

Butrint Foundation written reports

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Brief description of content/ keywords: A report on the work carried out in the 2001 season including the investigation of the villa and basilica at Diaporit, further excavation of the Triconch Palace, a geophysical survey of a section of the town on the south side of the Vivari Channel and survey work to locate the caves and prehistoric sites found by Luigi Cardini.

BUTRINT 2001

The 2001 season was the most successful to date. Between 26th March and 27th July we undertook four projects: a second campaign of excavations at the villa and basilica of Diaporit ('Atticus's villa'); a further large excavation of the triconch palace in Butrint; a geophysical survey of the newly discovered section of the town on the south side of the Vivari channel including four trial trenches; and further survey work to locate the caves and open prehistoric sites identified by Luigi Cardini, the 1930s prehistorian attached to the Italian mission at Butrint. The season was made more memorable by the numerous visitors to the site including President Meidani and by concerts given by Inva Mula in the theatre on 5 May and dedicated to flutes on 26 May.

During the project four groups of undergraduates took short introductory courses on field techniques. These included the first and second year archaeology students at the University of Tirana; the second year from Gjirokastra University; and a second year group from the University of East Anglia (UEA). In addition, a number of the Tirana University students who have been studying at the UEA returned to participate. In all, a total of over one hundred people took part in the season.

The project was directed by Richard Hodges and Kosta Lako, and managed by Sally Martin. The excavations at Diaporit were directed by William Bowden and Luan Përzhita; the triconch excavations were supervised by Andrew Crowson, Oliver Gilkes and Kosta Lako; the geophysical survey was led by David Bescoby; and Karen Francis and Ilir Gjipali undertook the Cardini survey. Finds processing was managed by Etleva Nallbani assisted by Dee Williams, Leomie Willoughby-Ellis and Abigail Daley. Rovenna Kurti led the data management programme. Oliver Gilkes ran the teaching courses assisted by Sindorella Golemi and Anthony Hyams. Particular thanks must go to the specialists who joined us including Paul Reynolds (American University of Beirut), Joanita Vroom (Leiden University), Pippa Pearce (British Museum) Adrienne Powell (York University), John Giorgi (Molas) and John Hayes (Institute of Archaeology, Oxford) and especially to the team who worked so hard.

We are also immensely indebted to our Albanian colleagues. Auron Tare, Director of the Butrint National Park and Gjoni Marko who provided assistance in setting up the project and helped in its smooth running. Last but not least a debt of gratitude is owed to the cook, the guard, his wife and our driver: Ylli, Jimmy, Lika and Mucho.

The Butrint Foundation excavations were funded by the Packard Humanities Institute. In addition, the Atticus Foundation supported the investigations at Diaporit, and the Institute for Aegean Prehistory supported the second season of research on the Cardini archive. The geophysical survey was partly supported by a NERC grant to the School of Environmental Studies, UEA. We are immensely grateful to all these bodies. Finally, our particular thanks go to Lord Rothschild and Lord Sainsbury of Preston Candover for their great support in making this season so outstanding for all involved.

Richard Hodges - Scientific Director, Butrint Foundation

Excavations at Diaporit

The investigation of the site of Diaporit on the eastern side of Lake Butrint continued during April and May 2001. The objectives of this season's work were to expand the two trenches excavated during the 2000 season within the area of the postulated villa and to continue the investigations of the Early Christian basilica. Full analysis of the ceramics excavated during both 2000 and 2001 was also carried out. This has proved particularly important in defining the phases of occupation of the villa and the church.

The 2001 season provided some notable successes, which have demonstrated the value of large-scale excavations on the site. Diaporit is the first Roman villa site in the southern Balkans to be investigated by means of stratigraphic archaeology. It is clear that the results obtained will have a significant impact on our understanding of the processes that were affecting Butrint and its hinterland in the crucial years following the foundation of the Roman colony. Equally the excavations of the church have allowed us to date the church and its various construction phases in a way that has rarely been achieved elsewhere. The site has also provided important data regarding life in the Butrint area during the late seventh century AD, a period that has thus far proved elusive in Albania and Greece.

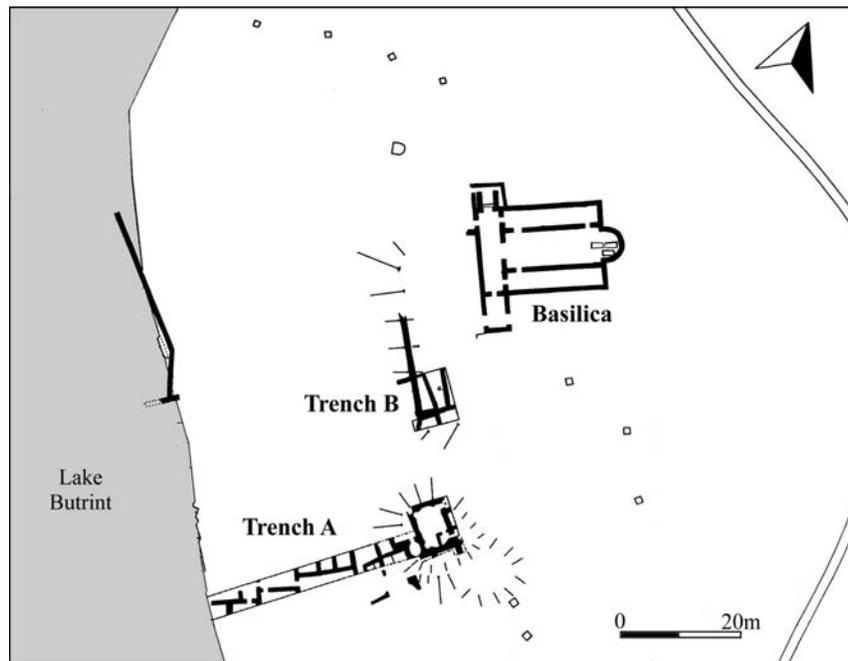


Fig. 1: Overall plan of the excavations at Diaporit.

The villa

A total of 20 rooms within the villa have now been wholly or partially excavated in the two trenches (A and B) opened in 2000 and greatly enlarged in 2001 (Figs. 1, 2 and 3). The excavations allow some preliminary conclusions regarding the nature and

duration of the site's occupation, and the plan of the villa complex. It is now clear that the earliest villa buildings thus far excavated date to the middle of the first century AD. However, pottery of the Republican period was recovered from both trench A and B, suggesting that earlier buildings remain to be found. The late-Republican period is of particular interest in that it is the period in which Roman aristocrats began to establish land holdings within Epirus. These landowners included Cicero's correspondent T. Pomponius Atticus, who owned an estate in the vicinity of Butrint. Recovery of Republican ceramics during the course of preliminary survey work heightened expectations that Diaporit may be the site of Atticus's villa. Diaporit has the best situation for a Roman villa in the area, with its south-west facing aspect and its commanding view. The visual relationship between Diaporit and Butrint is also crucial. The villa site is the only part of the eastern shore of the lake that is visible from the town. The buildings excavated thus far can be clearly seen from Butrint, giving some indication of the visual impact of the villa when standing to its full height. Nonetheless, although the site is clearly ideal for a villa owner of Atticus's standing and was certainly occupied in some fashion during the late-Republican period, the absence of structural remains means that at present 'Atticus's villa' must remain in the realms of hypothesis.



Fig. 2: View of trench B. The scale is positioned on the upper terrace, while the deep trench in the foreground reached the lower floor level.

The villa complex of the mid-first century AD seems to have erected over a series of terraces. The full height of one of these terraces (*c.* 2.20m) was revealed in trench B, where floor levels were identified on both the upper and lower terrace (Fig. 2). The lower room in this trench was painted with a series of dark blue panels outlined by yellowish green bands which sat above a dado level painted to resemble a veneer of grey marble or granite. The simplicity of this décor suggests that the room was within a service area of the villa. In trench A, the only section of the earliest villa located

thus far is the heated room excavated in 2000. This has now also been dated to the mid-first century AD.

This first building phase seems to have been relatively short-lived. By the late first or early second century, the buildings excavated in trench B seem to have been demolished. Within this initial period of around two generations, there were also a number of modifications made, including the abandonment of the painted room and the apparent extension of the terrace line to the west.



Fig. 3: Overall view of trench A. The room in the immediate foreground contained rare seventh-century occupation levels, including an oven built into the niche on the far right.

The bath complex on the southern side of the site in trench A was rebuilt in the late second century. The new bath was on a relatively grand scale, built over two terraces and extending down to the present waterline (Fig. 3). It included the room with curving walls and the small oval room on the upper terrace and a series of square and rectangular rooms on the lower terraces. Heated rooms were present on both terraces. Like the first building phase it too seems to have been relatively short lived although a number of modifications were also carried out before the complex was largely abandoned and robbed of its decorative material during the early third century.

The villa site was then apparently abandoned until the late fifth century although this remains to be investigated over a wider area. The only signs of activity are an early fourth-century Gazan amphora recovered from the construction levels of the church and late fourth- or early-fifth century coins found in later levels. However, the presence of late fourth or early fifth century coins on the site can be ascribed to the continued circulation of this coinage into the sixth century. This phenomenon, which has been noted in the triconch excavations in Butrint, is particularly interesting at

Diaporit, where there is little chance of the coins being residual within the sixth-century contexts in which they occur.

The site was reoccupied in the first half of the sixth century, probably in conjunction with the construction of the church described below. Occupation continued into (or at least recurred during) the latter half of the seventh century. This second phase of activity is unlikely to be associated with a grandiose estate centre and at present it seems that the Roman villa at Diaporit did not survive beyond the early third century. However, the relationship between occupation of the site and ownership and use of the estates is a complex one. Abandonment of the site as a place of residence is may not be indicative of either a change of land-ownership or in the mode of land-ownership.



Fig. 4: View of the basilica, looking towards Butrint. One of the three marble-lined tombs can be seen in the apse.

The basilica

In the late fifth to mid sixth century, a new phase of activity commenced on the site. All the excavated areas on the site contained significant quantities of ceramics dating from the period AD 500-550. This activity was probably contemporary with the construction of the church, which the ceramic evidence indicates was built around the end of the fifth century (Fig. 4). Pottery of the late fifth century was recovered from beneath the pavement of the southern annex of the narthex, which itself post-dates the construction of the church. Pot joins between these deposits and the late second- to early third-century demolition deposits discovered in the trench A on the far side of the site also provide conclusive evidence that the demolished remains of the villa buildings were quarried for materials for the construction of the church.

The 2001 excavations of the basilica revealed a number of important elements of the church. It was confirmed that construction was carried out almost entirely using material quarried from the villa. This included the large tile pavement within the central nave and a series of huge marble blocks, which were refashioned into window colonnettes for use within the church. Three of these colonnettes were found in each aisle of the church, together with a series of rectangular impost capitals, indicating that each side of the church was illuminated by three large bifora windows. Further elements of local sculpture were also recovered, including half of a decorated marble plaque which joins with a piece stored in the castle at Butrint, which was presumably discovered by the Italians during their excavations at Diaporit.

Perhaps the most significant discovery was that of three marble-lined tombs within the chancel and apse area. These graves were constructed with brick and were lined with panels of marble. They were constructed contemporaneously with the basilica, indicated by distinctive white shell-rich mortar used within the masonry of the tombs and the apse. These tombs are clearly the *raison d'être* for the church and the identity of the occupants is obviously of great significance in understanding the use of the site during late antiquity. The two main possibilities are that the graves contained the bones of saints or martyrs or those of patrons who built the church to serve as a funerary oratory. The use of the basilican plan may argue against the former, but it is unlikely that this question will ever be resolved.

The northern annex of the church was apparently modified during the latter part of the seventh century, when what had previously been an open-ended porch was closed by the addition of a northern wall. What appears to be a small porch was also added to the only entrance on the west wall of the narthex. Although these alterations are minor, they appear to demonstrate the continued presence of a Christian community at Diaporit in the latter part of the seventh century, long after the area was reportedly overrun by Slavic invaders. Occupation of a similar date has also been identified within the remains of the villa complex in the large room with niches at the eastern end of trench A, which was fully excavated in 2001. This room contained none of the demolition deposits that characterised the other rooms within trench A and it seems that it survived more or less intact until the later seventh century. This may be explained by the fact that it seems to have been a more substantial, vaulted, construction in comparison with the other villa buildings. During the latter part of the seventh century, there seems to have been renewed activity in this room, which had been previously robbed of its decorative marble wall panels and pavements. Post-holes were cut into the floor and a hearth or oven was built in one of the niches of the room (see Fig. 3))

The seventh-century date of these phases is established through sherd links between deposits within trench A and the basilica and the main seventh-century levels on the site, which were excavated in trench B. These include sherd links between deposits some 70m apart. In trench A and the basilica, the apparent seventh-century deposits are overlain by layers containing sixth-century material. It is clear therefore that during the sixth and seventh centuries, significant quantities of material were moved around the site, presumably during construction activity. This also highlights the importance of examining the ceramic assemblage in totality, in order that these site formation processes can be fully understood.

The excavations also provided a tantalising glimpse of activity on the site during the later medieval period. The church was certainly abandoned by the eleventh or twelfth century if not before. An almost complete example of an Otranto type amphora, dating to this period, was found on the floor of the central nave, close to the main entrance, suggesting that the church was disused by this point. However, the discovery of a small medallion, perhaps a votive, during the excavation of the apse area of the church, suggests that the site continued to function as a cult focus. In the fourteenth century the contents of the tombs within the chancel area were removed (see below). This activity was dated by a coin of one of the Latin dukedoms of the Peloponnese, found at the bottom of the central tomb. It therefore seems that whatever the identity of the occupants of the graves, by the fourteenth century they were assumed to be saints or martyrs, or at least it was expedient to regard them as such.

Conclusion

Although the excavation of Diaporit is still at a relatively early stage, with only an approximate ten percent excavated thus far, it is undoubtedly a project of some importance. The ceramic evidence in conjunction with careful stratigraphic excavation has allowed us to identify a complex archaeological sequence, thereby creating the possibility of understanding the relationship between Butrint and its hinterland during the Roman and late-antique periods. It is also the first detailed excavation of such a site in the southern Balkans and the results have ramifications beyond the area of Butrint.

Excavations at the triconch palace

The excavations for this season focused on defining the western limit of the palace, the relationship between the palace and the city wall and the sequence of the palace's development. It was also hoped to further our understanding of the triconch in the context of the changing morphology of the city in the late-Roman period. For example, what effect did the expansion of the palace complex have on the street plan of the city, and how was the waterfront of the town used before and after the construction of the palace?

The results of this season's excavations have highlighted the complexity of the archaeological sequence of the triconch. However, perhaps most significantly, the excavations suggest that it is possible to define the changing land boundaries within the town and consequently detect changing patterns in land ownership.

The waterfront of Roman and late-antique Butrint

The expansion of the excavation area during 2001 allowed the identification of three building plots that run northwards from the Vivari Channel. This suggests that the waterfront was divided into a series of narrow properties, each with access to the channel. The three plots identified in the area of the triconch appear to have been ultimately combined in a single property that was occupied certainly from the fourth until the seventh century AD, with an important phase of reoccupation from the eleventh until the fourteenth century. These plots are defined in Figs. 5, 6 and 7.

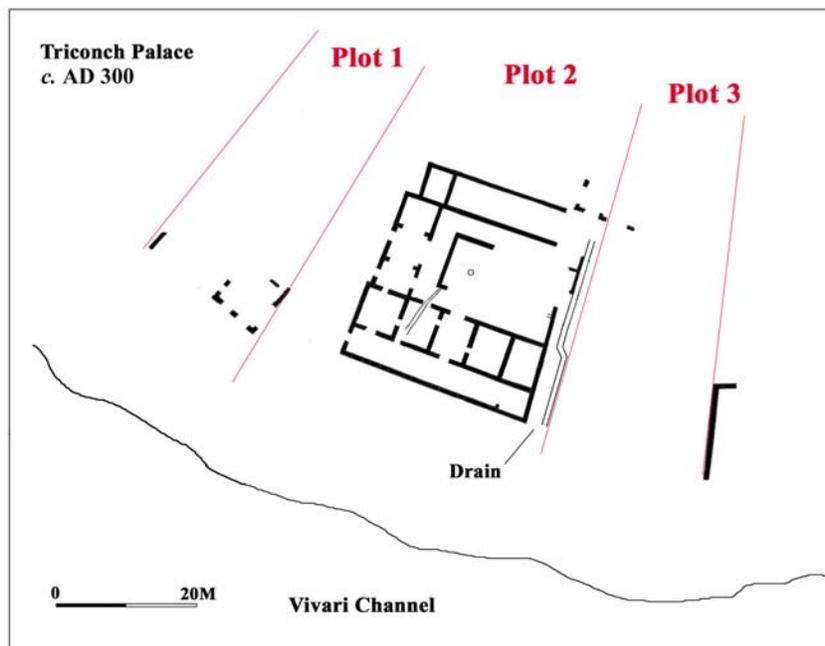


Fig. 5: Plan of the triconch palace around AD 300

A number of questions remain unanswered, in particular those relating to access to and between these plots. The street plan of Butrint remains elusive, with no definite roads identified within the excavation area thus far. However, although the evidence

remains incomplete, it is possible that these three plots functioned as a single unit. In other words, the palace and the commercial area were the property of one individual or family. This presents the opportunity to examine the ways in which a citizen of Butrint utilised the maritime location of the town in the creation and maintenance of wealth, and how he or she chose to utilise this wealth in the construction of a grandiose residence.

Plot 1

The western plot is delineated to the south and west by the line of the city wall. The eastern boundary is thought to be adjacent to the small bath complex associated with the grandiose residence defined in previous seasons. Finds of substantial quantities of transport amphora suggest that the area was used for commerce and may have been a small port with wharves and warehousing. It seemingly retained this function throughout the existence of its neighbour and remained in use, or was reused, in the early middle ages.

In the third or fourth century a substantial building occupied part of Plot 1, indicated by the remains of an arcade built on a series of piers (Fig. 5). A large opening to the east allowed access onto either an alley or road, or a private space connecting the arcade with the domestic buildings in Plot 2 (see below). The frontage of another building to the west (outside the excavations) was part of the same build as the arcade and faced the channel. These buildings seemingly enjoyed unhindered access to the waterfront, which may imply some commercial or industrial use based on goods imported via the channel. Perhaps in the late fourth century a rectangular building was added to the south face of the arcade, the openings of which were blocked, although a series of doorways still allowed access between Plot 1 and Plot 2 (Fig. 6).

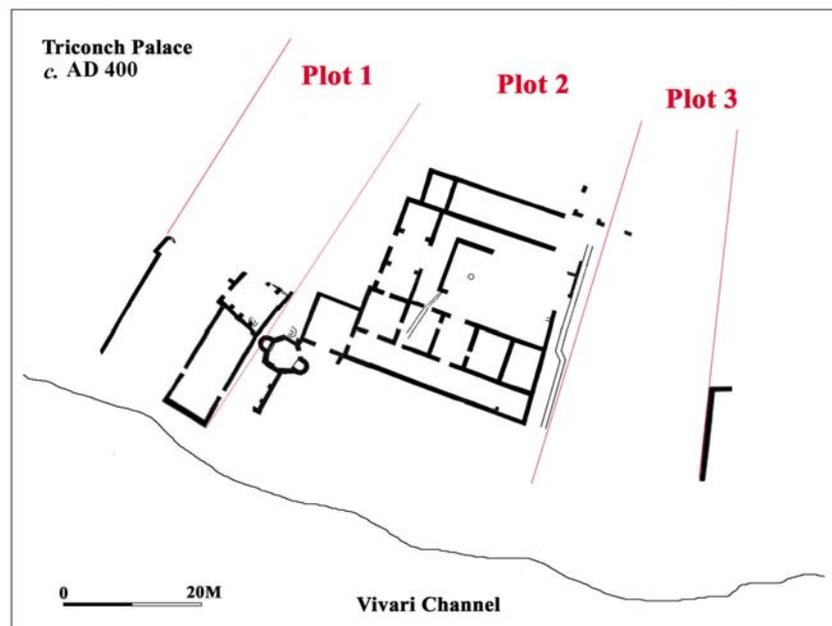


Fig. 6: Plan of the triconch palace around AD 400

A major alteration occurred around the middle of the fifth century with the construction of the city wall, which followed the western boundary of Plot 1, incorporating the walls of earlier buildings, before turning east along the channel front

(Fig. 7). Earlier buildings were seemingly converted into a tower, with a further possible tower at the angle of the wall. Two thick walls were erected between these postulated towers, separated by a gate permitting access to the channel. This gate was to be a long lived feature as it continued to open onto the waterfront for approximately 800 years. However, the immediate effect of the construction of the city wall on activity within the ‘port’ area is unknown. The apparent deviation of the wall to avoid the three plots within the excavated area could suggest that the owner wielded sufficient power to have some influence over the course of the city’s defences.

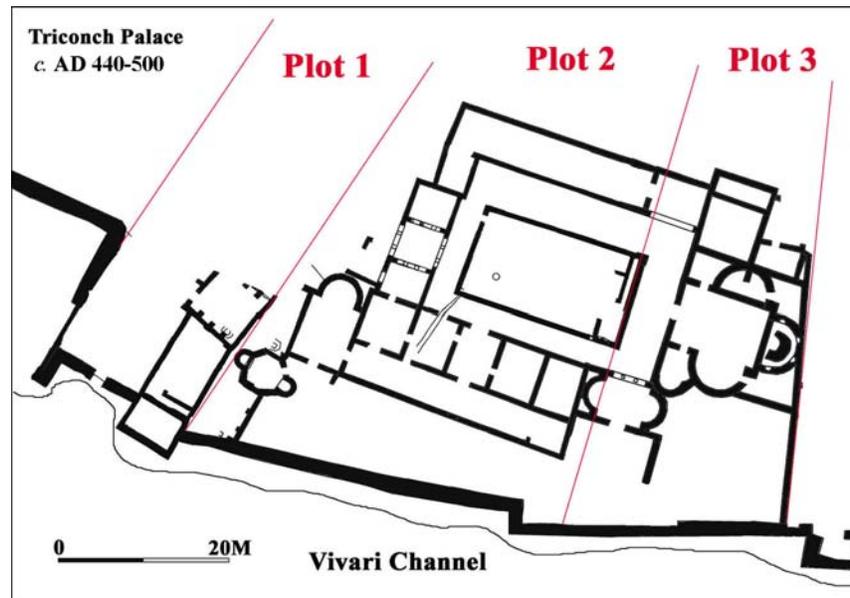


Fig. 7: Plan of the triconch palace around AD 440-500

During the first half of the sixth century, the earlier building with the blocked arcade was pulled down, although occupation continued inside the rectangular building to its south. Shell middens accumulated as a result of the processing of shellfish in the area. Use of this ‘commercial’ area continued into the late sixth or seventh century. As many as three new structures, were built in the space focused on the channel gateway. A building on the west side of the gate is dated to between 565 and 578 (or slightly later) by a coin of Justin II placed amongst numerous other offerings beneath the threshold. Although burials dating to this period have been found elsewhere in the triconch, their absence from this part of the site provides further evidence of continued activity in Plot 1.

This activity continued during the later medieval period. During the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, Plot 1 was occupied by a series of timber buildings arranged around a metalled courtyard focused on the gate in the city wall. These buildings contained a series of hearths or ovens, probably associated with shellfish processing. A vast spread of crushed shell was found within the remains of earlier buildings. Later hearths, however, did not have this waste associated with them and may be connected with salt extraction.

Around the thirteenth century, the city walls were refurbished and at a slightly later date, the gate in Plot 1 was blocked. Four crouched interments were found close up to the city walls, indicating that the area was used as a cemetery. Disturbance to the

upper levels of these burials and the great depth of soil overlying the site indicate that the final historic activities in the walled city were gardening or agricultural events dating to the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries.

Plot 2

The central plot (Plot 2) extends from the bath complex on the west to the line of a substantial masonry drain on the east (see Fig. 5). This drain bisects the entire site and continues further north, also appearing in the area of the so-called ‘gymnasium’. It existed from at least the third century AD. During the third to fourth century, a large building was erected in Plot 2, probably for residential use. A series of rooms with mortar floors and painted walls were arranged around what seems to have been a peristyle courtyard (Fig. 5).

In the early fifth century, further elements were added to this building including mosaics in the peristyle. These were elaborate geometric pavements incorporating figures of birds, repetitive motifs and some magical symbols such as knots and the evil eye intended to ward off misfortune. A similar symbol was found on a bone plaque recovered during the excavations (Fig. 8). Part of the western range was remodelled as a small colonnaded entrance vestibule with a mosaic floor while a dining room (later augmented with an apse) with a mosaic was built on the western side, looking out over the Vivari Channel. A small bathhouse was constructed next to the channel itself, and was subsequently enlarged with the addition of an entrance vestibule. These features created a division between Plot 1 and Plot 2 and may point to an increasing desire to separate the functions of the two spaces (see Fig. 6).



Fig. 8: Early fifth-century bone plaque to ward off the evil eye.

Around 440 AD the domestic building underwent a major aggrandisement (Fig. 7). The peristyle courtyard was reconstructed and new mortar surfaces were laid down over the mosaics. These were presumably intended as foundations for new pavements.

This aggrandisement included the expansion of the complex into Plot 3. However, this ambitious building programme was soon abandoned, perhaps as a result of the construction of the city wall, which forced the demolition of one end of the *caldarium* of the small bath complex and cut the access between the palace and the Vivari Channel. The western part of the triconch palace was heavily modified with the old entrance vestibule gaining a new western end elaborated with niches. This may have been intended to form a dining room suite, a miniature version of the unfinished triconch. A small kitchen was added into a nearby room. Blockings, subdivisions and repairs elsewhere suggest an attempt to convert the unfinished building into a habitable structure. The original owner may have moved elsewhere, perhaps leasing this property or leaving it for an agent to occupy.

By the early sixth century the rooms of the palace were being used for a variety of functions including industrial processes, rubbish tipping and the beginnings of a series of burials. After the middle of the sixth century, the palace was demolished and the stone robbed or broken-up, perhaps to make lime. During this time fishermen also used parts of the building to process shellfish. The use of the area for burial also continued into the seventh century.

Previous excavations have demonstrated that in the later medieval period, the area of the ruined palace within Plot 2 was reoccupied with a series of buildings built from crude masonry and timber. These structures have been identified within the ruined rooms in the north and west of the palace, focused on a cobbled courtyard above the former peristyle. Most date to around the thirteenth century.

Plot 3

The eastern plot (Plot 3) lies to the east of the drain. Little is known of the earlier use of this area, but around AD 440 it was incorporated into the plan of the main residence with a major extension that included the actual triconch triclinium, and its accompanying entrance vestibules (Fig. 7). The 2001 excavations have underlined that this was intended as a major monumental focus, with entrances from the Vivari Channel and the city, and a substantial colonnade of marble columns and Corinthian capitals, fronted by a water-filled channel, incorporating the earlier drain and a pool. The superstructure of the triconch included a row of four elaborate stone windows, two of which had Chi Rho monograms in the lunettes demonstrating that the owner of the building was Christian (Fig. 9). However, this programme was never completed as it appears to have been interrupted by the building of the city wall.

Conclusion

The excavations of the triconch in 2001 have made important steps towards an understanding of the changing uses and ownership of the waterfront of Butrint. It is possible that we have an indication of the changing fortunes of a particular family within the city, who gained wealth through mercantile activity carried out from a small privately owned wharf adjacent to their house, which became ever more palatial. The expansion of the house onto a further building plot suggests that the owner was increasingly able to control his or her environment. However, the erection of the city wall, while it may have deviated to follow the property boundaries, seemingly curtailed use of the building as a palatial dwelling. However, the continued differences between the three building plots that can be detected in the archaeological record suggest that these property divisions were maintained long after the

abandonment of the palace. This may indicate that certain aspects of social structure within the city endured until the end of late antiquity and into the early medieval period.



Fig. 9: Mid fifth-century stone window with Chi Rho monogram

The geophysical survey of the Vrina plain

Between 1998 and 2000 a geophysical survey of the Vrina plain was undertaken to map the extent of the archaeological remains opposite Butrint on the east side of the Vivari Channel (Fig. 10). The result of this work, together with a reassessment of the topography of Butrint, resulted in the reinterpretation of the old topographic model of Butrint and the discovery of a further 24 hectares of planned settlement, developed as part of the establishment of the Roman colony at Butrint (Fig. 10).

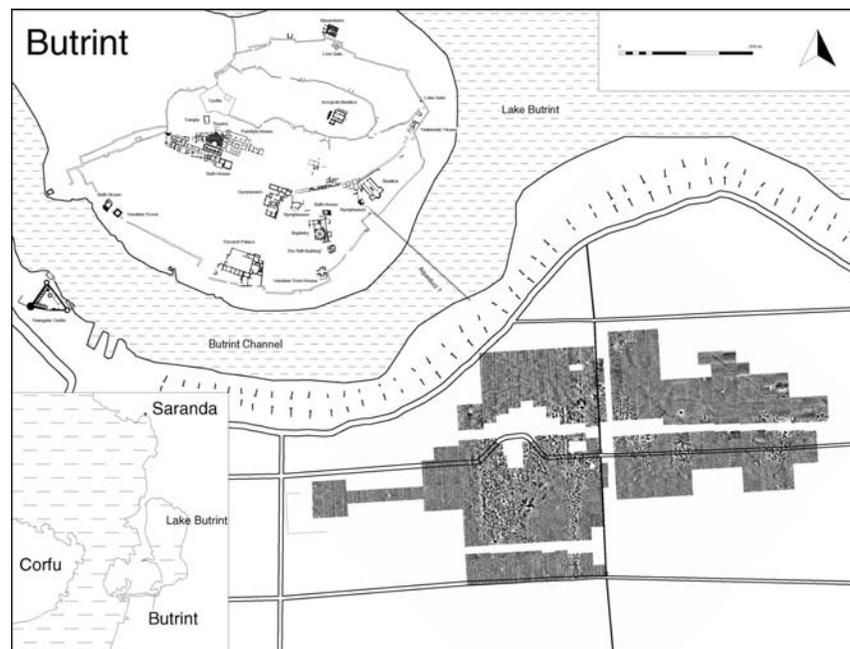


Fig. 10: Plan showing extent of geophysical survey

This year's survey was the first season of a new phase of work aimed at providing a detailed three-dimensional sub-surface image of the Roman colony lying east of the Vivari channel. The survey essentially took the form of a set of experiments which looked at the readings of different materials (fired brick, limestone, clay etc.) at different depths using different geophysical and computer modelling techniques. Four trial trenches were excavated to provide control data for the results.

The season produced extremely interesting results that considerably enhanced our understanding of the topography of the Roman colony. The survey of the south-western portion of the colony using a high sensitivity Caesium-Vapour magnetometer has revealed a coherent picture of the building plans and roadways belonging to the former settlement (Fig. 11). A large open space forming a square *c.* 25 x 25 m is clearly visible and appears to contain a central circular feature. Is this the remains of a public space with a large, circular monumental feature at its centre? The 'piazza' is surrounded on all sides with a complex network of building structures. The building along the NE side has a large apsidal room in the NE, flanked either side by smaller

apsed rooms. To the SE is a very large structure with a complex ground plan, resembling the plan of a peristyle house.

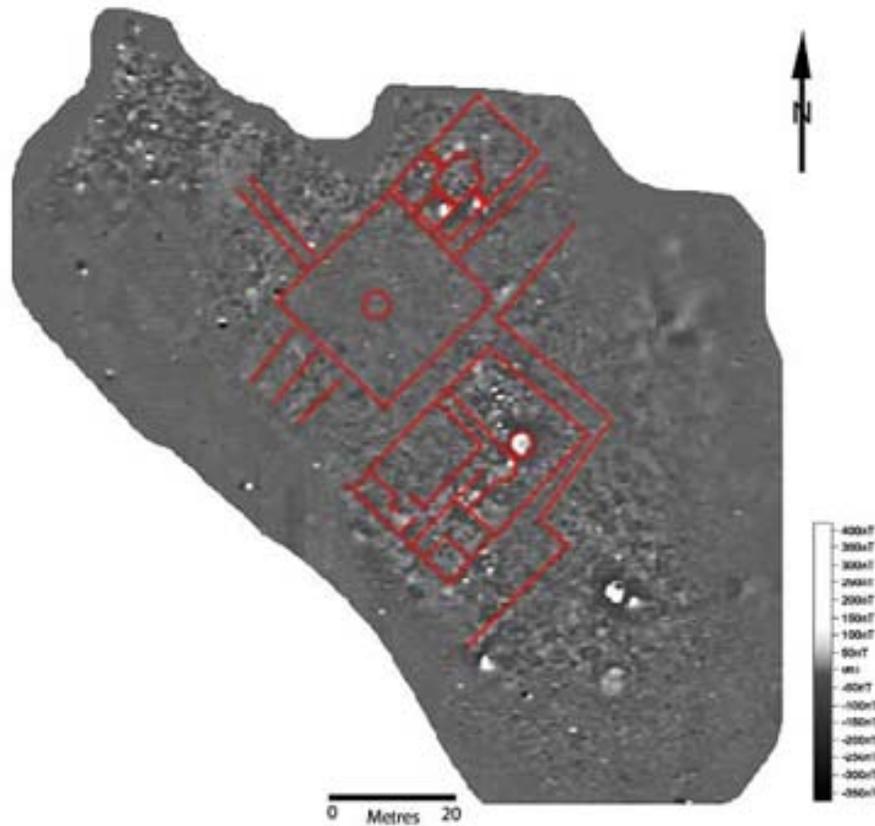


Fig. 11: Interpretation of geophysics results

To the east and west of the colony, linear features define the edges of the main settlement. The linear feature to the west was partially excavated in a test trench in 1998 and proved to be a ditch or water channel. This feature has now been recognised in 18th-century maps and air photographs from 1943. A trial trench was excavated across the eastern feature this year in the belief that it represented a roadway. However, this feature also appears to be a ditch or water channel and may either represent a defensive feature for the colony or be part of the Roman land reclamation system, draining marshland ahead of the development of the colony.

Beyond the eastern linear feature (and seemingly outside the main colony) there is an outlying structure first identified in the 1998-2000 geophysical survey. New surveys of this structure were undertaken to provide experimental data using a range of geophysical techniques. The magnetometry results (Fig. 12) clearly show the structural layout of the SE section of the complex and the presence of a courtyard with a portico to the NW, suggesting a large suburban villa. A trial trench confirmed the presence of substantial walls surviving at a depth of *c.*0.3 m.

Two trial trenches excavated elsewhere in the survey area have shown that the surviving archaeology is buried *c.*0.6 m below the current surface. The trenches revealed surviving walls and floor levels belonging to the colony in a good state of preservation. It was also clear from the excavations that the buildings continued to be used and modified during late antiquity.

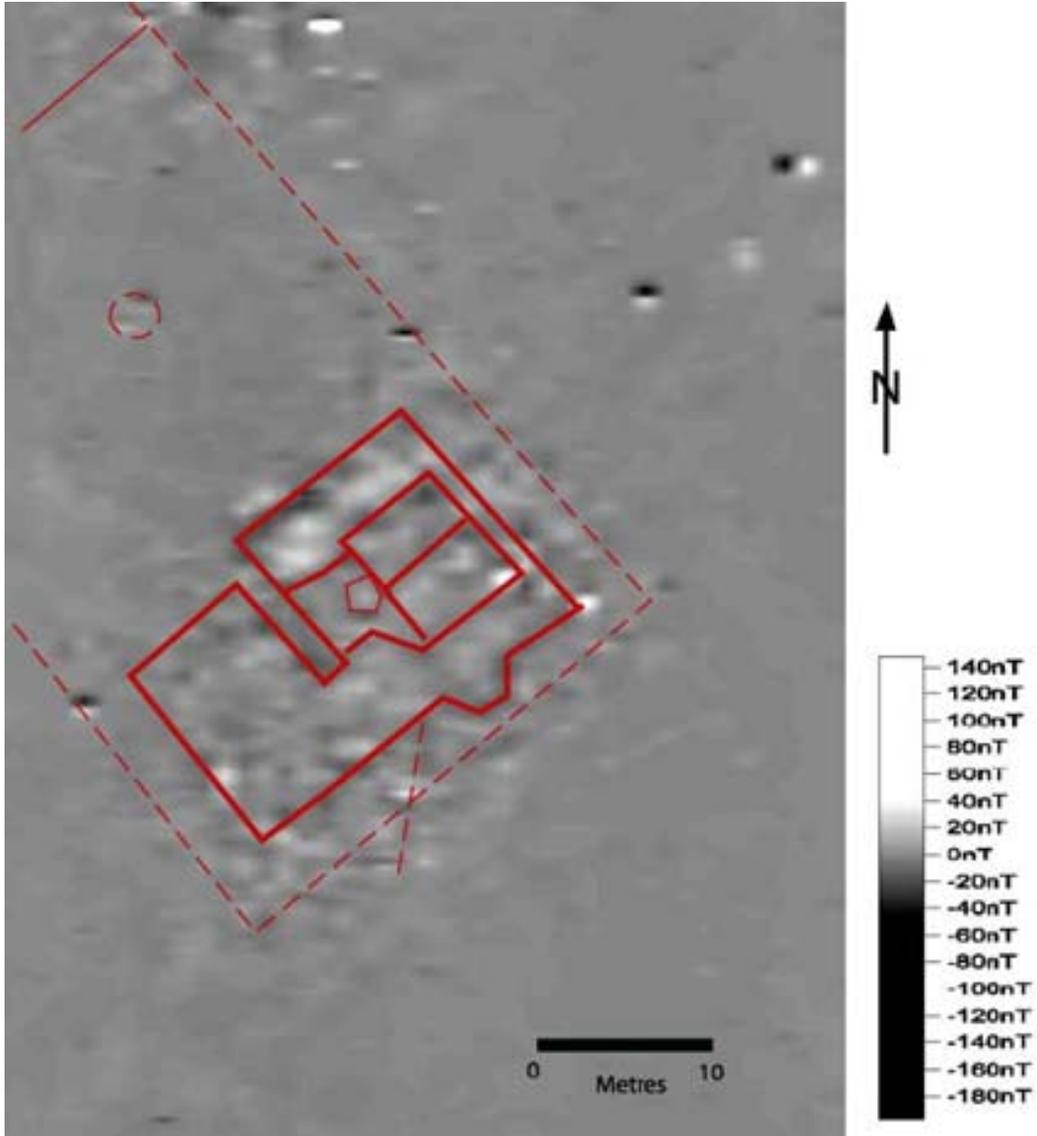


Fig. 12: Interpretation of the magnetometry survey

A second journey to relocate the caves of Cardini

Luigi Cardini was a distinguished prehistorian who was appointed by Luigi Ugolini to the Italian Archaeological Mission to Albania, between 1930 and 1939. During this time, Cardini travelled extensively throughout south-west Albania and, with the help of local guides and informants, discovered over 60 natural cave and rockshelters, many of which were found to have been occupied from early prehistory to Roman times. During his travels Cardini also located a number of Palaeolithic surface sites close the seashore, where concentrations of well-made stone tools provided evidence of visits by Neanderthal people, who had set up small temporary camps around 100,000 years ago, possibly to exploit shellfish and other food supplies. Such discoveries, particularly at the site of Xarra near Butrint, still form the basis of our knowledge of Albanian prehistory today, although prior to the exciting discovery of Cardini's Albanian notebooks in Rome in 1999, the majority of his work there had been long forgotten.



Fig. 13: Route taken during the Cardini survey 2001

A preliminary expedition to try and relocate Cardini's Albanian caves took place in the summer of 2000, directly as a result of the discovery of his notebooks. The survey was a success and managed to locate many of Cardini's southern-most caves and surface sites, situated close to the ancient city of Butrint. The work was made possible by a generous grant from the Institute for Aegean Prehistory, who also sponsored the current, second survey. This took place over 10 days in June 2001 and was designed to search for Cardini's remaining caves, situated much further north, between the towns of Saranda and Vlora. The survey commenced from the southern village of Ksamili and headed north along the winding coastal road to Vlora (Fig. 13). For logistical reasons, Cardini's caves were explored in geographical order, firstly along the outward coastal road, via Borsh, Himara and Dukat and returning inland, via Velcia and Tepelena - even though Cardini's research had taken place much more sporadically and over a longer period of time. Throughout the survey, as was Cardini's experience, the help and information divulged by local people and shepherds was paramount to success. Their knowledge of local topography and place names enabled many caves to be relocated with ease. In addition, many important new prehistoric sites and caves were discovered in 2000 and 2001. These included the discovery of a number of Middle Palaeolithic quarry sites on hills overlooking what is now Corfu. Large quantities of stone tools had been manufactured at these sites using the local limestone and flint. In total, 39 caves and rockshelters were recorded.

Of the caves examined, one or two revealed important evidence of prehistoric occupation. Of particular interest were three caves at the coastal town of Himara (Fig. 14), where Cardini had carried out successful trial excavations in 1939:

The Himara caves: these appear in the locality of Spilë, close to the Adriatic coast.....An initial trial trench carried out on the 4th June was widened and deepened on the 8th and 9th..... I verified the highly interesting nature of the site, which will require a long campaign of excavations -very promising in terms of results due to the enormity of the deposit; the abundance of archaeological and faunal remains and the rare stratigraphic clarity- and I thought it better not to disturb the deposit, which could be explored directly at a more opportune moment, using the means and the devices suggested by science (Luigi Cardini, 4th July. 1939 notebook).

Unfortunately, the survey revealed that the small, isolated beach sketched by Cardini is unrecognisable today and has now become a busy sea-front town. The caves that held so much potential are not at all visible from the water's edge: cave 1, in which Cardini excavated, is still intact but now lies hidden behind the concrete foundations of a partially constructed hotel (Fig 15).

Sadly it appears that the cave (7 m high and over 30 m long), will be inaccessible in the future, after the completion of the new building, although the floor still contains the deep deposits from which Cardini recovered stratified animal bone, flint tools, pottery and hearths, dating to the Eneolithic, Hellenistic and Roman periods. The survey demonstrated that the Himara caves require urgent examination, in light of their archaeological importance and imminent destruction.

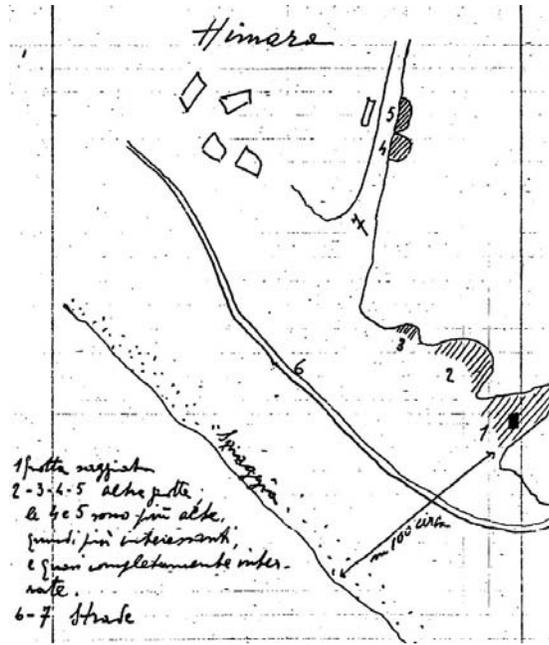


Fig. 14: Cardini's 1939 map showing the location of the Himara caves



Fig. 15: Cardini's cave 1 at Himara in 2001

Another site identified by Cardini in 1939 and relocated during the 2001 survey was found to contain significant evidence of late Mesolithic activity (Fig. 16): Kanalit rockshelter is a prominent limestone outcrop that overlooks the bay of Vlora and was one of Cardini's most promising sites, in terms of archaeological deposits:

At Capa Petrusit there is a cave which Sinan calls Kanalit, small but where there are pot fragments on the surface.....A trial trench carried out close to the rock face revealed the following stratigraphy...As a whole, the artefacts from the lower part of the deposit, even though scarce due to the small size of the trial trench, provide secure

evidence of the presence of an Eneolithic industry. The site, which presents a vast and explorable surface, promises to be able to procure an abundance of securely stratified and interesting material, as a result of systematic excavation (Luigi Cardini, 1939 notebook).



Fig. 16: Kanalit rockshelter looking southwest

During the survey we were able to securely identify Kanalit as a result of the accuracy of Cardini's plan (Fig.17).

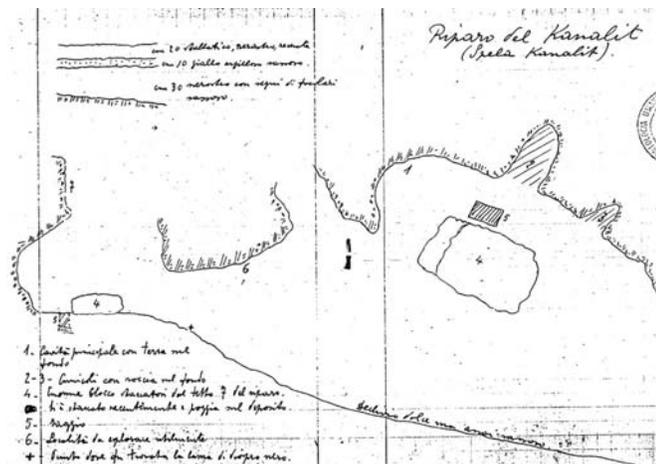


Fig. 17: Cardini's 1939 plan of Kanalit rockshelter

The rockshelter had a 50m long terrace, below which we recovered Iron Age and late-antique pottery, as well as an impressive collection of late-Mesolithic flint tools - extremely rare in Albania. As Cardini concluded, the Kanalit rockshelter has much archaeological potential and certainly merits future examination.

Luigi Cardini clearly realised the significance of his Albanian discoveries, particularly at Himara and Kanalit. Sadly, the Italian invasion of Albania and the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 meant that Cardini was never able to fulfil his aim to

carry out future survey and excavations at the prehistoric sites he had discovered. The discovery of Cardini's notebooks therefore not only provides us with a fascinating insight into his methodology and research, but has re-opened the door to the past and enabled his valuable work to be recognised and continued.