
Bladelet production in the Initial vs. Early Upper Paleolithic assemblages of Central Asia

Evgeny Rybin*^{†1}, Arina Khatsenovich¹, and Kseniya Kolobova¹

¹Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography Russian Academy of Sciences, Siberian Branch – Russie

Résumé

A distinctive bidirectional subprismatic method of reduction may be reconstructed for the Initial Upper Paleolithic (IUP) of Southern Siberia and eastern part of Central Asia. This method, associated with the concept of maintaining subtriangular asymmetric volume of cores, was aimed at production of laminar blanks and resulted in large and medium-sized blades used for retouched tools production. The reconstruction of reduction technology at the Kara Bom site (the Russian Altai) has revealed that production of small laminar blanks was embedded into this method since the earliest stage of the IUP ca. 48,000 – 50,000 BP (Zwyns et al., 2011). A distinctive feature of the IUP technology in Southern Siberia and eastern part of Central Asia was exceptionally rare intentional retouching of bladelets, including backed ones. Bladelets were produced following specific reduction method using burin-cores made on thick side-blades. In the other regions of IUP distribution, for example, in Northern Mongolia, bladelets were obtained using several independent methods, such as production from small blocks of raw material, or intentionally fragmented blanks. The evidence from the Tolbor-4 site (ca 40,000–45,000 BP) indicates that. The carinated technology is represented by rare thick end-scrapers; it played a marginal role in the technological program of the IUP as opposed to the later assemblages of the Early Upper Paleolithic in the Altai (the Ust-Karakol-1 site) where it is manifested by serial and typical cores. The carinated technology played a very important role in the western part of Central Asia in the industries of the Early Upper Paleolithic Kulbulakian tradition from the Kulbulak site (layer 2.1, ca. 35,000 BP) (Uzbekistan) and Shugnou site (layer 1, ca. 31,000–32,000 BP) (Tadjikistan), where the number of the carinated cores reached 53%, and such cores represented an independent technological trend. Morphology of the small-blade elements of these technocomplexes will be compared for establishing a possible boundary between the carinated technology and methods of bladelet production in the IUP.

Research was supported by Russian Scientific Foundation project # 19-18-00198

Mots-Clés: Central Asia, Siberia, Upper Paleolithic, lithic technology, bladelet production

*Intervenant

[†]Auteur correspondant: rybep@yandex.ru