

## Where had *Heracleia Sintica* Been Situated? Once Again on an Epigraphic Monument from South-west Bulgaria

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Recently an extremely interesting epigraphic monument, which was found in 2002 in the vicinity of the village of Rupite (former Muletarovo), was published in *Arheologia* (Sofia) (Митрев, Тараков 2002, 25-32). It is a marble stela with an inscription in Latin consisting of 24 lines, a copy of an emperor's letter related to the Roman emperors from the early 4th century - Augustus Galerius and Caesar Maximinus Daia, dated by the first publishers of the inscription to 308-309 AD.

The authors of the above paper identify the site *civitas Heracleotarum* mentioned in the inscription as *Heracleia Sintica* thus locating this ancient site near present-day Rupite, Petrich region.

However, the authors of the above paper do not take into consideration a number of facts, which would not enable them to locate *Heracleia Sintica* at the spot they have pointed to, i. e. to the north of Belasitsa Mountain. In order to back more thoroughly with arguments his disagreement on the proposed location of *Heracleia Sintica*, the author of the present paper provides several proofs of various character.

We could consider as a first proof preventing such locating the information given by all ancient authors. They had written on the location of the Sintoi territory: Thucydides, Titus Livius, Diodorus, Plinius, Strabo. The territories to the north of Belasitsa Mountain - between Kresna and Rupelsko gorges including the field of Petrich - were not in the past part of the Sintoi but Maidoi territory. All mentioned ancient authors locate Sintoi to the south of the

ancient Orbrlos (present-day Belasitsa Mountain).

A second proof, opposing to the location of *Heracleia Sintica* proposed by the first publishers of the Rupite stela, is *Tabula Peutingeriana*, which points out that the distance between *Heracleia Sintica* and *Skotoussa* is just 4 miles (ca. 6 km), i. e. it is obvious that the two towns were located very near to each other. However, the ancient *Skotoussa* was always located to the South of Belasitsa Mountain and no matter what kind of calculations we do, it is not possible to locate *Skotoussa* 6 km from Rupite, Petrich region because the distance to the beginning of Rupelski gorge is ca. 15 km.

The third fact, which contradicts a possible locating of *Heracleia Sintica* near the present-day Rupite, Petrich region, is that the town emitted coins in two different periods, the late 5th century BC and the 1st century AD, which are the most undeniable arguments in support of another location - to the south of Belasitsa.

In the end the author concludes that the mentioned town of *Heracleia* (in fact it is written *civitas Heracleotarum* on the stela) in the newly found inscription from Rupite is more likely to tell about the change of the name of the ancient site Petra (Phorunna) in the 4th century AD. It is absolutely impossible to identify it as *Heracleia Sintica*, a town of the Sintoi, which in any case was situated to the south of present-day Belasitsa - probably near the present-day town of Iraclion at the big curve of the Struma River to the south of Rupelski gorge in modern Greece.