

A TOWN THROUGH THE AGES

The 2006-2007 Archaeological Project in Stari Bar

by Sauro Gelichi

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Abbreviations:

UTS: Unità Topografica di Scavo (topographic unit of excavation, also referred to as area, trench)
US: Unità Stratigrafica (stratigraphic unit, also referred to as context, layer)
USM: Unità Stratigrafica Muraria (architectural stratigraphic unit, layer, architectural context)
EA: Elemento Architettonico (architectural element, such as doors, windows, columns etc.)
UTCF: Unità Topografica Corpo di Fabbrica (topographic unit of building, number of building)
PPN, PPS, PPE, PPW: Prospetto Particolare Nord, Sud, Est, Ovest (detailed prospect North, South, East, West)
PGN, PGS, PGE, PGW: Prospetto Generale Nord, Sud, Est, Ovest (general prospect North, South, East, West)

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FOREWORD

When prof. Sauro Gelichi and his associates started their research in Stari Bar in 2004, the world has again become aware of one of the richest archeological sites in the region. Four years later, the research has continued, and I have the honor of writing a brief introduction and thus contribute to the third publication, which will bring closer the research findings to a wider audience.

Prof. Gelichi and his team from the Ca' Foscari University of Venice, have gathered in the Old Town of Bar, besides Montenegrin archaeologists and young collaborators, world-renowned experts from other universities as Primorska University of Kopar, Cambridge University and University of Innsbruck. Their research helped us realize how immensely rich is our heritage and strengthen our intentions to revitalize the Old Town of Bar and make it a center of cultural events. Prof. Gelichi, as well as all others who will help us reach our goals, will have the support from Bar Municipality, because the question of the Old Town of Bar is a question of our own identity and culture.

Projects like this one are aimed at promoting our town and our culture throughout the world. Therefore I would like them to continue and our cooperation to expand in order to get as much as possible of nice and precious books like this one dedicated to our Bar.

ŽARKO PAVIĆEVIĆ
Mayor of Bar

UVOD

Kada je prof. dr Sauro Gelichi 2004. godine sa svojim saradnicima započeo istraživanja u Starom Baru, svijet je ponovo čuo o jednom od najbogatijih arheoloških nalazišta u ovom regionu. Četiri godine kasnije, istraživanja se nastavljaju, a meni je pripala čast da uvodnom riječju dam svoj doprinos trećoj publikaciji koja će dodatno približiti rezultate istraživanja široj publici.

Zahvaljujući prof. Gelichiju i njegovom timu sa Univerziteta Ca' Foscari iz Venecije, u Starom Baru su se okupili, pored naših arheologa i mladih saradnika, i renomirani stručnjaci sa drugih univerziteta kao što su Univerzitet Primorska iz Kopra, Kembrički univerzitet i Univerzitet iz Insbruka. Njihova istraživanja su nam pomogla da uvidimo koliko je neizmjereno bogato nasljeđe koje posjedujemo i učvrstila naše namjere da revitalizujemo Stari Bar i od njega načinimo središte kulturnih zbivanja. Prof. Gelichi, ali i svi drugi koji budu željeli da nam u tome pomognu, imaće podršku Opštine Bar jer je pitanje Starog Bara pitanje našeg ličnog identiteta i kulture.

Projekti poput ovog imaju za cilj promovisanje našeg grada i naše kulture u cijelom svijetu. Stoga želim da se oni nastave, da se saradnja proširi i da dobijemo još mnogo ovako lijepih i dragocjenih knjiga o našem Baru.

ŽARKO PAVIĆEVIĆ
Predsjednik Opštine Bar



FOREWORD

In 2004 Ca' Foscari University of Venice started its archaeological mission in the old abandoned city site of Bar, in Montenegro. The choice was not at random. Apart from its internationally acknowledged importance, both for the place and the amazingly well-preserved archaeological remains, Bar has been a Venetian city for over a century, alike similar Montenegro coastal centres living for a long time under the control of the Serenissima Republic. Coming back to Stari Bar was for Ca' Foscari a way to resume a relationship with a culturally close friend of Venice, with whom it shared a relevant phase of the history of the Adriatic region. Although working on Venetian features outside Venice may not seem new research, the mission has undoubtedly discovered some novelties. First of all archaeology gives a new point of view both for the issue and the period considered. Then, the archaeological approach of this book (and of previous issues of the Venetian-Montenegro équipe) considers and analyses not only the relevant Venetian period but also other prominent historical ages of the place, from its Byzantium origins to the local feudalism domination until the Ottoman period. I am pleased that this work, stemming from the co-operation with Montenegro archaeologists, is published while our relationships are strengthened by the signature of a formal agreement. This act testifies the effort and the commitment that inspired people who have carried on the initiative until now. I am certain this will be a solid basis for future research.

PIER FRANCESCO GHETTI
The Rector Ca' Foscari University

PRESENTAZIONE

Dal 2004 l'Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia ha iniziato una missione archeologica nel sito dell'antica città abbandonata di Bar, in Montenegro. La scelta non è stata casuale. Al di là dell'importanza, internazionalmente riconosciuta, al luogo, e alla spettacolare conservazione dei suoi resti architettonici, Bar è stata, per oltre un secolo, una città veneziana, seguendo in questo il destino di altri centri della costa montenegrina, a lungo sotto il controllo della Serenissima. Tornare a Stari Bar, dunque, significava per la nostra università riacciare un filo con un territorio che ci è, culturalmente, vicino, con il quale abbiamo condiviso, nel passato, una significativa parte di storia adriatica. Lavorare sulla venezianità fuori Venezia potrebbe apparire, tuttavia, una tematica non particolarmente originale, essendo da tempo nell'agenda di molti ricercatori, italiani e non. Tuttavia questa missione si presenta, e mi piace sottolinearlo in questa occasione, con alcuni indubbi elementi di novità. Intanto il tipo di approccio, archeologico, che costituisce, per il luogo, per l'argomento e per il periodo, davvero una chiave di lettura fino ad oggi mai sperimentata. Poi, il fatto che l'archeologia, come si può vedere in questo volume (ma anche nei precedenti pubblicati dall'équipe veneziana e montenegrina), non si limiti ad analizzare e contestualizzare la pur importante fase veneziana; anzi, la sua analisi si parametra, dialetticamente, con gli altri significativi momenti storici che il luogo ha conosciuto, dalle origini bizantine alla fase di dominazione della feudalità locale fino al periodo ottomano. Sono soddisfatto di presentare questa pubblicazione, frutto della cooperazione con gli archeologi montenegrini, in un momento in cui si consolidano i nostri rapporti con la firma di una convenzione. Tale convenzione testimonia, in maniera concreta, l'abnegazione e l'impegno che fino ad oggi ha accompagnato coloro che hanno promosso tale iniziativa e sono convinto che costituirà una solida base per le ricerche future.

PIER FRANCESCO GHETTI
Il Rettore dell'Università Ca' Foscari



PREFACE

This volume, the third in a series, is a collection of several archaeological papers, relating to the activities carried out by the Italian-Montenegrin archaeological mission in Stari Bar during the 2006 and 2007 seasons. This mission began in 2004 with the participation of the University of Koper, with the principal objective being to systematically undertake archaeological research on one of the most significant historical sites of Montenegro, after the pioneering research of Bošković during the 50s and 60s and after the demanding reconstruction activities following the earthquake of the 70s.

The scientific work of Bošković remains fundamental to this excavation and still innovative in many of its methodological approaches. Bošković aimed to bring to light the history of this forgotten Montenegrin town, and in the process produced an analytical and complete study of its material structures, a rare endeavour during that period. The only work missing from his analysis was a proper study of the archaeology which was not possible at that time. To restart the archaeological project at Stari Bar began with a study of Bošković's work and the plan of the settlement, which was already partially completed (in the meantime new clearances and excavations had brought to light districts that were buried in Bošković's time and had not therefore been documented, such as buildings 143-146), plus an assessment of the buried and standing archaeological features. Research campaigns then began, on standing buildings as well as buried features, with the two-fold aim of better understanding the long durée of the settlement sequence and the social changes as seen through the material culture of the site. In fact Stari Bar was (and is) very well suited to such analysis on the impact of political and social change over time and space and variations in the behaviours of the various communities who lived in the town and how they expressed their identities. Nonetheless there were some difficulties, due largely to the preservation of the buried layers and standing buildings, which had been heavily altered over time through natural and human activities, including the recent restoration works.

This volume essentially reports on research carried out in a very specific area of the settlement, within the medieval town, but possibly outside the Byzantine settlement (a series of buildings in the southern area near the curtain walls: rooms 8-9 and the church of St. Catherine). The aim was to analyze the evolution of an urban area from its birth through the Ottoman phases (previously unpublished). During 2006 a preliminary report was published with regards to this group of buildings and the report here completes that task with a study of the materials from those rooms (including the pottery), faunal remains, the architectural complex (including the church), some fibulae, a preliminary analysis of written documentation about Stari Bar, an evaluation of the archaeological resources of the surrounding territory and finally a report on olive oil production during the Ottoman period.

The team of 2006, under my direction, included Michela Babbini, Corinna Bagato, Silvia Cadamuro, Diego Calalon, Erica D'Amico, Annamaria Delmonte, Cristina Falla, Margherita Ferri, Alessandra Forti, Speranza Fresia, Elena Grandi, Ester Zanichelli, of the University of Ca' Foscari in Venice; Miguel Bru Castro of The University Autonoma of Madrid; Mladen Zagarčanin of the Museum of Bar; Alexander Pluskowki and Krish Seetah of the University of Cambridge; Dejan Drašković, Miloš Živanović and Petra Zdravković of Bar.

The team of 2007, under my direction, included Michela Babbini, Annamaria Delmonte and Claudio Negrelli of the University of Ca' Foscari in Venice; Mladen Zagarčanin and Goran Pajović of the Museum of Bar.

Several institutions and individuals support and sustain this project. For the Italian part, in addition to my University and its rector, Pier Francesco Ghetti, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE; Direzione Generale per la Promozione e la Cooperazione Culturale, Ufficio V, Settore Archeologia) which annually finances our excavation campaigns and the Italian Ambassador in Montenegro, Dr Gabriele Meucci. For the Montenegrin part the community of Bar and its Mayor, Žarko Pavićević and the Director of the Cultural Center, Čazim Nikezić. This project enjoys the support of the

Archaeological Society of Montenegro and its President, Mile Baković. In 2006 this project was made possible by the cooperation of Dr Lenka Bulatović, director of the Centre for Archaeological Research of Montenegro. I would like also to personally thank all my collaborators engaged in working in Bar since 2004, who have worked with competence and professionalism the publication of these preliminary reports, particularly Diego Calaon, Erica D'Amico, Margherita Ferri and Speranza Fresia. Finally I would like also to thank Omer Peročević, for years the strict yet dedicated custodian of the riches of Bar, Mladen Zagarčanin, friend without peers but also worthy archaeologist of the young Montenegrin archaeology and finally Mitja Gustin, to whom I owe the knowledge of this extraordinary site and the encouragement to begin this project.

SAURO GELICHI
Venice, August 2008

1. THE 2006-07 ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT IN STARI BAR: A PRELIMINARY REPORT

The general outline of the Stari Bar project has already been presented in the previous two volumes (GELICHI, GUŠTIN 2005; GELICHI 2006a) (Plate 1.1). It has therefore been established that the site is particularly complex and the degree of preservation of its buildings (and different conditions of accessibility: CALAON 2005; BAUDO 2005) have conditioned and directed the research. The stratigraphic thickness of the buried deposits turned out to be very different to what we were anticipating, even after an initial superficial assessment (again CALAON 2005). Natural and human factors have also greatly limited preservation, for example, of Middle and Late Byzantine material, that does not seem to be present in areas where we were expecting it (such as area 45, see BAUDO, CALAON, D'AMICO 2006). Contexts dating to that period were found: such as a secondary deposit that came shortly after the formation of the context, near gate 112, where structures leaning onto the two access towers represented a boundary containing and preserving the said deposits and their materials (BAUDO, GRANDI, BAGATO, FRESIA 2006). Human presence during Late Antiquity in the area where Bar is located is only hinted at by the appearance of residual materials (GELICHI 2006b, 19-21, Pl. 2.1), however abundant quantities of Iron Age ceramics were found in secondary deposits during work in the complex 143-146, demonstrating that already in that period the site was settled permanently (Plate 1.2). It is evident that these archaeological materials are important for reconstructing the history of Stari Bar and should therefore be analyzed carefully. However, it is also evident that the conditions of the area and the dense urbanization of the Late and Post-Medieval periods (as well as its orographic position) have had a limiting effect on the information we can obtain about earlier periods.

The principal elements of the Middle Byzantine settlement have already been highlighted and consist of a fortified area with an extant access gate (restructured in the High Middle Ages) as well as a semicircular tower, embedded within the Renaissance period Fortress (Plate 1.3). The limits of this enclosure, constructed, according to excavation data from gate 112, before the 11th century (perhaps between the 8th and 9th century, but certainly during the Middle Byzantine period: GELICHI 2006b, 24) cannot be clearly defined on the western side (the southern and eastern sides are presumed to have used the natural cliffs as boundaries). The hypotheses which have so far been proposed are all plausible, but no new archaeological data emerged during the campaigns of 2006 and 2007.



Plate 1.1 – Localization of Stari Bar.

The High and Late Medieval levels have been identified to date only in the area of rooms 8 to 11, a group of rooms stretching along the southern side of the curtain wall, near a vaulted passageway connected with the church of St. Catherine. In this case the town walls helped preserve the stratigraphic deposits, from the time of their reconstruction in stone (CALAON 2006). However, in the same area the construction within room 8a of an underground cellar during the Ottoman age probably caused the erosion of similar deposits: as we noted during the 2006 season, the sequence of 8a does not begin before the end of the 16th century. A similar event seems to have taken place in the nearby building 15, cleared in the 1990s, where materials dating mainly to the 16th century were found (ZAGARČANIN 2004, 26).

These cases demonstrate the difficulties inherent in any attempt to reconstruct long, convincing, sequences for extensive areas of the town. This does not mean we