Shala Valley Project
Final Report of the 2007 Field Season

Michael Galaty
Ols Lafe
Zamir Tafilica

With contributions by:

Ann Christine Eek
Christopher Fisher
Wayne Lee
Mentor Mustafa
Heather Rypkema
Robert Schon
Joanita Vroom
Charles Watkinson
Antonia Young

INTRODUCTION

During the period June 22-July 22, 2007, and with the financial support of the National Science Foundation of the United States, Millsaps College, and the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, we led a team of 18 archaeologists, anthropologists, and historians (Table 1) to Theth, Albania, located in the Shala Valley in the remote north of the country. Our primary goals for the 2007 field season were: 1) to complete intensive archaeological survey in the lower (southern) half of the Shala Valley, in particular in the villages surrounding Abat; 2) to conduct ethnohistoric and ethnographic surveys in the lower half of the Shala Valley, thereby producing data comparable to those collected in Theth in 2005 and 2006, 3) to undertake extensive archaeological survey to the south of Shala in the regions of Shosh and Kir; and 4) to conduct chemical and geoarchaeological surveys and limited excavations at the prehistoric archaeological sites of Grunas (Site 006) and Gimaj (Site 008), and the historic sites of Okol and the *stanë* (shepherd's hut) at Qafe e Thores. Our project's key theoretical question addresses the issue of isolation versus interaction: to what degree through time have the people of Shala been isolated from and/or interacted with the "outside world", and what factors might dictate isolation and/or interaction? Having now completed our third and final full season of field research in Shala, we are, we think, in a very good position to attempt to answer these questions.

Our focus in this report is the archaeological research. We review the results of historical and ethnographic fieldwork in less detail, and primarily as they relate to the archaeological record. Discussions of project methodology have been incorporated below where appropriate.

Table 1: 2007 Shala Valley Project Personnel[1]

Gwen Backwell, volunteer field technician, Liverpool, United Kingdom
John Backwell, volunteer field technician, Liverpool, United Kingdom
Sasha Caufield, field technician, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY, USA
Esmerelda Brahimaj, field technician, Tirana, Albania
Anjeza Cikapano, photographer, Altenberg, Austria
Ann Christine Eek, photographer, Museum of Cultural History, Oslo, Norway
Christopher Fisher, geoarchaeologist, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO, USA
Michael Galaty, project co-director, Millsaps College, Jackson, MS, USA
Attila Gyucha, field technician, Múnkacsy Mihály Múzeumin, Békéscsaba, Hungary
Anna Keegan, student field technician, Colgate University, Hamilton, NY, USA
Ols Lafe, project co-director, Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports, Tirana, Albania
Wayne Lee, ethnohistorian, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, USA
Mentor Mustafa, ethnographer, Boston University, Boston, MA, USA
Heather Rypkema, archaeological chemistry, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY, USA
Robert Schon, extensive archaeological survey leader, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA, USA
Anisa Selimi, student field technician, Universiteti Marin Barleti, Tirana, Albania
Ajrina Tafilica, student field technician, Shkodër University, Shkodër, Albania
Zamir Tafilica, project co-director, Shkodër Historical Museum, Shkodër, Albania
Jordan Taylor, student field technician, Millsaps College, Jackson, MS, USA
Charles Watkinson, intensive archaeological survey leader, ASCSA, Princeton, NJ, USA
Chelsi West, student field technician, Millsaps College, Jackson, MS, USA
Antonia Young, ethnographer, Bradford University, Bradford, United Kingdom and Colgate University, Hamilton, NY, USA

REPORT OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC TEAM, I[2]

The main ambition of the 2007 ethnographic team was to collect structured survey data from the villages of the lower Shala Valley, as was done in Theth in 2005. A total of 10 formal interviews were conducted in the villages of Ndërlysaj (3), Gimaj (3), Lekaj (1), Abat (1), Mushaj (1) and Bob (1). An additional intensive interview of ethnoarchaeological character was conducted in Theth with a special emphasis on tool use, subsistence activities throughout an agricultural year, and the spatial organization of a typical household compound. The results of the latter are presented in greater detail below. The ethnographic team was composed of Mentor Mustafa, who was joined by student members of the project as needed and on a rotating basis. Antonia Young conducted ethnographic work in Theth during the first half of the project, focused on the role of women and blood feud, as described below in the next section. The ethnographic team collected data as participant observers in social and other informal settings, such as at a village

[1] We also would like to extend thanks to the people of Shala, in particular Prek Harusha, mayor of Theth, and most especially Fran Frashnishta and his family.
[2] This section is the work of Mentor Mustafa.

feast, where music was played using the traditional instruments of Shala (*çifteli* and *lahutë*) (Figure 1) and lamb was roasted on a spit (*fërlik*). The team also documented the making of *raki*.

Figure 1: Shala man playing the traditional *çifteli* and *lahutë* instruments.

All data collection was conducted with the written permission of the informants who signed a form indicating their informed consent. Whenever permission was granted, photographs and recordings taken were documented in the project database. The audio and video recordings, photographs accompanied by a detailed photo log, interview notes, and the signed consent forms will remain part of the project's permanent archive.

In this preliminary ethnographic report we focus on the most important contributions of the 2007 ethnographic team to the overall aims of the project as a whole. The remainder of the collected information will be subjected to more systematic inquiry in the coming years and prepared for final publication. More specifically, here we look at 1) the onset of the settlement of Shala as reflected in the genealogical data, and 2) the social organization of Shala based on the available interview data.

Origins

In contrast to the interview data collected in Theth in 2005, the respondents from Ndërlysaj and Gimaj were able to offer extended genealogical information and lengthier patrilines. We now have two patrilines that go six generations beyond the founder Shalë Bengu (Shalë-Bengu-Zogu-Shiroka-Gjini-Murrani-Deti). These patrilines place the founder of the extended Shala *fis* (i.e. extended patriline, "clan", "tribe") on the 15th generation. This evidence is relevant because it speaks not only to the issue of the original settlement of the valley but also to the origins of the Shala settlers. Given that each generation covers a temporal bracket of about 33 years, the collected patrilines place the foundation of the valley in the early 1400s. This is in accordance with various oral histories and testimonies that indicate that the current inhabitants of Shala may have settled in the region shortly after the end of the uprising against the incoming Turks, led by Skënderbeg. Additionally, it seems that the trajectory of settlement may have run from lower to

upper Shala with a gradual settlement of the higher reaches of the valley, i.e. the villages of Gimaj, Lekaj, and Theth.

There is some evidence, however, that while the original settlement proceeded from the lower to upper valley, there was also some movement of population in the opposite direction – from north to south – and within the valley. Such is the case of Ndërlysaj, which is a neighborhood of Theth, and perhaps Rrogam (located in a subsidiary valley to the east of Shala, midway between Theth and Valbona), both of which were settled as satellite neighborhoods. These satellites relieved unchecked population growth and accommodated families who had experienced economic and social hardships in other neighborhoods.

We may infer based on the oral histories that: 1) people initially came to Shala from native territories outside of the valley as a result of social and economic hardships elsewhere, perhaps as long as 500 years ago, 2) the valley was initially settled from lower to upper Shala, and 3) excess population eventually moved from Theth in upper Shala to lower regions of the valley (i.e. to Ndërlysaj) or elsewhere outside of the valley (i.e. to Rrogam) in order to relieve population pressure. These are only a few of the many possible indications of very complex local-regional interconnections that will be further interrogated during the final stages of our research.

The two extended patrilines collected in 2007 also offer new insights into the question of the place of origin of Shala's current inhabitants. The testimony on this issue is rather diverse and sometimes confusing, with place of origin sometimes given as Kosova and at other times as Shirokë of the Shkodra district. There is in fact an extended patrilineage with the name of Shalë in Kosova (located to the northeast of Mitrovica and composed of some 40 villages with a population of 20,000 people) from which some informants claim descent. The issue of fis affiliations and shared fis names has been treated by various scholars, and Ulqini (1995) offers sound analysis in this regard that is strengthened by the data presented here.[3] Because similar toponyms are found throughout Albanian populated lands, Ulqini argues that many fis have adopted similar names even though they may not share common ancestry with one another. This means, for example, that individuals in Shala from Shalë in Kosova and Shirokë near Shkodra may share the same family name and fis affiliation. For instance, we recorded a family name that was adopted from the name of a pasture owned by the family. This toponym might then be appropriated by the whole kin-group despite disparate origins. In our case, the genealogical information from our surveys better supports the origins of the tribe from Shiroka.

It should be noted, however, that at least one testimony indicates that the valley – the villages of Mavriq and Bob in particular – was inhabited prior to the coming of Shala's current inhabitants. Mavriq was eventually outnumbered by the growing Shala population (see Table 2) and may have been pushed to the brink of extinction, while Bob befriended the new inhabitants and adopted their fis identity thus becoming "*fise të shoqnue*" or a "befriended" fis.

[3] Kahreman Ulqini, *Organizimi i vjetër Shoqëror tek Shqiptarët* (Eagle Press, Shkodër, 1996).

Year	Shala	Bob
1485	11	5
1529-1536	15	8
1671	32	18
1771	194 (1875 people)	
1900	200	6

Table 2: Household numbers in Shalë and Bob from 1485-1900 (after Ulqini 1996: 40)

It should be possible to bring the historical record to bear on the question of origins. The trajectory of the spread of the Ottoman influence and the appearance of the first armies in northern Albania, for example, may indicate which areas experienced the kinds of pressures that would have resulted in population movements towards the Shala Valley in the 1400s. A coordination of the oral histories with other lines of evidence that bear on the question of origins can be expected to paint a more accurate picture of how the valley was initially populated.

Regional Organization

A good deal of information was collected regarding the regional organization of the valley and the traditional system of customary law. At a regional level, Shala is made up of the four major brotherhoods, known also as *këmbët e fisit*, lit. "the feet of the fis". They are Pec Nika, Gimaj, Lotaj, and Lekaj. When the elderly are brought together in counsel (*pleqni*), representatives of these four *fis* come together; four others from each one of the villages may join them. While the details of the data on blood feud and conflict resolution await further analysis, we offer here a brief summary of the traditional forms of leadership (*prija* or *paria*) that continue to play a role in conflict management in the valley.

According to the 2007 interview data the role of traditional leadership is complementary to that offered by the local and state governments. The *bajraktar* is a hereditary position; the title is inherited and it often goes to one of the bajraktar's sons, often the eldest but more often than not, whomsoever is the most able of them all and worthy of the title's honors and responsibilities. It is a position that was appointed by the *vezir* of Shkodra during Ottoman rule and one that remains with the family throughout the generations. When the bajraktar dies, his family chooses someone to take his place. There is yet another way that one may become a bajraktar and that is by capturing a flag from the enemy. Shala is the only *fis* that has two bajraktars, one appointed by the *vezir*, and the other having earned the title through his success in war. The bajraktar is responsible for conflicts within the valley as well as for leading his men to war. His is an honorary title without any financial privileges except for public recognition in all social functions at which he is served well. The bajraktar keeps a plain white flag scarf that serves as the symbol for his leadership.

The role of the bajraktar is to signal the need for the union of all men in arms, and this is done by shooting the rifle 12 times in the air especially for cases where the national boundaries are threatened by the enemy. Other obligations are to enforce the rule of the counsel of the elders when it is not accepted. In such cases, the bajraktar's men may cut one's trees, burn their house, and even kick them out of the village. The bajraktar may even represent his people abroad. In 1917, for example, the acting bajraktar addressed the deputies in Vienna and informed them of the worsening condition in his region and the failure in the region of the Austria-Hungarian reforms. He was congratulated for his bravery and his willingness to speak frankly, for Vienna had been misinformed by its own concerning the conditions on the ground.

Another figure next to the bajraktar is called the "*kreu*", lit. "the front" or "headmen". Each village is known to have had such a figure drawn from the family that is known to have been the first to settle in a particular village. It is not a paid position and like the bajraktar, the kreu is recognized as the representative of his own village. He answers for all conflicts in the village and maintains direct contact with the bajraktar, who in turn serves the entire region. The kreu is the first son of the first family in every village and there is a flag, most often in plain white, that symbolizes the position. Whenever there is not a son to inherit the title, it transfers to the second brother. Whenever the "këmbët e fisit" are mobilized for a meeting, the kreu participates by representing his village.

There is yet another leadership position called the "*nishanli*". It is derived from Turkish and means "mark" or "marksman". It is a position that was recognized by the Ottomans, who offered a token of recognition to a particular family. In return the family was responsible for supplying soldiers whenever the Ottomans needed them. Being a nishanli was both a privilege and a chore.. It was a privilege because often work was done on his house by others because both the nishanli and bajraktar frequently traveled to areas of conflict in order to solve people's problems. Whenever the elders are mobilized the nishanli is also present. He is recognized as the most honored guest at every social gathering and is fed well, like the bajraktar.

If we were to map all of the leadership roles in Shala we would have to consider smaller units as well, such as the village (*katund*), neighborhood (*lagje*), brotherhood (*fis i vogël*), and family (*shpi*) leaders. At all these levels there is a designated *pari* who is responsible for the representation of the respective unit to larger social entities. The *zoti i shpis* (master of the house) is responsible for the household and if a member of the family is involved in a dispute, it is the head of the household who represents him in the settlement of the dispute. A more systematic look into the roles that each of the above-mentioned units plays can be expected to offer a fuller picture concerning the social organization in Shala.

REPORT OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC TEAM, II[4]

Women

We found that much of traditional life is retained, though year by year women have less patience with their lowly status, and gradually aspects of their life are changing. Inevitably those who go to Shkodra for the winter see more modern ways and have changed expectations on return to Thethi – particularly the younger women.

Amongst those who stay, traditional life is more closely adhered to, for example in marriage patterns and food preparations. It is still considered preferable to have marriages arranged by parents, though in practice men now may make verbal contact with a girl they fancy and later get an intermediary to go to her parents to make the proposal. Such was the case of one family's nephew, and the new bride is now part of their home, though their marriage was atypically held in November (traditional marriage months are July and August). The family must have overcome traditional fear of bad luck for a wedding in other months, giving the reason that summer time is the busiest time of year in the fields (not to mention for tourists). This same family has now partially moved out of their house to vacate two bedrooms prepared to receive visitors, despite being themselves one of the largest families in Theth (14 permanent residents).

It is very obvious that modern kitchens are not considered worth the investment, it being considered sufficient enhancement simply to have an outdoor cook stove rather than cooking on the open fire in the grate – this still in use in many homes: baking bread inside a pan placed under the fire's embers.

As a Catholic community, religious practice has been enhanced by the completion of the reconstruction of the old church, and the weekly provision of a priest (through the summer at least). He also gives weekly Italian classes.

Where people have repaired their roofs, we observed none which had used the traditional wooden tiles. Only the former ethnographic museum has a new roof made in the traditional manner. The cost for this was apparently shared between the owner and the state.

Bloodfeud Reconciliation

In our ongoing research we followed up on two families in particular, one from Theth and the other from Lekaj.

[4] This section is the work of Antonia Young, who was assisted in the field by Anjeza Cikapano. They collected information regarding development and tourism, which has been shared with the planning committee of the Cross-Border Balkans Peace Park (http://www.balkanspeacepark.org/). The bulk of their work was in Theth and focused on women's roles, in particular as they impact bloodfeud reconciliation.

The family from Theth was headed by an old man (aged 75) who married his wife when she was 14 (despite the fact the state had forbidden such marriages). They had seven children. His wife was left looking after them while he was imprisoned for over ten years for stealing (another in his group was killed for the crime). One of his sons was married and had a young daughter, and claimed to have accidentally killed someone. In turn he was killed. The daughter-in-law and girl were sent back to the birth family. When the widow married again (now living in Italy), the daughter was returned to her grandparents (now aged 13 and helping them domestically and in the fields).

The grandfather awaits reprisal in this bloodfeud (as more than one of the other family were killed), but says he does not hide as he would prefer that it were his life which was taken, rather than that of a younger man. His comment: "God took a son from me, but gave me six grandsons (and a granddaughter)".

In Lekaj we learned of a former bloodfeud which was resolved by the giving of brides to the "owed" family. According to the informant, who was born l936, there had been three intact *kullas* (towers) in Lekaj as late as l945. By l952 weather had broken their roofs, and between then and l958 all three had been dismantled and the stones used for other houses. The kullas were built in the late l9th century and were maintained by five of the wealthiest families. They apparently had the most to fear in terms of bloodfeuds. As they were built, the builders intoned the following prayer: "God save us from ever having to use this." One in particular was re-used fairly recently, though only for two weeks, and the feud was resolved by exchanging brides in marriage.

REPORT OF THE ETHNOHISTORIC SURVEY TEAM

In the summer of 2007 we widened our investigation of houses and structures into the neighborhoods and villages south of Theth. The team consisted of Wayne Lee, Sasha Caufield, and Esmerelda Brahimaj (for the first 2 weeks) and Ajrina Tafilica (for the last week). Given that we were unable to work in 2006 and had only three weeks in 2007, we altered our coverage strategy to a certain extent. We decided that since Ndërlysaj had once been a neighborhood of Theth, we would study it with exactly the same comprehensive method that we had used for Theth in 2005. For the other neighborhoods we adopted the *mehallë* or neighborhood as the "unit of analysis" (see the 2005 report for a discussion of mehallë creation). Limitations of time meant that we could not complete whole villages, but we could identify the separate neighborhoods and deal with them. We also decided that the best approach (after completing Ndërlysaj) was to focus our time on the houses themselves, indicating barns and other outbuildings, but not entering them separately into the database. In the end we surveyed Ndërlysaj (traditionally a mehallë of Theth) (32 houses); lower Kaprej (a distant mehallë of Gimaj) (6 houses); Gimaj-Koderlimaj (26 houses); Gimaj-Marvataj (23 houses); Gimaj-Xhaferraj (22 houses); and most of Marnikaj (now a mehallë of Breg Lumi, formerly of Nicaj) (12 houses), for a grand total of 39 occupied houses and 81 unoccupied.[5]

[5] 2-4 outlying houses of Gimaj-Marvataj and Gimaj-Xhaferraj were not included in the survey.

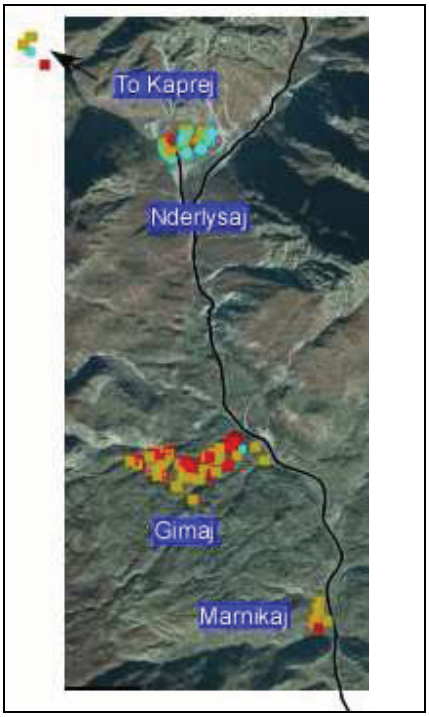
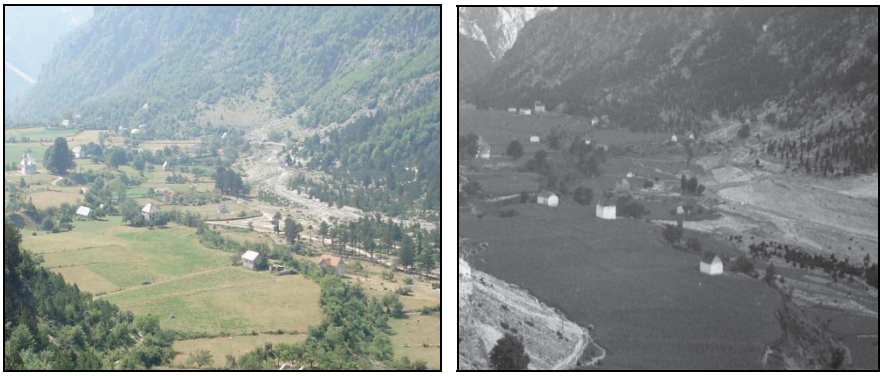


Figure 2: Neighborhoods targeted in the 2007 ethnohistoric survey.

Photographic Analysis

In addition to the field survey, with the enormous help of Selima Osmani, the director of the Marubi photo archive in Shkodër, we acquired copies of a number of landscape and building photos taken in the mountain areas by Pici in 1933 and 1938. We were able to duplicate the angle and subject of a number of his landscape photos in order to assess the changes in the land forms, in the density of homes/barns, and even in some architectural details. Consider, for example, the two following trimmed images of Theth (Figure 3):



In the more recent image (left, taken by Lee in 2007) 22 buildings can be seen (plus the church), while in Pici's 1933 photo (right) only 16 can be detected, an increase of 38%. Some of the additional buildings are barns rather than houses, but further analysis will sort out how many of the newer buildings are in fact houses. Analysis of other views of Theth-Gjeçaj and Gimaj (Koderlimaj, Marvataj, and Xhaferraj) support this level of change. Gjejaj increased from 4 or 5 buildings to 10 (100%) while the three Gimaj *mehallit* changed from 19 to 36 (89%).

In addition the photos clearly reveal the massive increase in the level of vegetation as the population has declined in recent years and with them the size of the goat and sheep herds and the demand for firewood. The photos are particularly interesting in the architectural detail, although they tend merely to confirm conclusions about changes in design that we have noticed through survey and interviews. Note the window size and balcony/second story entrance shifts in the two following paired photos (Figures 4 and 5).

Figure 4: Image of kulla taken by Pici in 1933 (right) and by Eek in 2007 .

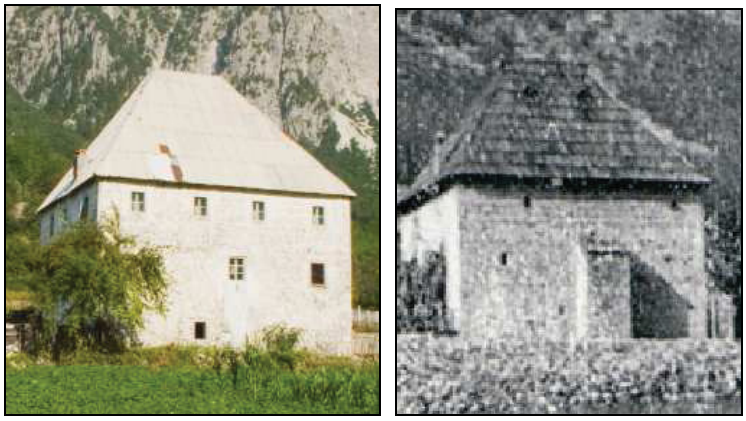


Figure 5: Image of large house in Okol. The older photo (right) is from Franz Nopsca, who traveled to the region in 1908. The other image is by Eek, taken in 2007.

Perhaps the most famous building in Theth, the tower kulla frequently portrayed in guide books to the region, turns out to have looked very different during Pici's 1933 visit (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Theth-Kolaj kulla in 2007, by Eek, and by Pici in 1933.

The photos await further analysis, particularly with regard to the size and density of agricultural terraces and the movement of the path of the river, but they have already greatly enhanced our understanding of the last 80-100 years of change within the valley.

Architecture and Chronology

One of the goals for the ethnohistoric survey was to establish a sequence of particular architectural features that would allow us to create a picture of the process of neighborhood creation and expansion, hopefully in a way that dovetailed with the *kanun*-based traditions of family movement, expansion, and fission. The 2005 survey produced enough detail that we were able to reconstruct a fairly accurate timeline of the development of Theth-Gjeçaj and Theth-Gjelaj.[6] In 2007 we have built on what we learned and refined our chronology of certain features, but there remain limitations. Traditional building techniques continue to be used, and the history of each family has its own idiosyncrasies that defy patterning.

As reported in 2005, the use of a raised and slightly offset foundation, especially when done in combination with an inset porch, nearly always indicates construction in the 1980s, with some in the early 1990s. Early versions of the offset foundation can be detected in the 1970s. An example of such a foundation with an inset porch is ST351, built in 1980 (Figure 7).

More complex is the problem of window replacement. As suggested in the Nopsca and Pici photos above, the valley's stone houses were originally built with small stone framed windows, known as *frengjis*, which were specifically designed to prevent enemies from shooting into the

[6] Wayne E. Lee and Michael L. Galaty, "Warfare, Politics, and Rural Population Movements: Analyzing Houses, Neighborhoods, and Abandonment in the Shala Valley of Northern Albania, 1450-2006", submitted to the journal *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, December, 2007.

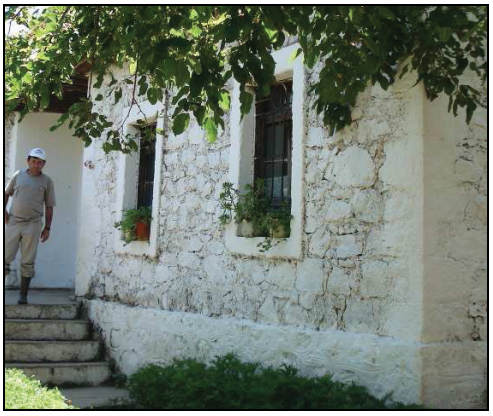


Figure 7: Offset foundation (ST351).

Figure 8: Closed frengji (right) and larger replacement window (left) (ST285).

home. Homes were still built with such windows into the 1930s, but as the danger of blood feud declined, frengjis were closed up or replaced with larger windows. The "first generation" of replacement windows tended to resemble the earlier small windows, still framed with 4 large blocks of stone, but now with a much larger opening. With the arrival of cement in the 1960s, when a homeowner replaced or enlarged his windows, he tended to do so by framing it in cement, and with an even larger opening.[7] Note the sequence of windows in the above photo, from the closed up small frengji on the right, to the larger stone framed window (ST285) (Figure 8). Many of the surviving open frengjis are on ground level and open into spaces used only for animals. Unfortunately without a witness, it is impossible to know if a new larger window replaced an older frengji, or was simply punched through the wall.

There seem to be two forms of "oldest" houses. One is the large, usually nearly square, two-story building, with extensive carved decorations on the cornerstones and some lintels (the older carvings often include raised carvings, rather than merely incised carvings). It tended to be designed for defense, with the ground floor for animals, sometimes with the only access to the second floor via an internal ladder, while others used a narrow external staircase (of wood or stone) to an elevated entrance (most such second story entrances are now closed up). These houses can usually be identified visually, although sometimes only after close inspection, and our assessment of their "old" status is usually confirmed by local tradition. The other form is more frustrating, largely because it has virtually no distinguishing features. Several houses identified by the locals as the "oldest" in a given neighborhood are simple one-story structures, sometimes divided into two rooms, but many of which have since fallen into disrepair or have been reused as barns. Without a local informant we would be hard pressed to determine

[7] One homeowner claimed to have been the first to use large cement windows in his neighborhood in 1959. Other such expansion have been attested to the 1960s, 1977, 1985, and several in the 1990s.

anything about their age (see, for example, Figure 9, below, ST082, which is universally identified as the first home in the Gjelaj mehallë of Theth).[8]

Unfortunately, for the most part, "old" merely means over 100 years old, which seems to be as far as local tradition reaches on such subjects, with a few very exceptional houses claimed to be much older. Interestingly, Franz Nopsca, traveling in the region in 1908, claimed that the tradition of building the large stone homes had only been introduced (by a single traveling craftsman) in 1850, and this may indeed explain the apparent "newness" of the extant buildings, with previous building styles more ephemeral.

Figure 9: ST082, Theth-Gjelaj.

Using architectural analysis and local tradition (which are comfortingly close) we can breakout the chronology of house construction over the last 100 years, with some homes indeterminate, and others merely "over 100 years old." It should be noted, however, that at least some families attested that their homes were built on top of the foundations of an older building, about which we can tell little. Combining the results from the three neighborhoods in Gimaj with Ndërlysaj, produces the results presented in Figure 10.

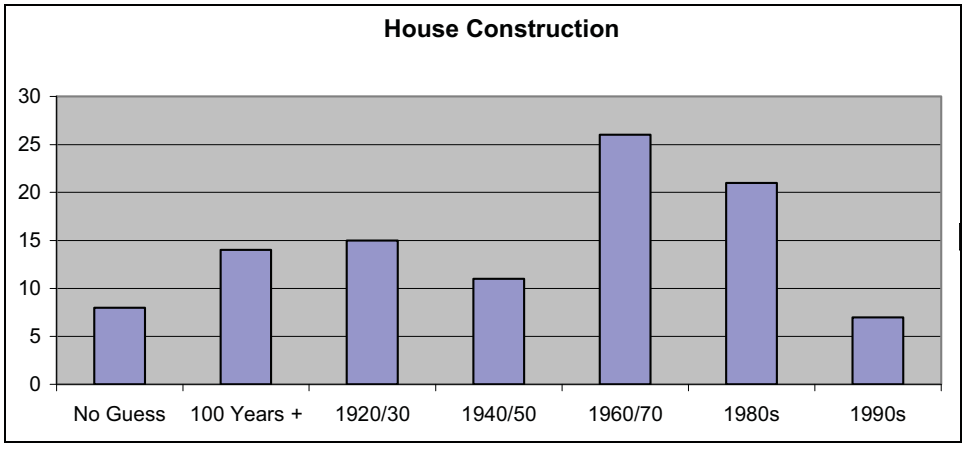


Figure 10: Results of house construction analysis for Theth-Gimaj and Ndërlysaj.

[8] This dual typology roughly conforms to that suggested in Pirro Thomo, Ali Muka, Faruk Zarshati, Gjergji Martini, eds., *Vendabanime dhe Banesa Populllore Shqiptare*, 1 (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave të Shqipërisë, 2004), 63-66.

As in the 2005 report, we associate the relatively high rate of new building in the 1920s and 30s with the stabilization of the independent state and the construction of the new road into the mountains. The dip in the 1940s seems clearly associated with World War II. Then in the 1960s, as the communist state tightened its grip on the land and upon out migration (a process that seems to have been escalating within this region in the late 1960s and early 1970s), we see more houses built to take advantage of the state's allocation of private land on a "house", rather than a "household" basis (see the 2005 report).[9] One family in Ndërlysaj, for example, reported that in 1945 the four brothers of an extended household owned eight *dylym* of land. The collectivization process in 1966 left the whole family with only three dylym, which was further tightened in 1971 to one dylym (a dylym equals approximately .1 hectare). Other families avoided this process by splitting the extended household into multiple homes. Furthermore, the state limited emigration from the village, which caused further tightening of space within the village, and thus the continued construction of homes into the 1980s. The emigration of the 1990s has eased that pressure. Collectivization of the flocks and herds also led many homes to convert their ground floor animal stalls into living space, and families built external barns for their limited number of privately-owned animals. The end of communism has seen a proliferation of larger barns, limited only by the villagers' desire to use relatives' abandoned homes as barns where possible.

Conclusion

Moving our survey down the valley has simultaneously confirmed the general portrait that we reached in Theth in 2005 and also pointed to the variability of experience and material conditions in both places. Theth, for example, is affected much more by the winter and by deep snow. Therefore they have a stronger tradition of steeply peaked roof construction, where the villages further south nearly universally report an earlier era of nearly flat roofs. Widespread shale formations in the southern valley also sustained a tradition of slate roof construction that seems absent in the Theth area. Gimaj also sits on a slope down the pass that leads to the headwaters of the Kir river and the lower Pulti region, and at a point that early modern travelers often used to access the Shala valley. Probably as a result they have much more vivid and specific memories of Serbian incursions in 1913 and 1915, during which they claim that "all" of the houses in Gimaj were burned.

Future work will elaborate on these survey data and combine them in a more comprehensive way with data from various archives in Rome, Vienna, Venice, Tirana, and Istanbul.

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[9] At the completion of coopertivisation in the mountains, the 5th Congress of Cooperatives in 1968 decreed an upper limit in the mountains of 0.1 ha irrigated private land, or 0.15 unirrigated. Mountain peasants were allowed to keep one cow and ten sheep and goats, increased to 20 if they had joined a "new" collective farm (one of those created after 1/1/1966). In addition they could have one pig, unlimited rabbits and hens, as well as one goose or up to 15 turkeys. Beasts of burden were no longer permitted, which severely hampered moving personal goods to market. Furthermore in 1972 a new type of cooperative was created, and even more restrictions on livestock created. Then, beginning in 1980, peasants were urged to hand over their remaining animals to the coop. Many peasants apparently slaughtered them instead. Örjan Sjöberg, *Rural Change and Development in Albania* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 130-31.

HOUSE COMPOUND SURVEY[10]

From July 9th to July 13th a small team conducted a survey of a number of house compounds. Sasha Caufield mapped the interior plans of houses and the spaces immediately around them, while Ann Christine Eek took photographs of spaces, artifacts, and people. Charles Watkinson and Ajrina Tafilica meanwhile interviewed the inhabitants of each house. On the first day, Mentor Mustafa joined the team and conducted an extended interview with Gjovalin Lokthi. On July 19th Sasha Caulfield, Ajrina Tafilica, and Chelsi West interviewed Gjovalin's wife Mariana to get a female perspective on the use of space. The interviews with Gjovalin and Mariana Lokthi were recorded and transcribed, but the following interviews were briefer and only summaries have been prepared.

The documentation of the Compound Survey consists of: 1) this brief report; 2) exterior and interior sketch maps prepared by Sasha Caufield, accompanied by a prose "tour" of each compound; 3) a photographic record prepared by Ann Christine Eek; 4) a glossary of Albanian/English terms prepared by Charles Watkinson and Ajrina Tafalica with references to interviews and photographs; and 5) a timeline and transcription of a typical agricultural year prepared by Mentor Mustafa and Charles Watkinson, based on the extended Lokthi interviews.

The Compound Survey differed from other ethnohistorical and anthropological activities conducted by SVP teams in two ways. Firstly, the granularity of the unit of analysis (the house compound) falls somewhere between the structures that are the focus of the Ethnohistoric Survey (EHS) and the landscapes that are the focus of the Intensive Archaeological Survey (IAS). Secondly, while using semi-structured interview techniques similar to those of the anthropologists on the project, the focus of all questions was on material culture, and the uses of artifacts and spaces. This places the Compound Survey firmly in a tradition of ethnoarchaeology, broadly defined as "the study by archaeologists of contemporary behaviors and their material correlates for the purpose of aiding in the interpretation of archaeological material."[11]

Although the dangers of extending analogies too far are well known, the study of the kind of material signature a household compound in this Alpine environment might leave today can feed into an understanding of what type of trace might have been left in the past. Also, since the Shala Valley Project is explicitly diachronic in approach, the understanding of modern lifeways is important in itself. With our material culture focus, therefore, particular attention was paid to patterns of discard ("Where do you throw your inorganic and organic refuse?") as well as post-depositional taphonomic processes (e.g., "Do you spread manure?", "How deep do you plow?") that might affect patterns observed in survey and excavation. A start was also made on recording

[10] This section is the work of Charles Watkinson, with assistance from Sasha Caufield, Ann Christine Eek, Mentor Mustafa, Ajrina Tafilica, and Chelsi West.

[11] Murray, P. and P. N. Kardulias. 1986. "A Modern Site-Survey in the Southern Argolid, Greece," JFA 13, pp. 21-41.

some of the processes (such as making cheese, distilling raki, milling flour) that might create distinctive material signatures. Questions were also asked about the origins of materials that might shed light on the question of interaction vs. isolation that is at the heart of the Shala Valley Project.

Methodology

While the choice of house compounds to investigate was partly opportunistic, guided by the warmth of previous receptions received by the EHS and IAS, we attempted to survey a sample of different socioeconomic and geographical situations. The compounds targeted were therefore spread throughout the valley and our first action was always to gather some basic statistical information on the size of the family, their holdings of land and animals. A crucial question was also whether the family spent all year in the valley or moved to Shkodër over the winter.

The house compounds surveyed were:

July 9

Gjovalin Lokthi in Theth-Ulaj. Household occupied by two families with young children, and two old people. Stays the winter. Interviewees: Gjovalin Lokthi, 37, and his wife Mariana, 26. 3 dynyms of arable land plus 12 dynyms of pasture. Photographic record: 2007_0709ace_005-221, 2007_0709aceL_378-391.

Gjon Deda in Theth-Okol. Household occupied by a mixed cast of Deda family members and paying guests. Does not stay the winter. Interviewees: Dila Dedndoja and her cousin Shuke Rama, both ca. 60 years old. Photographic record: 2007_0709ace_150-254, 2007_0709_aceL_398-401.

July 10

Ndue Marknikaj in Lekaj-Dednikaj. Household occupied by older couple and visiting grown children and their families. Does not stay the winter. Interviewees: Ndue Marknikaj, 65, and his wife Pashke Nikaj, ca. 60. 3 dynyms of arable land and 13 of pasture. Photographic record: 2007_0710ace_013_165, 2007_0710aceL_289-297.

Nik Gjelosh in Lekaj-Dednikaj. Household composed of a married couple and four children (19, 7, 11, 8). Stays the winter. House rented not owned. Interviewees: Nik Gjelosh, ca. 45, and his wife, Lina. 0.5 dynyms of arable land. Photographic record: 2007_0710ace_190-254, 2007_0710aceL_298-303.

July 11

Mark Arra in Abat. Stays the winter. Household composed of a married couple in their 30s with young children and the husband's parents; Mark Arra, 63, and Prende Arra, 63. Interviewees: Mark and Prende Arra. 60 dynyms of land, much of it pasture. Photographic record: 2007_0711ace_049-193.

July 12

Gjergj Nika in Ndërlysaj. Stays the winter. Household composed of widow of Gjergj Nika, her son Ded and his wife Shpresa (both in 40s) plus a number of visiting children, most young, and paying guests. 5 dynyms of land. Photographic record: 2007_0712ace_006-169, 177-187, 277-284.

Gjok Doda in Nderlyse. Does not stay the winter. Household composed of Gjok, 65, and one of his sons. Rest of the family in Shkodër. 4 dynyms of land. Photographic record: 2007_0712_ace_188-274, 2007_0712_aceL_287-288.

July 13

Informational interviews about artifacts with Ndoc Mark Pepniku and Mehill Palumb Nika in Gak. No mapping done at Pepniku house because burnt down. Photographic record: 2007_0713ace_009-010, 017-088. We were not allowed to map or photograph most of the house compound of Mehill Palumb Nika in Gak. Photographic record (allowed): 2007_0713ace_122-208.

On arriving at a house compound, the team invariably was greeted with coffee and raki. After presenting a summary of our aims, Ajrina started with the collection of basic data. This included the size of the family, the amount of land at their disposal for agriculture and pastoral activities, the kinds of crops grown, and the numbers and types of animals they kept. Other questions of relevance to the aims of the survey were then asked as the opportunity arose: such as where trash and kitchen waste were thrown, the plowing and manuring strategy employed, and the source of building materials. As the interview proceeded, permission was asked (and usually granted) for Sasha to start mapping and Ann Christine to photograph.

Having finished the "sit down" part of the interview (and our drinks) a guided tour of the house compound and the inside of the house was requested. As we proceeded around the space, we asked questions guided by the objects we observed; what is it, who uses it, when is it used and how, has it always been used the same way over time, and where does it come from. Questions were also asked about the use of space. Our hosts were often happy to demonstrate how objects were used, and in a number of cases we were allowed to observe processes actually under way: e.g., making raki at the Ded Nika house in Ndërlysaj, making cheese at the Marknikaj house, Gjok Doda demonstrating the grinding of corn at the mill in Ndërlysaj. It is testament to the powerful tradition of hospitality in the valley that our access to the most private spaces of the household was only restricted in one case, at the house of Mehill Pallumb Nika in Gak, probably

because the husband was not at home and could not be consulted. The interviews in Gak and with Gjok Doda in Ndërlysaj were the only cases where we had not made a prior appointment.

Some Observations

The Compound Survey Glossary and summary of the agricultural year provide more information about artifacts and processes observed. Three observations below focus on the contributions made by the Compound Survey to answering archaeological questions about artifact visibility and depositional patterns, and understanding the tension between isolation and interaction that is at the theoretical center of the SVP.

1. Implications of the Compound Survey for understanding artifact visibility

The relative scarcity of artifacts found during the intensive archaeological survey compared to experiences in other projects has been a puzzle over the three years of the SVP. While there may well be other explanations (related to soil movements and vegetation cover in this Alpine vs. Mediterranean landscape), the Compound Survey confirms that the traditional tool kit used by the inhabitants of the Shala valley is extremely limited, and most artifacts have multiple uses. When broken, they are mended or reused rather than being discarded. The materials used, moreover, are usually biodegradable and the archaeological trace they leave would be detected only by techniques like phosphate analysis that require a more concentrated, more spatially limited, approach than fieldwalking. That is changing however, as plastics replace wood. While non-biodegradable artifacts may be a boon to future archaeologists, the consequent garbage disposal difficulties present an environmental challenge.

Barrels present a good example of organic tools with multiple functions. These ubiquitous vessels are of two types; the *tinar* or *gaviç* (the latter term used more in the south of Albania) is a large cask, about 5 ft in height, either made from planks or in two solid wood pieces and bound with hoops of iron. This is used to hold water, fermented fruit, raki, or wine. The *shekë* is smaller and generally holds cheese, although it is also used for raki, water, fermented fruit, and other arable goods. We saw both types of cask reused in multiple ways; as dog houses, as steps for getting over fences, and to channel water. In a number of households, the wooden barrels are being replaced by red plastic tubs brought from Shkodër. These are entirely watertight, while the wooden barrels seep, and they are also lighter and require less maintenance.

The only pottery or glass materials that we saw in houses were coffee cups (*filxhan*) and water glasses (*gottë*). Even decorations and ornaments are mostly made out of knitted wool, animal skins, and other degradable fabrics. Again, the arrival of cheap plastic imports is changing this, making the Shala household of the future undoubtedly more visible in the archaeological record.

2. Implications of the Compound Survey for understanding depositional patterns

When broken beyond repair, inorganic objects (pottery, plastics, clothing) are generally either discarded down a ravine (to be washed away by the winter rains) or put in a pile away from the house to be burnt. Phosphate analysis also allows the archaeological signature left by organic materials to be mapped, and the Compound Survey may help shed light on these patterns.

Food preparation refuse is discarded close to the processing area; usually in the courtyard in front of the house next to a source of running water. It is rapidly vacuumed up by the pigs, cats, and poultry who roam free during the day. In a notional circle radiating out from the house, animal barns and the corn crib (*kotec* or *koçek*, the former word more common in the north of Albania) make a ring around the courtyard. The toilet is furthest away, with the cesspit regularly cleaned out and the excrement buried, mixed with beech leaves, and then left for a year before being spread on the fields with the rest of the manure. Fermented fruit for raki-making occupies a middle place; in some cases being kept in an outbuilding where the smell is diluted, but in other cases staying inside the house. Surrounding the compound are fruit trees (deliberately planted) that shed their fruit on the ground to be collected by animals and humans, and stacks (*mullar*) made of corn stocks and hay and topped with bracken. These are not just for drying, but stand throughout the winter as evidenced by the number of last year's haystacks left standing - not needed because of the mild 2006/2007 winter.

In the summer at least, the courtyard is the scene of most activity. Fish are cleaned, animals are butchered, and vegetables are washed there and food is often cooked on an open fire, leaving traces of ash. Food preparation is for animals as well as humans, and much of this involves boiling and mixing. At the house of Gjovalin Lokthi, for example, Mariana was boiling a mix of potatoes and milk, but this was for feeding piglets rather than the family. Her external hearth was, somewhat unusually, in a separate outbuilding next to a bread oven.

Inside the house, food materials are spread all around, rather than being confined to a kitchen area. Maize is hung from ceilings while on the cob and then spread out to dry in the attic after the cob is stripped. Also hanging from the ceilings are chunks of fatty, salted pork (*vjam* or *dhjam*), used for frying and making soups. Vegetables are stored throughout the house, rather than being confined to a pantry, and sacks of flour and imported sugar sit on stairs. Barrels of cheese are almost invariably stored under the stairs, while pits in the basement of a couple of houses provide a dark, cool repository for seed potatoes. Most houses have an open fireplace (*oxhak*) with a hearth (*vatër*) on the ground floor, with ashes in the grate. A small wood-burning stove (*shporet*) is either positioned in front of this fireplace or, as in the case of the Lokthi house, in an upstairs room where perhaps it is more useful for heating the house in the winter.

3. Implications of the Compound Survey for understanding patterns of interaction vs. isolation

Evidence for a very powerful sense of shared identity and style within the Shala valley exists in both the use of space and the types of artifacts we observed.

The house compounds we visited were all extremely similar in plan, both internally and externally. Inside the house, two rooms generally lead off the front hall; the *dhoma e pritjes* (literally, the "waiting" or sitting room) and the *kuzhinë* (kitchen, also with sitting and sleeping space). Upstairs, houses are divided into a number of bedrooms (*dhoma e gjumit*) with storage space and sometimes some extra sleeping room in the attic, under the roof. The terms used (expecially *kuzhinë*) may, however, give a limited sense of the multi-functionality of these spaces: refrigerators and stoves appear in other rooms, and we were often seated in the "kitchen" after entering the house. The plan also undoubtedly represents a more expanded use of space than that common in pre-1950s houses when animals would have been housed on the ground floor, and all living quarters for humans would have been upstairs. The "one cow per household" rule and campaigns for better sanitation under Communism clearly transformed the use of the ground floor and also must have resulted in the construction of barns for livestock. Whether these existed before the mid-1960s, when collectivization was enforced in the mountain areas, is unclear.

A similar homogeneity exists in the types of artifacts inside the buildings. This extends from tools through eating and drinking utensils to decorations. A ubiquitous tapestry shows Jesus with arms outstretched with light radiating from behind, while a knitted three-dimensional watermelon was a craft object observed in almost every house we visited. Sometimes this is supplemented by a knitted orange tree or a brightly-colored hanging with pouches to store small objects. The degree to which fashion or emulation ("keeping up with the Joneses") plays a role in spreading these designs around the valley, or whether we are seeing evidence of a school home economics project is an interesting question. Whatever the answer, these objects illustrate a strong amount of contact between households.

Interaction with the world outside the valley is evidenced in the large number of imported plastic goods now in evidence. It is also clear in the way that some practices are changing. The Ottoman *sofër*, a low round table, tends now to be stored in the attic or just used for the children's meal. It has been replaced by a regular table surrounded by plastic or wooden chairs, rather than the low wooden stools (*stol*) used in the past. Similarly, the *serem*, a thick iron baking tray, is being replaced by the thinner, imported aluminum *tav* or *tepsi* that does not cool down so fast and gives the bread time to rise. The lid to the *serem*, known as the *kaki*, remains in use, although its popularity seems to be fading. In the Pepniku house it was being used as an antenna to boost reception, while the Marknikaj household had invested in a modern electric bread maker.

The interactions demanded by an Ottoman lifestyle (needing imported coffee and sugar for entertaining, for example, and the accompanying coffee roasters and fine china) are now being superseded by a new set of habits that demand different types of interaction (the mobile phone that constantly needs new recharge cards, or the purchased enzyme used as a starter for cheese in place of the *mullzë* (rennet) extracted from a sheep's stomach still being used at the Gjelosh household). These new interactions are even transforming architecture. Since 2004 a large number of red plasticized metal roofs are appearing in the valley. These have become available

in recent years from Greece and are easier to maintain and more resistant to rain than the stone slates, tile, or wooden shingles. Mark Arra described a progress from locally collected stone slates to wood around 1960, and then from wood to metal ca. 3 years ago.

Most of the imported objects are bought either directly from Shkodër, or through a middleman in Breg Lumi. Ndoc Mark Pepniku told us that up until around 10 years ago gypsies would visit his house offering metalworking and painting services. Other specialist services are still found within the valley, such as the assistance of a vet to vaccinate or sterilize animals or the work of Bardhoku, a Lekaj craftsman, who produces and repairs packsaddles (he sells 10 a year for around 5,000 lek each) and other wooden goods.

Directions for Further Research

Our methodology had some limitations. Firstly, since our observations are based on only one visit, the "snapshot" we took of the use of space and artifacts is very partial. Objects important to families in the winter, like winter clothing, were packed away and we did not get to see them. Similarly, the agricultural storage spaces we observed were probably more empty that at any other time of year; with livestock in pasture, the barns contained only a few livestock while fodder was still out in the fields and had not been brought in yet. Secondly, although we observed activities during the time we visited, our information comes from interviews rather than extended observation. There were clearly some topics that interviewees did not want to talk about; a fact illustrated at the Arra household when we asked about games played over the long winter months. In this case, a young relative enthusiastically started to describe a family game (involving socks and a piece of corn) but was rapidly silenced by the head of the household who clearly felt that the game described was undignified.

We suspect that there are some items that we observed that had significance beyond the purely functional or decorative; the cross and other symbols on the walls of houses or on doors, for example, or the pig fat lumps hanging from the ceiling. Ethnographer Mentor Mustafa suggests that these have a role in warding off the "evil eye" but the hanging meat was explained as purely for cooking and eating by our interviewees. To shed new light on topics like these would require anthropological observation over a longer period of time. However, we hope that the Compound Survey will have some value in at least posing some questions for further exploration.

REPORT OF THE INTENSIVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY TEAM[12]

In 2007 the Intensive Archaeological Survey (IAS) team led by Charles Watkinson and Ols Lafe completed 17 days of active fieldwork, covering ca. 1.5 km^2 in 316 tracts (Figure 11). The team, the members of which scrambled up and down the steep terrain without complaint during some of the hottest days in Albanian history, consisted (in various combinations) of Anna Keegan, Anisa Selimi, Attila Gyucha, Chelsi West, Gwen Backwell, John Backwell, and Jordan Taylor.

[12] This section is the work of Charles Watkinson and Ols Lafe.

For the first two weeks, the team concentrated on the village of Abat (Tracts 001–086), the modern administrative center of Breg Lumi (Tracts 87–124) and the neighborhood of Lekaj Dednikaj (Tracts 125–174, 257–259), high up on the east side of the Shala. In the third week, Ols Lafe led the team to conduct a gridded collection of the historic fortified site of Dakaj (reported separately below) and then survey some surrounding areas in Nënmavriq Dakaj (Tracts 175–178). He then surveyed the area of Gimaj Camaj (179–256). In the fourth week, the team worked at the extreme south of the survey area, investigating the ridge on which the Church of St. Gjergji sat before being demolished by the Communist regime, before moving down to the immediate south of the ridge to explore Pylaj, the first village in Shosh (Tracts 260–278, 290–316). One day was also spent at the village of Bop (Tracts 279–289), high up on the East slope of the valley opposite, traditionally one of the oldest settlements in the valley.[13]

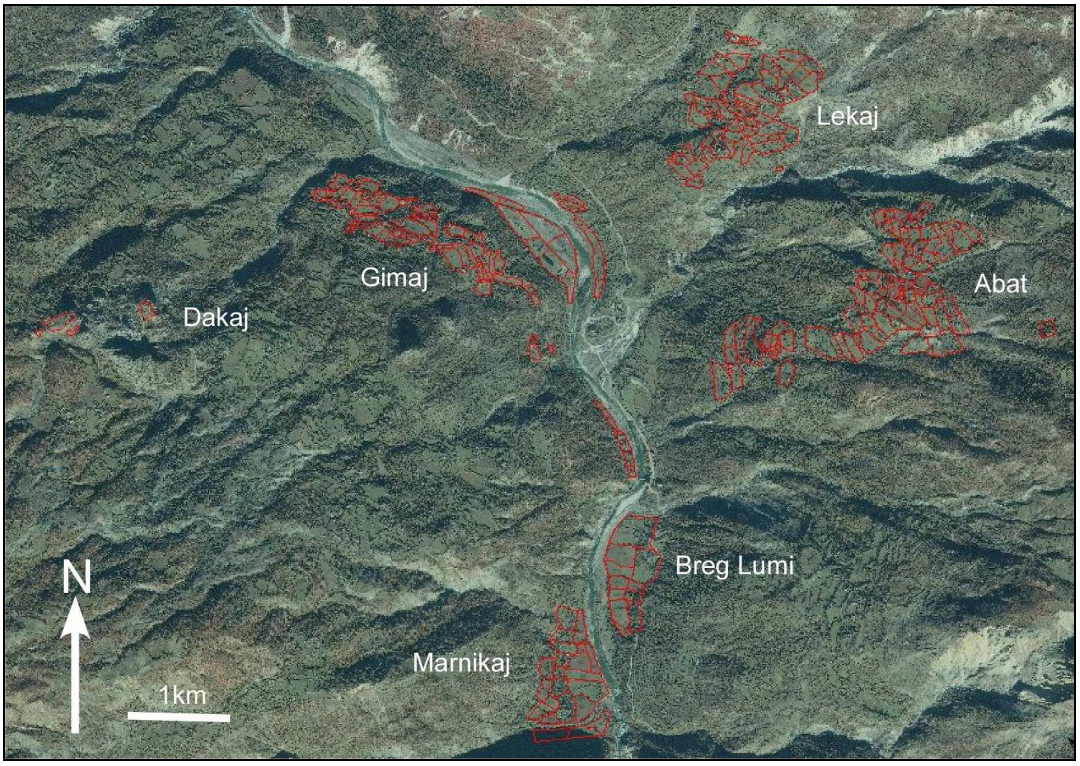


Figure 11: Areas survyed by the IAS in 2007. Survey tracts in Pyla and Bopi are off the map to the south (see Figure 28, below).

The choice of areas to survey was determined by a number of considerations. Firstly, the areas chosen complete the geographical coverage of the lower part of the valley, whose western slopes were surveyed in 2006. Secondly, we targeted places that are historically attested: the church at Abat and settlement of Bop ("Bobi") are mentioned in the 1671 publication by the Franciscan

[13] My thanks to Wayne Lee for all the historical references in this report based on his extensive research, and to Mentor Mustafa for information from his interview in Bopi.

priest Padre Gaspari, while Bop ("Robbi") is also shown on the 1689 Coronelli map and recorded in the 1485 cadaster of the Sanjak of Shkodra (as "Bop" or "Pop"). Thirdly, we aimed to sample different environmental zones; both upland slopes (as at Abat, Lekaj, and Dakaj) and valley bottoms (at Breg Lumi). Fourthly, the final days of survey on the Kodra St. Gjergji and in Pylaj concentrated on the border area between the two sets of the "Gates of Shala," the dramatic ridges cut by the river that form the boundary of the Shala region with Shosh.

It was hoped that these areas of historically attested settlement, closer to the south of the Shala valley, would yield more artifactual evidence than found higher up the valley in 2006. However, the number of artifacts found during survey was small. Compared to 2006, the visibility of the ground surface was slightly reduced because the maize was almost impassably high during the final weeks of the project (a week later this year) and more terraces were covered with meadow at the higher altitudes in which we were working. 76 of the 316 tracts walked were covered in maize while 212 were covered in meadow. Overall, ground visibility was more than 50% in only 31% of the 316 tracts walked (compared to 42% of the 347 tracts walked in 2006).

The landscape of the lower part of the Shala Valley is characterized by a mixture of conglomerate and shale. The shale slopes provide an easy source for the stone roofs that characterize houses in these areas. Ridges stretch down from the sides of the valley, dividing neighborhoods. These are generally uncultivated and were not surveyed systematically, with the exception of the Kodra e Sh. Gjergjit that bounds Shala to the south.

This report will now provide brief descriptions of the character of each of the areas surveyed before proceeding to some general observations about (a) the role of churches in the landscape and (b) the problems of defining borders of neighborhoods (*mëhallat*).

Abat

Abat is shown on the 1671 map prepared by the Franciscan priest Padre Gaspari and is described as being the site of the house where the priest covering Shala lived. On the slope above the church is a well-preserved kulla (Tract 013) visited by Edith Durham in 1908. This is now owned by Prek Kuvendi and has been arranged for visitors to sleep in. The fields around it are overgrown terraces and ground visibility was non-existent. Oral tradition sets the Church at 350 years old while the kulla is 300 years old and these relative dates are interesting if untrustworthy in absolute terms (Tract 033). No foundations of the ancient church are visible. They are probably covered by the large modern church that has been built perpendicular to, and cutting through, the ruined priest's house (Tract 010). The oldest part of the modern church is a bell dating to 1918, concealed during Communism. The church is possibly dedicated to St. John although this name is rarely used (according to Ndue Macaj, Tract 033). The last priest to live there left in 1964 (the time of the Albanian cultural revolution) and older men remember the names of the priests back to the 1920s, even if they do not always agree (notebook p. 22 for Kol Shutan Fusha, 87 years old, and notebook p. 33 for Marash Macaj, 73 years old). These priests included Anton Fishta, brother of the 19th-century scholar Gjergj Fishta.

The most interesting concentration of ceramics in Abat comes from area of Abat Mekshaj, in the center of the modern settlement, mid way between the watermill and the Church. A body sherd dated on the basis of fabric as prehistoric was found in Tract 008, while 8 sherds, possibly from the same Early Modern pot were found nearby (Tract 015 and Tract 017) associated with an older house; the abandoned home of Gjon Cukeli with carved symbols on corners and frëngji windows.

Abat is interesting in terms of the organization of its neighborhoods (mëhallat). A traditional saying recounts that "shtatë mëhallat e Abatit, më e mira ajo e fratit" ("Abat has seven neighborhoods, with the best being that of the father"). The neighborhoods are Metushaj, Mekshaj, Lotaj, Lekaj, Nikpalaj, and Lopçi with that "of the father" being the Church. Mekshaj is by far the dominant neighborhood in terms of the number of surviving structures (and the oldest according to Kol Shutan Fusha, 87 years old, notebook p. 22) and Metushaj is the other oldest neighborhood although only two of the ten houses (high above the kulla) are lived in. Mekshaj is also the location of the mill and of the site where the village council traditionally met (Tract 077, a plateau known as "kuvendi" i.e. council).

Defining the boundaries of the neighborhoods is difficult because the names appear to mirror the movement of families around the village rather than having a fixed geographical identity. Metushaj is traditionally the area above and around the kulla but there is also an enclave of three houses near the cemetery in the center of Mekshaj. These are the houses of the Macaj family who were originally from Metushaj and have brought the toponym with them (Tract 029 Pjetrush Macaj, Tract 031 Ded Macaj, Tract 033 Ndue Macaj). The houses lived in by the Macaj family are only ca. 40 years old, so the date of this movement may be quite recent. The boundaries of the smaller neighborhoods (Lotaj, Lekaj, Nikpalaj, and Lopçi) are even harder to discern, with Lotaj and Lekaj again referring to families who have moved from other villages in the area. Lopçi is down toward Breg Lumi (containing the houses of Petrit Arra (Tract 044) and Fran Dardha (Tract 048)).

The southern boundary of the village of Abat (dividing it from Nicaj) is a ridgeline, that of Kodra e Hollë above the *përroi* Dardha e Kuqe running beside the house of Petrit Arra. The northern boundary is the Perroi i Abatit that crosses the track walked by the IAS team from the shop at Lekaj. A pass to the west of the village (Qafa e Ndërmajës) leads to Tropoja. A mule road also traditionally leads from Abat to the village of Salcë (Salza), passing through Bopi and then over the Qafa e Agrit.

We are told from two modern interviewees that there are 35 households in Abat of which 12-13 overwinter. This number tallies well with the 1918 Austro-Hungarian census that lists 32 households.

There are a number of interesting houses in the areas of Abat we surveyed:

Tract 005: Ruined house (kulla) of Vuksan Lek Mekshi. Square with small windows and no internal subdivisions. Strategic position with good views.

Tract 010: Ruined "priest's house." Internally subdivided, used as a school during the Communist period. Half the building is collapsed and cut by the modern church.

Tract 013: Kulla now owned by Prek Kuvendi. Well-preserved, 4 stories high with a wood shingle roof. Many symbols are marked on corner and lintel stones.

Tract 016: Old house of Mëhill Kol Fusha pre-1970s. Now used as a barn. Traditionally ca 150-200 years old. 2 doors with frëngji.

Tract 017: Abandoned house of Gjon Cukeli. Traditionally 150 years old. Symbols carved on cornerstones. 3 stories.

Tract 048: House of Fran Dardha. Situated strategically on a rocky outcrop overlooking Breg Lumi.

Lekaj (Dednikaj)

The area of Lekaj Dednikaj traces a special relationship to Theth (according to Ndue Marknikaj, Tract 131). It appears to be the most inhabited of the six modern neighborhoods of Lekaj which are Qet, Pacaj, Rreth, Dednikaj, and Mushaj. In the 1918 census, these neighborhoods were listed as "Lekaj Canaj, Dednikaj, Musha, Pacaj, Qeta, Rrethi" (we do not know what happened to Canaj). Dednikaj lies in a small valley below the modern shop (Tract 152) and cemetery (Tract 130), bounded to the east by the hill of Suka e Kunjit (Tract 144). We are told that there are 15 households (*shpia*) in Dednikaj, five of which overwinter. About 10 households still move their animals to pasture during the summer (according to Zef Çuni, tract 143).

A small modern cemetery church is dedicated to Sh. Premte. This name is taken from an older ruined church in the area of Qet that the IAS team was taken to by Pjerrin Prel Vocrri (notebook p. 82). Strategically positioned on a hill to the north of the modern shop, little remains of the church today except some dry-stone foundation walls. However the route is still well-marked by wooden crosses and the saint's feast day is celebrated on July 25th. Sh. Premte was the first female Albanian saint credited with a number of miracles including turning water into wine. Her cult is mainly practiced in Mirdita where there are ca. 50 churches dedicated to her (information from Pjerrin Prel Vocrri). The ruined church may be that referred to in the commentary to Padre Gaspari's 1671 map: "between Nicaj and Pecaj, where the *bajraktar* lives, are still visible the ruins of a church given the name San Prende by the locals." Nobody locally can remember when the church was destroyed and there is no pottery around it nor any of the modern tile one might expect if the destruction was under Communism.

There are a number of interesting houses in Lekaj:

Tract 139: House of Mark Alia. This ruined house has arched windows and frëngji.

Tract 143: House of Zef Çuni. Owner claims that this is the oldest house in Dednikaj.

Tract 143: House of Besnik Ndoja. Abandoned and situated on the prominent hillock of Suka e Kunjit ("Hill of the Stick").

Tract 159: House of Ndue Delia. Abandoned but in good repair, with a "breast" symbol carved next to the door.

Tract 168: House of Frok Mëhilli. Abandoned small house next to current house apparently "burnt three times by Serbs." Interesting wooden chests inside.

Gimaj Camaj

This is the lowest neighborhood of Gimaj, just to the west of the bridge leading to Breg Lumi. Only two families (that of Shkëlzen Mark Blinishta, Tract 214, and Pal Vata, Tract 204) overwinter in the neighborhood but there are thirteen houses in total (four of them occupied during the summer)

There are two interesting houses in Camaj:

Tract 189. The old house of Gjergj Zefi. This is an abandoned house with symbols on the corners.

Tract 204. Pal Vata's house. 60 years old with symbol on the corner. Pal Vata says that in 1966 a tractor found pottery fragments next to the house of his brother, Gjelosh Vata, including a handle that "must have come from Shkodra or Peja with which we have traditionally had trade."

Breg Lumi

Breg Lumi has three neighborhoods; to the west of the river is Marnikaj, while to the east of the river is Tangjonaj from the Gates of Shala to the School (along the road), and Papnikaj from the School to the northern boundary of the village. We surveyed Marnikaj (Tracts 87–108) and Tangjonaj (Tracts 109–124). Although the establishment of Breg Lumi as administrative center of the commune of Shala happened only 30-40 years ago (probably ca. 1965-7 when the cooperative farm program was enforced on the north, according to Nik Gjoni (Tract 115) who headed the local cooperative from 1969–1975), the architecture observed in the neighborhood of Marnikaj shows that this neighborhood at least predates Communism, and that is probably also true of the few houses in Tangjonaj (especially that of Gjelosh Vata in Tract 115). At least three houses in Marnikaj (including houses of Mark Delia (Tract 87), Tom Kola kulla used as a museum during Communism (Tract 91) and, higher up, that of Gjon Pjetër Gjeloshi with balcony (Tract 108)) are shown in the 1933 Pici photograph of the Gates of Shala and the EHS team found a number of structures of interest during their survey of the area (on July 18, see EHS 2007 report). It is mentioned in the 1918 census as being part of Nicaj on the east side of the

river. No ceramics were found to confirm ancient origins. Eight households overwinter in Marnikaj out of a total of 15.

Pylaj

The village of Pylaj is the first in Shosh and probably takes its name from the forest attested by the large number of tree stumps (mostly oak) on the north-facing slope. There are around 15 houses in the modern village, around five of which are occupied over the winter. A watermill in the valley bottom (Tract 274) is still being used, but corn is now also being milled electrically by Zef Shporja (Tract 300). According to Kol Vuksan Kodra (Tract 262) the people in this area came from another part of Shosh, known as Guri i Lekës, around 200 years ago.

The interesting houses in this area are:

Tract 268: House of Lulash Gështenja. Small frëngji to west, an arched entrance for animals to lower story downslope to south. Probably the oldest house in Pylaj.

Tract 309 and 311: Houses of Nik and Fran Mici. Now ruined.

Bopi

In the 1918 census, Bopi is listed as part of Nicaj. The total list is "Babi, Marnikaj, Nicaj, Papnikaj, Pjolla, Vuksanaj." The road that climbs from the bridge across the Shala river to Lotaj passes through Pjolla and Vuksanaj before arriving at Bopi after a walk of about one hour. This road was used during Communism to service a fluoride mine near the Qafa e Agrit. It probably also links to a higher mule track between Abat and Salcë connecting the upper villages across the boundary ridge that forms the Gates of Shala. As mentioned above, Bopi was listed in the 1485 cadaster of the Sanjak of Shkodra. According to local tradition (see report of Mentor Mustafa on his interview with Mark Lulaj, 83 years old) Bopi and Nën Mavriq are the oldest settlements in the valley and were occupied before most of the inhabitants of the valley arrived in the Ottoman period. Padre Gaspari, in 1671, notes that "la villa di Bobi numera case 13, anime 58."

There are still around 13 houses in Bopi, two of which are in a lower area next to the Shala river (which was not surveyed), and 2-3 of which are high up on the east slopes (also not surveyed). The IAS team concentrated on the central part of the village, discovering no significant ceramic evidence but noting a couple of interesting structures.

The interesting houses in Bopi are:

Tract 280: House of Pëllumb Lazër Lulaj. A large house made up of two parts, the oldest of which is ca. 100 years old. The men of the family are traditionally rhapsodes and the women

wail at funerals (*vajtues* = keener). Pëllumb, 23 years old, the young head of the household plays the *çifteli* beautifully.

Tract 282: House of Pjetër Gjergji, Ndue Gjergji, and Kol Marashi. Stone roofed, symbols on corners.

Tract 287: House of Gjelosh Lulashi. Symbols on corners and a carved lintel over a second story arched doorway.

General Observations:

The relationship of the Church of Sh. Gjergji to the villages of Pylaj (to the south of the ridge in Shosh) and Lotaj (to the north of the ridge in Shala) presents an interesting analogy to the situation in Abat where the church is considered to be a mëhalla in itself. The link is hardly coincidental since tradition says that the church of Sh. Gjergji took over from the church at Abat as religious center of Shala at some point in the past. In the case of Sh. Gjergji, however, the area of Kodër (literally "ridge") has a definite physical dimension, with ca. 5 houses located on it. Although formally part of Shosh, the ridge top has a distinctly liminal character. Its highest point (Tract 296) is known as Kodra e Drithit (*drithë* = cereal) and was where corn from Shosh and Shala was traditionally collected for processing. Although now marked only by foundations, the site of the Church of Sh. Gjergji (marked by the cemetery and a bell dated 1939) is also the setting for a festival held on July 13 involving people from both Shosh and Shala. The role of churches as neutral territory, where disputes could be settled, is attested by Edith Durham's description of blood feud reconciliation outside the church at Theth in 1908.

In exploring patterns of interaction within the family, as well as interaction outside the boundaries of Shala, the concept of the neighborhood (mëhallë) is clearly an important one. Considering the problems of self-identification discussed above in the context of Abat, some observations made by the IAS team may help with the definition of this structuring unit: firstly, larger neighborhoods seem to differentiate themselves by the cemetery which they use. In Breg Lumi, for example, Marnikaj has its own cemetery to the west of the river, the cemetery of Papnikaj is near the modern church, and the cemetery of Tangjonaj is in Nicaj (up the hill to the east of the river). Secondly, neighborhoods seem to often be the unit around which irrigation rotas are organized. In Pylaj, each half of the valley receives water every five days while in Bop each family receives water for 24 hours once every 16 days. Thirdly, watermills seem to have a strong link to particular neighborhoods, although the use of these structures seems to be declining in favor of small electric mills bought by entrepreneurs (like Zef Shporja in Pylaj, Tract 305) or flour bought from Breg Lumi (as is the case in Bop, where the mill was abandoned 6-7 years ago). Even these resource-sharing tests, however, are probably insufficient in the case of smaller neighborhoods, and the use of the concept of the *mëhallë* in the Shala valley seems harder to understand after the end of the 2007 season than it did in 2006.

DAKAJ SYSTEMATIC SURFACE COLLECTION[14]

The Landrover was parked by the small bridge below Gak and then the ascent towards Dakaj began. The bridge had been damaged, some of its wooden superstructure was in decay, and passage was not as easy as it was in 2006. The walk to Dakaj took exactly two hours, and we made three stops: one by the watermill, the second by the big rock on the side of the road just next to Gimaj, and the third one just below Dakaj before the final climb.

Upon arrival we noticed the dry but dense low grass covering all the patches of soil between the rocky terraces of Dakaj. These areas were in some cases "hot spots" for finding pottery.

First, we had to decide the best place to set out the grid and this depended on two major factors: one was to have as many exposed areas as possible, and not bare rock, and two, was to be able to systematically cover the same area that last year produced some pottery fragments (see 2006 Final Report), while still randomly searching the wider area.

Location: the grid was located just under the Dakaj hilltop, about 50m to the south-east of it.

Preservation: Rocky terraces with some soil on them.

Visibility: at maximum 40%.

Method of collection: Axes N/S and E/W to construct a 27x15m grid at its maximum extent. All material was collected and no sorting was done in the field.

Photo record: 001 looking east, 002 looking at Dakaj top (both photos taken from the E/W axis).

Way Points: 001 at the center of the grid, 002 to the eastern edge, 003 at the northern edge, 004 at the western edge and 005 to the south.

Features: The grid was situated on one of the "terraces" to the east of the site, as being the most suitable for this kind of surface collection. It was not possible to collect anything in squares 213, 214, and 411, while we found material in 12 squares.

The rest of the work proceeded by creating the grid (as mentioned above) and assigning a square to everyone. It results that there was pottery only in square 111, while nothing came from all the 200's squares. The denser concentration was in the 300's and 400's squares (Table 3).

A great help in spotting pottery on the surface of the squares was Gjok Luca, an inhabitant of nearby Nenmavriq, an earlier acquaintance of SVP from 2006, who, with his son and two other kids, brought us a bottle of cold water.

[14] This section is the work of Ols Lafe. Site collection took place on July 9, 2007 and was undertaken by Anna Keegan, Anisa Selimi, Jordan Taylor, and Chelsi West.

Square number	Pottery count	Other
111	4	
311	2	
312	2	4 (wasters)
313	2	
314	2	
321	2	
322	3	3 (wasters)
323	13	1 (waster)
412	29	6 (wasters)
413	7	
421	6	1 (waster)
422	1	

Table 3: Pottery counts from the gridded collection at Dakaj.

PRELIMINARY POTTERY REPORT OF THE POST-ROMAN CERAMIC FINDS[15]

Introduction

During July 2007 I studied the Post-Roman ceramic finds from the Shala Valley Project (SVP) in northern Albania. The principal aim for me was to diagnose and to date the Post-Roman ceramics from the Shala Valley.

The Medieval Period

There are no fragments of Medieval fine wares or of Medieval amphorae in the survey material. Some body fragments of a rather coarse fabric could be Medieval (perhaps of the Middle Byzantine period), dating before the 13th century after Christ. However, the fabric could also be of Prehistoric times (what often is the case with these coarse fabrics), and because I have never seen Prehistoric material from this region before it is better to be cautious. Another problem is that the fact that these fragments are too small for the identification of definite Medieval shapes within this group.

More secure are several sherds of another type of coarse ware, which includes very many small- to medium-sized lime particles in the fabric. Because of the fact that I have never seen such a fabric in Albania before, this coarse ware could perhaps be of local or regional manufacture. Due to their shapes (such as thin-walled broad strap-handles) and their decoration-technique

[15] This section is the work of Joanita Vroom of the Department of Archaeology, University of Sheffield (UK).

(such as raised relief bands on the exterior surface) the fragments from this ware seem to be of Late Medieval times, that is to say: they can be dated between the 13th and 15th centuries.

Figure 12: Example of possibly Late Medieval coarseware from Dakaj. Note limestone grits in fabric.

The Post-Medieval Period

The bulk of the ceramic finds of the Shala Valley Project, however, can be dated after the Medieval period. In particular, during the Late Ottoman/Late Venetian period (circa 17th-18th centuries) and in more recent times (circa 19th-20th centuries) the pottery finds become more common. I have noticed, for instance, a few pieces of Underglaze Painted Ware and of Polychrome Painted Maiolica, as well as many fragments of Monochrome Glazed Wares in pale and brown glazes and of plain jars with glazed interiors.

The first type of ware mentioned above is Underglaze Painted Ware, which is a typical product of the Late Ottoman-Early Modern period and therefore can be dated in the late 18th to 19th centuries. The shape of this type of ware is often open, mainly bowls and dishes. The inside and upper part of the outside (just under the rim) of these open vessels are covered with a white slip (in French also known as *engobe*) and with a transparent lead glaze, sometimes pale yellow in tone. The interior of the vessels is painted under the glaze with a decoration in green (copper oxide) and in ochre-yellow/ochre-brown (iron oxide) on the white slip.

Also common are fragments of Monochrome Glazed Wares of Early Modern to Modern times (19th-20th c.). The surface treatment of these fragments is confined to a pale yellow or greenish lead glaze over a white slip (*engobe*) on the inside and upper part of the outside. There is no further decoration. The most characteristic shapes are open, such as bowls and dishes, although jars and jugs are also sometimes glazed with only a lead glaze on the interior to make them non-

porous. Some large jars of the Modern period (circa 20th century) have yellow glazed interiors or are totally covered with a brown glaze, and seem to have been used for the storage of liquids.

Fragments of plain wares are also present within the survey collection. The shapes of these unglazed, hard-fired wares are mostly closed, such as jars and jugs with flat bases. The bases often have string marks on the bottom. Similar looking examples in a plain fabric were also found during excavations at Didymoteicho in Thrace, at Istanbul and (more nearby) in a Post-Medieval well in Dürres (see Vroom forthcoming).[16] All these unglazed vessels were probably used for holding or serving liquids. Due to their porous unglazed fabric, these jugs and jars probably kept liquids and other goods cool (see Vroom 2005, 176-177).[17]

Finally, there are several fragments of Post-Medieval glazed cooking wares found in the research area. They often have a transparent lead glaze put directly on the (often) red-bodied coarse fabric. Some of these pieces have similarities with glazed cooking wares from southern Italy (especially from Apulia), others with glazed cooking wares from the Aegean and even from southern France. The shape of most of these sherds include large open vessels or casseroles, which often were used for stewing (see Vroom 2005, 192-193).

Discussion

Within both periods there are not many sherds of imported fine wares and amphorae found in the survey region. In fact, imported wares from (nearby) Italy are rare, except for a few pieces of glazed cooking wares of Post-Medieval times. The material culture in the Shkodër region between the 18th and 20th centuries seems to be in accordance with other survey material from Albania and from the Aegean (e.g., from the Mallakastra Regional Archaeological Project, or from the Kythera Island Project) during Post-Medieval times.

FIELD SOIL CHEMISTRY, PRELIMINARY REPORT[18]

During the first two weeks of the 2007 season, we collected soil samples from three different sites with the purpose of inter-site comparison and site prospection. Each sample was analyzed for phosphate level, which is a well-established indicator of human habitation and usage. The phosphate analysis methodology is summarized below. The first site was the stanë at Qafe e Thores, which is in intermittent modern use, the second was an historic house in Okol, currently inhabited, and the third was the prehistoric site at Grunas (Site S006), whose usage and intra-site function we were interested in determining. By comparing phosphate levels and patterns at Grunas to seasonal versus permanent habitation sites, we hoped to establish whether Grunas was occupied seasonally (presumably in the summer) or year-round. Soil chemical work at all three sites was combined with test excavation (as described below).

[16] J. Vroom forthcoming (2007), "Pottery finds from a 'cess-pit' at the southern wall in Durrës, central Albania", in: B. Böhlendorf-Arslan, A.O. Uysal and J. Witte-Orr (eds.), *Byzas* 7, Istanbul.
[17] J. Vroom (2005), *Byzantine to Modern Pottery in the Aegean. An Introduction and Field Guide*, Utrecht.
[18] This section is the work of Heather Rypkema.

Methodology

Samples were collected by means of a coring auger and specified on a grid of 5-10 m intervals, with additional sampling at spots of potential interest. The target depth was 30 cm, the depth of the top of the cultural layer at Grunas, but rocky soils often prevented us from achieving the desired depth. Samples were weighed wet to obtain 1.00 g of soil. Very wet soils were air dried, and rocky soils were filtered through a mesh to eliminate mass offset related to rocks. Each 1.00 g sample was digested in 10.00 ml of Mehlich III extracting solution, and shaken for 5 min for optimal extraction of inorganic phosphate from its insoluble form. The digested sample was then filtered through a 150 micron glass fiber filter by means of pressurized syringe filtration. A 3.00 ml portion of the resultant extractant was combined with .30 ml of developing solution A (ammonium molybdate and sulfuric acid), followed by .30 ml of developing solution B (malachite green and polyvinyl alcohol). Absorbance readings were taken simultaneously at 630 nm and 473 nm immediately after mixing, and the phosphate level was determined by means of the methodology described in Rypkema et al. (2007).[19] Solutions with phosphate levels beyond the dynamic range of the development method (approximately 320 mg P/kg soil) were diluted with extracting solution to maintain consistent sample pH.

Background

Test samples were acquired in order to assess characteristic soil properties of the region. These samples revealed a water content of 25.5% by mass with a standard deviation of 3.0% (N=5). Given the small amount of rainfall during the testing interval, we estimate that the water content remained roughly consistent among the sampled soils, well within the error of confident phosphate evaluation. The majority of tested soils contained fine particulate matter, often resulting in turbid samples. In order to evaluate the impact of this problem, we conducted a turbidity comparison experiment in which analysis was performed on both turbid and clarified soils (the latter of which took 2-3 hours to obtain). This study demonstrated that the absorption levels at the two wavelengths were affected by a similar magnitude; while the absolute value of both absorbances increased, the difference between the absorbances – the quantity used to determine phosphate levels – remained consistent, demonstrating an additional advantage of two-color spectrophotometric monitoring over colorimetry. The results of this study suggested that analysis of turbid samples in the field would provide acceptable accuracy, providing the turbidity did not boost absorbance levels beyond the reliable instrumental detection range.

Qafe e Thores stanë

We collected 25 samples at the stanë, centered around small residential structures and animal pens. Phosphate levels at the periphery were low, falling off within 10 meters of the westernmost structural boundary. Values increased in the region of the structures, with

[19] H. Rypkema, W. Lee, M. Galaty, and J. Haws. "Rapid, In-Stride Soil Phosphate Measurement in Archaeological Survey: A New Method Tested in Loudoun County, Virginia." *Journal of Archaeological Science* 34: 1859-1867.

particularly high levels in areas designed for animal habitation. To the south of Structure 1 is an area in which garbage deposition was observed. High values continue downslope, further south, probably the result of erosion and/or the shifting of high phosphate soils by rain. Values dip slightly along the path between Structure 1 and Structure 2, between which is a small structure of indeterminate use. Approaching structure 2, values rise again, and continue upward to the east, beyond which was located a third structure. The high phosphate value in the northeast corner of the sampling grid may be due to garbage deposition from this third structure.

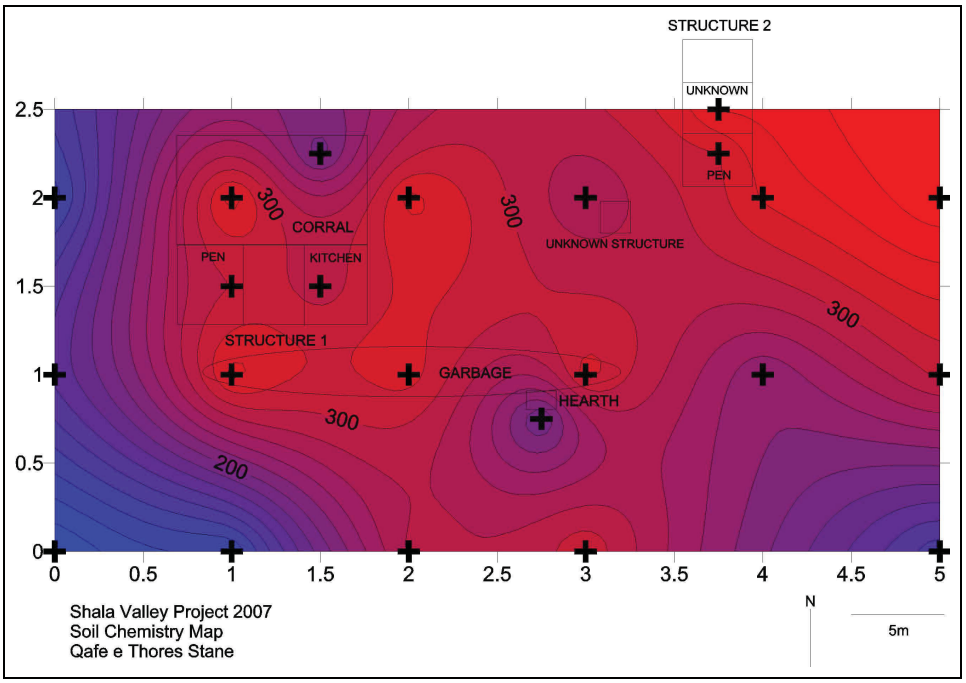


Figure 12: contour map of phosphate levels from Qafe e Thores.

Okol

Working again on 10 m transects, we sampled soil from in and around an historic house, which has been continuously inhabited for at least 100 years, and perhaps much longer. The contour map and sketched structures are shown in Figure 13. The lowermost transect runs across a fallow field on an elevated terrace, with phosphate levels decreasing with increasing distance from the road. Samples near the road are characteristically high, with lower levels in the majority of the cultivated field crossed by the transects north of the house. One unusual high point in this region is located north of the house, directly below the former location of a second-story toilet (see Figure 5, above); previous seasons have also discovered a number of artifacts in this region. A high post further to the east was obtained from in front of a compost heap that abuts the animal pens. The origin of the easternmost high point is unknown.

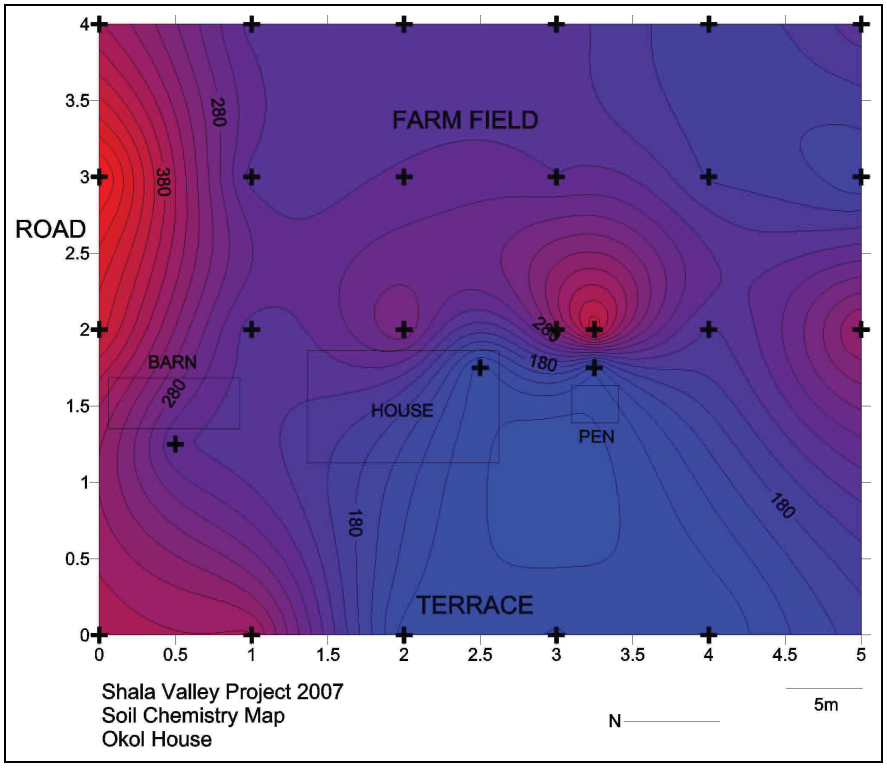


Figure 13: contour map of phosphate levels from Okol.

Grunas

The most extensive phosphate survey was performed at Grunas, with nearly 200 samples collected over the course of 5-6 days. We successfully processed between 27 and 37 samples per day, with analysis taking place on site as samples were collected. The contour map (Figure 14) provides some insight into the usage of various terraces. Two upper terraces (to the north and south of site center) showed remarkably high phosphate levels, probably due to their being used as pasture in modern times. Likewise, the terrace to the east of and below the fortification wall, shows high levels that indicate it was used as an animal pen, probably in modern times. It is currently accessible via a gate directly in front of a bridge that spans the river to the east. High phosphate levels on all of these terraces may merely be due to shallow sampling depths, which tend to yield higher phosphate values. Another elevated region immediately abuts the small house at the western boundary of the site. If the high phosphate levels associated with shallow soils, taken from modern pasture and pens, are removed, there remains a halo of relatively high phosphate on the terraces with thick soils that were intensively sampled to the south-southwest of the structures near site center. Based on the results of test excavation and georarchaeological analysis, these terraces were almost certainly occupied during prehistoric times, probably on a seasonal basis (see below). It is for this reason that the soil chemical data bear at least a

superficial resemblance to those from Qafe e Thores, where a family lives in huts in close proximity to livestock on a seasonal basis. This can be contrasted to Okol, where animals are held in small barns when not taken to forage and the house is surrounded by agricultural terraces and fields characterized by relatively low phorsphate levels.

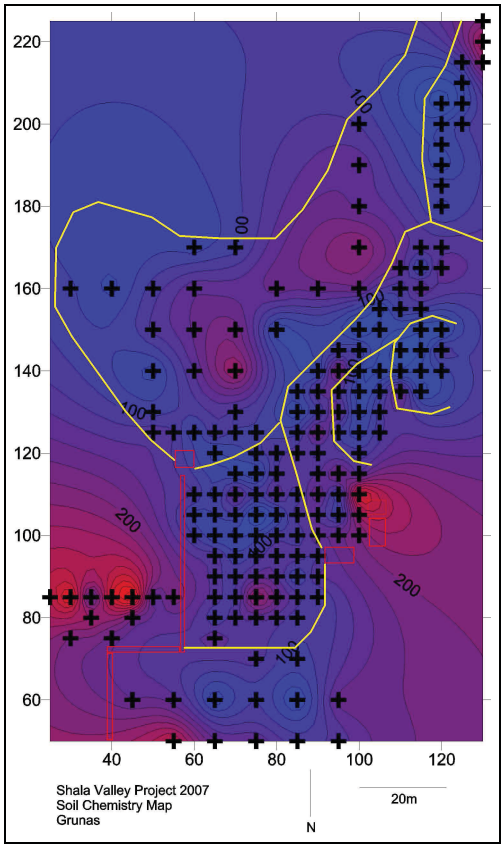


Figure 14: contour map of phosphate levels from Grunas.

EXCAVATION REPORT[20]

In 2007 we conducted test excavations at several sites in Shala, both prehistoric and historic. The following are short descriptions of the results of these excavations. Three units were dug, at Grunas (S006), Okol, and Qafe e Thores, in order to complement the chemical work described above. Two possibly prehistoric sites, Gimaj (S008) and the "stone circle" north of Grunas (S005), were targeted in order to determine their age and function. The test unit dug at Grunas is described in detail in the next section. For basic descriptions of these sites, see the "Site Catalogue" in the 2006 Final Report. Unless otherwise noted, we followed natural stratigraphy.

[20] This section is the work of Michael Galaty, Zamir Tafilica, and Attila Gyucha.

When natural stratigraphy could not be followed, we dug in 10-cm arbitrary levels. All dirt was screened through ¼-inch mesh.

Okol

A 1x1 meter test unit was dug just behind the large historic house in Okol in order to determine, if possible, the length of occupation. Architectural survey and historical data (see above, as well as the 2005 Final Report) indicate that the current house is at least 100 years old and some of the pottery collected in the adjacent field is of 19th-century date, possibly older.

We excavated five levels to a depth of 50 cms below surface. The top four levels (001-004) were composed of "plowzone" over a transitional B-horizon. The soil was very rocky, sandy clay loam, and there was much charcoal in level 003. Underlying the sandy clay loam was clean yellow clay (which appeared first in the NE corner of the unit and sloped to the SW, so that level 004 was found only in the SW corner of the unit and was only 2 cms deep). The yellow clay, level 005, is probably alluvium deposited by the nearby river. The top few cms of yellow clay were impregnated with much charcoal. Artifacts were few, but at the bottom of level 003 in the NE corner of the unit and on top of the yellow clay, amidst the charcoal, was a hand wrought iron nail. A charcoal sample taken next to this nail has been submitted to Beta Analytic for radiocarbon dating; results are pending. Underneath level 005 was bright red, sterile clay (level 006).

We associate the charcoal and nail found at a depth of 34 cms with the first occupation of the house site. The radiocarbon date, if usable, should help establish when the neighborhood of Okol, presumably one of the oldest in Theth, was first settled.

Qafe e Thores

We excavated a 1x1 meter test unit at the stanë at Qafe e Thores, just in front of structure 001 (see above, Figure 12), in hopes of establishing when the site was first used as a summer pasture. We dug two levels to a depth of 23 cms, and this only with diffculty due to the many, very large rocks just under the surface. We found many modern artifacts in level 001 (0-17 cms) and none in level 002 (17-23 cms). We did manage to take two very small charcoal samples in level 002, but given their questionable context, they were not submitted for radiocarbon dating.

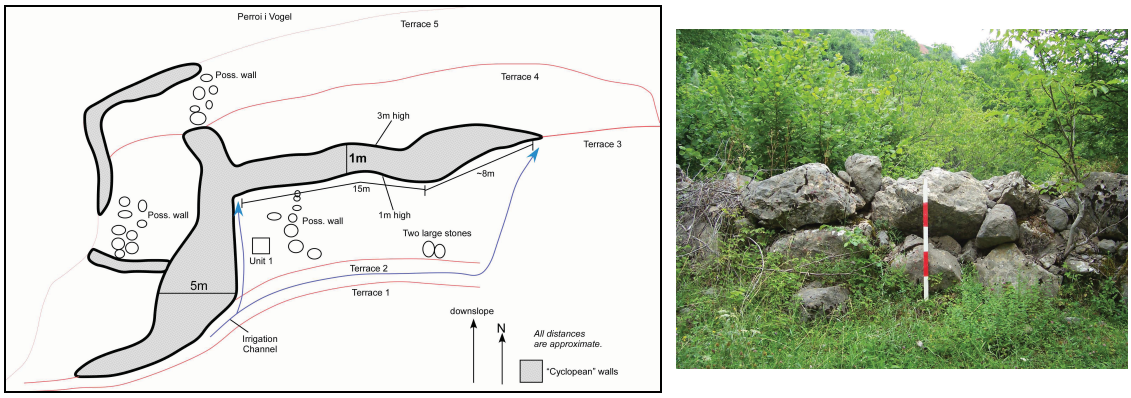
"Stone Circle" (S005)

S005 is located approximately 1 km north of the site of Grunas, on a large terrace. It is a circle of five large stones, each of which projects several inches above ground level, surrounding a stone at circle's center. A 1x1 meter test unit was dug here to establish whether the stones were deliberately placed. Four levels were excavated to a depth of 40 cms. Immediately beneath the surface were many very large stones, making it unlikely that the "circle" at the surface was a

deliberate installation. Only two modern artifacts were found (a chunk of metal and a nail), both in the "plowzone" (0-20 cms).

Gimaj (S008)

The possibly prehistoric site at Gimaj was found in 2006. What first drew our attention to the site were the very large terraces and several extremely large, "Cyclopean" walls (see sketch map, Figure 15, and photo, Figure 16). In 2006 a single small piece of what appeared to be prehistoric pottery was found, and so the site was targeted for test excavation in 2007.



Figures 15 and 16: sketch map of Gimaj and photo of large, "Cyclopean" wall (scale is two meters).

Unit 001 was excavated in five levels to a depth of 40 cm. Level 3 was composed entirely of rocks. Most of the rocks in the unit were in the western half and at first appeared to be a wall. Instead, these rocks may have been wall fall or the rubble interior of the large platform at site center. There were very few artifacts found, but at least one small piece of pottery, found in level 002, may be prehistoric. A radiocarbon sample was taken in level 003 and has been submitted to Beta Analytic for dating; results are pending.

GEOARCHAEOLOGY AT GRUNAS[21]

Methods

The 2007 geoarchaeological work at Grunas occurred in two distinct phases. First, we constructed a geomorphic map of the site and performed a quick survey of the site's platforms, terraces, and other features. Next, occupation features were tested using cores excavated by hand with a bucket auger. This involved limited sampling and geochemical testing (see above). Finally a single 1x1 meter test unit was excavated to sterile material (180 cm) in terrace 6 (Unit

[21] This section is the work of Christopher Fisher and Michael Galaty. Zamir Tafilica and Attila Gyucha helped with excavation and interpretation.

001), sampled in 5cm intervals, and described. Laboratory testing of sediments, charcoal analysis, radiocarbon dating, and other work is ongoing.

Site Composition

The monumental architecture of Grunas is truly impressive, composed of platforms, terraces, defensive walls, and house foundations (Figure 17). Platforms are characterized by their flat elevations, large scale, lack of landscape alignment, and shallow soil. In contrast, terraces contain deep soil and sediment deposits, are arrayed on the landscape in a contour fashion, and have sloped elevations. To ensure landscape stability and provide flood protection the core of these features (Figure 17, platforms 4, 8, 9, terraces 1, 5-7) would have to have been planned and constructed in a few episodes, perhaps over a couple of seasons. This required the construction of massive retaining walls, infilling of these features with rubble, sediment, and soil, and possibly the diversion of the stream. Considered together, and given the scale of Bronze Age society, this construction represents a major socio-political and landscape investment, underscoring the presumed importance of the location to the ancient Shala economy.

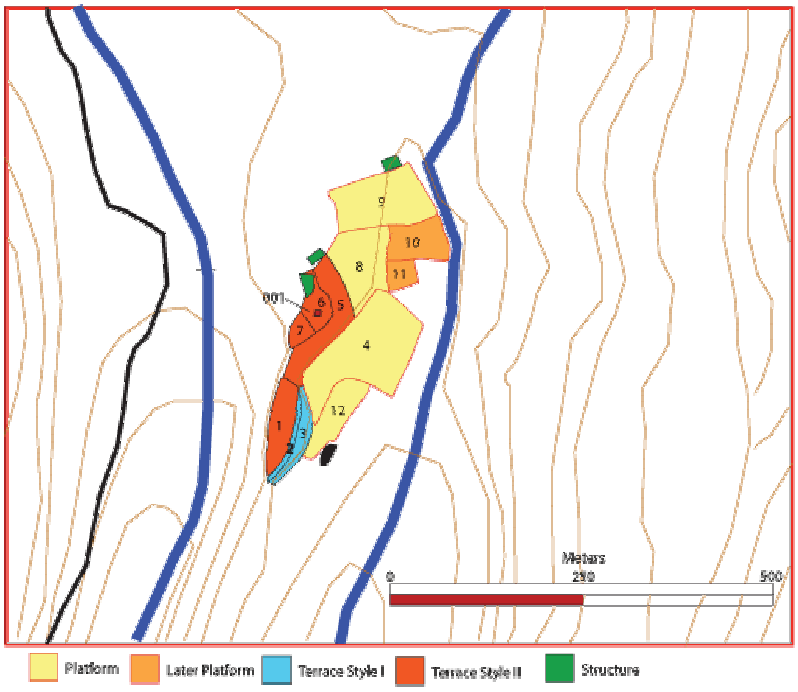


Figure 17: plan view of the site of Grunas. Contour intervals are 50 meters. North is up.

Platforms

Grunas contains five large platforms that were constructed in at least two episodes representing roughly 65% of the occupation surface of the settlement (Figure 17, 8-11, 4, 12, shown in yellow

and orange). Each platform intersects the stream on the east, abuts terraces to the west, and natural topographic highs to the north and south.

Figure 18. Edge of the Grunas stream channel. In the background is the spring/water fall that acts as the source.

The eastern side of this complex is roughly 3 meters above the active level of the stream on the south (Figure 18), less in the north, and faced with formal walls of large boulders in a manner that is similar to early, so-called Cyclopean construction. Auger testing revealed weakly developed soils (Entisols) with thin, loamy, A horizons (>20cm) over sands and gravels likely placed as fill during construction (Figure 19).

Figure 19: Example of the thin soils on platforms and terrace type II.
This example is from a collapsed section of terrace 3.

The platforms lack the dual occupation horizons that characterize the terraces (see below) and today are covered with alluvial material, especially platforms 9, 10, and 11. Given the lack of organic material it is likely that the platforms are not especially good locations for agriculture. Thus the platforms in effect create large, raised plazas, capped by a thin soil, that in the past both prevented spring flooding of the site and channeled water to the south.

Platforms 10 and 11 are different and may represent later additions to the site. 10 and 11 are lower in elevation than the remaining platforms, and face outward toward the stream and main path. They contain retaining walls on their eastern edge facing the stream but these constructions are much less robust, being composed of smaller stones, and today are eroded. Platforms 10 and 11 are also outside the later (Iron Age?) fortification. These platforms may represent later sheep pens or corrals (see soil chemical data above).

In terms of function, the platforms created large raised plazas that served as significant flood protection making the initial occupation of Grunas possible. Given the proximity of the site to the stream, and the high-energy environment present during the spring, flooding must have been a significant problem for the inhabitants of Grunas. Indeed, the presence of alluvial gravels, sands, and silts in areas where the platform retaining walls have failed, and similar deposits against the platform base attest to continued flood problems. Thus the platforms enabled the large-scale occupation of the site. Additionally, there is a strong possibility that the site caps a seasonal exit for the stream during the spring high stage. An alternative possibility is that this location was a small ridge that was flattened and expanded. In either case the location and size of Grunas meant that the stream had to be diverted east, again facilitated by platform construction.

The use of the platforms is an open question. They lack the dual occupation horizons of the terraces and this means that they probably did not support houses or other structures. Additionally, with the exception of a couple of anomalous samples from platforms 4 and 9, the soil tests did not reveal high concentrations of phosphate, as did platforms 10 and 11. They also certainly served some defensive function – or were at least better able to control flows of people, material, and animals between the upper and lower portions of the valley – though the later occupation (phase II – see below) significantly improved this ability. The most obvious interpretation is that they served as large, open plazas for ceremony, organization, and ritual.

Terraces

Grunas contains six terraces in two distinct construction styles comprising roughly 35% of the occupation surface of the settlement (Figure 17, 5-7, 1-3, shown in red). As the terraces together form a stable landscape unit it is likely that they were constructed in the same episode and so are contemporaneous – except for 2 and 3. The terraces together are stepped down toward the steeply sloped river drainage to the west, begin at the eastern edge of the platforms, and abut natural topographic units to the north and south. They are arrayed in a contour fashion to fill

what was probably a narrow channel and integrated into the platforms on the eastern edge. Visible terrace berms are between 1-2 m high, though much is buried by the intersecting terrace, and constructed in a manner that is very similar to the eastern platform complex edge (large boulders, fitted but not worked, smaller stones and perhaps mud to fill chinks). On the western edge of the complex where terraces intersect the river valley the walls are especially massive with much larger boulders and higher walls (4-5 m) on a possibly prepared platform (Figure 20).

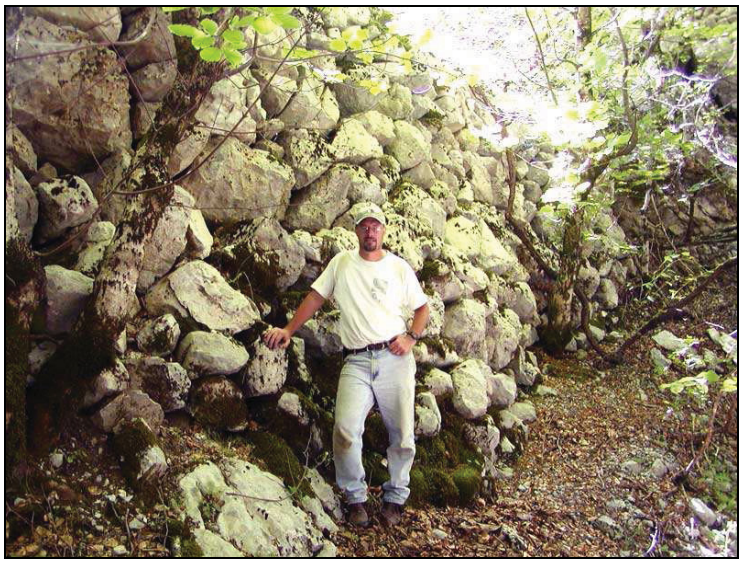


Figure 20. Shot of massive wall at the western edge of terrace 1 marking the western extent of the site. Note the large boulders, height, and possible prepared platform. Walls like these anchor the entire western edge of Grunas.

As these walls anchor the entire terrace complex their construction is critical and would likely have been accomplished first, and so would constitute some of the earliest construction at Grunas. All terraces are of a bench style with a marked downward slope of several degrees.

The Grunas terraces are constructed in two styles probably as a result of the natural topography, intended function, and perhaps distinct occupation episodes. Style I includes terraces 1, and 5-7, including the massive retaining walls on the site's western edge, making them some of the oldest features at the site. These terraces range in width with deeper sedimentation, robust walls, and intact archaeological deposits, including the only evidence for Bronze Age occupation at the site. Over the span of the 2006 and 2007 seasons three test units were excavated on terraces 5 and 6 (see below for the 2007 test excavation on terrace 6, and the 2006 Final Report for test excavations on terrace 5).

Figure 21: Terrace 6 looking south. Spoil pile in the middle of the terrace is excavation unit 001.

All of these terraces contain a five-zone sequence deposited in two episodes of terrace building/maintenance creating a stable surface that was exposed for a long period of time. Each episode is composed of fill deposits topped by a developed occupation horizon. Terrace 5 contains a compressed version of this sequence while terraces 1, 6, and 7, contain thicker deposits. In 2007 terrace 6 was tested with a 1x1m test unit (*sondage*) (Figure 21). Here the five zone sequence was at least 180cm in depth with well defined boundaries between the two occupation and fill levels. (This unit was described and sampled in 5cm increments for radiocarbon, basic soil characteristics and chemical analysis, pollen, and paleobotanical analysis – this work is currently on-going.)

The basic occupation sequence is underlain by alluvial sands and gravels capped with a thin A horizon representing the original surface (zone 6) (Figure 22). In 2006 this basal material was very moist meaning that groundwater was moving below the platforms and terraces, possibly along a relict channel. Above this is 60cm of homogenous material characterized by a silt-loam-loam texture, angular blocky structure, and a light color (7.5YR4/4) (zone 5). The placement of this unit directly on the original ground surface, coupled with the lack of cultural material, make it likely that this zone represents fill related to the original construction of the terrace. Interesting is the lack of stones, gravel, sands, or other alluvial material making this deposit very different from fill found on the platforms, and terraces 2 and 3.

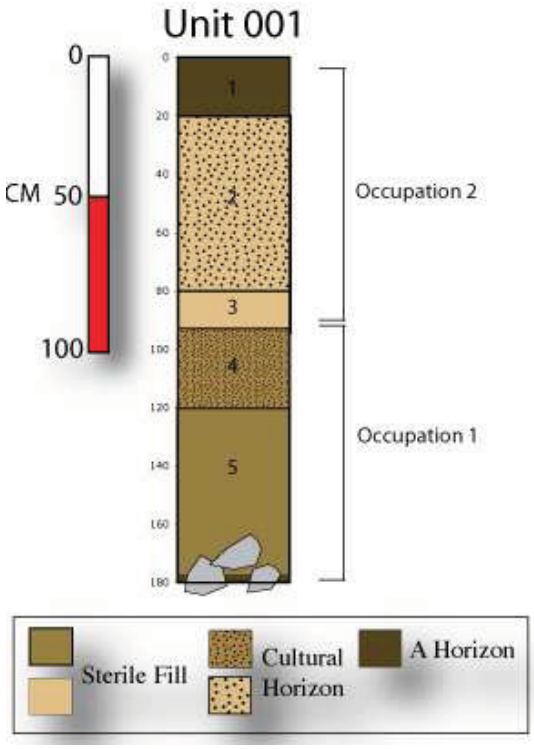


Figure 22: Depiction of profile 001, terrace 6, Grunas.

When first excavated this material readily broke into larger peds with a prismatic structure indicating a high bulk density and some soil formation meaning that this surface was exposed and stable for a long period of time. This zone is capped by the oldest of two cultural zones identified in Unit 001, characterized by a silt loam texture, angular blocky structure, and dark color (10YR4/4) (zone 4). In unit 001 this zone is roughly 30cm in depth with abundant fragments of carbon (1-3mm in length, 1mm width), daub (2-3x2-3mm), and lithic and ceramic artifacts. The basic characteristics of zones 5 and 4 are the same indicating that the cultural horizon formed on the fill episode represented by zone 5.

Above zones 4 and 5 is a younger fill/occupation episode (zones 2-3) with a more clayey texture (silt loam-silty clay loam), similar color (10YR3/2) and texture (angular blocky). Again this deposit represents a fill episode with a cultural horizon on the top in a sequence that is very similar to 4/5 (Figure 23). Different are the many rounded small gravels, some sands, and other weathered material representing eroded material washed onto the terrace in a way that is different then the initial occupation level.

Figure 23: Example of a large ped (secondary structure) of material from the upper cultural horizon. Note large chunks of carbonized wood.

Above zone 2 is a modern soil with a silt loam texture, almost granular structure, and a large root mat at the surface that resembles a thin mollic horizon. It is not clear if this deposit, or any of the material below, has ever been plowed making the likelihood of intact features and other deposits high.

The sequence of construction for terrace 6 closely follows the dual occupation horizons outlined above (see Figure 22). First, during phase I the initial shape of the terrace and retaining walls were constructed including sediment for fill (Figure 24). This surface was then exposed and stable for a long period of time, including the first occupation. During phase II the original terrace was expanded, including raising the terrace walls, raising the terrace surface with fill, and then occupied for a second time. Toward the end of the second occupation eroded material began to be incorporated into the occupation material. For the final phase (III) the second occupation horizon was buried by modern eroded material, and the walls were expanded or repaired with a smaller course of stones (Figure 25). At some point, and probably in the modern period, a drain composed of loosely packed boulders and gravels was installed at the front of the terrace (rubble/fill). This method of draining water-logged terraces has been documented by for the modern period by the ethnographic team (interview with local informant by Mentor Mustafa, 2007).

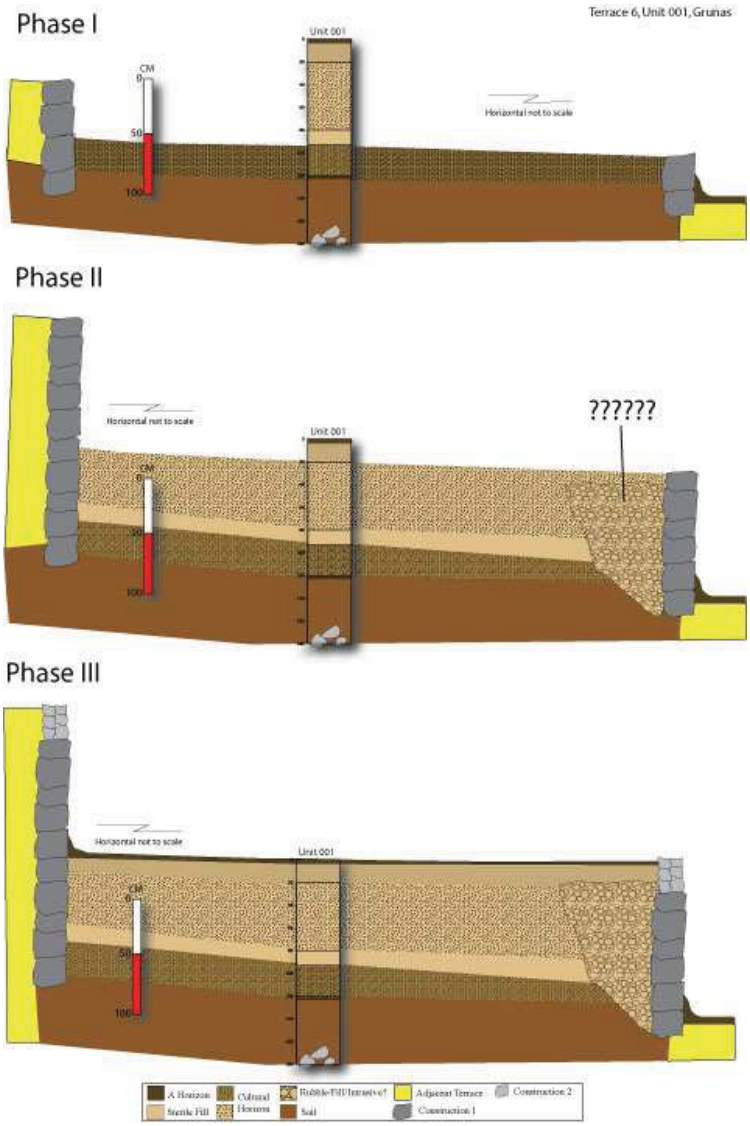


Figure 24: The sequence of construction for terrace six, Grunas.

Figure 25: Photo showing two courses of construction for the west wall of terrace 6. Lower course composed of large boulders related to phases I and II, upper course composed of much smaller material related to phase III.

Construction style II includes terraces 2 and 3 (Figure 17) characterized by walls with smaller boulders, less formal construction, and much shallower deposits. Like the platforms, auger testing revealed weakly developed soils (Entisols) with thin, loamy, A horizons (>20cm) over sands and gravels placed as fill during construction. These terraces are very narrow (2-4 m) and highly eroded and may have been constructed during a later occupation.

The presence of the daub, charcoal, and cultural material (see Figure 23) clearly indicate that terraces 1, and 5-7 contained structures. Given the weight of winter snows and the lack of stones or other material for foundations and walls (like later structures) it is presumed that these structures were not permanent and would have needed to be reconstructed on a frequent (perhaps annual) basis. It is interesting to note that though there is cultural material the overall density is very low suggesting that the number of people, or semi-permanent structures, was low. The thick deposits, abundant carbon, and evidence for human occupation would make these terraces great places for post-occupation agriculture.

Fortifications

Grunas also contains evidence for at least one episode of palisade and associated stone wall construction. The palisade was excavated into the eastern edge of platforms 4, 8, and 9 (Figure 26). Construction is characterized by a trench (1m wide) excavated just back from the platform wall, and bolstered on either side by small stone walls. The trench likely contained upright timbers that were then supported by the stones walls on either side. This defensive feature continues around the north edge of the site, with stone walls constructed in a similar fashion to the last phase of terrace construction. Further testing is needed to better date and understand these features.

Structures[22]

Grunas contains 5 structures represented by stone foundations, partial walls, and other features. Structure 1 is clearly constructed into and around the intersection of platform 8 and terrace 5 making it younger then these features. The overall layout of structure 1 is very similar to a historic stanë. Structures 2 and 3 are similar to 1 in general plan and probably function and also seem to have been incorporated into earlier construction. Structure 4 is different from 1-3 in that it is smaller, the foundation stones are more robust, and the remaining walls are higher. Its location, at the intersection of platforms of 8 and 4 would have been a strategic location when the palisade was active. It may have served as a tower. Structure 5 is very different from 1-4 being composed of a rectangular excavated pit without a stone foundation. This feature may represent a modern watering hole for livestock.

Occupation History

Given the above outline of the main features of the Grunas site it is now possible to create a provisional three-phase model for the development of the settlement. Phase I involved the construction of the main portion of the platform and terrace type I complex. The site would have been occupied on a seasonal basis with semi-permanent structures that were rebuilt at regular intervals, and based on the paucity of artifactual material, perhaps not many of those. During phase 1 Grunas would have been seen as a destination rather then a village or true occupation; a place on the landscape for ceremony, ritual, and socio-political process.

Phase II involved the construction of the fortifications, including the palisade and defensive wall. These features can be dated in a relative sense in that they are intrusive to the platforms but their relationship to the structures remains unknown. Whatever the relationship to the structures, their construction meant that Grunas, and probably the upper valley, had become a strategic location that was worth significant time and effort to defend.

Phase III is characterized by the construction of the structures, which like the palisade and fortification wall, are intrusive to the earlier platforms and terraces. Again, the meaning of Grunas would have changed from one of destination to one of habitation. Importantly, this shift was from a corporate- or group-focused society (phase I certainly, maybe II) when Grunas was controlled by a community, to a more individualized organization, during which the settlement was occupied by a family or families.

Grunas: The Northern Sector

In 2007 our attention was drawn by Wayne Lee, leader of the ethnohistoric survey, to an interesting complex of walls and mounds located just north of Grunas proper, referred to as the

[22] Longer, more detailed descriptions, photos, and plans of the structures at Grunas may be found in the 2006 Final Report.

"northern sector" in this report (see Figure 26). Several very large Grunas-style walls surround a roughly square, plaza-like area and abut a possibly humanly-constructed mound feature (Figure 27). The mound holds several cysts, some of which have been reused in modern times. In addition, circular retaining walls have been built into the mound. Several other mound feature nearby also look something like tumuli. This complex will be more carefully mapped in 2008 and remote sensing technologies will be used to determine whether the mounds might be tumuli.

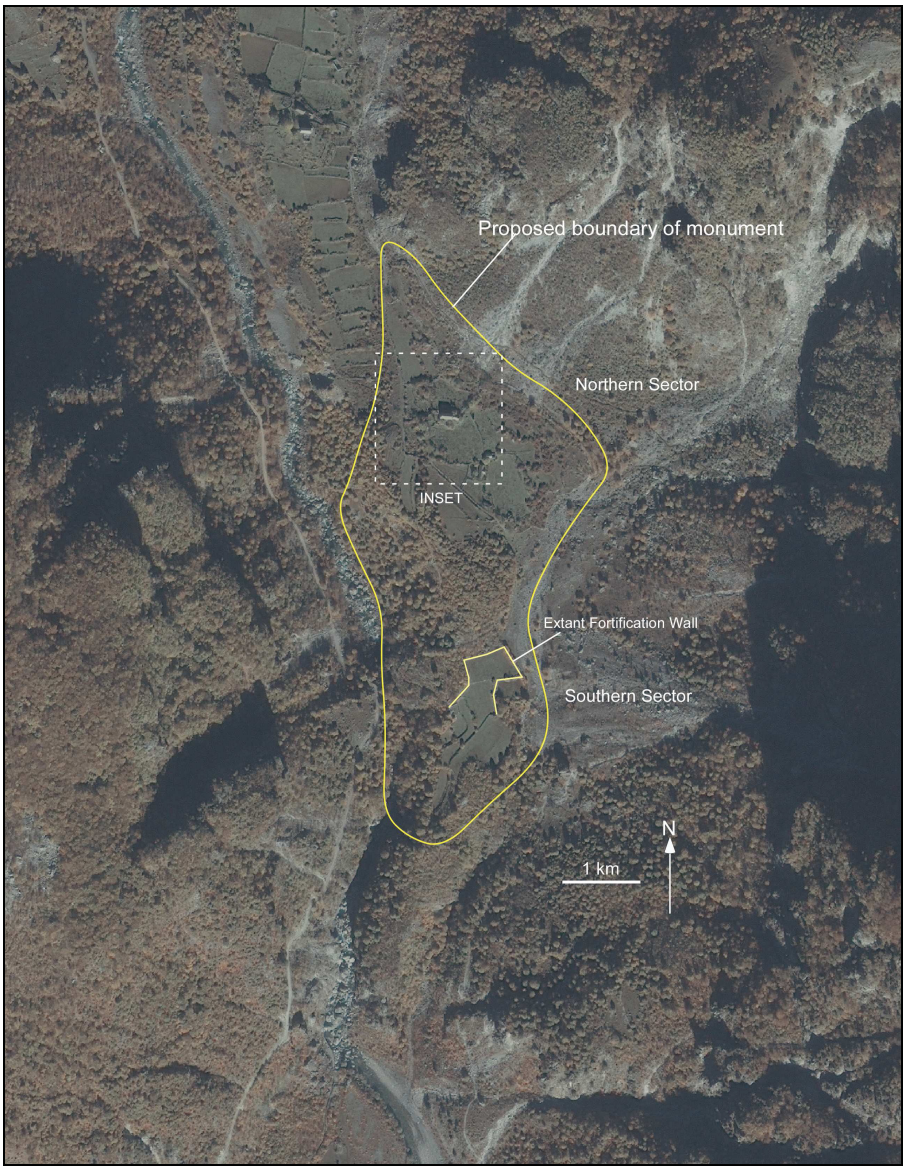


Figure 26: Image of Grunas (S006) including north and south sectors. Note outline of extant fortification wall. Inset is figure 27, below.

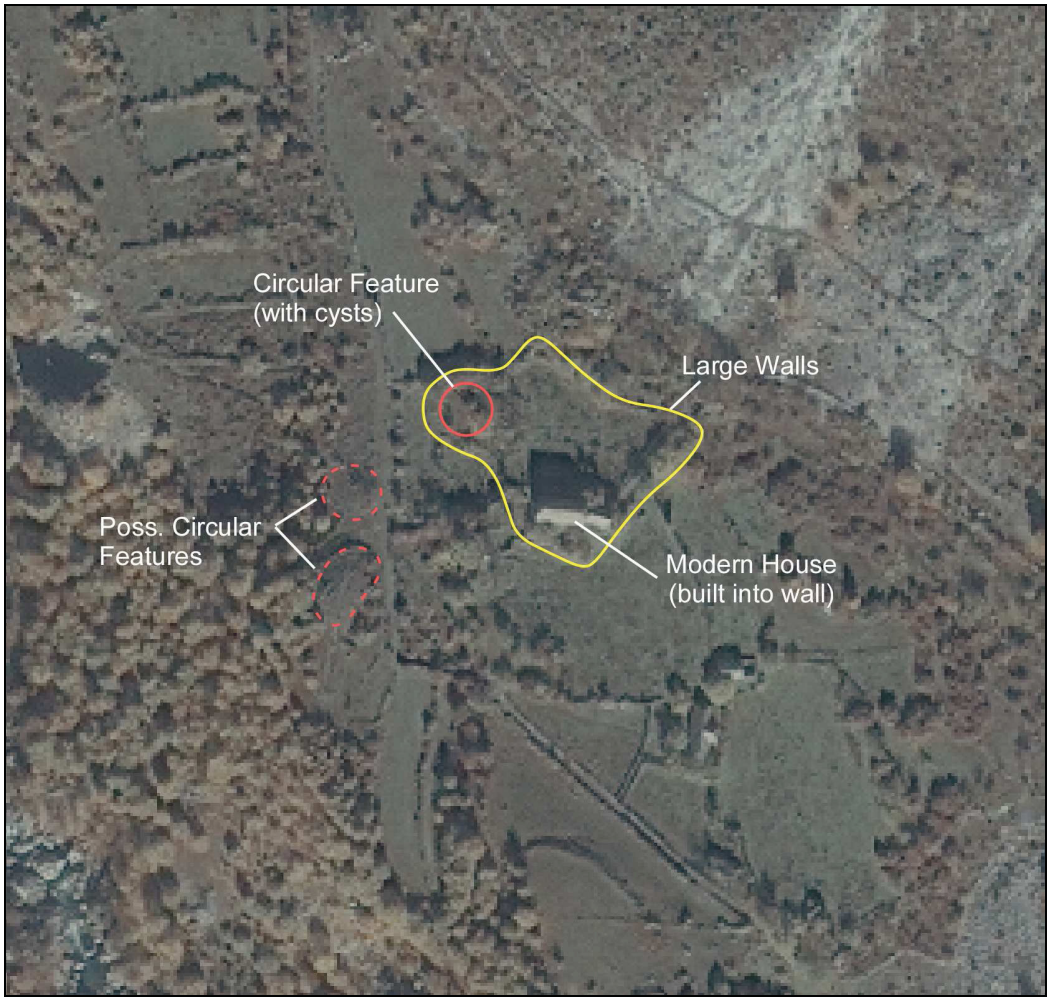


Figure 27: Close up of Grunas' northern sector. Large walls are outlined in yellow.

REPORT OF THE EXTENSIVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY TEAM[23]

Introduction and Goals

The primary goal of SVP's Extensive Archaeological Survey team (EAS) was to compile archaeological data in order to compare the settlement patterns between the Shala Valley and the area of northern Shoshi, just south of the "Gates of Shala", and eastern Pulti in order to test our hypothesis that human occupation in the Shala Valley was less intense, and consequently more isolated, than neighboring areas outside of the valley. To do so, it was important to understand

[23] This section is the work of Robert Schon and Zamir Tafilica. Thanks go to Mentor Mustafa for translating Tafilica's report into English.

the geophysical character of the valley and to visit present-day settlements. A limited amount of ethnographic data, especially about houses, was also collected. Given the time and personnel constraints (two people working for 11 days) we did not adopt the systematic tract walking technique of the Intenisve Archaeological Survey (IAS). Nor did we concern ourselves with mapping artifact densities or with the area's most recent material culture. Our aim was simply to discover as many sites and artifacts in this particular ethnocultural zone as possible.

Methods

We used two primary methods of site discovery. The first was traditional topographic prospection (UMME's work in Messenia, Greece is a good example of this approach; McDonald and Rapp 1972). Using this method, we searched out places that, in our judgment, would be good candidates for site locations. We began by looking for high, flat, terrain where one could see (but not necessarily be seen from) the landscape below. Immediately, we discovered two locations with possible Paleolithic material. In order to better our chances of finding sites of later periods, we subsequently added the availability of water and terrain with agricultural potential to our search criteria (soil, in fact, is quite rare in Shoshi). We also noticed that a number of the sites we discovered were near cemeteries and decided to investigate areas in the vicinity of those as well (with mixed results).

Our second method of discovery was to conduct informal interviews with local informants. During our days in the field, we invariably met local residents who invited us to coffee and raki. During these visits Zamir would ask them if they knew of any ancient material (large walls, artifacts) in their villages. While they all happily offered information, only one (Mark Zefi of Nicaj) produced positive results (Sites 010, 011).

Results

Overall, our methods proved quite effective. We discovered material from the Paleolithic through Medieval periods, including 51 pieces of pottery, 26 lithics, and 5 small finds. These totals represent roughly 15%, 45%, and 7% respectively of SVP's three-season total catalogued artifact inventories of these items. Since the full analysis of these materials is not complete, I will list our finds by location, rather than by period.

Region of Shosh

Shosh is the continuation of the Shala Valley whose lower extremes are traveled by the waters of the Shala River (Figure 28). The bed of the river narrows greatly and later empties into the Drin River. As far as the physical landscape is concerned, this part of the valley, in comparison with that of Shala, with its two linear mountain ranges, has extensions of mountainous rib-like features on both sides of the river and sloping down towards it. They weave together and thus enhance, in contrast to Shala, the extreme physical appearance of the region and its rugged looks

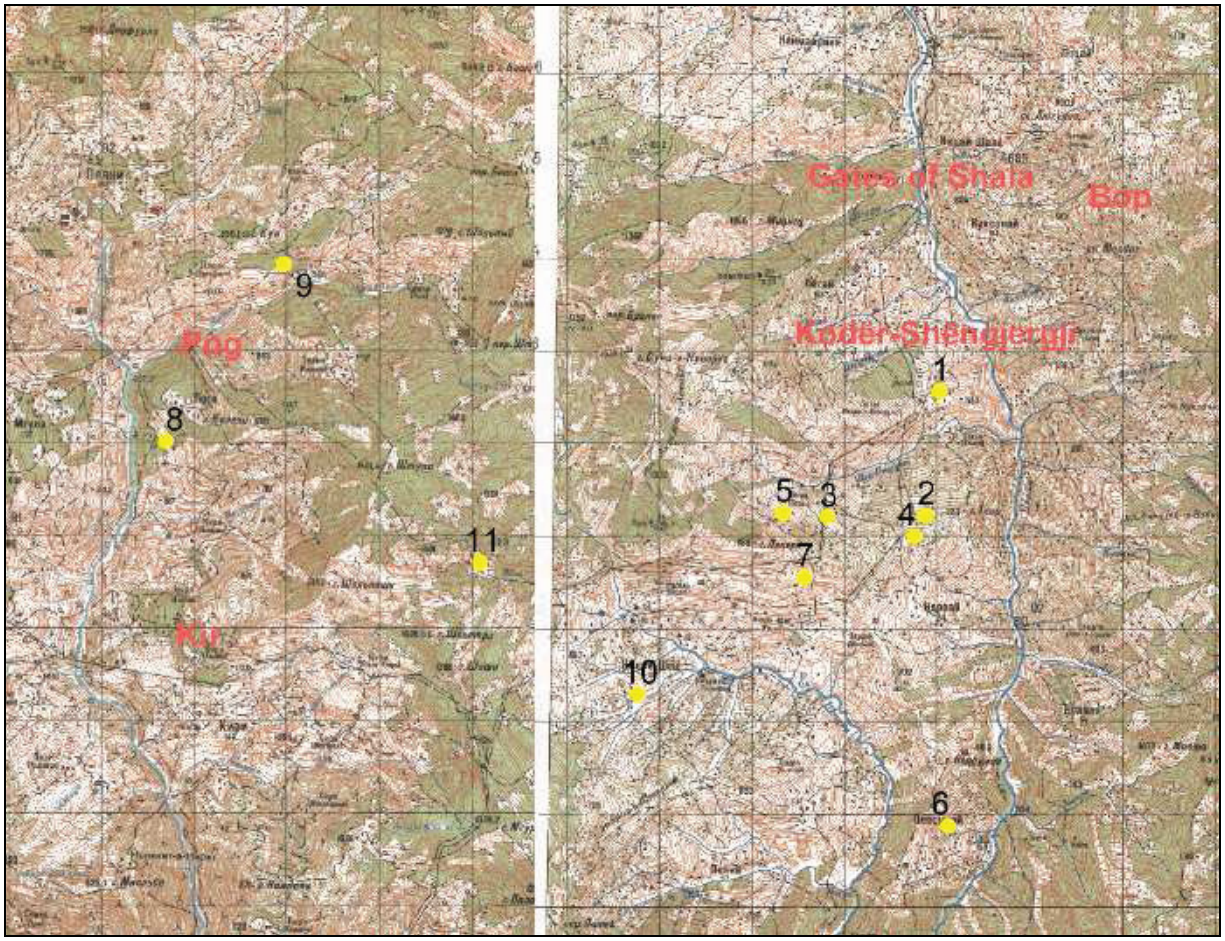


Figure 28: Region covered and sites found by the EAS.

(Figure 29). The terrain is made up primarily of "rreshpore" (shale) formations, and here and there, karsts. The waters of smaller streams are present but not of the same intensity as in Shala.

The villages of Shosh and their neighborhoods are spread throughout the valley. Their traditional boundary with Shala is the Kodër-Shëngjergji (see above), a small village with flat parcels that extend over the valley.

Typologically, the modern houses of Shosh do not differ from those of Shala, but their roofs are generally covered with slabs of "shtuf" (shale), a readily available material that is exploited traditionally as a kind of building material. It is found also in a few villages of Shala (see above). The buildings of the communist era and thereafter are covered with tile or other composite materials such as asbestos or metal sheets. Here, too, we find the same interesting carved symbols as are present on the exteriors of the Shala houses. In recent years there has been drastic abandonment of the villages as people seek a better life in the cities as well as

Figure 29: Looking south into Shosh. Note the narrow gorge of the Sahal River.

abroad. During summer a small number of households return to their homes to make use of the agricultural-pastoral resources available to them in Shosh.

Site 001: Kodër-Shëngjergji, Ara e Peronit

Based on oral testimonies of the inhabitants of this village (Gjergj Kola, etc.), during the communist period, an old cemetery that stood on the site of the new one had been bulldozed, right next to the ruins of the destroyed church of Shëngjergj. This was deemed necessary to gain flat terrain above the hill. Based on the villagers' testimony – they described "*varre paganësh*" or "pagan graves" – the cemetery perhaps belonged to early pre-Christian times. This hypothesis is supported by their descriptions of the graves: "tombs with big slabs of stone in the shape of a crate"; "many finds of earthen ware and objects made of metals". Our survey of the area in question did not produce any definite proof of these testimonies. Perhaps the disturbance of the cultural layers was radical enough that these remains were pushed over and into the canyon below.

Some pottery was found in a terrace just below the cemetery, but none was associated directly with the cemetery. In a cultivated field, next to the hill, on the northern side, we found a few ceramic fragments of small- and medium-sized wares made with red clay as well as some massive pieces that proved to be rather difficult to date based on their forms. Nevertheless we can propose the period of Late Antiquity (4th to 6th century after Christ) or perhaps the early Medieval period (6th to 9th century after Christ).[24]

Below and to the right of the foundation of the Shëngjergj church – a large church of basilica type with stone architecture, that had been totally destroyed in 1967 – outside its peripheral walls, about 2 meters below, we noted two lines of foundations that belonged to an older church. These walls were worked limestone and of quadratic shape.

Sites 002 and 004: Ndrejaj

These two adjacent ridges, just north of Kodra Sh. Gjergj, overlook the Shala river. They sit in the area where the shale (typical of Shoshi) intersects with the karstic limestone (prevalent in Shala). These denuded ridgetops yielded lithics of probable Paleolithic date.

Site 003: Qafa e Pyllës

The site is along a pass (qafa) near the road that takes one to Kir (Pult) and onward from there to Shkodra. Just adjacent to a modern cemetery, we discovered a dense scatter of pottery and lithics (44 artifacts over a 40 x 40 m area). This material most closely resembles the assemblage from Grunas, although no associated architecture was found. According to the villagers, there are nearby sources of such stones, but they are more familiar with a chert source somewhere in the neighboring regions of Shllaku.

Site 005: Leparu

The 4.5 hectare. area we explored below the peak of Leparu contains numerous ruined houses including a niche house (one niche on each of the two short walls). These houses were all in ruins. Locals informed us that the area is currently used exclusively for summer pasture and is not inhabited. No ancient material was found here.

Site 006: Pepsumaj

Despite 10 hours of climbing in a steep 8 hectare area, we only found 1 artifact at Pepsumaj (a sharpening stone). We came upon a number of houses and an electrical tower with an attached mill; all were abandoned. Only one family seemed to still be living on the inhospitable and steep slopes of this range.

[24] Vroom did not think any of this material was Medieval, or later. Thus Tafilica's early date may well stand and may tie EAS Site 001 to points further north, in Shala, such as Dakaj, which also yielded Late Antique pottery.

A block of terraces below this village have been given the toponym "Qytezë" or "town". This toponym is in widespread use in the vicinity of Shkodra (both variants "Qytezë", i.e. town or small city, and "Qytet", i.e. city, are found), but also in other regions of Albania, and elsewhere in the Balkans (Serbo-Croation "Gradinë", "Gradishtë"). Often the toponym indicates a prehistoric settlement. The only possible prehistoric feature we were able to locate was a dry wall (above the electrical tower/ mill), worked with large boulders and raised on top of a terrace, along the side of a stream. The wall is much like the walls observed in Grunas and Gimaj (both in Shala).

Site 007: Moll-kuqe/Dardhë

At Moll-kuqe, we encountered the reverse scenario – a structure built in a very similar fashion to Grunas, but with no associated artifacts. The site sits upon a well-terraced plateau with an excellent view toward Pepsumaj.

After passing Qaf-Pyllën, right after the point where the valley takes a steep turn towards the village of Kir, about 100 m below the road and on the side of the mountain, there are 2 to 3 terraces situated in a stair-like fashion. On the second terrace we found the ruins of a building with corners of 90 degree angles, worked with dry masonry using mountain stones of large and medium size (Figure 30). The building pressed on one of its longer sides onto the terrace (the opposite side had disappeared). On the side that remains, the natural cliff has been utilized as part of the wall. On the interior of this wall, at a height of about 1-2 meters above ground, there are three *kamare* (niches) quadratic in shape and spaced at equal intervals from one another. The other remaining wall, the one on the right, preserves still another kamare, and on the same level. The peripheral walls are preserved up to a height of 1-2 meters. We could not see any interior divisions of this feature. Coring and shovel tests down inside and outside the building did not show any evidence for cultural layers.

Figure 30: House at Moll-kuqe, with close up of niche.

The style and technique of construction, as well as the positioning of the building in a strategic place – pressed against the slope of a mountain and surrounded on three sides by a deep canyon – is much like the ones we found in Shala at Grunas and Gimaj. These features lead us to think that we may be dealing with a prehistoric construction.

Another village below that of Nicaj is called Dardhë. There our guide from this village, Ndue Zefa, showed us a high, long, and dry wall worked with large blocks and boulders. This wall was found inside the village and formed the lower boundary of a field along the river; the field was cultivated and in use. It is the very same positioning and location and the very same construction technique as in the other places of Shala and Shosh that we have mentioned above.

Site 010: Cilkuk

We explored about 19 hectares of the area of Cilkuk. A local informant (Mark Zefi) guided us to a terrace wall composed of some enormous blocks (over a meter on each side in some cases). A search of the terraces around it yielded a number of pottery sherds, lithics, and small finds. While the lithics may be prehistoric, the pottery is likely Early Modern in date.

Region of Pult

This region, in terms of geography and how the villages are spread throughout the landscape, does not show any apparent difference with Shosh. The houses are built using the same style, and show the same adaptations over time, especially on their fronts where the wooden stairs that once lead to the second floor and the landings theretofore have been eliminated and replaced by stairs on the interior.

A trip to the village of Kir, neighborhood of Telash, produced interesting results.[25]

As soon as one enters the village, over a hill with chestnut trees there is an old cemetery with about 20 burials oriented in the east-west direction. We could distinguish two kinds of graves. The first were simple burials that were the most prevalent. They were constructed with unworked stone slabs of "rrasa shtufi" and with two longer slabs of stone erected upright like stelae on the feet and the head of the burial. The second type were monumental tombs in the shape of a sarcophagus, two of which were close to one another while the thirds was standing by itself. They are build of worked stone slabs (gur shtufi), decorated with geometric ornaments along with a star and moon. Above the graves lie large crosses of stone that belong to the Catholic faith (Figure 31). It appears that at some point in the past, before they were broken down by the weather, they may have stood upright. It is possible that the third grave is a mass burial of a family because the dimensions are rather extreme.

[25] The visit to Kir took place on July 18, 2007, after Schon had departed Albania, and included Tafilica, Attila Gyucha, and Anisa Selimi. Their local guide was Vat Arra, aged 70.

Figure 31: Monumental tombs in the cemetery at Kir.

At an undetermined time, a water fountain on the side of the mountain was worked for public use, employiong stone that was chipped and shaped to construct two stairs of stone. Below the fountain there was also a small basin into which the water was deposited.

The house of Vat Arra was old, perhaps over 100 years old, and had suffered a number of later rearrangements. In the front yard of the house we saw an archway that was worked with lime stone; it was removed after the front of the house was reconstructed. It was decorated with geometrical motives along with two knobs and the Latin cross. There were many bee hives in front of the house and here there was also a large cross made of wood that was erected along with some other wood sticks on which red rags were hanging. The owner of the house mentioned that the cross was brought from the cemetery and that he had heard that the red rags and cross may protect the bees from the evil eye.

"Gjyteti" is the toponym of a small neighborhood that consists of 3 to 4 houses. It is located in front of Telash, below a massive stony formation, i.e. cliffs, that rise in the middle of the valley like a gigantic obelisk. The neighborhood consists of a block of small parcels, on different elevations, and suspended on steep, harsh, and terribly rugged terrain that brings about the impressions of a natural castle whose domain of rule is the entirety of the valley.

The houses were abandoned. One of them, located on the highest terrace of the neighborhood, had an architecture that was somewhat different from the others; it had a *çardak* that was open, made of wood, and located on the front side of the house.

During our survey of the terraces, which were reinforced with strong walls, we found a small hill that was located in the middle of flat and cultivated terrain. Like those at Grunas (northern sector), this mound was also surrounded with a dry wall, with medium size stones, that seems to belong to later times. On the surface of the hill, where the dense vegetation made it difficult to see, we noted two structures, two dry walls of stone on straight lines. One of the structures was serving as a retaining wall for the upper surface of a quadratic building.

We must add that on the front side the settlement of "Gjytet" was bound by a wall that followed the relief contours of a harshly rugged mountainside. We found several tracts of this fortification that may be of the Medieval era based on the technique of the construction.

The short visit to this settlement did not allow us to conduct an intensive survey for cultural traces like ceramics, etc.

Site 011

Mark Zefi also took us to a cave at the border of Shoshi and Kir. While it seems an ideal spot for temporary, or seasonal, habitation, no associated artifacts were found.

Sites 008 and 009: Lower and Upper Pog

Our furthest area of exploration was the village of Pog in the region of Plan. Most of our time was spent talking to locals, although a few hours of work (4 ha in lower Pog and a 3km walk in upper Pog) yielded numerous sherds, all of which were Early Modern to Modern in date. One resident (Mirash) pointed out a rock face (similar to Dakaj in the Shala Valley) that he claimed housed the ruins of a structure which included stone stairs, a stone arch, and iron rings embedded in stone as well. Due to time constraints, however, we were unable to explore that specific area.

Conclusions

In the face of difficulties with accessibility and time constraints, the extensive archaeological team achieved remarkable results. We discovered a range of sites and artifacts from numerous periods. Had we been able to work longer or more efficiently, we surely would have found more. Considering our positive findings compared to the limited discoveries made by the IAS (despite their systematic, intensive, and well-honed methods) we may be able to assert with a good deal of confidence that the areas south of the "Gates of Shala" have been more densely settled throughout history. What is more striking is that this pattern obtains despite very limited agricultural land and taphonomic processes that have certainly obliterated much of the archaeological record (although this latter factor applies equally to the terrain within the Shala Valley as well).

CONCLUSION

The 2007 field season of the Shala Valley Project was incredibly successful. We accomplished all of the goals we had set in 2006, and more. Most exciting, perhaps, are the glimpses we are getting of prehistoric Shala, at places like Grunas and, possibly Abat, Dakaj, and Gimaj. Certainly EAS Site 003 in Shosh is prehistoric, indicating an early human presence there as well. The latest occupants of Shala infiltrated and reoccupied a prehistoric landscape, building their stone homes on terraces built 2000 years before their arrival.

In 2008 we plan to return to Shala for two weeks of excavation at Grunas. We will conduct larger scale, horizontal excavations on terrace 6 and will seek to peg the occupational sequence. Likewise we will dig in structure 2 in order to determine once and for all whether the houses at Grunas are Modern in date, or ancient.

We have now established a publication plan and hope to have our book manuscript to a press in late 2009.