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REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA
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Port and coastal towers of Arbatax

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ The tower of San Gemiliano

Between the XVI and XVII century, in the central part of the East Sardinian coast, three lookout towers were built in Arbatax to defend and protect the territory against pirate raids. The tower called “di Largavista” was demolished in 1866 to make room for the Bellavista Lighthouse, while those of San Miguel and San Gemiliano are well preserved and can be visited (fig. 1).

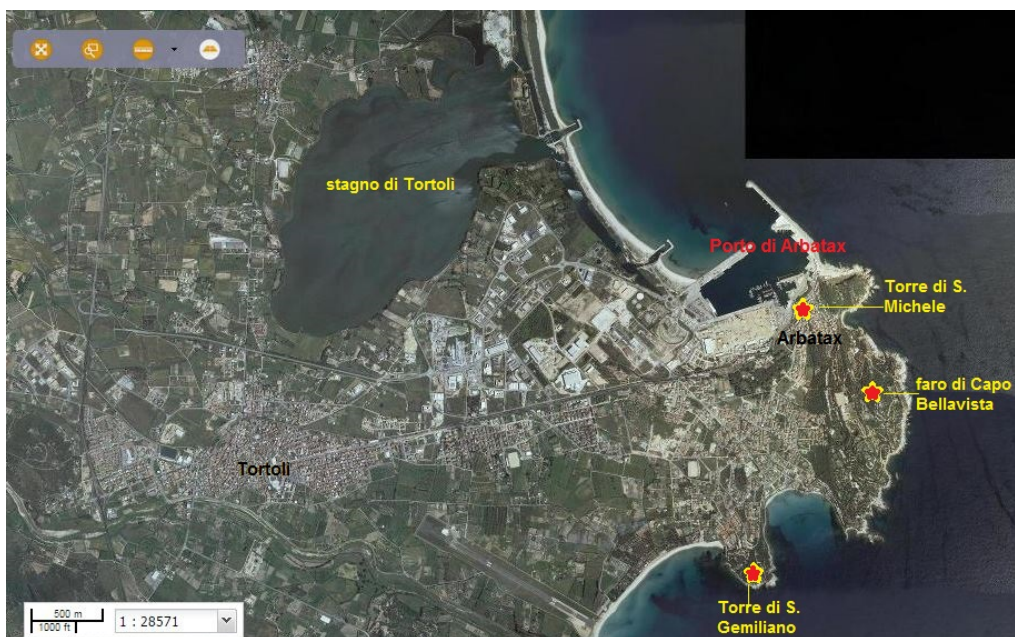


Fig. 1 - Orthophoto of the Tortoli-Arbatax zone with indication of coastal towers (from *Sardegnaoportale*; reworked by M. G. Arru).

The tower of San Gemiliano, built in 1587, was originally called “Taratasciar” in Arabic, the “thirteenth tower”. In the XVII century, it was named the tower of *Zacurru* and only acquired its current name in 1767.

It stands 43 metres above sea level, on a small headland guarding the bay of Porto Frailis, at about 4 Km from Tortoli. You can see for over 25 km from the building and can easily control the beaches and see the towers of Bari to the south and Bellavista to the north-east (figs. 2-3).



Fig. 2 - The relief with the tower of San Gemiliano seen from the the Bellavista Lighthouse (photo by Unicity S.p.A)

Built using local granite blocks, it has a cone-shaped, slender structure got from a diameter of 7m, for residual height of 12 m (figs. 3-4).





Fig. 3 - In the foreground the tower of S. Gemiliano; to the top right the Lighthouse of Capo Bellavista (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).



Fig. 4 - The tower of San Gemiliano seen from south-east (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).

The raised entrance, at about 4 metres up to guarantee the building better defence, could be reached by a rope or wooden ladder (fig. 5). The space the guards lived in was a small room covered by a dome measuring about 13 m², with two gun slits. Going up wooden stairs, through a trap door, you reached the terrace holding canons and where soldiers were protected behind a wall (that is a brick parapet present only on one side of the tower towards land). The tower was assigned an *alcaide*, that is a captain, two soldiers and an arsenal with six rifles, a cannon and two mortars. It was abandoned a few years after the Royal Administration of Towers was suppressed in 1842.



Fig. 5 - The tower of San Gemiliano seen from the east (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).

■ Credits

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La Sardegna cresce con l'Europa



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