This poster presents the results of the second season of the American Research Center in Sofia’s (ARCS) Field School excavations at the ancient Macedonian 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 (Fig. 2). A Latin inscription discovered in 2002, dated to AD 307, preserves the granting of city status to the Heracleans under Galerius, definitely 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; it was likely founded in the early Hellenistic period and occupied through the mid 5th century AD.

The ARCS Field School joins the excavations of the National Institute of Archaeology and Museum of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (NIAM-BAS), underway since 2007 (Figs. 3-4). The 2013 ARCS excavations concentrated on the area adjacent to a late Roman terracotta workshop, hoping to clarify phases of occupation, urban layout, and the use of urban space (Fig. 5). This season’s excavations concentrated on the northwest corner of a stone building of uncertain function, and forwarded our research goals through the exposure of two occupation layers, deposited in rapid succession, over a major destruction layer (Fig. 6). This sequence promises to add nuance to the current understanding of the occupation sequence, which has been previously divided according to four major periods. While conclusions are still preliminary, finds have confirmed the prominence of local terracotta production (e.g. theatrical masks) and have revealed, for the first time, the presence of high-quality interior decoration, including mosaics, painted plaster, and marble ornament.

The Site and Excavations

The ARCS/NIAM Excavations at Heraclea Sintica is made possible with
Heraclea Sintica (Bulgaria)

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

The Field School
Second season: May 29 – July 1, 2013

Participants
12 students from NYU, Virginia Tech, Williamette, Columbia, Rice, the Universities of Cincinnati, Illinois (Urbana-Champaign), Texas, Maryland, and Tennessee.

On site
Our area of excavation is on the southern slope, adjacent to and east of the NIAM-BAS excavations. Our trench measured 6 x 4 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.

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.

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.

Historical Topography of the Middle Strymon River Valley
Epigraphy of the Middle Strymon River Valley
(Emil Nankov, ARCS)
The Thracian Economy: Between Ideology and Archaeology
(Chavdar Tzchev, Independent Scholar)
Excavations at Heraclea Sintica
(Lyudmil Vagalinski, Director of NIAM-BAS)
Remote Sensing Techniques in Archaeology
(Petar Zidarov, NBU)
Human-animal relationships in Prehistory
(Nadya Karastoyanova, NBU)
The history of Macedonia from the Archaic through the Roman period.
Painting and mosaics.
The Coinage of Macedonia.
(Hallie Franks, NYU)

Weekend site visits
To familiarize students with the region and with comparable or contemporary sites, the program included trips during the field season to archaeological sites and museums in Bulgaria, Republic of Macedonia, and Greece.

June 9: Levunovo Sanctuary; Rupite (Bulgaria)
June 15: Bansko, Strumica; Stobi (Rep. of Macedonia)
June 22: Thessaloniki (Greece)
June 29: Sandanski; Blagoevgrad; Melnik (Bulgaria)

Pre-excavation trip to Bulgarian archaeological sites
Prior to our field season, the students participated in a 10-day tour of Bulgaria. This tour introduced them to Bulgaria’s historical periods and material culture, the problems facing Bulgarian archaeologists, and the modern country where they lived while excavating. Led by Drs. Emil Nankov and Eric De Sena of ARCS, the group visited sites from the prehistoric through the modern periods, and from Sofia to the Black Sea coast.

May 29-31: Sofia’s archaeological sites and museums
June 1: Sostra, Pavlikeni and Nicopolis ad Istrum (night in Veliko Tarnovo)
June 2: Novae and Ruse (night in Ruse)
June 3: Razgrad: Abritus, Shumen fortress, Madara (night in Varna)
June 4: Varna museum and baths, Messambria, Pomorie, Apollonia Pontica (night in Sozopol)
June 5: Kabylye, Stara Zagora museum, Augusta Traiana, Kazanlak (night in Pavel Banya)
June 6: Golyama Kosmatka, Ostrusha, Dioctelianopolis, Starosel tombs (night in Plovdiv)
June 7: Plovdiv (night in Sapareva Banya)
June 8: Germania (arrive in Petrich)

For more information and applications for our 2014 season, please visit arcsofia.org and take a flyer!

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