

Press release
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At the origins of Christian Corsica - the forgotten churches of Propriano



During the construction of a housing project at Propriano (Southern Corsica) by the Limat Promotion property group, Inrap archaeologists have unearthed, by order of the State (DRAC Corsica), a classical construction, a collection of churches and an Antique necropolis. In view of the scientific interest of these discoveries, an extension of the excavations has been financed by the DRAC of Corsica.

The churches

The archaeologists have uncovered two successive superimposed churches. The most recent, probably from the start of the second period of the Middle Ages, and preserved to more than a metre in height, has a nave of 11 m by 5.60 m, extended to the south-east by an apse. This chapel was built on the ruins of a previous church, currently attributed to the 6th or 7th century AD. This first church is larger – 16 m long and 8.50 m wide – and most of its liturgical facilities have been exceptionally well preserved. Thus, the masonry floor of the choir, the base of a masonry altar and a bench for the clergy against the apse are still visible. In the nave, two low parallel walls have also been uncovered, which seem to delineate an axial corridor leading to the choir. To the north, a small room, destroyed by fire, is linked to the chapel by a staircase cut out of the thickness of the wall.

A collection of walls and a circular building 6.50 m in internal diameter date from a previous occupation, perhaps corresponding to a Roman *villa*. Two small groups of burials, located a few metres to the west and north may also be associated with this occupation. It was on the ruins of this construction that the first buildings of the Christian cult were raised. Finally, to the west, the recent construction of a hangar has partially destroyed a third apsidal building, of which the walls can still be seen.

The necropolis

The necropolis is comprised of 72 graves, most often beneath tiled gables, sometimes in stone or brick coffers for adults, with a cylindrical amphora of African origin for children. These amphora graves are numerous and sometimes associated with a gabled tomb. The deposits of offerings consist of a few glass bottles and coins, mostly attributed to the 4th century AD. The last phase of use of this funerary zone is indicated by a collection of graves in open ground.

Rediscover the history of Propriano

The churches at Propriano probably fell into complete oblivion from the Middle Ages and even the toponymy retains no indication. No mention is made of a settlement or a port at this point on Ptolemy's classical map, nor on that of Antonio Magnani, produced before 1536. It was not until 1860 that this simple fishing hamlet, depending from Fozzano, became a commune in its own right.

Inrap

With nearly 2000 collaborators and researchers, Inrap is the largest archaeological research structure in France and one of the most important in Europe. This national public research institution undertakes the majority of archaeological evaluations and excavations in partnership with private and public developers, a total of more than 2000 sites per year in mainland France and its overseas territories. Its missions also include the scientific exploitation of excavation results and the transmission of archaeological knowledge to the general public.

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