

ANNUAL REPORT: BRESTO, PREHISTORIC FORTRESS IN THE MOUNTAINS: DIGGING IN THE TIME OF TROY 2016 FIELD SCHOOL, BULGARIA

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Bresto 2016. Aerial photograph of the southeastern part of the fortified settlement.

Our project explores the Late Bronze Age fortified site of Bresto, located in the mountains of southwestern Bulgaria, some 80 miles to the north of the Mediterranean sea. Bresto was founded in the time of the biggest heyday of the Mycenaean polities in the Eastern Mediterranean (13th cent. BCE). The site was abandoned in the 12th cent. BCE, shortly after the destruction of most of the Aegean palatial centers.

Among the main question of the international team consisting of scholars from Bulgaria, Germany, Australia and the USA are related with issues of connectivity (both regional and long-distance networks), mountain economy, social uses of built space and object biographies.

The Bresto project started with a short trench excavation in 2012 and became part of the Institute for Field Research-Balkan Heritage Foundation Program for the Balkans in 2015 (with first campaign 2016). It had a strong educational profile even before 2016, due to the fact that it is directed by two university professors who aim at educating students during fieldwork.

In 2016 we had the chance to find a Mycenaean imported wheel-made *alabastron*-vessel in Bresto. The presence of this Aegean container for ointments supports our hypothesis about the participation of seemingly remoted mountain communities within overregional exchange

networks. Bresto also stands out because of its sophisticated fortification architecture. This year we continued to excavate sediments to the outside of the early fortification wall (13th cent. BCE). In square I 58 this stone wall has two offsets. This way of shaping stone walls outlines is a marker of elaborated architectural skills comparable with the best examples of southeastern European and Anatolian Bronze Age stone masonry.

In 2016, we continued the excavation of the large apsidal house of phase 2 (12th cent. BCE). In square L57 we found a big amount of burnt wall plaster bringing valuable information on walls and roof of this building. In all the other trenches we worked, important data about the use of space during the two Late Bronze Age Phases of the site was collected.

During the excavation campaign we managed to digitalize all the field documentation.

In 2016 our team was bigger than in previous years and since 15 to 20 students worked in the field (we hire also 4-5 workmen who help students), we were able to make good progress. We continued our work in eight 5x5 m squares, while we opened two new ones. All recovered sediment was sieved.

Our students took actively part within all the steps of the fieldwork and evaluation: excavation, description of sediments and features in special forms, labeling of finds, orthophotographic documentation, drawing and photographing of finds (mostly ceramics and wall plasters).

The results of our work in Bresto will be presented on the annual conference of the Bulgarian Archaeological institute on February 2017, as well as on public lectures in Germany and Bulgaria. At least two publications are envisaged for the winter-fall 2016/2017. A short presentation of the field school will be available online by the end of October 2016, while a video about the excavation will be launched by the end of December 2016.