



National Archaeological Institute with Museum
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences



Archaeological Museum in Sandanski

Mobility, Interaction and Cultural Exchange in the Middle Strymon Valley (from the Bronze Age to the Late Middle Ages) International Archaeological Conference

Dedicated to the 90th Anniversary of the Archaeological Museum in Sandanski

Sandanski, Bulgaria | 8–11 October 2026

Organizers: National Archaeological Institute with Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Archaeological Museum – Sandanski

Supported by: Municipality of Sandanski, Archaeological Museum – Sandanski, National Institute of Archaeology with Museum at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Organizing committee:

Prof. Lyudmil Vagalinski, PhD (NAIM – BAS)

Assoc. Prof. Emil Nankov, PhD (NAIM – BAS)

Assist. Prof. Metodi Zlatkov, PhD (NAIM – BAS)

Anton Kovachev (Director, Archaeological Museum – Sandanski)





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GENERAL PROGRAM

8 October 2026 (Thursday)

Arrival in Sandanski

- 14:00 – 15:00 Check-in at Spa Hotel Spartak: (<https://spahotelspartak.com/en-gb/>)
- 15:00 – 15:20 Registration of participants
- 15:20 – 15:30 Official opening of the conference
- 15:30 – 17:30 Plenary session
- 18:00 Welcome cocktail

9 October 2026 (Friday)

- 09:00 – 12:20 Lectures
- 12:20 – 14:00 Lunch
- 14:00 – 16:20 Lectures
- 16:20 – 18:20 Visit to the Archaeological Museum in Sandanski and the Episcopal Basilica

10 October 2026 (Saturday)

- 09:00 – 12:20 Lectures
- 12:20 – 14:00 Lunch
- 14:00 – 16:20 Lectures
- 16:20 – 20:20 Visit to the Melnik Museum and dinner

11 October 2026 (Sunday)

- 08:30 – 13:00 Travel to Heraclea Sintica and Municipal Historical Museum, Petrich
- Afternoon Departure of the participants



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LECTURES PROGRAM

*The conference presentations will take place in the conference hall of the Spa Hotel Spartak
(1 Macedonia Str., 2800 Sandanski, Bulgaria)*

Day One: 8 October 2026 (Thursday)

15:20 – 15:30 – Official opening of the conference

SESSION 1. Plenary lectures

Chair: Anton Kovachev

15:30 – 16:00 – Anton Kovachev, Metodi Zlatkov (AM – Sandanski, NAIM – BAS, Bulgaria) The Archaeological Museum of Sandanski and its role in the archaeological research in the region

16:00 – 16:30 – Lyudmil Vagalinski, Lyuba Traikova (NAIM – BAS, Bulgaria) Heraclea Sintica – before and after it

16:30 – 17:00 – Maria-Gabriella P. Parissaki (NHRF – IHR, Greece) On the Foundation of Heraclea Sintica

17:00 – 17:30 – Alkiviadis Prepis (Democritus University of Thrace, Greece) Protection and sustainable development of traditional settlements in the context of tourism growth and promotion of employment: cultural values of yesterday, today and tomorrow



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Day Two: 9 October 2026 (Friday)

SESSION 2. Bronze Age and Early Iron Age in the Middle Strymon Valley

Chair: Bogdan Athanassov

09:00 – 09:20 – Velichka Kostova (AM – Sandanski, Bulgaria) *On the issue of dating the Early Bronze fluted pottery from the site near the village of Kovachevo*

09:20 – 09:40 – T. Boyadzhiev, G. Nekhrizov, V. Kostova, I. Kirilova, G. Lazarski, A. Kovachev (AM – Sandanski, NAIM-BAS, VTU, Bulgaria) *An integrated approach to the localization and study of an Early Iron Age necropolis in the Middle Struma region*

09:40 – 10:00 – G. Nekhrizov, D. Bayrakov, D. Mileva, V. Stefanova, B. Atanasov (NAIM-BAS, Bulgaria, NBU, HM-Velingrad) *At the Foot of the Sacred Peak. The Early Iron Age Necropolis near the Village of Palat in the Middle Struma Valley*

10:00 – 10:20 – Coffee break

10:20 – 10:40 – Georgi Ivanov (NAIM-BAS, Bulgaria) *Settlement patterns on the western slopes of Pirin during the Early Iron Age: Ilindentsi, Vlachi and Kresna*

10:40 – 11:00 – Ilia Kulov, Bogdan Athanassov (RIM - Blagoevgrad, NBU, Bulgaria) *Dominating a Landscape in Times of Interaction: The Early Iron Age Settlement on the Hill Marena, Middle Struma Valley*

11:00 – 11:20 – Coffee break

SESSION 3. Hellenistic Period in the Middle Strymon Valley and Neighbouring Regions

Chair: Maria-Gabriella P. Parissaki

11:20 – 11:40 – Emil Nankov (NAIM-BAS, Bulgaria) *Romans at the Gates: Late Republican Militaria from the Middle Strymon Valley*

11:40 – 12:00 – Svetoslav Yordanov (NAIM-BAS, Bulgaria) *Coins of the Roman magistrates found in the Middle Struma Valley and the arrival of the Romans (II-I c BC)*

12:00 – 12:20 – Iliya Kirov, Yana Mutafchieva (NHM, NAIM-BAS, Bulgaria) *Plain pottery from Dabnitsa, Southwestern Bulgaria (4th century BC)*



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12:20 – 14:00 – Lunch break

SESSION 4. Hellenistic Period and Principate in the Middle Strymon Region

Chair: Emil Nankov

14:00 – 14:20 – Svenja Simon (Saarland University, Germany) *Jewellery from Heraclea Sintica in Regional Comparison: Types, Materials and Cultural Influences.*

14:20 – 14:40 – Hanna Aleksandrova (NAIM-BAS, Bulgaria) *Until Death and Beyond: Ritual and Utilitarian Plant Use in Burial Contexts – Archaeobotanical Evidence from Southwestern Bulgaria*

14:40 – 15:00 – Eva Tonkova (NAIM-BAS, Bulgaria) *Terracotta unguentaria from the Cemetery of Hellenistic and Roman Heraclea Sintica in the Chervenite skali locality*

15:00 – 15:20 – Coffee break

SESSION 5. The Middle Strymon Valley and Neighbouring Regions during the Principate and the Dominate

Chair: Zdravko Dimitrov

15:20 – 15:40 – Vassilis Evangelidis, Despoina Tsiafaki (Athena Research Center, Greece) *Crossing the Mountains: Topography, Mobility, and Connectivity in Aegean Thrace*

15:40 – 16:00 – Arina Korzun (IBSCT – BAS, Bulgaria) *Beyond Copying: The Afterlife of Classical Sculpture types in Roman Macedonia—Evidence from Parthicopolis and Heraclea Sintica*

16:00 – 16:20 – Hristina Ivanova-Anaplioti (University of Verona, Italy) *Community Symbols and Imperial Icons: Depicting and Incorporating Power through Circulating Coinage Designs in Heraclea Sintica, 3rd–4th Century AD*



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Day Three: 10 October 2026 (Saturday)

SESSION 6. Middle Strymon Valley and the Aegean World during the Principate and the Dominate

Chair: Lyudmil Vagalinski

09:00 – 09:20 – Dimitra Andrianou, Vasiliki Anevlavi, Walter Prochaska (NHRF, Greece)

Funerary Reliefs from the Lower Strymon Valley: Aspects of a Wider “Strymon Culture”?

09:20 – 09:40 – Philip Kolev, Kaloyan Pramatarov (NAIM-BAS, Bulgaria) *Shaping a Rural*

Landscape: A Roman and Early Byzantine Settlement in the Territory of Parthicopolis

09:40 – 10:00 – Zdravko Dimitrov (NAIM-BAS, Bulgaria) *Viticulture in the Sinti Valley*

during the Roman Era - Archaeological Data from the Hills near Sandanski

10:00 – 10:20 – Coffee break

Chair: Despoina Tsiafaki

10:20 – 10:40 – Mariya Avramova (NAIM-BAS, Bulgaria) *Brick by brick and tile by tile. An exploration of the interpretive potential of building ceramics based on the material from site 12 near the village of Valkovo, Bulgaria*

10:40 – 11:00 – Svetla Petrova (AM - Sandanski, Bulgaria) *New data on the urban planning of Parthicopolis*

11:00 – 11:20 – Hristina Tsoneva (University of Vienna, Austria) *The Late Antique City of Sandanski in the Context of 6-th-Century Building Activity*



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11:20 – 11:40 – Coffee break

Chair: Vassilis Evangelidis

11:40 – 12:00 – Vladimir Petkov (independent researcher, Bulgaria) *Archaeological Observations on the Building Practices and Materials from the Construction of the Episcopal Complex in Parthicopolis*

12:00 – 12:20 – Ivo Topalilov (IBSCT – BAS, Bulgaria) *Early Mosaic Floors from the Episcopal Residence in Sandanski: Iconography, Origins, and Liturgical Context*

12:20 – 12:40 – O. Boubounelle, Y. Chalazonitis, D. Malamidou, Laurianne Martinez-Sève, S. Kriemadi, P. Ralli, E. Rizos (Lille University et al., France, Greece) *Terpni, a city at the boundary between the Lower and Middle Strymon Valley*

12:40 – 13:00 – Efthymios Rizos (Ephorate of Antiquities of Serres) *Figurative Christian Sculpture in the Strymon Valley*

13:00 – 14:00 – Lunch break

SESSION 7. The Middle Ages along the Middle Reaches of the Axios, Strymon and Nestos Rivers

Chair: Metodi Zlatkov

14:00 – 14:20 – Galina Grozdanova, Maria Pashova (NAIM-BAS, RIM - Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria) *The Cerovo hilltop within the settlement network along the Struma Valley during the Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*

14:20 – 14:40 – Ordanche Petrov (Institute for Old Slavic Culture - Prilep, North Macedonia) *Prosakos Fortress: Connectivity, Mobility, and Control between the Vardar and Struma Valleys*

14:40 – 15:00 – Dushko Cvetanov (NI IPCMM – Strumica, North Macedonia) *Medieval fortifications at the foot of Mount Belasica*



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15:00 – 15:20 – Coffee break

Chair: Galina Grozdanova

15:20 – 15:40 – Metodi Zlatkov (NAIM-BAS, Bulgaria) *The Newly Discovered Church of the Life-Giving Spring of the Virgin Mary in Melnik and Its Place in the Medieval Ecclesiastical Architecture of the Town and the Region*

15:40 – 16:00 – Guergana Guionova (CNRS, Aix Marseille Univ, LA3M, Aix-en-Provence, France) *Melnik's connection with the outside world in the 18th century, according to imported tableware*

16:00 – 16:20 – Mihail Vaklinov, Ilia Kirov (NHM, Bulgaria) *The St. Archangel fortress and its importance in the Nevrokop valley during the 13th – 14th CE*