

2004 Trial Excavation at Wong Tei Tung Spot, Sham Chung Archaeological Site, Hong Kong SAR.

Abstract

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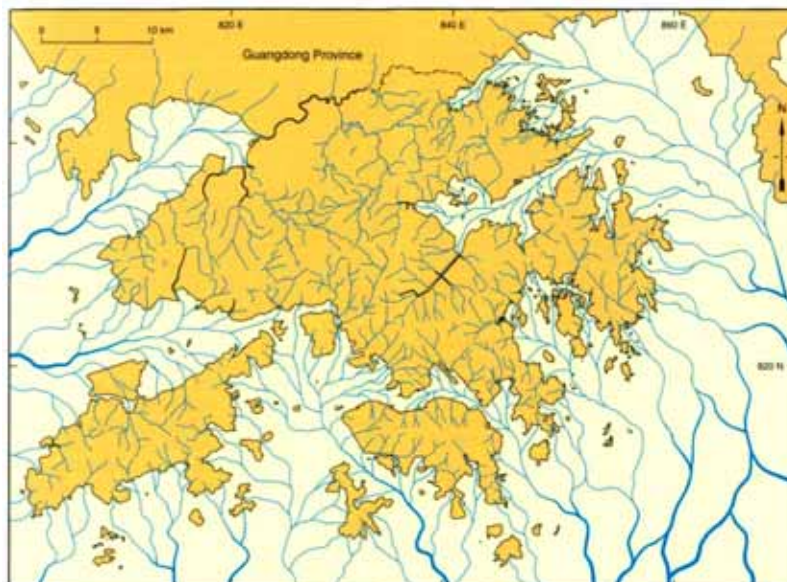
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The site, Wong Tei Tung spot of Sham Chung Archaeological Site was discovered by Mr. Huang Hu and Mr. Wu Weihong in spring, 2003. Hong Kong Archaeology Society associated with Centre for Lingnan Archaeology of Zhongshan University in Canton conducted a trial excavation at the site. Hong Kong SAR Government, China, funded the project. The field scanning, hand augering and test pitting had been conducted on late November 2004 to early January 2005.

The site is situated at north shore of Sai King Peninsula, at eastern area of Hong Kong SAR. East to the site is a hill, namely Wong Tei Tung at height of 154 meters, the site facing a bay, namely Three Fathoms Cover at west. The present depth of the Cover is less than 10 meters below sea level. Substantial number of liths are exposing both at surface of pebble beach and western slope facing to sea, the extent of lithic exposing at pebble beach about 300 meters long and up to slope at height 15 meters. Many lithics were also revealed at underwater that leaves the clues seems indicating the site was occupied before sea reaches present level since 6,000 years bp.

The solid geology of the site is mudstone and siltstone as well as bedrock observed at soil profile of test pits and auger holes, the silicon tuff in dark grey to black colour is overlaid bedrocks; an outcrop is standing at western slope at height of 40 meters to 50 meters also facing the sea. Such silicon tuff provides sufficient and very hard raw materials for lithic manufacturing. The thin section examination of lithic raw materials had been conducted in at Zhongshan University, the result indicating these lithics were made of silicon tuff.

The glacial-interglacial cycles have been resulted in major fluctuations of world sea level and shift in world climatic zones those important consequences for the region, particularly the offshore area. Around 75,000 years bp, a glacial maximum had been reaches and sea level had fallen to about 77 meters lower than at present. The last glaciations at Late Pleistocene commenced about 25,000 years bp, reaching a maximum about 18,000 years bp to 17,000 years bp, sea level was at its lowest at this time, falling to around -120 meters or -130 meters. Three Fathoms Cover were drying became a river valley as well as other coastal regions, ancient people is suggesting inhabited the site during this time where was situated at a former river terrace of at least 40 meters to 100 meters width that facing a river branch running into Tolo Harbour and Mirs Bay of northeastern Hong Kong SAR (Figure 1). According to marine chart, an underwater terrace is setting in front of the site at present depth of less than 5 meters, there is a hint seems showing ancient people could occupied the terrace before the sea reaches its height at present level since 6,000 years bp, the pebble beach and former river terrace in that case couldn't provide an ideal place for ancient people occupying.



*Figure 1 Schematic reconstruction of the Late Pleistocene drainage pattern (after Fyfe, J.A. and others 2000 *The Quaternary Geology of Hong Kong*, Hong Kong, Civil Engineering Department)*

A stratum contains high density of flakes, cores and lithics were observed in a face cutting along a concrete footpath parallel with pebble beach. Thus, we assumed the lithics are exposing in pebble beach are likely from slope. A total of five test pits had been dug both on pebble beach (T1 and T2) and hill slope (T3 to T5). Three areas (two areas of 5m x 10m and an area of 10m x 10m) were enclosed both at pebble beach and slope for surface artifacts density counting. No pottery associated either prehistoric or historic with lithics had been revealed in test pits (T3 to T5) of slope. The lithics are revealed in four test pits (T1 to T4) but except T5, T5 is setting at a slope terrace not far from a stream, because we assumed the ancient living area would chosen at that terrace. There are five strata contained substantial quantity of chucks, core, flakes, debitage, and lithic tools both in T3 and T4 at slope, L6 is a weathering bedrock, no lithic found at that layer.

Over 2,000 artefacts (Figure 2) were both found in pebble beach and test pits, a total of 156 pieces lithic artifacts after preliminary examination and classified into nine categories, these are wedge-like lithic (or adze-like lithic, short axe, 57.69%), scraper (16.02%), point (8.97%), hand-axe (biface lithic 5.76%), pick (1.28%), chopper (5.12%), projective point like lithic (1.92%), pick (1.28%) and burin (1.28%).

Almost of those lithics were used thick transverse flakes as blanks thereby are identified them as flake tools. Those artifacts were adopted techniques of biface, bipolar, sophisticated retouching at edges of flakes (Mousterian-like), and prepared platform were seen at few cores. If after detail examination, we believe some utilized flakes should be identified.

In terms of morphology, a few lithics have Sumatralith core's traits. According to blades or flake-blades are discovered in the Wong Tei Tang assemblage, thereby, we are suggesting such assemblage was adopted technique of Late Paleolithic Age to Early Neolithic Age.

In addition, debitage, waste flakes, blades, cores, nodules and chucks also discovered both in surface and test pits, which could re-construct entire lithic manufacture progress. Such finding is a clue to trace Wong Tei Tung spot was an ancient lithic manufacturing workshop.

The OSL dating from L1 to L5 of T4 at slope, L1 to L3 are dated to 1,938 years bp, 2,848 years bp and 6,800 years bp respectively; L4 and L5 are dated to 39,000 years bp and 35,000 years bp respectively, such datings and stratum are correlating to *Fanling Formation* of Holocene and *Chek Lap Kok Formation* of Late Pleistocene stratigraphy respectively.

Considering to the artifact techniques, their morphology, OSL dating and stratigraphy, the conclusion was is preliminary drawn on the finds shall be interpreted into two periods, the early period dated back to 40,000 years bp and later period dated back 7,000 years bp.

Although, few traits of Wong Tei Tung assemblage have been identified similar to Southeast Asia lithics. However, according to morphology, short-axe and Sumatralith cores that we couldn't simplify trace them into Hoabinhian, because of a lithic assemblage resulted of inter-action between environment and human adaptation, Wong Tei Tung offer a glimpse of particularity lithic manufacturing is result of human adaptation in a certain environment. In that initiated stage, we are suggesting the assemblage is a lithic cluster of certain "techno-complex" rather than an archaeological culture.

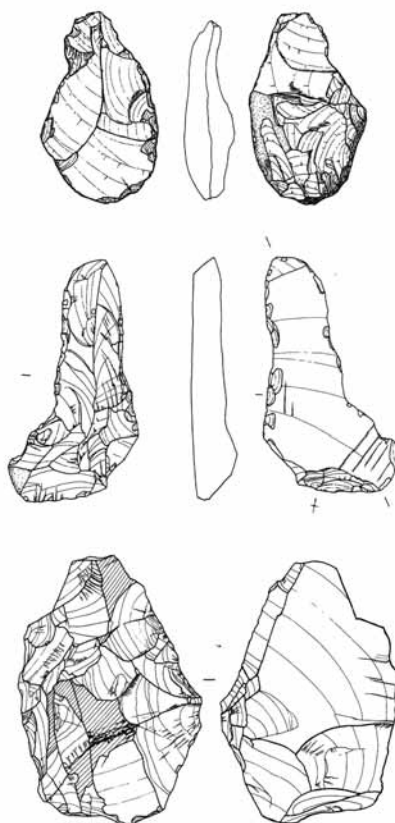


Figure 2 The stone artefacts discovered at Wong Tei Tung Site