

Archaeologists uncover oldest prehistoric town in Europe

November 1 2012, by Bob Yirka

(Phys.org)—Archaeologists in Bulgaria have uncovered what is believed to be the remains of the oldest prehistoric town in all of Europe. The researchers believe the town existed as a salt producing settlement around the time 4700 to 4200 BC. Excavation of the site, which was first discovered in 2005, has uncovered two story homes, three meter high walls surrounding the town – and two meters thick, and a small burial ground with the remains of some of the people that used to live there.

The [excavation](#) site is located near the town of Provadia; about 25 miles from the [Black Sea](#). Researchers there believe the people that lived in the town dug salt from the ground and boiled it to remove impurities and made [bricks](#) out of it for use and for trade as currency with others in the region. At that time in history, salt was a precious commodity needed by both humans and [domesticated animals](#) for survival. In speaking with the AFP Newswire, the researchers said the town could have supported between 300 and 350 people and some evidence indicates that it might have been a two class society, with wealthy land or mine owners in one group, and workers in another. They also said that evidence of burial rituals have been found, where some bodies were mutilated and others laid to rest unharmed. Some of those mutilated were actually cut in half with their torsos planted upright.

The big walls surrounding the town attest to how valuable salt was and to what lengths the people of the town were willing to go to protect it from marauders. A correspondent for the [BBC](#) has suggested that the existence of the ancient town serves as an explanation for a trove of gold

discovered 40 years ago in a cemetery 21 miles away. The researchers say that the tall thick walls are possibly the most massive fortification of its type in all of prehistoric Europe. They also said that evidence of a class system came in the form of spiral copper [needles](#) which are believed to have been used by rich women in the town to hold their hair up high.

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