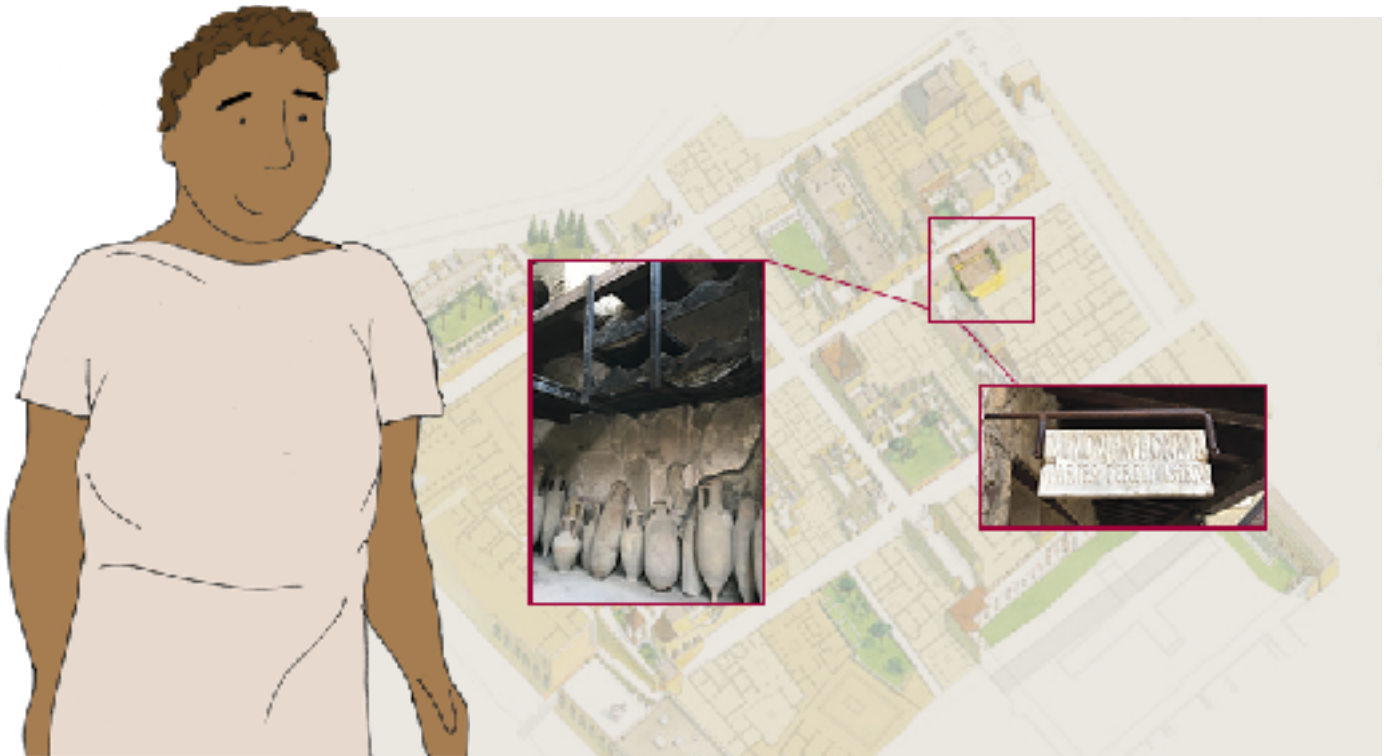


Fact file: Marcus Nonius Dama

Marcus Nonius Dama lived in Herculaneum, and probably owned a tavern just off the town's main street.



We know Dama's name, because there is a sign that says: "this wall is the private property of Marcus Nonius Dama, freedman of Marcus Nonius, forever". The other side of the sign tells us that the property there belonged to a Julia Paris - also forever. These two neighbours were very clear about where the boundary between their houses was!



His name tells us a lot about Dama. It tells us that he was once a slave - the slave of a man named Marcus Nonius Balbus. When he got freed, he took on his old master's first names (Marcus Nonius) as well as his slave name (Dama), and when writing official documents like this sign, he'd also tell us that he was a "libertus", a freed slave. The name Dama sounds like he might originally have been from Syria.

Dama therefore started his life as a slave, but now owns a tavern of his own, and has his own business. His relationship with his old master, now his 'patron', would remain close. His ex-master Balbus would look after Dama's business interests, giving him tips about suppliers perhaps, or making sure the tavern was insured if there should be a fire. In return, Dama would do his old master a good turn, giving him a cut of his profits perhaps, or doing services for him.



The large pot at the front would have held hot food, while the big amphorae that are resting against the walls would have been full of wine.

Can you see where they could have been stored?

Above the main room there was a wooden balcony, that could have been used to store supplies.

Lots of people would have visited Dama's tavern for food and a drink. Most people didn't have kitchens at home, so would eat out every day!



Dama and his family (his wife Cara, and his children Marcus and Silvia), would have lived above the shop, and we can still see parts of the rooms they would have lived and slept in.



Here, on the top floor, you can see just a corner piece remaining of what would have been someone's bed.

Have a look at the wall decoration as well - what colours did Dama's family choose to decorate their rooms with?

These are the two rooms on the top floor, seen from across the street. The rooms would have been bigger than you can see now - they extended above the pavement.



This is the entrance to the tavern (the barred doors are not ancient).

Can you see what colour the walls on the street used to be?