

Deposit of Amphorae in the Quarter of St. Theodore, Pula

Alka Starac



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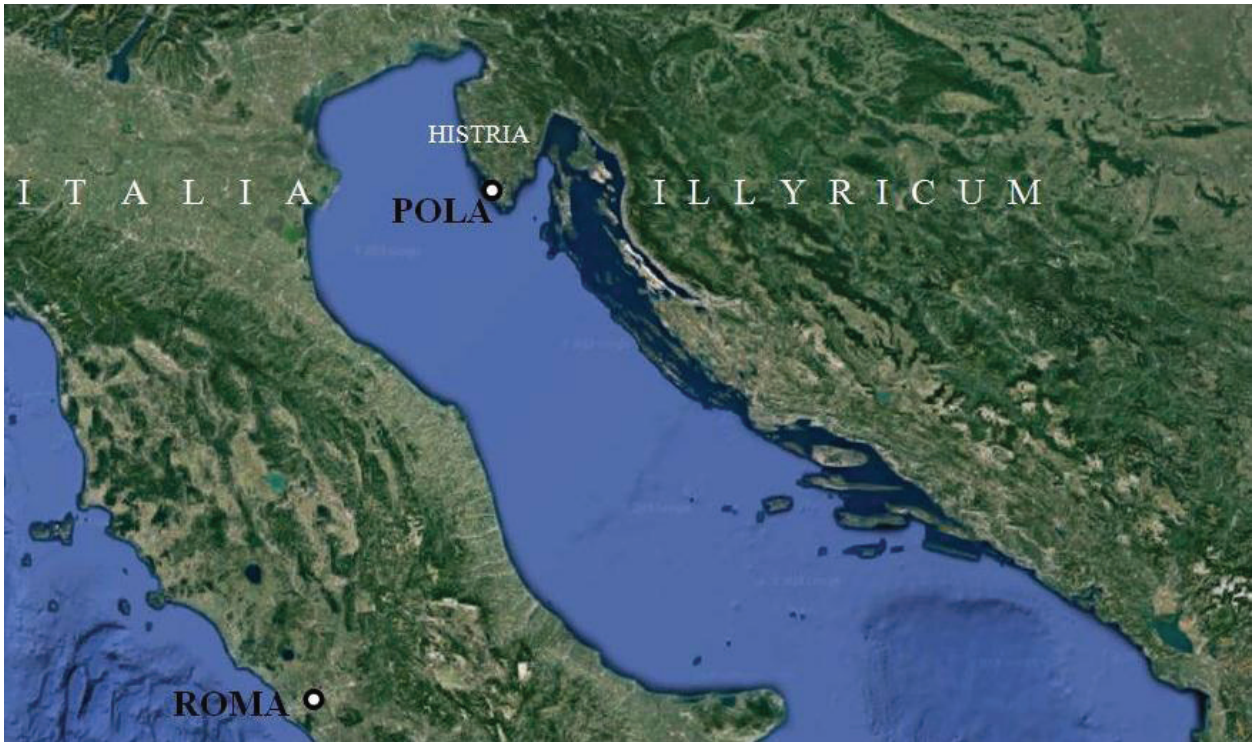
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Chapter 1

Archaeological excavations in St Theodore's Quarter 2005-2007

Archaeological excavations in St Theodore's Quarter in Pula (Latin *Pola*, in today's Croatia) was carried out in a rectangular area measuring 84 x 46 m, constructed in 1873 as the inner courtyard for infantry barracks (Figures 1-4).¹ A small part of the same deposit was discovered in 1873 during the construction of new Austro-Hungarian infantry barracks.² Some of the amphorae found here in the 19th century is now conserved in the Archaeological Museum of Istria in Pula, and most of them are still accessible to visitors, displayed below the amphitheatre.³ It transpired that the large, flat surface of the courtyard was created during the building of the high retaining wall on the north side, using as filling the large amounts of available crushed stone and soil. The rich, multi-layered archaeological site was found beneath the foundations of buildings used for industrial and commercial purposes that were built in the 20th century, and exposing rich testimony to the 3000 years of Pula's history. The archaeological layers, with their abundant finds, follow the natural slope of the hill and descend in terraces from Kandler Street towards the sea on the north side. The remains of the buildings in the archaeological layers

extend continuously over the whole plot, on an east-west axis, while in the direction north-south the remains extend from Kandler Street towards the sea for 75% of the site, in some places reaching a vertical wall height of over 5 m. Large amounts of moveable finds, items of material culture, and the remains of utility objects (in various materials, i.e. limestone, marble, ceramic, glass, bronze, iron, bone) were found, dating from the 10th century BC (of the Iron Age Histrian era) to the 20th century CE, over a range of three millennia.

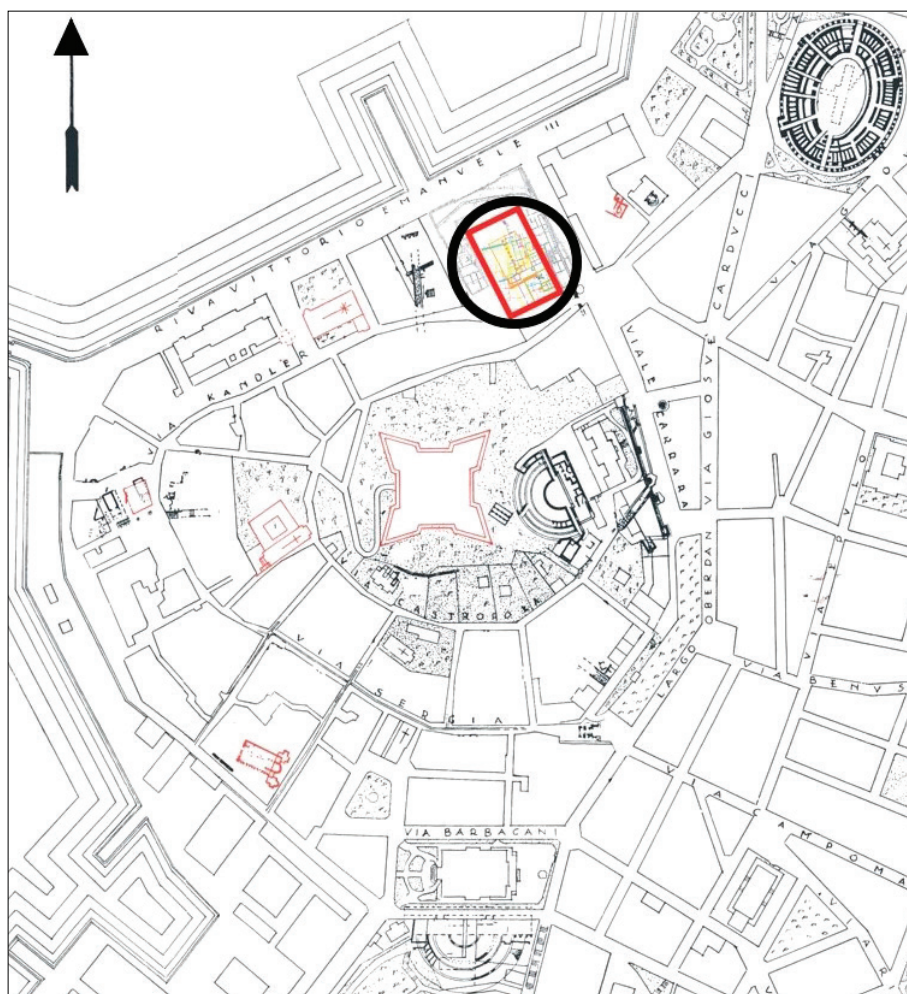


Figure 1: City quarter of St Theodore in Pula, excavated between 2005-2009.

¹ Starac 2006a: 135-140; 2006c: 235-238; 2007a: 263-265; 2007b: 84-90; 2008a: 121-129; 2008b: 301-313; 2009a: 379-389; 2009b: 123-168; 2009c: 271-290.

² Gnirs 1904: 215-232.

³ Gnirs 1904: 225; Starac 1995: 135-162; 2001: 269-277.

The layer with the largest and richest archaeological context is that of the Roman period, which comprises a section of the *insula* of the Roman colony of Pola near the northern inland city gate of St John, and covers

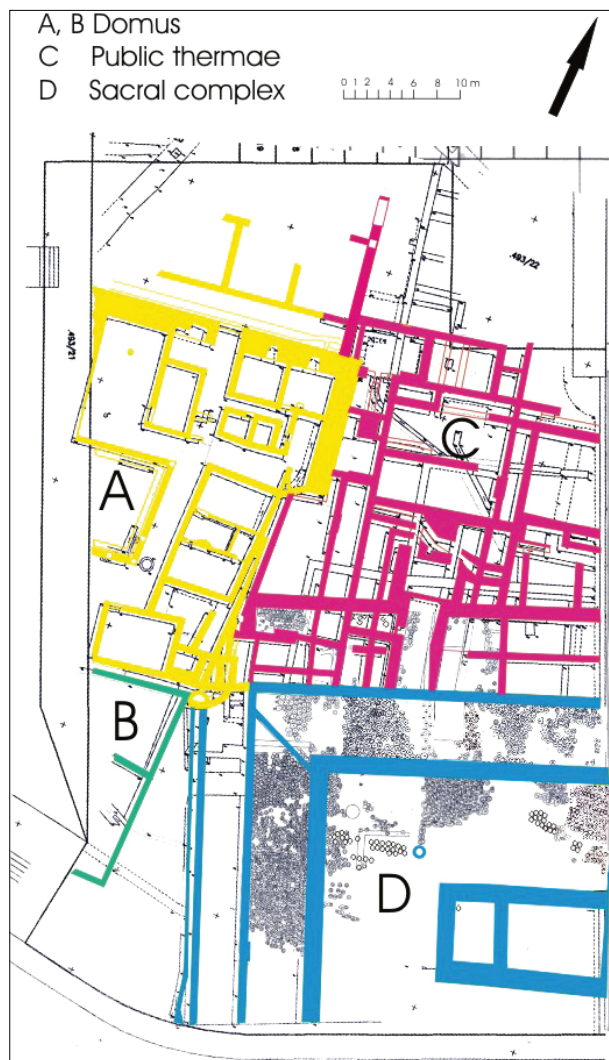


Figure 2: Building stage undertaken in the second half of the 1st century BC, showing spatial distribution.

the entire excavated archaeological zone (Figures 1, 3, 4). The highest, dominant position on the south side of the quarter occupies the Roman sacral complex, preserved exclusively in the foundations. It includes the significant, elevated temple of rectangular plan (of tetrastyle/prostyle composite style), surrounded by an open, sacred courtyard (*area sacra*, *temenos*), the explored part of which occupies an area of over 600 m² and three-winged portico.⁴ Extremely massive and solid foundations (150-180 cm wide, 300-450 cm high) supported this temple – attributed to Hercules – and which were laid on bedrock enclosing the rectangular ground plan (8 x 16 m) (Figures 2-3).⁵ The sanctuary complex, with its own courtyard and portico, contained a Roman well (S.U. Bunar 2), only a few meters from the newer well (S.U. Bunar 1) that was drilled centuries later in the inner courtyard of the Benedictine monastery. The sacral complex was located in the south-eastern

⁴ Starac 2009b: 123-168; 2018a: 1, fig. 2.

⁵ Starac 2018a: 96-102.

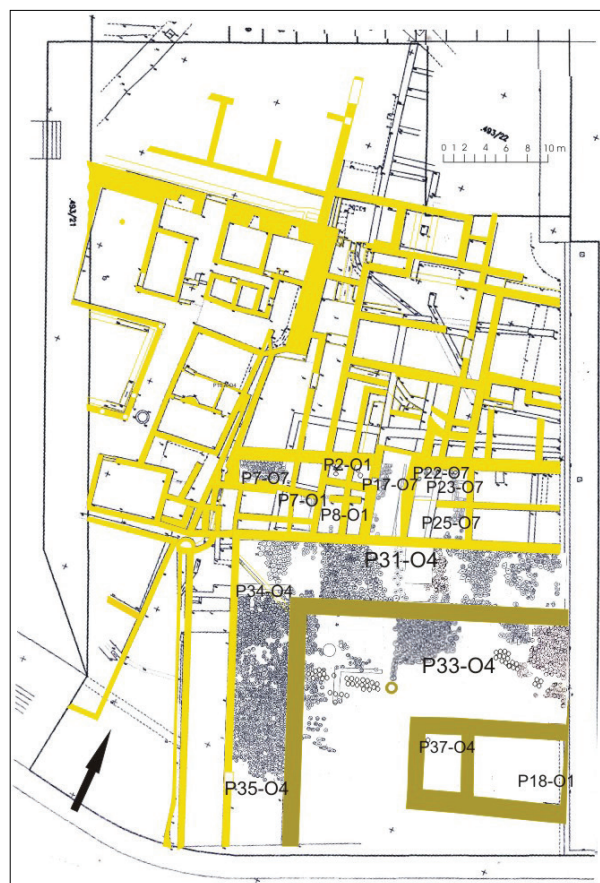


Figure 3: Building stage undertaken in the second half of the 1st century BC, with the names of locations of the amphorae deposits below floor level.

part of the explored zone, next to important urban *decumanus* that used to lead to the rear of the forum temples (today's Kandler Street), near the city walls. The floor level of the open square courtyard, of average total height of 340 cm, corresponded approximately to the level of the adjacent Roman street leading from St John's city gate to the forum. The Roman sanctuary was destroyed to ground level in the 5th century, and in its place the monastery complex was raised later. During demolition, the floor level in the terrace area of the sacred complex was raised by about 90 cm, to an average height of 430 cm.

The remains of a large Roman public *thermae* building, with floors organised on several levels, followed the natural slope by means of an alternating systems of ramps and stairs, and spread over the north-eastern section of the location.⁶ The floors for the most part are not preserved as a result of later interventions and rebuilding. A network of drainage channels was registered, large in capacity and built of stone. Its channels were partially destroyed and buried in later architectural interventions, and their widths range

⁶ Starac 2018b: 153.



Figure 4: The site in Kandler Street (2005); the view to the south.

from 70 to 110 cm; the full depth remains unknown, but it exceeds 170 cm. These channels were filled exclusively with dark-grey mud; there were no finds in the places where their vaults are preserved, since they have remained closed from the date of construction to the archaeological excavations in 2005. In addition to the network of drainage channels, a section of the water supply system was explored – exposing its fully waterproof, plastered channels and water reservoirs. The thermal building, equipped with sewer channels and a water supply system, has an asymmetrical layout that allows circulation, typical for Late Republican and Early Imperial thermal structures, by means of a long, laterally positioned, access corridor.⁷ The size of *thermae*, with its asymmetrical floor plan – extending over some 1350 m² in total – corresponds to other public *thermae* of medium dimensions, which usually occupied only a part of the *insula* and divided these same walls from other buildings.⁸ The dimensions of the thermal building, situated on a steep hillside, with its extensive sewerage infrastructure,

a monumental entrance, basin walls decorated in marble, and numerous marble plate fragments, testify that the foundation work of this building in the third quarter of the 1st century BC represented an imposing and technically demanding investment. Relatively numerous cosmetic implements (bronze, ceramic, glass, bone) are among the finds typical for thermal buildings. This thermal site was demolished after the fire at the end of the 5th century AD, being replaced by a large complex of polyvalent character, itself degraded after a further fire in the 7th century AD.

During the construction of the temple terrace, with its open courtyard and surrounding portico, and during the foundation of public *thermae* on the lower level, next to the north side of the sanctuary terrace, in the second half of the 1st century BC, large quantities of entire or halved amphorae were set for construction purposes between the foundation walls and under the original floor level. The amphorae from this deposit represent the main topic of our study here.

⁷ Adam 1989: 294; Krencker, Krüger, Lehmann, Wachtler 1929: 177, fig. 234, type a).

⁸ Starac 2018b: 160.