

Right or left? Determining the hand holding the tool from use traces

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- 1 Right or left? Determining the hand holding the tool from use traces.
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- 28
- 29 Abstract:
- Currently, approximately 90% of the human population is right-handed. This handedness is due to 30 the lateralization of the cerebral hemispheres and is controlled by brain areas involved in complex 31 32 motor tasks such as making stone tools or in language. In addition to describing the evolution of 33 laterality in humans, identifying hand preference in fossil hominids can improve our understanding 34 of the emergence and development of complex cognitive faculties during evolution. Several fields 35 of prehistory like palaeoanthropology or lithic analysis have already investigated handedness in 36 fossils hominins but they face limitations due to either the incomplete or the composite state of the skeleton remains or to results replication or method application failure. Wear analysis could provide 37 new complementary data about hand preference evolution and the development of certain complex 38

39 cognitive functions using indirect evidence (use traces, micro-scars in particular) of the hand 40 holding the stone tool during use. Controlled experiment has been carried out in order to establish 41 a reference collection of tools used with the left and tools used with the right hand. Wear analysis 42 was performed on this corpus using "classical" microscopic approach and geometric morphometric 43 analysis. A machine learning algorithm, the k-NN method, was applied to verify if use traces 44 (micro-scars) could help determine the hand holding the tool during use. The best model, based on parameters referring to invasiveness of micro-scars, was able to correctly determine the hand 45 46 holding the tool with 75% accuracy.

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49 1. Introduction:

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Hand preference is defined by the hand with which an individual performs a specific task 51 (e.g. Annett, 1985; Uomini and Gowlett, 2013). Several studies have demonstrated that hand 52 53 preference is linked to the lateralization of the cerebral hemispheres and is related to areas of the 54 brain similar to those involved in the control of other essential functions such as language (e.g. Corballis, 2003; Meguerditchian et al., 2013; Stout et al., 2000; Uomini and Meyer, 2013; Willems 55 and Hagoort, 2007). Thus, in addition to describing the evolution of laterality in humans, identifying 56 57 hand preference in fossil hominids can improve our understanding of the emergence and 58 development of complex cognitive faculties during evolution (e.g. Steele and Uomini, 2009; Stout 59 et al., 2008).

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61 Currently, between 74% and 96% of the human population preferentially uses the right 62 hand (Annett, 1985; Llaurens et al., 2009; Porac and Coren, 1981). Lefthanders are a minority in 63 all human populations. The highest rate of left-handers recorded in a population is found among 64 the Eipo in Papua New Guinea and is estimated at 26.9% (Faurie et al., 2005).

The control of fine manual actions (called "complex" motor actions) is attributed to the left 65 hemisphere which would explain the preferential use of the right hand for this type of action (e.g. 66 Greenfield, 1991; Johnson-Frey et al., 2005; Lewis, 2006; Schluter et al., 2001). Some authors 67 have thus hypothesized the development of a strong manual preference in relation to the 68 manufacture and complexity of tools (Corballis, 1987; Stock et al., 2013; Uomini and Gowlett, 69 70 2013; Uomini, 2009). Other studies show a greater effect of the nature and demands of the task as 71 well as the type of object involved and the speed of the action (Forrester et al., 2013, 2012, 2011; Pouydebat et al., 2014; Quaresmini et al., 2014; Rogers, 2009). The complexity of the task is 72 therefore probably not the only criterion explaining the emergence of a strong manual preference. 73 74 Establishing a direct link between strong manual preference and the complexity of (stone) tools is 75 difficult and, so far, concrete archaeological data do not support it. Moreover, few studies highlight

the fact that the right hemisphere is also involved and essential in activities such as tool use (Frey
and Gerry, 2006; Hartmann et al., 2005; Stout and Chaminade, 2012)

78 In non-human primates, especially great apes, similarly strong lateralization as in humans is 79 missing (Vallortigara and Rogers, 2005). This differs according to the species but also within the 80 same species at an individual level or a population level (Cashmore et al., 2008; Chapelain et al., 81 2011; Hopkins, 2006; Marzke, 2013; McManus, 2009). Differences in hand preference among non-82 human primates appear to be due to complex relationships between various factors, such as the environment (life in the wild or captivity), or the complexity and nature of the task (type, speed) 83 (e.g. Fagot and Vauclair, 1991; Hopkins et al., 2011; McGrew and Marchant, 1997; Mosquera et 84 al., 2012; Pouydebat et al., 2014). 85

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87 The origin of this peculiarity during human evolution is for the moment unknown. So far, data about fossil hominin hand preference are mainly coming from the skeleton, either directly 88 inferred from forelimb asymmetries or indirectly from the skull. The examination of bone 89 90 asymmetries on the upper limbs of fossil hominids could deliver direct indications of hand preference. However, as suggested or stated in several studies, observed differences in hand 91 92 entheses (the surfaces where ligaments are attached on bones) among individuals with the same occupation could be due to numerous variables including inter-individual genetic variability, 93 94 nutrition or hormone levels, and not just manual activities (Foster et al., 2014; Karakostis et al., 95 2018, 2017; Karakostis and Lorenzo, 2016).

96 On the other hand, other measurements of upper limb asymmetries have been used to identify human hand preference (Shaw, 2011; Trinkaus et al., 1994). Based on such observation, 97 Sparacello et al. (2017) studied a sample of humeri coming from 107 Late Pleistocene individuals 98 and obtained a distribution of hand preference similar to the distribution obtained with recent 99 100 human samples (i.e. right: 74.8%, left: 15.0%, ambiguous: 10.3%). Others suggested for example that the articular constraints model could help in the identification of hand preference (Lazenby et 101 al., 2008) or that the analysis of trabecular bone could contribute to the identification of right/left 102 103 directional asymmetry (Stephens et al., 2016).

104 Moving on to the skull, analyses of cranial endocast asymmetries analyses (e.g. Balzeau et al., 2012; Holloway, 1981; Holloway and De La Costelareymondie, 1982; Poza-Rey et al., 2017) 105 suggested possible relationships between hand preference, endocranial shape, and functional 106 capacities in hominins. Other studies, investigating striations on teeth surfaces, show that even for 107 108 the Middle Palaeolithic and species such as Homo erectus in Asia, or Homo heidelbergensis and 109 Homo neanderthalensis in Europe, the right hand was already the chosen hand for the majority of 110 individuals, both adults or young individuals (e.g. Bermúdez de Castro et al., 2003, 1988; Condemi 111 et al., 2017; Estalrrich and Rosas, 2013; Fiore et al., 2015; Frayer et al., 2012, 2010; Lozano et al., 2009; Poza-Rey et al., 2017; Xing et al., 2017). This could be the case as early as 1.8 Ma as 112 suggested by the study of labial striations on the OH-65 fossil's anterior teeth (Lozano et al., 2017). 113

For younger periods, analysis of wall-paintings and striations on bone tools may give clues about the hand preference of their authors or users respectively (see Spenneman, 1984 for an example concerning Neolithic).

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118 These studies do not provide data supporting a ratio of left- and right-handers clearly 119 different from now in Prehistory (see Llaurens et al., 2009). However, the more we go back in time 120 the more the application of these methods to extinct hominin species have serious limitations. Relatively bad conservation of skeletal remains often prevents any analysis of traces that are 121 relevant for determining hand preference. Also, apart from the limited number of individuals which 122 could be studied (see table 2.1 of Faurie et al., 2016 for a summary of fossil hominin data for 123 124 laterality and corresponding references) palaeoanthropology faces the problem of the partial 125 skeleton remains which implies sometimes to study composite anatomical elements composed of bones coming from different individuals (see Cashmore, 2009). 126

On the contrary, stone tools are often abundant in Palaeolithic sites. The data they could 127 provide regarding hand preference are therefore likely to be statistically more representative if 128 whole sets of assemblages are analysed. Different studies have intended to set up a methodology 129 to determine hand preference based on the observation of manufacture features appearing on 130 131 stone tools (size and shape of flake scatter patterns: Newcomer and Sieveking, 1980; dorsal cortex 132 position: Toth, 1985; occurrence of cortex and relic margins: Bradley and Sampson, 1986; 133 orientation of the cone of percussion: Rugg and Mullane, 2001; resharpening techniques: Cornford, 134 1986; combination of technical features: Bargalló et al., 2018, 2017; Bargalló and Mosquera, 2014). These methods give variable results and a recent work from Ruck et al. (2015), applying 135 Toth's, Rugg and Mullane's and Bargalló and Mosquera's methods, showed that these methods 136 were not able to determine the hand holding the hammer for the studied flakes production better 137 138 than a random guess (see also Patterson and Sollberger, 1986; Pobiner, 1999; Uomini, 2011, 2001). 139

The identification of the knapper hand preference based on the spatial organization of debitage remains have also been investigated giving successful results in experimental conditions but the authors highlight the difficulties in applying such method in an archaeological context (Bargalló et al., 2018).

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Some of these methods should be investigated further in order to improve their rate of correct determination and their applicability to archaeological samples. However, producing a stone flake is a quick and punctual activity. Therefore, any variation during this short production moment might modify the types of features appearing on the flake. The poor rates of success in identifying hand preference from patterns in flake production may be due to the high variability of factors influencing the production of any particular flake. On the other hand, a repeated activity or movement is likely to leave behind a stronger "signature" of the hand preference. Therefore,

focusing on stone tool use rather than stone tool production could provide better results in 152 identifying hominids hand preference. A handful of studies have attempted to extract hand 153 154 preference from stone tool use (based on asymmetries of the tool: Brinton, 1896; based on 155 direction of rotation of boring artefacts: Cahen et al., 1979; Cahen and Keeley, 1980; Keeley, 1977; see also Uomini, 2008). Others simply discuss why it is difficult to do so (D'Errico, 1992; Semenov, 156 1970; Weber, 1990). However, to our knowledge, most of them only briefly mention this question 157 and none is based on an experimental reference collection that was statistically tested to allow the 158 159 identification of specific criteria corresponding to the use of the tool in the right or left hand.

Here, we propose to examine if hand preference can be identified from use-wear on stone tools through qualitative (traditional wear observation) and quantitative (measurements and geometric morphometric) wear descriptors. A machine learning algorithm is used for the first time on these data in order to test which of the descriptors is/are the most relevant to recognize the hand holding the tool based on the traces of use.

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167 2. Materials and methods

- 168 2.1. Experimental setup
- 169 Tools:

170 Numerous variables (morphology and raw material type of the tool, worked material, 171 working angle, direction of movement, etc.) can have an effect on the formation of traces on the 172 surface of a stone tool. In order to characterise traces of use related to hand preference but also quantify their variability, it is first essential to limit the effect of these variables and particularly the 173 effect of the form of the tool. Therefore, the form of the tool was standardized using soda-lime 174 glass replicas of a Levallois point (lovita et al., 2014; figure 1). The use of this glass has the 175 176 advantage to simulate the type of conchoidal fracture of many raw materials used in prehistory. These artefacts measured 64.5 mm long, 36.5 mm at the maximal width and 6 mm at the maximal 177 thickness, with a weight of 15.8 g on average. 178

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Figure 1 (1 column)

A total of 20 volunteers participated in the experiment, 10 right-handed subjects (5 women and 5 men) and 10 left-handed subjects (5 women and 5 men). They were beginners in using stone tools; none of them had used prehistoric tools before. The subjects were not aware of the fact that the aim of the experiment was related to hand preference in order to limit modification of their behaviour. Their hand preference was documented along with a number of other variables, including name, age, sex, size, weight, hand size, circumference of the last phalanx of each finger

¹⁸² Users:

189 of the hand holding the tool, palm length, palm width, expertise, previous injuries in order to 190 prevent them from identifying the aim of the study.

- 191
- 192 Worked material:

193 Wooden (*Pinus*) sticks with no bark were provided to each subject. These sticks were of 194 standardized diameter (18 mm) and length (50 cm).

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- 196 Task:

Each individual had to sit on a chair and to saw wooden sticks with three different tools. 197 Each tool was used for a total duration of 20 minutes. The number of strokes was not constrained 198 but number of strokes (forward + backward = 1) per minute was measured during the 5^{th} , 10^{th} and 199 15th minutes in order to approximate the speed of the sawing movement (in mvt/min.) (Whole 200 experiment: min = 98.33 mvt/min., max = 191.33 mvt/min., mean = 135.96 mvt/min., SD = 23.59 201 202 mvt/min.; for left hand users: min = 98.33 mvt/min., max = 191.33 mvt/min., mean = 141.74 mvt/min., SD = 25.37 mvt/min.; for right hand users: min = 100.3 mvt/min., max = 166 mvt/min., 203 mean = 129.9 mvt/min., SD = 20.41 mvt/min.; see the dataset in supplementary material). Before 204 the experiment proper, a five-minute test was carried out without any instructions to observe how 205 individuals hold and use the tool spontaneously, and to evaluate the constrains of our controlled 206 207 experiment on the tool grasping mode. The first tool of the proper experiment was used with the 208 only instruction to use the predefined edge. For the second and third tools, the participants had to 209 use the predefined edge and keep the wooden stick horizontal on their knees. Each experiment was recorded individually and documented by one observer using a Samsung NV24HD video 210 camera. 211

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213 2.2. Analysis

214 Description of micro-scars

Each stone tool was observed with a stereomicroscope (Zeiss Discovery V8 with Plan S 215 1.0x objective; FWD = 81 mm; it is equipped with a ToupTek camera with a resolution of 5 216 MPixels) before use at 10x (objective FOV = 23 mm) and 80x (objective FOV = 2.9 mm) 217 magnifications. Then, the tools were cleaned (in a solution of DERQUIM LM02 phosphate free 218 neutral soap at 5% in ultrasonic-bath during 15 min), and moulded (using Heraeus PROVIL®novo 219 Light Regular silicone) and casted (using Axson F180 polyurethane resin) to keep a record of their 220 221 original morphology before use. The tools were then used for a total duration of 20 minutes each. After use, they were cleaned again (same procedure as before use) and observed at 10x and 80x 222 223 magnifications (with the Zeiss Discovery V8).

Micro-scars were documented before and after use on both sides of the tool. Their amount, position (ventral or dorsal face), type, orientation, and (position of) maximum extent on the surface perpendicularly to the edge were recorded (Figure 2). The type of micro-fractures was described following the typology of the Ho Ho Committee (1979): fracture, feathered and step. We added the type "abrupt" to refer to scars which were not straight as a fracture but too steep to enter in the category "feathered". Three categories were used for the orientation of the scars: perpendicular to the edge, oriented distally (towards the point) and proximally (towards the butt).

Statistical tests were performed in R (R Core Team, 2019). As the assumptions of normality and equality of variance for t-test were not met, we used non-parametric Mann-Whitney U tests to verify if the number of micro-scars and if their invasiveness were different depending on the hand holding the tool during use. The Cochran's rule being respected, we used chi-square test to examine if the type of micro-scars, their orientation and the face where they appeared were independent of the user, of the user's sex and of the hand holding the tool during use.

Figure 2 (1 column)

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Edge modification visualization and quantification

Photograph of each tool was taken before and after use. The same camera was not available during the whole study. Pictures were taken with a Nikon D300 equipped with a Tamron 16-300mm F/3.5-6.3 Di II VC PZD objective before use (pictures were taken at a focal length of 200mm) and with a NIKON 7100 with an AF-D Micro NIKKOR 60mm 1:2.8G ED objective after use.

As they were taken with different conditions, the two batches of photos (i.e. from before and 246 after use) were first scaled. They were then binarized with Adobe Photoshop. The Momocs 247 (Bonhomme et al., 2014) and geomorph (Adams et al., 2019) libraries for R were used for the 248 analysis of the shape of the tool edges. The outlines of the tools were automatically extracted from 249 250 the binarized images. The outlines were then aligned and cut to keep only the area of interest 251 displaying the modifications due to use: the used edge of each tool (Figure 3). The remaining 252 curves corresponding to the used edges of each tool were defined by two landmarks, one at each extremity, and by 1000 equidistant "sliding-semilandmarks" distributed between these two points. A 253 high number of points was chosen because the sought shape differences are due to the micro-254 255 scaring of the edges and can be very fine. The space between each "semilandmark" was then optimized by allowing them to slip between the previous and the next point in order to minimize the 256 Procruste distance with the pseudo-homologous point of the Procrustes mean shape (see Gunz 257 258 and Mitteroecker, 2013). This optimization aims to limit the effect of the former arbitrary spacing of the points (Gunz and Mitteroecker, 2013; Perez et al., 2006), here equidistant. This optimization 259 and the superposition of the curves were carried out by Generalized Procrustean Analysis (GPA). 260 261 The new coordinates obtained by GPA were used to calculate a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and to visualize, with transformation grids (Klingenberg, 2013), the axes on which the shape 262 variations were the most important according to the manual preference. A Procrustes multivariate 263 analysis of variance (Procrustes ANOVA using the function "procD.Im" of package geomorph in R) 264

265 was used to test if the shape differences visualized according to the recorded factors (e.g. hand holding the tool during use) were statistically significant. In other words, it allowed us to check if 266 267 specific scar distributions and specific used edge morphologies can be linked to the hand holding 268 the tool during use (i.e. left or right hand). The relationship between individuals' sex and the 269 resulting used edge shape was also tested. 270 271 Figure 3 (2 columns) 272 k-Nearest Neighbours model 273 274 In order to verify if the qualitative and quantitative descriptors of scars could be used to discriminate a tool used with the right hand from a tool used with the left hand, we used the k 275 276 Nearest Neighbours (k-NN) machine learning algorithm. It was computed using the "caret" library (Kuhn et al., 2019) in R. This algorithm uses Euclidean distances to find the k-Nearest Neighbours 277 of the artefact to be classified. The class which is the most frequent among the k Nearest 278 279 Neighbours is given to the unknown artefact (see Domínguez-Rodrigo and Baguedano, 2018 for 280 an example of application on cut-marks on bones). Twenty-one combinations of different 281 descriptors were tested: 1) Number of scars on the ventral and dorsal faces of the tool 282 2) types of scars on both faces 283 3) types of scars on dorsal face 284 285 4) types of scars on ventral face 286 5) directions of scars on both faces 6) directions of scars on dorsal face 287 7) directions of scars on ventral face 288 8) types and directions of scars on both faces 289 9) number, types and directions of scars on both faces 290 10) the 59 first principal components of the PCA on geometric morphometric data 291 11) the 2 first principal components of the PCA on geometric morphometric data 292 293 12) the 59 first principal components of the PCA on geometric morphometric data and the number of scars on both faces 294 295 13) position of the scar with the maximum extent on the surface perpendicularly to the edge 296 on ventral face 14) position of the scar with the maximum extent on the surface perpendicularly to the edge 297 on dorsal face 298 299 15) position of the scar with the maximum extent on the surface perpendicularly to the edge 300 on both faces 16) maximum scar extent on the surface perpendicularly to the edge on ventral face 301 302 17) maximum scar extent on the surface perpendicularly to the edge on dorsal face

18) maximum scar extent on the surface perpendicularly to the edge on both faces

19) maximum scar extent and position of the scar with the maximum extent on the surfaceperpendicularly to the edge on both faces

- 306 20) all descriptors from microscopic observation
- 307

21) all descriptors from microscopic observation and geometric morphometrics

308 We normalized the descriptors so their values were comprised between 0 and 1 to avoid emphasizing descriptors with larger ranges of values. Each configuration was tested with each odd 309 number between 3 and 59 as k value (3 being the minimum odd number for such model and 59 the 310 maximum in our case as we had 60 artefacts). The k value of the final model was chosen based on 311 the obtained accuracy and kappa for each model. As our sample size (N = 60) is quite small, we 312 313 used leave-on-out cross-validation method to evaluate the models. In this method, the whole sample set of analysed artefacts but one is used as a training set and the removed artefact is used 314 as a testing set. This procedure is repeated as many times as the number of artefacts in the 315 sample set. In addition, we used kappa statistics (value between -1 and 1 which measures the 316 317 agreement between observed and expected accuracy; negative values indicate disagreement, and the degree of agreement increase from >0 to 1), sensitivity (a measure of the proportion of 318 attributed classes - i.e. positives - which are correctly attributed - i.e. true positives) and specificity 319 320 (a measure of the proportion of rejected classes – i.e. negatives - which are correctly rejected – i.e. 321 true negatives) to evaluate the performance of the selected model.

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324 3. Results

325 3.1. Scars description

The scars qualitative description showed that independently of the hand holding the tool during use: 1) tools have more extended scars on their dorsal face than on the ventral face, 2) tools have mostly continuous scars on the dorsal face and discontinuous scars on the ventral face, 3) scars can be distributed all along the used edge and 4) scars are mostly perpendicular to the edge. Therefore, no significant difference of position, type and orientation of scars between tools used by left-handers and right-handers was noticed (Figure 4 and Supplementary figures 1 to 7).

However, right-handed subjects produced significantly more micro-scars than left-handed subjects ($\overline{X} = 81.42$, sd = 39.84 for the tools used by right-handers versus $\overline{X} = 53.04$, sd = 18.60 for the left-handers; Mann-Whitney U one-tailed test: W = 240, p-value = 0.0011). Micro-scars were also significantly less invasive on tools used by left-handed subjects ($\overline{X} = 2.45$ mm, sd = 1.13 mm for the tools used by right-handers versus $\overline{X} = 1.63$ mm, sd = 0.73 mm for the left-handers; Mann-Whitney U one-tailed test: W = 771, p-value < 0.0001).

The hypothesis of independence between the hand holding the tool and the type of microscars appearing on the surface of the tool could be rejected ($X^2 = 43.371$, df = 4, p-value < 0.0001). However, independence could not be rejected concerning the hand holding the tool and the orientation of micro-scars ($X^2 = 0.66197$, df = 2, p-value = 0.7182) and the face where microscars were located ($X^2 = 2.1323$, df = 1, p-value = 0.1442).

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Among other chi-squared tests performed on this dataset we can notice that the type of micro-scars is not independent from the sex of the user ($X^2 = 89.084$, df = 4, p-value < 0.0001) and that the type of micro-scars, the orientation and the face where appeared micro-scars are not independent from the user (respectively $X^2 = 587.75$, df = 76, p-value < 0.0001; $X^2 = 240.43$, df = 38, p-value < 0.0001 and $X^2 = 114.05$, df = 19, p-value < 0.0001).

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Figure 4 (2 columns) and Supplementary figures 1 to 7

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352 3.2. Edge modification visualization and quantification through geometric morphometric

353 3.2.1. Comparison of edges before and after use

Before computing the geometric morphometric analysis, the extraction of each edge of interest before and after use allowed comparing them to visualize the location of edge modifications and the amount of removed material during use (Figure 5 and Supplementary figures 8 to 18. Most of the modification seem to be on the middle and the rear of the edge. Few tools (40%, N = 24/60) present modifications on the front part of the edge but these modifications are generally not invasive. No difference or clear tendency is noticed between tools used with left versus the right hand regarding the amount of removed material and the location of modifications.

- 362

Figure 5 (1 column) and Supplementary figures 8 to 18

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3.2.2. Used edges shapes quantification

The first two axes of the PCA on shape data account respectively for 23.26% and 11.79% 365 366 of the total variance (Figure 6). Groups of tools held with the right hand almost fully overlap with 367 the group of tools held with the left hand. Procrustes ANOVA confirmed that no pattern of shape of 368 used edge can be specifically attributed to tools used with the right hand versus tools used with the left hand. (Procrustes ANOVA: df = 1, SS = 0.0002, MS = 0.0002, Rsq = 0.0247, F = 1.4708, Z = 369 1.4315, p-value = 0.101). On the contrary, we noticed that the user and the sex of the user may 370 have a larger effect (than the hand holding the tool) on the shape of the used edges (Procrustes 371 ANOVA on shapes and users: df = 19, SS = 0.0038, MS = 0.0002, Rsg = 0.4301; F = 1.5889; Z = 372 4.5104; p-value = 0.001; Procrustes ANOVA on shapes and sex of users: df = 1, SS = 0.0002, MS 373 = 0.0002, Rsq = 0.0324; F = 1.9407; Z = 2.3377; p-value = 0.029). 374

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378 3.3. k Nearest Neighbours model

Among the 21 tested models, only five gave an accuracy of at least 75%, all are based on descriptors concerning the maximum scar extent on the surface (perpendicularly to the edge). The best model includes the maximum scar extent and the position of the scar with the maximum extent on the surface (perpendicularly to the edge) on both faces. With a k value set up at 5, this model provided an accuracy of 75% (95% confidence interval: 62%, 85%) with an acceptable kappa of 0.51, a sensitivity of 85% and a specificity of 67% (Table 1).

Table 1 (2 columns)

388 4. Discussion

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389 4.1. Can hand preference be identified from micro-scars?

We could not document any significant difference in position, type, and orientation of scars 390 between tools used by left-handers and right-handers. The microscopic observation showed that 391 392 tools have more extended scars on their dorsal face than on the ventral face regardless of which 393 hand the user preferred. Knowing that tools were always held with the same orientation during the sawing action (with the dorsal face on the right) this result is counter intuitive. Indeed, during the 394 395 sawing action we usually observe a tilt of the tool toward the right for right-handers and towards the left for left-handers usually resulting in more scars on the face placed on the left for right-handers 396 and on the right for left-handers. This result shows that hand preference has no influence on the 397 distribution of scars on either of the tool's faces. Combined with the fact that these tools had a 398 399 centred cutting edge, this result may show that the edge morphology and surface structure may have an effect on the distribution of scars (when the glass casts were made, imperfections on the 400 401 edges were removed by polishing the ventral side of the edge only; this might have affected the 402 resilience of this face).

On the other hand, the type of micro-scars seems to be related to the hand holding the tool 403 during use. This is also a counter-intuitive result. However, as the tool had to be held in the same 404 orientation by left-handers and right-handers, the forces applied by left-handers, theoretically 405 symmetrical to those applied by right-handers, are applied on the opposite surface of the tool. As 406 mentioned above, the surface might have different resilience to contact during use and, as a 407 consequence, different types of micro-scars might have been produced. This should be tested in 408 409 future experiments. The suggestion that one of the surfaces (i.e. the dorsal face) of the tools might be weaker than the other is somewhat supported by the fact that irrespective of which hand was 410 411 holding the tool, the dorsal face exhibited more scars.

412

413 Comparison of the edges before and after use did not show significant difference between 414 the amount of removed material and the location of modifications on tools used by left-handers and 415 right-handers. Right-handed subjects produced significantly more invasive and more numerous 416 micro-scars than left-handers but this is very likely to be due to an individual factor as, apart from 417 hand preference, the sex and the user seem to have a negligible effect on the characteristics of the 418 micro-scars. This was confirmed by geometric morphometric analyses which show that the shape 419 of the used edges depends more on the user and user's sex than on the hand preference.

420

Based on the data gathered through microscopic observation of scars and quantification of edge modification with geometric morphometric, the k Nearest Neighbours method highlighted the importance of the maximum scar extent (on the ventral face) and of the position of the more invasive scar in discriminating hand preference during stone tool use. The model integrating these variables gave 75% of good identification of the hand preference of the user.

426 427

4.2. Importance of individual characteristics

We decided not to choose experts at this step of the project because expertize in using 428 429 stone flakes (here more exactly soda lime-glass) is a complicated notion. How can we define an expert user of stone flakes? Beginners are sometimes performing very well in such tasks. Like for 430 nowadays tools, a beginner might be more likely to damage the tool quicker than an expert might 431 432 but can we really consider someone as an expert stone flake user in the current world? Few have 433 more experience than others do and finding enough experienced people to produce statistically 434 acceptable data is not straightforward. In addition, experts may not have been the users of all the 435 archaeological pieces; expertise is not an information that we have archaeologically and we 436 intended to find parameters, which do not depend on the expertise to identify hand preference.

Thus, all of the individuals involved in this experiment were beginners in prehistoric tool 437 use. This lack of skill may be one of the reason why several scar features seem to be more related 438 to individual characteristics than to hand preference. The variability of grip and movements, even if 439 440 somehow constrained, likely influence scars production which may follow a pattern linked to the way each individual used the tool. It can be supposed that in prehistory, frequent use of stones as 441 tools implies a certain degree of know-how and the transmission of this knowledge among 442 443 members of a particular community. A certain regularity in the way stone tools were used might be 444 expected. If so, individual characteristics might not exert such influence on scars features in archaeological assemblages. However, in any discipline, experts often develop idiosyncratic 445 techniques which can be used to identify them. If stone tool use follows such a model, individual 446 447 characteristics may be very important in the process of scars formation and, for a specific 448 previously identified task, (even if unlikely because of the numerous variables possibly affecting 449 tool surfaces) it might be possible to evaluate the minimum number of different users within an 450 assemblage. This has to be tested in the future, involving experimenters skilled in stone tool use.

451

452 4.3. Hand holding the tool versus hand preference

453 The hand preference of an individual may vary depending on the action carried out (Provins, 1997). For instance, in the frame of this experiment, one individual declared himself as 454 455 left-handed but spontaneously used the right hand to saw the wood during the whole experiment. 456 Also, some of the individuals asked to change the hand holding the tool (which was not allowed 457 here) because of pain due to this unusual task. In an unconstrained context (as in Prehistory), it is 458 likely that individuals would change hand if they feel pain or discomfort. Such modification of the 459 hand used during the tasks would highly complicate the identification of left-handed and righthanded people based on archaeological stone tools. However, we can think that, during Prehistory, 460 stone tool use was a more frequent activity and pain and discomfort may have been less common. 461 In any case, such behaviours (as well as the case of ambidextrous people) demonstrate that what 462 463 we might intent to determine in an archaeological context is the hand holding the tool rather than the hand preference of the user. Only the study of large samples through multi-proxy examination 464 might allow approaching hand preference. 465

466

467 4.4. Archaeological application

The results of this experiment, the k-NN results in particular, are promising and show that it 468 might be possible to identify the hand holding the tool during use based on micro-scars extent and 469 470 location. However, even if 75% of correct identification is acceptable, it remains valid for a 471 constrained experimental context in wood sawing activity only. We can expect a drastic drop of 472 accuracy in unconstrained situations. Indeed, it is for instance essential to consider that one tool 473 could have been used several times, for various activities, and by different users. Furthermore, in an archaeological assemblage, it is very unlikely to deal only with artefacts used in sawing wood 474 activities. It is now essential to extend the experimental reference corpus with unstandardized 475 pieces (used for different activities), to improve the model with other traces (residues, micro-476 477 polishes, striations), and to validate the results with blind-tests before any application on archaeological assemblages. Such an application could be considered when a strong enough (i.e. 478 more than 90% accuracy) experimental model will be ready. It requires a large experimental 479 480 collection on which each of the traces will be examined and documented. Our model involves 481 parameters that are not dependent on the population ratio of right and lefthanders and is only based on repeatable measurements and description. Once improved, we will be able to propose a 482 new proxy which could provide different result concerning hand preference ratio in Prehistory or 483 484 reinforce the obtained results from the other disciplines.

485

486 5. Conclusion

Wear analysis, geometric morphometric and machine learning provided complementary results in order to examine if the hand holding the tool during use could be identified based on micro-scars. However, the k-NN method showed that the data provided by geometric morphometric and numerous data coming from wear analysis do not help in improving the 491 accuracy of the model of classification. Nevertheless, counter-intuitive results may indicate a bias related to the structure of the tool used in this experiment and these non-significant variables from 492 493 geometric morphometric and wear analysis should not be rejected definitively before further 494 experiments. Moreover, the heterogeneity of raw materials used in prehistoric times may lead to 495 similar results. The best model (75% accuracy) is obtained when based on the maximum scar 496 extent and the position of the scar with the maximum extent on the surface of the tool 497 perpendicularly to the edge on both faces. Other variables show overlap for tools used with the left hand and tools used with the right hand, and are likely to depend rather on individual 498 characteristics. 499

500 This first experiment, with standardized tools dedicated to hand preference identification, 501 yielded promising results and already highlighted variables that could be used as discriminants. 502 Nevertheless, the experimental corpus needs to be extended and the model tested further to 503 provide reliable results from archaeological assemblages.

504

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Fig.1: Soda-lime glass replica used in the experiment.

Fig.2: Documentation of the type, orientation and position of maximum extent of the micro-scars.

Fig.3: Used edges curves extraction for geometric morphometric analysis. A) Example of photograph taken after use. B) Binarization. C) Scaling of outlines. D) The line going through the extremities of each outline is placed horizontally, the outlines are then wedged on the rightmost point. E) The average coordinates of the uppermost points of the outlines is calculated and the uppermost point of each outline is aligned on it. F) The edge of interest is extracted by cutting the outline at the uppermost point and at the leftmost point.

Fig.4: Examples of position and orientation of micro-scars for left and right-handers.

Fig.5: Comparison of tool edges before and after use for left and right-handers.

Fig.6: Two first axes of the principal component analysis of the coordinates obtained by Generalized Procrustean Analysis (GPA) of the curves representing the used edges of the tools used by left-handers and right-handers. The used edge shape reconstructions are displayed for the minimum and the maximum values of each PC.

Table 1: Results of the k Nearest Neighbours models. Models providing the best accuracy are in bold.















Tool used by a right-hander







Model n°	Included variables	K-value giving best results	Accuracy	95%CI	Карра	Sensitivity	Specificity
1	Number of scars on the ventral and dorsal faces of the tool	23	0.65	0.5160, 0.7687	0.3092	0.7407	0.5758
2	Types of scars on both faces	9 & 11	0.6833	0.5504, 0.7974	0.3537	0.5926	0.7576
3	Types of scars on dorsal face	5	0.7	0.5679, 0.8115	0.398	0.7037	0.6970
4	Types of scars on ventral face	31	0.6	0.4654, 0.7244	0.1864	0.5185	0.6667
5	Directions of scars on both faces	17 & 27	0.6	0.4654, 0.7244	0.2131	0.7037	0.5152
6	Directions of scars on dorsal face	41	0.6333	0.499, 0.7541	0.2834	0.7778	0.5152
7	Directions of scars on ventral face	21	0.6333	0.499, 0.7541	0.2691	0.6667	0.6061
8	Types and directions of scars on both faces	25	0.65	0.516, 0.7687	0.3	0.6667	0.6364
9	Number, types and directions of scars on both faces	27	0.6167	0.4821, 0.7393	0.2333	0.6296	0.6061
10	The 59 first principal components of the PCA on geometric morphometrics data	55 & 57 & 59	0.55	0.4161, 0.6788	0	0	1
11	The 2 first principal components of the PCA on geometric morphometrics data	31	0.5833	0.4488, 0.7093	0.1776	0.6667	0.5152
12	The 59 first principal components of the PCA on geometric morphometrics data and the number of scars on both faces	13 & 15	0.65	0.516, 0.7687	0.3	0.6667	0.6364
13	Position of the scar with the maximum extent on the surface perpendicularly to the edge on ventral face	17 & 47	0.7333	0.6034, 0.8393	0.4539	0.6296	0.8182
14	Position of the scar with the maximum extent on the surface perpendicularly to the edge on dorsal face	21 & 23	0.5833	0.4488, 0.7093	0.1611	0.5556	0.6061
15	Position of the scar with the maximum extent on the surface perpendicularly to the edge on both faces	11	0.7333	0.6034, 0.8393	0.4613	0.7037	0.7576
16	Maximum scar extent on the surface perpendicularly to the edge on ventral face	25 & 37	0.75	0.6214, 0.8528	0.4966	0.7407	0.7576
17	Maximum scar extent on the surface perpendicularly to the edge on dorsal face	21 & 23	0.7333	0.6034, 0.8393	0.4613	0.7037	0.7576
18	Maximum scar extent on the surface perpendicularly to the edge on both faces	23	0.75	0.6214, 0.8528	0.5	0.7778	0.7273
19	Maximum scar extent and position of the scar with the maximum extent on the surface perpendicularly to the edge on both faces	5	0.75	0.6214, 0.8528	0.5066	0.8519	0.6667
20	All descriptors from microscopic observation	5	0.75	0.6214, 0.8528	0.5	0.7778	0.7273
21	All descriptors from microscopic observation and geometric morphometrics	9	0.75	0.6214, 0.8528	0.5066	0.8519	0.6667