The Early Neolithic communities in Macedonia

Časně neolitické komunity v Makedonii

Goce Naumov

The Neolithisation and the first agricultural societies in Southeast Europe are under constant discussions. Besides numerous data on the earliest farming settlements in this region, still there are debates on the directions and chronology of the dispersion of such significant economic and social process. Many proposed the diffusion of agriculture was initially introduced from Asia Minor to southern parts of Greece or eastern areas of Bulgaria, but there is not much written on how this process further progressed towards Macedonia. This region is still insufficiently explored to be thoroughly incorporated into the studies of Neolithisation in the Balkans, but however the modest research provided substantial data in order to propose the emergence of first agricultural societies in the Early Neolithic. Therefore this paper will incorporate the current knowledge on the initial Neolithic stages in Macedonia and how it was manifested within material culture, economy, rituals and social features specific for the farming communities in this region. In regard to vivid pottery patterns and abundance of human representations it will be proposed as well that the Neolithisation also involved a variety of symbolic processes.

Neolithisation – Southeast Europe – Macedonia – visual identities – anthropomorphism

Neolitizace a první zemědělské společnosti v jihovýchodní Evropě jsou předmětem stálých diskusí. Kromě četných dat o prvních zemědělských osadách v této oblasti se diskutují směry a chronologie šíření tohoto významného ekonomického a společenského procesu. Mnoho badatelů zastává názor, že zemědělství se nejdříve šířilo z Malé Asie do jižních částí Řecka nebo východních oblastí Bulharska, ale o tom, jak tento proces pokračoval do Makedonie, nebylo mnoho napsáno. Tato oblast je stále nedostatečně prozkoumaná na to, aby ji bylo možno plně začlenit do studií neolitizace Balkánu, nicméně stávající výzkum poskytl dostatek dat k předpokladu výskytu prvních zemědělských společností v časném neolitu. Tento článek shrnuje stávající znalosti o časném neolitu Makedonie a o jeho projevech v materiální kultuře, hospodářství, rituálech a společenských rysech specifických pro zemědělská společenství v této oblasti. S ohledem na živé vzory keramiky a hojnost znázornění lidí se také předpokládá, že neolitizace zahrnovala i celou řadu symbolických procesů.

neolitizace – jihovýchodní Evropa – Makedonie – vizuální identity – antropomorfismus

Introduction

The history of human kind confirms several crucial points when the important transformation of both the environment and humans themselves occurred. Frequently, these changes are result of the human adaptation within the space inhabited and are part of the process of its modification due to the employment of available resources or provision of adequate living ambient. Although such changes are perceived as rapid phenomena from nowadays perspective, still their implementation was developed gradually throughout several stages. In that context also the establishment of first agricultural communities in the Balkans is based on similar processes which significantly altered the demographic, social and geographical image of the space. The populations which settled this region in the middle of 7th millennia BC introduced numerous novelties and synchronically had effect onto the changes of the indigenous hunter-gatherers.

The actual remains of Neolithic settlements enable insight into such processes manifested onto architecture, ceramics, subsistence, rituals and crafts, as well as into the beginning of Neolithic and its dispersal in the Balkans. Such wide regional perspective on the progress of Neolithic, allows easier approach towards the Neolithisation of its composite parts. Therefore, in this occasion an attempt of presentation and elaboration of the Neolithisation in Macedonia will be made, particularly in the context of the social dynamism common for the neighboring regions as well. Additionally, numerous regional data will be used in order to have a more precise notion for the formation period of the Neolithic sites in Macedonia (*fig. 1*), and the recent data on the emergence and dispersal of new populations, plants, animals, technical achievements and ritual practices will be provided as well.

Reconsideration of theories on the Neolithisation of Southeast Europe

This paper is mainly focused on the process of Neolithisation in Macedonia, but more thorough observation of a broader regional context is necessary regarding the first farming societies in the Southeast Europe. These theories on so called 'Neolithic revolution' partially considers Asia Minor and Central Europe as regions involved in the introduction of farming, animal husbandry or pottery production in the Balkans and therefore will be partially concerned. They provide much broader spectrum of potential arguments for understanding the transformation of landscape and economy in various regions and consequently could be employed for explication of changes from hunter-gatherer to farming societies in Macedonia. Various avenues of archaeological studies will be reconsidered here in order to propose more thorough exposition of modes for the Neolithisation of Balkans and Macedonia in particular i.e. region still lacking crucial research and data for understanding this complex social, economic and symbolic process.

There are several attempts in the history of archaeology to define and explain the beginning of Neolithic and its emergence in the various parts of the world (*Whittle 1996*; *Scarre ed. 2005*). Since the Thomsen three-age system until most recent chemical analysis of material remains (*Rowley-Conwy 2006*; *Trigger 2006*), there are numerous ideas constantly applied on the chronology and modes of the Neolithic initial stages. These theories are grounded onto different organic materials and human activities in order to gain multi-perspective approach towards the most significant biological and social processes. Consequently, a various discussions concerned the economical factor as the main cause for the changes introduced in the Neolithic, although lately the aspect of ideology is more asserted as crucial element in the construction of ideas related with agriculture, domestication, pottery, architecture etc. The majority of analyses are concentrated towards determination of the first species of domesticated plants and animals, as well as onto their independent emergence in various parts of the world (*Denham – White eds. 2007*). Soon after, numerous thoughts appeared on the pottery and architecture as successive process related with the agriculture, thus effecting new social and economic relations and rituals established in the Neolithic for the first time.

Although the list of archaeologist which contributed towards disclosing the beginnings of Neolithic is extensive, however Childe's ideas introduced new perspective on how to explore and understand the Neolithic (*Childe 1958*). Surely, there were many archaeologists after

Childe which considerably supplemented and modified his reconstruction of the Neolithic. In this paper only few will be referred which contributed with mostly polarized views on the Neolithisation of South East Europe and opened ground based discussions on autochthonic appearance of the Neolithic or its 'import' from the West Turkey and Near East (*fig. 2*). These studies and analysis also notably had effect on the understanding of initial Neolithic stage in the Balkans and particularly in Macedonia.

Domestication

The emergence of first cereals and domestication of plants in general is still one of the most referential points in the interpretation of the Neolithic beginnings. Although there is huge number of analysis on cereal types cultivated in Europe (*Bellwood 2005*; *Thorpe 1996*; *Zohary – Hopf 2000*), their origin and motives for domestication in the Balkans are still largely debated. Despite the common thoughts on the start of Neolithic in Northern parts of Europe, the earliest presence of cereals in SE Europe is still under discussions. Regardless the traditional interpretation of domesticated plants as Anatolian import, the possibility of certain grains to be domesticated in Greece is currently more asserted. The excavations of Theopetra and Franchti confirmed wild wheat and barley suggesting that they were consumed even in the Mesolithic (*Dennell 1983*, 160; *Kotsakis 2001*, 66; *Kyparissi – Apostolika 2000*, 137; *Murray 1970*, 20; *Thorpe 1996*, 22). This could be also supported by the possibility of Mesolithic economic communication through the trade with Melos obsidian (*Chapman 2008*, 337; *Kotsakis 2001*, 68; *Whittle 1996*, 23). The established exchange of organic products is quite possible within this process. The model of ship or boat engagement in these phases is already elaborated and it is often affirmed for the distribution of new cultures both in European Mesolithic and Neolithic (*Broodbank 1999*, 37; *Farr 2010*, 21; *Perlès 2001*; *Pluciennik 2008*, 28). However, the problem of wild or domesticated cereals still remains open no matter its dating in the Mesolithic or Neolithic.

Although Dennell suggests that the spreading of cereals might be a result of natural process, such as the role of nutrition, excrement and birds migration (*Dennell 1983*, 164), still their import within 'Neolithic package' by the dispersing population from West Turkey to Europe is accented by the large number of archaeologists and paleobotanists (*Ammerman – Biagi eds. 2003*; *Price ed. 2000*; *Runnels 2003*, 124; *Thorpe 1996*). Nonetheless, even if the presence of particular wild cereals is confirmed earlier in the Balkan Peninsula, it is still considered that the idea for their cultivation originates from other region and it is again announced in the Neolithic (*Barker 1985*; *Dennell 1983*, 163). Consequently, it could be concluded that the domestication of cereals is imported in the Balkans by the Anatolian populations which synchronically promote the idea of fostering and controlling the new nurturing resources. This model partially clarifies the Neolithic beginnings in Macedonia which will be later elaborated.

The domestication of animals in the Balkans and more broadly in Southeast or Central Europe is explained in similar context. The debate remains open on the taming of cattle which are mainly considered as domesticated in the Central Europe and Balkan Peninsula (*Bökönyi 1974*; *Bökönyi 1996*, 166; *Grigson 1989*; *Spasov – Iliev – Boev 2001*, 167). The domestication of first pigs is interpreted comparably (*Ivkovska 2009*, 62). However, despite

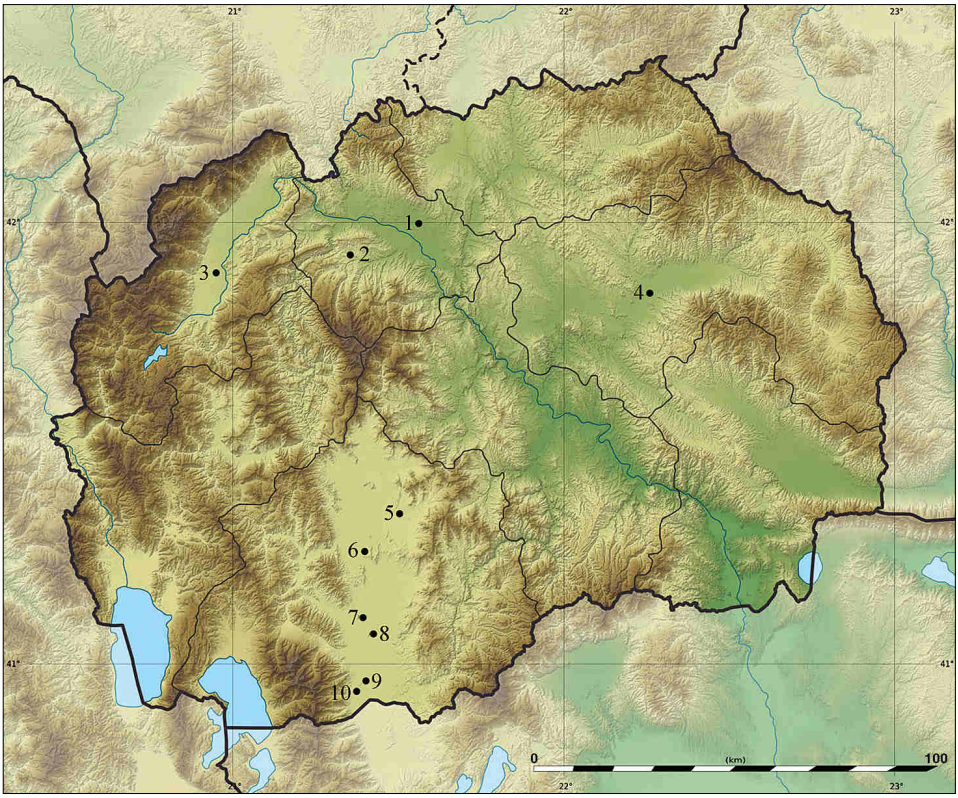

Fig. 1. Map of the Republic of Macedonia with the Neolithic sites mentioned in text: 1 Madjari; 2 Govrlevo; 3 Stenče; 4 Amzabegovo; 5 Gjumušica; 6 Topolčani; 7 Gurgur; 8 Optičari; 9 Porodin; 10 Veluška Tumba.
Obr. 1. Mapa Makedonské republiky s vyznačenými neolitickými lokalitami zmíněnými v textu: 1 Madjari; 2 Govrlevo; 3 Stenče; 4 Amzabegovo; 5 Gjumušica; 6 Topolčani; 7 Gurgur; 8 Optičari; 9 Porodin; 10 Veluška Tumba.

these considerations, the previous traditional justification on the emergence of such animals through the process of their 'import' from Western Turkey into South East Europe has been promoted again (*Rowley-Conwy 2003*, 113; *Runnels 2003*, 126). Regarding the ships, most of the researchers agree that they are brought from Near East which is also confirmed with the absence of their wild relatives (*Bökönyi 1996*, 173; *Dennell 1983*, 163; *Ivkovska 2009*, 60). Such analysis on the domesticated animals in the Neolithic settlements provide much broader image on the means by which the herding is implemented in the Balkans and how it is developed into one of the major economic spheres in the Neolithic. This will largely contribute towards the changes within social relations of the Neolithic communities, as well as in the creation of new identities based on the quantity of the animals possessed.

Despite the discussion on the authenticity or import of the domesticated plants and animals, the emergence of first Neolithic dwellings and pottery could not be neglected as novelty transmitted from Asia Minor or Near East. The dwellings made of mudbricks or wattle and daub are not familiar neither for Paleolithic nor Mesolithic in the Balkans. The use of

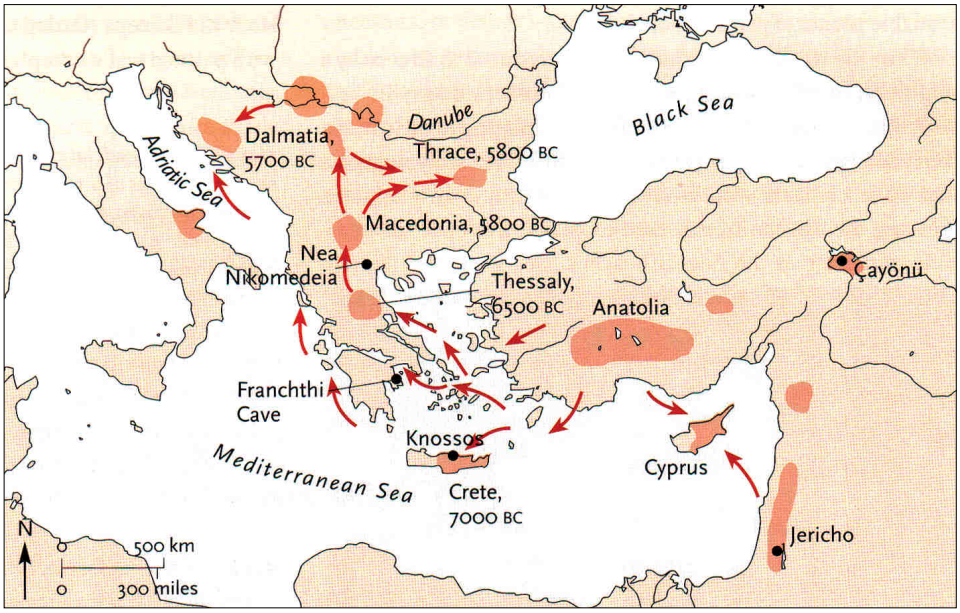

Fig. 2. Map of the Near East and Southeast Europe with indicated directions of Neolithisation (*Scarre ed. 2005,* fig. 11: 8).The indicated dates and directions are not updated and are currently modified as result to new research and analyses.
Obr. 2. Mapa Blízkého Východu a jihovýchodní Evropy s naznačenými směry neolitizace (*Scarre ed. 2005,* fig. 11: 8). Vyznačená data a směry nejsou aktuální a jsou v současnosti měněny výsledky nových výzkumů a analýz.

these materials and especially the mudbricks in the Early Neolithic induce the Anatolian relations, although the house building technology is quite different due to climate and geographic environment. These technological diversities will be also manifested on the organization of the dwellings within settlements, as well as onto the increased social relations inside the first Neolithic villages in the Balkans (*Düring – Marchiniak 2005*; *Perlès 2001*). Some authors suggest that the regions of Thessaly and Macedonia were not inhabited while the last Paleolithic sites disappear around 13 000 BP. This enabled the first agriculturalists free dispersion in such area and the concentration of numerous villages (*Runnels 2003*, 126, 128). The employment of new dwelling type and construction of the first village settlements indicate that there was detachment from the Mesolithic architectonic traditions which caused new social structures within communities.

Pottery

There are several dilemmas regarding the origin of ceramics in general, although pottery production is formerly considered as a novelty in the Neolithic Balkans. The clay as raw material is confirmed in the Late Paleolithic and it was used for modeling of figurines, sculptures, minor constructions or as basket insulation (*Bougard 2003*; *Budja 2005*; *Gheorghiu 2008*).

The earliest dated clay in Clissoura was used for constructing smaller hearths (*Stiner et al. 2010*), while the bison representations with large size were also modeled in clay in Tuc d'Audobert. Baked clay was exploited for figurine production in Dolní Věstonice and Pavlov while their intentional fragmentation resembles the one practiced later in the Neolithic (*Chapman 2000*; *Naumov – Chausidis 2011*; *Talalay 1993*).

The utilization of clay for vessels is not yet confirmed in the Paleolithic Europe, although the basket insulation might be considered as a sort of announcement to a later pottery technology in the Neolithic. Nevertheless, the usage of clay vanished in the Mesolithic and it is promoted again in the Neolithic as basic raw material for the production of vessels, figurines, models and other household items. This confirms that there was no direct relation between Paleolithic or Mesolithic traditions and new Neolithic practices, so that the clay could be regarded as cultural product which is directly imported or promoted by the agricultural populations from the Asia Minor.

Diffusion

Considering the numerous material, economic and ritual innovations in the second half of 7th millennia BC, there are diversity of models suggesting how these novelties were incorporated in the Balkans. In general, there is bipolar division on the issues related with the gradual transformation of local Mesolithic populations into Neolithic societies and on the one asserting the complete colonization of newcomers from Anatolia. The recent research indicates that the first model is quite possible and that it mainly considers the Mesolithic population in western and northern parts of Europe (*Thorpe 1996*; *Zvelebil 2001*). The migration of Anatolian population which brings its own technical, social and ideological traditions is less questionable regarding the Southeast Europe and especially southern parts of the Balkan Peninsula (*Borić – Price 2013*). Therefore, several models are suggested which partially explicate some of the possible variations of 'colonization' or cultural contacts in Southeast Europe. As most probable are indicated the following: '*folk migration*', '*demic diffusion*', '*elite dominance*', '*infiltration*', '*frog leap colonization*', '*frontier mobility*' and '*contact*' (*Zvelebil 2001*). Although the migration was asserted as most adequate (*Childe 1958*), still some of the aforementioned models are more affirmed along with some other subtle forms of Neolithic initial stages in Europe. Some considers this process as slow and gradually dispersed through southeastern parts of the continent (*Whittle 1996*), while others emphasize the rapid migration of people both from Asia Minor and Near East (*Perlès 2001*; *2003*).

Both scenarios regard the infiltration of new populations by the sea which was a maritime practice within the obsidian trade since Mesolithic (*Broodbank 1999*; *Pluciennik 2008*, 28). Such rapid expansion clarifies the abrupt emergence of agriculture, but the demographic changes as well (*Cavalli–Sforza – Cavalli–Sforza 1995*; *Renfrew 1987*). Therefore, the last decades of research on the genetic structure of Neolithic individuals have been intensified, which also brought new knowledge and additionally confirmed the presence of Anatolian genetic material (*Balaresque et al. 2010*; *Casalloti et al. 1999*; *Di Giacomo et al. 2004*; *King – Underhill 2002*; *King et al. 2008*). Consequently to such new data several genetic models of Neolithic dispersal through Europe were proposed, such as autochthonic transition, incoming farmers with differential degrees of mixture, complete replacement without

mixture, admixture as a function of geographic region, or a distance from source population (*Pinhasi 2003*). Although it is still hard to confirm which of these models are adequate for the Balkans, still the variety of archaeological, chemical and genetic data provide more solid insight into the dispersal of Neolithic throughout this region. Nevertheless, the presence of an Anatolian population should not be neglected which in contact with indigenous hunter-gatherers created the material, social and ideological features of Neolithic communities in this part of Europe.

There are not yet unified interpretations of motives which caused the migration of these populations towards the Balkan Peninsula. The idea of colonization and discovery of new resources for Anatolian communities was supported recently, but also criticized and not widely accepted. In the last decades the climate factors are much more promoted and especially the social instability within the Near East settlements which is concerned as a probable cause for constrains of the communities in their search for new convenient living space. Some considers the exploitation of resources for building and decoration of the Near East dwellings as one of the most significant motives for population movement, as well as the long periods of dry seasons (*Perlès 2001*). Despite this hypothesis, some authors suggest the economic and geographical factors as subsequent wave to primary ideological principles and their effect on the rapid spread of new social and economic standards. Although there are still discussions on the rituals and symbolic visual culture as element of the Neolithic religion, still more often the believes and rites are promoted as crucial segment in the creation of new ideologies (*Cauvin 2000*; *Schmidt 2010*; *Hodder ed. 2010*; *2014*). There are also thoughts on the agriculture as a developed stage of ideology endorsed among the communities affected by the process of Neolithisation (*Settegast 2005*). Surely, this segment should not be excluded for the Neolithic societies in the Balkans which have specific symbolic visual culture and rituals since the earliest phases.

Each of the afore mentioned aspects of Balkan Peninsula Neolithisation, including agriculture, animal husbandry, architecture, genetics and ideology, constructs the broader image on the formation processes of first farming communities in this region. Consequently, all these data also might be used in the eventual reconstruction of the Neolithic initial stages in Macedonia. This overview of wider Balkan area, as well as the information on Neolithic sites in Macedonia, induces numerous possibilities to understand the Neolithisation in particular region and to compare with the synchronic processes in the neighboring surrounding. Therefore, this paper mainly attempts to propose several models for the Neolithisation of Macedonia. The future research, excavation of sites and laboratory analyses will significantly contribute in the more precise definition of the chronology and the varieties within first agricultural villages in this area. This will enable deeper insight into social, economic and symbolic relations among Neolithic communities inhabiting this area.

Neolithisation of Macedonia

The research on the initial stages of the Neolithic in the Republic of Macedonia are still modest and are mainly based on the earlier excavations and secondary data from chronological analysis (*Benac 1989*; *Garašanin 1979*; *Jovanović 1968*; *Naumov 2009a*; *Sanev 1995*; *Zdravkovski 2006*). Therefore, the start of Neolithisation in this region cannot be

thoroughly explicated. Although modest, such data provide preliminary insight in the agriculture beginnings and establishment of first villages. They were used as the basics for several interpretations mainly asserting the cultural features of Neolithic sites. In the last several decades a number of new calibrated dates, paleobotanical and paleozoological results from Macedonia and broader Balkan area were published which significantly contribute towards understanding of the directions and forms of Neolithisation. Numerous samples from recent excavations were taken in order to have new glimpse into the beginning of Neolithic in Macedonia. These samples would be additionally included into botanical, zoological, geological, anthropological and chronological analysis which will confirm, modify or deny current knowledge on Neolithisation process in this region.

Although there are calibrated dates for the earliest Neolithic phases on some of the Macedonian sites, still their relation with the eventual Mesolithic settlements remains unknown. Despite the data on Paleolithic period (*Biblija 1999*; *Kuzman 1993*; *1995*; *Malez 1979*; *Šalamanov Korobar 2005*; *Šalamanov Korobar 2006*; *Šalamanov Korobar 2008*), those for the Mesolithic are modest and hypothetical, and unfortunately insufficient for a consistent reconstruction of the possible impact and interaction between Mesolithic population and farmers (*Sanev 2004*, 36; *Šalamanov Korobar 2005*, 18). Therefore, in regard to earlier excavations, most of the archaeologists agree that the Neolithic in the Macedonia starts as already developed process without preceding aceramic or monochrome phases (*Gimbutas ed. 1976*; *Garašanin 1989*; *Lazarovichi 2006*; *Sanev 1995*). In spite of that the initial monochrome phases for Greece and Bulgaria are extensively discussed and proposed as significant stages before the introduction of painted pottery (*Özdoğan 2014*, 37). Similar hypothesis was suggested for the Neolithic site of Pešterica where only monochrome pottery was determined (*Kitanoski – Simoska – Todorovič 1980*). However, this site was never dated and it is located higher than most of the Early Neolithic settlements in Pelagonia, so that currently the production of unpainted pottery cannot be merely distinguished as the indication for initial monochrome Neolithic phase.

The other site considered as monochrome is the Early Neolithic settlement at Zlastrana in Ohrid region which is not dated as well (*Kuzman 1990*). Zlastrana and Pešterica are entirely monochrome settlements and therefore it is still questionable if they could be regarded as Early Neolithic and as a stage prior to full Neolithic with painted pottery and entire set of so called 'Neolithic Package'. Most of the other Early Neolithic sites in Macedonia which are already dated consist white painted pottery in the initial phases of the settlements, such as Amzabegovo, Govrlevo, Veluška Tumba, Mogila, Stenče and many others (*Naumov 2010a*). Besides the proposed hypothesis of monochrome Neolithic for some sites in the surrounding regions, the situation in Macedonia for the moment fits the overall phenomena of the establishment of agricultural societies in the Balkan Peninsula along with painted pottery (*Özdoğan 2014*).

Nevertheless, the new excavations and analysis are necessary and could confirm or negate such interpretation, although the research in Govrlevo indicate the established settlement in last Early Neolithic stages with distinct material culture and white painted vessels (*Fidanoski – Tomaž 2010*, 69; *Fidanoski 2012*, 47). Most of the agricultural societies in Pelagonia also produced white painted pottery since the establishment of their first settlements, such as those from sites at the Veluška Tumba and Mogila (*Simoska – Sanev 1975*; *Simoska – Kitanoski – Todorovič 1979*). The same could be proposed for the Early Neolithic

sites in Polog region and the settlement at Stenče in particular (*Zdravkovski 2005*). Further East i.e. Ovče Pole region, the white painted pottery is detected in the earliest levels of Amzabegovo i.e. Anza Ia, but also the dwellings were built of mudbrick (*Gimbutas ed. 1976*). The painted patterns are similar to those performed on the vessels in Nea Nikomedeia and Giannitsa and the same architectural technique is practiced in these settlements as well (*Naumov 2010a*, 272; *Pyke 1996*; *Tasić 2006*).

Regarding the archaeological material of Amzabegovo and few other Early Neolithic sites it can be considered that the Neolithic in Macedonia begins rather rapidly with apparent elements of Thessalian and Anatolian traditions (*Sanev 1995*, 23, 29; *Naumov 2009a*, 23). Consequently it is evident that there were no solid relations between Mesolithic hunter-gatherers and Neolithic farmers, at least within material culture, although there are various observations on the interaction of these socially different communities in the other regions of Southeast Europe (*Bailey 2000*; *Bonsall et al. 2000*; *Borić – Price 2013*; *Kotsakis 2001*; *Srejović 1969*; *Whittle 1996*). It is still vague if the indigenous communities in Macedonia were integrated within the Neolithisation process or they were secluded into isolated environment, but this could be answered with future studies and more particular focus on Mesolithic societies in the region.

Chronology

Due to few calibrated dates the relative time span of Neolithic initial stages could be defined. There are chronological analyses for approximately ten sites which give first insight for the time when the earliest settlements were established. The Amzabegovo excavations provided the most numerous samples (*fig. 3*), thus enabling more consistent explanation of ^{14}C analysis results (*Gimbutas ed. 1976*, 29). According to recent calibrated data of these samples, the earliest dates for Amzabegovo range between 6510 BC (95.4 %) 6230 BC; 6450 BC (95.4 %) 5750 BC; 6250 BC (95.4 %) 5600 BC (*Whittle et al. 2005*, T. I, 348–350). The high percentages of sigma range indicate that the Neolithisation process in Macedonia, and especially in its eastern part, was quite soon after the one in Thessaly, although this is further to be discussed.[1] A calibration of these dates and provision of new samples is necessary to obtain much more thorough understanding of the first stages in Amzabegovo. Nevertheless, for the moment the current data provides first insight in Neolitization of the eastern parts of Macedonia which will be reconsidered and modified in the future.

South-western parts of Macedonia assert that such process was not equivalent and synchronous (*fig. 4*). Calibrated samples from Veluška Tumba and Porodin confirms later inhabitation of Pelagonia plain with a range from 6030 BC (95.4 %) 5620 BC to 5850 BC (95.4 %) 5470 BC (*Whittle et al. 2005*, 348). It is still under question how and when the Neolithic started in Pelagonia, but there are apparent similarities with the visual culture and architecture in Thessaly. Regarding the dates the first agricultural societies in Pelagonia established their settlements a bit later than those in Thessaly, but preserved some of the visual and architectural features or remained in contact with those in southern regions.

[1] It is recently proposed that Neolithisation in the Balkans started rapidly in fully developed stage around 6100–5900 BC after the one much earlier in Thessaly approximately at 6500–6400 BC (*Özdoğan 2014*).

SITE	LAB NO	DATE BP	CALIBRATED RANGE 2 SIGMA	MATERIAL, CONTEXT, ASSOCIATIONS
Anzabegovo	LJ-2519	7560±70	6510BC (95.4%) 6230BC	charcoal, block L, level 16, depth 219–229 cm below datum (oldest sample) (*Gimbutas 1976* 30; RC 19, 23)
Anzabegovo	LJ-3032	7210±50	6210BC (93.3%) 5980BC 5950BC (2.1%) 5920BC	charcoal, sq. V, units 103, 106, 107, 111 and 120; depth 370–380 cm below datum – phase Ia (*Gimbutas 1976* 30; RC 19, 23)
Anzabegovo	LJ-3183	7150±50	6160BC (4.9%) 6130BC	charcoal (Juniperus), sq. V, depth 90–110 cm below datum, layer 1 – phase Ia (*Gimbutas 1976* 30; RC 19, 23)
Anzabegovo	LJ-3185 5610BC	6830±70	5850BC (95.4%)	charcoal (Quercus, Juniperus and other trees), sq. V, combination of units 125 to 155, expected phase Ia but the age is for phase III (*Gimbutas 1976* 30; RC 19, 23)
Anzabegovo	LJ-3187	7150±70	6210BC (8.7%) 6130BC 6120BC (86.7%) 5840BC	charcoal, sq. V, units 76 to 86 and 116 to 124 depth 390–410 cm below datum – phase Ia (*Gimbutas 1976* 30; RC 19, 23)

Fig. 3. The earliest calibrated dates for Amzabegovo (*Whittle et al. 2005*).
Obr. 3. Nejstarší kalibrovaná data pro Amzabegovo (*Whittle et al. 2005*).

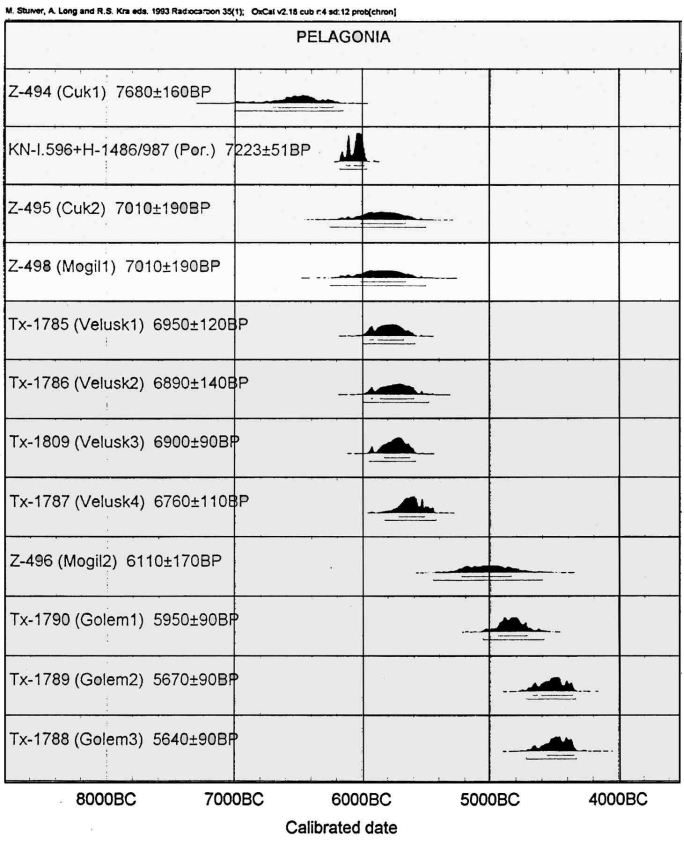

Fig. 4. The earliest calibrated dates for the sites in Pelagonia (*Thissen 2000,* fig. 5: 6).
Obr. 4. Nejstarší kalibrovaná data pro lokality v Pelagonii (*Thissen 2000,* fig. 5: 6).

The dense concentration of tell-sites and symbolic focus on house models is common for both regions, so it is still vague whether they shared similar social values in the same period or they were transposed much later within second wave of Neolithisation.

Regarding these issues the date for the Neolithic site at Čuka near Topolčani induce much earlier and almost not expectable dates for Pelagonia: 7050 BC (95.4 %) 6200 BC (*Whittle et al. 2005*, 348). Considering the occupation of the earliest Neolithic sites in other Balkan regions, such date is rather surprising although particular explications for its probability are suggested. Namely, similar dates are confirmed for several sites in Greece which invoked two possibilities (*Perlès 2001*): (i) a possible problem with the processing of samples in laboratories and (ii) if the dates are probable than they indicate the possibility of initial and very early wave of emigrants or so called 'pioneers-adventurers' which in smaller groups surveyed and settled the Balkan Peninsula (*Perlès 2001*, 62; *Perlès 2003*, 110). For the moment, the relation between these samples and material culture is not confirmed i.e. whether they are extracted from Mesolithic levels or from the settlement of Early Neolithic 'adventurers'; or simply they were not processed well during laboratory treatment. Published findings of this site, as well as those stored in the Museum of Prilep depots, asserts regular Neolithic features common for Pelagonia plain (*Kitanoski 1977*; *Kitanoski – Simoska – Todorovič 1978*; *1983*). The white painted patterns, anthropomorphic house models and figurines in Topolčani are common to those in Veluška Tumba, Mogila, Optičari and Porodin which are dated around 6000 BC at earliest. Therefore such early date from Topolčani is not yet supported by the archaeological material and thus could be considered as unreliable or should be observed in detail with the further study of pottery, tools and architecture.

Trajectories

However, although not absolutely objective, the provided dates from several sites in Macedonia are currently the most exact basis for the chronological determination, but also for the more accurate understanding of the spreading of Neolithic. Excluding the disputable sample from Topolčani the recent data confirms Amzabegovo as the earliest site, while those in Pelagonia and Skopje Plain are considered as subsequent. This does not indicate that the trajectory of Neolithisation firstly considers eastern parts of Macedonia, but the available data confirm such proposition in the moment. Pelagonia although southern and closer to Thessaly still does not provide any earlier dates which could point to this region as first in the northward Neolithisation of the Balkans from Thessaly. Even most of the Neolithic sites in the closest southern areas to Pelagonia (such as Meliti, Armenochori, Dispilo, Anargyroi, Variko, Vegora, Limnochori, Rodonas, Agios Pantaleimon etc.) are mainly Middle and Late Neolithic, which means that Pelagonia as well could be later inhabited by the first agricultural societies.

This also indicates the provisional directions of Neolithic dispersion through Macedonia which is partially alongside with previous interpretations of this process (*Sanev 1994*; *1995*). Despite the unsupported hypothesis that Neolithisation starts in Pelagonia and from there it is spread towards Skopje Plain and Ovče Pole (*Zdravkovski 2006*, 99), recent data asserts that settling dynamism was performed probably along Vardar river as central axis for the dispersion of new population (*Naumov 2009a*, 26). Besides the majority of radiocarbon analysis

Fig. 5. Early Neolithic vessels from Amzabegovo (*Chausidis 1995*, fig. 5).
Obr. 5. Časně neolitické nádoby z Amzabegovo (*Chausidis 1995*, fig. 5).

which exclude the Pelagonia as first regional spot of Neolithisation in Macedonia (*Thissen 2000*, 207; *Whittle et al. 2005*), there are contributions by the geological and geographical research which also disregards this hypothesis. Namely, the marshy ground of Pelagonia does not enable the early establishment of Neolithic settlements (*Kitanoski – Simoska – Todorovič 1980*, 17). Also its later occupation is caused by several geographical factors, mainly concerning Kožuv, Nidje and Karakamen mountains and Kitrini and Petr lakes. Their location does not allow rapid and early penetration in Pelagonia of population from Thessaly which probably at earliest stage traveled through the plane in the vicinity of Vardar River.

This is furthermore confirmed by the dates and artifacts analogous to several sites in Greek Macedonia which have chronological and material similarities with those common for Amzabegovo (*fig. 5*). This mainly concerns Nea Nikomedeia and Giannitsa, positioned in Thessaloniki Plain which is quite close to Pelagonian plain. Due to the almost identical dates of settlement establishment (*Reingruber – Thissen 2005*, 12, 25; *Thissen 2000*, 201), it could be considered that populations inhabiting Nea Nikomedeia were in close economic relations with those of Amzabegovo or it was the same population (or part of it) which later settled regions in the north. The similarities with the painted patterns on the vessels, as well as the identical building techniques with stone basis and mud-brick walls in Early Neolithic additionally verify the possible direction of first Neolithic dispersion in Macedonia along Vardar river (*Gimbutas ed. 1976*; *Naumov 2009a*; *Pyke 1996*; *Tasić 2006*; *2007*; *Washburn 1984*; *Yiouni 1996*). These painted patterns and architectural practices are currently not familiar for the Pelagonian sites, although later resemblance with the Thessalian painted vessels should not be disregarded. Consequently, it can be suggested that there were at least two waves of Neolithisation in Macedonia (*Lazarovici 2006*, 112). The first one was executed along Vardar river, whilst the second one was from Pelagonia in direction to Polog and later to Skopje plain where particular intertwining among painted patterns of Pelagonia and Skopje region are noticeable (*Naumov 2009a*, 26; *2009b*, 4).

This is a Neolithisation trajectory model which could be proposed due to the available data of research done in the last six decades. Such model could be entirely transformed or

modified with the further studies and new excavations in Gevgelia region or Pelagonia. The early dates for some Neolithic sites in Prespa region of Albania (*Bunguri 2014*), indicate such possibility due to monochrome phases in Vlusha and later resemblances between Pelagonia and Prespa material culture. However it is still hard to determine whether there was a monochrome phase in Pelagonia, although the recent excavation of Early Neolithic site in Mogila does not confirm this due to production of white painted and red slip pottery since the establishment of tell (*Naumov – Tomaž in press*). For the moment the data for more thorough determination of Neolithisation trajectories is still obscure and any hypothesis in this direction could be proposed only from the modest aforementioned available data.

Identities

First farming communities were not dealing only with the transformation of landscape and subsistence, but also embodied their social varieties. The diversity in material culture among the Early Neolithic societies in Macedonia indicates different identities within the Neolithisation process mainly manifested throughout painted vessels, anthropomorphic house models, figurines and architecture. In almost any of the regions (Ovče Pole, Skopje Plain, Polog and Pelagonia) the painted patterns were employed independently and used as element of visual identification and emphasis of local features (*Naumov 2009b*, 8; *2010a*, 273). The utilization of material culture in the accentuation of local attributes demonstrates that Early Neolithic was far more dynamic than it was previously supposed (*fig. 6*). Although there was sharing of common economic interests, the communities in Amzabegovo, Govrlevo, Stenče, Veluška Tumba and Porodin perceived themselves as belonging to different groups and asserted their particularity through different patterns painted on the vessels (*Naumov 2010a*, 274). Therefore the existence of two different and distinct cultural groups in the Early Neolithic (Amzabegovo-Vršnik and Velušina-Porodin) cannot be supported as they were previously defined (*Garašanin 1979*; *Sanev 1994*).

At least in the case with the Amzabegovo-Vršnik group there are apparent indications that Early Neolithic settlement in Amzabegovo, Govrlevo and Stenče do not share same white painted patterns on the vessels. This partially confirms that the settlements in Ovče Pole, Skopje Plain and Polog cannot be generalized into one common cultural group until the Middle Neolithic. Regarding Veluška Tumba, Topolčani, Slavej, Optičari, Porodin and other Pelagonian sites further research and analysis are necessary in order to verify such probability. In this case it should be considered that most of the sites belong to same and unified geographic region where the mutual influences are more intensive, as well as the identification of many communities into one cultural entity (*Naumov et al. 2014*, 19). It remains to be studied further if such variability in Early Neolithic cultural manifestations in Pelagonia, Ovče Pole, Skopje Plain and Polog was a result of mixture among local Mesolithic indigenous population with the agriculturists which developed different forms of identities. In other case there is also probability that such new local visual features could be deployed by the agriculturists from Anatolia or Thessaly right after inhabiting particular geographic environment (valley, ravine or lake) without prior contact with indigenous hunter-gatherers.

Nevertheless, this cultural circumstance is completely changed in the Middle Neolithic. In that period the vessels produced in Ovče Pole, Skopje Plain and Polog region were painted

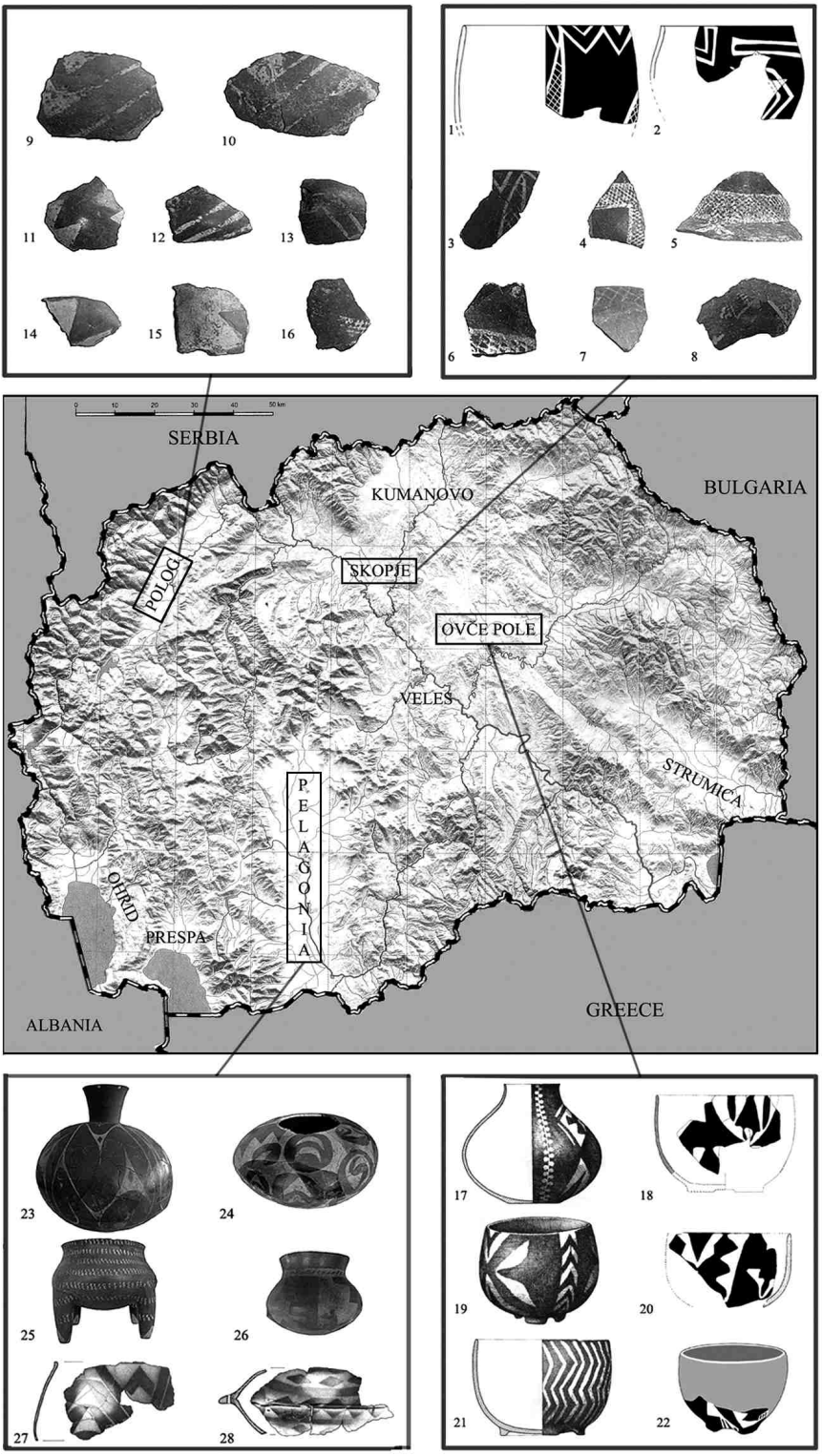

Fig. 6. The Early Neolithic regional identities manifested through white painted vessels (*Naumov 2010a*, fig. 11).
Obr. 6. Časně neolitické regionální identity vyjádřené bílou malbou nádob (*Naumov 2010a*, fig. 11).

with black or brown patterns also present among some of the sites in Bulgaria, Serbia and Albania, while the pottery in Pelagonia was still mainly painted with white color with and few patterns still resembling the Early Neolithic traditions (*Naumov 2009b*; *2010a*). This demonstrates that Pelagonian populations maintain a sort of isolation despite Middle Neolithic processes active in other surrounding regions. Such traditions are partly based on the maintenance of vivid relations with the past evident on the painted vessels and continuation of early Neolithic patterns in later phases. The relationship of Pelagonian communities with their descendants can be also traced through creation of tells as a result to the constant building of dwellings over those previously abandoned or ruined (*Naumov 2013a*, 70).

In that context, the Pelagonia as region is more remarkable as geographically enclosed and isolated space with the cultural processes quite different than those in other parts of Macedonia and abroad. This is also apparent on the level of figurine and anthropomorphic house models production. Such human representations significantly differ from their equivalents in other regions. The focus on miniature female body and dwellings on anthropomorphic house models is not common for other regions where mostly sexless figurines were produced or anthropomorphic models without architectural features (*Naumov 2014*; *2015*). Besides their symbolic components these ceramic items also comprised the segments of identity and the particular local perspective on the gender and hybrid relationship concerning human body.

Considering the visual traditions it should be asserted that they are consistent part of the first Neolithic communities in Macedonia. This mainly regards those that demonstrate clear relationship with Anatolian settlements and which partially confirms the migration or cultural contact among the Balkans and Asia Minor communities. Such relationship was also previously accented (*Garašanin 1979*; *Sanev 1994*), although they are additionally confirmed on the level of economy and utilization of cereals and animals formerly domesticated in Anatolia or Near East (*Hopf 1961*; *Ivkovska 2009*; *Renfrew 1976*). The employment of mud brick and stone foundations in the earliest Amzabegovo levels, as well as the identical patterns incised or painted on the stamps and vessels in Gorobinci, Veluška Tumba, Gjumušica, Porodin, Govrlevo, Madjari, Çatalhöyük and Bademağaci are in favor with such relations and there is also possibility for their transfer through communities in Thessaly (*Budja 2003*; *Gimbutas ed. 1976*; *Naumov 2008*; *2009a*).

Nevertheless, it is still hard to answer how the Anatolian traditions were incorporated into the social life of first agricultural communities in Macedonia. Were they directly transferred or were gradually intertwined with local practice it is a question that still remains to be observed and supported by the new studies. Besides the Anatolian features these Early Neolithic communities established apparent identity often not associated even with the neighboring societies. The case of Pelagonian farming societies clearly indicates potent local visual identity without any strong relationship with those further East and West. There were sort of contacts with communities on the North or South, but most of the material culture in Pelagonia asserts autochthonic features (*Naumov et al. 2014*). It is surprising that apparently there were preserved links with Anatolian material culture, such as incised patterns on stamps or corpulent female figurines (*Budja 2003*; *Naumov 2015*), but the white painted patterns and anthropomorphic house models are hard to be determined further South or East.

It should be considered as well that such links were simultaneously manifested onto the symbolic and social spheres no matter if they were straightforwardly or indirectly

transmitted or additionally modified. Therefore, besides economic and architectonic features, the abundance of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations in clay, as well as the intramural burials furthermore reveals the transposition and acceptance of similar symbolic concepts. In this context, the Neolithisation of Macedonia should be perceived as complete process which engaged all aspects of life of the first agriculturists. Alongside crucial changes with the establishment of initial settlements and introduction of innovative economic components, the Neolithic involved completely new perception of natural environment, as well as its explication within the material culture and rituals. In order to understand such complex processes profoundly it is necessary to trace entire economic, social and symbolic concepts and especially those manifested through human body.

The Neolithisation of human body

When the Neolithic initial stages are regarded mainly the agriculture, domestication and new resources providing environment modification are considered. Although these economic segments are of huge significance and had crucial role in the establishment of new subsistence standards, still it should not be neglected that they are created by and for the man himself. Consequently it is not fruitful to study them independently and isolated from the other spheres which equivalently contribute in the construction and existence of first agricultural communities. Inhabitation of new geographical area, house building, animal husbandry or cereals cultivation are synchronically intertwined within the modes that Neolithic societies employ to manage the insecurity of climate phenomena, architectonic static, population increase, animal health or the crop outcomes. Such insecurity particularly motivated the Neolithic communities to comprehend the importance of agriculture, domestication and dwellings establishment as novelty which significantly will change their life and routines.

In that context, the Neolithisation of Balkans and Macedonia in particular, was not only a process where the newcomers just applied its modes of life or the indigenous just simply accepted such novelties. On the contrary, the penetration into new geographic area and creation of first settlements is a course in which the agriculturists equally invested cognitive, technical and spiritual potentials. If the eventual contacts with the local native Mesolithic population are considered, then such courses were modified in completely different entity than the one of its origin i.e. Near East region. Nevertheless, all these cognitive, technical and spiritual engagements were entwined into a unit which generated social, economic and ideological notion about the new agricultural society and its relationship with the natural environment. Therefore, in such complex progression the entire forms of material and symbolic visual culture were employed, including substances and products, as well as collective ceremonies and rituals. Particularly the clay objects have significant role for the understanding of the first agricultural communities.

Besides the sensation caused by its transformation from wet clay into compact product, the ceramics as new material was quite suitable for the manifestation of new ideas related with the agriculture and consequential social and symbolic processes. Besides the vessels and its prominent symbolic significance in the Early Neolithic (*Vitteli 1989*; *1993*), also the human and animal representations had crucial part. Despite the emergence of various animal figurines in Macedonia and their affirmation of the economic and symbolic aspects of

Fig. 7. The employment of human representation on various artifacts: 1 anthropomorphic vessel from Tarinci – h = 7.5 cm (*Koništrkoska Nasteva 2005,* fig. 27); 2 anthropomorphic house model from Porodin – h = 25.5 cm (*Šemrov – Turk 2009,* fig. 59); 3 anthropomorphic figurine from Gurgur – h = 5.5 cm (*Koništrkoska Nasteva 2005,* fig. 3).
Obr. 7. Využití antropomorfních zobrazení na různých artefaktech: 1 antropomorfní nádoba z Tarinci – v = 7,5 cm (*Koništrkoska Nasteva 2005,* fig. 27); 2 antropomorfní model domu z Porodin – v = 25,5 cm (*Šemrov – Turk 2009,* fig. 59); 3 antropomorfní figurína z Gurgur – v = 5,5 cm (*Koništrkoska Nasteva 2005,* fig. 3).

cattle, still much more numerous are the anthropomorphic figurines (*Naumov 2009c*; *2014*). Although there are interpretations that zoomorphic figurines and the identification between humans and animals are dominant in the Balkans (*Nanoglou 2008*), the recent research indicates that at least in Macedonia the anthropomorphic representations outnumber the zoomorphic (*Naumov 2009c*; *2014*; *Naumov – Chausidis 2011*). Such production of figurines, vessels, stamps, house or oven models with human features in the Early and Middle Neolithic assert the human body as essential metaphor for explication of diverse symbolic, social and economic processes (*fig. 7*).

Therefore, the course of Neolithisation in Macedonia and the Balkans in general, was not only a set of actions and engagements where only natural environment and social structures were transformed, but also there are changes within the perception of human body and its employment as a metaphor for entire unit of crucial segments evolved throughout these changes and transformations. Simultaneously to the domestication of new plants and animals was the domestication of man itself when its role in the nature is redefined and mostly conceptualized within the life in permanent houses and settlements. Such relationship with the environment initiated a series of new concepts manifested through material culture and rituals. The anthropomorphism had the crucial role as essential metaphor which was engaged for the definition of human body as symbolic mechanism for the explication of new advantages as agriculture, pottery, ovens or houses (*Guthrie 2014*; *Naumov 2010b*; *2013b*). Even when the settlements are considered as ritual area, the selected members of Neolithic societies were buried bellow or between dwellings (*Bacvarov 2003*; *2006*; *Naumov 2007*; *2014*), so that such ritual practice additionally contributed towards the embodiment of settlements (*fig. 8*). Consequently it can be noticed that Neolithic communities employed several components of material culture and rites in their attempts to define complex processes within households by using the human body as main symbolic reference.

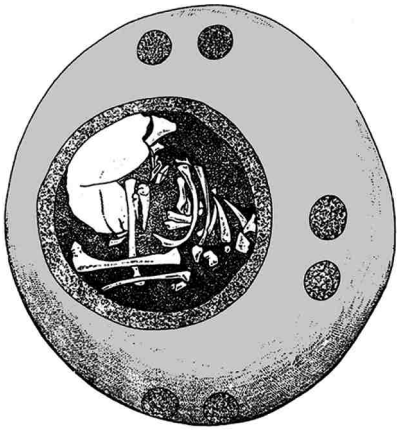

Fig. 8. The anthropomorphisation of intentionally broken vessel with an infant burial – Amzabegovo (*Gimbutas ed. 1976,* fig. 242).
Obr. 8. Antropomorfizace záměrně rozbité nádoby s dětským pohřbem – Amzabegovo (*Gimbutas ed. 1976,* fig. 242).

Such Neolithisation of the human body and its wide incorporation into symbolic spheres since the Early Neolithic, indicates its suitability as a proper metaphor reflecting norms and notions of the first agriculturists. On one hand, this demonstrates the man's transformation and its new role in the control of nature and social structures (agriculture, economy, believes etc.). But on the other, a dominant presence of human body in the visual culture and rituals could be understood as a model of convention which further explicates new activities and routines in agricultural societies. If the ideas on Neolithisation as ideology are considered (*Cauvin 2000*; *Hodder 1990*), than it could be expected that human body was used as well as ideological reference within the process of Neolithic dispersion and its affirmation in the wider geographic area. The production of numerous hybrid artifacts in the Balkans should be regarded (anthropomorphic vessels and models of houses and ovens with human features). Despite Anatolian practices where this type of ceramic objects are usually not present or were rarely produced in the Early Neolithic stages of settlements, they are much more frequent on the sites in Macedonia and the Balkans in general (*Naumov 2014*). Consequently, it can be concluded that these anthropomorphic objects were engaged within the processes of popularization, affirmation and symbolic definition of some Neolithic advantages, such as pottery, ovens, houses, stamps etc.

The question remains open whether they were employed by the agriculturists' ideology during their dispersion through the Balkans or they were engaged as agents in the implementation and explication of Neolithic structures and norms among indigenous hunter-gatherer population. Similar hybrid zoomorphic objects (vessels and 'altars') were also produced in the Early Neolithic, but they are outnumbered by the anthropomorphic hybrids, at least in Macedonia (*Naumov – Chausidis 2011*). The notion of hybridism induce that the common symbolic categories were incorporated into several economic spheres of the first agricultural communities. The manufacture of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic vessels, models, 'altars' and stamps continues in the following Neolithic phases in Macedonia and Balkans in general and further confirms that these segments of symbolic hybridism could be even conceived on the level of ideology related with the agriculture and economy. This suggests that Neolithic was indeed a crucial change in the life of prehistoric communities implemented in several economic, social and symbolic spheres. Therefore, the research on the

Neolithisation of Balkans should be equally focused onto these symbolic aspects in order to understand entirely its manifestation within the first agricultural societies.

Conclusion

It is still hard to determine the modes of Neolithisation in Macedonia, but the current modest data enable basic overview of the potential development of this significant social and economic process. There is still much to be done in order to provide more precise perspective when and how the first agricultural societies established their settlements and transformed the landscape. Hence, in regard to slow implementation of thorough research projects and inadequate acquisition of data base for this region it is necessary to propose possible explication of Neolithisation and to modify it in the future. It is still unclear whether it started rapidly or gradually advanced in various regions in Macedonia, but majority of sites confirm already developed 'package' incorporated since the earliest levels of the farming settlements. The white painted pottery was used along with the monochrome vessels and already domesticated cereals and animals were consumed in the Early Neolithic villages, thus suggesting the probable trajectories and models of Neolithisation. For the moment it could be speculated that Neolithisation started due to leap frog movements of communities from Thessaly and Anatolia as there are clear indications for cultural and genetic relationship with this regions.

Therefore it could be proposed that Neolithic considered the demic diffusion of particular societies gradually inhabiting particular regions in Macedonia, but after an apparent break from the initial Neolithisation of Thessaly. The first agricultural communities penetrated in the various regions of Macedonia between 6300 and 6100 BC, as suggested by the calibrated dates which should be further tested in the future. According to these dates there were probably at least two waves of Neolithisation, one earlier from Thessaly along the coast of Aegean Sea and northwards following the route of Vardar River. The second and later wave was from Thessaly as well, but advancing into the valley of Pelagonia and Ohrid Lake which established societies with significantly different identity than those penetrating to Ovče Pole and Skopje Valley. Besides the modest contacts they could have these communities preserved their autochthonous cultural features until the end of Neolithic. There are apparent differences in the establishment of settlements in the initial stages, so the communities in Pelagonia preferred tells, while those in Ovče Pole and Skopje Valley initially erected their villages on flat terraces near the river beds. The Pelagonian farmers were significantly focused on house symbolism and female body despite those from Ovče Pole which produced sexless figurines and were not familiar with house models in the Early Neolithic.

The notion of identity was much more manifested onto pottery and its decoration with distinct patterns that were not practiced abroad. Each region developed its own patterns which remained entirely different until the end of Early Neolithic. In the Middle Neolithic visual identity was transformed and large number of communities from Ovče Pole, Skopje Valley, Polog and Kumanovo regions adjusted their patterns to a more generalized dark painted aesthetics common for the broader regional Starčevo group. Besides the evidenced contacts between Pelagonia and other regions in Macedonia, the communities of this southern valley remained unaffected of Middle Neolithic changes and preserved their visual and

symbolic authenticity. Even in the Late Neolithic particular farming societies in Pelagonia and Ohrid Lake were more influenced by the pottery technology of Marmara and Thrace region than from the one progressing from North along with Vinča culture. It is evident that since the initial stages of Neolithisation the establishment of identities was rather dynamic and employed material culture as major agent and medium.

It is important to note that the process of Neolithisation in Macedonia was not only a result of economic transformation and progress, but also a symbolic phenomenon which engaged agency of material culture as well. The role that individuals had in the society was apparently manifested on ceramic items and rituals. The human body was central engine in these changes of landscape and society, and was therefore used as major metaphor in symbolic explication of natural and social transformations. Thousands of human depictions were produced since the Early Neolithic and some asserted the semiotic relationship of man with the dwellings and households. The anthropomorphism and hybridism were incorporated as major symbolic principles which employed vast number of ceramic objects in order to assert the significant role of human body and identity in the understanding of manmade environment. Along this potent metaphorical process actual bodies of individuals were engaged as well and were buried within settlements, next or below the dwellings. They further supported the notion of important role that human bodies and identities had in both social and spiritual components of farming societies. Such symbolic potency incorporated within ceramic items and rituals was alongside the economic challenges that first agricultural communities in Macedonia had. They were intertwined and synchronically progressed with the establishment and modification of identities related to particular community, settlement or society practicing farming and husbandry as crucial components of subsistence between 7th and 5th millennia BC.

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Časně neolitické komunity v Makedonii

Výzkum časných fází neolitu v Makedonské republice je stále skromný a založený převážně na odkryvech malého rozsahu a sekundárních datech vyplývajících z chronologických analýz. Jakkoliv nečetná, tato data umožňují předběžný vhled do počátků zemědělství a vzniku prvních osad. V posledních desetiletích byla publikována řada nových kalibrovaných dat, paleobotanických a paleozoologických výsledků z Makedonie a širšího Balkánu, což významně přispělo k porozumění směrů a způsobů neolitizace. Většina archeologů se proto shoduje, že neolit v Makedonii začíná už jako rozvinutý proces bez předchozích akeramických nebo monochromních fází. Většina průkazně datovaných časně neo-

litických lokalit v Makedonii vykazuje v časných fázích osídlení bíle malovanou keramiku (např. Amzabegovo, Govrlevo, Veluška Tumba, Mogila, Stenče). Nejstarší data pro Amzabegovo se pohybují mezi 6300 a 6100 BC. Vysoké procentuální hodnoty rozpětí sigma naznačují, že neolitizační proces v Makedonii, a zvláště její východní části, následoval poměrně brzy po neolitizaci Thesálie. Nálezy z jihozápadní části Makedonie ukazují, že tento proces nebyl stejnoměrný ani synchronní. Kalibrované vzorky z Mogila, Veluška Tumba a Porodin v rozmezí 6100 a 5900 BC dokládají pozdější osídlení Pelagonské roviny, ačkoliv bude nutné prověřit dosti časné datum z Topolčani (přibližně 6500 BC).

První zemědělské komunity nepřinesly jen proměnu krajiny a subsistence, ale také proměnu společenskou. Různorodost materiální kultury mezi časně neolitickými společenstvími v Makedonii naznačuje různé identity v rámci neolitizačního procesu, které se projevovaly hlavně malovanými nádobami, antropomorfními modely domů, figurínami a architekturou. V téměř každé oblasti (Ovče Pole, Skopje Plain, Polog a Pelagonia) byly malované vzory používány nezávisle jako prvky vizuální identifikace. Využití materiální kultury ke zdůraznění místních znaků dokazuje, že časný neolit byl daleko dynamičtější, než se dříve předpokládalo. Ačkoliv hospodářské zájmy byly společné, komunity v Amzabegovo, Govrlevo, Stenče, Veluška Tumba a Porodinu vnímaly samy sebe jako přináležící k různým skupinám a dokládaly svou odlišnost různými malovanými keramickými vzory.

Kulturní poměry se zcela změnily ve středním neolitu, kdy nádoby vyrobené v Ovče Pole, v oblasti Skopje a Pologu nesly černé nebo hnědé malované vzory, zatímco keramika v Pelagonii byla stále malována hlavně bílou barvou a několika málo vzory, které ještě připomínaly časně neolitickou tradici. Vizuální tradice jsou nedílnou součástí prvních neolitických společenství v Makedonii. To se týká zejména těch, která vykazují jasnou vazbu na anatolská sídliště a indikují migraci nebo kulturní kontakt mezi komunitami na Balkáně a v Malé Asii. Tyto vazby byly zdůrazňovány již dříve, ale nyní jsou potvrzeny v rovině hospodářské užíváním obilnin a zvířat původně domestikovaných v Anatolii nebo na Blízkém Východě. Použití nepálených cihel a kamenných základů v nejstarších vrstvách v Amzabegovo, stejně jako totožné vzory vyryté nebo namalované na razidlech a nádobách z lokalit Gorobinci, Veluška Tumba, Gjumušica, Porodin, Govrlevo, Madjari, Çatalhöyük a Bademağaci potvrzují tyto vazby a nastiňují též možnost jejich přenosu komunitami v Thesálii. Hospodářské a architektonické znaky, stejně jako hojnost antropomorfních a zoomorfních keramických motivů a pohřby v interiérech staveb dokládají přesun a přijetí symbolických představ.

Kromě klíčových změn souvisejících se založením prvních osad a zavedením inovativních hospodářských prvků přinesl neolit nové vnímání přírodního prostředí a jeho promítnutí v materiální kultuře a rituálech. Rozvinuly se také transformace týkající se vnímání lidského těla a jeho využití jako metafory pro celou řadu klíčových oblastí. Antropomorfismus plnil klíčovou roli jako zásadní princip zapojený v definici lidského těla jako symbolického mechanismu k vyjádření nových výhod, jež skýtalo zemědělství, keramika, pece nebo domy. I v případech, kdy byly domy považovány za rituální místo, byli vybraní členové neolitických společenství pohřbíváni pod obydlími nebo mezi nimi. Neolitické komunity využívaly několik komponent hmotné kultury a rituálů ve snaze definovat složité procesy v domácnostech použitím lidského těla jako hlavní symbolické reference.

Překlad *Sylvie Květinová*

GOCE NAUMOV, Museum of Macedonia, Josif Mihailović 7, 1000 Skopje, Republic of Macedonia
gocenaumov@gmail.com