

## THE MIDDLE PALAEOOLITHIC CULTURE OF THE DECCAN, KARNATAK AND CENTRAL INDIA

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ABSTRACT :—The authors deal with the Middle Palaeolithic Culture of the Deccan, Karnatak and Central India

IT is only during the last three years that this culture-complex within the Indian Stone Age Cultures is beginning to be recognized. The reasons for the non-

3. Absence of any rigid parallel of European Mousterian industry which then alone represented the Middle Palaeolithic.

As a result of this, the early collections were, under the influence of European parallels, of hand-axes and cleavers only. All the other tools which were unstratified and of forms and techniques different from the European industries, were supposed to be late.

Only two sites in India—Kurnool in Andhra (Cammiade, 1930) and Kandivali near Bombay (Todd, 1939)—provided a succession of lithic industries. Tools from the former site were, in most cases, surface finds. In the latter site a long sequence of stratigraphic successions was found in a surprisingly thin (12 feet) deposit. In fact many recent observers tend to accept the deposit as belonging to a single period.

At both the sites, again, none of the industries could be dated, in the absence of any fossil evidence. However, the influence of these typographical studies was so great that when tools of similar types were first found at Nevasa in well-stratified gravels, Sankalia (1956) was inclined to regard them as Upper Palaeolithic. It is only when intensive studies were made by Banerjee of the tools from the Godavari-Pravara and the Krishna-Malaprabha-Ghataprabha valleys that their distinctive character emerged. This together with their stratigraphical position and palaeontological association have led us to put the industry under the "Middle Palaeolithic" culture-complex.



recognition of this phase of man's cultural development in India were several, but the most important ones were:

1. The collections made were on selective basis i.e. only those specimens which appealed to the collectors' discretion were taken and the rest rejected. Naturally and understandably, the collectors chose only those types of finds with which they were acquainted. In Europe cleavers were overlooked in many Acheulean sites due to this reason only.
2. Absence of stratigraphically documented *in situ* specimens. Most of the specimens were only surface finds.

Though the tools of the industry described below, have now been found in several river-valleys in the Deccan, Karnatak and Central India, the key sections hitherto are from the type site Nevasa after which Banerjee has termed the industry 'Nevasian'. Here at Nevasa at Locality I, a series of three gravels underlie a thick deposit of yellowish brown silt. At Localities V and VI these three gravels are separated from each other by deposits of yellowish clay. In the Nalla adjoining and running at right angles to Locality V, the lower gravels (alternatively called Gravel I) are capped unconformably by the topmost, comparatively loose, gravels (Gravel III).

At Bel-Pandhari and Kalegaon, on the Godavari, thick deposits of cemented gravel lie under deposits of yellow silt and loose gravel (Gravel III) which in turn is capped by a thick deposit of black soil. The lowermost depths of the cemented gravel-bed were under water, so that we could not ascertain whether a more pebbly gravel-bed lay underneath or not.

Similar sections, very often incomplete, may be seen at Poona and other sites in the valleys of the Deccan rivers. For instance, near Bund Garden, Poona, the brown silt lies directly over a three feet bed of well-cemented gravel (Gravel I). Both the middle (Gravel II) and the finer (Gravel III) gravels are missing in the section. These gravels must have been eroded, as loose deposits of coarse gravels containing Nevasian (Middle Palaeolithic) tools are found in the bed of the same river.

In Karnatak, Taminhal shows the classic site which represents the consolidated Krishna-Ghataprabha-Malaprabha section.

In Central India, Mandsaur and Nahargarh, on the Shivna have exposed two gravels and two silt deposits. The topmost silt at Mandsaur is covered by a thin layer of black soil, whereas at Nahargarh there is still another bed of gravel with angular pebbles. From these it would appear that the complete cycle of river deposits in the region is as follows:

1. Basal pebbly gravel, extremely well-cemented with thick calcareous encrustations (Gravel I).

2. Yellowish silt.
3. Coarse gravel, well-cemented (Gravel II).
4. Yellowish silt.
5. Loose gravel (Gravel III).
6. Yellowish or brownish silt.
7. Black soil.

The earliest tools—previously called Series I—consist of hand-axes and cleavers of the Chelles-Acheul types. These are made on trap or dolerite in the Deccan, trap or quartzite in Central India and quartzite in Karnatak. They occur mainly in the basal gravel (1) but rarely, as at Nevasa in Gravel II (3) or at the junction of the uppermost gravel (5) and brownish silt (6). The last mentioned position probably indicates redeposition.

On the other hand, tools of the Nevasian Industries—previously called Series II—consisting of scrapers, points, borers, flakes and cores on jasper, chert, agate or chalcedony normally, and in largest number, occur *in situ* in the Gravel II (3) and scarcely in Gravel I (1), but rarely in gravel III (5), and none at all in the uppermost yellowish silt. Thus the middle gravel (Gravel II) appears to be the true implementiferous horizon for Nevasian Industries<sup>1</sup>.

At Kalegaon, a large number of these tools was found in February 1956 in the coarse cemented gravel (Gravel II) in association with the fossil cranium and the mandible of a *Bos*. A full drawing of it was sent to Prof. F. E. Zeuner, who kindly identified it as probably that of *Bos namadicus* Falconer. This identification was later confirmed by Dr. M. R. Sahni and Mr. C. Tripathi, when they examined the original specimen at Calcutta. They also opined that it belonged to the Middle Pleistocene period. Thus the gravels and the associated tools have to be dated Middle-Late Pleistocene. This great antiquity is fully in conformity with the nature, the type and technique of the tools.

The large stratified collections from Nevasa, Bel-Pandhari and Kalegaon and from the sites on the Tapi (Khandesh) and on the Ghataprabha-Karnatak—nearly 2,000 specimens—consist of the following

<sup>1</sup>This view has now been confirmed by a re-examination of Nevasa and Bel-Pandhari.



FIG. 1—Section showing series I tools, *in situ* at Mandasaur



FIG. 2—Section at Nahargarh (see text).

types of tools. (The following percentage is based on the finds from Nevasa, Bel-Pandhari and Kalegaon):—

I. Points		
(a) Simple.	}	16%
(b) Tanged		
II. Scrapers	}	57 %
(a) Side		
(b) End		
(c) Hollow		
(d) Round		
(e) Point-shaped		
III. Borers .. ..		25 %
IV. Scraper-Borers ..		2 %

Out of the total collection only about a fifth covers the various tool-types and a fourth is utilized flakes and cores. The scrapers predominate among the tool types.

With regard to the technique, Banerjee's studies reveal that:

1. The flakes were removed from the core by the Acheulean soft cylinderhammer technique.
2. Many specimens show bifaceted platform. This character can also be seen in the Acheulean hand-axes and cleavers.
3. No tool was fashioned before the flake was detached from the core.
4. The authors of these industries did not have mastery over the technique of retouching. Naturally therefore a number of flakes was produced and only those which could be fashioned into a tool with minimum retouches, were chosen.
5. It contains scraper types which occur also in the stratigraphically and typologically earlier industry. Borers show a gradual development from their earlier proto-types in the Acheulean industry.

6. All the tool-types suggest that in the final stage most of these were to be hafted before being used.

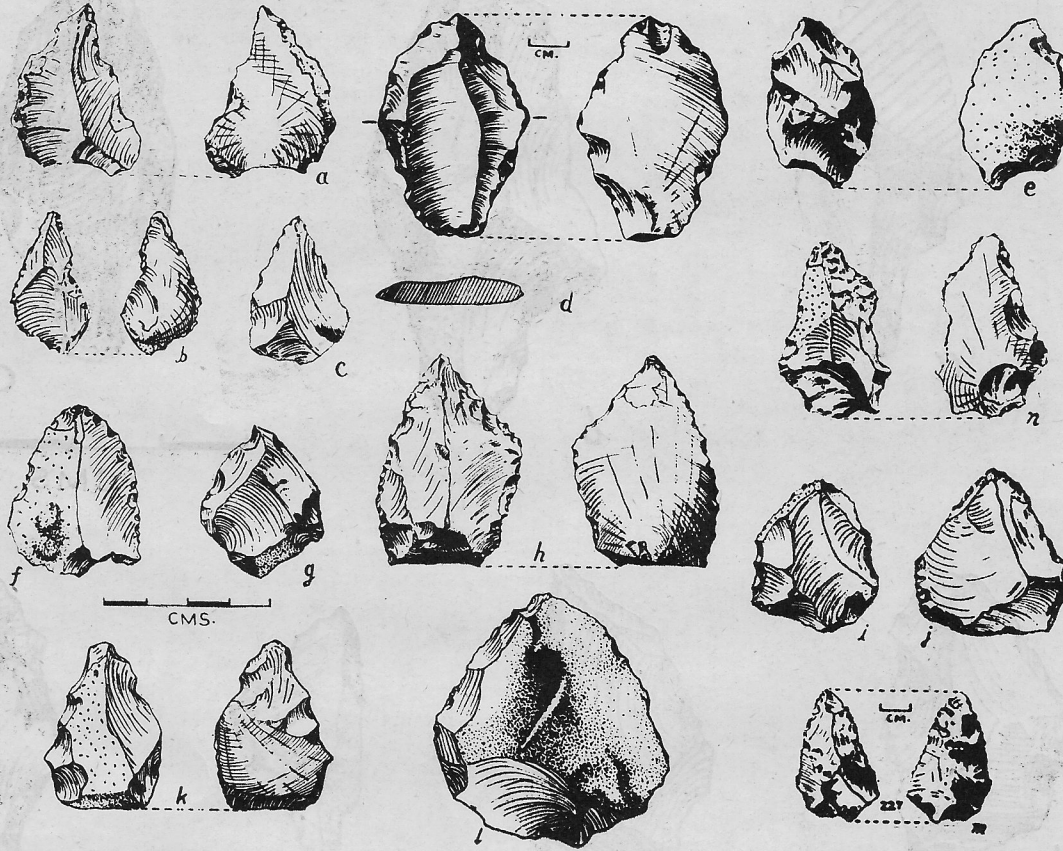
Thus the genetic relationship between the Nevasian and the Acheulean phase of the Chelles-Acheul culture of the region is well manifested both stratigraphically and technologically, and we reach the inevitable conclusion that Nevasian is a derivative of the Acheulean culture. In fact, but for the difference in the raw material and presence of tool types like simple and tanged (recalling Aterian tanged points) points, borers and a few flake blades this industry could have been mistaken for a by-product of the Acheulean Industries

Among the surface collections, particularly from Poona are a few true burins. These are on translucent chalcedony. None of these are, however, found in the stratified deposits<sup>1</sup>. Nor are they found in the Chalcolithic industries, the microliths of which are exclusively on chalcedony and contain parallel-sided flakes, lunates, pen-knife blades, a few triangles and, trapezes. Some of the other tool-types found in association with the burins are also found in many sites in the stratified deposits of Gravel III. These burins thus appear to belong to a period preceding the Chalcolithic and succeeding the Nevasian tools discussed in the paper. In view of the stratigraphic position this period—as in Europe—might provisionally be called "Upper Palaeolithic".

#### REFERENCES

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- SANKALIA, H. D., 1956, Fossil Animals and Palaeolithic tools from the Pravara Basin at Nevasa, *Ancient India*, No. 12.
- TODD, K. R. U., 1939, Palaeolithic Industries of Bombay, *JRAI*, Vol. LXIV.

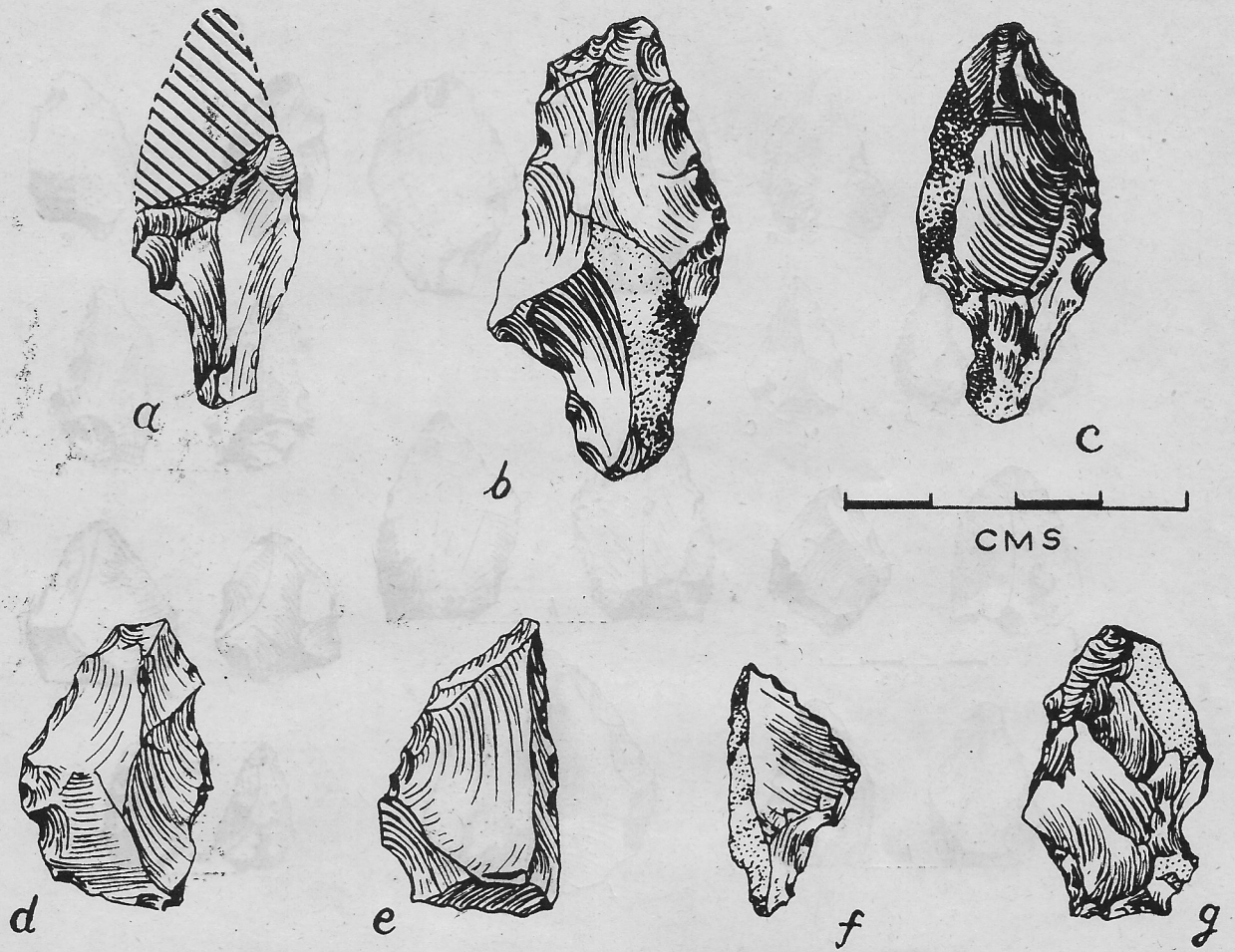
<sup>1</sup> Recent finds, however, show the presence of a few burins.



Text-fig. 1

NEVASIAN POINTS FROM MAHARASTRA

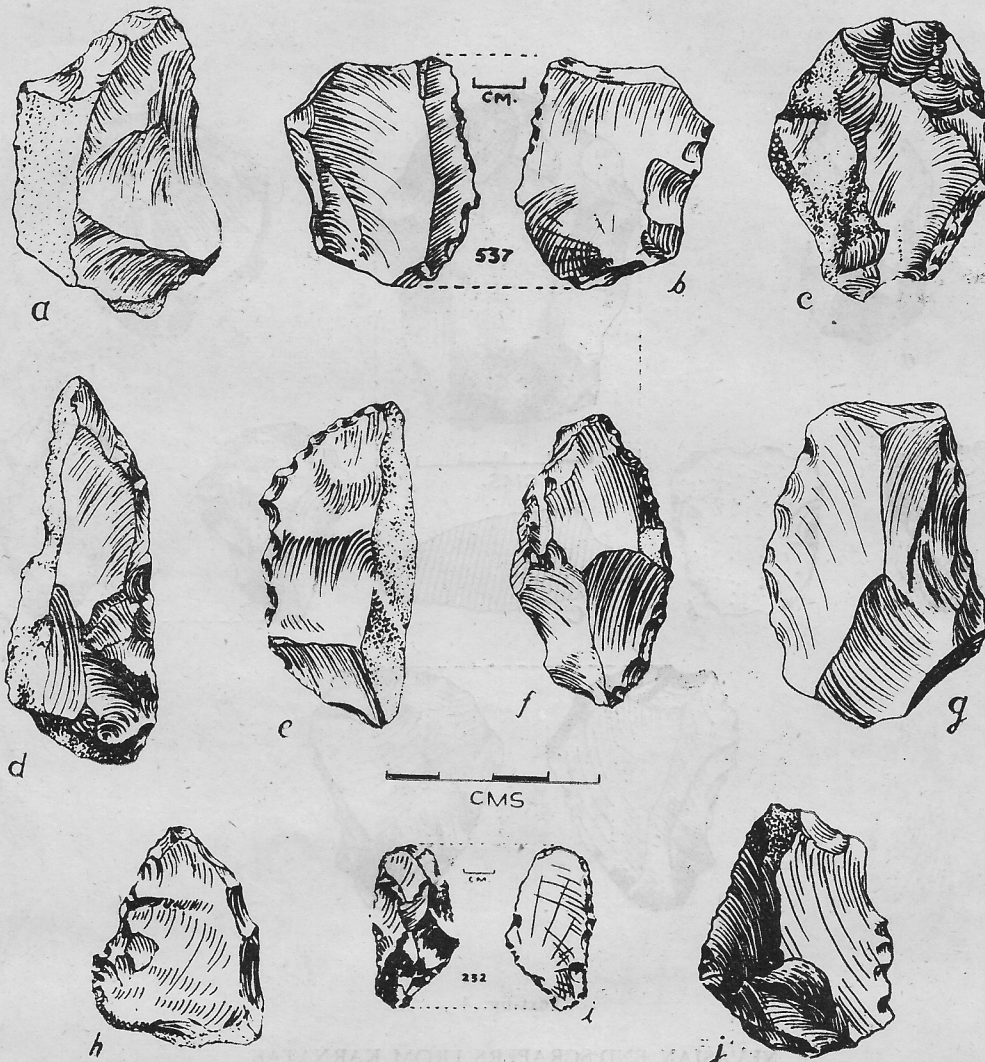
NOTE THE REMOVAL OF SMALL FLAKES AT THE BASE TO FACILITATE HAFTING



Text-fig. 2

NEVASIAN TANGED POINTS FROM MAHARASTRA

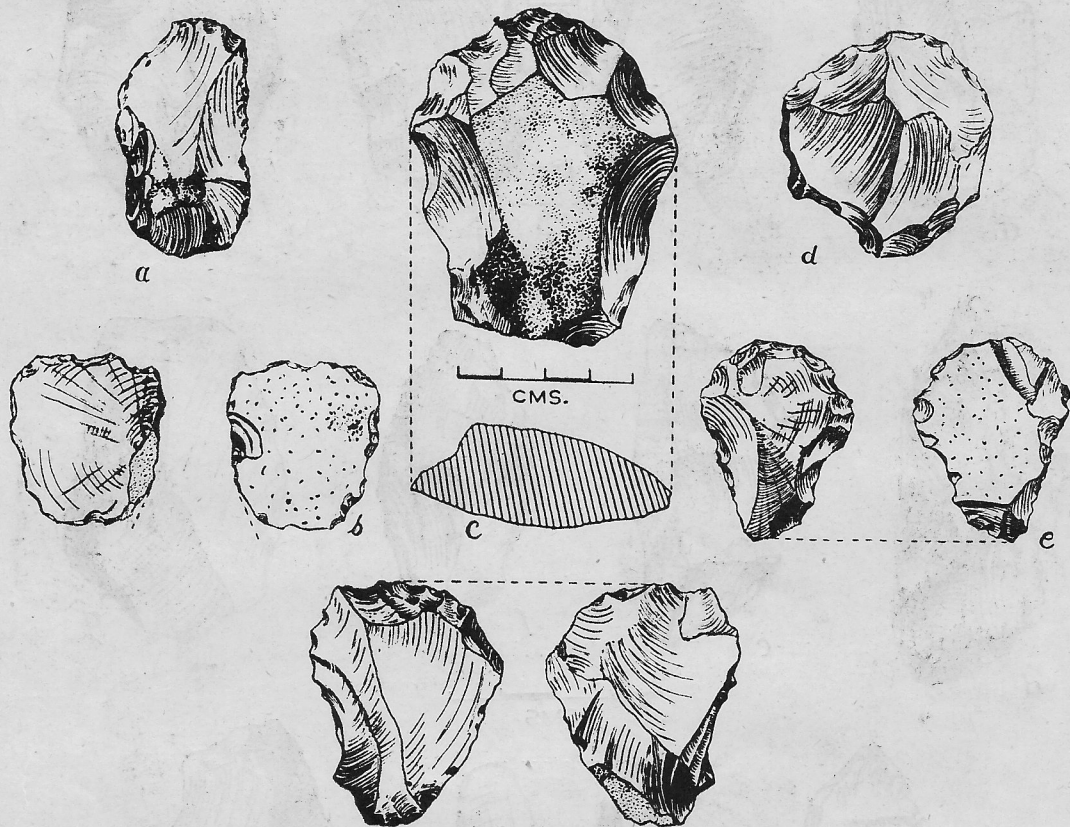
FIGS. *d*, *e* AND *g* SHOW STAGES OF MANUFACTURE



Text-fig. 3

NEVASIAN SIDE SCRAPERS FROM MAHARASTRA]

NOTE THE MORPHOLOGICAL SIMILARITIES OF FIGS. e AND f WITH MOUSTERIAN SIDE SCRAPERS

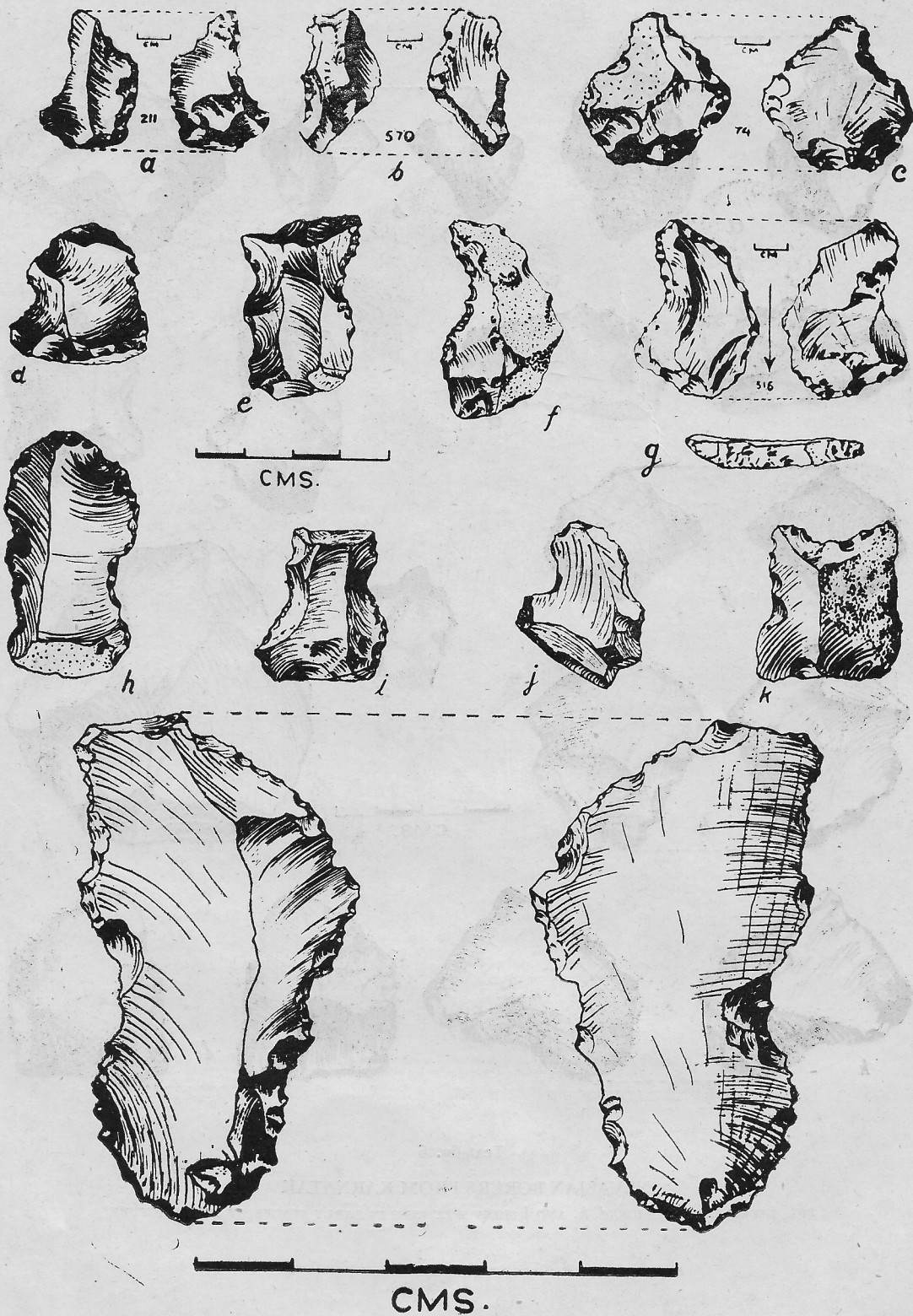


Text-fig. 4

## NEVASIAN END SCRAPERS FROM KARNATAK

FIGS. *c*, *e* AND *f* SHOW THE ONLY STANDARDISED TYPE

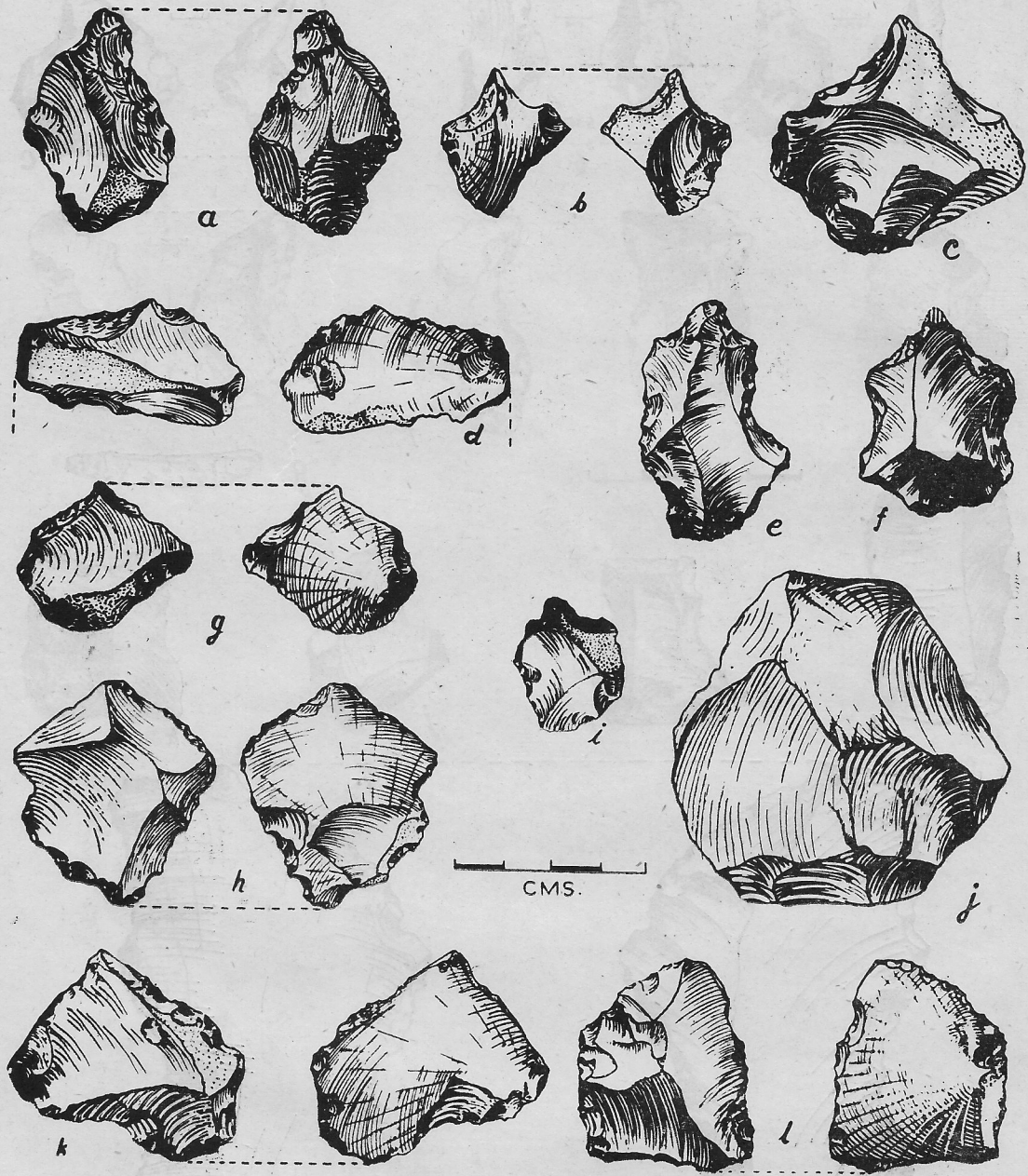




Text-fig. 5

NEVASIAN HOLLOW SCRAPERS FROM MAHARASTRA

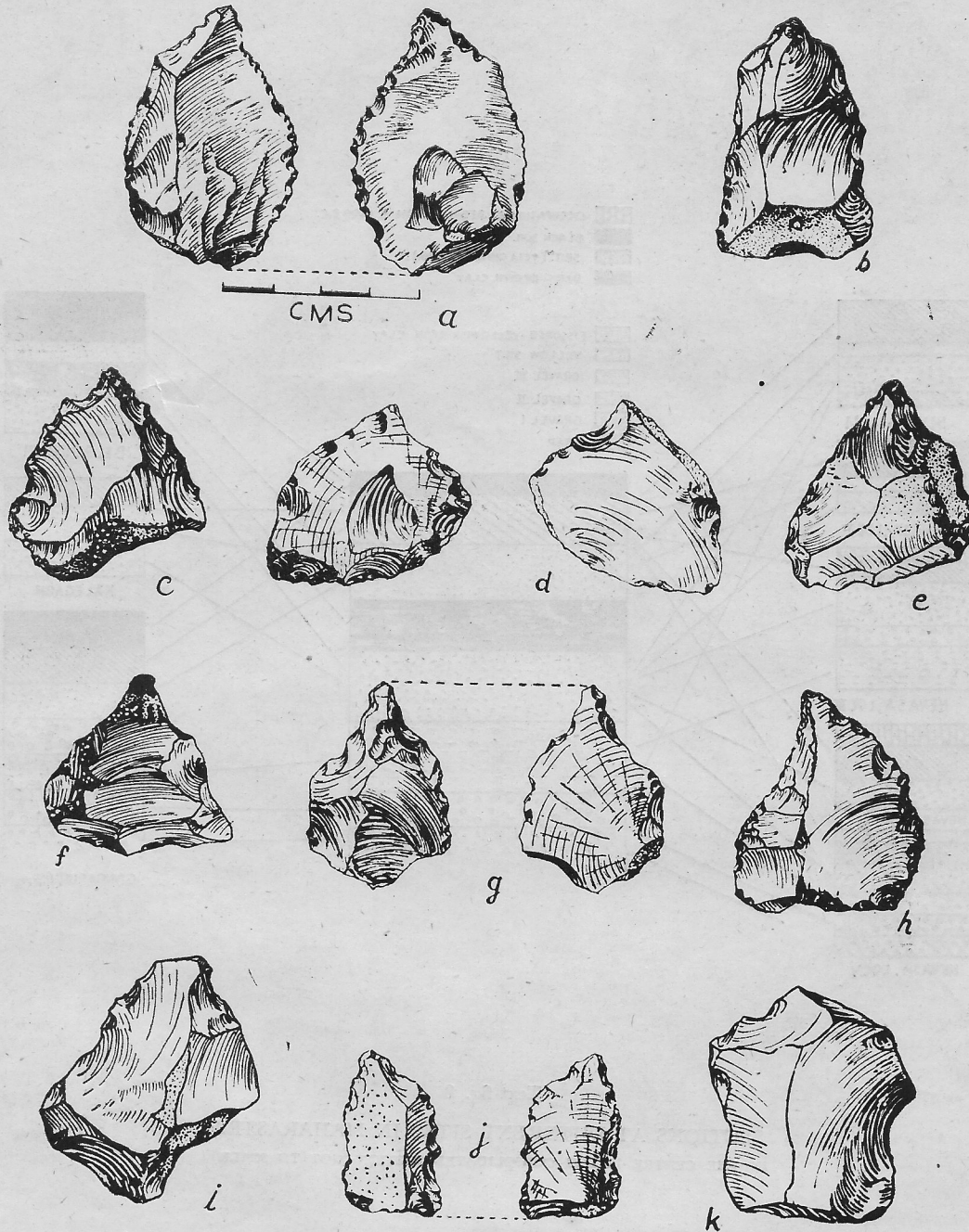
FIGS. h AND l SHOW SPECIMEN FLAKE BLADES



Text-fig. 6

## NEVASIAN BORERS FROM KARNATAK

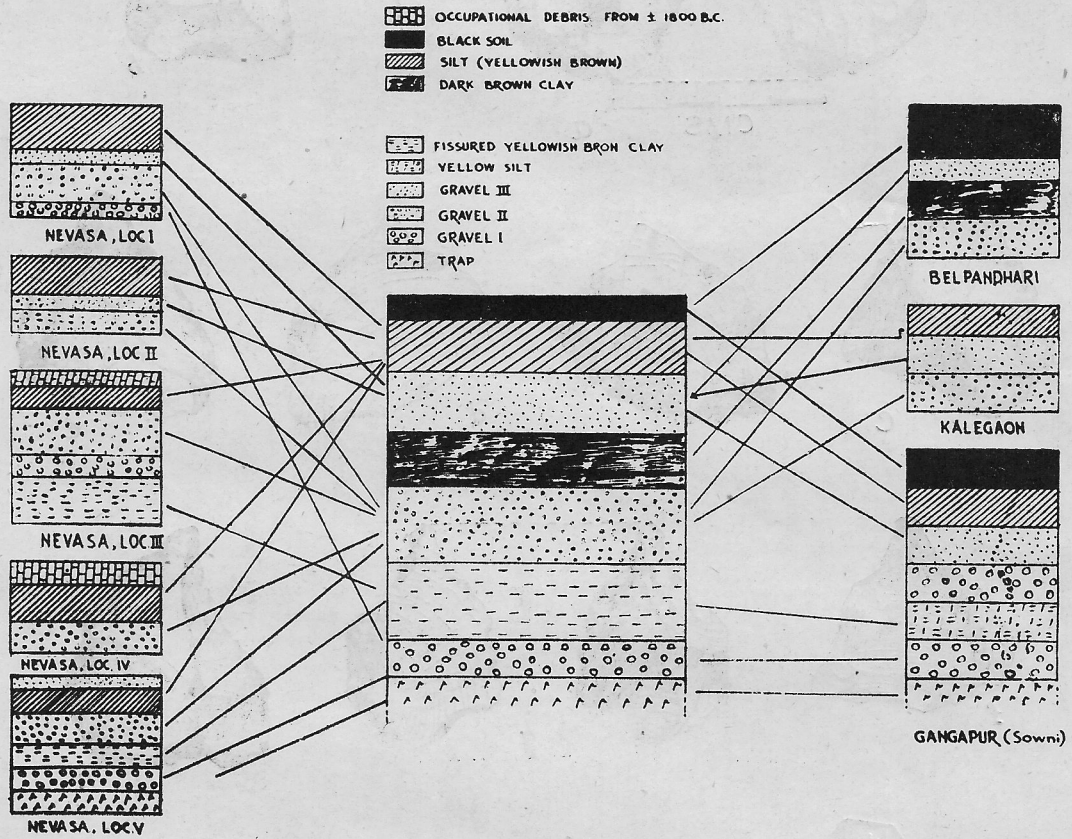
FIG. *j* IS OF A CORE. FIGS. *d*, *h*, AND *k* SHOW SPECIMENS IN EARLY STAGES OF MANUFACTURE



Text-fig. 7

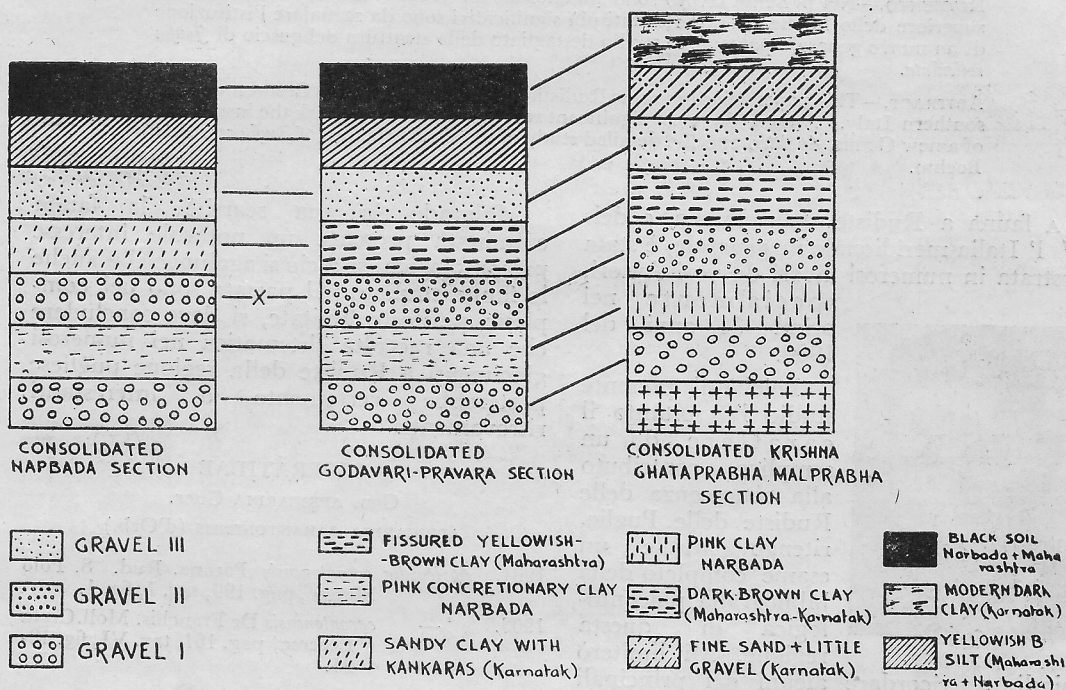
NEVASIAN BORERS FROM KARNATAK

FIG. *h* SHOWS HOW THE POINTED END OF FLAKES HAS BEEN EXPLOITED FOR THE MANUFACTURE



Text-fig. 8

SECTIONS AT DIFFERENT SITES IN MAHARASTRA  
 IN THE CENTRE IS THE CONSOLIDATED SECTION (NOT TO SCALE)



Text-fig. 9

CONSOLIDATED SECTIONS IN CENTRAL INDIA, MAHARASTRA AND KARNATAK

[ NOT TO SCALE ]