Cultural Contacts between Communities of Southwestern Romania and Central Balkans in the Fourth Millennium BC

Abstract:

At the beginning of fourth millennium BC, after the disintegration of the BubanjSălcuţa-Krivodol cultural complex, the so-called Transitional period from the Eneolithic to the Bronze Age began in the territory of Oltenia (western Bulgaria and Serbia). We still lack a lot of data about this period. In northwestern Bulgaria this period is defined by the Galatin group, and in Romania by the Sălcuţa IV group, while in Serbia it is almost completely unknown. Stratigraphical observations from new excavations (2008 to 2014) at the Bubanj site near Niš in southeastern Serbia suggest that elements of Bubanj-Hum I culture lasted longer there than in Oltenia and western Bulgaria, and that the hiatus between this culture and the Cernavodă III culture was very short. Excavations at the Mokranjske stene site in eastern Serbia, where the Coţofeni cultural layer lies directly above the Bubanj-Hum I culture layer, provide similar evidence. After this period, i.e. in the last quarter of the fourth millennium, it is possible again to notice some kind of cultural integration in the territory where the BSK complex previously existed. Across the vast territory from Transylvania in the north, across the Oltenia and eastern Serbia to southeastern Serbia to the south, almost identical stylistic and typological elements can be observed in the pottery record. According to recent absolute dates from Serbian sites, this cultural phenomenon can be chronologically defined starting from the end of the third quarter of fourth millennium BC, namely Cernavodă III culture. The situation is similar in the next period (last quarter of the fourth and first quarter of the third millennium BC), when Coţofeni and Kostolac societies met in the area of the Iron Gates and eastern Serbia, creating a new cultural phenomenon defined as Coţofeni-Kostolac culture. A significant proportion of the stylistic and typological elements of this culture are identical to those originating on Coţofeni territories in Oltenia and Transylvania. The impacts of these cultures reached far to the south, all the way to the Aegean coast, but in the late Eneolithic, Vučedol culture came to be a significant influence on the cultural milieu of the central Balkans. On the other hand, after the demise of Vučedol culture (second half of the third millennium BC), the Balkans became largely influenced by Aegean civilisation, which significantly contributed to the appearance of early Bronze Age cultures in the Balkans.

Keywords: *Central Balkans, fourth millennium BC, Černavoda III-Boleráz-Baden cultural manifestation, Vučedol culture, Coţofeni-Kostolac culture, contacts with southwestern Romania.*