

ANNUAL REPORT: BULGARIA APOLLONIA PONTICA 2019 FIELD SCHOOL

Director: Dr. Teodora Bogdanova, Archaeological Museum - Sozopol
Co-Director: Dr. Krastina Panayotova, National Archaeological Institute with Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences



Students working on the site

The Apollonia Pontica Excavation Project 2019 took place in Sozopol, Bulgaria (ancient Apollonia Pontica) on the Black Sea coast from June 22 to July 20, 2019. The excavations were conducted on the small island of St. Kirik, which is connected to Sozopol by an artificial causeway. The Apollonia Pontica Field School began in 2011 and from 2015 is an initiative of the Balkan Heritage Foundation – Institute for Field Research (BHF-IFR) Joint Program. The project contributes to the efforts of the Apollonia Pontica Excavation Team and the Museum of Archaeology – Sozopol to explore this important site, which is threatened by government investment projects.

Excavations on St. Kirik Island over the past decade have revealed that it was the site of a Greek settlement, the sacred precinct (temenos) of Apollonia Pontica with the sanctuary of Apollo from the Archaic to Hellenistic Period (late 7th-4th cent. BCE) and a Christian religious center with a basilica and necropolis in the 5th to 7th centuries CE.

The area excavated in 2019 was situated at the north and northeastern edge of the island where the four previous summers' excavations had discovered Archaic period pit altars (botroi), sizeable limestone foundations, and 5th-7th century CE graves.

The fieldwork results were rewarding: Another part of a massive pit, found in 2016 was excavated. It was filled with abundant archaeological material – mostly animal bones and pottery sherds. The large number of Roman pottery shards is the first clear archaeological evidence from this period on St. Kirik island. In 2019 started the initial processing of the animal

bones from the pit. The primary observations were that the bone collection consists mostly from bones of very young animals. This observation gives ground for the hypothesis that the pit had ritual functions. If the further analyses of the pit materials confirm this assumption it will prove sacral continuity on St. Kirik Island in the Roman period.

Among the finds were several 5th-7th century Christian graves, which belonged to a Late Antique necropolis situated around a big 5th – 6th century basilica.

A lot of mass material was collected – mostly pottery from the Archaic, Classical and Late Antiquity period, animal bones, and glass. Among the special finds were several coins and other small metal objects which will be cleaned and identified later this year, as well as elements from the elaborated marble decoration of the Archaic age Greek temple.

The 2019 season provided students with valuable fieldwork and finds processing experience. Under the guidance and supervision of their instructors, participants took part in all activities in the field: digging, measuring, field documentation (photography, graphic documentation, context sheets, bag labels, etc.), and initial finds processing (sorting and cleaning).

New element of the field school program was the workshop on animal osteology. Within it, students studied how to recognize animal bones and to determine their family, age, etc.

After the intensive fieldwork in season 2019, a lot of archaeological material and documentation was collected. It will be processed in the forthcoming months by the Apollonia Pontica excavation team and affiliated specialists. The results of the excavations will be presented to the public during the annual archaeological reports of the Bulgarian National Institute of Archaeology in March, and an article will be published in the annual edition of the Institute – Archaeological Discoveries and Excavations (in 2019). Probably some of the special finds will be included in the annual exhibition – Bulgarian Archaeology (2019) which will take place in Februari-March in the Bulgarian National Museum of Archaeology.