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## Indigenous Settlements and Punic Presence in Roman Republican Northern Sardinia

### Introduction

During the Republican period, continuity of occupation in Nuragic settlements is one of the most important phenomena connected to the diffusion of Punic and Roman cultures in Sardinia. In fact, archaeological evidence dating to that period can be found in most Nuragic sites throughout the region<sup>1</sup>. Particularly in Northern Sardinia the number of Nuragic villages occupied up to the Roman period is far larger than that of urban and rural settlements identified as Punic and Roman<sup>2</sup>. For that reason, the continuity of occupation of villages appears to be especially significant with respect to the territorial organization of N Sardinia from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE.

Generally, the occupation of Nuragic villages in the Republican period is testified by surface finds and labelled as a "Punic-Roman phase"<sup>3</sup>. It is currently very difficult to evaluate how important the impact of the Punic and Roman presence was on the Nuragic settlements, as evidence relating to this period is often only mentioned by scholars without giving further information concerning quantitative or typological data. This paper illustrates two case studies of the Nuragic sites Santu Antine and Sant'Imbenia, situated in NW Sardinia (fig.1). They are both excavated villages that provide unpublished finds from stratigraphic contexts. The analysis of the material evidence leads me to conclude that they were probably inhabited down to



Fig. 1 – The Santu'Antine and Sant'Imbenia sites in NW Sardinia.

<sup>1</sup> On the re-use of nuraghi in the Punic and Roman period, PALA 1990; see also PUDDU 2002. On the (re)occupation of Nuragic villages in Central W Sardinia, VAN DOMMELEN 1998, 600; for Northwest Sardinia, MORAVETTI 2000, 109.

<sup>2</sup> Olbia and Bosa are to be mentioned as Punic urban settlements; Padria is supposed to be as well. Sa Tanca 'e sa Mura (Monteleone Roccadoria) have been identified as a Punic rural settlement, MADAU 1997a. For a general view on Punic Sardinia, BARTOLONI 2005, 43-60.

<sup>3</sup> Actually, such definition can also refer to a longer period, including the centuries of Roman Imperial occupation.

the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. Furthermore, my analysis contributes to the definition of the chronology of these two important sites in the Punic and Roman Republican period.

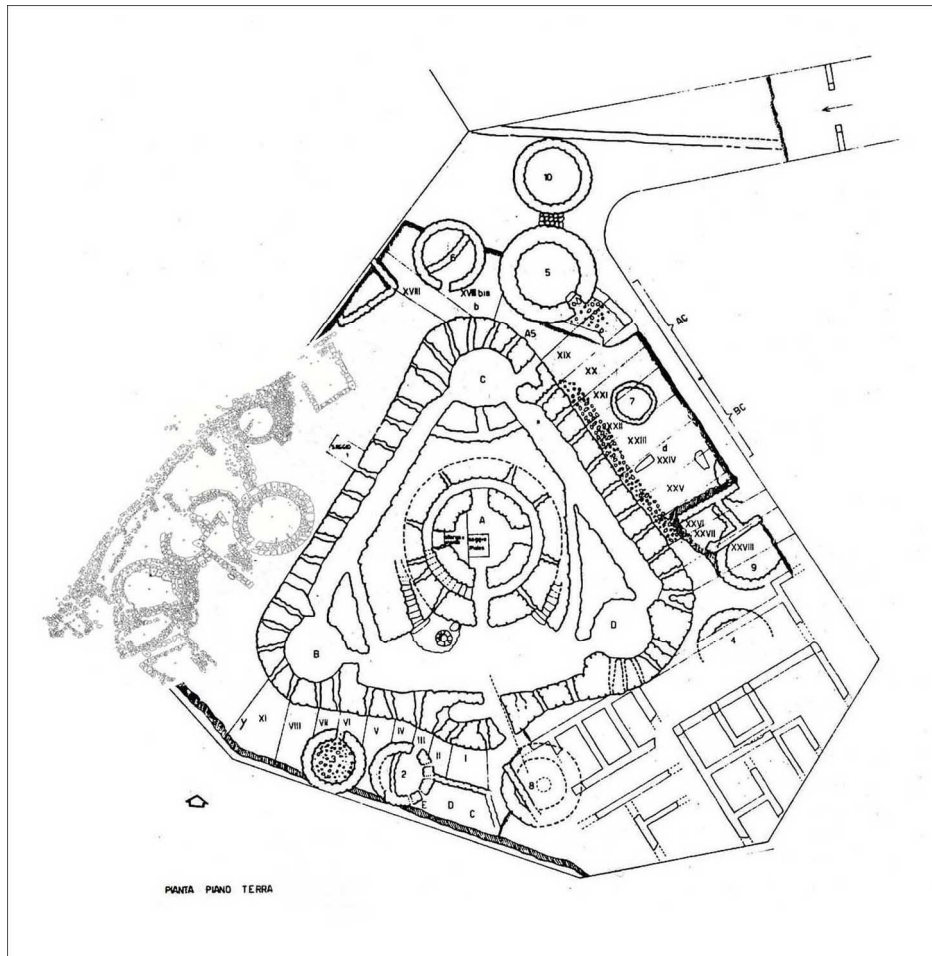


Fig. 2 – Santu Antine Nuragic village; left, the area excavated in 2003-2004 (modified from CONTU 1988, fig. 7; and PIANU 2006, fig. 69).

### ***Santu Antine Nuragic Village***

The village is located in a fertile plain area of the Meilogu region (inner NW Sardinia), abounding in rivers and springs (fig. 2). The nuraghe was first excavated in the 1930's and some squared rooms were discovered in the SE sector of the village, these were identified as a 'villa rustica' dating to the mid-late Imperial period<sup>4</sup>. The surrounding village was repeatedly investigated in 1960's, 1980's and 1990's<sup>5</sup>. The latest excavation campaign took place in 2003-2004 in the western sector of the Nuragic village; in the meantime, during a conservation project involving the nuraghe, a few limited areas inside the monument were excavated<sup>6</sup>.

To sum up, two main chronological phases have been identified at Santu Antine: the first one dating from the construction (15<sup>th</sup> century BCE) to the abandonment of the nuraghe (10<sup>th</sup>- 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE), probably due to a partial collapse of the structure; the second one testifies the occupation of the village from

<sup>4</sup> TARAMELLI 1939, 65-6.

<sup>5</sup> CONTU 1988, 7-12; BAFICO ET AL. 1997b.

<sup>6</sup> CAMPUS 2006, 65-72.

the Final Bronze (12<sup>th</sup> century BCE) to the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE<sup>7</sup>. Besides the Nuragic phase, the Roman period was also emphasised, through specific structures such as the rural villa excavated by Taramelli in 1933 and the storehouses located in the northern sector, dating to the Imperial period<sup>8</sup>.

Despite the number of field investigations carried out at Santu Antine, both overall studies concerning the nuraghe and its village and integral editions of finds are still lacking. Concerning this, most scholars complain that the greater part of material evidence found in the former excavations does not come from stratigraphical contexts. This is also true for the selection of imported ceramics dating from the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE to the Roman period, published in 1988 by Madau and Manca di Mores<sup>9</sup>. The uncertain provenance of these and similar ceramics at Santu Antine has meant that they have been only stressed for their chronological and geographical values. In fact, they are mainly considered as proof of the cultural contacts and exchanges that may have affected the Nuragic settlement throughout most of the 1<sup>st</sup> millenium.

Starting from the results of the former archaeological investigations, the 2003-2004 campaign aimed at excavating the Nuragic structures, and analysing the material evidence altogether. Excavations were carried out on three circular huts (12-14) of the Nuragic village as well as a few squared rooms and straight walls (possibly relating to the village modifications carried out in the Roman period). Both of these were in the western sector. Furthermore, the overall study of the ceramic finds was initiated<sup>10</sup>.

Even if still incomplete, the ceramic analysis has provided a further contribution to the historical reconstruction of the village's life, particularly during the Roman Republican period. Firstly, the huts of the western sector appear to have been modified by building straight walls and squared rooms during the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE; secondly, this sector of the village demonstrates continuous occupation only until the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, as testified by the absence of *sigillata italica*.

Moreover, the analysis of ceramics found at Santu Antine in mid-late Republican contexts has shown that Nuragic pottery dominates until the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE when compared to both Punic and Roman ones<sup>11</sup>. The presence of Punic pottery in Republican contexts appears to be less significant for the amount of fragments than was expected. In fact, only ten Punic amphorae fragments dating to the 5<sup>th</sup>- 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE<sup>12</sup> and one fragment of a black-glaze *guttus* probably produced in SW Sardinia between 350-250 BCE<sup>13</sup>, have been identified<sup>14</sup>. Unlike the published material from the previous excavations, evidence from the 2003-2004 campaign has not revealed ceramics between the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC<sup>15</sup>. Finally, if we consider the total quantity of Punic sherds including some plain and red band decorated fragments in the mid-Republican contexts, it seems to be less relevant than the Roman ones; in fact, the ratio of Punic pottery to Roman is 1:2<sup>16</sup>.

In the period examined (5<sup>th</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE), archaeological evidence reveals that Santu Antine was involved in trade networks including products from Central Italy and the northern Tyrrhenian area. Connections with the Punic area (S-SW Sardinia and probably Sicily) seem to have occurred as well. In such a perspective, the lack of Attic or generally Greek ceramics at Santu Antine, except for the pre-Campana

<sup>7</sup> CAMPUS 2006, 96-99.

<sup>8</sup> These structures were excavated in 1990-1994 and partly dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, BAFICO ET AL. 1997b.

<sup>9</sup> It includes 55 fragments on the whole, MADAU 1988, MANCA DI MORES 1988.

<sup>10</sup> Preliminary information on the 2003-2004 excavation campaign is available, see PIANU 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Referring to stratigraphies dating to the 4<sup>th</sup>- 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE, the percentage of Nuragic pottery varies from 88% to 55% of the total amount of sherds.

<sup>12</sup> They can be partly identified as belonging to the Maña B type, Bartoloni's Forma B5 (5<sup>th</sup> century BCE). The fabrics of the remaining fragments are similar to some amphorae from Terralba (Oristano) which result as having been produced in Sicily, as suggested by P. VAN DOMMELEN (personal communication).

<sup>13</sup> MOREL type 8114 a1.

<sup>14</sup> The whole group of twenty fragments dating to the 5<sup>th</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE also includes three fragments of Massaliote (4<sup>th</sup> century BCE) and Etruscan amphorae (Py type 4A, 450-250 BCE); six fragments of pre-Campana (Morel type 1122) and central-Italic black glaze pottery (Morel type 1111-1113, 1323, 1731, 2621). On the pre-Campana productions, MOREL 1981, 49.

<sup>15</sup> Actually, the selection of 34 fragments from the 1960's excavations published by Madau includes Eastern-Greek, Attic, Etrusco-Corinthian and Phoenician-Punic ceramics, MADAU 1988.

<sup>16</sup> It has been estimated from one sample of different layers.

fragment, appears to confirm that the indigenous site had weaker relations with the eastern Mediterranean area in that period<sup>17</sup>.

On the other hand Nuragic pottery appears to prevail over the imported vessels and persists throughout the Roman period. General conclusions that the indigenous community was transformed through the Punic expansion and later Roman conquest are not supported by the material evidence which suggests instead more gradual and non traumatic changes.

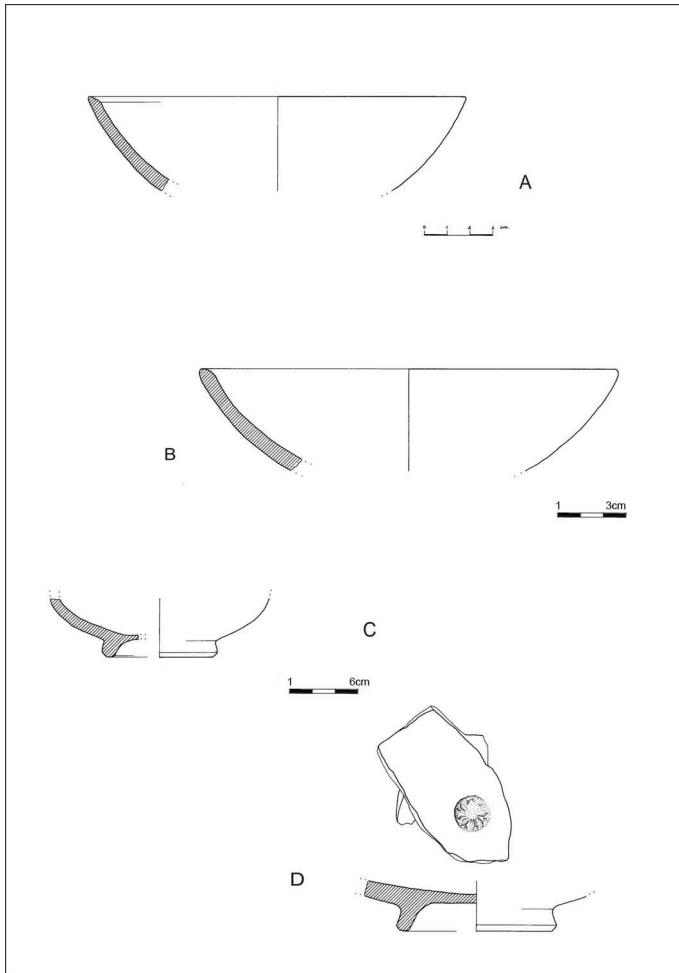


Fig. 3 – Black-glaze ware from Santu Antine, 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE;  
d) Roman Republican lamp, 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> centuries B.C.  
(2003-2004 campaign; drawings by the Author).

are associated with central-Italic thin-wall ware<sup>20</sup> (Southern Etruria, second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE), late Graeco-Italic and Dressel c1 amphorae. In the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, Campana A is still documented, although Campana B appears to prevail.

As already mentioned, the absence of Attic ware during the 5<sup>th</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE has been confirmed by the 2003-2004 excavation campaign<sup>21</sup>. It is mainly distributed in SW Sardinia, while in the northern region

### *Black Glaze Pottery (4<sup>th</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup> Centuries BCE)*

In the study of the Santu Antine Republican contexts, the analysis of black-glaze pottery<sup>18</sup> showed that it had a fundamental role in highlighting cultural relationships involving NW Sardinia, particularly in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE. Specifically, 36% of fragments have been identified as being produced in the half 4<sup>th</sup>- 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE, while 57% is dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE and 7% to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE.

By the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, wares produced in the central-Italic area (Etruria, Latium) predominate in comparison to Punic pottery (fig. 3a, c). Their presence significantly increased during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE; in particular, southern Etruscan products can be identified in the first half of the century. Besides them, late Graeco-Italic amphorae dating to the latest decades of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century/mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE and one fragment of the 'tipo biconico dell'Esquilino' lamp (180-50 BCE)<sup>19</sup> were also found (fig. 3d).

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE Campana A is increasingly more consistent, especially in the second half of the century. During the same period, Volaterranae wares from N Etruria (first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE) and Campana B probably from Etruria itself, are also present. In late Republican contexts, black-glaze ceramics

<sup>17</sup> On the absence of Attic black-glazed pottery at Santu Antine in the same period, MADAU 1988, 255.

<sup>18</sup> This is the most relevant amount of Republican fragments found at Santu Antine.

<sup>19</sup> The type might have been produced at Rome from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, PAVOLINI 1981, 144-149.

<sup>20</sup> Because of their poor conditions, fragments can be just identified as 'boccalini'.

<sup>21</sup> See supra N. 17.

its presence appears sporadic, excluding only the urban centre of Olbia where it seems to be more consistent<sup>22</sup>. Nevertheless, a special connection between N Sardinia and Central Italy (Etruria, Latium) seems to have characterized the northern parts of the region at least from the half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, as testified by the archaeological evidence from Santu Antine.

Even though the urban centre of Olbia on the northeast coast of Sardinia has revealed itself to have been involved in a trade network including both the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Phoenician and Punic cities in S-SW Sardinia, its hinterland and NW Sardinia seem to have been only marginally reached by Attic products. Furthermore, Punic black-glaze pottery at Santu Antine, which refers to the Western Mediterranean area (Sardinia, Sicily) during the period from the mid-4<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE, is only represented by few sherds. In fact, the overall amount of Punic ware has revealed itself to be less than the Italic black-glaze pottery<sup>23</sup>.

Among the black-glaze productions the presence of wares apparently imitating central-Italic and Campanian A types (particularly, bowls and plates), should be mentioned; from which they differ in fabric and coating<sup>24</sup>. The hypothesis about the existence of local imitation productions is also based on some sherds clearly showing firing faults.

Local and regional black-glaze productions imitating Etruria-Latium wares and Campanian A have already been identified at Karalis<sup>25</sup> and Olbia.<sup>26</sup> Specifically, Santu Antine black-glaze pottery can be compared with similar types found at Karalis, which are thought to have been produced locally during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE by ateliers operating at local or regional level.

However, the fabrics of Santu Antine's black-glazed pottery differ from those from Karalis, so that at present their direct provenance from Southern Sardinia is to be excluded. As these ceramic fragments have only been examined macroscopically, nothing more than an hypothesis can be suggested at present. As some waste fragments were found, it can be assumed that local or regional ateliers existed in N-NW Sardinia as well.

A local production of black-glaze ware imitating Campanian A can be identified at Karalis in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE<sup>27</sup>. On the other

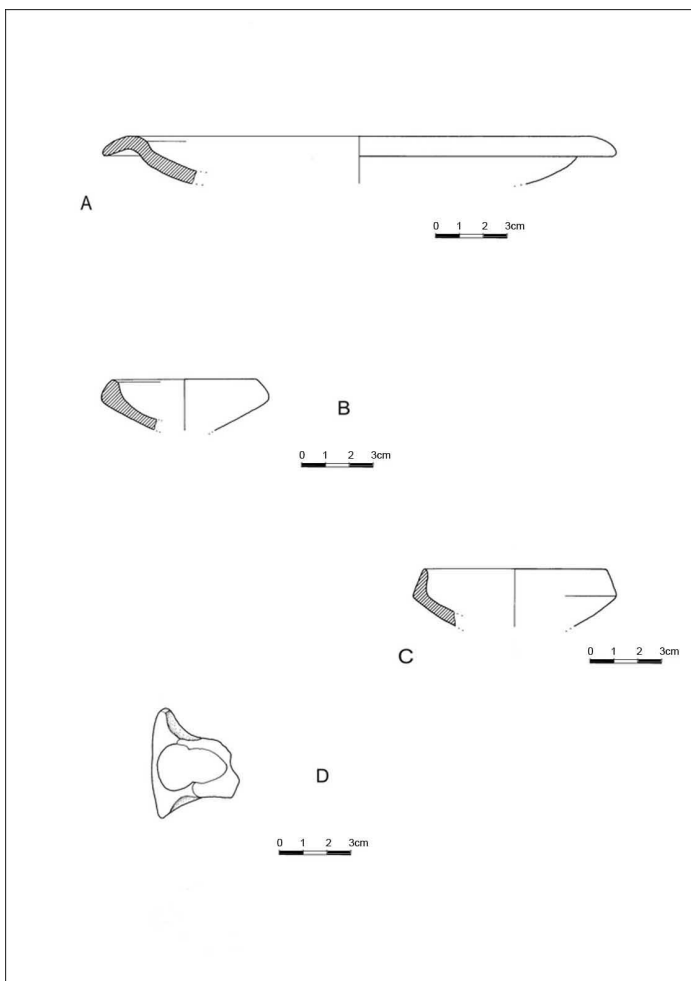


Fig. 4 – Black-glaze ware from Santu Antine, 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE, d) grey fabric fragment (2003-2004 campaign; drawings by the Author).

<sup>22</sup> CORRIAS 2005, 152.

<sup>23</sup> See supra N. 16.

<sup>24</sup> Ceramics similar to Morel type 1122, 1271, 1313, 2686, 2784, 2787 (fig 4c), 2974 (fig. 4a-b) as local/regional pottery.

<sup>25</sup> TRONCHETTI 1991, 2001.

<sup>26</sup> SANCIU 1998b. have been identified

<sup>27</sup> A few ceramics defined as local products may be similar to Campanian A vases (Morel type 1312, 2614, 2645, 2646, 2648, 2784), TRONCHETTI 2001, 285-288.

hand, Campana A fragments found at Santu Antine have been identified by shape, not by fabric. In fact, only a macroscopic examination has revealed the similarity of the Santu Antine fabrics (1-5)<sup>28</sup> to Campana A, so the identification of the production can only be hypothetical. However, many other types referring to different productions<sup>29</sup>, result as being made of the same fabric as Santu Antine 1 and 5; for this reason, these can be considered as used by local ateliers. The identification of Campana B production was not so problematic, because the diffusion of local imitations in the Mediterranean area is already known by the variety of fabrics used<sup>30</sup>.

Grey fabric is considered typical of Sardinian black-glaze productions;<sup>31</sup> it seems to have been used by ateliers situated in the S and SW region<sup>32</sup>. Only 10% of black-glaze pottery found at Santu Antine is made of grey fabric (e.g. Morel type 235a, fig. 4d), for which a probable provenance from the area of Karalis can be conjectured. Nevertheless, it cannot be excluded that local ateliers using grey fabric were located in N Sardinia as well, even if any specific production has not yet been identified.

To sum up, black-glaze pottery found at Santu Antine shows that the Nuragic village had a special connection to Central Italy (Etruria, Latium) from the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, while any exchange with Punic areas of Central-Western and Southern Sardinia seems to have been less important. Campanian A is confirmed as being widely spread throughout N Sardinia as well; however, the traditional idea of a massive presence of this imported pottery needs to be re-dimensioned with the evidence of imitation products presumably made by local or regional ateliers.

#### *Santu Antine Nuragic Village: Conclusion*

The material evidence from Santu Antine referring to the Roman Republican period, especially black-glaze pottery, is fundamental for dating the structural changes that affected the village in the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE and have been identified in the few straight walls transforming the Nuragic huts. If we try to attribute these structural modifications of the village to the Punic or Roman influence, it should be remembered that the few pieces of pottery do not provide evidence of a large impact of Punic culture. In addition it should be pointed out that a stable and systematic occupation of the territory by Carthaginians in Northern Sardinia as a whole is still to be definitively demonstrated.

The western sector of the village seems to have been abandoned by the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. The settlement might have been moved south-eastward to where the remains of the 'villa rustica' are still visible. The building was erected on the pre-existing Nuragic huts; it could have happened in the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, most probably around the end of the century, after the abandonment of the western sector of the village.

Until now, the villa has been generally dated to the Imperial period.<sup>33</sup> According to the most recent data however, the village might have started to be transformed into a "villa rustica" from the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. In this case, the introduction of the villa system implying an organizational and managerial pattern for land resources, may be dated to the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE rather than to the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. Activities connected to farming are documented throughout the centuries until the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, as demonstrated by the storehouses located in the northern sector of the village.

The transformation process of the Nuragic village during the Republican period does not appear to be characterized by sharp interruptions or destruction, but it seems to have essentially been a gradual, pacific change. It may depend on the fact that the village continued to exist as an agricultural settlement as in the Nuragic period, aiming at exploiting land resources. By assuming that Carthaginians and/or Romans had any strategy of control in the territory of Santu Antine during the Republican period, it can be

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<sup>28</sup> Fabric classification is due to the Author. See COLOMBI 2007, 114-118; 128-129.

<sup>29</sup> For example, central-Italic productions (Morel type 1122, 2784, 2787).

<sup>30</sup> For B and B-oides productions, MOREL 1981, 46-47.

<sup>31</sup> MOREL 1981, 50; TRONCHETTI 1996, 32-34.

<sup>32</sup> TRONCHETTI 2001, 279.

<sup>33</sup> See supra N. 4.

conjectured that both had aimed at maintaining and strengthening the actual conditions of the site which was especially favourable to agriculture. According to such an hypothesis, both Punic and Roman economic interest and purpose concerning NW Sardinia would have substantially coincided.

### ***Sant'Imbenia Nuragic Village***

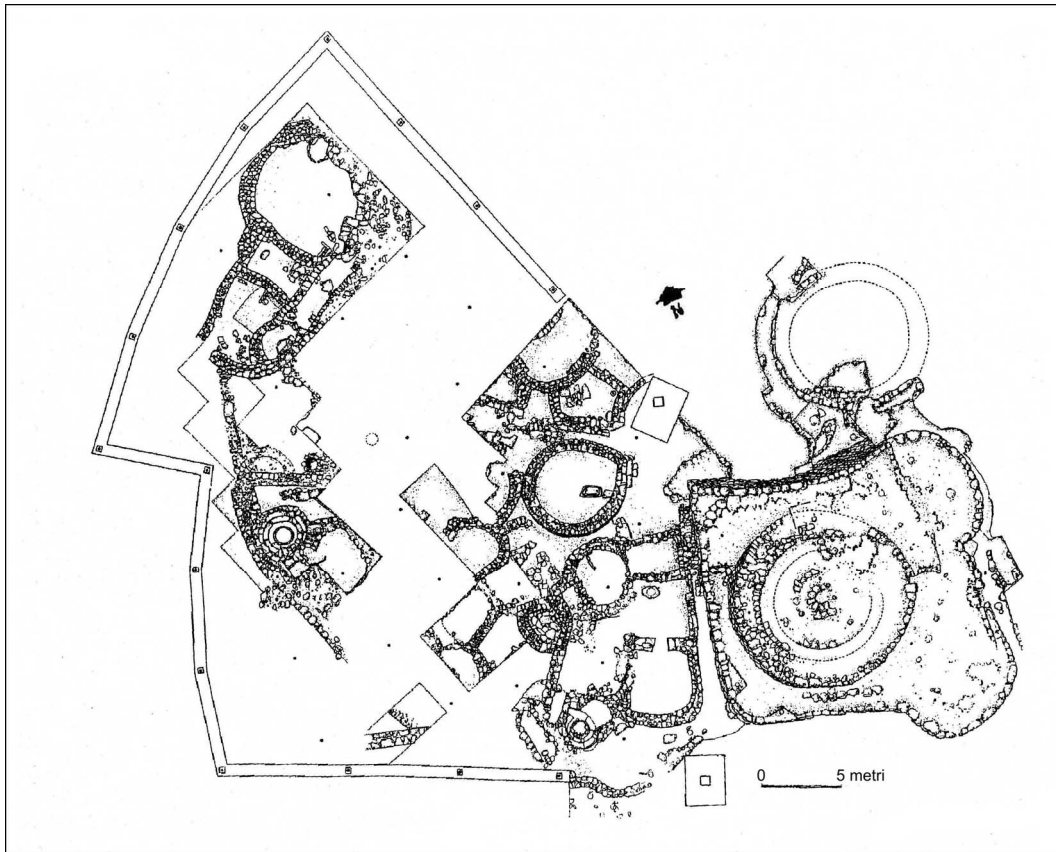


Fig. 5 – Sant'Imbenia Nuragic village  
(After BAFICO 1998, 16-17).

This village is situated on the NW coast of Sardinia on the gulf of Porto Conte, about 15 kilometres N of Alghero (fig. 5). It was excavated in the 1980's and in the 1990's. Material evidence has shown that the site was occupied from the mid Bronze Age to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE<sup>34</sup>. In particular, Phoenician and Greek imported ceramics were found, dating from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE; so it has been conjectured that an indigenous emporion was active at the site in that period<sup>35</sup>. In the 1982-1984 excavations, different sectors of the village were investigated<sup>36</sup> and some rectilinear walls connected to the huts were discovered. In the published preliminary reports they were defined as Nuragic and Roman; the material evidence was mentioned as belonging to the Roman Republican period and proving the existence of a phase of the village occupation in the same period<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> BAFICO 1993; 1997.

<sup>35</sup> BAFICO ET AL. 1997a, 45.

<sup>36</sup> Excavations were carried out in the areas N, NW, S and E of the nuraghe, RIVÒ 1982; 1984.

<sup>37</sup> A vast Roman Republican necropolis discovered 200 metres N of the nuraghe was probably connected to the Nuragic village, MAETZKE 1959-1961, 656-657.

Along the same coast, around 1 kilometre SW of the village, a prestigious villa also stood, which was decorated with stuccos and mosaic floors dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE<sup>38</sup>. The whole Sant' Imbenia site including the Nuragic village and its nuraghe, the Roman villa and a late Roman-early Medieval necropolis with its related settlement, testifies to a continuity of life from the Nuragic period to the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE<sup>39</sup>.

My recent analysis of the unpublished ceramics from the 1982-1984 excavations has made a more detailed reconstruction possible. Actually, material evidence mostly refers to Punic and Roman contexts dating from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE; this includes black-glaze ware, Punic and Roman amphorae (Graeco-Italic, Dressel 1, Dressel 2.4), utilitarian ware, *dolia*, roof tiles and *sigillata italica*. It is noticeable that the number of fragments dating up to the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, such as *sigillata italica* and Dressel 2.4 amphorae, is very limited<sup>40</sup>.

Ceramics of both the Punic and Roman periods were generally found in association; Nuragic pottery was found in the same contexts as well. A few Punic fragments probably dating to the 5<sup>th</sup> century have also been identified<sup>41</sup>. On the other hand, the later material evidence consisting of some sherds of late Roman pottery and glazed ware (*ceramica invetriata*) only suggests an occasional presence at the site during the latest centuries of the Roman Imperial period.

The analysis of the Republican contexts from the Sant'Imbenia Nuragic village has proved that it could have been continuously occupied until the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. The straight walls discovered in the village area, formerly identified as generally belonging to the imperial period, can be argued to have been built in the Republican period as well<sup>42</sup>. However, the Nuragic village of Sant'Imbenia shows some analogies with Santu Antine: continuity of occupation at least until the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, rectilinear walls modifying the huts, abandonment probably from the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, and establishment of a villa probably

## **General Conclusion**

In the mid-Republican period (4<sup>th</sup>- 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE), some Nuragic villages in NW Sardinia continued to be occupied, as is shown by Punic and Roman pottery. In the sites nearer the coast (S. Imbenia, Flumenelongu) the presence of Punic pottery seems to be more significant than at inland sites, like Santu Antine. Moreover, it appears to be in association with central-Italic black-glaze wares (Etruria, Lazio). In the same period, the Nuragic pottery<sup>43</sup> is generally dominant in quantity when compared with Republican Punic and Roman wares.

In the 2nd century BCE, structural transformation affected the Nuragic villages: square-plan rooms and straight walls modifying the huts were built at Santu Antine probably in the first half of the century. A similar transformation was carried out in the village of Sant'Imbenia a little later, in the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE<sup>44</sup>. In Northeastern Sardinia, at the same time, new farms were established in the Olbia hinterland and a few formerly abandoned Nuragic villages were re-occupied.<sup>45</sup> During the second half of the

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<sup>38</sup> MAETZKE 1959-1961, 657-658.

<sup>39</sup> ROVINA 1989; LISSIA 1989.

<sup>40</sup> In 1995, similar evidence was also found during the excavation of the nuraghe Flumenelongu, situated around 7 kilometres NE of S. Imbenia; in this site the Punic and Roman phase is documented by ceramics dating from the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> to the 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE, as well as Punic utilitarian ware (see CAMPANELLA 1999, fig. 2-10, fig. 5-29, fig. 14-113), black-glaze pottery (Morel type 2823, 7553), Dressel 1c amphorae, *dolia* and roof tiles. Fragments of Punic amphorae (Maña B type) are also present. On the excavations of the nuraghe, CAPUTA 1997; 2000, 98.

<sup>41</sup> They include one fragment of a red band decorated plate and two fragments of black-glaze handles probably referring to 5<sup>th</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> centuries ware. The former can be compared to a plate fragment from Neapolis, ZUCCA 1987, 185-11, fig. 51-58.

<sup>42</sup> As stratigraphical data are inadequate, a general chronology can only be suggested.

<sup>43</sup> Regarding the later Nuragic ceramic production a problem of definition does exist; it would be more appropriate to talk about late Nuragic Ceramic or Nuragic tradition ceramic, ROWLAND and DYSON 1999, 225.

<sup>44</sup> In the same period the Punic settlement of Sa Tanca 'e sa Mura was developed as a squared courtyard including the nuraghe (mid 3<sup>rd</sup>- mid 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE).

<sup>45</sup> SANCIU 1998a.



1<sup>st</sup> century BCE the Santu Antine and Sant'Imbenia Nuragic villages were abandoned; in both cases, the establishment of a villa was the consequence of the abandonment of the village<sup>46</sup>. The archaeological evidence suggests that the villas might have been built from the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE to the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

If we consider the territorial organization in NW Sardinia during the Republican period, continuously occupied Nuragic villages appear to be predominant both in coastal and inland areas, as demonstrated by the Sant'Imbenia, Flumenelongu and Santu Antine sites. That is the only pattern of rural settlement known in Northwest Sardinia if we exclude the excavated site of Sa Tanca 'e sa Mura (Monteleone Roccadoria)<sup>47</sup>.

Currently we do not have sufficient data to define the relationship between urban centres and their hinterland in Northwest Sardinia in the Republican period. However, it may be assumed that the Santu Antine Nuragic village had some connection to Padria (Gurulis Vetus), where evidence points to an important role for the site from the Hellenistic period.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, Sant'Imbenia looked out to the sea, and was probably in contact with the Punic coastal cities of Northwest and Central Sardinia (Bosa, Tharros, Neapolis), as well as with the sites of its hinterland, such as Flumenelongu. From the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, after the villa's establishment, Sant'Imbenia might have had some connections with the Roman colony of Turris Libisonis.<sup>49</sup>

Based on the data presented here, there is no evidence for a definite Punic policy aiming at the re-organization of the territory in Northwest Sardinia in the 4<sup>th</sup>- 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE. However, the aim of exploiting the former Nuragic network including settlements, routes, and land resources seems to emerge. If this is the case we can understand this as a necessary logistic support to Carthaginian agricultural practice in the area.

To summarize what can be inferred about the part Punic and Roman culture played within the transformation process affecting the indigenous communities of Northwest Sardinia in the mid-late Republican period?

First, it is almost impossible to evaluate the importance of Punic material culture in Nuragic sites in most cases. In fact, the presence of Punic pottery is generally defined as indicating 'a Punic phase'; while any specific analysis or typological study of the archaeological evidence is often lacking. A similar situation may be seen with the Roman pottery as well<sup>50</sup>,

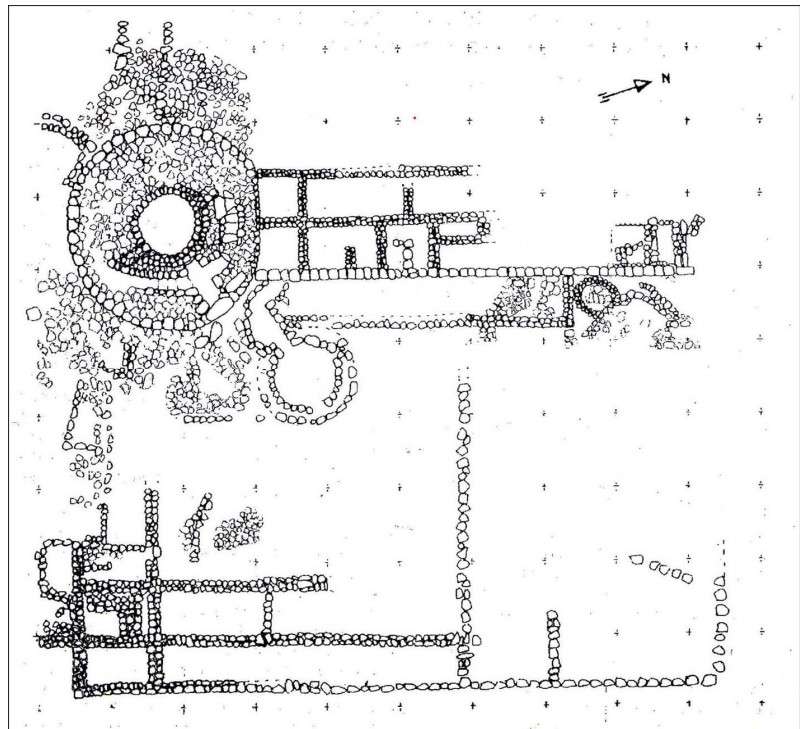


Fig. 6 – The Nuragic-Punic settlement of Sa Tanca 'e sa Mura  
(After MADAU 1997; without scale in the original).

<sup>46</sup> Actually, the W sector of Santu Antine village was left and the villa was built in the SE sector on former Nuragic huts. Differently, Sant'Imbenia village was abandoned and the settlement moved around 1 km. SW in order to establish the villa. It is significant that the remains of another Roman villa have been identified next to the nuraghe Talia at Olmedo around 19 kilometres NE of Sant'Imbenia, MADAU 1997b.

<sup>47</sup> See supra N. 46.

<sup>48</sup> GALLI 2002, 24.

<sup>49</sup> Turris Libisonis is the most important centre we know in NW Sardinia from the end of the 1st century BCE onward.

<sup>50</sup> Identifying Republican sherds is often considered as sufficient to define a Punic-Roman phase in the Nuragic villages. See supra N. 3.

where numbers are not usually compared with the Punic ceramics. However, both case studies examined show that Punic ceramics were less evident than Roman Republican or Nuragic pottery, which is still present in Republican contexts up to the 1st century BCE. If the Punic impact on Nuragic culture was not massive in Northwest Sardinia, then structural transformations in the Nuragic villages can be hardly be attributed to a Carthaginian occupation strategy. Such modifications were carried out by building square-plan rooms with rectilinear stone walls in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. That means a new construction pattern was being introduced. Is it to be considered as a consequence of the contacts with Punic or Roman cultures? Archaeological evidence from Northwest Sardinia shows that in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE a square-plan settlement was attached to the nuraghe in the Nuragic-Punic site of Sa Tanca 'e sa Mura (fig. 6).

Nevertheless, we should remember that in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE Rome was consolidating its supremacy in Sardinia after the conquest (238 BCE), as also demonstrated by the re-organization of Olbia's hinterland in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE. In that period, 81% of the villages show rectilinear structures transforming the Nuragic round huts, while 25% of the Nuragic sites were re-occupied after a period of abandonment, and 52% of the rural sites located in the territory has result as being occupied by farms built ex novo.<sup>51</sup>

The case of Olbia clearly shows the strategy adopted by Rome to exploit and control the territory from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE: it consisted in improving the rural settlements both by preserving the Nuragic village (even through partial modifications) and establishing new farms. Unfortunately, available archaeological data on Northwest Sardinia are still inadequate to define a similar organization of the territory during the Republican period. However, the early contacts between Santu Antine and the central-Italic area allow us to conjecture that the Roman policy could be equally applied to Northwest Sardinia from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. Further investigations focusing on this topic will confirm if such hypothesis can explain the situation at Santu Antine and Sant'Imbenia as well as other Sardinian sites.

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<sup>51</sup> This is the case of the Punic-Roman farm of S'Imbalconadu, SANCIU 1997. As for the Imperial period, only 25% of the rural sites appear to be continuously occupied at least up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE., while villas seem to be established from the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE., SANCIU 1998a.

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