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EVIDENCE FOR HUNTING AND HAFTING AT SIBUDU CAVE DURING THE MIDDLE STONE AGE

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Stone points represent the most recognisable Middle Stone Age (MSA) artefact. They are characteristic of the period in which anatomically modern humans emerged in southern Africa about 150 000 to 40 000 years ago. A functional analysis of these artefacts may thus contribute to a better understanding of this period in human development. It is during the MSA that we see the first indirect, but convincing, evidence in the archaeological record for hafting, or mounting, stone tools on handles and shafts (Schick and Toth 1993:292). Hafted, stone-tipped spears (projectiles) represent an important milestone in the development of hunting technology, both in terms of investment of labour before use and in terms of functional specialisation. While extensive work has been done on Middle Palaeolithic points in Europe and the Levant, relatively little is known about the function of those in the southern African MSA context.

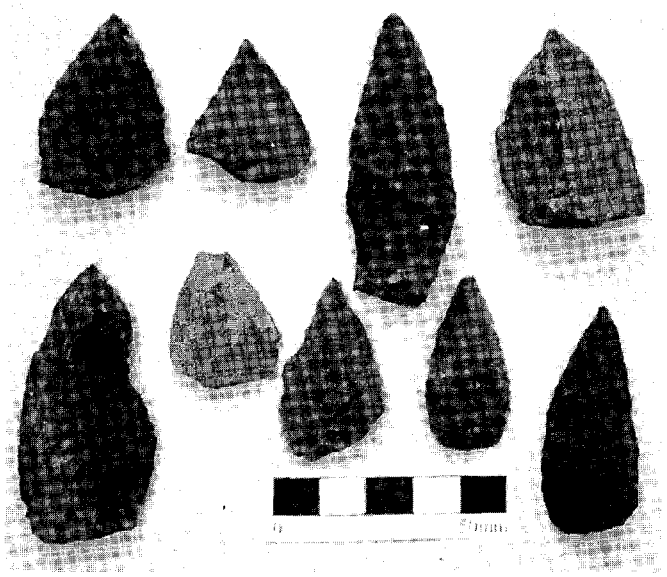

Fig. 1: Some of the points from the Sibudu sample

Fifty points were extracted for analysis from the Sibudu Cave assemblage (Fig. 1). The site is situated on a cliff above the Tongati River, about 15 km inland from the coast of KwaZulu-Natal north of Durban. Hornfels and dolerite were the main raw materials used for the knapping of MSA tools at Sibudu. Small quantities of quartz and quartzite are, however, present throughout the sequence, but they become less common in the more recent layers. Several finely worked unifacial and bifacial points have been recovered. In the eastern part of the excavation, hollow- based points were present in the uppermost MSA layers, but they have not yet appeared in layers older than about 42 000 years (Wadley 2001:3-4).

An approach that has proved successful in the functional interpretation of lithic points is the analysis of fracture patterns. This report pertains to the preliminary results obtained from a macro-fracture analysis based on the results and definitions as published by Fisher et al (1984). They executed experiments with the aim of isolating and defining types of fractures that could be considered diagnostic for the use of points as projectile/impact tips. Definitions were provided for cone fractures and bending fractures; the latter include feather-terminating bending fractures, hinge-terminating bending fractures, step-terminating bending fractures, snap fractures, embryonic bending fractures and spin-off fractures. The purpose of the analysis of 50 points from Sibudu is mainly to determine whether the sample displays any diagnostic impact fracture patterns and/or evidence for hafting that could be determined through macro-fracture analysis.

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ditions when climatic amelioration ensured regular rainfall and the pans held permanent water. During such times one would have been able to walk from the banks of a wide Orange River at Prieska across Bundu to a mighty Augrabies Falls without ever being more than a few kilometres away from a body of permanent water and abundant wildlife.

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THE WRONG RHINO

First prize for any reader who noticed that the rock art image did not match the caption and was in fact that of a black rhino in Fig. 5 of the article "Black or White? The identification and significance of rhinoceroses in South African Bushman rock art" in the August issue of *The Digging Stick* (Vol. 19, No. 2). With apologies to Sven Ouzman and Jim Freely, the correct image is reproduced below.

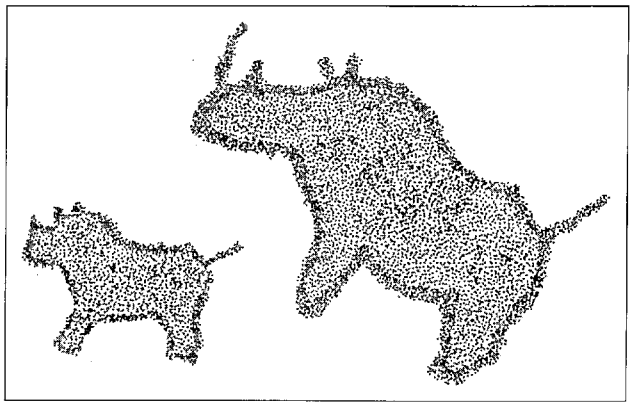

Fig. 5: Rock engraving of a white rhino with calf preceding it, San's Fountain, Northern Cape