A Sanctuary in the Hora of Illyrian Apollonia

Excavations at the Bonjakët Site (2004–2006)

Edited by
Jack L. Davis, Sharon R. Stocker, Iris Pojani, and Vangjel Dimo

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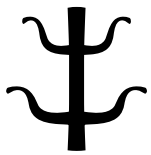

LOCKWOOD PRESS
COLUMBUS, GEORGIA
2022

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ISBN 978-1-937040-93-2

Cover design by Susanne Wilhelm.
Cover image: Limestone stele from the Bonjakët site depicting the goddess Artemis.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Davis, Jack L., author. | Stocker, Sharon R., author. | Pojani, Iris, author. | Dimo, Vangjel, author.
Title: A sanctuary in the hora of Illyrian Apollonia : excavations at the Bonjakët site (2004–2006) / Jack L. Davis, Sharon R. Stocker, Iris Pojani, Vangjel Dimo.
Description: Columbus, GA : Lockwood Press, 2022. | Includes bibliographical references.
Identifiers: LCCN 2020002944 | ISBN 9781937040932 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781937040949 (adobe pdf)
Subjects: LCSH: Apollonia (Albania : Extinct city) | Excavations (Archaeology)—Albania—Apollonia (Extinct city) | Illyrian antiquities.
Classification: LCC DR998.A66 D38 2020 | DDC 939/.865—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020002944

This paper meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (Permanence of Paper).

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Preface

THE BONJAKËT SITE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Jack L. Davis, Sharon R. Stocker, Vangjel Dimo, and Iris Pojani

In the years 2004–2006, a joint team from the International Centre for Albanian Archaeology in Tirana, Albania, the Institute of Archaeology in Tirana, and the University of Cincinnati conducted excavations in the plain west of the walls of the ancient Greek colony of Apollonia, a short distance to the southwest of the modern village of Pojan (Figs. 0.1, 0.2, and 1.3). The site lies almost entirely within a complex of farm buildings known locally as Bonjakët. The excavation was a continuation of a research project conducted under the auspices of the Mallakastra Regional Archaeological Project (MRAP) from 1998 to 2002.[1]

Results were particularly rewarding since a previously unknown monumental temple was discovered and documented; this work has made it possible to describe the rich history of ancient cult practice at the site. The Greek temple, which appears to have been built in the Late Classical period, is only the third to be found at Apollonia.[2]

MODERN SETTING OF THE ANCIENT REMAINS

The complex of modern buildings at Bonjakët consists of two principal dwellings that were occupied by 14 individuals at the time of our excavations; all were members of two extended families, descended from Hamdi and Sejdi Bonjakët, brothers who, in 1928, in the time of Ahmet Zogu, migrated to the Pojan area from Kosovo (Figs. 0.3 and 0.4).[3] The brothers built houses, one of which, although no longer occupied as a residence, still defined the northeastern side of the present Bonjakët compound.

1. Davis et al. 1998, 2006, 2007; Galaty et al. 2004; Runnels et al. 2004; Stocker 2009.

2. The only monumental Greek temple that stands today at Apollonia is the Doric building at Shtyllas, situated on a knoll immediately southeast of the polis center (see, most recently, Quantin 1996; Lenhardt and Quantin 2007, pp. 322–331); the date of its construction is unclear, as is the divinity to whom it was dedicated, although Artemis has been suggested (Lenhardt and Quantin 2007, p. 331). In addition, foundations of a building excavated on the lower acropolis of the city (Hill 104) have been tentatively identified as a temple to Artemis (Praschniker 1922–1924, cols. 35–40; Ceka 1958, p. 217; Dimo, Lenhardt, and Quantin 2007b, pp. 243–244, 246). Elsewhere in Albania, in 2001, a previously unknown temple was located at Spitalla near ancient Epidamnus/Dyrrachium (modern Durrës, hereafter Dyrrachium when in reference to the ancient city; Davis et al. 2003, pp. 61, 80–81). It has now been excavated in the course of several campaigns (Lafe 2004–2005, p. 124), and, in 2003, a second similar temple was found several kilometers farther north at Bisht i Pallës (Ndrenika and Booth 2007, pp. 51–53).

3. Zogu was president (1925–1928), then king (1928–1939) of Albania.

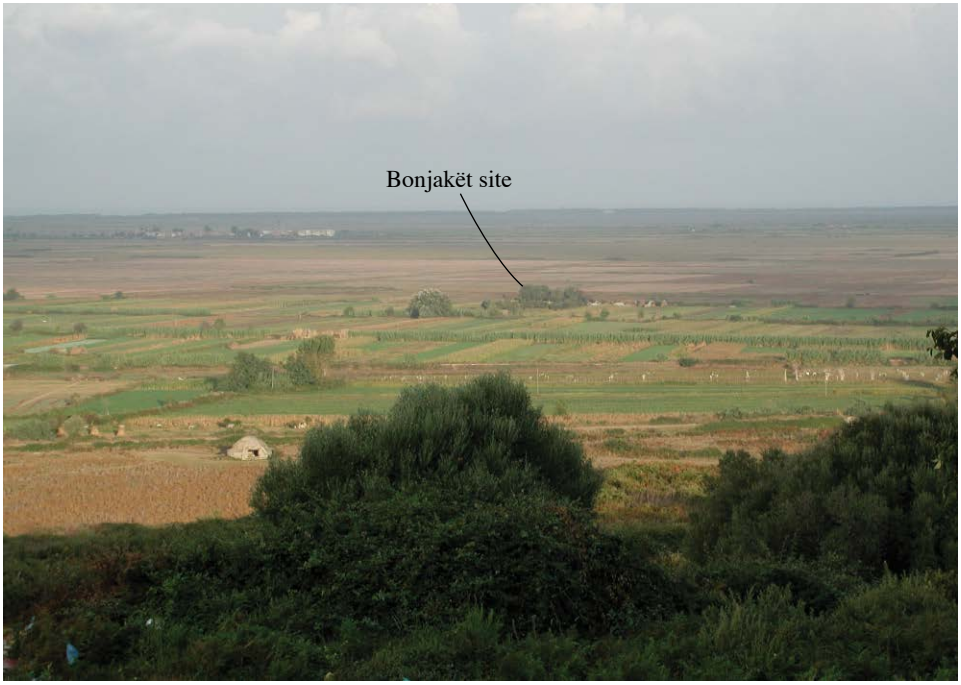

Figure 0.1. The Bonjakët site viewed from the Apollonia acropolis. Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati

Figure 0.2. View of the Apollonia acropolis from the Bonjakët site in 1960. Courtesy Institute of Archaeology, Tirana

Figure 0.3. The Bonjakët compound in 1960. Courtesy Institute of Archaeology, Tirana

Figure 0.4. The Bonjakët compound in 2004. Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati

Figure 0.5. Cleaning the mosaic in 1960. Courtesy Institute of Archaeology, Tirana

In 2003, members of our team became aware of plans being formulated by the Ministry of Transportation of Albania to improve communications between Tirana and Vlora. An extension to the national highway of Albania was planned that would bypass the city of Fier. The highway would run west of the acropolis of Apollonia, through its lower city and cemeteries, and would clip the eastern edge of the site of Bonjakët. In one fell swoop, a quiet, isolated, and largely vacant rural landscape would be exposed to the hustle and bustle of economic development.

Immediate action was required. Steps were taken to inform the Ministry of Transportation and other relevant parties in Tirana that extensive damage would be done to the antiquities of Apollonia should the highway be constructed along the proposed course. At the same time, an initiative was taken to mitigate the losses that would be incurred if the road was built as planned: excavations at the Bonjakët site began in September 2004, and, shortly thereafter, fields along the proposed route of the highway were intensively surveyed, and test excavations were initiated by the rescue unit of the International Centre for Albanian Archaeology in Tirana.

THE BONJAKËT SITE IN ITS LANDSCAPE

The results of our archaeological investigations at the Bonjakët site reinforce those of geological studies previously conducted in the plain west of the acropolis of Apollonia. Eric Fouache and his colleagues had identified several ancient beach fronts there, concluding that, during "toute l'Antiquité la plaine littorale se limite au piémont des collines molassiques, à une bande de deux à trois kilomètres de large qui borde des marécages et des lagunes séparées de la mer par un cordon sableux." This landscape remained relatively stable from the 7th century B.C. until the 7th century A.D.[4] The discovery in his core PS3 of a beach contemporary with the Greek colony allows the reconstruction of an ancient coastline in a position that is only ca. 1 km to the west of the Bonjakët site.

4. Fouache et al. 2004, p. 259.

An ancient coastline in this position is, in fact, precisely what has been predicted on the basis of intensive survey.[5] It is also clear that by the Hellenistic period, a substantial suburb had been established outside the walls of the city in a 1 km-wide coastal plain west of the acropolis of Apollonia.[6] Concentrations of ancient artifacts extend only a bit more than 1 km west of the acropolis walls before stopping abruptly at a point where the elevation of the plain becomes almost imperceptibly lower. It is likely that this falloff in density marks the edge of what in antiquity had been lagoons and marshes lying between Apollonia and the open sea.[7]

THE EXCAVATIONS IN BRIEF

We were drawn to the Bonjakët site by finds made in the course of surface investigations in 2002. Later we discovered that there had already been excavations at the site in 1960 (Fig. 0.5).[8] Three campaigns (2004–2006) then set those discoveries in a broader cultural context, adding greatly to what was known about the area west of the Apollonia acropolis. The recent excavations have also emphasized the extraordinary and singular importance of the Bonjakët site for our understanding of the first centuries of Greek colonization in the Adriatic.

A large stone temple was built at the Bonjakët site in the Late Classical period. Its foundation courses of sandstone were well preserved, but only scanty fragments of a limestone and marble superstructure remained. Soundings beneath the level of the foundations of the temple have provided a glimpse of ritual practice as early as the last quarter of the 7th century B.C. Worshippers dedicated many exotic objects at the temple, including some made of metal and glass; many of the artifacts find close parallels at the sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia and in the sanctuary of Hera at Perachora. In the Archaic period the sanctuary stood in isolation from the colony of Apollonia; surface survey suggests that the plain was relatively uninhabited at that time.

We cannot be certain about the deity or deities worshipped at this temple. Considering the location of the sanctuary, which likely defined the territory of Apollonia at its western extreme, it is possible to propose that Artemis was the divinity worshipped there.[9] Indeed, a stele, which we found immured in the wall of a Roman building southeast of the sanctuary, bore a depiction of Artemis with a torch, and a dedicatory inscription named her.[10] Still, the hundreds, if not thousands, of Hellenistic terracotta figurines depicting paired male and female reclining banqueters, many accompanied by a figure of Eros, may point to the worship of a divinity such as Aphrodite.[11] A Roman mosaic was uncovered nearby.

5. Davis et al. 2006; on the likely position of these lagoons, marshes, and the coastline of the Adriatic in antiquity, see Fouache 2002, p. 19, fig. 9; Fouache et al. 2004, p. 257, fig. 9; and Fouache 2007, pp. 3–13, fig. 7.

6. Davis et al. 2007, pp. 13–23.

7. Stocker 2009, p. 4, no. 12, and pp. 657–673.

8. This history of exploration is thoroughly documented in Chapter 1.

9. Davis et al. 2006. On sanctuaries in Albania similarly placed in liminal positions, see Davis et al. 2003, pp. 69–70 and n. 68; Quantin 1996.

10. See Chapter 3, this volume, for a discussion of the find context of the stele in trench 06T/07T/08T/09T. For the stele, see also Davis et al. 2006, fig. 4. We thank Peter van Minnen for offering us his opinion on the date of the inscription. Concerning other dedications to Artemis at Apollonia, see Robert 1950, pp. 70–73; see also Cabanes 1986, pp. 153–154. Cabanes, who published a relief from Apollonia dedicated to Artemis Limnatis, suggested that her sanctuary was located in the lower part of the city, perhaps even outside the walls "dans la zone des maris qui bordaient l'embouchure de l'Aoos...," and should be distinguished from a temple of Artemis Proscopa, which he identifies with the foundations found by Leon Rey on Hill 104 at Apollonia (1986, pp. 152–153; see also Quantin 2004, p. 596, who exhaustively surveys evidence for the cult of Artemis at Apollonia). Cabanes's is an attractive suggestion, and it can be imagined that worship at the Bonjakët site was associated with Artemis Limnatis. The location of the sanctuary would be appropriate (see Cole 2004, pp. 178–197, on "landscapes of Artemis"). It is, however, far from clear that the relief found near the Bonjakët site depicts Artemis Limnatis. The presence of a torch is of little help since another representation from Apollonia with the same attribute is identified as Artemis Agrota. Moreover, firsthand examination of the stele suggested to François Quantin (pers. comm. May 30, 2005; see also Quantin 2007, p. 321) that the goddess represented was Artemis Soteira, rather than Artemis Limnatis. He writes: "J'ai fait un estampage de l'inscription, ce qui ne rend pas la lecture plus claire. Il me semble que nous avons deux lettres rondes au début de l'épiclèse, peut-être un sigma lunaire et un oméga, ce qui permettrait de proposer l'épiclèse Sôteira, ou Sôtèra, ce qui conviendrait parfaitement avec la torche."

11. See discussion by Dimo et al. 2007, who, after Quantin 1996, also suggest a cult of Aphrodite on the basis of the figurines—without, however, excluding Artemis.

Clearly much work remains to be done. Only a fraction of the temple foundations has been cleared, and the Archaic deposits beneath them are still largely untouched. Remains earlier than the end of the 7th century B.C. may yet be found. Because the Bonjakët compound is an active farm, the progress of our excavation was slowed by the necessity of respecting the rhythms of the daily life of the residents, and we consequently had to backfill trenches at the end of each campaign. A visitor to Bonjakët thus sees nothing of our results—a pity since the site and its finds have potential value as a tourist attraction, especially if they can be presented within the overall program of the national park of Apollonia.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to Dr. David W. Packard and to the Packard Humanities Institute for funding our excavations in all three seasons, a study season in 2007, and during the initial stages of preparation of this publication in 2007–2009. We thank the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute for Aegean Prehistory, and the National Geographic Society for their support of MRAP, and the Semple Fund of the University of Cincinnati for assistance provided to MRAP and the Bonjakët Excavations. We also thank Marin Hadjimihali, director of the National Park of Apollonia, for allowing us to use his offices as workspace in 2007. Our research also benefited in many ways from the collegiality of our friend Richard Hodges.

Excavations at Bonjakët were conducted in 2004, as an extension of the research pursued by MRAP, with the kind permission of the director of the Institute of Archaeology in Tirana, Muzafer Korkuti. In 2005–2007, the project was authorized under its own permit. Fieldwork was codirected by Iris Pojani, Vangjel Dimo, Sharon R. Stocker, and Jack L. Davis. Evi Gorogianni served as field director, Tammie L. Gerke as geoarchaeologist, and Kathleen M. Lynch was responsible for the study of the pottery. Participants in the project included Natalie Abell (2006, 2007), Catherine Alexander (2005–2007), Susan Allen (2005), Christian Cloke (2006), Sarah Dieterle (2005), Arjan Dimo (2006, 2007), Kori Duncan (2004), Rexhep Halili (2004), Elio Hobdari (2004, 2005), Julie Hruby (2007), Gentjana Kosturi (2005), Genci Kotepano (2004, 2006), Ols Lafe (2004, 2005), Mustafa Laze (2005), Sarah Lima (2005, 2006), Anton Lulgjuroj (2006), Jonida Martini (2006, 2007), Ethan McGory (2006), Megan McNames (2006, 2007), Spiro Nika (2005, 2006), Ilir Parangani (2006), Marian Parker (2005), Dorentin Pashaj (2005), Melinda Russell (2005, 2006), Ann Santen (2005, 2006), Allison Sterrett-Krause (2007), Shannan Stewart (2004, 2005, 2007), Matthew Straughan-Morse (2005, 2006), Jed Thorn (2006), Brian Trail (2005, 2006), John Wallrodt (2005), Julie Wilson (2006, 2007), and Ilir Zaloshnja (2005). Skënder Muçaj represented the Institute of Archaeology in 2004. We thank Lorenc Bejko of the International Centre for Albanian Archaeology for his help. We are also grateful to the specialists who furthered the goals of the project, most of whom enjoy authorship in this volume or are otherwise credited. Less obvious will be the contribution of Alma Bardho, who, at short notice, in 2007 was enlisted to conserve bronze and iron artifacts. Artifact drawings are the work of Catherine Alexander (2005–2007), Jack L. Davis (2004), Allison Sterrett-Krause (2007), Rosemary Robertson (2007), and Shannan Stewart (2004, 2007); architectural drawings were prepared by Catherine Alexander and Elio Hobdari (2004, 2005). All illustrations were made ready in final electronic form by Rosemary Robertson and prepared for publication by Tina Ross, who also is responsible for the design of this book and its layout. John Wallrodt designed the project's data bases, managed our GIS, and produced electronic plans.

Finally we thank Susan Lupack for her initial editing of text and tables; Billie Jean Collins of Lockwood Press for her enthusiastic support of our plans for publication; Jeffrey Kramer, Carol Hershenson, and Joseph Katenkamp for support in Cincinnati; and Karl Petruso for his warm endorsement of this book and all our ventures in Albania. He led the way.

CERAMIC DATES OF DEPOSITS BY TRENCH

Kathleen M. Lynch

The following tables summarize the dating of ceramics from each deposit in each trench and are designed so that they can be printed out and consulted while reading Chapters 8 and 9, where tables note deposits for figurines and other small finds. For more detailed information about contexts, see Chapter 3, and for the dating of deposits, Chapter 7.

Deposit	*Levels*	*Associated Pottery*	*Associated Soil Unit*
01T			
A	2–12	Mostly Classical and Hellenistic, with Roman, early modern, and modern	Soil units 1 and 2 and upper part of unit 3
B	13–21, 24–26	Mostly Hellenistic with some Classical and Roman	Soil unit 3
C	27–30, 49	Hellenistic and Classical	Soil unit 3
D	31–40, 44–47, 50–53	Classical	Lower part of soil unit 3 and units 4 and 5
E	41, 42, 48, 54–58, 60–63	Archaic and Classical	Soil units 6–10
	1	Not datable	Cleaning surface vegetation
	22, 23	No finds	Not excavated
	43	Not datable	Removing backfill from 2004
	59	Not datable	Removing earth fallen into trench
02T			
A	2, 3	Classical to modern	Upper parts of soil unit 1
B	4–6	Late Classical to Early Hellenistic, possible Roman, modern	Lowest part of soil unit 1, unit 2, and upper half of unit 3
C	7–10	Not closely datable	Lower half of soil unit 3 and unit 4
	1	Not datable	Cleaning surface vegetation

Deposit	*Levels*	*Associated Pottery*	*Associated Soil Unit*
03T			
A	1–5, 19–21	Classical to Hellenistic, possible Roman, Ottoman, modern	Upper part of soil unit 1
B	6–10, 22–25	Classical to Hellenistic, possible Roman, modern	Lower part of soil unit 1
C	11–15, 26–32	Classical to Hellenistic, possible Roman, modern	Soil unit 2 and top of unit 3
D	16, 17, 33–37	Late Archaic to Early Classical	Soil unit 3 and top of unit 4
E	18, 38, 39	Not closely datable	Soil unit 4
	40	Not datable	Cleaning west balk
04T			
A	1–3	Classical and Hellenistic, modern	Soil unit 1
05T/10T			
A	2–5, 7–11	Archaic to Hellenistic and modern	Disturbed surface
B	14, 15	Mostly Archaic, possible Classical	Upper part of soil unit 1
C	17, 19, 21, 22	Archaic	Soil unit 2 and lower half of unit 1
D	16, 18, 20	Archaic and possible Early Classical	Pit within soil unit 1
E	23, 25–28	Archaic	Upper part of soil unit 3
F	24, 29, 30	Archaic	Cut into soil unit 4
	1	Not datable	Cleaning surface vegetation
	6	Not datable	Removal of balk
	12	Not datable	Coring into floor of trench in 2004
	13	Not datable	Removal of backfill in 2006
06T			
A	1–6	Hellenistic to Roman with some postmedieval	Disturbed; no soil units defined
07T			
A	1–15	Hellenistic to Roman with some postmedieval	Disturbed; no soil units defined
08T			
A	1–8	Hellenistic to Roman with some postmedieval	Disturbed; no soil units defined
09T			
A	1–6	Hellenistic to Roman with some postmedieval	Disturbed; no soil units defined
11T			
A	1, 2, 7, 8	Archaic to Hellenistic, possible Roman and medieval	Soil unit 1
B	3, 4, 9, 10	Classical to Middle Hellenistic, possible Roman	Soil unit 2
C	11, 14	Classical to Hellenistic	Soil unit 3
D	5	Not datable	Upper part of soil unit 4 and bottom of unit 3

Deposit	*Levels*	*Associated Pottery*	*Associated Soil Unit*
E	6, 12, 13, 15–17, 19	Late Archaic to Classical and Hellenistic	Lower part of soil unit 5
F	18, 20–23	Late Archaic, possible Classical	Soil unit 5 and parts of unit 4
12T			
A	1, 2	Late Archaic to Hellenistic, medieval	Soil unit 1
B	4, 5	Classical to Hellenistic	Soil unit 2 and lower part of unit 1
C	7	Late Archaic to Classical	Soil units 3 and 4
D	8	Late Archaic to Classical	Soil units 3 and 4
E	9–14, 16, 17	Late Archaic	Soil unit 4
F	3, 6	Hellenistic, Roman, postmedieval, and modern	modern backfill from robbing of blocks in the 1990s
G	15, 18–20	Hellenistic, Roman, and modern	Balk between trenches 11T and 12T
13T			
A	1–3	Hellenistic, Roman, postmedieval, and modern	Soil units 1 and 2
B	4–12	Possibly Hellenistic	Soil units 1 and 2
14T			
A	2	Mostly Hellenistic, possible Archaic, Classical, Roman, and postmedieval	Disturbed; no soil units defined
	1		Cleaning surface vegetation
15T			
A	2, 4	Classical, Hellenistic, Roman, and postmedieval	Pit dug into soil unit 1
B	15–18, 20	Mostly Hellenistic, with Roman and postmedieval	Soil unit 1
C	1, 3, 5, 6	Mostly Hellenistic with Classical, possible Roman, postmedieval	Soil unit 1
D	7, 19, 25	Classical to Early Hellenistic	Upper part of soil unit 2
E	8, 26	Late Archaic to Hellenistic	Upper part of soil unit 2
F	9, 22, 27, 29	Late Archaic to Classical and Hellenistic	Soil unit 2
G	10–12, 23, 30	Late Archaic	Upper part of soil unit 3 and lower part of unit 2
H	13	Late Classical to Early Hellenistic	Soil unit 3
I	14	Classical	Soil unit 3
J	24, 28	Late Archaic to Classical and Hellenistic	Soil unit 3
K	31–33	Classical	Trench dug into soil unit 3
L	34–36	Archaic, possible Early Classical	Soil unit 3
M	37–41	Late Archaic	Soil unit 4
N	42	Late Archaic	
	21	Not datable	Removal of block for micromorphological analysis

Deposit	*Levels*	*Associated Pottery*	*Associated Soil Unit*
16T			
A	1–2	Classical to Hellenistic, postmedieval and modern	Soil unit 1
B	3	Ancient of indeterminate date, modern	Soil unit 2
C	4	Classical to Hellenistic	Soil unit 2
D	5	Late Classical to Hellenistic	Soil units 2 and 3
E	6	Late Archaic to Classical	Soil unit 4
F	7–11	Archaic to Late Archaic	Upper part of soil unit 5 and bottom of unit 4
G	12–16, 21, 22	Archaic	Upper part of soil unit 6 and lower part of unit 5
H	17–20, 23–27	Archaic	Upper part of soil unit 7 and the lower part of unit 6
I	28	Archaic	Soil unit 7
17T			
A	1	Mostly Classical to Hellenistic, modern	Soil unit 1 and the upper part of unit 2
B	2, 3	Late Archaic and Classical	Soil units 2 and 3
C	5–11	Late Archaic	Part of soil unit 4 and units 5–9
D	4	Undatable	Soil unit 3