By Tsenka Tsanova, ABF Postdoctoral Fellow in Archaeology at The Field Museum
February 2012

My work in the Anthropology Department at The Field Museum, Chicago (Illinois) began in the Fall of 2011 (September 26). The main objective of my research was to work with the stone collections from the Upper Paleolithic period in the Anthropology Department at The Field Museum. The writing that I am about to complete based on the research at The Field Museum and my previous investigations is entitled, “The Emergence of Cultural Modernity. Middle to Upper Paleolithic Transition in the Eastern Balkans: Neanderthal-Modern Human Cultural Transactions.” This research concerns the emergence of cultural modernity, which presumably appeared with the arrival of the first modern humans in Europe and the extinction of Neanderthal populations about 50,000-35,000 years ago. I have already examined collections related to this topic from various areas of Western Eurasia (Zargos Mountain in Iran, Levant in Israel, and the Eastern Balkans – Bulgaria). My research at The Field Museum was conducted under the supervision of Dr. William Parkinson, Associate Curator of Eurasian Anthropology. I also worked very intensively on the stone collections with Dr. James Phillips, Curator of the Near East and North Africa in the Anthropology Department at The Field Museum.

Social events, seminars and travel

During the term of the fellowship I have also participated in social, educational, and community events and seminars. One of these was the Bulgarian Days in Chicago Festival, organized by the Bulgarian American Association on October 2, 2011. Dilyana Ivanova and Todor Petev introduced me to the Bulgarian community and authorities as the first postdoctoral fellow of the Archaeological and Anthropological Grant Opportunities in Bulgaria Program. I discussed my research during the Postdoctoral Fellowship at The Field Museum, funded by the America for Bulgaria Foundation. I met Simeon Stoilov (the General Consul of Bulgaria in Chicago at the time), other Bulgarian officials, and active Bulgarian community members. I discussed with them the problems and the future of Bulgarian Heritage and Archeology (http://fieldmuseum.org/explore/bulgarian-days-chicago-festival).

Additionally I participated in The Field Museum event called “Night of Bulgarian Archeology” on October 21, 2011, which was organized by the Department of
Anthropology. The goal of the event was to present the awarded projects of the Archaeological and Anthropological Grant Opportunities in Bulgaria Program, which was developed by The Field Museum in collaboration with the American Research Center in Sofia (ARCS) and funded by the America for Bulgaria Foundation (ABF). This important cultural event was attended not only by many active members of the Bulgarian community, but also by ABF president Frank Bauer, various specialists from The Field Museum, and guests from our Balkan neighbors, including Greece, Serbia and Bosnia.

After the opening of the event by Dr. Parkinson and the detailed presentation of the funded archeological projects in Bulgaria by Dilyana Ivanova, I presented a lecture on my research related to Bulgarian prehistory. I communicated my research agenda and goals for the academic year of my fellowship (2011-2012) and introduced the importance of actual and future results for the development of Bulgarian Paleolithic archeology. The particular topic that I lectured about highlighted relevant issues in human origins and migration, including the extinction of Neanderthal populations and their replacement by modern *Homo sapiens*. I also talked about the crucial geographical position of Bulgaria as the gate to Europe for the modern human population migrating from the Near East before 40,000 years ago. My presentation related what is already known about the archaeological record with the future prospects and ongoing field projects of the Human Evolution Department at the Max-Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany (http://fieldmuseum.org/explore/night-bulgarian-archaeology).

One of the aspects of my fellowship work at The Field Museum was to conduct fieldwork in Bulgaria. In November 2011, I attended our first archaeological excavation in Northern Bulgaria, which is co-sponsored by the Human Evolution Department at the Max-Planck Institute (Germany) and Prof. J.-J. Hublin, and is a collaboration with the National Institute of Archaeology and Museum, Sofia, and Dr. Stanimira Taneva. My trip to Bulgaria was supported by the America for Bulgaria Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship funds of The Field Museum. The preliminary results of this excavation have been published in Bulgarian and the publication in English is forthcoming.

During the 2011-2012 academic year, I attended various lectures and seminars organized by The Anthropology Department at The Field Museum.
During my postdoctoral fellowship, I also worked on two important publications concerning the first manifestation of modern human in Western Eurasia, and more precisely from the sites of Yafteh and Warwasi in the Zagros Mountains in Iran and the cave of Kozarnika in Northern Bulgaria (Tsanova et al. 2012). The second publication has been accepted but is still under revision (Tsanova, accepted).

In 2012 I also published two additional papers indirectly related to my research topic. For one of the articles, I contributed work concerning modern human lithic assemblages from South Africa (Villa et al. 2012). The second paper discusses flake production of all lithic collections from the onset of the Upper Paleolithic and the transitional Middle to Upper Paleolithic assemblage in Northern Bulgaria (Tsanova, 2012).

This February 11, I was elected to be an active member representing Bulgarian Upper Paleolithic research in Commission 8 (Eurasian Upper Paleolithic) of the International Union for Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences (IUPPS- http://www.uispp.org/). At the annual meeting in the Laténium Archeological Museum, Hauterive (Neuchâtel, Switzerland) I presented the current data from the Early Upper Paleolithic from Northern Bulgaria. New analysis on the lithic assemblages and perspectives of the Bulgarian Paleolithic research were discussed. Statements about this communication will be published at the end of 2013.

References:


