
Mesolithic Kukrek technocomplex revisited in the light of the collection from the Kamyana Mohyla 1 site (south-eastern Ukraine)

Dmytro Kiosak*¹ and Nadiia Kotova²

¹Odessa I.I.Mechnikov National University, Odessa (ONU) – Ukraine

²Institute of Archaeology National Academy of Sciences – Ukraine

Abstract

Kukrek is a taxonomic unit defined on the territory of modern day Ukraine and Moldova and unknown elsewhere in Europe. The definition of Kukrek aspect differs in fundamental way from any other definition of Mesolithic taxon in Ukraine. While the latter are grounded on microlithic projectile point's typology, Kukrek specificity is sought in other functional tools: Kukrek inserts and Kukrek burins.

Abundant Kukrek complexes of Kamyana Mohyla 1 site (excavations 2011-2019 by N.S. Kotova) provide the empirical basis for re-assessment of Kukrek technocomplex.

Kukrek inserts are medial fragments of blades with marginal retouch and hard ventral trimming. They were identified exclusively by Soviet and post-Soviet researchers. G.A. Bonch-Osmolovsky was the first to define them. V.N. Danilenko interpreted some inserts as "cutters" (prorezyvateli) for cutting grooves in bone, antler and wooden hafts. Current concept of "Kukrek insert" was developed by D.Ja. Telegin. Function of these tools was identified by use-wear analysis. They were used as planing knives on hard wood and bone. The perspective of the Kamyana Mohyla 1 site collection proves that Kukrek inserts are working elements of composite tools. These tools were used for planing hard organic materials (wood, antler, bone). Their reconstruction can be carried out as follows. Kukrek inserts cannot be placed in their hafts by long sides because some inserts were curved in profile. We suppose that they were hafted by their ends which were inserted in grooves or some other type of binding. That's why length of inserts was relatively standardized. When hafted like this, both sides of an insert were free and probably were used with a mechanic of movement similar to modern hard planes with force applied perpendicularly to a long axis of insert.

"*Kukrek burins*" were defined in several contradicting ways. They could be understood as "simple burins on chunks of flint" (Telegin 1982), burins on flakes with flat burin scar (Stanko et al. 1981: 11), multiple burins on flakes. We accept the latter approach.

If defined this way, "Kukrek burins" resemble secondary cores (cores on flakes). This point is supported by some refitting in the KM1 collection that gave us a possibility to ask whether "Kukrek burins are tools or cores?" (McPherron 2007).

Thus, Kukrek cultural entity was defined by classics of Ukrainian Mesolithic studies (Stanko 1982; Telegin 1982). However, we cannot continue to rely on this definition. Kukrek is rather

*Speaker

a technocomplex than "tradition" and it is structurally similar to large technocomplexes of Upper Paleolithic like Aurignacian or Epigravettian (Anikovich 2003-2004). Its specifics are based on functional tools rather than on projectiles. Later, a concrete realisation of Kukrek technocomplex should be understood region by region and period by period, taking a particular attention to the morphology of projectile points.

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