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## Fieldwork at Scodra 2013

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MARTIN LEMKE

## FIELDWORK AT SCODRA 2013

*Scodra* (Alb. Shkodër<sup>1</sup>) is located in northern Albania on the eastern shore of Lake Shkodër. The University of Warsaw has conducted fieldwork there since 2011, and there have also been several earlier archaeological investigations.<sup>2</sup>

According to written sources, *Scodra* was the capital of Illyria in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC until its annexation by the Roman Republic.<sup>3</sup> In imperial times, *Scodra* became a *colonia*, as proven by inscriptions, one of which was documented by the Antiquity of Southeastern Europe Research Centre.<sup>4</sup>

The 2013 campaign (10 May–7 June), was focused mostly on various areas atop the local castle hill. The fortress (“Rozafa”) was built around 1360 by George II Balšić (Balsha),<sup>5</sup> and later modified under Venetian and Ottoman rule.<sup>6</sup> The castle had a very intense history throughout the ages.<sup>7</sup>

Sediment has accumulated on the hilltop, although the scarcity of antique remains whatsoever suggests that the area was thoroughly cleaned, possibly either by some pedantic architect of the Medieval fortress, or by the inhabitants themselves, when the actual town of Scutari was



crammed into the premises of the castle of Rozafa under Venetian rule, leaving only those antique (Illyrian) walls in

<sup>1</sup> Also known as Scutari or Skutari, the Polish form is Szkodra.

<sup>2</sup> For earlier research and literature see: M. LEMKE, *Fieldwork at Scodra 2011*, “Światowit” IX (L)/A (2011), 2012, 209–214; idem, *Fieldwork at Scodra 2012*, “Światowit” X (LI)/A (2012), 2013, 177–183. Our work is kindly supported by the National Science Centre (Narodowe Centrum Nauki), within the project “Albanian-Polish archaeological research in the Illyrian capital Scodra” (Albańsko-polskie badania archeologiczne w stolicy Ilirii – Szkodrze), 2011/01/M/HS3/01828. We operate together with our Albanian colleagues, under the supervision of Dr Saimir Shpuza, University of Tirana.

<sup>3</sup> POLYBIUS, *Histories* 28.8; LIVY, *Ab Urbe condita* 44.31. For a history of Illyria see: J. WILKES, *The Illyrians*, Oxford 1995, 156–180; idem, *Dalmatia*, Cambridge 1969, 13–36; D. DZINO, *Illyricum in Roman Politics 229 BC – AD 68*, Cambridge 2010, esp. 18–60.

<sup>4</sup> The first inscription from Doclea: CIL III 12695, cf. III, p. 2253 = ILS 7159. The second one was built into a Medieval cistern in Scodra. Cf. M. LEMKE, *Fieldwork at Scodra 2011...*; A. ŁAJTAR, J. ŻELAZOWSKI, *Le nuove iscrizioni provenienti da Scodra (Albania) e il nuovo v(ir) e(gregius) ducenarius\**, “Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik” 192, 2014, 273–283.

<sup>5</sup> G. KARAIKAJ, *Die spätantiken und mittelalterlichen Wehranlagen in Albanien*, Hamburg 2010, 54. Marin Barleti states in his account of the siege of Shkodra in 1478 that the city was “unprotected by

walls” before the time of Balsha (M. BARLETI, *The Siege of Shkodra. Albania’s Courageous Stand against Ottoman Conquest*. Translated and edited by David Hosaflook, Tirana 2012, 59, cf. note 68).

<sup>6</sup> A. ROZMAN, *Sources Concerning the Conflict between Balsha and Venice (1396–1421)*, (in:) Ch. Gasparis (ed.), *The Medieval Albanians*, Institute for Byzantine Research International Symposium 5, Athens 1998, 261–270; G. KARAIKAJ, *Die spätantiken...*, 241–242; O. SCHMITT, *Das venezianische Albanien (1392–1479)*, München 2001, 237–239; K. JIRIČEK, *Skutari und sein Gebiet im Mittelalter*, (in:) L. von Thallóczy (ed.), *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, vol. I, München – Leipzig 1916, 105–107; T. IPPEN, *Skutari und die nordalbanische Küstenebene*, Sarajevo 1907, 19–21. The state of the fortifications appears to have been quite desolate when the Venetians took over the castle: J. VALENTINI (ed.), *Acta Albaniae Veneta saeculorum XIV et XV* (further – AAV), München 1973, III 637.

<sup>7</sup> Regarding the history of Rozafa: M. LEMKE, *Szkodra — legenda wielu epok*, “Archeologia Żywa” 58, 2011, 14–19; T. IPPEN, *Skutari...*, 16–24; S. LUZATI, *Bauten und Architektur in Shkodra: Niedergang einer nordalbanischen Metropole*, (in:) E. Samini, *Albanien – zwischen Kreuz und Halbmond*, Innsbruck 1998, 242–256. On the castle: C. PRASCHNIKER, A. SCHOBER, *Archäologische Forschungen in Albanien und Montenegro*, Schriften der Balkankommission. Antiquarische Abteilung VIII, Wien 1919, 8–10. Specifically on the famous siege in 1478: M. BARLETI, *The Siege of Shkodra...*

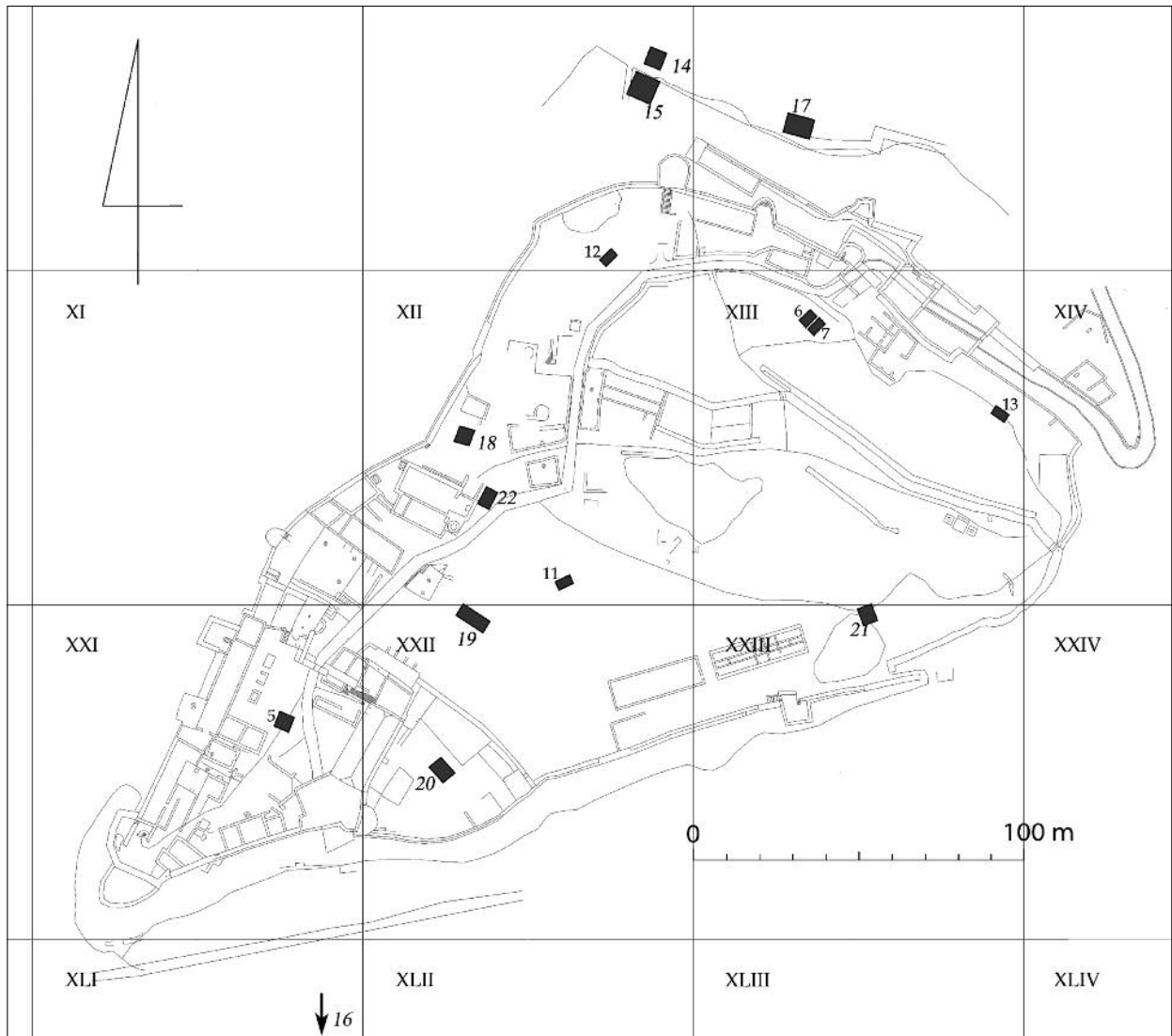


Fig. 1. Scodra 2013. Trenches on the castle hill Rozafa (Drawing M Lemke, M. Bura).

Ryc. 1. Scodra 2013. Wykopy na wzgórzu Rozafa.

place which were meant to serve as foundations for structures under construction.<sup>8</sup>

All probing trenches within our five-year research contract are numbered in succession. Trenches 1–13 were set up during the first and second campaigns in 2011 and 2012 (Fig. 1). Thus the first trench explored in 2013, No. 13, had already been established in 2012<sup>9</sup> and was enlarged this year (5×5 m). It is located in the north-eastern part of the castle, near the main entrance. Here, a skeleton was found, as well as some jewellery. Fieldwork was stopped in a depth of about 2 m, at the top level of two 70 cm

wide walls, which were connected with a stone platform. Upon continuing excavation in 2013, a deep and narrow pit (the bottom was not reached at 2.3 m below the platform level) measuring 1.8×1.6 m was uncovered near this platform (Fig. 2). Its walls are made of medium sized stones with no mortar, but a rather tight masonry. The object in question is probably the cellar or storage room to the former building above, on whose inside the entire excavated area was located with an entrance to the northeast, with the platform marking the floor level. Alternatively, this might be the outside of a small cistern.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, for safety

<sup>8</sup> A. EVANS, *Antiquarian Researches in Illyricum*, Westminster 1883, 83.

<sup>9</sup> M. LEMKE, *Fieldwork at Scodra 2012...*, 179.



Fig. 2. Trench 13, possible cistern or cellar (Photo M. Lemke).  
Ryc. 2. Wykop 13, cysterne lub piwnica.

reasons, fieldwork had to be stopped at a total depth of more than 6 m for Trench 13, before reaching the bedrock. The scarce ceramic material is Ottoman, but this does not preclude a Venetian building phase for this structure. It only gives a *terminus post quem* for when the hypothetical cistern/cellar was filled in, especially since a  $^{14}\text{C}$  sample from the filling of the object points to the 14<sup>th</sup>/early 15<sup>th</sup> c., that is before the Ottomans took control of the castle.

Three out of the four new trenches were located on the hilltop, but outside the castle walls. Here, the Venetians carried out extensive construction works in the eve of the wars with the Ottoman Empire in the 15<sup>th</sup> c., building a barbican in front of the main gate and an ad-

ditional line of outworks that leaned against the hill slope, thus being less prone to the effects of artillery fire (Fig. 3).<sup>11</sup> On the northern side of the hilltop, where the only access way and main entrance are located, the neighbouring civil buildings were razed to enhance security (the ruins of one house, probably once belonging to the Jonimi family, are still visible outside the main gate).<sup>12</sup> Additionally, a dry moat was constructed by carving out the rock bottom and strengthening its outer wall, the counterscarp, with a mortarless wall made of large, unhewn rocks<sup>13</sup> and an underground passage from there to the barbican was cut through the bedrock.<sup>14</sup> The idea behind these changes was to render the fortress less accessible from its only vulnerable side, where

<sup>10</sup> With all the defensive attributes of the castle of Rozafa, the potential lack of water during a siege was a major drawback. The Venetians built four large public cisterns within the castle, but there were also private ones within houses (G. KARAIKAJ, *Die spätantiken...*, 138–139). Due to the limited dimensions of cisterns uncovered in Trench 13, these are only hypotheses. Cisterns within houses are a common occurrence at Stari Bar, where a small living quarter was equipped with no less than five such water tanks of similar proportions, dated from the late 14<sup>th</sup> c. onwards (S. GELICHI, *Analizzare lo Spazio, Analizzare il Tempo. La storia di un isolato di Stari Bar*, Firenze 2011, 14–18).

<sup>11</sup> G. KARAIKAJ, *Die spätantiken...*, 70, 241.

<sup>12</sup> AAV XVII 4093; XIX 5172; V. KAMSI, *Fortifikimi i hyrjes kryesore të kështjellës së Shkodrës*, “Monumentet” 3, 1972, 163–170; J. SCHMITT, *Actes inédits concernant Venise, ses possessions albanaises et ses relations avec Skanderbeg entre 1464 et 1468*, “Turcica” 31, 1999, 247–312, 270–271; M. BARLETI, *The Siege of Shkodra...*, 159, note 22; F. CORDIGNANO, G. VALENTINI, *Saggio di un regesto storico dell’Albania*, Scutari 1937, no. 697.

<sup>13</sup> G. KARAIKAJ, *Die spätantiken...*, 70; M. BARLETI, *The Siege of Shkodra...*, 113.

<sup>14</sup> M. BARLETI, *The Siege of Shkodra...*, 115.



Fig. 3. Castle of Rozafa from the north (Photo M. Lemke).

Ryc. 3. Zamek Rozafa, widok z północy.

an attack of storming forces up the relatively moderate slope was possible. Also, artillery fire from the nearby Pasha-Hill could devastate the entrance area of the castle.<sup>15</sup> The moat with its adjoining glacis<sup>16</sup> however made the attackers vulnerable to fire, especially since a retreat from the moat was virtually impossible due to the high and steep counterscarp.

Still, the proportions of the stones in the counterscarp raised the question whether these might be the remains of another Illyrian wall like the one visible in the courtyard of the barbican (as part of the pre-Venetian curtain wall),<sup>17</sup> adapted for Medieval purposes. Therefore, Trenches 14, 15 (Fig. 4) and 17 were dug here to achieve certainty and also verify the written sources regarding the Venetian construction works.

Trench 14, measuring 4×3 m, was located outside castle wall, cutting the counterscarp. After digging through 3 metres of thick rubble with sometimes large but unaligned stones, lacking an external façade (the foundations of the glacis), a small wall made of medium sized stones with strong yellow mortar placed on the bedrock was discovered underneath (Fig. 5). While the rubble layers were predominantly devoid of pottery, the earth around the wall at the bottom contained a number of shards of Venetian pottery. This excludes the possibility of a pre-Medieval origin of the moat wall, while proving at the same time the existence of further Medieval buildings here, which were probably removed when the glacis and moat were built.

<sup>15</sup> M. BARLETI, *The Siege of Shkodra...*, passim, especially 113 for the earthen defensive works (“made of clay and sundry materials”) around the barbican on the north side, which would eventually allow the defenders to prevail after the stone walls had been bombed to pieces.

<sup>16</sup> A glacis is an artificial slope meant to keep attackers under the fire of the defenders until the last possible moment. On level ground, troops attacking any high fortification have some shelter from fire when close up to it; the glacis consists of a slope with

a low grade inclined towards the top of the wall. This gave defenders a direct line of sight into the assaulting force. Additionally, the bank of earth would shield the walls from being hit directly by cannon (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition, vol. 10, London 1911, 685).

<sup>17</sup> The barbican of the fortress was built between 1404 and 1416: G. KARAIKAI, *Die spätantiken...*, 69; C. PRASCHNIKER, A. SCHÖBER, *Archäologische Forschungen...*, 9; M. LEMKE, *Fieldwork at Scodra 2011...*, 210–211, fig. 2.





Fig. 4. Trenches 14 and 15, exploring the castle moat and counterscarp (Photo M. Lemke).  
Ryc. 4. Wykopy 14 i 15, przecinające fosę i przeciwskarpę.



Fig. 5. Trench 14. Wall under the counterscarp (Photo M. Lemke).  
Ryc. 5. Wykop 14. Mur pod przeciwskarpą.

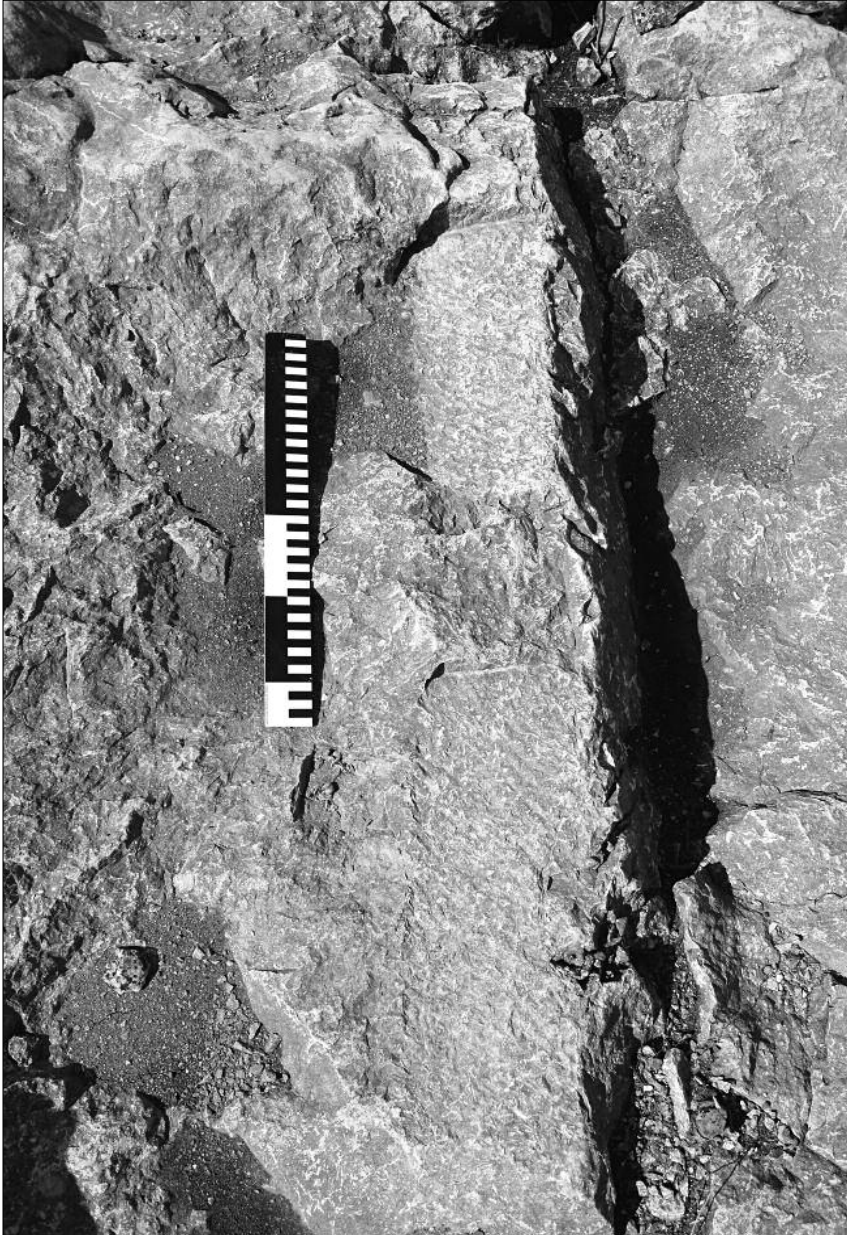


Fig. 6. Trench 15. Traces of quarrying in the moat (Photo M. Lemke).

Ryc. 6. Wykop 15. Ślady wydobywania kamienia w fosie.

Trench 15 (4×5 m) inside the moat was quickly finished after removing a mere 20 cm layer of erosion rubble and earth from the bedrock. Traces on the bottom revealed that not only had the moat been cut into the rock, but there had actually been a small quarry here to acquire stones for the wall (**Fig. 6**).

Trench 17 (4×5 m) was located halfway between Trenches 14 and 15 and the main gate. The situation here confirmed the results from the neighbouring trenches:

no outer façade and a glacis made out of paved rubble. Excavation was discontinued before reaching any older structures underneath.

By contrast, Trench 16 (5×4 m) was laid out at the foot of Rozafa hill, close to the River Drin in a private garden (**Fig. 7**). Excavations in the 1980s nearby revealed a number of buildings with a mosaic from the Late Antique Period.<sup>18</sup> In our case however, the excavations gave rather different results. Below an alluvial layer from the 20<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> c.

<sup>18</sup> G. HOXHA, *Zwei "korinthische" Reliefschalen der mittleren Kaiserzeit aus Shkodra (Scodra)*, "Archäologischer Anzeiger"

2012/1, 63–83; G. HOXHA, B. LAHI, *Gërmimet arkeologjike në qytetin e Shkodrës*, "Illiria" 18/2, 1988, 262–264.



Fig. 7. Trench 16 seen from Rozafa (Photo M. Lemke).

Ryc. 7. Wykop 16, widok od strony Rozafy.



Fig. 8. Trench 16, Late Antique pavement (Photo M. Lemke).

Ryc. 8. Wykop 16, późnoantyczna posadzka.



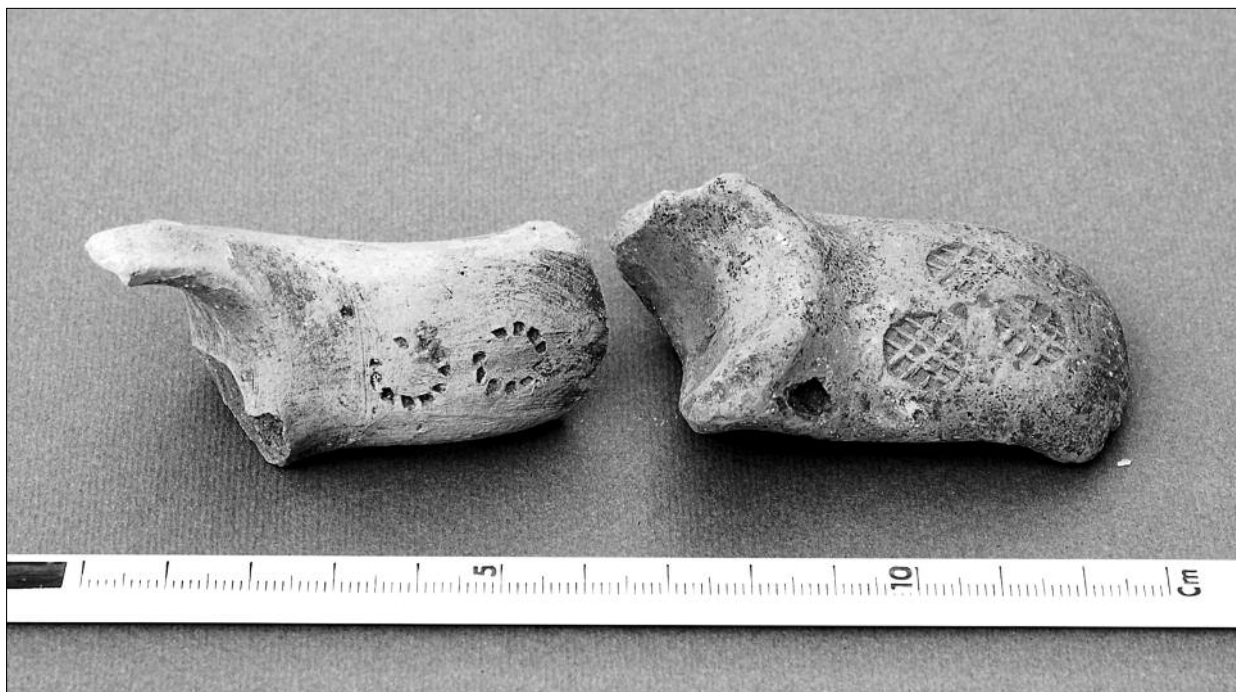


Fig. 9. Amphora handles with stamps (Photo J. Reclaw).

Ryc. 9. Stemplowane imadła amfor.



Fig. 10. Theriac jar, made of lead (Photo M. Lemke).

Ryc. 10. Pojemnik na *theriac*, wykonany z ołowiu.

were Ottoman strata, accompanied by a small wall (60 cm wide), running in a broken line along an N/S axis. Below ca. 1.5 m of this level, a pavement made of a single slate slab measuring 1.5 m in width and uncovered on a length of 4.3 m was discovered, with two adjoining small walls made out of medium sized and carefully joined (but not hewn) stones with mortar, forming a corner around the pavement (Fig. 8). Late Antique material was abundant in the according layers. The high water level of the Drin made it impossible to penetrate the earth below.

Small finds from the 2013 season are rather modest. A number of Venetian and Ottoman glazed pottery shards, two amphorae handles with pictographic stamps (Fig. 9), a small selection of Late Antique pottery from Trench 16 and, as every year in Scodra, a whole array of Turkish clay pipes. A small highlight is the little lead jar with inscribed lid, once designed for the proto-homeopathic medicine

Theriac, produced by the Venetian pharmacy “Ai Due Mori” (The Two Moors) in the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> c. (Fig. 10). Comparable containers for this medicine were discovered not far from Shkodra in Stari Bar (Montenegro).<sup>19</sup> On a larger scale, while Theriac jars from Venice are found in various places all over Europe, containers from this specific pharmacy seem to have been especially popular in the southern Balkans, with numerous items found in Bulgaria and Greece.<sup>20</sup> The jar was accompanied by a small bronze rod with measurements on it, stemming possibly from a scale – with a little fantasy we may perceive those finds as the sole remains of a former pharmacy.

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### BADANIA TERENOWE W SCODRA W 2013 R.

Podczas trzeciej kampanii w *Scodra* (10.05–07.06. 2013), prace Ośrodka Badań nad Antykiem Europy Południowo-Wschodniej UW skupiały się na wierzchołku wzgórza Rozafa (Ryc. 1, 3). Eksplorowano cztery wykopy sondażowe na wzgórzu oraz jeden u jego podnóża. Zachowując ciągłość numeracji w ramach całego pięcioletniego projektu otrzymały one numery 13–17, przy czym prace w sondażu 13 zostały już rozpoczęte w 2012 r. Na wzgórzu skupiono się na przeciwskarpie przy fosie na zewnątrz fortecy (Ryc. 4, 5). Mur przeciwskarpki zbudowano z potężnych bloków kamiennych, z grubsza podobnych do tych, z których wykonano mur iliryski widoczny jeszcze

w barbakanie twierdzy. Wykopaliska wykluczyły jednak możliwość powstania tej konstrukcji już w antyku. W wykopie nad rzeką Drin, pod sedymencie aluwialnym, odkryto posadzkę wykonaną z pojedynczej płyty łupkowej wraz z dwoma obramującymi ją murami (Ryc. 7, 8). Materiał ceramiczny sugeruje datowanie tej konstrukcji na późny antyk. Większość zabytków ruchomych jest pochodzenia weneckiego lub osmańskiego. Odkryto jednak także ceramikę antyczną, będącą dowodem dawnej obecności Ilirów i Rzymian w tym miejscu, oraz małą puszkę na protoplastę leków homeopatycznych, *theriac* (Ryc. 10).

<sup>19</sup> I express my gratitude to Lara Sabbionesi (University Ca' Foscari, Venice) for this information.

<sup>20</sup> U. KLEIN, *Theriac-Kapseln und kein Ende*, (in:) G. Dethlefs, A.

Pol, S. Wittenbrink (eds.), *Nummi Docent! Münzen, Schätze, Funde. Festschrift für Peter Ilisch*, Osnabrück 2012, 287–288. I wish to thank Dr Ulrich Klein for pointing out this geographical peculiarity to me.