
Recent research on submerged prehistoric landscapes in the Bay of Kiladha, Greece, and its archaeological implications

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Résumé

The Bay of Kiladha, in Southern Greece, is well known for the presence, on its northern shore, of Franchthi Cave, a major prehistoric site. Excavations in the cave by Indiana University in the 1960s and 1970s revealed an exceptionally long occupational sequence, starting in the Upper Palaeolithic and spanning the entire Mesolithic and Neolithic. During most of this time, because of sea level change, the Bay of Kiladha was a small coastal plain, and the cave, which is now very close to the sea, could be as far as a few kilometres away from it.

In the Neolithic, the cave was not the main focus of human activity anymore, as local groups turned to village life. Architectural remains dating to this period were found in front of the cave (the "Paralia" sector overlooking the modern pebble beach), but the main settlement was probably further away, in the small coastal plain that was later submerged by postglacial sea level rise. Accordingly, underwater research was carried out in the Bay of Kiladha in the 1970s and 1980s, before coming to a halt.

The University of Geneva and the Greek Service of Underwater Antiquities resumed research in the Bay of Kiladha in 2012, using different methods, including geophysical measures (in the course of the University of Geneva *Terra Submersa* Expedition in the Argolic Gulf) and piston coring from a platform at sea. The results have far-reaching implications, both for our understanding of human response to a changing environment, and concerning prospects for future research in the bay.

Mots-Clés: Submerged prehistoric landscapes, Neolithic, Franchthi Cave, Greece, geophysical measures, piston coring

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