

Pattern and mobility in the prehistoric settlements of the Edirne region, Eastern Thrace

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ABSTRACT – *This paper is a study of prehistoric settlement patterns and mobility in the Edirne Region, the north western part of Eastern Thrace. As a result of surface surveys of the region in 1995 and 1997, I was able to propose two different models of settlement mobility from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age. I have termed these the ‘Extensive Mobility’ and the ‘Restricted Mobility’ models. In this paper, I explain these two models in terms of the relationship between landscape and mobility in the region and discuss the wider question of sedentism in southeastern Europe. The results presented here should not be regarded as final, but as the basis for a future, more intensive survey in other parts of Eastern Thrace which, when combined with geomorphological studies, will allow the reconstruction of settlement patterns and help us to understand the mobility of prehistoric populations in Eastern Thrace.*

IZVLEČEK – *V članku predstavljamo prazgodovinske vzorce naselitve in mobilnost prebivalstva v regiji Edirne, ki leži na severozahodnem delu Vzhodne Trakije. Na podlagi terenskih pregledov regije v letih 1995 in 1996 smo predlagali dva modela poselitvene mobilnosti od neolitika do bronaste dobe. Imenovali smo ju model “ekstenzivne mobilnosti” in model “omejene mobilnosti”. V članku oba modela razložimo v kontekstu regionalne mobilnosti in njene vezanosti na krajinske značilnosti. Analiziramo vprašanje sedentizma v jugovzhodni Evropi. Čeprav predstavljeni rezultati niso dokončni, lahko služijo kot osnova za bodoče intenzivnejše terenske preglede v drugih delih Vzhodne Trakije. Šele ko bomo rezultate povezali z geomorfološkimi raziskavami, bo mogoče rekonstruirati poselitvene vzorce in bolje razumeti mobilnost prazgodovinskega prebivalstva v Vzhodni Trakiji.*

KEY WORDS – *Thrace; Neolithic; Eneolithic; Early Bronze Age; settlement mobility; settlement patterns*

INTRODUCTION

Eastern Thrace is bordered by the Maritsa (Meriç) River to the west, by the Istranca Mountains, the Black Sea and the Bosphorus to the north and east, and by the Sea of Marmara and the Dardanelles to the south. The Ergene River, which is a tributary of the Maritsa River, runs from east to west across the centre of Eastern Thrace. The Ergene River and its tributaries constitute the main central plain of Eastern Thrace. The region of Edirne is a part of the upper Ergene basin. This region lies at a crucial point on the important land route linking the Balkans not only to the region of Marmara, but also to the Aegean.

The following discussions are based on result of a surface survey carried out by the author in 1995 in the province of Edirne (Erdoğu 1997; 1999a). The aim of this survey was to identify new prehistoric sites, to refine the database of known sites and to identify the distributions of types. The survey interest expanded to cover the Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age periods only. Certain sections within the study area were chosen for original fieldwork where a gap in previous research was particularly apparent. The lands are known geographically as the basins of Tunca, Süloğlu and the area along the southern

fringes of the Istranca Mountains. The decision to conduct fieldwork in these areas was determined by the need to lay some sort of foundation for the study of local prehistory. The study areas were selected to ensure as much coverage of different altitudinal and contrasting environments as possible.

MODELS OF MOBILITY

Are Early and Mature agricultural and Copper Age tell settlements in Southeast Europe signs of permanent residence? Planned tell settlements with developed houses and a large quantity of artefacts have generally been accepted as evidence for long-term permanent habitation. However, the concept of long-term permanent occupation has come under criticism due to re-examined tell settlements, studies of hunter-gatherer complexity and recent research on the relations between the settlements and their landscapes. The study of sedentism in non-Neolithic and early Neolithic societies and social anthropological studies of complex hunter-gatherers indicate that a sedentary lifestyle cannot be used as a hallmark of the Neolithic. If such forms of sedentary life are used as signifiers of especially the earliest Neolithic, then Neolithic society began developing in the Mesolithic. The study of pre and/or proto-Neolithic groups of the Iron Gate suggest that Iron Gate communities lived in permanent houses, subsisting without dependence on agriculture and stock breeding (*Srejović 1972; Chapman 1993*). A large number of burials have been recorded within the nine Mesolithic sites of the Iron Gates, such as Lepenski Vir, Vlasac, Padina, Schela Cladovei (*Radovanović 1996.161*). Important work on hunter-gatherer social complexity in the Denmark-*Ertebølle* Culture, suggests that some of the sites, such as Skateholm I, were seasonal campsites, but the dead were buried in a cemetery (*Rowley-Conwy 1992.1*). The seasonal occupation of Skateholm I was very large and the adjacent cemetery contains some 50 inhumations. In the other areas of northern and western Europe, Mesolithic cemeteries associated with semi-sedentary and/or semi-nomadic (?) groups were also found e.g. Moita do Sebastiao (*Roche 1989*), Amoreiras (*Arnaud 1989*) in Portugal and Vedbæk in Denmark (*Price 1985*). We might suggest that the cemeteries could have been a very important factor for occupation by some hunter-gatherers. Some hunter-gatherer communities occupied fixed settlements in different seasons, and cemeteries mark these fixed settlements. Ancestors probably play an important role in sedentism. For the early Neolithic we have seen that burials are rare, but they occur in some tells, such as Anza, Nea Nikomedia and Azmak (*Whittle*

1996.59). At Anza, most of the burials were found in the earliest level (*Nemeskeri and Lengyel 1976.376*). We should consider that the broader elements of the ideology of the Neolithic, such as ancestor cults, or permanent houses can already be found in the Mesolithic. The more established social anthropological studies of complex hunter gatherers also show that non-sedentary complex communities engaged in activities, ideologies and belief systems little different from those of settled communities (*Bailey 1997.44-45*). Zvelebil has recently argued that there seems to be a considerable continuity in social organisation across the economically defined Mesolithic-Neolithic transition (*Zvelebil 1998.23*)

Now I turn to the question of whether the Early and Mature agricultural and Copper Age tell settlements in Southeast Europe are signs of permanent residence. Recent archaeo-geological research in Northern Greece shows that the settlements of the flood plain early agricultural tells was temporary and not permanent (*van Andel et al. 1995*). The research suggests that the flood plain tells, such as Platia Magoula Zarkou and Koutsaki Magoula, were occupied only outside the flood season. Research on the soil history shows that the early Neolithic activity at both sites occurred when flooding was frequent. Runnels and van Andel note that many early farming flood plain sites exist in Southeast Europe, at the Körös settlements in Hungary, for example (*van Andel and Runnels 1995.494*). However, more recent investigations in the Tisza region in Hungary have shown that only a few Neolithic sites lie on tiny elevations on the flood plain. Most of the sites are set back from the edge of the flood plain (*Chapman 1994.81*). In addition, about 10 tells were investigated by Todorova in Northeast Bulgaria, and only one of them can be described as a flood plain tell (*personal communication from Chapman*). Last, but not least, at Anza in Macedonia, no break is known in the early agricultural layers (*Gimbutas 1976*). Similarly, the cultural sequence at the tell of Achilleion, Thessaly, was divided into four main phases, covering without interruption most of the Early and Middle Neolithic (*Gimbutas, Winn and Shimabuku 1989*). We should consider that two types of early tell settlement might be characteristic of south eastern Europe: seasonal tells, such as Platia Magoula Zarkou, and permanent tells, such as Anza. I believe that there are still gaps in our knowledge of the early tell settlements in south eastern Europe.

Tell settlements of the 5th millennium BC such as Ovcharovo in north eastern Bulgaria are marked by

a long series of abandonments and re-occupations, and not by continuous settlements (*Bailey 1996; 1997*). According to more recent excavations, the Karanovo tell is also not a continuous settlement (*Hiller and Nikolov 1997*). I can now raise some questions, such as what length and period could be accepted as permanent occupation. If a re-occupied tell shows interruption levels in some periods, can we call it permanent? For myself, at least, it is difficult to answer these questions. It seems that in south east Europe three types of site may be recognised: permanent and seasonal tells, re-occupied tells and flat settlements. During our surface survey in the Edirne region, almost all the settlements we found are flat, rather than tells.

Several differences between the spatial organisation of tells and flat settlements were outlined by Chapman: "...different locations for communal activity (focal points outdoors for flat settlements, indoor or off-tell for tells), different potential for settlement expansion (greater for flat settlements, less for tells), a different degree of tolerance of dimensional variability (greater for flat settlements, less for tells), and different attitudes to the maintenance of tradition in the landscape (more stability on tells, less stability flat settlements)." (*Chapman 1989.39*). Settlements from the Edirne region can be described as mobile, re-occupied flat settlements. With the results of a surface survey, two models of settlement mobility in the Edirne region can be introduced. The first I call 'Extensive Mobility'. This model may explain the series of abandonments and re-occupation dispersed over a single wide landscape unit or community area (*Neustupny 1991.324*) such as a permanent stream, highland, coastline etc. The second model is 'Restricted Mobility', explaining abandonments and re-occupations of settlements dispersed over small, almost the same landscape unit. The size range of 'Extensive Mobility' is larger than of 'Restricted Mobility'. In 'Restricted Mobility' settlements are dispersed over an area of no more than 1 kilometre in radius. However, in 'Extensive Mobility' settlements are dispersed over an area of 10–20 km in radius in one community area.

Before testing our models, I describe the survey area and settlement pattern in the Edirne region.

DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA SURVEYED

The Tunca Basin

The Tunca River is a tributary of the Maritsa (Meriç) River, which rises in the Balkan Mountains, descends

southwards, and joins the Maritsa River below the town of Edirne. The Tunca Basin was partly investigated by the University of Istanbul in 1982 and 1986 (*Özdoğan 1983.66; 1987.159*). During our survey in 1995 six prehistoric sites were visited in the basin (*Erdogu 1997.274*). No uplands and tributaries have been investigated. The Tunca Basin consists mainly of a flood plain. The settlements are found on the lower or higher river terraces, which are now intensively cultivated.

The Süloğlu Basin

The Süloğlu Stream is a tributary of the Ergene River which rises near the village of Vaysal and runs from north to south. The Suloglu Basin was investigated by the University of Istanbul in 1982 (*Özdoğan 1983.66; 1985.532*). During our survey in 1995, six prehistoric sites were visited between the district centres of Havsa and Suloglu (*Erdogu 1997.278*). Both sides of the Süloğlu Stream are flanked by high and low terraces that are suitable for settlement and agriculture. The survey was carried out by walking along only these stream terraces. With the exception of one site, most settlements are situated on the lower stream terraces, close to the stream.

The area along the southern fringes of the Istranca Mountains

The Istranca Mountain range is composed principally of schist, gneiss, limestone, flysch and some granite pockets which were considerably eroded in later periods. The southern foothills are usually gentle and, compared to other parts of the region, this area is abundant in water and other natural resources. This area was chosen as the focus of the survey project in 1995 because it was a fertile area, previously unsurveyed (*Erdogu 1997.277*). The survey was mainly carried out by walking in directions suggested by local residents. Five prehistoric settlements have been recorded in the area. The settlements are concentrated along small streams or perennial tributaries, natural lines of communication and are generally close to natural water sources.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SETTLEMENT PATTERN

The siting of settlements in the Edirne region is linked to a number of predictable factors, such as locational preference for riverine environments, the selection of fertile soils for agricultural exploitation, and proximity to water sources and natural lines of communication. In the course of our survey, there was no evidence of early Neolithic settlement. Allu-

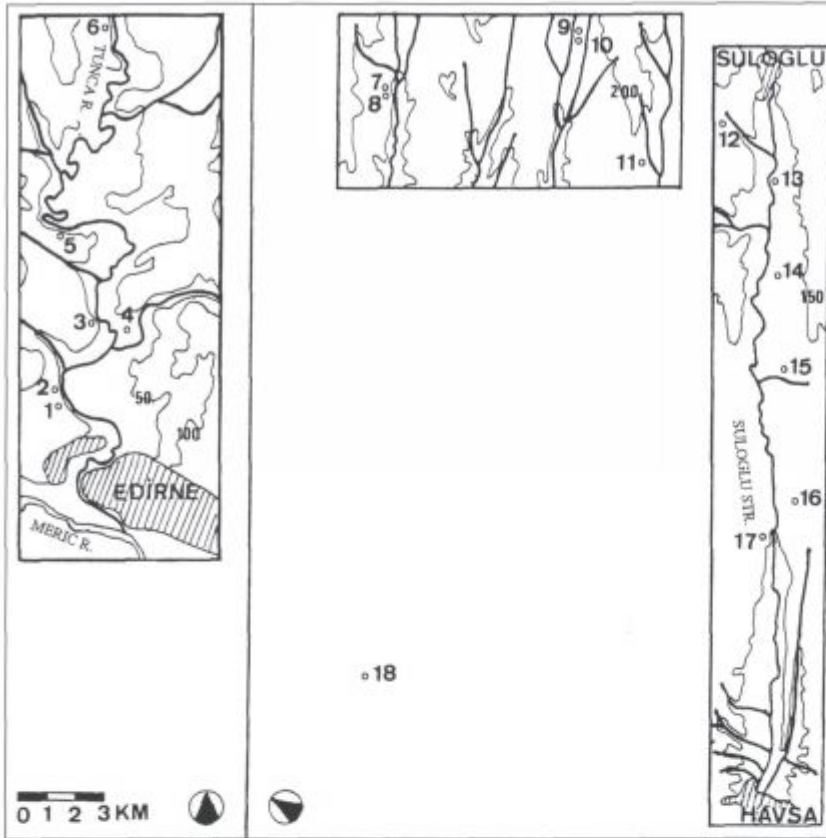


Fig. 1. Distribution of Prehistoric settlements in the Edirne Region: 1. Çardakalti; 2. Çardakli; 3. Kumocagi/Avariz; 4. Köprubasi; 5. Dustubaklyamasi; 6. Kaldirim; 7. Kavakli; 8. Ortakçi; 9. Kaynaklar/Sulecik; 10. Kaynaklar/Yagcili; 11. Kocahöyük; 12. Karabas; 13. Kocatepe; 14. Tepyeni; 15. Kaynaklar/Arpaç; 16. Yumurta Tepe; 17. Cevizlik; 18. Degirmen Çesme

vial deposits probably cover the early occupations of sites in the Edirne region. The earliest pottery found in the survey was Balkan Karanovo III.

Karanovo III and Early IV

Karanovo III and Early IV assemblages are found at five settlements, all of which are located on the lower terrace of the Tunca and Süloğlu basin, some 10–20 m above the flood plain. The settlements occur on the gentle slopes of small streams or perennial tributaries in the area along the southern fringes of the Istranca Mountains. Karanovo III and Early IV pottery is particularly common in Eastern Thrace.

Kalojanovec-Çardakalti

A total of five Kalojanovec-Çardakalti settlements are represented. This period displays a major change in the location of settlements in the Tunca Basin. In comparison with the Karanovo III and Early IV settlements, there was a tendency to locate settlements more frequently on the upper river terraces, some 50–60 m above the flood plain. The settlement of Çardakalti is the only excavated site in the Tunca Basin (Kansu 1963). It revealed only a single cultural phase, containing Kalojanovec material with some local variations. During our survey, the settlement of Kumocagi/Avariz in the Tunca Basin was also inves-

tigated (Erdoğan 1995). This settlement was damaged by a large trench dug for the quarrying of sand. However, on the eastern side of the settlement we were able to locate a single stratum in the profile cut by bulldozers which seems to bear some of the characteristic elements of Kalojanovec culture.

There is no evidence of Kalojanovec-Çardakalti settlements in the Süloğlu basin. However, three settlements were found on the slopes of small streams and gulches in other parts of the surveyed areas, two of which are on settlements previously occupied during the Karanovo III and early IV periods.

Marica/Pre-Cucuteni and Karanovo VI

These periods are marked by a decrease in the number of settlements in Eastern Thrace. However, in the course of our survey, five settlements were found in the Süloğlu Basin and one in the area along the southern fringes of the Istranca Mountains. The settlements are generally situated on the lower terraces. Only one settlement, Yumurta Tepe, is located on the edge of the upland, some 120–140 m above the flood plain. Much to our surprise, we found an absence of material dating to this period (the 4th millennium BC) in the Tunca Basin. It is an important point that the settlements occupied during the earlier periods were not settled during this period.

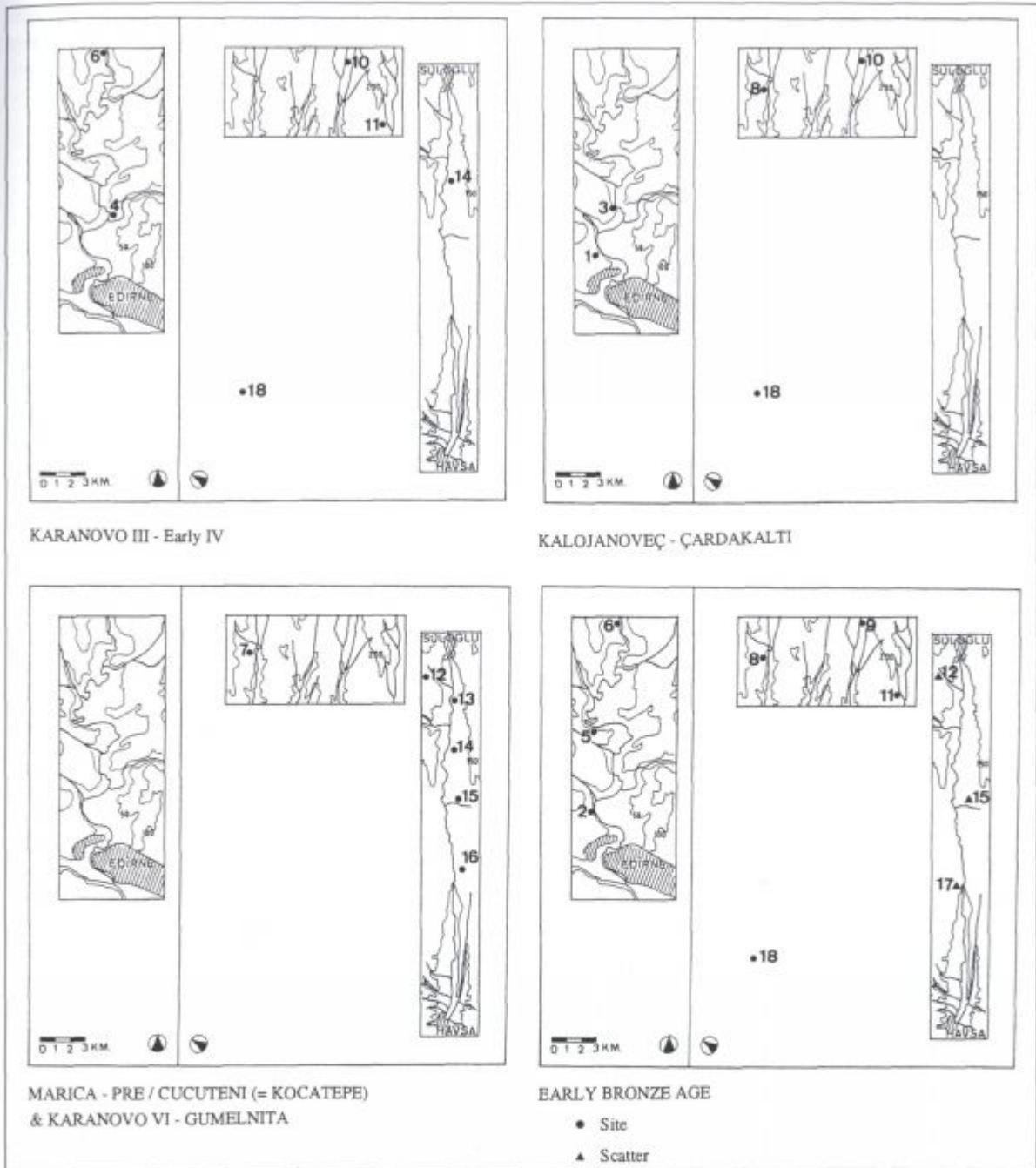


Fig. 2. Prehistoric settlements in the Survey Area.

The Early Bronze Age

During the Early Bronze Age there was an increase in the number of settlements in the Edirne region. With the exceptions of the Tunca Basin, the Early Bronze Age settlements are often situated on settlements previously occupied during earlier periods. The settlements are situated on the lower and upper river terraces, and the slopes of small streams. Most are large-scale sites. There are also small settlements associated with larger settlements. In the Süloğlu Basin were found only single finds from the Early Bronze Age.

SETTLEMENT MOBILITY: A CASE STUDY IN THE EDIRNE REGION

Occupation at the settlements of the Edirne region was marked by a series of abandonments and re-occupations. The settlements are often situated on sites previously occupied during earlier periods. However, later arrivals (?) settled not on the top of the early settlements, but always nearby. This pattern fits our 'Restricted Mobility' model. A number of settlements comprise a similar pattern, especially in the Süloğlu basin and the area along the south-

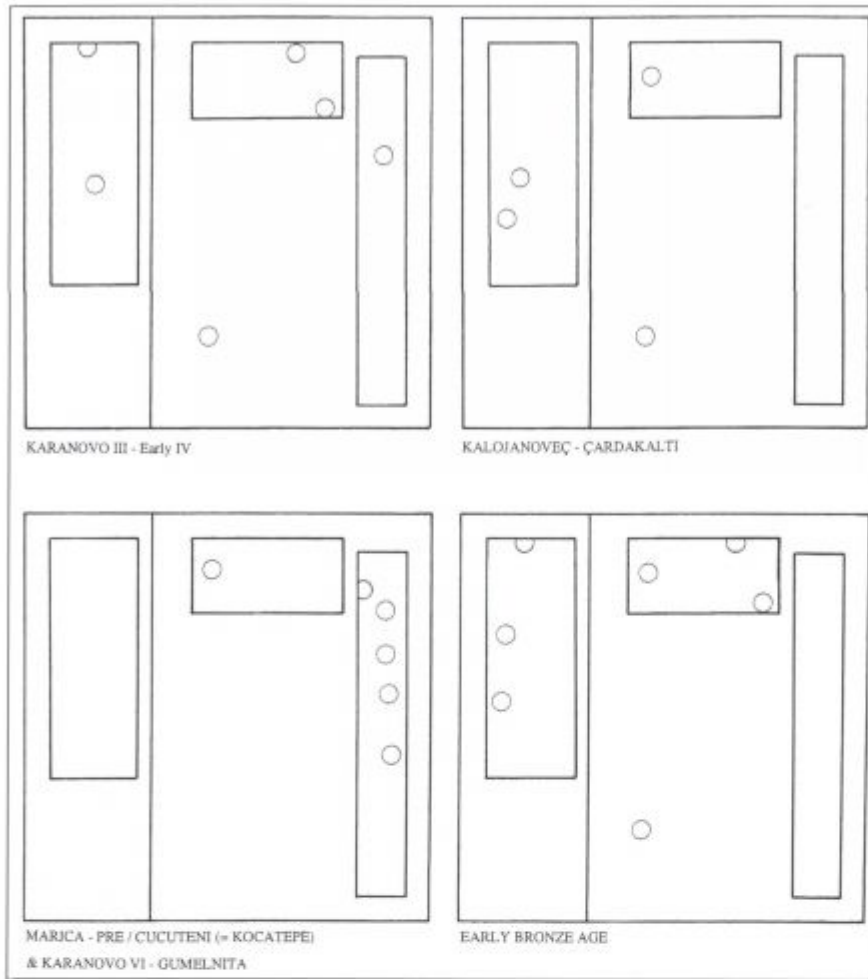


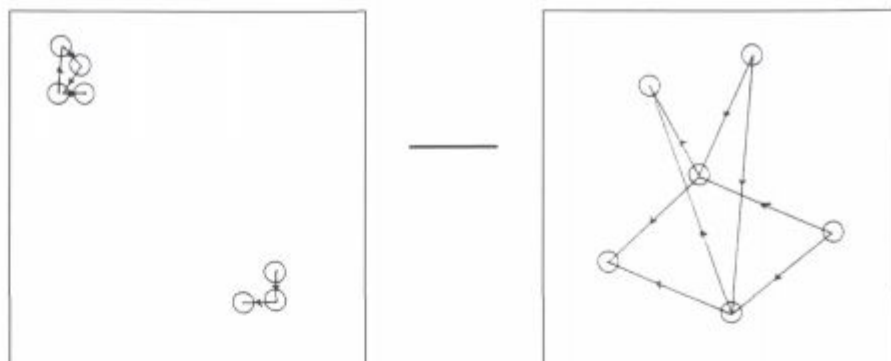
Fig. 3. Prehistoric settlements foci in the Survey Area.

ern foothills of the Istranca Mountain. Noteworthy among these settlements is Kavakli-Ortakçi, some 20 km northeast of the town of Edirne, south of the village of Kavakli, just to the south of the road leading to the village of Yagçili. Kavakli-Ortakçi is situated on the west bank of Çiftlik (or Ortakçi) Stream, which is a tributary of the Iskenderköy. On the west bank of the stream, there is a small narrow gulch. The settlements were found on both sides of the gulch. In Kavakli-Ortakçi, settlement history dates back to the end of the 5th millennium BC. Kalojanovec pottery is the earliest find from the south of the gulch. We suggest that, during this period, the settlement was small. The 4th millennium settlements were situated on the north of the gulch and are marked by Pre-Cucuteni/Marica and Karanovo VI assemblages. A Pre-Cucuteni/Marica (= Kocatepe) settlement was found just south of the village, far from the stream and the gulch. It is approximately 100 m in diameter. A Karanovo VI settlement is located roughly 120–150 m southwest of the Pre-Cucuteni/Marica (i.e. Kocatepe) settlement, close to the gulch. It is about 100 m in width and less than 1 m in height (Erdogu 1999b). Material density is high in

an area of 50 square metres. According to surface finds, the early stage of the Early Bronze Age settlements is missing in this area. The Early Bronze Age II settlement was found on the south side of the gulch which is considerably larger than the earliest settlements. It is some 250 m in diameter and 5–6 m high. There is a hiatus in settlement between the Early Bronze Age II and the Late Bronze Age period. A small settlement of the Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age was found at the confluence of the stream and gulch.

The Yumurta Tepe site is also particularly noteworthy for our 'Restricted Mobility' model. It is located some 12 km north of the district centre of Havsa and about 1 km east of the village of Hasköy. It is situated on the east bank of the Suloglu stream. To the east of the stream is a high terrace with an elevation of about 120–140 m, on which the site has formed. A natural spring was found nearby. Yumurta Tepe is dated to the 4th millennium BC; the Pre-Cucuteni/Marica (i.e. Kocatepe) and Karanovo VI settlements were found side by side. The Karanovo VI settlement is about 60 m in diameter, and perhaps

Fig. 4. Models of 'Restricted Mobility' (left) and 'Extensive Mobility' (right).



1 m in height. The settlement is dated to the latest stage of the Karanovo VI Culture. The Pre-Cucuteni/Marica (Kocatepe) settlement is located to the south-east of the Karanovo VI settlement. It is around 100–150 m in width (Erdogu 1999b). We suppose that the Early Bronze Age settlement lies under the modern village of Hasköy, to the east of the stream.

The settlements of the Süloğu Basin and the area along the southern foothills of the Istranca Mountains have patterns comparable to those of Asagipinar-Kanlıgeçit, near the town of Kırklareli, around 40 km east of Edirne (Özdoğan et al. 1997), and Drama in southern Bulgaria, some 60 km northwest of

Edirne (Fol et al. 1989.81). However, settlement mobility in the Tunca Basin is significantly different, and it can serve as an example of our 'Extensive Mobility' model. In the Tunca Basin, Karanovo III/early IV settlements were found on the lower terraces. At the end of the 5th millennium BC, all settlements were abandoned. The Kalojanovec-Çardakalti assemblage is marked by a shift from lower terrace to upper terrace settlement. At the beginning of the 4th millennium, the new settlements were also abandoned, and no evidence of 4th millennium settlement in the Tunca Basin has been found. During the Early Bronze Age, the settlements were situated on the lower and upper river terraces, and with one exception, there is no evidence of overlapping settlements.

It seems evident that the movement of settlements through the different periods occurred in different parts of the landscapes in the Edirne region. Re-occupations always occurred close to earlier, abandoned settlements, not on top of them. The apparent non-existence of tell settlements in the Edirne region may be explained in this way.

CONCLUSIONS

A study of settlement pattern and mobility in the prehistoric settlements of the Edirne region is outlined above. The results are inferences based on a surface survey which are not yet confirmed by systematic excavation. It seems evident that the prehistoric settlements in the Edirne region were not long-term permanent. The abandonment and re-occupation of settlements are dispersed either over one large landscape unit (Extensive Mobility), such as the Tunca River, or over small and almost identical landscape units (Restricted Mobility), such as the sites of Ortakçi-Kavaklı and Yumurta Tepe, but are not overlapping settlements. There are, as yet, no geomorphological studies, no detailed soil analyses and no pollen diagrams of Eastern Thrace. Hence, we

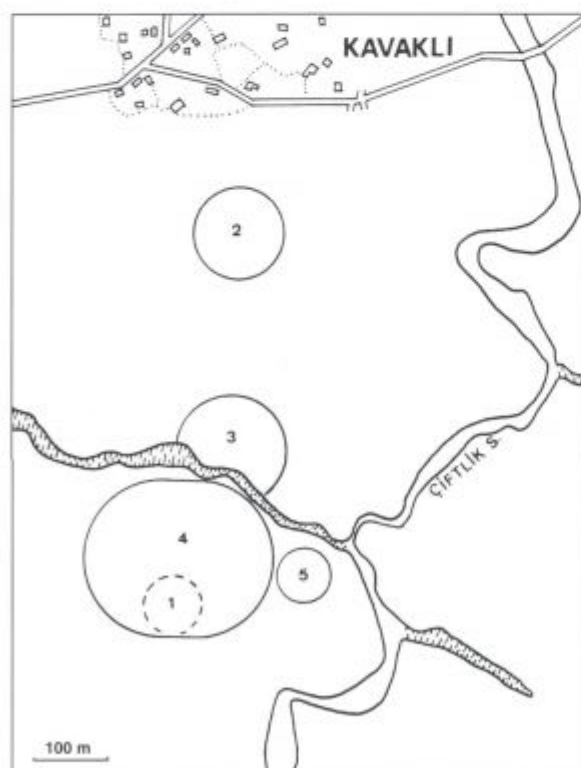


Fig. 5. Location map of Kavaklı-Ortakçi: 1. Kalojanovec - Çardakalti settlement; 2. Marica - Pre / Cucuteni (=Kocatepe) settlement; 3. Karanovo VI - Gumelnita settlement; 4. Early Bronze Age II settlement; 5. Late Bronze - Early Iron Age settlement.

can only speculate for the time being on what factors contributed to settlement change in the Edirne region. A number of factors, including physical and social, affecting settlement mobility have already outlined by Whittle (Whittle 1997:20-21) It is not yet clear whether settlement change in the Edirne region was due to changes in landscape (soils or natural water sources), climatic changes or other, social factors.

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