

## ...Walking amongst the Megaliths of Mt. Cucco...

Megalithic ruins are prehistorical structures made up of large rocks (from the Greek *me-gas* large and *lithos* meaning stone). Four main types exist: those made up of vertical stones (known as *menhir*), those with vertical stones in a line, stone placed around in a circle and stones arranged to form a room. Most of these structures are found in Europe and were built beginning with the late neolithic era until the first Bronze Age (4000-1000 BC). But such constructions exist also in India, Japan and in Western Africa. The circles of stone found in England and Britain (known as *cromlech*) suggest that their builders used a common unit of measure, the so-called "megalithic yard," which was 829 cm long. If this is correct it means that the ancient inhabitants of Europe had such advanced knowledge of mathematics and geometry before the Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations.

What was the reason that made our ancient ancestors cover large parts of the known world with such great stones? Why were such constructions often situated in a line (a ley) that was miles and miles long? Were they monuments dedicated to sun worship, gigantic funeral stones, astronomical observatories or--as many believe--receivers and amplifiers of mysterious earthly currents coursing inside our planet? or were they really acupuncture needles designed to cure the earth from a malaise? Whatever the answer may be, the origins of these megalithic structures represents a fascinating archeological mystery that for now has not been solved. Between **Francavilla di Sicilia** and Castiglione di Sicilia there is one such megalithic structure located on Mt. Cucco-Orgala.



Our excursion to discover the megaliths of Mt. Cucco will begin in Francavilla. Drive toward Castiglione di Sicilia and after the second paper mill, at the beginning of the bridge over the Alcantara river turn right and continue for about 1 km. After parking the car, walk on foot on a dirt road that crosses vineyards offering a pleasant view of nature.

Before arriving to the torrent that will take to the mountain, you can admire an old grape pressing structure carved out of the sandstone in a privately owned vineyard.



As you continue walking along the dirt road between privately owned vineyards, you will see some phallic symbols and other ruins.

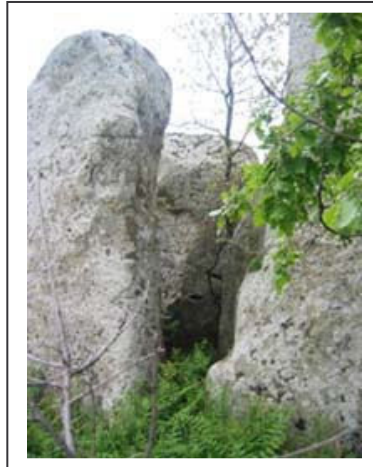


The sandstone megaliths which line the ancient “sacred way” along the course of the Alcantara river, are unusual witnesses of prehistoric cultures whose symbols have become part of our territory. It’s difficult to interpret the functions they served but we can come to some conclusions about their connections with the profane and the sacred by comparing them with the morphology of other megaliths spread around the world. The dirt road climbs up Mt. Cucco-Orgala, affording beautiful views of the valley below where the local population created fascinating grottoes, settlements, and funeral sites. This is an excursion that leaves those who undertake it with the unforgettable sensation of having delved into our mysterious past.



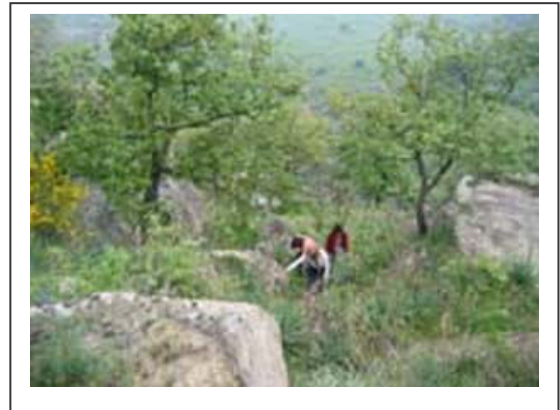
In the megalithic structure of Mt. Cucco there are many caves carved out of the sandstone. But there are other such structures in the Alcantara Valley, concentrated mostly in the territories of Francavilla, Moio Alcantara, Randazzo and Castiglione. These often had a dual function: as habitation and grave.





We continue to climb up the mountain and the place becomes ever more fantastic and mysterious. We come up to a statue made of sandstone. Does it represent a person praying... or it is perhaps a monument to the dead?

But we can see that the statue is gazing at the summit of the mountain where people gathered to pray or to perform initiatory rites.



...and finally after a long climb we arrive at the summit of the mountain and, behold, suddenly there come into view large stones, arranged in a circle whose meaning can only be guessed at. Was it perhaps the place where the local populations prayed to their divinities and offered propitiatory rites?





Mt. Cucco-Orgala is known as the belly button of the Valley. The high concentration of caves and megaliths suggests primordial myths. Even we who lived the atmosphere for barely one day were fascinated by the air of mystery that is inspired by these places.