

## **Soapstone (or « Pierre ollaire ») in western Switzerland: new archaeological and petrographical approaches.**

Hänni Mikael & Lhemon Maëlle

Department of Geosciences, University of Fribourg, Switzerland

The SNSF project «La pierre ollaire: un artisanat alpin» (in english: «Pierre Ollaire (soapstone): an alpine craftwork»), submitted in 2004 (V. Serneels, University of Fribourg, Switzerland), focus on the soapstone vessels found in the west part of Switzerland. This project gathers a petrograph (M.Hänni) and an archaeologist (M.Lhemon). The global goal of this subject is to understand and to precise the production and consummation history of this typical craftwork, especially during the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium of our era.

Informations and descriptions on the archaeological soapstone objects in western Switzerland are gathered, building a systematic inventory. Archaeological dataset are considered: geographical provenance, archaeological context and dating.

Morphology, forms and “decorations”, as well as the working marks (turning on the lathe, cutting), are studied in detail. These dataset are completed by a determination of the raw material: macroscopic petrographic observations, thin sections study and chemical analyses.

Considering forms, techniques of fabrication and raw material determinations, a precise characterisation of the corpuses coming from the same production centre is possible. The knowledges on the raw material ores would allow us to localize theses workshop or group of workshops.

It is possible to describe a specific assemblage for each archaeological centre containing soapstone elements. Comparing these assemblages, an image of the consumption and from his evolution with time is obtained.

This working-process would be illustrated through some characteristic examples