

Gender issues in Romanian archaeology

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1. The status of gender archaeology in Romania.

After a long lasting and successful activity, the feminist movement in Romania came to an end under communism: beginning with September 12th 1944 feminist publications – as all other publications - were censored by the Soviet occupant authorities; the contacts with the international feminist movement ceased; in 1949 the tens of feminist organisations were dissolved as the Communist Party decided that its organisations would provide for the problems of all citizens, integrating those of women. This year is considered to mark the end of the feminist movement in Romania. Some form of women's organisation existed even afterward, but it never had more than a decorative role, while the communist organisations required women to fit into the place reserved for them by the regime (BĂLUȚĂ 2001; COSMA 2002; CÎRSTOCEA 2002; MIHĂILESCU 2002 and 2006). Thus for the next fifty years or so the whole gender related social problematic fall into oblivion; after the fall of the communism the discussion had to begin literally from scratch. The initiators were private persons, mostly university teachers: they first approached (and sometimes even disguised) the gender problematic in the frame of more traditional courses, then – based on their personal prestige – obtained permission to hold courses on gender, published studies and ultimately organised specialist courses, mostly at master's level. The initiators, mostly women, often resorted to the argument of Romania's future integration into the European Union to legitimize their claims of formalizations of gender studies (POPESCU 2002; MAGYARI-VINCZE 2002; NICOLAESCU 2002; DASCĂL 2002). It seems that the first to teach courses on gender were a few women-teachers at the Department of English Literature of the Bucharest University, who studied in the USA and were long seeking for new ways of teaching English literature. At the time their initiative appeared as an 'import' (NICOLAESCU 2002: 224-230). They were followed by others from departments of sociology, political studies and cultural anthropology (BĂLUȚĂ, CÎRSTOCEA 2002). The interest for gender studies

appeared somewhat later in the faculties of history; the main work was done by a male teacher specialised in modern history and consists in publications (CIUPALĂ 2003) and in optional courses. This is important for gender archaeology since - as Romania does not have a higher education for archaeologists and archaeology is still considered an auxiliary of history - almost all Romanian archaeologists come from the faculties of history. In these faculties gender archaeology occupies a very modest place, being reduced to one lecture in a general course on archaeological theory. Publications in the field are very rare and presently I, a senior researcher at the main archaeological institute in the country (that in Bucharest, belonging not a university but to the Romanian Academy), am the only person dealing with gender archaeology in Romania. I began about five years ago not as an import, but as a reaction to what I perceived as a strong gender discrimination both in my professional and private life.

2. The professional situation of women-archaeologists.

From 697 registered archaeologists 191, i.e. 27 percent, are women (fig. 1) ; the percentage of women-archaeologists entitled to direct excavations is even smaller: 17 % - i.e. 41 women vs. 197 men (fig. 2). These ratios resulted from the count made by me according to the Register of Archaeologists from September 2009: <http://arh.cimec.ro/RegistruArheologi.aspx>). Assignment to gender was made by me based on the first name. Although according to a questionnaire I shall discuss below there is at least one archaeologists of another gender I didn't include this category because I cannot quantify it; this is why the reader should attach a certain, even if small, degree of approximation to these percentages.

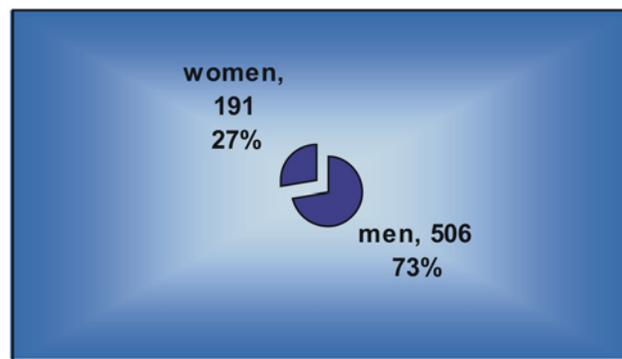


Fig. 1. Men : women ratio among registered archaeologists in Romania (as in September 2009).

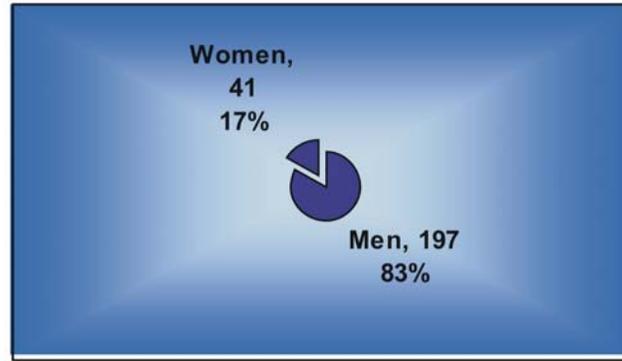


Fig. 2. Men : women ratio among authorized excavation directors in Romania (as in September 2009).

The most **influential positions** are those at the **universities** and the **research institutes** of the Romanian Academy. The number of women-archaeologists working there varies regionally, but diachronically it didn't change significantly over the last 50 years or so: the atmosphere is very conservative in Cluj, more liberal in the institute in Iași, and even more so in Bucharest, particularly in the Institute of Archaeology of the Romanian Academy (fig. 3).

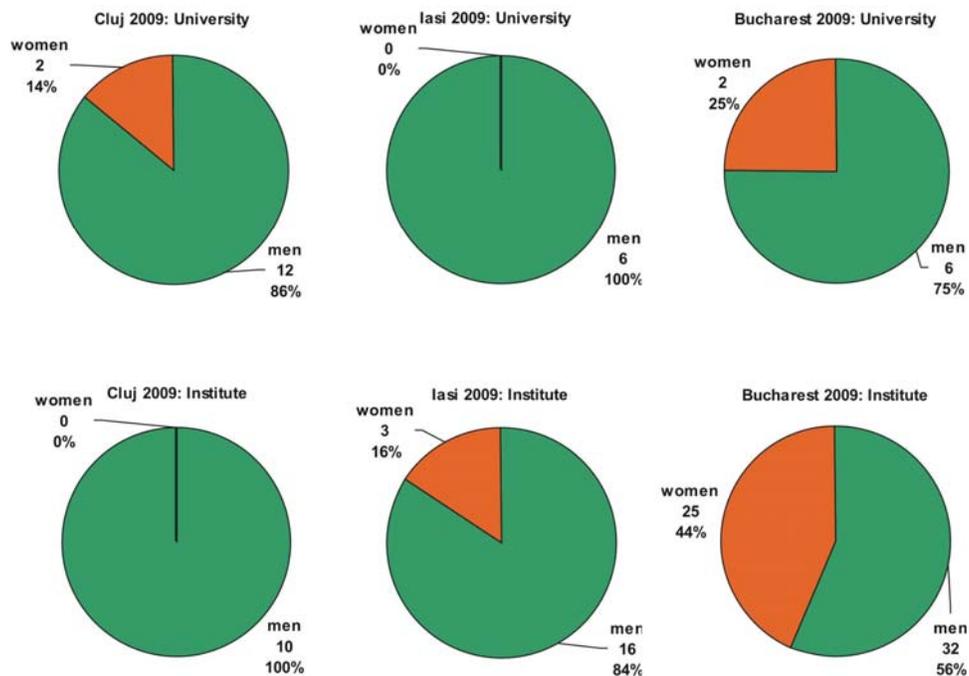


Fig. 3. Men- : women-archaeologists ratio in universities and research institutes (as in September 2009; source: the web-pages of these institutions).

But even if there are more women in the institutes of archaeology no woman has ever had a leading position (director or deputy director). The photo from below (fig. 4) is an eloquent illustration of this situation.



Fig. 4. Photo taken in June 2009 during a meeting of the management of the Institute of Archaeology in Bucharest: on the walls the photographs of former directors; in the room six of the eleven members of the scientific council; the only women-archaeologist in the council is not visible; the two women in the photo are the accountant and the minutes-taker.

According to a questionnaire answered by 32 Romanian archaeologists (4.6% of the total: 21 men, 10 women and one of another gender), most archaeologists are aware of the existence of discrimination against women, with women more so than men (fig. 5). No respondent noticed discrimination against men or other genders.

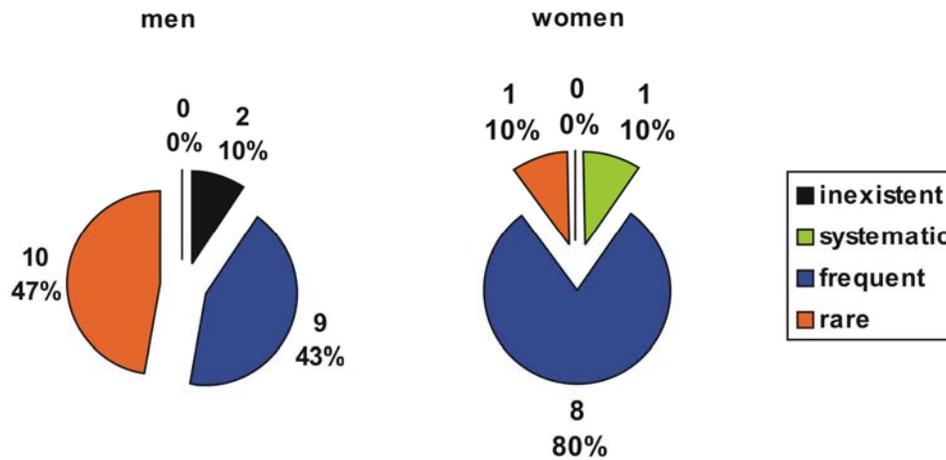


Fig. 5. Perception of discrimination against women among men- and women-archaeologists (the archaeologist of another gender didn't answer clearly: he agreed to the existence of discrimination, but didn't specify its object - i.e. whether against men, women or other genders).

3. How can we disseminate the results of gender archaeology to a wider public?

As one can easily see from the first part of this article, gender archaeology needs to be disseminated first among archaeologists themselves. Fortunately they seem quite interested in the problematic as shown by the answers to the questionnaire mentioned above (fig. 6); interestingly, much more than with respect to discrimination against women, here men and women seem to share opinion.

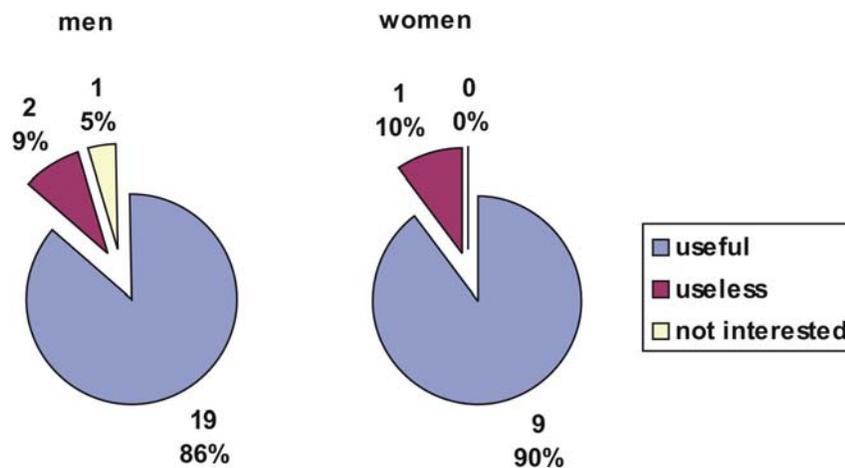


Fig. 6. Usefulness of gender archaeology as seen by the male and female respondents to the questionnaire (the archaeologist of another gender considered gender archaeology useless and was generally hostile to gender studies).

However, joining working-groups and conferences on gender studies is the only possibility for gender archaeology to reach to anthropologists, sociologists etc.

As to the public outside the academic world, we have been suggested to buy space in the cultural supplement of an important Romanian journal in order to bring the result of archaeology in general to a wider public. This didn't happen so far but it remains a possibility.

4. Another issue: taking action towards improvement of professional situation of women.

Clearly there is much to be done in this direction. In order for this to change is absolutely necessary for women to become more aware of their position in the field of archaeology and, more importantly, of their dispositions to act in that field: women-archaeologists tend to involve much more than men in works that, however necessary, are not taken into account for promotion. These can be auxiliary activities (like organising storerooms, primary documentation of finds), as well as strictly intellectual work such as reviewing articles submitted for publication, organising the exchange with publishers and libraries, paperwork requested by the ministries for the assessment of the institutes, journals etc. None of the 105 laws and amendments of the education system enacted during the last 20 years in Romania considered this problem. The assessment rules presently in force favour men over women (for women are more prone 'to be there for the others'), and the less gifted researcher (whom everyone avoids to work with) over the gifted. The more gifted a woman researcher is the more her career and private time is destroyed by the research practice. Consequently, gender archaeology in Romania has to concentrate first on the gender habitus of contemporary archaeologists if it is to contribute to equal chances.

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