Geometric microliths as a cultural marker in western Central Asia

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Résumé

Geometric microliths are one of the main cultural and chronological markers typical for Central Asian Stone age archaeology. The earliest geometric microliths in the region are represented by scalene triangles in Kulbulakian complexes (31–21 kaBP) [Kolobova et al., 2019]. The geometric tools subsequently shift from rectangular (20–15 kaBP) to lunate forms (15–9 kaBP) [Shnaider et al., 2020]. Lunates are one of the defining attributes for toolsets of the Eastern Caspian Mesolithic complexes, replaced by scalene triangles and symmetric trapezoids during the Neolithic [Alisher kyzy et al., 2020]. The Central Asian Neolithic is characterized by the abundance of diverse trapezoids: symmetric trapezoids on microblades (Oyukly culture and early Holocene complexes mountainous part of the Central Asia) [Markov, 1971], symmetrical, shortened, and elongated trapezoids on blades (Jeytun culture) [Masson, 1971], and horned trapezoids (Kelteminar culture) [Vinogradov, 1981; Szymczak, Khudjanazarov, 2006*]. The following chronological sequence of the shape variability of geometric microliths was traced in Central Asia: scalene triangles – rectangles – lunates – trapezoids. The shape of geometric microliths can be considered as a chronological marker, and the shape of trapezoids serves as a cultural proxy in Neolithic complexes. A correlation between the types of geometric microliths and the splitting technique typical for a particular industry can be observed. Scalene triangles, rectangles, and lunates are identified in complexes with percussion blade/bladelet industries (Kulbulakian, Tutkaulian, Mesolithic and Neolithic of Eastern Caspian), while trapezoids are widely common in pressure blade/bladelet assemblages (Jeytun, Kelteminar, Oyukly and Hissar cultures, complexes of the Fergana and Naryn valleys).*

Mots-Clés: Central Asia, geometric microlith, knapping technology, culture

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