

BRONZE AGE SETTLEMENTS IN SHKODRA REGION

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Abstract

This paper will relate archaeological data together with known settlements, in order to present a model for the development of settlements during the Bronze Age in the Shkodra Region. The paper attempts to cover the whole of Shkodra Region, but inevitably it deals more with some areas than others. The term settlements is used in here in its general sense, as a place where human social relations, permanently transform space in a repeated and archaeologically recognizable way as a result of conscious human activity. Intention, memory and tradition are all inscribed in the physical environment and concentrated in the settlements. The data were generated from archaeological excavations and surface surveys carried out in the Region of Shkodra as part of the Projekti Arkeologjik i Shkodrës (PASH). The settlements taken in study are: Gajtani, Ganjolla, Beltoja, Mokseti, Marshej and Zagora etc. Our analyses combine geographical and archaeological data in order to understand the larger interactions between humans and their environment. The objective was to provide some answers related to: 1) emergence of settlement; 2) their typology; 3) function; and 4) contacts. The interactions between settlements during Bronze Age in Shkodra Region, was the focus of this paper with the purpose to see links between them and the hierarchy. The methods used are: analytical, graphical and cartographical. Study provided a model for the development of settlements and their features. The result was that the social ranking and economic stratification has led to an increase in the number of settlements and geographical area. We will conclude by providing further information regarding persistent problems inherent with the archaeological study of settlements.

Keywords: *Bronze Age, Settlement, Shkodra Region, Patterns, Contacts.*

The paper aims to provide data about the pattern on the developing of settlements occurred during the Bronze Age in Shkodra. This study had used data obtained from previous excavations and surface observation. The objective of this study was to outline the various

issues related to the organization of settlements of studies conducted on the basis of analytical, graphical and cartographical methods.

Shkodra Region is a special morphological and morphogenetic unity, with variety of ecosystems and landscapes, which are linked with mutual interaction between them. Worth to be mentioned: Shkodra Lake, Shkodra Plain and their relationship with the Alps in NE, hydrographic knot Drin – Buna - Shkodra Lake and correlation scheme. Dominant forms and geomorphologic processes engage in the evolutionary scheme of Quaternary up to the current stage. This large physical and geographical unit divides into two main components: Shkodër and Nënshkodër Plain. Shkodra Plain occupies northern part of Shkodra Lowland along the eastern coast of lake, from Shkodra city in the southeast till to the Brigje village in the northwest, having a length of 36 km, 4-15 km wide and 390 km² surfaces. The main type of lands in Mbishkodër is brown pasture, which occupies 53% of the total area of the plain. They are appropriate for planting tobacco, grain and fodder. Great spread of karsts has conditioned poverty of a large surface hydrographic network, and significant development of underground leaks. The only real river that flows through the southeastern edge of the field of Shkodra, is Kiri. In this region are placed the settlement of: Zagora, Mokset, Marshej, Drisht tumuli of Shkrel and Shtojit. It extends from the right bank of the Drin River (Vau i Dejës – Buna sector), in northern part includes the area between the Kiri low flow and Guri i Zi village to the Adriatic Coast in southwest, in south with Lezha city, to a length of about 30 km and the western foot of the Hajmelit mountain to the east Buna flow, west to a length of about 25 km. Its total area is about 630 km². The most prevalent lands of Nënshkodër Plain, gray and brown are the ones that cover all its hilly. Although the Bronze characterized by the discovery of metals and the emergence of metallurgy, factors which preceded the birth of civilization, Shkodra Region it is not very rich in minerals. Mentioning here some sources such as, Tin in Koplik and Copper in Vau i Dejës. It is apparent that the region offers good conditions for the development of life because fulfills two factors, they are:

1. Environmental value, good condition for construction of a housing ambience.
2. The need for life products (nutritional and material) a quality of a compulsory requirement.

Bronze Age in Albania is divided into: 2100-1800 BE Early Bronze, Middle Bronze; 1800-1500 BE, 1500-1100 BE Late Bronze. During this era have been significant

changes in the organization of life in the organizational, social and cultural view point. In the social aspect Broze Age is the period of replacement of matriarchal with the patriarchal order, the birth of private property and social differentiation. Harding writes that during this time, Europe changed from a continent settled by small farming and pastoral groups, strongly linked at the local level but only weakly linked, if at all, at broader levels, to one where it is possible to discern the existence of quasi-political groupings on a relatively large scale; from a society where individuals were powerful but did little to express that power in their material remains to one where the expression of status and power was extremely important. We see such a phenomenon even in Shkodra because archaeological data show that in the early Bronze Age in the area we have the emergence of settlements and we are dealing with a population that knows the production of pottery, the tumulus, burial rite, metals and fortification. Shkodra is situated at the joining of two Drina's. The Drin and the White Drin connect the Adriatic to the basin of the Morava and so to the banks of the Danube. A strategic position that allows mobility and communication with other areas. The main of archaeological data are discovered during archaeological excavations in the settlements. Below you will see how these data show the pattern of settlements. In the chart No.1 is displayed the continuity of settlements from the Early Bronz to early Iron Age.

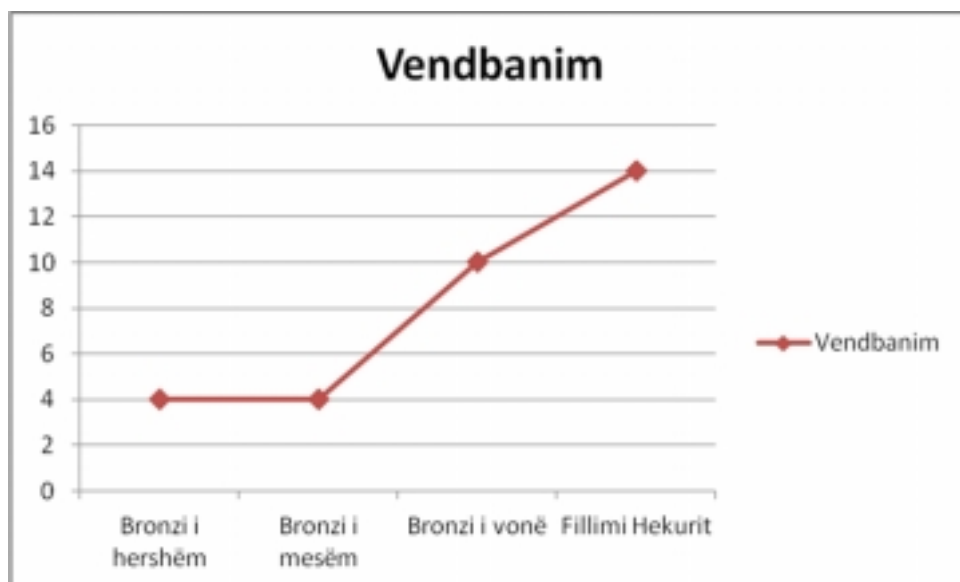


Fig. 1. Graph. 1. The continuity of settlements from the Early Bronz to early Iron Age.

As shown by the graph, the number of settlements has been increasing. With increased production, in a slow evolution grows naturally the private wealth, social stratification

and differentiation. That is expressed, at least in rich inventory of some graves, like golden expensive artifacts, as well as valuable treasures paramonetare, discovered in different parts of northern Albania in the form of storage, apparently property of melting craftsmen or traders. This gives rise to new settlements in Shkodra expanding geographical scope. As shown in Map No. 1.

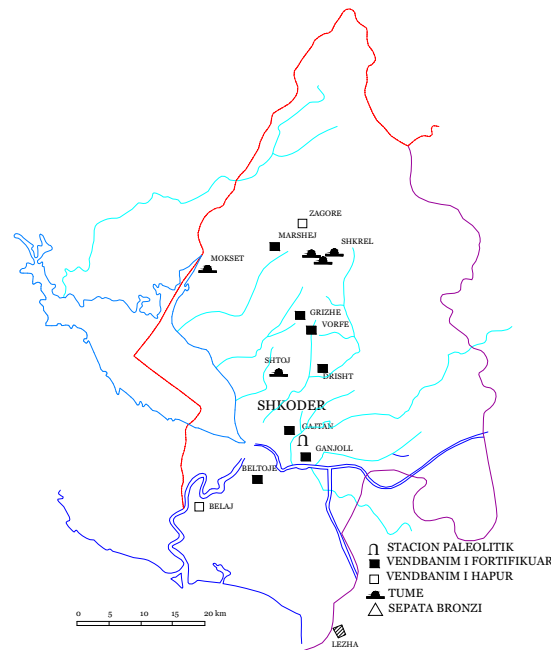


Fig. 1. Map of Bronze Age Settlements in Shkodra Region.

Archaeological data analyzed show that the region of Shkodra during the Bronze Age and early Iron is used as an environment for creating various types of settlements depending on group size and terrain. But in general we can say:

1. Fortified settlements located on top of hills (Gajtan, Beltoje, Ganjollë, Mokset, Marshej) and open, located on the slopes of hills (Zagora, Castle of Shkodra, Belaj).
2. They are Setting in strategic positions that offer good opportunities in around environmental observation.
3. Settlements size are relatively small and they follow the terrain and there is no set rule for their construction (Fig. 3).
4. The space inside the settlement is used for various activities in daily life.

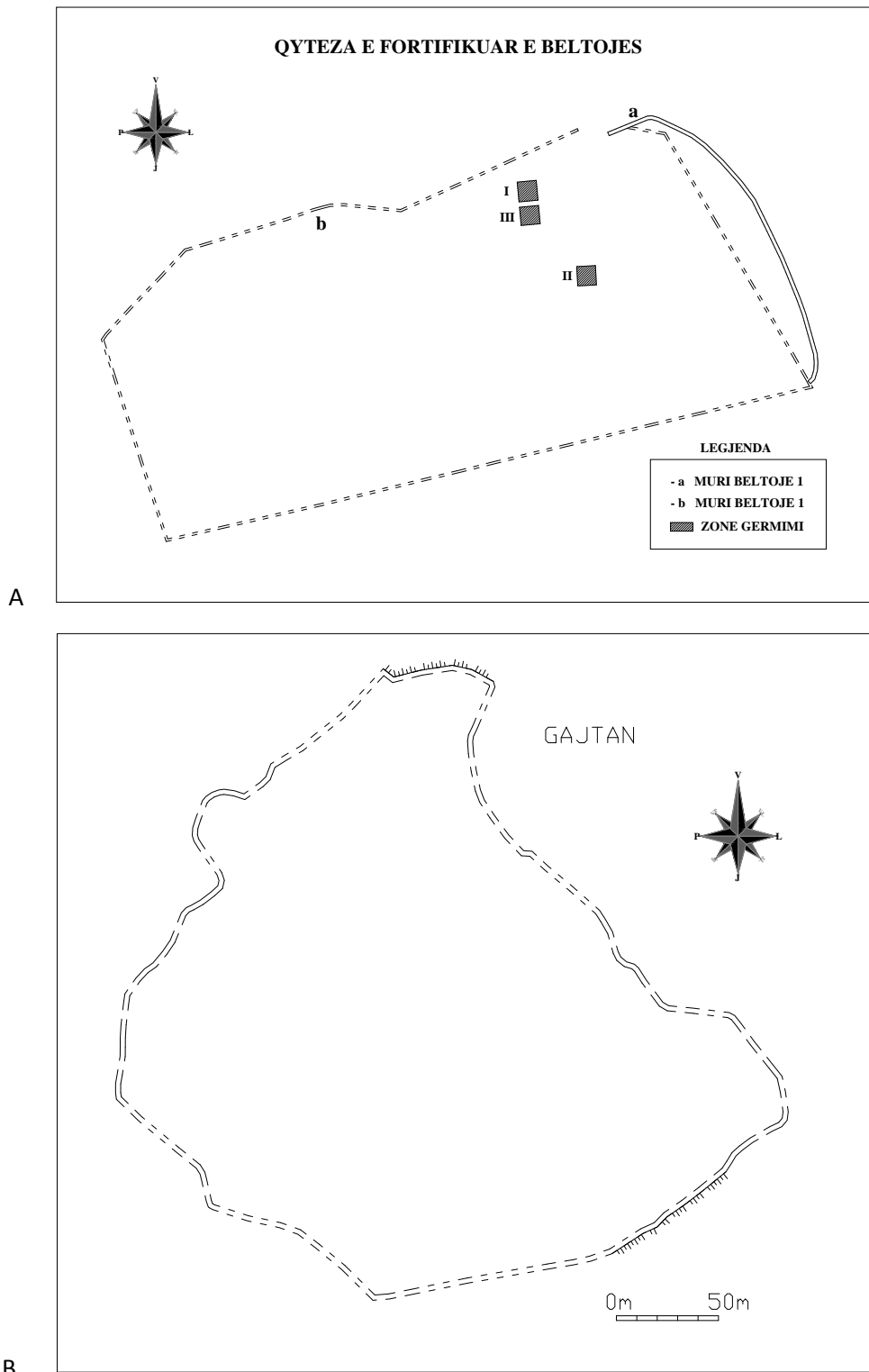


Fig. 3. Plans of Settlements. A. Beltoje; B. Gajtan.

Gajtan case shows that: 1. The space is used for living. During the excavation are found pieces of clay plastering with stick traces. 2. As a workshop. Where except of waste production of pottery are also found evidence of metallurgical production. The inhabitants were involved in the production of ceramics. This is indicate by the presence of three kilns

for ceramic production and objects for decoration. Kilns have horseshoe shape and have small size. So that makes us think that the amount of ceramics production should not have been too big. It served not only for the fulfillment of the needs of the community. But even as exchange object because we find it present in all other settlements of Shkodra Region. 3. As a place for burial. Excavations revealed large incomplete container (urna) within which children's bones were found (Fig 4).



Fig.4. Gajtan Settlement a) Inhabited area; b) Kilns ; c) Funerary urn.

Geographical proximity of settlements and the ease of communicating with one - another has enabled the establishment of contacts between them which consists of establishing relations of exchange. To understand how the development of these phenomena we should first know the reasons for contacts which are of different nature.

1. Economic contacts (Exchange of different objects).
2. Contacts with social character. (The establishment of marriage).
3. Random contacts. (In search of new territories).

From the current data we gain information for economic contacts where the only source is pottery. It helps to understand how exchange relationships are developed based on the comparison of typologies, decoration and forms. And where the similarities are not accidental but a result of contacts, we can affirm that it is a "exchange". Based on similarities of pottery we can assume that contacts between the settlements have started in the Early Bronze continuing in subsequent periods. Since Gajtani ceramics is much more studied and more diverse it is used as a reference point for other settlements ceramics. It can be argued that the pottery found in the Castle of Shkodra there is a pronounced resemblance to that found in the Gajtan. Such a similarity can be explained only a very close and intense between the two settlements. To see the resemblance to other centers in Ganjollë and Zagora that being geographically far away, meeting points are not as frequent as two settlements before but that may be associated with internal development of Zagora itself which is presented a higher level. The same phenomenon continues in two other periods: Late Bronze and Early Iron Age. Gajtan continues to be landmark because material culture found in other centers continues to be the meeting point to that of Gajtan. Forms almost the same as those in Gajtan are found even in Beltoja. A largest analogy of prehistoric ceramics of Belajve has with that hill settlement of the late Bronze of Zagora in Mbishkodra. However there are some differences between them that in the present state of research could be explained more with chronological changes. Some forms and décor of ceramics links prehistoric settlement Belajve with Gajtani. To be able to determine hierarch settlements, we should know better the space and the role of each. But the only data that can give an idea about the location and typology are settlement. Regarding to the first gives no clear idea because all settlements are positioned in strategic geographic places. Regarding typology indirectly might think that the fortified settlement of Gajtanit served as the main center for the Mbishkodra and and Zagora for Nënshkodra area. Their role has had an impact on the development of other inhabited centers that seems to have been the center that served a very small group of people. This phenomenon is observed even in other European places where space serves only a family. In conclusion we can say that the settlements in the Shkodra region have't followed a certain model but are developed depending on internal and external factors. Internal factors are physical – geographic conditions, demographic and socio - economic establishment which have oriented the placement and the type of settlement. External factors are contacts with other communities which have led to the necessity for territorial and cultural differentiation

as a need to distinguish. The combination of the factors mentioned above has brought the developments that we see today in the archaeological record of Bronze Age in Shkodra.

Recommendation

“...no archaeologist I know believes there is one true past”

Clive Gamble. *Archeology: The basics.*

In the end I will close this paper with some suggestion for future archaeological plans in Shkodra Region.

1. Systematic surface observation in whole Shkodra Region to gain a better understanding of the region's chronology. Full archaeological map with all the sites located in the region.
2. Archaeological and Palaeogeographical studies in order to understand geographical and social character in Prehistory. It is necessary to understand what happened during the Neolithic, particularly since it is not well-expressed in the region.
3. Systematic excavation of settlements in order to better understand the surface, organizational space, social environment and the role of each one.
4. Establishing chronology via absolute dating in order to relate phenomena from this region to those of others.
5. Studies of archaeological material discovered to date under the framework of the new developments in the field of Archaeology. Chemical analysis to assess the origin and subsequent uses of pottery.
6. Systematical study of tumuli. Data from tumuli helps to understand the development of funerary rites, beliefs, and the worldview of a community regarding death.
7. To assess the taphonomic changes that occurred throughout the Bronze Age landscape – both natural and cultural.
8. Comparison in relation to other regions of Albania and abroad. What are the roles that the Shkodra region had in the development of a culture?

9. Physical and social anthropological studies, in order to understand the demographic profile of the region's inhabitants; also to determine physiological stress and general health status.

10. The management and interpretation of archaeological sites; how to make them interesting to visitors, while sustainable and non-intrusive to the local communities.

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