

The Acheulean Site of Gesher Benot Ya'aqov Volume III: Mammalian Taphonomy, the Assemblages of Layers V-5 and V-6

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I have been fortunate to review this book after having reviewed the second monograph of the series 'The Acheulean Site of Gesher Benot Ya'aqov: Ancient and controlled use of fire' (Alperson-Afil and Goren-Inbar 2010, Griffiths 2011). Once again this is a high quality publication to add to the continuing research conducted at Gesher Benot Ya'aqov by Goren-Inbar and her team. The third monograph, as the title suggests, is the publication of the faunal material from the excavations, concentrating on Layers V-5 and V-6. We also have the publication of some extremely interesting experimental archaeology conducted by the authors to better understand the complex taphonomy and deposition at GBY. As with the other monographs within the series, the implications for understanding early hominid behavior as a whole are pivotal. This is especially true when considering the locale within its geographical context between North and South; Europe and Africa.

As with the previous examples, this monograph starts with the summary of excavations back in 1996–1997 (Chapter 2). The chapter includes some additional figures added since the 2010 publication which enhances the readers' understanding. Chapter 3 introduces the materials and methodology, both for the analysis and the experimental work conducted. Chapter 4 then moves onto the paleontological analysis. As would be expected, this is detailed and comprehensive and, in addition, draws from work conducted elsewhere within the Dead Sea valley for comparison. As fallow deer dominates the assemblages analysed from GBY, discussion of this species dominates the chapter and represents a valuable resource for Pleistocene *Dama* for Eurasia as a whole. The taphonomic analysis follows in Chapter 5. This is once again comprehensive with clear well referenced figures and tables. The experimental work is presented in Chapter 6, which is well worth a read, and has some interesting and telling results. Particularly interesting is the use of a cement mixer to replicate the low intensity churning of a lake shore environment. The final two chapters then provide the reconstruction of the taphonomic history of GBY and its implications for the locale's archaeological signature as a whole.

This publication documents two archaeologically sig-

nificant layers within the site, V-5 and V-6, both important in the past publications from GBY. Combined, over 3,500 bones were analysed, with a large majority of fallow deer present and small but significant numbers of horse and elephant. Pivotal, over 4% of the V-6 assemblage displays cut marks, with human induced percussion marks present as well. The cut mark analysis suggests that entire carcasses were affected by human action, possibly pointing to direct or near direct access to a carcass rather than confrontational scavenging. The age of GBY and its location (within the Levant) make this locale incredibly important for understanding the development of hominid behavior in Africa and Europe through the later part of the Early Pleistocene and into the Middle Pleistocene. The site could hold valuable insights into subsistence techniques for pivotal European sites such as Happisburgh and Pakefield.

As a whole this monograph significantly adds to our understanding of hominid interaction with mammals. Importantly it represents strong evidence for the hominid procurement of carcasses outside of Africa and prior to other Eurasian sites such as Ebbsfleet, UK, or Torralba and Ambrona, Spain. Significantly, GBY (ca. 0.78 mya) represents a period of little archaeological evidence, even for the Lower Palaeolithic. It is interesting that this same time frame, broadly between 1–0.7mya, has also been seen to represent a period of encephalization. It could be that GBY and sites like it potentially hold the key to understanding the complex relationship between meat procurement, diet, and hominid evolution. Tying this in with the material culture at the site, evidence for non-meat based subsistence, and the evidence for fire, this series of monographs should be on most researchers' reading lists.

REFERENCES

- Alperson-Afil, N. and Goren-Inbar, N. 2010. *The Acheulean site of Gesher Benot Ya'aqov Volume II: Ancient flames and controlled use of fire*. Dordrecht: Springer.
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