
Diachronic raw material procurement along the al-Hajar Mountains in Abu Dhabi Emirate (UAE)

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Résumé

The great majority of Palaeolithic findings in south Arabia appear as either isolated artefacts or surface find scatters. Contextual embedment is documented in few cases only. Beside by stratigraphy, context can also be provided by geological and geomorphological factors. Here, we report on the recent discovery of diachronic lithic raw material procurement and occupation in the Hafit-Mezyad area of Abu Dhabi Emirate in the United Arab Emirates. The main site, HTM0126, is located on the slopes and at the foot of a Late Cretaceous outcrop along the west edge of the al-Hajar Mountains with mainly conglomerates showing a high diversity of silicites. Traces of episodic occupation span from the Lower Palaeolithic to the Holocene. Beside raw material extraction and primary production, the site also provides evidence for the production of blanks and tools in a wide range of techno-complexes: Acheulian, Levallois, platform core-based blade production, as well as early to mid-Holocene flake industry and bifacial production. The chronology suggested by these technologies correlates with the degrees of weathering and patination of the artefacts. All techno-complexes also provide examples of ‘domestic’ tools. This finding is in agreement with the geomorphological position of the site, which has but a small catchment area for rainwater-runoff, and thus a very low degree of sedimentation dynamics. This led to the preservation of a palaeosurface with high-integrity find scatters where refittings allow for reconstruction of lithic workshops. Today, to the west of this palaeosurface, an extensive alluvial plain is covered by mid- to late Holocene gravels that accumulate in course of the rare but heavy rainfall events. In the early Holocene, however, just as in previous interglacials, higher precipitation must have fed extensive wetlands which potentially supported abundant wildlife.

Mots-Clés: raw material, diachronic use, Palaeolithic, Neolithic, south Arabia, geology, geomorphology

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