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Vydává: Archeologický ústav AV ČR Brno
Královopolská 147, 612 00 Brno
E-mail: ps@isibrno.cz

Odpovědný redaktor: PhDr. Jaroslav Tejral, DrSc

Redakce a příprava pro tisk: Mgr. Balázs Komoróczy, Ing. Petr Škrdla,
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**THE PROJECT ON „PATTERNS OF INTERACTION BETWEEN ANATOLIA
AND SOUTHEAST CENTRAL EUROPE
FROM THE PALEOLITHIC TO THE EARLY NEOLITHIC“**

In 1998, the American Research Institute in Turkey sponsored a research project aimed to analyse in a comparative manner the Paleolithic and Early Neolithic industries of Anatolia. This project is correlated with actual research on the EUP site of Stránská skála in a broader, Eurasian context (report in this volume). The nature of the project required the study of, first, the lithic collections from recent excavations in Turkey, and, second, the sites themselves. Therefore, the study was realised in the frame of two stays, from Jan. 28 to Feb. 25, 1998, and from May 6 to May 29, 1998. The winter stay was reserved for work with the lithic collections in the care of the Universities of Istanbul and Ankara and in libraries, whereas the spring stay was to visit the sites in field. I would like to acknowledge kind help of a number of Turkish colleagues, especially Mehmet Özdoğan, Given Arsebük and Nur Balkan-Atli at the Istanbul university, and Isin Yalcinkaya and members of her team at the Ankara university.

The observations

Most of the Anatolian territory is covered by the highlands and plateaus, obviously unfavourable for human survival during the coldest peaks of the Pleistocene period. Karst and caves are present throughout the territory, but, due to erosion or to ancient human activities (Cevlik area), the fossiliferous Pleistocene cave fillings are not always available - all the more important, then, are the caves with well-preserved evidence. The territory provides important sources of lithic raw materials (cherts, radiolarite, obsidian, quartzites) and, as elsewhere, the Lower and Middle Paleolithic sites usually favoured the materials from the direct vicinity, whereas with the Epipaleolithic begins limited lithic material transports (e.g. obsidian at Öküzini). Most of the sites are located in the relatively low areas in the southeast, in the Marmara region, or elsewhere along the sea-coasts. Paleolithic sites in the highland interior are dispersed in a more singular and isolated pattern, where individual site-clusters may also be influenced by the vicinity of important research centers (Ankara region). Thus, by its geographic nature, Anatolia represents not only a connecting link between Asia and Europe, but, during the cold periods, an important barrier to cross-cultural contacts.

Paleolithic surveys, initiated by I.K. Kökten, E. Bostancı, S.A. Kansu, and other pioneers, are actually being continued by the present generation of Turkish archaeologists. Recently, Harmankaya and Tanindi (1996) list a total of 210 Paleolithic sites, of which 86 are attributed to the Lower Paleolithic, 98 to the Middle Paleolithic, 59 to the Upper Paleolithic and 32 to the Epipaleolithic. Harmankaya et al. (1997) also add 55 Aceramic Neolithic sites. However, not only the numbers of sites per period, but also their quality, reflect the settlement dynamics in Anatolia. The majority of Paleolithic collections originates either from surface surveys or from earlier test trenches in caves, where the cultural classification is based almost exclusively on techno/typological analyses and analogies. Three sites, all of them caves excavated recently and in a complex manner, are of overregional importance: Yarımburgaz for the Lower Paleolithic (Arsebük 1998), Öküzini for the Epipaleolithic (Yalcinkaya et al. 1995), and, especially, the multicultural site of Karain (Yalcinkaya et al. 1992). Specifically, Anatolia provides a series of unique and spectacular Aceramic Neolithic sites of the *höyük* type (Özdoğan 1995).

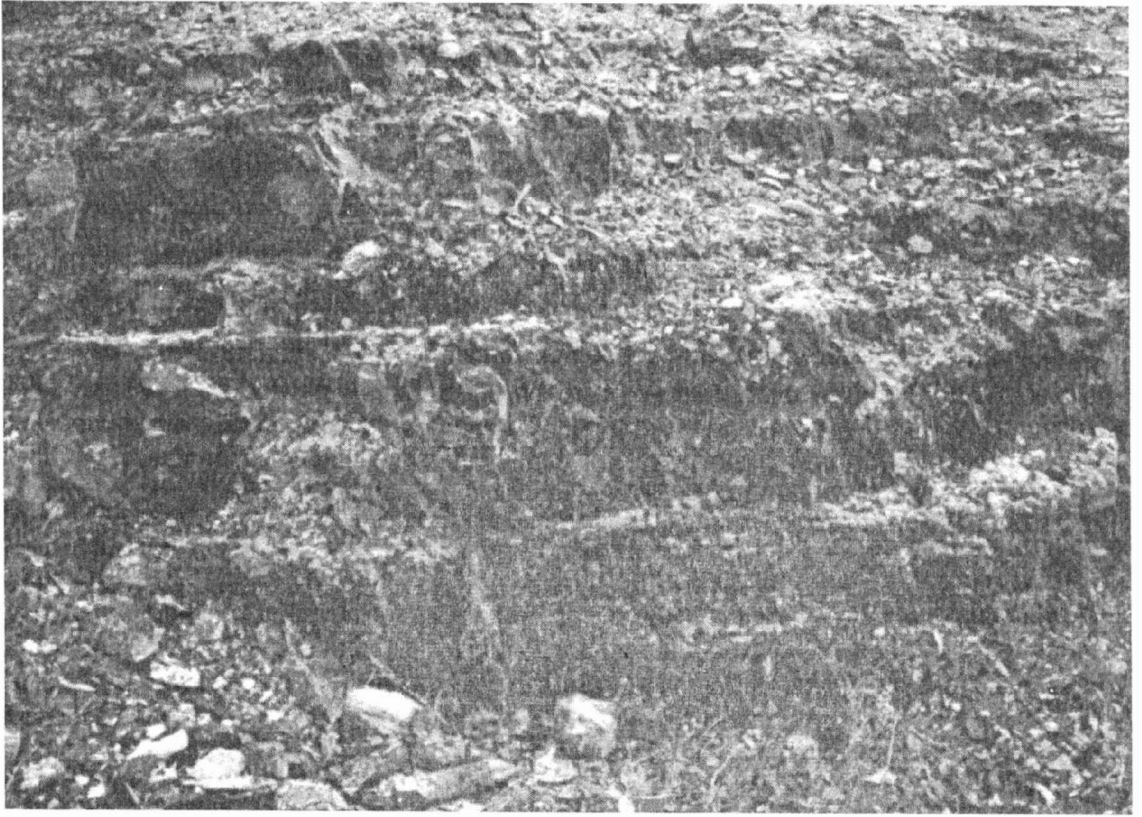


Fig. 1. Obsidian outcrops at Kaletepe, between Göllü Dag and Erdis Dag, Cappadocia

Seen from a spatio-temporal perspective, the assemblage from Yarimburgaz in Thrace seems to be unique in Turkey, both by its age and nature of the artifacts. As recognized by Arsebük (1998), the lithic implements may be comparable to several small-dimensional Middle Pleistocene assemblages of Europe (Vértésszölös, Bilzingsleben, Arago...) and represents thus a missing link between the early occupations of the Near East and Europe. The classical Acheulian sites, on the other hand, lie concentrated in the eastern and southeastern part of Anatolia (most typically in the Gaziantep and Urfa regions; Yalcinkaya 1981) directly attached to the Acheulian zone expanding from North Africa through the Levant to Transcaucasia. Approaching central and western Anatolia, the Acheulian finds become more scarce (cf. the new finds in the area of Cappadocian obsidian sources, or single finds of bifaces from the Bosphorus region). This geographic pattern mirrors, in fact, the site distribution in Europe, where density of the Acheulian finds radically decreases from the south and west (Italy, Spain, France, Germany) towards the east (Central Europe, Balkans).

The Middle Paleolithic clearly represents one of the key periods in the hunter-gatherer past of Anatolia. Especially the multilayer site of Karain (Yalcinkaya et al. 1992) represents, on a long-term scale, the connecting site between Middle Paleolithic settlement concentrations in the caves of the Levant, Transcaucasia and Balkans. Examination of the lithic industries, throughout the chronological development, confirms the view that the typology slightly differs from most of the Levantine sites, not only by an increased number of retouched blades, pointed blades, symmetrical and asymmetrical points and limaces, but also by denticulates and pointed denticulates, recalling the Tayac and Quinson points of the western Mediterranean. Compared to the Middle Paleolithic of the Balkans, Crimea and Transcaucasia, flat surface retouching seems less frequent or absent both at Karain and in the Levant (the bifaces at Karain may belong to an earlier, Acheulian stage). In general, the Karain assemblages seem to fit, as a specific member, into the mosaic of Middle Paleolithic variability in Europe and the Near East.

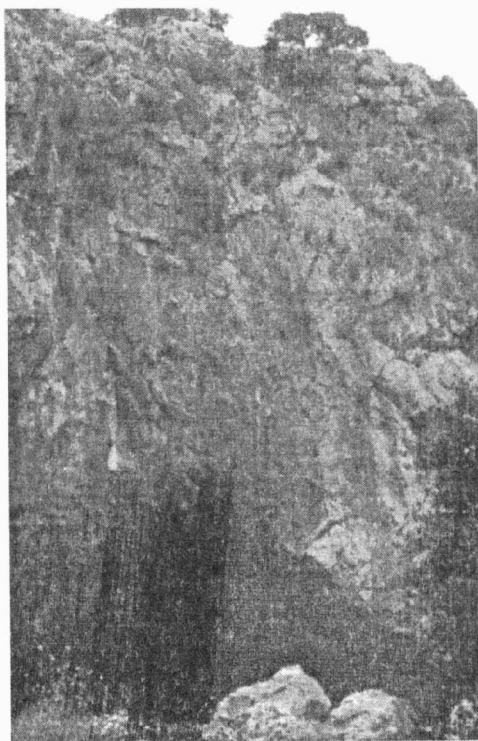


Fig. 2. Entrance to the Karain Cave

Despite the number of Upper Paleolithic sites recorded by Harmankaya and Tanindi (1996), I was unable to record industries directly comparable to the typical Aurignacian of Europe and the Levant, nor to the Gravettian of Europe and Transcaucasia. However, important Early Upper Paleolithic industries seem to be concentrated in the Hatay region (Bostanci 1973, Harmankaya - Tanindi 1996). Morphologically, some of these industries (Merdivenli, Tikali, Ucagizli Caves) seem to correspond to the transitional Levallois-leptolithic industries, as documented around 40,000 B.P. both in the Near East (Boker Tachtit) and in Southeast Central Europe (Temnata Cave, Bohunice, Stránská skála...). Locations of these sites, grouped in discrete regional clusters rather than covering larger areas, and their techno/typological comparisons, may be important for the ongoing project of Stránská skála excavation in Moravia, and for understanding Upper Paleolithic origins in Europe.

In addition, the Hatay region provided later Upper Paleolithic industries, at Ucagizli and Kanal Caves (Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara; Minzoni-Deroche 1993; Harmankaya - Tanindi 1996), with symmetrical and asymmetrical pointed blades, retouched blades, microblades, and flat endscrapers on blades and flakes, corresponding most probably to the Emirian of the Levant. These are dated to around 32,600 B.P. A less typical, but perhaps related industry exists in the Kanal Cave. In general, the caves of Hatay certainly require a modern interdisciplinary approach, and such a project is actually in preparation by the Turkish archaeologists.

The actual lack of evidence on the Upper Paleolithic in the larger part of Anatolia might either reflect a real absence of human occupation at that time, or lack of archaeological surveys. Given the amount of work realised in Anatolia by Turkish and foreign archaeologists over decades of intensive research (see also Direkli Cave), it does not seem probable that a more dense Upper Paleolithic occupation would constantly be escaping attention. More likely, the lack of sites may be explained by the high altitudes and by the vast spatial extension of Anatolian highlands and plateaus, which, under the harsh Pleniglacial conditions, presented an unfavourable environment for human occupation. This hypothesis would be important in light of any techno/typological comparison drawn between Southeast Central Europe and the Levant during the Upper Paleolithic.

After the Last Glacial Maximum, during the Epipaleolithic, a more intensive occupation of Anatolia is documented. The most important and the most completely excavated multilayer site is the Öküzini Cave in the southern coast (Yalcinkaya et al. 1995), together with the corresponding layers at Karain (Yalcinkaya et al. 1992), and several earlier excavated sites in the vicinity (Belbasi, Bildibi and others). These sites provided characteristic backed microliths, especially segments, triangles and elongated triangles, some of them with ventroterminal retouches, that fit generally to the cultural milieu of Circum-Mediterranean industries of that time. Another group of sites, with a few larger backed points, recalling the Gravettian tradition, was recognised during surface surveys in NE Turkey (Agacli, Gatsov - Özdogan 1994). Early objects of art are also dated to this period (Marshack 1997). In case of the engravings on the wall of the Keciler (Palanli) Cave, in the Pirin valley near Adhiyaman (Fig. 1; Bostanci 1971), the style suggests that the Epipaleolithic would be the earliest age acceptable.

An intensive study of the Epipaleolithic in Turkey is essential for understanding the origin of the spectacular Aceramic sites of this region, with their impressive architecture, technologies, art and rituals, but still with predominantly hunting economies (Nevali Cori, Göbekli, Cayönü, Asikli; Özdogan 1995 with further references). In what concerns the lithic industries, little continuity to the Epipaleolithic background may be proved at this time. A point for

comparison may represent the series of microliths from Asikli, for example, including backed implements, points and triangles, but of a more elongated shape than in the Epipaleolithic, and without ventroterminal retouching. Another typical component, the Aceramic projectiles as represented in Asikli and Cayönü, show no relationship to the previous development of lithic industries. The same holds true for the characteristic technology of point production from narrow, carefully shaped preforms, as documented at the obsidian sources in Cappadocia (Fig. 2; Balkan-Atli et al. 1997).

The conclusions

Seen from the perspective of Southeastern Central Europe and the Levant, the territory of Anatolia is an important case in studies of regional settlement dynamics. In relationship to fluctuations in Pleistocene climate, it seems that its role oscillates from a land-bridge to a highland barrier.

The Middle Paleolithic and Epipaleolithic are the periods when the land-bridge created a continuous mosaic of sites and cultures over Europe, the Near East, and North Africa. Anatolian sites of this period, especially the caves (Karain, Öküzini, and a number of related sites), represent specific local variants of these larger geographic complexes. The settlement dynamics of these caves is, in the rough outline, comparable to the other Circummediterranean areas. (Even in Moravia, if we would consider only the cave sites and neglect the open-air sites, the observation would be similar, with peaks in the Middle Paleolithic and the Magdalenian).

The Early Neolithic of Anatolia represents a specific case in interregional relationships which saw an increase in economic, technological, cultural and demographic potential of the region, and radiation of the qualitatively new achievements into the neighbourhood.

On the other hand, there are periods when the highlands of Anatolia and the Balkans seem to have created occupation barriers rather than land-bridges. This is visible, first, by the Acheulian site distribution in Anatolia, clearly decreasing from East to West, without corresponding occupation in the Balkans. Later, this pattern is even more clearly demonstrated by the scarcity of typical Upper Paleolithic sites in general. This hiatus will probably be approached during any interregional comparisons to be realised in the future: the Levallois-leptolithic industries of the Danube area, the Balkans, Hatay and the Levant; the Aurignacian of the Balkans and the Levant; the Emirian of Hatay and the Levant; and the Gravettian of Southeast Central Europe and Transcaucasia.

Naturally, this picture only reflects the present state of excavations and surveys in Turkey, as observed during my short stay. Ongoing Paleolithic research organised by Turkish archaeologists in this key geographic region will fill certain occupation gaps, as visible today, and may radically change our present understanding of the settlement dynamics between Europe and Asia.

Jiří Svoboda, AÚ AV ČR Brno

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Souhrn:

Dynamika anatolského paleolitu, jak je doložen novými jeskynnými výzkumy, vykazuje nerovnoměrný průběh, kulminující ve středním paleolitu a poté až na konci paleolitu. Údaje k počátku mladého paleolitu se teprve začínají objevovat. Podobný obraz lze konstatovat i jinde ve Středomoří (- dospěli bychom k němu i na Moravě, pokud bychom abstrahovali od otevřených sídlišť a sledovali pouze osídlení jeskyní).