



Megalithic circles of Li Muri

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ The "tafoni" of the territory of Arzachena

Tafoni, a term of Corsican origin used to indicate natural cavities of granite due to erosion processes, are often found in walls and blocks, they can reach a considerable size and are a characteristic element of all the granitic landscape of Gallura (fig. 1).



Fig. 1 - Limbara Nord, tafone of granite in Li Conchi
(da <http://www.sardegna.digitallibrary.it/mmt/480/528375.jpg>)

The various uses of these rock crevices have represented a geographical factor for man, closely connected with the morphology of the Gallura granite, and have accompanied him throughout history as a shelter, a burial place and a place for his animals.

In the case of inhospitable sites, the settlement seems to be linked to less settled communities; often the settlement was limited to a fortification on a granite hill and to the use of natural cavities made suitable for living there.

Under the entry "Gallura", curated by Vittorio Angius for the Casalis dictionary, it was reported that "*The granites of upper Gallura, mainly in the Arzachena region, have large cavities, which were and are used as a shelter by shepherds*" (fig. 2).



Fig. 2 - Tafoni in Pilastru, Arzachena (from <http://www.anemos-arzachena.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/AngoliDiStoria1.jpg>).

Tafone homes are generally located on the hills, naturally protected by the cliffs; in some cases, they tower over the surrounding land forming natural strongholds which provide shelter, protection and defence. They may also be further strengthened and adapted by man by integrating a dry wall.

Often they are defended by large enclosure walls built all around the shelters, creating an actual fortified settlement, as is the case in Monte Tiana and Le Casacce of Arzachena. In some cases, like in Punta Candela of Arzachena, there is an access *dromos* consisting of the rock face on one side and of a dry stone wall on the other, which served as an entrance to an underground cavity, where a great deal of stratified archaeological material has been found, indicating that the complex was used as a dwelling.

These settlements are sometimes completed by circular structures, built by exploiting the natural granite spikes, perhaps as towers or generic defence structures. The practice of artificially filling the spaces between granite and granite or of building simple wall structures which exploit the morphology of the rock, thereby incorporating it, is frequent in Gallura.

Another local peculiarity is the presence of mixed types of settlements which consist of both agglomerated huts and of tafoni used as dwellings.

The use of tafoni for funerary purposes, very simple from an architectural point of view, is a widespread phenomenon in the Gallura region, documented from the end of the Middle Bronze Age, associated with megalithic Nuraghic monuments which sometimes constituted an exclusive burial place, until the second half of the nineteenth century, as reported by Angius (fig. 3).

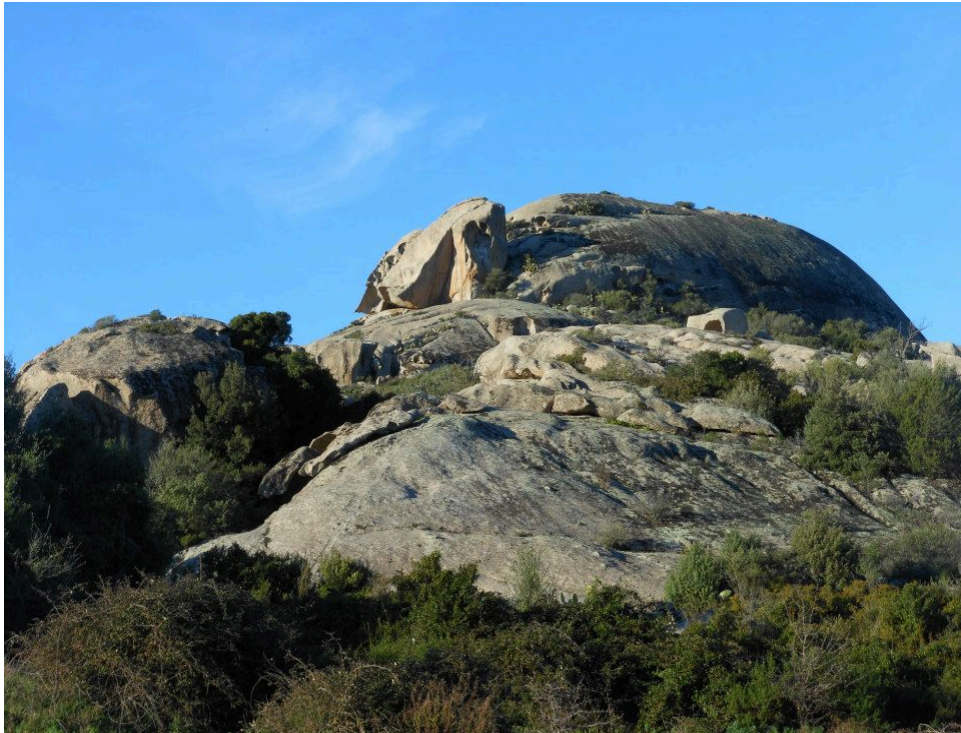


Fig. 3 - Monte Mazzolu (from <http://www.arzachenacostasmeralda.it/wp-content/gallery/escursione-a-monti-mazzolu/3.jpg>),

The scholar Maria Luisa Ferrarese Ceruti gave a valuable contribution with her accurate catalogue of funeral findings unearthed in the tafoni known until then, with a discussion of the problems associated with their use: the article is prepared in the form of an inventory, location by location and grave by grave, of the data known at the date of publication. The work is completed by the contribution of anthropologist Franco Germanà who published an article concerning human remains found in the tafoni, identifying the conceivable human types from the scant remains found in these graves.

In relation to their geographical distribution, the current stage of archaeological research appears to find that the largest number of tafone burials characterises the area

of Arzachena: Nicola Carta, Monte Mazzolu, Le Casacce, Punta Candela, Monte di Oglio,
Li Conchi, Malchittu, La Macciunitta, Li Muri, Donnicaglia, Lu Vignali.



■ Credits

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