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Two

The Living House: Signifying Continuity

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Traditional archaeological analyses of spatial patterning have not examined the meaning of houses. In a social concept of the 'house', a single house is subject to a range of differing perspectives. The proposition that houses have many alternative meanings and usages in society is illustrated by tracing one such alternative perception of houses in a settlement from Bulgaria in the fourth millennium bc. The example presented is the tell Ovčarovo, a Chalcolithic settlement from the north-eastern part of the country. At Ovčarovo, the repetition of house floor-plans and the display of house-shaped artefacts were used to signify the continuity of occupation through successive horizons of habitation.

Introduction

To write a social archaeology of the house is to write, and read, of many things. An archaeology of houses is an archaeology of space, of artefacts, and of people. Studies identifying, describing, mapping, and assigning function to the built environment were popular in the archaeologies of the 1970s and 1980s. I contend that a large portion of this research avoided an important direction of enquiry. Traditional spatial analyses failed to note the archaeological potential for a plurality of meanings of spatial organisation. Although traditional lines of research have produced tools useful for the measurement of the physical dimensions of the built environment, they have failed to inform upon the social reality of the house.

I do not intend to present a review of the academic history of the study of artefact distributions or spatial unit analysis. However, in approaching the questions posed in a social archaeology of the house, it is useful to con-

sider in which direction recent work on the archaeology of space has headed. Once these traditions have been illustrated, I shall redirect the enquiry towards a more realistic understanding of the house as encountered in a social archaeology. I shall then present one example of how a social archaeology would profit by considering houses as living participants in prehistoric social action.

Spatial definition: mapping units

The methodologies developed to identify and map the relationship of spatial units have enjoyed popular success in recent archaeological research (e.g. FOSTER 1989; BOAST AND YIANNOULI 1986). With the advice and tools of the architect, archaeologists have learned to define and identify spatial cells in the material record. Maps are drawn, diagrams are constructed. The sequences of cellular articulation and disarticulation are used to construct modern knowledges of the ancient built environment. Buildings are thus defined in terms of their component cells. A closed space is taken to equal a cell; the connection of one cell with another is measured in terms of continuity and separation. Thus cellular mapping provides an explicit method of quantifying spatial patterning.

Most influential of the cell mapping techniques have been the syntax and grammar methodologies of Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson (HILLIER AND HANSON 1984; HILLIER *et al.* 1976; HILLIER *et al.* 1987; see also STINY AND MITCHELL 1978; STINY 1980). The cell syntax and grammar approaches have become popular tools in the social archaeologist's workshop. By mapping cells of space and quantifying their interrelationships, measures of access, depth, or of spatial permeability are calculated and used to nourish interpretations of the social meaning of space. Some houses can be defined as defensive, deep, and out of bounds to the non-local public; others are open, permeable, and public. This approach's emphasis on the social, its methodological simplicity, and the minimal amount of information which it requires, makes it attractive to the archaeologist.

The title of Hillier and Hanson's work, *The Social Logic of Space*, proclaims their main directive: that spatial organisation has a social logic. A method of establishing and recovering the relationship of one space to another is a significant advance in archaeological science. However, one should not overlook the limitations of applying the cell-syntax methodology. From the raw material of two-dimensional floor-plans, space syntaxes and grammars forge their results on an anvil of statistical evaluations. Critical suspicion is warranted where such methodologies are applied as singular cases of evidence in support of social conclusions. A space syntax is a single piece of evidence, just as a pattern of artefact distributions is but one of many other archaeological clues which must be studied in an assessment of the built environment. With Hillier and Hanson (and their method as applied in archaeology) the contention is that space has a single logic: in

this case a social one which is defined in terms of permeability, access, and the depth of spatial architecture. The application of space syntaxes, however, is most successful when it is combined with other methods and categories of information.

A positive component of the space syntax and grammar approaches is the emphasis which they place on the social importance of spatial organisation. Space is socially constructed; its description and analysis inform and determine human activity and belief. While a great deal of attention has been paid to this aspect of Hillier and Hanson's work, specifically in attempts to practise social archaeology, it must be remembered that attempts to connect the spatial to the social have formed a substantial and explicit part of archaeological and other social scientific research goals over the last thirty years.

Artefacts, activities, and function

The most mature tradition of the spatial definition focused on artefact distributions and associations (WHALLON 1973; 1974; 1984; HIETALA 1984a; NARELL 1962; BINFORD 1981a; 1981b; SPETH AND JOHNSON 1976; CLIFF *et al.* 1975; CARR 1984a; 1984b). These studies identify distributions and associations of artefacts as coherent groups of material culture reflecting the loci of human activity. Thus, associated artefact patterns are taken to identify areas of particular human activities. The patterns are verified by any of a number of statistical methods (e.g. nearest-neighbour; multivariate analysis; non-parametric testing; constrained and unconstrained cluster; dimensional analysis of variance; k-means distributions; contour-map grid-squares). In this sense spatially defined activity areas can be defined as houses, as workshops, as seasonal camps, or as other functionally defined spatial evidence of human activity. The artefacts chosen to identify different spaces suggest functional meaning to the interpreter of the place: flint debitage and tool blanks equal workshops or hunting camps; hearths and bone debris equal kitchens; anthropomorphic figurines equal sanctuaries and temples; large covered pots indicate storage rooms.

An important prerequisite for the correlation of spatial trends (defined by artefact distributions) with social relevance (for the occupation and use of that space) is the definition of space being investigated (e.g. houses, workshops, markets, temples, villages, among other things). In archaeological terms, therefore, the distribution of particular classes of artefacts defines space and suggests interpretations of that space. In many cases micro-level artefact distributions may be the only available evidence of spatial definition and use. Such is the case at temporary loci of activities (e.g. hunting camps) in earlier prehistory or other times when permanent buildings were not used or have not survived. In most other cases, however, artefacts are grouped by their inclusion in, or exclusion from, built structures.

The analysis of distributions of artefacts and spatial units has dominated archaeological concern over the *definition* of areas of space. Spatial relationships of rooms, houses, and villages are quantifiable and calculable, and thus they assume authoritative status, in the same manner as artefact distributions are defined and consecrated through statistical formulations. The difference between explaining the patterning of artefacts and explaining the patterns of spatial cells is slight. In both attempts similar assumptions of the relationship between spatial pattern and social behaviour are made. In the case of artefactually defined spaces, function is assumed and assigned to types and classes of artefacts. Thus the presence of stereotypic artefacts identifies the function of the space within which they are found. Thus, loomweights designate textile production and hearths identify kitchens. In the spatial-cell tradition the relationship of one cell to another, or group of cells, is identified and assigned a meaning by its interpreter: closed deep space is private, open shallow space public.

I contend that while these approaches to understanding the social meaning of space in prehistory have provided valuable tools with which spatial patterning may be addressed, they do little to inform us of the social meaning of the house.

The definition and meaning of houses

To recover the meaning of houses from the archaeological record, it is necessary to assess the terminology in use and, where appropriate, explicitly redefine the concepts to be used. One must ask therefore, what is the value of the term 'house' for the social archaeologist? One answer to this question is found in a consideration of its etymological definition.

The dictionary reveals that a house may be 'a building for human habitation; especially a building that is the ordinary dwelling place of a family'; or 'a building for human occupation, for some purpose other than that of an ordinary dwelling' (e.g. an almshouse, an ale house); or 'a place of worship'; or 'a building for the entertainment of the public generally; in a tavern; ale-house, or public house'; or 'a building for the keeping of cattle, birds, plants, goods, etc.' (e.g. cow-house; greenhouse; hen-house); or 'the place or abode of a religious fraternity; a religious house'; or 'a college or a university' (e.g. Peterhouse); or 'a boarding house attached to and forming a portion of a public school'; or 'a building in which a legislative or deliberative assembly meets' (e.g. Houses of Parliament or Representatives); or 'a place of business; business establishment or firm' (e.g House of Fraser); or 'a theatre' (e.g. a playhouse); or 'the audience at a theatre'; or 'the habitation of any animal; a den; a burrow; nest; the shell of a snail, tortoise; in which the animal lives or into which it returns'; or 'one-twelfth part of the heavens' (e.g. the houses of Aquarius).

Etymological definition provides a range of different perspectives on the generic term 'house'. 'House' denotes a place of worship, eating, drinking, dwelling, entertainment, farming, education, legislation, economic activity, or astral observation. Indeed the presence of numerous variations on the definition of the word inspires one contention of my argument: that any one thing, be it word, artefact, or component of the built environment, has a multitude of meanings dependent on social and material context.

In these definitions one finds a common theme which is useful in our search for an archaeologically applicable definition. The etymological background of 'house' focuses on the continuity of action over time in one location. Thus a house is a building which serves as 'the ordinary dwelling place of a family'. The family includes 'ancestors and dependants; a lineage, or a race; especially one having continuity of residence'. Similarly, to dwell is 'to abide or continue for a time, in a place, state, or condition; to remain as in a permanent residence, to reside; to occupy as a place of residence; to inhabit'. A dwelling is 'a continuous, especially habitual, residence'. To reside is 'to dwell permanently or for a considerable time, to have one's settled or usual abode, to live in or at a particular place; to remain or continue in a certain place or position'. Abode denotes 'the action of waiting; delay; a temporary remaining; a stay; a habitual residence or dwelling'. Settlement is 'the placing of persons or things in a fixed or permanent position'. To inhabit is 'to dwell in, occupy as an abode; to live permanently or habitually in, to reside in'.

The condition of permanent or repeated attendance or living is also an important part of the archaeological conception of 'house'. House and related concepts (domestic, dwelling, abode, habitation) share a concern with the location of human action not only in space but, equally importantly, in time.

For the social archaeologist, therefore, the concept 'house' has two important aspects. The first of these is that its meaning is contextually dependent. The meaning of the word 'house', and I suggest the interpretation of its archaeological correlate, is dependent on a particular context. The context, whether of social, material or other parameters, defines the meaning of a house. Thus the context is social in that it is what the occupants of a house perceive their house to be. The context is material in that it is what the house contains, what it is constructed from, how it is ordered in three dimensions and how that ordering relates to other houses.

The second important aspect of the concept 'house' is the continuity and repetition of action. To define the house outside the limits of three-dimensional space is to build a better understanding of the meaning of 'house'. To move beyond the third dimension is to confront the dimension of time. Much of spatial archaeology thrives on sub-units, grammatical formulations, and statistical calculations and thereby drives towards concrete definitions of space: measurements of depth and axiality (HILLIER AND HANSON 1984); built area to unbuilt area (CHAPMAN this volume); or door width and distance from door to hearth (FLETCHER 1984). Thus, while

traditional spatial archaeologies have focused on horizontal displacement and description (cell mapping, depth studies, etc.), I suggest that a social archaeology of the house must also consider space as a vertical construct. By this I mean that the repetition and variation of spatial morphology over time involves the vertical perspective. In this sense, a house is not a 'house' if its identified usage cannot be attested through a succession of occupations and actions. It is this consideration of the element of time upon which I wish to expand in the example presented below of fifth millennium Bulgarian houses.

The general conception of 'house' (i.e. repeated action in one location in a social context) which I have produced may appear vague and rather loose. This may be especially the case when compared to the checklist definitions which have populated traditional archaeology and anthropology until recently (e.g. civilisation, modern society, primitive cultures). In order to move the debate beyond previous researchers' construction of methodologies for recognising and patterning space (and into realms where meaning can be recovered), I have chosen not to provide a step-by-step checklist definition. Equally I do not wish to tie the archaeological conception of 'house' to predetermined and culturally limited definitions. Thus, although I have drawn on modern western etymological dimensions of the word 'house', I have used these concepts to produce a definition dependent on situation-specific contexts, both social and material.

I contend therefore that a productive manner of appreciating the social archaeology of space, and more specifically of houses, does not start from a single definition. The definition of a house, as well as the meaning of that house, exists in many different dimensions. This is the case whether the definition is archaeological (e.g. types and locations of tools, hearths, and pots or closed cells) or etymological ('the living place of the family'). A social definition, therefore, must begin by acknowledging that a single space has a multitude of meanings to the people who create, use, abandon, and study it.

Do not misunderstand. To call for a multiplicity of meanings for the built environment is not to drift into hyper-relativism where anything goes and where any meaning or definition can be justified. Contexts are the referents which anchor each separate social meaning of a house to reality.

Systems of activities and systems of settings

Amos Rapoport has introduced a related line of reasoning to the archaeological debate (RAPOPORT 1988; 1990). Rapoport's most recent contribution (1990) is a summary and update of his research of the past twenty years in the field of environment-behaviour. The social archaeologist has much to learn from Rapoport's work. In his article 'Systems of activities and systems of settings', Rapoport helps to debunk the myth that built space binds and contains single social meanings. To handle the built

environment, Rapoport uses the term 'setting' instead of house or architecture. A setting is 'a milieu which defines a situation, reminds the occupants of the appropriate rules and hence of the ongoing behaviour appropriate to the situation defined by the setting. . . . The setting frequently provides the appropriate props for these behaviours and activities' (RAPOPORT 1990, 12; see also RAPOPORT 1979; 1982; 1988).

Of particular relevance to the multiplicity of meanings for a house is Rapoport's contention that it is inaccurate to consider a 'setting' or an 'activity' as a single unit. Rather, one must think in terms of systems of activities occurring in systems of settings. Thus a specific building is linked through the activity systems of its occupants to a social context which exists beyond the limitations of its own physical boundaries. In this way, Rapoport introduces the multiplicity and changeability of meaning of the built environment.

Rapoport's environment-behaviour work is relatively new to archaeology despite its own disciplinary maturity. More frequently, in archaeological analysis of the house, citations are made of Pierre Bourdieu's writings on the Kabyle House (BOURDIEU 1962; 1973; 1977). As Bourdieu has raised some of the issues I am presenting here, it is useful to consider his work briefly. Bourdieu considers the house, like all spatial forms, to be a mnemonic aid for its occupants. Thus the relational form of house space provides a durable medium for imposing schemes of social organisation on human perceptions. Furthermore, the organisation of space not only reflects, but also generates, social structures and practices. Bourdieu details the house as the principal locus where generative social schemes are objectified: the Kabyle house is an example of the construction of social meaning within a built structure. The majority of Bourdieu's analysis rests on the author's claims of structural oppositions between interior areas of the house and their social, biological, or natural referents (e.g. nocturnal and dark = female; day and light = male).

I do not wish to draw attention to Bourdieu's use of the antagonistic principles which he sees embedded in the house. Rather, I wish to borrow from the Kabyle House analysis Bourdieu's insistence that for any one house-unit there exists a variety of perceptions. Just as Bourdieu relates a male:female perspective of the house, so also does he note the internal:external perspective. The house exists at one level of meaning when considered from one side of its threshold, another when considered from the opposite side.

While it may be argued that Bourdieu's selection of antagonistic principles are simplistic and structuralist reductions, a social archaeology of houses benefits from two conditions of his work. The first of these is the belief that one house exists on numerous levels of perception and thus may have a number of different meanings. The acceptance of multiple meanings for a single house broadens the scope for a social archaeology of the

house. Thus, for example, it is acceptable to consider houses both in functional terms, as adaptations to environmental extremes, and in social terms as tokens in strategies of social competition. Just as one may argue that the origin of permanent habitation in the European Neolithic was an adaptation of people to climatic changes of environment which permitted settled agriculture, so also is it legitimate for the social archaeologist to relate the conspicuousness of house construction, occupation, and ownership to displays of wealth and resource control. It is a question of replacing monofunctional explanations of houses with multi-functional explanations.

The second useful contribution made by Bourdieu to the social archaeology of houses is the contention that the relationship between spatial organisation and social structure is discursive. That is to say, the built environment is as much an active generator of social behaviour as it is a reflection of it. The literature on the discursive nature of material culture, which includes the built environment, is well presented in other sources and need not delay us here (see, for example, SHANKS AND TILLEY 1987, MOORE 1982; 1986, etc.)

Thus, a satisfactory social archaeology of the house begins with the assumption that houses (like all social constructs in the past or present) are definable in numerous ways, from an equally numerous range of perspectives, in many different social and material contexts. In addition, houses not only *reflect* social structure and activity; they play an equal role in *determining* that structure and activity.

Multiple meanings of houses: different perspectives

My contention is that the meaning of a house is multi-dimensional and subject to repeated reorientations. The house therefore exists simultaneously within the dimensions of time, space, possession, wealth, protection, craftsmanship, access, permeability, weather patterns, technological ability, and so forth. Indeed it may prove impossible to exhaust the inventory of levels of perception. Each methodology, each society, and each individual will value the house differently by implementing different standards of measurement. Meanings of houses shift within temporal, spatial, and social parameters.

As an example of the multiplicity of house meanings, consider a house defined in terms of production and consumption. Thus, a house could be interpreted as the centre of food production, containing the hearth, the grinding stone, and other kitchen equipment as well as being the locus for biological production through physical acts of conception, gestation, and birth. Similarly it is possible to consider the house as a centre of consumption. The food is processed, prepared, eaten, and digested. Wood and other fuels are consumed at the hearth and in the oven; deceased inhabitants are interred beneath the floor.

On yet another level, the same house may be seen in terms of its location

in seasonal events: as a centre for the preparation of seeds for sowing, for the repair and preparation of tools for reaping and processing agricultural produce, and as a place of storage for the processed crop. In the same context the house may serve as a focus for the birthing, milking, shearing, or breeding of animals.

Or one may alter the meaning by shifting, not the activities performed in the space, but the scale of time over which activities are performed. While a longer time-scale reveals production and consumption activities of farming and stockbreeding in a seasonal time-frame, other perspectives are highlighted by the framework of a single day. In the morning the house is a generator, issuing its occupants into the day's activities. In the afternoon it serves as a centre for domestic chores. In the evening it is a receptacle offering shelter for the night.

Rapoport has written of the unavoidable temporal component of space. This involves 'the differential sequencing of activities in time as well as in space, their tempos (numbers of activities over unit time) and rhythms (the periodicity of activities related to different cycles: life time, animal, seasonal, profane time, sacred time, festivals, work day vs. weekend, day and night etc.)' (RAPOPORT 1990, 15).

The perspectives on which I have based these examples are limited to perspectives on the internal elements of a house. An equally diverse selection of perceptions of the reality of a house can be generated from an external perspective (cf. Bourdieu and the threshold of the Kabyle house). In this way, one house may be considered in relation to a neighbouring house, or to the collectivity of houses within a neighbourhood, village, or region, or to each house in a distant village. In Rapoport's scheme, activities occur not in architecture but in 'systems of settings which include outdoor area, settlements and beyond - the whole cultural landscape' (RAPOPORT 1990, 15).

The existence of not only a multitude of meanings but also of types of boundaries to a house presents problems for the 'objective' methods developed to analyse houses in the archaeological record. If, as I argue, the relationship between rooms of one house to those of another or of houses to houses is not static but shifting, then how do existing methodologies for identifying and quantifying units of space handle the resulting fluctuations in meaning? I suggest that they do not handle it very well at all. [1]

[1] There exists considerable debate (e.g. between Kent and Adams) over the accuracy of limiting specific spaces to specific meanings (KENT 1984; 1990a; ADAMS 1987). In a review of Susan Kent's book, *Analyzing Activity Areas*, William Adams has quite correctly objected to Kent's willingness to define rooms in modern Euro-American houses (bedroom, kitchen, closet, bathroom, dining room, family room or den) in terms of single functions. Adams raises the point that a typical bedroom is used as a place 'to sleep, rest, get well, die, have sex, procreate, watch TV, read, nurse babies, wrap presents, lay coats', etc. (ADAMS 1987). Thus for Adams, and for the social archaeologist, it is important to recognise that meanings of rooms and houses shift with different users and perceivers and at different times.

Active material culture and durable artefacts

The determination of the meaning of a house in a social archaeology therefore is a multi-dimensional task: it is social, it is material, it is spatial, and it is temporal. The goal for the archaeologist is to broaden one's perspective on what a house meant as it was built, used, and abandoned in the past. Previous research has presented the house as a fixed context for activity and perception: the house is seen as a centre for production; as a shelter; as a reflection of social structure; or as a goal of economic desires. As an exercise in broadening our perspective, I shall present an analysis of housing from one settlement in Bulgaria during the fourth millennium bc. My analysis suggests one useful perspective from which a social archaeology of a house may be pursued.

I suggest that a profitable approach to houses begins by considering the house as a living entity. In this way the house becomes active and mobile. Certainly Bourdieu (1977), Hillier and Hanson (1984), Moore (1982; 1986), and others have argued for an active role for the house in social constitutions of archaeological reality. The reflexive nature of material culture has been a popular topic amongst theoretical archaeologists of the 1980s. It appears to me, however, that this activeness has not been employed in the archaeological perception of the house.

To inject some life into the apparently lifeless, passive, and material requires the acknowledgement of two assumptions. First is the contention that material culture plays an active role in the social construction of reality (cf. HODDER 1982). Thus material culture is subject as well as object (cf. SHANKS AND TILLEY 1987). It both creates, is created by, influences, and is influenced by, the constitutions of social perception. As Bourdieu would agree, the house is an active component of the material culture world.

The second assumption required in the enlivening of the house is that the physical nature of material culture (especially terracotta and stone) invests certain artefacts with the power to function successfully as determinants of social behaviour and perception. Houses are constructed from a range of durable physical materials. They are built of permanent (stone) or semi-permanent (wattle and daub, mud-brick, pisé) materials; they occupy fixed locations in space.

To best consider a house as living, I suggest that the actions of a house are best read in terms of a biography. By this I mean that the house is an active participant in society just as a human member of society is. The house plays a variety of roles in the creation and maintenance of social reality. The house therefore is to be addressed as an entity which lives within a variety of social and material contexts. Thus, one may speak of the life-cycle of a house: a house is born, it lives, it dies, it is buried or cremated, and its spirit is remembered after its death. To illustrate the concept of a living house, let us consider an example from a Chalcolithic settlement tell from north-east Bulgaria.

The living house in the Bulgarian Chalcolithic

The Bulgarian Chalcolithic has been relatively well studied both by Bulgarian (TODOROVA 1978; 1982; 1986) and foreign archaeologists (e.g. RENFREW 1969; 1986; CHAPMAN 1983; SHERRATT 1983) In broadest chronological terms it represents the fourth millennium BC. Popularity for investigating the remains from this period of eastern Bulgaria was assured by the publicity of the sensational discoveries of large quantities of gold at the Varna cemetery on the Black Sea coast (IVANOV 1983; CHAPMAN this volume; FOL AND LICHARDUS 1988; KATINCHAROV AND MOHEN 1989). Of equal attraction for a social archaeologist are the numerous settlement tells distributed across the country. From the excavation of these tells an increasingly accurate picture is being produced of the social reality of the Bulgarian Chalcolithic.

Professor-Doctor Henrietta Todorova of the Archaeological Institute of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences has excavated several Chalcolithic tells in the north-eastern region of the country (Golyamo Delcevo, Polyanitsa, Ovčarovo). I shall use the results of her excavation at Ovčarovo as a basis for my investigations of the living house. The site of Ovčarovo is situated in the northern foothills of the Stara Plannina mountains. To the south of these mountains lie the better known sites of Karanovo and Azmak; 100 kilometers to the east is the coast of the Black Sea and the cemetery at Varna. Todorova excavated Ovčarovo *in toto* in 1971-74 (TODOROVA *et al.* 1983).

Before excavation Ovčarovo stood 4.5 metres high and consisted of thirteen vertically successive habitation horizons. Todorova defined the beginning of each horizon with the construction of a new level of houses. From fifteen radiocarbon dates we know that the tell was occupied for a period of at least 570 years.[2]

During the six centuries when the tell was occupied, at only one time were two succeeding horizons separated by an archaeologically detectable hiatus. This occurred between the tenth and eleventh horizons. The consequences of this break in occupation will be discussed in more detail below. This is not to say, however, that a series of local seasonal relocations and abandonments did not take place. As Todorova has noted, the site was located in a flood plain and thus was subject to low-scale seasonal flooding. In addition, there is geomorphological evidence that more substantial floods occurred at a more sporadic rate. Todorova reports that flooding occurs in these places in modern times every two to three years if not more

[2] Bln 1357 3470 ± 60; Bln 1358 3575 ± 60; Bln 1359 3690 ± 60; Bln 1360 3735 ± 60; Bln 1361 3775 ± 60; Bln 1545 3895 ± 40; Bln 1363 3670 ± 60; Bln 1362 3855 ± 60; Bln 1364 3666 ± 60; Bln 1365 3715 ± 60; Bln 1366 3795 ± 60; Bln 1367 3825 ± 60; Bln 1493 3990 ± 80; Bln 1368 3845 ± 60; Bln 1546 4040 ± 80.

frequently; several times excavations at the related site of Golyamo Delčevo had to be delayed for this reason (TODOROVA *et al.* 1975, 6). Sherratt has noted similar situations in Hungary (SHERRATT 1982, 313). The response to the floods was the construction of 'emplekton' walls on the south-eastern sides of the tell at Ovčarovo as well as at other tells in the region (Polyanitsa, Radingrad, Targovište). While it has been argued that these banks and ditches served a defensive function, it is more probable that they were employed to divert and drain flood water away from the settlements and into nearby rivers: in the case of Ovčarovo, the Oteki River. Indeed, Sherratt has suggested that the construction of tells be considered as part of flood defences (SHERRATT 1972, 522). The 'emplekton' dykes protected the settlement against disruption caused by floods of low intensity. I suggest however that floods of a more severe nature caused the occupants to temporarily abandon the site.

While conclusive evidence for the movement of peoples to and from Ovčarovo is difficult to recover, I contend that the patterns of house redecoration suggest patterns of abandonment and reoccupation. It is clear that some if not all of the houses at Ovčarovo were redecorated on a regular basis. Evidence of redecoration is found in the multiple layers of coloured plaster from the interiors of certain houses. In one house from horizon IV the walls, floor, and oven had forty-seven layers of yellow, black, red, pink, and white clay and an oven in the house had been rebuilt three times (TODOROVA 1982, 121; TODOROVA *et al.* 1983, 45). The cycle of redecoration can be compared with calculations for the duration of this horizon (eighty-two years) and it is probable that replastering took place every other year.[3] I suggest that redecoration was a maintenance activity performed at times of reoccupation from the time of a house's birth until its destruction, abandonment, or rebuilding.

The evidence of seasonal floods, as well as of more severe episodes of flooding, combine with the patterns of house redecoration to suggest that Ovčarovo experienced short periods of site vacancy. Thus these series of inescapable abandonments and reoccupations broke the continuity of settlement at Ovčarovo. Therefore there arose a need for a mechanism to ensure settlement continuity during these breaks in occupation. Continuity had to be legitimated in the short term (e.g. between seasonal relocations) as well as in the long term (e.g. between the rebuilding of subsequent horizons). As I shall argue below, the implementation of strategies based on house-shaped or, as I shall term it, tectomorphic imagery answered the threats to continuity created by seasonal or longer-term abandonments.[4]

[3] I have estimated the duration of each horizon using the radiocarbon dates. These estimations are most accurate for those horizons from which multiple radiocarbon dates were taken, less accurate for those horizons where only one date was produced, and least accurate for those horizons with no dates. For the horizons with multiple dates, the difference between the earliest and latest dates with the horizon equals the duration. At the crudest level (that is for the horizons without dates: I, II, IV, V, XIII) therefore, I have calculated the duration as the difference between the latest carbon date from the previous horizon and the earliest date from the succeeding horizon. Thus for horizon IV, the duration of habitation is approximately eighty-two years.

Table 2.1 Longevity of houses, measured in the number of single, double, triple, and quadruple generation houses in each horizon at Ovčarovo.

	Longevity of Houses on Generations				
Horizon	Single	Double	Triple	Quadruple	Total
I	7	0	0	0	7
II	8	2	0	0	10
III	9	1	0	0	10
IV	7	2	0	0	9
V	9	0	0	0	0
VI	10	1	0	0	11
VII	13	0	0	0	13
VIII	6	3	0	0	9
IX	4	4	3	0	11
X	5	1	1	2	9
XI	7	0	0	0	7
XII	7	0	0	0	0
XIII	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D

Note N/D: Horizon XIII had been disturbed by ploughing and thus no information regarding architectural organisation was available.

The houses at Ovčarovo

From twelve levels of settlement rebuilding at Ovčarovo Todorova recovered the remains of 113 houses (TODOROVA 1982, 119-43; TODOROVA *et al.* 1983, 27-42, Plates 13, 15, 17, 19-23, 26, 29-31). In an attempt to understand the biography of these houses, I traced the 'life-spans' of each house through the successive horizons. Some houses were short-lived, not surviving the horizons into which they were born (e.g. all the houses from horizons V and XI; see Figures 2.6 and 2.12). Indeed, this was the case with the majority of houses (see Table 2.1). Other houses were rebuilt through a series of successive horizons (three houses from horizon VII survived into horizon VIII; four houses from horizon VIII into IX; four houses from horizon IX into X). I based the determination of the survival of a house from one horizon to the next in the following manner. I compared the orientation and layout of house floor-plans in one horizon with the orientation and layout of floor-plans in the succeeding horizon (Figure 2.1). If the floor-plan of the preceding house was repeated at a significant level (i.e.

[4] Tectomorphic meaning 'building-shaped' from the Greek 'tektone' for carpenter or builder. Tectonic refers to building or construction in general, especially in connection with architecture.

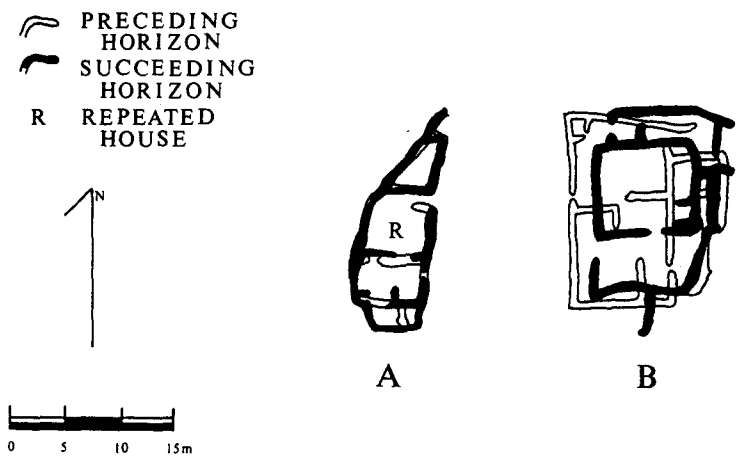

Figure 2.1 Example of the identification of repeated houses from Ovčarovo. A: repeated house; B: non-repeated house.

more than 75 per cent of walls in the preceding house were repeated in the succeeding house) then the succeeding house was termed a repeated house (see Figure 2.1a).[5] If on the other hand the floor-plans matched less than 75 per cent of their walls, then the house was considered an unrepeated house (Figure 2.1b). The results of these comparisons are listed in Table 2.1 and are illustrated in Figures 2.2–2.12.

Thus repeated houses are those which survived into the succeeding generation of buildings at Ovčarovo. While each house has an individual biography, each group of houses in use during particular horizons is a member in a generation of house ancestry. For example, in horizon I at Ovčarovo seven houses were built and in use and thus I would argue were born and lived in the first generation. Five of these houses did not survive the rebuilding into horizon II. The two that did survive into the second horizon thus are said to be second generation houses. Three new houses were born into the second generation at Ovčarovo, that is, were built in horizon II. Of the ten houses in horizon II one survived into the third generation in horizon III (see Figures 2.2–2.3). By noting the life span of each house within succeeding horizons, I identified those generations of houses which had high proportions of survivors from the previous generation. The frequency of houses of first, second, third, and fourth generation status is presented in Table 2.1 and the percentage of house repetitions from one horizon to the next is given in Table 2.2. For example horizon

[5] 75 per cent being the equivalent of three walls being repeated from a perfectly square house.

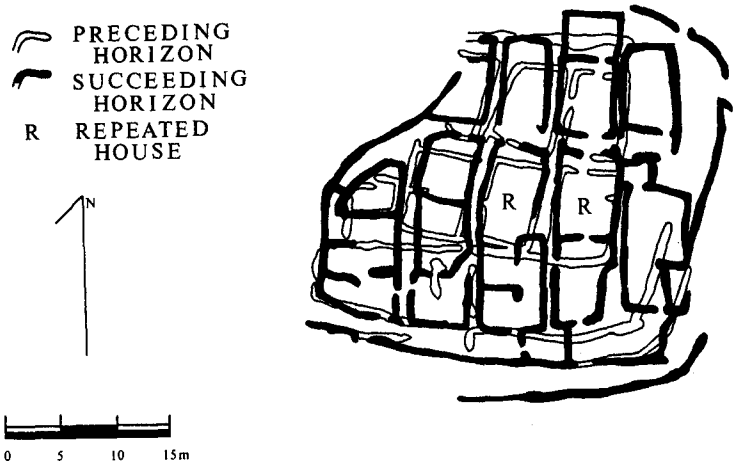

Figure 2.2 Superimposition of floor-plan from horizon II onto the floor-plan of horizon I from the settlement at Ovčarovo (after Todorova et al. 1983, plates 13 and 15).

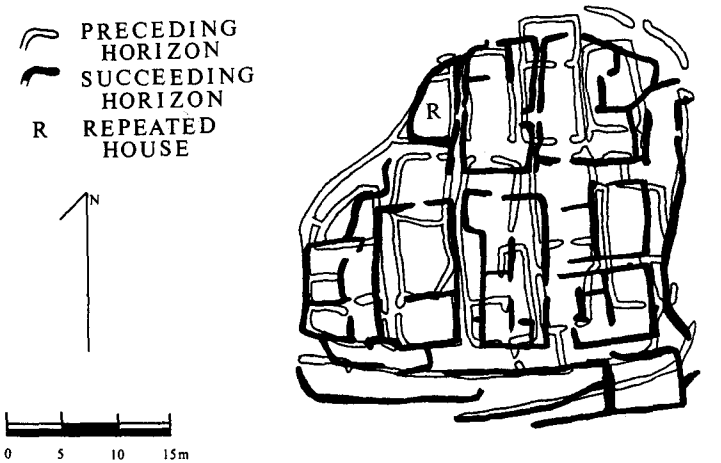

Figure 2.3 Superimposition of floor-plan from horizon III onto the floor-plan of horizon II from the settlement at Ovčarovo (after Todorova et al 1983, plates 15 and 17).

VIII, IX and X display high percentages of survival (33, 36, and 40 per cent respectively). In other generations of houses repetition of house floor-plans and thus percentage survival was considerably lower. For example, horizon III had one surviving house from the previous generation (thus 10 per

Table 2.2 Survival of houses at Ovčarovo in terms of repeated houses in each horizon and as a percentage of total houses in each horizon.

Horizon	Number of repeats from preceding horizon	Percentage of all houses in horizon
I	Not applicable	
II	2	20
III	1	10
IV	2	22
V	0	0
VI	1	9
VII	0	0
VIII	3	33
IX	4	36
X	4	40
XI	0	0
XII	0	0
XIII	N/D	N/D

Note N/D: Horizon XIII had been extensively disturbed by ploughing and thus no information regarding architectural organisation was recovered.

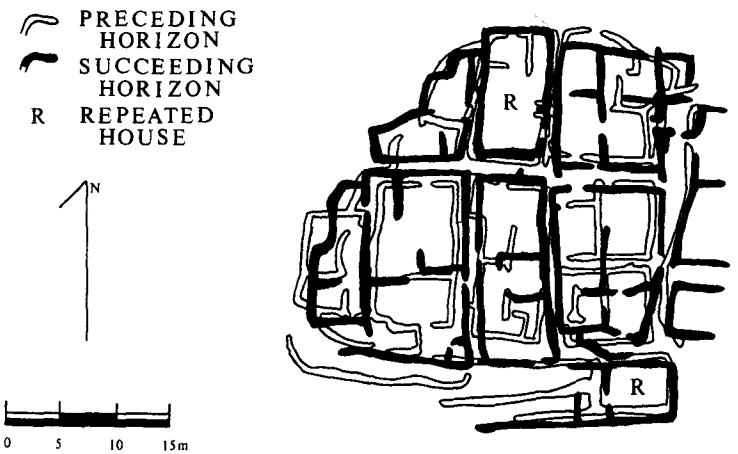

Figure 2.4 Superimposition of floor-plan from horizon IV onto the floor-plan of horizon III from the settlement at Ovčarovo (after Todorova et al. 1983, plates 17 and 19).

cent). Other horizons had no survivors at all: horizons V, VII, XI, and XII; thus 0 per cent).

I contend that repeating houses in successive horizons functioned to ensure continuity of settlement. Continuity of occupation had come under

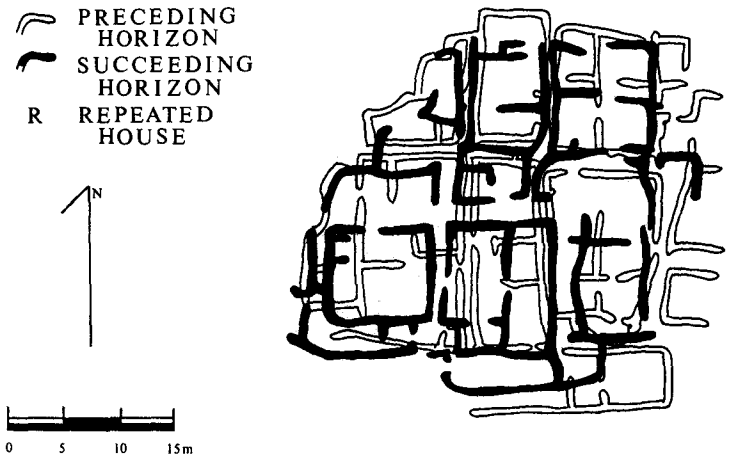

Figure 2.5 Superimposition of floor-plan from horizon V onto the floor-plan of horizon IV from the settlement at Ovčarovo (after Todorova et al. 1983, plates 19–20).

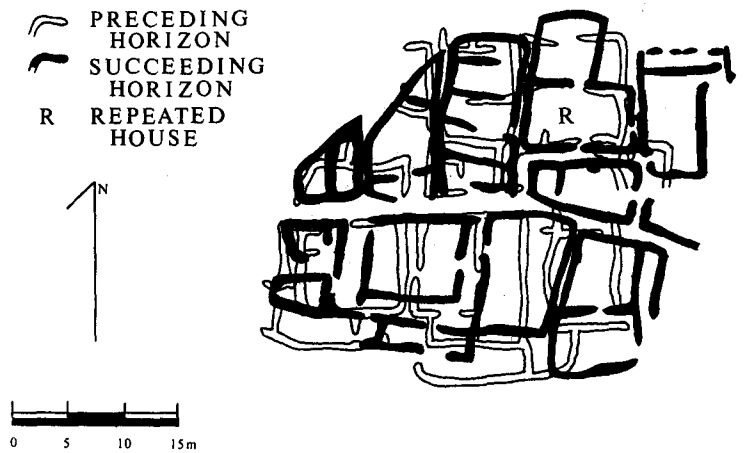

Figure 2.6 Superimposition of floor-plan from horizon VI onto the floor-plan of horizon V from the settlement at Ovčarovo (after Todorova et al. 1983, plates 20–1).

threat not only by breaks in occupation but also by increasing levels of competition for viable settlement space (SHERRATT 1972, 533). As Todorova has documented, it is during the later periods of the Chalcolithic, that the density of settlement increases (see Table 2.3; TODOROVA 1986, 85–9, table 32).

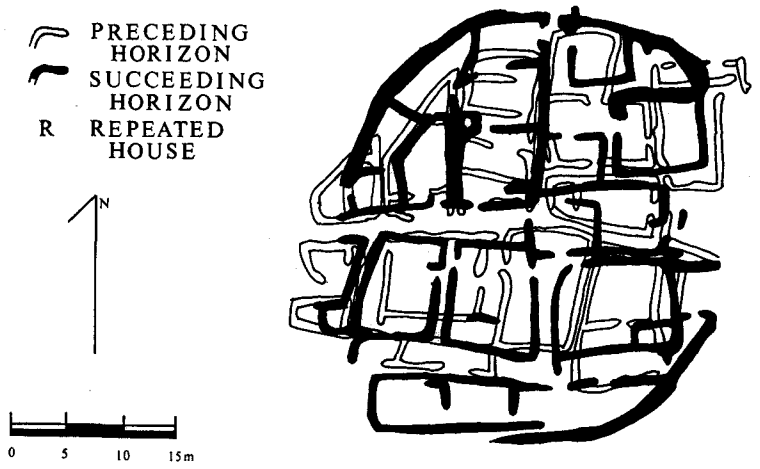

Figure 2.7 Superimposition of floor-plan from horizon VII onto the floor-plan of horizon VI from the settlement at Ovčarovo (after Todorova et al. 1983, plates 21–2).

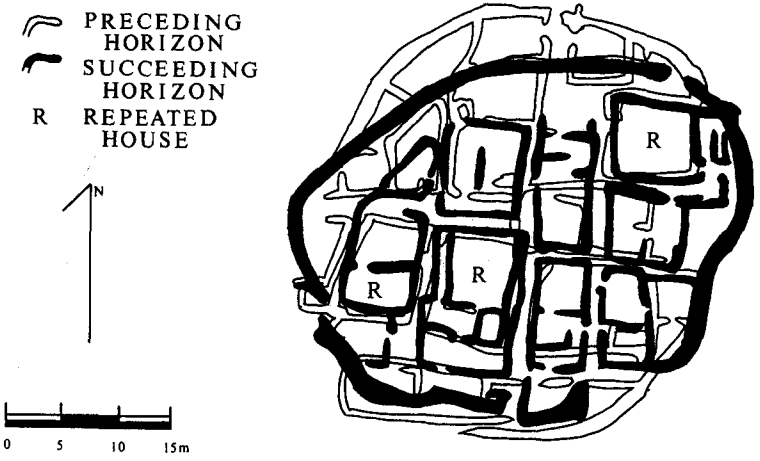

Figure 2.8 Superimposition of floor-plan from horizon VIII onto the floor-plan of horizon VII from the settlement at Ovčarovo (after Todorova et al. 1983, plates 22–3).

The period of significantly high percentages of house survival in horizons VIII through X is intriguing (Table 2.2; Figures 2.8–2.10). Why are house repetitions so common during these horizons and not in others? One part of the answer to this question is related to the increasing competition for settlement space. As detailed in Table 2.3 the number of settlements in the

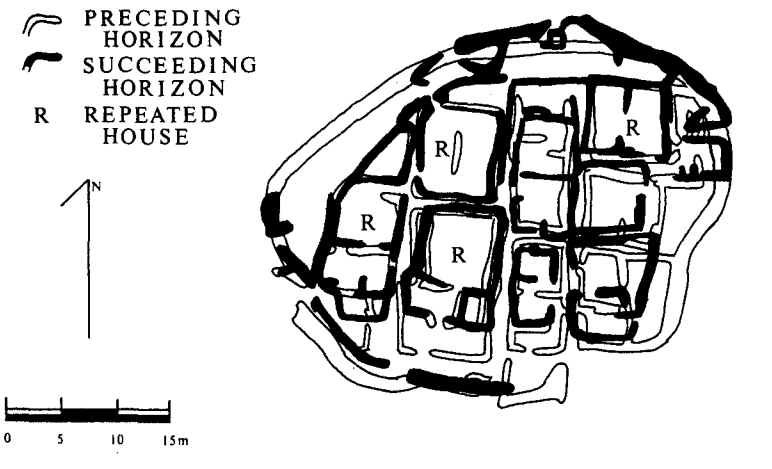

Figure 2.9 Superimposition of floor-plan from horizon IX onto the floor-plan of horizon VIII from the settlement at Ovčarovo (after Todorova et al. 1983, plates 23 and 26).

Figure 2.10 Superimposition of floor-plan from horizon X onto the floor-plan of horizon IX from the settlement at Ovčarovo (after Todorova et al. 1983, plates 26 and 29).

north-eastern region of the country increased dramatically from the middle Chalcolithic. As the number of sites increased, the number of settlers increased, so the density of settlement increased and the level of competition for land, as well as for other resources, intensified. Thus, during the earlier horizons at Ovčarovo, cycles of seasonal settlement relocation would

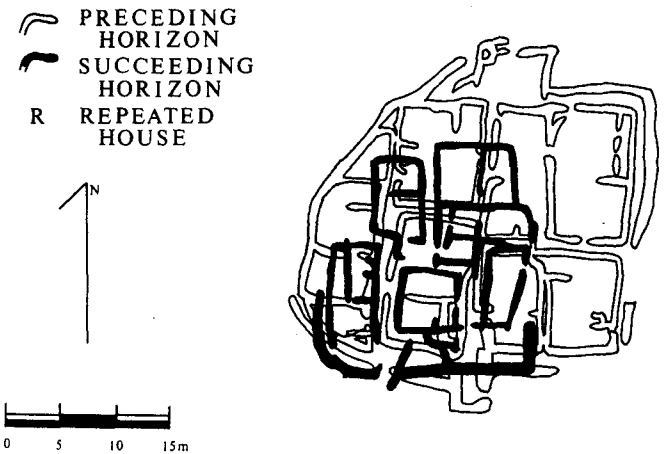

Figure 2.11 Superimposition of floor-plan from horizon XI onto the floor-plan of horizon X from the settlement at Ovčarovo (after Todorova et al. 1983, plates 29–30).

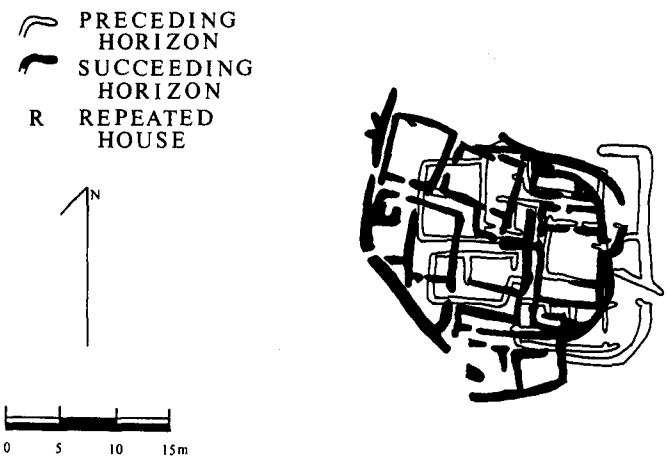

Figure 2.12 Superimposition of floor-plan from horizon XII onto the floor-plan of horizon XI from the settlement at Ovčarovo (after Todorova et al. 1983, plates 30–1).

not have necessitated explicitly intense legitimation of settlement continuity. However, this is not to say that competition for settlement space (especially in terms of individual houses) did not occur.

House plan repetition was only one of a number of tools used to legitimate habitation and social continuity. The continuous creation of the tell it-

Table 2.3 Number of settlements occupied after Todorova's ceramic chronology. Numbers in brackets are percentages of regional total (after Todorova 1986, table 32).

	Chalcolithic							
		Early		Middle		Late		
Area	I	II	III[a]	I[b]	I[c]	II[d]	III	Total
North-east	6	9	5	19	14	15	12	80
	(8)	(11)	(6)	(23)	(18)	(19)	(15)	
North-west	7	6	8	3	1	6	8	39
	(18)	(15)	(20)	(8)	(3)	(15)	(21)	
Thrace	10	12	13	11	6	13	18	83
	(12)	(14)	(16)	(13)	(7)	(16)	(22)	
Total	23	27	26	33	21	34	38	202
	(11)	(13)	(13)	(16)	(10)	(17)	(19)	

Notes
a Ovčarovo horizons I-IV
b Ovčarovo horizons V-VII
c Ovčarovo horizons VIII-X
d Ovčarovo horizons XI-XIII

self, a visible landmark of occupation, would have served to suggest continuity of habitation to foreign visitors and warned off potential competitors from the right to occupy the site. I contend that an additional means of legitimating house continuity and personal rights was accomplished through the production and display of tectomorphic images, specifically miniature three-dimensional representations of houses (see Figure 2.13). I suggest that these tectomorphs were used to legitimate individual and group rights to reoccupation and overcome breaks in settlement continuity. Tectomorphs were used in this way to supplement the practice of house floor-plan repetition.

Tectomorphs at Ovčarovo

Todorova recovered ninety-eight tectomorphs during her excavations at Ovčarovo (Table 2.4). A more accurate frequency is calculated by weighting these gross totals against the size of each horizon to determine the frequencies of tectomorphs per 100 square metres (column 2 in Table 2.4). Next, by ranking the horizons by their tectomorph per 100 square metre score (column 3 in Table 2.4) and comparing these ranks with rankings calculated for all other classes of artefacts from Ovčarovo (column 5 in Table 2.4), a score of tectomorph rank difference was produced (column 6 in Table 2.4). The measure of rank difference reveals in which horizons abnormal frequencies of tectomorphs were produced. Thus in certain horizons (II-IV, XI-XIII) a smaller than expected number of tectomorphs were produced. In other horizons (I, VI–VIII) a larger than expected number were produced. In two horizons (V and X) the expected frequency was close or equal to that of the observed number.

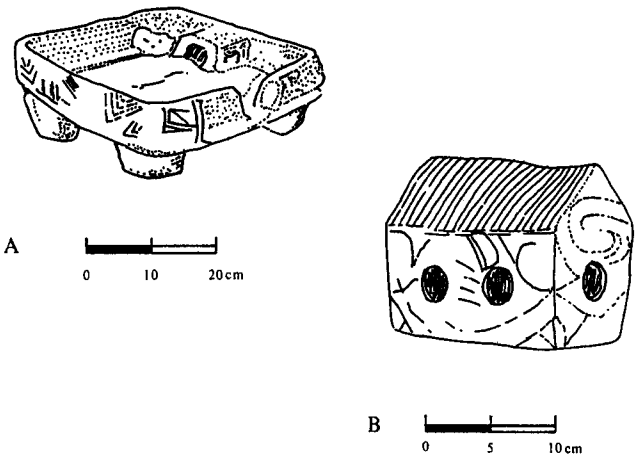

Figure 2.13 Miniature tectomorphic representations from north-eastern Bulgaria. A: Ovčarovo; B: Polyanitsa.

Table 2.4 Corrected frequency and ranking of tectomorphs.

Horizon	Tectomorphs Gross number	Per 100 sq. m.	Freq. rank[b]	All artefacts[a] Per 100 sq. m.	Freq. rank[c]	Rank difference[d]
I	3	.65	4th	3.46	10th	+6
II	2	.22	9th	6.02	5th	-4
III	3	.21	10th	4.34	8th	-2
IV	2	.18	11th	8.86	3rd	-8
V	54	5.02	1st	11.76	2nd	+1
VI	13	1.23	2nd	4.22	9th	+7
VII	9	.72	3rd	1.84	13th	+10
VIII	3	.33	8th	2.60	12th	+4
IX	4	.44	6th	2.64	11th	+5
X	3	.42	7th	5.18	7th	0
XI	2	.56	5th	15.02	1st	-4
XII	0	0.00	12.5th	6.46	4th	-8.5
XIII	0	0.00	12.5th	5.29	6th	-6.5

Notes

a Flint, stone, bone, antler, and complete pots.

b Frequency of tectomorphs per 100 sq. m. ranked from largest to smallest by horizon.

c Frequency of all artefacts per 100 sq. m. ranked from largest to smallest by horizon.

d Difference between ranking for all artefacts and ranking of tectomorphs. A positive value (+) indicates a horizon in which more tectomorphs were produced than would be expected in light of the frequencies of other artefacts. A negative value (-) indicates a horizon in which fewer tectomorphs were produced than would be expected.

I contend that in those horizons where traditions of settlement continuity were threatened, the need for an image representing stability and continuity inspired the production and display of miniature tectomorphs. Thus in horizon I the need to establish primary occupation rights was great and thus a relatively high number of tectomorphs were produced.

Once continuity had been established in horizon I, modest measures of tectomorph display and house repetition were employed in horizons II–IV. Horizon V had no surviving houses from the previous horizon yet had the largest number of tectomorphs (fifty-four). The number of tectomorphs is large only in gross terms. When considered in the context of the duration of this horizon and the large number of other artefacts produced during this horizon, the number is less surprising. Horizon V is the horizon at Ovčarovo with the longest duration and produced the second greatest number of artefacts (see column 4 in Table 2.4). I suggest that during this horizon a number of settlement relocations occurred. With each return to Ovčarovo, a new set of tectomorphs would have been produced. Horizons VI and VII combined an abundance of tectomorphic imagery (+7 and +10 in terms of rank difference) with an almost total absence of repeated houses (only one from horizon V into VI). As Todorova's survey showed (see Table 2.3) it is at this time, the middle Chalcolithic, that site density and competition for land increased dramatically. The abnormally high production of tectomorphs in these horizons is a response to these pressures.

Horizons VIII–IX saw both a large number of tectomorphs (+4 and +5 in rank difference) and the largest percentages of repeated houses (33, 36, and 40 per cent). In the final three horizons the only evidence of any strategy to legitimate continuity is the two tectomorphs from horizon XI; no houses were repeated in any of these last horizons. During occupation and reoccupation of horizons I through X a combination of strategies was employed to legitimate occupation and continuity of housing. I contend that the increase in the use of strategies to legitimate continuity in horizons VIII–X is a reflection of the increasing competition for arable and inhabitable land. The need to sustain occupation rights would have been highest during these horizons and thus the heavy use of both strategies of legitimation is to be expected.

However, as Table 2.5 confirms, neither strategy to legitimate continuity was practised in the final two periods of settlement at Ovčarovo (horizons XII and XIII). If competition for settlement space increased towards the end of the Chalcolithic, why do these final horizons exhibit no record of efforts to maintain continuity or ensure occupation? Indeed, in light of the absence of repeated houses in horizon XI and the low frequency of tectomorphic miniatures, I suggest that the strategies of continuity legitimation had failed by the end of horizon X. It is clear that neither strategy of legitimating continuity retained its effectiveness after the end of horizon XI.

The end of effectiveness for the continuity strategies is the product of

Table 2.5 Comparison of tectomorph frequency and house repetition by horizon at Ovčarovo.

Horizon	Number of houses surviving from preceding horizon	Gross number of tectomorphs	Rank difference of tectomorphs
I	Not applicable	3	+6
II	2 (20%)	2	-4
III	1 (10%)	3	-2
IV	2 (22%)	2	-8
V	0 (0%)	54	+1
VI	1 (9%)	13	+7
VII	0 (0%)	9	+10
VIII	3 (33%)	3	+4
IX	4 (36%)	4	+5
X	4 (40%)	3	0
XI	0 (0%)	2	-4
XII	0 (0%)	0	-8.5
XIII	N/A (N/A)	0	-6.5

Note N/D: Horizon XIII had been extensively disturbed by ploughing and thus no information regarding architectural organisation was recovered.

the complete destruction of horizon X by fire; the occupational hiatus between horizon X and XI; and the broader changes in social organisation taking place in south-eastern Europe at this time. Horizon X was destroyed by fire and marks the end of continuous settlement at Ovčarovo. After a 50–60-year hiatus Ovčarovo was reoccupied in horizon XI (TODOROVA *et al.* 1983, 46). This final reoccupation of the site is distinguished from that of the previous ten horizons, not only by the layer of sterile soil between horizons X and XI and the absence of strategies to legitimate continuity, but also by a significant change in settlement organisation. This change is manifest in a reorientation of the settlement axes and a severe reduction in settlement size (Figures 2.11–2.12).

The tradition of settlement continuity established and maintained during the first ten horizons had been broken; the site had been terminally abandoned at the end of horizon X. When reoccupied fifty years later, neither means of legitimating continuity and settlement occupation were required. I suggest that with the destruction of horizon X Ovčarovo had lost its value as settlement space. This is due in part to the gradual decrease in area available for occupation; as the tell had grown vertically horizon by horizon, so it had shrunk horizontally. Indeed, only a fraction of the habitation area available in the early horizons (1,300 square metres in horizons III or IV) was available for horizon XII (456 square metres). Furthermore, I suggest that the lack of interest in ensuring continuity and legitimating

occupation is a factor of the wider socio-cultural changes taking place at this time in Bulgaria.

The social formula of the early, middle, and the beginning of the later portions of the Chalcolithic period was characterised by the importance of resource and land control. The production and trade of copper and gold from Bulgarian sources, as well as the distribution of the marine mollusc *Spondylus gaederopus* from the Aegean (RENFREW AND SHACKLETON 1979), were important variables in the prestige networks and social structures in Chalcolithic south-eastern Europe on the whole. The importance of metal sources, the process of ore extraction, and the control of established resource areas for the distribution of prestige goods favoured a settled lifestyle which ensured control of resources, land, and trade: hence the popularity of the tells in north-eastern Bulgaria. When these broad social strategies began to shift during the later phases of the Chalcolithic (SHERRATT 1982; 1983) and when different systems of goods and abilities came to be valued (e.g. mobility, movement of goods), the value of settlement continuity dropped.

Thus in the final phase of occupation at Ovčarovo (horizons XI–XIII), it was not necessary, or desirable for that matter, for the occupants of the settlement to prove their rights to settle, occupy, and control the territory associated with the site. Indeed, continuity of settlement occupation was no longer an important bargaining variable. The bases of social interaction had shifted from continuity to more transient criteria. A foreshadowing of the increasing role of the individual is seen during the earlier phases of the Chalcolithic in the production and use of artefacts related to personal adornment (e.g. gold and copper jewellery, *Spondylus* bracelets). At the end of the Chalcolithic individual wealth and status became variables of social importance more greatly admired and manipulated than were settlement history and the legitimation of social position in the Chalcolithic present with reference to the Chalcolithic past. Settlement continuity had become less valuable than individual mobility and resource transport (SHERRATT 1983, 195). Thus the disappearance of strategies to ensure continuity of settlement can be explained. The large number of tell settlements dwindled and then disappeared; tectomorphic miniature representations were no longer produced.

Conclusion

The official publication of Todorova's excavations of Ovčarovo offers one perspective of the role of houses in the lives of the settlement's inhabitants. Houses were the centres of living, sleeping, cooking, eating, pottery production, and grain storage. Todorova outlined the prehistoric meaning of Ovčarovo houses in traditional terms by describing their component features; estimating the man-hours of labour which would have been required for their construction, and calculating the population of the site

(TODOROVA *et al.* 1983, 27–47).

I contend that while there is nothing incorrect with Todorova's treatment of housing at Ovčarovo, or with her conclusions with respect to house size and population, additional insight into the social reality of life at Ovčarovo is gained from a different perspective on the house. As much as providing shelter from the elements and a locus for sleeping and eating, the houses at Ovčarovo were living beings: they were born, they lived, grew, died, and were remembered after their death in miniature representations. The houses at Ovčarovo, through their position as symbols of occupational continuity, participated in maintaining social continuity. Either by the repetition of floor-plans or their representations in miniature form, houses were active components of a complex strategy to maintain stability through time.

At Ovčarovo the sequence of house rebuilding and the changing perspective of continuity and its legitimation during times of competition for settlement space is an example of the results available from alternative perceptions of houses recovered in the archaeological record. I chose to envisage the houses at Ovčarovo from a biographical standpoint. The biographical analogy and the legitimation of continuity are by no means the only correct interpretations of the Ovčarovo house sequence. Doubtless investigations based on other dimensions (e.g. house contents, house size, the house as storage facility, the house as wealth) would provide additional information which could be added to the continuity aspect as outlined in this chapter, as well as to Todorova's original conclusions. By considering an increasing number of diverse perspectives (social, material, and otherwise), the social archaeologist can produce an increasingly accurate reconstruction of the social reality of houses recovered from prehistory.

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Three

Social Inequality on Bulgarian Tells and the Varna Problem

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Regularities in the construction of settlement space are the norm for human communities, but the symbolic significance of the size of the deviations permissible from agreed spatial norms have received diametrically opposed interpretations. The dialectic between spatial regularities and variations is explored in the context of completely excavated village plans of tell settlements in Bulgaria. Directional trends are discerned in superimposed occupation horizons, with the aid of analytical techniques such as built/unbuilt space ratio, minimum interbuilding distance, and access analyses.

The complexity of differentiation of house attributes and control over space is seen as a result of differential reproductive success, which led to the emergence of more successful lineages. The Varna cemetery – a unique display of corporate wealth in the eastern Balkans – reveals comparable trends in increasing formalisation in mortuary space. It is suggested that this was the result of competition over the social reproduction of alliances, a competition related to the social inequalities created on tell settlements.

Introduction

In 1972, agricultural operations led to the discovery of a prehistoric cemetery on the outskirts of the Black Sea resort of Varna, in Bulgaria (IVANOV 1973). The excavations which ensued revealed the earliest concentration of goldwork in the world, dating to *c.* 5000 CAL BC. A plethora of publications and museum catalogues have ensued over the last seventeen years (BEST 1984; DEMOULE AND LICHARDUS-ITTEN 1989; GEORGIEV 1978; 1988; GIMBUTAS 1977a; b; GOLDSCHATZE 1975; IVANOV, I. 1975; 1978a; 1987b; 1983; 1984; 1988; 1989; LICHARDUS 1984; 1988; RADUNČEVA 1989; REN-