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A NEWLY DISCOVERED NORTH-EASTERN DECUMANUS OF POREČ

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Decumanus 9

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In the part of Euphrasius' Street in the old town centre of Poreč, during the archaeological excavations due to construction of a new underground infrastructure, an Antique period north-eastern Decumanus was discovered for the first time. The same was detected in the total length of 27.70 m at a depth of -149 cm. An Antique period street was consisted of roadway 2 m wide, and made of packed earth mixed with lime mortar, stones and tegulae. From the north and south side the roadway was bordered by 20 cm high kerb made of processed stone blocks, which were an integral part of the pavement approx. 40 cm wide.

Key words: Poreč - Parentium, excavations, north-eastern decumanus

During the archaeological supervision and later a systematic archaeological research¹ in the old town centre of Poreč, a mechanical/manual excavation of the streets was conducted² for the purpose of investors³ due to construction of a new urban underground infrastructure (Fig 1).

Prior to the research the whole area in Euphrasius' Street, eastern of house number 21, and in the Konzula Istranina Street was recorded by georadar in 17 sectors⁴. Ground penetrating radar imaging revealed some older structures beneath the recent pavement and also their depth.

¹ Archaeological research was conducted between October 2008 and March 2009.

² In Euphrasius' Street and Konzula Istranina Street.

³ The investor was town of Poreč, contractor was Michele d.o.o., a company from Pula, and supervision was performed by Istra inženjering from Poreč.

⁴ Recordings were done by Dr. Branko Mušič from the Univerza v Ljubljani, Oddelek za arheologiju, Ljubljana, Slovenija.

Fig. 1. Položaj Novalje.

Fig. 2. Euphrasius' Street

Fig. 3. An Antique period street with cobbles



The stratigraphy of the researched surfaces in Euphrasius' Street and in Konzula Istranina Street was complex as it is common in urban communities populated in various, often continuous chronological periods. During the excavations⁵, we discovered that under the upper and recent Modern period pavement (regularly processed stone parallepipeds) segments of the older pavement (irregularly processed smaller stone round worn parallepipeds) are located (Fig. 2).



⁵ The head of the archaeological research was museum counsellor, the author of this paper, while his assistant was Želimir Brnić, M.A. Two graduate archaeology students, Anja Bartol and Klaudija Bartolić, also participated in this research.

⁶ From the house number 17 to 21

⁷ Such systematic archaeological excavations have been conducted in 1997/1998 in the same street, but without similar results, and in the archives of the Museum there are no deposited records

⁸ Kovačić, 2008., the modern-day buildings are partially situated on the edges of the Antique period main street

⁹ Kovačić, 2007.

¹⁰ Prelog, 1957., 45-47

¹¹ Wheeler, 1964./1969., 173

¹² Coarelli, 1978., 260

¹³ Milić, 1994., 245,

¹⁴ Kolega, 2009., 127, Solway, 2003., 13

¹⁵ Girardi Jurkić, 2006., 24, Matijašić, 1988., 8

A Modern period and older pavement

Below these two pavements is a medieval layer consisting of pre-Romanesque/Romanesque layer, then the late Antique/early Christian layer, and then the oldest layer, which is the Antique period layer.

Euphrasius' Street⁶

Using the smaller probe in front of house number 18 in Euphrasius' Street, it was determined that on the sterile soil a layer composed of an Antique period construction debris, pottery and dirt was deposited.

Above this layer in Euphrasius' Street on its north-eastern side there was one of the most significant findings of the Antique period, an Antique period street with its accompanying side kerbs and cobbles. This is the first and so far only found/discovered very well preserved and conserved Antique period street inside the Poreč urban street layout⁷.

Previous archaeological research, especially in the street layout of the Antique period town of Poreč, revealed⁸ to us that today's main street *Decumanus maximus* during the Antique period was not only paved with large flat stone blocks that covered it and connected it with a paved *forum*⁹, which is adorned on the west side by two known temples (Large and Neptune's Temple)¹⁰. This is only logical since the town of Poreč was a very important Antique period city (such as Ostia¹¹, Pompeii¹², and Timgad¹³)¹⁴ and was adorned by the title *Colonia Iulia Parentium* (dated to the 1st century BC)¹⁵. Was the other important city street, *Cardo maximus*, paved in the same way we do not know, but the assumption is valid.





Fig. 4. Drainage channel

Fig. 5. Cobbles, kerb with pavement and house doorstep

Euphrasius' Street stretched parallel to the *Decumanus maximus*¹⁶ in the east-west direction, from the house number 17 to number 21 in the total revealed length of 27.70 m at a depth of -149 cm. This Antique period street was consisted of roadway 2 m wide, made of packed earth mixed with lime mortar, stones and tegulae (Fig. 3). On the roadway are visible eventually formed "patches" made of lime mortar mixed with pieces of tegulae and stones. In the roadway we found a driven iron wedge with a round convex head. In parts of the pavement on the embedded flat stones of the larger dimensions are visible cart-wheel grooves and scattered small-sized movable material which has a very important role in dating of the Antique period layer and street. Five coins, of which two are attributed to Constantius II (337-361 AD)¹⁷ and three to Theodosius II (408-450 AD) were found¹⁸. Most fragments of pottery were found in the Antique period layer: fragments of amphorae, mortars and *terrae sigillatae*. Also, some fragments of an Antique period glass in various colours and bronze artefacts (two bronze hair pins with round heads and one of them with a shank portion, one fragment of a Late Antique crossbow fibula and fragments of bronze sheet) were found.

On the roadway on the southern side a drainage channel next to the kerb of the pavement was discovered. The channel was rectangular with dimensions of 63 x 23 cm and 28 cm deep (Fig. 4).

To the north and south side the roadway was bordered by 20 cm high side kerbs made of processed stone blocks, which were an integral part of the pavement approx. 40 cm wide. Another, somewhat lower half of the pavement, in direct contact with kerbs, consisted of packed earth, above which was casted a thicker layer (6-10 cm) of lime mortar on which one could walk.

Parallel with the pavement two Antique period doorsteps from house entrances built into the façade wall of the Antique period houses were discovered. The same also had marginal grooves, and slots for doors and bolts. One was located in the passage from Euphrasius' Street into Konzula Istranina Street (Fig. 5) and the other in Euphrasius' Street (an Antique period wall is the same one that I found a year earlier)¹⁹.

During the late Antique/early Christian phase (construction phase II) on the south kerb and pavement a stone wall 40 cm wide and 60 cm high was erected. Also, three layers of stone rows were discovered.

¹⁶ Plesničar Gec, 2006., 14-16, Prelog, 1957., 50, Suić, 2003., 130

¹⁷ Sear, 1974., 326

¹⁸ Sear, 1974., 352

¹⁹ Kovačić, 2008.

ABBREVIATIONS:

HAG *Hrvatski arheološki godišnjak, Zagreb*

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SAŽETAK

NOVOOTKRIVENI POREČKI SJEVEROISTOČNI DECUMANUS

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Od listopada 2008. do kraja ožujka 2009. godine unutar starogradske jezgre grada Poreča provedena su sustavna arheološka istraživanja. Ista su bila nužno potrebna poradi izgradnje nove podzemne gradske infrastrukture.

Na dubini od oko 180 cm pronađen je jako dobro očuvani decumanus, koji je smješten u sjeveroistočnom dijelu grada. Na njega su se, okomito u smjeru sjever-jug, naslanjale antičke kuće s kućnim pragovima.