



UNIONE EUROPEA



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REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA  
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

# Giants' tomb of Thomes

Patrimonio culturale  
**SARDEGNA** Virtual Archaeology



## ■ Dorgali during the Nuraghic Age

The pottery found in the the domus de janas (Mariughia and Lottoniddo), caves and rock shelters (San Giovanni Su Anzu, Sisaia, Sas Furmicas, Fuili, Bue Marino), and the dolmen (Sa Barva) prove the inhabitation of the territory of Dorgali during the earliest phase of the Bronze Age (Bonnanaro Culture, 1800-1600 BC). In a narrow ravine of the Lanaittu valley between Oliena and Dorgali, speleologists discovered a nearly complete skeleton of an adult woman curled up with modest grave goods which include a bowl, a pan and a granite millstone. It was renamed Sisaia, the ancestor. The extraordinary datum of this archaeological discovery was given by the circular cranial lesion in the right hand side of the skull, that proved a cranial trepanation performed while she was alive, a widespread ritual practice for religious and therapeutic purposes throughout Sardinia and in Europe.



**Fig. 1** - Reconstruction of the burial and the grave goods of a woman found in the Cave of Sisaia Dorgali (from Fadda 2006, fig. 26, p. 34).

In the three large geomorphological areas (river valleys, the plateau of Dorgali and the rugged coast which had difficulties in communicating with the hinterland) that characterise Dorgali, a large number of monuments of Nuraghic Age (XVII- VI century BC) have been found: Nuraghe, walls, inhabited villages, wells and giants' tombs. It is difficult to establish the time of construction and period of duration and use for most of them, due to the insufficient and insignificant findings on the surface that are associated with them.

44 nuraghi have been registered up to now, most of which are now ruins; single-tower or complexes, they have all been built using natural rock that affected the layout each time. As they stand at the end of the valley and communication roads, towards their high roads, they may have been watch towers connected to a real defence system (fig. 2).



**Fig. 2** - Nuraghe Mannu-Dorgali

(from <http://www.sardegnaigitallibrary.it/index.php?xsl=615&s=17&v=9&c=4461&id=310459>).

As regards the settlement aspect, there are 111 known Nuraghic villages, detectable from the outcrops of walls and/or the findings of mobile material on the surface. The most densely populated centres are always located in relatively flat areas: examples are Dughine, Fruncudunue, Iriai I and II, Noriolo, Poddinosa and Ruju, and especially Serra Orrios (fig. 3). They stood either within an area protected by the Nuraghe, within the defensive lines defined by the large forts with village, or, the majority, was autonomous and independent.

These villages were made up of huts, whose numbers and complexity differed. The huts were modest stone houses with roofs made of branches and planks. The interior finish

was often completed by mud which served as plaster and sometimes cork was used as insulation from the cold. The centre of the room was almost always occupied by the hearth while beds and tables for domestic work were ranged along the side walls. Sometimes there were also niches.



**Fig. 3** - Aerial view of the site of Serra Orrios-Dorgali  
(from <http://www.sardegnaigitallibrary.it/index.php?xsl=615&s=17&v=9&c=4461&id=102911>).

The burial area discoveries show the presence of more than forty giants' tombs (fig. 4) that related to the number of nuraghi recorded so far, show the high density of this type of monument. These tombs are often located near the Nuraghe or the villages, with which they share a closely related topographic and cultural bond, or they are completely isolated, in pairs or in threes (Biristeddi).

Built in local stone, already plundered during ancient times, they are for the most part completely destroyed. Most of them are of the dolmen-orthostatic type, and still have their large arched, either monolithic or bilithic stele.



**Fig. 4** - Giants' tomb of Thomes-Dorgali (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).

The religious architectures (fig. 5) appears to be attested by 19 wells (Sorgolitta, Nastallai, Dugulana) and a spring (S'Ulumu).

Other architectural forms related to religious life are the small megaron temples built near the village of Serra Orrios.





**Fig. 5** - Nuragic spring of S'Ulumu  
(from <http://wikimapia.org/32752665/it/Fonte-a-Pozzo-di-S-Ulumu#/photo/4767175>).

## ■ Credits

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