



Petr Škrdl: Moravia at the onset of the Upper Paleolithic. The Dolní Věstonice Studies Vol. 23, Institute of Archaeology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Brno 2017. 159 pp. ISBN 978-80-8524-011-8.

The origin of the Upper Palaeolithic and the inter-mingling of Neanderthal populations with anatomically modern humans (AMH) has been addressed by the last but one publication from the Dolní Věstonice Studies series. The book contains a number of colour photographs, aerial photographs with plots of finds, map charts and profile drawings and chipped artifacts.

With the exception of the Lišeň / Podolí I site, the volume contains a summary of the main data from studies already published, primarily in the leading journals. With the exception of contributions about Ondratice / Želeč, the author is always the first mentioned of a number of different co-authors – there is no doubt however, that he is in fact the sole author in many cases. The work is the result of more than 20 years of hard work, carried out primarily on the initiative of the author, but with the committed physical help of many students and young researchers, who were often rewarded for their participation in publications with a significant impact. This activity has multiplied the number of stratified sites from the Early Upper Palaeolithic, although the initial model by K. Valoch is more confirmed than significantly modified.

The book consists of six chapters. The first – Introduction – presents the geographical and natural framework, chronological position and methodology. Here I would like to consider the accepted assertion that "earliest credible evidence of the presence of AMH in Europe" are the chipped industries of the Bohunician type, albeit without human remains (p. 13). Why not directly identify the occurrence of AMH with, for example, the even older site of Mandrin in southern France, whose Levallois microindustry looks even more

progressive? The wish is obviously the father to thought, the relevance of which is then no longer critically discussed. On page 17 at the bottom right, we are surprised to learn that the newly applied "*settlement strategy approach*" showed that Palaeolithic settlements are not distributed in the field randomly, but follow a strict distributional pattern, controlled by geomorphological factors. This was already known long ago.

The next chapters are devoted to the individual technocomplexes or industry traditions, the 2nd chapter is about the Szeletian, the 3rd the Bohunician, the 4th the Lišeň/Podolí I site and the 5th the Aurignacian. The chapter always begins with a general characteristic, sometimes with the development of knowledge, followed by a description of the main, i.e. stratified localities, a brief mention of the surface (by far the most numerous) localities, and concluding remarks on various aspects of the given culture.

In these main chapters, the geographic scope of the comparison base is very different: for Bohunician, it is Ukraine, the Balkans, the Middle East and China (nothing to the west), for Szeletian only the southern half of Moravia, as well as for the Aurignacian. In fact, only stratified localities are taken into account, for example, in the case of the Aurignacian culture, not even 5 % of the total number, so the resulting picture will lack something especially in terms of the strategy of settlement and variability of the represented raw materials, especially the rarer and more distant, which of course are all the more important for being rare. However, even the technological / typological content of surface sites cannot be completely neglected, especially in cases where their distinctiveness cannot be explained by contamination – this would in fact blur the image of the industries. For this, account should also be taken of the possible concentration of all elements on a small area. In short, the surface deposits are too numerous to give up the precision of the

criteria for their evaluation. On the other hand, it is highly appreciated that the collection technique has led Škrdl's team to a higher level by recording all findings in the GIS system.

In the text on smaller localities in the Drahanská vrchovina (pp. 74–75), I cannot find quotations of two original articles by K. Valoch (1967 and 1983 in *Acta Musei Moraviae*), which present the vast majority of the findings and also state their position in the field, although inaccurately. All the more it is necessary, however, to include the original designation of Valoch's publications.

The site of all the presented research from the initial phase of the Upper Palaeolithic (IUP) is the Brno basin with its surroundings (Bokrava valley), only some localities of the downstream Aurignacian are located by the Morava River in eastern Moravia.

From the point of view of discussion, the most important is Chapter 6: *Concluding remarks*. The author repeats his earlier conclusions and opinions, but some of them in a more explicit wording, which does not contribute much to the work. He seems to be building virtual targets from inaccurate citations, which he is now blurring with his comments. I have never claimed that the use of Levallois method in Early Upper Paleolithic (EUP) in Moravia applies only to the Jurassic chert from Stránská skála (CSS, p. 91), in both quoted articles I claim the exact opposite (cf. Oliva 1986, 43 and 47; 2016, 44), but with the most common Levalloisian method in CSS, it spreads along with this raw material, but it is also commonly found on other rocks. The constant dominance of CSS in the Bohunician type industries, its shrinking away from the source (of course with fluctuations such as Ořechov IV, but it is a trend) and his link to the Levallois method (Oliva 1979, 5) have been repeatedly demonstrated, but since the Škrdl's papers does not have tabular overviews of chipped industry from which

it would be immediately apparent, the mentioned author can obscure it. One of the most important findings is that by refitting flake to one of the leaf points from the Krumlovský les chert, P. Škrdla and G. Tostevin documented their local production (or repair), thus refuting their acquisition by exchange or collection, reported in some of my first works (eg, Oliva 1981, 11). But surely Petr understands that with these expressions I only circumspectly conceived the idea of their foreign origin. Paradoxically, while on the basis of this finding, among other things, I have reviewed my concept of Bohunician and continue to consider it as part of the Szeletian (*sensu lato*) phenomenon, P. Škrdla persists on the independence of the Bohunician and foreign origin of leaf points albeit obtained other than by exchange. Otherwise, he would not claim that their increased occurrence at an eponymous locality in Brno-Bohunice may be due to contamination with Szeletian (p. 92). How else would he explain their presence than as a cultural loan from our Szeletian environment, assuming that Bohunician came along with AMH from the Near East, where there are no leaf points. These industries, on the other hand, would lose the Emireh points typical of part of the so-called Emirian industries in Israel.

Apart from unnecessarily misrepresented citations, we differ only in the question of the autonomy and origin of the so-called Bohunician and its connection with the invasion of the first AMH. I have recently commented more extensively on this issue (Oliva 2017, 56 sq.). So I can be brief. Just to mention that the "Szeletian paradox" in the title of the chapter is not an innovation of the name of this industrial tradition due to the presence of bifacial and Levallois elements (p. 94), but a sign that according to available industries and data this "culture" was created by two kinds of people, Neanderthals and AMH, which greatly compromises the notion of pre-Aurignacian "cultures" in general. Considering the so-called Bohunician as the vanguard of the Near East settlements is very welcome, as it guarantees responses to a lively global debate. However, the just mentioned example of Szeletian *s. stricto* can warn us against identifying the type of

industry with the kind of man, and other examples from the Near East prove the same. With the narrowly defined Levallois-Mousterian type C, there are both Neanderthals (Tabun) and two groups of graves of modern type people (Skhul and Qafzeh). The Boker Tachtit industries, resembling Bohunician, as shown by Škrdla's convincing refittings of cores and analyzes of both technologies, do not accompany anthropological findings. The oldest industries with Aurignacian carinated scrapers are not found in Europe in the south-east, but in the south-west (Castillo, Arbreda), where they clearly follow techno-typologically the Middle Palaeolithic without knowing their bearers. The oldest European representative of AMH is now known from the Apidima Cave in Greece, but he is beyond our debate at 210,000 years old. There is probably a picture that sapiens have penetrated Europe in many waves with a variety of industries that have been unrecognisable domestically, with other industries with progressive features (Levallois blades, bladelets, high scrapers, backed points) could also occur convergently in Neanderthals. It was probably later that the Aurignacian wave originally appeared, documented in the central Danube region approximately 42,000 years BP (Willendorf II/3). Industries of the so-called Bohunician always develop on some local type of rock, and raw materials from the SE direction from where they were supposed to originate, contain much less than the Szeletian collections *s. stricto*, which apparently follow local bifacial traditions. In terms of raw materials, the then Levallois collections are the most localistic ones, which does not record much of the invasive model. A similar metric of semi-finished products, different from Aurignacian, is associated with Szeletian and Bohunician (Nigst 2012, 312). No leaf point of the so-called Bohunician deviates from the shape, raw material and technological scale of the Szeletian (Nerudová *et al.* 2011), although it differs from the leaf points of the Jerzmanowician or Altmühlian as a whole.

A very significant contribution of the research of Škrdla's team is the discovery

of brought shells of Tertiary gastropods with holes and traces of ochre, i.e. body ornaments, typical for sapiens rather than Neanderthals. I cannot quite understand why the Lišeň / Podolí I site, dated probably 36,000 years ago, the so-called Bohunician period, separates from this industrial tradition, although its Bohunician attribution would bring valuable points to the belief in the penetration of AMH. As we saw in the example of the Szeletian paradox, pre-Aurignacian cultures cannot be defined so reductively. If P. Škrdla is considering which culture to attribute to a given locality, and if it does not meet any criteria, then move it elsewhere to make the proposed model work (the distinguishing criteria are not defined, however), it proceeds somewhat scholastically. These "cultures" are not some natural entities existing independently of us, but are our constructs, created to communicate more quickly. On the other hand, if we adhere to these placeholders more strictly (see the chronic inconsistency in the classification of collections between Szeletian and Bohunician), it is better to abolish them and consider them in broader terms.

In addition to the absence of tabular surveys of industries, I would point out that the brief characteristics of the collections from the surface do not come from the main collections stored mostly at the Moravian Museum, but from new collections of limited scope or even from *ad hoc* attached Freising interwar photographs. It would be necessary to mitigate some rather hasty claims, such as that we have data on Aurignacian cores only from Napajedla III and Brno-Lišeň VIII (p. 125). The following paragraph states that the collection from Stránská skála was published by J. Svoboda in detail, including cores, of course. A detailed division of cores with many pictures is also in all contributions about Aurignacian by K. Valoch and the author of the review. The work also contains rather a lot of unexpected typos.

The aforementioned shortcomings give the impression that the book is a somewhat hasty and purposeful summary of the previous high-quality outputs, which, however, will serve as a quick and

convenient source of basic information, given the English translation abroad. The new results, however numerous and obtained by quality research, raise many questions that cannot be answered today. However, this does not diminish their crucial importance, because there is no other way than stratified sites.

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