

Middle Palaeolithic of the Dniester: Levallois at Neporotovo 7

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The most famous Levallois sites in the valley of the Middle Dniester are Molodova I and V. In 2012, a new multi-layered site, Neporotovo 7, was discovered, which allows to clarify the chronology of the emergence and presence of Levallois industries in this region.

The site Neporotovo 7 is located on the 50–60m terrace of the right bank of the Dniester River. In a more than 10m thick loess-paleosol sequence dating from MIS 3 to MIS 6, three Middle Palaeolithic archaeological horizons (AH 7, AH 3a, and AH 3) can be attributed to the so-called Molodovo variant of Levallois.

The Molodovo variant of Levallois represents, in contrast to classical centripetal Levallois, a specific system of preparation of the Levallois cores by the combination of unidirectional or convergent removals along with supplementary scars oriented from the lateral and distal platforms. Lateral and bilateral preparation of cores occurs frequently as well. There are rare and occasional triangle blanks similar to “Levallois points”.

The collection of Neporotovo 7 - AH 7 (MIS 6) is characterized by the Molodovo variant of Levallois reduction, as is evident from samples of cores and blanks (flakes and blades) with convergent-sub-crossed, unidirectional-sub-crossed, unidirectional-lateral, and other combinations of scar patterns. Levallois cores frequently were reduced from the two sides. Non-Levallois reduction strategies are represented by unidirectional, orthogonal and convergent reduction.

AH 3a (MIS 5b) is represented by a small number of artifacts. Both non-Levallois and Levallois reduction strategies have been identified in this assemblage. Unidirectional, bidirectional, radial and crossed cores demonstrate non-Levallois primary knapping. At the same time some cores have preparation features characteristic for the Molodovo type of Levallois: unidirectional removals, which come from the main platform, are combined with supplementary removals from the lateral and distal platforms. We do not exclude that these samples could be determined as “Levallois cores in a stage

of reparation". Faceted platforms of blanks support the conclusion about the Levallois nature of this archaeological assemblage.

AH 3 (MIS 5a) includes cores and blanks, which were produced by Levallois and non-Levallois reduction strategies. Among the non-Levallois objects the most representative are cores and blanks with unidirectional, bidirectional, crossed and sub-crossed scar patterns. Levallois cores have sub-crossed, convergent-lateral and unidirectional-distal preparation of their upper surface. With the exception of one unusual triangle-shaped Levallois radial core, all other Levallois cores have rectangle/sub-rectangle shape with prominent supplementary lateral/distal platforms.

In all archaeological assemblages discussed here, tools are not numerous and often presented by simple side-scrapers, retouched flakes/blades, and denticulates.

All three AHs of Neporotovo 7 (AH 7, AH 3a, and AH 3) have definite features of Levallois reduction strategy. At the same time, the Levallois ratio in each AH is different. In AH 3 and AH 3a there are examples of parallel reduction, which are quite similar to the Upper Palaeolithic volumetric types (sub-cylindrical/cylindrical).

The Levallois assemblage of AH 7 is technologically identical to the assemblages of the sites Molodova I and V as well as Ketrossy. The stratigraphic position Neporotovo 7 - AH 7 indicates that this Levallois industry of Molodovo variant currently is the earliest in Eastern Europe.