Jacques Tixier, 1925–2018

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Jacques Tixier, one of the most influential prehistorians of the last hundred years, passed away at his home in Lot, France, on April 3rd, 2018, at the age of 93. It is now up to his many students and collaborators, amongst whom we are honored to count ourselves, to carry on his work. Tixier belongs to the group of French prehistorians who revolutionized the study of prehistory in the twentieth century, including Abbé Breuil, André Leroi-Gourhan, and François Bordes. Each, in his way, reoriented the study of prehistory by using superb excavation techniques for recovering archaeological remains, developing morphological type lists for specific archaeological traditions, and, in the case of Bordes and Tixier and their friend Don Crabtree, developing the science of lithic production sequences of the Pleistocene and early Holocene flint knappers. The concept of *chaîne opératoire*, developed by Leroi-Gourhan from his reading of anthropologist Marcel Mauss' paper *Essai sur le Don*, could not have emerged without the approach pioneered by Bordes and Tixier—replication of the steps used to

produce usable tools, specifically manufactured from the same raw material used by prehistoric knappers.

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Jacques Tixier began his work while he was a secondary school teacher in Algeria. His first publication, on the site of el-Hamel, was in 1954, and Tixier continued his excavations and interests in North African prehistory for his entire career. During 1954–1967, he re-excavated and published lithic assemblages from several important Maghreb sites (Aïn Fritissa, Bou-Sâada, and Ternifine). It was also at this time that he began his publications on North African typology, first as a series of fascicles dealing with specific industries. Then, in 1963, he published his seminal *Typologie de l'Épipaléolithique du Maghreb* which is still used today in North Africa and the southwestern Levant.

During this same period, Tixier began his series of experiments with lithic production, which led to several influential publications. These include the widely influential *Prehistory of Knapped or Chipped Lithics*, co-authored with his colleagues Marie-Louise Inizan, Hélène Roche, and Michelle Rederoun. Thus, Tixier's quest to establish a new branch of prehistory, the "Anthropologie de la Technologie", began. This new paradigm for prehistory is based on the idea that prehistorians can enter the mind of the flint knappers of the Pleistocene and early Holocene through the replication of their decision-making in the choices of raw material and the knapping sequences, along with refitting and use-wear analysis. And, the replication and analysis of the *débitage* sequences are considered as important as the analysis of the use and description of the finished

tools. All of these allow scholars to develop models of past human behaviors.

Following his excavations in North Africa, Tixier moved his field research to the Near East and began a re-examination of Ksar Akil, a major rockshelter in Lebanon. His work there with M.-L. Inizan and his publication of the site's radiocarbon dates with Paul Mellars, have become crucial to our understanding of Middle and Upper Paleolithic sequences in the Levant. Further work in Qatar with his team, and renewed interest in the functional attributes of certain MSA and LSA tools, became his focus in later years, as well as his series of lectures in North America, Europe, and elsewhere. Tixier also produced several films for the French Ministry of Education, which were distributed worldwide.

Jacques Tixier was a marvelous teacher, an innovative scholar, and a philosopher of prehistory. His active encouragement of so many, including those like us who were not his formal students, has had a profound and lasting influence on prehistoric research. He will be sorely missed.

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