7. Neolithisation Processes in the Region of the Lower Danube

The region between the Balkan Mountains and the lower Danube is among the best researched Neolithic cultural landscapes within South-eastern Europe. Here, foundational work was most prominently provided by the expansive excavations of north-eastern Bulgarian tell settlements led by Henrieta Todorova. In turn, the Bulgarian north-east has been intensively investigated by Bogdan Nikolov, although the results of his excavations are unfortunately only cursorily published. The sites of Dzhulyunitsa and Ovcharovo-Gorata (newly reevaluated herein) also lie within northern Bulgaria. The flat landscape of Wallachia north of the Danube stretching up to the southern Carpathians may also be deemed to be well-researched. By means of contrast with the Bulgarian Danubian lowlands, significantly fewer Early Neolithic sites nevertheless occur within Wallachia, which, in light of the comparatively good state of research, can only be explained by either tallying with the actual situation during the Early Neolithic, or alternately by the conditions of archaeological preservation. Even more so than the Thracian Plain, that of Wallachia represents an alluvial landscape within which colluvium could accumulate from the Early Neolithic until the present day, and beneath which might potentially be concealed an entire Neolithic cultural landscape.

7.1. Dzhulyunitsa

The Early Neolithic settlement of Dzhulyunitsa located in an area called "Smardesh" is currently proving to be a key site in determining the characteristics of the earliest Neolithic within the Balkans. Meanwhile, numerous survey trenches excavated within its substantial settlement area have produced an extensive array of finds, and there is now good reason to assume that the occupation of this site commenced at the very onset of neolithisation within the eastern Balkans. Additionally, this site remained occupied throughout the entire Early Neolithic sequence, thus providing us with a unique insight into cultural-historical developments at the dawn of agriculture and animal husbandry within this region.

The site was presented in various discrete articles by its excavators Petar Stanev and Nedko Elenski. A summary of the results with a portrait of the individual Neolithic settlement phases was published by the present author (Krauss et al. 2014). This article also contains a contribution from Bernhard Weninger and Lee Clare regarding the ^{14}C dates and their modelling in respect to their stratigraphic position, and an evaluation of the animal bone finds by Canan Çakırlar and Petăr Zidarov. The contents of this publication will be briefly summarised below.

On the basis of the results from surface surveys, it might be estimated that the Neolithic occupation extended over some 4 ha, and that there were noticeable shifts in settlement activity within this area over the course of its long occupation, ultimately leading to the development of a pronounced horizontal stratigraphy. The spatial extent of the settlement towards the close of the Early Neolithic (Phase Dzh-IV) has been determined more precisely. During this period, the settlement area covered approx. 0.2–0.3 ha. In the easternmost part of the site, there is a small spur upon which a Chalcolithic settlement mound developed. Sporadic finds attributed to the Early and Middle Bronze Age found on the tell suggest that the accumulation of deposits did not completely cease at the close of the Chalcolithic, but instead continued into these later phases. A substantial

concentration of Bronze Age finds has been detected in an area south-east of the mound where the Bronze Age settlement's centre might be expected to have lain.

The oldest layer (Dzh-I) lies directly on loess, and has an average thickness of 0.2–0.3 m, although it reaches depths of up to 1.0 m in some pits. In all probability, structures from this early period were exclusively pit-houses, between which further features were discovered, although these were probably not directly associated with the houses.

The second settlement layer (Dzh-II) has a thickness of 0.45–0.90 m in the central trenches. Currently, clearly defined buildings or prehistoric surfaces have not been discovered for this phase, although three extensive concentrations comprising the remnants of clay ovens and three large ashy deposits have been identified. In the course of extensive horizontal excavation, it was observed that some pits from this second layer cut into deposits from the underlying first settlement layer. In comparison to the earliest settlement level (Dzh-I), this second layer is characterised by considerably thicker deposits, and especially by the occurrence of a greater number of finds.

The third level (Dzh-III) has only been documented sporadically over the entire area, being a mere 0.10 m thick at most. In comparison to all other layers, this particular deposit is not only significantly thinner, but also of a much firmer texture and not ubiquitously present even in the settlement's centre. It is extremely likely that this reflects a levelling layer. There are absolutely no signs of house floors in this level, and no remains of loam daub. This suggests that it may have been an area within the settlement free of structures, with any associated constructions currently poorly known on account of the limited extent of excavation work. Nevertheless, the platform for an oven has been assigned to this settlement phase.

The fourth settlement level (Dzh-IV, as yet only detected in the central part of the settlement) is 0.90 m thick, and is divided into three different subphases. In this layer package, house walls were exposed displaying a post-and-beam construction technique. The houses contained ovens and permanently installed storage vessels.

The lowermost subphase of the uppermost Early Neolithic settlement (Dzh-IVa) is a 0.40 m thick deposit of loose, dark grey sediment. In the southern central part of the settlement, a row of six postholes was observed. Additionally, three subterranean structures were recorded; these were originally accessed via platforms, beams or steps. It is likely that these structures served as workshops, for example, for flint knapping.

In the second subphase (Dzh-IVb), a ground-level house structure and two-thirds of a second such structure (both untouched by fire) were investigated. These buildings were built directly adjacent to one another, i.e. sharing a common wall. The first structure displays a rectangular plan; the floors comprised of a 0.10 m thick layer of trodden earth. The wall foundations rested on a single or double row of stones; there were no signs of postholes and the house walls were constructed using loam. In the north-western corner of the room, an oval-plan oven was excavated. The second building also featured a rectangular plan, with a 0.05 m thick trodden earth floor. Stone foundations in this structure were lacking, except for beneath the common wall separating it from the adjacent building. In the north-eastern corner of the house, a massive rectangular-plan oven was discovered. The remains of this structure suggest that it measured approximately 2.20 × 2.00 m, with a 0.30 m thick wall.

In the third (and uppermost) subphase of the fourth settlement level (Dzh-IVc), a small portion of an unburnt structure was investigated. This house partially superimposed one of the buildings from the underlying subphase. The higher-lying northern part of this house had already been damaged by modern ploughing as had part of a hearth construction, fragments of which were collected from the surface of the field in the direct vicinity. The plan of the house appears to have been rectangular and its trodden earth floor was some 0.10–0.05 m thick. An oval oven-platform was located in the western part of the house.

Finds from the oldest settlement layer at Dzhulyunitsa (Dzh-I) present clear affinities with material from the western Anatolian Late Neolithic. As such, pottery from this level is coeval with the very beginning of its use within the South-eastern European cultural sequence. Bulbous vessel forms with flattened bases or a slightly pronounced foot are particularly characteristic. The vessel form repertoire also includes spherical pots with a narrowing or slightly conical inclining neck, bowls with an S-shaped profile, and open bowls with straight walls (Figs. 101–104).

Quite remarkable here is the elaborate surface treatment of vessels while in their unfired and leather-hard state, this resulting in a consolidated and shiny, sometimes enamel-like appearance. This is all the more exceptional considering the coarse matrix of the pottery with its numerous rough organic inclusions. The only exceptions are the smaller, thin-walled vessels; no organic inclusions are visible with the naked eye in the fractures of these pots. These pottery vessels seem by no means inferior to modern porcelain in their strength, hardness, and gloss. Handles are limited to vertical cord lugs at the widest part of the vessel. Impressed decoration and plastic applications (e.g. warts or wide, well-smoothed incisions) are attested even among the oldest pottery. In their fractures, coarse wares



Fig. 101: Dzhulyunitsa I. Ceramic finds (after Krauss et al. 2014, fig. 6).

are mostly deep black, the fine ceramics varying from grey to brown. Surface colours range from dark hues of ochre to brown, orange, and red. Some fragments feature flamed patterns, and are discoloured dark brown to black. A few sherds also carry a simple painted decoration in a dark colour. This painted decoration takes the form of plain wavy and wide comb motifs extending over large parts of the vessel surface. However, painted pottery constitutes less than 1% of the material excavated. The pottery from Dzh-I is comparable with assemblages from the near vicinity, including the oldest material from Koprivets (Krauss 2006, pls. 1, 3, 5) and Pomoshtitsa (Elenski 2008, figs. 1–9), as well as with vessels from Orlovets (Stanev 2008, figs. 98–101) and Polyanitsa-Platoto (Todorova 2003, fig. 1). Similar vessel forms were recovered from Hotnitsa Cave (Ilcheva 2002, pls. 1–4), but this material most probably already represents a transition from Dzh-I to Dzh-II. Convincing parallels are attested in assemblages from western Anatolia, especially from the Izmir region, specifically Ulucak Va and early IV (Çilingiroğlu 2009, fig. 4/1–2. – Çilingiroğlu 2011, figs. 3, 5), Çukuriçi Höyük (Galik, Horejs 2011, fig. 5) and Yeşilova (Derin 2011, figs. 5–7). In the geographically closer Marmara region, Dzh-I material can be parallelised with Classical Fikirtepe, although vessel forms from Ilıpınar IX–VIII (Thissen 2001, figs. 21–29) or the eponymous site itself (Özdoğan 1999, fig. 33) only permit the identification of more general consistencies with the typological spectrum at hand.

Generally speaking, vessel forms from the second settlement phase (Dzh-II) do not differ substantially from

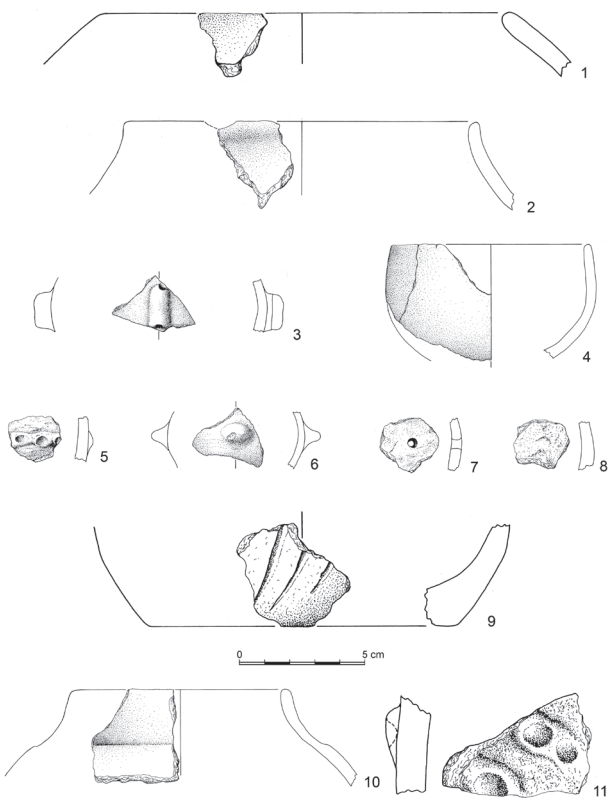


Fig. 102: Dzhulyunitsa I. Ceramic finds (after Krauss et al. 2014, fig. 7).

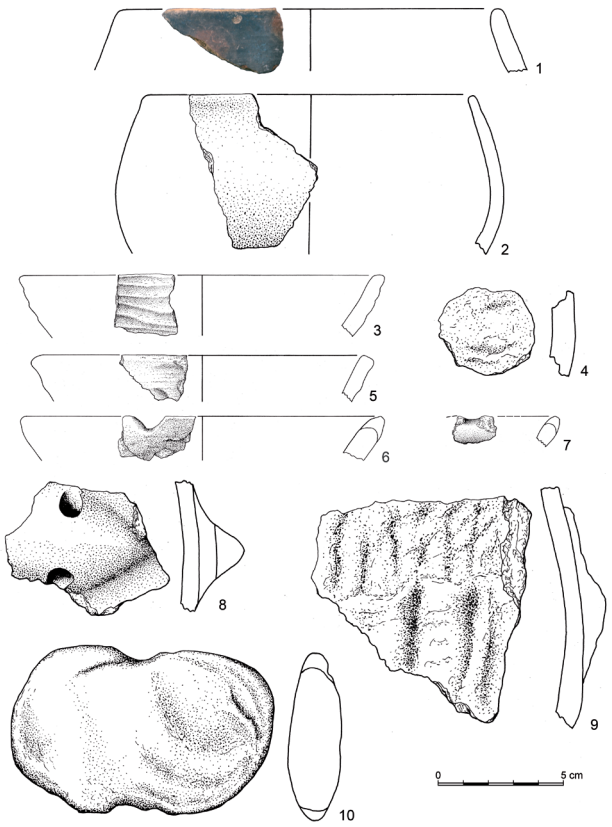


Fig. 103: Dzhulyunitsa I. Ceramic finds (after Krauss et al. 2014, fig. 8).

those of the first phase (Figs. 105–110). However, as finds from this phase are more numerous, a few of the forms appear in slightly greater variation; nevertheless, there are no new vessel forms associated with this settlement phase. Most vessels feature a surface treatment of an equally high standard as that noted for the previous settlement layer. A new development is the occurrence of white-painted decorations on a red slip; the dark-painted decoration from Dzh-I continues to be documented. In addition, there are two fragments featuring a creamy- or ivory-painted decoration, and three sherds painted entirely white. White-painted motifs include dabbed spots arranged into triangle shapes, latticed and stepped bands, parallel W-motifs arranged one above the other, and patterns reminiscent of textiles. The ratio of painted pottery in this layer attains just 1–2% of the entire assemblage. One tenth of painted sherds are of the dark-painted variety. Significantly, in the upper part of Dzh-II deposits, dark-painted wares vanish, and only white-painted decoration occurs. This white-on-red decoration connects Dzh-II with the horizon of Karanovo I in Thrace. Finds of pottery with white-painted decoration in combination with dark-painted vessels have recently been reported from Turkish Thrace, from the site Aşağı Pınar 7 (Özdoğan 2011, figs. 10–11). On the other hand, extensive decorations using beige paint are documented from the Izmir region; these may indicate parallels between Dzh-II material and Ulucak IV h-l (Çilingiroğlu 2009, fig. 4/19, 21).

Due to its highly fragmented state, pottery from Dzh-III does not permit a reliable reconstruction of vessel forms (Figs. 111–112). Particularly notable, nevertheless, is the lack of highly burnished sherds with a dense surface. Only a few fragments carry a white-painted decoration on a red slip, while dark-painted pottery is now absent for the first time. The stratigraphic position of this layer suggests that it may run parallel with developed Karanovo I, which would certainly not be contradicted by the material recovered from the deposit itself. Crucial to this conclusion is most vitally the presence of white-painted and absence of dark-painted decoration. A more precise chronological delimitation is not possible on account of the small number of finds.

Pottery recovered from the fourth settlement layer (Dzh-IV) includes vessel shapes characteristic of the developed Early Neolithic in the region, especially as known from the settlement of Ovcharovo-Gorata (Krauss 2011b, figs. 6–7). Vessels are characterised by bases with a solid foot or a

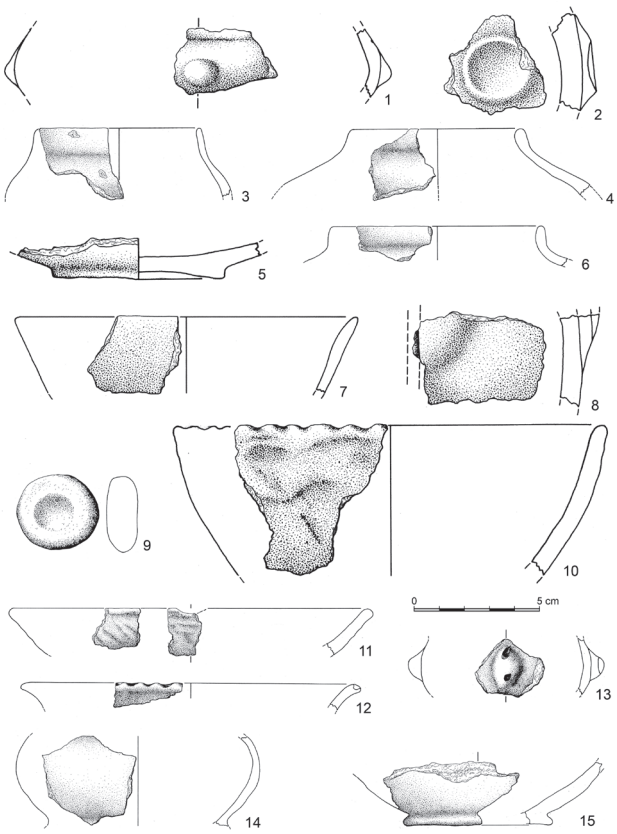


Fig. 104: Dzhulyunitsa I. Ceramic finds (after Krauss et al. 2014, fig. 9).

pronounced foot rim. Common vessel shapes are tall beakers, also with lateral strap handles, and diverse bowl and pot forms (Figs. 113–115). Occasional cylindrical lids belonging to bulbous vessels with elongated cylindrical necks also occur. Generally, pottery from this phase is coarser than that of the earlier phases, although the occurrence of fragments of fine ware still attests to efforts to produce highly burnished and lustrous surfaces. Vessel decoration is now dominated by plastic types of surface treatment. In contrast, painted decoration can no longer be discerned. Particularly characteristic is an extensive channelled relief decoration found especially on beakers, and various plastic applications such as spirals, small blossom patterns, and knobs or warts. With the exception of the rim and foot zones, the entire surface of the coarse vessels is frequently covered either with prick-marks or with parallel or diamond-shaped incised motifs. From a broader perspective, this describes a horizon correlating with Karanovo II in Thrace, further attested within European Turkey at Aşağı Pınar, within Layer 6 (Parzinger 2005, tabs. 116–117. – Özdoğan E. 2011, fig. 10). Coeval with this phase, although typologically different, is material from sites known in Anatolia. On the basis of radiocarbon dating, it is assumed that Dzh-IV is roughly contemporaneous with Ilıpınar V and the uppermost Chalcolithic layer of Ulucak IV.

A special ceramic form identified at the site is the four-footed table which is only attested in the oldest settlement layers of Dzh-I and Dzh-II. Such forms are either devoid of all decoration, or they are trays with a relief-type adornment on their sides; normally, this decoration takes the form of hanging triangles or protuberances pinched out of the tables' surface.

Among the most remarkable finds from Dzhulyunitsa are two anthropomorphic figurines discovered in 2010 (Figs. 116–117). The first figurine, the gender of which cannot be determined, comprises a human torso and head, with what appears to be a masked face and coffee bean eyes. The edge of the head is scuffed. The forearms and the lower part of the body are missing. A small breakage point on the front of the figurine suggests that the arms of the figure were originally folded across the belly. Exceptional from a typological perspective is the masked appearance of the face, a considerably younger feature more commonly associated with figurines from the Vinča culture. Typologically, the piece can be ranked among the previously discovered Early Neolithic figurines from South-eastern Europe, first and foremost due to the characteristic coffee bean eyes. The assignment of this figurine from Dzhulyunitsa to the Early Neolithic is further substantiated by its securely documented embedding in the lowermost Dzh-I settlement layer deposits, just 0.50 m in front of the investigated section. Radiocarbon ages were made on a charcoal (OxA-25044: 7095±40 BP) and on a bone sample (OxA-24979: 7145±38 BP) respectively, in direct proximity to the find. According to these, the figurine was deposited at this location around 6000 calBC. The surface of the figurine and the breakage points are heavily worn, indicating that this piece had been in circulation for an extended period of time. A second, smaller figurine was found at the same level, approximately 1.5 m south of the first figurine. This second figurine is of an extremely compact type. It is seated and features a greatly enlarged rump and shortened legs. The arms, which are only suggested, also appear to be crossed across the breasts. Large parts of the head had been chipped away. In spite of its small size, this piece can be attributed to a known format, namely the representation of a seated, presumably female individual, comparable, for example, with a figure vessel from Ulucak IV b2 (Cilingiroğlu et al. 2004, figs. 25, 32, 58). Parallels from Ulucak also demonstrate quite clearly as to how the position of the arms of the Dzhulyunitsa figurine should be reconstructed. The figure holds her hands below her breasts, presenting them in this way to the beholder. This gesture is a commonly encountered characteristic of



Fig. 105: Dzhulyunitsa II. Ceramic finds (after Krauss et al. 2014, fig. 10).



Fig. 106: Dzhulyunitsa II. Ceramic finds (after Krauss et al. 2014, fig. 11).



Fig. 107: Dzhulyunitsa II. Ceramic finds (after Krauss et al. 2014, fig. 12).

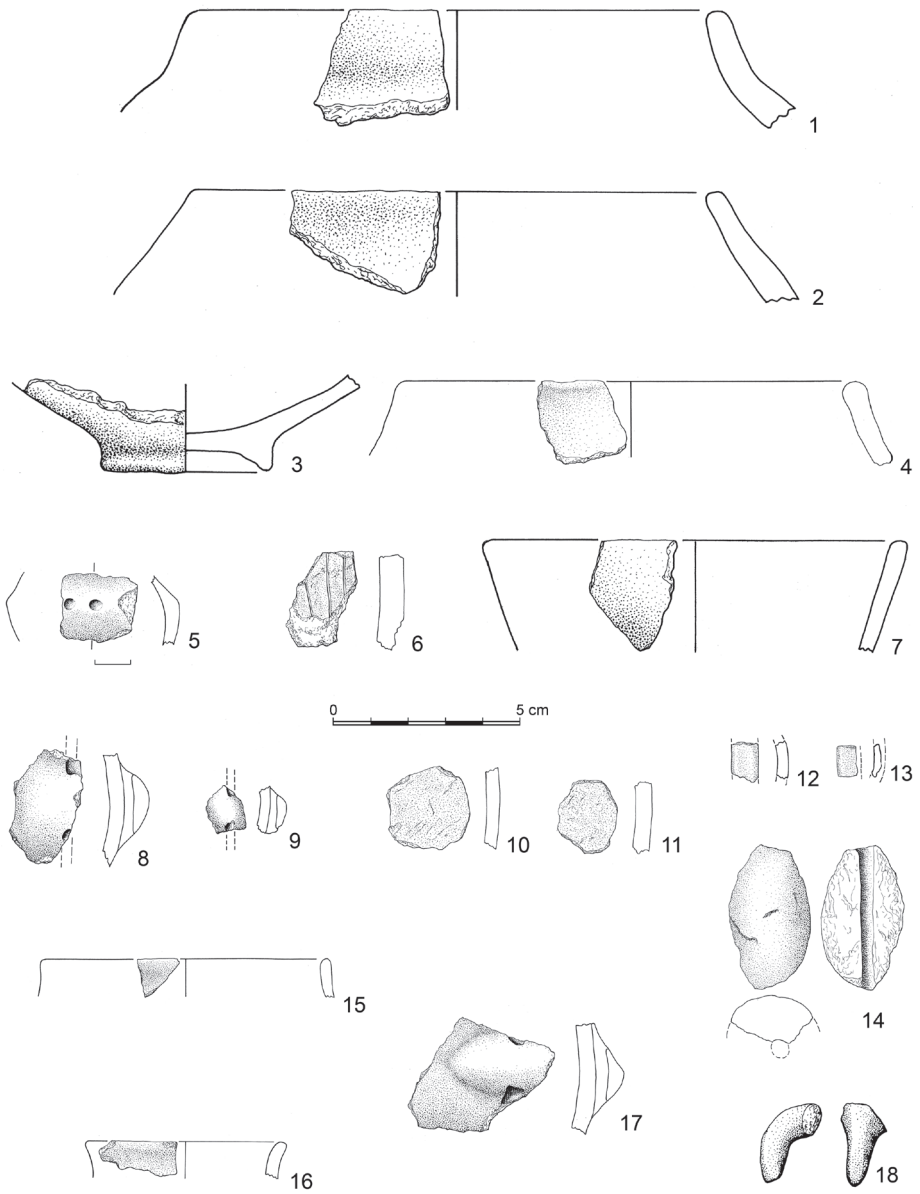


Fig. 108: Dzhulyunitsa II. Ceramic finds (after Krauss et al. 2014, fig. 13).

Neolithic figurines within the Near East and Anatolia, but is only observed in very few examples from South-eastern Europe (cf. Hansen 2007, 350 and tab. 9). It is of further note that this gesture is typical, and observed primarily among the earliest Neolithic figurines, already disappearing during the developed Early Neolithic period (cf. Hansen 2007, 363 and fig. 202).

7.2. Koprivets

The soundings undertaken by Volodya Popov at the village of Koprivets between 1990 and 1994 yielded a cultural sequence spanning from the Early to the Late Neolithic within three stratigraphically unrelatable excavation trenches on a slope falling in the direction of the Baniski Lom (Popov 1996, 35–38). Trench B at the foot of the slope revealed a settlement from the beginning of the Early Neolithic, within which a total of four successive levels could be observed. The find material of all four layers was presented together, representing the earliest developmental stage of the Neolithic north of the Balkan Chain, preceding even the horizon of Karanovo I in Thrace. The earliest material already demonstrates an excellent surface treatment, and can also be compared on grounds of form with (most prominently) the known sites within central western Anatolia such as Ulucak IV, Çukuriçi VIII, and Ege Gübre. Attested stratigraphically is a succession of overwhelmingly monochrome- and

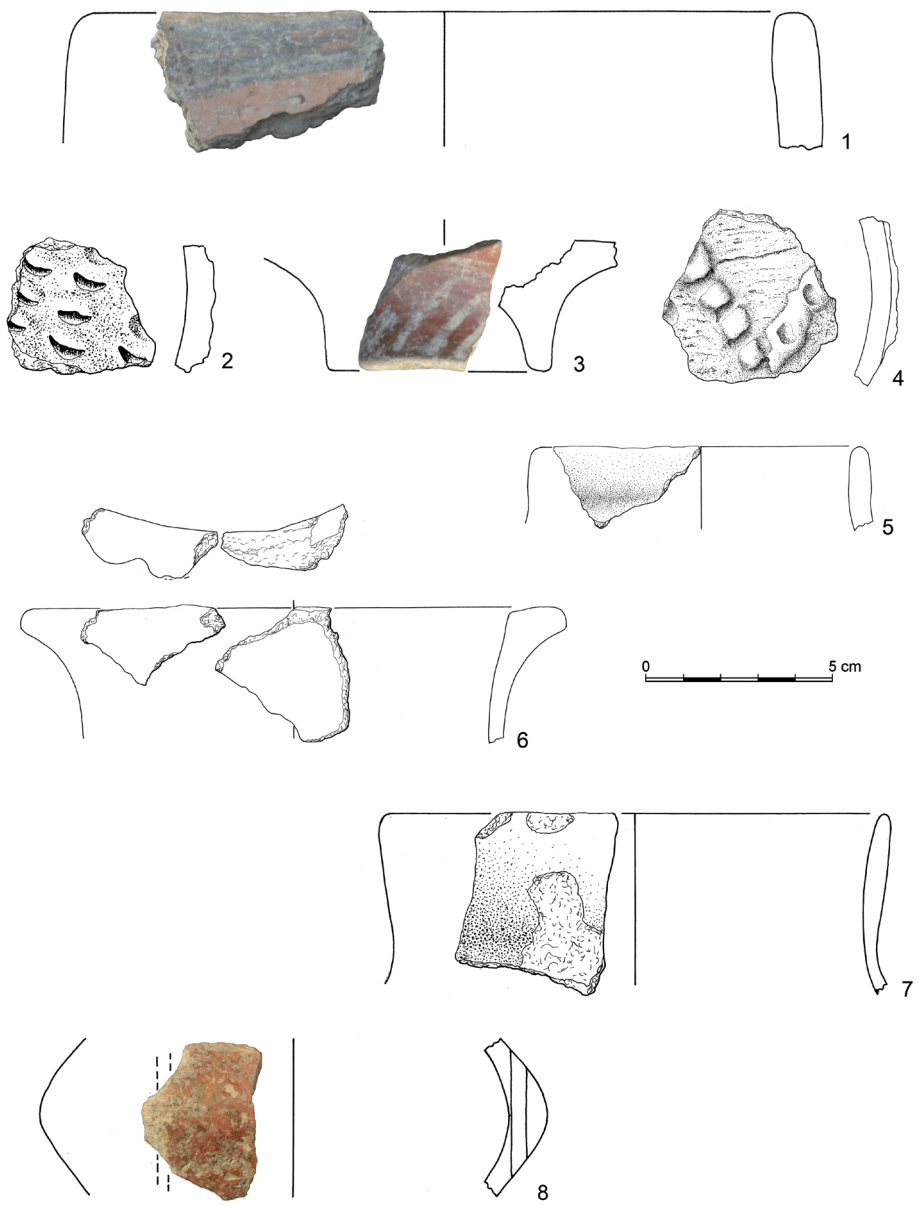


Fig. 109: Dzhulyunitsa II. Ceramic finds (after Krauss et al. 2014, fig. 14).

recurrently dark-painted pottery and a classical horizon overlaying this with white-on-red decoration as at the settlement of Dzhulyunitsa. Predominant among the vessel forms are spherical bowl and pot forms, partly with outcurved rims, and low-set carinated bowls with a vertical standing rim (Popov 1996, fig. 18). Characteristic are very low ring bases barely separated from the body of the vessel. Adornments are rarely observed; better attested are plastic ledges and knobs on the vessel's bellies. Upon a renewed examination of this material within the depots of the Museum of Ruse, further decorative techniques could be identified (Krauss 2006, pls. 1–5; 6/3–7; 7); from this, it is now clear that ornamentation of the vessels by means of scarification and impression was already commonplace. The decoration of the vessel surface with multiple, irregular nipples and dimples on the edge of the lip is also attested. Pierced lugs appearing either as perforated knobs or as applied tubes are to be found on handles. Most vessel fragments are red-slipped, with white pigment used to paint upon them. The finds from Trench B may be parallelised with the phases Dzhulyunitsa I and II. The stratigraphically oldest material of Sondage A of Koprivets had already been associated with Ovcharovo-Gorata by Popov (Popov 1996, figs. 30–36). At Dzhulyunitsa, this corresponds to Phase IV. Crucial to this are beaker forms and beaker-like pots resembling Types B1a and also B3a and B3c from Ovcharovo-Gorata, together

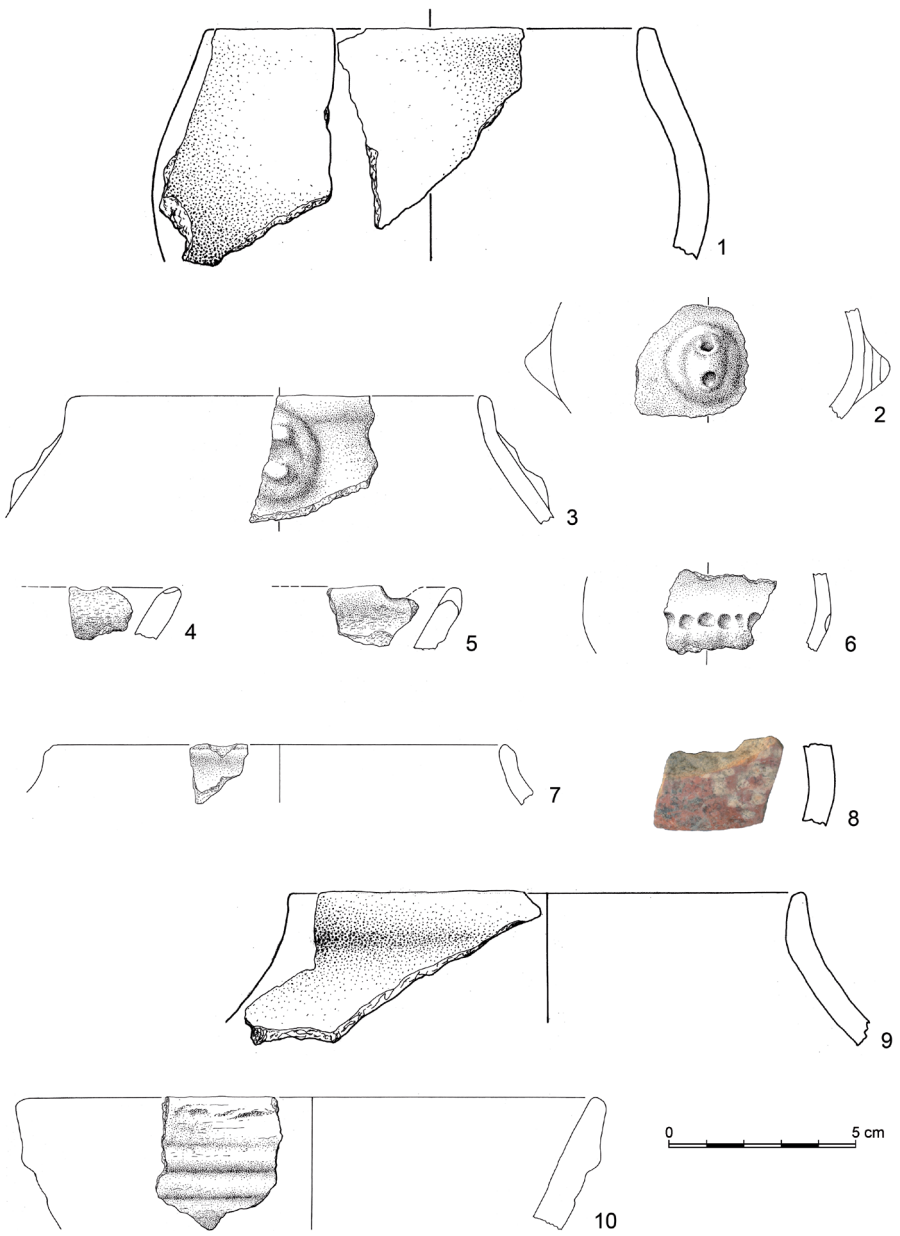


Fig. 110: Dzhulyunitsa II. Ceramic finds (after Krauss et al. 2014, fig. 15).

with the bowl types S1b and S3c. Presented schematically were primarily channelled fragments demonstrating a similar distribution in relation to the unchannelled pieces to that at Ovcharovo-Gorata. Plastically applied blooms which also appear in the material from Ovcharovo-Gorata are further attested. Following this occupation, the site was evidently abandoned, and only returned to at the end of the Late Neolithic. Characteristic carinated, high-set bowls serve to connect the material with Karanovo IV, the regional expression of which has been popularised as the 'Hotnitsa culture' (Todorova, Vaysov 1993, 137–142. – Popov 1996, 91–92).

7.3. The Catchment of the Yantra River

Landscape investigations on the lower course of the Yantra within the plains of Livadite yielded a little material at the village of Balgarsko Slivovo which might be associated with the earliest finds from Koprivets (Krauss 2006, cat. no. 27), and are thus somewhat older than the finds from Ovcharovo-Gorata. According to Popov, the striking settlement mound of Chakmaktepe near Borovo should also have yielded Early Neolithic material, which he connects with the so-called "Ovcharovo-Samovodene-culture" (Popov 1996, 118. – cf. Krauss 2006, cat. no. 142).



Fig. 111: Dzhulyunitsa III. Ceramic finds (after Krauss et al. 2014, fig. 16).

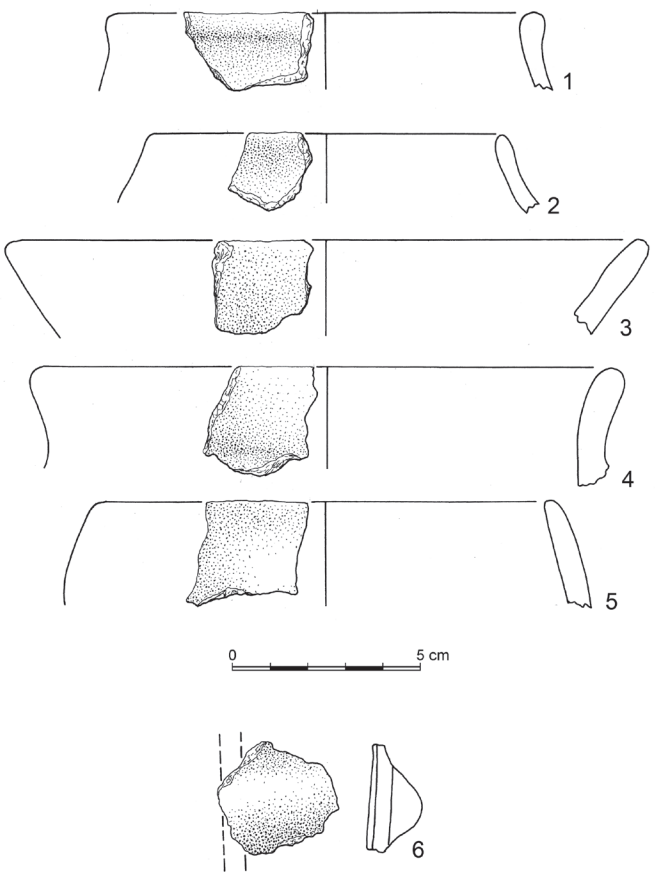


Fig. 112: Dzhulyunitsa III. Ceramic finds (after Krauss et al. 2014, fig. 17).

Elenski published further Early Neolithic material from the fields of Vodopada (Waterfall), Peshterata (Cave), and Mechata Dupka (Bear's Hole) near Hotnitsa, from Strelets-Eren Bunar, and also from the cave of Golyamata Lisitsa near Veliko Tarnovo (Elenski 2000). The finds from Hotnitsa Cave (Peshterata), Hotnitsa Waterfall (Vodopada), and a portion of the finds from Strelets-Eren Bunar may be associated with the earliest material from Koprivets. This comprises coarse pottery, heavily organically tempered and dark black in its breaks, generally coated with a red or ochre slip, and also of delicate, highly burnished fine ceramics fired to a resounding hardness.

The lowest settlement phase within the mound of Orlovets, A1, is also to be synchronised with Koprivets (Stanev, Naydenova, Elenski 1994. – Stanev 1995. – Elenski 2000, 24). The site lies some 4 km east of the Yantra at Polski Trambesh. A few white-painted fragments hail from the subsequent phase of Orlovets A2, from which Elenski deduced a parallelisation with early Karanovo I (Elenski 2000, 24), also viewing the finds of Hotnitsa Bear's Hole (Mechata Dupka) and an additional portion of the material from Strelets-Eren Bunar within this light.

In respect to the form development at Dzhulyunitsa, the already long-known about Neolithic finds of the plateau of



Fig. 113: Dzhulyunitsa IV. Ceramic finds (after Krauss et al. 2014, fig. 18).

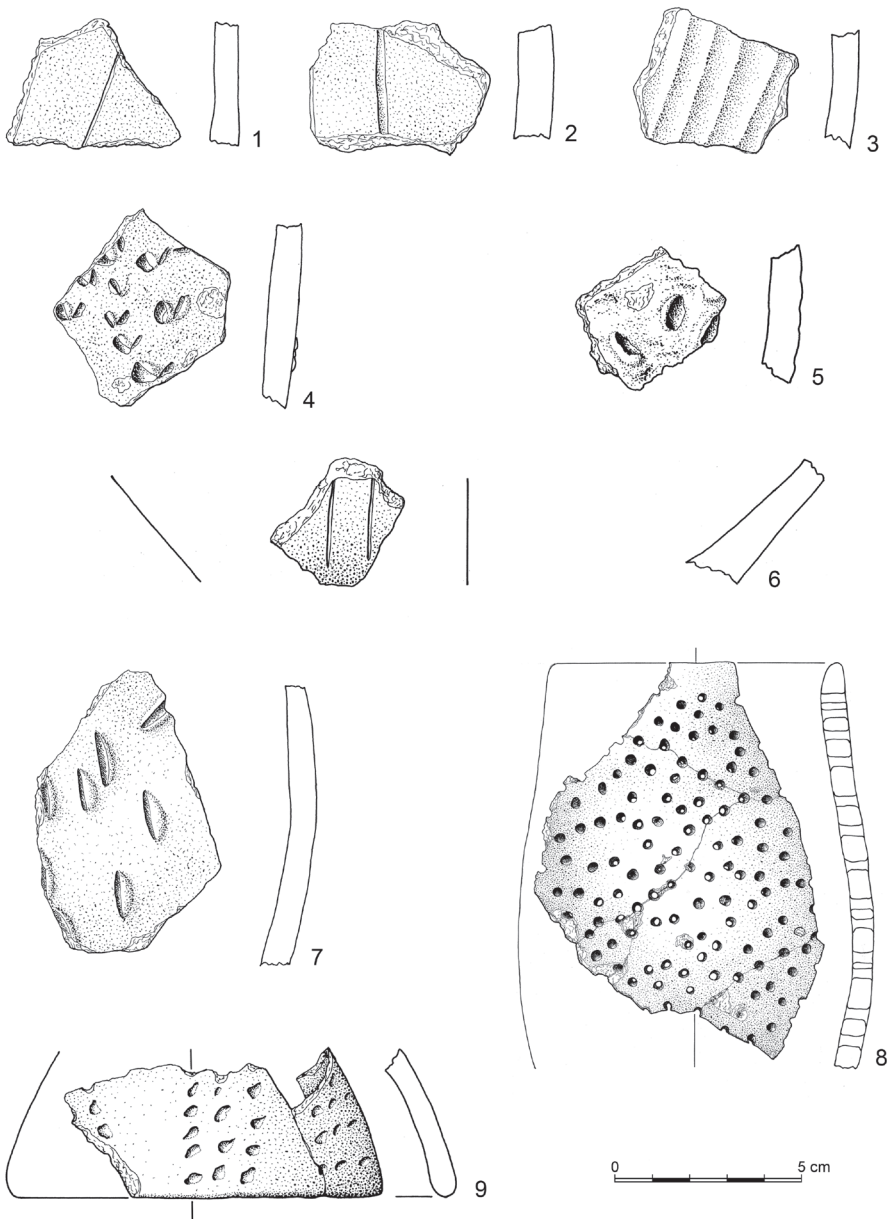


Fig. 114: Dzhulyunitsa IV. Ceramic finds (after Krauss et al. 2014, fig. 19).

Belyakovets (about which Rafail Popov had already reported during the early 20th century) may also be incorporated into this scheme (Popov 1925). Here, finds from both the Small and Large Caves at Preobrazhenski Monastery and the fields of Plochite are pertinent to the Early Neolithic. The finds from Plochite, discovered on a terraced slope south-east of Belyakovets, may be associated with Dzhulyunitsa I. As yet, only a portion of the coarse ware has been published in drawings; most prominent among these, are high, wide-mouthed forms with outward-turned rims and fragments of vessels on a low foot rim (Stanev 1996, fig. 9). Nevertheless, particularly decisive for the ascription of the earliest layer is the hard-fired sounding and excellently burnished fine ware which is preserved in the archive of the Museum at Veliko Tarnovo.[24] The few fragments revealed from the Small and Large Caves such as three pots adorned with rough pricks may be assigned with great caution to the level of Dzhulyunitsa IV, which might be parallelised with Ovcharovo-Gorata (Stanev 1996, fig. 10). One carinated

24. I am grateful to Nedko Elenski for the opportunity of studying the finds within the museum depot at Veliko Tarnovo.

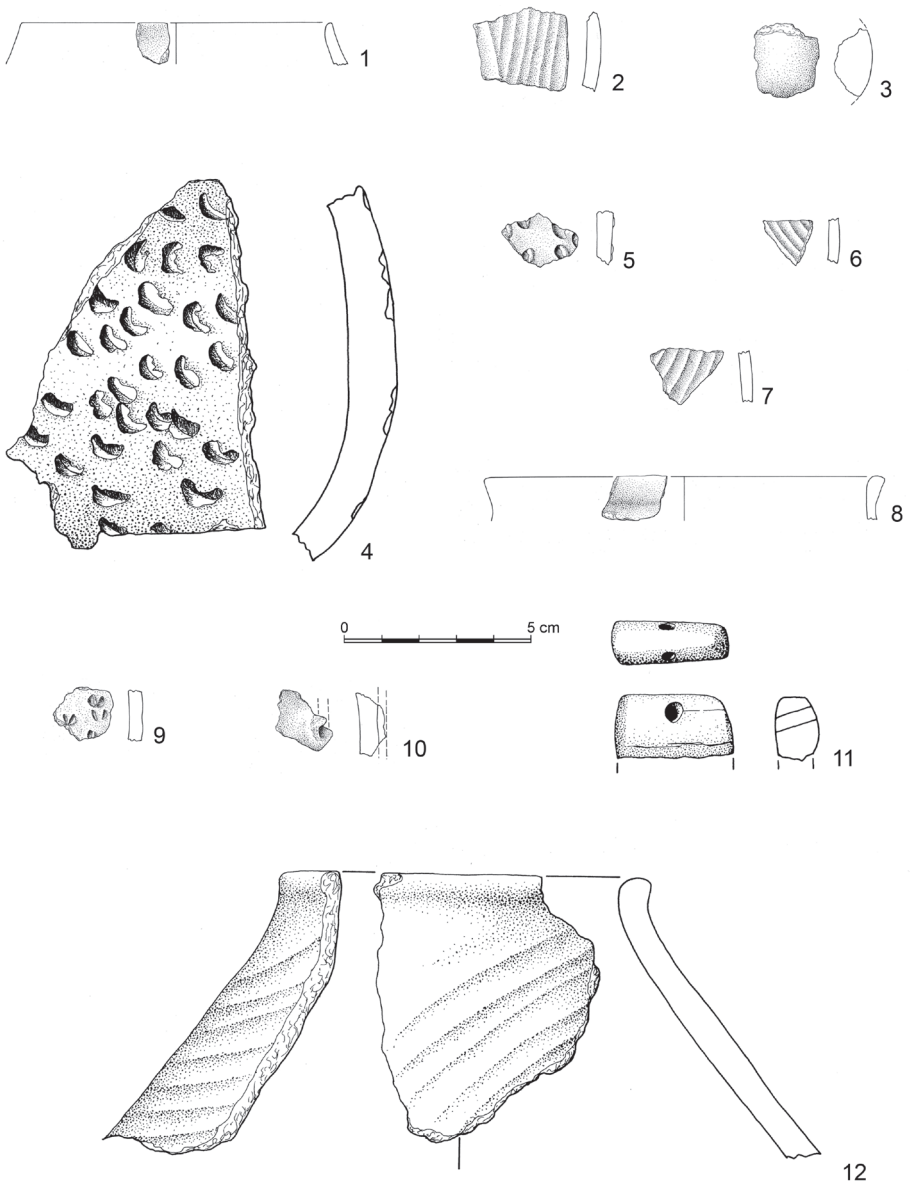


Fig. 115: Dzhulyunitsa IV. Ceramic finds (after Krauss et al. 2014, fig. 20).

bowl resting upon four small legs (already published by Popov) could, however, indicate a later chronological ascription parallel to Karanovo III, and thereby the Middle Neolithic (Popov 1925, fig. 10).

In terms of communication, the mound of Samovodene lies in a geographically opportune position, being located directly at the exit of the Yantra from the rock massifs of Veliko Tarnovo. Petar Stanev excavated the site between 1974 and 1994, and was able to isolate five individual settlement layers, namely A, A–B1, B1, B2, and B2–C (Stanev 2002a. – Stanev 2002b). The earliest find material from Samovodene A is particularly comparable to that of Ovcharovo-Gorata (Stanev 2002a, 190. – Stanev 2002b, 421). While individual forms are reminiscent of, for example, the beakers with band handles B2a, the bowls of type S2c and S3c, or the pot forms T1b, the material should more precisely be associated with the finds from Drinovo, and thus be dated slightly later. In particular, the deep-set narrow cups with a long conically tapering neck and inverted lips (Stanev 2002b, pls. 2/7; 3/5) find suitable counterparts in the forms from Drinovo. In Samovodene B1, high cylindrical cups with a huge tap-like handle, rounded in profile, are characteristic of Karanovo III. Carinated bowls may be found from Phase B2 until the end of the settlement; these represent the Late Neolithic in the manner of Karanovo IV.

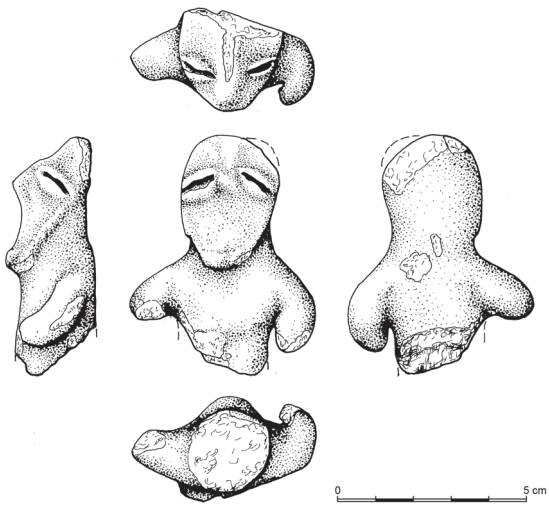


Fig. 116: Dzhulyunitsa I. Ceramic figurines (after Krauss et al. 2014, fig. 23).

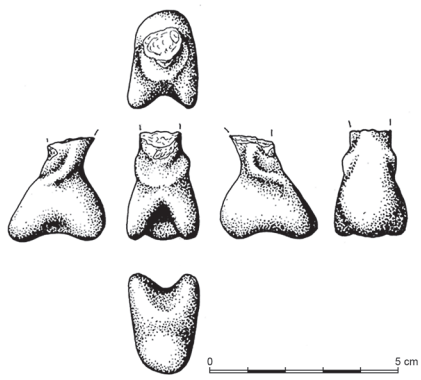


Fig. 117: Dzhulyunitsa I. Ceramic figurines (after Krauss et al. 2014, fig. 24).

At the foot of the Tash Bair near Novgrad, field surveys have provided evidence of an extensive settlement of the Late Neolithic (Krauss 2006, 146–155). Since 2018, this site has been investigated as part of a Bulgarian-German research project funded by the German Research Foundation, with Sven Conrad directing these investigations from German side. The settlement was heavily affected by later fortifications from the Iron Age and the Middle Ages. Pottery from the Vădastra group has been found at the site, but also materials from the local Bulgarian Late Neolithic and the Boian culture. So far, it is still largely unclear how these different find complexes are stratigraphically represented.

7.4. Ovcharovo-Gorata

From 1974 to 1979, archaeological excavations were carried out at Ovcharovo-Gorata by the Targovishte Regional Museum of History under the direction of Ilka Angelova. Twenty-seven years after the campaign's conclusion, the task of processing the excavation results was passed on to the present author by the excavation's scientific advisor, Henrieta Todorova, to be realised in collaboration with her son, Ivan Vaysov. In the spring of 2004, Targovishte was jointly visited by the present author and Vaysov for the first time in order to inspect the finds and excavation documents. With the support of the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft), the project began on October 1st, 2005 under the auspices of the Eurasia Department of the German Archaeological Institute (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, DAI). The digitalisation of the find inventory and old documents was completed in collaboration with Vaysov and students from the Freie Universität Berlin between March and April 2006. This inventory process (as well as all the work conducted on the older excavations) benefited from the extremely generous support of colleagues at the Regional Museum of History in Targovishte.

The results of the evaluation of the former excavations at Ovcharovo-Gorata were published in monograph form (Krauss 2014). This publication also contains the findings of an archaeoceramological study of the vessel pottery by Małgorzata Daszkiewicz, Gerwulf Schneider, and Ewa Bobryk, an appraisal of the silex artefacts by Nguyen Van Binh, the polished stone tools by Florian Klimscha, and the animal bone tools by Petăr Zidarov; it also includes remarks on the slaughtering refuse of the settlement by Norbert Benecke (partially based upon an earlier evaluation by Günter Nobis), and a general assessment of the use of the plant resources within northern Bulgaria during the Neolithic by Elena Marinova. Accordingly, only the most important results of the analysis of the structures uncovered and the ceramic finds need to be swiftly recounted here.

In the preliminary reports by Angelova, the structures uncovered in Ovcharovo-Gorata were introduced according to their ostensible settlement horizon, of which there are four. These horizons were numbered by stratigraphic sequence, ranging from the oldest (I) to the youngest (IV) respectively. Inasmuch as all subsequent publications employed their own respective stratigraphic naming systems, it was decided to use the original numbering for excavation documents, the uppermost settlement being thus Horizon I, the lowermost Horizon IV. The four settlement plans published by Angelova do not suggest any manner

of meaningful, systematic construction. In the plans for the uppermost settlement horizon, a double row of houses with post framework runs from the north-west to the south-east, with the main beams likewise oriented north-west to south-east. In contrast, the rows of post-frame houses in the north-east and south-east of the settlement tend to run from east to west. Furthermore, the plan for the latest settlement conspicuously does not feature any pits. Only the second settlement horizon reveals a row of pits inside and outside of the alleged post-frame construction. In the southern part of the settlement, however, there are nine oven platforms to which no post-frame structure could be assigned. Furthermore, yet another entirely different settlement organisation is indicated by the third settlement horizon, where multiple post-frame houses are grouped loosely around two open spaces in the south-western part of the settlement; nevertheless, only a few of the house layouts display a building entrance positioned in relation to these open spaces. The fourth, lowermost settlement horizon presents a fundamentally different pattern of construction encompassing the entire area of the settlement and (unlike the three postulated upper horizons) not limited to the area north-west of the canal. Instead of possessing solely post-frame houses as in the upper settlement horizons, exclusively pit-houses are documented. Indeed, the building plan for the settlement becomes altogether much more complex; this reflects the markedly better documentation accomplished during the final two years of the excavation.

A comparison of the plans published in the preliminary report and the original documentation revealed numerous manipulations of the architectural features. Thus, no wall trenches as suggested in the published building plans were actually detected among the post-frame constructions. Furthermore, the individual wall posts (often oriented precisely on the grid of the graph paper used for field documentation) were shifted from their exact linear alignment so as to appear more plausible in the publication. Similarly, other apparently superfluous posts were excluded from the published plans. Nevertheless, a different orientation for the construction can be clearly recognised among the fired-clay oven platforms documented in the north-east of the uppermost settlement horizon, this contradicting the east-west orientation of the post-frame houses in this area. Moreover, it is remarkable that many of the oven platforms within the first and second horizons come into precise vertical alignment. This would appear to indicate simple renovations to the oven platforms within one uninterrupted settlement, and yet the postulated post-frame houses stand in clear contradiction to this. It was even established that two post-frame houses from the first and second settlement horizons (one laying right on top of the other) possess fundamentally different orientations although they share the very same oven. The evaluation of the comprehensive photographic records from the excavation work revealed additional discrepancies between the finds actually present and the post-frame houses as previously arranged. Thus, rows of posts (aligned so straight that they might have been drawn along a ruler's edge) clearly cut right through the archaeological finds as visible in photographs. Moreover, some of the rooms indicated by the posts are much too small to be proportionate to the oven platforms positioned within. Additionally, it was revealed that other post-frame houses fit precisely into the 5 × 5 m quadrants indicated on the excavation grid. At many excavation sites in South-eastern Europe, exploratory ground probes are carried out, even to this day, with knives or stakes in order to locate loosely filled pits in the subsoil; this method has proven disastrous. Particularly in Ovcharovo-Gorata, where this method was carried out almost exclusively by school children with little to no archaeological background, the method has led to the creation of an image of the settlement corresponding in no way to the archaeological finds. Significantly, the adjusted finds around the post-frame houses of the third settlement horizon can be projected on to the pit-houses of the lowermost settlement plan without difficulty. For this reason, it has been concluded that the settlement at Ovcharovo-Gorata comprises gently sunken pit-houses recognised first at the outset of the excavation along the profile of the canal, and then again on a larger scale by qualified personnel in the final two years of the excavation. The post-frame houses documented in the intervening years did not withstand critical examination undertaken on the basis of excavation documentation.

In order to reconstruct the actual features, it does not suffice simply to dismiss the manipulated post-frame structures; there were clearly fired-clay platforms for ovens, and the ovens most certainly belonged to houses. The outlines of these houses, however, cannot, in most cases, be constructed based merely upon colourations in the ground. Additional findings such as grindstones and larger concentrations of finds permit distinct areas of use to be identified within the constructions. Indeed, the architectural structures become more apparent within the lowermost settlement stratum. Profile sections providing an idea of the shape of the constructions are available for some of the sunken pits. This most likely entails a building sunken from 0.5 m to a maximum of 1 m into the ground, the walls of which were likely constructed using a post and wattle-and-daub technique (Fig. 118). Remains of clay daub imprinted with wattle patterns have been documented. Parallels to this type of housing may be witnessed in the settlements of Aşağı Pınar and

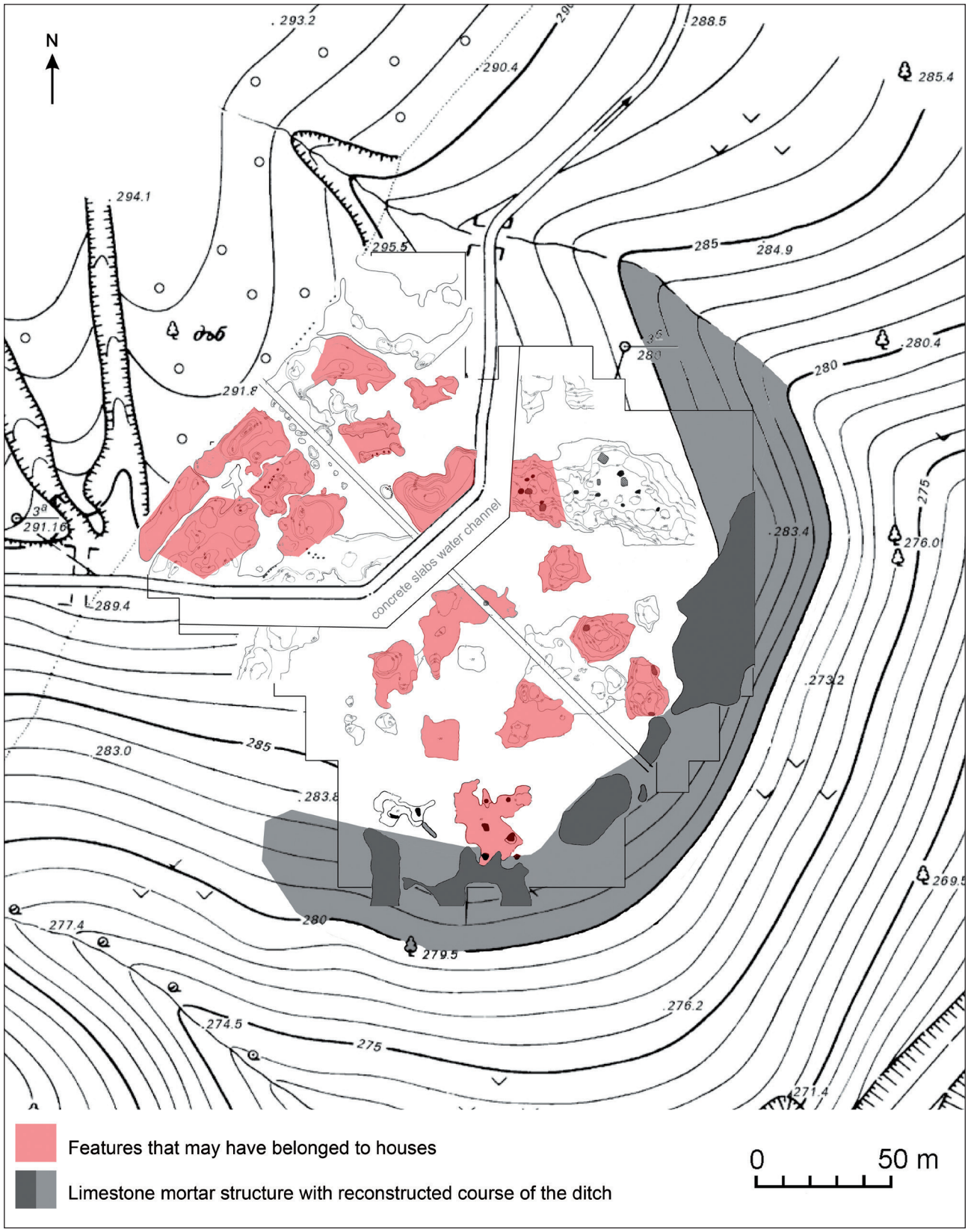


Fig. 118: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Reconstructed plan of the Early Neolithic settlement (after Krauss 2014, fig. 48).

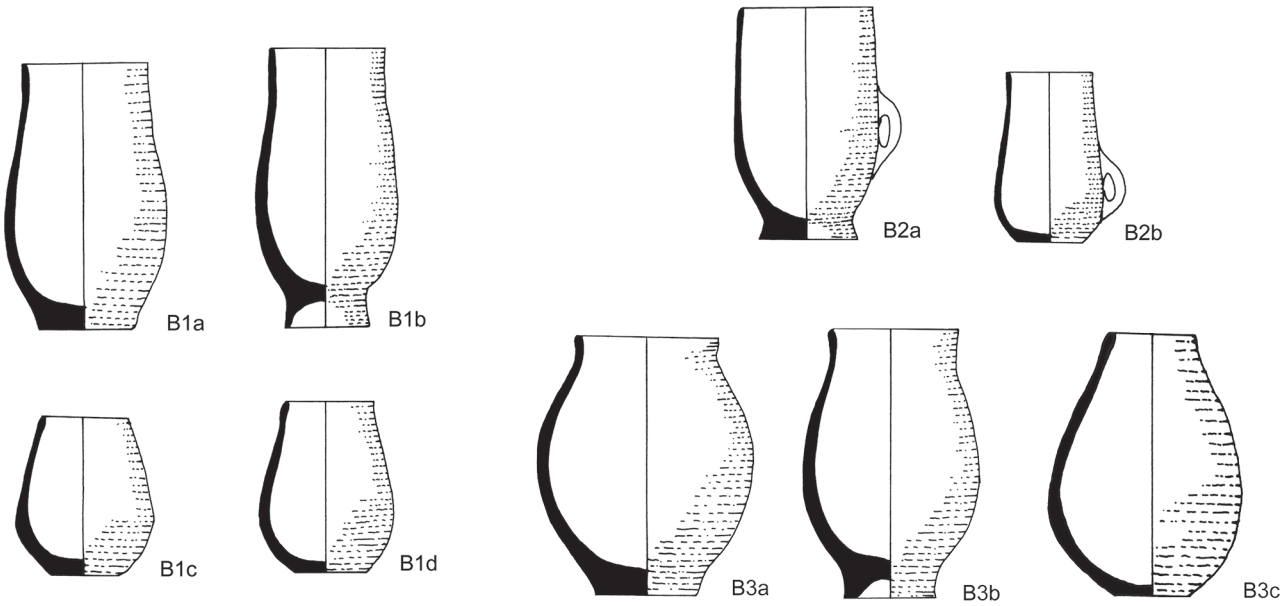


Fig. 119: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Main mug types (after Krauss 2014, fig. 54).

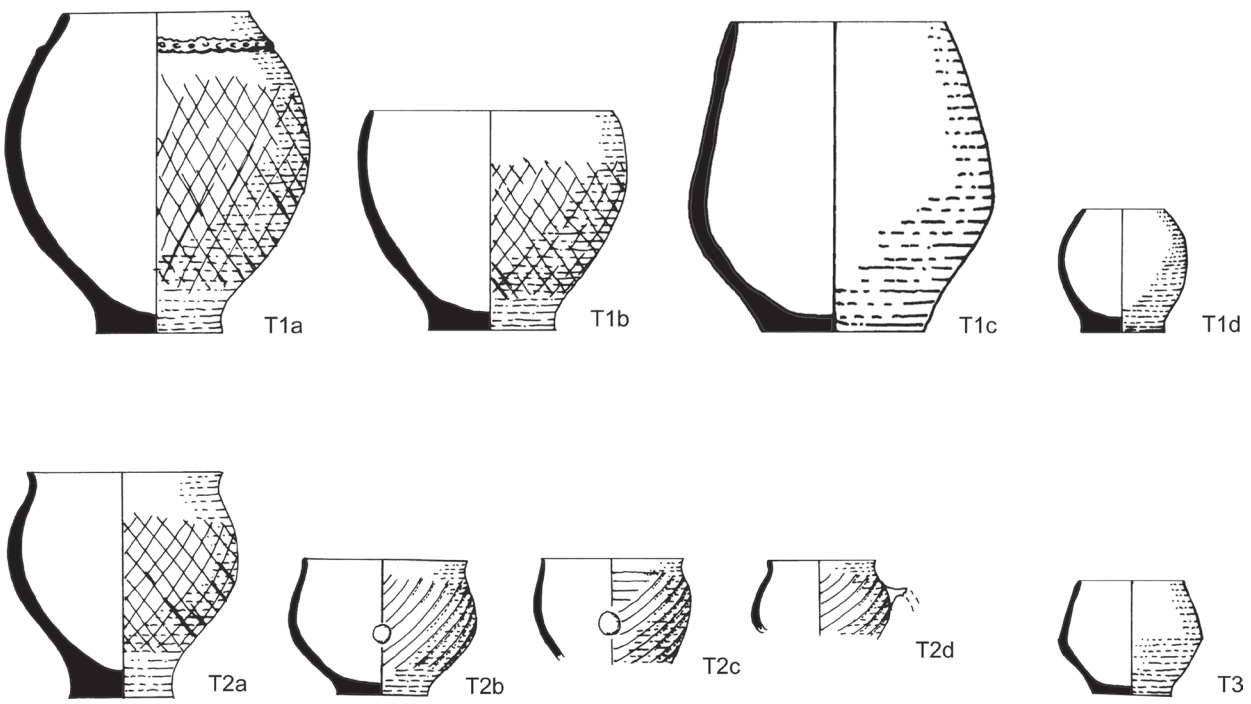


Fig. 120: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Main pot types (after Krauss 2014, fig. 55).

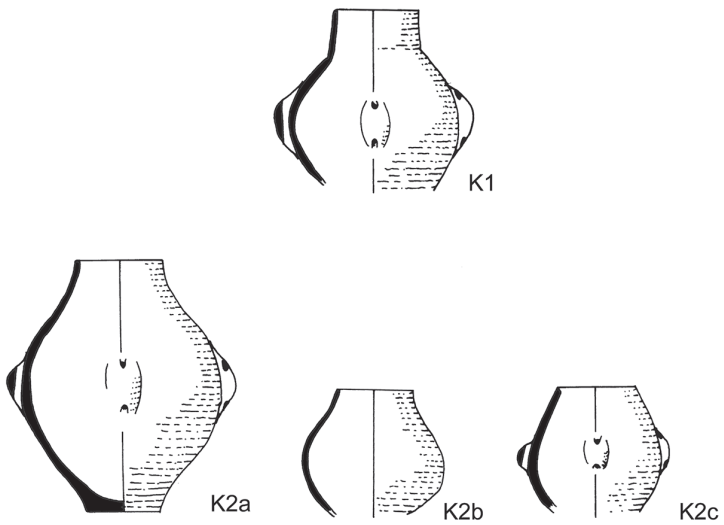


Fig. 121: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Main jug types (after Krauss 2014, fig. 56).

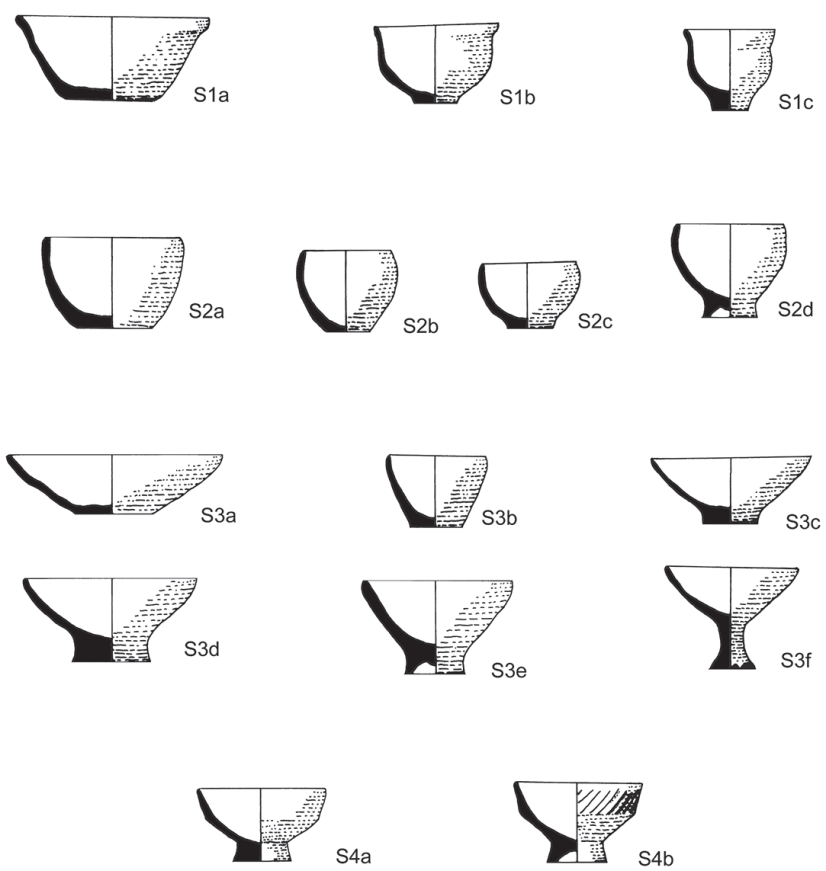


Fig. 122: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Main bowl types (after Krauss 2014, fig. 57).

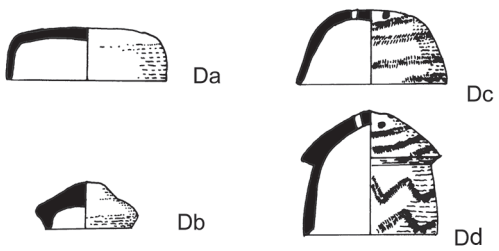


Fig. 123: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Main lid types (after Krauss 2014, fig. 58).

Horizon	Mugs and mug-like pots	Pots	Jug-like vessels	Bowls	Lids	Other vessels*	Unknown	Sum
I	0.23	6.68	0.27	1.72	0.01	0.01	3.57	**12.49**
II	0.13	5.03	0.22	1.07	0.02	0.00	5.80	**12.27**
III	0.24	7.50	0.29	1.90	0.02	0.01	10.34	**20.30**
IV	0.08	0.89	0.07	0.55	0.01	0.01	0.90	**2.51**
Unknown	0.45	17.48	0.51	3.12	0.06	0.05	30.68	**52.35**
Sum	**1.13**	**37.58**	**1.36**	**8.36**	**0.12**	**0.08**	**51.29**	100

Rounding error: 99.92

* Sieve vessels, cups and special shapes.

Fig. 124: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Distribution of vessel types to the postulated settlement horizons (in per cent) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 59).

Ilıpınar in Turkey. The linear structure partially uncovered in the south of Ovcharovo-Gorata during the final days of the excavation was interpreted as a rampart. While extremely important to the overall understanding of the settlement, this find was unfortunately insufficiently documented. An assessment of all available data allows for the possibility that this might simply represent the edges of a sunken area paved with the lime mortar-pebble stone mixture documented. As it is analogous to similar features at the aforementioned settlements in Turkey, the evidence more likely suggests that this feature should be understood as a paved trench facing the settlement, the lining of which was excavated as a raised structure. Precisely such trenches are particularly well attested at the settlement of Aktopraklık near Bursa. Moreover, evidence of just such a trench was also found in the Early Neolithic settlement of Golyamo Delchevo.

The ceramic forms identified included beakers and beaker-like pots (B), pot forms (T), jug-like vessels with conical, narrowed, or cylindrical necks (K), bowl forms (S), and lids (D) (Figs. 119–123). The edge and bottom forms were treated separately, as were the various vessel handles. In total, 23,744 vessel finds were catalogued, only 52.37% of which had been assigned to one of the postulated settlement horizons by the 1970s (Fig. 124). The distribution of the ceramic forms assigned to a particular settlement horizon does not suggest any significant concentration within the total development of the settlement. This should come as no surprise, however, in light of the aforementioned difficulties experienced during work on the construction of the settlement stratigraphy. Due to these problems, as well as the observations on the distribution of the vessel forms in the postulated settlement horizons, it was decided to present the find materials from Ovcharovo-Gorata as a whole, as any division of finds according to stratigraphic units would seem unjustifiable.

As for the horizontal distribution of the finds, a slightly higher concentration of ceramic finds was located northwest of a modern water channel that runs across the settlement. It has not been determined, however, if this concentration reflects the actual finds, or if it is simply a reflection of the selection of finds which reached the museum. Among the vessel forms, the pot forms are particularly numerous. Next (by a wide margin) come the bowl and beaker forms, as well as the jug-like vessels. All other forms appear only infrequently in relation to the total spectrum of forms at the settlement.

The decoration on the ceramics from Ovcharovo-Gorata is extremely varied (Figs. 125–129). Relief surface decoration is by far the most predominant form, including incised, impressed, and excised decoration on the rim and on the vessel base, as well as knobs and other relief decoration on the body of the vessel. The smaller pots and bowls, as well as nearly all of the beaker forms, are covered with fluting. Dark coloured paint has been detected on some of the fragments (Fig. 130).

The ceramics from Ovcharovo-Gorata suggest a single pottery workshop which made do without a specialised potter but was nevertheless oriented toward certain form traditions. Based on the broad spectrum of forms, we can surmise that each household produced its own dishes as needed, with the handiwork being determined more by convention than by changing fashions, the result being that the settlement's production as a whole appears to be quite cohesive today.

The miniature tables with recessed bowl (or so-called altars) appearing in the material from Ovcharovo-Gorata are (without exception) tripodal and feature triangular, dish-shaped indentations on their topsides as well (Fig. 131). Based on the fragments, the bulk of the tables were produced as one piece; no breakage pattern can be detected which would indicate that various parts were attached at a later point. We possess 115 surviving tripod tables (or fragments thereof) from the excavations. From a typological standpoint, they represent a relatively contained group. The height to side-length ratio is nearly always 1:2. The tripodal bases are produced, in most cases, as level extensions of the side surface, and are thus square-edged. From just two fragments, we also know of solid, rounded bases. One fragment with the remains of a ram protome is in existence; otherwise, the dish edges are always level. The sides of the dishes are decorated with various incised, impressed, and excised decorative techniques, although (for the most part) the chequerboard motif appears in variation throughout all examples. In contrast, incised chevron motifs and stamped out triangular motifs appear only infrequently (Fig. 132). Not unlike the other ceramic vessels, the distribution of the tripod tables does not reveal any particular concentration within the individual settlement horizons. On the basis of matching fragments from different horizons, it can even be demonstrated (independent of the stratigraphic observation) that the settlement strata were determined arbitrarily. In a superregional comparison, the miniature tables from Ovcharovo-Gorata can be placed in the broader group of triangular Neolithic altars, the distribution of which is centred within the eastern Balkans. These already appear in the horizon of Karanovo I, being produced throughout the entire Neolithic without significant changes to form or decoration. With regard to the typological development of this form at the tell of Karanovo, its relation to Horizon II is demonstrated once more. The tripod tables' extreme adherence to form and decorative motifs over the course of centuries reveals a pronounced conservatism in comparison with other settlement ceramics and is indicative of a distinctive function. At 0.48% of the total ceramic finds, they make up almost the same percentage as the three bowl subtypes (S1, S2, and S3) together. Despite this, tripod tables are not rare, and in terms of quantity they are significantly represented among the special forms. Their numbers remain, however, noticeably lower than the other surviving small ceramics from the settlement. The form of the objects clearly suggests a function involving specific contents, which, according to their position on the dish, would be uniformly presented. Characteristic elements of the table also include its triangular form, its tripodal base, the abstracted depiction of a ram's head documented on the corner of at least one example, and the preponderant decoration of the sides with chequerboard ornamentation. These are all characteristics which are not otherwise seen on any other surviving vessel group at Ovcharovo-Gorata. A clue as to the contents is offered by one example, a tripod table from Kachitsa, preserved in which are the remains of a seated figure affixed on top of it (Fig. 133).

A large number of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures come from the old excavation in Ovcharovo, of which 169 are still preserved in the Targovishte Museum. Among the clearly human-shaped figures, a type possessing a highly pronounced posterior and a narrow upper body dominates (Figs. 134–136). Most figures show a lower body decorated in relief, yet, at the same time, the nakedness of the statuettes is emphasised. In many cases, the arms are set off to the sides and presented as stumps. There is one figure offering an exception, with an arm resting at its side, upon the hip. Some statuettes even include anatomical details, such as a knee, an ankle joint, and toes. The faces, however, remain highly stylised. Due to their material, the two nephrite objects are standouts: a highly stylised anthropomorphic pendant, and a miniature axe that is drilled through from two sides at the neck (Fig. 137). On the basis of its form, the anthropomorphic pendant belongs to a larger find group comprising frog-like or anthropomorphic figures (see Chapter 11.3).

After the evaluation by Florian Klimscha, the inventory of the polished stone tools from Ovcharovo-Gorata is as follows. All of the axe blades examined are polished and imperforated, and can be divided into four main classes



Fig. 125: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Examples of plastic surface decorations on ceramics (after Krauss 2014, pl. 54).



Fig. 126: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Examples of bottom decorations, perforated rims and small humps on ceramics (after Krauss 2014, pl. 55).



Fig. 127: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Examples of ceramic fragments with fluting decorated and with a roughened surface (after Krauss 2014, pl. 56).



Fig. 128: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Examples of stitch and incised decorations on ceramics (after Krauss 2014, pl. 57).



Fig. 129: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Special forms of ornamentation on ceramics (after Krauss 2014, pl. 58).

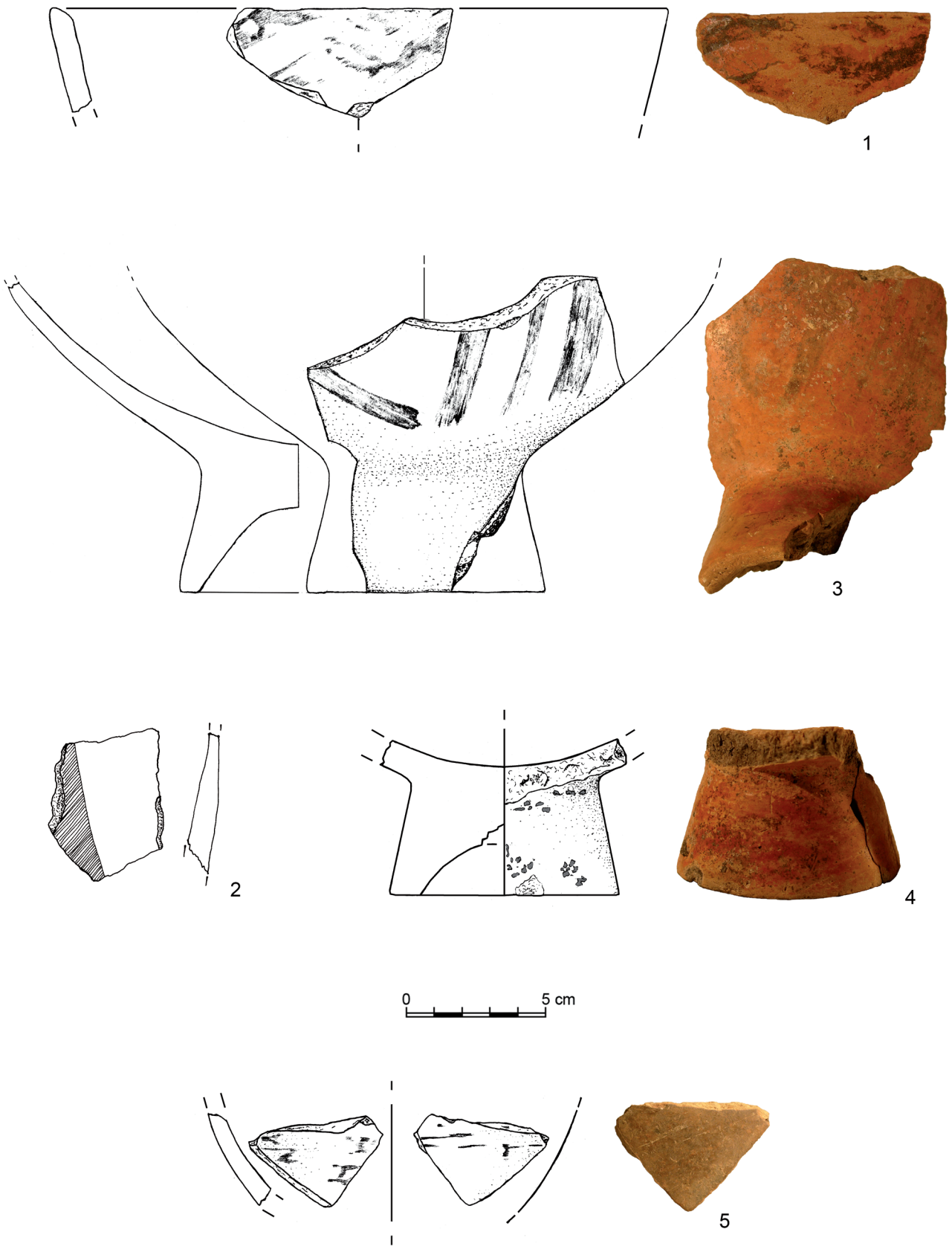


Fig. 130: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Painted sherds (after Krauss 2014, pl. 48).



Fig. 131: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Examples of tripod miniature tables (after Krauss 2014, fig. 80).



Fig. 132: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Types of decorations on tripod miniature tables (different scales) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 82).

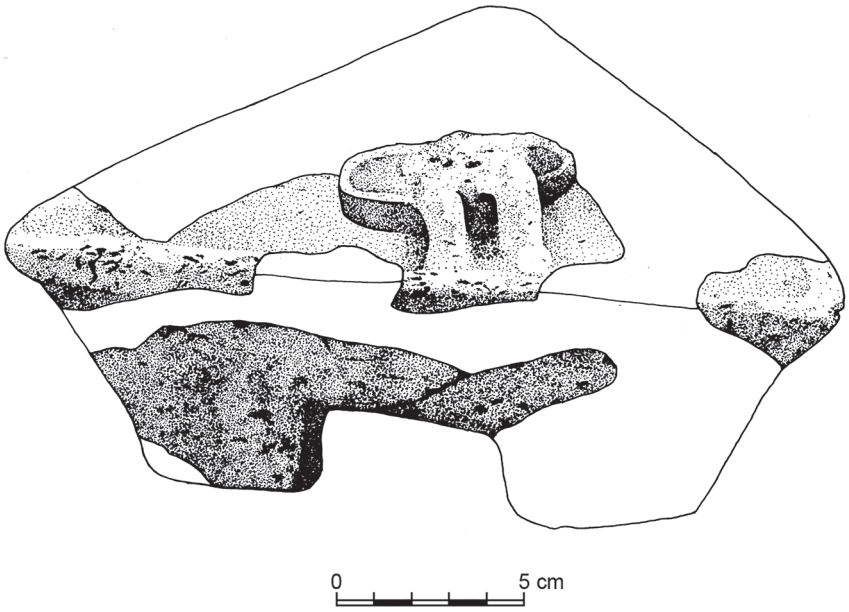


Fig. 133: Tripod miniature table from Late Neolithic Kachitsa with the lower part of a sitting figurine inside the bowl (after Krauss 2014, fig. 85).

(Figs. 138–139). Represented in the find inventory are two groups of small, chisel-like tools (Types A1–2), a very large, oversized and thick piece (Type D), and a group of smaller antler sleeve-hafted axe blades (Types B1–2), as well as four types of larger axe blades, each with different thickness and cross-section shapes (Types C1–4). It must be noted that some types are best explained as repurposed, formerly larger blades, and are thus a secondary product of the stone tool production.

In the Early Neolithic cultures of Greece, as well as in the Criș culture, some (to a certain extent) quite similar pieces could be accounted for, although differences in the overall picture of the axe industries do indeed exist. The perforated axes known from the Körös culture are not to be found in Ovcharovo-Gorata. Chipped flint axes are likewise missing from the find material. The antler sleeve- haft technique is, however, known; it can be traced to Anatolia, where a similar piece has been found in Ilıpınar. Large type D axe blades appear more frequently in Bulgaria, yet also occur in Turkish Thrace. Of particular interest is a series of pieces (roughly Types C3 and C4) that have solid parallels in the LBK and the Körös culture. Indeed, at the LBK find spots, only a selection of the types from Ovcharovo-Gorata appears. For example, the small axes and the corresponding antler sleeves are absent.

We also have a complete inventory of tools made from chipped stones from the old excavations at Ovcharovo-Gorata. The flint artefacts were processed by Nguyen Van Binh a short time after the conclusion of the excavations. In 1985, he submitted a dissertation with the title "Methodology for the Examination of the Prehistoric Flint Artefact Ensemble from the Late Pleistocene and Early Holocene on the Basis of Materials from North Bulgaria" to the Archaeological Institute of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Outstanding is the great variety of cores and blanks (Figs. 140–145). Structurally, the scraper and retouched flakes group dominates. Among the scrapers, the flake forms predominate (64%) (Figs. 146–153). The splinter form group is well-represented; burins, in contrast, are almost completely absent. The awl-like borers, most of which are atypically formed, are only weakly documented, as are the borers, the length and crosswise blunted tools, and serrated forms (5–7%) (Figs. 154–158). Also characteristic is the absence of the microlithic forms among the various types, with the exception of a few scrapers and retouched blades. Geometric microliths are completely absent. The existence of unretouched, semi-finished goods (lithic flakes and blades), as well as fragments of these goods, provides evidence of their deliberate employment in the production of tools. The technological-typological properties of the materials from Ovcharovo-Gorata have many parallels in the inventories of the Neolithic settlements of Usoe I and Podgoritsa.

7.5. Further Sites in the Ludgorie and the Catchment Area of the Golyama Kamchiya River

The region's earliest settlement was localised by Todorova east of Ovcharovo within the fields of Polyanitsa-Platoto

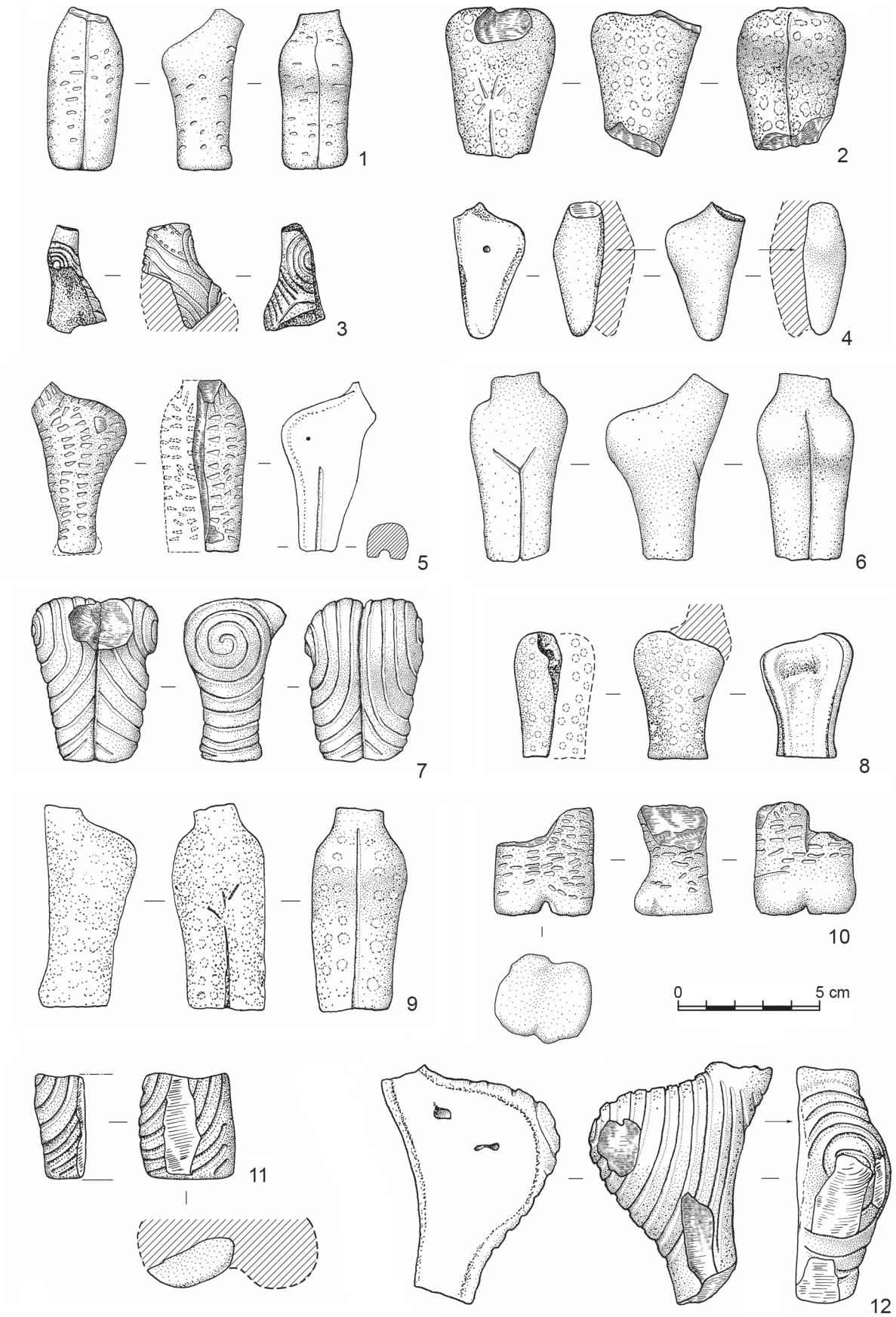


Fig. 134: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Selection of lower parts of anthropomorphic clay figurines (drawings: I. Vajsov) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 97).

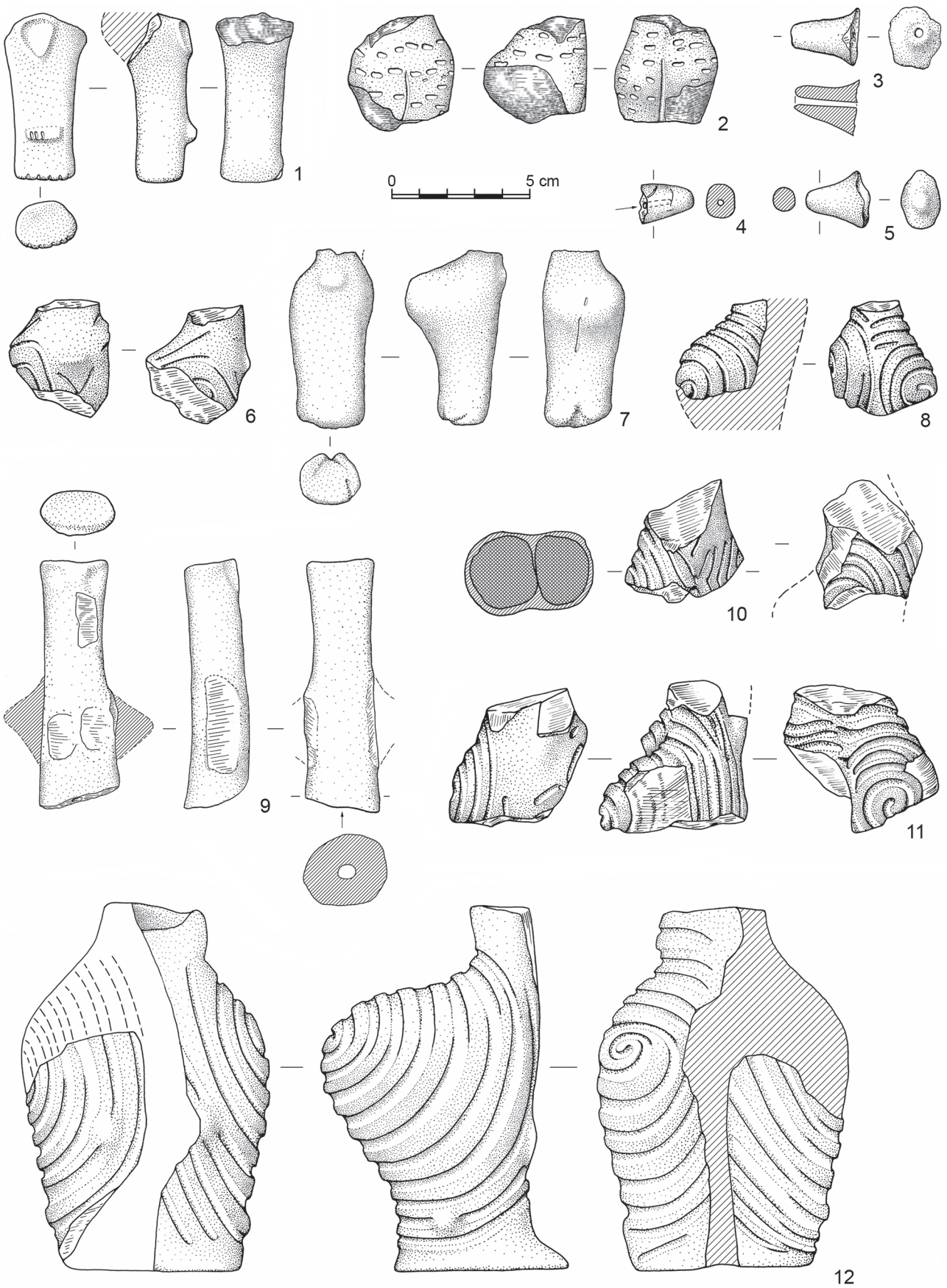


Fig. 135: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Selection of lower parts of anthropomorphic clay figurines and fragments of body parts (drawings: I. Vajsov) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 98).

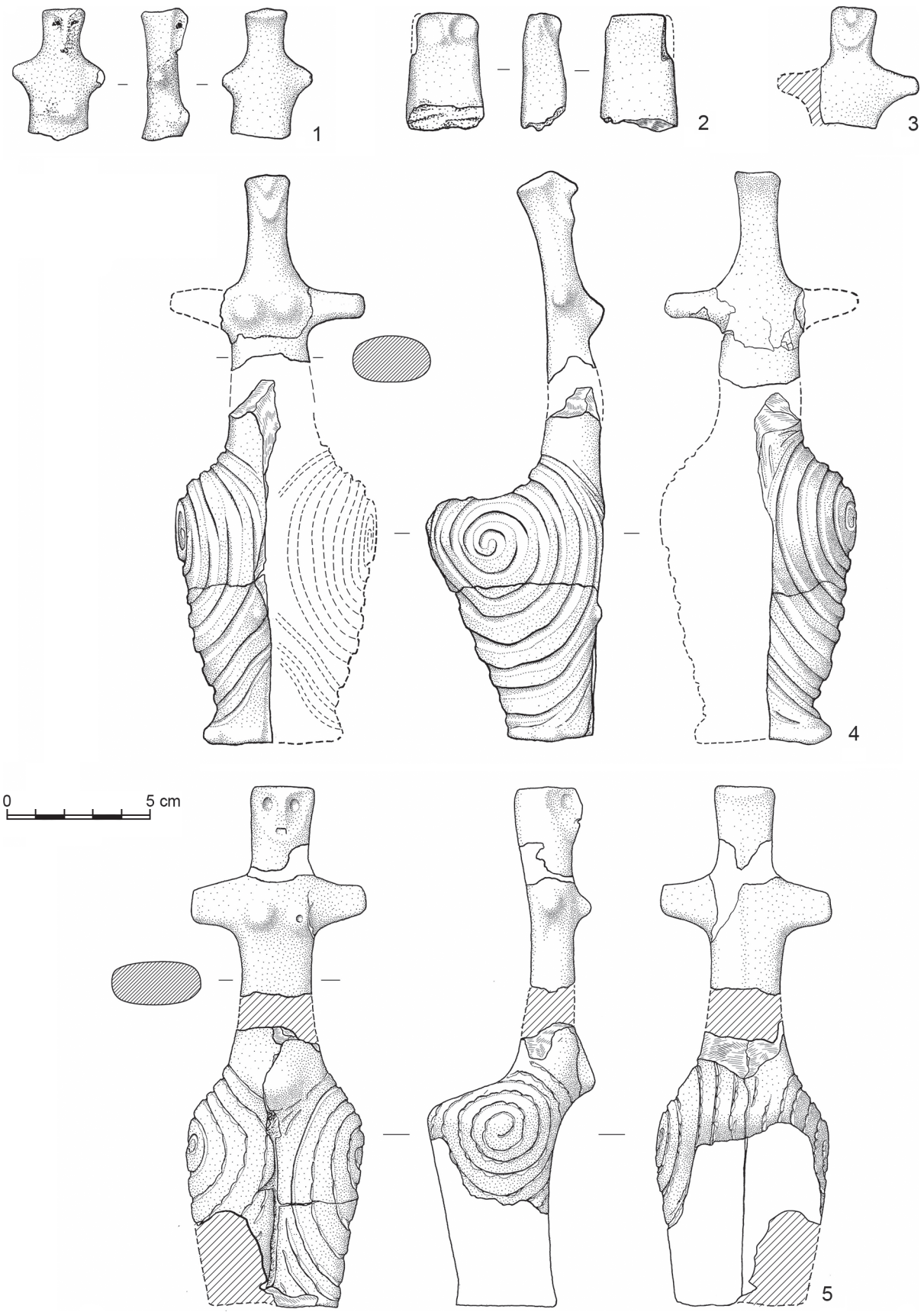


Fig. 136: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Selection of upper parts of anthropomorphic figurines and two idols composed of fragments (drawings: I. Vajsov) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 99).

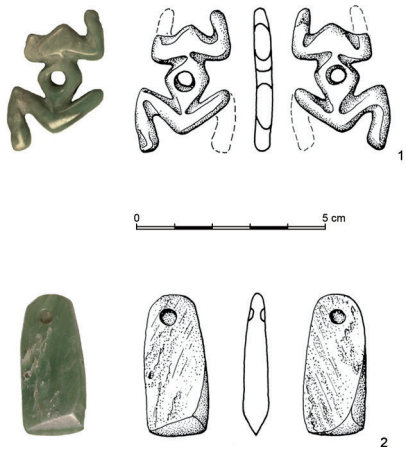


Fig. 137: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Anthropomorphic amulet and miniature axe of nephrite (after Krauss 2014, fig. 103).

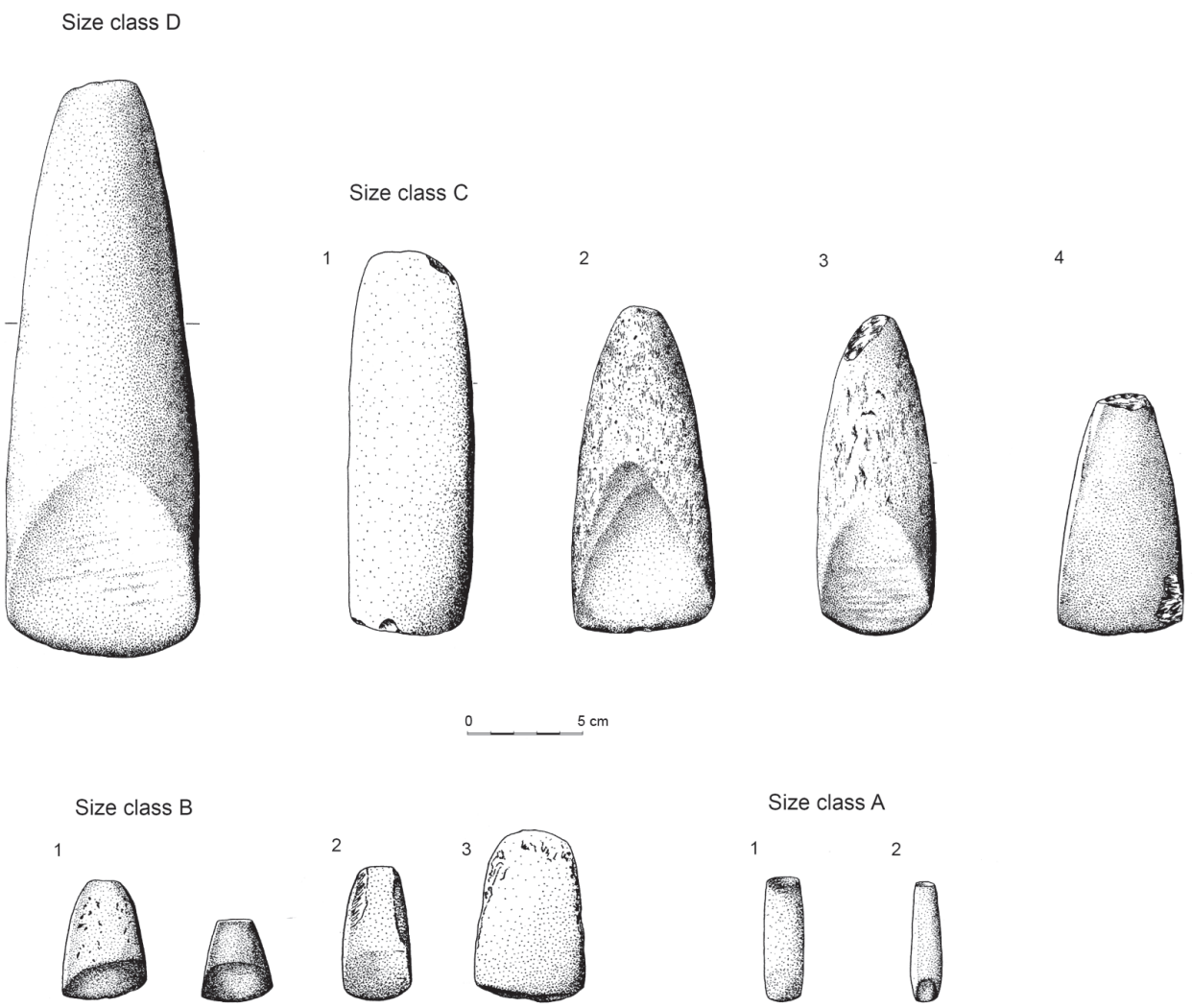


Fig. 138: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Size classes of polished stone axes (graphics: F. Klimscha) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 120).

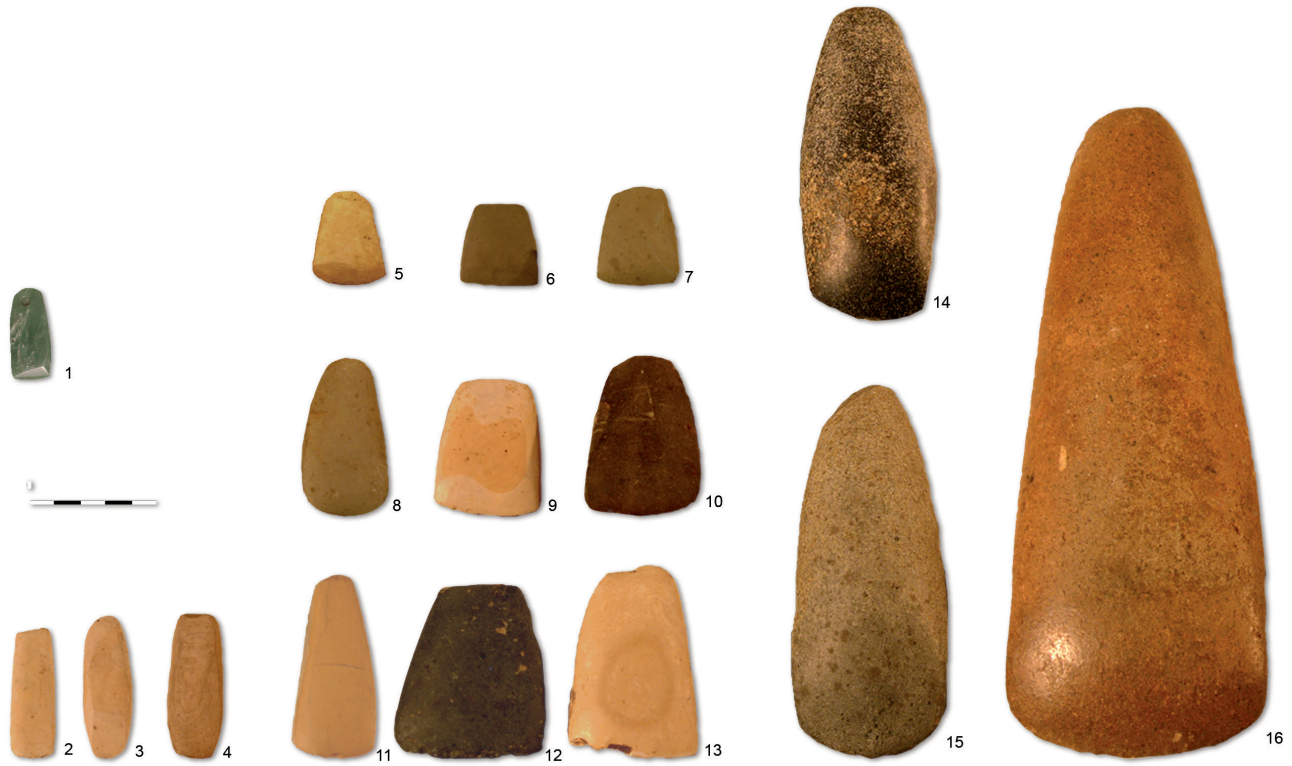


Fig. 139: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Examples of entirely preserved stone axes (after Krauss 2014, fig. 115).

(Todorova 1990. – Todorova, Vaysov 1993, 127–128. – Todorova 2003). Currently published from this settlement (identified in 1972) are seven vessels invariably cited as evidence of a 'monochrome' Neolithic in the region (Todorova 1990, fig. 2. – Todorova 2003, fig. 1). These consist of two half-spherical bowls on a massive foot adorned with notches and a further spherical bowl with a notched rim, together with two bowl-shaped pots with outcurved lips, a vessel with a narrow mouth and pierced lugs slightly underneath the belly, and an additional bowl with a straight wall which slightly projects. With the exception of the pots, all vessels are adorned with a red clay slip. The massive feet of the bowl forms may be deduced to be an archaism.

A selection of the pottery finds from Ovcharovo-Platoto was published together with the material from the excavation of the Chalcolithic tell of Ovcharovo (Todorova et al. 1983, pls. 1, 2A, 3, 5–6). The forms largely resemble the material from Ovcharovo-Gorata. Not only are the characteristic beaker forms B2a and B2b with strap handles and the handle-less beaker B1b with a massive foot present, but also the subtypes of the simple large pots T1 (cf. Chapter 7.4, Figs. 119–123). Finer pots with channels as represented by Group T2 also occur at Ovcharovo-Platoto. Only those types with a thin foot are present among the bowl forms, although these are present in almost every variant known from Ovcharovo-Gorata. These essentially consist of S-profiled bowls (S1b–c), spherical bowls (S2c), and bowls with straight walls (S3c–d). Only the carinated forms of the pots and bowls of Variant S4 are unattested, these admittedly also seldom occurring at Ovcharovo-Gorata. Equally absent are the jug-like vessels and characteristic lid forms adorned with impressions. Furthermore, the absence of high foot rims (which can be interpreted as indicating an earlier chronological position when considered in respect to the form trajectory in Thrace) is noticeable within the material from Ovcharovo-Platoto. If, indeed, the material from Ovcharovo-Platoto appears somewhat older than that of Ovcharovo-Gorata on the strength of these observations, then this should not be overstated. First and foremost, however, similarities between both find inventories prevail, this suggesting the coeval occupation of both settlements.

Only nine vessels from the field of Ovcharovo-Zemnika have been published as drawings (Todorova et al. 1983, pl. 2b). While, on the one hand, these are forms which are in the tradition of Ovcharovo-Gorata, on the other hand, they can be clearly distinguished from it with the introduction of new types. The unifying elements are the lid forms Dc

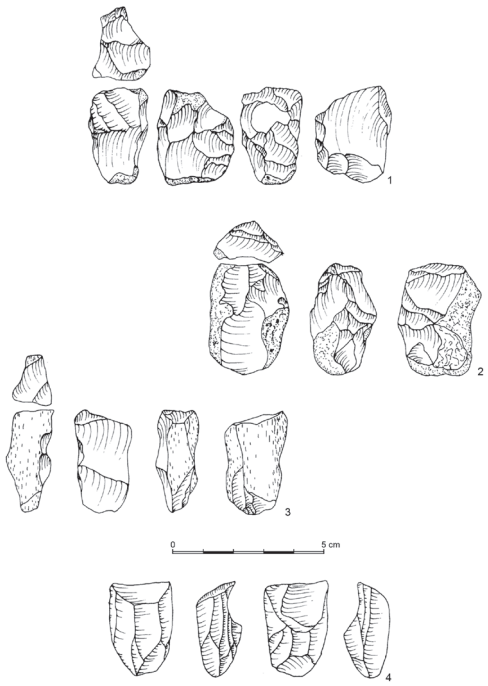


Fig 140: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Pre-cores (drawings: N. Van Binh, adaptions: P. Nedelcheva) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 129).

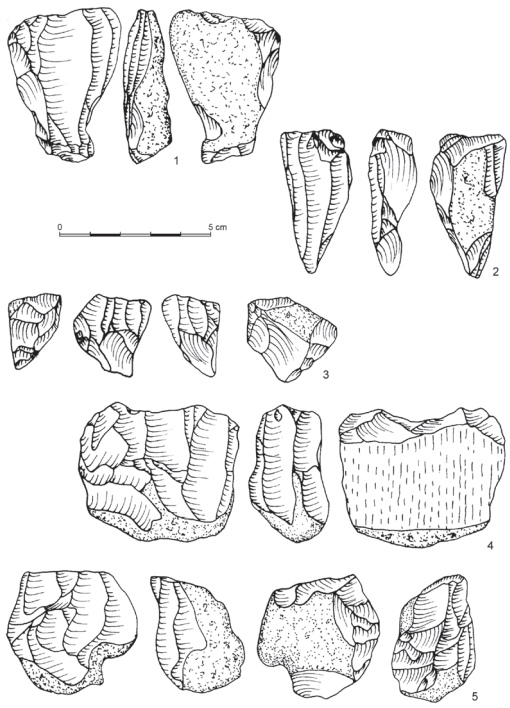


Fig. 141: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Cores (drawings: N. Van Binh, adaptions: P. Nedelcheva) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 130).

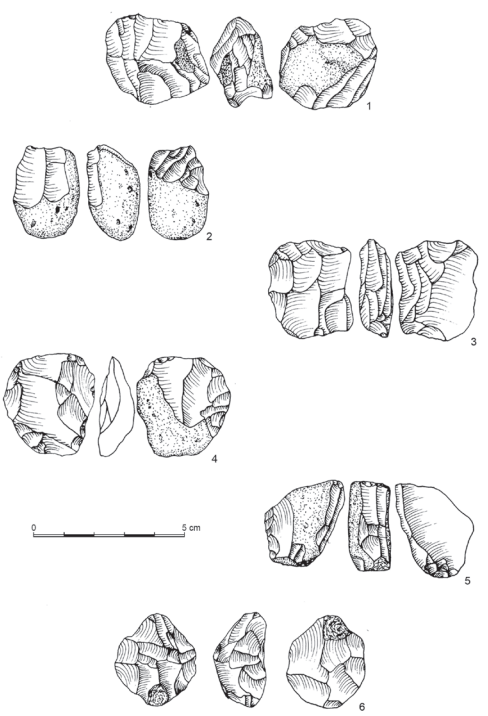


Fig. 142: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Pre-cores (drawings: N. Van Binh, adaptions: P. Nedelcheva) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 128).

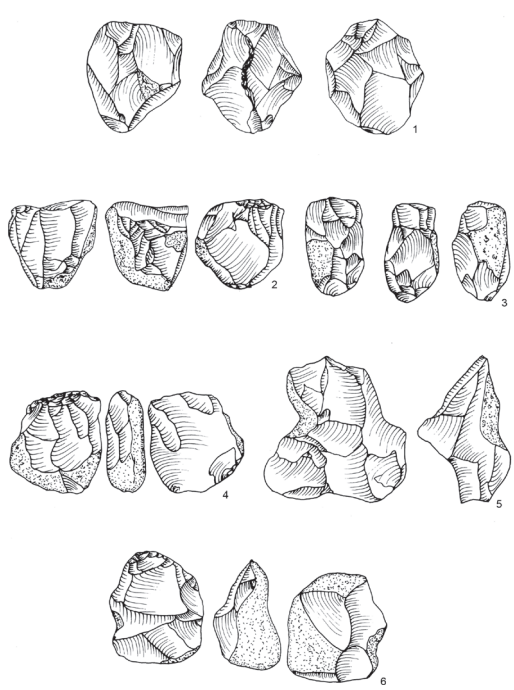


Fig. 143: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Cores and splintered cores (without scale; drawings: N. Van Binh, adaptions: P. Nedelcheva) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 132).

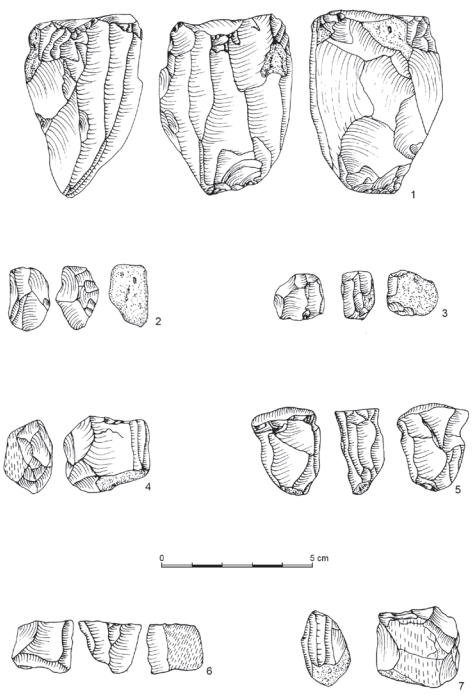


Fig. 144: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Cores from (drawings: N. Van Binh, adaptions: P. Nedelcheva) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 135).

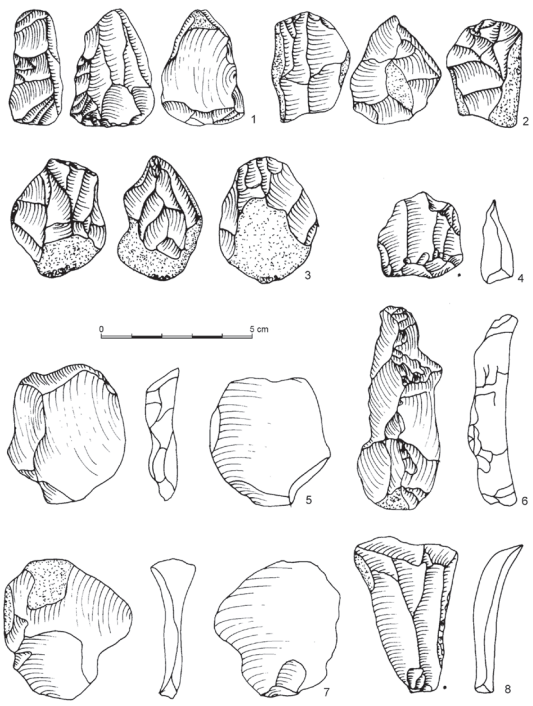


Fig. 145: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Cores and tools on flakes (drawings: N. Van Binh, adaptions: P. Nedelcheva) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 138).

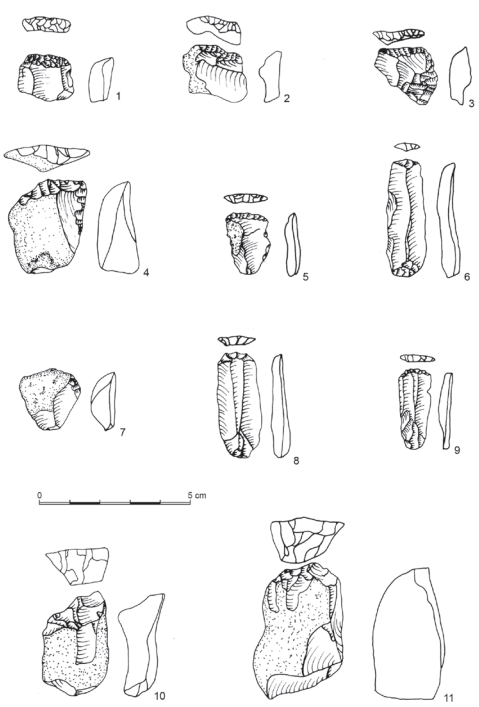


Fig. 146: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Scrapers (drawings: N. Van Binh, adaptions: P. Nedelcheva) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 152).

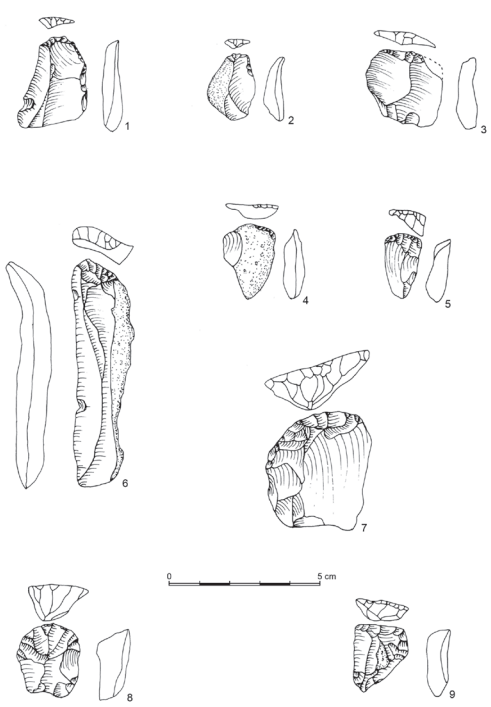


Fig. 147: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Scrapers (drawings: N. Van Binh, adaptions: P. Nedelcheva) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 153).

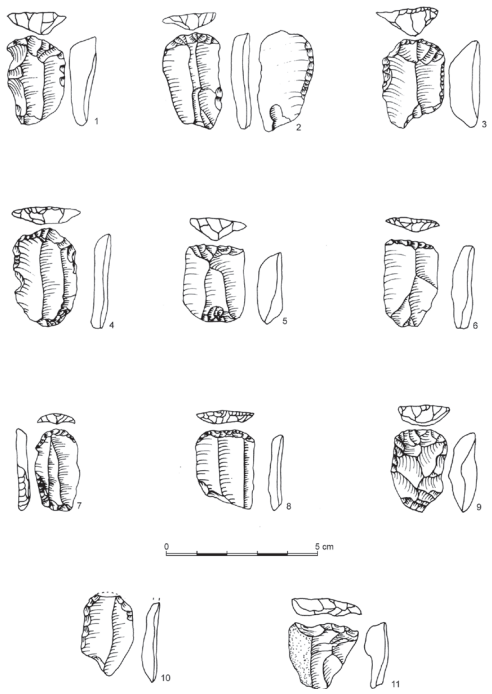


Fig. 148: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Unifacial scrapers (drawings: N. Van Binh, adaptions: P. Nedelcheva) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 154).

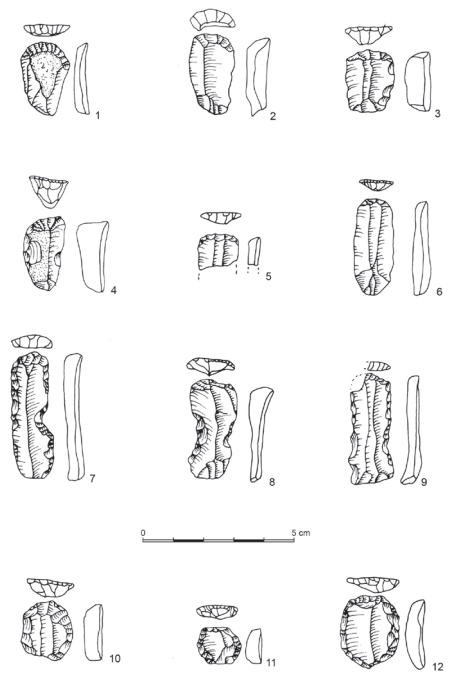


Fig. 149: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Unifacial scrapers (drawings: N. Van Binh, adaptions: P. Nedelcheva) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 155).

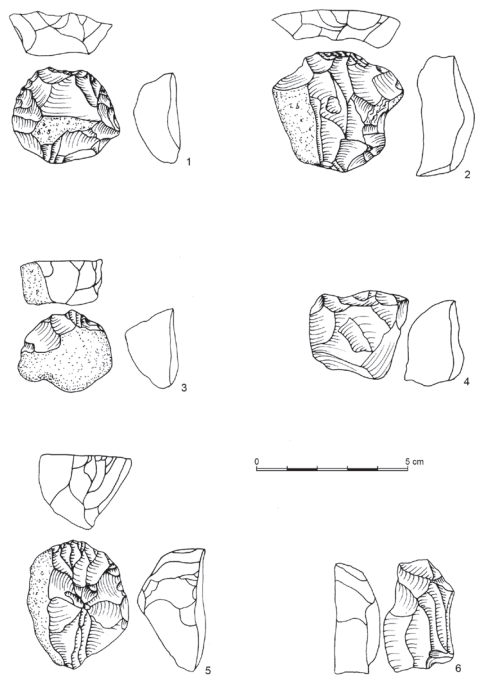


Fig. 150: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Round scrapers (drawings: N. Van Binh, adaptions: P. Nedelcheva) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 156).

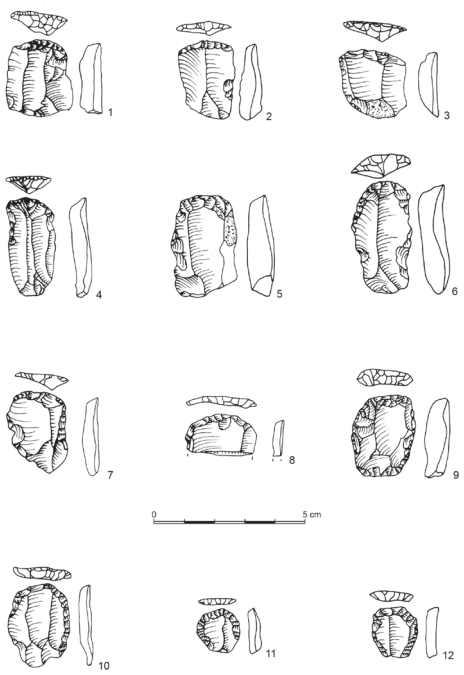


Fig. 151: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Scrapers (drawings: N. Van Binh, adaptions: P. Nedelcheva) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 159).

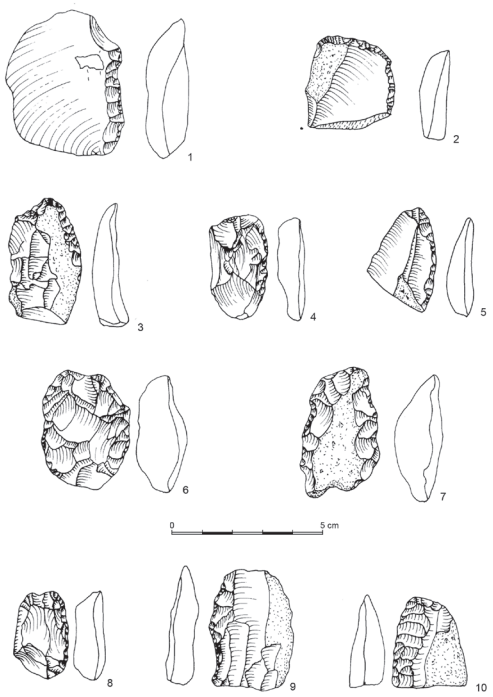


Fig. 152: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Scrapers (drawings: N. Van Binh, adaptions: P. Nedelcheva) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 160).

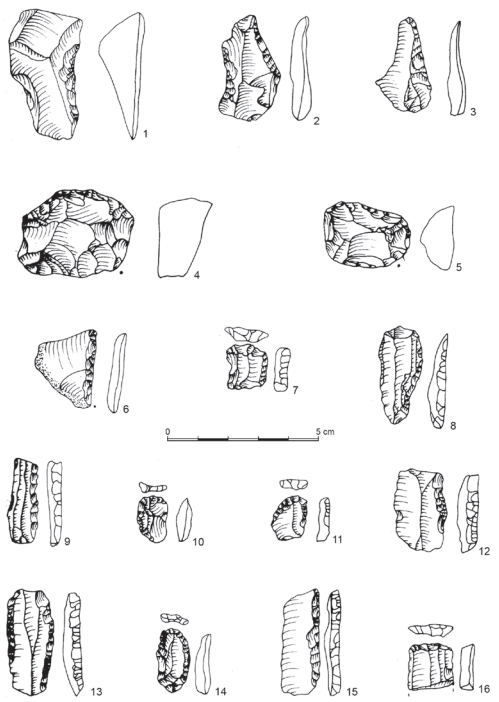


Fig. 153: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Scrapers and backed blades (drawings: N. Van Binh, adaptions: P. Nedelcheva) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 161).

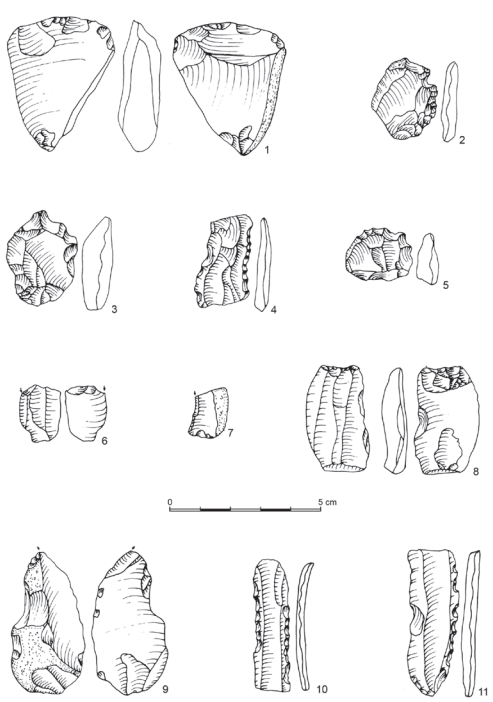


Fig. 154: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Silex tools (drawings: N. Van Binh, adaptions: P. Nedelcheva) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 162).

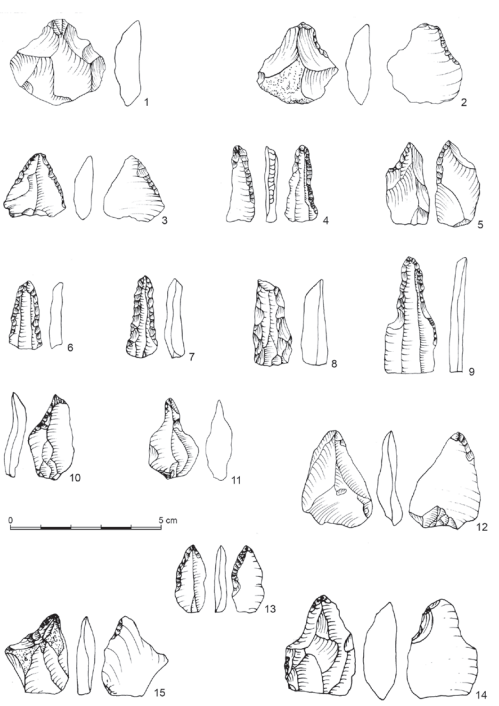


Fig. 155: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Points and borers (drawings: N. Van Binh, adaptions: P. Nedelcheva) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 163).

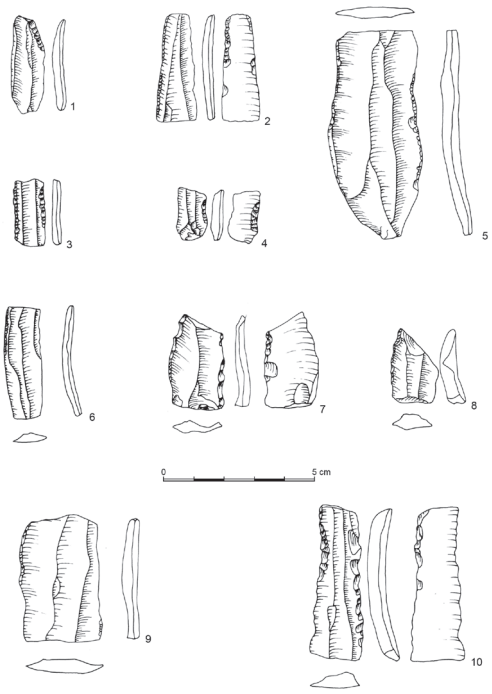


Fig. 156: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Retouched blades (drawings: N. Van Binh, adaptions: P. Nedelcheva) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 171).

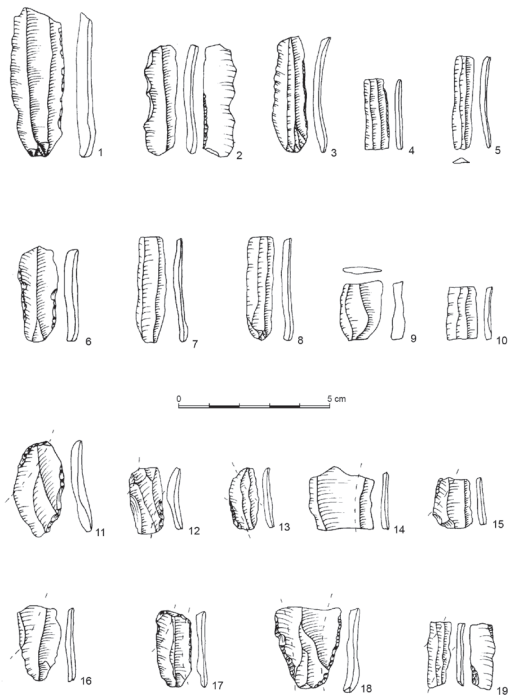


Fig. 157: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Blades (drawings: N. Van Binh, adaptions: P. Nedelcheva) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 173).

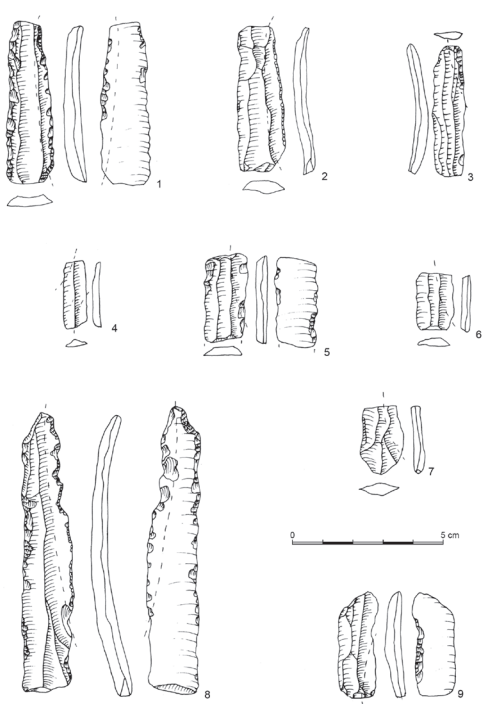


Fig. 158: Ovcharovo-Gorata. Blades with sickle gloss (drawings: N. Van Binh, adaptions: P. Nedelcheva) (after Krauss 2014, fig. 174).

(which continue the characteristic incised decoration) and a vessel with a narrow mouth and pierced lugs beneath the belly reminiscent of the jug-like forms from Ovcharovo-Gorata. A small channel-adorned barrel evidently bearing a very deep handle application is new, and may be understood as a further evolution of the beakers with strap handles without foot structures (B2b) on grounds of this peculiarity. Also only distantly related to the forms from Ovcharovo-Gorata is a large, half-round foot bowl with a channel decorated wall (Todorova et al. 1983, pls. 2b, 19). In order to understand the development of forms directly following Ovcharovo-Gorata, a larger corpus of material would be necessary.

Todorova also juxtaposes the finds from Zelena Morava with those from Ovcharovo-Gorata in the context of a form analysis (Todorova, Vaysov 1993, fig. 116/4–5). However, this ascription can be neither confirmed nor dismissed on the basis of a mere two sherds.

Only a slim selection of the finds from the excavations at Drinovo have also been published (Todorova, Vaysov 1993, fig. 117). Nevertheless, a larger collection of ceramic vessels is displayed in the Targovishte Museum, with these offering a good impression of the Middle Neolithic of the region. Here, the beaker forms had developed into high, thin vessels with a conically tapering wall. Retained in respect to

earlier exemplars was the strap handle on the lower half of the vessel. Among the bowl forms, more strongly profiled types such as carinated bowls now predominate, with these already intimating future developments during the Late Neolithic. New, in addition, are large, channelled cups with slightly funnel-shaped flared rims and a wide strap handle. Individual, very broad strap handles can now also be observed on the jug-like vessels. These forms with a widely protruding, often carinated wall and a narrow, cylindrical neck, are only distantly reminiscent of the narrow-mouthed forms from Ovcharovo-Gorata. Still commonplace are the basic decorative techniques of the Early Neolithic, such as incision, impression, and channel adornment, although the channels are now sunk deeper into the vessel surface and form wider gutters.

7.6. The Lower Course of the Kamchiya River and the Dobrudja

The lower course of the Kamchiya River entering the Black Sea's littoral displays an independent expression of Early Neolithic ceramics with a clear influence from the Hamangia culture located in the Dobrudja. In terms of environment, the Dobrudja is today a region with an arid climate providing no perennial river courses, while the adjoining region to the south is significantly better watered by the courses of the Provadiyska Reka and the Kamchiya. Both landscapes are open to the sea to the east, although a much greater extension of the inhabitable land during the Neolithic era is to be presumed on grounds of the constantly rising sea level since the end of the Pleistocene. Two Early Neolithic pottery complexes from Golyamo Delchevo and Dalgopol-Balkuzu may be discussed here. The early phase of the Hamangia culture (here serving as an interesting comparison to the Early Neolithic in the region's interior) is attested at the settlements of Durankulak-Nivata, Medgidia-Cocoaşă, and Cernavodă.

Beneath the deposits of the Chalcolithic tell of Golyamo Delchevo, an Early Neolithic settlement was unearthed; this represents the earliest levels, Phase I (Todorova et al. 1975, 15–20), ascribed by Todorova to the so-called Tsonevo culture (Todorova, Vaysov 1993, 142–147). Present in the find material are the bowl types S2c and S3c found in the type spectrum from Ovcharovo-Gorata (cf. Chapter 7.4, Figs. 119–123), although a slight outward turn of the lips reminiscent of the profiling of the bowls of Type S1b may be noted at Golyamo Delchevo. The large vessels with a narrowed mouth are certainly already very much different to those from Ovcharovo-Gorata inasmuch as the mouth projects out in a funnel shape, or the forms are wider. A similarity might be noted in a cup with lugs (Todorova et al. 1975, pl. 4.1) which finds a good counterpart in a vessel from Ovcharovo-Gorata, and in the many tall cylindrical pot stands. Lids do not yet occur within the material from Golyamo Delchevo I which might hint at an earlier chronological position. In light of these observations, the exact relationship with Ovcharovo-Gorata can accordingly only be roughly estimated. It is only with the arrival of Golyamo Delchevo II that multiple lid forms appear which admittedly already belong to the Early Chalcolithic Sava culture with which the actual tell formation begins at this site. Characteristic of this period are cylindrical forms, some of which are stackable within one another and possess a deeply excised decoration (Todorova et al. 1975, pls. 9–16). Whether this pertains to a later settlement in Ovcharovo-Gorata to be paralleled with Karanovo III, as Lichardus and Parzinger assume (cf. Lichardus, Iliev, Christov 2002, 360. – Parzinger 2005, 54), must therefore remain uncertain.

Further material from the Tsonevo culture has emerged from Dalgopol-Balkuzu (Todorova, Vaysov 1993, fig. 124). The selected vessel fragments published may also be neatly associated with Ovcharovo-Gorata. Bowl forms with half-rounded and straight walls of the type-groups S2 and S3 and pot forms on simple, flattened stands are attested. The surface of the vessels displays impressed or incised decoration and also the plastic application of small knobs or nipples. The characteristic channelling of fine wares is also attested.

Particularly striking within the material from Ovcharovo-Gorata are the profiled lid forms Dc and Dd and some of the vessels with cylindrical and conically elongated necks of the type-groups K1 and K2a, which are reminiscent of the Hamangia culture not only in their form but also (and most remarkably) in their highly specific impressed decoration. Despite this, connecting Hamangia with the developed Early Neolithic is no simple task, inasmuch as a general consensus exists as to the Late Neolithic, and thereby much later, chronological ascription of the Hamangia culture (Berciu 1966, 109–119. – Todorova, Vaysov 1993, 146–147. – Haşotti 1997, 19–23). The similarities to the Early Neolithic material from Ovcharovo-Gorata described, do, nevertheless, prompt the closer future study of this cultural grouping and, particularly, its early phase.

Among the fine ware of the settlement of Medgidia-Cocoaşă may be found a few pricked decorated vessel fragments which are directly comparable with Ovcharovo-Gorata (Haşotti 1997, fig. 30/3, 7–10). A wall fragment with three bands of rounded pricks arranged parallel to one another provides a good item for comparison (Haşotti 1997, fig. 30/3). Excellent parallels are also presented

by patterns composed of sharp, triangular pricks from Medgidia-Cocoașă (Haşotti 1997, fig. 30/9–11). The very fine channelled decoration typical of some Hamangia pots, especially on the upper part of two-part bowls and pot forms (Haşotti 1997, fig. 29), is admittedly mostly found among beaker forms in Ovcharovo-Gorata, although individual bowls also occasionally display this specific decorative feature. Similarities among the coarse wares may also be demonstrated, as in the case of pot fragments with angular pricks below the lips of the rim (Haşotti 1997, fig. 31/2–3), or the very specific zigzag pattern (Haşotti 1997, figs. 31/6; 32/7) which very similarly occur at Ovcharovo-Gorata.

Even clearer parallels may be elicited from material from Durankulak-Nivata. A vessel lid with an offset brim (Dimov 1982, fig. 9e) not only corresponds to Type Dd from Ovcharovo-Gorata in form, but also in the manner of its decoration. The bands formed of sharp-edged pricks on bowls from Ovcharovo-Gorata may be recognised in Durankulak-Nivata as bands filled with channels (Dimov 1982, fig. 10/г, з, и). Despite this, the profiling of the bowls with their raised rims clearly differs from that at Ovcharovo-Gorata. The simple pot forms (Dimov 1982, fig. 11/в–ж) may nevertheless be juxtaposed without difficulty.

In light of the numerous similarities between the material from Ovcharovo-Gorata and the earliest Hamangia pottery, chronological proximity must be considered for both occurrences. That such a corresponding form spectrum might have developed entirely independently after centuries hardly seems possible. Therefore, it seems more likely that both cultural groups chronologically connect. Consequently, this would mean an earlier onset of the Hamangia culture, and thereby also a markedly earlier neolithisation of the Dobrudja, which possibly already began in the mid-6th millennium. Unfortunately, ^{14}C dates for the advent of the Hamangia culture are currently completely lacking.

The geographically isolated Early Neolithic settlement of Malak Preslavets is the only site lying directly on the steep southern bank of the Danube. Among the find material, some ceramic fragments painted with dark paint finding no correlate in the vicinity were published (Panayotov, Gatsov, Popova 1992). In terms of environment, the site lies on the periphery of the Dudești culture spread within Muntenia, which is nevertheless characterised by a very complex incised and plissé channelled pattern. The technology of the vessel painting places the situation at Malak Preslavets in an Early Neolithic context, although the nearest comparable finds originate from north-western Bulgaria or Thrace, such as at Tlachene, Chavdar, Rakitovo, or Kazanlak (cf. Nikolov 2002a). Lichardus and colleagues parallelise the finds with Karanovo I (Lichardus, Iliev, Christov 2002, 360), although without giving reasons for this. However, as the material from Malak Preslavets seems younger than the finds from Dzhulyunitsa I, this ascription can nevertheless be confirmed.

7.7. The Catchment Area of the Osam River

In comparison to the Early Neolithic sites in north-eastern and north-western Bulgaria, the region of central northern Bulgaria is astoundingly devoid of finds. This reality is only masked in synthetic studies by sheer circumstance; the prehistory of this huge area is invariably appended to either the north-east or the north-west of this broader area (cf. Nikolov B. 1992. – Todorova, Vaysov 1993, 127–142). In fact, however, the central Bulgarian lowlands with the catchment area of the Osam River and the Vit River forms a natural unit which, due to its flat relief only rising gently towards the main Balkan ridge, can be easily distinguished from the hilly Ludgorie in the east, and the narrow foreland of the western Balkans dissected by numerous river courses. Among the earliest discovered prehistoric sites in Bulgaria was Devetaki Cave in a rocky massif directly above the Osam (cf. Mikov 1933, 29). During the 1950s, Vassil Mikov and Nikolay Dzhambazov undertook systematic excavations, resumed thereafter in the 1990s by Ventsislav Gergov (Mikov, Dzhambazov 1960. – Nikolov 2002a, 86–87). Mikov and Dzhambazov published various Early Neolithic finds from the cave, still termed Middle Neolithic by them.[25] Seventy-four further fragments of a rough ware with characteristic incised and pricked adornments, and also entire pot forms on highly raised foot rims and narrow-necked vessels lend themselves to comparisons with the material from Ovcharovo-Gorata (cf. Mikov, Dzhambazov 1960, figs. 24/c–d; 26–27; 30). Some white-painted fragments and a number of bossed fragments can be situated among the earlier material from Dzhulyunitsa II and Koprivets, and thus belong to the period prior to Ovcharovo-Gorata (cf. Mikov, Dzhambazov 1960, figs. 24/a; 25; 29/c; 31 and pl. I). Other elements such as a five-limbed, raised, cross-shaped base or the numerous pierced knobs could belong to either

25. Admittedly, no earlier finds from the Neolithic were known from South-eastern Europe at the time. The designation of this occurrence as Middle Neolithic was born of the hypothesis that such fine ceramics could hardly have emerged from nowhere and have been disseminated throughout the entire central and eastern Balkan region. The pre-Karanovo-I-period find horizon was then still entirely unknown (cf. Mikov, Dzhambazov 1960, 42–43).

the cave's earlier or, indeed, later Early Neolithic settlement (cf. Mikov, Dzhambazov 1960, figs. 28; 29/a–b). From the typological comparison of the finds from Devetaki alone, the cave appears to have been settled from Karanovo I until the era of Ovcharovo-Gorata. Moreover, further Early Neolithic finds are only known from the vicinity of the nearby locality of Krushuna (Stoyanov 1997). A fragment with pierced knobs and a further example from a vessel with a foot rim generally afford a synchronisation with the Early Neolithic (Stoyanov 1997, 14 and fig. 1), albeit without being able to narrow down the chronology of the settlement.

7.8. North-western Bulgaria

That the state of research of a particular region might be heavily influenced by the individual personality of a researcher is demonstrated by the high density of sites discovered in north-western Bulgaria, practically all of these having been identified by means of the intensive field activities of Bogdan Nikolov. His periodisation of the Neolithic, secured by means of numerous stratigraphies (Nikolov B. 1992), can, in turn, also be adopted as a yardstick for neighbouring regions.

Based upon the settlement stratigraphy of Gradeshnitsa-Malo Pole, Nikolov assumes a three-phase trajectory for the Early Neolithic which he further divides into multiple stages. According to him, the earliest stages of the first phase are present only in the finds from Devetaki Cave and in material from the environs of the town of Byala preserved in the Museum at Ruse.[26] The later stages of the first phase of the Early Neolithic are represented by the finds of Level A of Gradeshnitsa-Malo Pole characterised by vessels painted white or black (Nikolov B. 1974, figs. 1–2. – Todorova, Vaysov 1993, fig. 95/1–5). The greater part of the vessels, nevertheless, remain unpainted (Nikolov B. 1992, 12). Comprehensive collections of finds are attested for the contemporaneous sites at Banitsa, Gorna Beshovitsa, Ohoden, Rebarkovo, and Zakonitsa. Despite the relatively sizeable distance, the find material and (most prominently) the different decorative techniques of these sites lend themselves to comparisons with Ovcharovo-Gorata. Some plastically-formed blossoms and bow motifs on the coarse ware from Beshovitsa and Ohoden find their best counterparts there (cf. Nikolov B. 1992, figs. 2–3). An applied spiral motif is known from Rebarkovo (Nikolov B. 1992, fig. 4, second row from top, middle) which might be likened to comparable motifs from Ovcharovo-Gorata. More generally, the black painting, which is best known from Banitsa (cf. Nikolov B. 1992, fig. 1), may be considered a unifying feature. The channelling of fine wares is, nevertheless, not very common in north-western Bulgaria in this period, which permits a clear demarcation of the eastern Balkan Neolithic, where this manner of decoration is widespread and appears in large proportions within the vessel spectrum.

In 2002, Georgi Ganetsovski resumed excavations at Ohoden in the field of Valoga, and published further Early Neolithic finds which he places prior to Phase A at Gradeshnitsa-Malo Pole and parallelises them with Proto-Starčevo (Ganetsovski 2007. – Ganetsovski 2008). These consisted of red- or red-brown-slipped vessels which are unpainted and solely on the strength of this absence of painting are ascribed to the so-called 'monochrome ceramic' horizon (Dzhulyunitsa I). Some of the forms published such as the carinated bowls and the very high vessel feet accord much better with the developed Early Neolithic such as the phase of Karanovo II, and, ultimately, also with Ovcharovo-Gorata (Ganetsovski 2007, pls. 6/3; 11). Some of the fragments with cordons probably also belong to this chronological context (Ganetsovski 2007, pls. 15–16). Only later was the pit with the three deer antlers discovered, which we can now determine as Mesolithic on the basis of the ^{14}C data (see Chapter 2.4); yet, this find has nothing to do with the Mesolithic structures.

The chronologically subsequent development during the second phase of the Early Neolithic is attested in Level B of Gradeshnitsa-Malo Pole (cf. Nikolov B. 1974, figs. 6–7. – Todorova, Vaysov 1993, fig. 97). With this, polychrome vessel painting begins with the colours white, black, and red on a background somewhat lighter than that of the preceding first phase. This generally comprises more strongly profiled forms, some of these on thin, high feet with embouched bodies, and vessels with long, elongated, cylindrical necks. Possessing a total of four levels, the settlement of Tlachene belongs entirely to this phase (Nikolov B. 1992, 13). Within the ceramic inventory, the survival of the coarse wares decorated with incisions and impressions is demonstrable. Despite this, the more marked profiling of the vessels can be noted as the proportion of carinated and S-profiled forms clearly increases (Nikolov B. 1992, fig. 6). Among the jug-like vessels, the pierced lugs now lie somewhat above the widest extent of the vessel's belly and the finger-impressed barbotine may be noted with greater frequency. In contrast to the previously common simple unstructured incisions, the development of a structured incised decoration also begins in this

26. This probably means the finds from Koprivets, which were only discovered in 1990.

phase (Nikolov B. 1992, 13), which would come to be the dominant decorative form in the Late Neolithic.

The final, third phase of the Early Neolithic is presently only attested within Level C of Gradeshnitsa-Malo Pole (Nikolov B. 1992, 14–15). The development of forms may be inferred from the preceding second phase, demonstrating all but no change. Nevertheless, the carinated forms now predominate among the coarse wares (Nikolov B. 1992, 15). Among the decorative modes of the coarse ware, the finger-impressed barbotine plays a greater role (cf. Nikolov B. 1974, fig. 12). The vessel painting on fine ware continues to be polychrome, although the entire vessel body is frequently coated with a single colour, with the painting realised on top of this (cf. Nikolov B. 1974, figs. 14–15). Complex meander bends nested within each another and spirals appear as motifs.

The subsequent development during the Middle Neolithic is attested in the neighbouring plain of Gradeshnitsa-Lukanovo Darvo. The stratigraphic sequence is certain in this case as the earliest level of Lukanovo Darvo on the edge of the settlement overlays the latest level of Malo Pole (Nikolov B. 1992, 17). Characteristic forms of the early Middle Neolithic are carinated bowls and bowls with pronounced, inverted rims and high, also lightly carinated pots with narrowing necks (Nikolov B. 1974, figs. 19, 21–23. – Nikolov B. 1992, figs. 8–9). The painting of vessels is no longer attested and an extensive, ornamental incised decoration assumes its place (Nikolov B. 1992, fig. 10). The motifs are still reminiscent of the spiraloid painted pattern from the close of the Early Neolithic, but are supplemented by stepped meander and checkerboard motifs (otherwise exclusively attested on the miniature tables during the Early Neolithic period). Moreover, large tap-like handles with rounded cross-sections now appear for the first time (Nikolov B. 1992, fig. 8, above left), with these demonstrating a connection with Karanovo II/III and III in Thrace. Also belonging to this chronological horizon is a bowl on four long legs (Nikolov B. 1992, fig. 9, second row from below, right). Nikolov ascribes a further site at Komarevo to this initial phase of the Middle Neolithic. There, a twin vessel composed of two carinated pots affixed together appears as a new form (Nikolov B. 1992, fig. 11, below left).

For the later phase of the Middle Neolithic, Nikolov presented material from the sites of Altimir, Devene, and Byala Slatina, which, nevertheless, provides only a few complete forms (Nikolov B. 1992, 18 and figs. 12–14). These largely pertain to carinated forms decorated with incisions. It is in the developed Middle Neolithic, i.e. in the period of Karanovo III, that channelled pottery might first be expected in north-western Bulgaria. This decorative technology is even then still rare, and of a fundamentally different type, inasmuch as it is executed in a greater width than is known from the Early Neolithic of the eastern Balkans (cf. Nikolov B. 1992, fig. 14, below right).

7.9. Muntenia

Largely lacking from Greater Wallachia are finds from the onset of the Early Neolithic which would reflect those from Koprivets and Dzhulyunitsa I to III or the white-painted phase south of the Danube. It is only from one site near Dulceana in the Județ Teleorman that a few fragments painted white or black are assigned to the Starčevo III Phase by Eugen Comșa (Comșa 1995). Beyond these fragments, no material comparable to that of Ovcharovo-Gorata is known from Muntenia. While this absence of finds is certainly interesting, it may well be explained by the sedimentation of the relatively flat regions from the discharge of the Danube's northern tributaries.

A small but very well-studied selection of Early Neolithic finds originates from the site of Măgura Buduiasca (Jud. Teleorman) (Thissen 2012). Occupation there begins roughly coeval to the horizon of Dzhulyunitsa II. From 2505 ceramic fragments studied, 79 of them (or 3.15%) were painted. This painting always occurred upon a red-slipped surface created by means of the oxidised burning of a micaceous red ochre pigment (Thissen 2012, 12–13). The later Neolithic material may be attributed to the Dudești and Vădastra cultures. Remarkable are various fragments of painted ceramics with a darker colour on a red background which find their best counterparts in material from Malak Preslavets on the southern bank of the Danube.

Numerous sites are thereafter identifiable for the chronological horizon of the Dudești culture. The fundamental division of this occurrence into the phases of Malu Roșu, Fundeni, and Cernica is derived from Comșa (Comșa 1971. – Comșa 1974, 10). The entire trajectory of the cultural group was considered by him to be parallel to Karanovo III. At the eponymous site of Dudești, two levels could be evidenced, one overlying the other (Comșa's phases of Malu Roșu and Fundeni), the earlier of which Parzinger parallelised with the developed Karanovo II, the Fundeni Phase thereafter thus serving as the first reflection of Karanovo III. This corresponds to the synchronisation of Lichardus which connects Malu Roșu with Karanovo II/III, Fundeni with Karanovo IIIa, and Cernica with Karanovo IIIb respectively (Lichardus, Iliev, Christov 2002, tab. 3). Most decisive for him are the similarities between the material from Drăghiceanu and the pottery from Drama-Gerena B which he, in turn, parallelises with Karanovo IIIb. Nevertheless,

the question remains as to when the older material from Dudești (especially the Malu Roșu Phase) might begin. Already in the initial publication of Drăghiceanu, Alexandru Păunescu discusses two stratigraphically superimposed levels, the find material of which he nevertheless presented together (Păunescu 1964). Notable within the ceramic material are a sherd decorated with nipples (Păunescu 1964, fig. 3/13), and also impressed and incised pots with notched rims (Păunescu 1964, figs. 2/2, 9; 3/1–3, 5) which might just as well be associated with the Early Neolithic south of the Danube. Seemingly foreign from a southern perspective are the complex pattern of incisions composed of bands of meanders nestled within each another running vertically down the vessel's body which are so characteristic of the developed Dudești phases (Păunescu 1964, figs. 2/4, 6–8, 11; 3/4). Also to be ascribed to the later material is a vessel with a cylindrical neck and a fine channelled decoration which already resembles a classical Toptepe jug on grounds of form, and thus is first to be dated to the Late Neolithic (Păunescu 1964, fig. 2/1). Beyond formal similarities among the coarse ware, no vessel finds in Muntenia may currently be found which might be directly associated with Ovcharovo-Gorata.

7.10. Oltenia

From 1971 onwards, Marin Nica studied two settlement sites at Cîrcea in the Județ Dolj (Nica 1976. – Nica 1977). One of these was a site in the field of La Hanuri at which a three-phase trajectory may be attested, the other a location with the toponym of "Viaduct" representing a continuation of La Hanuri's trajectory. The stratigraphy at Cîrcea-La Hanuri allowed the differentiation of a total of five settlement levels, of which the lowermost three pertain to the Early Neolithic. At Cîrcea-Viaduct, a total of four settlement layers could be evidenced, of which the lowest two concern the Early Neolithic. By means of the material unearthed there, the earlier of these levels can be associated with the uppermost Early Neolithic layer at La Hanuri. The lowest stratum of La Hanuri (Cîrcea I) yielded (among other examples) spherical pots on a lightly offset straight foot rim, dome-shaped bowls on high footrims, and vessels on a cross-shaped base (Nica 1976, fig. 7). A smaller portion of the sherds is decorated with impressions or incisions (Nica 1976, fig. 8). In addition to the monochrome-slipped vessels (overwhelmingly with a red coating) which constituted the majority of the vessels, a few examples are additionally decorated with white paint (Nica 1976, figs. 1–4. – Nica 1977, fig. 2). Attested among the painted motifs are mainly linear patterns of parallel lines, crosshatched bands, and zigzag motifs, as well as dotted patterns. The type spectrum of the overlaying level (Cîrcea A II) can scarcely be distinguished from that of the level preceding it. Significant transformations may be evidenced in the painting now extensively covering the vessel surface. Still commonplace is the use of white paint. Polychrome painting is additionally attested in the colours of white, red, and brown (Nica 1976, figs. 10–13). Little material resembling the lowest stratum of Viaduct has been published from the uppermost Early Neolithic level of La Hanuri (Cîrcea III). Here, the slipping of the vessels with barbotine decoration can now first be attested (Parzinger 1993, 85). Polychrome painting in the colours of red and brown upon a barely tangibly altered vessel spectrum continue to be commonplace. Clear differences are first evident within Cîrcea IV, a late period only attested at Viaduct. Characteristic are bowls with sharp breaks and pots with S-profiled rims. Cups with tap-like applications on the handles appear for the first time. The painted vessels display an extensive, spiral-formed pattern overwhelmingly in the colours of ochre-yellow, red, and brown. Over the course of Cîrcea I to IV, a general reduction in red burnished wares in favour of simple, smoothed wares may be deduced (Parzinger 1993, fig. 5). A statistical evaluation of the pottery by Parzinger according to the highly detailed information from Nica demonstrates how complex the ceramic trajectory was, inasmuch as the different forms of surface treatment are not typical for any sole phase, but rather merely shift in their percentages in relation to each another (Parzinger 1993, 85–86 and fig. 5). With respect to Ovcharovo-Gorata, the greatest similarities are with Cîrcea III. In addition to a general similarity of the fundamental vessel forms, the vessels on a high foot and the vessels with tap-like handles and, finally, the vessel painting with brown paint on a reddish-slipped background are all decisive (cf. Nica 1977, figs. 17, 19). The large quantity of carinated forms seems to be a local peculiarity, although similar vessels such as the pot and bowl forms T3 and S4a–b are also evidenced at Ovcharovo-Gorata (cf. Chapter 7.4, Figs. 119–123). Numerous similarities may also be found among the coarse wares of Cîrcea-Viaduct's upper level (cf. Nica 1977, fig. 20), although the polychrome vessel painting and (most importantly) the barbotine slip suggest an advanced stage of the Early Neolithic (cf. Nica 1977, figs. 21, 23–28).

The preceding development (to be parallelised with Cîrcea I and II) is also attested at Grădinile-La Islaz (Nica 1992. – Nica 1995). Most of the published forms are of the fine ware displaying an extensive painting with white paint on a red-brown-slipped background (Nica 1992, figs. 1/1, 2, 4–5; 2/1–8). Expansive bowls on low foot rims and S-profiled, spherical bowls, some with a flat, rounded stud on the belly are attested (Nica 1992, figs. 1/2, 6–7; 2/3, 7).

7.11. The Problem of Early Neolithic Domestic Architecture

The detailed evaluation of the houses discovered at Ovcharovo-Gorata reveals the dilemma of the absence of trustworthy information regarding Neolithic domestic architecture in the eastern Balkans. Were the preliminary report of the excavations to be trusted (Angelova 1992), then the impression would have been gained of a development from unshapely pit-houses to rectangular post-houses over the course of the Early Neolithic. The stratigraphy of Ovcharovo-Gorata can neither be reconstructed from the excavation documentation, nor from the evaluation of the find material; thus, all information regarding the chronological depth of the postulated development of the houses is lacking. In terms of the domestic contexts themselves, it could be demonstrated that they had already been manipulated on the surface. The methodically better documented architectural discoveries at Dzhulyunitsa demonstrate that pits dug into the ground may, in fact, be presumed for the earliest Neolithic structures, although these nevertheless only represent substructions or storage pits within the houses.

Marion Lichardus-Itten evaluated the negative features in Kovachevo as drainage pits, and also noted a methodological problem in the interpretation of the shapeless settlement structures from the Early Neolithic settlement (Lichardus-Itten 2010, 14–15). The published settlement plan of the earliest level from Golyamo Delchevo must probably also be approached in such a manner (Todorova 1975, figs. 3, 5–6). The huts over the pit structures reconstructed by Todorova (Todorova et al. 1975, fig. 4) are also less than convincing.

The present author assumes thereby right-angled buildings which have left negligible trace below ground due to their specific mode of construction, for example as houses upon stilts or blocks. It is only with the arrival of the chronological horizon of Dzhulyunitsa IV that reliable data exists indicating a type of post-house constructed with the wattle-and-daub technique. The settlement of Ovcharovo-Gorata would also have consisted of such dwellings. The foundations published in the preliminary report cannot be meaningfully combined with the oven platforms unearthed, whose positioning within the archaeological record is the only evidence which might truly be considered authentic. The house types of the earliest Neolithic settlement within the Danubian lowlands seem to have differed thereby very markedly from those of the Struma Valley and North Macedonia, and do not permit any comparison with the solid architecture of the neolithisation's departure point in the Aegean sphere. It is conceivable that the wish to entrench houses somewhat deeper in the ground may have been a reaction of the early farmers in adapting to the continental climate of the region. Nevertheless, this can only be presumed, given the present state of research.

7.12. Summary of the Neolithisation on the Lower Danube

The earliest ceramic find material from the Lower Danubian lowlands is already so technically well executed that an extended period of prior technological gestation in the more southerly regions must be presumed. Regardless, no indication of an independent development of pottery production cant be found within this region. The connections to the ceramic trajectory within the central portion of western Anatolia are also more than apparent. A terminus post quem for the entry of this pottery into the Balkans may be established there by means of the stratigraphically secure development of the vessel pottery with its two characteristic innovative elements of red-slipped and impresso ceramics. Red-slipped and impresso pottery alike appear as the earliest pottery within the region of the Lower Danube. These ceramics are the most archaeologically visible part of a fully developed Neolithic economic package arriving in the north. Within the well-researched material from Dzhulyunitsa, further finds can be mentioned originating from the western Anatolian conceptual world, including stone rubbing plates, clay amulets in the form of stylised bucrania, the so-called 'labrets' (see Chapter 11.6), and a specific type of seated female statuette. It follows that various aspects of intellectual culture might have travelled with the Neolithic package from its region of origin to the Balkan region; the aforementioned objects are merely the direct evidence of this.

As a result of the research of Elena Marinova, comprehensive information about the environment of the Bulgarian Danubian lowlands into which the early farmers penetrated is now available. Indeed, that a genuine immigration of an already fully neolithised population is to be expected for the lowlands of the Danube is beyond doubt in light of this complex cultural packet. Emmer, einkorn, and barley along with lentils, peas, and bitter vetch are the usual domesticated plants which first appear in the region of the Lower Danube in connection with the Neolithic. These were also cultivated much earlier in the areas southeast of the Balkans. The most likely region of departure for the transference into the area of the Lower Danube would once again be western Anatolia (with perhaps Thessaly also to be further considered), in all of which regions these cultivars had previously already occurred.

Studies of the animal bone material from Dzhulyunitsa by Canan Çakırlar and Petăr Zidarov were able to demonstrate that domesticated cattle and sheep/goat already

heavily predominate within the refuse layers of the earliest settlement. This image only alters in its nuances with the advent of the developed Early Neolithic. Beyond the aforementioned ungulates, large proportions of domesticated pig may be found among the animal bones from Ovcharovo-Gorata and hunting seems to have played a larger role than at the beginning of the Early Neolithic. Regarding the question as to the direction from which the Neolithic penetrated the Lower Danube, only the Macedonian region presents itself as a viable option. No sites this early are known from Thrace to the south and the premise of a neolithisation from the east by means of the Black Sea lacks any basis in appropriate sites. As it will be sought to be demonstrated below, the Neolithic of the north-western Pontic steppes also begins markedly later. The topography of the landscape only offers two routes from the Macedonian region to that of the Lower Danube, both of which are presently equally viable paths for the neolithisation. One of these is the direct way through the Struma Valley over the plain of Sofia and via the passage of the Iskar through the Balkans. The other is the longer route via the river valley of the Axios/Vardar, then through the Southern Morava and finally into the Danubian lowlands by means of the Danube Gorges. Due to much earlier sites being as yet lacking within north-eastern Bulgaria, the former path via the Sofia Plateau is currently rendered more likely. Each newly discovered site between the Struma Valley and north-western Bulgaria, on the one hand, and the Vardar region and the Danube Gorges, on the other, will certainly modify this route, but the ultimate departure point of the Lower Danube's neolithisation from the Macedonian region will remain unchanged.