

• ALERIA •  
CLASSICAL SITE



SITE DISCOVERY

The ruins of the ancient town of Aleria were first described by Prosper Mérimée (1803-1870), Inspector of Historic Monuments, following his survey of Corsica in 1839. During his inspection visit to the island he noted signs of the Roman settlement, in particular the western arch and the hardcore filling of the foundations of the adjoining rectangular building. The first proper archaeological excavations were undertaken between 1955 and 1960 by Jean Jehasse, specialist in Corsican archaeology, and it was at this time that the *Forum* (public square) as well as most of the Roman ruins you can see today were unearthed. The necropolis discovered some 1000 m further south of the ruins

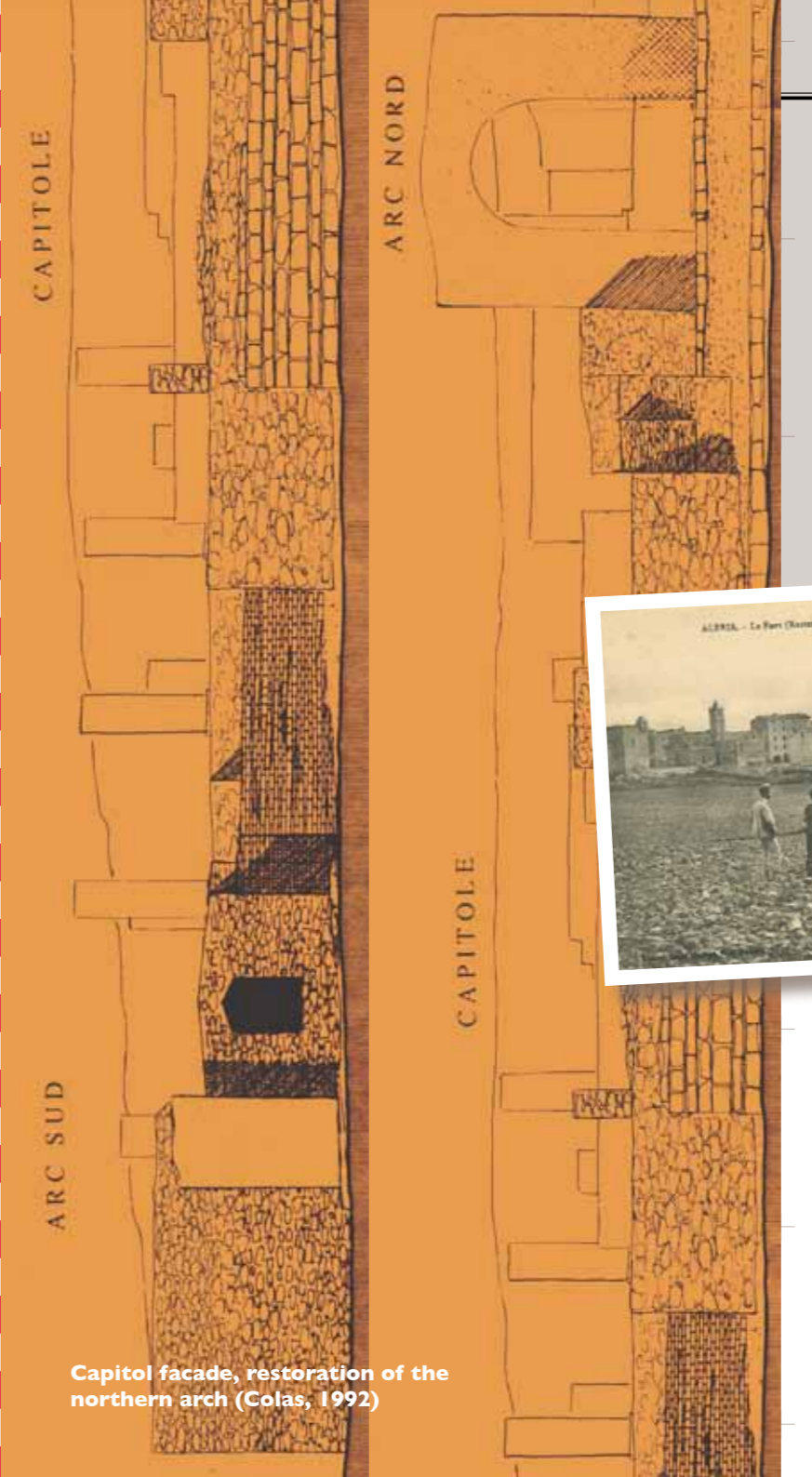
dates from pre-Roman times, and was excavated between 1960 and 1981. Many of the fascinating finds from this dig are on display at the Jerome-Carcopino Museum next to the Roman site.

Aleria c. 1900, remains of the northern arch



U FILU DI A RICERCA

*Compiu u so viaghju d'ispizione in Corsica di 1839, fù Prosper Mérimée (1803-1870) u prima à fà a discrizzione di l'antica città arruinata d'Aleria. Mintuvava in particulare l'arcu occidentale è e vistiche appariate di l'edifiziu rettangulare à cantu à l'arcu. Trà 1955 è 1960 Jean Jehasse intraprende i prima scavi impurtanti. Funu scuparti tandu u Foru (piazza publica) è a maiò parte di a impiantazione rumana chì si pò vede oghje. Scuparta à circa un chilomitrù da sottu à u situ anticu, a necropoli prerumana fù visticata trà 1960 è 1981. Assai oggetti ricacciati tandu sò da vede à u Museu dipartimentale Jérôme Carcopino, vicinu à u situ anticu.*



Capitol facade, restoration of the northern arch (Colas, 1992)

STUDY, PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION

The study and maintenance of the sites, as well as preservation and restoration works are carried out by archaeologists appointed by Corsica's regional government.

To the untrained eye, ancient monuments can seem indestructible. After all, these imposing classical remains have survived until the present day. However lichens, roots, rain water gullying and acidity, the load from superposed stones, as well as miniscule earth tremors, animals and humans (and even the removal of soil during excavations) all perpetually take their toll. Any solutions envisaged to reduce these damaging effects could well entail further risk to the site, and drastic measures are thus to be avoided.

Archaeologists appointed by the *Collectivité territoriale de Corse* (Corsica's regional government) concert their efforts primarily on the everyday upkeep and maintenance of the sites, including readapting them, as well as studying and evaluating conservation and restoration projects.

At Aleria, the ruins themselves constitute the archaeologists' main concern since their masonry needs protecting and reinforcing without altering the site. A conservation project undertaken in 2010 will, once completed, consolidate the ruins for several years. The aim is to ensure that visits to the site, as well as its development and, above all, its handing down to future generations, take place in the best possible conditions.

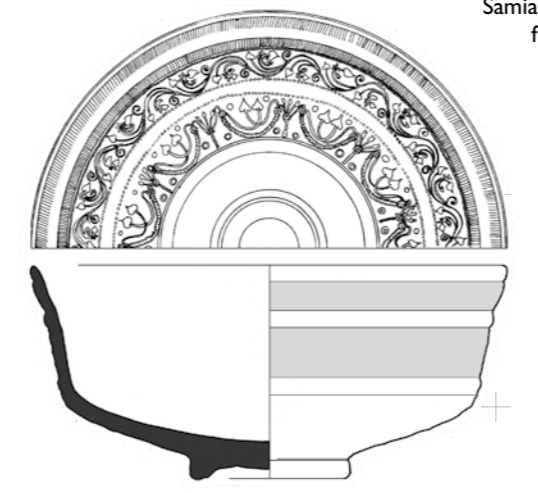


Panoramic view of the site: In the foreground, pools and thermal baths of a later period in the courtyard of the praetorium, capitol and forum in the background

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT THE REGION'S MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY

Classed as a *Musée de France*, and as such benefiting from state support, the museum exhibits a collection of artefacts uncovered during the digs at the pre-Roman Casabianda necropolis.

Artefacts discovered in the main tombs that accompanied the deceased to their final resting places are displayed in the showcases, including pottery, weapons and various utensils of Hellenic, Italic, Punic and local origin. The first room holds everyday items as well as religious objects which, together with the Roman site, provide a fascinating glimpse of how life would have been at the time. Of note is the marble bust of Jupiter Ammon, unearthed in the southern part of the ancient town. The inner courtyard of the museum



Samian pottery from Gaul

houses various tools used for milling, as well as an Etruscan statue of a lion found in close vicinity to the Roman villa.



Roman reticulated brickwork or "opus reticulatum" 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. / 1<sup>st</sup> century AD



Nested set of bronze measuring cups, Aleria

Getting there:  
From Bastia (N193 and 198): 72 km. Head south via Casamozza, Moriani, Folelli and Cateraggio  
From Bonifacio (N196 and 198): 100 km. Head north via Porto Vecchio, Solenzara and Ghisonaccia  
From Corte (N200): 48 km east

Learn more:  
Archaeological Museum  
Fort de Matra – Hameau du Fort – 20270 Aleria  
Tel.: +33 (0)495 57 00 92  
Fax: +33 (0)495 57 05 50

Opening times:  
from 16<sup>th</sup> May to 30<sup>th</sup> September:  
9.00 a.m. – 12.00 midday, 1.00 p.m. – 6.00 p.m.  
from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 15<sup>th</sup> May:  
8.00 a.m. – 12.00, 1.00 p.m. – 5.00 p.m.



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Map of town centre of ancient Aleria

The ancient city of Aleria, together with Mariana, make up the two largest known Roman settlements on the island. The presence of sizeable rivers and vast swathes of agricultural land no doubt contributed to their development. Aleria, as well as having been the economic heart of the lower Tavignano valley, was a garrison town, and a detachment from the Roman navy's Misene fleet was based here.

*A città antica d'Aleria cù Mariana sò e duie più maiò agglomerazione rumane cunnisciute di l'isula. Parenu esse state impiantate tramindue in leia stretta cù a prisenza di fiumi impurtanti è di larghe stese di tarre cultivatevule. In più d'esse stata u centru economicu di a piaghja di Tavignanu, Aleria bè stata dinò una città di guarnigione chì ci staziunava in particolare un istaccamentu di a flotta di Misena.*

**Chronology**



**PRE-ROMAN OCCUPATION**

In the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC historian Herodotus mentions the arrival of a group of Greek Phocaeans fleeing the Persians, around 545BC, although at this point in time a Greek colony had already existed in Alalia (today's Aleria) for some twenty years. Today, little remains to remind us of the former Greek settlement referred to in Herodotus' text save a few fragments of black-figure pottery found at the site. The Casabianda necropolis to the south yielded a number of funerary objects dating from the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. Of note are the Etruscan and Greek vases whose distinctive features suggest close links with northern Etruria, although the exact nature of this relationship is as yet still to be determined.



Pre-Roman lion, mausoleum entrance or temple decoration perhaps

**L'UCCUPAZIONE PRERUMANA**

*À u Vu s. nanzu à Cristu u storicu Erudotu mintuweghja l'arrivu d'un gruppu di grecchi d'uriente persequitati da i Persi ver di 545 n. à C., chì tandu una culunia greca era aghjà stabilita in Alaliè dapoi 20 anni. Oghje solu uni pochi di chjappuli di ceramica faciata nera scuparti nantu à u situ ramentanu a prisenza greca evucata da issu testu. A necropoli di Casabianda, più sottu, palesa una mubiglia funerale di i Vu è IVu seculi n. à C, cumposta frà altri di vasetti etruschi è grecchi. E so particolarità lascianu pinsà ch'ella ci fù cù l'Etruria di u nordu una rilazione forte chì a so natura ferma à schjarisce.*



Fish shaped relief decorating a re-used block (Praetorium)

**THE ROMAN TOWN**

Roman Aleria, just like Mariana further north, developed in the first century BC. The remains visible today correspond to the centre of the Roman town whose inhabitants arrived in three successive waves accredited to Roman Consul Sylla around 81 BC, Caesar in 45 BC and Augustus in approximately 32 BC. The town's main buildings spread out from a square lined with arcades designed to protect the shop fronts. The town flourished until late antiquity and underwent several changes as can be seen from the state of the buildings or indeed from the general organisation of the town centre thoroughfares.

Oil lamp decorated with a chrismon, a primitive Christian symbol



**A CITÀ RUMANA**

*Cum'è Mariana, una altra città più sopra, l'Aleria rumana si custituisce in lu corsu di u Ia seculu nanzu à C. I vistighi ch'è no videmu oghje currispondenu à u centru di a città rumana chì fù pupulata in trè scali di culunizazione attribuiti à Sillà ver di -81, Cesare in -46 è Ottaviu in giru à -32. I munimenti maestri di a città si trovanu à l'intornu d'una piazza accinta di portichi da prutege e facciate di cummerci. A città mutarà sinu à l'antichità tardiva è ci saranu mudifiche è riprese assai nantu à i casamenti o in quantu a l'urganizazione generale di e vie di circolazione interne à a città.*

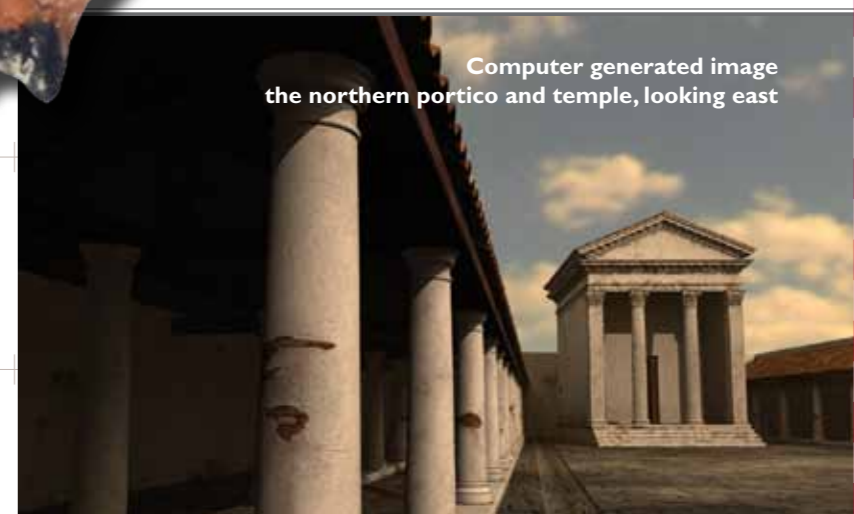
**L'ANTICHITÀ TARDIVA**

*Pari ch'ella sia calata à pocu à pocu a città à partesi di IV seculu di a nostra epica. À a fine di u Vlu s. una lettara di u papa Grigoriu Ia accerta a prisenza d'un viscuvalu in Aleria, benchì à oghje nisuna catedrala sia stata scuparta. Passata quella epica ci fù un tempu di sfruttamentu di e ruine chì pare ricullà à u XIIIu.*

**LATE ANTIQUITY**

It would seem that the town went into a gradual state of decline from 4 AD onwards. Although a letter from Pope Gregory 1<sup>st</sup> dating from the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century testifies to the presence of a bishop in Aleria, no cathedral has been uncovered to date. There followed a period, dating roughly back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when various structures were recycled, with building blocks being used for stone masonry or transformed into lime. Traces of such activity can be seen on the pillars of the western arch whose stones bear the imprint of their missing facade tablets. This practice went on until the 19<sup>th</sup> century and might well explain why so little marble has been found here.

Computer generated image the northern portico and temple, looking east



*Si tratta di riimpiecu d'elementi architturali sia da fà a calcina, sia aduprati tale è quale da i muratori. Tistimuniaghjanu in negativu di isse fatture i pilastri di l'arcu occidentale chì si vedenu i stampi di i blocchi di paramentu cavati. Pare ch'ella sia durata issa pratica sinu à u XIXu s., ciò chì pudaria spicà a rilativa scarsessa di u marmaru nantu à u situ.*

**Bust of Jupiter Ammon**  
(Aleria site) – family statue or for worship

