Byzantine
Butrint
Excavations and Surveys 1994–99
by
Richard Hodges, William Bowden and Kosta Lako
BYZANTINE BUTRINT:
EXCAVATIONS AND SURVEYS 1994–99

OXBOW BOOKS FOR THE BUTRINT FOUNDATION
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by Richard Hodges, William Bowden and Kosta Lako

with contributions by Richard Andrews, David Bescoby, William Bowden, Dee Brennan,
Alex Chepstow-Lusty, Neil Chroston, Oliver Gilkes, Shpresë Gongecaj, Peter Guest,
Richard Hodges, Mark Hounslow, Kosta Lako, Adrian Lane, Sally Martin, John Mitchell,
Dimitra Mylona, Etleva Nallbani, Sarah O’Hara, Luan Përzhita, Adrienne Powell,
Mark Pluciennik, Paul Reynolds, Peter Soustal and Joanita Vroom
TO
JACOB ROTHSCHILD
AND
JOHN SAINSBURY
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Richard Andrews, Carden and Godfrey Architects, 9 Broad Court, Long Acre, London, WC2B 5PY, UK
David Bescoby, Institute of World Archaeology, University of East Anglia, Norwich, NR4 7TJ, UK
William Bowden, Institute of World Archaeology, University of East Anglia, Norwich, NR4 7TJ, UK
Dee Brennan, Department of Archaeology, University of Wales, Lampeter, Ceredigion, Wales, SA48 7ED, UK
Alex Chepstow-Lusty, 21 Rue des Platanes, 34090 Montpellier, France
Neil Chroston, School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia, Norwich, NR4 7TJ, UK
Oliver Gilkes, Institute of World Archaeology, University of East Anglia, Norwich, NR4 7TJ, UK
Shpresa Gongecaj, Instituti i Arkeologjisë, Sheshi “Nënë Tereza”, Tirana, Albania
Peter Guest, School of History and Archaeology, University of Wales, Cardiff, PO Box 68, Cardiff, CF1 3XA, UK
Richard Hodges, Institute of World Archaeology, University of East Anglia, Norwich, NR4 7TJ, UK
Mark Hounslow, Centre for Environmental Magnetism and Palaeomagnetism, Department of Geography, Environment Lancaster, University of Lancaster, Lancaster, LA1 4YB, UK
Kosta Lako, Instituti i Arkeologjisë, Sheshi “Nënë Tereza”, Tirana, Albania
Adrian Lane, Department of Geography, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, S10 2TN, UK
Sally Martin, Institute of World Archaeology, University of East Anglia, Norwich, NR4 7TJ, UK
John Mitchell, School of World Art and Museology, University of East Anglia, Norwich, NR4 7TJ, UK
Dimitra Mylona, Faunal Remains Unit, University of Southampton, Southampton, UK
Etleva Nallbani, 116 avenue Henri Barbusse, Asniere 92600, France
Sarah O’Hara, Department of Geography, University of Nottingham, University Park, Nottingham, NG7 2RD, UK
Luan Përzhita, Instituti i Arkeologjisë, Sheshi “Nënë Tereza”, Tirana, Albania
Adrienne Powell, 34 Lerecroft Road, York, YO24 1JS, UK
Mark Pluciennik, School of Archaeological Studies, University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester, LE1 7RH, UK
Paul Reynolds, Department of Archaeology, American University at Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon
Peter Sostal, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Kommission für die Tabula Imperii Byzantini, Postgasse 7/1, Stg. 13, Stack, A–1010, Vienna, Austria
Joanita Vroom, Institute of World Archaeology, University of East Anglia, Norwich, NR4 7TJ, UK
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IWA Institute of World Archaeology, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK (illustrations by David Bescoby, William Bowden, Andrew Crowson, Karen Francis, Sarah Leppard, Sally Martin and Nevila Molla)
MCR Museo della Civiltà Romana, Rome, Italy
1. Introduction

Richard Hodges, William Bowden, Oliver Gilkes and Kosta Lako

Toward evening we arrived at a village called Livari, a corruption, it is thought, of Vivarium, from the fisheries in the lake, which here finds an outlet into the sea by means of a river. By the people of the place the lake is also called Boldopere. At Corfu the village is known as Butrinto or Vutzindro, but in the country itself we found these names unknown, a source of confusion, which caused us much difficulty. On the opposite side of the water is a rocky height, with remains of walls, which mark the site of the ancient Buthrotum, the celsam Buthroti urbern of Virgil. As we were embarking to cross to Corfu, I said to a Turkish official who was standing by, ‘Now we are leaving Turkey?’ ‘Yes,’ he replied, ‘now you are going to Europe’ (Fanshawe Tozer 1869: 232–3).

Introduction

Butrint sits at the crossroads of the Mediterranean, commanding the sea-routes up the Adriatic Sea to the north, across the Mediterranean to the west, and south through the Ionian islands. Like ancient Dyrrhachium (modern Durrës) to the north, it also controlled a land-route into the mountainous Balkan interior. The abandoned ancient and medieval port is located 3 km inland from the Straits of Corfu in south Albania (Fig. 1.1). For much of its long history it occupied a hill on a bend in the Vivari Channel, which connects the Straits to the large inland lagoon of Lake Butrint. A narrow plain, formerly a marsh, separates the channel from a band of hills to the south, along which runs the present frontier between Albania and Greece. Immediately east of Lake Butrint, a range of hills and low mountains rise up to 824 m, effectively creating a basin around the ancient city and the inland lake.

The walled city, designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1992, covers an area of c. 16 ha (Figs. 1.2–3), but geophysical survey on the eastern side of the Vivari Channel shows that at times in antiquity Butrint covered as much as 30 ha (see Chapters 5 and 6). The walled city comprises two parts: the acropolis and the lower city. The acropolis is a long narrow hill, approximately 200 m long and 60 m at its widest, that rises up to 42 m above sea level at its east end; its sides are accentuated by a circuit of walls that separate it from the natural and artificial terraces gathered around the flanks of the hill. The lower city occupies the lower-lying contours down to the edge of the Vivari Channel. Remains of a cemetery are recorded on the spine of the hill running west from the acropolis (Ugolini 1937: 174; Budina 1988), but its extent is unknown. The most obvious monument outside the city walls, on the opposite side of the channel, is the Triangular Castle, which after 1572 became the nucleus of the early modern settlement (Leake 1835: 95; Karaiskaj 1980: 33–5). Beyond the fortress to the east, opposite the walled site, there are substantial remains of late Republican to Byzantine date. These, as we shall see, form part of the Roman town and, later on, the late antique vicus.

History of discovery

Cyriacus of Ancona was the first antiquarian to visit Butrint. The Renaissance collector paused here on 26th December 1435, and recorded two inscriptions that he quite probably removed (Ugolini 1942: 223), as well as drawing sketches of the ruins. Many subsequent visitors mentioned the port, but the first major description of Butrint's topography is by Colonel W. M. Leake, who visited Butrint in 1805. Leake arrived by boat from Saranda, and described his arrival at Butrint thus:

As we approach Vutzindro, the water becomes muddy, and in the bay is almost fresh. This bay is very shallow on the northern side, and the bar at the mouth of the river will even now, when the water is still at the highest, but just admit of the entrance of a small, or small coasting vessels. We row three or four miles up the river, through a plain once perhaps the property of Atticus, a friend of Cicero, and now peopled with horses from the neighbouring
village. We then arrived at the Vivári, or more vulgarly Livári; that is to say the principal fishery, which is on the left side of the river, at its exit from the lake, nearly opposite to the peninsula which was anciently occupied by Butrintum. The only buildings at the Livári are a ruined house of Venetian construction, and near it an old triangular castle, occupied by a dirty bilibash of the Vezir, and fifteen or twenty soldiers (Leake 1835: 95).

The following year, Leake’s rival at the court of Ali Pasha, the French diplomat François Pouqueville, also visited Butrint, writing a description that was similar to that of Leake:

On the south side of the channel, communicating between that lake and the sea, is constructed the modern Venetian fortress of Buthrinto, and on the opposite side are the ruins of old Buthrotum ... These ruins show an acropolis or citadel, and the Roman town inclosed within a double wall, containing fragments of both Greek and Roman architecture. But, in the walls of the acropolis are preserved foundations of the highest antiquity, consisting of vast blocks without cement (Pouqueville 1820: 34–5).

There were other visitors as well. An anonymous tourist inscribed his initials and a date, AD 1796 P. A. M., on a Byzantine fresco on the acropolis (Museo della Civiltà Romana, Ugolini file [hereafter MCR Ug] 35), and during 1819 the French artist Louis Dupré visited in the company of the British High Commissioner on Corfu, Sir Thomas Maitland, in order to meet Ali Pasha. He was unimpressed with modern Butrint: “The fortress, if one can really apply that term to such a miserable tower, is armed with three cannon of mixed calibre ...” (Dupré 1825: 10). However, the ruins of the ancient city moved him to speculate on future possibilities:
Fig. 1.2 Overview of archaeological remains at Butrint and on the Vrina Plain. (IWA)

Fig. 1.3 Aerial view of Butrint. (BF)
Butrint, ancient Buthrotum, capital of the Chaonians, is today a tumble of ruins, but once in a more heroic and less barbarous age was a place of renown. It is without doubt that, one day, explorations of the ruins will bring forth a great wealth of discoveries that have been covered for all these centuries by the curtain of night (Dupré 1825: 9–10).

Dupré took the opportunity during a duck hunt on Lake Butrint, organised by the Vezir, to sketch Ali being rowed through the reeds of the lake shore (Fig. 1.4).

Throughout the 19th century Butrint was visited by tourists and artists, who found it easy to make the short trip from Corfu. Henry Cook, a British lithographer, visited in 1822, to draw the ruins by the Channel. As part of a series covering Corfu, Cook produced two prints. The first, entitled ‘The Aga’s House’, depicted (with a little artistic licence) the Venetian Triangular Fortress (see Fig. 6.23), while the second, called the ‘The Robber’s Castle’, shows a view westwards along the Vivari Channel with a watch-tower on the acropolis (Fig. 1.5). A further, somewhat romanticised, view of the Triangular Fortress was included by George De La Poer Beresford in a set of lithographs, * Scenes in Southern Albania*, in 1855. However, the best known artist of this time to record Butrint was Edward Lear. Lear excluded Butrint from his famous 1848 itinerary, but during his residence on Corfu during the later 1850s visited a number of times (Noakes 1979: 319–21), sketching Butrint on 7th January and again on 7th March Fig. 1.6). He made a journey to Tepelena in April of the same year and described his arrival in Albania in a letter to his sister Ann:

We had a perfectly quiet passage across of only 3 hours and anchored in the little harbour of Trescogli [modern Ksamil] – enjoying all the afternoon on making drawings – below the tall white heath all in bloom and having a comfortable dinner and quiet night. Early on the 3rd we found some woodcutters horses by the shore, and as there was no wind to take us on to Santi Quaranta, the proper place of landing to go to Delvino, we hired them and set of walking all along the lake of Butrint – which I did not draw, because it is within a 2 hours sail any day (Edward Lear: Letter to his sister Ann, 23/4/1857 Unpublished; excerpt reproduced courtesy of Vivian Noakes).

Other visitors of this era included regular parties of huntsmen and tourists. The Irish aristocrat Arthur Kavanagh visited on a number of occasions in his yacht, Eva. One such trip was sufficiently memorable to prompt him to write a book (Kavanagh 1865). Like Lear, his party put ashore at Ksamili. He employed local beaters to flush game birds and boar out of the thick undergrowth. Despite being born without arms and legs, the adventurous Kavanagh was a crack shot and an early amateur photographer (Steele 1891). His book is illustrated with lithographs made from the photographs he took on this occasion, which are the earliest known photographs of the immediate environs of Butrint.

*Fig. 1.4 Ali Pasha on Lake Butrint, sketch by Louis Dupré, 1819. (Private Collection)*
The Italian Archaeological Mission

It was perhaps the descriptions of these earlier visitors that led to the arrival of the Italian Archaeological Mission, directed by Luigi Maria Ugolini, in 1924. Ugolini’s mission was sponsored by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the specific request of Mussolini (Petricioli 1990: 268–74; Gilkes and Miraj 2000). The ministry was concerned to enlarge Italian political influence over the fledgling state of Albania and, alarmed by the presence of a French Archaeological Mission at the Graeco-Roman city of Apollonia, selected the young Fascist prehistorian Ugolini to make a survey of the country’s archaeology (Petricioli 1990: 274; Gilkes and Miraj 2000). In 1924 Ugolini made a journey through Albania, visiting many archaeological sites and ending up at Butrint (Ugolini 1927: 153–4). The following year Ugolini returned to begin a major project, which he launched at the Epirote hilltop site of Phoenice, situated 30 km north of Butrint at the ancient limit of Lake Butrint (Fig. 1.1). In his four seasons of excavations at Phoenice, Ugolini excavated the Hellenistic ‘treasury’, several Roman cisterns, and an early Christian basilica, as well as recording standing Roman remains within the village at the foot of the hill (Ugolini 1932a).

In 1928 Ugolini moved the mission to Butrint, initially camping on the acropolis. Here he launched a colossal and well-publicised campaign of excavations on and around what was, at that time, a largely bare unwooded hill (Fig. 1.7). In addition, his colleagues were encouraged to survey the surrounding region to record archaeological sites of all periods.

Ugolini was explicit in his intentions: according to Virgil, it was at Butrint that Aeneas had stopped before sailing on to Italy to found Rome, and Ugolini therefore wished to tighten ‘the spiritual chains between Rome and Butrint’ (Petricioli 1990: 284; cf. Ugolini 1937: 12). Between 1928 and 1943 the mission carried out a great campaign of excavations and surveys, which increasingly became entangled in the complicated political relations between Albania and Italy. The ambition of the project, however, was undoubtedly curbed by Ugolini’s death at the age of 41 in October 1936, although the mission continued on a slightly reduced scale under the direction of Luigi Marconi (who died in an aeroplane crash in 1938) and Domenico Mustilli. When the Greek army overran the area in the late autumn of 1940, the excavations had been only partially published. Investigations resumed after 1941, but ended with Italy’s
Fig. 1.6 Butrint, sketch by Edward Lear, 7th March 1857. (The Gennadius Library, Athens)

Fig. 1.7 Luigi Maria Ugolini (front centre) in the Theatre, 1931. (MCR Ug 80)
withdrawal from the Axis alliance in 1943. The projected series of five volumes of *Albania antica* was eventually reduced to three, with the excavations of the Theatre and Baptistery appearing in an abridged form in Ugolini’s *Il mito d’Enea. Gli scavi* in 1937 as well as in earlier reports and essays (Ugolini 1931; 1934; 1935).

At Butrint, as at Phoenicè, Ugolini’s interests extended well beyond the narrow ideological imperative of discovering the foundation phases of the ancient city. With his background in prehistory, he encouraged innovative work on the palaeolithic and earlier prehistory of the area by Luigi Cardini (Gilkes forthcoming; Francis forthcoming), just as he took an explicit interest in the archaeology of the Byzantine phase (Ugolini 1933; 1936) and its history (evidenced by an unpublished manuscript of transcriptions of medieval texts pertaining to Butrint in the Museo Nazionale della Civiltà Romana).

**Post-war Butrint**

Following the withdrawal of the Italian Archaeological Mission, Butrint was effectively abandoned until the late 1950s. Photographs show that much of the site became overgrown, despite the presence of a site guard from approximately 1948. Renewed scientific interest in the site was led by Dhimosten Budina, one of the first members of the Albanian Institute of Archaeology at its foundation in 1948. Budina was trained as an archaeologist in Moscow, and on returning to Albania in 1956 was despatched to Saranda to establish a regional office responsible for Butrint, Phoenicè and other archaeological sites in the region. In 1958–59 the Institute of Archaeology collaborated with a Soviet archaeological mission in an excavation of the nearby site of Çuka e Aitoit. Members of the project staff lived in the acropolis castle constructed by Luigi Ugolini at Butrint. In May 1959 Nikita Khruschev visited Albania and travelled to see Butrint (Fig. 1.8). The visit caused the Albanian government to construct and surface a road from Saranda to Butrint, and to clean the archaeological site. From this time, and for the next 30 years, the Institute of Archaeology periodically undertook excavation campaigns, supported by the Institute of Monuments, which sustained Ugolini’s programme of monument conservation and repair. Neritan Ceka and Gjerak Karaiskaj published major studies of Butrint’s multi-period fortifications (Ceka 1976; Karaiskaj 1976a; Karaiskaj 1976b; Karaiskaj 1980; Karaiskaj 1983). In 1975–76, Kosta Lako undertook a large excavation in a previously unexamined area on the interior of the Hellenistic wall between the Great Basilica and the so-called Gymnasium (Lako 1981). In 1982, Skender Anamali, Dhimosten Budina, Selim Islami and Aleksandër Meksi led a high-profile summer training excavation that led to renewed excavations of the Baptistery and Theatre areas, as well as excavations on the acropolis and on the extramural cemetery to the

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*Fig 1.8 Nikita Kruschev, Enver Hoxha and Nexhmije Hoxha (right to left) at Butrint, 1959. (Arkivi Kombëtar i Filmit, Tirana, Albania)*
west of the city and a survey of the Great Basilica (Meksi 1983; Budina 1988). Lako pursued the Triconch Palace excavations throughout the 1980s (Lako 1990), while his colleague, Astrit Nana, investigated the acropolis (Nana 1985), and Dhimetër Çondi and Budina explored the so-called Gymnasium (continuing the earlier investigations by the Italian mission) (Çondi 1989).

In 1990, with the beginnings of a democratic movement in Albania, the Institute of Archaeology initiated a number of collaborative projects with foreign missions. One of the first of these was with Katerina Hadzis of Athens Technical University, and it led to an excavation on the acropolis at Butrint concerned with the origins of the ancient city (Arafat and Morgan 1995; Hadzis 1998). In 1991 Karl Petruse of the University of Texas at Arlington began a collaboration with the Institute of Archaeology at the Konispoli cave, 10 km southeast of Butrint, developing the work of Luigi Cardini, the prehistorian attached to the interwar Italian mission.

The present project owes its beginnings to a visit by Lord Rothschild to Butrint in 1992, when the then Director of the Institute of Archaeology, Neritan Ceka, proposed that there should be a British archaeological mission to the site. In 1993 Lord Rothschild and Lord Sainsbury of Preston Candover created a British charity, the Butrint Foundation, in order to promote and sustain an archaeological project at the site. Later that year, in September 1993, Richard Hodges, accompanied by Kosta Lako, John Mitchell and Gjergj Sariçi, visited Butrint and devised a five-year programme of collaborative research devoted to the later Roman and post-classical phases, essentially based upon a study of the environs of the ancient city and two excavations – at the Baptistery and the so-called Triconch Palace – within the walled area.

After a preliminary visit in June 1994, the excavations took place during September 1994, April and August to October 1995, April and August to September 1996, and September 1998. As a result of the civil unrest in January–March 1997, no fieldwork was undertaken in 1997. The September–October 1999 season was devoted to processing finds. The excavations are continuing, and this report on the results of the first five years of the project has been influenced to some extent by the results of the further work that has been undertaken during its preparation.

Research context: from the Roman to the late antique town

During the last three decades, the late antique town has been the focus of a huge body of archaeological and historical research, and our understanding of this once largely unknown entity has increased exponentially as a result (Popovic 1984; Rich 1992; Christie and Loseby 1996; Brogiolo and Ward-Perkins 1999; Brogiolo, Gauthier and Christie 2000; Lavan 2001b). A combination of increasingly sophisticated excavation techniques and historical analysis has charted the changes in the fabric of the Roman city between the 3rd and 7th centuries AD in a way that has altered dramatically the picture of the late Roman Empire presented by A. H. M. Jones in his magisterial survey of 1964.

There is no doubt that the Roman town of the 4th century (at least in the Balkans and the West) was significantly different to the Roman town of the 1st and 2nd centuries in terms of both the built environment and the attitudes of its citizenry towards the idea of the town itself. The early Imperial city, with its emphasis upon public monuments sponsored by patrons, had been transformed. Public life was no longer conducted against the backdrop of monumental public architecture that gave the early Imperial city the distinctive appearance that has proved to be an enduring image of romanitas. The curial classes no longer deemed it worthwhile to secure election to local office through acts of civic munificence, which had been the hallmark of the early Roman town and which maintained the fabric of its buildings. Instead, the late Roman aristocracy used private residential building to define the architectural context in which their public encounters occurred. Great effort was invested in displaying a concentration of wealth in order to underscore the nature of patronage, as well as to demonstrate overtly the ideology of the heroic host (Ellis 1994: 123–30). The changing attitudes, sketched by Simon Ellis in a sequence of essays (1988; 1994; 1996), reached far beyond the layout of rooms in dwellings. Attitudes to diet and dress formed part of the ideology in transition from an Imperial form to one in which individuality acquired new meaning (Hodges 1998).

Within the changing axes of classical society, the urban poor occupied new niches. Taking the form of poorly constructed dwellings either made of earth-bonded rubble or post built, there has been a temptation to ascribe these to squatters drawn to the cities in the wake of the barbarian invasions. Long ago the poet Constantine Cavafy cautioned us to beware of using the barbarians as an excuse (in his poem Waiting for the Barbarians), and these structures, ubiquitous in Mediterranean cities, bear witness not so much to external ethnic issues as to a social transformation as embodied as that indicated by elite palaces. Like the new urban poor of contemporary Albania, the urban poor of Late Antiquity were possibly drawn from regions or occupations that could no longer function effectively within the economy (cf. Sodini 2002).

By the later 5th century, the urban landscape had changed still further. The great residencies of the aristocracy were supplanted to some extent by churches, which in many towns (including Butrint) are the only large-scale constructions that can be dated to the later 5th and 6th centuries. Churches were built within the former public areas of the city, often using materials recycled from earlier buildings. In many towns (such as Nicopolis and Byllis) they were built in numbers that appear disproportionate to the size of the urban area.
Equally, their size, solid construction and often opulent decoration mean that they form a substantial part of the archaeological record, in that they survive to a greater degree than the less substantial buildings of Late Antiquity and receive more attention, due to the presence of mosaics and sculpture that render them desirable to archaeologists and art historians.

The proliferation of substantial churches in this period was not an extension of the monumental public architecture of the early empire, with merely a change of religious emphasis. Instead, it was a revival of privately sponsored monumental building of a sort that had been absent from the urban environment for up to two centuries, during which surplus private resources largely had been spent on grandiose residences. That these buildings were often sponsored by private donors is clear from the numerous inscriptions that record both large and small gifts towards their construction. The Christianisation of late antique urban topography bears witness to the scale of this activity, which has received increasing attention from scholars in recent years (cf. Chapter 7 and Bowden 2001).

Although there is a marked difference between Roman and medieval towns, it is perhaps a mistake to view late antique urban centres as ‘towns in transition’, as this implies a metamorphosis from one static entity into another. Towns, and the role that they played in relation to the surrounding landscape, were no more static entities in the 1st century than they were in the 5th, although the broad brush of archaeology may tend to obscure this. There were certainly constants throughout the Roman period. The pattern of material culture bears witness to an enduring demand for traditional goods, outlining the first dramatic episodes of transformation.

In short, the circumstances in a later Roman port like Butrint were complex and cannot readily be reduced to comparisons between churches, palaces and squatting dwellings as contrasting forms of investment. Butrint offers a rich promise not only for determining the relationship between social classes in transition, but also, given its long history, the opportunity to examine how this relationship(s) had a bearing, if any, on the medieval town.

**Continuity and discontinuity**

Our theme must be discontinuity; the only issue is which. People have argued for millennia over exactly what changed as the Roman world turned into the Middle Ages in the different parts of the empire; but what no one has ever been able to argue away is that there was a break of some kind, perhaps of many kinds, at the end of Antiquity (Wickham 1994: 99).

The Butrint project might be described as part of the late 20th-century search for a ‘post-Pirenne paradigm’ (cf. Hodges 1998). The Belgian historian, Henri Pirenne, devised the 20th-century model for the end of Roman town life and the transformation of the ancient Mediterranean in his two enduring syntheses: *Medieval Cities: Their Origins and the Revival of Trade* (1925) and *Mohammed and Charlemagne* (1939). The central tenets of Pirenne’s thesis – that is, that Roman life and, more importantly, Mediterranean commerce continued largely unchanged, until the advance of Islam, in the 7th and 8th centuries, detached continental Europe from the Eastern Mediterranean – have been disproved long since. None the less, despite its obvious defects, the all-encompassing nature and essential simplicity of Pirenne’s model have ensured its continued attraction as a benchmark for historians and archaeologists. It has also fostered a strong interest in the fate of the late Roman town and the transformation of these places in the Middle Ages, although, at the beginning of the 21st century, few would argue that the creation of a ‘post-Pirenne paradigm’, a similarly overarching model to explain the transition between the classical and medieval worlds, is possible or even desirable.

Urban discontinuity – the break between the apparent end of town life in the late 6th and 7th centuries and its revival during the 9th and 10th centuries – disturbs archaeologists and historians (Brogiole and Gelichi 1997; Ward-Perkins 1997; Hodges 2000). The quest for urban continuity or its absence has dominated archaeological research into late antique towns since the 1960s (Hodges 2000). With a growing body of new evidence from Italy, Turkey and the Middle East, in particular, the picture of continuity and discontinuity is altering. It has become clear that the late Roman world was one of ever increasing regional diversity, with a corresponding degree of variation in the responses to the circumstances of Late Antiquity. If the historians and archaeologists who are concerned with this period agree on anything, they concur on the significance of this diversity (Wickham 1998). This retreat from macroscopic paradigms of change accentuates the absence of information from regions such as the Balkans, which must be examined at least partly on their own terms rather than as aspects of the broadbrush models that have been debated during the last 30–40 years. None the less, the fact remains that changes occurred on a Mediterranean-wide basis during Late Antiquity. Therefore, if urban change is to be studied on a local and regional level, it must be examined also in the context of change within other regions of the Roman world, where decades of sustained excavation have cast considerable light on this previously poorly understood period.

This is particularly the case in Rome, where excavations at the Crypta Balbi (Sagui 1993) and, more recently, at the Forum of Nerva (Santageli Valenzani 1997; 2000) have reinforced the evidence of written sources that suggest that urban life in the former capital persisted in some form during the 7th and 8th centuries. Furthermore, the archaeological data indicate active commercial relations with eastern Sicily, where the popes possessed
large estates. By way of these maritime connections, Rome clearly remained in contact with Constantinople and possibly, we may surmise, with the active Umayyad centres of the Middle East, and was in receipt of Byzantine amphorae and fine wares until the early decades of the 8th century (Sagüi 1998a). Only in the central decades of the 8th century did the city lose these connections, becoming a centre that for a generation depended upon the resources of its region, the Campagna Romana (Hodges 2000). Similarly, large-scale excavations in the towns of northern Italy, most notably Brescia and Verona, have demonstrated conclusively that occupation continued, although in a way that differed markedly from the classical town (Ward-Perkins 1997). The argument now rests on the nature and function of these settlements, rather than on the mere fact of their existence.

The evidence from elsewhere in Italy reveals a slightly different picture. Archaeological investigation of western Adriatic ports — such as Aquileia (Brogiole and Gelichi 1997: 164–5), Venice (Brogiole and Gelichi 1997: 121–2, 124–5), Ravenna (Brogiole and Gelichi 1997: 119–21, 145–6, 164–5), Pescara (Staffa 1991) and Otranto (Michaeldes and Wilkinson 1992) — has revealed sequences that terminate abruptly in the period before 640, prior to revival in the 9th and 10th centuries. This pattern is consistent with that which can be seen in towns within Albania, such as Skhedra, Saranda, Byllis and Butrint, none of which has produced any evidence of occupation that can be dated reliably to this intervening period. The possible exception within Albania is the town of Durrës, which has produced amphorae that it has been suggested date from this period (Tartari 1982). Durrës is, of course, exceptional, as it apparently remained in Byzantine hands throughout the early Middle Ages (Gutteridge forthcoming).

In Greece, until recently there has been little attempt to address this issue (Sodini 1984a: 341–2; Dunn 1994; Dunn 1997), but the limited evidence available suggests a picture of decline and discontinuity similar to that apparent in Albania, and excavation has begun to clarify the issue (Spieser 1984). At Sparta, a few sherds of cooking wares show small-scale 8th- to 9th-century occupation in the orchestra of the ancient theatre (Sanders 1995; Waywell and Wilkes 1995). In the Athenian Agora, a group of 35 unglazed jug tags found in an ossuary were dated by Robinson (1959: 121–2) to the early 7th century, while other similar material is shortly to be published by John Hayes. At Delphi, evidence has been found for ceramic production in the late 6th and early 7th centuries (Petridis 1997). Perhaps the most significant evidence is that from Argos in the Peloponnese, where a well deposit has been suggested to indicate sporadic occupation between the 7th and 9th centuries (Piérart and Thalmann 1980). In particular, the Argos excavations discovered examples of coarse, handmade pottery that was reminiscent of that associated with the so-called ‘Prague culture’ (Autpert 1980). This pottery, which was subsequently termed ‘Slavic Ware’, has been recognised at a number of sites in Greece, including Olympia, Tiryns, Corinth, Demetrias, Isthmia and Sparta (Vroom 2003: 52–3 with references). It has been interpreted generally within a culture historic framework as physical evidence of the Slavic invasions described by John Malalas and the Chronicle of Monemvasia, although this explanation remains slightly controversial (see Charanis 1950; Bowden 2003a). While further excavation will undoubtedly add to our knowledge of early medieval Greece, and fill in some of the substantial gaps that remain, there can be little doubt as to the scale of the change that occurred at the end of Antiquity.

In Epirus Vetus, the province in which Butrint was situated, the evidence for activity in this period is meagre, although it has been sought keenly on both the Greek and Albanian sides of the border. The survival of Nicopolis, one of the greatest Roman cities in the region, has been suggested on the basis of the recorded transfer of administration from Nicopolis to Naupaktos in the 9th century, in conjunction with references to the city in ecclesiastical lists. Whether these documents reflect anything more than a symbolic association with the town still has to be demonstrated archaeologically. The published numismatic evidence indicates a decline in the number of coins lost after the early part of the reign of Heraclius (610–41). This pattern is reflected in other towns of the region, although single examples of coins of Constans II (641–68) have been found at both Butrint and Phoenicé, while so-called Slavic Ware has also been found at Saranda (ancient Onchesmos) (see below and Bowden 2003a).

Outside the towns, evidence of early medieval occupation in Epirus Vetus is also poor, although it is possible that activity continued at some of the hilltop settlements of the region, which seem to have been occupied from as early as the 5th century (Bowden 2003a; Bowden and Hodges 2004). A number of cemetery sites (including reused bronze age tomuli) have produced metalwork paralleled in migration period contexts in the northern Balkans and northern Europe, although the interpretation of this material remains controversial (see below and Bowden 2003a; Bowden and Hodges 2004). Also of interest in this context are some churches in northwest Greece, which have been dated to between the 7th and 10th centuries (Vokotopoulos 1992), although, for reasons described in Chapter 7, this dating remains uncertain and the buildings in question may well have been built later.

Turning to the East, perhaps the most illuminating recent archaeological discovery with regard to settlement continuity between Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages has been made in the Anatolian fortress cities of Ancyra and Amorion in Turkey. While, as outlined above, we must remain slightly wary of transferring patterns from one region to another, the discoveries at these sites
may prove to be a model for circumstances in Albanian centres such as Butrint.

In common with Butrint and, indeed, most Byzantine cities in the Eastern Empire, Anycra shrank to a small citadel during the 650s and 660s (cf. Haldon 1990: 112-13; 1999b: 14). The fortress occupied an area measuring 350 × 150 m. Amorion had a *kastron* occupying some 450 × 300 m; in 716 it was reportedly attacked by an army of many thousands and successfully defended by 800 men. Excavations within the *kastron* by Chris Lightfoot have shown that, while the late antique town was very extensive, with circuit walls and towers as impressive as any in Anatolia, the early medieval occupied areas were similar to those of Anycra. The evidence shows that ‘while the very small fortress-citadel continued to be defended and occupied, discrete areas within the late Roman walls also continued to be occupied, often centred around a church’ (Haldon 1999b: 15). Small, poorly made, town houses constructed of rubble, *spolia* and mud have been unearthed (Lightfoot 1998: fig. 8). The associated material culture, in common with Saracha’ne, Constantiopolis, shows the continuity of commodity production (coarse pottery, transport amphorae, lamps, lamp chains, for example).

The discoveries at Amorion, modest though they appear by classical standards, are of great significance because, apart from small groups of pottery from temporary settlements, almost all Byzantine settlement in the Balkans and Anatolia appears to have been reduced to hilltop nuclei like Amorion (cf. Foss 1977; Spiels 1989; Hodges and Whitehouse 1996).

The Byzantine historian, John Haldon, provides a valuable description of the communities who lived in these places (1999b: 15–16):

I would suggest that what we are confronted with here are small but distinct communities whose inhabitants regarded themselves (in one sense, that of domicile, quite legitimately) as citizens of the city within whose walls their settlement was located; that the *kastron*, which retained the name of the ancient *polis*, provided a refuge in case of attack (though in many such cases it may not necessarily have been permanently occupied, still less permanently garrisoned); and that therefore many of the *poleis* of the 7th to 9th centuries survived as such because their inhabitants, living effectively in distinct villages within the area delineated by the walls, saw themselves as belonging to the *polis* itself, rather than to a village.

To date the archaeological evidence indicates that this markedly reduced manner of *kastron* living was sustained until commerce in the Eastern Mediterranean took off in the course of the later 10th and early 11th centuries, often articulated by Arab traders in Egypt and Palestine (Haldon 1999a; Hodges 2000). It is possible that a similar way of life was adopted within small population nuclei within the walls of the former late antique cities of Epirus, such as Butrint, although as yet the archaeological evidence remains elusive.

The issue, therefore, is not necessarily whether Butrint and other sites within Epirus Vetus and Epirus Nova were occupied, but relates rather to the nature of the occupation throughout Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, as Haldon pointed out for towns like Amorion. What role did the town play within its region, bearing in mind that during some periods it may have played no role at all? Excavations throughout Greece and the Balkans (as well as many other areas of the former Roman Empire), have established that the physical appearance of the late antique town differed radically from that of the early Imperial period (Sodini 1984a; Spiels 1984). Did these settlements therefore perform a different function during Late Antiquity, and how and why did this change after the mid-7th century? Are we looking at thriving urban centres dealt a catastrophic blow by barbarian incursions (contra the ideologically motivated conclusions of the post-war Institute of Archaeology described below), or at settlements that were hollow parodies of the classical town, housing little but ecclesiastical bureaucracies, which became simply irrelevant or were rendered finally defunct by regional instability? In short, ‘the much loved topic of “continuity” can now come off the agenda altogether ... Our real research objective is the story of the role of towns rather than simply the story of the individual towns themselves’ (Carver 1993: 61, 78).

**Nationalism and the question of urban continuity in Albania**

Towns, and more specifically urban continuity, were also a persistent theme in the archaeology of post-war communist Albania. Cultural continuity emerged as both an objective and a by-product of the potent blend of nationalism and Marxism that dominated archaeological thought in the communist Balkan states (Kaisa 1995). Albania was no exception to this, and towns figured large in the debate (see, for example, Anamali 1979–80), with continuity of occupation suggested at sites such as Antigoneia (Budina 1977–78), Berat (Pulcheropolis), Lissos (Anamali 1979–80) and Pogradec (Anamali 1975). Behind these interpretations lay an explicit nationalist motive, as Enver Hoxha made clear in a speech at Shkodra in 1979:

> We are the descendants of the Illyrian tribes. Into the land of our ancestors have come the Greeks, the Romans, the Normans, the Slavs, the Angevins, the Byzantines, the Venetians, the Ottomans and numerous other invaders, none of whom have been able to destroy the Albanian people; the ancient Illyrian civilisation is continued by the Albanians (Hoxha 1985 [our translation]).

In order to provide the country with a distinct identity, historians and archaeologists needed to construct a systematic and well-documented Albanian past, proving that the Albanians had inhabited their country from prehistory to the present day, and thereby countering the
territorial claims of surrounding powers. To this end, the main line of research supported by the authorities was the study of the Illyrians in terms of their ethnogenesis and of their ethnic and cultural links with modern Albanians. Particular significance was accorded to evidence of social structures that were compatible with a Marxist view of historical development.

As Hoxha suggested in his speech, this indigenous Illyrian culture remained largely unaffected by contact with Greek colonists. The rise of urban settlement was seen as an autochthonous development and, although Greek (and later Latin) were the languages of government, the native Illyrian language continued to be spoken by the population at large. The Roman period was identified as a period of occupation and exploitation, in a sense repeated in 1939–43 by the Italian invasion of Albania. Throughout classical antiquity, therefore, the Illyrians maintained a separate cultural identity, distinct from that of Greece or Rome, which re-emerged during Late Antiquity and the early medieval period. For this reason, the immediate post-Roman period assumed a great significance for Albanian archaeologists, who attempted to trace ‘Illyrian’ traits in the material culture of the period. For example, it was claimed that late antique ceramics found in excavations at the city of Selcës, in northern Albania, bore close affinities to Illyrian cooking wares (Ceka 1985: 170).

It was further argued that the country and its population were unaffected by the migrations of the various barbarian groups that crossed the frontiers of the Roman Empire during Late Antiquity, in particular the Avars and Slavs who are recorded as settling within the Balkans in the early 7th century (Bowden and Hodges 2004). It was suggested that the strong organisation of Illyrian society, and the difficult mountainous geography of the area, enabled the Albanians to remain ethnically and culturally distinct from the ‘rude barbarians’, the incoming peoples who were denigrated as culturally inert destroyers (for example, Islami et al. 1985). The lack of interaction between the Illyrians/Albanians and the newcomers was contrasted with the fate of the ‘Latinised’ Illyrian peoples of surrounding countries (Bosnia, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia), who were invaded by many tribes of Slavic origin and largely overwhelmed, leaving the Albanians as the sole survivors of the Illyrian people.

The Albanians or Arbërs first appear in historical sources in the Alexiad of Anna Comnena, written in the late 11th century, where they are mentioned as inhabitants of the upland regions of the Byzantine Empire’s Adriatic provinces, in particular the area around Durrës. It was therefore important for Albanian archaeologists to identify sites and materials of the period between Late Antiquity and the 11th century, through which to link the late antique Illyrians with the medieval Arbërs. This link was provided by a series of cemeteries around Koman and Kruja in north and central Albania, which were interpreted (Anamali 1964) as containing a distinctive Arbër material culture (Fig. 1.9) (cf. Bowden 2003b). A southern variant of this culture was also identified from finds from a series of burials inserted into bronze age tumuli around the upper reaches of the Vjosa valley (in particular at Piskova and Rapčka) (Bodinaku 1982). The populations of all these cemeteries were interpreted as representatives of the Arbër or proto-Albanian culture. The emphasis on funerary costumes in both Illyrian and Arbër contexts, and the similarities between the decorative motifs on jewellery, were seen as proof of the cultural continuity between the two periods.

The need to demonstrate the cultural homogeneity of Albania and its people was of course related to the country’s increasing isolation from the rest of the world. There was no preordained programme, though clearly archaeological policy and theory reflected developing political realities. The anti-Slavic argument and stress on the Albanian cultural resistance to change appears early on, and was directed against Yugoslav attempts to absorb Albania immediately after the Second World War. Interest in social structure and organisation was strong in the 1960s and ’70s, when Albania was experiencing its own ‘cultural revolution’ under Chinese influence. Finally, under the policy of self-reliance, following the 1975 split with China, the purity of Illyrian ethnicity was essential to the nationalist government’s political ideology (Vickers 1997).

**Continuity at Butrint**

The ideologically motivated construction of Albania’s history therefore has had a direct impact on archaeological approaches to the late antique towns of the country. At Butrint, according to Skender Anamali, ‘la vie continua sans être interrompue jusqu’au XVe siècle’ (Anamali 1989: 2,621), although prior to the present project no clear archaeological evidence had been discovered to indicate any occupation between the mid-7th and late 9th centuries, and no major historical sources describe the town in this period. None the less, occupation was claimed for these intervening periods, and archaeological material was interpreted in a fashion in which continuity was taken as read. Archaeological horizons that lay above those containing late antique material and below those containing material of the 10th century and later were assumed to represent the intervening period in its entirety, rather than, for example, a sub-phase of either datable horizon (see, for example, Karaiskaj 1979). This is also reflected in Karaiskaj’s (1983) study of the walls of Butrint, where the history of the town’s fortifications is condensed to demonstrate a continuity of defensive construction between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages (see also Chapter 8).

Butrint, like many Mediterranean cities, reappears in the historical sources from the late 9th century. Archaeological evidence from this phase of the city’s history is, however, extremely limited, and it seems that occupation
of the town was minimal – if indeed it was a town as such. Archaeological excavations to date have not produced significant deposits of the 9th to 12th centuries, although sporadic finds of coins and ceramics from this period testify to a presence of some sort, perhaps a small garrison (see the comparison made with Amorion above). This must cast doubt on the previous dating of remains elsewhere in the city to this period. The '9th-century' walls of the acropolis described earlier are probably no earlier than the 13th century, while the date of the rebuilding of the Great Basilica, suggested to be late 9th century (Meksi 1983a: 72), merits reconsideration (see Chapter 7).

This apparently limited occupation may not, however, reflect the strategic importance of Butrint during this period, as the northernmost town of the theme of Nicopolis, close to the frontier with the powerful Bulgarian state (Obolensky 1982: 99–114) and dominating the Straits of Corfu. None the less, Benedict of Peterborough’s reference to Butrint as a castellum desertum in 1191 (Soustal 1981: 133) reinforces the impression of minimal occupation, although the Arab geographer, al Idrisi, referred to markets being held at the town in the mid-12th century (Soustal 1981: 133; see also this volume, Chapter 2).

From around the second half of the 13th century, activity in the town appears to have increased markedly, an impression reinforced by the historical sources. Both the recent excavations and others carried out within the town (for example, Lako 1981) produced significant
deposits of the 13th to 16th centuries. Furthermore, substantial sections of the fortifications and at least six small churches can be ascribed to this period, suggesting that the walled city may have been occupied quite densely. This impression is supported by large numbers of burials of this period, found in both of the main excavations. Documentary sources reveal the importance of Butrint's fisheries during this period, as well as other exports, such as timber.

The increased activity in Butrint during this period may in part be a reflection of the turbulent events of the first half of the 13th century, which culminated in the establishment of the Despotate of Epirus in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade. Manfred of Hohenstaufen seized the Albanian coastline in 1257, and the area subsequently was annexed by Charles of Anjou in 1279. Angevin interest in the eastern shores of the Adriatic was directed against the resurgent Byzantine Empire of Michael VII, although their efforts eventually proved fruitless when they were defeated at the battle of Berat in 1281 (Soustal 1981: 59–66).

The physical development of the settlement at Butrint can be measured approximately in the context of these operations and ambitions. The castle of Butrint was probably built by Michael II in 1236 (Marmora 1672: 210–11). In the later 13th century, during the period of Angevin rule, there were regular appointments, apparently of some prestige, to the office of castellan (governor of the castle). Although the status of the post later declined, there continued to be a governor of the castle under the later Angevins and under the Venetians, who controlled Butrint after 1386, until the castle was surrendered to Suleiman the Magnificent in 1537. In 1572 the site of the ancient city was abandoned in favour of the Triangular Fortress on the southern bank of the Vivari Channel (Marmora 1672: 353). Of course, it would be invaluable to measure the port's history by the history of its harbours, but this is not possible at present. Moreover, the town houses and the urban poor remain merely marginal figures to date. In common with the late Roman circumstances, new excavations promise an opportunity to illuminate the inhabitants of a significant Mediterranean port, not just as colonists and castellans, but as merchants and their communities, situated close to an epicentre of Mediterranean commerce.

**Butrint and its hinterland**

At the outset, Butrint's relationship with its immediate territory formed a central aspect of the project, as it was clear that the relatively undeveloped nature of the surrounding region presented an opportunity to study the town within the context of a multi-period archaeological landscape and to examine the effect of the town's inhabitants upon the surroundings and vice versa.

Perhaps the most decisive moment in the town's relationship with its hinterland came with the establish-

ment of the Roman colony. The ancient writer Cicero, responding to letters from his friend Atticus who had a villa close to Butrint, leaves us in no doubt that Julius Caesar attempted to imprint his will on the landscape through settlement of veterans, apparently as a punitive measure against non-payment of taxes. In this instance Atticus discharged the debt and the veterans were sent elsewhere, although a colony was subsequently re-established by Augustus (Deniaux 1987). The circumstances surrounding the Augustan colony at Nicopolis provide some indications of the kind of changes to which Atticus was objecting in his correspondence with Cicero. As Alcock has noted:

The foundation of Nikopolis was accompanied by a cadastral organization of its territory, or at least of the peninsula south of the town; the module of the resulting centuries (identified as 20 x 40 actus or 707 x 144 m) and the network's orientation (identical to that of the urban plan) have been distinguished ... Land divisions observed here dictated for centuries the subsequent organization of the Nikopotilus peninsula ... Drainage of marshy areas accompanied this particular systematization of the cultivated landscape (Alcock 1993: 139–40).

We might expect the same transformation of Butrint and its landscape as the Roman surveyors attempted to impose on the conquered the ideologically motivated sense of parcelling up the world (Purcell 1990: 20). But for how long did this new managed landscape exist? In Italy the rural landscape experienced great crisis in the 3rd century, leading to concomitant problems for Italian cities as the villas were deserted. The archaeology of rural Greece in this period, according to Susan Alcock, appears to be altogether different. Alcock described a model situation in Boeotia and the islands where settlement numbers dropped between the late Hellenistic period and the 2nd century AD and grew from the 3rd or 4th century AD. She also noted an overall loss of small peasant sites in the early Roman period and a preponderance of larger nucleated sites that continued throughout the classical age (1993: 72). Did the landscape in southern Albania conform to this pattern? Were the circumstances at Butrint affected by its situation, surrounded on its south side by wetlands? Did the morphology of the settlements alter just as the dwellings within Butrint itself underwent transformation? What happened to rural settlement as the Goths and Slavs menaced the coastal area in the 5th and 6th centuries?

One final issue that continues to fascinate archaeologists and historians alike in all parts of the Mediterranean is what happened to the rural landscape once the port of Butrint was reduced to little more than a castle sustained by the military. To what extent did Butrint exploit and depend upon its environs? Or, to put it another way, was it a product of its seaborne trade largely insulated from any dependency upon the narrow coastal strip? Any answers to these questions throw light
not only on the regional settlement pattern, but also on the character and scale of Butrint as a central place.

**Research methodology**

In 1993 the Albanian Institute of Archaeology proposed that the Butrint Foundation excavate three sites in the lower city: the Baptistery complex, the so-called Triconch Palace and an area on the north side of the city that appeared to be a promising zone for the Roman port. The Baptistery and the Triconch Palace had been investigated by the Italian Archaeological Mission in the interwar period as well as by the Institute of Archaeology in 1982. As Aleksandër Meksi had published a detailed account of the Baptistery as a result of the 1982 season (Meksi 1983a), it was clear that our project should aim to re-examine its context and particularly the complex of buildings in which it is located. These were envisaged as small-scale excavations. By contrast, the Triconch Palace promised to be a substantial excavation, especially as Meksi, following Luigi Ugolini’s (unpublished) summary evaluation of the site, had interpreted it as a church as opposed to the *triclinium* of a large late Roman town house, as we supposed (Hodges, Srači and Bowden 1997). The port site on the north side of the town proved to be part of the Roman cemetery that begins immediately outside the Lion Gate and appears to spread out across this low-lying ground. On discovering this, as it did not serve the research aims of the project, the investigation was terminated during the first season.

As part of the collaborative process, the Butrint Foundation was invited to introduce a range of archaeological methods that had been developed in the United Kingdom and might offer a promising new direction for Albanian archaeology in the post-communist age. These new methods essentially comprise, firstly, making an assessment of the excavated sample in terms of its relationship to the city as a whole and the city’s own context; and, secondly, recording methods aided by computerised technology to ascertain the stratigraphic (chronological) sequences.

The assessment process ranged from establishing the regional context of Butrint to evaluating the deposits in the individual excavations and included a number of interdisciplinary approaches.

Firstly, a new map of the walled city was made using a Total Station Theodolite in tandem with a monument assessment programme that also allowed us to identify and re-examine structures and buildings belonging to the late Roman–early modern periods (Chapter 6). The Italian Mission of 1928–43 and the Institute of Archaeology have published several significant studies on the wall-circuits, for example, but these were based on the premise that the walled site was the entire nucleus of the settlement, rather than just one section of it. As a result, a new survey of the 2.5 km of walls was made with the assistance of the Institute of Monuments, whose Butrint team cleared vegetation to make recording possible. Likewise, a new survey was made of the Great Basilica in 1994 in order to use it as an architectural fixed point (a landmark building) when studying fragmentary structures unearthed in excavations either inside Butrint or in the surrounding region. All the chapels and churches, including the supposed late antique church on the acropolis, were also surveyed and recorded. Similarly, all the structures of this period were recorded, ranging from substantial late medieval buildings, like the two-storey dwelling beside the Vivari Channel, to the earth-bonded late Roman buildings constructed within the fabric of the ancient city.

Secondly, it was important to define the context of the Graeco-Roman port. This involved a two-part strategy: an intensive surface survey of the surrounding area from the Korafi Hills on Cape Stillo in the south, extending as far east as the village of Xarra (Chapter 4). Particular emphasis was paid to identifying late Roman sites, occupied contemporaneously with Butrint, in order to measure the character of the city in terms of villas and other centres in its immediate hinterland. These included the sites of Phoeucicë, Kalivo and Çuka e Aitoit (Bowden 2003a; Bowden and Hodges 2004) (Fig. 1.1). Special attention was given to the site of Diaporit, situated close to the northeast corner of Lake Butrint, where Ugolini had identified a villa, which seemed from the surface remains to include a substantial late Roman basilica. Intensive field survey was new to Albania, although the Greek Archaeological Mission had carried out a pilot study near Butrint, which is as yet unpublished. The second part of this strategy was to document the environmental history of the landscape in which Butrint is situated (Chapter 3). The marshes forming much of the Vrina Plain opposite Butrint had been drained in the late 1960s, following principles introduced by Chinese engineers during the period of close cooperation between the two countries. Quite clearly the reclamation transformed the ecosystem in which Butrint is located, just as the decline of the drainage system in the aftermath of the political upheavals of 1990–91 led to renewed winter and spring flooding of this area. Our intention was to chart the evolution of Lake Butrint as an inland lagoon, and, as a result, illustrate how Butrint’s role as a port situated between the lake and the Straits of Corfu altered over the course of its 2,500 year history. A critical aspect of the environmental survey involved obtaining satisfactory pollen cores as well as cores from different sites and loci within the field-survey zone.

The third aspect of the approach was an assessment of Butrint as a settlement entity. Ugolini had concentrated his efforts upon the walled area north of the Vivari Channel, with the result that the Butrint that existed in 1994 was essentially an Italian construct in which the walled area at the end of the Ksamil penisula was viewed as representing the city in its entirety. Subsequent excavations by the Institute of Archaeology also focused upon this area. Not surprisingly, this led UNESCO to
designate the walled area only as the World Heritage site when it was listed in 1992. However, just as there appears to have been an extramural cemetery, principally of Roman date, extending northwards from the site, so it is likely that other parts of the settlement complex lay beyond the familiar bounds. Three areas outside the bounds of Butrint were identified and, during the course of the project to date, two of these have been subject to study:

the Triangular Fortress on the south side of the Vivari Channel, the nucleus of the fishing village at Butrint visited by Leake in January 1805;

the area on the south side of the Vivari Channel where extensive Roman to late Roman remains exist – an area examined by the 1998–99 geophysical survey (Chapters 5 and 6);

the marshy area, on the north side of the channel, immediately west of the walled city (Fig. 1.10); several medieval buildings (towers and a possible chapel) are situated here. This last area remains to be investigated.

Lastly, part of the Butrint Foundation’s strategy for defining the dynamics of the city’s evolution involved a comprehensive study of the Butrint archive. Much of the site visible today was literally constructed by Luigi Ugolini and, working in his shadow, by the Institutes of Archaeology and Monuments in the post-war era. Ugolini, in line with archaeological practice in the 1920s and 1930s, removed all traces of the post-classical phases in his effort to expose the Hellenistic and Imperial Roman ruins. Often late Roman walls bonded with earth were simply restored with cement so that these fitted into the townscape of ruins more felicitously. In order to establish the lost phases, sometimes tersely described in Ugolini’s accounts, it was necessary to study his archive, as well as, of course, the archives of the Institutes of Archaeology and Monuments with regard to investigations since 1958. Locating, assembling and interpreting this archive has proved particularly fruitful. For example, the north nave wall of a 13th-century chapel survives on the terrace high above the Hellenistic Theatre. The remainder of the structure was demolished as Ugolini removed about 20 m of soil below it in order to reach the Roman levels. In the Ugolini archive in the Museo Nazionale di Civiltà Romana in Rome an unpublished plan of the original chapel survives, as well as an outline description of the excavations here of 1928. The fruits of this research will be published in several monographs, as well as in a digitised form (cf. Gilkes and Miraj 2000; Gilkes 2003).

The excavations

The excavation strategy itself was tailored to local circumstances. Sustaining a large archaeological project during this post-communist transition period in Albania was not entirely straightforward. As a result, particular emphasis was given to making an assessment of the archaeological deposits before embarking upon large-scale open-area excavations. Water-logging of the excavations, for example, had to be understood, as it occurs seasonally and, in most cases, makes it extremely difficult to excavate the early Roman deposits in the lower city.

The three excavation areas were selected in 1994 with an eye on the overall topographical history of the city and its environs. None the less, we set out to document the essential archaeological evidence while remaining sufficiently flexible to stop or change the direction of the investigations. Hence, on appreciating that the shallow deposits in the area of the proposed port on the north side of the city pertained to a cemetery area, it was decided to halt the trial excavation without disturbing any of the levels in the Roman mausolea revealed. At the Baptistery our aim was to record the complex evolution of the building into the early modern period within the fabric of a Roman bath-house structure. Emphasis, therefore, was given first to recording the mosaic pavements and the remains of the standing structures, including a small but well-preserved chapel situated to the north. Following this, a number of small stratigraphic excavations were made, mostly within earlier unpublished excavations, around the sides of the Baptistery. At the site of the Triconch Palace a different strategy was employed. The Triconch Palace manifestly belonged at one stage in its history to a substantial late Roman house or palace, but previous excavations showed it to have been built on earlier structures on the one hand, and to have been reused in Late Antiquity and the high Middle Ages on the other. Further, the complex was bounded by a well-preserved tract of the city wall running alongside the Vivari Channel. Primary emphasis was given in the 1994–98 project to establishing, firstly, the nature of the deposits, secondly, the stratigraphic relationship between the late Roman Triconch Palace building and the city wall, and, thirdly, the extent of the palace complex. These analyses had to be a precursor of any excavation to understand the history of the building and its material culture at different stages.

The field documentation process was new to the Institute of Archaeology. Essentially, the site record was composed of record sheets registering the context and its relationships. Based upon the system employed by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit (Great Britain), it follows the principle of creating a matrix of contextual relationships. Similar (pro-forma) recording sheets were used for bulk finds such as ceramics and faunal material; for human skeletal remains; and for small finds. Plans and sections were drawn at either 1:10 or 1:20, depending upon the level of detail required, and both black-and-white and colour photographs were taken of critical stages of the excavations. All these data have now been digitised following a system devised by the Albanian Rescue Archaeology Unit (established in 2000). Finds processing was undertaken in the Venetian castle at Butrint in limited conditions. Bulk finds were recorded on pro-forma sheets, and specific groups and items were then studied in great depth. Every effort was made to deploy
This report describes the results of the 1994–99 investigations, although little explicit use is made in this volume of the archival research that will be published in other monographs (Gilkes 2003; Francis forthcoming). Peter Sousal, none the less, provides an overview of the historical sources in Chapter 2. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 summarise the study of the environs of Butrint: the environmental survey by Adrian Lane (Chapter 3); the 1995–96 field survey (Chapter 4); and the 1998–99 geophysical survey. Chapter 6 provides a new overview of the evolution of the city from the early Iron Age until the Ottoman period, drawing upon the new survey of the hill as well as the geophysical survey. The new city map also informs Chapters 7 and 8, which respectively examine the city’s churches and fortifications. The reports on the excavations focus upon the Triconch Palace (Chapter 9) and Baptistery (Chapters 10 and 11), with a short account of the 1994 excavations made elsewhere in the ancient city (Chapter 12). The finds include significant chapters on the late Roman and medieval ceramics (Chapters 13–15), where the authors sampled the large body of material found to date, while the final chapters deal with the small finds and faunal remains. Reports on the glass found in the excavations and the human skeletal remains will appear in a future volume.

This volume marks a first step towards a new integrated analysis of an ancient city and its hinterland in Albania. As such, the Byzantine phases are illustrated as episodes in a longer history spanning two and a half millennia.
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The project began with the support of the British School at Rome, where Maria Pia Malvezzi and Tommaso Astolfi played an instrumental role in the early years. Since 1996 it has formed part of the research programme of the Institute of World Archaeology in the University of East Anglia. During the project, the work of the environmental team was supported by the Department of Geography at the University of Sheffield, the field-survey team was resourced first from the Department of Archaeology and Prehistory at the University of Sheffield, then the Department of Archaeology at the University of Wales at Lampeter. The geophysical prospection has been run from the School of Environmental Studies at the University of East Anglia.

Professor Richard Hodges and John Mitchell made the initial visit in 1993 with Gjergj Saraçi, Dr Kosta Lako and Aistr Nanaj at the invitation of Dr Namik Bodinaku, director of the Institute of Archaeology, and with the support and encouragement of Lord Rothschild and Lord Sainsbury of Preston Candover, as well as Sir Patrick Fairweather, then British Ambassador to Albania. Gjergj Saraçi visited Hodges at the British School at Rome on a ‘Know-How’ grant provided by the British government thanks to the intervention of Stephen Nash, then chargé d’affaires at the British Embassy, Tirana. The following June (1994), Richard Hodges, Sheila Gibson and Sally Martin established the main lines of the project with Gjergj Saraçi and Kosta Lako. Richard Hodges and Gjergj Saraçi served as co-directors from 1994 to 1996; and Richard Hodges and Kosta Lako with Dr Ilir Gjipali were co-directors from 1998 to 1999. The field seasons took place: September 1994; April 1995; August–October 1995; April 1996; August–September 1996; and September 1998. The September–October 1999 season was devoted to studying the finds.

Sally Martin acted as project manager of the 1994–99 seasons; Dr John Moreland served as assistant director of the project 1994–96 and took charge of trial investigations at Diaporit as well as co-directing the field survey of 1995–96 with Dr Mark Plucienicki. Dr William Bowden coordinated the finds season in September–October 1999. Dr Sarah O’Hara, assisted by Adrian Lane, was responsible for the environmental survey during 1995–96. A preliminary geophysical survey of the east side of the Vivari Channel was undertaken by the Institute of Geophysical and Geochemical Studies, Tirana, during April 1995; this was followed by an extensive project directed by Dr Neil Chroston and Dr Mark Hounslow during 1998–99. Chroston and Hounslow are grateful to Marisa Goulden, Felicity Laws, Sue Rosser-Davies, Cristal Long (all from University of East Anglia), Peter Cott and Albanian helpers for assistance with the field measurements. They are also indebted to Peter Cott for the loan of the RM4 resistivity meter.

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Kosta Lako and Oliver Gilkes directed the excavations at the Triconch Palace, and William Bowden with Dr Luan Përzhita (from April 1995) directed the excavations at the Baptistery. Sally Martin directed the excavations of the possible port site on the north side of the town in 1994. The study of the walls of Butrint was undertaken by Richard Andrews between 1994 and 1999. John Mitchell made a survey of the medieval churches (including their fragmentary frescoes) in 1994 and of the Baptistery mosaic in 1995. A new topographical map of the city was made initially by Sally Martin and Lucy Watson in April 1995, and completed by William Bowden and John Percival in October 1999. Jayne Bown, Adam Brossler, the late Petraq Damko, Karen Francis, James Fentress, Tomor Kastrioti, Bill Murphy, Elio Bjazi, Emmy Rothschild, Altin Skenderaj, Dr Edmund Thomas, Sophie Tremlett and Lucy Watson played a conspicuous part in the excavations. Pippa Pearce took charge of the conservation of objects during 1994–99. Finds processing was managed by Dr Inge Hansen (1994), Sophie Tremlett (1995–96) and Jan Allen with Sidorela Golëmi and Ilir Papa (1998). In 1994–95 Prue Chiles assisted as project architect. Jane Bromley and Noel Kilbride served as cooks in 1994–95; in 1998–99 Ylli Bani cooked for the team. The project management was made possible thanks to the assistance of Ilir Matta (April 1995), Bardhyl Musa (April/August–October 1995; April and August 1996) and Ani Tare (September 1996; September 1998; September/October 1999).

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Notes
1 Ugolini’s draft manuscript describing the excavations of the Theatre was discovered in the Museo Nazionale della Civiltà Romana and has been published recently: Gilkes 2003.
2 The Institute of Archaeology has taken various forms since 1948. Originally archaeology formed part of the Faculty of History in the University of Tirana. From 1972 an entity was established as part of the Albanian Academy of Sciences; in 1977 a Centre for Archaeology was established within the Academy; and in 1990 the centre was made into the current Institute of Archaeology. For the purposes of this report we have referred to the various organisations as the Institute of Archaeology.
3 ‘Ne jemi pasardhësit e fiseve ilire. Në këto troje të lashta të të parëve tanë kanë vërshuar grekët, romakët, normandët, sllavët, anshuinët, bizantinët, venedikasit, osmanët e shumé e shumë pushtues të tjerë, por ata nuk izhudkën dot as popullin shqiptar, as kulturën e vjetër ilire, as vazhdimesinë e saj shqiptare’ (Hoxha 1985).
4 Explicit statements of this hypothesis can be found in numerous publications. See, for example, Anamali 1971; Korkuti 1971. For comment see Wilkes 1992; Bowden 2003a; Bowden 2003b; Bowden and Hodges 2004.
2. The historical sources for Butrint in the Middle Ages

Peter Soustal

Introduction

Butrint (ancient Buthroton or Buthrotos) in Chaonia occupies a central position in the Mediterranean (Figs. 2.1–2). Thucydides (III.85.2) records its close association with the nearby island of Kerkyra (Corfu), and it is in part this location that has led to Butrint playing minor roles in many of the major episodes of Mediterranean history, as most of the goods and people that passed between the Eastern Mediterranean and the Adriatic Sea would have passed through the Straits of Corfu and hence close to Butrint. Strabo (VII.324.446) describes the location of the town, where Roman settlers lived, as being at the end of the peninsula (Heximili, Ksamili) at the mouth of the freshwater lake named 'Pelodes limen', which leads towards the Ionian Sea. The town was therefore protected by natural defences, which also clearly contributed to its importance, especially in the later medieval period (Schmitt 1998: 315). As well as its strategic location, however, the natural resources of the Butrint region, including livestock, fish and timber, gave the town an importance as a source of supplies and revenues to the various powers that held it over the centuries.

This central position also ensured the appearance of Butrint on late Roman itineraries and on a series of maps from the 13th to the 17th centuries, where it is marked mostly as 'Butinto', 'Botrinto', but also in other variants such as 'Butunto' and 'Protanto' (Kretschmer 1909: 630; Sphyeroeras, Avramea and Asdrachas 1985: 90, 143, 178 (nos. 57, 95, 129)) or 'Botroto', 'Butrento' (de la Roncière and Mollat du Jourdin 1984: no. 13), 'Buirinto', 'Botanto', 'Botrado', 'Botronto', 'Botrinto' (Capacci 1994: 409 (index), 'Botintro' (Sphyeroeras, Avramea and Asdrachas 1985: 70 (no. 34)). Some maps occasionally show it as 'Pilodes portus', 'Pelodes portus' instead of Butrint (Sphyeroeras, Avramea and Asdrachas 1985: 98, 106, 136 (nos. 65, 78, 89)). In the Greek-language portulan of the 16th century, the name of the town is rendered 'Bothrotos', 'Bothrento', 'Botronto' and 'Botre', while there are some references to the old town (chora palaia) and the many fishery installations (bibaria, vivaria) (Delatte 1947: 34, 54, 204, 305).

Historical references to late antique and early medieval Butrint

There are very few late antique references to Butrint. An enkomion to Saint Therinus, who died a martyr's death under Emperor Decius (249–251) in Butrint, is attributed to the Metropolitan Bishop Arsenios of Corfu (writing in the 9th to 10th centuries) (Lampros 1882: 3–22; cf. Ugolini 1936: 310–11; Beck 1959: 545; Kazhdan 1991: 187). Late antique itineraries mention Butrint as lying between Phoinike and Glykses Limes, or between the island of Saseno (Sazan) and Nicopolis: Antonine Itinerary 324.5 ('Butroto'), 488.7 ('Butroto'), 489.1 ('Buthroto'); Peutinger Table VII.3 ('Butharoto'). In the so-called Synedemos of Hierocles, an inventory of provinces and cities, probably compiled in 527/8, which provides an approximate account of the situation under Emperor Theodosius II (408–50), Buthrotos is listed as the seventh of the towns of the province of Palaia Epeiros (Old Epirus), then subordinated to the metropolis of Nicopolis (Honigmann 1939: 652,4). We also have names for at least two bishops of Butrint, although the attribution of a third (Zenobius Bostroensis), whose name occurs in AD 451 amidst the list of bishops of Epirus, is insecure (Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum II 2: 2, 70 [162]). It is, however, certain that Butrint was a bishopric of the metropolis of Nicopolis after AD 458. At the end of a letter that the Metropolitan Bishop Eugenius addressed to Emperor Leo I, the names of eight bishops are provided, the last of which is Stephanus episcopos Buthrodi (Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum II 5: 95 (ep. 46)). Later, in 516, Bishop Matthew of Butrint describes the election of John to the position of metropolitan bishop.
Fig. 2.1 Location of sites mentioned in the text. (IWA)
of Nicopolis (Täutu 1962: 881 (no. 22)); ... Matthaeus episcopus Butrinti ....

At the end of the 6th century it is possible that groups of Slavs, then migrating across the Balkans, arrived at Butrint, although we lack any documentation of the kind that exists for the town of Euroia (possibly at the site of modern Glyky), whose bishop resided in Kassiope, in the north of Corfu, after fleeing from Slavic migrants who overran his see (Täutu 1962: 515–19 (nos. 284–6)). Butrint certainly lies in the region known in the 13th century as Bagienia or Vagenetia, a term that can be traced back to the Slavic tribe known as the Bajunet. The names Vagenetia, Viyanetie and Viyanitie survived until the Turkish period, when in the 16th century the name Delvine became commonly used instead (Asdracha and Asdrachas 1992). The so-called ‘Partitio Romaniae’, the partition document of 1204, which was compiled on the basis of Byzantine tax registers, records the chartularaton de Bagienia (Soustal 1981: 58–9, 119–20). Epirus was also referred to in relation to Corfu as ‘Starea’, ‘the mainland’, and ‘Albania’ (Soustal 1981: 39).

Historical references to Butrint between the 7th and mid-11th centuries are extremely scarce and derive almost entirely from ecclesiastical sources. It was probably in AD 732 (although possibly a little later, in 751) that the churches of Illyricum, which were until that point subject to the papacy, were attached to the patriarchate of Constantinople. In the so-called Notitia of the Iconoclasts, compiled after 754, Butrint is listed as the fourth and last-but-one city of the province of Old Epirus, under the metropolis of Nicopolis. The transmitted form of Bythipotu can presumably be attributed to a mistaken reading of the original Latin document (Darrouzès 1981: no. 3, line 295, p. 236; cf. Kountoura 1998: 170, 174–5. In the late 9th century (880–84), Saint Elias the Younger and his pupil and companion Daniel were accused of being Agarones (godless Moslems) and spies, and imprisoned at Butrinti (polis epineios) by a man whose ‘rank is lower than that of the stratelates’ (Rossi Taibbi 1962: XIII, 42, 153–4 (c. 28)). In AD 904 the relics of Saint Elias, who had died in Thessalonica, were brought to Butrint via Thessalia, Hellas and Thespotzia, to be taken from there to Calabria (Saline) (Rossi Taibbi 1962: XVI, 116 (c. 73), 182).

The inventories of bishoprics from the 10th to 12th centuries identify the bishop of Butrint as subject to the metropolitan bishopric of Naupaktos, the ecclesiastical province that took the name of the old provincial capital of Nicopolis (Darrouzès 1981: no. 7, line 583; 9, line 454; 10, line 540; 13, line 590). Having subjugated the Bulgarian empire of Samuel in 1014, Emperor Basil II transformed the patriarchate of Ohrid into an independent archbishopric (archiepiskopos Achridon kai pases Bulgarians). Following a request by Archbishop John, in 1020 the newly founded archbishopric took over the areas of the metropolises of Naupaktos, Dyrrhachium (Durrës), Thessalonica and Larisa, which had previously belonged to Samuel’s empire. Hence, Butrint, together with Chimaera (Himara), Adrianopolis, Bela, Ioannina, Kozyly and Rogoi, were integrated into the archbishopric of Ohrid, leaving only the areas to the south of the Ambracian Gulf remaining with the metropolitan bishopric of Naupaktos. However, the fact that the bishops of Butrint and Himara were only allotted 12 clerics and 12 paroikoi attests to their comparative insignificance (Benešević 1911: 544–50; Dölger 1924: no. 807; Ivanov 1970: 559; Ducellier 1981: 62).

The Normans at Butrint

Late in the 11th century, Butrint suddenly found itself at the centre of major political events that engulfed the central Mediterranean. In May 1081 the Normans, under Robert Guiscard, conquered the town and secured it as a base for further ventures against the Byzantine Empire. No mention is made of either a siege or of prolonged combat (Mathieu 1961: IV, v. 203; pp. 214–15).2 Robert Guiscard had come from Aulon (present-day Vlora) by ship along the coast to Bothrenton, where he met up with his son Bohemond, who had already taken Aulon (Alexiad I: III c. 12.3). William of Apulia described how, upon his disembarkation, Guiscard faced a mixed contingent of troops of various provenances under Basileios Mesopotamites (‘Botrontina urb’s, ‘Botrontia urb’s) (Mathieu 1961: IV, vv. 324–43; pp. 36, 222–3, 316, 320). Perhaps these were local troops unknown to Anna Comnena, daughter of Emperor Alexius I and a chronicler of these events. The name of this man might be traced to Mesopotam, a monastery situated 20 km to the north of Butrint, close to the old Chaonian capital of Phoenicé (Mathieu 1961: IV, v. 321; Ducellier 1981: 43). However, either in March 1083 or the spring of 1084 the two Norman leaders had to return to Italy. In 1084 Guiscard, together with his sons Roger and Gidas, renewed their campaign against Byzantium, and Butrint was occupied once more. However, in 1085 the Byzantines, with the help of their Venetian allies, defeated Robert Guiscard in the vicinity of Butrint.3 Shortly afterwards, in July 1085, the sudden death of Guiscard on the island of Kephallonia led to the loss of all Norman possessions on the Greek mainland.

These events at Butrint during the course of this ‘proto-crusade’ of Robert Guiscard were one of the first encounters between the Normans of Italy and the Byzantine Empire, and were sufficiently memorable to provoke an otherwise unlikely reminder of the town’s name in the Song of Roland, where (in the episode of Balgiant) the town of Podandos in the Cappadocian-Cilician borderland is rendered, apparently under the influence of Butrint, as ‘Butentrot’, ‘Butintros’ (‘Butrentor’, ‘Butrintos’, ‘Boteroz’, ‘Butancor’, ‘Bonne terre’, ‘Val-Potenrot’, ‘Botzeroit’ (Grégoire and de Keyser 1939: 269–75, 311–12). During the First Crusade
in 1097, Bohemond’s son Tancred came to Cilicia through the ‘vallis de Botrethrot’ (Hild and Restle 1981: 109, 262). Other onomastic similarities from the Epirote area confirm this otherwise unlikely connection (Grégoire and de Keyser 1939: 275–311).

There are other sporadic references to Butrint during the course of the 12th century. In the middle of the 12th century, the Arab geographer al Idrisi mentioned Butrint as a small and well-populated town with markets (Jaubert 1840: 121; Prinzing 1997: 18–19), although this is somewhat at odds with Benedict of Peterborough’s description of Butrint as a castellum desertium in 1191.4 In addition to Butrint’s association with Aeneas (Miller 1908: 25), the crusaders were particularly interested in the legend suggesting that the abandoned castle of Butentrost or Butrinkto was the birthplace of Judas Iscariot. Abandoned or not, the town certainly had a bishop in 1181, as thanks to a scribe’s annotation of 13th March of that year, we know the name of the anagnostes and nomikos of the bishop of Butrint: Ioannes Monasterites from the village of Paulos (Codex Athos, Xenoph. I (collaboration of the priest Basileios from the village of Tzkerubianus in the archontia of Longabitsa); cf. Prinzing 1997: 22–3; Chrysos 1980).

**Butrint between Byzantines, Venetians and Angevins**

Following the division of the Byzantine Empire in 1204, Butrint belonged to a region that was allotted to Venice. The Venetian podestà in Constantinople decreed in 1205 that the coastal provinces from Glyky to Dyrhrachium, specifically mentioning the provincia Vagenecie, should be subordinated directly to Venice. The Venetians were, however, not interested in taking possession of the Epirote mainland, but allowed Michael Comnenos Doukas (Michael Comnus Dux) to rule as their vassal the territory from the border to the (Venetian) province of Dyrhrachium to Naupaktos. In return, in the treaty of vassalage drawn up in 1210, the Venetians required guarantees of protection and safety, free trade with these settlements and the right to have churches specifically for Venetians and Dyrhrachians (Soustal 1981: 58–61; Prinzing 1983: 84–107).

Records of ecclesiastical disputes provide our principal sources for Butrint during the first decades of the 13th century. As noted above, the bishops of Butrint were subordinate to the diocese of Naupaktos, at the head of which was Ioannes Apokaukos in the years from 1199/1200 until 1232. Apokaukos was a strong personality, who came to represent the strong independence of the Church within the Epirote empire, and who rejected the claims made by the patriarch of Constantinople, resident in Nicaea. Ioannes Apokaukos’s numerous writings are an important source for Butrint, especially his letters to his superior, Bishop Demetrios (Pétrides 1909: 77, 91. A letter dated to 1226 or 1227, which had as its subject the candidacy for the vacant see of Ioannina, provides an example of this correspondence (Bees-Seferli 1976: 141 (no. 83)). On 15th August 1227 the bishop of Butrint was a participant at a synod in Bonditzia convened for the election of the local bishop (Stauridou-Zaphraka 1993–94: 162–4). In November 1227 Ioannes Apokaukos instructed the bishops of Aetos, Acheloos, Buthrotos and Dragameston to perform the ordinations of the designated bishops of Bonditzia and Bela in his place due to illness (Bees-Seferli 1976: 77–8 (no. 17), 178–9 (no. 17); Stauridou-Zaphraka 1993–94: 164).5 In April of what is probably the year 1229, Demetrios of Butrint signed a decree of Ioannes Apokaukos (Rallees and Potles 1858: 106–9; Nicol 1957: 219–21; Laurent 1971: no. 1.283). Amidst the canonical writings of the archbishop of Ohrid, Demetrios Chomatemos (died c. 1236), who had crowned Theodore Doukas of Epirus as emperor in Thessalonica in 1227, one also finds an act originating in a request of Bishop Demetrios of Butrint. Apparently, the bishop had found himself in conflict with the abbot of the Choteachobou monastery over the ordination of priests. The monastery of Choteachobou was situated, like the nearby village of Choteachobon and the village of Tzemenikon (or Tormenikon) of the archontia of Choteachobon, within the diocese of the bishop of Butrint (Demetrios Chomatianus, 339–50 (no. 80) (Pitr 1891): 267–9 (no. 80) (Prinzing 2002)). In another act signed by the archbishop, mention is made of a statement issued by the chartophylax (administrator) of the bishopric of Butrint (Demetrios Chomatianus, 162 (no. 37)).

The extent of the activities of the despots of Epirus in relation to Butrint is unclear, although Marmora, writing in the 17th century, claimed that Michael II, the son of Michael I, fortified Butrint in 1236 in the wake of the election of his uncle, Manuel, from Corfu (Marmora 1672: 210–11; Nicol 1957: 132; Ducellier 1981: 202). The turbulent history of Butrint in this period suggests that it is certainly likely that the main phase of medieval fortifications dates to the 13th century (see also Chapter 8).

In 1259, Helena (daughter of Michael II of Epirus and Theodore Petraliphina) married Manfred of Sicily, who was of Hohenstaufen descent. Whether the area included in Helena’s dowry contained Butrint as well as Corfu is uncertain (Nicol 1972: 175; 1984: 13). After the defeat of Manfred at Benevento in 1266, and as a result of the Treaty of Viterbo in the year 1267, Manfred’s possessions passed to Charles of Anjou, who was titled King of Albania from 1272 (Ducellier 1981: 262). It is not known whether the area that Charles received stretched as far south as Butrint (Ntourney-Eliopoulos 1982: 63–72). As a result of the murder of Manfred’s governor, Admiral Philip Chinardo (Ducellier 1981: 43: Heisenberg 1903: 166; Schopen and Bekker 1829: 71), Despot Michael II was able to regain the coast to the south of the gulf of Vlora, including Butrint (Nicol 1984: 14). In the summer of 1274, the Byzantines started a large offensive against Charles of Anjou, who tried to establish himself in
Albania. In the course of prolonged fighting, the Byzantines were able to conquer a region extending from Berat to Butrint. By 1276 at the latest, Michael VIII Palaiologos had managed to snatch Butrint away from Nikephoros, son of Michael II and ally of the house of Anjou (Ducellier 1981: 236, 242). In 1277 Butrinto was in the possession of the emperor and a certain Lithorites was capiteanus of this castrum domini (Tafel and Thomas 1867: 226, 243 (no. 370); Nicol 1984: 18–30).

It was during this turbulent period that Butrint served as a hideout for the pirate John de Lo Cavo de Ania and his men. A complaint of 29th May 1277 is preserved in which Dessa of Zara (Jadra, Zadar) and his wheat-laden ship are recorded as having been attacked in the harbour of Vlora by Byzantine pirates under the command of John de Lo Cavo de Ania, and brought to Butrint. Shortly thereafter, a similar case occurred in which John de Lo Cavo de Ania captured two Venetian merchants, who were transporting furs from Spinarizza to Durrës, and took them to Butrint (Tafel and Thomas 1867: 243, 272–3 (no. 370)).

In 1278 Nikephoros ejected the Imperial garrison from Butrint and strengthened his ties to Charles of Anjou. In March 1279 Nikephoros declared himself a vassal of Charles of Anjou and transferred Butrint and the nearby towns of Panormos and Sopotos to his authority (Thalléczy and Sulfay 1913: 114 (no. 390); Nicol 1972: 184–5). On 12th April 1279 Charles notified the capiteanus of Corfu, Giordano di Santo Felice, that he should take over the castrum Bothonito and the other former mainland possessions of Manfred from Nikephoros (Romanos 1889: 555; Ducellier 1981: 249, 306). With the decree of 13th August 1279 Charles of Anjou declared that Hugo le Rousseau de Sully (recorded in the Byzantine sources as Ros Solymas) would be henceforth the overall commander of his possessions in Albania and Epirus (Durrës, Vlora, Sopotos, Butrint and Corfu), and ordered him to fight the Palaiologos (Filangieri 1950-71: XXVII, 255v; Thalléczy and Sulfay 1913: 115 (no. 394); Ntouri-Eliopoulou 1982: 67). In November 1280 Charles of Anjou placed Butrint, Sopotos and Himara directly under the control of Hugo le Rousseau de Sully. In 1280 or 1281 Hugues de Longueville became castellan of Butrint.8

Despite the failures of the Angevins during the siege of Berat, and their subsequent defeat, Butrint (and Corfu) remained in Angevin hands (Nicol 1984: 28). After their ejection from Sicily (as a result of the ‘Sicilian Vespers’ of late March 1282), the Angevins were not in a position to operate in Romania as effectively as they had previously. Giordano di Santo Felice, however, remained capiteanus of Corfu, of Butrint, Sopotos and Himara (1283). From 1284 Albania was for the most part in the possession of Andronikos II, and Angevin rule on the mainland was limited to Butrint, which formed a single administrative unit with Corfu. Later, Richard Orsini was governor on behalf of his suzerain, Charles II of Anjou, in Corfu and Butrint (Perrat and Longnon 1967: 35–6 (no. 15); Nicol 1984: 36). On 18th April 1290 Florent of Hainaut was entrusted with this position (Curpho and castrum de Prothento) (Nicol 1984: 36 n. 9), and shortly afterwards, between 1292 and 1294, Jean de Audelincourt held this position as capiteanus, rector and gubernator of the island of Corfo and of the castrum Prothonto (Perrat and Longnon 1967: 50–2 (nos. 35, 37); Ducellier 1981: 261).

In August 1294 there was once more a marriage between a potente of Italy and a female representative of the Byzantine-Epirote ruling family, namely between Philip of Taranto (son of Charles II of Anjou) and Thamar (daughter of Nikephoros). In the course of this liaison, Philip became suzerain of Albania, Romania and, in particular, the island of Corfu, the castle of Butrint and the associated territory in Epirus.9 In 1309 Philip of Taranto (died 1313), Prince of Morea, campaigned in Arta against Despot Thomas. His campaigns were not, however, successful. Later (perhaps in 1313) he reached a compromise with Thomas and received from him Nepanto (Naupaktos), Otrenoto (Butrint) and Bondiča (Bonditsa) (Morel-Fatio 1885: 115 (c. 526)). From the period 1310–13, a certain Nicolas is known as the Latin episcopus Botrontinensis (Ugolini 1936: 327).11

In the 14th century, Butrint and Corfu shared almost the same destiny. This picture emerges in the numerous Venetian documents revealing their keen interest in the town and island respectively. In June 1320 Nicolas Orsini of Kephallonia, who had murdered his uncle Thomas in 1318 thereby becoming ruler of Epirus, sought protection and support from the Venetians. In return, he offered them, amongst other properties, the castrum de Butronto, opposite Corphoy, or alternatively Parga (with its revenue from the sugar cane plantations), as a reward for their military support in conquering those parts of his despots that had belonged to Thomas but were now under Byzantine control. This was of concern to Ioannina, which had not recognised Despot Thomas and which had attached itself to the Byzantine Empire in 1318 (in relation to which it was promoted to the status of a metropolitans bishopric). Butrint at this time may have been one of the four suffragan bishoprics of Ioannina, which are mentioned in the chrysobull of Emperor Andronikos II in 1321 (Nicol 1984: 87 n. 23, 234). It was in this context that Nicolas Orsini referred to the revenue from fishing at Butrint, amounting to 1,500 livre a year (Thomas 1880: Acta Albaniae Veneta 1: 30–1 (no, 52); Nicol 1984: 90). The Venetians, however, rejected the offer in order to avoid antagonising the Byzantines (Romanos 1889: 556).

Butrint became Angevin again, possibly in the year 1331 when Philip of Taranto was fighting Walter of Brienne (Romanos 1889: 556). In 1337/38 it seems that the diocese of Butrint was unified with that of Glyky. In this period an unknown monk sent a request concerning the bishop of Butrint and Glyky (Bothrotou kai Glykeos)
to the patriarch, and received notification that the bishop should remain in his district and administer the Church (Darrouzès 1977: no. 2173; Hunger et al. 1995: 84–5 (no. 108)). At approximately this time the bishop seems to have moved his see (perhaps for reasons of safety) to Glyky. An episcopal list dating to the second half of the 15th century refers to a bishop Bothrontou kai Glykeon as one of the four suffragans of the metropolitan of Ioannina (Darrouzès 1981: 421 (no. 21, line 165); Nicol 1984: 238).

**Butrint under the Venetians**

From the middle of the 14th century the Venetians set out to take possession of the islands of Corfu, Paxos, Kephallonia and Zakynthos. Butrint in this context was the bridgehead to the mainland opposite Corfu. In 1348 the Serbs under Stefan Dušan had already conquered southern Albania and Epirus. After the Serbian occupation, the Venetians saw increasing opportunities for the taking of Corfu and Butrint (as well as Kephallonia and Zakynthos), and began negotiations with Catherine of Valois. In 1350 Robert of Taranto, titular Latin emperor of Constantinople, was prepared to sell Corfu, Kephallonia, Zakynthos and Butrint to the Venetians for 60,000 ducats. Already in 1351 the Venetians named a capitaneus and rector for the island of Corfou and a castellanus for the castro de Butrinto, though for some reason this enterprise did not materialise (Nicol 1984: 133). On the mainland, after the battle at the Acheloos in 1359, the Albanians began to emerge as a significant factor. Their appearance exacerbated the instability and insecurity of the region, and in turn facilitated the Ottoman conquest of Epirus. From the year 1362 it is known that Robert of Taranto granted Benedetto di Hagios Maurikio (amongst others) the yearly revenue of 5 gold ounces from the fish ponds of Butrint (Romano 1889: 557). In 1366 Philip of Taranto, titular Latin emperor of Constantinople, offered Corfou and the castro Botontroy to the Venetians as security for a loan (Acta Albaniæ Veneta 1: 184–8 (nos. 203–5)). In 1380 Butrint was occupied by force by the Navarese Company, whose leader Jacobo de Baux claimed the city as his inheritance from his maternal uncles (Hegemones of Taranto) (Romano 1889: 557).12 Shortly thereafter, the Corfiote Riccardo Altavilla evicted the Navarese from Butrint and entrusted the city to Charles III of Naples. For such services the former was created castellan and constable in 1382. The Butriotii received 1,000 modii of salt from Corfu in compensation (Romano 1889: 557).

On 11th June 1386, following the death of Charles III of Anjou, the Venetians were able to take possession of Corfu and Butrint following protracted negotiations, in order to prevent them falling to the Genoese. This was made possible by the cooperation of Riccardo Altavilla, who in early 1387 was praised for his efforts by Doge Antonio Venerio (Nicol 1984: 161; Asonitis 1998: 273–4). The Venetian administration of Corfu and its mainland dependencies was managed by the so-called Regimen Corphoi. The belt of fortifications on the terra ferma opposite the island consisted of Butrint, Saiata (also entitled Bastia), Parga (from 1401) and Phanari (Schmitt 1998: 313). All were now under threat from Albanian attacks. In 1387 the castellanus of Butentro was permitted to spend 50 hyperpyra on the repair of his palace and his house (habitacionis) (Acta Albaniæ Veneta 2: 40 (no. 322)). The salt extraction, which the despots of Ioannina had been operating in Sagiada (Saiata) to the southeast of Butrint, was considered by Venice as intolerable competition, and the installations were destroyed in 1387 (Nicol 1984: 161, 230).

In 1387 the Venetians also considered the problem of the restoration of the fortifications of the insula Botentro, the peninsula on which Butrint lies, known as a result of its six-mile length as Eximilia, Hexamilia. Five proviores visited the wall, recording that it measured four miles from the lake to the sea and was in some areas preserved to a height of one passus, while in other places it either existed as foundations or not at all. The five proviores established that the usefulness of the wall did not justify the cost of its repair (1,000 ducats). In 1394 similar measures were deliberated once more, but again were not undertaken (Acta Albaniæ Veneta 2: 46–7, 244–5, 251–2 (nos. 330, 544, 554); Asonitis 1998: 282; Schmitt 2001: 227). This fortification is now known as the Dema Wall and has a fortified monastery built above the original Hellenistic defensive wall structure (see Chapter 8).

In 1394 the castrum Butentro was also in need of repair. The position of castellanus and comestabilis Butentro (the castellania and commestabileria) was reserved for Corfiote citizens in recognition of the services of the islanders (according to documents of 1413) (Sathas 1882: 571; Thiriet 1958–61: II, no. 1,505; cf. Asonitis 1998: 278). The castellanus was supplied partially through the revenues of the fishery. From the years 1413 and 1415 there is information regarding the improvement of the installations for fishing (Thiriet 1958–61: II, no. 1,562; Acta Albaniæ Veneta 7: 173–4 (no. 1,929)). Amongst the other products that Venice gained from Corfu and Butrint were val(l)ania, villanida ‘acorns’ (Acta Albaniæ Veneta 2: 53–5 (nos. 339–40)). These are presumably gall-nuts that contain dyes (tannin) used for dyeing and medicinal purposes.

In March 1418 Theodore Mercurius, citizen of Corfu (Corphoi), was to have become the new comestabilis of the Venetian castrum Vutentro (Acta Albaniæ Veneta 10: 174 (no. 2,228)). The following year, in 1419, a peace treaty was signed between the Venetians and Turks, which contained, amongst many issues, recognition of the rule of Venice over Corfu and Butrint (Acta Albaniæ Veneta 10: 176 (no. 2,382)). Writing in 1420, Cristoforo Buondelmonti described the mountains of Epirus, in quibus Heleni propinquu matre Troiaque, et Butroto nunc
panditut ulbro, recalling the foundation of the city by the Trojan Helenus, and referring also to Virgil... celtsam Butrothi ascendimus urbem (De Sinner 1824: 55; cf. Virgil, Aeneid III.293). The Italian humanist Ciriaco de' Pizzicoli from Ancona (Cyriacus of Ancona) spent Christmas of 1435 on Corfu and on 26th December visited Bothrotum, which he also called the city of the Trojan Helenus. In May 1436 Cyriacus again spent a short time in Butrint (Bodnar 1960: 28, 43; Nicol 1984: 206).

The Ottoman threat to Butrint

A comprehensive Ottoman tax register (defter) for the Sancak of Arvanit dates to the period 1431/32. It makes mention of a locality Ayo-Ulas with its embarkation point of Vrutando (Inalcik 1954: 3; cf. Asdracha and Asdrachas 1992: 244). In 1456 Butrint was threatened by Simon Zenevisi, acting in accord with King Alphonso V of Aragon (Acta Albaniae Veneta 23: 179–80 (no. 6.472); Asontis 1998: 284–6). In 1470 an acute threat existed of an Ottoman attack on Butrint and Corfu. In Butrint, fortifications works on the castle and the civitas were carried out, and the leasholder of the fisheries of Butrint, Michali Pentopoliti of Corfu, complained that, in response to the Ottoman threat, the grills constraining the fish were opened on the orders of two civil servants to allow a galley to reach the castle (Senato Secreta Register 24, f. 162v (5th November 1470); Senato Mar Register 9, ff. 69r, v, 70r (15, 18th November 1470)). In 1475 the plans to repair the fortifications of Examilii were revived. This time the experts were of the opinion that such works were ‘very useful, easy and necessary’ in protecting Butrint and in consequence also the island of Corfu (in conservationem loci Butroti ex consequentibus insule Corphoi) (Senato Mar Register 10, f. 64r). Complaints registered by a citizen of Corfu in 1494, who had leased the peschierie of Butynio, testify to the damage caused by the Turks (Senato Mar Register 14, ff. 41v–42r).

Venice continued to be concerned to maintain the Castel de Butrinto in good order, as it was only twelve miles from Corfu, which was described as its protector and right eye (tutela et ochio dextro). 1,300 ducats per annum were allegedly spent on the castello, which was apparently in bad condition due to its age. In the relevant document of 5th October 1516, woods and fisheries (pescherie) are also mentioned (Sathas 1883: 250). A document of 22nd June 1517 shows that the castellans of Butrint still had to be chosen from amongst the citizens of Corfu (Sathas 1883: 256). Nevertheless, the low-lying town was increasingly stagnating, even though fishing in the waters around Butrint, notwithstanding Turkish raids, continued to yield profits in the 15th and 16th centuries. Reasons for this may be found in continued floodings of the town itself and of the surrounding area, and the illnes-inducing climate (malaria) (Schmitt 1998: 317).4 In early 1596 Patriarch Athanasios of Ohrid, who was intent upon ending Turkish rule and sought contact with the Venetians for this reason, met Angelo Basadonna, the provveditore of Corfu in Butrint. The Venetians refused any support, and the subsequent revolt in Himara was supported by Spain (Bartl 1974: 124–5). The bishopric had been moved a long time since to Glyky. Following the Treaty of Campo Formio of 1797, Butrint and its surroundings fell to the French and formed a nomos (district) together with Corfu, Paxos and Parga. French rule over Butrint lasted no more than 16 months, following which the garrison was forced by Ali Pasha to abandon Butrint and dismantle the fortifications (Romanos 1889: 559). It was Ali Pasha, therefore, who presided over Butrint during the last years of its occupation, when Leake and other European travellers began to write reports of the remains of the ancient city.

(Translated by Julian Baker)

Notes
1 On a map (Codex Lat. V F.32 in the National Library, Naples) of the 14th century, Butrint is indicated as pilodes portus, cf. Ptolemy, Cosmographia XI.
3 ... peri Bothrenton aulizomenon ...; Alexiad II: VI C. 5.8.
4 Stubbs 1867: 205 (concerning the year 1191); ... castellum desertum quod dictum Butentrost secus litus maris, in quo Judas proditor natus fuit.
5 In Nicol 1984: 221: given erroneously as 1229.
6 The location of this monastery is unknown, although it is unlikely that it was located near Chotachoba in the vicinity of Permet. See the new edition of the writings of Demetrios Chomatenos, by Günter Prinzing (2002).
10 For an allusion to the surrender of the towns of Bonditza, Naupaktos and Bothrentos, see Schopen 1828: 529 (B II c. 37), German translation with comments in Fatourou and Krischer 1986: 142, 246–7.
11 Cf. Eubel I 147.
12 The Navarese Company had already occupied Dyrrhachium in 1376 (Ntourou-Eliopoulos 1982).
13 I am very grateful to Oliver Jens Schmitt for this information from the Senato Secreta Register and Senato Mar Register, which at present is unpublished.
14 However, there are no specific references to these occurrences at Butrint.
7. The Christian topography of Butrint

William Bowden and John Mitchell

Introduction

The remains of at least nine churches can be seen within the walled area of Butrint, as well as the Baptistry described in Chapters 10 and 11 (Fig. 7.1). These buildings seemingly date to two main periods – the later 5th and 6th centuries and the 13th to 15th centuries. Churches of both periods can be seen in both the lower city and on the acropolis, with some of those in the lower city situated adjacent to the major gateways. It is likely that a further late antique church or churches existed in the extramural suburb on the south side of the Vivari Channel, although this has yet to be confirmed. The particular circumstances that gave rise to the quite intensive construction of Christian monuments at Butrint during these two periods are still far from clear.

It is important to remember that the symbolic and physical distinctions between sacred and profane in the late antique and medieval city were often blurred in a way that is rarely reflected in academic approaches to the topic of Christian buildings. In separating the Christian landscape of Butrint from the overview of the city’s topography given in Chapter 6, we are perhaps perpetuating this artificial distinction. However, in the context of a project that seeks to understand the urban environment of the late antique and medieval city, it was felt that the Christian buildings warranted a fuller treatment than that which was possible in Chapter 6 or was afforded by the excavation reports. This chapter will, therefore, outline what is known of these buildings and attempt to place them within their wider archaeological context.

The palaeochristian monuments of Butrint were first examined by Luigi Ugolini in the late 1920s and 1930s, and have subsequently been the object of considerable further study (Hodges et al. 1997 with references). Apart from the grandiose Baptistry (see Chapters 10 and 11), two basilicas are known (the so-called Great Basilica and the Acropolis Basilica described below), together with a further small church erected within the remains of the 2nd-century nymphaeum in the so-called ‘Gymnasium’ complex. There is also evidence for the Christianisation of the fountain of Junia Rufina on the north side of the city. The triclinium structure previously thought to be a martyrium church has subsequently been identified as the triclinium of a late Roman palatial residence, although part of the triclinum may have functioned as a chapel in the later medieval period (see Chapter 9). A very worn late 5th- or early 6th-century marble capital, which stands close to the entrance of the site, may attest to the presence of a further church.

The later medieval churches can be seen all over the city. The most substantial remains are those of the church adjacent to the Baptistry (described in detail in Chapter 10) and a small church on the north east side of the city, close to the Lake Gate. The archaeologists of the Italian Archaeological Mission are also known to have demolished (wholly or partially) two late medieval churches: one which overlay the Hellenistic ‘stoa’ to the east of the Theatre, of which only the painted northern wall remains, and a second built around the 2nd-century nymphaeum in the ‘Gymnasium’. A church or chapel may also have existed adjacent to the well of Junia Rufina, and a further chapel or shrine, of which the painted southern wall survives, was built next to the West Gate. Finally the foundations of a small church can be seen to the east of the acropolis castle.

Other late medieval or post-medieval churches exist in the immediate environs of the city. These include a small single-naved church close to the Vivari Channel approximately midway between the mouth of the channel and Butrint, and a similar building to the northwest of the town, close to the lake at the foot of Mount Sotirès.

Few of these churches have been examined in great detail, although Aleksander Meksi published a significant study of the Great Basilica and the Baptistry (Meksi 1983a), and comparative plans of some of the other buildings appear in Meksi’s study of the Christian buildings at Butrint (Meksi 1988). Meksi, however, was
working within the context of a historical model that assumed cultural continuity between the 7th and 9th centuries (Meksi 1983b), and, like other architectural historians working in Greece and the Balkans, based his dating on an essentially evolutionary typological frame-
work of church design (see Bowden forthcoming a). The buildings were, furthermore, examined solely in the context of Christian architecture, rather than as an element of the overall archaeological assemblage of Butrint or the wider region of Epirus.
Fig. 10.1 The Baptistery. (BF)

Fig. 10.2 The Baptistery during excavations by the Italian Archaeological Mission. (MCR Uğ 30)
Fig. 10.3 Re-erection of columns in the Baptistery by the Italian Archaeological Mission. (IA 68)

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Table 10.1 Summary of the Baptistery phasing.

Further major excavation campaigns were carried out at Butrint by the Albanian Institute of Archaeology in 1982 under the direction of Selim Islami and the late Skender Anamali. Ten quadrants of 5 × 5 m were excavated to the north and east of the Baptistery. The stated objective of the excavation was to clarify the relationships between the Baptistery and the other buildings in the complex, including the little church to the northwest and the Roman bath-house to the north, define the traces of wall that connected with the Baptistery on the northeast and southeast (presumably partially exposed by the previous Institute of Monuments excavations), and to establish a more precise date for the Baptistery by means of archaeological materials (Condil n.d.: 2). The excavations exposed the lower apses of the little church to the northwest, the well that lies close to
catalogue under ‘Fabrics’ (Appendix 1A). Vessels produced in micaceous CW 1B (3rd to 6th centuries) tend to be thin-walled and finely made. The vessel shown in Figure 13.238 (Cat. 402; Figs. 13.271–4) is an unusual, thick-walled example, in a particularly coarse and micaceous version of CW 1A.

A particularly distinctive handmade ware with abundant calcite also occurs in context 1152 (CW 3, Cat. 446–51, Figs. 13.271–4); this is characterised by wavy combed decoration on the exterior, and possible combed ribbing on the interior. A single form was identified in this ware—a flat-based vessel with out-turned rim and, possibly, no handles. In form and fabric, this is clearly equivalent to the calcite-gritted product commonly found as an import at Classe (Ravenna) and Venice, and classified by Helen Patterson under her fabric ‘gruppo V’—a group found in Ravenna with other forms in the same fabric, including a clibanus (Gelichi 1983; Gelichi 1998; figs. 1–3; Patterson 1998: 489–90), characterised by the presence of abundant calcite, with fine quartz and white mica. The flat-based form in the same ware from Butrint has been found also as a rare import at Rome (Crypta Balbi, late 7th century: Ricci 1998: 355–6, fig. 2.8–9; Gelichi 1998; Patterson 1998). In contrast to examples from Venice and elsewhere, the Butrint material shows no sign of burning on the outer surfaces (cf. Gelichi 1998: fig. 1.3), perhaps suggesting that it was imported for its contents and not for use in cooking.

Gelichi (1998: 481) dated the ware to the 6th to 7th centuries. On this basis, its presence in context 1152 would suggest that the ware is contemporary with the 6th-century material, and not with the much later, intrusive, medieval pottery. Indeed, the form is typical in the 7th-century Visigothic repertoire of the Vinalopó valley in Alicante, and has clear antecedents in the Visigothic heartland of central Spain; it is usually classed as ‘olla’ in Spanish publications (Reynolds 1993: HW 10.8 and HW 11.4; 2003b, fig. 8.1–2). However, the form is unknown from the 6th-century (late Roman and Byzantine) phase of the Vinalopó valley. The close association of this form with the Visigothic population and, perhaps, Visigothic culinary practices, makes its appearance in northeast Italy an interesting and perhaps unexpected phenomenon.

CW 3 is a less frequent, but none the less significant, import at Butrint. An Albanian origin is entirely possible, given the fabric’s high calcite content, though clearly the source would lie beyond the area where the more common flint–chert wares were produced.

The forms of handmade CW 3 are not encountered in the medieval ‘Slavic’ cooking ware presented here by Joanita Vroom (Chapter 15). Moreover, the classic ‘Slavic’ Ware encountered by Bonifay in Byllis is much cruder than CW 3 (Bonifay pers. comm.). Finds of so-called ‘Slavic’ Ware from Saranda are as coarsely manufactured as those from Byllis. The discovery that CW 3 occurs in 6th- to 7th-century contexts in Italy suggests that the examples in 1152 are contemporary with the late Roman material; alternatively, they may belong to the phase of late 7th-century burials overlying the site (see comments on the amphorae in FAB 8A and 8C, contexts 1546 and 1266, already noted), and so are not intrusive medieval pieces. In fact, an almost complete example of this ware was found in a definite mid- to late 6th-century deposit (context 3075) during excavations at Butrint in 2001.

It may be noted here in passing that yet another chert–flint ware, in an oxidised, pale fabric somewhat similar to CW 1B, is the coarse ware par excellence found in 6th- and 7th-century contexts at Diaporit, the site of a villa and bath-house, and a later basilica, on the shores of Lake Butrint. Perhaps significantly, the same ware is rarely found at Butrint itself.

Further work is needed in plotting the incidence and distribution of forms/variants and fabrics, in order to evaluate the respective roles of Butrint and Saranda in the production and distribution of local coarse wares.

**Jugs and plain wares**

A jug rim (Fig. 13.275) appears to be in the fabric of the ‘Samos cistern’ amphora (that is, FAB 5B). Micaceous closed form bases in other fabrics are not uncommon, and while their sources are difficult to determine, these are most likely to be wares from the eastern Aegean or Asia Minor (Cat. 453–7, Figs. 13.276–9). The ware of the domed base (Cat. 457, Fig. 13.279) could be Corinthian, given its similarity to the fabric of Corinthian Relief Ware. Jugs in local fabrics are notably rare (Cat. 459–64, Figs. 13.280–3).

All plain wares were imported. One large bowl is in a micaceous buff fabric that suggests an origin in the region of Ephesus (Cat. 477, Fig. 13.290). A large bowl with a ribbed body (Cat. 478, Fig. 13.291) would seem to be related in fabric to LRA 2. The micaceous fabric of a large slipped basin or large jar (Cat. 479, Fig. 13.292) recalls that of the Robinson M 273 handle (Cat. 363, Fig. 13.204), as already noted, and the slipped mid-Roman bowl (Cat. 101, Fig. 13.56). A ribbed piece similar to that shown in Figure 13.291 (Cat. 478) is known from Knossos, along with other late Roman slipped buff forms (Frend and Johnston 1962: fig. 17.57, slipped; fig. 18.77, slipped; fig. 19.94, plain). It is not clear if the latter is a similar import or a local Cretan product.

Finally, a tripod vessel (Cat. 482, Fig. 13.294) may be mentioned. This is in a micaceous, imported fabric that may be the same ware as the cooking pot in Figure 13.220 (Cat. 381). Another peculiar vessel in a fine buff fabric is probably of Apulian origin (Cat. 483, Fig. 13.295). Figure 13.336i (Cat. 569) shows one of several examples of this form known from Saranda (Lako 1984: tab. VII.11). The rim is thickened on the inside into two long, wide tabs, possibly supports for a vessel, perhaps something like a brazier. There would have been two vertical strap handles. Although the ware looks medieval and there is medieval
Only one piece of tin-glazed Spanish Lustreware was recovered from the Triconch Palace (Fig. 15.23). This fragment has blue painted geometric decoration (PMS 302) on the inside, which is usually combined with lustre. The lustre design does not always survive in acidic soil conditions, and on this fragment only the blue decoration remains. The fabric is soft, fine and whitish in colour (10 YR 8/2). The shape is open, probably a dish. The sherd originates from Spanish production centres at Valencia, and can be dated to the late 14th to 15th centuries. In Spain, this type of ware is known as *Loza dorada clásica* (cf. Gerrard, Gutiérrez and Vince 1995: 286–7), while outside Spain it is known as ‘Hispano-Moresque Ware’.

**Coarse wares**

Deposit 1185 produced a small amount (eight sherds) of Glazed Kitchen Wares. This group consists of various wheel-made wares of a medium coarse, reddish brown fabric (5 YR 5/8). The sherds are often burnt on the outside, as if the pots were placed directly in the fire. A transparent lead glaze was applied thickly on the inside of the vessels, and there are sometimes splashes or dribbles of glaze on the outside. The fabric and glaze show much similarity with red-bodied tablewares (such as Roulette Ware) from northern Italy. Small wheel-ridges are prominent on the exterior of a thin-walled pot (Fig. 15.24). Similar looking cooking wares were glazed in Italy from the 14th century onwards.
Finally, about 100 fragments of locally produced Unglazed Kitchen Wares were recovered in deposit 1185 (Fig. 15.25). These coarse wheel-made wares generally have a smoothed or burnished exterior and have been badly fired in a yellowish red or very dark grey colour (5 YR 5/6 to 10 YR 3/1). The fabric is moderately soft and coarse with many large lime and flint inclusions (up to 3 mm), as well as with large voids. The shapes are simple in design, with flat bases and everted rims with a straight lip. The inside is sometimes thickly covered with bitumen. The decoration is limited to incised wavy lines on the exterior.

The fragments appear to be identical to cooking pots made in a ‘Slavic’ tradition, including handmade wares or wares made on a slow wheel. The exact date of this group is still uncertain. The first handmade cooking wares in a ‘Slavic’ tradition were manufactured before the 9th century (see Paul Reynolds’s description of handmade CW3 in Chapter 13, where this ware is dated to the 6th–7th centuries). Wheel-made vessels, however, appear mainly after the 9th century and were produced until the late Middle Ages (15th century). In some parts of Albania, these locally produced, unglazed cooking wares continued to be produced until recently. In Durrës, similar cooking pots with incised wavy lines were found in a 13th- to 14th-century context (Elveta Metalla pers. comm.) – as is the case here in pit 1185.

Of particular relevance to the dating of these cooking pots in a ‘Slavic’ tradition are several fragments of a thin-walled unglazed jar, which were found together with the other Unglazed Kitchen Wares in deposit 1185. The jar has a biconical body, with flaring neck and upright rim. Thin strap handles extend from the top of the rim to the widest part of the body. The jar has parallels at the Otranto excavations, where a group of similar vessels was found in a late 13th- to 14th-century phase (Patterson and Whitehouse 1992: 98, fig. 6:3, nos. 433–40).

The Baptistery

General overview

Eighteen assemblages were found in the excavations around the Baptistery. These contained medieval and post-medieval fine and cooking wares. The total of the counted sherds was 636 fragments.

Fine wares

In comparison with the Triconch Palace, the excavations at the Baptistery recovered a larger number of 15th- to 16th-century (or later) wares, although there were fewer medieval fine wares (see below). In contrast to the 23% of Proto-Maiolica fragments recovered from the Triconch Palace, the material from the Baptistery contained only 10% of this type of 13th- to 14th-century pottery (Fig. 15.26). Also included were fragments of another type of Proto-Maiolica, the so-called Brindisi group I (or Proto- 

Maiolica brindisina I), which has a painted decoration in brown–black (5 Y 2/1) and in blue (PMS 278) (Fig. 15.27).

The largest group of post-medieval wares recovered from the Baptistery (around 25% of the total of the counted sherds) consists of Fine White Wares. Under this heading are grouped 77 fragments of Monochrome Green Glazed Ware, 34 fragments of Brown and Green Sgraffito Ware, 24 fragments of Monochrome Yellow Glazed Ware, 17 fragments of Metallic Ware, and eight
The small finds and coins

Peter Guest, John Mitchell, Eteleva Nallbani and Shpresa Gongecaj

The small finds

Archaeological work at Butrint in the years 1994–98 yielded a small number of finds, in silver, copper alloy, iron and bone. The reason for the small number of items found is that the operations during these years were limited to survey, cleaning of standing structures and relatively small-scale excavation. In this preliminary and summary catalogue, the material is grouped by medium. One item, together with all the coins found in 1994–96, was stolen from the museum in the castle at Butrint in 1997.

The finds comprise a rather disparate group of material ranging from the Roman period to the late Middle Ages. However, there are a few that can help in defining the occupational and cultural complexity of the site in particular phases of its development. Among these are a Roman period loom weight (Cat. 8) and part of a bone comb from a room in the Triconch Palace (room X) (Cat. 26), a possible late Roman marble veneer-crank of copper (Cat. 13) and an iron needle (Cat. 24), possibly for working on nets, from another room in the Palace (room XVII), and from a 6th- to 7th-century grave in the same room two silver earrings (Cat. 1–2), of a type known from the cemetery at Kruja. One of the most interesting items is unstratified (and unfortunately stolen in 1997); that is the headplate of a 6th-century radiate-headed bow brooch of a distinctive Lombard pattern (Cat. 3). This bow brooch exemplifies the wide distribution of types and fashions of dress-fittings and jewellery throughout Europe and across supposed ethnic boundaries in the immediately post-classical period. This is nowhere better illustrated than in the wide diffusion of so-called Avar fine metalwork from the 6th–8th centuries (Daim 2000).

 Artefacts in silver

1. Hoop earring
Small Find number (SF) 594. Fig. 16.1.
Greatest diameter 36 mm; diameter of rod 2 mm.
Hoop earring fashioned of an irregular oval-sectioned silver rod, tapering at each end.
The terminals are curled to hold the ring in place in the ear. One half of the circumference is ornamented at more or less regular intervals by five strips of silver wire wound around the rod four to seven times. The ring thus has a display side and a plain side.
Late antique: 6th century.

2. Fragment of an earring
SF 499. Fig. 16.2.
Overall length 22.5 mm; diameter of rod 1.5 mm.
A short curved length of oval-sectioned silver rod, broken off at one end.
The preserved terminal consists of a small ring with its opening aligned with the plane of the hoop. Three collars are fitted to the rod, one at the break, the other two at more or less even intervals along the intervening length. A strand of silver wire is wound tightly round the rod between the two median collars to create a decorative accent.
Late antique: early 6th century.

Although these two earrings were found in the same grave, they differ in size and design and cannot have formed a pair originally. The grave was sealed by a layer of roof-tile and midden (1127) containing ceramics that point to a deposition date of approximately the second quarter of the 6th century. Plain unadorned silver hoop earrings of this general type were found in the cemetery at Kruja some 30 km to the north of Tirana, and have been dated to the 7th/8th centuries (for example, Anamali 1964: pl. VII, 13).
Artefacts in copper alloy

3. Headplate of a radiate-headed bow brooch
SF 35. Fig. 16.3.
31 × 54 mm.
The semicircular headplate of a radiate-headed brooch, with seven (originally eight) projecting knobs.

Within the central field is a complex design in cast relief, possibly a devolved Style-I animal ornament. The material appears to be a copper alloy, but could be base silver.

This headplate is of a general Lombard-Pannonian type, known in German as a Zonenknopffibeln, which is distinguished by a bar arched around the central field of the headplate between its edges and the terminal knobs. The best Lombard examples can be composite assemblages, with the outer arching band of the headplate and the knobs and their shafts all separate elements, with the rods radiating from the headplate and passing though the arching bar (Åberg 1923: figs. 82–96; Werner 1960a: pls. 1, 9, 26/3, 31/1 and 3, 64/1a and b, 65/20; Kuhn 1974: pls. 325–30). The type was in fashion through most of the 6th century and, in Italy particularly,
continued during the first two decades of the 7th (Paroli 2000). The Butrint brooch was cast in one piece, but it would be premature to attempt to situate this headplate within the known sequences of Pannonian and Italian sub-types. It seems to be related formally most closely to a group of radiate-headed brooches found in Italy (Kuhn 1974: pls. 325–30; Carratelli 1984: 398, 410; Menis 1990: figs. IV.86, X.91, X.92, X.95a; Paroli 1996: pls. 24, 29; Bertelli and Brogiolo 2000: cat. 12b, fig. 13). It differs in detail from related examples from the Middle Danube area with a cast zoned headplate like those described by Csallány (1961: pls. CCXIII:18, CCXV:6). It is likely that it dates from the latter half of the 6th century. The Butrint brooch could be an imported piece, but could equally well be the work of a local craftsman following a Lombard pattern. One other example of the composite type has been found in this area of the Balkans, at Gračanica, in modern Kosovo (Vierck 1981: fig. 2). In its design, the Butrint headplate is different from those of the so-called Slavic radiate-headed brooches, sometimes characterised by a mask at the tip of the footplate, found on sites in southeastern Europe (Werner 1950: 1960b), and in one of the graves in the cemetery at Kruja, north of Tirana (Anamali 1964: pl. V, 11–12). A similar form of headplate, but with granulated ornament rather than openwork, has been found at Lezhë (Prendi 1979–80). Brooches of this kind were worn in pairs, by women.

This item was stolen from the project headquarters in the castle at Butrint in 1997. Probably second half of the 6th century.1

4. Fragment of a ring
Context 1114 (1996). Mixed topsoil layer in the Triconch Palace, containing material from Late Antiquity through to the late Middle Ages.
SF 36. Fig. 16.4.
Outer diameter 31 mm; inner diameter 23 mm; section 4 mm.
Half of a round-sectioned copper ring.

5. Finger-ring with complex bezel set with glass
Context 2305 (1998). Possible floor surface in the late medieval building immediately to the south of the Baptistry.
SF 502. Fig. 16.5.
Present outer diameter of hoop 24.6 mm; inner diameter of hoop 22 mm; width of hoop 5.5 m; width of bezel 18 mm.
A finger-ring with a complex and ornate bezel set with imitation gemstones in glass.

The hoop is a slightly tapering laminated copper band with an incisedplorable relief ornament within incised borders on its outer face. Gilding is well preserved on the inside of the hoop and traces remain on the outer surfaces and gem-settings. The central element of the bezel is an inserted irregular cold-cut hexagon of blue glass; this is ringed by beads of clear glass in simple circular settings on collared bases. There were originally nine of these beads, although only six are preserved.

Late medieval: late 12th to early 13th centuries?

6. Small buckle
SF 25. Fig. 16.6.
Outer dimensions 19 × 12 mm; inner dimensions 13.5 × 5 mm; thickness c. 1 mm.
The ring of a small oval buckle fashioned from hammered copper sheet.

7. Dress-fastener?
SF 497. Fig. 16.7.
Exterior diameter 18 mm; interior diameter 12 mm; section 2–6 mm.
A small open ring of copper tapered at one end and splayed at the other.
Little decorative marks have been incised into the splay. This is possibly a fastener for clothing.

8. Inscribed 1 nomisma weight
SF 496. Fig. 16.8.
12 × 12 × 4 mm.
Weight 4 grams.
A small square weight with bezelled sides, with the letter N incised into its display face: 1 nomisma.

Similar 1 nomisma weights have been found at Corinth and Sardis (Davidson 1952: 205, 209, pl. 94 no. 1590; Waldbaum 1983: 86, cat. 471, pl. 29; Bowden 2000: II, 46); and a related weight weighing 12 nomismata has been found on Kephala in basilica B (Barla-Pallas 1970: 94–7). Such weights were in common use throughout the Byzantine world in Late Antiquity.
Late Roman.

9. Fragmentary conical artefact
SF 495. Fig. 16.9.
Height 14 mm; greatest diameter 11 mm.
A small hollow cone, broken off at the base, open at the apex, with two sets of incised circling double lines by way of decoration.
Traces of wood and iron are preserved in the hollow interior. This must have been the tip of an implement.

10. Pendant
Context 1114 (1998). Mixed topsoil layer from room XIV in the Triconch Palace, containing material from Late Antiquity through to the late Middle Ages.
SF 494. Fig. 16.10.
Rome's success may appear spectacular only in its completeness and duration. Carthaginians, Ptolemies, Caliph, Byzantine Greeks, Aragonese, Venetians, and various colonial powers of north-western Europe have all attempted to dominate the mechanics of interaction between the multitude of particular places in the coastslands and islands of this sea. The geography of their respective empires of course differed; in means and intentions they were perhaps quite similar (Horden and Purcell 2000: 25).

As a microcosm of Mediterranean archaeology between c. 1000 BC and the early modern age, Butrint, being at the centre of the central Mediterranean, offers a rich and intriguing opportunity to examine what Horden and Purcell, echoing the Roman geographer Strabo, have described as the corrupting sea. Few Mediterranean ports, after all, witnessed the presence of so many peoples, from Illyrians and Corinthians to Venetians and Ottomans. In these preliminary conclusions, we shall examine the rhythms of the changing urban morphology and context of the town. Clearly, further open-area excavations, not only within Butrint but also of sites in its vicinity, undoubtedly will shed much new light on a complex history that is classically a product of the Mediterranean and its shared culture.

**Urban morphology**

Butrint was a small pre-Roman centre, initially an embarkation point on the busy sea routes north and west from the heartland of Greece. Proximity to the Corinthian colony at Corfu (Kerkyra) undoubtedly contributed to its growth and development in the 6th to 1st centuries BC. Yet Butrint was not an exceptional Archaic or Hellenistic town such as Apollonia, Corfu, Epidamnos or even, close by, Phoenicë. Separated by the lagoon and marshes from the Pavlas River valley reaching up towards the interior, its primary purpose seems to have been as a safe harbour rather than a port-of-trade at the end of a dendritic exchange network.

Five hundred years of largely undistinguished history were altered after Caesar's victories, consolidated by Octavian at Actium in 31 BC. Making use of the growing skirt of land between the Hellenistic fortifications and the Vivari Channel, as well as newly available low land on the south side of the Channel (thanks to a drop in the water table), a new town was shaped at the instigation of Rome. Roman Butrint was more than twice as big as the town was in the 1st century BC. Built around a bridge over the Vivari Channel, the town now looked not only towards the Adriatic Sea but also inland and towards the burgeoning towns of the interior (cf. Hammond 1967). Like Nicopolis, the new community was probably drawn from veterans as well as from farmers in the vicinity and from centres like Corfu, which had been deliberately penalised by Octavian for favouring his enemies (cf. Alcock 1993: 133-7; Purcell 1987) suggested that the colonists were Italians, displaced by Augustus' veteran settlements in Italy). It is tempting to speculate that the newly reclaimed marshes were centuriated, as the city and its countryside formed a new continuum exploiting what, with regulated drainage, had suddenly become an agriculturally fertile niche (cf. Horden and Purcell 2000: 96-101).

The excavations and surveys show that the main axes of the pre-Roman topography (essentially Butrint III-IV, as defined by the Albanian Institute of Archaeology (see Chapter 6)) were respected in the layout of the Roman colony. In other words, the main crossing point of the Vivari Channel was maintained and at least part of the Hellenistic street-grid was preserved to the southwest of the Theatre area, with a new street alignment adjoined to this from the Tower of Inscriptions eastwards, on both sides of the Vivari Channel. The Roman topography in turn formed the template for the 5th- to 7th-century town, though, not surprisingly, there was much encroachment
into the grid, reminiscent of modern post-Communist Albanian development. For example, the Triconch Palace encroached upon the streets to its west and east, while numerous small buildings were created within the ruins of the earlier monumental buildings around the area believed to be the forum.

We must view Butrint in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages through the prism of the moment it reached its greatest extent. The provisional evidence suggests that Butrint upheld much of its early Roman investment in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, which sustained the settlement as a place of wealth and trade until at least the end of the 4th century – the age of the Triconch Palace. A generation or two later it was transformed radically. Firstly, the palace was abandoned and made into workshops, a phenomenon witnessed intriguingly at a slightly later date in several major cities in Asia Minor (Whittow 2001: 149). This dramatic change, with its overtones of the post-communist building histories of contemporary Albania, is not explained easily as yet. Almost certainly, at Butrint and indeed throughout the Adriatic region, urban communities were perhaps responding to empire-wide social changes that, in turn, gave increasing impetus to the standing of the Church in the town (cf. Liebeschutz 1992a; Bowden 2001).

Five years ago, the 5th- and 6th-century makeshift workshops and dwellings might have been interpreted as significant steps in the inexcusable decline of the city, culminating in its extinction in the mid- to later 7th century (cf. Hodges, Saraci and Bowden 1997; Hodges 1998; Lavan 2001b: 243). Now, however, there is an increasing awareness that while ‘the political atmosphere of the city was completely transformed’ (Liebeschutz 2001b: 237), so too were the circumstances of all classes. Simple late Roman structures such as those at Butrint, it now seems clear, – harbingers of the vernacular architecture of the Middle Ages and early modern period – do not necessarily connotate poverty, as some historians have suggested (Cameron 1993: 160, 166; cf. Brown 2002). Far from it, in fact, for the material culture of these dwellings bears witness to a sustained level of consumption of imported goods.

Secondly, at some point in the later 5th century the northern half of the city (located on the peninsula) was fortified, the wall incorporating some buildings and respecting the existence of others as it snaked along the side of the Vivari Channel, before linking up with pre-existing lengths of the pre-Roman defences. As in many cities throughout the empire, old residential quarters were left undefended. In Butrint’s case this was the southern half of the Roman town. The exact date of the wall is not known yet (although more recent excavations suggest that the new walls were erected either shortly before or during the reign of the emperor Anastasius (491–518)). The fortifications are strongest on the western side, where flanking towers resembling those at Durrës (cf. Crow 2001; Gutteridge, Hoti and Hurst 2001), Nicopolis (Hellenkemper 1987) and Saranda (Saragi 1992) occur. Inland, the towns of Byllis and Phoienici were fortified later, in the Justinianic period (Bowden 2003a). Closer to Butrint, the new circuit of fortifications at Çuka e Aitoit, as yet undated, probably belongs to the 6th century too (Lako 1982), while Corfu remained unfortified until, according to local tradition, the ancient site focused upon Palaiopolis was abandoned during the 6th century in favour of the two rocky peaks (in what is now known as the Old Fort) that were to become the nucleus of the medieval port.

Although the chronology of Butrint’s walls remains tentative, the new defences essentially reduced the fortified area to approximately half the extent of the earlier Roman town. As far as we can tell, however, the perceived threat did not materialise. Instead, as in other Adriatic ports, there is evidence for building and for commercial and industrial activity. On the part of the Church at least, this was undoubtedly a period of sustained vitality, as opposed to decline, with investment and confidence best illustrated by the construction of the Great Basilica and Baptistry. This vitality, giving rise amongst other things to the increased status of the Church in the town, is replicated throughout the region of Epirus (Bowden 2001; 2003a). Churches were also built, in all likelihood, in Butrint’s newly created extramural suburb (the old southern sector of the colony), as well as at significant points in its lagoon landscape at Diaporit (Bowden, Hodges and Lako 2002). Nevertheless, while the dwellings in Butrint began to assume a rural character (cf. Haldon 2000), we can surmise from the combination of the excavations and field survey that the city was still involved in exploiting its territory, as well as in maintaining an active role in seaborne commerce.

The excavations reveal the changing axes of seaborne commerce, confirming patterns noted in other Adriatic seaports. During the 3rd and 4th centuries Cretan and Cyrenaica amphorae had been the principal imported amphorae, together with quantities of African Red Slipwares. From c. AD 475 Eastern Mediterranean sources played a major role, with late Roman wares from Phocaea being important. The presence of African Red Slipwares increased during the period c. 500–50, as did Tunisian amphorae. After c. 550 Butrint conforms to the standard Western Mediterranean pattern, with rare Tunisian imports and increasing quantities of eastern amphorae. As yet, though, how far the Buthsotians as a whole benefited from trade is a matter of speculation, until the homes of the élite, including the town’s churchmen, can be measured against those of the fishermen processing their catches inside the levelled rooms of the palace.

One factor in these new circumstances needs to be taken into account. Just as the Roman colony was made possible by the lowering water table, we must note the implications of a rising level of water possibly in the later 4th century and certainly during the 5th century. All the Roman buildings on the skirt of land beyond the
Hellenistic fortifications probably were susceptible to flooding for much of the year. Indeed, episodic inundation may explain why the Triconch Palace was never completed; it was simply no longer a tenable site for a major residence. With its desertion, a new picture emerges, where the buildings and occupation adapted to the environmental conditions. Living above the water level but with close access to the Channel were not necessarily conflicting determinants. Indeed, the intense 6th-century activity in the Triconch Palace area bears witness to the need to be close to the water. Quite possibly, of course, the elite may have moved to the slopes or even to the acropolis, retaining waterside properties for commercial and industrial purposes.

Butrint undoubtedly changed rapidly during the late 6th to mid-7th centuries. In common with many other central Mediterranean ports, the town declined quickly, evidently losing contact with its all-important East Mediterranean commercial connections. It seems highly likely that occupation continued on the acropolis and, indeed, on parts of the slopes or in the lower town. But this occupation, if it existed, was essentially non-commercial in nature, and, bereft of surplus wealth, no investment was made in the town’s pre-eminent monuments: its churches and defences. The town appears to have experienced what Haldon has described as the ‘ruralisation’ of society, which began in Asin Minor in the 6th and 7th centuries, but which may have started even earlier in the Balkans. In essence, this radical transformation of society stemmed from the restructuring of the empire, with urban centres losing their role in the state fiscal system. As a result, the ‘defensive properties of “urban” sites, their direct relevance to military, administrative or ecclesiastical needs, and so on, now played the key role in whether a “city” survived or not’ (Haldon 2000: 299; cf. Dunn 1994; 1997; 1999).

The archaeological evidence emphasises Butrint’s fall and transformation rather than its decline (cf. Liebeschuetz 2001a; 2001b). Between 500 and 600, Butrint had been scarcely less populated and less active than it had been in, for example, 400–500; only the character of this activity differed, much as Albanian towns of the 1980s changed in the 1990s. In the 7th century, however, commerce simply stopped, possibly, as Whittoe has suggested, because the Byzantine economy suffered a seizure once Heraclius committed the state’s forces to resisting the Persians (Whitto 1996; 2001: 137–8). In the western Balkans further disruption was caused by the Slavs, who sacked Onchesmos (Saranda) in 586/7. The impact of Slaic raids and eventual settlement cannot be underestimated in this increasingly fragile political environment. Out on the western rim of the Byzantine commercial nexus, and evidently no longer even a secondary trans-Balkan embarkation point, Butrint’s only source of trade would have been the episodic connections between ports in the Eastern Empire and Byzantine Italy (cf. McCormick 2001).

Continuity or discontinuity

The evidence from the excavations and survey clearly promises a new perspective of the town, building upon the work undertaken by the Italian Archaeological Mission and the Albanian Institute of Archaeology. However, the issue of ‘continuity’ in the post-Roman period, which was a key research question for the Institute of Archaeology’s work at Butrint, remains unresolved. None the less, the excavations allow us to draw a number of preliminary conclusions. The evidence strongly indicates significant continuity of the town’s fortunes after c. AD 400, but little indication of urban continuity between the 7th and 10th centuries. Indeed, no stratified archaeological evidence has been discovered thus far at Butrint relating to the period between the mid-7th and late 9th centuries. A number of explanations may be proposed:

that the town was completely unoccupied during this period;

that occupation was restricted to parts of the city that had not been the subject of detailed investigation (that is the slopes on the north side of the acropolis);

that occupation took a form that is not recognisable archaeologically in the ground conditions encountered or using the methodology employed so far.

A certain amount of evidence can be brought to bear to support the suggestion that the town was largely or wholly abandoned by the mid-7th century. Firstly, some historical sources state, either implicitly or explicitly, that this was the case for the towns of the two provinces of Epirus. The arguments relating to these sources and the purported Slavic settlement in the region have been discussed elsewhere (for example, Charanis 1950; Rosser 1996; Bowden 2003a). Here it suffices to say that regardless of the problems associated with them, it would be foolhardy to discount these sources entirely while lacking any substantial evidence with which to contradict them. Secondly, the archaeology of the towns of Epirus demonstrates an impressive uniformity, in that none of the classical cities of either Epirus Vetus or Epirus Nova (with the possible exception of Durrës) has produced any clear evidence of occupation from this period. Eighth-century occupation levels have been suggested for Nicopolis (Vokotopoulou 1974), but remain unconfirmed. It is, of course, possible that horizons dating to the early Middle Ages are present, but have not been recognised, perhaps owing to a lack of datable ceramics from this period. Certainly at Butrint the locally made coarse wares of the 7th and 13th centuries are relatively similar, with almost identical fabrics, although it is likely that some typological evolution occurred. However, they have been found (particularly in the Triconch Palace excavations) in conjunction with datable fine wares and glazed wares, with late medieval levels directly above those of Late Antiquity with no intervening horizons. It is, therefore, possible to state with some confidence that there was no
evidence of dark age occupation in either of the excavated areas. However, it is probable that between the 7th and 9th centuries Butrint functioned as a castrum, similar perhaps to the Amorion model described in Chapter 1 (Fig. 18.1). Increasingly, ceramics of this period are being identified in the central Mediterranean. With careful excavation, therefore, it may be possible to identify levels of this period on the acropolis, which remains the most likely site of occupation in this period.

Reoccupation and revival

In the 10th to 12th centuries, with the revival of Mediterranean seaborne trade (cf. McCormick 2001; Angold 1984: 11; Harvey 1989: 23–34), some periodic activity occurred at Butrint, judging from the small, but notable, scatter of low value Byzantine coins from Lake’s excavations behind the Hellenistic wall (1981), the Triconch Palace and Baptistery (one 9th-century folli was found in the Area 3 excavation of the cemetery (Chapters 12 and 16) and a 10th-century folli was found in the area of the suburb in 1995 (Chapter 16, SF 62, stolen in 1997). It is a pattern found previously in the Agora at Athens and at Corinth. The incidence of coins on similar sites in Northwest Europe, invariably without any obvious context, would be interpreted as evidence of a so-called ‘productive site’, in other words a periodic market (Ulmschneider 2000). A market at Butrint is mentioned by the 12th-century Arab source, al Idrisi. However, there is no evidence to suggest that Butrint enjoyed a significant economic revival at this time. The limited volume of ceramics from this period includes Apulian amphorae and Byzantine polychrome wares, indicating connections with Italy, the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean. It is of note that greater quantities of 11th- and 12th-century material occurred in the area of the Baptistery suggesting that occupation was concentrated around the Christian centre of the town (whether or not buildings were extant) (Fig. 18.1).

During the 13th century, Butrint once more became a small town, thanks to investment by the despots of Epirus and then by the Angevins. The topography of the new town is far from clear as yet. The fortifications around the lower city were rebuilt and strengthened, while a new wall was constructed around the acropolis. The Great Basilica, in ruins since Late Antiquity, was extensively remodelled, but the Baptistery was no longer in use. Elsewhere, new chapels were built, invariably close to points of spiritual importance in the town, such as wells. There are indications that the hilltop and mid-slope were occupied by dwellings, none of which has been examined adequately as yet. Below this, occupying the skirt of ground extending out to the edge of the Vivari Channel, lies a layer of thick black soil. This is best interpreted as a combination of refuse on the one hand – such as occurs around the slopes immediately beyond medieval hilltop villages in the Mediterranean – and, on the other, an attempt to raise the ground level above the water line. Occupying this layer, as the excavations in the area of the Baptistery and Triconch Palace have shown, are the remains of post-built dwellings with walls supported on rubble and slabs, with partitions made of either clay or timber. The density of dwellings should not be underestimated; numerous buildings occupied the many rooms of the old Triconch Palace, for example, giving rise to a prodigious volume of rubbish notable for the presence of Apulian Proto-Maiolica bowls and jugs.

Once taken by Venice as a satellite of Corfu in 1386, occupation of Butrint was focused on the hilltop fortress (occupying the acropolis), with outlying fortresses either side of the Vivari Channel and a line of fisheries dotted along it. Some of the well-built, vaulted structures near the Baptistery, probably the remains of fisheries, belong to this period. Maiolicas made in the Veneto and in the Po valley now eclipsed those made in Apulia.

Venice finally relinquished the hilltop fortress in 1572, in favour of a new fortress on the south side of the Vivari Channel. Some of the fisheries almost certainly were maintained on the old site. The Triangular Fortress became the new hub of a small nucleus of buildings and fisheries in the Ottoman period, as Colonel William Martin Leake and François Pouqueville recorded during their visits of 1805 and 1806 respectively (Leake 1835; Pouqueville 1820).

Butrint and its hinterland

The surveys made of the environs of Butrint provide a provisional context for this new history of the town. Some evidence exists to indicate that the great expansion of Butrint as a colony in the 1st century AD coincided with extensive reclamation of the surrounding landscape and the controversial process of centuriation. Certainly the land was higher in relation to the water level, and the pollen core from Lake Bufl shows a marked decrease in oak pollen, indicative of clearance. How long this landscape was intensively managed is not clear yet. At Diaporit, recent excavations have shown that an early Imperial villa was certainly reduced in size or entirely abandoned by the 3rd century (Bowden, Hodges and Lako 2002), but how typical was it of other sites in the area? At present we lack data to calibrate when the water level changed, and with it the modification of the early Roman settlement system. A number of late Roman sites were found beside the Pavillas River, where there is less alluviation, resulting in increased visibility of sites. Elsewhere, late Roman occupation was found on Kalivo, and a sizeable basilica was constructed at Diaporit (situated on the southeast shore of Lake Butrint), using the rubble removed from the ruinous villa close by (Bowden, Hodges and Lako 2002). In sum, the evidence suggests that, in common with the unfortified southern sector of Butrint, the surrounding settlement system remained closely linked with the town. Following the
7th-century collapse of commerce in Butrint, the rural community almost certainly abandoned lower-lying sites in favour of hilltops such as Çuka e Aitoit and possibly Kalivo (cf. Bowden and Hodges forthcoming). It is a pattern, as noted in Chapter 1, witnessed not only in Asia Minor, but also in Italy at this time.

Strikingly, only one later site (immediately below Kalivo), probably from the Venetian or early Ottoman periods, was found in the 1995–96 survey. The trial excavations at Diaporit, however, show that the site of the basilica saw activity in the 13th century.

It appears that from the 7th century onwards Butrint
was surrounded by marshland, which once more made it an enclave with its axis focused upon the Adriatic Sea, and increasingly Corfu, as opposed to a route into the interior. With the changes in the water table, it was attractive for hunting rather than for settlement. In addition, the written sources refer to the fisheries, the timber trade and the presence of livestock during the Venetian period and later (see Chapter 2 (fishing); Levi 1907: 90 (46) (timber); Bellaire 1805: 272 (livestock)). This mixed economic use of the environment only changed in the 1960s, when the plain was improved for agriculture and ambitiously drained in 1974, following a Chinese model.

In short, with the explicit exception of the Roman colony, Butrint for much of its long history was a port looking out to the Ionian Sea, surrounded by a marsh that restricted access to the inland lagoon and the interior. For much of its longer history, it was a actually or de facto a dependency of the powerful port of Corfu. This interpretation of Butrint is consistent with the intermittent observations made by visitors who passed through the Straits of Corfu (see Chapter 2). The affluence of the late medieval port, in effect a regional gateway revived by the despots of Epirus and the Angevins, is difficult to judge. It certainly had access to fine imported Italian wares, but the dwellings discovered to date are consistent with a south Italian village as opposed to a major urban community. Clearly, the results to date are provisional and intriguing.

The first five years of the Anglo-Albanian collaboration at Butrint have shed new light on the complex and sometimes controversial later classical and medieval history of this classic Mediterranean region. Butrint, it now seems, was at its zenith in the Roman epoch, and prospered once more in the 13th century under the Angevins and the despots of Epirus. This history of punctuated expansion and contraction, often interwoven with the history of Corfu, is far more complex than the geographically determinist model of Mediterranean town life put forward by Horden and Purcell perhaps assumes (2000). The corrupting sea, we would contend, and changing political geography also owed much to the intervention of individuals, as the history of the Roman colony at Butrint, for example, illustrates. This should not surprise us. Like towns around the Baltic Sea or the North Sea, this Mediterranean centre prospered in conjunction with wider economic and social coalitions. What is not clear yet is how Butrint fared during episodes of disjunction. Only further excavations with finely dated levels will provide data sufficient to clarify these presently obscure phases.

These preliminary surveys and excavations have raised as many questions as they have answered, and have opened many new lines of enquiry. The complexities and logistical difficulties of excavating at Butrint mean that methodologies must be reviewed and refined as the project continues. Above all, the first five years of the Butrint project have demonstrated the enormous potential of the site, as well as highlighting the advantages of a multidisciplinary approach to the archaeology and history of this undeniably important coastal region of Albania.
Appendix 3.
Three buckles from the late antique period

Etleva Nallbani

Luigi Ugolini published three buckles from the late antique period which had been discovered during his excavations in the Roman cemetery (1942: fig. 163). These buckles merit re-examination in the light of recent studies of ironwork from Albanian sites.

1. Buckle with integral attachment-plate (Ugolini 1942: fig. 163, left)

This buckle was the only find in the tomb of a sole individual. Few bones were found in the grave. The tomb was constructed with walls and cover of stone slabs except for the wall facing east, which belonged to a pre-existing structure made of brick. The tomb was aligned northsouth and measured 2.05 m by 0.95 m, with a depth of 0.90 m.

Buckle and plate are cast in one piece from copper-alloy (Fig. A3.1). The plate is U-shaped, and is surrounded by a border in imitation of granulation, with the field filled with an interlace motif. The same imitation granulation also surrounds the display face of the rectangular buckle. The tongue is flat-sectioned and gently curved with a little rectangular bridge.

A considerable number of U-shaped Byzantine buckles, both plain and ornamented with varying decoration, have been found in the Mediterranean region in recent years. According to Werner, they are very similar in shape to the Sucidava buckle type, although this type generally has an openwork attachment plate (Werner 1955: 41). Examples with ornamentation identical to that of the Butrint buckle have been found in Italy at Imola (to the west of Ravenna) (Werner 1955: pl. 8 no.9), in Turkey at Sardis (Waldbaum 1983: 120, pl. 44 no.701), and in Syria at Qal‘at Sem‘an. (I would particularly like to thank M. Kazanski for information on the finds from this site, which are in course of publication). Kazanski suggests a 6th-century date for this buckle-type, although the example from Imola, as well as those from Butrint and Sardis and a related belt-mount from Kent in England (Werner 1955: pl. 4 nr. 4a and 4b) can be dated as late as the first half of the 7th century (Werner 1955: 41). U-shaped belt-mounts and interlace ornament in this particular formation are quite common and are undoubtedly of Byzantine origin. Apart from the mount from Kent and others in the Diergardt collection (Aberg 1926: 102, fig. 185), U-shaped strap-ends ornamented with interlace are present in grave goods from the Crimea, especially at Kerch (Ajebabin 1990: 231, fig. 52 no.24), dated by Ambroz to the first half of the 7th century (Ambroz 1995). This is also the likely date of the buckle from Butrint.

2-3. Two buckles with attachment-plates, (Ugolini 1942: fig. 163, centre and right)

Two other buckles were discovered together in another tomb (tomb no.3, Ugolini 1942). The tomb was constructed of brick, was orientated northsouth and contained a single skeleton. The funerary furnishings included an unidentifiable coin found near the skull, as well as the two buckles which were recovered from the fill of the tomb.

The larger of the two (Fig. A3.3) is a cloisonné buckle. 4.5 cm long, with a hinged attachment-plate. The plate is rectangular, of double-skinned copper-alloy construction, with a central cabochon stone mounted in the centre, surrounded by little triangular cells. The colour of the central stone is not recorded, but it is clear from the surviving photograph that it was very light in tone. The surrounding triangular cells are filled with another substance, probably glass paste (Ugolini 1942: 155, fig. 163). The plate is pierced by rivets at the mid-points of three of its sides. The buckle-loop is oval and the tongue quite thin.

Polychrome buckles of this sort are quite common over a very large area encompassing Spain, southern Gaul and the entire Mediterranean as far as the Crimea. They are associated with funerary assemblages from a period
stretches from the 5th to the 6th centuries (Bierbauer 1975: 153–8; Koenig 1981: 344). Although this type has an extremely wide distribution and is found in variant forms, our example is closest to buckles found in the Eastern Mediterranean (in terms of structure and decoration) and belongs to the latest stage of their evolution, after the middle of the 6th century, when the cloisonné decoration was no longer used on the tongue but only on the plate. Close parallels have been found at Maccari in Italy (Orsi 1912: fig. 20), at El Jish in Israel (Kazanski 1994: fig. 8.7), in Syria (two examples in the British Museum – Kazanski 1994: fig. 14.7 and 18.5), at Lar in Georgia (Voronov and Senkao 1982: fig. 13, 14) and at Chersonesos in the Crimea (Ajbabin 1990: fig. 37.3). A more conservative dating, from the first half of the 6th century (Kazanski 1994: 148), is suggested by the funerary furnishings of a stratified assemblage from Lar, while the buckle from Maccari has been dated to the Vandal period, between the second half of the 5th and the first half of the 6th century (Koenig 1981: 344).

The structure and form of the Butrint buckle, with its oval buckle loop and thin tongue suggest a date from the mid 6th century onwards. Its association in the tomb with an openwork lyre-shaped buckle-plate, of a classic Byzantine form of 7th-century date (see below) implies a date between the middle of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th century, similar to the example from Chersonesos.

The second buckle from this tomb (Fig. A3.2) is of the Kesztelyh-Pécs lyre-formed type (named after the location of its first identification). Our example is made of copper-alloy and of rigid construction. It is 4 cm long and consists of an openwork plate representing a pair of “dragons” biting their own tails. Only half of the oval buckle-loop is preserved and the tongue is missing. The repertoire of decorative motifs employed (“dragons”, their geometric variants and fleur-de-lys), is typically Byzantine in origin, rather than a Byzantine assimilation of belt ornamentation of diverse external provenance (Gonosova and Kondoleon 1994: 143). Buckles of this type are very widespread in the Mediterranean region (Davidson 1952: tab. 114, no. 2187–2189; Vinski 1967: tab. XXVII/5.6.9; tab. XXVIII/3; Varsik 1992: tab. V/6), as well as in Pannonia (Fettich 1951–4: tab. 45/4; Vinski 1967: tab. XXVI/8, 9; Ibler 1992: tab. 1/1–3.11; tab. 3/1, 14) and are found as far as the Crimea (Ajbabin 1990: fig. 44).

The presence of this type of buckle both within the confines of the empire and also beyond its boundaries allows them to be classified as ‘cross-cultural’ artefacts. They appear in the Komani area in the centre and north of Albania, where almost all of the cemeteries contain variants of this type in copper-alloy. The majority are simple versions like the one from Butrint. The Komani examples have been dated to the 7th century and are often accompanied by brooches with turned-back foot, or by other Byzantine buckles (Spahić 1971: tab. 6/4; Prendi 1979–1980: tab. 1; Tartari 1984: tab. 2). Another parallel from the Komani cemeteries is a buckle of this type, but in the form of a double plaque (Musée de St. Germain en Laye, inventory no. 35898). This can be dated to the end of the 6th century, although it is generally placed in the 7th century. An example in gold with fleur-de-lys decoration with an unperforated attachment plate, from Mytilene in Lesbos was found together with a coin of Phokas and Heracleius (Gonosova and Kondoleon 1994: 146). Other examples from funerary complexes in the Crimea have been dated to the first half of the 7th century (Ajbabin 1990: 223).
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