

## Preface

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The complex problems of the cultural developments of the Early Upper Paleolithic in Europe connected with the dispersal of the early Homo Sapiens have always been a focus of the International Union of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences (UISPP). On 8-9 February 2016 a meeting of Commission No. 8 of the UISPP was held at the Palaeolithic Department of the Institute for the History of Material Culture (IIMK), St. Petersburg, on the topic of The Sungirian and Streletskian in the context of the Eastern European Early Upper Palaeolithic, which gathered prominent Palaeolithic scholars from various institutions in European Russia and abroad. It is worth mentioning that this conference was the first meeting of the Commission held in Russia, undoubtedly reflecting our colleagues' deep interest in the question of the Upper Palaeolithic of the Russian plain. The workshop was opened by talks from the Director of IIMK, St. Petersburg, V.A. Lapshin, the Head of the Paleolithic Department, IIMK, S.A. Vasilyev and the President of Commission No. 8, Professor M. Otte.

Introductory papers presented by M. Otte (University of Liège) and G. Bosinski (Dobbertin, Germany) were devoted to an overview of Streletskian-Sungirian sites, paying particular attention to the qualitatively new way of thinking expressed in the unique religious and ritual/funerary activity of the inhabitants of Sungir. The theoretical problems of the definition of the Initial Upper Paleolithic in Eurasia were highlighted in the report by N. Zwyns and S. Kuhn (University of California, Davis). A.A. Sinitsyn (IIMK, St. Petersburg) provided a review of the Streletskian sites of Eastern Europe and the modern state of the problem of their spatial distribution and chronology. The paper by E.Yu. Girya (IIMK, St. Petersburg) and P.Yu. Pavlov (Institute of Language, Literature and History of the Komi Division of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Syktyvkar) considered the technological criteria for differentiating Middle and Upper Paleolithic bifacial tool production. In the speakers' opinion, the main criteria for distinguishing the production of thin bifaces in the Upper Paleolithic are the presence of multiphase reduction and the particular method of platform preparation during thinning.

Two papers were devoted to the origin of the Streletskian. G. Bataille (University of Tübingen) presented a detailed reconstruction of leaf-point production at Kostenki 12 (Layer III) and Buran-Kaya III (Layer C), which enabled him to draw conclusions about similarities in the adaptive systems of the sites' inhabitants. A.K. Ocherednoi (IIMK, St.Petersburg) and co-authors presented a new series of AMS radiocarbon dates for the site of Betovo and examined the argument for a Streletskian origin in the Middle Paleolithic of the Desna River basin in Central Russia, as advanced by L.M. Tarasov.

Next came a series of papers on Sungir. In a report about the taxonomic position of Sungir, K.N. Gavrilov (Institute of Archaeology, Moscow) concluded that the site, and all other Streletskian settlements, belong to an Eastern European variant of the Final Szeletian. The paper by N. Reynolds (University of Bordeaux) and colleagues discussed general questions of radiocarbon dating using the example of the new series of AMS dates for Sungir obtained in the Oxford laboratory (ORAU). A group of authors led by K.N. Gavrilov and S.Yu. Lev (Institute of Archaeology, Moscow) presented the preliminary results of the new excavations at Sungir in 2015. A.B. Seleznev (Institute of Archaeology, Moscow) presented the results of an analysis of the spatial distribution of primary knapping products within the limits of the second and third "dwellings" at Sungir. The reports by T.E. Soldatova and V.S. Zhitenev (Moscow State University) considered the bone industry and mobiliary art objects from Sungir in the context of the Early Upper Paleolithic record of Eastern and Central Europe.

The question of Streletskian assemblages at Kostenki was the subject of several papers. A.E. Dudin and A.M. Rodionov (Kostenki Museum, Voronezh) concentrated on the problem of the stratigraphy of the lowermost cultural layers in different excavation areas at Kostenki 1. The talk by P. Haesaerts (Institut Royal des Sciences Naturelles, Brussels) and co-authors continued the focus on Kostenki, and discussed new radiocarbon dates for the lowermost cultural layers of Kostenki 1, which could attest to a "long chronology" of Streletskian existence at Kostenki. The question of Kostenki 11(III)'s association with the Streletskian and its possible late radiocarbon age were discussed in the paper by R. Dinnis (University of Oxford), A.A. Bessudnov (IIMK, St.Petersburg) and colleagues. S.N. Lisitsyn (IIMK, St.Petersburg) and co-authors communicated preliminary results of the 2015 fieldwork at Kostenki 12, which is thought to be a key site for the understanding of the Streletskian question.

Several papers were devoted to comparative analysis of assemblages showing similarities to the Streletskian and located in different areas of Central and Eastern Europe. In a report on the technology of Szeletian foliated bifaces in Moravia, Z. Nerudova (Moravian Museum, Brno) noted the similarity of the bifacial thinning technique in the Czech Early Szeletian and the Streletskian of the Russian plain. The paper by M. Oliva (Moravian Museum, Brno) was devoted to a special type of triangular bifacial point found at several sites of the late Szeletian of Moravia. The similarities and differences in ornaments from Aurignacian sites in Swabia and Streletskian-Sungirian sites were discussed by C. Neugebauer-Maresch (Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology, Vienna). A.P. Zakharikov (Lower Volga Archaeological Society, Saratov) reported on a Late Middle/Early Upper Paleolithic industry with characteristic bifacial points found at the Nepriakhino site in the Volga River basin.

After the presentations the participants of the symposium had an opportunity to examine the collections of lithics, bone and antler tools from sites including Kostenki 1, 6 and 14, Biryuchya Balka 2, and Nepriakhino. The new materials from the 2015 excavations of Sungir and Kostenki 12 were of particular interest. The meeting ended with an extended open discussion during which the main questions of current research into the Streletskian in the context of the Early Upper Paleolithic of Europe were considered.