

LEGENDS ON CIRCULAR RUINS

Project responsible: Prof. Grazia Semeraro

Author: Dr. Gaia Sabetta

Index

Segovia

Excavations: Who and When	3
A glimpse of the city	3
Legends and literature	4
Selected bibliography	4
Utilities	5

Tomis

Excavations: Who and When	9
A glimpse of the city	9
Myths and literature	10
Selected bibliography	10
Utilities	11

Butrint and its territory

Excavations: Who and When	15
A glimpse of the city	15
Myths and literature	15
Selected bibliography	16
Utilities	17

List of images 21

1. Segovia

Excavations: who and when

Archaeological excavations in Segovia began with a certain regularity in 1940, when Antonio Molinero Perez started his career in the Comisaría general de Excavaciones Arqueológicas (General commission for archaeological excavations). From 1940 to 1960 Molinero Perez carried out investigations in many places of Segovia and its territory, according to the Urbanistic National Plan. Excavations in Segovia, especially in the historical centre, are quite difficult due to the development of the modern city right above the ancient one. Nevertheless, the *Servicio Territorial de Patrimonio y Arqueología de la Junta de Castilla y León* operates to carry out investigations in town.

Between 1970 and 1980 another kind of excavations marked the archaeological studies in Segovia: the one in the archives. During those decades, in fact, archaeologists paid special attention in recollecting and restudying the epigraphic evidences brought to light in the past years, forming a proper *corpus* of Segovians inscriptions.

As conceivable, the most studied feature of old Segovia is its Roman aqueduct, which crosses the city from East to West with its still standing 167 arcades. Some other important investigations have been carried out nearby the town, outside the old plateau. They brought to light various features of the Segovian landscape, such as necropolis (like the medieval one at Duraton), a web of *villas* from the imperial period, and also cult sites with a significant life span (as the cave sanctuary in Pedraza).

A glimpse at the city

Located in central Spain, about 75 km NW Madrid, Segovia is now capital of the homonymous province in the autonomous region of Castile y León. It lays on a hilltop, looking down onto the Old Castilla Plains below. (fig. 1)

First signs of population in the area date back to the Iron Age, when the site was chosen for its relevant position, well defended between the two rivers Eresma and Clamores. Ruins of the Celtiberian wall are still visible on northern side of the hill, as well as the so-called “foso”, a deep cut in the stone which ran from north to south and protected the East flank of the Celtiberian village, settled by the Arevaci’s tribe.

It was then a Roman *oppidum*, due to its strategic location and its proximity to other centres of roman interest. In Flavian times it became a *municipium* of *Hispania Tarraconensis*: in this moment Segovia is a proper roman town with its thermal building, a forum and a stunning aqueduct, still visible today. (fig 2-3) Under the Visigoth, in 537 AD, Segovia became a bishopric, and traces of this domination can be seen in the remains of the Visigoth three- naves Church nowadays incorporated into San Juan de los caballeros Church. (fig. 4)

In VII century the city was occupied by Muslims, and conquered back by Christians only in 1088, by King Alphonso VI of Castillay León. Traces of Moors’ domination can still be detected in the Alcazar fortress (the name itself “Alcazar” came from Arab *Al-qasr*, meaning “fortress”), on the western side of the hill, and in San Millan Church, a Romanesque building with Mozarab decorations. (fig. 5)

From the Christian reconquest of Spain to the XVI century Segovia had its golden age: Queen Isabella was proclaimed here, and the city knew an economic boom due to the flourishing wool and textile market. (fig. 6) Then the abandonment till the XIX century.

With such a complex historical reality and multifaceted urban development is easy to understand why in 1941 Segovia was declared “historic site” by the Spanish law, and in 1985 received the nominee as World Heritage Site by UNESCO, thanks to its distinctive aqueduct.

Legends and literature

Segovia is not often cited in literature, but Celtiberian Arevaci had a bit more fortune. First author speaking about them is the geographer Strabo in I century AD. In book III of his Geography, he writes about *Iberia* (Spain) and its characteristics. In chapter 4, 12 he illustrates the internal division of the region and its ethnos and in the sequent paragraph he reports about the powerful tribe of Arevaci (“*Αὐτῶν τε τῶν Κελτιβήρων εἰς τέτταρα μέρη διηρημένων οἰκράτιστοι μάλιστα πρὸς ἔω εἰσὶ καὶ πρὸς νότον οἱ Ἀρουάκοι [...]*”) and their village Numantia. The same does Pliny the Elder, when in book III, chapter 3 of his *Naturalis Historia* he lists the major tribe living in the seven districts of *Hispania Citerior* and their towns

(“*Citerioris Hispaniaesicut conpluriumprovinciarum aliquantumvetus forma mutataest [...]. Nunc universa provincia dividitur in conventus VII, Carthaginiensem, Tarraconensem, Caesaraugustanum, Cluniensem, Asturum, Lucensem, Bracarum. Primi in ora Bastuli, post eos quo dicitur ordine intus recedentes Mentisani, Oretani et ad Tagum Carpetani, iuxtaeo Vaccae, Vettones et Celtiberi Arevaci.*”). And Appian, in his narration of roman history from the beginning to the reign of Trajan, speaking about the Celtiberian wars, again remembers the Arevaci as one of the fiercest tribes. Ptolemy instead, a Greek-speaking geographer from II century AD, in his “Geography” enumerates all Hispanic tribes and their cities, this time naming Segovia between the Arevaci’s foundation.

In 1637, Diego de Colmenares, segovian historian, in the *Historia de la insigne Ciudad de Segovia y compendio de las historias de Castilla* wrote about the history of his city, from the beginning to his days. In the first chapter he told us how Segovia was founded. Hercules, an egyptian hero -the same whom Greeks will tell myths about- freed Spain from the bad administration of three brotehrs, who were ruling the region after their father’s death. Then the hero founded cities in strategical places, such as Cadice, Sevilla, Toledo, Avila and, indeed, Segovia[(...) *Al cual sus valientes hazañas dieron renombre de Hércules, nombre egipcio y misterioso que después usurparon muchos valientes capitanes de diversas naciones. (...) vino a España, y dandole muerte a los tres hermanos, señoreó la provincia, reduciendo sus bárbaros habitantes a política urbanidad; y fundando muchas ciudades en sitios fuertes. Las principales fueron Cádiz, Sevilla, Toledo, Ávila y nuestra Segovia (...)*]. Anyway, there is a legend still really appreciate from Segovians, and it is right about the construction of the aqueduct. According to this story, there were a young girl, living in the city. Every morning she had to walk miles outside the city and up the mountain to collect water for herself and family. One day, fed up on this toil, the girl wished there was a way for water to come up to the door of her house. Suddenly what seemed to be a man- the Devil- appeared next to the girl and asked what she could give for this wish to be realised. She claimed she would have given everything, her soul too. Later that night the girl woke up, regretting her word, but looking out of the window, she saw the man and a host of devils building the aqueduct. But then a cockerel crowed, and the Devil must end his construction: for just one stone missing, he lost his wager and the girl retained her soul. To prevent the Devil from coming back, citizens of Segovia placed a statue of Virgin of Fuencisla, patron of the city.

As shown by this legend, the roman aqueduct is the focus point of the city, something the inhabitants of Segovia identify with. It became a symbol of the cross-cultural identity of the city itself. A city born Celtiberian, raised Roman, and then Visigoth, Mozarab and partly Jewish; in the end central part of the Christian Spanish Empire. A city, according to María de Zayas y Sotomayor (Spanish novelist from the “Siglo de Oro”), so rich in beautiful buildings, in heroic cavalymen, in wealthy merchants that its name could be easily known in the most remote Italian provinces [“tan adornada de edificios, como de grandeza de caballeros, y enriquecida de mercaderes, que con sus tratosextienden sus nombres hasta las más remotas provincias de Italia”].(fig. 7)

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Utilities

Archaeological Museum

https://museoscastillayleon.jcyl.es/web/jcyl/MuseoSegovia/es/Plantilla100/1258120721794/_/_/_

Cultural Heritage plan

<https://idecyl.jcyl.es/VisorLigeroPACU/index2.html?>

Segovia Tourism Office

<http://www.turismodesegovia.com>

Segovia page on UNESCO List

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/311>

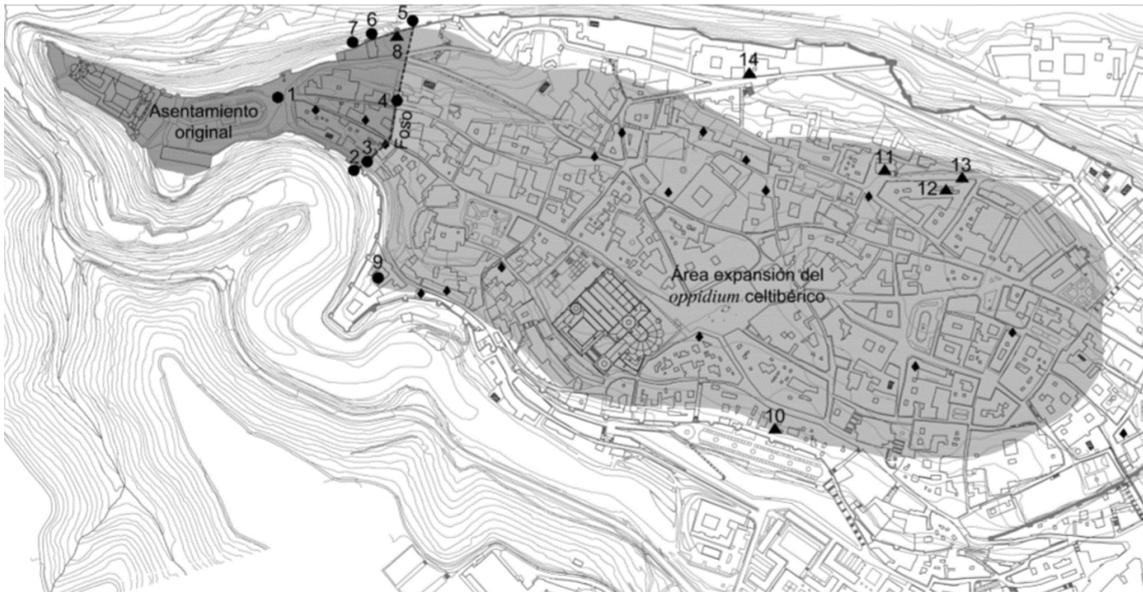


Figure -1. Plan of the city (Alvarez 2015, p. 7)



Figure 2. The Roman aqueduct (from internet, free from copyright)



Figure 3. Coin of 1 century BC (Martino Garcia 2005, p. 77)



Figure .4. San Juan de los caballeros (from internet, free from copyright)



Figure 5 The Alcazar and its prominent position (from internet, free from copyright)



Figure 6 The Gothic Cathedral (from internet, free from copyright)



Figure 7 Segovia, a panoramic view (from internet, free from copyright)

2. Tomis

Excavations who and when

One of the first stratigraphic excavations in modern Constanța, were carried out between 1971 and 1974 in the Cathedral Park, near the Saints Peter and Paul Church, by Adrian Rădulescu and Costantin Scorpan. Those excavations brought to light a dense stratigraphy, with layers from VI c. AD to VI c. BC. Due to the development of the modern Constanta right above the ancient Greek and Roman city, archaeological excavations in the area are difficult, and tranches are dug out especially in case of urban renewal and building projects.

Several interventions are not even published, creating a lack of information which causes dispersion of important archaeological data.

Significant hints about the history of the city come from epigraphic finds. Inscriptions, mainly from funeral and religious contexts, help archaeologists and historians to shed some lights on the population who lived in Tomis, on cults and deities, on aspects of military and political organizations otherwise unknown.

A particular mention goes to the efforts of Costantin Scarlat, pioneer of underwater archaeology, who in 1966 begun to study the submerged vestiges in the old port of Tomis and in other Romanian cities.

A glimpse of the city

Ancient Tomis occupied the extreme point of a peninsula on the left coast of the Black Sea, a flat and fertile land inhabited by Thracian populations. In ancient times this represented a key position on the crossroads between East and West, not only for men, but for commodities too (fig. 1).

It doesn't surprise that Tomis was born as a Milesian colony on the Pont Euxinus in the middle of the VI century BC, not far from other two famous Ionian colonies, Histrias and Kallatis. The above-mentioned excavations in the Cathedral Park let scholars delineate the development of Tomis from its origin to the byzantine phase (fig.2).

A turning point in the history of the settlement was the III century BC, when the war “περί Τόμewστoῦ ἔμπορίου” (for Tomis the *emporion*) started with the League of Histria and Kallatis against Byzantium. From that moment, Tomis begun to prosper and even minted its own coins. That flourishing continued since I century BC, when the city was included in the Pontic kingdom by Mithridate VI Eupator.

I century BC was also the time when Rome first approached the Pontus and by the end of the century all the western shores of the Pontus Euxinus became a *praefectura oraemaritimae* under Rome's direct control. During all Roman imperial period, Tomis has been a rich city, mainly involved in trade and navigation, always loyal to the imperial house as testified by the inscriptions found in the city, attesting the presence of temple for imperial cult and dedicatory statues (fig. 3-6). Still in the VI and VII AD, under the Byzantine Empire, Tomis flourished, as proved by the public buildings found in the old town, especially many basilicas for its being a bishopric both for Orthodox and Christian Church. After that, Tomis slowly declined and no traces have been found, other than some houses and tombs, which testified the existence of a small village: from now on historical chronicles will refer to the city as *Costantia*. The city knew again a period of prosperity under the Bulgarian Kings, but then a new decline that last five centuries, under the Ottoman Empire, when it was just a port of no importance. The modern history of the city sees Bulgaria and Romania fight to obtain control upon Dobruja. Eventually, at the beginning of XX century, the Romania gets it and Costanza in now a prosper port of the Romanian coast, as demonstrated by the liberty Casino still visible near the sea (fig. 7).

Myths and literature

As said before, Tomis was a famous centre of the Thracian coast and its name appears in various texts by ancient authors. One of the first mentions come from the *Geography* of Strabo. In book VII, chapter 6 of his description of the known world, the Greek writer speaks about the Milesian colonies of the Black Sea and gives specific indications on the localization of Tomis, 250 stadia south of Histria and 280 stadia north of Kallatis. [(...)]

*Ἔστιν οὐδ' ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱεροῦ στόματος τοῦ Ἰστρου ἐν δεξιᾷ ἔχοντι τὴν συνεχῆ παραλίαν Ἰστρος πολίχνην ἐν πεντακοσίοις σταδίοις, Μιλησίων κτίσμα· εἶτα Τόμις, ἕτερον πολίχνην ἐν διακοσίοις πενήκοντα σταδίοις· εἶτα πόλις Κάλλατις ἐν διακοσίοις ὀγδοήκοντα, Ἡρακλεωτῶν ἄποικος· (...)]. As well as Strabo, other geographers, like Ptolemy (*Geography*, III, 10) and Arrian (*Periegesis*, 35) of the II century AD, provided information about the correct localisation of Tomis. Jordanes, instead, a late author from VI century AD, in his work about the history of Getae wrote about the origins of Tomis: after a victory against King Cyrus the Great, Tomyris the queen of Getae founded the city and named it after herself (*Getica*, 61- 62).*

A more famous myth about the origins of the city, however, is referred by the poet Ovid. Exiled in Tomis at the beginning of the I century AD by August, there he wrote his *Tristia*, a collection of letters in five books. In book III, chapter 9 he describes Tomis as a “Graia urb inter inhumanae nominabatur barbariae” (Greek city among the name of savage barbarians) and says that the name of the city is more ancient than the city itself and it is connected to the murder of Absyrtus. This linked Tomis with the legend of the Argonauts. Absyrtus was, in fact, a brother of Medea, the witch who was helping the Greek sailors escaping from Colchis after stealing the Golden Fleece. Near the Thracian coast, in order to delay the Colchian army that was after them, Medea decided to tear apart the limbs of her brother and scatter them all around. The Colchian King Aetes, then, father of Absyrtus stopped to collect the pieces of his son and bury him. So, the place of the burial became “Tomis” by the Greek verb τέμνω, “to cut” [(...)]

*protinus ignar in ecquicquam taletimentis/innocuum rigidoperforatense
latus,/atque ita divellit divulsaque membra per agros/dissipat in multis inveniendalocis,
neupater ignoret, scopulo proponit in alto/
pallentes quem animum sanguineumque caput./ut genitor luctu quem novotardet uret, artus/dum legit extinctos,
tristem ore turiter./ inde Tomis dictus locus hic, quia fertur in illo/membra soror or fratris consecuisse sui.
(...)]. After distracting their pursuer, the Argonauts reached the Istros river and sailed toward the Adriatic Sea.*

Once again, Tomis is a key port in the routes that connect East and West, Asia and Europe. The Argonauts, sailed from Greece, reached the Asian coasts and the Thracian ones, before taking the Istros toward the Adriatic Sea. Their travel will conduct them in the Mediterranean, to expiate the murder of Absyrtus. Is not unusual than, that all the legends about the foundation of the city speak about journey and connections between East and West.

Tomis is at the centre of this routes, both in the myths and in real history.

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Utilities

Romanian Ministry of Tourism website
<http://turism.gov.ro/web/ Page>

Romanian Ministry of Culture website
<http://www.cultura.ro/>

Museum of National History and Archaeology of Costanta
<http://www.minac.ro/index.html>

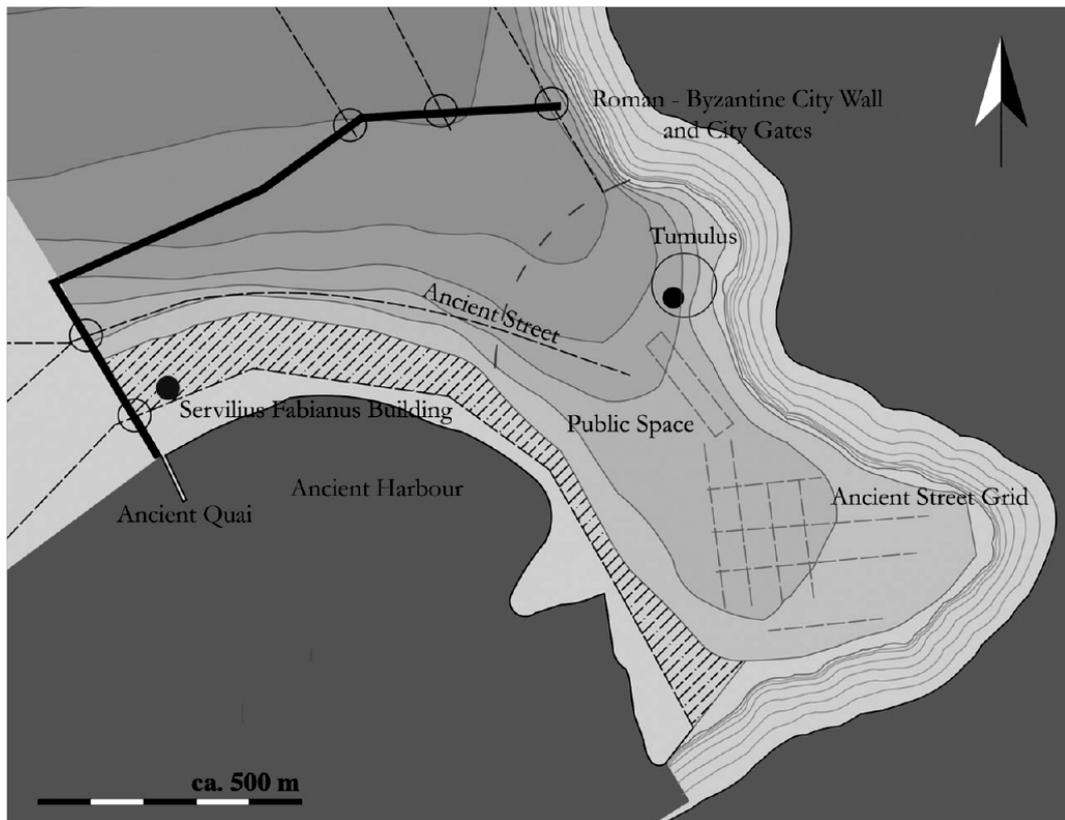


Figure 3: Reconstruction of the city plan (Toma 2012, p. 551)



Figure 4: Excavation area at the Cathedral Park (Rădulescu- Scorpan 1975, p. 10)



Figure 5: Columns with reliefs of Dioscuri (II AD); Dioscuri were patrons of navigation (MargineauCarstoiu 2018, p. 108).



Figure 6: Votive aedicula of Goddess Nemesis, IV AD (Alexandrescu-Vianu 2009, p. 44)

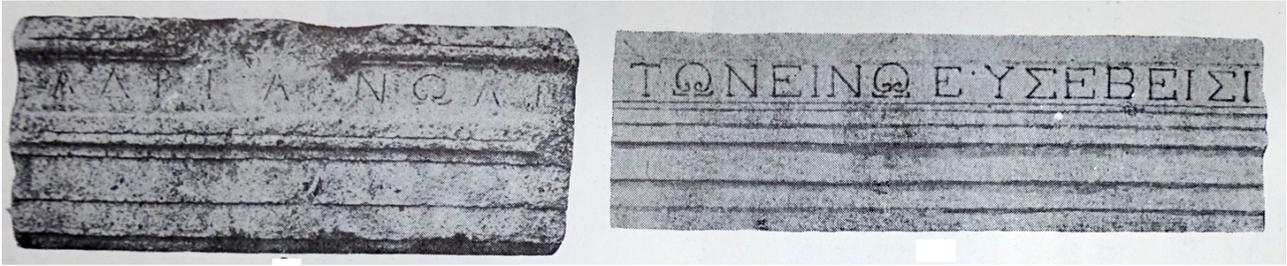


Figure 7: Fragments of a lintel with a dedication to Emperors Marcus Aurelius and Antoninus Pius, in Greek, II AD (Bordenache 1960, p.264)



Figure 8: Coin of Emperor Maximinus Thrax, on the reverse the image of a triumphal arch (AE26, Moushmov 2185)



Figure 9: The liberty Casino, inaugurated in 1910 (from internet, free from copyright).

3. Butrint and its territory

Excavations: who and when

“... et celsam Buthroti accedimus urbem” (Aen. III, v. 293): those could have been the thoughts in Luigi Maria Ugolini’s mind, when he began the first Italian excavation in Butrint in 1924. Italian Mission, seeking traces of this Troy in miniature, indeed uncovered the history of the city from its archaic origin to Venetian occupation. They pointed this millennial continuity out in order to connect Butrint and Rome – two Trojan cities-, to please Benito Mussolini.

Same nationalistic intent guided the Albanian researchers operating during Enver Hoxha government. Archaeologists then worked to shed light on the Illyrian past of the country.

1994 was a turning point for Butrint excavations’ history. The British new-born Butrint Foundation, in collaboration with Albanian archaeologists, started a new season of large-scale excavations, both on the hilltop site and on the Vrina Plan. Since then researchers have been working to understand environmental context as well as settlement history. Eager to protect the beauty of the region, made by biodiversity and historic heritage, in 2001 Butrint National Park was created.

A glimpse of the city

Located about 20 km South from modern centre of Saranda on the Ksamil peninsula, Butrint lays on the Ionian Albanian coast (fig. 1). The site has a dominant position on Corfu Straights and on the Vivari Channel and southward on the Vrina Plan. This lucky location made Butrint being selected as an ideal place of settlement from Bronze Age to modern times. All settlers chose Butrint due to its well defended hilltop position, its safe port and its lagoon abounding in fish (fig. 2). Moreover, proximity with the rich Corcyra and with the coast of southern Italy were two more key factors in the eligibility of Butrint as the perfect spot on Epirote coast.

Footprints of its inhabitants can still be seen nowadays. Pottery sherds and traces of fortification from late Bronze Age and early Iron Age have been detected in Butrint and in numerous hilltop sites in the inland. Those finds allow the reconstruction of well-connected paths, for circulating people and goods. Archaic phase of the settlements strictly depends on the relation with Corcyra. Butrint was territorial possession of the Island and part of the commercial routes that linked Greece and the colonies in Great Greece. Ruins of a temple for Athena Polias are still recognisable on the acropolis and part of its decorated lintel is now visible in the so-called Lion Gates (fig. 3). Hellenistic and Roman times are the most studied and those which gave back the richest finds. After the foundation of the Roman colony in 44 BC, Butrint reaches its maximum extension (fig. 4-5). The theatre is enlarged and decorated with plenty of statues; an aqueduct is erected; the Vrina Plan and the surroundings are populated with houses, villas- like the terraced one in Diaporit-, *thermae* and majestic tombs. Bishopric in the V century AD, after a period of abandonment Butrint reborn under the Byzantine domination (fig. 6). In the XIV century his position near Corcyra was strategic once again and Butrint was occupied by Venetians. Under continuous attack by Ottomans, Venetians fortified the city as testified by the Venetian walls and the tower, that nowadays hosts the archaeological museum (fig. 7).

This unique blend of culture is what assured the city the title of UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1992 and the confirmation in 1999.

Myths and literature

But Butrint was safe port not just for commodities but for myths. According to Stephanus of Byzantium, who quotes I-century BC historian Teucros of Cyzicum, the Greek name of city is linked with a mythical event. In his tale Trojan Helenus and his men landed at Epirus in their westward journey. Here they try to sacrifice a bull, but it escapes and swims across the strait (the Vivari Channel). Reached the opposite shore it dies for fatigue. Taking it as an omen, Helenus decided to found a city in that exact spot, naming it *Bouthrotos* after the wounded bull. Depictions of

the bull itself will be on the coinage of the city at least to the reign of Nero (I century AD), as sign of the city's Trojan ancestry. The ancient name of Chaonia -the region where Butrint is located- also is connected to Helenus. "[...] *Morte Neoptolemiregnorum reddita cessit/pars Heleno, qui Chaonioscognomine campos/Chaoniamque omnem Troiano a Chaone dixit, / [...]*" Vergil said in Aeneid III, 333- 336: Helenus, made king of Epirus by Pyrrhus Neoptolemus, named this land "Chaonia" after his deceased Trojan friend Chaon. Once made king, Helenus marries Andromache, previously married to Pyrrhus Neoptolemus himself.

Presence of Andromache in Epirus as second wife of Neoptolemus was already attested in literature, thanks to Euripides' V-century BC tragedy "Andromache". Here, at line 1243, speaking to Peleus, Thetis announces the Trojan princess will be taken as hostage and wife by Pyrrhus, but she eventually will settle in the Molossian region, marrying her dead husband's brother Helenus ["(...) *γυναῖκα δ' αἰχμάλωτον, Ἀνδρομάχην λέγω, / Μολοσσίαν γῆν γρηῖ κατοικῆσαι, γέρον, / Ἐλένω συναλλαχθεῖσαν εὐναίοις γάμοις (...)*"].

Together with Helenus, she has a child, Cestrinus, who will rule the land beyond Thyamis River about fifty kilometres south Butrint, also known as Cestrine Plan (nowadays part of Greek territory). According to Pausania (Descr., XI 1.1-2), the other two children of her, the two from Neoptolemus, Molossus himself will rule Epirus, whereas Pergamos will go back to Asia Minor and found the city of Pergamon

["(...) *Ἐλένου δὲ ὡς ἐτέλεῦτα Μολοσσῶ τῷ Πύρρου παραδόντος τὴν ἀρχὴν Κεστρίνοσ μὲν σὺν τοῖς ἐθέλουσιν Ἡπειρωτῶν τὴν ὑπὲρ Θύαμιν ποταμὸν χῶραν ἔσχε, Πέργαμος δὲ διαβάς ἐς τὴν Ἀσίαν Ἀρειοῦ δὲ δυναστεύοντα ἐν τῇ Γευθρανίᾳ κτείνει μόνον μαχίσαντά οἱ περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς καὶ τῆ πόλει τὸ ὄνομα ἔδωκε τὸν ὄναφ' αὐτοῦ: καὶ Ἀνδρομάχης— ἡ κολούθει γάρ οἱ— καὶ ὄνεστιν ἡ ῥῶν ἐν τῇ πόλει.*"]

As shown by myths about Helenus and his family, Epirus and Butrint are intimately linked with Mediterranean routes, not only westward but in reverse too. This is even more manifest looking at the story of another famous Trojan: Aeneas. The story is narrated by Vergil, in Aeneid, book III (vv. 381-387).

While escaping with his father and son from his disrupted city, Aeneas stops at Actium, the Augustan city of Nikopolis, just a hundred km south-east Butrint. Here they sacrifice to Jupiter and celebrate the Trojan game. After that, sailing northward, they reach Butrint, where Helenus and his wife Andromache have rebuilt a Troy in miniature. Once in king's palace, Aeneas receives a prophecy about the development of his journey towards Hesperia (the West). He will first reach the Adriatic coast of Apulia, then Sicily passing through the Ionian Gulf, Cumae, and Latium at last.

["(...) *Principio Italiam, quam tu iam repropinquam/vicinosque, ignare, paras invadere portus, / longa procullongis via dividit in via terris. / Ante et Trinacria lentandus remus in unda, / et salis Ausoni illustrandum navibus aequor, / inferni quae lacus, Aeaeaeque insula Circae, / quam tuta possis urbem componere terra (...)*"]. It's easy to understand that all those routes, far from being mythical themselves, were well established trading routes since the colonial period.

As secure landing in the Ionian Sea, Butrint hosted travellers from all regions and all epochs, in a form of mutual advantage. Its history became the story of all the Countries that lay around Mediterranean Basin, which has been for centuries -and still is- a wide web of economical trades, cultural exchanges and human relations.

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Utilities

The Butrint Foundation

<https://www.butrintfoundation.co.uk/>

Butrint page on UNESCO List

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/570>

Butrint page on Official Website of Albanian National Tourism Agency

<http://albania.al/destination/17/butrint/>



Figure 1. Location on Albanian coast (Hernandez 2017, p. 206)



Figure 2. A view of the peninsula (Hernandez 2017, p. 207)



Figure 3. Lion gate: lintel of the Archaic period temple for Athena Polias (Hernandez 2017, p. 231)

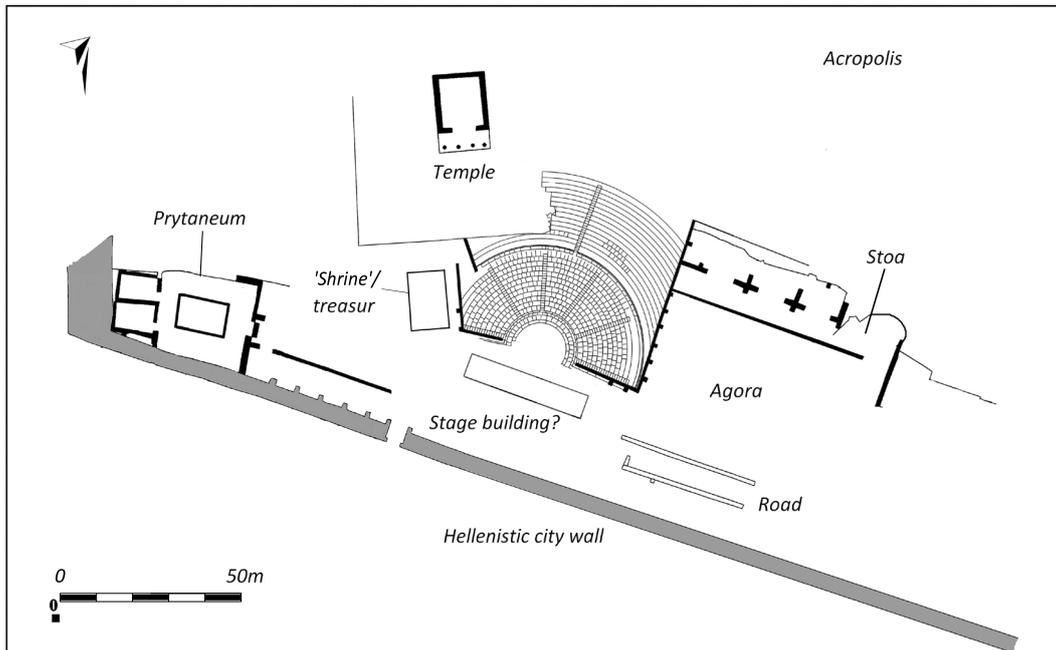


Figure 4. Plan of the theatre area during the Hellenistic period (Melfi 2007, p.22)



Figure 5. Neronian coins by Butrint's mint with the depiction of the bull(Hansen 2007, p. 55)



Figure 6. The 6th Century Baptistery (from wikicommons, free from copyright)



Figure7-8 The Venetian tower and a fragment of Italian maiolica with the "lion of Saint Mark" from the lower city (Gwyne 2014, p. 224)

List of images

Segovia

1. Plan of the city (Alvarez 2015, p. 7)
2. The aqueduct (from internet, free from copyright)
3. Coin of I century BC (Garcia 2005, p. 77)
4. San Juan de los caballeros (from internet, free from copyright)
5. The Alcazar(from internet, free from copyright)
6. The Gothic Cathedral (from internet, free from copyright)
7. Segovia, panoramic view(from internet, free from copyright)

Tomis

1. Reconstructed city plan (Toma 2012, p. 551)
2. Excavation area at the Cathedral Park (Rădulescu- Scorpan 1975, p. 10)
3. Columns with reliefs of Dioscuri (II AD); Dioscuri were patrons of navigation (MargineauCarstoiu 2018, p. 108).
4. Votive *aedicula* of Goddess Nemesis, IV AD (Alexandrescu-Vianu 2009, p. 44)
5. Fragments of a lintel with a dedication to Emperors Marcus Aurelius and Antoninus Pius, in Greek, II AD (Bordenache 1960, p.264)
6. Coin of Emperor MaximinusThrax, on the reverse the image of a triumphal arch (AE26, Moushmov 2185)
7. : The liberty Casino, inaugurated in 1910 (from internet, free from copyright).

Butrint

1. Location on Albanian coast (Hernandez 2017, p. 206)
2. A view of the peninsula (Hernandez 2017, p. 207)
3. Lion gate: lintel of the Archaic period temple for Athena Polias(Hernandez 2017, p. 231)
4. Plan of the theatre area during Hellenistic period (Melfi 2007, p. 22)
5. Neronian coins by Butrint's mint with the depiction of the bull (Hansen 2007, p. 55)
6. The 6th Century Baptistery (from wikicommons, free from copyright)
7. The Venetian tower (from wikicommons, free from copyright)
8. Examples of Italian maiolica found in Butrint (Gwyne 2014, p. 224)