

Civitella Archaeological Site

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The ancient fortification

The ancient fortification plant is determined in its trend and development by the natural morphological characteristics of the site. The Civitella hill is characterized by the presence of two wide top plateaux, the wider of which is situated at an altitude between 765 and 780m and it presents a prevailing exposition to south south-west. The superior, acroterial, terrace has a minor extension and an open view over all the surrounding territory is available from there.

This is separated from the inferior one by a natural scarp with a jump of more than 15 m. Altogether the usable surfaces, i.e. the ones with a slope which be inferior to 20%, make up about 37% (17300 sq.m.) of the overall building surface (about 46700 sq.m.). The building plant follows the margins of these two terraces set up on the soil maximum slope, which, for a long while, presents steep scarps with more than 100% slopes. The defence necessity is clearly shown by the building of the boundary walls, as well the former necessity to be able to give hospitality to a certain community, inside the enclosure, is evidenced by the wider terrace buildings. This is included in the plant for the very reason to increase the usable space availability inside the settling.

In fact the only top plateau, already very well defended, as we have seen, by the nature of the site, could brilliantly satisfy the defence requirements of an exclusively military settling situated on the top of the hill to control the territory.



The Archaic Building Area

In the upper part of the settlement, the digging resulted in the foundations of a building hidden by later structures and with a different orientation.

The building has a regular plant and dimensions of 12,80 x 5,85 m. Since it was realized with squared stone blocks, it can be considered chronologically contemporaneous with the fortification and with the upper terrace.

The structure is apparently divided into two rooms by a transverse corridor, which was originally placed under the soil level since it was a canal for draining the water flowing through the rocks on top of the building was built.

We don't have any hint about its purpose and its internal organization, but there are suggestive hypothesis about its use for military purposes or as a house of God.

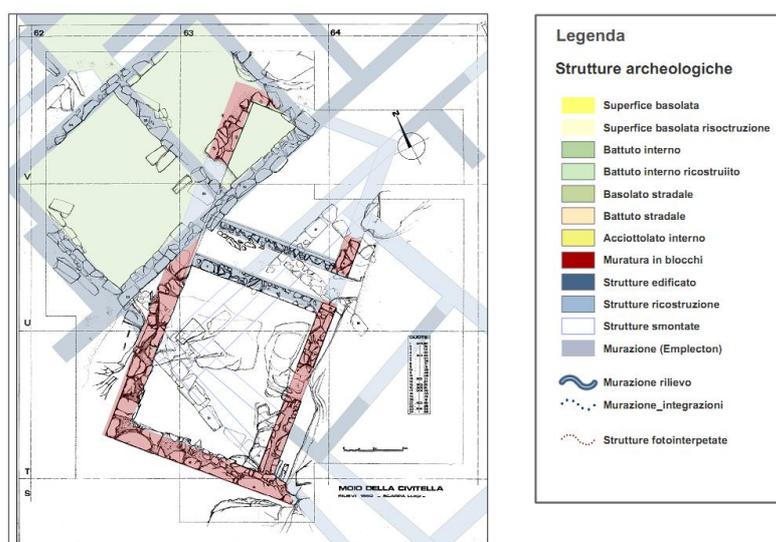


Fig. 1 - The Archaic Building Area.



Civitella Archaeological Site

The Civitella Archaeological Site interests the summit of homonymous hill, located in the municipality of Moio della Civitella, whose maximum altitude reaches 815m above sea level.

The area has been of interest from the mid 60's until the late 80's of the last century from numerous explorations and archaeological prospecting tests which brought back most of the ancient urban and architectural structures visible today.

The ancient structures have always been easily recognizable. A description of the “ruins” of Civitella is reported by the manuscript of Monsignor Alario in the XIX century, in his manuscript. He gives information about walls built with chiseled stones bound together without cement which still exist. Moreover the huge amount of debris and fragments scattered on the slope of the mountain and the many iron and clay objects found that can still be found today are a luminous proof of the existence of the city. As a matter of fact, the peasants who worked in that place have found many figurines of Apollo, clay idols, flint knives and a great number of coins.

A lot of archaeological remains have been traditionally re-used in the construction of many buildings in the villages of Moio and Pellare.

The Civitella Archaeological Site is connected to the “Focea” colony of Velia and to its requirements of military and economical control of the inner land.

The fortification system on the summit of the hill was built up during the IV century B.C.

It can be followed and recognized for a large part of its development; the archaeological excavation brought back well preserved parts with five or six rows of stone blocks as well as parts where you can hardly recognize the foundations. The sight blocks present a thorough chisel work and on some of them there are marks or letters carved after they were put into effect.

The wall extention reaches 850m above sea level and is composed of the external fence “*proteichisma*” and two internal fencings with terrace purpose, “*diateichismata*”





The West Door

The west door has a hall structure interrupted against the ground, that casts doubt on its real purpose.

The structure opened onto a perfectly levelled terrace that hints the designers aimed to confer the plant a sense of monumentality of particular detail. The door was restored in 2008 in order to stabilize the structures.

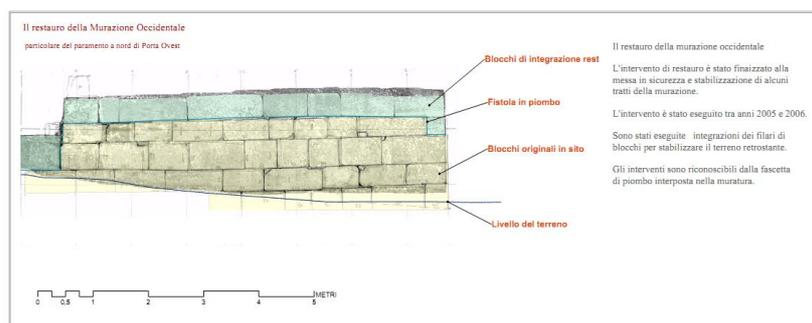
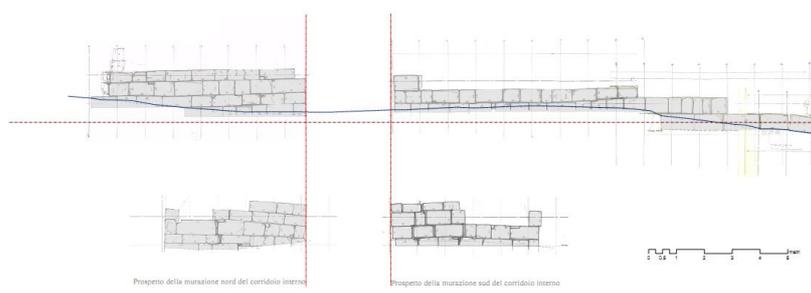


Fig. 3 - The west door



The South Door

The south door (or chestnut's door) represents, for Civitella, a particularly interesting unicum. It is located at the lowest height reached by the walls, looking toward the valley as if it would welcome the guests. The defensive system follows the traditional “claw scheme” with a “protyron” put before the hollow of the inner door. The protyron is spun respect to the entrance plane and the floor that slopes toward the outside. In the present arrangement the inclined plane was restored to let the visitors perceive value the original defensive system.

The digging resulted in a pseudo arc of a few blocks, a systems of brackets arranged in a lintel, jutting out with the lower surface shaped to arch over the entrance portal of the door.

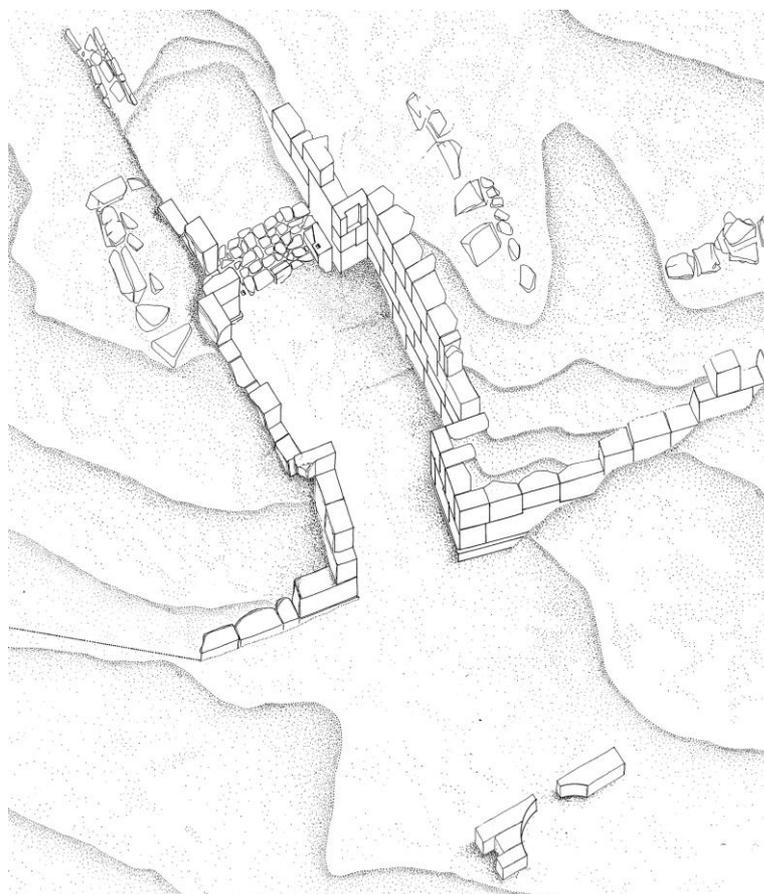


Fig. 4 - The west door - axonometry



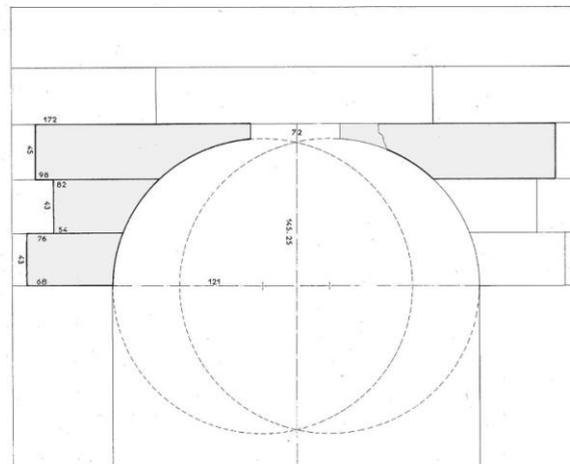
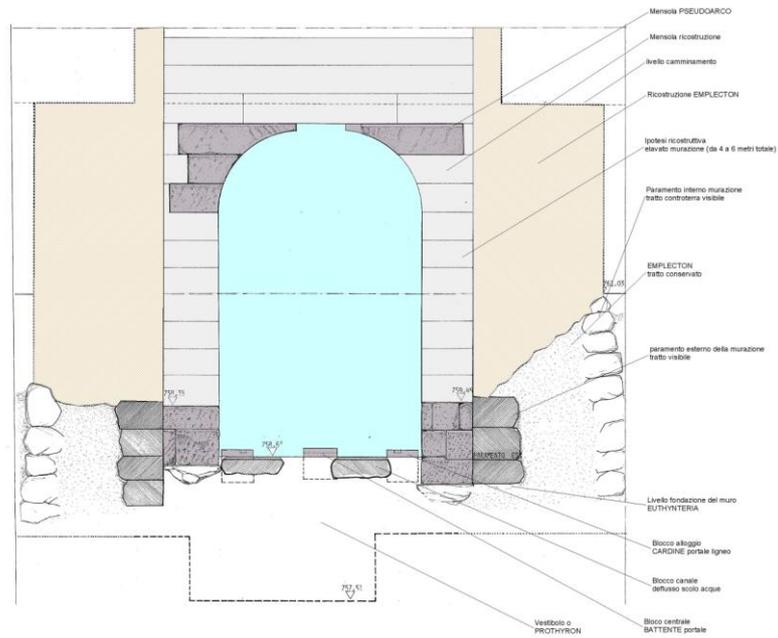


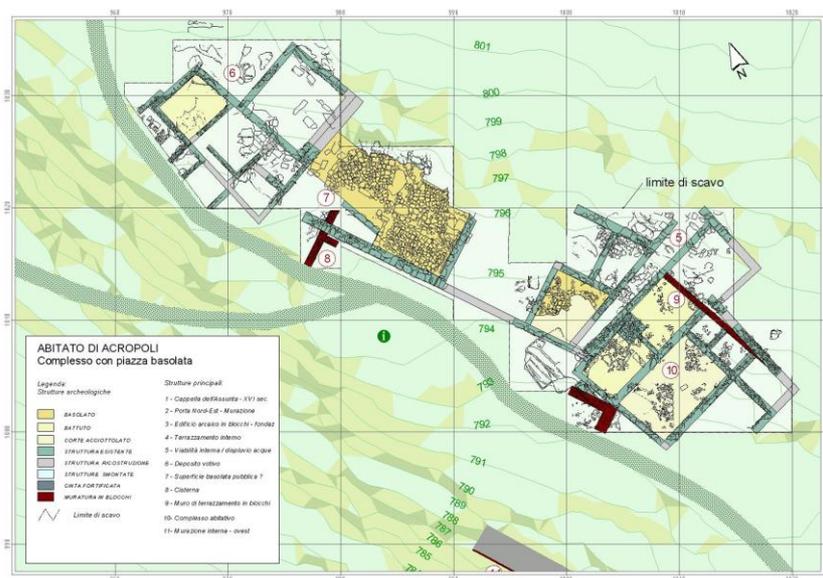
Fig. 5 - The west door – reconstruction



The Acropolis: The Set Paving Area

In the 3th century B.C. The acropolis terrace was characterized by a thick built up area realized with diverse construction techniques, like, among the others, the use of remains coming from pre-existing buildings and structures not yet localized, or, as we can see in other areas such as Roccagloriosa, the use of remains coming from the disassembly of part of the external walls and terrace.

The plant has a regular scheme, which, in accordance with the classical “double comb” scheme, is based on a main central street and perpendicular streets on both the sides.



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