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FIELDWORK AT SCODRA 2012

Scodra (Alb. Shkodër¹) lies in northern Albania on the eastern shore of Lake Shkodër. Fieldwork was initiated in 2011,² earlier research was carried out in 1988–1991,³ and on the verge of the 19th and 20th c.⁴

Scodra was the capital throughout Illyria's prime in 3rd c. BC for Agron and his wife Teuta up to the last Illyrian ruler Gentios in the 2nd c. BC. By 168 BC the entire territory was under Roman control.⁵ The town became an important centre of trade and communication, as proven by two inscriptions mentioning *Scodra* as a *colonia*. The first was found years ago in Doclea (not far from Podgorica),⁶ the second – during inventorial works within the castle of *Scodra*, built into a pillar of a cistern. The latter was cleaned and documented during the first campaign by the Antiquity of Southeastern Europe Research Centre in 2011.⁷

Throughout the second campaign (9 May – 7 June 2012), fieldwork was concentrated on the area of the castle hill of Rozafa, which is towering 130 m above the surrounding plain and peninsula. The fortress, as it is visible today, was erected by George II Balšić, Lord of Zeta, and subsequently modified under Venetian and Ottoman rule. Folklore mentions a legendary woman the castle was named after, while modern research points to a Near Eastern pro-



venience of its name.⁸ The singular topography of the castle hill was already described by Livy, who wrote it was the strongest (*munitissima*) of the Illyrian castles and difficult to reach (*difficilis aditu*).⁹ Consequently, the castle hill holds the key to the entire region. The earliest remains date back

¹ For clarity, the Latin version *Scodra* of the town's name will be in use throughout the article. German and Italian sources will often employ the variations Scutari or Skutari, the Polish form is Szkodra.

² See: M. LEMKE, *Fieldwork at Scodra 2011*, "Światowit" IX (L)/A (2011), 2012, 209–214.

³ By G. Hoxha in 1988–1991. Cf. G. HOXHA, *Muri rrethues i priudhës së vonë Antike në qytetin e Shkodrës*, "Illyria" 1–2, 1994, 231–247

⁴ C. PRASCHNIKER, A. SCHÖBER, *Archäologische Forschungen in Albanien und Montenegro*, Schriften der Balkankommission. Antiquarische Abteilung VIII, Wien 1919, 8–10; A. EVANS, *Antiquarian Researches in Illyricum*, Westminster 1883.

⁵ POLYBIUS, *Histories* 28.8; LIVY, *Ab Urbe condita* 44.31. For a history of Illyria see: J. WILKES, *The Illyrians*, Oxford 1995, 156–180;

idem, *Dalmatia*, Cambridge 1969, 13–36; D. DZINO, *Illyricum in Roman Politics 229 BC – AD 68*, Cambridge 2010, esp. 18–60.

⁶ CIL III 12695, cf. III, p. 2253 = ILS 7159.

⁷ Together with our Albanian colleagues under the supervision of Dr Saimir Shpuza. Cf. M. LEMKE, *Fieldwork at Scodra 2011...*; J. ŻELAZOWSKI, *A New Inscription of V(ir) E(gregius) Ducenarius from Scodra*, forthcoming.

⁸ Rozafa stemming from Resefa, a town in the Near East. Cf. G. HOXHA, *Scodra dhe Praevalis në antikitetin e vonë (Scodra and Praevalis in Late Antiquity)*, Shkodër 2003, 179–181. For the legend see: M. BARLETI, *The Siege of Shkodra. Albania's Courageous Stand against Ottoman Conquest*; translated and edited by David Hosaflook, Tirana 2012, 259–262; M. LEMKE, *Scodra. Tajemnicza stolica Ilirów*, "Archeo UW" 1, 2013, 56–65.

⁹ LIVY, *Ab Urbe condita*, 44.31.



Fig. 1. Trench 5, from NW (Photo M. Lemke).
Ryc. 1. Wykop 5, widok z NW.

to Illyrian times and are built in a very characteristic mortarless masonry. Throughout the centuries and under different leaders, the fortress was besieged many times but never conquered.¹⁰

Six probing trenches were dug in various promising parts of the castle. In continuity with the previous campaign, these trenches were numbered 5, 6, 7, 11, 12 and 13, with numbers 8 through 10 being additional trenches at the foot of the castle hill. Sediment has accumulated on the hilltop, although the scarcity of antique remains whatsoever suggests that the area was thoroughly cleaned by some of the architects of the medieval fortress, leaving only those Cyclopean walls in place which were meant to serve as

foundations for structures under construction.¹¹ Most of the trenches revealed human bones, quite likely from improvised graves dug during one of the numerous sieges of the castle. Most of the small finds are Ottoman or Venetian in origin. These encompass various types of clay smoking pipes and examples of fine glazed medieval pottery. However, antique pottery was also found, giving proof of the – reasonably assumed – presence of the Illyrian and Roman phase of the castle.

The first trench (No. 5) (**Fig. 1**) with a size of 5×5 m was located on the highest courtyard of the castle, in front of the headquarters of the Venetian governor and

¹⁰ For an overview see: M. LEMKE, *Škodra—legenda wielu epok*, "Archeologia Żywa" 58, 2011, 14–19; T. IPPEN, *Skutari und die nordalbanische Küstenebene*, Sarajevo 1907, 16–24; S. LUZATI, *Bauten und Architektur in Škodra: Niedergang einer nordalbanischen Metropole*, (in:) E. SAMINI, *Albanien – zwischen Kreuz*

und Halbmond, Innsbruck 1998, 242–256. On the castle: C. PRASCHNIKER, A. SCHÖBER, *Archäologische Forschungen...*, 8–10. Specifically for the siege: M. BARLETI, *The Siege of Škodra...*

¹¹ A. EVANS, *Antiquarian Researches...*, 83.



Fig. 2. Location of Trenches 6 and 7 (Photo M. Lemke).
Ryc. 2. Lokalizacja wykopów 6 i 7.

the arsenal. Bedrock was reached surprisingly soon here, at a depth of 1.5–2 m. No architectural structures whatsoever could be discovered and very few fragments of antique pottery were found. Moreover, the prominent and uneven bedrock does not suggest the former presence of buildings here. The layers consisted of earth mixed with mortar, pebbles and small stones – classic rubble.

A double trench (Nos. 6, 7) (Fig. 2), measuring 5×3 m each, divided by a 60 cm stratigraphic baulk was laid out on the opposite side of the main way leading into the gatehouse. The trench was situated on a possible prolongation of the Cyclopean wall on top of which the gatehouse was built. However, the prolongation was not found and bedrock appeared rather quickly. Here a number of 4 skeletons was found in rather crudely built graves, along with ample amounts of Turkish Ottoman pottery (Fig. 3).

On the opposite side of the mountain's gently sloping arête, Trench 11 (Fig. 4), measuring 5×3 m was located, not far from the entrance to the castle chapel. This trench rendered both interesting structures as well as the largest amount of antique material from the hilltop. A circular structure made of medium sized unhewn stones, possibly a hearth, was discovered. A crossing of two walls, ca. 70 cm wide was also found. The masonry suggests a possible pre-

-Venetian dating. The bedrock here is very uneven, with many small hollows, in which deposits of antique pottery were found (Fig. 5).

Trench 12 on the wide northern court, not far from the “Tower of Balshaj”, provided the most material, but predominantly Ottoman pottery from the 16th–19th c. Understandably, extensive layers of rubble dominated the upper part. These layers also included scattered human bones, possibly some sort of *ossuarium*. At a depth of ca. 2.5 m, a number of walls was discovered, together with a clay floor. The artefacts include some well-preserved Venetian vessels (Fig. 6).

Trench 13 was dug in the north-eastern part of the castle, near the main entrance. A skeleton was protruding from the northern trench wall. Two walls with a width of 70 cm were found at a depth of about 2 m, although bedrock was not reached here in this season. At the bottom, a platform of stones was discovered, most likely to level the bedrock here for building. Future research should reveal the dating of these structures. Among the finds was a small adorned earring of bronze wire (Fig. 7).

Fieldwork also took place at one location at the foot of the castle hill, not far from the banks of the River Drin (Fig. 8). Just like in the earlier season, research was



Fig. 3. Small bowl, Ottoman pottery, from Trench 6 (Photo J. Reclaw).

Ryc. 3. Niewielka czarka, ceramika osmańska, z wykopu 6.



Fig. 4. Trench 11, from SE, with remains of a hearth (?) (Photo M. Lemke).

Ryc. 4. Wykop 11, widok z SE, widoczne pozostałości paleniska (?).

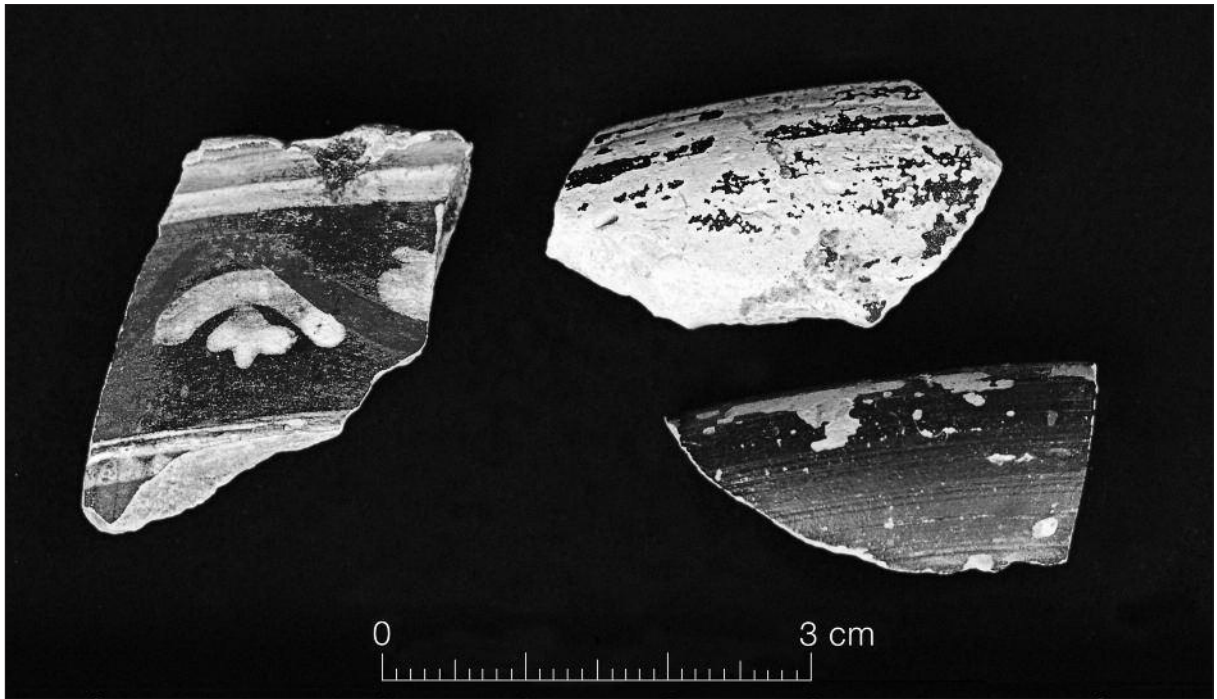


Fig. 5. Antique black gloss pottery, from Trench 11 (Photo J. Reclaw).

Ryc. 5. Antyczna ceramika czarnopokostowana, z wykopu 11.

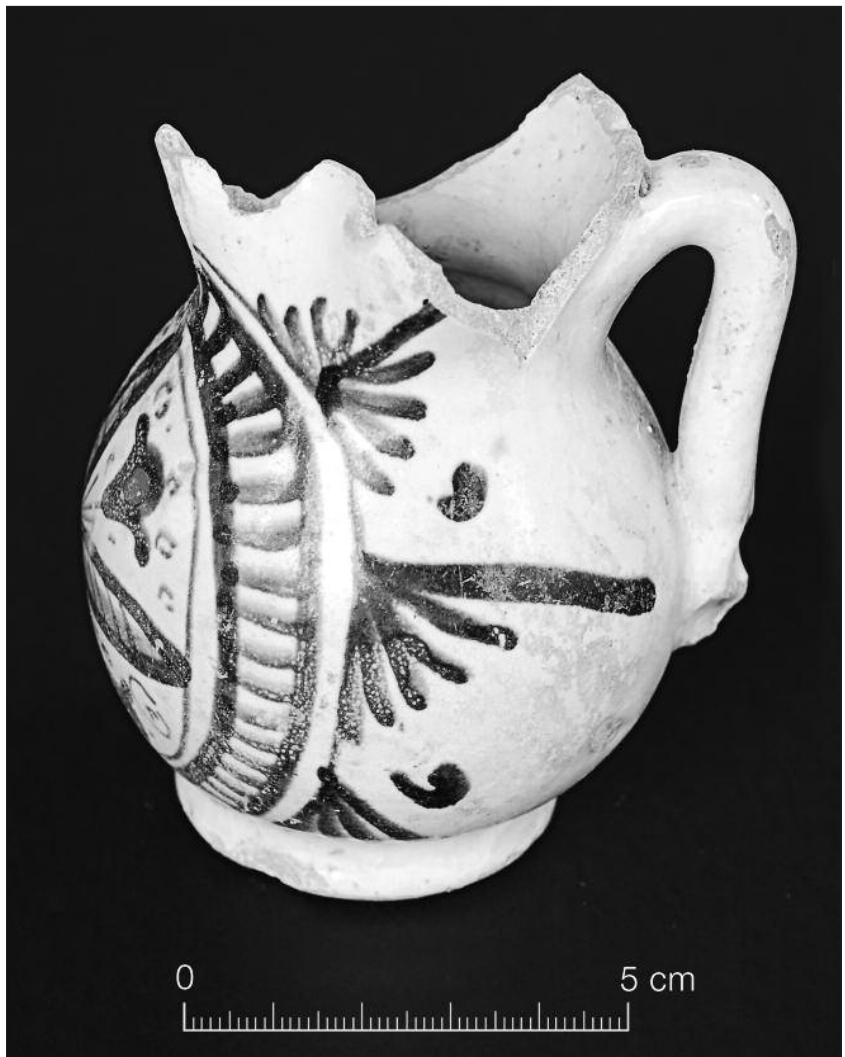


Fig. 6. Small Venetian jug, from Trench 12 (Photo J. Reclaw).

Ryc. 6. Mały dzbanek wenecki, z wykopu 12.

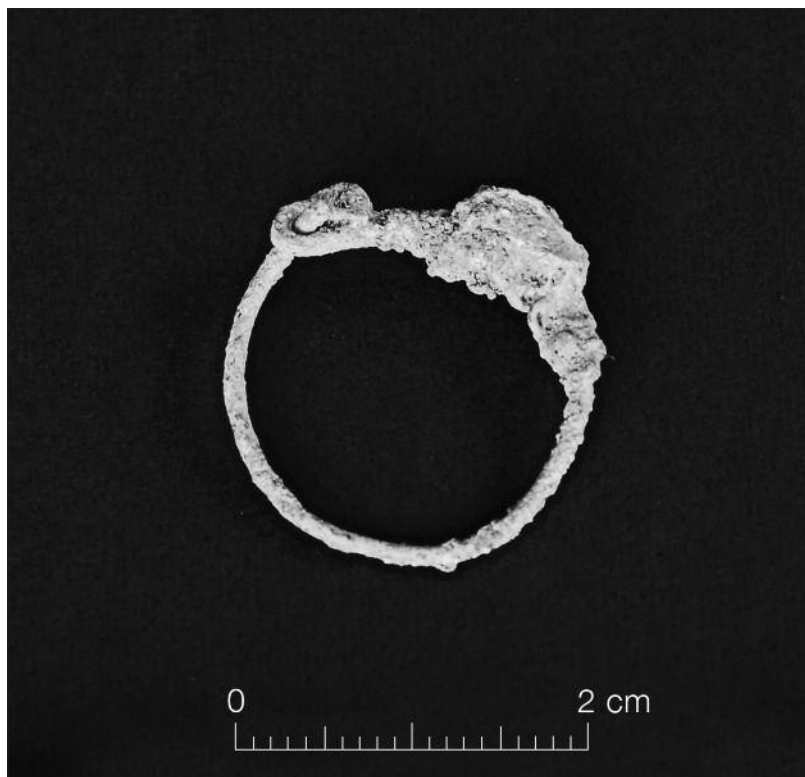


Fig. 7. Earring, bronze wire, from Trench 13 (Photo J. Reclaw).
Ryc. 7. Kolczyk z brązowego drutu, z wykopu 13.



Fig. 8. Trenches 8, 9, 10, view from the castle hill (Photo M. Lemke).
Ryc. 8. Wykopy 8, 9 i 10, widok ze wzgórza zamkowego.

rendered difficult because of the thick alluvial layers and emerging ground water. The estimated amount of alluvial sediment stacked up during the last 150 years equals about 2 m.¹² The three trenches (Nos. 8, 9, 10) were all in a line, measuring 5×3 m. Here, a single wall was uncovered in Trench 8, stemming most likely from the time, when the Lead Mosque nearby was built in the late 18th c. Apparently, the area was abandoned, when the Drin changed

its course in 1859,¹³ resulting in a regular flooding of the grounds.

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BADANIA TERENOWE W SCODRA W 2012 R.

Podczas drugiej kampanii w Scodra (09.05–07.06), prace Ośrodka Badań nad Antykiem Europy Południowo-Wschodniej UW skupiały się na wierzchołku wzgórza Rozafa, gdzie stoi dziś potężna forteca wenecka.

Założono sześć wykopów sondażowych w “obiecujących”, taktycznie ważnych, miejscach na wzgórzu, które – zachowując ciągłość z poprzednią kampanią – otrzymały numery 5 (**Ryc. 1**), 6, 7 (**Ryc. 2**), 11 (**Ryc. 4**), 12 i 13, podczas gdy wykopy 8, 9 i 10 znajdowały się u podnóża Rozafy (**Ryc. 8**). Przez kolejne stulecia na wzgórzu miała miejsce naturalna akumulacja sedymentów. Zaskakująco rzadkie i nieliczne występowanie materiału starożytnego sugeruje jednak, że podczas budowy średniowiecznej fortecy dokonano starannej niwelacji i usunięto z powierzchni skały wcześniejsze pozostałości. W większości wykopów odkryto

kości ludzkie, będące przypuszczalnie pozostałościami pochopionych pochówków, dokonanych podczas któregoś z licznych oblężeń twierdzy w czasach nowożytnych. Większość zabytków jest pochodzenia weneckiego lub osmańskiego (**Ryc. 3, 6**). Odkryto jednak także ceramikę antyczną, będącą dowodem dawnej obecności Ilirów i Rzymian w tym miejscu (**Ryc. 5**).

W trzech wykopach nad rzeką Drin (**Ryc. 8**), podobnie jak podczas kampanii w 2011 r., należało przekopać się przez ponad 2 m sedymentu aluwialnego nagromadzonego przez ostatnie 150 lat, odkąd rzeka Drin w 1859 r. zmieniła bieg. Poniżej aluwii odkryto kilka struktur pochodzących prawdopodobnie z drugiej połowy XVIII w., kiedy w pobliżu budowano tzw. Ołowiany Meczet.

¹² Cf. M. LEMKE, *Fieldwork at Scodra 2011...*

¹³ K. JIRIČEK, *Skutari und sein Gebiet im Mittelalter*, (in:) L. von

Thallóczy (ed.), *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, vol. I, München – Leipzig 1916, 94–151, esp. 102–103.