



## AMERICAN RESEARCH CENTER IN SOFIA NEWSLETTER No. 3, JUNE 2008

The American Research Center in Sofia (ARCS, [www.einaudi.cornell.edu/arcs](http://www.einaudi.cornell.edu/arcs)), established in 2004, is dedicated to research in the humanities and social sciences and represents a consortium of over 60 educational institutions registered in North America. ARCS is a Developing Member of the Council of American Overseas Research Centers and an Educational Member of the American Chamber of Commerce in Bulgaria.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

ARCS is delighted to welcome our new member institutions and their representatives: Baylor University (John Thorburn), the University of Michigan (Adela Sobotkova), Dartmouth College (Ada Cohen), and Loyola University New Orleans (Bernard Cook). Several other universities are in the process of becoming ARCS members.

November 2007-March 2008. Professor Kevin Clinton, Chair of the ARCS Managing Committee and Dr. Nora Dimitrova, Director of the US office of ARCS, gave guest lectures at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and the New Bulgarian University.

December 14, 2007. Dr. Nikola Theodosiev attended the Christmas Party organized by the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission and met Fulbright scholars doing research in Bulgaria.

January 30, 2008. Prof. Kevin Clinton and Dr. Nikola Theodosiev attended the General Assembly Meeting of the American Chamber of Commerce in Bulgaria. Guest speaker at the meeting was Mr. Alexander Karagiannis, Deputy Chief of Mission of the U.S. Embassy in Bulgaria. His speech was entitled "U.S. Primary Elections". In

addition, Mr. Karagiannis discussed American - Bulgarian relations.

March-May 2008. ARCS Associate Academic Director Dr. Nikola Theodosiev just concluded his visit to the US as the 2008 Samuel H. Kress Lecturer of the Archaeological Institute of America. He gave lectures on ancient Thrace at: California State University at Fresno, College of Charleston, College of William and Mary, Cornell University, Emory University, Loyola University at New Orleans, Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Randolph College, Science Museum of Virginia in Richmond, Stanford University, University of California at Berkeley, University of California at Los Angeles, University of Georgia, University of Texas at Austin and University of Virginia. The lectures were received with great interest by the audiences.

February-March 2008. Birgitte Bøgh of the Danish National Research Foundation's Centre for Black Sea Studies spent two weeks at ARCS dedicated to research on the cult of Cybele in the territory of Bulgaria. See more under Reports.

11-12 April 2008. Professor Clinton and Dr. Dimitrova gave presentations at the

8th Fulbright International Conference on "Education and Society: Problems, Prospects, Prognoses" at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski."

18 April 2008. Dr. Zvi Keren of the Tel Aviv University visited ARCS and gave a fascinating lecture on the history of the Jewish community in Bulgaria. The lecture was interspersed with musical performances and was enthusiastically received by the audience. Dr. Keren has done extensive research on Jewish documents from Bulgaria. Together with Professor Minna Rozen of the Haifa University, he has collected the texts of several thousand Jewish grave inscriptions on stone which await publication support.

22-24 April 2008. Kevin Clinton, Nora Dimitrova, and Anton Kazakov, ARCS Building Manager, visited the area around the picturesque town of Gotse Delchev, including the villages of Leshten and Kovachevica, famous for the quaint architecture of their traditional houses and the breathtaking landscape, as well as ancient Nicopolis ad Nestum, a flourishing Roman

and Byzantine town with significant archaeological remains. The group was impressed by the finds at the historical museum of Gotse Delchev, where they were kindly met by Mrs. Spaska Paskova. They also visited the "Ilia Todorov Gadjev" Institute for the History of the Bulgarian Immigration in North America. The Institute was founded and sponsored by Dr. Ivan Iliev Gadjev, a great Bulgarian benefactor who has helped many a worthy cause and has done a truly enormous amount of work on documenting the history of Bulgarian immigration. His Institute is an amazing research venue with a library exceeding 40,000 printed volumes as well as a massive archive of important documents. After the communist regime had murdered his father and handicapped the life of his family, Dr. Gadjev emigrated to the United States in 1968, where he had a successful career as a veterinary doctor in Detroit. He is the author of numerous books, including a five-volume collection of documents on the victims of communism in Bulgaria, a topic which is still in need of historical research and appropriate publicizing.

### **ARCS ACQUIRES PERMANENT HOME**

The Packard Humanities Institute (PHI) recently gave the American Research Center in Sofia (ARCS) two grants, totaling \$2,750,000, for the purchase, partial renovation, and equipping of a building to be used as its permanent headquarters in Sofia, Bulgaria. From the funds provided by these grants ARCS purchased most of the property on January 16 and an adjacent plot on February 22, 2008.

PHI ([www.packhum.org](http://www.packhum.org)) was established in 1987 to create tools for basic research in the Humanities and to foster public interest in the history, literature, and music of the past. ARCS is deeply grateful to the President of PHI, David W. Packard, who recognized the necessity of having property that would satisfy the long-term needs of

the Research Center and challenged us to find it. Thanks to his initiative we now have a building and property that admirably suit this goal.

The building (75 Vasil Petleshkov St.) is located in the Hadji Dimitar district in Sofia. The original building was constructed in the 1940's, expropriated under communism, and restored to its original owner a few years ago, who had it substantially renovated. It has ca. 800 sq. m. (ca. 8,600 sq. ft.) of interior space, on a plot of 1,540 sq. m. (ca. 16,575 sq. ft.), facing two parallel streets. The interior of the building has four levels: the lowest level is currently used as a hostel and can accommodate up to 6 visitors. The second and third levels are furnished with custom-

made book-shelves and function as library and office spaces. The fourth level is used as the director's residence, including a formal parlor and reception area.

Since January the ARCS staff has been busily engaged in managing the finishing work and equipping of the new building. Nearly all of the heavy-duty operations on

the property are complete. A landscaping company created a beautiful garden in the time-honored tradition of other American Overseas Centers. As a gift to the local community we have restored an adjacent children's park that has long since fallen into decay like many other little parks in the city. It's nice to see kids playing there again.

## SECOND SCHUYLER LECTURE

The second annual Eugene Schuyler lecture, entitled "Children in wartime: ancient Athens and modern Europe," was given on May 9, 2008 by John H. Oakley, Andrew W. Mellon Professor, American School of Classical Studies at Athens and Chancellor Professor/Forrest D. Murden Jr. Professor, College of William and Mary.

Professor Kevin Clinton introduced the speaker and reminded the audience of Eugene Schuyler's brilliant career as a diplomat-humanist and his significant contributions to Bulgaria's liberation. ARCS has named its annual lecture after him as a small tribute to his life. By serendipitous coincidence, the new home of ARCS is only a couple of blocks away from the street named Eugene Schuyler.

Professor Oakley's illuminating lecture was received with great enthusiasm: the hall was filled to capacity. Professor Oakley showed moving scenes of parental affection depicted on ancient Greek vases and pointed out intriguing parallels concerning the perception of children during

the Peloponnesian war and during wartime in modern Europe. In both cases children were more keenly felt as the future of the state, with attendant political and legal incentives to promote childbirth. The lecture was followed by an elegant catered reception, which was also a great success. The reception took place on the second floor. Several people brought gifts, most in the form of books—welcome additions to our library. Professor Petya Yaneva, Dean of the Philological Faculty at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", donated a lovely icon of St. George on behalf of the Classics department.

U.S. Ambassador John Beyrle and David Siefkin, Public Affairs Officer at the Embassy, were present at the event and conversed with many people. Both were very impressed by the building and the lecture. Also by the music. Hristo Alexiev, our library assistant, and the Balkan Wave Orchestra played Greek tunes before the start of the lecture and a Bulgarian tune at the end, with an American one as an encore.

## ANNUAL ACADEMIC PROGRAM

We are happy to report that the Spring Term of our annual program was carried out successfully. Our contributing lecturers kindly shared their expertise on the great variety of religious beliefs and practices in Bulgaria throughout the centuries. The program consisted of the following lectures and trips:

- Dr. Maya Vassileva, Center of Thracology: "Mainstream religious ideas in Thrace"
- Professor Nicolay Sharankov, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski": "Greek, Thracian, and Eastern Cults in the Greek colonies on the Black Sea Coast"

- Professor Dr. Elka Bakalova, New Bulgarian University: "A *locus sanctus* in Bulgaria: the Monastery of St. John of Rila and its sacred topography"
- Professor Dr. Georgi Vassilev, State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies: "Bogomilism and the English Reformation"
- Dr. Clemena Antonova, American University in Bulgaria: "'Reading' the Medieval Icon in Space"
- Dr. Elissaveta Moussakova, National Library "St. Cyril and St. Methodius": "Visualizing the Text in Bulgarian Medieval Manuscripts"
- Professor Evelina Kelbetcheva, American University in Bulgaria: "The Treatment of Islamic Minorities in Bulgaria under Communism"
- Dr. Liliana Simeonova, Institute of Balkan Studies: "Papal Missions to Bulgaria: 866-870"
- Orlin Yordanov, National Gymnasium of Classical Languages and Cultures: "The Palamite doctrine of the term "energy" in the context of original sin."
- Professor Rositza Gradeva, American University in Bulgaria: "Islam in the Balkans/Bulgaria: past and present, politics and culture"
- Dr. Zvi Keren, Tel Aviv University: "The Jews in Bulgaria: where do they come from? History and everyday life over the centuries"
- Visit of religious monuments: the monasteries of German, Samokov, Dragalevtsi, Divotino, Zemen, Lyulin, Zelin, Etropole, Glozhene, Obradovtsi, Ilientsi, Godech, Skravena, Sedemte Prestola, Vrachesh, the Boyana church and other sites.

**ARCS is delighted to announce the acceptance of five graduate students to its 2008/09 Annual academic program: Adela Sobotkova, University of Michigan; Yuliana Gencheva and Aneliya Dimitrova, Indiana University; Matt Thompson, University of Washington; and Hope Lozano-Bielat, Boston University.**

## REPORTS

### IN SEARCH OF KYBELE IN BULGARIA

Birgitte Bøgh

Centre for Black Sea Studies, Danish National Research Foundation, University of Aarhus, Denmark

Comfortably seated on the plane from Sofia, it seems a good time to write some notes on my trip to Bulgaria. Having experienced nothing but friendly people, helpful colleagues, and very interesting places, I'm pleased to conclude that it has been a very successful journey. I left Denmark, where I come from, two weeks ago, and came to Sofia in order to study statuettes of and literature about Kybele. She was an Anatolian goddess who was worshipped in Phrygia from ca. 10<sup>th</sup> century BC and in the Greek world from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC onwards. The newest research on this god-

dess shows that she was not a traditional fertility goddess in Phrygia. Instead, her most persistent iconographical features were those of power, being presented as a figure of control over wild nature, especially of mountains, and accompanied by predatory animals. Her status as a mother most likely reflected a connection with the state and the throne, thus being seen as the protector and divine legitimizing power behind the king. Besides the power aspect, one of her most important roles was that of a city protector. In the Greek world, but more specifically so in the Roman world, other aspects of her figure became prominent, namely those of fertility, healing, and protection and nursing of children (*kourotrophos*). Also, from Hellenistic times, she acquired a new partner, Attis. The goal of my Ph.D. thesis is to try to investigate Kybele's roles and degree of

worship around the Black Sea with a special focus on the western Black Sea coast, Kyzikos (on the southern coast of the Propontis), and in Olbia in the Northwestern part of the Black Sea. With the sensational find of a Kybele temple in Balchik, the ancient Dionysopolis, and the relatively large amount of material (coins, terracottas, inscriptions) from Nesebar, ancient Mesambria, Bulgaria seems to take a central position in my investigations. Was her cult introduced to this old, Thracian area in her Phrygian or Greek role? To what degree was her character influenced by indigenous beliefs? Did the cult develop along the same lines as in other parts of the Greco-Roman world? What part, if any, did the Black Sea region play in the formation of the iconography and type of worship of the goddess? In order to look further into these and other questions, I needed to get acquainted with the finds of Kybele material in Bulgaria and with the latest research by Bulgarian scholars.

Thus I spent the first days of my stay getting introduced to people and libraries. My two Bulgarian acquaintances, Maya Vasileva and Diana Gergova, were a great help and got me settled in the libraries of the Institutes of Thracology and Archaeology. I managed to get copies of all the literature that the state library in Aarhus, my home city, had not been able to retrieve. Furthermore, they helped me get in contact with some of the staff of the museums on the Black Sea coast. The absolute highlight of my visit happened a week later. ARCS had managed to set up a meeting for me with the epigraphist working on the inscriptions from Balchik, Nikolay Sharankov, who had most kindly agreed to share his first-hand knowledge on the epigraphic material found in the temple. I cannot begin to describe the importance of the insight provided by this epigraphic evidence, revealing not only unique epithets for Kybele, but also testifying to cultic matters, like priestly titles and yearly processions in honor of Kybele.

The inscriptions, their public character, and the several representations of Kybele demonstrate the great significance of this site, and the mere fact that an actual temple building was erected to Kybele in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC testifies to the uniqueness of this find.

After the ARCS staff made the necessary planning with tickets, bus routes between the coastal cities and a stay in a hotel in Nesebar, I went from Sofia to Balchik on a night bus. It was in fact (contrary to my expectations) a pleasant and comfortable way of traveling, even though I did envy the people who actually managed to sleep during the trip. When the museum opened, I hastened to see which interesting finds would appear before my eyes, and the Kybele reliefs and statues were indeed exceptional, even though the finds were not all on display. The next stops on my route were the Varna, Nesebar and Burgas museums, where I was impressed everywhere by the kindness of the staff. Sadly, but not surprisingly, the museums were not in possession of much Kybele material, but in the Nesebar museum, which is beautiful, I saw a new relief found in a grave and was allowed to photocopy some of their material. So, after all, it was a very exciting trip.

Living at the American Research Center in Sofia and enjoying the seemingly endless patience and helpfulness of the people there, who provided guidance and information that would have been impossible to find on my own (telephone advice, location of important stores, planning of trips, bus and city guidance, etc.), made all my academic goals of the trip considerably easier. Yet, equally important for me was the general feeling of an overall warm and welcoming Bulgarian people. Everywhere I met nothing but warm smiles, an eagerness to talk, interest towards foreign people, and — what charmed me the most — a deep joy of life. This was my first, but definitely not my last trip to Bulgaria!



Students and staff members visit the Boyana church, famous for the quality of its frescoes



The new home of ARCS



Visit to the monastery of German near Sofia



A priest consecrates the new home of ARCS



The Glozhene monastery with its stern beauty was one of the highlights of the Spring term



The gardens of ARCS



A recreation area in the yard



Professor Oakley gives the Second Schuyler lecture



Children playing at the adjacent park, restored by ARCS



Reception celebrating Professor Oakley's lecture and the new building of ARCS



The Balkan Wave ensemble performs Greek, Bulgarian and American music at ARCS



Foreground: Ambassador John Beyrle and Professor Kevin Clinton at the reception

## GETTING TO KNOW BULGARIA

Jennifer L. Raines

University of Colorado, Boulder

Yesterday I noticed for the first time that the MacDonald's sign on Maria Luiza is written in Cyrillic lettering. It was something so simple and yet it made me stop for a moment and realize just how far I have come since I arrived in Bulgaria in August. How things that once seemed so foreign to me are now familiar and comfortable. I knew so little about this country before I arrived. My attempts to read about the history of Bulgaria and to learn Bulgarian from a CD were edged out of the way by a full-time job in the summer and before I knew it I was boarding a plane for a country that few of my friends or family members could locate on a map.

I got on the plane for the last leg of my journey, from Munich to Sofia, and the flight attendant told us about the seat belts, life vests, and emergency exits first in very rapid Bulgarian. I stared at the Cyrillic writing on the tray table in front of me and the panic began to set in. What was I doing going to a country so far from home that I knew so little about and where I couldn't speak the language? But with a few deep breaths I managed to collect by luggage and enter the city that was no longer Sofia, but София.

It was strange and often terrifying to be surrounded by so many new things. It was unsettling to not be able to read street signs, or menus, or the names of stores. But luckily I did not have to tackle it all by myself. From the day I arrived at ARCS, the people in the Center were all extremely kind to me. And with their help I was soon equipped with an apartment, thrice-weekly language lessons, and, best of all, some friendly faces. As I mastered simple things like ordering coffee and buying toilet paper, things got easier and I began to take in the culture around me. The lectures and

field trips offered by ARCS did a phenomenal job of opening my eyes to the complexity and beauty of Bulgaria. From visiting beautiful Rila Monastery, to exploring Thracian tombs or quaint Revival Period villages, I was astounded by the depth of the history and richness of the culture that this country contained.

But while I saw countless beautiful monasteries and churches, museums, tombs, villages, cities, and landscapes, what stands out in my mind even more are the people. From a country shepherd, to my language teacher's family, from prominent archaeologists to shopkeepers, I have been continually awed by friendliness, enthusiasm, national pride and local knowledge of the Bulgarians I have met. They take such pride from their own culture, language and history and have welcomed my interest with open arms.

I have worked hard to understand that history and language. I have a notebook full of notes on history, a camera full of photographs around the country, and a certificate from the language school to prove it. But, those aren't the things that really indicate knowledge or understanding. It is only in those odd moments, like when the Cyrillic MacDonald's sign caught my eye, and I stood there, taking it all in even just for a moment - the towering minaret of the mosque beside me, the dome of Sveta Nedelya in the distance, the clatter of the tram lines, the honking of cars, and the brilliance of the fresh flowers sold by vendors outside the Hali. The layers of history in this scene go deep - the mosque, the church, the baths, TZUM, the party house just around the corner - and the Bulgarian on buildings, buses, flying out of people's mouths, undulating in the cold air. A few months ago this would have overwhelmed me and frightened me with its foreignness, but now it makes me smile. A knowing smile that comes from not just learning about Bulgaria, but being able to actually



experience the wonder and the quirks of this country, its history, and its culture.

**WHOSE WAR? READING THE  
PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE DANUBE  
THEATER OF THE CRIMEAN WAR  
1853-1856**

Stefka Hristova

University of California, Irvine

*Understanding the complexity of war is a necessary first step in any peace-building effort.*

Social and photography historians have hailed the Crimean War as the first modern war and the first photographed war respectively. We have come to know the Crimean War through the work of Roger Fenton, an English photographer commissioned to document the Russian (Ukrainian) Front of the war – namely the battles at Sebastopol, Balaklava, and Inkerman. Fenton's work has received wide recognition. Most recently it was exhibited in the Getty Museum in 2005, and his famous photograph "In the Valley of Shadow of Death" provoked heated debate on the pages of the York Times online in September 2007. Less is known about the war photographs and the tensions they documented from the banks of the Danube in 1853-4. In March 2008, I set on a two-week journey through the photographic archives in Bulgaria in search for visual documents of the engagement of Bulgarians in the war. I was able to conduct an intensive two-week survey of the photographs housed at the National Library St. Cyril and St. Methodius in Sofia and to visit the town of Silistra, Bulgaria – one of the key fortresses for which Russian and Turkish forces battled for nearly two months in the spring of 1854.

My research project seeks to offer a critical engagement with the construction of the Crimean War of 1853-56 by examining

the photographic record of these times. The Crimean war, like all of the previous Russo-Turkish wars, brought hope of liberation to the Bulgarian people living under Turkish governance. In the Bulgarian archives I found visual representations of the multiple avenues pursued by Bulgarians in addressing their grievances. Petitions for help were sent to the special Russian Envoy in Constantinople Prince Menshikov, and the Bulgarian delegation attended the crowning of Alexander II, bringing new pleas for help. Four thousand Bulgarian volunteers joined the Russian Army on the Danube Front. After the war former captains in the Bulgarian volunteer unit became leaders in several uprisings in Northern Bulgaria. While petitions and army volunteering had been part of the Bulgarian struggle since the beginning of the Russo-Turkish wars in 1812, a new strategy for liberation was rising, a strategy calling for self-sufficiency: a central organization of armed struggle and for independent military formations rather than participation in the Russian army. This struggle was documented through the photographs of Carl Szathmari as well as other unnamed practitioners. I will be presenting a working version of my research during the annual conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies in November.

I want to express my gratitude to the Center for Global Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of California, Irvine for their generous support; to Prof. Sally Stein, Visual Studies University of California, Irvine for her encouragement and guidance; and to the staff of the American Research Center in Sofia for their invaluable assistance. I want to thank also Dr. Rumén Lipchev of the Regional Historical Museum Silistra and Mrs. Zorka Ivanova of the National Library for their help in my project.

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