

Around Tsakhiurtyn Hondi. Studies of the Stone Age of the borderland of Altai Mountains and the Gobi Desert in Mongolia

At the foot of the Altai Mountains in Mongolia, in a place known as Tsakhiurtyn Hondi or Flint Valley, Russian archaeologists have discovered in the last century a huge accumulation of flint products in the region of the natural occurrence of this raw material. Their research shows that during the Paleolithic period, local communities used the resources of the Flint Valley, by obtaining flint there and pre-treating it. They left there innumerable quantities of flint products which are the remains of the workshops. However, this was not a place where those communities lived, but only where they acquired raw material. The settlement network was concentrated in vicinity, around Flint Valley, on the shores of now dried lakes at the foot of the Altai as well as probably within the mountain valleys and caves located there. The preliminary reconnaissance showed that in the immediate vicinity of the valley there are numerous remains of Paleolithic settlements and the mountain range was a region of hunting activity. The multi-faceted recognition of the nature of the settlement around Flint Valley is the research objective of this project. Thanks to the study of lake sediments and cave deposits, a reconstruction of the palaeoenvironment in which the communities using the Flint Valley functioned will be obtained. Excavations will bring information about the nature of settlement, its age, and cultural attribution. Laboratory work will show a range of the cultural diversity of Paleolithic and Neolithic communities based on the raw materials of the Flint Valley. The intended effect of the project will be the description of the settlement microregion operating on the basis of the Flint Valley resources in the Stone Age. Furthermore, it will also be a characteristic of the prehistoric societies of Central Asia, in still poorly recognized area of prehistoric settlement of the Old World.