
The Early Paleolithic industries with large cutting tools on the Taman peninsula (Azov-Black Sea region, Russia): age, representative forms of tools

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Résumé

Six sites (Rodniki 1-4, Bogatyri / Sinyaya Balka and Kermek) on the Taman Peninsula allow to elucidate the initial stage of Early Paleolithic in the Azov-Black Sea region. Biostratigraphic and paleomagnetic data indicate an Early Pleistocene age of these sites and correlate them with a number of levels correlated to Akchagylian-Apsheonian transition or early Apsheonian regional stages of the Ponto-Caspian stratigraphic scale. The earliest is the site of Kermek (about 2.1-1.8 Ma). It occurs in tectonically tilted beach (subaquatic) sediments of late Kuyalnikian or early Gurian/Apsheonian age and contains remains of small and large mammals of Psekups Faunal Complex (late Villafranchian). Distinctly later Rodniki 1 and Rodniki 2 sites (about 1 Ma) were found in subhorizontally occurring beach sediments of Gurian/Apsheonian correlated age. These stratigraphic member yielded remains of large and small mammals of the Taman Faunal Complex (late Villafranchian – early Biharian). The enclosing deposits belong to the upper part of the Matuyama Chron below the Jaramillo Subchron. The Bogatyri / Sinyaya Balka site is somewhat older than Rodniki 1 and Rodniki 2 sites. It is a stratotype locality of the Taman Faunal Complex with the age estimates from 1.2 to 1.6 Ma. Despite some chronological differences, the stone industries of all these sites are similar to each other by the used raw material (local silicified dolomite of the Miocene age), the technology of primary stone splitting (technology of the primary knapping), and by technical and typological categories of flakes and tools. It is obvious that we are dealing with the same early Paleolithic industry, named Tamanian, represented by several assemblages. The most characteristic common feature of this industry is the presence of large cutting tools (LCTs) such as peaks (unifacial and bifacial), cleavers on flakes, rude handaxes, as well as unmodified particularly large flakes (> 10 cm) with traces of usage as tools. These tool categories, based on their technological and typological appearance and age, characterise the Tamanian industry as one the early Acheulean regional variants. The early Acheulean Tamanian industry has its local features. At the same time, it is possible to distinguish two stages in its development. The first one is the assemblage of Kermek site (between 1.6-1.8 (2.1) Ma). This stage features picks and particularly large flakes with traces

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of use as tools but there are no cleavers and handaxes. The second stage is exemplified by Rodniki-1-4 and Bogatyri / Sinyaya Balka assemblages (between 1.0-1.6 Ma). The diversity of LCT tools increases with cleavers on flakes, and rude handaxes appearing in the industry.

Mots-Clés: Azov, Black Sea region, early Acheulian, Tamanian industry, late Villafranchian