Papers of the British School at Rome **82** (2014), pp. 199–235 © British School at Rome
doi:10.1017/S0068246214000099

ARCHAEOLOGY AND EPIC: BUTRINT AND UGOLINO VERINO'S CARLIAS

by Paul Gwynne, Richard Hodges and Joanita Vroom[1]

The Epirote port of Butrint (now in Albania) features significantly in the neo-Latin epic, the Carlias, *by the Florentine Ugolino Verino (1438–1516). This poem was recast on the occasion of the invasion of Italy by Charles VIII of France, to encourage the young king to imitate his ancestor, Charlemagne, and undertake a crusade. This essay focuses upon the poetic description of Butrint in the light of recent excavations. It reconstructs the run-down character of this fortified Venetian town, as well as the material living conditions of its occupants in 1493. The essay considers how Verino's narrative was shaped by literary sources, rather than the actual circumstances of the port.*

Il porto epirota di Butrint (oggigiorno in Albania) compare nell'epica neolatina, il Carlias del fiorentino Ugolino Verino (1438–1516). Questo poema fu rimaneggiato in occasione dell'invasione dell'Italia ad opera di Carlo VIII di Francia, per incoraggiare il giovane re ad intraprendere una crociata, imitando il suo antenato Carlo Magno. Questo saggio si concentra sulla descrizione poetica di Butrint alla luce dei recenti scavi. Ricostruisce la fatiscente città fortificata veneziana unitamente alle condizioni della vita quotidiana dei suoi occupanti nel 1493. L'articolo prende in considerazione come il racconto di Verino fu plasmato sulle fonti letterarie piuttosto che grazie alle effettive condizioni del porto.

> Con una commozione più intensa di quella provata commentando Omero sulle rovine di Micene, ora, io, sull'acropoli di Butrinto, da me scoperta e scavata, leggo Virgilio.
>
> Luigi Maria Ugolini, *Butrinto. Il mito d'Enea, gli scavi* (1937: 12)

Heinrich Schliemann (1822–90) famously began his search for Troy armed with a copy of Homer's *Iliad*. His excavations at Hissarlik seemed to verify that ancient epics reflect actual historical events. In the same spirit, the Italian archaeologist Luigi Maria Ugolini (1895–1936) launched his excavations in southwest Albania explicitly to find the remains of 'lofty Buthrotum' as described in Virgil's *Aeneid*, and, like Schliemann before him, actively acknowledged the presumed positivistic connection between the ancient epic and the archaeology (Fig. 1).[2] While ancient epic and archaeology often have walked hand in hand, medieval and renaissance epic are not generally included

[1] We are grateful to the Butrint Foundation for support during the preparation of this essay. Particular thanks to Helen Lovatt, Oren Margolis and Stano Morrone for reading and commenting upon drafts. The Butrint description draws upon the research of many colleagues, including Will Bowden, Andy Crowson, Oliver Gilkes, Inge Hansen, Dave Hernandez, John Mitchell and Nevila Molla. In addition, Harmen Huijgens is thanked for his help with the distribution maps of the Butrint ceramic finds used in this article (below, Figs 10–11).

[2] L.M. Ugolini, *Butrinto. Il mito d'Enea, gli scavi* (Rome, 1937), 11–12.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

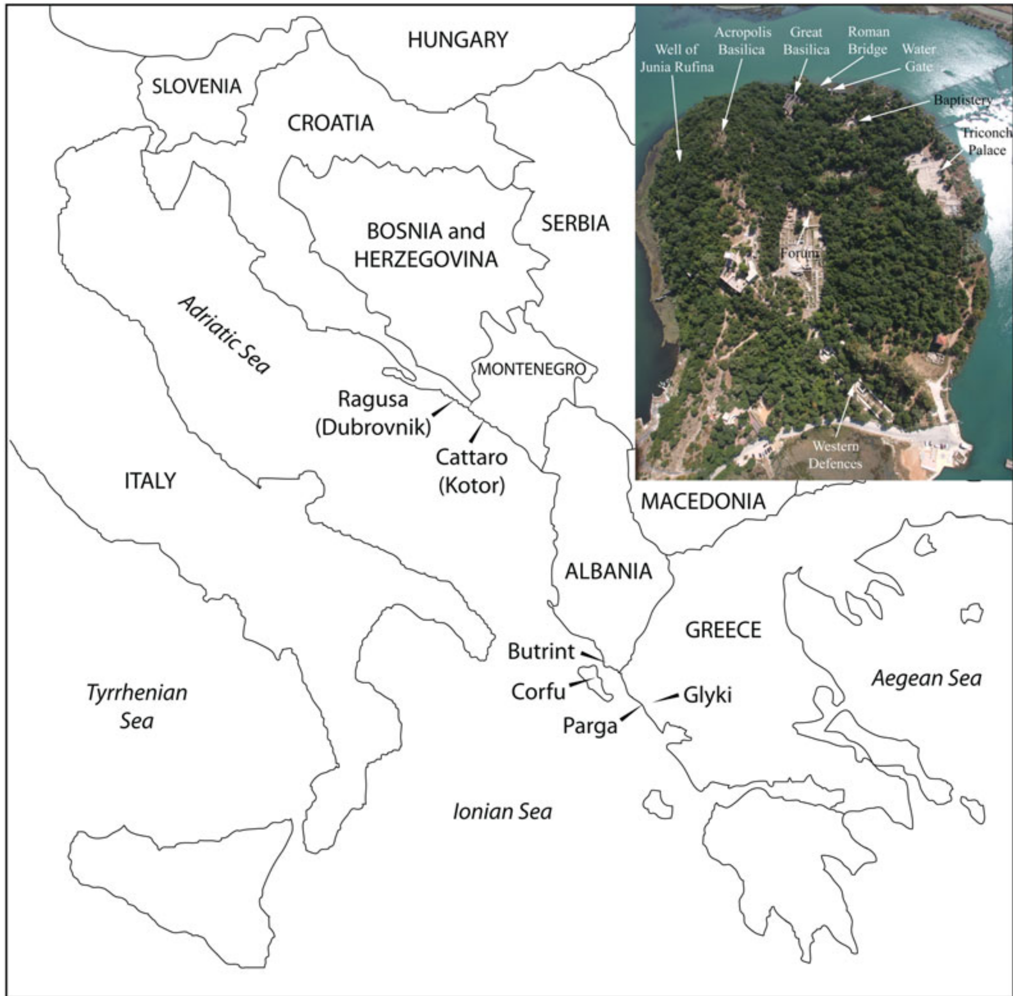

Fig. 1. Location of Butrint. *(Reproduced courtesy of the Butrint Foundation.)*

within the archaeologist's 'documentary field'. Archaeology, on the other hand, offers an important source for examining the ambiguities, contradictions and attitudes taken by a textual narrative. Being a text created in modern contexts, the archaeological record does more than illuminate the margins of a written source. The material remains, ranging from the text of an epic to animal or fish bones, do more than give a 'voice to the voiceless';[3] these are resources drawn upon by people in the construction of themselves and their communities. In our times, the positivism of Schliemann and Ugolini has given way to a critical understanding of the layers inherent in any text, both material and written. This essay, then, argues that, just as the *Iliad* may contain significant historical

[3] J. Moreland, 'Method and theory in medieval archaeology in the 1990s', *Archeologia Medievale* 18 (1991), 7–42, at pp. 13–14.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

evidence for the site of Troy, so references to Butrint in the neo-Latin epic *Carlias* are given new meaning by major large-scale excavations of this Epirote port, and vice versa. Although Butrint had featured in Virgil's *Aeneid* as a place of importance both to Aeneas and to members of Augustus's circle, it is here argued that the port features prominently in Books One and Five of Ugolino Verino's *Carlias* because of its strategic relevance for the dedicatee, King Charles VIII of France, as he contemplated a new crusade against the Ottomans, and then confronted the Venetians following his triumphal descent through the Italian peninsula (1494) and his conquest of Naples (1495).

UGOLINO VERINO'S *CARLIAS*

The fifteen-book, neo-Latin epic *Carlias* by the Florentine poet Ugolino Verino (1438–1516) is, for many reasons, an extraordinary poem.[4] The epic celebrates the career, both real and imaginary, of Charlemagne (742–814), king of the Franks (768) and emperor of the West (800). The historical figure, who had conquered the infidel throughout his empire and whose coronation in Rome on Christmas Day in 800 re-established the Western Roman Empire, is here remade into the hero of a Christian epic, whose deeds excel those of Achilles, Odysseus and Aeneas. The poem is divided into two parts: the first six books recount Charlemagne's mythical exploits in the Holy Land; while in the last books Charlemagne expels the Lombards from Italy.[5] Verino's epic includes all the classical tropes: he begins *in medias res*; there are banquets, journeys, storms at sea, great battles and councils of war. In a remarkable piece of invention, the epic *katabasis* is remodelled in imitation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, so that Charlemagne not only travels through the Underworld (Book Six), but also continues his journey to Purgatory (Book Seven) and Paradise (Book Eight), so that this Christian hero's destiny is affirmed directly in the presence of God. The Virgin Mary endorses Charlemagne's victories and encourages him with predictions of future greatness, while the angels applaud.

[4] For a biography of the poet and a brief synopsis of his poem, see A. Lazzari, *Ugolino e Michele Verino: studii biografici e critici* (Turin, 1897). The *Carlias* has begun to attract attention recently. A critical edition with commentary has been provided by N. Thurn, *Ugolino Verino 'Carlias'. Ein Epos des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1995); and N. Thurn, *Kommentar zur 'Carlias' des Ugolino Verino* (Munich, 2002). Note also H. Lovatt, '*Aeneid* 1 and the epic gaze in the *Carlias* of Ugolino Verino', *Proceedings of the Virgil Society* 27 (2011), 130–55. For the position of the poem within the epic tradition, see F. Bausi, 'L'epica tra latino e volgare', in R. Fubini (ed.), *La Toscana al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico. Politica, economia, cultura, arte*, 3 vols (Pisa, 1996), II, 357–73; P. Gwynne, 'Epic', in V. Moul (ed.), *Neo-Latin Literature* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

[5] Charlemagne's mythical crusade generally was accepted as fact, and indeed celebrated in the twelfth-century *chanson de geste*, *Le pèlerinage de Charlemagne* or *Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*; see P. Aebischer (ed.), *Le voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople* (Geneva, 1965); also M. Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory. The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks and Jerusalem before the First Crusade* (Oxford, 2011).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Charlemagne's wars, and his terrestrial and celestial voyages, are thus clearly intended not only to eclipse the achievements of the classical heroes, but also to surpass the fantastic deeds described in the medieval Alexander Romances.

An example from Book One reveals the poet's method of combining classical and Christian motifs. As at the opening of the *Aeneid*, the hero's fleet is caught in a storm:

> Francorum princeps geminas ad sydera palmas
> Substulit ac nudo supplex ita vertice fatus:
> 'Aspice nos, Christe, et tantum depelle procellam! [...]
> Da, pater, optatos Latii pertingere portus,
> Si letus tua iussa sequor vitamque periclis
> Obiecto et sanctos Romana e sede fugatos
> Ad tua sacra patres Tarpeae reddere rupi
> Festino et sevos duce te expugnare tyrannos!'
> Vix haec ediderat, leva cum flammea lampas
> Innocuo fulgore nitens descendit ab alto.
> Depulsis tenebris mox regia visa cremari est
> Puppis, et in malo caelestis flamma reluxit,
> Auditamque ferunt vocem de nube Tonantis:
> 'Ecce adsum; depone metum; confide! Vetamus
> Ulterius rapidis Sathan sevire procellis'. (Verino, *Carlias* 1.99–101, 109–20)

> (The leader of the Franks raised both hands to the stars and with his head uncovered as a suppliant spoke thus: 'Look down upon us, Christ, and calm such a storm! [...] Allow us, Father, to reach the desired ports of Italy, if I happily follow your commands and expose my life to hazards; under your guidance I am hurrying to restore the reverend fathers, who have been exiled from their Roman home, and your sacred rites to the Tarpeian rock and to expel the savage tyrants!'
>
> He had scarcely uttered these things, when on the left a fiery light gleaming with a harmless flash came down from on high. Immediately as the shadows were dispersed, the royal ship seemed to be on fire and a celestial light shone around the mast, they say that the voice of the Thunderer was heard from a cloud: 'Behold I am here; put aside your fear, have faith! We have forbidden Satan to rage further with his swift storms'.)

Verino here has combined Aeneas's prayer (*Aeneid* 1.92–101) with Christ's words to the disciples as he calms the waves on the Sea of Galilee (Luke 8.22–5) to add resonance to Charlemagne's epic mission and Christian destiny.[6]

Verino's epic poem was written over a long period and dramatically recast in the late 1480s/early 1490s when Europe was thrown into turmoil by the decision of King Charles VIII of France to press Angevin claims to the kingdom of Naples by force of arms.[7] The Duke of Milan, Ludovico Sforza, guaranteed the French

[6] See N. Thurn, 'Heros Aeneas und Iuno, die Hera. Der Wandel des Heldenbegriffes von der Antike zur Neuzeit', in T. Burkard, M. Schauer and C. Wiener (eds), *Vestigia Vergiliana: Vergil-Rezeption in der Neuzeit* (Berlin/New York, 2010), 9–30, where he has argued that Charlemagne's speech is conditioned by Augustine's criticism of Aeneas in *The City of God*.

[7] Nikolaus Thurn showed that the poem was begun in 1465 (Thurn, *Ugolino Verino's 'Carlias'* (above, n. 4), 29). In the dedicatory epistle to Charles VIII the poet claims to have been working on his epic for 24 years, thus dating the letter to 1489. Alfonso Lazzari said that the deluxe presentation

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

army safe passage into Italy, and in spring 1494 the French descent into the Italian peninsula began.[8] Charles excused and validated his invasion by claiming that his plans for the conquest of Naples and southern Italy were not an end in themselves, but the first step of a crusade eastward, aiming to wrest the Mediterranean from the Turks and to recapture the Holy Land.

Could Butrint have featured in the king's plans? Together with the island and fortress of Corfu, it had belonged originally to the Angevin dynasty of Sicily and southern Italy. It had been purchased by the Venetians a little over a century earlier, in 1386. Moreover, the imperial title of the Byzantine empire had been transferred to Charles. In the wake of the king's decision to march against Naples, Andreas Paleologus, the exiled despot of Morea living in Rome and the last 'titular' Byzantine Emperor (1453–1502), sold Charles the rights of succession to the Byzantine crown, before the French king had even arrived in Rome.[9] This bizarre ceremony took place on 6 September 1494, in the church of San Pietro in Montorio on the Janiculum. As Josephine Jungić has shown, this church was particularly noted for its associations with the Joachite prophecy of the Last World Emperor, who would come to reassert order in the Last Days before the final conflict between the forces of Good and Evil. This medieval prophecy had resurfaced in the late fifteenth century as the French army moved south.[10]

In Florence an atmosphere of almost messianic expectation prevailed. Savonarola proclaimed that the French monarch had been sent by God to

---

manuscript was given to Charles at Tours on 29 September 1493 by Gentile de' Becchi and Pietro Soderini (Lazzari, *Ugolino* (above, n. 4), 165). Thurn doubted this. At the beginning of the seventeenth century this manuscript was again in Florence, in the possession of the heirs of Petrus Verius. Lazzari observed: 'Non sappiamo come e quando il poema fosse restituito a Verino' (Lazzari, *Ugolino* (above, n. 4), 167). This suggests that the expensive gift was never presented. Verino, however, continued to work on his epic, removing passages and ideas to align the poem with the teachings of Girolamo Savonarola.

[8] When he succeeded to the throne in 1483 King Charles VIII of France was a minor, and the kingdom of France was ruled by his elder sister Anne and her husband Pierre II, sire de Beaujeu, duke of Bourbon (1488). Upon his majority (1491), Charles, who had inherited Angevin pretensions to the kingdom of Naples, immediately began preparations to reclaim his inheritance by war; the primary study remains Y. Labande-Mailfert, *Charles VIII et son milieu (1470–98): la jeunesse au pouvoir* (Paris, 1975); see also R.W. Scheller, 'Imperial themes in art and literature of the early French Renaissance: the period of Charles VIII', *Simiolus* 12 (1981), 5–69 and references therein. Note also G. Peyronnet, 'The distant origins of the Italian wars: political relations between France and Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries', in D. Abulafia (ed.), *The French Descent into Renaissance Italy, 1494–95: Antecedents and Effects* (Aldershot, 1995), 29–54; also P.G. Gwynne, *The Life and Works of Johannes Michael Nagonius, Poeta Laureatus,* c. *1450*–c. *1510* (Ph.D. thesis, The Warburg Institute, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 1990); now P. Gwynne, *Poets and Princes. The Panegyric Poetry of Johannes Michael Nagonius* (Turnhout, 2013), 75–140, 164–8, 387–412.

[9] Scheller, 'Imperial themes' (above, n. 8), 42.

[10] J. Jungić, 'Joachimist prophecies in Sebastiano del Piombo's Borgherini Chapel and Raphael's Transfiguration', in M. Reeves (ed.), *Prophetic Rome in the High Renaissance Period* (Oxford, 1992), 321–43.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

triumph in Rome, reform the Church, receive the imperial crown and deliver Constantinople and Jerusalem.[11] On his accession, Verino had sent the young king a panegyrical 'brief epic' in 300 hexameters (now lost).[12] As Charles VIII busied himself with the Italian campaign, Verino now recast the *Carlias* with a dedication to the French king. A presentation manuscript of the poem was prepared by the brothers Gherardo (1445–97) and Monte (1448–1532/3) di Giovanni del Fora (di Miniato), who ran a flourishing workshop in Florence from the early 1460s (Fig. 2).[13] As befitting the royal dedicatee, this book was a deluxe production of the highest quality, expensively bound, gauffered and written in coloured inks on fine white vellum. The elaborate title-page is bordered with exquisite images of Charlemagne, the French royal insignia and a portrait of the poet. The initial letter of each book is enriched in gold leaf, set against a multicoloured background, decorated with fine penwork, and complemented by a border *all'antica* composed of trophies, cameos and other classical motifs. As the dedicatory epistle makes clear, this volume was intended to inspire Charles VIII to emulate his ancestor Charlemagne, who, the poet says, is 'without rival in deed or religion' (see Appendix). At a moment in European history when the eastern empire had collapsed and a crusade seemed increasingly untenable, Charlemagne's eastern victories must have seemed particularly appealing.

CHARLEMAGNE IN FIFTEENTH-CENTURY FLORENCE

The myth of Charlemagne was extremely popular in fifteenth-century Florence.[14] For the legend of the foundation of the city holds that Charlemagne, returning to France after his coronation in Rome, stopped in Florence to refound and restore the city to its former splendour after the devastation of the Gothic invasions.[15] Florentine humanists in the fifteenth century certainly exploited the legend to stress a special relationship between the city and France. Donato Acciaiuoli

[11] See D. Weinstein, *Savonarola and Florence* (Princeton, 1970); O. Niccoli, *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*, trans. L.G. Cochrane (Princeton, 1990). In general, see M. Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge/London, 2008).

[12] Lazzari, *Ugolino* (above, n. 4), 165.

[13] See A. Garzelli (ed.), *Miniatura fiorentina del Rinascimento 1440–1525, un primo censimento*, 2 vols (Florence, 1985), I, 267–330; II (Illustrations), 1–699; M.M. Manion, *The Felton Illuminated Manuscripts in the National Gallery of Victoria* (Melbourne, 2005), 376–425.

[14] For Charlemagne in the literary tradition in Florence, see N. Bisaha, *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia, 2004), 13–42.

[15] See G. Fasoli, 'Carlo Magno nelle tradizioni storico-leggendarie italiane', in F. Bocchi, A. Carile and A.I. Pini (eds), *Scritti di storia medievale* (Bologna, 1974), 912–15; S. Raveggi, 'Tracce carolinge a Firenze', in A.I. Galetti and R. Roda (eds), *Sulle orme di Orlando. Leggende e luoghi carolingi in Italia* (Padua, 1987), 167–77; P. Gilli, *Au miroir de l'humanisme: les représentations de la France dans la culture italienne à la fin du Moyen Age* (Rome, 1997), 277–343.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

VGOLINI VERINI·CARLIA
DOS LIBER PRIMVS

PRELIA MAGNANI
mi canimus uictricia carli:
Armaq. francorũ nullis
imperuia terris:
Edomituq. orbem lon
gobardosq. feroces:
Impiaq. horrendis mi
serorum tartara penis:
Elysiumq. nemus ciuesq.
ardenti olympi:
Insuetum per iter ferimur nullisq. priorum
Orbita currenti monstbat uestigia signis.
Christe potens rerum æterni sapientia patris
Aspira ceptis: uatem nec diua precantem
Calliope spernas res ardua pande recessum
Parnasi memorans breuiter compendia rerum.
Victor ab aurora remeans pipinius herois
Tercentum egeas sulcabat nauibus undas:
Turbaq. nautarum pelagi secura [illegible]
Pulsabat scissum numeroso uerbere pontum:
Cum subito exarsit flammato pectore sathan.
Tristiaq. infecit solitus precordia liuor.

Fig. 2. Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS Ricc. 838, fol. 4r. © Biblioteca Riccardiana. *(Reproduced courtesy of the Biblioteca Riccardiana.)*

composed a *Vita Caroli* ('Life of Charlemagne') in both Latin and Italian, based largely upon Einhard, for presentation to Charles VIII's father Louis XI of France (1423–83) upon his accession to the throne in 1461.[16] Verino also

[16] The deluxe presentation manuscript written by Piero di Benedetto Strozzi and decorated by Francesco di Antonio del Chierico is now in Cambridge (Fitzwilliam Museum MS 180); see P. Binski and S. Panayotowa (eds), *The Cambridge Illuminations. Ten Centuries of Book Production in the Medieval West* (London, 2005), 338–9; also D. Gatti, *La 'Vita Caroli' di*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

exploits this myth to offer a panegyric on the noble origins of many Florentine families by creating for them a fictional ancestor among Charlemagne's paladins:

> Magnanimus Medices primum regit agmen equestre,
> Unde genus sumpsit Medicum pulcherrima proles.
> Quanto alios Libyes montes supereminet Athlas,
> Tanto Italos superat cives opulenta propago. (Verino, *Carlias* 9.277–80)

> (Great-hearted Medices, from whom the most worthy progeny of the Medici have derived their family, commands the first squadron of cavalry. As much as Atlas exceeds the Libyan mountains, so this wealthy family surpasses other Italian citizens.)[17]

In addition to this special relationship there is the myth of the Second Charlemagne of millenarian prophecy. Towards the end of the thirteenth century Alexander von Roes (writing *c.* 1281) had reformulated the old legend of a Last World Emperor with reference to Charlemagne. There is a popular prophecy, he says, which expects an emperor to be raised up from the Carolingian stock who will be *princeps et monarcha* of all Europe.[18] A century later an Italian, the so-called Telesphorus of Cosenza, infused this prophecy with new meaning.

> He will be crowned in his thirteenth year and at fourteen he will start on a triumphant career that will begin with the destruction of all tyrants in his own kingdom and carry him triumphantly through the subjugation of western Europe, the destruction of Rome and Florence, the conquest of Greece and eastern nations, until at last he reaches Jerusalem.[19]

As Marjorie Reeves showed, Charles VIII was clearly associated with these prophecies of the Second Charlemagne and the Last World Emperor of Joachite

Donato Acciaiuoli (Bologna, 1981); and D. Gatti, '*La Vita Caroli* di Donato Acciaiuoli', *Bullettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo e Muratoriano* 84 (1972–3), 223–74; C. Coluccia and R. Gualdo, 'Le metamorfosi di Carlo. Il volgarizzamento della *Vita Caroli* di Donato Acciaiuoli', in T. Matarrese and C. Montagnani (eds), *Il principe e la storia* (Novara, 2005), 307–38. Although Verino does not follow Acciaiuoli's *Vita Caroli*, a similar didactic purpose lies behind the presentation of both works. Acciaiuoli claims that he has chosen to write upon Charlemagne's deeds 'as a great example and mirror of virtue for other princes to imitate'. The Italian and Latin texts differ slightly: 'che e' fussi uno essemplo e specchio di virtù, el quale tutti e' principi del mondo riguardassino in ogni loro reggimento publico e privato' (D. Gatti, *La 'Vita Caroli' di Donato Acciaiuoli* (Bologna, 1981), 80); 'ut summum in omni genere virtutis exemplum ante oculos poneretur quem reliqui principes in publicis pariter ac privatis rebus intueri imitarique pro arbitrio possent' (p. 100). See also O.J. Margolis, 'The 'Gallic Crowd' at the 'Aragonese Doors': Donato Acciaiuoli's *Vita Caroli Magni* and the workshop of Vespasiano da Bisticci', *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 17 (2014 (forthcoming)); with thanks to Oren Margolis for providing this article in advance of publication.

[17] For the extensive list of Florentine 'worthies' added in the presentation manuscript for the French king, see Thurn, *Ugolino Verino 'Carlias'* (above, n. 4), 78–92.

[18] M. Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future. A Medieval Study in Historical Thinking* (revised edition; Stroud, 1999), 63.

[19] Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore* (above, n. 18), 69–70.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

thought.[20] She noted: 'There has seldom been in western European history a series of events so widely viewed within the framework of prophetic drama as the Italian expedition of Charles VIII'.[21] For example, in 1494 the vernacular poet Guilloche de Bordeaux had unearthed the Second Charlemagne prophecy and had proclaimed confidently that Charles VIII would conquer Greece and be acclaimed king of the Greeks; conquer the Turks and all barbarians; and that all Christian kings would submit to him.[22] Alessandro Benedetti similarly places the Italian campaign within the context of the contemporary prophecies. At the beginning of his *Diaria de Bello Carolino* Benedetti notes:

> Charles VIII, king of the French, was seized in the twenty-fourth year of his life with a desire for power, and to lend credence to the affair he feigned religious motives and let it be known everywhere that he was preparing a war against the Turks. He even avowed with still greater boldness that certain prophecies were prophecies concerning himself, so that when Spain, Germany and Italy had been vanquished under his auspices Greece, Asia, Syria and Egypt would without hesitation worship him as a god, and that when he had acquired Jerusalem, and laid his crown on the ground, and venerated the tomb of Christ, he would be borne off to heaven a triumphant victor on his last day.[23]

The reworking and dedication of the *Carlias* to Charles VIII therefore must be placed within the framework of the millenarian expectation that surrounded Charles VIII's descent into Italy; his march south towards Naples via Florence, and the projected crusade to liberate Jerusalem.[24]

In this context the frequent references to Butrint take on an additional resonance. The Florentine priest Cristoforo de' Buondelmonti (*c.* 1380/85–*c.* 1430), braving terrible dangers among the barbarous inhabitants of the Greek world, travelled extensively throughout the Aegean islands to record the antiquities associated with the epic journeys described in Homer and Virgil.[25]

[20] M. Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages. A Study in Joachimism* (Oxford, 1969), 354–8.

[21] Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore* (above, n. 18), 85.

[22] Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore* (above, n. 18), 86.

[23] 'Carolus octavus Gallorum rex vigesimum quartum aetatis annum agens regnandi cupidine ductus, ut fidem rebus faceret, simulata religione bellum contra Turcas parare ubique vulgavit et quaedam vaticinia de se ipso augurari confidentius professus est, ita ut eius auspiciis Hispania Germania et Italia perdomita facile Graecia Asia Syria ac Egyptus illum tanquam deum venerarentur et adepta Hierosolyma deposita humi corona sepulchrum Christi veneratus victor triumphans suprema die in coelum raperetur': A. Benedetti, *Diaria de Bello Carolino (Diary of the Caroline War)*, edited with a translation by D.M. Schullian (New York, 1967), 60–1.

[24] Bisaha, *Creating East and West* (above, n. 14), 37–40, but without reference to Butrint. More pertinent in this context is O.J. Margolis, 'The quattrocento Charlemagne: Franco-Florentine relations and the politics of an icon', in M. Gabriele and W. Purkis (eds), *The Many Latin Lives of Charlemagne* (Woodbridge, 2014 (forthcoming)); with thanks to Oren Margolis for providing this article in advance of publication.

[25] In the introduction to his *Geography*, Strabo is at pains to emphasize the use of the poets as a legitimate source for geographical information and that 'Homer is the first geographer' (Strabo, *Geography* 1.1.11).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

He disseminated his observations in two treatises: *Descriptio Insulae Cretae* (*c*. 1417) and *Liber Insularum Archipelagi* (*c*. 1420).[26] The latter was presented to the great Roman book collector, Cardinal Giordano Orsini in a dedication manuscript lavishly illuminated with schematic maps showing the locations of classical ruins (now unfortunately lost). Illustrated redactions of this text were extremely popular and influential throughout the fifteenth century.[27] Although the reference to Butrint in the text is confined to a quotation from Virgil (see below), the illustration of Corfu also features the fortress of Butrint on the Albanian coastline (Fig. 3). Captions supplement the meagre geographical information given in the text. Alternative spellings of the city are noted, the church dedicated to Saint Blaise is highlighted, and the natural surroundings of an oak wood ('dodona silva') and a large river are indicated.

A decade or so after Buondelmonti had toured the Aegean islands, Ciriaco d'Ancona (1391–1452) travelled in the same area.[28] On 26 December 1435 he disembarked at Butrint, made a tour of the site and copied an inscription in Latin (*CIL* III(1) 581) and one in Greek (*CIG* II 1823) from the walls before heading down the coast to Arta, the capital of the court of the Neapolitan prince of Epirus, Carlo II Tocco. As Edward Bodnar noted,

> Carlo II was Duke of Leukas and Zacynthos, vassal of King Ladislao of Naples, who had seized Anatolia, Acarnania, and Aetolia in 1405 and all Epirus in 1418 after the assassination of the Albanian, Mauriskos. His title was *δεσπότης Ῥωμαίων* and his wife (the daughter of Duke Nerio I Acciaiuoli of Athens) was *Βασίλισσα Ῥωμαίων*.

His relations with Florence, presumably through family connections with the Acciaiuoli, were especially good, and Italian merchants were regularly received at his court.[29] Ciriaco toured the Levant throughout the 1440s in a semi-official capacity to confirm the loyalty of the allies in the Crusade of Varna, a last

[26] For Buondelmonti, see R. Weiss, *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 15 (Rome, 1972), 198–200; note also M. Balard, 'Buondelmonti and the Holy War', in R. Gertwagen and E. Jeffreys (eds), *Shipping, Trade and Crusade in the Medieval Mediterranean* (Farnham, 2012), 387–94.

[27] No critical edition as yet exists; for the confusion of the various redactions, see C. Barsanti, 'Costantinopoli e l'Egeo nei primi decenni del XV secolo: la testimonianza di Cristoforo Buondelmonti', *Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale di Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte* 56 (2001), 83–253.

[28] Ciriaco's visit is recorded in a letter to Francesco Crasso sent from Arta, 29 December 1435: 'Atque sponte Corcyram civitatem ipsam quam pestifero morbo laborantem audivimus longe praeter linquendam curavimus et VII Kal(endas) Ian(uarias) Bothrotum antiquam in Epiro Troiani Heleni urbem venimus, ibique natalem humanati Iovis diem, quoniam apud Cassiopen, ut optavimus, colere ad sacram Almae Virginis aedem nequivimus, nautico more celebravimus' (BAV, Ottob. lat. 2967, fol. 31v). Ciriaco's diaries for this voyage survive only in a seventeenth-century edition, see C. Moroni, *Epigrammata Reperta per Illyricum a Cyriaco Anconitano apud Liburniam* (Rome, *c*. 1660); however, Ciriaco's travels for this period have been reconstructed by E.W. Bodnar, 'Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens', *Latomus* 43 (1960). In *To Wake the Dead. A Renaissance Merchant and the Birth of Archaeology* (New York, 2009), Marina Belozerskaya has said that Ciriaco saw 'the surviving triple circuit of walls enclosing the acropolis, the theatre on its southern slope and a few other ruins' (p. 178), without giving any references.

[29] Bodnar, 'Cyriacus of Ancona' (above, n. 28), 28–9, n. 1.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Fig. 3. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Chig. F.V. 110, fol. 2v. © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. *(Reproduced courtesy of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.)*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

attempt to save Constantinople and the remnants of the Byzantine Empire from the Turkish advance.[30] Thus through the 'archaeological' travelogues of Buondelmonti and Ciriaco, the Epirote port had begun to figure in the consciousness of Renaissance Florence as an ancient site of contemporary strategic importance.

CELSAM BUTHROTI ACCEDIMUS URBEM ('WE ARRIVED AT THE LOFTY CITY OF BUTHROTUM') (*AENEID* 3.293): BUTRINT IN VIRGIL'S *AENEID*

More importantly, Butrint had featured significantly in the *Aeneid*, Virgil's great epic on the foundation of Rome.[31] In Book 3 Aeneas arrives at Buthrotum/Butrint to discover that Hector's brother Helenus has married his widowed sister-in-law Andromache and together they have recreated a new Troy, identical in all respects to the city destroyed by the Greeks.[32] At this scale-model Troy, the Trojans not only receive a welcome break from the toil and weariness of their wanderings, but, more importantly, they are reassured in their destiny and future glory. For it is at Buthrotum that the seer Helenus foretells that, although Aeneas and his companions still have far to go, their expedition to Italy eventually will be successful. The sojourn at Butrint thus not only confirms Aeneas's divine mission, but also allows the Trojans to prepare themselves both physically and mentally for the next, and more important, stage of their quest. Butrint serves a similar function in the *Carlias* for both Charlemagne and, by association, Charles VIII. At Butrint Charlemagne's forces rest during the long winter months. More importantly, it is from Butrint that Charlemagne ascends to Heaven to receive divine sanction for his mission, for Butrint is also a gateway to the Underworld.[33] Whereas Helenus can only prophesy in the vaguest terms to Aeneas, Charlemagne has direct confirmation of his success from the throne of God. Butrint's association with Troy also has significance for Charles VIII. For, by selecting Butrint as the first stage of the eastern crusade, the French forces have achieved an immediate success. By

[30] E.W. Bodnar, 'Ciriaco d'Ancona and the Crusade of Varna. A closer look', *Mediaevalia* 14 (1988), 253–80; K.M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204–1571)*, 4 vols (Philadelphia, 1976–84), II, 82–107.

[31] See I. van Ooteghem, 'Énée à Buthrotum', *Les Études Classique* (1937), 8–13; Ugolini, *Butrinto* (above, n. 2); H.L. Tracy, 'Aeneas' visit to Buthrotum', *Échos du Monde Classique* 11 (1967), 1–3; C.F. Taylor, 'Toy Troy. The new perspective of the backward glance', *Vergilius* 16 (1970), 26–8.

[32] See D. Quint, *Epic and Empire. Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton, 1993), 50–65; M. Bettini, 'Ghosts of exile: doubles and nostalgia in Vergil's *parva Troia* (*Aeneid* 3.294ff.)', *Classical Antiquity* 16 (1997), 8–33.

[33] David Bright suggested that this might be due to the proximity of Butrint to classical Acherusia and the site of the Thesprotian Oracle of the Dead at Cichyrus, which Pausanias (1.17.5) proposes as Homer's model for the landscape of the Underworld in the Odyssey; see D.F. Bright, 'Aeneas' other Nekyia', *Vergilius* 27 (1981), 40–7.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

projecting their arrival back in a fantasy of power and triumph, they have revived past glories and retaken Troy, thereby assuring their forthcoming crusade to the Holy Land of success on an epic scale.

There is a faint echo of the classical tradition in the medieval *Song of Roland* (stanza 232), where the Emir assembles a Moorish army from across the Mediterranean, including a battalion of warriors from *Butentrot* (Butrint). Significantly, this *chanson de geste* was cited by Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont (1096), in his appeal to the chivalry of France to follow in the footsteps of Charlemagne and send an army against the forces of Islam. As W.S. Merwin has observed: 'Many of the crusaders who responded to Urban's summons, and many who came later, must have been following an image of themselves which derived, at least in part, from the legendary last battle of the now transfigured Hrouland'.[34]

REFERENCES TO BUTRINT IN VERINO'S *CARLIAS*

Strategically placed on the Albanian coastline, 'lofty Butrint' features at key points throughout the *Carlias*. It seems likely that Verino derived his information from the illustrations in Buondelmonti and Ciriaco d'Ancona's *Commentaria* for the period 1433–43 (now lost). In Book 1 Charlemagne and his companions, having incurred the wrath of Satan on the Aegean sea, are blown ashore at Epirus. A seer suggests that Charlemagne seek out King Justinus, descendant of the eastern empire, at Butrint:

> 'Quare, age, festina muros ac tecta subire
> Butroti, hos supera colles et moenia quaere!'. (Verino, *Carlias* 1.237–8)

('So, come, hurry to the walls and houses of Butrint and cross these hills and make for the city walls!').

On the way to Justinus's court, the Franks are met by ambassadors:

> Tunc senior Polynous doctis oriundus Athenis,
> Eloquio qui clarus erat, sic farier orsus:
> "Terrarum rex certa salus et gloria, Carle,
> Egregium Magni tribuit cui dextera nomen,
> Seu te turbati tempestas horrida ponti
> Appulit invitum Iustini ad littoris oras,
> Eprium seu sponte petis, succede libenter
> Butrotum, ut rebus cari potiaris amici!". (Verino, *Carlias* 1.254–61)

(Then aged Polynous, born in learned Athens, and renowned for his eloquence, thus began to speak: 'The sure salvation and glory of the world, Charles, whose right hand has bestowed

[34] *The Song of Roland*, translated by W.S. Merwin (New York, 2001), xiii.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

upon him the glorious name of 'Great', whether the grim tempest of the raging sea has forced you unwillingly to the shores of Justinus or you are making for Epirus of your own accord, come freely to Butrint and enjoy our hospitality as a dear friend!')

Here Verino has imagined how Charles VIII's new crusading army would be received as they use the city as their winter base before moving on to the Holy Land. When Charlemagne and his companions enter the city, Verino describes the main square:

> Dum sic alternis pubes Butrotia dictis
> Belgarum signat proceres, ad limina ventum est
> Regia. Campus erat medio latissimus urbis
> Marmoreis stratus tegulis, ac plurima circum
> Buxus erat platanusque virens Daphneaque laurus,
> Et late vernis mulcebant questibus auras
> Assuete volucres circumque supraque volare;
> Quin etiam aurato nitidae de fornice lymphae
> Hippocrinei stillabant fluminis instar.
> Editiore loco nascentis lampada Phoebi
> Regia marmoreis spectabat nixa columnis,
> Undique quam Pario cingebat porticus ingens
> Marmore suffulta et paries emblemate pictus. (Verino, *Carlias* 1.302–14)

(While thus the youth of Butrint point out the Belgian princes to each other, they arrive at the royal palace. There was a great wide square in the middle of the city paved with marble slabs, and surrounded by evergreen box, plane trees and Daphnean laurel and far and wide birds were charming the breezes with spring songs as they flew around; in addition, bright fountains were gushing from golden spouts as though from the Hippocrine stream.

On higher ground the rays of the rising sun were illuminating the royal palace built upon marble columns; a great portico, supported by Parian marble, enclosed this on all sides, and its walls were decorated with mosaic.)

Although this description of the royal palace is an epic trope, Verino's hyperbole may have some basis in the texts he had used. Ciriaco took inscriptions from the walls, and the illustration in Buondelmonti suggests a grand edifice dominating the town in this period (Fig. 3). The Franks are royally entertained at Justinus's court. The banquet recalls eastern customs:

> Dixit et ornari lautas sub Apolline mensas
> Innuit aurato tepidisque vaporibus aulam
> Impleri et fumo dispergier atria cedri,
> Qualem vere novo Pancheis saltibus auram
> Sentit Erithreis veniens sulcator ab undis.
> Iussit Oronteas frondes et ligna cremari
> Incendique pyram brumamque evincere flammis.
> Nec mora, luciferos pictis laquearibus ignes
> Suspendunt noctemque procul funalibus arcent;
> Quin et odoratis tepefacta caloribus unda
> Promitur, et manibus pretiosi dantur odores.
> Post niveam Cererem mollique siligine panes
> Apportant famuli, mensaeque onerantur opimae

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Aureaque ad summum Dicteo cymbia Baccho.
Pocula pars nitidis implet cristallina lymphis
Quaesitasque dapes pelago silvasque per omnes.
Ter centum famulae … (Verino, *Carlias* 1.361–77)

(Thus he spoke and gave the signal for the fine tables beneath a golden [statue of] Apollo to be decorated and the room to be filled with warm air and the halls be cleansed with incense, like the breezes from the Panchaean groves in springtime which a sailor returning from the Arabian Gulf inhales. He ordered Syrian boughs and logs to be burned and a roaring fire kindled to dispel the cold. They immediately hang gleaming torches from the painted ceilings and keep the night at bay with chandeliers; warm fragrant water is brought out and expensive perfumes are poured on their hands. Then the servants bring white bread and soft loaves of fine wheat and the sumptuous tables are weighed down and golden goblets are filled to the brim with Cretan wine. Some fill the crystal cups with sparkling water; the banquet has been procured from the ocean and all the forests. Three hundred servants ….)

In general terms, the description of the palace at Butrint and the festivities to welcome Charlemagne and his knights in Book 1 conforms to classical prototypes (usefully, though not exclusively, catalogued by Thurn).[35] Within the poem the palace also contrasts with the description of other palaces (for example, Pluto's palace in Book 6 and the description of Heaven in Book 8). An exclusively allegorical reading, which Thurn suggested, divorces the poem, and the sumptuous manuscript for Charles VIII, from its immediate historical context. Books 2–4 are recounted in flashback as Charlemagne narrates their previous adventures. In Book 5 the Franks repair their fleet during the winter months and entertain themselves by hunting in the wooded countryside around Butrint (again perhaps suggested by Buondelmonti's illustrations and Ciriaco's repeated references to Dodona):[36]

Fontibus irriguo centenis silva Talaro
Monte fuit semper florentibus horrida ramis. (Verino, *Carlias* 5.52–3)

(There was a wood on mount Talarus watered with a hundred streams and always bristling with flowering branches.)[37]

Epic games are held in the city also. Again, Verino specifies the location at Butrint. In this case a Greek theatre (supposedly witnessed by Ciriaco, though see below):

Francorum interea iuvenes Argivaque pubes
Venerat ad ludos. Locus est celeberrimus urbis,
Quem nostri circum, Grai dixere theatrum,

---

35 See n. 4.

36 'Provehimur inde remis, et nostrum ad iter die, noctuque placidi Neptuni liquidum sulcando campum Dodonaea secus littora Bargam, Phanarium Arnatiumque vidimus, et ad quintum denique Kalendas Ianuarii diem Dodonaeam ipsam venimus magnam, et nobilissimam Sylvam'; Bodnar, 'Cyriacus of Ancona' (above, n. 28), 28.

37 Pliny, *Natural History* 4.2: 'Talarus mons, centum fontibus circa radices Theopompo celebratu'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Marmore quod Pario forma cinxere rotunda.
Bis septem posuere gradus partisque supernae
Liquerunt spatium, praetores unde solebant
Aedilesque simul ludos spectare curules.
Inferior campus fuerat substratus arenis:
Illic Sparthano celebrabant more palestram
Uncti oleo iuvenes Danai, nec turpe dabatur,
Quod permixta viris sine vestibus horrida Martis
Virgo exerceret populi spectante corona
Proelia. Perfecto victrix certamine primae
Ingenti applausu capiebat premia sortis. (Verino, *Carlias* 5.233–46)

(Meanwhile the Frankish young men and the Argive youth assembled for the games. There is a very famous place in the city which we call a 'circus', the Greeks call a 'theatre', which they have girt with Parian marble in the form of a circle.[38] They made fourteen stepped seats with a place at the top reserved for the praetors and the curule aediles to watch the games.[39] The lower part had been covered with sand. The Greek youth, covered in oil, were using that place for wrestling in the Spartan fashion, and it was not considered indecent for a girl to join in with the men, without clothes, and perform the grim battles of Mars with a crowd of people watching.[40] When the first heat was completed a victorious girl took the prizes for the competition to great applause.)

When the games finish, the shade of Charlemagne's father Pepin appears to remind his son that his destiny will be explained after a visit through the Underworld, Purgatory and Paradise. With trepidation Charlemagne begins his search for the entrance to the Underworld and his descent begins:

Nec procul hinc Graio cognomine tristis Aornos
Exhalat diram horrendo fetore mephitim.
Proxima pestiferis Acherusia prosilit undis,
Quae Stigias intrat valles nigramque paludem
Auget et infernas non uno gurgite sedes
Circinat et caelum nebuloso sulphure ledit. (Verino, *Carlias* 5.485–90)

(And not far from here sad Aornos with a Greek surname exhales dire malaria with horrid stench. Nearby the Acherusian swamp gushes forth with its pestilential waters and enters the Stygian valley and fills the dark marsh and encircles the infernal seat with many whirlpools and poisons the air with clouds of sulphur.)[41]

[38] Here Verino may be attempting also to explain and differentiate the reference *theatri circus* ('the circle of a theatre'), the site of the foot-race in the Sicilian games at Virgil, *Aeneid* 5.288–9.

[39] Note that the number of stepped seats has been reduced here from eighteen to fourteen (not noted in the critical apparatus of Thurn, *Ugolino Verino 'Carlias'* (above, n. 4)). In an autograph manuscript dated December 1480 the line reads: 'ter senos posuere gradus ac desuper ingens / Liquerunt spatium praetores unde solebant' (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, codex Magliabecchianus, II, II, 94, fol. 46v).

[40] The reference to Spartan girls training with the men may echo Propertius 3.14.1–16.

[41] 'Aornos with a Greek surname', Greek Ἄορνος meaning 'without birds' because it was believed that the poisonous emissions from the Underworld were so noxious that they overwhelmed birds

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

As Charlemagne descends from Paradise at the end of Book 8, Butrint is mentioned for the last time in a line that deliberately recalls Virgil's famous description of the city:

> Rex iter accelerans per inhospita saxa Chimere
> Sub lucem celsi Butroti ad moenia tendit. (Verino, *Carlias* 8.901–2)

(The king hastens his journey through the inhospitable rocks of Mount Chimaera and by dawn's early light heads towards the walls of lofty Butrint.)[42]

Verino has not only recast Charles VIII's projected crusade in epic terms that recall Aeneas's divine mission and Charlemagne's real and legendary achievements, but has also, by placing particular emphasis on Butrint, suggested to the French king how the campaign can be played out in restored Angevin territory as the army proceeds across to Greece. For, by remodelling his epic with a dedication to Charles VIII, it seems that Verino, like many of his Florentine contemporaries in the circle of Savonarola, envisaged the young king's Italian adventure as the first step in a war for the salvation of Christendom. Nor was this the first time that Verino had re-presented his poem in this way. As Francesco Bausi has noted, an earlier redaction of the *Carlias* (dated 11 September 1481; now Bibliothèque Nationale de France Lat. 10324) was probably inspired by the fall of Otranto to the Turks in August 1480 and the Aragonese counter-offensive to retake the city.[43]

BUTRINT IN 1493: BETWEEN HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY (Fig. 4)

As we have noted above, Butrint's fame owed much to Virgil and the poet's association with Octavian (later the Emperor Augustus) and his circle, in particular Octavian's great general, Agrippa, who masterminded the victory over Mark Antony at Actium in 31 BC.[44] Butrint prospered because Agrippa's

flying overhead; the 'Acherusian swamp' may thus, in fact, refer to the marshland to the south of Butrint and close to Parga, through which the present river Acheron flows to reach the Ionian sea.

[42] Mount Chimaera in ancient Lycia was notable for volcanic phenomena; see Servius on *Aen.* 6.288; however, the reference again may be suggested by Ciriaco's letter: 'Inde Catharum, Ulciniumque venimus, et tandem amisso Dyrrachio XII Kal(endas) Ianuarias Chimerium superavimus, quod nobile apud Epirum Neptuni Promontorium vestibulum ad Illyrici sinus fauces nautae Linguam vocant [...] linquimus Linguae porticulum, et nostrum per iter Orientem versus Chimeri montis littora radimus'; Bodnar, 'Cyriacus of Ancona' (above, n. 28), 28.

[43] He has noted further that 'la *Carliade* è un testo interamente segnato da fortissime istanze anti-musulmane e percorso da un vero e proprio spirit da 'crociata'': F. Bausi, 'La *Carlias* di Ugolino Verino', in M. Villoresi, *Paladini in carta. Il modello cavalleresco fiorentino* (Florence, 2006), 161–73, esp. p. 164.

[44] I.L. Hansen, 'Between Atticus and Aeneas: the making of a colonial elite at Roman Butrint', in R. Sweetman (ed.), *Roman Colonies in the First Century of their Foundation* (Oxford, 2011), 85–100.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

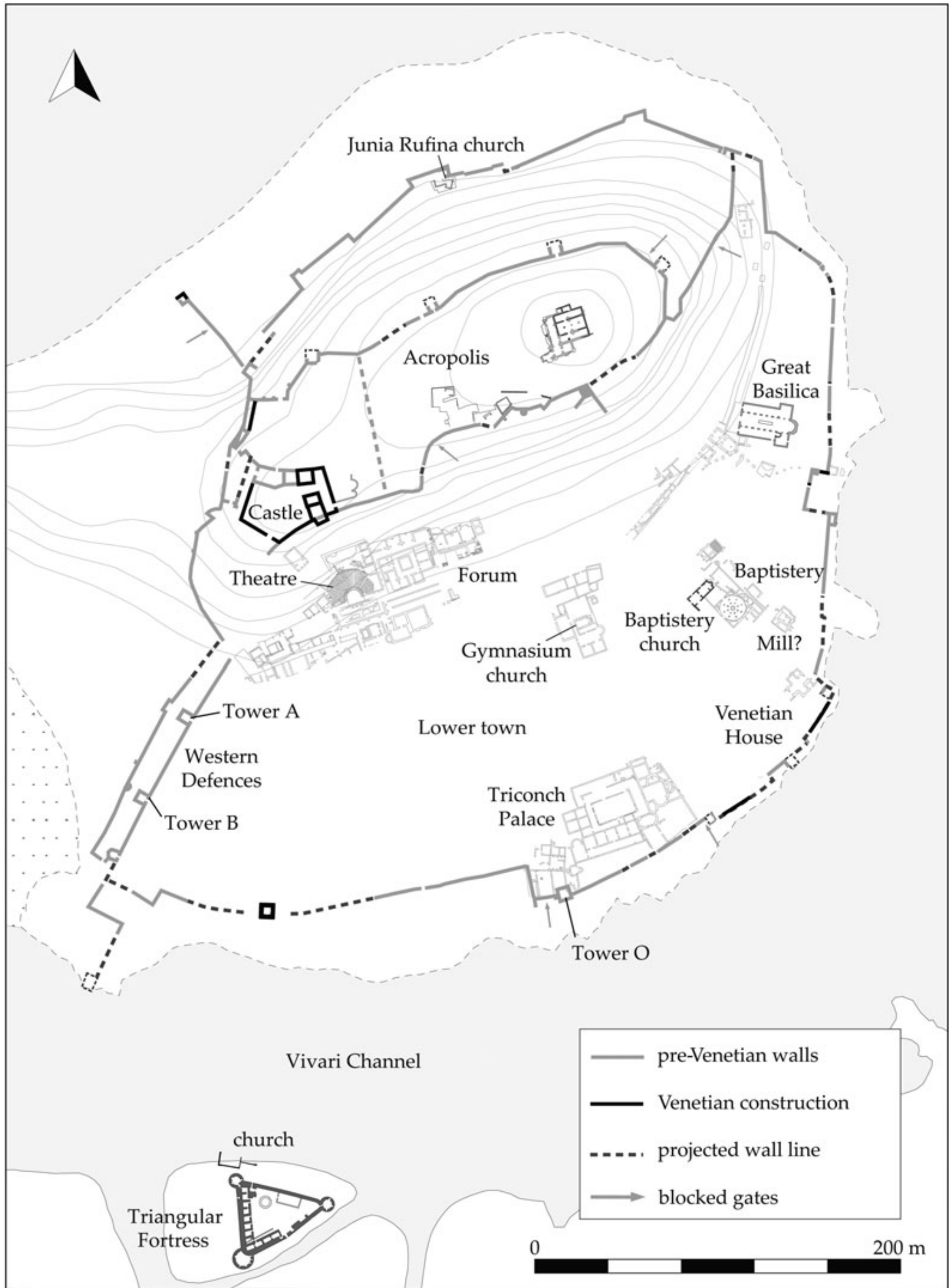

Fig. 4. Plan of Butrint in Venetian times. *(Reproduced courtesy of the Butrint Foundation.)*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

father-in-law, Titus Pomponius Atticus, had a large estate nearby and was himself closely associated with the fortunes of this small Epirote sanctuary-port in the late first century BC. Octavian supported Butrint's transformation into a colony, and this probably influenced Virgil's decision to reference the place in Aeneas's journey to Rome.[45] The urban footprint of this small, new colony certainly influenced the pattern of development here until the later fourth century, at which time, after suffering severe earthquakes, the port began to increase in size and wealth.[46] But after the mid-sixth century, in common with many Mediterranean ports, it shrunk to be little more than the home of a Byzantine administrator. The new medieval town owes its origin to the rise of Byzantine commercial interests in the Adriatic sea in the early eleventh century.[47] Surprisingly little of the Roman urban fabric survived because of dramatic changes in the water-table, compelling the community to raise the ground level with deep terracing. In AD 1204 the Byzantine town was conquered by members of the Fourth Crusade, which led to further renewal under, initially, the Epirote Despots, then the Angevins. By the fourteenth century the town had become vulnerable to intermittent Albanian attacks, and its commercial viability accordingly was depressed.

As we have mentioned already, in 1386, just after the death of Charles III of Anjou (king of Naples and Sicily), the Republic of Venice purchased Butrint, together with the island and fortress of Corfu, from the Angevin kings. The main concern of Venice in this transaction was safeguarding its Adriatic trade-route from the dangers posed by the rapidly expanding Ottoman Empire.[48] As to Butrint itself, a Venetian document described it as Corfu's 'protector and right eye' (*tutela et occhio dextro*),[49] or as Peter Soustal put it, '… the bridgehead to the mainland opposite Corfu'.[50] The Venetian territories included the ancient port and its fisheries, with a belt of other Epirote coastal places extending down to Parga. The Venetians appointed a *castellanus* as governor for the *castro de Butrinto* among the citizens of Corfu. But Butrint was not a viable town by this time. Fifty years before the sale to the Venetians, the town's bishop had moved to Glyki (100 km to the south). The main reason was the Albanian incursions, forerunners of Ottoman attacks, which were now constant. Almost at once the Venetian investment went into strengthening the old fortifications. So, within an Adriatic sea context, Butrint was probably the smallest of several enclaves on the Balkan coast that at this time comprised Ragusa (Dubrovnik) and Cattaro (Kotor).[51]

45 Hansen, 'Between Atticus and Aeneas' (above, n. 44).
46 R. Hodges, *Eternal Butrint* (London, 2006).
47 R. Hodges, *Byzantine Butrint* (London, 2008).
48 P. Soustal, 'The historical sources for Butrint in the Middle Ages', in R. Hodges, W. Bowden and K. Lako (eds), *Byzantine Butrint* (Oxford, 2004), 24.
49 Soustal, 'The historical sources' (above, n. 48), 26.
50 Soustal, 'The historical sources' (above, n. 48), 25.
51 J. Haldon, *The Palgrave Atlas of Byzantine History* (Basingstoke, 2005), map 10.4.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Over the following century, most of the sources describe efforts to safeguard Butrint's fishing grounds by repairs to its defences, especially of the castle on the Acropolis, which was apparently in a bad condition.[52] Parallel to this increasing dereliction, paradoxically, Butrint's historical status was gaining greater currency. As we have seen, in the early fifteenth century the Florentine, Cristoforo de' Buondelmonti associated Butrint with Virgil. This association almost certainly attracted the attentions of the humanist and antiquarian, Ciriaco d'Ancona, who visited what he termed the city of Trojan Helenus in search of antiquities in December 1435 (see above, p. 208). Unfortunately, any detailed descriptions that Ciriaco may have made, like those of Buondelmonti, have been lost. Certainly at this time, Butrint was considered a frontier zone, under constant threat of attack by the Albanians and then the Ottomans. Records of repairs to the old defences exist for 1470, 1474 and 1494, in the latter two cases after damage caused by the Turks. These small-scale incursions were dwarfed by the passage of Suleiman the Magnificent's siege army, which camped at Butrint in August 1537 before crossing to Corfu. This siege, and indeed the next great Ottoman siege of Corfu in 1715, was repelled at great cost,[53] and each time the Venetians boldly returned to Butrint, to manage its lucrative fishing grounds. Indeed, it was the French, not the Ottomans, who eventually prised the Venetians from Butrint (and Corfu), following the Treaty of Campo Formio in 1797.

The texts, then, mostly concern details of Butrint's defences. Yet few places in the central Mediterranean possess a better archaeological record for this period, thanks to the large-scale excavations of the Italian Archaeological Mission led by Luigi Maria Ugolini (1928–41) and the recent programme of investigations of the Butrint Foundation (1994–2012).[54] These shed light on Verino's epic in some unexpected ways.

The archaeology of Butrint and its environs tends to confirm the historical picture of Butrint as a town falling into ruin yet defiantly resisting the Ottomans in the early Venetian period.[55] Much as Ciriaco indicated, the town was largely abandoned by this time. Only the defensive works were maintained because of the wealth of its fishing grounds. The small castle at the western end of the acropolis was enlarged and strengthened in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with additional outworks intended to resist cannon fire.[56] This was quite unlike the place Verino, for example, conveys in the *Carlias*.

---

[52] Soustal, 'The historical sources' (above, n. 48), 26; R. Andrews, W. Bowden, O. Gilkes and S. Martin, 'The late antique and medieval fortifications of Butrint', in Hodges, Bowden and Lako (eds) *Byzantine Butrint* (above, n. 48), 145; S. Davies, 'Late Venetian Butrint: 16th–18th centuries', in I.L. Hansen, R. Hodges and S. Leppard (eds), *Butrint* 4. *The Archaeology and Histories of an Ionian Town* (Oxford, 2012), 280–8.

[53] N. Stamatopoulos, *Old Corfu. History and Culture* (Corfu, 1993), 41–7.

[54] Hodges, *Eternal Butrint* (above, n. 46).

[55] A. Crowson, *Venetian Butrint* (London, 2007).

[56] S. Greenslade, S. Leppard and M. Logue, 'The acropolis of Butrint reassessed', in Hansen, Hodges and Leppard (eds), *Butrint* 4 (above, n. 52), 69–71.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Marble columns, even reused ones, were definitely absent. The most that can be said is that the accommodation in the main tower was almost certainly improved by the insertion of a fine trifora window at this time.[57] Everywhere else the building techniques continued local traditions of earlier periods, using roughly hewn limestone of different dimensions with smaller stones and tile fragments, though cut stone was employed often for the construction of wall corners.

Meanwhile, over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Butrint's dilapidated outer ring of defences was also strengthened.[58] Excavations at Tower O, attached to the wall-circuit beside the Vivari channel, showed that this was now the only residence in the area of the old (late Roman) Triconch Palace. Its occupants were almost certainly cultivating small allotments within the ruins of the earlier Roman and medieval dwellings.[59] Other towers in the wall-circuit were also refurbished and reoccupied at this time, notably both of the excavated towers (A and B) in the Western Defences (Fig. 4).[60]

The most prominent addition to strengthen Butrint's defences was the construction between 1490 and 1540 of the Triangular Fortress on the south side of the Vivari channel, directly opposite the lower town. Nowadays one can still observe a small stone carving of a lion's head, probably the lion of Saint Mark and the symbol of Venice, at an apex of an arch in the interior of the Triangular Fortress.[61] With this new bulwark, both sides of the waterway connecting the Straits of Corfu to Lake Butrint and the precious fish weirs installed here were protected.

Like the defences, the early Venetian history of Butrint's churches was one of repair and make-do. The only church constructed at this time — if the apsed building recorded here in the nineteenth century was in fact a church — was immediately alongside the Triangular Fortress on the very edge of the Vivari channel.[62] In the lower town, with the departure of Butrint's bishop to Glyki in the fourteenth century, the Great Basilica, while not abandoned, was certainly not repaired.[63] As for the smaller churches within the old urban wall-circuit,

[57] N. Molla, M.F. Paris and F. Venturini, 'Material boundaries: the city walls at Butrint', in Hansen, Hodges and Leppard (eds), *Butrint* 4 (above, n. 52), 274.
[58] Andrews *et al.*, 'The late antique and medieval fortifications' (above, n. 52), 143–5, fig. 8.25; Molla, Paris and Venturini, 'Material boundaries' (above, n. 57), 274–5, fig. 14.12.
[59] W. Bowden, A. Crowson, M. Logue and A. Sebastiani, 'The medieval occupation of the Merchant's House', in W. Bowden and R. Hodges (eds), *Butrint* 3. *Excavations at the Triconch Palace* (Oxford, 2011), 203–30, at pp. 223–8.
[60] S. Kamani, 'The Western Defences', in Hansen, Hodges and Leppard (eds), *Butrint* 4 (above, n. 52), 254.
[61] Andrews *et al.*, 'The late antique and medieval fortifications' (above, n. 52), 145, fig. 8.26.
[62] See Henry Cook's nineteenth-century drawing: S. Martin, 'The topography of Butrint', in Hodges, Bowden and Lako (eds), *Byzantine Butrint* (above, n. 48), fig. 6.23; and Ugolini's photograph from the 1930s: Andrews *et al.*, 'The late antique and medieval fortifications' (above, n. 52), fig. 8.26.
[63] Molla, Paris and Venturini, 'Material boundaries' (above, n. 57).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

most were probably maintained on a small scale, but evidence of this exists only for the church immediately to the north of the late antique Baptistery, where a bell-tower and a resurfaced atrium were added at this date.[64] A similar bell-tower, dismantled by the Italian Archaeological Mission in the 1930s, had existed close by at the 'Gymnasium church',[65] so this thirteenth- to fourteenth-century church may have been maintained also in Venetian times. A third church, tucked inside a postern gate located beside the well-head shrine of Junia Rufina, had fallen into disrepair, but the well-head was crudely modified and maintained, and the church remained in use until the fifteenth or sixteenth century and possibly later.[66] A comparable well-head that had been a major feature of the Hellenistic and Roman forum was still in use, but again its architectural setting was now crudely makeshift.[67] As for fountains, none of Roman date survived in operation. So while the importance of earlier shrines and the healing powers of Butrint's waters were apparently recognized, all semblance of maintenance virtually ceased by the fifteenth century.

Strikingly few dwellings occupied the slopes or lower girth of the ancient site by 1490. By this time, for example, the medieval stone dwellings in the area of the old Roman Forum and the adjacent south-facing slope of the lower town were deserted. The same situation was found beside the Vivari channel. In fact, much of this lower-lying sector of the lower town, regularly inundated with water in the winter, had been abandoned since the fourteenth century. There is no archaeological evidence of a square or piazza, or indeed roads. Two substantial buildings in the lower town, however, exist in ruins to this day. The largest and most elaborate is located on the channel side, and appears to be a Venetian house. The house comprises a half-submerged cross-vaulted cellar with an adjoining barrel-vaulted room and living quarters on the first floor.[68] (This building was interpreted as a church by Ugolini in the 1930s.)[69] The second building is located slightly to the north, adjacent to the late antique Baptistery, and appears to have been industrial rather than domestic in function. Its interior is heavily water-worn, and it is possible that it may have functioned as a mill, although how such a building would have been supplied with water is unknown.

Most of the ancient town was not visible, *contra* Verino's compelling account. In particular, the Hellenistic and Roman theatre long since had been covered by a

---

[64] W. Bowden and L. Përzhita, 'The baptistery', in Hodges, Bowden and Lako (eds), *Byzantine Butrint* (above, n. 48), 199.

[65] W. Bowden and J. Mitchell, 'The christian topography of Butrint', in Hodges, Bowden and Lako (eds), *Byzantine Butrint* (above, n. 48), 114, fig. 7.16.

[66] A. Sebastiani, D. Gooney, J. Mitchell, P. Papadopoulou, P. Reynolds, E. Vaccaro and J. Vroom, 'The medieval church and cemetery at the Well of Junia Rufina', in Hansen, Hodges and Leppard (eds), *Butrint* 4 (above, n. 52), 214–44.

[67] Thanks to David Hernandez for drawing our attention to an unpublished photograph taken during excavations in about 1982, now in the Institute of Archaeology, Tirana.

[68] Martin, 'The topography of Butrint' (above, n. 62), fig. 6:22.

[69] Martin, 'The topography of Butrint' (above, n. 62), 99.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Fig. 5. View of the excavations of the theatre in 1928 showing the deep colluvium overlying the well-preserved Hellenistic and Roman seating. *(Reproduced courtesy of the Institute of Archaeology, Tirana.)*

deep colluvium, and its location was unknown (Fig. 5).[70] (When Ugolini began the excavations in 1928 that uncovered the theatre, he initially believed it to be a Roman bath-house.)[71] No trace of the putative amphitheatre or circus where Saint Terinus was apparently martyred during the reign of the Emperor Dacius (249–51) has been found. If it existed, it was most probably a timber construction outside Butrint, and therefore long since had disappeared by the Venetian era.

In contrast to this picture of martial defiance and dereliction, the material finds (especially the pottery) from the Venetian era offer insights about the dining culture — and indeed the identity — of the town's inhabitants.[72] The ceramics from early Venetian Butrint are strikingly rich, and, along with food residues, shed light upon the culinary behaviour of its embattled citizens. The bulk of the ceramics comes from the gardens around Tower O, overlying the remains of the

[70] See, in particular, L. Miraj, 'Ugolini and Aeneas: the story of the excavation of the theatre at Butrint', in O.J. Gilkes (ed.), *The Theatre at Butrint* (London, 2003), fig. 2.6.

[71] J. Wilkes, 'The Greek and Roman theatres of Butrint: a commentary and reassessment', in Gilkes (ed.), *The Theatre at Butrint* (above, n. 70), 107–79, at p. 107 and fig. 6.3.

[72] J. Vroom, 'The Morea and its links with southern Italy after AD 1204: ceramics and identity', *Archeologia Medievale* 38 (2011), 409–30; J. Vroom, *The Medieval and Post-medieval Ceramics from the Triconch Place in Butrint* (forthcoming).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Triconch Palace and its medieval occupants; other material was found in Towers A and B, as well as in other small excavations on the Acropolis and in the lower town.[73]

Among the imported wares in the pottery assemblages from the Triconch Palace are many fragments of blue-and-white maiolica jugs from Italy with trefoil-mouth rims and knife-trimmed disc bases with flat undersides.[74] It is clear, though, that the majority of the finds consists of fragments with a 'ladder medallion design' painted in blue. This type of painted decoration (*medaglione a scaletta*) is common on Italian maiolica jugs of the so-called *stile severo* from central and northern Italy (Fig. 6).[75] The fragments found at Butrint probably come from Emilia Romagna (or from Faenza in particular), and generally can be dated to the (late) fifteenth/first half of the sixteenth century.[76]

The excavations in Butrint also yielded a lavishly coloured type of maiolica that is typical of sixteenth-century northern Italy and is known as *maioliche policrome rinascimentali*.[77] Of special interest among the finds of this ware are some body fragments of a jug with a painted lion as decoration on the outside (Fig. 7).[78] This could be a depiction of the lion of Saint Mark, representing the Venetian Republic, as such images of lions are known to occur quite frequently on ceramics in areas under Venetian domination in post-medieval times.[79] Undoubtedly, their purpose was to underline the extent of the authority of Venice in this period.

In addition, the imported table-wares include variants of maiolica in a colourful style decorated in blue with red, green or yellow. Among these are pieces of *maioliche 'gotico-floreali'* from central Italy dating to the late fifteenth/ early sixteenth century.[80] It is possible that these sherds are from vessels

---

[73] See, for instance, J. Vroom, 'Corfu's right eye: Venetian pottery in Butrint (Albania)', in M. Guštin, S. Gelichi and K. Spindler (eds), *The Heritage of the Serenissima. The Presentation of the Architectural and Archaeological Remains of the Venetian Republic* (Koper, 2006), 229–36.

[74] For example J. Vroom, 'The medieval and post-medieval finewares and cooking wares from the Triconch Palace and the Baptistery', in Hodges, Bowden and Lako (eds), *Byzantine Butrint* (above, n. 48), figs 15.4 and 15.29; see also Vroom, 'Corfu's right eye' (above, n. 73), fig. 9; J. Vroom, *Byzantine to Modern Pottery in the Aegean. An Introduction and Field Guide* (Utrecht, 2005), 146–7.

[75] Vroom, 'The medieval and post-medieval finewares' (above, n. 74), figs 15.4 and 15.29; Vroom, 'Corfu's right eye' (above, n. 73), fig. 9. See also E. D'Amico, 'The excavation of UTS 161. The pottery', in S. Gelichi and M. Guštin (eds), *Stari Bar. The Archaeological Project 2004. Preliminary Report* (Florence, 2005), 69, pl. 6.29.

[76] Cf. D. Ciminale, 'Lecce nel XVI secolo e l'Isola del governatore: i materiali ceramici', in L. Giardino, P. Arthur and G.-P. Ciongoli (eds), *Lecce. Frammenti di storia urbana. Tesori archeologici sotto la Banca d'Italia* (Bari, 2006), 102, pl. XXXIV.3 and n. 31.

[77] Vroom, 'Corfu's right eye' (above, n. 73), figs 10–11.

[78] See also J. Vroom, 'Küthaya between the lines: post-medieval ceramics as historical information', in S. Davies and J.L. Davis (eds), *Between Venice and Istanbul. Colonial Landscapes in Early Modern Greece* (Princeton, 2007), 80–1, fig. 4.10.

[79] Vroom, 'Küthaya between the lines' (above, n. 78), 81.

[80] Vroom, 'The medieval and post-medieval finewares' (above, n. 74), fig. 15.5.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Fig. 6. Butrint, Triconch Palace: fragments of blue-and-white maiolica jugs from northern Italy. *(Photo: J. Vroom; reproduced courtesy of the Butrint Foundation.)*

manufactured in Montelupo, a pottery centre near Florence, because the painted designs on the Butrint sherds look similar to those on the late fifteenth-century production of this town, some of which carry exotic names such as 'Valencia leaf' (*alla foglia valenciana*) and 'Eye of the peacock's feather' (*occhio della penna di pavone*) (Fig. 8).[81]

The Triconch Palace excavations yielded many fragments of two types of monochrome glazed dishes or bowls with a ring foot, probably produced in southern Italian workshops. One type has a ribbed exterior upper part; the other type possesses an everted flanged rim. Both types are covered with a dark green or pale green lead glaze. The calcareous fabric of both types could be Apulian. In fact, the shape of the first type is very similar to late fifteenth-century dishes (the so-called *bacini a 'doppio bagno'*) from Apulia — although the excavated examples from the Triconch Palace are not double dipped in glaze like the Apulian vessels.[82]

[81] F. Berti, *Il museo della ceramica di Montelupo. Storia, tecnologia, collezioni / The Ceramics Museum of Montelupo. History, Technology, Collections* (Florence, 2008), 256–8, figs 16a–f, pp. 265–8, figs 20a–e.

[82] C. Castronovi and P. Tagliente, 'Ceramica a 'doppio bagno' nel Salento', *Quaderni del Museo della Ceramica di Cutrofiano* 3 (1998), fig. 3 nos. 2–3, figs 11–13; P. Tagliente, 'Lecce: uno scarico di fornaci della fine del Quattrocento. Primi dati', *Archeologia Medievale* 29 (2002), fig. 2 nos. 3–6, fig. 3 nos. 1–4; see also D'Amico, 'The excavation of UTS 161' (above, n. 75), pl. 6.6, no. 1054.4 for a similar bowl with ribbed exterior part from Stari Bar, dated AD 1425–75.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Fig. 7. Butrint: the image of a lion (the 'lion of Saint Mark') on sherds of a maiolica jug found during excavations in the lower city. *(Photo: J. Vroom; reproduced courtesy of the Butrint Foundation.)*

Furthermore, a few fragments were found of late types of painted and *sgraffito* wares from southern Apulia. These include a sherd of late 'RMR ware' of the (late) fifteenth/sixteenth century, which is painted in pale green and brown, in a form resembling RMR ware vessels from the Basilicata region.[83] Another fragment is of the so-called 'RMR graffita' or 'protograffita' group, essentially a transitional type of RMR ware from the Salento region of Apulia, and has incised decoration as well as painted designs in red, green and brown. Dating to the (late) fifteenth century, this type is known from Lecce, Galatone, Muro Leccese, Otranto and Cutrifiano.[84] Sherds of three small bowls with a straight rim and a flat base covered with a white slip and a pale yellow glaze on the interior and upper part of the exterior also seem to be Apulian. These probably can be dated to between the late fourteenth/fifteenth and the late fifteenth centuries.

[83] Cf. M.R. Salvatore, 'La ceramica altomedievale nell'Italia meridionale: stato e prospettive della ricerca', *Archeologia Medievale* 11 (1984), pl. 192, nos. 28–9 for the shape; Tagliente, 'Lecce' (above, n. 82), 548–51.

[84] Tagliente, 'Lecce' (above, n. 82), 552–4.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Fig. 8. Butrint, Triconch Palace: fragment of maiolica *gotico-floreale* manufactured in Montelupo in central Italy. *(Photo: J. Vroom; reproduced courtesy of the Butrint Foundation.)*

The study of these ceramics raises important issues about the culinary culture at Butrint in the early Venetian period.[85] Ceramic amphorae as well as coarse domestic wares are virtually absent in the Triconch Palace pottery assemblages. The analyses show that the proportion of coarse-wares in the early Venetian period compared to coarse-wares in the late medieval period appears to drop from about 18.7% to a mere 3.7% (Fig. 9).[86] One possible explanation for this is that from the later fourteenth century onwards there was a greater use of metal vessels (such as cauldrons) for cooking and boiling, as well as wooden barrels or casks. Written sources reveal that cooking pots made of bronze and iron (for easy cleaning) were becoming the commonest utensils in the kitchen. Furthermore, wood was suitable for barrels and casks (transport and storage), as well as for bowls, platters and spoons (food preparation), while stone was used for querns, mortars and pestles.[87]

[85] Vroom, *The Medieval and Post-medieval Ceramics* (above, n. 72).

[86] These proportions are visible also in Renaissance wells in northwestern Europe, where half of the objects unearthed were meant for use on the table rather than for meal production; see, for instance, J. Veeckman, 'Een waterput in het Groot Sarazijnshoofd in de Antwerpse Hoogstraat', *Berichten en Rapporten over het Antwerps Bodemonderzoek en Monumentenzorg* (*BRABOM*) 1 (1996), 58–9, fig. 9.

[87] R. Weinstein, 'Kitchen chattels: the evolution of familiar objects 1200–1700', in *The Cooking Pot. Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery, 1988* (London, 1989), 168.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

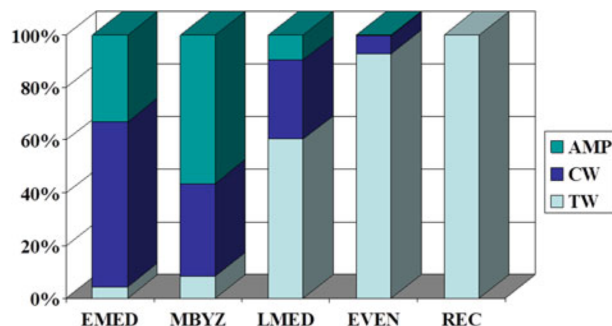

Fig. 9. Butrint, Triconch Palace: percentages of ceramic finds per function from early Byzantine to more recent times. *(J. Vroom.)*
Key: EMED = early medieval period; MBYZ = middle Byzantine period; LMED = late medieval period; EVEN = early Venetian period; REC = recent; AMP = amphorae; CW = coarse-ware; TW = table-ware.

By contrast, the percentages of glazed table-wares (especially open shapes) increased during the early Venetian period (later fourteenth to mid-sixteenth centuries), as can be seen in the large amounts of ceramics from the Triconch Palace and Merchant's House in Butrint (Figs 9–10). During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, for example, the inhabitants crammed inside and near Tower O were eating off polychrome sgraffito dishes and bowls with a simple or flanged rim. These were mostly imported from northern Italy (mainly from the Veneto and Emilia Romagna regions) (Fig. 11).

Accompanying these dishes and bowls were tin-glazed (maiolica) jugs and dishes intended for small group dining.[88] These tin-glazed ceramics have a smooth, glossy opaque surface with painted colourful designs in a fashionable style, such as flowers, portraits or animals. The various shapes of maiolica imply a range of food presented to diners, with separate vessels for special dishes. In addition, the Triconch Palace pottery assemblage includes glazed small bowls/cups with a simple rim or an everted rim, which were used for serving small quantities of food or semi-liquids, and glazed jugs with a trefoil mouth-rim and a flat disc-base for serving liquids. The latter might have been used in many ways, including the fetching and carrying of water, and the keeping of other liquids such as wine or milk. However, the (often) elaborate decoration on these jugs suggests their use at a dining table rather than in food preparation in the kitchen.

A remarkable aspect of the Butrint finds is the high percentage of coloured table-wares in the early Venetian period (Fig. 12).[89] The percentage of monochrome glazed wares in one colour far exceeds those of any other period. One reason for the growing inclination to eat from monochrome glazed table

[88] J. Vroom, *After Antiquity. Ceramics and Society in the Aegean from the 7th to the 20th Century A.C. A Case Study from Boeotia, Central Greece* (Leiden, 2003), 350–1.
[89] Cf. for the use of colour in late medieval table-wares found in Butrint, Vroom, 'The Morea and its links' (above, n. 72), 425–6, figs 20–1.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

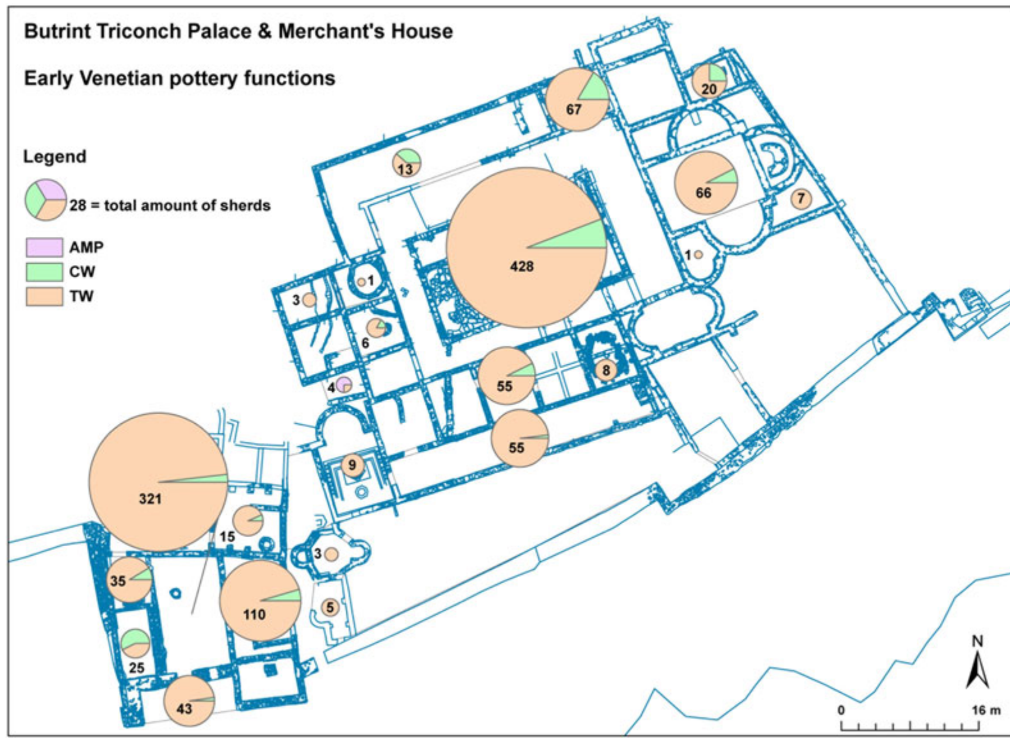

Fig. 10. Butrint, Triconch Palace and Merchant's House: distribution of ceramic finds per function in the early Venetian period. *(J. Vroom.)*
Key: AMP = amphorae; CW = coarse-ware; TW = table-ware.

utensils was the belief that the copper in the polychrome glazes gave the food a bad taste. Another explanation is that in an age when pestilence was a constant peril, the serving of food in a clear, hygienic form was considered reassuring. Another aspect of this approach to hygiene was for each diner to have a separate ceramic bowl or dish for each course.[90] Of course, this elaborate changing of plates at the dining table required more varied table services, hence perhaps the volume of broken wares in the rubbish scattered around the tower. Nevertheless, older drinking traditions continued: the Triconch Palace finds indicate that the defenders of Butrint drank a diluted wine from maiolica jugs served in delicate Venetian glasses, shared by several diners at the table (Figs 13–14). Indeed, a transparent wine-glass with a long delicate stem, which looks similar to the *cristallo* ones found in Butrint, can be seen in the hand of a diner or servant on a Renaissance icon from nearby Corfu (Fig. 15). He holds the glass at the base and not at the stem or cup, thus displaying a typical western drinking habit, favoured by the upper classes in this period of time.[91]

[90] Vroom, *After Antiquity* (above, n. 88), table 13.1.
[91] Vroom, *After Antiquity* (above, n. 88), 350, fig. 12.6.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

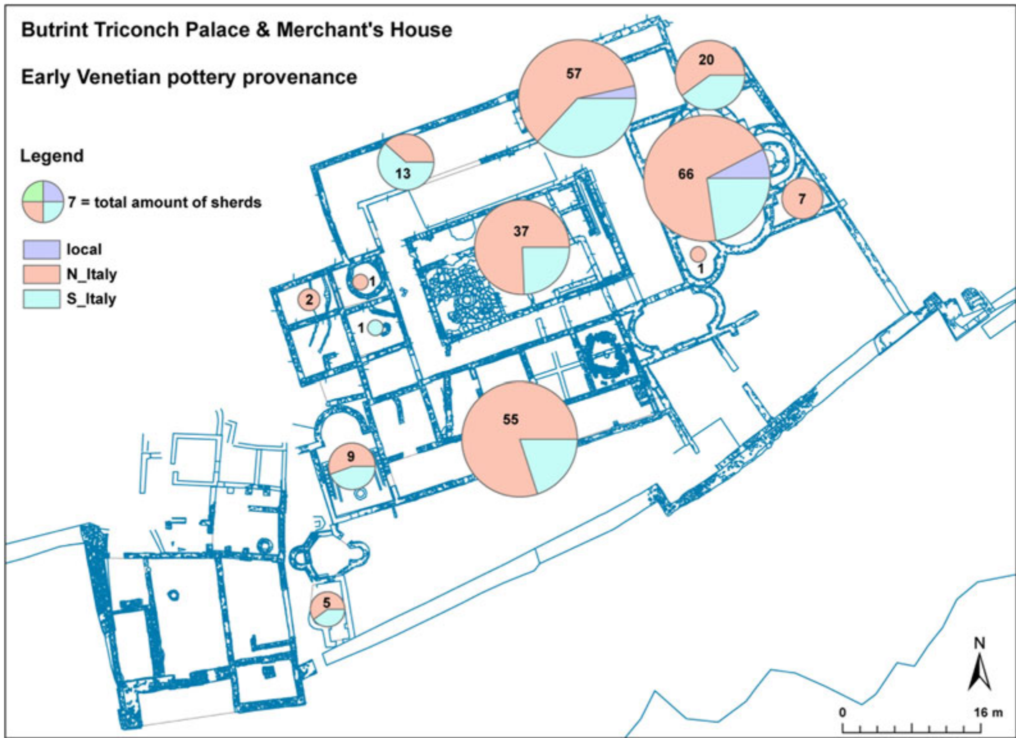

Fig. 11. Butrint, Triconch Palace and Merchant's House: distribution of ceramic finds per provenance (only definite) in the early Venetian period. *(J. Vroom.)*
Key: N_Italy = northern Italy; S_Italy = southern Italy.

The transparency of such *cristallo* glasses allowed the colour of the wine to be appreciated fully.

When we now take a second look at the banquet scene taking place in Butrint, as described in Verino's *Carlias* (1.361–77), it becomes obvious that the author, while trying to imagine a banquet in the era of Charlemagne, is in fact

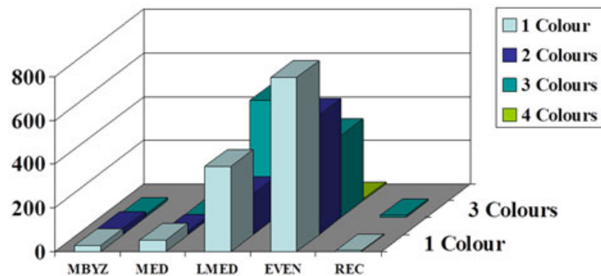

Fig. 12. Butrint, Triconch Palace: use of colour in ceramic finds from early Byzantine to more recent times. *(J. Vroom.)*
Key: MBYZ = middle Byzantine period; MED = medieval period; LMED = late medieval period; EVEN = early Venetian period; REC = recent.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Fig. 13. Butrint: Venetian *cristallo* wine-glass fragment with a moulded composite stem. *(Photo by J. Barclay-Brown; reproduced courtesy of the Butrint Foundation.)*

Fig. 14. Butrint: Venetian *cristallo* wine-glass fragments. *(Photo by J. Barclay-Brown; reproduced courtesy of the Butrint Foundation.)*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

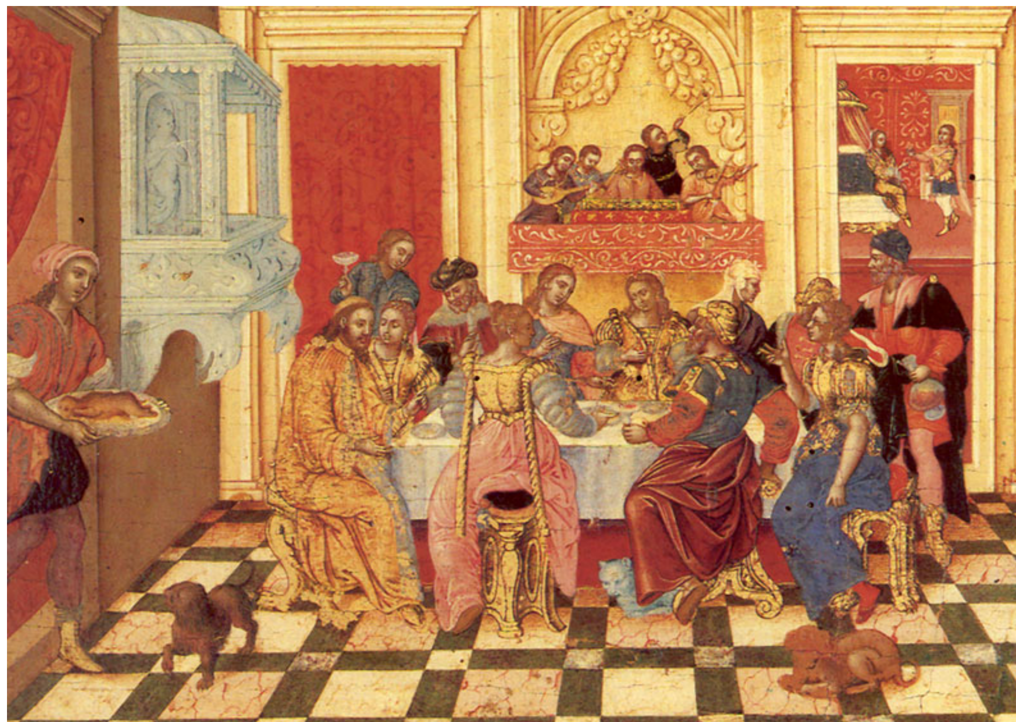

Fig. 15. Icon of the Life of Saint Alexios by Stefanos Tzankarolas, Antivouniotissa Museum, Corfu, post 1571. © Antivouniotissa Museum. *(Reproduced courtesy of the 21st Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities, and the Hellenic Republic Ministry of Culture and Sports.)*

describing a contemporary dining scene. The drinking of 'Cretan wine' from 'golden goblets' and from 'crystal cups', and the eating of 'soft loaves' of 'white bread', for instance, only became fashionable from late medieval times onwards, when the dinner party of the upper classes gradually evolved from a rather crude eating-fest into an elaborate performance intended for the display of wealth, status and power.[92] Part of this transformation was the introduction of sophisticated luxury table items: plates and cups, which previously had been made of wood or pewter, were now manufactured of precious materials (gold, silver or crystal) for the very rich, or of lustre-painted maiolica with a 'golden' effect for the somewhat less wealthy. Furthermore, there evolved a growing taste for sweet and spiced wines from Greece, such as the Malvasia-based *vino di Candia* (modern Heraklion), which was transported by Venetians to western Europe, and was highly praised in various fourteenth- to sixteenth-century texts.[93]

[92] C. Goldstein, *Pieter Bruegel and the Culture of the Early Modern Dinner Party* (Burlington, 2013).

[93] R. Strong, *Feast. A History of Grand Eating* (London, 2002), 82.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

In addition, solid dining tables (in the *Carlias* described as 'fine' and 'decorated') came into fashion during the Renaissance, while before that time mainly wooden trestles with a separate table top were used.[94] It was also during this time that handwashing with 'warm fragrant water' and 'expensive perfumes' became a typical part of the dining ritual, both for the display of wealth and for the display of 'civilized' table manners.[95] The importance of washing hands before and after a meal was, for instance, stressed by Erasmus in his instructional treatise *De Civilitate Morum Puerilium Libellus* (1530). He explicitly prescribed: 'Never sit down without having washed and without first trimming your nails lest any dirt stick to them and you are called dirty-knuckled'.[96]

The faunal assemblages from this period found in the Butrint excavations also confirm a notable standard of living. Cattle, sheep, goat and pigs were butchered elsewhere and the meat was brought as joints to the community, while small numbers of wild animals, including deer, wild boar and hare, as well as, in particular, waterfowl, were consumed.[97] Not surprisingly, the diet of these tower-dwellers was supplemented by fishing.[98] Common species found in the excavations include gilthead, mussels, thorny oysters, murex, cockles, carpet shells and whelks.[99]

In sum, the ceramic and faunal assemblages from Butrint, notwithstanding the hardships of frontier life, reflect access in good quantities to northeast Italian and Apulian table-ware of a high quality, as well as glassware and metal containers. The diet, of course, involved exploiting locally available resources, but overall the dining habits reveal a staunch pursuit of standards of cleanliness and taste upheld in the principle Venetian centres in Italy and elsewhere.

CONCLUSION

In the event King Charles VIII's projected crusade came to nothing, and his success in Italy was short-lived. Indeed, the deluxe manuscript of the *Carlias* may never have reached the king, and, if it did, it may be doubted whether he looked beyond the magnificent title-page to read Ugolino Verino's poem. Charles entered Naples in triumph on 20 February 1495; but exactly three months later (20 May) the king began the long trek back to France, leaving a small force to

[94] A. Gaba-Van Dongen, 'Tools of civilization. Erasmus's views on tableware and table manners', in P. van der Coelen (ed.), *Images of Erasmus* (Rotterdam, 2008), 267 and n. 16.

[95] U. Müller, 'Different shape — same function? Medieval hand-washing equipment in Europe', in G. De Boe and F. Verhaeghe (eds), *Material Culture in Medieval Europe. Papers of the Medieval Europe Brugge 1997 Conference* 7 (Zellik, 1997), 251–64.

[96] Gaba-Van Dongen, 'Tools of civilization' (above, n. 94), 266 and n. 12.

[97] J. Westoby and Z. Knapp, 'The faunal remains', in W. Bowden, *Butrint 5: the Triconch Palace: the Finds* (Oxford, forthcoming); see also H. Kroll, 'Animals in the Byzantine Empire: an overview of the archaeozoological evidence', *Archeologia Medievale* 39 (2012), 93–121, at pp. 105–10.

[98] A. Powell and D. Mylona, 'The faunal remains', in Hodges, Bowden and Lako (eds), *Byzantine Butrint* (above, n. 48), 305–20.

[99] Powell and Mylona, 'The faunal remains' (above, n. 98).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

defend his new kingdom. An Italian League between Rome, Venice, Milan and a number of satellite states was hastily formed to oppose the king's march north.[100] The first engagement was a skirmish between the French advance guard and the *stratioti*, the dreaded Albanian light cavalry, hired by the Venetians, on 1 July. Five days later, on Sunday 6 July, the two armies clashed on the banks of the river Taro near the village of Fornovo. It is perhaps ironic that the *stratioti* who were instrumental in the Italian 'victory' could perhaps have been horsemen from the hill country around Butrint. The grand French enterprise had come to nothing, and Butrint remained vulnerable. In 1499, amid rumours and even the expectation of Turkish invasion, the *bailie* of Corfu repaired the walls of Butrint, the better to defend his mainland charge.[101]

Verino's choice of Butrint as an important point in his epic about Charlemagne has no exact place in history. Charlemagne never had any connection during his lifetime with this Epirote port. Instead, uppermost in the poet's mind, we may surmise, was the association of Charlemagne with Aeneas, the founder of Rome, and through this connection Butrint served as Troy (the latter being in Turkish hands by this time). Nevertheless, these relationships across time and space should not be idly dismissed, even if the archaeology at face value might compel one to do so. As we have seen, fifteen centuries earlier Virgil appears to have invented this story to please Agrippa, whose wife had associations with Butrint. By the fifteenth century, though, the displaced memory of this association, thanks to the works of Cristoforo de' Buondelmonti and Ciriaco d'Ancona's lost *Commentaria*, was taking new forms. No less significantly for Verino and his royal dedicatee, Butrint was also by this time one of several precarious Christian bulwarks on the Balkan coast. Indeed, judging from its ceramics and dietary culture, it was defiantly Italianate. The dining emphasis was upon individual consumption characteristic of Italy as opposed to the exclusively communal dining of the preceding middle Byzantine period.[102]

Verino, we assume, hoped Charles VIII might embark on a reconquest of the lost Byzantine territories stretching beyond Butrint following the sale of the imperial rights to him by the exiled despot, Andreas Palaeologus. Butrint, then, symbolized a historic gateway close to Corfu in an increasingly unstable region. Fortress Butrint, we may also surmise, promised a thin thread of hope, embellished by the ultimately successful story of Aeneas, which would have resonated with contemporary audiences. Of course, it was not a new association of Aeneas and Butrint, but by this time the condition of the town was fast deteriorating. The actual status of civic life in the town almost certainly was immaterial to this narrative. As a result, perhaps precisely because his knowledge of Butrint was sketchy, Verino provided the place with a grandiosity worthy of his heroes and its ancient heritage.

[100] D. Nicolle, *Fornovo 1495: France's Bloody Fighting Retreat* (Oxford, 1996).
[101] Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant* (above, n. 30), II, 515.
[102] Vroom, 'The Morea and its links' (above, n. 72), 426.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Let us be more precise. It is clear that Verino knew nothing or almost nothing about Butrint as a place at the time of writing his poem. His sources, being the travelogues of Buondelmonti and Ciriaco, branded Butrint as a historical place because Virgil had described it. As we have seen, the topography of Butrint in the fifteenth century was very different from its description in the epic. There was not a royal palace supported on marble columns with a great portico supported by Parian marble columns, surrounded on all sides by walls decorated with images. In reality, the Venetian commander's tower on the Acropolis at Butrint was modest. As we have also seen, the lower town was largely deserted and its ancient monuments were sealed beneath a metre or more of colluvium, so there was no 'great wide square in the middle of the city paved with marble slabs, and surrounded by evergreen box, plane trees and Daphnean laurel'; moreover, Butrint's ancient fountains were no longer operative, so the 'bright fountains … gushing from golden spouts as though from the Hippocrine stream' was an eloquent flight of pure imagination (*Carlias* 1.304–8). These descriptions surely convey with a certain precision the palace, square and fountains of Mistra, the Palaeogean capital in the Peloponnese ceded to the Ottomans in 1460, or even, of course, parts of Constantinople itself. Finally, there was no trace to be seen at this time of either the ancient circus or the amphitheatre. The remarkably detailed description of the latter clearly has been pasted onto Butrint, perhaps from a place closer to Verino's Florentine home. One aspect, though, is accurate, as the nineteenth-century diplomat and author, François Pouqueville later attested:[103] 'dire malaria with horrid stench', to cite Verino, was definitely a characteristic of Butrint, its lagoon and associated marshes, though there were no 'whirlpools' that 'poisons the air with clouds of sulphur' (*Carlias* 5.486–90). The latter readily might describe better places in the Colline Metallifere of western Tuscany at this time, rather than Epirus.[104]

Verino's epic, of course, actively seeks to affirm the importance of Virgil's *Aeneid* in the story of Butrint. There can be little doubt that the medieval and Venetian port was still viewed by certain of its visitors through this prism, and this mythical status surely strengthened the will to defend it in the face of Ottoman aggression. This meant not only maintaining and improving its fortifications to a degree that far exceeded its economic and political value, but it led also to the overtly strong imported Italianate culture of its defenders, who otherwise suffered basic living conditions by Venetian standards.

[103] F.C.H.L. Pouqueville, *Travels in Epirus, Albania, Macedonia and Thessaly* (London, 1820), 34–5; Hodges, *Eternal Butrint* (above, n. 46), 33.

[104] These 'hellish' descriptions are an epic trope; compare the contemporary description of the alum mines at Tolfa in the *Volaterrais*, a four-book epic by Naldo de' Naldi (*c.* 1432–1513) on the war between Florence and Volterra (1472); see Gwynne, 'Epic' (above, n. 4). For the archaeology of the Colline Metallifere, see F. Grassi (ed.), *L'insediamento medievale nelle Colline Metallifere (Toscana, Italia)* (*British Archaeological Reports, International Series* 2,532) (Oxford, 2013).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Verino, however, challenges his model (noble, educated) reader by creating imaginary relations not only between Aeneas and Charlemagne, but also between Butrint and other recently lost Angevin and Byzantine towns in what is now Greece.[105] In this way, Butrint was a convenient canvas on which was painted a Mediterranean material past, now reified by the Renaissance. This approach was entirely consistent with a more popular trope of Mediterranean places espousing the eternal spirit of Troy. Like its ancient model, the *Aeneid*, then, *Carlias* was an instrument with a larger political purpose. As the Turks began aggressively to lay siege to Latin Christendom, this epic poem aimed to promote the mythical status of this erstwhile Greek town to convey the compelling importance of resistance. Paradoxically, Butrint — Virgil's 'Troy in miniature' — was in the hands of the author's and dedicatee's nemeses, the Venetians. This detail appears not to have mattered.

Did its dedicatee, we may wonder, grasp these layers of meaning and associations? For sure, if King Charles VIII had actually disembarked at Butrint, the archaeology now shows, he would have been profoundly puzzled. However, he readily would have recognized that Verino's epic and the combination of military architecture and the culinary behaviour of Butrint's community were different components of a shared identity powerfully directed at resisting the tide of Ottoman conquest.

Addresses for correspondence:
Dr Paul Gwynne
Archaeology and Classics Program, The American University of Rome, Via Pietro Roselli 4, 00153 Rome, Italy.
p.gwynne@aur.edu

Dr Richard Hodges
The American University of Rome, Via Pietro Roselli 4, 00153 Rome, Italy.
r.hodges@aur.edu

Dr Joanita Vroom
Faculteit der Archeologie, Universiteit Leiden, Einsteinweg 2, 2333 CC Leiden, The Netherlands.
j.a.c.vroom@arch.leidenuniv.nl

APPENDIX: DEDICATORY EPISTLE TO CHARLES VIII

Ugolini Verini praefatio ad Carolum christianissimum Francorum Regem

Carolus cognomento Magnus, Francorum primus imperator, a quo regiae sobolis destendit origo, religione ac magnitudine rerum cunctos omnium populorum sic reges superavit, ut adhuc illi iure nemo possit aequari. Huius sum gesta heroico carmine prosecutus, poetarum principes Homerum, Virgilium compatriotamque meum Dantem immitatus. Parentis primum tui regis invicti nostraeque civitatis hortatu tantam

[105] S. Runciman, *Mistra* (London, 1981).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press

bellorum molem sum exorsus. Quantum vero laboris, quantum pertulerim vigiliarum, non solum magnitudo huius voluminis est testis, sed anni quatuor et viginti pene sunt decursi. Tametsi minime sum, quod volebam, assecutus, opinor tamen sacratissimo nomini Francorum fore iocundum. Idque potissimum tibi, Rex Carole, destinavi, non solum quia nomen et genus ab illo deducis, verum mores et facta emularis, ut te speremus auctore Hierosolimam rursus cum omni regione, depulso, immo sublato Maumetti foetore, indui sacrosanctam Christi veritatem augustalemque iterum dignitatem in Galliam tanquam in patriam postliminium redituram, quae non minus tuis quam Italis sit profutura. Nam nec foelicior ecclesia nec quietior permansit Italia, quam centum circiter annos aub tutela Vestrorum imperatorum. Florentia in primis non solum servata, sed restituta et aucta, quicquid hadet dignitatis, id omne debet Vestrae maiestati. Nos igitur de patria, de re publica christiana bene merito principi, licet exiguas gratias referimus, laeti tamen et memores has tibi et nominis et imperii successori lucubrationes exsolvimus.

Opus est varium, non minus poeticis distinctum figuris, quam mysteriis christianae sanctionis excultum. Toto siquidem volumine tuorum procerum clarissimis gestis depicta excurrit oratio. Proinde precor, christianissime princeps, ut poema tuo nomini dedicatum suscipias. Sic me nec laboris nec paenitebit industriae.

Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 838, fol. 1r–v.

The Preface of Ugolino Verino to Charles, the Most Christian King of the Franks.

Charles surnamed Magnus, the first emperor of the Franks, from whom the origin of the royal line descends, so surpassed every king of every race in his piety and the magnitude of his empire, that deservedly no one could equal him, until now. I have examined his deeds in epic; I have imitated those princes of poets, Homer, Virgil and my compatriot Dante. I initially began this great undertaking on your invincible royal ancestor's wars at the encouragement of our state. Indeed, the size of this volume and the twenty four years that have passed bear witness to the great labour and the number of waking hours I have spent on it. Although the end result does not quite match my original intentions, however, I think that it will be pleasing to the most sacred name of the Franks. And I have dedicated it to you, most powerful King Charles, not only because you derive your name and descent from that famous name, but you also imitate his character and achievements, that we hope by your deeds, when the stench of Mohammed has been expelled, on the contrary removed from every part, Jerusalem will once again be dressed with the holy truth of Christ and the imperial dignity will once again return into France as if by right to its own fatherland, which would be no less a benefit to your people than to the Italians. For the Church was not happier, nor Italy more at peace, than when it was under your emperors' protection for almost one hundred years. In the first place Florence was not only preserved, but also restored and enlarged; whatever dignity the city now has is completely due to Your Majesty. We therefore return thanks, although humble, to a worthy prince on behalf of the fatherland, and Christendom, and we have completed these commemorative endeavours for you, his successor in both blessed name and empire.

This work is varied, no less noted for its poetic tropes, than decorated with the mysteries of the Christian religion. Indeed, this idea, exemplified in the deeds of your knights, extends through the whole volume. So I beg you, Most Christian Prince, to accept this poem which has been dedicated to you. Thus I will regret neither the labour nor the hard work.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246214000099 Published online by Cambridge University Press