

The Fascinating Ground Stone Tools from Franchthi Cave Excavations - Fascicle 14

Reviews

Maltby practices what he preaches with his own work. Like the others, this major site report synthesises material from several excavations in the defences and suburbs, with excellent regard for archaeological contexts. There is a considered evaluation of ritual versus refuse deposition for contexts containing Associated Animal Bone Groups, and some discussion of bone processing waste. But Maltby then goes much further, putting Winchester into regional context.

Maltby's work benefits enormously from his first hand experience of many of his comparative sites in and around Winchester. When he compares it with other towns in southern or eastern England, he sometimes comes up against the problem of different recording and/or publication methods. These can limit or preclude direct comparisons. This synthesis is not national as the quantity available for comparison was beyond the scope of this study. Is someone else up for the challenge? Maltby's detailed bone report provides excellent raw data for others to use.

The other chapters are summed up by the subtitle-environmental evidence. Not a synthesis but a series of (almost) stand-alone studies. There are some frustrating references to more developed discussions in some of the companion volumes, particularly for the cemetery material and craft working waste. I would have preferred this volume to have been self-sufficient, even at the risk of duplicating a few sections.

Pfeiffer's analysis of an early Roman cemetery in the Victoria Road area usefully considers the material in groups based on contexts and types of deposit. She separates animal burials and body parts in graves and in ditches from more general refuse. Further discussion of the burials will be in another volume. Anatomical measurements are provided but at a very summary level (number of examples, mean value and standard deviation). This severely restricts their usefulness for comparisons or further study.

Coy and Bradfield studied the animal bones from the western suburb and provide useful but tantalising information concerning bone waste from butchery and from craft working. Again, the developed discussions lie in another volume, masquerading as 'Medieval Winchester'.

After this comes Thomas's mollusc report, a study that probably should have come first as it considers the development of landuse around the edge of town. Although based on samples from the western suburb, it helps to set the scene for the whole volume.

Frank Green provides an overview of the charred or (occasionally) mineralised plant remains. No water-logged deposits were located in these excavations.

Large numbers of bulk sediment samples were taken for the recovery of plant remains at Winchester, in a pioneering development of archaeological methodology. The results are interesting in comparison to those of the animal bone studies, since they highlight the different site formation processes involved. Anyone interested in urban archaeology is recommended to read both the plant and animal bone reports, to get a balanced view of how 'stuff' gets into the ground.

Who is this book for? The title presents it dual role. Feeding the Roman Town — Maltby's synthesis of Winchester compared with other towns in southern and eastern England — will provide a basis for archaeologists interested in Roman urban development and economy in north-west Europe, as well as other faunal specialists. The other reports have a more restricted appeal but are relevant to students of Winchester (whether in its own right or as a case study) and provide primary data and good syntheses for comparative specialist studies.

The report is extremely well produced and extraordinarily good value. The text, black and white photographs, tables and figures are all very clearly printed on quality paper. A compact disc with the raw data in simple spreadsheets would have made direct statistical comparisons easier for poor typists like myself, but ironically this 'old fashioned' paper version probably has a much longer working life. As a publication of a backlog excavation, this monograph exemplifies both the drawbacks of old concatenated specialist reports, and the advantages of hindsight and wider experience. Is it for you? Probably yes, even if you are not specifically interested in Winchester or the Romans. All of the specialists provide skilful considerations of their data, aware of archaeological contexts and human actions. Maltby's wider synthesis will be a major reference for others attempting to understand towns of any age and how they might relate to each other and to their hinterland.

References

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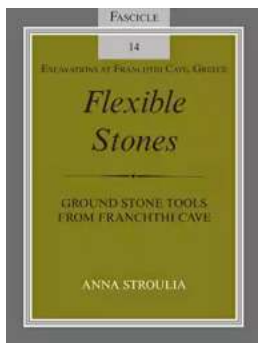
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Franchthi Cave, located on the southeastern coast of Greece, has been a fruitful archaeological site for decades. The extensive excavations carried out at this cave have provided valuable insights into prehistoric human activities and their

relationship with stone tools. Among the numerous artifacts found, ground stone tools stand out as a crucial invention during the Neolithic period.

Unveiling the Stone Age Technology

Ground stone tools are characterized by their smooth, flat surfaces, resulting from grinding or pecking rocks against each other. The process of manufacturing these tools involved hours of labor, precision, and expertise. Fascicle 14 of the Franchthi Cave excavations delves deeper into the world of these remarkable stone-age tools.



Flexible Stones: Ground Stone Tools from Franchthi Cave, Fascicle 14, Excavations at Franchthi Cave, Greece by Anna Stroulia(Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

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Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
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Print length : 236 pages



The Importance of Ground Stone Tools

Ground stone tools were a significant advancement in technology during the Neolithic period. They allowed our ancestors to have a more efficient and specialized approach to various tasks. These tools were versatile, serving purposes in agriculture, hunting, food processing, and daily life.

Among the notable ground stone tools found in Franchthi Cave were grinding stones, mortars, pestles, and hammerstones. These tools enabled our ancestors to process grains, nuts, and other food items, facilitating the shift from a nomadic lifestyle to settlements and the development of early agriculture.

The Process of Creating Ground Stone Tools

The manufacture of ground stone tools involved a complex and time-consuming process. First, suitable rocks were carefully selected based on their qualities such as hardness, texture, and durability. Then, using repetitive grinding and pecking motions on various parts of the stone, the desired shape and functionality of the tool were achieved.

For instance, grinding stones were crucial for processing grain. The flat upper surface of the stone provided an area for grinding seeds and grains, while the lower surface was usually curved to fit comfortably in a person's hand. Mortars and pestles, on the other hand, were used to crush and grind various materials to create different substances, such as pigments or medicinal powders.

Insights into Ancient Lives

The excavation of ground stone tools not only showcases human advancements in technology during the Stone Age but also offers glimpses into the daily lives of our ancestors. By examining these artifacts, archaeologists have discovered information about their dietary habits, cultural practices, and social structures.

The presence of grinding stones suggests the reliance on agricultural practices and the transition from hunter-gatherer societies to settled farming communities. Similarly, the discovery of unique stone tools throughout various layers of the cave indicates the development of specialized skills and the sharing of knowledge within the community.

The Legacy of Ground Stone Tools

The ground stone tools found at Franchthi Cave have left a lasting legacy. They played a pivotal role in shaping early human civilization and contributed to the establishment of permanent settlements. These inventions allowed for the increased production and storage of food, which ultimately led to population growth and the development of complex societies.

Moreover, the use of ground stone tools continued well into the Bronze Age and beyond. Their timeless characteristics and indispensable functionality ensured their place in ancient societies. As we explore the remnants of these tools today, we gain a deeper understanding of our ancestors' challenges, ingenuity, and perseverance.

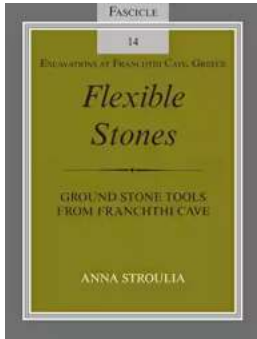
The excavation of ground stone tools from Franchthi Cave has opened a window into the distant past, offering us a glimpse of our ancient human relatives' ingenuity and resourcefulness. These tools, with their intricate craftsmanship and multipurpose functionality, played a crucial role in shaping our ancestors' lives and technological advancements.

The Fascicle 14 excavation at Franchthi Cave provides a comprehensive account of the ground stone tools' legacy. These tools allowed early humans to process food more efficiently, develop settlements, and establish permanent societies. They shed light on the transition from a nomadic lifestyle to a more settled one, marking a significant milestone in our history.

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Despite their ubiquitous presence among prehistoric remains in Greece, ground stone tools have yet to attract the same kind of attention as have other categories of archaeological material, such as pottery or lithics. *Flexible Stones* provides a detailed analysis of the material discovered during the excavations at Franchthi Cave, Peloponnese, Greece. Approximately 500 tools, the raw material used for their manufacture, as well as the byproducts of such manufacture were found. Most of this collection comes from the Neolithic component of the site—including a small number of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic cases—with a large number of the studied tools indicating multiple uses. Anna Stroulia sees the multifunctional character of these tools as a conscious choice that reflects a flexible attitude of tool makers and users toward tools and raw materials.



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