



UNIONE EUROPEA



REPUBBLICA ITALIANA



REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA  
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

# Archaeological area of Mount Sirai

Patrimonio culturale  
**SARDEGNA** Virtual Archaeology



## ■ The tophet

The tophet, the Phoenician sanctuary reserved for deceased infants (by periodical sacrifice according to some experts, while according to others they were babies born prematurely or aborted: however, in any case, the ceremony includes a purification sacrifice using fire) is proof of the urban culture and a growing population in the area, that involved Monte Sirai at the edge of the residential area, as in Phoenician town traditions (fig. 1).



**Fig. 1** - The settlement of Monte Sirai. Highlighted the position of the *tophet* (photo Unicity S.p.A.).

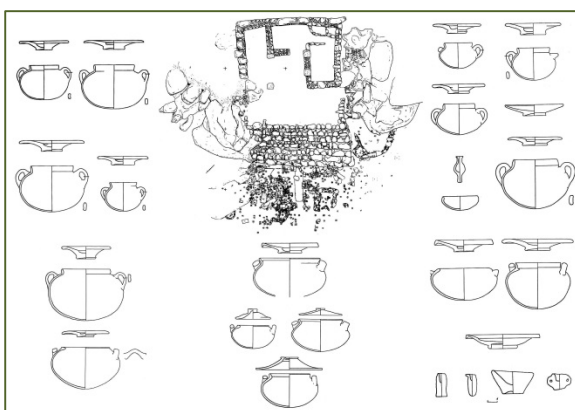
The digs indicate a presence from a short time before the mid 4th and throughout the 2nd century B.C. (fig. 2).





**Fig. 2** - The area of the *tophet* (GUIRGUIS 2013, fig. 7).

The sanctuary included a burial area where sophisticated urns containing the deceased children's ashes were covered by plates and placed in the ground (about four hundred have been found: fig. 3), with a sign (but not for all) comprising a stone stela of various types and symbols: Sometimes Egyptian style, others in Greek style or more linear, sometimes inside sacelli or tabernacles that were copies of temple architecture.).



**Figs. 3, 4** - Map of the *tophet* with distribution and types of urns (GUIRGUIS 2013, fig. 7); reproductions of urns and stelae of the tophet at Monte Sirai (photo MANCA DI MORES 2015)

Some steps lead to a ramp from the burial area (not the seven of the scenographic monumental staircase, reconstructed in the 1960s digs: fig. 5 which must be replaced by a new one),



**Fig. 5** - The *tophet* staircase (photo Unicity S.p.A.).

and finally to the remains still visible of the sanctuary, built on a platform and with three small rooms where holy sacrificial rituals with fire were carried out (figs. 7-8).



**Figs. 6, 7** - Rooms and fireplaces in the *tophet* sanctuary (photo Unicity S.p.A.).

## ■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Giuseppina Manca di Mores and Prof. Marcello Madau

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## La Sardegna cresce con l'Europa



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