



## Book Reviews

**STUDIES IN THE FINAL PALAEOLITHIC SETTLEMENT OF THE GREAT EUROPEAN PLAIN (EDS) M KOBUSIEWICZ AND J KABACINSKI**, *Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology Polish Academy of Sciences, Poznań Branch Poznań Prehistoric Society* 2007. 208 pages, 126 illus incl 6 col, 5 b/w, 7 tables, ISBN 978-83-89959-85-0 hb, price unknown.

This volume is the proceedings of a meeting held in 2003 of commission 32 of the *Union International des Sciences Préhistoriques et Protohistoriques* (UISPP), dedicated to the 'Late Palaeolithic of the Great European Plain'. This is one of the most active and long-lived of the UISPP commissions, and since the meeting on which this volume reports, several subsequent meetings have taken place. Fourteen papers in total represent various regions from northeast Germany in the west to Latvia and Russia in the east, presenting data from regions across the Central and Eastern European plain itself as well as its edges to the north (Sweden) and the south (Hungary and Slovakia, with several allusions to Moravia). Detail and quality of production is high, as one has come to expect of this commission's energetic outputs, and it constitutes a worthy summary of the Lateglacial of the Great European Plain. As the 2003 meeting was held in Poznań, Poland has a high profile in the volume, headed by an excellent summary of the Polish lateglacial by Ginter and Połtowicz. Evidence of three main population dispersals are evident in Poland; that of the Magdalenian prior to the Lateglacial Interstadial; a subsequent Magdalenian dispersal during the first half of the Lateglacial Interstadial (the Bølling in old money, or if you are fashionable, the Meiendorf: see De Clerck 2004 and Terberger *et al.* 2009 for discussion); and those of the Arched/Curved Backed Points Complex during the Allerød. The archaeology reveals that the area north of the Carpathians was exploited by groups several centuries before the major Magdalenian expansion across Western and Central Europe during the Meiendorf, although the wide geographical distribution of the sites, the presence of rich inventories representative of base camps, and good evidence for multi-seasonal occupation suggests that this was not a brief and unstructured dispersal.

The Meiendorf period Hamburgian features greatly, and deservedly, given its ubiquity on the plain. Kabaciński and Kobusiewicz discuss Hamburgian sites which were recovered through rescue excavations along the western end of the Warsaw-Frankfurt-Oder motorway. These have provided evidence of Hamburgian settlement in the east of the country (the Polish Lowlands), which had otherwise assumed to be restricted to Poland's western regions. Now, the country's biggest cluster of Hamburgian sites has been identified along the middle course of the Oder River, which has radically revised our understanding of Hamburgian cultural geography. Terberger and Lübke note for the first time the presence of the Hamburgian in northeastern Germany, the earliest evidence of which appears early on in the Meiendorf. Previously it had been assumed that this young morainic region was not able to support human groups at this time, although their re-evaluation of existing assemblages in the light of an expectation of a Hamburgian presence given its appearance in Jutland and Zeeland in its later (Havelte) phase, convincingly shows how isolated presence can be demonstrated, in this case representing dispersal from more western Hamburgian settlement. Hamburgian settlement is once again the earliest evidence of human dispersal in the Gorzów Dale in western Poland, discussed by Płonka.

Burdukiewicz, Szyrkiewicz and Malkiewicz discuss the exceptionally rich lateglacial archaeology of the Kopanica Valley in southwest Poland, which is dominated by two rivers and where fieldwork since the 1930s has revealed a useful environmental sequence from the Last Glacial Maximum, against which the earliest human dispersal relating to the Hamburgian and later dispersals of the tanged point complex (Bromme) and Ahrensburgian/Swidderian can be viewed. Schild, Królik, Tomaszewski and Ciepiewska contribute an excellent discussion of the settlement and ochre mining site of Rydno, in the northeastern foothills of the Holy Cross Mountains. After nearly a century of research at least 370 settlement assemblages are known from the vicinity of the mines (the term is misleading: these are pits <2m in depth in which haematite has been dug up from gravels). All of these are located on the lower slopes and terraces of the Kamienna Valley; they span the Lateglacial to Early Bronze Age, and in terms of Palaeolithic settlement the majority of those which are culturally diagnostic, relate to the Arched backed Point Complex and (particularly) the Late Tanged Point Complex or Masovian. The repeated attraction to this area - 'like a magnet' as the authors put it - over several millennia provide a welcome reminder that the use of ochre did not decline with the loss of 'cave art' elsewhere in Europe. This is also evidence in Sulgostowska's useful general survey of ochre use in Younger Dryas and early Preboreal Masovian (Swidderian) sites in Poland. Ochre is actually known from four sites of this period (Calowanie, Kocierz, Rydno and Ośnica), from one of which, Ośnica, derives a triangular pendant of ochre. The appearance of ochre on a number of flint tools from these sites suggests its widespread use.

Migal provides a useful summary of the differing technological *chaînes opératoires* used to manufacture Final Palaeolithic tanged and shouldered points in the Central European lowland, demonstrating that in two main traditions - Bromme/Lyngby and Swidderian - each involved a well-planned multi-stage production sequence, and shows that 'cultural' differences between major traditions goes a lot deeper than simple point typologies. Galiński concentrates on the Pleistocene - Holocene transition in the neighbouring regions of Germany and Poland. Here, the Ahrensburgian - characterised by abundant Zonhoven points - seems to have persisted from the Younger Dryas into the Preboreal, although it is admitted that dating of existing assemblages is difficult and there is in my opinion no compelling reason why the Ahrensburgian need not represent a very tight chronological position in the region, as it appears to in Britain.

Further afield, Kaminská provides a useful summary of the Final Palaeolithic of Slovakia, at the junction of the Northern European Plain and Central Uplands. As with neighbouring Moravia, human dispersal occurred earlier here in the post-Last Glacial Maximum (LGM) than it did on the plain itself; the Epigravettian appeared around or before 18,000 (uncal) BP, and subsequent to this, dispersals occurred in both Meiendorf and Allerød. A similarly early post-LGM dispersal into the Carpathian Basin is noted by Dobosi in her succinct summary of the Lateglacial in the region. Here, one is dealing with a cultural persistence of Pavlovian elements down to ~16,000 (uncal) BP, and evidence of Lateglacial dispersals is scant indeed, in both cases suggesting that the population history of the region had little to do with that of the plain. Schmitt discusses the tanged point Hensbacka assemblages of the west coast of Sweden. Occurring at the Pleistocene/Holocene transition it is no surprise that these points bear strong similarities with Ahrensburg forms, suggesting that this complex represents a northwards dispersal of the Ahrensburgian as deglaciation went through its final phases. In his study of the Final Palaeolithic of Central Russia, Sorokin notes that such work is still in its infancy; a good number of Lateglacial sites are known although very few can be said to be 'representative' (i.e. taxonomically identifiable) and dating is relatively imprecise due to the lack of charcoal and thus radiocarbon dates. Two broad traditions seem evident: one reflecting the Gravettian, linked by the lateglacial Resetta culture to several of the early Holocene; and the Lyngby tradition relating to the Ahrensburgian. Clearly research in this region will be of critical importance for understanding the complexities of population dispersals in the last millennia of the Pleistocene.

By virtue of the lack of preservation of organic remains that is so common on northern European lateglacial sites, discussion of faunal assemblages is understandably rare. The one exception is a useful presentation of radiocarbon dates for reindeer remains from Latvia by Jungner, Lukševica, Lukševics and Zagorska. The earliest reindeer probably arrived ~13,000 (uncal) BP, and probably explains the arrival of Final Palaeolithic humans in the region during the Allerød, both dispersing northwards up the country's major north-south oriented river valleys. A major Final Palaeolithic site – Salaspils Laukskola – deserves more attention than it has received as it contains a rich lithic assemblage with elements which derive from Poland, as well as evidence of dwelling structures, although taxonomic attribution and dating of Latvian assemblages has yet to be determined.

As a British specialist I couldn't help but note the similarities of the northeastern German assemblages discussed by Terberger and Lübke and those of southwestern Poland discussed by Burdukiewicz et al. to the broadly contemporary (Meiendorf) British 'Creswellian' assemblages. All of these possess elements of both Magdalenian and Hamburgian attribution, and raise in my opinion the intriguing question as to whether there is a connection between lateglacial human dispersals and assemblage change. Why are these regions apparently first settled at the point when lithic assemblages are visibly in transition? Dispersal is at the heart of the book even if the term is nowhere used, and it makes a useful addition to the repeated and short-lived dispersals of Palaeolithic groups that we are now used to. As it stands several can be recognised: a culturally Magdalenian dispersal north of the Carpathians prior to its main dispersal in the first half of the Lateglacial Interstadial; at least two (earlier and later) Hamburgian dispersals, the latter of which at least reached further north and east than those preceding to include Jutland and Zeeland in the Havelte phase; complicated and poorly-understood Allerød dispersals relating to regional expressions of the Arched/Curved Backed Points Complex; and the expansion of the Ahrensburgian as far as southern Scandinavia at the Pleistocene-Holocene transition. Clearly a wealth of new fieldwork and the valuable re-evaluation of old collections is really remodelling our understanding of the increasingly complex population dynamics of lateglacial northern Europe. Some obvious issues arise: dating the disappearance of the Hamburgian *sensu lato* has been difficult and remains a priority. Did it persist into the Older Dryas, or was it the decline in temperature and associated environmental change that brought about its downfall? What is the significance of similarities between the Hamburgian and subsequent assemblages of the Arched/Curved Backed Point Complex?

## References

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