

More *Terebralia palustris* (Linnaeus, 1767) near Abu Dhabi

by Peter Hellyer & Simon Aspinall

In *Tribulus Vol. 16.1* (2006), the presence of shells of the large mangrove mud-creeper *Terebralia palustris* on archaeological sites and *in situ* in now-dried inter-tidal areas between the island of Futaisi, just west of Abu Dhabi City and northwards to Saih ash-Sha'ib, just across the Abu Dhabi - Dubai border was reported (Hellyer & Aspinall, 2006). It was noted that the archaeological sites were all wholly or mainly Late Islamic in date, in contrast to the situation on archaeological sites on the Arabian Gulf coast of the Northern Emirates, where the species is common or relatively common from the Late Stone Age to the late pre-Islamic period and then becomes increasingly less common. The species is believed to be extinct on the UAE side of Arabian Gulf today, although as noted elsewhere in this issue, live populations are still present on the Iranian side of the Gulf in the Strait of Hormuz (Feulner, 2006).

Ecological fieldwork undertaken by Simon Aspinall in November and December 2006 identified four further sites with *T. palustris* shells in the same general area of North-East Abu Dhabi.

One is a small midden of shells, with no associated archaeological artefacts, on a rocky outcrop (*qassar*) on the coastline at Ra's Ghanadha.

A second is on the offshore island of Jazirat Hayl, a midden composed primarily of *Pinctada* sp., (pearl oyster) with some shells of the large edible gastropod *Hexaplex kuesterianus* and of *T. palustris*. Late Islamic pottery from the Julfar horizon is present nearby.

The third and fourth sites are on the island of Ghurab, just south of Jazirat Hayl, and include a mound of burnt stones, with which *T. palustris* shells and Late Islamic pottery are associated, and another large burnt stone mound with unidentified mammal bones and with several large *T. palustris* shells. In the absence of any pottery or other artefacts, this latter site cannot be ascribed a date without radiocarbon

dating. Where dated from elsewhere along the coast of Abu Dhabi, including on the island of Balghelam, close to Ghurab and Hayl, they have produced a range of dates from the middle Bronze Age to the Late Islamic period.

The discovery of the new sites is not unexpected and provide further evidence of the presence of *T. palustris* in a Late Islamic context in the north-east of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The questions as to why the species is, or was, present in only this part of Abu Dhabi Emirate, why it appears to have survived after it apparently disappeared from the Arabian Gulf coastline of the Northern Emirates and what finally caused its disappearance all remain to be answered.

Reference

Hellyer, P. & Aspinall, S. (2006). An archaeological and ecological curiosity - *Terebralia palustris* (Linnaeus, 1767) in the north-east of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. *Tribulus*, **16.1**, 10-13.

Feulner, G.R. (2006). Occurrence of the large mangrove mud creeper *Terebralia palustris* (Linnaeus, 1767) (Gastropoda; Potamididae) within the Arabian Gulf, at and near Qeshm Island, Iran, in the Strait of Hormuz. *Tribulus* Vol. 16.2, (p. 32)

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