
Before the Obirakhmatian? New data from Kulbulak site.

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Résumé

Kulbulak located on the southeastern slope of the Chatkal Ridge in the Western Tien Shan (Uzbekistan) is among the most important multilayer open-air Paleolithic sites in western Central Asia, because the stratigraphic sequence of the site was considered to be the most complete in this region. The new excavations are particularly interesting due to the presence of an early industry with blade and bladelet technology at the depth of 13.5 m in layer 23, which is a loamy-sandy sediments of mostly an proluvial genesis. The assemblage from the layer (more than 25 000 stone artifacts) is mostly marked by the production blades and points from Levallois (in most cases) and parallel flat-face cores, in combination with radial and truncated-faceted cores for flakes, along with prismatic and narrow-face cores (some with triangular shape) for bladelets prepared on blanks and small nodules. The tool kit (more than 300 items) mostly contains extensively retouched blades (with one or two working edges), pointed blades, thick elongated points (including Levallois), scrapers (including convergent and dejeté types), few end-scrapers (including some of carinated shape), few uni- and bifacial tools, along with great number of blanks with irregular retouch. Assemblages with similar features have been reported from western Central Asia, notably at Obi Rakhmat Grotto (also in Uzbekistan). But Levallois technology plays a secondary role in this industry. Taking into account the results of geomorphological, sedimentological, and stratigraphic studies, Kulbulak is now providing new data showing the presence of an earlier development of blade industry in the region (based on Levallois technology). Previously the emergence of Obirakhmatian industries in the region were recognized as a result of cultural influence from the Middle East. This study was supported by Russian Science Foundation (Project 14-50-00036)

Mots-Clés: Western Tien Shan, Middle Paleolithic, new excavations, Obirakhmatian, Levallois technology

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