214. Carbon-14 Date for a ‘Neolithic’ Site in the Rub’ al Khali

Henry Field


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Carbon-14 Date for a 'Neolithic' Site in the Rub' al Khali.

By Henry Field, B.A., M.A., D.Sc., Oxon., Research Fellow, Peabody Museum, Harvard University

At a camp site (lat. 18° 46' N. and long. 50° 16' E.) east of Jiladah in Saudi Arabia and north-east of Aramco camp G-2554 some 'neolithic' arrowheads were collected beside a hearth. A charcoal sample was received from Mr. Burt Beverly, Jr., for age-determination. This was forwarded to Dr. T. A. Rafter, Lower Hutt, New Zealand. The age of sample R-667 is given as 5,090±200 years B.P. (i.e. 3,113±200 B.C.).

Thus, this camp was occupied by 'neolithic' hunters about 3000 B.C., contemporaneously with the flourishing of civilization in Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Iranian Plateau and the Indus Valley.

Notes
1. No. 55 on Map of Archeological Sites of Arabia in Henry Field, Ancient and Modern Man in Southwestern Asia, Coral Gables (U. of Miami P.), 1956. At G-2554 (lat. 18° 18' N. and long. 49° 46' E.) blades of Solutrian type lay arranged in a circle about one meter in diameter.
2. See MAN, 1955, 145; 1956, 209; 1958, 121; and 1960, 30.
3. Manager, Exploration and Producing Department, Aramco.
4. Director, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Division of Nuclear Science, Private Bag, Lower Hutt, New Zealand. The letter from Dr. Rafter was dated 17 June 1960.

CORRESPONDENCE

‘The Mankind Quarterly’

215

Sir,—I should be grateful if you would publish in MAN the text of a letter which I wrote more than two months ago, on 10 August, 1960, to Dr. R. Gayre of Gayre, Editor of The Mankind Quarterly, 1 Darnaway Street, Edinburgh, 3, Scotland, because of what I consider to be the unsatisfactory nature of the replies which I have had to it from him and from his Honorary Associate Editor, Professor R. Ruggles Gates, F.R.S. The text of my letter is as follows:

‘As a member of the Honorary Advisory Board of The Mankind Quarterly I feel at least partly responsible for the views expressed in contributions to it. Some of those views appearing in the first issue, which has just reached me, seem to show such little concern for facts and to be so distorted by racial prejudice that I cannot allow them to stand without the most vigorous protest.

‘They are quite incompatibe with my conscience as a scientist and an affront to the bitter memories I have of the anguish suffered during World War II by the peoples of Europe and of my own country in particular—not to mention what I personally saw and experienced while a prisoner in Dachau—as a result of the abuse, for political motives, of the noble and dispassionate aims of anthropology.

‘I must therefore ask you to accept at once my resignation from the Board. Since you have given my name a certain measure of publicity in print, I should welcome an immediate assurance that you will also be fair-minded enough to publish this letter, as it is written, at the earliest possible moment in the organ you edit. Otherwise I shall have no alternative to seeking its publication elsewhere in the United Kingdom, whose scientific and humanitarian traditions I continue to respect.’

The Editor of The Mankind Quarterly, in acknowledging the receipt of my letter as ‘somewhat of an unpleasant surprise,’ stated that he could not answer it fully until he had consulted his colleagues but promised to do so on his return from Stockholm early in September. Up to the present that promise has not been kept. In his original acknowledgment of my letter, the Editor (1) charges me with being ‘entirely subjective’ in my views; (2) says that, if any contribution to The Mankind Quarterly contains anything that I believe to be untrue in any particular scientific fact he would welcome my demonstration of the incorrectness of the presentation, ‘provided that it were kept within reasonable bounds, having regard to what can be published in such a journal’; (3) threatens me that he would ‘react very sharply indeed to any suggestion made by publication, or privately in any quarters, which would attempt to smear with the term Nazi,’ his name or the journal and institutions with which he is associated.

I will deal with these points seriatim. (1) I emphatically deny that my views are anything but objective, and I shall be astonished if other members of the Honorary Advisory Board who, like me, joined this in ignorance of the ostensibly racist editorial policy of The Mankind Quarterly do not feel as I do. Should the Editor’s own condemnation of what he terms ‘Aracist Ultrapolymorphists’ (on p. 32 of the first issue) not imply that he is a racist himself, then words have lost their meaning. (2) I assert that I could demonstrate the incorrectness not only of its presentation but of the scientific facts but also of the ‘facts’ themselves, if what has so far appeared in some of the contributions to The Mankind Quarterly did not lead me to suspect that anything critical which I might write on the subject would be wholly unacceptable to the Editor. (3) I again deny (in spite of what may seem an obvious temptation to do so) that I have applied the term ‘Nazi’ to his name or that of the journal and institutions with which he is associated. The identity, and aims, of such institutions are unknown to me, but I should be extremely interested to learn more about them.

Professor Gates, in his reply, informs me (1) that my resignation is of course accepted; (2) that the next number of The Mankind Quarterly will, if I wish, contain a statement that I have resigned from the Honorary Advisory Board because I disagree with its policy; and (3) that my name would never have been suggested by him as a member of the Board had he known of my ‘harrowing experience’—I take it as a political prisoner in Dachau— which naturally had such an effect on my ‘mental outlook.’

Here are my comments, once more in turn, on what Professor Gates says. (1) I should have reacted very sharply indeed if my resignation from the Honorary Advisory Board had not been accepted. (2) I am unable to agree that only a spineless, and inaccurate, statement that I had resigned from the Board because I disagree with its policy should be published in the next number of The Mankind Quarterly. As far as I am concerned, I was never con-