

one of these beetles at night in sand dunes near the Al Markhaniya district of Al Ain. As I tried to pick it up with my bare hands, I experienced a painful series of concerted pin-pricks on my index finger and thumb, such that I was forced to let the beetle go by flinging it quite some distance away. No blood was drawn, and the skin, if not the ego, was unpunctured, but it appears that as I tried to seize the beetle, it used its middle and/or hind legs to pinch my fingers against the body spines. In retrospect, the use of the spines in this way should have been obvious, but at the time it was unsuspected. The device is reminiscent of the ones on the

forelegs of preying mantises which are used to seize prey. Certainly such a mechanism could be particularly effective in deterring vertebrate predators such as hedgehogs and foxes whose first contact with *Prionthecca* is likely to be with their noses. Significantly, when molested, *Prionthecca*, unlike the other large tenbrionids, does not offer any chemical defence. Is it possible that the evolution of the interlocking elytral and tibial spines has rendered chemical defence unnecessary? If so then the beetle would gain by not having to commit any of its water reserves of defensive purposes.

Dr. Michael P.T. Gillett

Archaeological investigations in the Wadi Safad, Fujairah, 1995

In April 1994, Dr Geoffrey King of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, conducted a survey to identify archaeological sites along a 10 kms section of the Wadi Safad, located approximately 12 kms north of Fujairah City. He identified more than 20 sites, of which the majority are probably Late Islamic in date. The results of this survey are soon to be published by the Cultural Foundation, Abu Dhabi.

The Wadi Safad runs west to east down from the Hajar Mountains to the Batina coast. There is a track which follows the bed of the wadi, but at the time of writing, a modern road was under construction. Extant within the wadi are palm groves, *falaj* systems and agricultural terraces. Local informants also told Dr King that on the summits of the high ground along the sides of the wadi there were abandoned farms occupying cleared areas.

The use of the land in, and along the sides of, the wadi, manifested in the construction of terraces and farms, and *falaj* systems, though late in date is an ideal context in which to understand the archaeology of human occupation in the valley. In effect, the wadi can be viewed as one archaeological site, with its own history of land ownership and management, and village or settlement disposition.

Archaeological work in other parts of the world have shown that the study of upland agricultural systems, such as terraces and associated features, can be extremely rewarding. When carried out in conjunction with botanical and geomorphological investigations, not only can a history of terrace development be ascertained, but so can aspects of settlements and ancient ways of life come to light. With these concepts in mind, and as a continuation of Dr King's survey, I visited the Wadi Safad in April of this year. My visit would not have been possible without the assistance of the Private Affairs Bureau of HH Sheikh Hamad bin Mohammed al Sharqi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Fujairah, which arranged for my accommodation and provided a vehicle, and Saif al Attar, then Director of the Fujairah Department of Antiquities and Heritage, who arranged for me to be accompanied and assisted by a representative from his office. While in the wadi I also met up with Ali Ahmed of the village of Safad, who is a mine of information on the area, and welcomed us most generously.

The first field terraces occur in the wadi at more than 7.5 kms up its length. These are abandoned and situated on both sides of the narrow flood plain of the wadi, though the northern terrace system is more extensive

then that to the south. On the steeply sloping ground immediately above the northern terraces there are the remains of a settlement consisting of buildings and enclosures (constructed of random rubble), probable storage structures, and small flat, revetted areas which could have been cleared for temporary shelters. These remains are probably integral with the terraces, and illustrate how the upper, steeply sloping ground had been utilised for domestic requirements, while the flatter wadi bottom was made into terraces for effective agriculture. Further up the wadi at just over 9 kms there are more extensive terraces which extend intermittently beyond the motorable track. Some of these are still in use with extensive palm groves and *falajes*. There is a distinctive rocky hill around which the wadi bends, and upon its summit there is a small but notable *Husn* (castle).

Down the northern slope from this structure there is also a small mosque, and it and the *Husn* are described in Dr King's forthcoming survey publication. However, between these two structures and occupying the north-east, downward slope of the hill, there are the remains of a settlement with an associated graveyard. Within the occupation area there are sunken buildings cut into the hill slope, more substantial rectangular buildings, and the remains of enclosure or boundary walls. From what is visible on the ground today, it is obvious that this settlement consisted of 'arish and stone structures serving different functions, and that there was a social structure manifest in the architecture and settlement layout.

Although this hill settlement has been unoccupied for a substantial period of time, its location amidst and above palm groves and terraces still in partial use, and in conjunction with the *Husn* and mosque, point to it as serving an important role in the late Islamic history of occupation in the Wadi. These remains deserve further archaeological study, especially within the context of land use and landscape evolution in the Hajar Mountains. There is a further, more recently abandoned settlement amidst terraces on the opposite side of the wadi, west of the *Husn*, and this with its accompanying fields will need to be studied if the history of human occupation in the Wadi Safad is to be understood.

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