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Instituti i Arkeologjisë

RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL

DISCOVERIES IN ALBANIA

Edited by I. Gjipali, L. Përzhita and B. Muka

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Recent archaeological discoveries in Albania

Tirana 2013

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Cover illustration: Handle in the form of forearm and hand, ivory, l. 11.9 cm, w. 2.3 cm, th. 1.6 cm, late 4th-early 5th century AD, Triconch Palace, Butrint, BM

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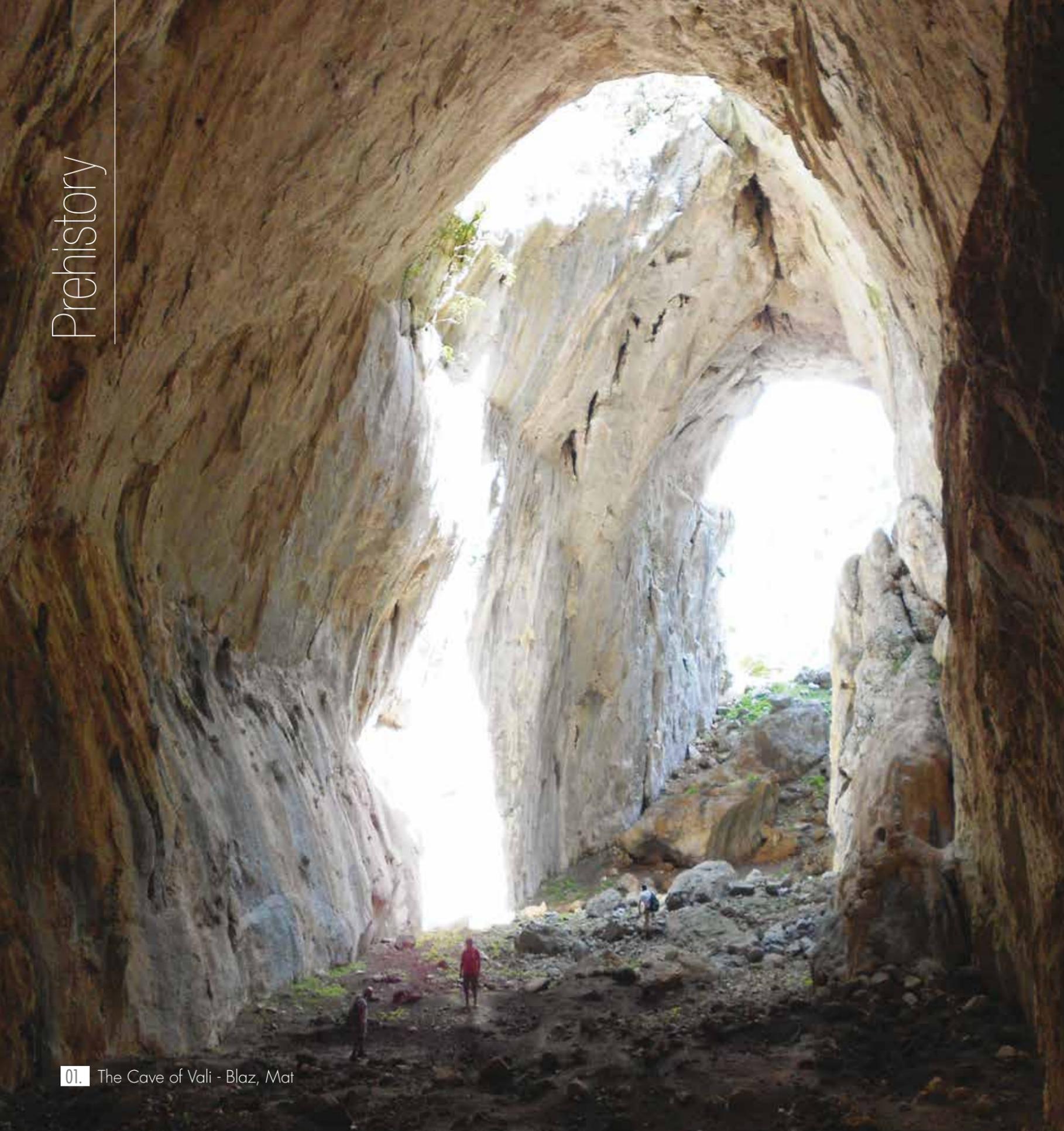
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Contents

Recent archaeological discoveries in Albania 1998 - 2013 (I. Gjipali) _____ 09

I. PREHISTORY

Archaeological Research on Prehistory (I. Gjipali) _____	14
1. The Palaeolithic and Mesolithic research in Albania (I. Gjipali and J. Richter) _____	18
2. Investigations on the Early Neolithic Period in Albania: Vashtëmi (I. Gjipali and S. Allen) _____	22
3. Archaeological investigations in the region of Korça (P. Lera and G. Toucheas) _____	26
4. Kallamas (P. Lera and G. Toucheas) _____	34
5. The settlement at Stillo (I. Gjipali and S. Lima) _____	40
6. Excavation at the Tumulus of Kamenica, Korça (L. Bejko) _____	44
7. Excavations at the Tumulus of Lofkënd (L. Bejko and J. Papadopoulos) _____	48
8. The necropolis of Apollonia (L. Bejko and M. G. Amore) _____	52
9. Maligrad: Lake Prespa (P. Lera and S. Oikonomidis) _____	58
10. Shala Valley: Grunas (M. L. Galaty and O. Lafe) _____	64
11. Helmets from Sofraçan (A. Bunguri) _____	68



The Palaeolithic and Mesolithic Research in Albania

Recent investigations on the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods have furthered the research of past survey projects in several areas in southern Albania (the South-West Albania Project and the Mallakastra Regional Archaeological Project – MRAP), which have discovered a large number of sites dating to these periods. The assembled data instigated the excavation of several Palaeolithic and Mesolithic sites, thus marking the start of systematic investigations in the early prehistory of Albania. The Department of Prehistory of the Albanian Institute of Archaeology is currently collaborating with research institutions that offer extensive experience in this field: a long term collaborative project on the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods in Albania has been established with the University of Köln, Germany, under the joint leadership of I. Gjipali and J. Richter, and within the same framework, partnerships have been established with the University of Ferrara, Italy, and the University of Southampton, UK.

In the years 2012-2013 the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic project carried out excavations in several regions in Albania, namely at Shën Mitër (St. Dimiter) located near Butrint in the district of Saranda, at the cave of Blaz, district of Mat, which archaeological potential had been previously recognised by Albanian archaeologist, and at the cave of Rrëza e Kanalit, in the Vlora

bay. In collaboration with the University of Southampton, trial excavations were carried out at the cave of Pëllumbave (the doves' cave) and the cave of Hile at Lekël, district of Tepelena, while survey investigations in the valley of Langarica, district of Përmet, in partnership with specialists of the University of Ferrara, Italy, evidenced several sites pertaining to periods from Palaeolithic to Iron Age.

Besides the discoveries at Shën Mitër, important Palaeolithic and Mesolithic data were recovered at Rrëza e Kanalit situated between Orikum and the village of Dukat, in the Vlora bay, which stretches in a northwest-southeast direction. The cave was first investigated as part a collaborative project with the Butrint Foundation in 2004, when Late Mesolithic flint tools were recovered. In proximity to the location of Rrëza e Kanalit, a collapsed karstic system was discovered at mid height of the limestone massif of Cretak, in Karaburun. Trial excavation at the collapsed entrance of the cave revealed Epigravettian remains. Given the isolation of the deposits underneath the collapse, and the previously discovered Mousterian and Upper Palaeolithic surface finds, the find-spot at Rrëza e Kanalit represents a site of potential interest for future research into the Palaeolithic period. In addition to this site, that of Treport further north has been identified.



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A rich assemblage of flint tools that pertain to all lithic periods (Palaeolithic Mesolithic and Neolithic) has been assembled at the latter site.

The collaborative project on the study of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods in Albania will continue its research in the coming years with investigations at various sites that have already been identified as sites of particular interest, such as the complex of caves in the area of Blaz, district of Mat. The use of up-to-date methodology

in these study projects has been possible thanks to the collaboration with the above mentioned European universities that are highly reputed for their research in this field. Besides the intensification of research in the above mentioned field, student training will also be an integral part of the project, while contribution will be made to the creation of permanent and temporary exhibitions which will aim at making the project results accessible to the wider public.



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Palaeolithic tools from Diaporit, Butrint

03
Lithic finds from Treport, Vlora

04
Excavation of the Palaeolithic site at Shën Mitër, Butrint

05
The Cave of Pëllumbas, Tirana

06
The excavation of the Cave of Pëllumbas, Tirana



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