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THE MESOLITHIC OF KONISPOL CAVE, ALBANIA

We report here on the first documented Mesolithic occurrence in an Albanian archaeological site. The site is Konispol Cave, near the town of Konispol in the Sarandë district of southernmost Albania (see Figure 1). This cave is the focus of a multi-year collaborative research project, co-directed by Muzafer Korkuti of the Instituti Arkeologjik in Tirane and Karl Petruso of the University of Texas at Arlington ¹.

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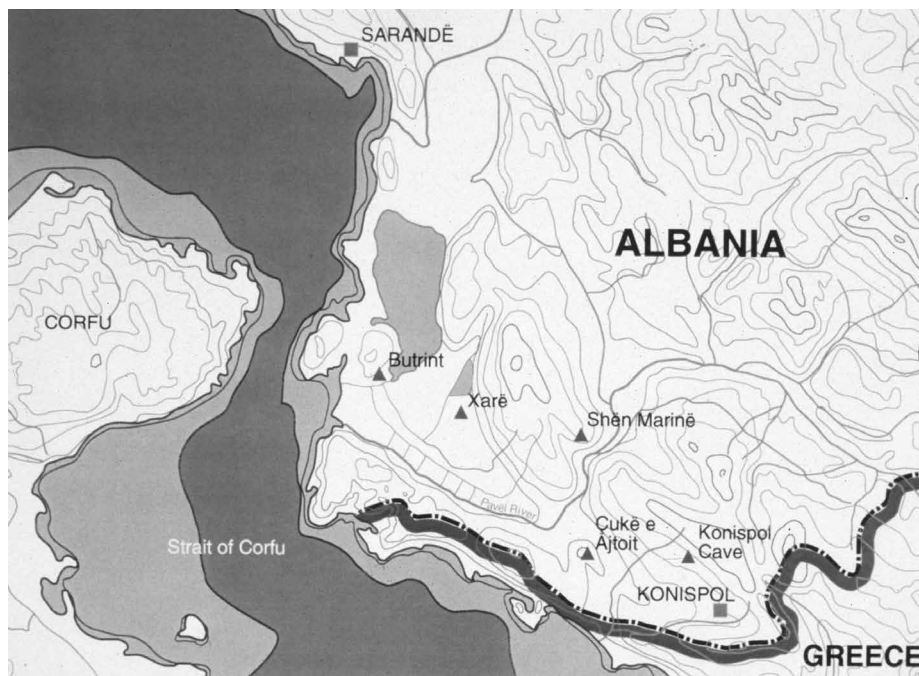


Fig. 1. Location of Konispol Cave; other designated sites include the Classical sites of Butrint and Cukë e Ajtait, the open-air Paleolithic site of Xarë, and the reported Paleolithic site of ShënMarinë (Harrold et al. 1999)

After initial work in 1989-90², excavations were carried out at Konispol Cave in 1992, 1993, and 1994³. Analyses of artifactual, faunal, geophysical, geoarchaeological, and paleoethnobotanical data are still underway, but some preliminary information about the Mesolithic at Konispol Cave can be presented.

The site

Konispol Cave is located about 400 meters above sea level, in a limestone massif overlooking a valley that descends to the northwest for some 18 km to the Classical site of Butrint and the Strait of Corfu (Figure 1). A line of low hills forms the southwestern side of the valley and separates it from the seacoast, which lies ca. 5 km southwest of the site. The cave is a horizontal solution cavity about 50 meters wide, 6 m long, and 6 m in interior height. By the conclusion of excavations in 1994, a total of 19 square meters in five trenches had been excavated to depths ranging from 1.5 to 4 meters (Figure 2).

² KORKUTI, SHABANI 1989, 1990

³ PETRUSO *et al.* 1992, 1994; ELLWOOD *et al.* 1993, 1996

Under disturbed superficial deposits that yielded Hellenistic ceramics and a Roman coin of the fourth century A.D., intact sediments presented a cultural sequence including Bronze Age; Eneolithic; Late, Middle, and Early Neolithic; and Mesolithic components. Underlying these are deposits yielding a very few retouched lithic artifacts that probably date to the Late Paleolithic⁴.

The mesolithic units

Immediately underlying the rich Neolithic levels in the cave are a series of excavation units characterized by a microlithic stone tool technology (including geometric pieces), the absence of pottery, and the presence of wild fauna⁵. These units form a series of Mesolithic layers some 50-90 cm thick in all four of the trenches that were excavated to sufficient depth. The Mesolithic units richest in stone tools are those in Trench XXI, a 2 m by 2 m trench near the western extremity of the cave (Figure 2). Fauna is also abundant here. By contrast, Neolithic and subsequent cultural remains are densest in the other trenches, near the entrance. No human remains are known from the Mesolithic deposits⁶. Neither were any constructed features found beyond simple hearths.

The Mesolithic deposit in Trench XXI (units 38-46) is 50-60 cm deep and consists primarily of gravelly sediments; in places the sediment contained more gravel than clay. The gravel may well have been water-lain, perhaps washed in from a breakdown window at the western end of the cave. It shows little rounding and may have been laid down relatively quickly, although perhaps in a number of different episodes. Animal bones, lithics, and pieces of carbon are found among and throughout the gravel. No clear stratigraphic break is evident between the Mesolithic and Neolithic units (the lowest Neolithic units also were in the gravel deposits), but near the top of the layer the sediment in the southern part of the trench was less gravelly than in the northern half, and there was a distinct lens of ash and burnt earth (hearth). It should also be noted that throughout these units a significant part of the trench (one-sixth to two-thirds) was taken up by a large breakdown boulder in the northwestern quadrant. This boulder may have provided some shelter to the

⁴ HARROLD *et al.*, 1999; ELLWOOD *et al.*, 1996.

⁵ Units preliminarily designated as Mesolithic include: Trench VIII: Units 23-26
Trench X: Units 20-25 Trench IX: " 20-29 Trench XXI: " 38-46

⁶ With the possible exception of two human bones, a cervical vertebra and a left first metacarpal, from a mixed Mesolithic-Neolithic deposit (Trench VIII, unit 22).

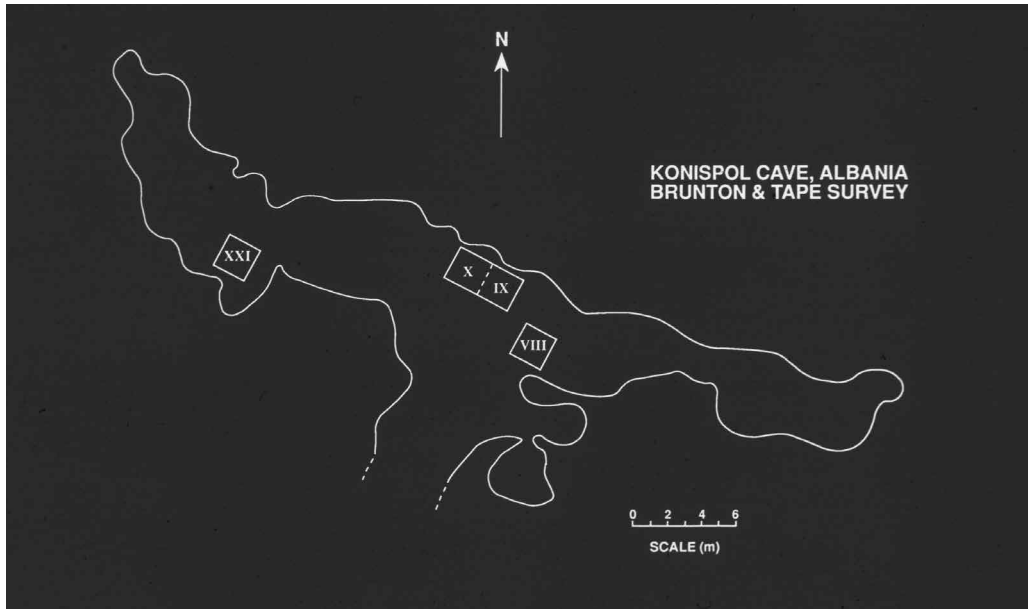


Fig. 2. Plan of Konispol Cave, showing locations of excavated trenches

area to its south and southeast, the area of the burning and somewhat less gravel. The lower limit of the Mesolithic horizon is also not a sharp one; the gravel gradually decreases, and the lower deposit is characterized by fewer and larger, cobble-sized rocks. The lowest two units of the trench (48 and 49) consist of a red clay deposit with fewer rocks, possibly a Pleistocene terra fusca soil formation, according to the preliminary observations of J. Schuldenrein⁷.

A series of radiocarbon dates (Table 1) indicate an age for these levels ranging between roughly 5,700 and 6,700 BC (calibrated), with most centered in the earlier part of this range.

Mesolithic artifacts

All artifacts from Konispol Cave's Mesolithic units are made of flaked stone. No ground stone, bone or antler implements, or any items of ornamentation or art, were recovered. The lithic artifacts from these units share some characteristics of technology and typology with those from overlying Neolithic and subsequent units (and with the extremely scanty Paleolithic stone tools), indicating a certain degree of cultural continuity over as much as ten millennia.

⁷ Personal communication.

Thus, like those from later units, the Mesolithic artifacts tend to be made in cherts readily available within 10 km of the site -- indeed, no raw materials have been positively identified as exotic. These cherts originated as seams in the local limestone bedrock, or as cobbles in the extensive gravels of the Pavel River. They are of highly variable quality, depending in part on the degree of tectonic stress undergone (in a region of very active geological uplift) as well as on weathering. Absolute densities of lithic artifacts are relatively low, as are frequencies of retouched implements. Retouch is often fine, delicate, discontinuous, and/or inverse, and composite tools (e.g., an endscraper/perforator/truncation) are not uncommon.

Beta-

56416	IX/18	Early Neo	6800+/-140	5950-5440 BC
56415	IX/20	Mesolithic	7060+/-110	6115-5680 BC
67803	XXI/39	"	7510+/-90	6465-6160 BC
67804	" "	"	7630+/-140	6690-6170 BC
80000	XXI/41	"	7550+/-80	5475-6190 BC
79999	XXI/42	"	7410+/-80	6400-6035 BC
80001	XXI/49	Final Paleo	8900+/-180	8250-7535 BC
56414*	VIII/28	" "	11410+/-80	beyond range

On grounds of an analysis of Konispol's magnetosusceptibility stratigraphic sequence (Ellwood et al. 1996), we suspect that this date is too young.

Tab. 1. Radiocarbon Dates Relevant to the Age of the Mesolithic at Konispol Cave Lab No. Trench/Unit Context C-14 age BP Calibrated Age (uncalibrated)

However, the Konispol Mesolithic stone tools differ from those of the other periods in several distinctive ways⁸ (See Table 2 for data illustrating several such

⁸ This preliminary description is based on observations of the 951 Mesolithic cores, flakes, blades, and bladelets recovered during the 1993 and 1994 field seasons (the roughly 300 Mesolithic items excavated in 1992 are not yet fully incorporated into our computerized database); similarly, the non-Mesolithic items discussed below derive from the 1993-94 excavations.

contrasts that are discussed here). Though not very numerous in absolute terms, the Mesolithic artifacts are relatively more numerous than those from either earlier or later periods. Non-Mesolithic artifacts (nearly all of them post-Mesolithic) are not quite twice as numerous as Mesolithic ones, but come from deposits that are volumetrically several times greater.

While made of local cherts, Mesolithic assemblages indicate a clearer preference than non-Mesolithic ones for the distinctive red, red-brown, and gray varieties that usually exhibit superior flaking qualities. These three "varieties" in fact grade into one another; a single core may, for example, be partly gray and partly red. They are thus analytically treated as one variety.

Mesolithic cores show some indication of having undergone more intensive reduction than non-Mesolithic ones, more often exhibiting three or more flaking platforms. Likewise, Mesolithic debitage products (flakes, blades, bladelets) have more ridges on their dorsal surfaces (indicative of prior flake removals). They are also smaller, except in length (presumably because of their greater laminarity; see below). While Mesolithic artifacts tend to be more intensively reduced than others, both samples indicate a fairly low incidence of the earliest stages of reduction; 72% and 68%, respectively, of flakes and blades from the two samples exhibit no cortex or rind. In other words, artisans responsible for both samples tended fairly strongly to bring pre-existing cores and debitage products, rather than nodules of raw material, into the cave; but people in Mesolithic times more fully reduced what they brought in.

Table 2 also indicates that Mesolithic debitage is distinctly more laminar than non-Mesolithic debitage, with both blades and bladelets better represented. This tendency may reflect greater conservation of raw material by Mesolithic peoples by maximizing the amount of usable flint derived from a core. Moreover, the quality of work is generally better, as illustrated by the lower Mesolithic proportion of "atypical" (irregular) blades and bladelets, perhaps due to the superior quality of raw material used.

Once detached, products of debitage (flakes, blades, and bladelets) from Mesolithic contexts were more likely to be retouched and, at least to judge from macrowear visible at up to 10X magnification, more damaged by use. Thus, as Table 2 shows, Mesolithic assemblages have higher frequencies of pieces with retouch, of retouched tools, and of pieces with macrowear.

The total of 215 retouched tools (see Figs. 3 and 4) from the cave's Mesolithic units greatly exceeds the number (142) recovered from all non-Mesolithic deposits. The most common retouched tool types are, in descending order, denticulates (19.5% of all tools), composite tools (11.7%), endscrapers and truncations (8.8% each),

	MESOLITHIC	NON-MESOLITHIC
CORES		
Percentage flaked in red/brown/graychert	79.50%	51.10%
Percentage with 3 or more flaking platforms	27.1	17.9
DEBITAGE PRODUCTS (Flakes, Blades, Bladelets)		
Percentage flaked in red/brown/graychert	77.1	48.4
Percentage exhibiting		
0 or 1 dorsal ridge	31.5	38.3
3 or more dorsal ridges	39.4	32
Percentage of		
Flakes	52.1	66.4
Blades	27.4	21.5
Bladelets	20.5	12.0
Atypical blades (as % of all blades)	42.7	55.8
Atypical bladelets (as % of all bladelets)	36.1	60.6
Percentage of		
Pieces with retouch	28.8	11.7
Formal retouched tools	26.0	6.1
Percentage exhibiting		
No macrowear	58.5	75.2
Light macrowear	32.2	21.7
Heavy macrowear	9.3	3.1
Mean length (unbroken items)	26.1 mm	26.1 mm
Mean width	16.6 mm	18.3 mm
Mean thickness	4.6 mm	5.4 mm

** Based on sample of 529 Mesolithic flakes, blades, and bladelets and 122 cores and core fragments (1992 materials not included); corresponding non-Mesolithic totals are 1,315 and 372.*

*Tab. 2. Selected Comparisons between Mesolithic and Non-Mesolithic Lithic Artifacts from Konispol Cave**

perforators (often multiple; 8.4%), and notches (6.5%). Burins are few (2.3%). Most diagnostic, if not especially numerous, are the geometric pieces. Eleven trapezes have been recovered (see Figure 4), along with two possible trapeze fragments, one unfinished trapeze, and a triangle. More so than those from other contexts, the Mesolithic retouched tools are characterized by multiple retouched surfaces -- thus the many composite tools, and denticulates and perforators with more than one working edge or point. Fine, discontinuous, alternating, and/or inverse retouch are common. There is also a tendency for some endscrapers and perforators especially to be canted (*déjeté*), i.e., offset to one side of the axis of the piece (Figure 4, Nos. 2, 3, 4, and 6).

In sum, Konispol Cave's Mesolithic stone tools are set apart from non-Mesolithic ones by greater raw material selectivity, more regular production of blades and bladelets, more intensive core reduction, smaller size of debitage products, more retouch, and more macrowear. While these patterns indicate more intensive lithic artifact manufacture, maintenance, and use in the cave in Mesolithic times, the overall density of finds does not point to long-term or intensive site use by Mesolithic people. Indeed, the careful conservation and curation of lithic materials implied by these patterns is consistent with a highly mobile subsistence-settlement system in which transport costs associated with the toolkit are minimized⁹.

Mesolithic fauna

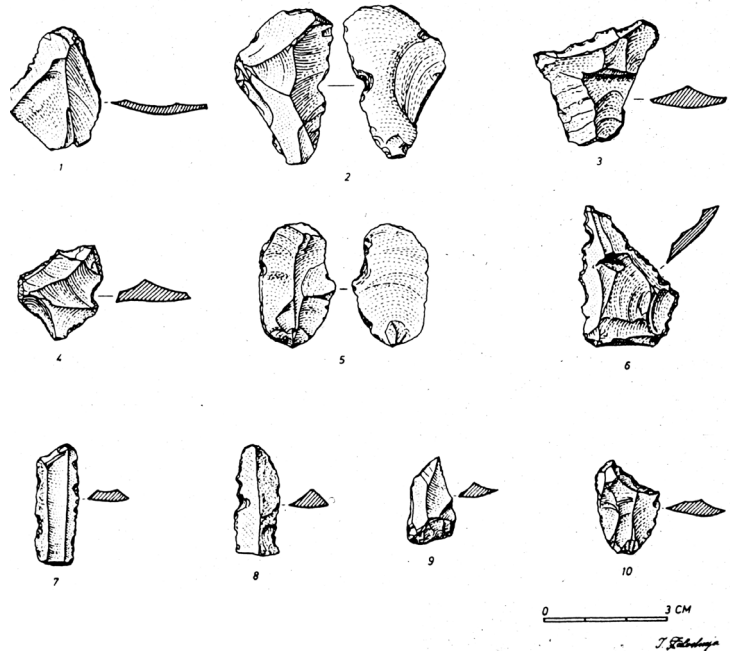
No domesticated ungulates have been positively identified from the Mesolithic units at Konispol. Where both wild and domestic forms of the same animal are present, domestic forms are recognized chiefly by their smaller size, as well as by morphological characters of the skull and horns. The situation is complicated somewhat by the small size of the local fauna in general, including the wild cattle and pigs, and by the presence of chamois and ibex, which when young, or when the bones are fragmentary, cannot always be distinguished from domestic sheep and goat. Nevertheless, most of the fauna is clearly wild (see Tables 3-5). When the fauna from all Mesolithic units studied is combined (omitting Trench VIII, Unit 21, which is probably at least partially Neolithic) and quantified in terms of diagnostic zones¹⁰, the emphasis is on small bovids (55%; presumably all ibex and chamois), with pigs (22%) and red deer (14%) being the other taxa of significance (see Table 6).

⁹ cf. KUHN 1995.

¹⁰ WATSON 1979; RUSSELL 1993.

Fig. 3. Mesolithic stone artifacts from Konispol Cave:

- 1, endscraper;
- 2, endscraper-notch;
- 3, endscraper-perforator-denticulate;
- 4, multiple perforator-notch-endscraper;
- 5, notch;
- 6, bec (atypical perforator)-denticulate;
- 7, denticulated endscraper;
- 8, naturally-backed bladelet;
- 9, truncation-endscraper;
- 10, truncation, truncation



In terms of contribution to the diet, however, this pattern is deceptive, since a single red deer or pig has much more meat than an ibex or chamois. A rough way of approximating the relative dietary importance of the major taxa, without trying to estimate the actual amount of meat consumed, is to multiply the diagnostic zones for each taxon by a 'sheep equivalent'. That is, the live weight of a cow is approximately 28 times that of a sheep; of a red deer, 10 times; pig, four times; while ibex, chamois, sheep, and goat are treated as equivalent¹¹. With this correction, red deer contributed most to the Mesolithic diet at Konispol (37%), with cattle/aurochs

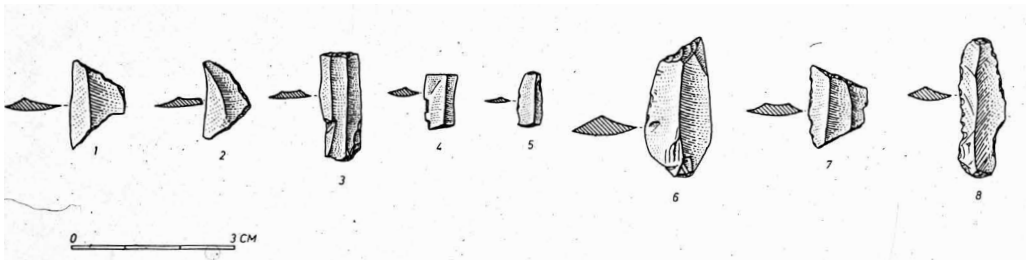


Fig. 4. Mesolithic trapezes from Konispol Cave

¹¹

No./% Unit	Sheep/ Goat	Ibex	Cha- mois	Small Bovid	Cattle	Aur-ochs	Red Deer	Roe Deer	? Fallow Deer	Pig	Dog	Wild Carni- vores
21	30/85.7				1/2.9		1/2.9	1/2.9		2/5.7		
22	3/12.0	P			1/4.0		14/56.0	5/20.0		2/8.0		
23		5/17.2	1/3.4	6/20.7	1/3.4		9/31.0	1/3.4		6/20.7		
24			1/9.1	1/9.1	P	P	2/18.2			6/54.6	1/9.1	
25		2/22.2		P			3/33.3	1/11.1		2/22.2	1/11.1	
26							1/50.0	1/50.0	P			P
27		1/20.0	2/40.0	1/20.0	P		P	1/20.0		P		
28							P			P		
29				P			P			3/100.0		
30										1/100.0		
31							P					

*Tab. 3. Trench VIII Fauna, Mesolithic units, by Diagnostic Zones
P=Present, no diagnostic zones*

<u>No./% Unit</u>	Ibex	Chamois	Small Bovid	Cattle	Aurochs	Red Deer	Pig	Hare	Dog	Wild Carnivores
21	2/20.0	4/40.0	1/10.0	P	P	1/10.0	2/20.0			
22	4/10.3	2/5.1	23/59.0	1/2.6	1/2.6	3/7.7	5/12.8			P
23			P			2/28.6	4/57.1			1/14.3
24	P					3/37.5	1/12.5	1/12.5	1/12.5	2/25.0
25						1/100.0	P			

*Tab. 4. Trench X Fauna, Mesolithic units, by Diagnostic Zones
P=Present, no diagnostic zones*

and pig roughly equivalent at 25% and 23.5% respectively, while the small bovinds account for only 14.5% of the meat (see Figure 5).

The mesolithic in the context of konispol cave

As noted above, the Konispol Mesolithic is underlain by units attributed on chronological grounds to the Late Paleolithic, but which are uninformative because of the scantiness of both fauna and recognizable products of lithic debitage.

The Mesolithic is represented throughout the excavated cave, but it is concentrated most heavily in the gravelly deposits of trench XXI, under a breakdown window near the western end of the cave, where residues from other periods are relatively poor. Indeed, lithic artifacts are denser here than anywhere else in the site regardless of period. They are densest in the middle to upper Mesolithic units -- especially 42, 41, and 39, in that order¹². Macrofaunal remains are also densest in these units, although by frequency the order is 39, 42, 41.

¹² Unit 40 was the initial, "cleaning" unit of the 1994 season and is disregarded as potentially contaminated. The combined depth of these three main units was 22-30 cm.

<u>No./%</u> Unit	IBEX	Cha- mois	Small Bovid	Cattle	Aur- ochs	Red Deer	Pig	Wild Carni- vores
38			P		P	1/100.0	P	
39	7/30.4		9/39.1	1/4.3		1/4.3	5/21.7	P
41	6/40.0		4/26.7	P	P	1/6.7	4/26.7	
42	13/59.1		2/9.1	2/9.1	1/4.5	1/4.5	3/13.6	
43	6/66.7		2/22.2			P	1/11.1	
44	P	3/60.0	P	P		P	2/40.0	
45		4/66.7	1/16.7			P	1/16.7	
46		1/100.0	P			P		

*Tab. 5. Trench XXI Fauna, Mesolithic units, by Diagnostic Zones
P=Present, no diagnostic zones*

Most of the bone is quite fragmented; ibex predominates, but red deer, wild boar, and a little aurochs are present. Small amounts of fish and marine shell (not yet analyzed) also occur in some units. Preliminary seasonality calculations indicate primarily fall/winter occupation. Most animals aged with sufficient precision to make a seasonality estimate were killed during this time. The only exceptions are one ibex neonate mandible from an individual killed during the spring, and one pig maxilla indicating a winter-spring death.

The nature of the finds and deposit, especially in unit 39, suggest two types of occupation in the area of Trench XXI. General purpose occupation (hearths and discard area), perhaps for weeks or longer, seems likely in the area of intense burning in the east and southeast of the trench. The large boulder in the northwestern quadrant could have provided some shelter, or at least a backdrop for the space between it and the cave wall; the window above would have provided some light as well as an exit for the smoke of fires. The long bone fragments of the larger animals (cattle and red deer) are weathered and perhaps water-worn, while the rest of the bone is mostly well preserved, including a few pieces of large mammal bone. Perhaps the bigger animals were butchered, cooked, and largely consumed outside the cave. If these animals were prepared all at once for a feast, it may have been easier to do so outside. A few bone fragments may then have washed in with the gravel. If this was the case, the species balance as indicated by the faunal remains

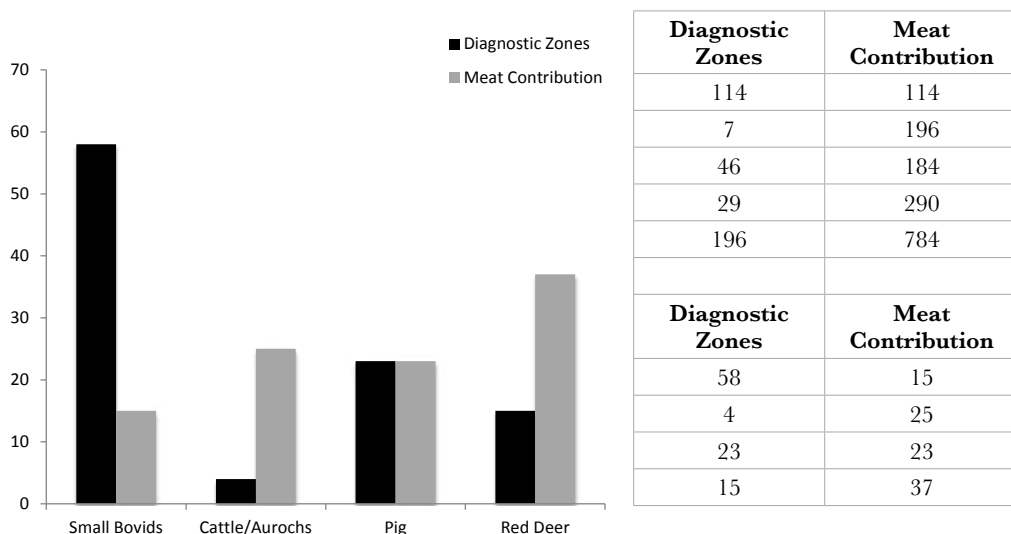


Fig. 5. Percentages of major taxa from Mesolithic units, with “sheep equivalent” correction for relative meat contribution

inside the cave may be somewhat skewed.

In the extreme southwestern corner of the trench, however, the deposit indicates a different activity. Here were found the skull and horn cores of two ibexes and most of the neck of an ibex (there is also a small amount of postcranial material). This suggests a relatively short but intense occupation, perhaps the processing following an ibex hunt, carried out mostly west and south of the trench, closer to the cave wall. The bones appear to be in a relatively primary context, and there is no indication of the presence of dogs in the form of gnaw marks. The two ibex dentitions that could be aged precisely enough to determine seasonality indicate fall-winter hunting; the pig maxilla mentioned above indicates winter-spring. Given the overlap in the seasonality estimates, all the animals could have been hunted during a brief period sometime from November to January. The season of death of the ibexes is essentially the same as those found elsewhere in the trench.

In the scanty units below unit 42 there is little or no evidence for *in situ* human occupation in Trench XXI. Many of the finds (carbon, lithics, and animal bone) could have percolated down through the gravel from the richer units above. This would be especially true for smaller carbon fragments and pieces of flaked stone. Downward percolation of small finds may also explain why in units 39-42, more bone is found in 39, but more stone in 42. In the lower Mesolithic units (43-46), a dramatic increase in the quantity of microfauna also occurs.

These remains¹³ almost surely derive from pellets of owls roosting in this area of the cave, by the window above the trench. The macrofauna of unit 44 is mainly composed of quite a few elements from the skeletons of two infantile small bovids of slightly different ages. The bones are mostly intact and show no signs of having been eaten, by humans or carnivores. Perhaps ibex sheltered in the cave and occasionally died there. A shed deciduous tooth, either ibex or sheep/goat, from unit 38 might also support this interpretation. An articulated chamois wrist was found in units 45 and 46, indicating fairly undisturbed conditions, and preservation is generally quite good. Yet quite possibly all evidence of human occupation found in the lower Mesolithic units (43-46) of Trench XXI derives either from the upper units or from elsewhere in the cave.

If we turn our attention to the other trenches yielding Mesolithic remains (VIII, IX, and X), we see distinct differences from Trench XXI. All three of these trenches are near the cave entrance. All yield far fewer lithic artifacts than XXI; for instance, the three together yield only 42 of the 215 Mesolithic retouched tools from the cave. Fauna has so far been analyzed from Mesolithic units in Trenches VIII and X. Looking at the three trenches separately, considerable differences emerge. Trench VIII has a higher proportion of large animals (red deer and pig) than the other two. In contrast, Trenches X and especially XXI show a predominance of small bovids. In Trench X, ibex and chamois are present in roughly equal amounts, while ibex predominates in both VIII and XXI. Indeed, chamois is present only in the lowest levels of XXI, where there is very little macrofauna in general.

Trench X gives the impression of an occupation that extended beyond a few days, with considerable concern for extracting maximum nutrition from the animal foods. Bones were probably processed for bone grease, and even marginal bones such as phalanges were cracked for marrow. This is not unlike the non-southwestern portion of XXI, but more extreme. This could reflect a seasonality difference: in late winter and early spring, animals are depleted in fat, and it can be difficult for hunters to obtain enough fat in the diet¹⁴. The thorough processing in these units may represent an attempt to extract as much fat as possible under these circumstances. Only two specimens permitted seasonality estimates: these are consistent with spring-summer kills.

The Mesolithic units of Trench VIII are characterized by red deer and pig bones with much burning and ash encrustation, no doubt related to the hearth in

¹³ now under study by Leola LeBlanc of Trent University

¹⁴ SPETH 1983, 1990.

Ibex	Chamois	Small Bovid	Cattle	Aurochs	Red Deer	Roe Deer	? Fallow Deer	Pig	Dog	Wild Carnivores
46/22.3	18/8.7	50/24.2	5/2.4	2/1.0	29/14.1	4/1.9	P	46/22.3	3/1.5	3/1.5

Tab. 6. Konispol Mesolithic Fauna, All units analyzed, by Diagnostic Zones
P=Present, no diagnostic zones; *Excludes Trench VIII, Units 21 + 22, which are probably at least partially Neolithic*

this trench. Preliminary seasonality estimates from the lower units tend mostly to the spring and summer. This area also seems to have been occupied for longer than a single hunt. Most of the bone in unit 22 and some of that in unit 23 is powdery and poorly preserved, apparently indicating a change in the depositional history.

This zone of poorly preserved bone seems to be local to Trench VIII, and may mark the Mesolithic/Neolithic transition here. Unit 21 contains horn cores of domestic sheep and goat, and probably belongs at least in part to the Neolithic.

Given the uninformative nature of the site's final Paleolithic residues, little can be said about the transition to the Mesolithic. There is virtually no fauna in the Paleolithic levels. In that period the cave seems to have been used but not inhabited. The small size of the few fragments of bone recovered from these levels suggests that they are likely to have sifted down from above.

The transition from the Mesolithic to the Neolithic, however, can be better characterized. Early Neolithic pottery appears, as well as occasional bone awls, though ground stone items are still extremely scarce. Lithic artifacts become on average fewer and larger, and more rarely retouched. Coarser chert varieties become more commonly used and provide most of the large flakes, blades, and cores found in these assemblages. However, one also finds a small number of retouched tools, usually on large, regular, carefully chipped blades. These "show pieces," most often endscrapers, truncations, or perforators on carefully retouched blades, contrast notably with the rest of the Neolithic assemblage.

The most obvious faunal change from Mesolithic to Neolithic is the appearance of domesticates: sheep, goat, cattle, and pig. Ibex and chamois are present in the Neolithic and later, but only in very small quantities. The Neolithic fauna is even more heavily dominated by small bovids, but these are now sheep and goat. Red deer and wild pigs are also infrequent in the Neolithic levels. Moreover, during most of that period, there are large quantities of very young sheep and goats, suggesting occupation around lambing time. Despite the contrasts

in faunal composition, however, there is some continuity in butchering techniques. Throughout the occupation at Konispol, animal carcasses were left in fairly large pieces, but rib cages were removed and divided, as is indicated by many transverse cuts at various points on the ribs, while there are few on the long bones.

Evidence so far analyzed is consistent with the proposition that the Mesolithic use of Konispol Cave was episodic and linked to the butchering and consumption of ibex -- probably taken in the immediate vicinity of the site -- and other medium and large mammals, and the preparation and use of flaked stone tools for these activities, generally in fall and/or winter. Relatively few stone armature elements (geometrics) have been recovered, relative to the denticulates, endscrapers, truncations, perforators, and other implements used to process carcasses and skins. The fairly numerous cores, unutilized flakes, and small chips suggest that lithic reduction was a relatively important part of the activity suite undertaken in the cave. The absence of several classes of evidence -- structures and facilities, burials, artifacts of ground stone, bone, or antler, items of ornament or art, or truly dense accumulations of occupational debris -- suggests that the site did not serve as a base camp or long-term occupation locus. Given its location far above the valley floor, this should not be surprising. In the absence of other known Mesolithic sites in the locality, little else can yet be suggested about the cave's role in Mesolithic subsistence-settlement systems.

The Konispol Mesolithic in larger context

One other possible Mesolithic occurrence in Albania is at Vlushë, an open-air site in the Korça Basin in the southeastern part of the country, where a stratum below the Neolithic has yielded geometric microliths and no ceramics¹⁵. Vlushë's geometrics, however, are predominantly lunates rather than trapezes. No dating or other contextual information has yet been published for this site.

The Konispol Mesolithic does not apparently compare closely with the slightly older Mesolithic at Sidari, about 45 km away on the north coast of Corfu¹⁶. That industry, excavated in the 1960s by Sordinas¹⁷, parallels Konispol's in the frequency of rather fine retouch and the presence of geometric forms. On the other hand, the artifacts, manufactured from small flint pebbles, are characterized by

¹⁵ YLLI, 1990; KORKUTI and PETRUSO 1993.

¹⁶ A radiocarbon date of 7820+/-340 BP was obtained from the Mesolithic layer, level D, at Sidari (Sordinas 1970:4).

¹⁷ SORDINAS, 1969, 1970, 1983.

Sordinas as featuring many irregular forms produced by both snapping and retouch, but with few laminar or abruptly retouched pieces. Considering Sidari's relative proximity and accessibility¹⁸, we find this lack of close resemblance interesting; we suspect that it is at least partly accounted for by both the Corfiote site's lithic raw material, and by the nature of the activities carried on there; Sidari level D is a coastal midden rich in *Cardiumedule* shells and fish remains as well as animal bones. A closer comparison may be afforded by material from several open-air Mesolithic sites recently discovered by Runnels in southern Epirus¹⁹, some 60-80 km southeast of Konispol. Three of these sites involve Mesolithic occupations discovered in Holocene soils developed on stabilized sand dunes on the Ionian shore west of modern Preveza. Like the Konispol Mesolithic, these assemblages feature trapezes; small, often composite retouched tools; and subtle, often denticulated retouch (Runnels, personal communication). The eventual publication of these sites, which unfortunately lack preserved fauna, will allow more detailed comparisons with the Konispol Cave Mesolithic.

No other Mesolithic sites are reported from either northwestern or southwestern Greece. In the rest of Greece the roster of Mesolithic sites is slim. Only a handful of sites are known, all but one located in the east-central regions of Megara and the Argolid²⁰. Of these, the Mesolithic at Franchthi Cave in the

¹⁸ Corfu may already have been detached from the mainland by 7500 BP, but the channel would probably have been narrower than today's (VAN ANDEL and SHACKLETON 1982), and the inhabitants of at least eastern Greece were competent sailors by this time.

¹⁹ RUNNELS 1994, 1995; WISEMAN 1995.

²⁰ The sites in the Megarid and Argolid are Zaimis and Ulbrich caves, both now lost or destroyed (Markovits 1928, 1932-33), two open sites in the Kleisoura Gorge in the northern Argolid (Wells et al. 1993; Runnels 1995 and 1996), and Franchthi and Koukou caves in the southern Argolid (Payne 1975; Jacobsen 1976; van Andel and Sutton 1987; Jacobsen and Farrand 1987; Shackleton 1988; Perlès 1990; Hansen 1991; Farrand 1993; Cullen 1995; Rose 1995; Jameson, Runnels and van Andel 1994 [for Koukou]). The one site with reported dated Mesolithic material not on the eastern coast is Theopetra Cave in western Thessaly in northern Greece, currently under excavation by N. Kyparissi-Apostolika of the Greek Ephoreia of Paleoanthropology and Speleology (Kyparissi-Apostolika 1999; Stravopodi, Manolis and Kyparissi 1999). A Mesolithic human burial is reported from this site. For recent discussions of these sites, as well as those in western Greece and other less probable reported Greek Mesolithic sites, see Perlès 1990 and Runnels 1995. Perlès also discusses sites from a wider area.

southern Argolid²¹ is by far the best-known, and is the only one both excavated with modern methods and extensively published. Franchthi's Mesolithic has some points of resemblance to Konispol's. The Lower Mesolithic (ca. 9500-9000 b.p.) shares with Konispol a strong emphasis on notches and denticulates, though it is older, and lacks trapezes or a significant blade component. The Upper and Final Mesolithic (ca. 9000-8000 b.p.) may slightly overlap temporally with the Konispol Mesolithic, and feature bitruncated trapezes; however, they are far more heavily flake-dominated.

There is furthermore a strong contrast in subsistence between Franchthi and Konispol during the Mesolithic. One of the most distinctive features of the Upper Mesolithic at Franchthi Cave is the exploitation of bluefin tuna, and throughout the Mesolithic there fishing, either of marine fish like tuna or of lagoon-dwelling fish, and gathering of molluscs was an appreciable part of the economy of the site's inhabitants²². Indeed, as Perlès²³ has noted, nearly all of the few known Mesolithic sites in Greece have a definite coastal orientation, in terms of both location and economy. In contrast, while Konispol is not far from the coast, it is an upland site where the importance of marine resources is minimal. If such coastal sites as those in the Preveza area, or Sidari, are themselves seasonal sites, then Konispol might represent an upland component of the same subsistence-settlement system, its focus being hunting rather than fishing and mollusc-collecting²⁴. Another distinguishing feature of Konispol is the presence of ibex, predominant at Konispol but absent from Franchthi and (as far as is known) the other Greek Mesolithic sites. That difference and perhaps others may well be due to sites' different locations, not only in elevation, but also on the western or eastern/southeastern coasts, which are respectively the wettest and driest parts of Greece. There is also the striking presence of several Mesolithic burials at Franchthi²⁵, and apparently one at Theopetra in Thessaly, contrasting with their absence so far at Konispol or any other known Albanian or Epirote Mesolithic site.

²¹ PERLÈS 1990

²² ROSE 1995

²³ PERLÈS 1990: 119-130

²⁴ In view of the generally coastal orientation of Greek Mesolithic sites, the reported Mesolithic from Theopetra Cave, located well inland in western Thessaly, is interesting.

²⁵ CULLEN 1995.

It might also be noted that in relation to Franchthi and, on present evidence, probably the other Mesolithic sites in eastern Greece, Konispol's Mesolithic (like Sidari's) is rather late. Its radiocarbon dates indicate that the period of the most intense Mesolithic habitation falls in the second half of the 7th millennium BC (calibrated), when the Neolithic had long since begun at Franchthi. Konispol is more nearly contemporary with Sidari and to Mesolithic sites north of Greece.

To the north, a gap exists in our knowledge of the Mesolithic reaching as far as Montenegro and Dalmatia. As noted above, only one other possible Mesolithic site is known from Albania; none are reported from Macedonia. Odmut Cave, an inland riverine site in northwestern Montenegro, has revealed a Mesolithic somewhat similar to Konispol's - a roughly contemporaneous occupation featuring trapezes and an ibex-dominated fauna²⁶. However, Odmut's richer and broader range of material culture, including elaborate antler harpoons and constructed hearths, contrasts strongly with Konispol. In this respect, Odmut is more similar to sites farther afield in the Iron Gates and northern Italy. At least two other Montenegrin sites have Mesolithic layers. Crvena Stijena and Medina Stijena are both also located in riverine gorges, but direct comparisons²⁷ with Konispol are difficult at this time²⁷.

A number of other sites are reported from the Dalmatian and northeastern Adriatic coast. Few details are known from most, but some have provided C-14 dates that are similar to those at Konispol, and some comparable fauna²⁸. At least in their lack of constructed hearths and harpoons, Crvena Stijena and probably the Dalmatian sites more closely resemble Konispol.

Late Mesolithic ("Castelnovan") levels of roughly the same age as Konispol's are found at both coastal and inland sites in Italy. The greatest known concentration of such sites is in the north (for example, Romagnano III and Pradestel in the Trento Basin). A sizeable number are known from Friuli, the Trieste Karst, and adjacent reaches of Slovenia at the head of the Adriatic²⁹. They also occur in central and southern Italy (for example, Riparo Blanc in Latium and Grottadella Madonna di Praia a Mare in Calabria), and in Sicily (notably at Uzzo Cave, though in subsistence economy, presence of burials, and location, this site compares with Franchthi, not

²⁶ SREJOVIĆ 1974, 1989; MARKOVIĆ 1978; cf. PERLÈS 1990:129.

²⁷ BENAC 1957; TRINGHAM 1971; SREJOVIC 1988.

²⁸ MALEZ 1979; CHAPMAN and MÜLLER 1990.

²⁹ BIAGI and VOYTEK 1994; BIAGI, STARNINI, and VOYTEK 1993

Konispol)³⁰. Again, close comparisons cannot be made with Konispol at this time, but some similarities are apparent. Ibex and red deer were hunted at a number of these sites, and trapezes and denticulates are common³¹.

We might also note Sordinas' report³² that in the upper part of the Neolithic level C at Sidari, impressed pottery is found similar to that from Crvena Stijena III. Likewise, the impressed Early Neolithic pottery at Konispol also belongs in the sphere of the Neolithic cultures of the Adriatic and is very different from the Early Neolithic pottery found in eastern Greece. At this point, however, it is premature to suggest whether the Konispol Mesolithic's closest connections lie to the south and east in Greece, or to the north and west. So far, Konispol and its region lack the sort of evidence (burials, constructed features, a wide range of material culture) that suggest prolonged, intensive occupation, in contrast to some Mesolithic sites in the regions just discussed. However, in the current state of knowledge, this lack may simply reflect the small sample of discovered Mesolithic sites rather than a unique subsistence-settlement system in southern Albania/Epirus.

Conclusion

While much work remains to be done, it is already clear that Konispol Cave has yielded a significant and well-dated Mesolithic occurrence. At intervals after roughly 6700 BC (calibrated) and perhaps as late as 5700 BC, hunters of ibex and other mammals visited this site for activities minimally involving butchering, cooking, and eating their prey, and manufacturing and maintaining stone tools. Subsequent analysis of the data from Konispol will shed further light on the environment and subsistence of the people who inhabited the cave's neighborhood between the close of the Pleistocene and the coming of the Neolithic.

³⁰ ALESSIO et al. 1984; BARKER 1981; GUERRESCHI 1994; PIPERNO 1985; PIPERNO, SCALI, and TAGLICOZZO 1980.

³¹ SORDINAS (1970:29) compares Sidari level D with Riparo Blanc, though Perlès disagrees. See Perlès (1990:126ff, 130) for a discussion of the Italian Mesolithic in relation to Franchthi. For further references also see GUERRESCHI 1993 and BARKER 1981.

³² SORDINAS 1967.

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PËRMBLEDHJE

MEZOLITI NË SHPELLËN E KONISPOLIT, SHQIPËRI

Shpella e Konispolit përfaqëson të parin sit mezolitik të dokumentuar në Shqipëri. Ai u bë objekt i kërkimeve shumëvjeçare (1992-1994) nga projekti i bashkëpunimit midis Institutit të Arkeologjisë në Tiranë dhe Universitetit të Teksasit në Arlington të SHBA, drejtuar nga M. Korkuti dhe K. Petruso.

Shpella ndodhet 400 m mbi nivelin e detit, pranë qytetit më jugor të Shqipërisë, Konispolit, në një masiv gëlqeror në jug të qytetit antik të Butrintit dhe lindje të Kanalit të Korfuzit (Fig. 1). Ka një shtrirje horizontale 50 m të gjatë dhe gjerësi e lartësi prej 6 m. Gërmimi u krye në pesë kuadrate që përfshinë një sipërfaqe prej 19 m² me thellësi që lëviz nga 1.5 m deri 4 m. Depozitimet kulturore të shpellës përfaqësojnë një periudhë të gjatë kohore që fillon nga Paleoliti i Lartë e vazhdon në Mezolit, Neolit, Eneolit, Bronz, Hekur dhe përfundojnë me gjetjet e periudhës helenistike dhe romake.

Pas shtresës së pasur të neolitit, depozitimet në shpellë dhanë gjetje të veglave prej guri ku përfshiheshin edhe format gjeometrike, me mungesë të qeramikës dhe prezencë të kockave të kafshëve të egra të cilat përfaqësonin shtresën mezolitike e cila luhatej 0.5-0.9 m trashësi. Shtresa më e pasur në vegla mezolitike i përkiste kuadratis XXI (2x2m) afër ekstremit perëndimor të shpellës (Fig. 2). Nuk ka një ndarje të qartë stratigrafike midis shtresave të mezolitit dhe neolitit. Një seri me datime radiokarbonike të kalibruara japin moshën e këtyre niveleve midis 5700 BC dhe 6700 BC.

Gjetjet e shtresës mezolitike kanë karakteristika teknologjike dhe tipologjike të ngjashme me ato të neolitit që tregojnë për një vazhdimësi kulturore. Lënda litike e shfrytëzuar është nxjerrë nga gëlqerorët lokal ose nga prurjet e lumit Pavëll.

Retushi i veglave është shpesh i mirë, me ndërprerje ose jo që duket në veglat e kompozuar si kruerset fundore, shpuset dhe prerëset e vogla. Veglat mezolitike të Konispolit ndryshojnë me ato të periudhave të tjera (Tab. 2). Ato janë më të shumta në numër nga periudhat me të hershme ose më të vona dhe tregojnë një preferencë më të qartë nga ato jo-mezolitike për variete të strallesh të kuqe, të kuqe-kafe, dhe gri që zakonisht shfaqin cilësi më të mira për ashkëlzim. Bërthamat mezolitike kanë reduktim më intensiv sesa ato jo-mezolitike, duke shfaqur shpesh tre ose më shumë platforma ashkëlzimi. (Tab.2). Kjo tregon tendencën për ruajtjen e lëndës së parë duke maksimizuar sasinë e strallit të përdorur nga një bërthamë. Në gjetjet mezolitike dallohet gjithashtu frekuenca e lartë e veglave të retushuara. Totali i 215 veglave të retushuara (Fig. 3, 4) nga shtresa mesolithike e shpellsë e tejkalon numrin (142) të nxjerrë nga të gjitha depozitat jo-mezolitike. Llojet më të zakonshme të veglave të retushuara janë, sipas renditjes, veglat e dhëmbëzuara (zenë 19.5% e të gjitha veglave), veglat kompozit (11.7%), krureset fundore dhe prefëset (8.8% secila), shpueset (8.4% %) dhe noçëzat (6.5%), kurse majat janë më pak (2.3%).

Shumica e veglave të diagnostikuara, janë me forma gjeometrike, kryesisht trapeza (Fig. 4). Veglat e retushuara mezolitike karakterizohen ngashumë retushe të sipërfaqeve. Kështu vegla të përbëra, vegla të dhëmbëzuara dhe shpuse kanë më shumë se një anë të punuar, me retush mjaft të mirë, të ndërprerë ose të alternuar. Në tërësi, veglat mezolitike të Shpellsë së Konispolit dallojnë nga ato jo-mezolitike nga përzgjedhja më e mirë e lëndës së parë, nga prodhimi më i rregullt i teheve dhe tehëzave, reduktim më intensiv i bërthamave, madhësi më të vogël të mbetjeve dhe më shumë retush.

Kuadratet e tjera që dhanë mbetje mezolitike (VIII, IX dhe X), kanë diferenca të dallueshme nga Kuadrati XXI. Të tre këto kuadrate janë pranë hyrjes së shpellsë. Ato dhanë shumë më pak objekte litike sesa Kuadrati XXI; për shembull, të tre së bashku dhanë vetëm 42 nga 215 veglat e retushuara mezolitike të grumbulluara në shpellsë.

Nga shtresat mezolitike të Shpellsë së Konispolit nuk është identifikuar asnjë kafshë e zbutur njëthundrake (Tab. 3-5). Fauna mezolitike e studiuar (duke përfshirë Trench VIII, Njësia 21, e cila ndoshta është pjesërisht neolitike) rezulton se përbëhet nga (55%, dhi dhe antilopa), nga derra të egër (22%) dhe dreri i kuq (14%), (Tab. 6). Përsa i përket kontributit në dietë, llogaritjet sipas peshës së kafshëve, tregojnë se dreri i kuq ka kontribuar më shumë në dietën mezolitike në Konispol (37%) e ushqimit; lopë dhe derr përkatësisht (25% dhe 23%); ndërsa lopa e vogël zë 14.5% e ushqimit.

Mezoliti është i përfaqësuar në të gjithë sipërfaqen e gërmuar, por gjetjet janë përqendruar më shumë në depozitat me zhavorore të kuadratis XXI, nën dritaren

pranë skajit perëndimor të shpellës, ku mbetjet nga periudhat e tjera janë relativisht të dobëta. Gjetjet litike janë më të dendura se në kuadratet e tjera dhe po ashtu edhe mbetjet e makrofaunës. Pjesa më e madhe e kockave ishin mjaft të fragmentuar; mbizotëron dhia e egër, por janë të pranishëm edhe dreri i kuq, derri dhe lopa egër. Sasi të vogla të peshqve dhe të guaskave detare (ende të pa analizuar) u gjetën në disa njësi stratigrafike. Llogaritjet paraprake tregojnë për përdorim sezonal të shpellës nga banorët mezolitikë, kryesisht gjatë vjeshtës dhe dimrit kur janë konsumuar kafshët e vrara.

Fauna deri më tani është analizuar nga shtresat mezolitike të kuadrateve VIII dhe X. Duke parë të tre kuadratet veçmas, evidentohen disa dallime. Kuadrati VIII ka një përqindje më të lartë të kafshëve të mëdha (dreri i kuq dhe derri) sesa dy të tjerët. Në të kundërt, kuadrati X dhe sidomos Kuadrati XXI tregojnë një mbizotërim të lopës së vogël. Në Kuadratin X, ibex dhe dhia e egër janë të pranishme në sasi të barabarta, ndërsa ibex mbizotëron si në Kuadratin VIII ashtu edhe në XXI. Në të vërtetë, dhia e egër është e pranishme vetëm në nivelet më të ulëta të XXI, ku ka shumë pak kafshë të mëdha. Kuadrati X jep përshtypjen e një okupimi që zgjati më shumë për nxjerrjen maksimale të ushqimit nga kafshët. Kockat ndoshta u përdorën për yndyrën e tyre, madje edhe kockat të tilla si falanget ishin plasaritur për nxjerrjen e palcës. Shtresa mesolithike e Trench VIII karakterizohen nga mbetjet e drerit të kuq si dhe kocka derri me shumë djegie dhe hi, që duket se lidhet me njëvatër. Përlllogaritjet paraprake të sezoneve nga shtresat flasin kryesisht për pranverë dhe verë. Pjesa më e madhe e kockave në njësinë 22 dhe disa nga ato në njësinë 23 janë të pastra dhe të ruajtura dobët, duke treguar kështu një ndryshim në historinë e depozitimit dhe mund të shënojnë tranzicionin mezolitik / neolitik. Njësia 21 përmban brirëtë dhenve dhe dhive shtëpiake, që duket se i takon neolitit.

Duke pasur parasysh natyrën jo informuese të mbetjeve të shtresës paleolitike, pak mund të thuhet për kalimin në mezolit. Nuk ka praktikisht asnjë gjetje faune në nivelet paleolitike. Në atë periudhë shpella duket se është përdorur por nuk është e banuar. Dimensionet e voglatë disa fragmenteve të kockave nga këto nivele, sugjeron që ata kanë gjasa të jenë të ardhura nga lart.

Kalimi nga mezoliti në neolit mund të kuptohet më mirë. Shfaqet qeramika e hershme neolitike, si dhe fëndyejt prej kocke, ndonëse gjetjet prej guri janë ende shumë të pakta. Veglat prej stralli janë të dimensioneve të ndryshme dhe rrallë janë të retushuar. Shumëllojshmëria e stralleve përbëjnë shumicën e ashklave të mëdha, teheve dhe bërthamave të gjetjeve. U gjetën gjithashtu një numër i vogël i veglave të retushuara.

Ndryshimi më i dukshëm i faunës nga mezoliti në neolit është shfaqja e kafshëve shtëpiake, deleve, dhive, lopëve dhe derrave. Dhia e egër është pranishme

në neolit dhe më vonë, por vetëm në sasi shumë të vogla. Dreri i kuq dhe derrat e egër janë gjithashtu të rralla në nivelet neolitike. Për më tepër, gjatë kësaj periudhe, ka sasi të mëdha të deleve dhe dhive shumë të reja, që tregojnë okupim të shpellës rreth kohës së qengjave. Megjithë dallimet në përbërjen e faunës, ekziston një vazhdimësi në teknikat e therjes.

Analizat e këtyre të dhënave tregojnë për përdorimin episodik të Shpellës së Konispolit gjatë mezolitit i lidhur me therjen dhe konsumimin e dhisë së egër (ibex) e të gjitarëve të tjerë, ndoshta të gjuajtura në afërsi të zonës si dhe përgatitjen e përdorimeve veglave për këto aktivitete, përgjithësisht në vjeshtë dhe dimër. Pak vegla guri (gjeometrike) janë gjetur, në krahasim me prerëset e dhëmbëzuara, kruaset fundore, shpueset dhe vegla të tjera të përdorura për proceset e prerjes dhe rrjepjes së kafshëve. Bërthamat e shumta, ashklat e pa shfrytëzuara dhe pjesëzat e vogla sugjerojnë se reduktimi litik ishte një pjesë e rëndësishme e aktivitetit në shpellë. Mungesa e disa llojeve të provave si strukturat, varret, veglat e gurit, kockave, brirëve, sendeve të zbukurimit ose artit, apo depozitimet e dendura të mbetjeve të përdorimit, sugjerojnë që shpella nuk shërbeu si bazë kampi ose staciontë përdorimit afatgjatë. Në mungesë të siteve të tjera mezolitike në këtë zonë, pak mund të thuhet për rolin e shpellës në sistemin mezolitik të përdorimit të territoreve.

Njësit tjetër mezolitik në Shqipëri është gjetur në Vlush, një vendbanim i hapur në Shqipërinë Juglindore ku një shtresë poshtë asaj neolitike ka dhënë mikrolite gjeometrike pa qeramikë. Në mikrolitet gjeometrike të Vlushës dominojnë format lunare në raport me trapezat. Nuk ka të dhëna për datimin ose të dhëna të kontekstit të publikuara për këtë sit.

Mezoliti i Konispolit nuk krijon mundësi për një krahasim të ngushtë me mesolitin më të vjetër në Sidari, rreth 45 km larg, në bregun verior të Korfuzit. Industria litike e Sidarit, e zbuluar në vitet 1960 nga Sordinas (1969, 1970, 1983), mund të krahasohet me Konispolin në frekuencën e retushit mjaft të mirë dhe praninë e formave gjeometrike.

Një krahasim më i ngushtë mund të ofrohet nga materiali i disa siteve mezolitike të hapura të zbuluar kohët e fundit nga Runnels në Epirin e jugut (Runnels 1994, 1995, Wiseman 1995), rreth 60-80 km në juglindje të Konispolit. Tre nga këto site mezolitike janë zbuluar në shtresa të Holocenit të zhvilluara në dunat e stabilizuara të rërës në bregun perëndimor të Jonit, në Prevezën e sotme. Ashtu si Konispoli mezolitik, gjetjet litike përmbajnë trapeza; vegla të vogla, shpesh kompozita të retushuara; dhe vegla me retush të dhëmbëzuar. Publikimi i këtyre siteve, të cilat fatkeqësisht nuk kanë të ruajtur faunën, do të lejojnë krahasime më të hollësishme me mesolitin e Shpellës së Konispolit. Në pjesën tjetër të Greqisë lista e siteve mezolitike është e pakët. Vetëm disa site janë të njohura, një i vendosur

në rajonet qendrore lindore të Megarës dhe në Argolid. Nga këto, mezoliti në Shpellën e Franchthit në Argolidën jugore (Perlès 1990) është shumë më i njohuri, i gërmuar me metoda moderne dhe i botuar gjerësisht. Mezoliti i Franchtit ka disa pika ngjashmërie me Konispolin. Mezoliti i Poshtëm (rreth 9500-9000 B.P.) ndan me Konispolin praninë e fortë të veglave “notches” dhe të dhëmbëzuara, megjithëse është më i vjetër dhe i mungojnë trapezat ose komponentët e rëndësishëm të tehave. Mezoliti i sipërm (rreth 9000-8000 B.P.) mund të përputhet kohësisht me Mezolitin e Konispolit dhe shfaq trapeza të reduktuar. Një nga tiparet më të dallueshme të Mezolitit të Sipërm në shpellën e Franchtit ishte peshkimi, në det ose në lagunë si dhe mbledhja e molusqeve, ishte një pjesë e rëndësishme e ekonomisë. Pothuajse të gjitha vendet e njohura mezolitike në Greqi, kanë një orientim të përcaktuar bregdetar në aspektin e vendndodhjes dhe ekonomisë. Në të kundërt, ndërsa Konispoli nuk është larg nga bregu i detit, është një sit malor ku rëndësia e burimeve detare është minimale. Nëse zona të tilla bregdetare si ato në zonën e Prevezës, apo Sidari, janë në vetvete sezonale, atëherë Konispoli mund të përfaqësojë një komponentsiti malor të të njëjtit sistem, ku fokusi është gjuetia se sa peshkimi dhe mbledhja e moluskëve. Një veçori tjetër dalluese e Konispolit është prania e ibex, që mbizotëron në Konispol dhe mungon në Franchthi dhe në sitet e tjera mezolitike greke. Ky ndryshim dhe dallimet e tjera mund të jenë për shkak të vendndodhjeve të ndryshme të siteve, jo vetëm në lartësi, por edhe në brigjet perëndimore ose lindore / juglindore, të cilat janë përkatësisht pjesët më të lagura dhe më të thata të Greqisë. Ka gjithashtu prani të disa varreve mezolitike në Franchthi, dhe me sa duket një në Theopetra të Thesalisë, në kontrast me mungesën e tyre deri më tani në Konispol ose në ndonjë sit tjetër të njohur në Shqipëri apo në sitet mezolitike të Epirit.

Gjithashtu mund të vërehet se në lidhje me Franchthin dhe sitet e tjera mezolithike në Greqinë lindore, ai i Konispolit (si Sidari) është më i vonshëm. Datat e saj të radiokarbonit tregojnë se periudha e banimit mezolithik më intensive bie në gjysmën e dytë të mijëvjeçarit të 7-të BC (e kalibruar), kur neoliti kishte kohë që kishin filluar në Franchthi. Konispoli është pothuajse bashkëkohor me Sidarin dhe me sitet mezolitike në veri të Greqisë.

Në veri, ekziston një boshllëk në njohuritë tona për mezolitin duke arritur deri në Malin e Zi dhe në Dalmaci. Siç është përmendur më parë, vetëm një sit i mundshëm mezolithik është i njohur nga Shqipëria; asnjë prej tyre nuk është raportuar nga Maqedonia. Shpella e Odmutit, një sit në brendësi të luginave lumore në veriperëndim të Malit të Zi, ka dhënë mezolit disi të ngjashëm me Konispolin, afërsisht të njëkohshëm me prani të trapezave dhe një faunë të mbizotëruar nga ibexi (Srejović 1974, 1989, Marković 1978, cfr Perlès 1990, 129). Megjithatë, kultura materiale më e pasur e Odmutit, përfshinë harpunat dhe konstruksionet e vatrave,

që dallojnë shumë me Konispolin. Në këtë drejtim, Odmut është më i ngjashëm me sitet më në veri, në Portat e Hekurta dhe Italinë veriore. Të paktën dy site të tjera malazeze kanë shtresa mezolitike. Crvena Stijena dhe Medina Stijena janë të vendosura në gryka të lumenjve, por krahasimet direkte me Konispolin janë të vështira (Benac 1957, Tringham 1971, Srejavic 1988). Një numër sitesh të tjera janë zbuluar nga bregdeti i Dalmacisë dhe verilindjes së Adriatikut. Pak të dhëna janë njohur prej tyre, por disa kanë dhënë datime të C-14 që janë të ngjashme me ato të Konispolit dhe fauna të krahasueshme (Malez 1979, Chapman dhe Müller 1990). Të paktën nga mungesa e konstruksioneve të vatrave dhe harpunëve, Crvena Stijena dhe ndoshta sitet e Dalmacisë ngjajnë më shumë me Konispolin.

Mezoliti i vonë ('Castelnovan') përfaqëson ka të njëjtën moshë si Konispoli dhe është gjetur në sitet e Italisë së brendshme dhe bregdetare. Përqendrimi më i madh i këtyre siteve është në veri (për shembull, Romagnano III dhe Pradestel në pellgun e Trentos). Një numër i konsiderueshëm njihen nga Friuli, Karsti i Triestes dhe në afërsi të Sllovenisë në krye të Adriatikut (Biagi dhe Voytek 1994, Biagi, Starnini dhe Voytek 1993). Ato ndodhen edhe në Italinë qendrore dhe jugore (për shembull, Riparo Blanc në Latium dhe Grotta della Madonna di Praia a Mare në Kalabri), dhe në Sicili (sidomos në Uzzo Cave, ndonëse ekonomia, prania e varreve dhe vendndodhja, e këtij siti krahasohet me Franchthin, jo me Konispolin) (Alessio et al. 1984; Barker 1981; Guerreschi 1994; Piperno 1985; Piperno, Scali dhe Taglicozzo 1980). Përsëri, krahasime të ngushta nuk mund të bëhen me Konispolin, por disa ngjashmëri janë të dukshme. Ibex dhe dreri i kuq janë gjuajtur në një numër të këtyre siteve, dhe trapezët e veglat e dhëmbëzuara janë të zakonshme.

Shpella e Konispolit përfaqëson një sit mezolitik të rëndësishëm dhe të datuar mirë. Në intervalet pas rreth 6700 BC (e kalibruar) dhe ndoshta deri në fund të vitit 5700 BC, gjuetarët e ibex dhe të gjetarëve të tjerë, vizituan këtë sit për aktivitete që përfshijnë, therje, gatim dhe ngrënien e prehëve të tyre, si dhe prodhimin dhe mirëmbajtjen e veglave prej guri. Analizat e mëvonshme të të dhënave nga Konispoli do të hedhin dritë mbi mjedisin dhe jetesën e njerëzve që përdornin shpellën në fund të Pleistocenit dhe fillimit të Holocenit.