

## GREECE

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The most characteristic feature of Palaeolithic Research in Greece in the past five years has been the large number of survey projects; trial trenches on several of the ensued locations provided a first glimpse into the archaeological information to be extracted from them by more intense research.

As a result, several sites or locations have been found since 2005, that provided finds attributed to the Lower and Middle Palaeolithic, a few to the Upper Palaeolithic and several more to the Mesolithic.

The principal sites and regions mentioned in the text are shown in fig. 1.

### Surveys – Excavations

The most favoured region proved to be that of the island of **Crete**; until recently considered devoid of traces of human occupation prior to the Neolithic, Crete, along with the smaller island of **Gavdos** to its south-west, yielded a considerable number of find spots of palaeolithic artefacts. (Kopaca & Matzanas 2009; Mortensen 2008; Strasser *et al.* 2010). The finds cover the entire span of the period, from Early Palaeolithic to Late Upper Palaeolithic and even to the Mesolithic. These discoveries raise the issues of human population movement and communication in this part of the Mediterranean Sea in Early Prehistory.

Middle Palaeolithic artefacts were recovered during trial excavations on a natural section in the Korrision lagoon, **Kerkyra (Corfu)** (Darlas *et al.* 2007). Similar finds from the island have been reported in the 60's by Sordinas (Sordinas 1969) who had also located and excavated the UPL Grava shelter and the Mesolithic open-air site of Sidari.

**Kokkinopilos**, Epirus, NW Greece: new bifaces were located in the Palaeolithic site of Kokkinopilos (Tourloukis 2009).

**Western Macedonia Palaeolithic Survey**: undertaken by the Ephoreia of Palaeoanthropology - Spelaeology of Southern Greece and the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, it was conducted on the river terraces of Aliakmon river in an area between Palaiokastros, Amygdalea and Grevena. The pro-

ject located 48 fossil specimens dated to the Late Pliocene-Early Pleistocene and twenty two lithic artefacts of mostly Pleistocene date (Middle and Upper Palaeolithic) (Harvati *et al.* 2008).

**Rapsaioi**, district of Ioannina, **Epirus**. An open-air site was located by E. Adam a few kilometres southwest of Ioannina and the Kastritsa cave, in the village of Rapsaioi. A total of 3.356 stone artefacts were collected from fields with a red-earth substratum in a low altitude area surrounded by limestone hillocks. The majority of the artefacts are un-patinated and their technomorphological features (fig. 2) assign them to the Middle Palaeolithic. The lack of blade technology both on the numerous cores and on the blanks themselves is notable; on the other hand a small number of artefacts exhibit sickle-gloss and NL-type retouch. Research is still under way and publication pending.

The **Kephalonia – Livatho Valley Project** (2001-2008), undertaken by the Irish Institute of Hellenic Studies at Athens concentrates on the multi-period study of an area known for its prehistoric and classical remains. The Project reports mention the collection of thousands of artefacts dating from the Palaeolithic to the present day, but no more information is available on them for the time being.

**Western Macedonia, District of Grevena, Samarina region**: the project, initiated in 2002 by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, covers the high-altitude Pindus mountain range in order to find evidence for prehistoric human activity. So far hundreds of sites have been discovered up to an altitude of around 2100 m asl.; most are attributed to the Middle Palaeolithic but they reach as recently as the Bronze Age (although the UPL component is minimal). In 2010 good-quality chert outcrops were spotted with evidence of exploitation in the Palaeolithic period. The location of these high altitude Mousterian sites is certainly of great value when considering human behaviour and raw material circulation in the area (Efstratiou *et al.* 2011).

In the **Mani Peninsula** (central southern Peloponnese), a number of caves/rockhelters with Pleistocene deposits were located; test pits in some of them provided a substantial number of Upper Palaeolithic stone artefacts. The finds cover the entire span of the Upper Palaeolithic; their majority is attributed to the



Figure 1 – Principal sites mentioned in the text

Gravettian-Epigravettian, with at least one “industry” attributable to the Aurignacian (Darlas & Psathi 2008). The evidence is of considerable importance, bearing in mind the remaining archaeological record of the Peloponnese peninsula (Koumouzelis *et al.* 2001, 2003).

The region of **Kastoria**: Galanidou reports on Upper Palaeolithic stone artefacts in the Pandazopoulos collection. The artefacts are reported as having been collected in the wider Kastoria region (Γαλανίδου 2010).

The **Pylos Regional Archaeological Project** conducted in the district of Messenia in SW Peloponnese, located only two Palaeolithic sites and two possible Upper Palaeolithic artefacts (Parkinson & Cherry 2010).



Figure 2 – Rapsaioi, Epirus

The **Thesprotia Expedition**, undertaken by the Finnish Institute at Athens in the region of Thesprotia, NW Greece between 2003 and 2010, aimed at addressing questions on Pleistocene/Holocene human activity in the area through the reappraisal of already known sites and the location of new data. In the course of the project a number of historical finds and sites were located, while the red-earth Palaeolithic sites of Karvounari and Morfi were re-visited. More importantly, a new site was located in the Kokytos valley, north of Karvounari. The site yielded an assemblage of 534 artefacts that are attributed on the basis of morphological and technological criteria to the Mesolithic (Tourloukis & Palli 2009).

Attiki, **Anonymo cave at Keratsini**: The cave lies on mount Aegaleo, in Attica. A rescue excavation by the Ephoreia of Palaeoanthropology - Spelaeology of Southern Greece located, under the Neolithic occupation layers, Pleistocene deposits; the finds are broadly assigned to the Late Upper Palaeolithic and possibly the Mesolithic; no proper data are available on them for the time being (Μαυρίδης & Κορμαζοπούλου 2009).

**Lemnos island**, eastern Aegean. The site was accidentally located in 2005; it’s an open air site on sand dunes on the eastern coast of Lemnos, and is currently being excavated (fig. 3) by prof. N. Estratiou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) and an international team of experts. So far the site has yielded thousands of stone artefacts made mostly on local materials (e.g. andesite, jasper) and manufactured on the spot. Lunates and end-scrapers dominate the assemblage. The industries are attributed to the end of the Pleistocene (*ca.* 12.000 BP), to a Final Palaeolithic/Epigravettian phase, without ruling out the possibility of a Mesolithic phase, too (Nikos Efstratiou, personal communication 2011).

## Publications

Two of the volumes of the Proceedings of the XV World Congress (Lisbon, 4-9 September 2006) are of relevance to the Greek Palaeolithic: volume 17 (Darlas & Mihailovic, 2008) and volume 3 (Djidjian *et al.*, 2009).

Research in Epirus still features abundantly in the literature through the publication of articles on faunal remains (Kotjabopoulou 2008; Kotjabopoulou & Kafantzis 2008) and on spatial analysis (Bailey & Galanidou 2009) of Upper Palaeolithic sites; the Mesolithic industries from Sidari are being re-examined by Adam (Adam 2007), and the publication of a doctorate

thesis adds new and much needed information on the Early and Middle Palaeolithic record of the region (Tourloukis 2010).

Of great interest is the recent publication of the results of the research conducted in Klissoura Cave 1 (Upper Palaeolithic) in NE Peloponnese by an international team led by prof. J. Kozłowski in cooperation with the Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism (see *Eurasian Prehistory* 7:2, 2010).

Several articles reviewing aspects of Stone Age Research in Greece have been published in the course of the past five years. Harvati *et al.* evaluate the palaeoanthropological record (Harvati *et al.* 2009), Adam is assessing the information on the Gravettian



Figure 3 – Excavation locus in Lemnos

in Greece (Adam 2007a) and the issue of territoriality in the Greek Upper Palaeolithic record (Adam 2009), while Runnels and Sampson are addressing issues of the Mesolithic record (Runnels 2009; Sampson 2008).

## Site and Museum management

*Theopetra cave, Kalabaka, District of Trikala, Western Thessaly:* the site was been opened to the public in October 2010. A visitor's track has been installed in the cave in the form of a raised corridor that runs parallel to the cave walls and allows the visitor to view the important features of the Palaeolithic-to-Neolithic sequence through glass floors (see relevant videos). A similar scheme has been suggested for Franchthi cave in the Argolid.

Last but not least, the **re-exhibition** of the collections of the Archaeological **Museum of Ioannina** has been completed. The museum re-opened to the public in November 2008. In its five exhibition halls it portrays human activity in Epirus from Palaeolithic to Late Roman times. Videos, posters and touch-screens complete the setting. Of particular importance is the Palaeolithic case (fig. 4) that exhibits stone and organic artefacts along with faunal remains from the major sites in Epirus discovered by the Cambridge teams in the 1960's and 1980's and the American School in the late 1990's (Adam 2008, in Greek). The

exhibition is accompanied by a coffee-table album with papers by the organisers on major aspects of past human activity in Epirus.



Figure 4 – Ioannina Museum. The new UPL show case

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