

## THE LIFE AND ACTIVITY OF PETRE DIACONU

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**Abstract:** Pe bază de mărturii orale, însemnări autobiografice, documente din familie și articole, lucrarea rezumă aspecte din viața și activitatea celui care a fost arheologul Petre Diaconu. Născut într-un teritoriu care a făcut vremelnice parte din România, într-o familie mixtă, a cunoscut din tinerețe greutățile unui refugiu, participarea la cea de-a doua conflagrație mondială și abuzurile noi puteri instalate la București în 1948. Trecând peste toate piedicile, ajunge student și absolvent al Facultății de Istorie din București. Remarcat de profesori săi, este angajat, încă din studenție, la Institutul de Arheologie. Ca tânăr cercetător participă la cercetările arheologice de la Dinogetia-Garvăn, Niculițel, Nalbant, Cernavodă, Capidava, Mărculești-Viișoara, Mangalia, Murfatlar, Cochirleni, Poarta Albă, Mircea Vodă, Mănăstirea Neamțu, Porțile de Fier și nu în ultimul rând Păcuiul lui Soare, șantierul arheologic de care și-a legat numele și la care a lucrat peste jumătate de secol. Preocupările vaste pe care le are în probleme de istorie, le dezbate în cadrul a câtorva sute de articole. Își pune semnătura pe trei monografii de excepție, două lucrări de sinteză și două volume de articole. Cea mai mare realizare a vieții a fost munca și rezultatele obținute pe șantierul său de suflet Păcuiul lui Soare, „academia” la care și-au început ucenicia o întreagă pleiadă de tineri cercetători. Prestigiul mult meritat îi este recunoscut începând cu anii 1990, este promovat în cadrul Institutului unde conduce pentru o scurtă perioadă doctorate și ține cursuri la Universitatea din București și Constanța. Însă pentru „creatorul arheologiei bizantine din România”, vârsta și boala și-au spus cuvântul, răpindu-l din mijlocul celor dragi. Ca o ultimă dorință, o fost înmormântat în cimitirul mănăstirii Dervent, în apropierea locului său cel mai drag, Păcuiul lui Soare, pe care să-l poată veghea și de dincolo.

**Keywords:** Petre Diaconu, resercher, archaeologist, Păcuiul lui Soare.

Petre Diaconu was born on 17<sup>th</sup> of September 1924 in the Suneci village (today Sarpovo), Doimușlar district, Durostor County. Because of the disturbances caused by the Bulgarian insurgents, he was registered at the Civil Status of Doimușlar communal residence only on 6<sup>th</sup> October. In official papers he appears as Petrea Deaconu. Three days later, on 9<sup>th</sup> October, he will be baptized by the curacy of "St. Ilie" church in the Cocina village, at christening receiving the name Petrică<sup>1</sup>. He will remain in official documents as Petrea Deaconu born on 6 October for the rest of his life. In a humorous and self-ironic autobiography, he put into account of bureaucratic errors the misspelling of his name and claimed his birthday as September 17

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<sup>1</sup> Document from the personal archive of Petre Diaconu, Dimitrie Racoviță street, sector 2, Bucharest.

and the sign of Virgo, not Libra<sup>2</sup>. And to complete the string of coincidences in his biography Petre Diaconu recorded that he was born at 17 p.m. Moreover, Petre Diaconu believed that number 17 and the pig are two elements that had marked his life. Therefore Suneci (Svineci in Slavo-Bulgarian meaning Piggish) is 17 km away from Silistra. The distance between Doimușlar (Doimușlar in Turkish means Piggish), the place he was registered, and Cocina, the place of his baptize, is also 17 km. And as a birth gift he received from his grandfather a sow born on the same day with him.

Petre was the second son of Diaconu family after Gheorghe (born on 1921)<sup>3</sup> being followed by the two daughters, Ecaterina (born on 1928) and Ioana-Silvia (born on 1934).

His father, Nicolae Diaconu, was born in 1893 in Făgețel, Olt County, in a simple family. He graduated only 5 grades. The most important event in his life, as he recorded in an diary, was the participation in the Great War. Promoted as sergeant in the Second Border Regiment he will take part in the heavy battles of summer of 1917 at Oituz<sup>4</sup>. At the end of the war he will be sent as gendarme in Doimușlar district, in the Cadrilater, which became part of Romania after 1913.

His mother, Paraschiva Velicu, was born in 1904 in a family of Bulgarian peasants with Greek origins. Married young, she gave herself to fostering and to housework. In his hilarious autobiography, Petre Diaconu presents his mother as looking after the nearly 100 pigs breed by the sow received as a gift from his maternal grandfather, Jecoff Velicu<sup>5</sup>.

He will spend the first years of his childhood in the village of Suneci, a eminently Turkish village (there was no church which is the reason why he was baptized elsewhere) beloved for his homeland. Later he will say that his entire life he has felt Dobrudjan, though he spent there only a short while. At the young age of 6-7 years, he comes to possess a large amount of money from the sale of the 100 pigs and he asked his mother for the money to buy pots of copper. *"In a few days [mother] had filled the house with pans, pots, kettles, saucepan, bowls, roots, lids, larger trays or smaller trays for jam, water buckets, laundry boilers, all made of bronze"* engraved with his name initials P.D., pots which become his property.

In 1931, Petre enters the primary school for boys at Silistra where his family moved meanwhile on Arab Tabia Street, no. 46. In 1935, with an

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<sup>2</sup> Mihai Irimia, „Petre Diaconu (1924-2007) (necrolog)”, in *Pontica*, XL, 2007, p.682.

<sup>3</sup> Radu Harhoiu, „Gheorghe Diaconu (necrolog)”, în *Dacia*, NS, XLVI-XLVII, 2002-2003, p.207-208.

<sup>4</sup> Petre Diaconu, „Cu sergentul Nicolae Diaconu în bătălia de la Oituz”, in *Apărarea patriei*, anul II, nr.3 (4), iunie 1987, p.4.

<sup>5</sup> Mihai Irimia, *op.cit.*, p.682.

overall average of 8,62 for four years and with a “very well” grade for behavior he receives the right to enter to the competition for admission to secondary school<sup>6</sup>. He’s taking the first five classes at Silistra Highschool where his teacher and principal is the famous linguist, folklorist, philologist and correspondent member of the Romanian Academy, Pericle Papahagi<sup>7</sup>.

At 5<sup>th</sup> July 1936, he participates, accompanied by his History teacher from Silistra Highschool, at the event dedicated to putting the stone foundation of the Holy Dervent Monastery, on which occasion he sees for the first time the ruins of the Byzantine fortress from Păcuiul lui Soare island<sup>8</sup>.

During study years in Silistra he befriends his desk mate, another celebrity of Romanian culture, Toma Caragiu. His friendship with Toma Caragiu will continue to the rest of their lives until his death on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1977.

Territorial cessions during the summer of the tragic year 1940 and the exchange of population affect the Diaconu family<sup>9</sup> who is enforced to seek for shelter to the north of the new boarder. Their hurry for leaving Silistra makes Petre lose a part from his property of pots from copper. They live in improper conditions, only one room, for a while near the Borcea village<sup>10</sup>. This fact will not prevent him from continuing his studies. He graduates the last three years of secondary school at Știrbei Vodă High School in Călărași, where his family moved after great difficulties.

After receiving the baccalaureate degree in the summer of 1943, he honors his military duties. Between 24<sup>th</sup> October 1943 and 10<sup>th</sup> May 1945 he attended the Military School of Reserve Officers in Aviation in Bucharest. The Aviation unit he was part of was operational for a short period between 23 and 31 August 1944. Petre Diaconu, as a student of the Military School, served as navigator on a bomber plane, taking part in actions against the Germans in Romania and Bulgaria. At the end of military service on May 10, 1945 he is promoted to the rank of second lieutenant in reserve<sup>11</sup>. His military services to the Romanian state are awarded in 2003 when the

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<sup>6</sup> Document from the personal archive of Petre Diaconu, document on which he appears as Petre Diaconu and 17th September 1924 as his birthdate.

<sup>7</sup> Petre Diaconu, „Scurtă notă autobiografică”, in *Contribuții istorice și etimologice*, Aalborg, Ed. Dorul, 2001, p.7.

<sup>8</sup> Information received from the abbot of the Monastery Dervent, Andrei Tudor, to whom I want to thank in this way.

<sup>9</sup> Toma Caragiu’s family will succeed their second refuge, after the first one in 1928 from Greece, but their friendship will continue.

<sup>10</sup> Adrian Bucurescu, „Istorie polemică la Păcuiul lui Soare”, in *România liberă*, 4 septembrie 2003, p.7.

<sup>11</sup> Document from the personal archive of Petre Diaconu.

President Ion Iliescu gives him the medal “The Commemorative Cross of the Second World War, 1941-1945”<sup>12</sup>. Petre Diaconu's participation in the battles of the Second World War was short-lived than that of his older brother, Gheorghe, who sent on the Eastern front at the beginning of the conflict will know all the difficulties that are involved in a war, including a two years captivity with work in coal mines.

After finishing military active service he starts a febrile activity of supporting the Național Țărănesc Party of which sympathizer and member has been since tenth grade. In the spring of 1946 he was elected the president of the Național Țărănesc Youth in Ialomița. Preparations for the elections of 19 November 1946 keep him busy all year; as he records he would support many lectures in the electoral propaganda. From the memories he left, he omitted sequences of arrests, beatings, PNT headquarters robberies and even murders during January-November 1946 which he had witnessed. The elections on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1946 found him as a member of the election commission near the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment Călărași. Together with a party colleague and former classmate, Picu Marinescu, he is tamed to another abuse by the communist supporters when an officer of Tudor Vladimirescu Division prohibits them to entry into the building reserved for election. The elections from November 1946 represent the beginning of a turbulent period for the Diaconu family; the father, Nicolae Diaconu, also a PNT member and delegate to the elections, is arrested for a short period<sup>13</sup>.

His PNT support activity gives him the chance to meet his future wife, Aurelia Ursu, who was just a student. In the autumn of 1946, in a dormitory room in Matei Voievod hostel in Bucharest, during a speech before a group of Aromanians, older acquaintances from the Cadrilater, she would be impressed by the knowledge that he possess. Here is how renders Aurelia Diaconu their first meeting:

*“I saw a blond man who was talking about everything, including football and I asked who was he. I was answered:*

*- He is Petre!*

*- And from where does he know so many things?*

*- Because he reads a lot”<sup>14</sup>.*

They don't get to know each other very well. Winning elections by the Block of Democratic Parties suppresses any opposition to the regime. Thus, although the Diaconu family had moved in Bucharest in 1947, they get to know the deportation policy and the settlement of house arrest. Aurelia

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<sup>12</sup> Certificate assigned by the decree no. 738/2003.

<sup>13</sup> Petre Diaconu, „Două întâmplări din anul 1946”, in *Analele Sighet*, 3, 1996, p.494-496.

<sup>14</sup> Information received from Mrs. Aurelia Diaconu, to whom I want to thank in this way.

Ursu, as a sympathizer of the Liberal National Party is arrested and imprisoned for six months to Jilava<sup>15</sup>. In his autobiographies, Petre Diaconu keeps silence on these times, but with his well-known humour, reminds that his pots of copper, his childhood property, helped them in starvation times, the family increasing their income by selling them until they left only one, a basin which he kept to the rest of his life.

In 1949 Petre enters the Faculty of History in Bucharest<sup>16</sup>. He studies Prehistory and Ancient History. He has illustrious professors such as Ion Nestor, Dionisie M. Pippidi, Gheorghe Ștefan, Alexandru Elian, Mihai Berza, Constantin Nicolăescu-Plopșor<sup>17</sup>. Because of the interest showed for study and the grades of "Good" and "Very Good" obtained he is noticed and enjoys the attention of his professors<sup>18</sup>. Due to the appreciation gained from professor Ion Nestor he is employed on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1951 – at the end of the second year of study – at the Archaeological Institute of the Romanian Academy on the position of site supervisor and starting with the 1<sup>st</sup> October the same year his employment is changed into that of scientific referee. Petre Diaconu will write beautiful and tender lines about his special bond with his professor in the book published afterwards in master's memory<sup>19</sup>. He takes his Bachelor Degree in June 1953 with Very Good. His licence paper was focused on Demostene's work. After successful graduation of faculty he is promoted as scientific researcher.

On 6<sup>th</sup> May 1954 he marries Aurelia Ursu. Born in Galați on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1925, she graduated Bucharest Conservatory. As a lyrical artist she activates in the Chorus of Philharmonic and Romanian Patriarchy. Newlyweds establish in Bucharest on Rose Street, No. 22, from where, after starting the program for town planning, they move on Dimitrie Racoviță Street, No.5.

As a young researcher and recent graduate participates, between 1953-1954, at the archaeological excavations at Dinogetia–Garvău, Niculițel and Nalbant, under the guidance of his of his professors, Gheorghe Ștefan and

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<sup>15</sup> Aurelia Diaconu, „Urmărit – arestat”, in *Analele Sighet*, 7, 1999, p.471-474.

<sup>16</sup> Also his brother, Gheorghe, when came back from the sovietic prisonership went to the Faculty of History in Bucharest, but Petre took this decision all by himself without wanting or trying to follow his brother's steps. Their historical destiny will intertwine, later they will be colleagues at the same institute, however their specialization will be different. Gheorghe Diaconu will handle the migration period.

<sup>17</sup> \*\*\*, „In memoriam Petre Diaconu (6 octombrie 1924 – 3 aprilie 2007)”, in *SCIVA*, tom 59-60, 2008-2009, p.263.

<sup>18</sup> Document from the personal archive of Petre Diaconu.

<sup>19</sup> Sever Dumitrașcu, „Sinuciderea” *Europei. Destine și idealuri românești*, Oradea, Ed. Europrint, 2010, p.79; Petre Diaconu, „Profesorul Ion Nestor, așa cum l-am văzut eu”, in *In memoriam Ion Nestor*, coordonatori: Petre Roman, Doina Ciobanu, Buzău, f. Ed., 2005, p.47-49.

Ion Barnea. Together with the group of young archeologists on the site (Maria Comșa, Eugen Comșa, Gheorghe Bichir, Florin Constantiniu, Exspectatus Bujor, Gheorghe Popilian, Bucur Mitrea and others) he tries to contribute to the knowledge of the archaeological realities by publishing articles<sup>20</sup>. He starts his long list of scientific work papers. He stays not so much at Dinogetia to reach to place his signature on the monography dedicated to the archaeological research, but the discoveries from Niculițel intrigue him for a while<sup>21</sup>. Meanwhile he joins for a short time Sebastian Morintz and Dumitru Berciu at the the rescue excavations in Cernavodă<sup>22</sup>. He is called to be part of another important "national" site - the one from Capidava - under the supervision of Grigore Florescu. His labour on the site is crowned with the participation to the publication of the first volume of Capidava's monography<sup>23</sup>, his first important work paper. For a month in the summer of 1956 Petre Diaconu investigates an early medieval settlement in the Romanian Plain from Mărculești-Viișoara<sup>24</sup>.

Knowledge of Bulgarian language gives him the opportunity to enrich his portfolio of periodicals by publishing reviews of historical materials published by the neighboring country. He does not forgive his compatriots by his mother for the things written combating with valid arguments any claim on their behalf over "historical rights" to rule Dobrudja.

Headed by the same dream which had Heinrich Schliemann whom he admires very much, to start and to lead the research to an innovative archaeological site, he convinces his mentor, Ion Nestor, to start archaeological research on Păcuiul lui Soare island. The need to start research at Păcuiul lui Soare was required also by the fact that the Byzantine fortress was continuously destroyed by the Danube, fact which had been repeatedly pointed by Niță Anghelescu, the Manager of the Museum from

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<sup>20</sup> Petre Diaconu, „Un pandantiv globular descoperit la Bisericuța-Garvăn”, in *SCIV*, tom IX, nr.2, 1958, p.425-427; Idem, „În legătură cu datarea olanelor cu semne în relief descoperite în așezările timpurii din Dobrogea”, in *SCIV*, tom X, nr.2, 1959, p.491-497; Idem, „Cu privire la patinele de os din epoca feudală timpurie”, in *SCIV*, tom XI, nr.1, 1960, p.177-178; Idem, „Despre datarea nivelului „locuințelor incendiate” de la Dinogetia-Garvăn (jud.Tulcea)”, in *SCIVA*, tom 26, nr.3, 1975, p.387-394.

<sup>21</sup> Idem, „Despre datarea „circumvalației” și a „bisericii treplate” de la Niculițel”, in *SCIV*, tom 23, nr.2, 1972, p.307-319; Idem, „Din nou despre încadrarea cronologică a valului și mănăstirii de la Niculițel”, in *SCIVA*, tom 26, nr.1, 1975, p.101-106.

<sup>22</sup> Sebastian Morintz, Dumitru Berciu, Petre Diaconu, „Șantierul arheologic Cernavodă”, in *SCIV*, tom VI, nr.1-2, ianuarie-iunie 1955.

<sup>23</sup> Grigore Florescu, Radu Florescu, Petre Diaconu, *Capidava. Monografie arheologică*, vol.I, București, Ed. Academiei R.P.Române, 1958.

<sup>24</sup> Petre Diaconu, „Săpăturile arheologice de la Mărculești-Viișoara”, in *MCA*, V, 1959, p.543-546.

Călărași<sup>25</sup>. Petre Diaconu knew the fortress since childhood because it was like he humorously wrote, at 17 km (the same number 17) distance on water thread Silistra, the town where he spent school years. He had prepared the ground for research two years before their debut in the fall of 1956. Research began on 17<sup>th</sup> September<sup>26</sup> and lasted one month. First night spent there remained printed in his memory as he was forced to spend it up a tree because of heavy vegetation<sup>27</sup>. In his already mentioned humorous autobiography he records that, among the first ceramic fragments found, one was representing a symbol that marked his existence, a pig, a wild boar this time. And not to forget the significance of the pig in his life, he received the news that in the area he left in Capidava, a sow that was grouting, exposed the oldest epigraphic document in Romanian - a clay pot which had engraved the Greek alphabet and the name of the potter - PETRE<sup>28</sup>.

It was just the beginning of a long series of archaeological campaigns, the beginning of his work which takes place over decades. Thanks to hard work, to the interest showed in research and to the appreciation which he had gained, in the spring of 1961, Ion Nestor entrusts him control of the site. *"I saw that you can deal all by yourself the scientific issues from Păcuiul lui Soare. That's why I have decided that, starting from this moment, to entrust you the control over there. Sure, you will still keep me informed with the archaeological facts. Make sure you make as few mistakes"*, was writing Petre Diaconu in the reverential article dedicated to the memory of Ion Nestor<sup>29</sup>.

Simultaneously with the investigations at Păcuiul lui Soare he develops rescue activities also in Mangalia. Together with his colleagues, Emilian Popescu and Constantin Preda, in 1959, reveal the famous tomb with papyrus<sup>30</sup>. They were *"powerless witnesses to the destruction of Greek papyrus"*, as he left written<sup>31</sup>. They did not know and long time was not known that the papyrus was saved from degradation and largely forgotten in Russia until 2011 when it was given back to the Romanian state.

<sup>25</sup> Idem, „Niță Anghelescu (necrolog)”, in *SCIVA*, tom 50, nr.3-4, iulie-decembrie 1999, p. 212.

<sup>26</sup> In the excavation report was written September 15, but to not remove the significance of number 17 will remain with that date.

<sup>27</sup> Document from the personal archive of Petre Diaconu.

<sup>28</sup> Adrian Rădulescu, „Un atestat străromânesc la Capidava”, in *Pontica*, III, 1970, p. 255-274.

<sup>29</sup> Petre Diaconu, „Profesorul Ion Nestor, așa cum l-am văzut eu”, in *In memoriam Ion Nestor*, coordonatori: Petre Roman, Doina Ciobanu, Buzău, f. Ed., 2005, p.47.

<sup>30</sup> Constantin Preda, Emilian Popescu, Petre Diaconu, „Săpăturile arheologice de la Mangalia (Callatis)”, in *MCA*, VIII, 1962.

<sup>31</sup> Document from the personal archive of Petre Diaconu.

Participation, along with Ion Barnea, at the discovery of the Murfatlar monastic complex (1957) and excavations at Cochirleni, Poarta Albă and Mircea Vodă (1965-1966) give to Petre Diaconu the chance to express – in a series of articles - his opinion towards dating and ethnic attribution of the three walls from Dobrudja and localization of the events from "The note of the Greek Toparch"<sup>32</sup>, starting an argue with medivist professor Constantin Cihodaru<sup>33</sup>.

In 1957 he is responsible for digging out of his native Dobrudja, in Moldova, at Neamțu Monastery, where, along with Radu Heitel, in "national interest", is looking for the ruins of the first church built by Peter Mușat<sup>34</sup>. A few years later, in 1961, he moves into the "Iron Gates" area. Under the guidance of Dumitru Tudor, together with his colleagues Eugen Comșa, Sebastian Morintz, Expectatus Bujor and Nicolae Constantinescu enlist sites<sup>35</sup> and perform rescue research in the area that was to be flooded<sup>36</sup>.

His attention is focused on the researches from Păciul lui Soare, the place where he started his odyssey, a place to which he is connected for life and through the understanding of a loving wife, would become a second home<sup>37</sup>. He dedicated himself entirely to the Byzantine monument at the Lower Danube. Research absorbed him, descending in early Spring and leaving late Autumn. Life on site was not easy: mosquitoes, excessive humidity, hot days and storms, but he had no regret and always persevered

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<sup>32</sup> Petre Diaconu, „Despre datarea valului de piatră din Dobrogea și localizarea evenimentelor din nota toparhului grec”, in *Studii. Revistă de istorie*, anul XV, nr.5, 1962, p.1215-1235; Idem, „Din nou despre valului de piatră din Dobrogea și Nota toparhului grec (Partea I)”, in *SCIV*, tom 16, nr.1, 1965, p.189-199; Idem, „Din nou despre datarea valului de piatră din Dobrogea și Nota toparhului grec (Partea a II-a)”, in *SCIV*, tom 16, nr.2, 1965, p.383-394; Idem, „Alte precizări în legătură cu valul de piatră din Dobrogea și însemnările toparhului bizantin”, in *SCIV*, tom 19, nr.2, 1968, p.357-369; Idem, „Cîteva considerații în legătură cu valurile din Dobrogea”, in *Pontica*, V, 1972, p.373-380; „Date noi privind „Valul mare de pământ” din Dobrogea”, in *Peuce*, IV, 1973-1975, p.199-209.

<sup>33</sup> Mihai Irimia, „Dr. Petre Diaconu la 80 de ani”, in *Prinos lui Petre Diaconu la 80 de ani*, coordonatori: Ionel Cîndea, Valeriu Sîrbu, Marian Neagu, Brăila, Ed. Istros, 2004, p.XXIV.

<sup>34</sup> Petre Diaconu, „Săpăturile de la Mănăstirea Neamțu”, in *MCA*, VI, 1959, p.699-702.

<sup>35</sup> Dumitru Tudor, Eugen Comșa, Sebastian Morintz, Expectatus Bujor, Petre Diaconu, Nicolae Constantinescu, „Cercetări arheologice în zona viitorului lac de acumulare al hidrocentralei „Porțile de Fier””, in *SCIV*, tom 16, nr.2, 1965, p.396-406.

<sup>36</sup> Petre Diaconu, Petre Roman, „Cîteva urme de viețuire din sec. al VII-lea în insula Banului”, in *Comunicări. Seria arheologică*, II, 1967; Petre Diaconu, „Rezultatele cercetărilor arheologice din zona Porților de Fier”, in *Comunicări Academia R.S.R. Grupul de cercetări complexe „Porțile de Fier”*, seria IV, 1968, p.43-47.

<sup>37</sup> Mihai Irimia, „Petre Diaconu la 80 de ani”, in *Pontica*, XXXVII-XXXVIII, 2004-2005, p. 558.



with further work<sup>38</sup>. He was not alone in his efforts, he was sustained by a large group made of architects, geologists, numismatists, art historians and students. He managed to transform researches from an archaeological site into a real "summer school", "an academy", making its contribution to the formation of new generation of researchers. In his approaches enjoyed the constant support of museums from Călărași and Constanța<sup>39</sup>. Next to him, on Păcuiul lui Soare site continued or started their career other great researchers such as Radu Popa, Dumitru Vîlceanu, Radu Heitel, Mihai Davidescu, Silvia Baraschi, Dan Căpățînă, Răzvan Theodorescu, Victor Spinei, Radu Harhoiu, Nicolae Conovici, Mihai Irimia, Gheorghe Papuc, Adrian Panaitescu, Tudor Papasima, Valeriu Sîrbu, Marian Neagu, Constantin Chera, Sergiu Iosipescu, Anca Popescu, Oana Damian and many others reaching close friends and partners<sup>40</sup>.

He does not reduce its activity to publishing only articles based on research results from Păcuiul lui Soare. He is interested in Turanians established on the Lower Danube and publishes two volumes: „Les Petchénègues au Bas-Danube”, Bucharest, 1970 and „Les Coumans au Bas-Danube aux XIe et XIIe siècles”, Bucharest, 1978. To these two books he added series of articles<sup>41</sup>, interest which turns him into one of the most prestigious specialists on Turanians in the country. He brings back into discussion the location of Onglos coming with a new plausible location in the plains of Wallachia<sup>42</sup>. He starts to look for the city of Vicina finding it at

<sup>38</sup> Constantin Novac, „Petre Diaconu: Dobrogea – o neconținută și multiplă revelație”, in *Tomis*, 17, nr.8, 1982, p.3.

<sup>39</sup> Oana Damian, Alexandru Niculescu, Andrei Măgureanu, „50 de ani de cercetări arheologice în siturile de la Târgșoru Vechi și Păcuiul lui Soare”, in *SCIVA*, tom 58, nr.1-2, ianuarie-iunie 2007, p.179.

<sup>40</sup> Sever Dumitrașcu, *Arheologia română la sfârșit și început de mileniu*, Oradea, Ed. Universității din Oradea, 1995, p.422.

<sup>41</sup> Petre Diaconu, „Cu privire la problema căldărilor de lut în epoca feudală timpurie”, in *SCIV*, tom VII, nr.3-4, 1956, p.421-439; Idem, „Despre pecenegii de la Dunărea de Jos în secolul al X-lea”, in *Studii. Revistă de istorie*, anul 18, nr.5, 1965, p.1117-1129; Idem, „Les Petchénègues du Bas-Danube au Xe siècle”, in *Dacia*, NS, XI, 1967, p.259-270; Idem, „The Petchenegs on the Lower Danube”, in *Relations between autochthonous population and the migratory populations on the territory of Romania*, editors: Miron Constantinescu, Ștefan Pascu, Petre Diaconu, București, Ed. Academiei R.S.România, 1975, p.235-249; Idem, „Românii și populațiile în migrație”, in *Independența României*, coordonatori: Ștefan Pascu, Constantin C.Giurescu, I.Ceterchi, Ștefan Ștefănescu, Constantin Olteanu, București, Ed. Academiei R.S.România, 1977, p.39-44; Idem, „A propos de l'invasion cumane de 1148”, in *Etudes byzantines et post-byzantines*, I, 1979, p.19-27; Idem, „Despre unele antroponime de origine cumăna”, in *Analele Brăilei*, SN, an II, nr.2, 1996, p.569-571.

<sup>42</sup> Idem, „Le problème de la localisation de l'Onglos”, in *Dacia*, NS, XIV, 1970, p.325-334; Idem, „Despre localizarea Onglos-ului?”, in *Peuce*, II, 1971, p.191-203; Idem, „Unde trebuie căutat Onglos?”, in *Istros*, VII, 1994, p.359-361.

Păcuiul lui Soare<sup>43</sup>. He seeks the Dafne fortress<sup>44</sup>. He has numismatic preoccupations on the basis of which he identifies an unknown state formation from the area of Silistra - Păcuiul lui Soare ruled by Ioan Terter<sup>45</sup>. He also has sigillography<sup>46</sup>, toponymy, paleography, ethnography and philology concerns. He is interested in the Slavs of the Lower Danube area<sup>47</sup> and the attribution of the Ciurel culture<sup>48</sup>. He continues to write reviews for books and articles from country and abroad.

Research work submitted to the knowledge of archaeological realities from Păcuiul lui Soare is being materialized through the publication of two exceptional monographs: „Păcuiul lui Soare. I. Cetatea bizantină”, Bucharest, 1972, for which on March 2, 1974 receives the Vasile Pârvan prize of the Romanian Academy and „Păcuiul lui Soare. II. Așezarea medievală (secolele XIII-XV)”, Bucharest, 1977. The monographs mentioned above are joined by dozens of articles published by the research team.

The island of Păcuiul lui Soare becomes point of attraction not just for its relics. The wonderful decor makes place to be for six years, between 1965 and 1971, the set for the casting film series "Haiducii", of the director Dinu Cocea. Many men of high culture start coming at Păcui attracted by the oasis of green scenery and quiet, people such as the actors Marin Moraru, Marga Barbu, authors Ana Blandiana, Romulus Rusan, Ioan Ruse, Constantin Novac, Ovidiu Dunăreanu, gimnast Maria Simionescu and many others with whom Petre Diaconu link close friendships<sup>49</sup>. Petre Diaconu and his wife, Aurelia, become novel characters and Păcuiul lui Soare their scene (Ana Blandiana – „Sertarul cu aplauze”, Ioan Ruse – „Pe valuri spre Sacidava”, Ovidiu Dunăreanu – „Păcuiul lui Soare”). Animal lover, Petre Diaconu transforms the island into shelter for homeless cats and dogs. Thus

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<sup>43</sup> Idem, „Despre localizarea Vicinei”, in *Pontica*, III, 1970, p.275-296; Idem, „Păcuiul lui Soare – Vicina”, in *Byzantina*, 8, 1976, p.409-447; Idem, „Iarăși despre localizarea Vicinei”, in *Revista de istorie*, tom 34, nr.12, decembrie 1981, p.2311-2316.

<sup>44</sup> Idem, „În căutarea Dafnei”, in *Pontica*, IV, 1971, p.311-318; Idem, „Sur l’emplacement de l’ancienne Daphne”, in *Studia Balcanica*, 10, 1975, p.87-93; Idem, „Unde a fost cetatea Dafne”, in *Magazin istoric*, anul X, nr.10 (115), octombrie 1976, p.7-9.

<sup>45</sup> Idem, „O formațiune statală la Dunărea de Jos la sfârșitul secolului al XIV-lea necunoscută pînă în prezent”, in *SCIIVA*, tom 29, nr.2, aprilie-iunie 1978, p.185-201; Idem, „Contribuție la cunoașterea monedelor lui Ioan Terter, despotul Țării Dristrei”, in *Cercetări Numismatice*, 3, 1980, p.73-76.

<sup>46</sup> Along with Ion Barnea was among the few researchers who had concerns for sigillography.

<sup>47</sup> Petre Diaconu, „Din nou despre slavi la Dunărea de Jos”, in *Istros*, XI, 2004, p.353-355.

<sup>48</sup> Idem, „Cui aparține cultura Ciurel?”, in *Istros*, X, 2000, p.491-493.

<sup>49</sup> Mihai Irimia, „Petre Diaconu (1924-2007) (necrolog)”, in *Pontica*, XL, 2007, p.683.

the dogs Dac, Guna, Necaz, Dervent, in several versions, enjoy the attention of an owner<sup>50</sup>

The fame of the Byzantine fortress and its relics that are covered by the Danube attracted also the attention of Jacques-Yves Cousteau who in 1972 demanded, unsuccessfully, the approval for performing underwater researches in the area.

On May 22, 1971 Petre Diaconu presents his PhD, coordinated by Ion Nestor at the University of Bucharest, with a theme regarding the Pechenegs on the Lower Danube<sup>51</sup>. After getting the title of PhD, he becomes scientific resercher III at the Institute of Archaeology. He is coopted in the editorial board of the Institute journal, „Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie”. He is appointed secondary coordinator, and later main coordinator, at the archaeological excavations at Adamclisi, function he occupies between 1971 and 1977. He does not publish any articles related to the evolution of research because of not having allocated any sector to carry out real excavations<sup>52</sup>. In 1986 takes the lead over the archaeological excavations from Grădiștea Coslogeni, on this occasion he encounters with his "port-bonheur" as he was calling it, the pig. This time as a skeleton burnt in nature, 3.000 years old.

Success and appreciation that he enjoys bring him into the attention of the Communist Party who propose him for the position of lecturer of the Central Committee in Bucharest. Without being a member of the party he speeches on historical matters until 1989<sup>53</sup>.

He participates in international congresses on historical matters, being the Romanian representative in the International Committee of Historical Geography and member of the Executive Committee of the International Association for the History of Glass<sup>54</sup>.

After the events from December 1989 he takes part in the re-establishment of the Național Țărănesc Party, the party whose member and supporter he was in his youth and where he meets old acquaintances: Corneliu Coposu and Ion Diaconescu. He doesn't stay long, after the 1991 miners' revolt resigns dissatisfied with the new turn of the party<sup>55</sup>. He involves in the establishment of the Association of Former Political Prisoners and the Civic Academy Foundation, motivated by the fact that

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<sup>50</sup> Niculae Conovici, „Păciul lui Soare, Petre Diaconu și viața mea”, in *Prinos lui Petre Diaconu la 80 de ani*, coordonators: Ionel Căndea, Valeriu Sîrbu, Marian Neagu, Brăila, Ed. Istros, 2004, p.XXXVII.

<sup>51</sup> Personal archive document of Petre Diaconu.

<sup>52</sup> Information received from Mr. Gheorghe Papuc, to whom I want to thank in this way.

<sup>53</sup> Information received from Mr. Marian Neagu, to whom I want to thank in this way.

<sup>54</sup> Niculae Conovici, „Petre Diaconu à 70 ans”, in *Dacia*, NS, XL-XLII, 1996-1998, p.474.

<sup>55</sup> Information received from Mrs. Oana Damian, to whom I want to thank in this way.

both he and his family suffered persecution from the communist. He becomes a member of the Movement for the Kingdom of Romania<sup>56</sup>.

On the approach of the age of retirement he is promoted on 1 February 1991 as scientific researcher II, as at May 1, 1991 to retire. As a recognition of his skills, he is given the right to lead doctoral studies for a short time. He coordinates and truly inspires only one work, of Oana Damian, in 1993 takes over the lead of other two more works – of Luminița Dumitriu and Suzana Heitel - at the death of Radu Popa.

Retirement also meant giving up formally at the head of the site at Păcuiul lui Soare leaving it in the care of Oana Damian, but in all the years after, he was scientifically and emotionally involved into their continuing. In recognition of his efforts made to archaeological and historical research of the Lower Danube he is declared honor citizen of Călărași<sup>57</sup>.

At the age of 70 years his friends and partners pay him homage through two articles published in *Dacia* and *Istros*<sup>58</sup>. On this occasion at Călărași appears a volume of articles intitled „Recenzii și discuții arheologice, I”.

The good relations that he maintains with the group of monks from the Derwent Monastery and with the Church of Tomis in general leads him to support the initiative to reactivate Tomis’ Metropolitan Church becoming the President of the Initiative Group for the Reactivation of Metropolitan Tomis. Their approach is not successful, but for his efforts on 5 October 2004, he is awarded by the Archbishop of Tomis, Theodosius, with the distinction “Dobrudja’s Cross”<sup>59</sup>.

Acknowledging his prestige he is coopted, at the invitation of Stelian Brezeanu as associate professor at the Faculty of History in Bucharest, and at the invitation of Adrian Rădulescu, at Ovidius University in Constanța, coordinating numerous licences and dissertations<sup>60</sup>. He is elected in the editorial team of “Pontica” journal of the Museum from Constanța. He becomes "the soul" of the scientific meetings of museums from Constanța, Tulcea, Călărași, Brăila, Slobozia. He resumed his activities on 1 January 2000 as scientific researcher I at the Institute of Archaeology. But he doesn't stay for long time, retreating on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2001.

Enjoyed fame brings him in close partnership with the Romanian community in Denmark, publishing numerous articles in the Romanian

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<sup>56</sup> Personal archive document of Petre Diaconu.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>58</sup> Niculae Conovici, *op.cit.*, p.473-484; Ionel Căndea, „Cercetătorul Petre Diaconu a împlinit 70 de ani”, in *Istros*, VII, 1994, p.451-455.

<sup>59</sup> Personal archive document of Petre Diaconu.

<sup>60</sup> Mihai Irimia, „Dr. Petre Diaconu la 80 de ani”, in *Prinos lui Petre Diaconu la 80 de ani*, coordonators: Ionel Căndea, Valeriu Sîrbu, Marian Neagu, Brăila, Ed. Istros, 2004, p. XXVI.

diaspora journal "Dorul", published in Norresundby and a volume of articles: „Contribuții istorice și etimologice”, printed in Aalborg in 2001.

As a recognition of his cultural merits he is granted by President Ion Iliescu on February 7, 2004 with the order of “Cultural Merit in the rank of Commander”<sup>61</sup>. On 30 July the same year he is declared honor citizen of Brăila<sup>62</sup>.

At 80-year anniversary his friends and partners dedicate him a significant reverential volume, „Prinos lui Petre Diaconu la 80 de ani”, published under the care of the Museum from Braila and the Museum of Lower Danube from Călărași. His Eminence, Casian Crăciun, the Bishop of the Lower Danube, Petre Ștefan Năsturel, from Paris, Mihai Irimia, Valeriu Sîrbu, Ionel Cîndea, Marian Neagu and Niculae Conovici, in the introduction evoke memories which relate them to “the creator of Byzantine Archaeology in Romania”.

Touched by a merciless disease is caught from among of his loved ones on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2007. Completely enchanted by the “spirit of Păcui” and wishing to supervise the place that he had dedicated over 50 years of research as well as beyond, he asked to be buried at the Holy Monastery of Dervent. The transcendent being left behind an impressive work by the variety, number, quality and erudition. Evoking the great archaeologist, close ones express in a series of articles their admiration for the one who passed away<sup>63</sup>. Oana Damian recognizes the generosity and the courage to leave his soul site on a woman's hand<sup>64</sup> and Radu Harhoiu recognizes his contribution to the preservation and increase of Byzantine legacy, to the interruptible supervise for half a century, “regardless of season or weather reports”, to this unique monument of Byzantine border in the Lower Danube<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup> Certificate assigned by the decree no.. 40 from 7.02.2004.

<sup>62</sup> Personal archive document of Petre Diaconu.

<sup>63</sup> Oana Damian, „Petre Diaconu așa cum l-am văzut eu”, in *SCIVA*, tom 59-60, 2008-2009, p.271-272; Radu Harhoiu, „Amintiri despre Petre Diaconu”, in *SCIVA*, tom 59-60, 2008-2009, p.267-270; Mihai Irimia, „Petre Diaconu (1924-2007) (necrolog)”, in *Pontica*, XL, 2007, p.681-684.

<sup>64</sup> Oana Damian, *op.cit.*, p.271.

<sup>65</sup> Radu Harhoiu, *op.cit.*, p.270.