

**Richard Hodges, *The Archaeology of Mediterranean Placemaking: Butrint and the Global Heritage Industry*.** Bloomsbury Academic, London and New York 2017. Pp. XVI +161, 47 black and white photos, illustrations and maps. Hardbound. List price US \$114 online price US \$102.60. ISBN HB : 978-1-3500-0662-1; ePDF 978-1-3500-0664-5; ePUB978-1-3500-0663-8.

The book is written by one of the most recognized international scholars and excavators. He chose the site of Butrint as a place where one has experienced in recent decades almost all the problems that face modern day archaeology. Hodges worked there, as Scientific Director of the Butrint Foundation, from 1993 until 2012. This book is a summary and expansion of what Hodges has published over the years at various places.

After the first democratic election in Albania (1992), the director of the Albanian Institute of Archaeology in Tirana looked for foreign help. One of the people he turned to was Lord Rothschild, who has a country house on the Greek island of Corfu that is right across the Strait of Corfu from Butrint. A year later, the Butrint Foundation was registered with Lords Rothschild and Sainsbury as trustees. The Foundation became the major instrument for the conservation of the site as we see it now.

This reviewer excavated in the Palaiopolis of Corfu from 1987 to 1999. Due to the political situation in Albania, he had never been able to visit Butrint during those years. In April 2017, he was finally able to do so with Hodges book for review in his hands.

While the book may serve as an excellent introduction and guide to the site, the real theme is: Placemaking in the Mediterranean and the challenges that face modern archaeology. As the author points out, the universities and institutions that supported archaeology in the 1960s and 1970s have lately been reconsidering their commitments. There is also the role that archaeological sites play in tourism, development for modern construction and the general conservation of the natural habitats. Hodges, who has a reputation as a great communicator, describes his experiences. His lively, sensitive, yet very honest descriptions make this a book hard to put down.

There are five chapters devoted to this World Heritage site. *Championing Placemaking* (pp. 1–9) explains how a “place” like the idyllic Butrint reminds us what Mediterranean sites might have looked like in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is contrasted to “non-places” such as airports, shopping malls, hotel resorts so common now along the Albanian coast. Non-places “do not integrate the earlier places.” (p. 7) Placemakers like the Unesco with World Heritage sites, or academics like Hodge, “are seeking to give some kind of authenticity to a place, a *genius loci*” (p. 8).

*In Virgil’s Long Shadow* (pp. 11–36), we learn how Butrint came about originally. While barely mentioned by earlier authors, it was Virgil who described it in his *Aeneid* as a “Troy in miniature.” Aeneas stops here to meet Hector’s brother, Helenus, who had married his widow Andromache. Close to Butrint was the estate of Pomponius Atticus, the friend of Cicero who had died a year before the battle of Actium. It seems that the Pomponii managed to have the city refounded. It became a colony. Agrippa appears to have played a

leading role with this. His first wife was a daughter of Atticus. Virgil contributed his share, in Augustan propaganda efforts, to make Butrint a counterpart to Nikopolis. That city was founded, after Actium, by Octavian as a victory monument, a nod to a victory very much achieved with the aid of his admiral Agrippa. Butrint became for Agrippa what Nikopolis was for Octavian.

Virgil's promotion of Butrint played a role still, when in 1927 (with the emerging ideology of Mussolini) the Italian archaeologist Luigi Maria Ugolini was able to find financial support for an excavation when Italy launched political and cultural interventions in Albania. Great interest existed due to the impending 1930 bi-millennium of Virgil's birth, with celebrations starting in 1929. Ugolini was skillful in using this for the excavation and preservation of the site.

The third chapter, *An Excavated Narrative* (pp. 37–78), is basically a summary of the history of the site and the result of the excavations and field strategies. After Ugolini, the site had received relatively little attention, such that not only Butrint itself, but also a large surrounding area, escaped major changes. The potential damage done by modern explorations was thus limited. The region has not yet been developed by a modern construction boom as one can see on Corfu where the impact is significant. A similar opportunity for place-making on Corfu will never exist, with perhaps the exception of the Mon Repos Park and the Palaiopolis Museum as the former Greek king's summer residence and the archaeological sites within that park.

*A short history of the Butrint Foundation* (pp. 79–112) explains how the trustees and those working with at the Foundation took advantage of the great opportunity. Financial institutions, Unesco, international diplomacy, negotiations with Albanian authorities and most of all a defined vision have conserved this archaeological site as a place with a special atmosphere. There was also a very detailed plan and a regular reporting of the status of activity to the Foundation, an NGO.

A buffer zone was created around the ancient town. There is only one hotel at the site (built in the style of a traditional Albanian country house) and this was not even part of the original design, as this reviewer learned during his visit, but more the result of political connections of the owners. Most buses have to leave at the end of the day and visitors spend the night in nearby Saranda, a city that promises to become a concrete jungle like many other non-places along the sandy beaches of Albania that are now flooded by developers and investors from other countries.

It is a very quiet and idyllic place to visit with nature trails available for walks. There is the Vivari channel with the castle of Ali Pasha at its entrance from the straits of Corfu. It leads into Lake Butrint, already known for the richness of its fish in antiquity.

Rather than placing an emphasis on restoring individual buildings, one tries to conserve them as they are. Reconstruction is done with illustrations displayed at particular monuments. Preservation methods must be reversible. There is awareness of the economy

of the surrounding villages and an effort to provide employment and training in the context of archaeology.

In the beginning years there was “no meeting of minds” (p. 81) between the vision of the Foundation and the Albanian team, that candidly admitted it wanted just to become rich. But in spite of all the difficulties the Butrint Foundation and Hodges encountered over the years on all levels, they were able to come up with what could be interpreted as a model. Starting in 2009 the Foundation gradually withdrew from direct activities letting other institutions (among them foreign universities) take its place. From 2012 on its involvement has been limited to providing annual grants to applicants. (see <https://www.butrintfoundation.co.uk>). 90% of the income from entrance tickets now goes towards the conservation of the site. Hodges evaluated the strength and weaknesses of the activity of the Butrint Foundation. In hindsight, more involvement of the local population should have been attempted. There was a great amount of success, but Butrint may remain more of an ideal, rather than a model that can be easily repeated. Success rested on a lot of connections and financial resources that most archaeologists would not be able to pull together: two very influential British peers, the Unesco, and an Albanian administration with several former archaeologists in charge, including the former prime minister. It is, however, admirable that the opportunity was seen and the major players pursued it with tenacity; one can learn a lot for other sites reading about the varied experiences.

Will this last? In the fifth chapter, *Eternal Butrint? Reflections on Future Sustainability* (pp. 113–143), the author ends his book in a somewhat worried tone. Albania had suffered under decades of Enver Hoxha’s terrorizing regime. Now there have arrived the temptations that come with mass tourism as a major source of income for a country that lived so long in poverty and isolation. In his book, Hodges described how modern media became one of the ways to help with the conservation of Butrint. A thirty-minute film (99) for Albanian television and educational programs in schools “sold” over the years the special spirit of the site to the Albanian people so that it became not only their first National Park, but also a source of pride, as a place with a special spirit. Maybe this will prevent it from encroachment.

The editors chose a nice type for reading. A real shortcoming, though, is that the photographs are all black and white (with the exception of the cover). For that reason they do not do justice to the spirit of the beautiful archaeological country site with its impressive colors. To catch that part of the spirit one needs to find images online, of which there is no shortage. This reviewer suggests to the editors that in the future a special website should be created with colorful images to accompany this kind of publication. It is after all by no means an inexpensive book.

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