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# Environmental Change and the Neolithization of the Balkans

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## Abstract

Any discussion of Neolithization in the Balkans south of the Danube has to confront two seemingly long-established and incontrovertible 'facts' - the abrupt appearance of a fully developed Neolithic 'package' c. 6200/6000 cal BC, and the virtual archaeological 'absence' of a pre-Neolithic substratum. This paper focuses on three inadequately discussed aspects of the ongoing debate surrounding the spread of farming across Southeast Europe: 1) the environmental potential of the region for pre-Neolithic hunter-gatherer settlement against the background of substantial climate and vegetational change during the Terminal Pleistocene and Early Holocene, 2) the appearance of a distinctive raw material ('Balkan Flint') and blade-based toolkits that are one of the hallmarks of the supra-regional Karanovo I – Starčevo – Criş – Körös cultural complex, and 3) the lack of Mesolithic sites in a large part of the eastern Balkans (ie Bulgaria) is 'absence of evidence' or 'evidence of absence'.

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