

## **“From flint chip to computer chip” - Technology and Culture in Prehistory**

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The way human cultures incorporate production and use of artifacts probably sets us apart from other animals. Much of what is known today about human evolution derives from the study of stone tools that are the main kind of artifact preserved from over 99.7% of the time span of human history. The gradual evolution of stone technology from rough and simple forms to highly sophisticated and refined objects portrays human cognitive evolution, as well as the development of technical and social skills.

The most important and difficult task facing prehistoric research is the mute messages embedded in the shapes and forms of the lithic artifacts as regards technological know-how, craftsmanship, as well as the tradition of the particular artisan/s that produced those artifacts. The very nature of the irreversible process of stone knapping implies that the producer of a stone artifact must have a clear idea not only of the final product he/she aims at, but also of the chain of operations which should be followed to achieve the desired goal. Indeed, this mental process is portrayed in the morphometrics of the artifacts, both the final products and in the waste material. We will attempt to follow general trajectories of prehistoric lithic production through time, pointing out focal points in the development and diversification of lithic assemblages.