

---

# New data from old excavations: revising the Initial Upper Paleolithic complex of Arembovsky site (Cis-Baikal)

Sergei Kogai\*<sup>1</sup> and Alexei Kuznetsov<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Institute of archaeology and ethnography SB RAS – Russie

<sup>2</sup>Irkutsk State University – Russie

## Résumé

Many research interests are currently focused on the Initial Upper Paleolithic (IUP) complexes of Central Asia because of their key position in such research questions as the origin of modern behaviour, migrations of ancient human populations and species of these populations. The age of the complexes has a wide range from 50 to 28 kyr BP. Arembovsky site is located in the north-eastern part of Irkutsk city. The estimated age of the site was evaluated within 35–25 kyr BP. During our revising the Arembovsky site collection, several important features were discovered that weren't previously known - the composition of the lithic industry was clarified, and faunal remains were revealed. The collection of archaeological material contains 15 423 pcs. The main lithic raw material of the industry is argillite. Lithic production was aimed at the large laminar blank production using the uni- and bidirectional reduction of flat-faced and sub-volumetric cores. Numerous core-trimming elements (crested and semi-crested blades) and the high value of the  $\Pi_{am}$  (29.7) show the congruence with the core series. The evidence of the Levallois technology is sporadic and presented in the collection with four Levallois cores for flakes. Meagre formal tool-set (64 pieces) based on the laminar blanks generally consists of end-scrapers, side-scrapers, oblique points, elongated points and various retouched blades. These types characterize the regional Upper Paleolithic industries in general, but their combination with described core reduction strategies is an explicit signature of the IUP industries of Central Asia. The assemblage of the lithic material types (a large number of lithic production debris, a minimal amount of completed tools) and proximity of raw material source show that Arembovsky site was a workshop. A small amount of faunal remains confirms this functional specification also. The faunal remains include 113 fragments of bones and antlers. The identified fragments belong to *Mammuthus sp.*, *Equus sp.*, *Bos/Bison sp.*, *Rangifer tarandus*. Bones allow yielding AMS dates that confirm the Upper Karginian age, suggested by first researchers and narrow down the chronological range. The retoucher was identified among faunal remains also. This tool is a pointed semi-oval cross-section fragment of a reindeer antler with dimensions of 109x30x10mm. The generalized macro-trace characteristics of the artefact indicate that the fragment of the reindeer antler was cut until a spongy mass and break off. This kind of tools is common for Siberian Paleolithic - e.g. bone retouchers with similar shape are present in materials of Malaya Siyia, the IUP site in Kuznetsk Alatau. Currently, Arembovsky site is the youngest IUP complex in the vast territory of the eastern part of Southern Siberia. There aren't known indisputable older complexes in Cis-Baikal, the technological approaches

---

\*Intervenant

of which could be interpreted as ancestral to Arembovsky materials. Set of cultural markers distinguished by E.P. Rybin for IUP complexes of Central Asia has minimal occurrences at Arembovsky site (bidirectional core reduction for blades, oblique points on blades). These features together with relatively young age and geographic isolation make more obvious a hypothesis that technological approaches in lithic production spread from Trans-Baikal.

**Mots-Clés:** Southern Siberia, Cis, Baikal, Initial Upper Paleolithic, lithic production, bone industry