

THE INDUSTRIES OF THE GORGORA ROCK SHELTER,  
LAKE TANA.

BY L. S. B. LEAKEY, M.A., Ph.D.,  
*Honorary Curator of the Coryndon Museum.*

(PUBLISHED BY PERMISSION OF THE TRUSTEES.)

GENERAL NOTES.

Colonel Moysey has asked the writer to describe the stone age material obtained by him from the Gorgora Rock Shelter.

The whole of the material — including waste flakes — was brought to Kenya and presented to the Coryndon Museum. The majority of the specimens are waste flakes or *débitage* and the fact that all these were made available for study together with the implements, facilitates a proper appreciation of the industries represented.

In his account of the excavations Colonel Moysey has pointed out that no sterile layers were encountered, indicating a more or less continuous occupation of the shelter by stone age man. Colonel Moysey has also noted that the top 4 feet of the deposit filling the shelter consisted of a black soil rich in humus, beneath which the deposit was mainly of grey volcanic ash down to the 8-foot level where concretions began to appear. These became increasingly common just above bed rock where almost the whole deposit was found to be cemented together.

The artefacts from the 12-foot level upwards to the top of the 4-foot level belong to the culture known as Stillbay. Throughout this series a gradual development is discernable, reaching a peak in the 7-foot level and followed by a distinct degeneration in the 6-foot and 5-foot levels.

On a Kenya basis, the lower levels would be classed as Early Stillbay, the middle levels as Middle Stillbay, and layers 6, 5 and 4 as Late Stillbay with layer 4 transitional to the Magosian. Layer 3, near the base of the black soil with humus, contains an industry which is attributable to the Magosian, a degenerative derivative of Stillbay, while the top 2 feet of the black soil contain a very crude microlithic industry which may best be regarded as a local derivative of the Magosian, comparable to the Wilton B of Kenya and Northern Tanganyika.

This industry, however, cannot be regarded as true Wilton, since it does not contain any of the characteristic Wilton forms. The number of specimens is too few to justify a final classification, but it is possible that this rough microlithic industry represents part of a Mesolithic or Neolithic assemblage from which some elements are missing.

The excavations, as Colonel Moysey has explained, were carried out by digging 1-foot depth of deposit at a time and the 4-foot level was, in fact, partly black soil, changing at its base to grey volcanic ash. This corresponds exactly with the typological evidence of the specimens, for layer 4 had already been classified as transitional from Stillbay to Magosian before Colonel Moysey's notes were received.

#### DETAILS OF THE INDUSTRIES FROM THE DIFFERENT LEVELS.

In discussing the industries from the different levels, the material will be dealt with in chronological sequence from the earliest to the latest and not in the order in which they were found.

##### *Early Stillbay* (Plate 33).

(From the 12-foot, 11-foot and 10-foot levels.) The 12-foot level yielded only eight specimens and of these, all but one are waste flakes. The exception is a small unstruck tortoise core showing a well-made, prepared striking platform. The 11-foot level yielded eighteen specimens of which twelve are waste flakes and six implements. Among these are four points of the Stillbay type, one of which is broken, and also two fragments of utilised flakes. Many of the waste flakes show faceted striking platforms indicating the use of the Levalloisian technique. From the 10-foot level, seventy-one specimens were obtained, thirty-four of which are waste flakes and thirty-seven implements and utilised flakes. Twenty-seven of the latter may be classified as Stillbay points and they approximate more closely to the Kenya Early Stillbay than to the Middle Stillbay. Nevertheless, certain specimens are as fully developed as in the Middle Stillbay and this level appears to be transitional between the two phases. In addition to the twenty-seven Stillbay points, there are the following: one burin, one crude end scraper, one small tortoise core and seven utilised flakes. The waste flakes include many specimens with faceted striking platforms.

##### *Middle Stillbay* (Plate 34).

(From the 9-foot, 8-foot and 7-foot levels.) The 9-foot level yielded a total of one hundred and thirty-four specimens, of which only ninety-six are waste flakes, the remaining thirty-eight being either implements or utilised flakes and cores. Of these, thirty are points of Stillbay type and the other eight comprise one small tortoise core, one core regenerator and six utilised flakes. The waste flakes again include many examples of faceted striking platforms. The 8-foot level yielded a total of one hundred and seventeen specimens of which eighty-five are waste flakes and thirty-two implements and utilised flakes. Twenty-five of

these are Stillbay points, the remaining seven specimens consist of one core regenerator and six utilised flakes. Fragments of red pigment occurred at this level. Many of the waste flakes show faceted striking platforms. The 7-foot level yielded one hundred and eleven specimens of which eighty are waste flakes and thirty-one implements or utilised flakes. Of these, twenty-three are Stillbay points and the remaining eight specimens comprise one scraper, three utilised flakes and four flakes exhibiting steep but crude secondary chipping on one lateral edge of the tip, suggesting rough obliquely trimmed points or backed blades. The waste flakes include a large number showing faceted striking platforms. Some fragments of blueish-grey colouring material were also found.

*Upper Stillbay* (Plate 35).

(From the 6-foot, 5-foot and 4-foot levels.) The 6-foot level yielded seventy-seven specimens of which sixty-seven are waste flakes. Ten of the implements are points of the Stillbay type, one is a large backed blade and two are core regenerators. Fragments of red pigment also occurred. Flakes with faceted striking platforms are again represented. The 5-foot level yielded two hundred and one specimens of which one hundred and seventy-nine are waste flakes, twenty are Stillbay type points and two are utilised flakes. Both red and grey-blue colouring materials were found in this level. The waste flakes include many with faceted striking platforms. The 4-foot level yielded one hundred and thirty-six specimens of which one hundred and eleven are waste flakes, many of which have not got faceted striking platforms. Of the twenty-five implements and utilised flakes, only five are Stillbay points and the other twenty specimens comprise two crude scrapers, four burin spalls, two burins, two core regenerators, two crude backed blades and eight utilised flakes. Red and grey-blue colouring material occurred in greater quantity than in the other levels.

The material from the 4-foot level is classed with the Upper Stillbay of the 5-foot and 6-foot levels, but it should more strictly be regarded as transitional to the Magosian of the 3-foot level. The few Stillbay points are less well made than those from the 5-foot and 6-foot levels, but they are more like the true Stillbay than the Magosian forms. One potsherd reported from this level was probably derived from the junction with the 3-foot Magosian level.

*Magosian* (Plate 36. Nos. 17—28).

(From the 3-foot level.) This level yielded two hundred and twelve specimens, of which one hundred and eighty are waste flakes. The remaining thirty-two specimens consist of the following: three hammerstones, seven Magosian type points (degenerate Stillbay), one *Audi* point, eleven small crudely

made backed blades and lunates, five scrapers, one burin spall and four utilised flakes. Comparatively few of the waste flakes show faceted striking platforms. The level also yielded eight potsherds, among which are one undecorated straight rim fragment and one sherd showing a decoration of five lightly incised parallel lines. These eight sherds are from a number of different pots and vary considerably in thickness. There are indications that the coil or ring method of manufacture was employed.

*A Late Mesolithic or Neolithic Industry* (Plate 36. Nos. 1—15).

(From the 2-foot and 1-foot levels.) The 2-foot level yielded one hundred and forty-seven specimens of which one hundred and twenty are waste flakes, the remaining twenty-seven specimens comprise the following: fourteen poorly made lunates and small backed blades, seven crude scrapers, one hammerstone, one core regenerator, one *lame écaillée* and three utilised flakes. There is not a single example of a faceted striking platform among the implements or waste flakes. Eleven potsherds were also recovered from this level, and they include a rim fragment of a large coarse pot, 22 mm. thick at the lip, together with a rim fragment of a thin pot, only 4 mm. thick. All are undecorated and there is no trace of the coil or ring technique.

The 1-foot level yielded eighty-eight specimens of which seventy-nine are waste flakes. The remaining nine specimens comprise the following: one hammerstone, two core regenerators, three backed blades and three utilised flakes. Faceted striking platforms do not occur among the waste flakes. Nine potsherds were recovered from this level, they are similar to those from the 2-foot level and none are decorated. There is one small rim fragment 6 mm. thick.

#### CONCLUSIONS.

The industries from the Gorgora Rock Shelter, from the lowest to the top levels are as follows: Early Stillbay developing into Middle Stillbay, Upper Stillbay and thence to Magosian. Thus far there appears to have been a continuous evolution of culture in the shelter, but the Magosian is followed by a degenerate microlithic culture which is probably a local Mesolithic or Neolithic derivative of the Magosian with certain elements missing in the material recovered.

FIND TABLE.

Culture.	Find Categories																	
	Level.	Total.	Potsherds.	Backed Blades and Crescents.	Scrapers.	Hammerstones.	Lames Ecaillees.	Burins.	Burin Spalls.	Magosian Points.	Stillbay Points.	Tortoise Cores.	Blade Cores.	Core Regenerators.	Pigments.	Utilised Flakes.	Waste Flakes (Bulb Ends).	Waste Fragments.
Mesolithic or Neolithic.	1	88	9	3	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	3	60	19
	2	147	11	14	7	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	3	96	24
Magosian.	3	212	8	12	5	3	—	—	1	7	—	—	—	—	—	4	141	39
Upper Stillbay.	4	136	1	2	2	—	—	2	4	—	5	—	—	2	xx	8	94	17
	5	201	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	20	—	—	2	x	—	152	27	
	6	77	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	7	—	—	2	x	—	54	13	
Middle Stillbay.	7	111	—	4	1	—	—	—	—	23	—	—	—	x	3	69	11	
	8	117	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	25	—	—	1	—	6	69	16	
	9	134	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	30	1	—	1	x	6	86	10	
Lower Stillbay.	10	71	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	27	1	—	—	x	7	27	7	
	11	18	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	2	11	1	
	12	8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	6	1	
Totals:		1,320	19	36	16	5	1	3	5	7	141	3	0	11	—	42	865	185