

PALEOENVIRONMENT. THE STONE AGE

**A.P. Derevianko¹, J.W. Olsen², D. Tseveendorj³, S.A. Gladyshev¹,
T.I. Nokhrina¹, and A.V. Tabarev¹**

¹*Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, Siberian Branch, Russian Academy of Sciences,
Akademika Lavrentieva 17, Novosibirsk, 630090, Russia
E-mail: gladyshev@archaeology.nsc.ru*

²*Department of Anthropology, University of Arizona,
Emil W. Haury Anthropology Building 1009, East South Campus Drive, Tucson, Arizona, 85721-0030, USA
E-mail: jwo@arizona.edu*

³*Institute of Archaeology, Mongolian Academy of Sciences,
Zhukoviyn Gudamzh 77, Ulaanbaatar, 51, Mongolia
E-mail: dtseveen@yahoo.com*

NEW INSIGHTS INTO THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD AT CHIKHEN AGUI ROCKSHELTER (MONGOLIA)

The paper continues a series of publications dedicated to the analysis of the archaeological findings from Chikhen Agui Rockshelter. Chikhen Agui is among the few stratified archaeological sites that have been located in Mongolia. In the previous papers, Chikhen Agui has been defined as a seasonal camp of the Early Holocene hunters. In the present publication, the authors employ the multifunctional approach to the analysis of the whole complex of archaeological findings. Abundant beads made of the ostrich egg shell were recovered from the entry terrace of the rockshelter; remains of a wooden pole were located in the central portion of the grotto, handles of composite tool were found in association with fire places. A biface blank and a pendant fragment made of the raw material unusual for this area were discovered. All these finds feature the nonutilitarian technologies. Hence, the authors hypothesize a more complex archaeological context of the site that it was believed before. This hypothesis is supported by the occurrence of a set of objects that can be explained by utilitarian purposes in the living zone. Extensive exploration of natural resources and adaptation to the environmental conditions gave rise to the relevant processes in the spiritual sphere, i.e., attached sacred significance to specific landscape features. In the authors' point of view, the ritual episode at Chikhen Agui Rockshelter can be linked with this cultural background.

Introduction

The majority of Stone Age sites in Mongolia are surface aggregates of artifacts unassociated with buried cultural deposits; hence stratified archaeological complexes in this region particularly attract the attention of scholars. The archaeological site known as Chikhen Agui Rockshelter (originally referred to as Chikhen-Khuver in early publications) is one such rare stratified Mongolian Stone Age site (Derevianko et al., 1989) (Fig. 1).

During the course of excavations carried out from 1996 to 1998 and in 2000, the small rockshelter's soft sediments were almost completely removed (Arkheologicheskoye issledovaniye..., 1998, 2000). Archaeological materials were recovered principally from two culture-bearing horizons: an upper horizon attributed to the Early Holocene, and a lower horizon dated to the terminal Pleistocene. The Holocene culture-bearing horizon is divisible into two lithological layers, 2 and 2a, while the terminal Pleistocene archaeological materials are associated with two lower lithological

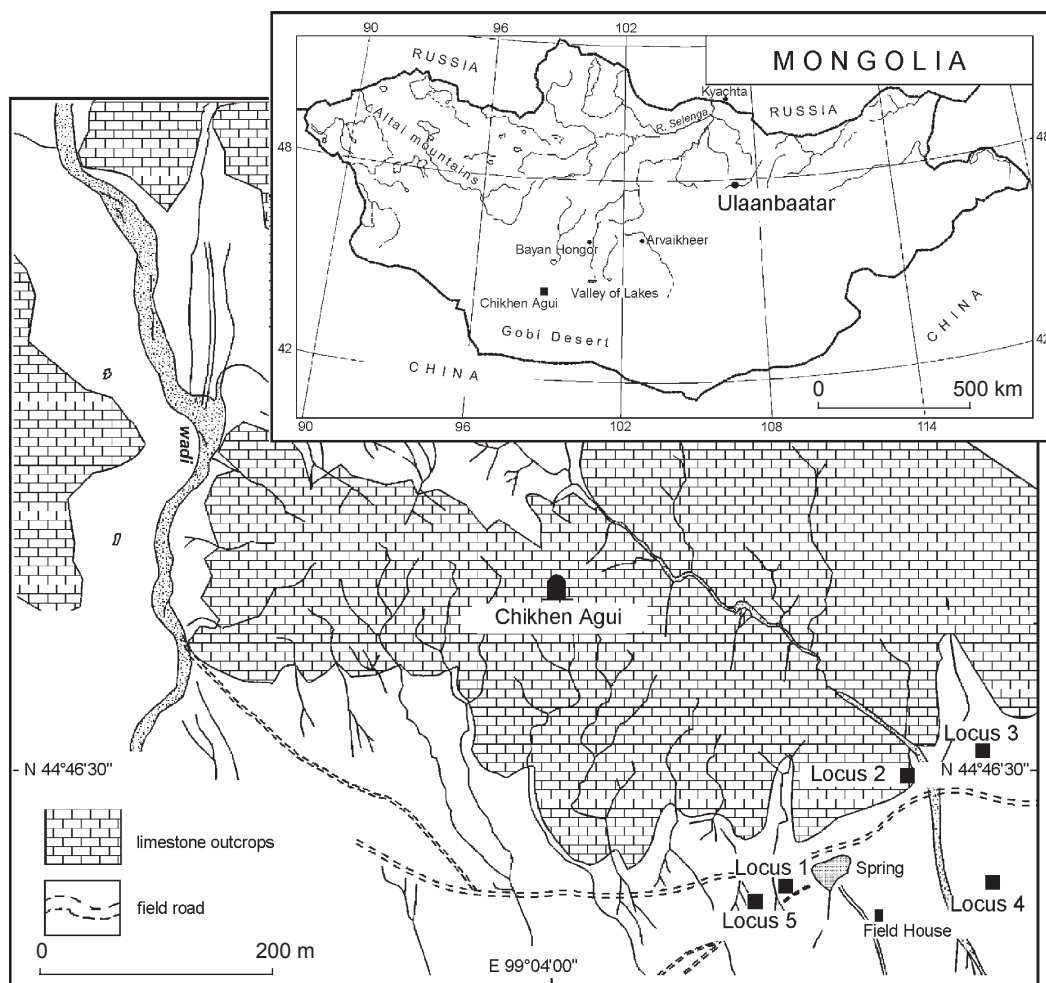


Fig. 1. Map indicating the location of Chikhen Agui Rockshelter.

layers, 3 and 3a. The Holocene artifact assemblage is mostly based on blades; the artifacts were recovered from the entire excavation area (57 m²), while the Pleistocene artifacts were distributed over a smaller area of roughly 13 m². Descriptions and interpretations of the archaeological materials as well as chronometric dates have been published elsewhere (Derevianko et al., 2001, 2003; Gladyshev, Nokhrina, 2003; Orlova, Kuzmin, Lbova, 2005; Gladyshev, Nokhrina, Tabarev, 2007). In these publications, Chikhen Agui was interpreted as a seasonal hunting camp. The present authors generally agree with that conclusion, but also suggest a different interpretation of the cumulative assemblage of archaeological findings made on the basis of a convergence-of-evidence approach.

Every human activity is reflected, albeit differentially, in the spatial organization of occupation areas. It is not always possible to distinguish different activities or to separate spatially distinct activity areas, because “every type of activity includes the beginnings of other activities

that are subjected to the former, and every activity zone is related to other forms of activities to a certain extent” (Florensky, 2000: 112). Hence, a safe assumption is that the behavioral context of the archaeological remains recovered from Chikhen Agui is more complicated than might superficially appear to be the case. Indeed, a number of objects were excavated whose occurrence in the rockshelter’s “living zone” cannot be explained conclusively as the result of domestic activities (Fig. 2).

The majority of recent publications on the archaeology of Paleolithic–Neolithic cave sites in Northern and Central Asia contain detailed information on stratigraphy, chronology, and faunal remains. Such articles provide the reader with detailed descriptions of the typological and technological features of tools recovered, reduction products, and waste. On the basis of results derived from the analysis of various archaeological data, the function of a particular site can be established as either a short or long-term camp, a seasonal station or hunting camp, or a workshop among other possible interpretations. Artifacts

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1034818>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1034818>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)