

Adriatico altomedievale (VI-XI secolo)

Scambi, porti, produzioni

a cura di Sauro Gelichi e Claudio Negrelli

Butrint

Never a 'non-place'

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Abstract This short essay takes its direction from Marc Augé's definitions of places and non-places. It reviews the settlement shifts at Butrint, ancient Buthrotum, between late antiquity and the 12th century. Butrint had been a place since the late Republic, if not earlier; a centre associated with mythic origins and healing. Located in at least three different places, Butrint after antiquity took three different physical forms, but appears to have sustained its association with a mythic past. Remaining not only a trading centre of varying importance, did the memory of its antiquity safeguard its continuity albeit in very different locations and settlement forms?

Summary 1 Place. – 2 Butrint – a Quintessential Mediterranean Port. – 3 Making Butrint into a Place (as opposed to a Non-Place). – 4 Archaeological Interventions. – 5 The Archaeology of *Three* Mid Byzantine Butrints. – 6 Discussion.

Keywords Adriatic. Byzantine. Middle Ages.

1 Place

A refocused anthropological vision would often take a greater interest in archaeological evidence about longer-term social change. It would deal much more extensively with historical events and their consequences: this evidence would assume the same importance that observed ethnographic minutiae and informants' now carry. [...] It is the conjunction of such intimate knowledge with short- and long-term history which has great potential in social and cultural analysis, not the pursuit of one endeavour to the exclusion of the other.

Nicholas Thomas, *Out of Time*, 1989, 122

First, a definition: Marc Augé defines a place as «an invention: it has been discovered by those who claim it as their own». Foundation narratives, he argues, «bring the spirits of the place together with the first inhabitants in the common adventure of the group. A place is relational, historical and concerned with identity, whereas a non-place is a space which cannot be defined by these criteria» (1995, 77-8). Places, to cite A.

Studi e Ricerche 4

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Appadurai, frequently practice «tournaments of value» - complex periodic events removed in some culturally well-defined way from the routines of economic life; «participation in them is likely to be both a privilege of those in power and an instrument of status contests between them [...]. [W]hat is at issue is not just status, rank, fame or reputation of actors [...] but the disposition of the central tokens of value in the society in question» (1986, 21). Temple cults and later, the Church, commonly legitimized a genre of cultural products at places. Supermodernity, on the other hand, produces non-places, meaning, to quote Augé, «spaces which are not themselves anthropological places and which [...] do not integrate the earlier places (which are listed, classified, promoted to the status of 'places of memory', and assigned to a circumscribed and specific position) Airports, shopping malls, cinema complexes, hospitals and hotel resorts are fundamentally non-places though there is a new effort to market them as places. «In the concrete reality of today's world, places and non-places intertwine and tangle together» (Augé 1995, 77-8).

Place and non-place are opposed polarities, together «the scrambled game of identity and relations» that is ceaselessly being rewritten. Place, Augé concludes, becomes a refuge to the habitué of non-places. The polarity is not new: place and non-place have existed since prehistory.

In north-west Europe after the collapse of Roman imperial government, place was bound up with authority and spirituality, leadership and the Church. Trading places, by contrast, were non-places, rarely described in the texts of the period because these were places for exchange operating on the frontiers or outside the bounds of tribal relations and tellingly unassociated with the sacred (cf. Theuws 2004; Hodges 2012, 91-100). In the post-classical Mediterranean world the assumption is that place outlived antiquity: in essence, once a place always a place (cf. Augenti 2004). But places had inevitably taken entirely new forms with the extraordinary collapse of Roman society. Describing the much reduced communities in the Mid Byzantine period, John Haldon concludes (1999, 15-6): «I would suggest that what we are confronted with here are small but distinct communities whose inhabitants regarded themselves (in one sense, that of domicile, quite legitimately) as 'citizens' of the city within whose walls their settlement was located; that the *kastron*, which retained the name of the ancient *polis*, provided a refuge in case of attack (although in many such cases it may not necessarily have been permanently occupied, still less permanently garrisoned); and that therefore many of the *poleis* of the 7th to 9th centuries survived as such because their inhabitants, living effectively in distinct villages within the area delineated by the walls, saw themselves as belonging to the *polis* itself, rather than to a village». Place, to interpret Haldon - the *kastron*, the successor locus effectively replacing towns and administrative residences - in this interpretation has a military emphasis in a Byzantine world that is normally interpreted as unstable and insecure.



Figure 1. View of Butrint and the Straits of Corfù

The thrust of this short essay is to question how places with memory and non-places were determined at the port of Butrint (Albania) during this period, and, tacitly, to argue, as the anthropologist, Nicholas Thomas does above, that in following the historical narratives as frameworks for the archaeological evidence, we might have been drawn to conclusions about insecurity and cultural process that are entirely misrepresentative of the material evidence.

2 Butrint – a Quintessential Mediterranean Port

Butrint, ancient *Buthrotum*, situated 3 kms from the Straits of Corfù on the Vivari Channel at the south end of Lake Butrint in south-west Albania (fig. 1), is a typical illustration of an ancient city that declined in late antiquity before experiencing a Mid Byzantine revival that endured until the later Middle Ages. With its fertile coastal niche extending 10 kms into a mountainous valley and with access to celebrated amounts of fish in Lake Butrint, it appears to fit the stereotype of a Mediterranean coastal location defined by Horden and Purcell in their influential *Corrupting Sea* (2000). But did the city of Butrint and its hinterland – connected to one

of the main arteries of the Mediterranean – outlive antiquity, to continue as a place in the Mid and Later Byzantine eras largely unaltered? Or, did it experience signal changes in its urban form with the end of antiquity, involving urban disintegration and abandonment and, ultimately, with the later 10th-century revival of Mediterranean trade, urban regeneration?

After a major revival in Late Antiquity, Butrint like many long-established ancient cities in the region was largely deserted (cf. Bowden, Hodges 2012). The results of the excavations strongly sustain an impression of dramatic change during the later 6th century, showing a major contraction of settlement that lasted until the 10th century. The Late Roman and High Byzantine towns are separated by a 300-year period during which occupation was limited and most of the population only had access to a narrow range of material culture. New building, which had formed a key part of the vocabulary of élite rhetoric in the Mediterranean for more than a thousand years, was almost non-existent, with the inhabitants occupying small post-built buildings or re-using earlier structures.

John Haldon (2006, 607) argued that the opposition assumed between continuity and discontinuity is «overstated and misleading». The effects of change, in Haldon's view, are differential, impacting at varying speeds to varying extents in a multiplicity of ways upon the different aspects of a socio-cultural system. Continuity, he contends, «is always present at some level or in some sphere of human activity». In this he assumes continuity of place and, presumably, its status including its memories. This can certainly be seen at Butrint, but at the same time these continuities do not negate the extent to which an entire social system and the built and material environment that it engendered was rendered almost unrecognizable, conceivably within the living memories of the town's inhabitants. The last people to use coins to make day to day financial purchases in the 6th-century town may well have been able to remember the town's great baptistery and basilica being erected – the last monuments in a recognizably Roman townscape that effectively vanished within the life-spans of its oldest inhabitants. Their experience should not become wholly subsumed to the polarity of continuity/discontinuity.

3 Making Butrint into a Place (as opposed to a Non-Place)

The origins of Butrint in the Bronze Age remain obscure (cf. Lima 2013). But by the 2nd century BC, if not a little earlier, Butrint was a thriving settlement with its distinction as a place associated with the 'tourna-mount of value' the cult of Aesclepius. Butrint had a brief moment in the political spotlight during the Julio-Claudian period when it was designated a colony by Caesar, before it was apparently re-dedicated by Augustus. There was a close relationship between the town and the family of the *Princesps*,

an involvement represented by a rich epigraphic and sculptural legacy (Hansen, Hodges 2007; Hansen 2007). At this time the Roman court poet, Virgil, in the form of his poem, *Aeneid*, lent Butrint a mythic association with Aeneas and his travels to found Rome, thus assuring Butrint of an exaggerated importance associated with Rome and Troy. This was to be a peerless foundation myth, given relational substance by the creation of a large civic centre found in the Butrint Foundation excavations (Hernandez, Çondi 2014). Many subsequent sources made reference to this Trojan association, notwithstanding that the town is poorly represented in Roman textual sources, appearing in late Roman itineraries (*Antonine Itinerary* 324, 5; 488, 7; 489, 1; *Peutinger Table* VII.3), in the *Synekdemos* of Hierocles (written around 527-8), where it is listed as the seventh town of Old Epirus (Honigmann 1939, 652, 4), and in episcopal correspondence in 458 and 516, respectively referring to Bishops Stephen and Matthew (Soustal 2004, 20-2).

From the later 5th century onwards, the province of Epirus Vetus was increasingly affected by barbarian incursions, although Butrint is not specifically mentioned in relation to any of these episodes. The region was subjected to sea-borne raids by the Vandals in the 460s, and again by Ostrogoths under Totila in 551. The most serious incursions appear to have been those of the Slavs in 586-7, which reportedly displaced a significant section of the existing population who fled to southern Italy and the Ionian islands.

The Slav presence in the Butrint region seems to have endured. Butrint lies in the region known in the 13th century as *Bagenetia* or *Vagenetia*, a term that can be traced back to the Slavic tribe known as the Baiunetai. The names *Vagenetia*, *Viyanite*, and *Viyantije* survived until the Turkish period, when in the 16th century the name Delvina (now the small town between Saranda and Gjirokastra) became commonly used instead. The so-called *Partitio Romaniae*, the document of 1204 describing the division of the Byzantine Empire, compiled on the basis of Byzantine tax registers, records the *chartularaton de Bagenetia* (Soustal 2004, 22).

Butrint is listed in the so-called *Notitia of the Iconoclasts* compiled after 754, but it is not clear that it possessed a bishop (Soustal 2004, 22). In the late 9th century (880-4), Saint Elias the Younger and his companion Daniel were accused of being *Hagarenes* (Muslims) and spies, and imprisoned by an official at Butrint (*polis epineios*). In 904 the relics of Saint Elias, who had died in Thessalonika, were brought to Butrint via *Thessalia*, *Hellas* and *Thesprotia*, to be taken from there by ship to Calabria (Rossi Taibbi 1962, XVI, 116, c. 73, 182; Soustal, 2004, 22). Little more is known about Butrint as a place at this time. Arsenios of Corfù (876-953) who apparently visited Epirus to plead with Slav pirates to desist their raids, recorded that Butrint was rich in fish and oysters, with a fertile hinterland. The inventories of bishoprics from the 10th to 12th centuries identify the Bishop of Butrint as

a suffragan of the metropolitan bishopric of Naupaktos, the ecclesiastical province which took the name of the old provincial capital of Nikopolis in southern Epirus (Soustal 1981, 2004).

4 Archaeological Interventions

The Butrint Foundation project began in 1994 in a theoretical context that could be defined as the search for a post-Pirenne paradigm (Hodges, Bowden, Lako 2004, 9; Bowden, Hodges 2012). Beginning some years before the publication of Michael McCormick's influential *Origins of the Medieval Economy* (2001), our aim was to examine how a critically located port on a significant seaway adapted to the transformation of the Roman world. Situated at the southern end of the Adriatic Sea, its harbours – to judge from the Roman and later Medieval sources (cf. Soustal 2004) – served shipping making for the Adriatic littorals and south-east Italy in particular, as well as southern Italy as far west as Sicily.

The challenge for the Butrint Foundation team was to confront the question of the changing nature of a Mediterranean port not through the study of isolated monuments in the context of an established historical narrative, but through establishing and explaining generational changes in the urban fabric of the city. Documenting Butrint's environmental context as well as the history of settlement in its environs was equally essential to comprehending the history of the city. Problems of residuality, the repeated remodelling and re-use of structures throughout the Roman period and the large-scale secondary movement of deposits in antiquity (during construction work and terracing) meant that the results of keyhole archaeology were inconclusive at best and totally misleading at worst. As a result, our initial investigations from 1994-99 summarized in *Byzantine Butrint* (Bowden, Hodges, Lako 2004), although dramatically increasing our understanding of Butrint, provided only an imprecise overview of the town and its changing topography. Many projects would have halted after this extensive range of investigations but, with support from the Packard Humanities Institute, from 2000 we developed a constellation of major excavations. Large excavations were initially opened at the Triconch Palace to review a waterside sector of the city (Bowden, Hodges 2011), and at the lakeside villa at Diaporit, identified in the field survey 4 kms north-east of Butrint (Bowden, Përzhita 2004). Concurrently, we embarked upon a programme to identify the suburb of Butrint on the Vrina Plain, first by a new extensive geophysical survey (following initial surveys in 1996-98) with an associated study of the environmental conditions, then by test-trenching along a drainage dyke made in the 1960s, and then by making two large open-area excavations focussed upon two very different parts of the suburb (Greenslade 2013).

These excavations, supported in particular by the remarkable knowledge and dedication of our ceramic specialists, Paul Reynolds and Joanita Vroom, have given us an entirely new understanding of the urban history of Butrint from its earliest occupation until the Ottoman age. Plainly, some of this approach evolved strategically to confront different period-based paradigms. However, our understanding of the 7th- to 11th-century histories has been enhanced not always as a result of judgements taken to identify these periods but by serendipity, in that some of the most significant discoveries relating to the Byzantine Dark Age have been more by accident than design.

Further excavation opportunities followed:

- to explore a section of the acropolis prior to backfilling and landscaping the 1990-94 excavations,
- to excavate ahead of conservation a tower in the Western Defences (Kamani 2011, 2013) and
- an area adjacent to the well of Junia Rufina beside the northern postern gate (Sebastiani et al. 2013), known as the Lion Gate.

These new excavations, executed with a knowledge gained from the excavations at the maritime villa at Diaporit, the Vrina Plain and the Triconch Palace, have been particularly important for developing a new understanding of the Mid Byzantine period. Based upon these new excavations, we have re-examined many of the standing monuments, including the fortifications, the Great Basilica and, in so doing, discovered close to the Water Gate the remains of a Roman bridge (Leppard 2013). From these investigations it is clear that Butrint from Hellenistic times to the modern age was never a non-place. Always associated with either its cult or Aeneas, it is the form of this relational continuity that is the most significant outcome of these excavations, especially for the Mid Byzantine period.

5 The Archaeology of *Three* Mid Byzantine Butrints

First, 7th- to 8th-century Butrint as a place.

By the 7th century, activity at Butrint had diminished dramatically, with the latest amphora burial in the Triconch area dating to around 650. No activity of 7th-century date was found at either Diaporit or on the Vrina Plain. Our original interpretation of this evidence was that 7th- to 9th-century Butrint was reduced to little more than a castle occupying the acropolis, following the model suggested by Haldon (1999) and others, described above. Opportunities to re-examine earlier excavations on the acropolis, however, together with reappraisals of the excavated material, showed little obvious sign of such a *kastron* (Greenslade, Leppard, Logue 2013).

In 2005, however, a fortuitous combination of circumstances led to the opportunity to excavate within one of the towers on the city's western defenses.



Figure 2. View of the restored Western Defenses (tower 1)

These had previously not been investigated because the level of overlying rubble and the poor state of the tower masonry had meant that the level of resources required for excavation were unlikely to be justified by the possible results. This excavation located extensive and unprecedented remains of 8th-century occupation, Vivid remains of the ground and first floor of the tower were found, thanks to a cataclysmic fire that engulfed it in the later 8th or early 9th centuries (Kamani 2011, 2013) (fig. 2). A wooden internal staircase, the two upper floors and the tiled roof collapsed downwards, crushing the stored contents just inside the ground-floor door (fig. 3). These included a crate of glass comprising 61 goblets and cullet – a consignment destined for a glass-maker somewhere (Jennings 2010). Next to this was a line of smashed amphorae from Otranto and other parts of southern Italy, as well as from the Aegean (possibly Crete) and the Crimea. There were White Ware jugs from Constantinople and local pots, so-called Avaro-Slavic types, as well as two portable ovens (known as chafing dishes) (Vroom 2012).

Excavations in 2008 in the adjacent tower to the south produced a similar assemblage, again in a destruction level caused by a fire. Two such cataclysms cannot have been coincidental and strongly suggest that the towers



Figure 3. Excavations in tower 2, 2008

were destroyed deliberately, presumably in an attack. The ceramics are dated to the later 8th or earlier 9th centuries. The carbon 14 dates broadly support this date. Small numbers of sherds similar to those from the towers have been found elsewhere in Butrint at the acropolis, forum and Triconch Palace. No traces of buildings, though, have been found and it seems likely that, as at the towers in the Western Defenses, any inhabitants were using extant structures. The inhabitants of the Western Defenses, however, had access to a range and quantity of material culture that was unavailable to anyone living in any of the other excavated areas. As for the Great Basilica, the principal sacred site in late antiquity, there is no evidence that it was used at this time (cf. Molla 2013). Why the occupation was focused in the Western Defenses as opposed to the acropolis remains a mystery. Perhaps these were the most habitable towers or their occupants wished to have direct over control shipping plying the Corfù Straits?

Can we define this as a place (as opposed to a non-place)? The evidence suggests the 8th-century *kastron* was at least partly focused around the towers in the lower city's landward defenses. In this sense, it was the administrative central-place at Butrint in this period. Did it sustain the



Figure 4. Location of the aristocratic *oikos* on the Vrina Plain in relation to Butrint

identity of the ancient town including its mythic origins and its sacred points? No evidence exists, unfortunately, except to demonstrate its connections to Constantinople and to Italy. Such connections, though, would put some weight on its continued status as a place associated with the exiled Trojans.

The fate of Butrint in the decades following the destruction of around 800 AD is unknown. However, by the mid 9th century if not a little before, Butrint was clearly occupied again, although the location and character of this occupation was markedly different to that of the late 8th century.

Ninth-century Butrint occupied a new place (fig. 4). Excavations in the Roman suburb on the Vrina Plain, to the south of the walled town, brought to light the successor to the tower-houses in the Western Defences. Here, in the ruins of the 6th-century the central-place – a manor-house or *oikos* (as termed by Magdalino 1983; Greenslade, Hodges 2013) of the 9th-century commander at Butrint was discovered. Post-holes found within the (re-used) paved narthex of the 6th-century basilica show that its upper floor was reinforced to take a new residence covering 7.10×5.80 m. With the post-holes fire-blasted through the paving stones, the primitive architecture of the house cannot be understated (fig. 5).

The black earth deposit also extended into the south aisle of the earlier church, while the north aisle, judging from hearths discovered here, was deployed as a workshop. A small Late Antique mausoleum off the

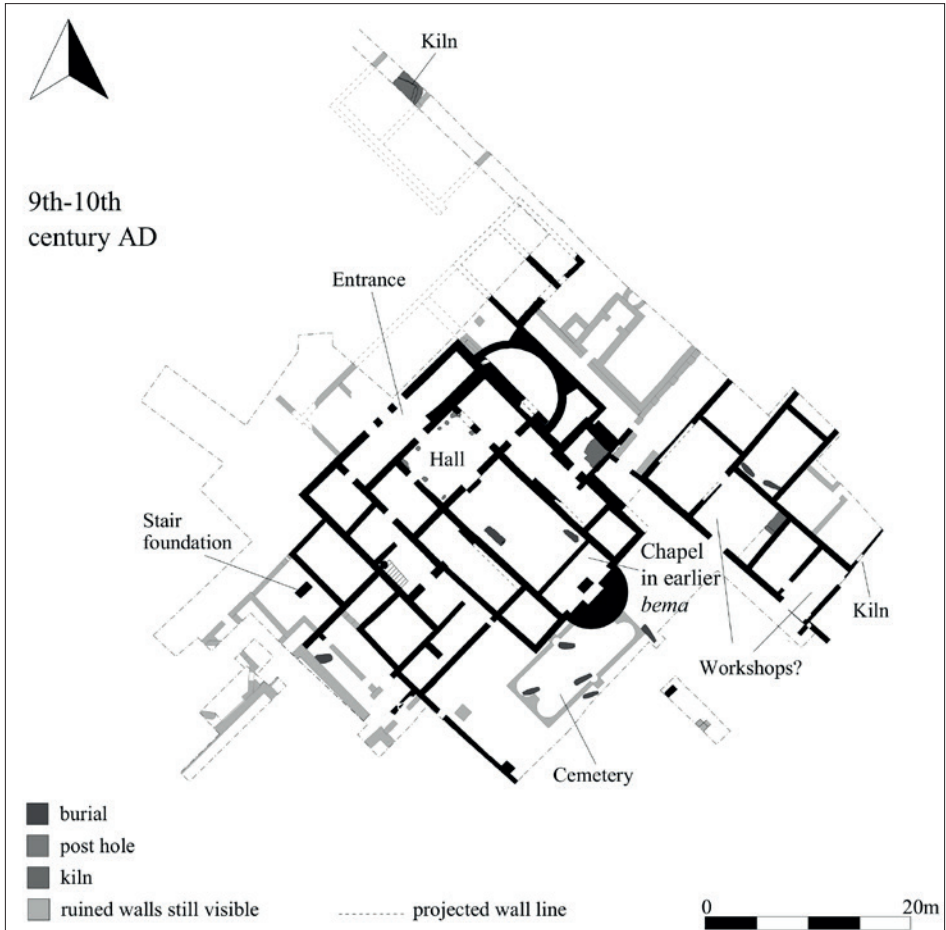


Figure 5. Interpretive plan of the aristocratic *oikos* on the Vrina Plain

north aisle now housed a single-flue pottery kiln. The nave of the basilica was made into an inhumation cemetery from the mid 9th century, graves rudely puncturing the earlier mosaic pavement. A grave with a fine copper-alloy openwork ornamental buckle, closely paralleled by a buckle found at Paleokastritsa on Corfù, which has been dated to the late 8th century (Agallopoulou 1973) accompanied one adult. A secondary cemetery lay beyond the apse of the church included a disturbed adult possibly associated with whom was a silver-plated horse bit. One adult placed directly outside the apse appeared to have been interred with a Byzantine *follis* in his pocket. The ceramics, like the prolific coins, appear to distinguish the culture of this household from that found in the tower at Butrint.

at Butrint in which according to the *Vita Eliae iunioris*, Saint Elias the Younger and his companion, Daniel, were held prisoner at Butrint in 881-2, on suspicion of being spies, on returning from the Peloponnese?

Within the ruins of the ancient town, there is no evidence to suggest the Great Basilica was restored to use at this time, though we cannot doubt that its memory was well recognized (Molla 2013). However, 9th-century ceramics but no evidence of structures were found within the Triconch Palace area beside the Vivari Channel. Were the channel-side areas within the walls of Butrint temporarily used as a periodic market place at this time? Was it an *emboropanegyri*, a periodic emporium that transformed the old place into a non-place? If so, and more excavated data are needed to demonstrate this, the ancient relational roles were reversed with the old suburb becoming the new Butrint, operating as the administrative Byzantine central-place.

The Vrina Plain site was apparently abandoned in the mid 10th century. Interestingly, a new study of the geomorphology at Butrint and on the Vrina Plain shows clearly that the environmental context of *Buthrotum* (which was situated in an open water estuarine location) changed inexorably and significantly after the 6th century (Bescoby, Barclay, Andrews 2008). The continued silting of the estuary meant that the waters became shallower (and probably less accessible to deep draft boats). Effectively this meant that the commander's dwelling on the Vrina Plain by the 10th century was situated in an increasingly marshy and inaccessible location, which may have contributed to its eventual abandonment.

Once again Butrint shifted its locus of administration, so there was a Mid Byzantine Butrint (Phase 3) (fig. 7). By two stages Mid Byzantine Butrint 3 was re-established within the bounds of the ancient city. The first stage is easily characterized as a preparation for the second, more substantive revival of the town. The numbers of later 10th- to early 11th-century coins found in the walled town of Butrint have long since indicated that some significant change occurred at this time. Was the Great Basilica refurbished for the bishop at this time? It was undoubtedly repaired during this period and a walled enclosure was created around it (Molla 2013). During the 10th and 11th centuries renewed and intensive activity occurred in the area of the former Triconch Palace, where stone- and post-built structures were erected above the remains of the Roman buildings (Bowden, Hodges 2011). Intriguingly, huge quantities of ceramics show a similar picture to that noted on the Vrina Plain (although persisting later in the Triconch area), with southern Italian amphorae forming the bulk of the imported material in comparison with table wares which were very limited. The emphasis on bulk transport vessels from a single region could suggest supply to a primarily military settlement, although this remains a matter of speculation.

Stage 2 is much clearer. New fortifications were erected around the acropolis, which presumably contained the new administrative centre, as

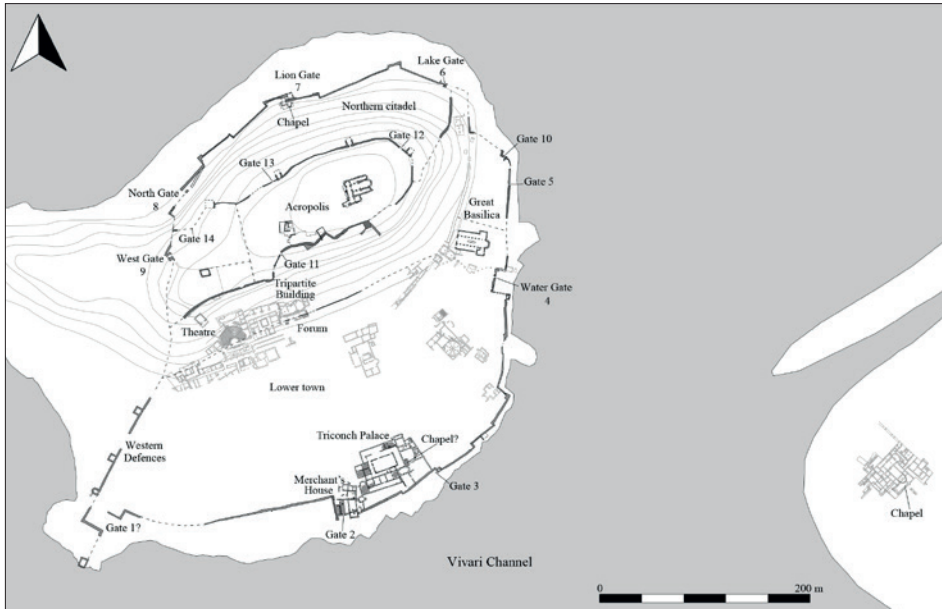


Figure 7. Map of Butrint in the 11th century

well as around the lower city (Molla, Paris, Venturini 2013). Making use of *spolia* taken largely from Hellenistic buildings, this was a major investment in reinvention of the town, quite unlike the earlier Mid Byzantine phases. At the same time, there is evidence of intensive new activity at Butrint, involving the creation of substantial new terracing on the slopes of the acropolis and a series of large walls that may represent property divisions in that they are not associated with any building. The scale of these activities suggests a planned intervention by a single authority. They included the creation of a massive new terrace above the conspicuous levels of fine silty alluvium that overlay Late Antique levels directly on top of the Roman Forum pavement (Hodges 2016). Running east-west over this terrace was an orthostat wall made of roughly reworked Hellenistic blocks, which had two anonymous *folles* [Class A2/A3 (ca. 976/1030-5) and Class C (ca. 1042-1050)] embedded in the fabric. Two further tracts of similar walling were discovered either side of the Great Basilica, part of an enclosure (fig. 8). One short tract appears to run from the Hellenistic fortifications eastwards to form part of an enclosure around the Great Basilica. Associated with this was an anonymous *folle* Class A (ca. 970/1030-5) (unpublished excavation by Neritan Ceka 2005; see Ceka 2006). The second tract of orthostat walling standing a metre high runs across the top of the Roman bridge (fig. 8). The cathedral – the Great Basilica – was refurbished at this



Figure 8. An 11th-century property wall (part of the enclosure around the Great Basilica) closing off the north end of the Roman bridge at Butrint

time, just as small chapels were erected in other parts of the town, and the sacred well of Junia Rufina was restored (Hodges 2016). Stone and timber dwellings, and sections of gravel roads have also been identified from this significant episode of urban reinvention. The ceramic assemblages from the late 11th century have a much more eastern Mediterranean focus, suggesting that this enlarged community was engaged in a much wider range of commercial links that of the mid 9th- to late 11th-century settlement with their narrower south Italian focus.

It is tempting to interpret this reinvention of Butrint as the coalescing and aggrandizing of the commander's residence with a will to make more permanent previous periodic trading activities. With the investment in urban infrastructure as well as churches, there is a transparent involvement of cults in the new urbanism, as there is also an increased level of commercial activity. Place and non-place, we might speculate, had been calculatingly fused together for strategic political purposes (cf. Hodges 2016).

6 Discussion

With the break-up of the Roman empire and the decline of Mediterranean commerce to a scale of prehistoric proportions, Butrint was reduced to little more than an outlying Byzantine castle by 700 AD. If it retained any real connection with a centralized administration in Constantinople, its purpose was to control a corridor connecting the Straits of Corfù to the interior. But this administrative authority was reduced to small dwellings occupying earlier buildings.

Butrint cannot have been an exception. Presumably most of its peers in the southern Adriatic Sea area during this era were reduced to a castle of some kind with, perhaps, associated settlements. But place is also about memory and context. Obviously, in administrative, cultural and economic terms this was a very different community to the Roman town, yet the material culture hints at a place engaged in the continuing relations that on a much greater scale Butrint had enjoyed for nearly a millennium. There is no reason, then, to assume that 8th-century Butrint lost its foundation myth or its relationship with its past.

The archaeologically-attested attack of the later 8th or early 9th centuries appears to have been restricted to the Western Defenses and was perhaps focused upon the élite rather than the community as a whole. The circumstances are certain to remain a matter of speculation, though the Slavic attack on Patras in 805 AD described in the *Chronicle of Monemvasia* is an obvious (if highly politicized) parallel (Curta 2004, 535). Its localized significance perhaps encouraged the community to leave the confines of the old walled town and seek the opportunity of an undefended, open site. The apparent successor settlement was located in the unfortified suburb on the south side of the Vivari Channel. The existence of five seals as well as the finds associated with the inhumations in the associated cemetery show that this was an élite settlement – probably a manor house or *oikos*, belonging to an *archon* (cf. Magdalino 1984; Greenslade, Hodges 2013). The residential space was scarcely more extensive than the towers, but there was scope here for other buildings besides a church and cemetery. Memory, we may surmise, was important. Perhaps, too, was its connection to old Butrint either by boat across the Vivari Channel, or less probably by the Roman bridge. Here, was perhaps a place for trading fish products for prestige goods, a non-place.

Unlike the residences in the Western Defenses, we have the means to determine more about Butrint as a place at this time. As in the case of the settlement on Aegina outside and up against the Late Antique fortifications from this same period (Pennas 2005, 14-5), defense was not a priority for this mid 9th-century settlement. Indeed, its location suggests that the official here chose to locate himself outside the old fortified urban area with its inherent urban history and memories. Rather like the emporia

in northern Europe which occupied new sites beyond largely abandoned Roman centres, a deliberate – if limited – investment was being made to differentiate between old (with custom and memory) and new. However, unlike the emporia of northern Europe, which were essentially ‘non-places’ in Augé’s sense described above, associated with but not inhabited by the élite, the Butrint circumstances perhaps suggest that for several generations between ca. 840-950/1000 AD, a new Butrint, in administrative as well as economic terms, was created on the Vrina Plain. The access of this settlement to coins and a limited range of imported goods from southern Italy was mirrored by the renewed settlement in the Triconch Palace area which seems to have developed slightly later (in the later 9th or early 10th century).

The subsequent revival of the old fortified town involved the refurbishment of the defenses (cf. Whittow 1995, Iveson 2000), major landscaping inside the town, and the creation of walled tenemental divisions (cf. Neville 2004, 123-4). Almost certainly benefitting from markedly increased Byzantine investment in southern Italy (cf. Holmes 2005, 429-47), early in the 11th century (von Falkenhausen 2003, 147-50), Butrint began to resemble the later Roman town in some of its urban characteristics, most notably in its renewed access to Eastern Mediterranean trade. With its re-dedication of churches (including a cathedral, the Great Basilica) and sacred wells, ‘tournaments of value’ became once more an integral ingredient of Butrint and all its operations. Given its morphology and investment it is hard not to imagine that visitors made reference to Aeneas when they disembarked here.

The archaeology of Butrint leads us to several clear observations. First, there can be no doubt that Butrint was virtually extinguished as a city in the 7th and 8th century and, as in the 18th century, when the Venetians held it against the Ottomans, was little more than a fortress with attendant households engaged in fishing. On any graph, this was not a slight dip, or trough, but a total change. Of course, it is likely that its inhabitants continued to describe the place as an ancient city with its vaunted Virgilian myths much as the British plenipotentiary to the Ottoman court, Colonel Martin William Leake was to do after his visit in 1805 when he found a group of Ottoman fishing huts here. But in 1805 it was far removed from the Roman town as an urban place; and so it was, we now recognize, in the 7th to 10th centuries. Second, after six hundred years of Roman urban continuity, the city had come to forge the cultural character of the coastal area. Roman Butrint made its centuriated landscape and in different forms retained control of this until the 7th century. The *kastron* was an altogether different settlement form, which in turn gave rise to the 9th-century manor house on the Vrina Plain. Both made use of preceding buildings, but by the 9th century there was an explicit rejection of the old walled city as a settlement (or an enforced retreat from it), and in all likelihood, a rejection of its

customs and memories. Defense too seems to have been foresworn. Many questions are thrown up by these discoveries that allow us to move beyond the reductive question of continuity versus discontinuity (cf. Haldon 2006, 607). How are we to explain the location of the main administrative authority outside the old fortified area rather than inside it? How are we to explain the apparent absence of architecture as rhetoric during the 7th to later 10th centuries? Why did old buildings rather than new ones suffice? The immutability of the new fortifications and the tenemental orthostat walls of the early 11th-century town suggest an urban colonization of an otherwise empty townscape that markedly contrasts with the apparent fluid adaptability of the ruralized settlement sequence from the mid 6th to the late 10th centuries. Equally, it hints at an attempted regularization of a townscape in which intra-mural land had suddenly become the subject of increasing control, competition and demand. Then, too, there is much to consider about sacred issues, especially the pattern of burial beside the habitations, which began at the end of Late Antiquity and which persisted thereafter alongside the 9th-century manor house, and into the 10th- to 11th-century town. Coin loss, too, begs many questions. The prolific loss of coins occurs again in the 9th- to 11th-century settlements, but 7th- to early 9th-century coins, in common with almost all parts of the Balkans are largely absent (cf. Curta 2006, 74-5). In sum, there is yet much to understand about the history of Butrint (and perhaps many similar post-Roman cities) between the 7th and 11th centuries.

Were these three Butrints, each invested we may surmise with its Trojan ancestry, places of memory in Augé's sense? The archaeology is not sufficient in its detail to be certain in the case of the 8th- 9th-century towers. There are no signs of any sacred activity that might shed light on its social context. A century later, though, on the Vrina Plain, there can be little doubt that the aristocratic *oikos* including its church with a cemetery was invested with place, perhaps associated with a non-place where trading occurred. The Vrina Plain settlement, distinguished by its material culture, was surely the home of an archon, whom in a further, later iteration of place driven by environmental and political circumstances, took his office back to the acropolis of the ancient city, high above a refurbished cathedral. Here, with much of the ancient monuments being covered by colluvium, a new civic centre was constructed in a Medieval rather than an ancient form. Place and non-place, we may surmise, were coalesced to optimize location, and with numerous churches, shared the local tournaments of value. Was security a critical factor in making places, as the narratives might lead us to believe? Perhaps in the 8th century; perhaps again in the 11th century; but most assuredly not in the 9th to 10th centuries when Butrint as a place was unfortified. To return to the beginning, we are the pivotal generation able to use multiple sources to analyze the early Middle Ages, and so able to demonstrate that the shifting of place with

its memories and sacred associations has as much and perhaps more importance than informants' ethnographic minutiae. It is the conjunction of such intimate knowledge with short- and long-term history that has great potential in social and cultural analysis, not the pursuit of one endeavour to the exclusion of the other. Place, and by its very acceptance in the past, non-place, matters as we construct new experiential maps of the making of the Middle Ages.

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