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RUHR-UNIVERSITÄT BOCHUM

Dwelling in Grutt‘i Acqua

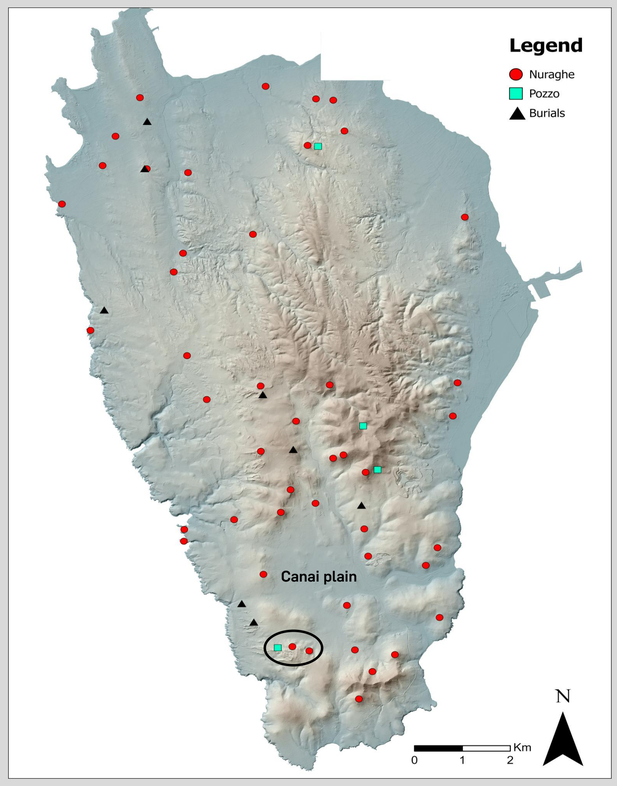
Settlement dynamics in southern Sant‘Antioco between the Middle and Final Bronze Age

Constance von Rüden, Marie Usadel

Making Landscape

Nuragic towers and settlements are not merely related to those humans they directly accommodate; rather, they constitute extensive networks across the mountains, plains, and coasts of microregions. This holds also true for the region around the Canai plain on the island of Sant’Antioco whose spatial organization appears to be non-centralized, with the community spreading across multiple monuments.

To better understand the settlement dynamics of this microregion the ‘Making Landscape’-project combines different empirical methods of landscape archaeology (von Rüden et al. 2023) including **remote sensing**, **geomorphology** (Schneider et al. 2025), **survey** on land and underwater (Yasur-Landau et al. 2026) with **excavations** of different sites to explore the diachronic development on the island with a focus on the Nuragic period. Excavation were executed in the region of Grutt‘i Acqua in the southwestern part of the plain with a particular focus on settlements.

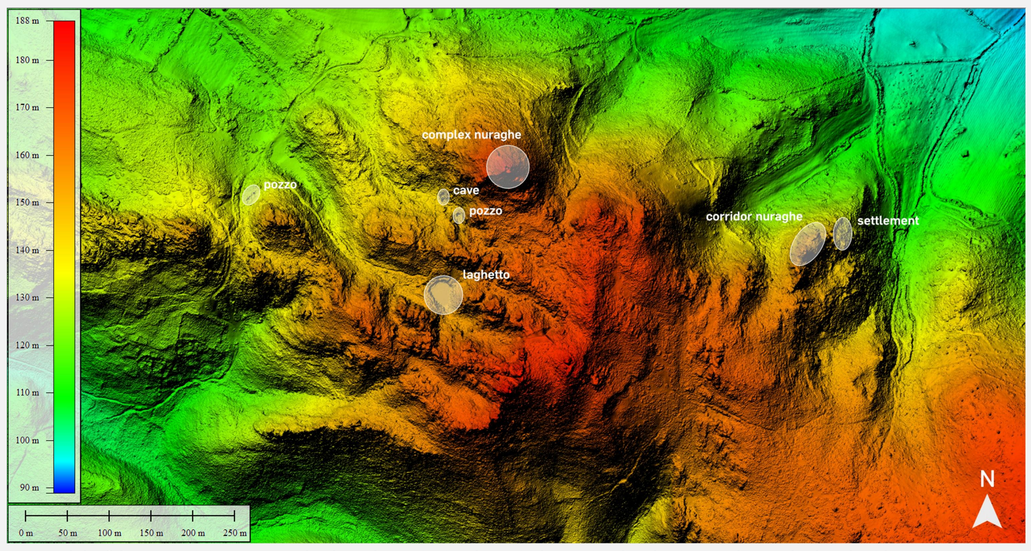


Nuragic sites on the island of Sant’Antioco.

Grutt‘i Acqua

The area of Grutt‘i Acqua is well-known thanks to several monuments which were visible at the surface already before the start of the project in 2017. Among them the complex nuraghe and several water installations in the west and the corridor nuraghe on the Crisionis Hill in the east of the area.

In the first phase the project focused on the MBA settlement below the corridor nuraghe (2019-2023), to grasp the formation phase of the Nuragic period. Since recently, the focus shifted to the LBA settlement with water installations and terraces at the foot of the complex nuraghe.



3D model of the Grutt’i Acqua complex based on LiDAR data (Airborne Technologies GmbH) calculated without vegetation.

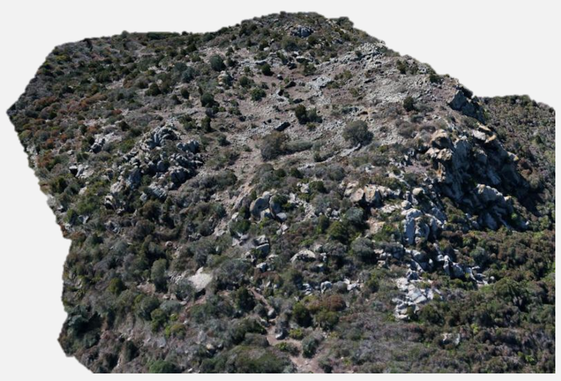


View of the Canai plain from the Crisionis hill.

Crisionis Hill (2019-2023)

The site is located close to a megalithic stone circle and a menhir on a rocky outcrop at the northern fringe of a plateau enabling the inhabitants to overlook the southern Canai Plain. Below the better known corridor-nuraghe the settlement is arranged along a slope to the east. Here, several architectural units were excavated, among them a massive oval shaped hut (C) with several household installations, whose occupation can be divided into two phases (von Rüden et al. 2023).

The following collapse of the Nuraghe covered the northern part of the hill, offering a well-stratified and undisturbed find situation of an Early Nuragic site.



3D model of Crisionis hill, view from the north.

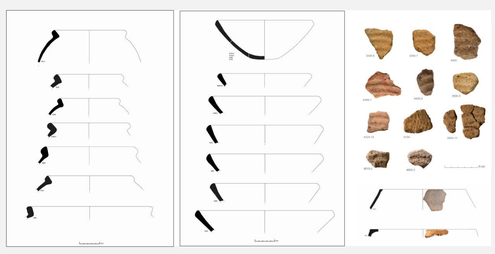


Hut C with annex.

The pottery shows a strong local tradition of certain shapes while petrographic analysis suggests regional exchange practices. According to the traditional typology the settlement was abandoned before the Final Bronze Age (Usadel forthcoming).



Pit filled with broken pottery (left) next to a platform made from carefully arranged sherds.



Pottery from the upper layers of the settlement area.

Grutt’i Acqua West

Around the complex Nuraghe of Grutt’i Acqua activities can be attested at least since the Late Bronze Age and continued into the Early Iron Age.

Today the area is characterized by thick vegetation, that has long misled the identification of a related settlement. First excavations of the Ruhr University in 2024 and 2025 demonstrate that huts were built on the lower hills to the west rather than along the steep slopes underneath the Nuraghe.



Pottery from the area of Grutt’i Acqua West.



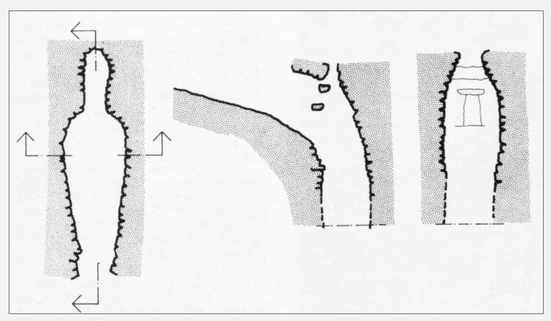
Part of a hut excavated in 2025.

Resource management

The site provides various, partly interrelated water management structures: a pond, a cave with architectural structures, a cistern and the better known pozzo sacro. Moreover, first investigations have also brought to light that the inhabitants of the site have cared about the soil maintenance by building terraces at the fringe of the site. Both type of building activities show how tightly the inhabitants were intertwined with the resources of this place.



The structure addressed as cistern or pozzo.



Drawing of the pozzo sacro by F. Rombi (Lilliu 1995).

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