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Macedonia, situated in the far south-east of Europe, and at the actual and civilisational cross-roads, has for millenniums been densely populated. These parts have been exposed to Near Eastern and Aegean cultural influence since the Neolithic and the Bronze Age and there actually are many archaeological sites discoveries from Mycaenean period, the Iron Age, the times of the Aegean migrations, Paionian rulers, Macedonian kings, Rome, Byzantium...

Having so many other mobile and immobile archaeological objects, very few archaeologists ever thought of organizing Paleolithic excavations. So, Paleolith has never been a subject of serious archaeological excavations. The existence of the remains of the Paleolithic period has often been ignored or sometimes even denied. But even so, some Paleolithic artefacts have been found, though not during archaeological excavations, but accidentally or as a part of paleontological researches and the Paleolithic objects found have, consequently, been treated as marginal.

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In this report, I will try to give a short, but comprehensive survey of the Paleolith in the Republic of Macedonia, basing it on actual findings and personal research, but avoiding extensive analysis and polemics. The first Paleolithic artefacts in this part of the world has been found near Bitola (south-west Macedonia) during the I World War by a French archaeologist - Etien Patte, at the time soldier on his way home from the Salonica Front. According to him, that was an atypical artefact, a pocket tool, dull-edged on one, and sharpened on the other side, probably by vertical blows technique. The article is made of white quartzite with red-green stripes, rounded at the edges which proves its relatively short rolling in the water. Its dimensions are height 9, width 8 and fat 4 cm (Drawing No. 1). The

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French archaeologist says that atypical tools like these are common for the older Paleolithic stages (shelen, ashelen, musterien). S. Brodar agrees that this is an atypical artefact and in defining its index, qualifies it as a product of ashelen culture.

But, if we study the object carefully and try to reconstruct its original look, we will easily find out that we are not dealing with an atypical tool, but, on the contrary, with a characteristic ashelen hand wedge that has, in the course of time, lost its original shape (Drawing No. 2).

The same author mentions another artefact, probably a scraper, very manour and crude, made of white quartzite, found a few kilometres south of the previous one. There are no details about this object. These two artefacts are the first ones registered and up to now the oldest Paleolithic objects found on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia. Both artefacts a part of University Collections of Etien Pate in Poatien, France.

Between 1955-1965 the Paleontological Department of the Museum of the Natural History of Skopje, undertook a systematical search of the caves of Makaroec and Makaroec 2. Both caves are situated at 300 m. above sea level, on the left bank of the Babuna River valley (The Babuna River being the right tributary of the Vardar River), south-west of Titov Veles, Central Macedonia. The Makarovec cave is 80 m. long and has two entrances. The main one is 6 m. high, 8,7 m. wide. The difference in altitude between the entrance and the exit is -8,5 m. and the cave ends in a small lake. This is the site where more than 30 undamaged and damaged cave bear (*ursus spaeleus*) skeletons and the few stone and bone artefacts have been found. We only have the crafts of these artefacts. The artefacts themselves are not in Macedonia. Here is their description:

**No. 1** - A flint - yellow-red massive flat with the polished base and roughly cut in the upper part. Its dimensions are high 7,8 cm., width 7,6 cm. and fat 5 cm. (Drawing No. 3a).

**No. 2** - A flint tool flat knife or scraper the lower part is flattened and polished and the upper part semi circular and sharpened (Drawing



No. 3b). The edges are also sharpened and cogged. Its dimensions are: high 3,8 cm., width 2,8 cm., fat 0,8 cm.

**No. 3** - A knife made from white quartzite with night yellow reflections. There is an indication of triangular form in it. The top is polished and the bottom broader and dull. The edges are well sharpened and cogged by short lateral blows. Its dimensions are: high 3,1 cm., width 2,2 cm., fat 1,1 cm. (Drawing No. 3c).

**No. 4** - A flint tool - brown with grey reflections. Irregular, triangular form, pointed and polished at the top, with rough structure in the lower part. Its dimensions are: high 5,3 cm. width 2,9 cm., fat 1,9 cm. (Drawing No. 3d).

**No. 5** - A flint tool - a knife made in pyramidal form. It looks very much like the older clactonian flints. The lower part is flat but it gradually becomes pointed toward the top. Its dimensions are: high 2,6 cm. width 2,0 cm., fat 1,6 cm. (Drawing No. 3e).

During the search of the cave the paleontologists have found some bone artefacts, but as they have not seemed so important at the time, they were neither kept, nor at least described in detail. The only one who has made a note about them was Risto Garevski (a paleontologist), the head of the project. He wrote that they were different in form: some were buttons, shaped, some were like awls and blades, and some like scrapers. Most of these artefacts were made from tubular bones (humerus and femurs) of cave bears. It is not clear if these "artefacts" were shaped naturally by rolling in the water, or were they made by the hand of Paleolithic man.

The mentioned artefacts could, by their stratigraphic and typological features be defined as Aurignac Culture, specially as they are very similar to Aurignac findings of the Pinios River, (Greece), Crvena Stjena (Montenegro) and particularly the cave of Potocka Zjalka (Slovenia).

Taking everything we already said into consideration and beeping in mind a certain analogy with site Potocka Zjalka (the same, partly burnt parts of cave bear bones), we could draw a conclusion that the Makaroec cave, as well as the Slovenian site has not been



continuously populated. It has rather, been periodically occupied as a kind of a hunting post for the hunters of the cave bears.

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Those were all the Paleolithic objects found up to now on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia. There are some indications that there might be more - if there are remains of the cave bears, it is very likely to expect the cultural remains of the contemporary humans. So, the following locations might be potential archaeological sites: the Jaorec cave near Ohrid (West Macedonia); the upper Treska River (West Macedonia); the region of Kratovo-Zletovo (East Macedonia)... Besides there are numerous and excellent other cave shelters and good hunting and fishing facilities that could have been used by the Paleolithic people.

And finally, I would like to mention a few archaeological Paleolithic sites in the regions surrounding Republic of Macedonia: Crvena Stjena (Montenegro); south-east Serbia; Gajtan and Hara (Albania); Tenekian Obor, Kremenite, Kremenlivata Dolina (Bulgaria) and the Petralona cave (where the remains of Neanderthals have been found), as well as Polikastro localities north-west of Olimp, Batilakos north-west of Thessaloniki, the Pinios valley and many other localities in the Greek part of Macedonia.

All that has been said here, proves that the live in the Paleolithic Period here, might have been as active and lively as in later periods.



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