NATHDWARA, A PALAEOLITHIC SITE IN RAJPUTANA

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ABSTRACT—The article draws the attention of pre-historians the to need for a systematic survey of the river valleys in Rajputana, as hitherto this region has been completely neglected. It further shows how the region is a very promising one by describing a palaeolithic tool from the famous Vaishnava site of Nathdwara on the Banas in Mewad, and noticing a subsequent discovery of over 400 palaeolithic tools at Chitod on the Gambhira.

NATHDWARA (E. long. 73–51′, N. lat. 24-56′) is situated on the right bank of the river Banās.[1] It is about 30 miles north-by-northeast of Udaipur, capital of the Mewad, Rajputana. This small town is renowned as the chief seat of the Vaishnavas of Vallabha School, and as such attracts thousands of pilgrims every year.

ful outcrops of gneiss, schist etc. Remains of cemented pebble conglomerate, (Pl. 13, fig. 2) capped by a thin layer of sandy alluvium on the opposite bank indicate that once the river flowed on a much wider channel which was at least 10′ to 15′ higher above the present one. The river is now eroding these ancient beds and at times even

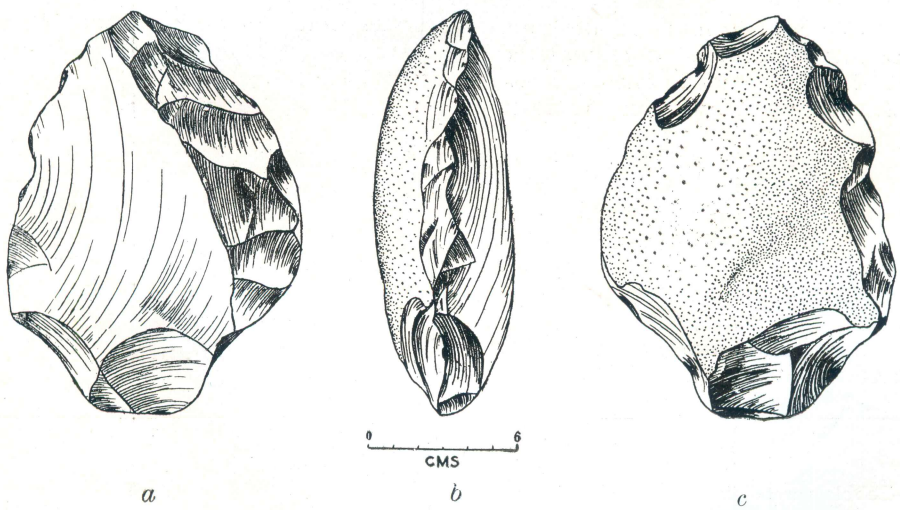

FIG. 1—Scraper on Pebble Flake from Nathdwara, Rajputana.

Nathdwara lies within the heart of the Aravallis, which present some of the oldest rock formations, like granite and gneiss. In fact, the Banas after rising in the south-western Aravalli ranges and cutting through them emerges in a narrow, open plain at Nathdwara, though on the city side, it flows at the foot of the hills which exhibit beauti-

the underlying rocks. This erosional activity of the river may be due to various reasons. But its strength may be imagined from the fact that a few yards further away, these older beds lie completely broken up (Pl. 13, fig. 1). Their debris—large and small pebbles—cover practicaliy the entire bed for nearly a mile. The pebbles, some

[1] Map, Survey of India, 1 inch=1 mile. No. 45 H/9×13, also *Imp. Gaz. of India*, XVIII, p. 415 (It gives 24.56 N. and 73.49 E) which seems to be wrong, according to the position indicated in the survey sheet. See also Cunningham, *Arch. Survey, of India*, XXIII, pp. 99–101.

3′×2′, as a rule are rolled but not so much rounded as one finds in the Narmada, for instance.

This is exactly the feature of the upper course of the Sabarmati, which we had examined as far as Gada in the north. The sites on it at Hadol, (Sankalia, 1946), Rampur, Valasna, Dharoi and Gada had yielded a palaeolithic industry in which pebble tools predominate. A few of these show the typical Early Soan flake technique, as well as the use of pebble tools. (De Terra and Paterson, 1939). The Nathdwara site, lying still further northwards but along the river which flows in an opposite direction to the Sabarmati, appeared promising and was accordingly examined by me and Shri R. N. and S. N. Sankalia, in the short time that we were there. Not a single hand-axe or cleaver was noticed by us, but we came across a large half of an oval pebble of fine grained, grey quartzite (154 mm. × 117 mm. × 54 mm.), broken lengthwise and deliberately, as indicated by the striking platform and wide angle (partly chipped away) on the underside. On this, as well as the upper surface, but only along the edge the flake seems to have been further trimmed by bold flaking which has left large and fairly deep scars, particularly at either end. Most of the cortex on the upper and the primary flaked surface on the under, remains untouched. The tool may, therefore, be described as "Scraper on pebble flake" (Fig. 1, *a–c*). This, indeed, is the characteristic of many tools we collected recently from the lower and upper gravel beds on the Narmada at Maheshwar in Central India (Madhya Bharat). The upper Sabarmati Industry contains this as well as typical pebble tools. Since both these industries and the associated gravels are placed in the Upper or Middle Pleistocene period, the Banās cemented gravels and tools, in the absence of fossils, may provisionally be assigned to this age.

Much work, however, remains to be done. Palaeolithically, Rajputana is practically unknown. Except two very vague references (Coggin Brown, 1917 and Sankalia, 1952)—one to a tool from Jaipur and the other from Idargarh—no details about the site or the stratum in which they were found are known. But even a cursory survey of the rivers, lying between the Punjab and Gujarat, at Nathdwara, Chitod and Nagari shows that a rich palaeolithic field, besides the proto-historic and early historic, awaits systematic exploration.

REFERENCES

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Explanation of Plate 13

Fig. 1—Pebble spread in the Banās at Nathdwara.

2—Cemented Pebble Conglomerate, left bank of the Banās, Nāthdwara.

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SANKALIA : NATHDWARA, PALAEOLITHIC SITE, RAJPUTANA.