Call for Papers


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With its roots firmly planted in French ethnography, the chaîne opératoire, or ‘operational chain’ functions as a framework for interpreting the manufacturing process, use, and eventual deposition of archaeological material culture and artefacts. A previous edition of the Archaeological Review from Cambridge (ARC) in 1990 was the earliest English language publication to discuss the chaîne opératoire and disseminate its use in archaeology to an international audience. Since then, the chaîne opératoire has become a well-established, widely utilised analytical tool in archaeological research.

Following its initial popularity within lithic studies, the chaîne opératoire is now utilised within studies of all other aspects of material culture including ceramics, rock art, textile studies, figurines, jewellery, metal work and everything in between. Even if its deployment within archaeological methodologies first focussed on production sequences, more recent work has demonstrated real potential for facilitating meaningful discussion regarding object biographies, craft traditions and technological processes, social relations, labour organisation, genealogies of production and socio-cultural identity.

Therefore, three decades since the original ARC publication, and despite a more recent edition of the ARC (2006) featuring chaîne opératoire related papers we feel the use of the chaîne opératoire has developed to such an extent that a reappraisal of the current status of the chaîne opératoire within archaeology is warranted. A key aim of this issue is to chart how it is currently being used to explore new questions as well as how it can be used to find new answers to old questions. How can the chaîne opératoire be applied to investigate aspects of material culture related to social processes?

Possible topics to be explored may include, though are not limited to:

- Studies which highlight the application of the chaîne opératoire alongside other complimentary methodologies, including archaeological science, which allow for a more holistic understanding of material culture, and the people involved in its production, use and discard.
- Studies that chart the development of chaîne opératoire studies since its initial application in archaeology.
- Studies which demonstrate how archaeology has benefitted from the addition of chaîne opératoire-based/supported methodologies
- Studies which deal with theoretical considerations for the chaîne opératoire.

Papers of no more than 4000 words should be submitted to Monique Arntz (ma767@cam.ac.uk) and Michael Lewis (ml830@cam.ac.uk) before September 15th 2019 for publication in April 2020. Potential contributors are encouraged to register interest early by submitting an abstract of up to 250 words or contacting the editors directly to discuss their ideas. More information about the Archaeological Review from Cambridge, including back issues and submission guidelines may be found online at http://arc.soc.srfc.net.