

11. The Cultural Legacy of the South-eastern European Neolithic

As has been seen, there are no indications in the slightest that Neolithic cultural technologies had developed independently within the Balkan-Carpathian sphere. There has already long been a consensus that the most important early cultivated cereals such as emmer, einkorn, and barley were grown in the Near East (WATKINS 2007). The wild predecessors of the first domesticated animals such as sheep and goats also originate from there. Moreover, even if it were theoretically possible to domesticate pig and cattle from the wild forms present in South-eastern Europe, it is now known that domesticated pig and cattle had already arrived as domesticated animals in Europe (BOL-LONGINO et al. 2012. – SCHEU 2012. – GEÖRG 2013). The notion that these herds and grain cultivars could not have reached Europe without their herdsman and cultivators is to be assumed, but remained a source of debate prior to the appearance of human genetic evidence of a concomitant migration of people into South-eastern Europe. It is now clear that the old Mesolithic population had next to no part in the planting of fields, husbandry, and sedentary life. Instead, the early farmers came from the western Aegean and migrated into the Balkans and the Carpathian Basin by way of the northern Aegean (LAZARIDIS et al. 2014. – HOF-MANOVÁ et al. 2016. – MATHIESON et al. 2018). It would thus seem that house architecture, ceramic production, and millstone technology also reached South-eastern Europe with sedentism and agriculture. It is only in the case of polished stone tools that it might be considered whether they might not already have been present or adopted from other regions, as polished stone tools also already occur in Eastern and Central Europe in Mesolithic contexts, although rarely.

11.1. Eating Habits and Interior Design

Table manners must also have changed with the menu. The production of pottery is the best expression of this. For the first time in cultural history, we now witness not only how food was stored and prepared, but also how people ate and drank. Many of the ceramic vessels can be interpreted as dinnerware. There are a large number of different bowls, dishes, and cups which may have been used for serving and consuming the food in question. The addition of cereal products to the diet requires new types of processing and thermal treatment. The grain must be ground, scalded or boiled, and perhaps also kneaded into dough and baked. Moreover, with a more reliable supply of carbohydrates, the production of alcoholic beverages will also have become possible for the first time in cultural history, offering new social opportunities. Perhaps the production of alcohol was even the driving force behind the introduction of agriculture (REICHHOLF 2008, 259–264). Many cups and bowls could have served as drinking vessels, either as individual vessels or as collective containers from which several people would drink one after the other. However, it is quite possible that alcoholic beverages and other intoxicants were produced as early as the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic (MAURIZIO 1933).³² Honey from wild bees and fruits which could be fermented were already available. With the emergence of the Neolithic, however, the use of alcoholic beverages seems to be more the rule than the exception, if only because the quantities

32. On this point I am very grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for the additional literature references.

of carbohydrates necessary for production were regularly available in larger quantities via agriculture for the first time in human cultural history. The intensive use of wild cereals in the Epi-Palaeolithic of the Middle East could have been a prerequisite for this (HAYDEN, CANUEL, SHANSE 2013). The history of wine made from fruit could have started just as early, albeit certainly without the grapevine, which was only cultivated much later (McGOVERN 2003).

This area also includes the use of milk, which has been attested in Anatolia and South-eastern Europe with the beginning of the use of ceramic vessels (EVERSHED et al. 2008). How people used to eat is a fertile ground for speculation. The fork can certainly be regarded as the very last addition to our western cutlery. The introduction of such a distinguished device to the table at the end of the Middle Ages (first in court society, and only much later among commoners) is well reflected in historical sources (ZISCHKA, OTTOMEYER, BÄUMLE 1994). Cutting knives must have been in use much earlier, although certainly initially only for food preparation, and not for use at the table. In the Neolithic, as in all the previous millennia, food was certainly cut and portioned with stone tools. For practical reasons, this must surely have been done before the food was put on the table. Interestingly, there is not much evidence for ceramic plates; the general lack of flat dishes could well be an indication that the food was already prepared and cut into bite-sized pieces prior to serving. In many cases, the dinnerware itself is so handy and ergonomically shaped that it is possible to eat directly from it. Neither chopsticks nor spoons are needed to transport porridge, soup or previously chopped food from the vessel to the mouth. The well-known ceramic spoons and bone spatulae are not numerous enough to have served as tablespoons. Asymmetrical signs of wear and tear are particularly evident on the spatulae, which are more indicative of their use as tools, for example to form pottery (ZIDAROV 2014, 255–259). It might at least be presumed that the food was eaten or slurped straight out of the bowls, dishes, and mugs, as is still common today in many parts of the world. The representations of vessel-holding figurines (SCHWARZBERG 2011, 49–53) can perhaps also be interpreted in this regard. Eating with fingers only appears unusual from a Western perspective. In truth, it is the only natural way to eat. Picking food up with chopsticks, as is common in large parts of Asia today, could also be a comparatively late, distinguished way of eating. It is quite possible, however, that sticks, skewers or other types of aids were already used in the Neolithic to fish certain chunks out of a hot vessel. However, even then, some time might have to pass to cool the food before eating a delicious bite. In this respect, the present author assumes for the time being that people ate directly from dishes in the Neolithic.

The inventory of furnishings in the house, including pictorial representations, is not so numerous that one can imagine sitting (especially on chairs) at a high table. Rather, it seems more likely that people would crouch on the floor to eat together, as is customary in large parts of the world even today. Mats, blankets, or smaller boards would be perfectly adequate as surfaces upon which to serve a meal. Individual miniature pieces of furniture such as tables and chairs in the well-known figurine groups of the South-eastern European Copper Age are so rare that they hardly seem to be images of real furniture, even in connection with the way in which the associated figures are depicted (cf. HANSEN 2007, pls. 233–234; 255/1; 314; 325/10; 336/15–25; 340–342; 355–357; 431/10–12). Even in much later cultural-historical contexts, only selected groups of persons sitting on special furniture are generally depicted. One might think, for example, of the group of figures on the frieze of the Parthenon Temple in Athens (BOARDMAN 1991, 96–136). The well-known female figurine from Çatalhöyük, possibly the oldest representation of a person positioned on a seat, is enthroned rather than sitting (cf. HANSEN 2007, pl. 57/10); all similar representations from the South-eastern European Neolithic might be understood analogously.

11.2. A Few Words about Music

Unfortunately, a Balkan orchestra for weddings and funerals cannot be reconstructed from the extant archaeological record. Yet, it would be at least as naive to believe that the actions and cultural practices partially preserved in archaeological finds were performed in absolute silence. Always and at all times, rituals have been accompanied by music, especially all manners of rite of passage. Since the social aspect becomes even more important within sedentary communities, an increase in musical performance practice can be expected with the beginning of the Neolithic. All basic types of musical instruments had been developed during the long preceding eras of the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic. The diverse spectrum of idiophones, membranophones, aerophones, and chordophones can therefore be regarded as already known to the European Neolithic. This is hardly the place to collect all of the indications for the interpretation of various finds as musical instruments; rather, a few remarks on selected aspects of organology added to the inventory with the Neolithic should suffice.

The material clay makes many things noticeable which were previously less visible on account of their organic constitution. Drums made of organic materials as known today from many cultures appeared in ceramic form for the first time in the Neolithic. One example is an hour-glass-shaped piece from Dyakovo (Fig. 209). In the field



Fig. 209: Dyakovo. Ceramic drum from the Chalcolithic settlement (after KRAUSS 2001).

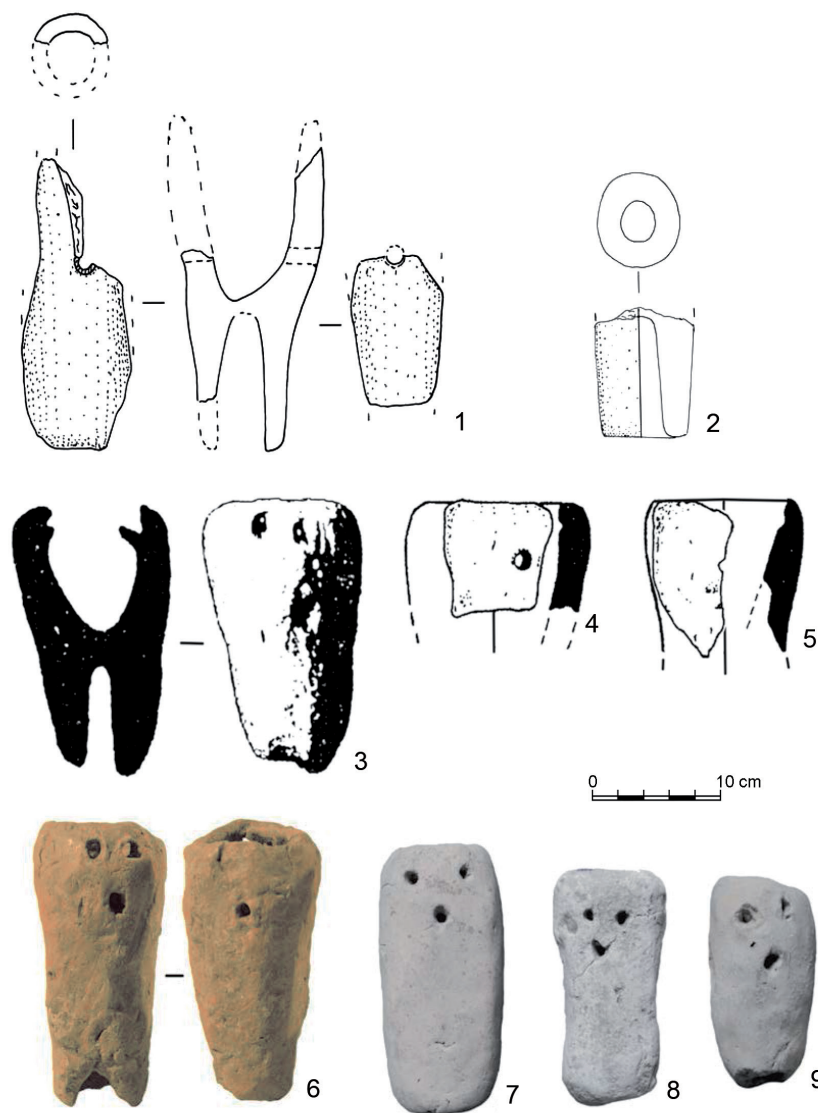


Fig. 210: Examples of probable Early Neolithic vessel flutes. – 1–2. Brunn am Gebirge. – 3–5. Gellénháza. – 6. Ovcharovo-Gorata. – 9. Hotnitsa (after POMBERGER, KOTOVA, STADLER 2018).

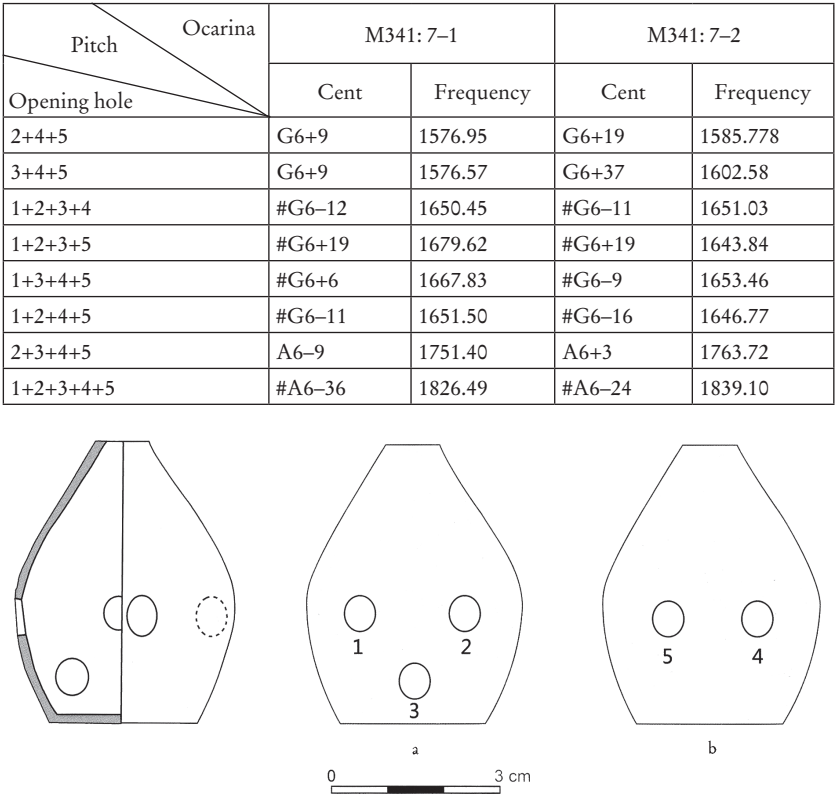


Fig. 211: Luoyang Beiyao, Henan (China). Schematic representation of an ocarina (clay flute) from tomb M341 (c. 1046–922 BCE) with finger holes on the front and on the back of the instrument. The upper table shows the playable tones (after JIANJUN 2016, 132).

of idiophones, a completely new soundscape opened up with the beginning of metallurgy: How the first ring of a struck piece of metal must have affected its audience! Perhaps there is much more magic in it than just its sparkling sheen. Even if brass instruments were still a long way off, the foundations for this group of instruments were laid in the Neolithic. The shell of a large sea snail can also be blown like a trumpet. The bow and arrow, as the simplest types of chordophones, have been known for a long time, but we still lack lyres, harps, and zithers in the archaeological record, not to mention violins and cellos. Nevertheless, the twanging sound of the plucked bowstring has been part of the human sound repertoire since the Palaeolithic. Flutes and pipes have also been known for a long time. In the search for representatives of such instruments in ceramic form, a special type of ‘idol’ went unnoticed for a long time, being first identified as clay pipes by Beate Pomberger (POMBERGER 2010. – POMBERGER, KOTOVA, STADLER 2018). The present author was also long sceptical of this identification as musical instruments, but the long period of time in which this type of tube with punctures on its front and back was used in South-eastern Europe is remarkable (Fig. 210). There is a fragment from the Early

Neolithic settlement of Ovcharovo-Gorata. Similar finds from the LBK settlement at Brunn am Gebirge date a little later. They then appear in large numbers in the Chalcolithic tell settlements of the 5th millennium BCE in the area of the Lower Danube. In this respect, a functional interpretation must be assumed which contributed to the retention of this simple form for more than 1000 years. Musical instruments meet these requirements. Ultimately, the traditional Chinese instrument called the xun (JIANJUN 2016), an ocarina or clay flute which is very similar in appearance to the Neolithic and Chalcolithic pieces from South-eastern Europe, is decisive in such an identification (Fig. 211); its similarity is derived from its mere functionality, rather than any manner of cultural contact. In turn, the rattle vessels which often appeared in the South-eastern European Chalcolithic, many of which are human or animal-shaped (SCHWARZBERG 2011, 60–61), can be clearly identified as sound-producing objects.

Instrument finds, however, are only a small part of musical practice. This, in turn, is only part of the social sphere as a whole. Admittedly, it remains impossible to determine whether some of the figurines and painted motifs on the ceramics of the South-eastern European Neolithic



Fig. 212: Movila lui Deciov. Two 'singers' from the Early Neolithic settlement (H. Jensen).

depict singing people or dancers (Fig. 212). However, vice versa, why should such an important pictorial theme be completely absent in the visual inventory of the European Neolithic? An important point is also that with sedentism comes the possibility for the first time of designating fixed spaces for regular social events. In this context, the areas in between buildings, namely courtyard areas and open spaces between houses, are much more important than the built-up areas within a settlement. The closer coexistence of people as a result of the Neolithic lifestyle provides the basis for new types of music-making which are still integral to daily life today. Singing, dancing, and making music are anthropological constants (JACKENDOFF 2002. – MIGHTEN 2005. – MORLEY 2013). With the dawn of the Neolithic, they can be grasped visually for the first time (GARFINKEL 2003), which perhaps brings these cultural groups closer to us emotionally.

11.3. Symbolic Aspects

A fundamental change in the representational world is also tangible during the different neolithisation processes in Europe. In the course of the Neolithic, small pendants made of green rock became important in the Balkans. Often, they have the shape of a swastika or the letter M (Fig. 213). These objects do not mark a specific period because they are spread over a long time from the second half of the 7th to the 5th millennium BCE. In the course of development, an increasing abstraction can be observed in these representations (KRAUSS 2014, 168–171). One thing these pendants have in common is that they are all made from

green stones. Geologically, these are different materials, such as nephrite, slate, jadeite, or serpentinite. Some of the later pendants from the South-eastern European Chalcolithic are made also of copper (HANSEN 2003, fig. 11), which also displays a green colour in corroded form. The prototype for this representation is apparently to be found in a crouching female figure, as rendered on an amulet from Achilleion. This picture motif of a naked woman is very old, and we see it already as a rock carving on the lion pillar building of the Göbekli Tepe in the Anatolian Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (PPN-B) (SCHMIDT 2011, fig. 15). Yet, something else might possibly also be meant, as another figure from Nea Nikomedeia is interestingly formed in the shape of a toad. The meaning of the depiction remains puzzling in the more abstract figures. Nonetheless, the motifs remain in use for a very long time. This demonstrates that these green pendants have lasted for a remarkably long time, and were most likely a basis for the M-shaped pendant type from the South-eastern European Copper Age. The forming of figures from green stone may well also be diagnostic for the development of early copper metallurgy, as many copper minerals are particularly distinctive in a natural environment due to their green colouration. Green is the colour of vibrant nature, and is complementarily counterposed to the colour red, which was already of great symbolic significance during the Palaeolithic, being the colour of blood.

If we turn specifically to the Neolithic representational world, then depictions of novel plants and animals within South-eastern Europe are particularly relevant. Some clear visual representations of ears of cereals on ceramic vessels

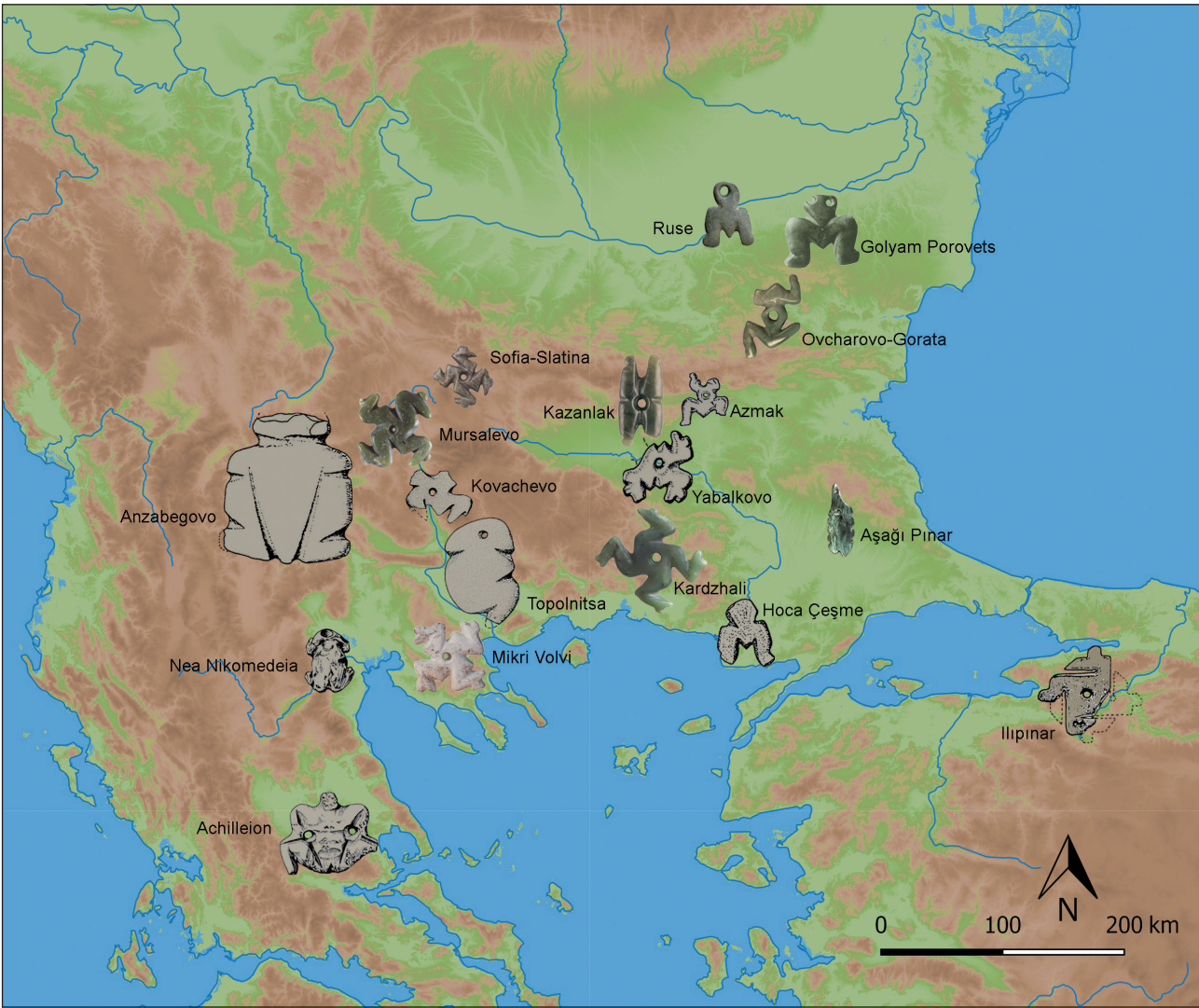


Fig. 213: Spread of Neolithic pendants made of green stone. The objects are reproduced on roughly the same scale (for reference of the individual pieces, see HANSEN 2003, fig. 3, KRAUSS 2014, fig. 104 and KRAUSS 2020, fig. 2).

are well-known from the Anatolian Early Chalcolithic, this corresponding to the earliest Neolithic in South-eastern Europe. In South-eastern Europe, quite depictions are evident on vessels (albeit not always immediately recognisable as such).

Regardless, with the advent of the earliest Neolithic in South-eastern Europe, visual representations of domesticated animals most prominently occur, these suggesting the high esteem in which these animals were held. Already from the Palaeolithic onwards, the wild species of ox (the European aurochs) played a vital role not only as game, but also within humans’ conceptional world. From the Neolithic onwards, two types of oxen were accessible, similar in appearance, but differing economically and, moreover, symbolically in their use. Some of the plastic cattle figurines

display remarkable details presenting suggestions both of the animal being led by a nose ring and, possibly, also already of the animal bearing a load. Of significance to the history of culture is the depiction of a person seated on a bull, which currently counts as the earliest example of its type. Moreover, amorphic figures with two horns are considered as index fossils for the earliest phase of the Neolithic from the Aegean to the Carpathian Basin, these generally being interpreted as heavily abstracted depictions of cattle heads. The dispersal and typology of these objects and indications of their use will now be discussed.

11.4. Images of Cattle

The European domesticated cattle (*Bos taurus*) numbers among the earliest domesticated animals of Eurasia,

reaching Southern and South-eastern Europe at the turn of the 7th to the 6th millennium BCE with the neolithisation process. According to the results of genetic studies, the region of the middle Euphrates and the upper Tigris can be identified as the sole place of origin for all European domesticated cattle, where their breeding from a local variant of the aurochs (*Bos primigenius*) occurred over the course of the PPN-B (~9000 calBC) (BOLLONGINO et al. 2012. – SCHEU 2012, 5–6). The genetic sequences of the Early Neolithic domestic cattle within the Balkan region display a high congruency with animals from the domestication region, with remarkable local discrepancies evident, for example, between the sites of Kovachevo and Koprivets in Bulgaria compared to a reference population in Iran (SCHEU 2012, 103). The greater correspondence of the cattle at Kovachevo to those from the area of origin in comparison to those of Koprivets could be an indication for different routes of neolithisation towards middle Europe. Interbreeding with the European aurochs has been repeatedly excluded by genetic studies (BOLLONGINO et al. 2008. – SCHEU 2012, 108–112).³³ Even after the introduction of domesticated cattle into Europe, aurochs continued to be hunted, as is revealed by the butchering remains from the relevant settlements. Hence, the first agriculturalists and pastoralists in Europe evidently engaged with two fundamentally different types of cattle: on the one hand, with a trusty domesticate, whose milk they already knew how to use from a very early period onwards, as is demonstrated by recent studies (EVERSHED et al. 2008. – VIGNE 2008), and, on the other, a dangerous wild animal, the hunting of which commanded a considerable social reputation, with this ultimately also resulting in its extinction in the Early Modern era (BENECKE 1994, 263–264). Hence, cattle assumed a special position among the large mammals of Eurasia. Since the warm phases of the Palaeolithic, it had numbered among the most popular of game, and counted as one of the largest wild animals of European forestland after the reduction and partial extinction of Ice Age fauna. The symbolic meaning of cattle, novel and yet familiar in its form, representing a smaller, more docile and (in the truest sense of the word) ‘domesticated’ version of the indigenous aurochs, cannot be overemphasised (BÁNYFI 2019, 103–112). As befitted its significance for humans, visual representations of cattle can be followed throughout the

history of the cultures of the Old World. The aurochs is among the most popular motifs of Palaeolithic cave painting (LEROI-GOURHAN 1981, 121–123). Following the Magdalenian, there is a lacuna in the archaeological record in terms of depictions of humans and animals in Eurasia. Remarkably, however, depictions of aurochs do reappear during the PPN in the Near East. Accordingly, aurochs were depicted along with other species dangerous to humans on the reliefs of the T-shaped pillars at Göbekli Tepe near Şanlıurfa in northern Mesopotamia (SCHMIDT 2011, fig. 14). A reduction of the animal to its characteristic horned head may already be encountered there (SCHMIDT 2011, fig. 36) which has endured from that time within the history of culture as the ‘bucranion’ or ‘bucephalon’.³⁴ The image of the aurochs also plays a special role in Anatolia’s early ceramic Neolithic. Its connection to hunting is clearly visible at Çatalhöyük on the famous fresco of Mellaart’s *Hunting Shrine*: a powerful bull with its tongue hanging out (CUTTING 2007, 130. – HODDER 2012, fig. 17). Cattle skulls, their horns, or sculptures of bull’s heads number among the most commonplace accessories in rooms at Çatalhöyük, to which a particular use has been ascribed (CUTTING 2007, 126–127. – HODDER 2012, fig. 9a). The special treatment of entire heads of aurochs, the animal’s skull, or its horns *pars pro toto* may also be noted with the advent of the Neolithic in Europe. Among the most famous examples are the cattle skulls integrated into the building of the ‘shrine’ at Parța (LAZAROVICI 1998). In the Banat, horns of aurochs are already found regularly deposited in Early and Middle Neolithic settlement pits.³⁵

An independent development in the portrayal of cattle may be noted on ceramics at the transition from the Late Neolithic to Early Chalcolithic (according to Turkish terminology). At Köşk Höyük in central Anatolia, cattle can be found as relief applications on a pottery vase (ÖZTAN 2012). Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether these are wild or domesticated cattle, as other vessels from the same site display the head of a red deer with characteristic antlers and a hunting scene with donkey (or onager) herds (ÖZTAN 2012, figs. 35, 39). It is also entirely possible that aurochs are also depicted here, rather than domesticated cattle. Similar

33. It is only from very recent studies of historical aurochs skeletons that it might be presumed that possible crosses of individual wild examples occurred at a much later date (SCHIBLER, ELSNER, SCHLUMBAUM 2014. – PARK et al. 2015).

34. Within Greek Classical art, *βουκράνιον* denotes only the fleshless cattle skull, whereas the head as a whole is termed *βουκέφαλον*.

35. As may, for example, be found at a kidney-shaped pit at Maroslele-Pana (PALUCH 2010, fig. 5). A comparable pit with the horns at its base was also uncovered under the present author’s direction during excavations at the Early Neolithic settlement of Bucova Pusta IV at Sănnicolau Mare (see Chapter 8.7, Figs. 176–178).

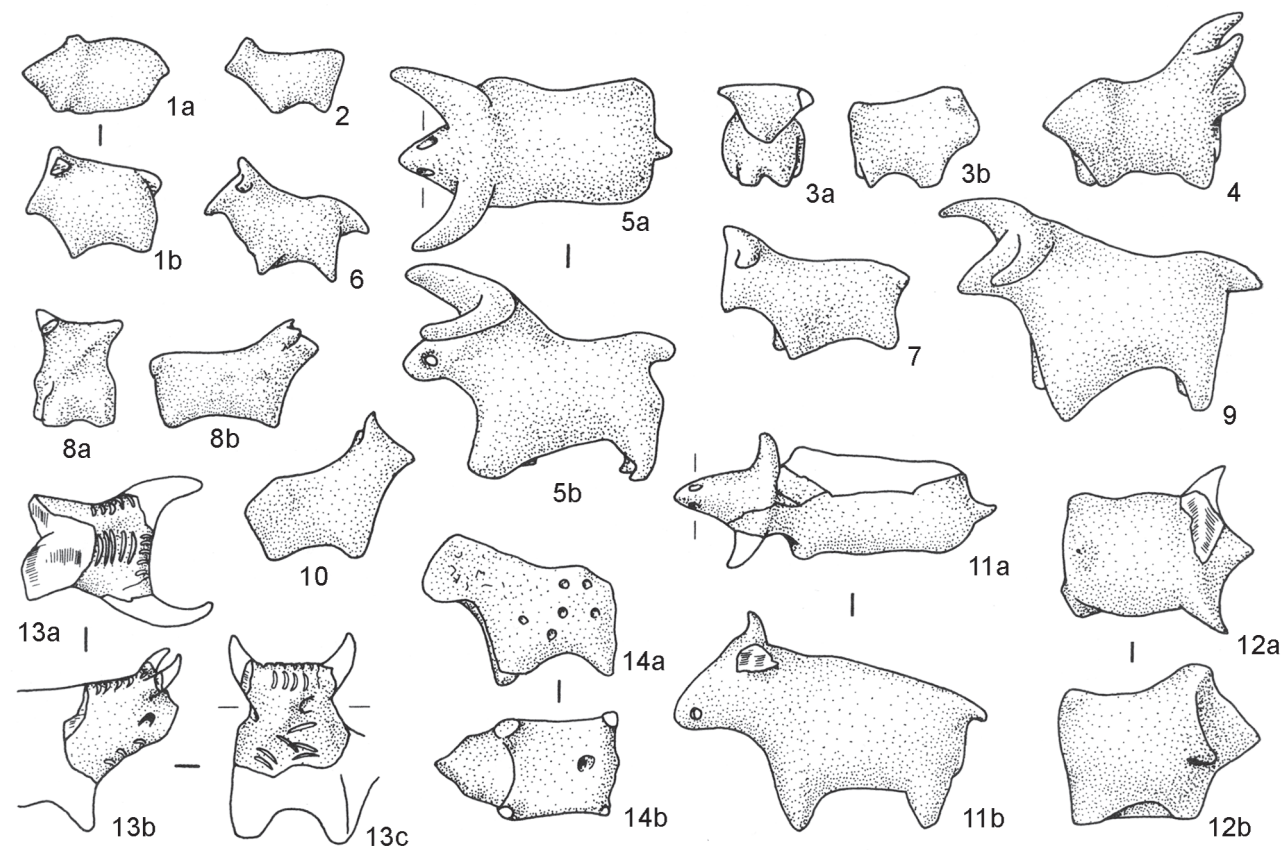


Fig. 214: Usoe. Ceramic figurines of cattle (after TODOROVA, VAYSOV 1993, fig. 198).

relief depictions from the site of Tepecik-Çiftlik with lyre-like widely flared horns are rather reminiscent of depictions of aurochs (BIÇAKÇI, GODON, ÇAKAN 2012). Remarkable is the depiction of the animals where the body is presented in profile, but the head displayed frontally. In this manner of portrayal, the artist prioritised maximal recognisability over a correct perspective. The frontal reproduction of the head ultimately permits the reduction of the motif to merely the characteristic detail of the top of the head of the horned animal. Bull heads realised in relief may be found on the pottery from the site of Hacilar in the south-western Anatolian Lakes region, most noticeably in Level VI (MELAART 1970, 112, 263). Later, it evidently became sufficient to depict the bucrania motif as a drawing on the vessel (MELAART 1970, 353). Simple plastic horns derived from the bucrania motif on vessels’ pierced lugs can also be found in western Anatolia, as in Ulucak Vb and Ege Gübre (ÇILINGIROĞLU, ÇEVİK, ÇILINGIROĞLU 2012, fig. 30. – SAĞLAMTIMUR 2012, fig. 18).

Plastic figures of cattle may also be noted throughout Anatolia’s Neolithic and Chalcolithic cultural history. Already before vessel pottery had been developed, clay figures can be evidenced at pre-ceramic Çayönü, among these a small



Fig. 215: Foeni Sălaş. Round, plastic cattle figurine made of fired clay (h: 4.9 cm, l: 9 cm) (after DRAȘOVEAN, POPOVICI 2008, cat. no. 62).

bull. A stone pendant from this site could also depict an ox (SIEBENMORGEN 2007, cat. no. 217). Among three ceramic animal sculptures from Köşk Höyük, one of them is remarkable on grounds of the clear presence of udders. The prominence of this anatomical detail permits its identification as a mother animal, and (in any case) as a domesticated cow. With the advent of neolithisation, not only the animals themselves,



Fig. 216: Ceramic figurines of ungulates with horizontally pierced snout. – 1. Sitagroi (after PAPATHANASSOPOULOS 1996, cat. no. 260: h: 10.6 cm, l: 16.4 cm, w: 9.9 cm). – 2. Szentgyörgyvölgy-Pityerdomb (after BÁNFFY 2003, fig. 6: h: 6.9 cm, l: 13 cm, w: 4.5 cm). – 3. Belovode (after HEYD 2016, fig. 9, without measurements). – 4. Varhari (after BOYADZHIEV, BOYADZHIEV 2011, without measurements). – 5. Jablanica (after PETROVIĆ, KATIĆ, SPASIĆ 2009, cat.no. 152: h: 1.8 cm). – 6. Sapareva Banya (after JACOB, FOL 2004, cat. no. 41).

but also their depictions reached South-eastern Europe (Fig. 214). Some of the ceramic figurines, for example from Kovachevo, Yabalkovo, Slatina-Sofia, Usoe, Grivac, and Ovcharovo-Gorata (to name but a few), may be interpreted as representations of oxen (TODOROVA, VAYSOV 1993, fig. 198. – LICHARDUS-ITTEN et al. 2002, pl. 22/21. – BOGDANOVIĆ

2008, pl. 6/3. – NIKOLOV 2011, 106. – KRAUSS 2014, fig. 101/9, 11–13. – Roodenberg, Leshtakov, Petrova 2014, 347 and fig. 5). One expressive sculptural depiction of a bull originates from Foeni Sălaş in the Romanian Banat (Fig. 215). This Early Neolithic site is among the earliest in the Carpathian Basin, and demonstrates how swiftly not only the Neolithic

lifestyle, but also the symbols of the Neolithic ideology could be disseminated into the subcontinent.

Over the course of the Balkan Neolithic, the symbolism of cattle may be further traced, although the depictions frequently become more abstract, and, time and again, only characteristic traits as symbols for this animal might be found (BÁNFFY 2019, 33–86). A good example of the dismantling of this image type is presented by small three- and four-footed tables: in addition to the tables' anthropomorphism identified by Nikolov (NIKOLOV 2007, 105–112), the corners of some of these special vessels are shaped into bulls or rams (SCHWARZBERG 2005, 282–301).

With the spread of the Neolithic to Central Europe, the significance of cattle depictions actually increases. In comparison to the Balkan Neolithic, anthropomorphic depictions in the LBK are rarer (BÁNFFY 2003, 19. – HANSEN 2007, 302). Additionally, zoomorphic figures or applications in the form of animal heads are also evidenced on vessels, particularly of cattle (BECKER 2007). An animal figurine from the Transdanubian site of Szentgyörgyvölgy-Pityerdomb displays telling decorative and representational details probably depicting a bovid. The settlement dates to the transition between the latest phase of the Starčevo culture and the earliest LBK (BÁNFFY 2003, 1). The animal's hide is reproduced with ornamental incised lines. Yet, even more remarkable is the horizontal piercing of the snout, by means of which it “could be led about by the nose” (BÁNFFY 2003, 8). A striking number of the cattle depictions from the South-eastern European Neolithic show a horizontally pierced snout (Fig. 216). Is this thus intended to portray a beast of burden? Leading by means of a nose ring would represent in itself a new stage of domestication, and could, in turn, serve as a preliminary step towards exploitation of animal labour.

Eszter Bánffy has emphasised that it is most prominently zoomorphic and later anthropomorphic vessels and house models which belong to the new images created by this novel lifestyle (BÁNFFY 2003, 16). According to her, all of these will become the most important and frequent objects of the cultic find inventory of the South-eastern European Neolithic (BÁNFFY 2019, 87–102). Only the custom of erecting monumental stone sculptures (like those from Lepenski Vir) disappears from the cultic record of the early farmers migrating to Europe. At the same time, there is a general consensus among all researchers of the Near Eastern pre-Neolithic hunters and gatherers that it is hardly coincidental that these novel, already Neolithic forms of sculpture arose in the period in which the first concrete indications of sedentarism and social organisation occur. The vessels with figures appearing within South-eastern Europe's cultural milieu at the advent



Fig. 217: The Bull Rider of Haúsa (after NIKOLOV 2015).

of neolithisation must nevertheless be considered to be novel creations, as they were first adopted at an already completely developed stage, as with the entire ceramic technology. An example for a particularly early figural vessel in the form of an ox originates from the Early Neolithic settlement of Rakitovo (MATSANOVA 1996, pl. 8). While the early animal vessels are simply hollowed out, and the vessel itself portrays the body, a new type with a bowl set on top would develop from this over the course of the Neolithic. One example is a painted vessel in the form of a bull from Settlement Level III of the mound at Sitagroi in northern Greece, from whose back a peg protrudes; it can be presumed that a small bowl would be attached to this, as known from other figurines (SCHWARZBERG 2005, fig. 29/1–2, 4). The question is thereby raised as to whether these animals only carry vessels in a metaphorical sense, or whether these are depictions of the realities of Neolithic life and, therefore, of the actual activity of cattle bearing burdens.

11.5. The Bull Rider of Haúsa

A representation of a bull which is remarkable in various aspects was discovered at the Late Neolithic site of Haúsa at Kapitan Andreevo at the border between Bulgaria and Turkey (NIKOLOV et al. 2014. – NIKOLOV 2015, 24–25). The figurine is worked as a vessel, has an anatomically correctly reproduced orifice on its reverse, and is marked as male on the underside with a depiction of a penis. While the rear legs are modelled as simple cylinders, knee joints and even the typical cloven hooves of the animal are depicted on the front limbs. The triangular head is highly stylised, but also displays anatomical details such as the elongated snout, ears, and eyes suggested by two perforations. The short, thick

horns of the animal protrude upwards and rather resemble those of a domesticated ox. The artist devoted particular effort to the reproduction of the animal's hide, realised in the contemporary manner of Late Neolithic pottery by means of incisions with inset white paste. These comprise intertwined bands of spirals, the intervals of which were very carefully filled with fine dashes. Preserved seated on the bull's back is a human figure's lower body (Fig. 217). The individual's legs hang down both flanks of the bull, while the body is broken away above the hips. Incised lines frame the noticeably jutting pubic region; two parallel lines stretch across the person's hips, probably delineating the edge of a short robe. The site of Haúsa can be dated with certainty to the Balkan Late Neolithic on grounds of its finds; the absolute chronological framework is set by the excavator at 5200–4850 BCE (NIKOLOV 2015, 22). This would therefore, represent the earliest known depiction of a person seated on an animal in the world! The cultural historical consequences of this portrayal cannot be emphasised enough. It remains uncertain as to whether the activity performed might already be termed riding as this would also presuppose control over the animal's movements, whether by steering or leading. The seated position on the animal nevertheless symbolises the power of the individual over the bull, and thus demonstrates one of the most important technical prerequisites for actual riding. In addition to the proven exploitation of milk (EVERSHED et al. 2008. – VIGNE 2008), did the secondary use of animal labour already begin in an era well before the discovery of the wheel and cart? Contradicting a regular use of cattle as beasts of burden, or work animals is the lack of any evidence of such exploitation on the bones or horns of the animals.³⁶ Temporary riding or a sporadic use of cattle for the bearing of loads would, however, have hardly left traces upon skeletal material. A ritual interpretation of this representation would still include the real performance of the activity. The case of the figure from Haúsa does not depict something akin to a hybrid creature which might merely be taken as an allegory for the activity of riding, but instead comprises two figures with their own respective corporeal

identities which are connected to one another by means of the portrayal. The figure identifiable as human on grounds of its surviving lower body sits on a standing or walking bull. Even more noticeable than the figure's upright carriage is the manner in which the figure sits with its legs hung over the animal's flanks, displaying the person's power. To put this another way, it is in precisely such a manner that one must actually sit upon a bull in order to ride it.

11.6. Bucrania Idols

In addition to figures of women and depictions of cereals (for example in the form of entire ears or of individual corns),³⁷ depictions of cattle number among the Neolithic's most common symbols. These are nevertheless merely the archaeologically visible elements of an ideology disseminated with the Neolithic.³⁸ In addition to the realistic depictions of humans, animals, and things, there is also a series of Early Neolithic objects with the character of amulets or idols which do not initially betray what they seek to portray from their own form, this making the interpretation of their function more difficult. Particularly insightful in this context are certain objects which might neutrally be termed T- or Y-shaped.³⁹ Common features of these objects are their small format (as most of these can be encompassed in an adult hand), and their minimalist reduction to a pillar-like triangular or pointed oval or teardrop-shaped body, at the end of which two horns

36. Traces of ploughing from south-western Iran evidence the harnessing of cattle already around 5000 BCE (BENECKE 1994, 269). Numerous visual representations and finds from wheeled vehicles or models of such are known from Europe and the Near East from the 4th millennium BCE (BAKKER 2004. – BURMEISTER 2004. – MARAN 2004. – SCHLICHTERLE 2004. – TURETSKIJ 2004). Demonstrably, cattle pulled these vehicles (whether sledges, travois, or carts) (BENECKE 2004. – BOROFFKA 2004).

37. "For the artists, the grain corn embodying the essence of agriculture became an important symbol. This would have symbolised sedentarisation and the production of foodstuffs, and most likely simultaneously served as a sign that one knew the veneration of the higher powers prayed to by these immigrants to the Balkans, and had adopted this to a certain extent. This symbol expresses the desire to align with the world of the early farmers." (BÁNYFY 2003, 18, trans. by A. Edmonds).

38. "The discovery of agriculture basically transforms not only primitive man's economy but also and especially his economy of the sacred. Other religious forces come into play – sexuality, fertility, the mythology of women and of the earth, and so on. Religious experience becomes more concrete, that is, more intimately connected with life. The great mother-goddesses and the strong gods or the spirits of fertility are markedly more dynamic and more accessible to men than was the Creator God" (ELIADE 1961, 126). "The early farmers of south-eastern Europe brought with them a material culture indicating a learned world of belief rich in cultic finds, albeit not yet completely understood. Nonetheless, this culture transformed step by step in the Carpathian Basin, and this metamorphosis continued ever more intensively in the Middle European regions beyond the Carpathians." (BÁNYFY 2003, 18, trans. by A. Edmonds).

39. As these are termed by Vuković (VUKOVIĆ 2005, 34–36).

laterally protrude. Not only do these objects possess entirely different forms, but they are also fashioned from various materials; most commonly they are made from clay, and more rarely bone and stone. Occupying a special place among these is a series of large-format examples from stone which will be discussed at the conclusion of this work.

Possibly related to these pieces is a group of plug- or nail-like objects most prominently appearing in Thessaly, Albania, and Dalmatia (KRAUSS 2017, fig. 3). They can present an upward curved shaft but are otherwise radial-symmetrical in design. These pieces in particular were already described as lip, ear, or nose plugs. It is difficult to establish as to who first introduced this functional interpretation within the academic literature. Vladimir Miložčić was already consciously using this term in the 1960s (MILOŽČIĆ 1960, 327) and it may well have been adopted from Oswald Menghin who was the first to use this in his *World History of the Stone Age*.⁴⁰ Reingruber has summarised the indications as to the employment of these Aegean nail-shaped objects which may have been used for a variety of purposes ranging from hair adornments and pendants to being used as rubbing stones for pigments (for example for paints or cosmetics) (REINGRUBER 2008, 566–568).

Those objects with a more or less rounded head will not be discussed here, but instead only those with two horns or at least a triangular expansive head; that is those reminiscent of stylised depictions of cattle heads which must probably be understood in this way.⁴¹ Since Stanković's excellent publication of the examples from Knjepište, these objects' full spectrum of forms has become evident (STANKOVIĆ 1991). These can range from very small and flat to long and large like a pillar. The only feature in common is the small horns jutting from the sides. While the function of these objects remains entirely unknown, the horns would seem to exhibit

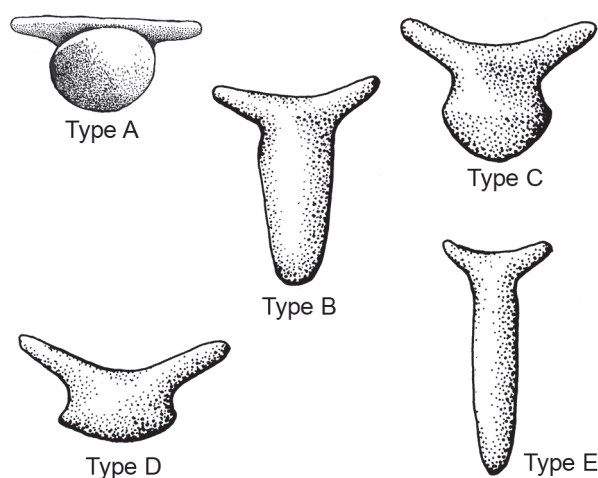


Fig. 218: Typology of the Bucrania idols (after KRAUSS 2016).

some manner of connection with the horned cattle heads,⁴² which is why they will be termed for simplicity's sake idols or bucrania idols, without fully plumbing the significance of the term idol.⁴³

A few arguments for different functions of these horned idols have been summarised and discussed by Jasna Vuković. According to her, it was Karmanski who adopted the terms “labrets” or “labial wedges” for the horned idols from the Balkans in analogy to find contexts from south-western Iran (KARMANSKI 1987). Contrary to this interpretation, Vuković has rightly noted that wear from contact with teeth would need to be identified on the items, which is not the case, and that the objects currently occur solely in settlement contexts, rather than originating from graves (VUKOVIĆ 2005, 34–35). Mihael Budja has pointed to the relevant discovery together of clay stamps and plug- and nail-like objects in the Aegean, on the one hand, and clay stamps and “zoomorphic” amulets, as he terms them, in the Balkans, on the other, and considers them to be a novel development of the South-eastern European Early Neolithic connected to the Neolithic economic mode. These may have served as counting stones or as aids in the storage of goods (calculi, counters, or tokens) (BUDJA 2003). Very early attested is also a very simple interpretation as clay spools for the winding of yarn which Menghin

40. “Most prominently deserving of attention are smaller or also larger cylinders of clay, whose surfaces are somewhat recessed and decorated. These can probably only be interpreted as earplugs. Very similar items occur in Badarian-period Egypt. The larger of these cylinders could, however, also be interpreted as paint stamps (pin-taderas).” (MENGHIN 1931, 327, trans. by A. Edmonds). Regarding the examples from pre-dynastic Egypt, he also notes later as follows “Ear, lip, and nose-plugs were also popular.” (MENGHIN 1931, 343, trans. by A. Edmonds).

41. “As the historical conditioning in the analysis of archaeological finds may be understood twofold: on one hand, the finds themselves, and, on the other, the archaeologists excavating them as children of their own time; accordingly, the interpretation is entirely uncertain” (BÁNYFY 2003, 12, trans. by A. Edmonds).

42. “A religious symbol conveys its message even if it is no longer consciously understood in its every part. For a symbol speaks to the whole human being and not only to the intelligence” (ELIADE 1961, 129).

43. Here meant solely in the stricter sense of Greek εἶδωλον, that is, form, image, or likeness.

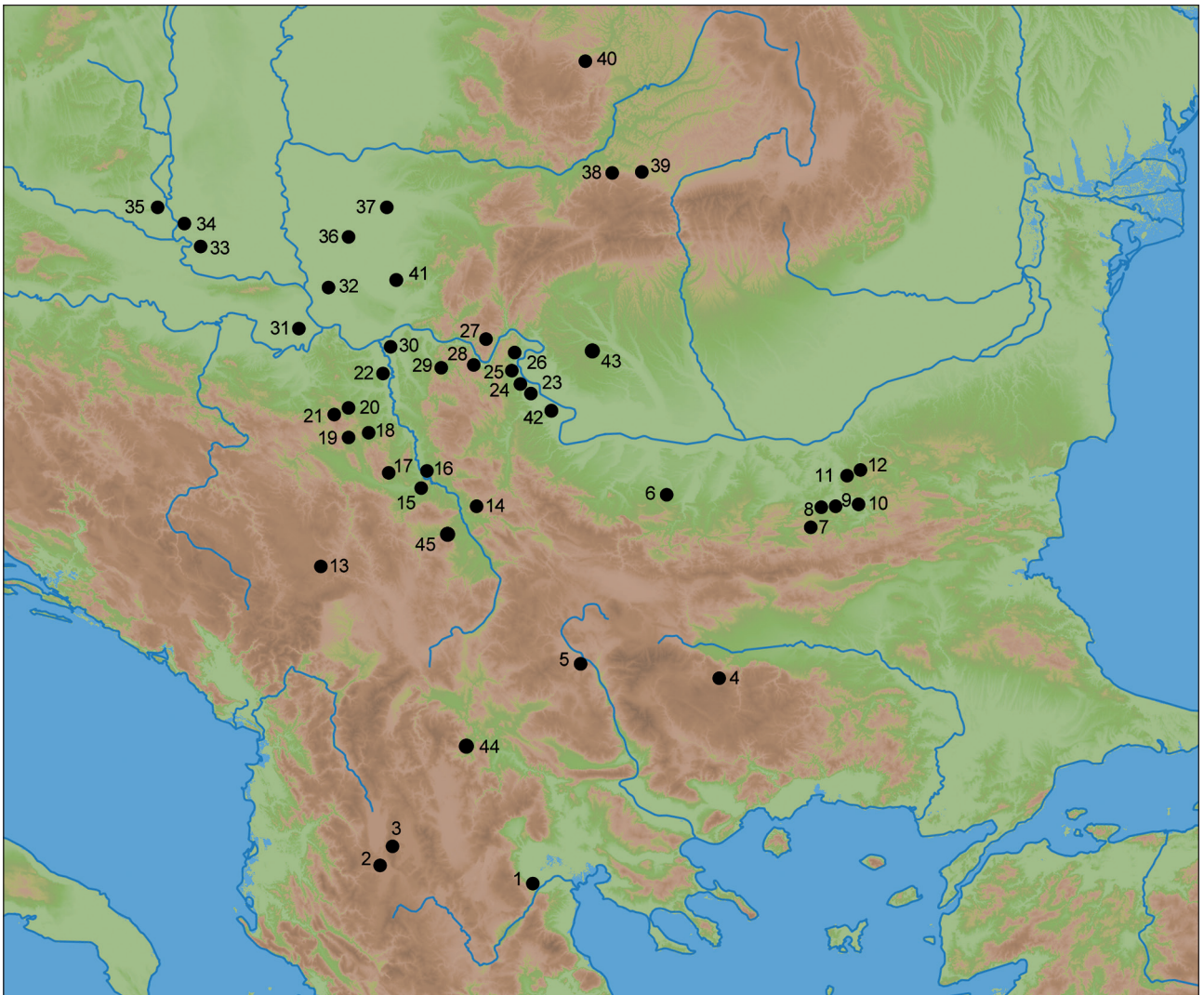


Fig. 219: Distribution of Bucrania idols from the Aegean to the Carpathian Basin. – 1. Nea Nikomedeia. – 2. Vashtëmi. – 3. Podgorie. – 4. Rakitovo. – 5. Vaksevo. – 6. Komarevo. – 7. Skalsko. – 8. Hotnitsa. – 9. Belyakovets. – 10. Dzhulyunitsa. – 11. Orlovets. – 12. Koprivets. – 13. Kremeštica. – 14. Jasenovik. – 15. Ornice-Makrešani. – 16. Drenovac. – 17. Blagotin. – 18. Divostin. – 19. Grivac. – 20. Banya Arandelovac. – 21. Rudnik. – 22. Minine Vode. – 23. Bukovče. – 24. Ušće Kameničkog Potoka. – 25. Knjepište. – 26. Velesnica. – 27. Dubova-Cuina Turcului. – 28. Lepenski Vir. – 29. Kučajna. – 30. Drmno. – 31. Dobanovci-Cigłana. – 32. Idvor. – 33. Donja Branjevina. – 34. Magareći Mlin. – 35. Zmajevac. – 36. Foeni Sălaș. – 37. Timișoara-Fratelia. – 38. Miercurea Sibiului. – 39. Ocna Sibiului. – 40. Gura Baciului. – 41. Vrșac-Kozluk. – 42. Mayor Uzunovo. – 43. Sluța. – 44. Govrlevo. – 45. Svinjarička Čuka (R. Krauß).

(distinguishing these from his “earplugs”) already identified with a clay object decorated with incisions from Knossos which corresponds in form to the idols of Type D as described below (MENGHIN 1931, pl. XL/5). Based on the grooves on some pieces, Vuković cites a further interpretation of these as having potentially served as hinges and thus forming parts of composite tools (VUKOVIĆ 2005, 36). Nevertheless, this is also contradicted by the lack of wear on the respective contact surfaces. Sundry interpretations as clothing or hair accessories such as buttons, buckles, clasps, hooks, and so on are thus further excluded.

Should the horned idols of the Early Neolithic in the Balkan-Carpathian region be systematised, then the existing, although disparate typologies by Elenski based on exemplars from central northern Bulgaria (ELENKI 2004), by Vuković for the pieces from Serbia,⁴⁴ and by Lazarovici

44. Vuković’s typology is based on an earlier version by Stanković which could be supplemented with numerous examples from Blagotin (VUKOVIĆ 2005).

on the basis of finds from the Banat and Transylvania (LAZAROVICI 2006) serve as a suitable starting point. The polymorphism of the bucrania idols nevertheless displays rather more fluid transitions than neat borders between the individual variants, which may well also be connected to the disparate materials used in their fashioning (KRAUSS 2016b). Their production also comes across as highly individual, and (in contrast to the fashioning of ceramics or stone tools, for example) does not seem to have been the preserve of specialists. The present author has thus suggested the following simplified typology (Fig. 218).

The first variant, here termed Type A, comprises a complex profiled body with a bent “muzzle” and horns markedly protruding from the “head”. A characteristic feature is its double folds, first perpendicular to the head and then once again along the axis of the horns, enabled by the pliable material of clay, as only examples fashioned from pottery are known of this type. These “folded” bucrania are consistently very small and generally wider than they are tall.⁴⁵

A second variant (here Type B) may be distinguished by a very large drop or tongue-like body, from which small horns, round in cross section, laterally protrude. In some cases, the underside is slightly curved. Idols of this type are also fashioned from stone. A few ceramic pieces are decorated with incisions or perforations on their front.

Idols represented by the standalone Type C present triangular bodies and lateral horns, the contours of which are particularly reminiscent of a bull’s head. The transition from Type B to C is fluid; characteristic nevertheless for Type C is a lower end which might be described as running to a point or at least sharply tapering. There are broader examples which look like pennants, and thinner ones, the bodies of which can be described as pointed or rounded. Individual pieces fashioned from stone are also known of this type, and at least one ceramic example displays incised decorations on its front. This appears to be a variant local to the central Balkan region.

To be attributed to Type D are idols with a very flat body, the upper and lower parts of which look roughly identical. This presents the shape of a double fork, as if for winding a thread. In other words, these idols resemble the upper parts of Types B and C. Vuković divides these into so-called “shortened” and “spool-like” examples (VUKOVIĆ 2005, 28).

Should the cattle head, that is, the bucranium, be assumed to be the prototype for these idols, then Type E has experienced the most striking transformation. These types comprise pieces with an elongated cylindrical or spindle-shaped body,⁴⁶ which are morphologically proximal to the nail- or plug-shaped “earplugs”. A common feature of all of these examples is the long shaft. The upper end is mostly horned, although there are also examples with triangularly protruding head plates without horns.

The typology does not describe any chronological trajectory, as different types can always be found in the same settlement layers at multiple sites.⁴⁷ At the important Early Neolithic settlements at Blagotin and Grivac, all of the variants appear together. Nevertheless, multiple types can also be found at more minor sites (KRAUSS 2016b). The Danube Gorges present a remarkable find concentration of bucrania idols. Types C and D appear relatively rarely by contrast, and demonstrate rather a preponderance in the central Balkans (at least according to the current state of knowledge). Nevertheless, each further find could alter the image of this distribution as the dispersal of these items is hardly decisive considering their low numbers. Chronologically, all of the bucrania idols belong to the early phase of the Balkan Neolithic. They occur with the advent of the neolithisation, and disappear with the arrival of the horizons of Karanovo II or Starčevo-Criș IIa, roughly 5800 calBC in absolute chronological terms. In the eastern Balkans, their occurrence is tied to the earliest pottery up to and including the phase of white-on-red painting, and in the central Balkans up to red painting. Thus, the total dispersal of the bucrania idols describes the overland neolithisation of Europe, stretching from the Aegean to the Carpathian Basin (Fig. 219).

Particular significant in the interpretation of the bucrania idols is the site of Blagotin, as not only have the most pieces by a wide margin been found there (with more than 63 examples), but also detailed information as to their discovery contexts is available. According to this, all of the finds originate from contexts to which a settlement function can be accorded; 25 idols alone come from a single context, at the

45. The individual references to Types A to E may be found in KRAUSS 2016b.

46. As a clear attribution of these objects is impossible, a phallic interpretation also does not seem any less plausible (cf. NIKOLOV 2011, 42).

47. The bucrania idols listed by Vuković from the sites of Bukovče, Dobanovci-Ciglana, Idvor, Jasenovik, Kremeštica, Magareći Mlin, Minine Vode, Ornice-Makrešani, Ušće Kameničkog Potoka, and Velesnica cannot be attributed to a type due to a lack of images (cf. VUKOVIĆ 2005, tab. 1).

base of which these were encountered, distributed at very regular intervals (VUKOVIĆ 2005, fig. 3). On the grounds of this find situation, Vuković considers the interpretation already presented by many authors that these are ritual objects as being justified, although the distribution of the objects seems more reminiscent of a household's individual cultic practice than that found within a "shrine" (VUKOVIĆ 2005, 36). In such a context, a few large idols fashioned from stone are informative, these possibly serving as a prototype for the small-format examples of clay.

11.7. Of Humans, Animals and Things

In addition to their shrinking in size, the transformation of the image from a representation of a bull recognisable in and of itself into an idol with two horns presents a broad field for semiotic considerations, as the reduction of the body to a simple geometric form with the recognisable attribute of the horns is polyvalent on many levels: despite the obvious connection to the horned cattle head, the bodies of the idols may also represent a person, a hybrid creature, a pole or totem, or even a mixture of all four. As naturalistic depictions of humans and animals are also available from the Early Neolithic, the ambivalence of the portrayal would seem to be intentional. Bánffy has noted the mental dimension of the Early Neolithic representational world in the Balkan-Carpathian region, and its changeability parallel to the alterations in the fledgling communities (BÁNFFY 2003, 15): should the inanimate be able to comport itself as lively, then the animal can feel human, or conversely the human can feel animal. It is in the nature of the external world that all of its participants function in a similar manner so that plants and (most vitally) animals are also able to think and act with human logic. Moreover, the reverse can also occur. The anthropomorphisation of animals is still alive in folkloric tradition even today, while its inverse, totemism, characterises every society of hunters, fishers, and gatherers. Transitional beings (that is, hybrid creatures between human and animal) have certainly existed since the Upper Palaeolithic. In turn, these beings survived throughout the Neolithic; their successors are with great likelihood the monstrous figures of Classical mythology. The transformation of the horned cattle head into the idols of the South-eastern European Early Neolithic can currently be considered specific to this region. From the Neolithic's region of origin in the Near East to the Aegean, related image types occur time and again, these all reflecting the essential elements of the new economy as a theme. With the crossing of the land route in the dispersal of the Neolithic via the Balkan-Carpathian region with its temperate-continental climate to

Central Europe (and the challenges connected with this for a lifestyle grounded in agriculture and husbandry), the spiritual conception of human communities evidently changed as well, of which the new type of bucrania idols represents one element. Over the course of the different neolithisation processes, these images disappear and new, more realistic types of representation appear, suggesting an intensified exploitation of cattle, which leads, in succession, to a presumably novel ritual appraisal of these important domesticated animals.

With the introduction of these novel visual representations, it is likely no exaggeration to recognise a tradition enduring until the present day in the countries of the Balkan-Carpathian region. The image of the human-friendly cow is a beloved motif even today in landscape painting. With the triumph of Christianity, the emblem of the "good shepherd" also appears. Furthermore, the bull remains a vital symbol, for example, as an allegory for Mark the Evangelist. The symbolism of cereals was probably equally significant. Through the introduction of novel cultivars originating from America such as the bell pepper, tomato, potato, and maize, the grain of the Old World has also receded in iconographic significance within South-eastern Europe. In such a manner, the socialist symbolism of sickle and ears of corn might also be considered a last glimmer of the Neolithic representational world. As yet, bread has also not lost any of its enormous symbolic worth among the peoples of the Balkan-Carpathian region. Vital rituals depict bread as central. Present-day life in permanent settlements and a nutrition based upon agricultural products has its roots in the Neolithic. It is demonstrable that human groups have been able to cultivate plants and domesticate animals in various parts of the world entirely independently of one another. For Europe, however, the foundations for this lie in the areas around the eastern Mediterranean. From thence, agriculture, husbandry, and a sedentary lifestyle were disseminated to Europe through the immigration of human groups, initially via the Balkan-Carpathian sphere. As has been demonstrated herein, this process of dispersal was very much variable within different regions. Accordingly, there is no single procedure by which neolithisation occurs, but rather a plethora of differing neolithisation processes. The movement of the Neolithic farmers to Europe largely occurred along the Danube and its larger tributaries. Further afield of these main routes, divergent neolithisation scenarios may be observed, where the participation of the prior Mesolithic population would have varied respectively. From an initial uniformity (for example in the products of ceramic manufacture), local traditions swiftly emerge. It is these differences which lend

human culture its charm. In this south-eastern corner of Europe, a rich plurality of languages hardly akin to anywhere else on the continent is preserved. The reasons for this are historically documented, and would seem unrelated to the dynamics of the dispersal of the Neolithic. The linguistic diversity is today the most visible manifestation of fundamental structural principles in South-eastern Europe, which, with all their common ground, still demonstrate time and again the differences in the human cultural expression of commonalities. The roots of this may well also be sought in the differing dynamics of these neolithisation processes.