

"Archaeometrical research of lithic raw materials for early Neolithic prehistoric communities with the help of Prompt Gamma Activation Analysis, with special regard to radiolarites and obsidian"

Radiolarite: Questions and answers

Katalin T. Biró
Hungarian National Museum
tbk@ace.hu

Radiolarite is a siliceous rock formed in the bathial region - deep sea and ocean environment. It is composed of Radiolaria, unicellular organisms with siliceous skeletal elements. Radiolarians as a taxon have a long range, they are known since the Palaeozoic till recent times. In rock-forming quantities, however, they are typical of the Mesozoic period.

As raw material for chipped stone tools, radiolarite is frequently used. On the average, it is the most frequent component of lithic inventories in Hungary and even more, in Transdanubia. There are macroscopically separable types among the radiolarites, mainly on the basis of colour and other physical properties. They are currently named after the most characteristic geological source locality. It remains a question though, how much the 'raw material types' represent really different sources; how variability within each source is reflected in the archaeological lithic material and how much we can separate regional varieties, supported by objective methods of analysis. It is also imperative to know radiolarites from sources outside the present territory of Hungary that may have played a role in the raw material supply and 'fingerprint' the individual sources and regions.

One of the basic aims of the current TÉT project was to get more information on these issues. The paper presented will survey current state of art in respect of radiolarite sourcing studies in the Carpathian Basin as a result of the Croatian-Hungarian collaboration project.