Archaeological Field School at

American Research Center in Sofia

The Site and Excavations

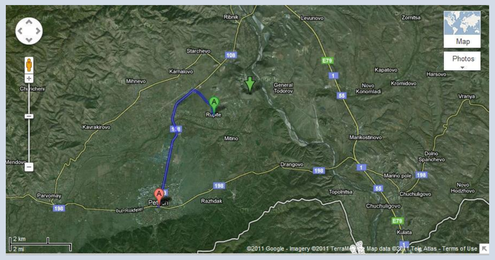


Fig. 1. Heraclea Sintica (marked with a green arrow) is located near the village of Rupite, approximately 12 km northeast of Petrich, SW Bulgaria (source: Google Earth).

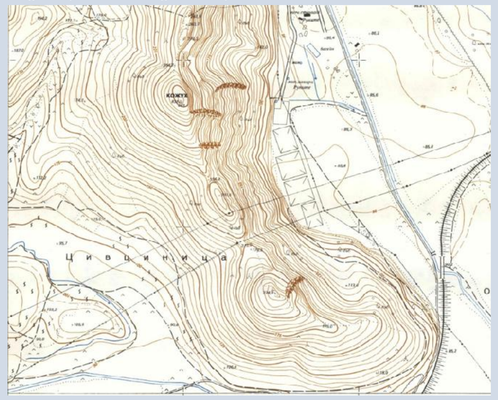


Fig. 2. Topographic map of site with immediate surroundings (scale: 1:5000). The site occupies the southernmost ridge (224 masl) of "Kozhuh", with the flooded terrace of Strymon river to the east.

This poster presents the results of the first season of the American Research Center in Sofia's (ARCS) field school excavations at the ancient site of Heraclea Sintica, located near the village of Rupite, in southwest Bulgaria (**Fig. 1**). The site lies on the southern slopes of an extinct volcano, called "Kozhuh" (281 masl), at the juncture of Strumeshnica (ancient Pontos) and Struma (ancient Strymon) rivers. (**Figs. 2-3**)

A Latin inscription discovered in 2002 (transcription to *right*), dated to AD 307-308, preserves the granting of city status to the Heracleans under Galerius, definitively identifying the site at Rupite as that of Heraclea Sintica, a city previously known from ancient literature and coinage.

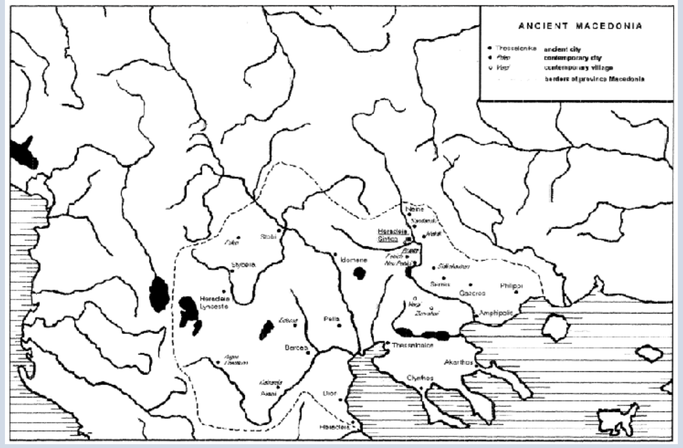
Located at the juncture of major rivers, Heraclea Sintica was a flourishing city of the Roman province of Macedonia Prima (**Fig. 4**); it was likely founded in the early Hellenistic period by Cassander and occupied through the late 4th century AD.



Fig. 3. View of the southernmost ridge and the confluence point of Strymon river to east and Strumeshnica river to south. The Rupel pass leading to Greece is in the background (photo: E. Nankov)



Fig. 4. According to Livius (45.29.6) and Diodorus (31.8.8.), Heraclea Sintica was included in Macedonia Prima, after the battle of Pydna in 168 BC. (source: Mitrev, *ZPE* 145 [2003], 263-272).



The ARCS field school joins the excavations of the National Institute of Archaeology with a Museum of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (NIAM-BAS), underway since 2007. The 2012 ARCS excavations concentrated on the area adjacent to a Roman terracotta workshop (**Figs. 5-6**), in order to clarify phases of occupation, urban layout, and the use of urban space. This season's excavations forwarded these research goals through the exposure of the northwest corner of a large room (likely from the second and third periods of occupation during 3rd century AD), a north-south street to the west of this room, and a hastily-constructed partition wall, inserted to divide the room in the fourth period of occupation during 4th century AD (**Figs. 6-8**). While conclusions are still preliminary, finds have confirmed the prominence of high-quality terracotta production, the prevalence of fishing, and the use of local marble (*right*, top row). Excavations will continue in 2013.





Of a total of 16 bronze coins, 12 were identified; 2 Hellenistic and 10 Roman. All coins originate from disturbed stratigraphic sequences.

1. Pella, 187-168 BC
2. Constantine I (306-337), barbaric imitation; Siscia (319-350)
3. Diocletian (284-305); Cyzikus (295-299)
4. Constantine I (306-337); Siscia (318-319)
5. Probus (278-282); Serdica



Fig. 5. The craftsmen quarter, located between Sectors IX, VIII and IV, was first excavated by Prof. Atanas Milchev in 1958. The NIAM excavations (2007-2012), directed by Assoc. Prof. L. Vagalinski, focused on the areas immediately to east, west and north of the complex. The deep deposits (3,50-4,50 m), marked by frequent fires and disturbances, testify to an intensive occupation within early 3rd-mid 5th century AD. The 14 sectors (I-XIV) designate the areas surveyed with a magnetometer by a German-Bulgarian team in April 2011. (source: L. Vagalinski).



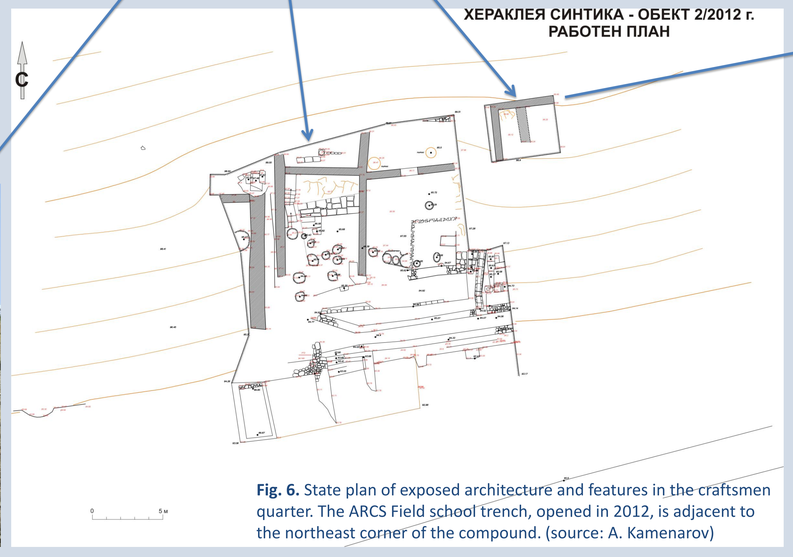
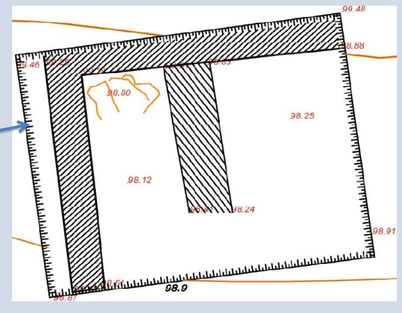


Fig. 6. State plan of exposed architecture and features in the craftsmen quarter. The ARCS Field school trench, opened in 2012, is adjacent to the northeast corner of the compound. (source: A. Kamenarov)







The ARCS Field School at Heraclea Sintica is made possible with the generous support of



Heraclea Sintica (Bulgaria)

Emil Nankov (ARCS), Lyudmil Vagalinski (Director, National Institute of Archaeology with Museum, Sofia), Hallie Franks (New York University)



The Field School

Inaugural season: June 28 – July 21, 2012



Participants

10 students from UNC, Cornell, Virginia Tech, University of Missouri, Brown, Willamette, The College of William and Mary, and the University of Colorado

Lecture Program

A lecture program augmented our fieldwork, and included lectures on archaeological material and techniques, and the region's environment, history, and material culture.



Epigraphy of the Middle Strymon River Valley
(**Nicolay Sharankov**, Department of Classics, SU "Kliment Ohridski")
Commercial containers in ancient Greece and beyond.
Money in ancient Thrace.
(**Chavdar Tzochev**, Kress Fellow at ASCSA)
Paleobotany in Bulgaria
*(***Tzvetana Popova**, NIAM-BAS)

Historical Topography of the Middle Strymon River Valley.
(**Emil Nankov**, ARCS)
Archaeology in Bulgaria (an overview). Excavations at Heraclea Sintica.
(**Lyudmil Vagalinski**, Director of NIAM-BAS)
Non-invasive methods in archaeology. Magnetometry.
(**Petar Zidarov**, Department of Archaeology at NBU)
Animals in Archaeology: An Introduction to Faunal Analysis and Human-Animal Relationships in the Past.
(**John Gorczyk**, Department of Anthropology, Cornell University)
The history of Macedonia from the Archaic through the Roman period.
Painting and mosaics.
The Coinage of Macedonia.
(**Hallie Franks**, Gallatin School, NYU)

On site

Our area of excavation is on the southern slope, adjacent to and east of the NIAM-BAS excavations. Our trench measured 6x4 m (see The site and Excavations).



To give every student ample opportunity to dig and process finds, we divided the students into two teams, and assigned each team to one half of the trench (east or west, each 3 x 4 m.). Experienced post-graduates acted as trench supervisors, and assisted in recording and in teaching the processes and techniques of recording. Each morning started with a summary and discussion of what had been accomplished the day before and a review of working interpretations of the material. In their respective trenches, the students rotated between digging, clearing, metal detecting, dry sieving, weighing and initial sorting of pottery on site, and recording progress.

Each student kept a field journal that described daily progress on site based on the kind of information recorded in our notebook system. Halfway through the season, we collected the notebooks and discussed them with the students individually and in their teams. In addition, each student wrote a paper summarizing their experience on site, the information recorded in their notebooks, and their interpretation of the results.







Site visits

To familiarize students with the region and with comparable or contemporary sites, the program included field trips to archaeological sites and museums in Bulgaria, FYROM, and Greece.

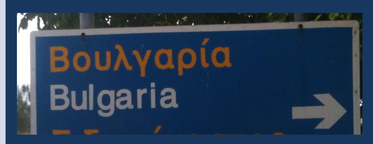
June 29: Ancient and medieval Sofia
July 1: Levunovo Sanctuary; Rupite (Bulgaria)
July 7: Bansko, Strumica; Stobi (FYROM)
July 15: Philippi; Amphipolis (Greece)
July 16: Vergina (Greece)
July 21: Sandanski; Blagoevgrad; Melnik (Bulgaria)





Processing

Processing of finds was primarily done in evening sessions, which served as hands-on tutorials on the local array of Hellenistic and Roman pottery shapes, fabrics, and functions, general pottery drawing and description, and photographing and recording techniques. The final two days on site were devoted to instruction in drawing trench plans and profiles, and photographing trenches.



For more information and applications for our 2013 season, please visit arcsofia.org and take a flyer!

the America for Bulgaria Foundation, in collaboration with the National Institute of Archaeology with Museum, Sofia