The Making of Medieval Sardinia

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Contents

Acknowledgments VII
List of Maps and Figures VIII
Contributors XIII
Abbreviations XV

The Making of Medieval Sardinia
A Historiographical Introduction 1
Alex Metcalfe, Hervin Fernández-Aceves and Marco Muresu

1 Discovery, Invention, and Supposition
Three Case Studies from Medieval Sardinia 17
Hervin Fernández-Aceves, Alex Metcalfe and Marco Muresu

2 Ancient Historical Contexts
Phoenicians, Carthage, Rome and the Barbaricini 42
Attilio Mastino

3 Saints, Cults, Sanctuaries, and Monasteries 88
Rossana Martorelli

4 Early Muslim Raids on Byzantine Sardinia 126
Alex Metcalfe

5 Byzantine Administrative Influence in Medieval Sardinia 160
Michele Orrù

6 The Coinage of Byzantine Sardinia 170
Marco Muresu

7 The *Iudex Sardiniae* and the *Archon Sardanias* between the Sixth and Eleventh Century 204
Luciano Gallinari

8 Muslim Contacts with Sardinia
From Fatimid Ifrīqiya to Mujāhid of Dénia 240
Alex Metcalfe

9 The Role of the Church in the Rise of the Sardinian *Giudicati* 268
Corrado Zedda

10 Sociolinguistic Dynamics and Dynastic Names in Byzantine and Early Medieval Sardinia 293
Giulio Paulis

11 The Earliest Charter Sources from Medieval Sardinia 314
Giovanni Strinna

12 Language and Vernacular Writing in Medieval Sardinia 343
Maurizio Virdis

13 Visual Arts in Early Medieval Sardinia
Painting, Sculpture and Metalwork 358
Alberto Virdis

14 Aspects of Medieval Architecture in Sardinia in the Eleventh and Twelfth Century 391
Andrea Pala

Bibliography 417
Index 477

CHAPTER 2

Ancient Historical Contexts

Phoenicians, Carthage, Rome and the Barbaricini

Attilio Mastino

1 Prehistory

The cultural history of Sardinia is a complex mosaic starting from the Neolithic period. Human presence has been attested in northern Sardinia since Lower Paleolithic times, for instance in the guise of the 'Clactonian culture' at Perfugas-Laerru some 500,000 to 350,000 years ago. Subsequent evidence of *homo sapiens* in the Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods, such as that found at Oliena in the 'Grotta del bandito Corbeddu' is still patchy and so it is not possible to speak in terms of cultural continuity.[1] The ancient Neolithic period ushered in revolutionary signs of a new era: agriculture, stock-rearing, pottery, weaving, and lithic production by grinding, which appeared in various parts of the island from the sixth to fifth millennium BCE in the bays of Cagliari, Oristano and Dorgali, and at Sulci, Porto Conte, and Sassari. This was the era in which, for the first and only time, Sardinia appears at the forefront of commercial and manufacturing on a relatively large scale, connected to its large resources of obsidian from Monte Arci – the 'black gold' of prehistory to borrow the colourful words of Giovanni Lilliu. Sardinian obsidian sources are the most westerly in the Mediterranean, and they nourished overseas trade towards Africa, the Italian Peninsula, Provence, and Catalonia during the neo-Copper Age between the sixth and the third millennium BCE.[2]

More distant from the continent than any other island in the Mediterranean basin, Sardinia was at the centre of the 'Mare Sardum'.[3] Since it was doubly fortunate to be an 'island-crossroad' as well as an 'island-deposit', it attained diverse and significant elements of Mediterranean cultures, conservatively

1 E. Contu, *La Sardegna preistorica e nuragica* (Sassari, 2006).

2 G. Lilliu, *La Sardegna* (Cagliari, 1982), 11.

3 A. Mastino, P.G. Spanu, and R. Zucca, *Mare Sardum: merci, mercati e scambi marittimi della Sardegna antica. Tharros Felix 1* (Rome, 2005), 21 ff.

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weaving them together with assorted strands of its own autochthonous cultures. The dramatic geographical relief of Sardinia also helped to push its various 'peoples' towards the formation of microregions where substantially similar cultures throughout the ages featured many local variations.[4] The Neolithic culture of Ozieri, which was of an Aegean-Anatolian type, brought the cults of the bull-god and mother-goddess; burial in artificial caves (*domus de janas*); lithic technologies, and ceramics decorated with bands found in all corners of the island forming the basic culture of Neolithic Sardinia, while during the Copper Age (2750–1800 BCE), the culture of both Abealzu–Filigosa and that of Monte Claro displayed more clearly regional variation.[5]

The advanced culture of the Bronze Age, often called the 'Nuragic period' in Sardinia, would also be constituted through 'provincial traits' determined by the diversified development of tower types and strongholds (the *nuraghi*), corridor tombs (the so-called 'tombs of giants'), and ceramics.[6] Contact with the Achaeans towards the fifteenth century, even more evident in the times of Mycenaean III B–C (twelfth to fourteenth centuries BCE), led to the rapid growth of the Sardinian Bronze Age. This period, in metallurgical terms, witnessed a new era of trade and cultural ties with the eastern side of the Mediterranean (notably Cyprus, Crete and coastal Syria) as well as with the eastern flank of the Iberian Peninsula,[7] reinforcing this influence across the sea in ships that seem to have been built in Sardinia.[8]

4 C. Tronchetti, *I Sardi. Traffici, relazioni, ideologie nella Sardegna arcaica* (Milan, 1988).

5 G. Lilliu, *La civiltà dei Sardi dal Paleolitico all'età dei nuraghi* (Turin, 1988).

6 G. Ugas, *L'alba dei nuraghi* (Cagliari, 2005).

7 M.L. Ferrarese Ceruti and R. Assorgia, 'Il complesso nuragico di Antigori (Sarroch, Cagliari)', in *Magna Grecia e Mondo Miceneo. Nuovi documenti. XXII Convegno di studi sulla Magna Grecia*, ed. L. Vagnetti (Taranto, 1982), 167–76; M.L. Ferrarese Ceruti, 'La Sardegna e il mondo miceneo', in *La civiltà nuragica*, ed. E. Atzeni (Milan, 1990), 245–54; F. Lo Schiavo, 'Sardinian Oxhide Ingots', in *Metallurgica Antiqua, in Honour of Hans-Gert Bachmann and Robert Maddin*, ed. T. Rehren, A. Hauptmann, and J.D. Muhly, Der Anschnitt 8 (Bochum, 1988), 99–112.

8 S.L. Dyson and R.J. Rowland, *Archaeology and History in Sardinia from the Stone Age to the Middle Ages: Shepherds, Sailors, and Conquerors* (Philadelphia, 2007), 43–111; G. Lopez, *Navires et navigations en 'Mare Sardum' de l'âge du bronze aux guerres puniques* (Ortacesus, 2003). For the Roman period: A. Mastino, P.G. Spanu, and R. Zucca, eds., *Naves plenis velis euntes. Tharros Felix 3* (Rome, 2009); G. Gasperetti, A. Mastino, and R. Zucca, 'Viaggi, navi e porti della Sardinia e della Corsica attraverso la documentazione epigrafica', *Antichità Alto Adriatiche* 79 (2014): 151–81.

2 The Late Nuragic Period: The Heroes of Mont'e Prama, Aristotle and Timeless Therapeutic Sleep

During the early Iron Age (ninth–eighth century BCE), and its subsequent orientalising and archaic phases (seventh–sixth century BCE), Sardinia abandoned its Bronze Age towers (*nuraghi*) in favour of complex forms of social organisation under the leadership of 'Optimates' or at least as recounted in Greek mythological tradition.[9] This would express itself through prestigious votive offerings to the indigenous pantheon, such as the 'giants' of Mont'e Prama at Cabras, the site of a funerary sanctuary.[10] Perhaps looking on those scores of statues, carved from quarried stone from Cornus at the foot of Montiferru, a Greek source known to Aristotle spoke of the iatromantic practice of therapeutic sleep and the perception of time that occurs only if accompanied by movement. Recalling the oldest witnesses, Aristotle wrote:

> Time does not exist without change; for when the state of our own minds does not change at all or if we have not noticed its changing, we do not realise that time has elapsed, any more than those who are fabled to sleep among their heroes in Sardinia do when they are awakened. For they connect the earlier 'now' with the later 'now' and make them one, cutting out the interim because of their failure to perceive it. So, just as if the 'here and now' were not different, but were instead one and the same, then there would be no time, so too when its difference escapes our notice, the interval does not seem to be time.
>
> *PHYSICS* IV, 11

Commentators have suggested that this may refer to the sick who could free themselves from nightmares by long therapeutic sleep that lasted for five days, perhaps as a result of a somniferant drug or perhaps the grass that caused 'a Sardonic smile' mentioned in the Odyssey.[11] The Greeks looked on megalithic

9 Diodorus of Sicily, *Library of History: Books 4.59–8*, trans. C.H. Oldfather, LCL 340 (Cambridge, USA, 1939), bk. 5.15.5, pp. 138–39.

10 On this, see A. Boninu et al., eds., *Le sculture di Mont'e Prama*, 3 vols (Rome, 2014); A. Bedini et al., *Giganti di pietra. Monte Prama. L'Heroon che cambia la storia della Sardegna e del Mediterraneo* (Cagliari, 2012); A. Mastino and R. Zucca, 'Mont'e Prama: le ragioni e le strategie dello scavo', in *Giornata di studio. I riti della morte e del culto di Monte Prama – Cabras (Roma, 21 gennaio 2015)*, Atti dei Convegni Lincei 303 (Rome, 2016), 15–19.

11 G. Minunno, 'A Note on Ancient Sardinian Incubation (Aristotle, Physica IV, 11)', in *Ritual, Religion, and Reason. Studies in the Ancient World in Honour of Paolo Xella*, ed. O. Loretz et al. (Münster, 2013), 553–60.

constructions, particularly the *nuraghi* with admiration, but they also thought that the island's 'barbarians' could not have developed such an architectural culture without the help of heroes. More generally, *nuragic* culture could not be autonomous without the 'founding heroes' of Greek myth – first, that of Daedalus summoned from Sicily by Iolaus, to whom the *nuragic tholoi* mentioned by Pseudo-Aristotle were sometimes attributed.[12] It is worth noting how the 'political' myths of the Greeks and Romans situated Sardinia in a dimension of barbaric alterity (cf. Solinus with the *bithiae*),[13] thus creating functional links of ancestry and descent to accompany colonial expansion. It was a prejudice that denied the very foundation of a 'Sardinian nation' and its cultural originality, and we must bear this in mind in order to avoid confusing ethnographic observations (recorded in historical times and accurately described by Aristotle) with myths, legends and cults imported by the Greeks, and perhaps by the Carthaginians too. One wonders what the Greeks who gave the island the name of *Ichnussa* or *Sandaliotis* (which presupposes a 'bird's eye' vision of it from above, perhaps through the eyes of the mythical Daedalus or Talos) would have made of the archers, boxers, round-shielded warriors from among the giant statues of Mont'e Prama with their shrine and cult status that endured until the rise of Carthage? From this, there might be derived the opposing mythographical Greek strand concerning nine of the fifty sleeping sons of Heracles in Sardinia, who ended up tainting the story of Aristotle.[14] Instead, the Greeks located their myths around the island, and around its promontories and plains.[15]

3 Phoenicians and Carthaginians in Sardinia

New cultural forms were not only the result of a network of relationships with the Phoenicians, whose presence was attested on the Sardinian coast from 750 BCE with their new-found colonies of Nora, Sulci, Tharros, and Othoca,

12 I. Didu, *I Greci e la Sardegna. Il mito e la storia* (Cagliari, 2003).

13 *Apollonides perhibet in Scythia feminas nasci, quae bitiae vocantur: has in oculis pupillas geminas habere et perimere visu si forte quem iratae aspexerint.* [*hae sunt et in Sardinia*]. Solinus, *Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium*, ed. T. Mommsen (Berlin, 1864), bk. 1.101, pp. 27–28.

14 A. Mastino, 'Aristotele e la natura del tempo: la pratica del sonno terapeutico davanti agli eroi della Sardegna', in *Giornata di studio. I riti della morte e del culto di Monte Prama – Cabras* (*Roma, 21 gennaio 2015*), Atti dei Convegni Lincei 303 (Rome, 2016), 151–78.

15 R. Zucca, Insulae Sardiniae et Corsicae. *Le isole minori della Sardegna e della Corsica nell'antichità* (Rome, 2003).

but also with the Etruscans (with who the Sardinians had regular contacts, and even marriages between community leaders from the Villanoviano II period), and possibly with the Greeks too.[16] Sardinian sanctuaries, based on the cult of water from sacred wells, attracted imported goods (as, for example, at Serri-Santa Vittoria, Settimo San Pietro-Cuccuru Nuraxi and at Orani-Nurdole), showing that in both the mountains and the plains, a developed Sardinian island culture was maturing, the fruit of Mediterranean insular customs in tandem with new contributions from the east as well as from the Greeks and Etruscans. Classical authors, especially Diodorus Siculus in the age of Caesar, and Pausanias in the Antonine period of the second century CE, reduced the complexity of these relationships through mythology, attributing the early colonisation of an 'island full of silver veins', rich with hundreds of mines that would then take the name of *Sardò*-Sardinia to *Sardus Pater*, who was linked to Libya; to Aristaeus, the son of Apollo and the nymph Cyrene; to Norax who came from Gades, the son of Hermes and nymph Erytheia; to Iolaus and his fifty Heracleidae descendants as well as to Daedalus and to Aeneas.[17]

The arrival of the Carthaginians in the late sixth century broke this established cultural system with the development of its urban physiognomy (we have no evidence of indigenous 'cities'), and a writing system from the eighth to seventh centuries BCE when Phoenician and Greek characters began to be etched crudely onto local ceramics at Monastir, Settimo San Pietro, and elsewhere.[18] With the military campaigns of Malcus, Hamilcar and Hasdrubal, foundations were laid for a widespread Carthaginian presence, at least on the island's coasts. As a result, this effectively barred the door to further Greek

16 F. Barreca, *La Sardegna fenicia e punica* (Sassari, 1974); F. Barreca, *La civiltà fenicio-punica in Sardegna* (Sassari, 1986); P. Bartoloni, S.F. Bondì, and S. Moscati, *La penetrazione fenicia e punica in Sardegna: trent'anni dopo*, Atti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Anno CCXCIV. Memorie, 9.9.1 (Rome, 1997); P. Bartoloni, *I Fenici e i Cartaginesi in Sardegna* (Sassari, 2009).

17 R. Zucca, ed., Λόγος περὶ τῆς Σαρδοῦς. *Le fonti classiche e la Sardegna* (Rome, 2004). On navigation and crossings, see A. Mastino and R. Zucca, 'La Sardegna nelle rotte mediterranee in età romana', in *Idea e realtà del viaggio. Il viaggio nel mondo antico*, ed. G. Camassa and S. Fasce (Genoa, 1991), 191–244; A. Mastino, P.G. Spanu, and R. Zucca, 'La Sardegna nelle rotte mediterranee. Le fonti letterarie ed epigrafiche', in *Mare Sardum: merci, mercati e scambi marittimi della Sardegna antica. Tharros Felix 1* (Roma, 2005), 21–77.

18 R. Zucca, 'Storiografia del problema della "scrittura nuragica" ', *Bollettino di studi sardi* 5 (2014): 5–78. On the early writings from the Roman period, see R. Zucca, 'Inscriptiones latinae liberae rei publicae Africae, Sardiniae et Corsicae', *L'Africa romana* 11 (1996): 1425–1489.

colonisation that had also attempted to penetrate from along the eastern coast and in particular at Olbia until the naval battle of Mare Sardo in 535 BCE, which left the Carthaginians in control over Sardinia, and the Etruscans over Corsica.[19]

In the first treaty between Rome and Carthage, which Polybius attributed to the first year of the Republic (that is to say, 509 BCE), Sardinia appeared to be firmly controlled by the Carthaginians, but not as yet included in the 'forbidden zone'. For the Romans, commerce had to be authorised in the presence of a Carthaginian official or scribe in charge of the collection of customs duties. Later, with the second treaty between Rome and Carthage in 348 BCE, the situation changed to the detriment of Rome, perhaps following the failed colonisation of five hundred Romans in Sardinia, as reported by Diodorus for the year 378 BCE. The 'forbidden zone', bounded by the Bello promontory (perhaps Cape Farina to the west of Carthage), was enlarged by including Sardinia and Libya, considered as a single unit, but which until now had been excluded from Roman and Etruscan trade.[20]

Compelled by the Carthaginians, the Sardinians withdrew to the mountains, taking refuge in their *castra*, *'nuraghi'* and caves, carrying with them into the *Barbaria* and its *Montes Insani* products of their advanced culture, including their language of so-called Proto-Sardinian of Mediterranean origin known to us only through a few hydronyms and place names.[21] Also, many unique or unusual personal names, which have no parallel outside the island either, are attested in Sardinia for the first time in Latin inscriptions.[22] These may be the anthroponyms of the locals who persisted into Roman times, and in some cases even into medieval period. Overall, we find about hundred examples, distributed especially in inland areas, that retained their popularity even into the imperial age – further evidence of the Sards' attachment to traditions that were still alive.

19 M. Gras, *Trafics Thyrréniens archaïques*, BEFAR 258 (Rome, 1985), 13 ff.

20 K.H. Schwarte, 'Roms Griff nach Sardinien: Quellenkritisches zur Historizität der Darstellung des Polybios', in *Klassisches Altertum, Spätantike und frühes Christentum: Adolf Lippold zum 65. Geburstag gewidmet*, ed. K. Dietz, D. Henning, and H. Kaletsch (Würzburg, 1993), 107 ff.

21 M. Gras, 'Les Montes Insani de la Sardaigne', in *Mélanges offerts à R. Dion* (Paris, 1974), 349 ff; P. Ruggeri, 'La romanizzazione dell'Ogliastra, in *Ogliastra: identità storica di una provincia. Atti del Convegno di studi, Jerzu-Lanusei-Arzana-Tortolì, 23–25 gennaio 1997*, ed. M.G. Meloni and S. Nocco (Senorbì, 2000), 151–89.

22 G. Paulis, *I nomi di luogo della Sardegna* (Sassari, 1987), Introduzione; G. Paulis, 'La forma protosarda della parola nuraghe alla luce dell'iscrizione latina di Nurac sessar (Molaria)', in *L'epigrafia del villaggio*, ed. A. Calbi, A. Donati, and G. Poma (Faenza, 1993), 537–42.

We still lack definitive works on autochthonous cultural continuity during the Punic and Roman periods. Giovanni Lilliu's article on this stressed that the theme of resistance was to be understood as the 'historical constant of the island that, over a long period, revealing the true mark of Sardinian society'.[23] In the Roman period, Lilliu added that:

> The old forms, the old usages, and much of the heritage of indigenous tradition was simply submerged and ossified. They continued to live with and against the new culture, so much so that writers perceived them from the outside as an indicator of their identities from a different world – a metaphor of historical memory'.[24]

In their reading of literary, epigraphic and numismatic evidence, recent studies have produced some particularly important conclusions in this respect.[25]

4 Roman Occupation: Clientage and the Fortunes of the *Populares*

The occupation of Sardinia by the Romans took place in 238 BCE, immediately after the end of the First Punic War (which concluded with the Punic armies being driven from Sicily) and after the revolt of Carthaginian merchants in North Africa. That the consul Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, a member of the *gens Sempronia*, was chosen to be in charge of military operations on the island was not without consequences for the future orientation of the province. He was able to occupy the main Carthaginian strongholds almost without a fight, mostly due to the welcoming reception by mercenaries from Campania and the ancient Phoenician colonies, dissatisfied by the most recent Carthaginian policies towards them. However, violent revolts of the inland Sards against the Romans erupted soon afterwards, and continued for centuries. Carthage initially provided support for the revolts, sending in merchants and spies from North Africa.[26]

23 G. Lilliu, *La costante resistenziale sarda*, ed. A. Mattone, Bibliotheca Sarda 79 (Nuoro, 2002), 225–37.

24 G. Lilliu, 'Sopravvivenze nuragiche in età romana', *L'Africa romana* 7 (1990): 415–46.

25 M. Perra, Σαρδώ*, Sardinia, Sardegna. Le antiche testimonianze letterarie sulla Sardegna dall'inizio dei tempi storici* (*VI sec. a.C.*) *sino al principato di C. Ottaviano Augusto* (*I sec. a.C.*), vol. 1, 3 vols (Oristano, 1997).

26 G. Brizzi, 'La conquista romana della Sardegna: una riconsiderazione?', in *Dal Mondo Antico all'età contemporanea. Studi in onore di Manlio Brigaglia*, ed. A. Mattone (Rome, 2001), 45–52.

Later, another Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, a member of the same family and consul in 177 BCE, forcefully repressed the great rebellion of the inland 'barbarians', the Ilienses and Balari, against the Romans and the coastal cities. The ambassadors of the cities on the coast requested military intervention in the Senate. Livy recounts that among the Sards who were made to flee and chased from their encampments (*castra*, possibly the *'nuraghi'*), there were some 12,000 dead in the first year of the war, and 15,000 in the second.[27] In 174 BCE, the triumphant consul set up a votive image in Rome in the temple of Mater Matuta, with the representation of the battles won and a cartographic image of the island on which he mentioned that he had killed or taken prisoner around 80,000 Sards. From the official documents, 50,000 Sards were sold as slaves in Rome and Italian markets – an enormous number considering that the total island population in this period is estimated at less than 300,000 inhabitants. The abundance of supply significantly lowered the prices of the slaves to the extent that the expression *Sardi venales* was coined, signifying objects of little value available at a low price.[28]

Another member of the Gracchi family distinguished himself during the years of his position as *quaestor* in Sardinia by his just dealings with the islanders and by his good governance, which later became proverbial. Unlike his predecessors, who used to bring wine amphorae on their return to Rome filled with money, Gaius Gracchus, the future tribune of the *plebs* in 123 BCE, surpassed his colleagues in his justice towards the subject peoples. He also built a network of personal relationships with those in charge of the provincial towns of Sardinia. After returning to Rome, he pushed through a law releasing the towns of the provinces from the burden of equipping soldiers.[29]

By contrast, the *propraetor* Albucio ruled in a quite different manner, and after 104 BCE, he stood accused of extortion by Gaius Julius Caesar Strabo, an uncle of Caesar, on account of his treatment of the Sards.[30] Fifty years later,

27 Livy, *History of Rome*, trans. E.T. Sage and A.C. Schlesinger, vol. 12, 14 vols, LCL 332 (Cambridge, USA, 1938), bk. 41.12.4–10, pp. 220–21. Recalled also by Florus, *Epitome of Roman History*, trans. E.S. Forester, LCL 231 (Cambridge, USA, 1929), bk. 1.22.35, pp. 106–7. Also, see P. Meloni, *La Sardegna romana* (Nuoro, 2012), 73 ff, 293; A. Mastino, *Storia della Sardegna antica*, Sardegna e la sua storia 2 (Nuoro, 2009), 94–95, 122.

28 G. Brizzi, 'Nascita di una provincia, Roma e la Sardegna', in *Carcopino, Cartagine e altri scritti* (Sassari, 1989), 69–86.

29 E. Pais, *Storia della Sardegna e della Corsica durante il dominio romano*, ed. A. Mastino, Bibliotheca Sarda 42 (Nuoro, 1999), 189–90; Meloni, *La Sardegna romana*, 76.

30 On Roman magistrates in Sardinia during the Republic, see M.A. Porcu, *I magistrati romani in Sardegna in età repubblicana* (Sassari, 1991); A. Mastino, 'La Sardegna provincia romana: l'amministrazione', in *La Sardegna romana e altomedievale. Storia e materiali*, ed. S. Angiolillo et al. (Sassari, 2017), 173 ff.

the same can be said about the proconsul Marcus Aemilius Scaurus, stepson of Sulla and proud member of the aristocratic party. The Sards unanimously accused him of embezzlement and violence, but their unanimity itself aroused suspicion and occasioned the ironic praise of Cicero.[31] The defensive argument developed on that occasion by the Arpinian appears particularly exasperating for the Sardinians, some of whom, years later, also complained of serious personal offences – for example, the case with Famea and with his nephew (or grandson), the lyric poet Tigellius from Carales (modern Cagliari).[32]

All this must have had an influence on the sympathies and political choices in the province during the troubled years of civil war. Over time, stable and well recognised networks of patronage and clientage were established between some Roman families and the insular aristocracy. For example, the legate Lucius Marcius Philippus, on the side of Sulla, only managed to defeat and kill the *praetor* Quintus Antonius Balbus by using military force – the latter held the province on the side of the *populares*. This also explains why, in 77 BCE, shortly after the death of Sulla, and after being defeated by Quintus Lutatius Catulus, the consul Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, ally of Marius, decided to move from southern Etruria to Sardinia in the hopes of finding support for the cause of the *populares*. After disembarking at Cosa (Porto Argentario), his army reached Tharros from where it managed to block shipments of grain to the capital for some time. Later, it suffered a heavy loss there at the hands of governor Lucius Valerius Triarius, who acted on the side of Sulla. After the death of Lepidus ('from disease and regrets'),[33] the forces of the *populares* were then led to safety by legate Marcus Perperna, reaching Tarragona and, from there, Huesca in Hispania Citerior. There, they joined the forces of the party of Marius, reorganised by Sertorius.

Caesar was marked from childhood by the *Pro Sardis* oration made fifty years before by his uncle Strabo, so much so that he could recite it from memory. After the Triumvirate was constituted and he became consul in 59 BCE (while his brother-in-law Marcus Atius Balbus was assigned to Sardinia to procure metal for the Gaul expedition), Caesar presented, as one of his first measures, a proposal for a *de repetundis* law with the intention of punishing the abuses of senatorial governors in the provinces. Later, in 49 BCE, when the civil war between Caesar and Pompey broke out, the citizens of Carales, loyal to the *populares* party, managed to chase away the governor

31 On Cicero's *Pro Scauro*, see A. Mastino, 'Natione Sardus. Una mens, unus color, una vox, una natio', *Archivio Storico Sardo* 50 (2015): 141–81.

32 Mastino, *Storia della Sardegna antica*, 114–15.

33 Florus, *Epitome of Roman History*, bk. 2.11.7, pp. 260–61.

Marcus Aurelius Cotta, who was loyal to Pompey. Frightened off – *perterritus* – by threats and violence, he managed to reach the survivors of the battle of Pharsalus from Pompey's side at Utica where he told them that by now all of Sardinia had clearly lined up behind the opposing side.

Later, the city of Carales was involved in making a decisive contribution to the battle of Thapsus, sending troops and supplies to Caesar's army in Africa at the precise moment when the *dictator* found himself in great difficulty, besieged by his enemies on the shore. After the victory and the suicide of Cato, the hero of the Republican party and of the cause of liberty against tyranny, Caesar, victorious, departed from Utica and reached Carales on 15 June 46 BCE. There he took revenge by punishing the Pompey loyalists in the city of Sulci, which had supported the cause of Pompey and the Senate with supplies of raw iron and arms. Possibly on this occasion the mining district was auctioned off and sold to private owners or else it went on to constitute an autonomous district that would be subordinated to an imperial *regio* in the age of Augustus. During his stay at Carales, Caesar seems to have decided to settle his debt to the city for the services rendered to the *populares* party: all inhabitants of Carales obtained Roman citizenship. With some of them – such as lyric poet Tigellius, who must have been already famous – Caesar had also established close personal friendships. Furthermore, the Punic civic organisation (the *civitas*) was abolished, along with its magistrates (the *sufeti*) and decision-making bodies, namely the popular assembly and city senate. The *municipium* of Roman citizens, led by the *quattuorviri*, was instituted shortly afterwards, possibly only by Octavian as *triumvir*. On the same occasion, Caesar, spending about a month in the ports of northern Sardinia and Corsica, may have decided to create a Roman colony in the Gulf of Asinara, and thus to found Turris Libisonis, which must have been begun in the first years of the Second Triumvirate of Marcus Lurius.[34]

In 38 BCE, Octavian was pursuing his plan to take Sardinia away from Sextus Pompeius, son of Pompey the Great, who had occupied the island after a long siege of Carales. In possession of the mining district, Octavian decided to have coins minted with the image of *Sardus Pater*, the national divinity of the Sards, and the likeness of his own maternal grandfather, Marcus Atius Balbus. Twenty years before, in the year of Caesar's consulate, Balbus had governed

34 On the joining of Corsica to the province of Sardinia, see A. Mastino, 'Corsica e Sardegna in età antica', in *La transmission de l'idéologie impériale dans l'occident romain*, ed. M. Navarro Caballero and J.M. Roddaz, Actes des Congrès Nationaux des sociétés historiques et scientifiques 128 (Bordeaux, 2006), 309–26; R. Zucca, *La Corsica romana* (Oristano, 1996), 13 ff.

the province laudably, among other things favouring the integration of the island aristocracy with generous concessions of citizenship to individual families. In 48 BCE, the rule of Caesar's ally Sextus Peduceus had been equally praised. In the Imperial age, naturally, the relevant issues were quite different. Nonetheless, some decisions of Nero – such as the conviction of governor Vipsanius Laenas in 56 CE for extortion or the donation of lands in the hinterland of Olbia to Nero's concubine Claudia Acte, lands belonging to his family, the *gens Domitia* – can only point to the attention that must have been paid, particularly in certain circles, to the exigencies and expectations of a province so close to the capital.

5 *Inland* Barbaria

The inscriptions of Palestrina (Praeneste) and Fordongianus have preserved a valuable record of the *Civitates Barbariae*, the interior of Sardinia, from the end of the age of Augustus through to the rule of Tiberius.[35] The main cities on the island had developed on the coasts, almost all from Phoenician and Punic colonies, with intensely cultivated hinterlands and the presence of villas and estates worked by agricultural labourers, often in conditions of slavery.[36] In mid-first century CE, Pliny the Elder listed the peoples and the cities of Roman Sardinia in the third book of his *Naturalis Historia* in a highly condensed form, making use of records from the first Augustan age.[37] He placed Turris Libisonis (modern Porto Torres) at the ideal apex of a pyramid that had at its base the rural populations of the Ilienses, Balari, and Corsi; then the eighteen *oppida*, among which were some *civitates stipendiariae* inhabited by *peregrini*, such as Sulci, Valentia, Neapolis, Bithia and others. Pliny then mentioned, in order of importance, the two *municipii* of Roman citizens: Carales and Nora. The last mentioned was Turris Libisonis, the only colony of Roman citizens in the Sardinian province: *colonia autem una quae vocatur ad Turrem Libisonis*. Later, other cities would reach the point of obtaining recognition of their fully

35 R. Zucca, 'Le *Civitates Barbariae* e l'occupazione militare della Sardegna: aspetti e confronti con l'Africa', *L'Africa romana* 5 (1988): 349–73; M. Mayer, 'Las *Civitates Barbariae*: una prueba de la realidad de la organización territorial de Sardinia bajo Tiberio', in *Naves plenis velis euntes*, ed. A. Mastino, P.G. Spanu, and R. Zucca (Rome, 2009), 43–51.

36 See, with due caution, L. Guido, Romania *vs* Barbaria*: Aspekte der Romanisierung Sardiniens* (Aachen, 2006).

37 E. Pais, 'La *Formula Provinciae* della Sardegna nel I secolo dell'impero, secondo Plinio', in *Ricerche storiche e geografiche sull'Italia antica* (Turin, 1908), 579–628.

Roman character: Olbia, Sulci and Bosa became *municipii*, while Uselis (*colonia Iulia Augusta*), Tharros and Cornus became colonies. Many of these centres experienced notable urban development, including major public works, baths, markets, and buildings for entertainment.[38] On the other hand, the cultural and economic reality of the internal *Barbaria* zone was very different as it was located in the mountainous areas that were less open to Romanisation. Here, the people maintained prehistoric religious customs up until the time of Gregory the Great.[39] Nonetheless, the last few years have brought to light some surprises, not least the excavations at Sant'Efisio at Orune which show the presence of a Christian religious centre of great importance was already in existence there by the end of the fourth century.[40]

The settlement of the interior of Sardinia was limited to small agricultural centres that were barely Romanised. There was only one colony, the *colonia Iulia Augusta Uselis* on the heights of Mount Arci, situated on the road that linked Carales with Turris and Olbia, and oriented towards the Gulf of Tharros and the Campidano. On the other hand, some military encampments were put in place to control the road network, at least during the Republican age and in the first decades of the Empire. For the rest, non-urbanised populations occupied vast hilly and mountainous areas, from the war like tribes of the Barbaria, the Ilienses, Balari and Corsi, to the Galillenses or the other peoples listed by the geographer Ptolemy (figure. 2.1), living in villages located on agricultural fields used in common.[41]

A series of inscriptions sheds some light on the policies pursued by the Roman authorities in the internal areas of Sardinia in the context of the traditional contrast between pastoralists and farmers.[42] The Table of Esterzili, containing the condemnation of Sardinian shepherds from the Galillenses

38 A. Mastino and R. Zucca, '*Urbes et rura*: città e campagna nel territorio oristanese in età romana', in *Oristano e il suo territorio. I. Dalla preistoria all'alto Medioevo*, ed. P.G. Spanu and R. Zucca (Rome, 2011), 411–601.

39 Gregory the Great, *Registrum epistularum*, ed. D.L. Norberg, CCSL 140 (Turnhout, 1982), bk. 4 no. 29; T. Pinna, *Gregorio Magno e la Sardegna* (Cagliari, 1989), 146 ff.

40 F. Delussu, 'L'insediamento romano di Sant'Efis (Orune, Nuoro). Scavi 2004–2006. Nota preliminare', *L'Africa romana* 17 (2009): 2657–71; F. Delussu, 'La Barbagia in età romana: gli scavi 2004–2008 nell'insediamento di Sant'Efis (Orune, Nuoro)', *Fasti OnLine Documents and Research* 150 (2009), www.fastionline.org/docs/FOLDER-it-2009-150.pdf.

41 P. Meloni, 'La geografia della Sardegna in Tolomeo', *Nuovo Bullettino Archeologico Sardo* 3 (1986): 207–5.

42 A. Ibba and A. Mastino, 'La pastorizia nel Nord Africa e in Sardegna in età romana', in Ex oppidis et mapalibus*. Studi sulle città e le campagne dell'Africa romana*, ed. A. Ibba (Ortacesus, 2012), 75–99.

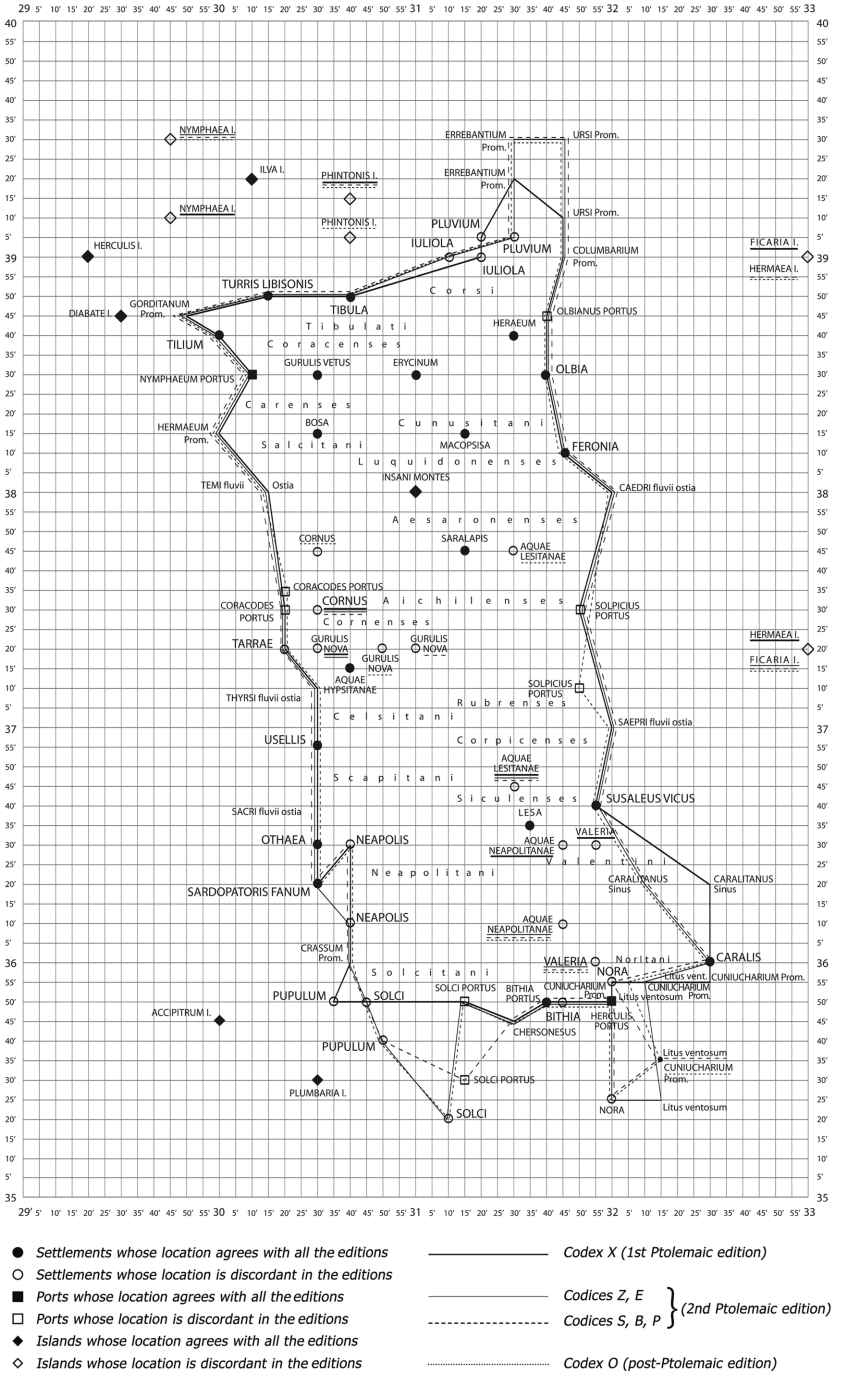

FIGURE 2.1 Places and *populi* of Sardinia according to Ptolemy's *Geographia* (2nd century)
SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM PIERO MELONI

tribe, is an instructive example of policies tending to privilege the agricultural activities of Italian settlers. We know that it was inscribed at Carales on 18 March 69 CE and displayed to the public by the initiative of the Patulcenses in an agricultural village. It contains a decree by which the provincial government confirmed the border that had been delimited in 112 BCE by the proconsul Marcus Cecilius Metellus after a long military campaign that lasted for at least five years, and concluded with the defeat of the local population at the end of what Marc Mayer called the 'second military occupation of the island'.[43]

At the beginning of the first century CE, two inscriptions, one found at Preneste and the other from Fordongianus, recorded the *Civitates Barbariae* beyond the river Tirso near Aquae Hypsitanae (later Forum Traiani, from 111 CE).[44] They were a group of indigenous tribes among which one could not yet find, during the reign of Augustus, an elite that was sufficiently Romanised and trustworthy, since the government and military control of the territory were entrusted to an equestrian *praefectus* in charge of Cohort I of the Corsi. Otherwise, Sardinian place names have preserved the memory of the Roman *Barbaria*, as in the toponym Barbágia that remains in use today to indicate an area of inland Sardinia sometimes imagined as unfriendly to outsiders.

6 On the Ethnic Origin of the Sards

From an ethnic point of view, the population that inhabited Sardinia until the first century CE had maintained notable affinities with African Libyan-Punic populations. Although poisoned by judicial polemics, the assertions of Cicero on the occasion of his defence of Marcus Aemilius Scaurus, the governor of 55 BCE, held much truth. The appellation *Afer* was repeatedly used by Cicero as an equivalent of *Sardus*. The judgment that *Africa ipsa parens illa Sardiniae* suggests the reality of an 'ample penetration of African peoples and the forced

43 Cited in A. Mastino, 'Cornus e il Bellum Sardum di Hampsicora e Hostus, storia o mito? Processo a Tito Livio', in *Il processo di romanizzazione della provincia Sardinia et Corsica. Convegno internazionale di studi, Cuglieri, 26–28 marzo 2015* (Rome, 2016), 27.

44 A. Mastino and R. Zucca, 'La constitutio del Forum Traiani in Sardinia nel 111 a.C.', *Journal of Ancient Topography – Rivista di topografia antica* 22 (2012): 31–50; A. Mastino and R. Zucca, 'L. Cossonius L. f. Stell(atina tribu) Gallus Vecilius Crispinus Mansuanius Marcellinus Numisius Sabinus pro consule provinciae Sardiniae e la constitutio del Forum Traiani', *Gerión. Revista de Historia Antigua* 32 (2014): 199–223.

and punitive character of colonisation – or, better put, deportation'.[45] Many other literary sources, as well as the archaeological record, confirm the successive intermingling of groups arriving from northern Africa (and also from Iberia, Corsica, Sicily, and possibly from Greece and the Orient too) from the prehistoric age until the time of the more recent Punic colonies, to such an extent that some sources speak of the *Sardo-Libici*. The onset of Roman occupation started a difficult relationship and a contested cohabitation with the Italian settlers. In Cicero's opinion, the admixture of peoples from which they derived, made the Sards even more rough and hostile. After repeated intermingling they had become wild, 'acidified' like wine, and taking on all the bad traits of which they were accused. Descendants of the Carthaginians, mixed with African blood and confined to the island, the Sards showed all the defects of the Punic people, according to Cicero. They were liars and traitors, almost none kept their word, and they hated the alliance with the Romans – even though there were no longer any cities in mid-first-century BCE Sardinia with the status of 'free' or 'friendly to the Roman people', but only *civitates stipendiariae*.[46] Adriana Muroni recently reappraised Cicero's assertions, transferring the argument to a juridical level.[47] The deportation of foreigners to Sardinia is also variously attested after Cicero. From numerous references in the literary sources, there is evident continuity in an African ethnic influx and migrations to Sardinia from North Africa. The judgment expressed in the mid-twelfth century by the Muslim al-Idrīsī is well known: 'The population of the island of Sardinia is, in origin, 'Roman' Afāriqa – barbarous and distant from the peoples of the *Rūm*'.[48] The ethnic stock of the Sardinian people, formed from prehistoric times and confirmed in the Roman age, was thus thought to be Berber-Libyan-Punic.

45 S. Moscati, 'Africa ipsa parens illa Sardiniae', *Rivista di filologia e di istruzione classica* 95 (1967): 385–88; P. Ruggeri, Africa ipsa parens illa Sardiniae*: studi di storia antica e di epigrafia* (Sassari, 1999), 15 ff.

46 Cicero, 'Pro Scauro', in *Orations*, trans. N.H. Watts, LCL 252 (Cambridge, USA, 1931), secs 19, 42, pp. 280–81, 296–97. Also, see A. Mastino, 'Le relazioni tra Africa e Sardegna in età romana', *Archivio Storico Sardo* 38 (1995): 11–82; Ruggeri, *Studi di storia antica*, 115–16 n. 7 (*Titus Manlius Torquatus privatus cum imperio*).

47 A. Muroni, 'La cittadinanza romana en Sardegna durante la *Res publica*: concessioni tra politica e diritto', *Diritto @ Storia. Rivista Internazionale di Scienze Giuridiche e Tradizione Romana* 12 (2014), www.dirittoestoria.it/12/tradizione-romana/Muroni-Cittadinanza-romana-Sardegna-Res-publica-concessioni-politica-diritto.htm.

48 See al-Idrīsī, *Kitāb Nuzhat al-mushtāq fī ikhtirāq al-āfāq*, ed. E. Cerulli and A. Bombaci, vol. 2, 9 vols (Naples, 1972), 584; Mastino, 'Le relazioni', 11–82. Also, see in this volume A. Metcalfe, 'Early Muslim raids on Sardinia: a historiographical perspective,' pp. 141–42.

7 A 'national' History: *Natio, Gens, Genus* According to Cicero and Varro

Recent years have witnessed the gradual rediscovery of *nuragic* culture's originality, which Greek myth had tended to minimise. The heroic statues at Mont'e Prama from the Iron Age represent a moment that synthesises a history, a self-representation and a collective imaginary in which the heroes are depicted as young and full of life even when wounded, in a moment of competition and exaltation. At a time of crisis and the dissolution of the Nuragic era, the statues of Mont'e Prama proposed a renewed vision of Sardinian national identity and culture, acknowledged by Aristotle although contaminated by Greek and Roman myth. It was one that shared continuous relations with Mediterranean cultures, particularly northern Africa, where an 'incubation' process was taking place, analogous to the one that took place in Sardinia in the Iron Age.

It is not out of place to speak of a 'Sardinian nation' in this context, given that we are using the word – *natio* – that was also used in Cicero's *Pro Scauro*, even though he used it with a polemic tint and often in parallel with *gens* or *genus*.[49] Still, for Cicero, the Sardinian nation is defined by the fact that all those belonging to it had *una mens*, *unus color*, *una vox*, and thus constituted *una natio*.[50] This is to say that the Sards had a similar way of envisioning the future and conceiving social relations (*una mens*), that all looked similar (*unus color*), and finally that all spoke the same language. This is more than the Canaanite language of the Phoenicians and the Carthaginians, the Protosardian of the heirs of the Nuragic people, or the lost language that had preceded Latin. It is instead an indistinct sound, a clamour, an uproar made of incomprehensible words (*una vox*).[51] The passage in Varro's *De re rustica* about the *Sardi pelliti*, allies of Cornus during the war with Hannibal, is in harmony with this idea. The *Sardi* are mentioned there together with the African *Gaetulli*: *quaedam nationes harum* (*caprarum*) *pellibus sunt vestitae*, *ut in Gaetulia et in Sardinia*.[52] Indeed, Mediterranean Africa lies at the basis of the tradition regarding the Sardo-Libyan islanders. According to Hellanicus of Lesbos in the fifth century BCE, whom Nicholas of Damascus quoted in the time of Augustus, the islanders when travelling took nothing more than a cup for wine and a short dagger, *kulix* and *machaira* – inspired by Dionysus, the god of drunkenness and the adversary of

49 Cicero, 'Pro Scauro', secs 19, 42, pp. 280–81, 296–97.

50 Cicero, 'Pro Scauro', secs 19, 41, pp. 270–71, 294–95.

51 Mastino, 'Natione Sardus. Una mens, unus color, una vox, una natio'.

52 Cato and Varro, *On Agriculture*, trans. W.D. Hooper and H.B. Ash, LCL 283 (Cambridge, USA, 1934), bk. 2.11.11, pp. 418–19.

Apollo, the god of light and civilisation.[53] In recent years, much of the groundwork has been laid for defining the parameters that may be used for tracing, the relations between Sardinia and the Roman provinces of the Maghreb across a wide chronological arc. These convergences, based on custom that dates back at least to the Punic age, are fuelled by repeated and significant exchanges of the population, and particularly by the presence of deportees and African immigrants in Sardinia, and of Sardinian soldiers and civilians in northern Africa. Consequently, Romanisation developed in an analogous fashion due to the structural affinities of their economies, and particularly that of agriculture in these provinces, linked as they were by commercial traffic, and often in their political destinies too. The survival of Punic and indigenous elements manifested itself in Sardinia, just as it did in Africa, in urban institutions, religious life, language, and names.[54] Epigraphic sources confirm further later convergences.

The evidence we possess is certainly heterogeneous and of varying quality. Some of the categories here used might be too generic, and interpretable in a different manner. Nonetheless, the sheer abundance of testimony, even with significant variations over time, is such as to render certain that the 'African' component of the history of ancient Sardinia may no longer be undervalued within the framework of a wider Mediterranean 'calling' which constitutes the true and particular character of the island.[55]

The element that combines these quite different aspects is seen in the vitality of the *Sardus Pater* cult, documented on the island at the end of the Republic and later in the age of the Severi. In Pettazzoni's account, *Sardus* was a *deus patrius* able to replace 'the idea of tribe with the idea of nation', the 'benefactor demiurge', by means of which it is possible to identify decisively the contribution of Libyan settlers in Sardinia.[56]

The only exponents of the thesis of the Sardinian 'nation' known to us from Roman Antiquity appear to be Livy's Hampsicora (Hampsagora in Silius

53 A. Mastino, 'Le testimonianze archeologiche di età romana del territorio di Santulussurgiu nel Montiferru (I Sardi Pelliti del Montiferru o del Marghine e le origini di Hampsicora)', in *Santu Lussurgiu. Dalle origini alla 'Grande Guerra'*, ed. G. Mele, vol. 1, 2 vols (Nuoro, 2005), 156. Original reference to Nicolaus of Damascus: *Sardolíbues oudèn kéktentai skeûos exo kúlikos kaì machaíras* ('The Sardinian-Libyans did not use any accoutrements other than a cup to drink wine and a sword, kylix'); K.O. Müller, *Fragmenta historicorum Græcorum*, vol. 3, 5 vols (Paris, 1849), 463, frag. 137. Perhaps derived from Hellanicus of Mytilene (fifth century BCE).

54 G. Paulis, 'Sopravvivenze della lingua punica in Sardegna', *L'Africa romana* 7 (1990): 599–639.

55 Mastino, 'Le relazioni'.

56 R. Pettazzoni, *La religione primitiva in Sardegna* (Piacenza, 1912); A. Mastino, 'L'iscrizione latina del restauro del tempio del Sardus Pater ad Antas e la problematica istituzionale', in *Il tempio del Sardus Pater ad Antas*, ed. R. Zucca, Monumenti Antichi 79 (Rome, 2019), 199–239.

Italicus)[57] and his son Hostus, allies of Hannibal in the *Bellum Sardum* in 215 BCE. Their names recall the family's distant North African origins, more precisely Numidian from the Cirtense region and the valley of the river Hampsaga. Still, it has been recently shown that the suffix *-ora* of the father's name and the son's name 'Hostus' reveal a paleo-Sardinian substrate, thus hinting at a process of full integration into the island's local context that would have been developing in the Carthaginian period.[58] Some parallel examples in *Barbaria* are known, such as at Ula Tirso.[59] All in all, proper names are testimony to the long history of the island, and are of great interest since some paleo-Sardinian names are attested in epigraphy during Roman Imperial times and re-emerge later in some of the earliest written records for the medieval period. The proper names that are particular to Sardinia are almost certainly pre-Latin and an expression of what Lidio Gasperini called the indigenous *Sarditas*.[60] The name Torbenius at Ula Tirso (at Canales),[61] just as Torvenius at Busachi and again at Ula Tirso,[62] are clearly connected with the medieval Dorueni de Caruia and more generally with the name Torbenus, found for example among the *iudikes* of Arborea.[63] The Roman names Nispellus and Nispenini, documented at Ula Tirso and Macomer, are to be connected with the medieval Nispella, the fruit of a proto-Sardinian substrate already visible in Antiquity.[64] With this name, see, for example, the wife

57 M. Sechi, 'Nota ad un episodio di storia sarda nelle "Puniche" di Silio Italico', *Studi Sardi* 7 (1947): 153–62; G. Runchina, 'Da Ennio a Silio Italico', *Annali della Facoltà di Magistero dell'Università di Cagliari* 6 (1982): 11–43.

58 Mastino and Zucca, '*Urbes et rura*', 428 ff.

59 Mastino, 'Cornus e il Bellum Sardum', 54.

60 L. Gasperini, 'Presentazione di: Porto Torres e il suo volto', *L'Africa romana* 10 (1994): 76. See the provisional list (with omissions) in R.J. Rowland, 'Onomastic Remarks on Roman Sardinia', *Names* 21, no. 2 (1973): 82–102.

61 CIL X 7876. See R. Zucca, *Ula Tirso. Un centro della Barbaria sarda* (Dolianova, 1999), 67 ff (*Torbenius Kariti* [*filius*]).

62 A.M. Cossu, 'Iscrizioni di età romana dal Barigadu', *L'Africa romana* 10 (1994): no. 2, pp. 976–77; Zucca, *Ula Tirso*, 69; P. Ruggeri, 'Una nuova testimonianza tra Sarditas e Romanitas: la cupa di Lucius Valerius Torbenius ad Ula Tirso (Oristano)', in *Serta Antiqua e Mediaevalia, Usi e abusi epigrafici. Atti del Colloquio internazionale di Epigrafia latina. Genova, 20–22 settembre 2001*, ed. M.G. Angeli Bertinelli and A. Donati, Serta antiqua et mediaevalia 6 (Rome, 2003), 507–19 = *AEp* 2003, 820: *L*(*ucius*) *Valerius Torbenius Iunior*.

63 See also *Dorbeni*, 425, 443; *Dorueni*, *CSPS* 75, 205, 243, 317, 333, 337, 376. See also S. Bortolami, 'Antroponimia e società nella Sardegna medioevale: caratteri ed evoluzione di un "sistema regionale"', in *Giudicato di Arborea e Marchesato di Oristano: proiezioni mediterranee e aspetti di storia locale. Atti del I Convegno internazionale di studi* (*Oristano, 5–8 dicembre 1997*), ed. G. Mele, vol. 1, 2 vols (Oristano, 2000), 183.

64 Zucca, *Ula Tirso*, 64: *Nispellus, Pipedionis f*(*ilius*); also *ILSard.* I 214 = AEp. 1992, 888: *Urseti Nispenini*, at Macomer. For a *Valeria Nispenini* at Olbia, see CIL X 7988 = *ILCV* 4358 = AEp. 1996, 821 = L. Gasperini, 'Olbiensia epigraphica', in *Da Olbìa ad Olbia, 2500*

of the Cagliari *iudex*, Torchitorio, in the eleventh century.[65] The name *Ietoccor Torceri filius*, from a memorial at Busachi, is the striking antecedent for the widespread name Ithoccor (less often, Ithocor, Itthoccor and Ithochor) borne by the members of the aristocracy of the *giudicati*, and also often mentioned in the Condaghe of Silki.[66] These are only examples along a lengthy thread that connects the Nuragic period with that of the *giudicati*, traversing the Roman era in a more or less underground fashion. A complete list of the *populi* that constituted the *natio Sarda* is now available (figure. 2.2).[67] To these there can now be added the Barsanes of Barumini, and the Uneritani of Las Plassas in Marmilla.[68]

8 The Revolts

The 'resistance' of the indigenous population to Romanisation in the Sardinian hinterland manifested itself from a cultural perspective even before it did so from a military one.[69] There were still many elements surviving from Sardo–Punic culture in contact with Italic immigrants. At the end of the Republic, military camps had been set up in inland Sardinia; in some cases, they were successors to Carthaginian outposts, and had the same aim of exerting control over the mountainous areas of *Barbaria*. There was no clear system of linear defences (*limes*). Instead, they preferred to focus operations on particular objectives, even using dogs trained for hunting humans, as the consul Marcus

anni di una città mediterranea. Atti del Convegno di studi (*Olbia, 12–14 maggio 1994*), ed. A. Mastino and P. Ruggeri (Sassari, 1996), 311–12 no. 3.

65 For Nispella in the medieval period, see A. Boscolo, *La Sardegna bizantina e altogiudicale* (Sassari, 1978), 113–14; R. Coroneo, *Arte in Sardegna dal IV alla metà dell'XI secolo* (Cagliari, 2011), 438–41.

66 Cossu, 'Iscrizioni di età romana', no. 4, p. 982 ff; R. Zucca, 'Le persistenze preromane nei poleonimi e negli antroponimi della Sardinia', *L'Africa romana* 7 (1990): 664. For the Condaghe of Silki, see, for example, the priest *Ithocorr de Frauile* nos 95 and 98. For further references, see A. Mastino, 'La romanità della società giudicale in Sardegna: il Condaghe di San Pietro di Silki', in *La civiltà giudicale in Sardegna nei secoli XI-XIII. Fonti e documenti scritti. Atti del Convegno Nazionale, Sassari-Usini, marzo 2001* (Sassari, 2002), 23–61.

67 M. Bonello Lai, 'Il territorio dei populi e delle civitates indigene in Sardegna', in *La tavola di Esterzili. Il conflitto tra pastori e contadini nella Barbaria sarda*, ed. A. Mastino (Sassari, 1993), 161–84.

68 On the Barsanes, see A.M. Corda and A. Piras, 'Alcune note sulla geografia urbana della "Provincia Sardinia" ', *Theologica & Historica. Annali della Pontificia facoltà teologica della Sardegna* 18 (2009): 260–62. On the Uneritani, see G. Serreli, 'Il rinvenimento di un'iscrizione dedicatoria dei pagani Uneritani a Las Plassas', *L'Africa romana* 14 (2002): 1787–93.

69 A. Mastino, 'Analfabetismo e resistenza: geografia epigrafica della Sardegna', in *L'epigrafia del villaggio*, ed. A. Calbi and A. Donati, Epigrafia e Antichità 12 (Faenza, 1993), 457–536.

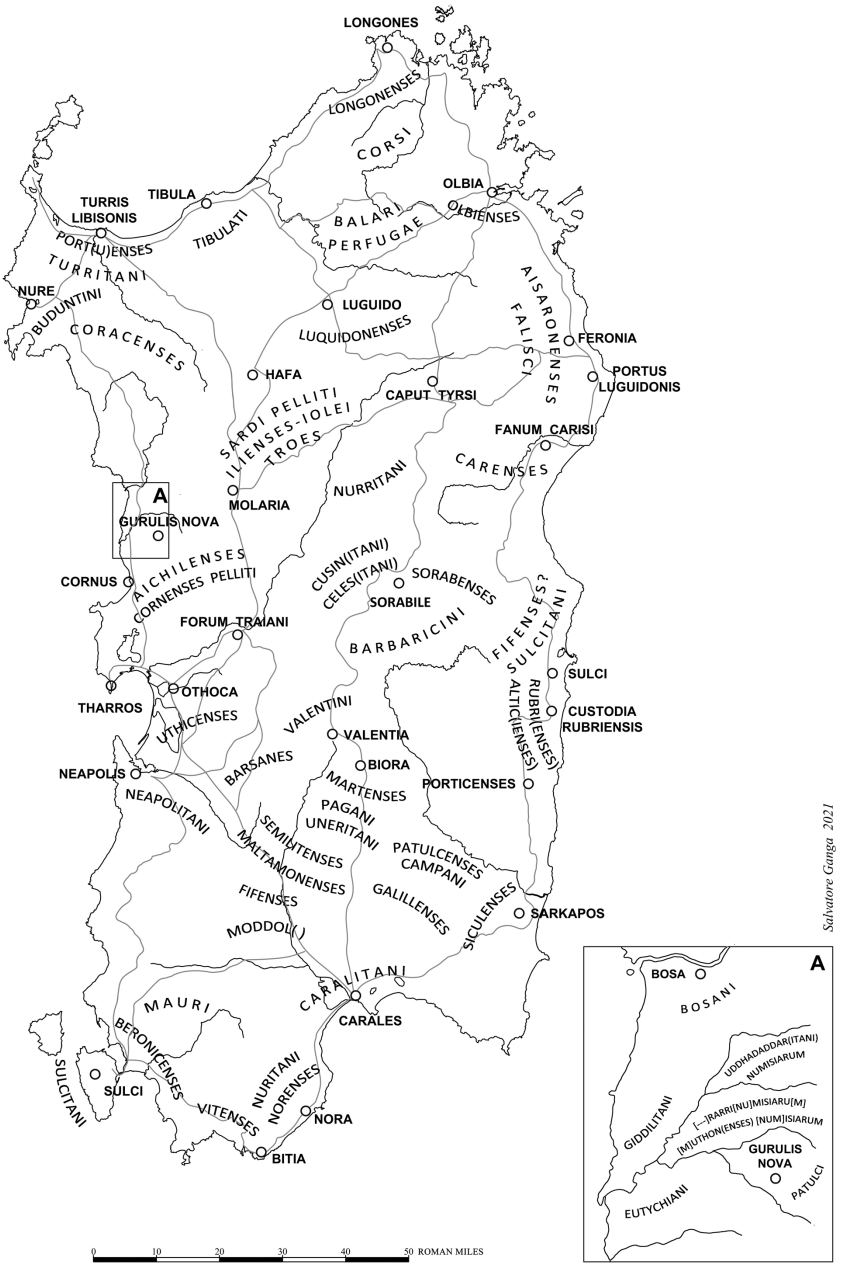

FIGURE 2.2 Location of the *populi* of Roman Sardinia
SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM SALVATORE GANGA

Pomponius Matho had done in 231 BCE. On other occasions, they resorted to ruses and ploys like those known to Strabo, according to whom the Romans managed to catch the Sards unawares by attacking them in the sanctuaries where their traditional feasts were being celebrated, where they would be treating themselves to the fruits of their raids.[70]

According to Livy, the Ilienses of the Marghine-Goceano area had still not been completely pacified in the age of Augustus. Pausanias wrote in the second century CE that they had taken refuge in the mountains and had fortified themselves behind stockades.[71] Diodorus Siculus also described how, in order to maintain their freedom, the Iolei-Ilienses were forced into the mountains. In mid-first century BCE, in his account, they inhabited 'difficult and inaccessible places, where they are accustomed to feed on milk and meat because they are shepherds, and are plentifully supplied. And because they live in subterranean dwellings' [perhaps the *nuraghi*] 'they dig galleries instead of building houses, and escape the perils of war with ease'.[72] Finally, Strabo observed that 'the tribes in the mountains are four: the Parati, the Sossinati, the Balari and the Aconiti, who live in caves. If they have any land fit for cultivation, then they do not tend to it with any care. Instead, they conduct raids against the lands of farmers, not only those on the island, but they also sail against those on the continent, particularly the Pisatae [Pisans]'.[73]

As time passed, the repressive campaigns conducted by Roman governors to fight piracy, employing seasoned auxiliary units and, on the coasts, the regular war fleet, managed to diminish the danger. Furthermore, the establishment of a wide network of roads at the end of the Republican period,[74] and in the Imperial age,[75] made a fundamental contribution to this process, rendering accessible even the more isolated regions of the province, and setting in motion a process of profound Romanisation (figure. 2.3). The

70 Y. Le Bohec, *La Sardaigne et l'armée romaine sous le Haut-Empire* (Sassari, 1990); A. Mastino and R. Zucca, 'Un nuovo titulus della cohors Ligurum in Sardinia e il problema dell'organizzazione militare della Sardegna nel I secolo d.C.', in *L'iscrizione e il suo doppio. Atti del Convegno Borghesi 2013*, ed. A. Donati, Epigrafia e Antichità 35 (Faenza, 2014), 383–410.

71 Mastino, *Storia della Sardegna antica*, 174.

72 I. Didu, 'Iolei o Iliei?', in *Poikilma, Studi in onore di Michele R. Cataudella in occasione del 60° compleanno*, ed. S. Bianchetti (La Spezia, 2001), 397–406.

73 P. Meloni, 'La seconda redazione della "Geografia" di Strabone e il capitolo riguardante la Sardegna (V, 2,7)', *Nuovo Bullettino Archeologico Sardo* 5 (2002): 297–305.

74 A.M. Corda and A. Mastino, 'Il più antico miliario dalla Sardegna dalla strada a Tibulas Sulcos', in *Contributi all'epigrafia d'età augustea. Actes de la XIIIe rencontre franco-italienne sur l'épigraphie du monde romain, Macerata, 9–11 settembre 2005*, ed. G.F. Paci (Tivoli, 2007), 277–314.

75 A. Mastino and P. Ruggeri, 'La viabilità della Sardegna romana. Un nuovo praetorium a Sas Presones di Rebeccu a nord della biforcazione Turris-Olbia?', in Παλαιὰ Φιλία. *Studi di topografia antica in onore Giovanni Uggeri*, ed. C. Marangio and G. Laudizi (Galatina, 2009), 555–72.

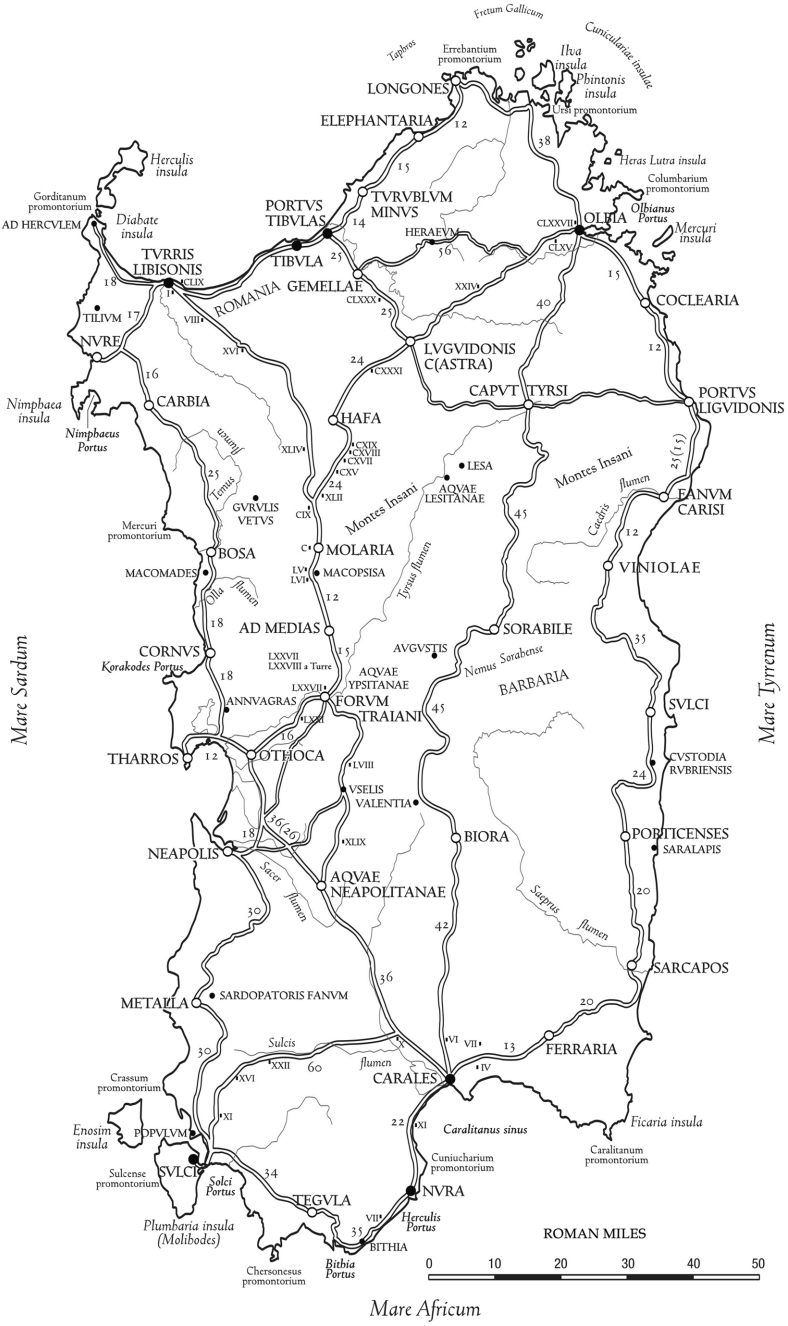

FIGURE 2.3 Road system of Roman Sardinia according to the Antonine Itinerary (‘*Itinerarium provinciarum Antonini Augusti*’) (3rd century)
SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM SALVATORE GANGA

characteristics of the neo-Latin language of the Nuorese are evidence of this today.

9 The *Latifundia* Economy

After the Roman conquest, the whole territory of the province would have been declared, at least formally, *ager publicus populi Romani*. For lands remaining in provisory ownership of any former owners, a tenth of the produce and various *vectigalia* needed to be paid. The relationship between owners, holders and agricultural workers changed radically, although at first it did so only from a theoretical point of view, at least in certain areas.[76] Subtle juridical problems arose regarding land ownership that embroiled the rural population in conflict with the violent illegal occupation of public lands; opposition between farmers and shepherds, and immediate demands to restore order with repressive interventions. Numerous boundary stones show a vast operation of land division in Sardinia at the end of the Republican age, particularly in the area that had been involved in the *Bellum Sardum* after Cannae in 215 BCE. The *limitatio* that was then put into effect to the north of Cornus, the capital of the rebellion, with a possible first phase already from the end of the second century BCE, was designed to accelerate the process of settling wandering tribes in order to contain brigandage and to favour agricultural development. In the sources, one sees a constant concern by the authorities to control the movements of indigenous shepherds and to fix the boundaries of single *latifundia*, some occupied by the local population, others by colonists (mostly farmers, but also shepherds) settled in lands possessed by individual families. The characteristic element of Sardinia's economic 'underdevelopment' in the Roman age was cereal monoculture, inherited from the Punic period. It caused the abandonment of other agricultural produce, limiting competitiveness and commerce, favouring exploitation, and determining economic and political subordination, as well as an increase in social inequality. Italo-Roman colonisation sometimes caused the division of resources and the expropriation of lands occupied by locals, who often found themselves enclosed within new confines and hindered in their traditional pastoralism, which, due to the nature of the soils, necessitated some degree of transhumance. The weak urbanisation of Sardinia and the traditional widespread nature of scattered settlements – also signalled

76 See Meloni, *La Sardegna romana*, 102 ff, 302 ff; Mastino, *Storia della Sardegna antica*, 175–76, 199.

by Pausanias, who spoke of a population dispersed throughout the territory – favoured the development of a *latifundia* economy based around cereal monoculture. This required the use of a large servile workforce.[77]

It is clear that Sardinian agriculture must have been little developed during the Republic, and on occasion, it did not even manage to guarantee food self-sufficiency. At the end of the first century BCE, the extent of abandoned fields in Sardinia reached, according to Varro, notable proportions in some places (possibly near Olbia), also in part due to brigandage (*propter latrocinia vicinorum*).[78] Strabo reported that the raids of the mountain people of the Iolei-Diaghesbei were, together with malaria, a great affliction that reduced the benefits offered by the availability of soils fit for cereal growing.[79]

However, this situation must have changed over time, mostly due to Italo-Roman colonisers following the extension of the conquest. Planting fruit trees was encouraged on a large scale; olive-growing, viticulture, and citrus cultivation all spread. The writer Palladius possibly testified to the cultivation of cedars on the island, particularly on the Campidano.[80] Still, Italic protectionism greatly limited the production of oil and wine. There were also other less valuable products, among which was low quality, bitter honey. The Sardinian economy thus rested on a fragile foundation, mainly due to the absence of adequate capital and the necessity of maintaining an administrative and commercial apparatus that was often parasitic. This can be seen when considering the presence of moneylenders, like those chased away by Cato in 198 BCE, or that of tax-collectors, contractors, merchants, and speculators.

Although pastoral activity, traditionally nomadic and involving livestock rearing, could not have represented a valid alternative to agriculture on its own, it must still have been widely practised by the islanders, even with little profit. To that must be added fishing, the production of *garum* and the export of salted fish. Among other activities, underground mining is attested, particularly in

77 A. Mastino and R. Zucca, 'Rura circa civitates in Africa et Sardinia', in *Le campagne e le città. Prospettive di sviluppo sostenibile in area mediterranea*, ed. F. Nuvoli (Cagliari, 2016), 33–52.

78 Cato and Varro, *On Agriculture*, bk. 1.16.2, pp. 220–21.

79 Strabo, *Geography*, trans. A.H. Jones, vol. 1, 8 vols, LCL 49 (Cambridge, USA, 1917), bk. 5.2.7, pp. 358–63. On the agrarian economy, see Mastino, *Storia della Sardegna antica*, 176–77, 199–200.

80 R. Zucca, 'Palladio e il territorio neapolitano in Sardegna', *Quaderni Bolotanesi* 16 (1990): 279–90. On aspects of the rural economy and product–conservation, see A.V. Greco, 'Amurca vs curculio: Strategie mediterranee per la protezione dei granai nella trattatistica agronomica latina', in *Sa massarìa. Ecologia storica dei sistemi di lavoro contadino in Sardegna*, ed. G. Serreli et al., vol. 1, 2 vols (Cagliari, 2017), 505–35.

Iglesiente. The mines yielded silver (in greatest proportion), gold (to such an extent that in the Imperial age, there was a gold rush by the *aurileguli*), iron, lead, and also alum and carnelian. Salt mines are attested at Carales from the beginning of the second century BCE, run by private enterprise and staffed with workers of servile condition. Construction was also active, founded on the exploitation of quarries, often for the realisation of important public works. For some materials, such as granite, export to Rome and Carthage is attested. Crafts also developed on the island, though with limited, uncompetitive activity and perhaps not sufficiently motivated economically. In any case, it was lacking a qualitative tradition that was recognised and appreciated in the marketplace. Textile activity is also clearly attested. However, the more typical clothing for Sardinia was the characteristic *mastruca*, a vest made from goat skins, 'monstrous' if we believe the medieval author Isidore of Seville, who wrote that 'those who put it on assumed the appearance of an animal'.[81] The literary sources also offer a detailed account of vegetation (for example, pines, cedars and oaks) and fauna (*musmones* or wild goats (mouflons), horses, fabulous birds, insects, and tuna fish that fed off 'sea acorns' and cetaceans). These contributed to defining the natural environment of ancient Sardinia with its wild beauties and its problematic aspects, chief among which was the unhealthy climate that caused malaria.[82]

10 An Island Society

In the Punic period, a Sardinian oligarchy seems to have built its riches from the exploitation of estates, engaging a workforce of freemen and slaves of local or Libyan origin. After the great battle of Cannae, won by Hannibal in the winter of 216–215 BCE, the Sardinian aristocracy made a clear choice for the pro-Punic camp, perhaps as they were hard hit by the burden of Roman taxation. Livy claims that on the eve of Hampsicora's rebellion – probably himself a member of the ancient Sardo–Punic nobility – a *clandestina legatio*, an embassy of *principes* of the Sardo–Punic cities and of the non-urbanised

81 Isidore, *Etymologiarum sive Originum Libri XX*, ed. W.M. Lindsay, vol. 2, 2 vols (Oxford, 1911), bk. 19.23.5.

82 M. Gras, 'La malaria et l'histoire de la Sardaigne antique', in *La Sardegna nel mondo mediterraneo. Atti del primo convegno internazionale di studi geografico-storici, Sassari, 7–9 aprile 1978*, vol. 1, 2 vols (Sassari, 1981), 297–303; P.J. Brown, 'Malaria in Nuragic, Punic and Roman Sardinia: Some Hypotheses', in *Studies in Sardinian Archaeology I*, ed. M.S. Balmuth and R.J. Rowland (Ann Arbor, 1984), 209–35.

civitates, left for Carthage, possibly from Cornus.[83] They went to forge a military alliance and to express their willingness to rebel against the Romans, obtaining in return friendship and help. It was indeed a true military alliance between the coastal Sardo–Punic inhabitants and the Carthaginians, whom the indigenous, skin-clad Sards (the *Sardi pelliti*) also joined. Other social groups of distant Phoenician origin might have instead preferred an alliance with the Romans.[84]

In later times, there were some cases of extraordinary riches in Sardinia, such as that of Famea from Cagliari, who in 64 BCE decided to support Cicero's election to the consulate, and who made his conspicuous wealth available to Atticus. Later, his nephew (or grandson) Tigellius accumulated an enormous fortune built from Caesar's donations and his extraordinary success as a lyric poet. Only very few senators and knights of Sardinian origin are known from inscriptions of the Imperial age, from which one may infer a widespread and almost generalised lack. A large part of the population belonged to an inferior social class, with a high percentage of slaves and freedmen. The presence of slaves in Sardinia was already notable in the Republican period. This was perhaps due to the existence of a rigid economic structure that was in great part inherited from the Punic period, and that required a low-cost workforce. Alternatively, it could have been due to how the Roman conquest was conducted. The slaves must have been skilled in various types of activity, as attested by the existence of influential entrepreneurs who were investing capital in Sardinia even as they continued to live on the peninsula. The miners (the *metalla*),[85] the salt miners (*salinae*), a large part of the field labourers (the *praedia*) and those in pottery workshops in Sardinian cities (*figlinae*) were certainly slaves. During the Imperial period, only one freedman was documented among the *metalla* and *praedia*, in the household of the governor–procurator, who was himself of the equestrian order. His subordinates were slaves, some of whom were responsible for large districts (*regiones*).[86]

83 On Hampsicora's revolt, see the remarks and references in Mastino, 'Cornus e il Bellum Sardum', 15 ff.

84 M. Corona, *La rivolta di Ampsicora. Cronaca della prima grande insurrezione sarda* (*215 a.C.*) (Cagliari, 2005).

85 Y. Le Bohec, 'Notes sur les mines de Sardaigne à l'époque romaine', in Sardinia antiqua. *Studi in onore di Piero Meloni in occasione del suo settantesimo compleanno* (Cagliari, 1992), 255–64.

86 F. Cenerini, 'Un nuovo servus regionarius da Sulci', in *Colons et colonies dans le monde romain*, ed. S. Demougin and J. Scheid (Rome, 2012), 337–46.

11 Sardo–Punic and Roman Institutions

There was important cultural 'persistence' in religious, linguistic, onomastic, juridical and administrative realms that shows a convergence with similar situations in Africa. This is not only due to a common ethnic matrix and a shared 'Punic' experience, but most of all to a continuity of connection as well as to similar economic and societal structures. The survival of Carthaginian constitutional models and Punic traditions in the organisation of the cities of Roman Sardinia during the last three centuries of the Republic and the high Empire, represent an important chapter in this field of discussion. It is known that the juridical emancipation of the indigenous *civitates* of the island did not happen before Caesar, and may instead date to the Second Triumvirate (43–33 BCE). We may presume that the cities and rural populations continued to administer themselves according to the norms of Punic public law, which survived in some cases until the start of the third century CE, if not later. The most significant evidence is given by the attestation, almost exclusively in Punic and neo-Punic inscriptions, of the magistracy of *sufeti* in numerous Sardinian cities, even many years after the establishment of the Roman province. Carales, Sulci, Neapolis, Tharros and Bithia fit here as examples. The abandonment of Sardo–Punic constitutional forms happened very late in Sardinia, and only gradually, starting from the second half of the first century BCE. In some particularly peripheral and conservative cases, the indigenous structures were maintained even in the fullness of the Imperial age, four to five centuries after the fall of Carthage. This was the case with Bithia, where a dedicatory inscription to the emperor Marcus Aurelius marks the completion of a series of public works in a year identified by the names of the two *sufeti*. One of these, 'the Roman', possessed individual Roman citizenship in a community of *peregrini*. The *civitas*, the political organisation of *peregrini*, is attested at Carales, at Neapolis, and maybe at Olbia too. The city senate is mentioned at Sulci in the mid-first century BCE. The occurrence in the second century CE of the expression 'the entire people of Bithia' is significant, as it can probably be identified with the Sardo–Punic popular assembly.

This evidence confirms a pronounced conservatism. Insularity, the sense of isolation from distant Phoenician–Punic ascendance, true enclaves in Roman territory, and also faithful to thriving contemporary traditions in Africa, must have all weighed heavily in this respect. It seems likely that such a long survival was maintained by new arrivals, successive contacts, and by continuous cultural exchange with Africa.

12 Popular Religiosity: *Sardus Pater*

According to Sandro Bondì, Phoenician–Punic culture was an essential constitutive element of ancient Sardinian culture.[87] There is very little information on the characteristics of traditional religiosity in the Nuragic era, which would have certainly borne fruit in the Punic and Roman periods. The only truly 'indigenous' divinity, however it is reinterpreted *a posteriori*, was *Sardus Pater*-Babi, founding hero and 'demiurge benefactor', which Classical mythographers held to be the son of the African Heracles (Melqart-Makeris), who in turn was said to have reached Sardinia from Libya. On the coins of Octavian, we see *Sardus Pater* depicted as a hunting god, armed with a spear and with a head-covering made from plumage, like the African Nasamones. The latest studies on the temple of Antas at Fluminimaggiore on the island have highlighted the continual vitality of the cult at the beginning of the third century CE, in a mining area where the presence of deported Christians is known from at least twenty years before.[88] The dedicatory inscription of the temple to emperor Caracalla highlights the connection between the 'god of the nation' of the Sards and the tributary cult to the goddess Rome and the emperors, which was being promoted by a provincial priest at the head of the *Concilium provinciae.*

On the other hand, the survival of elements of Punic religiosity into the Roman period is unsurprising due to the profound assimilation of the indigenous 'Punicised' population. It is known that some child-burial grounds or *tophet*s continued to be used until the second century BCE (at Monte Sirai, Carales, Bithia, Tharros and Olbia), and even in the first century BCE (at Sulci). This all determined a clear cultural orientation for the succeeding necropolises of the Imperial age, at least in the more marginal sites.[89] As in Africa and Iberia, it is possible to speak of phenomena of syncretism and of a particular development in the religious life of Sardinia without hindrance from Roman authorities. The case of Sid Babi comes to mind, the son of Melqart and Tanit, venerated at the temple of Antas and mentioned in around twenty Punic inscriptions between

87 S.F. Bondì, 'La cultura punica nella Sardegna romana: un fenomeno di sopravvivenza?', *L'Africa romana* 7 (1990): 457–64.

88 Mastino, *Storia della Sardegna antica*, 455–57, 491. On the cult of *Sardus Pater* and the temple of Antas, see A. Mastino, 'I decenni tra l'esilio in Sardegna di Callisto e quello di Ponziano: i rapporti tra cristiani e pagani e la ricostruzione del tempio nazionale del *Sardus Pater* presso i metalla imperiali', *Atti della Pontificia accademia romana di archeologia. Serie III. Rendiconti* 88 (2016): 159–85.

89 On sarcophagi, for example, see A. Teatini, *Repertorio dei sarcofagi decorati della Sardegna romana* (Rome, 2011).

the fifth century and the end of the second century BCE, as well as in a newly discovered Latin inscription from the Imperial period.[90] The personal name Sidonius is clearly connected with this divinity, and is attested at Sulci.[91] This cult was superimposed onto a more ancient devotion for an analogous Paleo-Sardic figure, which was influenced in turn by Baal-Hammon/Saturn, possibly venerated as Frugiferius at Tharros in the second century BCE, and then pursued in the Imperial age in other forms. After the Roman occupation, some cults were still practised in Sardinia without interruption: the cult of Tanit, already seen on the Sardo–Punic coins, a goddess with a temple at Sulci under the name Elat; the cult of Baalshamen, recorded at Carales in the third century BCE; the cult of Melqart, worshipped at Tharros in the third to second centuries BCE; the cult of Eshmun Merre, identified with Asclepius in the famous trilingual stele at San Nicolò Gerrei from around 150 BCE, with whom the statues of the so-called Bes should perhaps be identified; and the cult of Ashtart, which had a bronze altar at Carales in the third century. In addition, the cult of Demeter and Kore, introduced by the Carthaginians, shows particular characteristics in the form that was taken on the island, and was still associated with bloody sacrifices in the third century CE at Terreseu. The clay busts of Ceres, widespread in Sardinia, are heirs of the Punic *thymiateria*.

Another important aspect of belief is the survival in Sardinia of magical practices, which appear to have been founded on ancient skills and a tradition of knowledge regarding which may have had a connection to the Punic and Etruscan world, at the very least regarding divination. Apart from the ritual sacrifice of children, the killing of the elderly over seventy years old, and the use of venomous herbs (some provoking the *risus sardonicus* and an agonising death), the following rites must also be mentioned: the rite of incubation; dream interpretation; ordeals for testing the guilt of brigands and sacrilegious thieves; the interpretation of prodigies announcing the outbreak of war (for example, shields that sweated blood); idolatry and the veneration of *ligna* and *lapides*, and the presence of sorcerers and witches, such as the terrible Bithiae with double pupils, who could kill with a look. There is also a well known episode that has as its protagonist a Roman governor, Flavius Maximinus. According to a rumour heard by Ammianus Marcellinus, he was said to have killed by stealth by a Sard who was skilled in summoning damned souls and obtaining predictions from the spirits. At the end of the sixth century, pope Gregory the Great explicitly mentioned that such practices were pursued in

90 CIL X 7539 = *AE* 1971, 119 = *ELSard,* p. 583, B 13. Also, see *ELSard.* p. 583 B14; *ELSard*. p. 606 s. B 104 i.

91 *ILSard.* I, 3.

Sardinia when writing about the cleric Paulus, accused of performing magical rites in secret.[92] More generally, Gregory instructed the bishop of Carales to be vigilant against the idol-worshippers, soothsayers and occult sorcerers.[93]

13 Christianity

In the past few years, the extraordinary complexity of the history of Sardinia in Late Antiquity has come to light as a crux between the ancient and the medieval. One may mention here the Constantinian 'Peace of the Church'; the lively resistance of pagan traditions deeply rooted in island society, particularly in a rural setting; the civil and ecclesiastic organisation in the late Empire; a marked African orientation, also in a religious sphere; the Vandal occupation and the Arian Germanic world; the Gothic expedition; the reconquest of Justinian; the activity of pope Gregory the Great and of Latin Church; the cultural friction with the East, and the first Muslim threats to control of the island.[94] Sardinia thus comes into view as truly positioned in the heart of the Mediterranean, open to the most diverse cultural influences, lying between East and West in balance between Europe and Africa.

It is remarkable that the first testimony regarding the Christians exiled to the mines (*eis metallon Sardonìas*) is that of the future pope Callixtus after the financial failure of his master, Carpophorus, which came from the mines at Sulcis in the age of Commodus, perhaps at Metalla. This was in the same valley of Antas in which, twenty years later, the temple dedicated to the health-giving cult of the great eponymous god of Sardinia, *Sardus Pater*-Sid-Babi, would be restored in honour of Caracalla, who had fallen ill. This temple symbolised, in prehistoric Antiquity, in the Punic era, and more so in the Roman period, the lofty place where the whole history of the Sardinian people was represented, not only in its isolation and resistance, but also in its capacity to adapt to, and interact with, Mediterranean cultures. This is only one of many signs of the force and vitality that pagan traditions continued to have in Sardinia, where,

92 Gregory the Great, *Registrum*, bk. 4 no. 24.

93 A. Mastino and T. Pinna, 'Negromanzia, divinazione, malefici nel passaggio tra paganesimo e cristianesimo in Sardegna: gli strani amici del preside Flavio Massimino', in *Epigrafia romana in Sardegna. Atti del I Convegno di studio, Sant'Antioco, 14–15 luglio 2007*, ed. F. Cenerini and P. Ruggeri (Rome, 2008), 41–83.

94 A. Mastino, 'La Sardegna cristiana in età tardo-antica', in *La Sardegna paleocristiana tra Eusebio e Gregorio Magno. Atti del Convegno Nazionale di Studi* (*Cagliari, 10–12 ottobre 1996*), ed. A. Mastino, G. Sotgiu, and N. Spaccapelo (Cagliari, 1999), 263–307; R. Turtas, *Storia della Chiesa in Sardegna dalle origini al 2000* (Rome, 1999).

throughout the third century and also in the fourth, there is evidence for the restoration of pagan places of worship. The sources also speak of the ramified and diffused organisation of the imperial cult, on a municipal and provincial basis.[95] This was the straightforward territorial model that the new diocesan organisation of the Church had to follow in order to establish itself. It is documented in Carales, the provincial capital, from the time of the anti-Donatist council of Arelate to after the Constantinian Peace, but it certainly dates back to at least the previous century. It was in this period that the temple of Sardus Pater was abandoned by the faithful. Evidence for this, in effect, consists of imperial fourth-century coins, which indicate that the temple had fallen into disuse or had been destroyed. One may ask how many other pagan temples had been destroyed by Christians in the course of the fourth century, and particularly in the following two centuries? Or how many temples were otherwise repurposed according to instructions imparted by Roman pontiffs, such as Gregory the Great, regarding the necessity of transforming the pagan temples from places of demon-worship to places for the adoration of the true God?

Another emblematic case is that of the hypogeum of Hercules Salvator at the gates of Tharros, in the territory of Cabras. Here, the health-giving cult of the waters, and the cult of Heracles *Sotér*, who is at the centre of all Classical myths of the colonisation of Sardinia, was 'rebaptised' and reinterpreted with reference to Christ the Saviour along with a syncretism of profound meaning suggested by the depiction of Daniel in the lions' den.[96] For the rest, new religious practice continued to map itself onto pagan cult sites, assimilating the most successful of the preceding cults. At other times, Nuragic, Punic or Roman monuments or edifices were instead demolished with the intent of suppressing older pagan worship. The first case is well exemplified by the rise of cave churches inside abandoned chamber tombs (*domus de janas*), such as at Sant'Andrea Priu in Bonorva, or by the takeover, in the hypogeum of Forum Traiani, of a very ancient cult of Asclepius and the health-restoring nymphs built around the warm springs of the Aquae Hypsitanae by the cult of the martyr Lussorius. Continuity of worship was frequently documented in Sardinia, such as in the case of the temple of Hercules-Melkart at Olbia, on top of which two later Christian buildings were built, the last dedicated to saint Paul. At

95 Ruggeri, *Studi di storia antica*, 151 ff.

96 A. Donati and R. Zucca, *L'ipogeo di San Salvatore*, Sardegna archeologica. Guide e Itinerari 21 (Sassari, 1992). But the latest studies have also shown archaic epigraphic formulas of an erotic nature; I. Di Stefano Manzella et al., '[I]n (h)oc loco pidicatus. (Sardinia, ager tharrensis, loc. San Salvatore-Cabras (OR), Ipogeo di Heracles σωτήρ)', *Epigraphica* 80 (2018): 109–27. The most recent studies interpret the circus scene differently (Gaetano Ranieri *viva voce*).

Alghero, the cult of the nymphs protecting navigation seems to have been substituted in an artificial cave in the cliff at Capo Caccia by the cult of Maria Stella Maris. For the second case, that of destruction, one thinks of the temple dedicated to Jupiter in Barbaria, on the sacred mountain of Bidonì[97] beyond the river Tirso, where the ancient paleo-Sardic cult of the bull had possibly been celebrated.

The story of Christians exiled to Sardinia only briefly touches on the history of the island, and it remains in great part extraneous to the deep character of Sardinian society. The same is true for those Romans *en Sardonia martures*, liberated together with Callixtus by the presbyter Hyacinthus according to the will of Marcia, concubine of Commodus, perhaps thanks to the amenability of the *proc*(*urator*) *metallorum et praediorum*, who, twenty years later, would be in charge of imperial properties. It was the African pope Victor who provided the list of the exiled, among whom was the future pope Callixtus. This aspect of being extraneous to the island is again seen in the case of the exile of pope Pontian and the presbyter Hippolytus in the time of Maximinus Thrax, apparently again *ad metalla*, which confirms that Sardinia was considered a land of exile populated by pagans, in which the bishop of Rome would not have been able to find support among the faithful. As for the rest, even some great saints of the Sardinian Church are presented as strangers to local reality. This was the case with Antiochus, who is claimed to have been exiled from Mauritania in Hadrian's time for professing the Christian faith, and to have landed, according to a dubious tradition, on the *Sulcitana insula Sardiniae contermina* on board a *parva navicula*. It is the same with certain martyrs whose late-written *Passiones* would have them killed during the great Diocletian persecution, such as Ephysius, who was claimed to have been born in the East at Elia Capitolina (Jerusalem), or Saturnus, whose name suggests an African origin.[98] Maybe even the glorious martyr of Turris Libisonis, the soldier Gavinus Palatinus, had been temporarily assigned to Sardinia. That would have made him like his fellow soldier *Thalassus Palatinus, dominus et nutritor* of the *infelix Musa* at the end of the fourth century, or perhaps like the *Leontius* of a Carales' inscription that was considered a forgery by Mommsen.[99] This was true also

97 R. Zucca, 'Un altare rupestre di Iuppiter nella Barbaria sarda', *L'Africa romana* 12 (1998): 1205–11.

98 P.G. Spanu, Martyria Sardiniae. *I santuari dei martiri sardi* (Oristano, 2000); P.G. Spanu, ed., *Insulae Christi. Il cristianesimo primitivo in Sardegna, Corsica e Baleari* (Oristano, 2002); P. Ruggeri, *Alla ricerca dei corpi santi in Sardegna: l'epigrafia latina tra scoperte archeologiche e falsificazioni* (Sassari, 2012).

99 A. Mastino, 'Il viaggio di Theodor Mommsen e dei suoi collaboratori in Sardegna per il *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*', in *Theodor Mommsen e l'Italia*, Atti dei Convegni Lincei

of the simple faithful, who were often immigrants and outsiders. For example, for the *v*(*ir*) *s*(*pectabilis*) *Pascalis*, honoured by the community of Turris Libisonis for his merits, the inscription specifies: *hic iace*[*t*] *peregrina morte raptus*. The story of the pontifical messenger *Annius Innocentius* is similar – a very active Roman *acol*(*uthus*), twice sent to the court of Constantinople, but also to Campania, Calabria and Apulia, who died in Sardinia and whose bones were removed in the mid-fourth century to the cemetery of Callixtus in Rome. It cannot be ruled out that this official mission to Sardinia, occurring shortly before 366, 'in the fullness of the hardships suffered by the Roman Church on the part of the Arians',[100] might have been connected with positions taken up by Lucifer of Cagliari.

The latest studies, however, have necessitated reconsidering this framework of assumptions because newly found inscriptions from Turris Libisonis have pushed back the date for the establishment of Christianity on the island.[101] It appears clear that a flourishing Christian community existed in the Sardinian colony already in the mid-fourth century: a *vulgus* and a *populus* in harmony, which praised those doing just acts, such as *Matera*, *auxilium peregrinorum saepe quem censuit vulgus* (in a metric epitaph founded on the *lusus nominis*, *matrum aut inopum parens*). There was also a cult of martyrs since it was said about the *puella dulcia inmaculata Ad*[*e*]*odata* that she was welcomed by the holy martyrs – *a sanctis marturibus suscepta*. The dating is reasonably safe as the first inscription conclusively dated from paleo-Christian Sardinia is the epitaph of Musa buried under the basilica of the martyrs, which dates to 1 June 394, and which comes from this area. Its date is corroborated by mention of the consulate of Arcadius and Honorius on the eve of the separation of the Empire between East and West. Its connections to other inscriptions of the area now appears established, some of which date from shortly before.[102] It

207 (Rome, 2004), 227–344; A. Mastino, 'Tra Regno di Sardegna e Stato Unitario: l'epigrafia isolana sotto la lente di Theodor Mommsen (1817–2017)', in *Theodor Mommsen in Italia Settentrionale. Studi in occasione del bicentenario della nascita*, ed. M. Buonocore and F. Gallo (Milan, 2018), 167–93.

100 A. Ferrua, *La polemica antiariana nei monumenti paleocristiani* (Vatican City, 1991), 273 no. 357.

101 Mastino, 'La Sardegna cristiana in età tardo-antica', 273; A. Mastino, 'Una traccia della persecuzione dioclezianea in Sardegna? L'*exitium* di Matera e la *susceptio a sanctis marturibus* di Adeodata nella Turris Libisonis del V secolo', *Sandalion. Quaderni di cultura classica, cristiana e medievale* 26–28 (2005): 155–203; J. Del Hoyo Calleja and R. Carande, 'Nuevo "carmen epigraphicum" procedente de "Turris Libisonis" (Sardinia)', *Epigraphica: periodico internazionale di epigrafia* 71 (2009): 161–72.

102 Mastino, 'Una traccia della persecuzione dioclezianea in Sardegna?'.

is therefore necessary to abandon paradigms that have shown themselves to be too reductive, also regarding what we know of the origins and prestige of the Church in Carales. The real turning point in the religious history of the island was, once again, Constantine the Great – the emperor so favoured by the Sardinian Church, and whose cult had probably developed well before the Byzantine period. It was Constantine who, after the battle of the Milvian Bridge on 28 October 312, took back Sardinia, where a few years before, the African usurper Lucius Domitius Alexander had been recognised as ruler. Alexander had proclaimed himself emperor against Maxentius, and had been supported by Constantine and his men, among whom was the provincial ruler Lucius Papius Pacatianus, promoted to prefect from the *praetorium* and rewarded by Constantine. In the aftermath of the Edict of Tolerance, Quintasius, the bishop of Carales *ex provincia Sardinia*, was able to take part in the council of Arelate among the African bishops, in a position of honour as his name was chosen from among those of Fortunatus, the primate of Mauretania who was bishop of Caesarea, and Caecilianus, bishop of Carthage. Some decades later, the Sardinian Church was represented at the Council of Serdica in 343, in which one hundred Western bishops took part with a view to outlining a confession of faith on the nature of the relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit.[103]

Indeed, it was Constantine who ensured religious freedom in Sardinia and who adopted provisions that might have been inspired by the leaders of the local church. One example is the decree of 325, preserved in a partially modified form in the *Codex Theodosianus* concerning the reunification of slave families who had been divided among tenants of imperial estates on long-term contracts (*emphytheusis*). Scholars, for the most part, note that the principle of indivisibility of serf families was introduced from this period, and the consequent improvement in living conditions of slaves who were involved in the division of holdings based on patrimony or *emphytheusis*, can be recorded as the result of a new Christian spirit. It was also Constantine who started the controversial policy of large donations, such as to the basilica of Saints Peter and Marcellinus, to whom funds derived from imperial properties in Sardinia may have been assigned.

It is possible to trace the development of the Sardinian Church, which maintained strong ties with Rome, not least through the personal history of two Sards: Eusebius, bishop of Vercelli, and Lucifer, bishop of Cagliari. They had a

103 P. Ruggeri, 'Epigrafia costantiniana in Sardegna', in *Fra Costantino e i Vandali. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi per Enzo Aiello (1957–2013), Messina 29–30 ottobre 2014*, ed. L. De Salvo, E. Caliri, and M. Casella (Bari, 2016), 276.

determining role in the events of the fourth century, and, in some measure, in the elaboration of Christian thought. A little-known work of St Ambrose, the *De excessu fratris Satyri*, hints at the following that Lucifer continued to enjoy among the bishops of Sardinia, well after the Luciferian schism at the Council of Alexandria and even well after his death around 370. This work includes the story of the shipwreck of Satyrus in a region where Lucifer had left behind his followers whom Ambrose considered to be effectively heretics. The episode appears to have occurred in Sardinia a few years after the death of Lucifer. Even after the disappearance of their leader, Sardinian bishops did not seem to be in communion with the Church of Rome, and they seem to have remained united and isolated in their schismatic ideas. Grateful for having escaped the sinking of his ship, Satyrus nonetheless did not want to receive baptism from a bishop who followed the doctrinal positions of Lucifer, who was seen by Ambrose as fully involved in the schism.

The fourth century, the age after the great persecutions, was thus the most significant for the development of Christianity in Sardinia, at least in the *municipii* and in the coastal colonies, which were more open towards the outside and were based on a predominantly commercial and exchange economy. On the other hand, the 'barbarian' inland parts of *Barbaria* appeared in need of 'evangelising' in the time of Gregory the Great, as ancient pagan religious customs were still being practised in rural areas that might have dated back, directly or indirectly, to the Nuragic past. The agricultural cult of Demeter–Ceres was still practised in the fourth century in numerous *nuraghi* on the island, and showed particular vitality. This is seen in the frequent recovery of votive terracotta objects, offerings from the Roman period, found within more ancient buildings. Moreover, Gregory distinguished between Christians of the Byzantine province and inland pagans – between *provinciales* and *barbari*. Clearly exaggerating, he wrote that within the same province there were some territories, such as that of the distant diocese of Fausiana, where there were still a considerable number of pagans. However, as we have mentioned, the latest excavations at Sant'Efisio in Orune have challenged such assumptions by documenting the presence of Christian clergy in Barbagia as well.

Gregory claimed that these same *rustici*, the peasants in the jurisdiction of the Sardinian Church, were still pagans – *in infidelitate remanere* – at the end of the sixth century, because of the negligence of their respective bishops. Thus, the pontiff's threat to punish bishops under whom there remained a single *paganus rusticus*. Paganism must have been quite widespread: in a letter to the *magnifici nobiles ac possessores in Sardinia insula consistentes*, possibly sent by means of the bishops, Gregory exhorted the landowners to fight the idolatry of the

peasants working in the island *possessiones*.[104] The *possessores* must have been concentrated in the towns, first among them those of the senatorial order, of which there are traces in the sources. There were the *senatores de Sardinia*, possibly guilty of having offered support to the usurper Magnus Maximus, defended in 390 by Symmachus before the tribunal of Nicomachus Flavianus as well as the *clarissimi* who had taken refuge in Sardinia on the eve of Alaric's sacking of Rome in 410. We know that Sardinia remained outwardly closed to African Donatism, which nonetheless appears to have been in some way reworked and revitalised in Lucifer's rigorist thought, nourished by reading Christian authors from Africa. Later, the key issue became the relationship between the Arian *fides*, felt to be a 'national' distinctive trait of the Vandals in terms of defining their identity, and the 'Catholic' faith as commonly practised by the 'Romans' on the island. At a later time, one may consider the dedicatory inscription of the workers of the salt mines at Carales, which has perhaps a Nicenean and anti-Arian emphasis, or also the positions taken regarding Monothelitism and Iconoclasm, although in the context of a fundamental 'Roman-ness' of the Sardinian Church.

Finally, we know of a Jewish presence on the island, close to the Christian communities.[105] Some groups maintained their own identity for centuries, such as the *Beronicenses*, possibly *incolae*, originating from Cyrenaica, who had gathered together in the *municipium* of Sulci, or the Jews of Tharros, those of Turris or those of Carales, who had their own synagogue. The signs of Jewish presence are also attested inland as far as Isili and Macomer.

14 The Vandals

A re-examination of the work of Procopius of Caesarea, the direct collaborator of Belisarius and Solomon in Africa, and witness to the passage from Vandal domination to the reconquest of Justinian, sheds new light on the Vandal era. The start of this period should now be postponed for some years, and placed well after the sack of Rome on 2 June 455. This is indicated by Sidonius Apollinaris, in his panegyric to the Western Emperor Majorian in 458, could still praise the silver exports to Rome from Sardinian mines: *Sardinia argentum* […] *defert*.[106] Thus, the island probably did not yet recognise the authority of

104 Gregory the Great, *Registrum*, bk. 4 no. 23.

105 A.M. Corda, *Considerazioni sulle epigrafi giudaiche latine della Sardegna romana* (Cagliari, 1995).

106 Sidonius Apollinaris, *Poems. Letters*, trans. W.B. Anderson, LCL 296 (Cambridge, USA, 1936), bk. 5.49, pp. 64–65. On the Vandal conquest, see M.B. Urban, 'La storia', in *Le monete*

Gaiseric, who had initiated the attacks against the Tyrrhenian islands since 440, straight after the occupation of Carthage, causing serious uncertainty for sea-crossings.

In all, the Vandal kings administered the province of *Sardinia* in a relatively mild fashion, without the sinister ferocity which Victor of Vita denounced in Carthage and northern Africa. Certainly, his claims contained distortion and rhetoric for the purpose of requesting military intervention from Justinian, the only holder of imperial power after the *translatio imperii* following the fall of the Western Empire. The short-lived reconquest of Sardinia in 466, perhaps at the request of a Sard pope, Hilarius (461–468), with the expedition of Marcellinus who managed to overwhelm the small Vandal garrisons stationed on the island without much difficulty, already showed that the Vandals had limited themselves to controlling particular towns. They left the greatest freedom for the inland Sards, and for the Moors transferred from Cesariense and exiled by Gaiseric to Sardinia, confined together with their women, and who would pose a problem some decades later in the Byzantine period.[107]

The relative leniency of Vandal governance is paradoxically revealed in the case of the temporary exile of lay officials of the royal court to Sardinia and Sicily expelled by Huneric during the theological debate that would lead to the Council of Carthage. It is also shown in the case of the exile of African bishops sent away after 507 by Thrasamund. We know in particular that Fulgentius of Ruspe who, straight after being ordained bishop and Primate of Byzacena, established himself at Carales where he was able to receive exiled bishops as judge and mediator (*ultor* and *intercessor*), in addition to those who came before him from north Africa, *enavigato mari*, to receive pardon. He was able to continue his monastic activity and proselytising by counting on the support of the Sard pope, Symmachus (498–514), and the bishop Primasius, or Brumasius. There are those who would identify this latter character with the bishop who took charge of the relics of Speratus and other African martyrs, recorded in an inscription found on the lower Campidano.[108] Later, Fulgentius was temporarily recalled to Africa between 517 and 519, and, on his return to Sardinia, he was

della Sardegna vandalica. Storia e numismatica, by G. Lulliri and M.B. Urban (Sassari, 1996), 9 ff.; P.G. Spanu, 'La Sardegna vandalica e bizantina', in *Storia della Sardegna.* I. *Dalla Preistoria all'età bizantina*, ed. M. Brigaglia, A. Mastino, and G.G. Ortu (Bari, 2002); Mastino, *Storia della Sardegna antica*, 499–500, 508.

107 On the transfer of 'Mauri', see G. Artizzu, 'La deportazione di elementi mauri in Sardegna nella testimonianza di Procopio', *Quaderni Bolotanesi* 21 (1995): 155–63.

108 CIL X, 1383*; see P. Ruggeri and D. Sanna, 'Mommsen e le iscrizioni latine della Sardegna: per una rivalutazione delle *falsae* con tema africano', *Sacer* 3 (1996): 75–104.

able to found a second monastery at the Basilica of St Saturninus, within the paleo-Christian necropolis. This signified a moment of extraordinary cultural flourishing and spiritual profundity for the island, at least until the permanent recall of Fulgentius and the other exiled bishops by the decree of Hilderic. In any case, in the time of Fulgentius an important revival of religious construction had already begun, strongly influenced by African models. Around the martyr sanctuary at Carales, the necropolis of the Vandal period, which would continue into the Byzantine period, was developing, and it was, to some extent, similar to those at Cornus, Forum Traiani, Sulci, and Nora. From there, we have dozens of inscriptions, some of which are to be connected with the African context of the exiled, which had its own martyrs to venerate, its own traditions, and its own religious customs – for example, the epitaph of *Numida Cuiculitanus*, possibly the bishop of Cuicul, nowadays Djémila in Algeria. Likewise, an African connection is seen in certain ethnic names such as Maurus and Maurusius, or Bizacenta, or other African names such as Mapparia or Restituta. Finally, in 521 a *Concilium Sardiniense episcoporum Africanorum in Sardinia exulum* was held on the island, dealing with the relationship between divine grace and free will. The results of the debate were collected in an *epistola synodica* sent by Fulgentius to the Eastern monks.

A significant feature emerges in connection with the relative freedom of action that the Christians in Sardinia enjoyed, shown by the circumstances in which the convocation by Huneric of the Council of Carthage in 484 took place. At the request of Eugenius, the Catholic bishop of Carthage, there not only participated 458 bishops *per universam Africam constituti* in the Council, but also eight *trasmarini* bishops, all recorded as *episcopi insulae Sardiniae*.[109] They were, in order, the bishop of Carales, possibly already with the authority of a metropolitan see over the seven other suffragans; the bishop of Forum Traiani; of Senafer; of Minorica; of Sulci; of Turris; of Maiorica, and of Evusum. From these, four were certainly Sards, three from the Balearics, and one, the bishop of Senafer, probably from Sardinia, rather than Corsica. In any case, the presence of at least one bishop from Corsica is certain from the council documents. We do not know if these bishops had an active role in defending the *libertas* of their African colleagues from Vandal oppression. It is certain, however, that the council concluded with a condemnation of Arian positions and a resounding defeat for king Huneric, who was condemned to a horrible

109 K. Halm, ed., *Notitia provinciarum et civitatum Africae*, MGH Auct. ant., 3.1 (Berlin, 1879), 63–54, 71; R. Martorelli, 'I nuovi orientamenti dell'Archeologia Cristiana in Sardegna', *ArcheoArte. Rivista elettronica di Archeologia e Arte* Supplemento, no. 1 (2012): 425.

death as described by Victor of Vita with gory details typical of a literary genre. Perhaps this event conveyed a hint of the liberty that the transmarine bishops of the Mediterranean islands enjoyed as they were under less pressure from Vandal domination. It is nonetheless likely that there was no Sardinian bishop among the eighty-eight bishops who had died in the aftermath of the Council of Carthage, mostly from Numidia and Cesariense, just as there was none among the forty-six African bishops exiled to Corsica.

Finally, the weakness of Vandal power in Sardinia can also be confirmed at the end of the Vandal period, when, under the agèd Hilderic, the island with all its income was effectively 'contracted out' to Godas, a slave of Gothic origin. According to Procopius, he was 'a passionate and energetic individual, possessing great physical strength'. In the end, the Vandals had a traditional policy of exploitation and indirect interest in Sardinia, a policy that became more urgent on the eve of the Byzantine invasion. Tzazo's expedition, sent by his brother Gelimer to retake the island from the usurper, took place when the fate of the Vandals had already been sealed. Instructed by Gelimer's letters, Tzazo then abandoned Sardinia and landed with 5,000 men on the promontory that marked the boundary between Numidia and Mauretania – possibly the *Promontorium Metagonium* (today, Cap Bougaroun). It was close to the mouth of the river Ampsaga (today, al-Wādī l-Kabīr), much to the west compared to the regular route from Carales. It is also possible that it was at the port of Rusicade, today Skikda in Algeria, at the mouth of the *Thapsus flumen* (Wādī l-Ṣafṣāf) or at the port of Igilgili (Jijel). On the same route, but going the opposite way, Vitula, a young Moor woman from Sitifis, had travelled a few decades before, in the time of king Gunthamund, having been given as wife to Joannes from Carales in Sardinia. The epithalamium celebrating their wedding has been preserved. It was written by the Carthaginian Blosius Emilius Dracontius, who was then in prison for composing a poem dedicated to the Byzantine emperor, Zeno. The two spouses moved to Sardinia at the end of the fifth century. In the epithalamium, the poet makes a fortunate association between 'the little roses of Sétif, bringers of joy' and 'the Sardonic herb that from Antiquity was known to be able to provoke laughter and death'.[110] After the victory of Belisarius at Bulla Regia, Cyrillus displayed Tzazo's severed head to the Sardinian islanders, who did not in turn seem enthusiastic about their new rulers, as Procopius mentions they were not altogether eager in submitting to the Romans.

110 Dracontius, 'Epithalamium Iohannis et Vitulae', in *Poetae Latini minores*, ed. E. Baehrens, vol. 5, 5 vols (Leipzig, 1883), 154–60.

15 The Byzantine Era

From the territories that had once been the Vandal kingdom, thus from Sardinia and Africa, Justinian intended to set into motion his extraordinary *renovatio imperii*. With the Byzantine occupation, the island became one of the seven African provinces, organised as a prefecture and later as an exarchate.[111] The sixth century was a troubled time for Sardinia. The first prefect of the *praetorium* of the diocese of Africa Salomonis began to send troops against the Moors who were moving on Carales, or more likely on Chrysopolis, from the *Barbaria*. The prefect is probably the one on a Byzantine seal found on the grounds of the church of San Giorgio in Tharros, from where a seal of the *stratelates* Sergius also originates.[112] The army of the Byzantine commander, located on the river Tirso, moved repeatedly against the 'Barbaricini' of the interior until a peace treaty of 594. The Ostrogoths of Totila occupied the capital of the province for some months amid bloody fighting with the Byzantines. The Lombards of Agilulf were attacking the coast repeatedly, as the letters of Gregory the Great attest, together with the monumental epigraph from Porto Torres.[113] This inscription was traditionally dated to between 641 and 654, or between 681 and 685. It is now dated to the mid-eighth century. In the view of Pani Ermini, it might also explain the place name 'Palace of the Barbarian king', which would thus refer to the Byzantine military reusing the central baths complex instead of to the *Barbarus* magistrate who judged the martyr Gavinus in the age of Diocletian.[114] In any case, the construction fervour in this period included boundary walls and fortifications, such as the walls of Carales, under siege by Tzazo and the Ostrogoths, the town walls of Turris Libisonis on the Rio Turritano, or those of the *castrum sulcitanum* near the Roman bridge that connected the island of Sant'Antioco with the mainland. At the beginning of the Byzantine period, Nora is attested as a *praesidium*, Tharros as a *kastron*, and Forum Traiani as a *frourion*.

111 L. Casula, A.M. Corda, and A. Piras, eds., Orientis radiata fulgore. *La Sardegna nel contesto storico e culturale bizantino. Atti del Convegno di Studi* (*Cagliari, Pontificia Facoltà Teologica della Sardegna, 30 novembre –1 dicembre 2007*) (Cagliari, 2008).

112 P.G. Spanu, *La Sardegna bizantina tra VI e VII secolo*, Mediterraneo tardoantico e medievale. Scavi e ricerche 12 (Oristano, 1998), 128 ff.

113 Gregory the Great, *Registrum*, bk. 9 nos. 11, 195; L. Pani Ermini, 'Ancora sull'iscrizione bizantina di Turris Libisonis', in Quaeritur inventus colitur. *Miscellanea in onore di padre U.M. Fasola* (Vatican City, 1989), 513–27 (= SEG 40, 1993, no. 811); A. Guillou, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques médiévales d'Italie*, Collection de l'École française de Rome 222 (Rome, 1996), 243–46; F. Fiori, *Epigrafi greche dell'Italia bizantina* (*VII-XI secolo*) (Bologna, 2008), 28–57.

114 Pani Ermini, 'Ancora sull'iscrizione bizantina', 513–27.

From a social perspective, André Guillou proposed that there was a gradual disappearance of the secular class of great landowners, hit hard by the Byzantine fiscal system, who abandoned their domains and disappeared from economic life, to the advantage of the high clergy and the highest officers of the imperial army.[115] Even if this process did not develop along these exact lines, the members of the clergy and the army did go on to constitute the new landowning aristocracy, supporting itself using a peasant labour force and the enterprise of farmer-colonists, and constituting the new counterpart to the interests of the imperial tax office. A slave collar from the sixth century, probably from Monastir, gives a vivid testimony of a society in which the members of the high clergy were among the greatest slave owners: archdeacon Felix instructed that whoever found the fugitive slave wearing the collar to *tene me ne fugiam*.[116] After all, Gregory the Great was also acquiring slaves from *Barbaria* for the needs of the Church of Rome. Then, there were the vast estates belonging to Byzantine state property and the island Church, from which the properties that the *giudici* had at their disposal after the turn of the millennium certainly originate.

The religious geography of the island had also significantly changed with certain topographic and urbanistic aspects coming to be connected to the placement of the cathedral and baptismal font. This is the case in Sulci, where the edifice *ubi corpus beati sancti Anthioci quiebit* may coincide with the early diocesan cathedral which bishop Petrus restored and embellished with marble decoration and epigraphic *tituli* in the seventh century.[117] The scholar Pani Ermini underlined a particularly significant aspect of urbanism; that is to say, the 'dualism' between 'episcopal *civitas* that developed around the cathedral' and lacking walls on the one hand, and the military *castrum* built outside the urban area on the other. This dualism is a recurring feature in the Justinian period, particularly in Africa, but also in Sardinia. At Cornus, at Tharros and at Cagliari, fortified structures 'are placed in a position that is disconnected from, and, in some cases, can be called an alternative to, the *insula episcopalis*'.[118]

115 A. Guillou, 'La lunga età bizantina. Politica ed economia', in *Storia della Sardegna e del Sardi.* I. *Dalle origini all'età bizantina*, ed. M. Guidetti (Milan, 1988), 350 ff.

116 *ELSard*. p. 606 no. 104 d.

117 A. Mastino and R. Zucca, 'In Sardinia tituli scribuntur et immagines sculpuntur', in *L'officina epigrafica romana, in ricordo di Giancarlo Susini*, ed. A. Donati and G. Poma (Faenza, 2012), 393–428.

118 L. Pani Ermini, 'Sulci dalla tarda antichità al medioevo: note preliminari di una ricerca', in *Carbonia e il Sulcis. Archeologia e territorio*, ed. V. Santoni (Oristano, 1995), 365–77.

The specificity of doctrinal positions, of usages and of customs show the particular character of the Sardinian Church compared to the Church of Rome.[119] Here, one may point to issues of appearance, such as the habits of the nuns of saints Gavino and Luxorius at Carales, who dressed like the wives of *presbyterae*. One may also mention the derogation allowed by Gregory in the matter of the rite of unction, performed by priests instead of bishops, or the rite of baptism of *infantes* that was practised on the island. Also notable were disciplinary issues, such as recurrent violations of the vow of chastity, and cohabitation practised by some priests.[120] There were also issues of substance, suggested by the doctrinal positions taken by the followers of Lucifer. Inscriptions attest to a predilection for particular themes and passages from the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles regarding the *pauperes* and the duty of almsgiving and charity. They also indicate the attention given to *peregrini*, which meant the faithful who lived in, or were passing through, a different community from the one in which they had been baptised. It is also known that a rare version of the Bible was in use at Carales, as a sixth century inscription commissioned by a grieving father in memory of the young man *Gaudiosus, optio dracconarius*, perhaps an archer in service on a *dromon* ship, preserved the *Miserere* of Psalm 50 in the version of the Roman Psalter, rather than that of the Vulgate. Moreover, it is reported that Lucifer had likewise been using an ancient version of the Bible.

It has also been observed that the recurring interventions of Gregory the Great testify to the pope's preoccupation with the degeneration of Sardinian monasticism in its adaptation to local conditions, a phenomenon that remained fundamentally foreign to the traditions of the island, and was not able to reach full maturity. It did not always appear to have assimilated in Sardinia with the profound motivations of the monastic movement. According to Raimondo Turtas, this was because of only passing contact with the African masters.

Finally, how can one not recall the expression used by the Sardinian pope Symmachus (498–514), who arrived in Rome, and who was baptised *ex paganitate*?[121] This episode speaks volumes regarding the difficulties encountered by

119 A. Mastino, P. Ruggeri, and R. Zucca, 'Un testo epigrafico sul sacramento del battesimo in Sardinia', in *Isole e terraferma nel primo cristianesimo. Identità locale ed interscambi culturali, religiosi e produttivi. Atti dell'XI Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia Cristiana*, ed. R. Martorelli, A. Piras, and P.G. Spanu, vol. 2, 2 vols (Cagliari, 2005), 511–20.

120 Pinna, *Gregorio Magno e la Sardegna*.

121 *Roma mihi testis est, et scrinia testimonium perhibent, utrum a fide catholica, quam in sede beati apostoli Petri veniens ex paganitate suscepi, aliqua ex parte deviaverim*. Pope Symmachus, *Epistolae et Decreta*, ed. J.P. Migne, PL 62 (Paris, 1863), cols 66–71 no. 10, at col. 68.

the new religion in affirming itself in Sardinia. In all, ancient forms of popular religiosity would have survived for an even longer time, often bordering on magical practices. Even at this point, we are chronologically still outside the time period that is the object of this volume. That said, we cannot overlook that the Arab conquest of Carthage in 698, vainly opposed by a Byzantine army that probably contained Sardinian elements, provoked the political separation of Sardinia from Africa, but did not interrupt cultural exchanges. There were many African refugees that found shelter on the island before the arrival of the Arabs: the entire bureaucratic structure of the African exarchate was partly transferred for some decades to Sardinia, together with the imperial mint of Carthage.[122] Yet, the event that was crucial for the later destiny of the West was the transfer of the relics of St Augustine from Hippo to Sardinia. This was an episode that, at the time of the collapse of African *Romanitas* and after the most mature phase of Classical Antiquity, signalled the start of a new era.

16 Roman Heritage in Medieval Sardinia

It is clear that the identity of medieval Sardinia was strongly influenced by its Roman heritage, the expression of a long history that in some ways determines the society of today too. This heritage involves, first of all, the Sardinian language and place names, but also the traffic routes; the landscape transformed by human activity; forms of settlement; the trades practised in the region; agriculture, pastoralism and mining; fishing, coral harvesting, not to mention popular festivals and traditions.[123] Arriving at the age of the *giudicati*, one can detect a 'remarkable Romance atmosphere' in medieval Sardinia.[124] The *condaghes*, particularly in the realm of the Logudoro, document usages as well as traditions from the Byzantine, Roman and even from prehistoric times are echoed between the lines of the written sources. The remoteness of Sardinia over the centuries determined the 'archaicising tendency' of the Sardinian language that gives its first documents 'an almost exotic appearance'. And yet, as Benvenuto Terracini long since warned – we need to read with caution as the

122 Boscolo, *La Sardegna bizantina e altogiudicale*, 54 ff.

123 G. Clemente, 'Per una storia dell'identità sarda: l'eredità di Roma', in Sardinia antiqua. *Studi in onore di Piero Meloni in occasione del suo settantesimo compleanno* (Cagliari, 1992), 551–55.

124 F.C. Casula, *La Storia di Sardegna* (Sassari, 1992), 253. Also, see I. Delogu, '*Donnos*, *servos*, *appatissas* e *priores* nella più grande "Cronaca" del Medio Evo Sardo: il Condaghe di S. Pietro di Silki', *Sacer* 8, no. 8 (2001): 145–71; A. Soddu and G. Strinna, eds., *Il condaghe di San Pietro di Silki* (Nuoro, 2013).

'fallacious Latin appearance' of the first documents in Sardinian vernacular sometimes could lead one into error.[125] Thus, examination of the *condaghes* cannot dispense with the awareness of risk that some apparent continuities might really be concealing profound functional and semantic transformations the words themselves had undergone over the centuries. This is particularly true concerning the passage from Late Antiquity to the Byzantine and medieval periods, even in the context of the survival of Roman law. The general aspects, linguistic and ethnographic, that have been able to attest to a substantially 'Roman' and Byzantine framework of Sardinian culture in the *giudicati* period have been well investigated, and have been the object of fundamental studies. These have focused above all on an area close to the colony of Turris Libisonis, in a geographical setting culturally distinguished as the most 'Roman' of the island. This has left evident traces also in the naming of one particular *curadoría*: the term *Romania* (today Romangia) appears already fully attested in the Condaghe of San Pietro di Silki, with reference to a well defined area that possibly contained the centre of the land assignments made to the colonists of Turris Libisonis.[126]

Almost a century ago, Camillo Bellieni investigated the long history of the island through the lens of social division in the *giudicati* period between freemen and serfs, a composite and multilayered social reality of *liberos* and *servos*, whose interests were often in conflict.[127] These two groups must have been less internally compact than is usually imagined and open to some form of social mobility as the result of slow historical evolution. Among the *liberos* we find the noblemen, the *donnos*, who often bore names preserving the memory of towns and villages that were sometimes already abandoned, or would soon be. The *servos* group was of great complexity: *intregos, lateratos, pedatos*. In some places, such as at nowadays Porto Torres according to the Condaghe of Santu Gavini de Turres, there were extraordinary concentrations of serfs, clearly in continuity with the presence of the *giudicale* court or with

125 B. Terracini, 'Romanità e grecità nei documenti più antichi di volgare sardo (Riassunto)', in *Atti del II Congresso Nazionale di studi Romani,* III, vol. 3, 3 vols (Rome, 1931), 205–12.

126 Mastino, 'La romanità della società giudicale in Sardegna: il Condaghe di San Pietro di Silki'; G. Azzena, A. Mastino, and E. Petruzzi, 'Dalla Colonia Iulia Turris Libisonis al Comune di Sassari. Eredità, persistenze e trasformazioni', in *I settecento anni degli Statuti di Sassari. Dal comune alla città regia*, ed. A. Mattone and P.F. Simbula (Milan, 2019), 643–66.

127 C. Bellieni, *La Sardegna e i sardi nella civiltà del mondo antico*, 2 vols (Cagliari, 1931); A. Mastino and P. Ruggeri, 'Camillo Bellieni e la Sardegna romana', in *Sesuja Vintannos. Antologia della rivista in occasione dei Ventennale della fondazione dell'Istituto di studi e ricerche Camillo Bellieni* (*Quaderni, 5*), ed. A. Nasone (Sassari, 2009), 135–71.

earlier local traditions, even after the disappearance of the ancient town and its institutions. This seems to confirm the process, initiated in Late Antiquity, by which serfs and *peregrini* of the countryside ended up overwhelming the Roman citizens of the Republican colony at the same time as the urbanisation of Sard elements took place. This is shown by the introduction, from the fourth century BCE, of new forms of social organisation and production, an early indication of the transformations that were already in effect and moving towards a new economy of self-sufficiency. There was also an intermediate category of the 'semi-free', comprising freedmen and *colliberti*. They seem to be located in a line of continuity with Classical tradition, inasmuch as one ignores the differences between them and the serfs. In some way, though, a real difference between them seems to be excluded, since some documents appear to associate the categories of *colliberti*, serfs and maidservants. On a more general level, through the Condaghe of Silki it is possible to follow the process that Giovanni Cherubini calls the 'slow agony of the great estates of the Roman imperial age'.[128] This process consisted in the transfer of assets from the imperial *patrimonium*, administered by procurators (through the Vandal and Byzantine phases) into *giudicale* kingdom property, of which the *giudicato* could dispose liberally as donations. The laborious commitment of defending agricultural settlements from the incursions of shepherds is attested in the *Codice Rurale* of the *giudice*, Marianus IV.[129] Nonetheless, the model appears to be the same as that which can be traced from the decrees of Roman governors in the first imperial age, and which was recorded on the Table of Esterzili.[130]

Rural settlements in the medieval period appear to retrace the presence in the same territory of rustic villas of the imperial and late Imperial ages, although with interruptions and with the introduction of new functions. The landscape of Sardinia, particularly that of the Logudoro, which was described in the *condaghes* as very organised, preserves the flavour of a time long gone. There are mountains, gorges, lakes, swamps, marshes, ponds, rivers, streams, fords used by secondary roads, salt marshes, marine views, grottos, fountains, trees, valleys, rocks, hills, tanks for lime, farmyards, reeds, even rabbit burrows, briars, walls, cultivated fields, gardens, vineyards (possibly cultivated 'according to the ancient Roman system of making grapevines climb onto fruit trees in

128 G. Cherubini, 'Presentazione', in B. Fois, *Territorio e paesaggio agrario nella Sardegna medioevale* (Pisa, 1990), vii ff.

129 F.C. Casula, *La Carta de Logu del Regno di Arborèa. Traduzione libera e commento storico* (Cagliari, 1994); F. Lupinu, ed., *Carta de Logu dell'Arborea. Nuova edizione critica secondo il manoscritto di Cagliari* (*BUC 211*) *con traduzione italiana* (Oristano, 2010).

130 CIL X 7852 = *ILS* 5947.

orchards'), land for ploughing, olive groves, orchards, hemp fields, and barren fields. These were inhabited by men, goats, pigs, bullocks, sheep, horses, and so on. There are also here many continuities with earlier times, some tied to the environment, the landscape, the trades practised; others are the expressions of tradition. An example here is the care taken for raising good-quality horses, which is surely the fruit of skills already acquired in Late Antiquity, when Sardinia was *ditissima fructibus et iumentis* and *splendidissima*. The panorama that emerges from the Condaghe of Silki of the countryside in *giudicale* times comes into view as some type of living archaeological catalogue. It was populated by prehistoric, protohistoric and Roman monuments, *domus de janas*, dolmens (*sas pedras coperclatas*), mammillated betilic stones (*cun sos thithiclos*), 'tombs of giants', *nuraghi* (*monimentu* or *munimentu*, *castru*, *crastu*, *nurake*), inscribed boundary stones (some possibly recording local non-urbanised populations), mausolea and tombs, and crosses.[131] Most of all, the Sardinian landscape in the Middle Ages was marked by thousands of *nuraghi*, as it is today. Some of these monuments served the function of fixed signposts, and we know that in the Imperial period, the *'nuraghi'* (*nurake de termen*) were being used to indicate boundaries, such as at Aidu Entos in Mulargia marking the border of the Ilienses.[132] This is the oldest mention of the word *nurac*, possibly datable to the first century CE – a term which can even be found in the military diploma of Posada in the time of Trajan (*Nur(-)Alb(-)*) and which predates the mentions in the *condaghes* by a thousand years.[133]

Through the medieval sources, we can thus observe the re-emergence of a landscape, an environment, and a territory that maintained archaic aspects and that have remained almost crystallised throughout the ages. Indeed, the Sardinia of the *giudicale* period comes into view as being on the very margin of a long historical development that preserved the flavour of a distant time, now overcome by the centuries.

131 Soddu and Strinna, eds., *Il condaghe di San Pietro di Silki*.

132 Mastino, 'Analfabetismo e resistenza'; Paulis, 'La forma protosarda'.

133 A. Ibba, 'Il diploma di Posada: spunti di riflessione sulla Sardinia all'alba del II secolo d.C.', *Epigraphica* 76 (2014): 209–29. Also, see Mastino and Zucca, 'Un nuovo titulus della cohors Ligurum', 405 ff; Mastino and Zucca, 'L. Cossonius L. f. Stell(atina tribu)', 206 n. 48.