

Preliminary results on the use wear analysis of the splintered pieces from Holley Shelter, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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The splintered pieces from Holley Shelter were studied with several microscopes. To do those observations, it was necessary to clean the edge with a demakup cotton by carefully rubbing to avoid damage of the residues preserved on the piece.

The use-wear analysis was conducted with a stereomicroscope (Olympys SZX7) to look at the presence and type of removals to allow an identification of a possible use traces.

The pieces further underwent microscopic residue studies by Dr Dries Cnuts. Those analysis were also conducted using a stereomicroscope (Olympus SZX7). Further examinations of pieces with promising evidence for residue preservation were undertaken using a metallographic microscope (Olympus BX51M). Finally, the pieces were analyzed under the SEM (JEOL-IT300) to do an elementary analyses of the residues and to determine whether they are of anthropogenic or taphonomic origin.

The results obtained by the different observations show different kinds of categories. Some intermediary pieces (tools) were used on hard material, such as wood or bone. Some of the pieces previously called splintered pieces turned out to be bipolar cores. A differentiation was possible via the observation of typical removals on the bipolar cores. Those are characterized by a big hinge removal on the anvil part of the core and bifacial removals on the percussion part with a “U” profile. The tools identified often are asymmetric on both sides.

Further, more detailed observations on the splintered pieces from Holley shelter will be uploaded once the final publication of the results is accepted. This is currently work in progress.

The pieces meanwhile returned to the KwaZulu-Natal Museum in Pietermaritzburg where they are curated by chief curator Gavin Whitelaw.