

EXPERIMENTAL ARCHAEOLOGY AS A RESOURCE FOR APPROACHING FORMATION PROCESSES OF SEED ASSEMBLAGES: FIRST RESULTS

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The properties of the seed register are our only tools for making inferences of seed analysis results. These properties are affected in different ways by a large number of processes, ever since the seeds were first deposited on the soil. The existence of these formation processes is well known, but their effects on the properties of the seed assemblages are at the moment difficult to evaluate. This is because of the lack of a systematic project of experimentation that can find direct causes for the characteristics of each property.

For this first of our series of experiments, we have worked with two species: *Triticum aestivum* (5130 remains) and *Lens culinaris* (1478 remains). We have characterized the assemblage before its exposure to heat and after it, so that we can evaluate the differential effects of it when a whole assemblage is under study (most experiments work with single elements). After that, the assemblage has been divided in five equal groups. Four of them have been buried for one month in open air (from mid December of 2009 to mid January of 2010) and the remaining one has been left exposed without any covering during the same period.

After that, two of the samples have been excavated with a screwdriver and two of them with a trowel, aiming to compare the distinct effects of excavation techniques on seed fragmentation. Finally, one of each has been processed by flotation and the other one by water sieving, with the same purpose.

With this work we do not only expect to draw some preliminary conclusions on formation processes, but we also want to propose a more precise description of the properties of seeds in our everyday analyses. These more complete descriptions are the only way to be able to understand formation processes and, eventually, to evaluate the representativity of the assemblages under study.

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