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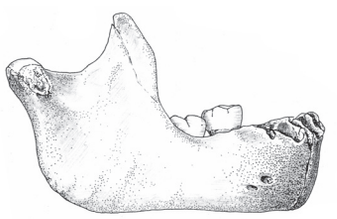

Proceedings of the European Society for the study of Human Evolution 8

Cover image: Scladina mandible (Scla 4A-1 & 9): External view from the right side showing the receding symphyseal region (drawing S. Lambermont, AWEM)

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New reflections on the EUP and AMH dispersal in Eastern Europe.

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The re-dating of sites and re-examination of artifact collections provide a basis for new reflections of the pattern of the earliest Upper Paleolithic (EUP) and related dispersal of Anatomically Modern Humans (AMH) in Eastern Europe.

Pre-Aurignacian assemblages of the East European EUP include six cultural units: (1) Streletskian, traditionally distinguished as a local transitional cultural unity [1]; (2) Levallois-derived entity or Emiro-Bohunician technocomplex [2]; (3) Zaozerian as a local cultural unit with curved backed pieces [3]. (4) Spitsynean as a regional East European culture or a local variety of Protoaurignacian [4]; (5) Cultural layer IVb at Kostenki 14 [5]; (6) cultural layer C at Buran Kaya 3.

The first two traditionally considered as transitional cultures containing a Middle Paleolithic component. The Spitsynean and cultural layer IVb of Kostenki 14 are fully developed Upper Paleolithic, associated with the skeletal remains (teeth) of modern humans.

Nowhere else in Europe pre-Aurignacian assemblages exhibit such diverse cultural traditions. Their chronology, classification, and role in the spread of the EUP and AMH remain open for discussion and are the subject of this review. The earliest Upper Paleolithic complexes at Kostenki are the most representative, most reliably dated, and yield the most archaeological material. The earliest Aurignacian is dated to 40 ka (cal) based on samples from the cultural layer in volcanic ash (LVA) at Kostenki 14. Others cultural units considered here are older, possibly overlapping with the Aurignacian at the younger end of their (uncertain) temporal boundaries.

Only the Streletskian is represented at numerous sites: five at Kostenki (K1-V, K6, K11-V, K12-III, Borshchevo 5-IV), and Sungir, Garchi 1, Nepriakhino, Vys outside the Kostenki group. The dating of the Streletskian falls between 45 ka (cal) for the cultural layer V of Kostenki 1 and 34 ka (cal) at Sungir, Vys and Garchi 1 with the likelihood that the latter will be revised downward. The Streletskian traditionally has been considered the most ancient UP and new dates confirm it with the unresolved problem of its upper temporal boundary.

All other cultural unities are represented by single sites. The bases for its cultural affiliation are the single features: microblades with rectilinear profile for the proto-Aurignacian identification; curved backed pieces for the separation of the Zaozerian as particular cultural unity; bifacial leaf-points for the attributions of the cultural layer C at Buran Kaya 3, etc. Along with well-defined cultural diagnostics, all cultural units of the East European EUP exhibit a number of similar cross-cultural indicators.

Two patterns of adaptation can be reconstructed on the basis of the raw material procurement for the pre-Aurignacian traditions at Kostenki. The Streletskian and IVb cultural layer of Kostenki 14 are characterized by the use of all available varieties of raw material with the predominance of local materials. The Spitsynean, by contrast, reflects predominance of imported black Cretaceous flint, the nearest outcrops of which are at least 150 km from Kostenki.

The current situation in classification the East European pre-Aurignacian assemblages leads to the problem: in what extent criteria for the cultural identification of the Western European Paleolithic can be used for the cultural differentiation of the Eastern European ones.

Two general models for the pre-Aurignacian EUP of Eastern Europe remain under consideration: (1) within the context of the Out-of-Africa dispersal, as a pioneer waves of the populations with unformed cultural traditions and different patterns of adaptations, and/or (2) outside of migrations concept as a consequence of the trial-and-error method in the process of search the optimal models of adaptation to local conditions and environments.

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