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THE HOME: WORDS, INTERPRETATIONS, MEANINGS, AND ENVIRONMENTS

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5

Archaeological Houses, Households, Housework and the Home

Ruth Tringham

Archaeologists and the home

Archaeologists do not frequently write about *homes* or the *home*. We write a lot about *architecture*, *spatial patterns*, *buildings*, *dwelling*s, *shelter*, and we make inferences about *houses*. Only recently have we even begun to make explicit inferences about *households*. But the home is a wildly cultural concept, evoking emotional nostalgia, whose apparent ambiguity leads it forever beyond the reach of the traditional archaeological record. And so it is rationalized as being irrelevant to investigation by archaeologists, as being a constant and not a variable in the big picture of human cultural evolution. From this point of view its demise on the part of people who study prehistory is similar to that of *gender*, the *family*, and *housework* (Tringham 1991a, in press).

In the 1970s, until the unfortunate early death of Glyn Isaac, there was a lively debate on whether early hominids were human enough to have a *home base* that would have been the focus of food-sharing and other social actions. Following on from this was the idea that the communication through speech and the social relations that went on in the home base were the source of the earliest cultural evolution of human beings (Binford 1981, 1983; Isaac 1976).

The term *home base* was only ever used to refer to hunters and gatherers. With the consideration of sedentary people, whether hunter-gatherer, pastoralist, or agriculturalist, more familiar and apparently objective terms are used, like *village* or *settlement* – at most, *house* – to express the living arrangements, the term *home* undoubtedly being considered too interpretive, individualistic, and not relevant to the grand trajectory of cultural evolution. My quest in this article is to examine whether the study of the home could ever become interesting and relevant to prehistorians.

Ways of looking at archaeological data

As the archaeological papers in this symposium alone show, several different theoretical perspectives are currently practiced in the discipline of archaeology. My own perspective assumes that material culture is both a passive reflection of behaviour *and* – in a dialectical relationship – an “active” medium for, and symbolic expression of, the social actions, practices, negotiations, and dominance structures of the prehistoric inhabitants. Architecture – that element of material culture most relevant to this paper – thus can be seen as both a container and arena of social action. This view of architecture is in keeping with that of a number of social theorists, including anthropologists, archaeologists, human geographers, and a few architects, in whom elements of neo-Marxism, post-structuralism, and post-modernism have been merged to form structuration theory, the theory of place, and social action theory (Bourdier 1989; Bourdieu 1990; Cosgrove 1984; Donley-Reid 1990; Giddens 1979, 1984; Hodder 1986, 1987, 1991; Moore 1986; Pred 1984, 1990; Rapoport 1990; Soja 1989; Stea and Turan 1990).

This perspective is not mutually exclusive of the view that is more traditional and mainstream in archaeology – that the archaeological record reflects behavior. The latter has formed in the past the basis for much of my own research in European prehistory, and is certainly the theoretical context in which most of the archaeological record has been accumulated and interpreted (Binford 1981; Kent 1990).

My plan in this paper is to introduce the rich archaeological data base of domestic architectural remains from Europe's prehistoric past from the different theoretical perspectives of archaeological architecture. The archaeological architecture of Neolithic and Eneolithic southeast Europe, five to seven thousand years old, may seem very distant in time and space from the subject of this conference. It does not represent the origins of architecture from which the Scandinavian house stemmed. It is not particularly spectacular or monumental. But it *does* represent perhaps the richest archaeological record of domestic architecture in prehistoric Europe, and one that has been excavated and interpreted by archaeologists with many different perspectives. Fire – whether accidental or deliberate, whether individual or village-wide – has been the main contributing factor to the excellent preservation of these architectural remains.

First, my aim is to show that, even within the traditional theoretical orientation of material culture as reflection and architecture as container of human behaviour, the archaeological record is not a fixed entity. It is expandable and changeable as different questions are asked of it (Patrik

1985). Then I shall show that, just as we think we have squeezed the true prehistory out of the archaeological record, we can expand it qualitatively and quantitatively. As shown by post-processual archaeologists, this can be done by considering:

1. material culture as an active component of social action
2. architecture as an arena of that social action
3. the biographies of the individual social actors as crucial parts of constructing the narratives of prehistory.

Moreover, within this more recent orientation, it is clear that there is no one true “prehistory” to be re-constructed, but that prehistory comprises multiple interpretations of the archaeological record and multiple narratives that can be constructed.

The use-lives of prehistoric houses in southeast Europe

A focus on the *use-life* of artifacts was developed by North American processualist archaeologists as a reaction against the traditional interest in formal variation of finished artifacts that had characterized much of culture-historical archaeology (Schiffer 1987; Tringham 1978). This new interest immensely expanded the archaeological record to include the procurement of raw materials, techniques of manufacture, utilization of artifacts, and the circumstances leading up to their eventual discard or re-use, all of which contributed to the artifacts' particular manifestation in the archaeological record.

The concept of use-life was applied to archaeological architecture (McGuire and Schiffer 1983; Tringham 1991a, Fig. 5.3). The result was an exciting expansion of information over the more traditional prehistoric architectural studies that focused on variability of the form and style of buildings as finished artifacts (which by the way is still popular), (Brukner 1990; Coudart 1987). At Opovo for example, our 1983–89 excavations provided information on variability in construction, spatial arrangement of the built environment and its surroundings in general, the expected versus actual duration of the building, the attempts to prolong a structure's use-life, the re-use of materials, and the nature of a building's destruction and eventual abandonment (Tringham et al. 1992).

House construction.

The architecture of Neolithic and Eneolithic Southeast Europe may be generalized as follows. It is characterized by rectangular detached buildings – presumably houses, ca. 6 meters wide, and varying in length from 6 to 20 meters. (Figs. 5.1.a, b, and c show floor plans of houses in various building horizons at Ovcha-rovo, Bulgaria. (After Todorova 1983)). These were traditionally built on a frame-work of upright wooden posts dug into the ground with walls of horizontal planks, logs, or wadding covered on one or both surfaces by a thick layer of clay daub. Their floors comprise a thick layer of clay which was frequently spread over a substructure of horizontal logs or planks. Generally the buildings have only one story, but two-storied houses have been excavated. The roof, which has never been preserved, has been reconstructed as gabled.

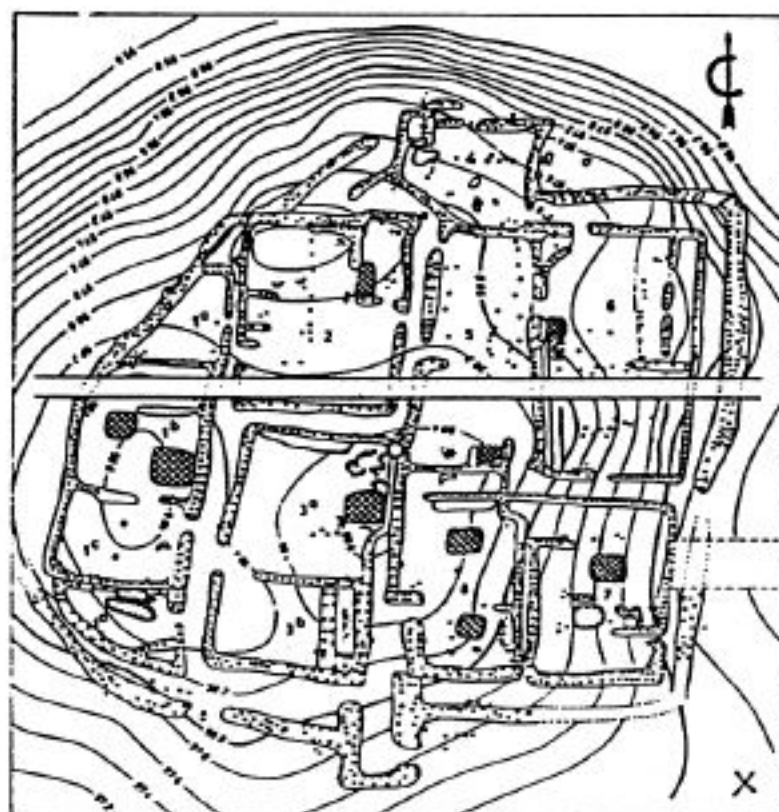


Fig. 5.1.a

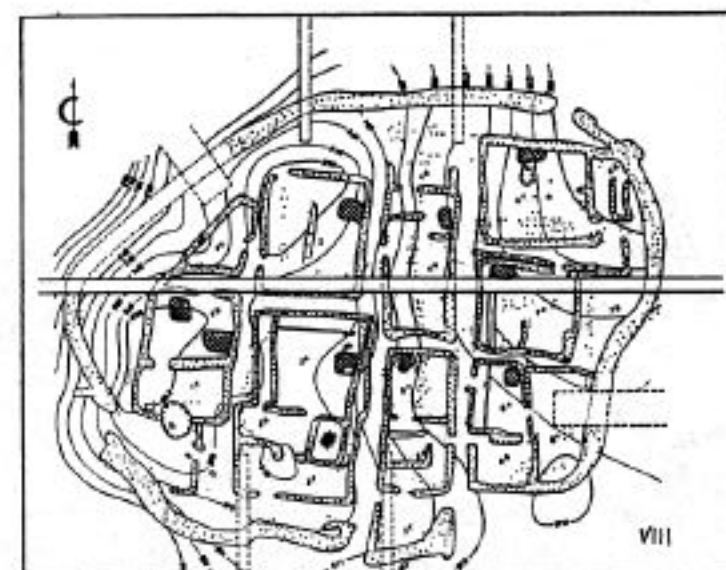


Fig. 5.1.b

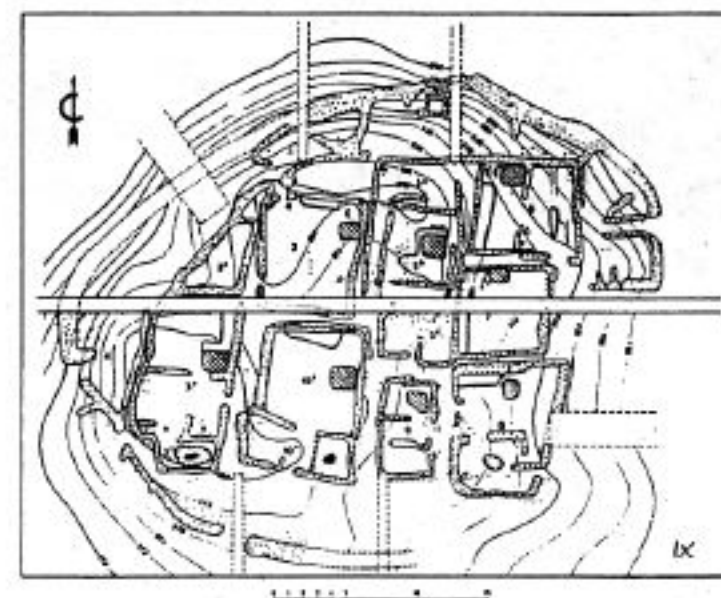


Fig. 5.1.c

On archaeological sites, the entire structures appear as bright orange or red masses of burned, collapsed clay rubble in which is impressed the shadows of the wooden framework (Fig. 5.2). Postholes, including one to three rows of internal posts, are visible beneath the collapsed superstructures and floors.



Figure 5.2 Burned and collapsed floor and superstructure of House 3 at Opovo, Serbia.
(Photo: M. Trainic)

The traditional interpretation of this archaeological record of architecture has focused on how it reflects human behaviour concerning the technology of house construction, including the amount of labour (usually man-hours) involved. Many aspects of house construction can be inferred with a good deal of plausibility and consensus, since they involve the properties and manipulations of materials that are subject to principles of physics, chemistry, and biology.

House Occupation.

A focus of all prehistoric architectural studies has been on the spatial organization of partitioning and activities within houses, and the distribution of houses within a village (Kent 1991). Traditionally in European archaeology, this interest manifested itself in cleaning the house remains of all debris until the floor level was reached, at which point a map could be made of the subdivisions into rooms, and of the distribution of artifacts and furnishings (such as hearths, platforms) that were found on the floor (Fig. 5.1) (Brukner 1990; Gimbutas 1991; Kalicz and Raczky 1987; Stalio 1968; Todorova 1978; Todorovic and Germanovic 1961). The assumption here is that, since the fires were sudden unintentional events, the situation on the floors of the house must reflect a Pompeii-type of situation – social action frozen in the midst of disaster.

The New Archaeologists of North America have fostered a growing interest in the processes by which archaeological sites are formed, as a result of which those archaeologists have become very aware of the complexities of making inferences about tasks, room functions, and the number of inhabitants on the basis of such distributions (Binford 1982, 1983; Schiffer 1987). The archaeological record of household tasks and behavior has been increased to include garbage disposal, re-use of materials, as well as off-site tasks such as gardening (Chapman 1989, 1990a). Thus the materials reflecting domestic behaviours (systems of activities) are being sought now in those areas suggested by Rapoport (Rapoport 1990) in his system of settings. That is, the areas that surround houses as well as their floors themselves, areas off-site, and in garbage pits (Coudart 1987; Hayden and Cannon 1983; McGuire and Schiffer 1983; Moore 1986; Tringham et al. 1992; Tringham, Brukner, and Voytek 1985).

The pottery and other materials excavated on the house-floors can indicate more than the distribution of tasks being carried out at the time of the fire. For example, at Gomolava we noticed that there was an uneven distribution of artifacts on the floors (Brukner 1980, 1988). This in itself has several possible interpretations. We could assume, as has so often been done in the past, that the house full of artifacts (e.g., House 80/3) was the center of domestic activity at the time of the fire, and that the emptier floor (e.g., House 80/4) represented a house that was already abandoned, or even was "poorer." Alternatively, the artifacts on the floor might be placed there deliberately, as part of the intentional act of house-burning; or floor spaces of an abandoned house might be re-used in the garbage disposal of a later neighbouring house, and the latest house might be the one with few artifacts on its floor. All of these possibilities would encourage us to seek

more detailed micro-stratigraphic evidence from the floors, including details of the use-lives of the artifacts, their fragments on the floors, and in the superstructural rubble, as we did at Opovo (Tringham et al. 1992).

It has traditionally been assumed that the farmers and gardeners represented by the neolithic and eneolithic sites of southeast Europe were "egalitarian", and that we should not expect to find any evidence of social inequality in the house remains. Such a concept has been given its most eloquent expression in the Utopian scheme of peaceful co-existing matri-focal societies of Marija Gimbutas (Gimbutas 1991). In recent years however, a number of archaeologists have challenged this assumption, and have suggested that we should look for and expect short-term but very real inequalities in terms of dominance and access to human and material resources between and within households, and between genders (Bogucki 1988; Chapman 1990a, 1990b; Kaiser and Voytek 1983; Tringham 1990, 1991a).

The idea of inequality between and within the households encourages a much more detailed comparison of household units within villages. The kind of materials that are expected to reflect such behaviour include elaboration of houses, accommodation in houses of more people, evidence of access to products and the production process of, for example, minerals and clays, stone tools and ceramics, agricultural products, as well as the more obvious exotic materials (Bailey 1990; Chapman 1989, 1990a, 1990b).

The latter days of the use-life of houses

The traditional interest in the *production* (construction and maintenance) of houses has led to a focus of excavation on the house plan and any still standing architecture (wall bases) and foundations (postholes and trenches), with a relatively quick removal and undetailed record of the "messy" debris which lay above it (Todorova et al. 1983). The concept that houses have use-lives however, makes relevant several aspects of architecture that have been the object of a great deal of assumptions and superficial explanation in traditional archaeology in Europe. Nor have they been much in evidence in other archaeological practices. These aspects comprise the latter days in the life of a building; that is, the sequence of events that led to its formation as part of the archaeological record: its decay, collapse, abandonment, destruction, looting for the raw materials to build later buildings, burial and eventual replacement. How long did a house last? How did it reach the end of its use-life? When does

a house die? Where is a new house to be placed? Interestingly enough, even architects themselves are shy of talking about this topic.

Destruction of houses.

The houses of the southeast European Neolithic and Eneolithic periods are characterized by evidence of house-burning which surpasses in terms of its volume and universality those settlements preceding and succeeding this period and those found anywhere else in Europe. Yet this "Burned House Horizon" has traditionally been taken for granted in European prehistory. It has been assumed that explanation was not needed beyond an intuitive common-sense reasoning that the fires were accidental, resulting from the increased use of fire within houses or the denser crowding of houses within the villages; or deliberately set fires due to inter-settlement competition, unrest, raiding, and even invasion. Once one starts to question such an assumption however, and to suggest that the coincidence of the apparently universal occurrence of house-fires with such socio-economic changes as the intensification of production, permanence of settlement, and organizational importance of autonomous households may be very significant, then all sorts of other data have to be wrested from this same "archaeological record" so that the record itself changes.

This was in fact the basis of our systematic investigation of the causes of the house fires at Opovo in the former Yugoslavia (Tringham 1990; Tringham et al. 1992, 1985). We looked for houses that did not burn and found none in the area excavated. We looked carefully in the collapsed debris – the data which is usually shoveled away as quickly as possible – for data reflecting the path and nature of the fires. The lack of burned materials in the areas between houses indicates that the houses burned in separate fires (Fig. 5.3), and burned at temperatures that in some parts of each house reached over 1000° C. Such temperatures are regarded as very high for accidental fires of wattle-and-daub houses and indicate that the fires are likely to have been "helped" by deliberate fueling and tending (Kirk 1969). For example, the central part of House 5 at Opovo is characterized by a massive area (ca. 3 x 3 m) of vitrified structural clay and ceramics, indicating a fire of high intensity at this point. This represents the rubble of the upper story, which collapsed along with its melted pots, which were fused to the floor in the heat of the combustion, and fell onto the lower floor along with the collapsing side walls burying, burning, crushing, and preserving the ceramics, stone, and other contents (including textile and string) of the lower floor.

Therefore, we have found data that reflect behaviour consistent with burning a single house, probably deliberately. This empirical conclusion may be interpreted in a number of ways. It may be explained, for example, as a measure to eradicate pests, insects, disease, or to signify the death of the household head as a symbolic end of the household cycle. We have shown that the fires are not something whose cause can be assumed and generalized, but must be questioned and investigated.

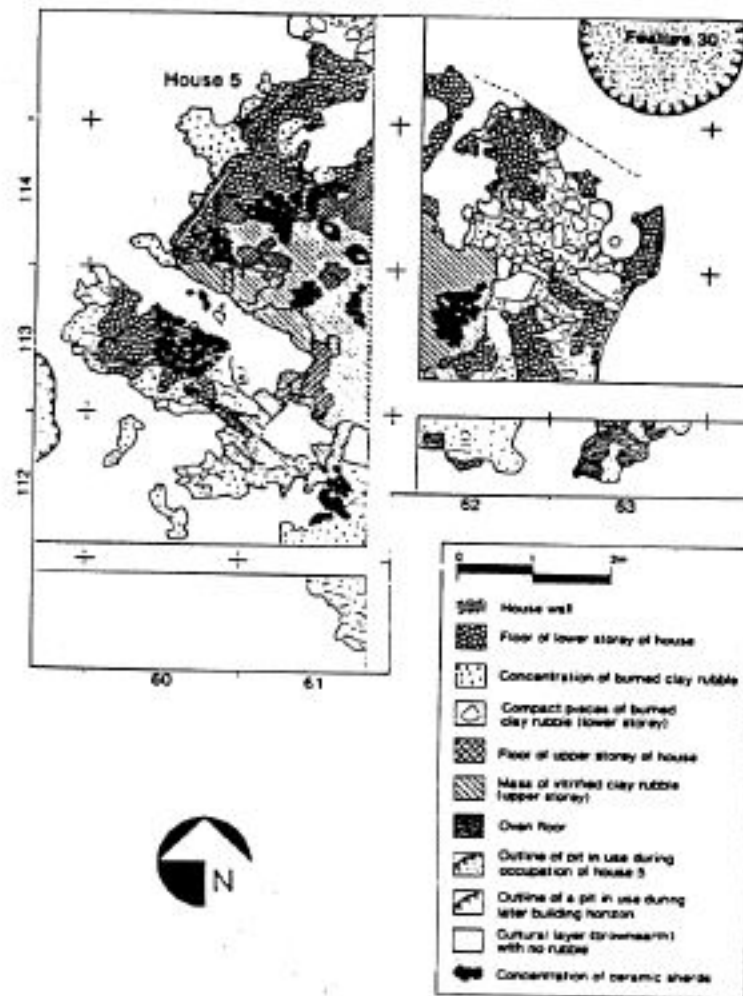


Figure 5.3: Architectural features of building horizon 3 at the Eneolithic village of Opovo.

House replacement

The Neolithic and Eneolithic villages in southeast Europe are traditionally excavated with a strategy that exposes their maximum area (hopefully the whole village) horizontally at a given time, and elucidates their chronological cultural sequence. It is a recognized practice to fuse the many years of occupation of the various houses at "a particular phase of time," and the thousands of depositional events that make up their formation as part of an archaeological site, into one generic time-frame. In such practice, individual houses and households at a particular settlement are fused into an *occupation horizon* or *building horizon* in which their individual histories (or use-lives) are concealed under an umbrella of a static time period (lasting perhaps several generations). Stratigraphy thus becomes a way of monitoring the chronological sequence of building or occupation horizons (Fig. 5.4).

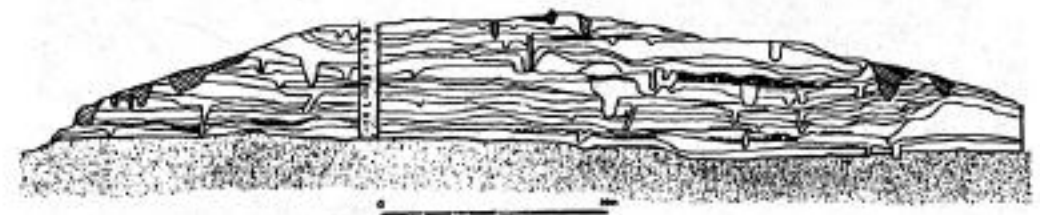


Figure 5.4: Vertical cross-section through the settlement mound (tell) of Ovcharovo, Bulgaria, showing the different building horizons (After Todorova et al. 1983).

Such a practice has also enabled the monitoring and measuring of cultural or behavioral variation through time at a particular site, as well as the establishment of cultural links and comparisons from one site to another. But it has prevented or at least discouraged the investigation of the *organic history* of a site. By this latter term I mean the processes of the destruction and abandonment of houses, and the relationship of abandoned houses to the construction of new houses (house replacement), by which the stratified occupational deposits were formed into either tells (settlement mounds) or open stratified sites. In fact, there is often an underlying assumption in the archaeology of southeast Europe that a sequence of building horizons is formed by the houses of one building horizon somehow being replaced by houses of another building horizon as a single depositional event (Bailey 1990; Chapman 1989; Todorova et al. 1983).

It is clear by now that by considering these aspects of destruction, abandonment, and replacement of houses as objects of investigation, the archaeological record is quantitatively and qualitatively increased, not only in the ways that existing excavated materials are interpreted, but also in the

actual excavation methods used to retrieve the data from the ground. In directing the Opovo Archaeological Project, where we were interested in the use-lives of each house from its foundation to its burial, we developed a technology in 1983-89 to excavate and record the collapsed debris of the burned house superstructure carefully layer by layer (Fig. 5.5).



Figure 5.5: Excavation of the burned daub of the collapsed superstructure of House 2 at Opovo.

Moreover, since I was interested in the relationship of a household to a locus or loci through time, the details of the modification, destruction, and replacement history of *each* house became important. This meant that it was essential to follow an excavation strategy that would enable us to recognize the micro-stratigraphic record of the placement of one building in relation to others in time as well as in space, and of the depositional events by which a house gradually became a part of the archaeological record (Banning and Byrd 1989; Harris 1979). This was really the first time that such a scale of resolution in archaeological observation of architecture was carried out in southeast Europe.

Even at Opovo however, we did not dispense entirely with lumping the depositional events into building horizons. The settlement debris piled up over a period of about 200 years more or less continuous occupation to

form a low mound over what was already a natural island in the marshes. We recognized in the area excavated (Block I), three building horizons, two of which had well preserved architectural remains (BH 1 and BH 3). The buildings of these two phases of occupation are not chronologically contiguous, being separated perhaps by one or two generations (Fig. 5.6).

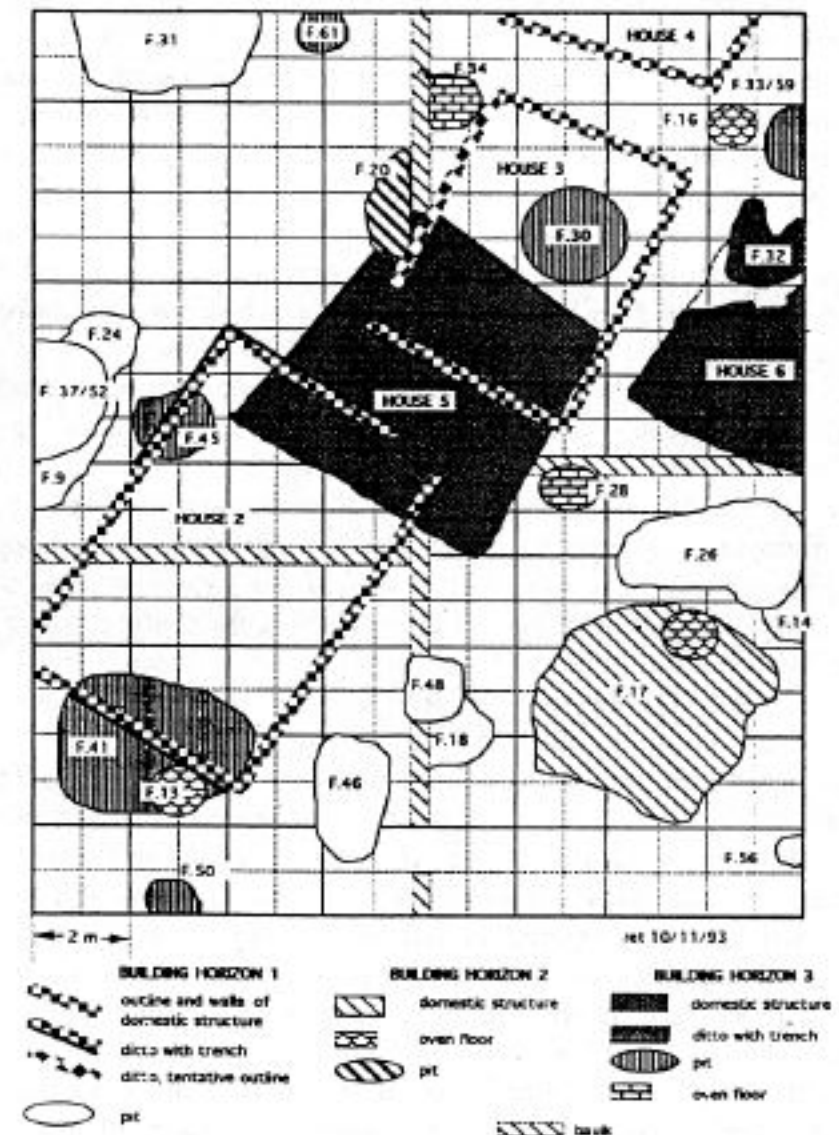


Figure 5.6: The three superimposed building horizons recognized in Block I at Opovo.

During Opovo's prehistory, efforts were made, sometimes immediately after the conflagration, to flatten the burned remains of the houses and deposit it in pits, in one case filling a probable well (Fig. 5.7). In many other cases the rubble was used, long after it had lain on the surface and had weathered, to top off garbage pits just before a new building was started. The aim of the builders of BH 1 was to use these old remains to their advantage in the construction of their dwellings, allowing old ovens and clay floors to provide a stable foundation layer and avoiding places of obvious weakness, such as filled-in pits. Thus the builders of the BH 1 structures were probably well aware of the remains of earlier building horizons, either through tradition or direct observation on or near their occupation surface. But the new houses display a certain amount of (but not complete), horizontal displacement in that their locations are not exactly above that of the old ones, I suspect because the exact location of the previous house was not known. This impression is made more plausible when we see that the corner of one of the new houses was placed directly over a previous well that had been filled in immediately after the fire of the old house (Fig. 5.7).

This pattern of house replacement at Opovo conforms to the pattern of house replacement in contexts where the area for residence was restricted by the surrounding landscape – in this case by marshland. It reminds us however, that in the southeast European Neolithic and Eneolithic periods, very contrasting patterns of house replacement have been recognized. This is the contrast between the tell or mound settlements, on the one hand, some of which were occupied for 2000 years continuously and are greater than 12 m high, and flat or open settlements, (Bailey 1990; Chapman 1989; Davidson 1976; Tringham 1990). The formation of tells are the result of a restricted settlement area in combination with intensive but not necessarily continuous occupation, and intensive accumulation of domestic debris caused, for example, by the burning of large amounts of clay daub. Some of the classic tell settlements of southeast Europe, especially those of the west Balkans such as Gomolava and Vinca, involve like Opovo a certain amount of horizontal displacement of consecutive buildings. In Bulgaria and Rumania however, the tells such as Ovcharovo and Karanovo are characterized by the vertical superimposition of buildings (Figs. 5.1 and 5.4).

As with many aspects of architectural destruction and re-location, these contrasts have traditionally not been regarded as objects of investigation, being explained by an underlying assumption that they are an adaptive response to particular topographic restrictions on settlement, such as river or marshland. But there are certainly many other reasons to restrict

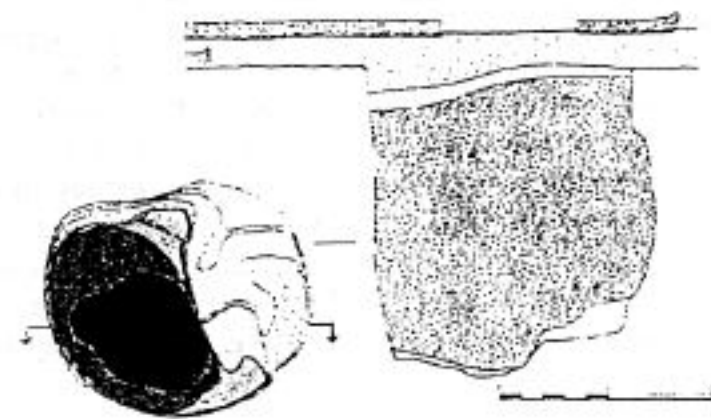


Figure 5.7: Plan, cross-section, and photographic profile of the well (Feature 30) next to House 5 at Opovo.

residence locus, such as unequal social access through inheritance and ownership of land for residence.

In his recent study of the tell question, John Chapman has suggested that the key to the contrast lies in the relationship of built to non-built land in terms of access, especially to cultivation and grazing areas (Chapman 1989). He suggests that tells reflect a situation in which cultivation land is held in common and its distribution and holding is organized at a village

level. He suggests that the residence pattern of tells reflects a situation in which social stability is at a maximum and that disputes and inequalities at a minimum, in other words, a highly regulated society.

Open (non-tell) sites, on the other hand, Chapman suggests reflect a society in which the holding of land is more flexible and linked more directly to the land on which a residence is located, and where the whole is organized at a household level. In this case, it reflects a social order in which inequalities between households within a village are more marked. His ideas have encouraged him to investigate many aspects of the built environment that had been ignored (or rather whose variability had seemed irrelevant), such as the ratio of built to unbuilt space, the location and access to cultivation and grazing land, and possible patterns of cultivation.

House to home, space to place, and evolution to history

I shall argue in the rest of this paper that as the destruction and replacement of prehistoric houses become objects of investigation rather than the subject of underlying assumptions, we learn about site formation and we expand the archaeological record of architecture. Much more significantly however, these investigations enable us to progress beyond the investigation of space and house in prehistory; they enable us to consider the cultural construction of place and home in prehistory.

In this conceptual transition from space to *place* and house to home, there is another crucial factor to be considered: that is the *scale of resolution* at which archaeological observations are interpreted. I have hinted already that the traditional practice of excavating by building horizons masks the rich mosaic of individual events in the histories of houses and of the human actors, even though it allows archaeologists to compare and contrast different data sets. The history of archaeological practice has witnessed a constant struggle between the "macroscale" standpoint that considers the aim of archaeology is the recognition of evolutionary trends in prehistory, and the "microscale" standpoint that emphasizes the importance of individual histories and social actions. In the current established archaeological practice of North America and much of Europe, the former is dominant, whereas the latter is characteristic of much of the more radical standpoint of post-processual archaeology, including the feminist critique. The feminist critique of archaeological practice advocates a *multiscalar* interpretation that has not often been put into practice, but which I shall describe in more detail below.

The interpretation of archaeological architecture is a reflection of these different standpoints, many of which are represented in this volume. Amos Rapoport and Susan Kent advocate the value of cross-cultural generalizations to be made about the evolution of cultures and people-environment relations (Kent 1990, 1991; Rapoport 1976, 1990). They have emphasized the possibilities of coming up with real general principles about bounding space, spatial organization of tasks in space, and so on, that could be used for consideration in the design of modern living spaces. These are based on a comparative analysis of worldwide and timewide ethnographic and archaeological samples. Such "macroscale" questions relating to the evolution of architectural styles, social complexity, and man [*sic*] -environment relations are ultimately the focus of most examinations of archaeological architecture, whether by archaeologists or architects.¹

Such "macroscale" questions comprise the main aim of the European archaeologists, whom I have been discussing, including myself at one point in my life. In this process of asking "macroscale" questions, it is understandable that individual houses from specific sites become normalized to be typical of and to "stand for" the cultural whole. In the process of discovering explanatory general principles, individual variability is understood as exceptional and of secondary relevance. In such generalizing, the "microscale" interpretation of house histories, the causes of individual house-fires, and the small inequalities between households in access to land and resources tend to be undervalued as irrelevant.

My own orientation however, has recently come to focus on "microscale" and historical questions such as these. Without denying the value of the evolutionary comparative viewpoint and questioning, I prefer to consider archaeology's contribution as a multiscalar exploration – both temporal and spatial – of variability and cultural expression in prehistory and history. In such an exploration, the lives and actions of individual families and members of those families are given equal priority to the longer, and wider-scale view in which these individual acts and perceptions are normalized and homogenized.

There are many paths to this humanistic and historical approach. The path which interests me is inspired by the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens, the theory of social practice of Pierre Bourdieu, and the theory of place of Allan Pred. Of these, Pred's concept of place that focuses on the transformation of spatial structures in a historical context, seem most relevant to my own investigation of archaeological architecture.

Pred has rewritten Marx's statement that "men [and women] make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen for themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past" to read:

Women and men make histories and produce places, not under circumstances of their own choosing but in the context of already existing, directly encountered social and spatial structures, in the context of already existing social and spatial relations that both enable and constrain the purposeful conduct of life. (Pred 1990, 9)

What occurs in the course of any local or larger-scaled transformation is not merely the making of histories but the making of historical geographies. And the unchosen circumstances under which historical geographies are constructed always subsume both existing power relations and their associated social logics, rules of behaviour, and modes of regulation (social structures), on the one hand, and the buildings, land-use patterns, and other features of humanly transformed nature already existing within a given geographical area (spatial structures), on the other. (Pred 1990, 229)

In Pred's concept, the production of place is a historically contingent process by which universally present components such as an unbroken flow of local events and "projects" (the reproduction of social and cultural forms), the formation of biographies of social actors (men and women), and the life histories of made objects such as the built environment (the transformation of nature) are interwoven differently with each local historical circumstance (Pred 1984, 284). Places are constantly changing, as is their meaning to the actors involved in their production, and as are people's relations to each other. Local places are interwoven dialectically to larger places, daily paths and practices to life paths and generational and long-term paths.

For an archaeologist, the investigation of places that are always "becoming" can serve as a viable alternative object of knowledge to testing a generally applicable theory by formal cross-cultural observation. Thus, the universal components of *place-becoming* or *place-production* are not subject to universal laws or general principles (Pred 1984, 291). In this respect, his concept of place-production contrasts with that of Stea and Turan (Stea and Turan, 1990). In Pred's opinion, it is the interweaving of the universal components in the formation and transformation of actual places in real historical situations that becomes the object of knowledge. Our aim then, as archaeologists, is the interpretive writing or construction of prehistoric narratives, rather than the analysis of the archaeological record to reconstruct prehistory.

In constructing the prehistory of different places in southeast Europe, I have relied heavily on the information of domestic architecture. Most of what we excavate is from the everyday world of housework. The theories

of Pred, Giddens, Bourdieu, and even Tuan suggest that the rich variability of human relations in the domestic sphere is relevant to the course of human history; that what men and women do in relation to domestic space, their negotiations for power, their negotiations about housework and where to put the garbage, *do* affect the ways in which cultural rules are formed and transformed and the ways that societies reproduce themselves.

Archaeology of the home: The ancient home

I will now consider the interplay of the following components of place-production in prehistory, such as:

1. house biographies
2. the biographies of the actors (the dialectic between their life path and daily path, and between their individual and institutional roles)
3. the social action itself (production and distribution projects as social forms, the dominance structure of social practice)

In doing this, I know that I have to face the challenge of the ambiguity of archaeological data (Tringham 1991a). Rather than shy away from these topics because they cannot be "found" in the archaeological data, I prefer to change my strategy of archaeological investigation by celebrating the ambiguity of the archaeological record, by considering multiple interpretations of the same data, and by a more explicit use of creative imagination. In other words, I must begin to practice a more interpretive archaeology (Hodder 1991; Shanks 1991; Shanks and Tilley 1987; Tringham 1991b, Tringham Forthcoming). For it seems to me that this is the only way that space can be linked to place, that house can be linked to housework and to household and, that all, ultimately, can be linked to the cultural construction of home. In the end, much about the definition of place overlaps with that of home.

My starting point in this interpretive study of what is essentially the prehistoric home in southeast Europe has comprised the material constraints on our interpretations, built up by all the generations of archaeologists and their research that I have outlined above. At this point, I can begin to interpret the archaeological record in terms of the interplay of architecture and its surrounding landscape as arena and construct of social action.

The (pre)history of the cultural construction of place and home can be told through the archaeological investigation of the *life-history* of each house.

In such a study, the house has to be considered as an individual, as a dynamic entity whose every month of life is significant for the men and women who act in and around it. It seems to me that the concept of life-history of the house has a more historical and humanistic significance than the term *use-life*. It concerns the time aspect – the duration of the house, the continuity of its next generation (its replacement), its ancestors and descendants, the memories of it that are held by its actors, the ghosts that are held within its walls and under its foundations. In other words, I become interested in its biography. In this respect, I am interested not only in its appearance of external wall and bounded interior space, but its appearance on the broader landscape through time. In archaeological terms this is the study of “space as a vertical construct” (Bailey 1990).

Douglass Bailey is one of the few archaeologists who has attempted this kind of biography in his re-interpretation of the excavations of the tell settlement of Ovcharovo in Bulgaria (Bailey 1990). He traced the continuity of specific houses through the twelve building horizons recorded in the stratigraphy of the tell (Todorova et al. 1983) (Fig. 5.8). Much of Bailey's discussion of the importance of the continuity of house and its locus on the land touches on what others would call the home. He suggests, following Bourdieu, that the meaning of the house is different for different actors. But in Bailey's interpretation, the meaning of the house is understood at the scale of the household in which the individual actors are masked. He envisages a world in which there is mounting competition for claims to locus of residence on the mound (tell) and a need to legitimize such claims because of an increasing population. He has an interesting idea that small clay house-models that occur in the archaeological record of the tells are symbolic aids to the legitimization of these claims (Fig. 5.9). To a great extent, the limitations of Douglass Bailey's model were determined by the strategy by which his archaeological data (and therefore his material parameters) were retrieved. At Ovcharovo, as mentioned above, in accord with traditional practice, the house remains were not excavated with a view to constructing individual house-biographies. They were excavated as a stratified sequence of floor-plans, grouped according to building horizon, and Bailey has not questioned this grouping (Todorova et al. 1983).

A crucial limitation to the ability of Douglass Bailey's model to address the question of place and home however, lies, in my opinion, in the distance to which he dares to take his imagination in constructing prehistoric narratives. The unit or actor of his narrative is the household, the driving force is “competition for land” and “need to legitimize the household's claim to land.” As Bailey has himself stated, “places” and “homes” are created by boys and girls, young men and young women, old men and

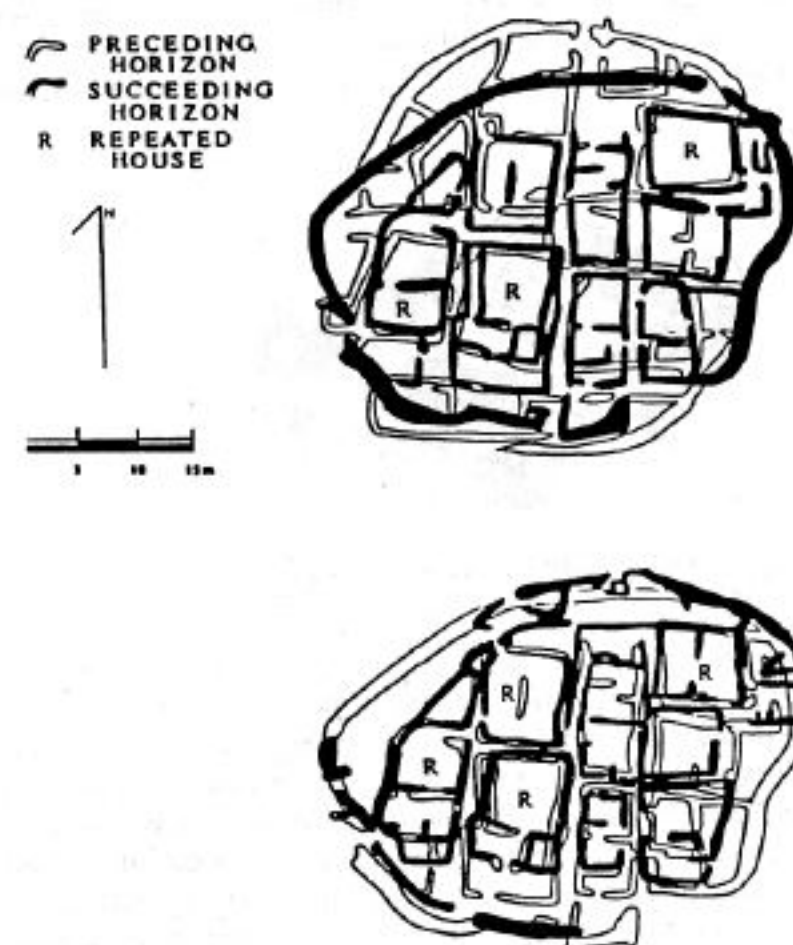


Figure 5.8: Superimposition of floor-plans of houses in various building horizons at Ovcharovo, Bulgaria, showing continuity of certain houses. (After Bailey 1990).

women as individuals, and members of a social group; they are created differently throughout their lives through their experience, perception, and memory of social practice (Boschetti 1986; Porteous 1990; Rodman 1992; Rybczynski 1986; Tuan 1977). But Bailey himself has chosen to normalize these experiences for purposes of comparison and recognizing general trends.

The variable standpoints and experience, as well the breadth of imagination and reading from ethnography and history of the archaeologists who excavate and interpret the materials that generate creations of prehistoric home and place, direct the selection of both the scale and the content of the interpretations. Douglass Bailey is apparently someone who is used to his own space and feels threatened by people crowding in on him. For him, significant social action, such as competition for space, happens *between* groups or families, not between individuals, for example, of different genders, within families.

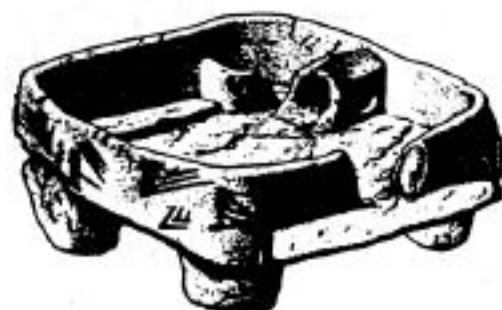


Figure 5.9 House model found in the settlement mound at Ovcharovo, Bulgaria. (After Todorova 1983).

I see the world very differently. Accordingly, my own narrative of what the world of the Ovcharovo tell was like, and what kind of behavior was generated by the house-models, would have been very different from that of Bailey. According to the theory of structuration to which I am attracted, the variability and transformation of cultural ideologies that we hope to observe at a macroscale are achieved by a process of negotiations and social action by individuals. Thus, at some point in writing prehistory, archaeologists have to dare to interpret their data and imagine (and write narratives about) life at this "microscale." Moreover, gender and age are such powerful dimensions to social life that it seems to me personally essential to consider them in any prehistoric narrative. A growing density of houses on the Ovcharovo tell to me means that there was an organic growth of the households on the mound through the cycles of growth and decline of each household. In this context, negotiation and working around authority is the way that most families and individuals would have run their social practice. A simple correlation of overt symbol (house-model) with power-over (land-claim) legitimation is much less likely in my imagination than personal protective symbol (house-model) with power-to (ability) control one's own fate in, for example, a new husband's house.

An Opovo-Ovcharovo story

One logical extension of my consideration of historically contingent places in prehistory is to write in creative narrative form, incorporating the details of the archaeological record and "macroscale" and "microscale" interpretive models.

The story that I present here is one snippet from a young woman's life or memory. She was born in a large village that might have been Ovcharovo, and is married off to an older man as his second wife. They live in a small village that might be Opovo in the marshlands far away. This story expresses the idea that for her home is the place where she was born. The crowding and competition of her home village is idealized in her memory to mean life, noise, and support for many other women, in stark contrast to the isolation of her life at Opovo (Fig. 5.10).



Figure 5.10: Cut-away axonometric view of the interior of House 2 at Opovo (C. Chang).

This house, it's so small. There's no place for anything. He's looking at me. He can see everything. She's watching too. Why doesn't she come in here to keep me company. Tell me what to do. Help me. They're just waiting for me to do something wrong. Have I got to do everything for them? That can't be so. Take their eyes away. Make it dark in here. There's so much light. It's not natural. The oven – at least she's a friend. She looks the same. She must be her. She must be the same one. Where's my little house? I've lost it! Maybe they took it! I need it. I want it. It's my only link with home. ...It's so quiet here. I feel so alone. Except those flies. No they're not flies. Flies don't suck your blood, and make ugly sores on your face. Where is everyone? It's so quiet. There's nothing to do here, no one to talk to. And it smells. You can't get away from it. Inside. Outside. You can't get away.

This is not a story written for its own sake as an escapist novel. Nor, by writing, and through the accompanying illustration, visualizing the places such as Opovo and Ovcharovo, have I produced any true facts or picture of prehistoric social action. I have followed through an interpretation of the significant change in the archaeological pattern of settlement described at Opovo at the end of the Neolithic in Southeast Europe – the dispersal of settlement onto agriculturally marginal lands.

I think however, that I have dramatically expanded the scope in which the architectural context of prehistory (house, artifacts, furniture) can be used to construct a prehistory – many prehistories! Artifacts, such as an undecorated hearth, become more significant potentially, rather than forgotten in the depths of some archaeological report. The significance of a house-model has multiple possibilities, rather than one true interpretation. The invisible arena of the most dramatic social action – housework – takes on a more visible and important role. A house, or a site, becomes important in its own historical trajectory, rather than as a sample from which the whole is to be extrapolated.

Why/How the ancient home - modern internationalized home?

The archaeological materials that constrain my imagination and the interpretive narratives about the prehistory of southeast Europe concern how a place or a home might have been created by the men and women of that historically specific time and place. That specific time is 6000 years and 2000 kilometers distant from the modern Scandinavian home. My last

question in this paper is whether there is any connection between the two – the "Ancient Home and Modern Internationalized Home." That is, what lesson is to be learned from an archaeological consideration of home?

My answer would be that an ahistorical (i.e., non-historically contingent) place or home cannot be created. All places and homes are created by their actors on the basis of their past and present context. The archaeologists who create stories about the ancient home each have their own history and emotions about home and place. What I am advocating, if anything, is that you listen to your own history and prehistory before you appropriate the ancient home of other places and other times: other heres and nows.

Endnote

1. For a fuller bibliographic referencing to back up this generalized statement, see (Tringham 1991a, b).

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