
The Aegean Acheulean: a view from Rodafnidia on Lesbos

Nena Galanidou*^{†1}, Giorgos Iliopoulos², Peny Tsakanikou^{1,3}, Elli Karkazi¹, Penelope Papadopoulou², Nikolina Bourli², Avraam Zellilidis², Andreas Magganas⁴, and Lee Arnold⁵

¹University of Crete – Grèce

²University of Patras – Grèce

³University of Southampton – Royaume-Uni

⁴National and Kapodistrian University of Athens – Grèce

⁵University of Adelaide – Australie

Résumé

This paper presents results from work conducted on Lesbos island to explore the early Palaeolithic record of the Aegean Sea. During the last decade systematic excavation at Rodafnidia has brought to light an extensive Acheulean site situated on a volcanic setting, near the shore of the Kalloni palaeolake and by a thermal spring. The paper presents geological data to discuss the structure of the Lisvori basin and the respective sediment sequences that were deposited during the Quaternary along with the chronostratigraphy of the site. p-IRIR dating obtained for the excavated sediments at Rodafnidia has returned minimum ages for the Acheulean activity on Lesbos placing it to the second half of the Middle Pleistocene. The lithic industry derives from fluvial deposits and comprises the full gamut of an Acheulean toolkit, with numerous LCTs (trihedrals, handaxes and a notably high proportion of cleavers) and other tools knapped on three types of cherts, tuff and basalt. At Rodafnidia complete chaînes opératoires aimed to produce bifaces by means of débitage and façonnage on a variety of blanks (large flakes, nodules) are brought to light. The paper further examines the main attractions that invited Middle Pleistocene hominins to return to what is today an island but during the glacial periods was organically connected to west Asia. Research on the Lesbos Acheulean archaeology has accumulated a body of evidence with many similarities and a few differences with other homologous sites in Africa and Eurasia. It makes a strong case for including this part of the NE Mediterranean Basin in the reconstructions of Lower Palaeolithic Europe, envisioning the Aegean as a region of affordances rather than a barrier to Middle Pleistocene hominin settlement and dispersals at the heart of Eurasia.

Mots-Clés: The Aegean Acheulean, Rodafnidia, Lesbos

*Intervenant

[†]Auteur correspondant: galanidou@uoc.gr