Grinding stones as indication of a socioeconomic change in early Holocene West Africa: the example of Ounjougou, Mali

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Schir, Katia (Universität Basell katoria.schaer@baleab.ch), Eric Huyssecom (Université de Genève), and Sylvain Ozainne (Université de Genève). Grinding stones as indication ofa socioeconomic change in early Holocene West Africa: The example of Ounjougou, Mali.

Excavations in Ounjougou (Mali) have yielded the fragment of a 8th millennium BC grinding stone. A review of the evidence of querns from comparable sites in West Africa shows that grinding stones used for cereals only appeared with the beginning of Holocene, but were nevertheless quite a common feature in the Sahara between 10,000 and 6000 BP. The presence of querns on a site points to an economic shift from hunting-gathering to an intensive, partly sedentary, exploitation of a chosen environment, including hunting, fishing and cereal gathering - with-out immediate connection to a future agricultural lifestyle. Ounjougou remains so far the only site with querns in subsaharan West Africa before 5000 BP and seems to be the first example of a "life style" transfer or migration from the Sahara southwards - or vice-versa.