

### Settlements in South-East Europe

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### Abstract and Keywords

This contribution traces the development of tells, or settlement mounds, in south-east Europe. Owing to their surviving height, these habitation monuments became the foci of regional research traditions, but more recently the balance has shifted to include horizontal or 'flat' sites. This has allowed to integrate tells into their social context, to systematically investigate off-tell activity, the different notions of time and community played out in both types of settlement, and the relations to other kinds of site, such as cemeteries. This chapter offers a chronological overview from the earliest tells in the southern Balkans in the mid seventh millennium, when households engaged in a variety of mobility strategies, to their expansion north-westwards into the Hungarian Plain, during which the significance of tells also altered. While tells continue to be built until around 3700 BC, the increasing social stratification may be a factor in their ultimately rapid abandonment.

Keywords: tell, horizontal settlement, Balkans, Neolithic, Copper Age, time, habitation monument, status

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## Introduction: Tell and Non-tell Settlements

NEOLITHIC open-air settlements in south-east Europe fall into two groups. One consists of a single, usually horizontal layer, the other comprises superimposed remains from several habitation layers. Whilst horizontal settlements occur throughout Europe, the distribution of 'settlement mounds' rising above the natural surface of the landscape is limited to the Near East, the Balkans, and the south-eastern part of the Carpathian Basin (Childe 1950, 38–39; Wace and Thompson 1912; Gimbutas 1974, 19–25, 29–33; Kalicz and Raczky 1987, 14–19; Chapman 1989, 1997a, 158–162; Raczky 1995; Whittle 1996, chapters 3–5; Bailey 2000, 156–177; Steadman 2000; Gogâltan 2003; Link 2006, 7–14; Rosenstock 2005, 2006, 2009, Raczky and Anders 2008, 35–37; Anders et al. 2010).

The northernmost Neolithic settlement mound is the tell of Polgár-Csőszhalom (Hungary), located by the northern reaches of the Tisza river, very close to the famous obsidian sources near Tokaj (see references in Raczky and Anders 2008). Artificial settlement mounds in Europe are between 2.5 and 10m high, their counterparts in south-west Asia

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5–50m. Tells may be of conical or flattish shape, with horizontal extents varying between 0.1 to 10ha, but reaching up to 20ha in the Near East (Chapman 1989, 36–38, fig. 2; Rosenstock 2005, 222–224, fig. 1a–b; Menze et al. 2006, 322, 325, fig. 10–11).

Depending on local languages, these often attractive landscape features are called *'tell'*, *'hüyük'*, *'tepe'*, *'magoula'*, *'tumba'*, *'mogila'*, *'măgura'*, *'település-halom-lakódomb'*, or *'Siedlungshügel-Wohnhügel'* (Chapman 1997a; Rosenstock 2005, 2006). The term *'tell'* (mound) was first used in a European context by Ferenc Tompa (1937, 47) for (p. 236) settlements of the Tisza culture on the Great Hungarian Plain and has since become generally accepted in the archaeological literature (Gogâltan 2003, 222–223). In south-east Europe, tell-like settlements may be at least 1 to 2.5m thick, and possess at least two superposed habitation layers. Single-layer, horizontal settlements are usually characterized by a deposit only 25–50cm thick, although some have fills up to 1m thick (Kalicz and Raczky 1987, 14–16; Link 2006, 10–14; Gogâltan 2003, 223–224).

Depending on local research traditions, different forms of phasing and terminology (Neolithic, Eneolithic, etc.) are used for the first tell-building cultures in south-east Europe. In absolute terms, the beginnings of tell sites date to around 6700/6500 BC, and their end to approximately 4000/3700 BC. Tells thus existed over c. 2500–3000 years during a period when food-producing economies emerged over a wide area between Greece and Hungary.

## The Physical and Social Conditions of the First Tells

Tell settlements mainly consist of stratified debris from clay houses, constructed using various techniques (*pisé*, mud brick, wattle-and-daub, etc.; Aurenche 1981, 42–72; Naumann 1971, 43–51; Stevanović 1997, 341–345; Rosenstock 2005, 228–233; Piesbergen 2007, 20–32). These structures frequently burnt down, but were systematically reconstructed on the same spot. Construction deposits were thus created by intentional leveling, alongside the daily accumulation of refuse. Settlement mounds hence represent long-term, planned activity. In addition to natural erosion, there is also evidence of conscious landscaping through the systematic removal of rubble and the remains of earlier houses. Physically, the resulting tell 'body' was created through a complex creative process including broad-based communal effort and resulting in a regionally significant topographic monument. The mound itself may hence be seen as the material manifestation of a community, its coordinated activity and communal life (Evans 2005). The apparently undisturbed 2,500 years of tell development in south-east Europe suggest long-term economic and social stability, which partly inspired Gimbutas' (1974, 17–19) idea of a collective identity labelled the 'Civilization of Old Europe', presuming the evolution of an urban-type system of institutions.

Evidently, the systematic activity of tell creation had a feedback effect on those who built these sites and, over the long run, contributed to the cohesion of communities and their inseparable, complex system of economic, social, sacral, and symbolic norms (Chapman 1997a; Kotsakis 1999; Bailey 1999; Tringham 2000b; Evans 2005; Gheorghiu 2008).

### (p. 237) **Early Research History of Tells in Europe**

Tells in Europe have long fuelled the imagination of modern villagers and treasure hunters, whilst their sequence of superimposed strata offered relative chronologies for artefactual assemblages. Unsurprisingly, the first more-or-less scholarly excavations in Europe also targeted these mounds. One tell of key importance was investigated by Vasić (1932–1936) near Vinča in Serbia between 1908 and 1934. He found periodically renewed adobe houses built on wooden frames, plastered open-air fireplaces, and refuse from Neolithic daily life, down to a depth of 9.5m.

The finds from its superimposed layers made the Vinča tell a yardstick for the Balkan Neolithic and, to some extent, Copper Age cultural development. Its phases have been alternatively labelled Vinča I (Tordos) and Vinča II (Pločnik) or A to D (Chapman 1981; Schier 1997). Gordon Childe compared this site to the tell of Troy in western Anatolia, and—on the basis of its finds—hypothesized a cultural/chronological connection between the two settlements at the beginning of the third millennium BC (Childe 1929, 34–35; Renfrew 1976, 42–52). This was one of the cornerstones of his historical model of ‘*ex oriente lux*—from the east the light’, whereby ethnic groups originating in the Near East crossed the Aegean and penetrated the Vardar and Morava river valleys before reaching the Danube region (Childe 1939, 1950, 36–57). In the German literature, Fritz Schachermeyr (1953) popularized the same idea as ‘*vorderasiatische Kulturtrift*—Near Eastern culture flow’.

During the first half of the twentieth century, researchers linked south-east European mounds to this population movement, which supposedly took place in several waves and resulted in the colonization of Thrace, Macedonia, and the Lower Danube region (Gaul 1948, 49–79; Childe 1950, 41–42, 51–53).

## **Tells in South-east Europe and their Local Stratigraphic Sequences**

Tell research followed the development of different national archaeologies. In Greece, Sesklo has long served as a reference point for studies of settlement structure and relative chronology (Tsountas 1908; Theocharis 1973, 68; Kotsakis 2006). Excavations during the 1950s revealed stratigraphic sequences at the *magula* of Argissa, Otzaki, Arapi, Agia Sofia, and Pevkakia, which together created a coherent diachronic system for refining regional Neolithic chronologies (Milojčić 1960). In Bulgaria, chronological phases I through VI at Karanovo have framed the standard chronology for the (p. 238) Neolithic and Copper Age (Georgiev 1961; Vajsová 1966, 5–8; Todorova 1981; Hiller and Nikolov 2000), whilst

stratigraphies at Vidra, Gumelnița, Sălcuța, and Hârsova—to name but a few—became the chronological standard in Romania (Berciu 1961, 82–86, 158–166; Comșa 1974, 32–33; Mantu 2000; Gogâltan 2003). Tells, especially those at Hódmezővásárhely-Gorzsa, Öcsöd-Kováshalom, and Berettyóújfalu-Herpály, also helped establish relative chronologies for the Great Hungarian Plain (see references in Tálas and Raczky 1987).

These examples illustrate how tell stratigraphies in south-east Europe became almost exclusive yardsticks for reconstructing Neolithic development. Syntheses and interregional comparisons were attempted using parallel phenomena and the presence of ‘import-export’ artefacts (Treuil 1983, 13–114). Consequently, the south-east European Neolithic was summarized in unified chronological tables presenting a *lato sensu* cultural system in a clearly visualized format (e.g. Ehrich 1992; Parzinger 1993, Beilage 1–5; Todorova 1998, tables 1–3; Bailey 2000, fig. 1.3).

With the radiocarbon revolution, settlements along the interface between the Aegean and the Balkans gained pivotal significance. By the 1970s, the stratigraphic sequence at the Sitagroi tell in east Macedonia had shown that local early Bronze Age type finds similar to material from Troy were deposited in layers above strata of the Vinča-Gumelnița culture in the Balkans (Renfrew 1970, 295–308): this provided evidence that the Vinča-Gumelnița cultural complex was older than that from Troy, lending credibility to previously contested radiocarbon dates which, contradicting Childe’s ideas, had placed the beginning of the Vinča tell 2,300 years before the emergence of urban development at Troy at around 3000 BC. Evidently, the Vinča settlement was not established by emigrants from Troy, who hence did not colonize the Balkans (Renfrew 1976, 101–109).

## The Representative Values of Tells and Horizontal/extended Settlements

Increasingly, then, tells became a primary source of information for settlement history. Indeed, compared with tells, horizontal/extended settlements and cave sites (similarly numerous in the region) were often underrepresented or neglected in large thematic summaries. Tell distributions in certain regions often meant that an entire culture was considered a ‘mound culture’ (cf. the Bulgarian Mound Culture; Gaul 1948, 79–207).

Until the 1990s, this research bias hindered the development of a balanced view of tells and horizontal settlements across south-east Europe. Yet, many tells were connected to adjacent horizontal settlements forming an organic unit with the mound (Bailey 1999, 2000, 174–177). At Sesklo, for instance, Theocharis reconstructed (p. 239) a large (almost 10ha) horizontal settlement around the tell, fortified by a stone wall. He recognized that the tell and its external horizontal settlement probably represented a complex, *acropolis-polis* settlement structure (Theocharis 1973, 68, fig. 178) in which the *acropolis* had a special function relative to the outer settlement, the scene of daily life (Kotsakis 1999, 69; 2006, 209–218). This showed that previous tell-centred settlement histories for south-east

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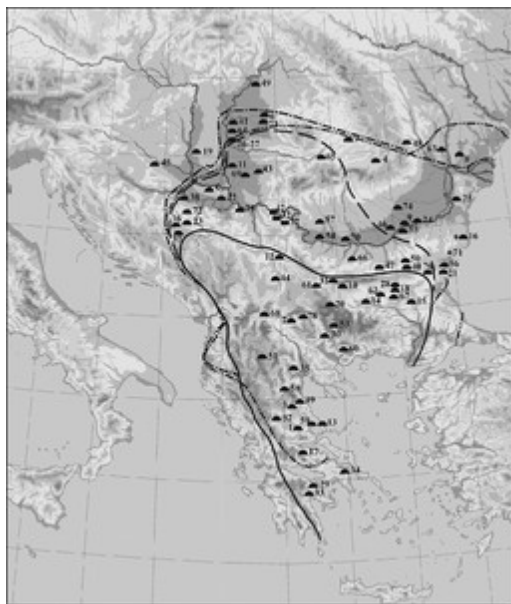
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Europe had led to the generalization of special phenomena erroneously seen as 'representative' on a broad scale (e.g. Todorova 1982).

Following these developments, and fostered by planned excavations, large and small horizontal settlements were observed in association with tells from various Neolithic and Copper Age periods. At Podgoritsa in northern Bulgaria, the association between the tell and external 'non-tell' features could be demonstrated as a general south-east European phenomenon (Bailey 1999, 2000, 175, fig. 5.8). Recently, geophysical surveys and large-scale excavations have revealed numerous examples showing this 'symbiosis' between tell and horizontal/extended settlements, including Paliambela in Greece (Kontogiorgos 2010), Pietrele and Uivar in Romania (Hansen et al. 2006, 4–8, abb. 5–7; Schier 2009, 222–224), Okolište in Bosnia (Müller et al. 2011), and Öcsöd-Kováshalom, Berettyóújfalu-Herpály, Polgár-Bosnyákdomb and Polgár-Csőszhalom in Hungary (Raczky and Anders 2008, 2010).

Actually, Chapman had already outlined the importance of external spaces for early food production. Tells were densely covered by houses, and within their limited spaces it would have been impossible to cultivate plants and keep animals to feed the population. Consequently, most subsistence activities must have taken place in the wider environment (Chapman 1989, 34–39). Moreover, external spaces had to be shared following principles of the structured communal economy valid inside the tell to permit sustainable, long-term sedentary agriculture. According to Hodder (1990, 83–87), the house-centric world of tells corresponds to the domestic, *domus*, surrounded by the wild (*agrios*). These two spatial spheres represented a complementary dualistic relationship throughout the Neolithic.

There is a diversity of physical relationships between tells and contemporaneous horizontal settlements across Neolithic south-east Europe (Chapman 1981, 1997a; Kotsakis 1999, 2006; Bailey 2000, 174–177; Halstead 2005), with stratified mounds forming an increasingly complex settlement structure impacting on horizontal sites adjacent to the tell and beyond (Chapman 1998, 113–118; 2010; Halstead 1999; Raczky and Anders 2008, 2010). Along the edge of the Balkan tell distribution area, Makkay (1982, 104–164) and Sherratt (1982) identified such a complex system, consisting of a tell and its numerous small, horizontal satellite settlements, in the Tisza culture of the southern Great Hungarian Plain (see also Parkinson 2006, 139–143). In the northern Great Hungarian Plain, only horizontal Tisza culture settlements are known, illustrating how dualistic settlement characteristics vary between geographical zones within this culture (Kalicz and Raczky 1987, 14–19; Makkay 1991; Raczky 1995).



*Fig. 12.1.* The geographical distribution of Neolithic tell settlements in south-east Europe between 6700/6500 and 4600/4500 BC. Solid line: first phase of tell distribution, 6000 BC; dashed line: second phase of tell distribution, 5500 BC; dashed and dotted line: third phase of tell distribution, 5100/5000 BC; dashed and double dotted line: fourth phase of tell distribution, 4600/4500 BC.

Selected list of stratified (tell and tell-like) settlements and horizontal sites in south-east Europe. 1 Achilleion, 2 Anza, 3 Argissa, 4 Ariuşd, 5 Bapska, 6 Berettyóújfalu-Herpály, 7 Bernadea, 8 Bolgrad, 9 Caşciorale, 10 Čavdar, 11 Čoka, 12 Crnokalačka Bara, 13 Dimini, 14 Dolnoslav, 15 Drama, 16 Durankulak, 17 Elateia, 18 Ezero, 19 Fajsz-Kovácsdomb, 20 Gălăbniş, 21 Goljano Delčevo, 22 Gomolava, 23 Gornja Tuzla, 24 Gumelniţa, 25 Hârşova, 26 Hódmezővásárhely-Gorzsa, 27 Hódmezővásárhely-Kökénydomb, 28 Karanovo, 29 Korintosz, 30 Kovačevo, 31 Kremikovci, 32 LepenskiVir, 33 Lerna, 34 Nea Makri, 35 Nea Nikomedea, 36 Obre I, 37 Okolište, 38 Otok, 39 Otzaki, 40 Ovčarovo, 41 Öcsöd-Kováshalom, 42 Padina, 43 Parţa, 44 Pavlovac, 45 Pepelane, 46 Pietrele, 47 Podgorica, 48 Poduri, 49 Polgár-Csószhalom, 50 Poljanica, 51 Porodin, 52 Prodomos, 53 Rakitovo, 54 Rast, 55 Ruse, 56 Sava, 57 Sălcuţa, 58 Servia, 59 Sesklo, 60 Sitagroi, 61 Slatina, 62 Stara Zagora, 63 Suceveni, 64 Szegvár-Tűzköves, 65 Tártária, 66 Teliş, 67 Tell Azmak, 68 Tumba Madjari, 69 Uivar, 70 Vadaştra, 71 Varna, 72 Varoš, 73 Vésztő-Mágor, 74 Vidra, 75 Vinča, 76 Vinica, 77 Vlasac, 78 Vršnik.

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Between 6700/6500 and 6000 BC, the first long-term settlements in the south-east European Neolithic were built in Greece, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Bulgaria. They mirrored contemporary sites in Anatolia, including tells (Whittle 1996, 37–59; Chapman 1997a; Tringham 2000a, 19–26; Bailey 2000, 39–55; Rosenstock 2005, 225–233; 2009, 102–106; Perlès 2005; Guilaine 2007). The best-known early tells are Argissa Magoula, Otzaki Magoula, Prodromos, Achilleion, Anzabegovo, Vršnik, Veluska Tumba, Tumba Madjari, Rudnik, Karanovo, Tell Azmak, Čavdar, Rakitovo, Slatino, and Kovačevo (Fig. 12.1). Tells cluster in the alluvial areas of major river valleys, and avoid less favourable environments in between. For example, several tells are known from the Larissa Basin in eastern Thessaly and along the Maritsa and Tundja rivers and their tributaries in Bulgaria (van Andel and Runnels 1995; Perlès 2001, 125–131; Nikolov 2002, abb. 2). Horizontal settlements of various levels of integration (from household through hamlet to village, in dynamic interaction) can occur near these tells (Chapman 2008). Neolithic villages appeared with an explosive intensity in the Carpathian Basin around 6000 BC, possibly through the endemic diffusion of the Near Eastern ‘Neolithic package’ along the great river valleys (Tringham 2000a, 19–33, fig. 2.3; Biagi et al. 2005; Davison et al. 2006; Bocquet-Appel et al. 2009). However, there were initially no tells north of the central Balkans, where a more mobile way of life was served by less permanent, horizontal settlements. Houses built at a distance from each other enabled horticultural, small-scale household-level cultivation in the immediate proximity of buildings and permitted animal keeping nearby.

During this initial, expansive form of subsistence strategy, time was conceived of in both horizontal and linear ways, respectively reflected in patterns of dispersed settlement networks and diffuse village plans in south-eastern Europe. These settlement forms facilitated mobility on a micro (household) and macro (community) scale. Variability within the house–hamlet–village system (Chapman 2008) offered a spectrum of adaptative possibilities and different mobility levels under divergent environmental conditions. One may also presume subsistence forms relying on different and complementary degrees and types of mobility (Halstead 2005, 45–49). As in the Near East, the basis of this system was the household unit, defined by its physical, economic, social, and ideological integrity (Flannery 1972, 2002; Tringham 2000b; Steadman 2000, 167–174; Borić 2008; Souvatzi 2008).

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(p. 242) Following this expansive ‘settling in’, tells emerged in the southern Balkans during a residential consolidation phase within the context of the Protosesklo–Karanovo I–Kremikovci–Anzabegovo–Vršnik cultural complex (Runnels 2003, 127–129; Tringham 2000b, 116–120). Tells represented a new attitude towards built space and time, stressing the vertical dimension. These artificially erected communal structures, often in strategically important positions, accentuated distinguished geographical loci, thereby constructing the external, physical web for the common mentality of communities, upon which cohesion within the controlled region could be based (Chapman 1997b; Gheorghiu 2008, 87–88). Each tell formed a horizontally defined, tightly aggregated system of houses. Their proximity to each other expresses a new form of self-definition, a special habitus on a community level or levels, beyond the household. The time depth of neighbouring house plots, which added authority and value, is expressed by the appreciation of earlier build-

ings, reconstructed on the same spot (Hodder 1998; Borić 2008). Using Sherratt's (1997, 22) term, tells are 'habitation monuments'. Specially arranged buildings with uncommon functions offer the clearest evidence for action at a communal level, for instance the 9 by 9m building from Tumba Madjari tell near Skopje, which yielded an artefactual assemblage indicative of a communal-ritual place (Sanev 1988). Similar buildings, for example at Nea Nikomedeia in Greece and Rakitovo in Bulgaria (Pyke 1996, 32, 48–49; Matsanova 2003), indicate that this was a general development in the Balkans at the time.

The relatively (?) mobile and adaptive 'house society' of the early Neolithic thus became integrated into the framework of the 'tell society' characterized by sedentism and a certain perception of time-depth. Therefore, a duality in attitudes to space and time may be reconstructed for, respectively, horizontal and tell settlements, a duality already present in the 'Neolithic package' of food-producing economies (Sherratt 1997, 22; 2005, 143). It is possible that the tell/non-tell dichotomy is also reflected at the level of buildings, respectively constructed as above-ground wattle and daub houses on the mounds and less permanent, semi-subterranean dwellings in horizontal settlements (Lichardus and Lichardus-Itten 2004).

The expansion of early food production in the Balkans was mediated by the Starčevo culture and its communities, who encountered specialized foragers of the local Mesolithic Lepenski Vir culture in the Iron Gates Gorge of the Danube. Their characteristic trapezoidal houses and anthropo/ichthyomorphic stone sculptures were discovered at the riverbank sites of, among others, Lepenski Vir, Padina, and Vlasac. They reflect specific cultural responses to and relations between humans and their particular microregional environment between 9500 and 5500 BC within a closed ecological zone (cf. Borić 2008). There were interactions between the thinly spread local Mesolithic populations and immigrant, sedentary food-producing communities, but the Lepenski Vir settlement tradition eventually dissolved without trace into the early Neolithic Starčevo culture, without influencing subsequent cultural development (Tringham 2000b, 33–55; Kaczanowska and Kozłowski 2003, 228–231).

### **(p. 243) Cultural Patterns c. 5500–4600 BC**

Between 5500 and 5100/5000 BC a clear north–north-west expansion of tell settlements took place throughout the Balkans. Mounds began occurring along the Bosna, Sava, Drava, and Maros rivers, beyond the Lower Danube and into Transylvania (Fig. 12.1). This is first apparent for the Dimini-Vinča-Kakanj-Karanovo III–IV cultures. Life at Vinča also began at this time (Chapman 1981, 6–32; 1998). At enclosed tells, houses were arranged in a strict order, often separated by very narrow alleys, making it difficult to access houses at the centre of the site (Chapman 1990). This offered an opportunity to mark the distinguished position of certain households. Meanwhile, the increasing concentration of houses limited the space in which individual and communal social interests could be played out, perhaps resulting in an increasing appreciation of living outside the tell and in the expression of prestige and status in a new arena outside the tell. This tendency may ex-



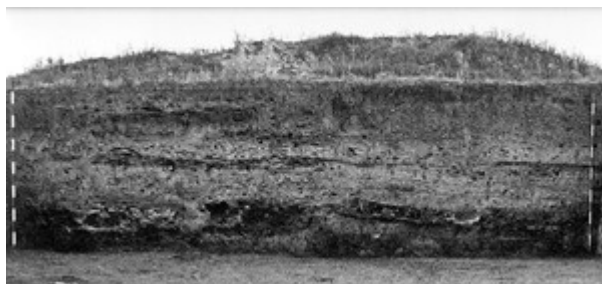
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plain the creation of communal cemeteries, new places for negotiating individual and group interests (see Borić, this volume). Most tells were enclosed by a combination of ditches, earthworks, and walls. Some, for instance Parța in Romania (Lazarovici et al. 2001), have buildings dedicated to special communal functions, indicated by atypical artefactual assemblages. The Vinča culture system of tells and numerous horizontal settlements continued the tradition of communal mentality as it developed in the southern Balkans. The broad geographical network of stabilizing food-producing economies and increasing social complexity were the likely driving forces.



*Fig. 12.2.* The tell settlement of Berettyóújfalu-Herpály with excavation trenches from 1977 to 1982.



*Fig. 12.3.* The tell settlement of Berettyóújfalu-Herpály. Detail of a north-south section showing the stratigraphic sequence.

By approximately 5100/5000 BC, the northward spread of settlement mounds reached the southern Great Hungarian Plain (Fig. 12.1), where the Tisza and Herpály cultures (Figs 12.2 and 12.3) include tell, tell-like (e.g. Tisza: Hódmezővásárhely-Kökénydomb, Hódmezővásárhely-Gorzsa, Vésztő-Mágor, Szegvár-Tűzköves, Öcsöd-Kováshalom; Herpály: Berettyóújfalu-Herpály) and horizontal settlements (cf. Tálas and Raczky 1987; Link 2006). The Polgár-Csőszhalom tell and its 34–35ha external horizontal settlement are located some 100km north of the main block of Tisza and Herpály tells (Raczky and Anders 2008). Its extreme size makes this site a special phenomenon in the late Neolithic of the region. A 3.5ha tell is surrounded by a multiple enclosure and palisade system, usually known from settlements in hilly Transdanubia (western Hungary) and the central European Lengyel culture (Trnka 2005; see Petrasch, this volume). The site is located at the

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meeting point of two major cultural regions and may represent a symbolic synthesis. Activities within the tell differed from those dictated by daily life in the horizontal settlement. Most likely, the tell and its external settlement reflect different attitudes towards space and time (Raczky and Anders 2008, 39–49; 2010). Sherratt's conclusion that this mound was an 'ersatz Tell' seems correct: Polgár-Csőszhalom functioned as a continuously constructed communal monument, rather than an ordinary habitation mound (Sherratt 2005, 142–143).

New forms of spatial patterning, such as orthogonal street layouts with very narrow alleys, emerged within southern Balkan tells, among the later Dimini–Karanovo (p. 244) IV–V–Boian–Maritsa–Poljanica–Sava–Vinča–Pločnik–Sopot–Butmir cultures (e.g. Ovčarovo, Goljamo Delčevo, Poljanitza, Sava: Todorova 1982). The production of clay house models (*tectomorphs*) was interpreted as a token of continuity between subsequent household units and an active component of maintaining social stability through time (Bailey 1990). At Ovčarovo house 7 (layer IX), a special assemblage of clay figurines and (p. 245) a house model indicates symbolic/sacral activities on a community level (Todorova 1982, 67–67, 135–136; Trenner 2010). Houses in tell communities were thus not simple dwellings but became symbols for household units (Tringham 2000b; Souvatzki 2008). Within late Neolithic tell communities, social interactions were realized on the level of household clusters. The periodical horizontal and vertical redefinition of houses implies the redefinition and/or reinforcement of community structure in a more abstract, social space. A strong ideological motivation may therefore also lie behind the cyclical and apparently intentional burning of houses at tell sites, an activity always followed by rebuilding (Tringham 2005).



Fig. 12.4. The tell settlement of Berettyóújfalu-Herpály. Reconstruction of House 11, a two-storey building, with the objects found within.

The physical limitation of tells, however, also defined tight social spaces for household units within a community, eventually leading to the erection of multi-storied buildings on some tells (Fig. 12.4). They emphasized the significance of certain households in yet another vertical dimension (Hiller 2001), illustrating increasing social tension within aggregated household clusters.

# Late Tells and Tells in Decline: c. 4600/4500-4000/3700 BC

Occupation at tells in the Great Hungarian Plain, the northern periphery of tell distribution, lasted about 500 years, ending abruptly around 4600/4500 BC. The subsequent Tiszapolgár culture is characterized by a dispersed settlement pattern in the (p. 246) area between the Maros and Körös rivers (Parkinson 2006). The complex enclosures at the Polgár tell were filled in during a single major communal action, marking the symbolic end of the local community before the tell was abandoned. Similarly, there was a break in the southern region of early tell formation, including Thessaly and Macedonia, at several late Neolithic tells (Aram-Stern 1996, 90–101; Todorova 1998). At the same time, tell-forming communities continued in the central Balkan Kodžadermen–Gumelnița–Karanovo VI (KGK)–Varna, Vinča-Pločnik, and Krivodol–Sălcuța cultures (Todorova 1995; Hansen and Toderas 2010). There was also an expansion of the Balkanic way of life into Moldova, with sporadic stratified settlements supporting a more sedentary Eneolithic economy (Chapman 2010).

In the central Balkans, tell plans show the tight arrangement typical of the previous period. At Durankulak, Hamangia culture layers were covered by oblong megaron-type houses on stone foundations between layers VI and III. The excavators reconstructed a number of sanctuaries and a central ‘palace’, the latter dated to phase III of the Varna culture (Todorova 2002). This diversity of buildings must, to some extent, reflect underlying economic, social, and ideological differences. However, grave goods from the associated cemetery show that social differences were primarily expressed in burials, a new arena for displaying prestige and social status (Renfrew 1986; Chapman 1991; Slavchev 2010). Whilst some cemeteries are associated with tells, the large Varna burial ground could not be connected to any (Lichardus 1991). Possibly this cemetery, with its unusual quantities of high-prestige copper, gold, and *Spondylus* shell objects, was used by high-status individuals from several communities, with outstandingly rich graves amidst groups of more modest burials. The Varna cemetery thus represents a new, external space contrasting with individual tells and their communities (Renfrew 2003, 142–143; Higham et al. 2006). In this context, the appreciation of special individuals and their communities is realized through new artefact types, material representations of a new system of values (Manolakakis 2007) and new networks of procurement well beyond the earlier small, regional scale (Strahm 2007; Hansen 2009; Chapman, this volume).

Meanwhile, in the core area of the Balkans, earlier social customs were maintained within an altogether more peaceful development, for instance at Pietrele in Romania (cf. Hansen et al. 2007). Gumelnița culture tells display a prosperity similar to settlement mounds in the Vedea and Teleorman river valleys (Andreescu and Mirea 2008).

Around 4000 BC, tell cultures ended relatively rapidly in almost the entire area of the Balkans. Some special settlement mounds remained in use until c. 3700 BC, including Galatin in north-west Bulgaria, where a house with stone foundations is indicative of con-

tinued habitation. The decline and ultimate disappearance of tell-forming cultures in south-east Europe proceeded from the lower Danube region toward Dobrudja, Muntenia, and north-east Bulgaria. The sudden disruption has been explained by a combination of external circumstances, including the westward expansion of the Kurgan culture from the steppes and climatic change (Gimbutas 1979; Todorova 1998). Recently, scholars have sought a better understanding of a complex system of external and internal factors that would explain the all-encompassing historical change over (p. 247) both south-east Europe and western Anatolia (Parzinger 1998; Nikolova 2003; Hansen 2009; Anthony 2010).

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