The lithic industry is typical for a knapping site dedicated to the production of bifaces and shows a Levallois-type production of large flakes. Preliminary OSL dates place this industry within late OIS 7, a period during which the MSA is already largely developed in some other parts of Africa. Here, we will present different scenarios discussing the late persistence of the Acheulean in this region. This discussion takes into account data such as the absence of known early MSA sites in West Africa and the recent identification, by other teams, of a late persistence of MSA traditions in Senegal, as well as data regarding the few other occurrences of very recent Acheulean sites in different parts of Africa. The ESA to MSA transition, as elsewhere, seems to show contrasted cultural trajectories that may echo intricate occupational patterns in West Africa.

4 THE LATE ACHEULEAN OF THE MIESO VALLEY (CENTRAL-EAST ETHIOPIA)

Author(s): de la Torre, Ignacio (University College London) - Benito-Calvo, Alfonso (CENIEH) - Mora, Rafael (UAB)
Presentation Format: Oral

The Mieso valley contains Middle and Upper Pleistocene deposits that were reported for the first time in recent years (Benito-Calvo et al, 2014; de la Torre et al, 2014). The Middle Pleistocene sequence has yielded several Acheulean occurrences that show significant inter-assemblage variability, including areas of handaxe production where conjoining sets are abundant, and sites where handaxes appear fully formatted and possibly used on-site. 40Ar/39Ar dates of the Middle Pleistocene sequence indicate an age younger than 212 ka for unequivocally-Acheulean sites which, if confirmed, would indicate persistence of this technology in the Rift Valley in a time span where the Middle Stone Age prevailed in nearby archaeological regions. This presentation will discuss the structure of the archaeological record in the Mieso Acheulean and contextualise it within the chrono-stratigraphic sequence of the East African Middle Pleistocene.


Author(s): Groucutt, Huw (Max Planck Institute for Chemical Ecology)
Presentation Format: Oral

Most research on the Lower to Middle Palaeolthic transition has been conducted in a few small areas of Africa and Eurasia. A clear understanding of this transition – such as identifying areas of population continuity in contrast to areas with occupational hiatuses – requires spatially and temporally representative study sites. The 3.2 million square kilometres of Arabia have long been known to have an abundant archaeological record, but it is only recently that scientific analyses such as chronometric dating have begun to be applied. Here I present recent findings from Arabia, particularly from the An Nefud desert in the north. In northern Arabia, the youngest dated Acheulean assemblage dates to MIS 9, and includes very small bifaces and a prepared core element. The oldest Middle Palaeolithic, meanwhile currently dates to MIS 7. Recent fieldwork offers significant new insights into both of these aspects. I explore different scenarios for the transition between these cultural phases, as well as situating the evidence within wider patterns of human prehistory and adaptation in Arabia as a whole. I hypothesise that the Arabian record demonstrates repeated hominin dispersals into the area, followed by localised cultural developments and repeated local extinctions.

6 THE MIS 7-6 ACHEULEAN IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

Author(s): Scerri, Eleanor (Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History)
Presentation Format: Oral

The Arabian Peninsula is situated at the nexus of the Old World, between Africa and Eurasia. Although long thought to have been a barren and unoccupied area throughout deep time, abundant Acheulean assemblages have been reported throughout the region. These assemblages are highly varied and typically found associated with river valleys and palaeolakes. Assemblage variation ranges from simply-flaked handaxes thought to represent older Acheulean assemblages, to small, finely flaked examples sometimes associated with Levallois technology and considered to be more recent – perhaps even representing the transition to the Middle Palaeolithic. Until recently, however, none of these Acheulean sites had been reliably dated. In this paper, the first securely dated Acheulean site in Arabia, Saffaqaq, is discussed, together with a newly studied Acheulean site named An Nasm. Saffaqaq is located in central Saudi Arabia and is associated with a prominent rhyolite dyke. The simple technology at this site is belied by the very young dates obtained, which are likely to span into MIS 6 and overlap with the earliest Middle Palaeolithic in the region. The site of An Nasm is located in the northern Nefud Desert and consists of fine, and often small handaxes associated with a deep lake. New dates and technological studies from An Nasm are discussed together with those from Saffaqaq to elucidate cultural process of change from the Acheulean to the Middle Palaeolithic in a key, but poorly understood region for the Acheulean.