

First experimental study for traceological interpretation at Olduvai sites

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Credit: CENIEH

Patricia Bello-Alonso of the Centro Nacional de Investigación sobre la Evolución Humana (CENIEH) has reported on experimental results for the traceological interpretation of activities carried out using stone tools made from the most representative raw material at the Olduvai Gorge sites (Tanzania), naibor soit quartzite. The results are published in *Quaternary International*.

This study presents the macro and micro-marks produced on the edges of experimental [stone tools](#) during their use on a diversity of types of plants (roots, tubers, [herbaceous plants](#), canes and wood), and bone and carcass processing, with the objective of identifying these kinds of

marks in the [archaeological record](#).

"By doing this, we have obtained an extensive reference collection of unretouched flakes made by knapping blocks of naibor quartzite," says Bello-Alonso, whose paper forms part of the traceological studies she is conducting at the Acheulean site of Thiongo Korongo (TK), around 1.3 million years old.

One of the novelties included in the work is the description and interpretation of the macro and micro-topographical changes in the surface of naibor soit quartzite. Based on the results, the researchers have developed criteria to distinguish the kinds of activities and materials by recording attributes including pitting and micro-polish.

This has made it possible to compile an interpretive database, both macroscopic and microscopic, which could enable and enhance functional interpretation of lithic utensils from the Acheulean site of TK and the majority of the other Olduvai Gorge sites where this same raw material was employed.

More information: Patricia Bello-Alonso et al. A use-wear interpretation of the most common raw materials from the Olduvai Gorge: Naibor Soit quartzite, *Quaternary International* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.quaint.2019.09.025](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.quaint.2019.09.025)

Provided by CENIEH

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