

3RD Annual Meeting of the

European Society for the study of Human Evolution

19–21 September

2013

VIENNA / AUSTRIA

The territory of Georgia (South Caucasus) is a crossroads between Europe and Asia, which is surrounded by the Great and Lesser Caucasian Ranges and the Black and the Caspian Seas. The most of the territories of Georgia were intensively occupied by the humans during the Middle Pleistocene and Late Pleistocene. The region was a geographic “deadlock” during the Paleolithic, where due to small area, different cultures were obliged to contact each other against the background of these cultures being one another’s competitors in mastering and using living resources. More than 480 Paleolithic sites discovered on this small area (about 70000sq.km). The territory of Georgia is divided into 6 regions by the dispersal of Paleolithic sites. More than 200 sites are represented in the Rioni-Kvirila basin (South Osetia, Western Georgia). Some Late Acheulean and Mousterian assemblages characterized by Levallois, proportion of blades and the use of bifacial retouches. In general the industry from artifacts caves and open sites from Rioni-Kvirila Basin resemble the “Tabund-type” and Hummalian entities in the Levant. If the origin of these characters leads of think to a possible link with the Near-East, another hypothesis, developed in the 1960s–1970s by Georgian researchers, proposes a relationship between the Caucasian Acheulean and the Early Middle Paleolithic. The aim of our work is to determine and of the beginning of the Middle Paleolithic in southern Caucasus trying to find the part of local technical behaviors and influences born from contacts or population movements from neighboring areas. The most of the Acheulean materials are represented on the surface by the complexes or isolated finds. Unfortunately, we have stratigraphy only in several Lower Paleolithic sites: most of the are un-stratified. Only in several Paleolithic sites: 1. Dmanisi (1,8MA); 2. Akhalkalaki I (1MA); 3. Kudaro I, III (Middle Pleistocene): Kudaro I and III (360-350000; 252000; 560000). A series of new TL dates from Djrchula Cave indicate at least two distinct human occupation phases. The dates from Middle Paleolithic Layers of Djrchula Cave are close to the dates of Acheulean layers from Kudaro Caves. All of these sites are located in the same, Rioni-Kvirila Basin. We suppose that some kind of cultural Influences from the Near East have been started in Lower Paleolithic (Acheulean). Later, a local evolution of Paleolithic culture, cultural influences from the Near East (Zagros) and Northern Caucasus, the merging of these different features and a local development of the culture took a place in Middle Paleolithic. Some kind of continuation of several traditions, some links between Middle and Upper Paleolithic, merging of different culture features also have been observed in Upper Paleolithic of Georgia

Acknowledgements: The authors wish to thank their colleagues O. Bar Yosef (Harvard University, Department of Anthropology, Peabody Museum), D. Adler (University of Connecticut, Department of Anthropology), L. Meignen (Centre d’ Etudes, Préhistoire, Antiquité), N. Mercier (Institut de recherche sur les Archéomatériaux), H. Valladas (Laboratoire des Sciences du Climat et de l’Environnement, Domaine du CNRS), Marie-Hélène Moncel (CNRS et Département de Préhistoire du Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle, Paris, France), David Pleurdeau (CNRS et Département de Préhistoire du Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle, Paris, France) for many years of fruitful collaboration. The works were carried out in the framework of a research program conducted by O. Bar-Yosef and supported by the American School of Prehistoric Research (Peabody Museum, Harvard University). The dating program was supported by CNRS and CEA (France). The works were possible through research projects supported by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Qartu” Foundation (Georgia) and Ilia State University (Tbilisi, Georgia)