

Balkan-Anatolian Relations in the Late Neolithic (Second Half of the 6th Millennium BC)

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The paper suggests the thesis that the appearance of the Late Neolithic painted pottery in the Struma valley resulted from the relations with Southern Anatolia that lasted for a long period. The study of this pottery offers additional information on the nature of the interrelations between the cultural centers of the Eastern Mediterranean in the second half of the 6th millennium BC and provides opportunity for a more detailed synchronization between Southern Anatolia and the Central Balkans.

This paper aims to study the polychrome painted pottery - brown on beige ware (Akropotamos style) and red on orange ware. The latter is found only in the Lower Struma valley. These wares are typical for the second half of the 6th millennium BC. The red on orange ware is the earliest; linear patterns and jars are the most typical for it. The Akropotamos type of ware appears next - dark (brown or black) motifs consisting of thin lines are painted on a beige slipped surface. Initially this pottery appears in the Struma valley as an import, and the production of a local variant of the ware - brown or black on red - starts at late 6th millennium BC. Polychrome ware appears in the late 6th millennium BC as well. The last two groups continue to exist until the early 5th millennium BC.

The appearance of painted pottery evidences the close contacts between the North Aegean coast and the Struma valley and the painted pottery production centers. There are two such regions in the East Mediterranean - Thessaly and Southern Anatolia where similar painted ware comes from. However certain differences exist, e.g. matt painted ware and polychrome ware appear at one and the same time in Thessaly. The flared shapes as well as the style of the painting (a combination between linear and the so-called solid style) also differ.

The sequence of the painted ware groups is easy to notice in Eastern Anatolia (the Konya plain and Cilicia): red on orange or beige, brown

on beige and polychrome ware. They appear at the end of the Early Chalcolithic (mid 5th millennium BC) and exist in the Middle Chalcolithic (the Anatolian sequence). The painting style, the production technology and some of the shapes of the painted pottery of this region display similarities with the pottery from the Struma valley.

The Late Neolithic painted pottery from the Struma valley has its origin in Southern Anatolia rather than in Thessaly.

There are a number of new cultural phenomena in Eastern Anatolia (the Konya plain and Cilicia) at the end of the Early Chalcolithic, mid 6th millennium BC - new ornamentation styles, new types of architecture, new types of figurines - that spread out from east to west. These changes are reflected in the Balkans in the second half of the 6th millennium BC: an increase of the population and the number and the size of the villages, trade acceleration (obsidian, salt, shell), change in the agricultural activity. The contacts between the Eastern Anatolia and the Balkans increase using the marine routes via the islands. The fact that Mersin participated very actively in the trade with obsidian and probably with salt and that its influence is detected on Saliagos, gives me reason to suggest that the contacts between the Balkans and the East Anatolia are based on the trade with the same goods as well.

These observations enable a more precise reconstruction of the process of the contacts between the Balkans and the Eastern Anatolia as well as a correlation of the cultural phenomena in the two regions:

1. Appearance of red on beige (orange) ware with linear motifs: Mersin XXV - Can Hasan 3, 2B - Hacilar I - Agios Petros II - Sitagroi I/II.

2. Appearance of brown on beige ware: Mersin XXIII - Can Hasan 2B3 - Hacilar I - Dikili Tash I - Sitagroi II - Balgarcevo II/IIIA.

3. Appearance of polychrome ware: Mersin XIX - Can Hasan 2A - Damjanica III - Strumsko I/II - Balgarcevo III/IV.