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# **EARLY PALEOLITHIC OF EURASIA: NEW DISCOVERIES**

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## **LOWER PALEOLITHIC OF UKRAINE: CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH**

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The stratigraphic position of the Lower Paleolithic sites known in Ukraine corresponds to the time of the Priazov – Tiligul/Potyagailovsky horizons of the Ukrainian scheme, or OIS 23-12/9, between 950/750 and ~450/300 kya. Despite the long duration of the period, the Lower Paleolithic sites known in the territory of Ukraine are not numerous, which can be due to different factors,

including taphonomy, insufficient intensity of field explorations, and low population densities during the Lower Paleolithic.

Of particular importance are archaeological assemblages from layers VIII, VII, VI, and V-c of the site of Korolevo, situated west of the Carpathian arch. As has been shown by G.A. Pospelova (and then confirmed by P. Haesaerts) layers VIII and VII occur below the Brunhes-Matuyama boundary. Taking into consideration that geographically Korolevo belongs to Central Europe, one can consider Medjibozh (in the Yuzhny Bug basin) as a candidate for the role of the earliest (Mindel-Riss) Paleolithic site in the East European part of Ukraine.

Some accumulations of surface finds can presumably be dated to the Lower Paleolithic, too. They include, for example, Neporotovo VI and a number of similar occurrences confined to the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> terraces of the Dniester, as well as some isolated finds from Kodak on the Dnieper that can date to Mindel-Riss. Of special interest are archaic-looking pebble industries of Echki-Dag, Gaspra and some other sites in Crimea, which are thought to date to the period between Dunai-Günz and Günz-Mindel. There are also some finds indicative of the possibility that Lower Paleolithic micro-industries were present in Crimea too.

The spatial distribution of the Lower Paleolithic sites in the territory of Ukraine shows that most of them are concentrated in the Carpathian region (including the Dniester basin) and Crimean peninsula. Geographically these regions gravitate to Central Europe and the north of Mediterranean.

By and large, the Lower Paleolithic sites in Ukraine are very rare and their chronological position is often disputable. The overwhelming majority of these sites have no faunal remains. As to the surface finds, their attribution to the Lower Paleolithic is very tentative, since it is based almost exclusively on morphological characteristics of stone artifacts.

Of particular interest are the materials Medjibozh, because their Lower Paleolithic age is confirmed by a number of independent lines of evidence, including stratigraphy, palynology, malacology, paleontology (mega- and micro-fauna), and TL dates for overlying layers. Single artifacts of Medjibozh are correlated mostly with the basal part of the sequence, represented by compact clay marls lying on Archean granites. The alluvial deposits superposed on these strata contain remains of *Mammuthus* cf. *trogontherii* Pohlig, 1885; "*Dicerorhinus*" cf. *kirchbergensis* Jaeger, 1939; *Megaloceros* sp.; *Cervus* cf. *elaphus* L. 1758; *Cervus* sp.; *Capreolus* sp.; *Sus*. cf. *scrofa* L. 1758; *Ursus* cf. *deningeri* Richenau, 1904; *Canidae* (1–2 sp.). The artifacts are represented by pebble tools, flake tools, flakes, and fragments bearing signs of utilization. The technological and typological characteristics of this industry do not contradict to the idea of its Holstein age.