

# ON THE BORDERS AND URBAN TERRITORY OF HERACLEA SINTICA

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Livy (59 BC – AD 17) supplies the earliest evidence of the urban territory of Heraclea Sintica. At one point he emphasizes its location in the tribal territories of the Sintoi by means of the expression "*Heraclea ex Sintis*" (Liv. XLII, 51, 7; Drakenborch 1842, 1621). Elsewhere, clarifying the issue of the division of Macedonia into four parts by the Romans in 167 BC, he observed that it included as a whole "*the land between Strymon and Nestos*," some of the areas to the east of Nestos, and also one territory "*from the west beyond Strymon – the entire Bisaltia with Heraclea, which was called Sintice*" (Liv. XLV 29, 6: *cis Strymonem autem vergentia ad occasum, Bisalticam omnem cum Heraclea, quam Sinticen appellat*). Immediately after that, Livy added that the second area of the divided territory included the lands between Strymon and Axios, but here again he explicitly specified "*without Sintice Heraclea and the Bisaltae*" (Liv. XLV 29, 7: *praeter Sinticem Heracleam et Bisaltas*. Drakenborch 1842, 1855. See also ITM 1949, 169). It becomes clear from these excerpts that the urban territory of Heraclea was located to the west of Strymon and to the north of the Bisaltae. This is also supported by Diodorus, who placed Heraclea in the district of Sintica as well, westwards of Strymon and above Bisaltia (Diod. XXXI, 8, 8: *πρὸς δυσμᾶς δὲ τοῦ Στρυμόνος Βισσαλία πᾶσα μετὰ τῆς ἐν τῇ Σιντικῇ Ἡρακλείας*. Dindorf 1867, 8). In addition to

suggesting the city's location, these sources also indicate that the *polis* initially had the name Sintice or Sintia and had been a tribal center of the Sintoi (see Σαμσαρης. 1976, 120-123).

What is interesting is the fact that elsewhere Livy also mentioned a *polis* named Sintia, but as a Dardanian city in the area of the Macedonian border; Philip V conquered this city in 212 BC (Liv. XXVI 25, 3: *inde Dardanorum urbem Sintiam, in Macedoniam transitum Dardanois facturam, cepit*. See also ITM 1949, 148). He does not indicate any connection between this "Dardanian" Sintia and Heraclea Sintica (Sintice), but Stephanus Byzantinus provides information that suggests that these may be one and the same city. Following a piece of information from Eudoxus of Cnidus dating to the first half of the 4th century BC, he mentions a city named Sintia located not in Dardania, but in Macedonia, close to Thracia (Steph. Byz. Σιντία, πόλις Μακεδονίας πρὸς τῇ Θράκη ... Meineke 1849, 570, 10.). According to R. Kiepert, that settlement was situated at Petrich, which completely corresponds to the current localization of Heraclea (Kiepert 1894-1914, XVI; *contra* Oberhummer 1927, 258; Геров 1961, 161, note 2).

These short notices also suggest that around 212 BC or after, Philip V changed the name of Sintice (or Sintia) to Heraclea. But

even if the appearance of Heraclea had been earlier and under different circumstances (since, after all, there is no definitive evidence concerning this issue), then at least during the time of Philip V and Perseus (179 – 168), it was established as one of the Macedonian *poleis*. It was a part of the Macedonian Koinon from the Hellenistic period and had its own specific urban territory, which, according to Livy, was to the west of Strymon. Livy refers to "the entire Bisaltia and Heraclea", which, as he had previously clarified, was located in Sintica. This leaves the impression that Heraclea's territory consisted of only a portion of the former tribal area of the Sintoi. Otherwise, Livy would have noted that to the west of Strymon the entire Bisaltia and the entire Sintica were included in the first Macedonian district.

A brief statement by Appian can be similarly interpreted. It is related to the actions of the Roman military leader Sulla against the Thracians along the Macedonian border in 85 BC, during the First Mithridatic War (καὶ Σύλλας, τὴν ἐν τοσῶδε ἀγρίαν διατιθεμένους, Ἐνετοὺς καὶ Δαρδανέας καὶ Σιντοὺς, περίοικα Μακεδόνων ἔθνη, συνεχῶς ἐς Μακεδονίαν ἐμβάλλοντα, ἐπιὼν ἐπόρθει καὶ τὸν στρατὸν ἐγύμναζε καὶ ἐχρηματίζετο ὁμοῦ (App. *bell. Mithr.* 55; Bekker 1852, 367; Detschew 1957, 447). While the negotiations for peace with the Mithridates were going on, Sulla settled in the fields of Enetoi, Dardanoi and Sintoi, neighbors of the Macedonian tribes, which jointly invaded Macedonia. To put it differently, Appian stated that the Sintoi were outside the borders of the province of Macedonia at that time. B. Gerov believes that there are two possible explanations for this: first, that Appian confused Maedi with Sintoi because of their proximity; second, that a part of the Sintoi were outside the province of Macedonia (Геров 1961, 172, note 7). There is, however, no substantial reason to assume that Appian made a mistake, and, in my view, this makes the second option more likely. The mention of the Sintoi alongside the Dardanoi and Enetoi (Eletoi, Dentheletae) shows that

more than 60 years after the establishment of the Roman province of Macedonia, the Sintoi (or at least some of them) were outside its borders. Even so, Heraclea had been a part of the Macedonian kingdom during the reign of the Antigonids, and had fallen within the first Macedonian district between 167 and 148 BC. It was also within the borders of the province of Macedonia as early as its establishment in 148 BC. Thus, it would appear that the urban territory of Heraclea Sintica and the tribal territories of the Sintoi during 3rd–1st BC did not coincide. The only acceptable explanation is that upon the establishment of the Hellenistic *polis* Heraclea, the Sintoi were not subordinated, but were chased away from the area that formed the urban territory. If not all, then perhaps at least a part of the population was forced to leave the valley region to the west of the middle Struma River and lower Stroumeshnica River. The names in the inscriptions from Heraclea and the adjacent area show the predominant presence of a Hellenistic and Macedonian population, not that of a Thracian population in the centuries 3rd – 1st BC (see Митрев, Иванов 2006, 73–80; 2011, 18–49; Манов 2008, 111–112, №№ 121, 122, 123, 124). This provides us with a reason to conclude that substantial colonization took place during the establishment of the *polis*.

After the Roman conquest of the Macedonian kingdom, Heraclea preserved its status of a *polis*. It was also preserved after the establishment of the Roman province of Macedonia in 148 BC, and even during the Principate. Information provided by Strabo (63 BC – AD 19), who wrote about it as πόλις Ἡρακλίας (Strab. VII, frg. 36. See ИТМ 1949, 223), attests that this status at the beginning of the Roman imperial period seemed secure. We should not, however, ignore the fact that the description he offers is more a compilation of facts drawn from authors of the Classical and Hellenistic periods than from the reality of the situation in his own era. In spite of that, Strabo supports the observations of Livy and Diodorus concerning the location of the city.



Figure 1. The Borders and Urban Territory of Heraclea Sintica.

In the Roman imperial period, the issue of the settlement's status is related to issues regarding borders and urban territory. The earliest information pertaining to this issue comes from Pliny the Elder (AD 23/24 – 79), who included Heraclea Sintica amongst the one hundred and fifty "populi" (peoples, municipalities) in Macedonia (Plin. IV, 35; ИТМ 1949, 264). Today it is assumed that the initial source is an official list dating to the Augustan period (Papazoglou 1988, 382). This information shows that during the era of Augustus the city was among the many Macedonian *poleis* conquered after armed battle; it was defined as a *civitas stipendiaria*, and its population was subjected to tax payment and was included in the composition of the provincial population. This manner of ruling and organization of the *polis*, as well as the urban territory related to it, was the reality up to the first half and the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, when Claudius Ptolemy mentioned Heraclea among the inland *poleis* in Macedonia, in the district of Sintice, together with Paroecopolis (Παροικόπολις) and Tristolos (Τρίστολος) (Ptol. III, 12, 27; Müller 1883, 510; ИТМ 1949, 356). After him, however, the history is interrupted and the city does not appear again until the 4<sup>th</sup>-century AD Tabula Peutingeriana (*Tab. Peut.* VIII; ЛИБИ 1958, 25). Today it is clear why this is the case, although it is impossible to date the processes precisely. The letter from the Emperor Galerius and Caesar Maximinus Daia to the Heracleans, dating from the end of the year AD 307 or the first months of 308, shows that at some point during the early Roman period, Heraclea lost its city status and its previous administrative situation and was transformed into a village (Mitrev 2003, 263-272; Митрев 2012, 90-115). Unfortunately, it is currently impossible to prove any of the assumptions outlined in the earlier publications. In the absence of any information on the city status of Heraclea after the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, it may be assumed that this change in status happened during the reign of the emperors Trajan or Hadrian, when urban territories increased at the expense

of the number of cities; the closest example is the increase of the territory of Pautalia, which reached as far as the Kresna gorge (compare with Геров 1961, 177-178). In this scenario, it would seem logical that Heraclea and its urban territory were integrated into the city territory of modern-day Sandanski (Paroecopolis?), which, as archaeological and epigraphic data attest, emerges as the most important center in the Middle Struma during 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD. Another possible explanation is offered by the hypothesis of Cl. Lepelley, who suggests that the degradation of Heraclea was part of a general decline in the Balkans and in Asia Minor following the invasions of the Goths during the 260s AD (Lepelley 2004, 227-231). In an earlier publication, I mentioned that taking away the city status of Heraclea could hypothetically date from even earlier, if we take into account the known proximity between Heraclea and Scotoussa, according to the Tabula Peutingeriana, and the autonomy of the Scotoussaean. But that seems to be in contradiction with the information provided by Pliny the Elder and Ptolemy, and so such a hypothesis would be very risky (compare Mitrev 2005, 182-183). After all, between 10<sup>th</sup> December 307 and 30<sup>th</sup> April 308 AD, the Emperor Galerius and the Caesar Maximinus Daia restored the city status (*civitas*) of Heraclea, citing the statement of the Heracleans that they once had such rights. There is, however, no way to establish what exactly the local people meant by this claim. Was it that they were once the citizens of a provincial *polis* with a status similar to that of *civitas stipendiaria*, which was possible for the time before AD 212? Or was it that they were Roman citizens who lived in a settlement with the regulation of a city (*civitas*), which was possible in general for the time after the year AD 212? In any case, the *civitas* Heraclea existed throughout the Late Antiquity as a part of the Province of Macedonia Prima (Hier. 639, 9; ГИБИ 1958, 91).

The urban territory of Heraclea during the Hellenistic and Roman periods in the years when it possessed the status of *πόλις* or *civitas*, hardly extended beyond today's Petrich valley

to the west of the Struma river. It was obviously not a *polis* of great territory, as was typical for 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD in neighboring Thracia, e.g. Pautalia, Serdica, Philippopolis and others. Moreover, it is not even clear if it had a city status during this period.

At this point the southern border of Heraclea's territory seems to be most certain. According to the information of Livy, Diodorus and Strabo, it divided the Heracleans from Bisaltia, the latter being located in the lower Struma valley (*Fig. 1*). In this sense, it seems logical that the border passed along the ridge of the Belasica mountain. To the east, the Struma River presents quite a probable boundary, and literary testimonia insist that Heraclea lay to its west. However, considering the location of the settlement on the river bank, it seems possible to me that the town also possessed a strip of land along the east side of the river. Despite the lack of information it could be assumed that to the north the urban territory did not reach beyond the Ribnik or the Lebnica Rivers because of the proximity to the ancient city at modern-day Sandanski. As regards the borders and neighbors to the west, there is only a short note by Strabo (63 BC – AD 19), who wrote that if you go north from Heraclea, the surroundings of Dober would remain on the left (Strab. VII, frg. 36. See ИТМ 1949, 223). This indicates that there was a common border between the urban territories of Heraclea and Dober during the time of transition from the Republican era to the Imperial. It is, however, totally unclear where exactly this border was.

Strabo's text gives the impression that the urban territory of Dober came relatively close to Heraclea to the east. That said, Dober has no secure localization: some authors situate it in the valley of the Stroumeshnica, while others locate it to the west of the slopes of Belasica (Геров 1961, 163, note 8; Papazoglou 1988, 328-333). In the second case, it would seem improbable that the territories of Dober shared a border with those of Heraclea. In such a situation, the administrative location of the

valley of the Stroumeshnica River between Belasica and Ograzhden remains unknown and the question of the western border of the territory of Heraclea remains unanswered. The only thing that seems certain is that Heraclea at least had the fields to the west of the slopes of the mountain of Ograzhden in this direction, as well as those next to and around the Ivanik river (a right tributary of the Stroumeshnica), situated roughly at the border between the Petrich field and the area of Podgorie. It should be specified, however, that the field surveys of the Bulgarian-Polish expedition "Struma" indicated an absence of Late Iron Age and Antique sites in the vast territory between the village of Muletarovo (now Rupite) and the villages of Parvomaj, Kolarovo and Samuilovo to the west (Домарадски и кол. 2001, 8 sqq., Map 3, Map 4). In this lowest area of the Petrich valley during the Thracian-Roman era there were evidently no suitable conditions for life due, perhaps, to the wetlands and the overflows of the Stroumeshnica. At the same time, the large number of sites around the villages of Starchevo, Karnalovo, Mihnevo and Kavrakirovo, must have been part of the urban territory of Heraclea.

In conclusion, it can be summarized that in relation to the question of the borders and scope of the urban territory of Heraclea Sintica there are still many unclear issues. The lack of systematic surveys in the region makes it impossible to securely specify the extent of the administrative border. The scarce literary data allows the formulation of some assumptions and several working hypotheses but they provide no opportunity for final solutions.

#### Abbreviations

ГИБИ 1958	Гръцки извори за българската история. Том II. София.
ИТМ 1949	Кацаров, Г., Дечев, Д., Бешевлиев, В. Извори за старата история и география на Тракия и Македония. София.
ЛИБИ 1958	Латински извори за българската история. Том I. София.

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## ЗА ГРАНИЦИТЕ И ГРАДСКАТА ТЕРИТОРИЯ НА ХЕРАКЛЕЯ СИНТИКА

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/резюме/

Градската територия на Хераклея Синтика през елинистическата и римската епохи едва ли е надхвърляла в значителна степен днешната Петричка котловина на запад от Струма в годините, когато е притежавала статут на πόλις или civitas. Наличните сведения показват, че тя не е била полис с голяма градска територия, каквито били през II–III в. тези на Пауталия, Сердика, Филипопол и др. Още повече, че през това време дори не е ясно, дали е притежавала градски статут.

Относно границите на Хераклея най-сигурна изглежда тази на юг. Трябва да се приеме, че е достигала до билото на Беласица. В източна посока като естествена граница се очертава река Струма, пък и историографските бележки настояват категорично, че Хераклея отстои западно от нея. Дали не е възможно обаче да е владеела и една ивица земя покрай реката в източна посока предвид разположението на селището на самия бряг? На запад изглежда е обхващала земите до склоновете на Огражден и до географската област Подгорие (северното подножие на Беласица). Изследванията на българо-полската експедиция "Струма" показват подробно картата на селищния живот в този район. Прави впечатление липсата на обекти от късножелязната и античната епоха в обширна територия по долното течение на р. Струмешница, между с. Мулетарово (дн. с. Рупите) и селата Първомай, Коларово и Самуилово. Последните явно са били извън градската територия на Хераклея, но няма как да сме съвсем сигурни. В тази най-ниска зона на Петричката котловина през трако-римската епоха не е имало подходящи условия за живот поради мочурищата. Същевременно големият брой обекти около селата Старчево, Кърналово, Михнево и Кавракирово са били част от землището на Хераклея. В северна посока градската територия на Хераклея не би могла да е преминавала р. Рибник или най-много р. Лебница заради близостта с античния град под днешния град Сандански.

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