Thus it seems that the pits must have been created at some time after the beginning of the Maglemose phase — but on the other hand they cannot be later than the formation of the culture layer that belongs to an early phase of the Maglemose Culture (late Preboreal) (Skaarup 1979: 101-104). Thus most likely they have been created within a narrow time interval before the Maglemosian settlement.

The dating of the pits in relation to the settlement and their positions in relation to the hypothetical dwelling outline based on the artifact distributions at the site, strongly indicates that the four structures represent some kind of structural elements related to the postulated dwelling structure. Any hypothetical use as storage pits or pits for hearths should have resulted in charcoal or organic coloring of the sand/gravel in them. The well preserved phosphate in the top of the underground clay, proves that the chemical traces are rather well preserved and have not been washed out.

The depth of the features have originally been at least 20 cm deeper than observed in 1989, and thus the structures must have measured 40-50 cm in diameter, and been 32 - 35 cm in deep. Immediately one would think of holes from a central row of posts supporting the ridgeline of a roof. Since the stone layer has been destroyed, structures indicating the positions of walls can easily have been removed. Postholes of similar dimensions are found as part of the inner construction of the large Russian late palaeolithic houses of Kostienki (Jeiimenko 1958: Fig. 5, Rogatchev 1955, 1957).

If the observed structures do represent post holes, it seems strange that no worked flints found their way into the pits when the posts turned over some time after the abandonment of the site. The material found in the pits was sand/gravel of the type found in the "stone-layer". In the top there were stones of the size found in the stone-layer according to their negative impressions. This loose material may well have found its way into the bottom of the pit first. The little piece of lime lay centrally, close to the top of the sand in one pit. The stiff lime-gyttja may have kept the culture layer that rested on it from falling down, so that cultural items were eeposited only in the upper parts of the pits, today removed by plowing.

It is interesting to note a preliminar publication of a very similar construction, incorporating clear post holes with a diameter of 15 cm, and wall lines marked b stakes with adiameter of 5 cm, excavated by Ebbe Westergren in southeastern Sweden. The structure is

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rectangular 3,.5 x 8.8 m - half the size of the postulated Flaadet house. There is one post in the middle of each gable, and one centrally in the room. These three are supposed by the excavator to have supported a saddle roof. There are also posts in each of the four corners, and one in the middle of one long side and two - marking a proposed entrance - centrally in the other. The culture layer appeared as a 12 cm thick layer inside the structure, whereas only thin blotches were preserved outside. The concentration of finds was clearly restricted inside the outline of the structure. This structure was located 2.5 m above the water, and like the Fladet site, 25 m from it (Westergren 1988: 5).

The results — not least the structural similarity between the two cases — seems to support the idea put forward by Ebbe Westergren and myself that larger and more solid dwelling types than the hut/tent structures hitherto found were in use in the Maglemose culture (Grøn 1987a: 311 - 315; Westergren 1988: 5 - 6). Furthermore they indicate that the spatial approach to the study of mesolithic dwellings seems rather fruitful, and usable in practical archaeological investigation.

In the discussion of the seasonal rotation of the Maglemose Culture, it has been postulated that the winter quarters were on the coasts of the North sea and the Baltic. However there exist some indications that this was not the case. Skottemarke and Favrbo were clear inland locations in early Maglemose. At the former was found at least six and at the latter two slaughtered carcasses of elk. The radiocarbon dates point to 7500 B.C. (uncalibrated) for both. The seasonal indicators point to that they were killed in winter (Møhl 1908: 5-15). According to the excavation of one of the few known Maglemosian coastal sites, Bua Västergard in Sweden, the diet consisted of approximately 50% from the sea and 50% from the forest. The site was located on an island, and within a reasonable hunting range surrounded by considerably more water than land (Wigforss et al. 1983: 8-13, 140, 196). This does not seem to support the picture of the Maglemose hunters as stubborn sea-hunters who would travel far to exploit the sea resources each winter.

One possible explanation of the fact that so few inland winter sites from the Maglemose Culture have been observed is that the sites were slightly withdrawn from the shore. If their waste was not deposited in a nearby water logged waste layer and thus preserved, no organic material and thus no winter indicators will be preserved. At Flaadet only a few bone fragments and one elk (?) tooth was preserved (Skaarup 1979: 136-137).

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RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Aime, Gérard, Pierre Bintz, Christophe Cupillard, Erwin Cziesla, André Gob, Jean-Marie Le Tensorer, Hartwig Löhr, Gilbert Pion, Dr. Jean-Georges Rozoy, Rernand Spier, André Thevenin, et Pierre Ziesaire. 1989. Epipaléolithique et Mésolithique entre Ardennes et Alpes: les grandes lignes des résultats actuels, edited by Gérard Aime et Andre Thevenin, pp. 7-15. Mémoire de la Société d'Agriculture, Lettres, Sciences et Arts de la Haute-Saône. Archéologie 2.

Il a paru important aux participants de la Table Ronde de Besançon d'arriver à une relative unité de vocabulaire pour certains termes concernant les cadres industriel et chronologique, et de présenter, sous forme de tableaux, les grandes lignes des résultats actuels. Les définitions proposées dans cette note, ainsi que les tableaux qui suivent ont été élaborés au cours de trois réunions, qui ont eu lieu successivement à Luxembourg, à Montbéliard et à Lyon.

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In this paper the residual spatial distribution of "exotic" personal decorative ornaments in the European Mesolithic societies is studied and interpreted in terms of Mesolithic marriage practices. The point of departure is a model considering the hierarchical organization of these societies according to three levels of social complexity; the band, the dialect speaking tribe, and the linguistic family, in analogy with several living North American hunter-fisher-gatherer groups. On the basis of the extra-territorial dispersion of the ornaments, the Authors conclude that in a first phase (from ca. 7500 to 5800 B.C.) the band is the unit of relevant social organization, while in a following period (from ca. 5800 to 3200 B.C.) the tribe acquires more importance. This process, however, is not uniform across Europe: southern or better south- eastern regions seem to show a higher social integration level in comparison with northwestern regions during the same period. In these latter regions, an integration level of tribal type will be reached only at the end of

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the second chronological phase. Correspondingly, exogamy is prevalent during most if not all of the European Mesolithic, while only at the end, with the occurrence of more complex social structures, incipient endogamy may be expected.

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Within the framework of ongoing investigations of Western European Mesolithic societies, we will demonstrate the interdependence between social stratification and activity stress, as reflected by limb lateralization. Some evidence of social/economic patterning in the investigated societies will be provided.

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