

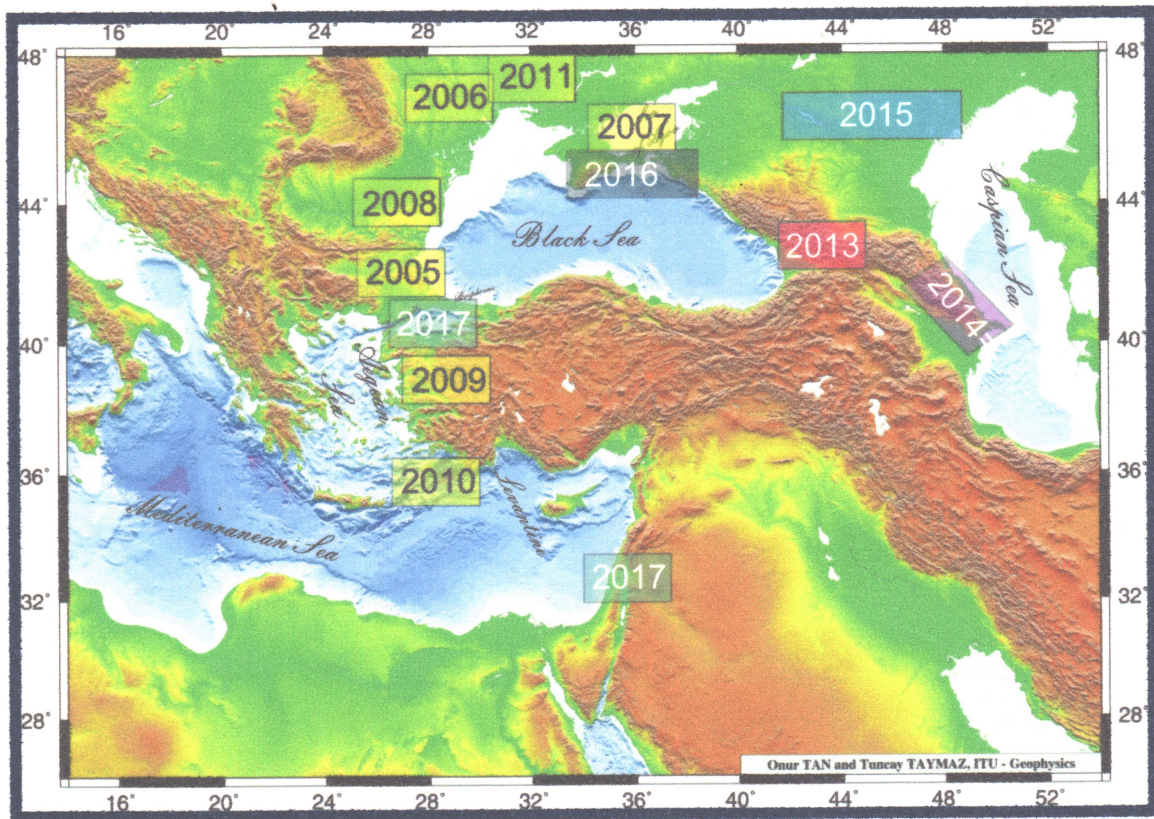
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**IGCP 610 "From the Caspian to Mediterranean:
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PALEOLITHIC OF GEORGIA

Tushabramishvili, N.

Iliia State University, Institute of Earth Sciences, Centre for Researches of Archaeology,
Paleoenvironment and Biodiversity,

77, Nutsubidze str., Tbilisi, Georgia, 0177, nikoloz_tushabramishvili@iliauni.edu.ge

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The geographic situation of Georgia – as a cross-road between Europe and Asia and simultaneously as a natural refuge, where the Pleistocene glacial periods had less severe influence, could provide a key information for deciphering the processes that have taken place during the Paleolithic in Eurasia: changes of its major chronologic and cultural-technological stages, driving forces of transitions from one phase to another, ways and directions of human migrations.

Understanding the paleoenvironment during the Pleistocene is important for reconstruction of routes used by Humans to expand into Eurasia. First time the hominids appeared on the territory of Georgia through the “Levantine Corridor”. The Early Middle Paleolithic is similar to Levantine Early Middle Paleolithic. Late Middle Paleolithic and Upper Paleolithic are more similar to Zagrosian Paleolithic.

Research of Paleolithic of the region gives a unique possibility to study extremely topical and up-to-date problems not only in terms of Caucasus but generally for prehistoric sciences:

- Dynamics, technological and typological changes and helpful factors of the transition periods from low to middle Palaeolithic.
- Trends of Palaeolithic development and a complete technological cycle and sequences;
- Dynamics, technological and typological changes and helpful factors of transitional periods from Lower-Middle-Upper Palaeolithic;
- Trends of various kinds of (e.g. diffusion) cultural influences and migrations;
- Raw materials, its spreading and accessibility in various epochs, reasons for intensity of their usage and the issues connected with it;
- Initial art and religion (First evidence of them were found some years ago);
- Peculiarities of sedimentation;
- Tectonic and seismic processes (the region is located on the fault zone) and their influence on human being adaptations;
- Approximately 490 Paleolithic sites were identified on this territory which is occupied by humans since 1, 85 MA.

The oldest fossil hominid site found in western Eurasia to date. This was well proved by Dmanisi archaeological discoveries, where remains (skulls, lower jaw and other) of the African type of one of the oldest human being-Homo ergaster, have been excavated.

The next most ancient Paleolithic site after Dmanisi is Akhalkalaki I. The stratigraphy of the site together with faunal correlations and reversed paleomagnetism indicates an age most likely in the late Matuyama Chron, probably between 980,000 and 780,000 years ago.

Only few Lower Paleolithic (Acheulean) sites with more or less clear stratigraphy are discovered on the territory of Georgia: Kudaro I, III, and Tsona Caves. The results of dating dates of these sites are: Kudaro I and III (360-350000; 252000; 560000) (Middle Pleistocene).

The Middle Palaeolithic sites in Georgia are distinguished by especially large number and diversity. Human trace is found in rock-shelters and caves as well as in open areas. In this very region, supposedly of the earliest of the Middle Palaeolithic (Djruçhula cave 275000-140000), and those of the latest one

(Ortvala Klde -34000-32000) have been confirmed (we would like to note here that we possess advance data which indicate that in the Bronze cave (Tsutskhvati multi-staged cave system) even later Middle Palaeolithic may be represented).

All Upper Paleolithic sites are located only in Western Georgia.

According to existed opinions, during glacial episodes, when the availability of human occupations in high altitude was reduced, Transcaucasia remained a preserved zone of relatively low height. And some archaeologists fixed the limit of vertical dispersal of human populations during Upper Paleolithic was about 800 m above the sea level. Recently discovered by us some Upper Paleolithic materials in Western Georgia (Imereti and Racha regions) on the altitude 1100-1350 m at the bottom of South slopes of Great Caucasus make us think that high lands have been occupied by humans or during warm episodes. Another version is that we discovered the areas where located the paths of Northern-South migrations which took a place during the coldest periods. This could document a cultural connection between North and South parts of Caucasus, as already attested in the lithic assemblages.

Co-existence of features of different cultures is one of the characters of Upper Paleolithic of Western Georgia.

The results of study of some Middle-Upper Paleolithic sites gives us base of supposing that there were existed some traditions of hunting.

Also, seems that in parallel gorges have been existed different economical activities of different groups, or distribution of the habitat areas between the tribes lived there.

In two caves (Bondi and Dzudzuana caves) were discovered the most ancient flex and fibers dated from 35000-34000.

All the stages of Paleolithic are represented in Georgia. This gives us a good possibility to research Human being, paleoenvironment and Human adaptations. The results will be important not for understanding only the history of this region but it is one of the keys for deciphering the processes that have taken place during the Pleistocene and Paleolithic in Eurasia.