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The Classical and Hellenistic Economy and the "Paleo-Balkan" Hinterland
A Case Study of the Iron Age "Hellenized Settlements"

Abstract: Dozens of similar fortified settlements exhibiting a familiarity with some Greek building techniques and traditions existed in some parts of the Balkans during the Iron Age, especially from the fifth to third century BC. The settlements are documented in a vast continental area stretching from modern-day Albania, the FYR Macedonia and south central Serbia to Bulgaria. Archaeological interpretations mostly accept that economic factors and trade with late Classical and early Hellenistic Greece were instrumental in their emergence, and the phenomenon is interpreted as Greek "influence" and local "imitation" of Mediterranean culture. Presenting the most influential interpretations of the Classical and Hellenistic economy and some perspectives in economic anthropology, this paper examines the traditional (mostly formalistic) culture-historical understanding of the Balkan "Hellenized settlements" of the mid-first millennium BC and Mediterranean interrelations. It also looks at the construction and role of status identity as a crucial social factor in shaping the Iron Age communities in the hinterland, and defines possible trade and exchange activities as only one aspect of the identity of a burgeoning elite.

Keywords: "Hellenized settlements", "Hellenization" and the Balkan Iron Age hinterland, economic anthropology, Classical and Hellenistic economy, status identity, Kale-Krševica

Introduction: "Hellenized settlements" in the Balkan archaeological traditions

Conducted in the last few decades, archaeological excavations in the Balkan hinterland have shown that numerous fortified settlements — often described as "Hellenized" and built "according to Greek models", came into existence between the mid-fifth and mid-fourth century BC. In modern-day Bulgaria such sites are referred to as *Late Iron Age* settlements (Popov 2002; Archibald 1998; 2000; Theodossiev 2011); in the FYR Macedonia, as *Early Classical* ("Early Antiquity") (I. Mikulčić 1982; 1999; Lilčić 2009; Sokolovska 1986; 2011); and in Albania, as *Urban Illyrian Phase* (Ceka 2005; Popov 2002, 181–263; Wilkes 1992). Similar, but not thoroughly investigated sites have been documented in modern-day Kosovo and Metohija and southeast central Serbia (Vukmanović, Popović 1982; Shukriu 1996; Tasić 1998). Kale, an archaeological site in the village of Krševica near the town of Vranje, stands out as a rare example of a systematically excavated "Hellenized" settlement site in Serbia (Popović 2005; 2006; 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2009a; 2009b;

Popović & Vranić 1998; Popović & Kapouran 2007; Popović & Vukadinović 2011). Compared to earlier and insufficiently known Early Iron Age forms, these settlements correspond to a supposed change in habitation patterns and mark a different social, political and economic milieu of "Paleo-Balkan" societies and identities from the fifth century BC onwards (Archibald 1998). The richest architectural phases and most prominent cases have been dated to the fourth and early third century BC, when most sites were abandoned — change traditionally seen as the result of "Celtic migrations" (Sokolovska 1986; 2011; I. Mikulčić 1999).

Their most conspicuous similarity to the material culture of late Classical and Hellenistic Greek centres is observable in architecture (Nankov 2008; Bitrakova-Grozdanova 2006; Archibald 1994; 1998; 2010). Some have assumed that Greek builders were instrumental in the appearance of ashlar masonry, usually observable in massive ramparts built of stone blocks, mud bricks and "Greek type" roof tiles — an intriguing phenomenon considering the settlements' great distance from the Mediterranean (see Tsetskhladze 1998; 2000; 2009, 161–163; Archibald 1998, 140). Similarities are observable in other forms of material culture as well. A well-known example is the wheel-thrown household greyware (Sokolovska 1992; Changova 1981; Domaradski 2002; Shukriu 1996; Vranić 2009), whose shapes (kantharoi, skyphoi, oinochoai, hydriai, etc.) and style correspond to late Classical and early Hellenistic Greek household pottery (cf. Rotroff 2004; 2006; Sparkes & Talkot 1970). In the Macedonian archaeological literature these forms are commonly known as *Early Antiquity/Classical Hellenized pottery*, while Bulgarian archaeology uses the term *Thracian grey wares*. At the same time, numerous imports from the Mediterranean have been documented. Apart from abundant amphorae, which presumably attest to the distribution of olive oil and wine, mostly from Thasos and the Khalkidhiki, there are also imports from much remoter centres, such as Chios or Rhodes (see Bouzek et al. 2007; Titz 2002; Tzozhev 2009, 55–72; Popović 2007c). Commonly found within the settlements are also late Classical and early Hellenistic painted wares (e.g. Archibald 1996; 2002; G. Mikulčić 1990; 2005; Krstić 2005; Parović-Pešikan 1992) and coins (e.g. Popović 2007b).

Apart from some terminological differences, which in the Balkan archaeological traditions are mostly related to ethnicities (Thracian, Paeonian, Illyrian, etc) (see Vranić 2011), the term *Hellenized settlements* articulates the interpretative significance of contacts, and reflects the ultimate goal of most researchers, which is to "recognize" (formal) analogies with the Greek world. The still prevailing culture-historical approach sees their emergence as a result of intensified contacts between "Paleo-Balkan" communities and late Classical and early Hellenistic Greece. The usual perspective is that the settlements were built after Greek "models" and that their material culture

"imitates" shapes and technologies of the north-Aegean cities (e.g. Popov 2002; I. Mikulčić 1999 Dimitrov & Ivanov 1984; Changova 1981; Bozkova & Delev 2002; Ristov 2003; Neidinger & Matthews 2008; Neidinger et al. 2009; Sokolovska 1986; 1990; Petrova 1991). The wide distribution of Mediterranean imports is used to support the hypothesis about local social changes occurring as a result of "Hellenization" — a recognizable traditional narrative viewing the "spread" of Greek culture as an expected consequence of contact between "less developed" Iron Age communities and Classical and Hellenistic civilizations (Theodossiev 2011, 14; e.g. Papazoglu 1980).

Culture-historical epistemology[1] in the Balkans approaches changes in material culture from two perspectives: as the result of the appearance of a new population (**migrations**), or as the result of the "spreading of influences" (**diffusion**). It assumes that communities and individual actors were essentially static and that they had never produced change in material culture on their own. The change that took place is considered to be the result of external influences — in this case, Classical and Hellenistic Greece. Interpretations of the "Hellenized" settlements favouring the migration perspective — e.g. *Demir Kapija* and the supposed Greek presence from the fifth century BC on (Sokolovska 1978; 1986, 47–51; 2011, 13; I. Mikulčić 1999, 176–182); *Damastion* as a Greek silver-mining town (Ujes & Romić 1996; Popović 1987, 24–34; 2012; Sokolovska 1990; 2003; Petrova 1991); *Pernik* as Philip II's stronghold (Popov 2002, 138, 141); *emporion* Pistiros (Bouzek et al. 1996; 2002; 2007) — are mostly subsidiary (and reserved for the most prominent sites) as against the prevailing idea of the diffusion of Greek cultural traits (e.g. Sokolovska 1986; Petrova 1991; Bitrakova-Grozdanova 1987). Combination of these two approaches is responsible for the construction of the narrative of the "spread" of an advanced culture, tending to overlook the issue of causes and new meanings of the "diffused" culture.

Among the many reasons for the continued existence of this theoretical perspective[2] is the traditional view on trade and exchange. A common thread upon which it hangs is the idea of the "superiority" of Greek culture, and of its "spreading" as an inevitable outcome. Another common thread is the use of commercial factors as a universal explanation for the motives for establishing contact. Ancient Greece is perceived as a "developed civilization" which established contacts with "Paleo-Balkan" communities because it lacked raw materials. The next step is to identify the "Hellenized settlements" as "international" trading centres and to recognize the economic ne-

[1] On the importance of culture-historical archaeology in general, see Olsen 2002, 30–39; Johnson 1999, 15–20; Trigger 2006.

[2] On the complex development of culture-historical archaeology in the Balkans, see Palavestra 2011.

cessity of emerging "market economies" which developed as the result of the appearance of "Greek merchants", the "demand" for raw materials and the constant supply of Greek "goods" (e.g. I. Mikulčić 1999; Domaradski 2000; Petrova 1991, 23–24; Bitrakova-Grozdanova 1987, 88–92; Srejović 2002, 32–34; Čerškov 1969, 18, 80).

Contacts between different communities and the interpretation of the supposed social changes related to these contacts are essential theoretical issues in the archaeology concerned with identity construction, but they are also economic issues in the broadest sense. In the case of contacts between ancient Greece, treated in the European intellectual tradition as the beginning of "our civilisation" (Shanks 1996; Morley 2009; Babić 2008; 2010; Kuzmanović 2011, 601), and communities in the Mediterranean hinterland, there is always the danger of a Eurocentric perspective. This paper seeks to show that it is precisely the view of the "market economy" as instrumental in the "Hellenization" process that reflects a Eurocentric perspective of modern Balkan researchers (cf. Morley 2009, 21–45; Thomas 2004; Kuzmanović 2010). It is observable in the formalistic view of the Greek economy as the "beginning" of the European capitalistic system on the one hand and, on the other, in "Hellenocentricity" — recognition of Mediterranean social characteristics in barbaric settings (e.g. Dimitrov & Ivanov 1984; Changova 1981; Bozkova & Delev 2002; Sokolovska 1986; 1990; Petrova 1991; Bouzek et al. 1996; 2002; 2007; Cohen 1995, 79–88). On this epistemological basis, it is argued, often uncritically, that besides similarities in architecture and other forms of material culture there should be expected in the hinterland socio-economic and socio-political institutions comparable to those in late Classical and early Hellenistic Greece. As a result, the Iron Age heritage, unearthed in modern Balkan countries, becomes "civilized" and more important in the contemporary political context (Vranić 2011).

"Hellenized settlements" and Classical and Hellenistic economy

Culture-historical literature is rarely concerned with interrelations of the Iron Age "Hellenized" communities and the Mediterranean world as a tangible case study on the level of individual actors, conscious social change or mechanisms leading to newly-established hybrid cultures (Hall 2002; Gosden 2004; Dietler 1997). At the same time, these interrelations are taken as the unquestionable, universal and widely-accepted cause of the appearance of the "Hellenized settlements" and of many other changes in the local cultural landscape. This interpretative paradox stems from theoretical premises.

The traditional approach to the economic aspect of the contact is taken from the modern Western evolutionary perspective. As a result, it assumes

that the "more developed" side initiated contact out of its own interests (Wilk 1996, 1–26; Adams 1974). When it comes to the emergence of the settlements, it is supposed that Greece "imported" "raw materials" (usually minerals, grains or furs) and slaves from the hinterland, and that the role of Balkan Iron Age communities was to meet the needs of the "superior" partner. Documentary sources provide some hints as to possible "Paleo-Balkan" "exports", which archaeologists usually take for a "fact". In the case of the central Balkans, the presumed "Paeonian territory" (the Vardar valley in the FYR Macedonia and the west of modern-day Bulgaria) is known for the "export" of silver (e.g. I. Mikulčić 1999; Sokolovska 1990; 2003) and wheat (Papazoglu 1967; Petrova 1991, 23–24; Rostovtzeff 1941, 216), while the southern regions of ancient Macedonia are generally recognized as exporters of wood and resin — the materials widely used in Athenian shipbuilding (Millett 2010, 474). Some form of "profit" for the "Paleo-Balkan" side is recognized in imported objects, which are treated as "Greek goods" and, therefore, as indirect evidence for trading activity. Culture-historical authors tend to identify "Greek merchants" as the most prominent "culprits" for this form of contact — traditional discourse in the modern European archaeological and historical literature assuming the critical role of trade in Greek society, portraying the traders "caste" as free entrepreneurs who came in contact with the "barbarian world" on the principles of market economy and personal gain (Rostovtzeff 1941, 300; Boardman 1980, 162). In Bulgaria, researchers even suggest the existence of *emporia* — permanent Greek trading colonies emerging in the upper Maritza valley in the fifth century BC, as the key socio-political factor in the "Hellenization" process (Bouzek et al. 1996; 2002; 2007; Archibald 2000, 212–233; 2004, 885–899; Domaradski 2002).

In a broader theoretical sense, this interpretative concept is closest to "**formalists**" in economic anthropology and "**modernizers**" in history — perspectives that assume that trading activities in pre-capitalist economies functioned on market-based principles similar to the modern age (Plattner 1989, 1–20; Carrier 2005; Wilk 1996; Morley 2007). They focus on individuals, whose rationality and need for profits are supposedly present in all societies (past or present), and on the cross-cultural concepts of *scarcity*, *maximization* and *surplus*. Trade and exchange are considered to be just a means by which this universal human instinct, which exists beyond culture and society, is channelled with the view to minimizing the effort and maximizing the advantage (Ericson & Earle 1982, 2; Hodder 1982, 201–203).

Among the most prominent historians insisting on market economy as the fundamental cause of the "spreading of Greek influences" in the Mediterranean was M. Rostovtzeff (1941; cf. Archibald et al. 2001). His "modernizing" approach to Hellenistic monarchies is focused on the evolution of new social structures based on the hypothesis that commerce and

economic reasons led to the integration of Greek and Eastern cultures. It is predicated on the premise that the Classical and Hellenistic poleis were socio-economic units organized toward the "production" and "export" of "goods", which generated profits that made these "producer cities" (cf. Weber 1958, 68–70) sustainable. This Eurocentric approach uncritically transfers modern capitalistic characteristics to the ancient economy, constructing the notion of the Greek socio-economic system as an important phase in the development of capitalism (Morley 2007; 2009; Kuzmanović 2010).

The archaeologists dealing with the "Hellenized settlements" in the Balkans only occasionally cited Rostovtzeff's monumental work (e.g. Papazoglu 1957; Bitrakova-Grozdanova 1987; Petrova 1991). However, whether aware of his work or not, those who did not cite him tended to apply the same theoretical concept (e.g. Sokolovska 1986; Mikulčić 1982; 1999). Using a simplified version of the "modernizing" model,[3] they assume that the quantity of imported objects is in itself proof enough that trade was the overriding motive for contact. Cheap "raw materials" and the "demand" for Greek "products" led to a change in settlement patterns and to the emergence of new "trading centres", followed by a growth of crafts within these newly-established "cities" that "imitated" Greek poleis (e.g. I. Mikulčić 1999; Petrova 1991, 23–24; Bitrakova-Grozdanova 1987, 88–92; Srejović 2002, 32–34; Domaradski 2000; Bouzek et al. 1996; 2002; 2007). Consequently, "international trade" becomes an "obvious" and "commonsense" explanation for the "spreading of Greek influences", without its being supported by any fundamental research into the principles of the Iron Age economy. Stylistic similarities and imported artefacts lead to drawing formal analogies with the modernizing picture of the Greek economy as a market-based system and a first step towards the emergence of the Western world. As a result, "Hellenization" is perceived strictly as a process of imitating Greek culture, of adopting the Mediterranean customs, political organization and way of life directly and without modification. However, if we acknowledge post-processual criticism, what we have here is the modern European picture of Classical and Hellenistic Greece projected onto the past and incorporated into Balkan archaeological and historical traditions (Babić 2008; 2010; Kuzmanović 2011). Pursuing this interpretative path, the culture-historical approach neglects the issue of different agencies at work within Iron Age societies which, selectively and consciously, incorporated elements of Greek culture into new social contexts of culture-specific meanings and character-

[3] It is important to note that Rostovtzeff (1941, 216) considered economic relations with Greece a key factor in the development of 'Paeonian' society during the late fourth and early third century BC, highlighting the shipments of Paeonian wheat to the city of Athens.

istics. Its search, in these diverse contexts, for the same structures and institutions constructs a "Hellenocentric" notion of the same role and meaning of material culture. A good example of this ethnocentric perspective is provided by many purported "poleis" excavated in continental Thrace (Archibald 2004), or by frequent identification of grain and silver "markets" (e.g. I. Mikulčić 1999; Domaradski 2000). Quite the opposite, "Paleo-Balkan" and Mediterranean societies most certainly exhibited different social, economic or cultural characteristics and identities.

Since the beginnings of research into past economies in the nineteenth century, the formalist/modernizing approach has not been the only theoretical perspective. There have also circulated opposite (but equally Eurocentric) views, that capitalism emerged in Modernity as a structurally different economic system marked by the newly-established nineteenth-century market economy (Humphreys 1969; Morley 2007; Morris et al. 2008). For decades, "**substantivists**" in economic anthropology and "**primitivists**" in history have been meticulously developing a different theoretical and methodological approach to many economic activities that predated capitalism, highlighting that these economies were "embedded" in social and cultural structures that shaped human behaviour in ways which cannot be analyzed in terms of the capitalist concepts of "profit" or "scarcity" (Polanyi 1968a; 1968b; 1968c; Finley 1970; 1973; 1981; Hopkins 1983; Morris 2001).

As for the Classical economy, "substantivists" believe that the polis with an agricultural hinterland (*chora*) was self-sufficient and did not depend on the "import of raw materials" which, if present at all, was not defined by the market (Finley 1973; 1981; Polanyi 1968a; 1968b; 1968c). The most important socio-economic feature of the polis, according to this perspective, was subsistence economy. Consequently, Greek urbanization is perceived neither as a mercantile necessity, nor as the growth of "production centres"; but rather as the outcome of the emergence of a new form of society, characterized by the practice of "rich landowners" to live inside the newly-formed cities (Finley 1973, 123–149; Morley 2007, 50). Through taxes and other dues, these "consumer cities" (Weber 1958, 68–70) thrived at the expense of their agricultural hinterland — a feature that "substantivists" consider as the basic attribute of this city-state culture and its identity. This approach to the economy is much more concerned with the social (mostly status-related) role of city dwelling (cf. Morris 1987) than with "export" of finished products.

This approach, now also subjected to criticism,[4] has profoundly influenced interpretations of Greek, Roman or Iron Age economies. On the other hand, it has been completely neglected in the study of the "Helle-

[4] For criticism of the "rich landlords" concept, see Hansen 2000 and 2006.

nized" settlements. Consequently, if the Greek polis was not dependent on the inflow of "raw materials" from distant sources, and if Classical society was not substantially dependent on "international trade", then an argument could be made against the concept of "Hellenized settlements" as "trading centres", especially in the case of fifth-century-BC inland "classical" sites such as "emporion Pistiros" in the upper Maritza valley (Bouzek et al. 1996; 2002; 2007) or Demir Kapija in the FYR Macedonia (I. Mikulčić 1999, 176–182; Sokolovska 1986, 47–51).

The concept of pre-modern economy today: an example of Hellenistic economy

Eventually, the "primitivist" and "modernizing" approaches found some common ground and this century-long debate has recently been put to rest with the conclusion that overgeneralizations are the basic flaw of both schools (Smith 2004; Morley 2007; Feinman & Garraty 2010; Morris 2001). For instance, most interpretations of Classical and Hellenistic Greece are focused on the Athenian economy, which was more of an exception than a rule, drawing universal conclusions from that specific context and applying them to other poleis or even Iron Age cultures in the Mediterranean hinterland. Most of the latest work points out the culture-specific role of the economy and draws attention to numerous setbacks marking all cross-cultural generalizations (see Carrier 2005; Wilk 1996; Morley 2007). Consequently, this topic is approached in the broadest sense — as complex relations between the community and its environmental and cultural landscape, taking **production**, **distribution** and **consumption** as related but very different socially constructed activities. Other important factors are climate, resources availability, demography, etc., issues neglected by previous research, which was mostly focused on distribution (substantivists) and production (formalists). At the same time, some authors question K. Polanyi's and M. Finley's dismissal of the forces of demand and supply which, in some, culture-specific, form probably were at work in pre-modern societies. The latest research on the social role of the humanities in the Western world shows that Polanyi and Finley, among many other important figures, overemphasized the distinction between Modernity — the period in the construction of which they participated — and every other (past or present) society (Feinman & Garraty 2010, 172–174). For instance, recent studies suggest that intra-community trade and exchange of agricultural products indeed was an important factor in the economy of a polis, while at the same time the entire polis remained self-sufficient (Hansen 2000; 2006, 69). On the other hand, the enduring "substantivist" view on the socio-political organization and group identity of the citizens still favours the concept of

culturally embedded redistribution as opposed to the market economy in the modern sense (Morley 2007, 6–9).

A step forward and away from the eternal "substantivists"–"formalists" debate has been made in the study of Hellenistic economies (Archibald et al. 2001; Parkins, Smith 1998; Davies 2001; 2006; Reger 2003). Contrary to Rostovtzeff's view on the role of trade, Finley paid little attention to the Hellenistic economy. He accurately concluded that Hellenism conceived of as being an integrated cultural system originating from the "mixture" of Greek and Eastern ways had never existed, ultimately favouring an idea which thoroughly undermined the entire concept of a distinctive "Hellenistic economy". Finley argued that the picture of Hellenistic monarchies as forming a single integrated socio-economic and socio-political system was a nineteenth-century construct, and claimed that two parallel systems, i.e. "Greek" and "Eastern", had simultaneously existed throughout the period (Finley 1973, 183). Today, this Eurocentric position is also subjected to criticism. As shown by recent studies, both interpretations are overgeneralizations in the light of the fact that "Hellenistic economies" were so regionally diverse that any blanket term suggesting some form of unity, similarly to Finley's position, is undoubtedly open to discussion (Davies 2001; 2006; Reger 2003). Also, they dismiss any strict division between "Greeks and Others" as a misleading approach to hybridization of new identities. It appears more likely that multiple and intertwined socio-economic levels (some old, others new, resulting from changes occurring in the aftermath of Alexander's conquests) existed within the newly-created Hellenistic monarchies. Consequently, interpretations do not rely on a single interpretative framework.

The assumption that majority of the population remained small producers of agricultural crops — a subsistence-related activity defined by the **domestic economy** model — is a rare generalization on which contemporary researchers are agreed. This form of household production (and consumption) may have been connected to the outside world through the polis, a local socio-political unit emerging in the newly-conquered territories and retaining its prominent role in the Greek world, or through any other hybrid form of urban settlement. At the same time, the **royal economy**, a new form of status-defined influence in economic behaviour also played an important role in the Hellenistic world (Reger 2003, 332; Graham et al. 2006).

This complicates matters considering that Hellenism and its economy are very important for interpreting "Hellenized settlements" due to the issue of "Hellenization", the supposed identity changes traditionally perceived as the highlight of the period (Momigliano 1971; Papazoglu 1980). Many authors still apply Rostovtzeff's views, claiming that the socio-political context of the fourth and third centuries BC in the Balkans corresponds

to the context of "Hellenistic monarchies", and ultimately recognizing the Odrysian, Paeonian or Illyrian kingdoms as polities organized in emulation of these characteristic political entities (Papazoglu 1967; 1988; Archibald 2000, 213). Others take a step further and argue that changes peculiar to Hellenism had taken place in the Balkans even earlier, around the middle of the fourth century BC, when Philip II conquered the region and created a short-lived "Hellenistic"-like situation with a distant Mediterranean political force ruling the local settings (Delev 1998). To complicate matters even more, the important role of Cassander and Lysimachus and their relations with "Paleo-Balkan" populations should not be overlooked either (Lund 1992; Theodossiev 2011, 10; Archibald 1998, 304–310). However, these settlements sit on the fringes of the Hellenistic world, and they most certainly constitute a different context from the Hellenistic monarchies characterized by the presence of the Greek elite. Therefore, political and social features of that ancient Macedonian society prior to Philip II's conquests, and its differences from and similarities to Balkan Iron Age communities may be a more important question than the ethnocentric quest for "Hellenistic institutions" (cf. Archibald 2000). Latest research approaches this neglected issue from a "prehistoric" standpoint, assuming that these societies (Macedonian and other neighbouring Iron Age communities), far more than the poleis or Hellenistic monarchies, were structured according to the "warrior aristocracy" principle (Millett 2010; cf. Archibald 1998).

Status identity and "Hellenization": concluding remarks

The brief introduction to the Classical and Hellenistic economy presented above shows that theoretical approaches to this topic overwhelmingly influence interpretations of relations between "Paleo-Balkan" and Mediterranean societies. It also puts forth a criticism of the culture-historical, formalist and modernizing "Hellenocentric" approach to "Hellenization" as the market-based appearance of "Greek" and "Hellenistic" institutions in the hinterland. These interrelations, however, may be approached bearing in mind the need to look into local, culture-specific Iron Age contexts and into contact-related internal changes.

Exponents of the processual approach, which profoundly influenced European Iron Age studies in the 1980s, were the first to try to go beyond the diffusionist model of culture-historical archaeology and scrutinize the supposed economic relations with the Mediterranean world, highlighting the role of long-distance trade and exchange in the process (e.g. Wells 1980; Collis 1984; for a bibliography in Serbian see Palavestra 1984; 1995; Babić 2002; 2004), and offering the first models for the emergence of status identity as the key characteristic of the entire period, a topic which

still remains very significant in recent theoretical perspectives (Babić 2005; Gosden 2004). Within processual archaeology, the *World System Theory*, an approach originally developed for modern colonial encounters (see Wallerstein 2004), was recognized as the most appropriate theory. Similarly to the modern European colonial empires, Mediterranean communities of the first millennium BC are seen as the centre, while Iron Age communities in the interior of the continent are conceived of as being the periphery of one interrelated "global" system (Champion 1989; Rowlands 1998). Therefore, authors closer to the "formalists" in anthropology explored, through various statistical models, the role of *entrepreneurs* in pursuit of personal gain and the role of "profit" in the emergence of status differences (Wells 1984, 25–37). On the other hand, "substantivists" believed that status differences and the elite's competition in the Iron Age had existed before possible trading contacts with the Greeks (Frankenstein & Rowlands 1978, 76–77). Therefore, imports are not necessarily indicative of the existence of commercial activity and "profits" in the modern sense, but should rather be ascribed to the complex system of status-related trade and exchange, very different from the modern market economy. The *World System Theory* approach and models of Iron Age societies were an important step forward in specifying the targets of research. Today, they may also be criticized as Eurocentric and as a "masked" form of diffusionism (Gosden 2004, 8–18).

Another step towards even more specific questions came with post-processual archaeology[5] and its quest for individual agency (Insoll 2007; Diaz-Andreu et al. 2005; Graves-Brown et al. 1996; Rowlands 2007). Post-processual interpretation does not focus strictly on the economic aspects of identities construction, but on the *biographies* of objects (or people) and the active role of material culture in the construction of culture and identity (Kopitoff 1986; Appadurai 1986; Gosden 2005; Buchli 2002). Even though not necessarily related to trade and exchange, this approach, by assuming the active role of materiality and the different and changing meaning of objects within different contexts (past or present), takes interpretation even further away from the principles of market economy. Various active roles of material culture in identity construction are expected in cultural, political or economic contexts of the circulation, consumption and discarding of a particular object (its biography), where its different social meanings may be manifested, and archaeologically documented (Earle 2010, 211). Consequently, demand, supply and consumption are defined by culture, but at the same time their constant re-enactment within the culture produces change, repeatedly constructing new cultural patterns.

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[5] On the complex development of post-processual archaeology, see Olsen 2002, 30–39; Johnson 1999, 15–20; Trigger 2006.

Today, the work that continues the traditions of processual archaeology, but acknowledges criticisms arising from material culture studies, proposes the existence of two different levels of economic contexts — **political**[6] and **domestic** economy (Earle & Kristiansen 2010; Kristiansen 2010; 2011). Through the production, circulation and consumption of material culture, these separate but interrelated levels of activity were critical for the construction of various identities. In pre-modern societies, marked by the household food production (domestic economy), it was the relationship of inter-household reciprocity that provided the economic base and essential context for family-based social organization. Political economy, on the other hand, constituted a different level where the elites, through organizing communal activities and mobilizing the labour force, constructed their status identity within the redistributive economy. Therefore, long-distance trade and exchange, even though important politically, had minor importance for the group's subsistence (Tainter 1988, 24; cf. Trigger 2003, 279–314). At the same time, these activities may have been decisive for status identity construction and social stratification (D'Altroy & Hastorf 2002; Earle 1997).

Status identity is recognized by archaeologists as a very important social feature in the Balkans in the sixth and fifth centuries BC, an Early Iron Age period prior to the first appearance of "Hellenized settlements".[7] Interestingly, this type of identity is a quite neglected topic in the context of the emergence and existence of these settlements (e.g. Bouzek et al. 1996; 2002; 2007; I. Mikulčić 1999; Sokolovska 1986). Only few studies discuss a different type of "warrior aristocracy" which emerged during the fifth century, and assumed the most prominent social role in the fourth and third centuries BC. Archibald (1994; 1998) points to the new practice of hiring barbarian mercenaries for Classical and Hellenistic armies as the crucial factor in the process, arguing that this new aristocracy and their vibrant social role caused an "important change" in the fifth century BC. The active role of mercenaries allows a very plausible interpretation for the substantial

[6] The term *political economy* has multiple meanings. It is a theory and a field of interdisciplinary studies in social sciences concerned with relations between politics and economy in the broadest sense. This approach in anthropology and archaeology becomes more prominent due to its theoretical position that allows the possibility of studying institutions and their emergence as related to the economy (mostly production) (Robotham 2005, 41). On the other hand, the term also refers to status-related **activity** which demonstrates the power and active role of individuals within society, especially within societies that show some level of "complexity" (e.g. D'Altroy & Hastorf 2002; Earle 1997; Earle & Kristiansen 2010).

[7] On Iron Age status identity and the case of "princely graves" in the Balkans, see Palavestra 1984; 1995; Babić 2002; 2004; 2005.

change in material culture termed "Hellenization". The role of mercenaries in the Mediterranean became more prominent from Philip II's campaign onwards (Trundle 2004; Miller 1984). In a very short time, this new context allowed considerable contact with the Mediterranean cultures and set the stage for the subsequent construction of new and many "Hellenized" status groups. Social communication of this new type of identity gave a boost to the consumption of Mediterranean material culture and, even more importantly, encouraged many changes on the regional level, manifested in the appearance of a similar material culture and, eventually, of numerous "Hellenized settlements". The identity of active and retired soldiers was a hybrid social group, probably constructed as an amalgamation of the identity of the already existing Iron Age aristocracy and the acquired identity of Classical and Hellenistic mercenaries. This new elite was the most dynamic agency in recomposing identities in the Balkans. The "Hellenization" of these status groups had a profound effect on entire communities and their identities through the active role of material culture, creating the characteristic "Greek" or, what should probably be a more appropriate term, "Mediterranean" features in the Balkan hinterland.

Recent post-processual work approaches "Hellenization" as a research topic through studying the role of contacts with the Greek world in the construction of new identities, defined on different and culture-specific bases (Dietler 1997; cf. Papazoglu 1980). Bearing that in mind, dozens of similar settlements in the Balkan hinterland should not be perceived as "international" trade centres and Greek *emporia*, but as a manifestation of a changing form of social structures and identities characterized by different behaviour, way of life and socio-economic organization. These changes were manifested in the consumption of "Greek" material culture and the subsequent hybridization of Mediterranean and continental identities. This process of change, characteristic of the entire Mediterranean hinterland, constitutes the conscious construction of new identities with different meanings within different local contexts (Gosden 2004; 2007; Goff 2005; Hurst & Owen 2005; Hingley 2000). The appearance of a similar material culture, imports and numerous "Hellenized settlements" in a vast area of the Balkans speaks more of local socio-political interrelations than of direct contact with the Greeks. The appearance of "Hellenized" material culture should be seen as a culture-specific characteristic which neither "proves" Greek migrations and the critical role of "market economy", nor widens the territory where the identity changes labelled as "Hellenicity" took place (cf. Hall 2002). It represents the construction of different local cultures in the Mediterranean hinterland on the fringes of the late Classical and early Hellenistic world. Contacts between the settlements and the consumption

of hybrid material culture are the outcome of political economy[8] of local elites — a process that began during the Bronze and Iron Ages and built complex status, regional and cultural interrelations (cf. Earle & Kristiansen 2010). The domestic sphere, on the other hand, probably remained local and mostly unaffected.

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[8] Peer Polity Interaction model, as a slightly older theoretical perspective, can still be appropriate for the interpretation of this sudden appearance of a similar material culture, Renfrew & Cherry 1986; Renfrew 1996).

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