

THE BIRTH OF EUROPE: EXCAVATIONS AT THE NEOLITHIC SETTLEMENT OF ILINDENTSI, BULGARIA

Course ID: ARCH 365Q

May 20 – June 16, 2018

DIRECTORS:

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INTRODUCTION

During the seventh millennium BCE, the Balkan Peninsula was a gateway through which farming, animal husbandry and general Neolithization spread from Anatolia and the Near East to Europe. Central parts of the Balkans (including the Struma river valley) were among the most important migration routes during that period. Among the six Early Neolithic settlements mapped in the small Middle Struma Valley is the site of Ilindentsi. The site is located on a high terrace at 250-253 m above sea-level just at the foot of the Pirin Mountains - the third-highest mountain range on the Balkans. The site – with vertical and horizontal stratigraphy – covers an area of almost three hectares, where the prehistoric cultural layer lies immediately under the top soil (10 to 20 cm). During previous archaeological excavations (2004-2009 and 2011-2017) were unearthed remains of Early and Middle Neolithic (6000 – 5500 BCE) settlement structures and features. Among them are several dwellings, one with stone foundations, and another with elaborate floor construction and under-floor drainage systems. A third structure is completely burnt with a well preserved *in situ* "kitchen-space" including an oven, grain-storage pit and a Neolithic grave of a new-born baby. The settlement was protected by a ditch with a clay coated stone wall in the central area and by a wooden palisade along its southern border.

Excavations in 2011-2017 revealed a system of concentric trenches around the Neolithic ditch (their purpose remains unclear) and a Neolithic well structure in the South. The cultural layer was rich with artifacts dated to the first half of 6th millennium BCE. Magnetic gradiometer map of the site indicates a good preservation status of Neolithic houses to the east of the current trenches.

Although the possibility for acculturation of indigenous population cannot be completely disregarded at this stage, archaeologists assume that the Neolithic settlement at Ilindentsi was established by people of Anatolian origin (culture Hacilar VI-I), who also established the earliest and the largest Early Neolithic settlement near modern Kovachevo in the Valley. These migration patterns trace the routes of European Neolithisation and indicate multiple origins. Early farmers likely entered Europe due to complex and varied reasons: increased population, limited environmental resources, climate change etc.

Research at Ilindentsi aims to address these questions by investigating more nuanced patterns in the archaeological record. Our goal is not only to explore migration routes and reasons for European Neolithisation but also the type and history of interactions between different Neolithic groups and farming communities in the Balkans, their technology, economic and social organization. More site-specific questions concern the continuity/discontinuity of habitation, borders of the settlement through time and the function and the range of fortifications. In 2018, field school participants will take part in further excavation of the Neolithic settlement interior including buildings (one of them holds remains of stone-wall foundations, a rare example of stone architecture in the Neolithic Balkans) and outdoor activity zones.

ACADEMIC CREDIT UNITS & TRANSCRIPTS

Credit Units: Attending students will be awarded 8 semester credit units (equivalent to 12 quarter credit units) through our academic partner, Connecticut College. Connecticut College is a private, highly ranked liberal arts institution with a deep commitment to undergraduate education. Students will receive a letter grade for attending this field school (see grading assessment and matrix). This field school provides a minimum of 160 direct instructional hours. Students are encouraged to discuss the transferability of credit units with faculty and registrars at their home institutions prior to attending this field school.

Transcripts: An official copy of transcripts will be mailed to the permanent address listed by students on their online application. One additional transcript may be sent to the student's home institution at no additional cost. Additional transcripts may be ordered at any time through the National Student Clearinghouse: <http://bit.ly/2hvurkl>.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To introduce students to:

- Field archaeology and finds processing methods considering the specifics of excavating a Neolithic settlement;
- The archaeology of the Neolithic period in the Balkans with focus on Neolithic pottery and tools;
- GIS and its application in archaeology;
- Finds processing and documentation procedures: cleaning, sorting, labeling, documenting, and storing archaeological finds, flotation and processing soil samples as well as study and recording of Neolithic pottery, etc.;
- Contemporary standards of work on an archaeological site;
- Health and safety requirements at an archaeological site.

To prepare students to perform:

- Basic excavation tasks: to use proper excavation tools and techniques, follow excavation procedures, recognize artifacts and ecofacts, and distinguish archaeological contexts during involvement in excavation activities;
- Basic field documentation tasks during an ongoing excavation project: the use of measuring and documentation tools, creating a written, graphic and photographic record.

DISCLAIMER – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Archaeological field work involves physical work in the outdoors. You should be aware that conditions in the field are different than those you experience at home or around your dorms or college town. Note that a southern European (subtropical) climate dominates in the region, making summers hot (30-40° C). Rainy and chilly days in this season are rare but not unheard-of.

If you have any medical concerns, please consult your doctor. For all other concerns, please consult the project director, as appropriate.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The Field School schedule consists of four modules:

MODULE I - Theoretical module (app. 25 hours). Consists of three components:

- Lectures and instructions about the field methods and practices;
- Lectures about different aspects of the archaeology of Ilindentsi and the settlement context;
- Lectures about the history and archaeology of the Balkans, Bulgaria and the visited sites.

MODULE II – Practicum (app. 155 hours). Consists of two components:

- Field work including basic practices of excavation and archaeological records;
- Workshops dedicated to primary archaeological finds processing and documentation.

MODULE III – Excursions accompanied by lectures, presentations and behind the scenes visit to sites of historical/archaeological significance such as the medieval town of Melnik and Rozhen Monastery, the Blagoevgrad Regional Museum of History (UNESCO World Heritage Site) and the nearby town of Sandanski - a popular SPA resort, containing archaeological remains from the Late Antiquity (app. 15 hours).

MODULE IV – Homework (app. 10 hours) will be assigned to all students, which will consist of editing and processing of students' field documentation (field journal, context sheets, drawings, photos, etc.), preparing of presentations and reports.

Date	Morning	Afternoon
Day 1 20 May	Pick-up from Sofia airport can be organized upon request for an additional fee.	7:00 pm. Arrival at the guest house. Traditional Bulgarian welcome dinner.
Day 2 21 May	Orientation	Lectures: Emergence of Early Farming in the Near East and Europe: Causes and Consequence; The Early Neolithic Site at Ilindentsi and Its Geographic and Cultural Environment;
Day 3 22 May	Field work Instructions: Hygiene, health and safety at the site. Basic Field Methods and Practices for Excavation and Documentation. Use of Tools and Techniques.	Lecture: From the Field to the Storage: Review of Basic Methods for Uncovering, "First Aid", Consolidation in Situ, Cleaning, Sorting, Labeling, Documenting and Storing Ceramic Artifacts; Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation

Day 4 23 May	Field work Instruction: Introduction to the Field Journal; Contextual Sheets, Log Book and Other Forms	Lecture: Early Neolithic Pottery in Southwestern Bulgaria – Part 1 Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 5 24 May	Field work Instruction: Three Dimensional Positioning of Finds, Features and Structures. How to Use a Total Station	Lecture: Early Neolithic Pottery in Southwestern Bulgaria – Part 2 Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 6 25 May	Field work Instruction: Stratigraphy: Horizontal and Vertical	Lecture: Dating Methods for Prehistoric Sites Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 7 26 May	Excursion: Visit to the Rozhen Monastery and the medieval town of Melnik: sightseeing and optional wine-tasting.	
Day 8 27 May	Day-off	
Day 9 28 May	Field work Instruction: How to Draw a Ground-plan/elevation-plan/Cross-section Using Scale	Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 10 29 May	Field work Instruction: Photography for Archaeologists	Lecture: Field Reconnaissance Survey. Geophysical (Electrical and Magnetic) Methods in Archaeological Reconnaissance Survey Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 11 30 May	Field work. Instruction: Excavations Preparation. Preliminary Research	Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 12 31 May	Field work Instruction: Excavation completion. Post excavation work and analyses	Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 13 1 June	Field work	Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 14 2 June	Field work	Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 15-16 3-4 June	Days-off. Optional tour to Philippi (UNESCO World Heritage Site) and Kavala, Greece. Extra fees apply.	
Day 17 5 June	Field work	Lecture: Technology of Production of Stone and Bone Tools during the Neolithic Period in Europe

Day 18 6 June	Field work	Workshop: Artifact Recording and Illustration: Prehistoric Pottery
Day 19 7 June	Field work	Lecture: Introduction to the Neolithic Ceramic Studies Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 20 8 June	Field work	Workshop on Neolithic Ceramic Studies Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 21 9 June	Excursion: Visit to the Rila Monastery (UNESCO World Heritage Site) and the Regional Museum of History in Blagoevgrad	
Day 22 10 June	Excursion: Tour of Sandanski	Free time
Day 23 11 June	Field work	Lecture: GIS and Its Application in Archaeology Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 24 12 June	Field work	Lecture: Raw Materials and Diagnostic Features in Diachronic Perspective Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 25 13 June	Field work	Lecture: Standards in Archaeological Reports And Publications Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 26 14 June	Field work	Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 27 15 June	Field work	Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 28 16 June	Field work	Presentation of the Excavation's results. Evaluation meeting & Exam. Dinner and farewell party
Day 29 17 June	Departure. Check-out by noon.	

Course structure may be subject to change upon directors' discretion.

A typical work day

6:00-6:20 am	Breakfast
6:20-6:35 am	Walk to the site
6:35 am-1:00 pm	Fieldwork, including a 30-min break and a lecture on field archaeology's methods and practices (at the site)
1:00-1:15 pm	Walk to the guest-house
1:15-4:00/4:30 pm	Lunch and siesta

4:00/4:30 -7:30 pm	Lectures/Workshops/ Finds processing
7:30-8:30 pm	Dinner

In case of rainy days, lectures and/or lab work will be performed.

GRADING MATRIX

% of Grade	Activity
20 %	Exam
10 %	Excavation (use of tools, digging, scraping, brushing, cleaning, sieving, etc.)
10 %	Field journal and context sheets/labels
10 %	Leveling, measuring and scale-drawing (ground plan/ cross section/ specific archaeological structure or feature);
10 %	Photography
10 %	Finds processing: washing and sorting, labeling and registration
10 %	Artifact drawing (pottery)
10 %	Statistic forms
10%	Flotation and processing of flotation samples.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

The required minimum attendance for the successful completion of the field school is 85% of the course hours. Any significant tardy or early departure from an activity will be calculated as an absence from the activity. An acceptable number of absences for which a medical or reasonable excuse is provided will not be taken into account if the student catches up on the field school study plan through additional readings or personal consultations and tutorials with program staff members.

PREREQUISITES

None. This is hands-on, experiential learning and students will study on-site how to conduct archaeological research. Archaeology involves physical work and exposure to the elements and thus requires a measure of understanding that this will not be the typical university learning environment. You will have to work outdoors and will get sweaty and tired. Students are required to come equipped with sufficient excitement and adequate understanding that archaeology requires real, hard work, in the sun and wind, on your feet, and with your trowel. The work requires patience, discipline and attention to detail.

The field school at Ilindentsi will host students and professionals of archaeology from all over the world. With such an international team it is vital that all students respect the IFR code of conduct, each other's cultures, and local social and cultural rules and laws.

EQUIPMENT LIST

- Work shoes (preferably closed shoes like sneakers or running shoes)
- An additional set of walking and hiking shoes.
- Clothing suitable for outdoor activities (consider weather conditions from hot and sunny to rainy and chilly).
- Wide brim hat for field work.
- A light raincoat for possible rainy and windy days is recommended.
- Medication - It is not necessary to bring over-the-counter medicine from your country since you can buy all common types in Bulgaria (e.g. aspirin, anti-insecticides, sunscreen, etc.) It is recommended, however, that you bring any individual prescription medicines.
- A converter to EU type electricity wall-plug if needed.
- A good attitude for work, fun, study, and discoveries.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation: Students will stay at the Blagovesta Guest-house at Ilindentsi. The guest house has comfortable rooms with 2 to 3 beds, bathrooms with a WC, shower, air-conditioning, and TV. Laundry service and free Wi-Fi is provided. Students are not expected to bring any additional equipment, sleeping bags or towels.

The village and the site: Ilindentsi is a small village – there are a couple of basic food & beverage shops, bars & taverns, a winery, a Christian Orthodox church and an art-center with a sculpture park. The closest supermarket, drug-store, pharmacy, bank with ATM and medical office are in the municipal center Strumyani, 3 km away from Ilindentsi.

The excavation site is situated about 1 km away from Blagovesta guesthouse. Participants will be expected to walk to the site and back to the guest house during the work days. The walk takes approximately 15 minutes. All site trenches are protected from the sun by sheds. The site has no running water or electricity nearby but there is a field latrine.

Meals: Three meals (Balkan cuisine) per day are provided. Meals usually take place in the guest-house garden. Brown-bag-lunches will be provided during excursions and days-off. This field school can accommodate vegetarians, vegans and individuals with lactose-intolerance. Kosher and gluten-free restrictions are impossible to accommodate in this location.

Students must pay on their own for extra days and for single room accommodation as well as for extra meals, beverages, services and products!

TRAVEL & MEETING POINT/TIME

Students should arrive on May 20 at the guest house by 7:00pm. Students may organize the trip individually or request a transfer for an additional fee. Enrolled students will receive a travel info-sheet with specific travel details prior to departure.

If you missed your connection or your flight was delayed/canceled, call, text or email the project staff (email: bhfs.admissions@gmail.com). Local contact information will be provided to enrolled students.

VISA REQUIREMENTS

Citizens of US, Canada, Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia and New Zealand **do not need a visa** to visit Bulgaria for up to 90 days. Citizens of all other countries may need a visa. The Balkan Heritage Foundation can send an official invitation letter that should be used at the relevant embassy to secure a visa to the program.

For more information visit the Balkan Heritage Foundation web site at <http://www.bhfieldschool.org/information/visa-help> and the links provided there.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Safety and health orientation will take place at the beginning of the program. Ilindentsi is a small Bulgarian village but the municipal center of Strumyani (3 km away) offers first aid medical care and a pharmacy. The closest town with a hospital is Sandanski – 15 km away.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Bulgarian dialing code: +359

Time Difference (Summer time): UTC/GMT +2 hours (March through October).

Measure units (metric system): degree Celsius (°C), meter (m.), gram (gr.), liter (l)

Money/Banks/Credit Cards: The Bulgarian currency is the Bulgarian LEV (BGN). You cannot pay in Euros or other foreign currency, except in casinos and big hotels (where the exchange rate is really unfair)! Since 1997, the Bulgarian LEV has been pegged to the EURO at the exchange rate of 1 euro =

1.955 lev (usually sold for 1.94 lev). Bulgarian banks accept all credit cards and sometimes travelers' checks. Usually banks open at 8.30-9.00 am and close at 5.00-6.00 pm. They work from Monday to Friday. Shopping malls, supermarkets, and many shops in Sofia and/or bigger towns and resorts will also accept credit cards. This is not valid for smaller "domestic" shops throughout the country where the only way of payment is cash! You can see Bulgarian notes and coins in circulation at:

<http://www.bnb.bg/NotesAndCoins/NACNotesCurrency/index.htm?toLang= EN>

Exchange of foreign currencies is possible not only at banks but also at numerous exchange offices. NB, Most of them don't collect a commission fee and have acceptable exchange rates (+/- 0.5-1,5% of the official rate) However, those located in shopping areas of big cities, resorts, railway stations, airports, etc., can overcharge you varying amounts. Ask in advance how much money you will get!

ATMs are available all over the country and POS-terminals are in every bank office.

If you plan to use your credit/debit card in Bulgaria, please inform your bank of your intention before departure! Otherwise it is very possible that your bank will block your account/ card for security reasons when you try to use it abroad! Unblocking your card, when abroad, may cost you several phone calls and a lot of money.

Electricity

The electricity power in the country is stable at 220 - Volts A.C. (50 Hertz). Don't forget to bring a voltage converter, if necessary!



Outlets in Bulgaria generally accept 1 type of plug: two round pins. If your appliance's plug has a different shape, you will need a plug adapter.

Emergency

National emergency number is 112.

REQUIRED READINGS

Readings will be made available to enrolled students as PDF files through shared Dropbox folder.

Boyadzhiev, Y. *Early Neolithic Cultures on the Territory of Bulgaria.* – In: I. Gatsov, Y. Boyadzhiev (eds.). *The first Neolithic Sites in Central/South-East European Transcaucasia, vol. 1. Early Neolithic Sites on the Territory of Bulgaria. BAR International Series 2048, 2009, 7-43.*

Bojadžiev, J. *Absolute Chronology of the Neolithic and Eneolithic Cultures in the Valley of Struma.* - In: H. Todorova, M. Stefanovich. G. Ivanov (eds.). *The Struma/Strymon River Valley in Prehistory. In the Steps of James Harvey Gaul, 2. Sofia, 2007, 309-316.*

Grant J., S. Gorin and N. Fleming. *The Archaeology Coursebook: an introduction to themes, sites, methods and skills. Routledge. 2008*

Grębska-Kulova, M. and I. Kulov. *Prehistorical Sites in the Middle Struma River Valley between the End of the VIIth mill. BC and the beginning of the Ist Mill. BC.* - In: H. Todorova, M. Stefanovich. G. Ivanov (eds.). *The Struma/Strymon River Valley in Prehistory. In the Steps of James Harvey Gaul, 2. Sofia, 2007, 279-296.*

Lichardus-Itten, M. and J.-P. Demoule, L. Perničeva, M. Grebska-Kulova, I. Kulov. *The site of Kovacevo and the Beginnings of the Neolithic period in Southwestern Bulgaria. The French-Bulgarian excavations 1986-2000.* – In: *Beiträge zu Jungsteinzeitlichen Forschungen in Bulgarien.* Eds. M. Lichardus-Itten, J. Lichardus, V. Nikolov. Bonn, 2002, 99-158.

Nikolov, D. *Periodization of the Neolithic along the Struma Valley.* In: *Academia Litterarum Bulgarica. Thracia XV. In honorem annorum LXX Aleksandri Fol. Serdicae, 2003 (MMIII), 99-106.*

Pernicheva, L. *Prehistoric Cultures in the Middle Struma Valley: Neolithic and Eneolithic - In: Prehistoric Bulgaria. Monographs in World Archaeology No 22. Edited by D. Bailey, I. Panayotov, pp. 99-147. Madison Wisconsin 1995*

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Čochadžiev, S. and V. Genadieva. *Contribution to the Study of the Early Neolithic Age in the Struma River Basin. - In: M. Stefanovič, H. Todorova, H. Hauptmann (Hrsg.). James Harvey Gaul in Memoriam 1. Sofia, 1998, 79-89.*

Gimbutas, M. *Neolithic Macedonia. As reflected by Excavation at Anza, Southeast Yugoslavia. Monumenta Archeologica 1. Los Angeles, 1976.*

Gurova, M. Bonsall, C. *Lithic studies an alternative approach to Neolithization. – Bulgarian e-Journal of Archaeology, vol. 4, 2014, 104-135.*

Malamidou, D. and D. Kryoneri. *A Neolithic and Early Bronze Settlement in the Lower Strymon Valley.- In: H. Todorova, Stefanovich, M. and G. Ivanov (eds.). The Struma/Strymon River Valley in Prehistory. In the Steps of James Harvey Gaul, 2. Sofia,2007, 297-308.*

McIntosh, J. *Handbook to Life in Prehistoric Europe. New York, 2006*

Mitrevski, D. *Prehistory in Republic of Macedonia-F.Y.R.O.M. – In: D. Grammenos (ed.). Recent Research in the Prehistory of the Balkans. Thessaloniki, 2003, 13-72.*

Perlès, C. *The Early Neolithic in Greece. The first farming communities in Europe. Cambridge, 2001.*

Perničeva, L. *Prehistory of the Strumešnica valley - In: Śliwa J., Domaradzki, M., (eds.). The lower Strumešnica Valley in prehistoric, ancient and early medieval times. Kraków, 1983, 11-34.*

Perničeva, L. and I. Kulov, M. Grebska-Kulova. *Early Neolithic House from Bălgarčevo, Blagoevgrad Region (SW Bulgaria). – Archeologia Bulgarica, 2000, 3, 1-10*

Weninger, B. and E. Alram-Stern, E. Bauer, L. Clare, U. Danzeglocke, O. Jöris, C. Kubatzki, G. Rollefson, H. Todorova, T. van Andel. *Abrupt Climate Forcing Observed at Early Neolithic Sites in South-East Europe and the Near East. – In: The Struma River Valley in Prehistory. H. Todorova, M. Stefanovich, G. Ivanov (eds.), Sofia 2007, 7-28.*