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## ASOCIAȚIA ROMÂNĂ DE ARHEOLOGIE

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## Against functionalism: review of the Pietrele Archaeological Project

Alexandru DRAGOMAN\*  
Sorin OANȚĂ-MARGHITU\*\*

**Abstract:** *The present text is a review of the German-Romanian archaeological research of the tell of Pietrele-Gorgana in southern Romania. As we show in this paper, the functionalist interpretation and the Fordist organization of the archaeological practice at Pietrele are interdependent. Both draw their legitimacy from the same functionalist paradigm criticized in the social sciences as an ideology of maintaining and reproducing the system, stating that functionality is a natural, universal state. In our opinion, archaeology, as the discipline of "the other", should fight the dominant discourses colonizing the past and implicitly or explicitly promoting the reproduction of hierarchical systems.*

**Rezumat:** *Textul prezent este o recenzie a cercetărilor arheologice germano-române din tell-ul de la Pietrele-Gorgana din sudul României. După cum arătăm în acest articol, interpretarea funcționalistă și organizarea pe baze fordiste a practicii arheologice de la Pietrele sunt interdependente. Ambele se legitimează de la aceeași paradigmă funcționalistă care este criticată în științele sociale ca ideologie a menținerii și reproducerii sistemului, afirmând că funcționalitatea acestuia este o stare naturală, universală. În opinia noastră, arheologia, ca disciplină a "celuilalt", trebuie să combată discursurile dominante care colonizează trecutul și care promovează implicit sau explicit reproducerea sistemelor ierarhice.*

**Keywords:** *Pietrele-Gorgana; Gumelnița-Karanovo VI; tell-sites; burnt houses; "paths"/"domestic waste areas"; functionalism; academic politics; reflexive archaeology.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *Pietrele-Gorgana; Gumelnița-Karanovo VI; tell-uri; construcții incendiate; "poteci"/"zone menajere"; funcționalism; politică academică; arheologie reflexivă.*

### Introduction: theoretical premises

The present text is a review of the archaeological research of the tell of Pietrele-Gorgana (Băneasa commune, Giurgiu county) in southern Romania, conducted as part of an ongoing German-Romanian project started in 2002. The project partners are the Eurasien-Abteilung des Deutschen Archäologischen Institut (Berlin), the Institut für Ur- und Frühgeschichte der Ruhr-Universität Bochum and the "Vasile Pârvan" Institute of Archaeology of the Romanian Academy (Bucharest). The arguments rely on our participation in the excavations from 2002, 2004-2005 and on the published texts. Our dissatisfaction derives from the positivist and functionalist nature of the project, which is why in 2006 we renounced to take part.

The outlook of the Pietrele Archaeological Project can be best summarized by "*Vorsprung durch Technik*", an advertising slogan for Audi cars. Sabine Wolfram used the expression (2000) in a critical analysis of post-war West German archaeology. According to Wolfram this type of practice is characterized by:

*"(1) even more, and more detailed, typological and chronological schemes, with an increasing use since the 1970's of quantitative techniques and computers. [...].*

*(2) a strong trend towards employing 'objective' scientific methods. This is especially true of settlement archaeology which may be regarded as a special case of historical interpretation. The study of prehistoric settlements in their ecological and economic environment requires the use of 'hard' science (zoology, botany, soil science, etc.), which gives settlement archaeology prestige as well as the appearance of value-free 'objectivity'. Settlement archaeology is today one of the most important and valuable approaches in German archaeology. This is illustrated by the number of such projects funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft [...]" (S. Wolfram 2000, p. 182).*

The very goals of the Pietrele Project are: to build up a chronology on the basis of the stratigraphic sequence, the processing of pottery and radiocarbon data; to analyse the structure of the settlement, both by excavating and by geophysical prospecting; to reconstruct the economy by means of archaeozoology, paleobotanics, etc.; and to reconstruct the environment in the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium BC by means of sedimentology (see for instance, S. Hansen *et alii* 2003, pp. 169, 184, 186). The objectivity of the approach and the project high standards and importance are emphasized not only by mobilizing the so-called "hard sciences", but also by expressions such as "*Der*

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*außerordentlich hohe Fundanzahl*“, *„Das Fundaufkommen ist in Pietrele sehr hoch*“, *„Auch die Zahl der Silices ist außerordentlich hoch*“, accompanied by figures (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 341; 2006, pp. 2-3). The excavating methods are of paramount importance, something to be proud of, as one can see from the following quotation: *„Die hohe Fundzahl hängt natürlich mit unserer Grabungsmethode zusammen*“ (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 341).

The official discourse of Pietrele Project contains a certain ambiguity. On the one hand, it denies the existence of any scenario of the archaeological excavation, as the methods guarantee an objective research (involving data gathering and recording), by means of which one can avoid setting forth preconceived ideas. On the other hand, a few clear aims are established from the very beginning and supposed to be attained upon researching *Gorgana*. Rather stated on various occasions than explicitly expressed by the archaeological practice at Pietrele, the empiricism is just a strategy meant to justify and defend the functionalist manner of interpreting the contexts and objects. The aims of the research and the published texts show that the tell is imagined as being made of overlapping villages, having a plan that has to be understood, because their structure is a sign of social organization (S. Hansen *et alii* 2002, p. 7; 2003, p. 169). A great importance is paid to the differences between the functional areas within the settlement, established by plotting the archaeological material on the plan of the settlement (S. Hansen *et alii* 2002, p. 6; 2003, p. 168; 2004, p. 3). The villages are conceived as a sum of houses defined as *„economic units*“ (S. Hansen *et alii* 2002, p. 7). In the case of uncovered buildings, the main interest lies in determining the functionality of each and their comparison (S. Hansen *et alii* 2003, p. 186; 2004, p. 45; 2005, pp. 341, 389), starting from the idea that the *„inventories*“ reflect the activities that took place inside the houses. According to the same line of thought, the spaces between the houses are considered to be simple *„lanes*“/ *„Gassen*“ (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, pp. 347-348). The environment is regarded as a resource available to inhabitants; consequently, the results from faunal remains analysis are not published in relation with the specific contexts, but by species (S. Hansen *et alii* 2004, pp. 41-43), or by general context categories such as *„Haus*“ or *„Gasse*“ (S. Hansen *et alii* 2006, pp. 54-57); the published analysis is limited to the reconstruction of the subsistence techniques. The research scenario of the tell at Pietrele is eloquently summarized by the conclusive phrases of the 2004 campaign excavation report:

*„Der funktionale Vergleich zwischen den Hauseinheiten ist bislang nur sehr eingeschränkt durchführbar. Eine Interpretation wird erst der erneuten Vergrößerung unserer Grabungsflächen, der Analyse der Tierknochen und botanischen Reste, des umfangreichen Steingeräteinventars, der Kleinfundverteilung u.a.m. sich schärfer konturieren. Dabei werden insbesondere die Frage der Gleichzeitigkeit der Hauseinheiten und ihre mögliche funktionale Differenzierung im Vordergrund stehen*“ (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 389).

The functionalist discourse mingles an evolutionary narrative with vulgar Marxist tints (due to the prevalence attributed to the economic element), emphasizing the cultural changes as a result of the transformation of an egalitarian society into a hierarchical one. The *„rich*“ inventories of some of the graves in the well known cemetery at Varna would reflect the existence of a *„stratified society*“, of a *„dominant class*“, it is said that we might even assume the existence of an *„institutionalized ruler*“, of a *„chieftain*“ (S. Hansen 2006, p. 436; S. Hansen and M. Toderăș 2007, p. 4)<sup>1</sup>. The key element for understanding the transformation of a society perceived as largely egalitarian into a stratified one, is supposed to be the analysis of the economic system. It is believed that tells suit this purpose well, because they enable the study of the economic system evolution in the long run. Thus, the tell at Pietrele was chosen. It is approximately contemporary with the graves at Varna and it has a stratigraphical sequence established by earlier excavations conducted by Dumitru Berciu (1956), containing both a Boian level, traditionally dated to the Late Neolithic, and Kodžadermen-Gumelnița-Karanovo VI levels, traditionally dated to the Early Copper Age (S. Hansen 2006, p. 436; S. Hansen and M. Toderăș 2007, p. 5).

Although the aim is to understand the evolution towards social inequality, what it is meant by this change is not discussed. For instance, the concept of social structure is not theorized at all, as it is taken for granted, which might lead to misleading results:

*„Divergent interpretations of the concept have direct implications for archaeological research as they are founded on different epistemological notions with regard to the nature of social reality, the ontological*

<sup>1</sup> Interpretations of the cemetery at Varna from other theoretical outlooks: J. Chapman 1990; P. Biehl and A. Marciniak 2000; A. Marciniak 2000.

*status we confer to that reality and the level of abstraction at which we work. Furthermore, the concept of social structure is always allied to a particular methodology. Unless we have a clear understanding of the implications of different interpretations of the concept, our analyses will be inadequate and lead to misleading conclusions*" (C. Tilley 1982, p. 28).

Thus, at Pietrele, the concept of social structure becomes equivalent to that of pattern (see C. Tilley 1982, p. 28). Social structure is reflected in material culture: an egalitarian society should be characterized by the lack of a differentiation in material culture, while in the case of a hierarchical society should be the reverse (for a critique see M. Rowlands 1989, p. 29).

Regarding *Gorgana* as a sum of houses that are as many economic units, specialized parts making the whole operate, we might say that the Pietrele Project philosophy has analogies with a modernist model of building contemporary cities. The aims of the project remind of Le Corbusier's idea that all human beings have the same needs because they have similar bodies, with the same functions (F. Choay 2002, pp. 35-36). The city is a material space built by the architect to fulfil these needs. The purpose of this social project is to obtain the highest efficiency, the city, by a functional town planning, being turned into a working tool (F. Choay 2002, p. 37). With Le Corbusier the house is a lodging tool, a "cell" best corresponding to our physiological and sentimental needs (P. Hall 1999, pp. 232, 235-236). The result of this outlook was the largely successful attempt to rationally search an order pattern applicable to any human group.

However, this urban model was challenged by some resounding failures. One of them was the city of Chandigarh, the new capital of Punjab, designed according to Corbusier's plans based on a functionalist outlook (P. Hall 1999, pp. 239-241). The project did not consider the lifestyle of the locals; the relation between the streets and the buildings was fully European and applied with no regard for the harsh climate in northern India or the Indian lifestyle. As so many times before, the project put into practice a totalitarian ideology, as the city was segregated according to income and social position (P. Hall 1999, p. 240). Le Corbusier also proposed replacing the destroyed city of Saint-Dié by eight "lodging units" and a civic centre, but the absurdity of this plan was perceived by the inhabitants as threatening (F. Choay 2002, p. 74).

As already stated, the failure of this type of architecture is due to the arrogance of the architects trying to impose their projects to people who would not adapt to them (P. Hall 1999, p. 270). The architects of this model of urbanism emphasized the function of the objects and overlooked their meanings (F. Choay 2002, p. 76). While this urban model has failed until now, we cannot see how it might have more chances of success when applied to the past. Both Le Corbusier's model of urbanism and the functionalist archaeology of Pietrele Project start from the idea that people have the same needs and adopt rational strategies to fulfil them, and to adapt to the environment. However, as we can see from the examples provided by ethnography and historical archaeology, people used to act in the past, even in times close to the present, in ways that today seem irrational (J. Deetz 1996, p. 34).

The tell as a "labour tool" made up of houses-"lodging tools", spaces for conducting various activities, resumes very well the perspective upon *Gorgana*. The intellectual origin, even though not explicitly assumed, of this perspective can be found in the dawn of the functionalist ideology emerged in the sociology of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (G. Huaco 1986; J. Turner and A. Maryanski 1988; A. Maryanski and J. Turner 2000). With the functionalists, society is an organism or a mechanism whose parts perform various functions in order to maintain and reproduce it. The philosophy of the Pietrele Project reminds also of the so-called "functional requisites" or "needs" set forth at that time by Herbert Spencer (J. Turner and A. Maryanski 1988, p. 11; A. Maryanski and J. Turner 2000, p. 1030). According to Malinowski, first of all people have to fulfil their biological necessities. In order to meet them, they have to organize collectively, which generates other necessities, that in their turn have to be fulfilled if the structure is to remain viable (J. Turner and A. Maryanski 1988, p. 113). Functionalism emphasizes the equilibrium of the system, its maintenance and reproduction; the existing social order is naturalized, as the changes are the result of accidents (G. Huaco 1986; J. Turner and A. Maryanski 1988; A. Maryanski and J. Turner 2000). Besides, the functionalist approach in archaeology ignores the fact that houses and settlements, objects, agriculture and animal breeding, and the environment are imbued with symbolism (see for instance, I. Hodder 1990; C. Tilley 1999; R. Bradley 2005). Even the floor plastering may have symbolic significance (N. Boivin 2000).

### Fieldwork, excavation reports and academic politics

Knowledge at Pietrele is produced in an authoritarian way. The project leaders are Svend Hansen, director of Eurasien-Abteilung and Alexandru Vulpe, director of the Institute of Archaeology in Bucharest. Because of his age, the latter could not participate in the excavations, but he agreed that one of us (A. D.) should represent the Romanian part on the site. In practice, the decisions regarding the schedule, the excavation aims and strategy, the right to synthesise and interpret the results, the style and contents of the publications, and so on, have been *par excellence* the attributes of the German project director. The causes of this situation reside in the hierarchical organizational structure. It is taken for granted that the project directors (holding the highest academic position) are the only ones who can make decisions on all the aspects of practice, as they have the highest symbolic capital. This symbolic capital is seen as a result of merit and experience. Consequently, their opinion is considered to be legitimate. The right of a team member to materialize his/her opinions (in fieldwork, in publications) is conditioned by the project leader's approval. As the field representative of the Romanian part did not hold an important position in the academic hierarchy, the whole research and publication strategy was decided by the German project director. We should add that, at Pietrele, the authority is not imposed, as it functions under the form of an "patron-client" relationship, aiming to co-interest the participants: finding a job (in the case of the German archaeologists), getting scholarships (in the case of the Romanian archaeologists), applying for doctor's degree and/or joining other research projects – such as excavating in the tell of Aruchlo in Georgia (in both cases), etc. In exchange for a compliant attitude, the members of the team may use these offers in order to attain their own ends, be they financial, or legitimizing, or both. This relationship develops a complicity between the "contracting parties": investing by what (s)he writes, says or accepts uncritically in the promoted official image, the person in question invests in his/her own image.

One of the factors contributing to the perpetuation of the hierarchical system and to an uncritical practice is the academic and university system where the archaeologists were educated. Ulrike Sommer's conclusion referring to the west-German archaeological education system is relevant for understanding the practice at Pietrele:

*"Students are not encouraged to have a thought of their own before they start on their Ph.D., and it does not greatly matter if they do not think then. 'Careful thorough research' is what matters most: students are taught to be critical about data, not about ideas. Thus, the German university system favours not necessarily the most interested or gifted students, but the most resilient, those most resistant to frustration, and those who are prepared to accept the wisdom of their elders and betters"* (U. Sommer 2000, p. 235).

Even though in Romania there is no specialized archaeological education system (as archaeology is included in history), U. Sommer's characterization is also adequate for the way in which the Romanian archaeologists are trained, as it can be observed from the following quotation regarding the causes of perpetuating the positivist-empiricist approach in post-war Romanian archaeology:

*"[...] the cult of method will quickly lead to the cult of those who handle it. Thus, a special relationship might develop, that between master and apprentice, with different initiation steps, and, especially, due to the inevitably direct contact between the two, bound to generate a true "cult of the personality". The masters of empiricism will soon surround themselves with new apprentices supposed to be passionate and faithful"* (M. Anghelinu 2003, p. 241).

"German archaeology" has always been considered by many Romanian archaeologists as the model most worthy to follow. We apologize for the totalizing term "German archaeology"; we should rather be talking about "archaeologies": there is great diversity, signaled for instance by the meetings organized since 1992 by the German T-AG (Theorie-Arbeitsgemeinschaft), that resulted in several publications (S. Wolfram 2000, pp. 193-194; see also *Rundbrief der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Theorie in der Archäologie*). However, we used the singular because, whenever the Romanian archaeologists talk about "German archaeology" they have in mind just the positivist-empiricist approach and its methods. Why? As most of the "great professors" studied in inter-war Germany, positivist-empiricism became, by means of the master-disciple relationship, the main element the Romanian archaeologists could relate to. During the communist period, the most generous scholarships offered to them were granted by west-German archaeological institutions: Humboldt, DAAD (M. Anghelinu 2003, pp. 202-203 and note 643). For many the German prehistoric archaeology school became "*synonymous with scientific rigour and methodological intransigence*" (M. Anghelinu 2003, p. 240), an image perpetuated



to this day. For instance, when we asked one of the Romanian colleagues why did he come to Pietrele, as we knew he had no interest in tells or the "Copper Age", he answered: "*I came to learn the German method*". German archaeology used to mean and still means authority, legitimacy and scientific aura added to one's own practice and implicitly, to oneself. Here is an example chosen from a text published on the celebration of 170 years of archaeological activity by the "Vasile Pârvan" Institute of Archaeology of the Romanian Academy:

*"The evolution of archaeology in Romania proceeded simultaneously with the rest of European archaeology, an important part of which was the German school. Our most brilliant forerunners, Grigore Tocilescu, Vasile Pârvan, Ion Andrieşescu, studied in Germany or Austria [...] This was the case with Vasile Pârvan's pupils as well. Among them we must mention Ion Nestor, a pupil of Gero von Merhart of the Marburg/Lahn school. Nestor is without question one of those who contributed crucially to the foundation of Romanian pre- and proto-historic archaeology. He brought to Romania the research methods of German archaeology, remarkable for their accuracy; they were then adopted by his pupils, the author of these lines included" (A. Vulpe 2004-2005, p. 5).*

The financial policy also enabled the German project director to concentrate the power to make decisions in his own hands. A tacitly accepted principle is that whoever brings the necessary financial support for the project holds the monopoly over it or, until the year 2005 inclusively, the funds were provided only by the German part: in 2002 by the rector's office of the Ruhr University in Bochum, by a donation from the Hornbach-Baumärkte company, and since 2004 by a subvention from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft.

In the Pietrele Project the same functionalist perspective is mirrored both by the way the past of *Gorgana* is interpreted, and the way the production of knowledge is organised. The project, the finality of which is to produce data likely to document the goals, is going on in two different settings: *Gorgana*, from where the material is collected, and the Pietrele school where it is processed. On the *Gorgana* stage, the project director distributes the parts of the actors: he assigns them to the two trenches (the wish some of them had to see what is going on in the other trench was repressed), gives them instructions at the beginning of the working day and during the work, checks on them periodically. Any initiative of a team member has to be approved by the project director. In the second setting, on the stage organized at the school, the actors are three girls from the village who wash the material brought from the tell, those who draw various objects and the specialists in pottery, stone artefacts, animal bones. When work is over, the members of the team on the *Gorgana* stage act also on the school stage. That is because at Pietrele each person is responsible for a category of artefacts: figurines, clay weights, flint axes, stone, bone, copper artefacts, etc. What links these two stages is the "archaeological material" (vessels, sherds, animal and human bones, grains and whatever else is collected). In very few cases those working at the school join *Gorgana* team and the reverse. Because of the lack of time, the actors at the school do not get information on the contexts from which the objects, bones, grains come. The people in the field do not receive from those at the school data that might influence the method of digging. Everyone just "does his/her duty", that is excavating, gathering the material, washing it, marking it, ordering it, describing it, introducing it into the databases, drawing and/or photographing it. For instance, if one is supposed to handle the "clay weights", it is unlikely that (s)he will learn anything about the contexts from which the objects (s)he is responsible for originate, let alone about the work results of those involved in something else. Those can be found in the published reports or in the congratulating letters sent by the project director on the winter holidays (S. Hansen *et alii* 2004a; S. Hansen 2005a).

Thus the work at Pietrele is organized according to the principles of a Fordist system (D. Harvey 2002, pp. 122-139) that corresponds to a large extent to the functional categories imposed to the past of *Gorgana*: each team member produces data and partial interpretations regarding these categories, that later are incorporated in the excavation report, in a final interpretation. The result is a hierarchical organizational structure topped by only one person, and founded on various layers of specialists, students and master's degree applicants, as well as the villagers who take part in the excavations. The hierarchical structure of the team is obvious also in the published reports. First of all, it can be observed in the order of the authors of the texts: the first are the representatives of the German and Romanian parts, followed by the "simple" authors, in alphabetical order. From one report to another, one can see whether any of the authors went up in the hierarchy (compare S. Hansen *et alii* 2004 with S. Hansen *et alii* 2005). The interpretation of the excavation is monopolized by S. Hansen: he signs alone or with others the introduction, the chapter "*Der Grabungsbefund*" and the

concluding chapter where the excavation plans for the next campaign are drawn up (S. Hansen *et alii* 2004; 2005; 2006). The Fordist organization of the Pietrele archaeological practice is reproduced also in the congratulating letters sent by the German project director to the team members: they learn what they excavated and found, what each one of them worked at in the last campaign, what they have to do during the next (S. Hansen *et alii* 2004a; S. Hansen 2005a).

The excavation reports start from the idea that the methods have the role to ensure the objectivity of the excavations and of the material processing; the interpretation has to be drawn up only at the end of the work, when all the data were gathered and put together. The field practice shows, however, something completely different: the interpreting process takes place during the very excavations. The archaeologists are not robots whose actions are perfectly objective, as proven by the questions they ask each other and by the way they consult one another on the various situations encountered, that they try to figure out. Questions such as: "Where do you think that the south limit (let's say) of this context might be, I can't see it very clearly?", "Now should we give another feature number or are we still digging the same feature?", "How do you think that it would be best to excavate this situation?", "What do you think about this situation?", etc. show that the observations made in the field are not given, but they are generated by those who dig, dialogue, depending on the practical and theoretical experience of each one of them. We think, together with others (for instance, C. Tilley 1989; I. Hodder 1999; G. Lucas 2001; J. Thomas 2004, pp. 243-247), that the relation between theory and practice is a dialectical one: the theory generates questions determining the archaeologist to pay attention to a multitude of aspects that otherwise (s)he would have missed, and on the other hand, the situations encountered during the excavation change the questions and trigger new ones.

Nothing of what has been discussed on the site, sometimes contradictorily, regarding the interpretation of one or other contexts or concerning the manner in which these should be excavated, nothing of the uncertainties during the excavations or of the mistakes committed, is mentioned in the excavation reports. Despite divergent opinions, the published narrative implies that we were all of a single mind. It is taken for granted that the interpretations provided are "objective", reflect "the reality" in the field, that is that from the past; nothing is revealed about what happened with the interpretations failing to comply with the functionalist paradigm. For instance, the text of one of us (S.O.-M.), a contextual analysis of copper artefacts, was sent to Berlin in order to be translated into German and incorporated in the 2004 summer excavation report. Without notifying the author, some paragraphs were removed and certain terms (*e.g.* "deposited") were replaced by neutral terms (*e.g.* "found"), which the author observed while correcting the German variant of the text. As resulted from later discussions, the chapter in question was considered by S. Hansen as too interpretative, namely subjective and full of preconceived ideas, with no "real" foundation. Even if this were true, the intervention in a text without the author's knowledge shows an authoritarian attitude. It is interesting that although the undesirable paragraphs were removed, the well-meaning editor forgot to remove from the bibliographical list the titles referenced in those paragraphs: "*Bailey 1994*", "*Pollock 1995*" (see S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, pp. 377-383).

The same uniformity effect derives from the practice of mentioning the representative of the Romanian part as author of excavation reports he never contributed to or wrote just a few lines (S. Hansen *et alii* 2002; 2003; 2004; 2006). Although he disagreed both with this practice and with the functionalist approach, he became co-author of texts that actually belong to S. Hansen. The "official appointment" required the mentioning of his name as second author, which can be noticed also in the manner of quoting: "Svend Hansen/Alexandru Dragoman u.a.". Thus, the reader is provided with an image of a consensus regarding the outlook upon the developments at Pietrele, an image likely to mask the existing disagreements.

In 2005 we invited a sociologist at Pietrele, Gabriel Dragomir, to analyse the traditional village architecture. He was able to come to the site only two weeks before the end of the excavation season. Due to the short time available, A.D. asked him to postpone the initial theme until the next year and to begin instead an ethnographic analysis of the "archaeologists' community", of the "workers' community" and of the relationship between the two, and to continue it during the next fieldwork season. [This initiative is no novelty: several projects have included such analyses of the archaeological practice, with the hope that they could contribute to an understanding of how knowledge is generated on the site. From our point of view, a very good example is that of the Leskernick Project (M. Wilmore 2001; 2003; see also <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/leskernick/>).] The sociologist (Gabi) gathered all the present archaeologists, informed them on what he intended to do and asked them to think about it and tell him if they wish to participate or not. At the same time, he

mentioned that his arrival did not coincide with a very favourable moment, as there were only two weeks until the end of the excavation season, a period during which everyone was tired, work was still a lot to do and the short spare time was most likely to be spent in order to rest, instead of discussing with him. At the moment everyone agreed on taking time to consider the proposal. Later, the team members (both from Romania and Germany) divided into two: a minority group who agreed, and a majority group who rejected the idea. The reaction of the majority group was aggressive: they insisted that A.D. should tell Gabi to leave because he represented a stressful factor (people were tired and there was so much left to finish). The members of the majority group spoke on everyone's behalf, forgetting that there were colleagues who had accepted the idea. In short, this experience is rendered very well by the violent reaction of a colleague: "*There is no place for a sociologist on an archaeological site!*" Therefore, both A.D. and Gabi left the site a week before the end. Paraphrasing the title of a play by Edward Albee, we might ask not: "who's afraid of Gabriel Dragomir?" but why?

In conclusion, we would have liked to enjoy at Pietrele what Jürgen Habermas calls an "*ideal speech situation*" (J. Habermas 2000; A. Marga 2006, pp. 235-237). That presupposes the removal of any coercions and the fulfilment of four validity claims: intelligibility, honesty, legitimacy and believability. Habermas distinguishes two forms of speech: (1) the *communicative action*, in which speakers exchange information (that is they ask questions requiring information on something and that receive answers by clarifications, statements, explanations and justifications), while the validity claims are not questioned, but taken for granted naively – in this case we deal with a tacit consensus between speaker and listener (false consensus); and (2) the *discourse*, in which the speakers do not exchange information, but they question the validity claims, a situation that presupposes two essential things – a virtualization of the action constraints (necessary in order to eliminate them) and a virtualization of the validity claims (necessary in order to doubt them). If these virtualizations are real, not just pretended, we deal with a true consensus between the speakers (all the participants share the wish to reach an agreement), with an "*ideal speech situation*", in which all the opinions are submitted to theorizing and criticism (J. Habermas 2000; A. Marga 2006, p. 237).

From that perspective, the excavation reports should have contained all the points of view, no matter how contradictory, and the reader should have been allowed to choose the interpretation (s)he considers best sustained by the empirical data presented or to build up his/her own interpretation. The readers need not be treated as consumers of texts in which their authors have the last word, but they should be invited to take part in the production of interpretations (C. Tilley 1990; 1993, pp. 13-14). Unfortunately, at Pietrele, due to the established hierarchical structure, we deal with a false consensus claiming to be a true one, which does not take into consideration in a critical way the validity claims of the statements of each excavation team member. Hence, the uniform narrative present in all the published reports or the reactions to a sociological analysis of our own practice. As far as we are concerned, we share the opinion of Barbara Bender, Sue Hamilton and Christopher Tilley (1997, p. 150), according to which, "*If excavation is not interpretation, and presented as such, it is nothing*".

### On the houses

In the case of the excavations in the southern Romania tells, the interpretation of the houses and their inventories in terms of "common sense"/functional/practical, has prevailed. For instance, the image presented in the excavation report on the tell of Căscioarele, is that of a "*small Neolithic village*" formed of 16 houses and an adjoining construction (Vi. Dumitrescu 1965). The entrance to the houses is deduced from house-models, from the lid handles shaped like houses and from the cardinal point where now the coldest winds blow (Vi. Dumitrescu 1965, p. 224). One of the houses (no. 2) was seen as a workshop for processing flint axes, as inside were found, among others, 14 flint axes, together with 13 nuclei, four hammers and over 60 large flint flakes (Vi. Dumitrescu 1965, pp. 225-226; S. Marinescu-Bîlcu 1965). The large amount of animal bones from another house (no. 8) was interpreted as reflecting the existence of a "*slaughtering house-storage room*" (S. Marinescu-Bîlcu 1998-2000, p. 324). Similar interpretations are provided in the case of other tells. In the case of the excavations at Borduşani, it is stated that "*les habitations étaient orientées approximativement nord-sud, emplacement fort probable tenant compte des nécessités de protection contre les vents et les pluies*" (D. Popovici and F. Vlad 2007, p. 5). At Medgidia a "*mill-dwelling*" is mentioned, containing eight hand-mills, eight grinding stones, carbonized wheat, eight large storage vessels, a few smaller vessels, etc. (N. Harţuche 1981). The discovery inside a vessel in House no. 5 at Hârşova of several fragmentary bracelets from *Spondylus* shell, some of them restorable, others cut and partially perforated, led to the interpretation of this house as a workshop for processing *Spondylus* ornaments

– the transformation of the bracelets in beads by means of small chisels and some copper awls which were found in the same house (D. Galbenu 1962, pp. 294-296; P. Hașotti 1997, pp. 80, 103-104).

Whenever the situations identified in the field are in sharp contrast to the “common sense” view of the archaeologist, the contexts in question are catalogued as “ritualistic” and gain a high importance. At Căscioarele, the presence of two human skulls immediately under the floor of House no. 1 and the lack of similar deposits in the case of the other houses, would point to the special nature, relating to magical practices, that this house might have had within the community (VI. Dumitrescu 1965, pp. 224, 232). At Hârșova, House no. 11, excavated in 1990, was catalogued, on the basis of two inside altars and of the finds, as being a “*shrine*” with two construction phases, that “*might have had impressive sizes*” (P. Hașotti 1997, pp. 80-81).

The same interpretation pattern can be encountered in the case of earlier excavations at Pietrele (D. Berciu 1956). In House 1, D. Berciu uncovered a fireplace on whose south side there was a clay plate with a round opening “*servicing for putting the vessels on fire to boil, similar to the plates of our cooking ovens with round loops*” (D. Berciu 1956, p. 508). Near the fireplace, D. Berciu found a bench that “*served for sleeping; in day time, the woman used to sit here while preparing the food*” (D. Berciu 1956, p. 508). Some objects hung on the walls. The scene was drawn, without the woman and the objects hanging on the walls by the architect G. Ionescu (1982, p. 21, Fig. 2). On the bench, the architect put also an animal fur. According to G. Ionescu (1982, p. 20), the bench was used not only for sleeping, but also for eating. But what kind of activities were going on inside? In order to answer that question, D. Berciu had a simple idea: the material culture directly reflects the function of the contexts on which it occurs. On the basis of the artefacts and of the installations, the dwelling is divided functionally into kitchen (the presence of the fireplace), the place for sleeping and eating (the bench) and the place for worship (along the west wall where there were uncovered most figurines and red ochre cones).

The theoretical perspective according to which the function of a house can be determined on the basis of the function of the objects discovered in it is also characteristic of the Pietrele Project. During the three fieldwork seasons we joined, the excavations went on in the north-west parts (Trench B) and south ones (Trench F) of the tell. In the first campaign (2002) about five centimetres under the grass, we found the remains of a burnt construction (S. Hansen *et alii* 2003, p. 172; 2004, p. 6). The results of the geophysical measurements carried out in 2004 and 2005 (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, pp. 342-346; 2006, pp. 4-8), point to the existence on the tell of about 25 houses oriented north-south and arranged linearly in four parallel rows, oriented east-west. Outside the tell, to the north and south-west, the geophysical measurements led to the identification of several structures with the same orientation as the houses on the tell. Thus, at a given moment, the settlement could have included about 120 buildings. In this paper we are going to refer especially to three burnt houses, on which we have more information: two of them are in Trench B, and the third one in Trench F (there is a considerable difference of level between the two trenches). The house we conventionally called B-Ost (S. Hansen *et alii* 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006) was identified after the red burnt adobe fragments, some of them massive. *In situ* walls were not found. Inside there were three “installations” with thin clay walls. Within the perimeter of the house many complete or restorable vessels were found (especially large-sized, but also smaller vessels with lids), deformed by fire, several hand mills, flint, stone and copper artefacts, figurines, a *Spondylus* shell fragment, etc. To the west of the B-Ost house, separated by a so-called path 1.00-1.60 m wide, there was another burnt house that we conventionally called B-West (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005; 2006). It looked like a burnt daub concentration and measured about 5 x 7 m. No wall was uncovered *in situ*. Within its perimeter we found several vessel concentrations (over 70 complete or restorable pots deformed by fire; S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 356), hand mills, flint, bone, copper artefacts, figurines, etc. Large bits from the wall debris were preserved over these vessel concentrations. Between the complete vessels (most found along the north and east limits of the house) and most small finds there was a difference of level of almost 50-60 cm, so it was simplistically concluded that the vessels stood on a bench (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 351). However, that would be valid only if we accept that the bench extended over the whole walking level surface of the house, as the black burnt earth layer (P04B16) beneath the fallen walls of the burnt house (on which the vessels stood) stretched all over the house (see S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 349/Abb. 10). We think that here we deal with two different sequences of the same built space. The third house we refer to is P04F16/P05F104, uncovered in the Trench F (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005; 2006). It was identified after the red burnt adobe fragments from the fallen walls, covering the few preserved remains from the floor and from the north and west walls. Inside two clay “installations” were found: an oval shaped one, with thin clay walls, and a rectangular one. Relating to

this house there were over 40 complete or restorable vessels in the western part only (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 356), deformed by fire, flint and bone artefacts, etc.

The analysis of various categories of finds uncovered within the perimeter of the houses follows a functionalist outlook. The hand mills found in B-Ost are those determining the function of the vessels and of the context; the importance given to them results from their detailed description (S. Hansen *et alii* 2003, p. 176; 2004, p. 10), as well as from the published plan (S. Hansen *et alii* 2003, p. 173/Abb. 15; 2004, p. 8/Abb. 5). The plan of the context emphasizes, by selection, the presence of the hand mills and of the vessels, the other objects, let alone the animal bones, are ignored<sup>2</sup>. Thus, the B-Ost house was interpreted as a specialized area for grain processing: "*Es ist klar, daß der von uns ergrabene Bereich dem Mahlen von Getreide diente und daß die zahlreichen Gefäße im Zusammenhang mit dessen Aufbewahrung zu sehen sind*" (S. Hansen *et alii* 2003, p. 176; 2004, p. 10). It is assumed that the clay "installations" were used to dry the grains or even to bake bread (S. Hansen *et alii* 2004, p. 25, note 56). Despite this interpretation, in the house there was not any single cereal bean. The explanation provided is that the grains could have been destroyed by fire (S. Hansen *et alii* 2002, p. 22). Contrary to this opinion, in the burnt house in the Trench F (P04F16/P05F104) there were found about 12 kg of grains (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 353) that were not located near any "installation" or in/near any vessel. However, as everything has to be understood in practical terms, the German project director maintains that "*Das Getreide muss in einem organischen Behälter aufbewahrt worden sein*" (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 353).

As mentioned in one of the excavation reports, the aims of the statistical processing of the pottery are to define on the vertical the history of the tell occupation and on the horizontal the function of the living and working spaces, of paths and free spaces (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 356). As regards the analysis of the vessels uncovered in the B-West house and in the house in the Trench F (P04F16/P05F104), the only aim is that of finding out the possible functional and/or chronological differences between the pottery inventories of the two houses (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, pp. 356-367). Therefore, on the basis of their shape and volume, the vessels are related to certain activities: storage and subsequent processing of grains (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 366). At the end of this comparative, bulky and descriptive study, the author cannot give an answer:

*"Ob die Unterschiede zwischen der Keramik in den Flächen B und F allein auf funktionaler Ebene zu erklären sind, oder ob auch chronologische Faktoren mitspielen, muss im weiteren Bearbeitungsprozess beantwortet werden"* (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 367).

We do not deny that in these houses various activities went on in which the vessels were used, but we think that it is simplistic to assign functions to the vessels only on the basis of their shape and volume. The analyses of the organic residue determining the content (tests that were not performed at Pietrele and we have no knowledge that they are going to be performed), showed that the vessels whose function seemed so obvious due to the ethnographic examples contained in the past completely something else than what archaeologists had expected (about the famous *Milchtopf*, see O. Craig *et alii* 2003). Similarly, the finds in the vessels from Pietrele often do not match the functionalist illusions: a few bone objects (P04F19), flint artefacts, or simply pebbles. D. Berciu also found vessels with this kind of content: a vessel with its lid, with shell beads, a vessel with a small stone axe, and in another vessel he found 13 anklebones (D. Berciu 1956, pp. 511, 512, 559). The presence of grain in a vessel does not necessarily mean that it was a simple storage vessel. For instance, near a house from Gumelnița, a vessel full of carbonized wheat was discovered in an area with ash, burnt adobe and many shells. In the close vicinity of the vessel with wheat, in a small pit, were deposited the skull of a five-six year old child, ash, sherds, a vessel lid and red ochre bits (V. Dumitrescu 1966, p. 56).

Another example of functionalist interpretation is that of a turtle-shaped rattling object (*Rassel*) uncovered in the B-West house (S. Hansen 2005). In the published article nothing of the discovery context is mentioned except that it was found near the east wall (S. Hansen 2005, p. 339)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Although at the beginning of the project, out of the desire to reflect as "objectively" as possible the archaeological "reality", the colouring of the plan and profile drawings prevailed, we have no information from the published plan on the "level" the installations were mounted; these, together with the vessels and hand mills float on a white stain (the colour of paper).

<sup>3</sup> Regarding this construction it is said, however, on an other occasion (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 350) that no wall was uncovered *in situ*.

The function of the rattling object might result from the noise it produces when stirred: because it is too heavy to be handled by a child (S. Hansen 2005, p. 341), the rattling object was interpreted as a musical instrument (S. Hansen 2005, pp. 340-341; S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 387), used on the occasion of dances performed during the summer feasts, when turtles were eaten (S. Hansen 2005, p. 347). Following this logic, we wonder what kind of feasts relate to the bird-shaped rattling object (S. Hansen 2006, pp. 443/Abb. 13, 444) discovered at *Gorgana* the next year? These “top” objects emphasize the Pietrele approach, according to which the function of the object resides in its shape. Taken off the context they were found in, the top objects become a good opportunity to travel to remote geographical areas, over long periods of time, starting from the Bronze Age south-eastern Europe, passing through the pre-dynastic Egypt, Anatolia and Iran, from the pre-pottery Neolithic up to the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium, reaching 7<sup>th</sup> millennium China (S. Hansen 2005). Instead, the “common” figurines are rapidly classified: anthropomorphic-zoomorphic, female-male, or according to the frequency of occurrence in the “Gumelnița area” (“*typisch*”, “*relativ selten*”, “*große Seltenheit*”, “*keine Parallelen*”, etc; S. Hansen *et alii* 2003, p. 183; 2004, p. 29; 2005, p. 387).

The analysis of the stone artefacts faces a series of problems. The technological study of the flint artefacts, carried out by Ivan Gatsov and Petranka Nedelcheva, already has interesting results, up to now six varieties being defined, according to colour, texture, knapping capacity (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, pp. 367-377). But at Pietrele it is difficult to try to define an area of flint artefact concentration, because, on the one hand, the surface of the tell is not squared, and, on the other, except for the axes of this material, the flint artefacts do not fall into the category of “small finds”, hence they have no coordinates that make it possible to map them.

It might be assumed that the existence of spaces for the processing of stone artefacts could be documented directly by the presence of nuclei and flakes. However, many nuclei and flakes were found between houses, in the areas where many bones and shells were deposited, that cannot be included in the category of processing spaces. Moreover, as shown by some ethnographic examples (P. Sillitoe and K. Hardy 2003, p. 560), the archaeologists’ attempt at determining the processing areas on the basis of the spatial distribution of stone artefacts is useless since the artefacts are not discarded/deposited in the area where they were processed.

Therefore, the discovery of stone artefacts in houses or outside them reflects the patterns of their use-life, discarding or deliberate deposition, not processing areas. Under these circumstances, as already stated, the smallest processing remains and their concentration are the safest signs of the existence of stone processing areas (F. Hassan 1978; A. Rosen 1989; K. Hull 1987; W. Matthews *et alii* 1997; L. Martin and N. Russell 2000, pp. 61-63). But at Pietrele the extremely rare practice of sifting the archaeological deposits and the lack of flotation (especially in the case of floors) resulted in “*the absence of chips from retouching and small flakes under 10 mm*” (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 368). Hence the impossibility of documenting the processing spaces not only of the stone artefacts, but also of the bone ones or of the grain. Important information (necessary for the stated goals of the project) from three houses, each of them with several “biographic” sequences, was irreparably lost.

Once more: we do not deny that the built spaces could be places where certain activities went on, but we think that it is deceitful to search for specialized processing areas only by the spatial distribution of the objects (also those limited to the category of “small finds”) and by the simple presence of some “installations”. The endeavour to define specialized areas at the level of the whole surface of the tell (impossible to document in other sites, such as Çatalhöyük; I. Hodder 2005), reflects only the wish to impose a modernist order in the social space of the people in the past. We could hypothesise that inside each construction there were “specialized areas of activity”, but those cannot be defined directly by studying the distribution of the objects on the floors, but by recovering and developing a precise context for the “micro-artefacts” in these contexts. That presupposes the squaring of the floors, of various clay layers, the flotation of sediments in order to study the concentration and fragmentation of the artefacts, of the processing remains and botanic micro-remains (W. Matthews *et alii* 1997, pp. 294-299) and the comparison of the results with those obtained from other contexts (C. Cessford 2003). Therefore, at Pietrele, in order to reach the main aims of the project, it would have been necessary to adopt a coherent strategy of applying the microstratigraphic and micromorphologic analyses that could have led to the identification of the attributes characteristic of domestic contexts (preparing food, storing supplies, processing various materials, whether a space is roofed or not; W. Matthews *et alii* 1997, pp. 291-293).

The philosophy according to which the artefacts directly reflect the functions of the contexts in which they occur, not only suppresses the formulation of other interpretations, but also points to

the lack of questions regarding the very way in which the functionalist aims of the Pietrele Project can be supported by evidence.

### **On the deliberate burning of the houses and the biographies of the built spaces**

Since the early '90s, an interpretation that has drawn the attention of the archaeologists is that of the symbolic killing by fire of the constructions during the "Neolithic" in Europe and Near East (e.g. J. Apel *et alii* 1997; D. Bogdan 2005; J. Chapman 1999; 2005; S. Farid 2005; K. Harrison 2004; M. Stevanović 1997; M. Stevanović and R. Tringham 1997; R. Tringham 1991; 2005; R. Tringham *et alii* 1985; 1992; M. Verhoeven 2000; L. Yeomans 2004; 2005). This interpretation, however, is not entirely new. The first names that should be mentioned are those of the French archaeologists Georges Seure and A. Degrand. They considered the burnt constructions discovered in the tell of Mečkjur to be cremation tombs (G. Seure and A. Degrand 1906). Consequently, the constructions are described as tombs (indeed, in a few of the constructions also human bones occur), each of it having the sizes and grave goods mentioned. The performance of the "funeral practices" is described as follows:

*"Le corps étaient incinéré à l'air libre sur un bûcher; les cendres, comme celles du bûcher, en étaient recueillies, puis placées sur une brique plate ou sur un lit épais de pisé grossier, et l'on recouvrait le tout de pâte argileuse. Quand la première enveloppe était sèche, on en appliquait successivement d'autres; et quand on avait atteint l'épaisseur voulue, on lissait plus ou moins soigneusement la surface, modelant quelques ornements en relief ou en creux. Cet amalgame était ensuite entouré ou recouvert des vases contenant les offrandes; parmi ceux-ci, on plaçait des branchages et du blé; et le tout, recouvert d'argile, était alors soumis à l'action d'un feu ardent, qui devait cuire l'enveloppe des cendres, afin la mieux protéger"* (G. Seure and A. Degrand 1906, pp. 404-405).

The tell is regarded as a funerary monument made up of small adjoining tumuli or partially overlapping ones. On the vertical, the authors distinguish four fired layers, each containing such tumuli, separated by clay layers. In order to raise the funerary mound, the people had to restrict towards the centre the surface on which the tumuli were raised, by building towards the margin stone walls in order to support the earth brought here (G. Seure and A. Degrand 1906, Fig. C).

Later, Seure's and Degrand's interpretation was harshly argued against, and in time, their opinion was forgotten, as the article is at the most mentioned at "the history of the research". The following quotation, selected from a critic of the two Frenchmen's interpretation, is illustrative for the "common sense" explanations that would prevail until the present day the research of the tells in south-eastern Romania:

*"I think that I am not mistaken in saying that these tells were sites with successive layers of prehistoric human settlements, where what Seure and Degrand call tombs, rather complicatedly built, are nothing but remains of burnt dwellings, crowded under this very form of mounds, exactly as we could find at Gumelnița. The fact that most remains can be found inside these debris mounds is perfectly explicable, because almost the entire equipment of a prehistoric "household" logically must have been found only inside the dwelling in question"* (Vl. Dumitrescu [1930], 2002, p. 44).

We do not argue in favour of returning to Seure's and Degrand's interpretation: the burnt constructions are not actual graves, as they used to maintain. Nevertheless, the observations made in the field by the two tell more about the tells than all the cultural-historical publications dedicated to the topic put together. That is because the metaphors "tell-funerary monument", "house-grave", "house goods-grave goods" change the outlook on the research, from the cultural and chronological framing of the material, the building of "stratigraphies" or the functional zoning of the social space, towards intentionality and meaning. The same as the grave, the "house", as we find it in the excavation, represents the ultimate act of a performance; from this point of view, the archaeologist should focus upon this ultimate act by which the "house" underwent destruction deliberately or not. As in the case of the funerary monuments, the tell could be the result of certain actions, a materialization of an ideology that does not reflect the social reality, but actively participates in its building, idealizes it, distorts it, legitimizes it and reproduces it. Therefore, the archaeologist's attention should shift from developing a static image of the tell as a document of economic life to developing a dynamic image based on the definition of the actions performed in order to raise this "monument".

Meanwhile, we should not overlook the ethnographic examples referring to the existence of metaphorical links between people, burnt constructions and tombs. In the Tamberma or Batammaliba communities in Africa, the houses are metaphorically identified with people, as each stage of building and using a house corresponds to the stages of human life (S. Preston Blier 1983; C. Tilley 1999, pp. 41-49). When a house gets old, it dies in order to give birth to an offspring, a new house, partially built out of the remains of the deceased one (S. Preston Blier 1983, p. 373; C. Tilley 1999, p. 45). The symbolism of the houses and graves is complementary – they function as analogue references for each other. The tombs are located in the cemetery in a manner which, to a large extent, imitates the position of the houses in a village. Houses evoke tombs, while villages resemble cemeteries (C. Tilley 1999, p. 48). From that perspective, the interpretation by Seure and Degrand gives us the incentive to abandon, while excavating the tells, the borders between the functional and the symbolic, between the sacred and the profane, between the domestic and the funerary – they are faces of the same coin.

Several contextual situations seem to sustain the theory of the ritual killing by fire of the constructions as a social practice in the tells in south and east Romania. We are going to refer to five possible indicators:

- (1) A singular case until now is that of Dwelling no. 19 in the tell of Bordușani: only the deliberate burning of the exterior walls of the construction was detected, while the inside was not damaged by fire; after that moment, inside were deposited ash, organic remains, fish scales (so-called "domestic waste"), after which, the wall parts that still stood were destroyed and even levelled (S. Marinescu-Bîlcu *et alii* 1997, p. 66).
- (2) The presence inside some burnt constructions of exotic objects sets. Considering their value, in the case of an accidental burning, such objects could have been recovered after the fire was extinguished. An example of this kind is the treasure of 11 gold pieces from the tell of Sultana, found in a house model, near the fireplace of a construction, in association with a large quantity of pottery – "*13 large bags full of sherds, mostly restorable*" (C. Hălcescu 1995; D. Șerbănescu 1997, pp. 234-235; V. Cojocaru and D. Șerbănescu 2002). The same category includes the so-called "workshop" in the tell of Hârșova. On the fireplace of House no. 5, in association with a graphite-painted vessel containing 19 fragmentary bracelets and 20 *Spondylus* shell fragments, there was an anthropomorphic support with four small legs and a head painted in white and red; near the fireplace there were four awls, a small chisel and five lockrings, all of them made of copper (D. Galbenu 1962, pp. 294-296; 1963). The importance of these *Spondylus* shell artefacts is proven both by their wide circulation (from the region of provenience, Aegea, up to the Parisian Basin; J. Müller 1997), as well as by their occurrence in a large number in the cemeteries of Varna (I. Ivanov 1988, p. 62) and Durankulak (M. Avramova 2002), in Grave 4 in the tell of Ruse (J. Gaul 1948, p. 111) or in hoards, such as that of Kozludže (J.F. Gellert and F. Garscha 1930) or that in the tell of Omurtag (B. Gaydarska *et alii* 2004). Moreover, the association between copper artefacts and exotic shells in House no. 5 at Hârșova is a feature of some symbolic graves at Varna (I. Ivanov 1988a, pp. 186-191, 196-200, 205-207).
- (3) The deposition of archaeological materials directly on the debris from burnt constructions. In the tell of Bucșani, all the constructions excavated up to 2001 (inclusively) were destroyed by strong fires. They contain extremely few artefacts, most of which are flakes. The largest part of the pottery was not in the constructions, but on the remains of the fallen walls (C. Bem *et alii* 2002, p. 68): for instance, in the case of House no. 11, a large part of the 100 vessels found were on the debris, covering its whole surface (C. Bem *et alii* 2001, p. 47). The vessels, of various sizes and shapes, are all secondarily burnt, which points to their deposition at a time when the adobe mass was still burning; at the same time, they were deposited carefully, as "*there are no cases of scattering due to a special impact*" (C. Bem *et alii* 2002, p. 68). Another deposition example that might be related to the "*death of a construction*" at Bucșani is the discovery of a Vidra type copper axe thrust with the sharp side in the upper part of the burnt adobe debris belonging to House no. 10 (C. Bem *et alii* 2002, p. 67). A similar situation is mentioned for the tell of Luncavița: several vessels and utensils were concentrated on the burnt debris of houses 2 and 8 (C. Micu and M. Maillé 2006, p. 19).
- (4) The presence inside a burnt construction of a very large number of artefacts (especially pottery), surpassing in quantity the usual inventory of a household. For instance, in the tell of Sultana, the burnt House no. 2/2003 contained over 50 complete or restorable vessels (including graphite-painted bowls, a support-vessel painted in white and red), a fragment



from an anthropomorphic vessel, bone and antler tools, clay and bone anthropomorphic figurines, zoomorphic figurines, triangular bone plates, perforated snail shells and a gold sheet pendant (R. Andreescu *et alii* 2004, pp. 324-325; 2005, p. 366; 2006, p. 347). Support-vessels like the one from Sultana are rarely found in settlements, they occur in large numbers in the funerary arena, a reason for which they are considered to be "*eine eindeutig sepulkrale Gefäßform*" (H. Todorova 2002, p. 86). Until 2002, the excavations in the settlement of Durankulak uncovered, from all the "cultural layers", only three fragments from such vessels, while, in the Varna type graves, 40 were discovered, 11 of which in cenotaphs (H. Todorova 2002, p. 86, Abb. 89). The presence of this type of vessels inside a burnt construction, in association with a large quantity of restorable vessels and exotic objects (*e.g.* gold pendant), might represent a supplementary argument in favour of the existence of a symbolic relation between houses and graves.

- (5) The deposition of bodies or human fragments inside or in/on the debris of a burnt construction. In the settlement of Gumelnița, among the remains of a burnt construction there was a human skeleton (Vi. Dumitrescu 1925, p. 38). In the tell of Luncavița, isolated human bones were uncovered (E. Comșa 1952, p. 416), and in the tell of Vidra, inside a construction, isolated human skulls were found (D.V. Rosetti 1934, p. 39). Human bones were also uncovered in the debris of Dwelling SL 26 in the tell of Bordușani (G. Vasile 2003, p. 99).

As early as during the first excavation season at Pietrele, when the remains of a fired construction occurred, we raised the issue of a deliberate burning. In spite of that, a note regarding this topic was included in the excavation report (somehow as a concession) only after the end of the second fieldwork season, when three burnt constructions had already been excavated (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, pp. 354-355). The project director had no intention to create what Ruth Tringham and Mirjana Stevanović call "*archaeological fire maps*" (R. Tringham 2005, p. 102). To obtain such a map, during the excavations in the Vinča settlement at Opovo, the surface of the constructions was one meter squared and each adobe fragment with a length/width greater or equal to 10 cm was drawn and numbered on the plan, described *in situ* in its spatial context and collected to be analysed in detail; at the same time, the debris was systematically sampled, among others, in order to determine the firing temperatures reached in various parts of the constructions (M. Stevanović 1997, pp. 348-351; R. Tringham *et alii* 1985, pp. 441-442). At Pietrele, only the massive fragments were preserved and not even these were numbered so that their exact location could be identified on the plan (they were marked only with the feature number they come from). Consequently, any attempt to develop an "*archaeological fire map*" on the basis of adobe fragments selected is doomed to fail.

How simplistic is the functionalist interpretation of the constructions and their inventories results from the anthropological analysis carried out by Joachim Wahl (S. Hansen *et alii* 2006, pp. 49-54). In the debris from the B-Ost construction (P02B10) there was a human thighbone belonging to a three-four year old child, and inside the construction (P02B35), another thighbone belonging to an adult was found (S. Hansen *et alii* 2006, p. 49). A part of the materials attributed to the debris from this construction were rather deposited on it, after the destruction by fire: only 12% of the 1618 pottery fragments are secondarily burnt (S. Hansen *et alii* 2004, p. 16/Abb.13); at the same time, only a small part of the animal bones uncovered in the debris bear traces of burning (S. Hansen *et alii* 2004, p. 41).

In the B-West construction, in the context P02B43, we also uncovered a human bone (metacarpus) belonging to a "*spätjuvenil oder älter*" (S. Hansen *et alii* 2006, pp. 49-50). The presence inside the construction of a set made up of a copper pin (*Doppelspiralkopfnadel*) and disc-like shell beads, an association occurring in three of the four tombs in the "Gumelnița area", where such pins were deposited (J. Gaul 1948, p. 95, pl. LIV/3, XLIV/4; E. Comșa 1995, pp. 88-89, 97, 171 Fig. 33/2, 174 Fig. 36/4; disc-like shell beads are associated with a bone pin in M.41 at Varna – A. Fol and J. Lichardus 1988, p. 124/Abb. 72), suggests their deliberate deposition. The inventory goods of this construction include a necklace of red deer canines imitations. Its importance is suggested by the fact that for the Gumelnița tells only two pendants are mentioned at Căscioarele: a canine and an antler imitation (S. Marinescu-Bîlcu and M. Cârciumar 1992, p. 365). Instead, red deer canines were discovered in a tomb in the cemetery of Durankulak, and some of the tombs at Varna contained both canines and bone imitations (H. Todorova 2002a, p. 187). The association between red deer canines and isolated human bones can be encountered in "Tripolye area": the deposit at Hăbășești includes, among others, 22 canines and an extremely small fragment from a human skull (Vi. Dumitrescu 1954, pp. 435-441); similarly, the vessel deposit from Cărbuna contained, next to many other objects, 124 canines, 13 bone imitations and a perforated human tooth (V. Dergačev 1998; 2002, pp. 11-16, Taf.

1/B, 2-7, 8/A). An issue that should be tackled is the fragmentation and deliberate deposition of some parts from the same object in various contexts. Unfortunately, due to the lack of squaring and to the fact that the stone artefacts (except for the axes) do not fall into the category of small finds, so they do not get coordinates enabling their mapping, this theme cannot be approached systematically, although it might have led to interesting results: a flint blade fragment deposited together with several blades in a vessel from a construction found at the east end of Surface B (P05B140) – we have not referred to this construction because we do not have enough information –, can be joint with another fragment from the same object deposited under another vessel from the B-West construction (P04B11). The two contexts were at a distance of 12 m one from the other, and at a difference of level of 70 cm (S. Hansen *et alii* 2006, p. 11). Last but not least, the presentation of the B-West construction misses a context we consider to be important (P04B18): over the concentration of several vessels covered by large burnt clay fragments we uncovered an up-side-down fireplace, broken on the spot, under the circumstances that inside the construction there was no other fireplace. Whenever we discussed with the project director about this situation, he answered that the fireplace “*Fell from the storey*”, even if we have no empirical proof of the existence of a storey! Thus emerges the image of a house in which the “inventory” (vessels, human bone, copper, bone or shell ornaments, etc.) might have been on the “ground floor”, while the fireplace might have been at the storey. This explanation obviously expresses the tendency at Pietrele to include in the “inventory” of the constructions objects or contexts relating to the debris of the constructions. This interpretation pattern is reflected also by the inclusion within the perimeter of the construction B-West even of a whole greenish clay layer (P04B3) (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, pp. 348, 350-351). As the fieldwork revealed (documented by photos), this layer was deposited over the fired debris of the construction, including over the overturned fireplace.

In the construction in Trench F (P04F16/P05F104) no human bones were found. Instead, the presence on the debris of a set of whole cups (P04F9), entailed a series of discussions, as we maintained that it should be considered that they were deposited on purpose after the construction had burnt and fallen. In the report two explanations are provided, both considered to be possible: the vessels either fell from the storey, or were deposited on purpose as “*Opfergaben*” (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, pp. 351-352).

As far as the human bones are concerned, we mention one more example. In 2006 in Trench F another burnt house than the one presented above was found. We are told that the house had a second storey: “*The ground floor was used as storage and work space, while the inhabitants slept upstairs*” (S. Hansen and M. Toderas 2007, p. 13). Upstairs, east of an oven, there were the remains of three individuals. According to the interpretation offered by the authors the three human beings “*met their death in the conflagration of the house*” (S. Hansen and M. Toderas 2007, p. 13). In our opinion the presence of the human remains might be related with the social practice of deliberate burning of the house.

It is hard to believe that these houses were accidentally burnt because at Pietrele no rows of postholes from wattle-and-daub were found, only compacted clay walls of about 40 cm thickness and, occasionally, isolated post-holes inside the houses (S. Hansen *et alii* 2006, pp. 9-10; S. Hansen and M. Toderas 2007, pp. 9-10). Therefore, the wooden structure of the houses is insufficient to produce the hardly burnt clay remains as we found in the excavation. Even in the case of wattle-and-daub houses the experimental firings confirmed this argument (see M. Stevanović 1997 with literature).

We think that the deliberate burning of houses is an important issue for the interpretation of the past of *Gorgana*. Even more important are the reasons why the Pietrele Project research has avoided this subject from the beginning, an action which had a negative impact on archaeological practice. Consequently, the lack of precise contextualization of the objects and bones on and in the debris (necessary for establishing possible deposition patterns), the lack of “firing maps”, the omission of certain contexts (such as that of the fireplace mentioned above), inconvenient for the functionalist perspective applied to the houses, are the results of an excavation that, in spite of the large excavated area and the considerable depth reached, cannot provide arguments or counter-arguments in the discussion referring to the deliberate burning of the constructions.

The three burnt houses described in the present text represent a stage in the biography of the built spaces (for the biography of constructions, see D.W. Bailey 1990). As shown in the results of the geomagnetical prospecting (until now confirmed by the excavations), under the three burnt constructions there are other constructions, some of them unburnt, that have the same orientation and are included in the same space. The so-called “paths” have preserved the same location. If we accept that the three constructions could have been fired deliberately, then, both the deliberate

destruction by fire, and the deposition of isolated human bones (irrespective whether in burnt or unburnt constructions), can be considered to be strategies of ensuring the continuity of the place and of building up social memory (R. Tringham 2005, p. 106). Taking that into account, the image of *Gorgana* as a sequence of villages blurs, and the emphasis is laid upon an archaeology of destruction (deliberate or not) of the constructions, an archaeology of the "biographical moments" of various built spaces and of the areas between them, an archaeology of the way in which material culture participates in building their significance.

#### **On the "wirtschaftlichen Grundlagen des bäuerlichen Lebens"**

The study of faunal remains is considered to be important for knowing the economic basis of rural life during the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium (S. Hansen *et alii* 2003, p. 168; 2004, p. 3). From the archaeozoological reports published until now (S. Hansen *et alii* 2004, pp. 41-43; 2006, pp. 54-57) it results that wild animal remains prevail, which reveals the importance of hunting (S. Hansen and M. Toderas 2007, p. 18). But the results of the study are influenced by two factors: (1) the sieve was seldom used; only in 2004 we occasionally and randomly sifted a small amount of some archaeological sediment and (2) the context in which the consumption occurred or in which the animal bones were discarded or deposited was ignored.

Although in the 2004 fieldwork report, written before beginning the 2005 excavations, the project director asserted the need for using the sieve (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 348), that promise was forgotten. Not even in the third excavation season the sieve was not supplied at the site, so it could not be used. The lack of sifting has negative effects upon obtaining a full image upon consumption: on the one hand it points out the proportion of mammal bones to the detriment of small species (especially fish), and, on the other hand, it falsely emphasizes the proportion of large fish (see S. Hansen *et alii* 2006, p. 56, Abb. 102). For instance, in southern Romania, between the Gumelnița "phases" A2 and B1 there are differences as regards the percentage of faunal remains by animal classes: during the first phase fish remains prevail while during the last phase mammal bones prevail. That is due to the fact that in the A2 "phase" sites there were used more samples and sifting output from the archaeological depositions. The mammals prevail as remains in the sites where the sieve was used (A. Bălășescu *et alii* 2005, pp. 212-213; 214; compare Fig. 89 with Fig. 90). As shown by the excavations at Hârșova, the direct collecting of the faunal remains provides a distorted image upon the share of various fish species (N. Dese-Berset and V. Radu 1996, p. 185 and Fig. 1). At the same time, the sampling and sifting of archaeological depositions for the collecting of small faunal remains, especially fish bones, might provide also the opportunity to compare the percentage of various species in various contexts, with important implications for getting a consumption image as close to reality as possible (A. Bălășescu and V. Radu 2004, p. 244, Fig. 119).

After three excavation seasons at Pietrele we still do not discuss about the contexts in which these bones were handled, we still do not have a comparison between the deposition/discarding of the bones in different constructions, on their debris, in various stages of the same construction, between the constructions and the space between them (for the importance of contexts see for instance A. Marciniak 2005). In the case of large contexts (the debris from constructions, the so-called "paths"), we already know that we will not observe any possible spatial models of bone discarding/depositing from lack of squaring.

If this approach continues, at the end of the project, because of the lack of a strategy for sampling in order to obtain a representative fauna spectrum (N. Dese-Berset and V. Radu 1996; A. Bălășescu and V. Radu 2004, pp. 38-40) and because of the lack of precise animal bone contextualization, we have a distorted image upon the "economic base of rural life" in the Eneolithic, and the interpretation of the meaning of the presence of bones in various contexts will be very difficult. Strangely enough, in some texts (S. Hansen and M. Toderas 2007, pp. 18-19), the interpretation of the faunal analysis matches D. Berciu's statements made in the 50's: the Danube waters and the ponds provided fish and shells; "close by there were also animals for hunting", and "behind the settlement", on the terrace, there was "good soil for cultivating plants and breeding animals" (D. Berciu 1956, pp. 503-504).

#### **On "layers", "domestic waste areas", and "paths"**

The areas between the built spaces are formed by the accumulation of soil, ash, animal and human bones, shells, various complete or fragmentary objects. By laying the emphasis on the stratigraphical method regarding the tell as a sequence of "dwelling levels" or "chronological horizons", the earlier excavations, such as those at Căscioarele (Vi. Dumitrescu 1986, p. 77),

Ciolănești din Deal (M. Petrescu-Dîmbovița and S. Sanie 1969), Gumelnița (Vl. Dumitrescu 1966, pp. 54-55), Tangâru (D. Berciu 1959, p. 151), Vidra (D.V. Rosetti and S. Morintz 1961), Hârșova (D. Galbenu 1979, p. 3), Cunești (E. Comșa 1983) tackled these contexts as simple "*layers*" separating (horizontally and vertically) the "dwellings". With no interpretation, it was considered that their importance was exclusively chronological.

Using a different perspective, Ion Nestor, interpreted the contexts of this type discovered at Glina (I. Nestor 1927-1932, p. 229) and Cernavoda (I. Nestor 1937) as domestic waste depositions over the debris from houses or in the space between them. This interpretation is characteristic also for the new excavations at Hârșova (D. Popovici *et alii* 1998-2000; C. Haită and V. Radu 2003), Bordușani (S. Marinescu-Bîlcu *et alii* 1997; Popovici 2003), Vitănești (R. Andreescu *et alii* 2003; 2003a), Luncavița (C. Micu and M. Maille 2001, p. 118), Bucșani (S. Marinescu-Bîlcu *et alii* 1996-1998; C. Bem *et alii* 2001, p. 48; C. Haită 2001) or Drăgănești-Olt (M. Nica *et alii* 1995). The recent interdisciplinary research of such "*domestic waste areas*" at Hârșova (D. Popovici *et alii* 1998-2000; C. Haită and V. Radu 2003) somehow try to answer questions like "how" and "when" such contexts formed, by emphasizing the periodicity of certain human activities, their repetitive nature and their direct reflection in the stratigraphical units defined and dug as such. It is considered that the answer to the question "why" resides in the very definition (considered to be objective) of these contexts: "*domestic waste area*", "*refuse deposits*", "*residue*", "*depôts*", "*dépôts anthropiques à caractère ménager*", "*zones ménagères classiques*", "*domestic filling layer*". The ash from fireplaces, the animal bones, the consumed shells, sherds, etc., in a word, the "garbage" resulted from the cleaning performed in the houses on the tell, are moved from the "domestic space" into the area between the houses. Meanwhile, the houses fallen following their firing become spaces for depositing the domestic waste discarded by the inhabitants of neighbouring houses (S. Marinescu-Bîlcu *et alii* 1997, p. 69; D. Popovici *et alii* 1998-2000, p. 19).

The functionalist interpretation of this kind of contexts is grounded on the contemporary understanding of the notions of garbage, hygiene<sup>4</sup> and the belief that the "function" of these contexts results directly from the uncovered material culture (for other interpretation of the "domestic waste" deposition, see K. Padayya 1998; L. Martin and N. Russell 2000; J. Chapman 2000a, pp. 61-63; 2000b; N. Boivin 2004; P. G. Johansen 2004; L. Douny 2007). A pattern of this interpretation is the overlook of other objects uncovered in these contexts. Paradoxically, following a logic with a circular quality not yet sensed, these contexts are "domestic waste areas", as they contain animal bones, shells, coprolites, etc., while the other objects or other categories of materials become "domestic waste", as they are found in these "areas". For instance, the human bones uncovered in these "domestic area", discarded at the same time with the other "waste", could attest the practice of cannibalism by the Eneolithic communities (D. Popovici *et alii* 1998-2000, p. 114); this suggestion that does not take into account the fact that in other sites, in similar contexts whole human skeletons were uncovered (for instance, Ruse; J. Gaul 1948, p. 109). At the same time, in the tell of Drăgănești-Olt, a "*domestic filling*" layer with many shells and snail shells, sherds, a copper pin (*Doppelspiralkopfnadel*), a jar, a cup, a spindle whorl, flint artefacts, and a red deer horn "hammer" was interpreted as "storing *place for fishing tools*" based on the seven clay weights spread in this deposition (M. Nica *et alii* 1995, p. 9).

It is true that the artefacts gain significance due to the context in which they were deposited, but it is equally true that these provide, in their turn, the context with meaning. The large number of finite stone artefacts, the bone, antler, copper and gold artefacts, the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines, entail the reconsideration of the interpretation of the context in which they were deposited as "domestic waste areas". In fact, the "stratigraphic units" in a "domestic waste area", themselves a product of the time elapsed and of the post-depositional processes, seldom accounted for, directly reflect not various human activities, but rather deposition/discarding patterns with meanings that can be guessed only by defining (1) the structural relations between "domestic waste areas" and the "built spaces", and (2) the deposition pattern of the materials from these contexts. Only in this way can we work out opinions on the different attitude of the Eneolithic communities towards what we call "garbage"; the attitude relates to an ideology according to which "domestic waste", next to human bones and a whole range of objects are deliberately included in the domestic space.

<sup>4</sup> Nestor drew attention as early as in 1937 that "*it would be wrong to judge the situation in a tell starting from the hygienic rules we are accustomed to*" (I. Nestor 1937, p. 10).

Following a functionalist logic, at Pietrele these contexts are simple "paths" ("Gassen") (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 347; 2006, pp. 8, 10) because they are spaces separating the houses. The finds from these "paths" are either "food refuse" ("Speiseabfall" – S. Hansen 2006, p. 439; S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 393) discarded here (shells, animal bones), or lost objects (those that do not fall into the category of "residue"): "Allerdings sollten nicht alle Objekte in diesen Bereich als Abfall klassifiziert werden, denn auch Verluste kleinerer Objekte kommen in Frage" (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 347). At the same time, the large number of objects (such as those of bone and copper) uncovered in these spaces might reflect the fact that outside the houses many activities might have been going on: "Nur die Knochengeräte konzentrieren sich auffällig in den Gassen. Inwiefern sich hierin bestimmte Tätigkeiten widerspiegeln, muß eine genauere Bearbeitung der Knochengeräte zeigen" (S. Hansen 2006, pp. 439-440).

Far from being a "walking-level" (as suggested by the notion of "path"), the main characteristic of these contexts is the deposition, in the same spaces between the constructions, of ash, large quantities of shells and mammal and fish bones, many human bones, sherds with no traces of secondary burning, flint, bone, antler, copper and clay artefacts (anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines, spindle whorls, clay weights), wild boar tusks, as well as "exotic" artefacts (a disc-like gold object, *Spondylus* shell bracelet fragments) (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005; 2006).

If at Hârşova several "stratigraphic units" could be defined in such contexts (D. Popovici *et alii* 1998-2000; C. Haită and V. Radu 2003), at Pietrele, the depositions between the built spaces, especially in surface F, have a homogeneous aspect. The reduction of all the meanings of the whole deposition between the constructions to the "function" of path is excessive. We do not deny the existence of paths between constructions, but these are particular moments of these contexts: burnt or unburnt clay layers covering these depositions; one can take into account also the possibility that these depositions could be periodically covered by wooden beams (a suggestion received from A. Vulpe), as remains of these, unburnt, were often found in these contexts.

Far from being lost, the objects in the spaces between constructions were deposited deliberately. The intentionality of this practice is proven by the large number of objects discovered in these contexts; in the case of the trench F it can be stated that certain categories of objects (such as copper artefacts) occur more frequently in these depositions than inside the houses (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, pp. 377-384). At the same time, some categories of objects are discovered intact, as in the case of the copper ones; for instance, in the upper part of the depositions in the space between the B-Ost and B-West houses, intact copper awls were found, in contrast to the large number of similar fragmentary objects uncovered in houses (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, pp. 377-384). From this point of view, the presence of large quantities of intact shells is another argument that the spaces where they occur are not "walking levels"/"paths".

The fact that the objects were often found grouped in certain areas of the deposition or, in some cases, forming true "deposits", is still another argument that these were not "lost", but deliberately deposited. Such is the case, for instance, with the deposition P04F12 where over a restricted area (cca 1 m<sup>2</sup>) about ten flint artefacts were deposited. Above, in the same deposition, we found a copper awl with bone handle. In the same space, deeper, in the north part of this deposition, two copper artefacts were stuck to each other (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 378).

Last, but not least, the very way in which certain singular objects were found suggests the intentionality of their deposition. It is worth mentioning the case of an anthropomorphic bone figurine, adorned with ornaments (copper rings at the ankles and an ear-ring, a necklace of five disc-like clay beads) (S. Hansen *et alii* 2006, pp. 40-42). The complete figurine was deposited "on the back" in the space between the houses in the surface B, in a grey earth layer with many bones and shells (P05B168), where unburnt wooden remains were preserved over the entire surface. Near the figurine there were 11 Dentalium shell beads (probably making up a string that belonged to the set of ornaments of the figurine). The bone plate figurines with copper ornaments were uncovered in "domestic" contexts as well as those from Căscioarele (E. Comşa 1979, pp. 72, 73, note 28, Fig. 4/2; R. Andreescu 2002, 64; Pl. 42/2), Sultana (R. Andreescu and T. Popa 1999-2000, 135, 140, Fig. 2/2; R. Andreescu 2002, p. 64; Pl. 46/1, V/4), Glina (R. Andreescu 2002), Lovéc (M. Dimitrov 1962; E. Comşa 1979, pp. 72, 73, Fig. 5/2), Karanovo (G. Georgiev 1961, p. 83, Pl. XXV/4). But the association of the figurine with shells evokes the two figurines from Selevac, next to which 70 perforated snail shells and an ochre ball were found (D.W. Bailey 2005, pp. 66-67). The way the figurine from Pietrele was deposited, the way the set of ornaments was composed, its association with other objects, remind of certain funerary contexts in the cemetery of Durankulak, where the clay figurines adorned with copper pieces were deposited in order to replace the deceased (I. Vajsov 2002, pp. 262-263). At

the same time, the figurines with metal ornaments participated in building up the meanings of the so-called symbolic tombs at Varna. In each of the graves 2 and 3, in the east part of the pits (opposite the area where the clay masks with gold ornaments were found), a bone and a marble figurines adorned with gold applications were deposited. The bone figurine in tomb 2 was accompanied by Dentalium shells, one flint blade and one copper pin. In tomb 3, next to the marble figurine, Dentalium shells, one marble vessel, and one flint blade were also found (I. Ivanov 1975, pp. 8-15, Pl. XVI-XXXII; see also S. Hansen *et alii* 2006, p. 42).

S. Hansen starts from the idea that the figurine from Pietrele was found in a "path", therefore undergoing "post-depositional" actions, which makes him believe that the figurine and the Dentalium shells probably do not belong together (S. Hansen *et alii* 2006, pp. 41-42; S. Hansen 2006, p. 441). We have a different interpretation: the figurine was found in a layer and not on a "walking-level" ("path"), as suggested also by its completeness; the fact that it was associated with other objects in a similar way as the finds from other "domestic" contexts, and, above all, funerary ones, lead us to the idea of its deliberate deposition and of the set of pieces nearby.

Meanwhile, it is worth mentioning that most human bones, both of children and adults, are deposited in these contexts. Most of the 30 human bones were discovered outside the constructions in surface B. Other two human bones were deposited in a "path" in surface F.

The interpretation of the depositions in the spaces between the constructions is hindered by the lack of micromorphological and sedimentological analyses, by the failure to publish the study of the fauna remains and the diminished attention paid to the pottery in these contexts. The micromorphological and sedimentological analyses might provide clues on whether the earth between the constructions had been brought and deposited here (in that case, it would be important to find the source) or these depositions formed *in situ*, during a certain period of time. Meanwhile, these studies might provide data allowing us to discriminate between the accumulation of earth, ash, shells, bones and various objects as the result of a single moment of deposition and a deposition that occurred in several phases. The latter case could suggest a cyclic or seasonal nature of the act of depositing. These approaches lead to remarkable results at Çatalhöyük, in other Near East sites (W. Matthews *et alii* 1997), and, closer to *Gorgana*, at Hârşova (D. Popovici *et alii* 1998-2000; C. Haită and V. Radu 2003). The study of the spatial distribution of animal bones is impossible to achieve at Pietrele due to lack of excavation squaring, but a certain formalism of their deposition is not out of the question. Meanwhile, the pottery in the spaces between the constructions is analysed only statistically, like in the case of the bones, as the lack of squaring renders impossible a more precise spatial distribution of the pottery fragments, as well as of the studies on their deliberate fragmentation.

In the present paper we do not envisage to provide a definitive interpretation of the meaning of these depositions. The interpretation should take into account their structural nature ("*structured deposition*"; C. Richards and J. Thomas 1984; J. Pollard 1995; J. Chapman 2000; 2000a), their contextual relation with the built spaces and the relational analogies with the other contexts in which various objects, animal or human bones are directly deposited over the debris from the constructions. We will only say that the deliberateness of the deposition of these objects in the spaces between the constructions shows that the meanings of these contexts cannot be simply reduced to the function "paths" or "domestic waste areas". At Pietrele, the meanings of these depositions are tightly related to the "biographies" of the built spaces, to their vertical continuity (leading to the reproduction on the horizontal of their layout by rows). Complete and fragmentary objects, together with human bones, shells, animal bones take actively part in the renewal of the places between the built spaces, in a rhythm linked to the biography of the latter. The emergence of these "domestic waste areas" must have been the result of social practices that involved a specific performance.

### **Towards an archaeology of the Other**

The functionalist approach to the past of *Gorgana* generates a discourse which makes stereotype knowledge "scientific": *Gorgana* is reduced to a sequence of villages made up of houses and paths, where the houses had storeys, from where, had they fallen, came down some complete objects, sherds, animal bones, human bones, as well as houses where the vessels stood on benches or shelves, and paths on which they used to discard litter and very many objects would often get lost. Meanwhile, this discourse imposes a functional zoning of the surface of the tell, of the objects and contexts.

After three excavation seasons, the Pietrele Project will not achieve its aims if the way *Gorgana* has been excavated until now is going to last:

1. Defining functional relations over the entire surface of the tell is doomed to fail, because the spatial distribution of the objects does not reflect them, but patterns of their deposition, discarding, keeping. Until now, from lack of sifting and flotation, there is no evidence of bone, stone or cereal processing in various areas of the houses or of the tell in general. The sifting of the depositions could have been important also for the recovery to a large extent of the human bones, of the small copper, gold, exotic shell artefacts, important for the interpretation of the various contexts in which they occur, but also for the documentation of the remote exchange connections, one of the aims of the project.
2. The "*economic basis of rural life*" sets forth a distorted list of animal species (from lack of any sampling strategy of the deposition amount to be sifted) and a poor contextualization of the fauna material (from lack of squaring).
3. Defining a general stratigraphy, valid for the whole surface of the tell, is doomed to fail because it simply does not exist. As already stated, *Gorgana* is the result of the structural relations between the various built spaces that have various biographies, separated by depositions called by some "*domestic waste areas*", and by others "*paths*". It is impossible (at least by further applying the Pietrele excavating method) to find out the stratigraphical relations between the various phases of a construction and the depositions in the "*domestic waste areas*" and it is even more doomed to fail to try to find out the relations between the various phases of the various constructions. From this point of view, it should be remarked that the <sup>14</sup>C data obtained by analysing charcoal and cereal samples taken from B-Ost and from the fired construction in surface F did not reveal significant differences (S. Hansen *et alii* 2004, p. 44; 2005, pp. 388-389), in spite of the fact that these were at a difference of level of about 2 m (S. Hansen *et alii* 2005, p. 341). In short, any general stratigraphy obtained will not be valid for the whole surface of *Gorgana*.

The positive aspects of the project – the environment reconstruction studies, the geomagnetical tests, the radiocarbon data, the plotting on the settlement plan of the many categories of objects, the studies on the technology of pottery and stone artefacts, the quick processing of the materials, and the constant publication of the preliminary reports – are just a few elements of any "successful project" that, however, leaves apart crucial issues regarding the meaning of the contexts and the way in which material culture participates in building it up.

In spite of the fact that in the official discourse the word "methodology" prevails, the failure of the project comes first of all from the reluctance to look into the methods of achieving one's aims in a critical way. The methodology adopted is grounded on a few axioms that are not evaluated critically. As we have shown in this paper, the issues of the "economic basis", subsistence strategies or those referring to the definition of the specialized working areas cannot be tackled by applying such axioms. The answers to these questions can be formulated only after a thorough research that should recover and contextualize as accurately as possible more material culture elements, including the smallest processing remains.

We might face the objection that this discourse comprises provisional interpretations, published in preliminary reports. To a large extent this is true in the case of an archaeological approach, found also at Pietrele, separating the interpretation from the archaeological excavation: first one gathers the material objectively and at the end of the excavation one interprets it. However, as already seen, these "provisional interpretations", resulted from the indigence of the functionalist-chronological questions put before the start of the project, are stated and reproduced from one year to the other. Between the field experiences and the aims of the project there is no relation at Pietrele, no fruitful dialogue with the past, from which we could learn to ask more questions. From one year to the next the Pietrele Project reproduces this totalitarian action of documenting its aims, by continuing a excavation emphasizing certain contexts and omitting others, dividing material culture in "small finds" and "cinderellas", missing tighter contexts of certain objects, losing important information. The poor answers considered to be preliminary interpretations become archaeological "facts" for the excavation in the next season, but also for those who read the reports.

However, the main cause of the failure of the Pietrele project is the very ideology grounding archaeological practice. Emmanuel Lévinas (2000; 2006) points out that, irrespective of our intentions, we are responsible for the *Other*, that by reducing the otherness of *Another* to the *Same* (like ourselves), we submit him/her to an act of violence annihilating the difference. In the same sense, Julian Thomas (2004, p. 238; 2004a, p. 31) points to the fact that the way we treat the distant people

is dialectically linked to the way we relate to the people of today. By taking over Thomas' arguments, we think that functionalist archaeology tackles people from the past (human remains, their material culture) as "*raw material*" to build up historical interpretations, reduces them to "*atoms of a past social system*" and projects upon them an image of the modernity, as it submits the complexity of human life to a totalitarian logic. Following such an endeavour, the archaeologists learn nothing from the past, as they just shape it according to the features and structure of the present. This totalitarian logic is extremely dangerous as it bears the germs of accepting and justifying totalitarianism: those who consider it justified to shape the lives of people in the past according to "scientific" criteria, allegedly "objective", will find it equally justified to shape the lives of present people the same way (J. Thomas 2004, p. 238; 2004a, p. 31).

As we have shown in this paper, the functionalist modelling of the past of *Gorgana*, an action we might call colonization, and the organization on Fordist bases of the archaeological practice at Pietrele, an action we call domination, are interdependent (on the relation between Fordism and the inclination of modernism towards functionality and efficiency, see D. Harvey 2002, p. 135). Both draw their legitimacy from the same functionalist paradigm criticized in social sciences as an ideology of maintaining and reproducing the system, stating that functionality is a natural, universal state (G. Huaco 1986; J. Turner and A. Maryanski 1988; A. Maryanski and J. Turner 2000). At Pietrele, the separation of the interpretation from excavating, the fragmentation of the archaeological data into functional units with no link between them brought about a Fordist organization of the site. As already stated, this alienating labour division leads to the proliferation of hierarchical authority structures (A. Chadwick 2003, p. 99; J. Thomas 2004, p. 246). Like the architect imagined by Le Corbusier, the project director, standing on top of the hierarchy, "harmonizes" into a discourse the data produced by the excavation technicians, reduced to the status of "*non thinking shovels*" (Å. Berggren and I. Hodder 2003), and the partial interpretations produced by various specialists.

At Pietrele, like in the case of most "successful projects", the practice of colonizing the past and imposing in the present a dominant discourse, by reproducing the hierarchical organization, is grounded, legitimated or masked by the obsessive use of the word "objectivity". Also at Pietrele it is claimed that it is necessary and sufficient to gather "data" objectively for generating "Science". Objectivity is considered to be a mental state that should be attained in order to efficiently organize the members of an archaeological team as data hunters-collectors. But all that is an illusion. These "data" are gathered according to certain aims of the project, according to preconceived ideas, considered to be commonsensical, not needing any debate whatsoever. The data emerge into a discourse of the functionalist ideology shaping the past of *Gorgana*, by imposing contemporary values considered to be natural, universal. However, even in natural sciences, regarded by the archaeologists-scientists with envy, objectivity is not a mental state. Objectivity refers to the capacity of the data of objecting, of "protesting" against what is stated about them; due to the laboratory conditions developed, these data are rendered relevant (B. Latour 2000). Therefore, the *Gorgana* data and those from any other archaeological site, should be questioned and the members of the team should be allowed to raise their own issues. As already stated: "*the data are not 'given' to interpretation. Rather, interpretation is part of the data*" (I. Hodder 1999, p. 83). As we have shown in the present paper, the archaeological data have "objected" in this way, as our interpretation is one of the many possible ones. Therefore, we think that the members of the team should take part in the act of interpreting. From this point of view, the finality of the excavation reports should not be getting into the "scientific circuit" some "facts" considered to be unquestionable, but rather the doubts and issues referring to the meanings of the contexts excavated in the respective excavation season. The interpretations, even contradictory, produced by the members of the team should not be repressed, but expressed in the published texts. Thus, we plead next to others (B. Bender *et alii* 1997; I. Hodder 1999, pp. 80-104; 2000; 2003; Å. Berggren and I. Hodder 2003; A. Chadwick 2003) in favour of a self-reflexive practice grounded in a multitude of opinions. From a plant strictly organized hierarchically with a rigorous repartition of a series of narrow responsibilities, in which the "workers", constrained by the limits of their strict specialization, have to prove the highest efficiency, in order to produce most efficiently functionalist "archaeological data", the Pietrele archaeological practice should turn into a democratic environment in which every one should participate in the interpretation process. Only in this way we will bring about not definitive answers rooted in a consensus, but rather new interpretations, new issues referring to the past of *Gorgana*.

In conclusion, together with others, we think that archaeology, as the discipline of "*the Other*" (J. Hegardt 2000; B. Olsen 2001; 2001a; J. Thomas 2004, p. 236), should fight the dominant discourses colonizing the past and implicitly or explicitly promoting the reproduction of the hierarchical



systems. In an age when cultures are rendered uniform, archaeology, from an agent-discipline colonizing the past, searching for a elusive "objective truth", should become a space of freedom in which – by dialogue and taking into account the examples provided by anthropology, ethno-archaeology and the different way in which the present is interpreted in literature, art, politics, etc. – images of the diversity of people in the past allowed to emerge.

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## Abrevieri

ACMIT	Anuarul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice, Secția pentru Transilvania, Cluj-Napoca
AIGR	Anuarul Institutului Geologic al României, București
AJA	American Journal of Archaeology, Boston
AJPA	American Journal of Physical Anthropology, New York
Aluta.	Aluta, Sfântul Gheorghe
AMM	Acta Musei Meridionalis, Vaslui
AMN	Acta Musei Napocensis, Cluj-Napoca
AMP	Acta Musei Porolissensis, Zalău
AMT	Acta Musei Tutovenss , Muzeul "Vasile Pârvan" Bârlad
AnB	Analele Banatului S.N., Timișoara
AO (SN)	Arhivele Olteniei, Serie Nouă, Craiova
ARCIFE	Academia RSR, Centrul de Istorie Filologie și Etnografie, Seria Antropologică, Craiova
Argessis	Argessis, Studii și comunicări, Pitești
Apulum	Apulum, Alba Iulia
ArchB	Archaeologia Bulgarica, Sofia
ARCS	Annals of The Royal College of Surgeons, Londra
ArhMold	Arheologia Moldovei, Iași-București
ArheologijaSofia	Arheologija. Organ na Arheologičeskija Institut i Muzej, Sofia
ARMSI	Academia Română. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice, Seria III, București
AS (IMP)	Archaeological Series (International Monographs in Prehistory)
B(M)SAP	Bulletin et Mémoires de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris, Paris
BA	Biblical Archaeologist, Atlanta
BAI	Bibliotheca Archaeologica Iassensis, Iași
BAR	British Archaeological Reports, Oxford
BAR (BS)	British Archaeological Reports, British Series, Oxford
BAR (IS)	British Archaeological Reports, International Series, Oxford
BF	Before Farming, United Kingdom
BFSC	Buletinul Facultății de Științe, Cernăuți
BibIThr	Bibliotheca Thracologica, București
BMA	Bibliotheca Musei Apulensis, Alba Iulia
BMG	Bibliotheca Musei Giurgiuvensis, Giurgiu
BMN	Bibliotheca Musei Napocensis, Cluj-Napoca
BMJTA	Buletinul Muzeului Județean "Teohari Antonescu", Giurgiu
BMSAP	Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris, Paris
BRGK	Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Frankfurt am Main
BSA	Annual of the British School of Archaeology at Athens, Atena
BSPF	Bulletin de la Société Préhistorique Française, Paris
BSSC	Buletinul Societății Științifice din Cluj, Cluj-Napoca
CA	Cercetări Arheologice, București
CAANT	Cercetări Arheologice în Aria Nord-Tracă, București
CCDJ	Cultură și Civilizație la Dunărea de Jos, Călărași
CI	Cercetări Istorice, Iași
CIAAP	Congrès International d'Anthropologie et d'Archéologie Préhistoriques, Bruxelles
Cronica	Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice, București
Dacia (NS)	Dacia (Nouvelle Serie). Revue d'Archéologie et d'Histoire Ancienne, București
DocPraeh	Documenta Praehistorica, Ljubljana
Drobeta	Drobeta, Drobeta Turnu-Severin
EJA	Journal of European Archaeology, London

ERAUL	Etudes et Recherches Archéologiques de l'Université de Liège, Liège
Eurasia	Eurasia Antiqua, Berlin
IJO	International Journal of Osteoarchaeology, Wiley Interscience.
IJNA	International Journal of Nautical Archaeology, London
INA	Institute of Nautical Archaeology, Drawer
Izvestija	Izvestija na Arheologiskija Institut, Varna
IzvestijaVarna	Izvestija na Narodnija Muzej (Izvestija na Varnenskoto Arheologičesko Družestvo), Varna
JAS	Journal of Archaeological Science
JEA	Journal of European Archaeology, London
JFS	Journal of Forensic Sciences, West Conshohocken
JMA	Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology, London
JWM	Journal of Wildlife Management, Texas
Materiale	Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice, București
MAU	Materiali z Antropologij Ukraini, Kiev
MCA (SN)	Materiale și Cercetări de Arheologie (Serie Nouă), București
MemAnt	Memoria Antiquitatis, Piatra Neamț
MM	Mesolithic Miscellany, Wisconsin
MNIT	Muzeul Național de Istorie a Transilvaniei
OJA	Oxford Journal of Archaeology, Oxford
PA	Probleme de Antropologie, București
PRIA	Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, Irlanda
PTRS	Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, Londra
PZ	Prähistorische Zeitschrift, Leipzig-Berlin
RDAC	Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus, Lefkosia
SCA	Studii și Cercetări de Antropologie, București
SCIV(A)	Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche (și Arheologie), București
SE	Sovetskaja Etnografija, Moscova
SP	Studii de Preistorie, București
StudPraeh	Studia Praehistorica, Sofia
Tor	Tor. Tidskrift för arkeologi – Journal of Archaeology, Uppsala
VAH	Varia Archaeologica Hungarica, Budapesta



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