A123-ME-Israel-‘Ubeidiya-Figurine-Red Tufic Pebble-Lower Paleolithic-1.2 mya

Figs. 1-4.ME-Israel-‘Ubeidiya-Figurine-Red Tufic Pebble-Lower Paleolithic-1.2 mya

**Case no.: 1**

**Accession Number:**

**Formal Label:** ME-Israel-‘Ubeidiya-Figurine-Red Tufic Pebble-Lower Paleolithic-1.2 mya

**Display Description:**

“The discovery is exciting by any standard. Was found to the north of the Dead Sea about 15 km from its right [bank]. In a cave in which an archaeological excavation is carried out. Dating to the beginning of the Paleolithic Stone Age. There are several figures engraved on it.” Given its time horizon of 1.2 mya it is assumed to be a product of *Homo erectus*. The several figures engraved upon the pebble are really abrasions that have shaped the pebble into a tear-drop shape with a prominent cranium a broadening out to shoulders, a concavity meant to be the abdomen and a posterior coming to a rounded point.

Lower Paleolithic hominin sites in the Levant include 1. Yabrud. 2. El Kowm. 3. Umm El Tlel. 4. Hummal. 5. Tabun cave. 6. Azraq sites. 7. Latamne. 8. Kefar Menachem West. 9. Revadim. 10. Holon. 11. Bizat Ruhama. 12. Nahal Hesi. 13. Kisufim. 14. Evron. 15. Ubeidiya. 16. Gesher Benot Yaakov. 17. Berekhat Ram. 18. Umm Qatafa. 19. Nahal Zihor. 20. Qesem Cave; Eyal 23. 21. Adlun cave sites: Bezez. Adlun and Abri Zumoffen caves (See Fig. 5).

The Lower Paleolithic site of ‘Ubeidiya at ~1.4 Ma in the Jordan Rift Valley is in the area where this worked stone originated. The site provides evidence for the earliest migration of *Homo erectus* out of Africa (Belmaker et al. 2002; Martínez-Navarro et al. 2009). The Zihor River valley was surveyed in 1996 by H. Ginat and I. Saragusti of the Hebrew University, which uncovered an early sequence of Pleistocene fluvio-lacustrine deposits and a paleo “Lake Zihor” with a minimum date of ~1.6 Ma for the fluvio-lacustrine deposits (Guralnik et al. 2010). The gradual formation of valleys and terraces in the southern Negev (Ginat 1997: 188) were created by tectonic uplifting, post-dating Lake Zihor (Ginat et al. 2003). Lower Paleolithic Acheulean hand axes and worked stones like this one were concentrated in many find spots near the paleo shoreline of Lake Zihor and neighboring terraces in an area of 12 km2 (Ginat 1997; 2003: 450).

**LC Classification:** [GN772.32.I75](http://josiah.brown.edu/search~S7?/c1-SIZE+GN772.32.I75+S27x+2004/cgn++772.32+i75+s27+x+2004/-3,-1,,E/browse)

**Date or Time Horizon:** Lower Paleolithic, 1.2 mya

**Geographical Area:** right bank of Jordan River near ‘Ubeidiya

### Map:

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Fig. 5. Map of Lower Paleolithic sites in the Levant: 1. Yabrud. 2. El Kowm. 3. Umm El Tlel. 4. Hummal. 5. Tabun cave. 6. Azraq sites. 7. Latamne. 8. Kefar Menachem West. 9. Revadim. 10. Holon. 11. Bizat Ruhama. 12. Nahal Hesi. 13. Kisufim. 14. Evron Quarry. 15. **‘Ubeidiya**. 16. Gesher Benot Yaakov. **17. Berekhat Ram**. 18. Umm Qatafa. 19. Nahal Zihor. 20. Qesem Cave; Eyal 23. 21. Adlun cave sites: Bezez. Adlun and Abri Zumoffen caves.

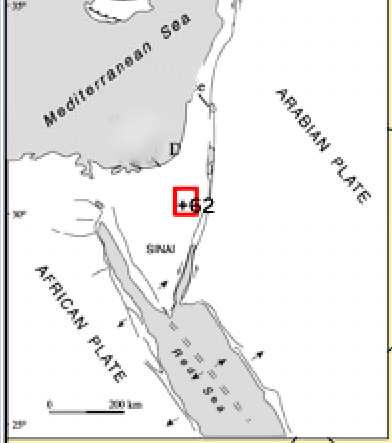
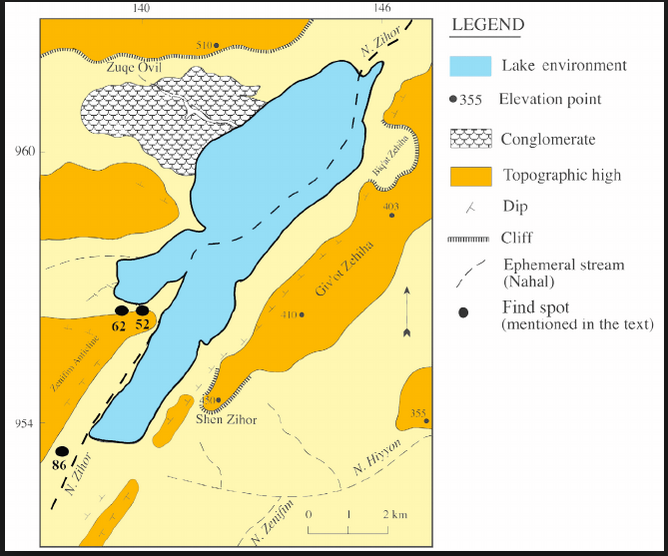


Fig. 7. Continental location of ‘Ubaidiya no. 62.



Fig. 8. ’Ubeidiya no. 62: its geological setting with refeenc to the geological context of the area aroud Lake Zihor. After https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Leore\_Grosman/publication/233859889/figure/fig1/AS:299980108648450@1448532239685/Location-of-the-Pleistocene-lake-Zihor-in-the-Arava-region-Southern-Israel-after-Ginat.png



Figs. 9.’Ubeidiya no. 62: its geological setting on the northern perimeter of the topographic high of the Zenifim anticline dated to the Lower Paleolithic, 1.2 mya, that is photographed in Fig. 10. After https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Leore\_Grosman/publication/233859889/figure/fig1/AS:299980108648450@1448532239685/Location-of-the-Pleistocene-lake-Zihor-in-the-Arava-region-Southern-Israel-after-Ginat.png



Fig. 10. Ash layer of the Zenifim anticline dated by tephrochronology to the Lower Paleolithic, 1.2 mya, in the Zihor River valley in which the artifact was found. From the research “Reconstructing the Paleo Geohydrological aspects of the Early Pleistocene water body at Nahal Zihor” (led by Yuval Lorig; co-supervised by Hanan Ginat​). After http://in.bgu.ac.il/en/humsos/fluv/images/zihor1.jpg

**GPS coordinates:** unknown

**Cultural Affiliation:** Lower Paleolithic-1.2 mya

**Medium:** Red Tufic Pebble

**Dimensions:** H 7.6 cm; W 4 cm

**Weight:** 103 grams; 3.55 oz

**Condition: “**The stone was cleaned professionally by the archaeological team, and then coated with a transparent lacquer that gives it protection and custody as well as beauty for display. This is the standard treatment offered by the museum and carried out by those who are involved in it and at a high level.”

**Provenance:** Hanan Ginat, Zihor River valley, 2002.

**Discussion:**

“The incision of the present channel of Nahal (wadi) Zihor in the lacustrine sediments is manifested by a series of rock-cut and fluvial terraces (Q1–Q4) capped by gypsic-salic soils, which reflect the onset of the present, extremely arid climate. Over 100 find-spots and larger occurrences of prehistoric artifacts assigned to the Lower Paleolithic were discovered near Lake Zihor. On the basis of techno-typological and stratigraphic considerations, these assemblages are divided into two groups, the first of which may be contemporaneous with the lake, while the second is found mainly on the younger Q1 and Q2 terraces. It is estimated that the lake existed for more than 100,000 years” (Ginat, Zilberman, and Saragusti 2003).

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Appendix: The Berekat Ram pebble is similar to the current pebble morphologics being presented. Reservations presented with regard to its validity are also pertinent to the current pebble.



Fig. 10. Three views of the Berekhat Ram red tufic pebble, 500-233 mya. After various sources.

The Berekhat Ram red tufic pebble, 35 mm (1.4 in) long, was found in 1981 on the Golan Heights between two layers of ash dated by tephrochronology to at least 230 ky BP by archaeologist N. Goren-Inbar of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. It has been claimed to be a female figurine made by *Homo erectus*, dating to the later Acheulean-Early Middle Paleolithic, 500-233 ky BP (Goren-Inbar and S. Peltz 1995). It has three grooves, that have been conceivably incised on it: one groove encircles the narrower, more rounded end of the pebble, and two shallower, curved grooves extend down the sides as neck and arms of the figure.

Alexander Marshack in 1997 argued that the grooves around the "neck" and down the "arms" were anthropogenic, but Steven Mithen in 1999 argued that Marshack's arguments "do not demonstrate that the lines are indeed intentional and that if they were that they were intended to represent a female figure". In 2000, d'Errico and Nowell argued that the incisions were anthropogenic, but the functionality of the object was of concern: "the use of different types of raw materials to produce a varied tool kit seems well documented." However, some of the abrasions "are not necessarily consistent with a functional use of the object", suggesting that symbolic intent is to be considered as a possibility of great consequence.

Three questions still remain, however: 1) are the grooves made by hominins; 2) if they were, did they have symbolic intent; 3) if so, did they represent a female hominin?

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