



SEEKING EUROPE'S FIRST CIVILIZATION: TELL YUNATSITE, BULGARIA

Course ID: ARCH 365S

July 11-August 8, 2020

Academic Credits: 8 Semester Credit Units (Equivalent to 12 Quarter Units)

School of Record: Connecticut College

DIRECTORS:

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of the project is to provide participants with theoretical background on the development of Neolithic cultures in Southeastern Europe with focus on Final Neolithic/Chalcolithic Europe's first civilization¹ and with practical experience in excavating a complex prehistoric tell-site.

During the seventh and sixth millennia BCE, the Balkan Peninsula was a gateway through which farming, animal husbandry and generally Neolithisation spread from Anatolia and the Near East to Europe. This new population gradually settled down and got familiar with the surrounding areas, suitable agricultural areas, raw sources and so on. In the sixth millennium BCE their economy, social organization, trade and cultural contacts evolved, to reach their peak in the fifth millennium BCE. In the beginning of the fifth millennium the earliest metallurgy in European and global prehistory (the processing of copper, and soon after – gold) appeared in the Balkans. Thus, this period is known as Copper age, Chalcolithic or Final Neolithic. The continuative inhabitation of the same suitable places during these millennia led to the

¹ Also known as Civilization of Old Europe.

formation of a settlement phenomenon, characteristic of the Near Eastern and Balkan prehistory – the multilayered tell-sites.

Tell Yunatsite is located near the modern village of Yunatsite in Southern Bulgaria. It is among the biggest tells in Europe with a diameter of approximately 110 m/360 ft and height of 12 m/39 ft above the modern surface. Tell Yunatsite was first excavated in 1939 by the Bulgarian archaeologist Vasil Mikov. In 1976, regular excavations were carried out on an annual basis. Since then, research at Tell Yunatsite has grown into an important research program under the National Institute of Archaeology and Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. At times, Greek and Soviet archaeologists joined research at the site and today this is an international research effort directed by Bulgarian scholars. The field school will be held for the seventh year and is a joint cooperation between Balkan Heritage Foundation (BHF), the Regional Museum of History in Pazardzhik, the Tell Yunatsite Excavation Team from the National Institute of Archaeology and Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and the Institute for Field Research.

To date, approximately one third of the tell has been excavated. This work yielded rich collections of archaeological materials, and the sterile soil has not yet been reached. There is a medieval cemetery at the top of the tell, followed by a Roman period level, two Iron Age levels, another dated to the Early Bronze Age, and finally a Chalcolithic/Final Neolithic layer. It is unknown if the cultural history of the tell begins in the Chalcolithic/Final Neolithic period or whether older Neolithic occupation layers exist.

The archaeological field school takes place at the Tell Yunatsite lowest excavated layer, which corresponds to the time of Europe's first prehistoric civilization in the fifth millennium BCE. The intense study of these very first complex societies in Europe began 40 years ago with the excavation of the Varna Copper Age necropolis. That excavation was the first to demonstrate the rise of social complexity in the region. It is during this time that metal processing became widespread and it is the earliest dates for such transformative technological innovation. Data suggest that it is the world's earliest mass production of both copper and gold (the world's oldest gold treasure was found in the Varna [Copper age necropolis](#)), the first urban settlements in Europe, distinct social and political stratification, and pictograms and characters interpreted by some scholars as the world's oldest script (as on the Gradeshnitsa tablet, for instance). The area of this civilization stretches from Anatolia across the Balkans to the Carpathian basin and the steppes of Eastern Europe. It collapsed around the end of the fifth millennium BCE under the pressure of drastic social and demographic changes, which were presumably caused mainly by climate change but were exacerbated by foreign invasions.

Recent excavations at Tell Yunatsite indicate that the Chalcolithic/Final Neolithic period settlement covered an area far larger than the tell itself and consisted of uptown (acropolis?) and a downtown distinct. The uptown section was surrounded by a five meter wide clay wall and a broad and deep ditch. Buildings at this part were placed closed to each other, creating an almost unbroken urban fabric. The Chalcolithic/Final Neolithic settlement experienced a violent event at *ca.* 4,200-4,100 BCE. Evidence suggests deliberate destruction by outsiders. Many skeletons of children, elderly men, and women were found scattered on floors, suggesting a massive massacre. Those who survived returned and resettled at the Tell, but soon even they left. At that point, Tell Yunatsite and the area around it were abandoned for more than 1,000 years. During this time, a sterile layer accumulated over the last Chalcolithic/Final Neolithic layer.

Excavations in the last years shed new light on the stratigraphy and development of the Chalcolithic/Final Neolithic, and brought new interesting discoveries. Among them are a golden bead and a golden amulet, which are among the earliest golden artifacts in the world.

This field school provides a unique glimpse into the rise and fall of arguably the earliest European civilization. In 2020, field school students will take part in further excavation of the burned

Chalcolithic/Final Neolithic layer buildings. Faculty and students will work together and explore why and how did one of the earliest proto urban centers in Europe emerge in the beginning of the fifth millennium BCE, and what are the reasons that caused its collapse 800 years later.

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 institution 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 more transcript may be sent to the student home institution at no cost. Additional transcripts may be ordered at any time through the National Student Clearinghouse: <http://bit.ly/2hvurkl>.

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 Tell Yunatsite 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.

DISCLAIMER – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Our primary concern is with education. Traveling and conducting field research involve risk. Students interested in participating in IFR programs must weigh whether the potential risk is worth the value of education provided. While risk is inherent in everything we do, we do not take risk lightly. The IFR engages in intensive review of each field school location prior to approval. Once a program is accepted, the IFR reviews each program annually to make sure it complies with all our standards and policies, including student safety.

The IFR does not provide trip or travel cancellation insurance. We encourage students to explore such insurance on their own as it may be purchased at affordable prices. insuremytrip.com or [Travelgurad.com](http://travelgurad.com) are possible sites where field school participants may explore travel cancellation insurance quotes and policies. If you do purchase such insurance, make sure the policy covers the cost of both airfare and tuition. See this [Wall Street Journal article about travel insurance](#) that may help you with to help to decide whether to purchase such insurance.

We do our best to follow schedule and activities as outlined in this syllabus. Yet local permitting agencies, political, environmental, personal, or weather conditions may force changes. This syllabus, therefore, is only a general commitment. Students should allow flexibility and adaptability as research work is frequently subject to change.

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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 OBJECTIVES

To introduce students to:

- Field archaeology and finds processing methods considering the specifics of excavating a tell;
- The archaeology of the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods in the Balkans;
- Methods for documentation and analysis of prehistoric pottery;
- Finds processing and documentation procedures: cleaning, sorting, labeling, documenting, and storing archaeological finds, flotation and processing soil samples;
- Contemporary standards of work on an archaeological site, including 3D intra-site modeling and documentation;
- 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.

COURSE SCHEDULE

All IFR field schools begin with safety orientation. This orientation includes proper behavior at the field area, proper clothing, local cultural sensitivities and sensibilities, potential fauna and flora hazards, review of IFR harassment and discrimination policies, and review of the student Code of Conduct.

The Field School schedule consists of four modules:

MODULE I - Theoretical module. Consists of app. 25 hours of lectures.

MODULE II – Practicum (app. 145 hours). Consists of two components:

1. Field work, including the basic practices of excavation and archaeological records;
2. Workshops dedicated to primary archaeological finds processing and documentation.

MODULE III - Excursions accompanied by lectures, presentations and behind-the-scenes visits to sites of historical/archaeological significance (app. 15 hours), such as the Regional Museum of History in Pazardzhik; the Archaeological Museum, Roman monuments and Old Town Quarter in Plovdiv; Stara Zagora and its Museum of History, Roman monuments and the museum of Europe's best preserved Neolithic (5600 BCE) dwellings; the National Archaeological Museum and the Roman monuments in Sofia.

MODULE IV – Homework (app. 15 hours) will be assigned to all students, which will consist of editing and processing students' field documentation (field journal, context sheets, drawings, photos, etc.) and preparing presentations and reports.

Day	Morning	Afternoon
Day 1	Pick-up from Sofia airport can be organized upon request for an additional fee.	By 7.30 pm - Arrival at the hotel. Check-in. Traditional Bulgarian welcome dinner.
Day 2	Orientation. Tour of Pazardzhik Old Town Quarter.	Lectures: Emergence of Early Farming in the Near East and Europe: Causes and Consequence; Rise and Fall of Europe's Earliest Civilization in the Fifth Millennium BCE; Tell Yunatsite: Environment, History, and Excavations.
Day 3	Field work Instructions: Hygiene, health, and safety at the site. Basic Field Methods and Practices for Excavation and Documentation. Use of Tools and Working Techniques.	Lectures: Warfare in Prehistory. From the Field to Storage: Review of Basic Methods for Uncovering, "First Aid", Consolidation in Situ, Cleaning, Sorting, Labeling, Documenting, and Storing Ceramic Artifacts
Day 4	Field work Instruction: Introduction to the Field Journal; Contextual Sheets, Log Book and Other Forms	Tour of Pazardzhik Regional Museum of History Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 5	Field work Instruction: Three Dimensional Positioning of Finds, Features and Structures. How to Use a Total Station	Lecture: Understanding Pottery - part 1 Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 6	Field work Instruction: Horizontal and vertical Stratigraphy	Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 7	Field work Instruction: Photography for Archaeologists	Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 8	Excursion: Plovdiv (the ancient city of Philippopolis) – Archaeological Museum, Roman monuments and the Old Town Quarter	
Day 9	Day off	
Day 10	Field work Instruction: How to Draw a Ground-plan/elevation-plan/Cross-section Using a Scale	Lecture and workshop: Artifacts recording – pottery
Day 11	Field work Instruction: Excavations Preparation. Preliminary Indoor Research	Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 12	Field work	Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 13	Field work	Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 14	Field work	Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 15	Day-off. Optional tour of the Bulgarian capital Sofia. Extra fees apply.	
Day 16	Day off	
Day 17	Field work	Lecture: An Introduction to GIS Spatial Analyses and Cartography Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 18	Field work	Workshops: Producing 3D Photogrammetric Models of Excavation Units Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 19	Field work	Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 20	Field work	Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 21	Field work	Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation

Day 22	Excursion: Stara Zagora (the ancient city of Augusta Traiana): the Regional Museum of History, Roman monuments, and the museum of the Europe's best preserved Neolithic (5600 BCE) dwellings.	
Day 23	Day-off	
Day 24	Field work	Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 25	Field work	Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 26	Field work	Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 27	Field work	Workshop: Finds Processing & Flotation
Day 28	Field work	Exam Presentation of the Excavation results. Evaluation meeting. Dinner and farewell party
Day 29	Departure. Check-out by noon	

TYPICAL WORK DAY

6.15-6.30 am	Travel to the site
6.30-8.30 am	Fieldwork
8.30-9:00 am	Breakfast at the site
9:00-11.00 am	Fieldwork
11.00-11.15 am	Break
11.15 am -1.00 pm	Fieldwork
1.00-1.30 pm	Lunch at the site
1.30-1.45	Travel to the hotel
1.45 – 4.45 pm	Siesta
4.45-5.00 pm	Travel to the site
5.00-8.00 pm	Lectures/Workshops/Finds processing
8.00 – 8.45	Dinner at the site
8.45-9.00	Travel to the hotel

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

GRADING MATRIX

% of Grade	Activity
20 %	Exam
20 %	Excavation (use of tools, digging, scraping, brushing, cleaning, sieving, etc.)
20 %	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%	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.

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
- A small backpack (for your food, bottle of water, wet wipes, camera, papers etc.)
- 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

In [Primavera Hotel](#) in the district town of Pazardzhik, Bulgaria – in comfortable rooms with 2-3 beds per room, bathrooms with shower and WC, TV, air-conditioning and free Wi-Fi. Cheap laundry service available at the archaeological site. Participants are not expected to bring any additional equipment, sleeping bags or towels. The hotel is located next to the main pedestrian area of the Downtown Pazardzhik. There are lots of shops, pharmacies, banks, ATMs, a hospital, taverns, bars, cafes, post office and tourist attractions around in the hotel area. Pazardzhik is a mid-size Bulgarian town (50,000 inhabitants). The town and its surroundings offer a variety of opportunities for good entertainment, sightseeing, sports, wine-tasting and shopping.

The excavation site, Tell Yunatsite is situated about 10 km away (15 min ride) from Pazardzhik and the hotel. Transport on work days will be arranged and covered by the Balkan Heritage Foundation (BHF). Next to the site is the archaeological base with running water, electricity, a field latrine, dining and lab facilities as well as a tool storage available to the students.

Meals: Three meals (Balkan cuisine) per day are covered by tuition fee. This field school can accommodate vegetarians, vegans and individuals with gluten- and lactose-intolerance. Kosher-restrictions are impossible to accommodate in this location.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner meals will take place at the site during the work days. Other meals will take place at the hotel's restaurant. Brown-bag-lunches will be provided during excursions and days-off.

Students must pay on their own for extra days or for single room accommodation.

TRAVEL & MEETING POINT

Hold purchasing your airline ticket until six (6) weeks prior to departure date. Natural disasters, political changes, weather conditions and a range of other factors may require the cancelation of a field school. The IFR typically takes a close look at local conditions 6-7 weeks prior to program beginning and make Go/No Go decisions by then. This time frame still allows the purchase of discounted airline tickets while protecting students from potential loss of airline ticket costs if we decide to cancel a program.

Students should arrive on July 11 to the Hotel Primavera 2 (in Pazardzhik) by 7:00pm. Students may organize their 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 the 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](#) and links provided there.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Safety and health orientation will take place at the beginning of the program. Pazardzhik has numerous pharmacies and drug stores as well as several hospitals providing regular and specialized medical care and first aid.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Bulgarian dialing code: +359

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

Measure units: 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 travellers' cheques. 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:

www.bnb.bg/NotesAndCoins/NACNotesCurrency/index.htm?toLang= EN

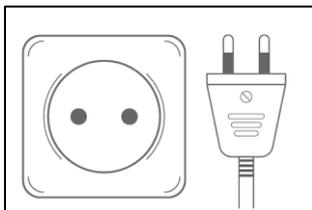
Exchange of foreign currencies is possible not only at banks but also at numerous exchange offices. NB, Most of them don't collect a commission fee and have acceptable exchange rates (+/- 0.5-1,5% of the official rate) However, those located in shopping areas of big cities, resorts, railway stations, 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

Anthony D. (ed.). The Lost World of Old Europe. The Danube Valley, 5000 - 3500 BC. New York University and Princeton University Press, 2010.

Aslanis, I. Settlement Patterns in the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age: the Case of the Prehistoric Settlement of Yunatsite, Bulgaria. – In: Neolithic and Copper Age between the Carpathians and the Aegean Sea. S. Hansen, P. Raczky, A. Anders, A. Reingruber (eds.). DAI, 2015, 395-402 (Archäologie in Eurasien, 31).

Balabina, V., T. Mishina. Considering the Destruction of the Latest Eneolithic Village at Tell Yunatsite – In: Boyadzhiev, Y., S. Terzijska-Ignatova (eds.) - The Golden Fifth Millennium. Thrace and Its Neighbour Areas in the Chalcolithic, Sofia 2011, 39-47.

Boyadzhiev, Y. Chronology of Prehistoric Cultures in Bulgaria. – In: Bailey D. and I. Panayotov (eds.). Prehistoric Bulgaria. Monographs in World Archaeology № 22, Madison, Wisconsin 1995, 149-191.

Boyadzhiev Y. Chalcolithic Stone Architecture from Bulgaria - Archaeologia Bulgarica VIII, Sofia 2004, 1-12.

Boyadzhiev, Y. Tell Yunatsite: Development and Absolute Chronology of the Settlements from the Beginning of the Chalcolithic to the Early Bronze Age. – In: Neolithic and Copper Age between the Carpathians and the Aegean Sea. S. Hansen, P. Raczky, A. Anders, A. Reingruber (eds.). DAI, 2015, 381-394 (Archäologie in Eurasien, 31).

Merpert N. J. The Problem of Transition from the North Balkan Aeneolithic to the Early Bronze Age in the Upper Thracian Valley – In: Europa Indo-Europea, Roma 1994, 41-50.

Todorova N., Mazanova V. Late Chalcolithic Ceramic Style at Yunatsite Tell (Approach to the Systematization of the Ceramics from the Newly Excavated Levels) – In: Nikolova L. (ed.) - Technology, Style and Society. BAR International Series 854, Oxford 2000, 331-361.

Zäuner, S. The Dark Side of the Chalcolithic. Evidence for Warfare at Tell Yunatsite? An Anthropological Approach – Boyadzhiev, Y., S. Terzijska-Ignatova (eds.) - The Golden Fifth Millennium. Thrace and Its Neighbor Areas in the Chalcolithic, Sofia 2011, 49-56.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Aslanis I., Y. Boyadzhiev. Fleißdeponierung in der chalkolithischen Siedlung von Yunatsite – In: Prehistoric Thrace. Proceedings of the International Symposium in Stara Zagora, Sofia – Stara Zagora 2004, 370-378.

Boyadzhiev K. Development and Distribution of Close Combat Weapons in Bulgarian Chalcolithic - Studia Praehistorica 14, Sofia 2011, 265 – 281.

Boyadzhiev Y., I. Aslanis, S. Terzijska-Ignatova, V. Mazanova. Yunatsite: Ein Bulgarisch–Griechisches Grabungsprojekt. Die Jahre 2002–2008 - In: Boyadzhiev, Y., S. Terzijska-Ignatova (eds.) - The Golden Fifth Millennium. Thrace and Its Neighbour Areas in the Chalcolithic, Sofia 2011, 21-37.

Boyadzhiev Y. Ethnocultural Interrelationships in the Lower Danube Area during the Second Half of the Sixth and the First Half of the Fifth Millennium BC (According to Evidence from Cemeteries) - Studia Praehistorica 14, Sofia 2011, 205 – 223.

Grant J., Sam Gorin and Neil Fleming. The Archaeology Coursebook: an Introduction to Themes, Sites, Methods and Skills. Routledge, 2008.

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

Merpert N. J. Bulgaro-Russian Archeological Investigations in the Balkans. Ancient Civilisations from Scythia to Siberia – In: International Journal of Comparative Studies in History and Archeology, Vol. 2, N 3, Leiden 1995, 364-383.

Tell Yunatsite. The Bronze Age, Vol. 2, Part 1 (Moscow, 2007). (In Russian; a summary in English is available after each chapter.)

Todorova N. The Ornamentation of Late Chalcolithic Pottery from Yunatsite Tell, Pazardzhik District - - In: Nikolova L. (ed.) Early Symbolic Systems for Communication in Southeast Europe. BAR International Series 1139, Oxford 2003, 291-311.