

**RESEARCH REPORT
IREX STG**

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Grant Year: 2002

Narrative Report

The project entitled, *Documenting Neandertal occupation at the periphery: excavations at the cave sites of Siypantash and Anghilak* was an enormous success. The success of the 2002 field season was the product of a true collaborative effort between American and Uzbek anthropologists and archaeologists. The main goal of this past field season was to investigate two newly discovered caves, Siypantash and Anghilak, in the Kashkadaryia region of Uzbekistan in order to document the presence of Middle Paleolithic/Mousterian occupation horizons (125,000 – 40,000 years ago). Dr. Rustam Suleymanov, my principal collaborator, discovered these caves during a survey of the Kashkadaryia region in October 2002. During the five-week season in May-June 2002, the team also was able to investigate three other nearby caves for additional Middle Paleolithic deposits.

During the first week of the field season, the team visited Siypantash cave to examine its rock art. Siypantash's rock art appears to lack the characteristics of Upper Paleolithic cave art and was perhaps painted during the Neolithic or Bronze Age. This rock shelter was unknown to local archaeologists previous to our preliminary investigations and a specialist in cave painting from the Institute of Archaeology in Samarkand will begin research at Siypantash next year. Because the art at Siypantash is not of Paleolithic origin, our team will no longer conduct research at this locality.

After preliminary investigations at Siypantash, the team put in two test pits (1 X 2 m.) at Katta Kamar cave (N 39°15'790, E 66°41'727, 915 m.) in the Kashkadaryia region of Uzbekistan. Dr. Suleymanov recovered two lithic pieces from a small test trench that

are probably of the Mousterian tradition in October 2001. Unfortunately, our larger trenches did not yield any lithic or faunal material. We also did not uncover any ceramics or more recent artifacts from the excavation or from screening the sediments. After digging to a depth of 70 cm. through continuous roof fall, we abandoned this cave to begin work at another promising locality three kilometers away. Although we did not find any material at Katta Kamar during the 2002 field season, the cave should not be ruled out in terms of its potential to yield Middle Paleolithic material. Next year part of our team will return to Katta Kamar to continue excavations in order to reach the bedrock of the cave so that it either can be sufficiently eliminated or included in the Middle Paleolithic archaeological record of Uzbekistan.

For the last two weeks of the 2002 field season, the team worked in Anghilak cave (N 39°17'124, E 66°41'218, 796 m.) (Figures 1, 2). A 1 x 2 trench, the long axis of which faces due east, was excavated (Figure 3). After screening the first 20 cm. of the trench, enough lithic and faunal material was recovered that we began a more controlled excavation. The 1 X 2 m. pit was divided into two square meters, J10 and K10 respectively, and a second 1 X 1, J12, was opened. The square meters were divided into four 25 X 25 cm. quadrants that were given cardinal labels. The excavation then proceeded in 10 cm. depth intervals. X, Y, and Z coordinates as well as 360 degree orientation of long axis and long and b-axis inclination was recorded for any animal bone or artifact over 10 cm. long. All material less than 10 cm. was placed in quadrant bags from the appropriate 10 cm. interval of the excavated square. J10 and K10 were excavated to a depth of 1.45 m., while J12 was excavated to a depth of 75 cm.

The two test trenches from Anghilak cave yielded a rich Mousterian lithic industry (n=440) as well as over 2000 animal bones from the Late Pleistocene. The lithic material consisted of recognizable tool types such as Mousterian points (Figure 4), blades, bladelets, flakes with retouch (Figure 5), as well as a considerable amount of

lithic debris and debitage, the by-product of stone tool manufacture. Most of the animal bones were long bone fragments of sheep and goat with clear indications of human modification and processing. All of this material was recovered from the first 80 cm. of the excavation. From roughly 80 cm. to 1.45 m, the cave sediments at Anghilak were composed of heavy clays and were sterile. Bedrock was not reached.

In addition to this relatively large volume of Paleolithic material, the team was able to identify a well-delineated ancient hearth/fireplace from which a charcoal sample was collected for carbon-14 dating purposes. At a depth of roughly 75 cm, in the northeast quadrant of J10, a patch of what is probably ochre, a pigment used in burials, for personal adornment, and in cave art, was discovered. This material was also collected for further analysis.

Anghilak cave is the first new Mousterian cave site to be discovered in Uzbekistan since the early 1980s and is the first site, cave or open-air, from the Paleolithic era to ever be discovered in the Kashkadaryia region of this newly independent nation. Anghilak cave lies in between two important mountainous regions from which Paleolithic occupation has been documented in Uzbekistan, the Zerafshan foothills to the north, near the city of Samarkand, and the mountains of the Gissar range to the south where the famous Neandertal child was discovered in the Baisun region of Gissar range from the cave site of Teshik-Tash. The material recovered from the 2002 field season at Anghilak cave has established the foundation for important future multi-national and multi-disciplinary research at this site and for significant contributions to the investigations of Neandertal and/or early modern human colonization of Central Asia.