

The Paleolithic sites of Korman' IV & 9 (Middle Dniester, Ukraine)

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In 1930/1931, I. Botez and N. Moroshan discovered Palaeolithic site, Korman' IV. On the right bank of the Dniester, two archaeological layers were discovered, marked by lithic artefacts and faunal remains and identified as Upper Palaeolithic. In total there are 16 archaeological layers documented spanning the Middle Palaeolithic to Mesolithic: 12-9 - Mousterian, 8 - 'transition' from Middle to Upper Palaeolithic, 7-1 - Upper Palaeolithic and layers B and A are classified as Mesolithic.

During 1969–1975 Korman' IV was excavated by a team led by O. Chernysh and I.K. Ivanova. This interdisciplinary study and the comparison with the Molodova I, V sites resulted in a cultural and chronological scheme of the development of Upper Palaeolithic cultures in the region. The close cooperation with specialists of the natural sciences lead to a detailed reconstruction of the palaeoecological context of Palaeolithic occupation.

In 2012, the Dniester Palaeolithic expedition of the IA NASU in cooperation with the University of Cambridge discovered a new site, Korman' 9. The preliminary archaeological and geological fieldwork at Korman' 9 allows a first assessment of the stratigraphy, chronological position and archaeology of the new site. Three layers were discovered that were all attributed to the Upper Palaeolithic. All three layers belong to the Late Pleniglacial and human occupation that occurred under cold conditions.

Layer I can be classified as Epi-Gravettian based on typology (microliths) and technology (core for micro blades and bladelets) as well as personal ornaments (shell, amber and tooth). Also, the radiocarbon age (17.950 ± 80 BPGrA-59996) supports this classification. Also, Layer II can be classified as Epi-Gravettian based on the radiocarbon age (18.440 ± 80 BP; GrA-59993)). Due to the scarcity of finds, we cannot base such a classification on lithic typology and technology.

Layer III can be attributed to the Gravettian technocomplex based on morphological criteria (bi-directional prismatic core and rather wide value with evidence for organic (soft) percussion). Currently, Layer III is undated.

The stratigraphy of Korman' 9 connects to the upper part of Korman' IV, but to the low numbers of artefacts at Korman' 9, a detailed comparison is not possible. It is also important to note that in the new Palaeolithic site of the Dniester Valley, Neporotovo 7 (Layer II), an analogue of the industry of the Middle Palaeolithic layer 11 of the Korman IV site was found.

However, we can conclude: The Upper Palaeolithic at Korman' 9 and Korman' IV have the same chronostratigraphic position with near identical radiocarbon ages. Furthermore, the faunal assemblage is very similar; the same is true for technological and typological characteristics of the lithic artefacts.