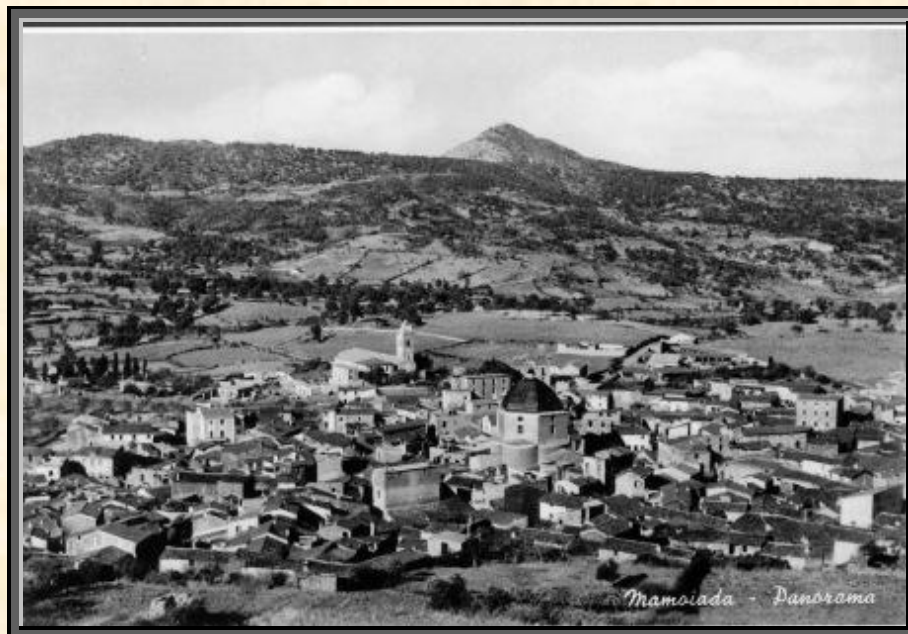


The Village and its surrounding area History, Archaeological Heritage



Panorama - 1957 -

The town of Mamoiada can be reached from Cagliari, Sassari, Oristano and Olbia via Highway 131 and then the 131 turnoff to Nuoro, the Province's chief town. From there, just get onto the new Freeway 389 towards Lanusei and Tortoli and the small town of Mamoiada is about 15 km away. (See the geographic and sat map to the chapter "dove siamo" – where you are).

Mamoiada is a charming hillside town with a population of about 2,700, located at 650 meters above sea level. Its entire area barely covers 4,900 hectares of pastureland rich with livestock and numerous vineyards, which sustain its most thriving primary industries which feature the production of excellent wines and cheeses.

Brief History

Mamoiada's history, between 550 b.C and 238 b.C (when the Carthaginians period Sardinia) and in the centuries following, coincides with that of a "proud mountain people, always defiant against foreign domination". Ancient archive documents refer to different versions of its name, i.e., Marmoiada, Mamoyata, Mamujata and Mamojada or Mamoiada in recent times.

Around the 11th Century, Mamoiada was part of the *Giudicato di Arborea* and subsequently of Ollolai's *Curatoria della Barbagia* (curatorship-administration).

During the long period of Aragonese-Spanish domination (1324-1720), Ferdinand V, the King of Spain, assigned Mamoiada and other towns in the Nuoro area to Pietro Massa of Arborea. Then in 1604, the town became part of the Duchy of Mandas, a fief originally belonging to the Mazza family and subsequently the Tellez-Giron.

In 1820, during Savoy domination, feudalism formally ceased with the issue of the "Editto delle Chiudende" (edict on enclosures), which permitted the allocation of land to the local population, even though for various reasons, these allocations were in fact nearly all redeemed by the town's nobles.

With the end of the Sardegna-Piemonte reign in 1847 and the subsequent Unification of Italy, Mamoiada, together with the other towns in Sardinia and on the mainland adapted to the new political situation and the various socio-economic developments and changes which are still ongoing.

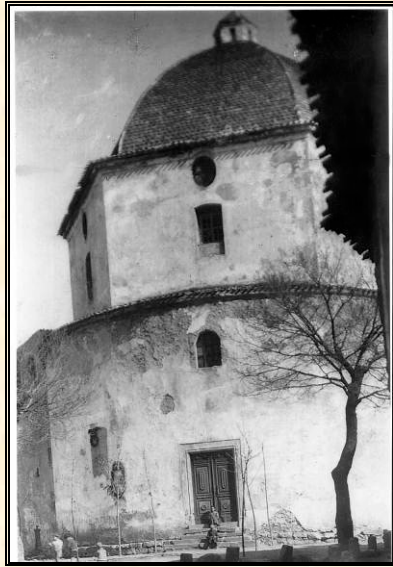
Locally hand-made and genuinely wholesome products include its bread (*pane haresau*), its cheeses and a vast range of typical local sweets.

The quality of wines, the *Biancu* and *Nigheddu* (black and white), is excellent.

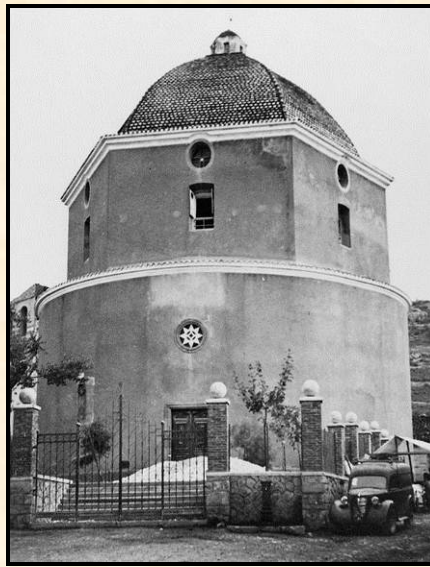
Mamoiada's craft industry produces antique furniture and its traditional chests, together with the now-famous [Mamuthones and Issohadores](#) costumes, which can only be obtained from the town's few master craftsmen who continue to work in their small workshops, just like the ceramic miniatures and full reproductions of the *Mamuthones* and *Issohadores*.

Just 5 Km away from Mamoiada is the Saints Cosma and Damiano Sanctuary. Since it dates back to the Seventh Century a.D., some researchers believe it to be the oldest in the Barbagia area. Inside the church there is a seventeenth century niche in pink trachyte and some Byzantine-style frescos. Its walls feature 14 well-made glazed ceramic panels depicting the Way of the Cross, which were created by the artist from the Alcora factory in Castellon de la Plana, Spain in the half of the twenty century. On Good Friday in 1998, the entire world was able to admire these same panels when they featured in the “Via Crucis” proceedings officiated by Pope John Paul II at the Colosseum in Rome.

Symbolizing Mamoiada from an architectural point of view is the Church of Our Lady of Loreto, which is situated in the town centre and probably dates back to mediaeval times.

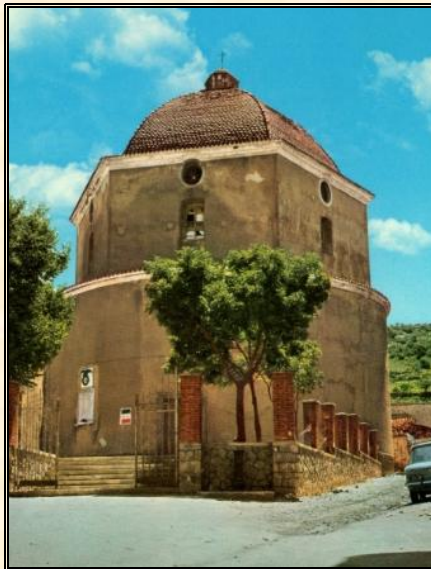


20s-30s



'50s

CHURCH OF LADY OF LORETO



'70s



current view

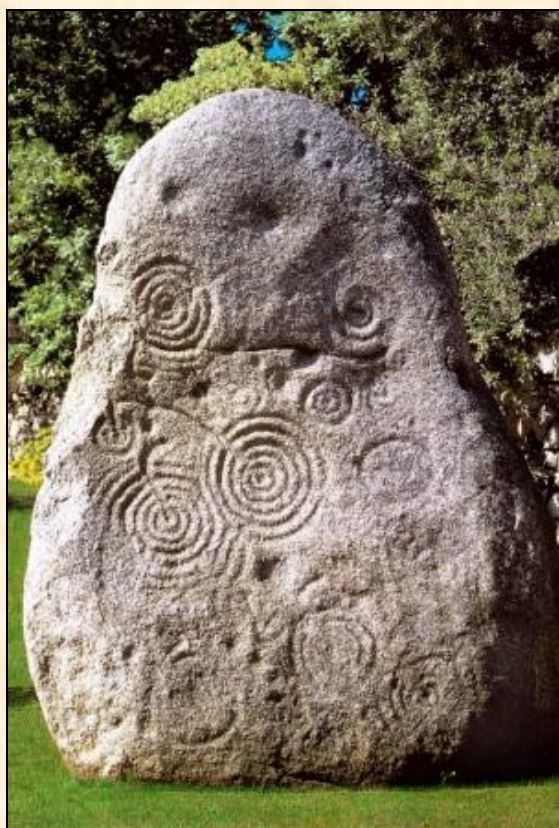


“Su Hantaru Vezzu” (THE OLD SOURCE)

Archaeological Heritage

Mamoiada has vast areas of archaeological interest. Since there is substantial evidence of very ancient civilizations in the area, it must be concluded that human settlement in this town dates back to very distant times, i.e., XV-XIII Century b.C.

The numerous *Nuraghi* are linear in structure and are mainly situated in the most fertile areas where water is available. The ruins of villages are still evident around some of the *Nuraghi* and where these are missing, it is assumed they were destroyed in the process of fencing off the fields. Some examples are: “Arràilo” in the *sa Pruna* area on the road to Orani; “Monte Juradu” on the road to Sarule and “Orgurù” on the road to Fonni. There are also numerous small tombs dug in granite called the “Domus de Janas”, which date back to the Neolithic-Prenuraghic period. These can be found on the outskirts of the town at a location called “Mazzozzo”; near the country church called “Loret’attesu” at “Garaunele” on the local road to Oliena; at a location called “S’Eredadu” and in other spots. Particularly interesting is a group of 6 “domos” known as the “*Sas Honcheddas*” at “Istevene” along Highway 389 to Fonni. Within the third “domo”, sculpted in relief on a rectangular column is the outline of the head of a bull, which is regarded as a symbol of strength and fertility. There are also several “Menhirs” or *Perdas Longas*, which are considered to be cult objects.



Sa Perda Pintà

In recent times, March 1997, some rare stones were discovered. One example is a superb unclassified monolith which is unique in its kind because of its height (6.50m). Also found was a large granite “Menhir” statue known as “*Sa Perda Pintà*”, which measures 2.67m x 2.10m and probably dates back to the third millennium b.C.. What distinguishes this latter monolith is that it features a series of cupels and concentric engravings, which make it unique in its kind in Italy. It appears that a similar monolith has been found in Celtic area: England, Scotland and Brittany.(*)

Until about two centuries ago, many of the archaeological sites must have been pretty much intact. The subsequent destruction and “dismantling” of entire sites or single shafts, *perdas longas* and more did not specifically occur because of vandalism or the construction of boundary walls.

Quoted below in the original language is a brief passage from the “Geographic, Historical, Statistical and Commercial Dictionary” of the States of His Majesty the King of Sardinia, compiled by Professor Goffredo Casalis at the

beginning of 1800s, which refers to Mamoiada’s “relics”: “...up there on the boundaries with the slopes of Orgosolo and in the next area close to the slopes of Orani known as **Venatieri** large pyramid-shaped monoliths can be seen erect on the ground, of the same type that in other regions are called **Pedras Fittas** (Embedded-stones) and that number three with the biggest one in the middle. The first of suchlike monuments to be considered by me was the first. Before that day no other writer had ever considered them.

Anyone who has ever seen the Celtic stones known as **Men-hir**, which in the language of the Bretons means **Stones** (men) **long** (hir), on the shores of the Carnac (Morbihan, France)

and then sees these Sardinian monoliths, which many call **Pietre-fitte** (Embedded-stones), because they are embedded into the ground and others call them **Long Stones**, will be able to recognize the great and nearly total similarity of such obelisks of the two towns in question, both in shape and from other points of view. However, in Sardinia these stones are located far away from each other and always in sets of three, two of which are smaller than the third whilst those in Brittany occur much more frequently, so much so that one could think they were monuments to the dead on top of the burial place of distinguished persons. Also, they are all the same height, which is the same as the average height of the Sardinians' **Long Stones**.

Gullible country folk in many parts of Brittany maintain that at certain times of the year, goblins they call the **Cornandous** appear in the moonlight and do a diabolical dance around the **Menhir** and in the silence of the night, their strident voices are heard calling travelers who they try to lure by tinkling some gold. Equally some strange opinions regarding these monuments are held amongst the Sardinian mountain people. There are those who believe that devils have treasures stored under those stones and that one cannot get to them as a thief, other than when it's a Holy Year and the bad spirits are prevented from defending them. It was in the year of the General Jubilee that the Embedded Stones were toppled in many places, including one in the Mamoiada area».

FAIRS and FESTIVALS

Several country fairs and festivals are held in Mamoiada during the year. Amongst these are the agro-food and local crafts fairs and the local Saints' days in honor of Saints Cosma e Damiano (Cosmas and Damian), San Sebastiano (Saint Sebastian), Madonna del Carmelo (Our Lady of Carmel) and the Madonna de Loreto attesu (of the Snow). In the past, locals felt very strongly about "*Santu Sidore*" (Saint Isidore) and his feast day, which was one of the biggest and most eagerly awaited, was celebrated until the sixties.

One of the festivals the people of Mamoiada still hold very dear is that in honor of *Sant'Antoni* (Saint Anthony the Abbot), which is held on 16/17 January each year originated in remote ancient times as an expiatory rite in favor of the new harvest year. The celebrations begin on the evening of 16 January (*sa die de su Pesperu*) with the kindling and benediction of the fire outside the parish church. The faithful walk around the fire reciting the Apostles' Creed three times. Tradition dictates that each section of the town then lights its own fire with an ember taken from the main one in honor of the Saint. The people in every section of the town gather around their large votive fires.

It's a moment of great social participation, which is also extended to the foreign visitors staying in every neighborhood and to whom good wine and local sweet products of the season are offered.

It is during this festival that the [sos Mamuthones](#) and [sos Isshadores](#) appear for the first time during the year.

On the contrary, the festival in honor of Saints Cosmas and Damian represents the end of the agricultural harvest year. It is held 5 kilometers outside the town in the country shrine named after these Saints. During the summer season, numerous pilgrims attend this shrine, where it is possible to stay in the picturesque *hùmbessias* (typical rooms) that surround the church. The celebrations in honor of the two Saints which are held at the end of September, are brought to a close with religious, musical and local folkloric events.

Amongst Sardinia's most ancient popular festivals rich with folklore is the [Carnevale Mamoiadino](#) (Mamoiada's Mardi Gras or pre-Lenten celebrations). It's a simple and meager event in the sense that it lacks the usual sophisticated symbolic floats featuring papier-mâché characters and other modern masquerades but it is also amongst the most charming and authentic.

All of Mamoiada pours into the main "*piazza*" (central square) to dance the traditional *passu torrau* and *sartiu* to the sound of the *organetto* (diatonic accordion) untiringly, for hours and hours. Nothing is affected or imported, other than, of course, the tourists who each year arrive in ever growing numbers from every part of the world to witness this genuine spectacle. Many stay with the local families (contact the local tourism Associations and Bad and Breakfast to enquire about availability).

Whilst parading and dancing, men and women dressed in traditional costume offer everyone locally-made sweet products.

However, everyone's attention is really drawn to what is the symbol of this Carnival, the **Mamuthones** and **Isshadores** who fascinate and involve the crowd with their parading to the tune of their rhythmical "music". They move spontaneously, without interrupting the composure of their dance. They are the real masters of the Mamoiada's Carnival.

The residents of Mamoiada maintain that, «Without the *Mamuthones* and the *Issohadores*, there is not Carnival ». ([All the hypothesis and studies in this web site](#)). Another symbol of Mamoiada's Carnival is the other classic mask called the *Juwanne Martis*, which represents Fat Tuesday (or Mardi Gras) and is placed on a cart and surrounded by a limited circle of “relatives” crying over the death of the last day of Carnival. At the end of the three days of dancing and parades in the central square, the people present are offered the local dish of broad beans with pork accompanied by the excellent local wine.

Books about Mamoiada

