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REPUBBLICA ITALIANA



REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA
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Palace of Baldu

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ Church of San Leonardo

Three kilometres as the crow flies from the palace of Baldu there is the castle of Balaiana, still linked by a footpath to the church of San Leonardo, located a few dozen metres to the north (fig. 1).



Fig. 1 - Overview of the Balaiana area: on the right the castle, at the centre the church of San Leonardo (Photo by C. Cocco).

The devotional space, also known as *Santu Ninaldu*, stands atop a granite outcrop which dominates much of the territory of Luogosanto (fig. 2); it is in the Balaiana region, that can be reached on foot by going up a steep path. The architecture has undergone some restoration work; it was officiated until the last century.



Fig. 2 - The church of San Leonardo of Balaiana (photo by C. Cocco).

Probably it was the chapel of the castle: its structure with a single nave is small and consists solely of granite ashlars, it has an entrance on the south side, the apse is oriented to the east and a projecting rectangular forepart leans on the west side of the building (fig. 3); internally it has vaulted ceilings and a sloping roof made from pieces of local rock. Light and air inside the church were provided by a cross-shaped window on the façade and by three single-light rectangular windows, respectively in the apse (fig. 4) and on the long side.

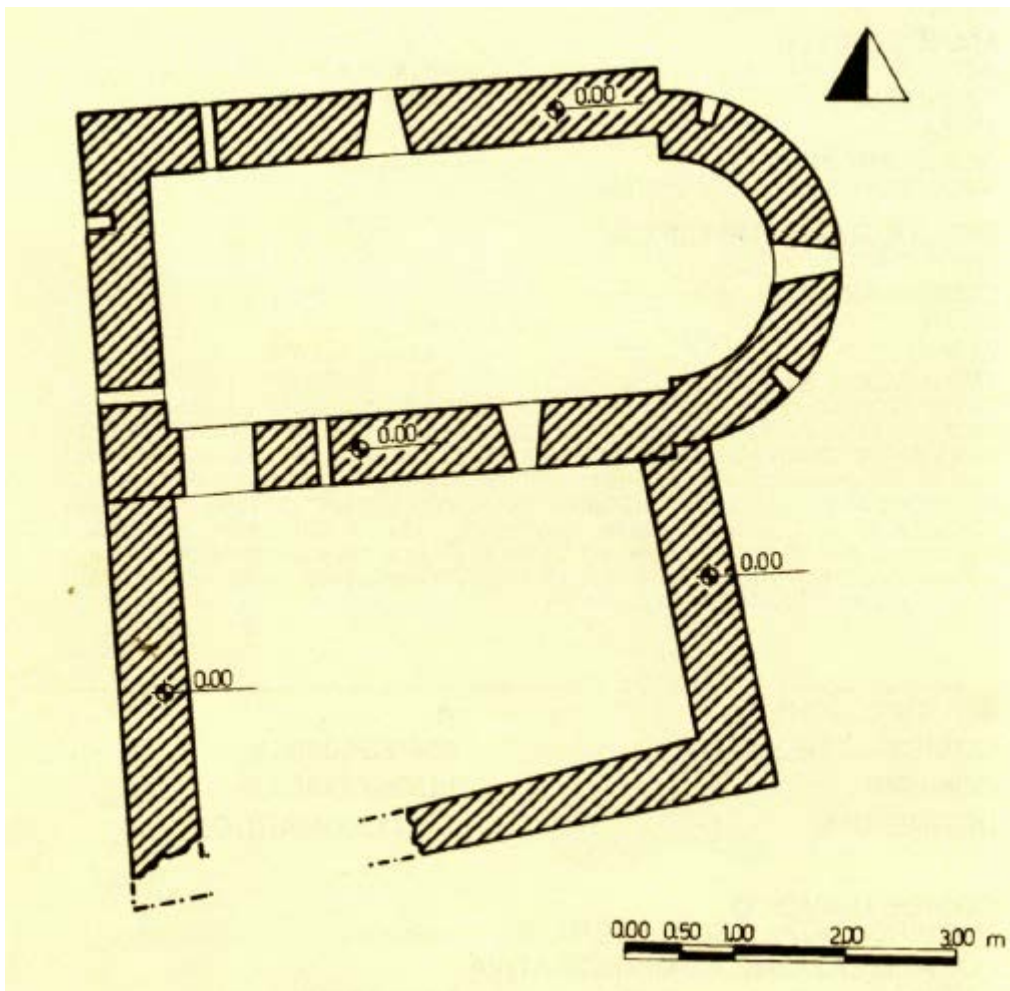


Fig. 3 - Plan of the church of San Leonardo (from *Archaeologia del territorio*, p. 284).



Fig. 4 - Church of Leonardo, apse: view from the East (from <http://www.sardegna.cultura.it/j/v/277?s=7&v=9&c=2488¬izia=17905&pic=1>).

Its small size suggests that it was used by the castle's garrison and its shape leads to the possibility of dating it back to the second half of the twelfth century AD. Similar structures were found in nearby Corsica, leading to assume the presence of craftsmen skilled in the use of granite who operated during the Romanesque period.

The church has no simulacrum, which, according to a folk tale, was stolen in the second half of the 19th century by the inhabitants of Luras - where the priest had jurisdiction over the Luogosanto church - to be exhibited in the place of worship dedicated to the same saint, but in the Luras countryside.

The cult of St. Leonard spread in Italy between the eleventh and twelfth centuries; the saint, a native of Gaul, lived between the fifth and sixth centuries, and led a hermit's life for most of his existence. Later, thanks to a donation given by King Clovis, he created a monastery at Noblac and became Abbot. He is considered the protector of prisoners, this is why he is shown in chains; sometimes he is garbed as a deacon, more often he wears the robe of a monk.

■ Credits

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

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