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REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA  
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

# Archaeological area of Tharros

Patrimonio culturale  
**SARDEGNA** Virtual Archaeology



## ■ The Roman water system

Water was supplied for a Roman city in three ways. Collection of rainwater in cisterns; wells that took up groundwater; water carried by aqueducts. Although we know that the Romans preferred fresh running water, the use of water collected in cisterns was widespread, especially in areas where water sources were scarce.

Tharros had an aqueduct, that carried water to the *castellum aquae* in the centre of the city, which had a public fountain; some diversions must have taken water to the thermal baths lower down, that needed a large amount of water (figs 1-2).



**Fig. 1** - The *castellum aquae* (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)



**Fig. 2** - The *castellum aquae* (C) and the thermal bath buildings (T) (from Google Earth. Review C. Tronchetti)

There are many cisterns, open ones, that were particular to the Punic world and that were used for a long time in Roman Sardinia. There were 18 cisterns recorded, some mainly private that recovered rainwater for domestic use (figs. 3-4) or were linked to public buildings, such as the temple of semi-columns (fig. 5).



**Fig. 3** - Open cistern (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)



**Fig. 4** - Open cistern (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)



**Fig. 5** - Cistern of the temple of semi-columns (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)

The covering of the cisterns, where still preserved, are dual-sloping (fig. 5); sometimes the larger cisterns have a small sloping sector from the perimeter, where the well was placed to draw water (fig. 6).



**Fig. 6** - Sector of a cistern used as a well to draw water from (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)

There is almost nothing left of the systems used to take the water to the cisterns. In some cases, a few channels comprising terracotta tubes have been found, now in fragments, while more frequently channels carved into the rock with a slope to the outside have been found, used as "overflows", when too full.

There have been eighteen wells found (fig. 7), ten of which no longer touch the natural aquifer.





**Fig. 7** - Curb of a well (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)

Together with the water supply system, we must also consider the disposal of waste water, that was carried out with a well-organised system of sewers. These ran alongside the main roads, receiving water from the smaller roads, and flowed towards discharge in the sea (figs. 8 -10).





**Fig. 8** - Roman road: modern covering in wood in the centre lines the sewer cavity (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)



**Fig. 9** - Sewer in a minor road of Tharros (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)



**Fig. 10** - Sewer heading to discharge into the sea (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)

## ■ Credits

Deepening card edited by DR. Carlo Tronchetti

## ■ Bibliography

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