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New evidence for the Palaeolithic in Attica, Greece

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ABSTRACT

Despite Greece's key geographic position between southeast Europe and southwest Asia, and its potential for documenting hominin dispersals, Lower and Middle Palaeolithic sites are rare. This suggests the need for research to identify deposits that may contain Palaeolithic artefacts. Here we describe 165 quartz and quartzite artefacts with Palaeolithic characteristics (based on technical and morphotypological definitions) from a private collection that was made from erosional lag deposits on the southeastern slopes of Mt. Pendeli and the northern edge of the Spata *polje* (a large karstic depression filled with terra rossas) in northeast Attica. Artefacts of the same type occur in the region of Ano Souli, another karstic depression. These karstic depressions are of interest because they resemble artefact-bearing deposits found at similar features such as Kokkinopilos in Epirus that have provided datable geologic contexts for Lower and Middle Palaeolithic artefacts. Our study suggests that Attica was frequented by hominins in the Lower and Middle Palaeolithic and that Pleistocene deposits in karstic depressions in Attica may preserve datable contexts for documenting early human activity. The lithic collection described here provides a glimpse of the potential of the region, and we recommend continued archaeological efforts in Attica to investigate the likelihood for buried Palaeolithic sites.

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Justin Holcomb is a PhD Candidate within Boston University's Department of Archaeology, and a Predoctoral Fellow at the Malcolm H. Wiener Laboratory for Archaeological Science at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens. Holcomb's research targets key geographic areas representing gaps in the larger narrative of early hominin dispersals, such as the Americas and Greece. He studies geoarchaeology as well as lithics analysis.

Curtis Runnels, Boston University

Professor Runnels has been involved in fieldwork in Greece, Turkey, and Albania since 1973, including excavations, surveys, and laboratory

studies. Since 2008 his research has focused on the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic finds from the Plakias region of SW Crete. Before that he was Co-Director of the Greek-American Mesolithic Kandia Survey in the Argolid in 2003, and from 1988 to 1992 the Swedish-American Berbati-Limnes Survey in the Argolid. From 1991 to 1995 he was a staff member on the Boston University's Nikopolis Project, and the 1987 to 1991 Director of the Palaeolithic survey of Thessaly, and from 1979 to 1983 Associate Director of the Stanford University Archaeological and Environmental Survey of the Southern Argolid.

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Duncan Howitt-Marshall is a PhD Candidate at Cambridge University and a specialist in maritime archaeology, Mediterranean prehistory, and the archaeology of islands. His research interests include the origins and development of seafaring, early coastal and island societies, maritime adaptations and social change in the Mesolithic/Epipalaeolithic, Neolithic and Early Bronze Age, and applied methodology in underwater archaeology.

Evangelos Sachperoglou

Evangelos Sachperoglou is as a scholar of ancient poetry and avocational archaeologist, and is most know for translating C. P. Cavafy's, "The Collected Poems".

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Fig. 13.—*Flaker at Work. Boy knapping in background.*
(From a Photograph.)

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