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A L'OCCASION DE SES SOIXANTE ANS

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LIFE AFTER SELEVAC: WHY AND HOW A NEOLITHIC SETTLEMENT IS ABANDONED

Abstract. – The period of the 4th to mid-3rd mill. B.C. is a period during which urban centres and early states were established in Mesopotamia. Six thousand years ago, the Near East and Europe were demographically, technologically and economically at not such very different levels, but no cities or states developed in Europe until 3000 years after the earliest examples in the Near East. How does one explain such contrasting paths of social evolution? Environmental and demographic factors have been in the past suggested and critiqued as primary causes of the rise of civilization in Mesopotamia. The emphasis in this article is on the socio-economic factors.

I am suggesting that in Balkan prehistory, and temperate European prehistory in general, there was a preference to maintain the domestic co-resident group (household) as the main unit of social and economic cooperation. The establishment of small settlements of the Vinča-Pločnik IIb (Vinča D) phase, such as Opovo, and the abandonment of settlements such as Selevac represent a development *away* from any growth of social complexity and centralized organization *toward* the maintenance of the smaller, co-resident, kin-based domestic groups (households?) as units of social and economic organization.

The period of the 4th to mid–3rd mill. B.C. is a period during which urban centres and early states were established in Mesopotamia. Six thousand years ago, the Near East and Europe were demographically, technologically and economically at not such very different levels, but no cities or states developed in Europe until 3000 years after the earliest examples in the Near East. How does one explain such contrasting paths of social evolution? Environmental and demographic factors have been in the past suggested and critiqued as primary causes of the rise of civilization in Mesopotamia. If we assume that, from an environmental and demographic point of view, both Europe and the Near East had an equal chance of developing an urban pattern of settlement (an assumption

which would not be found universally acceptable), then we have to conclude that the development of urbanism is the voluntary or involuntary result of decisions relating to social and economic organization of society and the particular historical trajectories of these regions.

A popular explanation is that the "Old order" of Europe – "Old Europe" – was diverted from its path of emergent complex society by migrating pastoralists from the steppes north of the Black Sea moving westwards into the Balkan Peninsula.[1] In its most extreme form this model suggests that the migrators were speakers of Indo-European languages as they dispersed towards their present distribution during the same period as state society was emerging in the Near East (late 4th-3rd mill BC).[2]

Within this explanation is the strong underlying assumption that the "natural" path of the evolution of Old Europe would have been towards a complex society and urbanization. My questioning in this article of the pastoral migration from the North Pontic steppes – whether Indo-European Kurgan or otherwise – as an explanation for the manifested archaeological changes and inferred socio-economic changes, questions also the legitimacy of this basic assumption. In other words should we assume that urbanism and social complexity would be the what we see in Europe until that continent was drawn into the World system of the Roman Empire was a legitimate alternative to that strange artifical entity which we call urban life and civilization. The diversion of European society from the path towards "civilization" was not forced from the outside by invasion, but was a deliberately chosen path.

The changes that are manifested archaeologically in eastern Europe in the late 4th early 3rd mill. B.C. have been described by many archaeologists.[3] Traditionally the change from Sherratt's Southeast European Copper Age (Tasić et al. Early Eneolithic; Todorova: Middle-Late Eneolithic)[4] was regarded as representing significant social and economic discontinuity and societies in a state of flux. Changes in the archaeological record include general abandonment of the large tell settlements which are replaced by small, scattered settlements on marginal soils, some of which are fortified; a change in settlement faunal composition towards a predominance of more "pastoral" animals among the fauna; the disappearance of many of the artifacts which had shown a high degree of technological skill such as copper, goldworking and ceramics; and the disappearance of "symbolic" artifacts such as clay female figurines and spondylus shells and clearly differentiated ceramic designs; and finally the appearance of material and features of North Pontic (steppe) origin: the single burial under a low mound with the body covered in red ochre and accompanied by artifacts of stone and later metal which are typologically the same as those burried in the North Pontic "Pit-Graves" or "Kurgans".

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[1] Гарашанин, 1961; 1974; Јовановић, 1982; Тасић, 1983; 1989; Тодорова, 1978

[2] Gimbutas, 1970; 1980; 1991

[3] Anthony, 1986; Gimbutas, 1970; 1980; 1991; Sherratt, 1981; 1982; 1983

[4] Sherratt, 1984; Tasić – Jovanović – Dimitrijević, 1979; Todorova, 1978; Tringham, 1991

These are shocking changes indeed for archaeologists who are used to the quantity and variety of settlement remains of the preceding periods. A popular interpretation of these changes has been in terms of sudden replacement, [5] by a population which was in direct contrast and conflict with the indigenous villagers: pastoral, patriarchal, patrilineal, patrilocal, warlike, hierarchical with a belief system and language which was also in sharp contrast to the peace-loving, matrifocal, harmonious farmers of "Old Europe".

Andrew Sherratt has suggested an important alternative model by which he is able to explain the social, economic, and lingustic changes within eastern Europe without having to resort to external migrating pastoral agents of disaster.[6] He suggests that the "end of Old Europe" in east Europe and the "Proto-Indo-Europeans" of the North Pontic are part of the same process of socioeconomic changes resulting from certain technological innovations, which are in fact diffused from the Near East, the Caucasus mountains and the North Pontic steppes.

He has produced a convincing set of arguments to link a series of technological innovations in the late 4th/3rd mill. B.C., the light plough, the wheel and animal traction, the horse, wool and milkproduction to a series of subsistence changes: the spread of agriculture to marginal areas, such as dry steppe and poorly drained areas in a kind of slash-and-burn system of cultivation, the widespread practice of grazing animals in open areas (incorporating the practice of transhumance) and the establishment of a pastoral subsistence strategy, greater population mobility and more long-distance transport of goods. He then links these changes to changes in the organization of labour in which the role of the male in subsistence activities is enhanced leading to social changes such as virilocal residence, patrilinear inheritance, and the ownership and inheritance of land as a crucial factor in the establishment of social relations and social inequalities. These changes are linked to political changes in which "big men" emerge as the transitory leaders in the hierarchy of social groups.

In his model, Sherratt looks forward to see the ultimate development of these early 3rd mill. B.C. trends as the establishment of salient ranking and hierarchically organized societies of the late 3rd/2nd mill. B.C. [7]

In this article, I want to look backwards, and with John Chapman suggest that the process of change that Sherratt has sometimes called the Secondary Products Revolution in fact started much earlier, in fact at the end of Sherratt's Mature Neolithic (Tasić et al.: Late Neolithic; Todorova: Early Eneolithic).[8] The term "Revolution" is in fact misleading since the process was neither so sudden nor so dramatic as is made out by Gimbutas' or Sherratt's argument, but was a process of continuous transformation, of which the clearest archaeological manifestation is at the beginning of Todorova's Southeast European Early Bronze Age.

[5] Gimbutas, 1970; 1980; 1991

[6] Sherratt, 1981

[7] Renfrew – Shennan, 1982; Sherratt, 1984

[8] Chapman, 1982

LIFE AFTER SELEVAC

The occupation of Selevac-Staro Selo spans exactly the whole period of Sherratt's Mature Neolithic [9] (Tasić et al.: Late Neolithic; Todorova: Middle-Late Eneolithic). In the final report on Selevac, a model was presented to explain a series of social and economic changes in the prehistory of southeast Europe during the period of its occupation.[10] The Selevac Archaeological Project has documented for this period a change of settlement pattern from semi-sedentary to long-term fully sedentary settlements; a transformation of the subsistence strategy from low-productivity horticulturalism and herding to relatively intensive agriculture; the intensification of production in general as an enabler, precondition, and consequence of increased sedentism [11] and, finally - albeit speculatively - change from a system of social and economic organization based on loose-knit social units acting together in small villages to one based on fixed, long-lasting co-residential groups (households) as social units operating autonomously in large aggregated villages.

I suggested that the process of transformation did not stop with the establishment of the large villages, such as Selevac. The abandonment of the site of Selevac-Staro Selo after 500–1000 years of occupation is itself a manifestation of a continuing process of social and economic change along with Selevac, many other larger villages such as Turdas and Potporanj, as well as smaller villages of the Vinča culture, were abandoned during this period. These changes in settlement pattern are associated with changes in the material aspect of the Vinča culture which distinguish the Vinča-Pločnik IIb (Vinča D) phase from the preceding Vinča-Pločnik I–IIa (Vinča C) phase.

The period of the Vinča culture *after* the abandonment of Selevac (Vinča D: Period IV or Late Vinča in Chapman's sheme [12] (Sherratt's Copper Age) is of long duration. It is characterized by small scattered villages with a "conspicuous absence of any site remotely resembling the size and presumed complexity of Selevac." Sites of the size and regional significance of Selevac in fact did not form part of the Serbian landscape again until the Roman period.[13] The post-Selevac settlement pattern contrasts with that of the preceding period also in its wide variety of settlement locations, including those situated on soils such as the intractable chernozems, infertile podsols, and heavy clayey floodplain soils (including the lower Morava for the first time), which should undoubtedly be regarded as "marginal- from the point of view of neolitic-eneolithic cultivation technology. Such changes in settlement pattern and the associated material cultural changes, such as the unification of ceramic styles and the decrease in figurines, while not on the same as those which later mark the change from Sherratt's Copper Age to Late Copper Age (Todorova's Late Eneolithic to Early Bronze Age), would

[9] Sherratt, 1984
[10] Tringham, 1990
[11] Kaiser - Voytek, 1983
[12] Chapman, 1990
[13] Chapman, 1981; 1990

seem to represent the early stages of a process which became more obviously manifested in the archaeological data of the latter periods. Thus it is likely that any explanation that we suggest for the abandonment of Selevac and associated changes in the archaeological record should be seriously considered also as explanations for the later and more obvious Late Eneolithic to Early Bronze Age changes.

Our model for the abandonment of Selevac and other sites of the Vinča-Pločnik I–II (Vinča C) phase and for the subsequent social evolution in this area is based firmly on the premise that these changes represent essentially a socioeconomic trasformation of the cultures with no significant external stimuli. Nor do we believe that the settlements were abandoned as a result of a catastrophic end to their occupation by eartquake, fire, or invaders.

As mentioned above, Sherratt suggested that problems in resource availability such as a reduction in soil fertility, growth of population beyond the carrying capacity of the site territory, and deforestation were important factors in the later (Late Eneolithic to Early Bronze Age).[14] These same factors have been hypothesized as the ultimate cause of the abandonment of sites such as Selevac and the changes seen in the immediately subsequent periods.[15] Both Sherratt and Chapman emphasized the importance of the technological innovations that they suggest were adopted in response to the threats to the availability of resources, such as the widespread adoption of the plough, wheeled transport, and a focus on wool-producing sheep, all of which would have encouraged the expansion of population to the "marginal areas".

I have tended to asign a more significant role to the transformation of social organization in the process of such socioeconomic changes as shifts in settlement pattern. In other words, in the process of socio-cultural evolution, the transformation of those social relations that encompass the manipulation of materials by humans seems to me to be more important than the transformation of these material conditions themselves. Thus, although the material conditions that demanded change - for example, problems in resource availability - may have been present, I regard their role as secondary in the change between the Vinča-Pločnik IIa and II b (Vinča C2 and D) phases of the Vinča culture. A more important factor for me in the latter process of change is the hypothesized growing inability of late Vinča-Pločnik IIa (Vinča C2) settlements to participate in complex networks and the breakdown of the networks themselves.

The crucial point here is that if the explanation for the dispersal on to agriculturally marginal lands is not the fact that the plough and open-grazing enabled the expansion of the Neolithic population which was already bursting at the seams within the confines of the easily cultivable (without a plough) lands, then what did cause it?

[14] Sherratt, 1981; 1982; 1984

[15] Chapman, 1982; 1990

OPOVO

The subsequent research of the group that started work at Selevac was to investigate this problem by excavating one such late Vinča settlement that was established on the marginal lands of the lower Tamiš valley, 20 kms. from its confluence with the Danube, at Opovo.[16] The land here is characterized by poor drainage – in fact the settlement was probably surrounded by marshland for much of the year – and chernozem soils which need a plough to enable cultivation.

Much late Neolithic and Eneolithic research in southeast Europe focused exclusively on the "establishment" settlements, that is on the big village settlements of the Danube, Morava and Sava river valleys (for example, in Yugoslavia, Vinča, Gomolava, Selevac). From 1983 to 1989, however, we excavated a site which is hypothesized to be an early form of what became the established social formation of the Early Bronze Age. The site, known as Opovo-Ugar Bajbuk, excavated from 1983-1989 by a joint team from U.C. Berkeley and Institute of History, University of Novi Sad, covers an area approximately about 5 hectares. The deposits all belong to the period of the Vinča C2-D1. The drainage pattern caused problems for cultivation and settlement but also served to enrichen the local biomass.

Our overall impression is that Opovo differs in several important aspects from the general pattern of late Vinča culture sites, which are known for the most part in the Danube valley and the fertile easily cultivated hills to the south of it.

Firstly, the analysis of faunal remains shows an unusually high percentage of wild animal, especially red deer and pig. The study of the parts of body and sex/age ratios suggests that this reflects a real emphasis on hunting activities in the procurement of food at Opovo. Domestic animal bones and macrofloral remains of emmer wheat, however, attest to the presence of the regular Vinča culture complement of plants and animals.

Secondly, there are relatively few flaked and polished stone tools at the site, particularly the former. In late Neolithic sites in southeast Europe most flaked stone tools are used as "sickles", this is not at all the case at Opovo, where distally retouched blades used for scraping soft materials are the most frequent. Observations on raw material utilization point to a pattern of raw material acquisition at Opovo which was not the usual pattern of rich and easy acquisition of a variety of raw materials for specific tools and tasks. The materials were acquired from possibly quite distant sources, 30–45 km or more for the majority of materials, and over 100 kms for the obsidian. This in itself is not unusual in raw material procurement for Vinča-Pločnik sites. What is unusual is the fact that all the tools seem to be brought in to Opovo in already finished form and that careful steps are taken to prolong their use-lives. The materials used, however, are not of poor quality; they show the same discrimination in using special materials for special tasks that has been seen on other Vinča-Pločnik sites.

[16] Tringham et al., in press; Tringham et al., 1885

The buildings seem smaller and squarer (5–7x5–8 m.) than the usual Vinča-Pločnik buildings, (ca. 5–7x10–12 m.) and have less complex division of space into rooms, possibly reflecting smaller households or household at the beginning of their developmental cycle. They are also perhaps less permanent than those further south. However, their method of construction with a wooden frame covered by a coating of daub is very similar to that of other Vinča culture houses. One of the houses was even twostoreyed. All houses were burned. Pits for storage, garbage disposal, and wells existed at the site.

For the most part, however, the tools and artifacts manufactured out of the raw materials (including those of local materials such as bone and clay) are identical in formal characteristics. Figurines, both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic, on the other hand, are both scarce in and around the houses and have a scarcity of surface decoration and elaboration. Their forms are more reminiscent of the very late Vinča culture figurines of the Morava basin, but this has no chronological significance in the case of Opovo. The dating of this site is firmly established by the close links with well-dated ceramic sequences of Vinča and Gomolava nearby. However, a lessening in the frequency and surface elaboration of figurines is a characteristic of Vinča D.

The discovery of a few tiny fragments of copper oxide has firmly established the links to the Vinča-Pločnik sites of the middle Danube and lower Morava valleys, and the exploitation of the copper ores to the south and east in the mountains of Eastern Serbia.

THE MOVE TO "MARGINAL" LANDS

It remains for me to show how the presentation of these two sites – Selevac and Opovo – has helped understand the abandonment of Selevac and the move in increasing frequency towards the end of the 3rd mill. B.C. of settlement on to "marginal" lands.

Variables need to be sought which would have caused the social fissioning which we assume accompanied the changes observed in settlement pattern at the end of the Vinča-Pločnik IIa (Vinča C2) phase. I can only speculate on the nature of these variables, but they would seem to me to focus on the organization and power structure of society rather than its technological ability to manipulate the material world.

One such social factor which may have encouraged social fissioning lies in the exploitation and monopoly of power in the circulation of goods and marriage partners by "senior" men and women or "senior" households. Anthropological research has demonstrated that in pre–capitalist societies labour and not land ownership is the essential variable in the transformation of society.[17] It follows that he/she/they who controls the circulation of labour controls the social reproduction of society. For example, Meillassoux describes a traditional "egalitarian" society in which there is real "exploitation" of labour, i.e. a monopoly on the

[17] Friedman – Rowlands, 1978; Meillassoux, 1975

decisions relating to labour and contacts with the outside world, (i.e. those social relations which relate to the social reproduction of a social group), of the "junior" (younger) by the "seniors" of a single lineage or extended household, or of junior by senior households. In this case, the inequality is not very great, nor is it permanent, but it provides the dialectic force for the transformation of society.

Although such a monopoly may have been bearable during optimum material conditions of occupation at Selevac, it would have aggravated and have been aggravated by any population overgrowth within the confines of a permanent village and by any problems in resource availability.

Such a situation could have been ameliorated by measures and strategies to intensify production further or by expansion of the village area, although there would still have remained organizational problems. Such a situation could also have been resolved to a certain extent by restructuring the means of conflict resolution or by a reaffirmation of the traditional holders of power. The archaeological data, however, do not indicate that any of these measures were put into effect. There is no evidence for intensification of production during the Sherratt's Copper Age/Chanoan's Late Vinča (Vinča-Pločnik IIb).[18] An exception may be seen in the growth in the scale of copper metallurgy during the Vinča-Pločnik IIb period. If this is a manifestation of the intensification of production, however, it is characteristic only of the settlements of the Southern Morava Valley, and the south Balkans in general, rather than those of the majority of the north Balkans.[19] The settlements of the Vinča-Pločnik IIb (Vinča D) period are smaller, not larger, and the number of ritual objects and evidence of symbolic expression, which we would expect to reflect an increase in the complexity of the dominance structure, decreases.

A second social factor that may have led to the fissioning of the social group lies in the problems associated with the organization and dominance structure of large aggregate groups. Based on the data of living and historical societies, it is clearly unrealistic to expect that a settlement could continue to exist without end for thousands of generations, its population growing without restriction and its area expanding without limit. This has clearly never happened, however complex the society. There are finite limits to sizes of populations, areas of residences and duration of settlements.[20] For population, settlement area, and duration of settlement to increase, it is necessary to change the organization of a settlement's society and production. Central to this problem is the concept that in each social formation (system of social organization) a limit to the population size of its social groups is imposed by the system of information flow, organization, and decision-making entailed in social and economic activites.[21] As a population reaches its organizational threshold it can either change its organizational and

[18] Chapman, 1981; 1990

[19] Jovanović, 1982

[20] Chapman, 1970; Gletcher, 1981

[21] Chapman, 1970; Fletcher, 1981; Johnson, 1982

dominance structure to one which is based on an increased degree of complexity in decision-making and power structure or it can fission in order to maintain a workable size within the existing organizational structure.

The settlements of the Vinča culture in the Moravo-Danube Basin gradually became permanent sedentary villages, increasing their economic production within the existing framework of social organization of the labour force and relations with the outside world. Yet the demand for intensification of production and the growth of the labour force did not stop simply because the limits of organization of society (and possibly resources within the existing technologies) were reached.

In this kind of social formation, in which there is a flexible and temporary basis both of power and inequality, there are real limits to the number of members who may belong to a co-resident domestic group and to the number of domestic groups (households?) that can interact together in an aggregated settlement. These limits can only be overcome by changing to a system of organzation and power structure which comprises a more centralized and more permanently hierarchical social organization. [22]

I propose that, by the end of the occupation of Selevac and other such sites in the Vinča-Pločnik IIa (Vinča C2) phase, the organizational limits of a social formation that comprised economically autonomous co-resident domestic groups (households) aggregated into a network of large settlements were reached. Without some centralizing dominance structure through which the households could be organized into an integrated (as opposed to aggregated) political unit, it would have been impossible to continue the trajectory of intensification of production and growth of population in the Vinča (Binča-Pločnik I–IIa phase) culture settlement. [23] But such a path of further centralization was not chosen.

I suggest that the solution that was chosen for either or both of these reasons was to fission the social group. I hypothesize that at the end of the Mature Neolithic (Champman's Early Vinča), the large aggregated settlements fissioned along household lines and that smaller hamlets comprising one or two households were established. Obviously, I am hypothesizing that Opovo is one such hamlet.

Three alternative models have been proposed to explain the differences and similarities that Opovo manifests to other Vinča culture settlements of the Moravo-Danube area:

1. Opovo represents a late Neolithic adaptation to the specific environmental conditions in the Tamiš valley. There remains, however, the problem of why this area was settled in the first place.

2. Opovo represents one of a series of sites whose settlers originally came into this area from the south, from the heartland of the Vinča culture (that is, the Morava-Sava-Danube confluence area). We hypothesize two possible mechanisms by which the marshlands of the Tamiš-Tisza valley would have been settled in this way.

[22] Flannery, 1972

[23] Fletcher, 1981; Johnson, 1982

a) Opovo was inhabited each year for a relatively short period by a population who normally lived in a large permanent settlement like Vinča itself. It is hypothesized that the settlement would have served certain specialized purposes, such as the seasonal exploitation of red deer and wild pig herds in the Tamiš marshlands, and or the acquisition of raw materials from the Fruška Gora and Carpathian Banat via other groups who procured these materials directly. Many other forms of exchange could also take place at such a time. In this mechanism, we would expect to see the unit of social reproduction as a partial replica of that of the large villages further south.

b) The inhabitants of Opovo represent a bud-off group of "juniors" fissioned from an overgrown center, such as Vinča itself, where "seniors" dominated the labour and production of a group. In this mechanism, we would expect to see the unit of social reproduction as identical to those (but perhaps less well developed or established) in the larger villages of the Vinča culture further south, but we would expect to see it as an isolated dispersed version of these.

Such social fissioning would not have been done rapidly, nor over long distances. Nor need it have involved a permanent severing of ties with the larger group. We may speculate that such fissioning would not have been carried out by those at the top of the dominance structure; it would have been the less powerful members of a household or less powerful households who were the ones to break away from the rigors of tradition.

It is very probable that such fissioning of the social group started out as a temporary measure, such as transhumant seasonal grazing of animals in marginal areas as suggested in Model 2a concerning Opovo and became a more permanent move including pasturing and new uses of animals and the cultivation of new exchange contacts over wider areas and, presumably, eventually new networks of alliances, as has been hypothesized by Sherratt. The idea here is that these were unfamiliar areas, contacts, economic strategies and techniques over which the "seniors" of the large Mature Neolithic (Late Neolithic/Early Eneolithic) villages, such as Selevac, did not have a monopoly of knowledge and experience; they would no longer have been able to control the social reproduction of those who had broken away.

The significant decrease in the manufacture of anthropomorphic figurines in the Copper Age (Late Eneolithic) may not be caused so much by a decrease in the importance of female deities in the society's belief system as by the transformation of the whole nature of the rituals and their symbols which had characterized the traditions of the large Vinča-Pločnik I–IIa settlements such as Selevac. If it is hypothesized that during this period there was a breakdown in the dominance structure so that the "senior" households and "senior" members of a household lost control of the social reproduction of society, accompanied by fissioning of "junior" households and members of households, then the figurines would have lost their purpose of manufacture. It is interesting to note that, although the need for symbols to maintain traditional dominance structure of society certainly arose later during the Bronze Age, clay figurines seemingly never again fulfilled that function.

Thus, in summary, I am suggesting that in Balkan prehistory, and temperate European prehistory in general, there was a preference to maintain the domestic co-resident group (household) as the main unit of social and economic cooperation. The establishment of small settlements of the Vinča-Pločnik IIb (Vinča D) phase, such as Opovo, and the abandonment of settlements such as Selevac represent a development away from any growth of social complexity and centralized organization now and the maintenance of the smaller, co-resident, kin-based domestic groups (households?) as units of social and economic organization. Thus although the large settlements such as Selevac may have been abandoned in favour of the establishment of smaller settlements such as Opovo, the social formation itself did not change. The co-resident domestic group (household) continued in the Copper Age and Bronze Age to be the main unit of social reproduction in southeast Europe.

By the time the archaeologists see this process in the 3rd mill. B.C. in the Southeast European Early Bronze Age, what had started out as an "anti-establishment" movement had in fact become the Establishment itself, meaning that this process of transformation had been going on already for a thousand years, long, long before the drama of any Caucasian, "Pontic" and "Kurgan" migrations are recognized.

ЖИВОТ ПОСЛЕ СЕЛЕВЦА: КАКО И ЗАШТО НЕОЛИТСКО НАСЕЉЕ БИВА НАПУШТЕНО

Резиме

У четвртом и трећем миленију пре нове ере насеља на Блиском Истоку и у Европи су била демографски, технолошки и економски на сличним нивоима развоја али и поред тога урбанизовани центри су се развила у Европи 3000 година касније од најранијих оваквих насеља у Малој Арији. Како објаснити овакве разлике? У литератури су до сада најчешће поминьани фактор природне средине и демографски фактор. Наше мишљење, у овом чланку изнето, је међутим да су социо-економски фактори пресудни за објашњење горе наведене енигме. Наиме, наше мишљење је да је у праисторији Балкана, као и Средње Европе постојала наклоност за живот у мањим заједницама типа породице и за одржавање тог типа социјалноекономске кооперације.

У овом чланку нам је намера да на примерима два неолитска насеља, Селевац-Старо село и Опово-Угар бајбук, централног Балкана покажемо наведену тенденцију неолитских житеља. Пратећи развој једног типичног винчанског насеља као што је Селевац можемо констатовати развој од семи-седелачког до потпуно седелачког типа живота. Ово је праћено/проузроковано трансформацијама у производьи хране и интензивираньем производње и коначно преласком из система социјално-економске организације засноване на слабо везаној породици у малим селима у дугорочне социјално-економске формације типа сеоске задруге у великим селима.

Наша претпоставка је да овај процес социјалних и економских трансформација није био заустављен већ да се наставио даље. На примеру Селевца, као и других насеља из периода развијене винчанске културе, се може видети да су ова насеља била напуштена и да се њихов живот на одређеном степену развоја културе завршава. Појав-

ћују се мала, расута насеља, која не наликују на оно пре тога. Питање је шта се догодило са великим винчанским селима типа Селевац. Из ког разлога су она напуштена. Ми не верујемо у објашњења типа освајачког рата или природних катастрофа. Ми сматрамо да је дошло до промена у социјалној организацији и стога до промена у типу насеља. Опово је пример насеља младе винчанске културе које је формирано на маргиналној територији доњег Тамиша. Ово насеље се у многим битним аспектима разликује од типичних млађе-винчанских насеља из долине Дунава. То су остаци фауне, камена индустрија, архитектура, антропоморфне и зооморфне представе.

Наша је хипотеза, заснована на оповачком примеру, да на крају развијеног неолита долази до цепања великих сеоских агломератних села по линији породичне задруге и до формирања засеока који се састоје од два домаћинства. Наведени су неки разлози који су могли бити узрок оваквој појави.

Према томе, у праисторји Балкана и Средње Европе је постојала наклоност ка формирању заједнице типа сеоске задруге као основне јединице социјалне и економске кооперације. Формирање малих насеља Винча-Плочник, иако се на Опову прелази на мање заједнице базиране на рођачким везама које представљају основу социјалне и економске организације насеља у суштини се иста социјална форма продужава.

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