

ARCHAEOLOGY

Albanians Vie for Control of Site

About 2000 years ago, the Romans built a stunning theater in the coastal Albanian town of Butrint during their military conquests of the Balkans. Today the ruins are witness to another battle, this one between opposing political factions in Albania, for control of this internationally recognized archaeological site. Caught in the crossfire is a British foundation that hopes to protect the theater and other structures spanning nearly 3 millennia in a country trying to emerge from decades of global isolation.

The battle over Butrint pits Albania's Ministry of Culture against the Institute of Archaeology and the Institute of Monuments, both based in Tirana, the capital. Last month, Culture Minister Edi Rama, appointed in April, stripped both institutes of authority at Butrint after an international body criticized them for failing to work together. The ministry itself

took control, and Rama asked the London-based

Butrint Foundation to help manage the site. Rama says that

foreign support is critical

to saving the deteriorating site: "The [Butrint] Foundation will help us develop research and excavations."

But on 28 July, archaeologists at the two institutes petitioned Albanian President Rexhep Meidani to block the collaboration. The opponents, who include former Monuments Director Reshad Gega, charge that the Butrint Foundation intends to profit from rising tourism at the site and to control revenue from future exhibitions of Butrint artifacts. Legislator Limoz Dizdari, head of the Albanian parliament's Culture Commission, told a Tirana newspaper that Albania "risks losing its national culture" if the U.K. foundation, which has collaborated with the archaeological institute on research projects at Butrint since 1994, is given a management role.

However, Rama and others say the petitioners' real beef is with the new government. "They are hostile to reforms being taken in the country" to strengthen ties with the West, says Rama. "We'll show with concrete results that our decision is not against Albania's interests."

Archaeologists have traced Butrint's history to the 8th century B.C., when traders from Corfu are thought to have settled the site, on the tip of the

Hexamil peninsula in southwest Albania. The Romans took control of Butrint around the 2nd century B.C., and the remains of Butrint's theater—along with a row of remarkable statues that includes the beautiful "goddess of Butrint"—were unearthed by Italian archaeologist Luigi

Ugolini in 1920s.

His team later excavated the

Temple of Asclepius, an

Early Byzantine palace, and a

baptistry with an

exquisite mosaic

floor featuring im-

ages of animals (see

inset illustrations).

During the Cold

War, when Albania was shuttered from the outside world, Butrint was developed into a tourist attraction for Albanians. In 1992, after Albania opened its borders, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) added Butrint to the list of World Heritage sites, making it eligible for U.N. assistance and a measure of oversight to help ensure its preservation. But during fighting early last year, thieves made off with artifacts from the Butrint museum, pumps for draining

the water-logged site,

and even interpretive signs. "We

were lucky:

Nothing sup-

pervaluable

was stolen," says

Auron Tare, Alba-

nian representative

of the Butrint Foun-

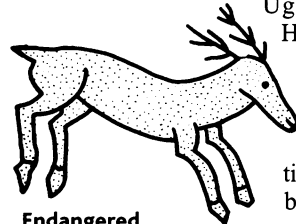
dation. Last April a UNESCO-supported conference in Saranda, Albania, convened to devise a plan to save Butrint, decried a recent "history of rivalry and a conspicuous lack of cooperation" between the two institutes, and urged that one entity be chosen to run the site.

Despite the petition to the president, the Butrint Foundation hopes next year to launch a 5-year research and renovation program at the site. "Rama is under considerable fire for going forward, not backward," says Butrint Foundation scientific

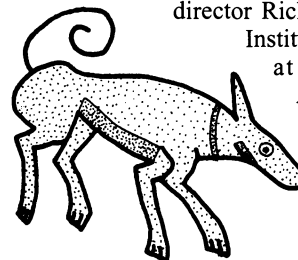
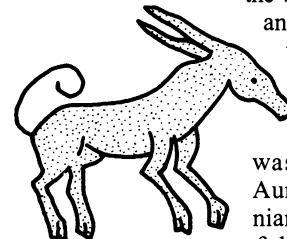
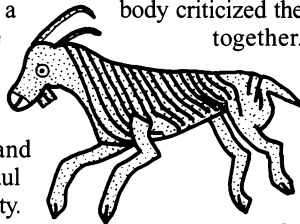
director Richard Hodges, head of the Institute of World Archaeology at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, U.K.

"The dispute is the political consequence of an effort to make Butrint a major national asset."

—RICHARD STONE



Endangered animals. Water cult's 6th-century mosaic at Butrint celebrated birth and life.



Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), which published two letters. Other observers say what's really eye-catching is the fees the authors fetched. "Anybody who thinks the amount doesn't matter has been holed up in the ivory tower for a very long time," says bioethicist Arthur Caplan of the University of Pennsylvania. "They would have been hard pressed to take the time to write if there hadn't been a \$10,000 prize out there," he asserts.

It's clear that EPA was the target of the letter campaign. Apparently in response to the EPA's secondhand smoke report, the Tobacco Institute set up the "ETS Consultant Program Project," according to documents from a Web archive* created by tobacco companies last February as a result of the Minnesota lawsuit. Documents marked "attorney-client communication" describe letters written by the consultants, including one submitted to *Science* that was never published. A few sentences in one document describe what the Tobacco Institute was looking for: "Senior cardiologists being contacted to determine interest in a review of relevant literature. ... Ideal are people at or near retirement with no dependence on grant-dispensing bureaucracies." The scientists who wrote letters included several private consultants and some academic researchers, such as Paul Switzer, a statistician at Stanford University.

Several of the published letters did, to varying degrees, tip readers to their sponsorship. For example, a 17 March 1993 *JAMA* letter from Chris Collett of Theodor D. Sterling and Associates Ltd. in Vancouver stated that "This comment was supported by the Tobacco Institute." Others were less forthcoming. In a 6 July 1993 letter to *JNCI* by statistician Gio Batta Gori, a statement notes that Gori is a former deputy director of NCI's Division of Cancer Causes and Prevention, then adds: "On occasion, Dr. Gori has consulted for the Tobacco Institute."

Gori, a consultant in Bethesda, Maryland, says he spent "several hours" on the letters and defends the payments, which included \$3555 for the *JNCI* letter and \$6000 for a letter in *The Wall Street Journal* that apparently wasn't published. "Do you think scientists live out of air? Everybody gets paid by somebody," he says.

Although editors contacted by *Science* were unfazed by the payments, at least one journal is quietly changing its disclosure rules. *JNCI* Editor-in-Chief Barnett Kramer says his journal plans to modify its rules to make ties more explicit. But "as long as it meets the criteria for publication, we may still publish it," he says. Lundberg agrees: "If the content is solid, that's what matters."

—JOCELYN KAISER

* www.tobaccoinstitute.com