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Foreword



The National Center for Documentation and Research (NCDR) represents the “memory of the nation” by documenting, preserving and promoting national interest in the UAE’s centuries-old rich history and heritage.

A key event of the 40th anniversary celebrations of the NCDR in November 2008 was the International History Conference on the theme “New Perspectives On Recording UAE History”.

The papers presented in the conference covered a diverse range of subjects related to the history and heritage of the Emirates from the prehistoric period up until the establishment of the Federation of the UAE in 1971.

Knowledge shared is knowledge gained. Drawing some of the best intellects from around the world and within the country, this forum provided excellent opportunities for fostering intellectual interaction amongst archaeologists, historians and academics specializing in the history and culture of the UAE and the Arabian Gulf.

I thank all the scholars for their important contributions which should be an invaluable learning experience for researchers, scholars and interested readers in the UAE and should lay the groundwork for research co-operation worldwide.

Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan

Deputy Prime Minister
Minister of Presidential Affairs
Chairman of the NCDR

Our History, Our Identity

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this volume comprising the proceedings of the International History Conference organized by the National Center for Documentation and Research (NCDR) under the patronage of H.H. Shaikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Presidential Affairs and Chairman of the NCDR.

New ideas and viewpoints based on authentic records and documents form the intellectual lifelines of a nation's history. With this objective in view, the NCDR chose "New Perspectives On Recording UAE History" as the theme of the conference.

The papers presented in the conference by national and international scholars from multi-disciplinary fields offered valuable insight into the latest researches on the history and heritage of the UAE from prehistoric times up to the establishment of the Federation.

The stimulating debates and the interest aroused during the conference sessions encouraged us to proceed with the publication of the proceedings. Furthermore, in order to widen the scope of understanding and dissemination of these scholarly presentations, we undertook the task of translating the papers from English to Arabic and vice versa. This proved to be a painstaking task in view of the relatively short time at our disposal. We apologize for the errors that may have escaped the 'rigorous filters' to which the publication has been subjected.

We sincerely hope that this volume authored by some of the best experts from around the world and within the country, will be appreciated by researchers and readers alike.

In conclusion, we must record our sincerest thanks to H.H. Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, H.H. Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, H.H. Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince, and H.H. Shaikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Presidential Affairs and Chairman of the NCDR, for their active encouragement and unfailing support to the cause of historical research in the UAE.

Abdulla Mohammad El Reyes
Director - General

Part 1

**Prehistoric roots of the UAE:
From the Stone Age to the Pre-
Islamic Period**

much more than a series of individual, locality-bound case-studies. The reality is, of course, that most scholars, no matter how inter-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary their work may be, are grounded in a particular field, even if their academic commitments - research, teaching and administration - take them outside of that field on an almost daily basis. In this respect, an optic analogy may be helpful. Put simply, if we are doing our job properly, no matter what our field may be, then the data that we study must be examined, not just through one lens, but through many. To continue the optical analogy, it will often be the case that we first view our data as though through a microscope, focussing on it and it alone narrowly in its native environment. From there, we change lenses and view the same data at a series of larger and larger scales, moving from the local, to the national, to the regional, to the trans-national and ultimately to the global. Obviously not every academic study lends itself to this sort of approach, and I would not for a moment suggest that everything we do must fit this sort of model. Some of what we do, particularly in the historical sciences, is however, perfect for this sort of multi-scalar and inter-scalar approach. Although the intent of modernist, economic studies of globalization employing this kind of terminology are clearly different from historical or archaeological studies, the vocabulary and the ways of thinking associated with it can help free up our ways of thinking about the past in a productive way.³⁴

Multi-scalar and inter-scalar views of the past imply an awareness of a hierarchy of scales of analysis. This is not the same as the perennial problem of defining the 'unit of analysis'. In the latter case, the unit may be broad or narrow, as befits the problem. In the present instance, the unit of analysis is narrow, but the multi-scalar view is not, and ranges from local to regional to inter-continental. The inter-scalar view, on the other hand, is one in which comparisons are undertaken within a region, between the local and the national. In each case, asymmetries are likely to emerge, but symmetry is not the goal of the exercise, insight is.

Historical analysis and archaeological research in the UAE are still young disciplines. Nevertheless, at least in the areas with which I am familiar, the achievements to date have been considerable. The world yearns for the big picture, for global stories, and for historians and archaeologists who dare to move beyond their often narrow disciplinary boundaries to look at topics in a way which the public, in the globalized 21st century, finds meaningful. Our constituencies are not merely ourselves and our colleagues. The citizens of a relatively new country such as the UAE have every right to know that their past makes a difference in world historical discourse. This is a challenge for all who research in this region, whether in the mountains of Ras al-Khaimah or the desert of Abu Dhabi. But it is a challenge that will not only enrich the national historical discourse, enhancing self-awareness. It is one which stands to make a real contribution to the global community's understanding of its rich and variegated past.

³⁴ For a good introduction to the multi-scalar and inter-scalar approach to globalization studies see Park, B.-G. 2005. Globalization and local political economy: The multi-scalar approach. *Global Economic Review* 34: 397-414.

Introduction

Until recently, our knowledge of the Palaeolithic of the Arabian Peninsula has been scant. In the last three decades, a number of Middle Palaeolithic sites have been discovered which threw light on the importance of the peninsula. Importantly, a large number of these sites were located along the corridor zone of the Bab-el-Mandeb Straits, the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea. This supports the current southern migration theory, with the peninsula acting as a bridging corridor, from Africa to southwest Asia.

Archaeological work on the Palaeolithic of the Arabian Gulf began in the early 1990's. A number of international expeditions discovered Pleistocene sites in Abu Dhabi Emirate (McBrearty, 1993, 1999; Wahida et al., 2008, 2009 in print). In Sharjah Emirate, Hans-Peter Uerpmann began the first in situ excavations of Palaeolithic assemblage in the Arabian Gulf, at the rock shelter of Jebel Faya. This has been dated to around 85,000 years ago, though bedrock is still about 2 metres below the present level of excavation (Uerpmann & Marks, 2008; personal communications, 2008), suggesting that this figure will increase. Upper Pleistocene tool manufacturing sites were discovered at Fili east of Jebel Faya (Scott-Jackson & Scott-Jackson, 2006; 2008).

In neighbouring Oman, a number of Pleistocene sites have been discovered and attributed to a late phase of the Acheulian and to Middle Palaeolithic Ages (Biagi, 1994; Rose, 2004a; 2005; 2006; 2008).

In the Yemen, five Acheulian sites were claimed in the Hadhramout Mountains (Whalen, et al. 1992). Many more Middle Palaeolithic sites were discovered near Bab-el-Mandeb Straits and along the Red Sea shore and the Arabian Sea zone (Amirkhanov 1994). The location of the above Middle Palaeolithic sites along the crossing zones from Africa to Arabia is of importance in support of the out of Africa migration theory (Petraglia, 2007). More Middle Palaeolithic sites were also discovered in the hinterland areas of the Yemen along dried up rivers, streams and lakes (ibid.).

In Saudi Arabia, a large number of Acheulian and Middle Palaeolithic sites were discovered in north, central, south and south western regions. Of special importance were three probably old sites namely, Shuwayhihiya in the north, site 226-63 near Nagran in the south and Tathlith in the south west of Saudi Arabia. These sites were thought of to belong to an early part of the Pleistocene based on typological evidence (Whalen and Pease, 1992). In addition, important research into the Middle Palaeolithic along the Red Sea coast has progressed and Al Sharekh is currently working on possible Lower Palaeolithic material in central Saudi Arabia (Petraglia & Al Sharekh, 2003; Al Sharekh, 2007). The only in situ, dated site in Saudi Arabia is that of Saffaqah, near Dawadmi, in central Saudi Arabia (Whalen, et al., 1983; Whalen, et al., 1984). Uranium-thorium dating has placed Acheulian artefacts to a minimum of 200,000 years ago (Whalen, et al., 1992).

Genetic studies have recently been introduced in Arabia and revolutionary geneticists have begun to appreciate the major role that Arabia must have played in the origin of modern humans. New genetic evidence has highlighted the significance of the Arabian Peninsula as a corridor for early human migration to and from Africa (Abu-Amro et al., 2007). New Palaeolithic evidence, discovered at Barakah on the Arabian Gulf, promises to provide a wealth of data to explore questions surrounding Palaeolithic occupation of the eastern end of the peninsula.

Although prehistoric research in the Arabian Peninsula is still in its infancy, the present paper represents a signature backing the importance of prehistory on the Arabian Peninsula in general and of the Arabian Gulf in particular. Furthermore, it will hopefully encourage more archaeological work in this vast (2.3 million Km²) and vital area bridging Africa and southwest Asia.

Geomorphology of Barakah

Jebel Barakah is located on the west coast of Abu Dhabi Emirate, overlooking the sea between Jebel Dhannah and the Qatar peninsula (Fig. 1). The coastline of Abu Dhabi is generally low and dominated by Sabkha (salt land) with occasional sand hills and low grass vegetation. Jebel Barakah, at 62.6m above sea level, is the highest point along this stretch of coastline. It is an isolated outcrop composed of red sandstone (originally wind-blown sand) and thin bands of conglomerate (originally water-transported, wadi pebbles). The outcrop, oval in shape, occupies a low plateau of 2.5km from north to south and 2km from east to west (Fig. 2). The international road to Saudi Arabia and Qatar divides the plateau into two sections. The larger northern section is the most important as it has yielded all the Upper Miocene fossils discovered at Barakah, as well as Palaeolithic artefacts. The southern section is disturbed, and partly occupied by new installations. Construction of this structure resulted in the exposure of the upper sections of the Baynunah geological formation.

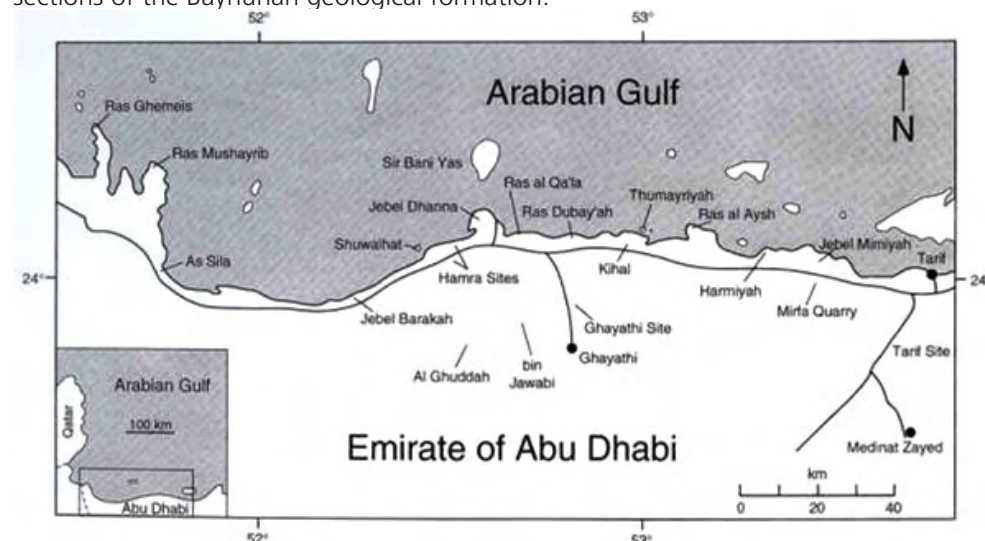


Figure 1 – Location of Jebel Barakah in the Western Region of Abu Dhabi Emirate (after Whybrow & Hill, 1999)

The Jebel, a small outcrop with a narrow flat summit and sloping surfaces, occupies about one square km of the north-western side of the plateau. Like most of the outcrops in the western region of the Abu Dhabi Emirate, the Jebel is capped by narrow, flat summits and covered with a layer of deflated cherts. The eastern most of the plateau is a high ground, separated from another similar high ground to the west by a low ground which seems to have been formed by water and natural erosion. A lower ground surface with pronounced outcrops separates these two areas from the Jebel. The low and wide gullies, formed by rain, slope down towards the sea.

The exterior edges of the plateau are indicated by a series of pronounced cliffs formed by gushes of rain water. The Jebel is the last elevated area as you head westwards towards the Sabkhat Matti.



Figure 2 – Jebal Barakah looking north

Jebel Barakah was probably best known for its Late Miocene fossil remains (Whybrow and Hill, 1999). Part of the sea cliff contains the type section for the Baynunah Formation, which covers Shuwaihat Formation (Whybrow, 1989; Whybrow et al., 1999). At the outcrop of the Baynunah Formation, which covers the Shuwaihat Formation, the sequence in most places is capped by a thick layer of resistant tabular chert-flint (cryptocrystalline siliceous rocks produced by diagenetic solution).

The lithic material from Jebel Barakah was first reported by McBrearty (1993; 1999). She noted that a large number of artefacts occurred on the level bluffs on the southeast side of the Jebel (McBrearty, 1999:378). The artefacts lie directly on Baynunah Formation rocks; up-slope they are overlain by a thin superficial layer of soft unconsolidated sediment derived from the exposures of the Baynunah Formation above. McBrearty also

reported that the Barakah artefacts demonstrate a highly consistent and formalized flaking method, being composed almost entirely of radial cores and the flakes derived from them. All 16 cores collected by McBrearty are radial or high-backed radial form. There was no trace of any blade element. The aim of this chapter is to introduce new findings from Jebel Barakah, providing evidence to support that the site represents a Middle Palaeolithic Locus.

The Jebel Archaeological Localities

The lithic material provided here and currently under study by the primary author was collected by staff members of Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH). The lithic material from Localities 1-3 have been discussed in a paper submitted to the Proceedings of the Arabian Seminar (Vol. 38, 2008). Two added Localities (4-5) with more materials were discovered this year (2008), together with materials at Locality 2.

Locality 1 (BRK1), is situated on the north-west and western side of the Jebel, between the sea cliffs and the first line of ridges up the slope. Artefacts were scattered on a thin layer of soft soil derived from the exposure of the Baynunah Formation outcrops. Much of the lithic artefacts along the cliffs must have been eroded away to the Arabian Gulf along its substantial cliffs. Upon further study this season, it was noted that this locality covers a wider area than initially anticipated. It covers the western section and extends beyond the Jebel from the northern side. McBrearty's description of her site agrees with the above description of Locality 1. Unfortunately, it contradicts with the co-ordinates provided in her report (McBrearty, 1999), which plots the site location on the north-west side of the Jebel, in proximity to Locality 3.

Locality 2 (BRK2), is located to the south and southwest side of the Jebel, and descends southwards away from the Jebel. A few artefacts were collected from the western section of this locality last season (2007). Additional lithic artefacts have been collected from the eastern section of Locality 2, during the following season though the total count of artefacts is small. Locality 3 (BRK3), lies to the eastern slope of the Jebel providing a small number of artefacts. Locality 4 (BRK4), lies to the east of the Jebel and unlike localities 1-3, it is separated from it by low-flat ground. It is an irregular, long and narrow outcrop, extending northeast-southwest and rising about 4 metres above sea level (ASL). The irregular surface of the outcrop, which extends about 200 meters, consists of soft soil mixed with quantities of chert-flints and small gravels.

Locality 5 (BRK5), is a long plateau measuring about 250 metres long with triangular shape, and is located at a distance of about 400 metres to the north of Locality 4. The site which is only about 120 metres away from the beach represents a peninsula of wide and flat surface, surrounded by two wide gullies from the east and west. Its elevation is about 4 metres ASL and has a low ground extension at the north-eastern side with an elevation of 3 meters ASL. Both sides of the peninsula have been extensively damaged by rain erosion. Stone artefacts have been collected from both areas but were more prominent on the main peninsula.

It should be noted here that subsequent to the initial reconnaissance a small number of artefacts were discovered to the east of Locality 5 and southeast of Locality 2.

The Lithic Assemblage

The five localities at Barakah appear to represent a single techno-typological industry. It should be stressed here that study of the Barakah assemblage is still in its preliminary stages and further analysis has been planned, including detailed artefact analysis and comparable study with other sites in the region.

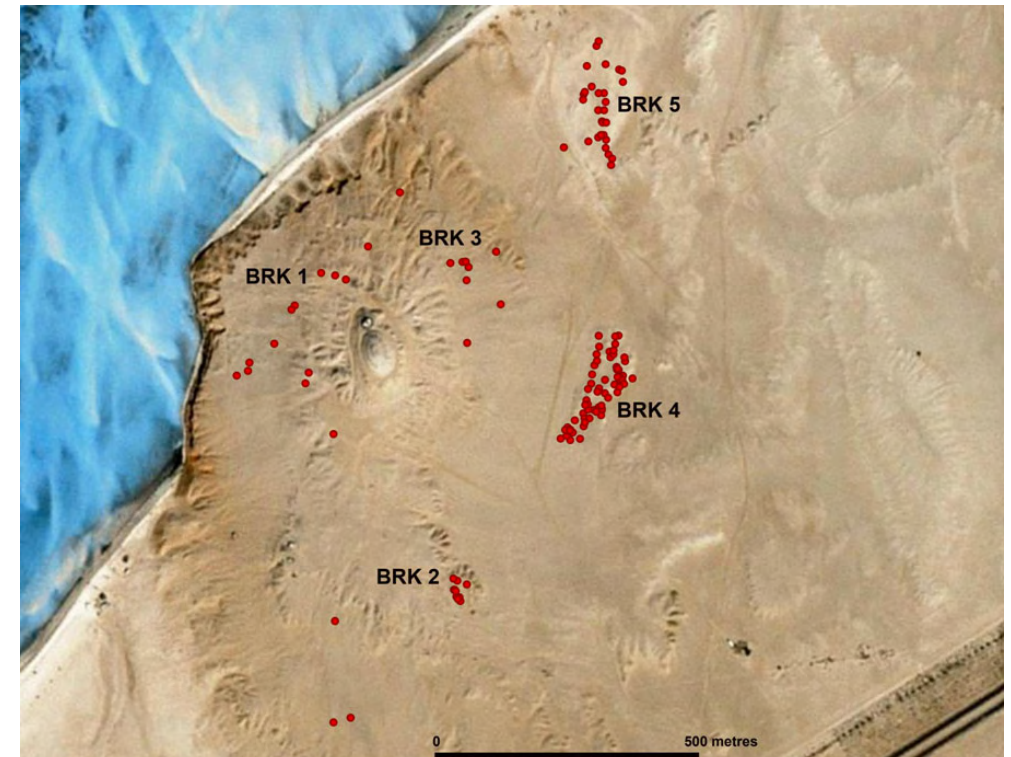


Figure 3 – Localities 1-5, with artefacts dotted

The lithic collection strategy was determined by erosion and deflation that the five localities had suffered. Laying down a grid for a systematic collection of artefacts would have been of little use. Instead, a system of Latitudinal and Longitudinal coordinates for each artefact was obtained by Global Position System (GPS). In cases where a number of implements were located within 5 meter radius, one reading was obtained for the group as they lay within the possible area of error of the system (Fig. 3). For fear of possible looting of artefacts by a few irresponsible expatriates, armed with GPS, it would be unwise to publish those readings, and indeed of any archaeological site, before the new Antiquity Law of Abu Dhabi Emirate is in force (Beech, 2006).

The Barakah artefacts were made of good quality flints, but had black to blue-black patina. The artefacts were unlike those found by McBrearty and more numerous. Beyond the radial cores, McBrearty collected 218 objects, of which eight are modified flakes as tools. McBrearty suggested several dates for the Barakah assemblage, including probably the Acheulian, the Middle Stone Age assemblages and mid to late

Holocene. The first three dates were based on the presence of radial and high backed radial cores from which the flakes originated. The youngest age was probably based on the presence of two broken implements: one a bifacial tip; and the other a flake with unifacial trimming. McBrearty is credited for her identification of the Middle Palaeolithic artefacts although her limited collection of tool types gave her limited space for other conclusions to be drawn. McBrearty had offered in her article an excellent outline of the Paleo-environment of the Western Region of Abu Dhabi Emirate, including Barakah, to which there was little to be added. Although an attempt was made to locate McBrearty's material, at the time of publication the material can not be located.

Technology and Typology

The main technique of core reduction at Barakah was the prepared core method by radial flaking known as the Levallois. This technique requires the working face of the core to be specially prepared beforehand, allowing a predetermined flake of probable shapes to be detached. The underside of the core was partially flaked off around the edge and this was the case with all radial cores. The other technique was the bipolar whereby two flakes were struck off from two opposed ends of an elongated Levallois core. A third technique was that of the Nubian Method Type 1, where one Levallois flake core, oval in shape, had the last flake struck off from the thinner distal end. Two earlier removals from the thicker proximal end were probably part of the preparation technique (Fig. 5).

(The lithic assemblage was dominated by radial, high backed radial and discoid cores that reflect a tendency towards Levallois centripetal core strategy (Fig. 4.1, 1-5). Applying the Levallois technique of obtaining as many flakes as possible, the original large nodule of raw material was reduced in size, such that no more desired flakes were possible. As McBrearty noted, we agree that the assemblage displayed a 'very consistent and formalized flaking method, being composed almost entirely of radial cores and the flakes derived from them' (McBrearty, 1999).

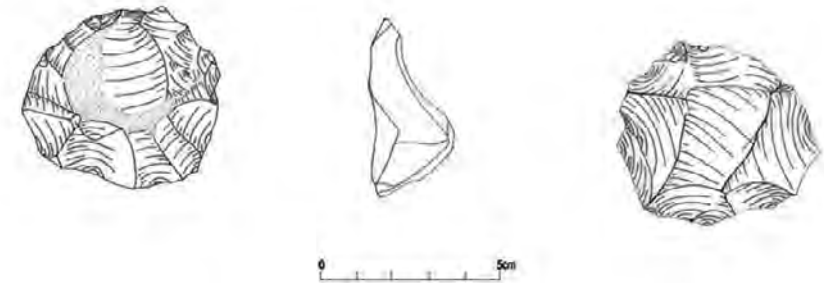


Fig. 4.2 High backed radial core

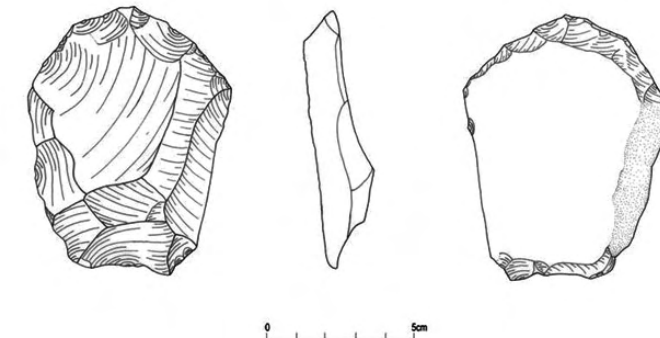


Fig. 4.3 Elongated bifacial core

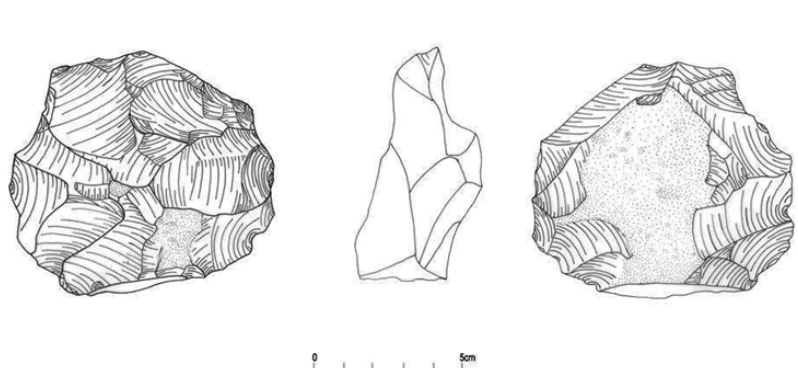


Fig. 4.1 (1-5) Bifacial centripetal core

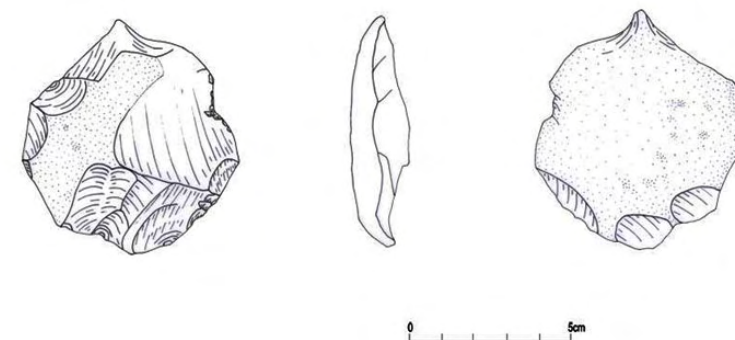


Fig. 4.4 Pointed Bifacial discoidal Core

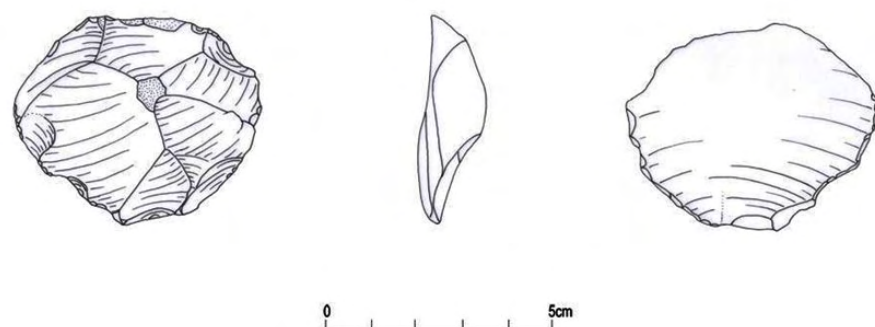


Fig. 4. 5 Unifacial centripetal Radial Core

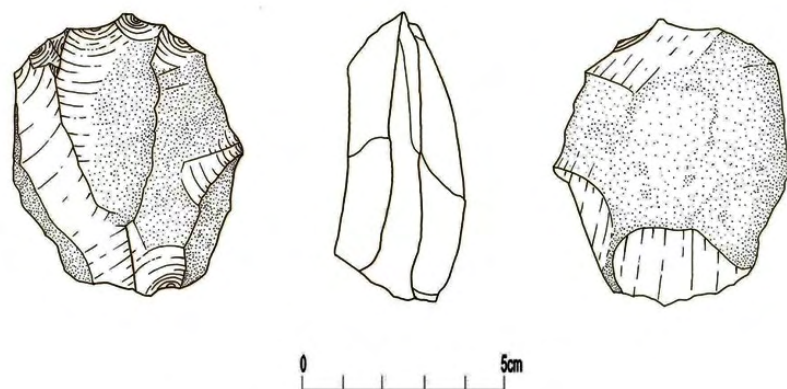


Figure 5 Levallois Flake Core, Nubian Method Type 1

Among the 158 specimens collected from Localities 2, 4 and 5, 49 radial, high backed radial or the discoid cores were found. These cores were distributed as follows: Locality 2, 17, of which 10 were cores. Among the 97 specimens collected from Locality No. 4, 28 were cores. Locality 5 produced 44 specimens, of which 11 were cores. One bipolar Levallois core found in Locality 4, and one Levallois flake core, found in Locality 5, would bring the total number of cores to 51.

The smallest radial core comes from Locality 4, and measures 4.1 x 4.0 x 1.4 cm, whereas the largest radial core, comes from Locality 3, and measures 13.2 x 12.3 x 5.2. One hand axe was found in Locality 5. The base was broken towards the proximal end and would have been of the cordiform type if complete. Combined shallow flaking and sinuous retouch have been applied to both sides, with the original cortex remaining on both sides, in the area closer to the proximal end. The retouch was confined mainly to the left sides of the hand axe. A hard hammer was probably applied in the primary flaking and a soft hammer was likely used to produce the final flaking and retouching (Fig. 6).

Apart from some diagnostic types, the majority of the tools numbered (19) were side-

scrapers 2 (Fig. 7), notches 11 (Fig. 8), denticulate 1 (Fig. 9), drill 2 (Fig. 10), Levallois flake (Fig. 11), denticulate 1 and points 2. (Graph 1). One side-scraper, a bifacially retouched fragment on a thin tabulated flint, was found in Locality 5. The ventral retouch is shorter than that on the dorsal surface. Apart from the retouched area, the remainder of the fragment had cortex. One unflaked Levallois flake point (Fig. 10) with some obverse retouch on one side was found in Locality 1 (not included in Graph 1). The notch concavities were made mainly by a single blow, and lack any form of deliberate retouch. The notch may be dorsally or ventrally directed or straight. These implements were an important component within the Barakah assemblage. Microwear and refitting studies (Cahen, et al. 1969; Keeley, 1977; Keeley, 1980) showed that similar tools had one or more functions; including woodworking, splitting bone for the extraction of marrow and fashioning bone tools, hide cutting and piercing, butchering of animals and the preparation of plant food.

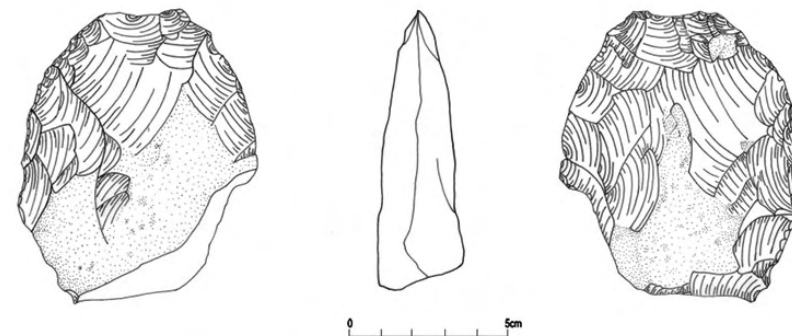


Fig. 6 Hand Axe

The number of primary flakes from three localities (2, 4 and 5) numbers 110 including specimens (complete and broken) that lack deliberate retouch. Three flakes have sharp edges or wide distal ends suitable for cutting or scraping. Three others have probably use-retouch on their sides. Nine flakes have their long axis shorter than their breadths. This small number of flakes is not unusual since their manufacture technique depends on the shape of the core and the force of the blow on the platform. Two of them have dorsal cortex.

Conclusions

It may be confidently stated that the Barakah assemblage may belong to the Middle Palaeolithic in the Arabian Peninsula. This conclusion is supported by the presence of the Levallois centripetal radial strategy, and the resultant radial and discoidal cores, the

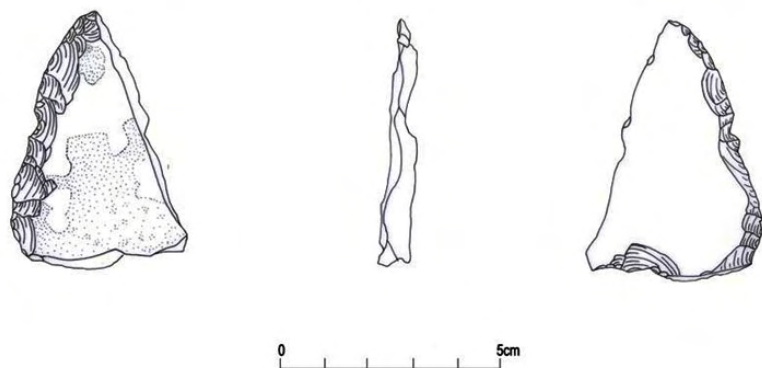


Fig. 7. Bifacial Sidescraper

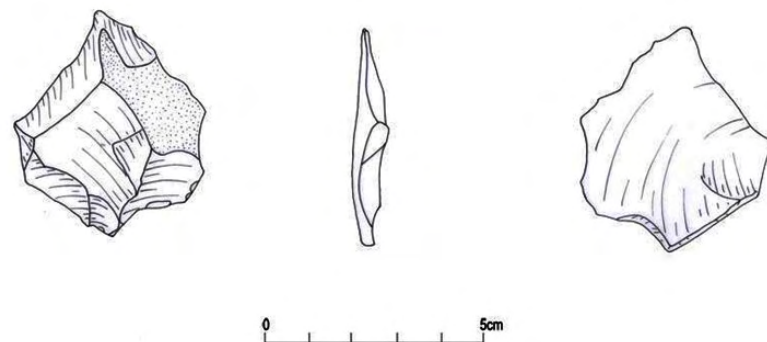


Fig. 8. A Dorsally Directed Notch

presence of two Levallois flake cores, one of Nubian Method Type 1 and one Bipolar as well as one typical hand axe of the cordiform type. The assemblage also included one bifacial side-scraper fragment similar to the Nubian Mousterian, of Type B (Marks, 1968a). One unfaceted Levallois flake point. The absence of blade elements and blade manufacturing techniques may suggest the Barakah flake assemblage belongs to the Early Middle Palaeolithic. In this respect it is worth mentioning here that the Early Mousterian assemblages in the Levant, dated to c. 250-130kya(kya=1.000) (Shea, 2007), has a laminar aspect debitage resulting from the Levallois-core reduction strategy. These laminar 'Upper Palaeolithic', tool types as endscrapers and burins were relatively common (ibid). The Middle Stone Age industries of Africa, dated to before

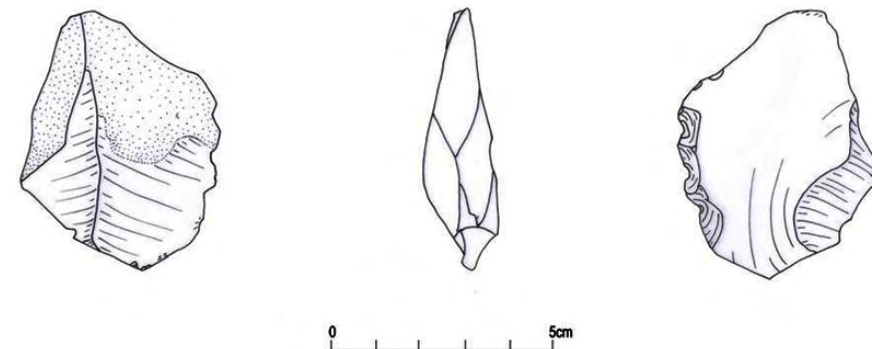


Fig. 9. A denticulate

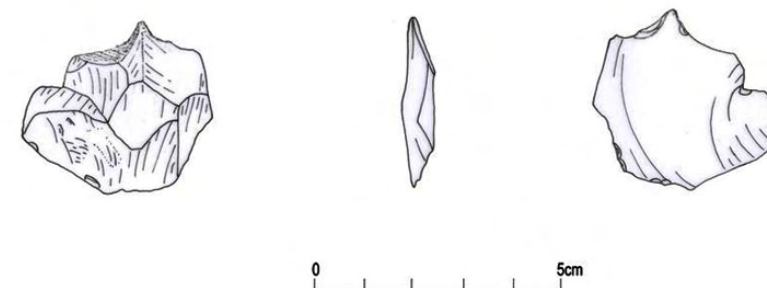


Fig. 10. A drill

285kya (McBrearty, 2007) have among their components, blade techniques, microlithic composite tools, finely made lanculates and foliate points and even tanged points (ibid; van Peer and Vermeersh, 2007; McBrearty, 2007). And the Middle Palaeolithic of Arabia (Petraglia, and Al Sharekh, 2003; Petraglia, 2007) all had among their components blades and retouched tools of various forms, mentioned above. Obviously, the Barakah assemblage lacks any such 'Upper Palaeolithic' elements.

In some parts of the world Middle Palaeolithic industries developed out of the Late Acheulian. At Barakah, there is no sign of any Acheulian elements.

The Barakah assemblage complements the recent discovery of Middle Palaeolithic material elsewhere in the UAE, Oman the Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The stratified materials of Palaeolithic industry, discovered at Jebel Faya in Sharjah Emirate have been dated by Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL) to around 85,000 ya. Bedrock is still about 2 metres below the present level of excavations (Uerpmann and Marks, 2008 personal communications). This date has provided an approximate age of Palaeolithic origins in the United Arab Emirates.

The Middle Palaeolithic sites of southern Arabia and along the Red Sea of Saudi Arabia complement the migration theory from Africa into Asia. If these sites were vestiges of the early migrants, this evidence supports the short crossing route theory along Bab-el-Mandeb waterway into Asia (Petraglia, 2007). The Barakah assemblage would present the most eastern extension of migrants into Arabia, probably during one of the pluvial phases associated with marine isotope stage (MIS) 5. Palaeo-environmental conditions from southern Arabia indicate at least three pluvial conditions were associated with MIS 5e, 5a and 3 (Rose, 2004). Earlier climatic conditions in the Arabian Peninsula during MIS 6 were too arid to support hunter-gatherer population (ibid).

The very high ratio of cores artefact types were consistent and indicates that Barakah Localities 2,4 and 5 were most probably used as a raw material workshop for a short interval of time as artefact types were consistent and not mixed with other later tool types. It should be noted here that the Arabian Gulf during the time in question was a huge river-system valley and the Barakah hunter gatherers where living in a world totally different from today.

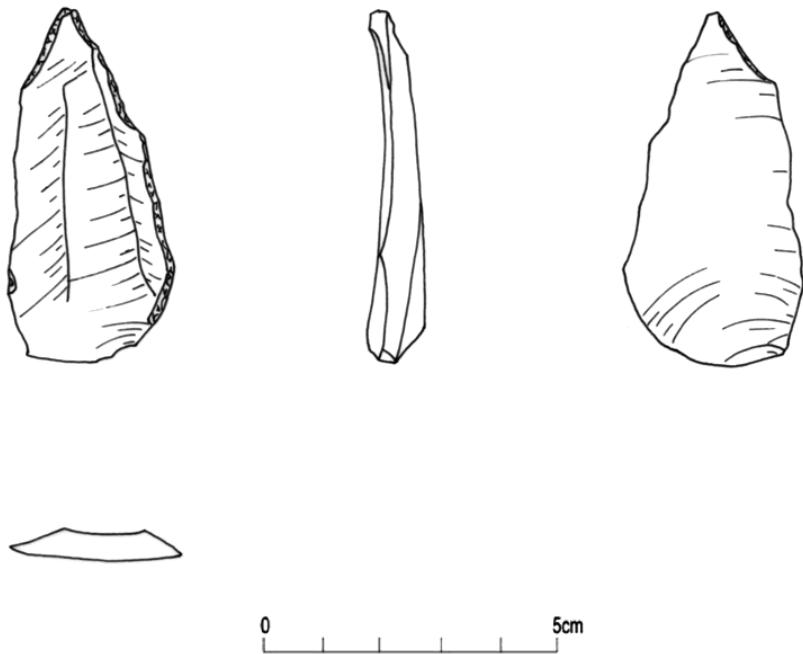
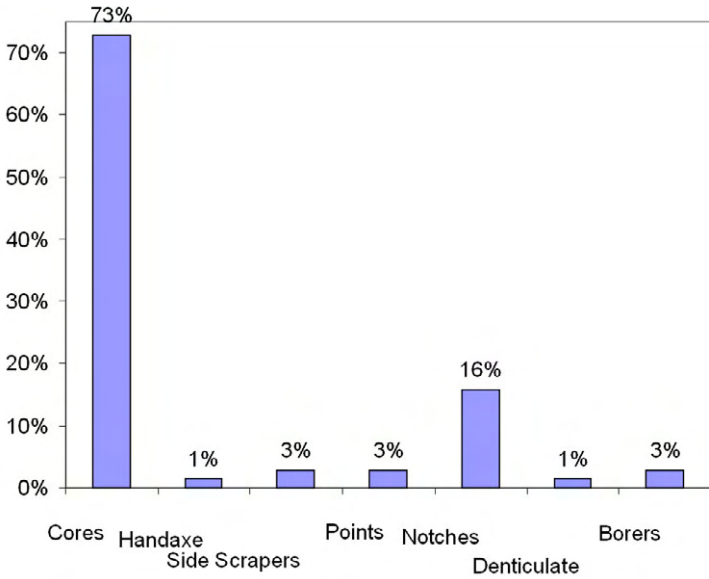


Fig. 11 Levallois Flake Point



Graph 1 - Showing the Percentage of Cores and Tool Types

The Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH) is currently striving to protect important archaeological and paleontological sites throughout the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The discovery of the first Middle Palaeolithic site in the Abu Dhabi Emirate should place the site, with its already known fossil rich Late Miocene deposits, at the highest level of protection.

Notes

Jebel Barakah archaeological site was first discovered by Sally McBrearty in 1991.

Locality 4 was discovered by Dr. Walid Yasin during a one day visit to Jebel Barakah in December 2007. Dr. Yasin, a member of the Barakah Surveying team, also discovered Locality 5, in addition to the above-mentioned small number of artefacts collected subsequent to the initial investigations.

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Introduction

The southeast Arabian Neolithic period lasted about as long as all the later periods from the Bronze Age to the present era together, that is, from 8000-3000 BC. Our present knowledge about the beginning of the Neolithic in the area which is now the United Arab Emirates is very recent. The result of the ongoing research of a joint project by the University of Tübingen and the Directorate of Antiquities of the Government of the Emirate of Sharjah has not yet been fully published. A radiocarbon measurement of a marine shell from an Early Neolithic context at a site at Jebel Faya in the Central Region of Sharjah yielded a surprising result of 9583±66 radiocarbon years before 1950.¹ This date added more than 1000 years to the time-depth of the SE-Arabian Neolithic as it was known before. The date was not completely unexpected, however.

The work of the Danish expeditions led by Glob and Bibby in the 1950s and 1960s is an early milestone of prehistoric research in the Gulf area. The Atlas of the Stone Age Cultures of Qatar by their collaborator Holger Kapel was a first attempt to provide an overall structure for this period in South East Arabia.² He noticed similarities between a certain type of arrow heads from Qatar – which he classified as his 'B-Group' – and points found in early Neolithic contexts in the Levant. Similar points were found at many other sites throughout the Southern Arabian Peninsula.³ They were named Fasad-points after a site in the Sultanate of Oman.⁴ Most researchers were aware of the similarities of these points with the respective finds from Qatar. However, a close connection with the Early Levantine Neolithic – the so-called Pre-Pottery Neolithic B – was considered highly questionable. This was mainly based on the assumption that arrowheads meant hunting and hunting is not the form of subsistence generally connected with the Neolithic period.

The present definition of the Neolithic period is based on a shift of the prevailing subsistence strategy from hunting and gathering during the Paleolithic to agriculture and animal husbandry during the Neolithic period. This shift first happened in the northern Fertile Crescent during the Final Pleistocene and was accomplished there by before 8000 BC. Agriculture and animal husbandry expanded from this centre in all directions, except – as it was thought by most researchers – towards the Arabian deserts where a primitive cultivation of cereals and pulses was impossible for climatic reasons. As early agriculture and animal husbandry were seen as a package, the idea of a separate spread of herders into Arabia was not considered a realistic option, in

1 Radiocarbon dates do not exactly correspond to calendar dates. Because of fluctuations of the radiocarbon-contents of the air through time they have to be calibrated against substances of known age. Calibration of the radiocarbon date for the shell from Jebel Faya (Hd-26089 = 9583 ± 66 bp) against the calibration curve "Marine04" for marine substances (Reimer et al. xxxx) yields a calendaric date between 8454 and 7761 BC.

2 Kapel, H., 1967.

3 For an overview see Dreschler, P., 2007b.

4 Pullar, J., 1974; Charpentier, V., 1996.