

6. Neolithisation Processes in the Central Balkans

That a pre-Neolithic population is to be expected at all within the Balkans' farther reaches is evidenced by the archaeologically well-researched zone of the Danube Gorges. There, directly on the banks of the Danube's passage through the Balkan-Carpathian belt, an uninterrupted settlement sequence ranging from the end of the last Ice Age until well into the Neolithic has been attested (BORIĆ 2011). However, the available data show that either the number of settlements markedly increases with the Neolithic, or that settlements become ever more difficult to detect with increasing chronological posterity. Despite this, it is vital here to state that the absolute number of known settlements from the period immediately prior to the neolithisation is roughly equal to that of the Early Neolithic (BORIĆ 2011, fig. 5). The lack of pre-Neolithic settlements thus appears to be a primarily methodological problem.

6.1. The Catchment Area of the Great and Southern Morava Rivers

The reason why the western Bulgarian sites demonstrate fewer correspondences with the Early Neolithic materials in north-eastern Bulgaria is to be sought in the strong ties of these areas to the central Balkans (Fig. 97). While the earliest ceramics in the western Black Sea region may still be compared to those of the region of the Great Morava and the Danube Gorges, and (even more so) can only be understood through this connection, the evolution of forms of the developed Early Neolithic nonetheless takes its own course (as was the case elsewhere). Information on the Proto-Starčevo level introduced by Srejović (SREJOVIĆ 1971, 11–17) has only recently been expanded upon by means of more recent excavations (PAVÚK 1993). In addition to the

finds that have been known about for longer from Lepenski Vir IIIA1 (SREJOVIĆ 1969. – PERIĆ, NIKOLIĆ 2004), Padina (JOVANOVIĆ 1987), Divostin (BOGDANOVIĆ 1987), Banya Arandjelovac (Bogdanović in: SREJOVIĆ 1988, 70–71), Ornice-Makrešani (Stanković in: SREJOVIĆ 1988, 85–86), and Grivac (McPHERRON, SREJOVIĆ 1988. – BOGDANOVIĆ 1995. – BOGDANOVIĆ 2007), a large find collection is also known from Blagotin (VUKOVIĆ 2004). There is a general consensus that the earlier material from Koprivets and the finds from Polyanitsa-Platoto in north Bulgaria belong to the period of Proto-Starčevo (cf. TODOROVA, VAYSOV 1993, 74–75. – POPOV 1996, 104–105. – KRAUSS 2006, 184–185). To these might be added the finds from Dzhulyunitsa I, so that one can assume a large-scale spread of this earliest Neolithic phenomenon in the Balkans. While this consists almost completely of monochrome ceramics, the discovery of three fragments of dark-painted pottery at Blagotin is remarkable. These comprise extensive linear patterns realised with a broad brush, although their application upon minuscule fragments does not permit any identification of structure.²² It is evidently an extensively applied, dark-painted pottery similar to that otherwise evidenced from Dzhulyunitsa I.

Statistical information on the ceramic wares' relationship to one another is available from the settlement

22. The material was presented by Jasna Vuković at the conference "Beginnings. New Research in the Appearance of the Neolithic between north-western Anatolia and the Carpathian Basin" in April 2009. See also VUKOVIĆ 2011.

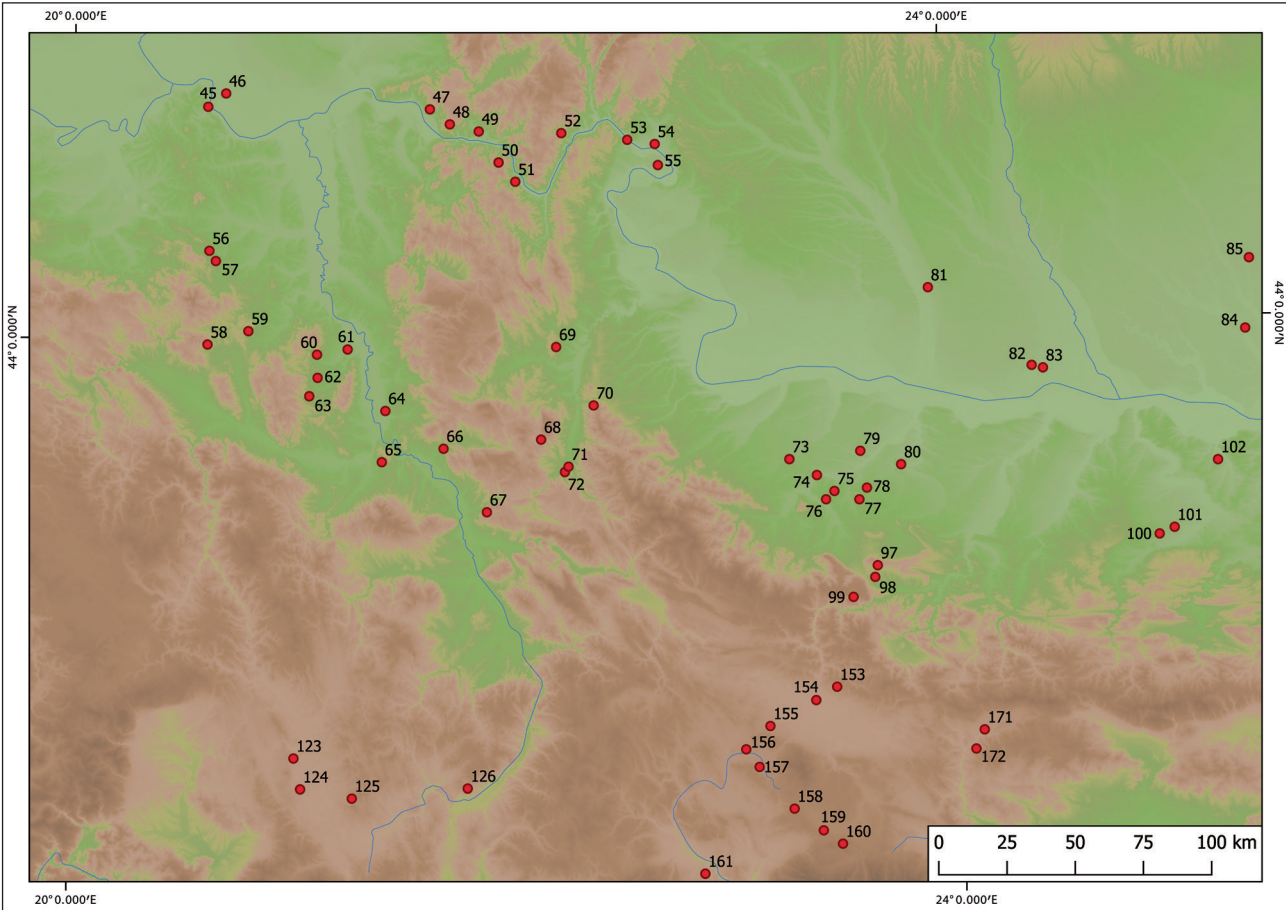


Fig. 97: Map of Early Neolithic sites in the Central Balkans. – 45. Vinča. – 46. Starčevo. – 47. Pojejena-Nucet. – 48. Moldova Veche-Rât. – 49. Gornea. – 50. Padina. – 51. Lepenski Vir. – 52. Cuina Turcului. – 53. Ostrovul Golu. – 54. Schela Cladovei. – 55. Ajmana-Mala Vrbica. – 56. Svinjarička Čuka. – 57. Banya Arandelovac. – 58. Grivac. – 59. Divostin. – 60. Belica. – 61. Svetozarevo (Jagodina)-Bunar. – 62. Tečić. – 63. Blagotin. – 64. Drenovac. – 65. Ornice-Makrešani. – 66. Crnokalačka Bara. – 67. Bujanj. – 68. Dubrava. – 69. Kučajna. – 70. Jelašnica. – 71. Knjaževac. – 72. Kadijski Krst. – 73. Gradeshnitsa-Malo Pole and Gradeshnitsa-Lukanovo Darvo. – 74. Devene. – 75. Ohoden. – 76. Banitsa. – 77. Tlachene. – 78. Komarevo. – 79. Altimir. – 80. Byala Slatina. – 81. Cîrcea-La Hanuri and Cîrcea-Viaduct. – 82. Vădastra. – 83. Grădinile-La Islaz. – 84. Măgura Buduiasca. – 85. Dulceana. – 97. Zakonitsa. – 98. Beshovitsa. – 99. Rebarkovo. – 100. Devetaki Cave. – 101. Krushuna. – 102. Balgarsko Slivovo. – 123. Karagač-Žitkovac. – 124. Rudnik. – 125. Gladnice. – 126. Pavlovac-Gumnište and Pavlovac-Čukar. – 153. Kremikovtsi. – 154. Slatina. – 155. Pernik. – 156. Priboy. – 157. Negovantsi. – 158. Galabnik. – 159. Kraynitsi. – 160. Sapareva Banya. – 161. Nevestino. – 162. Vaksevo. – 163. Balgarchevo. – 164. Eleshnitsa. – 165. Dobrinishte. – 166. Kovachevo. – 167. Toumba Serron. – 168. Sitagroi. – 169. Dikili Tash. – 170. Kryoneri. – 171. Chelopech. – 172. Chavdar (R. Krauß).

of Grivac (BOGDANOVIĆ 2004, 47–59). Three Early Neolithic levels attributed to Proto-Starčevo succeed one another. These are overlaid by an additional three layers with Vinča material. Milenko Bogdanović’s information about the decorative forms of the Early Neolithic pottery from Grivac permits a nuanced stratigraphic understanding (BOGDANOVIĆ 2004, 51–54). According to this, the following distribution applies from the lowermost levels (Tab. 2).

Significant here initially is the increase in impressed and barbotine-decorated wares over the course of the Early Neolithic trajectory. It becomes evident from the

table that while painted pottery is first attested from the second settlement phase onwards, it also encompasses less than 2% of the entire spectrum. This consists rather overwhelmingly of linear painted motifs, with curvilinear painting patterns only occurring from Grivac III onwards. A subdivision according to the different painting colours presents the following percentual distribution (Tab. 3).

While a significant proportion of white painting is still evidenced during Grivac II, this recedes markedly with the arrival of Grivac III in favour of red painting. At Grivac, the development from initially white to overwhelmingly red, and finally black painting can easily be followed.

	undecorated	impresso	applications	barbotine	plastic strips	incisions	grooves	fluting	painting
Grivac I	86.8	3.82	3.3	1.87	1.4	0.62	2.19	–	–
Grivac II	87.99	6.18	1.26	2.11	0.26	0.35	–	0.55	1.3
Grivac III	74.11	10.46	2.55	9.68	0.44	0.65	–	0.39	1.72

Tab. 2: Grivac. Distribution of decorative types on Early Neolithic ceramics according to the lowest layers. Indicated is the percentage of the sherds in the respective layers (after BOGDANOVIĆ 2004).

	white	dark red	dark	black
Grivac II	32.07	64.83	2.09	1.01
Grivac III	11.53	75.96	5.76	6.75

Tab. 3: Grivac. Percentage distribution of ceramic painting (after BOGDANOVIĆ 2004).

A continuous development from Proto-Starčevo to classical Starčevo has only been stratigraphically proven at a few sites in eastern Serbia. An overlapping of layers with exclusively monochrome pottery with layers with white-painted ware is proven at Lepenski Vir and Drenovac (BOGDANOVIĆ 1995. – SCHUBERT 1999, 43–47). White-painted pottery has also been identified at the single-phase settlement of Ajmana-Mala Vrbica (SREJOVIĆ 1988, 51. – SCHUBERT 1999, 47 and pl. 239). At Lepenski Vir and Drenovac, the subsequent development up to the phase of dark painting on a lighter slip background is also documented (SCHUBERT 1999, 45–47), to which many further sites may be ascribed. For example, dark or bichrome, white-black painting has also been identified at Tečić, Bujanj, Pavlovac-Gumnište, and Crnokalačka Bara (SCHUBERT 1999, 87). A link between these sites and the development of pottery in Bulgaria via vessel painting was suggested by Schubert. He links the material from Karanovo I with his level of Proto-Starčevo III, for which white painting and barbotine decoration is characteristic (cf. SCHUBERT 1999, 79). He considers the trajectory of Karanovo I to continue uninterrupted until the phase of spiraloid dark-painted pottery within his level of Starčevo II (cf. SCHUBERT 1999, 86–87). It is very much evident that painted ceramics in the central Balkan region passes through various developmental stages which cannot be readily attested in the western Black Sea region. As a result of this, a precise parallelisation of the cultural trajectories in both spheres solely on grounds of painted motifs remains unclear. What might be considered certain is a chronological anteriority to Karanovo II, and thereby to Ovcharovo-Gorata. Interestingly, the linear black painting on the vessel fragments from Ovcharovo-Gorata

would be contemporary with Schubert’s level of Starčevo III, where he notes a decrease in spiraloid motif forms in favour of linear-Ghirlandoid patterns (SCHUBERT 1999, 88–89). Some of the decorative techniques are, in fact, reminiscent of those from Ovcharovo-Gorata such as, for example, plastic adornments, cordons employed as motifs, applied blossoms, and the frequently aforementioned incised motifs composed of vertically running, parallel zig-zag lines as might be found upon vessels from Svetozarevo (Jagodina)-Bunar (cf. GALOVIĆ 1964, pls. 1/1; 3–4; 6/4–7; 7. – Vetnić in: SREJOVIĆ 1988, 74). In eastern Serbia, a fundamentally different form group follows in the guise of Vinča A, during which channelled ceramics now appear for the first time. A sequence of late Starčevo followed by Vinča A is attested at the eponymous site of Vinča-Belo Brdo (MILOJČIĆ 1949, 72. – GARAŠANIN D. 1984, 13–21), although a specific hiatus evidently occurred between both settlement periods (PARZINGER 1993, 60). Parzinger fills the gap within his Horizon 3b with the finds from Pavlovac-Gumnište (GARAŠANIN, GARAŠANIN 1971. – cf. PARZINGER 1993, 67 and Suppl. 2). By means of contrast, Schubert expresses doubt in the stratigraphic sequence of Pavlovac-Čukar (with linear dark-painted pottery) and Pavlovac-Gumnište (with spiraloid dark-painted ceramics) which is foundational to this argument (SCHUBERT 1999, 49).

6.2. The Early Neolithic Settlement of Belica and a Find of Figurines allegedly Originating from there

In 2008, Milorad Stojić reported upon a unique discovery of a cache of Early Neolithic idols, presently unique in its scope, purported to come from the village of Belica near Jagodina (central Serbia) (STOJIĆ 2008). Large portions of the discovered finds are alleged to have been uncovered by a rescue excavation in January 2002 under the direction of Stojić. Attributed to this find were largely heavily stylised female-shaped (gynaecomorphic) figurines, representations of human body parts, and even miniature hatchets, as well as a few abstract objects. In total, the find was to have consisted of 61 stone, 10 bone, and 7 clay figurines (Figs. 98–99). In July 2012, Hans-Jürgen Gawlick (Leoben) and Wolfgang



Fig. 98: Belica. The supposed Early Neolithic finds. Museum Jagodina (N. Borić).



Fig. 99: Belica. The supposed Early Neolithic finds. Museum Jagodina (N. Borić).

Frisch (Vienna) succeeded in identifying the stone types of all lithic artefacts from the figurine find. These comprised serpentinite and, in the case of a single figurine and some unworked fragments, stone originating from the immediate vicinity of the site. An excursion into the find site's broader environs served to localise serpentinite deposits. Most likely, the stone source originated from an ophiolite belt running in a northerly direction some 40 km west of the find site.

Debris could be collected from the riverbeds of this massif (most prominently from the Ibar and Western Morava). Also present in the find were various unworked stones and two dozen fragments of pottery vessels. Since the late 1990s, individual figurines have been frequently collected by the village's inhabitants at the edge of the locality. The necessity for a rescue excavation arose from the appearance of a discolouration from a filled pit on a field path south-east of the



Fig. 100: Belica. Geomagnetic mapping of the archaeological site. The enclosure ditch of the Early Neolithic settlement is clearly visible a little to the right above the centre of the picture (Eastern Atlas, Berlin).

village, from which, according to Stojić, the aforementioned figurines are said to have come. The upper section of the feature had already been largely removed through the impact of traffic from agricultural vehicles on the path and the intensive erosion of the slope, so that only the lowest level of some 10 cm could be excavated by the archaeologists under any manner of controlled conditions. Following this rescue exposure, Slavisa Perić (also of the Archaeological Institute, Belgrade) undertook further excavations at the site during the summer of 2003.

An initial visit to the site by a Tübingen work group (including the present author) took place in early 2012. By means of geomagnetic mapping of the site by the Berlin company Eastern Atlas, the outline of the settlement and, in part, its internal structure could be identified. The settlement displays a core area surrounded by a ring ditch (Fig. 100). The settlement structures also continue beyond this ‘core area’. The area excavated by Stojić in 2002 lies within the settlement’s interior on a modern field path. Three AMS dates are available for the dating of the settlement site as the organic components from

fragments of vessel pottery allegedly found together with a portion of the figurines have been measured (Poz-49793: 6830±40 BP; Poz-51241: 7000±40 BP; Poz-51242: 7150±40 BP). One reading provided a date for the site as had been expected which was within the 57th century BCE. The two other dates with calibrated results of around 6000 and 5900 calBC seem too early in date. These earlier dates can be explained by fractions of fossilised organic substances within the clay matrix, these causing the results to appear older. Various attempts to date bone finds failed as either not enough collagen remained in the samples or the finds had been contaminated with other organic material in the course of restoration. In typological terms, the ceramic find material belonged to the phase of the developed Early Neolithic.

In 2012, Perić published a report with Dragana Antonović in which the authenticity of the figural finds was brought into doubt (ANTONOVIC, PERIC 2012). New examinations undertaken on behalf of the University of Tübingen confirmed that some of the figurines were fashioned with modern tools. These demonstrably falsified pieces were

mixed with genuine artefacts from the Early Neolithic period. Thus, in the present author's opinion, the find in its entirety can no longer be viewed as authentic. By means of a Tübingen research project financed by the Thyssen Foundation, it was possible to study the discovery in greater depth. An important argument for its authenticity would have been a secure context explored purely through archaeological investigation; yet, here, contradictory statements from the researchers who participated in the work exist. What is undisputed is that at least parts of the find were discovered within a rescue excavation supervised by Stojić in January 2002. The find situation was photographically documented, although it was only published in sketch-like plans and profiles. While Stojić assumes that the entire find is to be understood as coherent, Aleksandar Kapuran (also involved in the excavation) considers this to be doubtful as too many finds emerged from the mud of the sediment after the archaeologists had already departed.²³ Nenand Tasić was initially tasked with the rescue excavation; however, he was unable to direct the work during January 2002 for personal reasons. It was only as a result of this that Stojić was more or less employed as his substitute. The present findings on the site and the figurine discovery may be summarised as follows:

1. The pit from where the find originated lies within a circular ditched installation which is understood to have constituted part of a larger Early Neolithic settlement. Until the acquisition of the geophysical measurements by the Tübingen team in August 2012, this ditched installation had been unknown. The Early Neolithic chronological ascription could be established independently by means of surface finds collected on site.
2. The 2003 excavations directed by Perić also yielded numerous Early Neolithic finds presently stored in the find depot of the Jagodina Museum. Nevertheless, these excavations related merely to a peripheral area of the settlement, as is only now evident from the visualisation of the settlement structure as presented by geomagnetic mapping.
3. A dating of the organic material from ceramic fragments from the hoard provided a date of approximately 5700 calBC; this corresponded to expectations from the typological classification of the vessel pottery. Nevertheless, only the pottery from the settlement was dated in this

way. Its connection to the find of the figurines, at least a part of which has been proven to be of modern manufacture, would now seem to be construed.

4. The independent analysis of the flint artefacts from the hoard by Ivan Gatsov and Petranka Nedelcheva (New Bulgarian University, Sofia) resulted in an ascription of stone artefacts to the developed Balkan Early Neolithic. Thus, in addition to the pottery fragments, the flint artefacts may also be deemed authentically Neolithic.
5. A study of the clay figurines by a work group at the Curt-Engelhorn-Zentrum Archäometrie, Mannheim was able to demonstrate that they had not been carved from burnt hut clay, as had been claimed in the article (ANTONOVIĆ, PERIĆ 2012) but instead had been originally sculpted from fresh clay. The clay figurines thus appear authentic, although they have not yet been dated scientifically.
6. All but one of the stone figurines are fashioned from a single type of stone. Serpentine, however, is one of the common materials for Early Neolithic stone figurines.
7. In terms of typology, the majority of the figurines display parallels to examples from sites in South-eastern Europe and Anatolia. Even those pieces from the Belica hoard, which seem as yet unique, still demonstrate an iconography entirely to be expected from the Balkan Early Neolithic's visual repertoire. Hence, someone with considerable knowledge of the South-eastern European Early Neolithic must have been involved as the free artistic invention of these figurines seems to be excluded on grounds of the good parallels. The find ensemble is not only of good craftsmanship, but the individual figures also seem to be typical of the south-eastern Early Neolithic. Nevertheless, the large number of figurines and the sheer range of the depictions was rather unusual, both of these being uncommon for the south-eastern Early Neolithic.
8. Although a determination of age for the surface of the serpentine objects is presently impossible, clear and insightful results could still be obtained by means of a microscopic analysis of the figures. Four stone objects from the hoard of Belica cited within the aforementioned article as example pieces were examined in the Institute for Geosciences of the University of Heidelberg on November 23rd, 2012 with the aid of a 3D laser microscope. Here, no traces of modern tools could initially be established, although even the fashioning of the pieces by means of prehistoric techniques would not have shown whether the pieces were manufactured some 7000 years ago or only in the recent past. A subsequent investigation undertaken by Emanuela

23. In a personal conversation in Heidelberg on 9 March 2013, Aleksandar Kapuran gave his opinion on the find situation to the present author.

Cristiani at La Sapienza, University of Rome, and comparison with a companion piece fashioned by means of prehistoric techniques on behalf of the University of Tübingen, however, provided undoubted proof of modern manufacture. Here, the comparison with the experimentally worked pieces delivered particularly unequivocal results. The pieces investigated were cut with modern, swiftly rotating tools.

The find ensemble is thus inauthentic as a whole and may be unmasked as a combination of archaeological finds with reproduced stone figurines. The alleged site is, nevertheless, genuinely a settlement of the developed Early Neolithic with a system of ditches. It is entirely possible that those pieces from the discovery at Belica that might be deemed originally Early Neolithic originate from this area. Nevertheless, this cannot be assumed with any certainty considering the conscious attempt at deception undertaken by means of these pieces.

6.3. The Timok Region

Aleksandar Kapuran and colleagues have reported a series of newly discovered Early Neolithic sites from the northern valley of the Timok in eastern Serbia. These include finds from surface investigations collected along the western branch of the Crni Timok (KAPURAN, BULATOVIĆ, JOVANOVIĆ 2011). Originating from Kučajna, the only substantial find collection (KAPURAN, BULATOVIĆ, JOVANOVIĆ 2011, pls. I–II) may be assigned without difficulty to Proto-Starčevo, which is also affirmed by the present author in contrast to a later chronological ascription by Z. Stanojević (KAPURAN, BULATOVIĆ, JOVANOVIĆ 2011, 21). Characteristic early forms are wide plastic knobs on narrow mouths of large vessels, and dimples in the vessel lips (KAPURAN, BULATOVIĆ, JOVANOVIĆ 2011, pl. I/3–4). Idols in the form of a strongly abstracted bovine head (cf. Chapter 11.6) typical of the earliest stages of the Neolithic (so-called ‘labrets’, see Chapter 11.6) also occur (KAPURAN, BULATOVIĆ, JOVANOVIĆ 2011, pl. II/19). The extremely fragmented material displayed from a further 16 sites may be ascribed only very generally to the Early Neolithic (KAPURAN, BULATOVIĆ, JOVANOVIĆ 2011, pls. III–VI).

Further Proto-Starčevo material from the southern zone of the Timok Valley appeared in the course of rescue excavations in 1990 at Jelašnica in the locality Valuge (STOJIC, ILIJIC 2011, 59–60). Most chronologically diagnostic is a large bowl with deep dimples in its rim and characteristic large warts on the walls (STOJIC, ILIJIC 2011, pl. 6/3). A multi-period site settled from the late Early Neolithic to the close of the Chalcolithic (Baden) was excavated within the basin of Dubrava at Knjaževac. The earliest settlement levels yielded copious dark-on-red painted sherds which might be

assigned to Schubert’s Level III (STOJIC, ILIJIC 2011, pl. 13 and fig. 45). Following this is a level containing early Vinča material. Further Early Neolithic finds from a small-scale excavation at the crossroads of Kadijski Krst (immediately south of Knjaževac) are kept within the Knjaževac Museum (PEKOVIĆ, JEVTIĆ 2006. – STOJIC, ILIJIC 2011, 74–76). These finds are not illustrated within the preliminary reports, and also cannot be ascribed to any specific Starčevo period.

6.4. Attempts at Synchronisation between Vinča and Karanovo

As indicated by Wolfram Schier, direct parallelisation of the stratigraphies of Karanovo and Vinča harbours various difficulties (SCHIER 2000. – cf. also GARAŠANIN 2000). At Karanovo, a development from flat bowls with thickened rims within Horizon III to the high-set carinated bowls typical of Horizon IV can be charted. Certainly, similar high-set bowls may be encountered among the earliest forms at the mound of Vinča. These originate from graves sunken into the sterile subsoil and belong to phases Vinča A1 and A2 alike. By means of contrast, bowls with thickened inner rims and a channelled decoration reminiscent of Karanovo III are first encountered during the later phases of Vinča C1 and C2. The form trajectory thus seems to be contrary at both sites (SCHIER 2000). Parzinger assumes a beginning of the Vinča occupation during his own Horizon 4; this corresponds to Karanovo III (PARZINGER 1993, 80). Following the modified periodisation for Thrace, Lichardus equates Vinča A1 with Karanovo II/III (LICHARDUS, ILIEV, CHRISTOV 2002, 361–364). His argumentation is based upon the also uncertain connection of the southern Romanian Dudești culture with Vinča which, for its own part, can only be slightly better correlated with the Thracian trajectory. A further problem is the character of Karanovo II/III within Thrace (as discussed above). According to Lichardus, this comprises a chronological phase to which he nevertheless can only assign relatively scarce and nondescript material (LICHARDUS, ILIEV, CHRISTOV 2002, pl. 7). According to Nikolov, this is merely a regional form variant (NIKOLOV 1998, 55–56. – NIKOLOV 2006. – cf. also KRAUSS 2008).

It should be added to the discussion on the synchronisation of Karanovo and Vinča that the finds from Ovcharovo-Gorata might be associated with the later stages of Starčevo in eastern Serbia positioned immediately prior to Vinča A1. Should Karanovo II mark this chronological horizon, then a rough equation of Karanovo III with Vinča A1 follows. At this juncture, the finds from Samovodene A–B1 are also significant, as some carinated bowls might be neatly compared with those of Vinča A1 (STANEV 2002a, fig. 160. – STANEV 2002b, pl. 6/3–4. – cf. PARZINGER 1993, pl. 46/2–3).

6.5. Kosovo

Within excavations at the settlement of Karagač-Žitkovac in 1955, Nikola Tasić was able to discern two levels which he was able to attribute to the Starčevo and later Vinča cultures (TASIĆ 1958). In addition to a coarse ware which is barbotine-adorned, a polished fine ware with overwhelmingly linear, dark painting occurs. Largely similar pottery was unearthed at Gladnice from 1959 onwards. As well as the linear, dark painting, a few fragments with white painting were found (TASIĆ 1998, 47). This material was studied by Jovan Glišić within a dissertation, but remains currently unpublished with the exception of a few small finds (TASIĆ 1998, 438–445). A longer stratigraphic sequence is presented by the mound of Rudnik, also excavated by Glišić from 1966 to 1968 and in 1984 (TASIĆ 1998, 49–53, 423–438). The sequence found there corresponds to that found at numerous multi-level settlements in western Bulgaria and North Macedonia. Rudnik I yielded exclusively monochrome-slipped ceramics as well as impressed and barbotine-adorned wares. Following this, there is a layer with black-painted and white-painted fine wares in Rudnik II. The painted motifs are both curvilinear and linear. In Rudnik III, the white painting is replaced by exclusively dark painting while largely retaining painted motifs. In Rudnik IV, the plastic adornment of vessels predominates, and carinated forms appear in greater numbers. With this phase, it would seem that the horizon of Ovcharovo-Gorata is reached, while the earlier phases of I to III represent the trajectory from Proto-Starčevo to Starčevo II, with this corresponding to the development of the Pre-Karanovo I horizon up to Karanovo I in Thrace and northern Bulgaria.

6.6. Are there Mesolithic Traditions in the Neolithic of the Central Balkans?

As the Danube Gorges is the only area within the entire Balkan-Carpathian region presenting a demonstrably continuous settlement from the Mesolithic into the Neolithic, it would be of interest should there be elements evoking the Mesolithic tradition found within its Neolithic. In terms of the stone chipping industry, not only does the technology appear to change with the neolithisation, but a supply of raw

materials from more distantly removed regions may also be evidenced with the Neolithic's advent (cf. RADOVANOVIĆ 1996, 225–252. – GATSOV, NEDELICHEVA 2009). Remarkably, the characteristic trapezoidal hut structures erected in Mesolithic tradition endure until well into the Neolithic era in the zone of the Danube Gorges, and therefore not only at Lepenski Vir (BORIĆ 2002), but also at Vlasac (BORIĆ, RAIČEVIĆ, STEFANOVIĆ 2009) and at Padina (BORIĆ 2011, fig. 12). Also connected are specific burial customs within the houses or their immediate vicinity (BORIĆ 2005). Ultimately, subsistence within this special zone that was unsuitable for agriculture and only somewhat capable of supporting cattle husbandry remains focused on fishing and hunting until well into the Neolithic (BORIĆ 2008, tab. 1). On the one hand, beyond the actual area of the Danube Gorges, no elements might be discerned which could be part of a Mesolithic tradition; insofar, the pre-Neolithic groups played no part in the transmission of the Neolithic package. On the other hand, objects from the agrarian and pastoral communities may be identified within contexts ascribable to the hunter and fisher groups. This is first and foremost the pottery, which does not experience any alterations at the hands of the inhabitants belonging to the zone of the Danube Gorges, reflecting rather classical Starčevo ceramics as known from the surrounding Neolithic settlement sites (PERIĆ, NIKOLIĆ 2004). Regarding the question as to the mechanisms by means of which this pottery could reach the fisher settlements at the Danube Gorges, the mind turns to models similar to the “fertile gift” model developed by Kristina Jennbert for the Baltic Sea (JENNBERT 1984. – JENNBERT 1988. – JENNBERT 1994). Nevertheless, the Starčevo pottery in the settlements of the Danube Gorges would seem to have been more than a symbolically charged gift exchange, as it was genuinely used, and occurs in the settlements in large numbers. Zvelebil's Availability Model (ZVELEBIL 1986. – ZVELEBIL 1989. – ZVELEBIL 2001) can also only be applied to the situation at the Danube Gorges with some reservations, as an adaptation to the Neolithic's economic mode is not evidenced at any juncture. Precisely because this environment lends itself so ideally to fishing, the aquatic resources continued to be exploited during the Neolithic period.