

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM "MARITSA-IZTOK" – RADNEVO

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPEDITION "MARITSA-IZTOK"

MARITSA-IZTOK  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

VOL. 5

RADNEVO, 2001

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

PROBLEMS OF PREHISTORY

Chairmen: Dr. I. Panayotov (Archaeological Institut with Museum – BAS, Sofia), V. Matsanova (Museum of History, Pazardzhik);  
Secretary: M. Stefanova (National Museum of History, Sofia);  
Participants: Dr. K. Leshtakov (Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"),  
Dr. S. Alexandrov (Archaeological Institut with Museum – BAS, Sofia), Dr. S. Chohadzhiev (Museum of History, Kyustendil), Dr. L. Nikolova (Museum of History, Karlovo) and Dr. P. Stanev (Museum of History, Veliko Turnovo).

Upon proposal of Dr. I. Panayotov the reports are delivered in chronological order and the discussion follows the problems relevant to the two periods – Neolithic and Bronze Age.

NEOLITHIC PROBLEMS

**I. Panayotov:** I am giving the floor to L. Nikolova to make a report.

THE UPPER STRYAMA VALLEY  
IN THE EARLY NEOLITHIC (KARANOVO I CULTURE)

*Lolita Nikolova*

The initial stage of investigation of the Early Neolithic in the Upper Stryama valley is connected with drilling excavations of P. Detev in 1960<sup>s</sup> and 1970<sup>s</sup> (Banya-Ploskata Mogila and Chernichevo). It should be also stressed upon the settlement discovered in the town of Karlovo, which according to popular communication had cultural layer of 1–1.50 m and was characterized by white painted pottery (unpublished). At the beginning of 1990<sup>s</sup>, L. Nikolova has documented two settlements – Dubene-Pishtikova Mogila and Kliment-Banyata (Nikolova L. 2000 with ref.).

Therefore, for the time being, five settlements are known from Early Neolithic in the Upper Stryama valley – three tells and two open thin-leveled settlements. The only stratigraphic data originate from Dubene-Pishtikova Mogila and Kliment-Banyata. Perhaps the tell of Chernichevo was investigated over the biggest area. All the stages of Karanovo I culture except the initial formative one have been documented in the upper Stryama valley. The end of Karanovo I culture corresponds to the end of the Early Neolithic in the western Upper Thrac. Some emblematic features of the material culture of Karanovo I culture are represented in fig. 1.

Brown and black and gray smoothed and burnished pottery (with variants), as well as red burnished pottery characterize the Early Neolithic ceramic style of Karanovo I culture in the Upper

Stryama valley. The white-painted pottery and as exception red painted pottery is idiosyncratic of the ceramic style. The big storage vessels are represented by spherical pithoi and short-necked vessels with rounded body, in some cases with relief ornamentation. Impresso-pottery has been documented in several variants. Vertical corded handles characterize the pots. They are with a spherical body and flat base and belong to the brown smoothed and brown burnished groups of ceramics. Red burnished spherical bowls represent another typical shape, some of which with S-profiled and white-painted ornament. The deep conical bowls belong to other widely distributed types, which are with pedestal or massive ring-like bases or with flat base. The black burnished pottery is rarer distributed characterizing spherical bowls with corded vertical handled. The pedestal bases, which belong to conical bowls, tulip-vessels and other shapes are unarticulated or divided into two or three parts.

The earliest pottery from Early Neolithic in the upper Stryama valley has been already characterized by white-painted pottery (fig. 1 c–h). Those ceramics are very close to the pottery from the earlier Slatina horizons in Sofia field. But the closest parallels to the west originate from Chavdar from Zlatitsa-Pirdop hollow, up to the third horizon, in the light of the evidence published (Georgiev G.II. 1981;

Fig. 1.

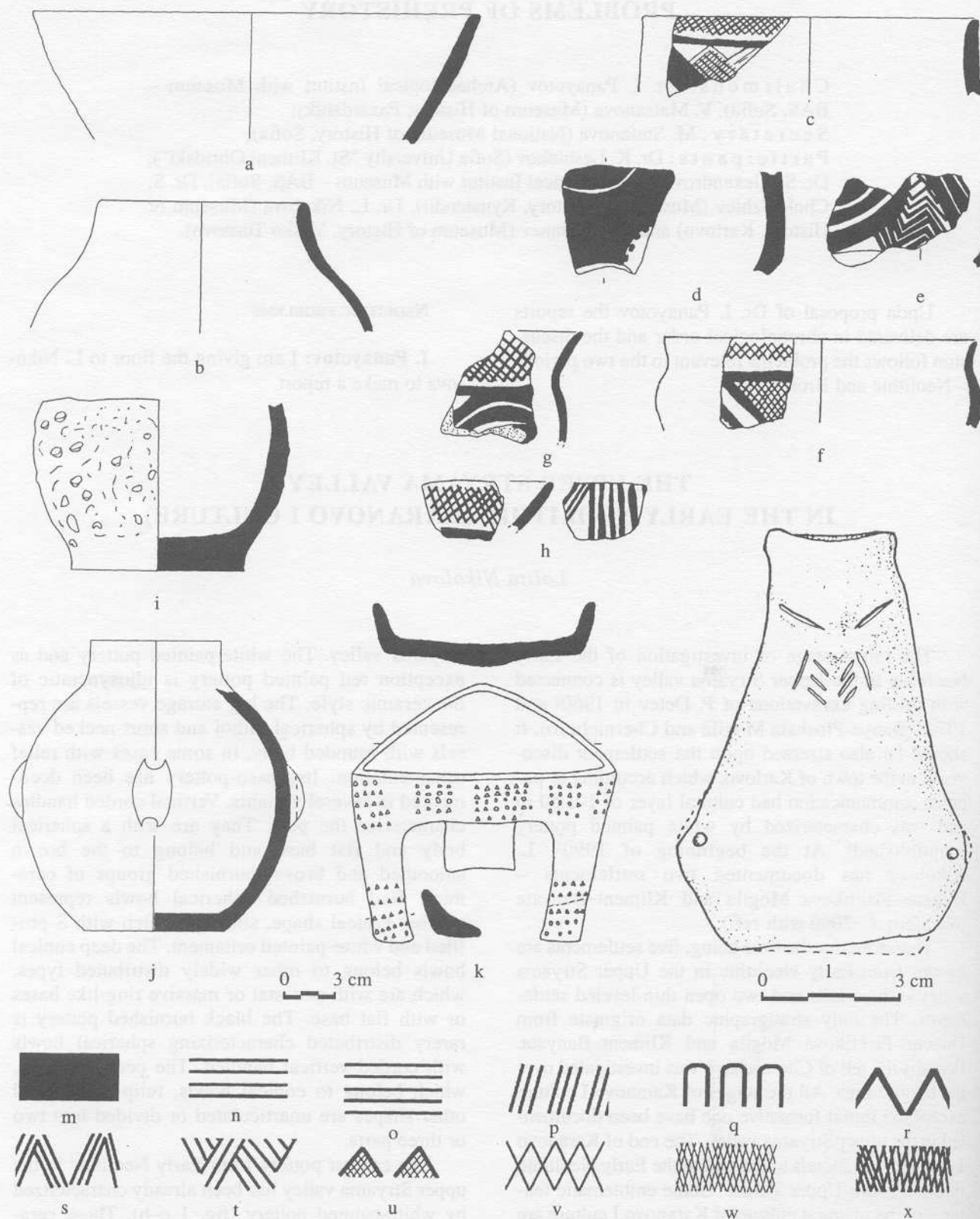


Fig. 1. Idiosyncratic features of the Karanovo I culture in the Upper Stryama valley. Chernichevo (a-f, i-j), Dubene-Pishtikova Mogila (g-h), Kliment-Banyata (k), Banya-Ploskata Mogila (l). Ornaments (m-x) characterizes the pedestal bases of the Chernichevo white-painted pottery (after *Nikolova L.* 2000).

Николов В. 1994). As the archaeological record shows, through the uppermost Stryama course, the population could deeply enter the western Sredna Gora Mountains where near contemporary Koprivshtitsa it was possible population to reach the upper Topolnitsa basin and from there to go into the Iskur and Struma valleys. So, in some cases the geographical determination of the Upper Stryama valley (divided by the Western Sredna Gora Mountains from the Iskur and the Struma basins) was contradicted to the general integration cultural processes. The similarity in the pottery indicates that there was an active communicating line through the western Sredna Gora Mountains passes. In other words, the Upper Stryama valley was in an integration position to connect both the micro-regions in the Central Balkans, despite the geographic mountain barrier. But the question is complicated, as for the time being, it is not clear the directions of diffusions of the white-painted pottery style into Upper Thrace. On its hand, the cult-table from Kliment-Banyata has parallels in whole area of Karanovo I culture (fig. 1 k). However, one of the most expressive Early Neolithic finds – the female figurine from Banya-Ploskata Mogila (Николова Л. 2000:обр. 1 а) – also confirms the active western direction of contacts of the population from the Upper Stryama valley, despite we do not know well the mobile art of eastern Upper Thrace.

In the light of the recent data, there is no evidence of a distribution of monochromic ceramics in Upper Thrace (Early Neolithic IA after: Nikolova L. 1998). In addition, according to the recent data,

there are also no data on the earliest horizon of the white-painted pottery in the Balkans known from the western Central Balkans, western Lower Danube and southern Middle Danube (Early Neolithic IB). Palaeoecological evidence indicates the first farmers impacted upon the forested landscape that predominated in the Balkans, but there is in fact a deficiency in the record from Upper Thrace (Willis K., K.D. Barnett. 1994).

The Early Neolithic II-III development in the Upper Stryama valley indicates that cultural processes in the Southern Balkans were rather complicated – with different rhythm of integration of the distinct cultural-geographic zones. It is especially expressive at the latest stage of the Early Neolithic when in Sofia field Starcevo culture influence became very strong (Николов В. 1996). It looks as if at that point a frontier zone was Zlatitsa-Pirdop hollow. The new evidence from the Upper Stryama valley makes more precise the close interrelations between the Chavdar settlement and Karanovo I traditions in the white painted pottery (Georgiev G.II. 1981:figs. 35–38 a; 39–48; Nikolov V. 1994:figs. 1–4; cf. fig. 1 c–h). A model of active cultural interactions between both microregions can be argued. However, we need vaster investigation to study in more detail the peculiarities of ceramic style in both microregions under discussion, as for the time being, there is missing evidence of a polychrome pottery in the Upper Stryama valley.

*translated by the autor*

## REFERENCES

НИКОЛОВ В. 1994. Рисуваната орнаментация върху раннеолитни керамични съдове от Чавдар. – ГДА-НБУ, I, София, 185–208.

НИКОЛОВ В. 1996. Неолитната култура в българските земи в контекста на Анатолия и Балканите. – ГДА-НБУ, II-III, София, 133–144.

НИКОЛОВА Л. 2000. Праисторически женски фигурки от Горнострямската долина. – Археологически вестник, III, 2, 3–8.

GEORGIEV G.II. 1981. Die neolithische Siedlung bei Čavdar, Bezirk Sofia. – ИАИ, XXXVI, 63–109.

NIKOLOVA L. 1998. Neolithic sequence: The Upper Stryama valley in Western Thrace (with Appendix:

Radiocarbon chronology of Balkan Neolithic). – DP, 25, 99–131.

NIKOLOVA L. 2000. Towards the Neolithic and Copper Age Development in the Balkans (Data from the Stryama Valley). – In: L. Nikolova (ed.), Technology, Style and Society. Contributions to the Innovations between the Alps and the Black Sea in Prehistory, BAR Oxford, BAR International Series, London, 65–92.

WILLIS K., K.D. BARNETT. 1994. The Neolithic Transition – Fact or Fiction? Palaeoecological Evidence from the Balkans. – The Holocene, IV, 3, 326–330.