

# THE UPPER PALEOLITHIC MAMMAL FAUNA OF THE BAIKAL REGION, EASTERN SIBERIA, RUSSIA (NEW DATA)

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There are two different geographic zones in the Baikal region: the periglacial Siberian (Fore-Baikal region) and the extraglacial arid Central Asian (Trans-Baikal region). In the Fore Baikal region, the Karginian interstadial mammal fauna (Wurm II, 50 000 to 23 000) was known from several archeological sites (Khenzykhenova 2005).

The first Karginian mammal fossils in the Fore Baikal region were found in 2003–2005 by the Russian–Japanese project team at the Bol'shoj Naryn site, 53° N, 103° E (Sato *et al.* 2008). Another mammal fossils that dates back to the same period of time were found in 2007–2008 during excavations at the Gerasimov site in Irkutsk (Kogai *et al.* 2007). The zooarchaeological survey of both fossils helped to establish the differences in the habitats of people at the two coeval Paleolithic sites located not far from each other. The species composition of the Karginian mammal fauna, obtained from the new sites, suggests the widespread presence of open landscapes and forested areas in the region, as well as a warmer and more humid climate in comparison to the glacial period. Large mammals that lived in the Baikal region during the Karginian interstadial were typical representatives of the Upper Paleolithic faunal complex (Gromov 1948), with the mammoth (*Mammuthus*) widely spread to the east of Lake Baikal, and the rhinoceros (*Coelodonta*) in the Trans-Baikal region. As to small mammals, those were represented by steppes and forest species. The Brandt's vole (*Lasiopodomys brandti*) [lives in the dry steppes and deserts] was a dominating species in the Trans-Baikal region. The coeval fauna of the Fore-Baikal region included steppe species [the narrow-sculled vole (*Microtus gregalis*) dominated at the Gerasimov site, and the steppe lemming (*Lagurus lagurus*) at the Bol'shoj Naryn site] together with forest, tundra and field species, and some intrazonal animals. Thus, the faunal fossils obtained from the Bol'shoj Naryn site and the Gerasimov site were ecologically mixed and surprisingly diverse. The comparative analysis of the small mammal faunas that date back to the Karginian interstadial shows the predominance of the steppe species not only in the Fore-Baikal region but also in the Trans-Baikal region.

It is to be asserted that open landscapes prevailed at that time. Radiocarbon dating of the Karginian soil was conducted in Novosibirsk, Seoul and Tokyo.