

The Cultural Network of Starčevo Potters: Technological Choices and Changes in the Early Neolithic (6th millennium BC) in the Central Balkans

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Abstract:

A wide-scale archaeometric project on the Early Neolithic ceramics of the central Balkans focused on the analyses of pottery from 18 sites in central eastern Croatia, Serbia and Romania. More than 500 ceramics (including cult objects, such as anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines, four-legged vessels or altars) and net weights, spindle whorls, and a wide variety of soil and sediment samples were analysed by polarised microscopy and scanning electron microscopy with energy dispersive spectroscopy (SEM-EDX). These techniques allowed the author to carry out mineralogical and chemical analyses. The results show a ceramic tradition, without innovation for more than 700 years, independent of geography and geology, where all ceramics were made following the same recipe from the arrival of first farmers. As well as the same recipe for the ceramic body, potters followed the same recipes for red slipping, white paint (typically used for the early ceramics) and black pigments (used for the late phases of the Starčevo culture). Similarities and differences with the contemporaneous Karanovo culture are discussed.

Keywords: Neolithic ceramic, chaîne opératoire, Starčevo, red slip, white and black paint, surface finish, central Balkans