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REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

Palace of Baldu

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ Castle of Balaiana

Three kilometres as the crow flies from the palace of Baldu, there is the castle of Balaiana which is still linked by a footpath to the church of San Leonardo, originally the castle's chapel (fig. 1).



Fig. 1 - Luogosanto, the church of San Leonardo: the Castle of Balaiana is in the background (from Pinna 2008, p. 102, fig. 81).

The structure is located on Mount San Leonardo at 299 metres above sea level, from which it dominates a large portion of territory that were the Gallura curatoria of *Balayana*, *Canahim*, *Unali*, *Montanna* and *Taras* in the Middle Ages, and the roads which joined it to the most important ports and cities of the Giudicato. This is why awarding it a defensive function of the internal borders and the surrounding areas has been suggested. There were also plenty of water reserves: at the foot of the granite rock there is the Rio Balaiana and a short distance away there is the river Liscia, while in the entrance room inside the

structure, a cistern can still be seen for the collection of rainwater, that ensured water supply even in the event of a siege.

The fortress was probably built by Giudice Constantine I during the eleventh century with the work of craftsmen from Pisa. This theory would support some building peculiarities, in fact the castle was made entirely in square granite ashlar placed in regular rows, fitted together in such a way as not to require mortar; there are larger blocks that are more shaped in the corners. The septs are dual façade with a cavity filled with small stones. The castle is characterised by a trapezoidal tower (12x7 metres) divided into two rooms, with access from the eastern side (figs. 2-3)

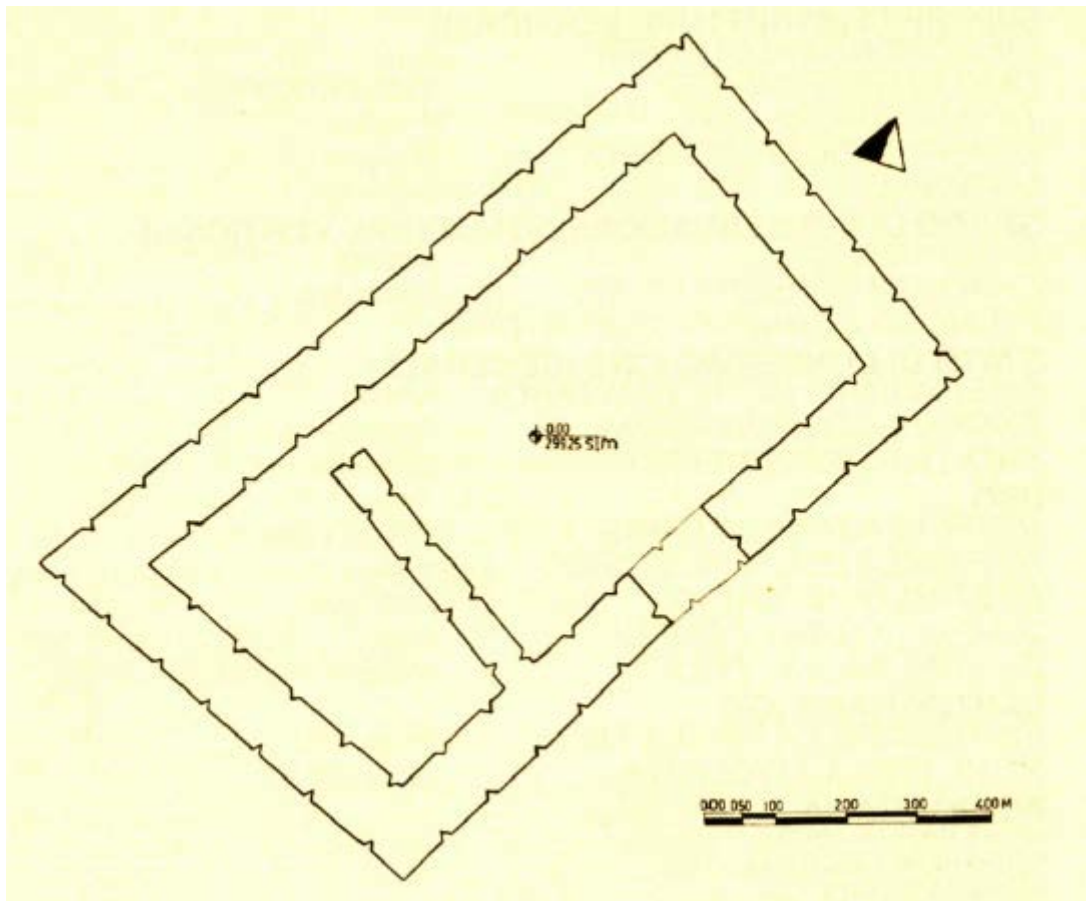


Fig. 2 - Plan of the castle of Balaiana (from *Archaeologia del territorio*, p. 285).

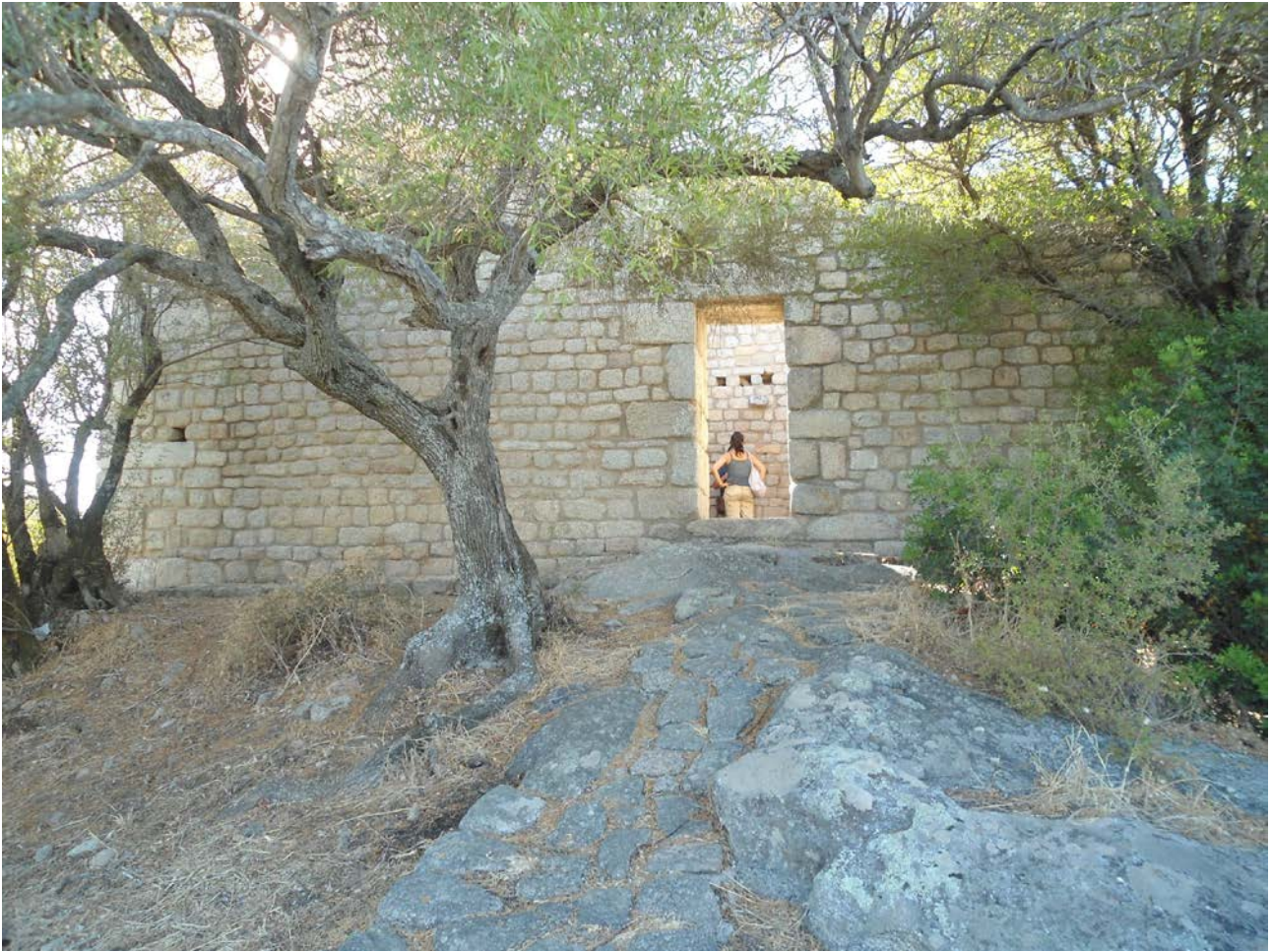


Fig. 3 - Luogosanto, Castle of Balaiana: view from the east (photo by C. Cocco).

The existence of stone alignments in the surrounding plateau has led to the hypothesis that there were other curtain walls placed there to prevent access from all directions.

It is mentioned in Condaghe of Bonarcado, which brings the dispute started between the judge of Gallura Constantine III and the sons of his predecessor Comita Spanu, who had occupied the fortress of Balaiana. In 1146 the bishop of Pisa Villano met in Bonarcado (Giudicato of Arborea) the four Sardinian sovereigns to resolve this issue. In that occasion the Castle was donated by Barisone of Arborea to the monastery of Santa Maria of Bonarcado. Its destruction can be traced back generally to the Catalan-Aragonese; according to some scholars, this act was ordered by Alfonso d'Aragona in 1442.

The conditions of severe neglect of the castle, of which only a few remains of the top part remained, imposed major restoration interventions at the turn of the last century (fig. 4).



Fig. 4 - Luogosanto, Castle of Balaiana: view from the North (photo by F. Collu).



■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Claudia Cocco and Dr. Francesca Collu

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