

Middle Stone Age (MSA) points form and function: evidence from Magubike rock-shelter, Southern Tanzania

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Abstract

This paper highlights technological innovation and food acquisition strategies employed by Middle Stone Age (MSA) humans who inhabited the rock-shelter of Magubike in Iringa, Tanzania. It also assesses the morphological characteristics of points and the ways in which they were used to form composite tools. The majority of analyzed points were deliberately modified on their proximal ends to allow hafting. The metric dimensions, weight and Tip Cross Section Area suggest for the existence of spearhead projectiles at Magubike during the MSA about 150,000 BP. Results from this study suggest that in sub-Saharan Africa, the development of projectile technologies was more effective and it went alongside with the evolution of anatomically modern humans in Africa during the Middle Pleistocene. The mechanisms used to manufacture and use projectile weapons suggest that the MSA people were skilled, knowledgeable and they had cognitive and developed behavior capability.

1. Introduction

There is an increasing need for research on the Middle Stone Age (MSA), because it marks the first appearance of anatomically modern human in sub-Saharan Africa. The behavioural and technological capabilities of early African modern humans is still debated, but it is commonly agreed that the stone points abundant in MSA assemblages were used as inserts for hunting weapons, such as spears and arrows (Brooks *et al.* 2006; Shea 2009, Shea and Sisk 2010). To contribute to the ongoing discussion, this paper presents the results from morphological measurements and functional attributes of MSA points from Magubike rock-shelter in Iringa, Tanzania (Fig.1). Measured attributes were chosen to reflect technological patterns and functional values that can be used to differentiate various features needed for hafting and making projectile weapons.