

Parallel *chaînes opératoires* in Cypriot Chalcolithic Chert practice

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Observations of parallel *chaînes opératoires* were made while investigating the previously excavated chipped stone material from Prastio – Agios Savvas in southwestern Cyprus dating to the Middle Chalcolithic period (c. 3500-2800 calBC). Through a close reading of the artefacts, rather than primarily tabulating finds based on predetermined attributes, recognisable groups within the material became apparent, which led to the conclusion that the separate groups reflected parallel lithic practices.

A *chaîne opératoire* approach allows for a close comparison of these parallel practices. In this paper I propose that they were carried out concurrently but within strictly differentiated frameworks with varying connotations for each artefact group all through the *chaîne opératoire* from the procurement of the stone from its source to the final deposition. The acquisition of the raw material could be either uncomplicated or surrounded by restrictions depending on the particular stone favoured for the various practices.

The manufacture and use of the objects show that varying degrees of expert knowledge were required for the respective groups. I therefore propose that the groups had various relations to different tasks and branches of subsistence in society. As a consequence, different regulations would have existed for the use of items and also for the different ways of disposing of the material.

Four local *chaînes opératoires* will be presented, of which two are flake based and the other two are blade based. One of the associated groups comprising expediently made and used flake based pieces dominates the chipped stone material. Assemblages of this kind (abundant and of *ad hoc* character) have at times been seen by investigators as archaeologically *second rate material*. In this paper, this dominating flake manufacture is put in its context by linking it to three concurrent, parallel practices at Prastio – Agios Savvas, which opens up for a more comprehensive scenario.