



Archaeological survey of the St. Dimitri hill Butrint 2015

This project was founded by the Butrint Foundation



July 2015

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This report represents the work of the Centre for Albanian Cultural Heritage (Qendra Trakult) in the frame of its Survey of the St. Dimitri project, carried out with generous financial support from the Butrint Foundation.

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Centre for Albanian Cultural Heritage (Qendra Trakult) – Report, July 2015.

Front-cover: East view of St. Dimitri hill during survey.

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Acknowledgment

We would like to express our deep gratitude to the Butrint Foundation who has generously funded the research project of the St. Dimitri hill in 2015.

Thanks go to Prof. Luan Përzhita (Director of the Institute of Archaeology) for his help and decisions taken during the fieldwork phase, Prof. Dhimitër Condi (Regional Archaeologist) for his assistance in field survey and Mr. Brian Ayers for his professional consultation and open-minded support of this research.

We wish to extend our thanks to the staff of the Butrint National Park and local farmers of Zara for the collaboration and assistance provided during the project.

The survey research would not have been possible without the help of assistants who participated in this project thanks goes to them Eriona Qilla (Archaeologist at the Butrint National Park) and Mirgen Shahmetaj (archaeologist/designer). Special thanks goes to Oliver Gilkes, Andy Crowson, Prof. Ilir Gjipali (IA), Paul Reynolds (University of Barcelona), Jose Carvajal Lopez (UCL Qatar), Joanita Vroom and to all of our friends for their help.

Introduction

Between 2nd and 17th July 2015 an archaeological survey was conducted at St. Dimitri hill and its surroundings. This project was carried out in collaboration with the Albanian Institute of Archaeology, the Butrint National Park and was funded thanks to a generous grant of the Butrint Foundation. The project is a continuation of research on late Butrint started in 2014 with trial excavations at the triangular fortress, near the Vivari Channel. In a wider perspective, these projects are part of a main project that aims to study coastal sites in southern Albania under Venetian and ottoman influences from 14th to 18th century. The project studies similarities and distinctions in the topography of sites, domestic architecture, military constructions, religious buildings and economic relations. From this point of view, St. Dimitri hill has an important part for the study of late Butrint as a Venetian outpost on the mainland managed through Corfu and can shed light to a numerous issues related with late settlement pattern, economy and communications in this area.

Archival and field researches conducted by Oliver Gilkes¹, Siriol Davies², Andrew Crowson³, and archaeological survey by Jose Caravjal Lopez⁴ and Richard Andrews⁵ are a valuable contribution to the history of later Butrint. Thanks to these studies has become possible to create a basis for more detailed studies on the Ottoman and Venetian Butrint and its economic, political and military links. It has been said that although Butrint was managed from Corfu with the arrival of the Ottomans the sea communications were closed. All production of the area turned inland as Butrint became overshadowed by the Pashalik of Delvina. On the other hand, as the recent researches at the triangular fortress show, contacts between Butrint and Corfu and central and southern Italy were never interrupted.⁶ During Venetian period, the triangular fortress operated for protection of the fishery and as a place for embarking local goods to Corfu. As a result, it has been of a great importance to establish a link between this small harbour and other parts and inland areas through a network of roads. As the maps of the time show the historical route, connecting Butrint with other important areas like Delvina and Konispol, passed close to St Dimitri hill when a settlement is believed to have been built to the south.

Background

St. Dimitri hill lies around 1.7 km southeast of Butrint (Figure 1). The first account on the presence of a settlement in this area was given by William Martin Leak during his trip to southern Albania. He mentioned, “... on some low eminences rising from the southern bank of the lake Riza are the villages Zara and Zarópulo, which are comprehended in the district of Vutzindró (Butrinto)”⁷.

¹ Gilkes, Oliver. *A report on the printed and documentary archival for the later history of Butrint to be found in the United Kingdom*. Unpublished report, 1998.

² Davies, Siriol, *Late Venetian Butrint: A report on the research on the archives of Corfu and Venice*, Butrint Foundation, 2002.

³ Crowson, Andrew, *The triangular Castle*, Butrint Foundation, 2007.

⁴ Lopez, Jose Caravjal, Ali Pasha's Castle at Butrint: *Butrinti në shekuj*, ed. Solinda Kamani, Tiranë 2011.

⁵ Andrews, Richard, Bolden, William, Gilkes, Oliver and Martin, Sally, The late antique and medieval fortifications of Butrint: *Byzantine Butrint: Excavations and surveys 1994-1999*, Oxbow 2004.

⁶ Parangoni, Ilir. *Trial excavations at the Triangular Fortress, Butrint 2014*. Unpublished report. Butrint Foundation 2014.

⁷ Lik, Ulliam Martin. *Udhëtim në Shqipërinë e vezirëve*. Tiranë: Migjeni, 2008.

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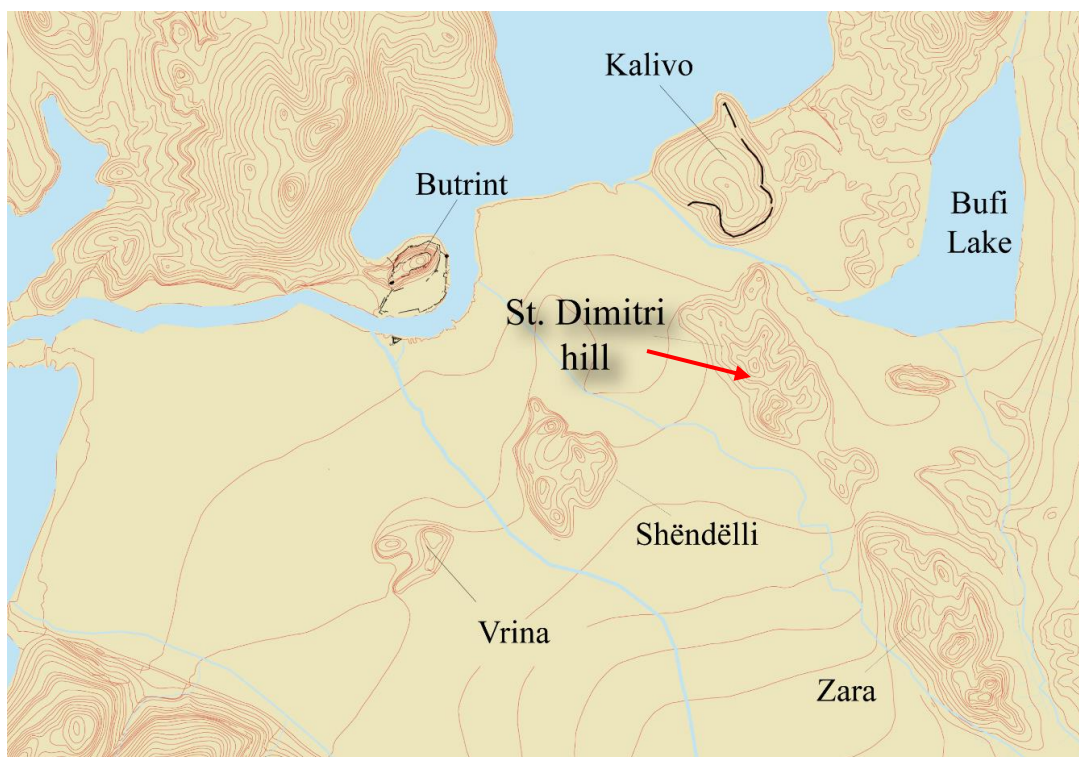


Figure 1 Location of the St. Dimitri hill

In the 1960s-70s, thanks to agricultural and reclamation works undertaken around Butrint considerable archaeological material was brought to light. Excavations carried out by Dhimitër Çondi at that time identified a Roman necropolis to the northwest foot of the St. Dimitri hill. Twelve tombs were excavated dating mainly to the II-III century AD associated with ochre coloured *terrasigilata italiana*, iron objects and a bronze coin of Hadrian⁸.

In 1995-96, a survey was conducted by the Butrint Foundation and directed by Pluciennik, Lako, Përzhita and Brennan on the surrounding area of the ancient site. During that survey near Kalivo a sparse scatter of limestone and tile was noticed, probably Roman, deposited by dredging. Extending in an elongated central oval towards Kalivo they found a single-period scatter of potsherds including combed amphorae sherds and polychrome-glazed wares dating to the early modern period⁹.

In 2008 a survey conducted by Sebastiani and Vacarro around Butrint recorded several Roman tombs found in the 1980s at the St Dimitri hill. Together with the Roman necropolis they found also some other Roman material suggesting a small village or villas around the hill¹⁰.

⁸ Çondi Dhimitër. Gjetje arkeologjike nga rrethina e Butrintit. *Butroti*. Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë 1988, fq. 237-249.

⁹ Mark Pluciennik, Kosta Lako, Luan Perzhita dhe Dee Brennan. The environs of Butrint 2: the 1995-96 field survey. In R. Hodges, W. Bowden, & K. Lako, *Byzantine Butrint: Excavations and Surveys 1994-1999*. Oxford: Oxbow 2004, fq. 47-63.

¹⁰ Sebastiani Alessandro dhe Vacarro Emanuele. *Preliminary report of the Diaporit-Mursi survey*. Unpublished report. Butrint Foundation 2008.

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Lastly, during a survey on the Veneto-Ottoman period at Butrint led by Jose Caravajal Lopez scattered stones in the southern part of the St. Dimitri hill together with presence of Roman graves were reported. The material found in this part dated back to the 16th-18th and attempts were made to identify the settlement of Zarópulo around this area¹¹.

Methodology

With reference to all the dispersed information on the St. Dimitri hill coming from different surveys around Butrint together with the lack of any detailed survey on this area, it was planned to carry out an archaeological survey. The project aimed to:

- Undertake an archaeological survey of the St. Dimitri hill and its surroundings by recording visible archaeological features and findings (despite their period).
- Locate the exact extent of Zarópulo at the St Dimitri hill, assessing its type, layout and lifespan.
- Linking new results with other previous studies carried out in Butrint.

The project survey area was approximately of 70 ha in total. It includes the St. Dimitri hill with a surface of 50 ha, low eminence to the south of St. Dimitri hill with a surface of seven ha and two other low hills to the northeast of modern village of Zara with a surface of 13 ha. The entire surface was considerable wide thus it was divided into six areas. The geographical division was done based on natural borders and slopes of the St. Dimitri hill (Figure 2).

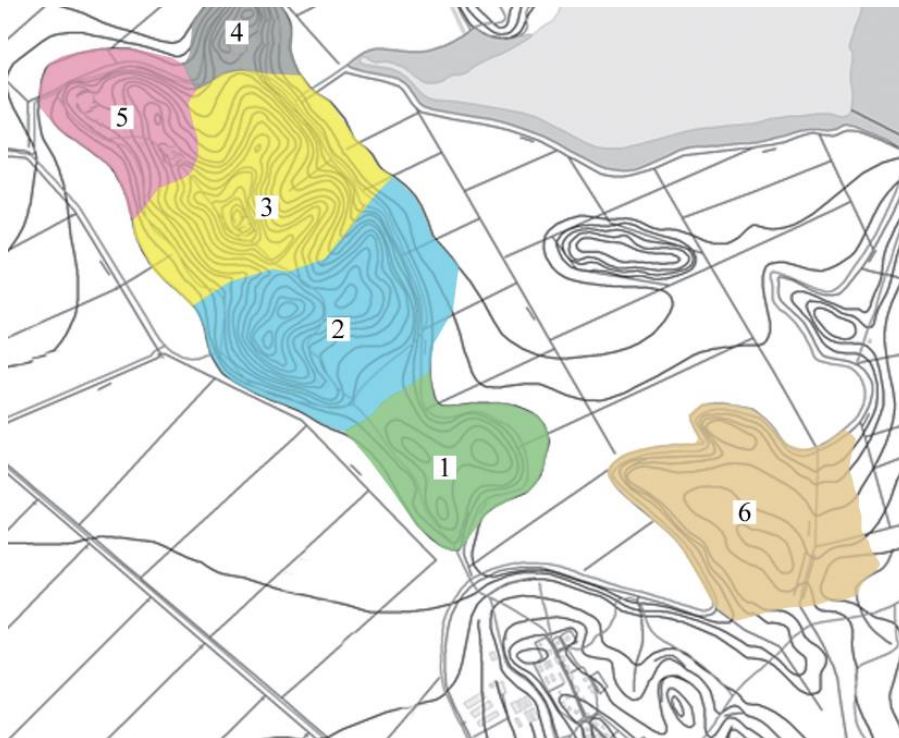


Figure 2 Division of the surveyed area in 2015

¹¹ Lopez José C. Carvajal, Hayden Benen, Alexiou Kostas, García Marcos. *Interim report for the Butrint Foundation on survey carried out in 2010*. Unpublished report. Butrint Foundation 2010.

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The field methodology applied to this project was extensive survey involving unsystematic walking across the project area. Archaeological features were recorded using handheld GPS *Garmin GPSMAP62* and other conventional documenting methods applied in archaeology. Artefacts were collected and examined on surface while diagnostic material was treated as small finds and deposited at the Butrint National Park storeroom.

The field survey was proceeded by a desktop research focusing on previous researches of the Butrint Foundation and the Albanian Institute of Archaeology. In collaboration with the Butrint National Park, contacts were established with local residents, farmers and shepherds who could have knowledge of the area or indications of archaeological findings. Regarding limitations during field survey, there were certain spots where visibility and walking was difficult and often impossible. The prevailing vegetation in this area is fern, which is denser to the eastern slopes of the hill. Another difficulty encountered during the survey relates to fenced private lands and sheep sheds. However, thanks to a close collaboration between the Butrint National Park and local owners it was possible to overcome these obstacles.

Results

Area 1 (*Small eminence to the south of St. Dimitri hill – surface 7 ha*).

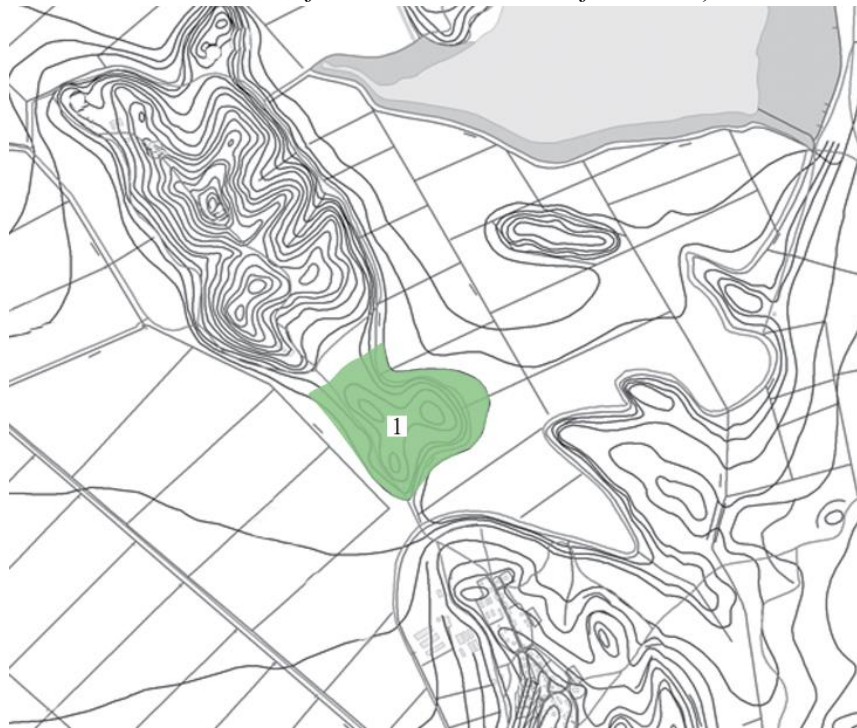


Figure 3 View of area 1

Area 1 lies to the south of the St. Dimitri hill and is called by local inhabitants, *paleozivar* (Figure 3). Its surface is approximately 7 ha but the survey was slightly extended to the west towards Vrina plain. The geological composition of this area is of clay and small gravel. Nowadays parts of this low eminence are planted with olives groves and their access was made possible through owners' permission. During survey in Area 1 scattered fragments of tiles and small stones mainly to the

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northwest of the eminence (E20° 3' 3.1466" N39° 44' 11.8999") were observed, dating generally to the 18th-19th century. Other debris were found to the east but they were not associated with any particular features or structure. It is important to note that this area was terraced during the communist period and it is therefore difficult to find the origin of their source. Furthermore, the construction of a military trench to the west could have disturbed any possible earlier structure on this part of the eminence because other fragments of stones and tiles were found westwards of the modern road passing near area 1 connecting the St. Dimitri hill with Zara. There was no other finding on this area. It seems that this low prominence could not have had any significance use in a certain period. Nonetheless, it is thought that near this area passed the old route that connected Butrint with Delvina and Butrint with Konispol (*see below area 6*).

Area 2 (*South part of St. Dimitri hill – surface 18 ha*)



Figure 4 View of Area 2

Area 2 has a surface of 18 ha and lies to the south of the hill of St. Dimitri (Figure 4). The geology of this area is composed of clay and small gravel at the bottom and mudstone on top. A few years ago, a road was built in this area starting from the foot of the hill and going to the top where the church of St. Dimitri with a large white cross stand today. It is thought that the new road follows the old route going on top hill. Construction of the new road has disturbed the ruins of a late settlement which may be identified as Zarópulo. To the south of this area flint artefacts were found (E20° 2' 59.3421" N39° 44' 18.9390"). It is believed that they could have been either flint chips deriving from working of tools or proper tools (Figure 5).

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Figure 5 Flint findings from Area 2

Flint findings were visible mainly on landslides and erosion. Previously in the area the Albanian Institute of Archaeology had carried out an excavation about prehistory. The project led by Ilir Gjipali has found material dating from the High Palaeolithic to Late Bronze. The Archaeological material of this project is still being studied whilst another excavation is planned to be undertaken in this area in autumn 2015 by the Albanian Institute of Archaeology. Going up to the top of the hill a great density of scattered building materials were seen (E20° 2' 56.5226" N39° 44' 22.2580"). These materials mainly stones, bricks and tiles were found all over the southeastern slope, scattered on both sides of the modern road. GPS measurements showed that surface seize of ruinous area was approximately 0.47 ha (Figure 6). It seemed that in some places, the new road follows the natural slope of the hill but approaching to the area with ruins it is clear that parts of the topsoil together with construction debris were removed to open the way for the new road. During field survey, it became obvious that construction of the new road had affected a considerable part of the settlement. This caused the distribution of scattered fragments of building materials and pottery on both sides of the new road. Another pile of rubble, not affected by the construction of the road, was recorded at the eastern slope below the church of St. Dimitri (*see area 3*). Construction debris found on this part seem to be of the same type with those found on the southeast slop and probably they belong to the same settlement. The stones were medium and small sized while amidst were occasionally large limestone slabs. During survey short alignment of walls were noticed, but the remains are scarce and never more than 1 or 1.5 m long. Four piles of rubble were found on this hillside with east west extension. Their layout suggests the creation of flat terraces or spaces on slopes for construction of buildings. The distance between each terrace is short and their alignment suggest a direction overlooking Lake Butri to the east and the old road going from Butrint to Delvina south.



Figure 6 Aerial image of the St. Dimitri hill showing debris construction of Zarópulo

An important part of the 2015 project was the documentation of this settlement (Figure 7). Two of the rubble piles were recorded during the field survey. Referring to both recorded layouts it is believed that the typology of constructions was rural. They may have been rounded-shaped huts built largely with small stones and wooden beams, allied with mud and covered with tile roof. Floors were paved with bricks and slabs. During a cleaning of the area to record the settlement's layout, it was noticed that bricks still had remains of a mortar floor adhering to them. Bricks

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measured 3-4cm thick and have diagonal lines scored across. Similar brick were encountered in the Roman aqueduct from other earlier researches on the Vrina plain. This might suggest reuse of the Roman bricks from an unidentified Roman site, perhaps one of those around the hill, during the late period at the settlement of St. Dimitri hill. This particular style of brick seems, at the moment, to be the result of one period of manufacture, or indeed one tiler, and can be tentatively dated to the later 2nd or early 3rd centuries AD¹².

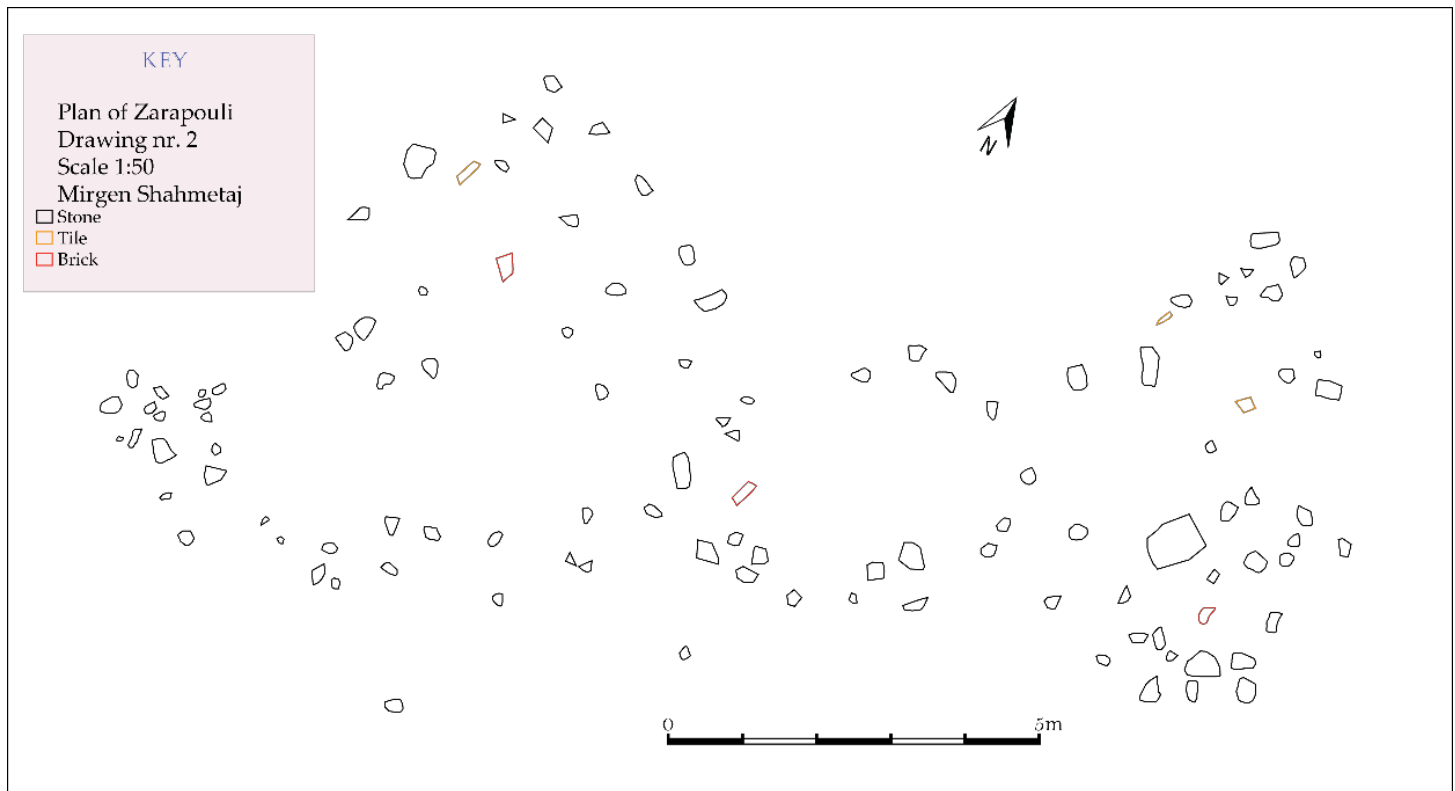


Figure 7 Plan of rural construction to the southeast of St. Dimitri hill

During the survey to the south east of the new road, several fragments of pottery similar to those found at the triangular fortress were retrieved (Figure 8 a-b). They consist of two vessels base and some walls. The material is white glazed with blue decoration, possibly imported Italian *maiolicas* of the 16th-18th century. To the west upper part of the new road pottery that looks early in date was found (Figure 7b). It could be an imitation of Zeuxippus ware dated initially in the 13th-14th centuries (although they kept on being made in Ottoman times)¹³

¹² Oliver Gilkes *pers. comm*

¹³ Joanita Vroom. *Byzantine to Modern Pottery in the Aegean. An introduction and field guide*. Utrecht: Parnassus Press, 2005.

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Figure 8 a-b potsherd found amidst the ruins on both side of the new road going to the Church of St. Dimitri.

Area 3 (Central part of St. Dimitri hill – surface 22 ha)



Figure 9 View of Area 3

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Area 3 had a surface of 23 ha in total and included mostly the central part of the St. Dimitri hill (Figure 9). Generally, the area was under a high-density shrub vegetation that hinder field survey. However, it was possible to notice some important findings. On the north eastern slope where today is the Church of St. Dimitri a square-shaped stone structure level surface (E20° 2' 46.2294" N39° 44' 33.7962") was found. The depth was shallow approximately 1.20 m diameter and initially has been considered as an abandoned water well. After cleaning the vegetation and soil, it was observed that the structure was built in white worked limestone bonded with strong modern mortar. The arrangement of stones in such a way suggested a modern date for that structure probably a hidden entrance of a communist-era tunnel.

It is important to mention that besides military bunkers and trenches built throughout this hill, there is a considerable number of underground tunnels linking different defensive features of that period. To the east of tunnel entrance on a flat slope scattered sandstone were recorded (E20° 2' 46.7894" N39° 44' 34.8431'). The view from this spot is dominant and looks over Lake Bufi and Kalivo hill. Further to the south of this spot other similar sandstone associated with several fragments of yellow coloured tile were evidenced (Figure 10). Dimensions of tiles were about 40 x 15cm but it is obvious that they were much bigger in their original shape. From preliminary consultations with Dhimitër Çondi, it is believed that these fragments are Hellenistic in date and may belong to a tile tomb of that period¹⁴.



Figure 10 Yellow tile fragment found the east slope of Area 3

¹⁴ Dhimitër Çondi *pers. comm.*

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The most substantial feature of this area is the Church of St. Dimitri from where the name of the hill derives. The church is located on a dominant spot of the hill overlooking the Vrina plain to the west, Kalivo hill to the north, Lake Bui to the east and village of Zara to the south (E20° 2' 44.0085" N39° 44' 28.9256"). A modern road built some years ago connects nowadays the hill with the village of Zara. The surface on which the church was built is flat. It is hard to say when this area is flattened or whether it was a natural transformation process. It worth remembering that the geological composition of this area is sand and lime mudstones, as Lopez had noticed in 2010, enabling easy alteration of surface from both natural process and human agents. During the survey on this flat surface, there were only very few tile fragments, though difficult to define their period, to suggest any early possible construction. The Orthodox church of St. Dimitri is a small one nave building erected in 1910 referring to an inscription on the entrance. It should be noted that the walls of the chapel do incorporate blocks of a *cloisonee* style masonry, which has been used in local Orthodox churches for centuries, and which here suggest the presence of an earlier church of unknown date. However, it is still hard to determine whether this area was ever used before the construction of the church. No other archaeological remains were found that could suggest an earlier use of this part of the hill, though there was some significant disturbance of archaeological material during the erection of a substantial concrete cross on the hilltop in the late 1990s. From conversations with county archaeologist Dhimitër Condi, who assisted during the survey on this part of the hill, in the 1980s he had undertaken an archaeological excavation on flat surface where is now the white cross. The excavated area was about 250 m² (10mx25m) divided by trenches measuring 5 m wide and down to 1m deep. The excavations results with not many findings except one tile tomb dating to the second century A.D. It seemed that the tile tomb was robbed at a later date because there was no skeleton or other archaeological material¹⁵. Furthermore, from the same archaeologist in the 1980s, following a military trench along the mid-range of the western slope around 20 Roman burials were found of which 12 with inventory. One of these is still preserved near a fig tree but due to dense vegetation and tress we could not document it (E20° 2' 36.5348" N39° 44' 31.5837")¹⁶. During walking to the northwest of the hill down to the former agricultural cooperative part some flint artifacts were found (E20° 2' 34.4491" N39° 44' 36.4394"). They are believed to be high Paleolithic to the Bronze Age although is still soon to define their actual period (Figure 11). It seems that the flints could have come out due to landslide on the slope. As we have already mentioned above, most of the geological composition of the area is clay with small gravel and mudstones and because of that creep is easily to occur.

Following the new road before getting to the church of St. Dimitri on the right there is a ridge stretching east (E20° 2' 51.4822" N39° 44' 28.1237"). Here the top hill was flat and building debris where found during walking. The scattered material mainly tiles and small stones without pottery occupied an area of about 0.025 ha or 250 m². The construction debris seemed to be of the same type with the ones found at Area 2 and are believed to belong also to Zarópulo.

¹⁵ Condi Dh. 1980, *unpublished report*.

¹⁶ Sebastiani, A., & Vacarro, E. (2008). *Preliminary report of the Diaporit-Mursi survey*. Unpublished report for Butrint Foundation.

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Figure 11 Flint collection found to the northwest of Area 3

Area 4 (North part of St. Dimitri, called Bullar – surface 3 ha)



Figure 12 view of area 4

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Area 4 lies to the northeast of St. Dimitri the hill with a surface of about 3 ha (Figure 12). This area consists mainly of a cape called by the locals the eminence of *bullar*. From the field walking there was no evidence of any archaeological features or finds around this area except a communist military trench for defensive purpose to the north. However, Dhimitër Çondi claims to have excavated a Roman tomb with tile roof construction to the south of this eminence (E20° 2' 43.4002" N39° 44' 42.3270"). This further supports the idea of a Roman period necropolis at the St. Dimitri area if we refer to burials found to west part of the hill on area 3. The area to the northeast of the cape is mentioned by various travellers of the 19th century as Lake Riza used also for fisheries. Time to time it turned into swamp but during 1960s it was reclaimed by the state and a numerous of ditches were opened. During the field walking at the bottom of the eminence to the northeast scattered limestone rubble was found (E20° 2' 45.0707" N39° 44' 48.2591"). The stones are large sizes and more are visible in the vicinity of the hill near some trees (Figure 13).



Figure 13 North view of cape of Bullari

Not far from the cape to the north east there are two large rocks or rubble (E20° 2' 45.0127" N39° 44' 49.9815"). The area between two rocks and the cape of *bullar* is separated with a drainage ditch. During field survey at two rocks, it was noticed presence of small stones and bricks with mortar layer yet attached to them. Some parts of that pile of rubble appears to have gathered there from the opening of drainage ditches. However, the opening of ditches has probably disturbed what could have been a probable connection between the northeast cape and the two piles of rubble. Its character remains unclear because there was no pottery or other archaeological finds

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associated with the rubble that could give any indication of any possible use. Nonetheless, during survey it was noticed that some parts of the rubble were dug out in order to use them probably for burial (Figure 14). The excavated areas, presumably tombs, had dimensions of roughly 1.50m x 50m with no archaeological inventory. Numerous tile fragments thought to belong to the Roman period were found scattered around. To the north of this area, earlier surveys conducted by the Butrint Foundation, found Roman pottery and ceramics dating back to the sixteenth century.



Figure 14 Presumably Roman tombs located to the northeast of the cape of Bullari

Close to the cape there is a modern sheep sten (kraal) named after the owner, a Vlach lady named Sofia (E20° 2' 41.5752" N39° 44' 40.0032"). Worth mentioning about the Sofia's sten is that some years ago the Butrint Foundation obtained a quantity of Venetian silver coins, now on display in the museum at Butrint. They had collected by local shepherds to the south of the cape of *Bullari*. These may well have been the other part of a hoard found by Dhimosten Budina in the 1960s during drainage work¹⁷. During the 2015 survey there was no archaeological evidence in this area.

¹⁷ Dhimitër Budina *pers. comm.*

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Area 5 (Northwest part of St. Dimitri hill – surface 7 ha)



Figure 15 View of Area 5

Area 5 lies to the northwest of St. Dimitri hill with a surface around seven ha (Figure 15). It was used for agricultural and military purposes during 1960s-1980s. During survey it was possible to obtain some important data on the use of this area in the Roman period (E20° 2' 27.1106" N39° 44' 37.6051"). To its north western edge, the opening of military trenches had disturbed what could be determine as a Roman site (Figure 16). When cleaning a trench sections for documentation, Roman potsherds and fragments of a *dolium*, were found (Figure 17 a-b). Potsherds were shown for consultation to Paul Reynolds who suggested that they were Roman. According to him, the rim was part of a large vessel a rectangular rim, outer face folded into a step. The handle is placed over the outer edge and inner rim top. The handle would prevent anyone putting a lid on the inside. He mentioned that was the first time for him seeing a piece like that and could offer no parallels from the Butrint corpus. However, the fabric seemed to be local (with chert), e.g. as vessels in Diaporiti. He suggested a late Roman dating for the rim together with the *dolia*. These findings suggest the presence of a Roman settlement, besides a necropolis to the west of the hill, which goes until late antiquity. The survey conducted in this area has yielded no any other findings. During communist era, a cowshed stood to the south not far from the Roman findings. Today no structure of cowshed exists but it is believed that parts of it were built near the area where the Roman potsherds were found.

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Figure 16 Section of military trench to the northwest of the St. Dimitri hill.



Figure 17 a-b Roman and late antique sherds found at the military trench to the northwest of the St. Dimitri hill.

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Area 6 (Two low eminences near Zara – surface 13 ha)



Figure 18 View of Area 6

Area 6 area lies southeast of the St. Dimitri hill and northeast of Zara. It is composed of two low eminence with a surface of about 13 ha (Figure 18). The geological composition is the same as that of area 1 with clay and gravel while its current function is pasture. From some inhabitants of Zara we learnt that this eminence is called Zarópulo and it was believed that the old route would have been pass through this area before getting to the main road going to Delvina. Therefore, this area was included to see if there was any possible connections between name Zarópulo and this part.

From field research was not evidenced any archaeological findings or any settlement structure. There was almost nothing to show any possible use of this area in a certain period. This low eminence has undergone major intervention during the communist era. During that time, it was terraced and a big drainage channel was opened (E20° 3' 38.1977" N39° 44' 5.3061"). This drainage channel is believed to have affected the historical route going to Delvina (*see below*).

Nevertheless, the name Zarópulo, as Lopez noted from the local residents in 2010, has been used for both hills (Area 2 and 6). The term though is preserved only here where there is nothing today and it seems that nothing was there before. The settlement to the southeast of St. Dimitri actually no longer preserves the name Zarópulo but it is called *paleospiti* (old houses).

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However, after a conversation with local residents we noticed that it is largely accepted that in area 6 passed the road from Butrint to Delvina¹⁸. After leaving Butrint, the road continued through the forest of Vrina, passing south of St. Dimitri hill where Zarópulo (*paleospitias*) was located. From whence the road is divided in two directions: one going to Zara and the other one continued to east passing through two eminences then reaching the main road coming from Delvina through the pass of Sorone to northern extremity of lake Bufi.

Discussion

From the data collected during the 2015 survey and referring to previous studies, we can say with certainty that the remains found on the south and east of the St. Dimitri hill are attributed to the settlement of Zarópulo found on Venetian maps. There is no record of any other later settlement around this area that can prove the contrary. Saying that, a few questions arise about this settlement: What was the character of Zarópulo? What function it had on the economy of late Butrint? Was Zarópulo a permanent settlement or was it used temporary? What is its lifespan and when was it abandoned?

Leake mentioned Zarópulo during his visit when he describes fishers and economy of Butrint. He notes that these two villages were part of Butrint's district built on some low eminences along the road going to Delvina but giving no details about their character. Situated on the road connecting Butrint with Delvina, Konispol then Filat and other parts of the Ottoman Epirus, this settlement could have served as a way station (traveller inn). According to Përzhita this way station, found along the road Butrint-Delvina, could have replaced the ancient way station of Diaporiti in later period¹⁹.

According to a preliminary analysis of the field recordings, it seems that Zarópulo was not a large settlement. It may have had 7-8 hats spread in two groups on south and east of the St. Dimitri hill. Buildings have used Roman bricks found on the Vrina plain for paving the floors. Walls may have been built with medium limestone, wood, mud and covered with tiled roofs. Regarding their shape, it is a little difficult to determine accurately but referring to our survey of debris it is thought they had rounded shapes, placed one after another stretching east-west.

When the borders of the Venetian enclave were defined in 1718 Zarópulo appears as a settlement on all Venetian maps. Consequently, this makes us think that the village of Zarópulo was probably existing before 1718 or was built at the same time, whilst its mention from Leake in early 19th century suggests that it continued to exist together with Zara even after the fall of La Serenisima. Further, potsherds found during field survey suggests a dating to the end of the 17th beginning of the 18th century for the site. But, we cannot exclude the idea of an early origin because fragments of Zeuxippus ware were also found on site. Zeuxippus was widely distributed on Mediterranean in the 13th-14th century but in the Balkans imitation were produced into Ottoman times²⁰. On the other hand, the lack of a considerable quantity of ceramic in the settlement can be interpreted in

¹⁸ Local inhabitants described the route from Butrint to Delvina more or less in the same way as Leake mentioned during his journey.

¹⁹ Luan Përzhita, *pers. com.*

²⁰ Joanita Vroom, 2005

two ways: first could be the temporary character of the site, which may be linked with a mobile way of life thus leaving only a sparse archaeological record, or secondly a short lifespan of the settlement in general. However, future researches and probably archaeological excavations could shed light on this issue.

Conclusion

The survey conducted in 2015 on the Hill of St. Dimitri brought new data on the use of the hill in different periods. Thanks to this survey, it became possible also to shed light on late settlements in the surroundings of Butrint. Data received from this survey date from prehistory to the communist period when parts of hill were turned into military defensive zone. However, from preliminary results it is thought that the earliest archaeological records belong to Upper Palaeolithic period found to the south and north-west of the hill. Other flint material, mainly residue, show their use stretching probably until early Bronze Age.²¹ However, in order to create a more accurate idea about the character of the hill in prehistory we should wait for the research to be carried out this year by the Albanian Institute of Archaeology in this area.

During the Hellenistic period the hill seems to have some scattered activities but not of any great importance. Starting from the second century AD the space of St. Dimitri hill was intensively used as necropolis. Tombs excavated earlier by Çondi and those documented by Sebastiani show the use of west and northeast hill mainly for this purpose. Apparently, the necropolis at St. Dimitri could be a continuation of the Roman necropolis at Vrina. Tombs found at St. Dimitri hill date mainly to the second century AD at the same period with Roman tombs found earlier in the Vrina plain. On the other hand, presence of a *dolium* and late Roman wares same with those found at Diaporit also suggests that to the northwest cape of the hill a Roman villa with a lifespan continued until late antiquity could be found.

For the medieval period, there is no much information about any clear use of the hill. The only indications for this period come from north area where some medieval coins without context were collected from local residents. It is difficult to say whether this part of Butrint has had significant role during middle Ages. However, with the beginning of the 16th century there are indication of activity to the north part of the hill, as is shown earlier from a survey undertaken by the Butrint Foundation and the Albanian Institute of Archaeology.

In the late period, it seems that southern and south eastern areas were used for the construction of a settlement. The village of Zarópulo appears to have flourished in the 18th century. Situated on the communications roads between the harbour and fishers of Butrint and important centres inland it could have served as a station though its use could have been temporary. The economy and relations of the village would have been merely connected with that of the Venetian enclave whilst its abandonment seems to have happened in the 19th century being replaced eventually by Zara. This is also proven by the inhabitants of Zara itself when they refer to the settlement of Zarópulo as *Paleospiti* (old houses).

²¹ Ilir Gjipali, *pers. com.*

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During 20th century, an orthodox church was built on the summit of the St Dimitri Hill giving thus the name to the hill. Later in the 1960s-1980s, the hill and its surroundings were incorporated in a large agriculture and military scheme. A cowshed and some drainage ditches were opened while over 25 bunkers and 7 military trenches were recorded during survey of 2015. All these military activities had affected archaeological heritage of the hill together with the construction of the new road going up to the church of St. Dimitri. Contacted the Ministry of Defence in Albania it resulted that no evidence of what could have been destroyed at the time was recorded. The only records of what have been found are coming from county archaeologist Dhimitër Çondi who is the only one to have taken records on those activities.

Nevertheless, the survey of 2015 assessed also the opportunities of St Dimitri hill being exploited as an itinerary for touristic walking. It is important to mention that the hills of St. Dimitri is located in an area not far from the ancient city of Butrint, near Lake Bui and today village of Zara. Considering all these elements, St. Dimitri hill bears resources to be turned into an important destination of tourist itineraries within the Butrint National Park. The St. Dimitri Hill can be easily reached from Butrint through three directions:

- *Through Vrina Plain.* Crossing the Vivari Channel, walking near the modern fisheries, and then continuing east on the Vrina plain where ruins of Roman colony and an earlier basilica were excavated. Continuing further east, until the northern hill is reached. (30-35 minutes walking).
- *Through St. Deli.* Walking through the main road to the south, turning left to the hill of St. Deli, and then continuing walking until getting to the St. Dimitri. (40 minutes walking).
- *Through Zara village.* Crossing the Vivari Channel continuing the main car road to the south until getting to the village of Zara. At the end of the village, continue 15 minutes walking north until reaching the St. Dimitri hill.

Introducing the hill of St. Dimitri into tourist itineraries within the Butrint National Park area is of particular importance. One should not forget that other destinations around Butrint have already become part of tourist itineraries such as Triangular fortress crossing the Vivar Channel or regular walking itineraries to the castle of Ali Pasha by walking on the Vrina plain.

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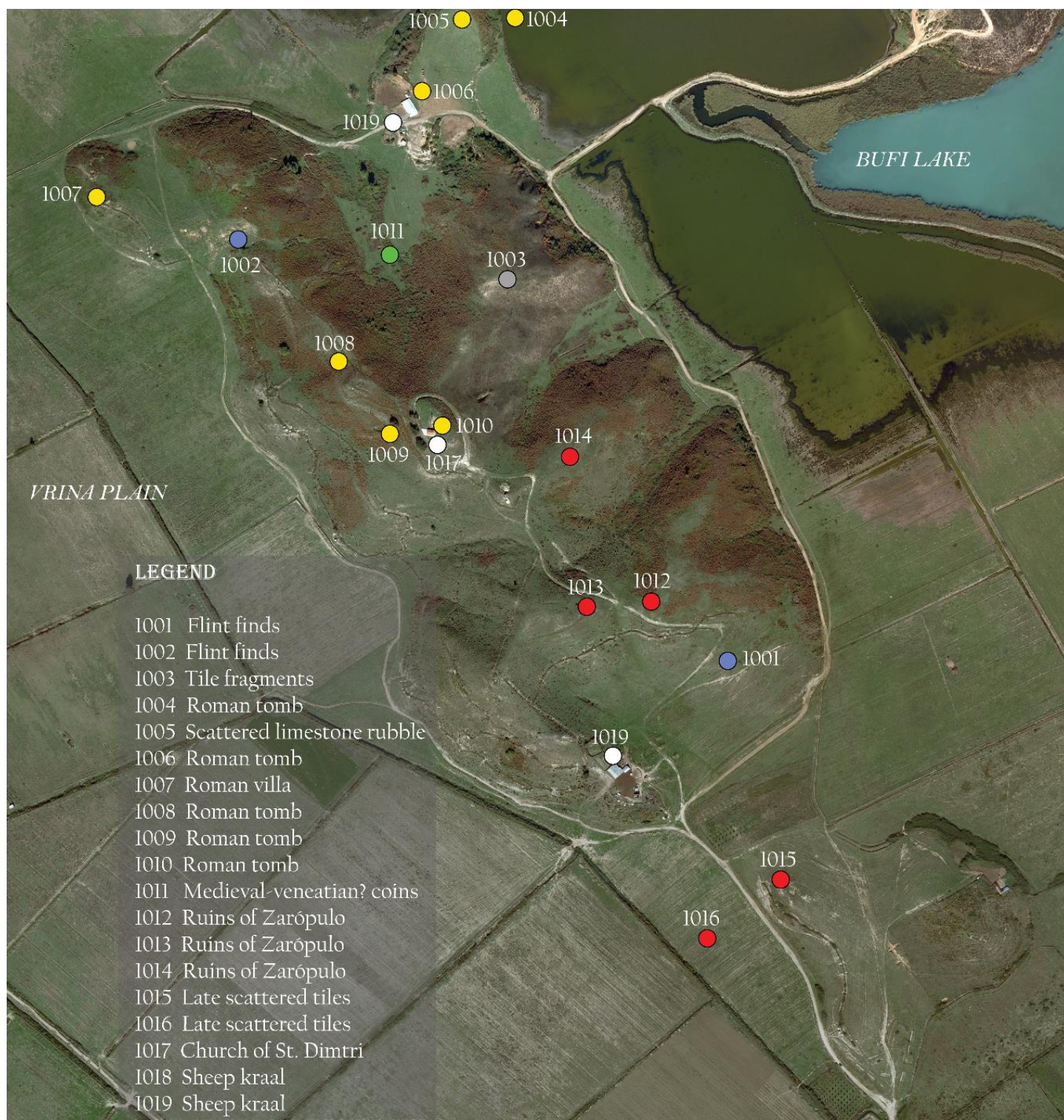
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Appendix - List of sites



List of finds at the of St. Dimitri hill in different periods based on the results of current researches

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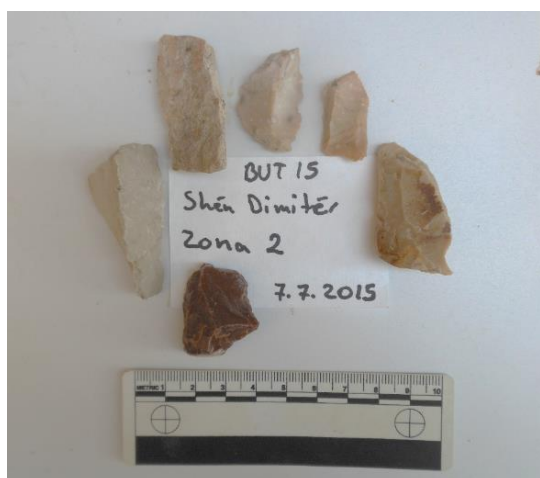
SITE NO. 1001

Definition: Flint collection

Interpretation: Probably flint tools.

Date: Upper Palaeolithic-Late Bronze

Description: flint chips deriving from working of tools or proper tools



SITE NO. 1002

Definition: Flint collection

Interpretation: Probably flint tools.

Date: Upper Palaeolithic-Late Bronze

Description: flint chips deriving from working of tools or proper tools



SITE NO. 1003

Definition: Tile fragments

Interpretation: Tile tomb

Date: Hellenistic-roman

Description: Tile fragment that may belong to a roman tomb. Dimensions of tiles were about 40 x 15cm but they were much bigger in their original shape. They were found associated with sandstones rubble.



SITE NO. 1004

Definition: Rubble

Interpretation: Roman tomb

Date: Roman (second century AD)

Description: parts of the rubble were dug out in order to use them probably for burial. Numerous tile fragments thought to belong to the Roman period were found scattered around.



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SITE NO. 1005

Definition: scattered limestone rubble

Interpretation:

Date: ?

Description: The stones are large sizes and are more visible in the vicinity of the hill near some trees figs. No ceramic was found.



SITE NO. 1006

Definition: Roman tomb

Interpretation: Roman tomb

Date: Roman second-third century AD

Description: excavated Roman tomb with tile roof construction to the south of *bullar* eminence. No evidence of that tomb is yet exist.



SITE NO. 1007

Definition: Potsherd

Interpretation: Roman Villa

Date: Roman-to late antique

Description: potsherds and fragments of a *dolium* found on military trench. These findings suggest the presence of a Roman settlement



SITE NO. 1008

Definition: Roman tomb

Interpretation: Roman tomb

Date: Roman second to third century AD

Description: Tile tomb.



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SITE NO. 1009

Definition: Roman tomb

Interpretation: Roman tomb

Date: Roman second to third century AD

Description: Tile tomb. No evidence of it yet exist.



SITE NO. 1010

Definition:

Interpretation:

Date:

Description: Only a tile roman tomb dating to the second century A.D was found here during excavations in the 1980s. There is no evidence of the tomb at the moment only a white cross.



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SITE NO. 1011

Definition: Coins

Interpretation: hoard?

Date: Medieval – Venetian

Description: the Butrint Foundation obtained a quantity of Venetian silver coins, now on display in the museum at Butrint. They were collected by local shepherds to the south of the cape *Bullar*



SITE NO. 1012

Definition: building debris

Interpretation: settlement of Zarópulo

Date: Venetian

Description: scattered fragments of building materials and pottery on both sides of the new road. Reuse of the Roman bricks on floor pavement and the constructions are rounded in shape.



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SITE NO. 1013

Definition: building debris

Interpretation: settlement of Zarópulo

Date: Venetian

Description: Construction debris whose layout suggest the creation of flat terraces or spaces on slopes for construction of buildings. The distance between each terrace is short and their alignment suggest a direction overlooking to the east and south.



SITE NO. 1014

Definition: building debris

Interpretation: settlement of Zarópulo

Date: Venetian

Description: The scattered material mainly tiles and small stones without pottery occupied an area of 250 m². The construction debris seemed to be of the same type with the ones found at Area 2



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SITE NO. 1015

Definition: tile fragments

Interpretation:

Date: modern

Description: scattered fragments of tiles and small stones mainly to the northwest of the low eminence.



SITE NO. 1016

Definition: tile fragments

Interpretation:

Date: modern

Description: debris were found to the east but they were not associated with any particular features or structure.



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SITE NO. 1017

Definition: Church of St. Dimitri

Interpretation: orthodox Church

Date: modern

Description: The Orthodox church of St. Dimitri is a small one nave building erected in 1910 referring to an inscription on the entrance. The walls of the chapel do incorporate blocks of a *cloisonee* style masonry, which has been used in local Orthodox churches for centuries, and which here suggest the presence of an earlier church of unknown date.



SITE NO. 1018

Definition: Kraal

Interpretation: sheep sten of Sophia to the north of the St. Dimitri hill

Date: modern

Description: modern sheep sten (kraal)



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SITE NO. 1019

Definition: Kraal

Interpretation: sheep sten

Date: modern

Description: modern sheep sten (kraal) to the south of the hill

