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Saimir Shpuza

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*Nunc decet caput impedire myrto*



# *Nunc decet caput impedire myrto*

## Studies Dedicated to Professor Piotr Dyczek

on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday



edited by Krzysztof Narloch, Tomasz Płóciennik, Jerzy Żelazowski  
in cooperation with Janusz Reclaw

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Solvitur acris hiems grata vice veris et Favoni  
trahuntque siccas machinae carinas  
ac neque iam stabulis gaudet pecus aut arator igni  
nec prata canis albicant pruinis.

Iam Cytherea choros ducit Venus imminente luna  
iunctaeque Nymphis Gratiae decentes  
alterno terram quatiunt pede, dum gravis Cyclopum  
Volcanus ardens visit officinas.

Nunc decet aut viridi nitidum caput impedire myrto  
aut flore, terrae quem ferunt solutae.  
Nunc et in umbrosis Fauno decet immolare lucis,  
seu poscat agna sive malit haedo.

Pallida Mors aequo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas  
regumque turris. O, beate Sesti,  
vitae summa brevis spem nos vetat inchoare longam.  
Iam te premet nox fabulaeque Manes

et domus exilis Plutonia, quo simul mearis,  
nec regna vini sortiere talis  
nec tenerum Lycidan mirabere, quo calet iuventus  
nunc omnis et mox virgines tepebunt.

Ostra zima odchodzi, przez wiatr wiosenny przegnana,  
machiny ciągną suche łodzie do morza,  
odtąd nie cieszy się ogniem wieśniak ni bydło oborą  
i łąki siwym już nie bieleją szronem.

Już przy świetle księżycy Wenus prowadzi orszaki,  
subtelne Gracje wraz z nimfami złączone  
tupią w ziemię na przemian raz jedną, raz drugą stopą,  
gdy Wulkan zwiedza ciemne kuźnie Cyklopów.

Zatem wypada błyszczącą w mirt przystroić dziś głowę  
lub w kwiaty, które ciepła rodzi nam ziemia.  
Złożyć ofiarę Faunowi w cienistym wypada też gaju  
z jagnięcia albo — gdyby tak wolał — z kozła.

Błada śmierć tak samo traktuje królewskie pałace  
jak chłopskie chaty. O, szczęśliwy Sestiuszu,  
krótkie życie nie daje nam żywić długich nadziei.  
Już noc się zbliża, już oczekują Cię Many

w domu ciasnym Plutona: skoro się tam wybierzesz,  
nie będziesz odtąd więcej nalewał nam wina,  
chłopca też tego podziwiał nie będziesz, w którym młodzieńcy  
kochają się dziś już, a wkrótce zaczną dziewczęta.

*Translated by Tomasz Płóciennik*





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## *Ad multos annos!*

Inevitably, a time has come when 65 years — once an abstract moment in the future — turned real. But it makes for a good opportunity to recall and appreciate the foregoing achievements of Professor Piotr Dyczek and ready ourselves for upcoming successes.

Each of us, former rectors of the University signed under this text, followed Professor Dyczek's acquirements, as well as those by his collaborators. This observation began at the turn of the previous century — prolonged acquaintance with archaeologists taught us to measure time in units fitting this discipline — and already span more than twenty years, which amounts to about a half of the Jubilarian's rich professional life. We took pleasure in learning how excavations conducted in the Balkans and near the Black Sea, attended or directed by him in person, resulted in outstanding discoveries. Ancient sites in South-Eastern Europe, entirely unknown to most laypersons, revealed their rich and fascinating history, whereas the scope and intensity of the fieldworks, in combination with Professor Dyczek's determination, led to establishing two permanent archaeological research stations — in Bulgaria and Montenegro.

It is exceptional how much Piotr Dyczek is able to tell about the history of places he investigates — this feature is generally shared by all archaeologists, but to a varying extent. As usually, archaeological details, invisible to an untrained eye, can speak volumes about a given location and historical period as well as unlock knowledge about distant lands, thus shedding light on unknown facets of history. Such was the case, for instance, with the find of golden coins of King Ballaeus which was reported by newspapers and a university periodical, apart from academic publications. He also narrates about his discoveries in a passionate, vivid, and erudite way both during his lectures and casual conversations upon different occasions. It is then that the similarities between the work of an archaeologist and that of a detective become particularly striking. It is to our great satisfaction as representatives of natural sciences that research tools and procedures employed in our laboratories find another use in solving historical riddles. Remembering Professor Dyczek's keen interest in exact sciences in his school days and well-aware of his good orientation in advancements in this field, we rest assured that "our" instruments and measuring methods will, in addition to shovels and brushes, remain typical tools of the trade for him and his colleagues.

It is impossible not to mention two distinguishing features of Piotr Dyczek: his sense of humour and command of many local languages (as well as customs) from the regions of his scholarly interest. These assets are equally priceless during excavations and at the University. For his Jubilee, therefore, we wish him unfaltering optimism, further research ideas, and many more solved riddles!

*Katarzyna Chałasińska-Macukow*

*Marcin Pałys*

*Piotr Węgleński*



## PIOTR DYCZEK



A jubilee of a scholar still in his prime is no time to give rundowns, as it may be expected, especially in the humanities such as archaeology, that the best is yet to come. This notwithstanding, it is still possible to characterise Professor Piotr Dyczek's scholarly career — one marked by distinct consistency and discipline. Upon descending from the Silesian Foothills into the lowland Masovia in 1975, he undertook studies in Mediterranean archaeology at the University of Warsaw and became soon involved in a community of researchers under a profound influence by Professor Kazimierz Majewski (1903–1981). This group consisted of the Professor's students, such as Ludwika Press (1922–2006), as well as fellow scholars, such as Jerzy Kolendo (1933–2014), who appreciated his pioneering works, for instance those on Roman imports in Polish lands. Admittedly, Kazimierz Majewski's students were mostly affiliated with the Institute of History of Material Culture of the Polish Academy of Sciences (renamed to Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology in 1992), co-founded in 1953 by Majewski who also served as its first Director. However, it was at the University of Warsaw where Ludwika Press, already a professor herself by then, continued her mentor's studies on the Aegean civilisation during the Bronze Age — an interest he pursued already in pre-war Lviv. Her numerous books, academic as well as popular, ensured lasting importance of the Aegean world in Polish archaeological studies after the World War II. This would explain why young Piotr Dyczek was sent to the Aegean front — a path he followed successfully for more than a dozen years. In 1980, he delivered a thesis on Aegean amulets and talismans, thus obtaining his MA in archaeology with honours. A decade later, in 1990, still under the tutelage of Ludwika Press and at the University of Warsaw, he got his PhD based on a dissertation about Pylos and settlement in Messenia in the 2nd millennium BC, later published in English as *Pylos in the Bronze Age. Problems of Culture and Social Life in Messenia*, Warsaw 1994.

Nevertheless, Piotr Dyczek is currently associated first and foremost with archaeology of the Balkans, not the Aegean Bronze Age, which should in a way, again, be credited to his mentors. Kazimierz Majewski, through his contacts with Dimităr Dimitrov, initiated the first Polish-Bulgarian excavations in Novae in 1960. They encompassed a Roman camp of the *legio I Italica* by the Danube, near the town of Svištov (Bulgaria). Organisation of the endeavour was managed by the University of Warsaw, in 1970 joined by the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań with an expedition of its own directed by Professor Stefan Parnicki-Pudełko (1914–1994), but with time

it was Ludwika Press who would take the lead in the Warsaw team, which gradually forced her to divide attention between the Aegean fascinations and the archaeology of the Roman *limes*.

Undoubtedly, the excavations at Novae left their mark on Polish Mediterranean archaeology, as testified by thousands of diverse studies on the subject and numerous academic careers built around these issues in both Warsaw and Poznań, such as those of Professor Tadeusz Sarnowski (1945–2019) or Piotr Dyczek whose first visit to Novae dates to 1977, when he was still a student. A lucky turn of events, as it was a breakthrough moment for the Warsaw expedition — a late-antique structure already explored for years, a large residence called “the Building with Porticoes”, turned out to have been erected on top of remains of a military hospital (*valetudinarium*) constructed during Trajan’s Dacian campaigns in the early 2nd century AD. In consequence, Piotr Dyczek goes down in history as the principal investigator of the hospital. By unearthing it in its entirety, he discovered also a little temple of Asclepius and Hygieia situated in a central courtyard of the complex and thus shed new light on the functioning of Roman military camps. Over time, it turned out that below the hospital from the beginning of the 2nd century AD there lay remains of legionary baths from the Flavian Period which elucidated the earliest stage of the stay of the *legio I Italica* in Novae. It is to be hoped that these important discoveries will eventually find their academic manifestation in a future volume of the series *Novae. Legionary Fortress and Late Antique Town*, published by Piotr Dyczek and initiated by Jerzy Kolendo already in 2008.

It should be considered a major achievement by Ludwika Press, especially thanks to her tactfulness and propriety, that she was able to encourage her students to choose their scholarly ways independently. Although Professor Kazimierz Lewartowski, another of Ludwika Press’s “apprentices”, decided to remain faithful to the Aegean civilisation, Piotr Dyczek took a different path and threw himself into the vast realm of the Roman borderland and the military camp by the Danube. In the Polish setting, this choice was actually between desk research and working in the field, so undeniably characterological factors were at play there. Piotr Dyczek has always cherished interpersonal contacts, new acquaintances, and teamwork, an indispensable attitude during excavations. In this context, it is worth noting that after finishing his archaeological studies in 1980 he enrolled to a post-graduate course in journalism at the University of Warsaw. He graduated two years later, in the meantime actively cooperating with local radio stations. It is even more notable, however, that in 1981 the then Rector, Professor Henryk Samsonowicz, entrusted him with the office of Rector’s Plenipotentiary for Students’ Affairs, which he held until 1986, simultaneously being a member of the university’s Senate. By the way, Piotr Dyczek remained actively involved in university life also in the following years, as attested by the fact that he participated twice in the Electoral College voting for Rector of the University of Warsaw, chaired the university’s Ballot-Counting Committee, and undertook numerous other public actions within the academic community.

His penchant for team working in the field, as well as significant organisational skills, quickly allowed Piotr Dyczek to make a name for himself as one of the key figures of the Warsaw expedition at Novae, alongside Tadeusz Sarnowski. A pivotal event came in 1992, when he became Director of the newly-established (1990) Centre for Archaeological Research “Novae”, taking up the baton after Ludwika Press in this generational relay. He has never parted with this independent body within the University of Warsaw meant to foster archaeological research in Novae and contributed vastly to its development. This resulted in renaming the institution to the Antiquity of Southeastern Europe Research Centre of the University of Warsaw in 2007 and in transforming the book series started in 1987, edited by Ludwika Press and focused on showcasing studies

and materials of the Warsaw archaeological expedition, into the regular yearly journal *Novensia*, continuously published to date and devoted to broadly-understood archaeology of the Balkans.

Usually, organisational activity takes its toll on one's research, but in 1999 Piotr Dyczek somehow managed to prepare his habilitation about amphorae from the Lower Danube region and the goods transported in them in the Roman Period. The work was subsequently published in Polish (*Amfory rzymskie z obszaru dolnego Dunaju. Dystrybucja amfor i transportowanych w nich produktów w I–III w. po Chr.*, Warsaw 1999) and English (*Roman Amphorae of the 1st–3rd Centuries Found on the Lower Danube. Typology*, Warsaw 2001), thus paving the way for his further academic career. In 2000, he was made Associate Professor at the University of Warsaw and since 2003 — also the head of the new Department of the History of Material Culture of Antiquity at the Institute of Archaeology of the University of Warsaw, an institution whose name referenced the tradition of Kazimierz Majewski. Later, when the Institute was promoted to the Faculty of Archaeology in 2020, he took the Chair of Classical Archaeology, once more safeguarding the legacy of studies on Antiquity in the Polish capital, only this time with full professorship which he earned in 2013.

Organisational zest combined with scholarly work now seem obvious, but 30 years ago, in Poland at the threshold of the economic transformation of the 1990s, it was controversial. Naturally, these controversies affected Piotr Dyczek, but he could count on unfailing support from Jerzy Kolendo who was a firm believer in the overall positive effect of such managerial approach to academic work and stressed its role in raising quality of discoveries and opening new research avenues.

Since the very start, the excavations in Novae proved to be quite complicated methodologically, due to the complex nature of the legionary fortress which would gradually transform into a late-antique urban centre since the 3rd century AD by adapting earlier architectural structures. In effect, many monuments and relics were discovered in secondary contexts. At the same time, Novae's situation in a borderland region in Lower Moesia, a province showing relatively low degree of Romanisation but with Greek towns by the Black Sea, confronted researchers with complicated cultural entanglements combining influences from various local tribes — Dacian, Thracian, and others — on the provincial-Roman culture with a strong Roman military presence. In consequence, it is no surprise that the scope of Piotr Dyczek's academic activity is marked with exceptional diversity which he has presented for decades at numerous international congresses, starting from the so-called *limes* meetings (*Roman Frontier Studies*) through those focused on Thracian as well as Illyrian cultures, art of the Roman provinces, bronze metallurgy, and Roman weaponry (*Roman Military Equipment Conferences*) to technological and ceramological ones (*Rei Cretariae Romanae Fautores, Late Roman Coarse Wares*). He has also frequently and actively participated in committees of the societies and other bodies organising them. Being the investigator of a military hospital, he could not escape getting involved in military medicine and the everyday life of soldiers stationed in the legionary camp.

Piotr Dyczek keeps looking forward and does not hesitate to take up newer scholarly challenges. It is a recurring trait in field researchers, who tend to dislike looking back, but it is also what brings about fresh and spectacular discoveries. Such approach led to undertaking, among others, the important archaeological investigation in Risan (Montenegro, since 2001), the Graeco-Illyrian capital of Queen Teuta later turned into a Roman *municipium*. They were rich in unexpected findings, such as the hoard of several thousand coins of King Ballaeus from the 2nd century BC or uncovering of large chunks of the Hellenistic urban housing, but above all they engaged

a great variety of research problems related to writing a new history of this multi-cultural centre. This activity found its extension in the works started in 2011 in Shkodra (Albania), yet another Graeco-Illyro-Roman centre, and more recently also in Bushat (Albania), not to mention Centre's long-standing involvement in excavations in Tanais, at the mouth of the Don (Russia), and other sites across the Balkans and the Black Sea region. Such a broad scope of research rendered the Centre under Piotr Dyczek the leading Polish institution promoting archaeological studies in the Balkans, even more so if we remember that the aforementioned excavations have always attracted many students from around Poland and other European countries, thus forging future generations of archaeologists. At the same time, again thanks to Piotr Dyczek's efforts, the University of Warsaw can now boast two permanent research bases in Novae and Risan which create favourable working conditions for students and scholars alike. In this sense, one may say with no exaggeration that he laid a solid foundation for future development of Polish archaeology in the Balkans.

Under Piotr Dyczek's leadership, for nearly 30 years the Centre has been open to new archaeological challenges and international cooperation. For instance, it participated in an international group organising promotion and protection of archaeological heritage within the borders of the Roman Empire whose actions resulted, among others, in including the Antonine Wall in the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage list in 2008 or taking up similar works aimed at protecting the Pannonian section of the *limes*. For years, it partook in different European projects (Tempus, Erasmus, or more recently — EuroTech) stimulating extensive exchange of students and researchers. In consequence, it was no coincidence that in 2007 an Interdisciplinary Doctoral Programme was launched at the Centre and has so far produced several dozen graduates. Dissemination of archaeological research has always been the apple of Piotr Dyczek's eye and it would be impossible to list all his didactic initiatives on European and local levels undertaken within the Open University of the University of Warsaw or in various Polish and foreign media outlets. He is also to be credited for introducing archaeological aspects into forensic studies at the University of Warsaw.

Simultaneously, Piotr Dyczek has proven extremely active in promoting Poland in his regions of investigation. This way, he shares a belief, once common but somewhat forgotten nowadays, that archaeological research actually serves to showcase Poland in other countries and creates a favourable atmosphere for broader cooperation. It is clear in Bulgaria, but especially obvious in Montenegro and Albania — countries particularly open to international collaboration.

Undoubtedly, Piotr Dyczek may look back at his organisational and scholarly achievements with a sense of satisfaction, but at the same time he is going to face a major challenge of ensuring continuity of his accomplishments and the already long tradition of research. Fortunately, he is surrounded by a circle of dedicated collaborators and students, so the future of Polish archaeology in the Balkans can be approached with optimism. It may be summarised that Piotr Dyczek knows how to grab Greek Kairos by the hair, has a fair amount of good fortune, and is an all-round high achiever. But in practice, he owes these feats first and foremost to his hard work and consistency, thus serving as an example of how anyone can be a master of their own fate.

*Martin Lemke*  
*Janusz Reclaw*  
*Jerzy Żelazowski*

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## ORICUM 48 BC. ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE CAESAR'S CIVIL WAR



*Saimir Shpuza*

**Abstract:** The present article focuses on an impact of the Caesar's Civil War on ancient Oricum. The town, provided with two harbours and situated only 80 km to the east of the Italian shores, played a key role as a naval base for the Romans. In Antiquity, it happened to be at the heart of an important battle between the Roman armies of Caesar and Pompey. Caesar himself described in detail the outstanding tactical efforts employed there in both naval and land operations. Recent archaeological investigation conducted within an Albanian-Swiss project confirms the facts transmitted by ancient written sources. A horizon of destruction in the main monuments of the town have been documented, thus testifying to the devastating aftermath of the war and subsequent complete abandonment of the town.

**Keywords:** Oricum, Epirus, Illyria, Caesar's Civil War, Caesar, Pompey

### Introduction

Military operations of the Caesar's Civil War started in January 49 BC and ended in the summer of 45 BC. The main campaigns between Caesar and Pompey took place during the year 48 BC outside of Italy, in the eastern part of the Adriatic, namely the territory of the province of Macedonia. Among the battles, the most known are those of Dyrrhachium,<sup>1</sup> where Caesar tried to encircle Pompey and cut him off from his provisions, and the one at Pharsalus, in Thessaly, which decided the fate of the war in Caesar's favour. However, key military operations between the Roman armies took place at Oricum where outstanding tactical efforts were made in both naval and land operations [Fig. 1].

These important historical events have attracted interest of historians since the 19th century. Léon Heuzey and Honoré Daumet visited the region in order to retrace the ancient battlegrounds of Antiquity. Their missions were supported by Napoleon III, himself very interested in the sites which Caesar had been fighting at. On this occasion, the two scholars visited Oricum in the second half of the 19th century and drew a first sketch plan of the remains of the site as well as surveyed

1 CHLUP 2018.

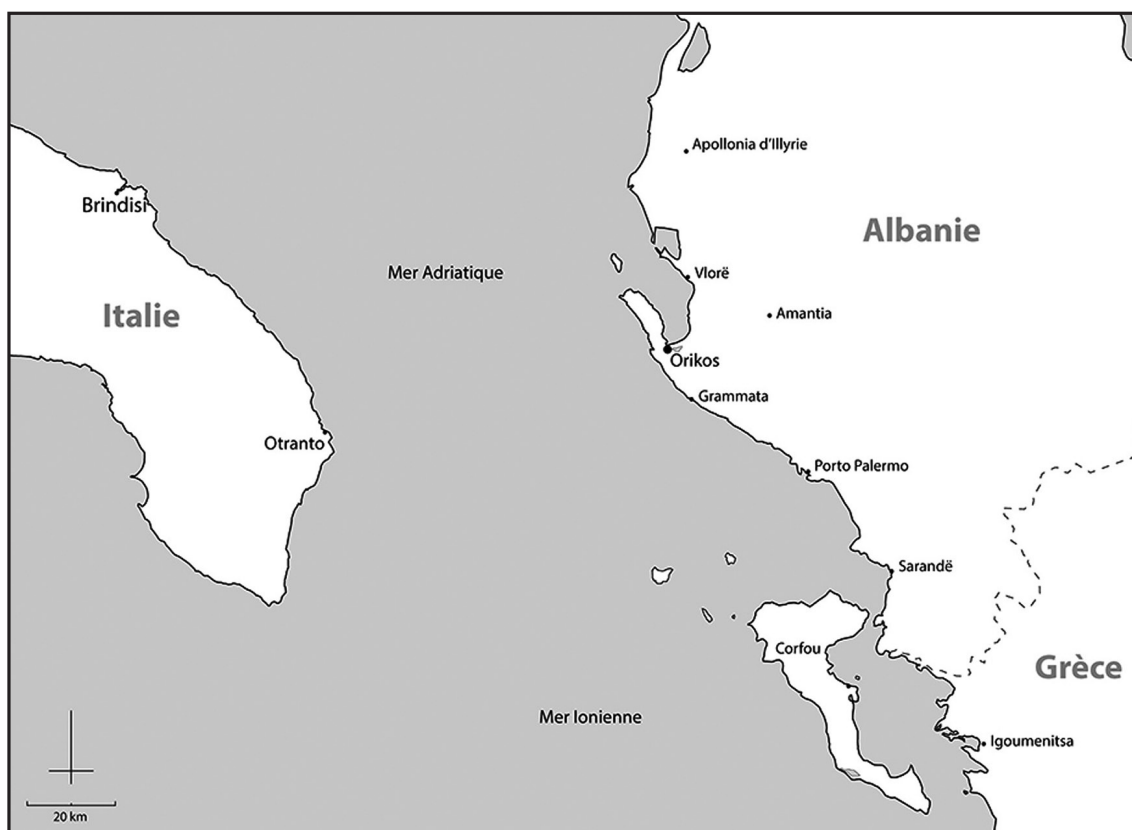


Fig. 1. Map showing the Otranto Strait and the localisation of Oricum (compiled by G. Consagra)

the Acroceraunian Mountains to trace the passages of Caesar's army.<sup>2</sup> The geography of these military operations was investigated with equal care by Georg Veith, an Austrian officer who, among many works on Caesar's military campaigns, wrote a book on the battle between Caesar and Pompey around Dyrrhachium.<sup>3</sup> Recently, Neritan Ceka has gathered further information concerning the places traversed by Caesar in the area around Oricum and the Acroceraunian Mountains.<sup>4</sup>

The ongoing excavations conducted at Oricum by an Albanian-Swiss team has contributed considerably to the understanding of this troubled period which Oricum and its territory went through in the middle of the 1st century BC.<sup>5</sup> The main aim of this article is to implement these operations, known from written sources, to the topography of the site as well as highlight the impact of this overwhelming military presence on the destruction and abandonment of the town [Fig. 2].

2 HEUZEY 1866; HEUZEY, DAUMET 1876.

3 VEITH 1920.

4 CEKA 2011.

5 Originally, the project was initiated by J.-P. Descoudres and V. Bereti. Since 2016, it has been headed by J. Terrier and S. Shpuza. The first excavations (2007–2010) were mainly targeted surveys in different parts of the town and aimed to develop a more precise idea of the topography and chronology of

the site. From 2012, and especially since 2016, the excavations have been amplified and aimed to discover important components of its urban plan (public monuments, fortifications, churches, and houses) over a wide chronology. The current excavations are funded by the Swiss-Liechtenstein Foundation.



Fig. 2. Aerial view of Oricum. In the background — the Gulf of Vlora (Octopus Foundation)

### Geographical position of Oricum and its historical and archaeological background

The geographical location of Oricum, established on a small hill at the Gulf of Vlora, at the foot of the Acroceraunian Mountains, has given it a privileged position on maritime routes in the Adriatic, throughout Antiquity and up to now. The hill overlooks a large lagoon which serves as a hidden port connected to the sea by a narrow channel. The main port, still used today as a naval base, is situated a few hundred metres to the west [Fig. 3]. Oricum is situated in a frontier zone. The Acroceraunian Mountains represent a boundary between Epirus and Illyria as well as between the Adriatic and the Ionian Sea. Oricum is also very close to the Italian shore of Puglia, situated just 80 kilometres to the west. The Otranto Strait separates the two coasts.

Although the ancient sources date the foundation of Oricum (Orikos) by Euboeans to *ca.* 700 BC, archaeological research has shown that the origin of the first occupation of the site stretches back to the 6th century BC.<sup>6</sup> In the 5th century BC, Oricum is mentioned as a harbour (*limen*) by Hecataeus of Miletus.<sup>7</sup> Already by this period, Oricum, beside its maritime importance, controlled a rural territory (*chora*), as mentioned by oracular lamellae found in Dodona.<sup>8</sup> This rural territory corresponds approximately to the Plain of Dukat and to the rich pastures that surround it. No later than the 4th century BC, Oricum had already attained the status of a *polis*<sup>9</sup> and by this time was related to Corcyra through a treaty of *sympoliteia*,<sup>10</sup> in force until the end of the 3rd century BC.<sup>11</sup>

6 For an analyses of the ancient sources on the foundation of Oricum, see BERETI *et alii* 2010, pp. 422–425; BERETI *et alii* 2014, pp. 97–99; CONSAGRA, DESCOEUDRES 2012, pp. 131–134; CIGIME 3, pp. 138–149.

7 Hecataeus, *FGrH* I 106.

8 LHÔTE 2006, no. 54; CIGIME 3, no. 164.

9 Pseudo-Scylax 26.

10 LHÔTE 2006, no. 2; CIGIME 3, no. 165.

11 CIGIME 3, no. 166.



Fig. 3. Aerial view of Oricum and its surroundings (photo by G. Consagra)

Thanks to its particular geographical position, as well as its political and economic relations, the town has often found itself at the crossroads of important political and military events. In 214 BC, Oricum was at the centre of military operations between the Macedonians and the Romans — the town was first occupied by Philip V and then used as a base for the Roman army.<sup>12</sup> Almost two centuries later, the town and its ports were at the heart of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, events on which this paper is focused. The port proved also useful to the Byzantines, as shown by the current archaeological and historical research,<sup>13</sup> as well as to the Ottomans who gave it its current name, Pashaliman. Moreover, it served as a submarine base since the 1950s, during the Cold War, and remains a major naval base in Albania today [Fig. 4].



Fig. 4. The naval base of Pashaliman. In the foreground — the submarines; in the background — the hill of Oricum and the Plain of Dukat (photo by G. Consagra)

12 Livy 24.40.

13 On the recent results on the Byzantine phases of Oricum, see: TERRIER, SHPUZA, CONSAGRA 2017; 2018; 2019. See also PRIGENT 2019.

The ancient urban layout of Oricum can be reconstructed according to the rock-cut marks of ancient houses and roads. The town was built on a small hill on the top of which an acropolis was once situated. The houses were built on the slopes of the hill. On the other hand, the main public monument, known to us until now, was situated on a flat terrace in the eastern part of the town.<sup>14</sup> This urban layout dates probably to the early Hellenistic Period and remained in use until the civil war.<sup>15</sup> Thus, when Caesar visited the town, he saw a small but well-organised urban tissue, with regular orthogonal *insulae* and monumental public buildings [Fig. 5]. However, Caesar does not give details on the town itself. Only the two harbours and the fortifications made their way to his descriptions. Both were the most important military assets of the town. The presence of a secure naval base as well as its proximity to the Apulian coast were the key reasons which compelled Caesar to guard it as a strategic base, together with Apollonia, during all the campaigns of the civil war.

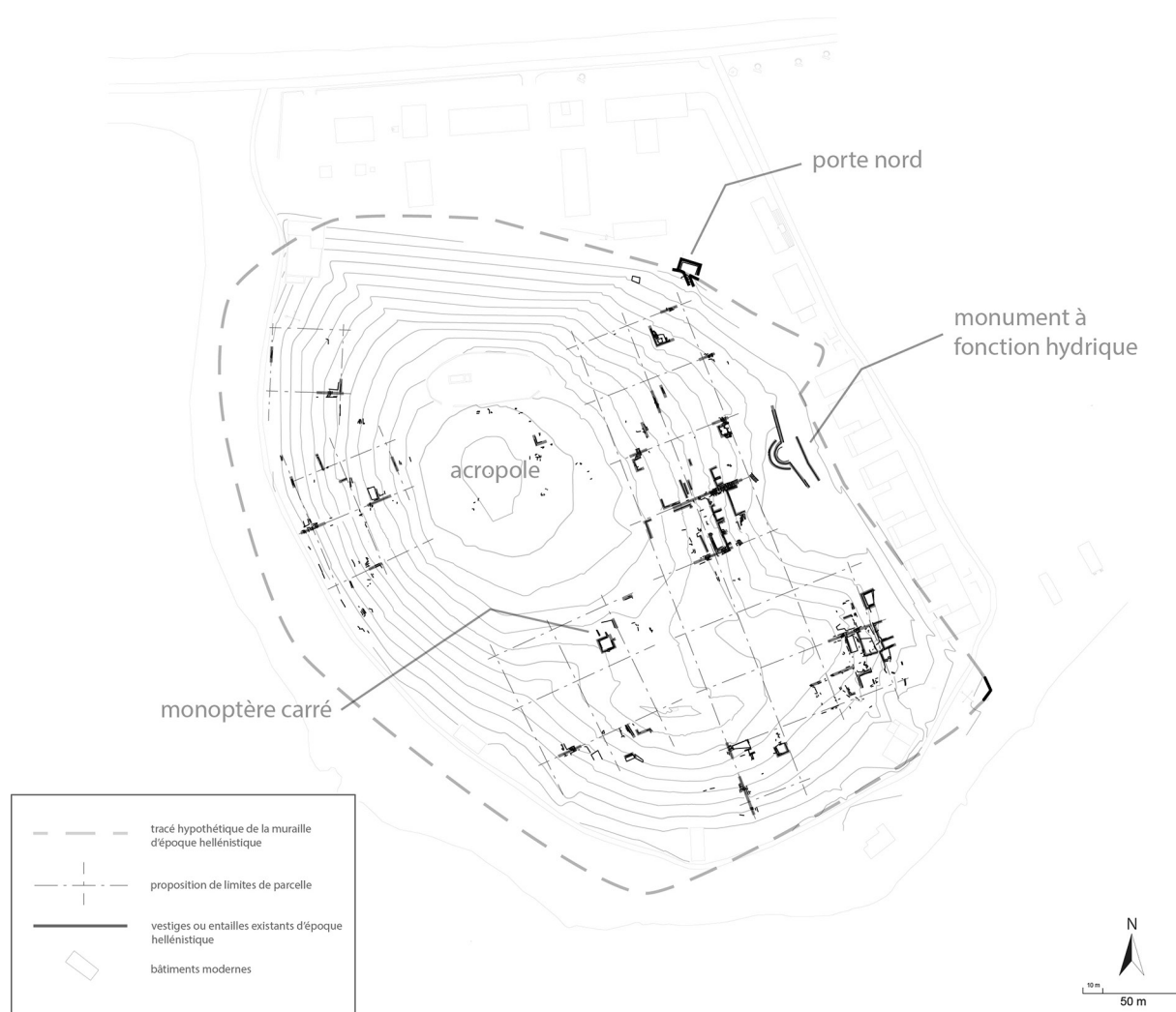


Fig. 5. Urban plan of Oricum during the Hellenistic Period (compiled by S. Shpuza, G. Consagra)

14 On the recent results on the excavation of this monument, see: TERRIER, SHPUZA, CONSAGRA 2020.

15 SHPUZA, CONSAGRA 2019.

## Description of the military operations taking place at Oricum

After leaving Italy, Pompey decided to winter at Dyrrhachium. For that, he had collected a large quantity of grain in order to supply his army. His main intention was to control Apollonia, Oricum, and other coastal towns of the Eastern Adriatic in order to prevent Caesar from crossing the sea. To this end, he distributed his fleet all along the seacoast. His son, the young Gnaeus Pompeius was in command of the Egyptian ships, but the command of his huge navy was placed under Marcus Bibulus.<sup>16</sup> Bibulus himself was stationed at Corcyra where the main headquarters were. As it concerns Oricum, 18 ships were stationed in the Gulf of Vlora under the command of Lucretius Vespillo and Minucius Rufus.<sup>17</sup>

As a response to these measures of Pompey, Caesar was able to build up nine legions of Roman citizens at Brundisium and was expecting two more legions of Scipio from Syria.<sup>18</sup> This army was composed of infantry, cavalry, as well as archers and slingers. Seven of his legions were embarked on a small mercantile fleet by night.<sup>19</sup> They were able to pass unnoticed by Bibulus's patrols and the next day they arrived at a place called Palaeste, situated in the Acroceraunian Mountains, to the south-west to Oricum.<sup>20</sup> Palaeste corresponds with today's Palasa situated in the southern maritime outskirts of Epirus. Apparently, Caesar preferred to avoid a naval battle in front of Oricum and chose to land in a deserted beach. It was probably because his ships had to go back to Brundisium, so that the rest of the legions and the cavalry could be transported.<sup>21</sup> However, a high mountain range, the Acroceraunians (1027 m a.s.l.), separated Caesar's army from Oricum. After landing, Caesar set forth to this town. His troops had to endure a difficult march across a mountain pass [Fig. 6].<sup>22</sup> The town was under the command of Lucius Torquatus who had in it



Fig. 6. Oricum. View from the Acroceraunian Mountains (Octopus Foundation)

16 Caes. *B.Civ.* 3.5.

17 Caes. *B.Civ.* 3.7.

18 Caes. *B.Civ.* 3.4.

19 App. *B.Civ.* 2.54.

20 Caes. *B.Civ.* 3.6.

21 Thirty of these ships were captured by the fleet of Bibulus who decided to burn them irritated by his own negligence which permitted Caesar to cross the Adriatic, see: Caes. *B.Civ.* 3.8.

22 App. *B.Civ.* 2.54.

a garrison of the Parthini. At the time, this Illyrian tribe controlled a large territory in the hinterland of Dyrrhachium and across the valley of Shkumbin (Genusus River). This explains why they were the main local ally for Pompey securing mercenaries, corn supply, as well as protected mobility through the Via Egnatia which passed on their territory and was the main road from Dyrrhachium to Macedonia. Torquatus decided to make a stand and ordered his soldiers to close the gates. On the other hand, the residents of Oricum were opposed to his decision and refused to fight against the Roman authority. Finding himself without support, Torquatus opened the gate and surrendered himself and the town to Caesar.<sup>23</sup> These decisions kept the town safe and unharmed. The same happened also with Apollonia, Byllis, and Amantia, all of which preferred to side with Caesar instead of Pompey.<sup>24</sup>

If these first events kept the town safe from the destructions of war, what followed seems to have been devastating for Oricum. Caesar left three cohorts at Oricum to protect the town, entrusting to them the custody of the warships which he had brought over from Italy. The legate Acilius Caninus was placed in charge of these duties. He withdrew the ships into the inner port of Oricum and sank a merchant-ship to block the mouth of the port and attached to it another ship, on which he constructed a tower, setting it just opposite the entrance of the harbour. This he filled with soldiers.<sup>25</sup> On learning of these proceedings, the young Gnaeus Pompeius, who was in command of the Egyptian fleet, came to Oricum and by great effort drew off the submerged ship with a windlass and a number of ropes and attacked the second ship, which was stationed by Acilius to guard it, with a number of vessels fitted with towers of equal height. This gave his soldiers, which were continuously replaced with fresh combatants, a higher position compared to those of Acilius. Meanwhile, the rest of his troops were attacking the walls of the town at once by ladders from the land and with his fleet. These great efforts, and the overwhelming shower of missiles overcame Caesar's cohorts. In order to attack Caesar's ships installed in the inner harbour of Oricum, in the lagoon, Gnaeus Pompeius had his troops drag four biremes across the breakwater line of earth by placing rollers under them and propelling by crowbars. It is surprising at the end that Caesar did not provide descriptions of the final result of this devastating attack on the town. Appian tells us that Oricum was captured by the Pompeians after this battle!<sup>26</sup> Gnaeus Pompeius is told to have gone to Lissus where he attacked Antony's fleet composed of 30 merchant-vessels and burned them all inside the harbour.<sup>27</sup> Despite the doubts which exist on this matter, it becomes quite clear that after these traumatic events, Oricum was mentioned only sporadically for the rest of the story. The main military events happened around Dyrrhachium until the decisive battle between the adversaries took place at Pharsalus. Afterwards, the town reappears as a base of Caesar's army where he had stationed three cohorts.<sup>28</sup>

The description of the military operations is quite detailed. It is possible to reconstruct schematically the places where these battles occurred. The channel connecting the lagoon with the Adriatic Sea, where Acilius sank one of the ships, is still visible on site, although it silted up over the centuries. On the same time, the breakwater line linking the town of Oricum to the land has remained unchanged. This landline is only a few metres large and the description of the passage of Gnaeus Pompeius biremes along it is practicable. Archaeological research and underwater surveys effectuated so far on the lagoon have not been able to find traces of the inner harbour mentioned

23 Caes. *B.Civ.* 3.11.

24 Caes. *B.Civ.* 3.12.

25 Caes. *B.Civ.* 3.39.

26 App. *B.Civ.* 2.56.

27 However, he was unable to capture the town itself, defended by Roman citizens and Caesar's garrison, see: Caes. *B.Civ.* 3.40.

28 Caes. *B.Civ.* 3.78.

by Caesar. Our research has shown that the coastline of the lagoon has enlarged over the centuries and that structures dating probably to late Antique or early Medieval Period are now underwater.<sup>29</sup> As it concerns the town walls which were attacked by ladders by the Pompeian army, the archaeological research has shown that they must have been quite impressive. One gate and two towers (one of which could have equally served as an artillery platform) discovered so far show elaborated execution and high technical skill [Fig. 7].<sup>30</sup>



Fig. 7. a – Aerial view of the northern gate (photo by G. Consagra);  
b – Aerial view of the southern part of the Hellenistic fortification (photo by G. Consagra)

29 TERRIER, SHPUZA, CONSAGRA 2018, pp. 69–70.

30 On the recent results of the excavations of the fortification wall, see: TERRIER, SHPUZA, CONSAGRA 2020.

## Abandonment of the town after the Civil War?

Archaeology confirms all the monuments known from the Hellenistic Period which were abandoned after the Civil War. This is also corroborated by the general information available on the ceramics found at the site. Excavations in almost all the sectors in Oricum have yielded very few ceramics of the Roman Imperial Period (1st–3rd centuries AD). The only exception concerns the excavations in the south-eastern part of the fortification where a rich layer of late 2nd- and 3rd-century ceramics was found.<sup>31</sup> Data from all the other sectors demonstrate that not only the site was abandoned immediately after the war, but that all the monuments of the town were destroyed.

The excavation of the monopteros situated on the southern terrace of the town has clearly shown that this monument was destroyed *ca.* the mid-1st century BC.<sup>32</sup> A destruction layer covering the pavement was very rich in ceramic material of this period, leaving no doubt on its dating [Fig. 8]. The same can be told also about the monumental area to the east of the town. It includes a multi-functional monument from the Hellenistic Period which, as proven by the ongoing excavations, was out of use by the mid-1st century BC with most of its columns and cornices collapsed [Fig. 9].<sup>33</sup> The excavations on the houses of Oricum which took place in 1991 similarly found no traces of ceramics from the Roman Imperial Period there.<sup>34</sup> All the discovered material was dated to between the 3rd and 1st centuries BC, thus indicating periods of exploitation and abandonment of the houses, respectively. Excavations at the necropolis have discovered only graves belonging to the Hellenistic Period (3rd–1st cent. BC), with no information on the presence of Roman graves whatsoever.<sup>35</sup> Only one inscription written in Latin from Oricum belongs to the Roman Period [Fig. 10]. Its provenance is unclear and it cannot be used as an indication of the presence of a Roman necropolis. The inscription can be dated to between the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, and it mentions a *lictor decurialis*.<sup>36</sup> Such a high administrative rank does not find its place in Oricum,



Fig. 8. a – Orthophotograph of the monopteros (photo by G. Consagra);  
b – Destruction layer on the floor of the monopteros (photo by S. Shpuza)

31 DE MITRI, LOPRIENO 2019.

32 SHPUZA 2014.

33 TERRIER, SHPUZA, CONSAGRA 2020.

34 BERETI 1991.

35 DESIDERI, SHPUZA 2015–2016.

36 CILA, no. 221: *D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum) / T(ito) St(ilio) / P(ri)ato / dec(uriali) lic(tori) / qui fuit hic.*

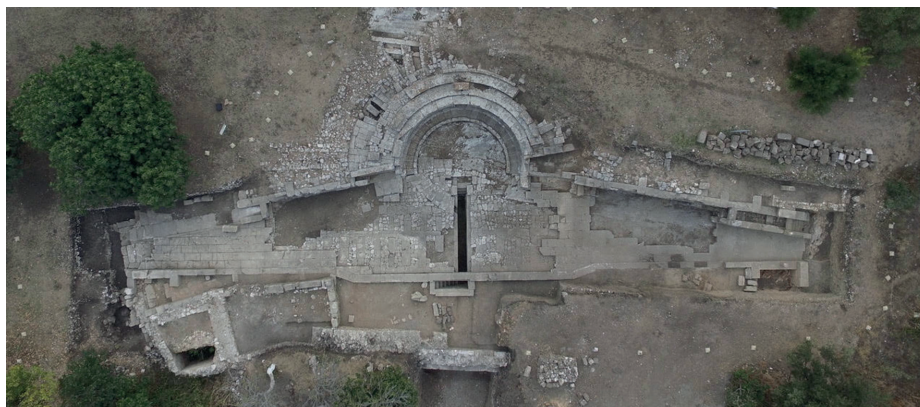


Fig. 9. a – Aerial view of the multi-functional monument of Oricum (photo by G. Consagra);  
 b – Destruction layer witnessing the collapse of the architectural decoration (photo by S. Shpuza)



Fig. 10. Inscription of Titus Statilius Pribatus  
 (photo by S. Shpuza)

where hardly any material and structures of the Roman Period can be found. The inscription is exhibited at the Vlora Historical Museum, but detailed information on the circumstances in which it was found are entirely missing. Thus, it is not impossible that the inscription could have originated in another town, such as Aulona situated a few kilometres to the north of Oricum. In the Imperial Period, Aulona achieved much greater importance than Oricum. The *Tabula Peutingeriana* confirms this supposition. The absence of Oricum and the presence of Aulona is evident. This map also features an Acroceraunian road station to which no archaeological finds can be attributed.

The analysis of the archaeological data suggests that the town was not only abandoned after the battle of the civil war, but also that this process was quite traumatic, as suggested by the destruction layers. The impact of the war on the destruction of the town is equally confirmed by the finds of several ballista balls and projectiles, of different dimensions, found in several areas of the town [Fig. 11]. As mentioned above, slinger cohorts were part of the Caesarian army, while in Caesar's description of Gnaeus Pompeius's attack the use of numerous projectiles (*multitudine telorum*) is mentioned.<sup>37</sup> However, despite the damage caused by this war to Oricum, this should not be the only reason why the ancient town was never rebuilt. The abandonment of towns was a common phenomenon in Illyria at the end of the Augustan Period. Many of the flourishing sites of the Hellenistic Period were deserted and significant demographic shift is perceptible towards the rural territories of the Roman colonies and closer to the main axes of communication.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the war was probably not the only reason which led to the abandonment of Oricum. It has to be admitted that its well-protected harbour was not so important within the framework of the *pax Romana* when the Adriatic Sea became a lake for the Romans.<sup>39</sup>



Fig. 11. Stone ballista balls found at Oricum, 1st century BC  
(photo by S. Shpuza)

37 Caes. *B.Civ.* 3.40.

38 SHPUZA 2016, p. 39.

39 SHPUZA *et alii* 2018, p. 521.

A short text transmitted to us by Flavius Philostratus in the 2nd century AD mentions Herodes Atticus colonising the town of Oricum, which by this period was in decadence.<sup>40</sup> On the one hand, this statement confirms our archaeological data on the degradation of the town's monuments during the Roman Period, but on the other hand no constructions dating to the 2nd century AD have been discovered so far which could have been erected by this important Roman entrepreneur, famous for fountains and monuments of spectacle.

Archaeological data indicate that Oricum regained its importance during late Antiquity, when the site was fortified again in the Justinian Period, and especially during the early Middle Ages. Starting from the 8th and up to the 11th century, an agglomeration, known under the name of Jericho, was built above the ancient ruins, using the Hellenistic monuments as *spolia* for new constructions. A series of seals found at the site suggest that Oricum, and especially its harbour, was very important for the Byzantine administration.<sup>41</sup> In the late Medieval Period, only the church on the top of the acropolis seems to have remained in use.

### The legacy of the Civil War

Despite the fact that Oricum was abandoned after the civil war, Caesar and Pompey both left an important footprint in the area around the town. In the Bay of Grammata, situated to the southwest of Oricum, famous in Antiquity for its quarries and an open-area sanctuary dedicated to the Dioscuri,<sup>42</sup> one can see an inscription left by the young Gnaeus Pompeius and his officers [Fig. 12]. Unfortunately, the inscription is incomplete.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, it represents an exceptional testimony of one of the main actors of the battle of Oricum. Moreover, in the Acroceraunian Mountains the phrase “Pass of Caesar” still functions as a toponym, in a way eternalising the strenuous enterprise

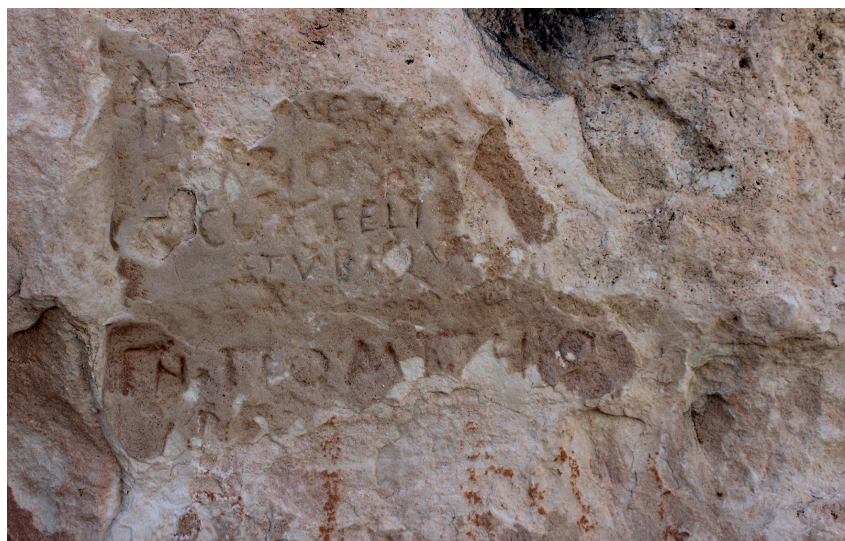


Fig. 12. Inscription of Gnaeus Pompeius at Grammata (photo by S. Shpuza)

40 Philostr. *VS* 551.

41 PRIGENT 2019.

42 HAJDARI *et alii* 2007, pp. 365–370; QUANTIN 2018, pp. 99–101.

43 *CIGIME* 3, no. 187B.

undertaken by Caesar and his soldiers crossing the mountains. In the modern town of Oricum, one can see the names of the roads baptised after Caesar and Pompey. They express the will to connect the locality to these two important personages of Antiquity. No matter who gained the war, they are both treasured in the collective memory of today's Oricum.

### Abbreviations

CIGIME 3 — *Corpus des inscriptions grecques d'Illyrie méridionale et d'Épire*, vol. III, ed. P. CABANES, Athens 2016.

CILA — *Corpus des inscriptions latines d'Albanie*, ed. S. ANAMALI, H. CEKA, E. DENIAUX (= *Collection de l'École française de Rome* 410), Rome 2009.

FGrH — *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, ed. F. JACOBY, Berlin 1923–.

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