



UNIONE EUROPEA



REPUBBLICA ITALIANA



REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA  
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

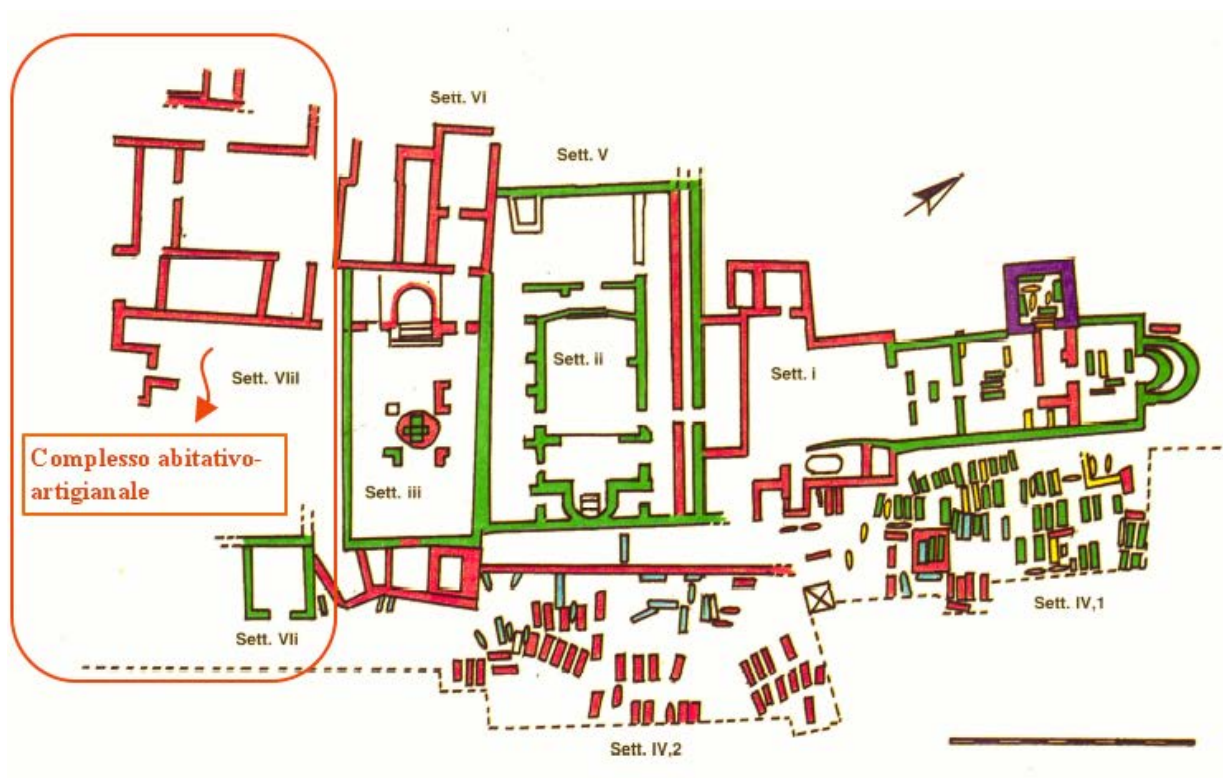
# The area of the Cornus basilicas

Patrimonio culturale  
**SARDEGNA** Virtual Archaeology



## ■ The Stone Specialist's workshop: architectural elements

South of the Columbaris rooms of worship there is the craftsmen's quarter, arranged around a central space, in addition to the probable bishop's residence (fig. 1)<sup>1</sup>. Among the presumed workshops a mason's workshop has been identified (fig. 2) on the south side of the courtyard, characterised by the presence of a counter on three sides, while the latter was occupied by a staircase, which seemed to have been used up to the 7th century A.D.<sup>2</sup>



**Fig. 1** - Area of the Columbaris basilicas with an indication of the dwelling-craftsmen's complex (Graphic reproduction F. Collu, by *Cornus* I.1, p. 200, table II).

<sup>1</sup> *Cornus* I.1, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> MARTORELLI 1999, p. 582



**Fig. 2** - The stone specialist's workshop (by *Cornus* l.1, p. 44, fig. 27).

The belief that the area was used for this function came from the presence inside of stone material including pieces of rough stone, mostly architectural elements<sup>3</sup>, roughly hewn<sup>4</sup>, others reused<sup>5</sup>, and others still ready to be used<sup>6</sup>. There are various types of items found: there are funeral elements such as sarcophagi, fragments of religious furnishings (candelabrum and relative columns)<sup>7</sup> and architectural items (columns, capitals...)<sup>8</sup>. Some similar

---

<sup>3</sup> Some elements show the same decoration as the ones found inside the room-baptistry and can be compared with the ones found in the San Lussorio *martirium* regarding the 7th century basilica (SPANU 1998, pages 73, 102; SPANU 2007, page 1452).

<sup>4</sup> A roughly hewn table was found in a store inside the workshop (Martorelli 1999, page 582).

<sup>5</sup> An example is the Roman era bust reworked to obtain a never completed shelf (CORONEO 2002, p. 104).

<sup>6</sup> Among these, there were also some sarcophagi (MARTORELLI 1999, p. 582).

<sup>7</sup> CORONEO 2002, p. 104.

<sup>8</sup> SPANU 1998, p. 102; MARTORELLI 1999, p. 582; CORONEO 2002, p. 104; SPANU 2007, p. 1452, figs. 6-8; CORONEO 2011, p. 87.

fragments to the latter, and therefore from the same workshop, were found in the northern pastophorium of the baptistery<sup>9</sup> where they could probably have been ready for use during the restoration of one or both rooms of worship in the Romanesque church<sup>10</sup> - never built - or, according to one theory, placed in the *triumphalis* arch of the cathedral and reduced to fragments by a collapse<sup>11</sup>, or, again, inserted into the arches or in the entablature of the *tegurium*<sup>12</sup>.

The items are separated into the ones that carry inscriptions, the ones with engraved geometric designs (fig. 3) and lastly the ones with sculpted decoration. Some limestone fragments belonging to the first group refer to a votive inscription - which is missing in parts - that reads *votum fecerunt*, that comes into the formula of inscriptions and the names of the Virgin Mary (fig. 4), Saint John and Saint Paul. It is possible that one of the three basilicas in the Columbaris complex was dedicated to each saint: the cathedral to Mary, the baptistery to St John the Baptist and the cemetery basilica to St Paul<sup>13</sup>. Several experts have given their opinion about the dating of this inscription: P. Testini states it was a period between the 6th and 9th<sup>14</sup>.

---

<sup>9</sup> Some experts report the information that they were found in the bishop's room (TESTINI 1972, p. 560).

<sup>10</sup> During the 1970s, G. Maetzke proposed the sculpted furnishings such as the one relative to the rebuilding of the church in Romanesque style, which took place at least in the 10th century A.D. (MAETZKE 1971, p. 316). After acquiring the most recent dig data it is not possible to accept this hypothesis, that is incompatible with the chronology of the latest phase of life of the site (end of 7th - beginning of 8th century A.D.), (*Cornus* I.1, p. 79).

<sup>11</sup> This devastation may have occurred due to structural collapse when the room was abandoned, or due to destruction by war (Testini 1972, p. 560, note 51).

<sup>12</sup> SPANU 1998, p. 102; SPANU 2007, p. 1452, figs. 6-8; CORONEO 2011, p. 87.

<sup>13</sup> MAETZKE 1971, p. 316; MASTINO 1984, pages 165-171; *Cornus* I.1, p. 46; SANTONI 2002, pages 279-280. The dedication to St Paul for the cemetery room would be confirmed in the finding of the bronze statue in tomb 107, in the cemetery area of Columbaris. For the statue and reflections about it, please see PANI ERMINI 1990b; SANTONI 2002.

<sup>14</sup> TESTINI 1972, p. 560; PANI ERMINI, ZUCCA 1989, p. 280; PANI ERMINI 1990b, p. 25.



**Fig. 3** - Architectural elements: part of the inscription in the foreground (from Maetzke 1971, p. 335, fig. 18).



**Fig. 4** - Fragment of the inscription in which the letters interpreted as "Sancta Maria" appear. (from Mastino 1984, p. 167, fig. 25).

The elements with engraved decorations are characterised by limestone blocks with red trachyte geometric inserts (fig. 5) that can be compared with the ones found in the San Lussorio *martyrium* and relating to the 7th century basilica<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> SPANU 1998, pages 73, 102; SPANU 2007, p. 1452.



**Fig. 5** - Architectural elements in limestone with red trachyte geometric inlaid pieces  
(from Spanu 1998, p. 103).

Lastly, some sculpted decoration elements including a capitals-impot, the shelves with an acanthus leaf, a capital with fish, a roughly hewn shelf in the body of a statue and a capital-impot that keeps the decoration of the item it was made from on its long side<sup>16</sup>.

A capital-impot in marble has an acanthus leaf with an upside down top, of which only the shape, the return and the engraved nerves of the Justinian plant remain and due to

---

<sup>16</sup>CAPRARA 1986, p. 172; CORONEO 2002, p. 260, fig. 18; CORONEO 2011, p. 268, sh. 4.21.

these characteristics and based on comparisons<sup>17</sup>, can be dated between the 6th and 7th centuries.

---

<sup>17</sup> FARRIS 1993, pages 131-136. Similar capitals come from San Gavino in Porto Torres (CORONEO 2002, pages 258-259, fig. 15; CORONEO 2011, p. 268, sh. 4.21), San Saturnino di Cagliari (CORONEO 2002, p. 259, fig. 16; CORONEO 2011, p. 268, sh. 4.21), San Giovanni battista di San Sperate (CORONEO 2011, p. 266, sh. 4.19) and Sant'Antioco di *Sulci* (CORONEO 2002, p. 260, fig. 17; CORONEO 2011, p. 267, sh. 4.20).



## ■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Claudia Cocco and Dr. Francesca Collu

## ■ Bibliographic abbreviations

- Ai confini dell'impero* P. Corrias, S. Cosentino (a cura di), *Ai confini dell'impero: storia, arte e archeologia della Sardegna bizantina*, Cagliari 2002.
- Caprara 1986 R. Caprara, *Tarda Antichità e Medioevo*, in Lo schiavo 1986, pp. 169-184.
- CNAC II *Atti del II Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia Cristiana* (Matera, Venosa, Melfi, Massafra, Taranto, Canosa, Foggia 25-31 maggio 1969), Roma 1971.
- CNAC IX R. M. Bonacasa Carra, E. Vitale (a cura di), *La cristianizzazione in Italia fra Tardoantico e Altomedioevo. Atti del IX Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia Cristiana* (Agrigento 20-25 novembre 2004), II, Palermo 2007.
- Cornus I.1* A. M. Giuntella, *Cornus I.1. L'area cimiteriale orientale = Mediterraneo tardoantico e medievale. Scavi e ricerche*, 13. 1, Oristano 1999.
- Coroneo 2002 R. Coroneo, *La cultura artistica*, in *Ai confini dell'impero*, Cagliari 2002, pp. 99-107.
- Coroneo 2011 R. Coroneo, *Arte in Sardegna dal IV alla metà dell'XI secolo*, Cagliari 2011.

- Farris 1993 G. Farris, *Le aree paleocristiane di Cornus*, Oristano 1993.
- Insulae Christi* P. G. Spanu (a cura di), con la collaborazione di M. C. Oppo e A. Boninu, *Insulae Christi. Il cristianesimo primitivo in Sardegna, Corsica e Baleari = Mediterraneo tardoantico e medievale. Scavi e ricerche* 16, Oristano 2002.
- Lo schiavo 1986 F. Lo schiavo (a cura di), *Il Museo Sanna in Sassari*, Sassari 1986.
- Maetzke 1971 G. Maetzke, *Scavi e scoperte nel campo dell'archeologia cristiana negli ultimi dieci anni in Toscana e in Sardegna*, in CNAC II, 1969, pp. 311-336.
- Martorelli 1999 R. Martorelli, *Riflessioni sulle attività produttive nell'età tardoantica e altomedievale: esiste un artigianato "ecclesiastico"?*, in RAC, LXXV, pp. 571-596.
- Mastino 1984 A. Mastino, *Cornus nella storia degli studi con un catalogo delle iscrizioni rinvenute nel territorio del comune di Cuglieri*, Cagliari 1984.
- Pani Ermini 1990b L. Pani Ermini, *Un piccolo bronzo da Cornus raffigurante S. Paolo*, Roma 1989, in RenPontAcc, 61, (1988/89), 1990, pp. 3-25.
- Pani Ermini, Zucca 1989 L. Pani Ermini, R. Zucca, *L'età paleocristiana e altomedievale: la produzione artigianale e l'epigrafia*, in V. Santoni (a cura di), *Il Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Cagliari*, Sassari 1989, pp. 247-286.
- Santoni 2002 V. Santoni, *Una statuina in bronzo raffigurante San Paolo*

*dall'area cimiteriale di Cornus, in Insulae Christi, pp. 277-280.*

Spanu 1998 P. G. Spanu, *La Sardegna bizantina tra VI e VII secolo*, Oristano 1998.

Spanu 2007 P. G. Spanu, *Le sedi diocesane della Sardinia in età bizantina: alcune note d'aggiornamento*, in CNAC IX, 2, pp. 1449-1468.

Testini 1972 P. Testini, *Il complesso paleocristiano di Cornus (Regione Columbaris) in Sardegna*, in *Actas del VIII Congreso Internacional de Arqueologia Cristiana* (Barcelona, 5-11 octubre 1969), Barcellona 1972, pp. 537-561.

## ■ Periodicals and magazines

**RAC** *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana*, Città del Vaticano, I, 1924 e ss.

**RenPontAcc** *Atti della Pontificia Accademia romana di archeologia. Rendiconti*, Città del Vaticano, I, 1923 e ss.



UNIONE EUROPEA



REPUBBLICA ITALIANA



**REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA**  
**REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA**

## La Sardegna cresce con l'Europa



UNIONE EUROPEA

Progetto cofinanziato dall'Unione Europea  
Programma Operativo FESR 2007-2013

FESR - Fondo Europeo di Sviluppo Regionale - Asse I, Linea di Attività 1.2.3.a