THE FINAL PALAEOLITHIC SITE OF ROSTISLAVL (PRELIMINARY REPORT)

ALEKSANDR V. TRUSOV

Abstract

The site of Rostislavl is located on the right high bank of the Oka river near the town of Ozyory (Moscow region). Tanged points from the Rostislavl site are similar to the ones spread in the Alleröd-Dryas III period on the sites of northern Germany, Poland, the Upper Volga (Podol III and Ust-Tudovka I), and in the Upper Dnieper (Anosovo I) regions etc. This fact allows us to assume, at this stage of research, the Final Palaeolithic age of the Rostislavl site as the most probable.

Key words: Final Palaeolithic, tanged points, Lyngby, Ahrensburg, Ienevo, Grensk.

The site of Rostislavl is located on the high right bank of the River Oka eight kilometres downstream from the town of Ozyory (Moscow region) on a high cape where the remains of the medieval town of Rostislavl are situated (Fig. 1, 2).

Since 1994 up to the present, excavations of the medieval town have been carried out by an expedition from the Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of Archaeology and the Museum of Moscow History, headed by V. Koval. Flint tools were discovered in the cultural layer of the town as early as the first years of the expedition. In 2002 sectors of excavation pits 1 and 2 yielded the majority of flint artefacts.

In 2003, A. Trusov began the further investigation of underlying loamy soils, from which the majority of the flint tools discovered in the medieval cultural layer must have originated. Thus, 96 square metres were investigated in excavation pit 1, and 28 square metres in excavation pit 2.

The main layer containing the finds was loamy podzolic soil five to ten centimetres thick, directly underlying the medieval cultural layer.

The cultural layer of the site was badly damaged by numerous medieval pits and holes left by fossorials.

Stone artefacts collected in 2003 included 851 items (601 from excavation pit 1, including 64 fragments with traces of fire; and 250 flint artefacts from excavation pit 2, including 37 fragments with traces of fire). A total of 461 items were discovered directly in the podzolic layer in excavation pit 1. The podzolic layer in excavation pit 2 yielded 211 items. In both excavation pits 1 and 2 the majority of the artefacts were discovered within an area of five to six metres in diameter (Fig. 3).

In the table below, artefacts obtained during the 2003 excavations were combined with artefacts obtained in 2002 in accordance with the excavated areas. Artefacts from excavation pit 1 are named “Concentration A”, and artefacts from excavation pit 2 “Concentration B”. Concentration B has been only partly excavated so far.

There are no typological differences between the main Final Palaeolithic complexes of tools found in the two concentrations, hence it is possible to speak of their belonging to the same culture and, relatively, the same period. Yet Concentration B yielded a higher number of tools. In addition, the amount of arrowheads (among tools) in Concentration B is twice as high, whereas the amount of scrapers (in per cent) is half (see Table 1). These differences may be interesting because they may reflect specific (seasonal) characteristics of the areas. Yet since excavations of Concentration B are not yet finished, it is too early for final conclusions.

Artefacts

Cores (18 items) are different in their forms; they were used for making various blanks. As a rule, they are quite worn-out; probably that is why there are no regular prismatic and front cores. Knapping was not intended for making blanks of strictly determined forms. Double and more striking platformed forms prevail. On the whole, we may speak about the insufficient development of the technology of making blade blanks (Fig. 4: 1, 2).

The latter must have been the reason for the significant predominance of tools produced on flakes (58.1% of the tools are produced on flakes, and only 41.9% on blades).

Table 1.

	Excavation pit 1 Concentration A		Excavation pit 2 Concentration B		Total	
Cores	14	2.2%	4	1.3%	18	1.9%
Core-like debris	1	0.2%	2	0.6%	3	0.3%
Core tablets	7	1.1%	4	1.3%	11	1.2%
Debris	4	0.6%	-	-	4	0.4%
Flakes	451	71.1%	204	64.1%	655	69.0%
Blades	91	14.4%	56	17.7%	147	15.5%
Bladelets	3	0.5%	3	0.9%	6	0.6%
Burin spalls	13	2.1%	7	2.2%	20	2.1%
Retouched flakes	5	0.8%	4	1.3%	9	0.9%
Retouched blades	1	0.2%	4	1.3%	5	0.5
Hammers	7	1.1%	1	0.3%	8	0.8%
Tools	37	5.8%	27	8.5%	63	6.6%
Total	634	100%	316	100%	950	!00%
Tools						
Arrowheads	5	13.5%	7	26.9%	12	19.0%
Burins	15	40.5%	11	42.3%	26	41.3%
Scrapers	13	35.1%	5	19.2%	18	28.6%
Blades with oblique retouch truncation	-	-	2	7.7%	2	3.2%
Points	1	2.7%	1	3.8%	2	3.2%
Backed knife	1	2.7%	-	-	1	1.6%
Axe-like tools	1	2.7%	-	-	1	1.6%
Scaled piece	1	2.7%	-	-	1	1.6%
Total	37	100%	26	100%	63	100%

Table 2. Correlation between tools on flakes and blades

	Excavation pit 1		Excavation pit 2		Total	
Tools made of flakes	21	58.3%	16	59.3%	37	58.7%
Tools made of blades	15	41.6%	11	40.7%	26	41.3%
Total	36	100%	27	100%	63	100%

Among tools, burins are the most numerous, at 26 (41.3%). Among these, burins on retouched truncation prevail absolutely, at 16 items (Fig. 5: 2–6). There are many double and multiple retouched burins.

The second largest group includes angle burins: eight items (Fig. 5: 1, 7, 8). There is one dihedral burin on a flake, most probably accidental.

A multiple angle burin on a thin regular prismatic bladelet (a blank which is alien to the entire Rostislavl site flint complex) may be considered an alien element (Fig. 5: 9). The find is from the medieval layer outside Concentrations A and B (earlier excavations by V. Koval).

There are 18 scrapers (28.6%), end-scrapers prevail (Fig. 6: 4–10). Among these there is one ogival end-scraper, and also two end-scrapers without retouch on the scraping front. The plunging ends of large flake-blades, which show signs of significant wear in fine retouch to the back, were used as a scraping front (Fig. 6: 8).

There are also three oval scrapers retouched throughout or almost throughout the perimeter; one of these is on a flake, and two large ones are on a core fragment and a flint plate (Fig. 6: 1, 2).

A backed knife on a flake-blade has been found. The back was treated with large abrupt retouch. On the distal end there is a thin burin spall, which must have been made unintentionally while preparing the back (Fig. 7: 10).

Within the first concentration an axe-like tool (adze) was found, broken in two parts in the course of manufacture. The two fragments and some small flakes obtained in the course of manufacture were found at the same place. The tool had been triangular in shape, with a highly asymmetric structure (Fig. 4: 3).

Two points have been found. One was made on the corner of a flake with semi-abrupt direct retouch. The other (from V. Koval's earlier excavations) is on a large flint fragment. The working edge of the tool was treated with bifacial removals with large retouch (Fig. 7: 11).

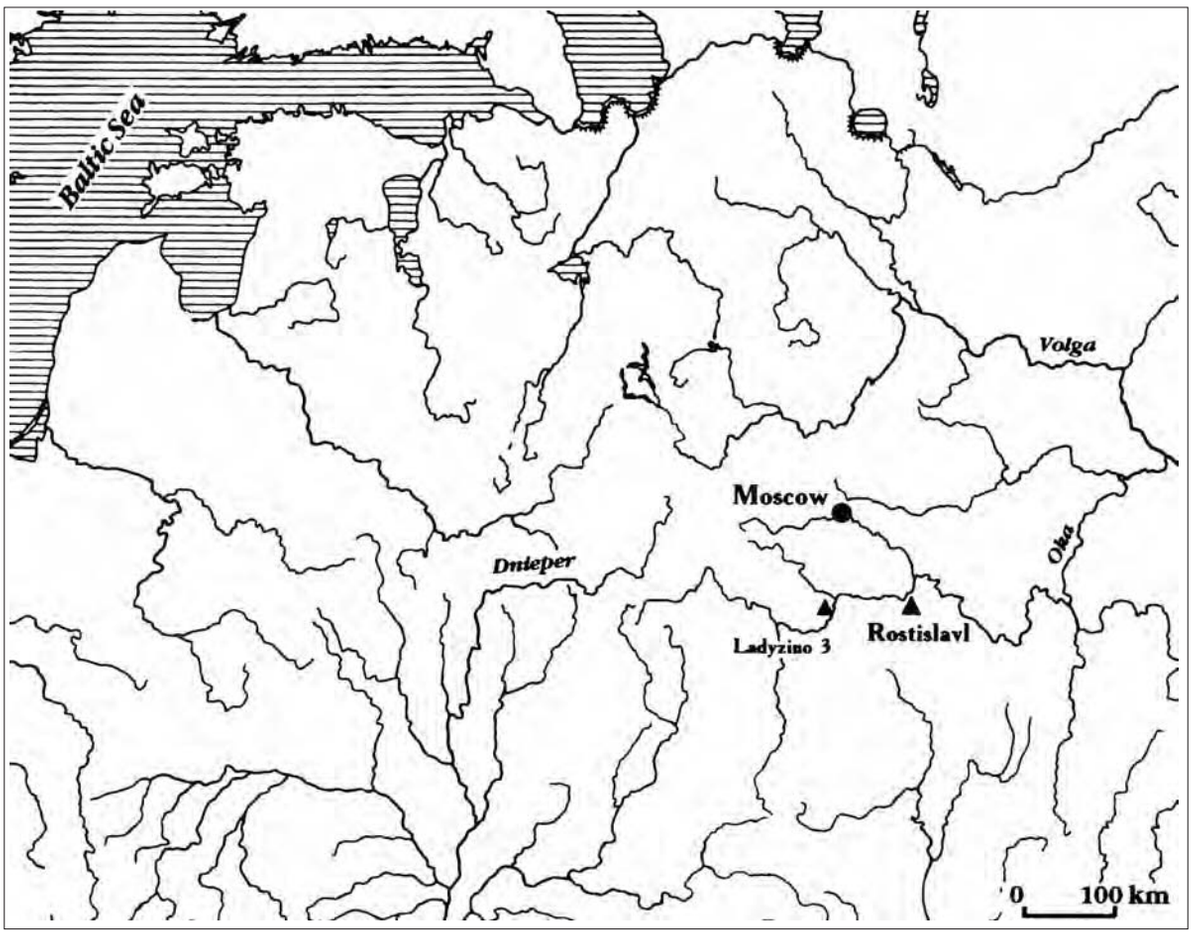

Fig. 1. The map of location of Rostislavl site

The most interesting is a series of tanged points. A total of eight such points have been found, including the previous years (Fig. 7: 1–7). Their fairly wide tangs had been treated with direct abrupt retouch (Fig. 7: 1–3), to the inverse (Fig. 7: 5), and with alternate retouch (Fig. 7: 4, 6, 7).

There is one highly asymmetric trapeze (Fig. 7: 9).

The fairly high percentage of tools, despite nearby flint sources (limestone one to two kilometres up the River Oka), and the variety of tools which testify to many forms of economic activity (quarrying and primary treatment of flint, making tools for various purposes and, of course, hunting and utilising game), point to a general rather than specialised character of the site.

On cultural identity and dating

As has been noted above, a series of tanged points were found in Rostislavl which resemble tanged points from the Lyngby and Ahrensburg cultures. Though fairly similar in shape, Lyngby Culture points are larger than those from Ahrensburg. Thus, the size of Ahrensburg points varies within 3.5 centimetres (Clark 1975: 77), whereas the size of Lyngby points varies from 5.5 to eight centimetres and larger (Синицина 2000: 63–65). Rostislavl points are between those (their length varies from four to 6.6cm, the average being 5.3cm). The use of a hard hammer and corresponding large massive blanks may link Rostislavl to Lyngby sites. Yet oblique retouched points are more characteristic of Ahrensburg sites. In addition, Lyngby burins are mainly dihedral, and retouched burins are more numerous in Ahrensburg sites.

Of course, we shall not find an absolute similarity with either Lyngby or Ahrensburg in Rostislavl. More important is the presence of a steady series of tanged points at the site, which are widely discovered at sites in northern Germany, Poland and, finally, to the east of Podol III (Синицина 2000: 61–71) and Ust-Tudovka on the Upper Volga (Жилин, Кравцов 1991), Believo 4a (Кравцов, Луньков 1994: 113, Fig. 1, 15, 20), Anosovo 1 on the Dnieper (Лисицын 2002: 37, Fig. 1, 1) in the Allerod-Dryas III period. Due to this data, in the preliminary stage of the study we may assume the Final Palaeolithic age of the Rostislavl site as the most probable.

Such an early date is somewhat contradicted by the trapeze found in Rostislavl and described above. Yet it

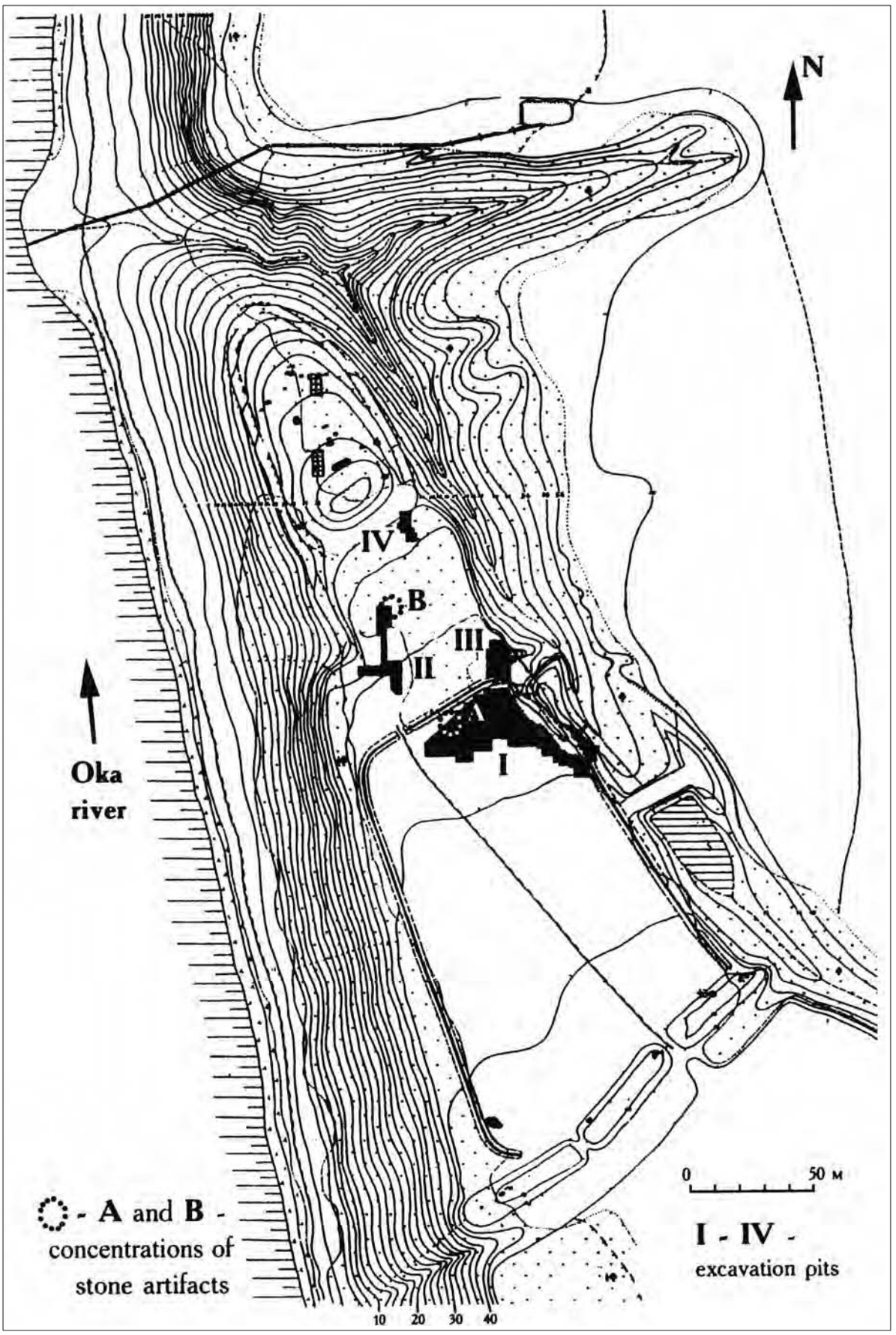

Fig. 2. Map of the medieval town and the palaeolithic site of Rostislavl

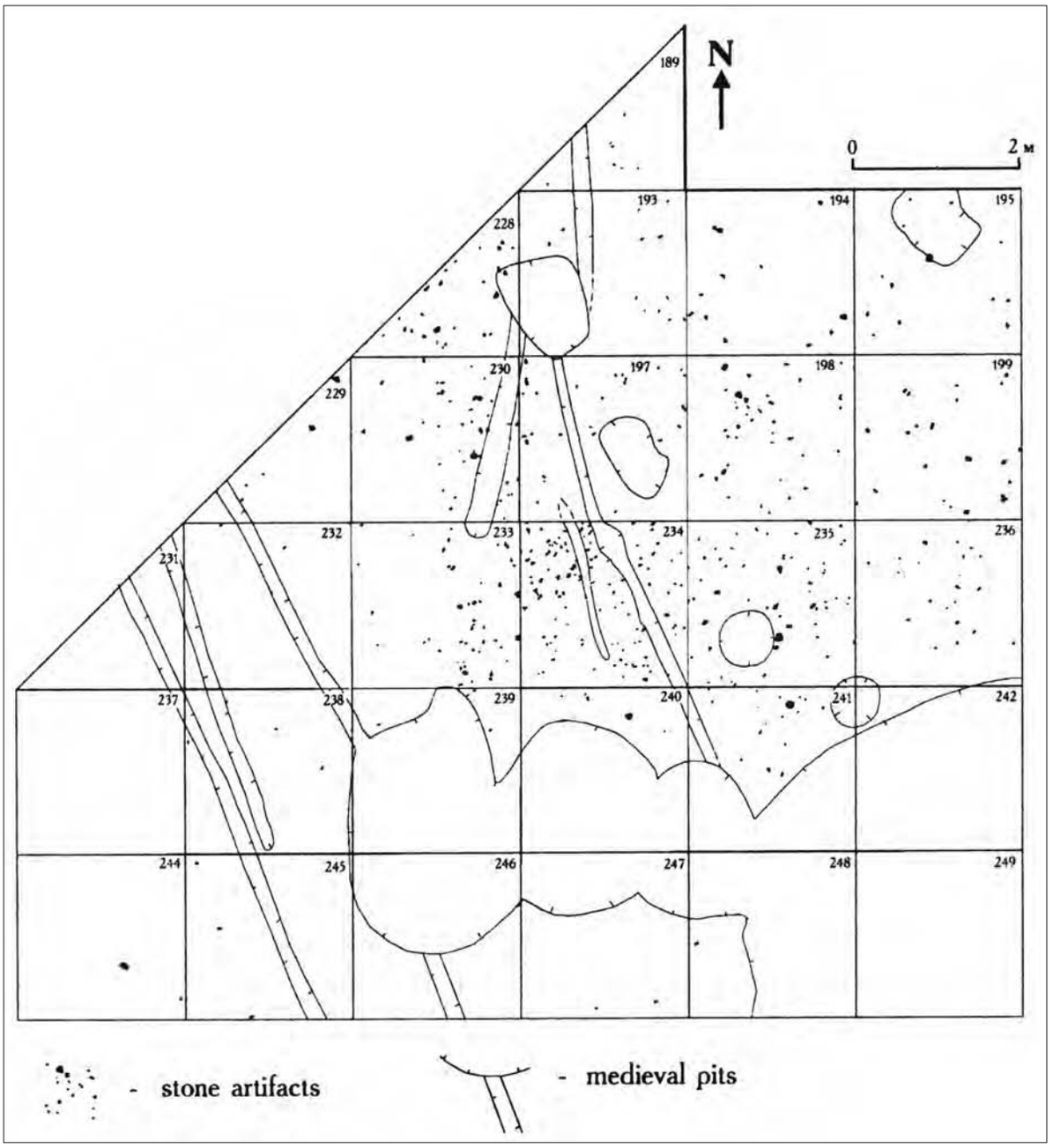

Fig. 3. Concentration of stone artefacts in excavation pit 1

may be a later inclusion in this complex, because the complex contains some artefacts which seem to date from another time and to belong to a different culture.

As far as cultural similarity is concerned, Rostislavl is the closest to the site of Ladyzhino 3, where practically all types of artefacts discovered at Rostislavl were found, including similar large tanged points (Fig. 7).

At Ladyzhino 3, as in Rostislavl, the technique of obtaining blades is insufficiently developed (Жилин, Фролов 1981: 257–258). Here burins are the main type of tool, the predominant ones being burins on the corner of a broken blank and retouched burins. But primarily the sites are similar because of the presence of a series of large tanged points (Fig. 8). Among published data on excavations in the Oka basin, such points have been found serially only in Ladyzhino 3.

According to the opinion of A. Kravtsov and S. Konnov, there is no doubt that the materials of Ladyzhino 3 are mono-cultural and belong to Ienevo Culture. Yet the dating of the site is not final: the existing palinological dating (climatic Preboreal optimum) has been criticised. In the opinion of the above-mentioned authors, an earlier settlement (as compared to the complex of excavation pit 1) might have existed, which is testified to by finds from shaft 1, where flint tools are, on the whole, large. In addition, a large tanged point has

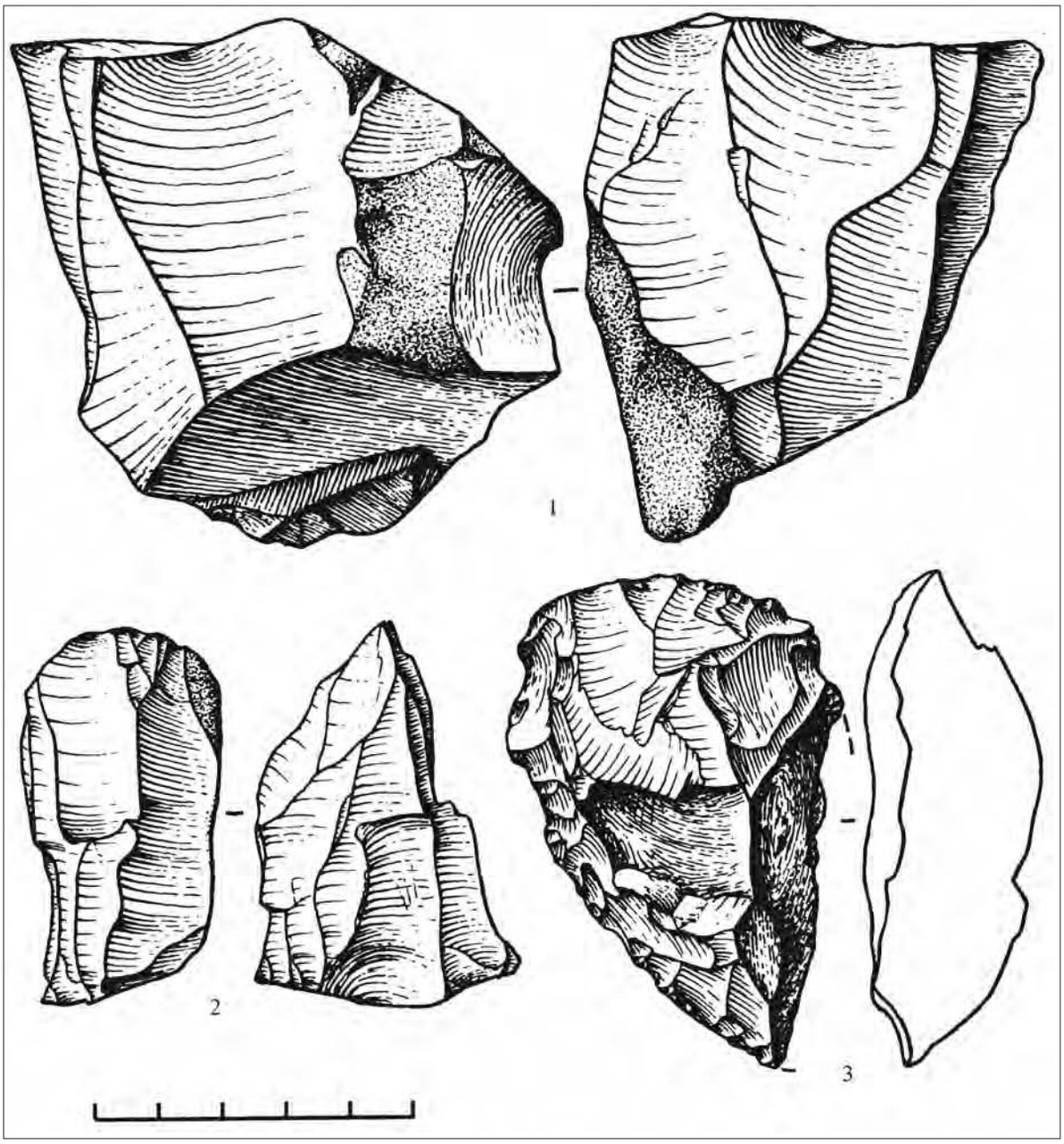

Fig. 4. 1, 2 cores; 3 axe-like tool

been discovered there, which may be compared, in the opinion of the authors, to points from the Bromme site. Considering the series of tanged points executed in the traditions of Lyngby and Ahrensburg, the site may be dated to the border of the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic (Кравцов, Коннов 2004).

The fact that Ladyzhino 3 belongs to Ienevo Culture does not contradict the opinion of the majority of researchers. Noting a certain similarity between the complexes of Ladyzhino 3 and Rostislavl, we may relate the Rostislavl site to Ienevo Culture as well.

According to L. Koltsov, the main characteristics of Ienevo Culture (hereinafter IC) are the following: a certain variety of core forms (the absence of any definite system of flaking), and, as a result, the predominance of tools made of flakes. Among scrapers, various endscrapers predominate. Among burins, there are mainly burins on the corner of a broken blank and various retouched burins. The most characteristic forms that determine IC are the following: high and medium trapezes, shouldered points, and also waisted axes. Tanged points have been found at earlier sites (Кольцов 1989: 76–82).

The weakness of IC is in that the above-mentioned forms of artefacts in this or that combination are also found in other Mesolithic and Final Palaeolithic cultures. Thus, sites of the Pesochny Rov type are also characterised by the weak development of the flint

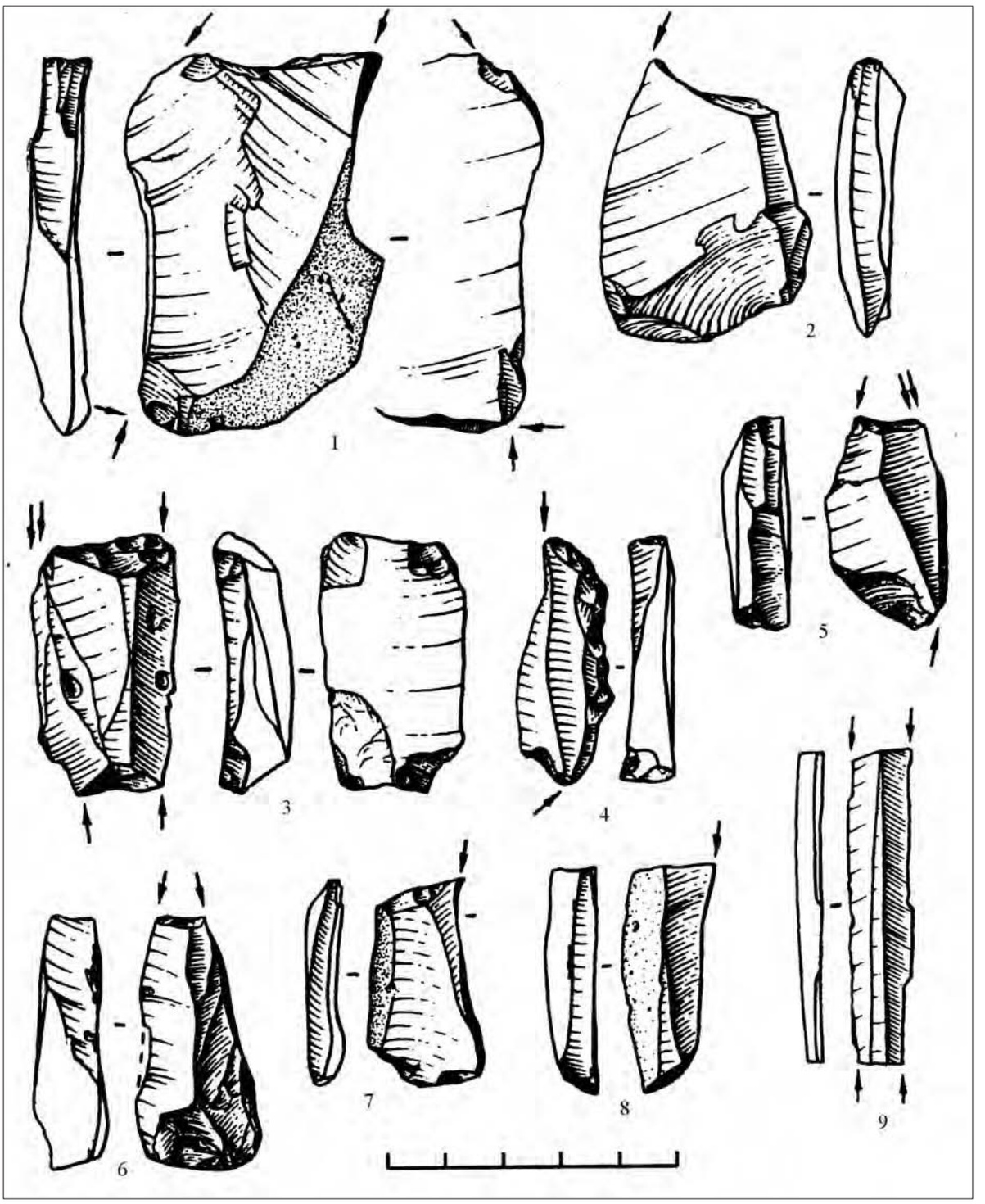

Fig. 5. Burins

knapping technique, the presence of shouldered points similar to Ienevo ones, highly asymmetric trapezes, and also tanged points of the Ahrensburg type. The similarity between flint artefacts from sites of the Pesochny Rov type and IC is so great that L.L. Zaliznyak came to the conclusion that these are local variants of the same culture (Зализняк 1986: 124).

The main characteristics peculiar to IC complexes are observed also in Grensk Culture on the Upper Dnieper, best represented by the Borovka site. Here we can also observe careless knapping, aimed mainly at obtaining flake blanks. Consequently, tools made of flakes predominate. As far as burins are concerned, retouched burins dominate (Копытин 2000: 24, 88). Among other tools are waisted axes and, of course, tanged and asymmetric points similar to Ahrensburg ones.

It is quite probable that the cultural phenomena described above and IC as such form a certain cultural

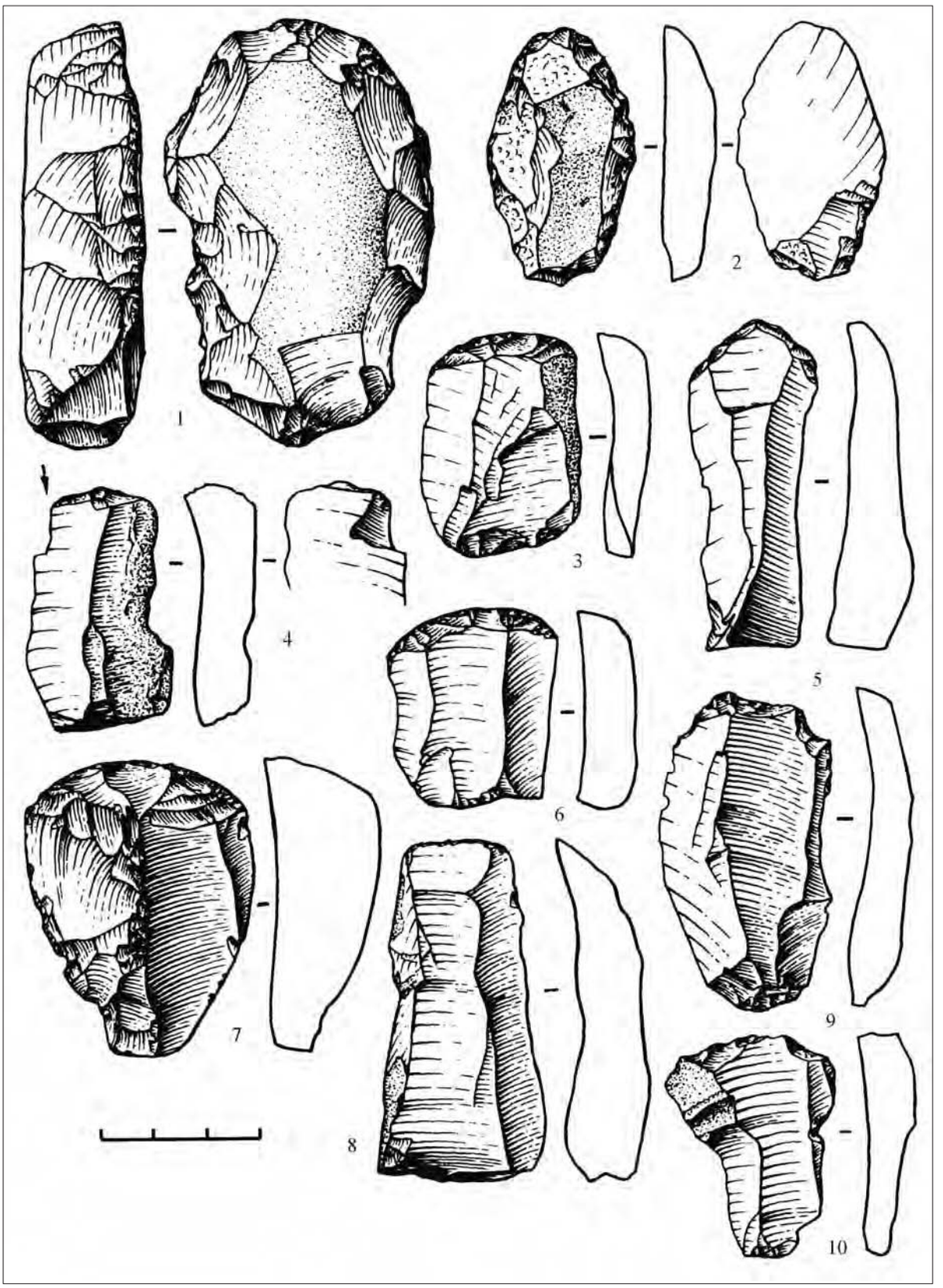

Fig. 6. Scrapers

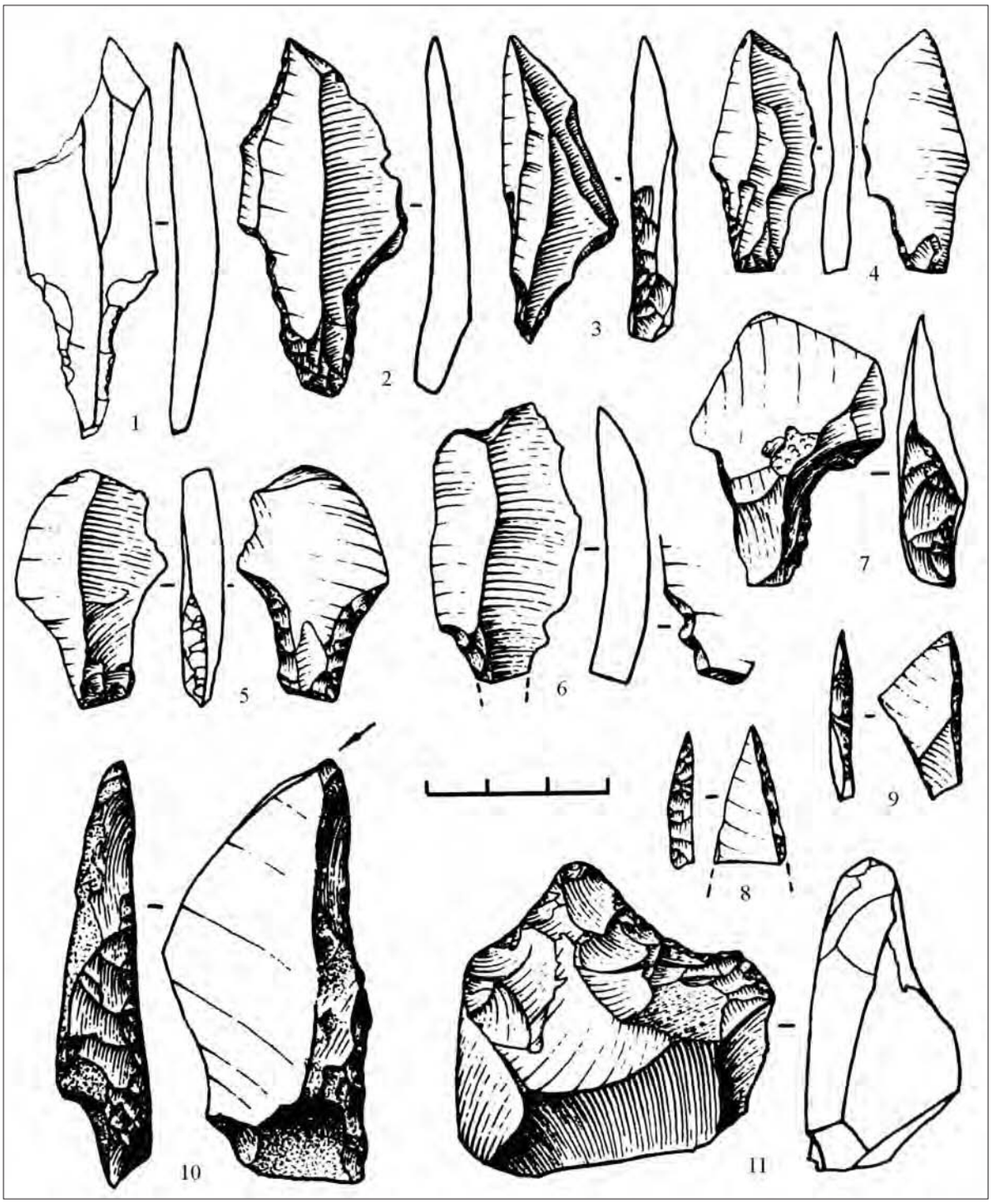

Fig. 7. 1–7 tanged points; 8 fragment of an arrowhead tip; 9 trapeze; 10 backed knife; 11 massive point

unity, within which boundaries would be relative if at all possible. They are united by a general relation to Lyngby and Ahrensburg, expressed first and foremost in hunting tools (various tanged and shouldered points). It is more difficult to determine the degree of influence of Lyngby-Ahrensburg traditions and the traditions of local Palaeolithic cultures in the formation of the Final Palaeolithic and Mesolithic cultures which are the object of our study.

Yet some researchers refuse to acknowledge the presence of the Lyngby-Ahrensburg component in IC and related cultures. In the opinion of V. Kopytin, bearers of Mezin cultural traditions "were an important component in the formation of Grensk Culture and the genesis of a series of cultures (Ienevo and Pesochny Rov)" (Копытин 2000: 134).

And in the opinion of H.A. Amirkhanov, IC of the Oka basin was formed on the basis of East Gravettian Pal-

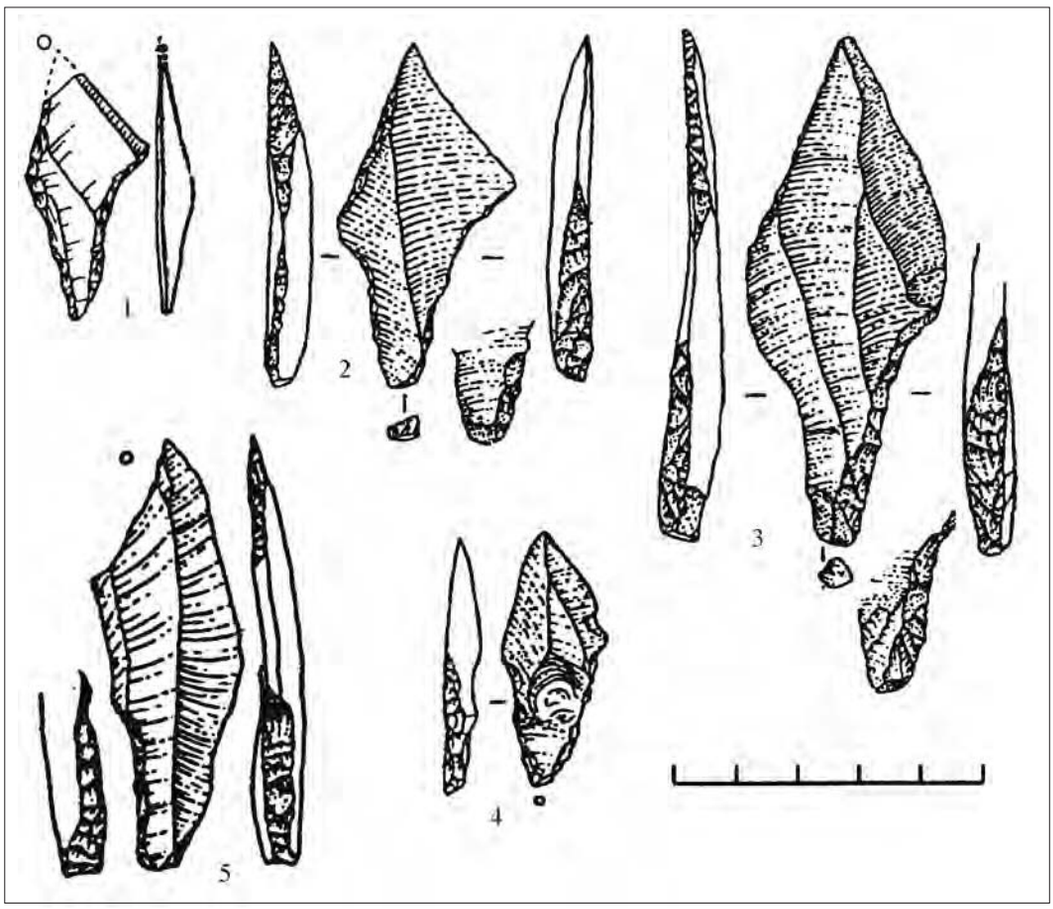

Fig. 8. Tanged points from the Ladyzino 3 site (upper Oka): 1 Фролов, Жилин, 2–4 Кравцов, Коннов; 5 Кравцов, Коннов, Трусов, 2003

aeolithic traditions (Zaraisk, Tregubovo 2, Koltovo 2) (Амирханов 2002: 86).

Of course, the presence of a certain autochthonal element in the formation of these Mesolithic cultures is more than logical, yet it is impossible to acknowledge their fully autochthonal origin.

Returning to the cultural identity of the Rostislavl site, it is impossible to deny the fact that it belongs to the sphere of IC and related sites. Yet noting the strong predominance of tanged point forms in the complex (which is on the whole not typical of IC sites), we must acknowledge the singularity of the flint complex of the Rostislavl site.

Here we may mention the site of Ust-Tudovka, which is also characterised by a similar knapping technique and similar artefacts, among which there is a series of tanged points of the Lyngby-Ahrensburg type. In the opinion of researchers, the flint complex of the Final Palaeolithic site of Ust-Tudovka is an important component in the formation of IC, which developed on the basis of Ahrensburg Culture: "the complex may be called protoienevo" (Жилин, Кравцов 1991: 17; Кравцов, Леонова, Лев 1994: 27).

Noting the significant predominance among arrowheads of points of the Lyngby-Ahrensburg type, one may assume the existence of a certain protoienevo episode as well. Researchers of the site agree with this and acknowledge the possibility that a still earlier settlement existed (Кравцов, Коннов 2004).

To sum up, it may be said that IC and related cultures did not emerge in a ready form. They were preceded by a stage characterised by a significant manifestation of Lyngby-Ahrensburg traditions in artefacts. Further on, some forms of artefacts were lost or modified and new forms appeared, which finally resulted in the formation of IC at the border of Pleistocene and Holocene.

Judging from the above, the study of the Rostislavl site, which may, together with Ust-Tudovka, Podol III, the earlier complex of Ladyzhino 3, Anosovo 1 and Gremyachee (Воеводский 1941) etc, elucidate the formation of IC and, possibly, other Mesolithic cultures, is of much interest. The above circumstances do not allow us to relate Rostislavl and the sites mentioned above to IC. Rostislavl and similar sites are of independent interest, and should be considered if not an independent cultural phenomenon, then at least a phenomenon with the prefix proto- (proto-Ienevo).

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Abbreviations

АО – *Археологические открытия*
МИА – *Материалы и исследования по археологии*
СА – *Советская археология*

A. Trusov
Institute of Archaeology RAS
Dm. Ulyanov ul. 19, Moscow 117036, Russia
E-mail: sasha@comail.ru, sashatr@veernet.ru

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ROSTISLAVLIO VĖLYVOJO PALEOLITO GYVENVIETĖ

Aleksandr V. Trusov

Santrauka

Rostislavlio stovyklavietė yra dideliame pusiasalyje, kur išlikusios viduramžių Rostislavlio miesto liekanos, Okos aukštame dešiniajame krante, 8 km pasroviui nuo Oziory miestelio, Maskvos srityje (1, 2 pav.). Pagrindinis akmens amžiaus kultūrinis sluoksnis (5–10 cm storio su titnaginiais radiniais) aptiktas po viduramžių miesto kultūriniu sluoksniu. Didžioji dalis titnaginių radinių aptikta dviejose 5–6 m skersmens koncentracijose „A“ (3 pav.) ir „B“. Skyrėsi skaldytinių forma. Apskritai galėtume kalbėti apie neišvystytą skeltinę techniką, todėl dauguma dirbinių buvo pagaminti iš nuoskalų. Gausiausia dirbinių grupė – rėžtukai (5 pav.). Rėžtukai, suformuoti ant statmenu retušu nupjautų ruošinių, kurie vyravo tarp kitų tipų. Tarp jų gausiausi rėžtukai, suformuoti ant tiesiai arba įgaubtai retušu nuskelto galo (5 pav.: 3, 5, 6). Gremžtukai pagal skaičių antri. Tarp jų vyrauja įvairios galinių gremžtukų formos (6 pav.). Strėlių antgaliai – trečia pagal skaičių dirbinių grupė. Vyrauja įvairūs įkotinių antgalių tipai (7 pav.). Tarp jų yra keletas panašių į Lyngby ir Arensburgo kultūrų antgalius (7 pav.: 1–3). Taip pat aptiktas asimetriškas trikampės formos kirvelio tipo dirbinys (4 pav.: 3) ir peilis statmenai retušuotu šonu iš pailgos nuoskalos (7 pav.: 10).

Įkotiniai antgaliai iš Rostislavlio stovyklavietės panašūs į antgalius, kurie aleriodo ir driaso III laikotarpiais buvo paplitę paleolito gyvenvietėse nuo Šiaurės Vokietijos ir Lenkijos mažiausiai iki Volgos aukštupio (Podolo III, Ust-Tudovkos I stovyklavietės) ir Dnepro aukštupio (Anosovo I) rajonų. Todėl šiame tyrimų etape manome, kad Rostislavlio stovyklavietė greičiausiai datuotina finaliniu paleolitu.