Team E Report, 2012

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During the period 17 May-12 June 2012, over the course of 26 days of fieldwork, Team E, composed of Sylvia Deskaj (team leader), Bruna Sinani, George Bey IV, Dora Lambert, Alba Selita, Erilda Selaj, and John Eaton surveyed a total of 250 tracts, covering 1 square kilometers. The tracts were intensively surveyed using standard Mediterranean methods. Survey was conducted at 15-meter intervals and surveyors were instructed to count all tile/brick and pottery and to collect any diagnostic artifacts, including all lithics. The largest tract was 1.6 hectares, the smallest 0.05 hectares, and the average was 0.4 hectares. During the 2012 field season, Team E surveyed the plain of Shtoj in areas roughly adjacent to those previously surveyed by Team A during the 2010 field season and Team C during the 2011 field season.

Survey was conducted in multiple areas (see Figure X) forming a vertical line running north-south encompassing areas north and south of the village of Kullaj and adjacent to Team C's survey region during the 2011 PASH field season. The 2012 survey region extended south just north of the main Mes road, west of the Kir River. The northern boundary was the village of Vorfë located between two canals, the eastern boundary was the areas surveyed by Team C during the 2011 PASH field season, and the southern boundary was the main Mes road. All fields in the region were surveyed, unless the landowner objected, which was rare, or the vegetation was so dense as to make survey impractical. Average visibility was 71.8 %, which is relatively high, reflecting the fact that most fields had been plowed and were under cultivation. Most were planted with cash crops of tobacco and onions, maize, wheat, and beans. Some fields were fallowed and planted with alfalfa. Many fields were fenced, which slowed survey since landowners often had to be consulted prior to entry. Landowners, most of whom were recent migrants from the nearby, surrounding hills, were, however, an excellent source of information regarding the local archaeological landscape, tumuli in particular.

Team E had several goals for the 2012 season. First of all, we hoped to locate and identify sites of all periods on the plain versus those in the hills and fields surveyed by Team F and Team G. Second of all, we sought to locate and map all extant prehistoric tumuli within our survey area, as well as those that had been destroyed by landowners or excavated by Aristotel Koka in the 1980s (see e.g. Koka 1990). These two goals were met during the period of regular field survey. A final goal was to revisit all tumuli, describe them in detail, and enter these data into a database. This was necessary in order to assess their state of preservation and suitability for future excavation.

Results

Team E discovered artifacts from most periods of the past, including evidence for occupation during the Middle and Upper Palaeolithic periods and during the Mesolithic Age. Palaeolithic

finds were not completely unexpected given the proximity of the survey region to Gajtan Cave, excavated by Anton Fistani in the 1980s (Fistani 1989), who also mentioned an open air site at Bleran (Fistani 1993), a village located within our study region on the eastern side of the Kir River.

Ceramic artifacts, including both pottery and tile, were counted and diagnostic artifacts were recovered (see density maps for pottery and tile). The vast majority of ceramic artifacts recovered are post-Medieval to Modern, as would be expected given their proximity to the villages (Figure XX). Very few Archaic, Classical, and Medieval ceramics were found in the study region.

Team E identified 3 prehistoric tumuli within the bounds of the survey region, two of which are visible in Google Earth (see Figure XX). It is of special interest that the tumuli identified this year are situated in fields adjacent to the tumuli concentrations identified during survey of previous field seasons. The absence of visible/known tumuli in areas outside of this concentration is of equal interest, as well, and has further been investigated. We made every effort to identify the locations of tumuli that had been destroyed, either by landowners or through excavation, but probably undercounted tumuli to some degree. Nevertheless, the map of tumuli indicates some identifiable locational patterning. Tumuli appear to be clustered in one concentrated area, perhaps representing family or lineage groups, and this will be tested in the near future using various forms of GIS and statistical analysis.

All tumuli were revisited on one day at the end of the 2012 field season. These were more carefully mapped, photographed, and described in detail. Two of the tumuli are in relatively good shape, while farmers have removed one tumulus presumably to open up their fields. Some farmers mine and sell the soil. In 2010, we identified four tumuli that should be considered for rescue excavation in 2013; these are 052, 054, 062, and 065. During the 2011 survey season, we identified four additional tumuli that should be considered for rescue excavation in the future: 084, 085, 087, and 090.

Future Goals

I would suggest continuing very minimal survey in plains of Shtoj in 2013. Tumuli that were identified during the 2010 and 2011 field seasons, which are located within a noticeable concentration of tumuli, should be targeted because they have been completely leveled and are located in relatively close proximity to one another, making excavation efforts more feasible for the time period allotted. Every effort should be made to excavate these in 2013.