

Preface

This book's central aim is to present the complexity of the transition from hunting and gathering to agriculture and animal husbandry in South-eastern Europe. There is no single neolithisation process; rather, there are different scenarios for the transition to sedentarism in each of the major regions examined herein. My objective is thus to describe this diversity of neolithisation in the subcontinent's dissimilar environments and to outline several processes by means of case studies. To achieve this, however, it was first necessary to subject the existing archaeological data to a critical review. Working with new radiocarbon data, it is clear how fundamentally our understanding of the spread of agriculture and animal husbandry to Europe has changed when compared to older syntheses on the neolithisation. Beyond this, however, tangible manipulations of the archaeological data can also be demonstrated. Another aim of this work is therefore to indicate some of these falsifications by way of example.

This book is based on my habilitation thesis, which I submitted under the German title "Dynamik der Neolithisierung in Südosteuropa. Der Beginn von Ackerbau, Viehzucht und sesshafter Lebensweise" on 14th February 2014 to the Philosophical Faculty of the Eberhard Karls University in Tübingen. Major sections of the original text have since been published. This applies, in particular, to our work on the material from Dzhulyunitsa-Smardesh and Ovcharovo-Gorata in northern Bulgaria. The results of our investigations in Dzhulyunitsa were presented in a journal publication (KRAUSS et al. 2014). The evaluation of the earlier excavations in Ovcharovo-Gorata is the subject of a separate book (KRAUSS 2014). The main results from both projects have only been summarised here, and will

be described within the context of the overall presentation of the neolithisation process in the lowlands of the Lower Danube. The revised text was then translated into English by Alexander Johannes Edmonds, and only individual sections subsequently added.

The work begins with a research-historical review of the development of the concept of a 'Neolithic'; although the term itself was not coined until the 19th century, it is, in my opinion, deeply rooted in Western cultural history. Indeed, some of the oldest texts in ancient Near Eastern literature already address the contrast between sedentary farmers and wandering hunters. The historical overview demonstrates as to how not only the Three-Age System established by Christian Jürgensen Thomsen (1788–1865) in Denmark, but also contemporaneous systems developed by Johann Friedrich Danneil (1783–1868) and Georg Christian Friedrich Lisch (1801–1883) in the German states, are not only an "ingenious invention", but, above all, represent the concerted implementation of an established historical principle.

The evaluation of the neolithisation process requires knowledge of the conditions prior to this event. However, we only possess solid information on previous Mesolithic settlement for a few areas, such as the zone at the Danube Gorges. The highly simplistic thesis of a neolithisation solely through immigration from Anatolia and the Aegean Sea into the Balkans and beyond into the Carpathian Basin and Central Europe is a consequence of this. A more detailed analysis of the known Mesolithic sites in South-eastern Europe now reveals for the first time a continuation in several places of Mesolithic traditions up to the Neolithic period. The interactions between Mesolithic and Neolithic communities must therefore be assigned more importance.

I had previously already dealt critically with the collection of stone artefacts from Pobiti Kamani in north-eastern Bulgaria. Important results for the research of the Mesolithic in South-eastern Europe were then presented in the anthology “Southeast Europe Before Neolithisation” which was edited by Harald Floss and myself (KRAUSS, FLOSS 2016). In the meantime, however, numerous new discoveries have come to light which could be included in the analysis. Among the most important are certainly the publication of the old finds from a cave near Odmuť in Montenegro and a previously little-known Mesolithic feature from Ohoden in north-western Bulgaria.

The settlement of Dzhulyunitsa, which is not only one of the oldest Neolithic sites in the Balkans, but also remained inhabited throughout the entire period of the neolithisation process, offers a key to understanding this development in the Balkans. It turns out that the entire greater area north of the Aegean Sea was only neolithised after the definitive end of the climatic processes encapsulated in the 8.2 ka event after 6200 calBC. According to the limited resolution of the radiocarbon dates, it was a sudden process which covered the area from the northern Aegean to the Carpathian Basin within a maximum of two centuries. However, not all areas within the Balkan-Carpathian region were affected in the same way by this first wave.

The neolithisation of mainland Europe started from those areas which correspond most closely to areas with a Mediterranean climate in terms of their environmental conditions. In South-eastern Europe, this is initially the Sub-Mediterranean-Aegean Biogeographic (SMAB) Region, which only extends deep into the subcontinent along the Axios/Vardar, Struma, and Nestos/Mesta river valleys. The oldest Neolithic sites which are still directly influenced by the Neolithic maritime networks of the Aegean are found in these areas. This area’s Neolithic only spread into the Central Balkan region (Proto-Starčevo) and the lowlands of the Lower Danube (Dzhulyunitsa 1–2) by way of an additional step.

According to current knowledge, the neolithisation of Thrace and the Carpathian Basin took place somewhat later. The trigger for this process need not necessarily have been the immigration of an already fully Neolithic population; it is quite possible that autochthonous Mesolithic communities were involved in the neolithisation process occurring there, which only became archaeologically visible thereafter. The physical remains of sedentary societies are simply much more detectable than those of roving hunters.

The architecture of the early settlements is particularly important for the investigation of the expansion dynamics of the Neolithic, since building traditions permit the tracing of the connections between different cultural areas like no

other archaeological aspect. However, it is precisely in the documentation of Neolithic house features that major methodological problems for the Balkans are revealed. Based on the evaluation of the old excavations at Ovcharovo-Gorata, a settlement of the developed Early Neolithic in the eastern Balkans, it can be demonstrated how the published house plans had already been manipulated during excavations. As a consequence, all previously published settlement plans for the South-eastern European Neolithic must be critically reassessed. The finds from Ovcharovo-Gorata can be largely paralleled with the material from other sites in South-eastern Europe. This comparability can be taken as a sign of increased communication within the entire Balkan-Carpathian region, which was only possible after the complete establishment of the Neolithic there.

In a supposedly Early Neolithic figure ensemble from Belica in Serbia, manipulation of the finds themselves can be proven. The results of these investigations are also presented here for the first time.

In the Carpathian Basin, the expansion of the Neolithic comes to a halt for several centuries along a line that has been defined as the Central European-Balkan Agro-Ecological Barrier (CEB AEB). The preliminary results of our investigations in the Maros/Mureş area immediately south of this line already show how the Neolithic settlement in this border area had adapted to the changed environmental conditions. Cattle dominate the domestic animal population there, while sheep and goat breeding predominate in the Balkans, just as in the Neolithic lifestyle’s areas of origin in the south-east. The use of aquatic resources and hunting are also more important in the northern areas. The expansion beyond the CEB AEB northwards is apparently related to the exploitation of obsidian deposits in the northern Carpathians. Other exchange networks can also be proven on the basis of the distribution of various raw materials and render it likely that Mesolithic populations were involved in the neolithisation process, especially in this area. In the Carpathian Basin, the Neolithic package is also adapted to the northern ecological conditions to such an extent that it could ultimately also be used to settle areas further north in Central Europe.

The neolithisation of the northern Pontic steppes occurred accordingly late, only during the phase of the developed Early Neolithic (Cris III), and very probably initially originated from the eastern Balkans. In the course of bringing the Neolithic way of life to this area, however, a significant reduction in the Neolithic package can be observed with the ever-increasing distance from the Balkans, until, finally, only ceramic production can be demonstrated in an otherwise economically completely Mesolithic environment.

The book ends with an overview on various cultural techniques of the Neolithic and selected symbolic aspects. These provide an insight into the social and ideological preconditions that made the neolithisation of Europe possible in the first place.

Although the manuscript was written in Tübingen, there were good reasons for submitting it to the Austrian Academy of Sciences for printing. I thank my good friend and

esteemed colleague Barbara Horejs for this opportunity. The two reviews commissioned by the Academy were very helpful and so I would also like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their comments. Special thanks go to the editors of the MPK series and especially to Hazel Harrison, whose precise work contributed a great deal to the improvement of this text, and also to Ulrike Schuh for her continued extremely useful and straightforward guidance.