

AKTI VIII. MEĐUNARODNOG KOLOKVIJA O PROBLEMIMA RIMSKOG PROVINCIJALNOG UMJETNIČKOG STVARALAŠTVA

AKTEN DES VIII. INTERNATIONALEN KOLLOQUIUMS ÜBER PROBLEME DES PROVINZIALRÖMISCHEN KUNSTSCHAFFENS

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 8TH INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM ON PROBLEMS OF ROMAN PROVINCIAL ART

LES ACTES DU VIII^{ÈME} COLLOQUE INTERNATIONAL SUR LES PROBLÈMES DE L'ART PROVINCIAL ROMAIN

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RELIGIJA I MIT KAO POTICAJ RIMSKOJ PROVINCIJALNOJ PLASTICI

RELIGION UND MYTHOS ALS ANREGUNG FÜR DIE PROVINZIALRÖMISCHE PLASTIK

RELIGION AND MYTH AS AN IMPETUS FOR THE ROMAN PROVINCIAL SCULPTURE

LA RELIGION ET LE MYTHE COMME INSPIRATION POUR LA SCULPTURE ROMAINE PROVINCIALE

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CULT AND MYTHOLOGICAL REPRESENTATIONS AS DECORATIVE ELEMENTS OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS IN ROMAN POLA

BY KRISTINA DŽIN

The earliest name for the Roman colony of Pula is mentioned by Pliny the Elder in his work *Naturalis Historia* (3, 129): ... *colonia Pola, quae nunc Pietas Iulia*. The forming of the *Pola* Colony dates to the time of Caesar. As the “colony of Caesariana”, it was founded between 46 and 45 B.C. with the goal of being one of many strongholds of Roman conquest on the Adriatic, from Trieste to Greece. The task of foundation was entrusted to Caesar’s kin and friends: his father-in-law and titled duumvir *L. Calpurnius Piso Caesonius* and legate *L. Cassius Longinus*, brother to Caesar’s later assassin.¹

A plaque with the names of the two duumvirs and founders of the colony *Pietas Iulia* stands built into the Hercules Gate decorated by the head of Hercules, the oldest city gateway of the colony of Pola, raised on the site of the ancient, pre-historic hill fort entrance.²

After the civil war of 42 B.C., among the Triumvirate of Octavian, Antony and Lepidus on the one hand and Caesar’s assassins Brutus and Cassius on the other, Pula, as a faithful follower of Caesar’s assassins, was ravaged and demolished following Octavian’s victory at

Actium in 31 B.C. The crucial geo-strategic and political stronghold of Pola was soon rebuilt for Octavian-Augustus, however, and as a symbol of the victory at Actium, one of the most beautiful of the Augustus age triumphal arches was raised at some point between 29 and 27 B.C. in Pula; the Triumphal Arch of the Sergii family, a masterpiece of Roman architecture.³

By designing the city in accordance with Roman urban custom as the “*pars inferior*”, and expanding the city limits to include the city hill “*pars superior*”, Augustus transformed Pula into an imperial city with all the essential elements of its majestic demeanour, conducting the underlying policy ruled by the slogan “*pax Iulia*”. At this stage, the most monumental and striking examples of the Roman architectural tradition were built in Pula: the great amphitheatre, a spacious Roman outdoor theatre, a small theatre in the city itself and Augustus Temple.⁴

The Arch of the Sergii family in Pula certainly belongs to the first group of such monuments: it was the first sign of an economic, political, architectural and artistic importance of Roman Pula at the end of the 1st C.B.C.

¹ A. Fraschetti, *La “Pietas” di Cesare e la Colonia di Pola*. *Annali del seminario di studi del mondo classico – Archeologia e storia antica* 5, 1983, 77–102. – V. Jurkić, *Pula from its Beginnings*. In: *Pula – a City to measure* (Pula 1985) 24–52. – G. Fischer, *Das römische Pula* (München 1996) 5–15. – R. Matijašić/K. Buršić Matijašić, *Antička Pula s okolicom* (Pula 1996) 39–51. – V. Girardi Jurkić, *Pula-Pola*. In: *Ciudades Antiguas del Mediterráneo* (Barcelona 1998) 146–149.

² P. Sticotti, *Il culto di Ercole a Pola*. *Archeografo Triestino* ser. 3 4(32), 1908, 233–239. – V. Jurkić, *Izbor antičke kulne plastike na području Istre*. *Materijali* 12. IX kongres arheologa Jugoslavije – Zadar 1972 (Zadar 1976) 211. – V. Girardi Jurkić, *Arte plastica del culto come determinante l’esistenza dei culti romani e sincretici nella regione istriana*. *Atti del Centro di ricerche storiche* 5, 1974, 8–9. – M. Sanader, *O kultu Herakla u Hrvatskoj*. In: *Rasprave o rimskim kultovima* (Zagreb 1999) 23. – A. Starac, *Herkulova vrata*. In: *Arheološka istraživanja 1997.–1998.* – Pula, iza Herkulovih vrata. *Katalog Arheološkog muzeja Istre* 60 (Pula 2001) 21–22.

³ G. Bandelli, *La politica romana dell’Adriatico orientale in età repubblicana*. *Atti e Mem. Soc. Istriana Arch.* n.s. 31, 1983, 167–175. – G. Bandelli, *Momenti e forme della politica romana nella Transpadana orientale, III–II sec.a.C.* *Atti e Mem. Soc. Istriana Arch.* n.s. 33, 1985, 2–29. – F. Cassola, *La politica romana nell’alto Adriatico*. *Antichità Altoadriatiche*, 2, Aquileia 1972. – V. Jurkić, *Najnovija istraživanja urbane jezgre antičke Pule, 1975–76*. In: *Novija i neobjavljena istraživanja u Dalmaciji*. *Znanstveni skup Vodice* 10–13. svibnja 1976. *Izdanja Hrvatskog Arh. Društva* 3 (Split 1978) 95–105 spec. note. 5. – R. Matijašić, *Tajne pulskog foruma*. *Vijesti Muz. i Konzervatora Hrvatske* 37 1/2, 1988, 20. – A. Starac, *Forum u Puli*. *Opuscula Arch.* (Zagreb) 20, 1996, 71–89. – V. Jurkić, *Periodizacija izgradnje antičkog foruma u Puli*. *Histria Antiqua* 5, 1999, 1–19.

⁴ Fischer (note 1) 44–122. – K. Džin, *Dekoracija Augustovog hrama u Puli (Decoration on the Augustus Temple in Pula)*, *Histria Antiqua* 4, 1998, 139–146. – Jurkić (note 3) 1–19. – R. Matijašić, *Neka topografska pitanja pulskog foruma*, *Histria Antiqua* 5, 1999, 21–28. – K. Džin, *Forum u Puli – hipoteza o mjestu kulta Klaudivijeva*. *Histria Antiqua* 5, 1999, 29–32.

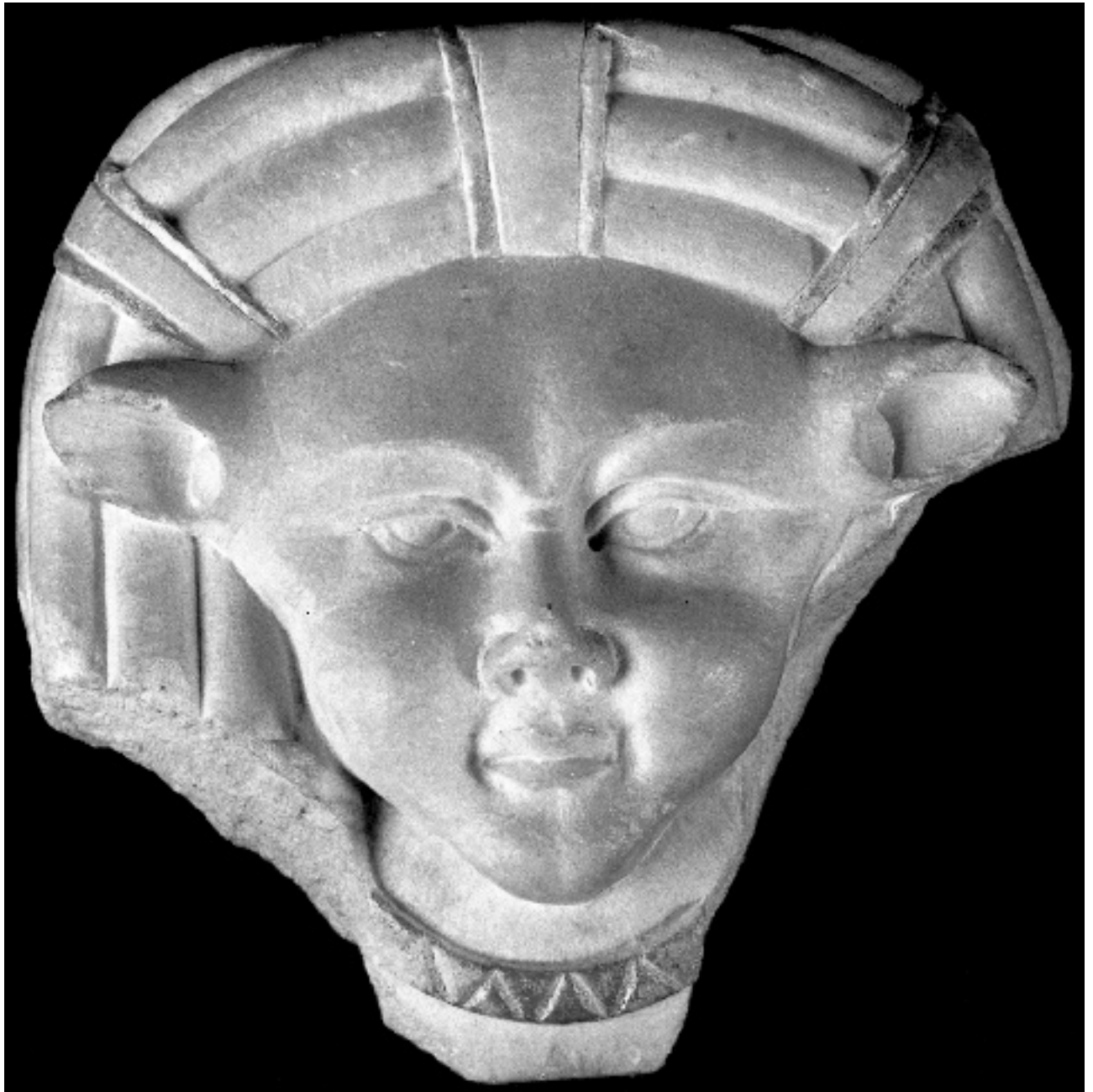


FIG. 1 HATOR, PULA'S AMPHITHEATRE, 2 ND – 3 RD C.A.D., INVT. NUM. A 8712, IN THE AUGUSTUS TEMPLE IN PULA.

For its conception and dimensions, it belongs to a category of rather small arches. Its ground plan is quadrangular, with two strong stone pillars, connected with an arch made with finely worked, cuneiform blocks. A continuous decorated frieze stretches along the whole length of the front. The main motives of the decoration on the Sergii Arch as mythological representation are winged Sphynx, Gryphon, Hippocampus, and as deities are winged Victoria, Selene-Luna and Cupid. Above it are

the mouldings and the three bases for statues of the three members of the family, in memory of whom this arch was erected, as a natural plan of an entrance into town.⁵

The analysis of influences on the style and decoration of the main structure, as well as on the ornaments of trabeatio, and the reliefs of mythological and gods representations show that the monument was built between the years 29 and 27 B.C. It was formed and decorated in a Hellenistic spirit, as an expression of the



FIG. 2 SFINGA, LARGE SCENIC ROMAN THEATRE, 1 ST C.A.D., INVT. NUM. A 5744, IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF ISTRIA IN PULA.

Hellenistic influence on the architectural conception and artistic decoration.⁵

The stone arch is formed in a stylistically homogeneous, spontaneous manner, so that it seems that the idea

and execution were under no autochthonous, local influence whatsoever. It can be concluded that the woman who ordered the work to be done, Salvia Postuma Sergi, commissioned the work to a workshop owned by

⁵ G. Traversari, *L'arco dei Sergi* (Padova 1971) 47. – K. Džin, *Helenistički utjecaj na oblikovanje i dekoraciju slavoluka Sergijevaca u Puli* (Hellenistic influences on the form and decoration of the arch of the Sergii in Pula). *Jadranski zbornik* 14, 1990–1991, 11–31.

⁶ J. M. C. Toynbee/ J.B. Ward Perkins, *A hellenistic motif in imperial art*. *Papers Brit. School Rome* 18, 1950, 8 T.XXII/1. – A. Schober, *Die Kunst von Pergamon* (Wien, Innsbruck 1951) 148 fig. 145–146.



FIG. 3 MENADA, MID 1 ST C.A.D., INVT. NUM. A 423, IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF ISTRIA IN PULA.

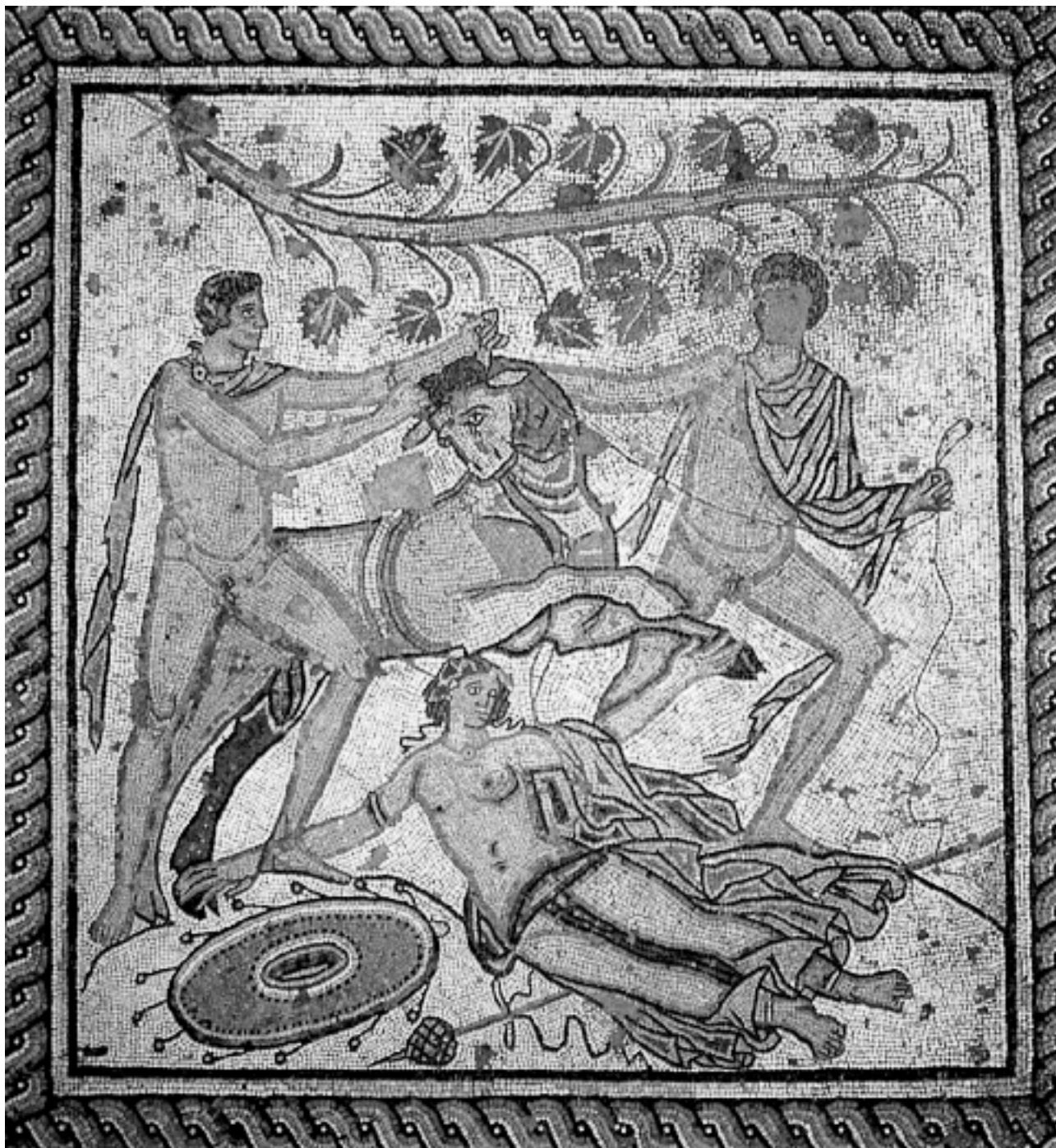


FIG. 4 DIRKA, PULA, ROMAN MOSAIC, ATRIUM OF ROMAN URBAN VILLA, 3 RD C.A.D.

a Greek from Asia Minor, obviously pervaded by Hellenistic influences.⁷

Roman Pola is one of the roman towns that can prove the words of Aristotle, under the heading “from

Cult to Theatre”, as it comprises the motives connected with ancient cult rites performed in the worship of the pagan god Dionysus from whence the antique Greek, and thus European theatre, leads its origin. Although

⁷ K. Džin, *A contribution to the study of the Sergii Arch in Pula*. *Histria Antiqua* 3, 1997, 95–99.

some different opinions exist on the origin of the theatre, nevertheless, Aristotle is still to be believed in his description of its creation in his book "On Poetic Art", in the chapter on the historical development of tragedy.⁸

The tragedy only later arose from unknown myths and humorous talk, having been transformed from the satyr song.⁹

Colonia Iulia Herculanea Pollentia Pola (Pula) has preserved valuable evidence of the organization of gladiators' games and theatrical performances; an amphitheatre which could sat 23,000 spectators, decorated with appliqué of Egyptian deity Hathor, and architectural remains of a bigger and a smaller theatre.¹⁰

The ground-plan description, as well as the drawings, of the architectural decorations of the bigger Roman theatre, only several blocs of which have remained and which was situated outside the defence bulwarks of Pula on the northern slopes of the present-day hill Monte Zaro, have been preserved in the works of Sebastian Serlio, the Renaissance builder and architect (1475–1554).¹¹

Among the few existing finds are some specimens of architectural decoration and a marble torso of a fragmented statue of an emperor in larger-than-life proportions. The main motifs of the decoration on the Large Roman theatre are the sitting winged Sphinx, Gorgon and Satyr.¹²

The research on the smaller Roman theatre, which has been incorporated into the Upper town (*Pars superior coloniae Polae*) had been done in stages since the beginning of the 20th century, until the outbreak of World War II when the amount of the discovered architectural remains and decorative elements made it possible to recognize its total architectural composition (both the interior and exterior decoration). The main motifs of the decoration on the small Roman theatre are Silenus, winged Genius and Gorgones.

Slabs with reliefs representing dancing women in lively movements, numerous oil-lamps with a variety of scenes taken from gladiator fights, masks, representations of theatrical performances, details from the life of actors, etc. should also be added to the inventory of the evidence of theatrical and other performances.¹³ After World War II, a large polychrome mosaic with a representation of the punishment of Dirce was discovered in Pula. The composition deals with the moment when the mythological twins, Zeus's sons Amphion and Zethus, are tying Dirce, dressed as a bacchante, to the horns of an enraged bull. It is a pictorial representation of the mythological story of Antiope, the beautiful daughter of Nykteus, the theme which Euripides treated in his tragedy *Antiope*, which has been preserved only in fragments.¹⁴

Perhaps the building, in which among other floor decorations was found this mosaic, might have been the home of one of the nameless curators of the theatre, who were mentioned in the two fragmented inscriptions discovered in the remains of the smaller Roman theatre in Pula.¹⁵

* * *

On all nominated monuments we can see various animals as dolphins, snakes and birds as an accompaniment of mythological representations.

All nominated gods and goddesses (Victoria, Selena-Luna, Cupid, Satyr, Hathor) and mythological representations (Sphinx, Gryphon, Hippocampus, Gorgon, Satyr, winged genius) are common motives of decoration on votive and funeral arches, theatres, and amphitheatres, as well as public buildings.

The execution of the decoration was commissioned to the artists and workshops pervaded by Hellenistic influences of oriental origin, that means that the idea and execution were under no strong Italian or autochthonous local influence whatsoever.

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⁸ D. Rnjak, *Od kulta do pozorišta (From Cult to theater)*. In: *Antički teatar na tlu Jugoslavije* (Novi Sad 1979) 43.

⁹ Aristotel, *Opjesničkoj umetnosti*, translation by N. Đurić, Beograd 1948, 10–11. – M. Bieber, *The History of the Greek and Roman Theatre* (Princeton 1961) 1 sqq.

¹⁰ M. Mirabella Roberti, *L'arena di Pola* (Pola 1943). – Š. Mlakar, *Antička Pula* (Pula 1958) 30–37. – Girardi Jurkić (note 2) 17 fig. 15 – Š. Mlakar, *The amphitheatre in Pula* (Pula 1980) 5–28. – K. Džin, *Amfiteatar i igre u carsko doba Pule* (Pula, *Amphitheatre and games in the Imperial period*). Katalog Arheološkog muzeja Istre 53, 4; 15. – V. Girardi Jurkić, *Egipatski kultovi u ozračju antičke Istre (Egyptian Cults in the atmosphere of antique Istria)*. Katalog Arheološkog muzeja Istre 59 (Pula 2001) 14–15. – V. Jurkić, *The History of Research of the Amphitheater in Pula*. *Histria Antiqua* 9, 2003, 19–69.

¹¹ S. Serlio, *De architectura* (Venezia 1544) by G.D. Scamozzi. – S. Serlio, *Tutte le opere di architettura* (Venezia 1584). – C. de Franceschi, *L'antico teatro di Pola*. *Atti e Mem. Soc. Istriana Arch.* 24, 1908, 49.

¹² Š. Mlakar, *Iz inventara svjedočanstva o kazališnom životu u antičkoj Puli (From the inventory of the Evidences of Theatrical Life in classical Pula)*. In: *Antički teatar na tlu Jugoslavije (Théâtre antique sur le sol de la Yugoslavie)* Actes de l'Assemblée scientifique du 14 au 17 Avril 1980 (Novi Sad 1981) 91–108.

¹³ A. Gnirs, *Das römische Bühnentheater in Pola*. *Jahrb. Altde.* 2, 1908, 153 and fig.. – A. Gnirs, *Grabungen und antike Denkmale in Pola*. *Jahresh. Österr. Arch. Inst.* 15, 1912, 239 sqq. – M. Mirabella Roberti, *Notiziario archeologico*. *Atti e Mem. Soc. Istriana Arch.* n.s. 1, 1949, 247 sqq. – Mlakar (note 12) 103–105.

¹⁴ Š. Mlakar, *Antički nalazi u Puli*. *Arheološki pregled* 1, 1959, 107 and fig.. – Š. Mlakar, *Novi antički nalaz u Puli*. *Arheološki radovi i rasprave* 2, 1962, 429 sqq.

¹⁵ B. F. Tamaro, *Inscriptiones Italiae, Regio X/I, Pola et Nesactium*, Roma 1947, no. 101, 102. – V. Girardi Jurkić, *I mosaici antichi dell'Istria*. *III Colloquio internazionale sul mosaico antico*. Ravenna, 6–10. sett. 1980 (Ravenna 1983) 167–176. – J. Meder, *Podni mozaici u Hrvatskoj od 1. do 6. stoljeća* (Zagreb 2003) 55 Pl. XVII fig. 3