Cultural Encounters and Everyday Life around a Nuraghe in Phoenician and Punic Sardinia

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Nuraghe S’Urachi is situated in the Upper Campidano and Gulf of Oristano regions of west central Sardinia. Standing halfway between the rapidly rising slopes of the Monti Ferru to the north and the extensive salt marshes and lagoons of Cabras to the south, its inhabitants enjoyed easy access to a wide range of environmental zones. S’Urachi is one of the largest nuraghi in the region, while it is also just 15 miles away from the Phoenician colonial settlement of Tharros, and a rich variety of imported objects suggests that the site has long been a key place of colonial encounters.

Since 2013, excavations have focused on two areas immediately outside the outer defensive wall of the nuraghe complex (D and E), bringing to light complex and diverse situations of reconstruction and adaptation that demonstrate first of all that the prehistoric monument continued to be inhabited throughout the first millennium BCE; they also show how changes in concepts of space resulted in a new lay-out of the settlement as a whole.

Area D
To the south of the nuraghe, a whole new sector was added that radically changed the organization of space in the nuraghe. The addition included a carefully constructed paved courtyard, which was entered through a newly built monumental wall attached to tower 1. Two Phoenician tripod bowls show that it was built before the late 7th c. BCE.

Area E
The extensive remains found in front of tower 2 show that the outer defensive wall with its ten towers also included a five-meter wide ditch with constructed embankments. Tower 2 and the ditch were constructed together in the early centuries of the first millennium BCE. By the late 7th c. BCE, the ditch lost its function and was progressively backfilled with domestic trash from nearby houses.

Discussion and Conclusions
As is evident from the finds in both areas D and E, Phoenician and later Punic-style material culture became increasingly prominent in the 7th c. BCE. While much of this material was imported from elsewhere, these types of objects also began to be produced locally in increasing numbers, and rapidly replaced indigenous Nuragic wares over the course of the 7th c. BCE.

It is the later decades of the 7th c. BCE in particular that stand out at S’Urachi as a period of rapid change and profound cultural transformations.