



UNIONE EUROPEA



REPUBBLICA ITALIANA



REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

Castle of Monreale

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ The Giudicati

The castle of Monreale was one of the main strongholds of the Giudicato of Arborea. The four Sardinian *Giudicati* of Cagliari, Arborea, Torres (or Logudoro) and Gallura were independent kingdoms, which were created between the VIII and IX century as a result of the isolation forced on the island because of the Arab expansion in the Mediterranean¹.



Fig. 1 - The Sardinian Giudicati from the 11th to the 14th century
(from http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c5/Giudicati_sardi_1.svg).

¹ A. BOSCOLO , *La Sardegna dei Giudicati*, Sassari, 1979.

During the eighth century, Sardinia was still part of the Byzantine Empire, but already by the end of the preceding century the imperial organisation had entered a crisis period and, at the same time, the first Arab threats began to appear against the coastal areas of the Mediterranean islands. The exact processes which led to the gradual isolation of Sardinia are not known, but it is certain that the crisis of the Byzantine presence in the centre of the Mediterranean led to a power vacuum and exposed the island to the danger of Saracen raids².

During the Byzantine dominion, the island was governed by a *praeses* who took care of civil affairs, and by a *dux*, who led the *exercitus Sardiniae*. In the eighth century, the office of *praeses* lost much of its authority and many of its functions were absorbed by that of the *dux*, until everything became concentrated into one person, the *iudex Sardiniae*³.

It is likely that during the ninth century the *iudex Sardiniae* entrusted his lieutenants (*lociservatores*) to flank him with the political and military administration of the four most important territorial districts (*partes*) of the island. Thereafter, each of them appointed himself *judex* and the Sardinian territory found itself divided into several autonomous units which took on the appearance of four independent kingdoms⁴.

The Giudicati resurface in known history after the year one thousand, already administratively and socially organised. Each state was called *Logu* in Sardinian, and was headed by a monarch called *judike*. One of the most important aspects of the organisation of the Giudicati is provided by the curatorie called *partes*: these were administrative districts consisting of a group of villages or "villas" (*biddas*) which depended on a "curatoria" capital. The curator was appointed by the King on a fixed-term basis, he managed the use of

² G. MELONI, *L'Origine dei giudicati*, in M. Brigaglia, A. Mastino, G.G. Ortu, *Storia della Sardegna, II. Dal Tardo Impero romano al 1350*, Roma-Bari 2002, pages 1-32.

³ L. ORTU, *Storia della Sardegna. Dal Medioevo all'Età contemporanea*, Cagliari 2011, p. 24.

⁴ S. PETRUCCI, *Storia politica e istituzionale della Sardegna medioevale (secoli XI-XIV)*, in *Storia dei Sardi e della Sardegna, II. Il Medioevo dai Giudicati agli Aragonesi*, Milano, 1987, pages 97-156.

public lands, of the villas, organised the armed service and presided over the court. Each curatoria was self-sufficient and functional⁵.

The Giudicato of Cagliari (fig. 2) was the largest (6000 sq. km) and the richest, its capital was Santa Igia (fig. 4). Its history ended in 1257. The Giudicato of Arborea (fig. 2) had an area of 4500 square kilometres, its capital was first Tharros and then Oristano. This was the longest-running Giudicato as it fell, in fact, in 1410. The capital of the Giudicato of Torres (or of Logudoro, fig. 3) was first *Turris Libisonis*, then Sassari. Its history ended in 1259. The Giudicato of Gallura (fig. 3) had as capital Civita (Olbia), and fell in 1298.

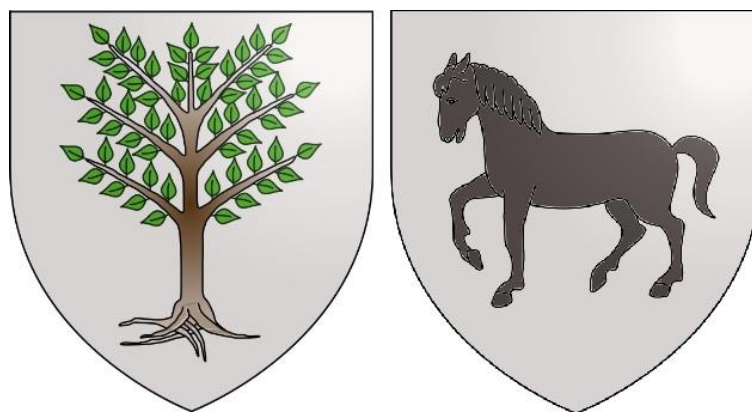


Fig. 2 - Coats of arms of the Giudicato of Arborea (left, from <http://www.cavalierimacomer.com/macomer.html>) and alleged coat of arms of the Giudicato of Cagliari (on the right, from http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benedetta_di_Cagliari?uselang=it#mediaviewer/File:Cavallo_del_Giudicato_di_Cagliari.svg).

⁵ *S. Igia capitale giudicale: contributi all'Incontro di studio Storia, ambiente fisico e insediamenti umani nel territorio di S. Gilla (Cagliari)*, 3-5 November 1983, Pisa 1986.

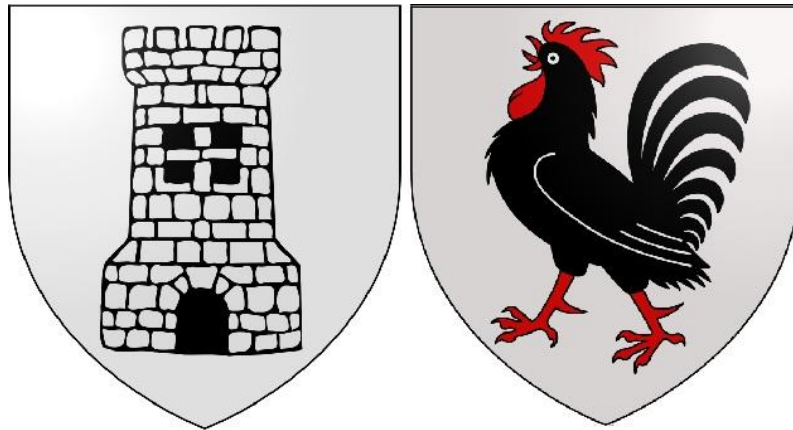


Fig. 3 - Coats of arms of the Giudicato of Torres (left, from http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Storia_della_Sardegna_giudicale#mediaviewer/File:Torre_Merlata_del_Giudicato_di_Torres.svg) and Gallura (right, from http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gallo_del_Giudicato_di_Gallura.svg).

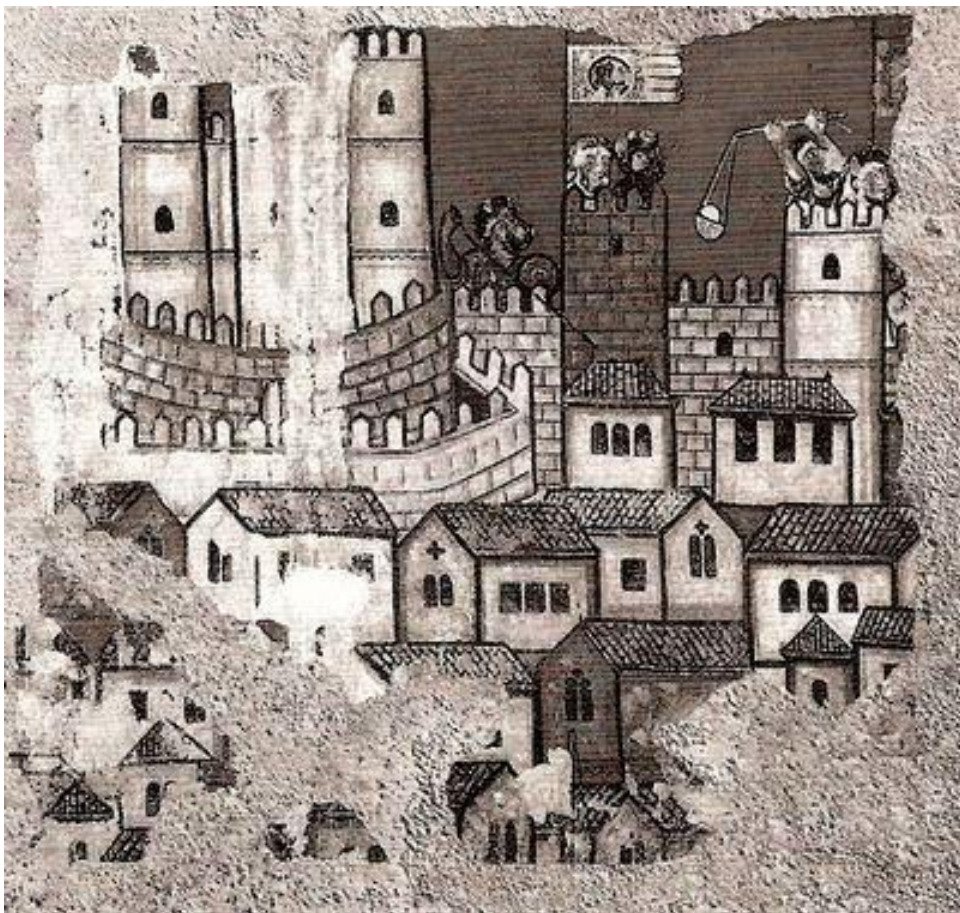


Fig. 4 - Ancient representation of Cagliari (from *S. Igia capitale giudicale*, Pisa 1986).

■ Credits

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