

# Megalithic circles of Li Muri

Patrimonio culturale  
**SARDEGNA** Virtual Archaeology



## ■ Site localisation

The circle tombs of Li Muri are located in the hinterland of Gallura, along the road to Luogosanto. The site is accessible from Arzachena, driving along the SP115 road for about six kilometres towards Bassacutena. At the crossroads for Lolghi Li, on the left, continue for about a further two kilometres along a dirt road until you reach the fenced archaeological site, located on the right.

## ■ History of the excavations and studies

The first information concerning the archaeological sites of Gallura can be found in the *Dictionary* by Goffredo Casalis, whose part concerning "Gallura" was edited by Vittorio Angius.

At the same time, there are lists of the antiquities in the various centres of Gallura even in works which are not specifically archaeological, such as the *Voyage en Sardaigne* by Alberto Della Marmora.

At the beginning of the last century, in 1922, there is some information concerning the monumental archaeological evidence of Gallura in the work by the scholar Carlo Dessì. However, it will be necessary to wait for the topographic surveys by Antonio Taramelli, carried out in order to elaborate the sheets of the Archaeological Map of Sardinia, to obtain a picture of the ancient inhabitation of the territory of Gallura. Among the many studies, as an indication, we can refer to the excavations of the complex of Cabu Abbas and Sa Testa in the Olbia municipality, directed by Doro Levi between the thirties and forties of the last century, who succeeded Taramelli as Director of the Archaeological Superintendence of Sardinia.

As far as the territory of Arzachena is concerned, great importance is attached to the discovery of the major known monuments by a local primary school teacher, Michele Ruzittu (1871-1960), better known as *Babboi Micali*, who, moved by "a warm patriotic feeling" for his community, devoted himself to the meticulous study of the ancient monuments

within his territory with the intent of "letting the importance of the region in all ages of history and prehistory resurface".

The Neolithic necropolis of Li Muri (Arzachena, OT) discovered in 1939 by Ruzittu himself, was dug, on behalf of the then Archaeological Superintendency of Sardinia, by Francesco Soldati (fig. 1).



**Fig. 1** - The archaeological excavation (from Antona, Ceruti 1992, p. 22, fig. 1).

During the Forties, Salvatore Puglisi, in the *Bullettino di Paletnologia Italiana*, in the publication concerning the excavation data, suggested that the pre-proto-historic civilisation of this northern part of the island, with its cultural peculiarities, due largely however to its geographical position and its environmental features comparable to those of neighbouring Corsica, is nothing but the result of an external contribution.

Twenty years after the first publication concerning Gallura, Puglisi, in collaboration with Editta Castaldi, once again returns to the problem of the megalithic circles of Gallura in *Studi Sardi*, with a careful analysis, site by site, of the materials found. Although their theories can be considered dated in view of new knowledge, and this applies to both the chronological and cultural context and to the idea of the Gallura culture as a marginal and secondary culture, their contribution has the merit of providing an important source

of archaeological documentation data and especially of formulating an important theory concerning the role of the funerary circles of type B, connected to the ritual of defleshing, for the first time (fig. 2).



**Fig. 2** - Overview of the site (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).

In 1983 Editta Castaldi devoted an essay to the necropolis, published in 1983, and a study of the Neolithic village of Pilastru, perhaps in connection with it.

Over the years, in relation to the prehistoric phases, Giovanni Lilliu and Ercole Contu also focused on what appeared to them as a phenomenon of great interest, that of the "culture of megalithic circles" or "of Arzachena", or "Gallura' culture".

Angela Antona, employed by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage of Sassari and head of the territory of Gallura, also began to deal with the site during the nineties of the last century, particularly in relation to the phenomenon of funerary Megaliths in Gallura, and it is thanks to this scholar that the first major systematic study of the necropolis was carried out (fig. 3).

In her latest book, aided by an accurate photographic documentation curated by Egidio Trainito, when describing the local archaeological discoveries, Angela Antona often stresses that the Gallura archaeology belongs to the great tradition of Western Megaliths.



**Fig. 3** - Rendering of the funerary circles (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).

Francesco Corni also carried out a reconstruction of the necropolis, included in a collection of his drawings published in 2001 and edited by Fulvia Lo Schiavo and Giovanni Maria Demartis (fig. 4).





**Fig. 4** - Hypothesis of reconstruction of the necropolis  
(from Demartis 2000, p. 50).

## ■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Emanuela Atzeni





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