

MUNICIPIUM CLAUDIUM CELEIA

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Izleček

V prispevku so predstavljene nove ugotovitve o nastanku, rasti in ustroju rimskega municipija Celeje. Vse od leta 2002, ko je bila Celeja celovito predstavljena v knjigi *The Autonomous Towns of Noricum and Pannonia*, so v Celju potekale številne arheološke raziskave, ki so popolnoma spremenile naše vedenje. Potrdile so med drugim lokacijo in datacijo foruma, obstoj severnega obrtniškega predmestja ter na novo zamejile severno in južno grobišče. Odkrita in delno raziskana je bila vzhodna nekropola. Raziskave v starem mestnem jedru Celja pa so omogočile nova spoznanja o nastanku in notranjem ustroju rimskega mesta.

Ključne besede: Norik, *Municipium Claudium Celeia*, *oppidum Keléia*, topografija

Abstract

This paper presents new findings on the origin, growth and structure of the Roman municipium of Celeia. Since 2002, when Celeia was presented in its entirety in *The Autonomous Towns of Noricum and Pannonia*, a number of archaeological investigations have been carried out in Celeia, which have completely changed the way we know about Celeia. The results of these investigations have confirmed the location and dating of the construction of the forum, confirmed the existence of a northern artisan suburb, and redefined the northern and southern burial grounds. The eastern necropolis was discovered and partially excavated. Investigations in the old town centre of Celje have provided new insights into the origins and internal structure of the Roman city.

Keywords: Noricum, *Municipium Claudium Celeia*, *oppidum Keléia*, topography

GENERAL REMARKS

Archaeological excavations in Celje have a long history, beginning in the mid-19th century. Because of specific circumstances, such as an urban setting and river activities, there is still much about the structure and development of Roman Celeia that remains unclear. The first comprehensive overview of Celeia was written in 2002 (Lazar 2002) and presented alongside other Roman towns in Noricum and Pannonia (M. Šašel Kos, P. Scherrer (eds.), *The Autonomous Towns of Noricum and Pannonia. Noricum*, Situla 40, 2002). After its publication, there was a proliferation of archaeological investigations across Celje. First there was research in the area of the Roman forum, followed by the investigations in the northern and eastern Roman suburbs and cemeteries, as well as a series of other investigations that have brought a wealth of new knowledge of the origins, structure and development of Roman Celeia.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOWN

The literary sources mentioning Celeia are relatively scarce and known for some time. They reveal the name, the location and that it was conferred town rights under Claudius, but tell very little of its urban fabric. Much more can be gleaned from the epigraphic monuments. These were analysed on several occasions, but finally systematically recorded, interpreted and comprehensively published in 2017 (Visočnik 2017). The new knowledge thus mainly comes from the archaeological investigations.

An important aspect of the town was its hydrological landscape, which was very different from that of today. The investigations in the southern part of the old city centre and the geological drillings across Celje suggest that the River Savinja had at least two branches (Fig. 1), the main branch in the north and a minor one in the south, with the latter roughly running where the river runs today (Bausovac, Krajšek 2020, 27–29; Gaspari et al. 2001; Verbič et al. 2023).

The earliest settlement documented in Celje dates to the Early Iron Age. Trial trenching locates this settlement to the saddle below the summit of Miklavški hrib (Fig. 2: 1; Bolta 1951, 69; Teržan 1989, 107). The Celtic *oppidum Kéleia* was situated on the terrace at the foot of the same hill (Fig. 2: 2). Relatively few investigations have been carried out here, though pottery remains and other finds indicate this was also the site of the earliest Roman settlement (Bausovac, Krajšek 2020, 34). The substantial quantity of La Tène pottery from the Sindikalni dom site (Fig. 2: 3) suggest a continuation of the Celtic settlement from the end of the Middle into the Late La Tène period (Tiefengraber 2011, 94–98), while Roman presence began to be felt during the

Augustan period (Vičič 1997, 43). The archaeological investigations conducted in 2011 and 2021 on the terrace and below it (Fig. 2: 3, 4) revealed a stratigraphic sequence that confirmed a single, La Tène – Early Roman settlement (Bausovac, Praprotnik 2012; Krajšek, Bausovac 2021, 15–23). The later small-scale investigations at Sindikalni dom (Fig. 2: 3) have confirmed the hypothesis on the beginnings of Roman presence with reliably-dated contexts (Krajšek, Bausovac 2021, 15–23). They also showed the Romans began settling both inside and on the periphery of the existing settlement (Krajšek, Bausovac 2021, 15–23), as this edge of the La Tène settlement was only intensely inhabited with the arrival of the Romans, and required draining, in places even terracing for habitation purposes. The post-medieval interventions here unfortunately caused considerable destruction and only the structures and layers from the last few decades BC and most probably first half of the 1st century AD have survived. Apart from stray finds and artefacts from mixed contexts, there is no evidence of the intensity and duration of the settlement on the terrace in the Principate and the Late Roman period. Below the terrace, in the Breg street (Fig. 2: 4), we documented the thickest stratigraphic sequence in the area of Roman Celeia (and Celje in general), with the first archaeologically sterile layer reached at the depth of 7 m (Bausovac, Krajšek 2020, 34). A radiocarbon-dated charcoal sample suggests the site was first occupied in the late 2nd century BC (Bausovac, Praprotnik 2012, 11ff). The modest data do not reveal much of the structure, size and development of the Celtic *oppidum Kéleia*, though this southernmost Norican settlement must certainly have been of great regional significance. The numerous small Norican silver coins, blanks and mint seals recovered from the Savinja riverbed at Breg (Fig. 2: 5) suggest the settlement may have had a mint in this area (Gaspari et al. 2001; Krempuš 2012, 367–368; Bilič 2023, 190).

The limited space on the terrace and at the foot of Miklavški hrib (Fig. 1: 1) caused the settlement to spread northwards, across the Savinja's south branch to the plain on its left (north) bank (Fig. 1: 2). Evidence confirming the earliest habitation phase on the north bank comes from the Osrednja knjižnica Celje (Fig. 2: 6) and Trg Celjskih knezov sites (Fig. 2: 7; Bausovac 2014, 34ff; Novšak 2002, 7ff). The pottery finds from the Glasbena šola site (Fig. 2: 10) suggest the associated layers and structures unearthed (though not adequately recorded) there date to the early 1st century AD; the site also revealed the walls of a small Roman sanctuary (Pirkmajer 1982; Kolšek 1983, 168) built on a natural elevation above the Savinja. This early habitation phase is poorly known, though it appears to have involved timber and rare masonry buildings of uneven orientation confined to the vicinity of the Savinja's south branch.

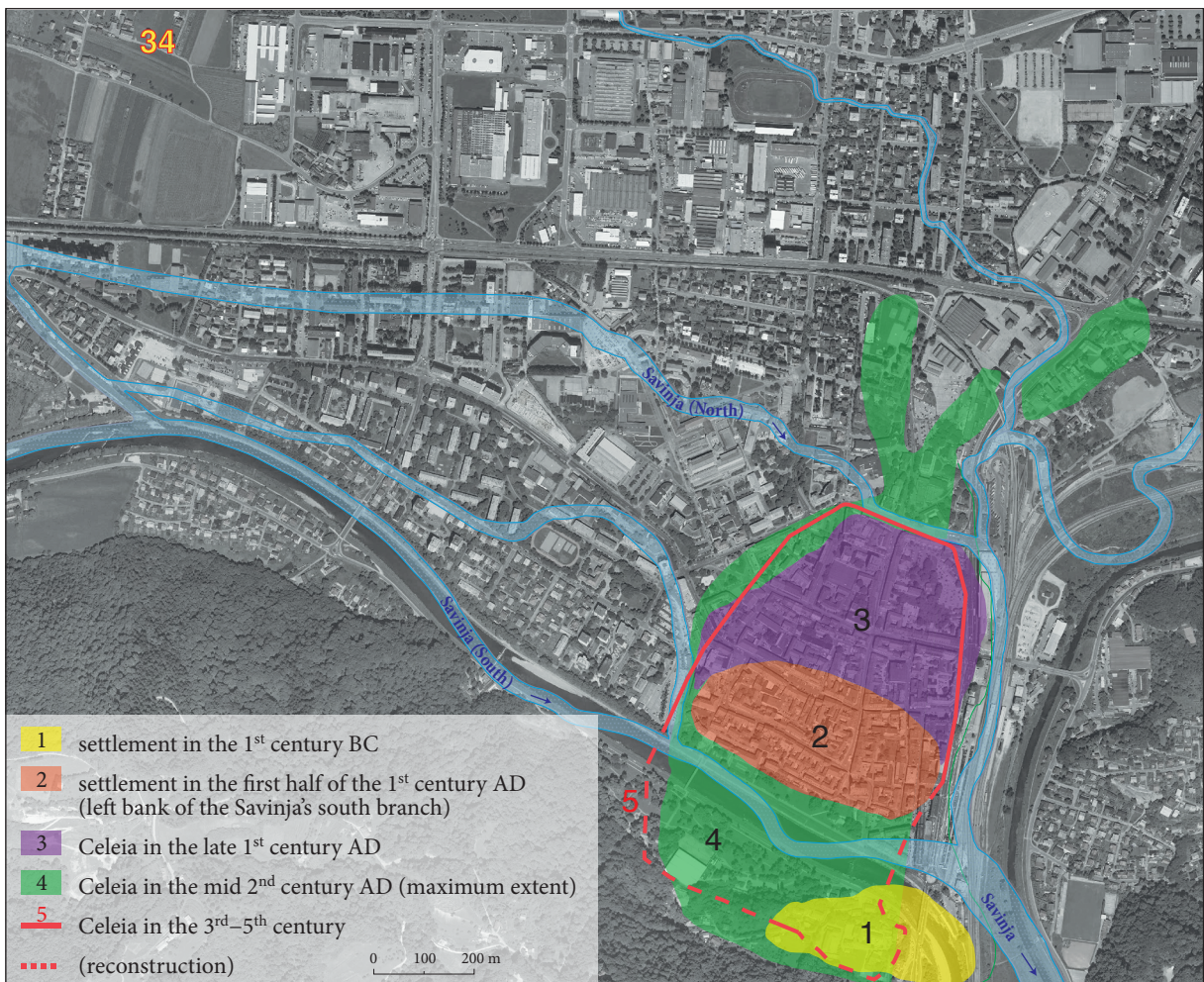


Fig. 1: Reconstruction of the ancient branches of the Savinja River and settlement development from the 1st century BC to the 5th century AD; 34 – Babno.

At a certain point, the centre of habitation also shifted to the plain between both branches of the Savinja, though the available evidence does not allow the exact time of this shift to be ascertained. We also know that the settlement at the foot of Miklavški hrib continued to be inhabited, i.e. the *oppidum* area was not abandoned (Figs. 1: 1; 2: 2). The second habitation phase on the north bank of the Savinja followed the first one very quickly, probably only after a few years and certainly during the first half of the 1st century AD. In this phase, all the buildings and structures from the first phase were demolished and new ones constructed (Bausovac 2014, 36ff). From this phase on, all walls and structures show the same orientation at least until the second half of the 4th century. Few walls and structures are known from this early period, but we can presume that the street grid was constructed first, followed by building-up the plots thus created. Evidence suggests that this phase represents the *ex novo* construction of the town with a rectilinear street grid on the plain between the two Savinja branches (Fig. 3).¹ This is most

¹ The structure and precise stratigraphy of the settlement

clearly discernible in the remains unearthed at Muzejski trg (Fig. 2: 6, 16) and Glavni trg (Fig. 2: 9; Bausovac 2014; Urankar, Krajšek 2014). Whereas constructing the new town in the southern part of the modern-day city centre (Fig. 1: 2) involved demolishing buildings, the part of the town north of the axis of the forum (Fig. 1: 3) was most likely built on a largely undeveloped area (Bausovac, Krajšek 2020, 35ff). The available evidence suggests that the later urban *pomerium* was only completely built-up in the Flavian period. At Gubčeva ulica (Fig. 2: 8), five burials from the Claudian period (or mid-1st century AD) found in 1969 were oriented with respect to the adjacent northbound road leading from the pre-*municipium* settlement and were, in the Flavian period, covered with small houses aligned with *Cardo* East I (Kolšek 1972a; Krajšek 2014). Archaeological research thus far provided no evidence of a wall around Celeia in the 1st and first half of the 2nd century.

in the *oppidum* area (Fig. 1: 1) are unknown, making it difficult to presume the same development there.

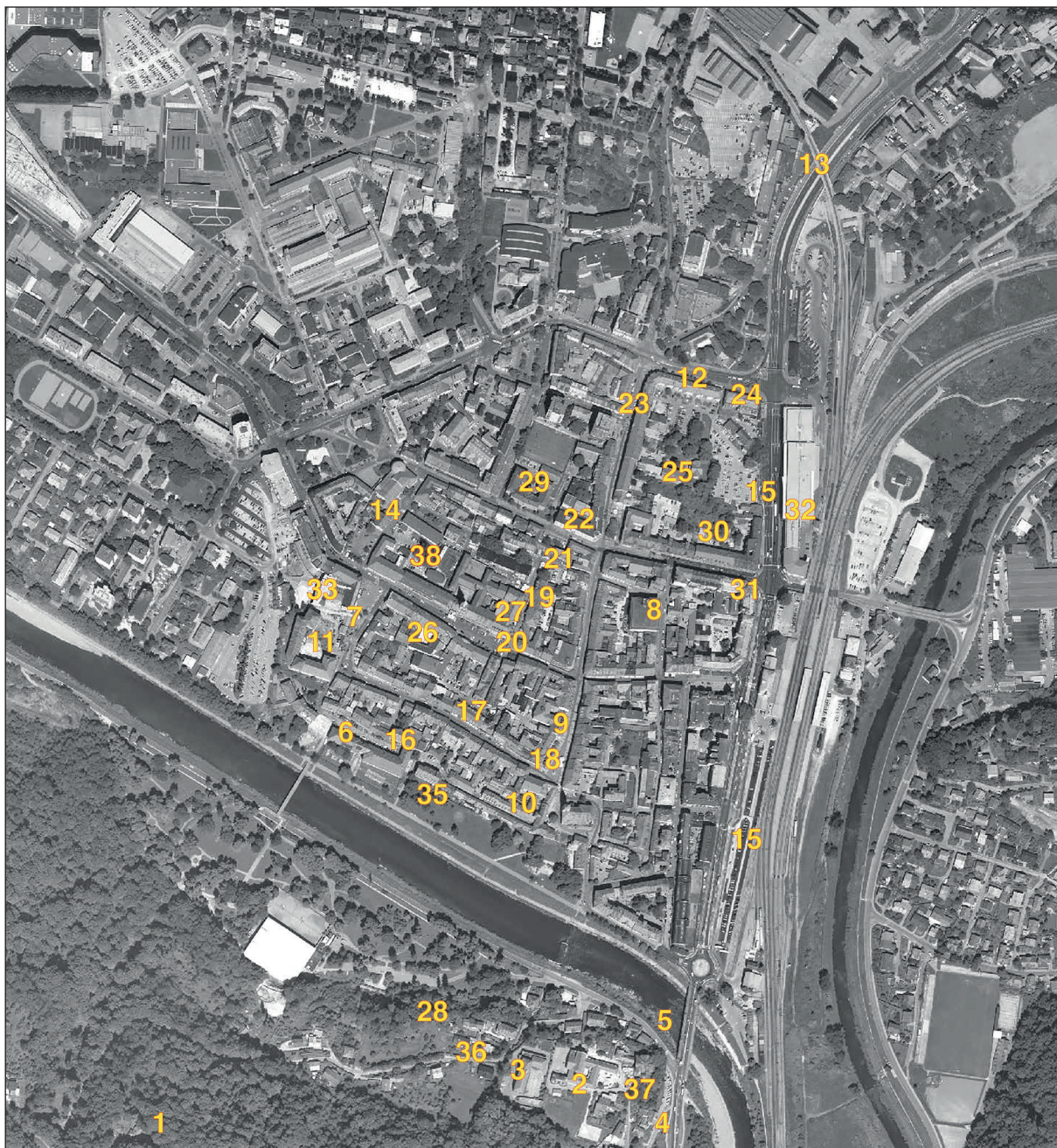


Fig. 2: Excavated sites with major discoveries in Celje.

1 – Miklavški hrib (top of the hill); 2 – Miklavški hrib (foot of the hill); 3 – Sindikalni dom; 4 – Breg; 5 – the Savinja river bed; 6 – Osrednja knjižnica; 7 – Trg Celjskih knezov; 8 – Gubčeva ulica; 9 – Glavni trg; 10 – Glasbena šola; 11 – Knežji dvor; 12 – Levstikova 1; 13 – Gaberje; 14 – Turška mačka; 15 – Aškerčeva ulica; 16 – Muzejski trg; 17 – Zidanškova (Gosposka) ulica; 18 – Glavni trg; 19 – Rimljanka; 20 – Prešernova ulica; 21 – Linhartova ulica; 22 – Vodnikova ulica; 23 – Miklošičeva ulica; 24 – Agrotehnika; 25 – Stallnerjev vrt (Stanetova ulica); 26 – Mohorjev atrij (Prešernova ulica); 27 – Prešernova ulica; 28 – Herkulovo svetišče; 29 – Vodnikova ulica; 30 – Cankarjeva ulica; 31 – Early Christian basilica; 32 – Celeiapark; 33 – Narodni dom; 34 – Babno (see Fig. 1); 35 – Left bank of the Savinja river; 36 – Maistrova ulica; 37 – Breg; 38 – Gledališka ulica.

Celeia's growth in the 1st century AD and its northern boundary is most clearly visible at Levstikova ulica. The site at Levstikova ulica 1a-g (Fig. 2: 12) revealed a roughly 4 m thick stratigraphy, as characteristic of Celeia, and small finds datable at least from the mid-1st century AD onwards (Pirkmajer 1987; Krajšek 2015, 44). Found among the ruins at the site was also a fragment of an inscription slab² mentioning the renovation of a building with apses during the last quarter of the 1st century AD (Visočnik 2017, 204).

In the 1st century BC, a separate habitation core with a sanctuary complex at a river crossing (Fig. 2: 13) formed at Gaberje, some 1.3 km north of the Celtic *oppidum* (Novšak et al. 2004; Gaspari et al. 2007; Plestenjak et al. 2023). It was located at the northbound road on elevated ground that also provided sufficient space for pottery and metallurgy workshops (Novšak et al. 2004; Plestenjak et al. 2023). Reaching to these workshops and the bridge was the early northern cemetery of Celeia (Fig. 4: 2), used in the second and third quarters of the 1st century AD, which then began in the area that later formed the central part of the *pomerium* (Bolta 1953; Kolšek 1972a; Novšak et al. 2004; Plestenjak et al. 2023).

The Roman town expanded and prospered to the late 160s. During the Marcomannic Wars, it was devastated, probably burnt down, and its population declined. Coin finds show that circulation dropped during the reigns of the Emperors Marcus Aurelius (161–180) and Antoninus Pius (138–169) (Kos 1985, 280). Archaeological investigations at numerous sites in Celje also unearthed a layer of burnt debris datable to this period (Gaspari, Novšak 2003; Novšak et al. 2004; Bausovac, Praprotnik 2012). Afterwards, buildings at the outskirts of Celeia were abandoned and only those later within the Late Roman town walls were renovated.

Extensive renovations followed under the Severan dynasty. Streets were restored and widened, the forum resurfaced and modernised, the main temple (*capitolium*) restored. The ground across the town was raised by almost a metre. Research at the Aškerčeva ulica (Fig. 2: 15) and Turška mačka sites (Fig. 2: 14) also suggests the construction of the first town walls took place in this period (Novšak et al. 2006; Kolšek 1970b, 186ff; Kolšek 1983, 168).

As for the size of Celeia, it can roughly be estimated to have extended across 8–10 ha in the early 1st century AD (Fig. 1:1, 2). The above-mentioned investigations at Levstikova ulica suggest the town in the second half of the 1st century extended beyond the line of the later walls, covering an area of at least 50 ha (Fig. 1:1, 2, 3), and reached its maximum extent of some 70 ha or more by the mid-2nd century (Fig. 1: 1–4). The first town walls presumably constructed as part of the renovations in the late 2nd or early 3rd century also determined the extent

of Celeia. Its size is most reliably established from the mid-4th century onwards, when the investigated and reconstructed line of the town walls points to the settlement covering over 38 ha (Fig. 1: 5). Evidence shows this line did not change later. The only problematic section is in the south, where the walls have as yet not been reliably located.³ We can presume, however, that the urban settlement continued to include areas on both banks of the Savinja's south branch.

THE STREETS

The many excavations conducted in Celje from the mid-19th century on have revealed several sections of the Roman street grid; best known are the *cardo maximus* and *decumanus maximus* (Fig. 3: 2, 3). The great thickness of the archaeological layers and the gradual rise of the ground level are the reason for most available evidence coming from the final phases of the town, i.e. the 3rd and 4th centuries. Earlier evidence shows that the walls shared the same orientation and were aligned with the streets from the second phase onwards; the north-south streets have a 28° eastward deviation. Walls of a different orientation only appear in the second half of the 4th and the 5th century.

The *decumanus maximus* has been recorded at Knežji dvor (Fig. 2: 11),⁴ where the westbound road entered the city via a bridge across the south branch of the Savinja (Urancar 2009, 30–32), at the junction with the *cardo maximus* (Fig. 2: 17; Kolšek 1970a; Kolšek 1972b)⁵ and at the junction with *Cardo East I* (Fig. 2: 18;

³ The only indication that the south walls were on the left (north) bank of the Savinja's south branch is the vertical grooves for a sliding grate in the cloaca under the *cardo maximus* (Fig. 2: 35), though the grate may also have been installed later. As for the right bank, excavations at the 'Temple of Hercules' (Fig. 2: 28) on Miklavški hrib revealed numerous coins from the 4th and one from the 5th century (Kos 1988, 71–73), while the 2005 replacement of the infrastructure pipelines at Breg revealed part of a massive wall at the edge of the terrace below. The construction of the sewage system at Maistrova ulica also unearthed a massive, 4.5–7 m thick wall (Fig. 2: 36) on the terrace east of the 'Temple of Hercules' (for comparison, the town walls were 6 m thick in all documented sections) and had a roughly E-W orientation. Previous interventions here had heavily damaged the wall's south face (the only visible face), hence the exact orientation could not be ascertained.

⁴ A 30-metre-long section of the *decumanus maximus* with both footways and drainage ditches is on display at the Celeia – a town beneath today's town exhibition in the Princely Palace (Knežji dvor).

⁵ The district engineer Friedrich Byloff added the location of a roughly 60 m long section of *decumanus maximus*, unearthed during the construction of the sewage system in 1821 and 1826, onto the map of Celje from 1847 with drawn remains of Celeia. He erroneously interpreted the street as

² Inscription slab, Inv. No. PMCe L 303; Visočnik 2017, 201.



Fig. 3: Reconstruction of the Roman town of Celeia with some of its most prominent buildings.. 1 – Forum; 2 – Decumanus maximus; 3 – Cardo maximus; 4 – Cardo East I; 5 – Cardo West I; 6 – Decumanus North I; 7 – Decumanus North II; 8 – Cardo West II; 9 – Cardo East II and Early Christian complex; 10 – Temple of Hercules.

Urankar, Krajšek 2014). The *cardo maximus* (Fig. 3: 3) has been documented in its central and northernmost parts (Fig. 2: 19–23; Kolšek 1986, 263–265; Pirkmajer 1987; Kolšek 1990; Bausovac 2013; Hrustel et al. 2014; Sovdat, Golob 2022; Bausovac, Golob 2022, 15–17); its entire width including both footways only came to light at the intersection with the *decumanus maximus* (Fig. 2: 17; Kolšek 1972b). Outside the town, the *cardo maximus* continued into the northbound road, which the 2003/2004 investigations at Mariborska cesta showed to make a turn to the north-east (Fig. 2: 13; Novšak et al. 2004; Plestenjak et al. 2023).

Little is known of other streets, but their line can in part be reconstructed. Cardo West I was unearthed while renovating the water supply lines under the streets of Vodnikova ulica (Fig. 2: 22; Hrustel et al. 2014) and Gledališka ulica (Fig. 2: 38); it crossed the forum under Trg Celjskih knezov (Fig. 3: 5) and separated the *area sacra* with the forum sanctuary from the public area of the forum. Cardo East I has been excavated at several sites (Fig. 3: 4). Its bedding layers were investigated during the renovation of Glavni trg (Fig. 2: 9, 18; Urankar, Krajšek

the remains of a large hall with columns (archives of the Celje Regional Museum, Inv. No. G/XI-116).

2014),⁶ also revealing the west porticated footway in the length of some 40 m along the west edge of the Glavni trg square. The artefacts and the stratigraphy here date the last renovation of the footway to the late 3rd and 4th centuries (Urankar, Krajšek 2014). Cardo East I (Fig. 3: 4) terminated in the south just in front of the sanctuary recorded at Glasbena šola (Fig. 2: 10; Pirkmajer 1982). In the north, it ended with a bridge head at the Agrotehnika site (Fig. 2: 24; Kolšek 1970b; Kolšek 1980, 50).

There is currently no evidence of Decumanus South I. Decumanus North I can be reconstructed, mainly from the line of the sewers. The extent of the town further north suggests there was at least one other decumanus there (Decumanus North II) (Fig. 3: 6, 7). Sewers also point to the existence of Cardo West II in the 1st and 2nd centuries, which may have been abandoned after Celeia diminished in size in the 3rd century, as it would have remained outside the town walls (Fig. 3: 8).

In addition to the main street grid, which divided the town into more or less uniform parts, there were also narrower, up to 2 m wide streets or passages between individual buildings or building plots (Urankar, Krajšek

⁶ The surface did not survive and was either removed in later periods or never existed.

2014). Evidence of these comes from the recorded sewers and smaller channels that constituted a complex sewage system.⁷

Most streets probably had a gravel surface. The earliest street of Celeia, the *decumanus maximus*, has been recorded at Knežji dvor (Fig. 2: 11) and dated to the beginning of the second half of the 1st century AD (Krempuš 2001, 26). The roadway was initially narrow and without stone paving; a section across the street and its footways revealed it was repaired and resurfaced several times from the 1st century onwards. In the late 2nd or early 3rd century, as part of the extensive urban renovation, the roadway was widened and paved; the street level was raised by more than one metre (Bausovac, Krempuš 2008). Research has shown that only the *decumanus maximus*, the *cardo maximus* and *Cardo West I* were entirely paved (Fig. 3: 2, 3, 5); they also had the same appearance: the roadway was 7 metres wide and paved with irregular limestone slabs,⁸ the curbs were made of upright stone slabs, the flanking footways were roughly 2.5 m wide, porticated and paved with lime mortar. The round columns of the porticus measured 35 cm in lower diameter, 240 cm in reconstructed height and 250 cm (8,5 Roman feet) in intercolumnar distance. They were placed on a low footing separating the roadway from the footway. The main streets together with the footways were just over 14 m wide (Bausovac, Krajšek 2020, 59–64).⁹ The last recorded street renovation dates to the mid-4th century (Fig. 2: 9; Urankar, Krajšek 2014; Bausovac, Krajšek 2020, 63). The last recorded road surface at Knežji dvor dates to the same time (Krempuš 2001, 27). Somewhat later, probably in the second half or the late 4th century, we have examples of buildings encroaching on streets in some parts of the town (Pirkmajer 1990; Urankar, Krajšek 2014).

THE SEWAGE SYSTEM

Roman sewers first came to light in a greater extent during the earthworks for the modern sewers in Celje, conducted in the 1820s. Engineer Andreas

⁷ The available evidence does not allow a precise and complete reconstruction of the Roman sewage network.

⁸ Rectangular paving slabs are explicitly mentioned at the intersection of the *cardo* and *decumanus maximus* (F. Byloff in: archives of the Celje Regional Museum, Inv. No. G/XI-116; Kolšek 1983, 170).

⁹ The ideal street width in Celeia is 48 Roman feet (14.208 m), though the actual widths vary slightly from site to site as the walls of the adjacent houses were poorly preserved, in some cases only as foundations. The side streets were narrower; *Cardo East I*, for example, measured just under 12 m (roughly 40 Roman feet). We should emphasise that investigations only revealed the remains from the 4th and probably also the 5th century when the original street grid had already been partly modified.

Zorzinni (1827) drew them onto a plan of Celje,¹⁰ while district engineer Friedrich Byloff added their cross and longitudinal sections and gradients.¹¹ Due to their good condition, a large part of the Roman sewers was incorporated into the sewage network of the first half of the 19th century, the latter even imitating the Roman ones in construction method.¹² Today, almost 2000 years after construction, some of the Roman sewers in the southern part of the old city centre still serve their purpose. Until recently, the Roman sewage system was thought to have been divided into at least two main branches – the east and the west branch. Research in recent decades, however, has enabled a reinterpretation of the network as a single, ramified and well-connected system with a common southward gradient discharging into the south branch of the Savinja. Several outlets into the Savinja have been found so far. The state of research, however, remains poor, particularly regarding the connections between the eastern and western parts of the town, while the sewage network in the northern part is all but unknown.

THE FORUM

The exact location of the forum in Celeia was long unknown. The walls of a monumental building and fragments of marble sculptures of considerable, almost colossal dimensions found in the 19th century (Fig. 2: 7) pointed to the western part of the town (Orožen 1854, 199; Riedl 1900, 33–36), while the discovery of votive altars of *beneficarii* in the mid-19th century led to conjectures that it stood in the northern part (Fig. 2: 25; Orožen 1927, 41, 52). Archaeological investigations in 2002 and 2003 (Fig. 2: 7, 26) finally provided reliable evidence of its location in the western part of the street of Prešernova ulica (Fig. 3: 1; Krempuš et al. 2005). The forum area was delimited by the *cardo maximus* in the east and a monumental temple in the west. It measured 196 m in length and 80 m in width (660 × 270 Roman feet). *Cardo West I* divided it in two almost equal parts, with *area sacra* in the west and *area publica* in the east. The monumental temple, first documented already in 1844, had a tripartite cella that suggests the temple was dedicated to three divinities such as the Capitoline or some other triad. The size of the temple can be reconstructed with the help of the ground plan and the pieces of architectural elements

¹⁰ Kept in the Celje Regional Museum, Inv. No. PMC G/XI-114.

¹¹ Plan kept in the Celje Regional Museum, Inv. No. PMC, G/XI-116.

¹² The investigations conducted in advance of the most recent renovations in the city centre revealed that some sewer sections previously identified as Roman actually date to the 19th century (Bausovac 2013; Urankar, Krajšek 2014).

found in the immediate vicinity (Gubo 1909, 12; Orožen 1927, 40ff). The latter include parts of a column shaft, a column capital and the cornice, and show the temple was likely approximately 53 m (180 Roman feet) long, 30 m (100 Roman feet) wide and 26 m (88 Roman feet) high. The forum's longer sides would have been flanked with porticos, though their size is uncertain. The architectural elements that may be seen as parts of the forum area based on their iconography and parallels¹³ give a reconstructed porticus height of 8.8 m, which is not high enough given the size of the forum and even more so the estimated height of the forum temple (26 m) (Vitruvius, Book V, Chapter 1).¹⁴ This leads to the supposition that the porticus had two storeys and the above-mentioned elements belonged to the upper storey; this solution would give the total porticus height of just over 14 m (Vitruvius, Book V), which is more appropriate given the size relationship between individual parts and buildings of the forum complex. The reports from the 19th century (Gubo 1909, 16) and the photographs of the stratigraphic sections taken during the construction of the bank at the corner of Prešernova ulica (Fig. 2: 27) suggest the forum was paved with marble slabs. The location of the urban basilica, presumed at the east end of the forum, is as yet unconfirmed. What we know is that the investigations carried out during resurfacing and communal infrastructure renovation in 2012 and 2013 revealed a neatly and solidly constructed wall (Fig. 2: 20) just west of *cardo maximus* (Bausovac 2013), the appearance of which closely resembled the walls of the forum temple.¹⁵

Investigations at Trg Celjskih knezov (Fig. 2: 7) have shown that the construction of the temple, and most probably of the forum as a whole, can be dated to the reign of the Emperor Domitian (AD 81–96), more precisely after he was awarded consulship for the twelfth time (Novšak 2002; Krempuš et al. 2005, 173–174). It remains unclear whether the town functioned without a forum up to that time or there was an earlier forum at another location. Numerous stones reused as building blocks in the foundations of the west gates of Celeia show that the forum and its temple already lay in ruins by the first half or middle of the 4th century, at the time when the town's west flank was fortified (Krempuš 2001, 27–28).

¹³ Inv. Nos. PMCe L 177, PMCe L 121, PMCe L 120, PMCe L 358, PMCe L 357, PMCe L 356, PMCe L 355, PMCe L 361, PMCe L 77, PMCe L 170, PMCe L 185, PMCe L 347.

¹⁴ Hicky Morgan 1914, 131–136.

¹⁵ Already in the 19th century, the construction of the water pipeline at Prešernova ulica brought to light several very thick walls (the report with a sketch of the find is held in the archives of the Joanneum in Graz).

THE SANCTUARIES

A large building from the early 1st century AD was excavated in 1981 and 1982 at the Glasbena šola site (Fig. 2: 10), identified as a defensive tower (Kolšek 1986, 262; Lazar 2002, 90). Its ground plan, however, rather points to a small sanctuary. Investigations at Glavni trg (Fig. 2: 9, 18) have also shown that *Cardo East I* ends in front of this sanctuary (Urankar, Krajšek 2014), located on the highest point in the southeastern part of the Roman town, overlooking the south branch of the Savinja. The divinity to which the sanctuary would be dedicated is unknown.

The drawn reconstruction of the town plan reveals an intriguing connection and a hypothetically intentional positioning of the sanctuaries (Fig. 2: 28, 10, 13). One is a temple called the Temple of Hercules (Fig. 2: 28),¹⁶ located on the terrace above the municipal park in Celje. It was investigated in the late 1940s and became the first archaeological monument in Celje to be displayed to the public (Klemenc 1957). It measures 19 m in length and 10 m in width, and was enclosed on three sides with a porticus with niches that held statues of deities. The 1947–1949 excavations revealed an extraordinary depth of the archaeological layers here (Klemenc 1957), indicating an exceptional age of the building, though later trial trenching showed the temple was built on a specially prepared plateau at the edge of the terrace, between the second half of the 1st and the early 2nd century (Bausovac 2021, 31). It was located on the hypothetical axis of *Cardo East I*, which connected this temple, the small sanctuary at Glasbena šola (Fig. 2: 10) and the sanctuary complex (Plestenjak et al. 2023, 468) at Mariborska cesta (Fig. 2: 13) in the northern suburbs of Celeia.

The sanctuary or sacred pond at Mariborska cesta (Fig. 2: 13) was established at a depression in the bed of a small stream where the autochthonous population deposited their offerings of pottery, jewellery, tools and food between the end of the La Tène and the Early Tiberian period. This was followed in the Middle Tiberian period by an Early Roman sanctuary with a covered ambulatory and an open *cella* that was built over this sacred pond. In the Late Tiberian period, another, small sanctuary of the ambulatory type, perhaps of a commemorative or funerary character, was built in the immediate vicinity, between the sanctuary and the riverbed (Plestenjak et al. 2023, 468ff).

¹⁶ The excavations unearthed two fragments of small marble statuettes depicting Hercules, which immediately after excavations gave rise to the name of the temple.

THE BATHS

The public buildings in Celeia included bathing facilities. In addition to the public baths excavated at Cankarjeva ulica (Fig. 2: 30) in 1891 (Riedl 1891) and presumably a smaller bath establishment at Vodnikova ulica (Fig. 2: 29; Riedl 1904), excavations in Muzejski trg (Fig. 2: 16) partially investigated rooms that were also part of small public baths (Bausovac, Krajšek 2020, 74–75). The entirely excavated *caldarium* and *tepidarium* were found to be abandoned in the midst of an extensive renovation, while other rooms were only partially investigated. The baths continued beyond the excavation area to the north, east and south, hence it is impossible to estimate their size. The four excavated *praefurnia* that were not in use at the same and the numerous modifications to the building show it was in use over a long time.

THE HOUSING

Of the architecture of ancient Celeia, least is known on the buildings that were the most numerous – the private houses. The many investigations across Celje revealed no house in its entirety. The partial ground plans seem to suggest that the predominant dwelling was a single-family town house, i.e. *domus*. The house most extensively investigated is at the street junction of Stanetova ulica and Miklošičeva ulica (Fig. 2: 23). It extended across the 400 m² large excavation area (Kolšek 1986) and continued in at least three directions beyond it. Investigations at Glavni trg (Fig. 2: 9) recorded, for the first time in Celeia, the entire façades of two adjacent houses (Urankar, Krajšek 2014). Their length enabled a reinterpretation of earlier excavation results and showed that the streets of Celeia delimited individual plots in the size of 200 × 300 Roman feet (approximately 60 × 90 m).¹⁷ Presumably even larger were the houses unearthed at Knežji dvor (Fig. 2: 11; Krempuš 2001) and Turška mačka (Fig. 2: 14),¹⁸ which were located next to the forum and among the richest and largest in the town.

The only two smaller buildings identified as houses have so far been documented at Gubčeva ulica (Fig. 2: 8; Kolšek 1970b); they measured between 170 and 190 m².

¹⁷ Recorded at Glavni trg were the façades in the total length of 58.8m (198 Roman feet) that belonged to two contiguous houses oriented north-south; the second house was delimited by a street on two sides. The next street in the westward direction was located exactly 88.82 m (299 Roman feet) away. Investigations at Muzejski trg revealed that the module of 100 Roman feet also corresponds to the east-west grid.

¹⁸ Only a small part of the rich town house has been excavated at Turška mačka; a mosaic from one of its rooms (probably the corridor of the peristyle court) was originally at least 19 m long.

THE CEMETERIES

Archaeological research over the past two decades has made great strides in revealing the vast and relatively poorly known cemeteries of Celeia. Until recently, only a small number of burials of this large town, which hosted up 15,000 inhabitants and extended over more than 70 hectares at its peak, has been excavated and recorded. Some cemeteries witnessed small-scale excavations in the 19th and early 20th centuries, but the finds were either not documented or the records have since been lost (Lazar 2002, 87–89).

The southern cemetery, along the *via publica* towards Neviodunum (Fig. 4: 1), was archaeologically confirmed during the river engineering works on the Savinja between 1953 and 1955. Thirteen inhumations were excavated that date from the 3rd and 4th centuries (Berce 1956, 399; Bolta 1957). In 2010 and 2011, four additional burials were excavated at the same site and thirteen inhumations further 100 m to the south (Bausovac, Praprotnik 2012). Considering that several tens of graves came to light during the construction of the railway embankment in the 19th century and given the distribution of the above-mentioned burials, we can estimate that the Late Roman southern cemetery extended across at least 1.5 hectares. The location and extent of the earlier cemetery from the 1st and 2nd centuries remains unknown, though the numerous tombstones from this time span found reused for later graves suggest this cemetery did exist, but was later destroyed and its remains recycled (Bolta 1957; Bausovac, Praprotnik 2012).

The known burials of the northern cemetery (Fig. 4: 2) include a grave at the church of the Holy Spirit (Orožen 1927, 53), four cremations at Gubčeva ulica (Fig. 2: 8; Kolšek 1970b; Kolšek 1978), remains of cremations at Kocenova ulica (unpublished), burial remains at the Agrotehnika site (Fig. 2: 24) and a cremation at Mariborska cesta (Fig. 2: 13; Bolta 1953). The 2003/2004 underpass construction at Mariborska cesta (Fig. 2: 13) revealed 57 inhumations from the late 3rd, 4th and early 5th centuries, as well as a walled burial plot with two cremations (Plestenjak et al. 2023, 518–545). We should note that part of the northern cemetery still in use in the mid-1st century AD was later, in the Flavian period, built-up and included into the *pomerium* (Fig. 2: 8; Bausovac, Krajšek 2020, 110ff).

The only remains of the eastern cemetery known from early literature and at least roughly located are the pieces of two sarcophagi and the inhumation burial of a child, which were found in the vicinity of the Early Christian basilica, in the eastern part of Celeia (Figs. 2: 31; 3: 9; Orožen 1927, 53). In 2002, part of this cemetery was unearthed and found to have extended not along a road, as was the established Roman practice, but along the east walls of the Late Roman town (Fig. 4: 3). The excavations in advance of the construction of the Celeia-



Fig. 4: Cemeteries of Celeia. 1 – Southern cemetery; 2 – Northern cemetery; 3 – Eastern cemetery; 4 – Western cemetery.

park shopping centre (Fig. 2: 32) revealed 31 graves with at least 58 burials (Novšak, Josipovič 2003). Particularly intriguing are the group burials and a joint interment of 21 human skulls (Novšak, Josipovič 2003). An even larger part of the eastern cemetery was excavated in 2005 and 2006 (Fig. 2: 15), revealing further 110 inhumations and only two urn burials (Novšak et al. 2006).

The surviving funerary remains suggest that the western cemetery, leading to Emona, was the most extensive and reached as far as Levec (Fig. 4: 4). Its location and extent can be estimated on the basis of the funerary remains unearthed in the 19th and 20th centuries, but also increasingly numerous recent finds. An unknown number of graves was found at Villa Stieger (Orožen 1927, 53). The remains of a grave with the associated tombstone were discovered at the street junction of Čopova cesta and Ljubljanska cesta (Kolšek 1977). Graves also came to light at Lava near Jošt's Mill. In 2003, the Narodni dom site (Fig. 2: 33) revealed an inhumation burial inside the ruins of a 1st–2nd-century house just outside the Late Roman town walls (Gaspari,

Novšak 2003, 11f). The 2014 investigations at Babno (Fig. 1: 34) unearthed part of a walled burial plot and in it an urn burial (Jerala, Janežič 2014; Mulh et al. 2017). The continuation of this burial plot was excavated in 2017, revealing the foundations of a very large funerary monument in the centre. Next to the plot stood another walled burial plot that reached westwards beyond the excavation area (Praprotnik 2017). A fragment of a marble sarcophagus was found built into a nearby outbuilding. Further archaeological investigations took place east and west from here over the next few years, unearthing the remains of other burial plots (Stergar, Žižek 2018; Sovdat, 2023, 19ff), but also a small sanctuary (Stergar, Žižek 2018). The sanctuary included a well, in front of which a votive altar was excavated with poorly preserved inscriptions on the opposite sides, of which only part of the imperial titulature is legible.¹⁹ The geophysical surveys to the east have indicated burial plots with much better preserved funerary remains (Rutar

¹⁹ I thank Julijana Visočnik for interpreting the inscription.

et al. 2019). Not only for the extent and location of the western cemetery, these discoveries are also important indications for the location of the major road leading from Celeia to Emona.

CONCLUSION

The archaeological research in the last decades has significantly advanced our knowledge of Roman Celeia. Many of the excavation campaigns proved enormously revealing only later, when comparing the data and considering them as a whole. Part of them pertain to the very heart of the Roman town – its forum. The 2002–2003 investigations examined its remains when renovating the square of Trg Celjskih knezov, adding an extension to the Celje Administrative Unit and constructing the Mohorjev atrij office building. These again revealed the monumental temple at the forum's west end, provided the width of the forum and unearthed the foundations of the porticus, provided evidence for dating the construction of the temple and probably the forum as a whole, and enabled us to identify to forum's full extent for the first time. These campaigns also offered an insight into a private house built immediately next to the forum.

The research carried out during the reconstruction of Mariborska cesta, Aškerčeva ulica, Krekov trg and Ulica XIV. divizije revealed the eastern town walls, the eastern and northern boundaries of the urban settlement in the 3rd, 4th and 5th centuries, confirmed the existence of the eastern and northern cemeteries, and an artisanal suburb in the north of Celeia.

The research in advance of constructing the Central Library in Celje (Osrednja knjižnica Celje), which took place in 2006 and 2007 in Muzejski trg, provided important new data on the early development and phases of the Roman town. The investigations preceding the renovation of the Princely Palace (Knežji dvor) in 2009 and 2011 revealed the well-paved walkways of the *decumanus maximus* and the western boundary of the town, while the remains of the bridge head foundations at the west façade of the palace confirmed the continuous use of the westbound road and the *decumanus maximus* at least to the late 4th century or first half of the 5th century.

The southern cemetery and the southern artisanal suburbs were partially excavated during the construction of the sewerage system in Breg in 2010, 2011 and 2014. These discoveries have shifted the southern boundary of the Early Roman settlement significantly further south and south-east.

Extremely significant were the results of the rescue excavations in Glavni trg, the main square in the old town centre, where archaeologists unearthed a series of three town houses along *Cardo East I* that were inhabited from the 1st to the second half or at least the middle of

the 5th century. The street and the houses were built simultaneously in the initial decades of the 1st century and, considering their orientation and layout, according to a precise plan. The postholes for timber houses of several different phases indicate the area was inhabited even after the 5th century. The stratigraphy of the last Late Antique phases is unfortunately not known, as the construction work that most likely followed the devastating fires in the 17th and 18th centuries presumably removed the last Roman, Late Roman, Early Medieval and Medieval layers.

The construction of a new gymnasium for Primary School I at Vrunčeva ulica in 2014 revealed an artisanal area and burial grounds along Celeia's northbound road.

A small part of the southern cemetery and artisanal suburb was excavated during the flood control work and sewerage construction between 2010 and 2014 at Breg. The intensive construction activities taking place at Babno, Ložnica and Medlog over the last ten years revealed a previously unknown and extremely well-preserved part of the western cemetery, confirming and more precisely locating the major road leading from Celeia to Emona.

The archaeological watching briefs and rescue excavations in Muzejski trg have revealed a very high standard of living in the town and also more details as to its structure. The watching briefs documented the remains of five Roman buildings, while the excavations in a smaller area revealed part of a west *cardo* with a cloaca, a Roman town house with exceptionally well-preserved wall and ceiling paintings, and part of Late Roman baths.

Since 2002, Celje has witnessed a succession of important investigations that have significantly changed our knowledge of the beginnings of the Roman town, its development and structure. Investigations comprised not only excavations, but also watching briefs, geophysical surveys, geological drilling interpretation and others, all of them making major contributions in confirming certain previous hypothesis, documenting later structures and providing insight into the stratigraphy and remains of the town as a whole. The current knowledge is still limited for certain periods, hindered by the relatively limited areas of investigation and the extremely thick stratigraphic layers. Having said that, the amount of data is sufficient to (finally) enable a realistic reconstruction of the remains of Roman town Celeia. This can prove useful in identifying the structures already unearthed and aspiring for a successful urban planning and renovation of the city of Celje that goes hand in hand with our efforts to preserve the cultural heritage in the best possible way.

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