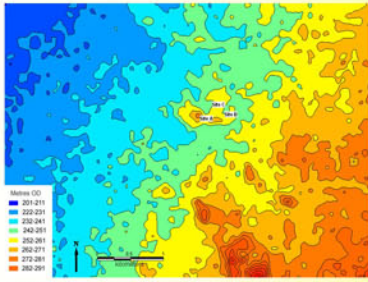


Middle Palaeolithic - or what?

New sites in Sharjah, UAE

Your Opinions Please!



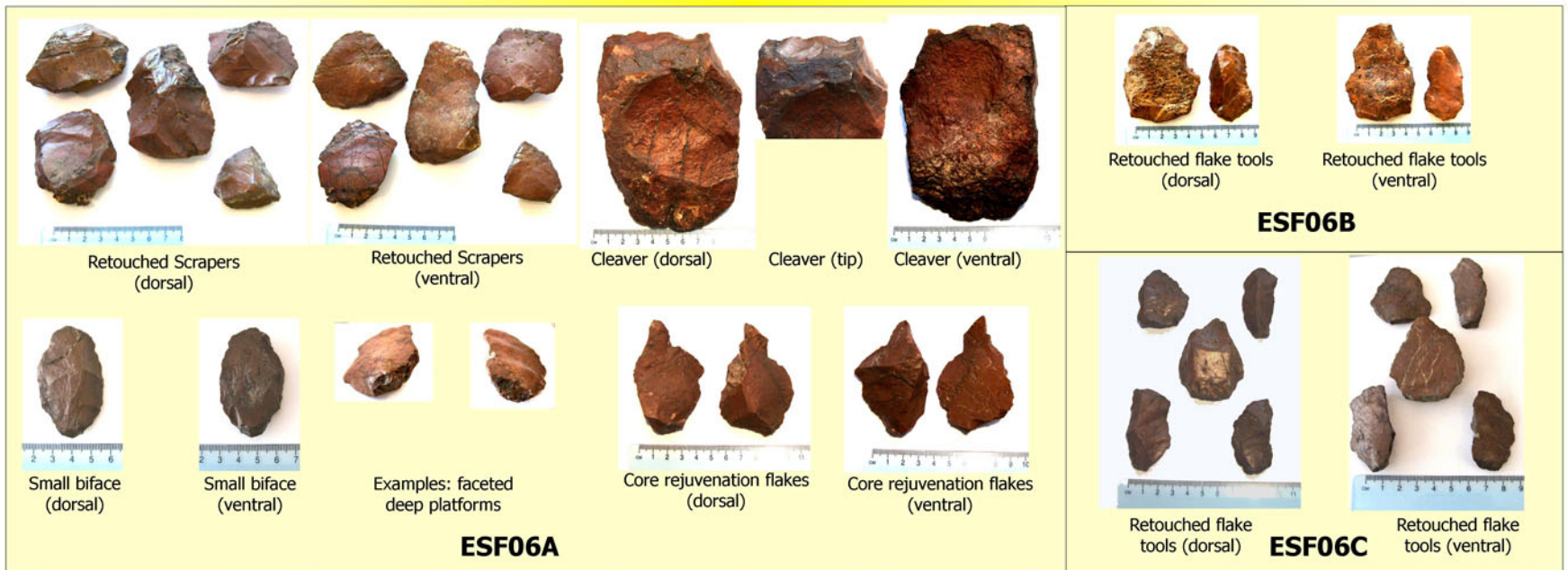
Elevation model showing location of sites: ESF06A; ESF06B; ESF06C.

Sites: The three sites, designated ESF06A, ESF06B and ESF06C, are situated on a high-level limestone outcrop, ~260m above sea level, overlooking a wadi. ESF06A (on the top of the hill) is especially prolific. ESF06B and ESF06C are discrete scatters

Artefacts: To maintain site integrity at this early stage of investigation, only a very small sample of the many available artefacts was removed from the sites. There are no apparent handaxe trimming flakes amongst the very small number of artefacts collected. The knappers seem to be producing flakes from cores for making tools such as scrapers from locally available raw material (i.e. chert). Several of the retouched scrapers have faceted deep platforms.



View of hill-top site ESF06A (circled in red) looking North.



Site ESF06A: Photograph showing ~1 sq m of the western quadrant of the ~50 sq m artefact scatter.

Patination: Generally, the artefacts exhibit **dark reddish brown** patina (Munsell color 2.5yr 3/4). Possible later artefacts found in a discrete scatter near ESF06C, were patinated a **strong brown** colour (Munsell color 7.5 yr 5/6). When newly fractured, the chert was a **light reddish-yellow** colour (Munsell color 7.5 yr 7/6).



Locally available raw material (chert circled in red) in limestone cliff-face.



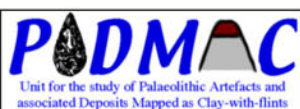
Site ESF06A: Photograph showing ~3 sq m of the eastern quadrant of the ~50 sq m artefact scatter.



Site ESF06B: General view of the western quadrant of the artefact scatter.



Site ESF06C: Photograph showing ~1 sq m of the northern quadrant of the ~20 sq m artefact scatter.

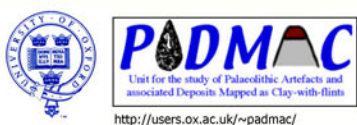
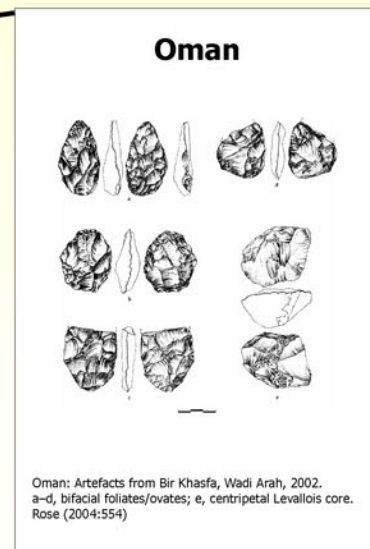
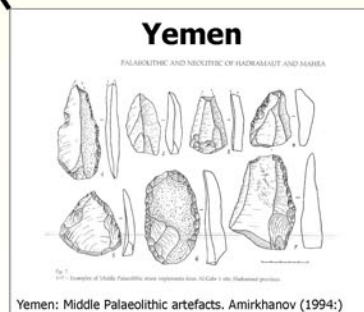
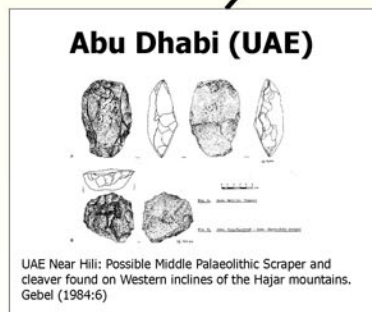
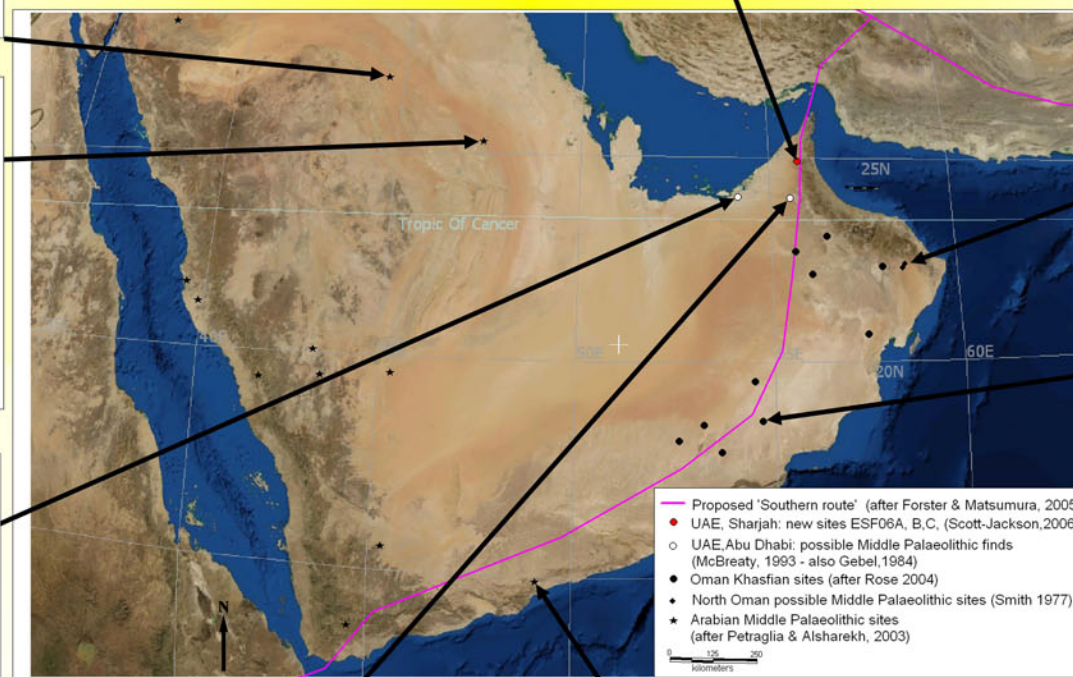
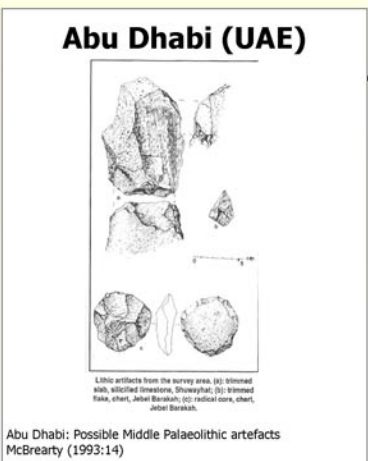
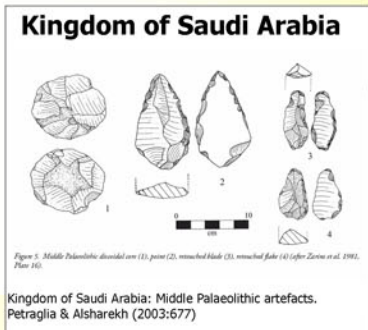


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Artefacts attributed to the Middle Palaeolithic in the Arabian Peninsula compared with the ESF06A, ESF06B and ESF06C finds

A Middle Palaeolithic 'Southern' route out of Africa to the Far East has been suggested by several authors (e.g. Forster and Matsumura, 2005; Petraglia and Alsharekh, 2003). The United Arab Emirates (UAE) lie directly on this route and yet, to date, no Middle Palaeolithic sites have been unequivocally identified. Rare individual finds from locations in the UAE have been described as Middle Palaeolithic but in the absence of firm dating evidence they have not been considered as reliable indicators of a Middle Palaeolithic presence. Dr Sabah Jasim, Director of Antiquities, Sharjah, has encouraged investigations of the early pre-history of the Emirate. In March 2006, following a desk based assessment of the region and discussion with Dr Jasim and Prof. Hans-Peter Uerpmann of the University of Tübingen, Dr Julie Scott-Jackson and Dr William Scott-Jackson of the University of Oxford, investigated an area which had potential to yield a Palaeolithic site. These investigations resulted in the discovery of a prolific prehistoric stone-tool manufacturing area on a limestone hill-top. Examination of selected artefacts from this site by various lithics experts has proved tantalising - suggesting a Middle Palaeolithic affinity. The site area is situated in the East of Sharjah Emirate on the Western anticlines of the Hajar mountains. To the West, the gravel plain of Mudam drops down to the desert, the city of Sharjah and finally the Persian Gulf. To the East, the Hajar mountains rise to ~2000m before falling away to the Gulf of Oman. The sites are located on a high-level limestone outcrop, ~260m above sea level and overlooking a wadi - a similar geographic context to the locations of some Middle Palaeolithic sites in other areas of the Arabian Peninsula.



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