Editorial Note

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As all the observations made within this group of Byblos points from Gürçütepe II seem to be true also for most of the other Byblos points with Palmyran retouch, the separation of that group under the name “Palmyra points” is proposed. Their characteristics are, as described, a proximal burin blow partly removing the acentric bulb at the left ventral edge and a torsion of the blade. As Palmyran retouch was already dated to the final Syrian PPNA by Fujii, and since the Palmyra points from Gürçütepe II can be attributed to a building layer which seems to be parallel in date with Çayönü Large Room phase, a new fossilis directeur for Upper Mesopotamian-North Syrian LPPNB industries might be established. So far the Palmyra points are completely absent at Gobekli Tepe, a PPN site several kilometers northeast of Gürçütepe, where LPPNB does not seem to be exist (Schmidt 1995, 1997; Gerber 1996; Beile-Bohn et al. 1997).

Bibliography


More “Pillow-Shaped Pieces” from LPPNB Basta
Bo Dahl Hermansen and Hans Georg Gebel
Carsten Niebuhr Institute, Copenhagen University and Seminar für Vorderasiat. Altertumskunde, Free University of Berlin

The outstanding pieces published in this issue from PPNA Jerf el-Ahmar encourage us to present similar but later examples from Late PPNB Basta. The few pieces from Basta, of which we illustrate two from the 1992 season, certainly represent a distinctive but rarely attested PPNB artefact class that we expect is imperfectly described as a “shaft straigtheners”. Most (but not all) of these tablet or “pillow-shaped” pieces, made of what looks like chlorite (no mineralogical identifications have been made yet), show the grooves typical of “shaft straigtheners”.

They appear in three ways: 1) only grooved, 2) with grooves plus a distinctive pattern of geometrical engraving (e.g. Fig. 1:2), or 3) with the engraved pattern without the grooves (e.g. Fig. 1:1). We originally thought (Hermansen n.d.) that a piece such as Fig. 1:2 represented a “shaft straigthener” that was later modified and re-used for ornamental or symbolic purposes. (Please note that the engraved decoration occurs twice inside the groove and repeats roughly the design from the other side!). The piece Fig. 1:1 must represent a subclass of pieces that from the beginning were designed for reasons unassociated directly with the purposes of the grooves. (The dimensions of this piece are unique technique on proximal end of flint artifact and the evidence of east Anatolia. 280: 1–14). It appears doubtful that these engravings are meaningless decorations in a soft but durable material. If the interpretation of “shaft straigtheners” is correct at all, any meaning has to be sought in the context of hunting and symbolism, leading us into the cognitive spheres of hunting magic.
Notes and News from Excavations

Çatal Höyük 1996, Anatolia
A fourth season of fieldwork at Çatal Höyük on the Konya Plain took place during August and September 1996. The project is directed by Prof. Ian Hodder (University of Cambridge), and field directed by Dr. Roger Matthews (British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara). During the 1996 season excavation continued in two areas of the site. At the base of the area excavated by Prof. Mellaart in the 1960s a 20x20 m square was cleared and opened, with the aim of long-term exploration of the earliest levels of occupation. In the North Area a single Neolithic building was almost completely excavated. The building had three main phases, starting its life with a classic "shrine" plan, similar in many respects to shrines excavated in the 1960s, with plat-forms, red-painted walls and other decorative features. After some alterations, the south half of the building was deliberately destroyed by fire and only the north half continued in occupation until final abandonment. At least 37 individuals were buried under the floors of the building, including many children. The last burial in the building had its head missing. Excavations will continue in 1997. (communicated by Roger J. Matthews)

Dja'de 1996, Syria
The field season in Dja'de this year was limited due to financial restrictions, but the work carried out was quite impressive: study of materials, completion of the excavation of a multiple tomb under an early PPNB house (with at least two burial phases and 15 individuals) and some work in the deep sounding. (communicated by Eric Coqueugniot)

es-Seyyeh 1996, Central Jordan
A new Jordanian Neolithic site was sounded by the Wadi az-Zarqā‘/ Wadi adh-Dhulayil Survey Project, 1996 (Universities of Rome, and Yarmouk University, Iribd; co-directors: Zeidan Kafafi and Gaetano Palumbo). The survey area covers the lands between the northern periphery of Zarqa near Amman, the village of Hashemiyyeh, and the confluence between the Wadi az-Zarqā‘ and the Wadi adh-Dhulayil. This year’s work concentrated on the survey of Pleistocene river terraces, the soundings at a Neolithic site, and the detailed survey of an Early and Middle Islamic site. An Epipaleolithic and a Bronze Age site threatened by expanding agricultural activities were also studied in detail. The soundings at the Neolithic site of es-Seyyeh, on the right banks of the Zarqa river, near the village of Sukhnah, have revealed at least two layers of occupation, dated to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic C (PPNC) and to the Pottery Neolithic (Yarmoukian) period. The soundings revealed the deposit to be of great archaeological potential, with well stratified deposits reaching a depth of over 3 m despite the heavy disturbances suffered by the site due to road works and agricultural activities. Beaten earth floors, remains of structures, and a plethora of artefacts were recovered, allowing establishment of a provisional chronostratigraphic sequence for the transition between Pre-Pottery and Pottery Neolithic in this region of Jordan.

Future campaigns will develop the research initiated this year along the lines of the inter-disciplinary collaboration between Yarmouk and Rome Universities. (communicated by Zeidan Kafafi and Gaetano Palumbo)

Choga Bonut 1996, Khuzestan
The joint Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization - Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago expedition to Choga Bonut excavated below Archaea Susiana 1 deposits and reached the so-called “Formative Susiana” remains under which there were occupational debris with some classes of pottery that should be Formative. Below this there is a class of coarse ware that is apparently the earliest class of pottery. Therefore, Ms. Kantor’s Formative will have to be “Archaic 0”. We also have some 3 m of aceramic deposit with typical round fire pits, paved with pebbles, many blades and microliths, some obsidian, stal- and T-shape figures, many small geometric tokens, etc. We have collected seeds and bones for analyses. Although we did not find architecture, the presence of lumps of straw-tempered mudbricks indicate that the aceramic level had some kind of solid architecture. (communicated by Abbas Alizadeh)

Request for Cooperation in Research
(from Eric Coqueugniot): I am currently working on the use of obsidian during the late periods (Bronze and Iron Ages, Roman period, etc.), and I am interested in all archaeological and bibliographical information concerning obsidian objects other than tools and weapons. Please reply to Eric Coqueugniot, Maison de l’Orient Mediterranee, CNRS/Universite Lyon 2, UPR 7537 - Equipe n° 17 du C.R.A., 7 rue Raulin, F- 69365 LYON Cedex 07, fax (33) (0) 72 72 08 65, email: Eric.Coqueugniot@mom.fr.

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Forthcoming Warsaw Proceedings
Hans Georg Gebel and Stefan K. Kozlowski
Seminar für Vorderasiatische Altertumskunde of Free University of Berlin, and Institute of Archaeology, Warsaw University

At last, some 38 contributions are expected for the Proceedings of the Second Workshop on PPN Chipped Lithic Industries, to be published in mid-1997 as: