

Early Farming in Dalmatia

Pokrovnik and Danilo Bitinj:
two Neolithic villages in southeast Europe

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Cover image: Aerial view of the Danilo Valley, site of Danilo Bitinj in the middle distance, looking southeast (photo Šibenik Museum)

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Preface

The Early Farming in Dalmatia Project began with an invitation. In March 2000 Andrew Moore was visiting the American College of Management and Technology in Dubrovnik, a satellite of his home institution, Rochester Institute of Technology in the USA. Colleagues at the College arranged for him to meet archaeologists in Split who would show him the main Neolithic sites in the region. That intriguing and informative excursion led to a meeting with Marko Menđušić who invited Andrew to join him in a collaborative project. This investigation would undertake a deeper exploration of key issues in the Neolithic and the development of farming in the central Adriatic. Two years later we began the project.

The project was conceived in the aftermath of the Homeland War which had ended a few years before. Archaeologists and other scientists in Croatia wanted to strengthen contacts with their western counterparts in the interests of building intellectual exchanges. For archaeology this meant bringing together the traditional expertise of Croatian archaeologists in the cultural record of their country with the new techniques and perspectives that their guests from abroad could deploy. There was indeed much to do, especially for prehistory. The great sites of the classical world in coastal Croatia, Split, Pula, Vis, Hvar, and others, were well known but the Neolithic sites were scarcely recognized. Maps of the later prehistory of Europe would leave the eastern shore of the Adriatic blank. This was despite the fact that substantial accounts of significant excavations carried out since the Second World War had been published in English and German.¹ This region formed the link between southeast Europe and the central and western Mediterranean. It should therefore have contained sites that could yield vital information for understanding the spread of agriculture and sedentary, village-based societies through the Mediterranean to southern Europe. Our project was intended to fill this void.

We have been joined by other archaeologists and scientists from Croatia, the USA, Britain and elsewhere who have recognized the potential importance of the region for later prehistory. Throughout, our collaborative research has proceeded in a spirit of generous cordiality. All participants have learned from each other: the team experts, skilled professional excavators, and students. Our results thus far demonstrate how productive this approach has been. Already, our project has generated an array of productive inquiries

¹ Korošec 1958-1959, 1964; Novak 1955.

leading to a series of publications and theses at the masters and doctoral levels.² It has also stimulated a new generation of international scholars to undertake research on the later prehistory of the region from a variety of innovative perspectives.

A major theme of our investigations has been to understand the human ecology of the earliest farming in Dalmatia and its later development. We have been especially interested in establishing the relationships between the history of the first agricultural villages as revealed by our excavations and the landscapes in which they were located. This context was an ever changing one, with human impact becoming increasingly significant as the Holocene advanced. We have also taken into account the influence of rising sea levels during the early Holocene, a more important element we now realize than we had thought at the outset. Much more needs to be done to expand our research with these perspectives in mind. That will be our task, and that of others, in the years to come.

Of the team that came together for the Early Farming in Dalmatia Project, one of its distinguished members is no longer with us. Tony Legge joined us in the field during several seasons, providing an immediate assessment of the significance of the faunal remains as they were recovered. His untimely death in 2013 was a great loss to us and to the world of archaeozoology.³ Fortunately, he had completed his initial analysis of the animal bones from Pokrovnik and Danilo, and that research is included in this book.

This account represents a preliminary statement of our research thus far and our initial findings. We intend to pursue our inquiries further and to explore more fully the implications of the data we have recovered. We look forward to that task eagerly, stimulated by the rich insights that we have gained already.

Andrew Moore and Marko Menđušić
Autumn 2017

² A partial list has been published in Menđušić and Moore 2013.

³ His friends and colleagues have compiled a book of essays in his honor, see Rowley-Conwy *et al.* 2017.