

Archaeological obsidian by chronological periods

The specific qualities of obsidian - perfect knappability, sharp working edge and its indisputable beauty - rendered the rock suitable and popular for making certain types of tools, later on, objects of prestige from the earliest periods of Humankind. Continental obsidian sources in Africa, Asia and Europe have been in use since the Lower Palaeolithic.

The utilisation of obsidian in artefact production is an important marker for prehistoric contacts and trade. Obsidian distribution data describe objectively the action radius of Palaeolithic communities and, later on, the social and trade networks, preferred routes and distribution centres of more recent prehistoric societies. What is the dynamism of obsidian distribution in certain geographical regions? Can we trace contacts and boundaries? Does the proximity of accessible sources motivate migration and movement?