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**JACQUES TIXIER (1925-2018). In Memoriam.
A Great Prehistorian and Technology Ethnologist**

Jacques Tixier, an archaeologist and technologist, passed away at the age of 93 on 3 April 2018 in his home at Pradines (France) near the Lot river and chalk cliffs which he loved to watch as they glowed in the evening sun in springtime. His death marked the passing of the pioneering generation which crafted French prehistory into an internationally recognised branch of study, helping this young science to become a fully-fledged discipline in its own right.

**A PIONEER OF LITHIC TECHNOLOGY
RESEARCH**

As both an experimental and speculative science, Prehistory lies at the interface of social and natural sciences and Jacques Tixier had the insight, energy and academic rigour to embrace this key area and devote himself to it. It was Tixier, that ardent and exacting researcher, who first dared to enter this field of study armed with a new investigative approach, enabling him to make great strides towards the understanding of human behaviour in prehistoric times. As an ethno-technologist, Jacques Tixier set out to study certain dialectical relationships in the interplay of Nature and Culture, in particular those dealing with the management of mineral resources suitable for the production of stone tools, stone artefacts representing the most common category of remains preserved on archaeological sites. This way of thinking, between Nature and Culture, exemplified by Claude Lévi-Strauss' structuralist approach in the development of *socio-cultural anthropology*, was initiated by Jacques Tixier to contribute to the *anthropology of material culture* using the original and pertinent angle of stone-age tool making as a starting point. This pioneering approach can be classed as an "anthropology of technology" in response to the seminal work of Marcel Mauss and as a continuation of it.

**A MASTER OF KNAPPING TECHNIQUE
IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ISHI, DIMAN BALYO
AND OTHERS**

Jacques Tixier began by basing himself in part on André Leroi-Gourhan's notion of the "*chaîne opératoire*" and the first trials of François Bordes following on from, inter alia, Hippolyte Müller, Henri Breuil and Léon Coutier. However, he went beyond what they had achieved and finished by bringing about a veritable volte-face in the way of looking at the remains spread out over a large part of the world and the angles from which they could be approached. These residues of use were the only "archives", in the form of manufactured objects, which had been preserved from the longest period in the history of mankind. His innovative approach is the result of fruitful discussions with pioneering Americans working on the technologies of Pre-Hispanic societies (in particular Don E. Crabtree, who took part in the first Colloquium on Lithic Technology (not published) at Les Eyzies in November 1964, a meeting which proved to be a revelation); Tixier's approach has influenced ethnologists and archaeologists throughout the world.

**THE FOUNDER OF THE TECHNOLOGICAL
APPROACH**

While in Algeria in the 1950s, Jacques Tixier tried his hand at flint knapping which, teaching himself as he went along, led him to the development of a new method of analysis called "lithic technology". This made it possible to make hundreds of thousands of ostensibly mute prehistoric remains "break their silence". Going beyond the stone tools themselves, ranging from the handaxes to arrowheads, lithic technology enables scholars to reconstitute the intellectual and manual steps which led to the conception and then to the transformation of a technical idea into a functional tool simply on the basis of the left-over products of knapping, from simple flakes to cores. Operating on the borders of cognitive science and the "*artes mechanicae*"

(in the sense proposed in the 12th century by H. de St Victor in his book *Didascalicon*), this approach opens the door to an ethereal dialogue with prehistoric craftsmen, to the extent that millennia of human achievements, some of which can be complex indeed, from the Lower Palaeolithic to the Neolithic, can be made intelligible and readable. These examinations take as their starting point an analysis of the technical and economic choice of the raw materials, of which flint, quartz and Tixier's particular favourite, obsidian, are the most well known, being the most responsive to shock waves produced as a result of knapping.

THE FUNDAMENTAL BOOK:
Technology and Terminology of Knapped Stone

The five volumes of the *Technology and Terminology of Knapped Stone* (French original title:

Préhistoire de la Pierre taillée) published between 1980 and 1999 and produced jointly with Marie-Louise Inizan, Michèle Reduron and Héléne Roche constitute the internationally recognised reference work on tools produced and used in prehistoric times. The book is richly furnished with numerous explanatory illustrations to ease readers through the rigorously academic prose. The authors paid particular attention to harmonising the specialised technical terminology used, for which precise and detailed definitions are provided. This "Bible", which reconstitutes the thought processes of mankind's earliest craftsmen, uses a very specific set of terms. Translated into a dozen languages, ranging from Arabic to Portuguese and from English to Russian, this textbook is now the internationally acknowledged standard work on the subject.

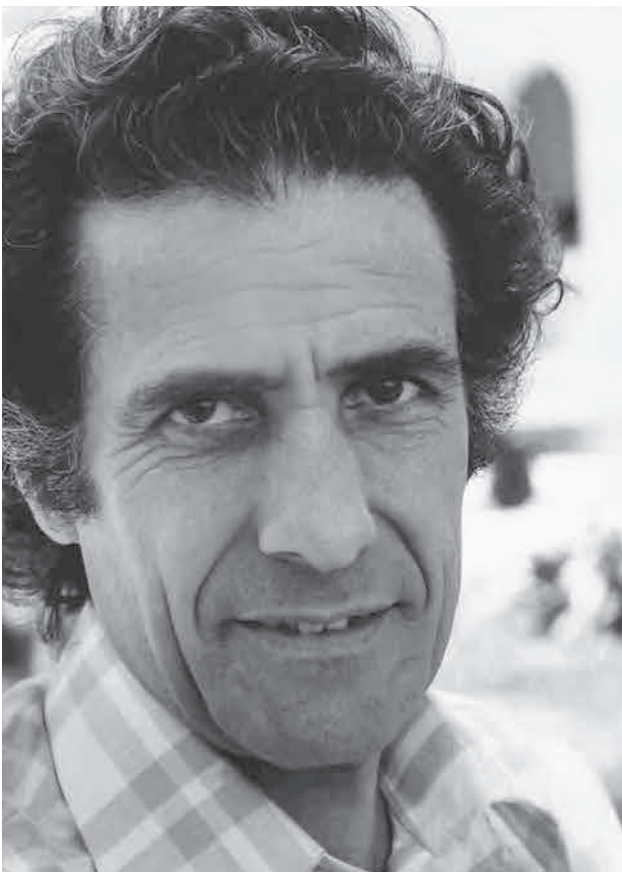


FIGURE 1: Jacques TIXIER, Beyrouth (Liban), 1974 (@Y. Coppens).

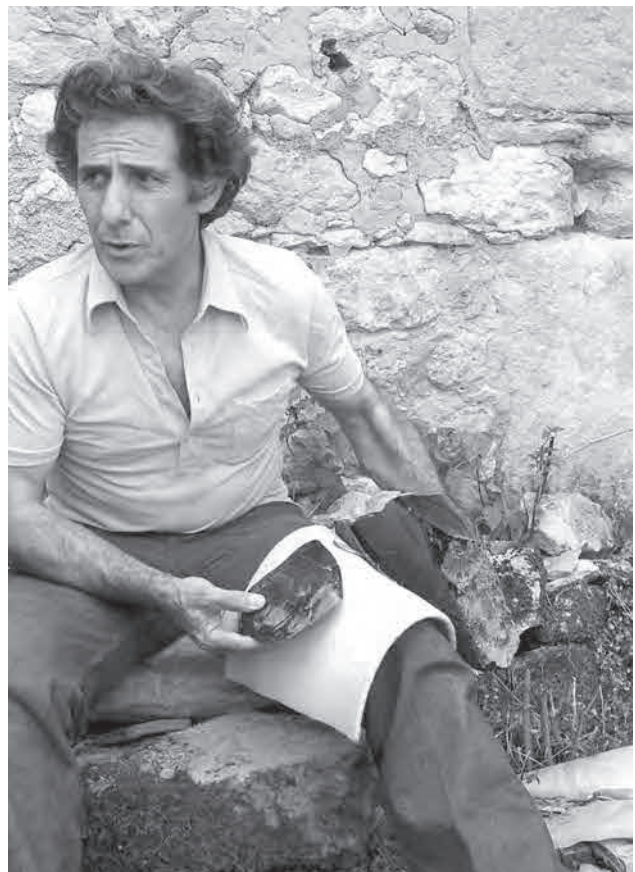


FIGURE 3: Jacques TIXIER, Savignac (France), 1976 (@P.-J. Texier).

A SCHOLARLY BENEFACTOR

Although it was in Aquitaine, where Jacques Tixier was born in 1925, that his interest in prehistory was first aroused, it was out in the desert in Algeria, where he arrived at the age of 22 to become a primary school teacher, that he fully embraced this discipline at the frontier between the natural and social sciences. In the Maghreb he frequented many of the men active in the research then being conducted in North Africa, starting with Lionel Balout, a professor at the university in Algiers and a curator at the Bardo museum. He began to study and conduct excavations, and it was in order to study prehistory that he went up to the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) in 1955, followed by the Institute of Human Palaeontology in Paris from 1961. A stretch as Director of Prehistoric Antiquities in Lorraine was followed by a similar post in the Limousin before he founded a CNRS laboratory spread between the three sites of Nanterre, Meudon and Valbonne in 1980. This laboratory, Joint Research Unit (UMR) 7705 "Prehistory and Technology", is still in existence. Its field of interest is global. Faithful to his unifying approach, his disciples, such as Catherine Perlès, Didier Binder, Jacques Pelegrin, Eric Boëda, Pierre-Jean Texier and many others from Japan to Brazil, from Africa to Greece are busily engaged in doing the spadework for and uncovering what may very well come to seem like a form of primary and universal "language": the skills and know-how involved in making stone tools. Opposed to all forms of dogmatism, Jacques Tixier frequently warned against some of the dangers inherent in academic practice, namely not falling into the "isms" trap: technology and typology are not ends in themselves. Whatever the academic approach used in prehistory, it was important to avoid focusing overmuch on procedure as such and forgetting that the primary purpose of studying prehistory was to increase the sum of knowledge of everyday life in prehistoric societies viewed in their natural environment.

AN INNOVATIVE PIONEER AND TEACHER

Jacques Tixier never allowed the scholar to overshadow the man.

His influence in his field extended from France to the rest of the world. This humanist, who was more than a mere field archaeologist excavating sites in

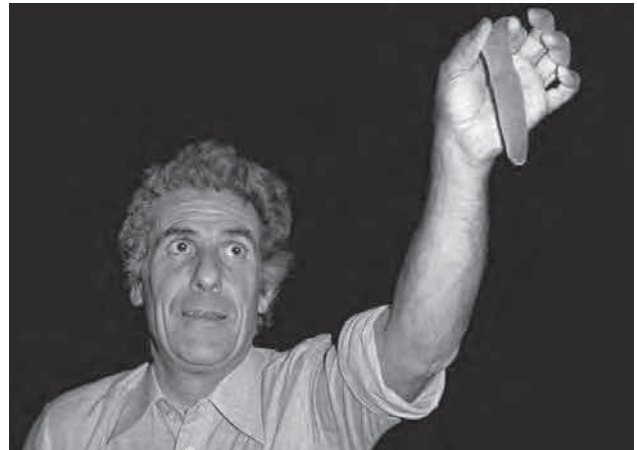


FIGURE 3: Jacques TIXIER, Tucson (Arizona, USA), 1978 (@anonymous).

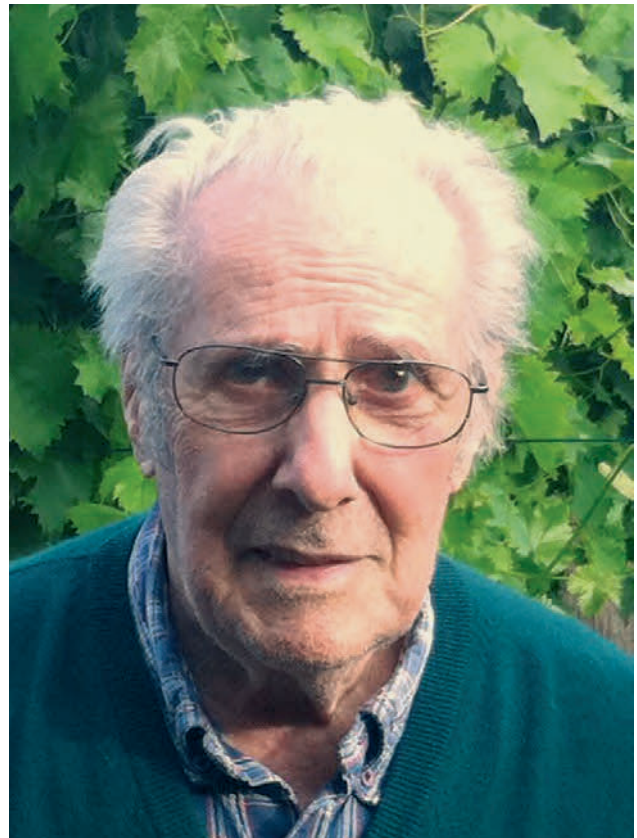


FIGURE 4: Jacques TIXIER, Cahors (France), 2013 (@F. Le Brun-Ricalens).

various regions covering different periods – in Algeria, the Lebanon or Qatar for example, but also, and particularly, sites in the French south west where generations of scholars had received their field training, was a teacher in advance of his time, not just at university level. He also reached out directly to primary and secondary schools, where he would give spectacular demonstrations of knapping techniques and also used educational films, which are now available on the web for all to see. A wide-ranging thinker and a loyal friend, Jacques Tixier was one of those eminent and visionary scholars who completely revolutionised their field of studies in a subtle and enduring manner with a combination of theoretical and practical instruction.

On behalf of the numerous scholars from all continents who join us in expressing their respect to the man and scholar, we extend our profound compassion and most sincere condolences to Jacques Tixier's family, and especially to his loving wife, Catie.

The academic community in France and abroad has lost a very great prehistorian. He was a selfless conveyor of scientific knowledge and his academic colleagues have lost a dear friend. Let us commemorate his legacy by pursuing our work with the same enthusiasm and high standards of scholarship which he enjoyed encouraging, as shown by one of his dedications in green ink (this former teacher did not like using red ink for making annotations):

"Hammer away. Prehistory will reward your toil."

He leaves a prolific body of work of enduring value that it is beneficial to re-read.

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