

Abstract #: 440

TRANSFORMATION OF THE LATE NEOLITHIC VINČA CULTURE: INNOVATIONS AND TRADITIONS IN THE COPPER AGE OF THE CENTRAL BALKANS

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During the second half of the 5th millennium BC communities in the Central Balkans experienced fundamental changes. The complex process of transformation of the Vinča culture included a series of internal and external factors, which have led to the gradual abandonment of long-lasting large settlements, micro-regions, and regions, and the formation of the new cultural milieu of the Copper Age. These changes included the establishing of settlements in completely new places and colonization of previously sparsely populated or unpopulated areas. This was accompanied by changes in the overall number, size, internal structure and spatial relationships between settlements, as well as in diet, agriculture, animal husbandry, textile production and copper metallurgy, among other things. The wide range of inhabited altitudinal zones, an increased focus on soils unsuitable for cultivation, complementarity of neighbouring settlements in topography (flat/hill-fort or cave sites), geomorphology (valley/hinterland), and local resources, as well as more frequent settling of naturally fortified positions suggest the utilisation of a wider range of local resources, the existence of economically specialised, cooperative and competitive settlements, cultural diversification, conspicuous territoriality, high level of control over the surrounding area, communications and resources and a greater degree of inter-connections between settlements. On the other hand, the orientation of most Early Copper Age settlements towards a mixed economy and the great importance of agriculture in certain areas indicate a strong Neolithic tradition. All of this indicates an overall decline in population and significant changes in social organization during the second half of the 5th millennium BC. Furthermore, a high level of continuity in the settling of the same places can be noted after a new settlement pattern had been established.

Keywords

Central Balkans, 5th millennium BC, settlement patterns, Neolithic traditions, Copper Age innovations

Note/comment