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From tribal territory to the *chôra* of a city. Urban and rural fortifications in the region of the Labeates (Illyria)

Saimir Shpuza

Introduction

In the previous work on the fortifications around the Lake of Scodra¹, influenced also by earlier publications², a distinction was made between the Bronze and Iron Age walls and those of the Hellenistic period. The only criterion for distinguishing between prehistoric and Hellenistic fortifications is in most cases the typology of masonry as very few have actually been investigated archaeologically. Even so, there is mounting evidence from excavations that rubble walls, considered most of the time as prehistoric, continued to be built also after the Bronze and Iron Ages. There are many examples of such walls being built in the Hellenistic period from Attica³, Chalcis⁴ and the territory of Eretria⁵. Moreover, long walls of “prehistoric masonry” were built on the frontier between different tribes even in the Roman period, as indicated by epigraphic data from Dalmatia⁶. All things considered, a chronology of this kind of fortifications is risky at best. The aim of this study, therefore, is to present the concentration of such fortifications in the territory of the Labeates, describe their main technical features and discuss their function in the landscape.

From a geographical perspective, the territory of the tribe of the Labeates features important rivers, such as Drin (Oriund), Buna (Barbana), Kiri (Klausali), and Morača, as well as alluvial plains around the

lake. Only Drin and Buna were navigable in antiquity; Kiri and Morača were little more than seasonal torrents. The Montenegrin Alps and the Adriatic Sea acted as natural frontiers in the east and west respectively⁷. Fortifications of various types, about 25 different sites from the Iron Age to the Hellenistic period, have been identified in this territory, distributed over an area of about 2000 km², of which 500 km² is taken up by the Lake of the Labeates (Scodra Lake). Some of these fortifications are known already from archaeological research in the 20th century, others have recently been identified by the Albanian–Polish project in Shkodra and Bushati⁸, and the recent prospection carried out in the region by the Institute of Archaeology, Tirana⁹. The Montenegrin part of this territory, north of Scodra Lake, has also contributed important new data¹⁰. Even so, little research has been done on their topography, architecture and history. This review article aims to fill the gap, bringing into focus also some examples of less known urban and rural fortifications. However, since it is not intended as an exhaustive study, it will limit itself to discussing some representative examples. Generally, the fortifications in question

1 SHPUZA 2014; SHPUZA 2019.

2 KORKUTI 1973; KARAIKAJ 1977; CEKA 1986.

3 MCCREDIE 1966.

4 BAKHUIZEN 1970.

5 FACHARD 2012.

6 VRKIC 2018, pp. 343–352.

7 On the extent of the territory occupied by the Labeates, see SHPUZA 2019.

8 The project is directed by Prof. Piotr Dyczek and the author. It is financed by the Polish National Science Centre under the grant DEC-2014/14/M/HS3/00741. The first phase of the project, 2011–2015, was focused on geophysical prospection and trial trenches in the upper and lower city of Scodra and a relevant publication is in preparation. The second phase of the project, 2016–2020, concerns excavations and survey in Scodra and its territory. For the first results see SHPUZA, DY- CZEK 2018a, pp. 369–396.

9 KURTI, RUKA 2018, pp. 139–172.

10 DIMITRIJEVIC 2014; DIMITRIJEVIC 2016; LULGURAJ 2017.

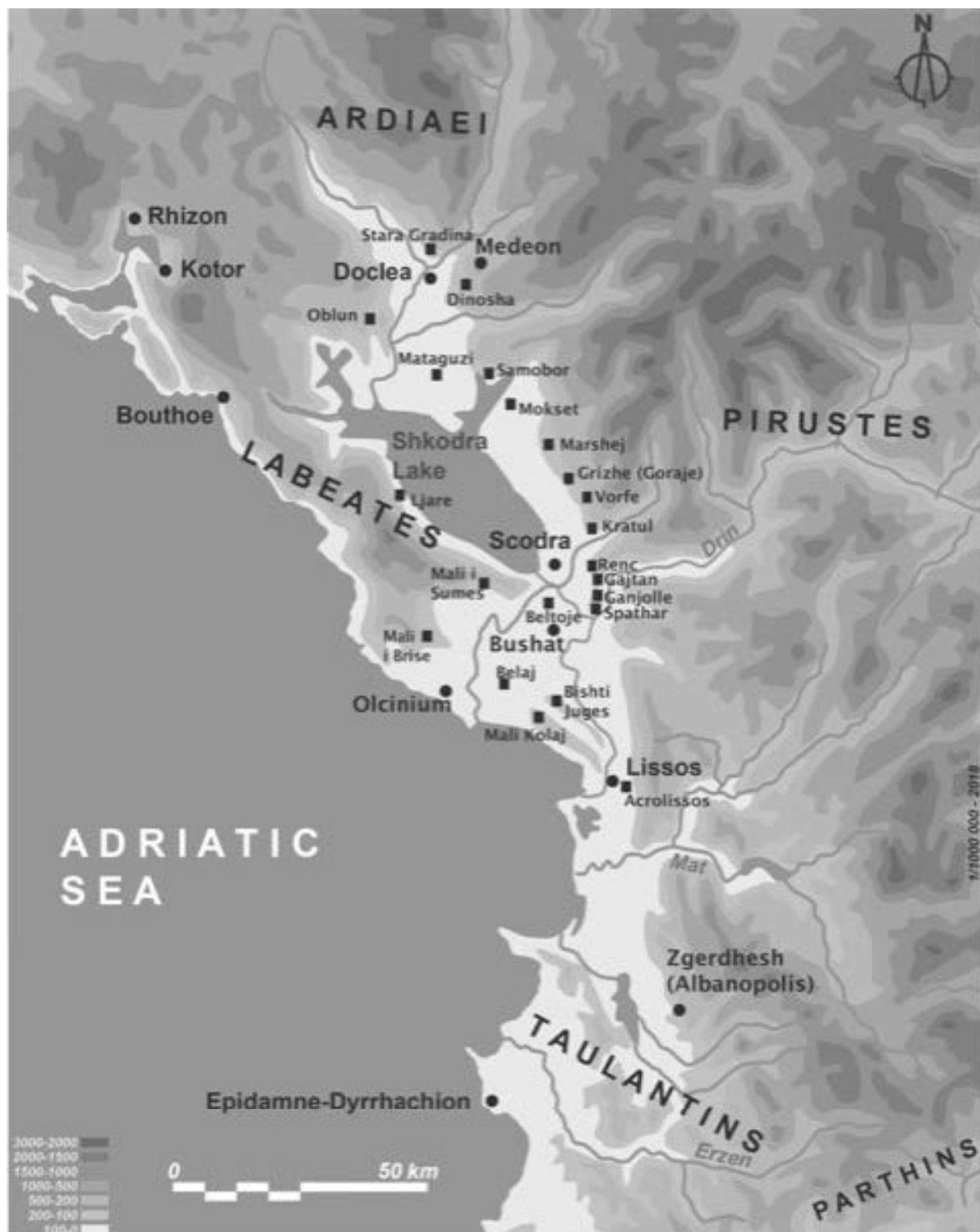


Fig. 1. General repartition map of the urban and rural fortifications in the territory of the Labeates (by the Author).

were constructed on high hills dominating the fertile plains and rich pastures, and were naturally well

protected (fig. 1). The main cities in the area, such as Scodra, Bushati and Lissos, were constructed on

Fig. 2. Hellenistic fortifications of Scodra integrated on the Venetian ramparts (photo by the Author).



the most prominent hills in the area, whereas the first range of hills on the fringes of the alluvial plains around Lake Scodra was occupied by rural fortifications. Importantly, these sites had good visibility of one another and of the main cities—up to 50 km on clear days. It is this topographical observation that suggests that we are dealing with a planned system of fortifications comprising several related sites and not individual and isolated points of defence.

Urban fortifications

The end of the 4th century BC marks the emergence of an urban way of life among the Labeates and the Illyrians in general¹¹, forcing a rather drastic change from the small village existence of earlier times. Illyrian communities will be in a state of continuous development throughout the 3rd century BC, tending to integrate into the Mediterranean networks not only in terms of urbanization and trade, but also the political and social organization which resembles models known from the central Mediterranean. In the territory under study here, the period corresponds with the appearance of the Ardiaei dynasty on the Balkan political scene, but there is no known example of an Illyrian king actually founding a city. The role of the cities is wi-

thin traditional ethnic communities and it is only with King Genthios, in the middle of the 2nd century BC, that an existing city, Scodra, is established as the capital of a kingdom, asserting its political centrality in a great part of the Illyrian world. Three cities are historically and archaeologically known to have been built in the territory of the Labeates: Scodra, Medeon and Bushati, the latter still without a known ancient name (fig. 1). According to Livy, Medeon was an *urbs*, whereas Polybius designated it as a *polis*¹². Considering the size of the site, its topography and the archaeological finds we consider that Medeon was not a city but mostly a fortified settlement in the territory of the Labeates¹³. On the other hand, it is not clear whether Lissos was situated in Labeatian territory or not¹⁴. There is nothing in the historical sources or numismatic evidence to link it to the Labeates, but it was one of the most important cities in the realm of King Genthios where coins were minted for the king. Access to the Hellenistic remains of Scodra is very difficult¹⁵. The only evidence of the ancient enclosure is a 16m long section of the ancient wall integrated into the fortification built by the Venetians in the beginning of the 15th century (fig. 2). Presumably

11 ISLAMI 1972; CEKA 1985.

12 Polybius, 29.3.5; Livy, 44.32.1.

13 See SHPUZA 2019, pp. 79-80.

14 See the discussion in SHPUZA 2019.

15 DYCZEK, SHPUZA 2014, pp. 387-398; SHPUZA, DYCZEK 2018b, pp. 269-280.



Fig. 3. Aerial view of the Scodra castle (photo M. Pisz).

nothing else survived of this Hellenistic wall or else it would have also been integrated into the new walls. Nonetheless, it is very probable that the Hellenistic enceinte surrounded the whole plateau (fig. 3). The upper town is situated on a fairly steep hill, and consequently the city was organized into two separate parts, one on the hill and the other on the surrounding flat ground. For the moment, there is proof of fortifications in the upper town and no trace of ramparts in the lower town. However, a passage from Livy, which describes the installation of the Roman army near the city walls, indicates that the lower city was also fortified¹⁶.

A new Illyrian city was recently identified at Bushati, 15 km south of Scodra and 20 km north of Lissos¹⁷.

¹⁶ Livy 44.31.6-8.

¹⁷ The site is part of an excavation project conducted since 2018 by Piotr Dyczek and the author, in cooperation between the University of Warsaw and the Institute of Archaeology Tirana.

The remains of the fortification wall visible on surface suggest a site of the size of about 20 ha (fig. 4). The wall was apparently constructed on the top of hills surrounding a small valley situated on a much lower level than the fortification itself. The fortification starts on the highest part of the hill, 195 m above sea level, and descends gradually to the lower part of the plain, 65 m above the sea level. The difference in levels is around 130 m. Archaeological excavation of the lower part of the city discovered a gateway protected by a rectangular tower (fig. 5). The general layout of the Bushati fortification is similar to a triangle and comparable to the fortification of Zgërdhesh (Albanopolis), as well as Lissos. A chronological analysis of the remains will be possible once the excavations have progressed. For the moment, one should note the difference between the walls of the acropolis and the lower city. The dating of the establishment of the city proposed on archaeological



Fig. 4. Plan of the Hellenistic fortification at Bushati (B. Wojciechowski).



Fig. 5. Aerial view of the southern gate at Bushati (photo M. Lemke).

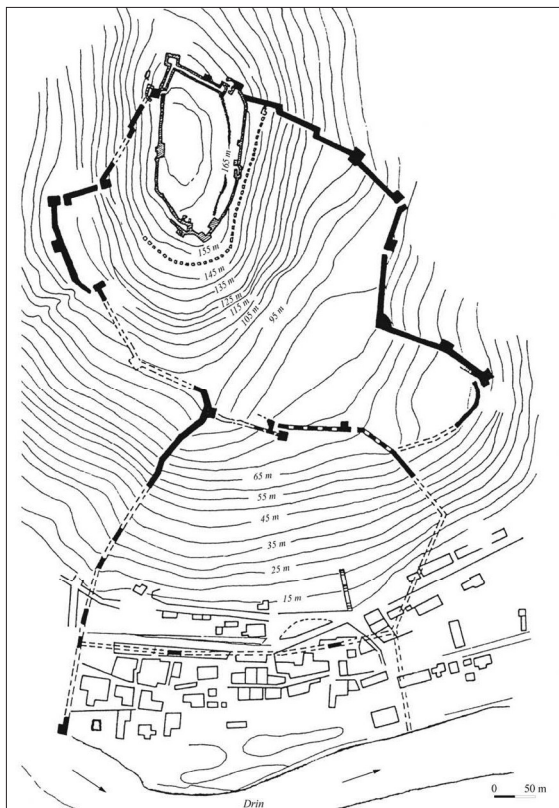


Fig. 6. Plan of Lissos (after PRENDI, ZHEGU 1972, p. 223, fig. 5).

grounds is in the end of 4th century BC, same as in the case of Scodra and Lissos.

Lissos is the best known fortification from the area, even if its belonging to the Labeatian territory is put in doubt. The city has walls 2200 m long, surrounding a site 20 ha in area (fig. 6). They begin, as in Bushati, on a high acropolis 165 m above sea level and reach the lowest point at 15 m above sea level with a difference between them of 150 m. There are six gates and 17 towers (fig. 7)¹⁸. A bronze socket of the gate was still very well preserved in one of the gates (fig. 8).

These urban fortifications demonstrate the Illyrians' good knowledge of Hellenistic circuit wall building already at a time when they started to establish their cities. In turn, the quality of these construction projects suggests substantial financial resources at the disposal of their builders¹⁹. At Scodra and Lissos,

foundation trenches were excavated down to natural rock; at Bushati, the walls were set on a packed surface of sterile soil²⁰. The foundation comprised one or two rows of big blocks supporting the upper structure. The masonry is mostly irregular trapezoidal, pseudo-isodomic and in a few cases polygonal. The width of the fortification varies, 3.20-3.50 m. The *emplekton* building technique calls for two regular wall faces and a core space in the middle filled with fragments of stones at Lissos and stone mixed with earth at Bushati. Cross walls (*diatone*) every 2 or 3 m create a compartment wall. Towers are supplemented with indented trace, a technique recommended by Philo of Byzantium²¹, especially in steeply sloping terrain which predetermines their asymmetric and irregular form. This technique was quite common in Northern Greece²² and Illyria²³.

Rural fortifications

Rural fortifications were the most important part of the Labeatian fortification system. They demonstrate a lower quality of construction as compared to the urban fortifications, suggesting that they were built without expert supervision and in many cases probably in emergency situations, using raw material that was available and with little mind for the aesthetics of the outcome. The following is a classification based on the main technical characteristics, standardizing them by function, size, geographical position and relation to the landscape²⁴. Although the function of these sites is often difficult to determine, this provisional categorization will act as a starting point for a general understanding of the Labeatian landscape from the Iron Age to the Hellenistic period. Four different categories of sites have been distinguished: fortified settlements, fortresses, towers and isolated walls.

Fortified settlements

The only site to be classified in this category is Me-deon, identified with the village of Medun in Mon-

18 PRENDI, ZHEGU 1972, p. 222; PRENDI, ZHEGU 1986.

19 BAKER 2000.

20 Philo (A 1) and Vitruvius (1, 8) both mention the importance of solid foundations on stable ground for the construction of the fortification walls. See also ADAM 1982, p. 18.

21 Philo, A 55.

22 GARLAN 1974, p. 248.

23 BAÇE 1987, pp. 5-55.

24 FACHARD 2016, pp. 208-214.

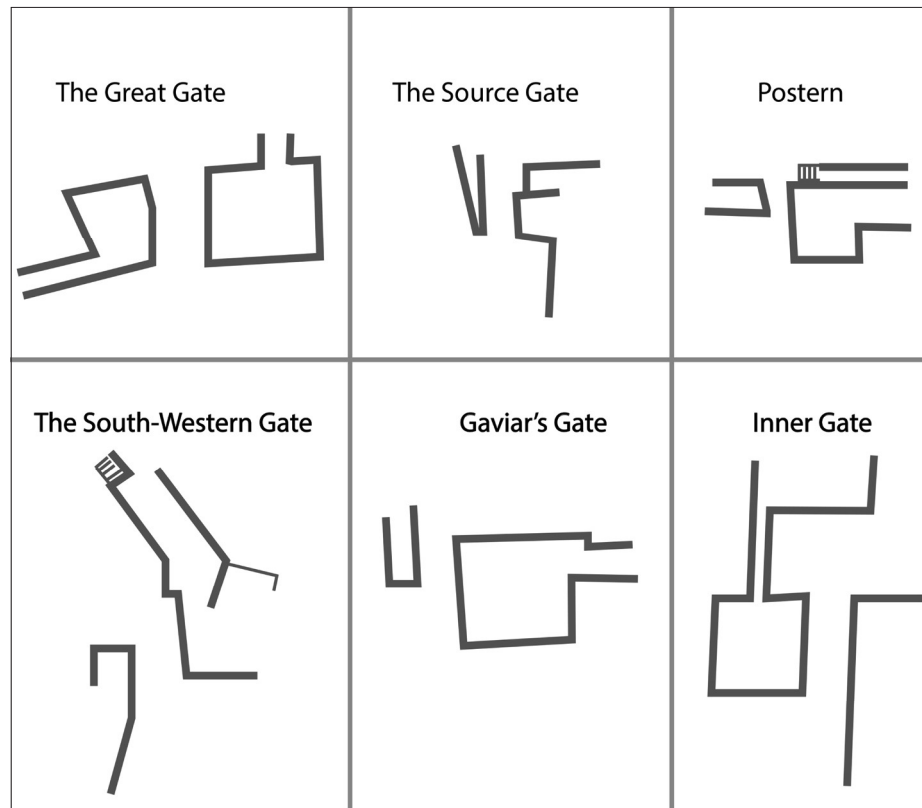


Fig. 7. Plan of the gates of Lissos (after PRENDI, ZHEKU 1972, p. 243, fig. 12).



Fig. 8. Bronze socket found in one of the gates at Lissos exhibited in the Archaeological Museum in Tirana (Inv. 8406, photo A. Hyka).

tenegro. The best description of the site was given in 1919 by Praschniker and Schober (fig. 9)²⁵ and it still holds today as there has been no archaeological work undertaken at the site. The fortification walls,

preserved for a length of 100 m, surrounded an area of about 0.5 ha in size. Four towers were traced at a distance of 24m from one another. According to Livy, Medeon was an *urbs*, whereas Polybius designated it as a *polis*²⁶; on the other hand, most every site was a *polis* to Polybius. There is as yet no archaeological data on the internal organization of the site, but to believe the historical sources, it served first as a meeting place for the envoys of the Macedonian King Perseus and King Genthios and then as a refuge for Genthios's wife and children during the war with the Romans²⁷. The site is quite small in size, but in light of this historical data, it should probably be classified as a fortified settlement, especially in view of the imposing fortifications that must be proof of its military role.

Fortresses

The category of fortresses comprises sites with a principally military function, sheltered by massive

25 PRASCHNIKER, SCHÖBER 1919, 3-8.

26 Polybius 29.3.5; Livy, 44.32.1.

27 Livy, 44.32.1.

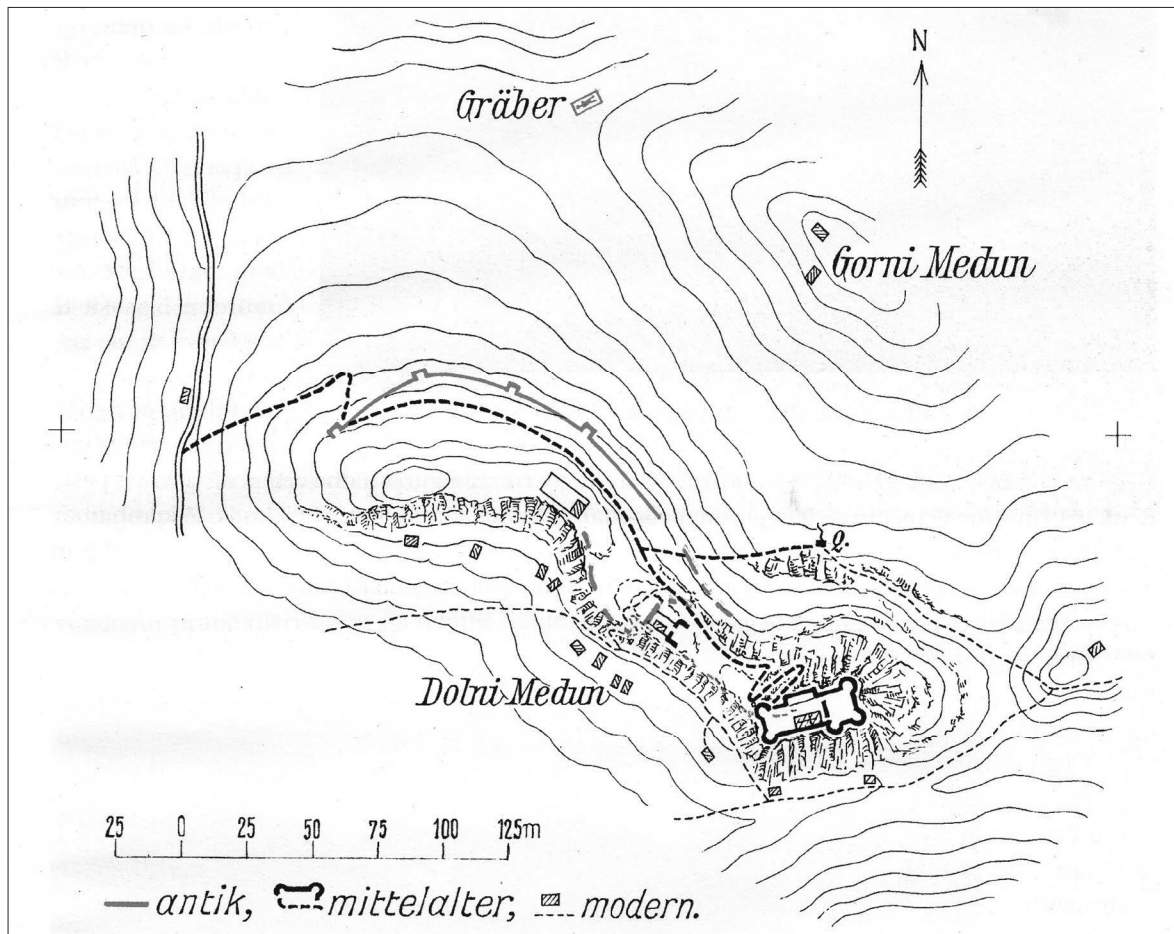


Fig. 9. Plan of Medun (after PRASCHNIKER, SCHÖBER 1919, p. 5, fig. 7).

walls with towers and bastions²⁸. It includes four sites: Acrolissos, Kratul, Samobor and Stara Gradina. The general layout of the fortification is similar in these cases with two types of walls, one considered prehistoric and the other Hellenistic. They are all of fairly small size, approximately 0.5-1 ha, intended primarily as fortresses for stationing military forces on a continuous basis, but providing neighborhood inhabitants with a refuge, if needed²⁹.

The historical sources speak of the military role played by Acrolissos, especially during the siege of Lissos by Philip V of Macedonia³⁰. It has a wall of

crude, roughly dressed blocks, traditionally attri-

that the defences of Lissus, both natural and artificial, were admirable from land as well as sea, and that Acrolissus which was close to it owing to its height and its general strength looked as if there would be no hope of taking it by storm, he entirely renounced this latter hope, but did not quite despair of taking the town. Noticing that the ground between Lissus and the foot of Acrolissus was convenient for directing an attack from it on the town he decided to open hostilities on this side, and employ a stratagem suitable to the circumstances. After giving his Macedonians a day's rest and addressing them in such terms as the occasion demanded, he concealed during the night the largest and most efficient portion of his light-armed troops in some thickly-wooded ravines above the aforesaid ground on the side farthest from the sea, and next day with his peltasts and the rest of the light-armed infantry marched along the sea on the other side of the city. After thus passing round the city and reaching the place I mentioned, he gave the impression of being about to ascend towards the town on this side. The arrival of Philip was no secret, and considerable forces from all the neighbouring parts of Illyria had collected in Lissus; but as for Acrolissus they had such confidence in its natural strength that they had assigned quite a small garrison to it. Consequently, on the approach of the Macedonians those in the town began pouring out of it confident in their numbers and in the advantage of the ground. The king halted his peltasts on the level ground, and ordered his light infantry to advance on the hills and deliver a vigorous attack on the enemy. His orders

28 FACHARD 2016, p. 216.

29 FACHARD 2016, p. 218.

30 Polybius, 8.13.1 "Philip's attention had long been fixed on Lissus and Acrolissus, and being most anxious to possess himself of these places he started for them with his army. After two days' march he traversed the defiles and encamped by the river Ardaxanus not far from the town. Observing



Fig. 10. Hellenistic wall at Acrolissos (photo by the Author).

buted to the Iron Age period³¹, and another wall of Hellenistic date (fig. 10). The two may have coexisted during the Hellenistic phase, surrounding in effect a small plateau of around 1 ha (fig. 11). The archaeological material found at the site, although not in clear relation to the fortification walls, confirms these two chronological phases in the history of Acrolissos³².

Kratul watched over the Kiri valley (fig. 12). The fortification was of ellipsoid shape, its western part greatly damaged by modern military works. A tower stands in the eastern part. It was built of better dressed blocks compared to those used in

the rest of the walls. Moreover, the fortification wall was constructed of two faces and an inner rubble core, whereas the tower wall comprised two rows of stones set back-to-back. The earliest material on the site is of Iron Age date, but most of the pottery and coins date to the Hellenistic period³³. Thus, the wall and the tower apparently functioned during the Hellenistic period.

The fortification of Samobor is relatively well preserved, standing to a maximum height of 2 m, including an entrance gate and a tower. The construction technique of the wall is rough masonry of big blocks with very little dressing. However, pottery and coins from the site are dated to the 3rd–2nd centuries BC.³⁴ Stara Gradina presents a similar case with a polygonal wall 3–4 m wide built on top of an earlier, prehistoric fortification. Two towers belong to the Hellenistic phase. The site has never been investigated archaeologically and no plan of it exists³⁵.

Vorfa is very similar to Kratul, Samobor, and Acrolissos, but it lacks the towers (fig. 13). It is not clear whether it should be classified as a fortress. The site is situated on a rocky hill 160 m above sea level, 5

being obeyed, the combat was for some time an even one; but afterwards Philip's troops, yielding to the difficulties of the ground and to superior numbers, were put to flight. When they took refuge with the peltasts, the Illyrians from the town in their contempt for them followed them down the hill and engaged the peltasts on the level ground. At the same time the garrison of Acrolissus, seeing that Philip was slowly withdrawing his divisions one after the other, and thinking that he was abandoning the field, imperceptibly let themselves be enticed out owing to their confidence in the strength of the place, and then abandoning Acrolissus in small bodies poured down by bye-paths to the level ground, thinking there would be a thorough rout of the enemy and a chance of some booty. But at this juncture the troops which had been posted in ambush on the land side rose unobserved and delivered a brisk attack, the peltasts at the same time turning and falling upon the enemy. Upon this the force from Lissus was thrown into disorder and retreating in scattered groups gained the shelter of the city, while those who had abandoned Acrolissus were cut off from it by the troops which had issued from the ambushade. So that both Acrolissus was taken beyond all expectation at once and without striking a blow, and Lissus surrendered on the next day after a desperate struggle, the Macedonians having delivered several energetic and terrific assaults".

31 PRENDI, ZHEGU, 1972, p. 216.

32 PRENDI, ZHEGU, 1972, p. 216.

33 FISTANI 1983, pp. 113–115.

34 The site is known since long ago, the early topographical plans being made by Nopça first and then Praschniker and Schober, PRASCHNIKER, SCHÖBER 1919, pp. 91–94.

35 VELIMIROVIĆ – ŽIŽIĆ 1981, p. 131.



Fig. 11. Plan of Acrolissos (after PRENDI, ZHEKU 1972, p. 242, fig. 2).

km north of Kratul. The entire hill seems to have been protected by fortification walls, which, however, seem to have been built in different techniques (Fgg. 14a, 14b, 14c). As in the other cases, the presence of two main phases, prehistoric and Hellenistic, cannot be excluded.

Towers

Four towers have been identified in the territory of the Labeates. The towers at Spathar, Ganjolla, and Renci are situated on Sheldia Mountain, southeast

of Scodra, just 7-8 km away from the city, but with very good visibility of Scodra, Bushati, Lissos and Acrolissos. The fourth tower, at Oblun, is situated north of the Lake of the Labeates, at a distance of 50 km from Scodra and 20 km from Medeon. The dimensions of these towers vary from 20m² to 100m² (Ganjolla 20 m², Renci 50m², Spathar 60m² and Oblun 100m²).

Oblun is a hill situated in the Zeta plain, near the Morača river. The fortification lies 214 m above sea level. There are two construction phases, prehisto-

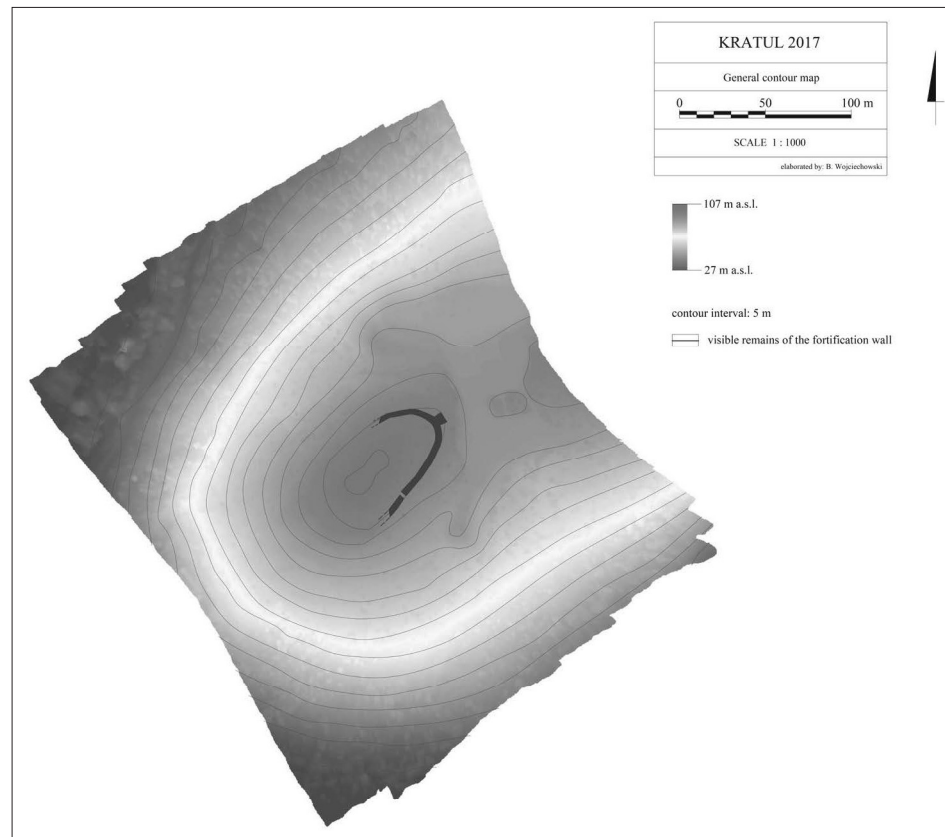


Fig. 12. Plan of Kratul (B. Wojciechowski).

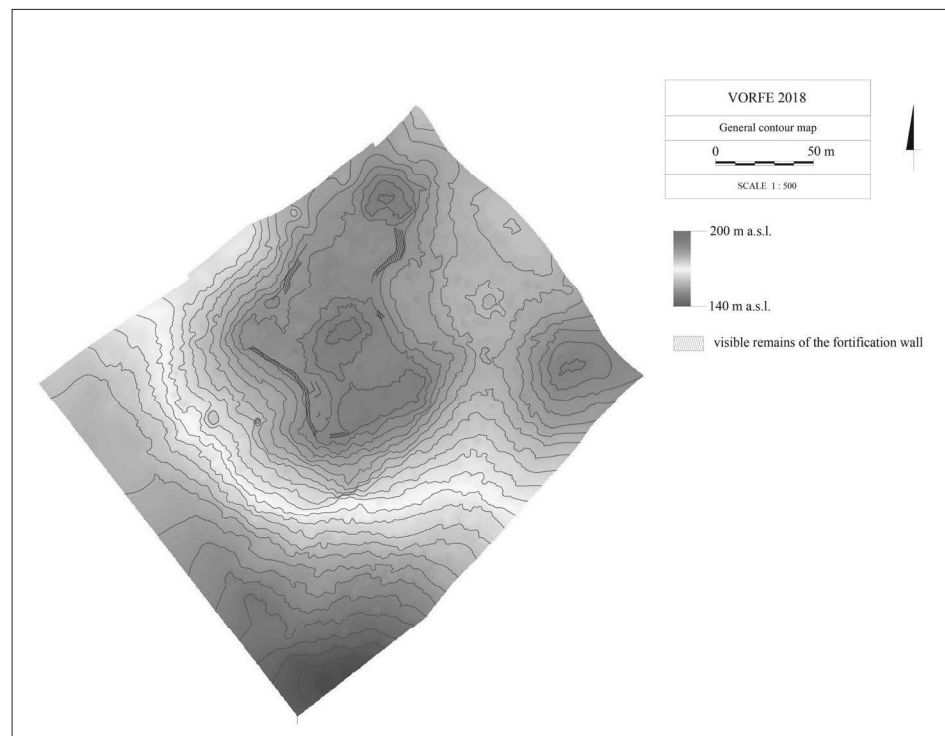


Fig. 13. Plan of Vorfa (B. Wojciechowski).

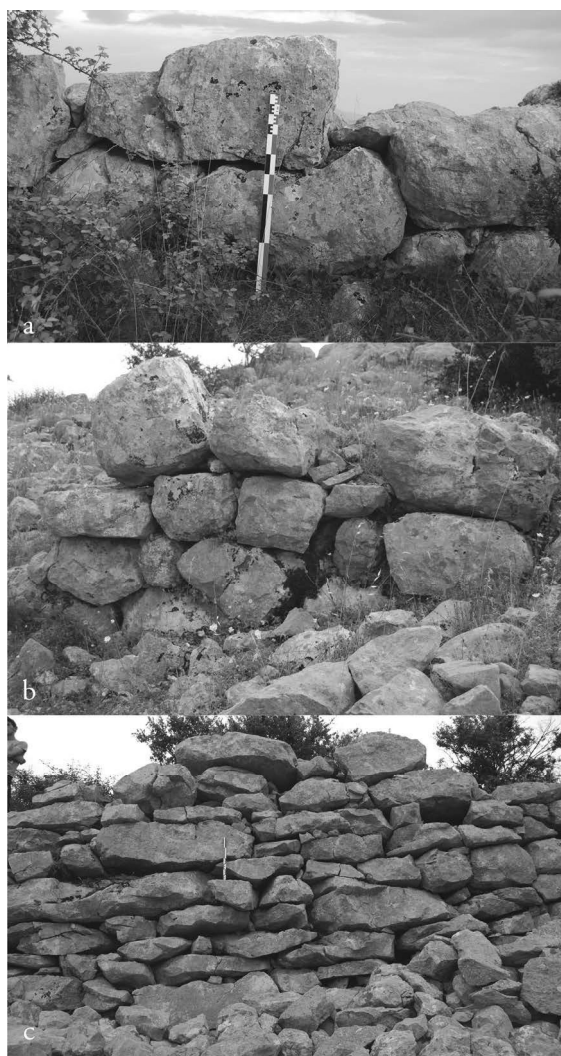


Fig. 14 (a, b, c). Types of masonry at Vorfa (photo by the Author).

ric and Hellenistic, distinguished by the building technique. A tower was added in the Hellenistic phase. The prehistoric structure is a rubble wall, while the Hellenistic one is built of regular trapezoidal blocks³⁶. The tower is rectangular, measuring 13m by 8m.

The Renci tower is situated on a hill 178 m above sea level, but the panoramic corridor that it lies in gives it a controlling view of the Drin valley to the east and Scodra Lake on the west and north. The tower has roughly coursed, pseudo-isodomic masonry that includes stones of massive size (fig. 15).

³⁶ DIMITRIJEVIĆ 2016, p. 302.

The blocks underwent minimal dressing with most of the effort going into the front surfaces. The walls are preserved to a height of no more than 1.5 m. The eastern wall of the tower is the best preserved and runs for a length of 18.5 m; the western wall is less preserved and difficult to follow along its entire length, but it also seems to have incorporated natural rock into its structure³⁷. The extreme part of this wall is better preserved and it can be followed for 10 m to the end of the tower. A wall 2.80 m long closes the tower on the fourth side. Considering the sloping ground on which it was constructed, the tower comprised two levels. A wall, which was 3 m long, divided the tower into two parts as well as two different levels.

Spathar lies 217 m above sea level and comprises two phases of construction. The original fortification was probably a rubble wall that was 3 m wide, with no regular faces, as nothing like a facade could be observed on the preserved, 120 m-long stretch of wall (fig. 16). The circuit enclosed an area of 0.7 ha, with a precipice providing natural protection in the western part. In the second phase, another rampart including a tower was added to the standing fortification wall. This second wall is technically more advanced. It is 3 m wide and 12 m long. The tower at the end of the eastern part is of rectangular shape, but with irregular dimensions (7.90 × 6.90 × 8.50 × 8.10 m). Only two to three courses of stone blocks have been preserved, the tower walls reaching no higher than 1 m.

The fortification at Ganjolla is the only one to be documented archaeologically³⁸. The Hellenistic tower was built on the site of a Late Bronze / Early Iron Age fortification (fig. 17). It is the highest point of all the fortifications on Sheldia Mountain and it has a clear view of the plain of Zadrima and the Drin River. B. Lahi dates the construction of this tower to the first quarter of the 2nd century BC and links it to the preparations of King Genthius for the war against the Romans³⁹.

Interestingly, the towers of Ganjolla and Spathar are situated only 1.6 km from one another and they

³⁷ However, modern military intervention at the site cannot be excluded in view of the presence of a military base until the 1980s.

³⁸ LAHI 1993, pp. 201-218.

³⁹ LAHI 1993, p. 204. It is well known that such towers were built continuously during periods of war, see LAWRENCE 1969, p. 187.

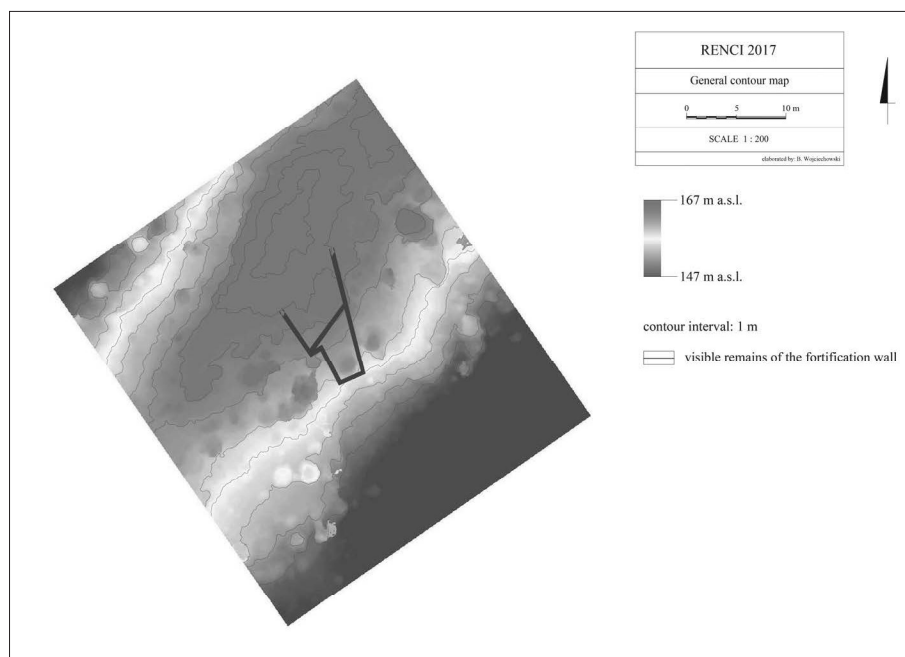


Fig. 15. Plan of Renci (B. Wojciechowski).

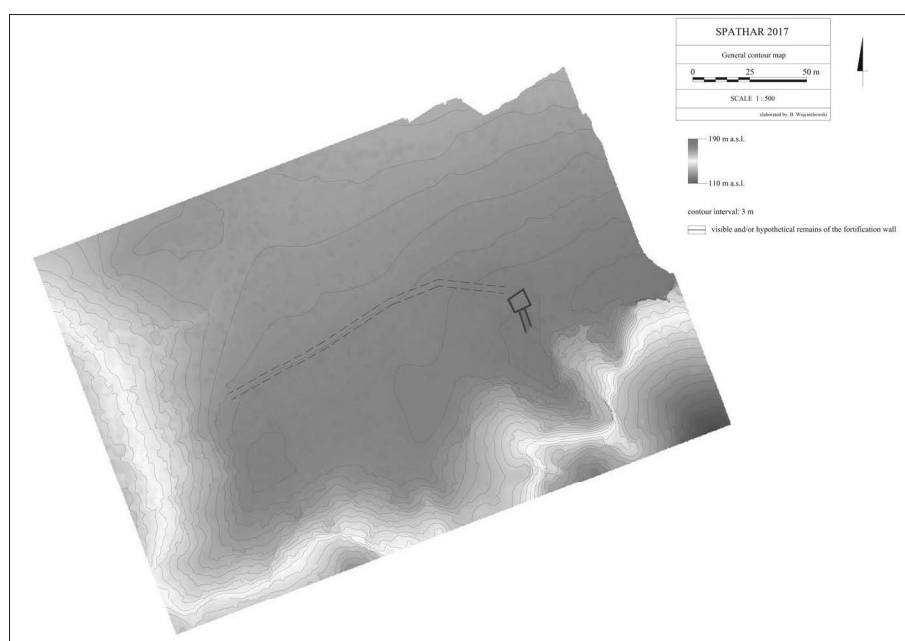


Fig. 16. Plan of Spathar (B. Wojciechowski).

seem to have controlled the same area: the Zadrina plain and Drin River. Were they chronologically disparate or functionally different? Ganjolla is known from the reign of Genthios, while nothing can be said in the case of Spathar. In terms of construction, they are quite different; Spathar is a rectangular tower that might coincide with the use of war machines, while Ganjolla was only an observation point.

Isolated walls

Isolated walls are the most numerous class of fortifications in the territory of the Labeates. Some examples were explored archaeologically and seem to date mostly to the end of the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, the timespan being from the 11th to the 5th century BC. This broad chronology results as much from the long life of these sites as from



Fig. 17. Aerial view of the tower of Ganjolla (M. Pisz).

their rather uncertain periodization. In many cases, tumulis are associated with these fortifications⁴⁰. The dense pattern of these fortifications shows the enduring control that the Labeates exercised over their territory from the Bronze and Iron Age, but it also shows that construction was relatively easy. Rubble walls were easily built, hence their proliferation in the rural landscape⁴¹, and because they did not require special building skills; they kept on being constructed on a continuous basis. Although used by small tribal communities, they were part of a larger and homogenous territorial structure of the Labeates, typical of most of the Balkan territory known as the heartland of Glasinac Culture, the main characteristics of which still require better definition.

The most prominent example of this kind of fortification, which became also a “symbol” of the pro-

to-urban settlement in Albania, is Gajtan⁴². The wall is preserved for 90 m and is 3.50 m wide (fig. 18). Although the plateau of the hill is around 5 ha, the fortification wall “protects” only its southern part. This is typical of most of the pre-urban sites in the territory of the Labeates. It seems that marking territory was the main aim, not the fortification itself. The same deduction can be made also at Marshej (fig. 19). Little is known of the settlement in relation to these walls. The only explored example is that of Gajtan where excavations conducted at the site revealed traces of economic activity, mostly metallurgy, confirming thus the idea of a continuous habitation.

The most characteristic feature of these walls is their construction with two relatively regular façades and an “*emplekton*” core of dry stones, mostly of small and medium size. The façade stones are very little worked. These walls stand directly on bedrock

40 KOKA 2012; KURTI, RUKA, GJIPALI 2014, pp. 181-190.

41 FACHARD 2016, pp. 220-221.

42 CEKA 1977-1978; CEKA 1983.

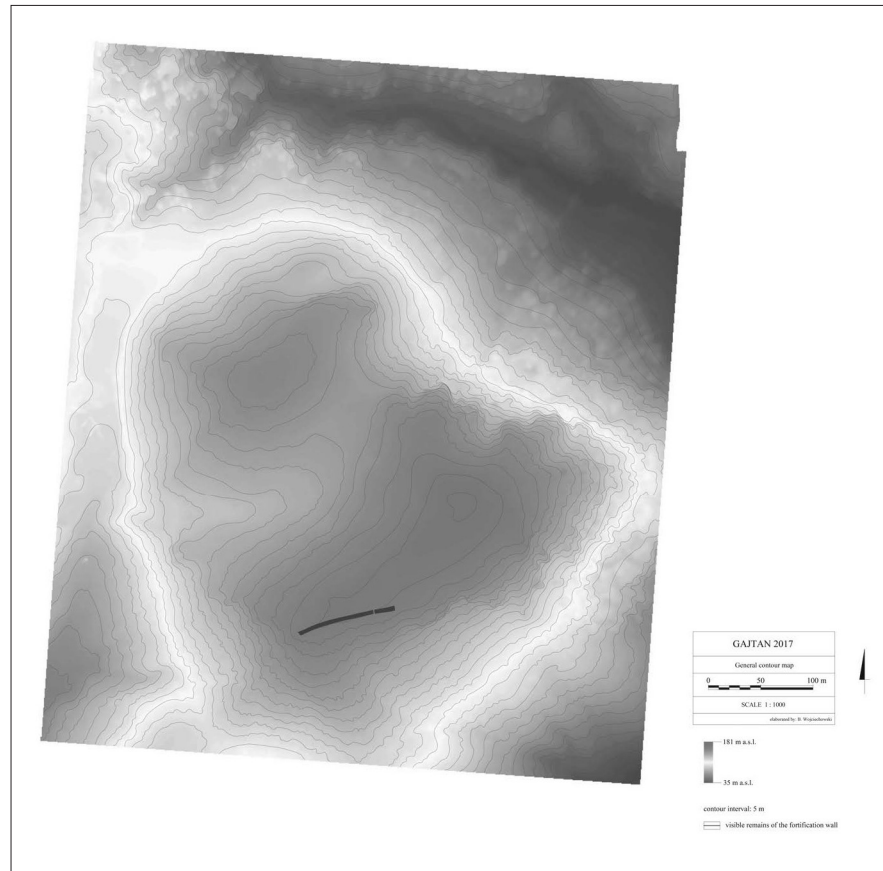


Fig. 18. Plan of Gajtan (B. Wojciechowski).



Fig. 19. Aerial view of the wall in Marshej (M. Lemke).



Fig. 20. View of the wall and the gate at Gajtan (photo by the Author).

or a solid natural surface. The width of the walls ranges from 2 m to 3.50 m and their preserved height varies from 1 to 1.50 m. In most cases, this kind of fortification has no corners and towers are missing. The gates are very simple (fig. 20); they are created just by leaving a gap in the wall. Examples of walls of this kind are numerous from the territory under study here, but the main issue is still their function.

Chronology

The record regarding the chronology of these rural fortifications has been a little disappointing so far. However, since we are dealing with a complex and integrated system of protection of urban territory, it follows that most of the rural fortifications of the Hellenistic period must have been built after the founding of the cities of the Labeates. The end of the 4th century BC is thus a *terminus post quem* for their construction and their usefulness ceased with the fall of Scodra to the Romans in 168 BC. Some periodization can be proposed. For instance, at Ganjolla excavations have confirmed construction in the first half of the 2nd century BC, thus corresponding to the times of King Genthios before the

third Macedonian War. It should be kept in mind, however, that these rural fortifications were closely tied in with a rural population living around the cities. These people would have supplied the garrisons with food or other necessities, and sought refuge there in case of danger.

Many of the evidently prehistoric sites appear to have been reused in Hellenistic times, e.g., Beltoja, Mali i Brise, Belaj etc. that have produced Hellenistic ceramics⁴³. These must have been signal posts and as such they need not have been fortified with either towers or better walls. Situated at isolated high-altitude sites, they played no role in military operations, being intended solely for signalization purposes.

This conversion from the tribal territory of the Labeates to the extra-urban territory of Scodra seems very difficult to perceive. Were these rural fortifications built on the frontiers of tribal territory or was their role to protect the *chōra* of a city? Moreover, it is hard to establish clearly the territory of Scodra, as opposed to that of Bushati, for exam-

43 JUBANI 1972; LAHI 1988; LAHI 1993; FISTANI 1983; LULG-JURAJ 2017; KURTI, RUKA 2018, p. 156.

ple. Judging by their topographical position and visibility, the same towers could have played their role for each one of the cities. This fact probably suggests that territorial defence was mostly a policy of a central authority controlling all the cities, that should be the Illyrian King, rather than a policy of a single *polis* like Scodra, Lissos or Bushati. It seems that we are dealing, as in the case of the Iron Age fortifications, with an integrated system of territorial defence, useful to all the cities in Labeatian territory. Thus, with the appearance of urban life in the territory of the Labeates the former tribal space was re-structured according to the needs of the *chôra* of a Hellenistic city.

Military or civil structures?

There has been a trend in recent years to demilitarise the role of rural fortifications⁴⁴. However, in the case of the Labeatian fortifications, the military function of these sites has been privileged in this paper. The reasons for this are several. First, there is no archaeological data coming from these fortification sites that could argue in favour of either agricultural or transhumant activity. Second, all the known fortifications are situated at altitudes between 80 m and more than 400 m above sea level. The terrain is mostly rocky and far from the alluvial plains supporting agriculture around Lake Scodra. Third, the region played a key political and military role throughout the Hellenistic period, especially at the dawn of the Illyrian dynasty of the Ardiaei and during Roman expansion into the Balkans. Neither should one forget the habitual conflict between the Illyrians and the Macedonians with Philip V of Macedonia striving to create a gateway to the Adriatic. He first threatened Apollonia, briefly seized Orikos, then moved north to capture Lissos in 213 BC and threat Scodra⁴⁵.

To conclude, the spatial organization of Labeatian fortifications, all categories combined, testifies—in the author's opinion—to a territorial concept of defence, if not a global defensive policy. There is still much to be done in terms of the exploration of these fortifications, whether to date the better or to

understand better the Illyrian landscape during an important transitory phase from the Iron Age to the Hellenistic period.

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44 MORRIS-PAPADOPOULOS 2005; FACHARD 2016, pp. 209-214 and 224-228.

45 MAY 1946, pp. 48-49.

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SUMMARY: The aim of this study is to present the concentration of urban and rural fortifications in the territory of the Labeates, describe their main technical features and discuss their function in the landscape. About 25 different fortified sites from the Iron Age to the Hellenistic period, have been identified in this territory. However, the article, will limit itself to discussing some representative examples.

The fortifications of three cities will be examined here: Scodra, Bushati and Lissos. These urban fortifications demonstrate the Illyrians' good knowledge of Hellenistic circuit wall building and suggests substantial financial resources at the disposal of their builders.

On the other hand, rural fortifications were the most important part of the Labeatian fortification system. Their role seems mostly to be military. We will try to categorize the rural fortifications by their function, size, geographical position and relation to the landscape. Many of the evidently prehistoric sites appear to have been reused in Hellenistic times. This conversion from the tribal territory of the Labeates to the extra-urban territory of the cities seems very important to point out. Topographical observation suggests that we are dealing with a planned system of fortifications comprising several related sites and not individual and isolated points of defence.

RIASSUNTO: Questo studio si propone di analizzare il sistema di fortificazioni urbane e rurali del territorio dei Labeati, di descrivere le caratteristiche principali dei siti fortificati, le loro tecniche e discutere la loro funzione all'interno del paesaggio. In questo territorio, infatti, sono stati identificati circa 25 siti fortificati databili dall'età del Ferro al periodo ellenistico. In questa sede si limita a trattare alcuni degli esempi più rappresentativi.

Vengono esaminate in dettaglio le fortificazioni di tre città: *Scodra*, *Bushati* e *Lissos*. Queste fortificazioni urbane mostrano un'ottima conoscenza da parte degli Illiri delle tecniche ellenistiche di costruzione di circuiti murari e lasciano trasparire la disponibilità di notevoli risorse finanziarie da parte di questi centri.

Le fortificazioni rurali, d'altro canto, costituiscono la parte più importante del sistema difensivo labeato: il loro ruolo sembra essere principalmente militare. Si propone qui una loro classificazione in base alle funzioni, alle dimensioni, alla posizione geografica e alla loro relazione con il paesaggio. Molti dei siti di certa datazione preistorica sembrano essere stati riutilizzati in età ellenistica. Un punto cruciale che merita di essere sottolineato è il passaggio dal territorio tribale dei Labeati al territorio extraurbano delle città. L'analisi topografica suggerisce che si ha a che fare con un sistema di fortificazioni pianificato che comprende diversi siti tra loro correlati, che non devono essere considerati quali punti di difesa individuali e isolati.

Keywords: Illyrians, Labeates, Scodra Lake, urban and rural fortifications, territorial defence.

Parole chiave: Illiri, Labeati, Lago di Scutari, fortificazioni urbane e rurali, protezione territoriale.