

# Megalithic circles of Li Muri

Patrimonio culturale  
**SARDEGNA** Virtual Archaeology



## ■ The origins of Arzachena

The local pronunciation of the modern name is Alzachèna, Arzaghenà: according to Massimo Pittau it would be a place-name of early Sardinian origin, with the typical Nuragic suffix -èna, connected with Artakené, an epithet for Hera, the goddess of the city of Artàke of Thrace, in the Hellespont, also connected with the Ptolemy Heraion, which Pittau may have identified with Tempio; this would prove the connection between Sardinia and Asia Minor (fig. 1).



**Fig. 1** - Overview of the municipal territory  
(from <http://www.bbliconchi.com/images/info800x/10.jpg>).

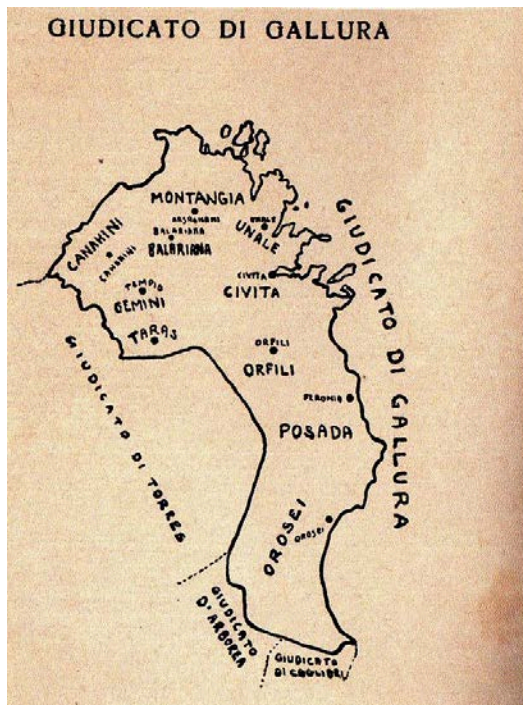
According to another hypothesis, the name Arsequen would be of Greek origin, in view of the fact that the capital city of the Lestrigoni people, who would have inhabited this very area of the island, *Ἀρτακία* (Artachia), was mentioned in Homer's *Odyssey*. After all, the Sardinian populations of Gallura held business contacts with overseas nations from the XIV century B.C., mainly with Greece and other Aegean locations.

Arzachena also has traces of these trades, presumably some of these ships sailed up the east coast to Corsica and southern France.

During Roman times, the road station of *Turublum Minus* was located in its territory (between *Portus Tibulae* and Olbia, on the road to Carales), a name whose meaning remains uncertain. The name, however, does suggest the existence of a hypothetical *Turublum Maius*, which some think was located in the territory of Arzachena, in Nicola Calta, where the name Tùvulu Maggiori appears to be preserved.

The earliest mention of the name of Arzachena, in the form *Arsaghene*, dates back to 1421 and is in the Charter of fiefdom granted by Alfonso V of Spain to Ramboldo de Corbaria.

Arzachena maintained a significant importance throughout the period of the Giudicato, the time span when it was the capital of the curatoria of Unali (figs. 2, 3). The small medieval settlement was in the area of Sant'Antoni, just over 1 km from the nuraghe called La Prisgiona. Besides the church remains, there are a few other structures, difficult to interpret.



**Figs. 2, 3** - Sardinian Giudicati from the eleventh to the fourteenth century (from [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c5/Giudicati\\_sardi\\_1.svg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c5/Giudicati_sardi_1.svg)) and the Giudicato of Gallura (from [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/it/thumb/2/23/Giudicato\\_di\\_Gallura.jpg/640px-Giudicato\\_di\\_Gallura.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/it/thumb/2/23/Giudicato_di_Gallura.jpg/640px-Giudicato_di_Gallura.jpg)).

After the fall of the Giudicato of Gallura and the beginning of the Spanish domination, it slowly depopulated because of the frequent Saracen raids and pestilence.

During the second half of the sixteenth century the area was virtually uninhabited.

In the work by Giovanni Francesco Fara, it is remembered as a destroyed village.

The current town was built starting in 1716 by the will of the King of Sardinia, Carlo Emanuele III. Between 1774 and 1776, the small country church dedicated to Santa Maria d'Arzaghena was greatly expanded and changed its name to Santa Maria Maggiore; the village strongly developed around it, so much so that in 1909 it already had 853 inhabitants.

During the nineteenth century, Vittorio Angius indicated that the remains of the disappeared village were located near the Church of Santa Maria.

In 1922, after years of hard struggle, it obtained its autonomy from Tempio Pausania and has since then enjoyed a continuous urban and demographic development, further amplified during the sixties of the last century thanks to the tourist boom of the Costa Smeralda (fig. 4).



**Fig. 4** - Arzachena, overview (from <http://www.infeagallura.it/Rete/Immagini/arzachena01.jpg>).

## ■ Credits

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