

The first people: Monuments of the Stone Age

Territory of Zhambyl area was habitable since very ancient times, starting from the paleolith epoch (ancient Stone Age)

Paleolith is divided by researchers into lower (early), middle (late middle paleolith – “Mustye”) and upper (late).

During the ancient (or lower) paleolith environment of the Kazakhstan territory as well as Eurasian territory differed from the modern one. Mountains were lower (from 500 to 1000 m) that allowed warm and damp air streams from Indian ocean to get freely to this territory. Damp and hot climate favored to rich and thick vegetation. Coniferous and deciduous woods grew in mountains of Tien-Shan; its lowlands were filled with damp meadows and dry steppes and semi-deserts were close to them. Plateaus were located in a place of a modern Karatau ridge.

Plateaus were located in a place of a modern Karatau ridge. Diverse flora created fine conditions for life of various kinds of animals. Mammoths and cave bears lived at the mountains slopes; “overnskiy” mastodon and a southern elephant habited in the woods and at the basin banks. Herds of horses were grazing in the meadows and steppes, and camels were found in the droughty semi-deserts.

The first traces of ancient person of the territory of Kazakhstan relate to early paleolith (about 1 million years – 140 thousand years ago). Remains of the ancient person were not found yet, but based on the remained traces of short-term sites it was established that the most ancient people of Kazakhstan were contemporaries of the pithecanthropus and sinanthropus that lived one million years ago.

Karatau mountains were the most favorable places for dwelling in Zhambyl area. The most ancient stone tools were found there. In their work and during hunting people used rough cutting tools – bifaces. The main jobbing material for

their manufacturing was presented by flint, quartzite and slates. These minerals are convenient: when being split and processed they get sharp cutting edges.

The earliest monuments of paleolith were found in Talass area. These are Borikazgan and Tanirkazgan sites. Spread of tools here is accurately limited, they are not being found outside of a certain border. Tools always have an accurately shaped form, one end of the tool is processed, sharp and other one retains a pebble crust or is slightly corrected. Tools of Shabakty I site located close to Saudakent aul are identical.

Degeres site was revealed near Zhargimbai hill of Talass area. Along with the most ancient forms, there is new processing of a stone conditioned by more progressive techniques in “ashel-mustye” epoch.

During middle paleolith –mustye epoch of the environment starts to change. Rising of Himalayas, Pamir, Tien-Shan Mountain ridges occurs. The access of damp, warm streams from the south has been closed and the climate becomes colder. The cold snap periods were replaced by periods of warming and corresponded to glacial epoch of Eurasia. This affected the character of vegetation that in turn caused the migration of animals.

During mustye period (140-40 thousand years BC) formation of modern river beads and river directions has begun. Open spaces with steppe vegetation have widely extended. Willows, alders, elms, oaks, lindens and codling grew in rivers valleys. Ancient camel and saiga still existed at the open spaces of deserted steppes. A zebra (zussenberney) horse and mossback horse appeared instead of a Stenon horse. The steppe rhinoceros and ancient bison occupied shrubby steppes with high grass and riparian tangle along the rivers. Marals lived here and the elephant was found in woods between the rivers.

During an epoch of the upper (late) paleolith (40-12 thousand years BC) orogenic processes have amplified. There was rising of Karatau, Tien-Shan. The climate became damper.

At this time wild rams were found in mountains; saiga, onager and camel were found in steppes and semi-deserts.

In the upper paleolith horses, wild bulls, red deer and saiga were widespread. Driving hunting for these provided meat, fat, bones and skin for humans.

Mesolithic (the middle Stone Age) is a following archaeological epoch covering the period of 12-10-6 thousand years ago. The bottom border of Mesolithic is substantially conditional and the upper one is determined by emergence of the cultures familiar with ceramic ware.

Mesolithic is a transitive epoch in every respect: in the nature and living conditions of people and in economy. Mesolithic had preconditions for emergence of agriculture and cattle breeding.

Numerous materials were found during excavation of Karaungar cave located on the right coast of a small river with the same name, at the border of Zhambyl and South Kazakhstan regions.

Analyzing the obtained collections of tools with scrapers and cutters, silicon and quartzite tips of darts, spears and arrows with one-side and two-side retouch, punches and knives, stone sinkers for fishing nets; bone and horn needles, awls, harpoons and ornaments, it is possible to restore a picture of versatile activity of the human from the neolith epoch.

Used materials:

- 1. Treasure of ancient and medieval Taraz and Zhambyl region / K. M. Baipakov, G. A. Kapekova, D. A. Voyakin, A. N. Maryashev.*