

Prehistoric lakeside settlements in the southwestern Balkans

Project: : EXPLO. Exploring the dynamics and causes of prehistoric land use change in the cradle of European farming (ERC, 2019–2024)

Dissertation project: Johannes Reich, M.A

Keywords: Underwater Archaeology, Pile Dwellings, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Chronology, Balkans

Around the tripoint of Albania, Greece and North Macedonia lies a mountainous lakeland between Lake Ohrid in the west and Lake Vegoritida in the east (Fig. 1). As known mainly from Central Europe, Neolithic and Bronze Age lakeside settlements are also found here, including so-called pile dwellings. In contrast to the circum-alpine pile dwellings, the sites on or in the lakes of the southwestern Balkans are largely unexplored, but also show an immense research potential due to excellent organic preservation conditions.

In this geographical area, the first farming communities in continental Europe can be traced back to the 7th millennium BC. Here EXPLO investigates with a broad multidisciplinary approach the mutual relationship of prehistoric farming societies with their natural environment.

The dissertation project is intended to carry out basic research on the prehistoric lakeside settlements of the southwestern Balkans. For this purpose, all known lakeside settlements will be recorded and evaluated. The core of the project is the execution and evaluation of underwater archaeological excavations amongst others in the sites Ploča, Mičov Grad (Northern Macedonia) and Lin 3 (Albania) at Lake Ohrid.

The combination of dendrochronology and radiocarbon dating allows for the first time to study the wetland sites of the southwestern Balkans in a high-resolution absolute chronological framework. This allows both well-founded insights into architecture and settlement dynamics as well as the examination of relative chronological sequences of material culture.

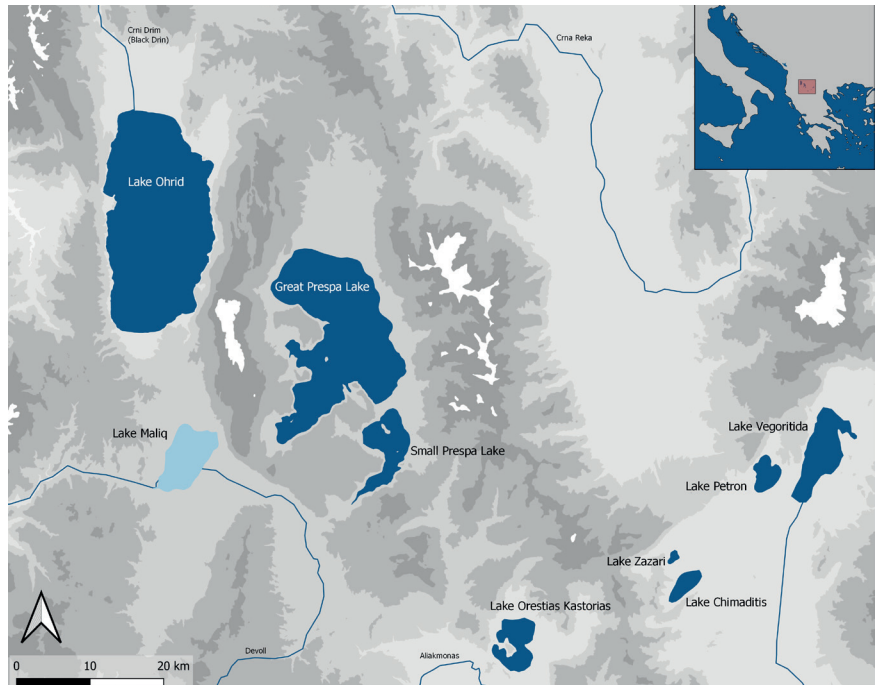


Fig. 1: Study area around the tripoint between Albania, Greece and Northern Macedonia.

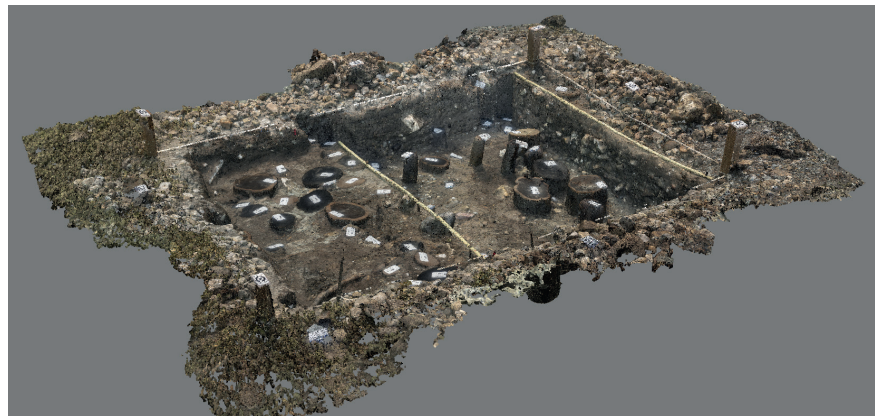


Fig. 2: Three-dimensional view of an underwater excavation reconstructed from several hundred photos.

In the second part of the dissertation project, the implementation of existing photogrammetric documentation techniques in pile-dwelling archaeology will be investigated for and during underwater excavations. In this context, workflows and methods for this specific underwater archaeological application will be further developed (Fig. 2).

Kontakt: johannes.reich@iaw.unibe.ch

Link: www.exploproject.eu; www.iaw.unibe.ch