

Forreddos de gianas

The *domus de janas* in the archaeological site of Martì, first recorded by Antonio Taramelli between 1911 and 1917, are traditional chamber tombs that in Tonara have been known since ancient times as *forreddos de gianas*: due to their entrance being a similar shape and size to the ovens in which people would bake bread, locals call them ‘ovens of the fairies’ instead of ‘homes of the fairies’. In the Barbagia di Belvì Mandrolisai region they call ‘*forreddos*’ (*Forreddos de Martì* in Tonara, *Forreddos de Mancosu* in Tiana) the same openings in the walls that in the Goceano (*sa Costera*) region are known as *furros*, i.e. ‘small ovens’ (*Sos Furrighesos* in Anela).

The *domus* dates back to 3200-3000 B.C. and consists of three underground rooms dug into quartz-rich sandstone; the floor of the entrance hall is dotted with holes that contained votive offerings. The *forreddu* has an irregular round shape with a circumference of almost 15 metres. There are two entrances: the north-east entrance seems to have been made at a later date or as the result of a collapse, whereas the south-west entrance might have been the actual point of entry since it leads to an entrance hall and then to the first room through a small square opening. Located at the heart of the *domus*, this is the largest of the three rooms, with a circumference of almost 6 metres, a height of 0.85 metres and a width of almost 2 metres. From here, you can enter the other two rooms through two openings: the front opening is a square shape (with a perimeter of 4.5 and a height of 0.84 metres), whereas the opening to the right has a doorstep and is roughly rectangular. There is a circular area carved into the floor at the entrance (with a circumference of about 50.24 cm and depth of 4.5 cm), which was probably used for sacrifices or funerary offerings. In the vestibule of the *domus* there is another one (with a diameter of 45 cm and a depth of 7 cm) that was probably meant to represent a fireplace, as was usually the case in other Sardinian tombs.

The monoliths scattered around the pine forest – including the one known as *S'Abbas-antera* – are further proof that this site was used for ritual purposes. In Roman times, the *domus* was used once again as a burial place, as evidenced by the tableware found during excavations.

Like many other similar places across Sardinia, the *forreddos de gianas* in Tonara are said to be inhabited by mythical creatures shaped by both Christian and pagan lore: legends have it that they guard great treasures and have hair that, when brushed by a human, falls and turns into gold. In Tonara it is believed that the *janas* are still to this day hiding treasures (*ischisorgios*) in the area of *Tracullau*.

Text by Cecilia Mariani

