



STOBI, THE CAPITAL CITY OF MACEDONIA SECUNDA EXCAVATION PROJECT: REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

Course ID: ARCH 365T

June 7–July 5, 2025

Academic Credits: 8 Semester Credit Units

FIELD SCHOOL DIRECTORS

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OVERVIEW

The ancient city of Stobi was the largest city in the northern part of the Roman province Macedonia, later capital of the province Macedonia Secunda and an important urban, administrative, trade and religious center during the Roman and Late Roman periods. Located on an exceptionally significant position, on the intersection of the two main roads, north-south road (Thessalonica-Stobi-Singidunum) and the diagonal road (Heraclea-Stobi-Serdica), the town possessed all preconditions for greater rise and development.

First historical records for Stobi are found in Roman historian Titus Livus, who recorded the Paionian *urbs vetus Stobi* as a place close to the battleground where Macedonian king Philip V defeated the Dardanians in 197 BC. The same author reveals that in the period after 168 BC, when the Romans conquered the Macedonian kingdom, Stobi entered the fourth *meris*, and became a trade center from where salt was distributed to the north, to Dardania. When the Roman province of Macedonia was established in 147 BC, Stobi was the largest city in the northern part.

Roman period: The salt trade and strategic position allowed Stobi constant rise in the following centuries of Roman rule. Pliny recorded Stobi as *oppidum civium Romanorum*, a status gained during the time of Augustus meaning that there must be a community (conventus) of Roman citizens who possessed *ius Italicum*, besides the local population and other foreigners. The citizens who enjoyed Roman civil rights belong to the tribes *Aemilia* and *Tromentina*.

Stobi became *municipium*, a status which appeared on the first coins minted in Stobi by Vespasian in 72/73 AD, and on few inscriptions dated in the period between 1st and 3rd century AD. The imperial mint at Stobi, with interruptions, lasted until the time of Caracalla (198-217 AD). The town suffered in the second half of the 3rd century, due to the intrusion of the Goths and Herules in 267/69 AD, and later, around the year of 300 AD, by an earthquake. These events, along with the general crisis in the Roman Empire caused the decline of the prosperity of Stobi.

Few public buildings from this period are partly uncovered at the site: the Theatre, the House of Polycharmos with the northern part adapted to a Synagogue, the Temple of the Egyptian deities Isis and Serapis, the Building with Arches (the Library), and partially uncovered urban villa named *Casa Romana*, located close to Erigon River. Their grandiose architectural solutions, manner of building, used materials along with the magnificent marble, stucco, painted and sculptural decoration points to a city where benefactors were some of the emperors and local prominent families.

Late Roman period: The large reconstruction of the city occurred during the 4th and especially in the 5th century. Since Constantine issued the Milan Edict in AD 313 which equated the Christianity with the other religions, many cities throughout the Empire became bishop's seats, including Stobi. Budios was the first recorded bishop in Stobi, who participated at the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in AD 325. Besides Budios, six other bishops from Stobi are recorded in the sources or inscriptions.

In AD 388, Emperor Theodosius visited Stobi from where he issued two edicts. When new provincial division was established in AD 386, Stobi probably became the capital of the newly formed province of Macedonia Salutaris, and slightly later, when the province was reorganized and renamed as Macedonia Secunda, ancient sources mentioned eight cities within the province and Stobi was mentioned as first. In AD 447 Stobi and seventy cities or towns on the Balkans suffered in the raids of the Huns, while Theodoric and the Ostrogoths plundered Stobi on their way to Dyrrachium in AD 479. Most of the excavated buildings and fortifications at Stobi belong to Late Antiquity, and were erected between the 4th and 6th century. A new inner fortification wall was built on the eastern side in the early 5th century, thus shortening the city's territory. Some of the existing houses were renovated and more large residences were built with many rooms organized around the central inner courtyard with fountains and pools, lavishly decorated with mosaics and rich architectural marbles: the House of Parthenius, the Theodosian palace, the House of Peristeria, the so called Casino, as well as two public

baths and the city fountain. The buildings were divided by streets, some of them paved and colonnaded.

Christianity largely shaped the urban layout of the city. The Early Episcopal basilica was built in the late 4th, renovated by bishop Eusthathios in the early 5th century. In the late 5th century a new, larger Episcopal basilica was built on an artificial terrace, 4.5 meters above the Early church. Three more basilicas are known from the second half of the 5th century within the city walls (North basilica, Civil basilica, Central (Synagogue) basilica and three outside the fortification: the Cemetery basilica, Basilica Extra Muros and Basilica in the village of Palikura, 2km southeast of Stobi.

The earthquake in the early 6th century caused damages to the buildings. Major repairs and rebuilding is recorded on the public and residential buildings as well as on the fortification. The incursions of the Slavs and Avars and other tribes from the north during the second half of the 6th century devastated the cities throughout the Balkans. Besides the earthquakes and barbaric incursions, the bubonic plague during Justinian reign which caused depopulation as well as climate changes were reasons for decline in the second half of the 6th century and abandonment of the city in the first decades of the 7th century. The city was probably struck by another earthquake shortly before or after it was abandoned.

Medieval period: The last historical records mentioning Stobi refers to the victory of the Byzantine emperor Basil II over the military garrison stationed in Stobi in the year of 1014. During the Medieval period (11th-14th centuries) a small settlement existed, judging by the remains discovered in the southeast part of the city, around the Temple of Isis and in the corridors of the abandoned Theater, while the small cemetery was found above the remains of the Civil and Central basilica. In the following centuries Stobi vanished into oblivion until it was discovered in the second half of the 19th century.

HISTORY OF EXCAVATIONS

The first excavation at Stobi began during the First World War, in 1917 a group of German officers stationed at the site uncovered the remains of three basilicas. Later, in 1918, excavations were led by German architect F. Krischen. Between 1923 and 1940, excavations were organized by the Museum of Prince Paul (National Museum in Belgrade) conducted by several prominent scholars: B. Saria, R. Eger, V. Petkovic, J. Petrovic, Dj. Mano-Zissi. From 1955 until 2008, excavation and conservation activities were undertaken by the Archaeological Museum of Skopje, Museum in Veles, Museum of Macedonia in Skopje and the Institute for Protection of Monuments of Culture. Between 1970 and 1980, during the joint Yugoslav-American project for Stobi, excavations were directed by Dj. Mano-Zissi (Belgrade University), J. Wiseman (University of Texas at Austin, later Boston University) and Blaga Aleksova (Skopje University). The National Institution Stobi (NI Stobi) was founded in December 2008 as an independent governmental institution under the Ministry of culture. The large-scale excavations conducted by S. Blazhevka (NI Stobi) began in 2009. Until 2019 numerous archaeological and conservation projects were successfully finalized (for more information, see: www.stobi.mk).

The participants in the field school projects (2014-2019) excavated an area next to one of the most representative, residential buildings in Stobi – the [Theodosian Palace](#) – located at the center of the city, bordered by two main streets: Via Principalis Inferior and Via Principalis Superior. The building, which is richly decorated with mosaics, was given its name by early scholars under the assumption that the emperor Theodosius I was accommodated there during his visit to Stobi in 388 CE.

The excavations in the last five years brought to light a late antique building situated between the Theodosian palace and an adjacent building, called “the Jail” due to the discovery of shackled skeletons in the 1920s. In 2022, the work will continue in the same area in an effort to investigate the chronological and architectural relation between the three buildings.

ACADEMIC CREDIT UNITS & TRANSCRIPTS

Credit Units: Attending students will be awarded 8 semester credit units through our academic partner, Connecticut College. Connecticut College is a highly ranked liberal arts institution with a deep commitment to undergraduate education. Students will receive a letter grade for attending this field school (see assessment, below). 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's 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 perform archaeological excavations. 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 Stobi Excavation Project will host students and professionals from across the world. With such an international team, it is vital that all students respect the IFR Student Code of Conduct, each other's cultures, and local social and cultural laws and rules.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To prepare students to perform basic excavation tasks: the use of tools, digging techniques, sieving, scraping, etc.
2. To prepare students to perform basic field documentation tasks: the use of measuring and documentation tools and devices, creating written (locus sheets, field journals, finds labels, etc.), photo, and graphic documentation (drawing of stratigraphical situations, architectural structures, contexts, etc.).
3. To introduce students to basic find processing procedures: cleaning, selecting and arranging archaeological finds, field inventory, technical pottery drawing, the organization of finds storage, etc.
4. To introduce students to contemporary 3D recording techniques, including Digital Photogrammetry, Satellite Positioning and Total Station Surveying.
5. To introduce students to the range of materials and cultures of Stobi and the region in the Roman and Late Roman period.
6. To introduce students to teamwork, ethical standards and contemporary methods of work on an archaeological site.
7. To introduce students to health and safety requirements at an archaeological site.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students participating in this field school will gain basic knowledge of excavation techniques, field documentation practices and finds processing, leaving them better prepared for any future

archaeological fieldwork projects. They will have certain knowledge in the history and archaeology of Stobi and Macedonia during the Hellenistic, Roman and Late Roman periods and basic training in photogrammetry capture and processing. During the outlined activities participants will learn skills transferable outside of excavations, such as analytical thinking, teamwork, the ability to meet deadlines and adapt to outside conditions, which will aid them when seeking employment in any work field.

ASSESSMENT

Students will be graded based on their work as follows.

| % of Grade | Activity |
|-------------------|--|
| 20 % | Exam |
| 10 % | Excavating (use of tools, digging, scraping, brushing, cleaning, etc.) |
| 20 % | Keeping a field journal and filling in locus sheet and labels |
| 10 % | Scale drawing (ground plan/ cross section/ specific archaeological structure or feature); Measuring and leveling |
| 10 % | Photography, Photogrammetry and Surveying |
| 10 % | Finds processing: washing and sorting, labeling and registration |
| 10 % | Artifact drawing (pottery) |
| 10 % | Presentation of the field work results |

ATTENDANCE POLICY

The required minimum attendance for the successful completion of this 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.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Safety and health orientation will take place at the beginning of the program. Cities around Stobi offer good medical facilities, first aid, and pharmacies. Proper personal hygiene and resting after a hard day of field work are good prevention methods against the summer flu.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The Field School schedule consists of four modules:

MODULE I - Theoretical module (approx. 30 hours). Consists of three components:

1. Lectures and instructions about field methods and practices.
2. Lectures addressing different aspects of the history and archaeology of Stobi.
3. Lectures exploring the history and archaeology of the Balkans, Macedonia and other local sites.

MODULE II– Practicum (approx. 160 hours). Consists of two components:

1. Field work, including the basic practices of excavation and archaeological recording.
2. Workshops dedicated to primary archaeological finds processing and documentation.
3. Workshops in 3-D Archaeological Recording Methods: In 2019, an additional module was added to the excavations at Stobi instructing students on the use of new three-dimensional recording techniques. These techniques complement and amplify the traditional hand-recording techniques that the students will also learn during the course of the excavations. This new module includes

instruction on basic geodesy, the setting up and operation of both total stations and GPS/GLONASS receivers, and the fundamentals of technical photography, including DSLR operation, lens selection and proper exposure. The core of the module consists of workshops on digital photogrammetry -- a technique that uses overlapping photos to create dense 3-D models -- in order to record the excavations and selected finds. The students will learn to plan and execute photogrammetric recording in the field, to process the resulting imagery in software, and to produce accurate drawings from the 3D data. This module is available for course credit through Queen's University. Students interested in receiving Queen's credit should contact the head instructor of this module, George Bevan (Associate Professor, Geography and Planning).

MODULE III - Excursions accompanied by lectures, presentations and behind-the-scenes visits to sites of historical/archaeological significance, such as the town of Bitola (Archaeological Museum), the site of Heraclea Lyncestis, the town of Ohrid (the Ancient Lychnidos, UNESCO World Heritage Site), and the city of Skopje (National Archaeological Museum of Skopje) in Macedonia, and Pella and Vergina in Greece.

MODULE IV – Homework (est. 10 hours) will be assigned to all students. Homework will consist of editing and processing students' field journals, context sheets, drawings, and photos and preparing in presentations and reports.

Program 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.

| Date | Morning | Afternoon |
|-------|---|--|
| Day 1 | Arrive by noon at Skopje Airport in North Macedonia or Thessaloniki Airport in Greece, arrange in advance a pickup with BHF logistic coordinator to Stobi | Traditional Macedonian welcome dinner. |
| Day 2 | Presentation of the Balkan Heritage Field School, NI Stobi and collaborating universities & institutions, the project and the participants. Ice-breakers and orientation. | Sightseeing of the archaeological site of Stobi . |
| Day 3 | Field work | <p>Lecture: Introduction in the excavation area and methodology of fieldwork</p> <p>Lecture: From the Field to Storage – review of basic methods for uncovering, “first aid”, consolidation in situ, cleaning, sorting out, labeling, documenting and storing of ceramic artifacts</p> <p>Workshop: Archaeological finds processing and field documentation</p> |

| | | |
|--------|---|--|
| Day 4 | Field work | <p>Lecture: Total Station and GNSS Surveying; Ground Control Set-up.</p> <p>Workshop: Total Station and GNSS Surveying and Ground Control Set-up</p> |
| Day 5 | Field work | <p>Lecture: Typology of Roman and Late Roman Pottery (based on examples from Stobi)</p> <p>Workshop: Archaeological finds processing and field documentation</p> |
| Day 6 | Field work | <p>Lecture: Archaeological Photography and Principles of Digital Photogrammetry; Mapping in 3DM Analyst</p> <p>Workshop: Digital Photogrammetry of Excavations and Total Station Operation; Mapping in 3DM Analyst</p> |
| Day 7 | Field work | <p>Workshop: Pottery Drawing, Part I (in groups)</p> |
| Day 8 | <p>Excursion: Guided visit to Bitola and the ancient city of Heraclea Lyncestis</p> | |
| Day 9 | <p>Excursion : Guided visit to Ohrid: Ancient Lychnidos (UNESCO World Heritage Site)</p> | |
| Day 10 | Field work | <p>Workshop: Introduction to Surveying: Total Station</p> |
| Day 11 | Field work | <p>Workshop: Introduction to Surveying: GNSS</p> |
| Day 12 | Field work | <p>Workshop: Pottery Drawing, Part II</p> <p>Workshop: Archaeological finds processing and field documentation</p> |
| Day 13 | Field work | <p>Workshop: Processing Photogrammetry Data in 3DM Analyst and Agisoft Photoscan</p> |
| Day 14 | Field work | <p>Lecture: Religious Beliefs in Stobi</p> <p>Workshop: Archaeological finds processing and field documentation</p> |
| Day 15 | <p>Excursion: Optional Guided visit to Pella and Vergina in Greece– Not Included in the participation fee. The price varies, depending on the number of the students between 40-60 Euros.</p> | |
| Day 16 | <p>Free day</p> | |

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|--------|--|---|
| Day 17 | Field Work | Workshop Archaeological finds processing and field documentation |
| Day 18 | Field work | Workshop: Archaeological finds processing and field documentation |
| Day 19 | Field work | Lecture: Architecture and Urban Development in Stobi Workshop: Archaeological finds processing and field documentation |
| Day 20 | Field work | Lecture: After the excavations: Contemporary principles for sites conservation and presentation |
| Day 21 | Field work | Workshop: Archaeological finds processing and field documentation |
| Day 22 | Excursion: Guided visit of Skopje | |
| Day 23 | Free day | |
| Day 24 | Field work | Lecture: Cemeteries and Burial Practice in Stobi Workshop: Archaeological finds processing and field documentation |
| Day 25 | Field work | Exam Workshop: Archaeological finds processing and field documentation |
| Day 26 | Field work | Workshop: Archaeological finds processing and field documentation |
| Day 26 | Field work | Workshop: Archaeological finds processing and field documentation |
| Day 27 | Field work | - Presentation of the Excavation's results. - Evaluation meeting and Conclusion Dinner and farewell party |
| Day 28 | Departure | |

The course structure may be subject to change upon directors' discretion.

Typical work day

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 6.00-6.30 | - Breakfast |
| 6.40 - 13.00 | - Field-training at the excavation site |

| | |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| 13.30-17.00 | - Lunch and siesta |
| 17.00-19.00 | - Lectures and workshops |
| 20.00-21.00 | - Dinner |

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

REQUIRED READINGS

Some of the required readings will be posted on the field school website. Enrolled students will have access to and be able to download PDFs upon completion of payment.

Studies I = Wiseman J. (ed.), 1973. *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi* vol. I, Beograd 1973

Studies II = Wiseman J. (ed.) 1975. *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi* vol. II, Beograd, 1975

Studies III = Aleksova B. and Wiseman J., (eds.) 1981. *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi* vol. III, Titov Veles, 1981

Studies IV = Blazevska S., (ed.) 2018. *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi* vol. IV, Stobi, 2018

Anderson - Stojanovic, V. R. - *Stobi. The Hellenistic and Roman Pottery*, Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 1-61; 144-155.

Anderson-Stojanović V. R., Computer-assisted analysis of pottery at Stobi, Yugoslavia. *Journal of field archaeology* (2013), p. 335-348.

Collet, L., *An Introduction to Drawing Archaeological Pottery*, Rotherham, Yorkshire, 2008, p. 5-31

Grant J., S. Gorin and N. Fleming. *The Archaeology Coursebook: an introduction to themes, sites, methods and skills.* Routledge. 2008, p. 25-51; 81 – 192; 93-100; 114 – 119; 277 -281.

Wiseman, J.R., 1986, Archaeology and History at Stobi, Macedonia in: (ed. Charles B. McClendon), *Rome and the Provinces, Studies in the Transformation of Arts and Architecture in the Mediterranean World* (1986): 37-41.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Arnold, H., M. Jones - *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, Vol. 1 and 2. (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

Brown, P. - *The World of Late Antiquity AD 150-750* (W. W. Norton & Company, 1989).

Burke, H., C. Smith - *The Archaeologist's Field Handbook* (Allen & Unwin, 2004)

Cameron, A. - *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity: AD 395-600* (Routledge, 1993).

Cary, M., H. H. Scullard - *A History of Rome: Down to the Reign of Constantine* (Bedford/St.Martin's, 1976).

Drewett, P. L. - *Field Archaeology: An Introduction* (University College London, 1999)

Harris, E. - *Principles of Archaeological Stratigraphy* (London & New York: Academic Press, 1989)
Available in Internet - <http://www.harrismatrix.com/>

Mikulcik I., *Stobi. An ancient city* (Skopje 2003)

Pavlovski, G., Blazevska S., *Archaeological Evidence of Earthquakes at Stobi, Monumenta 2-3, MASA*, Skopje 2017/18, 49-82.

Renfrew, C., P. Bahn - *Archaeology: Theories, Methods and Practice* (Thames & Hudson, 2008)

Styliaras G. - *Towards a web-based archaeological excavation platform for smartphones: review and potentials. SpringerPlus 4.1 (2015): 1.*

<https://springerplus.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40064-015-1115-3>

Wiseman, J. R., D. Mano-Zissi - *Stobi: A City of Ancient Macedonia, Journal of Field Archaeology, 3, 1976, 269-302.*