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Fortified settlements in the valleys of Provadiyska, Golyama Kamchiya, and Luda Kamchiya Rivers in the context of Chalcolithic economy (Abstract)

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Fortification was an omnipresent element of Chalcolithic landscapes in the Eastern Balkans. The economic differences between the settlements created tensions, which required the construction of efficient defensive structures.

The economic inequalities between the Chalcolithic settlements in northeast Bulgaria had various origins, which seem to have been related to the presence or absence of important but rare raw materials. No oxide copper was available in the area but there were two large deposits of raw materials which are unique to the Eastern Balkans and exceptionally valuable for the Chalcolithic communities - salt (Provadia-Solnitsata) and high quality flint (Razgrad area) - whose exploitation resulted in the respective specialized production in each of these two areas, and in long-distance trade in their products.

Certain areas south of the Balkan Range were rich in oxide copper ores which created a solid basis for the copper ore extraction and processing as the third type of specialized production in the Eastern Balkans.

The active trade in the products of the three specialized productions was most likely the main reason for the appearance of an extensive Late Chalcolithic complex with similar material culture, Kodzhadermen-Gumelnița-Karanovo VI, which comprised a considerable part of the Eastern Balkans (almost from the Carpathians in the north to the Aegean in the south). The three specialized productions in the eastern part of the Eastern Balkans gradually created considerable economic inequality both between the settlements in their respective areas and generally in the vast area of active trade in 'industrial' (non-agricultural) products. This logically necessitated the construction of defensive fortifications around the settlements.

Several completely excavated Chalcolithic tell sites in northeast Bulgaria have yielded evidence of fortification systems. All of them were enclosed by a fort made of wood and clay.

Comparatively well preserved remains of Middle and Late Chalcolithic stone fortifications have been revealed recently in the valleys of Provadiyska and Golyama Kamchiya Rivers. Tell Provadia-

Solnitsata was enclosed by a complex stone fortification, and the hilltop settlements of Sushina (Shumen District) and Avren (Varna District) were defended by stone walls that protected only the approaches to the sites which were otherwise hardly accessible from the other sides.

On the one hand, these stone-fortified settlements were located near the two big rivers which run north of the Balkan Range and flow into the Black Sea, i.e., it is safe to assume that they played a special role in the use and control of the two river valleys as two-way arteries for the movement of both people and products. Thus far there is no evidence for the existence of a possible road along the narrow valley of the Luda Kamchiya which cuts across the Eastern Balkan Range diagonally and flows into the Golyama Kamchiya River.

On the other hand, the three stone-fortified settlements obviously played an essential role in the control over the *meridional* trade roads through the Eastern Balkan Range.

Active trade contacts - 'export' of salt and 'import' of prestigious items, copper ore or other types of copper raw materials from the Strandzha Mountains - assumedly existed between the salt production center of Provadia-Solnitsata and the region south of the Balkan Range along the narrow

lower valley of the Luda Kamchiya and through the Aytos Pass.

The fortified settlement of Avren-Bobata had a strategic position in a key area along the lowest Provadiyska River valley where the roads from and to the Lakes diverge and converge, respectively, running through the Aytos and Dyulino Passes and crossing the lowest Kamchiya River valley (Longoza). These roads seem to have been actively used both for the 'export' of salt (to the south) and 'import' of metal raw materials to the Varna metallurgical center and north of the Lakes.

The fortified settlement of Sushina was located in a strategic position between the northern entrance/exit of the Varbitsa Pass in the south and the narrow Ticha River valley (i.e., the upper Golyama Kamchiya River) in the north thus making it possible to control the movement of people and goods on one of the presumably most important Chalcolithic Trans-Balkan roads which could have connected the centers of specialized production of the highest quality (Ludogorie) flint in the Balkans in the north (in the area of Razgrad) and the Tundzha River valley in the south. On that road, in the opposite direction, metal raw materials and graphite could have been transported, probably through the Mokren Pass as well.

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