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REGIONE AUTÓNOMA DE SARDIGNA
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

Archaeological area of Tharros

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ Roman Tharros

The Roman city of Tharros can currently be seen in its format during the Rome Empire era. Like all multi-strata sites dug decades ago without a stratigraphic criterion, it is now rather difficult to reconstruct the various phases of the site's building activity, only being possible to date some of the better preserved buildings.

We can however reconstruct the general urban layout, that stayed unchanged for several centuries.

The main proof of Republican Tharros is the large northern fortification walls that repeat the directly of the Punic walls, expanding the perimeter a little, and defining a defence moat (figs. 1-3). They were constructed around the 2nd century B.C. and no longer used after about one century, with the moat partly filled and later used as a small necropolis (fig. 4).



Fig. 1 - Northern fortifications: A) the moat; B) the counterscarp wall; C) the perimeter wall
(photo by Unicity S.p.A. Reprocessed by C. Tronchetti)



Fig. 2 - The perimeter wall of the fortifications, with the postern blocked up at a later date (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)



Fig. 3 - The fortification's countescarp wall (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)



Fig. 4 - The early Roman Imperial Age necropolis in the moat that was no longer used
(photo by Unicity S.p.A.)

We are clearly close the actual residential area, which is confirmed by the construction of an circular amphitheatre built in the mid Imperial Age on the agger (figs. 5-6).



Fig. 5 - The top of Su Muru Mannu with the amphitheatre ruins in the centre
(Archaeological Superintendency Archive)



Fig. 6 - The area where the amphitheatre stood (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)

The actual town spread over the southern slopes of Su Muru Mannu and on the eastern slopes of San Giovanni, dominated by the tower of the same name, until it reached the seashore on the Gulf of Oristano (fig. 7).

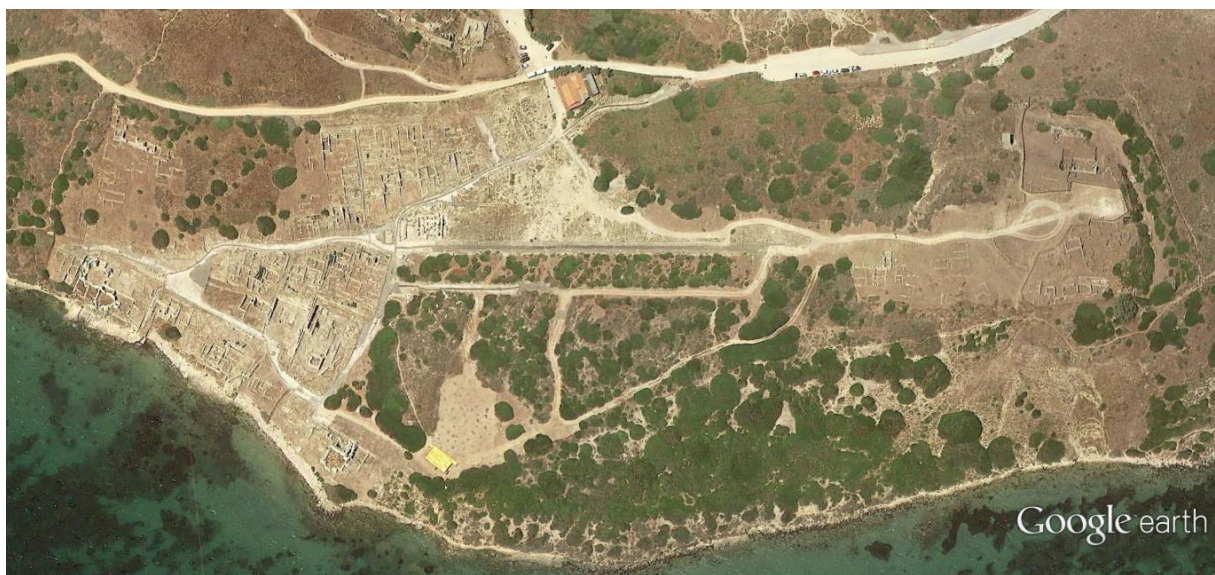


Fig. 7 - Air view of the area of Tharros, from the Su Muru Mannu hill (right), to the end of the investigated area (left) (from Google Earth)

The side of the Su Muru Mannu hill has two large roads paved in basalt, that identify three large blocks, that are still to be investigated. The southern area is divided into quarters by large paved roads and, in turn, these are crossed by small alleyways, also paved and with sewers (figs. 8-12).



Fig. 8 - The central quarter (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)



Fig. 9 - The quarter on the slopes of San Giovanni hill (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).





Fig. 10 - The main North-South road on the Su Muru Mannu hill (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).



Fig. 11 - Main road that outlines the central quarter to the north (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)

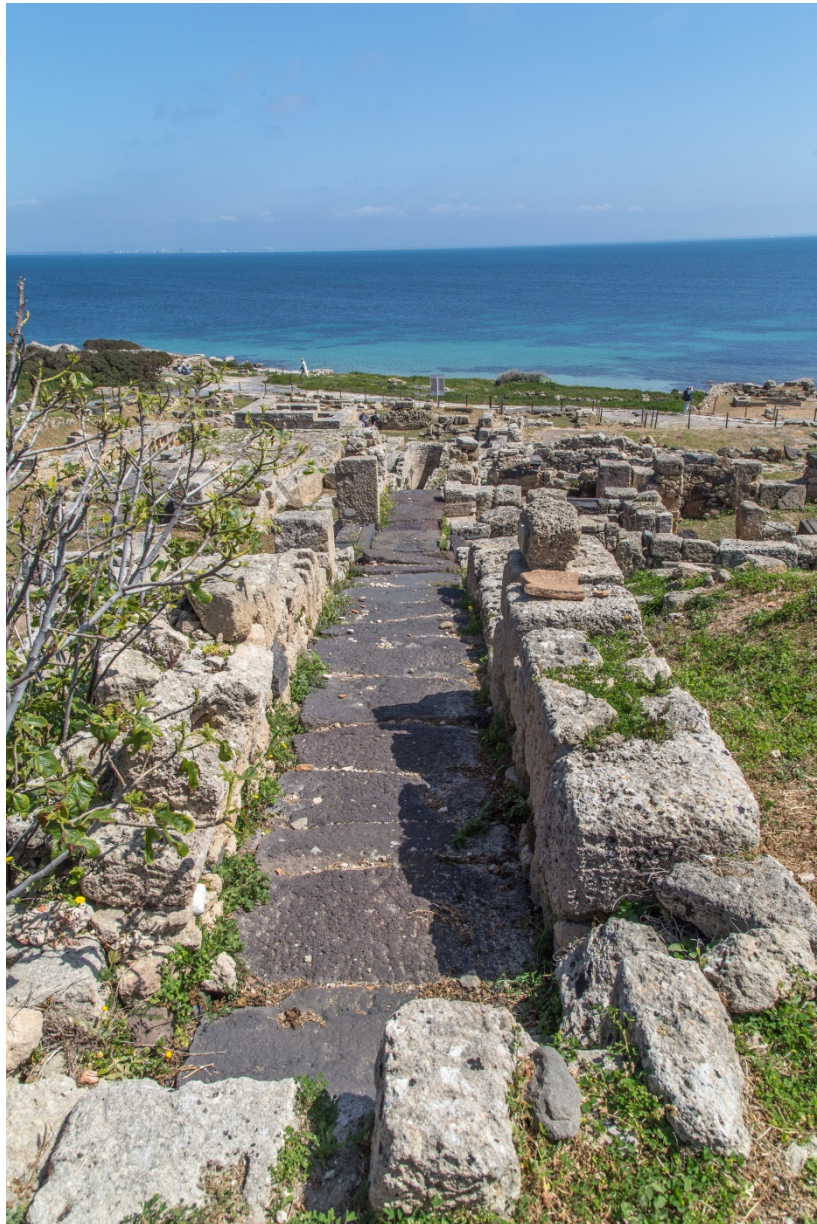


Fig. 12 - *Ambitus* that divides the blocks of houses (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)

In the Northwest part of the central quarter, four roads cross, forming a triangular square in the middle where a small building stood that has now been lost; the *castellum aquae* looks on to the square that distributes the water via a public fountain (figs 13-14).



Fig. 13 - The square at the crossroads (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)



Fig. 14 - The central square and the *castellum aquae* (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)

The public area of the city extends into the urban sector overlooking the Gulf of Oristano, with a longitudinal road running through it (fig. 15).



Fig. 15 - The public area of the Roman city (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)

On the western side, the artery separates an area with the Punic temple of semi-column, covered by flooring in the Roman era for a new sacred aedicula. The “semitic -style temple” is next to it: a large space cut out of the rock were the remains of two small holy buildings and a mosaic covered corridor can be seen, dated to 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. (fig. 16).



Fig. 16 - The so-called "Semitic style temple" (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).

On the eastern side of the road there are two thermal bath buildings, the thermal baths no. 1 and the Convento Vecchio Baths, with another building of uncertain use between them, perhaps for worship, with a row of columns of which two columns have been rebuilt (fig. 17).



Fig. 17 - The building with row of columns (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).

The remaining urban area is mostly taken up by houses, built by making terraces on the strongly sloping land. Small houses with one or two rooms, often with a gallery, stand next to each other without a precise technique or layout, having in common only the arrangement down a slope and having to look down onto the roads that led to them (figs. 18-19).



Fig. 18 - The housing quarter on the slopes of San Giovanni hill (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).

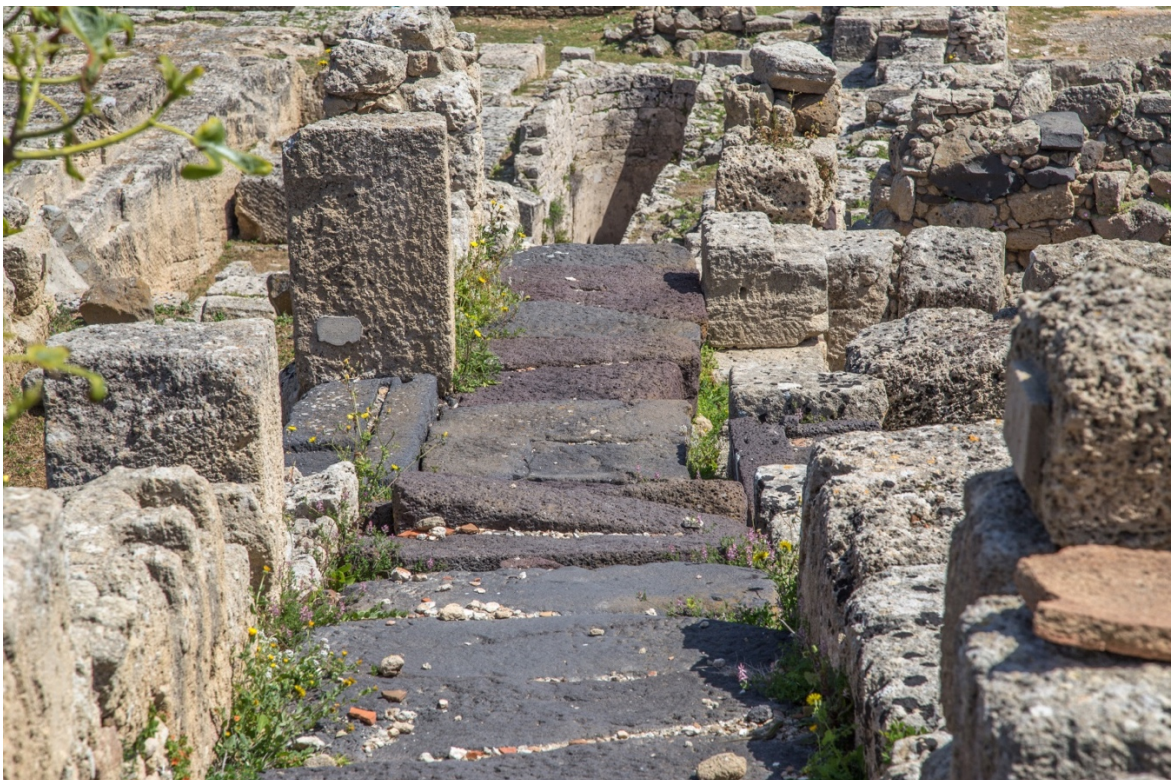


Fig. 19 - The threshold of a house that opens onto an *ambitus* (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)

Roman Tharros was one of the most important centres in Sardinia. A connection point for traffic from the Iberian peninsula to Ostia, the port of Rome. We have proof of this role in the wrecks found near its western coast. In particular, one of them carried a large amount of lead coming from Spanish mines and headed for Rome.

Tharros was not just an import and redistribution centre in the area, but also a production centre. It has been reasonably hypothesised that the workshop of *Memmi*, where oil lamps found throughout the island were made, was in Tharros.

With the advent of the Vandals, in the 5th century AD, the urban fabric tended to break down and spread out, with the creation of centres that were both for housing and production, and this trend continued in the Byzantine era too.



■ Credits

Deepening card edited by DR. Carlo Tronchetti

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