

Figure 13. Hematitic female figurine known as Venus of Petřkovice (Yelinek 1982: 410).



example, has been discovered in **Hlum, Kůlna, Podkovice, Lopatka** and **Neslavice** (Abramova 1966: 184). These sites were also occupied by members of mammoth-hunting cultures and are located in the vicinity of the sites previously mentioned.

The Ukraine

Describing prehistoric miniature plastic art of the Dniester and Desna-Dnieper regions, the Central Russian plateau, the Urals and Siberia I primarily rely on the register of Palaeolithic art of the Soviet Union compiled by Abramova and on taxonomy used in this publication (Abramova 1962: 72).

Molodova is the best known Palaeolithic settlement of the Dniester watershed. It is located on the right bank of the Dniester, in the Chernovtsy Province, the Ukraine. Owing to its favourable geographical position the settlement has been repeatedly rehabilitated: during the Mousterian phase (43.6–33 millennia BC), the Upper Palaeolithic period (30–23 millennia BC) and continuously inhabited from the glacial maximum to the Mesolithic Period. The

Molodova collection of prehistoric findings is not very abundant but consists of rare examples. One of such rarities is a bone engraving on a fragment of mammoth scapula from the Mousterian phase (Figure 14). The engraving displays indistinct ornamentation and a primitive zoomorphic representation, which is one of the first examples of figurative art in the whole world. Obscure lines of black pigment have been painted on the same bone – the same object can thus be considered a prehistoric painting. It was estimated that the

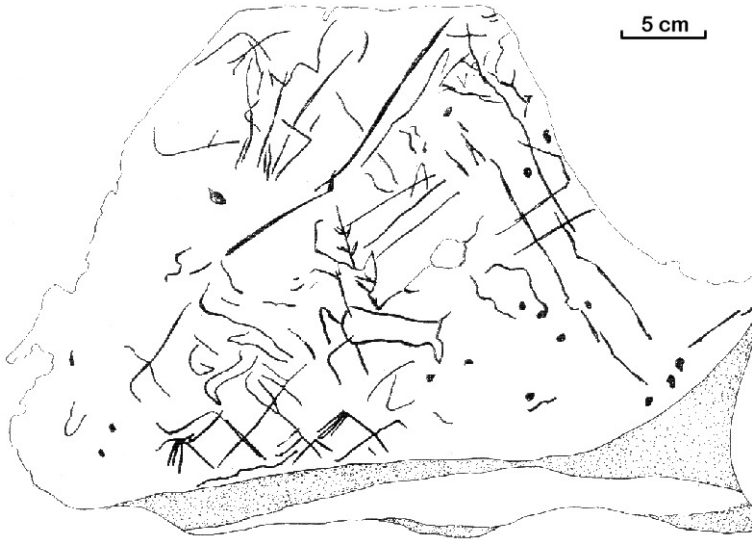


Figure 14. A more than 40 millennia old engraving on a fragment of mammoth scapula (Chernysh 1978).

cultural layer where the object was found from was 40.3–40.6 millennia old (Chernysh 1978).

An important site in the view of prehistoric art chronology is the settlement of Molodova V with its rich stratigraphy. A horn harpoon decorated with zigzag and slanted streaking was discovered in its uppermost, Mesolithic cultural stratum about 8 millennia old (Figure 15).

In the second cultural layer that belongs to the last phase of the Palaeolithic period a 19.5 cm tall hollow sculptural object made of reindeer antler was found. Cavities carved into the object suggest that the object may have been a prehistoric flute. The third stratum revealed a limestone female figurine and a rod-like object with anthropomorphic handle. The fourth stratum revealed another flute-like musical instrument (21 cm tall) carved in reindeer antler. The sixth layer dates back 16.8 thousand years and revealed a semi-oval slate tablet with edges decorated with triangular notches. The seventh,

Figure 15. An ornamented harpoon from the Mesolithic period (Abramova 1962: XL, 3).



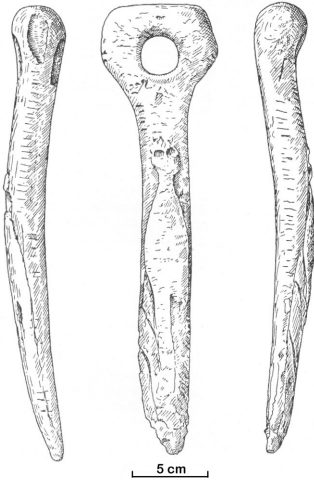


Figure 16. A staff with a low-relief anthropomorphic representation (Abramova 1962: XL, 5).

23–23.7 millennia old cultural stratum displayed 5 staves of reindeer antler with large cavities in their thicker ends. The edge of one staff has been decorated with indented ornamentation of parallel lines, and the flat side exhibits a low-relief 13.5 cm tall anthropomorphic figure (Figure 16). Sandstone discs with polished surfaces, one of them decorated with painted radial lines, were found in the same layer. As for jewellery, 3 snail shells and a tooth of an arctic fox have been found. The eighth, more than 24.6 millennia old layer unearthed a semi-oval ivory pendant and an item of jewellery made of snail shell (Abramova 1962).

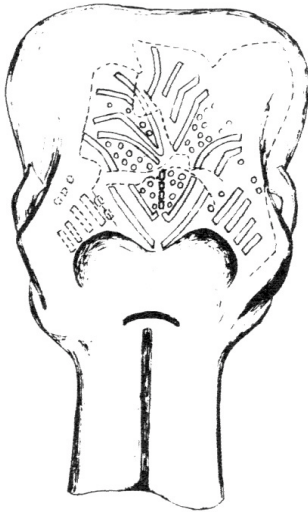


Figure 17. A mammoth skull decorated with red paint from Mezhirich (after Pidoplichko, Yelinek 1982: 284).

Propiatin is another settlement of the Mousterian phase where figurative art has been found. Namely, an animal representation (3.7 x 6.8 cm) engraved to the interior surface of a split pipe bone. Although the object's age has not been dated with radiocarbon method, judging by the cultural stratum the object must be at least as old as the animal representation created on the fragment of mammoth scapula from Molodova I (Sytnik 1983). Propiatin is located about 150 km north-west of Molodovo, near Ternopil at the midcourse of Dnieper's left tributary Seret.

A unique mammoth skull with a pattern painted in red (Figure 17) was discovered in the settlement of **Mezhirich** on the right bank of the

Figure 18 (right). Surface extent of the tusk fragment with prehistoric Kirillovskaia engraving (Abramova 1962: XXXIX).

Dnieper (about 120 km southeast of Kiev).

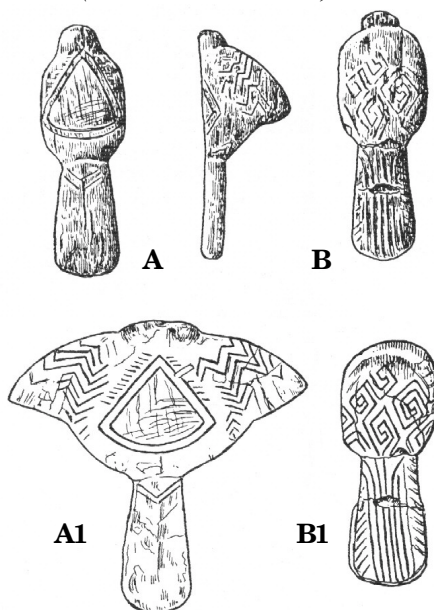
The skull was probably used as a construction element. The prehistoric settlement of Mezhirich dates back 14.3–15.2 millennia (PSSSR 1984: 357).

A bone engraving on a 30 cm long piece of mammoth tusk is known as the **Kirillovskaia** find. The object represents the head of a long-beaked bird, an animal silhouette identified as a turtle and line ornamentation (Figure 18). The tusk fragment was discovered more than a century ago during archaeological excavations of the 21 m deep cultural layer on the right bank on Dnieper, in Kiev. Two other tusk pieces with primitive indentations and line ornamentation have been found in the same site (Abramova 1962).

Mezin is the Palaeolithic settlement richest in prehistoric artefacts in the whole Ukraine. The settlement was inhabited after the gla-



Figure 19. Ornithomorphic art objects (A and B) and their surface extents (A1 and B1) from Mezin (Abramova 1962: XXXI).



cial maximum more than 17 millennia ago (PSSSR 1984: 40) and is located on the right bank of the Desna river, 25 km downstream of Novgorod-Severski. Archaeological excavations were conducted in the area between 1909–1912 and 1954–1956. There are not many examples of figurative art among the finds of Mezin: two stylised anthropomorphs with a round head and cylindrical body carved in ivory and an indistinct zoomorph. The number of symbolic ornamented miniature sculptures, however, is considerably larger. The most interesting of these are 6 ornithomorphic figures carved in mammoth ivory with small heads, round bodies (some with protruding wing-like flexures) and flat tails. All figures are covered with intricate ornamentation of straight lines, zigzags and meanders. Meander-pattern has not been found in any other Palaeolithic site (Figure 19).

Another interesting group of artefacts consists of 11 phallic figures. The size of these objects varies but the shape is almost the same – a longer pointed forepart is separated from the shorter and blunt rear end by a bulge on three sides. The front part is carefully polished and embellished with line ornamentation (Figure 20).

Jewellery (pendants, necklaces, bracelets and headbands, etc.) constitutes an ornate collection of art objects. 2 round and 5 globular pendants, sticklike objects with perimetric indentations, about 80 snail shells with drill holes, most likely used as beads, two bracelets and fragments of headband have been found in Mezin.

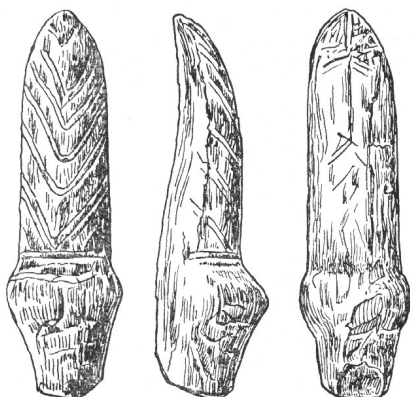


Figure 21 (above). Mammoth tusk bracelet with meander pattern (Abramova 1962: XXXIV).

Figure 20 (left). Phallic art object from Mezin (Abramova 1962: XXXII).

Headgear and bracelets have been made of mammoth ivory tiles. 14 fragments of these have been found, most of which are ornamented. A most unique example is an elaborately created and lavishly ornamented 5.3 cm wide bracelet that was unearthed in 1912 (Figure 21). In 1956 another bracelet was found: it consists of five joined mammoth tusk rings 1 cm wide, each ring edged with ornamentation.

Sensational discoveries in Mezin continued in 1956 with mammoth bones (two mandibles and a scapula) ornamented with red paint (Figure 22). Their pattern resembles those engraved on other objects of mammoth ivory. Inspection of usage traces revealed that the objects were prehistoric percussion instruments. A percussion hammer of reindeer antler for creating sounds was found nearby. The whole set of musical instruments was restored in the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, and the supposed Palaeolithic sounds recorded on a record (Matiushin 1996).

Considerably less discoveries of prehistoric art have been made in other Ukrainian Palaeolithic settlements. Single art objects dating back 13–16 millennia have been found in **Klinets** (Zhitomir Province) in the Northern Ukraine, **Gontsy** on the Udaia, a tributary

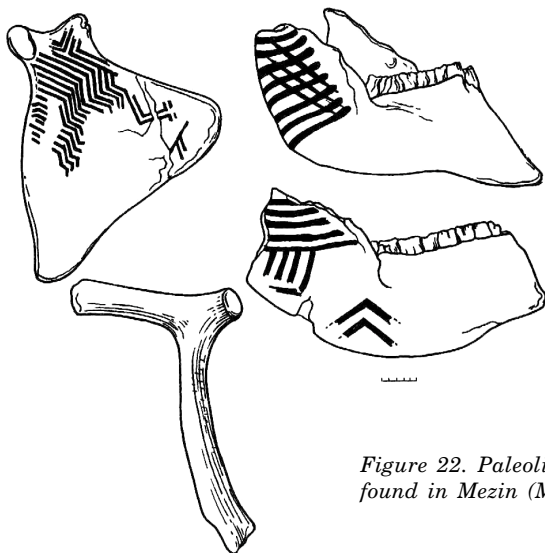


Figure 22. Paleolithic musical instruments found in Mezin (Masson 1996: 57).

to the Suly river, **Dubovaia Balki** and **Kaistrovaia Balki** (Nadporozhie on Dnieper), **Amvrosievka** (Donbas, Miuss watershed), **Yakimovskaia Balki** (Luganski Province) and **Ilskaia** (the Kuban river) in the central and southern regions of the Ukraine. The finds are mostly ornamented fragments of objects and beads. A piece of amber with traces of polish found in Dubovaia Balki and an oval object with a large cavity in its centre and handle-like joints from Gontsy are unique (Abramova 1962: XXXIX). Few ornamented objects have been found near Bakhchisarai on the Crimean Peninsula (**Siuren, Shan Koba, Balin Kosh**).

Central Russia --->

The sites of Central Russia are located in the watershed of the Desna, Don and Kama rivers. The Palaeolithic settlements on the Desna **Novgorod-Severskaia, Pushkari, Timonovka** and **Suponevo** are located upstream from Mezin. Single ornamented fragmentary objects have been discovered from Novgorod-Severskaia and Pushkari, some ornamented and also sculptural art objects of vague shape have been found in Suponevo and Timonovka. Radiocarbon dating on the cultural stratum of Timonovka suggests that these locations may be 12–15 millennia old. The location quite rich in prehistoric art finds is the prehistoric settlement of Yeliseevichi, which dates back 13–15.6 millennia.

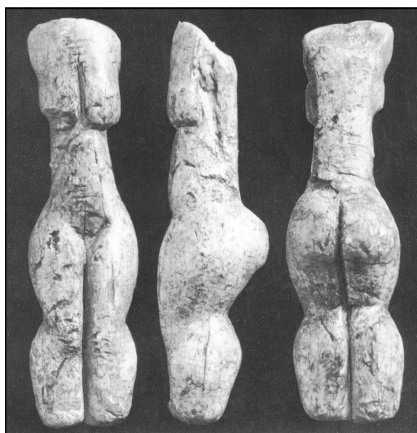


Figure 23. *Venus of Yeliseevichi* (Stoliar 1985: 243).

The **Yeliseevichi** site was discovered in 1930 and it is located on the river Sudost, the right tributary of the Desna, in the Briansk Province, Russia. The majority of prehistoric artefacts was found in a heap of mammoth skulls piled next to a residential house. The most remarkable of these is a finely modelled 15 cm tall figure depicting a shapely woman with no feet, head and hands, carved of mammoth tusk. The figurine