

**EVIDENCE FOR EARLIEST COPPER SMELTING IN  
BELOVODE, A VINČA CULTURE SITE IN EASTERN SERBIA**

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The abundance of metal artefacts in early cultures of southeast Europe has long suggested an independent origin of metallurgy in Europe. However, the hypothesis was so far unsubstantiated, due to the lack of indications of smelting. Such evidence has recently come to light in an excavation at Belovode, a Vinča culture site in Serbia, together with the production of malachite beads. Microscopic, chemical and isotopic analyses of ore, slag and metal samples show that the raw materials derive from several local copper mineralisations, including the close area of the well-known contemporary copper mine at Rudna Glava. Radiocarbon measurements of bones associated with the metallurgical material provide the earliest secure dates for smelting in Europe, in the late 6th millennium BC. This is contemporary with the earliest documented copper smelting in Anatolia.