

The Balkan Proto-Indo-Europeans in the Fourth and Third Millennia BC

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Introduction

The territory of this study comprises the region bordered by the Drina River on the west, the Black Sea on the east, the Carpathians to the north and the Aegean to the south, in other words, the territory of southern Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, northern Greece and north-western Turkey. The main river, the Danube, connects the northern Balkans with Central Europe. The Maritsa River links the southern Balkans with the Aegean (Greece and Turkey) on the one hand, and through the Zlatitsa – Pirdop, upper Strouma and Velika Morava valleys—with the lower and middle Danube basin. The fertile valleys of the Tundzha, Maritsa, Stryama, Strouma, Vardar, Danube, Drina, etc. vary with respect to agricultural capacity but all possess the range of semi-mountain, mountain or lowland steppe grazing lands which predetermined the agricultural-stockbreeding structure of the prehistoric Balkans (Fig. 1).

The period of the Final Copper Age (= FCA), i.e. the earlier 4th millennium BC, as well as of the Early Bronze Age (= EBA), i.e. from the later 4th millennium BC until the late 3rd millennium BC, belong to the same period that Marija Gimbutas associated with the Indo-Europeanization of the Balkans (Gimbutas 1997) by way of a steppe nomadic invasion; this model has been stressed frequently elsewhere (see for instance Mallory 1989 with ref.). It should be stressed that Gimbutas saw the process of the Indo-Europeanization “not only as a transformation of the social structure and the administrative system but also as a religious war, analogous to the introduction of Christianity in Europe” (Gimbutas 1990: 18; cp. Stefanovich 1992).

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Fig. 1. Principal Final Copper Age and Early Bronze Age sites in the Balkans (settlements, flat and tumulus cemeteries).

Actually, the crucial periods for the Balkans extend all the way to the end of the Early Bronze Age. If we accept that every general change in the material culture is a result of a new population, each of these periods can be a candidate for general ethnic change. It is not by chance that the migration from the North Pontic is connected with the FCA Cernavoda I culture by S. Morintz and P. Roman (1968), as well as with the EBA I Cernavoda III culture by N. Tasič (1995). In both cases the main argument rests on ceramic change in the eastern

lower Danube basin (Gumelnița > Cernavoda) or in the entire lower Danube basin (the emergence of the Cernavoda III culture).

At the same time ceramic studies of the later Cucuteni and of the Krivodol-Sălcuța-Bubanj complex also suggest a gradual decline. The question arises whether there might not be alternative explanations for the ceramic changes in the Balkans during the Final Copper Age than simple migration theory? The social change model is offered here as an alternative explanation confirmed by detailed region analysis (Nikolova 1999).

Final Copper Age

First of all, we should keep in mind the prosperity of the Balkan Late Copper Age society, to which we would attribute the gold-rich cemetery at Varna which dates to the later 5th millennium BC. Despite the significance of metal production in this period, the economic base was still agriculture and stockbreeding. An absence of suitable techniques to retain soil fertility and a proposed reduction in temperature by the end of the 5th millennium BC would have produced a significant economic crisis. So it is very probable that the rich Varna cemetery reflects not the prosperity, but the initial crisis, which required extravagant fertility rituals. Accordingly, a complex of internal reasons were primary factors in the decline of the Late Copper Age in the eastern Balkans.

The social implications are especially evident in light of the Yunatsite excavations in the upper Maritsa valley where archaeologists discovered numerous skeletons in or between the houses of the latest Karanovo VI phase of the site (Mazanova 1992). Different theories have been proposed to account for the deceased (Nikolova 1999: 309: 312). The main excavator, N. Merpert (1997), argues that the Late Copper Age population were victims of Early Bronze Age invaders from the north. This explanation ignores the numerous settlements in the Balkans where there is no evidence for contacts between the Karanovo VI culture and the putative steppe invaders. For instance, at the type-site of Telish (Fig. 2) there is evidence that it was in contact with both the Final Copper Age at Yunatsite (Telish 3) but also yielded a level (Telish 4) which post-dates the Final Copper Age at Yunatsite but precedes the Early Bronze Age level on the tell. The dynamic interactions in the

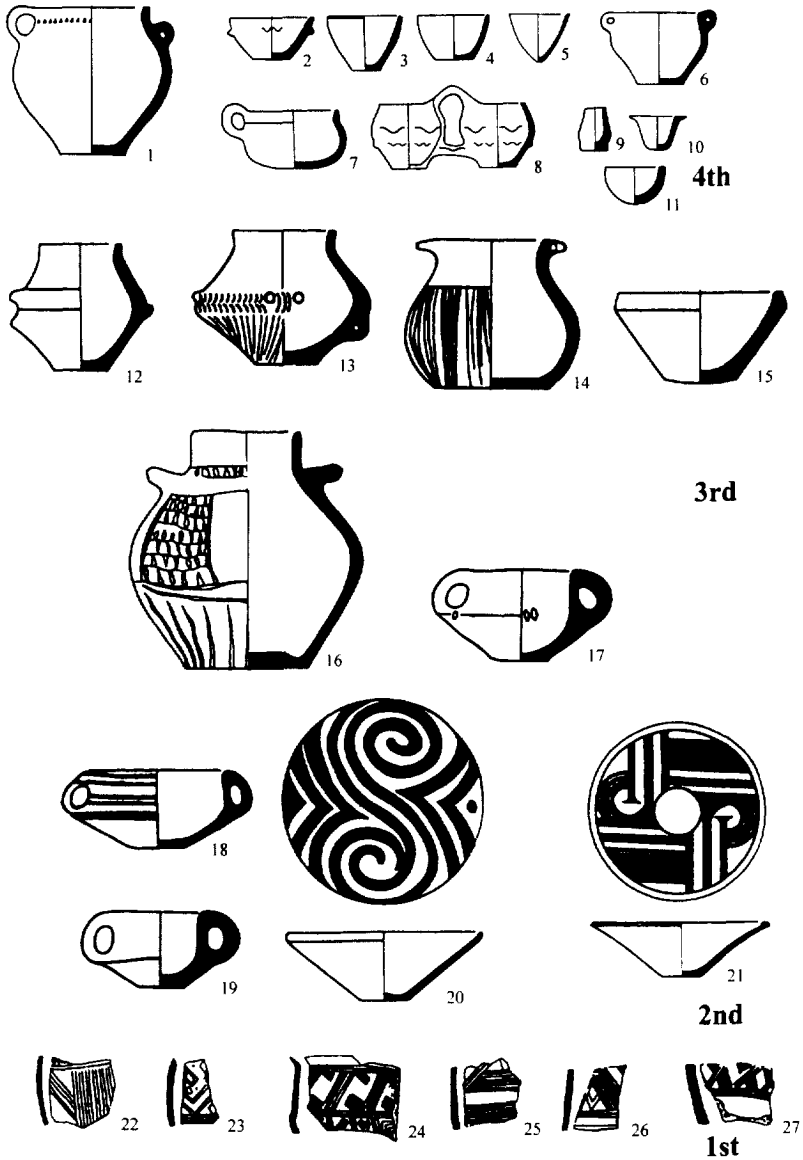


Fig. 2. Telish 1-4 sequence. The Later Copper Age in the western lower Danube.

Balkans documented for all the prehistoric periods make it impossible to believe that the population at Yunatsite could live for more than 300 years in traditions of the Copper Age when the surrounding area had already changed. Merpert's thesis also ignores the fact that the earliest EBA horizon at Yunatsite did not represent the earliest Bronze Age in the Balkans.

The most recent evidence indicates a social conflict between the latest Karanovo VI and the Krivodol-Sălcuța-Bubanj (= KSB) population. The latter were in contact with the Karanovo VI population in the upper Maritsa valley when in eastern Bulgarian Thrace most of the Karanovo VI settlements had already been abandoned. There is the possibility of an intrusion from the north but this concerns the Cernavoda I culture or the Telish-Sălcuța population, from the lower Danube basin to the south. But the lack of any evidence of these cultures at the Yunatsite site, as well as the rest of western Bulgarian Thrace, does nothing to support this hypothesis.

The evidence of the Final Copper Age from other regions in the Balkans can be explained by several theoretical models:

Evolutionary model — the transformation of the Sălcuța-Krivodol-Bubanj (=SKB) complex as well as the Karanovo-Gumelnița-Varna (=KGV) complex;

Innovation model — the appearance of a new ceramic style in the Cernavoda I, Sălcuța-Telish and Huhyadihalom-Vajska cultures;

Transformation-innovative model — for instance, Șuplevac-Bakarno Gumno and Yagodina group.

Migration model — the migration of the Suvorovo population.

Socially, the cultural changes during the Final Copper Age resulted in the disappearance of the long-term settlements (tells). An exception to this is the evidence for settlements in the southern Balkans (the central Rhodope Mountains and the middle and upper Strouma valley). In the northern Balkans the thin level short-term settlements had begun to predominate. It should be stressed that sites like Telish (Fig. 2) and Galatin in north-western Bulgaria did not represent the real cultural sequence in the western lower Danube. Other sites like Škodrinno Polje in eastern Serbia and the Ostrovul Corbului cemetery (Fig. 3, 4: 1-9) from the later FCA I followed Telish 3 and preceded Telish 4 (Nikolova 1999: 80, 82). Some new

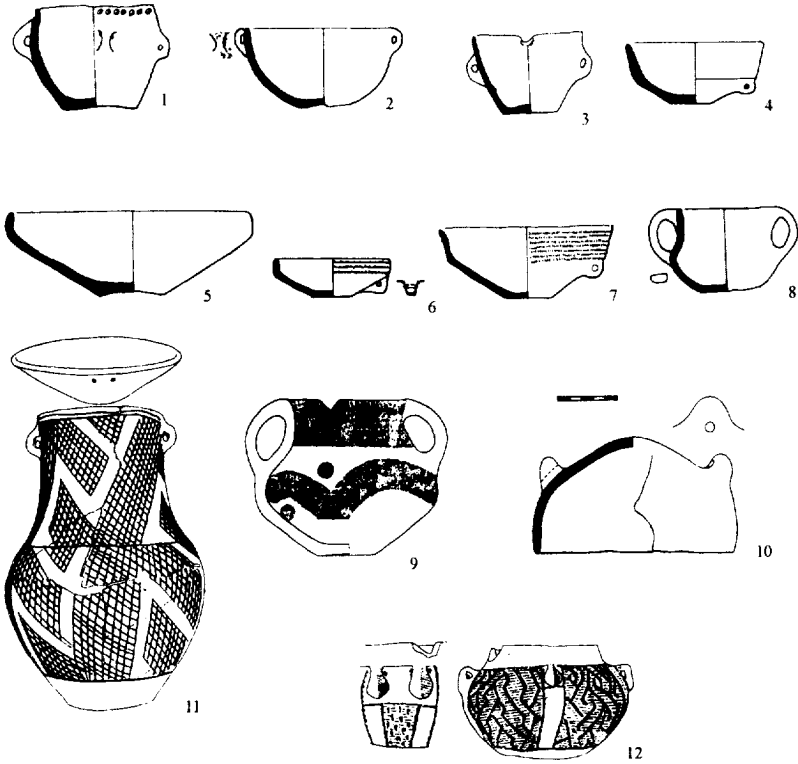


Fig. 3. FCA I burial pottery from Ostrovul Corbului, western lower Danube basin.

elements occurred among the ceramics of the Ostrovul Corbului cemetery (Figs. 3: 6-7) where P. Roman and A. Dodd-Oprîtescu recognized a Cernavoda I culture affinity (Roman and Oprîtescu 1989). However, even in cases with typical Bodrogkeresztúr ceramics (Fig. 3: 11), the KSB shapes existed as well. This suggests that the cemetery reflects the transformation of KSB communities using plain wares that served the pastoral groups, with a possible penetration of the Bodrogkeresztúr population who introduced the earliest applied disk-handled elements (Fig. 3: 12).

As far as the appearance of nomadism is concerned, pastoral and semi-pastoral economies were also part of the traditions of the middle Danube basin where the ceramic changes from the Tiszapolgár to the Bodrogkeresztúr and the Vajska-Hunyadihalom culture did not imply a general change of the economic and social structures. On the other hand, the

socio-economic structure of the KSB complex included pastoral groups. So, there is no reason to believe that pastoralism was imported into the north Balkans from elsewhere.

The mobile pastoral socio-economic nature of the Yagodina group in the central Rhodope Mountains is illustrated in both the environment and the thin-levelled habitations discovered, in several caves in the central Rhodope Mountains (Avramova 1992; Vajsov 1992; Vajsov 1993; Nikolova 1999). Daggers discovered there demonstrate the close contacts with the north, along with some pottery with parallels with the KSB complex. The demographic background of this population can be found in the latest Karanovo VI population representing one of the aspects of the transformation of the Karanovo VI culture. Other consequences could be a population decline (decreased fertility) during the transformation of agricultural-stockbreeding into a pastoral economy, which explains the demographic collapse of the Balkan Final Copper Age.

Keeping this model in mind, we can return to the situation in the eastern lower Danube basin where the dramatic change in ceramics is usually explained by a migration from the North Pontic. On the one hand, the tell-site of Drăgănești - Olt in the Olt River basin has exhibited the change of the pottery style from the Gumelnița culture into the KSB (Nikolova 1999: fig. 6.2). On the other hand, at a site like the Gumelnița tell the gradual decrease of the Gumelnița ceramic style could be observed. Thus, the emergence of a plain Cernavoda I pottery resulted also in a gradual decrease of the Gumelnița pottery, but in comparison to the KSB complex, the change was more dynamic. In addition, there is no homeland for the Cernavoda I culture pottery in the North Pontic (Manzura 1999) from whence it could have dispersed westwards. This is emphasized by the fact that the emergence of the Cernavoda I culture predated the Usatovo stage of the Tripolye-Cucuteni population that produced a similar pottery.

Therefore, economic and social factors for the ceramic change are of primary importance for explaining cultural change during the Late Copper – Final Copper Age in the eastern lower Danube basin. In this process we should stress the accelerated socio-economic role of the mobile pastoral population which was associated with the scepter graves in the eastern Balkans. That population was probably integrated with the Cernavoda I communities because a scepter seems to

appear together with the FCA false corded pottery at the Šuplevac tell (Pelagonia). Two scepters were discovered at Telish IV in north-western Bulgaria from the Sălcuța–Telish culture. The scepters appeared in different points of the western Circum-Pontic area (Govedarica and Kaizer 1996) but their initial connection with the north-west Pontic mobile pastoralists seems obvious. But it should be stressed that there is no evidence that can connect the distribution of the scepters with a mass intrusion of population. Also, their chronology is not very well defined as the Sălcuța and Šuplevac finds are without certain stratigraphic context; the scepters from Ruzhevo and Drama are chance finds; the Kyulevcha grave has no chronological markers other than the scepter, and the Telish finds mark a possible upper chronological border –FCA II (earlier second quarter of the 4th millennium BC).

The Final Copper Age is also characterized by development of copper metallurgy and the emergence of new types as the Jászladány axes and different types of daggers (Vajsov 1992; Vajsov 1993; Nikolova 1999: 290-94; 301-303; Fig. 5).

In light of the recent evidence, the FCA sees an economic shift toward nomadic and semi-nomadic structures in the entire Balkans in contrast to the stable mixed farming economies of the Early and Late Copper ages. The Final Copper Age can be defined culturally as a transformation-innovation period. These changes in the Balkans were the product of internal innovations that involved the adoption of some neighboring elements not only from the north Pontic but also from central Europe.

In ethnic terms we find a transformation and stagnation of the tribes of Gimbutas' "Old Europe" and an integration of the intrusive groups from the North Pontic within the transformed Old European population. The history of the southern Middle Danube includes the evolution and transformation of the Tiszapolgár population resulting in the appearance of the southern variant of the Bodrogkeresztúr culture followed by the Vajska – Hunyadihalom culture, the bearers of which was probably the same population.

As far as it is conceivable to equate material culture and strong cultural interactions with linguistic kinship, the Final Copper Age is a stage of the linguistic integration of the Balkans, the north Pontic and central Europe based on Proto-

Indo-European predecessors (Nikolova 1998).

The Early Bronze Age

The Early Bronze Age is divided into three stages: EBA I (c. 3600/3400 – 3000 BC), EBA II (3000 – 2500/2450 BC) and EBA III (2500/2450 – 2000 BC).

The earliest Bronze Age sites recently discovered in the southern Balkans do not represent the earliest Bronze Age in the different Balkan regions. For the time being, exclusively in the eastern lower Danube basin we can define the transition from the Copper Age to the Early Bronze Age by the appearance of the earliest Cernavoda III culture ceramic style documented at Hotnitsa-Vodopada (Fig. 6: 1) in north-central Bulgaria, as well as at Koprivets (Fig. 6: 2) and Oltenița-Renie II. These sites reflect the evolution of the Cernavoda I culture ceramic style and the appearance of typical EBA pottery elements. Chronologically, Hotnitsa-Vodopada probably corresponds to the latest Sălcuța-Telish and Vajnska-Hunyadihalom culture in most western micro-regions, but the chronological interrelations between the Vajnska-Hunyadihalom and Baden I culture in the southern middle Danube are not yet clear. The 14C dates place the site to c. 3600- 3500 BC (Nikolova 1999: 175-76). The earliest stratified ceramic evidence to the south, in Bulgarian Thrace, originates from Ezero A1, Golyama Detelina (Fig. 6: 5-6), Yunatsite 17-15 and Dubene IIA (Fig. 6: 9.11-12).

Further to the south, in the north Aegean, Sitagroi IV (Fig. 6: 8,10,13) has the earliest data for the EBA I in the southern Balkans. The 14C dates set the beginning of the site to c. 3300 BC. Chronologically close to these is the beginning of the Early Bronze levels of the Ezero tell in eastern Bulgarian Thrace, as well as the Yunatsite tell and Dubene-Sarovka tell in western Bulgarian Thrace. Based on the parallels with Sitagroi IV and late Baden I, Kovachevo III and Radomir-Vakhovo II in the middle and upper Struma also belong to the later 4th millennium BC. The evidence for contacts between Sitagroi IV and the Yunatsite I culture confirms the early dating of the EBA I levels at Dubene-Sarovka IIA (cf. Fig. 6: 9 and Fig. 6: 10). But in light of recent data, a considerable chronological gap exists between the latest Final Copper Age and earliest discovered EBA I in the southern regions of the Balkans. Does this gap represent the gradual depopulation of that region during the

Final Copper and the earlier Early Bronze ages, so that we can speak of a massive migration to the south in later EBA I?

In terms of archaeological evidence, it is not difficult to see a migration of population from north-western Anatolia into the northern Aegean and Bulgarian Thrace, based on the popularity of channel pottery at Poliochni I, Sitagroi IV, Dikili Tash IIIA, Yunatsite IIA, etc. The similarities with Baden I connects the eastern central Balkans with the southern middle Danube and can be accepted as evidence of a migration from central Europe to the south/southeast. Some Usatovo parallels in the pottery of the east Balkans may be recognized as proof for a migration of the Usatovo population to the west/southeast. Z. Sochacki has argued this multi-migration model for the Ezero culture (1988) but serious arguments contradict such a simple explanation.

First of all, keeping in mind the mobile pastoral and semi-pastoral socio-economic structure of the Final Copper Age, the process toward a more mobile life can result in a scantiness of material evidence of settlements, shelters or cemeteries. Secondly, a demographic increase in the later 4th millennium BC can be expected because of economic and social changes promoted by mixed agricultural strategies. An improving climate would have stimulated the settlement of mobile pastoralists. Thirdly, the ceramic evidence is the best record of the cultural interactions and the similarity between neighboring and distant cultures can be reasonably explained by a variety of cultural contacts. Therefore, the archaeological record makes it possible to see the Final Copper – the Early Bronze Age transition in terms of the settlement of mobile pastoral groups in the different Balkan micro-regions. An institution of long-term agricultural-stockbreeding and the semi-pastoral Balkan structure that predominated during the later EBA I, EBA II and EBA III characterizes the beginning of the EBA in the Balkans.

The different groups of the Yamna culture of mobile pastoral groups were integrated into these mixed farming systems at the end of the EBA I and in the EBA II (Nikolova 1999). That population was characterized by inhumation in the flexed position on the back while in the Balkans from the Final Copper Age and EBA I flexed inhumation on the side predominated (Fig. 4: 1-12, 14). However, already in Ezero A1 we find the flexed position on the back (Fig. 4: 13) that

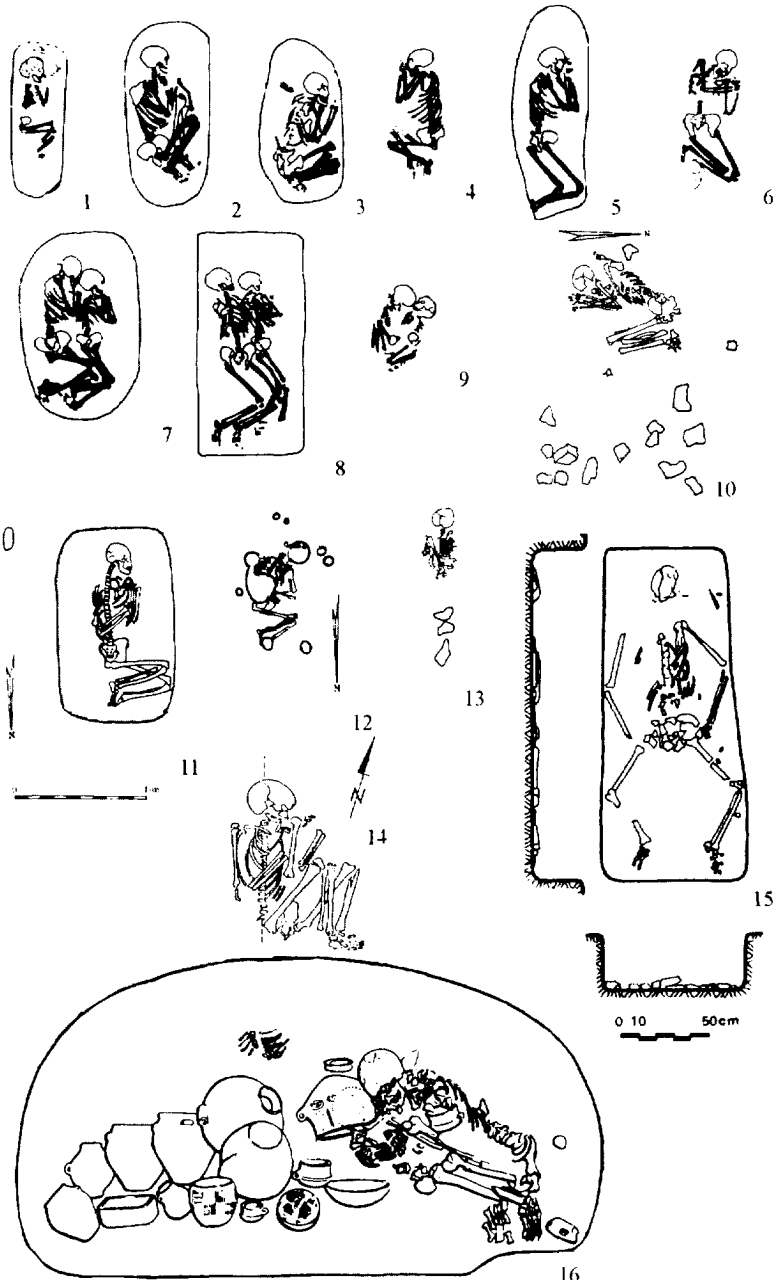


Fig. 4. Balkan burial rites from the FCA and EBA I-II periods. Ostrovul Corbului (1-9), Ezero (10-13), Vučedol (14, 16) and Goran Slatina (15).

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probably indicates Yamna cultural influence or it was already in the FCA where we find such a burial posture in the scepter grave from Kyulevcha.

The Yamna culture groups (Nikolova 1999: 369-89) emerged in the period of stability of the EBA I-II when different social structures flourished. They defined the cultural development only in some micro-regions like north-eastern Bulgaria. In most of the micro-regions the Yamna culture occupied small areas in the milieu of the native agricultural-stockbreeding communities (eastern Bulgarian Thrace, western lower Danube basin) or their occupations were short-term (Yugoslavian Banat). The integrative model should also be stressed for eastern Bulgarian Thrace. That model was not included in the zone division of Z. Sochacki (1988: fig. 1) that characterized not only areas of his zone I (for instance north-western Bulgaria), but also the area of Radnevo micro-region in eastern Bulgarian Thrace. In other words, the recent record clearly distinguishes both parts of Bulgarian Thrace and the eastern parts were integrated with the Yamna culture in the later EBA I and EBA II. That fact indicates that culture was not a barrier for the Yamna culture as it was thinkable in 1980s (Sochacki 1988), but was a part of the eastern EBA Balkan integrative culture system. The disappearance of the burial rituals of the Yamna culture in the Balkans during the EBA III reflects the process of settling down of these nomadic groups and probably their assimilation by native populations.

The EBA I-III societies in the Balkans underwent a process of social evolution. The theoretical model includes the emergence of chiefdoms during EBA II, evident in settlement hierarchy, and social stratification within regional cemeteries (Nikolova 1999). It is difficult to say whether every regional culture represented an independent chiefdom and whether the social homogeneity characterized the entire Balkans. Probably the main social unit of the Yamna culture was the household or lineage and rich graves appeared only exceptionally at tumulus cemeteries of this nomadic culture. One instance is the Yamna culture cemetery at Goran – Slatina where a bronze chisel was discovered in a secondary grave (Kitov et al. 1991: fig. 47e; Fig. 4: 15).

Various forms of chiefdoms can be assumed for the Yunatsite and Ezero cultures in Bulgarian Thrace, as well as for the Sitagroi Va–Dikili Tash IIIB group in the northern Aegean

and the Vučedol culture in the southern middle Danube. In terms of settlement architecture, for instance, the apsidal house emerged in FCA II (Telish, Fig. 7:1), and seems—along with the new element of the timber bridge (Fig. 7: 2) — to have continued in EBA I, according to the data from Yunatsite (Fig. 7:3) and Ezero A1 (Georgiev et al. 1979: figs. 55-57). But in EBA II it can be assumed that some of the apsidal houses had taken on a special function reflecting a higher social status, e.g., Dubene IIB2 (Nikolova 1999: fig. 13:2). A chieftain's burial can be seen from the double grave at Vučedol where a woman was sacrificed and deposited in a grave with a quantity of ceramics to accompany the grave of a chief (Nikolova 1999: fig. 20: 4; Fig. 4: 16). Ditches, already popular in the earlier EBA (Fig. 7: 4) where they enclosed settlements, occurred as a special cult construction in EBA III (Fig. 7: 5; Cherna Gora, unpublished excavations of K. Leshtakov). In most regions encrusted pottery was widely distributed in EBA II (Fig. 8; Nikolova 1996: 160-82).

A gradual cultural change characterized the different components of the EBA III Balkan cultures in the later 3rd millennium BC with respect to ceramic style, settlement pattern, metallurgy, etc.

With the exception of the Maros culture, encrusted pottery was replaced by a plain ware in most regions (Fig. 9). This ceramic change probably reflects the indirect influence of wheel-made ceramics (the popular in Anatolia), but a social change in the function of ceramics cannot be excluded. However, the ceramic style again connects the Yunatsite culture with the northern Balkans, so an influence from the north can be seen in the pointed based cups (Fig. 9: 1-4, 12). A common type of round-bottom cup was distributed as well (Fig. 9: 10; cp. Nikolova 1996: fig. 23). The spouted bowls are found both in Bulgarian Thrace and the western central Balkans (Fig. 9: 8, 13), but the rim-handled bowls remained peculiar to the northern Balkans (Fig. 9: 16). After a long break, the disk handled bowls again were distributed in the Balkans (Fig. 9: 19). Some peculiar shapes include the dipper in eastern and western Bulgarian Thrace (Fig. 9: 20; Cherichevo, unpublished).

A change in the settlement structures occurred in different micro-regions. In the northern Aegean the settlement of Dikili Tash was abandoned. At the same time, EBA III stone-based megarons emerged at the Kirklareli site in north-western

Turkey (Özdoğan 1998). In Bulgarian Thrace, the Ezero culture settlement structure shifted in form toward that of the new settlement centers (Nova Zagora) and Ezero was abandoned in the later EBA III despite its prosperity during the earlier phase of this stage. In the Yunatsite culture, the eponymous site continued its prosperity, but Dubene-Sarovka disappeared in later EBA III, as well as new centers like the Manole tell and Chernichevo tell occurred.

In south-western Bulgaria the scanty ceramic evidence of destroyed settlements probably implies the presence of short term occupation of the Pernik group III, a semi-mobile pastoral population in the EBA III. The change of the settlement environment characterized also the Velika Morava valley where Bubanj III group developed and the Proto-Vatina ceramic style emerged (Fig. 9: 5-7). In place of the long-term settlements of the Vučedol culture in the southern Middle Danube, the rare settlements of the Vinkovci culture and graves without a settlement context have been documented. The rich grave near Belgrade (Nikolova 1999: 368) from the last culture indicate a social stratification that continued the tradition of the Vučedol culture. J. O'Shea (1995) argues a social stratification at the EBA III – earlier Middle Bronze Maros culture cemeteries, but according to that author, there was no marked social differentiation for that culture in eastern Central Europe.

With respect to metallurgy the shaft-hole axe appears in EBA III with the emergence of the Apa-Neboiu type. The stratigraphic evidence from Yunatsite (the sixth horizon) indicates very early forms of that type – earlier EBA III (Nikolova 1999: 294-99; Fig. 5).

The gradual social evolution resulted in the appearance of trade centers. K. Leshtakov proposed Gulubovo as such a center in north-eastern Thrace in later EBA and MBA (1996). It can be assumed that exchange systems were already functioning between south-eastern Europe and western Anatolia in EBA II and even earlier, but there are no certain imports from this period.

Discussion and conclusions

The socio-cultural model in this study is based on the recognition of the limitation of the archaeological record as well as the most recent evidence from the later prehistory of the Balkans. First of all, there are reasons to believe that the

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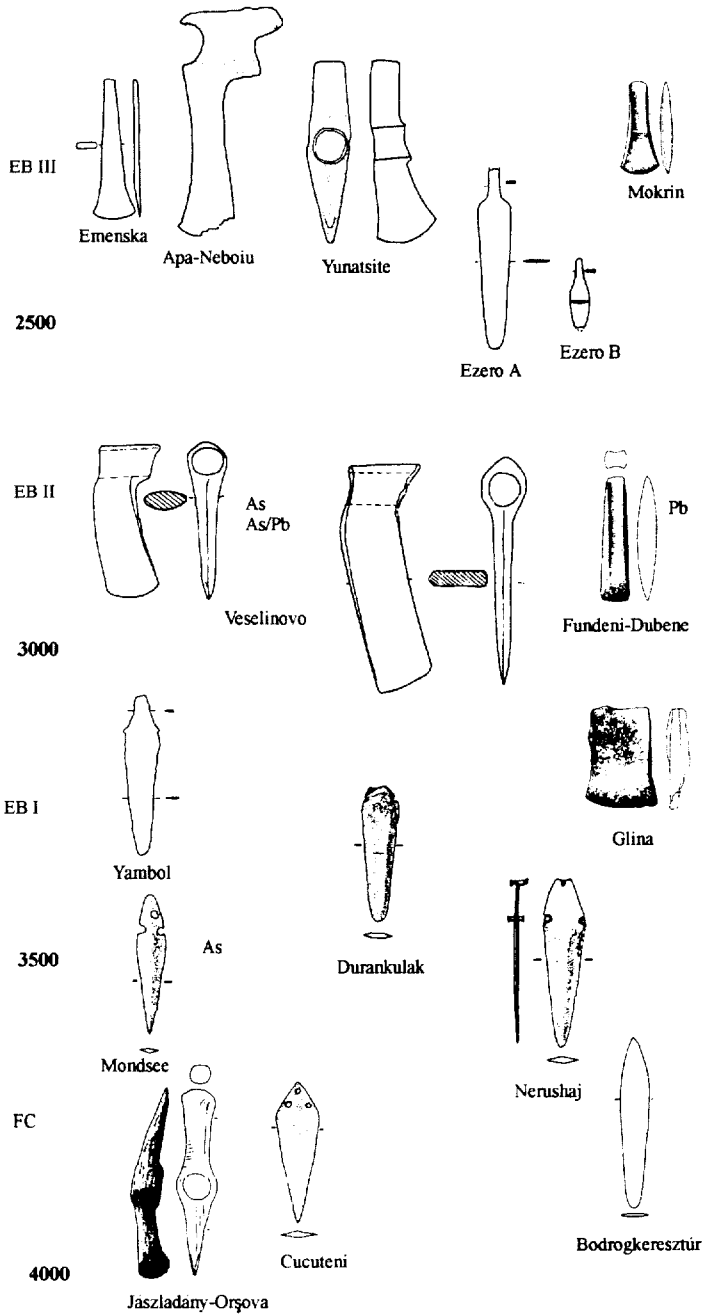


Fig. 5. The variety of metal finds from the FCA and EBA.

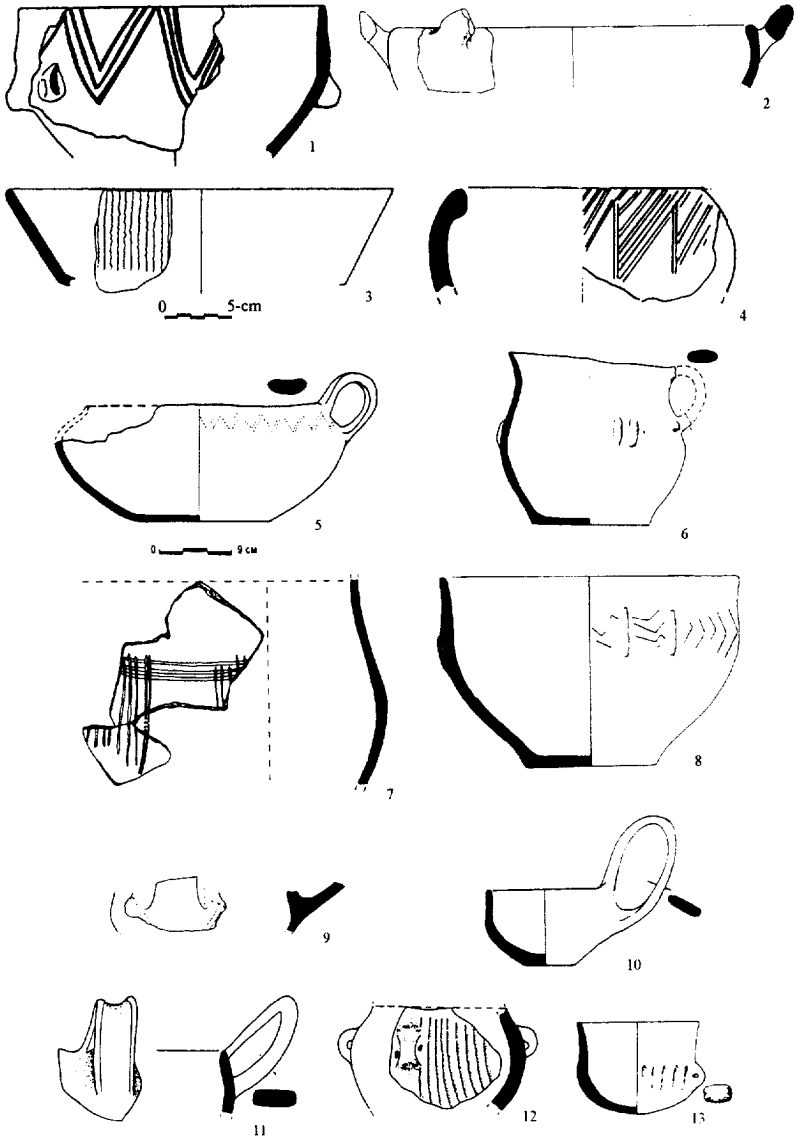


Fig. 6. EBA I Balkan pottery. Hotnitsa-Vodopada (1), Koprivets (2), Mirovtsi (3), Durankulak (4), Golyama Detelina (5-6), Karanovo VIIA (7), Sitagroi IV (8, 10, 13) and Dubene (9, 11, 12).

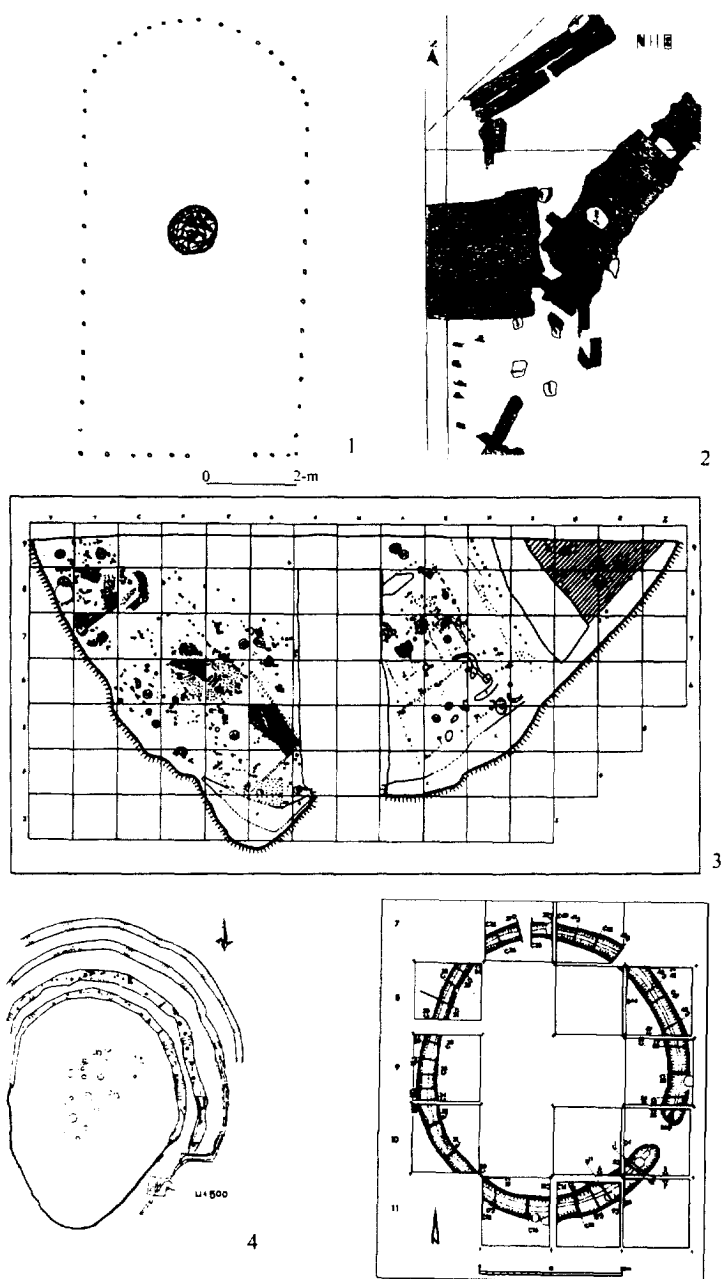


Fig. 7. FCA and EBA architecture in the Balkans. FCA Telish (1), EBA I Yunatsite (2-3), earlier EBA Ovcharitsa (4), EBA III Drama (5).

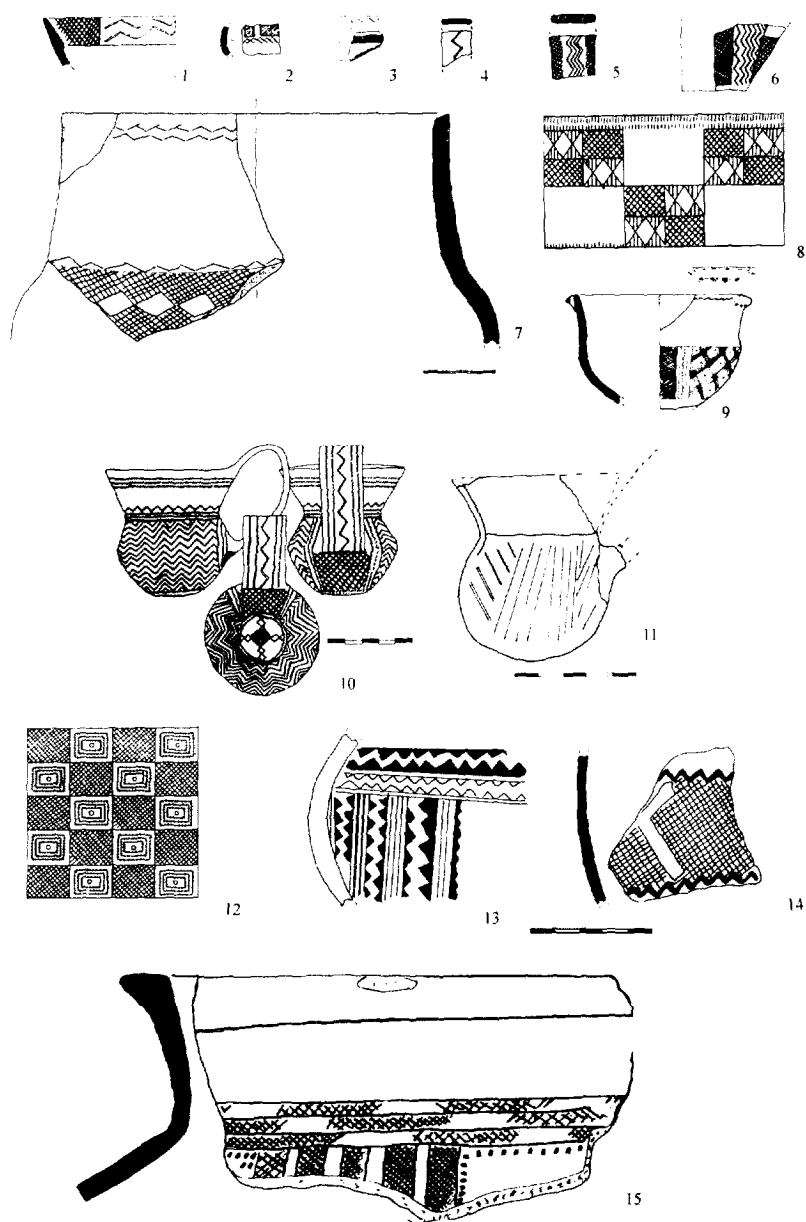


Fig. 8. EBA II encrusted pottery. Yunatsite (1-6), Dubene-Sarovka (7), Ostrikovac (8), Sitagroi Va (9), Dolno Sakhrane (10), Gradets (11), Radomir-Vakhovo (12), Pernik-Krepostta (13-14), Govora Sat-Runcuri (15).

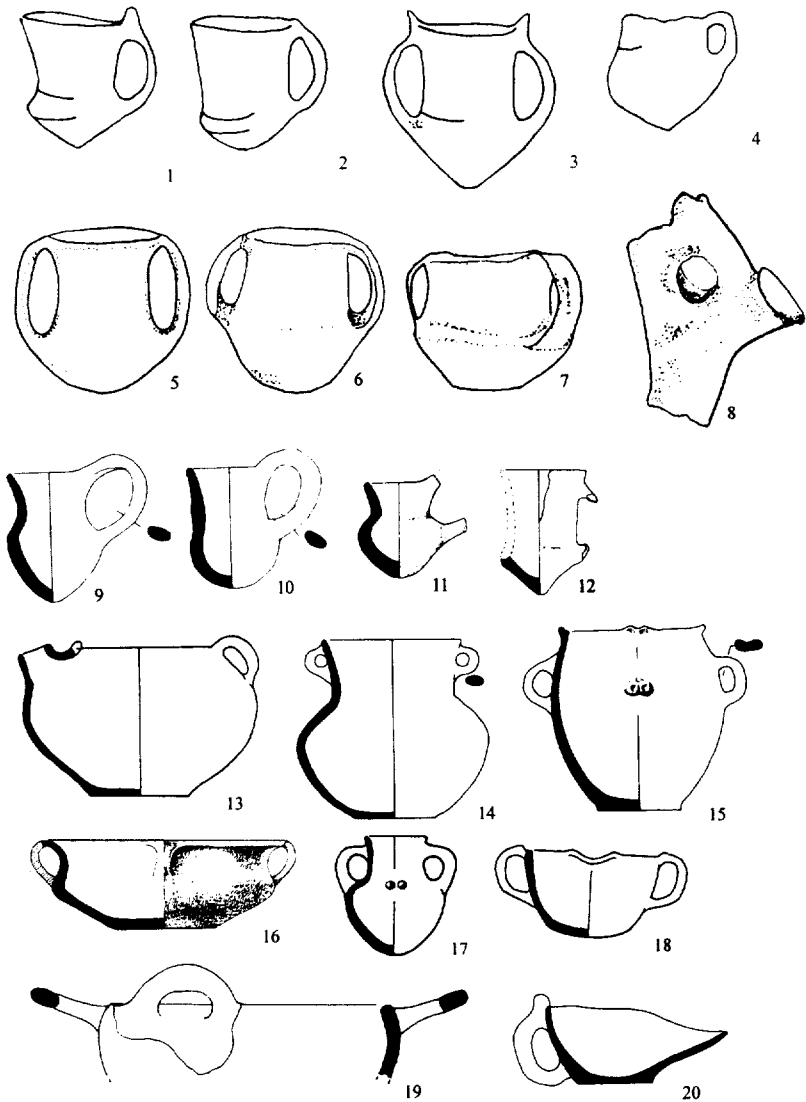


Fig. 9. EBA III Balkan pottery. Yunatsite (1-4), Vecina Mala (5-8), Sitagroi Vb (9-12), Dyadovo (13, 17-18), Gulubovo (14-15, 20), Beba Veche (16), Dubene (19).

cultural changes in the earlier 4th millennium BC were due to a complex of factors including a series of economic and social crises in the context of climatic deterioration.

The gradual decline of the rich graphite painted pottery coincides with the preservation of the typical Krivodol–Sălcuta–Bubanj shapes at the Ostrovul Corbului cemetery where they occur along with encrusted Bodrogkeresztúr pottery. Sites like Škodrino Polje demonstrate the continuing change of the KSB ceramic style where carinated bowls—a common shape in the Šuplevac–Crnobuki group—predominated. Along western Upper Thrace and the Rhodope Mountains, the most emblematic features of cultural continuity in the FCA I were preserved. Here we find the decline of the fertility cult within Old European society itself, so there is no reason to believe in a so-called ideological war between different ethnic groups as proposed by Marija Gimbutas (see above).

As far as the north-eastern Balkans are concerned, our lack of knowledge regarding the origins of the Cernavoda I culture makes it impossible to say anything other than assume a complex transformation towards a mobile stockbreeding economy. The formation of the central places that in fact were in many cases descendants of the Gumelnița culture implies some multilevel settlement like Cernavoda, Hirșova, Rimnicelu, etc. (Manzura 1999; Nikolova 1999). It should be stressed that the shift toward mobile pastoralism is confirmed even for upper Thrace because metal finds there cannot be correlated with any settlements but do document a population presence.

In the Final Copper Age, many sites in different points of the Balkans document the transformation of the Late Copper Age culture and the innovations connected mainly with the development of the mobile pastoral way of life. Despite the absence of a clear chronological definition of some of them, it can be assumed they cover chronologically all of FCA I-II. But with the exception of Hotnitsa-Vodopada, there is no clear chronological interrelationship between the FCA and EBA I cultures in the other regions of the Balkans. For instance, one can only assume a continuity in development from Vajnska-Hunyadihalom towards Baden I in the southern middle Danube, as well as from the Yagodina group towards the Sitagroi IV–Dikili Tash IIIA and Yunatsite cultures. But there is no archaeological evidence for any mass migration resulting in the emergence of the Bronze Age cultures in the Balkans. That

fact suggests that the social explanation model is the only correct one, so that the earliest Bronze Age communities were descendants of the FCA mobile pastoral population in the Balkans.

In the course of the three stages of the EBA, there are multiple cultural interactions between neighboring and distant cultures in the Balkans. The main social feature was the evolution of initial chiefdoms as in the area of the Yunatsite II-III, Sitagroi Va–Dikili Tash IIIB, Ezero B, Vučedol cultures, etc. The archaeological record demonstrates strong well-organized societies, which could not be destroyed by external factors. In this case a good instance is the Yamna culture that began to penetrate into some microregions of the Balkans in the late 4th millennium BC. It occupied areas like parts of northern Dobroudja, north-eastern Bulgaria, Muntenia, Oltenia, Banat reaching in the southern microregions of eastern Bulgarian Thrace. However, the entire central Balkans along with the southernmost areas proved a serious barrier. This fact is a strong argument against overestimating the Yamna culture as one of the main vectors for the spread of the Indo-European languages. Also, with the exception of the easternmost areas of the Balkans, the Yamna culture was in close interaction with the local population. As a matter of fact, in the course of the later EBA development the Yamna culture tumulus graves gradually disappeared. Accordingly, the strong influence of the local population on the Yamna culture can be inferred vis-à-vis mass ethnic-linguistic changes caused by the north Pontic population.

From the point of view of continuity and discontinuity in Balkan prehistory, there are several critical periods that have been or can be explained by migration theory. Beginning with the earliest Neolithic, through the Late Neolithic and then Late Copper Age/Final Copper Age, Final Copper Age/ EBA, EBA II-III and EBA III/MBA, the material culture of the new periods has been seen as products of intrusions or explained by demic diffusion. But with the development of archaeological research and widening of the archaeological basis, one migration model after another has failed. For the time being, we have only the Early Neolithic period for which demic diffusion can be argued, but as a complex multi-aspect process. The transition from Karanovo II to Karanovo III is archaeologically well explained recently; internal factors also serve to explain the emergence of

the Late Neolithic Karanovo IV period. The transformation from Starcevo to the Vinca culture should be stressed as an internal process as well. Therefore, the Final Copper Age and Early Bronze Age population were the descendants of that Copper Age population genetically connected with the Early Neolithic population. So, we can speak of Proto-Indo-Europeans in the Balkans long before the 4th millennium BC. The cultural changes and especially the decline of fertility symbols is not a product of ethnic change but social change towards a more mobile pastoral way of life in the course of the 4th millennium BC. There is archaeological evidence for the fertility cult but certainly the rituals changed, because the increased social differentiation increased the political function of the leaders and the ideology had begun to serve a different society—that of the chieftains.

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Balkan Proto-Indo-Europeans in the Fourth and Third Millennia BC 219

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