



Neanderthals and Modern Humans in Mani: Results from the 2023 Apidima Field Season

Lecture by Assoc. Prof. **Vangelis Tourloukis** (Assoc. Professor for Prehistoric Archaeology, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Ioannina; Senior Researcher – Paleoanthropology, Institute for Archaeological Sciences, Senckenberg Centre for Human Evolution and Palaeoenvironment, Department of Geosciences, Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen) and Prof. **Katerina Harvati** (Centre for Early Sapiens Behaviour (SapienCE), University of Bergen; Professor for Paleoanthropology at the Institute of Archaeological Sciences, and Director of the Senckenberg Center for Human Evolution and Palaeoenvironment, Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen)



Apidima Cave Complex Aerial Photo (Apidima Excavations Archive)

The lecture will take place on **Wednesday, 29 May 2024, at 7:30** p.m. (EEST) at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, Tsami Karatasou 5, 11742 (the lecture will also be streamed online via Zoom)

Registration is required for both in-person and virtual attendance.

To attend in-person, please register at norwinst@uib.no

To attend via Zoom, please register via the following link:

<https://uib.zoom.us/meeting/register/u5MufuCrrj8uGNeCkZMwjsgIxAhNatgb0qdV>



Abstract

The Apidima project is a five-year research program of archaeological and geological investigations at the homonymous complex of five caves (A to E) in Mani, Peloponnese. A first phase of research at the site in the 1970's and 1980's brought to light important palaeoanthropological and archaeological finds, including two crania from Cave A and a partial skeleton (presumably from a burial) from Cave C. Recent re-analysis of the crania (Harvati et al. 2019 in the journal *Nature*) gave unexpected results for cranium AAO1, for it attributes it to an early *Homo sapiens*, and not a Neandertal as it was thought earlier. A direct radiometric date of 210 ka BP indicates that AAO1 represents the oldest anatomically modern human specimen in Eurasia –essentially, about 150,000 years older than the oldest *Homo sapiens* known so far in Europe. The Apidima project aims at two main objectives: 1) to evaluate and re-address the research questions that emerged from the earlier work, with an archaeological methodology based on cutting-edge excavation techniques, and 2) to elucidate new research questions arising from the recent re-analysis and direct dating of the known palaeoanthropological material. The 2023 research campaign opened, for the first time after the 1970s/1980's, new excavation units in Caves B and C, and conducted extensive topographic documentation and geological sampling at all five caves. The works of 2023 brought to light significant new finds, which set a solid basis for assessing old questions (such as the antiquity of human activities at each of the caves), and re-address novel questions based on our new findings (such as the presence of the earliest *Homo sapiens* in Europe), thereby shedding new light on this very important site.

Biography

Dr. Tourloukis (PhD & MA, Leiden University) is an Associate Professor of Prehistoric Archaeology at the University of Ioannina, Greece, and Senior Researcher in Paleoanthropology, Institute of Archaeological Sciences, University of Tübingen, Germany. Dr. Tourloukis has a broad training in Prehistoric Archaeology and his research focuses on the Palaeolithic period, lithic technology and geoarchaeology.

He has been awarded research grants from the German Research Foundation (DFG, 2021-2024), the Volkswagen Foundation (2019), the Wenner Gren Foundation (2015-2016) and the State Scholarship Foundation of Greece (2005-2008).

Dr. Tourloukis has extensive experience as co-director of field research and lithic analyst in several survey projects and excavations in Greece and Turkey. Since 2012, he has been (co-)directing the excavations and surveys conducted in the framework of the ERC projects PaGE (2012-2016) and CROSSROADS (2017-2022), where he was responsible for designing the research methodology, coordinating the field and laboratory analyses of the cultural material, and contextualizing the chronological and paleoenvironmental data. At present, he is involved as research collaborator in the ERC-funded project FIRSTSTEPS (PI: Prof. K. Harvati). Dr. Tourloukis has co-directed and/or participated in more than 25 research projects of archaeological surveys and excavations in Greece (Epirus, Macedonia, Thessaly, Peloponnese, Crete, Ionian Islands). Currently, together with Prof. K. Harvati, he directs the archaeological, palaeoanthropological and geological investigations of the five-year research project (2022-2026) at the Apidima cave complex in Mani, southern Greece.



In the study of prehistoric cultural remains, Dr. Tourloukis investigates the evolutionary dynamics between early human technology, subsistence strategies and environmental settings. His research interests include the evolution of the human niche, the role and social dimensions of prehistoric technology in early human behavior, and the socio-economic and ecological contexts of hominin behavioral diversity.

Dr. **Katerina Harvati**¹ is Professor for Paleoanthropology at the Institute of Archaeological Sciences, and Director of the Senckenberg Center for Human Evolution and Paleoenvironment at the University of Tübingen. Her research focuses on Pleistocene human evolution, with special emphasis on Neanderthal paleobiology, on modern human origins and dispersals, and on the paleoanthropology of South-East Europe. Her broader interests include primate evolution and life history; the settlement of the Americas; and understanding the evolutionary processes underlying human skeletal variation. She is a pioneer of the application of virtual anthropology methods to paleoanthropology.

Prof. Harvati is President of the European Society for the Study of Human Evolution (ESHE), and Editor-in-Chief of the diamond open access journal *PaleoAnthropology*.

Among her many distinctions, in 2021 she was awarded with the highest academic distinction in Germany, the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz prize; and in 2014 with the Research Award of the state of Baden-Württemberg. She was elected member of the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina in 2022.

Prof. Harvati is the recipient of three ERC grants: ERC Starting Grant PaGE (2012-16); ERC Consolidator Grant CROSSROADS (2017-22); and ERC Advanced Grant FIRSTSTEPS (2022-28). In the framework of these projects, she has been conducting an extensive research program in Greece. She directs the DFG Centre for Advanced Studies 'Words, Bones, Genes, Tools: Tracking linguistic, cultural and biological trajectories of the human past' together with Prof. Jäger. She has (co)directed fieldwork in Europe and Africa since 2006.

Since 2020, Harvati is also Professor II at the Centre for Early Sapiens Behaviour (SapienCE), University of Bergen, Norway.

Currently, she directs the archaeological, paleoanthropological and geological investigations of the five-year research project (2022-2026) at the Apidima cave complex in Mani, southern Greece, together with Dr. Tourloukis. This research is conducted by the Norwegian Institute in Athens and funded through her ERC Advanced grant FIRSTSTEPS.

¹ Also: Centre for Early Sapiens Behaviour (SapienCE), University of Bergen; DFG Centre for Advanced Studies 'Words, Bones, Genes, Tools', Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen; Museum of Anthropology, Medical School, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens