Comment and Reply

Comment on "Konispol Cave, Southern Albania, and Correlations with Other Aegean Caves Occupied in the Late Quaternary by Joseph Schuldenrein"

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I was very glad to see J. Schuldenrein's article on Konispol Cave in *Geoarchaeology* (13[5]:501–526) because I have been following the studies there for comparison with Franchthi Cave in southern Greece. It is an interesting site and rather complex for its relatively small size. Also I was glad to see Schuldenrein's comparisons with Franchthi and two other caves, but I would like to set straight some misinterpretations of the facts. In his Figure 9, the placement of the sedimentation intervals and hiatuses is quite faulty. We have no evidence of occupation in Franchthi after the end of the Neolithic, shortly after 5000 B.P., except for post-Roman disturbance, and, very importantly, the Cave was occupied at least 35,000 years ago, and probably earlier. Flint artifacts and large animal bones occur below the volcanic ash (Stratum Q) which is dated ca. 33,000 B.P., and suggestions of Middle Paleolithic occupation (probably below present sea level) come from stray artifacts found in disturbed areas. These misconceptions would have been avoided if Schuldenrein had consulted other pertinent available literature, particularly by Perlès (1987) and Vitelli (1993). Perlès discusses the intensity (although sparse) of occupation in Strata R and P, as well as the likelihood of a Middle Paleolithic presence in the cave. Vitelli describes in detail the degree of post-Neolithic reworking, as well as the way in which Paralia deposits were dated, in the absence of C-14 dates.

Schuldenrein's reading of the paleosol on Paralia (the beach occupation site) is incorrect. It is a Pleistocene paleosol of unknown duration, not an early Holocene paleosol. Soil development terminated ca. 8000 B.P. by virtue of the onset of Neolithic habitation of the Paralia. In other words, this was an old soil surface on which the Neolithic people came to live. In fact, in areas beyond the Paralia settlement, that soil is the modern soil.

It is inappropriate to speak of deglaciation in connection with Franchthi (p. 521). There was no glaciation anywhere near the Franchthi area, and it is even quite doubtful that freezing temperatures were ever experienced there, at least not low enough to produce frost shattering.

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Finally, I believe that Schuldenrein may have generalized a bit too much in identifying the "most pervasive occupational gap among the four sites" (p. 523) that he is comparing as occurring between 20,000 and 12,000 B.P. The record of occupation for Kastritsa fills the gap between 20,000 and 13,000 B.P., without any indication of a hiatus such as Schuldenrein shows in his Figure 9. In Klithi the "rich archaeological material is confined to the uppermost 2 m . . . between about 16,000 and 10,000 B.P." (Bailey & Gamble, 1990: 157). Thus, the statement that "virtually no cave sedimentation occurred between 14,000 and 11,500 B.P." (p. 523) is obviously incorrect. The 12,300 date for Klithi and the 12,540 date for S2 in Franchthi contradict that conclusion, and Stratum S1 in Franchthi is undated but must fall somewhere between 14,680 and 22,000 (Farrand, 1993: Figure 4). All dates mentioned here are in uncalibrated radiocarbon years.

My Franchthi colleagues and I recognize that our publication plan, which consists of individual fascicles by each of our specialists, spanning some 11 years now, may not facilitate access to a synoptic view of our work in Franchthi. Nevertheless, all the facts and interpretations just referred to have been in print for 5 or more years. A synthetic volume on Franchthi Cave is in preparation, and the full details of my stratigraphic study is forthcoming in the next few months (Farrand, in press).

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