Spinning and Weaving Activities at Abu Hamid as Inferred from the Study of Perforated Objects

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Abstract

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The archaeological record is considered as a “black box” which contains the residues of past human activities. These activities in terms are indirect in the contemporary archaeological records. However, past human behavior could be inferred by studying the material remains and defining their functional patterns.

This perspective of studying material remains to infer past activities is employed in this study so as to define the spinning and weaving activities that were performed by Abu Hamid settlers. The period concerned here is ranged from the Late Sixth down to the early fourth millennium B.C.

The main archaeological materials that have been examined and discussed are: a) the ‘perforated objects’ b) archaeobotanical evidences and c) archaeozoological evidences. In addition, ethnoarchaeological study was conducted to aid in interpreting the archaeological data. The main aims of this ethnoarchaeological study is to observe and discuss the human behavior/ material remains relationships. Since these relationships are absent directly in any given archaeological record.

The above data were manipulated so as to define the toolkits that are employed in spinning and weaving activities. The main direct raw materials correlated with these activities are perforated objects. The investigation of these assemblages from Abu Hamid sheds light on the functional attributes that could be used to distinguish between objects used in spinning performance and the ones used in weaving as loom weights.
In addition, the indirect evidences of both botanical and zoological data showed that two main fibres were utilized by the settlers of Abu Hamid. These were flax and wool.

Moreover, it was possible to correlate between the fibres and the appropriate spindle whorls used in their spinning.

The functional separation of the perforated objects also enabled to state the conjoined features that correlated with weaving and dyeing activities. This has been well attested from the archaeological deposits of the Upper levels.

The investigation of the spatial distribution of both spindle whorls and loom weights sheds light on the behavior context of these tools. This process showed that spinning activity was performed at the household level, meanwhile, weaving was correlated with common activity area where each household members can produce their textiles in a common workshop.

The frequency of wool whorls indicated that there were advance utilization of this fibre in the early fourth millennium (Ghassulian culture) comparing with the Middle Levels (Wadi Rabah culture). Moreover, it could be more probably that the inhabitants of Abu Hamid employed warp loom in the early fourth millennium as the numerous loom weights indicated.