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THE ABANDONMENT OF BUTRINT

From Venetian Enclave to Ottoman Backwater

ABSTRACT

This article examines Butrint under Venetian and Ottoman rule during the period of its final settlement and subsequent abandonment, before the start of archaeological excavations (A.D. 1386–1928). On the basis of excavated Venetian houses and later burials at the site of the Roman forum, it is argued that the Republic of Venice abandoned the Butrint headland after Süleyman the Magnificent sacked the city in 1537 and that Butrint was never resettled thereafter due to environmental adversities posed by malaria and emergent wetlands. Plague, border-zone dynamics, and state decay also exacerbated local conditions. Throughout its abandonment, however, Butrint and its environs remained economically active and strategically important, primarily to Corfu.

INTRODUCTION

Luigi Maria Ugolini first arrived at Butrint alone in 1924 (Figs. 1, 2).[1] As the first director of the Italian Archaeological Mission, having been appointed to this post earlier in the same year by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he was exploring the archaeological landscape of southern Albania in search of the kingdom of Helenos and Andromache, the legendary Trojan founders of Butrint (Bouthrotos/Buthrotum), in the ancient region of Epeiros (Epirus) in western Greece.[2] Upon disembarking on the Butrint headland, he was confronted by woods and then managed, with some difficulty, to reach ruins located near a rocky outcrop. There, he inspected walls of ashlar masonry.[3] Despite his desire to explore the ruins of the ancient city, he proceeded no further. He was afraid of the wild that lay before him, observing that it was late in the day and that dangerous animals roamed freely over the site.[4] Butrint had long since been abandoned, and four years later Ugolini returned with a team of archaeologists to unearth its history.

This article examines the archaeology and history of Butrint's last settlement and period of abandonment, from the Venetian colonial era to the time before the start of archaeological excavations (A.D. 1386–1928). Three Venetian houses and late burials excavated at the site of the Roman

1. Ugolini 1927, pp. 153–157; 1937, pp. 15–22. All dates in this article are A.D. unless otherwise stated.

2. For the Trojan ancestry of Butrint, see Hernandez 2017b, pp. 210–212. For a discussion of Ugolini's early exploration of Butrint, see Ugolini 1937; Hernandez 2017a; Hodges 2017.

3. Ugolini inspected the Hellenistic fortification wall at the eastern end of Butrint, located northeast of the Great Basilica.

4. Ugolini 1927, pp. 153–154; 1937, p. 18; 1942, p. 41.

Figure 1. Butrint in the western Balkans. D. Hernandez

forum by the Roman Forum Excavations (RFE) Project between 2005 and 2011 provide new evidence for the city's final phases.[5] These houses are the first dwellings of the Late Medieval period to be excavated at Butrint and serve as exemplars of Late Medieval domestic architecture in Epeiros. Archaeobotanical remains collected from one house, destroyed by fire, offer unique insight into the diet and agriculture of Venetian Butrint. The latest inhumation burials excavated in the lower city also reveal a community suffering from a range of illnesses connected to the natural environment.

The archaeology of the Late Medieval to early modern period is among the least researched timeframe at Butrint, as it also is for all of Epeiros.[6] This seemingly gray period of the city's afterlife, however, is surprisingly eventful. Its study is necessary to define the nature of the abandonment, to identify its causes, and to situate the site in the historical context of its region. Previous studies of this period, or of any part of it, have approached the Butrint material in five ways: (1) literary sources from political and ecclesiastical archives have been mined to reconstruct Venetian and Ottoman historical events;[7] (2) topographical studies have traced the physical

5. For an overview of the RFE Project, see Hernandez 2017c, 2017d; Hernandez and Çondi 2014; 2018.

6. In this article, the Late Medieval period spans the 13th–16th centuries. For a discussion of the archaeology of the Late Medieval and early modern period in Greece and the Aegean, see Davies and Davis 2007.

7. See Soustal 2004; Davies 2013.

Figure 2. View of Butrint and the Vrina Plain in the 1920s, looking southeast, showing the Venetian Tower and Triangular Fortress on the right. Ugolini 1937, p. 25, fig. 11; courtesy Butrint Foundation

development of the city over time;[8] (3) archaeological research projects have established chronologies and provided material evidence for specific artifacts, monuments, and excavated sites;[9] (4) introductory discussions pertaining to the history of the city have included documentary material from travelers and artists who visited Butrint from the 17th to 20th centuries;[10] and (5) geophysical investigations have attempted to model the long-term geomorphological changes in the landscape.[11] The first three approaches focus on periods when Butrint was settled prior to the 17th century, while the fourth summarizes post-settlement history in the context of Butrint's "rediscovery." The fifth supplies environmental data for both the Venetian and Ottoman phases of the city within a broader framework of diachronic landscape change. The present study aims, in part, to assess and unify this body of scholarship, in order to clarify the processes of urban decline and determine what activities occurred at Butrint during its period of abandonment. Historical and archaeological evidence and scholarship are considered in the context of landscape formation processes, which reveal the dynamic environmental factors that played a leading role in the city's later evolution and demise. Research of archaeological material from the early modern period, in particular, requires an approach that bridges the current methodological divide between the fields of archaeology and history.[12]

8. See Martin 2004; Crowson 2007; Hodges 2013b.

9. For the acropolis, see Greenslade, Leppard, and Logue 2013. For fortifications, towers, and castles, see Andrews et al. 2004; Karaiskaj 2009; Carvajal and Palanco 2013; Molla, Paris, and Venturini 2013. For the Triconch Palace and Merchant's House, see Bowden, Crowson, et al. 2011; Bowden, Culwick, et al. 2011; Bowden, Francis, et al. 2011. For the Junia Rufina well, see Sebastiani 2008; Sebastiani et al. 2013. For pottery, see Reynolds 2004; Vroom 2004, 2006; see also Vroom in Sebastiani et al. 2013, pp. 234–240. For coins and small finds, see Guest et al. 2004. For faunal remains, see Powell 2004.

10. See Ugolini 1937; Hodges et al. 2004; Hodges 2006a.

11. See Lane 2004; Bescoby 2007, 2013; Bescoby, Barclay, and Andrews 2008; Ariztegui et al. 2010; Morellón, Anselmetti, et al. 2015.

12. Davis and Davies 2007, p. 19. For the applicability of archaeology to measure urban decline in the Late Medieval period, see Astill 2000.

As in the case of many abandoned cities in the Mediterranean, the mechanisms leading to decline and abandonment remain obscure at Butrint.[13] The term "decline" has a broad range of meanings. It can refer to a notable reduction in settlement economy and demography, by human or natural agency. It can refer to urban decay, evidenced by a town's inability to maintain its infrastructure, or to its "ruralization," when a small population has come to live among its ruins.[14] It can also refer to a marked diminution of the city's political, ecclesiastical, or military status. In these cases, "decline" should not be taken to mean that living conditions were necessarily less advantageous for everyone in the community or the region.[15] Indeed, the evidence will show that significant prosperity existed both at Butrint and its hinterland during periods of decline and abandonment.

Among extinct cities, Butrint is unique in many ways, not least owing to its long period of habitation from prehistoric to late medieval times and to its advantageous coastal position in the central Mediterranean, lying midway between the ancient regions of Greece and Italy. With no modern urban development on the Butrint headland, Butrint offers a unique glimpse into the late medieval town. In many instances, it preserves traces of its past better than cities that have been continuously occupied into modern times. In a recent volume on *urbes extinctae,* Christie observes that "'lost' sites offer far more scope to explore and understand aspects, structures, and sequences of classical and post-classical life which can otherwise only ever be partially traced and interpreted in continuously occupied towns."[16] He categorizes five principal factors that brought about the end of cities: warfare, nature's losses, economic marginalization and loss, institutional redundancy, and state decay.[17] This article will examine these categories and show that in the case of Butrint, it was a combination of warfare and nature's losses that brought a decisive and permanent end to settlement.

VENETIAN BUTRINT AND THE ABANDONMENT OF THE HEADLAND

Butrint occupies a small headland (410 × 225 m) on the coast of Epeiros, facing the island of Corfu (Greek Kerkyra, ancient Korkyra/Corcyra) (Fig. 3).[18] The headland stands at the issue of Lake Butrint, which discharges into the Ionian Sea through the Vivari Channel. Sheltered at the southeastern tip of the Ksamil Peninsula, the site has strong natural defenses, created by the surrounding mountains and sea.[19] The acropolis offers commanding views of the city's territory and surrounding settlements (Diaporit, the Vrina Plain, Kalivo, Shën Dimitri, Xarra, Mursi, and Çuka e Aitoit), and it has a direct line of sight to Corfu. The Acropolis Castle occupies the lower western

13. In this article, the terms "loss," "demise," and "abandonment" refer specifically to the end of habitation on the Butrint headland. For a synopsis of current research on abandoned cities in the Mediterranean, see Slater and Higgins 2000; Christie 2012.

14. See Christie 2000, p. 66; 2012, p. 22.

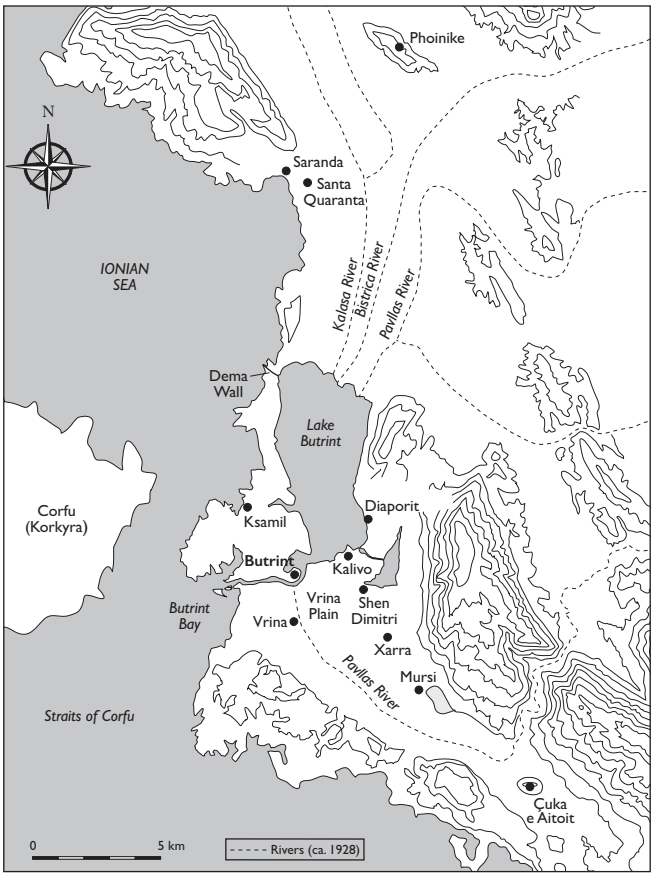
15. See Slater and Higgins 2000, p. 1.

16. Christie 2012, p. 3.

17. Christie 2012, pp. 11–23.

18. For a summary of modern Butrint, see Hodges 2006a, pp. 19–34; 2013b; Hodges et al. 2004, pp. 1–8. For an archaeological survey of the region, see Giorgi and Bogdani 2012.

19. The modern town of Ksamil, after which the peninsula is named, was founded in 1966. Artifacts dating as early as the Upper Paleolithic have been found in the area. In the 19th century, the shore of Ksamil was called Trescogli Bay because of its three small islands.



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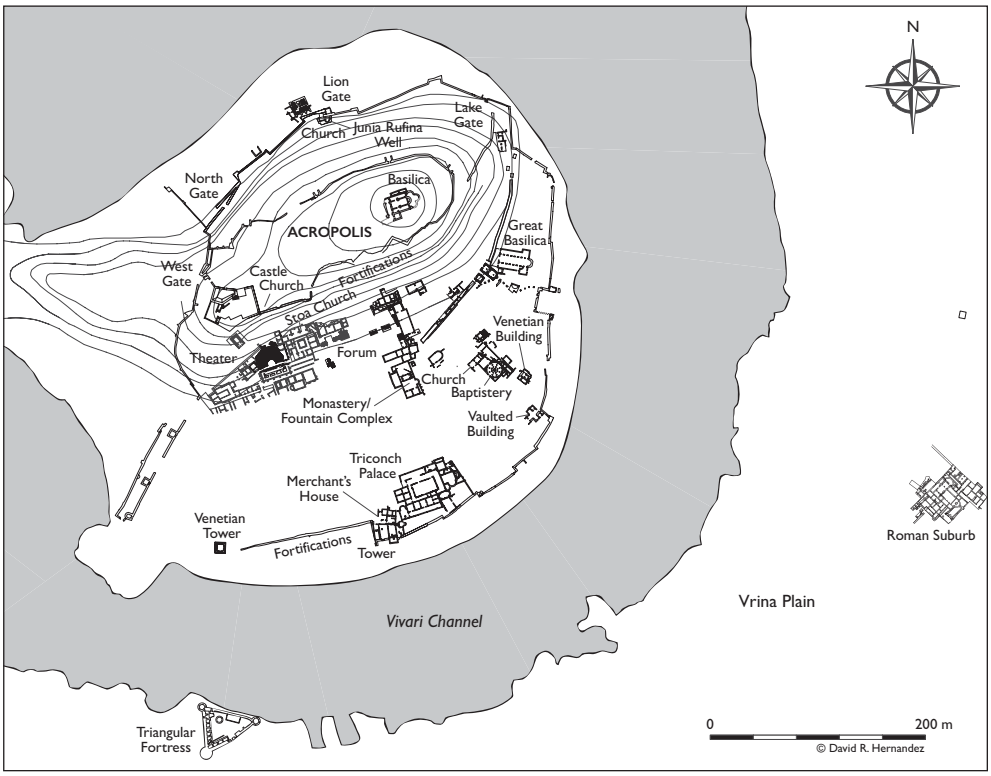

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Figure 3. The Butrint region (a); Butrint site plan (b). D. Hernandez

Figure 4. Aerial view of the lower city and Acropolis Castle. Photo A. Islami; courtesy Butrint Foundation

plateau of the acropolis, while the ruins of a Byzantine church sit on its summit, which is on the eastern side of the hill (Figs. 3:b, 4). The terrain of the lower city, where the ancient urban center emerged, is relatively flat, running from the southern foot of the acropolis to the Vivari Channel.

Timeframe of Abandonment

The Republic of Venice acquired Corfu and Butrint together in 1386, after the death of Charles III of Anjou, and held them until the fall of the Republic in 1797.[20] Butrint had flourished under the rule of the Despotate of Epeiros in the 13th and 14th centuries, when the city continued to serve as the seat of a suffragan bishop subject to the metropolitan diocese of Ioannina.[21] In 1337–1338, Butrint's bishopric was transferred to Glyky, and the city ceased to hold the same status as it did as a suffragan diocese.[22] This did not diminish the influence of the Catholic Church, however, which continued to prosper at Butrint well into the Venetian era. The Acropolis Castle was originally constructed in the first half of the 13th century, probably in 1236 by Michael II during the Despotate.[23] The precise date when it was abandoned is not known. Venetian records indicate that the castle was garrisoned and strengthened at various times in the 15th century, during the period when the regions of Albania and Greece, together with much of the Balkans, fell under Ottoman rule.[24] By 1498, the castle was in need of repair and was garrisoned by only 12 soldiers.[25] It was still garrisoned in 1500, and part of its large fortification walls crumbled in 1502 after heavy rains.[26] Venetian records report that in 1517,

20. Nicol 1988, p. 324; Asonitis 1998, pp. 271–272; Soustal 2004, p. 25.

21. Soustal 2004; Molla 2013, p. 213.

22. Soustal 2004, pp. 24–25.

23. Marmora 1672, pp. 210–211; Andrews et al. 2004, p. 137; Soustal 2004, p. 23; Molla, Paris, and Venturini 2013, pp. 271–272.

24. Marmora 1672, pp. 210–211; Fine 1987, p. 609; Soustal 2004, p. 23; Davies 2013, p. 280.

25. Zamputi 1967, p. 186, n. 266.

26. Sanuto 1880, p. 776; Zamputi 1979, p. 327, n. 263.

the *castellanus,* the governor in charge of the castle, was chosen from the citizens of Corfu and that the Republic of Venice was investing 1,300 ducats per year on the castle.[27]

Andrea Marmora, who published the earliest known history of Corfu in 1672, reported that the city and the castle had been abandoned and were in ruins by 1571:

> A Butrintò non si fece pensiero di mandar gente, essendo destrutta la Città, e il castello; e bastava per allora à gouernare la sicurezza del lago, quella torre, che Cristoforo Condocalli hauea munita con molti braui Corciresi, che, benche fuorosciti, dentro vi si chiusero in seruigio del Principe.
>
> [The Doge of Venice] did not give thought to send people to Butrint, since the city and its castle were destroyed; the tower was sufficient for now to govern the safety of the lake, that tower, which Cristoforo Condocalli had armed with many fine Corfiots, who, although exiled, fortified themselves within it in the service of the Doge.[28]

Marmora explains that the Republic of Venice did not send colonists to Butrint after its naval victory over the Ottomans at the battle of Lepanto in 1571 because the city (settlement) and the castle had both been destroyed *(destrutta)* previously. Cristoforo Condocalli, a nobleman of Corfu, was granted land on the Ksamil Peninsula and 5% of Butrint's fishing revenues and received the distinguished title of *cavaliere* as a reward for capturing the Ottoman admiral's ship at the battle.[29] Marmora's statement provides a terminus ante quem of 1571 for the end of garrisoning of the Acropolis Castle and for the end of settlement at Butrint. Thus, the Butrint headland was abandoned sometime between 1517 and 1571. The end of both garrisoning and settlement, however, did not mean the end of the fishing industry centered on the Vivari Channel. The abandonment of Butrint involved a key moment of transition, when the Butrint headland was abandoned in favor of a fortified structure adjacent to the fish weirs in the Vivari Channel.

The Venetian Tower and Triangular Fortress

The tower *(torre),* which Marmora says Condocalli defended with Corfiot exiles, has long been identified with the Triangular Fortress, built opposite the Butrint headland to protect the fish weirs at the outlet of the lake (Fig. 5). The fortress occupies one of two tiny islands opposite the headland on the southern bank of the Vivari Channel. Many scholars believe that it is Venetian, built in the late 15th or early 16th century.[30] Marmora, however, writes that in 1655 a Venetian knight *(cavaliere)* at Butrint abandoned "the tower *(torre)* to the Turks, who then built a royal fortress *(fortezza reale)* nearby and excluded the Corfiots almost completely from their dominion on the mainland."[31] The tower that Condocalli occupied in 1571 must instead be the Venetian Tower, which was originally part of the headland fortification system. By this time, it had become an independent fortified

27. Sathas 1883, pp. 250, 256; Soustal 2004, p. 26.

28. Marmora 1672, p. 353. Translation my own.

29. Marmora 1672, p. 351; see also Miller 1921, p. 221; Hodges 2006a, pp. 188–189; Davies 2013, p. 281.

30. Andrews et al. 2004, p. 145; Crowson 2007, pp. 47–49; Karaiskaj 2009, p. 112. Believing that the primary tower dates to about the late 15th century, Karaiskaj argues for an earlier phase, with no towers dating to the 13th–14th century.

31. Marmora 1672, p. 424: "Ricevuto quest'ordine, partissi l'Cavaliere, e con sommo dolore lasciò la Torre a'Turchi, che poi fabbricarono ivi presso una Fortezza Reale, ed esclusero quasi totalmente dal dominio di Terra Ferma i Corciresi." Quoted also in Davies 2013, pp. 282, 286, n. 31.

Figure 5. Aerial view of the Triangular Fortress in the 1990s. Photo A. Islami; courtesy Butrint Foundation

Figure 6. The Venetian Tower. Photo D. Hernandez

structure (Fig. 6). The tower features musket ports all around and two levels of canon ports on its southern side in the direction of the Vivari Channel.[32] On the basis of its architectural features, the tower is thought to date to the mid-16th century.[33] The *fortezza reale* was therefore the Triangular Fortress, built in 1655 by the Ottomans. A recent study, which examined newly discovered Venetian documents and the architecture of the fortress, confirms that the Triangular Fortress was constructed around this time by the Ottomans.[34] Marmora also writes that five years after its construction, in 1660, the Venetians captured the Triangular Fortress, referring to it as "la Fortezza, che fù fabbricata dagli Ottomani."[35] The Triangular Fortress continued to be garrisoned for the purposes of protecting the fishery until at least the end of the 18th century.[36]

32. Karaiskaj 2009, pp. 105–112; see also Andrews et al. 2004, pp. 146–148; Crowson 2007, p. 59; Molla, Paris, and Venturini 2013, p. 276.

33. Andrews et al. 2004, p. 146; Crowson 2007, p. 59; Molla, Paris, and Venturini 2013, p. 276.

34. Bevilacqua et al. 2015.

35. Marmora 1672, p. 433; quoted also in Davies 2013, p. 282, 286, n. 32.

36. The fortress was lost intermittently to Turks from the mid-17th to 18th century. See Davies 2004, 2013.

Acropolis Fortifications

When the Republic of Venice gained permanent control of Butrint, the defenses of the city and its territory were its primary concern.[37] In 1387, five *provveditori* traveled to Butrint to consider the feasibility of reconstructing the Dema Wall, a massive double-curtain fortification across the neck of the Ksamil Peninsula that was originally constructed in the 5th century B.C. by the Greek colony of Korkyra in order to protect the enclave of Butrint from neighboring Epeirote tribes (see Fig. 3:a).[38] Considered too costly at the time (1,000 ducats) and again in 1394, the ambitious plan to reconstruct the wall was later realized in 1475 to protect the northern frontier of the Venetian enclave from the Turks. In the 15th century, the threat of an Ottoman attack on Corfu would have extended to Butrint as well. In 1454, less than a year after sacking Constantinople, Mehmet II assaulted Butrint, reportedly with a force of 10,000 troops, which signaled, at the time, an unprecedented effort to take the city. Defended by the nobles of Corfu, Butrint was not captured. Its defenses were apparently sufficiently robust to withstand the assault.[39]

The Acropolis Castle was the center of Butrint's defenses under Venetian rule in the 14th and 15th centuries.[40] In the late 14th century, the castle was strengthened through the construction of walls, buildings, and a southern tower. The work included the remodeling of the West Gate and the construction of new defensive installations and a barracks building.[41] A two-storied, square building (16.7 m^2) was constructed above the ruins of the Byzantine basilica on the acropolis. Situated on the summit of the acropolis and rising well above the height of the castle, the building would have provided the best view of the surrounding territory, and it must have formed part of the city's defenses. In the village of Kamenica, near Delvina (ca. 30 km north of Butrint), well-preserved ruins of a contemporary two-storied building with a three-storied tower (ca. 11 × 9 m), dating to the 14th–15th century, occupy the summit of the hill.[42] The building on the summit of Butrint may have been another such lookout. In 1387, the Republic of Venice allowed the *castellanus* to spend 50 gold coins *(hyperpyra)* to repair his palace *(palacij)* and home *(habitacionis)* at Butrint.[43] The money may have been used for the repair of the castle and this building. A date in the late 15th century has been proposed for the final phase of fortifications on the acropolis and of repairs to the enceinte enclosing the Butrint headland.[44]

Churches

Four churches of Venetian date have been discovered at Butrint (see Fig. 3:b). The so-called Stoa Church, which overlays the buried Hellenistic Stoa adjacent to the theater, features wall paintings of saints that date to the 14th century.[45] The stratigraphic position of the church in the ancient urban center corresponds to the Venetian occupation phase in the area of the Roman forum, suggesting that the church was in use in the 15th century. The church at the Junia Rufina well was active until the 16th or early 17th century.[46] A single deposit excavated at the church contained pottery

37. Asonitis 1998, p. 275.

38. The *provveditori* (Latin *provisores*) were "overseers" chosen by the *Consiglio dei Rogatis* (Venetian Senate) to serve as ambassadors, commissioners, captains, or commanders. See Asonitis 1998, p. 279; Andrews et al. 2004, p. 139; Soustal 2004, pp. 25–26; Hodges 2013a; Hernandez 2017b, pp. 251–253.

39. Marmora 1672, pp. 260–261.

40. Molla, Paris, and Venturini 2013, pp. 274–276.

41. Andrews et al. 2004, pp. 143–148; Greenslade, Leppard, and Logue 2013, pp. 67–71, fig. 4:30.

42. Thomo 1997.

43. Valentini 1968a, pp. 40–41, n. 322; Soustal 2004, p. 25.

44. See Andrews et al. 2004; Molla, Paris, and Venturini 2013.

45. Bowden and Mitchell 2004, pp. 114–118.

46. Sebastiani 2008; Sebastiani et al. 2013, pp. 220, 234–240.

Figure 7. Henry Cook's *The Robber's Castle,* 1853, showing the Roman tomb below the Venetian watchtower. Cook 1853, pl. 7; courtesy Butrint Foundation

from the early 17th century, which may represent either the last phase of use of the church (as suggested by the excavators) or, in my view, rubbish deposited after its abandonment. The small church at the Baptistery was occupied in the 15th and 16th centuries.[47] The final additions made to it included a bell tower and a stone pavement, which, on typological grounds, may have been built in the 16th century. The church at the Roman Fountain Complex, excavated and demolished by Ugolini, featured a bell tower of the same type as that of the small church at the Baptistery.[48]

On the acropolis, the remains of a fifth church on the eastern side of the castle appear to date to the Late Medieval period on the basis of the masonry construction and plan.[49] In all likelihood, this so-called Castle Church was built before the Venetian occupation of Butrint, since a building was partially constructed over its ruins in the late 14th–early 15th century.[50] In addition to churches, there are Christian shrines at Butrint with elaborate Venetian wall paintings. Just inside the West Gate, a group of four 15th-century panels on painted plaster depict images of Christ, Mary, and saints.[51] Outside the city, the Venetians built a small shrine to Saint Demetrius above the ruins of a monumental Roman tomb of the 1st or 2nd century A.D.[52] This shrine is situated directly below a small Venetian watchtower, which was built on a rocky peak to overlook the Vivari Channel and the Straits of Corfu. Both the watchtower and the ruins of the tomb/chapel on the bank of the river were sketched by the British traveler Henry Cook, who visited the site between 1849 and 1855 (Fig. 7; see also p. 411, below).[53] Dating between the 15th and 17th centuries, the shrine features wall paintings depicting saints and a baptismal scene of Christ.

47. Bowden and Përzhita 2004, pp. 196, 199, figs. 10.24, 10.25.

48. Ugolini 1937, pp. 166–167, fig. 116; Mustilli 1941, pp. 691–695; Bowden and Përzhita 2004, p. 199.

49. Bowden and Mitchell 2004, p. 119.

50. Greenslade, Leppard, and Logue 2015, p. 68.

51. Bowden and Mitchell 2004, pp. 120–122, fig. 7:20.

52. Hernandez and Mitchell 2013, pp. 184–192, pl. 10:1–4.

53. Cook 1853. The lithograph is entitled *The Robber's Castle.*

Archaeological Evidence from Excavated Sites on the Headland

The latest material recovered from archaeological excavations undertaken at various sites throughout the headland by the Butrint Foundation and the RFE Project, between 1994 and 2013, establishes the chronological terminus for the settlement. The sites of the Triconch Palace and Merchant's House show a sharp decline in pottery around the mid-16th century.[54] The area of the Triconch Palace, in particular, ceased to be occupied from the early 15th century onward. The latest coins from this area are a group of seven dating sometime between the 15th and early 17th centuries (terminus ante quem of 1630); only one definitively postdates the mid-16th century. The latest activity in the Triconch Palace area occurred at the Merchant's House, which came to serve as a rubbish dump in the late 15th and early 16th century. The rubbish appears to be connected to the occupation of the nearby headland fortification tower, which collapsed before the early 17th century (see Fig. 3:b).[55] The southern end of the Butrint headland was effectively abandoned throughout the 15th century, except for this tower, which was occupied into the early 16th century. The material evidence from the Baptistery shows occupation into the 15th and possibly early 16th centuries.[56] Like the Triconch Palace and Merchant's House, all pottery recovered from the excavations at the Baptistery was earlier than the end of the 16th century.[57]

Two buildings investigated by Ugolini have been identified as Venetian on the basis of (insecure) masonry typologies.[58] The vaulted building located at the southeastern end of the headland has rooms with robust concrete barrel-vaulted and groin-vaulted ceilings (see Fig. 3:b). It is unclear whether the building was constructed before or after the Venetian occupation of Butrint in 1386, although it appears to have been built sometime in the 14th or 15th century. The building is thought to have served as a church or a house,[59] but it does not conform to the architecture of any known Venetian churches at Butrint or to that of the known Venetian houses excavated at the site of the Roman forum (both discussed below). Given its location adjacent to the shoreline and fortification circuit, the building might have served as a warehouse, storing military equipment, agricultural products, or salt for the fishery. The other building, located to the northeast of the vaulted building, has been interpreted as a mill or an industrial structure.[60] Beyond the fact that it does not appear to have been a dwelling, the building's date and purpose remain unknown.

The RFE Project has observed an abandonment sequence at the site of the Roman forum that is similar to those noted elsewhere on the headland, where the latest phase of occupation dates to the 16th century. Topsoil deposits did yield a few sherds of Mezza-Maiolica ware dating to the early 17th century, but these finds were too infrequent and sparse to suggest settlement in the lower city at that time.[61] The abrupt end of Maiolica imports from northern Italy and Italian Polychrome Sgraffito ware from the Veneto region noted across the headland indicates that the settlement ended in the lower city around the mid-16th century.[62] The sporadic finds of Mezza-Maiolica pottery in the area of the Roman forum

54. Bowden, Culwick, et al. 2011, pp. 150–151.

55. Bowden, Crowson, et al. 2011, p. 228. For this tower, see also Hodges 2013b, p. 16.

56. Reynolds 2004, p. 272.

57. Vroom 2004, pp. 291–292.

58. See Andrews et al. 2004, pp. 149–150.

59. Martin 2004, p. 99.

60. Martin 2004, p. 99.

61. The Late Medieval and Venetian pottery was studied by RFE Project ceramicists Joanita Vroom (Leiden University), Fotini Kondyli (University of Virginia), and Marco Cavalazzi (University of Bologna).

62. Vroom 2006; see also Vroom in Sebastiani et al. 2013, pp. 234–240.

and at other sites on the headland suggest some limited, undefined activity on the headland into the early 17th century.

Across the headland, the soil directly below the topsoil is black, on account of high carbon content deposited during the period of wild vegetation growth when the site was abandoned from the 17th to 20th centuries. Very little material dating to this period at Butrint has been published.[63] Ugolini's photographs of the Acropolis Castle have been said to show windows that might date to the 17th or 18th century, but this typological dating is speculative and doubtful.[64] Some of the artifacts from these black deposits at the site of the Roman forum show activity on the headland during the period of abandonment, among them a spherical lead musket bullet (20 mm; 11.75 g), probably belonging to a 19th-century shepherd or hunter;[65] a five-pronged iron spear head, similar to the one used for fishing by Vlach shepherds in the 19th and early 20th centuries;[66] and a fragment of a ceramic Ottoman smoking pipe.[67]

The Environmental Context of Abandonment

The history and fortunes of Butrint, as a seaport, have been tied closely to its natural environment and geographical siting. From antiquity, the city relied on the alluvial valley of the Vrina Plain as its *chora* for agriculture. The plain runs south of Butrint down to Çuka e Aitoit (known also as Aetos). The city's proximity to hills and mountains made the Butrint region favorable for crop cultivation and animal husbandry. In Ugolini's time, the Vrina Plain was a wetland, covered in swamps and woods, whereas now it is an open plain that is dry and treeless on account of agricultural drainage of the valley in the 1960s and 1970s.[68] Thus there exists a correlation between patterns of use and disuse of the Vrina Plain, on the one hand, and patterns of settlement and abandonment, on the other. The formation and growth of the wetlands are tied to historical environmental changes and to the city's management of land.

It is noteworthy that rainfall in Epeiros is greater on average than in most other regions of the Balkans.[69] Heavy rain, strong river systems driven by seasonally melting snow on mountains, and tectonic forces have produced high rates of erosion, which has played a major role in the formation processes of the region.[70] Three rivers, the Kalasa, Bistrica, and Pavllas, have shaped Butrint's distinctive coastal environment (see Fig. 3:a).[71] Together with the northern branch of the Pavllas, the Kalasa and Bistrica empty into

63. Vroom 2004, p. 292.

64. Greenslade, Leppard, and Logue 2013, p. 71.

65. From unit 20, 2012: context 1209, small find 1689.

66. From unit 27, 2013: context 1869, small find 4046. See Ugolini 1937, p. 33, fig. 21.

67. From unit 20, 2012: context 1199, small find 1547.

68. In antiquity, Butrint Bay was named the Kiraion Gulf, and its adjacent alluvial plain (Vrina Plain) was called the Kiraion Plain (*FGrH* 1 F105 = Hekataios of Miletos); see Hammond 1967, p. 474. See also Ugolini 1927; 1942, pp. 12–33, 46; Crowson and Gilkes 2007, p. 119; Lane 2004, p. 29.

69. For the climate of Epeiros, see Hammond 1967, pp. 6–7; 1997, pp. 12–24; Polunin 1980, pp. 12–18; Sturdy, Webley, and Bailey 1997, pp. 587–593; Jing and Rapp 2003; Lane 2004, pp. 27–31.

70. Davidson 1980; King, Proudfoot, and Smith 1997; Bowden 2003, pp. 214–224; Jing and Rapp 2003; Lane 2004, p. 28; Ariztegui et al. 2010, pp. 184–185. See also Hammond 1967, p. 19; Hutchinson 1969.

71. Ugolini 1937, p. 6, fig. 2; Hammond 1967, p. 82, map 4.

Lake Butrint from the north and are largely responsible for the lake's formation, whereas the southern branch of the Pavllas empties into the Ionian Sea. Overbank flooding of the Pavllas River, which changed its course through the valley over time, formed the alluvial deposits of the Vrina Plain.[72]

Through the Butrint Foundation, Adrian Lane and David Bescoby directed separate environmental surveys in which borehole cores were extracted from the Vrina Plain by hand-driven augers.[73] Reaching depths between 4 and 7 m below the surface, the cores revealed a complex topography of subsurface sediments, many of which formed in the course of changing environmental conditions over the Quaternary period. Sea levels in the Holocene period, rising more than 50 m between 12,000 and 3000 B.C., formed a wide coastal embayment between the Butrint headland and the Vrina Plain.[74] Settlement of the region from the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1600 B.C.) onward saw increased rates of erosion, likely triggered by deforestation.[75] The Pavllas River facilitated the transport of alluvial soils through the valley. The accretion of sediment loads into the bay led to the formation of an estuary and brought about an incremental expansion northward of the shore of the Vrina Plain. The progradation of the alluvial plain was accelerated by land subsidence, which, though typically gradual, could have been substantial in the event of a strong earthquake.[76]

Sometime after the 6th century, seasonal overbank flooding began to inundate the Vrina Plain. Rising water levels came to submerge the ruins of the Roman and Late Antique suburban settlement. In time, reed swamps and wetlands formed. Radiocarbon dates from borehole samples indicated that the wetlands emerged by the 13th–14th century.[77] Subsequent pollen analysis from borehole cores taken from Lake Butrint suggest that the wetland conditions existed as early as the 11th century.[78] Continued overbank flooding and increasing relative sea levels created the plain's thick homogenous topsoil layer of alluvium (Fig. 8).[79] These developments were

72. The migration of a river over time is a common characteristic of floodplain evolution; see Brown 1997, pp. 17–33.

73. Lane 2004; Bescoby 2007, 2013; Bescoby, Barclay, and Andrews 2008. I thank David Bescoby (University of East Anglia) for discussions of his research on the Vrina Plain.

74. See Pirazzoli 1991, pp. 88–99; 1996, pp. 54–58, 100–134. Lane (2004, p. 31) reports a sea level rise of more than 100 m.

75. Pollen evidence supports the chronology for historical deforestation in the Butrint region; see Lane 2004, p. 43; Morellón, Sinopoli, et al. 2016, pp. 11–14.

76. For evidence of seismic activity in the Butrint-Corfu region, see Pirazzoli, Laboral, and Stiros 1996; Pavlides and Caputo 2004; Bescoby 2013, pp. 26–29.

77. Based on accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS) radiocarbon dates of 1290–1455 (Lane 2004, p. 38) and 1270–1390 (Bescoby 2013, p. 23). This date range establishes an upper chronological limit for the formation of Butrint's wetlands. There is no hard evidence at present to show that this same environment existed at Butrint in Roman times. Not only have no traces of wetlands been recovered from excavated Roman deposits at Butrint or its hinterland, but the centuriation schemes on the Vrina Plain and the seaside villa at Diaporit, in addition to the scale of urban construction on the headland and in the suburban settlement, indicate the presence of an extensive agricultural regime and marine environment quite unlike the reed marshes, peat, and woodlands that presently characterize the wetlands of Butrint. Because erosion and sedimentation have been long-term processes affecting regional formation at Butrint as early as the Late Bronze Age, it remains unclear whether human work (e.g., drainage systems) during the Early Imperial period suppressed preexisting wetlands or whether the combined effects of natural processes and human activities ever reached the necessary tipping point to enable a wetland environment to form before the 11th century (see n. 78, below).

78. Morellón, Sinopoli, et. al. 2016, p. 14.

79. Lane 2004, p. 37, fig. 3:9. The topsoil thickness varies between 0.5 and 1.5 m. It is important to note that areas in which the topsoil is thicker than 1.5 m typically represent late infill of the Pavllas River or its tributaries.

Figure 8. Excavation trench (area G) on the Vrina Plain in 2003, showing thick alluvial deposits in section (right) and the ruins of a Roman tomb adjacent to the suburb. Courtesy Butrint Foundation

accompanied by changes in the shoreline of Butrint Bay, with a narrowing of the Vivari Channel over the past 2,000 years.[80] The northward progradation of the Vrina Plain ceased only in the last century, during which the plain's northern shore reversed course and began to recede slowly.[81] Thus, the environmental context of the abandonment of Butrint in the 16th century is one of an emergent and dynamic wetland.

VENETIAN HOUSES IN THE AREA OF THE ROMAN FORUM

The RFE Project excavated three Venetian houses at the site of the Roman forum (Figs. 9, 10). They are the first domestic buildings from this period to be discovered and studied at Butrint. Venetian House I came to light in 2006 in unit 6.[82] The trench exposed the northwestern side of the house, revealing a single room with an area measuring 5.6 m east–west × 4.6 m north–south (Fig. 11).[83] It was located below the fill and pavers of a modern, Communist-era visitor path. The construction of the visitor path appears to have destroyed most of the archaeological remains of the building. A single course of large irregular stones, representing the building's foundations,

80. See Lane 2004, pp. 36–38; Martin 2004, pp. 76–77, fig. 6:1.

81. Ugolini (1937, pp. 40–42) noted the recession of the southern bank of the Vivari Channel. The process began when the rate of sedimentation from seasonal flooding dropped below the rate of soil loss from the banks of the Vivari Channel. The Bay Fortress, which was connected to the Vrina Plain in the 18th century, is now situated on an island.

82. For the excavations from 2005 to 2011, see Hernandez and Çondi 2014, pp. 292–293; 2018.

83. The room is larger, since only the northern and western walls of the house emerged in the trench.

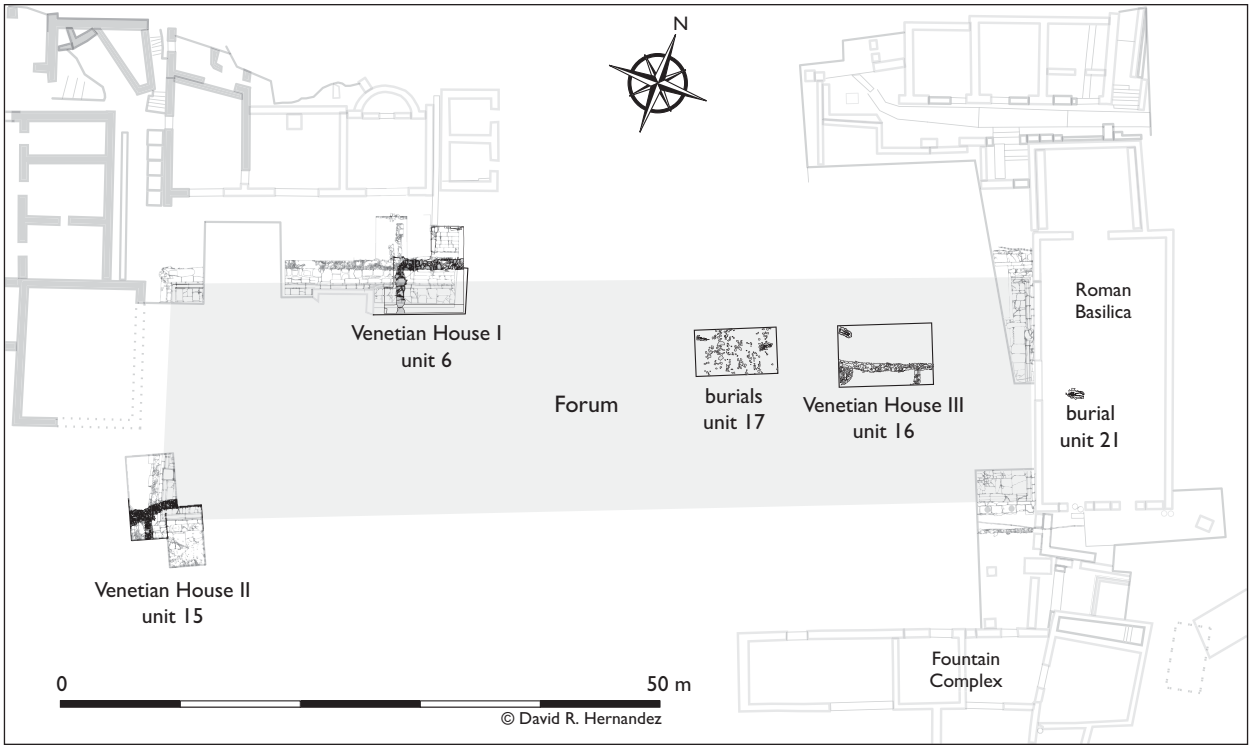


Figure 9. Site plan of Venetian houses and burials at the Roman Forum. D. Hernandez

and the original earthen floor of the house were found in situ. The house was constructed in the late 14th or 15th century, dated on the basis of coins and Polychrome Sgraffito ware and Monochrome Glazed ware pottery imported from northern Italy.[84] Seven coins were recovered from deposits associated with the house (Table 1). A silver tornesello minted in Venice between 1343 and 1471 (between Doge Andrea Dandolo and Doge Cristoforo Moro) was recovered from the deposit upon which the foundations were laid.[85] Four older medieval coins (two silver and two bronze) and one Hellenistic coin were also found. The latest coin, found in fill overlying the floor, is an akçe of Süleyman the Magnificent, dating between 1520 and 1566 (Fig. 12).[86] This silver coin is a unique find, because no coin of this date has previously been found at Butrint. The coin must have belonged to the last phase of the house. It establishes a terminus post quem of 1520 for the latest occupation of Venetian House I.

Venetian House II was excavated in 2007 in unit 15. The house was a remodeled Late Antique building (Fig. 13). A coin hoard was found embedded within a small, dilapidated wall of the building. The hoard contained 19 silver torneselli, 16 of which are legible (see Table 1): one dates between 1365 and 1368 (Doge Marco Corner), one between 1368 and 1382 (Doge Andrea Contarini), and 14 between 1382 and 1400 (Doge Antonio Venier).[87] Also included was a Roman nummus of Constantine I. Although the original purpose of the Late Antique building is unknown, the deliberately hidden coin hoard suggests that it was used as a dwelling in the Venetian period. On the basis of the latest coins, a terminus post quem of 1382 can be assigned to the occupation of Venetian House II. The destruction debris of the house and parts of its walls were removed in the 20th century, possibly during the same Communist-era activity that saw

84. For this type of pottery at Butrint, see Vroom 2004, p. 291, fig. 15:33; 2006, p. 232.

85. Small find 550, from context 437. All coins in this article were studied by RFE Project numismatists Sam Moorhead (British Museum), Richard Abdy (British Museum), and Pagona Papadopoulou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) for the 2004–2007 excavations, and Elena Baldi (Archaeology SE, University College London) for the 2011–2013 excavations.

86. Small find 494, from context 423. See Sultan 1977, p. 114, no. 1090.

87. The illegible torneselli include two complete coins and three fragments, which may come from one or more coins.

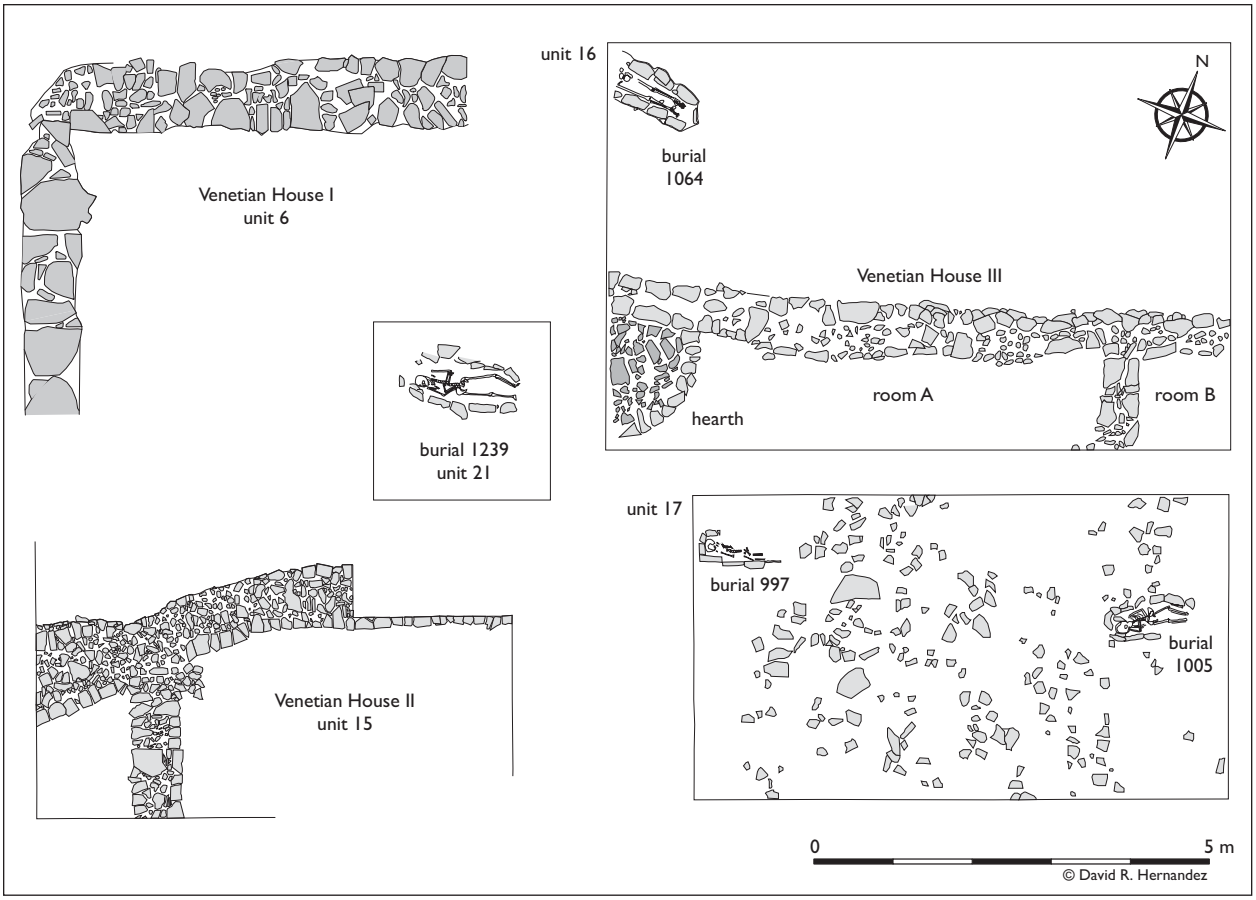


Figure 10. Compilation of five plans of the Venetian houses and burials in the Roman forum. D. Hernandez

Figure 11. Venetian House I, unit 6 (2006). Photo D. Hernandez

TABLE 1. COINS RECOVERED FROM THE VENETIAN HOUSES AT BUTRINT

House	*Context*	*Small Find No.*	*Denomination*	*Metal*	*Date*	*Period*	*Authority*	*Mint*
I (unit 6)	423	494	akçe	silver	1520–1566	Ottoman	Süleyman the Magnificent	Constantinople
	437	550	tornesello	silver	1343–1471	Venetian	Doge Andrea Dandolo or Cristoforo Moro	Venice
	423	526	denier tournois	silver	13th–14th century	Late Medieval	Frankish Greece	Greece
	480	556	denier tournois	silver	13th–14th century	Late Medieval	Frankish Greece	Greece
	437	552	follis	bronze	1078–1081	medieval	anonymous emissions	unknown
	435	547	follis	bronze	920–944	medieval	Romanus I	Constantinople
	423	492	AE16/17	bronze	(3rd–2nd century B.C.)	Hellenistic	unknown	unknown
II (unit 15)	846	902	tornesello	silver	1365–1368	Venetian	Doge Marco Corner	Venice
	831	881	tornesello	silver	1368–1382	Venetian	Doge Andrea Contarini	Venice
	846	902.01	tornesello	silver	1382–1400	Venetian	Doge Antonio Venier	Venice
	846	902.02	tornesello	silver	1382–1400	Venetian	Doge Antonio Venier	Venice
	846	902.03	tornesello	silver	1382–1400	Venetian	Doge Antonio Venier	Venice
	846	902.04	tornesello	silver	1382–1400	Venetian	Doge Antonio Venier	Venice
	846	902.05	tornesello	silver	1382–1400	Venetian	Doge Antonio Venier	Venice
	846	902.06	tornesello	silver	1382–1400	Venetian	Doge Antonio Venier	Venice
	846	902.07	tornesello	silver	1382–1400	Venetian	Doge Antonio Venier	Venice
	846	902.08	tornesello	silver	1382–1400	Venetian	Doge Antonio Venier	Venice
	846	902.09	tornesello	silver	1382–1400	Venetian	Doge Antonio Venier	Venice
	846	902.10	tornesello	silver	1382–1400	Venetian	Doge Antonio Venier	Venice
	846	902.11	tornesello	silver	14th–15th century	Venetian	unknown	Venice
	846	902.12	tornesello	silver	14th–15th century	Venetian	unknown	Venice
	846	902.13	tornesello	silver	14th–15th century	Venetian	unknown	Venice
	831	882.1	tornesello	silver	1382–1400	Venetian	Doge Antonio Venier	Venice
	831	882.2	tornesello	silver	1382–1400	Venetian	Doge Antonio Venier	Venice
	831	892	tornesello	silver	1382–1400	Venetian	Doge Antonio Venier	Venice
	831	896	tornesello	silver	1382–1400	Venetian	Doge Antonio Venier	Venice
	846	906	nummus	bronze	306–337	Roman	Constantine I	Thessaloniki
III (unit 16)	1021	1282	soldino	silver	1368–1382	Venetian	Doge Andrea Contarini	Venice
	1103	1349	soldino	silver	14th–15th century	Venetian	unknown	Venice
	1106	1413	tornesello	silver	1343–1471	Venetian	Doge Andrea Dandolo or Cristoforo Moro	Venice
	1123	1459	tornesello	silver	1343–1471	Venetian	Doge Andrea Dandolo or Cristoforo Moro	Venice
	1024	1088	AE3	bronze	408–423	Late Antique	Theodosius II	eastern empire
	1123	1451	follis	bronze	517–518	Late Antique	Anastasius	Antioch
	1009	1332	AE3	bronze	335–341	Late Antique	House of Constantine	unknown
	1009	1066	follis	bronze	1000–1099	medieval	anonymous emissions	Constantinople
	1009	1067	follis	bronze	1000–1099	medieval	anonymous emission	Constantinople
	1009	1071	follis	bronze	1005–1191	medieval	Comneni	Constantinople?

the removal of deposits above Venetian House I. This is evident from the absence in the trench of the black-earth deposits and topsoil covering the headland (discussed above).

Venetian House III was excavated in 2011 in unit 16, at the eastern side of the forum (Figs. 14, 15). The northern wall of the house appeared across the length (8.5 m) of the trench. Its plan and overall dimensions could not be determined, but it was evidently large and built on a foundation of sizable irregular stones. Three to four courses of earth-bonded walls survive above the foundation level. The collapsed roof, consisting of a layer of large, broken yellow ceramic roof tiles, was found in situ below the house's stone rubble (Fig. 16). The earthen floor of the house was burned, and there was ample evidence that the house had been destroyed by fire.

Fragments of complete ceramic vessels were found on the floor. Ten coins were recovered from the house: six bronze and four silver (see Table 1). The silver coins, all minted in Venice, came from the earliest floor level. Two are silver torneselli dating between 1343 and 1471 (between Doge Andrea Dandolo and Doge Cristoforo Moro), and one is a soldino dating between 1368 and 1382 (Doge Andrea Contarini; Fig. 17). Although illegible, the other silver coin is also a soldino minted in Venice. As with Venetian House I, all the bronze coinage is earlier: three date to the Late Antique period and three to medieval times. The presence of (proto-Maiolica) Ramina Manganese Rosso (RMR) ware ceramics of a type from Taranto and Metaponto coincide with the latest coins, which date the construction of the house to the late 14th century.[88]

The house consisted of at least two rooms on the ground floor. The larger of the two, room A, occupied the northwestern side of the building and measured 6.3 m in length. A stone masonry hearth paved with thick rectangular tiles occupied the northwestern corner of the house (Fig. 18). The hearth/chimney was installed in a later phase of reconstruction in the 15th or 16th century, when that corner of the house was rebuilt in regular coursed masonry. The internal partition wall, separating rooms A and B, belongs to this later phase and was built of spolia, which included molded architectural fragments from ancient buildings (Fig. 19). This use of spolia recalls those found in Venetian repairs of Butrint's fortifications.[89] Room A served as a kitchen and storage area. Finely crafted kitchen utensils and other bronze artifacts were found here, including a spoon on the hearth (Fig. 20). The iron objects from the room included a blade, the head of a small tool, semicircular handles, a chain ring, and a hearth chain hanger (Fig. 21).

Flotation of the soil from the room's earthen floor yielded large amounts of free-threshing wheat *(Triticum aestivum/durum),* in addition to einkorns *(T. monococcum),* emmers *(T. dicoccum),* oats *(Avena sativa),* six-row hulled barley *(Hordeum vulgare),* rye *(Secale cereale),* millets *(Panicum/Setaria spp.),* peas *(Pisum sativum),* lentils *(Lens culinaris),* Spanish vetchling *(Lathyrus clymenum),* olives *(Olea europaea),* grapes *(Vitis vinifera),* flax *(Linum usitatissimum),* fava beans *(Vicia faba),* bitter vetch (*Vicia ervilia*), and various wild berries (*Rubus* sp., *Sambucus* sp., *Sorbus* sp.) and other types of small vetches of the *Vicia* or *Lathyrus* genera.[90] A large amount of wheat was recovered (ca. 38,000 seeds), virtually all of which came from room A (Fig. 22). Since pithoi were not present, the wheat appears to have been stored in sacks placed against the northern wall of the kitchen.

Figure 12. Akçe (silver coin) of Süleyman the Magnificent from Venetian House I, 1520–1566.
Scale 2.5:1. Photo D. Hernandez

88. See Vroom 2004, p. 283.

89. Crowson 2007, pp. 29–33.

90. All archaeobotanical information in this article was kindly provided by RFE Project archaeobotanists Diego Sabato (University of Cagliari) and Leonor Peña-Chocarro (Escuela Española de Historia y Arqueología en Roma).

Figure 13. Venetian House II, unit 15 (2007). Photo D. Hernandez

Figure 14. Venetian House III, unit 16 (2011). Burials from the 6th–7th century are located at lower right. Photo D. Hernandez

The destruction of the house occurred in the first half of the 16th century, judging from its latest pottery, which included Italian Polychrome Sgraffito ware and Italian Maiolica. One complete glazed jug painted in red, green, and brown, which belongs to the RMR "Bari type" imported from the region of modern-day Calabria, Basilicata, and Puglia, is of the same type as has been found at Stari Bar in Montenegro and dated stratigraphically to the first half of the 16th century (Fig. 23).[91] The house was, therefore, contemporary with Venetian Houses I and II. The large quantity and variety of foods indicate that the house was in use immediately before it burned down. On the basis of its size, plan, location, and hearth/chimney, as well as its rich yield of bronze and iron objects, coins, and foods, the occupants of Venetian House III were not poor.

The construction of Venetian Houses I, II, and III occurred at the time of, or soon after the acquisition of Butrint by Venice in 1386. The

91. S. Gelichi (pers. comm.); see also Salvatore 1982, pp. 89–92, figs. 10–24; Boriani and Gianbruno 2015, pp. 96–106.

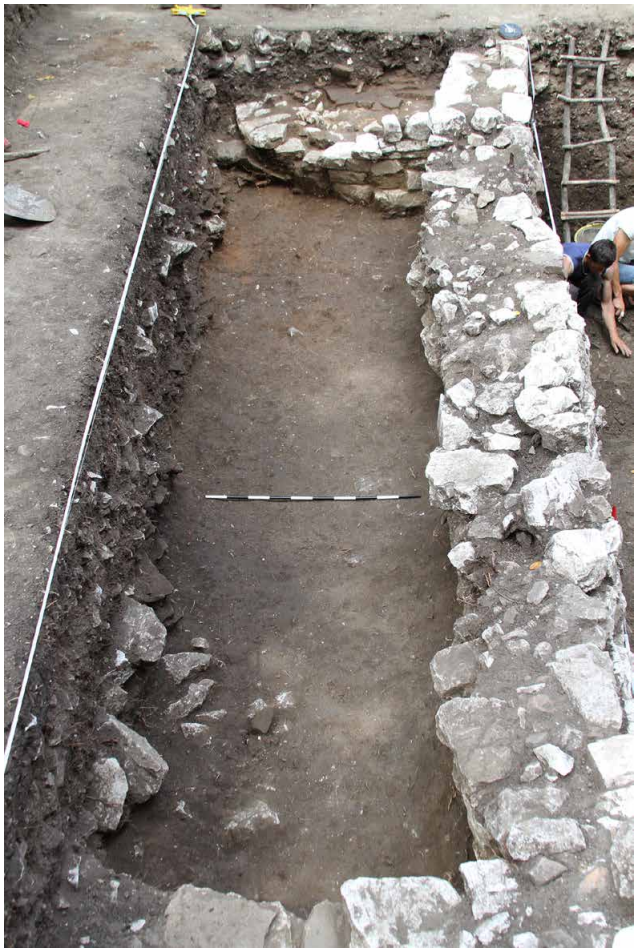


Figure 15. Earthen floor and masonry hearth (top) of room A, Venetian House III. Photo D. Hernandez

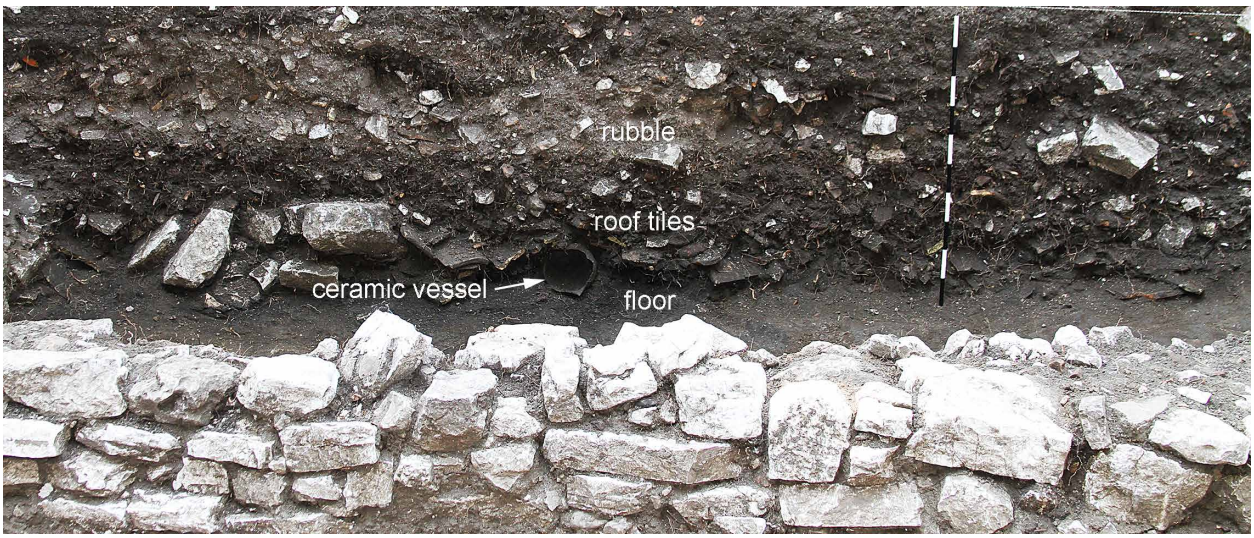


Figure 16. Stratigraphy above the floor level of room A, Venetian House III, showing a complete cooking pot in situ. Photo D. Hernandez

Figure 17. Soldino (silver coin) of Doge Andrea Contarini from Venetian House III, 1368–1382. Scale 2:1. Photo D. Hernandez

Figure 18. Masonry hearth in room A, Venetian House III. Photo D. Hernandez

Figure 19. Spolia in the partition wall between rooms A and B of Venetian House III. Photo D. Hernandez

colonial building program appears to have involved the construction of new houses and the rebuilding of older structures into dwellings. This was likely accompanied by a new demarcation and redefinition of property boundaries on the headland. The houses were constructed of spolia taken from the historic buildings of the city. There is no indication that bricks were manufactured or stones quarried for use in construction. The houses do not show evidence of internal plastering.

Figure 20. Bronze finds from room A, Venetian House III. Scale 2:3. Photo D. Hernandez

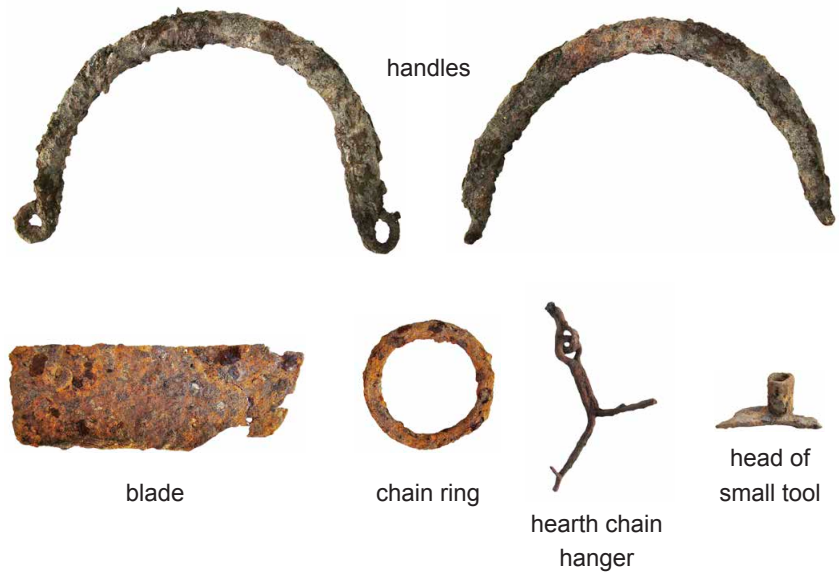


Figure 21. Iron finds from room A, Venetian House III. Scale 1:3. Photo D. Hernandez

Little is known about Late Medieval domestic buildings in Epeiros. In Greece and Italy, urban houses of this period were typically built of stone.[92] The plan of Venetian House III is consistent with the linear domestic building designs (rectangular and L-shaped) that were common in the Balkans in the Late Middle Ages (e.g., at Stari Bar in Montenegro).[93] A number of houses built in the 14th and 15th centuries have been identified in the village of Kamenica, near Butrint.[94] Abandoned in the early

92. For Italy, see Galetti 2006; Arthur 2010. For Greece, see *Corinth* XVI; Sigalos 2004.

93. Sigalos 2004, pp. 65–74.

94. Thomo 1997.

Figure 22. Wheat from the earthen floor of Venetian House III. Photo D. Hernandez

Figure 23. Complete RMR glazed jug from South Italy, ca. 1500–1550. Photo D. Hernandez

Figure 24. Bone hairpin from Venetian House III. Scale 1:1. Photo D. Hernandez

17th century, the village is nearly contemporary with the Venetian houses at Butrint. An Ottoman fiscal register records 222 households at the site in 1582–1583.[95] All houses at Kamenica were two-story stone dwellings. Most are smaller (e.g., ca. 5 × 5 m; 5 × 7 m) than Venetian House III, and almost all consist of a single room on each level. In Greece, on the other hand, small houses consisting of a single room are typically only a single story. For example, at Geraki, a town near Amaliada in the northwestern Peloponnese, only large, two-storied dwellings featured internal masonry partitions. At Stari Bar in Montenegro, a large two-storied building of the late 14th and 15th centuries with internal partitions, has been excavated that contained a stone-lined, integral hearth/chimney comparable to that of Venetian House III.[96]

Owing to its size and rooms, it is probable that Venetian House III was two-storied. The rafters, timber beams, posts, and other wooden elements of the house were lost in the fire. A bronze thimble and a bone hairpin discovered in room A may have come from the second floor (Figs. 20, 24), as these items are associated with sewing and female adornment.

95. Thomo 1997, p. 246.
96. Calaon 2006, p. 188.

Figure 25. Venetian church at the Fountain Complex. Ugolini 1937, p. 166, fig. 116; courtesy Butrint Foundation

Loomweights and spindle whorls are notably absent from the recovered material. The function of the upper-floor room remains unclear. Perhaps it had a female occupant or served as sleeping quarters. Room A, as a kitchen and storage area, was likely the back room of the house.[97] If this is correct, then the entrance would have been located on the eastern side, which opened into room B.

In Greece, the layout and distribution of houses of this period, as at Panakton (in northern Attica), Thespiae (in Boiotia), Rendina (east of Thessaloniki), and Geraki (in the Peloponnese), consisted of freestanding buildings scattered near or around a fortified structure, in most cases as part of a *kastron* (Byzantine administrative and defensive outpost or fort).[98] This was probably the layout at Butrint as well, with the settlement spread out below the fortified citadel of the acropolis. The proximity of the three houses in the area of the Roman forum suggests a fairly tight clustering of houses, with each occupying a small plot, similar in urban layout and density to the scheme in Kamenica.[99] The number of known churches and shrines is also comparable to that of Kamenica.

Venetian House III was located immediately north of the church at the Fountain Complex (Fig. 25); the two are separated by a short distance of ca. 30 m.[100] The church at Butrint must have owned some arable land on

97. At Panakton, for example, the rear rooms of the houses were used for storage; see Gerstel 1996, p. 149.

98. Sigalos 2004, pp. 65–76.

99. Thomo 1997, p. 246.

100. Ugolini 1937, pp. 166–167, fig. 116; Mustilli 1941, pp. 691–695.

the Vrina Plain.[101] Laborers would have been hired by the church to farm this land, or plots would have been leased to farmers. The archaeobotanical evidence from the kitchen of Venetian House III shows that in the 16th century, the settlement at Butrint cultivated a wide variety of crops, which included cereals (wheat, einkorn, emmer, oat, barley, rye, and millets) and pulses (Spanish vetchling, lentils, peas, and vetches). Other notable crops and fruits were flax, olives, grapes, and berries. Most, if not all, the cereals and pulses would have been cultivated in fields seasonally, presumably on the Vrina Plain, although there were probably small gardens located throughout the headland as well. On account of its size, location, and agricultural surpluses, it is possible that, at the time of its destruction, Venetian House III was linked to or owned by the church at Butrint.

THE SACK OF BUTRINT IN 1537

The context of the fire that destroyed Venetian House III is not known. There is no evidence of conflagration in areas outside the house, so a widespread urban fire could not have been the cause. It is noteworthy that the house was never rebuilt, and the destruction debris was never cleared. The rubble of the house, left undisturbed and exposed to the elements, was eventually buried by natural processes. This indicates that the site was not reoccupied and that the fire may have coincided with the end of settlement on the Butrint headland.

The archaeological material from Butrint is consistent with historical information. As discussed above, literary sources establish the timeframe of abandonment as between the years 1517 and 1571. Marmora, in particular, stated explicitly that the city and castle were destroyed *(destrutta)* by force.[102] The latest material in Venetian House III dates to the first half of the 16th century, and there is no evidence to suggest habitation at Butrint later than the three houses excavated in the forum area.

Only one Ottoman coin has been found at Butrint, the silver coin of Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566) from Venetian House I (see Fig. 12). It is also one of the two latest coins ever discovered on the Butrint headland. It is conceivable that the coin came to Butrint during the Third Ottoman-Venetian War (1537–1540), when Süleyman captured Butrint in May 1537. Butrint was said to have been seized by 1,000 cavalry.[103] At first glance, this may seem striking since the Ottomans were not able to capture the city with a much larger force, reportedly 10,000 troops, in 1454.[104] The reason lies in the events of 1537 leading up to the Third Ottoman-Venetian War. As noted above, the castle was in disrepair. The imminent threat of Ottoman attack immediately before the outbreak of war prompted the Venetians to strengthen the fortifications of Corfu. At the same time, they decided not to do the same at Butrint, believing that

101. It is unknown whether church land would have amounted to a large or small proportion of the total cultivable land of the settlement. The percentage of monastic land on the island of Siphnos in the 17th century was small (Kiel 2007, p. 42), whereas in the 14th century, Byzantine monasteries had substantial landholdings (Fine 1987, p. 332).

102. Marmora 1672, p. 353.

103. Diedo 1751, pp. 84–86.

104. Marmora 1672, pp. 260–261.

even if reinforced, they would not withstand the Ottoman attack there.[105] A strategic decision was made to abandon Butrint. The Sultan dispatched a fleet of 280 vessels to besiege Corfu, the largest Ottoman fleet to set sail at the time.[106] Süleyman is reported to have constructed a pontoon bridge across the channel, from the territory of Butrint to Corfu.[107]

Launching the attack against Corfu, reportedly with 25,000 troops under the command of famed admiral Hayreddin Barbarossa, Süleyman used Butrint as the base of operations.[108] Failing to capture the citadel of Corfu, Barbarossa plundered the island, setting fire to villages and carrying away 20,000 captives.[109] The Venetian settlement at Butrint could not have survived this action unscathed. In the same year, Barbarossa enslaved the inhabitants of the Sporades after conquering the islands, and he also enslaved 1,000 inhabitants from the island of Kythera.[110] Butrint was surely sacked as well, and the destruction of Venetian House III by fire is likely a testament to the event.

The Venetian settlers at Butrint would have been keenly aware of the impending attack, the debate on Corfu, and the decision to abandon the colony in favor of strengthening Corfu. It is reasonable to conclude that the settlers would have been prepared to vacate their homes at the approach of the enemy. Barbarossa is known to have burned down the houses of the Corfiots and probably set fire also to the houses at Butrint. The type of material recovered from the Venetian houses (e.g., an old colonial coin hoard, sacks of wheat, cooking utensils, and pots) may represent what was left behind by settlers in flight. There remains the question of how the silver coin of Süleyman the Magnificent arrived in Venetian House I. It is possible that the coin was left behind by an occupying Ottoman soldier just before the houses were set ablaze.

In 1540 Süleyman the Magnificent reached a peace agreement with the Republic of Venice that concluded the war. Butrint reverted to Venetian control, but in light of the city's destruction, the Venetian authorities adopted a new policy toward the city and its region. Numerous documents demonstrate that before the war, all Venetian investment had been aimed at defending the *kastron.* In 1503, the Venetians had even envisioned converting Butrint into an island. The idea was to dig a canal across the narrow isthmus that connects the headland to the Ksamil Peninsula.[111] The existence of such a plan confirms Venice's interest to protect the *kastron.* But the defenses of the castle proved expensive to maintain and ultimately were deemed inadequate. After the sack of Butrint in 1537, therefore, the Venetians decided to abandon the *kastron* and the entire headland. To protect the fish weirs and fishing operation, a small garrison was stationed at the *torre*, the Venetian Tower. This inexpensive small outpost would also enable the Republic to defend the enclave from small-scale, local threats.

105. Marmora 1672, p. 310.

106. Khalifeh 1831, p. 55.

107. Khalifeh 1831, p. 57.

108. Jervis (1852, p. 121) questions Diedo's figure of 25,000 troops, believing that 5,000 troops seems more realistic. The figure of 25,000 is accepted by Miller (1921, p. 219). Khalifeh (1831, p. 55) writes that the Ottoman fleet was manned by 30,000 sailors.

109. Marmora 1672, pp. 301–312; Miller 1921, p. 220.

110. Kiel 2007, pp. 36–38. The Venetian report of 1563 states that 7,000 prisoners were taken during the destruction of Ayios Dimitrios (modern Paliochora); see Gregory 2007, p. 187.

111. Zamputi 1979, pp. 344–345, n. 294.

Figure 26. Stratigraphic position of female burial (at the top right corner of the trench) in relation to Venetian House III, unit 16. Photo D. Hernandez

Figure 27. Female burial from unit 16, mid-16th to mid-17th century (context 1064), 2011. Photo D. Hernandez

THE LATEST BURIALS IN THE LOWER CITY

The latest burials at the site of the Roman forum provide evidence for conditions on the headland soon after its abandonment. The burials date after the destruction phase of the Venetian houses. In unit 16, an inhumation burial cuts into the final occupation level of Venetian House III (Fig. 26). The lower part of the burial appeared in the trench; the upper portion of the skeleton remained buried beyond the western side of the trench (context 1064; Fig. 27). Only the lower torso and legs of the skeleton, from the pelvis down, were recovered. The burial was located just outside the house. Its orientation was east–west and differed from the alignment of the house, which followed the contour of the hill. On the basis of its stratigraphy, the burial dates between the mid-16th to mid-17th century; the earlier part of the date range is more probable because the grave was cut directly from the surface of the destruction layer. The remains were of a female aged ca. 23–25 years, showing evidence of nonspecific, systemic infections that were active at the time of death.[112] She suffered from lesions on her legs (both tibiae and fibulae), as well as nutritional deficiencies.

112. All human osteological information in this article was kindly provided by Thomas Crist (Utica College), the RFE Project's forensic anthropologist.

Figure 28. Infant female burial from unit 17, mid-16th to mid-17th century (context 997), 2011. Photo D. Hernandez

Figure 29. Female skull with cranial hole from unit 21 (context 1239), 2012. Photo D. Hernandez

Two contemporary inhumation burials of infants were excavated nearby in unit 17. One was a girl aged 3–4 years who suffered from scurvy due to vitamin C deficiency (context 997; Fig. 28). Her skeleton showed signs of lesions and systemic infections, which may have been caused by brucellosis and deficiencies in vitamin D and iron. The second was a girl aged 4–5 years who had similar illnesses, which include scurvy, deficiencies in vitamins C and D, brucellosis, and lesions (context 1005). A third inhumation burial excavated at the site of the Roman Basilica in unit 21 (context 1239) may be contemporary, although an earlier date is possible. The skeleton was of a woman aged 30–40 years. Her cranium had a large symmetrical hole in the center of the forehead that was caused by a tumor or lesion that dissolved the bone (Fig. 29).

The latest phase of burials in the lower city demonstrates that the historical urban center served as a cemetery soon after the abandonment of the headland. The individuals include women and young children. This suggests that the burials come from families rather than soldiers. It is possible that the interred were villagers from the surrounding region

or, more likely, transhumant shepherds who occupied the headland seasonally.[113] These individuals suffered from a number of severe ailments, characterized by nutritional deficiencies and lesions throughout the body, brought about by infections. The observed pathologies are consistent with tuberculosis and brucellosis, and possibly anthrax as well.[114]

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVERSITY: WETLANDS, MALARIA, AND PLAGUE

The perils posed by Butrint's natural environment are well documented in the historical record. In a visit to Corfu in September 1500, Marino Sanuto, a senator of the Republic of Venice, described insalubrious and severe conditions at the site. He stated that soldiers and cannon-makers were reluctant to go to the city because it was considered "a tomb for men because of the bad air."[115] In another passage, he again describes Butrint as the place with bad air *(cativo aere)*.[116] Three centuries later, in 1805, Colonel William Martin Leake visited Butrint and wrote that the air from Lake Butrint was the "principal cause of the fevers so common at Butrinto."[117] In 1807, François Pouqueville found the air pestilential, stating: "The effects of [Butrint's] air are dreaded even across the sea in Kerkyra, when the wind blows from that part of the continent. The fish caught in the lakes are from the same causes unfit for food during the heats of summer."[118] He claimed that the Ottomans had failed in their second large-scale siege of Corfu in 1716 because the troops contracted illnesses caused by the noxious air *(l'air méphytique)*.[119] A travel guide to the Ionian islands published in 1840 informs readers that "the country [of Butrint] is unhealthy in consequence of the vapours."[120] These descriptions refer to malaria, a disease whose name literally means "bad air." Its presence at Butrint was widely reported in Ugolini's time, shortly after the first identification of the disease in 1880.[121]

In 1798, French infantry captain J. P. Bellaire was stationed at the Triangular Fortress.[122] He reported that the water at Butrint was very unhealthy and that it produced harmful air in summer, on account of the

113. This also would explain the sporadic, yet consistent remains of rubbish found at various sites on the headland into the early 17th century.

114. T. Crist (pers. comm.). Brucellosis has been identified at Butrint in human remains from the 12th–13th centuries; see Mutolo et al. 2012.

115. Zamputi 1979, pp. 189–190, n. 111: "Il castello dil Butrintò li dà fastidio; mandano monition, soldati e bombardieri, qualli vanno mal volentieri, per esser sepultura de homeni per il pessimo aiere." See also Sanuto 1880, p. 776.

116. Sanuto 1880, p. 812; Zamputi 1979, pp. 191–192, n. 114.

117. Leake 1835b, p. 66.

118. Pouqueville 1806, p. 358; 1820, pp. 1, 29, 32–35.

119. Pouqueville 1826, p. 45.

120. Murray 1840, p. 228.

121. Ugolini 1937, pp. 29, 38; Jones 1909, pp. 4–8. The malarial parasite was discovered in 1880. The discovery that mosquitos transmitted malaria was made on August 20, 1897 by British medical officer Ronald Ross.

122. Bellaire 1805, pp. v, 125–135, 255–272. Bellaire, Captain of the French infantry, recounts, as an eyewitness, the battle against Ali Pasha in 1798.

marshes and seasonal flooding of the valley. He described also how Venetian soldiers garrisoning the fortress contracted illnesses with symptoms similar to the plague:

> The air at Butrint is so unhealthy, that the majority of Venetian soldiers who occupied the fort had leg ulcers, which were deemed incurable: all these soldiers and their officers resembled plague victims; a certain number perished annually in the summer. It even happened on occasion that the Venetians were forced to abandon the fort for several months without a garrison.[123]

These illnesses were tied to the ecosystem of Butrint's wetlands. Leg ulcers and plague-like symptoms resemble the pathologies noted in the human remains excavated at the site of the Roman forum that date from the mid-16th to early 17th centuries. The source of these infections may have been brucellosis, tuberculosis, anthrax, malaria, or some combination of them. Bellaire understood that the diseases were related to the natural environment. He suggested that permanent drainage of the marshes could restore Butrint to its former healthy state in antiquity.

Tied to the wetlands, these diseases affected cattle as well, and infected livestock may even have been the primary source of transmission. Malaria compromises the immune system, increasing the incidence of infections and nutritional deficiencies. While it cannot be proven at present, it is possible that the individuals who were buried at the site of the forum suffered from malaria and may have perished because of it. Communities infected with malaria suffer particularly high infant mortality rates,[124] and the infant burials in the forum are consistent with this pattern. This is not, however, to say that the infant burials serve as direct evidence of malaria; infant mortality rates are typically high in preindustrial societies.

Bellaire understood that Butrint was blighted by its wetlands. The problems caused by the high water table were evident to Leake and Pouqueville as well: disease, property loss, a lack of safe drinking water, poor air quality, limited habitation, and flooding. Leake mentions the prevalence of fevers, which are the principal symptom of malaria. With Butrint's wetland ecosystem thriving in the 13th–14th century, and Sanuto's reference to deaths linked to bad air at Butrint as early as 1500, we can conclude that malaria was endemic to Butrint from the start of its Venetian era in the late 14th century.

In addition to malaria, plague was another major adversity at Butrint, albeit episodically. Venetian records of the 18th century report the outbreak of plague and a mandatory 26 days of quarantine along the Epeirote coast,[125] and some Venetian maps of the period were commissioned to aid with quarantine measures (see p. 397, below). Public measures to contain the contagion also included strict health regulations. For example, all boats traveling to Butrint were licensed and assigned an escort *(guardiano)* who ensured compliance with health regulations.[126] Licenses required that vessels going to Butrint for the purposes of loading and unloading fish from the fisheries were "prohibited upon pain of death from touching or disembarking upon any other shore of the mainland, from joining with ships in quarantine, or from bringing aboard a passenger without written permission."[127] One license dated to 1762–1763 specifically prohibited dealings

123. Bellaire 1805, p. 131: "L'air de Butrinto est tellement malsain, que la majeure partie des soldats vénitiens qui occupoient le fort étoient atteints aux jambes d'ulcères réputés incurables: tous ces soldats, ainsi que leurs officiers, ressembloient à des pestiférés; il en périssoit annuellement un certain nombre dans l'été. Il arriva même quelquefois que les Vénitiens furent obligés de laisser pendant plusieurs mois le fort sans garnison." Translation my own.

124. Jones 1909, pp. 90–91.

125. Davies 2004, p. 21: Enetiki Dioikisi, Corfu, file 1233 (Greek Archives of Corfu concerning Venetian Administration).

126. Davies 2004, pp. 26–31: Ugeionomeio, Corfu, file 64, 77 (Greek Archives of Corfu concerning Public Health Commissioners).

127. "Se gli proibisce in pena della vita di toccare, o sbarcare in alcuna riva di Terra Firma, unirsi in viaggio con navigli di contumacia essendo loro di liberta, o di levare alcuno senza le solite permissioni inscrito." Davies 2004, pp. 26–28: Ugeionomeio, Corfu, file 64 (Greek Archives of Corfu concerning Public Health Commissioners).

with people on the Butrint headland *(castello)* and surrounding region on account of plague. Those living in the "huts" *(callive)* at the fishery were forbidden to have contact with local villagers. Venetian trade with local Turks and Albanians had to be supervised by health escorts. Pouqueville claims that in 1780, plague killed two-thirds of the inhabitants of Konispol, a town located 21 km southeast of Butrint.[128] Plague, then, was clearly another cause of fatal illnesses, which might account for the burials in the archaeological record at Butrint.

HISTORICAL MAPS AND THE MANAGEMENT OF BUTRINT'S WETLANDS

Historical maps of Butrint show features associated with the challenging conditions of the natural environment. The earliest modern map that shows Butrint was made in 1513 by Ottoman cartographer Piri Reis (Fig. 30).[129] Later, in 1525, he presented a compilation of maps to Süleyman the Magnificent that included an expanded map of Corfu and its region, with Butrint's location marked (Fig. 31). In 1528, Venetian scholar Benedetto Bordone published a sketch map of Corfu and Butrint in his study of the islands of the world (Fig. 32).[130] A Venetian map dated to 1537, the year of the Ottoman attack, depicts numerous sites on Corfu and marks the position of Butrint with an image of a church atop a fortified city (Fig. 33).[131] Butrint appears on the Epeirote coastline opposite Corfu on Venetian maps dating to 1564, 1570, 1571, and 1602,[132] which are reproductions of an original made in the second quarter of the 16th century.

Among all of the known historical maps showing Butrint, perhaps the most detailed in its representation of the site is a Venetian map of 1662–1664 that recently has come to light (Fig. 34).[133] It depicts the acropolis and headland fortifications, as well as a number of other features of the landscape. The perspective of the map is intriguing. Its aerial vantage point is from the view of Corfu, except for the Triangular Fortress, which alone is depicted in plan near the center of the map. The fortress is labeled "Forte erretto da Turchi" (fort built by the Turks). The focus of the map is thus squarely on the Triangular Fortress, which had been built only a few years earlier in 1655. According to Marmora, the *provveditore generale* Niccolo Barbati captured the fortress in 1660, promising to hunt infidels and to return the emolument of the fishery to the Doge of Venice.[134] Hostilities with the Turks over Butrint around this time prompted the Venetians to create the map, which explains why its emphasis was on the recently constructed fortress. Butrint and the Venetian Tower are labeled "demolita" (destroyed). The fish weirs are carefully depicted, consisting of three rows of gates. The Vrina Plain is labeled "campagna rasa quasi tutti palude" (leveled land almost all swamp). No agricultural works or signs of cultivated land are indicated on the Vrina Plain. Yet a Venetian contract of 1636 stipulated that the leaseholder of the fishery was to dig a drainage ditch on the plain from the Pavllas River to the sea and maintain it in order to prevent flooding.[135]

Official maps of the Butrint region were made by Vincenzo Coronelli, court cartographer of the Republic of Venice from 1685.[136] His map of

128. Pouqueville 1826, p. 46.

129. Robinson and van den Boogert 2003, p. 6, fig. 1.

130. Bordone 1528, p. xxxiiii.

131. See Tooley 1939, p. 25, no. 161.

132. Concina 1986, p. 203, nn. 306, 307; Lane 2004, p. 33, fig. 3:5; Hodges 2006a, p. 24.

133. Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Dispacci Rettori Corfu, photo 30, drawing M. See also Bevilacqua et al. 2015, p. 36; Xhufi 2016, pp. 878–890.

134. Marmora 1672, p. 451.

135. Davies 2013, p. 283: Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Provveditori di Terra e da Mar, file 969.

136. Hodges 2006a, p. 26.

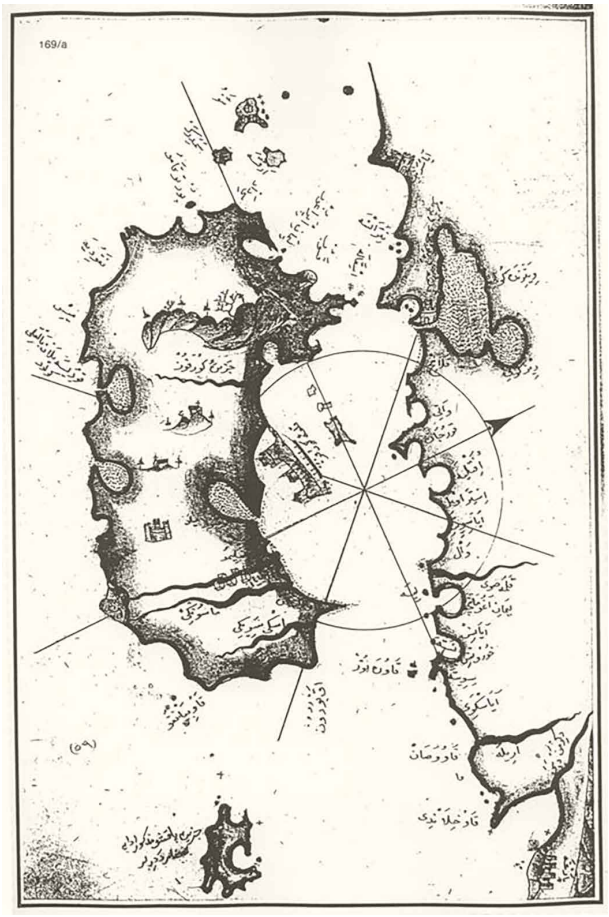


Figure 30. Ottoman map of Corfu and Butrint by Piri Reis, 1513.
Courtesy Butrint Foundation

1688 (Fig. 35) shows the Triangular Fortress, the Venetian Tower, and the small shrine of Saint Demetrious on the Vivari Channel.[137] A new land survey was undertaken after the Treaty of Passarowitz at the end to the Seventh Ottoman-Venetian War (1714–1718).[138] Venetian maps of 1718 and 1725 do not show land under cultivation on the Vrina Plain.[139] Records indicate that the plain remained uncultivated in 1726 and that contractors of Butrint's fishery felt threatened by local villagers who would commit acts of extortion and attack boats traveling to and from the fishery.[140] In contrast, a map dating to the mid-18th century shows a long canal parallel to the Vivari Channel, from the Pavllas River to the Straits of Corfu (Fig. 36).[141] Pietro Combici, a wealthy citizen of Corfu, dug the canal sometime between 1726–1747, after signing a 20-year contract to lease the fishery. The canal is labeled on the map as "taglio Combici" (Combici's cut). It was a costly and difficult undertaking and was therefore tied to the contract for leasing the fishery.[142] The drainage canal was vital to Venice's economic interests at Butrint not only for the purposes of cultivating the plain, but also and

137. Ugolini 1937, p. 39, fig. 28.
138. Davies 2013, p. 283.
139. Carvajal and Palanco 2013, p. 298, fig. 16:12, 13.
140. Davies 2013, p. 283.
141. Davies 2013, pp. 283–284, fig. 15:1.
142. Davies 2004, p. 19: Enetiki Dioikisi, Corfu, file 212 (Greek Archives of Corfu concerning Venetian Administration).

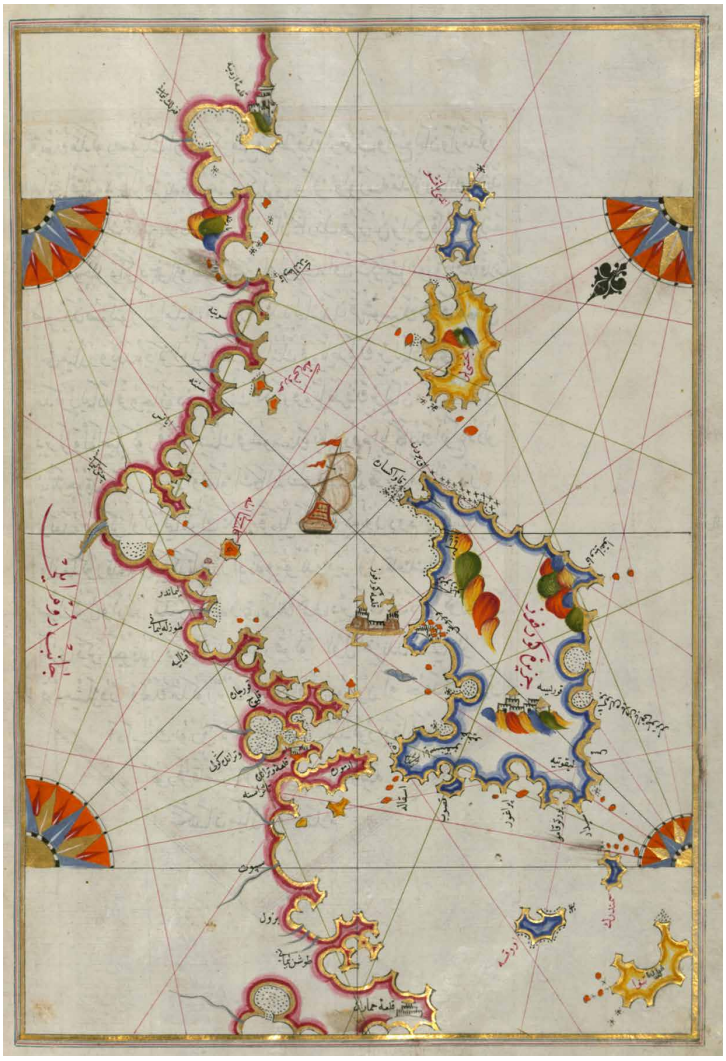


Figure 31. Ottoman map of Corfu and Butrint by Piri Reis, 1525. Baltimore, Walters Art Museum W658.145B. Courtesy the Walters Art Museum

more importantly to prevent fish from escaping from the weirs, thereby lowering the productivity of the fishery.

Marmora's history of 1672 includes a different map of Corfu that shows the Epeirote mainland and the site of Butrint.[143] It was reproduced in the 18th century and updated with contemporary features for the purposes of aiding the Venetian fleet in containing the plague (Fig. 37).[144] Unlike the original map, the 18th-century map depicts the canal dug by Combici on the Vrina Plain, which can, therefore, be dated more precisely to after 1726. A Venetian map of the 1780s, based on the same land survey of 1718, depicts areas of parceled land under cultivation on the plain (Fig. 38).[145] It also shows swaths of swampland around the Butrint region. Notably, this map

143. Marmora 1672, p. 341; Concina 1986, pp. 209–210, n. 327.

144. Concina 1986, p. 210, n. 330.

145. Andrews et al. 2004, p. 148, fig. 8:30; Martin 2004, p. 100, fig. 6.24; Hodges 2006a, pp. 190–191; Carvajal and Palanco 2013, p. 299, fig. 16:14.

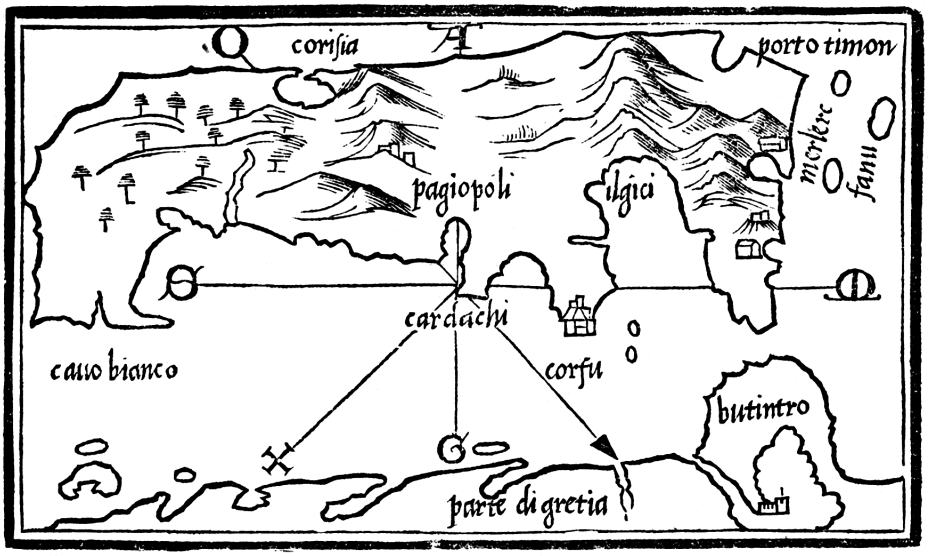


Figure 32. Venetian map of Corfu and Butrint by Benedetto Bordone, 1528. Bordone 1528, p. XXXIIII

Figure 33. Venetian map of Corfu, showing Butrint on the coast of Epirus, 1537. Courtesy Prisma Archivio, Alamy

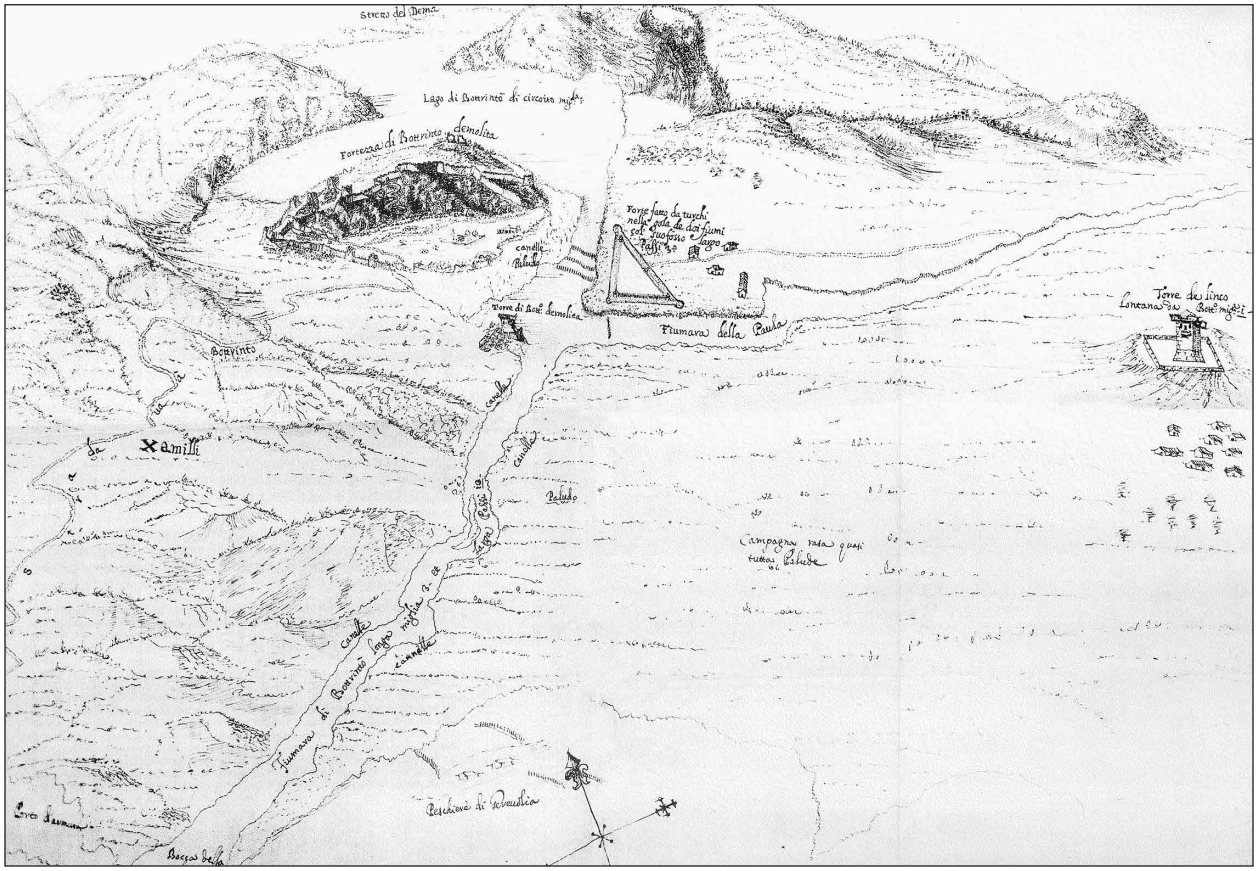


Figure 34. Venetian map of the Butrint region (1662–1664) showing the Venetian Tower, the Triangular Fortress, and the ruins of Butrint. Xhufi 2016, pp. 888–889

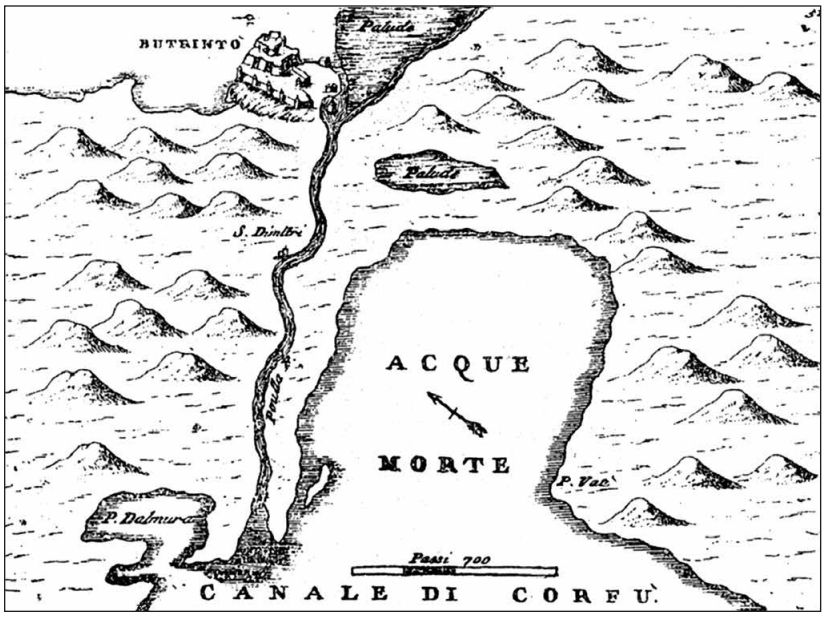


Figure 35. Venetian map of the Butrint region by Vincenzo Coronelli (1688) showing the Triangular Fortress, the Venetian Tower, and the small shrine of Saint Demetrius on the Vivari Channel. Ugolini 1937, p. 39, fig. 28; courtesy Butrint Foundation

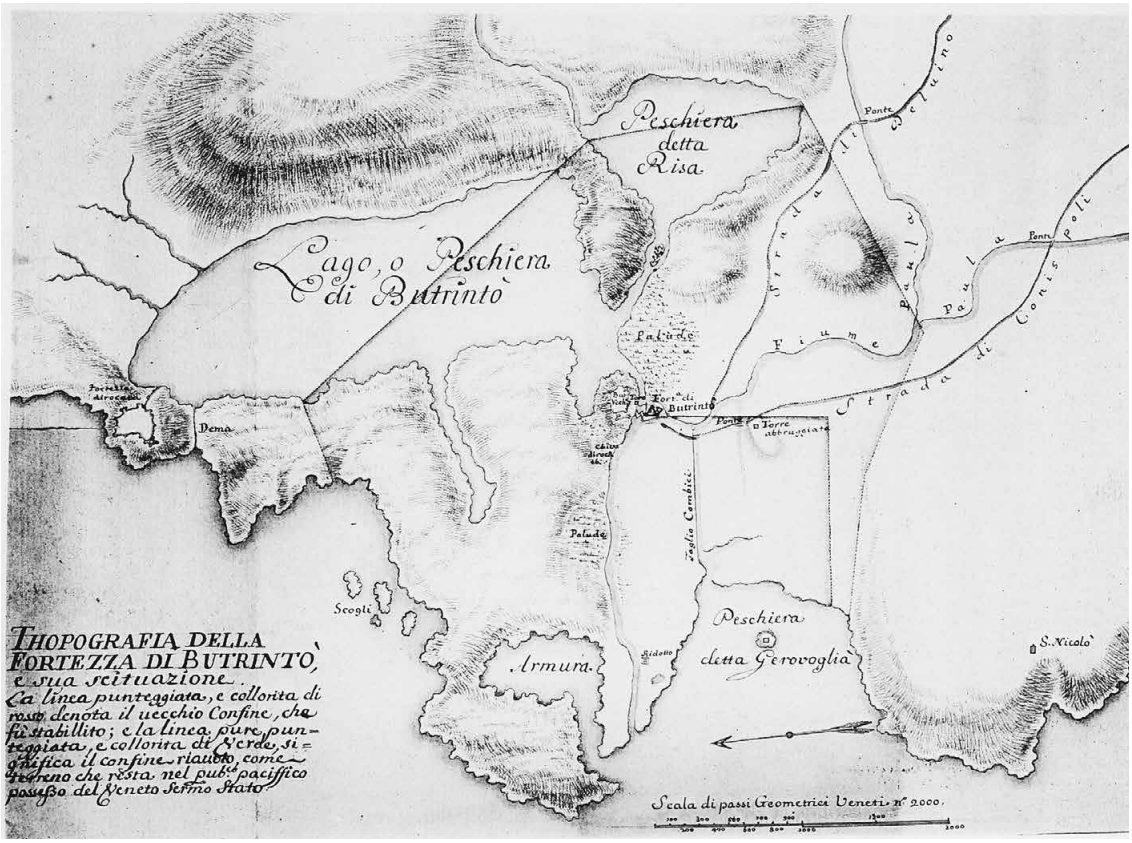


Figure 36. Venetian map from the mid-18th century showing the Butrint region with Combici's canal cut through the Vrina Plain. Davies 2013, p. 284, fig. 15:1; courtesy Butrint Foundation

does not feature Combici's drainage canal. The land was by then controlled by the Gonemi family, who held the lease after Combici, and the drainage canal had silted up, apparently after a short period of neglect.[146] In 1807, Pouqueville described the district of Butrint as having a "wild and sterile aspect."[147] British scholar Thomas Smart Hughes, writing in 1830, noted a similar condition.[148] In 1826, a map made by Lieutenant General Comte Armand Guilleminot depicts two drainage cannels from the Pavllas to the Straits of Corfu.[149]

Under the authority of the Hydrographic Office of the British Admiralty, Commander Arthur Mell of the HMS *Firefly* undertook a detailed topographical survey of the Albanian coastline in 1863.[150] His map of the Butrint region includes monuments with rudimentary descriptions (Fig. 39). The Triangular Fortress is labeled "Ruined Castle and Huts." All the land south of the Vivari Channel (Vrina Plain) is described as "Uncultivated Plain." The site of Butrint and the watchtower are mapped and labeled "Ruins." Large tracts of land adjacent to Lake Butrint, Butrint Bay, and the

Figure 37 ***(opposite, top)*****. Venetian map of the Butrint region (ca. 1726–1780) showing Combici's canal through the Vrina Plain.** Concina 1986, p. 210, no. 330

Figure 38. ***(opposite, bottom)*****. Venetian cadastral map made in the 1780s, based on the land survey of 1718.** Carvajal and Palanco 2013, p. 299, fig. 16:14; courtesy Butrint Foundation

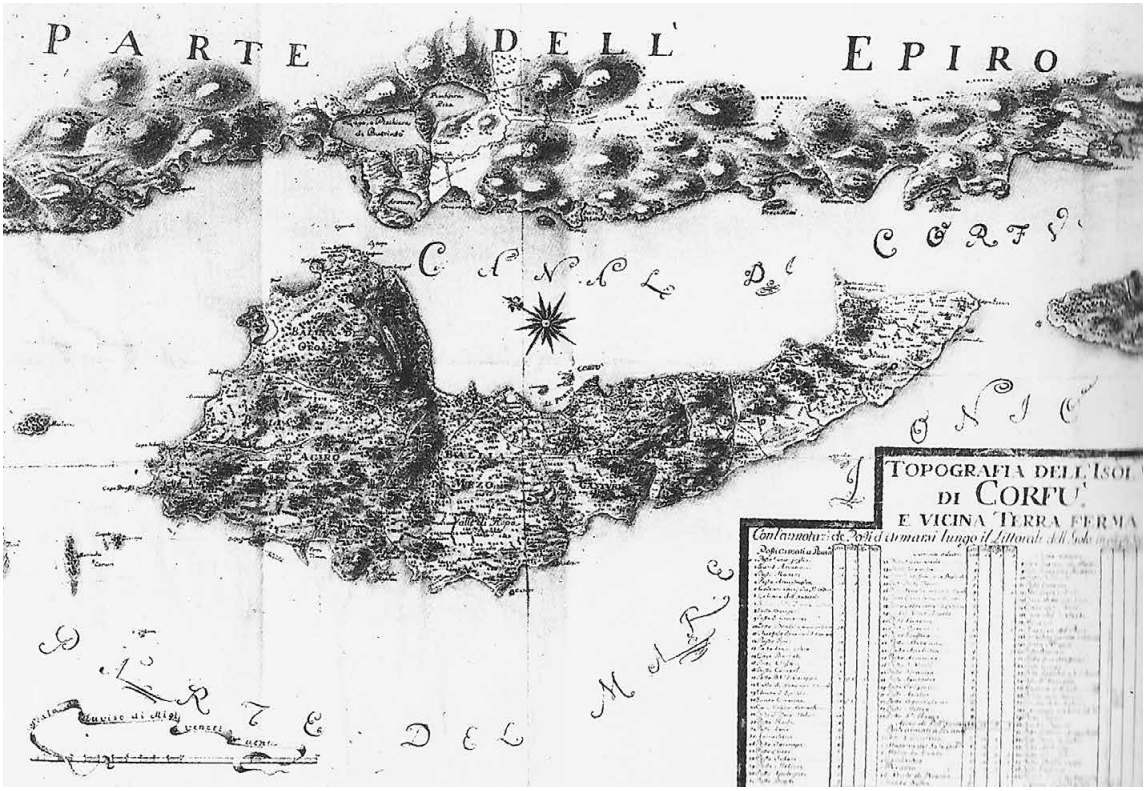
146. A 1777 letter sent by an engineer to the *provveditore generale* of the Butrint fisheries states that the drainage ditches were mostly blocked. See Davies 2004, p. 16; 2013, p. 283: Enetiki Dioikisi, Corfu, file 212 (Greek Archives of Corfu concerning Venetian Administration).

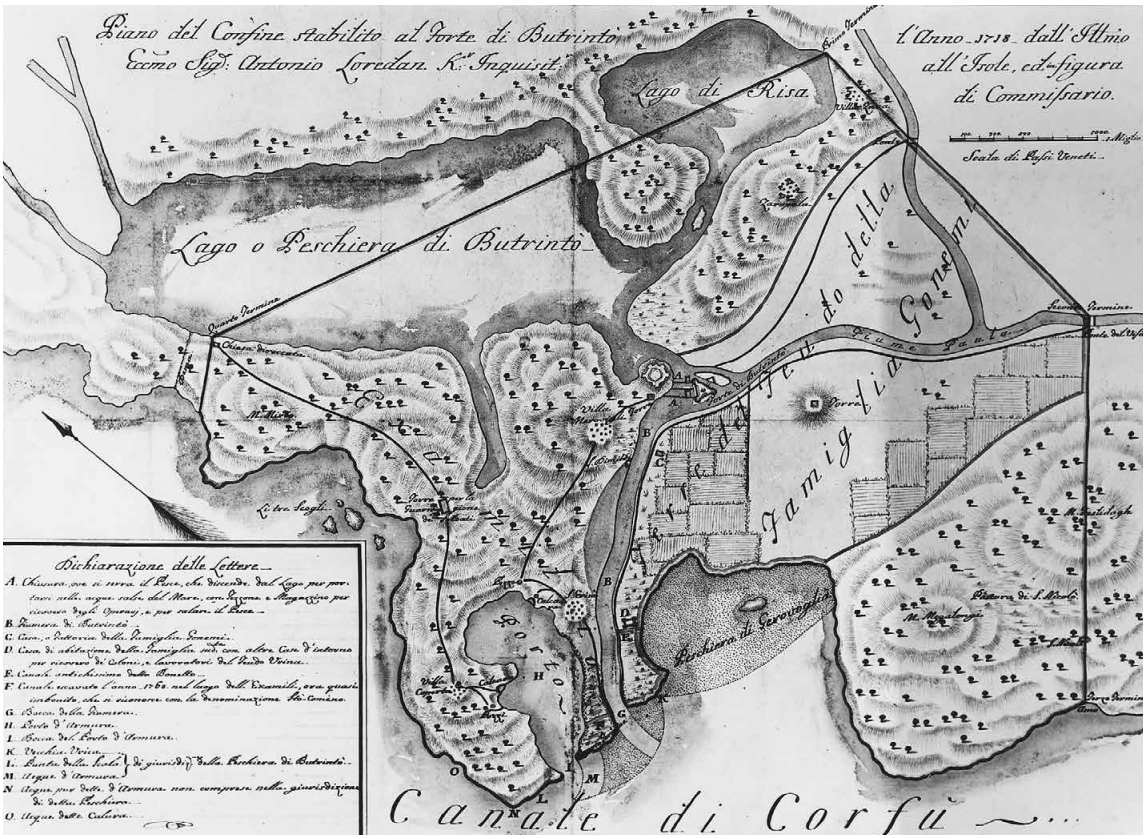
147. Pouqueville 1820, p. 32.

148. Hughes 1830, p. 200.

149. Lane 2004, p. 35, fig. 3:7.

150. Lane 2004, p. 34, fig. 3:6. See also Hodges 2006a, pp. 26–29.


PARTE DELL' EPIRO
CANALE DI CORFU'
MARE
TOPOGRAFIA DELL'ISOLA DI CORFU'
E VICINA TERRA FERMA


Piano del Confine stabilito al Forte di Butrinto
l'Anno 1718 dall'Illmo
Lago di Risa
Lago o Perchiera di Butrinto
Scala di Passi Veneti
Dichiarazione delle Lettere
Canale di Corfù

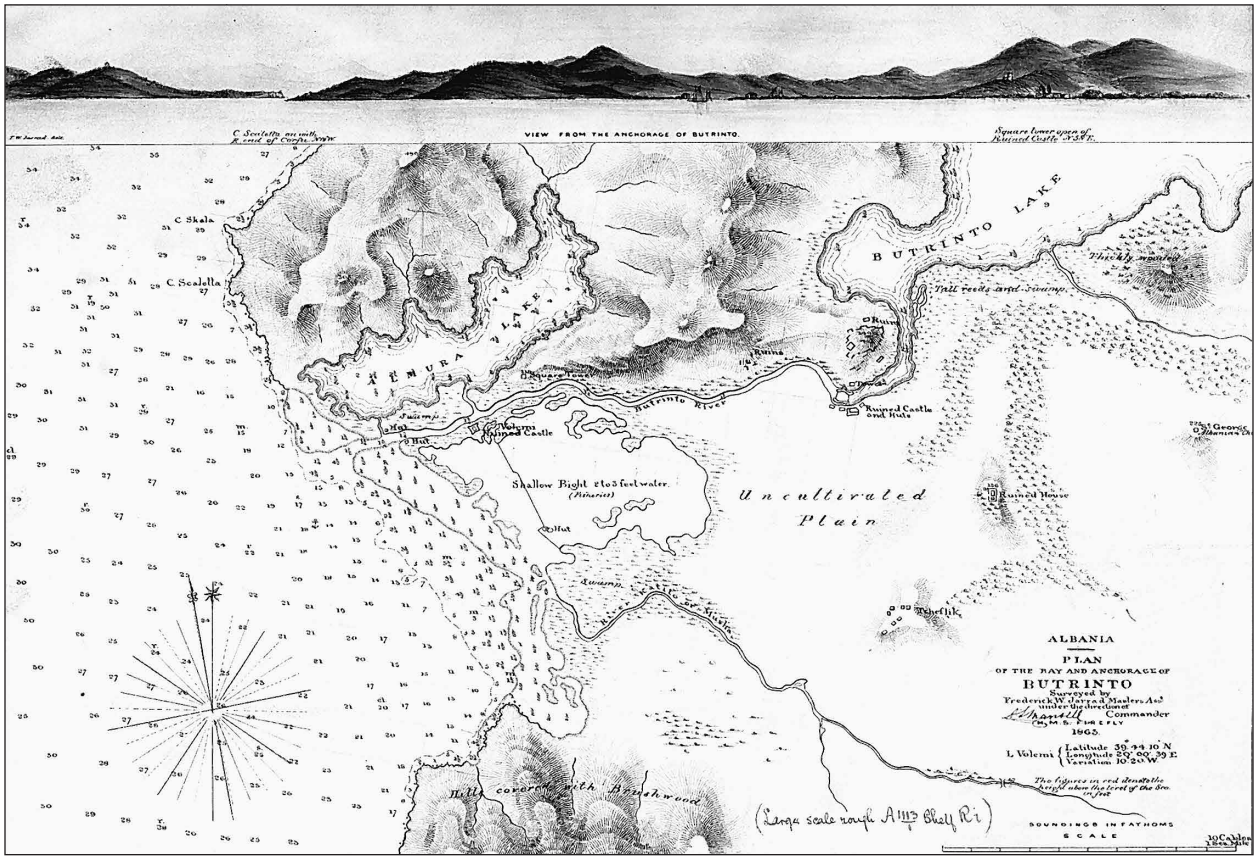


Figure 39. British map of the Butrint region produced by Commander Arthur Mell of the HMS *Firefly*, 1863. Courtesy Butrint Foundation

Vivari Channel are identified as swamps. *The Adriatic Pilot* of the British Admiralty published in 1861 reports that Butrint Bay is considered the best anchorage on the coast of Epeiros, but it warns sailors that Lake Butrint is "stagnant and taints the waters in the vicinity."[151]

It is possible to discern a general pattern of land use for the Vrina Plain on the basis of its formation processes, historical maps of Butrint, and Venetian historical documents. The plain appears to have been productive in 1636 when the contract for drainage works was signed. It was then unproductive in 1662, and it appears to have remained so until 1726. After Combici dug a drainage canal through the plain, it became productive once again around the mid-18th century. But by the 1780s, the drainage canal had silted up and seasonal flooding resumed. The map of 1826 shows new drainage ditches on the plain, such as would have made the land productive again. These ditches had silted up by 1863, and the plain was then unproductive once more, reverting to a wild swamp and woodland.

The homogeneity of the thick alluvial topsoil of the Vrina Plain shows that the same processes of alluviation were at work since about the 13th century, determined principally by flooding and the ecological dynamics of the wetland. Despite the fact that relative sea levels rose over time, the historical maps do not show a linear trend of rising water levels rendering the land on the plain increasingly less cultivable over time. Whether parts of the area were under cultivation or not in a given period depended most on human labor, that is, on the clearance of woods, construction of drainage works, planting of appropriate seasonal crops, and implementation of

151. *Adriatic Pilot* 1861, p. 223.

measures to undermine or circumvent the plain's wetland conditions and flooding cycle. It is of considerable interest that the unproductive period noted above from 1662 to 1726 is concurrent with the two Veneto-Ottoman wars (1685–1699 and 1714–1718). Management of the wetland environment required relatively peaceful conditions, a circumstance that Butrint's strategic position did not often permit.

BUTRINT AND CORFU: BETWEEN SYMBIOSIS AND ANTAGONISM

Positioned off the Epeirote coast, Corfu controlled vital maritime communications along the eastern side of the Strait of Otranto, the most important sea crossing between the ancient regions of Greece and Italy. The island was known as the "gate of the Adriatic," because it was able to regulate shipping across the Ionian and Adriatic seas.[152] Situated 7 km west of Butrint, Corfu exerted a greater influence over Butrint than other neighboring regions in Epeiros.[153] Its strategic importance and economic potential brought foreign powers to the island as early as the 8th century B.C., during the early period of Greek colonization.[154]

Historically, Butrint was often under the power of Corfu, which relied on the city as a strategic foothold on the mainland. Thus Butrint often found itself surrounded by hostile neighbors who laid claim to the land. During the Peloponnesian War in the second half of the 5th century B.C., the city was threatened by Chaonian, Thesprotian, and Molossian tribes.[155] Under Venetian rule, the city contended with local Albanian lords and later with the Ottoman Empire. In 1913, Italy was prepared to go to war to stop Greece from possessing both Butrint and Corfu, fearing Greek control of the Adriatic.[156] After the First World War, the Great Powers dissolved their historic union and apportioned Butrint to Albania and Corfu to Greece. Nevertheless, the two remained inextricably linked. Each being vital to the other's security and prosperity, they shared a mutual interest in cooperating for security, economic exchange, and control of the Straits of Corfu.

In response to the emergent Ottoman threat in the early 16th century, the citizens of Corfu sent a petition to the Republic of Venice requesting that the fortifications of the Acropolis Castle at Butrint be strengthened: "your castle of Butrint located on the mainland, only 12 miles distant from this city [Corfu], the castle which is the protector and right eye of this territory and island."[157] The Ottomans laid siege to Corfu twice (in 1537 and 1716), and in both instances the capture of Butrint preceded the assault of the island.[158] Reportedly, 25,000 troops were assembled at Butrint for the attack of 1537 and 65,000 in that of 1716.[159] A map showing the Ottoman invasion of Corfu for 1716 depicts a line of warships sailing from the territory of Butrint to Corfu.[160] For about 150 years after the peace agreement of 1540, the only mainland possessions of the Republic of Venice in the southern Balkans were the enclaves of Butrint and Parga (ancient Torone).[161] Butrint was thus of foremost strategic value to Venice.

Butrint's relationship with its Albanian and Ottoman neighbors was complex.[162] Acts of hostility between islanders and mainlanders were frequent. The Venetian Tower and the Triangular Fortress were garrisoned for

152. Hughes 1830, p. 208. Napoleon called the Ionian islands the "key to the Adriatic"; see Fleming 1999, p. 71.

153. A distance of 16 km separates the ancient cities of Korkyra and Bouthrotos.

154. Ancient literary accounts already noted Butrint's connection to the island as "the city located opposite Corfu"; see Hernandez 2017b, pp. 214–216.

155. Asonitis 1998, pp. 271–276; Carusi 2011; Hernandez 2017b, pp. 216–217.

156. Schurman 1914, p. 120; Pearson 2004, pp. 42, 131.

157. Sathas 1883, pp. 249–250: "el Castel suo de Butintro posto in terra ferma, distante solum miglia XII da questa città [Corfu], el qual Castello è la tutela et ochio dextro de questa terra sua et insula." Translation my own.

158. Schmitt 1998, p. 317; Soustal 2004, p. 26; Davies 2013, pp. 280–282; Hodges 2013b, pp. 16–18.

159. Diedo 1751, p. 86; Jervis 1852, p. 135.

160. Davies 2004, p. 29.

161. Miller 1921, p. 373.

162. Asonitis 1998.

the purposes of facing local threats. For example, a 1572 report states that Christoforo Condocalli had at various times, and at his own expense, led groups of armed Corfiots against armed groups of villagers at Butrint, and that he killed a number of them to retake control of the Venetian Tower.[163] In 1611, complaints were made that local villagers were attacking Venetian officials and citizens in the area of Butrint.[164] After the Ottoman authorities constructed the Triangular Fortress in 1655, the local Venetian governor Niccolo Barbati captured it by force in 1660 (see p. 372, above).[165]

In 1726, contractors of the fishery and transport vessels were frequently subject to attack and extortion by local villagers.[166] Throughout these centuries, health regulations to prevent the spread of plague restricted contact between islanders and mainlanders. Nevertheless, records also show that locals were often hired for work and that economic exchange between Butrint and Corfu was substantial and constant.[167] Since at least the 15th century, the Venetian authorities considered Albanian immigration into Corfu a perennial problem. Many Albanians were sent back to the mainland, and in 1436, the authorities even proclaimed that any Corfiot citizen harboring Albanians would be executed.[168]

Corfu is reported to have been infertile and sterile in the mid-15th century and unable to sustain itself for more than a quarter of the year without importing resources from the mainland.[169] A Venetian document of 1584 records that the principal revenue of Corfu's treasury was the fishery at Butrint,[170] and documentary references to Butrint's lucrative fishery are indeed plentiful. In the 10th century, Saint Arsinius of Corfu is said to have spoken about the abundance of fish at Butrint.[171] Some of the earliest Venetian references to the fishery date to 1320, 1321, 1362, 1398, 1413, and 1415.[172] In the 15th century, fishing revenues helped cover Venetian expenses at Butrint, including the pay of the *castellanus* and *commestabileria* (constable of Butrint).[173]

An interesting reference to custom tariffs on the fish weirs at Butrint in 1481 mentions salt mines of Corfu, which exported salt to Butrint and the mainland.[174] In 1387, the Republic of Venice destroyed installations for salt extraction at Sagiada (Saiata), located southeast of Butrint, in order to eliminate Sagiada's competition with the island's salt mines,[175] yet another instance of the interconnectedness between the island and the city.[176]

Venetian records also show that large quantities of timber were exported from Butrint to Corfu as early as the 15th century.[177] In 1503, two

163. Marmora 1672, pp. 351–353; Davies 2004, pp. 7–11: Enetokratias, Corfu, file 102 (Greek Archives of Corfu concerning Venetian Rule).

164. Davies 2004, p. 13: Enetiki Dioikisi, Corfu, file 203 (Greek Archives of Corfu concerning Venetian Administration).

165. Marmora 1672, pp. 422, 451; see also Xhufi 2016, pp. 860–873.

166. Davies 2013, p. 283.

167. Davies 2004.

168. Asonitis 1998, pp. 289–290.

169. Sathas 1882, p. 470.

170. Davies 2004, p. 33: Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Sindici Inquisitori in Levante, file 74.

171. Ugolini 1937, p. 33.

172. For 1320, see Valentini 1967, p. 31, n. 52. For 1321, see Nicol 1984, p. 90. For 1362, see Romanos 1889, p. 557. For 1398, see Valentini 1968b, pp. 87–88, n. 714. For 1415, see Soustal 2004, p. 25, citing Valentini 1970, pp. 173–174, n. 1929.

173. Sathas 1882, p. 32; Soustal 2004, p. 25.

174. Zamputi 1967, pp. 66–67, n. 73.

175. Nicol 1984, pp. 161, 230; Asonitis 1998, p. 274.

176. Asonitis 1998, p. 288.

177. Sanuto 1881, pp. 296, 362–363; Zamputi 1979, pp. 341, 344–345, nn. 291, 294.

galleys were loaded with timber from Butrint that was to be used for the construction of a warehouse *(magazen)* on Corfu. Specific information on the commodities imported into Corfu from Butrint can be gleaned from cargo logs and other archives of the Venetian administration on Corfu. Most ships transported timber, together with other commodities. Cargo records of 1611 register the importation of timber, fish, and meat from Butrint.[178] The same categories of material are recorded in 1730–1731.[179] Ship cargoes in 1756–1757 included wood, fish, cattle, pigs, horses, sheep, goats, wool, wheat, maize, legumes, flour, nuts, oats, flax, and salt.[180] Cargoes in 1765–1766 contained timber, fish, cattle, pigs, horses, wheat, and maize.[181] Venice also imported gall-nuts *(valania, villanida)* from Corfu and Butrint, which were used for dyeing and medicines.[182] The archaeobotanical remains from Venetian House III in the forum included wheat, oats, flax, and legumes, showing that many of the commodities shipped in the 18th century were also produced at Butrint in the early 16th century. It thus is evident that the Venetian settlement at Butrint was critical to the defense and trade of Corfu since its establishment in 1386.

In the 18th century, the Venetians constructed the rectangular Bay Fortress (30 × 22 m) at the mouth of the Vivari Channel, overlooking Butrint Bay.[183] The rectangular plan of the fortress is shown on a map of 1725.[184] Although there is some uncertainty regarding the building's purpose at this early stage, it appears on a map of the mid-18th century with the label "Ridotto" (stronghold).[185] In the 1780s, it served as the private home of the Gonemi family, who owned the contract to the fishery.[186] It has been argued that the Bay Fortress served as a Venetian "fortified storage structure" for the export of materials to Corfu.[187] Given Corfu's constant demand for materials from the mainland, the frequent altercations with local villagers, and the hardships posed by the wetlands, indeed this fortified building on the bay, near Corfu, would have been better suited for trade than the Triangular Fortress. The Bay Fortress, thus, gives expression to a new stage in the abandonment history of Butrint, signaling a continued effort by Corfu to exploit the region in the face of adversities.

After its abandonment in 1537, Butrint remained important to Corfu for its natural resources, especially fish and timber, and for the protection of the island. It was invested with troops garrisoned first at the Venetian Tower and later the Triangular Fortress to protect the enclave, fisheries, and small agricultural operations. With the fall of the Venetian Republic in 1797, the Treaty of Campo Formio ceded Butrint and Corfu to France, which held Butrint with a garrison stationed at the Triangular Fortress.

178. Davies 2004, p. 13: Enetiki Dioikisi, Corfu, file 203 (Greek Archives of Corfu concerning Venetian Administration).

179. Davies 2004, pp. 24–25: Ugeionomeio, Corfu, file 46 (Greek Archives of Corfu concerning Public Health Commissioners).

180. Davies 2004, p. 26: Ugeionomeio, Corfu, file 64 (Greek Archives of Corfu concerning Public Health Commissioners).

181. Davies 2004, p. 25: Ugeionomeio, Corfu, file 49 (Greek Archives of Corfu concerning Public Health Commissioners).

182. Soustal 2004, p. 24: *Acta Albaniae Veneta* 2, pp. 53–55, nn. 339, 340.

183. Andrews et al. 2004, p. 148; Karaiskaj 2009, pp. 115–120; Carvajal and Palanco 2013.

184. Carvajal and Palanco 2013, p. 298, fig. 16:13.

185. Davies 2013, p. 284, fig. 15:1.

186. Carvajal and Palanco 2013, p. 297.

187. Carvajal and Palanco 2013, p. 299.

In 1798, Ali Pasha led an armed attack and forced the French to abandon Butrint. Before withdrawing, the French soldiers torched the Triangular Fortress and ostensibly blew up its towers.[188] Butrint then fell under Ottoman rule from 1798 until 1913. Through it all, Corfu continued to depend on Butrint for survival.

OTTOMAN BUTRINT

In the 19th century, Butrint was isolated and largely disconnected from centralized authority, situated at the western fringe of the declining Ottoman Empire. The region of Albania was overseen by local governors *(beys)* who controlled the cantons of the region and collected tribute.[189] By the mid-18th century, many of the feudal regions in Illyria and Epeiros had fallen under the authority of two regional centers, one at Shkodra, the other at Ioannina, each ruled by a *pasha.* Ali Pasha of Tepelena, *pasha* of Ioannina, ultimately became the principal authority over all Epeiros and much of Macedonia and the Peloponnese.[190] By virtue of the size and location of his dominion, at what was effectively the intersection of East and West at the time, he became an important political figure to the British, French, Russians, and the Porte. From 1814 to 1864, the British controlled Corfu and the other Ionian Islands.[191] Thomas Maitland, Lord High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands from 1816 to 1823, invited French painter Louis Dupré to a conference at Butrint with Ali Pasha. It was then that Dupré made the famous colored drawing of Ali Pasha in a *kirlanguitch* (small cutter) while on a hunting expedition in Lake Butrint.[192]

Visiting Butrint in 1805, Colonel Leake wrote that "Buthrotum is in a desolate state."[193] Leake describes the lucrative fishing and timber industries, which he explains were the principal interests of Venice in Butrint. He also notes that Corfu depended on a continuous supply of goods from the mainland—wood, fish, botargo (roe), wheat, and cattle—most of which came from the Butrint region.[194] When water happened to be scarce on Corfu, as often occurred in the summer months, sailors drew it from Butrint's Pavllas River.[195] Not only did Corfu benefit from these needed supplies, but the Butrint region also provided the island with a market for its surplus goods, which included fruits (oranges, lemons, and figs), rice, wine, and oil.[196]

188. Bellaire 1805, pp. 255–272; Pouqueville 1806, p. 358; Hughes 1830, p. 160; Davenport 1837, p. 128; Romanos 1889, p. 559.

189. Vickers 1999, pp. 18–24.

190. For Ali Pasha, see Davenport 1837; Foss 1978, pp. 37–48; Brøndsted 1999; Fleming 1999; Winnifrith 2002, pp. 114–119. The Ottomans controlled Ioannina from 1430 to 1913.

191. See Gallant 2002; Potts 2013.

192. Dupré 1825, pp. 9–10. The drawing was made on March 9, 1819. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Parga, which the British had sold to the Ottomans in 1817; see Laurent 1821, p. 229. Many of Ali Pasha's meetings and visits with Englishmen, who also included Henry Holland (1815, pp. 261, 286), were part of his policy to form an alliance with England in order to counter French and Russian encroachments in Epeiros. Ali Pasha's death came in 1822, when he was shot and beheaded in the midst of a parley with Ottoman troops, after his revolt against Sultan Mahmud II.

193. Leake 1835b, p. 66. Foreign governments dispatched agents to the court of Ali Pasha. British King George III sent Leake.

194. Leake 1835a, pp. 8–10.

195. *Adriatic Pilot* 1861, p. 226.

196. Leake 1835a, p. 9.

In 1807, François Pouqueville saw large numbers of Corfiot fishing boats at Butrint.[197] Under Ali Pasha, the fishery began to export fish to Ioannina as well.[198] Pouqueville believed that the Turks delivered the final blow *(les derniers coups)* to the city and that Ali Pasha was responsible for Butrint's abandonment.[199] He witnessed at first-hand the devastation caused by Ali Pasha's soldiers, who burned down houses and buildings in an attempt to eradicate Epeirote resistance.[200] He also observed that peasants from Corfu, who would cross over to the mainland to labor in the fields seasonally, withdrew at the arrival of Ali Pasha's men. Ali Pasha strengthened the Bay Fortress with towers and transformed it into a frontier fortification opposite Corfu.[201] In the 20th century, the fortress came to serve as a military installation for Communist Albania.

While it is unlikely that any one individual or singular event was responsible for the continued abandonment of Butrint, political instabilities and local hostilities of the sort that marked Ali Pasha's time must have disrupted the clearance of drainage ditches and the management of the wetlands. Allowing the wetlands to thrive unabated would exacerbate the adverse environmental conditions that plagued Butrint throughout much of its modern history. The map of 1826 shows drainage canals on the Vrina Plain, suggesting reinvestment on the part of the British, soon after they had gained control of Corfu.[202] By the mid-19th century, however, Butrint and its environs were being exploited by foreign hunters for wild game and by contractors who leased land for timber, fish, and meat to export to Corfu. Transhumant Vlach shepherds living seasonally at Butrint cooperated and apparently benefitted from these industries. Many of the flocks they tended at Butrint were owned by the monastery at Santa Quaranta (Church of the Forty Martyrs; see Fig. 3:a).[203]

During this period, fear of plague continued to be a wedge between island and mainland. Stationed at Corfu, British Captain J. J. Best reports being subjected to a mandatory seven-day quarantine in 1838 that was required of anyone arriving at Corfu from Albania.[204] He also notes that sportsmen could not find better hunting grounds than along the coast of Albania, citing Lake Butrint in particular. According to the 1861 *Adriatic Pilot,* Butrint abounded in wild game.[205] In the late 19th century, Ninth Earl of Cavan Frederick Edward Gould Lambart mentions that Butrint had become a popular destination for English shooting parties.[206] In 1862, Irish aristocrat Arthur Kavanagh undertook an extensive hunting voyage along the Albanian coast, visiting Butrint many times in pursuit of chamois, boar, wolves, jackals, deer, birds, fowl, and foxes.[207] Kavanagh also spent considerable time on Corfu and reported that large quantities of firewood were regularly exported to the island from Butrint.[208] He also mentions large numbers of local boats *(tribacalos)* transporting wood from the nearby port of Fettilia, south of Butrint. He saw beef regularly shipped from Butrint to Corfu on wood-carrying boats.[209]

In his account of the "shooting cruise" of 1862, Kavanagh noted that the only inhabitants at Butrint were transhumant shepherds in the winter. At the end of spring, the shepherds would migrate to high pastures in the mountains. "In the summer . . . this district [Butrint] is left in undisturbed possession of the snakes and jackals," wrote Kavanagh,[210] who observed that

197. Pouqueville 1806, p. 358; 1820, pp. 1, 29, 32–35. Pouqueville joined the court of Ali Pasha as Consul-General of France under Napoleon Bonaparte.

198. Hodges 2013b, p. 17.

199. Pouqueville 1826, p. 40.

200. Pouqueville 1920, pp. 31–32.

201. Karaiskaj 2009, pp. 119–120; Carvajal and Palanco 2013, p. 306.

202. Lane 2004, p. 35, fig. 3:7.

203. Ugolini 1927, p. 147; Kavanagh 1865, pp. 180, 185; Meksi 1985, pp. 38, 43; Hodges 2006a, pp. 217–220; 2006b, 2007; Hodges and Mitchell 2014.

204. Best 1842, pp. 53, 66.

205. *Adriatic Pilot* 1861, p. 223.

206. Cavan 1897, p. 58.

207. Kavanagh 1865, pp. 2–3, 118–120.

208. Kavanagh 1865, p. 180.

209. Kavanagh 1865, p. 185. According to Kavanagh, all the pastureland of the district of Fettilia was leased to a contractor to supply meat to the British garrison on Corfu.

210. Kavanagh 1865, p. 119.

most animals—other than the snakes and jackals—followed the shepherds, including sheep, goats, pigs, deer, and wolves. He visited Butrint once in May, "but there was not a living soul to be found."[211] The prevailing conditions at Butrint had changed little when Ugolini made his first trip to the city more than 60 years later.[212]

These accounts refer to the peak period of Butrint's abandonment in the 19th century, and they provide an important perspective that helps define the nature of abandonment at the site. While there was no permanent habitation on the headland, the only period of complete abandonment, by people and animals alike, was during the summer months. Otherwise, Vlach shepherds inhabited the area seasonally and a village called Livari developed around the ruins of the Triangular Fortress, its inhabitants pursuing the lucrative fishing industry. During the period of abandonment, Butrint and its entire microregion remained economically active, serving not a settlement at Butrint, but rather the island of Corfu. The fishery was very productive, and large amounts of fish were exported to Corfu, together with timber, meat, and wheat. Fruits, rice, wine, oil, and salt were imported from Corfu. All of the land around Butrint was carefully assessed, parceled, and assigned by contracts to Corfiots for economic exploitation. Numerous boats from Corfu routinely arrived at Butrint to fish, a privilege granted only to those who held a permit at Corfu. Wealthy European foreigners and military personnel from Corfu visited seasonally to hunt a variety of wild animals.

THE VILLAGE OF LIVARI AND THE SALT HOUSE

In 1861, English scholar Henry Fanshawe Tozer arrived at the village called Livari at Butrint. He noted that its name derived from "*vivarium,* from the fisheries in the lake."[213] The village was occupied by the contractor of the fisheries and his employees and by the shepherds who returned to Butrint seasonally for winter pasture. He adds that the Greeks on Corfu called the village Butrinto or Vutzindro, and that he was somewhat confused at the site because these names were unknown to the "people of the place."

George de la Poer Beresford published 12 double-tinted lithographs of scenes from southern Albania in 1855.[214] One depicts the Triangular Fortress and the Venetian Tower amidst the landscape of abandoned Butrint (Fig. 40). In the foreground, two shepherds, dressed in Albanian garb, one with a shepherd's crook and the other leaning on a rifle, stand on a rocky outcrop next to a shepherd dog.[215] The dog is looking intently at some distant object, probably a ship docked at Butrint Bay.[216] A tiny boat with two individuals paddling upstream on the placid water of the Vivari Channel adds to the small human presence in this natural environment.

In 1853, British artist Henry Cook published a lithograph of Butrint that he made during a tour with Sir Henry Ward, Lord High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands from 1849–1855 (Fig. 41).[217] Entitled *The Aga's House,* the engraving depicts a lively scene around the Triangular Fortress, which is a stark contrast to the desolate ruins of the fortress depicted by Beresford.[218] Although the fortress does appear to be a ruin, there are small

211. Kavanagh 1865, p. 119.

212. Ugolini 1937, pp. 34–40.

213. Tozer 1869, pp. 232–233. The Vivari Channel derives its name from this village.

214. Beresford 1855.

215. Pouqueville (1820, p. 29) mentions that in 1806, he encountered similarly armed shepherds accompanied by ferocious dogs.

216. A sand bar at the mouth of the Vivari Channel prevented large boats from entering Lake Butrint.

217. For more on this tour, see Cook 1853.

218. An edited volume in 1860 published by the members of the British Ornithologists' Union states that the fort was called the "Aga's House"; see Sclater 1860, p. 347. "Aga" was a term for the Ottoman authority of a district.

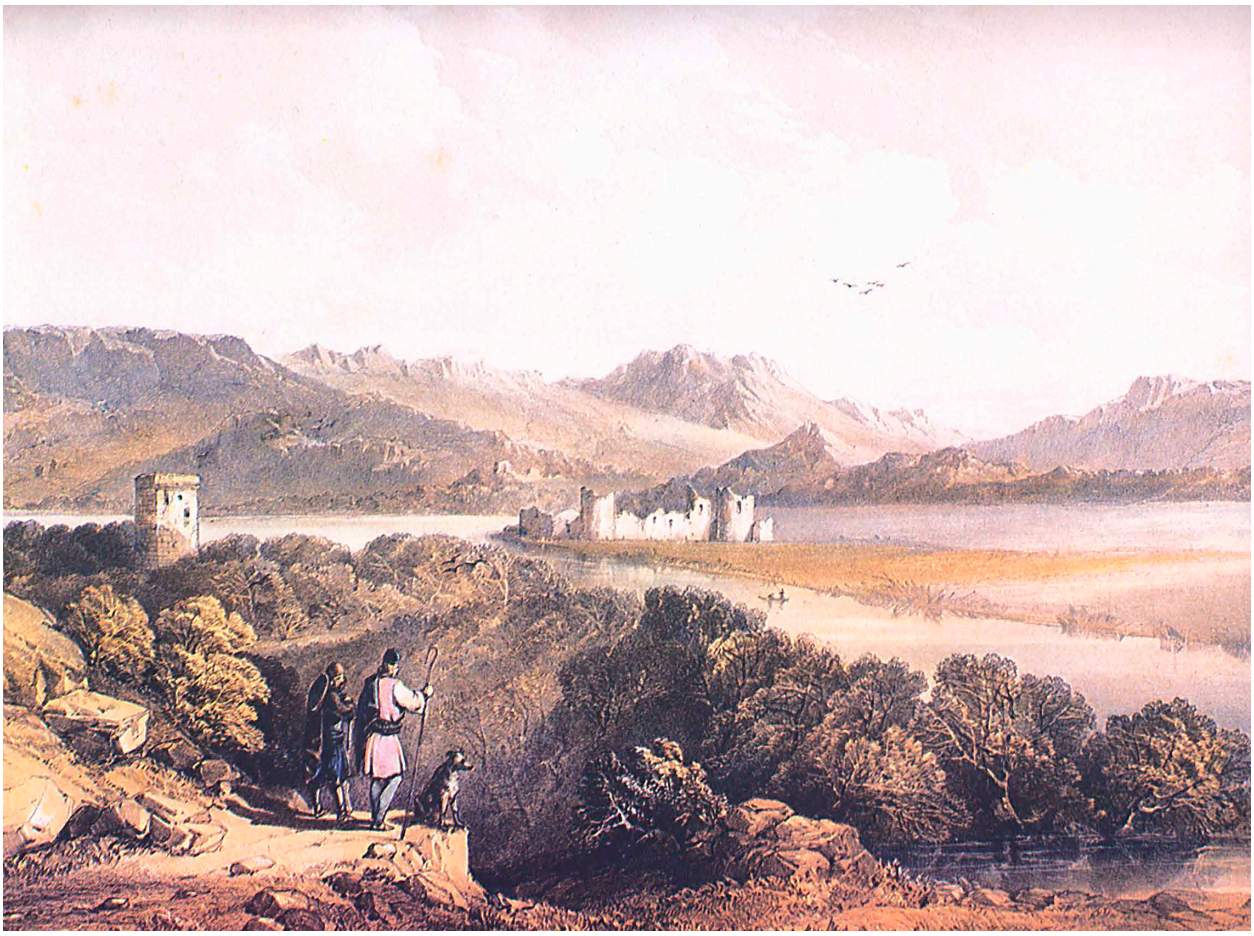


Figure 40. Lithograph by George de la Poer Beresford, 1855, showing the Venetian Tower and Triangular Fortress. Beresford 1855, pl. 12; courtesy Butrint Foundation

roofed dwellings in and around it, and several individuals are engaged in activities on both sides of the channel. New details on the state of things at Butrint during this period can be gleaned from the illustration, confirming the archaeological and historical evidence.

In the foreground on the northern bank of the Vivari Channel, a group of Albanians armed with rifles are transporting a dead boar toward two small boats. Nearby is a stack of logs ready for shipment. The scene is thus one of hunting and timber transport, an illustration of the historical accounts of cargo shipments from Butrint that we have considered. On the opposite bank of the river, there is a docked sailboat. To the right of it, two individuals engage in close conversation, standing next to two Albanians who are squatting to tend a fire, probably burning rubbish. Of the two individuals in conversation, one is a foreigner, an Englishman identifiable by his coat and pants, the other an Albanian, identifiable by his *fustanella* (Albanian skirt). The scene depicts a negotiation, which, considered in the context of the activities on the other bank of the channel, probably relates to hunting and trade. It is conceivable that the foreigner is Cook's British companion, Lord Ward himself. This scene would then illustrate cooperation between Ottoman and British officials for the purposes of trade.

A weir, made of reeds, can be seen in the middle left of the engraving, running across the Vivari Channel. One side has a latched door that could

Figure 41. Henry Cook's *The Aga's House*, 1853, showing the Triangular Fortress. Cook 1853, pl. 6; courtesy Butrint Foundation

be opened to allow small boats and migrating fish to pass through but otherwise would be closed to trap fish in Lake Butrint. The buildings around the ruined fortress are part of the small village of Livari. The larger building adjoining the northern side of the Triangular Fortress served the fishery. Its height and terminal exedra give it the appearance of a church, which could have been the building's original function, but it did not operate as one in Cook's day.[219] The central door at the exedra end would be most unusual for a church, because that is the traditional location for the sanctuary and altar.

A productive fishery like this one at Butrint would have required, among other things, large amounts of salt and a shaded facility where the highly perishable fish could be preserved, prepared, and stored for export.[220] Leake met the contractor who leased the fisheries, and he reports that both fresh and salted fish were sold in a "small stone building," three-quarters of which was used for a shop and storage, while the rest served as the contractor's quarters.[221] He observed boxes with salted grey mullet among the stores, and the roes of mullet suspended from the rafters to be smoked and enclosed in wax for preservation. Pouqueville states that a "customs house and some magazines" (douane et quelques magasins) were adjoined to the Triangular Fortress.[222] It appears that the custom's house refers to the same stone building described by Leake, namely this Salt House illustrated by Cook.

It was common for artists in the 19th century to embellish their sketches and paintings with bucolic backgrounds populated with ruins and shepherds.[223] This was evidently the case with Beresford, who is said to have used "a little artistic license" in his drawing to create a "somewhat romanticized view."[224] We know that Cook held the view that ancient ruins should not be restored, but rather preserved "as is" to protect their

219. The building is identified as a church by Hodges (2006a, p. 197). Hobhouse (1817, p. 147) mentions a Catholic bishop at Butrint who was established there by the Venetians and later protected by both the French and Ali Pasha. Bellaire (1805, p. 130) reports that a Greek Orthodox chapel was located inside the courtyard of the fortress.

220. Bekker-Nielsen 2005, pp. 88–89; Curtis 2005; Gertwagen 2008.

221. Leake 1835a, p. 9.

222. Pouqueville 1826, p. 44.

223. Tsigakou 1981; Terkenli, Tsalikidis, and Tsigakou 2001.

224. Hodges et al. 2004, p. 4.

picturesque aesthetic.[225] Cook's drawings of Butrint's details, on the other hand, do appear to have been rendered realistically. His sketch of the tomb/chapel on the Vivari Channel in the "Robber's Castle" was an accurate depiction of the ruin (see Fig. 7).[226] The same is true of the watchtower and the landscape features. In the sketch "Aga's House," the ruins today are also consistent with those depicted. The remains of walls attached to the Triangular Fortress demonstrate that a large building (the Salt House) was attached to it, as illustrated by both Cook and Beresford. The complex scene showing a negotiation between a British and Ottoman official and the activities of fishing, hunting, and timber transport is, moreover neither bucolic nor romantic. The outstretched arms of the Englishman show gestures of pleading or frustration, while Albanians burn rubbish nearby. For the most part then, the drawing appears to be a realistic representation of the sort of activities that are known to have taken place at Butrint in the mid-19th century.

CONCLUSIONS

The three Venetian houses excavated at the site of the forum were built shortly after the Republic of Venice acquired Butrint in 1386. The establishment of this colonial settlement entailed a demarcation of property boundaries in the lower city such that each house controlled a small plot of land. Some houses, such as I and III, were newly built from materials salvaged from the historic buildings of the city. Other homes, such as Venetian House II, were reconstructions of older buildings. A relatively high number of churches and shrines were present in the settlement. The Stoa Church, the church at the Fountain Complex, and the Baptistery Church were all close to the houses at the site of the old forum. Although Butrint had ceased to be the seat of a suffragan bishop in 1337–1338, a strong ecclesiastical presence continued, and the inhabitants of the houses were probably closely associated with the church. The original settlement appears relatively prosperous. Most of the silver coins recovered by excavation, including the coin hoard from Venetian House II, date closer to the early colonial period than to the later occupation phases of the houses. The Venetian Republic invested heavily in the defense of the enclave, strengthening the Acropolis Castle and the fortifications around the headland. Deliberations began immediately to restore the 2,000-year-old Dema Wall fortification to protect the enclave, a project completed in 1475. The fishery served as the economic foundation of the settlement: its revenue paid for Butrint's defenses and the salary of the *castellanus* and also enriched Corfu's treasury. The production of timber and agricultural commodities were significant industries, which Corfu depended on for its survival. Most, if not all, the Venetian colonists were Corfiot citizens who held long-standing interests in the economic exploitation of the Butrint region.

The Venetian settlement at Butrint endured in the face of great adversity. By the 14th century, rising (relative) sea levels had brought about seasonal flooding, which created a wetland habitat, with reed marshes across much of what was once the Vrina Plain. These wetlands fostered conditions favorable

225. Tsigakou 1981, p. 69.

226. Hernandez and Mitchell 2013, p. 185; Cook 1853.

for the proliferation of mosquitoes and the spread of malaria. Deadly "bad air" is historically attested at Butrint by 1500. As environmental conditions at the site deteriorated, agricultural production diminished and the settlement found it difficult to pay for its own defensive infrastructure. These difficulties were exacerbated by plague, which broke out episodically throughout Epeiros.

By the early 15th century, Butrint had effectively become a territorial frontier of the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Empire. For the Venetians, Butrint remained the lifeline of Corfu, supplying critical resources to sustain its garrison and population, and operating in tandem with the island to control maritime communications along the western Balkan coastline. For the Ottomans, Butrint was key to the conquest of Corfu and the ejection of the Venetians from the southern Balkans. Its rich natural resources in fish and timber were coveted by Ottoman authorities and local villagers alike, increasing the scale and frequency of hostilities at Butrint.

Until the moment of its destruction, Venetian House III was relatively prosperous, as shown by its architecture, money, and supplies. These included diverse foods and imported goods from Italy. The evidence suggests that the destruction of the house by fire occurred at a time of violent conflict at Butrint between the Venetians and Ottomans, probably in the context of the sack of Butrint in 1537 by the forces of Süleyman the Magnificent. Before the attack, the Republic of Venice had decided to strengthen the twin citadels of Corfu rather than to protect Butrint. The unfavorable conditions at Butrint brought about by the wetlands and plague likely contributed to the decision to abandon the city in the face of the Ottoman threat. The only Ottoman coin that has ever been discovered at Butrint is the silver coin of Süleyman the Magnificent found in Venetian House I. It is conceivable that the house was occupied temporarily by Süleyman's troops before the settlement was destroyed. The withdrawal of the Ottoman army was accompanied by a widespread devastation of Corfu's countryside and, reportedly, the enslavement of 20,000 of its inhabitants.

The end of settlement at Butrint is marked by an absence in the lower city, from this time forward, of material remains evidencing habitation. After Venice regained possession of Butrint in 1540, however, its strategic and economic importance did not diminish, even as plague and the wetlands rendered the area increasingly uninhabitable. Before 1537, all efforts to defend the enclave had been directed at fortifying the city. The calculus changed in 1540, when a decision was made to abandon the headland altogether. The Venetian Tower and later the Ottoman Triangular Fortress were constructed and garrisoned in order to protect the lucrative fishing industry and to maintain control of the site. The rubble of Venetian House III was never cleared for new construction. It became buried by natural processes of erosion and vegetation growth.

A study of historical maps and documents related to Butrint demonstrates no linear trend consistent with rising water levels making land on the plain increasingly less cultivable over time. Instead, the homogeneity of the thick alluvial topsoil shows that similar conditions have prevailed on the plain since the 13th or 14th century, driven principally by flooding and the ecological dynamics of the wetland. Whether parts of the plain were

under cultivation or not in a given period within this timeframe depended most on the construction of drainage works, the clearance of woods, the planting of appropriate seasonal crops, and the implementation of measures to undermine or circumvent the plain's wetland conditions and flooding cycle; in other words, on political stability and human labor. This human-environmental dynamic was a vicious cycle: a diminution of human input made the region wilder and the site less habitable, while an increase in human efforts had the opposite effect.

This process provides the context of Butrint's abandonment. The latest phase of burials in the lower city, dating between the mid-16th and mid-17th centuries, may have been those of transhumant shepherds (Vlachs). They suffered from a wide range of ailments, including lesions and nutritional deficiencies that are probably attributable to plague, malaria, or other infectious diseases attributable to the wetland environment. Despite deteriorating conditions at Butrint in the 18th century, Venice continued to maintain a garrison at the Triangular Fortress until the fall of the Republic. Venetian soldiers garrisoning Butrint often succumbed to severe illness, and a number of them died every year from malaria, which Bellaire witnessed firsthand. In 1716, Ottoman forces captured Butrint, which served them once again as a base of operations against Corfu. Pouqueville reports that the siege of Corfu was abandoned due to malaria. A new phase of activity began in the 18th century, with the construction of the Bay Fortress. As a fortified depot, it testifies to the continued efforts of Corfu to exploit Butrint in the face of local threats and considerable environmental adversity, even after conditions at the Triangular Fortress became severe.

Flooding damaged buildings on the Vrina Plain and made much of the surrounding land unusable for agriculture. It also restricted available sources of drinking water. Under Ottoman rule in the 19th century, flooding and malaria stifled the growth of Livari, the small village established around the fishery at the Triangular Fortress. While the territory of Butrint continued to be exploited through leases issued by Ottoman authorities, Butrint and its environs descended rapidly into a state of wildness, becoming the winter site of Vlach shepherds and a habitat for wild animals. Despite Butrint's strategic importance and rich resources in fish, timber, and pasture, lack of drinking water, flooding, malaria, and diseases caused by stagnant waters made living conditions impossible, even for a small garrison.

Of the five major factors thought to be responsible for the end of cities, warfare was the trigger at Butrint, with the sack of the city in 1537. The principal cause of abandonment, on the other hand, was environmental adversity, stemming from malaria, plague, and flooding. The great strategic and economic value of Butrint to the Venetians and Ottomans was the basis for their continued attempts to mitigate environmental adversity and to persist in exploiting the resources of the region in the face of hardship. Economic marginalization was not a contributing factor to the abandonment at Butrint. In fact, the region remained active only because of its economic potential and exploitation by Corfu. Institutional redundancy was also not a factor. Butrint's role in relation to Corfu was unique and irreplaceable. State decay, on the other hand, was an important factor, modulating the degree of environmental adversity. The establishment of a

system of contracts for the fishery and other industries in the region under the Republic of Venice helped attenuate the negative effects of the wetland and kept the region largely productive.

The peak period of abandonment occurred in the 19th century. Located now at the fringe of the declining Ottoman Empire and disconnected from its centralized authority, Butrint became increasingly inhospitable. The wetlands were left unmanaged and the region became a popular hunting ground. The investment of troops at Butrint by the Venetians, French, Ottomans, and lastly Albanians shows that even with these conditions and the end of settlement on the headland, Butrint was at all times considered economically and strategically important. Throughout most of its period of abandonment from 1537 to 1928, Butrint and its microregion remained economically active. All land around Butrint was carefully assessed, parceled, and assigned by contracts to Corfiots for economic exploitation. For Venetian and British Corfu and the Ottoman Empire, abandoned Butrint was a land of opportunity.

When Ugolini returned to Butrint in 1928 to launch archaeological excavations, the Italian team confronted the same adverse conditions that were responsible for the city's abandonment. They endured and looked beyond these hardships in search of cultural treasure. Under Ugolini's direction, Butrint was transformed from a wild ruin into an archaeological park, complete with a museum. Albania turned to archaeology and to the discoveries at Butrint to help define the identity of the young nation founded in 1912. Likewise, Butrint's archaeology became tightly bound to the forces of nature that had compelled urban transformation and the site's abandonment centuries earlier.[227]

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227. Hernandez 2017b, 2017c.

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