A MULTISCALAR MODEL FOR THE STRYMON NEOLITHIC

Presented for the degree of MPhil in Archaeology

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Declarations

I declare that, except where indicated by specific reference, the work submitted is the result of the candidate's own investigation and the views expressed are those of the candidate.

Candidate Signature: Kati Baneva

I declare that no portion of the work presented has been submitted in substance for any other degree or award at this or any other university or place of learning, nor is being submitted concurrently in candidature for any degree or other award.

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Thesis Summary

There are geographic regions in south-eastern Europe which have been continuously overlooked by mainstream Anglophone prehistoric discourse. This had been at the basis of an unavoidably patchy understanding of the mechanism of the European Neolithic as a whole. My work targets the lack in understanding of a little-known area in the Southern Balkans. This thesis is about the Neolithic of the Strymon River which flows from Bulgaria into Greece. Hailed as a highway or incoming neolithization groups, the Neolithic of the river's catchment is little-known, despite the richness of its material and settlement records. The thesis presents material previously unavailable to English-speaking audiences and an original perspective on the Neolithic of south-eastern Europe. It is a work which aims to avoid the separation of the river's catchment based on national borders.

The analytical model which this work proposes is of a mutliscalar nature, incorporating both temporal and spatial scales, in an attempt at creating a holistic understanding of a prehistoric area. The multiscalar model finds its roots in the Annales theoretical approach and proposes as a viable alternative to choosing a singular scale on which to focus analysis and interpretation. Working at large, medium and small scales of analysis, this work establishes a settlement network pattern for the entirety of the Neolithic, a settlement biography for two examples of Strymon Neolithic sites, and finally attempts viewing the everyday prehistoric narrative from an innovative point of view.

The thesis is successful in narrating the prehistory of the river as a singular geographic unit, disregarding the limitations of national borders. The outcome reveals an unexpected pattern of settlement establishment along the Strymon catchment. Instead of the normative view that the river was populated from its southernmost areas and northwards, the data evidences a much different case.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express gratitude for the completion of this project to several people. It has been a truly harrowing experience, mentally and financially, to see this project to a sort of finish. What started as a self-funded PhD and is now ending as a self-funded MPhil thesis would not have been possible without months on end without days off, weekends or any respite. I worked so hard to provide for myself this opportunity and for that I am grateful. I am also indebted to Ally MacKenzie Crystal and Terry Crystal for their financial support when I was faced with the hard reality of not being able to pay a year's fees.

Exploring the Bulgarian and Greek Strymon would have been rubbish without the camaraderie of Donald Crystal, my dearest friend, in academia and life. He also kindly took the photos presented in the text, while I drove us around the almost roads of the wild Bulgarian south west. My parents who willingly dedicated time to exploring the Strymon with me were also irreplaceable companions, especially when our car was robbed 10 m. from the excavations at Mursalevo, Blagoevdrag district.

Lastly, I don't think I would have actualy finished this work if it wasn't for my partner, Spencer. He spent so much time keeping our home in ship shape and keeping me sane, and I am grateful beyond words for the support that kept me going.

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3 INTRODUCTION

The Strymon River is an eclectic landscape of mountains, valleys and myriad tributary networks, located in the Southern Balkans. Flowing between Bulgaria and Greece the river has played and continues to play a major role in the theories of Balkan Neolithization (Fig. 1). The Neolithic in this area has a chronological span of ca. 1200 years. It is difficult, as I shall be discussing later in this thesis, to give a precise date span for the Neolithic of larger areas but within the geographic unit of the Strymon, the period spanned between ca 6000 cal BC to ca 5800 cal BC. I have long contemplated conducting a study which closely engages with the powerful phenomenon which the Neolithic became in the Balkans. In 2015 I wrote a thesis which focused on the Neolithization debate surrounding the Strymon River (Baneva 2015). After several trips along the course of the river, and being familiar with its landscape since childhood, I was left inspired by its setting. Upon following my previous work concerning the Strymon I was left with the unsettling realization of how its segmentation into a Bulgarian and Greek part has de facto hindered a holistic appreciation of the Neolithic along the entire river catchment. This segmentation has created unnecessary boundaries to Neolithic research but fits comfortably with the overall Balkan tendency of respecting national boundaries more than research interests. That is why I decided to dedicate another thesis to this mighty river, and this time to incorporate all areas of it, regardless of national territories. A study of the Strymon in its entirety might also serve as a precedent, I hope, for a renewing of British research interest in widely unpublicized areas of the Balkans. With a wealth of materials and remnants of social practices, there are many portions of the Balkan Peninsula, and Bulgaria in particular, which have been left out of the European Neolithic British discourse for too long. The purpose of this thesis is to study the Strymon River as a singular geographic unit and bring to light information previously unknown in Anglophone studies.

The Strymon River is 415 km long. Its source lies in the Vitosha Mountain, northwest to Bulgaria's capital. Strymon discharges into the Aegean coast of Northern Greece, into the Strymon Gulf. The Bulgarian sector of the river is 258 km long and its Greek portion is 157 km long. Is has been speculated that the current name of the river derives from mythological roots. The river's first known name, although these are untraceable sources found in Greek legends, was Palestin (a son of Poseidon). Later the name seems to have changed to Strymon (son of Ares and Helike) (Dremsizova-Nelchinova 1987, 7).

Figure 1. General Map of the greater Balkan area. The Strymon begins in the Vitosha Mountain and flow into the Ageagean sea (Source: http://www.14sea.org/img/3_III_1_1200.jpg).

The Strymon emerged as the tectonic boundary between the Serbomacedonian and Rhodope massifs, as a NE-SW trending basin during the Neogene (Tranos 2011). The underlying geomorphology of the Strymon River is closely associated with changes in the morphological structures of the Rila-Rhodopes massif in the Neogen-Quaternary (Stranski 1982). From the late

Quaternary onwards the basin itself has been separated by the Strymon Gulf due to a N-S tectonic extension (Tranos 2011). Due to this separation the prevalent sedimentation of the river basin of a terrestrial character. The geomorphology of the river basin is a complicated combination of starkly contrasting in height and sloping river terraces (Stranski 1982). The thickness of alluvium south of the Kresna Gorge, in the Lower Strymon, reaches up to 25m (Stranski 1982). Karst groundwaters collect in Mesozoic carbonate rocks, occurring in the Upper Strymon, the Radomir sub-valley, and in the region of Kraishte; the Lower Strymon is characterized by underground karstic formations (web 1) The mean perennial rainfall of the Strymon catchments is ca 1390 mm/year (web 1). The Upper and Lower Strymon is mainly fed by karstic groundwater, while the Missled Strymon the runoff is made up of snowmelt mountain streams (Stranski 1982). In the Upper Strymon area the seasonal variation between the long-term maximum and minimum discharge is low to moderate, while in the lower parts of the Strymon there is high seasonal hydrological variation, promoting the likelihood of floods (Shoulikidis 2009).

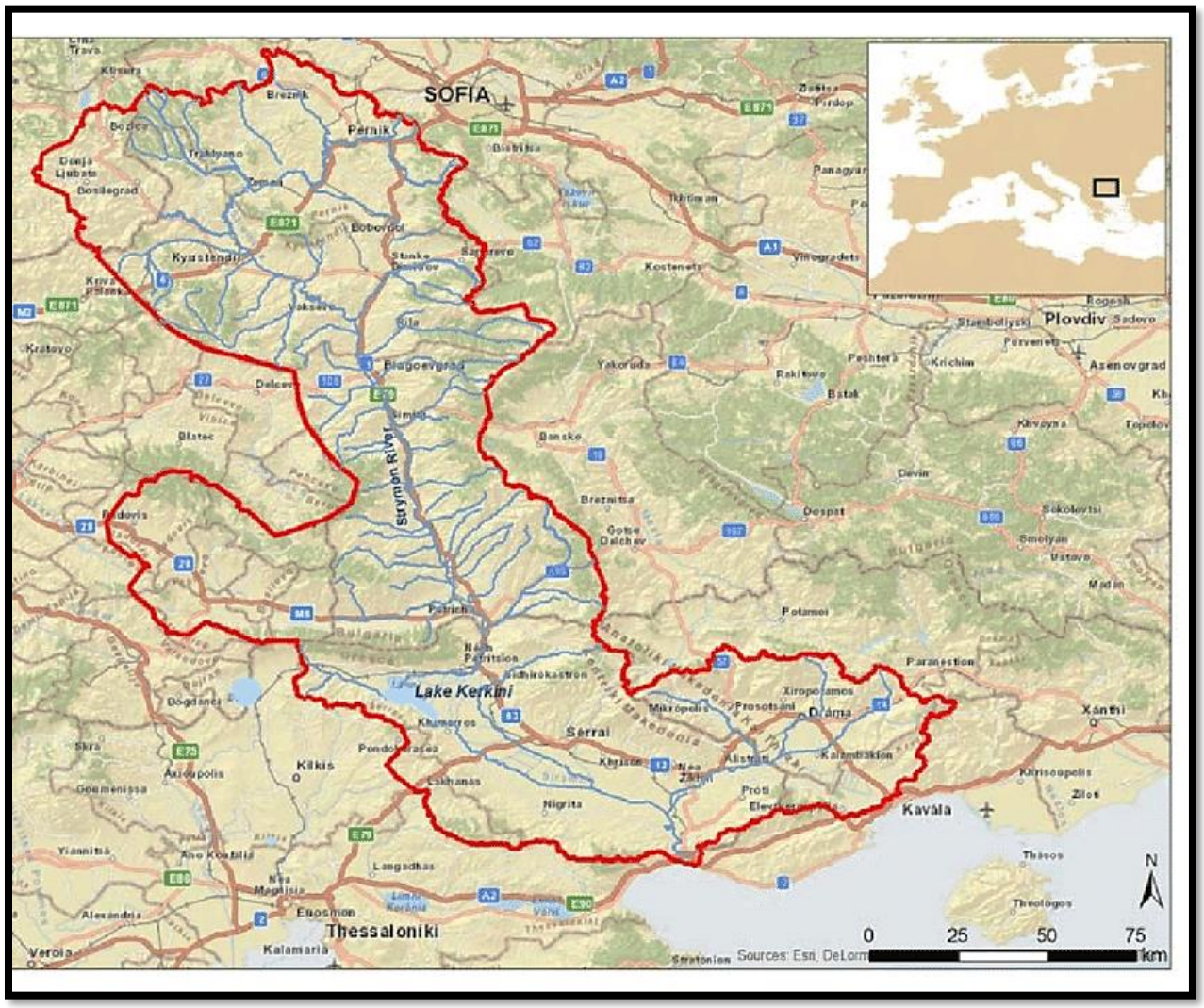

Figure 2. Map of the tributaries to the Strymon (source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Lake-Kerkini-and-Strymonas-River-catchment_fig2_308369647)

The transitional nature (Mediterranean to continental) of the climate and vegetation of the Southwest Bulgaria and bordering sub-Mediterranean climate of northern Greece make this area crucial for the understanding of Neolithization practices (Marinova et al. 2012). The modern-day vegetation for the lowlands up to 900 m. consists of oak and hornbeam forests (Marinova et al. 2012). There is little evidence to suggest large scale exploitation of the southern Balkans woodlands prior to the beginning of the Bronze Age (Van Andel and Runnels 1995, Marinova 2012). Pollen analysis from high altitude lakes in Southwestern Bulgaria has revealed that between 5900 - 5500 cal BC deciduous Oak forests declined and a rise in coniferous forests

occurred; lower lying birch vegetation was increasingly replaced by coniferous flora due to increase in humidity and precipitation (Marinova et al. 2012). Below the belt deciduous mixed oak forests developed; a high count of cereal pollen in cores reveals an increasing settlement activity along the Middle Strymon in the first half of the 6th mil cal BC (Marinova et al. 2012).

There are two aims of this thesis which need clear outlining. The first aim of this study is to study the Strymon River as a singular geographic unit. It is imperative to incorporate all sites which arose in relation to the river if a holistic understanding is to be gained. Does a consistent settlement pattern emerge for all the Strymon Neolithic settlements, when the area is studied as a single unit? One of the primary objectives in the study will be to substantiate the claim that the Strymon catchment forms a singular geographic unit. Such an evidence-based assertion will enable the construction of a settlement pattern for all known sites. Another objective is to bring to light information previously neglected in Anglophone studies. The importance of gaining understanding and clarity of the Strymon Neolithic cannot be over-stated. The area of the southern Balkans played a key role in the advancement of the gargantuan changes, which the Neolithic encapsulated. The Strymon settlement record, as discussed within this thesis, presents a scholarly audience with one of the most intriguing examples of settlement establishment and growth. The material assemblages from many of the sites bear unparalleled importance to the relative chronology of the entire region of the Balkans. The implications for a richer understanding of the European Neolithic which come with studying such a region are of an immense magnitude. The second aim of this thesis is the creation of a concise interpretational framework which focuses simultaneously on grand narratives, generational rhythms and everyday prehistoric life. Can the multiscalar framework elucidate the mechanism for establishment of persistent lifeways?

This study is designed to serve as an investigation of the entirety of the Strymon river basin. This includes territories north and south of the Bulgarian-Greek border. The principal administrative units, provinces, over which Strymon flows in Bulgaria are Pernik (Pk), Kyustendil (KN) and Blagoevgrad (Bgd); the latter also being the largest area. In Greece, the Strymon flows through the west part of the administrative region known as Eastern Macedonia, this includes the

municipalities of Serres and Drama. It is the case, however, that Neolithic sites, associated with chronologies and trends along the Strymon are found in the Kavala municipality. Kavala is the seat of the Eastern Macedonia and Thrace administrative region.

The Strymon has many tributaries with different discharges. The largest tributaries to the river are the Rila River, Dragovishtitsa, Blagoevgradska Bistritsa, Konska River, Sandanska Bistritsa and the Angitis. Apart from these, there are many smaller secondary tributaries, which weave a large territorial net creating the larger Strymon catchment area.

Within this thesis I propose that a study engaging with multiple scales of research is not only possible but also logical. The basis for this proposed methodology lies with the multiscalar approach to the past developed by the French school of Annales (Braudel 1975, Febvbre 1977, Le Roy Ladurie 1978). The second aim of my thesis is then to lay out a proposed model for working at multiple spatial and temporal scales. This model would ideally be a successful tool in unfolding a multifaceted story of human lives over a large, but cohesive, geographic area. The objectives for working towards such a model will be the analysis of the Strymon catchment at three scales. The long-term, large-scale pattern of settlement distribution, apart from being the first proposed scale of research will also reveal some previously unknown, and completely unexpected results. A medium scale analysis of settlements and their genesis will have the objective of being the catalyst of long-term changes, as propelled by everyday activity. An everyday narration of prehistoric life will present an anthropocentric attempt of grasping human existence which gives birth to change. While the importance of devising a multiscalar methodological framework will be highlighted, this thesis might not provide a full, unimpeded application of the model to the Strymon data set. The data needed for a wholesale application of the multiscalar approach should be of the very highest resolution, which the current state of Strymon research simply cannot provide.

The study follows a structure intended to provide maximum clarity of the location and previous engagement with the river's prehistoric inhabitation. The first chapter is dedicated to the interpretational framework I propose. Why and how can a multiscalar approach to a geographic

area bear fruitful insight into its developments is focused on extensively. In the second chapter of the study the history of research and present state of research are discussed. Attention is also given to the different ideologies and methodologies that have shaped the current state of knowledge. The third chapter is very narrowly aimed at presenting the chronological framework for the study of the Strymon. The leading chronological timeline is outlined and a nascent issue in the terminology between the Bulgarian and Greek chronologies is resolved for the sake of consistency. Chapter 4 presents the Strymon settlement case studies upon which I rely for the testing of the multiscale approach. The aim of presenting a comprehensive overview of the scope of building techniques and the production of materials is to begin the process of thorough perception of human activities. In Chapter 5 an application of the multiscalar approach to the present data is proposed. The large, medium and everyday scales are each tackled and the viability of applying the multiscalar model is tested. The large-scale settlement pattern is revealed. An approach to writing a settlement's biography is proposed. Everyday narratives and the extent to which these are seen to have a bearing on the overall picture of the Strymon Neolithic are discussed. In the conclusion to the thesis I draw attention to the outcomes of the research focused on the Strymon catchment and present possibilities for multiscalar framework future lines of research.

4 Chapter 1. The Theoretical Grounding for the Multiscalar Approach

"I am by no means the sworn enemy of the event" – Braudel 1975

Space and time are the two central theoretical concepts of my thesis. Which should come first, which one is secondary for a purely archaeological practice? Or are these two colossal categories of equal impact in archaeological interpretation? I am going to argue that not only are they equal, but also vital to use in unison.

In the mid nineteenth century, the historian Leopold von Ranke laid claim to a history methodology which would inform the view of history "*wie es eigentlich gewesen war*" (von Ranke 1887). The study of the past has come a very long-winded and complex road since that claim was made. Nowadays, to study the past is an endeavour so segmented into established disciplines, and diffracted through political and ideological prisms, it is all but impossible to allow for a singular envisioning of the past. Multimodality, seen in the way of people claiming pieces from different versions of the same, has driven humanities and sciences researchers into making tentative suggestions and creating politically-driven narratives. While these approaches are in no way to be condemned, the question stands before all researchers, peering into the past, whether we want to explain the "how", "what" or "why". In this thesis I do not suggest that any one discipline can claim to a wholesale approach to all 3 questions, rather I will explain how archaeology has the utmost responsibility to strive to answer them all.

The main reason for the creation of my thesis has been a problem, which has been increasingly apparent to me in the way both archaeologists and the general public understand human existence in the past. Specialists in archaeology segment themselves into subgroups, studying specific narratives of a hybrid humanities-science nature. Bioarchaeologists, landscape archaeologists, dating specialists, GIS specialists and theoretical thinkers - each claim a piece of the archaeological record. A big portion of contemporary archaeology navigates the politics of discipline interest and discourse. The strive towards the generating of a wholesale notion of the human past has somehow managed to take a back seat, while we are all busy laying claims to what part of archaeological records we should be studying. Only a fool would suggest we are to study everything, together, collectively – life as a monolithic phenomenon. With the risk of being such a fool, in this thesis I will argue that a methodology should be created, that allows for the visualization of prehistoric life as a wholesale experience – how it *might* have been. This is an appropriate stage to also address the ever-present issue of subjectivity in archaeological discourse. Rather than arguing for a universal objectivity of observations, I will admit that any product of such a thesis will be a highly subjective narrative. Albeit based on solid observations

of prehistoric settlements and past human activity, my thesis can only be a singular view of a history, as it might have happened.

4.1 A SHORT HISTORY OF "TIME"?

Let us look, in some detail, at the development of "time"-centred theories, which form a part of the multiscalar approach. I will firstly take a wider look at the fields of philosophy, social sciences, history and anthropology, and trace how the perception of time has been continually evolving; thus, creating an easily malleable category applicable to a wide range of scholarly debate. While time does not have a consistent place in theoretical debate, I will draw attention to existing stances and emerging attitudes in archaeological discourse.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the philosopher McTaggart wrote a short, albeit influential, piece on time which has spurred theoretical discussion ever since (1908). In the *Unreality of Time,* he discussed the phenomenological experience of time and determines between two separate perceptions of time: the A-series and B-series. The A-series type of time perception is signified by the difference between past, present and future events and how the interplay between these determines our view of experience time relativity. B-series is a notion of time in which events are designated as earlier as or later than each other. McTaggart argues that the events in the A-series always need an external, unchanging proxy to determine their relation to each other (past, present or future); while the B-series events, once determined by predecession always remain fixed in an exact alignment. In the simplest of perceptions, we can distinguish the A series and B series as temporal and atemporal, one accepting and one rejecting the existence of a tense, respectively. The controversy surrounding the A-series temporal view is that an entity is required, objectively outside of that time itself, to stabilize the succession of past, present and future events. It is the notion of succession of event which raises concern with archaeological thinkers (Lucas 2005, 10). It is pivotal, however, to draw attention to this early controversial stance on temporality/atemporality because of the unconscious bias, which could go unchecked in archaeological thinking. A simple subscription to unquestioned linearity of events equals a straightforward subscription to the problematic A-series view.

An important new paradigm for the perception of time in the humanities emerged out of the French School of Annales in the first half of the 20th century. The notion of time perspectivism most famously, albeit not only, was propagated by Fernand Braudel (e.g.2001) of the Annales School of thought. The impact of Braudel's work on many of the humanities has been remarkable and its impact on theoretical thinking became an archaeological approach on its own. This entailed the understanding that the temporal past consists of layers of rhythm, which intertwine their various duration and impact to instigate historical change as we know it. Time perspectivism has enjoyed a mixed reception by archaeological thinkers (Bintliff 1991, Knapp 1992, Sherratt 1992). It has been argued that most time perspectivism inspired archaeological interpretations are detached from a coherent view of temporality and the social context these explore (Harding 2005, 83). The Annales view of time, at all its scales, does not begin or end with Braudel's historical work. In the 1920s Lucien Febvre was the first to turn the historical magnifier onto the role of the individual, in their restricted life-frame, as sources of major change (1977). Febvre indeed belonged to the first generation of Annales thinkers which aspired towards the deconstruction of disciplinary boundaries. Decades after the passing of Braudel, Leroy Ladurie carried forward the framework of time-perspectivism, arguing for a problem-based historical interpretation. This entailed the merging of events and underlying social structure into a generational approach to understanding change (Harding 2005). Le Roy Ladurie's most famous work is *Montaillou* (1975) in which the intimate lives of villagers during an Inquisition inquest are subjected to a meticulous study. The place of the Annales discourse in archaeological perception of the past has indeed been subjected to many discussions but in its majority seems to be "old news" to contemporary archaeological thinkers. The approach, together with its implications is considered dated, irrelevant to the needs of contemporary study agendas. My own stance on the matter of utilizing the work of the Annales School is quite the opposite. I see an untapped potential for the use of a multiscalar (time-perspectivism inspired) reasoning in archaeological interpretation. The incorporation of the Annales multiscalar methodology will be of further focus in this chapter and thesis. As such its discussion will continue further on.

In his pivotal work titled *Time and Narrative* (1985) Ricoeur introduces an element to the discussion of time in the narration of the past, which is of immense importance for this work. He posits the question whether a hundred years can be present at once (1985, 8). This is, of course, an allusion to the unfolding argument about the way language is used in writing the narrative of historical times. There is an obvious linguistic problem involved in the writing of historical narrative, and in this I include its prehistoric counterpart. As Ricoeur argues (1985), a paradox exists in the writing of past time as a meaningful entity, while past time is, to the logical mind, simply no longer existent. Yet, in (pre)historic narration we speak of time as a certain, stable entity and we insist on measuring time. The paradox of measuring something that simply no longer exists, argues Ricoeur, is a matter negotiated by language (1985, 8). By linguistically addressing the perceived length of time of events and processes, we create the basis on which all further narrative exists. Thus, language becomes an important tool in the creation of narratives about the past. Since language is such a versatile tool, it then follows, the past of any given society can be constructed in a countless number of ways. What navigates the manner in which the past is written (and spoken) of is the underlying discourse, which (pre)historical researchers subscribe to (Kumar 1991).

An important separation between the way in which a narrator experiences time and the time they narrate is encoded in two very different, yet similar German words – Erfahrung and Erlebniss (Frow 1997, 223). While both can easily be translated into English as “experience” the semantics of their usage is quite specific. Erfahrung implies the gaining of some kind of knowledge while Erlebniss is intricately linked to the physical, embodied experience. They are both “experiencing” but in different conditions and contexts. This important distinction introduced by Frow (1997) has great implications for the creation of temporal narratives of the past. The textuality of a written narrative, he suggests, is not pliable to the same rules of temporality which control our lived experience. There is no before and after in a narrative, because all events exist within a malleable field of time perspectivism. The embodiment of past events needs to occur simultaneously as the creation of the narrative. A highly intriguing and immensely relevant suggestion is that a narrative can have its own internal time series (Le Poidevin 2007, 167). Such

singular narrative-specific time series can entail events which do not adhere to the linear nature of our lived time. This facilitates the writing of past narratives in which time, essentially, does not possess the narrow restraints of past, present and future. Events, occurrences, stability/change can then be studied as a dynamic ensemble of existence. The philosophical field of narrative temporality has borne fruit to a diverse discourse about time and narration. Since it is within the domain of archaeological inquiry to produce narratives of the past it is more than a little surprising that we do not more often discuss issues of narrative temporality (for an excellent discussion see Pluciennik 1999). It is the field of anthropology which has also greatly contributed to the humanities-wide discussion of lived, human time. I have found inspiration in the call for distancing ourselves from our own perceived modernity when writing about the subjects of our study, be those prehistoric or contemporary (Overing and Passes 2000, Overing 2003, James and Mills 2005, 6).

Time is, perhaps, one of the most difficult and loaded concepts subjected to discussion in archaeological discourse. Entire volumes dedicated to the deciphering of the concept in an archaeological context have not been the focus of much research (but see Murray 1999, Lucas 2005 and Olivier 2015 for excellent examples). How we should think about the passing of time as archaeologists has been a starting point of theoretical inquiry. We might accept, as an ultimate truth, that time is purely a linear concept and superimpose our modern-day concept of it onto the whole of human history. This is the most logical way to incorporate human developments into a time frame. Still, the notion of linearity heavily restricts the temporal dimensions of the deep history narrative. That time might need to be thought of as a cyclical occurrence has been suggested by researchers more than once (e.g. Bailey 2007, Lucas 2005). This mode of thinking entails the consideration of events for their repetitive cyclical or otherwise multivalent nature, a non-linear model of change. Everything from the changing of the seasons (wherever these have a notable climatic difference), to the replenishing of water sources, creation or destruction of a dwelling or the death/birth of a social group member – could be a beginning/end of a “time”. In that sense, to only look back at history and write in terms of calendar years is a self-indulgent task. While the desire to know exactly when something has occurred, in linear temporal relation

to us, is a great driving force in archaeological research, it is research for the sake of numerical accuracy. This type of exploration is often solely focused on the big-scale changes, while small-scale, micro events and occurrences might remain obscured by the overwhelming limelight on the big picture. What I want to draw more attention towards is a discussion of time thought of as a lived experience. The beginning and end of perceived stages of life, the interconnectedness between the daily, the annual and ancestral are viable topics of study, alongside their big-scale counterparts within a multiscalar approach.

The brief overview of 'time'-centred research presented here is the assemblage of ideas out of which my own thinking originates. The discourse I adhere to is one of anthropocentrism. The narrative I seek to create is one not easily subjugated to simple pursuit of chronologically linear explanations. It is to be a narrative of suggested embodied and accumulated experiences and how these could have possibly shaped the material record we uncover.

4.1.1 What is Time for archaeologists?

A particularly prominent facet of time-centred archaeological thinking has been embedded into the *three-age system*, which has to this very day remained at the basis of temporal perceptions in prehistory. This mode of chronological thinking aimed originally at a narrative as well as a relative chronology (Lucas 2005, 50) and its tremendous impact preordains a lot of the reasoning behind prehistoric perceptions. That there is a beginning, a middle and an end, simply put, forms the groundwork of archaeological imagination. This is also a notion, however, that is to be constantly questioned. In his work on the archaeology of time (2005), Gavin Lucas raises an issue of chronological time and 'real' time. Attention is drawn to a more sensitive perception of how different time scales interact to create the very definition of 'time' (2005, 43). In the same work Lucas also discussed the question of timescales within prehistory and outside of it, in different disciplines, e.g. history and anthropology. Archaeological timescales, he argues, are too different from its sister-disciplines for an adequate exchange of methodological frameworks to be satisfied. Olivier suggests that the act of archaeology itself, as defined in the work (2004, 206) is

only made possible because of the precise order of successive events/periods, discernible in the archaeological record (2004, 208). He continues his argument by claiming that archaeology is uniquely concerned with the fragments of memory recorded in the very matter we study; and as such our discipline cannot simply subscribe to the unilinear, cumulative nature of purely history research (Olivier 2004, 208-209).

This is where my own work reaches an impasse with much of the research done in the theoretical field of archaeological time. For my own framework presented here I draw heavily on the Annales approach to time-scales and their interconnectedness, in other words - time perspectivism. John Bintliff (1991) and Bernard Knapp (1992) had their own distinct impact on the adoption of the Annales time perspectivism into archaeological discourse. While these important contributions serve as an example of an attempted merging of disciplines, a coherent realization of their theoretical calls is yet to be accomplished. The reception of time perspectivism in the post-processual stage of archaeology has been summarized by Bailey (2007) and its common misunderstanding and subsequent rejection. It has been Geoff Bailey who has advocated the inclusion of the original methodology into archaeological discourse (2007, 2008). It is important to note that the time perspectivism advocated by Bailey is not the same time perspectivism of which I have already written in this chapter. The approach Bailey advocated is very much concerned with the exploration of alternate temporal scales of research, coupled with the versatile nature of the archaeological record. While the underlying basis of Bailey's approach has clear roots in the Annaliste perspective, this has not been an overtly discussed matter in his works (but see Bailey 2007, 201). The notion of exploration of multiple temporal and geographic scales, as advertised by the subsequent generations of Annales scholars, apart from but including Braudel, remains somewhat outside the reach of Bailey's time-perspectivism. What I have traced in my own research is an attitude of neglecting, evading the matter of big scale archaeological research, in favour of more fragmented temporal and geographic scales. This aversion, I conclude is a direct result of the 1980s post-processual turn, which called for a paradigm concerned with the post-modernist turn to deconstructing the very notion of human existence. A direct result of this became the solidifying of the notion that the big scale, long term research is inherently

environmentally deterministic and as such devoid of an embodied sensitivity. In recent years Robb and Pauketat (2013, Pauketat 2013) have paid extensive attention to the way time scales are used and considered in contemporary archaeological discourse. Their work underlines the pertinent aversion to solving issues of large scales and sheds light on the postprocessual tendency of shunning the large scale as the source of environmentally deterministic and structurally confined explanation of the past (and hence unacceptable to the "post-modern" thinker) (Robb and Pauketat 2013, 5-17).

The redeeming of large scale, long term research in the overall discourse of archaeological inquiry is an important step along with the establishment of a multi-scalar approach. To propagate the importance of processes only visible in the scale of a millennium can no longer be viewed as an encroachment on the fine-tuned search for individualised human experience. The two simply need to be of equal value.

4.2 Talking "Space"?

The study of space has, not unlike that of time, taken many shapes and entered many narratives throughout antiquity to modern times. The way space is perceived of seems to bring on many different and often clashing opinions; it is ultimately a cross-disciplinary exercise in how physical existence itself is understood and has had an unprecedented influence on archaeology. Recent trends in philosophical ethics studies have called for a moving away from anthropocentric ideas of space and moving towards a more eco-centric approach to the study of landscapes and human-nature interaction (e.g. Passmore 1980, Steiner 2010). The move towards environmental ethics which has been overwhelmingly important in the development of Western philosophical thought, however, has also had a noteworthy impact on archaeological discourse. This has resulted in the further fragmentation of the overall topic of study into subfields, a major one of which is landscape archaeology with its at times predominantly scientific methods. The segmentation of the archaeological field further into social archaeology has served as an unspoken divider of the overall matter of the archaeological record. There are, nowadays, many different, often juxtaposed discourses, for the way archaeologists can (and should) interpret past

space. It is, in fact, pivotal for a student of archaeology to choose a sub-discipline early in their education, and once in that lane, adhere to prescribed methods.

Studying the topic of space from a historical perspective, the Annales approach, and especially that of Braudel has also echoed throughout the humanities and brought to the foreground a vividly intricate perception of how human (but not only) landscapes change over time. Apart from a brief notion of implementing an Annales method to archaeology in the early 1990s (e.g. Bintliff 1991), there has not been a wholehearted incorporation of the multiscalar framework within archaeology. There has been, instead, a singling out of some of Braudel's more popular ideas, specifically pertaining to large scale research.

4.2.1 The Archaeology of Space

Discussions surrounding the concept of space in archaeology have been and still are much more varied and numerous than that of time. Space, with all its physical, symbolic, emotional and social implications is something of a "goes without saying" attribute of human lives; only when the values we impose on space are in some way questioned does it become a conscious attribute of existence (Buttimer 1980, 167). The philosophical concept of phenomenology was swept into archaeological discourse in the 1980s. The approach has been aiding researchers in the study of how humans experience and relate to the spaces they inhabit (Tilley 2008, Van Dyke 2014). It is not within the reach of the present study to present an encyclopaedic knowledge of the implementation of the concept of phenomenology in archaeology; suffice to say the introduction of the philosophical method of perceiving of space has had a long-lasting effect on the way in which prehistoric landscapes are written of and imagined. Phenomenology as a method studies the ways in which physical space is experienced in everyday life and seeks to discern whether patterns transcend the purely empirical contexts and hint at the essential human condition (Seamon 1980, 149). In archaeology, the focus of phenomenological studies is first and foremost the concern for embodied experiences of past landscapes (Tilley 2008, 271). Landscape archaeology itself does not have a long history, being introduced in archaeology only in the 1980s (David and Thomas 2008, 27). The notion of an archaeology wholly dedicated to the study of landscapes has shifted along the understanding of what comprises an archaeological landscape;

when the concept is summoned in contemporary studies it as often an amalgam of studying social and natural landscapes, their interaction and change (David and Thomas 2008). Landscape archaeology, as an established sub-discipline, informs many avenues of inquiry within archaeology but does not play a sole part in the umbrella term of spatial archaeology. While archaeology, especially in its earlier processual incarnation, was interested in the study of the natural environment which humans occupied, eco-centric approaches as such only started influencing archaeological thought in the 1990s. More precisely, the shift of attention from an anthropocentric towards an enviro-centric approach to the study of landscapes has had a lasting knock-on effect on the state of archaeological thought and method. Environmental archaeology, derived from the biological and geophysical sciences, studies the socio-environmental interactions in the past (Denham 2008, Rowland 2008).

There is an interplay between physical scales of investigation within spatial archaeology, in which landscape archaeology cannot be the only method. The archaeological study of social life, its creation and sustenance, has developed into the establishment of the sociology, anthropology and geography informed social archaeology. The pairing of spatial and social archaeology has given rise to a branch of research which deems space, and socially constructed places as the scene of the pivotal establishment of social relations (Hendon 2008). Alongside the fusion of social and spatial approaches, the term “household” emerged in archaeological discourse to fully form the conceptual framework of exploring micro-scale spaces of domestic activity as the backdrop to which societies emerged and disappeared (Allison 1999, 2002; Bruck and Goodman 1999; Hendon 2008). It must be noted that this line of theoretical reasoning was in no small part influenced by the prolific study of the “house” as a subject in anthropology (Helms 2007). A social archaeology of households (Preucel and Meskell 2008, Souvatzi 2008) is what has been, in archaeological research, the smallest spatial scale of analysis to date. The merging of sociological concepts, together with geography methods has paved the way for perceiving of the past as a human past, experienced, created and sustained by mere people. This is one of the great allures of the archaeological study of households – the merging of material and spatial distribution

studies, plotted to the background of subtle sociological perceptions (Preucel and Meskell 2008, Hendon 2008).

One of the attributes of space, as perceived by archaeologists, either in a landscape, big-scale quality or at a household level, is that it becomes intrinsically embedded by the mythologies of its creators (Jones 2013, 71). Space is the physical canvas upon which all the metaphysical attributes of human existence are played out. It is the archaeologists' choice whether attention is to be paid to the canvas or the painting, so to speak. The Annaliste approach, in this sense, aids to alleviate the necessity of choosing one method and instead promotes an amalgamation of approaches. Along this principle, the study of space no longer needs to be restricted to a choice of a single physical scale.

The terminology surrounding the archaeological study of space has exponentially grown in line with the widespread understanding that the experience and recognition of space are key in constructing an understanding of the world (Blake 2008, 230). It is also worth noting at this point that the Annales approach, with its interdisciplinary aspirations, has positively impacted the study of social development through a spatial lens (Blake 2008).

The problem which arises from the genesis of sub-disciplines is that the many various studies, diffracted by the lens of sub-disciplinary discourse, only result in a partial narrative of the human past. Landscape and enviro-centric, geoarchaeological studies provide an insight into an overall idea of how the building blocks of the past were constructed. Social archaeology, with its attention to the spatiality of households and social production, offer us an intimate notion of embodied, lived spaces. A holistic approach, embracing both these extremes, often seems to be an impossible task. This is in no small part because of the nature of archaeological sites – while some sites might provide a wealth of archaeo-palynological, archaeo-botanical and archaeo-biological information, other sites' archaeological records consist of overwhelming amount of material and building remains. Sites which provide a wealth of broader data combined appear rarely on the archaeological radar. When they do, excavation of such sites is lengthy and painstaking, publishing of reports is slow and uncertain. There is, then, of course, the need for an

excavation methodology which would satisfy the needs of large and small- scale inquiries alike, and that is no small condition.

4.2.2 Space-Time studies

One term I came across multiple times while researching this chapter was that of spacetime. Between philosophy, geography, anthropology and sociology, spacetime has for several decades occupied a very specific niche in the exploration of spatially/temporally situated lived experience. The usefulness of such a concept in the multiscalar framework became obvious to me, since spacetime presents a suitable, and admittedly convenient convergence of the two axes of research.

The development of space-time as a self-established discipline has not been a long one. Presently there are a variety of studies emerging, which aim at agglomerating two different strands of study into a consistent continuum of approaches. Space-time studies do position the human experience at their epicentre and emerge from a long tradition of getting to grips with the human perception of reality (Schatzki 2010). The value of introducing the spacetime (or timespace) idea of scalar analysis in this work is twofold. Spacetime analysis is valuable at both the micro-scale of everyday life and the intermediate scale (between daily and centennial/millennial scales) at which we can trace the development of settlements and larger social agglomerations. To write about spacetime studies at the scale of everyday life involves the consideration of everyday spatial displacement of the human body and habituated movements at all environmental scales (Seamon 1980, 148-52). The body, in this sense, is considered an intelligent subject which we shall denote as a body-subject (Season 1980, 158). The body subject has control over habituated behaviour and manual skill, which Seamon calls body-ballet; in the arena of the everyday experience the vortex of time-space becomes the scene for the body-subject's body-ballet (1980, 157-58). Space, place and time are joined together in this manner, as a stabilizer for the innate perpetuation of daily living, which melts seamlessly into the in-between scale. It is the overall field of the spacetime that practices constitute and are constituted by the continuous play of daily life and social structure (Shove et al. 2012, 26).

The purely philosophical study of spacetime has in the past taken a route of more scientifically aligned reasoning in which time becomes a dimension of spacetime, so far as the Special Theory of Relativity in concerned (see Nierlich 1998, Schatzki 2010). Spacetime can also be viewed as the result of expressing time geographically, involving directional progression or special location (Helms 1988, 34). Space can be charged with meaning other than the mundane concerns of social and material reproduction. Cosmological space-time perceptions can also be the involved in creating a distance (both spatial and temporal) from the concepts of past origins (Helms 1988, 11). In the domain of origin cosmologies distant places can be correlated with distant time (Helms 1988, 42). This raises an interesting issue regarding our own spacetime perceptions of the past populations we study. The spacetime of the people and area I study herein appear to me separated from the present reality and compartmentalized in their own little pocket universe. This carries many implications considering the above discussed time realities of historical narratives. Such concerns, however, are beyond the scope of the present work and are due attention in a more in-depth study.

The use of the spacetime concept could also be useful in the development of an understanding of how social practices are directed and constrained at the level of bigger social conglomerations (Wandsnider 2015). The field of spacetime studies is not yet defined well enough within the parameters of archaeology so that it can be applied to theoretical methods beyond question and confusion. Spacetime, within the constraints of the humanities, is the physical level at which the interplay between lived time and lived space converge to create a scene enabling human agency. Much more extensive work is required, however, to integrate spacetime into a holistic approach to archaeological interpretation.

4.3 WHY MULTI-SCALAR?

The idea of utilizing analyses at multiple scales and dimensions is not new. It has in fact been dwelling in the minds of researchers from across many disciplines and their methodological discourses; and ultimately has been having an impact on archaeological narratives for decades (Tringham 1971; Sherratt 1992; Harding 2005; Gaydarska 2007; Robb et al. 2012; Wandsnider

2015). Instead of taking a two-axial approach of differentiation between space and time in my differently scaled case-studies, I propose an amalgamation of the two. A multiscalar approach is one that factors in both these concepts. While the ever-tangible study of space provides a solid analytical basis for studying a given area, the consideration of passing time provides a perception of the pace of change. Along with specifically archaeological methods for tackling data – settlement patterns; activity spaces, production and depositional analysis, etc. – a method for achieving an embodied level of perception will be to take on a singular point of view. A single-person perspective can be formed, in order to provide a personalized view of prehistoric life. This is all but a small opportunity for narration within a multiscalar model which will be further elaborated on in this chapter.

In tune with recent notions of the subjectivism of archaeology (Campbell and Hansson 2000; Joyce 2008; Shanks 2012; Lucas 2015) and aligning with approaches sensitive to the personal experience of the past, I will develop all my case-studies as a fact informed, archaeological narrative with elements of embodied cognition theory and intersubjectivity. Before I continue elaborating on the methodological scheme of my thesis, I would like to briefly divulge some of the semantics of the 'multiscalar' term. Simply taking this to mean analysis on different scales is crude and uninformed. The main reason why such a meaning is most often misperceived is the deceptiveness of the two-dimensional archaeological reality that current archaeological narrative allows for.

The temporospatial dimensions at which my work will be developed can be roughly separated into three scales, following the well-established, albeit controversially received framework of Braudel's work (Braudel 1975; Braudel et al. 2001). Those are namely: a long-term analysis, a medium one (defined in my work by parameters other than simplistic Neolithic phasing), and a short-term one, specifically dealing with the intricacies of everyday existence.

The principles along which I will develop the multiple dimensions of spatial analysis can be perceived as narrowing- down; meaning that I will consecutively analyse landscapes largely varying in size.

From the very beginning of my archaeological education I have taken great interest in Pierre Bourdieu's *habitus* theory (1977). I have been insistent, on the occasion when writing of habitus in archaeological contexts, on its potential for holistically approaching the archaeological record. But apart from Bourdieu's not quite developed theory of practice, I have also paid close attention to the ways in which the archaeological record is traditionally segmented. It never made sense to my archaeological reasoning that phases and areas should be separated into big *or* small analytical blocks. Connecting the everyday, the habitus of humans and attempting to understand how that gets weaved into large networks of practice and cohabitation has become a central focus for my own inquiries. In many ways, the multiscalar approach has become a part of the genesis of my theoretical thinking. It was not, however, until I started getting closely acquainted with Annaliste writing, that I understood exactly what the tools might be for an archaeological multiscalar approach. Archaeologists have been introduced to the French school of *Annales* for the past 25 years through the same channels (Bintliff, Bailey etc.). While I do not argue that past archaeological analysis of the Annaliste writings is wrong, I also find myself disagreeing with the existing unified archaeological attitude towards the underlying manifesto of the French school of thought. What some archaeologists are turning attentions to now (e.g. Robb and Pauketat 2013) has demonstrably been part of the Annaliste approach for the last century – namely the attention toward the small, as well as big resolution of (pre)historic inquiry. The multiscalar approach of the Annales School had one distinctive feature, which serves to justify and contextualize studies of past societies – the topic of study must be beyond doubt a coherent geographic unit. A unit in this sense means a geographic region in which developments occurred either synchronically or as a spread of ideas in a homogenous field. An obvious example of this is Braudel's study of the late Medieval Mediterranean as encompassing the shores (and sea-adjacent countries), the relations of which triggered changes in the overall course of collective development (Braudel 2001). The need for such a cohesive geographic unit is justifiable in the tracing of subtle or seismic events which sent ripples through the very fabric of practices and societies. For such events/processes to be observed, geographic parameters are a nascent necessity.

4.4 An Agenda for The Multiscalar Methodology

Some focussed discussion is due to address the multiscalar methodology for the study of Neolithic settlements I propose. The bringing together of such distinct research agendas as landscape studies and household studies, infused with a complicated sense of chronology and its linear values is no small feat. It is, in fact, quite a difficult task to attempt the bridging of sub-disciplines which have stemmed out of quintessentially different discourses. Moreover, what I propose here is not simply an underlying principle of thinking about archaeological space-time; I believe a succinct approach to perceiving space and time can produce fruitful novel ways of archaeological reasoning itself.

The type of time frames that this thesis will include, as discussed above, span from the smallest perceivable building block – a day, representing a so-called micro scale to the largest scale of study-the entire geographic unit. Daily time-block can also be grouped in a cyclical fashion of several daily cycles. The middle (moyen) scale, as defined by the Annales School is somewhat more problematic – this might vary from a year, a decade or few to a century. The problem of defining a time span for the in-between scale needs to remain study-specific. Taking into consideration the temporal expanse studied, the scale's temporal duration can be adapted to the individual needs for analysis. The third and biggest time frame in the approach will engage with a time frame spanning several centuries to a millennium. There is a reason behind the vagueness of this explanation- the reflexivity of the approach itself. It is very difficult to split the Neolithic of any given region in clear cut demarcations, without the tool of highly precise absolute chronology. The region I am studying is no exception. An approach to tackling time-frames should be specifically tailored to the significant individuality of the pace of stability/change for any given region. A spectacular example of applying a micro-scale everyday temporal scale is the work of Lin Foxhall (2000) in which she studies specific Ancient Greek context in light of the pursuit of an everyday narrative. In this article Foxhall seeks to address the disparity between short-term time scales and the overall accumulation of the archaeological record at Greek historical contexts. The article specifically discusses the short-term practices which led to the formation of any given

archaeological record. I believe the example of an area I have chosen in this thesis is a perfect representation of the tensions between change and continuity, process and event.

As for the spatial expanse of each scale, these should also be subjected to the individual parameters of a study area. A daily scale would normally entail a domestic space of activity, a house; but this micro-scale could also spread to areas within a settlement where associated activities took place. An example of this could be areas with evidence of the different stages of pottery production or raw material use, crop fields and areas for gathering/hunting, as well as spaces related to tending to animals. The spatiality of the daily scale is solely defined by the extent of related activities at locations in any given site.

The medium scale, on the other hand, could be concerned with a portion of a site or ideally with a whole chosen site, which enables the consideration of developments resultant of daily rhythms. The spatiality of the big-scale is perhaps the easiest one to define – it involves all know areas of activity within a geographic unit for the entirety of a chosen overall study period. When dealing with a time-span over several centuries it might be prudent to segment the geographic unit based on its natural features. The observations made at a sub-regional level can then be amalgamated into the biggest picture possible of a geographic area.

Another facet of the multiscalar method is the vital role of narrative in creating an understanding of past lives. I have earlier in this chapter briefly suggested that past narratives of the distant past could be considered as developing in a separate spacetime from ours. To put this simply, the way we imagine and write of the deep past could be much more akin to storytelling that to the fact-laden constrictive narrative of borderline scientific interpretations. In the words of Mary Helms, a cosmological narrative can easily correlate distant spaces and distant times (Helms 1988, 42). In order to create a narrative, and thus an image of human lives in the past, we could treat the creation of narratives more akin to the writing of science-fiction for instance, but in reverse. This approach is, importantly, centred on creating viable stories. It is imperative to underline that such a story-telling approach does not substitute the initial interpretation of a given archaeological record. The creation of a narrative, mirroring that of a cosmological character, is an example of

what can be achieved with some knowledge of the past, once facts have been established. The deeper we go into our history, the more the gap between us and 'them' widens. The multiscalar approach is a proposal for a method to narrow this divide.

4.4.1 Embarking on a holistic Neolithic narrative

While not taking the centre stage in my principal study, the creation of a progressive line of Neolithic archaeological narratives remains a point of interest that is worth further pursuit. The idea of an archaeological narrative, combining characteristics of affects theory, among other sociological devices, has for some time sparked the interest of humanities scholars (Lefebvre and Levich 1987; Lloyd 1993; Jacob 1997; Overing 2003; Thrift 2008; Anderson and Harrison 2010; Gregg 2010; Shryock et al. 2011; Shove et al. 2012; Bernbeck 2015; Bernbeck and Van Dyke 2015). These narratives I am referring to could be written from a first-person perspective, they could explore a first-hand experience of generational and individual perceptions of the ever-present flow of time. Creating this kind of an experimental hybrid archaeological narrative could entail at once a declaration of the subjectivism and an individual point of view, albeit one inspired by a creative effort. While the large timespace narrative cannot benefit from such an exercise, I believe this can create an enticing precedent for the study of everyday activity. To write about individual experience is not completely unheard of in prehistoric studies. Doug Bailey (2000) did it in an introductory segment to his Balkan Prehistory book. Once an archaeological narrative is infused with a first-person experience, it becomes something else completely. It becomes a lived (hi)story of a space and time. I appreciate this might be an approach too adjacent to creative writing for some researchers to even consider. We need to be aware, however, that archaeology as a discipline has its limitations. A time will inevitably come when archaeology's influence upon other humanities and communities expires. In order to sustain prehistory as an interest in the public domain, the non-scientifically based exploration of the past needs an alternative approach. What I am attempting to say is, simply put, that we cannot keep writing archaeological narratives for the sake of other fellow researchers.

4.4.2 The Long, The Middle and The Short

If we, once again, turn our attention to the scalar perception of the Annales tradition, we find that these are often subject to the contextual sensitivity of a given study. The longue durée, the grandest scale of research could encompass several centuries. In the archaeological sense, the long term is taken to mean one to several millennia. In cases when one chronologically perceived period (an "age" if you wish) those are usually taken to denote a large scale of examination of the "*relationships with the environments*" (Braudel 1975, 20). In this highly hypothetical work, that is also what the longest time scale will be taken to involve – the whole span of the Neolithic along the Strymon river. As for the spatially big scale of investigation, that is translated in this study to mean the entire stretch of the Strymon river bed – from its source in the Vitosha to its estuary in the Strymon Gulf. The moyen durée, in an Annales approach, is directly correlated to awareness of "*perceptible rhythms" (*Braudel 1975, 20). This scale, temporally, will involve the development of a given Neolithic settlement, from its creation to its abandonment. As we will see later in the thesis, there is a very limited number of sites which spanned the entirety of the Neolithic, with the majority existing for often a short fraction of the nearly 13 centuries of the period. Spatially, the medium scale of investigation will also be restricted to the confines of a singular site. Narrowing the research then to the smallest scale of the proposed methodology, I propose an examination which in principle is concerned with everyday activities but chronologically does not span more than one generation. In the case of Balkan Neolithic settlements, periods of house renovation/construction/demolition occur at rates which I argue can be perceived as generational. Therefore, the shortest/smallest scale of research, in this particular example, displays a smooth convergence of the spatial and temporal perceptions.

4.4.3 Long/Large scale of research – A river valley in flux

The tradition of landscape archaeology is by its nature associated with vast reaches of space, perceived over a long chronological duration. Noticing patterns which occur over big spatial areas requires that a multitude of smaller, short changes are superimposed on a canvas of a long duration. Braudel understood and more so explained that in an elaborate sense that keeps

attracting the attention of scholars (Braudel 1975, 2001). That is perhaps why, while not the most innovative of Annales scholars, he keeps being hailed as the prior most proponent of the multiscalar framework – because of his eloquent elaboration. Otherwise known as geographical time (Reynolds 2001), the longue durée focuses the necessary attention on the subtle shifts that create enduring patterns of human interaction with the environment. It is my opinion that large scale/long term studies are one of the best explored avenues of archaeological research (see David and Thomas 2008). Let us take the study of large-scale Neolithic areas in Bulgaria as an example. While the country's archaeological discourse has not in the slightest included the wholly available approach of landscape archaeology (Gaydarska 2007), grand narratives of long-term developments are not lacking.

The place of the largest scale of the multiscalar methodology is determined by the requirement of all viable archaeological work to consider all available information and create a robust understanding.

At the largest/longest scale of interpretation, the emerging settlement patterns along the Strymon will be observed. The area will be segmented into three principal areas, associated with the changing landscape of the Strymon. The Upper, Middle and Lower Strymon areas will be shown to exhibit varying principles of site selection. An important interest at this scale of investigation will also be the possible formation of occupational hot-spots and the position of Neolithic settlements in relation to the main Strymon river bed and its multiple big and small tributaries.

4.4.4 Space and time in a Neolithic Settlement – the birth of Settlement Biographies

The conjuncture, the middle point of perception between the long-term span and the shortly occurring events, exist in a coeval chronological manner with the other two but determined by socially situated spatial dimensions (Osborne 1995, 28). This means that events and developments can happen simultaneously within the three time-frames but the impact of these is experienced in individual ways by the various time-frames. The establishment of a conjuncture,

a middle scale temporal frame, is pivotal for the realisation of the long-term effects of brief event upon the prehistoric narrative.

The reason why this stage of my methodology is entitled a biography is predetermined in no small measure by the recent turn of the humanities to the "biography" as a method (Caine 2010). This resource, well perceived by historians, provides an added layer to understanding the subjective conditions of communal experience, which are the pivotal piece of bridging the spatially expansive long-term and the physically and temporally narrow short-term (Caine 2010, 1). The practical example of how this scale of research can be implemented will be offered through the study of singular examples of Neolithic sites. While an argument can be raised against looking at prehistoric settlements of the same area in isolation, I aim to demonstrate that sites had a very individual character of emergence and development. Patterns of house location selection and demolition, as well as building techniques then will be symptomatic of the subtle dynamics of social living. A very delicate difference exists between the settlement data required for the writing of a settlement biography and for the narration of daily life. For a settlement's biography to emerge, clear patterns in the data are needed, proving continuity/cessation of activity.

My goal, in writing a settlement's biography, is to ultimately separate the narrative from the well-established formulae of discussing prehistoric sites. By this I mean that to begin with jargon will be avoided as much as possible. The goal of a biography is to plainly tell a story, without unnecessarily complicated language. In that vein, I will not use strictly archaeological terminology. When a biography is written, it is written with the reader in mind, enabling their understanding as much as possible; that is what I shall aim for.

4.4.5 Human experience at the scale of an embodied day

"*A history of brief, rapid, nervous fluctuations, by definition ultra-sensitive; the least tremor sets all its antennae quivering." (*Braudel 1975, 21)

The above quoted sentence is quite the succinct sentiment of what the most prominent of Annales scholars deemed the study of the micro-scale to be. The small-scale, shortest term – daily spatial and temporal analyses are few and far in-between. To think in terms of daily

practices in archaeology is often treated as an abnormality, far from a normative search for structured practices. Still, while most have been wary of engaging too closely with such an analysis, examples do exist (Foxhall 2000, Whittle 2003).

Attention towards the importance and role of everyday cycles in human life has notably been a central agenda in some important anthropological studies (e.g. Helms 1988, Overing 2003). Discussing the dynamics of everyday life in a prehistoric context is no easy task to propose for consideration in the archaeological narrative. Much high-resolution data is needed for the finest of interpretations to be attempted. This of course alludes to the fact that excavation methodologies need to be in place at the beginning of a project for the right type of data to be consistently sought and recorded. By 'right' here I mean the adequate observations connected to specific activities at prehistoric settlements. The physical remains of daily activities serve as, for all intents and purposes in this framework, a signifier of singular experiences. Hence these remains of activities of repetitive daily tasks serve as proxies for the lived human experience (Highmore 2017). That everything can become 'everyday' has been extensively argued alongside the problematic of what daily activities signal about the people involved in them (Highmore 2017, 3-9). The study of archaeological remains at the micro level, then becomes the study of the most intimate of experiences – embodied ones as well as human bonds (Highmore 2017, 15).

The problem which an attempt of daily life narrative faces is the internal motivation behind different types of archaeological inquiry itself. If a paradigm is pursued in which events, are to be calendrically observed, this already signifies an agenda aimed towards a sensationalist revealing of dynamic archaeological change. The repetitive nature of daily activity is inherently embedded in any attempt to identify a rhythm of human existence. It follows then that this thesis breaks away from a well-established pattern of searching for paradigm-shifting events to addressing a search for the non-events that make out a human life (Highmore 2017,1).

For the practical display of the method at the smallest, daily scale, then a cluster within that site ought to be solely observed. The layers of house reconstruction/demolition are to be treated as temporally significant symptoms of changing generations. Within the timescape of a single

generation house occupation, the distribution of materials in and around a house, any clues towards the use of the space such as positioning of hearths and ovens becomes important.

The treatment of interpretation of this smallest of scales can also be merged with an unorthodox approach. By this, I am hinting at the possibility of very specific factual data and weaving it together with a first-person narrative of daily life. Since this approach has not been attempted extensively, it will feature within the discussion chapter of this thesis.

4.4.6 Problems and solutions

The choice of the Strymon case study is not an accidental one. I have been interested in the Bulgarian Neolithic for the entire span of my archaeological education. Not only I am invested in the development of a greater understanding of the prehistory of the Southern Balkans, I am also able to overcome the linguistic barrier of Bulgarian which has undoubtedly been an unpassable hurdle to many Western researchers. The Bulgarian and North Greek Neolithic records are problematic, to say the least. Information is difficult to get a hold of and publications are sparse.

It is a risk to attempt a multiscalar method, but the purpose of this thesis is not a systematic, rigorous study. Rather, the aim of this somewhat short work is restricted to the brief example of how such a diverse idea can be put to action. On the matter of success in dealing with the Strymon record, and the understandable concerns with the overall patchiness and incompleteness of it, I rely on a quote from Mary Helms' *Ulysses' Sail (*1988,7*): "The challenge lies not in the data per se, but in our interpretation of them"*.

Only a truly multiscalar, holistic space-time analytical methodology can provide a wholesale understanding of a multi-dimensional Neolithic existence. I propose the equal distribution of attention to settlement patterns, the generations who sustained or forgot these alike, *and* the human, whose daily life fed the building blocks for deep history.

5 CHAPTER 2. HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE SOUTHERN BALKANS

There are different kinds of archaeological practices, related to the study of my principal Strymon area. Situated between southwestern Bulgaria and Northern Greece, the course of the river has witnessed many changes in geo-political landscapes and national boundaries. For more than a century the river has been divided between the two countries and the approaches to studying the archaeology along it have traditionally not shared research agendas. Because of this, there exists no one complete understanding of the totality of Neolithic developments along the Strymon, and its manifold tributaries. Since this big and important waterway has not been considered in its entirety, this chapter will attempt to provide a clear understanding of the socio-historic processes, which have influenced this situation. I will explore the probable reasons behind the genesis of a partial understanding of the river's place in the lives of Neolithic populations. The underlying principle of my overall thesis is the exploration of the Strymon river basin in its entirety; prior to further studies of the archaeological record, it is important to understand how the regional traditions have operated to create the existing knowledge of the Strymon's archaeology. I argue that for the purposes of a holistic and well-rounded study of the area, the native research histories need to be summarised, for a full appreciation of the research contexts to be possible. It is important to underline that I do not intend disregarding the local traditions of archaeological investigations; rather to examine the available Strymon settlement and material record in order to create an alternative understanding of Neolithic life in the river basin. This chapter will then serve as a basis for understanding the research contexts, whilst embarking on the proposed multi-scalar consideration of the river as a unit further in this thesis.

5.1 *"A CONFUSED KETTLE OF FISH"*

In 1906 the Scottish traveller and author John Foster Fraser used this turn of phrase to describe what he perceived the Balkans to be at the very beginning of the 20th century. The breadth of 19th and 20th century travellers' memoirs, political opinions or cultural stances of Balkan

territories, written in English is of a staggering proportion (see Todorova 2007 for a detailed list). These were often written by well-educated individuals, embarking on a type of adventure in culturally ambiguous lands. At times such writings served as anecdotal recollections of one's travels across yet "*to be civilized*" Balkan lands (Smith 1906, 14). At other times, especially of political and military unrest in the Balkans, Anglophone politicians and journalists put pen to paper to express amazement and disgust with the ways of the Balkan people (see Todorova 1997, 3-5). Comments of such nature, though not unknown to Bulgarians, have remained unchallenged and to an extent have been calmly accepted.

This chapter will, in part, seek to discuss and appraise the lack of dialogue between Anglophone and Bulgarian archaeological scholarship. I start by outlining the post-18th century developments in political and cultural thought on both fronts, which inevitably led to the current state of almost complete mutual cancelation of the two. This is not to say that other non-Bulgarian academic circles have no bearing on the current research standoff between most Bulgarian and Anglo-Saxon archaeologists (see Bailey 1998). It is the limitations of my work, which exclude a wider discussion at this stage. Because of the way in which Anglophone discourse developed, in reference to the Balkans in general, a direct and sustainable dialogue between Bulgarian and English-speaking academics, especially archaeologists, has never been established. An aim for this chapter is also to flesh out the reasons for this and offer a solution for the reconciliation of the two.

The development of historical and archaeological thought in Bulgaria advanced in a way which greatly differed from that in Atlantic Europe and America. Affected by political developments and driven by foreign educated intelligentsia, 20th century Bulgarian historical studies brought about the current character of Bulgarian archaeology. Described in the terms of the Anglophone archaeological development, this is a mixture of culture-historical perceptions and terminology, and a positivist attitude towards the collection and processing of data. Archaeology in Bulgaria is largely referred to as a science, for which I will attempt providing a historically-grounded explanation. Positioning the archaeological discipline in a wider context of the historical discipline is vital for the understanding, and validation, of current Bulgarian practice.

The border-crossing nature of my research calls for an equally informed appraisal of the developments in Greek scholarship in prehistoric archaeology specifically, which have set the scene for current research. The focus of the chapter, however, is on the challenging perception of Northern Greece and the problematic nature of its connotations in both recent history and archaeology. Greek Neolithic studies have greatly gained from a fruitful common discourse with Western European archaeologists. Yet there are geographic areas, which have remained outside the focus of main research trends. Of great interest over the last century have been the archaeologies of a few distinct regions, including Thessaly (Wace and Thompson 1912; see Shapland 2012), Greek Macedonia (Renfrew and Gimbutas 1986, Rodden 1996) and most recently Crete and the southern Aegean (e.g. Efstratiou et al. 2013, Nowicki 2014). The portion of northern Greece with which my study is involved occupies a position between Greek Macedonia and Thrace. Several socio-political and socio-historical developments have greatly affected the perception of the particular region, creating a surplus of complex historical connotations within the Serres and Drama area. This point will be more widely discussed further in this chapter.

Lastly, it is the historically burdened relations and juxtaposition of Greek and Bulgarian archaeology which will form the finishing aspects of the chapter. The lack of extensive cooperation on research projects pertaining to adjacent regions is a conundrum. There are, however, occasional co-operative projects between neighbouring countries in the Balkans, such as the Promahonas-Toplolnitsa project (Greece and Bulgaria, Koukouli-Chryssanthaki 2007), or indeed further to the north the high-profile collaborative work on the Vinča project (see Whittle et al. 2016). These are an exception to a main trend, rather than a usual occurrence. It has been a scholarly norm, over the last century, for respective Balkan countries not to overstep national borders (Fig. 2). This has stemmed, I argue, from the desire of the small nations to establish the limits of their own national identities. Another reason for the lack of intra-state research is perhaps, not surprisingly, the disposition concerning state borders, following the repercussions of the Second Balkan War in 1913. The reality of the archaeological material, however, has proven that prehistoric studies should be impervious to such national(-ist) holdbacks. The

Strymon provides an example of how national interests have hindered the overall understanding of the river valley in its entirety.

What this chapter will also investigate is whether the Greek and Bulgarian perspective on the Strymon can be adequately amalgamated.

5.2 Stuck between West and East? The case of Bulgarian research traditions

5.2.1 Balkanism, Otherness and inspecting the Balkan "East"

Thinking about the Balkans, and Bulgaria in particular, has always proven to be an exercise in drawing imaginary, often historic-political inspired lines (Todorova 1997). The assignment of different Balkan regions with specific, and loaded, geographic terms has heavily pervaded archaeological practice. There is a pre-formed division between the Balkans and Greece in some academic work, which tends to separate the two into prefabricated categories (e.g. Krauß 2011, Lichter 2011). While Bulgaria remains, in the archaeological imagination, a stronghold of Balkanism; Greece is treated as a transitional zone, between West and Orient. This is quite a surprising distinction, since both countries were part of the Ottoman Empire for centuries. Simultaneously, post-Ottoman states did rely on their classical and medieval past for the re-establishing of national roots (Mazower 2001, 14).

We need not look too far back, in grand scale millennial terms, to find the fable-like nature of the "Balkans" as a unified landmass. It was only in the late 19th century that misguided geographers named the peninsula after the Balkan mountain range, which had previously been used by the Ottomans to describe the region (Mazower 2000). The range otherwise known in Bulgaria as Stara Planina (Old Mountain) was erroneously considered as extending though the whole of the landmass; even though realizations that this was in fact untrue soon became known, the idea of the Balkans was firmly established. One might ask why is it that a common denominator was required for the lands of the once Ottoman part of south-eastern Europe. Western ideologies of the 19th and 20th centuries and the attitudes of the Great Powers towards the "Balkans" have occasionally come under scrutiny (Evangelos 1975; Hristov 1987; Todorova 1997). While the

external boundaries of what the Balkans in popular Western imagination have not changed much since the turn of the 20th century, the state boundaries within have witnessed drastic changes (Clogg 1992, Crampton 2007). Following the controversial treaty of San Stefano in 1878 (see Fig.1), and the following debunking of those decisions by the Berlin Congress of 1906, Balkans countries have seen a shift in Eastern European state territories, unprecedented in 20th century history. In specific relation to my area of interest, the border between Greece and Bulgaria has dramatically shifted in the course of the multiple war period spanning 1912 to 1946. Because of this, matters of ethnicity and nationality of the area have been inextricably linked to its historical archaeology. Macedonian, Bulgarian, Greek and Vlachs ethnicities all occupy a small region and the resultant tension between political and national interest has long governed the direction of research agendas and projects. It is not the intention of this chapter to review all the materials written on the topics of ethnicity, nationalism and conflict in the Greek-Bulgarian border area, or indeed the Macedonian question. Rather, remaining aware of the existing literature (e.g. Evangelos 1975, Todorova 1997, Crampton 2007) I want to take the opportunity to provide a wider discussion of the perception of Balkanism and Easternness.

To discuss Bulgaria as 'Eastern Balkans' is to follow a trend of Anglophone perceptions of the 'Oriental' and its inextricable relation to the geographic east. This link has been the source of a widely developed wave of cultural studies (Said 1978). The connection Orient-East has been proven as historically and politically constructed, and one serving the justification of a Western psyche (Hristov 1987; Hamilakis 2007). In stark contrasts to the over-generalization of a West-East opposition in Said's original *Orientalism,* however, I only refer to purely Anglophone attitudes. Instead of further indulging in etic ideas of what Bulgarian archaeology consists of and speaks to, I will instead adhere to geographically dictated ways of separating regions in the Balkan area in question. The Strymon valley in its entirety is then referred to, in this work, as positioned in the Southern Balkans.

Bulgarian archaeology does not solely suffer from a misguided attribution of "Easterly" features in material terms. The current practice of archaeological research in Bulgaria is perceived, exclusively by Anglophone scholarship, as lacking in the reflexivity and flexibility, otherwise

present in Anglo-American scholarship. Turkish archaeology and prehistory have developed and instigated new methods of practice, mirroring well-known paradigm shifts (Őzdogan 1999, Basgelen and Őzdogan 1999). Greek practice, albeit at a pace very different from Western Europe, has also developed to an extent which enables international co-operation and exchange of ideas. Looking briefly at the rest of the Balkan countries reveals a similar, yet not coherent picture of developments (see Grammenos 2003, Gatsov 2006). Balkan countries have experienced various degrees of developments in prehistoric research. All of this is not to say that Bulgarian archaeology is lacking developments in terms of excavations and material retrieval (e.g. Grebska-Kulova 2001, 2004, Bakamska 2007, Boyadzhiev 2009). On the contrary, Bulgarian Neolithic studies have enjoyed a period of steady progress and a renewed vitality of investigations. The national archaeological institute publishes an extensive annual account of all excavation conducted within a calendar year. Yet, new discoveries and undoubtedly important ones for the whole of the European narrative remain outside the focus of Anglophone regional scholars.

Amidst a Balkan-wide boom in international involvement and influx of ideas since the second part of the 20th century, Bulgaria has been slow to join an ever-growing international discourse (but see *Bulgaria Past & Present* conference papers 1978; Bailey et al. 1995; Todorova et al. 2007; Gatsov and Schwarzberg 2009). While there are some examples of attempts at positioning Anglo-American archaeological discourse alongside the Bulgarian one, the issue of methodological differences and practical incompatibility of studies is yet to be addressed. Examples of this are numerous and often serve the creation of incomplete pictures of the Neolithic narratives in south-eastern Europe (see Nikolov and Hiller 2000; Krauß 2011). It is impossible to understand and appreciate the breadth of Bulgarian prehistoric research without the practical skill of reading Bulgarian texts. Bulgarian academia does, to an extent, exist in a self-imposed isolation from its relevant neighbouring countries. This is, however, been increasingly changing, especially regarding co-operation with Greek archaeological teams (Koukouli-Chryssanthaki et al. 2014; Tell Yunatsite project – ww1); collaboration between Bulgarian, German and American teams has also yielded successful research (Pernicheva-Perets 2011; Krauß 2014). Under the ever-increasing

influence that European Union research funding has had, it is also surprising how little this European influence has contributed to altering standard of research in Bulgaria (see Gatsov and Boyadzhiev 2009). European Union funding does not necessarily translate to Anglophone-accessible published research.

The two-fold lack of engagement is to this day leading to a Bulgarian prehistory studies, developing in isolation, non-conformism and detachment from the fast-developing South-eastern European archaeological discourse.

Greek archaeology, on its own terms and with its own problems, has experienced strong polarization of sub-fields. In climates of swiftly changing political realities and a reliance on nationalist ideologies, Greek archaeology has undergone its own independent series of methodological paradigm shifts (Kotsakis 1991, 2003). For decades before and after the Greek liberation from the Ottomans, Greece was an archaeological epicentre of Western academics seeking the roots of Western modernism (Friedman 1992, Marchand 2003). As a result of this, the Classical past, and archaeology alongside it, became pivotal in the minds of indigenous and Western scholars. Prehistoric archaeology in Greece had a very different genesis, nonetheless, linked to the work of foreign and Greek scholars' alike (Tsountas 1908, Wace and Thompson 1912, Heurtley 1939). The systematic collation and presentation of area studies has been part of Greek prehistoric research from its beginning. Perceptions of the landscape, studies of the varied topographic oddities of sites, have consistently fuelled the study of the Greek Neolithic (Wace and Thompson 1912, Elster and Renfrew 2003, Koukouli-Chryssanthaki et al 2008). Prehistoric archaeology in Greece had over an extended amount of time followed a methodological example set by the culture-historical need of Classical studies (Kotsakis 1991, Demoule and Perles 1993). To deny the influence of British, German and American scholars for the developments in Greek archaeology would be erroneous. What does require pointing out is the ideological seclusion from the Balkans in which Greece has existed since the conception of its own nationalist agenda. To put it straight, and in the words of Mazower (2000, 5) Greece at one point became a marginalized part of "the West". As such, my work perceives of Greece, especially its Northern part, in a two-fold role – Balkan and non-Balkan. It is very difficult to accept and adhere to lines

on maps when thinking about the region in its form from 8000 years ago. But it would also be foolish to remain oblivious to the historical and political circumstances which have made discussions of the region so problematic.

If we are to study the area in its Neolithic incarnation, borders and politically loaded terminology fade away in the backdrop of immense diversity. To study a region such as this, however, without considering its loaded historicity would be naïve. Instead, I accept in this chapter that the Balkans as a state of mind exist for the convenience an outsider's perspective. It is opportune and has proven so over the years of Western discourse accumulation, to use a common denominator to describe something wildly unknown and problematic. The perpetuation of a paradigm in which the area remains only a minor echo of a Western ideal of statehood is easy when no difference is made between each state. In contrast, the individual countries possess fiercely individualized self-perceptions. Whilst "the Balkans" is a known term, it is not internally (from within the Balkans) called upon to denominate something. This is, interestingly, a phenomenon only observed when indigenous archaeologists write about the archaeology for a non-native discourse (e.g. Borić 2005, 2011; Gaydarska 2007). Holding within this tradition, I have also previously used the term Balkans, to ease the understanding of an Anglophone audience regarding the context of a study.

One reflexive aspect of my study then begs to be discussed, that is the epistemological state in which the Balkans both exist and do not exist as a cohesive entity. For non-Balkan parties this has developed as a convenient term to generalise a certain worldview; for Balkan parties, however, this is an artificial grouping with no real-life application. This is, in short, the difficulty I am presented with as a native Bulgarian working in an Anglophone discourse. This state of mutual exclusion is also at the root of my discontent with the current state of British scholarly non-involvement with Bulgarian prehistoric material. Simultaneously, the thesis is an effort to re-introduce the Bulgarian Neolithic to the European narrative, by attempting to overcome the reclusiveness of Bulgarian scholarship.

There is a clear language barrier, which stands in the way of an easy incorporation of Bulgarian, and some extent Greek material into mainstream prehistoric discourse. Excavation reports and site studies have been published respectively in German, Russian and at times French, relating to prehistoric scholarship. English is rarely utilized as a language in Bulgarian scholarship, and when it is, these are often publications lacking in rigorous editing (e.g. Chohadzhiev 1998, 2007). Greek publications, especially of regional excavations (e.g. the AEMTH reports) and some widely known sites (e.g. Dikili Tash) are published in Greek.

5.3 GENESIS OF BULGARIAN HISTORICAL DISCOURSE

Bulgarian historical discourse acquired its 20th century and present form through Bulgarian clergymen and foreign educated revolutionaries, who were attempting to stir an upheaval in national consciousness prior to the Ottoman-Russian wars of the 1870s. A very notable Early Modern attempt at establishing parameters for the rooting of a national consciousness is the work of Paisius of Hilendar who in 1762 wrote the *Slavonic-Bulgarian History of the Peoples, Tsars, Saints, and of all their Deeds and of the Bulgarian Way of Life* (Crampton 2007, 31). This was largely a reaction of the clergyman to the Hellenisation of the Bulgarian clergy and the demise of any remnant positive Bulgarian self-image. The very first sentence has proven to be an epoch-defiant outcry for a unified Bulgarian psyche – „О, неразумни юроде*! Поради что се срамиш да се наречеш. Болгарин*“ – “Oh foolish nation! Why is it that you are ashamed to call yourselves Bulgarian?”[1] Apart from the nationalist element of the work, it was indeed a well-researched study of pre-Ottoman Bulgaria, and its extinguished grandeur. Hilendarski’s work was symptomatic of developments of a national mentality, which largely happened under the radar of Ottoman officials. Often when work such as my own are written, in reference to the development of Bulgarian ethnic identity, there is a danger of oversimplifying the resultant nationalist overtones of modern-day ethnicity (Diaz-Andreou and Champrion 1996; Kotsakis 2003, 59). We need to remain aware that the genesis of Bulgarian ethnicity was reactionary, under the Ottoman imperial realities. It comes as no surprise that the words of Hilendarski were so impassioned and urging, in the face of being assimilated into the larger Millet group (Todorova

1997). The Millet group as designated by the Ottoman authorities were all non-Muslim communities within the empire.

Hilendarski's seminal work provides a starting point for the study of the emic development of a Bulgarian ethnic, and later national identity. Following a whirlwind of political and military developments in the latter part of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, Bulgaria increasingly became a country attempting to secure a metaphorical European space for its national identity (Hristov 1987). This process did not go unnoticed, and even before the Bulgarian Liberation, the Bulgarian intelligentsia had commented on the trend of Bulgarians aspiring to be 'European' (e.g. Dobri Voinikov's satirical play Misunderstood Civilization in 1873).

Developments in the national mentality and self-perception played a vital role in the latter 20th century advance of historical studies. Unfolding in a space of political and social tension, stuck between the ideology of the nation-state and an inherent Ottoman cultural heritage, Bulgarian historians had to devise appropriate ways for the accommodation of the multi-vocality of Bulgarian national identity. In the early 20th century The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (henceforth BAS), an outgrowth of the Bulgarian Literary Society, focused historic studies on the 'greatness' of the Medieval Bulgarian kingdoms (Todorova 1992, 1106). At this early stage of Bulgarian historical scholarship trends were already following the major research agendas in contemporary German scholarship (Todorova 1992). The overwhelming influence of the German culture-historical school of thought resulted in an overpowering archaeological interest in the classification and departmentalization of material culture. An overarching concern with the perceived aesthetic value of objects became imbedded in Bulgarian practice.

In the interwar period, the scope of historical research broadened to incorporate more ancient as well as modern topics of Bulgarian developments, in an attempt to strengthen the threatened state of national self-image (Todorova 1992, 1107). After WWII Bulgarian scholarship experienced the influence of historical-materialist thought, coupled with a politically sustained need for historically affirmed 'national ideals'. After the initial influence of Marxist ideology and the prerequisite for culture histories Bulgarian historians reverted to traditional topics of study

of ancient and medieval history (Todorova 1992, 1108-09). This was accomplished under close political scrutiny; academics often paid an introductory 'lip service' to the Party's agenda, rendering most parts of studies "*uncontaminated with political clichés"* (Todorova 1992, 1107). Bulgarian scholars shared this practice with their fellow researchers in other parts of the Communist block (Leach 2015). The study of the medieval past served the nationalist agenda of the communist governments; the study of great khans and border expansion became one attribute in empowering the powerful ideological regime (Todorova 1992).

The point of major difference between Anglophone and Bulgarian scholarship might be found in the disenfranchisement of universities as leading research institutions in Bulgaria. Following the Soviet example of dividing research and education, the Institute of History and Institute of Archaeology were established separately as part of BAS in the late 1940s (Todorova 1992, 1113). In the later 1960s and into the 1970s the influx of more university students into the hard sciences also marked a period of low influx of new scholars into the historical sciences. Currently both universities and the Institutes are once again equally involved in research, but this past separation has had a lasting effect on the infrastructure of research agendas.

Historical research post-1989 in Bulgaria was initially anticipated to develop in a state of newly acquired privileges to a pluralism of thinking; the reality of research in a young democratic Bulgaria became vastly different (Todorova 1992, 1997). Todorova (1992, 1112), however, outlines the mere mechanical changes in historical writing (omitting well-known dogmatic formulas) and the overall lack, especially amongst younger academics, of introducing and employing archaeobotanical and geophysical methods of research (e.g. Marinova et al. 2002, 2012; Vajsov and Zidarov 2011). As a result, post-1990s archaeological scholarship exists as a continuation of long-established practices, with only minor amendments, such as both romanticized and positivist attitude towards data (Todorova 1992).

5.3.1 The place of archaeology in the wider historical discipline

Archaeology, as an academic discipline was first established in Bulgaria at the turn of the 20th century by the Czech-born academics Constantin Irecheck, Karel and Hermanegild Skorpil. Widely

educated in the natural and historical sciences, they were appointed as teachers in various Bulgarian towns and became pioneers in the research of Bulgarian prehistoric and medieval materials (Skorpil 1931). The establishment of the oldest Bulgarian museums - that of Varna and Sofia, was also the result of Karel Skorpil's striving for the protection of cultural heritage (Skorpil 1925, 1931).

The Bulgarian archaeological method and ideology for the majority of the 20th century have admittedly been based on the Marxist social formulas of historical materialism. The Marxist paradigm, well established in Soviet archaeology (Leach 2015), had a strong influence on the excavations of many sites which were being excavated and recorded. It was in the period between the 1940s and 1970 that the study of Neolithic/Chalcolithic sites in Bulgaria had its peak. Durankulak, in Dobrudzha was discovered in 1970 and excavated between 1974 and 1997, under Henrietta Todorova and her extensive team (Todorova 2002). The eponymous tell Karanovo excavations started in 1947 by Mikov and Georgiev (Nikolov 2007); then between 1984 and 1988 the tell was researched by a joint Bulgarian-Austrian expedition (Nikolov and Hiller 1997). The Varna chalcolithic cemetery was unearthed in 1972. Tell Junatsite, in the Maritsa catchment was first recorded by the Skorpil brothers and excavated first by Mikov in 1929; the site has since been studied co-operatively by Russian and Greek teams (Matsanova 2011). Neolithic Slatina, in modern-day Sofia was recorded in the 1930s but first excavations took place in 1985 (Nikolov 1992). Ovčarovo, in the northeast, was studied by student teams lead by Ilka Angelova between 1974 and 1979 (Krauß 2014). These are only some of the renowned Bulgarian prehistoric sites, which have served as period-defining discoveries in the Southern Balkans. It is obvious that extensive studies were undertaken under a Socialist regime in Bulgaria, which did indeed bear the influence of historical materialism. These were nonetheless valuable discoveries and research expeditions, yielding data relevant to this day.

According to leading Bulgarian archaeologist Vasil Nikolov (2000, 95), up until 1990 archaeology was regarded as a sub-discipline of history. It is also true that prehistory is still widely regarded by Bulgarian academics as defined as material history discipline only – resulting from the way it is taught at major Bulgarian universities (Nikolov 2000). The approach to archaeology formed by

a purely materialist perspective establishes a sound basis of many in-depth studies of prehistoric materials. Volumes on pottery style genesis (e.g. Nikolov 1998), articles on flint and stone tool provenance and production (Gatsov 1997, 2009; Gurova 2010, 2014), well-informed studies of burial ground and accompanying goods (e.g. Bačvarov 2003) all stand testimony to the effect of a material-based archaeology. The same approach has left the prehistoric past devoid of palpable human presence. While I do not argue this is necessarily carrying a negative connotation, this perception has hindered the adoption of virtually any post-processual methodologies.

Claiming that Bulgarian research agendas have moved on from that ideology is ill-advised, since there has not been an obvious theoretical or methodological paradigm shift in archaeological thought or practice. This is partially due to the lack of major translation programmes of European theoretical works. While English has always been widely read by certain high-positioned scholars, the lack of such translations prohibits a wide acceptance of Anglophone theoretical movements. On the other hand, the way in which doctoral positions are acquired invites the perpetuation of traditional research agendas and methods. Although some attempts have been made to create a succinct historiography of the archaeological discipline (e.g. Todorova 1992; Bailey 1998) these have fallen short of outlining the problematic tensions between history and archaeology, or politics and archaeology. As mentioned in English works, the allure of Bulgarian prehistory for non-Bulgarian speakers, is strongly reduced by the quality standard of published reports and publications (Bailey 1998). Adding to this, the procedures for receiving excavation permits are heavily reliant on national and local commissions. It was only after 1997 that foreign citizens have been allowed as heads of archaeological expeditions. The permission for this, however, is subject to the approval of the country's Council of Ministers (Nikolov 2000, 95). Excavation permit issuing is controlled by the Archaeological Institute with Museum (NAIM BAN/BAS); part of the permit commission are also representatives of the Ministry of Culture and the Institute for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage (Nikolov 2000).

The slow tempo of excavation publications has in the past been a severe problem for the incorporation of new archaeological data into the mainstream national, and international, prehistoric discourse. The only annual, consistent source of newly excavated site data has been

the AOR (Археологически открития и разкопки – Archaeological discoveries and excavations); these publications – printed in limited numbers and available in the building of NAIM in Sofia, but obtainable via non-straightforward means as electronic files. It has been claimed that the quality of the AORs has been standardized and elevated to international standards (AOR 2015). The information provided in these elusive publications is often very condensed and primary. Hence, the AORs often cannot be used as a source of in-depth site data.

Another aspect of the way archaeological research has been conducted on Bulgarian territory in the past has been that of strongly regional/thematic monopolies over research. Established archaeological household names have for the past 40 years claimed specific geographic locations and/or specific materials they are invested in academically (e.g. Nikolov 1992, Chohadzhiev 2001, Bakamska 2014). This type of research regionalism is strongly rooted in the Bulgarian archaeological tradition. The culture-historical paradigm under which the scholarship operates distinguished between settlement and burial archaeology in a way which severs any points of connection between the two. Many theories of the Neolithization process only deal with certain portions of the Bulgarian territory, leaving huge gaps in the understanding of nation or Balkan-wide occurrences (see Nikolov 2002; Todorova 2003). A notable example in the past has been the research of Henrietta Todorova, concentrated on the north-east of the country and the Black Sea coast. Another such case is the work of Vasil Nikolov in Slatina and Thrace (Nikolov 1998, Hiller and Nikolov 2000). Yavor Boyadzhiev is another prominent Neolithic expert who has consistently established his own niche in the research, largely working towards absolute chronology (Boyadzhiev 1995, 2009). While Anglophone scholarship is not devoid of area and material specialists, the concept of synthesizing large amount of specialist studies is not widely spread among prehistorians of the region in question. As a result, no large-scale synthesis exists for the whole of the country. In turn the overall understanding of the Bulgarian Neolithic record is hindered.

Bulgarian Neolithic archaeology lacks an efficient synthesizer of all the research pertaining to often very specialized pieces of material culture. A grand-narrative approach has been attempted in the past. An attempt at such a work was the 1993 work by Henrietta Todorova and Ivan Vajsov

– *The Neolithic Period in Bulgaria* (1993). The book compiles a wide range of topics, spanning from the Neolithic Revolution, through chronology, architecture, economy and the spiritual life in the Neolithic of Bulgaria. This work, however, lacks a clear and consistent contextualisation of materials and practices.

From an Anglophone archaeological point of view, what Bulgarian archaeological discourse lacks are underlying principles of the material fluidity, dynamic and tempo of change of material culture. Bulgarian scholars do not share in the practice of treating archaeological material as a provider of narratives. For most of these researchers, archaeology is best described as an exercise in classifying and labelling. Interpretations of prehistoric lifeways are almost exclusively related to establishments of social divisions and modes of production (e.g. Raduncheva 2002, Dzhanfezova et al. 2014). While neo-Marxist materialistic convictions are not apparent, fragments of dated modes of thinking are ostensible in the discipline. The reason why I call for the infusion of more anthropocentric values in this research is the stagnant way in which material is considered – as a teleological subject.

5.3.2 Foreign influences on Bulgarian archaeological research

A very important point of impasse between Anglophone and Bulgaria academia is the lack of a prominent sense of cultural heritage in Bulgarian mentality overall (Baneva 2015). This one immense difference could be found stemming from the lack of a clearly outlined Antiquarian phase in the development of the archaeological discipline in Bulgaria (Velkov 1993, Todorova 1997). Prehistoric/classical landscapes and monuments were not widely explored and described in the overly romanticising fashion in which this occurred elsewhere. In the very beginning of the 20th century, in contrast, the Ottomans developed a considerable dialogue with Western scholarship on the account of Greco-Roman antiquities. Within the Ottoman Empire the interest in and collecting of antiquities did not develop until 1869 when the first Ottoman legislation concerning the control over antiquities was created; this was paired with the rising idea of constructing an Imperial Museum in Istanbul (Çelik 2016, 23-24). Shortly after this initial development, the Ottoman Empire saw the forming of its first understanding and relationship with archaeology, translated ‘the science of antique works’ in Turkish (Çelik 2016, 25). The way

in which modern Turkish archaeology developed out of late Ottoman imperialist interest is a fascinating topic, but not one that can be extensively covered herein (see Çelik 2011, 2016). Sufficient for the purposes of my study is the understanding that Bulgarian and Greek territories were not affected by the upsurge in the belated Ottoman quest for antiquities. Osman Hamdi, the founder of the Imperial Museum at Constantinople, contributed to the very first Law of Antiquities in 1906. This was the first step of Turkish practice towards the creation of a modern-day, consistent antiquities regulation (Çelik 2016).

Meanwhile in Bulgaria Karel and Hermanegild Skorpil did produce works of Antiquarian standards, describing the wonders of Bulgarian archaeology (e.g. Skorpil and Skorpil 1890; Skorpil 1925, 1931). The two brothers, as noted above, were not Bulgarian educated and as a result were also a source of a mentality nurtured in the heart of Europe. Even though they had established the foundations of archaeology and museology, the influence of their worldview did not affect the development of the discipline in the way Antiquarianism did in Atlantic Europe. The case could be argued that Professor Bogdan Filov introduced a more Antiquarian style of thinking to the historical and archaeological disciplines. German educated, historian, archaeologist and politician Filov founded and was elected head of the Archaeological Institute prior to WW2 and admittedly exerted a great amount of influence in the tempo of archaeological research (Velkov 1993). The case can be argued, however, that these very few figures were not a consistent enough influence for the development of a full-blown Antiquarian movement.

Western intelligentsia and governments were not only impartial to the internal struggles of the ‘ordinary people’ but also often frankly demeaning and patronizing (Zakynthos 1920). It might strike the reader as irrelevant to deal with such intimate feelings of righteousness, but I argue that the sedimented discontent of Bulgarians is in part responsible for the aloof attitude of many Bulgarian archaeologists.

The influence of Anglophone researchers, and indeed a first-hand engagement with the archaeological record, are very rare in the history of the Bulgarian discipline. In the late 1930s the young American scholar, and later Lieutenant in WWII, James Harvey Gaul traversed Bulgaria

in search of the bigger prehistoric picture. He was a fellow of the American School of Prehistoric Research. Although he passed away in 1945, his work *The Neolithic Period in Bulgaria* was published in 1948 (Stefanovich et al. 1998). This was a very innovative research for its time, and in the context of the local practices, which attempted presenting a comprehensive overview of the chronological and material developments in the whole of the country; the study even went as far as to seek connection with neighbouring countries. The work of Gaul was pivotal in outlining the Early Neolithic West Bulgarian Painted Culture chronotypology, and indeed for the development in the archaeology of the whole Southern Balkans (Stefanovich et al. 1998, iii). The effect of Gaul's work is very tangible in contemporary Bulgarian Neolithic studies. As far back as the 1960s, when prehistoric research was resumed, Bulgarian archaeologists started retracing Gaul's steps, looking for further justifications of his conclusions (Chohadzhiev 1998). It comes as no surprise that Bulgarian archaeologists have consistently engaged with his terminology of choice, and there has not been a decisive move away from it (e.g. Boyadzhiev 1995, Chohadzhiev 2000, Bakamska 2007). Gaul was the first scholar to propose a unified theory of the widespread phenomenon of white-painted pottery along the whole of Western Bulgaria. He proposed that this should be named the *West Bulgarian Painted Pottery Culture*- an Early Neolithic material expression of local innovations and technology. His work in the Strymon in 1939 also contributed to expanding the known record of Neolithic sites, and the search for more sites in the following decades (Chohadzhiev and Genadieva 2003, Kulov 2009).

Following the work of Gaul, and the immense impact it had on the systematic study of prehistoric sites, a few different scholars continued regionalized efforts in uncovering a wealth of prehistoric locations (e.g. Chohadzhiev 2000, Grebska-Kulova and Zidarov 2011). A few extensive studies of the Bulgarian Neolithic paleoenvironmental record have been conducted (Dennell 1978, Stefanova et al. 2003, Marinova et al. 2012). Following the discovery of the multiphase tell site of Karanovo, and its initial excavation, an Austrian-Bulgarian cooperation devoted over two decades to studying the sequence of the fascinating site (Nikolov 2007).

It is interesting to observe through these developments, how the nature of Bulgarian research seemingly adopted a regional pattern on its own volition. One of the great problems in current

Bulgarian archaeology is not the lack of studies; it is the lack of great synthesizer. The big picture approach, within the parameters of 1990s archaeology, has in fact been attempted before, and by an Anglophone academic (e.g. Tringham 1971). As far back as the 1970s Ruth Tringham was calling for a unified study and understanding of the Eastern European Neolithic. She was also adequately raising the issue of an archaeology solely focused on typologies and identification of cultures. In more ways than one, her contributions have paved the way for this research. The work of Douglass Bailey in his 2000 book *Balkan prehistory exclusion, incorporation and identity* attempted what no other book had before. Bailey's approach was, however, largely disregarded the Bulgarian attitudes to the archaeological record. The problem of the impasse between Douglass Bailey's approach and the local research tradition, is the very notion of juxtaposition of material and human existence. Whilst Bulgarian researchers focus on comprehensively studying the make-up of material assemblages, in an openly descriptive fashion; Bailey's approach seeks to position materials and features within a wider socio-economic context. While this is a common enough approach for a contemporary Anglophone scholar, it is in a stark opposition to established Bulgarian practices. His approach, whilst remaining a core reading for first-timers in the field, according to Bulgarian researchers fails to capture the wildly individualized identity of different regions. Rather than attempting to bridge a discursive and terminological divide Bailey decides in this book, and elsewhere (Bailey 1997, 1998) to disregard the indigenous research climate of Bulgaria. This has been remarked on by Bulgarian prehistorians and Nikolov (2000) openly expresses discontent with Bailey's attempts at treating Bulgarian scholarship as a fringe phenomenon in the Balkans. Bailey's *Balkan Prehistory* is a remarkable compilation of the Balkan Neolithic. Very rarely attempted, and not undertaken since, such a work stands as proof that it is indeed possible to enmesh the Neolithic material of neighbouring Balkan countries (see Chapman 2000). The results of this are the successful bridging of known sequences and practices. Without further work, however, this remains an isolated attempt at creating a truly border-free narrative of the southern Balkan Neolithic.

Bailey's 2000 book was not his only attempt at engaging with Bulgarian archaeology. In the 1990s he took part in the study of a tell site in the northeast of Bulgaria – the Podgoritsa tell project

(1998). The events of this project have been surrounded by controversy before the publication of *Balkan Prehistory*, in the preface of which Bailey expresses discontent with the Bulgarian Ministry of Internal Affairs (2000, xv). Even though all the details of what happened to Bailey and his Cardiff University team have never been discussed in full detail and openness, it is notable that work explicitly focused on Bulgaria has not been produced by Bailey since. Moreover, the possible effect of the Podgoritsa scandal is that of a doubtful attitude of Bulgarian prehistorians towards British researchers. In 1995, Bailey and Panajotov, presenting the different aspects of study in Bulgarian prehistory, published an edited volume, inviting Bulgarian academics to contribute. The comprehensive volume includes studies of the chronology of the Bulgarian Neolithic, intriguing explanations of the chrono-typologies of the Strymon, as well as studies of flint working, tools and regional sequences worthy of scholarly praise. Whilst the individual chapters in the volume are innately helpful by themselves, the overall tome does not contribute to the easement of tensions between Bulgarian and Anglophone terminology and methodologies.

The list of Bulgarian publications in English is rather short. Prehistoric specialists in Bulgaria, when not writing in Bulgarian, publish rather in German, French or Russian – heavily depending on where research funding has come from (Lichardus-Itten et al. 2002, 2006; Nikolov and Hiller 1997; but see Pernicheva-Perets et al. 2011). In some rare case, like the one of Chohadzhiev's *Settlement Patterns of the Strymon,* publishing in English has been a conscious attempt at engaging Anglophone academia (2007)

Other Anglophone academics have worked closely with Bulgarian prehistoric materials e.g. John Chapman (2000, et al. 2007), Clive Bonsall (Gurova and Bonsall 2014, 2014a), and in exclusive cases alongside their Bulgarian colleagues. The result of such studies is then very rarely spoken about in contemporaneous academic writings, and results of postprocessual Anglophone studies do not become part of the dominant ways of understanding the materials/periods.

Bulgarian studies keep existing in a vacuum of otherwise dated terminology and theoretical reasoning, or lack thereof. It is not difficult to understand the inability of Anglophone academia

to nowadays operate within the Bulgarian scholarship mode – outdated terms, outdated thinking, at least from an Anglophone perspective, have mostly served as a repellent for British academics. The problem of this impasse lies with the existence of two different and non-converging archaeological realities – the Bulgarian and the Anglophone one. While Bulgarian archaeologists do not consider their views and agendas archaic, they also do not attempt to compare their perspectives with non-Balkan views. In that sense, it is only understandable that Anglophone archaeologists have stayed, for the most part, impartial to Bulgarian material. As decades go by, the terminological, chronological and theoretical gap keeps widening. Findings of Bulgarian scholars become, in effect, increasingly impossible to include in a Balkan Neolithic narrative.

5.4 GREEK PREHISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE 20TH CENTURY

The development of the Greek nation state and national identity alongside the unparalleled development of 20th century Greek archaeology had a story much different from its Bulgarian counterpart. The place of Greece as a singular locus of the post-medieval aesthetic and ethical values had secured the place of the country as a recognized part of the Western European worldview (Kotsakis 1991, 2003; Mazower 2000; Hamilakis 2007). To discuss the history of the Greek archaeological discipline is a task much more extensive than the Bulgarian one. This is so because of the way in which Greek archaeology was cemented into the foundations of building a Greek national identity (Friedman 1992; Morris 1994). The Classical past of Greece had an immense two-fold role to play in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries. Firstly, it was the combined interest in Classical antiquities from Western European powers that spurred much more than the development of archaeology. Art history, philosophy, nationalist discourse and cultural ancestry became entangled in a common discourse, which dominated the Anglo-Saxon scholarly discourse (Mazower 2000). The Greek past became much more than simply the past of a single country, it became the common ancestor of all countries claiming to be the forerunners of Western cultural values and ideals. On home ground, the Greek past served the seminal purpose of rebuilding the national consciousness of the Rumelian realms of the Ottoman Empire

(Kofos 1975, Diaz-Andreou and Champion 1996). In this chapter, I do not claim a comprehensive review of the Greek nationalist agenda apparatus. Many works have been dedicated to the history and modernity of the unity between the Greek past and the Greek state (see Marchand 2003, Hamilakis 2007). For the purposes of my thesis, however, I want to pay specific attention to the place of prehistoric studies in the overall landscape of archaeological developments. Greek prehistory has developed along the lines of its current trajectory in the shadows of the ever-important Classical past (Kotsakis 1991). Herein I discuss how this has affected the current mode of prehistoric studies.

5.4.1 The Place of Greek Archaeology (Prehistory and Classics) in European Academia

The separation between Classics and Prehistory had not always seemed inevitable. In the first half of the 20th century prehistoric studies in Greece were subjected to a lesser interest in the political and public eye. Whilst the Classical past provided both wider audience and interested political sides with a much-needed sense of continuity, archaeology beyond the glorious images of the Minoan Bronze Age was not a priority. In many of his works Kotsakis consistently calls upon the notion of continuity as a moving force behind the legitimation of the past, required in nationalist discourse (2003). Classical studies in Greece had been traditionally the forte of foreign explorers and considered the sovereignty of western stakeholders also interested in legitimizing their own validity as movers and shakers (Shanks 1996). Classical discourse, with its many internal problems and struggles have been, on their own terms, the focus of many studies (see Morris 1994, 8). I do not claim a comprehensive understanding of the field, not least because of the palpable ideological gap between Classics and Prehistory in modern-day Greece. Researchers of the two exist and develop on their own terms. This has not always been so.

The history of Greek archaeological and prehistoric thought has had its own unique sequence of changes in modes of thinking and research methodologies (Demoule and Perles 1993). Within a mere decade after the liberation of Greece from Ottoman rule, the Archaeological Society of the modern Greek state was founded, in 1837 (Gallis 1979, 1). The purpose of this early formation was related to the protection, collection and presentation of national antiquities (Gallis 1979). Later in the course of the 19th century, once Thessaly became officially recognised as a part of

the Greek state, and with establishment of the Archaeological Service, research in Northern Greece began developing rapidly (Gallis 1979). The structuring and working of the Service developed into involving local municipal authorities in the collection of antiquities and reporting to the Central Service in Athens (Gallis 1979). Christos Tsountas, an Ephor of Antiquities in the Society was sent to Thessaly in the late 19th century, as an experienced Athens and Germany educated archaeologist (Gallis 1979; Voutsaki 2016). Tsountas was a prominent figure of Greek archaeology, having in his lifetime worked and published extensively on Mycenean and prehistoric sites alike (Voutsaki 2016). He is most often credited with the legacy of eponymous Neolithic sites such as Sesklo and Dimini, along with the tradition of systematic studies of Thessaly and its landscape. Influenced by Greek classical traditions of study, as well as the German *Altertumswissenschaft,* Tsountas introduced many of the prevalent European modes of thinking of early 20th century archaeological scholarship (Voutsaki 2016).

Greek archaeologists did not solely conduct research in Northern Greece in the beginning of the 20th century. As early as 1912, British Scholars Wace and Thompson had published a volume of north-eastern Greek prehistory (Wace and Thompson 1912), This early work is in many ways definitive of this early period of study and contains a comprehensive glossary of the Neolithic record know at the time. Following a period of brief cessation of extensive studies, Greek prehistory renewed its vigorous development after the war period (Fotiadis 2001, Efstratiou 2010).

Following WW2 and the nascent reality of civil political unrest, archaeology in Greece reached a turning point in its development. The British government and foreign interest had placed a notable stamp of interest in Greek socio-political life (see Clogg 1992). Classical archaeology had been fulfilling the function of substantiating claims to historically-based national identity since the late 19th century. The process had its affiliations with the similarly developed British narrative (Voutsaki 2016). The study of the Aegean Bronze Age, and its Homeric connotations, became a major branch of research, and attracted many Anglophone academics, who to this day remain the leading names in the field (Gere 2011). Prehistory was considered irrelevant to this discourse due to the lack of apparent continuity (Kotsakis 2003 but see Voutsaki 2016). In briefly outlining

the separate developmental trajectory of Greek prehistory scholarship, I will primarily rely on the 1991 work by Kostas Kotsakis. In this work, Kotsakis very clearly identifies the main stages in the development of research agendas and methods. Under the influence and importance of its prominent Classical past, Greek archaeology in the early 20th century mostly followed a culture-historical trend, in line with the nationalist political agenda. The works of Childe (1929) and Evans (1925) strongly resonated with a pre-war archaeological vigour in Greece. The trends set in fieldwork by British academics left behind a nascent sense of tradition.

The influence of neo-marxist historical materialism inevitably reached the Greek archaeological schools in the late 1950s and 1960s (Kotsakis 2003). The short-lived and partial involvement of the Marxist paradigm was the reactionary tool for breaking away from the Classicist modes of thinking. Whilst a Marxist archaeology was not established proper, but it provided a different perspective of the material record. In the 1990s neo-Marxists topics briefly featured in the overall Neolithic discourse, pertaining to modes of production and craft specialiazation (e.g Hourmoziadis 1995, 1996). Some valuable insight regarding the pottery production and craft specialization was contributed by Karen Vitelli (1995, Vitelli and Perles 1999), albeit pertaining mostly to the southern Greek Neolithic. Rather than engaging with the property relations and modes of material production, prehistoric scholarship needed an approach dealing with the social context of making. The works of Hourmouziadis, for over two decades was strongly influenced by both neo-Marxists reasoning and well as New Archaeology interpretational tools (Kotsakis 1991). The approach Hourmouziadis adopted became an important half-way point between neo-Marxist materialism and New Archaeology positivism. Historical materialism took an odd form in Greek archaeology and the Marxist agenda never reached a full peak in the country. The reason for this is twofold, to be found primarily in the outcome of the Greek civil war in the 1940s, which resulted in the ultimate cessation of furthering communist thought in Greece (Clogg 1992). The reader should also bear in mind that in archaeological terms, Greece was never considered as a unified entity. The separation between Northern Greek and Southern Greek loci and practices in the post-war period was embedded in the socio-political landscape of the time, discussed further below (Demoule and Perlès 1993). It was the culture-historical

German tradition that played a key role in 1960s development of Thessalian prehistory; emphasis on chronological frameworks and pottery groups was immense (Demoule and Perlès 1993, 356). Simultaneously, the Anglophone tradition of environmental and economy studies found a foothold in the south of the country, relating to the continued quest for continuity with the Hellenic past (Demoule and Perlès 1993). This is partially explicable by the rise of New Archaeology in the West, which brought about notions of system theories and positivist attitudes. These were the necessary tools for Greek prehistorians to finally establish themselves as a unified research front. The myriad works of prehistorians Theocharis and Chourmouziadis in the 1970s and 1980s presented the emergence of a very powerful, critical and self-sufficient school of prehistoric thought in Greece. Not entirely New Archaeological in nature, but also not readily accepting the ideas and analysis of Neo-Marxims, Greek prehistorian have proven themselves as independent critical thinkers. Greek prehistoric scholarship did also experience a variety of theoretical influences (Kotsakis 1991). In the backdrop of the Bulgarian academic situation, however, the presence of concurrent opposing modes of Greek thinking is a true testimony to the nature of Greek prehistory. Whilst remaining engaged with the developments of theory in Europe and America, Greek prehistorians succeeded in establishing a discipline of a truly international status.

In terms of contemporary governmental organization of archaeological research in the Greek state, there are two bodies conducting archaeological research in Greece, apart from the work of University archaeological departments – The Archaeological Society of Athens and the Archaeological Service. The Service was formerly part of the Ministry of Education but is currently under the structure of the Ministry of Culture (Kotsakis 1991, Efstratiou 2006).

5.4.2 Stuck between North and South? - Northern Greek Archaeology

In her important 2007 work on Greek social archaeology, Stella Souvatzi briefly, but helpfully synthesizes the problem that Northern Greek research faces. Stemming from the accumulation of historical, political and nationalist perception, the northern Greek borderlands have been

perceived as non-central, hence non-vital (Souvatzi 2007, 50). Even with increasing numbers of studies in Macedonia and Thrace (e.g. Gimbutas 1976, Renfrew et al. 1986, Darcque and Tsirtsoni 2010), the state of research of Northern Greece still does not equate to the extensive knowledge of regions such as Thessaly (Souvatzi 2007, 48). The segmentation of Northern Greece into smaller geographic units has been quoted as a reason for the disunified prehistoric discourse, ever since the early 1900s (Wace and Thompson 1912, Theocharis 1973). Clearly notable in later Prehistory, as well as in the Neolithic, the Greek-Balkan frontier is inherently a place of contact and enmeshing of lifeways. It is also worth pointing out that when discussed in material terms, later prehistorians and classicists have often been found ascribing Greek material culture with a more superior aesthetic status (Shanks 1996, Hamilakis 2007). This trend is the legacy of the *Megali Idea* of early Greek irredentism (Kofos 1975) and holds a key place in the Classical and Bronze Age archaeological approach to northern Greek material (e.g. Rutter 1983). The *Megali Idea* itself was the result of nationalist political movements towards uniting all Balkan territories encompassing ethnic Greeks (Kofos 1975). Whilst the attitudes of perceived aesthetic superiority are still common in contemporary Classical scholarship, the prehistoric aspect of research gained its independence from a culture historical hold in the establishment of the prehistory at the University of Thessaloniki (Kotsakis 2003). Prehistory and Classical archaeology within the Greek modern state started drifting apart in an environment of perceived political affinities, as well as ideological discord. The study of the Greek Classical past has maintained strong links with right-wing political establishments since its inception, associated with the very core of the country, Athens (Morris 1994, Hamilakis 2007). The ideological locus of prehistoric archaeology became Thessaloniki where prehistorians found an independent environment for the genesis of ideas. Away from the capital, archaeological thought developed under the influences of a much-needed degree of freedom in left-wing political thinking (Hamilakis 2007).

The position of chair of prehistory in the University of Thessaloniki was created in 1964 (Andreou et al. 1996). This was the official recognition of an already existing tradition of prehistoric research in Thessaly. It was only after the mid-1970s, however, under the patronage of successive chairs Hourmouziadis and Theocharis that prehistory became systematically taught, and the

University started work in the region (Andreou et al. 1996). This became the foundation of the Hourmouziadis School of prehistoric research in Northern Greece.

The geographic perception of Northern Greece is amalgamated with ideological and ethno-cultural implications and even political inferences. Here I am alluding to the long-lasting ideological effects of the establishment of the Former Yugoslavic Republic of Macedonia. The historical region of Macedonia had been the cause for political and military disquiet between Balkan states for the majority of the 19th and 20th centuries (Clogg 1997). It must come as no surprise then, that the historically loaded region of Greek Macedonia is also tainted by past ethno-political realities. Separating Greek Macedonia into Western, Central and Eastern adds to an already difficult research landscape. With the further segmentation of Northern Greece into the area of Greek Thrace the landscape of the area became an increasingly difficult area of study.

5.5 The many faces of the Neolithization debates

The Neolithic discourse in the southern Balkans, and the greater Balkan area for that matter has traditionally been a source of many controversies and outright disagreements. My thesis, albeit attempting a coverage of the entire Neolithic, inadvertently deals closely with the advent of the Neolithic in the southern Balkans. Here are some of the major debates focused on the Neolithization process, pertaining to the development of my own research.

5.5.1 The Greek Neolithization debate

Greek research of the Neolithic has been flourishing since the early 20th century. A mixture of both Greek and British excavators has left a wealth of researched sites; and many interpretations, relating to the earliest phases of Neolithization, as well as to the very end of the Greek Final Neolithic, have been put forward (e.g. Renfrew et al. 1986, Souvatzi 2008, Koukouli-Chryssanthaki et al. 2008).

Following the development of Prehistoric research, helmed in the north of the country by the University of Thessaloniki, work in Greek Macedonia began on a big scale in the 1980s. Prior to this sites in Nea Nikomedea, in the early 1960s, to the west and Sitagroi, in the late 1960s-early

70s, in the east of Greek Macedonia were discovered, representing respectively Early and Middle Neolithic sequences (Rodden 1996; Andreou et al. 1996). Excavations at the site of Dikili Tash had started in 1961, under a French-Greek partnership (Andreou et al. 1996, 578). Dikili Tash and Sitagroi, both in Eastern Macedonia are multi-phase sites with elaborate stratigraphies serving as indicators of the Middle to Late Neolithic in the region. Whilst not coterminous, their respective sequences and materials have served as markers for developments in the second half of the Southern Balkan Neolithic (Theocharis 1973, Andreou et al. 1996). Makri is another extensively researched site, providing insight into the Middle to Late Neolithic, and Early Chalcolithic of the Northern Greek region (Andreou et al. 1996). Likewise, the site of Dimitra associated with the Angitis River in the Serres plain, coterminous with the early phase of Sitagroi provides more knowledge of Neolithic occupation (Andreou et al. 1996).

Archaeological research in Greece has largely thrived under the colonial political and scholarly influences of Western European counties, not to forget American influences on Greek Bronze Age and Classical archaeology. Many sites across Greek territories have been jointly excavated by international teams, with high rates of data infused into an overall European discourse. This is among the chief reasons why Greek Neolithic sites have been prominent in the theories concerning the Neolithization of Southeast Europe. Multiple theories have claimed that the Aegean, and its Greek coast, were vital ingredients in the recipe of Neolithic developments and its transferral further into Europe (e.g. Thissen 2000, Perlès 2001, Krauß 2011, Brami 2015). It is imperative to note that even in the most well-known cases of Neolithic synthesis and Neolithization works (e.g. Perles 2001; Kotsakis 2003; Kyparissi-Apostolika 2006 but see Reingruber 2011) the Greek Neolithic has traditionally been evaluated as a unique phenomenon.

There is an inherent problem with the archaeology of the Serres and Drama plains, related to the extent of erosion and alluviation rates of the Strymon and Angitis Rivers (Andreou et al 1996). From the little-known sites of the areas, of prime interest to my own study, a pattern of abandonment of sites at the end of the Neolithic is noticeable (Andreou et al. 1996). Much focus has been put on the Thessalian plain and portions of Greek Macedonia. The valley of the Strymon, however, has remained outside the interest of Neolithic specialists.

The development of Neolithization and Early Neolithic research in Greece has changed immensely over the last two decades. Large-scaled demic diffusion had been hailed as the most viable explanation for the Greek Neolithization (Van Andel and Runnels 1995). Claims of a Preceramic Neolithic phase in Greece, corresponding to the PNNB of the Levant and Anatolia has now been proven to have been the result of radiocarbon overestimations (Weninger et al. 2006, Reingruber and Thissen 2009, Reingeruber 2011). There is still some controversy over the way Neolithic life started in the region. Some researchers point to Northern Greece, and its Mesolithic population as the progenitor of the European Neolithic (Kyparissi-Apostolika 2006, 59; Seferieades 2006, 15-16). Simultaneously, the material similarities and shared influences with Anatolia have an undeniable status in the Neolithization narratives (Perlés 2001, Kyparissi-Apostolika 2006). The Greek Early Neolithic is increasingly perceived as the result of a complicated process, involving not only human movement but adaptation to local landscapes and transfers of Neolithic know-hows (Perlés, 2001; Kotsakis 2003; Lichter 2011, 35).

One big advancement has been the confirmation of the Early Holocene, Mesolithic period in Greece and the study of its localities (Bottema 2003, Manolis and Stravopodi 2003, 207). It has been chronologically defined, with the help of lithics spanning from 9700 to 8100 cal BP (Bottema 2003). Environmental studies have discovered that the Aegean Sea level had risen some 130 m. since the beginning of the Holocene (Bottema 2003, 33 – 34). Even though paleo-environmental studies have shown a steady increase in the development of forested areas, other studies have pointed towards multiple Early Holocene weather deteriorations, one of which was the short-term 8200 cal BP event (Marinova et al. 2009).

This intensified research into conditions and anthropogenic activity in the Early Holocene has had a double effect on existing opinions, creating the contemporary version of the diffusion/acculturation divide (Kotsakis 2003, Seferiades 2006). A growing number of papers recognize the importance of Mesolithic presence in Greece, and the Balkans overall, in the processes of becoming Neolithic. The sites with well recorded Mesolithic stratigraphies are found thought-out modern-day Greece and follow the Turkish extension of the Aegean to the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea coast (see Seferiades 2006, 16; Facorellis 2003, 55; Özdogan 1999,

210). The Mesolithic in Thessaly is especially well represented by the Theopetra Cave, with its use of local flint, clay and a burial (ca 7050 – 7010 BC), spanning the Early Holocene for a period of 1700 – 2000 years (Kyparissi-Apostolika 2003, 189-193). More precise dating has revealed the chronological occupation span of 10 900 – 8900 cal BC (Facorellis 2003, 65). This growing discussion of the Greek Mesolithic has essentially had a healthy effect on the overall discussion of the Greek Neolithization. Because the presence of human population in different parts of Greece has been proven, the complexity of the Neolithization is more easily perceptible (Kotsakis 2003). Searching for a straightforward stratigraphic connection between Mesolithic and Neolithic occupations should not be a perpetual research expectation (Kyparisi-Apostolika 2003, 195-196). The Greek Neolithization does not follow the same patterns of Mesolithic behaviour as that of central and northern Europe, the same straightforward results as those of the Danube Gorges should not be anticipated. Kotsakis (2003, 229) further states that perceiving the southern Balkans as a buffer between south-eastern and north-western regions is hindering the developing Mesolithic-oriented research.

Greek Mesolithic research has had a rejuvenating effect on the Neolithization debate. Valuable new ways of thinking about the process have infiltrated the research agenda to the south-west of Bulgaria. Coincidentally those are exactly the kind of rejuvenations that current Bulgarian Neolithization research lacks altogether.

5.5.2 The Bulgarian Neolithization debate

The past and contemporary counterparts of Bulgarian Neolithization models do not differ greatly in Bulgarian literature. Large scale demic diffusion has been the favourited explanations of the leading authorities on the topic (e.g. Todorva and Vajsov 1993, Nikolov 1989, Boyadzhiev 2007). The only points of impasse between prehistorians have been the geographic routes on which this diffusion has taken place and the timing of these movements. The main theories are focused on riverbeds which allegedly provided easy access into an otherwise heavy forested Bulgaria. Nikolov (1990, 2007) suggests a northward movement along the rivers Strymon and Mesta. As a long-time excavator in the area, Nikolov has centred his research on the land south of the Stara Planina mountain ridge. Relying on close parallels between the Early Neolithic pottery of north-

western Turkey/Turkish Thrace and southern Bulgaria, justifications have been made for the movement of people northwards (Nikolov 1990, 2002, 2007, Elenski 2004).

Henrieta Todorova held a long-term opposition to Nikolov's theories, insisting a more complex movement of people occurred, following the Black Sea coast (Todorova 2003, Todorova and Vajsov 1993). This, she theorised, eventually led to the establishment of the Earliest Neolithic occupations in Northern Bulgaria (Poljanitsa-Platoto, Koprivec, Dzhulyunitsa - Smardesh) (Vajsov 2009). In one of her works she claimed that it was this movement along the lower Danube, which led to the Danube Gorges Mesolithic-Neolithic interactions (Todorova 2003). At ca 6300 cal BC, it has been suggested, Neolithic populations occupied the lands north of Stara Planina, until a ca 6000 cal BC drop in temperatures drove them to go southwards (Todorova 2003); these were the people, visible through the record of Karanovo I, about 5900 cal BC. Proponents of other water ways for the spread of the Neolithic have advertised possible routes along the Maritsa and Vardar, endorsing them as vital proponents in the spread of Early Neolithic pottery cultures (Boyadzhiev 2009, but see Nikolov 2007, 184-186) An influential group of prehistorians do not support theories of pre-Neolithic human presence (e.g. Todorova and Vajsov 1993, 54; Nikolov 1990; Boyadzhiev 2006, 2009; Gatsov 2013). Environmentally driven research excludes any possibility of widespread human population in the Early Holocene Bulgarian territories (Weninger et al. 2006). Presently, no coherent theoretical model of a Mesolithic-Neolithic interaction exists in Bulgarian prehistory.

Simultaneously, there are a few axiom-like suggestions, which keep circulating present Neolithization model. One is the undeniable role of the Strymon for the Neolithic incomers and contacts (Nikolov 1990, 63). Another axiom of Neolithization is the spread of Monochrome pottery in central and north-western Bulgaria (Ohoden, Poljanitsa- Platoto, Koprivec and Dzuljynitsa-Smardesh), otherwise known as the Koprivec cultures, and Proto-Starcevo for the case of Ohoden (Todorova 2003, Boyadzhiev 2007, Ganetsovski 2007). A stratigraphic hiatus followed this type of pottery production, after which red and white painted pottery appears, known as the Galabnik culture in the North and then Karanovo I, in Eastern Thrace (Budja 2009).

The suggested initial Monochrome phase of the Neolithic has been convincingly shown to not have been an isolate phase of the earliest Neolithic (Krauss 2011).

5.6 THE PROBLEMATIC STUDY?

The big question faced by the archaeologies of the two countries at the end of the 20th century is whether they really existed in a Post-Soviet and a Post-Ottoman reality. It can certainly be argued that Bulgaria became increasingly post-Soviet in the 1960s, after the deaths of Georgi Dimitrov and Stalin, and after the post-Tito influence of the Balkan federation agenda (Crampton 2007, 343-345). Soviet politics, even so, never exercised a great amount of strain purely on the matters of Bulgarian archaeology. It does hold true that a nationalist agenda was observable in the treatment of archaeological material from the Classical Greek and Thracian/Bulgar Bulgarian pasts, respectively. In the case of Bulgaria, however, continuity was never sought within the deep prehistoric past of the country. Hence, a strong nationalist agenda has never been attached to these studies.

As for the post-Ottoman status of the two countries, I believe there are number of underlying social issues of self-perception and identity, remnant in both societies. Since the late 1950s the Bulgarian and Greek states have both attempted developing diplomatic relations (Crampton 2007). Nevertheless, the two nations have also had to partake in an effort to prove their attained modernity – to one another, and themselves. In less than two centuries of independence from the Ottoman Empire the two countries have been playing catch-up with over five centuries of ideological developments through which the rest of Europe obtained its status as 'modern'.

The nature of archaeological research in the two regions discussed, coupled with their above-studied genesis, poses a few very difficult questions for interested scholars. Could a holistic link between archaeological research of Greek and Bulgarian Strymon be established? In the event it is, how successful would such a study be? The benefits of a unified approach to the whole of the river are unquestionable. The sole principle of ignoring modern-day boundaries and conflict for the sake of a complete narrative of a place is at the basis of all contemporary British research. Based on the already discussed problematic of existing research, for the success of my thesis, an

entangling of different ideological horizons needs to occur. Whilst recognizing the origins and individuality of the separate research traditions, my approach is inherently grounded in a British intellectual tradition. What makes the approach different to those of other Anglophone scholars is my ability to gain direct knowledge of the intimate workings of the Bulgarian archaeological apparatus. Accordingly addressing the contemporary discourse of Greek prehistory as well, I shall be narrating a unique point of view.

The archaeological record of the Strymon catchment has been growing, both in terms of numbers of excavated sites and materials from these. As in other distinctive regions in both Greece and Bulgaria, the Neolithic of the Strymon does not easily afford itself to systematic understanding of trends and developments. Only a glimpse at the Early Neolithic sites distribution along the river reveals that many of the earliest sites were in fact established in the Upper Strymon region, thus defying a simplistic understanding of northward moving Neolithic settlers (see Chapter 5). The whole of the Neolithic along the Strymon is characterized by a mixture of distinct changes in occupation patterns, mixed with more persistent trends in land-use. I will further discuss the overall river settlement pattern of the Strymon, but I use these examples here to underline how recent research has enriched our ability to make sense of these patterns (e.g. Demoule and Perlés 1993; Andreou et al. 1996, Koukouli-Chryssanthaki et al. 2003). All the different approaches, which have affected the Strymon catchment create an incoherent and patchy narrative of the understanding of Neolithic processes. It is an objective of this thesis to tackle the difference in approaches and compile a wholesome understanding of Neolithic developments, defying national borders and the inherent nationalism.

The nature of research along the Bulgarian transect of the Strymon is heavily affected by the regional character of both surface and invasive investigations. The frequency and efficiency of such investigation, on the other hand, are dependent on the budgets of regional museums, or outside investments and international expeditions. Because of these combined conditions, different regions, e.g. the Blagoevgrad, Kyustendil and Petrich/Sandanski region, are at varied states of unearthing/discovering prehistoric settlement sites. The combined efforts of regionally based researchers and the NAIM have resulted in the production of an online database called the

Archaeological Map of Bulgaria. This is hosted on an online platform to which archaeologists get access from a central leader of the database in NAIM. The so-called map presents the combined list of all archaeological sites researched in Bulgaria, as well as surveyed sites. The website itself offers the opportunity to apply for privileges to use the data base. I have applied for access to this database on two separate occasions and have been denied access without further explanations.

Greek archaeological research is organized in a different manner. The Greek Archaeological Service is a division in the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sciences; the service consists of over 40 ephorias, dealing with different periods, materials and environmental topographies; 25 of these are of prehistoric and classical antiquities (Thomas 1988).

My thesis is restricted and defined not only by the existent knowledge on the topic, but also by the extent to which I am allowed access to existing data. In the case that my own assumptions about the still undiscovered richness of the Strymon settlement record are proven true, this thesis would in time grow irrelevant and quite possibly misinformed. For the time being, however, and with all the material available to me, I am obliged to primarily provide a comprehensive initial presentation of the nature of Neolithic material remains.

The undeniable reality of the current research within Northern Greece and Southern Bulgaria is that combined studies, and efforts, of the two countries play in the favour of the interests of neither. The two countries have no mutual interest in developing a common grand narrative, or a narrative of any kind. It is easier, in many ways, to treat the phenomena of Neolithic innovation of local, regional inventions with vague neighbouring parallels, than to admit that at some point in the distant past boundaries had no value for the inhabitants of those lands. Following Trigger's work (1984) it is of use to my overall study to briefly consider the socio-political nature of the two national discourses and whether they fit within the tri-fold distinction between nationalist, colonialist and imperial modes of archaeological thinking. Because of the prolonged status of both Bulgaria and Greece as provinces of the Ottoman Empire, the two counties have had a very short time in which to develop a clear understanding of their own national identities, compared

to other European countries. In that sense a nationalist discourse has always been superimposed onto the ideologies of the countries. In the wake of Western European 19th century industrialization, archaeology and history were both used with the specific agenda in mind to strengthen the sense of class unity (Trigger 1984, 358). Simultaneously, the systematic study of prehistory, at the rise of the Industrial revolution, were in the hands of middle class and gentry in northern and Western Europe (Trigger 1984, 357). Viewed in this light, the archaeologies of post-Ottoman countries, while exhibiting signs of nationalist intentions in the late 19th and early 20th century, had a very different grounding. The archaeology of Bulgaria arose out of a need to find some sort of historical footing for the invention of a national identity; the Greek, albeit in a different favour to Western Europe, was also seeking to alleviate the pressure of Ottoman rule in the sense of a unified identity. These reasons, I argue, are the root cause for the socio-political sensitivity on both sides of the Greek-Bulgarian border. All the developments, movements of state boundaries, political and ideological affiliations that the two counties experienced in the 20th century need to be viewed through the lens of that root cause. Some may argue for the effects, which imperialist archaeology ideas of cultural diffusion (Trigger 1984, 364) have had on the two archaeological developments. This is warranted – in reference to Trigger's tri-partite separation, Bulgaria and Greece do not fit any straightforward mould.

The trajectory along which Bulgarian and Greek archaeology develop does not seemingly lead to an easy agglomeration of research agendas. It is already apparent that the terminological and methodological gap between Bulgarian and Anglophone academia is equated by the lack of research coordination between Greece and Bulgaria. This is an even bigger issue for the development of the discipline in British scholarship; and it makes the task twice complicated – e.g. to reconcile Bulgarian terminology and chronology not only with the Anglophone one, but with Greek ones as well.

5.7 History of Research of the Strymon

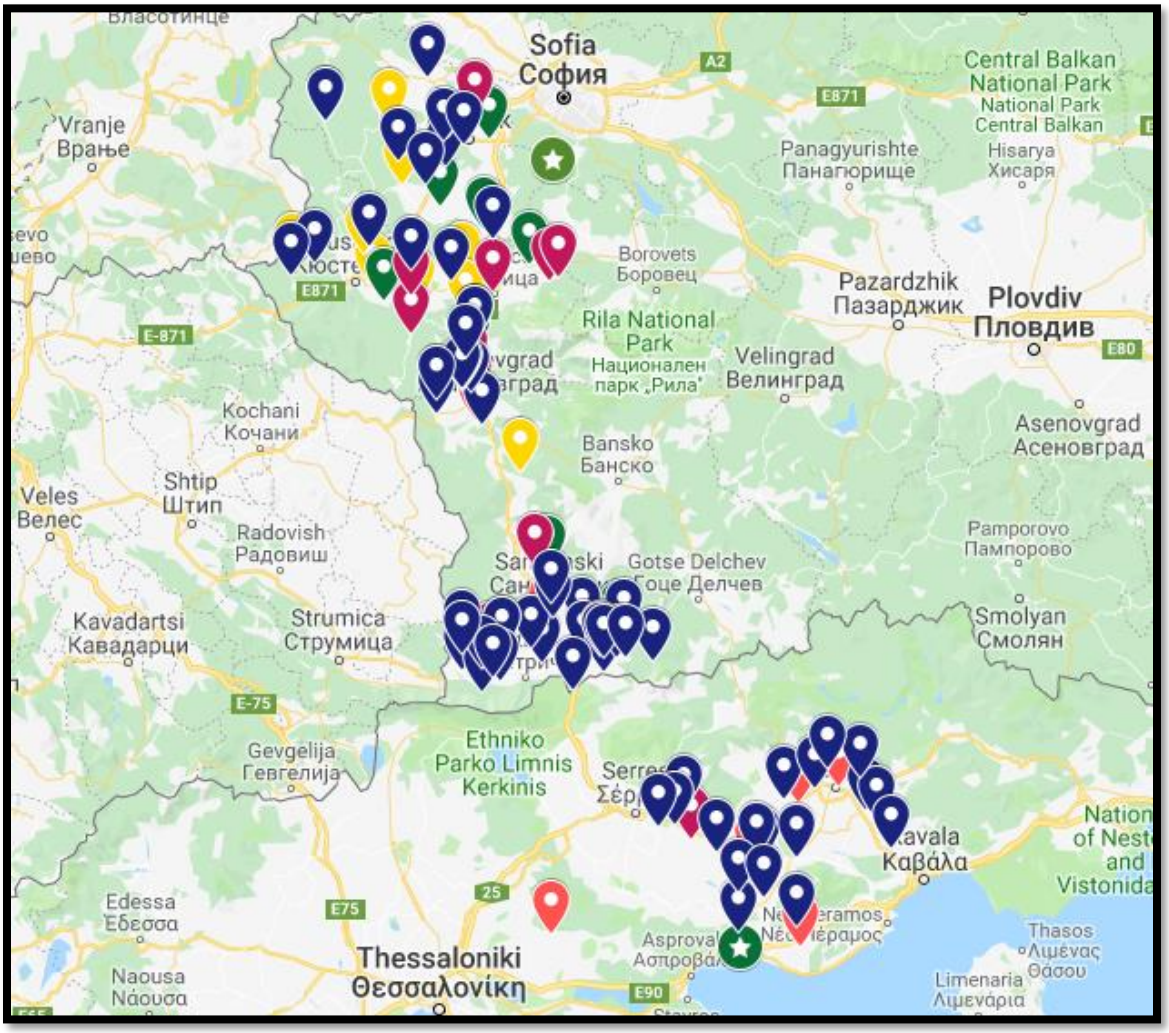

Figure 2. Map of all Strymon catchment sites discussed in the text. Sites in Green and Yellow are Early Neolithic, sites in Dark Pink are Transitional, sites in Blue and Pink are Late Neolithic (Source: Google Maps)

The earliest known references to the archaeology of the Strymon region are found in the travelling recounts of a Russian explorer by the name of V.I. Prigorovich. He visited the town of Melnik in 1844 on his journey across European Turkey and described some heritage sites there (Dramsizova-Nelchinova 1987). The beginning of the 20th century saw an increasing interest in the study of the Strymon area; works published by Bulgarian scholars V. Kanchov and H. Dzhambov discussed the richness of sites along the river, spanning from the Upper Paleolithic to the Middle Ages (Dramsizova-Nelchinova 1987). The excavation and construction of the Sofia-

Kulata railway in the 1930s was one of the first large-scale causes for the unearthing of multiple prehistoric Strymon sites, among which are the Neolithic Nevestino and Mursalevo (Chohadzhiev 2007).

The very first research in the Upper Strymon Pernik region was briefly conducted by R. Popov in 1923 at the Pernik fortress (Chohadzhiev 2007). At the end of the 1970s, some alterations to the river bed of Blato River, left tributary of Strymon, led to the discovery of the Neolithic site of Galabnik (Pernik region); materials were handed over to the Pernik historical museum by diggers of the area. The multi-layered settlement of Galabnik was excavated between 1979 and 1993, under changing teams of research leaders; for a brief period at the beginning of research Neolithic expert Jurai Pavuk was co-directing the excavations (Bakamska 2014). The excavation of the site positioned Galabnik as the most expansively studied Neolithic site in southwestern Bulgaria. Its Early Neolithic phase has 10 separate building phases; the inhabitation of the site likely continued through into the middle Neolithic. The cessation of the excavations, however, left question about the full extent of occupation unanswered. In 1986 when sterile soil was reached at the site, the thickness of cultural deposits was estimated to 4.80 m. (Bakamska 2014, 45). In 2007, Stefan Chohadzhiev wrote that the full publication of Galabnik was supposedly in preparation in the early 2000s (Chohadzhiev 2007); no complete report of the site investigations has been published to date.

In 1906 archaeologist Jordan Jordanov excavated what he believed to be a Medieval fortress and first found the remains of prehistoric sites around the site of Nevestino, Kyustendil region (Chohadzhiev 2007). In his posthumously published study of the Bulgarian Neolithic, J. H. Gaul also writes of an Early Neolithic site at this locality. The Neolithic site of Nevestino was then closely researched in 1990 when agriculture-related landscape alterations were put in motion (Genadieva 1991). The concerned prehistoric settlement consisted of two occupation horizons, of the early and middle Neolithic, respectively. The combined thickness of the two was estimated to ca. 2 – 2.40 m (Genadieva 1991). The sites of Slatino and Vaksevo were excavated in the intervals 1982-88 and 1989-95 respectively (Chohadzhiev 2001, 2006). These two well-excavated and published sites present different phases, but otherwise cover the entire span of the Neolithic

in the Kyustendil region. An early Neolithic site near the village of Priboj also yielded evidence for occupation and featured in Gaul's outline of the West Bulgarian Painted Pottery Culture. The site, however, was only excavated over one season and the only published materials are a few short articles (Chohadzhiev 1986). The site of Piperkov Chilfik has also been the subject of study, but extensive reports have not been published (Vandova and Spasov 2005).

The first historical society in Blagoevgrad region was created in the 1930s and the first specific information about archaeological sites along the Strymon are credited to it (Kulov 2009). The first appointed curator of the Blagoevgrad regional museum, D. Stoyanova-Serafimova, established a programme in 1952 for the active archaeological reconnaissance in the wider region (Kulov 2009, 13). The extensive Strymon expedition took place between 1977 and 1982, under the leadership of M. Domaradski and under a Bulgarian-Polish partnership. This survey covered an area of 840 $km^{2,}$ recorded 1800 sites and resulted in the publication of detailed Neolithic studies of the Strumeshnitsa, a Strymon tributary (Gergova 2009, Kulov 2009). In 1987 the Blagoevgrad Regional Museum published a volume dedicated to all the known information about archaeological monuments in the Blagoevgrad district. At that point, the knowledge of Neolithic settlement distribution pointed towards a more pronounced Middle and Late Neolithic in the Blagoevgrad area. Conclusions were also drawn that the distribution of sites along the river is varied, including both alluvial and colluvial terraces, as well as hillsides related to the river (Dremsizova-Nelchinova 1987, 17). In 1994 a second campaign of archaeological surveys in the wider Blagoevgrad area studied 60 km^2 on the right bank of the Strymon. The Skaptopara expedition was led by I. Kulov and M. Grebska-Kulova and added another 165 sites to the known record of prehistoric occupation (Kulov 2009). Specific observation from this expedition led to the conclusion that the Strymon, or at least the surveyed part of it, witnessed a settlement increase during the Neolithic and later in the 4^{th}-2^{nd} centuries BC (Kulov 2009, Grebska Kulova 2009). The sites of Balgarčevo is perhaps one of the most thoroughly excavated Neolithic dwellings in the region, studied between 1977 to 1987 under the expertise of L. Pernicheva, with the aid of I. Kulov and M. Grebska-Kulova of the Blagoevgrad museum. M. Grebska-Kulova and her team published the excavations report for the first phase of inhabitation, Balgarčevo I, in

2011 (Pernicheva-Perets et al. 2011). This volume, however, does not contain any of the information on the radiocarbon dating reportedly performed on material from the level. Kovačevo, along with Balgarčevo, is another Neolithic site that has attracted a lot of interest due to the lengthy research expedition (Nikolov et al. 2005). The site comprises an Early to Middle Neolithic sequence - Kovačevo Ic-d and has often served as a singular point of interest in the area among foreign researchers (Lichardus-Itten et al. 2002). The Neolithic sites at Ilindentsi, Brezhani and Drenkovo have been subjected to more detailed archaeological work, especially with the help of non-destructive techniques (Grebska Kulova 2005, 2006; Grebska Kulova and Zidarov 2011a, 2011b, 2011c). What has been recorded are multiple cases of Neolithic building horizons with burnt structures. Dolna Ribnitsa is a peculiar site of a very regionally restricted Middle Neolithic phase, which has lent its name to the phase, based on the unique pottery decoration of the locality (Domaradski et al. 2001).

Promahonas-Topolnitsa is a Late Neolithic and early Chalcolithic settlement situated on both sides of the Bulgarian-Greek border. The settlement was first recorded by the Bulgarian-Polish expedition of M. Domaradski along the Middle Strymon (Vajsov and Zidarov 2011). Its Bulgarian transect was excavated between 1980 and 1991, under head archaeologist Henrietta Todorova. The Greek portion of the site was studied in the years 1992 – 2003 by H. Koukouli-Chrisanthaki and I. Aslanis. In that period much new information came to light about the Late Neolithic of the northernmost parts of Greece (Koukouli-Chrisanthaki et al. 2000, 2002). Between 1985 -1990 excavations at the Late Neolithic site of Damjanitsa took place, which provided important information about the later Neolithic developments in the Middle Strymon (Chohadzhiev 2007a).

The political changes, which took place in Bulgaria in 1990, had the effect of briefly ceasing most archaeological work during a period of reassessing of local practices. The changes in government control, however, did enable in the mid-1990s a reinvigorated bout of work in regional museums, in the form of extensive surveys, as in the above mentioned Skaptopara expeditions (Chohadzhiev 2007a).

The very first years of the 21st century along the Bulgarian Strymon are characterized by an almost universal interruption of research; an exception are the French-Bulgarian Kovačevo excavations (Chohadzhiev 2007a).

Along the Greek Strymon the history of archaeological research takes on a slightly different development. Research began in the interwar period, with a second period of more intensive research beginning after the 1960s (Chohadzhiev 2007a). Dikili Tash and Akropotamos were the first sites to be researched by C. Blegen and F. Welch during WWI. After WWII Northern Greek archaeology was in a state of standstill with research only starting again in the 1960s.

The Neolithic site of Dikili Tash, located in the southeast of the Drama plain, Kavala district, had been initially and superficially researched in 1920 (Chohadzhiev 2007). It was systematically excavated from 1961 until 2001 by two consecutive expeditions (Tsirtsoni 2002). These have been directed firstly by D. Theocharis and J. Deshayes; then by H. Koukouli-Chrisanthaki and R. Treuil under the patronages of the Archaeological Society of Athens and the French School of Athens (Lespez et al. 2013). In 2008, a series of cores were taken from the site, as part of a study into possible Early Neolithic/Early Holocene anthropogenic signatures at the site (Lespez et al. 2013). I do not think that the presented evidence and dating of the claims that the earliest human occupation occurred during the Early Neolithic are enough to consider Dikili Tash as an earlier Neolithic site. The data presented in the 2013 work is solely originating from cores around the area with known Late Neolithic activity. No big scale unearthing has been conducted, which would yield proper contextual evidence to suggest that the region of Dikili Tash was exploited on a big scale by Neolithic populations.

One of the few well-excavated and published sites, with a direct correlation to Strymon, is Sitagroi. Researched between 1968 and 1970, excavations were led by M. Gimbutas and C. Renfrew. Six years after the end of research the first of two volumes was produced (Renfrew, Gimbutas et al. 1986); the second volume followed in 2003 (Ernestine and Renfrew 2003). This site presents perhaps the most distinct phase of the Late Neolithic (see chapter 3 for chronological clarification) of Northern Greece, alongside Dikili Tash (Renfrew et al.

1986). During the excavations at Sitagroi, a team of a British and native Greek archaeologists conducted a very limited, yet useful, survey of the Drama plan (Renfrew and Hardy 2003). The survey was mostly restricted to surface finds in location with previously suggested Neolithic activity. About 11 sites were recorded as synchronous with either the first or second level at Sitagroi (Renfrew and Hardy 2003, 473).

In the 1970s and 1980s the Greek archaeologists Theocharis, Fotiadis and Grammenos made invaluable contributions to the study of the Late Neolithic/Early Chalcolithic of the Drama and Serres plains (Chohadzhiev 2007).

Another prominent Northern Greek site in the Strymon basin is Akropotamos, after which many of the Late Neolithic pottery sequences along the Middle Strymon are named. Materials from the very first excavation there were published prior to WWII and are still in use today (Chohadzhiev 2007).

Most recently Kryoneri has become the centre of the most intensive Late Neolithic research in the region, excavated 1996-1997 by Malamidou (Tsirtsoni 2016).

Much like the myriad of sites (over 90 in total) on Bulgarian territory, many of the Greek Neolithic Strymon sites are only know from short publications, primarily in Greek – 83 sites in Bulgaria and 24 in Greece (see Appendix 1). Even under this blanket of research obscurity, the number of recorded Bulgarian Neolithic inhabitation along the Strymon is disproportionate compared to the Greek sites. Research biases and geomorphological conditions have previously been cited as reasons for the scarcity of Neolithic sites along Greek Strymon. The entirety of inland Greek Macedonia had been, up until later prehistoric anthropogenic influences, an extensive marshland spanning between the Nestos and Strymon Rivers (Glais et al. 2016). During the Neolithic the extensive plain of Serres and Drama were much different than the modern day cultivated expansive fields. Overall marshy, wet conditions certainly would have presented a challenge for prehistoric inhabitants.

5.8 WHAT MAKES UP A GEOGRAPHIC UNIT OF STUDY?

Later in this thesis I will delve deeper into the development of settlement networks along the Strymon (see Fig. 2). First and foremost, however, it is important to establish exactly why it is that Strymon can be safely considered a singular geographic unit. The physical landscape of the river bed, as established above, is far from uniform. Mountain ranges, kettles and floodplains alternate thus creating varied and at times contrasted conditions for the development of Neolithic societies. The most consistent and reliable marker for the consolidation of the entirety of the river is, in line with archaeological reasoning, the sharing of similar material culture and a commonly observed shared cycle of change of said material culture. Pottery, and decorated pottery, then plays an important role in my conclusion. The observable change of shared trends in synchronistic and temporally related settlements unequivocally displays that a shared pool of ideas existed along the Strymon, which guided the creation of certain types of pottery and the transmittance of significant decoration markers.

A shared material culture is one of several important markers of a geographic relation between prehistoric sites. The choice of settlement location is a point of interest in my own work, as I will discuss in the next section. Another signifier of knowledge shared through a geographically established network is that of building techniques. A notable example of this principle of unity in practice is the well-known long house form of the Linearbandkeramic phenomenon. The Strymon catchment shows evidence of all those makers of *cultural* unity but not evident in a straightforward way; certainly, the same dynamics of the Central European Neolithic cannot be followed here.

We need to treat the development of the Neolithic in these south-eastern fringes of the European continent as an exercise in exploration. We cannot expect to find uniformity in the same ways in has been observed a millennium later in Central Europe. The expansion of the Neolithic in the southern Balkans is a story of exploration, trial and error as evidenced by the settlement along the Strymon. Different climatic conditions, different indigenous flora and fauna all had an impact on the incoming Neolithic. The story of the Strymon Neolithic started, unexpectedly in the Upper and Middle reaches of the river, *not* on its southernmost marshy plains.

5.8.1 Can the Strymon valley be considered as a singular unit of study in the landscape of the Neolithic Balkans?

For a multiscalar approach to be effectively applied, assurances need to be presented that a proposed area of study is indeed a coherent geographic unit. Much work has been written, in Bulgarian, Greek and English about the importance of the Strymon as a waterway for the advancement of Neolithic lifeways (be it in the shape of practices or people) further into the Balkans. It has always been assumed that rivers provide an ideal environment for this spread, because of the inherent valley, floodplain pattern of rivers, generally speaking; as well as because of the enhanced farming/herding opportunities of lands with access to water. That has surely been the case for the Maritza river in Bulgaria, for the Körös and Criș in Hungary and Romania, for the French Rhône and of course in the matter of the continent traversing Danube river. The Strymon, however, is starkly geographically distinct from these famed examples. In order to better understand the landscape of the Strymon River, over the course of two years I undertook several trips, exploring the Upper, Middle and Lower reaches of the river. In 2015 I started my trip from Pernik, where the river is closest to its source in the Vitosha, and the river flows through the city itself. In the Upper reach of the river, from its source down to the mountainous region south of Kyustendil, the river flows through a predominantly unfluctuating landscape. Some undulations in the landscape surrounding the river bed occur, delimitating the borders of the now altered floodplains. Upon reaching the field of Blagoevgrad, the Strymon enters an area of a predominantly mountainous character. In its Upper and Middle streams, the Strymon also follows the line of separation between the tallest mountain ranges in Bulgaria – Pirin and Rila. Certainly, in the 16 km stretch of the Kresna Gorge the river weaves an at times dangerous water passage (seasonal water level oscillation in mind) through the northern reaches of the Pirin Mountains. Following the Kresna Gorge, the Strymon enters the Sandanski-Petrich plain which geographically is the upper border of the Lower Strymon. Following the plains surrounding Petrich, the river then continues into Greece where, for its entire remaining length, it flows through an even landscape. What struck me as odd and intriguing upon my first crossing of the Bulgarian-Greek border at Kulata was the very sudden change in physical landscape. The Strymon flows out of its mountainous confines and into an extensive plain, which straddles the Serres and

Drama plains and provides a low-lying ground of a floodplain character. The river bed of the Greek Strymon has been altered in the past century with the construction of the large artificial Kerkini Lake, which solved the problem of marshlands which had surrounded the low-lying lands in the floodplain for millennia. The marshy wetlands of Northern Greece preconditioned the highly erosive nature of prehistoric deposits which undoubtedly hinders visibility of prehistoric activity (Gkouma and Karkanas 2018). The Strymon empties into the Aegean Sea though the Strymonian Gulf.

5.9 CLOSING REMARKS

This chapter has discussed in some detail the differences between practising archaeology in Greece and Bulgaria and has outlined the problematic relationship between Bulgarian and British academia. There are several points that my overall thesis must draw from such an overview and move onto developing. Firstly, there is a tension between the archaeological practice of British and Bulgarian scholars. Once this is recognised, a practice must be devised to amalgamate my inherently Anglo-Saxon approach with the Bulgarian Neolithic record, without sacrificing the integrity of either. Secondly, an overarching narrative of the entire Strymon River is still to be carried out successfully. An amalgamation of existing knowledge needs to be produced, without hindering the ideological interests of both parties. I believe the multiscalar approach could solve these recognized issues.

6 CHAPTER 3. CURRENT STATE OF NEOLITHIC CHRONOLOGY

This chapter serves to bring clarity to the current Neolithic chronology for the Strymon. In this chapter I do not review all existing models for the Bulgarian Neolithic, and I do not claim a comprehensive overview of all opinions on the chronology of the Southern Balkans. The chapter focuses on a variant of the Neolithic Strymon chronology proposed by Stefan Chohadzhiev

(2008), which I consider to be the most coherent model for the period. The chapter begins with an explanation of the synchronization principle of relative chronologies, which is widely utilized in all available literature. The attempts at creating absolute estimation for the Strymon Neolithic are also presented along with the principal chronology that the present study will follow. The phasing of the Early and Late Neolithic is expanded on and for the first time in the thesis the Strymon sites become a central focus of the narrative. Lastly, the problem arising from the discrepancy in Late Neolithic Greek and Bulgarian overall chronology is negated for the purposes of this study.

It should probably serve as a useful detour of this narrative to pay specific attention to the work in archaeological chronologies, which has spurred on research such as mine into the more robust scales of prehistoric human life. Under the supervision of Alasdair Whittle I have regularly come in contact with his progressive work on recalibrating the scales at which the study of prehistoric life is possible. Most recently Alasdair and his extensive team published the latest in a series of ground-breaking extensive project of formal modelling of the European Neolithic. After the success and continued implications of Gathering Time (2011) in which Alasdair, together with Frances Healy and Alex Bayliss provided a new model for the pace of change in the Early British Neolithic, the Times of Their Lives project undertook a large scale formal Bayesian modelling of vast areas of continental Europe (Whittle 2018). The basis of the Bayesian formal modelling allow for an alignment of radiocarbon and archaeological sequences, revealing a resolution at the human lifetime and generational scales. The targeting of short-term and singular events, possible through formal modelling, is aimed at creating detailed narratives, intimate narratives of lifetimes, which are to realign archaeology with the broader practices of history (Bayliss and Whittle 2018, Banffy et al. 2018). Witnessing Alasdair's pursuit of the scale of human lives is what aimed my own approach to seek these scales and make sense of them, albeit without the support of formal Bayesian modelling. It is worth acknowledging, however, that it is these advancement in creating of robust, detailed narratives, which has enabled their inclusion into the wider archaeological discourse. My own search for a scale of daily human existence is inspired by the work of Alasdair Whittle and his dedication to propagating the analysis of generational narratives.

6.1 On the issue of site synchronization

The chronology of the Strymon River is a contentious matter in current and recent archaeological literature. In most cases of work striving to comprise an absolute chronology (e.g. Kovacheva and Toshkov 1991, Boyadzhiev 1994, 2007, Tsirtsoni 2016) of the region and wider Balkan area, the only available dates are taken in consideration. Of all dated samples none have been submitted to formal or Bayesian modelling. No projects exist attempting the coherent, consistent sampling of material from sites throughout the Strymon. Hence the overall result of enmeshing of dates with different quality and sourcing results in an artificially imposed overview of possible overarching chronologies. The pottery sequences and synchronizations between different sites remains currently the most reliable method of discerning chronological ascription of sites and their phases (e.g. Sanev 1992, Nikolov 1992, Grebska-Kulova 1994). This thesis demonstrates how useful pottery categories and sequences are in the process of grasping overall Neolithic changes and phases. While I attempted to, at earlier stages of research for this thesis, keep pottery styles and decoration groups out of the general discussion, this became impossible when discussing the Strymon Neolithic. My initial approach to the study of prehistoric materials was solely based on my subscription of postprocessual research methods. Since pottery categorization and culture identifications have not been a core part of the Anglophone research, I was familiar with, it seemed outdated and unnecessary to delve into details of these.

Ceramic assemblages are the main materials found at Neolithic sites, sometimes in enormous quantities (see Balgarčevo, Kovačevo and Sitagroi in Chapter 4). What I remain sceptical about and have not adopted when discussing periodization in this chapter and thesis altogether, is the separation between sites based on pottery culture categories. I have found that the use of culture groups often makes the discussions and interpretation of settlements and their development very rigid. Because sites are then considered as a static unit in an inflexible system of pottery developments only, the understanding of individual sites is restricted to their role as sources of pottery only. Another issue of culture group systematization of sites in the available literature are the attempts of some researchers (e.g. Bogdanovic 2007, Pernicheva 2007) to fit the locally established Strymon pottery groups within the better-known pottery phenomena such as

Starčevo, Vinča, Sesklo and of course Karanovo. Such attempts at linking pottery markers, in most cases, are only extended to the ceramic assemblages and rely on similarities only. The results of these efforts are unclear and rigid comparisons drawn between ceramic groups, upon which rely the far-fetched interpretations of movement of pottery and populations. The drawback of the pottery synchronization technique is that it treats sites as closed contexts of a few ceramic markers. Settlements are not considered as individual units of human development and existence but rather as actors in the network of spreading pottery influences. While I will point out the synchronization between Strymon sites and sites in neighbouring regions (Fig. 3), I refrain from using the available overarching synchronization with the big culture-group entities of the region. This allows for an approach more sensitive to the individual character of the sites and for the valuation of their small-scale achievements in the development of Neolithic lifeways.

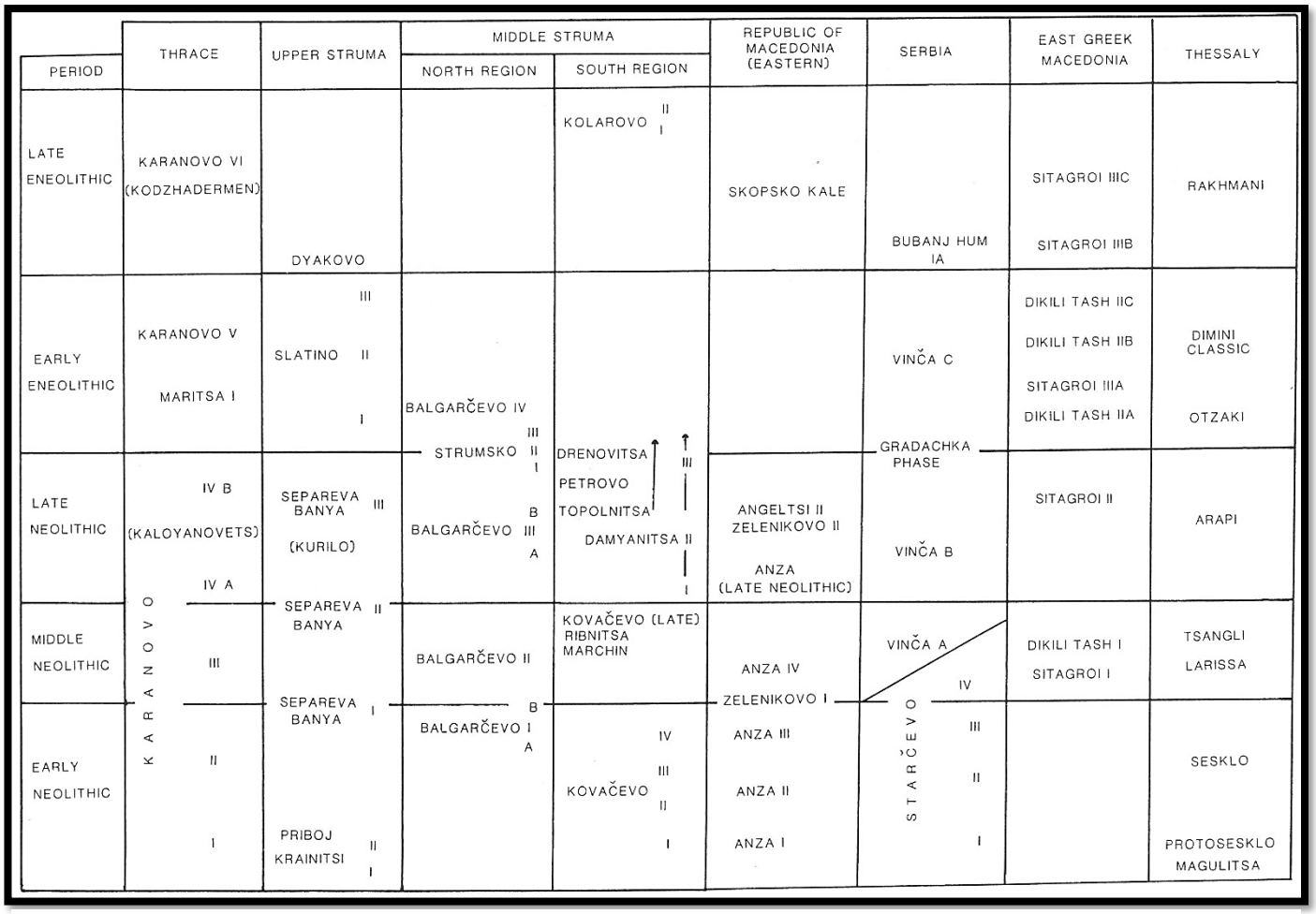

Figure 3. Synchronisation of Prehistoric Settlements in the Strymon Catchment and Nieghbouring Regions (Pernicheva 1995, 135)

6.2 THE STATE OF ABSOLUTE CHRONOLOGY CATEGORIES

Some researchers of the Strymon valley argue that this is perhaps the best studied region in the whole of Bulgarian archaeology (Chohadzhiev 2000, Pernicheva 2007). Research in Northern Greece has been rapidly developing over the past several decades, yielding a far superior number of studies elucidating the Neolithic of the area (e.g Whelton et al. 2018a, 2018b; Kotsos 2014; Hofmanova et al. 2016; Urem-Kotsou 2017). Yet, the Strymon River is not studied as a coherent land unit between the two countries, a point stated earlier in this work. The resultant reality of this division has some extreme consequences on the overall Neolithic chronology of the river.

The Bulgarian part of the river has its chronology aligned and synchronised with the Karanovo Neolithic sequence (Nikolov 1994). The Karanovo sequence remains one of the main reference points for the separations between Early, Middle and Late Neolithic phases both in Greek and Bulgarian sequencing Pre-Karanovo (earliest Neolithic) dates to before 6000 cal BC; Karanovo I – between 6000/5900 cal BC and 5820 cal BC; Karanovo II – starting at ca 5820 cal BC continues to 5740/20 cal BC; Karanovo III – ca. 5740/20 cal BC to ca. 5640/5600 cal BC; Karanovo IV- simultaneously beginning ca. 5740/200 cal BC until ca. 5450/5400 cal BC (Boyadzhiev 2009). This presents the latest attempt at an absolute chronology of the sequence. These calendrical values, however, should be further scrutinized; the differences between phases on the Karanovo group Neolithic are not so much chronological as regional, namely the parallel time-span of Karanovo III and IV. Whilst some sites exhibit signs of phase I, or II, other sites in the Karanovo catchment display phase III characteristics (Boyadzhiev 1995). Even a simple overlook of the existing Neolithic periodization, in this sense, provides a sense of chaotic matching-up of sites.

The Greek part of the river has a chronology, which does not perfectly align with the Neolithic periodization on the Bulgarian side (Tsirtsoni 2014). Instead, the Northern Greek Neolithic has Late and Final phases, which correspond numerically to the Chalcolithic phase of the rest of the Balkans. I am wary of suggesting that there is one wrong or right account. It is, however, important to note the difficulties for research in the region that arise from this stark chronology controversy.

6.3 A PRINCIPAL CHRONOLOGY

To begin with, in this section, I will give separate accounts of the current dominant relevant chronology of the Bulgarian Strymon. An overview of the Neolithic chronology of Greek Strymon will follow. To conclude this part of my argument, I will present the problems that arise because of obvious chronological discrepancies and the possible ways in which those could be resolved.

The most widely accepted (but also contradicted) periodization of the Strymon Neolithic is that of Stefan Chohadzhiev, who compiled the only extensive study of all known sites in the area (2008). In this publication, Chohadzhiev builds up a Neolithic chronology based on the

synchronization between sites in the Strymon valley as well as established chronologies in the larger Southern Balkan area. It is important to point out that the periodization and chronology in Chohadzhiev's work, as well as that of most Bulgarian researchers, is singularly reliant on appearance and change of pottery production practices and styles. Perhaps the only well-established Bulgarian researcher to engage with radiocarbon dating of material in order to establish a semblance of an absolute chronology has been Yavor Boyadzhiev (see also Zlateva and Kulov 2016). Intermixed with the periodization of Chohadzhiev, therefore, I will provide the most recent absolute date approximations available.

6.3.1 The Early Neolithic phases

The Early Neolithic, Chohadzhiev argues, consist of three phases (and subphases thereof) and begins ca. 6300-6200 cal BC in the Strymon valley, based on radiocarbon dating by Yavor Boyadzhiev (Boyadzhiev 2007). The earliest recorded Neolithic activity is at the site of Krajnitsi, in Dupnitsa municipality, Kyustendil area. This period is signified, in ceramic terms, by the lack of painted ornaments on pottery. Chohadzhiev seems to consider this an oddity but goes ahead to compare the Krajnitsi 1 phase with Neolithic sites in Thessaly – Otzaki I, Achilleion Ia and Sesklo; in the Morava valley with Divostin and in North-western Bulgaria with Poljanitsa. The whole of the Early Neolithic I phase is solely evidenced by the occupation at Krajnitsi. The Early Neolithic II phase is then the time of occupation at the sites of Galabnik and Kovačevo, evidenced by their earliest occupational layers. At Galabnik, the estimates for primary occupation are 6000 to 5750 cal BC and Kovačevo's first phase is estimated at 6000 to 5900 cal BC (Boyadzhiev 2007). This phase is characterised by regional developments in white painted patterns on pots. The earlier stages of the Early Neolithic II are characterised by simplistic floral-like patterns later developing into a wider variety of curvilinear, spiral and hatched motives. Phase IIa is represented at the sites of Vaksevo and Nevestino, Kyustendil region. Analogous developments in white painted decorations are found outside of Bulgaria in Anzabegovo I and Velushka Tumba (FYROM), Donja Branevina (Serbia) and Yanitsa B (Greece). Vaksevo, Kovačevo and Galabnik are best suited, according to Chohadzhiev, to demonstrate the development from Early Neolithic IIa to Early Neolithic IIb from floral patterns to more complex curved and linear patterns. The Early Neolithic

IIa at Galabnik is then also related to the phase of Karanovo I and synchronized with Rakitovo I. The earlier levels at Galabnik (and so is the Early Neolithic II) are characterized by red or dark red wares (as well as in Vaksevo), whereas in the later stages the red of the ceramics becomes much brighter. Hence, Chohadzhiev likens the IIa and IIb stages to developments in the Starčevo Neolithic, rather than that of Thrace. He also argues that a more in-depth understanding of Early Neolithic IIc pottery development would only be viable after the full publications of Galabnik and Kovačevo.

A big difference, in terms of pottery colour and decoration colour in general, seems to be the most substantive marker for the beginning of the Early Neolithic III period. The beginning of the phase Chohadzhiev determines with the start of the 7th building horizon at Galabnik where white painted and red-painted pottery are discovered together. Following Boyadzhiev's conclusions (2008), Chohadzhiev positions this phase between 5800-5750 cal BC and 5450-5400 cal BC.

The ENIII period is separated into three phases. The IIIa phase is explored in-depth at the sites of Pernik and Galabnik in the Sofia plain, but there are 12 more sites along the Upper Strymon which also exhibit the presence of red-painted pottery. This is described as a transitional phase between white-painted and red-painted pottery and synchronized with levels at Starčevo II-III and Anzabegovo-Vrsnik II. It is interesting that a portion of the red-painted patterns of this phase bear great resemblance to their counterparts in white, while another half are patterns which become characteristic in phases IIIb and IIIc. Chohadzhiev argues that the Starčevo phenomenon had a great influence on the material developments of the Strymon valley in the IIIb phase. In this period a change from red-painted to black and brown painted vessels occurred. Materials from Galabnik, Separeva Banja and Negovantsi attest to this. This phase is established through the study of Pernik, Galabnik III, Kremenik I, Balgarčevo IA-B and Vaksevo III. The IIIc phase was a time of intricate curvilinear and phallic patterns of ceramics and material influences from Thrace are indisputable.

There appears to be a certain amount of disagreement amongst Bulgarian Neolithic experts on the periodization of different parts of the country and well-known Early Neolithic sites with the

periodization of Karanovo. The excavators of Galabnik synchronize its III horizon with Karanovo II (Chohadzhiev 2008). In the Lower Strymon Pernicheva synchronizes Balgarčevo IA with Karanovo II and Balgarčevo IB with Karanovo III (Pernicheva 1994). Nikolov, the principal researcher of Karanovo, synchronizes Balgarčevo I with Kremenik I and Karanovo III; Balgarčevo II-III with Kremenik II-III and Karanovo IV (Nikolov 1999, 1999a). Vandova's meticulous study (2000) of the Kremenik Ia and Ib ceramic assemblage has, however, denounced the possibility of such synchronization with the Thracian Neolithic. Based on this, and discrepancies between the material at Vaksevo I-III and Thracian developments, Chohadzhiev argues that the overall Strymon Early Neolithic IIIc phase is synchronous with Karanovo II; thus, disagreeing with Nikolov and positioning the Strymon Early Neolithic as coterminous with the Early Neolithic developments in Thrace and the Maritsa valley.

6.3.2 Transitional stage and Late Neolithic

Vaksevo IV is sited at a location along the Strymon which marks the transitional period between the Early and Late Neolithic. Chohadzhiev (2008) corrected his previous notions of a tri-partite Neolithic, and instead adopts the two-partite Early/Late Neolithic sequencing of the Strymon valley. A transitional phase is not clearly established by Chohadzhiev, chiefly because in a relative chronology concerned with materials there is little space for vague and fuzzy temporality of change. Chohadzhiev draws the conclusion that albeit there are some oddities in terms of pottery differences at some sites (such as Kremenik IV), a unified criterion for the Late Neolithic does exist – the production of black and greyish black burnished pottery. These pottery signatures are Dolna Ribnitsa-type pricked decoration, black-topped pottery and the Akropotamos-style black-painted decoration. Once again utilizing the absolute chronology of Boyadzhiev (2007), the calendar limits of the Late Neolithic are established between 5400 cal BC and 5000-4900 cal BC. The Late Neolithic I phase can be traced at Vaksevo IV, Balgarčevo II, Kovačevo II and Dolna Ribnitsa. This phase is characterised by the Dolna Ribnitsa decoration (albeit it seems only at that site itself) and the overall lack of painted decorations at the sites. Chohadzhiev cannot find a close parallel of the shapes and scant decorations of this phase within the rest of the Bulgarian Neolithic. He does mention a possible parallel with Karanovo II-II (Protokaranovo III) vessels but

admits this is a far-fetched comparison. The closest parallels are then found in Neolithic sites in Albania and a synchronization with the end of the Thessalian Sesklo culture is proposed (Sesklo IIIA and IIIB).

The Late Neolithic II stage is traced at the settlements of Slatino I and Kremenik II. This is also the presumed period of the first occupation phases at Damyanitsa (Sandanski district) and Kryoneri (Drama district). The ceramic complex at Slatino I is widely used for the characterization of the period, since it is chronologically and stratigraphically securely isolated. The appearance of the later wide-spread black-topped pottery is recorded at the site. This pottery then appears in Separeva Banja III.

The Late Neolithic III phase is marked by the appearance of Akropotamos painted pottery and this becomes the first recorded period in Bulgarian prehistory for which a direct influence from Northern Greek material developments is openly adopted. The appearance of Akropotamos and its distinctive pottery has been synchronized with a sub-Sesklo phase, at the beginning of the Late Thessalian Neolithic (Theocharis 1973, 91, Grebska-Kulova 1994). The Late Neolithic Akropotamos (III) is further divided, according to studies of Strymon basin sites, into a IIIa, IIIb and IIIc sub-phases. The IIIa phase stands out because of the brown on beige type of ceramic decoration. It is recognized at Balgarčevo II –III, Sitagroi I, Dikili Tash Ia and Dimitra. During the IIIb stage brown slip was applied to red-clay vessels; simultaneously black-painted decoration began. This has been recorded at Balgarčevo III, Dikili Tash Ib, Sitagroi II, Dimitra II and III, Drama and Damyanitsa. The Akropotamos IIIc stage is the chronological borderline between the Late Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic in the Strymon basic. Black-painted decoration is prevalent, a red-on-red decoration becomes popular. Some of the black-on-red patterns bear resemblance to graphite painted patterns from the Early Chalcolithic. The IIIc phase is recorded at Damyanitsa III, Slatino, Strumsko, Topoltnitsa and Kryoneri.

Late Neolithic II and III, according to this then are synchronized with the end of Karanovo III and Karanovo IV and with the Dimini culture (its Tsangli and Arapi phases). The synchronization with Neolithic phenomena of the Bulgarian Strymon sites will later in this work serve as a basis for a

larger chronological reconciliation of the otherwise asynchronous Neolithic stages of the Bulgarian and Greek portions of the Strymon.

6.4 Resolving the problematic Greek Final Neolithic issue

There are several different terms denoting the period immediately following the Neolithic throughout the Balkans. For the area covered in this study, the period following the Neolithic is called Chalcolithic. In Greece the terminology is different since a phase such the Chalcolithic is not recognized. Rather, the Neolithic period is extended chronologically until its Final phase. This Final Neolithic corresponds to what is termed the Chalcolithic in Bulgaria. The Greek Final Neolithic is followed immediately by the Early Bronze Age. The nature of the mismatch between the Late Neolithic Bulgarian and Greek chronologies has been very rarely discussed. This is quite a palpable problem when it comes to the Neolithic of the Strymon as a whole. This study will not perpetuate the difference in chronological attribution on either side of the Greek-Bulgarian border. For the sake of consistency, whatever is deemed Early or Late Neolithic is deemed so for both. It has been noted very recently that a great difficulty arises when attempting to find non-clashing chronological tables (Tsirtsoni 2016, 15). The biggest issue, Tsirtsoni argues, is that regional northern Greek archaeologists retain the Neolithic denomination for the period following the appearance of the otherwise considered Early Chalcolithic graphite painted pottery (2016, 17-20). In many parts of Greece, the term Neolithic (Late or Final and various sub phases) is maintained for the whole duration of the Bulgarian Chalcolithic. This is due to a methodological difference in regional chronological reasoning – Greek specialists perceive of the period as a continuation of Neolithic lifeways, only with more innovations (Fig. 4) (Tsirtsoni 2016, 21).

Date BC	*Periodization (dominant Aegean terminology)*	*Periodization (alternative Aegean terminology*)*	*Crete, Cyclades Peloponnese*	*Thessaly*	*Macedonia Aegean Thrace*	*Periodization (Balkan terminology)*	*Struma valley*	*Rhodopes*	*Thrace*	*North-East Bulgaria*	*North-West Bulgaria*	*Periodization (European terminology)*	*Former Youg. Macedonia Serbia*
5400	**Late Neolithic I**	LN Ia	Knossos V-VI Franchthi 3-4 Tharrounia Ia Saliagos I Ftelia	Tsangli-Larissa Arapi	Sitagroi I Makri II Paradimi I-III Dispilio Dikili Tash I Makrygialos I Sitagroi II	**Middle Neolithic**	Balgarchevo II Damianitsa I-II	?	Karanovo III	Usoe	Kurilo	**Middle Neolithic**	Vinča A Anzabegovo IV
5200						**Late Neolithic**	Balgarchevo III Damianitsa III Promachon-Topolnitsa		Karanovo IV	Hamangia I-II			Vinča B
4800	**Late Neolithic II**	LN Ib	Knossos IV Saliagos II Tharrounia Ib	Otzaki Dimini	Paradimi IV Makrygialos II Sitagroi IIIA Dikili Tash IIA-C Sitagroi IIIB Sitagroi IIIC Kastri	**Early Chalcolithic Middle Chalcolithic**	Slatino		Maritsa I-IV Karanovo V	Hamangia III Hamangia IV	Gradeshnitsa	**Late Neolithic**	Vinča C
4500	**(Final Neolithic or Chalcolithic)**	LN IIa	Alepotrypa Knossos II-III Franchthi 5 Tharrounia II Kephala Athens Agora	Rachmani		**Late Chalcolithic**	?		Karanovo VI	Varna Gumelniţa	Krivodol-Sălcuţa	**Early Chalcolithic**	Vinča D Crnobuki I-II Bubanj Hum Ia
4000						**Transitional (Final Chalcolithic)**	Kolarovo	Yagodina Haramiiska			KSB IV		
3700		LN IIb		Petromagoula Mikrothives	Agios Ioannis	**Proto-Bronze**	?			Cernavoda I Pevets Hotnitsa-Vodopada	Sălcuţa IV Galatin		Crnobuki III Bubanj Ib
3300	**Early Bronze Age I**	EBA I	Eutresis III-IV Grotta-Pelos	Pefkakia 1-2	Sitagroi IV Dikili Tash IIIA	**Early Bronze Age**			Ezero A	"Pit graves"	Magura Coţofeni	**Middle Chalcolithic**	Baden Kostolac
2800	**Early Bronze Age II**	EBA II	Eutresis VI-VIII Kampos-Syros	Pefkakia 3	Sitagroi Va Dikili Tash IIIB		Kovachevo		Ezero B Mihalits	Ezerovo			

Figure 4. Comparative chronology of the Late Neolithic/Early Chalcolithic of Bulgaria and Greece (Tsirtsoni 2016, 19) .

My work does not claim that either the Bulgarian or Greek terminology or understanding is better than the other. However, for the sake of synchronicity, terminological and chronological clarity I choose to, in this thesis, work under the premise that the Neolithic ends at 4900 cal BC; with the appearance of graphite painted pottery, the beginning of what is called Late Neolithic II in Greek terms. This is the conclusion of the most recent expansive radiocarbon dating project of the area "Balkans 4000" (Tsirtsoni 2016a). The ends of the simultaneous phases in Bulgaria and Greece are respectively – 4900/4850 cal BC and 4800/4700 cal BC (Tsirtsoni 2016, 32). The latest estimations, after calibration at 2 sigmas, place the beginning of the Late Neolithic II (outside the scope of my study) at 4900 cal BC (Tsirtsoni 2016, 33). That is, therefore, the chronological cut-off point for this study. This means that my study will only focus on the two earliest phases of the Sitagroi site, and its corresponding settlements. This choice for a cut-off point for the study also embraces a stance on Neolithic chronology, which positions a principle of Balkan-wide consistency at its core. The cut-off also provides a consistent chronological framework for such a

work, which in turn can then be used in reference to different geographic locations in the Balkans and further afield.

While the overall use of ceramic chronological signatures remains the basis for understanding the Strymon Neolithic sequence, some attempts have been made to put the Neolithic sequence of the Strymon into a calendar-dates perspective. The debate regarding the exact phasing of the Neolithic is ongoing in both Greek and Bulgarian discourse. This chapter presents the current state of research consensus.

While this chapter aimed to present a variant of the Neolithic Strymon chronology, as stated earlier, it does provide the chronological framework which I will be utilizing in my own study. The Neolithic of the Strymon for the purposes of this work will be considered as a two-stage, Early and Late Neolithic phenomenon spanning from ca 6300-6200 cal BC to 4900 cal BC.

6.5 CHANGES IN POTTERY PRODUCTION

In Chapter 4 I present the ceramic material from Vaksevo, in the Upper Strymon reaches. This assemblage, primarily considered in the first two Early Neolithic phases, follows a trend in sharp contrast to the rest of the Strymon. Whereas the coarse pottery from the first and second horizons bear similarity to Krajnitsi and Pernik, in the Upper Strymon; the fine ceramics from the same site phases resemble in decoration, the motifs found at Kovačevo Ia and Ib. How is it that during the same period, at the same site, one set of pottery was aligned with the Upper Strymon and another to the Middle Strymon? Notably, while Vaksevo is itself on the border between the Upper and Middle Strymon, it is much closer to Krajnitsi and Pernik than it is to the somewhat secluded Kovačevo. The answer might lie, once again, with the individual choices of Vaksevo's inhabitants. When I write about similarities in ceramics here, I am predominantly referring to surface treatment techniques. Functionality is a big principle to consider, but the decoration of objects can be directly corelated to expressions of aesthetic and a level of social belonging. To speak of different types of decoration of objects also points to either a dedication to taste and/or the establishment of the aesthetic element as a necessity in material production. Either way, the unprecedented variety of surface treatment techniques, available in the Strymon catchment, is

a gateway to coming to grips with subtle societal changes in attitude. The ceramic decoration at the site of Vaksevo, for instance, changed in the latter part of the Early Neolithic, when dark paint became the predominant choice for painting motifs. This trend was shared between Vaksevo and other Upper Strymon sites. It is interesting that while the approach to decorating the pottery changed, the clay recipe for the ceramics remained consistently the same at Vaksevo, with large quantities of organic inclusions in both the coarse and fine ceramics. This leads me to believe that a transference of the ceramic production know-how appeared between generations in Vaksevo and the specific recipe was engrained into the very basis of pottery production. This bears important signals for settlement and population continuity and development. The beginning of the Late Neolithic, at Vaksevo and many other settlements, was marked by a considerable change in attitudes towards pottery decoration. A distinction between fine and coarse ceramics can no longer be made at the site and painted decorations all but disappear. The replacing surface treatment is overwhelmingly a black-topped trend alongside highly polished dark vessels. The organic inclusions in Vaksevo ceramics remain permanently present. This big change in surface treatments, paired with the consistency of clay production is evidence that while we cannot exclude population movement, the social continuity established at Vaksevo persisted into the later portion of the Neolithic. This paints a picture of an underlying stability amongst all the flux of practice, which is often heavily preferred as a topic for both Greek and Bulgarian site discussions. Slatino (Karo IV and Chardako I), Dolna Ribnitsa and Balgarčevo II of the Middle Strymon; Kryoneri and Sitagroi II in the Lower Strymon, amongst many of the other Strymon sites display this discontinuity of ceramic decoration and the uptake of black-topped and black-burnished ceramics. This is the change which has been the major justification of the Late Neolithic periodization of the Strymon. As discussed earlier in this chapter, many researchers have equated the advent of these ceramics as the de facto advent of the Late Neolithic. The conclusions I make here question such presuppositions.

7 CHAPTER 4. CASE STUDIES

All the sites presented in this chapter are of great importance for the understanding of the genesis of the Strymon Neolithic. In the process of research, a site catalogue of 107 Neolithic Strymon sites was compiled. Most of the site information was taken from the most extensive studies of the region (Grammenos and Fotiadis 1985, Grammenos 1980, Chohadzhiev 2008). Some Neolithic sites are at times mentioned in passing in reports. This is so because the catalogue itself does not comprise an equal amount of information about all sites. While there is enough evidence suggesting the magnitude of the river catchment's developments, only a handful of the sites have sufficient information to elucidate their place in the overall Neolithic landscape. Of these sites, I here present the ones with the most published material. I am presenting the sites in a geographic order, rather than in a chronological one, starting from north to south. This is aimed at substantiating the perception of the Strymon as a coherent geographic unit. I have already discussed the state of settlement phasing and dating and that is the reason why, instead of infusing this data-based chapter with relative phasing, I chose a geographic ordering.

The sites which have complete excavation reports are Vaksevo, Slatino, Balgarčevo and Sitagroi. Bigger sections of the chapter are devoted to sites for which a finer detail of Neolithic occupation is available: Vaksevo, Slatino, Balgarčevo, Kovačevo and Sitagroi. The sites of Galabnik, Dolna Ribnitsa and Kryoneri have very little detailed information in their respective reports. A structure is followed in presenting the data: starting with location, excavation and stratigraphy information, then presenting materials at the sites; following this I lay out the architectural evidence available. Lastly, I include a short summation of the importance of the settlement in the overall Neolithic landscape.

7.1 A BRIEF FORE INTO PALEO-SUBSISTANCE

The matter of archaeobotanical and zooarchaeological information about the Neolithic subsistance practices, although no longer scant, is still not consistent for a great number of the

settlements in the Strymon catchment. Within this thesis, I will not be relying on archaeobotanical data for further analysis but will provide a brief outline of the current knowledge of paleo-fauna and flora in the Neolithic of the souther Balkans. It has been amply stated that there is more archaeobotanical data available in Bulgaria, rather than Greece due to differing traditions in sampling (Allen 2017). Even so, based on larger scale analysis of souther Balkan sites inferences have been made that the Neolithic cultivation made use of well-watered soils, so-called supplementary irrigation (Boogard et al 2013). Material from several Early Neolithic Bulgarian sites, including Kovačevo in the Strymon basin, provide an insight to the main crops utilized (einkorn/emmer wheat, barley and pulses such as lentil, grass pea and bitter vetch) (Marinova 2007). Emmer seems to have been prevalent at some sites, while einkorn at other, a heterogeneity of raw food selection is noted (Marinova 2007). There is limited evidence of cropping and moderately intensive cultivation spanning sites between Thessaly to the south and Kovačevo in the Strymon basin; data from Galabnik evidences winter cropping and lower intensity cultivation with limited field disturbances (Allen 2017). The use of wild plants and fruit seems restricted from the evidence available (Marinova 2007). At Early Neolithic Kovačevo the data points to mid-winter stripping of the fields and their occasional occupation by grazing animals; whereas at Galabnik the harvesting was later in the year and grazing animals were more extensively kept on cultivation fields (Allen 2017). Evidence of livestock consumption in the earliest Northern Greek Neolithic suggest that nearly 98 percent of animals at the site of Revenia Korinou were domesticated, ovicaprids in largest numbers, followed by pigs and cattle; wild animal remains were a rare addition to the assemblage (Isaakidou et al. 2018). It has been concluded that goats and sheep were cut and cooked in larger bits, whereas cattle and pigs were dismembered into smaller joints (Isaakidou et al. 2018). Evidence from subsistance activities in Western Macedonia point towards an over 90 percent reliance on domestic animals (ovicaprid, cattle and pig) and cereals (einkorn/emmer wheat, barley) in the Early Neolithic (Karamitrou-Mentessidi et al. 2013). Sites with available information from Norther Greece evidence a wider trend in reliance on cereals in Early Neolithic assemblages (Kotzmani and Livarda 2018). Emmer stands out as a widely used crop without a wild progenitor in pre-Neolithic Greece, thus serving

as evidence of an event of introduction from the Near East (Kotzmani and Livarda 2018). There is not one pattern however emerging of general raw food sue in the Northern Greek Neolithic, rather a wide-spread heterogeneity in the choice of plant resources emerges (Kotzmani and Livarda 2018). A study dedicated to the food storage facilities in Neolithic Greek sites has concluded that small scale intensive cultivation would have occurred to result in the plant and animals remains datasets (Urem Kotsou 2017). The house as a base production unit would have overseen production and storage of raw foods, in clay lined pits mostly in the Early Neolithic, followed by an increased variety of storage solutions in the later Neolithic (Urem Kotsou 2017). Most recently a line of highly conceptualized studies has aimed at providing in-depth material of the modes of food production in the south Balkan Neolithic. Valamoti (et al. 2019) have created an innovative method for the classification of prehistoric cereal foods, based on their morphology resulting from various cooking treatments; this is a big step towards opening the paleo-botanical discourse to the transformation of cereals into food. Another study has proven unequivocally that, based on available data, dairying was not intensively practiced in the Neolithic of Northern Greece, as well as that cereals were processed in ceramic vessels (Whelton et al. 2018). This research was based on ceramic residue analysis and brings us one step closer to tangible understandings of daily activities.

As fascinating and insightful as some of these advancements and data sets are, we are still far from having an overarching picture of modes of subsistance in the Neolithic of the area. Therefore I have decided to eliminate the current uncertain value of archaeobotanical and zooarchaeological from my approach.

7.2 GALABNIK

Catalogue number: 13

7.2.1 Location, excavation and stratigraphy

Galabnik is a multi-phase tell site in the Pernik region, situated in the Upper Strymon. There are 12 other Neolithic settlement, north of Galabnik but only 3 (4, 11 and 12 in the site catalogue) are Early Neolithic as well. It was excavated extensively in the late 1970s by an international team

and then after a brief cessation the research continued until the late 1980s when sterile levels were reached in multiple locations. A full report has not yet been published. The only information available comes from a handful of articles in edited volumes and offers only partial insight into the sequences and scale of occupation. I recently came in contact with Stefan Chohadzhiev, who had written on some of the issues which Galabnik data could elucidate and he himself told me that publication of the full report has been over 15 years in the waiting. He mentioned that J. Pavuk, who was one of the principle excavators in the 1970s, has assured him the volume is prepared but no funding is available to cover publication and distribution costs. In the meantime, some articles have been published on the stratigraphy and architectural remains of Galabnik (Bakamska 2007). The settlement's pottery assemblage is often referred to in publications as the original source of an Early Neolithic pottery phenomenon (Pavuk 2007).

7.2.2 Architectural features

The following information about the architecture and site plan is wholly taken from Bakamska's paper on the topic (2007). The site of Galabnik covers a total of 7 ha and the cultural layer reaches a thickness of 4.80 m. The river bed of a nearby Strymon tributary was moved directly on top of the settlement in the last century. The subterranean water levels in the area resulted in the preservation of timber material in many of the occupational layers of the site. Galabnik has a total of ten Early Neolithic building phases. While only 1200 m^2 of the whole of the site were excavated, the good preservation of building foundations has enabled the researchers of the site to conclude that careful planning took place prior to building the settlement. There seems to have been a plan of building arrangements kept throughout the existence of the site with building plans overlapping. Throughout all 10 phases, the location of the biggest recognizable house remained the same. Groups of houses at the site had very narrow passages separating them. Bakamska likens the site building plan to that at the Neolithic site of Ilipinar in north-western Turkey, in the Marmara region. There is not one single house construction technique employed at Galabnik. Whenever post built walls occur, the posts reached to 1.2 m below the surface. Walls were made of purified local clay, with external and internal plaster and, at times, wooden supports. There is no phase by phase description of different houses. It is impossible to discern,

from the information provided, any detail about house constriction techniques in individual occupation horizons. Of interest is that fire-destruction was not visible at the site. Particular houses were renovated or wholly built anew in the places between existing houses, and in this way the overall site plan was well preserved.

7.2.3 Place of Galabnik in the Strymon settlement network

Galabnik takes centre stage as the best researched Early Neolithic settlement in the Upper Strymon. Juraj Pavuk (2007) has written on the distinctly well-defined characteristics of the Galabnik painted pottery assemblage. He has also implied that the reason for the obvious regional differences in well-defined pottery assemblages is the result of distinct groups of Mesolithic populations (Pavuk 2007). This theory involves the reasoning that if already defined sub-layers of Mesolithic groups were inhabiting the landscape prior to the Neolithic, then a difference in regional practice became a prerequisite for the emerging Neolithic population.

Although the available data on the Early Neolithic site is so restricted, I have made it a focus in this chapter because of the important implications of the site. Settled very early in the Neolithic Strymon sequence, this was a site carefully built over and organized. This speaks of a high level of cooperation between a probably high number of people with specialist competences. Compared to some of the other early sites along with Strymon, Galabnik stands out as an uncharacteristically organized project of settling and exploiting the Upper Strymon valley.

7.3 VAKSEVO

Catalogue number: 32

7.3.1 Location, excavation and stratigraphy

The prehistoric site at Vaksevo is situated in the location known as “Studena Voda” (Cold water) on the right bank of the Strymon tributary Eleshnitsa. The site itself spreads over 0.8 – 1 ha on a colluvial terrace 550-554 m. above sea level. As the name of the location suggests there is a fresh water spring in the immediate vicinity of the site. The prehistoric site was located in a natural

hollow, which had once been the seat of a lake (Ninov 2001); this was the only habitable location in the area, surrounded by hills and only a small gorge leading running water to the Strymon. Reports of prehistoric activity at the site date back to the 1950s but the first excavation was conducted by Chohadzhiev in 1989. The following information about the site is exclusively sourced from the excavation report by Chohadzhiev (2001). Since 1989, excavations were conducted at the site annually until 1995. The depth of the cultural activity at the site reaches 2.2 m but because of the westward sloping surface of the site, not all stratigraphic layers are equally represented in different trenches. Overall three occupational levels were discerned with seven building horizons split between them. I and II building horizons, directly atop sterile soil, are attributed to the Early Neolithic; III and IV building horizons belonging to the end of the Early Neolithic and to the Late Neolithic. Occupation horizons V, VI and VII are ascribed to the Chalcolithic and following Early Bronze Age.

7.3.2 Ceramic materials, raw materials

The systematisation of the Neolithic ceramics follows several principles in the 2001 Vaksevo site report. Wares are separated into horizon attribution and then further into fine and coarse wares. Chohadzhiev provides a very detailed and comprehensive systematization of the ceramic material found at the site. I provide an overview of the pottery systematization.

7.3.2.1 Early Neolithic – horizons I and II ceramics

The coarse ceramics in the Early Neolithic were produced out of unrefined clay with large mineral and plant inclusions. The surface and inside of the vessels were predominantly smoothed. Ceramic shapes included deep bowls and wide-rimmed vessels, as well as large storage jars and vessels. The coarse ceramic vessels in the first two Neolithic horizons seem to have a very broad range of shapes and surface treatments. Some examples are the smoothing of surface of only half a vessel and barbotine and impresso application on the other half. Parallels are drawn with coarse vessels at Krajnitsi, Pernik and Anzabegovo (FYROM).

It was the fine ceramic vessels at Vaksevo that underwent more elaborate decoration and surface treatment. The clay used for these had smaller mineral inclusions but still large plant inclusions.

Vessel colours vary from light beige to dark brown, but vessels had a reddish coloured surface. A great variety in patterns and colours is noted. Chohadzhiev does not attribute this to chronological differences. Rather he suggests, that the versatility in production of vessel is not the result of particular ceramic "technology" but rather a result of "coincidental conditions". All fine vessels from these horizons are either monochrome or decorated; white paint was used on a red surface, or a beige or greyish-black surface on occasion. The white paint is primarily applied to whole section of vessels rather than separately.

In the rare occasions of impressed ceramics, parallels are noted with Kovačevo and Rakitovo, in the Maritsa basin. Overwhelmingly, similarity in pottery production and decoration are found with Kovačevo, especially its earliest phases Ia and Ib.

7.3.2.2 Early Neolithic - horizon III

The ceramic material from this occupational level is in starkly reduced quantity compared to the preceding ones. Variation in shapes seems to be less abundant in this level. Material is once again separated into coarse and fine ceramics, based on the degree of smoothing of surfaces.

The clay base for vessels is rich in mineral and organic inclusions. Coarse vessels are greyish-brown, brown and reddish-brown in colour. Coarse ceramics seem to once again present the majority of surface treatments – nail impresso, bone impressions, incised lines and linear motifs forms a rich palimpsest of decoration techniques. Given the quantity of vessels itself, Chohadzhiev concludes that the diversity in surface treatments is outstanding.

The fines wares had well smoothed, even polished surfaces. Either monochrome or decorated with paint, the monochrome wares were brown or black and the paint for decoration was brown on red or beige vessels.

This level at Vaksevo, with its dark-painted ceramics (Fig. 5), serves as a very clear chronological marker for the technological and cultural development which transformed into the Late Neolithic

period. Parallels or dark-painted pottery are found, within the Strymon catchment, predominantly in the Sofia plain to the north.

Figure 5. Dark painted ceramic vessel from Vaksevo, displayed in Kyustendil Museum (Source: Personal Archive).

7.3.2.3 Late Neolithic – horizon IV

The distinction between coarse and fine ceramics is very difficult in this level. None of the ceramics have painted decoration. As is the trend in the Late Neolithic across the Strymon, black-topped and highly polished dark wares are predominant. The raw clay used for vessels was fine and inclusions of mineral and organic materials remain a staple of Vaksevo ceramics. Surface treatments continue to include finger and fingernail impresso. The colour of vessels is overwhelmingly black or greyish-black. A distinct characteristic of the IVth horizon at the site is the dominant diversity in shapes rather than that of decorations. Channelled and finger surface decoration were the main surface treatment techniques.

Ceramic analogies are drawn with Separeva Banja IV, Dolna Ribnitsa and Balgarčevo II.

7.3.2.4 Other materials

The flint artefacts from Neolithic Vaksevo represent a rather restricted number of shape variation, when compared with pottery production. While stylistic diversity of flint products is low, the artefacts exhibit a high production quality and functional versatility. The flint used in the Early and Late Neolithic Vaksevo, aligning with the choice of raw materials in the whole of southern Bulgaria, is high quality material – beige-caramel with white speckles. It is worth noting that despite the high amount of natural raw resources associated with the Strymon valley, Neolithic occupants of the area were very specific in their choice of raw flint material.

A high versatility is noted in the stone tool assemblages from the Neolithic phases at Vaksevo – awls, hoes, chisels.

Most loom weights and associated ceramic weaving tools were associated with contexts from the Late Neolithic occupational level.

7.3.3 Architectural features

Much of the settlement's architectural features were strongly disturbed by post-Neolithic occupation. The very first occupational layer was situated immediately on top of sterile soil and the only building activity remains were trenches into the virgin soil. These seem to have been supporting the walls of houses. The mean depth of these trenches was 0.25- 0.40 m and width were between 0.40 – 0.60 m.

The second occupational level presented the remains of burnt house walls, preserved up to a height of 0.12 m. Walls were built by two rows of thin posts, with a width between 0.45 – 0.80 m. The assumed door opening of the building has dimension parallels in Separeva Banja and Galabnik. A storage facility belongs to this second horizon, which cut directly into remains from the first horizon and deeper into the sterile soil. This storage pit was half a meter deep and 0.90 m in diameter; black ash and charcoal made up most of the fill and the top was covered with burnt plaster.

The third horizon's architectural remains consist of the remnants of a furnace. It was built using river stones up to a height of 0.10 m. Plaster was applied on the stone. The walls of the furnace were built with thin wooden posts and filling of the gaps between them with clay.

The fourth building horizon was primarily characterized by the foundations of four furnaces and several unburnt house floors. All furnace installations had a rectangular shape, built using river rocks.

It must be also noted that Chohadzhiev insists that two Neolithic trenches on the eastern borders of the settlement served as foundations for site fortifications. There is no information, however, as to which occupational horizon these might have belonged to. Neither is there is a sound justification of why such structures should necessarily have a protective function.

A remarkable feature of Vaksevo's first occupational horizon is the fully preserved skeletal remains in a pit grave. This is perhaps one of the first and only adult burials associated with intra-site spaces in the Neolithic of the Strymon. Burial remains are not a usual part of Neolithic site inventory. The body is bent at the pelvis, knees and neck. The arms are unnaturally flaying above the head and under the legs. This does not seem like a carefully thought out burial but rather as a careless "dumping" of a body in a pit.

7.4 SLATINO

Catalogue number: 33-35

7.4.1 Location, excavation and stratigraphy

The main excavation report published to date is that by S. Chohadzhiev and it is where the following information is taken from (Chohadzhiev 2006b).

Slatino has been deemed one of the most important Late Neolithic-Early Chalcolithic sites in its area and along the whole of Strymon. It lies on the southern reaches of the Upper Strymon area. Like several other settlements along Bulgarian Strymon, the occupation at Slatino is spread across two different localities which have been excavated. Whilst the site is overwhelmingly cited as one whole, in does it fact consist of two different locations, excavated at different times –

Chardako and Karo. The better excavated location is Chardako - more extensively expanded on in the cited volume. Slatino-Chardako was first studied in the 1930s by J.H Gaul on his extensive trip around Bulgaria. It was excavated in the later 1980s/early 1990s and the report for the site was published in 2006. This report contains very limited data on architectural and environmental remains. While these sites cannot be the subject of extensive analysis and discussion, Slatino boasts one of the only obtainable 'complete' reports on findings. Slatino-Karo was subsequently discovered as a neighbouring area with Neolithic activity during the ongoing excavations at Chardako. Most of the findings from this locality come from surface finds but a clear stratigraphy has been established.

Both Karo and Chardako have several occupational phases. They were locations of flourishing activity over a vast period.

At Slatino-Chardako there is a clearly closed Late Neolithic horizon. This is the only Neolithic phase at the site, followed by 7 other horizons of Chalcolithic, Bronze and Iron Age occupation. Slatino-Karo has 6 occupational horizons, only the first one of which (Karo VI) belongs chronologically to the Late Neolithic.

7.4.2 Ceramic materials, raw materials, miscellaneous

7.4.2.1 Karo VI ceramics

The ceramic material at Late Neolithic Karo was produced from fine clay with a small amount of mineral inclusions. The clay colour is greyish-brown or greyish-black and pottery has a smooth to polished surface. Most vessels were wide-mouthed round and flat vessels. The handles of vessels have channelled or incised decoration, and brown-painted motifs. A pricked decoration is common, at times combined with a channelled one. These follow the principle of the typical *black-topped* type of the Late Neolithic, but at Karo the black colour is substituted with brown. The overwhelming amount of decorated pots were of the brown-on-cream or brown-on-red variety. Analogous colour combinations are found at Damyanitsa, Topolnitsa, Dikili Tash, Sitagroi II, Akropotamos and Kryoneri.

7.4.2.2 Chardako I ceramics

The ceramic material at Chardako comes from pits and subterranean structures, dug into the natural soil. The clay used has small and occasional big mineral inclusions. Vessels have a smooth surface – black or greyish-black in colour. In comparison to later horizons, the Late Neolithic pottery at Chardako has a limited variety of forms and decorations. No complete vessels were excavated. Types of pottery are wide-mouthed, 'closed' bowls; vessels with handles and separately attached bases; taller (bottle-like) pots and 'floor', flat vessels.

Many variations of the channelled decoration occur on Late Neolithic Chardako pottery. Incised decoration is mostly observed on the so-called cult tables, rarely on other vessels. Pricked decoration is rare. Black-topped finish is most common. Whenever it occurs, it is only applied at the top biconical part of the vessel, with occasional additions of channelled decoration.

Direct analogies to the assemblage are found with the pottery from Separeva Banja, Kremenik II, Sitagroi I and Dikili Tash I.

As for other types of clay objects of various forms, the report by Chohadzhiev is confusingly vague (2006b, 33-39). Anthropomorphic figurines, house and oven-models, cult tables and altars are mentioned, but not attributed to distinct layers. There is a very intriguing mention of a small phallic object in the Late Neolithic layer. Objects of this type are usually referred to as labrettes and have a puzzling distribution across southern Bulgaria, in Early and Late Neolithic occupations alike.

Akin to the overly brief nature of clay object description, the presentation of raw materials and various types of tools is not specified by occupation phase (Chohadzhiev 2006b, 13-19).

7.4.3 Architectural features

The predominant form of building remains at Slatino-Chardako are subterranean remains, dug into the sterile soil. No above ground structures remain from the Late Neolithic phase, which leads Chohadzhiev to conclude that the overwhelming type of building was of a subterranean type – with pits as deep as 0.60 to 0.90 m. These structures had an oval shape with a length

varying between 4 – 5.5 m and width of 2.45- 4.40 m. Surrounding these pits are stake-holes 0.15-0.30 cm in diameter and the bigger structures also have stake-holes in their middle, presumably supporting a roof-structure. Only one of the so-called pit-houses was found to have a beaten clay floor, on top of the natural soil. All these house-like structures did not have a square footage exceeding 20 m^2. The author of the report proposes that these were possibly seasonal occupations, due to their lack of internal hearths. These claims, however, are not substantiated by an in-depth analysis of subsistence evidence, which could further support such claims.

The only other human-created structures at the Slatino-Karo were 14 refuse pits. They were dug into the sterile soil and their fills consisted of small stones, charcoal, animal bones and ceramic fragments.

This earliest occupation was probably ceased by a naturally occurring silting up, due to a landslide triggered by excessive rain. A thick layer of 0.50-0.60 m sandy soil sealed the Late Neolithic layer from later occupation.

7.4.4 Place of Slatino I in the Strymon settlement network

Slatino, with its geographic position and multi-area distribution, presents an interesting aspect of the Late Neolithic of the area. It is situated in an area where mostly Early Neolithic Strymon settlements are recorded. Yet, Slatino's occupation began in the Late Neolithic and continued, with several hiatuses, for over 2000 years. This is a pattern of settling the landscape, which is predominantly observed in the Lower Strymon and rarely associated with the Upper stretch of the river. The very initial occupation of the site presents yet another conundrum. With very little evidence presented, I am unwilling to easily accept Chohadzhiev's thesis of seasonal occupation.

7.5 BALGARČEVO

Catalogue number: 43

Figure 6. Balgarčevo alluvial terrace, Pirin Mountain Range in the distance (Source: Personal archive).

7.5.1 Location, excavation and stratigraphy

The site is situated on the outskirts of Blagoevgrad and lies on an alluvial terrace of the Strymon (Fig. 6). It was excavated between 1978 and 1988. The publication of the first of two volumes took place in 2011 (Pernicheva-Perets et al. 2011). All information presented herein is taken from the first volume.

The Neolithic settlement of Balgarčevo had a favourably selected location. In the immediate vicinity of the Strymon, it benefitted from extensive plainlands for agricultural purposes. Simultaneously, the neighbouring hilly Vlahina Mountain provided excellent conditions for

herding and stock-breeding. The settlement itself was limited to the east by the precipitous edge of the river terrace it occupies, and to the south another slope towards a Strymon tributary surrounds it.

The site was discovered at the end of the 1960s, during one of the archaeological surveys by Blagoevgrad regional museum, described in Chapter 2. Initially, several test trenches were excavated in the location in 1974. The intriguing materials prompted the prolonged excavation expeditions. Excavations yielded more 4000 finds and several tons of pottery and bone materials.

The estimated surface area, which the settlement covered during the Early and Late Neolithic phases is 1ha, which subsequently grew in the later Neolithic and Chalcolithic to 1.7ha. Due to the extensive modern-day exploitation of the area for agricultural purposes, the latest occupation layer, 0.25-0.40 m. deep, was mostly destroyed. The average thickness of the whole of the prehistoric cultural layer is 1.50 m, but this varies in different areas of the site. Balgarčevo is a flat site with a very complex stratigraphy and not every occupation horizon is represented equally in various site areas. The earliest occupation activity is only represented in the southern portion of the site, nearing the terrace edge. The stratigraphy of the site and excavated trenches is very intricate. Many of the occupational layers are found in different thickness and occurrences across the several big trenches. Often one stratigraphic layer contained structures from different chronological periods. Balgarčevo I, II and III are found to have accumulated over the Early and Late Neolithic and the site continued into the Early Chalcolithic (Balgarčevo IV). Burnt structures from Balgarčevo IA and IB, as well as II, seem to have had a prolonged development and many rebuilding episodes can be traced. The earliest occupation of the site, phase I, has further been divided into phases IA and IB.

7.5.2 Ceramic materials

The ceramic material from the Balgarčevo excavations was so numerous that a system was worked out in the excavation process for the separation of ceramics into groups and categories. These do not correspond to particular phases of occupation because of the complex site

stratigraphy. For consistency I will discuss the pottery in terms of its chronological development. The excavation report presents a very detailed cataloguing of the abundant ceramic material. Detailed descriptions of forms and statistical studies of distributions and relative frequency are provided.

Figure 7. Examples of black-on-red painted ceramics from Balgarčevo in display in Blagoevgrad museum (Source: Personal Archive).

In the period Balgarčevo I four distinct types of pottery are designated: coarse pottery, ordinary pottery and fine pottery; a separate Early Neolithic painted pottery category is distinguished. The distinction between coarse and ordinary pottery, which does not appear at other sites, is only viable because of the high amount of ceramic material at the site. Coarse pottery is typically considered a category of large food storage vessels; the clay has large mineral and organic

inclusions and the wall thickness is over 1 cm. Ordinary pottery has 0.6 – 1 cm wall thickness and smoothed outer surface. The fine pottery has wall thickness between 2 mm to 6 mm. The clay is highly refined, or with small mineral inclusions. Coarse and ordinary vessels are most common. Relief ornamentation, barbotine, impresso and pricked ornamentation are found on coarse vessels as well as on ordinary vessels. Channelled and impressed ornamentation appear exclusively on the surfaces of fine vessels. When painted decorations appear on vessels, the ornamentation is confined to the mouth of vessels on slipped surfaces. White painted decoration is very rare in Balgarčevo IA and is drawn over dark red slip. The main characteristic of Balgarčevo I pottery, in reference to its relative chronology, are the dark painted ceramics (Fig. 7). In the overall typology of Early Neolithic painted vessels, this securely places the beginnings of the site in the later phase of the Early Neolithic. No other Early Neolithic sites with dark painted pottery were discovered south of Balgarčevo. Settlements with clear parallel in the dark paint ornamentation are found in the Upper Strymon valley – Kremenik, Separeva Banja and Piperkov Chiflik. Interestingly, settlements further to the west in the Vardar valley, such as Zelenikovo, bear the most resemblance to the whole of the Balgarčevo I ceramic assemblage. It seems that Balgarčevo was a site with collections of various ceramics influences both from the Starčevo phenomenon, as well as Early Neolithic Thessalian Sesklo elements further south.

During Balgarčevo II the three categories of pottery (coarse, ordinary and fine) remain but the difference between vessels is mostly confined to the thickness of walls rather than to surface treatments. The difference between coarse and fine pottery increases in relation to clay composition and surface treatment. Firing technology improves during Balgarčevo II and this enhances the different surface treatment technologies. Barbotine, impresso ornaments, incised, pricked and channelled decorations appear most frequently on all different vessel categories. More variations of these surface treatments appear during Balgarčevo II. The pricked ornaments on vessels, knows as a Dolna Ribnitsa, type is the most symptomatic of the phase. Balgarčevo, along with Kovačevo and Ilindentsi are the only multi-phase settlements which display the affiliation with the Dolna Ribnitsa decoration styles. The presence of Dolna Ribnitsa type pottery, black polished vessels with channelled or pricked decoration, is also problematic for the

straightforward establishment of relative chronologies at the sites. Because the appearance of this type of vessels signifies a transitional period between the Early Neolithic and later developments, it is often difficult to discern when one phase ends and a new one begins at settlements without an occupational hiatus, such as Balgarčevo. Parallels are drawn between Balgarčevo II ceramics and Vaksevo IV vessels. Similarities are drawn with Nevestino and Separeva Banja II, but these do not show signs of Dolna Ribnitsa decorations at all. Overall, because of the mixture of transitional elements from both the Upper and Middle Strymon valley, Balgarčevo II is considered as a unique occurrence signalling a distinctive process of developments between the Early and Late Neolithic.

Balgarčevo III presents a problem in the categorization of ceramics. No closed complexes from this phase have been recognized and Balgarčevo III pottery is usually recognized in relation to a transitional period between phases III and IV. Many of the elements characteristic of the later IV phase are present in the transition, apart from the ubiquitously recognized Early Chalcolithic graphite ceramics. The contrast in firing techniques and clay quality between the three categories dissipates. The variation in surface treatments continues to grow and improve. A total of six new categories are recognized in the Late Neolithic Balgarčevo phase based on new variants of surface working and ornamentation styles: red and mauve lacquer slip; a nuanced surface with wood-cross section; brown grey surface; grey colour and cement-like structure; Late Neolithic (Akropotamos) drawing and black-topped pottery. The last two categories of Akropotamos and black-topped pottery are very prominent Late Neolithic markers for the site of Balgarčevo, as well as for the whole Strymon study area. The ceramic make-up changes, organic and large-grain mineral temper disappear from the clay. Thickness of the coarse vessels' walls diminishes. The ornamentation styles of the previous stage underwent a major change and new techniques emerged that were completely absent in Balgarčevo II materials. The barbotine surface treatment is developed into more elaborate variations, while impresso ornaments completely disappear in Balgarčevo III. In the Middle Strymon parallels with Balgarčevo III are found at Late Neolithic Drenkovo (Ploshteko), and to the north Slatino stands out as a ceramic counterpart. The appearance in the ceramic assemblage of black-topped as well as Akropotamos pottery is

yet again a signifier of the peculiar place of Balgarčevo both in the settlement network and in the ceramic development. In the Lower Strymon, at Dikili Tash I and Kryoneri, the Akropotamos, brown on cream painted, ceramics are found. To the south of the Kresna gorge, Balgarčevo has ceramic parallels at Damyanitsa and Promahonas-Topolnitsa. While to the north of Balgarčevo black-topped and grey ceramics began developing in the Late Neolithic, to the south Akropotamos style painted ceramics were rapidly spreading. Yet both are found within the same occupational phase of Balgarčevo. Looking to the other best studied site in the Lower Strymon valley, Balgarčevo III is synchronized, based on ceramic material, with the transitional phase between Sitagroi I and II.

7.5.3 Architectural features

7.5.3.1 Northern Trench Early Neolithic

The best-preserved building remains at the site were found in layers IV and III, in the northern trench. The dwelling provides a wealth of information about the construction, stages of material development and an astounding moveable inventory. This was given the name Dwelling 1.

Dwelling 1 was most certainly a structure with more than several episodes of rebuilding and modification. The best-preserved layer from this structure is the one conserved by a fire, which was of a two storeyed building with an elaborate organization of internal space. During the earliest period of its construction a very strong fire destroyed the structure. Because of the fire damage, large amounts of its domestic inventory were preserved, concentrated in a dug-in substructure and on the dwelling floor surface. A considerable amount of fallen plaster was also recovered from the ruins of this first phase. This very first building was supposedly erected at the time of the first settlers at the site; a room in Dwelling 1 was dug out in the virgin soil. The whole of the structure was ca 27- 28 m^2 and one-storied. This type of domestic building is seen throughout the site in the earliest occupational phase – small structures with semi dug-in floors, which are unanimously situated below the floors of later buildings. The dug-in part of the building, filled with daub, is a draining floor-technology, also found at Kovačevo I. The most elaborate phase of Dwelling 1 was its second phase. Two ovens were built in this phase, facing in

different directions. Although specific dating evidence does not exist, it is assumed the house was occupied for a substantial amount of time in this phase and its inhabitants enjoyed economic stability. Large stores of grain were discovered along with the building of a second-floor level. During this second phase, it seems that strengthening of the walls and exterior occurred. Following a substantial fire that destroyed this structure, its third stage presents an entirely new approach to building. The floors of the house, including the earliest dug in premise were completely drained and covered with a well-plastered surface. It is assumed, based on the change in architectural activities, that this might signal new population at the site. The fourth and last building phase of Dwelling 1 is associated with the Late Neolithic. During this phase an entirely new structure was superimposed atop the previous ones, although a slight shift to the north-west occurred. No internal habitational inventory was discovered in this building and it was not burnt. The assumption is that completely new settlement inhabitants erected this. The ceramics and archaeomagnetic dating of Dwelling 1 put its existence within Balgarčevo I primarily. A date has been yielded from the oven in Dwelling 1, between 5520-5420 cal BC, which corresponds with Kovačevo Id. The overall time-frame of Dwelling I, as well as Balgarčevo I is coeval with Karanovo II. The first phase of the dwelling might be coincident with the very beginning of Balgarčevo IA, whereas the third phase might be transitional, between Balgarčevo IB- II.

There were four more buildings excavated in the northern trench. These dwellings appeared to have the same phasing as Dwelling 1. These were also all burnt down in the earlier phase of their existence.

Dwelling 2 was only partially unearthed, since the structure continued under the northern profile of the northern trench. The building is structurally like Dwelling 1, a small difference being the distance between the lines of wall postholes. There were at least two successive houses erected in the space of Dwelling 2. As with Dwelling 1, Dwelling 2 also exhibited the structural peculiarity of a dug-in flooring in parts of the overall floor. The length of this pit is 4.5 m. and a rectangular shape; it was filled with superimposed layers of brown clay, grey clay, brown clay and daub pieces and beaten grey-brown clay. Strongly beaten clay with inclusions of charcoal and daub is very

characteristic for these so-called dwelling pits. No oven structures of domestic inventory were retrieved.

Dwelling 3 has two distinct building horizons; rebuilding occurred after the burning down of the earlier structure. Most of the dwelling was in a bad state of preservation and with major signs of later disruption. However, a thick clay platform made of red purified clay served as the base of the dwelling. The walls of successive structures were once again built with the aid of post holes. No dwelling pit was excavated in this Dwelling, but it had another smaller structure associated with it. This smaller structure had stone slabs as a footing and an oven associated with it. It is assumed that is might be the remnant of an earlier building pre-existing Dwelling 3. Underneath the whole of Dwelling 3 many small pits were found, which seem to have fulfilled a refuse purpose for the destruction material following rebuilding. The later stage of this dwelling might be ascribed to Balgarčevo II

Dwelling 4 has been largely disturbed by later structures and it is difficult to establish phases of building and re-building; 2 phases of occupation are suggested. Wall bearing post holes are small, smaller than at the other houses and seem to be thin at the intersection with the oven structure found within. There were also postholes found in the intermural space, supposedly bearing a gabled roof structure. The oven structure in Dwelling 4 was very elaborately made, with a lot of high-quality material going in its construction. There was no dug-in floor space in this dwelling. The occupation of Dwelling 4 coincided, based on pottery from in-between two successive floors, with the transition between Balgarčevo IB and II.

Dwelling 5 was mostly spanning beyond the limits of the northern trench, with only a small portion of it visible. Its orientation was associated with Dwelling 2, built in its vicinity. A clay floor platform was put down in a later occupation phase, completely covering the typical dug-in, dwelling pit of the earliest occupation. The pit covered the entirety of the house plan and was 1 m. deep. A large ceramic vessel, broken in situ, was recovered from the very bottom of the pit and the pit was filled with grey-brown clay and multiple pieces of plaster and pottery. No other

domestic inventory was retrieved. Based on the ceramic material, Dwelling 5 belongs entirely in Balgarčevo I.

7.5.3.2 Southern Trench Early Neolithic

At the southern trench a total of six structures were uncovered, referred to once more as Dwellings. These are enumerated with Roman numerals.

Dwelling I was the first one established at the eastern-most edges of the settlement. It had a structure, surprisingly different from those in the Northern trench, even though burning was obvious here as well. There was no clay floor platform or a dwelling pit and the structure itself has smaller dimensions. Internal post holes are thought to have supported a gable roof or a structure roughly 5.50 m. by 6.20-7 m. A substantial oven was found in this dwelling along with clay surfaces, probably dedicated to food production. A peculiar concave surface, resembling a trough was also excavated, which was plastered with refined fired clay and very cracked; a large broken vessel was found *in situ* associated with it. The pottery from the dwelling determines a chronological ascription to Balgarčevo IA. Refuse pits with burnt destruction material were excavated outside Dwelling I.

Dwelling II was only partially within the parameters of the southern trench, hence only a small amount of it was excavated. Even so, an 11.5 m. long brown-red clay floor platform was discovered, reminiscent of that in Dwelling 3, preserved at 1.20 to 3 m. in width. Two separate oven structures were discovered in this dwelling, but it remained uncertain whether those belonged to the same phase of one dwelling, different phases of the same dwelling or two different dwellings entirely. The Dwelling was likely built during the phase Balgarčevo I. Many traces of burnt material, ashes and fire places were found in association with Dwelling II suggesting a long period of occupation in this corner of the site.

Dwelling III is only partially revealed in the southern trench. A clay platform and associated line of post holes were discovered at its floor. No domestic material was discovered, and the pottery present is signifying Balgarčevo I as the occupation phase.

Dwellings IV, V and VI are grouped together because of the segmented character of their discovered surface area. Remnants of post holes lines were discovered immediately next to the western profile of the trench. These dwellings remain mostly uncovered. What information is available is that clay platforms, very well rammed and made of the virgin soil, were associated with their floors. No materials were recovered from the intermural space. It is the substructures of these buildings that drew the excavation team's interest. Wall ditches were found in association with the outlines of the dwellings. Of the three, only Dwelling VI exhibits direct association between post holes and ditches. The surfaces of the structures were all heavily infringed upon by later Chalcolithic structures. Where post holes occur, oval pits seem to have been dug out. These ditches probably belong, according to the excavator, to an earlier period of occupation, prior to the raising of the clay platforms. Pottery from the three dwellings is from Balgarčevo IB, the transitional Balgarčevo I-II and Balgarčevo II.

As a conclusion for the Early Neolithic buildings, several factors can be summarized:

- The majority of buildings belonging to Balgarčevo I were destroyed by fire and Balgarčevo II structures were built over them.
- The earliest buildings at the site were located in the eastern part of the settlement and river terrace (Dwellings I, II and III).
- Balgarčevo I buildings (Dwellings 1 and I) were built with solid wattle and daub walls, reaching 0.25 m. thickness.
- The buildings built on levelled platforms of local clay (Dwellings IV-VI, 1, 2 and 4) were continuously occupied after the Early Neolithic phase.
- A conclusion not made in the excavation report is that the site clearly exhibits signs of two very different building techniques. Dug-in underfloor pits and rammed floor pits floor techniques seem to have co-existed at the site. A very peculiar wall trench trend was also present, seemingly for a brief time.

7.5.3.3 Balgarčevo II-III structures

Dwellings in Balgarčevo II were directly built on top of Balgarčevo I ones, but they do not show extensive signs of burning, as in the very initial settlement period. It is evident though, that the most durable houses of the phase II were the ones superimposed over phase I structures. A break with techniques of the previous period is the orientation of walls. Large pits appeared in Balgarčevo II to serve the refuse needs of the entire settlement, excavated in the southern trench. They were situated between buildings and had materials spanning Balgarčevo II and III. Buildings with a lighter construction appeared in these phases, possibly representing communal activity spaces outside of the domestic, dwelling context.

7.5.3.4 Late Neolithic Dwellings

A considerable change in building techniques occurs at the later stage of Neolithic occupation at Balgarčevo. The site itself seems to have moved towards the south-west of the terrace and most structures from the period are probably not excavated. Buildings in this phase appear to have been densely built with only 0.80-1 m. between them. Dwellings were of considerable size – the longest one being 14.5 m. long by 5 m. wide. These long structures also had internal partitions, separating the space in two or three areas. These Late Neolithic dwellings were not burnt down but rather repaired and maintained over long periods of time. No dug-in floor or clay platforms were discerned. The structures were lighter than in earlier periods, replacing wattle and daub with timber and clay building technology. There were no significant remains of a distinct domestic material from the period.

7.5.4 Place of Balgarčevo in the Strymon settlement network

Balgarčevo provides a wealth of information, especially compared with the restricted number of data from other sites. It is true, however, that no subsistence data features in the official excavation report for the site. It is difficult to build a full picture of such a multi-phase, continuously occupied site without an in-depth picture of the agricultural and activity (other than pottery production) habits of the people occupying the site. Looking into the detailed building data from the site, however, does provide an interesting glimpse into the changes which occurred

over centuries. The coexistence of several different building styles within the same occupational phase strongly mirror the co-existence of ceramic materials, found in both the Upper and Lower Strymon. Balgarčevo seems to have been, over its long occupation, serving as a melting pot of people and influences travelling in the Strymon valley, as well as crossing over from the Vardar and Morava valleys. Balgarčevo will be the site on which my interpretation of the daily temporal scale will occur.

7.6 KOVAČEVO

Catalogue number: 58

7.6.1 Location, excavation and stratigraphy

Kovačevo is an Early Neolithic site positioned on one of the smaller tributaries of the Middle Strymon in the southern parts of the Blagoevgrad district. The Neolithic settlement is located 3.5 km from the small village Kovačevo at the foothills of the Pirin mountain massif. Kovačevo was first sounded for prehistoric material in 1981. It was excavated by a joint French-Bulgarian team for 14 years from 1986. Despite many announcements in smaller articles of the importance of the material for the bigger Strymon context, a full publication is still to be printed. All the information herein is taken from the most informative article on the site (Lichardus-Itten et al. 2002). I visited this site in 2015 when writing my MA dissertation. Some detail is available on the continuity of occupation, but this is yet another site with a very restricted data set.

The site is situated on a sloping terrace on the right bank of Katunska Bistritsa. Based on surface finds, the site spread over 6 ha and its southern edge is a sharp slope to the river bed. As it stands today, the prehistoric settlement is divided by a modern road. This was a flat Neolithic site, with probable horizontal movement during its continued occupation. The thickness of the cultural layer reaches up to 2 m. in places. Because of the superimposed nature of consecutive habitation, the stratigraphy of the site is very complex and individual horizons are difficult to recognize. Even though presently the river terrace on which Kovačevo is situated is sloping, the terrace at the level of Neolithic occupation was almost flat. The very first settlement structures were built using the natural yellow loam of the location. The Early Neolithic layers were heavily eroded.

Throughout much of the site the later Neolithic layers were dug into the earliest levels. Following a hiatus of over half a millennium, Bronze Age features were superimposed directly on top of Neolithic ones. Building remains from the Neolithic phases are scarce. The best-preserved Neolithic sequences are in the north-west part of the excavated territory. Preliminary stratigraphic observations have led to the conclusion that the site was occupied in two periods over the course of the Neolithic - Kovačevo I, being the Early Neolithic stage with four distinct occupational phases, and Kovačevo II considered by researchers as Middle Neolithic. The Kovačevo II phase has in a subsequent publication been divided into IIa and IIb with no further detail on phase differentiation (Lichardus-Itten et al 2006). In line with the thesis' chronological framework, I refer to this period as Late Neolithic. Kovačevo was re-settled long after the end of the Neolithic, and a later Kovačevo III phase was established. It must be pointed out that at the time of publishing of the main source material, the excavation of the site was still ongoing. No definitive conclusion has been made for the organization of the site. Of the Early Neolithic phases, Ib and Id exhibit well-defined built structures, usually built closely together. More information is required for phases Ia and Ic to be better understood in terms of occupational patterns.

7.6.2 Ceramic materials, raw materials and miscellaneous

While no definitive results have been presented on the ceramic finds from Kovačevo, information is available about the painted pottery categorization. Painted pottery represents only about 3% of the overall ceramic material found. A full report of the entirety of ceramic assemblage, however, has not been published. All painted vessels from Early Neolithic Kovačevo point to high technical skills. As a rule, the pots are painted with white paint over a red slip, and the surfaces are usually polished or burnished. There are 9 stylistic groups into which the Kovačevo I pottery is separated. Groups I and H are found in Kovačevo Ia. These groups consist of white paint of dark-red or brown-red surface. Decoration is found only on the outside of the vessels. Motifs are restricted to straight lines crisscrossing into net-like patterns. Kovačevo Ib is associated with Groups G, F and E – differentiating more in vessel shapes, the paint is cream or ivory on orange-red surface; motifs are rectilinear and hatched lines and painted on both sides of the vessels. Kovačevo IC is associated with groups D and C – curvilinear decorations on both the inside and

outside of the vessels. Groups B and A are ascribed to Kovačevo Id – characterized by white on red motifs only on the surface of vessels, meandering shapes. The information provided is not sufficient to make further distinctions. There is no mention of surface treatment beyond painted decoration. The tradition of white-painted pottery seems to have its longest presentation at Kovačevo I. There is a very clear line of development in white drawing. From the earlier to later phase motifs become very eloquent in shape and more complex than the earliest simpler designs. The beginning stage of occupation is related to sites further to the south and west of Kovačevo. The researchers draw links with sites in the Mesta valley. None of the later Early Neolithic dark-painted techniques are found here.

Quartz was worked as a raw material almost exclusively at Kovačevo and there is a large number of quartz tools at the site. Flint is found rarely in the raw material assemblage, but when flint tools are considered they fall within the same spectrum of tools found at neighbouring sites – sickles, scrapers, blades. Bone tool assemblages were particularly abundant at the site, with clear signs of thermal treatment techniques. The "typical" Early Neolithic settlement inventory is well presented at Kovačevo – from tools to clay figurines, bracelets, pendants, slings, pestles and mortars, stone axes, and stamps (pintaderas) – all form a group of materials that are unanimously considered the core principle to what is considered Neolithic ways of life.

7.6.3 Architectural features

Due to severe erosion and the lack of signs of burning in the early Neolithic levels, it is very difficult to distinguish architectural features for the duration of Kovačevo I. Some house structures, as well as external and internal facilities were recorded.

House 216 (Kovačevo Id) was destroyed by fire, which makes it an exception at the site. Remains from the structure were found about 0.15 m. under the topsoil. This location was used consecutively for two different buildings. The first one was built with a typical for the site dug-in foundation towards the centre of the structure. Following a burning a second structure was erected over a meticulously smoothed surface. Both consecutive houses had internal ovens. Very few traces of post holes were evident at the presumed limits of the structure. Wattle and daub

were more plentiful building remains. The latter house was completely emptied before cessation of occupation, apart from one complete white-painted vessel. Based on stratigraphic and material observations, this house was last occupied toward the end of the Early Neolithic – Kovačevo Id.

Three house structures belonging to Kovačevo Ic attested to the fact that the site was very densely occupied. Rather than rebuilding of one house, three distinct buildings were superimposed in a very quick succession. All the buildings had the distinct floor building technique of a dug-in premise, filled in with various materials. The floors of previous buildings were evened out prior to new construction. The reason for the lack of load bearing posts surrounding any of the Kovačevo buildings is that a different technique was employed. A compact earthen concrete material was prepared, and trenches used as casing for the laying out of walls. The unfired walls material was so dense that it presented quite a difficulty at the time of excavation. This type of wall construction is otherwise known as pise-style.

A floor structure ascribed to Kovačevo Ib revealed a great deal of insight about the construction and function of the dug-in floor technique. The particular organization of material in the dwelling pit gave hints of an arrangement dealing with the natural flood of water underneath buildings and control thereof. There are structures in the Kovačevo Ib layer with up to 9 layers of superimposition.

House structures belonging to Kovačevo Ia were excavated with up to 5 phases of floor rebuilding and none exhibited the typical under floor dwelling pit. In this initial phase of occupation at the site, houses were built with a wattle and daub technique, utilizing post-holes. Only one house from this earliest layer had a long trench associated with it, containing a large amount of adornments and domestic inventory.

Overall, the earliest constructions at Kovačevo were aligning with local wattle and daub building techniques. During Kovačevo Ib and Ic a markedly different building style was introduced.

Ovens, refuse pits and big storage vessels were found both inside and outside of houses, spread throughout the site. The reports over their chronological attribution are not clear in the articles

available. What is fascinating about the site are the several ditches and canals found crisscrossing the site, presumably having served as water control systems during Kovačevo Ic and in later phases. The canal walls were all lined with compact earthen concrete material.

Another feature of Kovačevo, of a unique status in the Strymon valley, are several infant and adolescent inhumations found at the site. Five inhumations of infants from newly born to 9-month olds were discovered buried in pots or in pits, in close association with Kovačevo I. A particular burial procedure was not observed. In the later Kovačevo II several more burials of adolescents were unearthed but not much information is provided on them. A Kovačevo Ic or Id wall deposit contained a dog burial. The dog was carefully laid on its side and an anthropomorphic figurine was placed under it. This type of foundation deposit is another rarity.

7.6.4 Place of Kovačevo in the Strymon settlement network

Kovačevo remains the earliest site in the Middle Strymon. It appears that from the very beginning of the occupation, a well-defined manner of material production and construction existed. The inhabitants of Early Neolithic Kovačevo were also resistant to the pottery decoration trends of the north. A well-defined knowhow of pottery production, as well as working of raw materials was established here. It is unfortunate that more detailed information about the site, and especially about the Early to Late Neolithic transition period, is not made available.

7.7 DOLNA RIBNITSA

Catalogue number: 64

Figure 8. Dolna Ribnitsa village and the contemporary stream's bed running through the village (Source: Personal Archive).

7.7.1 Location, excavation and stratigraphy

This is the site with the least available data, yet it provides a very interesting and important point in the overall development of the Neolithic in the Strymon valley. The site was discovered during the 1988 Skaptopara expedition led by the Blagoevgrad Regional Museum and the Archaeological Institute. A one-season research was launched following the discovery of surface finds. The site represents what was a unique phase of the Middle Neolithic in the mid-to-lower Strymon valley, according to its researchers. The excavation report from the expedition provides some level of

contextualisation of the site in the wider Strymon region. All the information presented here is taken from the publication by Domaradski et al (2001).

The area of the Dolna Ribnitsa village itself has 8 different areas where archaeological materials were recovered. These are all surrounding the modern-day village of Dolna Ribnitsa, which inhabits the hilly slopes of the Slavyanka Mountain (Fig. 8). Only one of these areas – Oreshkite – has yielded Neolithic remains.

A trench with dimensions 6 by 8 m was positioned at Oreshkite. This site of Neolithic activity is located on 30-degree sloping ground. The thickness of the cultural layer varies, naturally because the north-eastern part of the trench was sloping strongly, and virgin soil was only 0.10 m under the humus. There were two distinct soil colorations in the trench – greyish-black soil, where all the material was found and yellowish-brown soil which did not yield any material. Three distinct agglomerations of stones and broken ceramics were found in the second layer of the trench. These material clusters were in fact in pits, filled with large stones at the top and mostly ceramics of the bottom. Another structure discovered in the second layer of the trench was a somewhat rectangular irregular shape. Accumulations of plaster, high amount of ceramics and burnt soil were discovered in darker patches within the structure. There is an irregularly shaped rammed-clay platform but where that thins, a row of post holes is revealed. This structure seems to have been built in part right against the sloping hill and using it for support. Underneath this second layer, a final third was determined, from which only several ceramic fragments were retrieved.

7.7.2 Ceramic materials

Even though ceramic material was recovered from different layers in the trench, all the material seems to be of a singular character. No distinction can be made between different production phases. This is usually interpreted as a sign of a short-lived settlement in Bulgarian discussions, because the longevity of a site is usually measured by the number of stylistic and production ceramic horizons. Another explanation would be that the inhabitants of the site kept to a uniform manner of pottery production and decoration for a longer period than is normally observed in

the Strymon Neolithic. Either way, the excavated area and material remain too restricted for a coherent conclusion to be made.

7.7.3 Place of Dolna Ribnitsa in the Strymon settlement network

It is peculiar that a site with a total of 3 pages excavation report, concerning the Neolithic, has taken such a centre stage in the heated discussion of Neolithic periodization. While Domaradski himself ascribed Dolna Ribnitsa to a possible phase of the Middle Neolithic unique to this part of Middle Strymon, this clashes with the most-recent chronology by Chohadzhiev, which this thesis adopts. Hence, I consider this site to a phenomenon occurring in a narrow transitional period between the Early and Late Neolithic.

7.8 PROMACHONAS-TOPOLNITSA

Catalogue number: 83

7.8.1 Location, excavation and stratigraphy

This site situated on both sides on the Greek-Bulgarian border is perhaps the perfect material representation of the need for a study such as mine. The research of the site spanned the 1980s and 1990s and more recent work has focused on non-destructive means of research of the area. A complete publication of findings is not available, but a few articles make the site suitable for discussion (Koukouli-Chryssanthaki et al. 2007, Vajsov 200). Most of the information here, apart from the typology of ceramic materials, is taken from the article by Koukouli-Chryssanthaki et al. 2007). There are many smaller reports on the ongoing investigations of the Greek research team in the annual reports for excavations in Thrace and Macedonia (AEMTH). These, however, provide very fragmented pieces of information, which do not provide an overall picture of the site's phase development.

The Bulgarian portion of the site was discovered in 1978 and excavation began in 1980 led by Henrietta Todorova. Between 1980 and 1991 only Bulgarian teams worked on the site, within its Bulgarian limits. Then between 1992 and 2003 a joint Greek-Bulgarian research effort unearthed the Greek portion of the settlement.

The site is located about a kilometre away from the present-day right bank of the Strymon. Its location falls at the border between the Middle and Upper Strymon valley and takes the strategic position of the easiest pass through the river landscape, both northward and southward. The 14 yearlong study of the area determined that the site occupied an area of 5 ha, over two adjacent hilltops and a total of four occupation phases were identified. The cultural layer is between 0.50-1.70 m. thick. Phase IV belongs to the Early Chalcolithic and is synchronous with the Chalcolithic phase at Slatino, as well as Sitagroi III and Dikili Tash II. Phase III as the site is dated to the first half of the 5th mill cal BC; it is also separated into two phases: IIIA and IIIB (Vajsov 2007). This was probably a transitional phase between the Late Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic – evidence of copper smelting was discovered, but Akropotamos pottery was still present. It is difficult to discern between Late Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic. Because of the clear material similarities with the Later Neolithic of other Strymon sites, this thesis will include Phase III of Promachonas-Topolnitsa in its discussion. Phase II, which is dated to the end of the 6th mill cal. BC is the earliest phase of occupation researched at the site, belonging to the very beginning of the Late Neolithic. The first phase, I, has not been discussed in detail in publications. Vajsov provides some absolute estimations for the dating of the site, based on material collected from the Bulgarian sector of the site: Phase I- ca. 5320 – 5300 cal BC (but this is to be quoted with caution); Phase II- ca. 5300-5070 cal BC and Phase III- ca. 5070 – 4700 cal BC (2007).

7.8.2 Ceramic material

This principal data article does provide some insight into the types of material found at the site. The article (Koukouli-Chryssanthaki et al. 2007), however, does not ascribe the finds to different periods, instead talking about principal finds in general terms. Of the little concise information available, it becomes clear that phase II at Promachonas-Topolnitsa was in part characterized by bituminous surface decorations, dubbed a Topolnitsa style. Bichrome painted pottery and Akropotamos (black on red/orange) were associated with Phase III.

Ivan Vajsov (2007) provides an in-depth study of the development of pottery and pottery decoration for the Promachonas-Topolnitsa site. He defines eight ornamental styles to be chronologically sensitive. Phase I at the site is characterized more specifically with bitumen

decorations, where the bitumen material was applied on the polished surface/slip of vessels. This phase is synchronized with early Sitagroi II and Dikili Tash I.

Even though bitumen decorations remained present in Phase II, Akropotamos style decoration appears at the site. The vessels with Akropotamos designs are made of very fine clay and Vajsov has stipulated that because of the lack of mineral inclusions in the clay, these were all imports. Black-topped pottery also appears in Phase II, but this type of decoration is restricted to particular shapes. In Phases IIIA and III B, the number of black-topped ceramics increased while the Strumsko strain of Akropotamos decoration becomes predominant. Phase IIIA is very intriguing in chronological terms because during this time graphite decoration was used on vessels for the first time in this part of the Balkans. Towards the end of phase IIIA the Strumkso type Akropotamos pottery begins to change technique and colour and graphite decorations decrease notably.

7.8.3 Architectural features

Architecturally speaking, both phases II and III are characterized by so called subterranean buildings. But it was during Phase II that the settlement expanded to covering the biggest surface area (Vajsov 2007, 94-97). Subterranean buildings have a floor area, which appears to be a shallow pit dug into the natural subsoil. Examples of this building technique are known at several northern Greek sites. Notably, this dwelling pit situation echoes the building techniques evident at both Kovačevo and Balgarčevo. Finds from this subterranean pit signify that at Promachonas-Topoltnitsa they were used as living spaces, and possibly as specialized work areas. The article describes dwelling pit buildings found in different sectors of the site, but their phasing is not divulged. Vajsov (2007) reports that the settlement underwent a wide-scale fire destruction at the end of Phase II and in Phase III above ground buildings with timber wall posts started being built. A notable building from the later part of Phase III largely differs from all other known semi subterranean buildings. This building, titled structure 4, is round and completely subterranean, dug up to 7 m into many layers of previous occupation. Upon further investigation, it became apparent that this structure 4 was built on an area with a wealth of previous activity. Structure 4 was two storeyed, the subterranean floor had signs of timber frames supporting the structure.

The inventory of the subterranean portion of the structure was very rich and varied, from grinding stones, tools, varied clay objects and structures, as well as figurines, body adornments and a single bucranium. Similar deposits, as well as a second bucranium, were found with structure 4 outside of the pit, so it is assumed that both spaces were equally used. Clear signs of continued renewal of the floor, floor structures and walls speak of a prolonged use of this domestic space. A regular sloping of all successive floor towards the centre of the dwelling pit suggests that successive wooden floors were collapsing towards the centre of the large pit. Such sloping of floors toward the middle of these pits was also observed at Balgarčevo. In structure 4, wetter conditions have preserved to some extent the timber of the clay covered wooden floors. The settlement underwent another phase of expansion during the late portion of Phase III (Vajsov 2007, 98).

7.8.4 Place of Promachonas-Topolnitsa in the Strymon settlement network

The unearthing of Promachonas-Topolnitsa is the result of a mutual effort of Greek and Bulgarian researchers. No one uniform account of the whole site has been published. Bulgarian researchers most often refer to the Bulgarian portion of Topolnitsa, and Greek researchers write mostly of Promachonas. The site displays a very familiar pattern of building structures with subterranean dwelling pits at their centre in the earlier occupational periods, but this changes in the last Neolithic phase of the site. In clear contrast with the other Late Neolithic sites studies here, this site is in a direct relation to Strymon's river bed. Late Neolithic sites in direct proximity to the Strymon as most notable in the Lower Strymon and almost absent in Middle and Upper Strymon. The material links with sites to both and north and south of the Greek-Bulgarian border are very clear. Promachonas-Topolnitsa also provides insight into the transition from the Late Neolithic to the Early Chalcolithic. At this site the transition seems to be a logical continuation – in occupation space, material technology, and most importantly location.

7.9 KRYONERI

Catalogue number: 106

7.9.1 Location, excavation and stratigraphy

Kryoneri is a site located on the west bank of the Strymon, occupying the slopes of a low hill along the river (Malamidou 2016). The total area of the settlement is estimated to ca 0.3 – 0.4 ha, but because of the destruction of all archaeological layers on the eastern side of the site, this is a rough estimate. The presence of a freshwater spring at the time of occupation as well as of fertile soils in the immediate vicinity of the site have been documented (Malamidou 2016, 300). The immediate vicinity of the site consisted of the then more heavily forested hills of the Kerdyllio Mountain; the distance from the sea was at ca. 5 km. The landscape of the settlement, however, would have been dominated by the presence of the Strymon.

Research took place at the site between 1996 -1997 and had a rescue character. Due to the largely unexplored nature of the Serres plain Neolithic, Kryoneri, despite its rescue character is a main example of the Late Neolithic in the Lower Strymon valley (Malamidiou 2016, 300). A complete excavation report has not been published, but this chapter provides most of the known material.

The information known from this site is derived from a 50 m long vertical cut at the sites. The Late Neolithic layer (starting at ca 5400/5300 cal BC) was the very first recorded level of occupation at the site. The settlement had a continued existence into the Early Chalcolithic, and then into the Early Bronze Age. Maximum thickness of the overall deposits reached 3.5 m. in the presumed centre of the settlement and decreased towards the verges of the sites. The thickness of deposits for each period could not be easily determined, but it did seem that most of the deposits belonged to the later stage of the site.

7.9.2 Ceramic material and architectural features

The ceramic material from the earliest level is black burnished ware with rippled or black-topped decoration, accompanied by brown-on-cream wares. As mentioned above, the Late Neolithic I layer at the site does not offer a huge amount of information about the holistic view of life at the

site. Due to the destruction of part of the site during roadwork preparations, what could have been part of the earliest phase was destroyed. The two structures associated with the Late Neolithic I are a proposed potter's kiln and a large cylindrical pit. The pit had been dug into the natural soil underlaying the Late Neolithic I occupation; its walls and floor had distinct burning traces with many burnt fragments and ash uncovered. The pit was dug about a kilometre away from the main excavation site. It was cylindrical and 2 m. in diameter. Also cut into the natural soil, it contained traces of burning, fragmented black-topped and brown-on-cream ceramics, a flint blade and stone axe, as well as bones and a copper bead.

7.9.3 Place of Kryoneri in the Strymon settlement network

There are two very intriguing points, bearing importance to the settlement spread along the Lower Strymon. Firstly, the settlement, like several others in the vicinity, was not established until the Late Neolithic, even though the appropriate conditions and resources were present for a successful settlement. Secondly, the overwhelming evidence for Late Neolithic I pottery is more reminiscent of the end of the Early and beginning of the Late Neolithic along the Upper and Middle Strymon. There is not a predominant amount of Akropotamos ware, indeed none for the Late Neolithic level. A local variant of the Akropotamos style appears in the following stage, intermixed with graphite-painted wares.

7.10 SITAGROI

Catalogue number:89

The excavations of Sitagroi, conducted by Maria Gimbutas and Colin Renfrew, have been fully published. The information from this site provides the most complete and detailed picture of life in a prehistoric site of the Strymon valley. The Neolithic levels at the site, however, represent only the very end of the Neolithic in the river basin, and as such show no indication of the earlier Neolithic developments. The information presented here is entirely taken from the 1986 publication of the excavation at Sitagroi (Volume I by Renfrew, Gimbutas, Elster 1986).

7.10.1 Location, excavation and stratigraphy

The site is situated along the left bank of the Angitis River in the Drama Plain, Norther Greece. The Angitis river drains the plain and joins into the Strymon. The sites itself is a settlement mound and had accumulated over the course of several thousand years of occupation; the depth of the cultural layer was 11m upon excavation (Renfrew 1986, 147). It is only the very first two phases of occupation (Sitagroi I and II) that belong within the Neolithic range set in this thesis. Colin Renfrew himself, after a season of field surveys and surface collection, selected the site of the settlement mound as a promising exemplar of prehistoric occupation. The site was acquired, and excavation began in 1968 with a mound-wide surface collection campaign. It has to be noted that the initial interest in the site was fuelled by Renfrew's and Gimbutas' combined interest in the post-Neolithic, Copper/Bronze age oddities of the central and southern Balkans. The information presented here will be restricted to the data required for the aim of the thesis. The excavation campaigns took place between 1968 and 1970.

The division of the rich stratigraphic layers was chiefly done based on pottery. Based on changes in pottery decoration and surface treatment, Sitagroi occupation was divided into 5 phases. Phases I and II fall in the Neolithic range. Sitagroi I spans 5500 to 5200 cal BC and Sitagroi II 5200 to 4600 cal BC (Renfrew 1986, 151-173). The last Sitagroi phase ends in ca 2200 cal BC. The Neolithic settlement of Sitagroi falls within the Late Neolithic of the Strymon valley.

7.10.2 Ceramic materials

The ceramic material from Neolithic Sitagroi phases I and II is presented in the excavation volume in a separate chapter (Marriott Keighley 1968, 345-392). The main diagnostic types of ware from phase I are separated into fabrics: Grey lustre, Grey Lustre Channelled, Rural and Rusticated. No full vessels were recovered from Phase I. The grey lustre ceramics bear correlation to the best-made shapes; grey lustre and grey lustre channelled wares were of the most impressive shapes – barrel jars, open bowls and plates (shallow open vessels with flat or rolled rims). Rural and rusticated wares were found in small quantities in Phase I, but they represent a specific group of rough and unfinished vessels with well-burnished inner surfaces. These two types of wares are always represented by the same shape – shallow open plate. Rusticated wares, albeit not

decorated with paint exhibit a variety of finger-applied surface treatments. Grey lustre wares were produced in two modes- plain and channelled. Both variations had a smoothed surface, the fabric is well-made with small inclusions of mica and grit. Graphite was added to the production of grey lustre ceramics, in the form of powder which either served to burnish the surface or was applied as slip before firing. The grey lustre ceramics were produced in a uniform manner in Sitagroi Phase I and are easily recognizable. Where straight-sided grey lustre vessels are found these are undecorated; decoration of rimmed grey lustre vessels appears in the form of carination or grooving around the rim area.

Grey lustre channelled ware is designated as a separate group, although with the same fabric as for grey lustre wares. What is symptomatic of this group of ceramics is the combination of vertical and horizontal channelling. Bowls, jars and plates were produced in this manner. Channelling along with grooving and plastic decorations are observed in this group.

The rural ware group is characterized by a very micaceous and spongy fabric; vessels were uniformly plates. The insides of vessels were well burnished and the outside left rough and at times tempered with straw. No decorations occur on these vessels.

Rusticated ware vessels were coarse in nature, with grit inclusions but well fired. The inside always smoothed and undecorated and the outside decorated with rough finger-pinching and nail-impressions.

Dark and pale burnished ware only slightly vary in the coarseness of the ceramic make-up and have no decorations. The colour of the burnish varied from black/brown and reddish to cream and light brown.

Smooth wares were abundant in Phase I, with medium grit inclusions and a surface colour between red and brown-greyish pink. Painted wares are rare in Phase I. Only very few sherds were recovered with painted motifs and as a rule the whole phase is lacking this type of vessel decoration. Black-topped vessels appear for the first time at the site at the very end of Phase I and continue being produced in Phase II.

Painted ware is the most numerous vessel group in Phase II and as such is the best-suited diagnostic feature of this phase's ceramic assemblage. There are in total 15 distinguishable painted ware types. Grey lustre and rural ware continue to be produced in the early stage of Phase II and two new diagnostic undecorated vessels appear widely in the assemblage – Black topped and rippled. The rippled ceramics appear finer than the grey lustre ware and are finely burnished both on the inside and outside of vessels. A general homogeneity is observed between Phase I and II shapes, apart from the new shapes which appear in the latter phase: open bowls with a thick incurved rim and deep bowls. Jars become more widely produced in Phase II.

Painted ware wall thickness varied between 3 to 11 mm. The different groups of paint are as follows: brown-on-cream; brown-on-orange/red; brown-on-buff; fine brown-on-buff; heavy brown-on-buff; orange-on-orange; red-on-white; white-on-red; matte brown-on-white red slipped; red crusted; brown slipped; other white painted; black-on-red; red-on-brown. The designs of paintings of all these groups are found in separate cases on all parts of vessels, including the inside. Designs were also highly varied including cross-hatching; spirals (combined with lines, within lines); straight lines (thick ad single); wavy lines (thick, thin, single and grouped); chevrons; concentric circles and ladders. The above listed painted ware groups were discovered in varying quantities in Phase II. White-on-red wares were very scarce, albeit very striking in coloration, as was the red-on-white ware. Red crusted and brown slipped wares were uncommon for the site.

The diagnostic for phase differentiation of unpainted wares were determined to be black-topped, rippled, fine black burnished and incised wares. The commonly found along Strymon Late Neolithic black-topped ware has two recorded instances of painted motifs. The rippled wares were expertly burnished and fired. Incised wares were coarser than the rest of the diagnostic unpainted examples and only decorated on the outside with broad, open incised lines.

When drawing comparisons with ceramic materials from contemporaneous sites, Keighley draws on similarities with the Vinča and Veselinovo (Karanovo III) cultures (Keighley 1986). The Late Neolithic sites at Chorla, Drama and Nea Baphra (all within the Strymon catchment) bear ceramic

similarities with the Sitagroi I material. Clear parallels with early Dikili Tash are also found with Sitagroi I. The comparisons drawn between Veselinovo culture ceramics (south-central Bulgaria) are not of interest to this study because the Veselinovo materials fall within the Maritsa River catchment. It is unclear whether the limited comparison with Bulgarian material was dictated by the lack of awareness of the Bulgarian Strymon material, or the lack of known material at the time of the study.

Graphite painted wares become the most recognizable feature of the Sitagroi III assemblage and are outside the concerned timespan covered by this thesis.

7.10.3 Architectural features

For a site as famed for its wealth of prehistoric information, the data concerning the architectural features in the Neolithic levels is surprisingly scarce; all data cited here is taken from the relevant chapter of the excavation report (Renfrew 1986, 175-222). Many details of structural features mentioned here are contained within site notebooks, stored at the British School of Athens.

The deep sounding trench ZA revealed a Phase I house floor and an associated wall. The wall was preserved as a 0.2 m. thick area of pale-yellow clay with remains of daub. The wall was preserved in place up to a height of 0.3 m. Softened mud brick and yellow fragments of daub were found in association with the wall. Ceramics were recovered and only several small finds (no further information provided).

Excavation in squares KL and KM of the site, albeit restricted, also provided an insight into the earliest occupational layers. A notable feature of the Phase I and lower Phase II levels was the damp condition of the soil. Wood remains were recovered from these deeper soundings, in the shape of pale uncarbonized fibres (evidence of burning was lacking). Traces of floors were recovered as clay patches and the only remaining evidence of built structures were postholes. A clay oven floor was recorded in sounding ZJ. Information about the earliest occupational levels were recorded in areas ML and JL.

7.10.4 Place of Sitagroi in the Strymon settlement network

Sitagroi is the most securely dated Strymon Neolithic site. Apart from secure dating, however, there is not much the available information adds to the overall picture of Neolithic occupation along the Strymon and the more micro-scale observable development of everyday living. The significance of this site is that it is the earliest recorded Neolithic site in east Macedonia (Greek province of Macedonia) to date (Renfrew 1986, 479-480). This fact has major implications for the development of the settlement network along the Strymon and surprisingly reveals a possibility that the Early Neolithic was not represented at all in this part of Northern Greece.

8 CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

The development of settlements, settlement networks and life-ways at the sites is presented in Chapter 4. These are all processes which occurred at different speeds and exhibit varied dynamics in the overall picture of the Strymon Neolithic. To begin the attempt at applying a multiscalar framework of study to the river catchment, a clear differentiation needs to be made between the different scales at which material will be studied. Areas such as the Serbian Danube Gorges, the Turkish Marmara region and the Bulgarian Maritsa valley are regularly studied as coherent units where certain individual developments took place. The rivers running north to south in the southern Balkans (Vardar, Strymon, Morava) have regularly been cited as locations where independent developments took place. Attempting to contradict the notion of south-north orientation of population/material dispersal I will construct an informed interpretation of the Strymon settlement pattern for the whole of the Neolithic. Settlement location varies greatly from phase to phase along the Strymon, as well as across the Upper, Middle and Lower Strymon reaches. These patterns will be drawn out from the available data-base. I will suggest what the possible processes might be behind the settlement location selections. The construction of a settlement pattern, along with a viable interpretation thereof, has not been previously suggested in other archaeological works for the entire area. While this thesis will not claim to be an

exhaustive study, it does claim originality of the work presented. My work is the first of its kind to propose that the population of the Strymon began in its northernmost territories and subsequently spread to the south of the area. While the application of a multiscalar model was one of my original aims, the result of studying the totality of Neolithic sites has been a practically important alteration to the knowledge of the Strymon. As such, the settlement pattern study in this chapter becomes one of the primary contributions of this thesis.

Following the establishment of important patterns for the Neolithic settling of the Strymon catchment, I will pay attention to closely examining the development of two Neolithic settlements – Kovačevo and Topolnitsa-Promachonas. I attempt constructing a medium scale notion of a biography of sites, tracing changes and dynamics, fast and slow, which established life as it was. Lastly, the scope of the analysis will be narrowed to the focus on daily living. While I cannot claim to be making ground-breaking proposals of new types of narrative, I offer a possible insight into the lives of the Early Neolithic Balgarčevo inhabitants. On their own all the three scales of analysis seemingly focus on different priorities; altogether the separate steps of the overall analysis serve to create a tangible understanding of the human landscape of the Strymon River. Understanding of the smallest scales of research in a multiscalar model feeds into the appreciation of events and processes at the medium and big scales

8.1 Development of the settlement pattern in the Strymon valley

The big scale/long duration scale of research of the Strymon area takes the shape of an emerging settlement pattern. The choices of location and relationships between settlements and the landscape are the principal analytical foci of the settlement network when viewed from a big picture perspective (Fig. 9). 18 of the 107 Neolithic settlements on the Strymon belong in the designated first part of the Neolithic. Of those, 8 are multi-phased and 10 are single phased. Of the single phased sites 9 are situated in the Upper Strymon, and only one (Brezhani) is south of Blagoevgrad, in the Middle Strymon area. Of the 10 Early Neolithic single phased sites, 5 are in close relation to the main Strymon river bed, situated directly in its floodplain. The other 5 sites are situated along large Strymon tributaries. Out of the 8 multi-phased Early Neolithic sites, only

2- Ploski and Kovačevo- are situated in the Middle Strymon, and the remaining 6 are found spread across the Upper Strymon and its tributaries. The relationship of mutliphased Early Neolithic sites with the main stream of the Strymon seems even more imperceptible. Only Pernik Hockey Ring and Mursalevo were in direct proximity to the main river and the rest of the sites were situated along minor tributaries and in varying topographic settings. The site of Kovačevo is a notable example of an outlier for the selection of a location for the establishment of an Early Neolithic site. It is the only one in this group which is situated over 600 m. above sea level and a straightforward geographic relationship with the Strymon is difficult to establish.

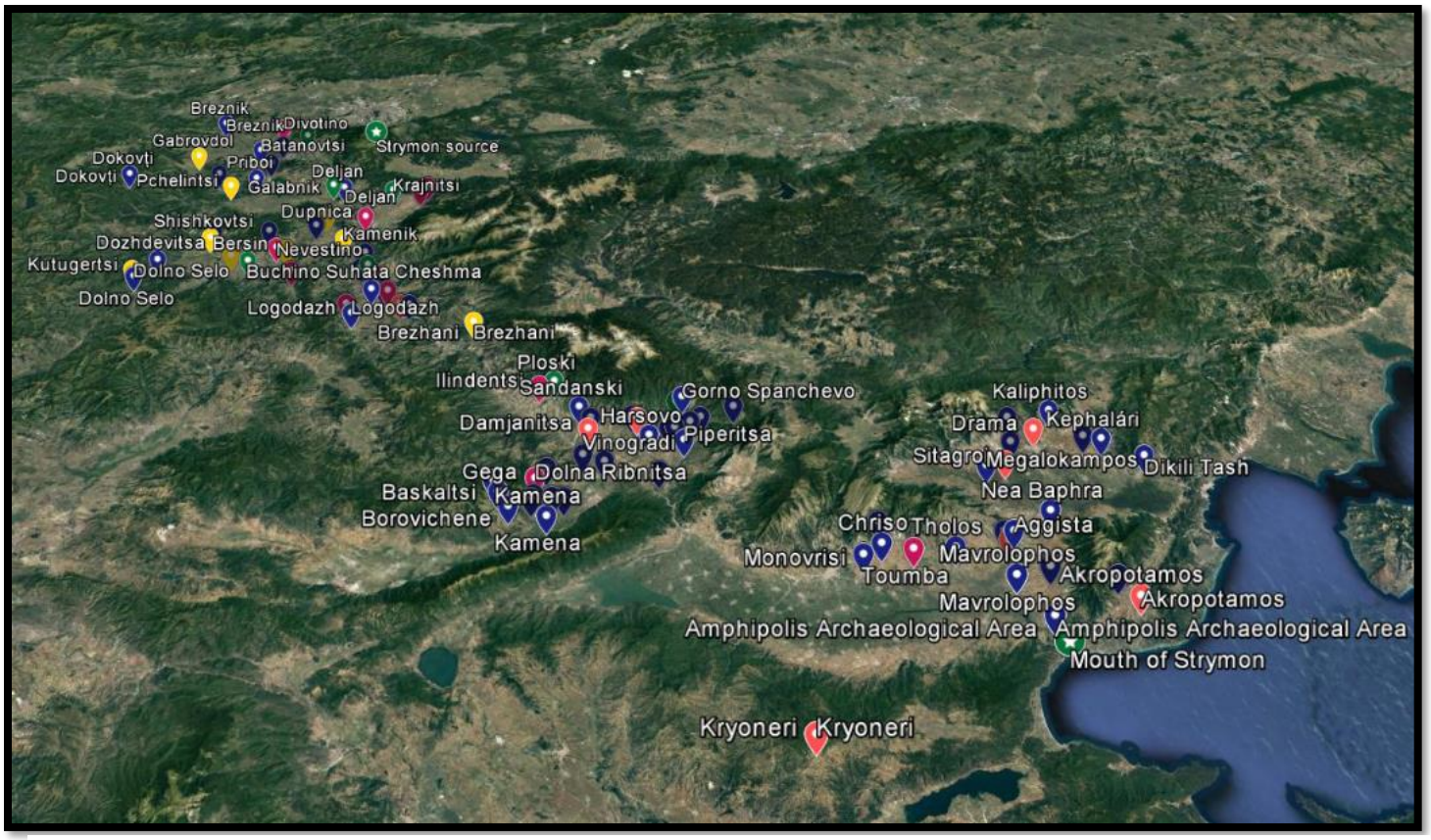

Figure 9. Map of the Neolithic sites along the Strymon catchment (Source: Google Earth).

My personal observation of the site, over the several times I have visited the location, is that the sloping nature of the terrain, the remoteness between it and the distant Strymon plain make it a very odd choice for an experimental, earliest Neolithic site. This oddness comes across in a

context of presumed human movement northwards up the Strymon, as has been suggested many times over by the leading researchers in the field.

The so-called transitional settlements, which straddle the chronological line between the Early and Late Neolithic follow a pattern of distribution similar, but not, restricted to the above examples. There is once again a clustering of 8 sites in between the Kyustendil (Fig. 10) and Blagoevgrad regions of the Upper Strymon, and 2 more transitional sites occur in the Sandanski and Petrich regions of the Middle Strymon (Fig. 11). It is perhaps no small coincidence that dark painted pottery became a phenomenon uniformly spread in the Upper Strymon in the last part

Figure 10. The Strymon alluvial terrace of the Kyustendil area and Konyavska Mountain Range in the distance (Source: Personal Archive).

of the Early Neolithic. The watershed between the early and late phases of the Neolithic is evidenced by one example in the Lower Strymon, at the site of Toumba, in the Serres plain.

Figure 11. The Petrich Plain and Belasitsa Mountain Range in the distance (Source: Personal Archive).

An interesting example of a transitional occupation is the site of Dolna Ribnitsa. Although no traces of settlement had been excavated, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the material from Dolna Ribnitsa offers a rare insight into a period of change in the Strymon region. The location of this site was of interest to me when I visited its namesake modern-day village in the summer of 2017. The village itself is in the outskirts of the Slavyanka mountain range. It is one of the very few locations, including Kovačevo, which is found at a relatively higher altitude. West of the Strymon and higher in the mountains, facing the flat and fertile Petrich plain, the selection of the site appeared very peculiar to me, most of all because the presumed site itself would have

been located in a narrow ravine on a small, secondary Strymon tributary. The areas surrounding the site of the modern-village, and the village itself is a combination of sloping ground and the steep hills surrounding it. That a settlement at the end of the Early Neolithic would be established here is somewhat of a mystery. The topographic conditions alone do not fit within a framework of agriculture-based living.

Dolna Ribnitsa (transitional), Kovačevo (Early Neolithic), Ilindentsi (transitional) and Ploski (Early Neolithic) in and around the Sandanski-Petrich plain, and Brezhani (Early Neolithic) just north of the Kresna Gorge are the only sites which emerged during the early part of the Neolithic in the Middle Strymon (Fig. 12, 13). This is starkly surprising given the fertile, agriculturally suitable lands of the plains.

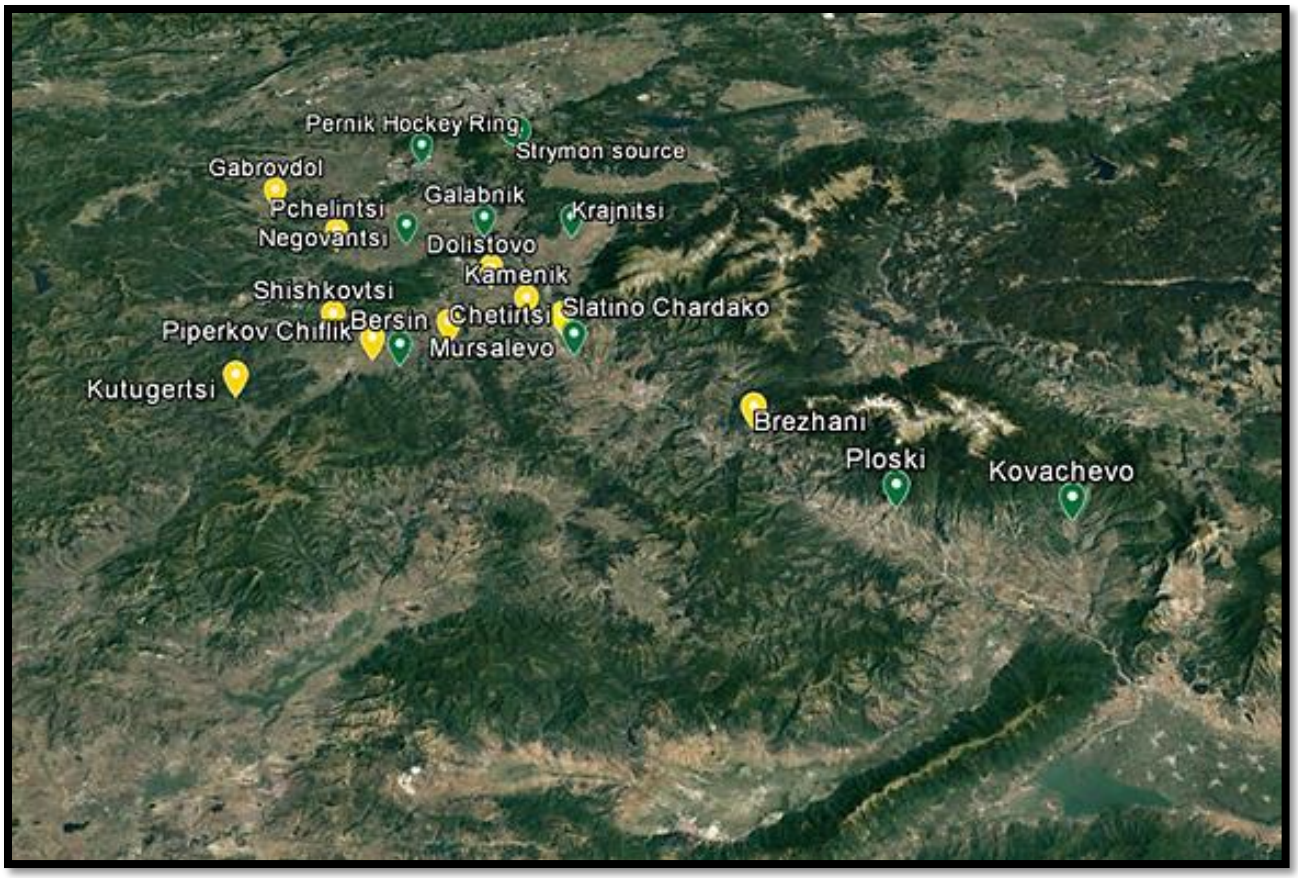

Figure 12.Early Neolithic sites of the Strymon catchment. Sites in Green are multi-phased, sites in Yellow are single-phased (Source: Google Earth).

If we are to look at the combination of the above described site locations a picture of an undeniable settlement tendency is painted. Based on current research, settlements appeared in great numbers in the Upper Strymon, and in smaller numbers along the Middle Strymon in the first half of the Neolithic. With no Early Neolithic sites yet recorded in the entirety of the Lower Strymon, any claims that the river served as a gateway for the northward influx of Neolithic lifeways is plainly unfounded and entirely misguided.

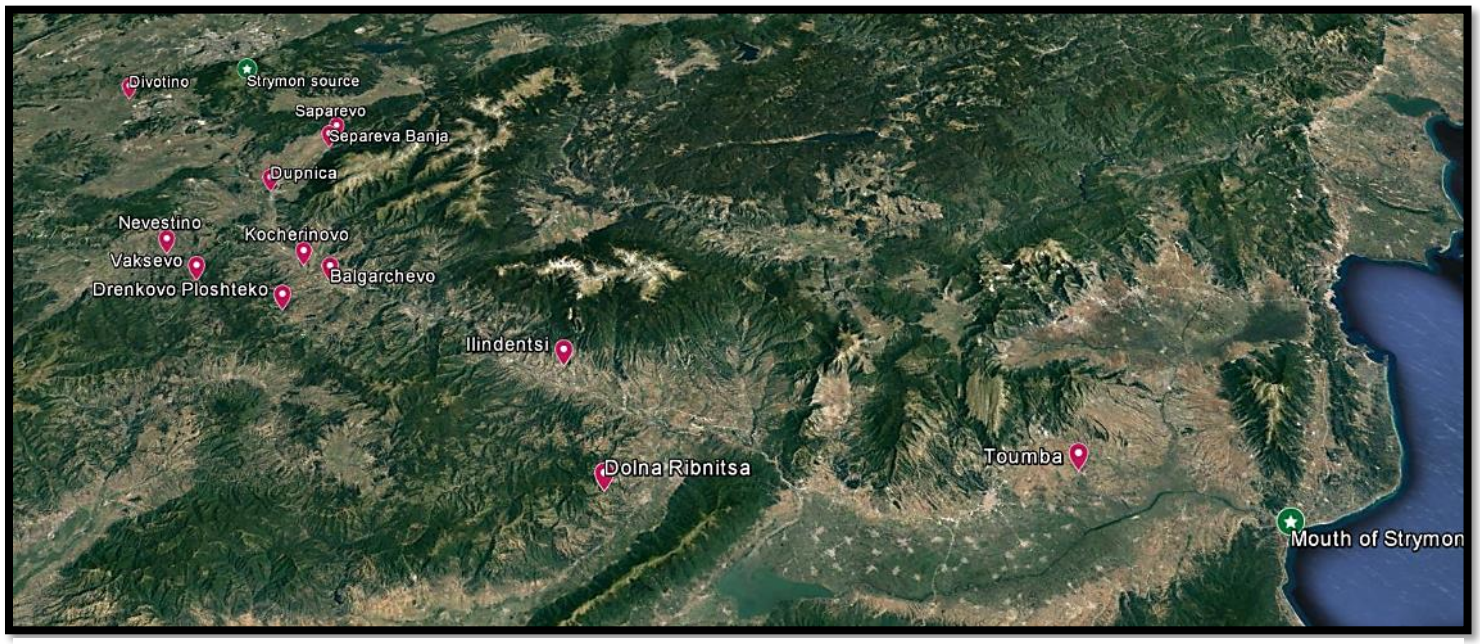

Figure 14. EN-LN Transitional settlements of the Strymon catchment (Source: Google Earth).

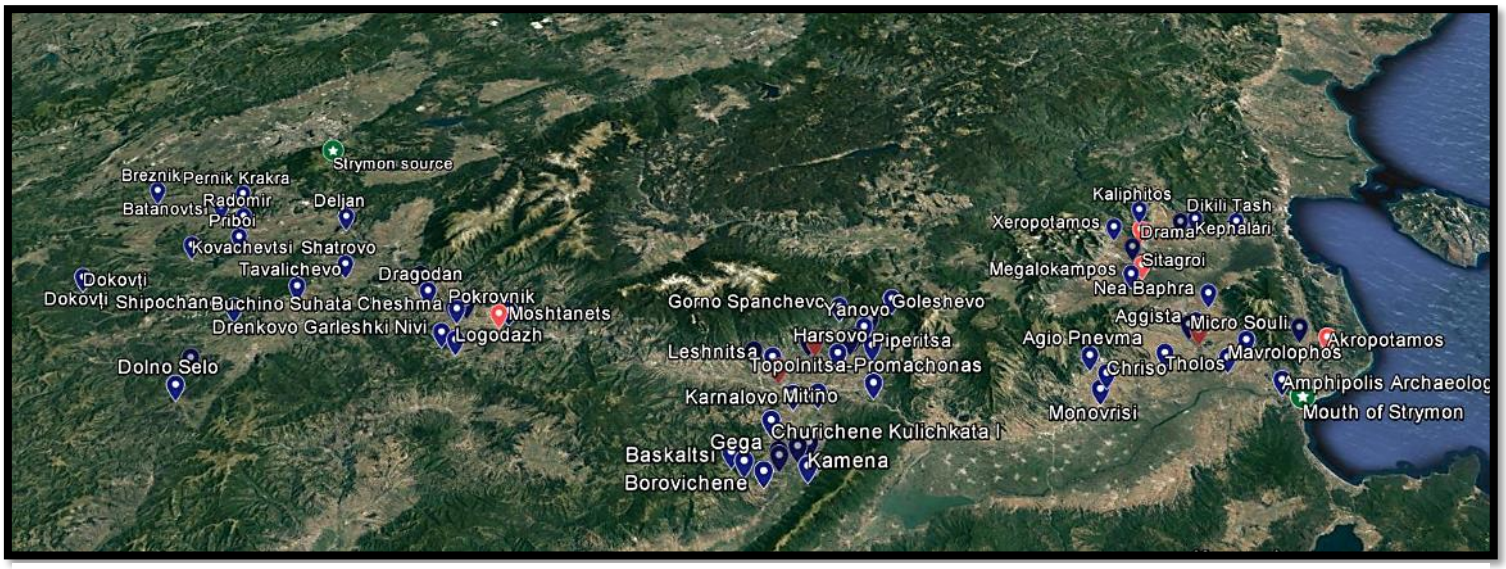

Figure 13. Late Neolithic sites of the Strymon catchment. Sites in Pink are multi-phased, sites in Blue are single-phased (Source: Google Earth).

The canvas of the later Neolithic Strymon paints a picture of continued dispersal of Neolithic sites to previously unsettled locations (Fig. 13). The later Neolithic sites of the Strymon are also separated into single-phased and multiphased occupations. Single-phased sites are 67 in number

and multiphased ones are only 9. The discrepancy between these different types of occupation carries a clue to another pattern of settlement in the later Neolithic phases. The settlements of single-phased nature in the Upper Strymon are 20, as opposed to 23 sites in the Middle Strymon. Whereas the settlements in the Upper division only form two small clusters in direct proximity to the Strymon (around Pernik and Blagoevgrad), most sites in the Middle transect are spread to smaller Strymon tributaries in a mixture of high-altitude locations. The mutliphased later Neolithic sites, in contrast, only number 9. Of these, 4 are situated at the beginning and end of the Middle Strymon, around Blagoevgrad and Sandanski. Of the Lower Strymon sites, 5 are situated between the Drama plain and the very shores of the Strymon Gulf. The Middle Strymon sites are predominantly established near the Strymon with only Vinogradi to the east, on a right small tributary. Along the Lower Strymon only one site is in direct correlation to the river, and all other sites are dispersed to the east of the main rived bed in the Drama plain. The number of multiphased sites, however, is too small for any overwhelming tendencies to be recognised. No multiphased sites appear in the uppermost areas of the Upper Strymon, where there were clusterings of Early Neolithic sites, especially around Pernik and Kyustendil. A tendency can be presumed for Late Neolithic long-lived occupation, which sees the selection of location shifting towards the south of the river. A notable pattern is also the avoidance of the portion of the river between Blagoevgrad and Sandanski, part of which is the Kresna Gorge; as well as the definitive lack of sites in the once marshlands of the modern-day lake Kerkini. Apart from the Upper Strymon, the rest of the river catchment sees an overlap between the site locations of single- and multi-phased Late Neolithic settlements.

A very interesting example of a Late Neolithic (single-phased) site in the Middle Strymon is the site of Logodazh (Fig. 15). Situated at the foothills of the Ograzhden Mountain, the Bulgarian radio in my car on the way there switched to Macedonian as we approached the site. The Ograzhden served as a natural barrier in the place of the modern Bulgarian-Macedonian border. The site became of interest to me after ascertaining the denivelation and distance from the fertile valley, which the Strymon forms around Blagoevgrad. Akin to the mystery of site selection I encountered at both Kovačevo and Dolna Ribnitsa, the presumed occupation area is situated on a narrow riverine terrace, created by a small Strymon tributary coming down from the

Figure 15.The principal location of the Late Neolithic Logodazh settlement (Source: Personal Archive).

Ograzhden.

The 3 sites, with a peculiar location I have discussed here are by no means the only sites of the 107 Strymon settlements to exhibit a location more closely associated with higher altitude woodlands rather than low-lying valley-like conditions. These examples merely serve here to

represent a notion, which I have been examining for the duration of my research. The establishment of settlements in the mountainous foothills surrounding the Strymon is a reason to argue that a level of interaction and co-operation existed between incoming Neolithic populations and groups of people indigenous to the area. I have argued in my master's dissertation (Baneva 2015) that the scholarly aversion to discussing possibilities of Bulgarian Mesolithic strata is of hindrance when interpreting data, unfitting with overall Neolithization explanations. The proposal that Mesolithic populations inhabited and knew the hilly areas surrounding the Strymon well fits within the present example of exploration of resources, seemingly detached from the know-how of Neolithic populations.

Figure 16. Immediate hinterlands of the Middle Strymon, near the location of Logodazh (Source: Personal Archive).

When we take into consideration the overall distribution of Early and Late Neolithic sites in the Strymon region alike, the avoidance of the Kresna Gorge (apart from one single site – Brezhani) and Lake Kerkini areas becomes very apparent. These two areas form the most uninhabitable stretches of the river, due to their lack of suitable farming lands. While earliest Neolithic settlement cover the fertile lands of the Upper and Middle Strymon, the later Neolithic single-phased sites appear cohesively throughout the expanse of the Strymon.

8.1.1 Settlement clusters

A peculiar trait of some locations in the Strymon catchment is the appearance of multiple occupational areas within a very close proximity. The examples of Buchino, Katuntsi and Yanovo present a case of areas of several Late Neolithic settlements, each individually recognized by field-walking exercises. The Buchino area has 4 Late Neolithic occupations, Katuntsi and Yanovo each have 3 areas where occupational activity has been recorded. In the case of the sites surrounding Slatino, 3 have been recorded, being of Early, Transitional and Late Neolithic character respectively. Being presented with only a scatter of data on the fieldwalking expeditions and hardly any information on the recorded sites, it is incredibly difficult to gauge whether these sites were actual established individual sites. Another possibility would be that areas such as Buchino, Katuntsi and Yanovo were hospitable locations where very large settlements developed in the Late Neolithic, covering up to several hectares. If this were the case, then the records of separate sites ought to be examined and further investigations conducted into the possibility of Late Neolithic mega-sites.

8.1.2 From riverine occupation to small tributaries?

In the early Strymon Neolithic settlement location does not seem to follow any overriding pattern of main river versus tributary selection. Sites appeared near the Strymon, as well as further afield in the mountainous foothills surrounding the big river, where small tributaries flow down from the peaks.

Of the Transitional sites, 5 are in direct relation to the Strymon and its floodplain, while 7 are situated on tributaries, both to the east and west of the main river.

The multiphased sites of the Late Neolithic in both the Upper and Middle Strymon are within the area of influence of the main river, whereas in the Lower Strymon these sites (except for Nea Kerdillia) are located some distance from the river in the expansive Drama plain.

It is most distinctively in the Late Neolithic that single-phased settlements appear in greater numbers in association with tributaries in the Upper Strymon. The number of such sites in the Middle Strymon rises dramatically, with over 20 Late Neolithic single phased sites located on and around tributaries. Across the Lower Strymon, settlements continue to occupy the Drama Plain, but more sites appear in the Serres plain to the east; more closely neighbouring the main river bed. It is only in the Late Neolithic that settlement numbers in the Upper Strymon are rivalled by those in the Middle and Lower Strymon.

When observing the development of the settlement network in the Late Neolithic, in conjunction with the location of sites in the earlier phase, it is credible to propose that in the advanced stages of the Neolithic, the hinterlands of the river started being explored and settled more uniformly (Fig.16). This could have been the result of an expanding knowledge of the lands associated with but not directly linked to the main water body of the Strymon.

8.1.2.1 Is there uniformity in the site locations selection?

When it comes to speaking of uniformity of settlement location, the intricacy of the Strymon settlement record is observable. Pernik and Kyustendil provinces certainly have their own unique landscape of fertile valleys surrounded by higher lying grounds, making for a versatile environment. This certainly contributed, in the Early Neolithic, to the selection of location on flat ground with easy access to the Strymon if not one its more substantial tributaries. Whereas this tendency is continued in the Late Neolithic, more settlements are observed in the Strymon catchment's adjacent lands. As we shall see later in this chapter, regarding other practices, it becomes characteristic for varied, juxtaposed even, Neolithic practices in the Strymon catchment to be observed simultaneously.

As for the Blagoevgrad district, only 2 Neolithic sites are observed on the east side of the Strymon bank, which can be easily explained by the increasingly hilly turning to mountainous character

east of the Strymon in its Middle transect. Only 3 Early Neolithic sites are registered in this district and only one of them (Brezhani) is situated in a narrow tributary ravine in the outskirts of the Pirin mountain range. Late Neolithic sites follow the trend of appearing only to the west of the Strymon but in no obvious patterns.

The Sandanski district has only one Early Neolithic site and that is Kovačevo. The number of sites both to the east and west of the Strymon grows dramatically in the Late Neolithic with the settlements appearing almost exclusively in the foothills of either the Pirin and Slavyanka, or Osogovo mountain ranges.

It must be pointed out that the most overwhelming settlement pattern of the Lower Strymon is the observable connection of road network construction and recorded sites in the Serres-Drama plain. No settlement of either Early or Late Neolithic are to be found to the west of the Strymon. On its eastern plains, settlements are recorded as far as the Kavala. At least based on the current state of research it seems that the main river did not play a big role in the selection of sites, rather the riverine conditions of its smaller eastern tributaries. Considering these varied places of Neolithic settlement, it can be claimed that locations of no single preference existed among the people who lead Neolithic lifestyles along the Strymon.

Relying on the raw numbers of sites can only drive analysis of a human occupied landscape so far. Narratively speaking, a story needs to be created using these observations and conclusions for the use of a multiscalar approach to be optimised. As we saw in the case of Early Neolithic settlement spread in the Strymon, the process of getting to know and settling the river catchment surely started from the very northernmost reaches of the Upper Strymon. I am not considering the dating claims for the earliest occupation at Krajnitsi and Kovačevo, simply because not enough uniform data is available across all sites for such an approach to be exercised. I am herein invoking trends of settlements taken at a very large scale of perception. The choice of and movement towards locations detached from the main river catchment can be deemed as evidence for varied practices. This lack in uniformity can also be traced to the many varied ways of house erection, pottery production and decoration, as described in Chapter 4. This implies a

development of a type of regional identity from the very beginning stages of the Neolithic, a process I speculate was an interaction of small numbers of incoming populations with indigenous groups. There has been no research into pre-Neolithic occupation in the Upper and Middle Strymon, so my suggestion remains strongly speculative in nature (Baneva 2015). As the landscape of the Strymon catchment provides such a diverse range of micro-settings, groups with different affinities to immediate surroundings had the freedom to make individual choices. Some groups of people inhabited the low-lying Strymon valleys (e.g. Slatino, Galabnik, Vaksevo, Promachonas-Topolnitsa, Kryoneri and Sitagroi), others chose the much more sheltered and mountainous backdrop of the mountains through which the Strymon cuts (Dolna Ribnitsa, Kovačevo). With the advancement of the Neolithic, more and more of this backdrop had been discovered and explored, which explains the growth in numbers of Late Neolithic sites in the Middle and Lower Strymon.

The settlement web of Neolithic Strymon was in constant flux, growing and expanding as people found new ways of establishing their lives. One precise pattern was never followed and certainly did not serve as a gateway for the advancement of Neolithic populations.

8.2 A TALE OF TWO NEOLITHIC SETTLEMENTS

The medium scale in this multiscalar research focuses on two sites. The study of Kovačevo and Topolnitsa-Promachonas at this scale is more fine-tuned to the implications of their respective developments. One site existed in the very beginning of the Neolithic, the second one spanned the end of the Neolithic and subsequent Chalcolithic period. Yet, these two sites have something in common, namely the diversity of coterminous practices. Instead of causing disruptions in the settlements' lifecycle, this diversity seems to have fuelled the success of the long-lived sites. I want to know more about the internal workings of these diverse cooperations. I suspect that it was exactly the interaction of varied approaches to practice which enabled the longevity of the sites.

8.2.1 Kovačevo

Kovačevo is the pioneering settlement of the Middle Strymon Early Neolithic. Set over a steep precipice above the Katunska Bistritsa, the settlement is the epitome of what we could call frontier living. Lacking the natural shelter of nearby hills, the area offers a stop halfway between the Strymon valley and the high Pirin mountain ranges. The very first houses at the site were built using the naturally yellow loam of the location. What appears 8000 years later as sloping hills used to be a nearly flat river terrace. There is not much we can say about the development of the site in its earliest stages. Centuries of consecutive occupation have consistently dug into and eroded the remains of the very first settlers. Shortly after the very first wattle and daub dwellings were rebuilt, a new building design was adopted by the inhabitants of the site. The houses initially built on the Katunska Bistritsa terrace had one marked problem, which the descendants of the first settlers had to find a solution for. The initial houses were flooding because of the subterranean waters, fed seasonally by the melting of the mountain snow. The new houses had to be built with a solution in mind for the uncomfortable, inconvenient annual flooding of the domestic spaces. After all, the concept of inside had been created and perfected for a reason. The Kovačevo people began building their homes in a new fashion. Pits were being dug in the middle of the house floors and filled with building debris, broken objects and locally sourced clay, for the subterranean water to be properly dealt with. The walls of these houses were built by filling out trenches with densely compacted clay, which upon drying would create a lasting protection from the elements. Houses were rebuilt consecutively after the initial building experiment over 9 times in certain parts of the site. Meticulous care was taken to even out the surfaces of previous houses before the new ones were built. People took their time building their homes, even if they knew of the impermanence of their creation. This is a testimony to how the location of Kovačevo grew in meaning to the people who inhabited it. It is not enough to simply survive, in order to stay put in one location, you need to also thrive in it. The lands surrounding the area proved fertile enough so that a plentiful yield of crops for sustenance was provided. The crop yield was in fact so good that animals were only a secondary source of food.

In the several centuries past the initial settling of the Kovačevo location, people continued to use the drainage pit building technique. Generation upon generation passed on the knowledge of it and sustained a flourishing Early Neolithic community. Fire, which so often becomes an unavoidable disaster, does not appear to have been a problem on the Kovačevo people. Only one house, during the entire existence of the Early Neolithic site was burnt, whether on purpose or accidentally we will never know. As the settlement spread and developed, its occupants came up with new solutions for the flooding of the settled area, for which indoor solutions had been implemented generations before. Canals were dug out throughout the settled areas in between the houses and their walls fortified with compact beaten clay.

It is difficult to put an end to the story of how Kovačevo developed or stopped developing altogether. Excavation reports mention the continuation of life at Kovačevo in the Late Neolithic but whether this was propelled by the descendants of the very first settlers remain undistinguishable. Whether a hiatus occurred between the Early and Late Neolithic is also unclear. We do know that millennia after it was first settled, the site at Kovačevo was again populated in the Bronze Age. For the exact location of an earlier site to be revisited and successfully reclaimed from the wilderness is not unheard of but deeply intriguing as well. The location of Kovačevo must have, in some way beyond the reaches of this study, impressed itself permanently in the landscape.

8.2.2 Promachonas-Topolnitsa

Promachonas-Topolnitsa (PT hereafter) inhabited the fertile open river valley, at the place where the Middle Strymon becomes the Lower Strymon. Climate and landscape at the location very much resemble the rest of the Strymon in Greece. If you happen upon the area today, especially in summer, you would be taken aback with the saturated green that envelopes the Strymon, luscious and excessive. The TP site was established here shortly after the middle of the 6th millennium BC but we do not yet have enough information to be more precise about dates. The first phase of the settlement has been partially excavated but the researchers have not published that information. What we do know is that the Neolithic developments of the site comes from the two distinctive and separate stage of the settlement's existence. The second phase continued

for about 230 years, and a third phase in the site's life followed for about 370 years. Combined, the continuity of the Neolithic lifeways at the site spans 6 centuries. That is indeed a long time for a settlement to develop, change and reinvent itself, as well as keep to established traditions. It was during TP's first two centuries that houses at the site bore great resemblance to the way in which houses were built in Kovačevo in its later Early Neolithic phases. Shallow pits were dug out in the floors, filled up and covered with a layer of beaten clay to make a floor level. It was also in the space of these two centuries that PT expanded and reached the biggest surface area of the site. Admittedly not much is known in detail about the particulars of life at the site in the 230 years of its second phase. What we do know is that the site met a fiery fate around 5070 BC, which seems to have destroyed many of the houses. But people did not leave the site, instead they rebuilt it and continued to thrive in the location, sustained by Neolithic ways of life for over another 3 centuries. The technique of house building changed markedly after the fiery destruction of the pit floor houses. The houses were being built with solid timber frames to support them. One such house has attracted the attention of the researches of TP and has been described in unparalleled detail. This big house, which had possibly taken somewhat of a central location at TP for several centuries was semi-subterranean, its floor was dug 7 meters deep into layers of previous activity. This building was two storeyed, supported by sturdy timber framing. The wet conditions of the subsoil have preserved it very well. Upon excavation, archaeologists discovered a very rich collection of objects from the many decades over which the house was in active use. This big house was used for a variety of activities including grinding of grains and working of stone and flint objects. Many clay pots were among the remains, as well as clay models of houses and figurines. A single bucranium was also discovered in this house, mirroring the discovery of a bucranium in a trench on its immediate outside. Such varied evidence of activities within houses is not very often found in Neolithic abodes, within the Strymon catchment and further afield. For the duration of the several centuries after the initial timber house building, this two storeyed house could have probably served as focal point for the people of TP. As such, over the centuries it could have developed a special meaning for the inhabitants of the settlement. The well-being of social life at TP is certainly traceable through another period of

growth of the settlement in the last few decades before the beginning of a new phase of life – the Chalcolithic. The settlement of TP continued its existence for a total of a millennium, changing, growing and shrinking, and its people adopting new skills and ways of living and doing. Keeping in mind what we would consider a successful endeavour in the present day, a settlement which endured over a millennium can certainly be considered a flourishing venture.

It is very likely that the people who lived at both Kovačevo and Topolnitsa-Promachonas did not experience their own flow of time as we consider it. We most certainly do not think of ourselves as living in any one phase or stage of a town or city's life. Sure, our experiences are permeated by the subtle changes around us – a new high rise being built, an old building knocked down. We do not see these changes, however, as the bringers of new epochs in our lives. It is very likely that neither did the prehistoric occupants of the two discussed sites, and all other prehistoric sites for that matter. Yet, the way houses were built was changing, so was the shape in which pots were being made and the decorations people adorned them with. Rather than hailing a new phase in their lives, the subtle changes in the know-how of these societies are more likely to have created subtle ripples in the rhythms of their lives, which carried more of an effect of consecutive generations. If the digging out of pits as the foundations of houses were one way of doing it did not change overnight. This was a process of trial and error which engaged the attention of entire families, their neighbours and community. The drive to improve one's life was not invented in the great ages of Enlightenment and Mechanisation, that drive has been part of humanity's life for many millennia. The brief examples of development of the two sites is but a flicker in the story of how humans have always strived to invent new ways of making their lives better. Writing prehistoric people's stories in this way is what enables us to see these subtle but vital flickers.

8.3 Development of daily life at the Neolithic site of Balgarčevo

The everyday scale of study aims to be the building block upon which assumption from the previous two scales could be rejected or justified. Daily life is such an intangible topic in archaeology, yet it is the accumulation of daily activity that creates the archaeological record we are concerned with. This is the scale at which all the practices I have been describing above

emerge. It is of pivotal importance to not only keep the everyday in mind when interpreting a site, but to actively seek the fundamentals of practices observable at the medium and big scales. The everyday record of the earliest phase at Balgarčevo holds clues to how people possessing versatile knowledge cooperated to create a sustainable living. Day after day, the people of Balgarčevo kept themselves busy with an array of activities, at times much wider than we ourselves can individually partake in nowadays. Agriculture and stock-keeping, house building and renovation, pottery making, working of raw materials – all Neolithic activities, which are themselves a palimpsest of small sub-processes and concerns. The production of pottery itself requires knowledge of local sources of clay, how to extract it, purify and ready it for use; the skills involved in shaping, firing and decorating pottery are nowadays considered a craft. How are we as archaeologists to navigate all the presupposed skillsets and ascribe them to the humans of the past? Did only certain people make pottery and others produce food and keep stock? Who carried the knowledge of house building with all its intricacies? These have been questions which have quite frankly plagued me ever since the beginning of my own studies in prehistory. The simple answer is, of course, that we can never know. The logical follow up to that is that we do not necessarily need such details, but this is only determined by the agenda and underlying research discourse, as discussed in chapter 1. The discourse this third part of the multi-scalar analysis takes on is intimately concerned with such matters as personal experience. While I cannot claim to provide any secure answers to the above questions, I propose a possible version of Neolithic experiences. The everyday scale of analysis holds the vast potential to reveal details of the genesis of the regional Neolithic itself. The data available, however, is at times too sparse for a larger expansion on the implications of everyday life at Balgarčevo itself. The following account can be considered as giving the past a voice; a voice which remains open to critique, but I believe one which also opens an avenue for amalgamations of the archaeological and creative imaginations.

8.3.1 A day of destruction

The archaeological information upon which this following narrative is based is from the Early Neolithic Dwelling I in the Northern Trench at the site of Balgarchevo. The very first occupational

phase at the house is well-preserved due a large scale burning of the entire structure, upon which consecutive rebuilding phase were established. This structure provides a somewhat fine insight into the organization of internal space at the time. A raised clay platform was raised towards one end of the building; the house itself had two storeys. Two distinctive ovens were built, and a designated grain storage space discovered. The walls closer to the grain storage had raised shelves. All storage vessels were found it-situ within the fire destruction level.

Our home was built near the very edge of the land our people have settled, overseeing the river down below us. The people who travelled here to create our village came here, our ancestors, many changings of the seasons ago. We like this area a lot, so much so that since the first settlers our numbers have grown. The fields towards the sunrise are good for our crops and we have good bounty from year to year. The hills over which the sun sets have been providing good pastures for our stock. The house, which my father and mother built with the help of our neighbours is big enough so that my brother and his family can live alongside me and mine. We have built two ovens over the vast floor of beaten clay, so that all mouths can be fed. That way all the children can be taught to grind the grains and make bread. One of my brother's older children also works stone adzes at our home. I like this endeavour, it brings all the children together in their amusement at the site. Our house also has a higher level, where some of the smaller children go to rest at night, there have been a few cracks in the plaster recently and apart from all our storage vessels we take care not to have many people up there. Most of us in the house rest at night in the corner close to the ovens, so we are kept warm on top of our clay floor. In the days I help in the fields and as a result our big family has a good amount of grains stored. We put them toward one end of our house in big clay pots. I make some of the pots we have around the ovens, I have learned how to shape and fire them. Sometimes I help the other pot makers go to the hills and find more good clay. I have also created shelves on our walls and some of the pots we need are put on them.

The night when the fire erupted, we were all sound asleep. I could hear the children above rustling in their sleep – two of mine and one of my brother's. It was a day in that darker time when the light of day is quick to go and leave us, fires are alit for most of our days and a cold chill is starting

to creep up from the river, depleted in size. The grains from the harvest had been transported and secured in our big pots. We were getting ready for the cold to arrive. We were never afraid of going hungry though, it had been a good year. How the fire started I cannot say. The smoke quickly spread, and I could only see the growing glint of flames from the lower end of the house, where the granaries were. Flames had completely consumed the ceiling of that lower end. My heart jumped with fear for the children sleeping above. We had to escape as quickly as possible before the ceiling collapses and the entry way is blocked. I was yelling for help as the mother of my brother's children swiftly climbed up the wooden ladder and was taking the children down. Most of our family was already outside the building when we came out last, carrying the scarred small children in our arms. As I was stepping out of the house the small roof my father had put when he was still a young man above the house gate crumbled down, it almost killed me and the little one I was carrying. All our grain was left inside, some of my older children had tried dragging out one of the large vessels, even filling their hands and pouches of their clothes. We were all standing on the periphery of the burning house, looking on as the home place of our ancestors and all our possessions were engulfed in the fire. The lower end, where the grain was stored collapsed first, then the rest followed. As we waited for the new dawn, we all knew that a lot of work was now in store if we were to rebuild our abode, and in the cold times to come as well. Luckily, we knew we could rely on the goodness of the people we shared this village with.

It is always a gamble to intertwine archaeological fact and artistic fiction. Regardless of how cautious the use of creative license is, the room for speculation and expanded interpretation widens to considerably, that archaeological analysis is all but a small fraction in the overall picture. There are some rules followed, however. All archaeological data is objectively presented and it if from it that further narrative stems. The suspension of the rules of strictly archaeological narrative is imperative for the populating of the past with plausible human experiences. That is the purpose of the daily scale of study. To be able to see prehistoric life in its smallest detail means to bear a certain responsibility for the notions which arise from these details. This is where the devolution of prehistory into (pre)history lies, in telling intimate stories of people's lives and not only of the material remnants they left behind.

8.3.2 Why do people build houses differently?

It might seem at times dangerously easy to make assumptions about the daily life of people from millennia ago. It *might* seem harmless, but it is in fact a responsible and taxing endeavour. The lines between guesswork and fact are often blurred in such a context. The above suggested narrative is fascinating in that it relies on a factual knowledge gained but the discretionary use of artistic license is applied to an already vague picture of existence. The reason why I decided to write a first-person narrative can be traced back to the way the prehistoric past, especially in the region, is spoken about. A narrative in which there is no space or name for the actors of those social scenes, begs to be interrupted by an injection of fresh, highly speculative tools with which the human behind the pot might be recognized. While I highly doubt, based on my observations and personal experiences of the academic climate, that such an approach might be accepted, I believe there is yet space for the expansion of archaeology's interpretative toolbox.

Everyday life at Balgarčevo, for the sake of utilizing the rest of the hereby proposed methodology, can be examined in a less artistically affected manner. I have, in the preceding two scales of interpretation, written of the importance of building construction and this scale sees a perpetuation of this. The very first occupational phase at Balgarčevo constituted a phenomenon which cannot be observed to the same extent at other sites. That is namely the different construction of houses which co-existed at the very same period. The houses in the eastern part of the sites, which were the earliest ones to be built, exhibit a very different approach to house building. Houses with wattle and daub walls, dug-in pits and clay platforms were built alongside smaller houses with more substantial timber framing and internal postholes. Given the context of very early stages of settling of the area an interesting picture emerges of what could have happened at the site during its early days.

The settlement was first established in a part of the Early Neolithic when other sites to its north had already successfully persevered through the means of a Neolithic lifestyle. I propose, based on the variety of building approaches and pottery treatments, that the people who built the initial settlement were not a homogeneous group of singular origin. The people who settled Balgarčevo were instead at least two different collections of people, originating from different

locations but converging at the point of this resource-rich area. Why would people with seemingly different origins agree to settle together? Maybe we are viewing the problem of prehistoric collaboration from a loaded, prejudiced point of view. As I suggested earlier in this chapter, in the case of Kovačevo and Dolna Ribnitsa, it could have been exactly a type of collaboration which supported people of different groups to a sustainable lifestyle. The principle of cooperative work and exchange of knowledge is not a foreign concept for the more rigid traditional views of Strymon, which often speak of imported wares and close similarities between distant sites. Why could it, then, not be the case that in the earliest days of Balgarčevo and even before, people came from different locations to converge at the edge of the Strymon plain; each group of people bringing their own knowledge and skills. If we accept that to be true, then this supposed experiment of co-habitation succeeded manifoldly. After the very first phase of the earliest houses a more uniform way of construction occurred. Many of the buildings were rebuilt many times over and kept in good condition. If we can observe a proposed melting together of people at this smallest of scales, this is adequately mirrored by the conclusions I made at the grand scale. People, with forethought and pre-planning, came together to co-create a lifestyle which put the beginnings of a remarkable social and material development not only in the Balkans, but also seen in the rest of Europe. The recognition of the southwards settling of the Strymon catchment is only the first step to a viable reconsideration of the importance of the Southern Balkan Neolithic.

8.4 IN CONCLUSION

This thesis is concluding much differently than initially planned. More so than providing a clear signposting for the full implementation of the multiscalar model, I have provided an example of the pitfall of such an endeavour. Some of the aims of the thesis have not satisfactory achieved. Primarily, the development of a holistic understanding of the entire Strymon Neolithic is still lacking. Even though I have managed to demonstrate an emerging pattern of initial and secondary settlement dispersal, many questions about the intricate processes and reasoning for this have been left out. As a result, the analysis of the three different scales are disentangled and

far-removed from one another, starkly contrasting the neat Russian-doll effect I had intended to this narrative. The reason for this, however, was ultimately beyond my control. As fascinating and multifaceted the Strymon Neolithic is, it remains largely lacking in systematic study. The main reason for the discombobulated state of the different scales and the lack of overlapping between them in the thesis is the deficiency of systematically consistent data for all regions/sites. When I began the project, I was aware that some sites were better represented than others in the Bulgarian discourse, because it was only the Early Neolithic that I had researched prior to it. The truth is that I was perhaps less informed about the overall available publications than I ought to have been. The first data collection trip to Bulgaria back in 201 was the foreshadowing of many fruitless attempts at broader data gathering. The first stop of my first trip was the historical museum in Pernik, at the very top of the Strymon. I was an excited first year PhD student, driving along the canals of the Strymon running through the city. The experience in the museum itself was less than satisfying. Initially, the overseers of the building did not want to unlock the gallery with all the archaeological material. They said it was due to the structural unsoundness of the room. After some convincing I was allowed to see the collection, primarily materials from the Early Neolithic at the site of Galabnik. After witnessing my acute interest, the people at the museum asked who it was that I was working with. That would become a question all too often asked at all these museums. Being a student in a British institution, however, seemed to be closing more door than expected. On my second trip to Bulgaria and Greece, finding myself in the Blagoevgrad historical museum together with another fellow PhD student, the reception was rather icy. The museum overseer, a woman in her late fifties, rushed down to the prehistory gallery to yell at us for taking photos, after hearing our exchange in English; an effect which was absent from my fist trip there the previous year, when I took many photos of the exhibition. In the northern Greek museum in Drama and Kavala this was less of an issue, but I still noticed a few doubtful glances from the museum staff.

Apart from this attitude of protectiveness over the collections, the museum trips themselves were often a dead end for the research. I was not allowed to the storage facilities to look at actual excavated material up close without the direct agreement of the excavators, which I was not

going to receive as an unassociated researcher from a random foreign university. Time and again, I was left with the notion that unpublished excavated material was guarded like a priceless treasure by its excavators, not to be shown to unknown researchers. The exhibited items in the collections themselves were less than useful. A few isolated examples of pottery, stone tools and ceramic figurines are not of interest in a study such as mine. This would have been a much different study had I been allowed access to the wealth of unpublished data.

Ultimately, what stood in the way of a more successful multi-scalar analysis, was my affiliation or lack thereof with Bulgarian researchers. This is a very important point to make, however silly it may sound. If future research of the same elk as mine is to be conducted, good working relations needs to be established with active researchers both in Bulgaria and Greece. That is a lesson I unfortunately learned at stages of my research when it was too late to change directions.

For future research in the Neolithic of the Strymon, and the southern Balkans as a whole, to be successful, several accommodations should be made. Firstly, as mentioned above, a good working relation with the current field researchers is essential. This is no easy task, keeping in mind the lack of large-scale involvement of Anglophone prehistorians in Bulgarian archaeology, as well as the current trend in British academia of retracting from the wider field of European research. Secondly, and just as importantly, we should work towards the issue of national borders in prehistoric discourse becoming a thing of the past. Of all the rivers and valleys crisscrossing the Balkans, more attention should be paid to studying regions wholesale. The value of such effort is displayed in my study, through the presented overall Strymon settlement trend. Lastly, future researchers should go into this field and discourse, prepared to have to build bridges and nourish co-operation. As Anglophone academics we should recognize we have no right in only seeing our inherent reasoning and approach as superior.

9 CONCLUSION

I set out my research with the aim to write a narrative of the Strymon Neolithic regardless of national barriers. This has been successfully accomplished through a synthesis of the available

knowledge of the entire Strymon catchment. The status of the Strymon as a singular geographic unit has been amply demonstrated. Much of the material presented in Chapter 4 was obtained during site visits in Bulgaria and is otherwise difficult to acquire. Most site data were reported in Bulgarian. In writing this thesis, I have translated vast portions of data into English, thus making them available to an Anglophone audience.

The most obvious limitation of my study is the lack of the archaeological data published in Greek. Even though I did set out to conduct a study irrespective of national borders, the language barrier became a challenge too difficult. Another drawback of the thesis is my inability to obtain more in-depth information about some of the sites presented as case studies. It remains my conviction that my position as an outsider to both Greek and Bulgarian indigenous academia was a major reason for this.

The application of the multiscalar model is challenging. Even so, some very important conclusions and suggestions about the Neolithic of the Strymon are presented in this thesis. Most importantly, observing the settlement network at a prolonged, large scale has enabled me to conclude that the claim for a northward movement along the Strymon as an explanation of settlement is incorrect. The first successful settlements in the catchment appeared in its northernmost parts. The proposition that some sites, especially those in higher altitude areas, might have begun as an experiment in cohabitation between people with very different worldview is also of great importance. The overall characterizing quality of the Strymon settlement is diversity. Diverse houses, diverse pottery and tools all indication that people agglomerated their different ways and figured out how to successfully co-create their lives together. This only becomes visible when the observations and conclusions at all three levels of analysis are combined.

The application of the multiscalar model is only partially successful. A very distinct, clear picture is developed of the grand scale of the Strymon Neolithic, as well as of the development of individual site biographies. The conditions of daily life and the means in which we can safely incorporate it into an overall narrative, however, remain uncertain. For a comprehensive account

of everyday existence to be created, as promoted in this thesis, much more data is required than I was allowed access to. High resolution data is indeed required, which is currently not produced by the researchers of the area. As for the grand and medium scales more is left to be required of the materials concerned here. An in-depth study should be conducted of the patterns of provenance and use of raw materials. Special material groups should be consulted, such as cult vessels (e.g. Schwarzberg 2006) and lithic products (e.g. Gatsov 1994, Gurova 2014, Tardy et al. 2016). Where possible and with great attention, the archaeo-botanical and archaeo-zoological record should be consulted. The ways in which people approach their subsistence is a pivotal marker for change/stability. What was presented in the above chapters is by no means an exhaustive account of all the prerequisites for the application of a multiscalar model. One last apparent downside of my thesis is the lack of a consistent naming of the involved research scales. Big or grand scale does not necessarily carry the required temporal connotation explicitly. Medium or middle scale are too vague nomenclatures – a settlement biography analysis seems to encapsulate adequately the qualities of the approach. The smallest or daily scale is yet another problematic along the way of consistency. It is perhaps best to term this a narration of daily life. In this thesis I do not claim an exhaustive exploration of all the problematics of the multiscalar model. The thesis is dedicated to bringing forth the need, usefulness and prerequisites of such an approach.

I have solely deemed sites and materials in terms of their geographic location in relation to the Upper, Middle or Lower reaches of the Strymon. As for the success of proposing a multiscalar model, some results do stand out as particularly successful. The big scale analysis of the Strymon catchment has successfully discredited theories of northwards settling of the Strymon and its adjacent lands. The data serves as proof that the exploration of the Strymon began in its northernmost reaches. In conjunction with the middle scale settlement biographies, the analysis has also presented the viability of a Neolithic social model in which groups of people with varied backgrounds cooperated in the establishment of settlements. Such a proposition has never been explicitly made by any researchers of the area. Lastly, the narrative device for the creation of a settlement's biography has proven to be a successful tool for enhancing the observation of

Neolithic sites. A settlement biography not only considers the wider chronological and material framework in which a settlement arises, it also pays focused attention to the subtle temporal and spatial shifts, which enable a site's sustainability.

Whether the first-person narration of the everyday scale is successful is a rather moot point. Judging on such creatively-propelled fact-based narrative is necessarily subjective as well. The reader will either like and accept or completely reject it. As I stated at the very beginning of this chapter, the recognition that archaeological narrative needs a new approach remains a sensitive topic. What I do think can contribute to a more theoretically grounded approach to an everyday narrative is stronger expression of the principles of spacetime theory. That remains, however, an exercise for a future work.

The Strymon River, as depicted by this thesis, was a cradle for the development of versatile Neolithic lifeways. More research will surely further contribute to a modern-day understanding of the river catchment's significance. Whether an Anglophone audience could become engaged in Southern Balkan research once more is the main question resultant from such a study as mine.

My study is the first step in a renewed interest in the southern Balkan area. The Neolithic of entire Bulgaria and northern Greece, beyond Greek Macedonia, undoubtedly holds more insight into the Balkan and European Neolithic still to be revealed.

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11 Appendix 1. Strymon Site Catalogue

The site entries in this site catalogue are not an exhaustive account of all settlements discovered along the Strymon catchment. This collection is, however, the most reliable agglomeration of validated data of the Neolithic occupation of the Strymon. Where settlements have been mentioned with only surface finds associated, I have designated these in my created maps as single-phased sites. This might not be completely correct but has been done for ease of data processing; future research into these may uncover multi-phased occupations at a vast number of these. The designation of a Transitional phase refers to the discussion in Chapter 3 of the current Neolithic chronology, and it is not to be confused with references to a transitional period in other works concerning the territory of period of study.

Strymon Neolithic Sites Catalogue					
Site Number	Site name	Location in relation to river	Site dimensions (in ha)	Chronological Attribution	Altitude (m.a.s.l.)
1	Breznik	Konska River	ca 3 - 4 ha	LN	700
2	Divotino	Unnnamed Strymon tributary	0.3 ha	Transitional	830
3	Dokjovtsi	Yavor River	0.3 ha	LN	886
4	Gabrov Dol	Unnnamed Strymon tributary	ca 0.25 ha	EN	800
5	Batanovtsi	Strymon River	unknown	LN	unknown
6	Pernik (Hockey ring)	Strymon River	unknown	LN	unknown
7	Pernik (Krakra)	Strymon River	4 ha	LN	740-750
8	Kovachevtsi	Svetlia River	ca 0.5 ha	LN	630
9	Radomir	Strymon River	18 ha	LN	636-639
10	Priboj (Poleto)	Strymon River	0.1 ha	LN	unknown
11	Pchelnitsi	Strymon River	10 ha	EN	unknown
12	Negovantsi	Glavesh River	1 ha	EN	635
13	Galabnik	Blato River	7 ha	EN	unknown
14	Deljan (Izvora)	Deljan villgae	0.3 ha	LN	694-706
15	Shipochano (Mramor)	Strymon River	0.25 ha	LN	495 - 505
16	Shishkovtsi	Strymon River	ca 1.7 ha	EN	478

17	Dozhdevitsa	Dozhdevska River	0.2 ha	LN	890
18	Kutugertsi	Bistritsa River	unknown	EN	890-900
19	Tavalichevo (Gigian)	Near unnamed Strymon tributary	2.7 ha	LN	616 - 622
20	Dolno selo (Gerena)	Labnitsa River	unknown	LN	820
21	Piperkov Chiflik	Suha River	unknown	EN	495
22	Krajnitsi	Dzhubrena River	ca 1 ha	EN	608 - 612
23	Dolistovo	Dolistovska River	0.3 - 0.4 ha	EN	516
24	Shatrovo	Golemi vrah hill	0.15 ha	LN	700
25	Saparevo	Dzhubrena River	1.6 ha	Transitional	678 - 685
26	Sapareva Banja (Kremenik)	Dhzerman River	2.4 ha	Transitional	720 - 730
27	Dupnitsa (Karabujuk)	Dzherman River	1 ha	Transitional	514 -520
28	Nevestino (Moshteni)	Strymon River	2.5 ha	Transitional	446
29	Bersin	Unnnamed Strymon tributary	unknown	EN	unknown
30	Chetirtsi (Orlovo Gnezdo)	Eleshnitsa River	cave	EN	455
31	Kamenik (Prestola)	Kamenichka River	unknown	EN	806
32	Vaksevo (Studena Voda)	Eleshnitsa River	1 ha	Transitional	550-554
33	Slatino (Chardako)	Dzherman River	ca. 0.4 - 0.5 ha	EN	435 - 436.5
34	Slatino (Karo II)	Dherman River	3-4 ha	LN	428 - 436
35	Slatino (Karo III)	Dherman River	0.8 ha	LN	424 - 428
36	Mursalevo	Strymon River	1.3 ha	EN	370
37	Dragodan (Pandurska Mogila)	Strymon River	0.2 ha	LN	375
38	Kocherinovo	Strymon River	3.5 ha	Transitional	392 - 398
39	Buchino I (Nivite)	Vlahina Mountain	9 ha	LN	unknown
40	Buchino II (Suhata chesma)	Vlahina Mountain	2 ha	LN	unknown

41	Buchino IV (Lisijska chuka)	Vlahina Mountain	0.15 ha	LN	unknown
42	Buchino III (Golio Rid)	Strymon River	unknown	LN	unknown
43	Balgarčevo	Strymon River	1.7 ha	Transitional	380
44	Drenkovo (Garleshki Nivi)	Drenkovska River	0.3 ha	LN	unknown
45	Drenkovo (Ploshteko)	Drenovska River	7 ha	Transitional	600
46	Logodazh	Drenovska River	0.5 ha	LN	unknown
47	Pokrovnik	Chetirka River	unknown	LN	unknown
48	Moshtanets	Strymon River	unknown	LN	unknown
49	Brezhani	Unnnamed Strymon tributary	0.1 ha	EN	613
50	Ilindentsi	Shashka River	1.5 ha	Transitional	240-260
51	Ploski	Belishka River	unknown	EN	unknown
52	Sandanski	Sandaska Bistritsa River	unknown	LN	unknown
53	Leshnitsa	Bozhdovska River	unknown	LN	unknown
54	Damjanitsa	Strymon River	ca 50 ha	LN	130
55	Lozenitsa	Melnishka River	unknown	LN	unknown
56	Gorno Spanchevo	Pirinska Bistritsa	2 ha	LN	331
57	Vinogradi	Melnishka River	6 ha	Transitional	380
58	Kovačevo	Pirinska Bistrica	50 ha	Transitional	260
59	Baskaltsi (Goljamata niva)	Ograzhden Mountain	0.5 ha	LN	950
60	Churichene (Kulichkata I)	Ograzhden Mountain	0.5 ha	LN	unknown
61	Churichene (Kulichkata II)	Ograzhden Mountain	0.3 ha	LN	unknown
62	Karnalovo	Unnnamed Strymon tributary	unknown	LN	unknown
63	Gega	Ograzhden Mountain	ca 0.6 ha	LN	unknown
64	Dolna Ribnitsa	Ograzhden Mountain	0.25 ha	Transitional	670
65	Harsovo	Melnishka River	1 ha	LN	180
66	Katuntsi (Marchin)	Katunska Bistrica River	3 ha	LN	193

67	Katuntsi (Balkona)	Katunska Bistritsa River	0.3 ha	LN	173
68	Katuntsi (Turski dol)	Katunska Bistritsa River	3 ha	LN	193
69	Yanovo (Sveta Petka)	Pirinska Bistritsa River	0.5 ha	LN	370
70	Yanovo (Ruzhenitsa)	Pirinska Bistritsa River	0.5 ha	LN	370
71	Yanovo (Katarino)	Pirinska Bistritsa River	0.5 ha	LN	345
72	Petrovo (Beglika)	Petrovska River	1.5 ha	LN	662
73	Petrovo (Drene)	Pirin Mountain Foothills	0.6 ha	LN	590
74	Mitino	Petrichka River	unknown	LN	unknown
75	Borovichene (Markovo Dabe)	Ograzhden Mountains	ca 2 ha	LN	unknown
76	Drenovitsa (Shlakov ravnjak)	Ograzhden Mountain	0.2 ha	LN	350
77	Drenovitsa (Gegovski Ravnitsi)	Ograzhden Mountain	0.25 ha	LN	350
78	Goleshevo	Pirin Mountain Foothills	1.6 ha	LN	680
79	Parvomay (Ahmed)	Sandanski-Petrich plain	0.5 ha	LN	150
80	Parvomay (Valoga)	Strumeshnitsa River	unknown	LN	unknown
81	Piperitsa	Slavyanka Mountain	1.2 ha	LN	300
82	Kamena	Belasitsa Mountain	0.5 ha	LN	250
83	Promachonas-Topolnitsa	Colluvial Terrace on the right bank of Strymon	unknown	LN	75-85
84	Xeropotamos	Drama Plain	unknown	LN	unknown
85	Kaliphitos	Drama plain	unknown	LN	unknown
86	Mylopotamos	Drama Plain	unknown	LN	unknown
87	Drama	Drama plain	unknown	LN	unknown
88	Megalokampos	Angitis River	unknown	LN	unknown
89	Sitagroi	Angitis River	unknown	LN	unknown
90	Agion Pneuma	Serres Plain	unknown	LN	unknown

91	Doxato	Drama plain	unknown	LN	unknown
92	Chriso	Serres Plain	0.5 ha	LN	50
93	Monovrisi	Strymon River basin	0.5 ha	LN	20
94	Kephalari	Drama plain	unknown	LN	unknown
95	Toumba	Serres Plain	0.7 ha	Transitional	unknown
96	Tholos	Strymon River basin	0.8 ha	LN	80
97	Dimitra (Myrini)	Angitis River	0.4 ha	LN	15
98	Dimitra (Airi Bairi)	Angitis River	2 ha	LN	unknown
99	Dikili Tash	Drama plain `	4.5 ha	LN	71
100	Nea Baphra	Drama Plain	unknown	LN	unknown
101	Aggista	Angitis River	unknown	LN	60
102	Mavrololophos	Agnitis River	0.4 ha	LN	unknown
103	Micro Suli	Angitis River	unknown	LN	unknown
104	Podochori	Pangaion Mountan Foothills	unknown	LN	unknown
105	Amphipolis	Strymon River	unknown	LN	unknown
106	Kryoneri	Kerdilio Mountain	0.3 ha	LN	unknown
107	Akropotamos	Southern Macedonian plain/Strymonas Gulf	unknown	LN	unknown