

## Personal ornaments and decorated objects from the Early Upper Paleolithic site of Sungir

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### Abstract

The general analysis of material culture of the Early Upper Paleolithic site of Sungir is complicated and hotly disputes. Personal ornaments and portable art objects – beads, pendants, zoomorphic figurines, engravings - have been the subject of study. However, in-depth study of all the giant complex (more than 15,000 items) of these objects was not provided.

The first results of a new comprehensive study of personal ornaments and decorated objects allow re-evaluate the value of this material to characterize the relationship of different parts of site, as well as burials. The solution of this problem is particularly helped the identification of individual techniques of manufacture of beads certain types.

New evidence of ornamental decoration on ivory objects, including all the figurines, found in the result of work with a collection from O.N. Bader excavations. Results of the study of ornament manufacturing techniques and principles of its location revealed some typical cultural characteristics Sungir.

Certain influence on the technique of manufacturing certain types of Sungirian pendants had a cultural traditions Initial Upper Paleolithic of the Russian Plain (eg., Kostenki XVII/2). Aurignacian features in personal ornaments and ornament patterns are similar both in the rare materials of the Russian Plain (Kostenki I/3), and in the materials from Central and Western Europe. Using personal ornaments on the burial suits are similar to the materials of the early Gravettian of Moravia (the problem of the influence direction has not been studied).

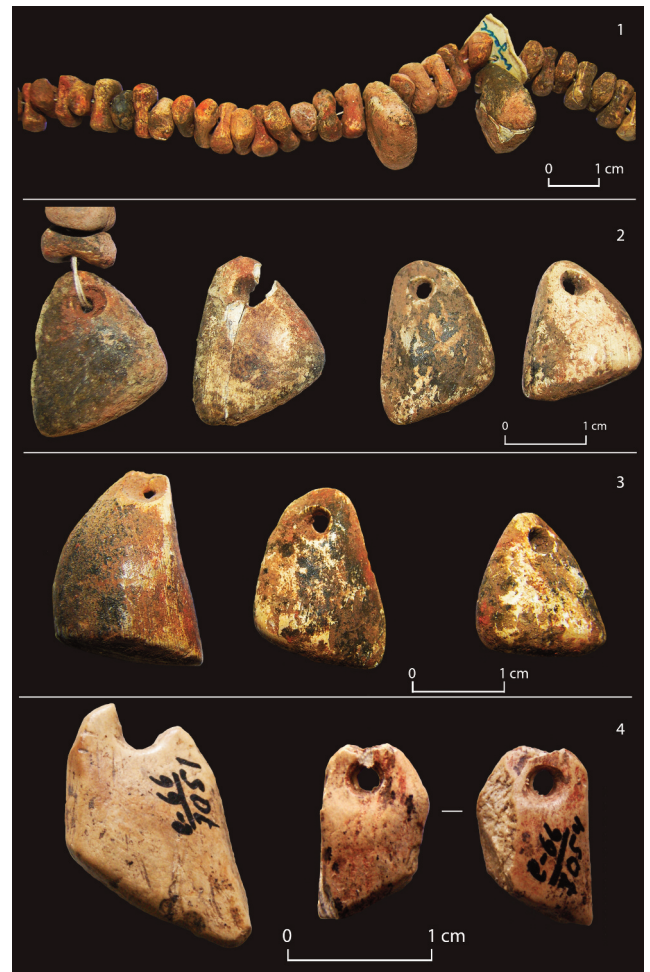
This is a complex mosaic of cultural influences in the Sungir materials provides a new look at the cultural and historical processes (including migration of people and ideas) that took place in Europe in the Early Upper Paleolithic.

**Key-word:** Initial Upper Paleolithic, Early Upper Paleolithic, Aurignacian, Sungir, personal ornaments, decorated objects, portable art, ivory

### Introduction

The age of the Early Upper Paleolithic site Sungir, which is the subject of endless debates, dates back to about 34-30 ka cal BP (eg., Kuzmin *et al.*, 2014; Marom *et al.*, 2012). Results of paleoanthropological research of human remains from burials are uniquely identify site inhabitants like *Homo sapiens*. Stone industry features is characterized transitional industries from the Middle Pa-

leolithic to the Upper Paleolithic (eg. Streletskian, Szeletian...). A few types of tools from bone, ivory and antler have a broad similarities in the materials of the European Early Upper Paleolithic sites.



**Figure 1:** Sungir ivory personal ornaments (beads and deer canine imitations) from children's burial (1-3) and cultural layer (4).

The collection from its excavation comprises more than 80,000 objects (Upper Paleolithic site ..., 1998). A wide variety of personal ornaments (fig. 1, 2, 4-9) is found in the cultural layer and the burials of the site, including fragments of *Dentalium* sp., the perforated Paleogene fossil shells *Gryphaea*, bone tubes, pendants made of arctic fox canines, one pendant made of a wolf canine, ivory, bone and stone beads and pendants; ivory bracelets, rings, and carved discs, zoomorphic pendants (Bader, 1973, 1978; Zhitenev, 2007, 2011; White, 1992, 1993). O.N. Bader's statement about the presence of the belemnite pendants in the cultural layer of the site is erroneous (Bader, 1978). The belemnites with cuts, present in the collection, are the evidence of segmentation of the be-

lemnites, but not personal ornaments. There are no objects made of belemnite on the site. One of the possible explanations for the significant number of cracked belemnites is that these are the traces of pretreatment for later use, e.g. for medical or cooking purposes, as a preserving supplement for storing meat for the long term. Technology of segmentation belemnites has direct analogy with materials (fig. 3) from an Initial Upper Paleolithic site Kostenki XVIII/2 (White, 1993).



**Figure 2:** Sungir: fragments of belemnites with segmentation traces (1-2), fragments of *Dentalium* sp. (3).



**Figure 3:** Kostenki XVIII/2 layer: Initial Upper Paleolithic personal ornaments from belemnites and arctic fox canines;

## Personal Ornaments

The basic amount of personal ornaments were found around and in the graves. Two graves found at Sungir. Female skull (ind. C5) was located on the surface of the grave 1, over the burial men (ind. C1), which was at the bottom of the grave. Upper burial in the grave 2 is the burial of the postcranial remains (ind. C6 - women?). Lower burial in the grave 2 is the burial children placed head-to-head (ind. C2 - south burial adolescent - boy, ind. C3 - north burial child - girl).

In the women's burial (ind. C6) found 19 personal ornaments directly into the grave (17 drilled and non drilled ivory beads, a perforated arctic fox canine, ivory ring); more than 130 ornaments found above grave, but the relationship of all with the burial is not obvious (Bader, 1973, p. 138). In the men's burial found about 3600 personal ornaments (Bader, 1967, p. 156). The largest number of personal ornaments on the Sungir site found in the burial of children.

Pendants of fox canines (fig. 6) is the most indicative for the analysis of personal ornaments for the current research (as the most compact and statistically significant type of pendants).

In total, the children's burial contained 9,343 intact personal ornaments, 834 fragments and 151 unlabeled beads, which could not be attributed to either boy's or girl's burial (Zhitenev, 2013). The girl's burial contained 4,849 intact personal ornaments and 425 fragments; among them just one arctic fox canine, which was located under the lower jaw. 4,494 intact personal ornaments and 409 fragments were related to the boy's skeleton; among them were 185 intact arctic fox canines and at least 43 fragments. 42 intact canines were found near the skull, the number of fragments is unknown. At the right shoulder, 21 ivory beads and 3 arctic fox canines were located. 4 canines and 10 beads were found near the right wrist. At the level of lumbosacral spine, 136 intact canines and at least 43 fragments were located.

More than 20 pendants made of arctic fox canines were found in the cultural layer of the site. Unfortunately, only 14 objects have an exact address. The spatial distribution shows the accumulation of canine-made ornaments in the area around the grave 2, at the level of 3-5 horizons. On the remaining site area, the arctic fox teeth pendants do not form any assemblages. It should be noted, that almost all awls found in the cultural layer of the site, are also concentrated around the grave space. Such picture, apparently, is the result of specific funerary activities.

A striking analogy to it is the spatial distribution of the fox teeth pendants, needles and needle cases in close vicinity to the burial in Kostenki XV (Zhitenev, 2007). The connection between pendants and needles can often be traced in the Upper Paleolithic sites. On some sites, one can identify if not the place of creating the pendants,

at least the area, where they were attached to certain details of the costume.

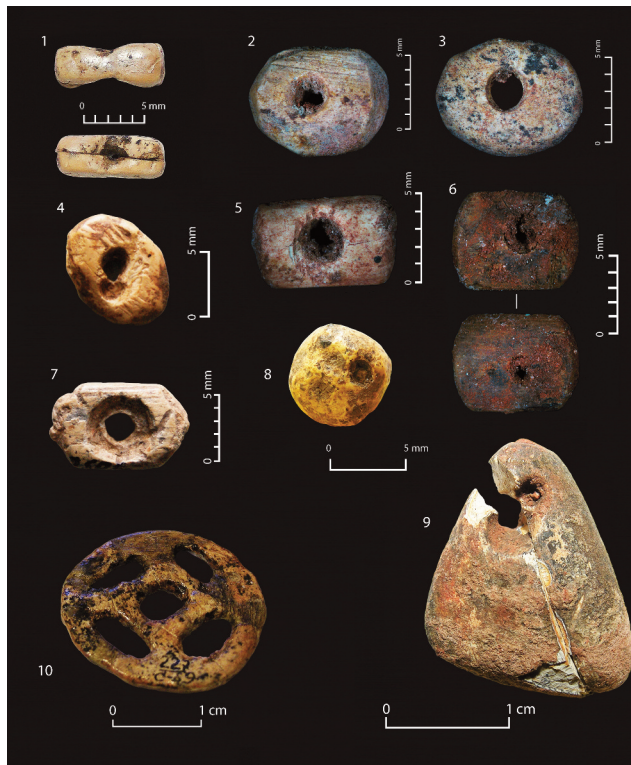


Figure 4: Sungir: ivory beads (1-7), ivory bead blank (8), ivory pendant (9), ivory carved disc from children's burial (10).



Figure 5: Sungir: stone pendants and stone pendant blank.

The situation in Kostenki XV appears to be an excellent illustration of the location of a variety of pendants on a limited area in the cultural layer. In the cultural layer

of Gorodtsovskaya site (Gravettian time) fox teeth pendants were discovered both in the burial (more than 150 teeth sewn onto caps), and in the close vicinity to it, on a limited area of the cultural layer (30 teeth).

All morphological subclasses of teeth, which belonged no less than 11 arctic foxes, were used for manufacturing pendants quite equally. The spatial distribution of bone tools traditionally associated with the manufacturing and finishing of clothing has shown obvious correlation in the location of pendants and needles with the needle case, while the location of awls and other bone tools in the cultural layer is not restricted to the grave space only.

A similar pattern is apparently the result of relatively short-term purposeful funerary preparations, after which, at least the said area around the burial was essentially out of use.

The results of the analysis of the spatial distribution of all kinds of ornaments and unfinished pieces in the cultural layer of the site provide plain evidence to the thesis that accumulation of the arctic fox canine pendants near the grave 2 is deliberate (Zhitenev, 2011). The presented plan reflects the location of the vast majority of the artifacts discussed, but not 100% of them, as some of the ornaments have no definite address. Most of the ornaments in the area of accumulation near the grave 2 were revealed in 3-5 horizons, as well as in the assemblage in the excavation III, small in size, but extraordinarily rich in the number of ornaments and their unfinished parts.

The results of the zooarchaeological stage of studying more than 180 pendants made of arctic fox canines (from the burials and cultural layer) allow to say with confidence that all morphological subclasses of canines of more than 50 arctic foxes were fairly equally used for manufacturing pendants. The features of manufacturing techniques of some types of ornaments from Sungir site were initially described in detail by S.A. Semenov, and later completed by R. White and G.A. Khlopachev (Khlopachev, 2006; Semenov, 1968; White, 1999).

The results of studying the arctic fox canines allowed finding a certain discrepancy in the perforation techniques on the ornaments from the burials and those from the cultural layer of the site. The vast majority of canine pendants found in the burials have clear signs, that just a few craftsmen manufactured these ornaments.

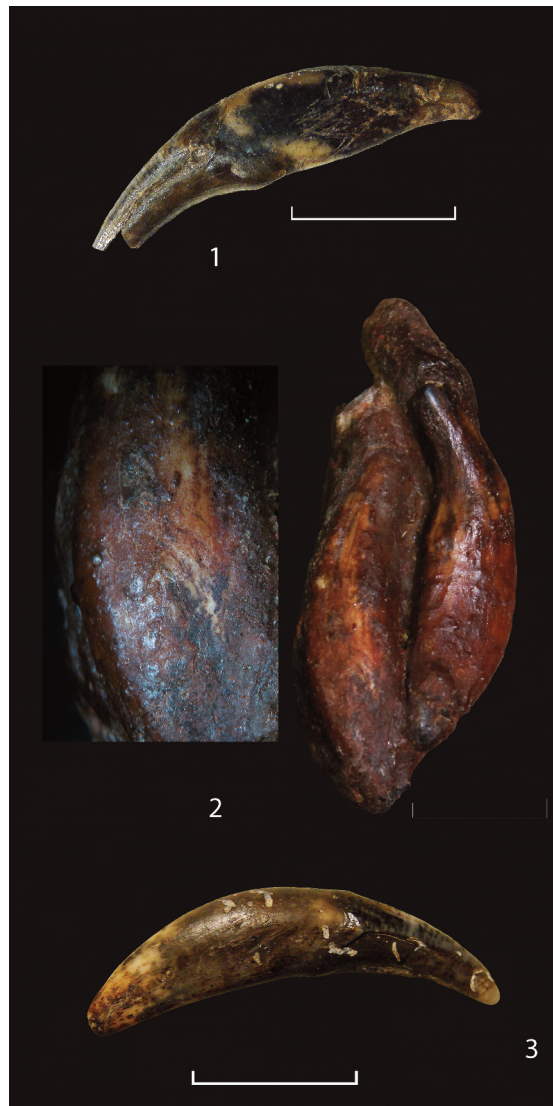
There are no unfinished pendants made of arctic fox canines in Sungir cultural layer, although there are some unfinished ornaments of other kinds. Among the Palaeolithic sites I have studied, the only two, where a variety of unfinished ornaments made of animal teeth was found, were the collections of the Gravettian sites Gagarino (fig. 7, 1, 3) and Khotylevo 2. Only two (single?) unfinished pendants made of arctic fox canines (fig. 7, 2) are found in the burial of an adult male (grave 1, ind. C1). Various unfinished ornaments are found in the graves of



**Figure 6:** Sungir: pendants made of arctic fox canines.

children and the man alike (fig. 4 - 5). Therefore, we can assume the existence of practice of using not only the special funerary artifacts, but also the unfinished objects. The issue of fastening the ornaments with incomplete perforation is resolved in each case individually. In case of the bracelet, it is either placed on the shortened arm under the garment, or fixed by overlapping the two ends of the bracelet. In case of arctic fox canines, they are placed onto/into the ochre mass, that thickly covered the man's head (similar to the individuals from the triple burial of Dolní Věstonice II), or tightly pressed with a thread on a cap thickly sprinkled with ochre.

The fox canines perforation was done using different individual approaches (fig. 6). Initially, it should be noted that methods of flattening of the canine roots prior to the perforation varied greatly. The most common perforation of arctic fox canines from the cultural layer (and the wolf canine pendant) is the double-sided drilling; there are also clear signs of work of different people. In the children's burial, the perforation techniques vary considerably. Thus, one series of perforated canines is drilled (in the other series: perforation by gouging; pres-



**Figure 7:** Arctic fox canine's pendant blanks: Sungir (2) and Gagarino (1, 3).

sure or indirect percussion; cutting) from one side only, while the hole on the other side is perforated by pressure or percission through (similar to the technique used on some stone pendants); the perforated hole can be either neatly modified with reaming or cutting (for smoothing and/or alignment purposes), or left untreated.

However, this variety of ornaments is assorted in the manner of manufacturing holes and is clearly divided in turn into several separate series, apparently due to the craftsmen's individual work style (similar techniques of perforation and individual features of the craftsmen are identified in a series of personal ornaments (fig. 3) from Kostenki XVII/2, an Initial Upper Paleolithic site).

Similar techniques were used to perforate the stone pendants, which suggests that the same craftsmen produced objects made of different materials. Similar perforation styles (techniques) in the children's and adult's burial may also indicate that they were not long separated in time - within two or three generations (at the level of inheriting the cultural and technological traditions from grandmother to granddaughter). Another explanation for this phe-

nomenon could be a long existence of unique family traditions. However, the observation and analysis results on the characteristics of perforation technology of the objects from the cultural layer contradict this idea in part.

There are no signs of wearing on a considerable part of ornaments found in the graves, while almost all pendants found in the cultural layer of the site had been worn heavily. There are other artefacts in the burials, which, apparently, nobody ever used, but which bear the clear signs of hasty, yet thorough manufacturing (fig. 4). One of the most striking examples is the figurine - a horse-shaped pendant from the boy's grave (fig. 9). However, not only the ornaments and small figurines were produced immediately before the inhumation of children, but also spears and lances made of mammoth ivory (Girya, Khlopachev, 2006).

The presence of bracelets, rings, discs, and fossil shells, as well as the placement of the ornaments on the costumes of the buried finds analogy in the early Gravettian site in Moravia, close in terms of time and distance (eg., Klima, 1987; Taborin, 2000).

The dominance of ornaments made of arctic fox teeth and the presence of imitations of deer canine indicate the specific group markers traditionally used by the groups of hunter-gatherers from the Russian Plain, starting from the Initial Upper Paleolithic and with the ongoing cultural contact/exchange with the Central Europe at least.

The ungual phalanges of the cave lion from the children's burial are likely to be also a part of personal ornaments. One ungual phalanx was located contra laterally on the right side of the abdomen of each buried at the same – lumbosacral - level (which apparently was associated with certain perceptions about the place of these symbolic objects on the garment). Moreover, the boy had "on the left cheekbone and almost between teeth – a large ungual joint" of the cave lion (Upper Paleolithic site..., 1998, p. 77). Another ungual phalanx was found in about fifteen meters to the southeast of the grave № 2 (with children's burial). The lion's paw (*Panthera spelaea*) in anatomical order was found nearby. It is important to notice that, despite the profound differences in the diet of the buried adult male and the girl vs. boy, both males' costumes are ornamented with arctic fox canine's pendants. While the girl had only one canine as pendant around the neck. In the upper burial of grave 2 (ind. C6), where only the poorly preserved postcranial, most likely female, remains were found, the ornaments of arctic fox canines were not revealed. Thus, despite the social and age class differences, the costume ornaments of Sungirians were subject to some other, probably more profound, regulatory framework.

This can be illustrated by the example of the arctic fox canines pendants, used in the boy's clothes (ind. C2) to decorate the cap and the belt, and in the males' clothes (ind. C1) – to decorate the cap and trousers. Thus, we see clearly the special role of the ornaments made of arctic

fox canines in male costume decoration and especially for the cap. The issue of the boy's social and age class position in the community, as well as the burial status of children and their costumes (in comparison with adult costumes) requires separate consideration.

Sungir personal ornaments combine different types of Initial Upper Paleolithic and Early Upper Paleolithic personal ornaments (and particularly – Aurignacian beads) and perforations technique (and Initial Upper Paleolithic, Aurignacian, and beyond-Aurignacian features).



Figure 8: Sungir: ivory pendant-figurine of a schematically rendered horse or saiga, decorated with a pattern of drilled dots and painted with red ochre.

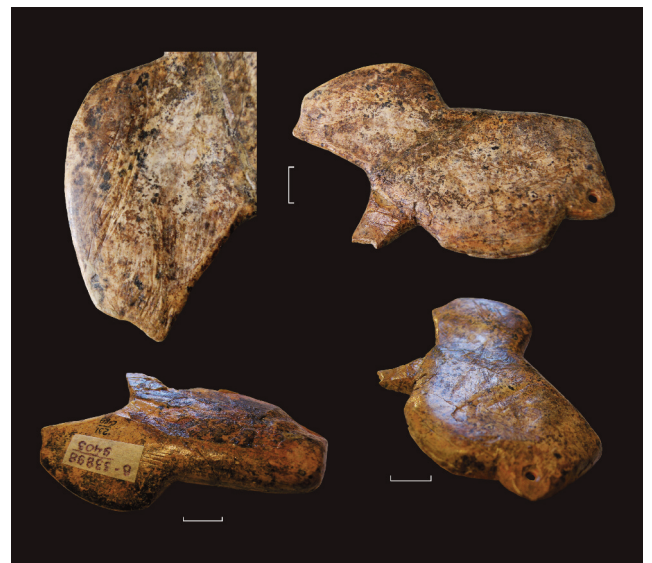


Figure 9: Sungir: ivory horse-shape pendant-figurine with traces of the clear signs of hasty, yet thorough manufacturing, special for inhumation (1-3) and decorated with a cut lines on the head (4).



**Figure 10:** Sungir: ivory carved discs (from: Soldatova, 2014a, p. 168, fig. 8).



**Figure 12:** Sungir: decorated ivory (left) and antler (right) perforated batons (from: Soldatova, 2016, fig. 12).

### Decorated Objects

The decorated objects from Sungir cultural layer and burials are scarce: an ivory zoomorphic (horse or saiga) pendant from the cultural layer (fig. 8), an ivory zoomorphic pendants / statuettes (horse and mammoth or bison) from the boy burial, an ivory bracelet from the man burial, ivory discs (fig. 4,10, 10), an ivory spindle-shaped object (fig. 11), perforated batons made of antler and ivory (fig. 12), and a fragment of mammoth tusk (fig. 13) and some others. The terminological and methodological



**Figure 11:** Sungir: ivory spindle-shaped object decorated with a drilled dots.



**Figure 13:** Sungir: fragment of mammoth tusk with engravings and ornamental incisions.

foundation for description and analysis of the decoration is built primarily on the works of M.D. Gvozdover (Gvozdover, 1985, 1995).

The geometric decoration (linear, reticulate and central) consists of such elements as drilled dots, lines (dashes, one isolated angle), and segments (decorative rosettes). The geometric shapes (e.g. rectangles, triangles) and complex patterns (herringbone, zigzag) are not typical for it. The main elements of the patterns are the following: drilled shallow holes (sometimes, deepened holes); either short carved lines (not cut) or profound and broad (including annular) incised lines; segments of decorative rosettes, made by slitting carving.

Ivory flattened zoomorphic pendant ( $5.6 \times 2.7 \times 0.4$ – $0.1$  cm) - a figurine of a schematically rendered horse or saiga (fig. 8), decorated on both sides with a pattern of drilled dots and painted with red ochre. Two smoothly curved lines run on the right side of the figurine from muzzle to croup, each line with 20 dots, the lines on the legs have 5 dots, including the double-sided drilled perforation for suspension. On the left side of the figurine, the lines are made somewhat differently: they are less curved and less carefully planned, the upper line consists of 17 dots, and the bottom line consists of 19 dots. There are 4 dots on the foreleg and 5 on the hind leg. This is a classic description of the pendant's decoration (Bader, 1978).

The surface of the figurine is carefully polished. In addition to a small number of traces of manufacturing and processing, there are traces of marking the line pattern for the dots (or using of manufacturing/processing traces as such). The front part of the head is pointed, almost like a blade, which suggests that the object had a production function (Bader, 1978).

Zoomorphic pendant ( $8 \times 4.9 \times 1.4$  cm) is found in the children's burial (grave №2, the south burial, ind. C2), on the boy's chest (fig. 9). It is a massive figurine of a horse with disproportionately short perforated hind leg. The front part of the head is pointed, almost like a blade. The surface of the figurine is polished. However, numerous traces of manufacturing and processing preserved. Drilled dots and series of cut-lines on the head decoration discovered recently and it's in the course of studying.

Ivory spindle-shaped object (in the form of a navette) ( $18.2 \times 3.3 \times 3$  cm) is found in the female burial (grave №2, the upper burial, ind. C6) and is poorly preserved (fig. 11). The object has a flattened base, it is circular in cross section, its surface is polished (engraved lines are preserved?). Both ends are pointed, with traces of transversal notches and traces of using the object as a retoucher (?) or specific ornamentation, perhaps of technical character. The traces of ochre can be found on the surface. Groups and single drilled dots (and cutts?) are fixed on the surface of this ivory object. Approximately in the center of the object a drilled dots ornamentation is made, forming a belt. It is a line of minimum in nine shallow

circular drilled dots. A little further, also across the object two more drilled little dots are made. Judging by the location of the decoration, the object was girded by this belt of dots in its circular side, but not the flattened side, which allows it being stable, while in a horizontal position.

Ivory sculpture (pendant) of a "mammoth" ( $11.2 \times 7.9 \times 3.1$  cm) is found in the children's burial (grave № 2, the south burial), under the boy's left shoulder (ind. C2). The surface is poorly preserved, there are traces of manufacturing and polishing. Drilled dots decoration discovered recently and it's in the course of studying (like decoration on the other figurines from Sungir). Compositionally one of the decoration's area on this sculpture is similar to the dots decoration inside the ivory bracelet from male burial.

Ivory broad bracelet ( $20.5 \times 2.2 \times 0.2$  cm) from the male burial (grave №1, the adult male burial, C1). Two holes remained on its one end and one hole on the other (the second hole is broken). The surface of the bracelet is polished, there are traces of ochre in some spots inside and outside (hence the bracelet was put on the surface that had been already covered with ochre). Both sides of the bracelet are decorated with drilled dots. Across the width of the object on the inner surface of the bracelet, a pattern of 15 dots is made (Muravyova, 2001). The dots are not deep, some are just outlined. Two rows of six dots are located across the width of the bracelet. Two dots are adjacent to the second and the third dots of one line. There is another dot next to the second dot of the other line. Visually the following decorative pattern is developed: two lines of six dots, each of which almost crossed two other lines - of three or four dots. On the outer surface of the bracelet, almost in the middle, across the width (perpendicular to the length) runs a belt of four dots.

Ivory perforated baton ( $18.6 \times 5.1 \times 1.1$  cm) found in the children's burial (grave № 2, the northern burial, ind. C3) on the left side of the girl's abdomen (fig. 12, left). The rod with traces of ochre has a rectangular head with a cut circular hole. The rod's handle is oval in cross-section; it is flattened on the edge and is slightly pointed. The decoration of dots is made on the front side of the object around the opening on the rod's head and then goes down to the middle of the handle. 23 drilled dots are made around the opening; on the edges of the head, 9 dots are made on one side and 10 – on the other. Along the handle, the dots form two parallel lines – 18 and 19 dots correspondingly. Another 4 dots are drilled approximately in the middle of the handle between the parallel rows, forming the third line; 3 more dots are to the left from the parallel rows.

Ivory disc ( $3.1 \times 3.1 \times 0.3$  cm) found in the cultural layer. One side is a little more flattened. The disc is decorated with a central perforation and a drilled dots, radiating from it on both sides. Each eight of beams extending from the central hole consists of four dots.



**Figure 14:** Sungir: bone "shaft" tool ornamented by a carved annular decoration.

Ivory carved disc ( $2.8 \times 2.6 \times 0.3$  cm) found in the children's burial (grave № 2, the northern burial, ind. C3) on the back of the girl's skull (fig. 4, 10). In the center of the disc, there is a cut hole of oval (rectangular?) form. Four oval holes are located around the central one. Numerous manufacturing traces create the impression that the disc was made immediately prior to the burial and for the funerary purposes, as well as a number of other objects from the grave №2. The overall impression of the appearance of the disc (inelegant, unskillful, rough, obvious carelessness and ineptitude of work here and there, i.e. all signs of lack of matured skills), especially in comparison with other similar objects, suggests that it was created by a child, who did not have sufficient experience in manufacturing such objects. However, the child bore a part and left a touching farewell gift for the buried girl.

Ivory carved disc ( $7 \times 6.8 \times 0.7$  cm) found in the children's burial (grave №2, the southern burial) was soldered with lime in a vertical position to a large spear (fig. 10, upper left). Initially, it was probably mounted on the wooden spear under reconstruction (Bader, 1978). Around one cut central circular hole 10 oval carved segments are placed, narrowing towards the center. The craftsman made some minor mistakes, while marking and manufacturing, which were later corrected during his work by the reduction of one of the segments.

Ivory carved disc ( $5.8 \times 5.6 \times 0.4$  cm) found in the children's burial (grave №2, the northern burial) on one of the ivory lances (fig. 10, lower left). Eight carved oval seg-



**Figure 15:** Sungir: bone "shaft" tool ornamented by a carved annular decoration.

ments surround one central circular hole. The surface is polished; the manufacturing traces are clearly visible.

Ivory carved disc ( $10 \times 9.9 \times 0.8$  cm) found in an upright position in the children's burial (grave №2, the northern burial, ind. C3) on the left side of the girl's abdomen (fig. 10, middle right). Around one carved central circular hole are 8 oval carved segments narrowing towards the center. The segments are intentionally divided into two parts by size (four segments in each part). The arc-shaped outer edge of the largest segment has a carved groove and a circular recess (which accidentally make the segment resemble a zoomorphic head with ears). Similar recesses (and grooves and cuts) of different shapes are present on some other segments. The disc had been heavily used as a working instrument, as judged by the traces and polishing from long-term exploitation.

Bone "shaft" (fragment,  $3.4 \times 1.1 \times 0.8$  cm) found in the adult male's burial in a layer of ochre under the left tibia (grave № 1, ind. C1). The working edge of the instrument is heavily slanted and bears traces of polishing from the long-term use. A fragment of the handle-part of the object is ornamented by a carved annular decoration (winding). The carving is wide and deep, but in some areas the cuts are not increased and remain narrow and shallow lines. A narrow strip of polishing is present on some windings, which are located closer to the working end of the tool. Shallow longitudinal cut line located across the windings on the opposite side of the working edge.



Antler perforated baton ( $26 \times 9.2 \times 2.1$  cm) found in the children's burial, behind the spears to the left of the girl's skeleton (grave № 2, the northern burial, ind. C3; fig. 12, *right*). The hole is cut through; there are traces of ochre on the rod's surface. On the handle's edges, there are groups of short and relatively wide perpendicular cuts: 26 and 22 lines. They are arranged unevenly, some of them bear the traces of rubbing out. Similar cuts are known and on other antler objects of similar shape but without hole or fragmented.

Fragment of mammoth tusk with ornamented incisions and engravings found in a "ritual pit" located between the graves (Bader, 1978). Apart from this fragment, other parts of mammoth tusk were found in the pit, including the overburnt ones, as well as objects made of stone, ivory, antler and bone, including ivory beads, ochre, bird's bone, "the vertebrae of the arctic fox's whole tail and two vertebrae of another tail" (Bader, 1978, p. 78). The tusk fragment is flattened by a cleavage, and lies stably on it, while in a horizontal position. The carved decoration lines are found on the edge of the cleavage, which is not very well preserved. It consists of one row of 16 or 17 short wide relief cuts limited by the engraved line at the bottom. A series of smaller cuts - 7 or 8 items - located underneath, diagonally from the top line (as in a staggered). There are clearly readable engravings on the same fragment of tusk. They are not the only example of engraved fragments of mammoth tusk at Sungir (Bader, 1978).

## Discussion

The issue of nature of decoration made by cuts on the perforated baton remains unresolved, whether it was symbolic or merely technical, especially considering the hypothesis, that these objects were used as tools for making ropes (Rigaud, 2001). The possibility of technical use of such cuts at Sungir site is supported by the appearance of the "needle" / piercing (Soldatova, 2014b, p. 123). Accepting the idea of the technical value of the decorative cuts at the edges of the perforated baton, the drilled pattern on another object can be interpreted with great caution as a decorative image of a rope/thread.

The widespread existence of complex costumes of Sungirians was justified by O.N. Bader on the materials from the burials (Bader, 1978). The hypothesis about the possibility of textile production at Sungir site was first proposed by O. Soffer with co-author (Soffer *et al.*, 2000). Hypothetically, the mammoth ivory disc, found in the children's burial on the girl's abdomen, may also fit into the group of objects related to processing of organic materials of short duration.

The analogies of a widely and deeply carved circular decoration can be found both on the artifacts of the Initial Upper Paleolithic and on the aurignacian objects.

Since the decoration may have not just an aesthetic and symbolic meaning, but also functional, such character can have the objects with circular and spiral pattern,

which is widely known in Eurasia since the Initial Upper Paleolithic. These items could be used as coils (eg., fig. 15), or other devices for winding threads or thin cords of both animal and vegetable origin. In this case, it becomes more understandable widespread of utilitarian objects shape and not the complicated ornament pattern.

Fully accepting the theses of M.D. Gvozdover that "the nature of placement of the elements and their selection are not caused by technical reasons, but by cultural tradition" and that "archaeological culture is characterized by the actual elements of the decoration and their layout on the decorated field, as well as the grouping of elements" (Gvozdover, 1985, p. 19), as well as stating the identified stable relationship between the types of artifact and the characteristics of its decoration, one may talk of an important parallel in the form and nature of decoration between the Aurignacian specimens of portable art of Swabian sites and Sungir. It should be noted that the identified parallel refers, above all, to the decoration's nature and the layout, but not to the technological aspects of its application. A typically Aurignacian decoration, from the point of view of application technology, is presented in the materials of Kostenki site I/3 (Hoffecker *et al.*, 2016; Sinitsyn, 2012), where just like at the Swabian Aurignacian sites, the tapered notches/indentations predominate (fig. 15).

The use of dots in the decoration of bone artifacts in the French Aurignacian (e.g., Abri Blanchard, La Souquette) is equally important. However, the most remarkable (illustrative) reflection is a similar decoration of monumental images (Bourrillon, White, 2015, p. 125, fig. 4). Thus, the tradition of (partial) decoration with notches or holes of the body, neck and legs (in various combinations) existed on the vast territory from the Vézère valley (France) through the Swabian sites (Germany) to the Russian Plain (Russia) in the Early Upper Paleolithic - in Aurignacian tradition. The practices of manufacturing Venus figurines and cave parietal art practices have a similar pan-European dissemination.

The location of the decorated field on the objects and the type of layout of the elements of Sungir pattern, as well as some types of personal ornaments find close analogies in the materials of Early Upper Paleolithic sites in Russian plane and Aurignacian sites in Central and Western Europe, as well as in a number of the Urals and Siberian sites of Early Upper Paleolithic (eg. Pavlov *et al.*, 2001; Pitulko *et al.*, 2012; Sinitsyn, 2012; Derevianko, Shunkov, 2004; Vanhaeren, d'Errico, 2006).

The absence of some types of ivory ornaments at Sungir (eg. double perforated ivory beads, or basket shaped ivory beads), as well as a limited variety of animal species, being source of teeth for manufacturing pendants, is a typical feature of the Upper Paleolithic sites of the Russian Plain both in the Initial and Early Upper Paleolithic, and in Gravettian time (Zhitenev, 2007). Apparently, this certain reduction of some types of ornaments is a specific regional feature.

## Conclusion

The cultural identity of Sungir can not be uniquely determined because of the direct evidence of mosaic influences of various European traditions of the early Upper Paleolithic, and, possibly, the early Gravettian on both the stone (traits of Streletskian, Szeletian and other cultures) and bone inventory, including the artifacts and decoration (especially the Aurignacian), and the funerary rites, including the characteristics of the costumes of the buried (early Gravette?). At the same time, the influence of the Initial Upper Paleolithic traditions are traceable in at least a number of aspects of the Sungir personal ornaments manufacturing technology (Zhitenev, 2011).

Taking into account the entire complex of the currently available data, the most correct is to determine the cultural identity of Sungir materials as a concrete historical phenomenon of polygenetic nature (term view: Gavrillov, 2016).

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