



# AQUILEIA

## A BORDER CITY

### FRAGMENTS FROM THE PAST TRACES OF THE FUTURE

Aquileia is one of the biggest cities of the Roman Empire and one of the liveliest Paleo-Christian communities in the Roman world. It was also one of the most important ancient ports on the Adriatic.

Aquileia, founded by the Romans in 181 BC, was the starting point of commercial, cultural, and military roads to the Northeast. A city of culture and the crossroads of many religions, seat of the Episcopate and of a Patriarchate abolished only in 1751. Aquileia has been offering its treasures for over a century: lavish

monuments, magnificent floor mosaics from the basilica and the oratories, the objects from every day life. The Fondazione Aquileia was established in the spring of 2008, with the collaboration of its partners: the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities, the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region, the Province of Udine, the Town Hall of Aquileia, and the Archdiocese of Gorizia. Since then its goal has been to valorize the city's extraordinary archaeological patrimony, which in 1998 joined UNESCO's prestigious World Heritage List.



FONDAZIONE AQUILEIA



Fondazione Aquileia [www.fondazioneaquileia.it](http://www.fondazioneaquileia.it)

Extract taken from *Archeologia Viva* n. 141, 142, 148, 154, 160 - [www.archeologiaviva.it](http://www.archeologiaviva.it) - Photo Gianluca Baronchelli



ARCHEOLOGIA VIVA



GIUNTI

**O**n considering the process of growing up to become an adult it could be said that the stages of growth are just as important as the phases of discontinuity. In a similar way even institutions and public services need the input of substantial innovation in order to take off with renewed momentum towards achieving the desired goals.

This sequence could also be applied to the archaeological sites in Aquileia which have been excavated and been places of research since the Renaissance. Today there is great need to implement new working tools with which to address the legitimate requests of the increasingly articulate and demanding cultural requirements, breaking away from established habits and overcoming financial restrictions and management limits which a Ministry, with ever decreasing funds and human resources available, is no longer able to meet as it clearly should.

The Fondazione Aquileia is currently an irreplaceable means through which to face the challenge of promoting this ancient city. Some of the archaeological areas which have already been partially excavated in the past have not been easy to comprehend, on the one hand due to not having been completed and on the other to the lack of explanatory didactic systems able to render the information accessible to everybody, a subject which can sometimes appear over-challenging to many.

The Fondazione Aquileia's first concern was to focus their attention on an area with well-defined boundaries, i.e. the area around the famous patriarchal Basilica which was declared by UNESCO to be part of the World Heritage as far back as 1998.

The objective was to restore a sense of physical unity to the area by means of straightforward pathways and clear signposting. Some of the already existing excavations are scattered here and there like a leopard's

spots. It is also of utmost importance to promote the museums which often seem to have been abandoned, for example the 'Südhalle' (South Hall) – a Paleo-Christian hall with mosaic work from the late IV century – especially from the point of view of its accessibility and tourist appreciation.

The focus of attention has, at the same time, been placed on the restoration of the precious mosaic "carpets" which left in the open air are showing signs of deterioration due to the atmosphere: despite being neither an easy task nor able to be immediately accomplished, the restoration was absolutely necessary.

Innovation needs to be made which would allow the introduction of new – at least for this site – methodology in order to safeguard the ancient structures and eventually improve the level of understanding the monument to the unspecialized person as much as to the school which constitutes the most important target for tourism in Aquileia.

In the ultimate analysis, also taking into consideration the geographical position, is the aim to propose the site as an archaeological focal point of international standing willing to experiment with new solutions. Hence the International Contest of Ideas towards the creation of a system of coverage was given the go ahead. The aim is not to create a copy of ancient constructions, but rather to evoke spaces and atmospheres in such a way that the visitors can enjoy the experience also in terms of having a better understanding of all its aspects.

A new phase, therefore, combining research, conservation, promotion and communication of knowledge is underway, as the more society is aware of the value of its heritage, the more the safeguarding of these relics will be strengthened and projected towards the future.

Alviano Scarel  
President of the Fondazione Aquileia

# AQUILEIA

*The monumental complexes that are open to the public in addition to the many excavation campaigns in progress provide evidence of how the city of Aquileia made an economic and political fortune out of its strategic position between the Adriatic Sea and continental-Balkan Europe*

## A BORDER CITY

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**IN THE HEART OF THE CITY.** Aquileia's forum as it appears today. In the background is the Basilica's bell tower. Identified in 1812 by L. Zuccolo, the public square was acknowledged as such by G. Brusin in 1934 and has been subject to many excavation campaigns until recently. In the Republican Age (II-I c. BC) the square hosted a variety of activities among which the elections following the assemblies (*comitia*) in the nearby assembly building (*comitium*).



**T**ITUS LIVY, HISTORIAN FROM *Patauium* (Padua) who lived in the Augustan Age wrote about a group of twelve thousand *Transalpine* Gauls who penetrated «in *Venetiam*» with the goal of settling in the low plains of Friuli in 186 BC. This was the event that led directly to

## AQUILEIA IN THE PAST AND PRESENT

**What a challenge.** Aquileia is one of the most important archaeological areas in Italy. As such, the city is subject to the conditions that typically “rule” over the country’s cultural patrimony: lack of funds and of staff, administrative uncertainty, normative inadequacy. In cases where the patrimony in question is a city like Aquileia, both archaeological and modern problems multiply and the “rules” interfere with the routine management of museums, warehouses, excavation areas, protected lots of land, etc. Fortunately, on a more positive note, Aquileia is also developing into a “Great Aquileia” thanks to the drafting of new protection rules, preservation, research and valorization. The Soprintendenza Archeologica is responding with clear objectives in mind: a restoration and maintenance project for outdoor areas (like the forum), the preservation of specific excavated open-air areas (like the mosaics), the coordinating of scientific research (from environmental archaeology to medieval archaeology without focusing solely on Roman archaeology) with the involvement of specialists from eight universities (Udine, Trieste, Padua, Venice, Milan, Rome, Foggia and Catania), and the opening of a Research Center with labs (the Archaeozoological is one now being inaugurated). And last, but not least, is valorization. In addition to the existing museum there will be an archaeological park. In particular, “the museum of the territory” project is about to take off. It is a new display outside of the archaeological areas which showcases the Aquileian territory’s history: from the development of the Grado and Marano lagoons, to the first settlements, to the foundation of Aquileia, as well as other historical events. A very ambitious program in which the Aquileia Foundation will primarily take part in.

Luigi Fozzati



the establishment of the Latin colony of Aquileia in 181 BC. This event provided protection for the territories that bordered areas subject to the influence of the Venetians (allies of the Romans) to the west, tribes of the Alpine Gauls to the north and the Histri to the east. After the *Transalpines* were forced to return to their native lands, a prestigious commission of the Roman Senate gathered a group of three thousand foot soldiers and

## THE FORUM

an unspecified number of centurions and knights who were granted unprecedented amounts of farmland, i.e. twelve and a half, twenty-five and thirty-five hectares, respectively. However, this did not mark the birth of a Roman settlement on virgin soil. Recent research on the area north of the forum points out the existence of an indigenous settlement from as early as the end of the IX c. BC. The pre-Roman village was made up of wooden huts built on reclaimed land. It also contained structures for the production of pottery which strongly resembled ancient Venetian pottery. The place name ‘*Aquileia*’ seems to be of Venetian origin. The indigenous settlement seems to have lasted until the II c. BC. However, the period immediately before the establishment of the Roman city remains obscure.

**MONUMENTAL RUINS.** In the first half of the I c. AD the forum was a large rectangular pedestrian area covered in Aurisina limestone and lined by porticoes (see the plinth featuring Medusa’s head) that led to shops (*tabernae*) and the Civilian Basilica. On the western side stood the temple (*aedes*) consecrated by the 169 BC Triumvir T. *Annius Luscus*.



**THE GREAT AQUILEIA**  
Uninterrupted research starting in the late XIX c. to today has helped Luisa Bertacchi draw a map of Aquileia that gathers all of the archaeological structures and infrastructures discovered thus far:

1. the main axis road (the Postumia Way?);
2. the Annia Way;
3. the Late Antiquity defensive walls and gates;
4. the northern city gate;
5. the *Aratria Galla Decumanus* (East-West road);
6. the forum;
7. Building built over the *Comitium*;
8. Building built over the *Macellum*;
9. river port;
10. eastern dock of the *Natiso cum Turro* River;
11. dock and warehouse (?) on today’s Ausset River;
12. dock on today’s Natissa River;
13. Civilian Basilica;
14. Theater;
15. Amphitheater;
16. *Castellum aquae* of the aqueduct;
17. *Schola*?;
18. Food market;
19. Circus;
20. Great Baths;
21. Suburban Villa of Marignane;
22. Warehouses (*Horrea*);
23. Basilica complex and Bishop’s palace;
24. Markets on the Natissa River;
25. Complex of the so-called Small *Thermae* (Late Antiquity phase);
26. Complex of the so-called Markets south of the Natissa River;
27. Bridges on tributary of the *Natiso* River;
28. Bridge on the *Natiso* River in Monastero;
29. Road to *Tergeste* (Trieste);
30. Road to *Emona* (Ljubljana);
31. Road intersecting with the road to the North;
32. Road along the *Natissa* River;
33. South-western Necropolis (mistakenly called of the *Annia* Way);
34. Basilica of Monastero;
35. Basilica of San Felice;
36. Basilica of San Giovanni.

(Elaborated by C. Tiussi from L. Bertacchi, *Nuova pianta archeologica di Aquileia*, Udine 2003)

right  
**A STRONGHOLD**  
 Plan of the western gate of the Republican walls. The most ancient brick walls with gates with quadrangular and circular courtyards were built before the mid-II c. BC.

lower right  
**WEALTHY DOMUS**  
 Today's "CAL Area", one of the wealthiest residential areas of the Roman city. Here stood luxurious houses with mosaics dating between the early Imperial Age and Late Antiquity (I-IV c.).

**AMAZING DOCUMENT**  
 Base of a statue unearthed along the western side of the forum. The inscription dating to 130 BC celebrates the Triumvir Titus Annius Luscus, who together with the other triumvirs confirmed that a second contingent of colonists should be sent in 169 BC. The inscription lists the magistrate's actions: the construction of a temple, the drafting of administrative laws, and updating the lists of local member of the Senate. (Aquileia, Archaeological Museum)

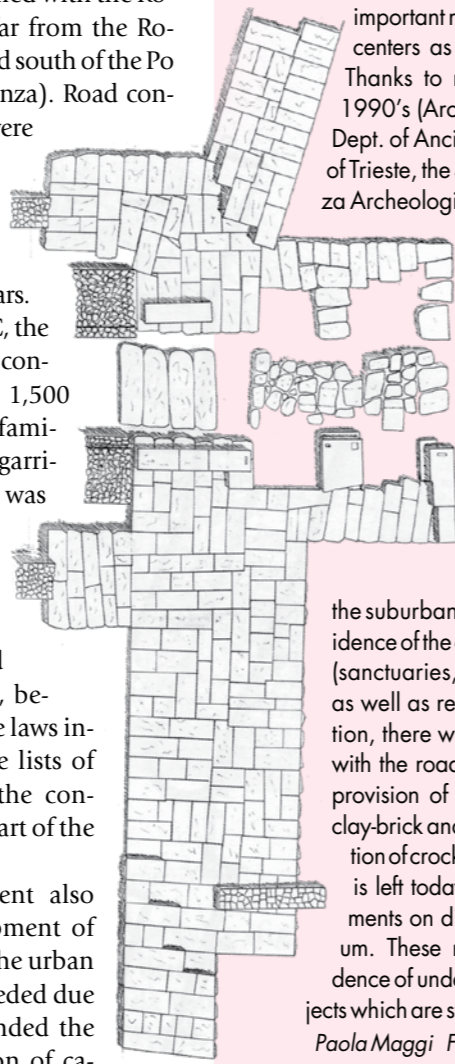
### A complex settlement in the marshes

The colony first emerged as a strategic and military outpost among ethnic groups that still were not reconciled with the Romans and furthermore it was far from the Roman strongholds to the north and south of the Po River (Bologna, Cremona, Piacenza). Road connection with the the Romans were guaranteed only after the mid-II c. BC (the *Postumia Way*\* 148 BC; the *Annia Way*\* 131 BC). Thus, the colony encountered great difficulties in its early years. Only twelve years later, in 169 BC, the foreseeable defections from the contingent led to the dispatch of 1,500 more Latin colonists with their families as a reinforcement to the garrison. Evidence of Livy's account was found in an epigraph. On a base, found in Aquileia's *forum* in 1995, mention is made of Titus Annius Luscus, one of the triumvirate members that led the extra colonists. In addition, besides introducing administrative laws into the colony and updating the lists of the local Senate, he oversaw the construction of the temple in the heart of the city.

The surrounding environment also had an impact on the development of the colony. A balance between the urban center and its ecosystem was needed due to the marshlands that surrounded the area. Thanks to the construction of ca-

### IN THE GREAT OUTSKIRTS

**A network of waterways.** In Roman times the center of Aquileia and the strip of land that surrounded the city's urban perimeter were closely linked. The suburban area housed service structures and was intersected by important roads that went to other urban centers as well as to the countryside. Thanks to research work done in the 1990's (Archaeological Maps FVG, the Dept. of Ancient Science of the University of Trieste, the SARA Project, Soprintendenza Archeologica del Friuli Venezia Giulia), the suburban network can now be clearly outlined. Research has pointed out how varied the suburban areas were. Its navigable waterways (rivers, canals, channels) constituted a functional circuit that circumnavigated the urban center.



#### Close coexistence of the funerary and civil spheres.

In the suburban areas of Aquileia there is evidence of the existence of public buildings (sanctuaries, baths and market places) as well as residential buildings. In addition, there were artisan shops connected with the roads and water systems for the provision of construction materials (both clay-brick and limestone) or for the production of crockery and oil-lamps. Little of this is left today but for the funerary monuments on display at the National Museum. These remain the only visible evidence of underground burials with rich objects which are still being unearthed today.

Paola Maggi Flaviana Oriolo Paola Ventura

nals (like the Anfora Canal which is still active) the water flowed out into the sea. Nearly two centuries later, Vitruvius (80/70-23 BC) acknowledged the importance of the man-made drainage system as it guaranteed "incredible healthiness" in the area. A clay-brick wall (with imposing salient-angled bastions and gates leading to a parade ground) was built around the city enclosing a narrow and long urban space of 41 hectares. To the east flowed a fifty-meter-wide river identified as «*Natiso cum Turro*» (as cited by Pliny the Elder) or 'the Natisone and the Torre', used as a river port. Still today the two waterways bear the same name and flow into the Isonzo river. In ancient times, however, they are likely to have had a different course and to have licked the colony to the west.

### The city forum develops along the main road

Inside the city walls the urban space was organized into a system of perpendicular roads. A grid of blocks, differing in size, came to be. The main axis was the northwest/southeast road (today's Regional Road 352) which led from the northern gate to the southern one. Along the *cardo maximus*, at the actual center of the city, space was reserved for the forum (city square).

Together with the river port, the city square is one of Aquileia's most famous areas, especially following excavations in the 1930's and the anastylosis performed on a number of portico columns by Giovanni Brusin, a historian who greatly contributed to the Roman city's knowledge. The current size of the square (142 x 56 m) is similar to its size during the Republican Age\*. Many important public buildings were built on

the edge surrounding the square. Though not much archaeological evidence of such buildings remains, we know of the *comitium* (where people gathered in *comitia* or assemblies) and have epigraphic evidence of the temple commissioned by the triumvir Titus Annius Luscus. The square was used for multiple activities: commercial, recreational, administrative as well as for the elections. As for the rest, not much more is known about the city in the Republican Age but for complexes like the *macellum* (the market, north of the forum) and the *forum p equarium* (the animal market whose location is unknown) which were destined to fulfill the city's growing vocation for commerce.



**VASUM DIATRETUM**  
 Fragment of a diatretum (Roman cup) found in one of the levels of the house "of the dancing Putti" (IV c.). The precious cups were used only by officials and notables at the imperial court, or by the court's representatives.

### THE DOMUS "OF THE DANCING PUTTI"

**Between the forum and the river port.** Thanks to regional and CRTrieste funding, in 2005 the Department of Ancient Studies of the University of Trieste in collaboration with the Office for Soprintendenza Archeologica del Friuli Venezia Giulia gave way to a research project in Aquileia on one of its most important *insulae*\*. Excavations, supervised by Federica Fontana, are providing young archaeologists with a training opportunity to help uncover a wealthy residential IV c. building known as the *domus* "of the dancing Putti".

**Who was the home owner?** About twenty rooms decorated with mosaic floors have been uncovered. The discovery has unveiled mosaics featuring erotic dancing, possibly referencing to Constantine's (306-337) *felicia tempora* (happy times). It has also been possible to determine the function of the rooms. There is a kitchen, a thermal bath, service rooms and hallways, "private" rooms surrounded by a peristyle that likely connected with the so-called "del Tappeto fiorito" ("Full of flowers Carpet") triclinium. The solidity of the *domus* and the wealth of decorative apparatuses indicate the cultural and social status of the owner (*dominus*) who was likely to have been *Septimius Theodulus*, the first Christian governor of *Venetia et Histria*.

Emanuela Murgia



### EXCAVATING THE GREAT THERMAL BATHS

**A large Late Antiquity building.** Since 2002, following excavations performed by the Soprintendenza Archeologica del Friuli Venezia Giulia between 1922 and 1987, archaeologists of the University of Udine have been retracing the history of one of the largest Late Antiquity public buildings. Built in the IV c. in the southwestern area of the city (Braidia Murata), the thermal baths complex covers an area of two and a half hectares. The bath complex included basins for bathing in warm (*calidaria*) and cold (*frigidaria*) water, a wide paved pool and wide rooms with mosaic floors. The complex was luxurious as can be witnessed by fragments of architectural decorations, columns, inlaid walls of precious stone, painted plasterwork and statues, which were all uncovered in later excavations. Between the VI and VII c. the ruins were re-utilized as houses with annexed burial grounds. Lastly, after years of abandonment, in the XIII and XIV c. the complex walls were pulled down and the area was used for agricultural purposes. The abandoned materials were used to build rural structures. Other excavations are being performed by students for training purposes as part of a project by the Friulian university in conjunction with the Soprintendenza Archeologica.

Marina Rubinich



**THERMAL BATHS STATUE**  
 One of the sculptures decorating the Great Thermal Baths uncovered in the great pool (*natatio*). This heroically nude torso is a copy dating to the II c. AD of Diomedes by the Greek sculptor Kresilas (IV c. BC). A sculptural portrait head was applied to it by someone in Aquileia.

### RIVER PORT

The ruins of Aquileia's great river port. The docks, provided with mooring rings, and the warehouses stood along the right bank of the *Natiso* cum *Turro* River. Its monumentalization dates to the 1 c. AD. The original river bed (48 m wide) was filled in the 4 c. thus



transforming the river into a waterway called *Natissa*. Today, along the ancient river bed lies an embankment (left) offering an archaeological walk (the so-called *Via Sacra*).

### Monumentalization of urban space

As of the 1 c. BC, following the transformation of the colony into a municipality\* (89 BC) and even more so in the second half of the century, Aquileia underwent profound changes. This was also thanks to important people like Caesar who spent many winters in Aquileia with the legions, or Octavian Augustus who chose Aquileia as one of his residences and hosted Herod, the great King of

Roman Judea, or even Tiberius. No less important was the abundance of construction materials excavated from the Triestine Karst like Aurisina's white natural limestone, still extracted today. The city had a theater with steps in trachyte stone (from the Euganean Hills) and a portico where a magnificent Doric frieze once belonged with images of weapons. Later, outside of the Republican city walls, by then for the most part demolished, stood a big amphitheater, discovered mostly in 19 c. excava-

tions. Between the end of the 1 c. BC and the first half of the 1 c. AD the Aquileians restored the city square. The original square was surrounded by great porticoes with nearly six-meter-high columns. Above the horizontal trabeation lay *pluteuses*\* featuring images of wreaths supported by *amorini* or eagles alternated with *plinths*\* shaped like the heads of Jupiter Ammon (venerated in the Siwa oasis) and Medusa (a Greek mythological figure). Such iconography was either proposed or im-

posed by early emperors to celebrate the strength of the Roman. On the southern side of the square, perhaps during Augustus's reign (27 BC-14 AD), the civilian basilica was built (for the administration of justice). This building (we see it today in its restructured version in the 2 c. AD) led to the end of vehicular traffic on the square.



### THE DOMUS ON THE EX COSSAR AREA

**An ancient residential zone.** After forty years of inactivity in the area, in 2009 the Department of Archaeology of the University of Padua resumed excavations in the ex *Cossar* Area (after the previous landowner's name), situated north of Aquileia's Paleo-Christian basilica complex and inside the Roman Republican Age city walls. Former excavations, performed by Giovanni Brusin and Luisa Bertacchi, had uncovered a block (*insula*), bounded to the east by a paved road, on which stood at least three houses (*domus*) with valuable mosaics. Though this area of the ancient city can be visited, not much is known due to the limited amount of information available. Thus, action has been undertaken to understand the area with regards to functionality and architecture for future valorization. The courtyard of the central house (1 c. AD) is primarily the subject of the new excavation campaign. Here a basin covered in mosaic was connected to a complex system of channels interpreted to be a fountain. To the east, a large number of coins and the weight of steelyard have been found between the *domus* and the paved road. All such findings lead us to believe that shops once stood there.

Diana Dobrova Guido Furlan Caterina Previato



**FOUNTAIN.** Excavations in 2009 in the courtyard of the main *domus* in the ex *Cossar* Area. In the foreground, a small outlet channel feeding to the mosaic basin in the center of the courtyard (1 c. AD).



**MAXIMINUS**  
A sesterce of Maximinus Thrax (Rome, 235-236) found during excavations in the *domus* on the ex *Cossar* Area. The emperor died at Aquileia's defensive walls in 238.

**EXCAVATION AREA**  
A panoramic view of the ex *Cossar* Area, between the abandoned Cervignano-Aquileia-Grado railroad lines (above, alongside the river port) and private property. Excavations in the area began early in the 19 c.



### THE NECROPOLIS ALONG THE POSTUMIA WAY

**The burial ground near the road.** Among the protection activities undertaken by the Soprintendenza Archeologica are the investigations north of the residential area (*Morona*), which took place in the winter of 2009-2010, on a site ready to house a gas station. In the area, near the regional road (the ancient *Postumia* Way), a graveyard and a structure likely to be used for the practice of artisanal activities were uncovered. In the strip of land closer to the road, a walled burial structure was discovered. Inside the structure two cremation tombs had been excavated some time before the first half of the 1 c. AD, each containing limestone urns with the combusted remains. Rich grave goods in ceramic and glass were then deposited in the two graves.

**A metallurgical workshop.** Behind the graveyard a building was found which contained layers of metal slag. It is thought that a metallurgical shop might have stood there and been active until the end of the 1 c. BC. The remains of the building were utilized to elevate the ground level and put the metal shop to new use. When the building was abandoned, between the 1 and 4 c. AD this strip of land was used as a graveyard, with tombs excavated randomly. Two of the tombs were cremation tombs. They contained no urns but did contain some objects, though of lower standards, compared to those contained in the walled burial structure close to the road. One of the two tombs had a conduit for votive offerings like food and drink. Another three tombs were graves. One in particular contained a wooden coffin lined with lead sheets. This kind of burial had been previously attested in Aquileia with two such findings having been uncovered in its southern graveyard. The use of lead, a burial practice of eastern origin, was believed to preserve corpses for eternity.

Luciana Mandruzzato

**CREMATION AND BURIAL.** Cremation tombs (1 c. AD) in the graveyard along the *Postumia* Way, north of the city, for the placing of the urns, with a round cover, and for the grave goods placed outside of the urn. In the other photo, excavations of a grave and discovery of a wooden coffin lined with lead sheets.



\* → p. 16

## THE 1950'S

Giovanni Brusin helps unearth the peacock mosaic in one the Aquileian houses in the Beneficio Rizzi Area.

# Aquileia's magnificent mosaics

The great wealth accumulated from commerce led to the execution of many splendid mosaic surfaces



mosaic decorations created with stone and glass paste tesserae.

### Creating fashionable motifs.

Both in the National Museum and in the vast archaeological areas accessible to the public, the wide variety of floors on display feature motifs from a repertoire of geometrical and figurative designs. This originality testifies the workforce's ability to follow and innovate the trends in Rome and other more distant areas in the Empire with which Aquileia was in contact.

### Playing with arrangements.

In the beginning, the mosaics employed rigid geometrical designs, but over time came the gradual introduction of more curvy elements loaded with rich motifs mostly from plant images and geometrical shapes. The original colors of black and white gave way to more colorful contrasts. A significant result of all this is the "Full of flowers

Carpet" floor mosaic (II c. AD) installed in a wealthy Imperial Age *domus*, featuring an articulate composition of colorful flowers, rosebuds, bell-shaped stems and branches in bloom. These decorative motifs also became common in paintings and fabrics.

### Liveliness of imagery.

Aquileian artisans gave proof of their constant evolution in the art of figurative mosaics which culminated in the creation of the famous Christian Basilica floor (IV c. AD). Early examples permeated by Hellenistic traditions can be seen in the "unswept room" ("*asarotos oikos*") mosaic (I c. BC-I c. AD). This is a copy of the original by Sosos of Pergamon (II c. BC) and represents the leftovers of a lavish meal on an unswept floor. Later, the mosaics featured simple representations of domestic crockery, blossomed branches or images of animals at the center of rigid geometrical motifs. In later stages, the representations appear on uniform backgrounds of color. Consequently, marine scenes alternate with scenes of hunting and powerful images of athletes, wealthy patrons (often thought to represent the Good Shepherd) or even the sponsors of the floor mosaic



**REFINEMENT**  
The mosaic of the so-called "Full of flowers Carpet" unearthed in the Cassis Area (II c. AD).

**THE UNSWEPT FLOOR**  
Segments of the "unswept floor" ("*asarotos oikos*") mosaic (I c. BC-I c. AD), perhaps belonging to the archaeological context of the ex Cossar Area, together with the mosaic featuring Nereid. The leftovers on the floor from an unfinished meal symbolize the wealth of the owners dining tables. (Aquileia, Arch. Museum)

**GEOMETRICAL DESIGNS**  
Aquileian mosaic (IV c. AD) featuring a maze from the Ritter Zone. (Aquileia, Arch. Museum)

## MOSAIC FASHION

Mosaic in the Comelli Area featuring the image of a *kantharos* (cup). Integrating images of pottery within the geometrical patterns became a widespread trend between the I and II c. AD. (Aquileia, Arch. Museum)

The incredible number of mosaic floors uncovered as of the XIX c. to date are among Aquileia's greatest attractions. Due to the variety of mosaics, Aquileian artisans reached a high level of expertise between the end of the Republican Age (II c. BC) and Late Antiquity (IV c. AD).

Those commissioning floors for wealthy residences or luxurious thermal buildings had a variety to choose from, depending on the context: from cheaper floors made with terracotta tesserae or made of *caementicium* (at times embellished with colorful inserts) to marble floors and luxurious



**MASTERPIECE**  
Mosaic uncovered in the XIX c. featuring the sea-nymph Nereid riding a sea-bull in the company of an Erotes holding a lit torch and a triton (I c. BC-I c. AD). The scene seems to be linked with the myth of Europe. (Aquileia, Arch. Museum)



# An invitation to the National Archaeological Museum

To better understand the ancient Roman city, the local museum is well worth a visit



**GOLDEN FLIES**  
One of the showcases displaying the grave goods called "of the golden flies" coming from a cremation tomb found in Beligna, south of the ancient city.

above right  
**BOREAS**  
The head of a wind appliqué in bronze of Greek-Hellenic influence, most likely imported to Aquileia and dating to the Republican Age (II-I c. BC).

center  
**GLYPTICS**  
Green quartz with image of the punishment of Dirce, a motif from the Augustan Age and the Julio-Claudian dynasty (I c. AD).

**LOCAL CRAFTSMEN**  
Urn made of limestone featuring the scene of a funeral banquet. One of the many examples of Aquileian craftsmanship performed in workshops active throughout the Imperial Age.



Aquileia's glorious past can be witnessed by its outdoor areas, the basilica, and two museums – the Archaeological Museum and the Paleo-Christian Museum. The need to share with the public thus far what has been discovered began in the mid-1700's when the Canon Gian Domenico Bertoli (1676-1763) displayed his collection of findings in his house which is still standing. Though most of

the findings went missing, they are documented in three volumes of which only one was ever published: *Le antichità di Aquileia profane e sacre per la maggior parte finora inedite* (Venice, 1739).

**Historical commitment for a museum in Aquileia.** Aquileia's first public museum was opened in 1806. It was housed in the ancient baptistery and called Museo Eugenio, in honor of Italy's viceroy Eugenio Beauharnais. Aquileia's desire to have a museum starts again after the city's Napoleonic period and after Austria's dominion over the city (until 1918). There was growing interest in the city's Roman and Christian ruins. Nonetheless, preservation laws at the time allowed finds of minor importance to be sold while valuable ones were to be taken to Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum. In order to be able to keep Aquileia's finds from the past, where they belonged, the citizens themselves request-



ed the opening of the Museo Patrio della Città (1873-1881). The museum's patrimony was later transferred to the *Caesareum Museum Aquilejense* in 1882 – a villa with an adjoining garden which houses today's National Archaeological Museum.

**The finds outdoors.** The garden which resembles a XIX c. lapidarium houses funerary monuments alongside architectural decorations from religious and civilian buildings, mosaic floors from houses and thermal baths. The naval section of the garden the remains of a Roman boat, found in the *Lacus Timavi* in Monfalcone. The museum storehouses are along the Natissa River and can be visited. They house terracotta decorations from Roman temples of the Republican Age, sculptures, epigraphic elements and mosaics.

**Precious collections.** Inside the museum a number of reliefs are on display: images of the foundation of the city, fu-

nerary sculptures of local production, imperial statues of the Julio-Claudian family, and refined Attic sarcophagi. The images of divinities represent religious cults but are also testimony of the way houses and gardens were decorated. On the first floor hangs a bronze



chandelier with a double crown (mid-IV c.) found in the basilica's four-sided portico. This rare find brings to life the Christian message with its symbolic images that can also be seen on the oil-lamps and religious objects on display in the nearby show-



case. Opposite is the section dedicated to Oriental religions: the cult of Antinous, Isis and Mithra is represented in religious objects and gems from Egypt. In the neighboring room only a small number of glyptic finds are on display. Beside them lie bright-colored stones,



**Well-being in an Imperial City.** Glass was also crafted locally. The museum houses many samples of glass created with the ancient grinding technique as well as samples of blown glass exported to western regions. On the last floor, a sophisticated display of Baltic amber can be viewed. Between the I and II c. AD charming trinkets, rings with feminine heads and other complex designs were created as well as cases for mirrors and boxes for make up. A woman's world to which belonged the necklaces and bobbins found in tombs. In the showcase opposite is another feminine display including necklaces, bracelets, rings, earrings decorated with pearls, lapis lazuli and emeralds that remind us of the wealth and imperial role of the city. The exhibit ends on the last floor, the attic, where coins are on display, with special focus on the Aquileian (294-425) and patriarchal Mint.

Franca Maselli Scotti  
For information call: 0431-91035

**GREEK MARBLE**  
The so-called Navarca semi-nude heroic statue (I c. BC), unearthed together with funerary materials, inspired by the statues of Roman generals in Tivoli and Capua.

**THE BLACKSMITH'S WORKSHOP**  
A blacksmith's funerary stele (I c. AD), symbolic of the liveliness of Aquileia's artisanship, favored by the nearby iron ores in Noricum (Austria) that could be reached from Aquileia by road.

**LIGHTING**  
A bronze chandelier (late IV c. AD) called *Policandilon* or *Jerusalem* that lit the Basilica's Paleo-Christian portico. Its arms were shaped like dolphins and branches ending with containers for oil.



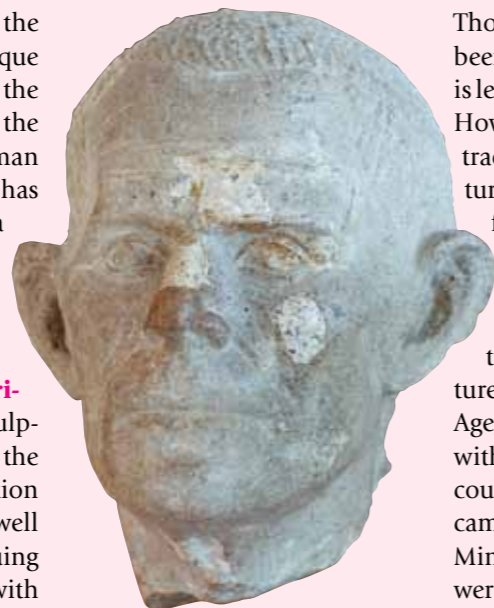
# Art and craftsmanship in Aquileia

*Paintings and sculptures: testimony left behind*

The University of Trieste is involved in regular excavation campaigns and projects in Aquileia which are then discussed during meetings organized by the *Centro di Antichità Altoadriatiche* in cooperation with the Department of Late Antique and Medieval Sciences of the University of Trieste. For the first time, the topic of Roman painting in Northern Italy has been linked with Aquileia because of research done on the fragments of frescoes found in excavations.

**A partly dispersed patrimony.** With regards to sculptures, a project backed by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research as well as a computerized cataloguing program in cooperation with the Villa Manin Center in Passariano in the province of Udine are under way on the subject of antique sculptures in Friuli Venezia Giulia. Most fragments come from Aquileia, but only a small amount is safeguarded in the National

Museum. The rest now belongs to regional collections, such as that of Count Francesco di Toppo in Buttrio, in the province of Udine, or to other museums such as the City Museum of



Trieste and the City Museum of Udine. Yet other fragments can be found in European museums, in particular in Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum. The presence of Austrian archaeologists in Aquileia from

the first findings up to the first World War explains why. One such archaeologist was Otto Benndorf, founder of the Austrian Institute of Archaeology.

**Valuable local workmen.** Though Aquileia has always been famous for its mosaics, it is less known for its sculptures. However, Aquileia has an extraordinary variety of sculptures to offer: in terracotta, from the beginning of the colony, to marble and Aurisina limestone, used in particular for architectural and sepulchral sculptures. As of the Republican Age, thanks to relationships with other Mediterranean countries, marble sculptures came from Greece and Asia Minor. However, many shops were soon established in Aquileia producing products such as statues of mythological subjects, portraits, sculptural furniture, sarcophaguses, inspired by the models of Greek and Roman workshops.

Monika Verzár

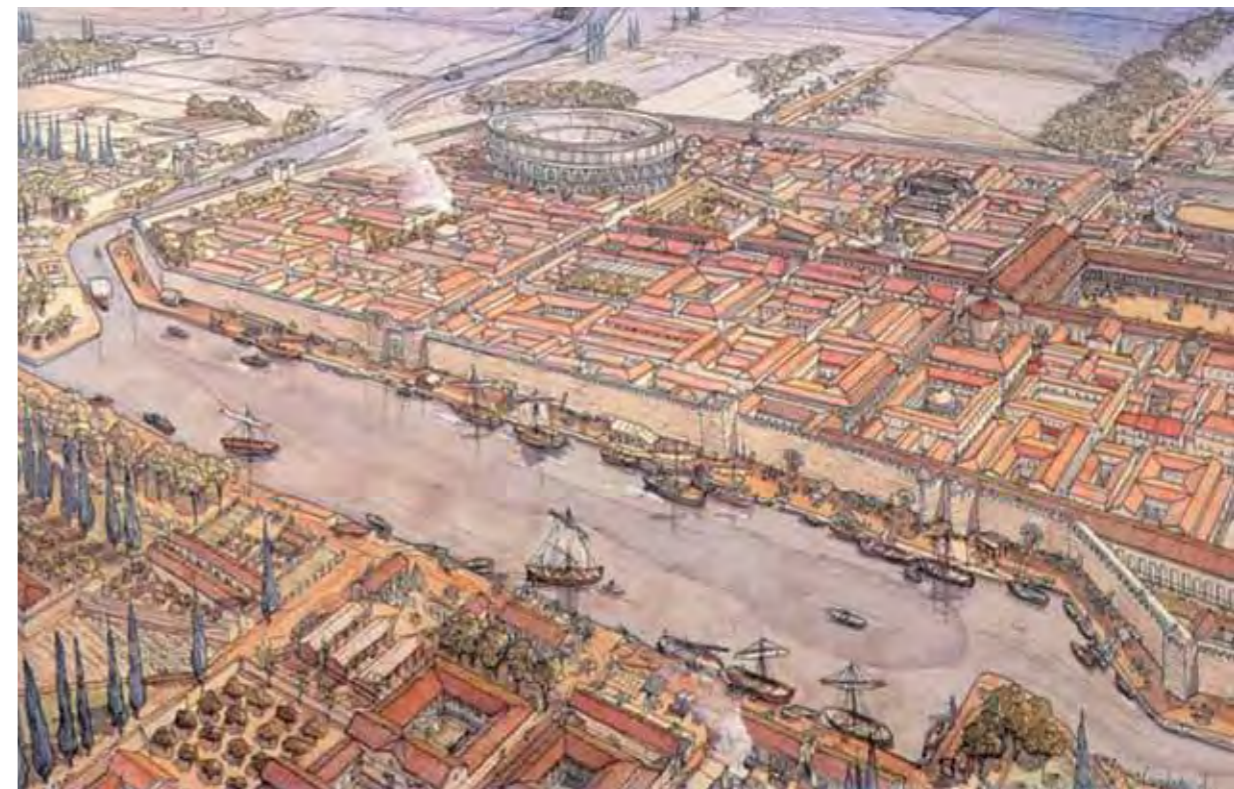


**REALISM**  
Late Republican Age male portrait (late 1 c. BC), likely in a funerary context. Worth noting is the realistic depiction of the face, a typical expression in Roman portraits. (Aquileia, Arch. Museum)

**THE ART OF GLASS**  
Partial view of the amazing collection of glass artifacts (1 c. BC and IV c. AD) produced in Aquileian workshops: pieces from the table, containers for spices and other vessels. (Aquileia, Arch. Museum)

## The great Northern Adriatic port complex

In the 1 c. AD many other architectural projects were completed in Aquileia. Special attention was dedicated to strengthening the "port system" on the *Natiso cum Turro*. This project featured bank walls in Istrian stone\*, piers, connections with urban roads, and warehouses with a front of three hundred meters. However, the port system was also connected with minor docks on smaller waterways and on navigable canals north and west of the urban center. The Anfora Canal was also part of the system: an extraordinary man-made project off the western edge of the city which extended in a straight line for six kilometers and flowed into the present-day Marano Lagoon. Aquileia's crucial role as a wealthy commercial crossroads between the Mediterranean Sea and continental-Balkan Europe is documented by thousands of finds and confirmed in the geographer Strabo's words: "Aquileia [...] can be reached by navigating up the Natisone River with commercial boats for more than sixty stadiums.



The city is an emporium for the Illyrian peoples living along the Danube. They come and get products from the sea, wine that they put into wooden barrels which they haul away onto carriages and oil. Local people come to make purchases in exchange for slaves, animals and leather". The city's com-

**AQUILEIA IN THE PAST**  
Hypothetical reconstruction of Aquileia - view from the northeast. River port is in the foreground. Picture by of J.-C. Golvin in *L'antiquité retrouvée* (Édition Errance).

mercial wealth had an impact on the economic growth of its society. In the 1 c. AD big houses with porticoed courtyards and internal gardens were built and became famous in the ancient world for their rich mosaic apparatuses.

**WEALTH**  
Part of a hexagon with images of animals adorning the mosaic floor featuring a female figure unearthed in 2009 in the house "of the wounded beasts" (IV c.).

## THE DOMUS "OF THE WOUNDED BEASTS"

**Four centuries of life.** In 2007, the University of Padua resumed investigations on the house "of the wounded beasts", a wealthy *domus* in Aquileia's northern residential area. The building was first brought to light, though only in part, in the 1960's when an emergency survey took place. At first a well-known mosaic floor was uncovered featuring images of hunting and wounded animals. Then the area as a whole was entered. Recent investigations have led to a first reconstruction of the *domus*. The house "of the wounded beasts" in all of its uses over the four centuries still shows its wealth.

**The woman with the roses.** The first complex dates back to at least the 1 c. AD when a series of structures and mosaic floors were discovered dating back to the same period. Among these is a black and white floor featuring a reticulated pattern adorned with floral motifs found below other levels. However, the most pompous and well-preserved stage of the *domus* is placed in the IV c. At that time the main courtyard was decorated with large slabs and with a series of rooms surrounding around it. The polychromatic mosaic floors feature geometrical and stylized decorations. In particular, one of the floors features a standing woman who is likely to have been the home owner. Surrounded by images of fish and birds she holds in her hands a flower bud and a basket of roses. Michele Bueno Marta Novello Monica Salvadori





### Aquileia in Late Antiquity between crisis and grandeur

**NECROPOLIS**  
The so-called  
Sepolcreto  
(end of I to III c. AD),  
west of the urban  
center along  
a minor road.

Between the II and III centuries, Aquileia maintained its role as a maritime terminal for traffic along the Adriatic Sea. This led to an increase in the construction of buildings as



well. During Mark Aurelius's and Lucius Verus's reign (161-169) the city was attacked by the Quads and Marcomanns\*. Although their attacks might have been weak, they still had a traumatic impact on the city after two centuries of peace and prosperity. Much worse was the usurper Maximus Thrax's siege on the area in 238, as narrated in detail by Herodian (*History of the Empire* 8, 2-6). After restoring the ancient Republican Age city walls which had fallen into disrepair in the pax augustea climate, the population rose against the "public enemy" who in the end was killed by his own army. Thus, the city's people "became the defenders and saviors of Italy".

This episode changed Aquileia's role. Throughout the IV and half of the V c. in Aquileia there were assaults and military conflicts among the different factions for control of the empire. Aquileia regained its role as a "border city" which it had had during the early centuries. However, such difficulties did not hinder the start of a new season of growth and wealth in the IV c. At that time, following Diocletian's reforms, the city was named capital of the province *Venetia et Histria* and became on several occasions the imperial residence. This led to the setting up of a Mint in 294 as well as important construction of granaries (south of today's Christian basilica), strategically important to supply the armies on the Danubian border, the circus, the imperial palace, as well as the so-called "great baths" commissioned by Constantine (306-337). In the first half of the IV c., new city walls were built to defend one of the most beautiful cities in the Mediterranean area. The walls enclosed more urban space to the west and south creating an area totaling 85 hectares of land. In 361 the new walls protected the city from Julian the Apostate's\* legions. However, they also reduced the functions of the docks and limited the use of the river port which also suffered diversion of the waterway on occasion. Al-

though Aquileia was still defined in the IV c. by the poet Ausonius as «*moenibus et portu celeberrima*» ('famous for its walls and port'), it suffered a decline marked by reduced commercial traffic and more frequent battles which destabilized its economy. On July 18, 452 Attila succeeded in sieging the city. The city was violated for the first time in 600 years. This had a heavy impact on the city's architectural and socioeconomic structure. Though life in Aquileia did not come to a halt, the ransacking by the Huns, which too often has been banished by critics as a legend, led to the city's historical and urban decline. From then on, the city grew in the shadow of the religious power of the episcopal complex which developed by the IV c. in the southern area of the ancient colony. But this is yet another chapter in the millennial history of Aquileia.

Jacopo Bonetto Cristiano Tiussi

**DISTINGUISHED FAMILY.** A funerary monument of the Aquileian *Curii* family (I c. AD) rebuilt in the garden of the Archaeological Museum. It includes a triangular-shaped aedicula fenced off by stone slabs and boundary stones.



### THE FONDAZIONE AQUILEIA

**Valorization Tool.** As provided by the Code of Cultural Landscape and Heritage (art. 112), the Fondazione Aquileia is a "valorization institution" and one of the first in Italy. The partners are The Ministry of Heritage and Cultural Activities, the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region, the Province of Udine, the City Hall of Aquileia, and the Archdiocese of Gorizia.

**A role projected in the future.** The Foundation was established in 2008 following an agreement between the national government and the regional government of Friuli Venezia Giulia which defined the site's valorization objectives thus confirming the statute and the areas to be included. Among the major objectives are the valorization project, the musealization of the archaeological areas, cultural programs, tourism development programs, the creation of innovative information tools, and the organization of events and shows. The Foundation is administered by its Board, having planning tasks, and its Director, both of whom are supported by the Board of Statutory Auditors and the Supervisory Committee. The Foundation's activities are funded by means of contributions guaranteed by the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region and the Province of Udine, in addition to being financed by Arcus s.p.a.

Info: 0431-917619 [www.fondazioneaquileia.it](http://www.fondazioneaquileia.it)

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### \*DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

**Anastylosis.** A technique whereby a ruined building or monument is restored using the original architectural elements to the greatest degree possible.

**Roman Republican Age.** The period between the institution of the Republican regime in Rome (509 BC) and its evolution into a principality in the Augustan age (end of I c. BC). For Aquileia this period falls between its establishment as a colony (181 BC) and the end of the I c. BC.

**Julian the Apostate (Flavius Claudius Julianus).** Roman Emperor from 361 to 363 who was acclaimed Augustus by his troops. He was the last emperor to reject Christianity

in favor of paganism. This act caused him to be called the Apostate. In 361 he unsuccessfully sieged Aquileia by deviating the waterway that brushed the city walls.

**Insula.** A building with several residential units. Insula also indicates the rectangular block between road axes. In Aquileia the size of the blocks differed due to variations in the grid road system but also due to the winding river and to how the defensive walls stretched.

**Maximus Thrax (Gaius Julius Verus Maximinus).** After rising to the throne in 235, he died at the foot of Aquileia's defensive walls on May 10, 238 after he failed to siege the

city. He was the first "barbarian" emperor (no citizenship at birth) who had imperial power without ever setting foot in Rome for his military duties.

**Municipium.** A title granted to urban centers where people gained the right to citizenship (*ius romanum*). The municipium had its own statute (*lex municipalis*) and owned the territory as the basis of its economy. Aquileia was transformed from colony to municipium immediately after the civil war and following legislation in 90-89 BC.

**Istrian stone.** A type of impermeable limestone extracted in the Istrian peninsula. It is white to pale gray and is an excellent con-

struction material. Transported largely by sea, it was used in the construction of public structures in Aquileia (walls, the port, Anfora Canal) and in northern Italy.

**Plinth.** A quadrangular stone block upon which parts of a construction rest.

**Pluteus (marble relief).** A balustrade formed by parallelepiped slabs of stone that could be decorated with frames or reliefs.

**Quads and Marcomanns.** Northern European tribes that migrated across a number of eastern regions (Moravia, Slovacchia, Pannonia) between the I c. BC and the I c. AD. In the second half of the II c. (167-170), in Marcus Aure-

lius's age, they invaded Italy destroying *Opitergium* (present day Oderzo in the province of Treviso) and putting Aquileia under siege.

**Triumvirs.** Three public officers who formed a commission having political and administrative tasks. In Aquileia the triumvirs were *triumviri coloniae deducendae*, i.e. in charge of functions for the establishment of the city. In 181 BC the triumvirs were Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica, Gaius Flaminius, and Lucius Manlius Acidinus. In 169 BC in support of the settlement were Titus Annius Luscus, Publius Decius Subulo, and Marcus Cornelius Cethegus.

**The Annia Way.** A road was developed in the II c. BC to connect the Eastern Po plains (from

an uncertain caput viae Rimini, Bologna or Adria) with Aquileia. Some scholars claim the road was commissioned in 153 BC by Titus Annius Luscus, while others claim it was in 131 BC (or in 128 BC) by Titus Annius Rufus. The road reached the city from the Northwest.

**The Postumia Way.** A consular road traced by Spurius Postumius Albinus in 148 BC. The road connected Genoa on the Tirrean Sea with Aquileia on the Adriatic Sea across the Po Plains. It had an important role, especially in *Venetia*, serving as a "defensive road system" protecting bordering territories. It reached Aquileia from the north.

# PATRIARCHAL

# AQUILEIA

*After having been a capital city in the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity the city on the banks of the Natissa River became a powerful Episcopal seat with one of the most beautiful basilica complexes of the Christianity*

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Edited by Fondazione Aquileia  
Photos by Gianluca Baronchelli Enzo Andrian  
Photo credits Archaeological Heritage of Friuli Venezia Giulia  
Translation by Joanne Baldoni

**PALEO-CHRISTIAN COMPLEX.** The Basilica of Aquileia, the IV c. octagonal baptistery, and the bell tower commissioned by Poppo. The vast piazza Capitolo – named after the patriarch's canons – has been restructured marking the perimeter of previous Paleo-Christian constructions with slabs of Aurisina limestone.



### THE GOOD SHEPHERD

The mosaic in the South Hall of the patriarchal basilica features a shepherd with a sheep on his shoulders and another at his feet, looking up at him.

below left  
**PATRIARCHAL POWER**  
Partial view of the Basilica of Aquileia and its bell tower. In the foreground is one of the two surviving columns of the great palace of patriarchs built in the XI c. on former Roman structures, inhabited until the XVI c. and then left in a state of gradual disrepair until it was entirely demolished in the XVIII c.

**ROMANIC ART**  
Frescoes in the Roman apse created at the time of Patriarch Poppo (mid-XI c.) with a Renaissance pulpit in the foreground. To the left are the saints Hilarius, Tatian, and Mark with the Duke of Carinthia and Poppo offering the Virgin Mary a model of the Basilica.

**A** FEW YEARS AFTER THE EDICT of Milan in 313 in Aquileia stood a basilica with two parallel halls joined by a third hall and by a baptistry with an oval-shaped font. There was also a bishop, Theodore, mentioned in the records of the Council of Arles (314) which he took part in together with Deacon\* Agatone. These buildings are one of the first Christian structures of its kind, which proves the existence of an already organized community. But what happened before the Constantinian shift? How did the Gospel's first announcement arrive in Aquileia? When did a Church of Aquileia come into existence with its bishop, presbyters and deacons? One of the most important river ports of the ancient world developed in Aquileia at the northernmost end of the Adriatic Sea. The river port in Aquileia was the ideal place for commercial exchanges and an essential stop along any journey to the North and East of Europe. Merchants and soldiers not only brought with them prosperity but also philosophical and religious ideas. In the first few centuries of the Christian age, the presence of gnostic sects\*, mysterious cults\* and a lively Jewish community were witnessed.

To rebuild the life of the first Christian community would require a connection with the Jewish as well as with the Antenicæan\* Fathers' exegetical and theological intuitions such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen. Anti-gnostic\* beliefs from the second half of the III c. in-



fluenced the specific Creed in Aquileia. According to tradition, the founder of the Church of Aquileia seems to have been Mark the Evangelist, while Hermagoras seems to have been the first Bishop. Yet, the first recorded Bishop to the throne was not until 250. Ancient catalogues of the martyrs list the names of the many Christians killed throughout many persecutions. Many of the martyrs' stories are told in the *Acta Martyrum* (Acts of the Christian Martyrs), but some of them have been confirmed by archaeology. In San Canzian d'Isonzo (in the province of Gorizia), a few kilometers east of the city, a number of tombs were discovered which most likely belonged to the three siblings Cantius, Cantianus and Cantianilla and to their tutor Protus, whose story was narrated by the Bishops Venantius Fortunatus, Maximus of Turin, and others.

### Patriarchs dignity for the Bishops of Aquileia

**A**t the beginning of the IV c., Bishop Theodore built and consecrated the first basilica in Aquileia 'with the help of God and of the herd provided by heaven' as inscribed on the dedicatory clipeus\*. Between 325 and 381 the Aquileian Church witnessed with great intensity the clash between the Nicene orthodoxy\* and Arianism\*. This was a time of great uncertainty due to many existing doubts on doctrinal fundamentals as well as increasingly strong ties between religious and political matters. In fact, in 358 Fortunatus undersigned the much debated *Sirmium\** Creed. On the contrary, his successor, Valerian, opposed such a heresy and in 381 presided over the Council of Aquileia where Ambrose of Milan led the Bishops to condemn Palladius of Ratiaria and Secundianus of Singidunum, supporters of Photinus's pro-Arian ideas.

A time of relative tranquility followed on the theological front, sealed by Chromatius's episcopacy (388-408), but not on the geopolitical front. During the V c., increasingly frequent migrations of people brought with them destruction and local inhabitants were forced to flee to nearby islands in the lagoon, like Grado. Chromatius's successors thus contributed to rebuilt churches in Grado and to restoration of the basilica of Aquileia, which became ever more isolated in the decadent city. Political events and theological controversies throughout the VI c.

led to a schism. The complex issue was solved by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Council of Constantinople (553) with the condemnation of a number of statements (the so-called Three Chapters\*) made by three Greek fathers. The decision, undersigned by the Pope and urged by the Emperor, was seen to be in contradiction with the provisions of the Council of Chalcedon\* (451) to which the Church of Aquileia wanted to adhere. In 579 Bishop Elia consecrated the new Grado cathedral dedicating it to St. Euphemia, martyr of Chalcedon, and thus confirming his distance from Rome's and Constantinople's positions.

Pressure in favor of reconciliation was strong, but immediately after Elia's death what had been acknowledged as a single Patriarchate split into two. One church had its residence in Grado and the other in Aquileia (later, due to the ancient Roman city's increasingly marginal position, Cividale became the seat of the Longobard Duchy of Friuli). Although the schism came to an end in 699, the two churches each continued to develop along their own individual paths. The mainland church acquired an increasingly important role within a vast territory in the heart of Europe. The church in Grado transferred its influence to the sea until the Patriarchate of Venice was established in 1451 on the ashes of Grado and of the subordinate Diocese of Castello.

**BISHOP HELIAS**  
The monogram of Bishop Helias in the mosaic of Grado cathedral, which he consecrated in the VI c. The church's dedication to St. Euphemia, martyr of Chalcedon, was a decision with which



Bishop Helias stressed the position of the Aquileia Church in the theological debates of the time.

**THE ENLIGHTENED BISHOP**  
Chromatius (388-408) announces the Word: fresco by P.A. Novelli (1790) in the sacristies of the cathedral in Udine.

### CHROMATIUS OF AQUILEIA

**The decline of the Classical Age.** Chromatius was bishop of Aquileia from 388 to his death during or shortly after the Visigoth invasion of Alarico in 408. He was the 5<sup>th</sup> successor of Bishop Theodore who built the cathedral halls and the famous mosaics. Chromatius contributed to increasing the heritage of his immediate predecessors: Fortunatus, head of the Aquileia Church – second only to Rome in terms of dignity – contributed with careful mediation to the Catholic resistance against the Arianism promoted by emperors; Valerian, consolidated the Nicene orthodoxy by presiding over the Aquileia Council (381) to stop the Arian hotbeds of Illyria. Father Chromatius's resolute voice still echoes from the acts of the Aquileian assembly.

**Great moral authority.** Rufinus from Concordia and Jerome from Stridone tell us about Chromatius's endeavor in circa 370 which turned him into a master of new spiritual trends: the founding of a monastery (*monasterium*), "famous for its similarity to a choir of saints" which – as testified by Jerome – gathers clerics and "renowned monks" all the way from Syria to join his family. A wide network of friendships spreads thanks to which Chromatius's authority enhances Paleo-Christian culture, especially after the daring translation of the Bible from Jewish by Jerome himself and the spread of Greek-Christian theology and historiography among Latin peoples by Rufinus. Bishop Chromatius distinguishes himself as a preacher and as a commentator, emulating Fortunatus. Only few fragments of his work survive; however, new ground for research on the history of Christian Aquileia opens after the French philologists Raymond Etaix and Joseph Lemarié attribute to Chromatius the writing of *Sermons* and of *Treaties on Matthew*, after having been passed on under a false name. Alessio Persic



\* → p. 30



# The magnificent basilica of patriarchs

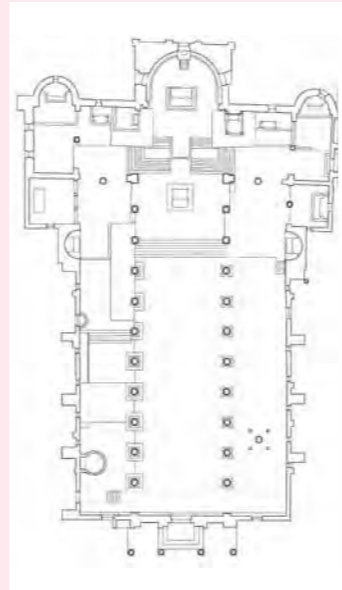
The most important and visited monument in Aquileia is the Basilica, a stratification of over 2,000 years of history

**INSIDE THE BASILICA**  
The mosaic floor inside the Basilica commissioned by Theodore in what originally was the South Hall (early IV c.) and the Gothic arches commissioned by Marquard of Randeck (XIV c.). The morning sunlight shines on a sector with images of animals and Gordian knots interwoven with two or three cords.

For those approaching Aquileia from across the plains that surround it, the majestic and symbolic bell tower of the cathedral will appear. A cathedral that has seen twenty centuries of history. At the foot of the bell tower, excavations in the late XIX c. brought to life a highly sophisticated house (*domus*) built in the Augustan Age. The *domus* is representative of the first use of the area along the banks of the Natissa River which was peripheral compared to the heart of the Roman colony. In Imperial period (I-III c.) this area

contained large warehouses for the storage of goods. The area then acquired a new Christian identity at the beginning of the IV c., perhaps through the transformation of the warehouses.

**Development of the great Paleo-Christian complex.** The most extraordinary evidence of such change is represented by the mosaic floor (about 750 square meters) which can be seen immediately upon entry into the basilica. As mentioned in the inscription in the mosaic, Bishop Theodore requested it to adorn one of the two



original twin halls which were the new attraction among Aquileian Christianity in Constantine's times. Of the two halls, one was likely used for liturgies while the other provided instruction to the catechumens who had yet to be baptized. In spite of the opulence of the mosaic floors, walls and ceiling frescoes, the two halls were soon replaced with a more impressive project (between the middle and late IV c.). First, Fortunatianus (342-357), then Chromatius (388-408), who were bishops at the time of Aquileia's glory days in Late Antiquity, contributed to tripling the size of the halls following the example of Rome's Christian models, like St. Peter's. A four-sided portico with the bishop's residence was built in front of the north hall

basilica in the forum were used to embellish the new episcopal hub.

**The basilica as we see it.** This structure was short-lived as it was pillaged by Attila the Hun in 452. In particular, the north hall was destroyed and never rebuilt. The south hall and the adjoining baptistery were less damaged. They were left to worshippers during the Byzantine domination. By the beginning of the IX century, massive restoration work was commissioned by Patriarch Maxentius. Materials from previous constructions were recovered and the new structure was planned, still maintained to this day. The transept and the apse were added and the baptistery was isolated from the surrounding buildings.



mentioning is the construction of the Holy Sepulchre adjacent to the northern aisle in the XI c., at the peak of the crusades. Final changes date back to the 1400's, with the introduction of ogive arches between the aisles in late Gothic style carried by new elevated and decorated dossierets, and to the 1500's, with a wooden keel-shaped vault which is still well-preserved today.

**An extraordinary itinerary.** In modern times, the site was damaged, though not heavily, by Austrian bombing during the first World War. Later, archaeological excavations further changed the appearance of the Basilica. This allowed for the development of a very appealing itinerary around the complex. Our next stop is the South Hall, beside the baptistery, with its mosaics from Chromatius's times.

Patrizio Pensabene  
Enrico Gallochio

Information on basilica:  
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the two photos above  
**BAPTISTERIES**  
Remains of the second Aquileian baptistery dating back to the mid-IV c. (the first, Bishop Theodore's, dates back to before 320 and is located below the north wall of the basilica), called "atanasian" after Bishop Atanasius of Alexandria who was present at the consecration of the new Aquileian basilica (345) at Fortunatianus's time. The third baptistery, commissioned by Chromatius (388-408) with the hexagonal font and octagonal wall structure.

left  
**OVERLAP**  
The foundations of the bell tower commissioned by Patriarch Poppo (early in the XI c.) on top of Bishop Theodore's mosaics in what originally used to be the South Hall (early IV c.) in the patriarchal complex of Aquileia.



and an octagonal baptistery was created in front of the south hall in place of the former Paleo-Christian one (still visible) between Bishop Theodore's two halls. In addition, the floor level was raised, which helped preserve the previous mosaic floors, and new mosaic floors were installed. Architectural remains, often marble, from other abandoned public buildings in Aquileia, like the theater and the civilian

**The majestic Bell Tower is built.** Most likely after an earthquake in 958, Patriarch Poppo (1019-1042) had the facade of the basilica redone in Romanic style. He also introduced new capitals and bases of Aurisina stone (extracted in nearby Carst). In particular, in place of the once north hall, he built the 70-meter tall bell tower which then became a prototype for Friulian and Istrian constructions to come. Worth

# Mosaics for the new religion

The Aquileia Basilica contains the largest mosaic floor in the western Christian world



Installed before 320, the mosaics from Bishop Theodore's age, one of Aquileia's first bishops, cover the floor of the two original halls of worship (South and North). The site is where the complex of the Basilica as we see it today was later erected.

**The large mosaic floor in the South Hall.** The mosaic is dominated by "Jonah's story" in three Paleo-Christian illustrations: the sea monster swallowing the prophet who refused to preach at Nineveh; Jonah thrown onto the beach before facing his mission; Jonah resting under a shelter after the city's conversion. The scene is set in a sea full of fish being caught by fishermen with nets

**A MAJESTIC MOSAIC**  
An extraordinary zenithal view of the mosaic floor of the south Hall inside the patriarchal basilica: a surface of nearly 750 m<sup>2</sup>.

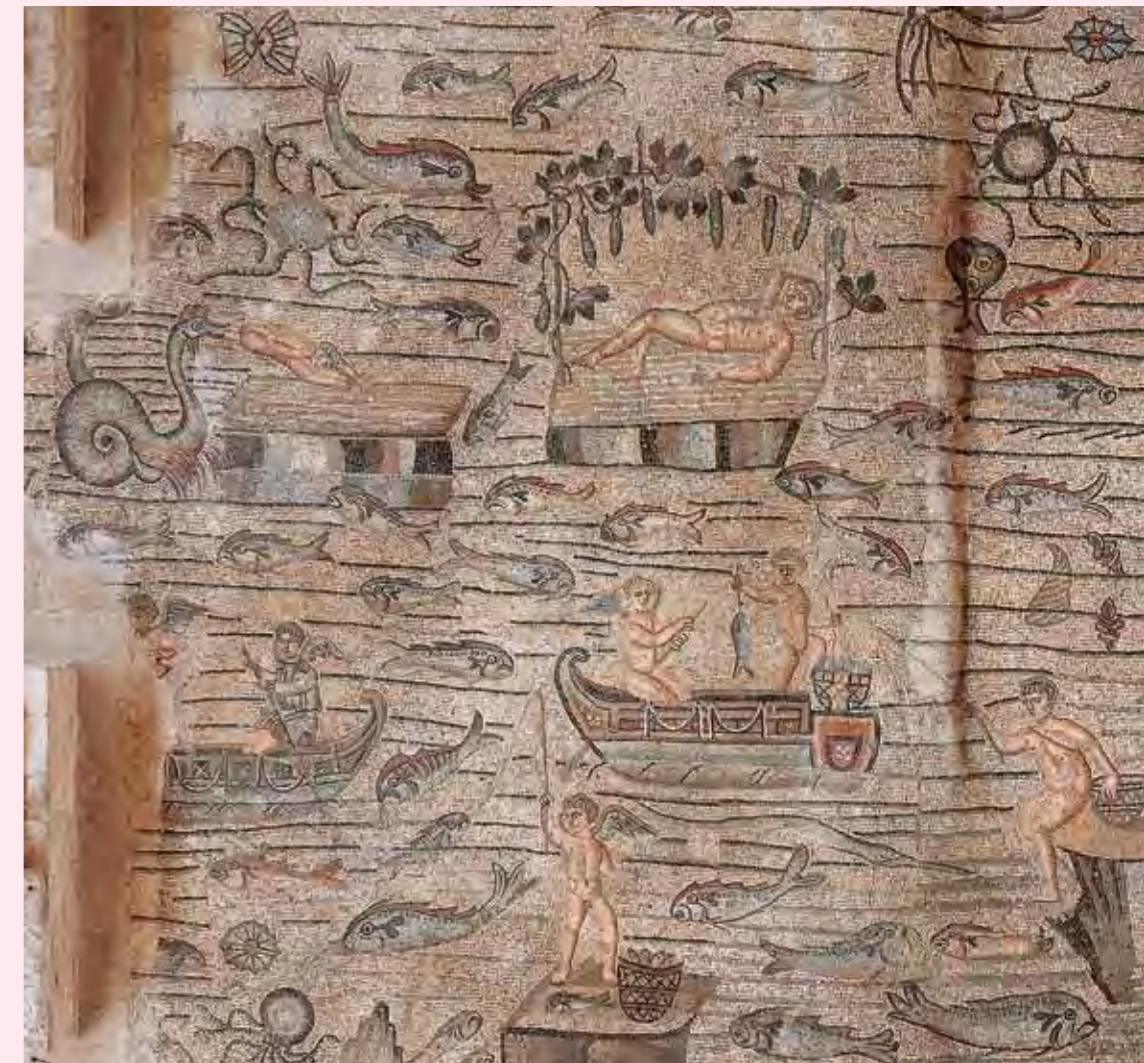
and poles. It is clearly a religious allegory of death and resurrection, but there are also baptismal symbols where the catechumen 'removed' from the font leaves behind him death and enters the Church of those who live forever. Another evocative image is that of a shepherd with a sheep on his shoulders and another at his feet looking at him; at his sides, an antelope and a deer seem to run towards him. In the central section, the winged Victory is surrounded by human subjects at work. Lastly, and very likely an addition after the Council of Aquileia in 381, is the scene of a fight between a cock and a tortoise which may refer to the Arian controversy.

**The mosaics in the North Hall.** The mosaics in the North Hall can be seen around the base of the XI c. bell tower. The symbology in the illustrations is complex. Some claim there is an

allegorical representation of the terrestrial and celestial church; others say there are decorative figures or representations inspired by gnostic texts. Before accessing the narrow corridor between the north wall of the basilica and the bell tower, the mosaics feature two baskets, one containing mushrooms and the other full of snails. The next mosaics are striking for the intensity of their colors and perfection: a braying donkey, a goat with episcopal symbols and sultan chickens; they introduce the most fascinating panel, showing a nest of partridges, kids (baby goats) at rest, and even a ray and a lobster brushing against each other on stylized trees. Lastly, there is a ram with the writing that reads "Cyriace vibas" above it – perhaps an incitement to life addressed to every "man of the Lord" – and again, a lively scene with a fighting cock and tortoise. A.B.

*p. facing*  
**VARIETY OF MOTIFS**  
The floor of what originally was the North Hall of the patriarchal basilica features: a ram with accompanying inscription *Cyriace vibas* and a battle between a cock and a tortoise, a scene symbolizing the victory of orthodoxy – the cock crowing at dawn – over heresy – the tortoise seen as an "animal of Tartarus", ie of the underworld, as its name suggests.

**JONAH'S BIBLICAL STORY**  
Mosaic in the South Hall of the Basilica of Aquileia: surrounded by a sea full of fish, boats, and fishermen, the prophet Jonah is spit out by the sea monster and rests under a pergola after preaching at Nineveh.



# The crypt of frescoes below the altar

“Heroic” images of early Christianity in the crypt commissioned by Patriarch Maxentius to house the martyrs’ relics



**THE ORIGINS**  
The Massentian Crypt (IX c.) of the patriarchal basilica shows scenes depicting the Marcian Legend: Peter sends Mark to Aquileia; Peter’s consecration of Bishop Hermagoras in the presence of Mark; beheading of Hermagoras and of Deacon Fortunatus; burial of Hermagoras and Fortunatus.

The crypt below the main altar in the basilica of Aquileia was commissioned by Patriarch Maxentius in the IX c. to house the relics of the Aquileian martyrs Hermagoras and Fortunatus. Still today it maintains the same function. Two glass showcases display the precious reliquaries containing bone fragments. The decorative frescoes – a unique combination of Eastern and Western Christian art – date back to the second half of the XII c. The lunettes show scenes of redemption while the ceiling is dedicated to the first bishop and his deacon. The Chri-

stian mystery of salvation from death is told by a *dormitio virginis\** as well as by a pictorial cycle of which only the crucifixion, deposition from the Cross, and burial of Jesus remain.

**The fascinating Marcian Legend.** Near the central window begins the most “historical” cycle illustrating the so-called Marcian Legend (derived from Mark the Evangelist’s name - *editor’s note*). It is a story told at the time of “The Three Chapters” schism on the right to the patriarchal title over the church of Aquileia. The truthfulness of the story was never doubted in the Middle Ages to the point where Mark was thought to have written his Gospel here. The frescoes highlight strong ties with Rome.

Peter sends Mark to Aquileia, Mark chooses Hermagoras and takes him to the bi-bishop of Rome for consecration. The new shepherd, Hermagoras, then returns to the city and chooses the Deacon Fortunatus to join him on his mission. Near the central window images of preaching, baptizing, and of charity are shown, following the pattern adopted in the biographies of ancient founders. Fortunatus and Hermagoras are envied for their successful preaching and the two are persecuted for their religion, dragged to court, and thrown into prison. As illustrated with particular realism, their disciples place their bodies into the sepulchre after witnessing their beheading and burial.



## The long and troubled season of the Patriarchate

In the last quarter of the millenium, the Aquileian patriarchs on the mainland had their main seat in Cividale with its spiritual, legal, and missionary functions. First, they attempted to reunify the split Patriarchate, but their efforts failed in spite of the many sentences legitimizing their authority in the divided seat of Grado. From a judicial point of view, the metropolis of Aquileia comprised important dioceses like Como, Mantova, Verona, Vicenza, Padova, Treviso, Trento, Belluno, Feltre, Concordia, Ceneda, Trieste, Capodistria, Parenzo, Pola, Pedena and Emona (Ljubljana). Throughout the Middle Ages it was the biggest diocese in Europe. In addition, Cividale is where missionaries

outpost in Italy. By 1200, Patriarch Bertrand of Udine became the political, religious, and cultural reference point of the Patriarchate. In 1348 an earthquake damaged the basilica which was restored a few decades later in the Gothic style by Patriarch Marquard of Randeck.



## A “SOCIETY” FOR THE BASILICA

**The task of preservation.** The management of a basilica like Aquileia’s requires effort, especially with over 250,000 people visiting it every year. Early in the XX c. the Archbishop of Gorizia, Mons. Francesco Borgia Sedej started a “society”, active until the start of First World War (1915), for the management of the prestigious complex. In 1989 the basilica was provided with a new administrative body currently called “Society for the preservation of the basilica of Aquileia”. In juridical terms it is a foundation whose president is currently Mons. Dino De Antoni, Archbishop of Gorizia who appoints the Director and the Board of Directors; to protect pastoral functions the pro term parish priest is a member of the Board of Director. The society is part of the Fondazione Aquileia. *Arnalda Becci*

## THE CEMETERY OF HEROES

**The Battles of Isonzo.** From the Aquileia bell tower, the fields of First World War battles can be seen. Mount St. Michael, in the province of Gorizia, with the hills and Bainsizza highlands were the scene of the bloody “Isonzo battles” for over two years. Hundreds of thousands of casualties... In 1915, during the first stages of the conflict, Aquileia was won over by the Italians. In October 1917, following the Battle of Caporetto, it returned to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and once again, back to the Kingdom of Italy after the peace treaties.

**The “unknown soldier”.** The picturesque cemetery behind the apse of the patriarchal basilica contains some of the first Italians who fell to the war on the Carst. The cemetery was desecrated during the Austrians’ reoccupation and after 1919 the cemetery was returned to Italy. The bodies of twelve soldiers whose names are unknown are also buried there. Maria Bergamas, a Gradisca d’Isonzo woman who lost her son to the war chose the eleventh soldier to be taken to Rome and buried beneath the *Altare della Patria* (Altar to the Fatherland) in 1921, who was named the “unknown soldier”. *A.B.*



**THE GREAT WAR.** A partial view of the cemetery which lies behind the Basilica of Aquileia where the tombs of Italian soldiers appear. Shown is a statue made by Ettore Ximenes in 1917 featuring the Angel of Charity holding up a dying soldier.

departed from within the limits agreed with the bordering metropolis of Salzburg. New churches will rise, especially among Slavic peoples, thanks to the ancient Aquileian matrix.

The patriarchs at the time were as follows: Paulinus (787-802), a gifted shepherd, assistant to Charles, King of the Franks, and poet of Aquileia; Maxentius who in the IX c. had strong influence on the patriarchal basilica; Frederick who in 921 headed the fight against the invading Huns in Friuli; Wolfgang von Treffen, called Poppo, patriarch from 1019 to 1042, family member and minister of Emperor Conrad II who earned influence on the port and in defence of Aquileia, and promoted the reconstruction of the basilica based on German architectural styles.

In 1077 Emperor Henry IV gave Patriarch Sigard the region as a feudal possession. This was the start of a patriarchal State as an imperial

## THE FATE OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE FRIGIDUS

**Clash between two empires.** In 394, between September 5th and 6th, an important battle was fought 50 km Northeast of Aquileia. The empire was divided into a western part, headed by Flavius Eugenius, supported by the Frankish General Arbogast, and an eastern part, governed by Theodosius I. The two sides’ refusal to reunite led to a war that came to an end near Aidussina, by the spring of Frigidus, present-day Vipacco, which is a tributary of the Isonzo.

**Religious reasons.** Flavius Eugenius and Arbogast leaned towards a return to ancient religions, while Theodosius supported Christianity as the only religion of the empire. The way the decisive battle on the Frigidus developed is quite bizarre. At first, the “westerners”, greater in number and better armed, seemed to triumph. But later, the eastern army’s better organization helped Theodosius’ troops win, thus finally leading Christianity to establish itself throughout the empire. Therefore, Theodosius’ victory at Frigidus is just as meaningful for Christianity as Constantine’s was at the Milvian Bridge. According to Theodosius, divine intervention at the Frigidus favored him: the “easterners’” fate seemed secure, but when a strong wind began to blow, it slowed them down and favored the others while launching arrows against their adversaries. In truth, that wind, called “bora”, often blows along the Frigidus/Vipacco Valley: it is no coincidence that the battle in 394 has been known as “the battle of the bora”.

# The Paleo-Christian museum of Monastero

*A monastery built on the remains of a great basilica which now houses the finds of early Christianity*



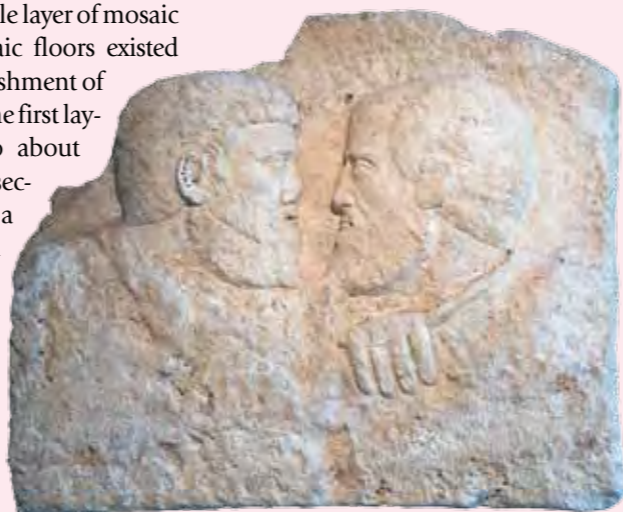
**A BASILICA REDISCOVERED**  
The great hall of Monastero which houses Aquileia's Paleo-Christian museum. The excavations brought to light a basilica that dates back to the IV c. effaced by the Benedictine convent in the IX c.

**PETER AND PAUL**  
Incomplete relief depicting two apostles embracing (IV c.), discovered near Monastero.

A hamlet in Aquileia still bears the name of Monastero recalling the convent of Benedictine nuns, dating back to the IX c. until its suppression by the Austrian emperor Joseph II. The building fell into decay and was then used as a storehouse for agricultural products until the early XX c.

**An ancient basilica comes back to light.** Use of the building as a museum dates back to 1961. Excavations followed leading to the discovery of a large ba-

silica with a double layer of mosaic floors. The mosaic floors existed before the establishment of the monastery. The first layer dates back to about 345 while the second layer about a century later. A panoramic view of the entire basilica hall is possible from atop the two floors built to put the gravestones on display.



**Another rich building of worship.** The first floor houses the mosaic from the basilica's apse. It was previously located in the district of Ca' Tullio, also named "of Beligna" as it is likely to have been built on a temple dedicated to Belenus\*. The scene depicts a garden with twelve lambs grazing and a lovely peacock, perhaps symbolizing Christ surrounded by the apostles. Thus, this is thought to have been the basilica of "the Apostles", built in Aquileia around 390.



**THE MISSING BASILICA**  
Details of the mosaic floor in the apse of the Aquileian basilica called "of Beligna" (end of the IV c.); the peacock symbolizes resurrection and immortality.



**COPTIC EUCHARISTIC TABLE.** The table was recomposed using the fragments found during excavations in a hall not too far from the museum. The table featured twelve cavities. This kind of eucharistic table was widely used in the IV c., especially in Egyptian contexts and in the East where its convivial use was more emphasized than its sacrificial one.



**TESTIMONIES.** Aquileian epigraphs: a gravestone depicting the baptism of a baby girl (IV c.); Restutus's gravestone (likely V c.), the African who died in Aquileia where he found 'more than his own parents'.

**Extraordinary epigraphic finds.** The entrance houses a Coptic table (IV c.) with the twelve apostles' seats, recalling an eastern version of the Last Supper in which its convivial significance prevails over its sacrificial one. On the first floor there is a gravestone with images of baptism (IV c.), covered in Trinitarian and Christological symbols, and an unfinished relief of Peter and Paul exchanging a gesture of reconciliation. The finds on the second floor are about early Christians, with writings and

symbols that worshippers dedicated to their loved ones at death. Very meaningful is the epigraph of *Restutus* who 'came from Africa to learn about this city' and who 'would have liked to return to his home country' but instead was affected by a deadly disease and 'went through great pain as he was not able to see his loved ones'; in Aquileia, however, 'he was much loved, more than his parents had ever loved him'. A.B.  
For information on museum: 0431-91016



## THE LONG CONCLUSION OF A REMARKABLE HISTORY

**Aquileia in Late Antiquity.** In the IV c. Aquileia was a big port city, a crossroads and the seat of the *Venetia et Histria* government. Though its geographical position had favored its expansion, it was also the reason for its demise. In 401 it was invaded by King Alaric and the Visigoths. During the crisis that followed, the city's defensive walls were not able to stop the advancement of people and warlords coming from the East. In 452 the invasion of the Huns and the conquest of Aquileia by Attila left a permanent mark making Attila a symbol of catastrophe in popular Friulian tradition.

**Medieval Aquileia.** After 476 (the end of the western Roman Empire), Aquileia experiences a recovery, at least until 568 when the Lombard King Alboin annexes the city to the Duchy of Friuli, having Cividale as its capital city. After the governing offices were transferred, Aquileia was abandoned at length. Antique structures fell into disrepair and were turned into stone-pits for the construction of new buildings. Invasions from the Avari around 780 shook an already upset city. In the IX c., after joining the Sacred Roman Empire, once again Aquileia came back to life, at least in terms of religious institutions. Thanks to Charlesmagne's and the German emperors' support, Friuli became an outpost in the heart of Europe. In 1077 Henry IV granted independence to what then became "the Friuli State" with Patriarch Sigeward at its head. The temporal power of the patriarchs lasted for three centuries, until 1420, when Aquileia was incorporated in the Republic of Venice.

A.B.



facing  
**TRADITION**  
The Church of St. Mark at Belvedere in Aquileia. According to tradition, the evangelist disembarked here to preach the Gospel.

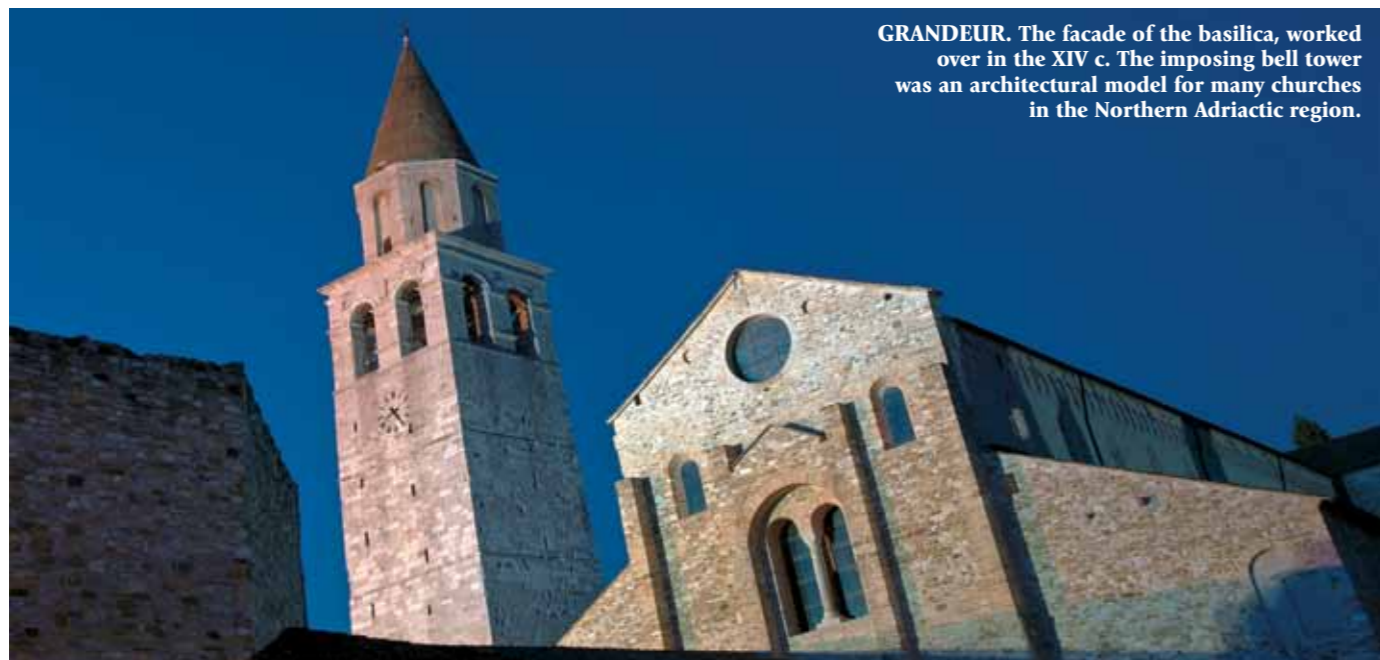
right  
**NATURALISM**  
Detail of the mosaic in the South Hall of the basilica depicting Jonah's story: a big octopus and a shell or sea urchin.

## The patriarchs' temporal power comes to an end

Venice's occupation of Friuli in 1420 signals the end of the patriarchs' temporal power. Though the Patriarchate survives in its pastoral functions and for its worshippers, patriarchs are chosen in faraway Venice. As the Patriarchate is partly located on the territory of the Empire, the Patriarch has difficulty controlling the situation in more distant territories. The matter grows thornier until the seal *Iniuncta nobis* is issued by Benedict XIV on July 6, 1751. This marks the end of the Patriarchate of Aquileia whose legacy goes to the Archdiocese of Gori-



**GRANDEUR.** The facade of the basilica, worked over in the XIV c. The imposing bell tower was an architectural model for many churches in the Northern Adriatic region.



zia (1752) and Udine (1753).

The Church of Aquileia thus becomes the official episcopal seat for non-residential bishops, while the territory of the small, but lively, Friulian town houses a parochial community which preserves 2,000 years of Christian traditions.

Andrea Bellavite

The authors: A. Becci, director of the Society for the preservation of the Basilica of Aquileia; A. Bellavite, professor of Fundamental Theology at the Theological Faculty of Triveneto; E. Gallochio and P. Pensabene, University of Rome "La Sapienza"; A. Persic, professor of Patrology at the Catholic University of Sacred Heart in Milan and at the University of Udine.



## THE AQUILEIA FOUNDATION'S EFFORT

**A complex archaeological reality.** An excavated site, in view for dozens of hectares, here and there, in a sparsely populated area, subject to investigations for a whole century is of considerable importance from a scientific point of view, but not easy to manage – neither for the central government, which is having a hard time administering it, nor for the Town Hall, unwilling to accept it the status quo, nor the regional government, which cannot give up the chance for development.

**A new cultural project for the city.** The Fondazione Aquileia was established to find a solution to the problems above. Competencies and resources from all the actors in play (Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities, the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region, the Province of Udine, the Town Hall of Aquileia) were brought together with the private sector. The Foundation's objectives are many, but in sum Aquileia needs to be relaunched by means of a cultural project. It needs to be provided with structures that can help it grow, not limit its development. It needs to be a city of archaeology, not just a quick getaway destination.

**A patrimony to offer.** The archaeological patrimony needs to be modernized. The right perception of what the ancient Roman center used to be like can only be had by arousing interest through a variety of structural and technological interventions. This cannot happen without involving the local community and getting local institutions' support. The city needs a shared project to exploit its cultural role, but also to create job opportunities, both in maintaining and restoring the site as well as in benefiting from and enjoying it. The area is becoming a giant archaeological site for universities and postgraduate schools. Thanks to the site's half million visitors so far, the tourism industry will identify opportunities to turn an hour-long visit into a better organized and lengthy stay.

Alviano Scarel - President of the Fondazione Aquileia

[www.fondazioneaquileia.it](http://www.fondazioneaquileia.it)

## \*DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

**Belenus.** One of the most ancient Celtic deities. Shining and bright, Belenus protected sheep and livestock.

**Clipeus.** A round shield. In Roman and Medieval Art the term referred to portraits, scenes and inscriptions inside a circle.

**Council of Aquileia.** An assembly of bishops presided by Valerian of Aquileia and led by Ambrose of Milan gathered on September 3, 381 to sentence the last supporters of Arianism in the Roman West.

**Anti-gnostic controversies.** The position of Christian writers against those who proposed a radical distinction between matter, soul, and spirit. An effort in the name of "the Resurrection of the Body" to shun the spiritual view of salvation.

**Creed of Sirmium.** A document that focused in the belief in the relationship between God the Father and the Son of God in the Trinity. Underwritten by Pope Liberius and other bishops in Sirmium (present-day Sremska Mitrovica, near Belgrade) in 358.

**Mystery religions.** Religious beliefs brought from the East by soldiers and Roman merchants. Initiation practices introduced initiates into mysteries that provided a strong sense of belonging. The Belenus and Mithras cults, associated with light and the Sun, were the better known.

**Chalcedonian Definition.** Council of Chalcedon in 451 in the city of Martyr Euphemia which repudiated the notion of a single nature in Christ, and declared that he has two natures in one person and also insisted on the completeness of his two natures: Godhead and manhood.

**Deacon.** 'Servant' in Greek (*diákonos*). In the Christian Church, a member of the clerical order, just below the bishop and presbyter. Their main tasks being to assist in administrative duties and to serve the poor and outcast.

**Tale of the Dormition of the Virgin (Dormitio virginis).** According to the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas, Mary's death was witnessed by the same apostles who saw the rise of Christ with a baby girl in his arms. Some theologians claim the baby girl was the "soul" of the Mother of Jesus while others claim was Creation freed from death.

**Edict of Milan.** Issued in 313 by Constantine establishing religious toleration for Christianity within the Roman Empire.

**Arianism.** A Christian heresy proposed by the priest Arius who lived early in the IV c. in Alexandria in Egypt. Arius's basic premise was that God is unique and that the Son is similar to God but not the same.

## \*DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

Christ the Son came into existence to free humanity from death. Arius' ideas were condemned by the Council of Nicaea (325) and the Council of Constantinople (381), yet they influenced his believers for a long time.

**Photinus.** Bishop of Sirmium in the IV c. whose heresy was regarded with aversion by many anti-Arian synods. Photinus held that Jesus was adopted as "the Son of God" upon his baptism in the Jordan River.

**Gnosticism.** A collection of ancient religions that spread in the Mediterranean area between the I c. BC and the III c. AD. A common characteristic of these groups is the teaching of knowledge (*gnosis*) which man can reach in stages by shunning the material world. The objective of true gnosis is happiness.

**Nicene orthodoxy.** The first Council of Nicaea (325), convened regarding Arius's preachings, established that the Son of God is of the same substance as God the Father. This definition livened the debate which continued in the Council of Constantinople (381) when disagreements were resolved and the Creed was promulgated.

**Ante-Nicene Fathers.** The Church fathers who preached and wrote from the beginning of Christianity down to the Council of Nicaea

(325). They included apostolic fathers (late I c. and early II c.) and those who witnessed the apostles' preachings. In the following period, the writings by Irenaeus of Lyon (130-202) had great influence on the "errors" of the gnostic teachings of the time while those by Origen of Alexandria (185-254) fixed the criteria for the exegesis of the Holy Scriptures.

**Patriarchate.** A diocese founded by any of the apostles or by someone in their circle. Aquileia's Patriarchate started in the VI c. and the Church of Aquileia is claimed to have been founded by Mark the Evangelist.

**Presbyterian.** Meaning 'elderly man' in Greek (*presbyteros*). He who in the early churches presided over the life of early congregations. Second in the rank of holy orders, between the bishop and the deacon.

**Schism of "the three Chapters".** The controversy began when the Church of Aquileia rejected the sentence of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Council of Constantinople (553) which condemned the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyr, and Ibas of Edessa. The three fathers were accused of highlighting the distinction between Christ's human and divine will and nature. The schism ended in 699 when the Church of Aquileia combined with the Church of Rome.

# BACK TO AQUILEIA

## *an ancient town is born*

***First an ancient Roman colony and then a seat of the patriarchy at the northeastern end of the peninsula, Aquileia keeps surprising us thanks to the excavations and valorization projects in process. Here are the extraordinary results of the work in the shadow of the Paleo-Christian basilica***

Texts by Jacopo Bonetto Maurizia De Min Pierluigi Grandinetti Marta Novello Marco Santi  
Alviano Scarel Cristiano Tiussi Giovanni Tortelli Eugenio Vassallo  
Photos by Gianluca Baronchelli  
Translation by Joanne Baldoni

**A**QUILEIA'S REALITY WILL NEVER stop surprising us with exciting discoveries. Thanks to the goodwill of the Fondazione Aquileia, the scientific supervision of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici del Friuli Venezia Giulia, and the involvement of a wide array of universities, in 2010 and 2011 a number of restoration and excavation sites were opened giving way to a major breakthrough towards un-

derstanding and valorizing the patrimony of this extraordinary Roman city. In particular, in the state-owned area called the ex Cossar Estates (named after its previous owner), just up the road from piazza Capitolo dominated by the huge basilica, work has been intensified thanks to the Valorization Project financed by the Fondazione Aquileia. The Project is now in the process of being finalized following the recent closing of the Contest for the Proposal of Ideas.

**RESTORATION.** The inside of the South Hall of Aquileia's Paleo-Christian baptistery during the floor restoration stage. In the background, on the wall, the peacock mosaic (late IV c. - early V c.) coming from the basilica's narthex.



pp. 36-37  
**DOMUS FROM ABOVE**  
 The articulation of the Roman *domus* in the Cossar Area after the 2011 excavation campaigns.

right and facing page  
**THE EXCAVATIONS**  
 Archaeologists at work while excavating the *domus* in the ex Cossar Area. And restorers' drawing before removal of the mosaics.

two photos below  
**THE ANALYSIS**  
 Stages of documentation during excavations of the *domus*. A coin has just been found: a Maxentius *foliis* from the second workshop of Aquileia's Mint, dating back to 307 AD.

## An amazing *domus* in the ex Cossar Area

The excavations under the supervision of the University of Padua and the Soprintendenza Archeologica del Friuli Venezia Giulia, first identified the connection between the large Roman *domus*, in the middle of today's state-owned area, and the ancient road to its east. Along it was a wide strip of land where commercial activities were likely managed by the owner of the luxurious house. The original installation of the house dates back to the I c. AD. Other important evidence arose from the following investigations on the mosaic areas around the main garden of the *domus*, where lavish decorations and waterworks dating back to the same period were uncovered. The more relevant news regarding the studies of this *domus* came with the Fondazione Aquileia's pur-

chase of a plot of land neighboring the state-owned area. This was an opportunity to explore the house all the way up to a second road that bounded the area to the west. Thus, it was later determined that the large Aquileian *domus* stood on an area of over 1,300 square meters and occupied an entire strip of the block between the two roads, one to the east and the other to the west. In the broad western section, excavations led to the identification of intact portions of the Early Middle Ages phase (VI-VIII c.) which had been removed almost entirely during previous excavations with a goal to reach the mosaic floors of the Roman period. This precious evidence helped rebuild, at least to some degree, the sequence of historical events of settlements that followed Attila's siege in 452. Further excavations are expected to take place in every section of the *domus* with a goal to create a plan of the building to support the

valorization and reconstruction projects. Meanwhile, cement platforms created in the 1960's have been removed from the ancient ruins so the mosaics covering them can be displayed on site. The platforms have proven to be inappropriate for the modern preservation and fruition of the remains. The main objective of the project is to cover the area of the *domus* and integrate evidence of the initial installation stage of the house (I c. AD) together with traces of its transformations over the III-IV c. In addition to the above, a second investigation process has recently begun in the southeastern corner of the state-owned ex Cossar Area to uncover the remains of the city walls from the Roman Republican Age (II c. BC). The defensive tower of the same period was roughly identified during former excavations in 1930.

Jacopo Bonetto



### PROJECT IDEA FOR THE COSSAR AREA

**The archaeological area of the *domus*.** Archaeology, architecture, landscape, preservation, valorization, and making known are all topics we have acknowledged as key in the Fondazione Aquileia's Contest for the Proposal of Ideas in the ex Cossar Area, as well as in our winning project. We set up a series of standards capable of: guaranteeing the preservation of the ruins; acknowledging them as living testimony of a distant past; guaranteeing accessibility to and fruition of the area. We are well aware of the complex stratification of the area's signs and features as well as their connection with nature. Additionally, we have outlined a hypothesis that links with the new results in archaeological research.

**An articulate system of itineraries.** The project envisions a system of itineraries that connect the Basilica with the Violin Barn complex

which will be transformed into a visitors' center. From here it continues along the "valley" of the archaeological area of the *domus* (ex Cossar Area) which has been appropriately reorganized and valorized to highlight its character as a Roman block of houses. Here stand the "della Pesca" *domus*, recreated in its constituent elements in the form of a museum with a system of footpaths and roofing, and the "Domus system", replicable in similar sites. Access to the *domus* area is also possible from the defensive tower and the Republican walls, which have been recreated observing "green architecture" building criteria, by means of the present day Cervignano-Grado bike trail. Sloping grassy areas and plant species from the Roman age enhance the area. By valorizing its historical symbols, the site acquires a new identity.

Maurizio De Min Periluigi Grandinetti Eugenio Vassallo





right and below right  
**POLYCHROMATIC FLOOR**

View from the top of the apsed hall uncovered in the Violin Barn area in Aquileia. A magnificent polychromatic floor features fish, branches in bloom, baskets and vessels containing fruit. The original mosaics in the apse recall hanging drapes with elegantly shaded folds (early IV c.). Below, the apsed hall near piazza Capitolo upon being discovered.



below  
**AT WORK**  
Archaeologists and restorers working on the mosaic from the apsed hall brought back to light in the Violin Barn complex.



*The Violin Barn area:  
the mosaics under the ruins*

In a multi-layered archaeological area such as Aquileia's, urban excavations will always lead to surprises. Even more so when the area in question is only a few steps away from the basilica complex and its imposing Romanic bell tower. Within the Project for the requalification of the area between the archaeological sites of the Pasqualis and the ex Cossar Estates, a small green public area called Violin Barn, on the north end of Capitolo Square (opposite the basilica) was investigated. Two construction stages were identified under the modern and medieval levels. The most recent stage (late IV c.-early V c.) featured a badly preserved mosaic surface similar in size to the complex that had already been brought to light fifty years earlier by the archaeologist Luisa Bertacchi. It was determined to be a part of Aquileia's bishop's residence. To the west, this Late Antiquity complex was bounded by a wall – entirely removed and utilized as construction material – beyond which there was

a paved outdoor space. To build this episcopal complex, a former building of the early IV c. had been demolished. Fortunately, the mosaic floor was spared. Thus, most of the large hall with the semicircular apse was brought to light. The mosaics, protected by debris derived from the demolitions, show their ancient splendor. Beside the mosaics are the remains of the frescoed plasters – recovered from the floor – which provide a comprehensive view of the hall's decorative system. What was the function of the building that contained this hall? We have formulated two hypotheses: it might have been the private residence of a wealthy owner, perhaps attracted by its vicinity to the first basilical complex of the same period, or the hall might have been part of rooms connected with the early-Christian religious complex of Aquileia, commissioned by Bishop Theodore in the years following the Edict of Constantine (313). Though both hypotheses are fascinating, an overall analysis of the structures and remains shall provide the answer.

Cristiano Tiussi

facing page and on this page  
**MAGNIFICENT MOSAICS**

Details of the mosaics in the apsed hall constructed with precious marble tesserae in different colors similar to those of the floor in the nearby Theodorian Basilica. The mosaics feature fish and shells, *khantaros*, a cup full of fruit and a pheasant.



**THE MOSAICS IN THE VIOLIN BARN (STALLA VIOLIN)**

**Bishop Theodore's times.** The IV c. mosaic floor brought to light in Aquileia in the Violin Barn area is closely linked to the magnificent mosaic in the nearby Paleo-Christian basilica complex commissioned by Bishop Theodore at the start of the IV c. They date to the same period and also most likely shared the same workforce.

**Repertoire of the times.** The quadrangular space in the hall is divided into three wide areas juxtaposed by geometrical lines and decorated with widely spread motifs from the repertoire of the time which include birds, grapes, pots full of fruit, branches in bloom or full of fruits, fish, an octopus, a ray and two shells.

**Painted walls of the apse.** The decorations on the apse were appealing. After falling off the apse and onto the mosaic floor, what remains today are segments with decorations on a red background and adorned with vine branches. The multi-colored and linear decorations within featured a motif that was very popular in the IV c., especially in the mosaics found in North Africa. The motif featured hanging drapes, once used to decorate apse basins, in combination with an open valve having curvy edges which in the Aquileian version is rounded in the middle to evoke the image of a bird's head.



on the two pages  
**SOUTH HALL**  
 Partial and total views of the South Hall of Aquileia's Paleo-Christian baptistery at the end of the recent musealization process. →

## Mosaics in the South Hall of the baptistery

Having the mosaics on display in the South Hall (Südhalle) of the baptistery crowns a long season of research and studies which began at the end of the XIX c. It all

began thanks to the Austrian Count Karl von Lanckoronski who brought to light the sophisticated mosaic floors in the series of halls used for liturgical services around the baptistery. Their construction can be included in the long transformation process of the Theodorian basilica complex in which Bishop Chromatius's (388-

408 AD) role was fundamental. All such interventions led to the gradual building of two large basilicas having three naves preceded by a long narthex (the space reserved to catechumens and penitents) and a four-sided portico. The mosaic in the South Hall of the baptistery is divided into three rectangular sections which can be seen

inside the new protective structure. Its decorations recall Aquileia's widely witnessed motifs from between the late IV c. and early V c. The decorations of the basilica in Monastery and the bishop's residence feature similar motifs. The geometrical lines in hues of red and gray are embellished in the central panel → p. 44

→ In particular, an octagonal mosaic floor featuring a sheep and the big hall housing the sarcophagi as well as the peacock mosaic from the basilical narthex.

### THE SOUTH HALL OF THE BAPTISTERY

**Restoration and valorization.** In 2003 the International Contest for the organization of the areas surrounding the Basilica Complex and for the musealization of the South Hall of Aquileia's Baptistery was won by Tortelli Frassoni Architects & Associates. It gave way to an important project which favored a beneficial synergy between archaeology and architecture. The project's main thread is based on the best regard of the archaeological remains.

**Ancient plans.** On the surface of the pedestrian piazza Capitolò floor, the white stone outlines the perimeter of the large post-Theodorian four-sided portico (constructed after the basilica's original building commissioned by Bishop Theodore in the early IV c. - *editor's note*), the North Hall of the baptistery (Nordhalle, as it was named after the first excavation campaign in the late XIX c.) and the basilical narthex. Similarly, a plan of the granaries (*horrea*) on Patriarchs Square, evidence of which existed above ground until the XVIII c., can be identified on the surface, seemingly in control of the empty space south of the basilica.

**Archaeology and urban context.** The link between archaeological preservation and urban context has been much more intricate for the South Hall of the Baptistery (or Südhalle by Lanckoronski) – commissioned by Bishop Chromatius (388-408) – due to its short distance from the basilica complex and to its strong image. A

structure has been created for the preservation and fruition of what remains of its IV c. floor. The appearance of the structure and the methodological approach adopted to build it are expressive of our times: the outside was built with traditional construction materials (bricks and Muggia sandstone bound with lime mortar); inside, more peculiar materials were used (such as powder-coated metal) to cover the walls and ceiling in order to make the geometrical spaces less noticeable and to draw attention to the mosaic remains instead.

**Invitation to the South Hall.** Access to the South Hall is through one of the original openings of the baptistery which had been walled in the XIX c. Visitors may view the mosaic remains from an elevated platform made of iron and split stone. From the platform visitors will rule over the entire surface of the hall. Also, through a big glass wall visitors will have a view of the portico and the facade of the basilica. Inside, on the Western wall, appears the amazing "peacock" mosaic created during Chromatius's era in the apse of the narthex. Lastly, the scientific and museographic organization features a few recycled, inscribed and reworked Christian sarcophagi on display on top of gray sandstone platforms. The sarcophagi are likely to pertain to the basilica area as they date back to the same period.

Giovanni Tortelli



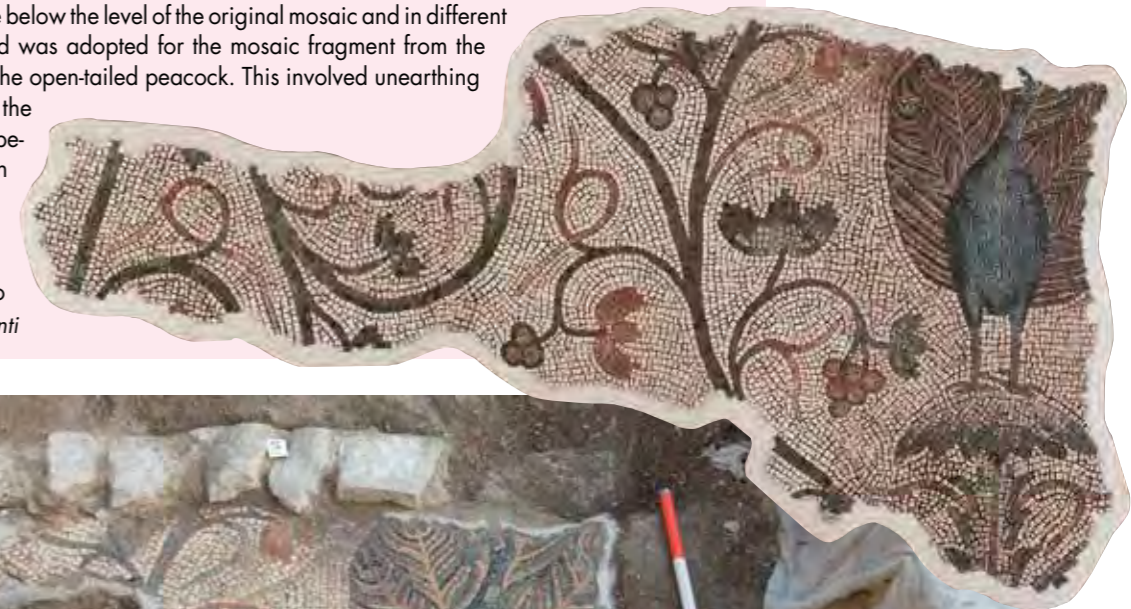


## RESTORING MOSAIC FLOORS

**Valuable finds of the early XX c.** Restoring the mosaics in the South Hall (*Südhalle*) of Aquileia's baptistry first involved understanding the documents published by the scholar Karl von Lanckoronski in 1906. By comparing XX c. blueprints with the situation today, it is clear that parts of the mosaics have been lost. The delicate work, assigned to the experts of the Gruppo Mosaicisti di Ravenna and supervised by the project architects and the Soprintendenza Archeologica del Friuli Venezia Giulia, was performed keeping in mind the opportunity to recreate the original mosaic decorations referring back to the drawings available from the last century.

**Accurate underlevel interventions.** Many original tesserae have been recovered in excavations performed in the year 2000. A study of the tesserae has confirmed that only local stone (*aurisina*, *granitello*, *nero del vallone*) and clay (brick fragments) with red and yellow hues were used. Thanks to the Austrian drawings, some of the decorative geometrical elements in the central area of the floor mosaic as well as the edging featuring flowered ornamental acanthus leaves have been recreated. However, small sections of the complex geometrical designs were missing and have been replaced. Another important project involved unearthing fragments of mosaic installed on supporting bases of cement which had been removed to create channels for the draining of water from the basilica complex. Some fragments were found on site but out of place while others were preserved in the warehouses.

**Filling the gaps.** Lastly, gaps in the mosaic floor were filled, especially in the western area of the site, by reproducing the main geometrical lines into which the three sections of the floor were divided. For teaching purposes this was done below the level of the original mosaic and in different hues of color. The same method was adopted for the mosaic fragment from the narthex featuring the image of the open-tailed peacock. This involved unearthing the fragment on site, removing the supporting cement base from beneath the fragment recovered in XIX c., placing the latter on honeycomb panels and completing the original composition following the drawings dating back to the early XX c. Marco Santi



facing page  
**MOSAICISTS TODAY**  
Restoration  
of the mosaic floor  
in the South Hall  
of the baptistry  
(late IV c.-early V c.).

two photos below  
**INCORRUPTIBLE**  
The peacock mosaic  
(late IV c.-early V c.)  
during excavations and  
extraction from the  
narthex of Aquileia's  
basilica. The peacock  
mosaic after restoration.  
For Christians,  
peacocks symbolized  
resurrection for the  
cyclical regeneration  
of their feathers  
in spring and for their  
incorruptible meat.

**THE PROJECT**  
Rendering of the  
"domus system",  
i.e. part of the project  
which won the →

→ with figurative elements like images of sheep and metal vessels full of fruit; on the contrary, the eastern section, edged with a refined shoot in bloom, features a variety of geometrical

designs and plants articulating the composition. On display inside the structure is also a precious mosaic fragment belonging the narthex floor. Surrounded by a composition of vine

twigs, the fragment features a peacock with open feathers on a tuft of acanthus created with polychrome glass paste or sometimes golden tesserae. The meaning of the image of the peacock in

the basilical complex is symbolic. In pre-Christian times it was widely used as being auspicious in meaning. Peacocks evoked concepts of immortality because of the cyclical regeneration of their feathers in spring and because of the legend told by St. Augustine on its non-corruptible meat. Thus, the image of the peacock became a symbol of resurrection among Christians.

Marta Novello

→ **Competition of Ideas for the valorization of the ex Cossar Area.**



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center  
**INAUGURATION**  
Inside the South Hall during the recent inauguration ceremony with the participation of Friulian bishops and members of the diocese which once belonged to Aquileia's Patriarcate.

### AQUILEIA'S LONG HISTORY

**From village huts to a Roman colony.** Around the IX c. BC, on the marshlands that lay along the ancient Natisone and Isonzo Rivers, grew a village with huts made of wood, hay and clay. Between 186 and 183 BC, a series of invasions from Celtic populations from beyond the Julian and Carnic Alps determined Rome's intervention to support Aquileia. Therefore, as narrated by Titus Livius in 181 BC a Roman colony was established as a military district and merchant hub on an area bordering with both the Roman world and the Balkan-Danubian universe. The colony had 3,000 foot soldiers (1,500 more joined in 169 BC) and an unspecified number of centurions and knights.

**Extraordinary urban development.** The city was connected to the Italian peninsula by means of the Postumia Way (148 BC) and the Annia Way (153-128 BC), to the transalpine regions through mountain passes, and to the Marano Lagoon and the Adriatic Sea by means of the man-made Anfora Canal. Thus, in the I c. BC

Aquileia became the main hub for transporting goods between the Mediterranean area and continental Europe. As such, it gained great importance and wealth that shows in its public and private buildings. Situated along the left bank of the Natisone and Torre Rivers, Aquileia was surrounded by imposing city walls made of stone and bricks. The city was divided into a grid of roads and had a porticoed square, 400 meters of piers and many religious, merchant and manufacturing buildings. Lavish houses with amazing mosaic floors stood everywhere.

**Famous for its walls and port.** After centuries of productive urban life (I c. BC-II c. AD) and following visits by Julius Caesar and Octavian Augustus, the city was met by usurpers and invaders from the East. Worth remembering is Maximinus Thrax's siege in 238, warded off by the Aquileians, or Julian the Apostate's in 361, crippled by the defensive walls that had been built a few decades earlier. The difficult climate, however, did not stop Aquileia from rising again in the IV c. It was made capital of Venice and Istria (*Venetia et Histria*) following the reforms passed by Diocletian who doubled the number of provinces and on several occasions became the seat of the imperial residence. To poet Ausonius's (about 310-395) eyes, Aquileia appeared as one of the biggest cities in the Mediterranean: "*moenibus et portu celeberrima*".

**Attila's sacking.** The introduction of freedom of religion, which stopped the persecution of Christians, gave a boost to urban development. At the start of the IV c., great works such as piazza Capitolino and the basilica were commissioned by Bishop Theodore. However, after 600 years of peace, on July 18, 452, Aquileia was sacked and conquered by Attila and the Huns. This led to heavy consequences on the city's architectural and socio-economic growth. Life in the city went on, but the event, often described as a legend, marked a turning point in Aquileia's historical and urban growth.

**THE POPE'S VISIT.** View of piazza Capitolino on May 7, 2011 when Pope Benedict XVI visited Aquileia.



### THE FONDAZIONE AQUILEIA FOR ITS CITIZENS

**Lessons of culture.** The most efficient way to preserve a cultural patrimony is to share the knowledge of the archaeological site by making it accessible to all citizens and educating the youth in culture. Being aware of this, in addition to its valorization projects the Fondazione Aquileia organizes events to promote knowledge of the ancient city. In partnerships with other important cultural institutions, the events target a variety of users ranging from adults with a passion for archaeology to children and their families by involving them in multi-disciplinary activities.

**For the young and old.** The most popular event is the *Aquileia Film Festival*, organized in cooperation with *Archeologia Viva* and Rovereto's International Archaeological Film Festival (*Rassegna internazionale del cinema archeologico di Rovereto*). On July 27-29 a selection of international documentary films on the topics of archae-

ological, historical and paleontological research will be shown in the ancient Roman city which has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site. In the evenings, discussions with writers, scholars and archaeologists will offer an opportunity to deepen one's knowledge on such topics. For children aged 3-10, *Aquileia's Lab* in conjunction with the Science Center '*Immaginario Scientifico*' will continue with their calendar of events with recreational and didactic activities based on the life of the ancient Romans. Kneading "ancient" bread, painting with natural colors, playing with Astragaloi (Knucklebones) or dressing up as Jupiter or Venus are ways of learning more about the origins and understanding of what life was like in Aquileia at the time of its establishment, back in 181 BC.

Alviano Scarel - President of the Fondazione Aquileia

For more information: [www.fondazioneaquileia.it](http://www.fondazioneaquileia.it)



**AQUILEIA.** The great Paleo-Christian Basilica with its bell tower, the Baptistery, and the South Hall.



# AQUILEIA and FRIULI

## THE DAYS OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PRINCE

*In the Middle Ages the emperor granted the Patriarch of Aquileia temporal power over Friuli and Istria  
A new historical phase had begun for one of the most prestigious seats of early Christianity*

Texts by Donata Degrassi Photos by Gianluca Baronchelli Translation by Joanne Baldoni



THE ITALIAN MIDDLE AGES

SCENES FROM THE MIDDLE AGES. Bertrand of Saint-Geniès, Patriarch of Aquileia, who died in 1350 and was canonized shortly afterward, hands out bread and drinks to the locals. There are various pilgrims present identified by staffs, flowing capes, wide brimmed hats with the symbols of their pilgrimage destination pinned on them:

Greek crosses recalling Jerusalem; shells from St. James of Compostella; Latin crosses in Rome; the figure of the bishop St. Nicolas of Bari. Table of early XV c. Worth noting is a person holding "a pilgrims flask" and a rudimentary means of transport for an invalid. (Udine, Duomo Museum)

p. facing below  
**POVERTY**  
 A widow offers food to St. Biagio, who had liberated a piglet from the clutches of a wolf. Pig farms were widespread in Friuli in the Medieval age. Animals similar to wild boars graze in the woods. As can be seen in the fresco in order to recognize domestic pigs their backs were shaved. (Cividale, St. Biagio)

**A THOUSAND YEARS AGO**  
 The basilica in Aquileia showing the imposing bell tower commissioned at the time of Patriarch Poppono who also carried out the renovation of the church (1031). The present day landscape has hardly changed since medieval times.

**I**N 1077 HENRY IV GRANTED HIS loyal chancellor, patriarch Sigehard of Aquileia – who supported him in the Canossa issue (when the emperor risked losing his throne after being excommunicated by Pope Gregory VII in the investiture controversy) – temporal power over the vast territory which made up the county (*comitatus*) of Friuli and, a few months later, of Istria as well. By doing so, the head of the Holy Roman Empire availed himself of someone he trusted to administer and safeguard in his name the territories south of the Alps – one of the main areas of access to the Italian peninsula. For nearly two centuries the cathedra saw patriarchs from the imperial *entourage* come and go. They came from aristocratic families who had many interests in or feudally governed areas of Istria, Carniola (present-day Slovenia), Carinthia and Stiria. Friuli had a network of institutional, economic, and cultural relations with neighboring towns on both sides of the Alps.

This is the area where many groups of knights (*militēs*) who settled in Friuli came from. Together with local families they formed aristocracies which established close bonds of feudal nature with the patriarchs. In exchange

for their military service and loyalty, the bishops of Aquileia gave them land. Over time the groups of noble stock purchased land and built castles on their property. They often created their own areas of control and drafted policies to develop and promote their power, to the detriment of their neighbors and of the patriarchs themselves. Their wealth and power laid in their land. The territories they owned were vast and spread throughout the whole region, including the mountains. Their vast lands yielded a variety of products depending on the climatic and morphological characteristics of the land.

The region is not particularly fertile. Most of Friuli is mountainous and not appropriate for cultivation, thus explaining why livestock breeding prevailed. In the plains, fertile areas were limited due to vast areas of gravel and marshland in the center region and to the north. Along the coast during the Middle Ages, thick forests could be found. Land ownership consisted mostly of large, self-sufficient farms located in different areas around a village (*villa*). The village people were directly responsible for the farmland. The family heads of the village community (*vicinia*) determined what crops were to be rotated (normally grains) on

**FOR THE PATRIARCH.** In this drawing of *Sermones Catholici* (XIII c.) Raimondo della Torre (Patriarch of Aquileia from 1273 to 1299), sitting on an elaborate *faldistorium* (folding chair), receives two geese from a certain «Martinus» defined as an «amicus vini», 'drinking friend'. Martino says in dialect «Toite queste oche» (Take these geese) to which Raimondo replies «Bene es ocha» (One goose is enough). A crane is perched on the palace with battlements, the patriarch's residence. (Udine, Public Library)

the *tavella* (the strip of cultivatable land surrounding the residential areas), when the livestock should graze, and how to exploit common property (*comugne*) like the woods and pastures, i.e. either collectively or by distributing among the families. The land exploited collectively did not include the fenced off plots (vegetable gardens, *baiarzi*-barnyards, *braide*). These areas were used for the production of vegetables, legumes, and wine. A wide variety of grains were cultivated on the arable land. Among the bread grains cultivated were rye and wheat, the food product which was most valuable and in demand. Other grains that were cultivated included: oat, millet, sorghum, *setaria italica*, barley, spelt and legumes like fava beans which were short-cycle plants cultivated in abundance to make soups and mush.



**POPPO AND THE BASILICA**

A detail of the fresco on the apse vault of the basilica in Aquileia (first half of the XI c.) with the saints Hilarius, Tatianus and Mark. In smaller dimensions figures of the Patriarch Poppo (with a square nimbus used for the living), offering the Virgin a model of the basilica. Another important person is present thought to be the Duke of Carinthia.



**THE MINT AND THE COINS IN AQUILEIA**

**Patriarchs and their money making rights.**

The Patriarchs in Aquileia exercised money making rights and produced coinage for the region they dominated which was common practice in the Medieval age. Furthermore, coins from other signories also circulated most notably issued by the Venetians, Tergestines (from Trieste) and the Friesachs. The latter category had particular importance.

In Friesach (a district in Carinthia) substantial veins of silver were discovered; as a consequence, in 1130 a mint was established enabling the precious metal extracted to enter into circulation.

**Initially the coinage was good.** Until the first decades of the 1300's, the coins produced in Aquileia conformed to those minted by the Friesachs, weighing just over a gram

with a diameter of circa 20 millimeters. On the upper face of the coins appeared the seated Patriarch while on the other side of the coin appeared an image of a temple with two towers or an eagle. Initially the value was very high at 900 thousandths and continued to remain high (at 830 thousandths) for most of the 1300's, until it rapidly fell and lost value. At the beginning of the 1400's both the weight and the quantity of metal had halved. The currency of Aquileia had become bad money.

**The Mint.** The Mint was located in Aquileia, in a street recorded as "Androna della moneta" (the money road) in the quarter of St. Andrew. Towards the 1330's, when the patriarchal residence was established in Udine, the Mint was transferred to the same town. Those in charge of the Mint were often experts from Tuscany.

**The nest-egg regained.** Of particular interest was the discovery (1969) of the treasure trove of as many as 367 coins, unearthed near the patriarchal city walls of Aquileia. The coins had been kept in a sort of 'pod' in the shape of a folded metal leaf. There were 13 large coins made by the Venetians, 38 coins from Trieste and 316 coins from Aquileia itself, corresponding to issues dated from the last decade of the XII century or a little later in the century. The excellent state of the conservation meant that it was not only possible to make accurate measurements of weight, size and material but also to calculate on the basis of the number of used coins the total amount of the coinage produced by the Patriarchal Mint in that period.



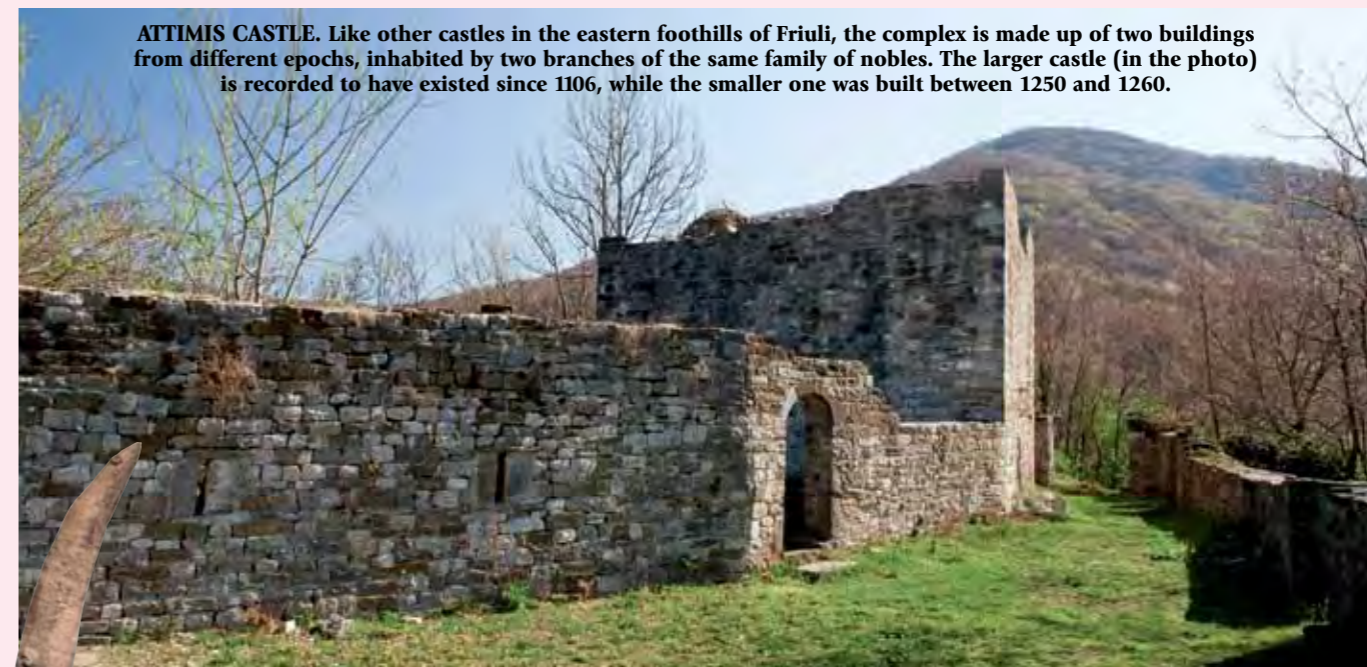
**COINS FROM AQUILEIA.** Treasure trove with Aquileian, Venetian and Triestine coins found in Aquileia in 1969. The coins were inside a metal purse shaped like a pod made from a metal leaf. Inscribed on the obverse of the silver Aquileian coins (early XIII c.) were the seated Patriarch, a cross in his right hand and a book in his left with legend *VOLGER P(atriarcha)*, while on the reverse the inscription *CIVITAS AQUILEGIA*. (Aquileia, Archaeological Museum)

**CASTLES AND THEIR INHABITANTS IN FRIULI**

**The power of a family.** In the last centuries of the Medieval age the castle was not only used as a fortress for military purposes or merely the dwelling place for the nobility. Beyond these roles the castle was the most obvious symbol of domain giving its name to the family who lived in. The castle constituted the main element of their identity both for the successive generations that were born and the various branches into which a family subdivided. It could also

**Defense of the territory.** It could hardly be said that life in the castles of Friuli was full of the pomp and splendor that we are led to believe about such places. Throughout the XII century and for most of the following one, castles were mainly built for military demands and not for residential reasons: they were built with thick walls mostly made of stone with few openings which were always narrow in the form of a squat tower (mastio), inside which the interior spaces were often undifferentiated.

**ATTIMIS CASTLE.** Like other castles in the eastern foothills of Friuli, the complex is made up of two buildings from different epochs, inhabited by two branches of the same family of nobles. The larger castle (in the photo) is recorded to have existed since 1106, while the smaller one was built between 1250 and 1260.



be said that the castle served the function of a type of 'safe' for the wealth of the bloodline as products from the land, properties and feudal rights would be amassed in the cellars and store rooms gathered by the farmers like symbolic leases or rent money.

**The "voice" of the inhabitants of the castles.** The castle was a status symbol which distinguished its inhabitants on a social and political level. The "castellans" were the members of the lineage of feudal land lords who carried out noble service for the patriarchs (fighting wars as knights) and who had "a voice" (fulfilling the role of representation and the power to vote) in Parliament of the "Patria del Friuli", where they were the most numerous and influential group.

**BERDICA.** A sort of large axe used for fighting (mounted on a staff) from the XIII c., found at the castle at Motta (in the district of Povoletto - Udine), widely used in Eastern Europe. (Attimis, Museum of Medieval Archaeology)

**CASTLE INTERIOR.** Model of a castle between the late XI and early XIII c., with the keep which doubles up as both residence and fortress. The tower is subdivided by a wooden gallery; for safety reasons the entrance can be found on the first floor accessed by stairs in an emergency. A chapel and out-buildings used as stables for the horses and an oven as well as store rooms, warehouses and servants quarters can be seen inside a fenced-off area. (Attimis, Archaeological Museum)





## Medieval Aquileia: light and shadow

*Aquileia was surrounded by a city wall situated by a fork in the Natissa River while the other fork flowed towards the city...*

**A** vanished city? It is certainly not an easy task to know how to present Aquileia in the Medieval age, and definitely more difficult than in the Roman period, not only because of the excavations and operations of valorization which favorably influenced the testimonies of a more distant and more splendid epoch, but also due to the fact that the best part of the medieval city was burned to the ground in 1703 by French sailors who came up the Natissa. In the medieval period Aquileia was surrounded by a city wall, nestling by a fork in the well known river, while another fork

flowed towards the city. There was a vast space free of buildings within the city walls which was used for cultivation.

**Two jurisdictions.** The medieval city was divided into halves by a road which connected the gate to the north (*Utina* gate or *Omnium sanctorum*) to the one towards the south (Beligna gate). One of the particularities of Aquileia was the fact that this median line also served as marking the boundary dividing two different jurisdictions: one in the east, named *Pala Crucis*, characterized by the presence of the canons of the Chapter (Ca-

pitolo), while the one in the west pertained to the authority of the town council. This dichotomy inevitably reflected the functional reality, an ecclesiastical pole on one hand, a civil and economic one on the other.

**The Grand Patriarchal palace.** The massive basilica was located in the eastern part of the city where the sacred buildings were connected with the Chapter Lodge while the residence for the canons was located nearby. The patriarchal palace was situated south of the basilica, an imposing building of 90 meters by 66, articulated from one end to

### AQUILEIA IN 1693

In the late XVII c. the city still appeared much as it had in the Medieval age of the patriarchs. The walls are surrounded by the Natissa River and by a canal forking from the same river. The remains of the basilical complex with the ancient patriarchal palace can be noted with the sea of Grado in the background.



quarters of the civil magistrates, also gave onto the square which had been completed in 1322 substituting the previous building. Rising above a portico some of the most prestigious professionals in Aquileia had their offices here. There used to be a fish market (*piscaria*) in the south of the square, next to the bridge which crossed the Natissa.

**Outside the city walls.** Outside the city walls stood the Benedictine monastery of Santa Maria for nuns was, the Chapter of St. Stefano and the Benedictine Abbey of Beligna. Structures designed to host and recover both pilgrims and the sick (*xenodochio*) were built nearby and as a matter of necessity were isolated, including the leper colony of San Lazzaro.

**left and below RESIDENCE**  
The remains of the great Patriarchal Palace (XI c.) in Aquileia. Converted from granaries (*horrea*) in the period of Late Antiquity, as can be seen in the photo of the excavation site. The column with many more similar columns supported the ceiling of a great hypostyle hall located on the ground floor. There would have been at least another floor. As can be seen from the plan of 1693, the palace was crowned by battlements.

the other by archs supported by pilasters and crowned by battlements. Built in the period of Late Antiquity, probably at the end of the III c., for quite a different purpose: that of a granary (*horreum*) where the reserves of grains for the city were kept. On being restored and readapted it functioned as the patriarchal residence until the end of the 1300's, then was abandoned and fell into decay (already documented in the XVI century). Here stood the *canipa*, i.e. warehouses and cellars

where the cultivated products ready for the Patriarch's table were conserved. Today there are only two columns remaining of the building which along with many others had supported the rooms located on the ground floor.

**The civil sector.** The west part of the city was centered around the *forum*, the square par excellence, lined by the workshops or small shops (*stationes*) running their commercial activity. The Commune palace, head-



**PILGRIMS**  
Three pilgrims with staffs strengthened with strips of leather or metal and fur cloaks, behind a man who is proffering a cylindrical container, interpreted as a relic, and a notable person sitting on a *faldistorium* (a type of folding chair also used by bishops when preaching their sermons). The scene is a part of the fresco in Velario (late XII c.) in the crypt of the basilica in Aquileia.

below  
**BENEFICES**  
 A scroll dated 1031, July 13<sup>th</sup> in Aquileia. Patriarch Poppo, during the consecration of the basilica reconstructed by him, established that the fifty priests in this office were the ones to whom benefices were bestowed in the form of land located in the region of the lowlands of Friuli, as well as thirty *staciones* (shops and ware houses) in the square in Aquileia and a further twenty in the port of Piro (present-day Monastier in the Province of Treviso). (Udine, Capitular Archives)

*A land of busy traffic between the Adriatic and the countries beyond the Alps*

Another important resource was the movement of goods and people across the area, from beyond the Alps to the Adriatic shores. Because the two areas differed so much in climate and geography, they were a source of a wide variety of products that complemented each other. From beyond the Alps came precious metals, useful minerals (iron, copper, tin), animal fur, hide and leather. From the Adriatic came wine, grains, oil, dried fruit, dried and salted fish. The growth of Venice as an emporium for the purchase of luxury goods from the East was indeed an added bonus.

As early as the IX-X c., there were three border checkpoints that seemed to have existed where duties were levied on the goods in transit. The checkpoints were in San Pietro di Zuglio, on the way from the mountain pass of



**KNIGHT.** The "liftable" visor of the knight known as Knight of Soffumbergo (late XIV c.). Together with other pieces of armor found in the excavation sites of the Friulian castle of Soffumbergo the visor was used in order to reconstruct the hypothetical appearance of a man in heavy armor at the end of the 1300's. (Attimis, Museum of Medieval Archaeology)

Monte Croce Carnico, in Cividale, along the road from the mountain pass of Predil which ran along the Isonzo and Natisone valleys, and lastly in Aquileia where its river port was the terminal point for products coming from the Mediterranean and continuing to the continent. The city's flourishing economy based on commercial exchanges is also witnessed by the official document dated July 13, 1031 with which Patriarch Poppo granted 50 priests, who had been called upon to officiate on occasion of the consecration of Aquileia's Basilica, the earnings of 30 shops (*staciones*) on the square in Aquileia.

In the centuries that followed the year 1000, traffic grew increasingly. In the XII and especially in the XIII c. new urban centers took over the ancient checkpoints and became hubs for the passage and exchange of incoming and outgoing goods. Among the roads that led beyond the Alps, the one that crossed the valley of the Fella Creek (a tributary of the Taglia-

mento River) and the mountain pass of Camporosso (Tarvisio) took to Villach in Carinthia. Levies were moved to Gemona, a bit further downstream from where the Fella Road met with the one coming from the Monte Croce mountain pass. The city of Gemona had succeeded in becoming the place where means of transportation were changed in order to face the more challenging mountainous routes. It also became a lively market to exchange goods. Thus, the importance of the *terra* (the urban center with the defensive walls) waned. With regards to Aquileia's river and maritime ports, other cities with similar facilities developed and took over, both on the coast and inland: Monfalcone, Marano, Latisana, Portogruaro and even Sacile and Pordenone. Such proliferation was due to the presence of a number of lords who promoted the towns where they lived as port terminals. This led to them making substantial earnings from the excise duties and tolls they charged.

below  
**MILITES IN FRIULI**  
 A group of knights in heavy armor (*milites*) in a scene taken from the story of St. Biagio depicted in the frescoes (XIV c.) in the vaults of the church of St. Peter and St. Biagio in Cividale in Friuli. The heavy cavalry constituted the nucleus of the medieval army and in the patriarchate of Aquileia was made up of castle owners. Regarding the armor this depiction can be compared to the samples found pertaining to the knight known as the "Knight of Soffumbergo".



## AQUILEIA PILGRIMAGE DESTINATION

**This aspect plays an important role.** Many pilgrims headed for Aquileia at the beginning of the first affirmation of Christianity and subsequently throughout the first Medieval age to honor the relics and the martyrs which were held there but also to recognize the role of the original Church from which Christianity had spread inland. This function strengthened during VIII-IX c., when the city became a reference point for the evangelization of the still Pagan population who were settled in Carantania (region in the eastern Alps), Pannonia and Moravia.



Compostella and in Italy, Loreto and Assisi, apart from St. Michael al Gargano visited with great assiduity in the Longobard period. Thus, Aquileia was no longer considered the final goal of a devotional journey nor the main center of religious reference in the area of the north Adriatic, although it did remain a place to be visited with veneration even when just on the way to visiting other destinations. The signatures and the prayers scratched on the walls by the pilgrims of the crypt in the so called Church 'of the Pagans' convey a deep sense of faith.

**Calling of St. Sepulchre.** Apart from the antique relics the patriarchal Basilica offers as a calling the model of St. Sepulchre (or better known as the aedicule of *Anastasis*, in other words of the Resurrection), reproduced on the basis of the representations and descriptions handed down and shared between pilgrims and travelers. This construction was erected in the first half of the XI c. more than likely commissioned by Patriarch Poppo who took it upon himself to restore the Basilica to its original ancient splendor. In 1033, he was involved in organizing the millennium of the Passion of Christ.

**WRITING ON THE WALLS.** The pilgrims' graffiti found on the frescoed walls of the Church "of the Pagans" (so called because the structure had originally been reserved for those who had not yet been baptized). The various writings from different eras were traced above all those written on top of the figures of the saints from whom the pilgrims asked protection.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS.** A page of an *Evangelario* (Book of Gospels) likely to belong to a religious community in Aquileia. The subscriptions of the pilgrims can be seen in the empty spaces of the text (the majority of them were of German and Slavic origin) dated to VIII-early X c. (Cividale, Archaeological Museum)



**Processions of newly converted followers from Oltralpe.** A particular testimony can be cited regarding the presence of pilgrims from the lands which had been converted. Housed in a *Evangelario*, currently safeguarded in Cividale (although it was more than likely kept in Aquileia originally), is a list of subscriptions amounting to over one thousand five hundred names including many people of Germanic and Slavic origins, showing evidence of the constant flow of pilgrims from Oltralpe. Most of them were not commoners but princes and prominent figures from the Slavic population who, thanks to their patronized mission from patriarchal seats in Aquileia, had recently been converted. Furthermore, other subscriptions from Emperors, high ranking Church officials and members of the French nobility were listed. The subscriptions of the Evangelary in Cividale were interrupted in the early X c. at which time there were also less signs of the presence of pilgrims in Aquileia. This was the time of the Hungarian raids which had a devastating effect throughout this area and in neighboring regions.

**Penalized by "mass" pilgrimages.** The flow of pilgrims picked up momentum again in the XII c., although the prospects, destinations, routes, the orientation and the protagonists themselves on their devotional journey had changed. Due to the new political and religious organization in Aquileia, the role of being the propulsion center of Christianity towards the east had been lost and even the calling exercised by one of the oldest pilgrim destination where the remains of martyrs could be venerated had grown dim. Beginning in the 1200's and especially during the 1300's and 1400's pilgrimages became a widespread phenomenon of interest to all the social stratum. To the traditional destinations, such as Rome and The Holy Land, new ones were added, like St. James of



## Few urban centers in the Patriarchal Friuli

Contrary to other areas of North Central Italy, Friuli lacked the presence of powerful and independent cities able to exercise economic leadership in the region's political organization. This border region suffered the effects of the fall of the Roman Empire because of the devastation brought by the migration of Germanic peoples and the incursions of peoples from the steppes. As a consequence, major cities like *Iulium Carnicum* (present-day Zuglio) *Iulia Concordia* (present-day Concordia Sagittaria) declined. In sum, with the exception of *Forum Iulii* (Cividale), the entire network of ancient Roman cities collapsed and in the Middle Ages a new series of urban centers (*urbs*) had to be developed into organized communities (*civitas*) able to administer themselves.

In the process, patriarchs, too, played a different role. No longer bishops bound to a city, as in the rest of Italy, but territorial lords who, like many medieval sovereigns, contin-

ually moved across the lands they controlled. This practice helped the government control and understanding the territory directly. However, the State's central government and administration no longer had a fixed place to refer to but a territorial lord who gathered his council of vassals (*curia vassallorum*), and later Parliament, wherever and whenever he deemed appropriate. For most of the 1200's, it was no longer possible to speak of a patriarchal residence and of his followers. The prelate now resided in Cividale, in Aquileia – the city that gave the Patriarchate its name but where the climate and weather conditions were unfavorable for long-term stays – and in a few castles, like Udine or San Daniele. In the 1200's, in order to counterbalance the power of the castellans and to avail of a force to support their policies, the patriarchs favored the economic and demographic growth of a number of places like Udine, Gemona, Sacile, Tolmezzo. In addition, they promoted their transformation into independent communities or groups of citizens who had the right to be represented and voting in Parliament.

Donata Degrassi  
Professor of Economic and Social History  
of the Middle Ages at the University of Trieste

**ST. SEPULCHRE**  
It is a small monument erected in the first half of the XI century, and thought to have been created to celebrate the millennium of the death and resurrection of Christ (1033). It can be seen at the entrance of the left nave in the basilica in Aquileia and is a reproduction of the St. Sepulchre in Jerusalem, much noted and depicted at the time. It was utilized in the Easter liturgy.

**NOBILITY AT THE TABLE**  
Drawing taken from a manuscript *Sermones Catholici* (XIII c.) depicting the Banquet of Herod and the beheading of John the Baptist. The lively scene conveys the atmosphere of a convivial gathering of nobles and patriarchs in Friuli during the Medieval age apart from the significance of the biblical episode here represented. (Udine, Civic Library)



# YOU WERE SO BEAUTIFUL, AQUILEIA

*The wealth and beauty of the Roman city on the Adriatic Sea is presented in all its past glory as it was twenty centuries ago for all to see. This is the result of a long and complex project where archaeologists collaborated with experts in the field of virtual image reconstruction.*

Text Gianluca Baronchelli Cristiano Tiussi Virtual reconstruction Altair4 Ikon Nudesign  
Photos Gianluca Baronchelli by courtesy of the of the Archaeological Heritage in Friuli Venezia Giulia  
Translation by Joanne Baldoni



**O**N A WARM EVENING... A YELLOW light jostles with the ever elongating shadow of the bell tower. Strolling in the direction of the *domus* (house) of Titus Macer, I come across a group of tourists lingering on the excavation site. Three curious children fire a series of questions at the kind and professional guide to whom she replies, 'Try to imagine that...' 'You need to imagine... just imagine' rather like a mantra. Aquileia greets you with a mixture of sensations. Initially you are guided – whether you arrive from the north or the south of the lagoon – inspired by Patriarch Poppo's (XI century) seventy-three-meter bell tower which impresses us more than a comet would! You are then stunned by the massive basilica with its one thousand three hundred square meters constituting the greatest expanse of mosaic flooring from the Roman west. You then might feel like taking a backward step slightly overwhelmed. With every pace the glorious past of the city is perceived, notably the sheer size of it which housed a population of fifty thousand inhabitants in the Roman Imperial age (just over three thousand today). But what remains of the city founded in 181 BC and subsequently raised to the ground by Attila in the year 452 AD? Aquileia, not only one of the biggest cities in the Empire but also one of the most important ports in the Adriatic. What ever happened to the forum pulsating with the political, administrative and social life of the city, the river port, the numerous bustling markets, and an amphitheater even larger than the arena in Pola? What happened to the high walls and the sumptuous *domus*? And so the mantra echoes for the children to listen to, 'You will just have to imagine...!'



on the two pages

**THE HEART OF THE CITY**

The remains of the forum in Aquileia and some reconstructed images: panoramic view of the square with the civilian Basilica in the background to the south, details of the entrance of the same Basilica (previous pp.), the presumed location of the Temple of the Capitoline divinities. The square is built with the city in the II c. BC, assuming the current appearance in the first half of I c. AD, lined with porticoes at least on three sides and housing numerous workshops to the east and to the west. The present-day columns belonging →



→ to the eastern part of the portico were raised and integrated with clay bricks in the 1930's. The composite capitals, shafts and bases were constructed in limestone from Aurisina and dated back to the late epoch of the Antonini Emperors (circa 170-180 AD). The paved flooring (Aurisina limestone, Trieste) belongs to the julio-claudian age (first half of the I c. AD). In some cases the material was substituted by reused materials such as inscriptions. In particular, an epigraph to Titus Annius (Luscus) was found, the triumvir who led the second contingent of colonists in the city in 169 BC.





### From the imagination to a historical image

Nevertheless, between mere imagining and actually observing, a happy medium can be found today in the form of a reconstruction. At the virtual, yet photo-realistic level a high degree of similarity to the ancient reality could be achieved. In accordance with the requirements of the Fondazione Aquileia, a team of experts worked together for two intense years. They managed to overcome any previous sense of being misunderstood and incomplete by inspiring a new sense of awareness and enthusiasm in the visitors. In so doing the fragments from the past were brought back together again, the relics put back into place towards the recreation of the original city as opposed to a meaningless list of items removed from their context. New technology offers an extraordinary opportunity for promoting our heritage for both scientific and didactic purposes as well as for tourism. This project represents an important exchange between archaeology and the public at large, creating images which, through the power of imagination, remain imprinted within the memory. Consequently, the places making up the great city of Aquileia such as the river docks, the markets,

the city walls, and the domus of Titus Macer emerge once more taking on a new light, life and substance. The next step which the Fondazione Aquileia strived to achieve is to systemize this created information in order to communicate it to the visitor via the new available technology such as images and interactive, three-dimensional videos which are optimized and can be enjoyed through most mobile devices and by accessing the site of the Fondazione Aquileia ([www.fondazioneaquileia.it](http://www.fondazioneaquileia.it)), either at home or alternatively available for downloading on the physical location. In the case of the domus of Titus Macer, the three-dimensional simulation can be enjoyed on the archaeological site of the Cossar Area as augmented reality, which also gives the visitors the opportunity to evaluate the ruins using their own smartphones or tablets, visualizing an interactive reconstruction set in its environmental context. Additionally, and also offered free of charge, the latest app is also available giving theme itineraries and over a hundred points of interest mapped out and geo-referenced. Obviously, panels of great impact are not lacking which serve to decipher archaeological spaces and ruins utilizing a direct, emotional style of language which stimulates an in-depth learning experience.

on the two pages  
**THE PORT ON THE RIVER NATISONE**  
 The present-day river port of Aquileia set against a reconstructed panorama. Here is one of the best preserved examples of a structure pertaining to ports from the Roman age. It was built near the ancient river that ran along the east of the city. This structure is over 300 meters long near the Republican city walls (II-I c. BC). The port was renovated in the early I c. AD. A building was constructed behind the docks, the outside walls of which were built of bricks. Further transformations date to the age of Constantine (IV c.), a few years before the new city walls would extend over the docks.

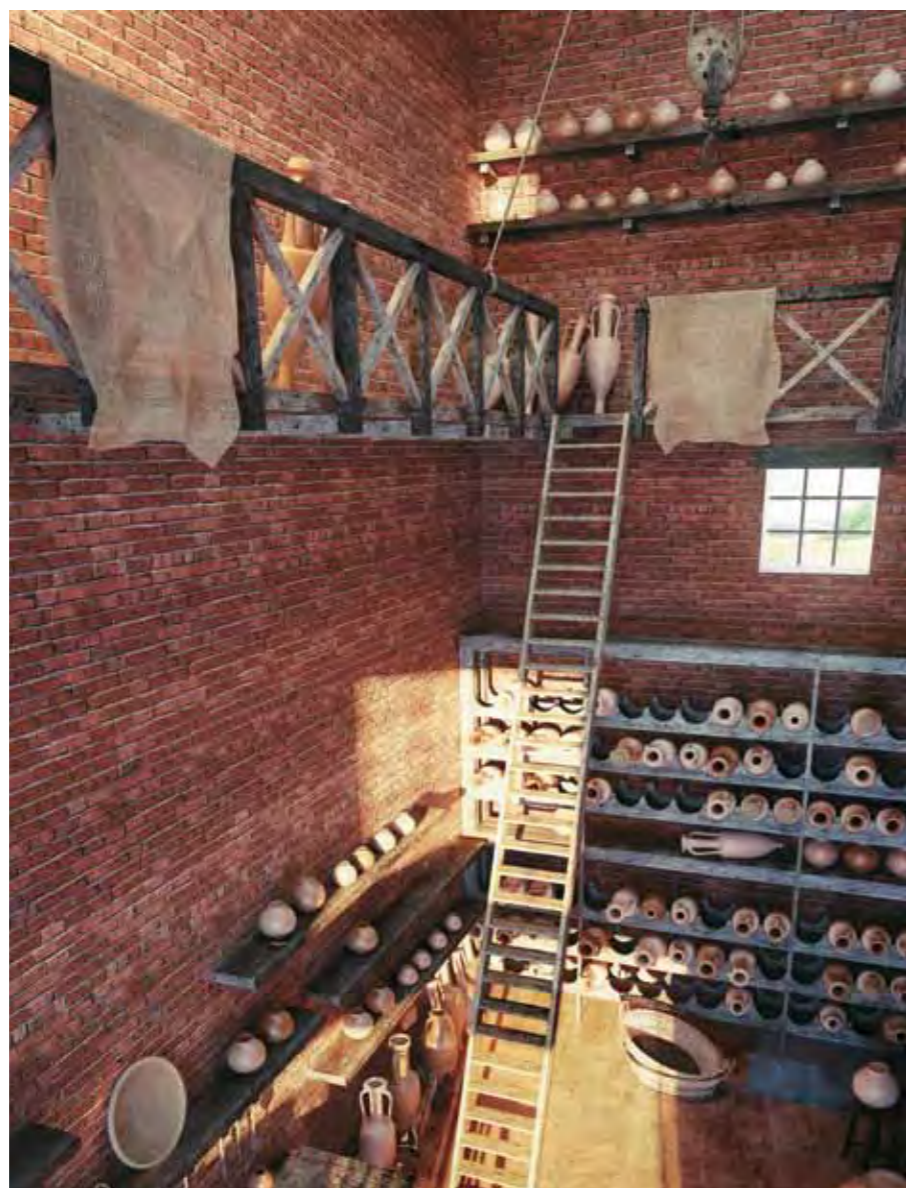
### DISCOVER AQUILEIA ON THE WEB AND MOBILE PHONES

**Planning a trip and visiting the city.** The digital guide of *Aquileia World Heritage* available on the sites [www.arte.it](http://www.arte.it), [www.fondazioneaquileia.it](http://www.fondazioneaquileia.it) and free to download at the App store for iPhone users gives the opportunity to plan a trip and visit the city in an interactive way thanks to the mapping out of the area and due to the geo-referencing of a hundred points of interest including monuments, churches, museums and archaeological areas. Utilizing the menu users can obtain directions to reach the desired destinations and to consult the information charts created by the staff made up of a team of experts and archaeologists, organized with the use of an ingenious iconographic system in which the contents are constantly balanced between being descriptive and emotional. On arrival in Aquileia the visitors can share their itineraries and intentions on the social network. The information is embellished with thematic itineraries (Roman art, the Christian and medieval period, The Great War) and *timelines*, a synthesis of twenty locations of the city from its foundation until the present. The interactive guide of Aquileia also provides a useful information area for those who wish to familiarize themselves with the city and its landscape, as well as the structures existing in the town and the neighboring areas. The App additionally offers a calendar of events and temporary exhibitions in Friuli Venezia Giulia, available as additional information when planning or extending your holiday.





Above facing page  
**MARKET AREA**  
 Background panorama of Pasqualis Area including a view of the great Basilica of Aquileia. During excavations made in 1953-54 on the south-eastern tip of the Roman city, two wall sections from the late Roman age and three areas were discovered, near a great building used as a warehouse. In these spaces small market structures can be identified dating from the late Imperial age (IV-V c.), linked to embarkation points on the Natisone River which ran just outside the city walls. Today there are two of these visible (proposed again in the reconstructed designs). The one in the extreme east was made up of an area articulated around a well whereas the one in the extreme west, again with a central courtyard, revealed the presence of a portico under which the workshops would have been located. In one of these, about thirty amphorae still containing grains of par roasted grain were discovered. The double line of the walls visible in the Pasqualis Area dates to the late Imperial age (IV c.), when a new city wall was added here which followed the course of the river at this particular point.



to the side  
**FIRST PHASE OF AQUILEIA**  
 The city gate on the northern side of the city walls of the Roman Republic age (II-I c. BC). Facing a secondary water way utilized to transport commercial cargo in small boats.

facing page  
**WORKSHOPS**  
 Probable appearance of the interior of a workshop which looked out onto the forum (see pp. 60-61).

on both pages  
**THE AMPHITHEATER**  
 Two images of the reconstructed amphitheater in Aquileia, erected in the early Imperial age (1 c. AD) near a secondary exit from the west side of the city, towards the road of the Sepolcreto seen in the background. It is supposed that this building →

### The scientific basis of the reconstruction

Amongst the most challenging and at the same time necessary feats for the archaeologists to address is firstly the reconstruction of the features of ancient buildings from the fragmented ruins and secondly to provide accurate images of architectonic structures and decorations. The intention of the archaeologists is to go beyond the two-dimensional perspective which is perhaps for them the most reas-

suring and face the third dimension of the elevations which is fundamental when attempting to convey the nature of the ruins to the public at large making use of the constant evolution of the various computer techniques which are increasingly able to satisfy demands in terms of verisimilitude and creating atmospheres.

Aquileia is notoriously lacking any consistent ruins in elevation. Until relatively recent periods the reutilization or dispersion of the original materials used to build and decorate public complexes such as the central square (forum), the ci-

vilian Basilica and the city walls characterized the history of the city. Nevertheless, what remains on site and what is today housed in the museums or in other places but can no doubt be attributed to specific buildings, together with the comparison with best known archaeological sites (taking Rome and Pompeii as a starting point) often prove to be sufficient in order to reconstruct a true to life image of the most important complexes, even if this image is by nature provisional.

### The central square and river port: the pulsating life in Aquileia

The colonnaded façades flanking three sides of the forum, the main square in the city, re-emerge before our eyes with their elaborate composite capitals, and articulated trabeations depicting an obsessive repetition of the motifs of Juppiter Ammon and Medusa. The overall layout of the square – regrettably interrupted today by the regional road which runs from Grado to Udine – has been completely reassembled. The rows of workshops lined up beneath the portico convey the lively atmosphere which would have characterized the heart of the ancient city. Moving on to the port, it is difficult today for those who visit the well-conserved ruins of the docks for loading and unloading of goods, the sloping floors and the ramps linking the urban roads to imagine that underneath the so-called

“via Sacra” a river basin of nearly fifty meters opens up, where ships of various tonnage would arrive from all over the Mediterranean. Not to mention the long building behind the quay with access to the sloping floors. With the help of computer graphics other details which made up life in the sea port have been brought back to life such as the mercantile ships or the massive cranes being maneuvered around the quay. These have been duly reconstructed on the basis of the discoveries in situ or from the Roman monuments which represented these aspects.

→ of which remains very little, corresponds perfectly to the model of the great arenas of the Roman Period.

### A TEAM OF EXPERTS

**Reconstructing Aquileia.** In order to “reconstruct” Aquileia three work groups were necessary sharing a single overview and a continual exchange of views, information, ideas and suggestions. There were three companies involved. Altair4 ([www.altair4.com](http://www.altair4.com)), who for twenty-five years have been creating innovations in the field of the language of communication and more specifically concerning technology for promoting our cultural heritage. They executed the virtual reconstruction of the Constantinian basilica. Secondly, Ikon ([www.ikon.it](http://www.ikon.it)), a web agency specializing in internet solutions and multimedia, having considerable experience in the field of 3D reconstruction, carried out the reconstruction of the *domus* in the CAL and Cossar Zone. The necropolis, the river port, the markets, the forum and amphitheater were undertaken by Nudesign ([www.nudesignstudio.com](http://www.nudesignstudio.com)), a brand new company orientated towards interior design, design in general and advertising. The models and high definition rendering were carried out by *software 3D Studio Max* while the motor rendering was performed by *V-Ray*. Real-time 3D simulations were generated by the platform *Unity 3D*, which maximizes the graphic potential of cutting-edge technology and distributes the applications to various platforms (web, iOs, Android, etc.).



on the two pages  
**HOUSE BELONGING  
TO TITUS MACER**

The archaeological area of the Cossar Estates in Aquileia. There are the remains of several houses relative to one of the southern block of Aquileia during the Roman age, currently being researched by the University of Padua. Recent excavations have uncovered the remains of a great house built between two roads. This *domus*, at the beginning of the I c. AD, was built around a central space, a garden surrounded by an ambulatory with mosaic floor embellished with a fountain (*below*). Workshops have been recognized towards the east next to the road (*facing p.*); while towards the west an atrium has been found (*facing p.*), supported by four columns, on which various private rooms converged. A stone weight with an inscription gives us the likely name of the owner, Titus Macer.



on this page

**THE HOUSE OF "THE GOOD SHEPHERD"**

The background panorama of the CAL Area of Aquileia and two reconstructed details of the eastern domus with a colonnaded court and the mosaic of "The Good Shepherd". In this area, outside the most ancient walls of the city, a residential quarter was developed. Towards the north the area is dominated by a big room with an apse (protected by a modern structure), which was preceded by a colonnaded court. For some time identified as an Paleo-Christian oratory due to the presence of the "The Good Shepherd" mosaic (IV c.) which decorates it, today it is considered rather as a reception hall of the house of a wealthy owner. The mosaic of "The Good Shepherd" gets its name from the figure positioned at the center of an elaborate pattern made up of rhombs and squares with octagonal spaces inscribed. The motifs, which apart from the Good Shepherd include fish, dolphins, peacocks, ducks, and masculine and feminine busts, belong to the figurative repertoire also adopted by non Christians at the height of the IV c.



**A multi-purpose complex and the great amphitheater**

An extensive working complex, consisting of a massive warehouse and three small paved areas thought to have been used as market, were built next to the city wall constructed in Late Antiquity in the southern part of the city next to the first Christian basilica built by the bishop Theodore at the beginning of the IV c. The enormous warehouse was demolished only in the XVIII c. and had been noted by local experts. The façades articulated in blind arches reached a height of circa twenty meters rising above the markets beneath, where there was a central court yard surrounded by stone structures or by sim-



ple, wooden colonnades under which the market traders displayed their wares.

Despite there being very few remains of the amphitheater left, they are sufficient to delineate the layout. In this case the reconstruction attempt definitely proved to be more of a challenge but is nevertheless backed up by comparative methods, i.e. a comparison with buildings which have been better conserved, namely in cities in ancient northern Italy (Verona and Pola). As far as the interior views are concerned the very few pieces of architectonic decoration such as the molded tiles in the form of a dolphin are placed in their original positions as a parapet of the outlets of the cavea (the seating area of the amphitheater).

on this page

**THE NECROPOLIS**

The stretch of necropolis currently open to the public in Aquileia and a reconstruction of the funerary space which is located on a secondary road out of the town. Only five funerary areas belonging to various families who lived in Aquileia remain (Statia, anonymous, Julia, Trebia, Cestia). On the basis of the monuments and tombs excavated (1940-1941), the area was utilized from the beginning of the I c. AD. The fourth funerary area, however, was extended at least until the IV-V c., as the presence of various sarcophagi from the Late Antiquity period testify, some of which were positioned on small brick pilasters to convey the idea of the original depth.



on both pages  
**THE GRAND BASILICA**  
 The interior of the Basilica in Aquileia as it is seen today. Two images that reflect its original appearance in the time of the Bishop Theodore (early IV c.): the exterior with two parallel rooms, north and south →

### From the houses of the rich to the city of the dead

The domus of Titus Macer, a wealthy citizen of Aquileia living in the I c. AD, in the archaeological area in the Cossar Estates near piazza Capitolo, is the only one in which we can see the entire layout and a sizeable part of the mosaic surfaces. The entrance, a Tuscan atrium, a garden

with a fountain, the small shops lining the two roads (*cardines*) creating a boundary to the area contribute to the three-dimensional reconstruction recalling the demolished wall structures. Furthermore, the presence of part of a *domus* dating from the IV c., in the archaeological area of the CAL Estates, boasting a delegation hall including an apse preceded by a colonnaded court. The impressive mosaic floor at the center of



which a figure of "The Good Shepherd" is depicted was erroneously thought to have been a Christian oratory.

Finally, the only trace of the necropolis still visible today, consisting of five areas for the Aquileian families, running along the northern side of a secondary road out of the city. Nothing, however, remains of the tombs on the opposite side. Taking a wide view and bringing to bear didactic criteria, it is speculated that the

structures acted as a boundary of the funerary areas were made up of various organic material, for example hedges or shrubs or even wooden fences. This was a system commonly utilized in Roman necropolises. So Aquileia comes alive again...

Gianluca Baronchelli Cristiano Tiussi

The authors: G. Baronchelli, journalist and photographer; C. Tiussi, archaeologist.



→ (the former can be seen today in the "Cripta degli scavi" while the latter constitutes the present day Basilica), and the interior of the same room in the south with mosaics still currently visible. The present basilica is the one commissioned by the bishop (patriarch) Poppo, who consecrated it in 1031. In 1909 the floor from the Poppo phase was removed as far as the height of the presbytery, in order to unearth the underlying mosaic floor of the building dating back to the Constantinian age, situated circa a meter underneath. This floor, dominated by the inscription dedicated to Theodore, represents one of the most spectacular elements of the religious building commissioned by the first bishop of Aquileia after the Edict of Tolerance in 313 AD.

### BUILDINGS ERECTED BY CONSTANTINE AND THEODORE

**The origins of the Christian aspect of Aquileia.** The exhibition "Constantine and Theodore. Aquileia in the IV century" is being shown from July 5th to November 3rd 2013 in Aquileia (Ud). Promoted by the Fondazione Aquileia, the Soprintendenza Archeologica and the Società per la Conservazione della Basilica, the exhibition is being held on occasion of the celebration for the seventeenth centenary since the Edict of Milan in 313 AD. Catalogue by Electa. The main explanatory exhibition is being held in Meizlick Palace, and also in the nearby basilica. Here lie important remains from the first complex of the Christian age, commissioned by Bishop Theodore in the period after the edict which had sanctioned religious peace. The combination of the vast extension of splendid mosaic flooring, the structural remains, the large fragments of the wall decoration constitute one of the best known examples of ecclesiastical buildings dating from the Constantinian era.

**Constantinian testimonies in Aquileia.** The northern Adriatic city together with Milan was one of the main points on the strategic-military chess board of the IV c. in northern Italy. It was the city where the mint was located and emperors often visited its. «Famous for its city walls and port», as mentioned by the poet Ausonius, the city maintained an important function throughout the IV c. due to its geographical position on the route back to Adriatic and linked over land to the Balkans. According to a panegyric written in the IV c., a *palatium* was located in Aquileia was where the young Constantine received

a precious helmet as an engagement present from his future wife Fausta. The Imperial residence was most likely connected to a circus, according to a plan which was applicable from the Tetrarchic period (late III c.). Constantine renovated the warehouses in the river port and organized the construction of a big *thermae* similar to the one built in Rome by the same sovereign. The exhibition demonstrates the building and urban development of the city, into which the Christian structure built in the IV c. by the Bishop Theodore can also be viewed.

**Inside the immense Theodorian Basilica.** A computer-graphic video presents the reconstruction of the interior space of the original basilica in Aquileia. The architecture has been reconstructed on the basis of the surviving elements and existing structures on the layout. Various hypotheses have been put forward particularly concerning the vertical elements of the South Hall (the one occupied by the present basilica). The most plausible solution opted for was based on the available data. Regarding the surrounding structures (*horreum* i.e. public warehouses and *domus*) a comparison was made with an analogous typology in relation to the development of the layout deriving from the plans. Concerning the interior, the frescoes were extended and completed on the surviving inferior section whereas the reconstruction of the elements of the mosaic flooring were calculated by comparing the mosaics with the surviving ones still present on site.

Info: [www.fondazioneaquileia.it](http://www.fondazioneaquileia.it)

