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### **With or Without You: the Formation of Identities in the Neolithic Balkans**

The so called 'Neolithic Package' in the Balkans did not introduced only economic advantages and novelties, but also had a significant social impact onto the communities that inhabited this region. The interaction between indigenous population and migrants in the Early Neolithic initiated new notion of identity established on trade, exchange, labor, ideology and especially on the production of material culture. Consequently the first farming communities were socially modified and many new were created as the agriculture, domestication, clay objects, human representations and intramural burials progressed in various areas of the Balkans. Thus the identity was subsequently incorporated in various aspects of Neolithic life, but it could be archaeologically observed only on material culture and decorated pottery, house models, stamps and human representations in particular.

It is evident that various Early Neolithic societies dispersed in different wetland regions were producing pottery with distinct patterns common only for isolated geographical areas and the same was practiced in the domain of anthropomorphic and house representations. Such diverse societies apparently maintained economic networks, but deliberately accented its discrete identity throughout painted vessels, house models, stamps and figurines. Some of them bear reminiscences of Neolithic visual culture from Anatolia, but many developed novel designs and concepts. Nevertheless, this was significantly changed in the Middle Neolithic when the issue of identity witnessed apparent transformation manifested mainly on pottery. Thus, many Neolithic communities in various regions of the Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Albania, Serbia and Croatia initiated entirely new painted pottery patterns, drastically different than those at the early stages of the Neolithic. While many societies accepted and extended this changes within spheres of visual identity others restrained the Early Neolithic traditions and persisted with white painted vessels.

This paper will mainly consider the Neolithic networking in the Balkans and discuss its complex character and inconsistency as apparently the networking was not a total social process, but mainly regarded merely particular spheres of the societies. Therefore various identities were constructed as the communities interacted in the domain of economy and exchange of goods, but the major social and symbolic distinctiveness was reflected onto material culture. In this context the painted pottery,

house models, figurines and stamps from the Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, Serbia and Croatia will be mainly concerned as it gives a broad overview of units and clusters of societies which shared similar identities or established entirely different visual references. Consequently this paper will discuss the problem of networking and formation of identities, as well as the tendencies towards belonging to particular societies or the persistent maintenance of visual traditions during social transformations in the Neolithic Balkans.