

The Castle della Fava

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ Encastellation

The term encastellation refers to the phenomenon which occurred throughout most of Western Europe during the Middle Ages, particularly from the end of the ninth until the twelfth century, which led to the birth of castles, intended both as a feudal residence and as a settlement or fortified village.

The first castles erected during the ninth century were simple fortified wooden constructions, whose sole purpose was defensive, whilst at the end of the tenth century stronger materials such as stone and brick began to be employed, in order to make them more suitable for controlling the territory.

The castles built in Sardinia during the Middle Ages belong to different types and are the direct consequence of the time span during which they were built. These fortresses are located mostly on high hills, in order to be effective in the defence of economically important roads and regions. A few of these structures were built as early as the sixth-seventh century, during the Byzantine domination and then rebuilt or renovated during the period of the Giudicati.

Finally, during the thirteenth and fourteenth century, with the arrival of the Pisan and Aragonese people, a new phase of construction began (Fig. 1).



The first group of fortifications is characterised by the regularity of the masonry, but not of its plant, by being perched on inaccessible hills, by the distance from roads and by the lack of a directly associated inhabited settlement. These are, therefore, castles which may be dated to the beginning of the Medieval Age, built, sometimes on structures dating back to the Byzantine Age, by the Judges in order to assert their sovereignty over the territory.

The second group of castles was built in the 13th century on the initiative of the Pisa dynasty, with the aim of consolidating their power. They are generally square-shaped with a square watch tower and high-quality walls, which make one believe they were part of a pre-established project. They are perfectly distinguishable both from the "ancient" castles (up to the twelfth century), and from the later ones of the Aragonese age.

This second group includes the Castle "della Fava" of Posada, probably built in the early thirteenth century according to orders by the Giudici belonging to the Visconti family of Pisa, which tied its fate during this historical phase to the interests of Sardinia and particularly of Gallura (figs. 2-3).



Fig. 2 - The so-called Castle "della Fava" of Posada (from <http://www.sardegna.digitallibrary.it/index.php?xsl=615&s=17&v=9&c=4461&id=62931>).



Fig. 3 - The walls and the tower of the Castle della Fava

In Sardinia, castles have certainly played an important role in the movements of its built-up areas, particularly during the High Middle Ages, when due to external threats such as from the Arabs, the coastal settlements migrated to better protected and strengthened sites. However, Sardinia does not appear to show the system of population concentration within fortified structures which is typical of medieval Europe.

During the Giudicato period, the Sardinian territory was organised in administrative districts called "curatorie", which amounted to about fifty. The village where the curator lived was the capital of each of these districts. During the twelfth century, when the Pisani arrived, there was not a true headquarters within these boundaries, except in the cases of the capitals of the Giudicati and of the Bishop's seats. At the end of the Middle Ages almost all districts housed a castle and these forts served as the capital, substituting their



name to that of the villages where the *curator* used to live. This fact apparently demonstrates the role played by the forts erected by the Pisani: a new place of power represented by the castle was inserted in the curatorie, i.e. the traditional location of civil power, on which the villages often depended and which, among other things, were also required to provide men for the garrison. The geographical distribution of these villages shows that they are positioned around the castle, but not necessarily within the same curatoria (district). This implies the existence of a kind of castle-territory, within which the population is employed by the castle, but without physically being nearby.

This system organised in Sardinia by the Pisani could be interpreted as an attempt to change the organisation of residential spaces, but the Aragonese conquest of 1325 stopped the project which, in many ways, only appears to be outlined.



■ Credits

Coordination Prof. Rossana Martorelli

Deepening card edited by Dr. Maria Grazia Arru and Dr. Enrico Dirminti

■ Bibliography

SODDU 2013 = A. SODDU, *Incastellamento in Sardegna. L'esempio di Monteleone*, *Quaderni di Castra Sardiniae*, Hillsborough 2013.

FOIS 2012 = F. FOIS, *Castelli della Sardegna medioevale*, Cagliari 2012.

FLORIS 2008 = G. FLORIS, *Il castello medioevale della Fava (Posada)*, in *Acta historica et archaeologica mediaevalia*, 29, pp. 257-297.

FARRIS 2003 = M. G. FARRIS, *Il fenomeno dell'incastellamento in Sardegna*, in S. CHIRRA, *Aspetti del sistema di fortificazione in Sardegna*, *Atti degli Incontri sui castelli in Sardegna (2002) dell'Arxiu de tradicions*, Roccas, 2, Oristano 2003, pp. 17-26.

SPANU 2003 = P.G. SPANU, *Un'epigrafe del XIII secolo dal Castrum Montis Regalis*, in A.M. CORDA, *Cultus Splendore. Studi in onore di Giovanna Sotgiu*, 2, Senorbì 2003, pp. 915-929.

POISSON 1990 = J.M. POISSON, *L'erection de chateaux dans la Sardaigne pisane (XIII siecle) et ses consequences sur la reorganisation du reseau des habitats*, in *Actes du colloque international tenu a Najac (France), 1988*, Caen 1990, pp. 352-366.

POISSON 1989 = J.M. POISSON, *Castelli medioevali di Sardegna: dati storici e dati archeologici*, in *Archeologia Medioevale*, XVI, 1989, pp. p. 191-204.

CASULA 1980 = F.C. CASULA, *Castelli e fortezze*, in R. PRACCHI, A. TERROSU-ASOLE, *Atlante della Sardegna*, Roma 1980, pp. 109-113, tav. 40.

BOSCOLO 1978 = A. BOSCOLO, *La Sardegna bizantina e alto-giudicale*, Sassari 1978.

SOLMI 1908 = A. SOLMI, *Un nuovo documento per la storia di Guglielmo di Cagliari e dell'Arborea*, in *Archivio Storico Sardo*, IV, 1908, pp. 193-212.



UNIONE EUROPEA



REPUBBLICA ITALIANA



REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

La Sardegna cresce con l'Europa



UNIONE EUROPEA

Progetto cofinanziato dall'Unione Europea
Programma Operativo FESR 2007-2013

FESR - Fondo Europeo di Sviluppo Regionale - Asse I, Linea di Attività 1.2.3.a