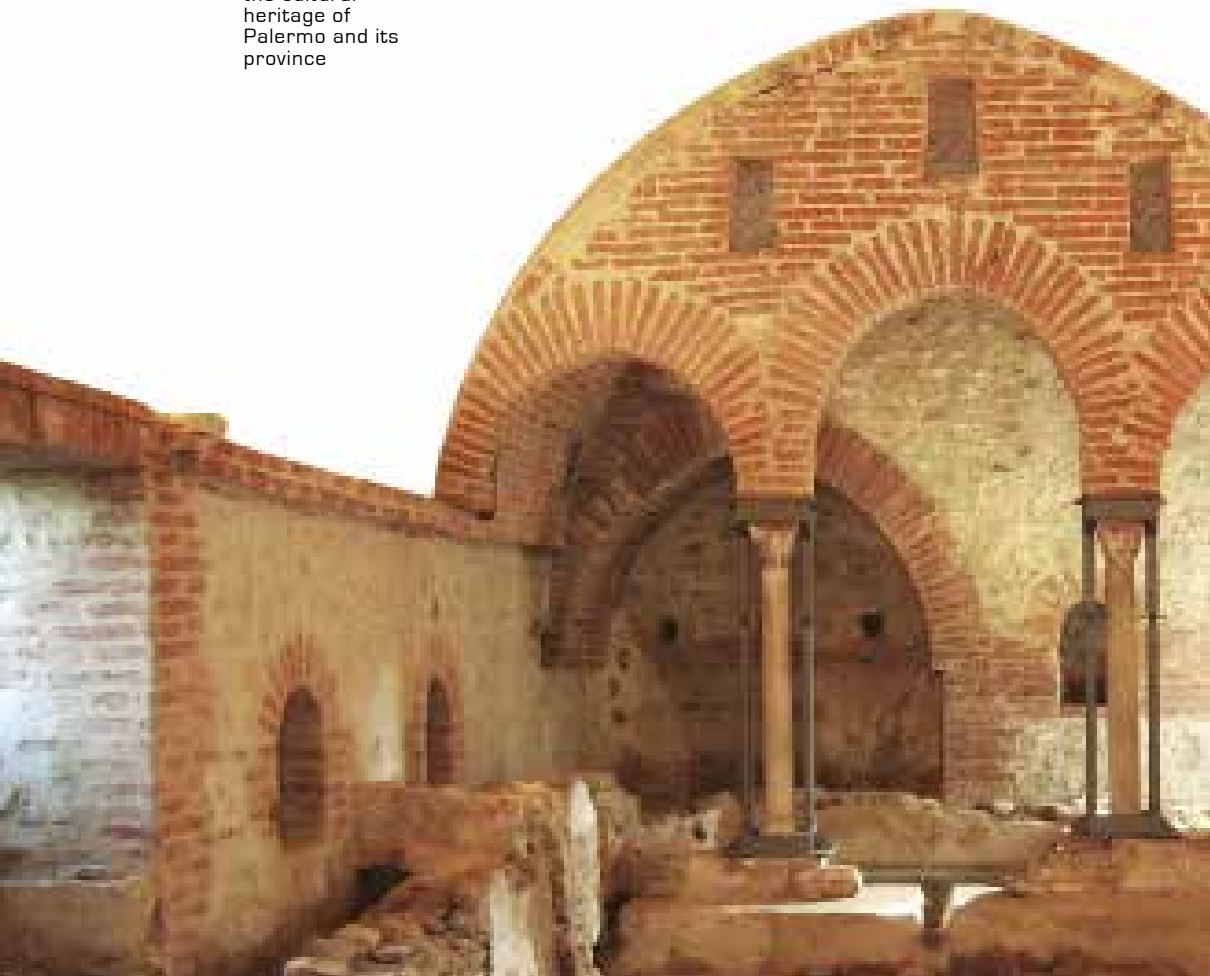


PALERMO
CULT

TREASURE MAPS

Twenty
journeys of
discovery of
the cultural
heritage of
Palermo and its
province



Soprintendenza per i Beni culturali
e ambientali di Palermo

ARCHAEOLOGY. HISTORICAL DATA AND FINDINGS FROM PREHISTORY TO THE MIDDLE AGES

Edited by **Stefano Vassallo** In collaboration with **Rosa Maria Cucco**

REGIONE SICILIANA
Assessorato dei Beni culturali
e dell'Identità siciliana



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“Investing in your future”

Project TREASURE MAPS

Twenty journeys of discovery of the cultural heritage of Palermo and its province

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ARCHAEOLOGY. HISTORICAL DATA AND FINDINGS

From Prehistory to the Middle Ages

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The province of Palermo has been, since prehistoric times, the scene of important historical facts and alternations of different cultures and people, which has had a profound effect on the lives of the towns and the transformation of the natural environment.

The richness and diversity of landscapes that alternate with jarring changes of scenery - from the rocky Tyrrhenian coast to the valleys that are reached by impassable elevations and the vast agricultural hinterland which is characterized by a wide range of hills have strongly influenced the history of human settlement, always causing different forms of settlement. This makes the history of this part of the island very beautiful and charming. In the ancient and medieval ages the reconstruction of the history of this region owes much to archaeology; the numerous investigations carried out in recent decades have contributed to restoring significant periods of the past and to show monuments and artefacts of great artistic interest, until now remained obscure. The large and continuous research and knowledge held by archaeologists of the Soprintendenza of Palermo, despite enormous difficulties, allowed us to acquire more new data and to read that today allows us to read with greater consistency and continuity the historical evidence. The parallel study of written sources and documentation of excavation was very

useful in order to establish the specific historical periods of the different excavation context. The findings retrace our cultural itineraries that can and should provide a path of useful knowledge to better understand the difficult historical moment in which we live.

The purpose of this paper is to provide, through concise texts and basic information, which are accompanied by appropriate illustrations, a grid of reference within which to place the ancient history of the area. The hope is that these booklets, in this way, can stimulate the reader's curiosity and makes him desire to deepen their knowledge of a territory from the ancient and deep roots that has not always been adequately valued.

There are three volumes of the series "The treasure maps" dedicated to archaeology; the first is a summary form of the main historical phases of the territory, from Prehistory to the Middle Ages. Below are two brochures that include in an easy format the files of the most important ancient settlements of our province, from the most known such as Palermo and Solunto, to many other sites whose reputation has emerged only recently, thanks to the archaeological excavations but that now form a significant network of the historical-archaeological area of Sicily which is among the most important for its richness and variety of cultural heritage.

Stefano Vassallo

PREHISTORY AND PROTOHISTORY IN THE PROVINCE OF PALERMO

Giuseppina Battaglia

If you consider that human presence in the Italian peninsula dates back as early as the lower Paleolithic (at least 700,000 years ago) you understand how recent, based on current knowledge, is the occupation of Sicily. Earliest raw material traces date back about 30,000 years (New Fountain Shelter - Marina di Ragusa), but it is only c. 15,000 years that we have constant, continuous, and uninterrupted, documented habitation: specifically dates 14,750 years ago to the oldest human skeleton - of genus *Sapiens Sapiens*, named Thea - found in 1937 in the Cave of San Teodoro, Acquedolci (Me), now in the Museo "G. Gemmellaro", Palermo (**fig. 1**).

The Paleolithic burials in the Cave of San Teodoro are the only ones to be found on the island. There are seven individuals: three females and four males, all adult. The skull is dolichomorphic (long, narrow, high) with strong jaws. Wear on the incisors is indicative of a use of the teeth that was not only for food. Average height is about 1.64 m. We are in the later part of the **Upper Paleolithic** period (20,000 - 11,000 years ago), when Sicily was a region of steppe lands, with a cold, dry climate. The large mammals of an earlier period had disappeared - in fact, only the *Equus hydruntinus* (the European Ass spread throughout the Eurasian continent during the middle and late Pleistocene) surviving hunted along with deer, fox and oxen - human diet included molluscs (both land and sea) and plants. Humans lived in caves, where all sedentary activities occurred: sleeping, cooking, artifact production, magic-religious practices, and burials.

The type of tools used connects these early inhabitants to the Italian peninsula,

although some tools may have been introduced from North Africa. North-western Sicily, in particular, is an area of great concentration of examples of Prehistoric art: in fact, in the province of Palermo, there are several caves that have engravings in a naturalistic style, including: the Cave of Puntali Carini, the caves of Capo Gallo and those of Monte Pellegrino, Palermo (**fig. 2**).

Transition from a Pleistocene climate to that of the Holocene - the current geological epoch - also marked a new way of life and of subsistence, preparatory to the rise of agriculture and animal husbandry. The melting of glaciers led to a submerging of vast coastal areas, the disappearance of a land bridge connecting the island to the mainland and the redrawing of coastlines to their present dimensions. In Sicily, never affected by glacial phenomena, it seems probable that there were periods of intense cold, towards the end of the Pleistocene, which were followed by a long period of warm temperate climate, during

the first few thousand years of the Holocene. The term **Mesolithic** defines societies characterized by small groups of people practising basic subsistence activities, such as selective *hunting*, *fishing* and *gathering*: activities essential to both agriculture and animal husbandry.

With the disappearance of the big Pleistocene mammals, the diet was based on the hunting of smaller animals, supplemented by fish, molluscs (both land and sea) and plants. The transformation of stone tools is related to this change, tool dimension decreases and take on geometric shapes (trapezoids, crescents, triangles), there is a development of missile weapons, and in particular the use of the bow and arrow. Caves are still utilised for all sedentary activities and, in regard to rock art, the Mesolithic era sees the disappearance of the naturalistic style and its replacement by linear incisions, of obscure interpretation. Within the Cave of Molarà (on the north-western outskirts of Palermo) can be found a rich archeological deposit, stretching from fauna of the warm Pleistocene (a half-molar of *Elephas mnaidriensis*) to the Norman period (12th century AD); to the Mesolithic period (10,000 years ago), are attributed the only two burials of this period hitherto found in the province of Palermo (**fig. 3**).

Agriculture and animal husbandry - that characterize the transition to the **Neolithic** period - came to Sicily approximately 8,000 years ago, probably introduced by new populations, together with a wealth of new ideas and tools, including open-water navigation and, thus, the possibility



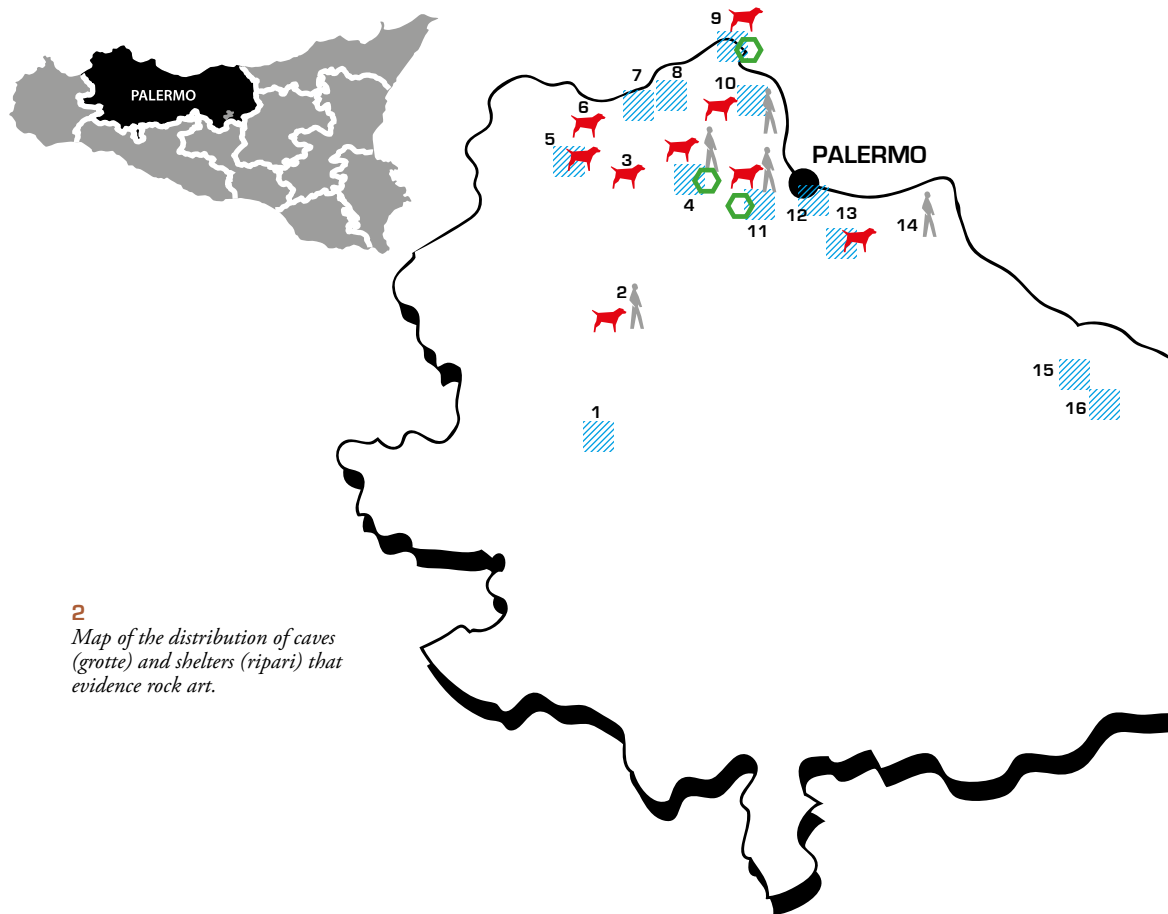
1
*Acquedolci (ME),
Cave of San Teodoro:
skeleton of Thea,
presently in the Museo
"G. Gemmellaro",
Palermo*



3
*Cave of Molarà, Pa-
lermo - skeleton laid
out in a crouched
position, dated to
Mesolithic period*

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2
Map of the distribution of caves (grotte) and shelters (ripari) that evidence rock art.

- 1** - Roccamena: Grotta Sticca
- 2** - S. Giuseppe lato: Grotta del Mirabella
- 3** - Torretta: Grotta Tonnara
- 4** - Torretta: Grotta and Riparo 'Za Minica
- 5** - Carini: Grotte Armetta and Puntali
- 6** - Carini: Grotta Carburangeli
- 7** - Capaci: Grotta Mastricchia
- 8** - Capaci: Grotta delle Incisioni
- 9** - Capo Gallo: Grotta dei Vitelli, Grotta del Capraio, Grotta Perciata, Grotta delle Mani

- 10** - Monte Pellegrino: Grotta del Condannato, Grotta Niscemi, Grotta dell'Anfro Nero, Grotta delle Incisioni
- 11** - Montagnola di S. Rosalia
- 12** - Grotticina di S. Ciro
- 13** - Villabate: La Montagnola
- 14** - Bagheria: Grotta dell'Eremita
- 15** - Termini Imerese: Riparo Bongo Scuro
- 16** - Termini Imerese: Riparo contrada Franco

-  Anthropomorphic drawings
-  Linear etchings
-  Zoomorphic drawings
-  Other depictions



to reach the surrounding small islands. At Lipari and Pantelleria, was discovered obsidian, a black volcanic glass, shiny and extremely hard, used for making ornamental items, but most specifically for producing thin, sharp tools, especially blades. The obsidian that comes from these sites is found, not only in Sicily, but from North Africa to the Dalmatian Coast and the Coast of Provence, and demonstrates the existence of trade routes.

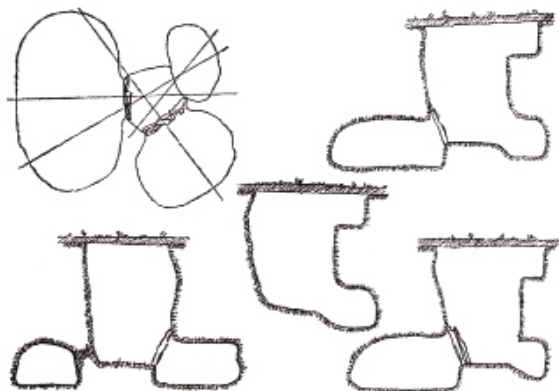
Social groups no longer live in caves, now used as places of worship, burial or pastoral activity, but in villages of huts - of rectangular shape, often with their corners rounded - provided with defensive ditches, gates and fences. In the villages it is estimated that there were possibly a few hundred inhabitants with a very small number of tombs noted as being made from simple pits dug into the earth or rock, sometimes lined with stone slabs, with a single corpse laid out in a crouched position and with few additional artefacts.

Another innovation was the introduction of pottery: transportable containers, made without the use of a potter's wheel, decorated with various etched geometric

patterns. Apart from this pottery – named Stentinello, from the eponymous Syracusan site - there is painted pottery, originally decorated with simple red bands on a havana background (bi-chromic pottery), which was succeeded later (in the Middle Neolithic) by more complex designs delineated by a black band (tri-chromic pottery) (**fig. 4**).

With the discovery of metal as a raw material for the manufacture of tools, the Mediterranean world entered the **Copper Age**. In Sicily, there probably arrived new populations, and from c. 3500 BC a new pottery style appeared, named San Cono-Piano Notaro - from the eponymous sites of South-Eastern Sicily - characterised by grey or black decoration with incised lines or printed dots, and filled with a white paste. Along with this pottery came the first true weapons and a new method of burial, characterised by an oven-like grave dug into rock. The structure was very simple: a well with cylindrical access, about one metre wide and one metre deep, with a base that opens onto one or more hemispherical cells, of small size, reminiscent of the local farmers ovens (**Fig. 5**).

4
Le Rocche, Roccapalumba - Neolithic tri-coloured Vessel (Museo Archeologico Regionale "A. Salinas", di Palermo)



5

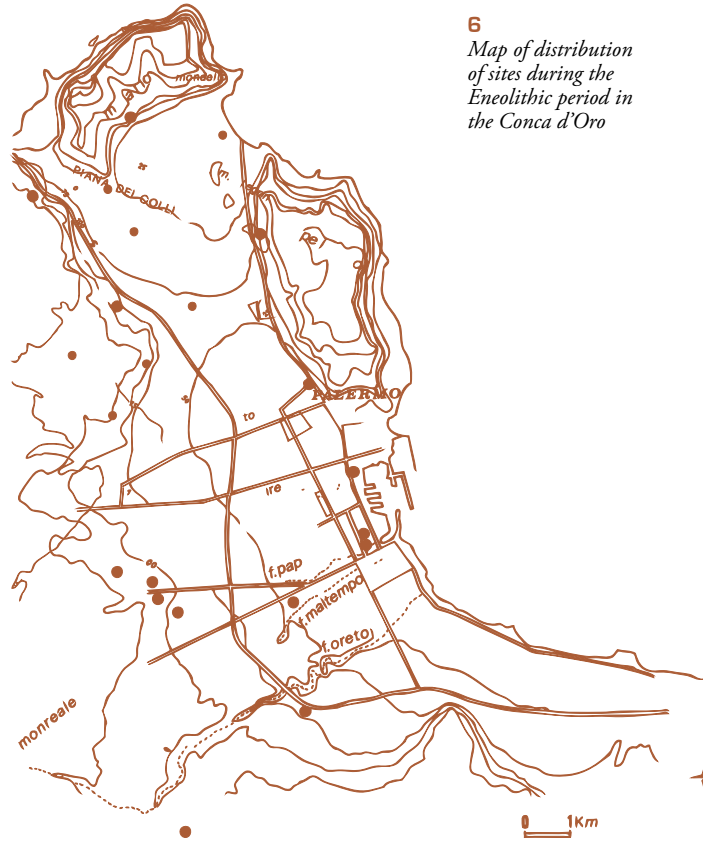
*Palermo, Uditore -
Plan and section of a
tomb in a cave*

In the Conca d'Oro, the main culture of San Cono-Piano Notaro had a long life, up to the XXII or XXIII century BC; in this period there was the oldest episode of capillary occupation of the metropolitan territory (**Fig 6**). The settlements show a concentration in areas of Valdesi, Partanna and Mondello. Here, the huts had to have a wooden structure covered with clay. Archaeological findings prove which activities took place in the village: fishing and weaving (weights for the fishing net and for the loom), spinning (whorls), hunting animals of small and medium size (size of arrowheads). Similar situations are found in the foothills between Boccadifalco and Baida and in the Pisani area which is found along the stream of Cannizzaro. One last case concerns the ancient coastline, where graves have been reported to be found in the cave under the State Railway building, under the Standa building in Via Roma, and at the fruit and vegetable market in Giachery square. Among the most typical funeral material grave goods there are

ollette globulari, jugs and “double” vases consisting of two interconnecting bowls, the so-called “salt shaker” which can be compared to the ceramics of the same period in both coeva of Malta and Ay and Gerico in Palestine. Of these necropolis remains only a small part in the contrada Ciachea in Carini.

In a late episode during the Eneolithic era, in the last centuries of the third millennium BC, via Sardinia, a quaint artifact was discovered, which can be found in various locations ranging from Morocco to Poland and from Ireland to Sicily. It is a **glass bell**; a ceramic mug, which the profile “S” gives a form of an inverted bell, carefully decorated with geometric engravings. This was perhaps used to drink beer. The glass is only an indicator of the arrival of a group of artifacts characteristic of the European world, including the dolmen (in the province of Palermo one found in Mura Pregne, Sciara) (**Fig. 7**) and bone buttons “V”, such as those found in the necropolis of Uditore, in Palermo.

Towards the XXII century BC the **Bronze Age** began, which is divided into ancient, middle and late. The evidence in our area tends to decrease more and more until it almost disappears. Attributable to the earliest phase, the current Piazza Leoni, derives two little lozenge idols statues which are a stylised representation of rigid priest capes particularly ornate and covering the entire chest that make up a Sicilian variant of a type very common in Malta during this period, where instead of being painted decoration is engraved (**Fig. 8**). Further evidence of the earliest phase is the village of Boccadifalco, composed of at least nine huts, some elliptical and one circular pseudo-plan, built with stone walls. The smooth ceramic grey surface and pointy handle, which look like horses ears, are compared to the village of Mursia in Pantelleria, which also has similar construction techniques. Towards the end of the XV century BC, Sicily was integrated into the commercial Mediterranean network thanks to the Mycenaeans. It is likely that human groups from the East had settled permanently on the island, contributing to the management of large commercial hubs like Lipari (Messina), Cannatello (Agrigento), Thapsos (Syracuse) and Ustica (**Fig. 9**). In the province of Palermo depopulation continued; the few traces of human presence - including some caves of Monte Pellegrino where burials with grave goods were found attributable to this period - documenting that here as well as in eastern Sicily, for example in Pantalica, the ritual of burying in caves, natural or artificial was widespread and difficult to access.



6
Map of distribution
of sites during the
Eneolithic period in
the Conca d'Oro

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7 Sciana, Mura Pregne -
The dolmen

9 Ustica, the Faraglioni village dating from the Middle Bronze Age: note the axis road that crosses the village.

So far Palermo has very few elements attributable between the XIII and IX centuries BC. Meanwhile it is well known that in the provinces there are several sites dating to this period, as is documented by the various indigenous centres mostly found inland, in a dominant position on the surrounding territory. This topographical data is generally considered an indicator of a period of uncertainty that in fact characterizes the last centuries of the II millennium BC in the Mediterranean basin. Typically, another indicator of instability is considered the presence of “closets”

which contained metal objects buried on purpose (“put away”) interpreted as hidden treasures or as votive offerings. This custom is accentuated from the Middle Bronze Age, which is proven by the composition of the ‘closets’ discovered in many villages throughout Italy. Even in our territory you may find some cases as in Gratteri, on the Madonie, in locality Portella, where in 1920 a “closet” was found which consisted of eleven bronze objects: flat axes (also the eye form) and a ring. The findings date between the X and the VIII century BC.

8 Palermo, Piazza Leoni -
One of the two lozenge idol
statues (Museo Archeologico Regionale
“A. Salinas”, di Palermo)



THE NATIVE CENTRES

Alba Maria Gabriella Calascibetta

The Palermo area, in terms of geomorphology, is characterised by great variety in landscapes that show vast flat inland areas, hilly areas and extensive mountain ranges (The Busambra rock, the Madonie mountains, the Sicani mountains) and in the coastal sandy beaches which alternate with high cliffs. However, the special environment that most marks the territory is represented by the wide **river valleys** that are named after the main rivers - the Eleuterio, San Leonardo, Torto, Imera Settentrionale, Iato, Belice and Alto Sosio - with their length and different scope, run along western Sicily and since ancient times have played a decisive role in the process of human settlement in the area.

The wide range of environmental assets is matched by an equally varied and complex **framework of ethnographic** Palermo in ancient times. The extraordinary presence of different populations - indigenous peoples, Sicani, Elimi, Greek colonies and Punic - makes the area a “vantage point” for the analysis of those complex “phenomena of mixture and integration” generated by the contact between different cultural and ethnic realities.

The starting point in understanding the local populations and the complex inter-relationships with Greek and Phoenician derived from a long *excursus* about the Sicilian *ethne* which Thucydides presents in the so-called *ἀρχαιολογία*, the sixth book in the “Peloponnesus War” (Πελοποννησίου πολέμου, at the end of the V century BC). According to the Greek historian, when the Greeks arrived, the western part of Sicily was inhabited by Sicani and Elimi, a civilization of different origin and lineage. Regarding the Sicani *ethnos* origin, the historian recognizes this civilization as the

first which appears to have historically inhabited Sicily. He reports two cases: the first derives from what the Sicani say about themselves, that is, to be indigenous; the second, for which Thucydides clearly favors, considers them an immigrated civilization in Sicily from Iberia. Regarding the origin of the Elimi, according to Thucydides, they were Trojan refugees who had escaped the destruction of the city, arriving by sea in Sicily and settled near the Sicani, with whom they joined, taking the name of Elimi and they gained two cities, Erice and Segesta. On the contrary according to Ellanico of Lesbo, who was also from the V century BC, the Elimi were from the Italian peninsula, and had taken refuge in Sicily to escape the pressure of Enotri. The uncertainty of the literary origin, combined with the difficulty in distinguishing archaeological data clearly, a cultural and territorial difference between Elimi and Sicani has generated much debate among scholars. Nevertheless, excluding the problem of

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10 Western Sicily with the main river basins and archaeological sites

11 Monte Iato. Indigenous Jug stylised as a human figure. (Antiquarium of Case d'Alia).



origins, the progress of archaeological research, with excavations carried out in many indigenous centres and different *surveys* (surface survey) conducted in the territory, has allowed us to acquire a significant documentation regarding the material culture, the settlement types, the residential area, religious and funeral practices of the indigenous people. It also allows to analyse the nature of the relations between the natives who inhabited densely hinterland and the new settlers in the period between the Iron Age and the high archaism (IX-VII century BC) who settled on the coast as well as the results generated by the contact between them.

Since ancient times, the wide river valleys, fulfilling the function of privileged connecting paths, determined the rich history of settlement and cultural environment (**fig. 10**).

Archaeological research has well documented widespread occupation in the Palermo

area from the Early Iron Age (X – VIII century) by a territorial system characterised by a network of indigenous villages, particularly active in the Archaic period, which was concentrated inland.

The control of agricultural and mineral resources by the indigenous people was guaranteed by a hierarchical settlement system. This was characterised by the most important and largest residential areas, positioned in high areas to defend the main travel routes, which were river valleys. This settlement, in relation to each other, are in a leading position compared to those of more limited extension settlement, in the surrounding hills or on the valley floor.

This type of territorial organization is well represented in the wide **valley of the Belice**, perhaps being the ancient *Krimisos*, which is the most important hydrographic reality in western Sicily. Its main axis is oriented

in NE/SO, after the confluence of the two tributaries - the Right that comes from the Southern Mountains of Palermo and the Left which originates from the southern side of the Busambra Rock - bending towards the SE, flowing on the south coast of the island, near Selinunte.

The crucial role played by the Belice in population of the entire area is highlighted by the density and vitality of settlements dominant in villages located on modest hills and small rural sites located along its course. It is part of this inhabited system, offshore from North ancient *Iaitas*, which stands on Monte Iato, whose imposing range is found at the southern foothills of the Mountains of Palermo. It overlooks the river valley Iato defending the crossing access to the northern coast of the island from its southern slope, the valley of Alto Belice Destro, which is a natural connection with the south coast.

The systematic investigations on the site have documented an intense and continuous occupation since the beginning of the first millennium BC until the total destruction in 1246 by Federico II. In early contacts with the Greek world from the end of the VII century BC, followed in the course of the VI century BC a more intense relationship that led to the peaceful coexistence of the Greeks and the indigenous. This has been proven by the discovery of Greek monumental buildings (the temple of Aphrodite and the late Archaic big house (fig. 11). The complete Hellenisation of the site can be considered completed at the end of the IV century BC, when the city was completely rebuilt following Greek

12
Monte Iato. Statue of menade from the scenic theatre building. (Antiquarium of Case d'Alia).




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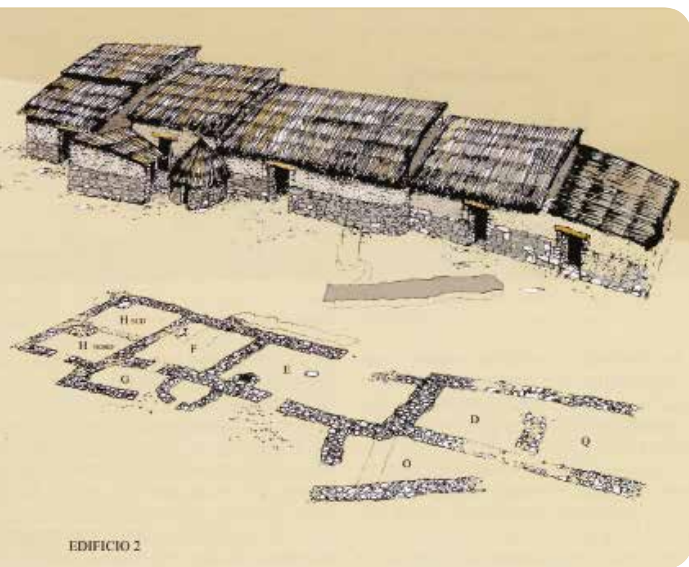
*Monte Maranfusa.
Panoramic view.*



architecture and city planning (fig.12). Along the river Belice branch, in the middle, the settlement arose between the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age on **Monte Maranfusa (fig. 13)** having a phase of greater development in the Archaic period (VII - VI century BC.), when it came into contact with the Greek colonial world, in particular with Selinunte. The final abandonment of the centre by the first half of the V century BC allowed documentation of the organization of a native settlement in the Archaic and Late Archaic (fig. 14). Moving in the eastern part of the catchment area of Belize, just near the confluence of the two branches, we find the same name fortress **Entella (fig. 15)**, that controls a vast territory that extended eastward to the line of watershed, between the Belice catchment area and that of Sosio. In this site, continuously occupied since the end of the Eneolithic (3000-2400 BC) until 1246 AD, there are contacts with the early colonial world since the end of the VII century BC. Always in the eastern basin area are three other important archaic villages spread over high mountains at a distance almost constant: from North to South **Pizzo Nicolosi** near the springs of the Belice Sinistro, **Montagna Vecchia** in Corleone, identified with the ancient *Schera* sources, and central eastern end of the river area, on the line of the watershed between the hydrographic area of the Belice

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14
*Monte Maranfusa.
Floor plan and
reconstruction of the
building no. 2 of the
Archaic settlement.*

Sinistro and that of Sosio, **Monte Triona**, which in comparison to other sites, was abandoned at the beginning of the sixth century BC.

Further east, the site on **Cozzo Spolentino** above the line of the watershed between the Belice valley and that of San Leonardo was active from the Archaic period and abandoned in the middle of III century BC.

On the northern side to the east of Palermo there was the **Eleuterio Valley**. This was the ancient preferential connection to *emporía* (colonies Phoenician-Punic) of the coast, mainly Solunto (located immediately to the east of the mouth of the river), the internal indigenous communities and the

Greek colonies, not only Himera, but also, Selinunte (through the valley of Belice). From springs located on the northern slope of the Busambra Rock, Eleuterio bends in a narrow valley surrounded by high mountain between 600 and 1200m. Since prehistoric times, along the articulated path of the river, several settlements developed, but the population became more consistent during the Archaic Period, when the Punic foundations and Greek colonies on the coast gave new impetus to the internal indigenous centres. These include those of **Monte Porcara** and **Pizzo Cannita** (**fig. 16**), located in the lower course, becoming a prominent role in the relationship with the world Phoenician-Punic, as early as the VI century BC, evidenced by the famous anthropoid sarcophagi of Cannita, today at the Museo Archeologico Regionale "A. Salinas" di Palermo (**fig. 17**). In strategic position dominating the entire valley Eleuterio, the site located on the Montagnola of Marineo (**fig. 18**), identified with the **Makella** sources, had undoubtedly played a major role in relations between the mobility that ran through Sicily is both an East-West North-South direction. This site came in early contact with the Greek colonial world during the VI century BC and became the walled city and reaches the largest expansion during the Hellenistic period, like the other centres of western Sicily falling within the area under the control of Carthage (*eparchia*).

Equally intense since prehistoric times was the population in the **San Leonardo and del Torto Valley** with similar geomorphological characteristics link the Tyrrhenian coast with the hinterland.

Along the winding paths of the two rivers, and also along the network of rivers that flow into smaller streams, numerous indigenous villages are located on steep hills and a dense network of rural settlements between them are connected. In the valley of San Leonardo, moving from the mouth, located to the west of Termini Imerese, inwards, we find **Cozzo Sannita**, **Pizzo Ciminna**, **Pizzo Pipitone**, **Vicari** and **Pizzo di Casa**. These were active centres in the Archaic period and in some cases thriving even in the Hellenistic Age.

The territory between the high valleys of the rivers Torto and San Leonardo in the North and those of the rivers Platani and Sosio-Verdura in the south, in an environmental context of the Eastern Mount Sicani, strategic connections between the Tyrrhenian coast and the Mediterranean, but also between the eastern and western parts of the island, was intensely popular from the Bronze Age to the Middle Ages. Considerable control over the surrounding territory had to carry out the settlement on **Montagna dei Cavalli**, a natural stronghold south of Prizzi, identified with the Ippana of historical sources. In the same geographical context, in the upper valley of the Torto, **Colle Madore**, site of a modest relief, was an interesting example of early reports that the colony of Himera started with the hinterland in the aftermath of its foundation. The Sicani centre played a significant role in the control of the high valley of Platani, operating from the V century BC, on the site **Kassar**, a high hill that dominates the country from west to Castronovo.



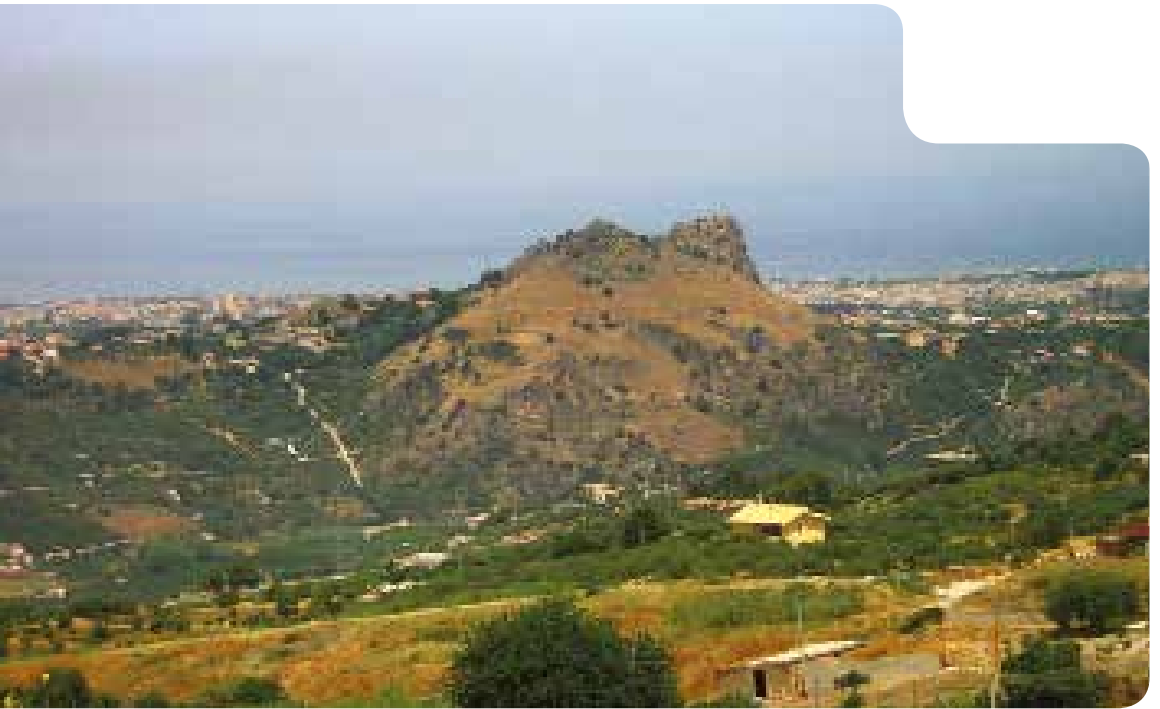
Also in the territory of Castronovo, the nearby settlement of **Cozzo Babaluceddu**, known only from area surveys, seemed to not have survived beyond the early V century BC. In the lower valley of the Torto indigenous centre of **Mura Pregne**, in a strong position in the domain of the surrounding Himera, the western boundary of the territory controlled by the Greek colony was formed. Excavations have documented a continuity of occupation since the Neolithic era and an expansion of the town between the VIII and VII century BC and later between the IV and III centuries BC.

Moving again to the East in the **northern Imera Valley**, large settlements, located

15
Rocca d'Entella. Indigenous Jug with engraved decoration, impressed and plastic. (Museo Civico di Contessa Entellina).

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Pizzo Cannita. Panoramic view from the South.

17

Pizzo Cannita. Anthropoid sarcophagus (Museo Archeologico Regionale "A. Salinas" di Palermo).

18

The Hill of Marineo. Panoramic view



in elevated and well defensible positions, the **Monte d'Oro di Collesano**, on the low foothills of the Madonie, and **Monte Riparato** both mark the east and south limits of the area of concentrated influence (*chora*). Finally, the territory occupied by the Salso-Imera valley, crucial to the viability to central Sicily as it marks the transition between the eastern area, the Sicilian's abode, and west of Sikanian, is affected by a dense network of settlements, often of considerable size; those that fall within the territory of Palermo, **Cozzo Tutusino**, **Terravecchia di Cuti**, **Monaco**, **Monte Chibbò** show a continuity of life between archaic and classical age.

PHOENICIAN AND GREEK COLONIZATION

Monica Chiovaro

The period between the VIII and the I century BC is characterized, in the north west of Sicily, by **contacts between the indigenous world and the colonies of the Phoenicians and Greeks (fig. 10)**. The colonies provide complex, elaborate economic and settlement models, than those present until then in the Sicani and Elimi Sicily. **The Phoenicians** had occupied the area along the coast of present Syria and Palestine since 1200 BC; the city-state, locked inside the kingdom of Israel and the Assyrian empire around the IX–VIII century BC, founded the western Mediterranean colonies on the coast of the North Africa, Spain, Sicily and Sardinia **(fig. 19)**.

Tucidide says that the Phoenicians had initially economic relations with the entire Sicilian population, “Occupying sea promontories and small islands along the coasts”; only after the arrival of the Greeks (in 734 BC Naxos was founded, the first Greek colony in Sicily) would push the Phoenicians in their settlements in the northwest island, *Mozia*, *Panormos* and Solunto.

The Phoenician colonies (*emporìa*) were actually just interested in the political control over wide areas, however the hinterland represented for these settlements one significant outlet for their intense commercial traffic. Perhaps initially these inhabited areas were also devoid of the fundamental characteristics of a true urban hub; it was likely to stop seafarers from bartering goods. Unlike the foundation of a Greek colony, these inhabitants were composed of **small settler groups**, not necessarily permanent, but linked by contingent commercial activity.

During this period the **Greek colonization** occurred bringing a group of citizens

to the Sicilian coast and southern Italy. For different reasons, they departed towards the West under the guidance of a founder (*ecista*). The colonial phenomenon constituted a strong boost for the island’s economy, both from an agricultural and cultural point of view, and gave way to intense mercantile exchanges between the Greek cities of the new foundation and motherland.

The Greek colonization was often justified propaganda in rich mythological tradition of Heracles enterprises; So, for example, the foundation **Himera**, Zancle sub colony (Messina) which was the only Greek colony in the Palermo territory **(fig. 20)**. This was ennobled by tradition, which according to reports, *polis* was born not far from the place where the nymphs, to appease Athena and to mitigate the efforts of the heros, would have made the water flow - which is still active today – today called Termini Imerese **(fig. 21)**.

During the VI century BC, a rift with the Punic world was caused by the **tyrants setting up in the Greek colonies**, who based



on their want to expand, interfered with the interests of the Phoenicians colonies. Between 559 and 529 BC. Carthage intervened by the campaign of general **Malco**, who moved to the island with his army to defend the Punic economic interests in the northwestern part of Sicily. The expedition was, according to sources, successful, however, it does not appear to have expanded the territories of the Punic colonies.

480 BC was a vital moment for the history of Ancient Sicily, the year in which before the walls of Himera clashed the Punic army and a coalition of Greeks, Imeresi, Agrigentini and Syracusans, under the command of Gelon, the tyrant of Syracuse.

The Greek triumph was so important for the ancient population as it was compared to the Greeks in Salamina against the Persians in the same period (**fig. 22**). The battle had important consequences on the internal balance of the Greek cities in western Sicily: Himera remained under control of Theron of Agrigento for ten years. Subsequently, Himera was finally freed from Acragantini tyrants and eventually led by a democratic government.

In the second half of the century the selinuntini expansionist interest, to the detriment of Segesta elima, paved the way for **military intervention of Athens in Sicily**, within a much broader conflict: indeed Athens, then already fighting against Spar-

19
Necklace with vague glass polychrome from the Punic necropolis Palermo. Museo Archeologico Regionale "A. Salinas" di Palermo.

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Himera, orthophotography within the areas of the ancient city.

ta in the Peloponnesian War, due to the calls for further help by Segesta, in 415 BC Athens creating an imposing army, who sailed to Sicily led by Alcibiade.

The **crushing defeat** of Athens, after several clashes and a defeat on the river Assinaro - Near Syracuse - completely changed the fragile political balance within Sicily.

Carthage took the opportunity to take advantage of the situation of total confusion that had generated among the Sicily *poleis*.

In fact, in **409 BC**, Carthage deployed a new army which, after having conquered Selinunte, besieged and conquered Himera, razed to the ground. The city was never rebuilt on the same site; in 407 BC *Thermai Himeraiai* was founded by the Punics, which today the city has the same name.

The **treaty of 405 BC** between the Greeks and the Carthage people defined their areas of influence. However, decades of violence and clashes followed between Dionysius of Syracuse and Carthage, so that in 397 BC Mozia, the oldest Phoenician colony in Sicily, was besieged and conquered.

The Punic eparchy

Only with the **treaty of 374 BC** the limits of the two neighboring territories have been set; in fact Sicily was so divided in two distinct areas: the western part remained under the Punic political control and the eastern part under that of Syracuse. The border was marked in South *Halykos* (perhaps today's Platani) north Himera.

In the punic eparchy there were some important cities hinterland, located on mountains, as *Iaitas* (Monte Iato), *Entella*, the unknown centre on Calvaturò's Monte Riparato, *Hippana* (Montagna dei Cavalli), Pizzo Ciminna, *Makella* (the Montagnola di Marineo) (**fig. 23**).

Around 350 BC a new phase of clashes between Carthage and Greeks began led by Timoleonte, the Corinth leader called by the Syracuse people. He was able to control the whole of Sicily in a few years. After defeating the Carthaginians, near the river Crimiso (perhaps the current Belice river) in **339 BC**, the general retired. The political structure of these years, involved the military opposition between the Carthaginians and the Greeks but also generated in Sicily the *Koine*, a language taken from Greek roots that gave birth to **Hellenism** (an historical-cultural phenomenon that followed the exploits of Alexander the Great and that swept across the Mediterranean). Indeed, despite the strong military contrasts, on the island wellness was verified and contributed to the widespread economic development and persisted up until the outbreak of the First Punic War.

Looking at **the urban aspect** of the

northwestern cities in Sicily a renewal that reflected the sensitivity scenic era; it is remarkable in the case of Solunto, but also in Panormo, Cefalù and Monte Riparato. In this city they created a regulation for living spaces. Furthermore, **the defense** of the settlement was hit by a significant structural renewal – following the Hellenistic fortification techniques - For example in Palermo, in Marineo/*Makella*, at Montagna dei Cavalli/*Hippana*. In this age numerous **public buildings** were built, such as the Solunto theatres (**fig. 24**), of Iato and Montagna dei Cavalli/*Hippana* (**fig. 25**), which are also places of town meetings; Furthermore, during the excavations rich **objects** were found, which were placed among the grave goods, where terracotta figures and theatrical masks are frequently common (**fig. 26**). In this area there were **rare luxury goods**, such as tiaras found in Montagna dei Cavalli/*Hippana* or the cup of gold in Caltavuturo (**fig. 27**). At the end of the IV century BC, there was a new leader **Agatocle** in Syracuse, who started an aggressive and expansionist political agenda against Carthage. In **304 BC** the tyrant assumed the title of *basileus*, as the Mediterranean followers of Alexander the Great did.

On the death of Agathocles, in **289 BC**, the mercenaries from Campania and the **Mamertines**, who also played for the service of Syracuse, were often protagonist in a period of trouble.

The following year the same Mamertines conquered Messina, from which they raided the surrounding area; to counter their action, Syracuse besieged the city in **264 BC**,



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but the Campania mercenaries called the Punic, who sent them a fleet for help. At this point Syracuse - during the reign of King Ierone II - retired and the Mamertines entered into contrast with the Punic; it was then that they decided to ask the Romans for help, who intervened militarily, provoking the **First Punic War**. The war lasted twenty years and this war made profound changes throughout Sicily. In **260 BC** in Milazzo, the Roman fleet managed to win against the Punic ships and in **254 BC**, after a long siege *Panormos* was conquered; convinced of the military importance of the city, the Punic tried to reclaim it in **251 BC** by plundering the territory. However, they were overwhelmed by the forces of the Cecilio Metello consul, who had captured a large part of the army's North African elephants and then showed them to Rome during a celebration for their triumph. During these years the military settlement was on Monte Erike, probably known as Monte Pellegrino, where the Punic continued to attack the Romans for three years, without being able to retake the city. The war ended in **241 BC**, the Roman victory taking place on the Egadi Islands.

However, only after the **capture of Syracuse in 213 BC**, Sicily became **one Roman province**, that accelerated the unification process - starting with the Hellenistic age - of heterogeneous elements forming the rich and varied cultural reality of the island.

Following these military and laboring events servile rushed abundant in the island, encouraging the **wealthy landowners** to

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*Himera, west necropolis, mass grave of the fallen in battle
480 BC*

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*Tile engraved with the name of the City Makella.
Found on Monte Marineo. Museo Regionale della Valle dell'Eleuterio*



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Solunto, a hypothetical three-dimensional theater reconstruction.

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Montagna dei Cavalli - Hippa-na, view of the theater.

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Monte Riparato di Caltavuturo, theatrical mask of a male character of New Comedy. Antiquarium of Himera.

increase their assets; It gradually favored the extension of the *latifundia*, huge plots of land that grow extensive crops. Not by chance in this north-west area of the island in 104 BC, the Second Servile War had begun, which caused significant damage to the area. Years of **fighting civil wars** was also dramatic for the island; *Thermai Himeraiai*, for example, the Marian party was deep rooted, perhaps because many traders lived here and who made up a significant part of the Marian Party. In 81 BC, **Pompeo** was preparing to punish the city, when he was dissuaded from the major city, Stenio. Stenio was a Mario follower and had become an advocate of Pompeo. He was the victim of **Verre**, the corrupt governor of Sicily (73-71 BC) that flew into a rage throughout the territory with its robberies and that - following allegations from Cicero - fled into voluntary exile.

After the period struggles during the first and second triumvirate, in **31 BC**, with the victory of Octavian at Azio (on the west coast of Greece), a political and military peace started in Sicily which lasted substantially uninterrupted until the threshold of the Middle Ages.

A few years later, the birth of the principality Augustus would have favored the composition Virgil's **Eneide**. In this book the stop-over of Enea in Sicily was emphasized and where the characters Entello and Erice had a role, whose names are derived from the ancient Elime cities; so the young Roman foundation myth was connected to the ancient traditions of the island.



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*The so-called golden phiale
of "Caltavuturo" Himera
Antiquarium of Himera.*

THE FIRST SICILIAN INHABITANTS ACCORDING TO THUCYDIDES

To do a full tour of Sicily, with a cargo ship, takes no less than eight days; and, while being so wide -maximum the size of 20 stadiums-, only a narrow sea divides it from the mainland.

Here lies the information about how people came to occupy it.

It is said that the oldest inhabitants are Cyclops and the Lestrigoni who inhabited a part of the island: I could not say what race they were, where they came from and where they ended up; we must be content with what poets have sung and with what we know about those peoples. After these mythical people, it seems that the Sicani were the first people to inhabit the area; indeed, as they say, they could have even preceded the Cyclops and the Lestrigoni since it is also said they were born here; instead the real truth is that the Sicani were the Iberians, driven away by Ligurian from the river bank of Sicano, which is precisely found in Iberia. From their name the island was called Sicania, whereas before it was Trinacria and even now they live there in the west. When Ilio was conquered, some of the Trojans escaped from the Achaeans and landed their boats in Sicily. Here they settled on the borders of Sicani; and they all had the name Elimi; Erice and Segesta were their cities.

To these were added and lived with them some of the Phocians that, on his return from Troy, were moved by the storm first in Libya and beyond then in Sicily. The Sicilians, who currently lived in Italy, were fleeing the Opici and passing Sicily on rafts, (as is said or thought)crossed the strait

after having waited for the wind to become calm; or maybe it took some other means of navigation.

The Sicilians are still in Italy, even the region was rightly called Italy by Italo, a king of the Sicilians, who had this name.

Therefore they went to Sicily in large numbers, won the battle against Sicani, who banished them to the southern and western regions. They made the island change its name from Sicania to Sicily. Once the transition was made, they occupied and lived in the most fertile areas of the country, about 300 years before the Greek would lay foot: and even now they are on the centre and north of the island. Even the Phoenicians lived here and there throughout Sicily, after having occupied the headland and the small Islands close to the coast, to facilitate business relations with the Sicilians. When a large number of the Greeks arrived by sea, the Phoenicians left most of the country and settled in Motia, and Solunte, Panormo. Here they lived near Elimi, with who they had an alliance and at that point very close to Carthage.

Many were barbarians, who in this way of life, lived in Sicily.

(Thucydides, The History of the Peloponnesian War, VI, 1-2)

IMPERIAL AGE AND LATE ANTIQUE AGE

Rosa Maria Cucco

Among the first Imperial Age (I-II century AD) and the V century AD Sicily experienced a period of peace. The Vandal conquest of 468 AD and the following passage to the reign of the barbarian, Odoacer, after the fall of Western Roman Empire occurred in 476 AD, did not establish a great position in the economic and social upheavals of the island.

In 535 AD Sicily was occupied by the Byzantines and annexed to their empire. At the end of seventh sec. AD Sicily became one of the “themes” (administrative entities with tax and army autonomy) of the Byzantine Empire. During the Empire Age in the present territory of the province of Palermo flourished two coastal cities, *Panormus*, [today Palermo] and *Thermae Himeraeae* [today Termini Imerese]. They became particularly wealthy from the III century AD, when the reign of Emperor Septimius Severus African (193-211 AD) intensified transits between Rome and the province of Africa.

In this regard the ports of the two cities established important milestones in commercial transit to the capital. When Constantinople was founded (330 AD), in Egypt, which had taken the main role from Sicily of “granary of Rome”, becoming the supplier of grain for the new capital. However from the IV century AD Sicily, together with Africa, resumed his role of an important supplier of wheat to Rome. In the late antique age the economic upturn of the island explains the development of large and rich villas in this era, on both the coast and inland of the island. In some cases these dwellings were seats for owner **otium** and at the same time the directional heart of the land. From the centre of Sicily, wheat was transported through a dense internal road network, partly coinciding with sheep tracks, that still exist today, in the coastal

road axis, to the the consular road Valeria. From this road, now widely traced from the SS 113 (Northern Sicula), the goods came to the ports of *Panormus* and *Thermae* and embarked to Rome.

The Roman consular roads provided many branch points, adapted to facilitate the connection between the road and territories and settlements of particular importance.

Walking the Valeria road, from *Choephaloedium* (today Cefalù) (**fig. 28**) to the West, before reaching *Thermae*, doing a short detour between headlands Mazzafor-
no and Capo Playa, there’s *villa maritima* of Settefrati (**fig. 29**), decorated with mosaic floors. On the best preserved part of the floor, there are plant and geometric motifs and fish images that refers to scenic location near the sea. This is now exhibited at the Himera Antiquarian.



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*Aerial photo
Cefalù*

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Continuing to *Thermae Himeraeae*, on the hills that surround the Via Valeria in the South, between Campofelice di Roccella and Buonfornello, the “villa” of Terre Bianche can be found (fig. 29). This luxurious settlement was definitely a *mutatio*, a place to change horses during short stops, among *stationes* (imperial post station, places to stop and change horses and trawl animals and commercial trading places) of *Choephaloedium* and *Thermae* (fig. 30). The resting places could be equipped with spas, often decorated with marble and mosaics, to receive the travelers. After crossing the river Imera by a **bridge**, which had many arches, **Buonfornello villa** can be seen leaning against the northern slopes of the Tamburino flatland (fig. 29).

Today this villa is totally enveloped in a

modern house, still decorated with mosaics, observed in the XIX century.

From here to the *Thermae*, the Roman road crossed the Torto river, probably at the ruins of an old bridge. This bridge, “bridge of the harlot” was also in a state of ruin in the mid of the XVIII century. From the northern slopes of Monte St. Calogero the Valeria road to *Thermae* have a parallel route (in sections) with the **Cornelius aqueduct**. This impressive hydraulic structure dated back to the second century AD, that provided the city with the Brucato source (fig. 31).

The importance of the city of Termini, always more from the age of Augustus, is documented by works such as imposing the aforementioned aqueduct and the Cornelius amphitheater. This city, thanks to the veterans of the sixth Legion, take the title of the colony.

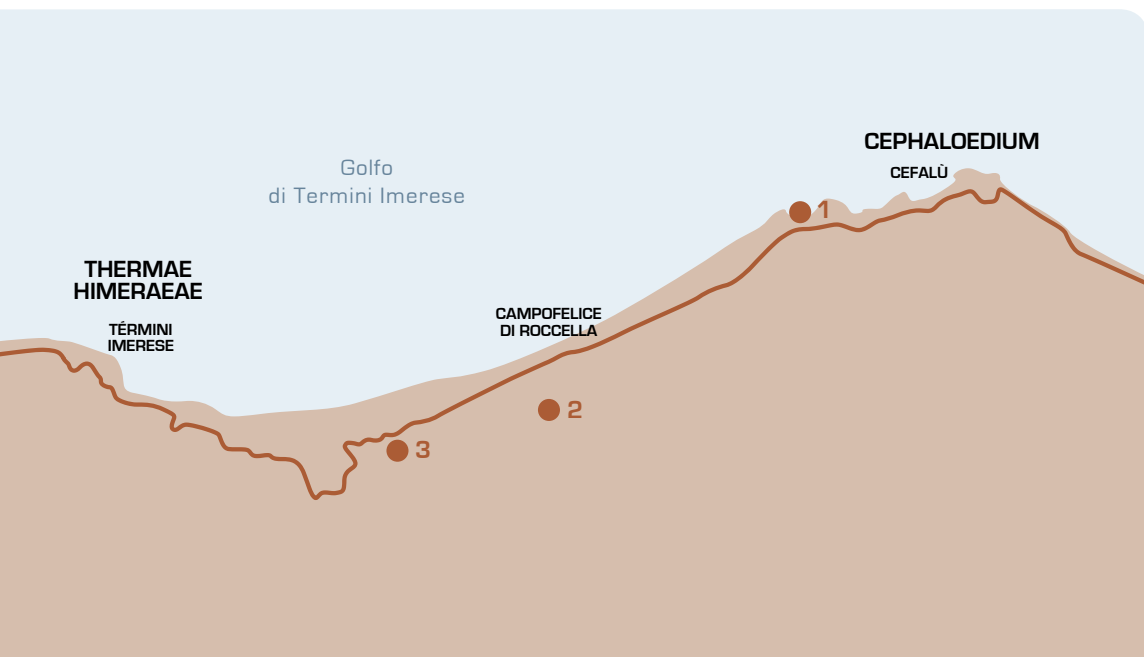
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The villas along the Valeria road.

1: *Settefrati*

2: *Terrebianche*

3: *Buonfornello*



Continuing from *Thermae* until **Solunto** (fig. 32) where the remains of the advanced imperial age are very scarce and limited to some Commodus coins and movable objects, such as an epigraph dedicated between 202 and 205 AD by *Respublica Soluntinorum* to Fulvia Plautilla, the wife of Emperor Caracalla (AD 180-192). It is the latest evidence of city life, that seems to have been voluntarily abandoned since the beginning of the third century AD (just over 200 AD). The Site remains only an indication, in relation to the cable consular Valeria, in itinerary and geographical sources, composed between the middle of the III and VII century AD, including the *Itinerarium Antonini* and *Tabula Peutingeriana* (fig. 30). *Panormus* is another coastal city which is

30
Sicily in Tabula Peutingeriana
 with Cefalù, Termini Imerese,
 Solunto and Palermo indica-
 tions.



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*Termini Imerese.
Contrada Figurella:
Cornelio aqueduct*

important for trades to and from its port and was elevated to rank of the colony during the imperial age. There is limited remains of the Imperial and Late Antiquity city. The more significant findings were carried out in the Cassaro area, around Vittorio Emanuele highstreet.

We highlight the Roman houses in Victoria Square which suffered a partial change in the second half of the IV century AC as evidenced by the small areas of necropolis. Two buildings known as A and B. In building A both the mosaic floor and **(Fig. 33)** the complex thermal baths were

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*Solunto.
Aerial view*





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made in the Severiana age, during the first decade of the III century AC. It is plausible that building A was a *schola*, perhaps the headquarters of a orfico-dionasico cult. During the Imperial period, which was prosperous, building B was made monumental with the creation of the peristyle (colonnade). The building was probably much damaged by the earthquake in the IV century AD.

In the Imperial Age and Late Antiquity era, there were buildings in Setteangeli's square and Montevergini road (**fig. 34**) decorated with mosaics. Only evidence provided by written proof certifies that in Palermo, during the imperial age, these two buildings were used for performances: a theater and perhaps an amphitheater.

Except for the data found in Victory Square necropolis, in Palermo the burial grounds of the Imperial Age and Late Antiquity era are very small.

We quote the complex Trans- Kemonia, in the area of Casa Professa Church, and the **catacombs of Porta d'Ossuna**.

Beyond *Panormus*, during the journey towards Lilibeo, the Valeria road brings you to the important settlement of San Nicola a Carini and the **complex Villagrazia catacombs** (the early Christian largest catacomb in western Sicily) which for geographical contiguity and chronological development there is certainly a connection to the **San Nicola settlement**. In this set-

tlement mosaic "Galati", who had to cover an apsidal environment, interpreted as a Christian basilica or a part of a luxurious *villa* during the late antiquity era.

The floor, decorated by a polychrome pattern showing plant and animal motifs, can be compared to both the mosaics in Armerina square to that of the African tiles in IV century AD.

The excavations carried out in San Nicola have revealed structures referring to a settlement lived in from late Roman period (IV - V century AD) to the Islamic period (X-early XI century). Two rooms with mosaic floors in a geometric pattern style have been found, which, together with the mosaic "Galati", document the architectural value of one or more buildings of the late Roman town. More Islamic evidence has been recently brought to light in the northern are of the cemetery of Carini.

The medieval findings, above, almost certainly correspond with those covered by the Arab geographers *al-Muqqadasi* (late X century), and Idrisi (XII century). It is likely, then, that the ancient centre can be identified with the *Hykkara* in the Roman age, mentioned in the *Itinerarium Antonini*, as a *statio* located along the Valeria road. In the site the Bishop's headquarters of the "ancient *Hykkara*" can be found. This is documented by various ecclesiastical sources in the Byzantine era and confirmed

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Palermo.

Victory square.

Building A:

mosaic with Orpheus and wild beast, today in the Museo Archeologico Regionale "A. Salinas" di Palermo.

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*Palermo. Via Montevergini:
mosaic with a dolphin.*





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by the monumental complex catacombs in Villagrazia of Carini.

From the start of the Byzantine era, the inhabited area of San Nicola had to have a “Town” structure, when the centre was certainly a place of trade and cultural preferences by entering the port of Baglio di Carini and having an easy connection with the consular Valeria road.

The importance of the early Christian community, resident here, is attested by the high importance with the building of the bishop’s centre, today archaeologically proven by the discovery of a seal lead with the name of Bishop Felice.

From a stately home comes the marble portrait of Partinico (II century AD) now hung

in the Regional Archaeological Museum of Palermo.

Between Partinico and Terrasini, near the mouth of the Nocella river, the remains of furnaces for the production of cups with a type of “thickened edge” were found, in use probably since the conquest of the Roman island (around the middle of the III century BC) until at least the V century AD.

Other axis roads were united to Valeria street certified by ancient itineraries.

Between these, within the Palermo province, via *Catina-Thermae* played an important role; before it was a medieval road map of the Messina street in order to go into the mountains and today from highway 120 called “Etna and Madonie” it branches off

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*Pellizzara, Petralia Soprana.
S. Marina: portico area (as seen from the South).*



from Highway 113 to North of Cerda and reaches the Ionian coast.

During the Roman age, this road axis brought wheat from the centre of Sicily to the coastal city of *Thermae*, where the goods were loaded for Rome.

Two Madonie settlements, that of **Santa Marina** (in the municipality of Petralia) (**fig. 35**) and one in the **contrada Muratore** (in Castellana Sicula council) was served by this road. The Santa Marina settlement, overlooking the Salty river valley and located in proximity of a salt mine, in addition to cereal production was probably, the centre of salt sorting. Perhaps the site of a *vicus* (village) or a well-structured dwelling, is currently being explored. Here, it has been brought to light that these are the remains of a colonnade, probably pertinent to a portico environment. The building was probably inhabited even in medieval times. Driving along the Palermo-Agrigento road, an important valley road, which was used in ancient times, you take the detour to Castronovo di Sicilia in whose territory lie the remains of the **Roman Villa in the Contrada San Luca**.

In late ancient-Byzantine era, the Castronovo territory was densely populated, as is documented by the rocky settlements along the valley of the river Platani. This site was documented also by the numerous arcosolium burials (recess tombs with an arch above) and in the pit burials such as those in the contrada Le Grotte, near the Casale of St. Pietro. The strategic importance is proven by the Byzantine fortification of **Kassar**, probably the qasr Al Gadid ("new castle") conquered by the Arabs between 857 and 858.



Along the Palermo-Sciacca road, however, you reach the junction for Piana degli Albanesi, in which the municipality, in the **contrada S. Agata**, a late antique necropolis *sub divo* (i.e. open air) was found. This is one of the most relevant Sicilian complex burials of that time (**Fig. 36**). The settlement which was connected to the necropolis of S. Agata may perhaps be identified with the *statio Pirama* located on the *Itinerarium Antonini 24 milia passum* from Palermo, along the *Aurelia* road (the oldest Roman road in Sicily) linking Palermo to Agrigento.

Falconiera in Ustica is dated between the V and VI centuries AD. This is the evidence that proves early Christian necropolis of the population on the island in the late Roman and Byzantine era. The necropolis includes burials of various types: *formae* (niches), subterranean rooms where access is through a corridor (*dromos*) and niches or sarcophagi placed inside a type of arcosolia.

36
Piana degli Albanesi. Contrada S. Agata: Tomb garments 78. The necropolis S. Agata garments are today exhibited at the Museo Regionale della Valle dell'Eleuterio in Marineo.

THE PROVINCE OF PALERMO IN THE MIDDLE AGE

Carla Aleo Nero

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 AD, the date that marks the beginning of the Middle Ages, Sicily became part of the Roman-Barbaric kingdom of the Goths - based in Ravenna - under whose rule the island is experiencing a period of relative tranquility.

In 535 Palermo was conquered by Belisario, the Byzantine general sent by Giustiniano to bring Italy under the jurisdiction of the Roman Empire of the East; Sicily became the land of war and military base of the "Greek-Gothic war" for almost twenty years (535-553).

The historiographical tradition believes that Belisario, to celebrate the conquest of Palermo, built the **S. Maria dell'Annunziata, called della Pinta**.

Independent from Ravenna, Sicily became a province under the direct dependencies of the Byzantine emperor. Sicily had a magistrate accompanied by a military commander driving an army and a fleet made in Sicily. At the end of the VII century with the creation of the tema (administrative unit) comprising the island of Sicily and the Duchy of Calabria, the strategic importance of the island was consolidated thanks to the defensive function that the island had against the danger of an Arab invasion.

The militarization of the province is part of this program and perhaps due to the birth of the fortification centre of **Kassar** near Castronovo (**fig. 37**).

Sicily remained for about three centuries under Byzantine rule but the progress of the Empire became weak leaving room for the thrust of Islam's expansion, over the centuries IX and X.

During the Byzantine period, the Church played a leading role: it had numerous possessions and the bishop held a dual

religious service and administrative role; he was in charge of large land properties, chose officials and administered justice. In the VI century Sicily had at least eleven bishop headquarters, among which also included Palermo, Cefalù, Termini Imerese and Hykkara.

Gregorio Magno, who became pope in 590, tried to stem the byzantine process in the island, but it was very difficult to identify and locate numerous Gregorian monastery foundations towards the end of the VI century.

Only one of the monasteries in Palermo mentioned in the documents, that of S. Hermes, probably identified as the monastery **San Giovanni degli Eremiti** which was rebuilt in the Norman era by Ruggero II (1130-1154).

Around the middle of the VII century the phenomenon of fortification can be traced, i.e. the Byzantine government initiative encouraged settlements in fortified towns, as well as the spread of the rocky settlement around the Mediterranean.

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The fortified city of Kassar near Castrovovo, part of the east door (VIII century).



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Palermo. S. Maria degli Angeli (La Gancia). Ceramic from the Islamic age.

A glazed ceramic basin in brown, green and yellow. Mid X – mid XI century

As an example of **trogloeditismo** (living in a cave) is a reminder of the the complex **grotte della Gurfa** in Alia. The phase of Byzantine fortification ended at the end of the VII century.

For the period known as “barbaric” (476-535) no significant archaeological traces remain; more numerous is the evidence relevant to the Byzantine era, especially in eastern Sicily, while for the territory of Palermo we recall **Cefalù, Vicari and Castronovo**.

The first northern African Arab raids date back to the mid- VII century, but the real conquering plan matured only later with the Aghlabid dynasty from Tunisia.

After the 827 landing in Mazara del Vallo, the city of **Palermo** was conquered in the year 831 but the conquest of the whole of

Sicily lasted several years. The island was under the control of the Muslims only at the beginning of the X century. After the political extinction of the Aghlabid people, Sicily came under the control of the Fatimids and - in 947 - of Kalbiti. During the ninety year control of the latter, the island enjoyed a period of flourishing prosperity. **Palermo**, in particular stood for wealth and splendor in the writings of Arab travelers.

Later, around 1040 and 1050 the rivalry between the local lords determined the arrival of the Normans, mercenaries called by Lord of Catania and Syracuse Ibn al Thumnah.

Initially, the Arabs preferred to settle in the plains and along the coast; only in the late X century there was a phenomenon of

Islamization in the hinterland, thanks to a specific policy by the Fatimidi who encouraged the fortification.

In the Norman age Muslims were still numerous in western Sicily, as is proven by the recent discoveries of Muslim burial ritual sites in **Entella, Monte Maranfusa and Monte Jato**.

Many traces of the Arab age remain today especially in material culture - **Palermo** is recognized as an important manufacturer of glazed polychrome ceramic traditionally North African (**figs. 38-39**), but the Islamic architectural structures of Palermo and its territory remains very little.

The **palazzo di Maredolce in Palermo** was initially made in the kalbita age style, but the structures visible today are part of a reconstruction in the Norman age by Roger II; doubts still exist about the identification of a mosque, in a room with two aisles found in the courtyard of **San Giovanni degli Eremiti** and the so-called 'ipostila' (a closed space supported by columns i.e. a hall) under the **Incoronata church** in Palermo's cathedral.

The **Cefalà Diana thermal baths**, whose first site dates back to the Islamic age, appear in a Norman style (**fig. 40**).

The Norman conquest was over in thirty years (1061 - 1091) by two brothers of Altavilla: Roberto called Guiscardo (who died in 1085) and Roger (who died in 1101). In 1072 Palermo was taken and in 1091, with the surrender of Noto, the whole of Sicily was in the hands of the Normans.



39

Palermo. San Giovanni degli Eremiti. Ceramic from the Islamic age. A glazed ceramic basin in brown, green and yellow. Mid-X – mid-XI century

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40
*Cefalà Diana, the so
called "Arab baths".
XII century.*

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41
*Monumental part of the
S. Maria of Campogrosso church
near Altavilla Milicia, founded
by the Normans at the time of
conquest (second half XI century)*

The intervention of the Normans in Sicily encouraged the papal idea for the Christians to reconquest Sicily and to favor a policy of latinazione (Latinization) in all the churches on the island.

The pope granted the Normans the authority of choosing bishops in Sicily;

The Basiliano (greek) (in **Palermo, S. Maria dell'Oreto church**) Christians were tolerated and encouraged, as were the muslims; neither had political rights and were subject to royalties, while Latin immigrants were favored.

The Norman conquest of Sicily did not coincided with the elimination of the Muslim people who remained numerically still substantial.

Politically, economically and legally the Normans preserved many elements of the previous organization and the Islamic culture; this lasted at least until the first half of the XIII century.

The Island's conquest- from Messina to the west and the interior - was a true "holy war" against Islam, so each victorious event was emphasized with the building of a new Christian worship place; Furthermore, to meet the military needs of occupation, castles (fortified residences: **Brucato, Caccamo, Carini, Caltavuturo, Cefalà, Cefalù, Collesano, Corleone, Geraci, Gratteri, Jato**, probably **Misilmeri, Petralia, Prizzi, Roccella, Termini** and **Vicari**), bridges and fortifications were built.

When the conquest phase ended and domination began, these activities intensified. As regards the country and the hinterland, the settlement pattern persisted as created

in the Arabic period.

Among the churches during this period “conquest” we can mention **S. Maria di Campogrosso (fig. 41)** - with its adjoining monastery and a bridge (fig. 42) not far from the church – near **Altavilla Milicia**, whose ruins are visible along the Palermo-Catania highway; In **Palermo**, Roberto il Guiscardo “founded” his Christian Church in the upper town, transforming the main mosque; of this first “cathedral” of Palermo nothing remains because it was rebuilt in the reign of Guglielmo II (fig.43).

Palermo became the Norman capital only after the death of Count Ruggero when his widow Adelaide, the mother of the future king Ruggero II (crowned in 1130), moved there with their court in 1112 (?). Under the reign of Ruggero II Palermo and Sicily began an era of extraordinary artistic activity which continued under his successors, Guglielmo I nicknamed ‘the bad’ (1154-1166) and Guglielmo II, nicknamed ‘the Good’ (1166 - 1189);

the royal commission and the court entourage were responsible for the creation of masterpieces such as the **Chapel Palatina**, the **Ammiraglio** or the **Martorana church**, **S. Giovanni degli Eremiti** and the **Cefalù cathedral**.

All these religious buildings were built under Ruggero II.

Regarding public architecture under Ruggero II, we remember, for example, the **royal palace in Palermo** but especially the “place of delights” of the **Palazzo** (building) **Favara** or **Maredolce’s**, equipped with a fish pond, and a **hunting reserve of Parco** (today Altofonte).



42

A Bridge from the Norman period (second half of the XI century) near the church of S. Maria di Campogrosso near Altavilla Milicia.

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43

P. Mattei, View of the Palermo Cathedral, 1855 abt. from Sergio Troisi, "Vedute e luoghi di Palermo nei secoli XVIII e XIX", 1995.

The solace, found in the suburb of **Zisa**, was initiated with Guglielmo I and then ended with Guglielmo II, who was responsible for the construction of the same building in **Cuba**.

Regarding the religious architecture of the last Norman period, we remember the **S. Cataldo church** in Palermo (Guglielmo I) and **S. Giovanni dei Lebbrosi**.

The last two architectural works made during the reign of Guglielmo II, were the reconstruction of the **Cathedral of Palermo** and the construction of the **Cathedral of S. Maria la nuova in Monreale** with its Benedictine monastery.

On the death of Guglielmo, due to the events relating to the succession and the Sveva conquest of Sicily (1194), a period of political and economic instability followed that lasted until Federico II's return from Germany (1220); the conflict with Muslims that culminated with their final expulsion from the island in 1246 was dramatic. **Jato, Entella, Maranfusa** were the heart of Muslim resistance.

On the death of Federico (1250), after a short Sveva period, the Angioina rule succeeded (1266 – 1282), which ended with the War of the Vespers.

With the coronation of Pietro III of Aragona (1282-1285) the kingdom of Sicily enters under the influence of the Spanish crown, but during almost all of the XIV century (from Federico II of Aragona (1296-1337) until the 1392) there was





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44
*Palazzo dei Normanni - Anonymous,
beginning of the
XVIII century. Museo
Regionale "A. Pepoli"
di Trapani*



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independence from the crown of Aragona and the emergence of the most important feudal families of the time, including Chiaramonte in western Sicily. The reunification of the island to the kingdom of Aragona came in 1412 and due to this Sicily lost its independence.

As the great Norman commission ended, few initiatives were ascribed in the first two decades in 1200. Federico II of Svevia building work was resumed and the completion of work on the Cefalù and Palermo Norma cathedrals, and the opening of new construction sites especially in the east of the island but, in fact, the Federico II building system were very limited in western Sicily. Thanks to the especially short angioina domination, in the second half of 1200, it can be noted that there were widespread orders to build both Franciscan and Dominican monasteries; the Palermo churches (with an adjoining convent) of **S. Francesco d'Assisi** (consecrated in 1277) and **S. Agostino** date back to this period.

The kings of Aragona brought forward a substantial building program, sponsoring fortifications and religious foundations in various centres of the island (including **Guliana, Assunta church**). On the coast,

just before 1385, the **Roccella Castle** was restored.

At the end of Federico II of Aragona's reign of the most important architectural works were managed by the baronial families who settled in Palermo between the late 1200 and early 1300 (Sclafani, Chiaramonte, Calvello).

The increase of Palermo's urban and construction framework opened with religious commissions (the **Church of S. Nicolò la Kalsa**, demolished in 1823, commissioned by Chiaramonte) and the completion of **S. Giovanni degli Eremiti's convent** by the Chiaramonte - Sclafani household.

With regards public buildings, we are reminded of **Steri di Palermo**, built by the Chiaramonte family, and the **Palazzo Sclafani**, wanted by the family of the same name. Both represent a type of square based building, a portico courtyard on the ground floor and raised on two levels. The last religious building in 1300 is the **Domenicani cloister** (1350-1360), while in 1388 the Benedictine monastery of **S. Maria degli Angeli** (also called **Gancia**) was founded by Manfredi III. This monastery was still incomplete when the Chiaramonte family diminished in 1392.

45

From D'Angelo-Zoric, "La città di Palermo nel Medioevo", 2002. The historic centre of Palermo, schematic map in 1300

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CRONOLOGY

From 800,000 to 35,000 years ago

Lower and Middle Paleolithic in Italy.
Uncertain traces in Sicily

From 30,000 to 8,000 years ago

Superior Paleolithic and Mesolithic.
First certain human traces Riparo di Fontana
Nuova in Marina di Ragusa

From the beginning of the VI millennium to the end of the IV millennium BC

Neolithic

III millennium BC

Eneolithic or Copper Age

II millennium

Bronze Age

From the I millennium BC to X-VIII century BC

The Iron Age. Central and western Sicily is
populated by the Sicani, one of the first popu-
lation known to have lived on the island

VIII century BC

Start of Punic colonization
(carthaginian) and Greeks in Sicily

648 BC

The foundation the Greek colony of Himera
by a group of settlers from Zancle (Messina),
from Syracuse and from Greece

480 BC

Battle of Himera, fought between the Greeks
Sicilians and the Carthaginians in the Plain of
Buonfornello, ended with the victory of the Greeks

409-405 BC

The Carthaginian army conquered and destroyed in
a few years the Greek colonies of Selinunte, Himera,
Agrigento, Gela and Camarina

405 BC

Peace treaty between Carthage and Syracuse.
The western part of the island remains under
the control of Carthage (Punic Eparchy). The
east is subject to Syracuse

344-339 BC

The Corinthian leader Timoleonte, called from
Syracuse, with a military campaign against
Carthage, conquered the whole island. After
restarting hostilities, in 339 with the battle
the Krimisos, (Belice river?) a new peace treaty
between Greeks and Carthaginians is concluded.

323 BC

Death of Alexander the Great
and the start of the Hellenistic Age

264-241 BC

First Punic War between Rome and Carthage.
Rome conquered the western part of Sicily

227 BC

Sicily became the first Roman province

212 BC

During the Second Punic War (218-202 BC)
Roman consul Marcellus, besieged and con-
quered Syracuse. The entire island goes under
the control of Rome

140-132 BC

First Servile War, fought in Sicily between the
Roman Republic and rebel slaves

101-97 BC

Second Servile War

31 BC

Battle of Azio. Ottaviano defeats Marco
Antonio. Hellenistic Age ends.

27 BC

The start of the principality of Ottaviano
Augusto, which marks the transition from the
Roman Republic to the Roman Empire

395 AD

Death of Emperor Theodosius I. The Roman
empire is divided into western Roman Em-
pire and Eastern Roman Empire

476 AD

Emperor Romolo Augustolo removal by
Odoacre. Decline of the Roman Empire

535 AD

Sicily, during the Gothic War (AD 535-553),
is occupied by Belisario and annexed to the
Byzantine Empire.

827 AD

The start of the Islamic conquest of Sicily

1061

The start of the Norman conquest of Sicily

1130-1198

The Normans reign on Sicily

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1198-1250

Federico II di Svevia becomes King of Sicily and will rule on the island for over half a century.

1250

Death of Federico II. The succession of his son Corrado IV, who died in 1254

1258

Election of Manfredi who became King of Sicily

1262

Costanza, daughter of Manfredi, married Pietro III di Aragona. Pope Urbano IV gives the Sicilian crown to Carlo I d'Angiò, brother of Luigi IX, King of France

1266

Manfredi was defeated and killed in Benevento by Carlo I d'Angiò, who was elected king of Sicily

1268

Carlo I d'Angiò defeats Corradino di Svevia in Tagliacozzo, heir to Corrado IV, and is executed in Naples

1282

March 31. Revolt of the Vespro in Palermo. The War of the Vespro between Carlo I d'Angiò and Pietro III d'Aragona

1302

The war of the Vespro ends with the Treaty of Caltabellotta. Sicily belongs to Federico III d'Aragona, but it is separated from southern Italy, which belongs to the Angioini

1410-1416

Sicily under Ferdinando di Castiglia, King d'Aragona and Sicily

1415

Sicily has its first viceroy, Earl Giovanni di Pegnafiel

1479-1516

Sicily under Ferdinand II il Cattolico that introduces the Spanish Inquisition in Sicily

1492

Expulsion of the Jews from Sicily

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