

# Settlement organisation and economic strategies in Bronze Age Southern Balkans.

**Projekt:** Institute of Archaeological Sciences, Prehistory, Mittelstrasse 43, 3012 Bern.

**Dissertation:** Marco Hostettler

**Keywords:** Bronze Age, complex societies, economic strategies, settlement organisation, human-environment interactions, prehistoric land-use, resilience, fragility, GIS, Southern Balkans, Albania, North Macedonia, Northern Greece.

## Introduction

During the European Bronze Age (ca. 3500-800 BC) for the first time in history 'complex' societies appear in different parts of Europe (e.g. Minoan and Mycenaean Civilisations in the Aegean). Being located between different centres showing social complexity from an early stage on, the Southern Balkans (Albania, Republic of North Macedonia and Northern Greece) appear as a crucial geographical area for the understanding of both the European and the Eastern Mediterranean Bronze Age (a.o. Vandkilde et al. 2015; Galanaki et al. 2007). At the same time the region is considered to undergo divergent social and economic developments, triggered by the neighbouring communities in the North and South (e.g. Margomenou 2008; Kotsakis 2007; Horejs 2007).

This PhD-thesis aims to shed light on these questions by taking a diachronic (Early Bronze to Late Bronze Age, i.e. 3500–1000 BC) approach to the spatial settlement organisation, taking into account information regarding supraregional contacts, economic strategies as well as environmental data. The spatial distribution of sites (settlements, burials, sanctuaries and depositions) and its change over time, linked to relevant archaeological and environmental data, can offer insights into economic strategies and responses to environmental and/or societal change. The study will assess these questions applying statistical and GIS-based methods to shed light on macroscale developments. Correlations in cultural change and spatial settlement organisation with environmental data can offer new insights into the interrelationships between society, economy and environmental parameters. The theoretical framework will draw from sociological understandings of practice, economic thought but also incorporate concepts such as resilience



*Fig. 1: Settlement landscape in the Southern Balkans at lake Prespa (Albania). In the background the village Kallamas. Several prehistoric settlements from different ages, including the Bronze Age are located in the region.*



*Fig. 2: The geographical setting of the PhD-thesis includes the mountainous area between the Aegean Sea and the Danubic plains. It includes the modern countries of Albania, Bulgaria, Greece and North Macedonia.*

and fragility to understand how ancient societies coped within a changing environment. The study takes place within the ERC-funded project "EXPLO: Exploring the dynamics and causes of prehistoric land use change in the cradle of European farming".

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