

## **New archaeological materials of the Stone Age in At-Bashi rayon**

**Aida K. Abdykanova**  
**Anthropology Department**  
**American University of Central Asia**  
**Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan**

### Introduction

The study of sites belonging to Stone Age is of great significance for solving the problem of settling ancient humans in Central Asia. The importance of such study is well demonstrated on the ground of open and studied Paleolithic sites in Batken and Issyk-Kul areas of the Kyrgyz Republic for last years.

Main goal of archaeological survey was the collection of lithic artifacts dated back to the Stone Age in At-Bashi rayon of Naryn region.

The first date of stone tools from Naryn region was received in 1953 as a result of the complex archaeological and ethnographical expedition by A.P. Okladnikov. Professor A.P. Okladnikov had found out some archaic pebble tools on the terrace of On-Archa river.<sup>1</sup>

The rayon including Arpa valley (Burana-Chap, Kochkorok-Zhar), the surroundings of coast Chatyr-Kul lake, the western part of Ak-Saj valley (valley of Terek river) were investigated also in 2007 by an archaeological team, consisting of the students and researchers from American University of Central Asia, Kyrgyz-Turkic University “Manas” and Kyrgyz National University named J. Balasagyn.

The previously investigated rayon was well-known due to the publications of V.A. Ranov, M.B. Yunusaliev and Sh.A. Kadyrov. In 1963, it was the expedition head by the geologist Sh.A. Kadyrov.<sup>2</sup> Later in 1967 and 1968 this territory was investigated by a paleolithic team of archaeological expedition head by V.A. Ranov, an archaeologist of Stone Age.<sup>3</sup>

Burana-Chap location was discovered as a more perspective place of archaeological findings in the Arpa valley, at N 40 47'54.9 E 74 45'95.7.

The location of raw materials was found during our preliminary investigations in the form of siliceous rocks that located in Ak-Saj valley nearly to the Tashele Mountain Ridge, at N 40 42'34.2'' E 75 56'53.7''.

### Description of sites (Arpa valley)

Burana-Chap (Burma-Chap) is located on the left bank terrace of the Arpa river, at N 40<sup>0</sup> 47'54.9'', E 74 45'95.7''. Artifacts were assembled from the first and second terraces. The collection is comprised of 2 artifacts made of pebble and represents debris and retouched flake.

Next location, Kochkorok-Zhar (Kochkor-Adzhol by V.A. Ranov), is located on small ridge draw out of latitude to the east from the Burana-Chap location, which is heavily degraded by the Arpa River, at N 40 45'98,5'', E 74 50'31.4''. The artifacts were assembled from the eastern part of the ridge and at the bottom of the river-bed. The unique feature of this collection is the finding spur. This massive stone tool may be dated from Paleolithic Age. The

---

<sup>1</sup> Okladnikov A.P. *Raboty Kirgizskoy kompleksnoy arheologicheskoy ekspeditsii v 1953 godu* // SE. – 1954. - № 2

<sup>2</sup> Ranov V.A., Kadyrov Sh.A. *Nahodka kamennogo veka u ozera Chatyr-Kul.* // Izvestiya AN Tadzhikskoy SSR. – 1969. – №1 (55), p. 54-55.

<sup>3</sup> Ranov V.A., Yunusaliev M.B. *Itogi razvedochnykh rabot paleoliticheskogo otryada* // Izvestiya AN Kirgizskoy SSR. – 1969. – № 3, p. 99.

collection totals 4 specimens, including the product of debitage of primary reduction (n=1), perforator (n=1) and notched tools (n=2) (Fig. 1).

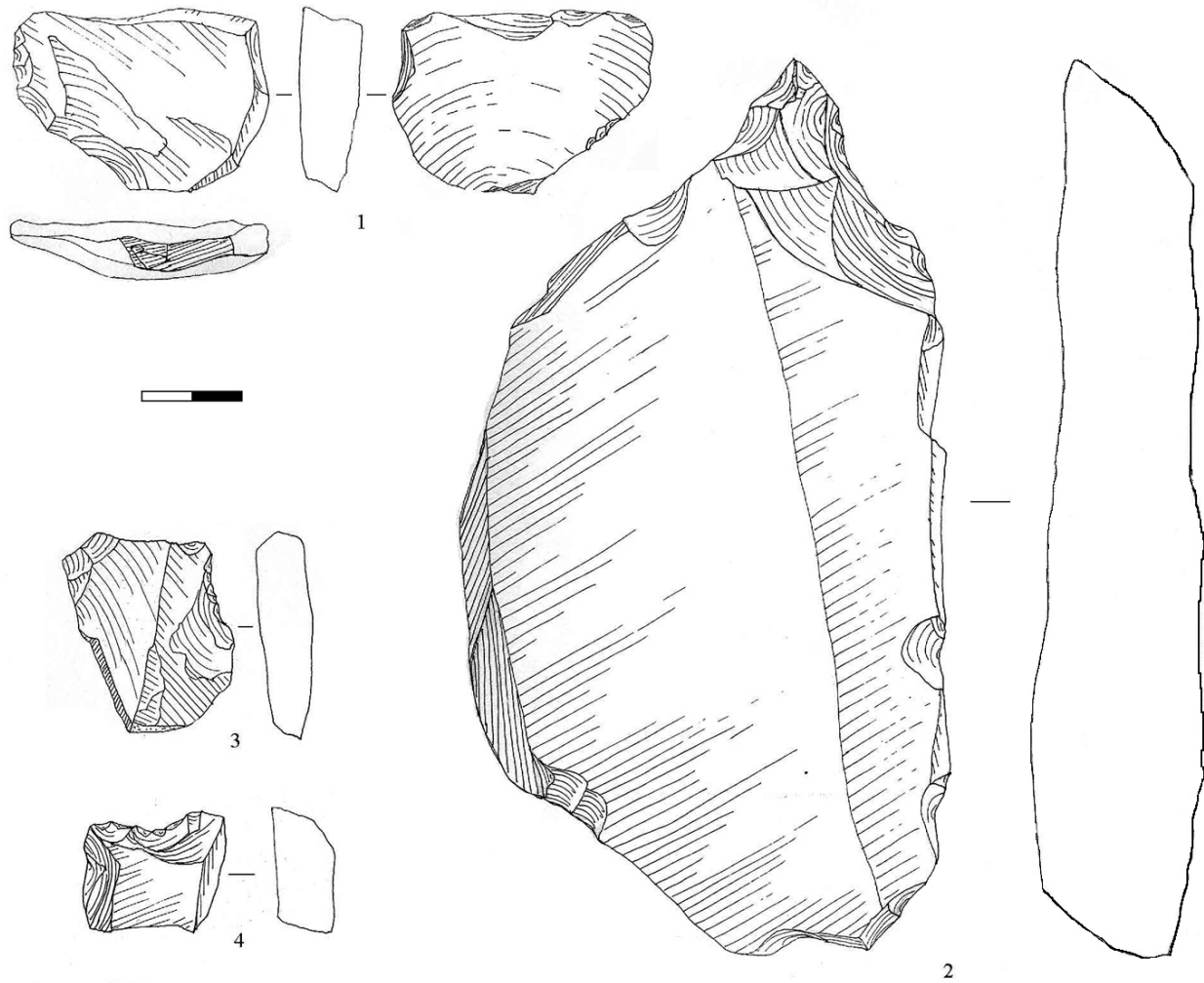


Figure 1. Artifacts from the Arpa river valley  
1 – Burana-Chap, 2-4 – Kochkorok-Zhar

**New discovery was Semetej grotto.** The grotto is located in the north-eastern part of the road leading from the Arpa valley to the Tujz-Bel crossing, at N 40 36'19.7'', E 75 03'69.5''. The findings are composed of 2 artifacts: a fragmented microblade and a debris made of dark-blue flint. The grotto is very perspective for further investigations, especially for stationary excavations. The object is preliminary dated from the Middle Stone Age to New Stone Age.

#### Description of sites (Chatyr-Kul eastern coast)

The Ajgyrzhal location is situated on the western sides of the Ajgyrzhal Ridge, at N 40 41'97.3'', E 75 27'56.3''. The artifacts were manufactured of yellow and red siliceous rock, pebbles and grey-dull chalcedony. The collection represents a mixture of artifacts that can be affiliated with different chronological periods. Some artifacts' surface have been badly preserved. The total collection from the Ajgyrzhal Ridge includes borers (n=3), a notched tool (n=1), a spure (n=1), retouched flakes (n=2) and retouched debris (n=8) (Fig. 2).

The findings were also discovered at the bottom of the Kek-Ajgyr river. All artifacts are tools. This category includes a side scraper (n=1), borers (n=3), a notched tool (n=1), a

denticulate-notched tool (n=1), a spure (n=1), a perforator (n=1), retouched flakes (n=2,) and retouched debris (n=8) (Fig. 3).

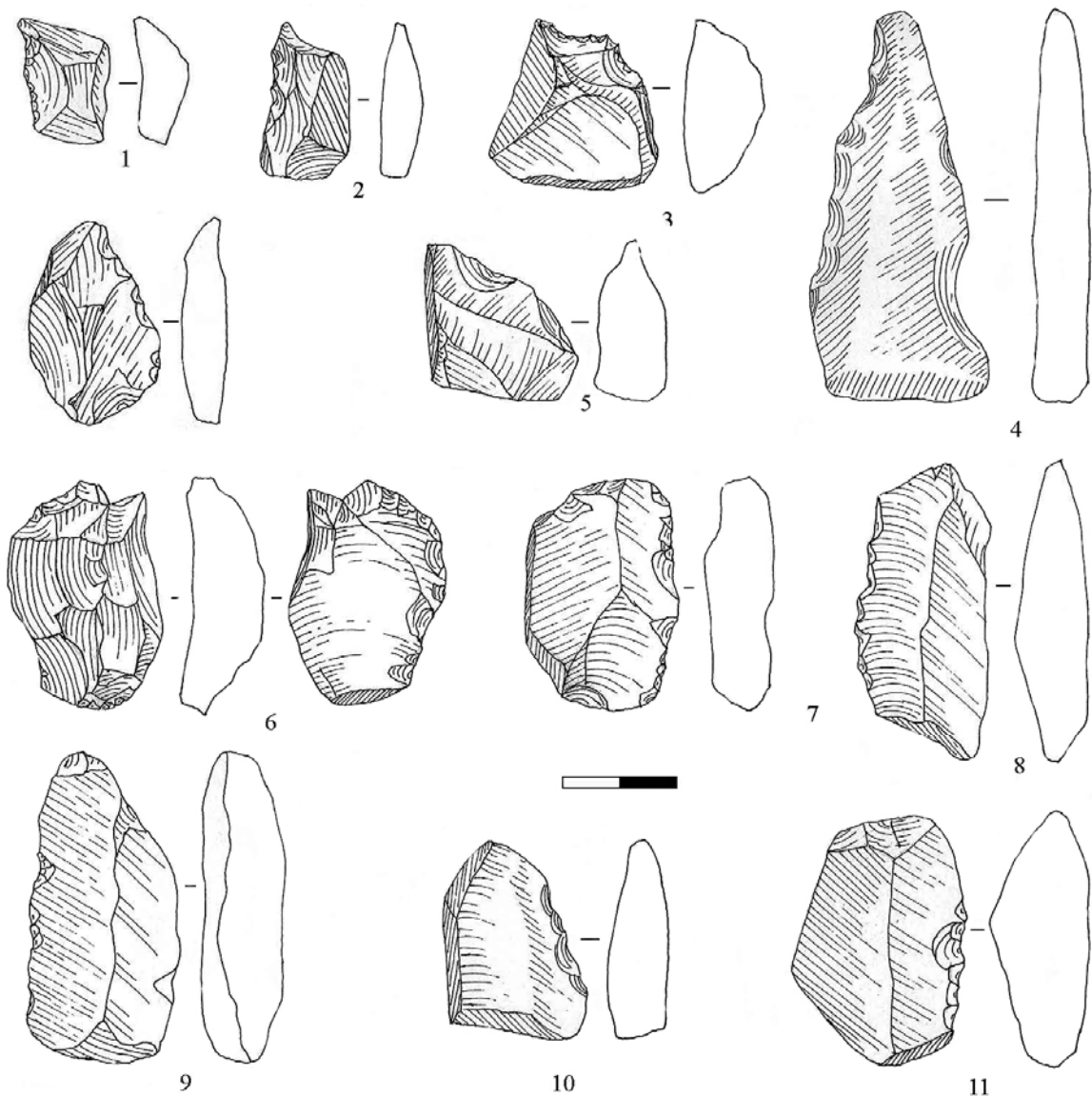


Figure 2. Artifacts from the Ajgyrzhal location.

### Description of sites (Ak-Saj valley)

The complex of open-sites was discovered on the left bank of the Terek river.

Terek-2 is located near the Azhap Sarajy place, at N 40 49'62.9'', E 75 55'72.4''. The artifacts totals 4 specimens. The collection includes prismatic cores (n=2) and massive tools similar to "shaves"(n=2).

Terek-3 have the following coordinates: N 40 41'12.8'', E 75 55'67.7''. The collection consists of 6 specimens including a relette (n=1) and flakes (n=5). Tool kit represents a relette and retouched flake.

Terek-5 is located near to the outcrops of raw material in the form of greenish flint, at N 40 42'34.2'', E 75 56'53.7''. The collection represents 2 artifacts, including a retouched flake and a notched tool (Fig. 4).

The findings on the right terrace of Sary-Imek river in the Arpa valley is composed of 3 specimens. It is most probably that this location is Sary-Imek open-site, which was discovered by V.A.Ranov.<sup>1</sup> The collection represents a side-scraper (n=1) and retouched debris (n=2).

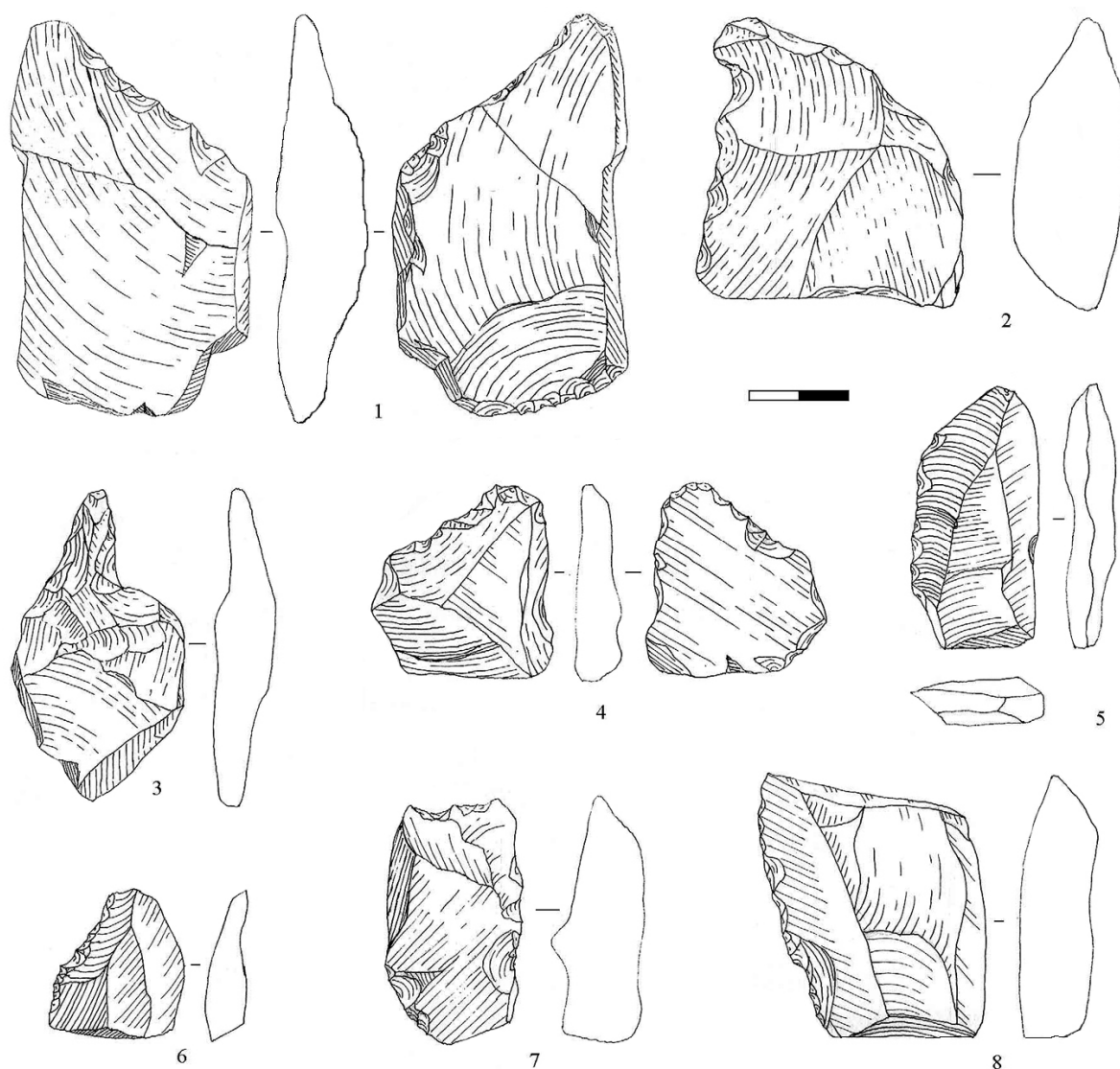


Figure 3. Artifacts from the Kek-Ajgyr river bottom.

### Conclusion

During the investigation survey in Naryn region a number of archaeological sites including the Semetej rock-shelter was discovered. As a result, the original material collected has broadened our insight about this site and some aspects of prehistory of At-Bashi rayon and Kyrgyzstan on the whole.

All collected materials preliminarily dated from Paleolith, Middle and New Stone Age. Heavily abraded findings from the Kek-Ajgyr site, a perforator from the Arpa valley as well as a pebble tool finding on the terrace of the Zhoon-Aryk river may be dated back to Paleolithic Age.

<sup>1</sup> Ranov V.A., Yunusaliev M.B. *Itogi razvedochnyh rabot paleoliticheskogo otryada // Izvestiya AN Kirgizskoy SSR. – 1969. – № 3, p. 100.*

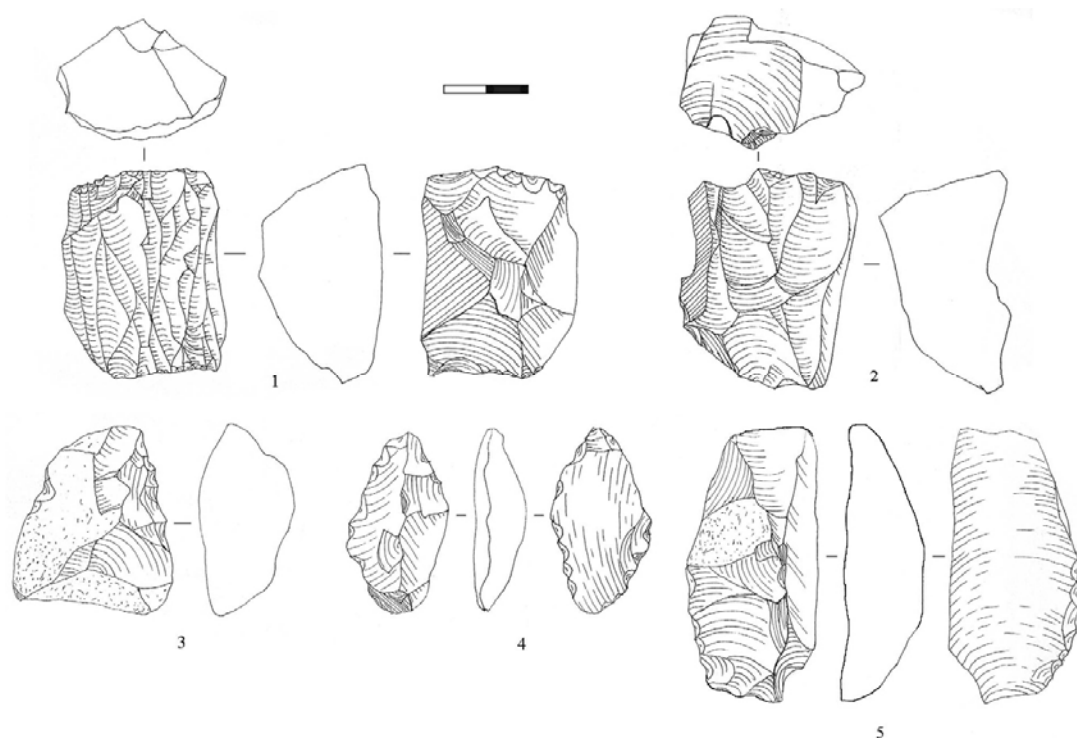


Figure 4. Artifacts from the Terek river valley.

Considering stone tools, the main source of raw material is most likely located in Ak-Saj valley. The artifacts, especially prismatic cores founded in the Terek river valley date from Middle and New Stone Age. From the point of view of presented data, the hypothesis by V.A. Ranov about the existence of local “ak-saj” culture can have grounds. It is the author's opinion that the “ak-saj” culture has a certain analogy with “markansuj” high mountain culture in Uzbekistan.<sup>1</sup>

The localization of artifacts on the south-western mountainsides of the Ajgyrzhal chine of the Chatyr-Kul lake eastern coast allow outlining the migration ways of ancient peoples from the Ak-Saj valley to eastern coast of the Chatyr-Kul lake and farther along the south coast via Tyuz-Bel pass to Arpa valley. The findings in Torugart pass and the discovery of the Semetej rock-shelter behind the Tyuz-Bel pass confirmed this assumption.<sup>2</sup>

Along with unpublished materials from a number of sites of Kumtor and already discovered first stage of obishir culture in Tash-Kumyr, the findings in the Aksaj valley (along Terek river) let us conclude about the existence of a local variant or variants of Stone Age in the high mountains zone of the Central-Asian region within the bounds of Kyrgyzstan.<sup>3</sup>

In general, our research has revealed a large number of archaeological sites, which can be excavated successfully in the future. All archaeological materials deposited in the At-Bashi Museum.

<sup>1</sup> Ranov V.A., Yunusaliev M.B. *Itogi razvedochnyh rabot paleoliticheskogo otryada* // *Izvestiya AN Kirgizskoy SSR.* – 1969. – № 3, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> Bernshtam A.N. *Istoriko-archeologicheskie ocherki Centralnogo Tyan-Shanya i Pamiro-Alaya.* M-L., 1952. – (MIA, №26), p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Korobkova G.F. *Mezoliticheskie ohotniki i sobirатели Ferganskoy doliny* // *Novoe o drevnem i srednevekovom Kyrgyzstane.* – Vyp. 2. – Bishkek, 1999, p. 34.