



Crimea at 30,000 BP: the Neanderthal cul-de-sac or an evidence for parallel evolution of anthropologically different groups of humans?

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In Eastern Europe during the period from about 36,000 to 28,000 BP two Late Middle Palaeolithic (LMP) industries, Eastern Levallois-Mousterian and Eastern Micoquian, coexisted with the number of Early Upper Palaeolithic (EUP) complexes, such as Streletskaya, Gorodtsovskaya, Spitsynskaya “cultures”, Aurignacian of Krems-Dufour type and Gravettian. There were no LMP industries north to Crimea. The Dniester and Don River valleys were populated by the makers of EUP assemblages. At the same time, during the period from 32 ca to 28 ca BP Crimea was inhabited by both LMP (Eastern Levallois-Mousterian and Eastern Micoquian) and EUP (Streletskaya and Aurignacian). Also, the Dniester and Don River valleys, from one side, and Crimea, from another, were environmentally different: northern-boreal forests were common to Dniester and Don Valleys, and south-boreal steppe – forests-steppe landscapes were characteristic for Crimea. The Spitsynskaya, Gorodtsovskaya, Aurignacian and Gravettian inventories are associated with Anatomically Modern Humans (AMH), while the makers of Micoquian assemblages were Neanderthals. The anthropological types of Levallois-Mousterian and Streletskaya complexes are unknown, yet.

The temporal coexistence of LMP and EUP assemblages is demonstrated by the AMS chronology, as well as by stratigraphical sequences of such Crimean sites as Buran-Kaya III and Siuren I, where the interstratification of LMP and EUP levels were found. Thus, the shift from LMP to EUP in Eastern Europe covered a relatively long period of time: from about 36 to about 28 ca BP in radiocarbon terms. The Neanderthals were responsible for Crimean LMP industries until 28 ca BP. The first appearance of AMH

in Eastern Europe is dated to about 36,000 – 32,000 BP, and they are not associated with Aurignacian complexes, being the makers of specific EUP stone and worked bone assemblages, such as Spitsynskaya and Gorodtsovskaya “cultures”. There is no reliable evidence for any kind of interactions between any of mentioned industries. There are also no data to suggest generic links between LMP and EUP in Eastern Europe. Thus, the most appropriate scenario for LMP / EUP transition is discontinuity added by parallel evolution of technologically and anthropologically different groups of humans on the territory of Crimea.