

RUSSIA

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Introduction

Despite recent economic problems Russian archaeologists carry on active research in the area of the Upper Paleolithic studies. Several important fieldwork projects are currently under way in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Northern Asia. We will concentrate on field research carried out within the national territory, thus omitting intriguing studies directed by the Russian scholars at Ukraine, Central Asia, and Mongolia. In this short overview we present a roster of main sites under study and names of scholars. For the sake of brevity we will include only important monographs and collective works in the list of references, ignoring a vast number of collections of articles, journal papers, technical reports, etc.

Let us consider the main research centers in Russian prehistoric archaeology. In Moscow it is the Stone Age Department at the Institute of Archaeology, Russian Academy of Sciences. Paleolithic scholars are mostly involved in the investigation of the central provinces of Russia and in the Northern Caucasus. One should not avoid the research activities of the Department of Archaeology of the Moscow State University (fieldwork in the south of Russia and the Urals), the Museum and the Institute of Anthropology at the same University (the long-term exploration campaign at Avdeevo), and the State Historical Museum.

In St. Petersburg, scholars mainly work as members of the Paleolithic Department at the Institute for the Material Culture History, Russian Academy of Sciences. The institute carries out intensive independent or collaborative research on the Upper Paleolithic at the Central Russian Plain (Upper Volga, Kostenki, Avdeevo, and Iudinovo), South Siberia and even the remote area of Yakutia (the Yana River valley). Apart from the institute, the Paleolithic research is carried out by the scholars from the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg State University and the Museum of the History of Religions.

There is a growing number of independent centers of Paleolithic studies in European Russia outside Moscow and St Petersburg; these are affiliated with local universities (Kaliningrad, Bryansk,

Voronezh, Lipetsk, Cheboksary, Saratov, Volgograd, Perm, Nizhniy Tagil), academic research centers (Kazan, Syktyvkar, Ufa, Yekaterinburg), museums (Kostenki, Kurchatov, Samara, Chelyabinsk), and archaeological societies (Rostov-na-Donu).

Paleolithic studies in the Asian part of Russia are co-ordinated by the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography in Novosibirsk, the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, which has a network of subsidiary laboratories, located in several cities in Siberia. The Institute brings together archaeologists studying the Paleolithic in different parts of Russia (South Siberia, Far East, Northern Caucasus) and the adjacent territories of Mongolia and Central Asia, occasionally exploring those remote areas as Iran and Montenegro.

Paleolithic research in different parts of Siberia and the Russian Far East is conducted by the scholars from numerous local research centers, the main of these are located at Tomsk, Barnaul, Krasnoyarsk, Abakan, Irkutsk, Ulan-Ude, Chita, Yakutsk, Khabarovsk, Vladivostok, Iuzhno-Sakhalinsk, and Magadan.

Field projects and publications

Let us start our brief overview from the western most point of Russia, the Kaliningrad region, located at the Baltic Sea coast. O.A. Druzhinina discovered some Final Paleolithic remains at Ryadino V. Farther to the east, in the Upper Volga Basin, a team by G.V. Sinitsyna has discovered several occurrences produced tanged points assemblages of Late Glacial age similar to those known in northwestern Europe (Baranova Gora, Vyshegora I and III). These sites shed a new light on the recolonisation of North European Plains by the groups of hunters following the Last Ice Age.

At the famous site of Sungir N.O. Bahder and A.B. Seleznev carried out restricted stratigraphic fieldwork, supplemented by the publication of a summary of planimetric data (Seleznev 2008).

K.N. Gavrillov continues the work at Khotylevo II at the Desna River valley. Apart from the remains of domestic structures made of mammoth bones, this rich Gravettian site produced new art objects. The results of the previous excavation campaigns have been published (Gavrillov 2008). Work was continued by G.A. Khlopachev and G.V. Grigoryeva at Iudinovo to study a series of mammoth-bone constructions on this Magdalenian site.

A.V. Trusov and Y.N. Chuvilyaeva excavated Upper Paleolithic sites dispersed in Central Russia, at the territory of the Moscow, Tver and Ryazan Regions (Klushino, Bolotnikova, etc.). Interesting data has recently been gathered from excavations of Final Paleolithic site of Vashana (the Tula Region) directed by S.N. Lisitsyn and N.K. Anisiutkin. Meanwhile the main efforts are concentrated on a long-term research project on the East Gravettian site of Zaraisk in the Moscow area, south of the capital city. Over the last few years a multidisciplinary team led by Kh.A. Amirkhanov and S.N. Lev carry out intensive studies of the Eastern Gravettian site of Zaraisk B. The main results of the previous excavation campaign at the Locus A of the site, including the discoveries of remarkable feminine and animal figurines, are published (Amirkhanov *et al.* 2009).

All data relevant to the Pleistocene human occupation of the Oka River basin are summarized by A.V. Trusov (2011), while the Final Paleolithic occurrences at the Upper Volga were presented by M.G. Zhilin (2007).

The Kostenki expedition continued the exploration of this unique cluster of Upper Paleolithic sites on the River Don. A.A. Sinitsyn excavated the lower assemblages at the multicomponent site of Kostenki XIV (this site produced the earliest Upper Paleolithic manifestations known at the Russian Plain), while M.V. Anikovich concentrated on the stratigraphic investigation at those sites as Kostenki I, VIII and XII. S.N. Lisitsyn conducts excavation at the Borshevo village not far from Kostenki. The collective monograph resumed the relevant data on the Upper Paleolithic localities of Kostenki (Anikovich *et al.* 2008); it included the overview of the research history, the discussion of chronological and paleoenvironmental problems, a brief description of the all assemblages arranged in temporal and culture-historical order.

Beyond Kostenki new research activities took place in the areas around the famous sites being essentially blank in the past. A.N. Bessudnov and A.A. Bessudnov studied a series of sites at Divnogorye, while I.V. Fediunin (2010) excavated Nazarovka and Samotoevka.

N.B. Akhmetgaleeva directed the exploration of the cluster of multicomponent Late Upper Paleolithic sites located near the city of Kurchatov, the Kursk Region (Byki II, V and VII). Among other achievements in the study of Paleolithic of the Central Russian Plain one should mention a long-term campaign carried out by the joint team of scholars from Moscow and St.Petersburg (E.V. Bulochnikova and G.P. Grigor'ev) at the site of Avdevo, which is close in character to Kostenki I, the upper (East Gravettian) component.

In the south of Russia A.E. Matiukhin excavated a group of lithic workshops belonging to different periods of the Paleolithic at Biriuch'ya Balka. A team directed by N.B. Leonova, continued a long-term excavation at the large open-air habitation site of Kamennaya Balka II (Leonova *et al.* 2006), while N.A. Khaikunova excavated at Kamennaya Balka III located nearby.

In the Northwestern Caucasus, E.V. Belyaeva followed by E.V. Leonova carried out the Upper Paleolithic research at the rockshelter of Chygay, located at the Gorge of Borisovskoe. The materials from the Aurignacian site of Shirokiy Mys located at the Black Sea coast have been published by V.E. Shchelinsky (2007). Several assemblages of the multicomponent sites of Tinit I and Rubas I at Dagestan (the area around the Caspian Sea) investigated by A.P. Derevianko and A.A. Anoinin, could be referred to the Upper Paleolithic.

In the Middle Volga region, a lithic workshop of the Upper Paleolithic age of Sholma I is currently under excavation by M.S. Galimova and A.Y. Berezin. The scarce and dispersed data on the Upper Paleolithic development in the Lower Volga region are summarized by P.E. Nekhoroshev (2006).

P.Y. Pavlov and E.L. Lychagina continued the work on the Late Upper Paleolithic of the Northeastern part of the European Russia.

To the east lie the Ural Mountains rich in cave sites. The geological, hydrological and meteorological studies were continued at the famous cave of Kapovaya (Shulgantash) with Pleistocene-aged drawings (Lyakhnitsky 2008). V.S. Zhitenev is studying the cave sites in the Southern Urals, namely Sikiyaz-Tamak I. In collaboration with V.G. Kotov he resumed the excavations at the Kapovaya Cave. Y.B. Serikov continued the fieldwork in the Trans-Ural region.

The Upper Paleolithic remains are far from being numerous at the vast territory of the West Siberian Plain. One of the few exceptions is the unique mammoth deathsite of Lugovskoe located at the centre of the Plain (Maschenko *et al.* 2006).

The Upper Paleolithic studies are more intensive in different areas of South Siberian mountain belt, first of all at Altay. The major field project was targeted at the Altay sites with the focus on the Mousterian/Upper Paleolithic interface. Owing to the wealth of material discovered at these sites, we have been able to extract sufficient valuable data to allow us, for the first time, to study such key issues of prehistoric archaeology in North Asia as the genesis of the Upper Paleolithic. The unique concentration of multilayered cave and open air sites in the north-west of Gorny Altay makes this region a "classic" point of reference for the Paleolithic in North and Central Asia, in much the same way that Southwest France is considered a point of reference for archaeology in Western Europe.

The Denisova Cave was chosen as a key site, since its thick and well-stratified deposits could provide a principal reference for the whole area (Derevianko 2009, 2011). The Early Upper

Paleolithic Layer 11 yielded remarkable assemblage, including rich series of personal ornaments, including the bracelet made of softstone. The same component produced human remains (cf. below).

Apart from Denisova, A.N. Zenin finished the exploration of the Strashnaya (Central Altay), which produced Upper Paleolithic assemblages, while N.Y. Kungurova explored the lithic workshop of Urozhaynaya.

The groups headed by N.I. Drozdov and E.V. Akimova investigated different Upper Paleolithic sites at the Middle Yenisei valley both downstream and upstream from Krasnoyarsk (Sazhentsy, Serebryakovka, Derbina, Ust'Maltat, etc.). To the west from Krasnoyarsk, P.E. Nekhoroshev finished the salvage archaeology campaign at the sites of Berezovskiy Razrez.

In the Upper Yenisei Basin V.S. Zubkov started the exploration of a lithic workshop at Kuibyshevo II and several other stratified sites located at the Upper Abakan River basin (West Sayan Mountains) while S.A. Vasil'ev did a reconnaissance trip along the future railroad leading to Tuva. The Upper Paleolithic localities (mostly surface scatters) discovered in the 1960-1980s at Tuva have been published by Astakhov (2008).

After Novosibirsk, Irkutsk is the second most important centre for North Asian Paleolithic research. The scholars continued the investigations at the Irkutsk city territory (the sites of Sedova, Gerasimova I, etc.) as well as the region of Tayshet (Gribova Gora). In collaboration with Japanese colleagues, G.I. Medvedev and other Irkutsk archaeologists continue the multidisciplinary study of the stratified occurrences located at the Belaya River valley (Cheremushnik I and II) and the Bratsk reservoir (Bolshoy Naryn I and II).

Numerous Stone Age sites located at the area of the sources of the Lena River, was published in posthumous monograph of M.P. Aksenov (2009).

Further to east, in the southwestern part of the Trans-Baikal area, the research team, headed by V.I. Tashak explored a rich cluster of the Early Upper Paleolithic sites (Podzvonkaya, Barun-Alan, etc.). The teams under the guidance of M.V. Konstantinov and I.I. Razgildeeva, conducted Stone Age research in the western Trans-Baikal region; these are involved in large-scale horizontal excavations of Upper Paleolithic habitation sites (Ust'Menza V and XIV, Studenoe I and II) along the Chikoy River valley, which resulted in the discovery of an impressive series of slab-lined structures. In recent years, V.V. Nesterenko and S.V. Moroz started the fieldwork in previously unexplored areas of the southeastern and eastern portions of the Trans-Baikal, discovering new sites.

Other new area of the Upper Paleolithic culture has been identified in the northern part of Trans-Baikal, at the Vitim River valley, including the deeply stratified site of Kovrizhka III and several other sites (Ineshin & Teten'kin 2010). V.V. Krasnoschekov excavated the site of Bamovskaya in this remote area.

At the Pacific coastland of Russia, the Maritime Region, the Upper Paleolithic localities (Ustinovka, Novovarvarovka I, Tigrovaya II, etc.) are under exploration carried out by N.A. Kliuev and I.E. Pantiukhina. At the weakly explored Sakhalin Island A.A. Vasilevsky (2008) discovered the first clearly stratified Upper Paleolithic site of Ogonki V, which yielded the remains of light aboveground dwelling units.

For a long time, the vast perennially frozen areas of Northeastern Siberia remained scarcely investigated archaeologically; only isolated finds being known there. Yet these areas are of the crucial importance for the problems of early humans' dispersals and adaptations to the hard climatic conditions of High Latitudes, the peopling of the Americas. It goes without saying that one of the most interesting events in Russian prehistoric archaeology of the last decade was the sensational discovery of V.V. Pitulko at the Yana River, in North Yakutia (Putul'ko & Pavlova 2010). Several stratified occurrences labeled the Yana RHS site embedded into frozen deposits with abundant ice are referred to the unexpectedly old age (*ca.* 27,000 to 28,500 BP). Apart from rich and sophisticated lithic assemblage, bone, ivory and antler inventory, the site yielded personal ornaments and decorated objects. Moreover V.V. Pitulko investigated the famous mammoth deathsite of Berelekh, being for the long time the northernmost point of the human dispersal in the Pleistocene.

At the continental Northeast S.B. Slobodin and I.E. Vorobei are conducting research into sites dating to the Final Pleistocene and Early Holocene at Upper Kolyma and around the Sea of Okhotsk. I.E. Ponkratova excavated the multilayered site of Ushki V located at Ushki Lake (Kamchatka). The layer 7 of the site produced the habitation unit. A.V. Ptashinsky recently discovered new assemblages belonging to the Ushki culture.

In the extreme Northeast of the country, at the Chukotka Peninsular M.A. Kiryak continued exploration of the sites in the area of Lake Tytyl, including the occurrences dated by the end of the Pleistocene.

Discussion

Let us start with geoarchaeological problems. The last years saw the appearance of the first short but very concise manual devoted to the practical geoarchaeology, illustrated by the examples from Siberian archaeology (Vorob'eva & Berdnikova 2007). Complicated geoarchaeological problems connected with the excavations of the sites in frozen-ground deposits have been discussed by Putul'ko & Pavlova (2010). There are several important methodological novelties related to the subsistence and settlement of Paleolithic humans in Russia. The long-term investigation at Kamennaya Balka gave rise to a wide spectrum of previously weakly developed in Russia approaches, including the ecological setting of habitation sites, archaeozoological studies of butchering techniques and seasonality of occupation. Another interesting technique is the micro-stratigraphy. By recording each find individually and subsequently plotting its position on a micro-profile, it became possible to identify a series of 'occupation horizons' within a homogenous cultural

layer (Leonova *et al.* 2006). Kh. A. Amirkhanov (Amirkhanov *et al.* 2009) conducted a detailed micro-stratigraphical analysis of the site of Zarsk and was able to identify the various stages of occupation during which the layout of the prehistoric settlement changed considerably. The explorers of the multicomponent site of Bolshoy Yakor I (the northern Trans-Baikal) put forward intriguing techniques for the identification of seasonality and spatial structure of the living floors oriented toward the reconstruction of numerous short-term occupation episodes (Ineshin & Teten'kin 2010).

Next is the lithic analysis. In spite of the absence in Russia a general textbook on the Paleolithic typology and technology, some important achievements are worth to mention. First, a short manual devoted to the raw material analysis, including a careful petrography study, the search for raw material sources, the reconstruction of lithic procurement, etc., has been published (Kulik & Postnov 2009). Second, attention should be given to the special analysis of the techniques of retouch on the Paleolithic tools from the cave and open-air sites at Altay (Kolobova 2006).

During the last decade the Russian scholars achieved an important progress in previously little explored area, the analysis of the technologies used by the prehistoric people in manufacture of ivory, antler, and bone tools and personal ornaments. It is worth to mention a monograph devoted to the comprehensive study of ivory working in the Upper Paleolithic (Khlopachev 2006), supplemented by richly illustrated edition showing the intriguing experimental work on ivory and reindeer antler processing in the Stone Age (Khlopachev & Girya 2010).

In the area of the study of prehistoric art, the works of Z.A. Abramova were the most significant; not only did she synthesize all the data on Pleistocene art in Russia but also the anthropomorphic representations of the Upper Paleolithic of Europe (Abramova 2010). Among other important publications let us mention a manual on the prehistoric art with special attention paid to the discussion around the art origins (Sher 2006) and a short textbook on the same topic (Lbova & Tabarev 2009). The richly illustrated album of color representations of the famous depictions and signs at the cave of Kapovaya, located at the Urals Mountains, attracted the attention of scholars and interested laymen (Lyakhnitsky 2008).

After a very long break Russian scholars published a new complete catalog of the Pleistocene-aged paleoanthropological findings discovered in Russia and former Soviet Republics (Gerasimova *et al.* 2007).

The last decade saw a new surge of interest to the history of Paleolithic research, the formation and interaction of different approaches to the prehistoric past. Apart from general overview of the developmental history of the discipline in Russia (Vasil'ev 2008), one should not avoid regional case studies, devoted to the history of Paleolithic research at Trans-Baikal (Konstantinov 2008) and Altay (Kungurov & Tsyro 2006). The new phenomenon previously unknown in Russia is the re-edition of rare old books on prehistory (Gerasimov 2007).

The traditional topic of the Upper Paleolithic origins captivated Russian archaeologists for a long time. L.B. Vishniatsky (2008, 2010) concentrated on the wide-scale comparative study of the anthropological and archaeological data on the Middle/Upper Paleolithic interface at Africa, Near East, Europe, and Siberia. He discussed the chronology and nature of the process, emphasizing the role of the population pressure. The diversity of the Early Upper Paleolithic archaeological units in Eurasia was outlined (Anikovitch *et al.* 2007).

The discoveries at Altay shed new light on the problem. At the basis of the exploration of several deeply stratified cave and open-air sites two lines of the Middle Paleolithic development have been identified (the Karakol and Karabom), later (from *ca.* 50,000 to 35,000 BP) both developed into the Early Upper Paleolithic cultures. The identification of a new hominid species based on the genetic analysis of remains from Layer 11 of the Denisova Cave, labeled *Homo sapiens altaiensis*, indicated that early modern humans were the bearers of these traditions. At the same time span the Mousterian Sibirichikha line appeared, associated with remains of the Neanderthal-grade people discovered at the Okladnikov Cave. The global-scale comparative study indicates the polycentric scenario of modern human origins being represented by different subspecies in Africa, Southern and Southeast Asia, and Northern Eurasia (Derevianko 2011).

On the other hand, the problem of the Final Paleolithic-Mesolithic transition, the human responses to the Pleistocene-Holocene paleoenvironmental change is of no less importance and Russian archaeologists continued to analyze the data in the light of recent discoveries. The last years saw the publication of huge volumes (Zhilin & Kol'tsov 2008; Sorokin *et al.* 2009) summarizing the data on the Final Pleistocene cultures widespread in the European Russia between 13,000 and 10,000 BP, and making a comparative study of the culture manifestations in Western, Central, and Eastern Europe.

Dealing with the general problems of the prehistoric research, the publication of lectures on the methodology of the study of the Upper Paleolithic culture units (Anikovitch 2010) should not be avoided.

Other traditional topic of the Russian prehistory is the relevance of the Siberian Upper Paleolithic to the peopling of the New World. This problem is considered now within a context of a vast multidisciplinary study, including the contributions of ethnography, mythology, physical anthropology, genetics, etc. (Vasil'ev *et al.* 2009).

Last but not least, a publication of the multilanguage dictionary of the Paleolithic archaeology (Vasil'ev *et al.* 2007) is worth to mention. The glossary also serving as a reference book includes several thousand terms used in the Paleolithic archaeology with English, French and German equivalents. Apart from the roster of the terms the book contains commentaries and illustrative material. The glossary is based on the interdisciplinary base including terminology in use in fieldwork, in the environmental reconstruction, in lithic analysis, the description of bone, ivory and antler artifacts, personal ornaments and mobile art objects

as well as terms necessary for culture-historical and functional interpretation and reconstruction.

Conclusion

The last decade has been seen a remarkable upsurge in the scale of international co-operation and the accessibility of new information. Among the most important achievements of the last five years a series of sensational archaeological and

paleoanthropological discoveries throwing new light on the Early Upper Paleolithic origins at Altay should be mentioned as well as great progress in the study of the Upper Paleolithic habitation sites and technologies. Paleolithic studies carried out by the leading Russian centers of research produced a large amount of high-quality evidence, which may be successfully used by a wide community of prehistorians, especially to those who are interested in treating this evidence in a broad anthropological context.

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