

Preface

This is the third volume of final reports produced by the Crimean Paleolithic Expedition that began joint field investigations ten years ago. After years of excavations at Middle Paleolithic sites in the western part of Crimea (Marks and Chabai, eds. 1998; Chabai and Monigal, eds. 1999), it became obvious that the study of Middle Paleolithic variability in Eastern Crimea was necessary to put the initial work into a broader geographic perspective. In addition, the test excavations of Buran-Kaya III rockshelter, being carried out by Dr. A. A. Yanevich, provided a rare possibility to study both Middle and Early Upper Paleolithic industries in a single stratigraphic sequence. In 1996, A. E. Marks and A. A. Yanevich began joint excavations at Buran-Kaya III, with Yanevich concentrating on the Upper Paleolithic deposits and Marks on what was then thought to be wholly Middle Paleolithic deposits. These excavations produced both unexpected and significant results: the Upper Paleolithic occupation of Levels C and E were found stratigraphically below the Middle Paleolithic, Micoquian Kiik Koba facies occupation of Layer B. This was the first time in Europe where a single stratigraphic sequence proved that a Middle Paleolithic occupation was absolutely and undeniably younger than early Upper Paleolithic occupations.

In the course of a survey carried out during the same field season, V. P. Chabai and A. I. Yevtushenko found the new Middle Paleolithic site of Karabi Tamchin, as well as confirming the presence of *in situ* Pleistocene sediments at the famous site of Chokurcha I, which had been excavated during the late 1920s and early 1930s. As a result of this work, these three sites (Figure 1) became the main focus of activity for the Crimean Paleolithic Expedition

for the next four years. The reports contained in this volume are the product of this work.

Over time, our understanding of Crimean Middle Paleolithic variability has shifted. When we began work, the accepted framework for the Crimean Middle Paleolithic included four different industries: the Ak-Kaya, the Kiik Koba, the Staroselian, and the Western Crimean Mousterian. By 1998, however, based on work in western Crimea, it seemed clear that only two Middle Paleolithic traditions existed, a Western Crimean Mousterian and a Micoquian with three facies (Ak-Kaya, Kiik Koba, and Staroselian). Our more recent work in eastern Crimea has certainly reinforced the perception that the Micoquian consists of these three facies, the variability of which were determined by a combination of site activities, distance from raw material, and occupational intensity. In addition, the presence of Western Crimean Mousterian in eastern Crimea, at Karabi Tamchin, suggests that, at the very least, its name is not fully appropriate. Here, as with the other excavations, it is apparent now that the traditional distinction between eastern and western Crimea has little meaning for Middle Paleolithic site distributions and Crimea may best be considered as a single geographic area, at least during the Middle Paleolithic.

Aside from the necessary descriptive reports on recovered paleoenvironmental data, lithic assemblages, absolute and relative chronology, economic adaptations of the different occupations, this volume also includes a number of studies of artifact and site use, based not only on traditional microwear analyses but also on new, quite creative interpretations of the meaning of intra-assemblage technological and raw material variability. These add another dimension to local Paleolithic studies, proposing many provocative

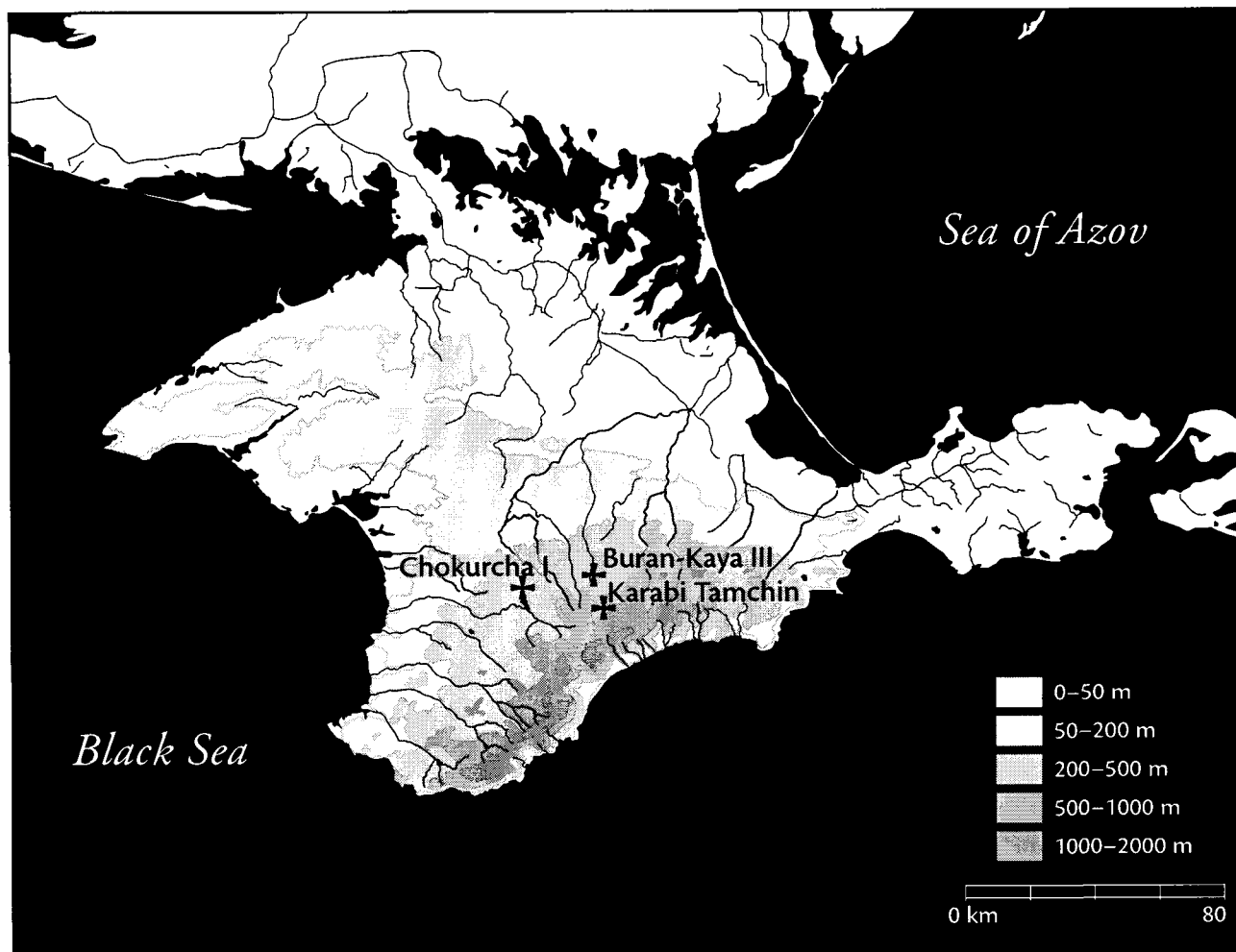


Figure 1—The western Crimean sites of Buran-Kaya III, Karabi-Tamchin, and Chokurcha I.

interpretations. As always, time will tell whether these new perceptions will permit new and more meaningful analyses and understanding of the Middle Paleolithic. At the very least, they are truly thought-provoking.

The final chapter attempts to place our Crimean work into the larger context of Eastern Europe. At best, it is an initial formulation and, as work progresses in Crimea and other areas of Eastern Europe, our understanding of inter-regional relationships will undoubtedly change. Such is the nature of archaeological research.

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