

## Book review

**Raiko Krauß**

**Ovčarovo-Gorata. Eine frühneolithische Siedlung in Nordostbulgarien.** Mit Beiträgen von Gerwulf Schneider, Malgorzata Daszkiewicz, Ewa Bobryk, Nguyen Van Binh, Petar Zidarov, Florian Klimscha, Norbert Benecke und Elena Marinova (Archäologie in Eurasien 29). Bonn >Habelt-Verlag< 2014, xiii+350 pages, 209 figures, 74 plates. ISBN 978-3-7749-3914-1

In the first half of the 1980s, lithic materials from the prehistoric settlement of Ovčarovo-Gorata in northern Bulgaria were studied by Vietnamese archaeologist Nguyen Van Binh. At that time, he was a doctoral student in the Department of Prehistory of the National Archaeological Institute and Museum Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. In 1985, Nguyen Van Binh completed his doctoral thesis “*Prehistoric flint artifact assemblages from the Late Pleistocene and Early Holocene on the basis of materials from North East Bulgaria*”, which presents the results of lithic assemblages processed from the site.

Three decades later, thanks to Raiko Krauss, the work of Nguyen Van Binh on the flint assemblages of this prehistoric settlement was published with his consent in Krauss' monograph *Ovčarovo-Gorata. Eine frühneolithische Siedlung in Nordostbulgarien*. Archäologie in Eurasien, Herausgegeben von Svend Hansen, Band 29, DAI, Eurasien-Abteilung, Habelt-Verlag Bonn, 2014.

The study of flint assemblages from Ovčarovo-Gorata by Nguyen Van Binh is one of the first comprehensive and professional studies in Bulgaria of chipped stone artefacts from the Neolithic period. Naturally enough, this analysis of flint assemblages bears the imprint of its time.

Work on the thesis was carried out in the early 80s and is consistent with the then prevailing methodological trends in lithic studies. These were associated with traditional technological and typological analyses, which still focused heavily on typology and the more formal treatment of technological aspects.

With regard to the work of Nguyen Van Binh, the valuable results of such a study of flint raw materials used in the preparation of flint tools should be particularly noted. The Neolithic flint industry at the prehistoric settlement of Ovčarovo-Gorata has largely been associated with the use of local varieties of raw materials, which were processed mainly in the area of the settlement.

The analysis conducted by Nguyen Van Binh allows us to trace *chaînes opératoires* stages within a prehistoric settlement as well as see that the core preparation stage was not done at the site under discussion. The evidence for this is the absence of cortical flakes and the lower frequency of crest specimens compared to sites where core preparation occurred on site. Flint production focused mainly on the acquisition of flakes; moreover, the presence of splintered pieces was also noted. With regard to the core knapping process, the initial exploitation was linked to single platform specimens which were later transformed into two platform cores. The last stage of core knapping usually occurred on cores with an altered orientation – *e.g.*, all surfaces were used. Nguyen Van Binh's work revealed the relationship between technological characteristics and the type of raw material and nodule dimensions.

The lithic assemblage's typological structure includes flakes, end scrapers, and retouched flakes; perforators and drills are relatively poorly represented, straight and oblique truncations, and denticuled tools and fragments. Microliths occur in single items in the form of micro end scrapers and bladelets. According to Nguyen Van Binh, this was due to the lack of sieving rather than other factors. It should be noted that some of the conclusions drawn by Wang Bin Ngun have not lost their relevance today, such as the similarity of Ovčarovo-Gorata lithic assemblages and those of Ussoe I and Podgorica in north-eastern Bulgaria.

On the other hand it is regrettable that the lithic assemblage was not available along with other groups of finds from the site in the monograph on Ovčarovo-Gorata, so that the analysis could be updated and the possibilities for interpretation increased.

Van Binh assumed that they were at least two *chaînes opératoires*, one of which is relatively poorly represented – for lamellar production (see bladelet cores – Abb.130: 1–3 and bladelet/microbladelet débitage products – Abb. 152: 9; Abb. 164: 6; Abb. 171:

1, 3; Abb. 173: 3–5, 7, 8, 19; Abb. 174: 4; Abb. 184: 1, 4, 5, 11). While there are no data on the processing of these bladelets in geometric microliths (which may be due to the lack of sieving and washing), there is still a series of retouched microlithic forms, sufficiently distinctive semi-circular and circular micro end scrapers (Abb. 155: 3, 10–12; Abb. 159: 9–12). Although these elements are less represented in the Ovčarovo-Gorata lithic collection, they deserve more attention than they were given years ago in Nguyen Van Binh's dissertation.

The quality of illustrations is very high and allows one to get a good idea of the core types and retouched tools, all of which are accompanied by technical and typological characteristics.

It should be pointed out that it was Krauss's ambition to present as fully as possible the results of different studies from this settlement in order to create

a general background for studies of the Neolithic in the Central and Eastern Balkans. Although these studies were done more than 30 years ago, most of Nguyen Van Binh's conclusions are relevant today and have their place and weight in the study of the Neolithic in the Lower Danube basin.

The professional level of the study of chipped-stone assemblages as presented by Nguyen Van Binh in the monograph Ovčarovo-Gorata is undoubtedly to the great merit of Krauß, to whom we owe the invaluable opportunity to add these almost unknown data to our general scientific knowledge and to advance the debate on Neolithisation in Southeast Europe.

*Ivan Gatsov,  
New Bulgarian University, Sofia and  
Nikolay Sirakov,  
National Archaeological Institute and Museum,  
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia*