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## Book reviews

**Moravia at the onset of the Upper Paleolithic.** Petr Škrdla. Czech Academy of Sciences, Institute of Archeology, Brno (2017), Brno, Czech Republic, 159 pp., ISBN 978-80-7524-011-8.

### Moravia at the onset of the Upper Paleolithic

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The topic of this monograph is the Early Upper Palaeolithic (EUP) period in Moravia (Czech Republic). It is a synthesis of the current state of knowledge about this period and also the conclusion of the results of the project funded by Grant Agency of the Czech Republic titled “The Early Upper Paleolithic occupation in Brno-basin and surrounds”, which was realized between 2008 and 2012 and, indeed, was directed by the author of the reviewed publication.

The book presented is divided into six chapters. In the introduction the author briefly acquaints the reader with the situation in Moravia at the beginning of the Upper Palaeolithic, describing the geographical conditions, and then pays his attention to certain methodological problems, such as the method of searching for new stratified sites, which has been recently described in some of the author’s previous papers (Škrdla *et al.*, 2011; Škrdla

*et al.*, 2016), as well as site dating and problems concerning the various levels of spatial analyses of finds.

The following four chapters are devoted to particular technocomplexes present in Moravia during this period, specifically the Szeletian, the Bohunician, the Líšeň/Podolí type and the Aurignacian. Finally, in a rather brief conclusion, the author tries to answer four basic questions, namely: “where?”, “when?”, “what?” and “who?” In the part devoted to the “where?” question, the author focuses his attention on the settlement geography and settlement strategies of the Early Upper Palaeolithic foragers. The results of the absolute dating methods (radiocarbon dating, termoluminescence and optically stimulated luminescence) give the answer to the “when?” question. Within the framework of the “what?” question, the author summarizes the actual finds and main trends in lithic production during the studied period. Finally the “who?” question addresses the problem of the creators of the Moravian EUP lithic industries. With respect to this question, the author concludes that, while the Szeletian industries, which follow the local Middle Palaeolithic traditions, were probably still made by the local Neanderthal population, other EUP industries, starting with the Bohunician, were created by anatomically modern humans (AMH).

Concerning the main part of the monograph, which is a description of the Moravian EUP sites, I would like to go through particular chapters devoted to the Moravian EUP technocomplexes. The author begins with the Szeletian. He uses this traditional term (*cf.* Červinka, 1927, 66; Prošek, 1953; Allsworth-Jones, 1986; Oliva, 1991), although he is surely aware of all the problems connected with it. In particular, it is a fact recently pointed out that the stratigraphy of the type site Szeleta cave in Hungary, excavated at the beginning of the twentieth century (Kadić, 1916), is rather problematic and that a part of bifacial tools found at the site could be dated to the Middle Palaeolithic, whereas another part of the meticulously retouched

leaf points probably belong to the Late Gravettian period (Lengyel *et al.*, 2016). Another fact, which the author is surely familiar with, is the probable discontinuity between the Moravian Early Szeletian and Late Szeletian with the poplar leaf shaped points of the Moravany-Dlhá type, which is particularly known from western Slovakia (Kaminská *et al.*, 2011). The Szeletian term would therefore deserve a major revision; however, this is not part of this monograph. On the contrary, the author sticks to the traditional point of view. A fundamental research question remains, whether it is even possible to define this technocomplex solely on the basis of the presence of the bifacial reduction, which has been proven in many different industries to be dated from the Middle Palaeolithic up to the Bronze Age. The author presents the sites of Vedrovice V (Valoch, 1993), Moravský Krumlov IV (Neruda and Nerudová, eds., 2009) and Želešice III (Škrdla *et al.*, 2010a) as the main Moravian stratified Szeletian sites; however, he also mentions other, predominantly, surface sites, which could be dated to this technocomplex.

Much attention is devoted to the technocomplex of Bohunician, which is a topic that has been already studied by the author over a long period (*e.g.* Škrdla, 1996). Individual subchapters discuss the stratified and dated assemblages originating from particular sites in Bohunice (Valoch, 1976; Škrdla, Tostevin, 2005) and on the Stránská skála hill (Svoboda, Bar-Yosef, eds., 2003), and also from the recently excavated sites of Tvarožná X (Škrdla *et al.*, 2009) and Ořečov IV (Škrdla *et al.*, 2017). Attention is also paid to the settlement micro-regions with the appearance of the mostly surface sites determined as Bohunician, such as the eastern margin of the Brno basin (Svoboda, 1987), Bobrava river valley (Valoch, 1956; Škrdla, *et al.*, 2011), surroundings of Mohelno (Škrdla, 1999; Škrdla, 2012), and the Ondratice micro-region (Mlejnek, 2015). Quite unsystematic is the presence of another chapter devoted to other European Bohunician sites and to Bohunician analogies outside of Europe.

This is probably due to the personal interest of the author with this issue and also due to the relevance of the Bohunician as the possible first AMH migration wave to Europe. Important could also be the fact that Bohunician sites are not so numerous as sites dated to other EUP technocomplexes (e.g. Aurignacian); it was therefore possible to mention also the other assemblages outside of Moravia. Moreover, the Bohunician is the only Palaeolithic technocomplex with a type site and central settlement area (Brno basin) located in Moravia.

Rather surprising is the definition of the independent Líšeň/Podolí industrial type based just on the single excavated site Líšeň/Podolí I (Líšeň VII – Hrubé Podsedky; Škrdla, 2016). The reason for this definition is, according to the author, the fact that this assemblage shares attributes typical for three different central European EUP technocomplexes (Bohunician, Szeletian and Jerzmanowician – LRJ). However, it is also true that other assemblages assigned to other particular EUP technocomplexes differ one from another and it remains questionable as to whether it is appropriate to define an independent industrial type just on the basis of an assemblage from a single site. Another reason for the definition of the Líšeň/Podolí type could be the uniqueness of this site due to the presence of the pierced and ochre-coloured tertiary mollusc shells. It is one of the oldest proofs of jewellery fabrication in Europe, which makes this site absolutely exceptional. It is noteworthy that the note in this book is the very first publication of this find, although it could be expected to find the first publication of this unique find as a paper in some prestigious peer-reviewed scientific journal rather than in a conclusive monograph.

Finally, the Aurignacian, the first European culture probably created by AMH, is mentioned as the last of the EUP technocomplexes. Although Moravia belongs to regions with a high density of Aurignacian sites, only a limited space is devoted to this technocomplex in the book reviewed. All the stratified sites are described: Mladeč Caves with finds of the AMH bone remains associated with the Aurignacian antler and stone tools (Teschler-Nicola, ed., 2006); Stránská skála hill settlement cluster near Brno (Svoboda, Bar-Yosef, eds., 2003); Líšeň I – Čtvrtě stratified site (Škrdla, et al., 2010b); Líšeň VIII – Na Výhonem (Škrdla, et al., 2013); Napajedla III (Škrdla, 2007); Vedrovice Ia (Oliva, 2016, p.296); and Milovice I (Oliva, 2016, p.219). By contrast, a description of lithic assemblages from numerous surface

sites is missing (e.g. Oliva, 1987). This could be due to the fact that a description of numerous Moravian micro-regions with the Aurignacian settlements would perhaps exceed the expected extent of this publication. One interesting piece of information is that the Aurignacian spread into Moravia as late as during its middle phase. The presence of the early Aurignacian, which is known, for example, from the near Danube valley (Willendorf II, archaeological horizon 3; Nigst and Haesaerts, 2012), has not yet been recorded here. It could be caused by the longer survival of the older technocomplexes of the Bohunician and Szeletian in Moravia.

As minor flaws in this book, rare typos may be mentioned. Furthermore, the discussion and conclusion sections could be somewhat longer. In conclusion, however, it can be stated that, after a book devoted to an Upper Palaeolithic settlement on the middle reach of the Morava River (Škrdla, 2005), the author has come up with another precious summarizing monograph which should not be missing from the bookshelves of anyone interested in the central European Palaeolithic.

Ondřej Mlejnek

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