

2019 Society for American Archaeology Annual Meeting

Symposium Title: An Advancement of Obsidian Studies in the Old and New Worlds

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By means of geochemical sourcing of obsidian and its relationship to human behavior, including procurement, production, transport, trade, distribution, use, and discard, archaeologists have illuminated technological, economic, ritual, and political domains in a wide range of societies, from foraging hominins using the Oldowan stone tools to craft specialists in Teotihuacan. In addition to methodological advancements using standard analytical techniques (notably portable-EDXRF), archaeologists have also developed diverse theoretical, methodological, and empirical studies to enhance our knowledge of the use of obsidian in the past (e.g., formation processes, micro-wears, surface modifications, obsidian hydration, and core/tool reductions).

Since obsidian is a globally exploited material, the goal of the present symposium is to enhance our understanding of the current variability in archaeological questions and approaches to complexity in the use of obsidian by past populations. This will be achieved by assembling archaeological studies from various temporal settings from the Pleistocene to contemporary times between the Old and New Worlds.