PROGRAM AND ABSTRACTS OF THE 12TH MEETING OF THE ASIAN PALEOLITHIC ASSOCIATION

SYMPOSIUM:
EARLY UPPER PALAEOLITHIC IN ASIA:
COMMONALITY AND DIVERSITY AFTER THE IUP

2025

DATES: June 20th – 24th, 2025
VENUE: TOHOKU UNIVERSITY

ORGANIZED BY
JAPANESE PALAEOLITHIC RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
ASIAN PALEOLITHIC ASSOCIATION

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The Middle Paleolithic lithic industry of Taglar Cave, Azerbaijan, in the South Caucasus

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Taglar Cave is a karst cave site that opens into the foothills of the Lesser Caucasus Mountains, Khojavand, in Southern Azerbaijan. Discovered in 1960, it was extensively excavated by Mamadali Huseynov for 12 seasons between 1964 and 1986, with his collaborators including Mansur Mansurov and Asadulla Jafarov. The site is unique for its more than 5-meter-thick Middle Paleolithic cultural deposits, whereas most cave sites in the region have relatively thin deposits. Furthermore, excavators noted that the lithic assemblages at Taglar resembled those of the Zagros Mousterian in Southwest Asia—an innovative proposition in Caucasian archaeology at the time. To evaluate this interpretation and investigate the stratigraphic changes in the Middle Paleolithic lithic assemblages, we resumed excavations at Taglar Cave in 2023. The first two seasons focused on identifying the remaining primary deposits, establishing their stratigraphy, and sampling the archaeological remains. This study presents the preliminary results of these analyses.

The site is situated in the Kuruchay Valley near Fuzuli City. The Kuruchay is a tributary of the Araxes River, which flows into the Caspian Sea. The region connects the southern coasts of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, likely serving as an east-west corridor for the eastward dispersal of Neanderthals from Europe to Asia. This paper also includes a techno-typological comparison of the Middle Paleolithic assemblages from Taglar Cave with those from Southwest and Central Asia, contributing to a better understanding of the Neanderthal dispersal process.

***Keywords**: Middle Paleolithic, Zagros Mousterian, Neanderthal dispersals, Caucasus corridors, Southwest Asia*

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