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REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

The area of the Cornus basilicas

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



The Byzantines and the government of Sardinia

The word “Byzantine” comes from the ancient name of the Greek city *Byzantion*, founded in the 7th century B.C. On the site where Istanbul in Turkey now stands, on the Bosphorus (fig. 1)

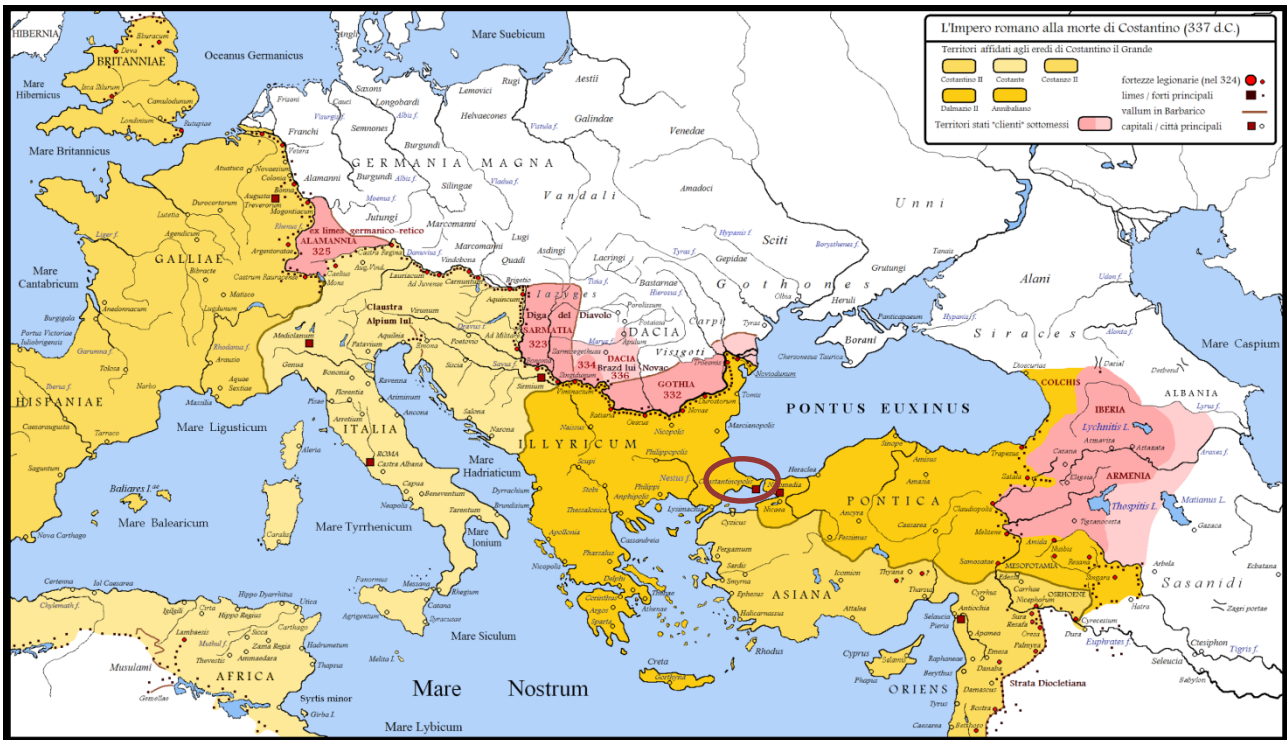


Fig. 1 - The Roman empire at the death of Constantine and indication of Constantinople (from http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Costantinopoli#/media/File:Costantino_nord-limes_png.PNG).

When in 324 Constantine decided to build a new town, he chose this site and in 330 A.D. He established the new capital of the empire there (fig. 2) with the name of *Nea Roma* (New Rome), or alternatively, Constantinople (City of Constantine), which followed the inheritance of Rome and its inhabitants called themselves Romeians, with their country as the Kingdom of the Romans.



Fig. 2 - Ideal reconstruction of the city of Constantinople, founded by Constantine I on the ancient Byzantium (from http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Costantinopoli#/media/File:Bizansist_touchup.jpg).

After the Western empire was separated from the Eastern one in 395, the latter extended and lasted until 1453, when it was conquered by the Ottomans.

During the reign of Emperor Justinian (527-565), in the attempt to win back the territories of the ancient western empire (fig. 3), the Byzantine had managed to take Sardinia from the Vandals in 534: it became a part of the Byzantine empire, becoming one of the seven provinces that made up the prefecture of Africa.

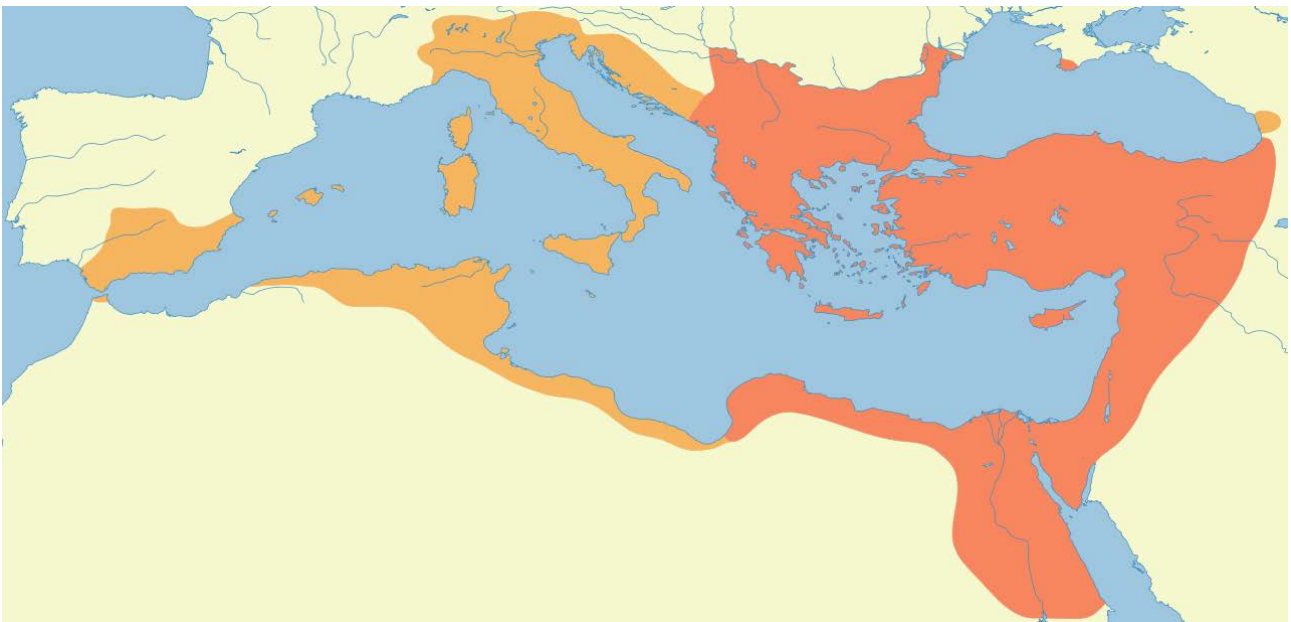


Fig. 3 - Map of the Byzantine Empire: ■ Before Justinian I (527); ■ After his death (565), (from http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giustiniano_I).

As of that date, the military command of the island was held by a *dux Sardiniae* with its headquarters «in the mountains where the Barbaricini were thought to live», place assumed to be Fordongianus. It exercised military functions, handled organisation and the defence efficiency of fortresses (*castra*) spread over the area, especially in the most exposed centres and the most important ones like *Karales* (Cagliari), *Sulci* (Sant'Antioco - fig. 4), *Tharros*, *Forum Traiani* (Fordongianus), Olbia, *Turris Libisonis* (Porto Torres).

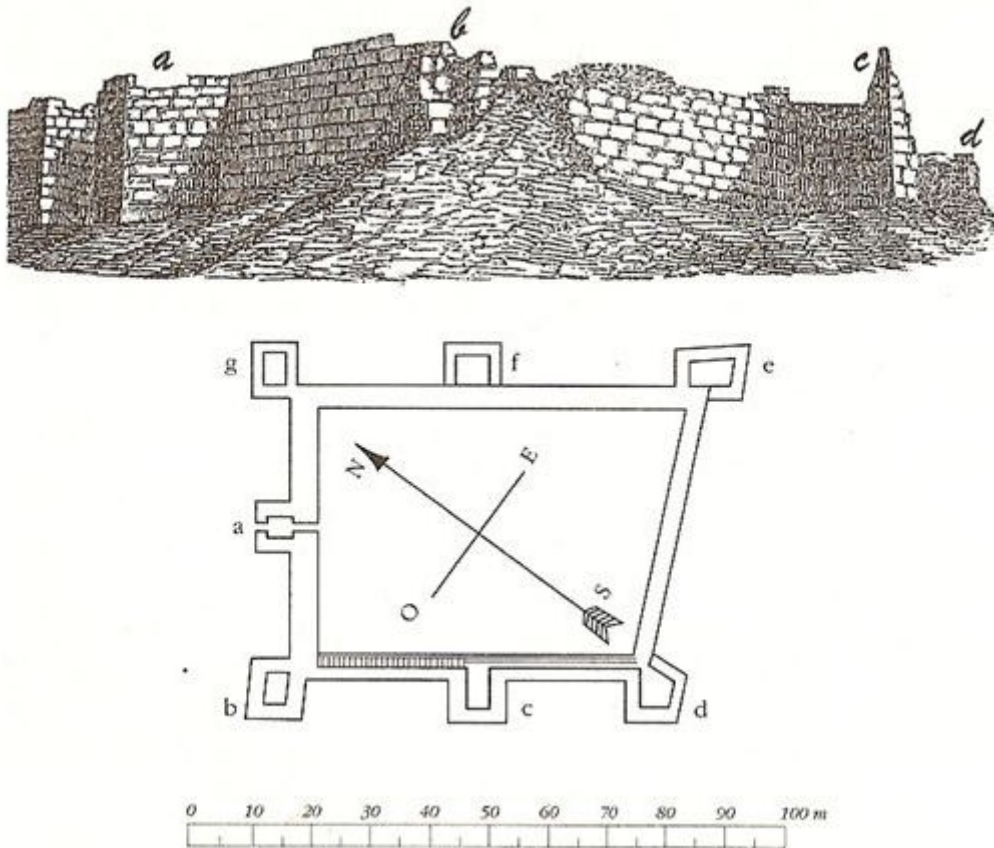


Fig. 4 - Perspective and floor plan of the Antioco *castrum* (LA MARMORA 1997, p. 258, fig. 6).

In 687 Giustiniano II ordered, perhaps for safety reasons, that the *dux* be transferred to Cagliari where the *praeses*, official holding administrative functions, was already based. At times of particular danger, the two figures became a single official - called *iudex provinciae or archon* - charged with handling threats. Progressively, that figure increased his autonomy until the Districts were slowly created and the Byzantine government came to an end in Sardinia.

■ Credits

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

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La Sardegna cresce con l'Europa



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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