

Necropolis of Is Pirixeddus

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ Sant'Antioco during Roman Times

Sardinia passed from the Carthaginian domination to the Roman one in 238 B.C. In spite of this, it is simple to see how clear the traces of the long-lasting Punic culture and tradition are, which had permeated the island in three centuries. There was cultural continuity between the Punic age and the Roman Republic. Not by chance has this period been called “Punic-Roman”, due to the hybrid nature in which the political structures brought from Urbe coincided and were integrated in the strongly Punic society on the island. After the end of Carthaginian rule, the Punic language and writing were still used for a long period and this also in official documents: one important piece of evidence comes, in fact, from an inscription in Punic letters from *Bithia* dated to the end of the 2nd or early years of the 3rd century A.D. This testifies the persistence of administrative positions of Punic origin, such as that of the *Sufeti* (figs. 1-2) Sant'Antioco also has evidence of the use of the Punic language in bilingual inscriptions (fig. 3).

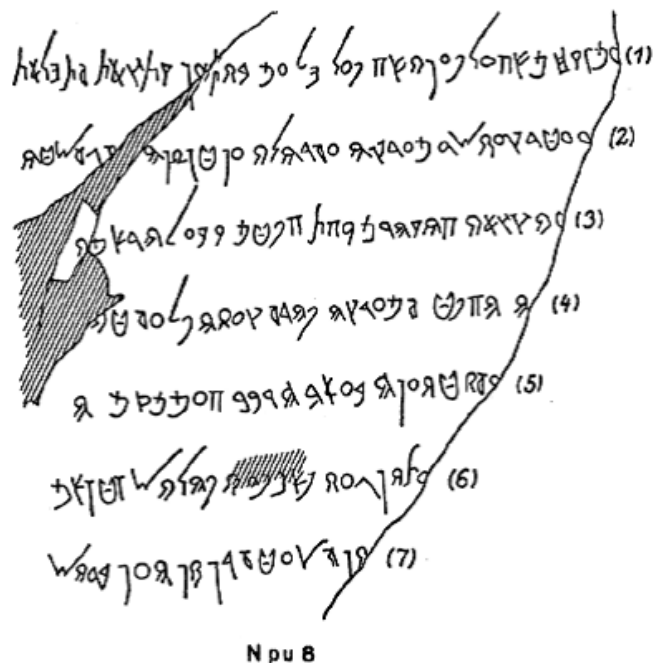


Fig. 1 - *Bithia* inscription (from Amadasi Guzzo 1967, no. Npu 8)



Fig. 2 - A coin from Cagliari on which the two Sufeti from 40 or 38 B.C. Aristo and Mutumbal Ricoce are represented, maybe the last two Sufeti of Karales and, on the back, the Templum Veneris (from http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/sardinia/caralis/RPC_624.jpg)

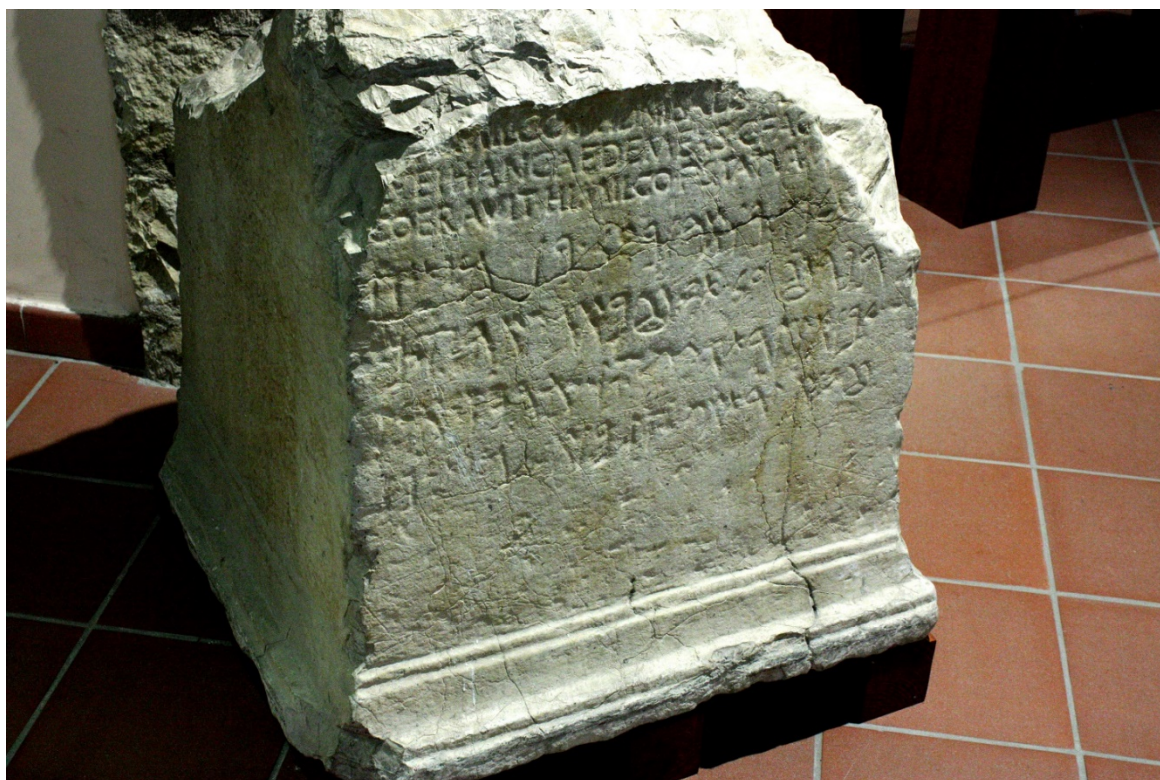


Fig. 3 - Bilingual Latin-Punic inscription kept at the Municipal Archaeological Museum "F. Barreca". (photo by M. Murgia).

The alternation between Roman and Carthaginian rule did not mean an uprooting of the island's inhabitants from their traditions and culture, that was rooted in the Phoenician element for several centuries. The Romans, on their part, usually integrated themselves with the conquered populations, respecting their language, customs and traditions.

In Sulky, Punic chamber tombs show that they were used without interruption for about two more centuries; the *Tophet* was still active in the Republican Age (fig. 4).



Fig. 4 - Detail from the tombs in the *tophet* of S'Antioco, with a bethel (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).

During this period, *Sulky* became a part of the games of power played between Pompeus and Caesar. In fact, in 47 B.C., the city declared itself in support of the former, welcoming the fleet of L. Nasidius, from Pompei, who had travelled from Massalia (now Marseilles)

into their port. Marseilles was in the hands of Pompeus' partisans, providing men and vehicles to the cause.

The city was later able to rise again to new glory, once again becoming an important centre for trading the metals extracted from the rich mining area of the Iglesiente: this activity earned the town the name of *Insula Plumbea* ("Island of lead"). The inclusion of Sardinia within the Roman economic sphere, during the Republican era, also led to an import of manufactured goods, particularly of ceramics, which arrived in Sardinia as wine containers and included amphorae (especially the *Dressel I* type) (fig. 5) Together with the wine and amphorae, black glazed pottery from Campania, Etruria and the centre of Italy were also imported to *Sulky*. These shapes were also imitated or became a model of inspiration for the creation of new original items.



Fig. 5 - Dressel I-type Amphora
(from http://mostre.museogalileo.it/images/vin/oggetti_944/VI.5_ph.PioFoglia%20Anfora%20inv.77664_944.jpg).

In the Imperial Age, under Claudius, the city was raised to the rank of *municipium*. For electoral and registration purposes, the inhabitants of Sulky, like those of *Karalis* (Cagliari) and *Cornus* (Santa Caterina di Pittinuri) were enrolled in the Quirina tribe. Until the 2nd century A.D., *Sulky* was prosperous, thanks to the tight-knit commercial network linked to North Africa, a link that never stopped, as can be seen by the episode of Sant'Antioco, Proto-martyr, Patron Saint of Sardinia, that the inhabitants still worship. The *passio* tells the story that the saint, originally from Numidia and doctor by profession, was exiled and died in the town that then took his name. From the point of view of material culture, the Imperial Age is full of evidence, mostly coming from the necropolis. Some types of commercial amphorae were used for *enchytrismòs* burials: there were Tripolitana I and II, Africana I and II and round amphorae from the late Imperial age that cover a period of time from the 2nd to the 4th century A.D. A large number of commonly used items were also found that were produced in the Roman provinces of North Africa: tableware and oil lamps, plates, beakers and other ceramic items for the kitchen, found as both burial items and in houses.

In the urban areas, again from the 2nd century B.C., the presence of a group of people of Jewish origin has also been attested and highlighted by tombs with Jewish inscriptions and symbols; these were perhaps among those who participated in the Jewish revolt which occurred at the end of the second century A.D. (fig. 6).





Fig. 6 - Decoration of a Jewish Arcosolium (from *Bartoloni 1989, fig. 44*).

■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Cinzia Olianas

■ Bibliographic abbreviations

AMADASI GUZZO 1967	M.G. AMADASI GUZZO, <i>Le iscrizioni fenicie e puniche delle colonie in Occidente</i> , Roma 1967.
BARTOLONI 1989	P. BARTOLONI, <i>Sulcis</i> , Roma 1989.
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