



Archaeological area of Tharros

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ The Christian baptistery

In the late-ancient era, the urban layout of Tharros changed and the city split into separate centres, with the religious ones being important.

In this picture, the transformation of the sector north of the Thermal baths no. 1 on the coastal side overlooking the Gulf of Oristano, is significant (fig. 1).

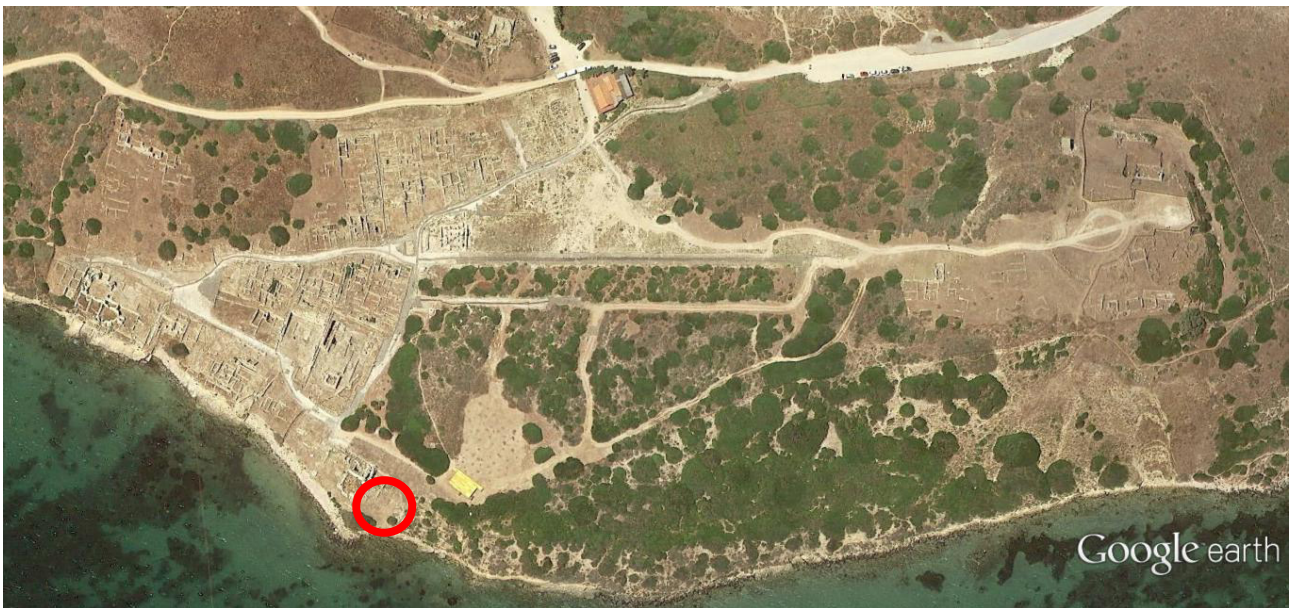


Fig. 1 - Location of the Paleo-Christian area (from Google Earth. Reprocessed by C. Tronchetti)

During the 6th century A.D. Several structures were built against the thermal baths, using large sandstone blocks and small stones and re-using materials from buildings that had collapsed. These new structures, with an apse and small adjacent rectangular rooms, were probably used for the baptistery (fig. 2).

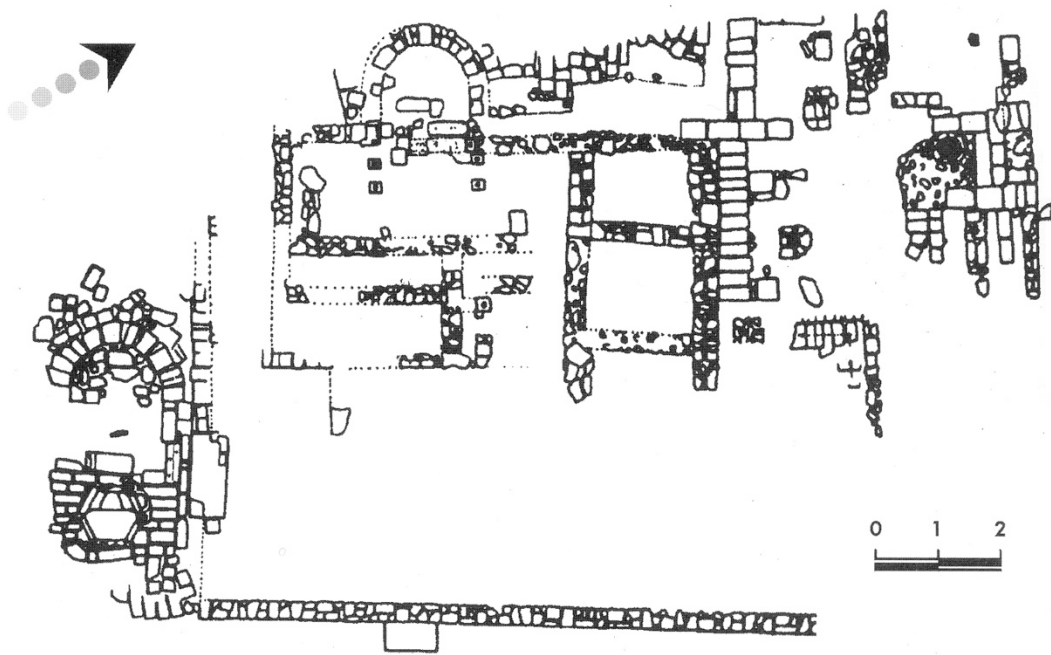


Fig. 2 - The Paleo-Christian complex (from SPANU, 1998, page 82)

The structure destined for this liturgy also had an apse to the North-east and contained the hexagonal baptismal tub (fig. 3).



Fig. 3 - The baptistery from the 6th century AD (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)

The tub must have been covered by a canopy, as seen by the springers of the two columns on the northern side (fig. 4).



Fig. 4 - The remains of the baptismery canopy (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)

Inside the tub there is the seat for the person being baptised, built in concrete (fig. 5).



Fig. 5 - Detail of the baptismal tub chair (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)

The floor of the small baptismal room and the tub structure are made from basalt slabs that are similar to the ones on paved roads and probably come from the stripping of a stretch of road that was no longer in use (fig. 6).



Fig. 6 - Detail of the floor in the baptismal room (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)

A suggestion has been made to identify the building to which the baptistery belongs as *Ecclesia S. Marci*, located in Tharros by Medieval tradition, connected to a small monks' settlement; the naming after the saint gave the name to the small peninsula.

■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Carlo Tronchetti

■ Bibliography

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