One Hundred Croatian Archeological Sites
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LEKSIKOGRAFSKI ZAVOD MIROSLAV KRLEŽA
ONE HUNDRED CROATIAN ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES

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Omišalj on Krk

In the northwestern part of the island of Krk, below today's Omišalj, in the deeply indented and calm cove Sapan (Sepen) was the ancient city Fulfinum. Ancient writers like Pliny the Elder and Ptolemy mention it; in the famous historic battle of the Civil War between Caesar's and Pompey's fleet in 49 BC the Liburnian league of the Pertinaces, which inhabited that territory, ensured Pompey's forces an overwhelming victory.

Uninterrupted habitation of this area can be traced from prehistoric times, especially the Bronze and Iron ages, up to the 11th cent. Fulfinum as an urban center grew on the terrace-leveled and well-drained land along the shore line of the well protected cove on an area of almost 4 hectares. The suitable cove made it possible to build a large and safe harbor, and the fertile field, with a wealth of sources of drinking water, was the basis for the city's participation in the life of Classical Antiquity. Municipium Flavium Fulfinum was organized and settled by veterans of the Flavian dynasty, most probably in the reign of Emperor Domitian, although it gained immunity significantly earlier.

From a military settlement Fulfinum quickly grew into a city, a municipal center with a large harbor, which in less than three centuries became equal in importance with Curicum (Krk) throughout the whole northern part of the island of Krk.

At the site Oklada there is a clearly defined urban plan of an orthogonal grid with a system of sewers and a water supply network. Like other Roman cities, Fulfinum had its important buildings arranged within a rectangular street network. The most striking public building was the city forum with the capitol, of which only the southern part is preserved, which was turned toward the sea. The forum area with the shrine, 22 m × 27 m in dimensions, had its facades covered by arcades and it was enclosed by shops on the southern side and by the city hall or basilica on the northern side. Extensive building is visible over the whole area, and the residential insulae and city villas (villae urbanae) are notable. Toward the eastern part of the settlement were the bath complexes with rooms heated by a hypocaust, agricultural villas (villae rusticae), the harbor infrastructure with the commercial section and an aqueduct. Suburban roads linked the city with the agricultural land and with two necropoleis (at the sites Kurilovo and Sinjaše). Judging by numerous finds of ancient household ceramics, glass, luxury items, jewelry and coins the necropoleis date to the 1st and 2nd cent. AD.

With the fall of the Roman empire and the coming of new masters to the northern Adriatic and with the influx of a new population Fulfinum became inadequate and unsuited for the new conditions of life. Most of the city was abandoned, but as its spatial and temporal continuation on its western periphery, at the site Mirine, there arose a magnificent early Christian complex.

The part of the complex that was preserved is a church at the very seashore, oriented to the ancient decumanus and bounded by a city block 35 m × 25 m in dimensions. Also of interest is the rare case of a church with an elongated cross as ground plan with a narthex and two pastophorium. Originally it was a basilica church, 12 m × 28 m in dimensions; on its southern side were built on a tower and arcade, before which lay the residential and economic part of the complex. Later it was rebuilt into a church with a confessio, that is, a symbolic altar-grave as an ancient Fulfinum and the early Christian complex Mirine.
underground cross-shaped structure, with a sanctuary, sacristies, a transept, pastophoria, secretaria, a narthex, a bell tower, an arcade on the southern side and a small cloister with a graveyard. All the preserved walls of the church except the pastophoria are divided by pilasters. The perimeter walls of the nave and transept have broad arched window openings, while the windows on the rear wall above the sanctuary and on the western wall of the narthex are divided into bифora. These windows were covered by transennae with an ornamental motif of a shell and stylized decorations in the middle frame. The facade wall has been preserved to the level of the roof together with the gable, while the rear wall lacks only certain of its parts. The narthex of the church is of an enclosed type, and one enters it through a partially reconstructed rectangular portal with a semicircular lintel. On the same premises four graves were investigated, one of which was in a sarcophagus. Above the narthex and pastophoria preservation work has placed a roof.

Among the finds of church furnishings and decorative sculpture we note fragments of the altar, more precisely of the table, of the ciborium (fragment of a capital and paneling), of a triumphal arch (the base of one of the columns bearing it) and of window transennae, as well as a small column and even one small fragment of the pluteus of the altar screen.

The remains of walls southwest of the church belonged to the monastery complex, while somewhat to the east was a large graveyard. Northwest of the complex lie the foundations of a church with unknown name. It is a single-naved building with three apses, connected on its southern side with an atrium. Archival data about this church are not known, but buildings with similar typological features are on the neighboring island of Cres and in Istria.

The complex was built with construction material from deserted Fulfinum. Many ancient fragments attest to this, notable among which is a Fulfinum inscription from the 1st cent. AD (kept in the Stone Monument Gallery in Omišalj). The inscription mentions that the aqueduct was widened and repaired for the needs of the city from 69 to 96 AD, at the time of Domitian, Vespasian’s son. Considering models, the complex arose at the beginning of the 5th cent. under direct influence of northern Italian architecture, and was presumably part of the Glagolitic Benedictine Abbey of St. Nicholas, abandoned in the 15th cent.