

# Adriatic Voyages. Prehistoric mobility between the sea and the mountains

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## ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes the main results of a research project on trans Adriatic mobility in Late Prehistory, with particular focus on the Western Balkans in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC. Through a combination of analyses on material culture, seascapes and mountainous landscapes, ethnographic approach and computational archaeology, mobility at different scales is researched and understood. This paper is complementary to the [video](#) presented by the author at Blue Planet Economy (BPE) European Maritime Forum 2021.

KEYWORDS: prehistory, Adriatic area, mobility.

## HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Adriatic Voyages is a section of a wider project investigating mobility between the Balkans and the Mediterranean in the 3rd millennium BC. It focuses mainly on central Dalmatia, Croatia, but it also researches sites in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Italy and Greece<sup>1</sup>.

Adriatic Voyages benefits from a cluster of international collaborators, projects, and Institutions. The most important collaborations are the City Museum of Šibenik (Croatia), the Sapienza University of Rome (Italy), the University of Tübingen (Germany), and the Croatian Science Foundation (Croatia).



**Figure 1.** Cetina pottery from Dalmatia (photo M. Gori).

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<sup>1</sup> For more details, please watch the following video: *When (South)East meets (North)West. Transculturation phenomena in the Western Balkans*. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nBJyVfj6ac>

## 2 THE CETINA REGION (CROATIA)

One of the most relevant areas investigated with this project is the Dalmatinska Zagora, and in particular the upper course of the Cetina River<sup>2</sup>. Along the upper course of the Cetina River, a large numbers of funerary stone barrows of different dimensions are clustered together; some of them covering a central cist grave. These structures represent landmarks and are possibly connected to communication routes.

The barrows contain pottery decorated with characteristic geometric patterns (Figure 1). Thanks to petrographic analysis undertaken on pottery by Silvia Rita Amicone (University of Tübingen), we were able to trace the spread of peculiar manufacturing techniques in the Adriatic-Ionian areas.

Many efforts were devoted to surveying the area and mapping new sites.

## 3 KORÇË BASIN (ALBANIA)

Albania is another key region for the study of trans-Adriatic mobility, especially for investigating the relationship between the Balkans, Italy and Greece. Thanks to the French-Albanian archaeological mission in the Korçë Basin (Albania), we undertook pottery and clay sampling campaigns, supplemented with analyses with portable XRF. The aim was to produce a solid dataset for comparative analysis.



**Figure 2.** Sampling campaign in the Korçë Basin (photo M. Gori).

<sup>2</sup> For more details, please watch the following videos: *The Cetina phenomenon between the land and the sea. Where are we now?* Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xr3G6A3GNE8>; *Western Balkan mountainscapes: connectiveness and disconnectedness in the Cetina period.* Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLRtiGzhlG0>

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

New laboratory and fieldwork data were combined with legacy data and studied by applying Network Analysis and Agent-based Modelling. We used ethnographic examples to test the feasibility of our models and fully understand seaborne mobility in the Adriatic during prehistory. In the third millennium BC, small groups of people crossed the Adriatic in search of resources. One of the most important was the Gargano flint. New research pinpointed the small island of Palagruža as a crucial stopover for voyages between Italy and Dalmatia, directed to Gargano flint procurement.

The Balkans are a key place situated between the mountains and the sea, where mobility represented not only a means to get different types of resources. It represented a way for Late Prehistoric community to mark their identities across the Mediterranean (Cazzella et al., 2020; Gori, 2020). The project researching Adriatic mobility will continue including Southern Dalmatia and Montenegro.

#### 5 REFERENCES

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