

PALEO  
CULT

## TREASURE MAPS

Twenty Itineraries  
Designed to Help  
You Explore the  
Cultural Heritage  
of Palermo and  
its Province



Soprintendenza per i Beni culturali  
e ambientali di Palermo

# ARCHAEOLOGY

## THE INLAND SITES

Edited by **Stefano Vassallo** and **Rosa Maria Cucco**

REGIONE SICILIANA  
Assessorato dei Beni culturali  
e dell'Identità siciliana



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## ARCHAEOLOGY

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The archaeological research carried out in the last ten years, inland off the centre-north coast of Sicily, has furnished a rich and articulated panorama of the continued presence of mankind, from Prehistory to present day. The many small and large valleys that wind their way from the Tyrrhenian coast into the hinterland are littered with archaeological sites, most of which have been surveyed but not yet excavated. However, it is already possible to trace the complex history of this part of the Island, dominated over the centuries by various civilisations that have had different repercussions on the way of life of the settlements.

The sites described in this booklet are only a selection of the many archaeological sites present in the inland of the Province of Palermo. The sites that have showed artefacts from more than one era have obviously been preferred. In some places, in collaboration with the local municipality, small archaeological museums have been created, permitting students and tourists alike to study the history of the settlements directly on-site.

Some of the sites described—Montagna dei Cavalli, Entella, Monte Riparato, la Montagnola of Marineo or Maranfusa—were great centres, dating from between 6<sup>th</sup> century BC and early Roman times—and formed part of an important segment of the sicilian history, beginning with the development of the Greek and Phoenician/Punic colonies on the coast, which was a historic event of great magnitude and therefore forced the local population to take refuge on higher ground, which

offered a natural strong defensive position. These centres grew and flourished in course of time, above all during the Hellenistic period, becoming developed urban complexes, with large public buildings of great importance, such as the theatres of Iato and Montagna dei Cavalli.

Under the Romans, the population of these inland sites altered, gradually but radically, emigrating from the large upland towns, and creating, thanks to the many centuries of peace, a multitude of farms and villas dominating the agro/pastoral economy which has for centuries constituted the real wealth of these territories. The villas of San Luca or of the Muratore district are a minor example of the hundreds of rural settlements present in these Sicilian valleys. The main object of this booklet, other than providing up to date information on the individual sites, aims rather to provide the itinerant traveller with an impression of a land and its highly suggestive landscapes, apparently unchanged, but which have, over the course of centuries, witnessed continuous alterations and transformations in the settlements, nowadays no longer physically perceptible, but which have left a deep impression on the character of the Island's culture.

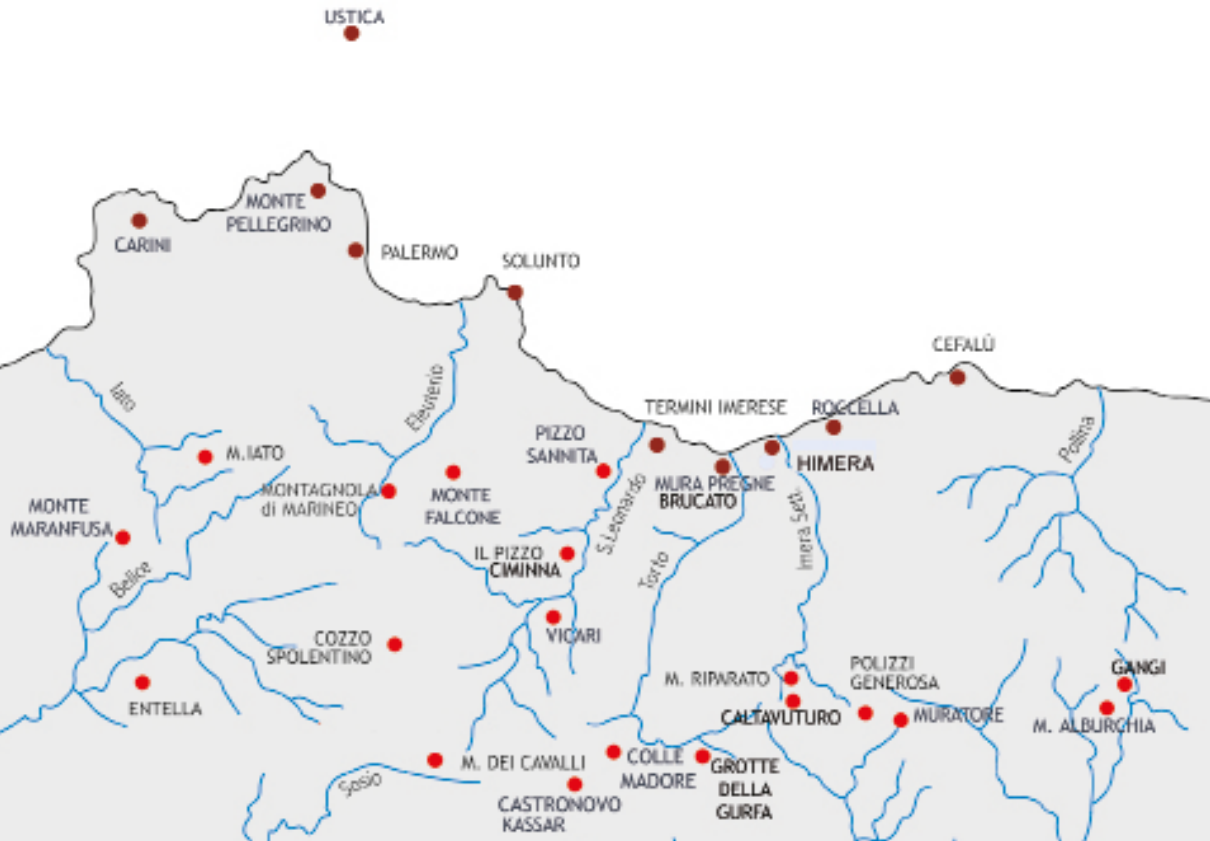
Stefano Vassallo

# THE INLAND SITES

1  
*The Province of Palermo  
with the principal  
archaeological sites*

The map of the principal archaeological sites of the inland indicates the position of the various settlements, the orographical configuration of the area, as well as the most important fluvial valleys of central-

north Sicily. It also illustrates how the development of the settlement of this part of the Island has been heavily influenced by the presence of important natural routes linking the coast to the hinterland.



# VALLEY OF THE RIVER SALSO (IMERA MERIDIONALE)

## MURATORE/CALCARELLI AND THE CASTELLANA CIVIC MUSEUM

The settlement of the *contrada Muratore*, nowadays absorbed into a surban park, is accessible from Calcarelli, suburb of Castellana Sicula. It is situated in a valley, traversed by the Nociazzi stream that flows around the site to the northwest. Surveys have so far mapped out two archaeological areas. In the first a large building has been brought to light, with an apsidal space showing remains of opus signinum [pottery shards beaten to dust and tempered with lime] on the internal walls, connected from the north by a U-shaped corridor, with walls still standing of around 1.5mts. The building, most likely thermal baths from the Imperial Roman era, was almost certainly altered during the Middle Ages, as attested by the furnace found in the interior. Not far from this building a room has been excavated, and more than twenty-two amphorae have been unearthed, mostly of African production from under a layer of broken roofing, collapsed almost certainly because of a fire. Other objects found indicate that the space could well have been a storehouse or a warehouse and was destroyed at some point between the late 5<sup>th</sup> and early 6<sup>th</sup> century AC. The settlement in *contrada Muratore* was probably what is known as a 'vicus', a small village, with various activities, or workshops, deposits of agricultural products and most likely, Roman baths adjoining the residential zone. The baths were a meeting place for the populace spread thinly across the large property and represented its fulcrum and

perhaps the market place of the village. The finds of African imports of tableware and transport amphorae also attest to the fact that the settlement of Muratore was one of the stops on the wide-ranging commercial traffic routes.

There is also a necropolis connected to the East of this Late-Imperial settlement, with *arcosolium* tombs (tombs situated inside an arched niche), excavated in isolated rocky outcrops, as well as two burial vaults cut out of the rocks. One of these, nowadays enclosed in the building that houses the Civic Museum of Castellana was transformed into an olive press sometime between the end of the Middle Ages and Modern Times.

The **Civic Museum of Castellana Sicula** has two sections: ethno-anthropological and archaeological. The first consists of the

2  
*Castellana Sicula,  
Contrada Muratore.  
Apsidal room*



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3

*Castellana Sicula,  
Contrada Muratore.  
Late Roman-Byzantine  
basin.*



4

*Castellana Sicula,  
Contrada Muratore.  
Paleo-Christian  
oil-lamp of African  
manufacture, found  
in the area around the  
Large Building with  
the apsidal room.*



5

*Castellana Sicula.  
Local Civic Museum*



collections donated by Father Abate to the Municipality. There is a small compilation of archaeological finds from various sites, together with objects and work instruments attesting to the local agricultural culture as well as an extraordinary collection of animals both stuffed and under formaldehyde. In the archaeological section, exhibits from the excavations carried out under the aegis of the Soprintendenza ai Beni Culturali di Palermo (Local Superintendent Authority for Cultural Heritage) in 2000 and 2001, in collaboration with the Municipality of Castellana, as well as objects found on the surface in other local municipal sites, which attest to the antiquity of the human settlement in this area, dating it to Prehistoric times.

R.M.C.



## MOUNT ALBURCHIA, GANGIVECCHIO AND THE GANGI CIVIC MUSEUM

**Mount Alburchia** rises from the mountain chain of the Madonie, the Nebrodi and the Erei, to the Southeast of Gangi and was the site of an ancient settlement.

Baron Gandolfo Felice Bongiorno was the first person to report the discovery of archaeological remains on the site in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Half way through the 20<sup>th</sup> century S. Nasello talks of the various occasional finds and indicates the presence of a necropolis. Some of the objects on show at the Gangi Civic Museum originate from two different burial zones in the *contrada* Comune, relating to two different phases of life of what was most likely a mountain settlement; one can be dated between the Archaic and the Classic Age (7<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century BC) and the other dates back to the Hellenistic Age (4<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC). The excavations carried out at Mount Alburchia in 1958 brought to light walled structures pertaining to dwellings that attest to the fact that the site was inhabited in Late-Roman times (4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century AD), but no evidence has been found of a settlement from earlier ages. However, in the necropolis area of *contrada* Comune, two tombs datable to the Archaic-Hellenic Age, (between late 4<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC) have been excavated. As things stand at the moment, no evidence has been found of a settlement on Mount Alburchia connected to the tombs from the Archaic-Hellenistic period, whilst there is ample documentation of the presence of a settlement in Late-Ancient times.



**6**  
*Mount Alburchia.*  
*Votive aedicule or*  
*tomb, carved out of the*  
*north face. (Photo by*  
*Santo Ferraro)*

**7**  
*Mount Alburchia.*  
*Aedicule along the*  
*north wall. (Photo by*  
*Santo Ferraro)*



8  
*Gangivecchio.*  
*The inner courtyard*

An out of the ordinary presence of votive aedicules dating from the Hellenistic-Roman Age has been found, along the north wall of Mount Alburchia. A settlement, built in the area of the Benedictine Abbey of **Gangivecchio** (14<sup>th</sup> century), can be dated to Late Antiquity. Excavations have uncovered in the courtyard the remains of a tomb with a rich collection of grave goods, including ceramic vases (small jugs, a small

amphora and a bottle) two glass *ampullae*, two rings and a bronze earring.

The '**Naselli**' Civic Museum in **Gangi** was opened in 1958, in the buildings of the Elementary School 'Gaspare Vazzano', exhibiting finds collected in the area, gifted by the locals. In 1960, the Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione (Italian Ministry of Public Education) officially recognised the

9  
*'Naselli' Museum in  
 Gangi. Indigenous  
 jug from Gangi, 6<sup>th</sup>  
 century BC*

10  
*'Naselli' Museum in  
 Gangi. Terracotta  
 statuette of a person  
 offering a sacrificial  
 pig, 5<sup>th</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup>  
 century  
 BC*

Museum and in 1965 it was added to the list of 'Minor Museums' of Italy. In 1995 it transferred to its new location in Palazzo Sgadari and has continued to enlarge its collections.

The new location permitted the addition of a new section and the Museum now has a Picture Gallery composed of the Foundation Gianbecchina and the Museo delle Armi (a section devoted to arms). The archaeological section occupies four ground-floor rooms with an Educational and a Topographical division. In the Educational section the artefacts are classified by type: indigenous ceramics, lamps, decorated earthenware, coins, whilst the Topographical section exhibits artefacts found directly on the Mount Alburchia site.

R.M.C.



## VALLEY OF THE NORTHERN IMERA RIVER

### MOUNT RIPARATO

There was already a settlement in the Archaic period on Mount Riparato in Caltavuturo, but the remains of buildings and streets brought to light by the excavations refer to the Hellenistic-Roman period. The dwellings from around the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, which could have been part of the ancient *Ambica*, are organised in blocks, interspersed by orthogonal streets. Lower down, below the residential area, there are thermal baths, probably dating from 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. The threshold with a mosaic depicting a flower with six petals on a black background is now exhibited in the Civic Museum in Caltavuturo.

The subsequent abandonment and destruction of the Hellenistic settlement is probably due to some kind of natural disaster. The only necropolis found up to now is situated in the locality known as Santa Venera. Signs of both inhumation and cremation are present. Inhumations, singly, were in simple earthen ditches. Cremations are documented as having been in the primary form, with the entire corpse being cremated in a ditch and the ashes conserved *in situ* (normally carried out on adults). Cremations were often signalled by markers (*epitymbia*), consisting of small stepped monuments made of blocks of local stone, similar to those found in the

11

Mount Riparato.  
View from the South





coeval necropolis in Polizzi Generosa. The grave goods, dated between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, normally consist of between 12 and 35/40 objects, including lamps, table ware, a great number of ointment containers and ointment jars such as *lekythoi*, usually from the tombs of children. Occasionally there are bronze artefacts and figured terracotta.

### **The Caltavuturo golden phiale**

Although attributed to Caltavuturo or Mount Riparato, the provenance of the

famous golden phiale (*phiale aurea*) is uncertain. It is a shallow dish, with central navel (*mesomphalic*), embossed and chased and with Greek inscriptions on the edge, dating from between mid 4<sup>th</sup> century and early 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.

Sold through the black market it was recuperated and given back to the Italian Heritage in 1990 and is now on show in the Antiquarium of Himera.

**12**

*Mount Riparato.  
Dwelling spaces  
on the south slope  
(photo by Domenico  
Pancucci)*

R.M.C.

## ARCHAEOLOGY

### The Inland Sites

#### **PAGLIUZZA: THE TREASURE TROVE OF COINS AND THE RURAL SETTLEMENT**

541 silver denarii, coins in use in Ancient Rome, were found in a treasure trove in Pagliuzza (Caltavuturo), buried in a farm datable from the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century to early 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. Most of the coins date from the last twenty-five years of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. The nest egg had been hidden under

one of the floors of the building, probably during a moment of danger, which could have coincided with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Servile War in 104-99 BC.

R.M.C.

13

*Pagliuzza. Marcus Tullius Roman Republic 'Denarius'. Obverse: Helmeted head of Roma right, ROMA behind (102-100 BC)*



14

*Pagliuzza. Marcus Tullius Roman Republic 'Denarius'. Reverse: Victory in quadriga right (102-100 BC)*





15  
*Caltavuturo,  
 Terravecchia. View  
 from the Rocca of  
 Sciara*

### TERRAVECCHIA OF CALTAVUTURO AND THE “GIUSEPPE GUARNIERI” CIVIC MUSEUM

The mediaeval settlement of Caltavuturo was built on a limestone cliff, known as the **Terravecchia**, dominating the town from the north and protected to the East by the Rocca di Sciara. The Rocca was probably the seat of a Greek lookout, from the Archaic and Classical era. On the summit there are the remains of the Hermitage of San Nicola, already documented in 1584. The Castle sited on the Terravecchia was in use in the Norman era (11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century) up to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The little mediaeval church of the Casale or the Santissimo Salvatore, maybe dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, was deconsecrated at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and used as a communal graveyard in times of emergency such as the epidemic of the Spanish Fever

in 1918. The Terravecchia was definitively abandoned in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The **Caltavuturo Civic Museum** is dedicated to don Giuseppe Guarnieri, an enthusiast of history of Sicilian archaeology. The archaeological section occupies four rooms on the ground floor, around the cloisters of the ex-Monastery of San Francesco (17<sup>th</sup> century). The first room exhibits artefacts from the archaeological field surveys in the area around the town. The second room exhibits material from the Mediaeval settlement of Terravecchia; the third room exhibits grave goods from the necropolis of Santa Venera and artefacts from the inhabited area; the fourth room exhibits the treasure trove of coins from Pagliuzza.

R.M.C.

16

*Polizzi Generosa.  
Panoramic view  
(photo by Luciano  
Schimmenti)*

## POLIZZI GENEROSA AND THE ARCHEOLOGICAL CIVIC MUSEUM

The modern town of **Polizzi** coincides with an ancient settlement. It is situated at 918 metres above sea level, dominating a large part of the upper valley of the Grande River (or Imera Settentrionale). The town is protected on three sides by steep cliffs, which made it easily defensible; only to the East it opens up towards the district of San Pietro, the area of modern urban development. Here a rich necropolis from the Hellenistic Age (mid 4<sup>th</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC) has been discovered.

The remains of a church dedicated to Saint Peter (*San Pietro*) also attest to the presence of people during the Norman era.

Recent excavations under the aegis of the Soprintendenza of Palermo, during the restoration of the Main Church, have uncovered remains of indigenous pottery dating back to the Archaic-Classical Age (**fig. 20**). Particular attention should be paid to the necropolis from the Hellenistic Age in the district of San Pietro. Signs of both inhumation and cremation are present (the ashes were kept in funeral vases (*cinerari*); In later years cremations were carried out in the primary form, with the entire corpse being cremated directly in the ditch, together with the grave goods and other with offerings (almonds, pinenuts and eggs). In the case of a burial, the body was probably placed on a bed of wooden planks and put in a ditch dug out of the ground. Infants were always buried between two tiles or in large containers, normally amphorae (*enchytrismo*).







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*Polizzi Generosa.  
Panoramic view*

Many of the burials were covered by stone markers (*epitymbia*), consisting of a rectangular platform or a stepped pyramid, similar to those found in other coeval necropolises such as Lilibeo (Marsala), Cefalù and Morgantina as well as the necropolis of Santa Venera on Mount Riparato in Caltavuturo. In later years the ashes were sometimes deposited in tombs (*alla cappuccina*), made out of flat tiles (*solenes*), creating a pitched roof. Amongst the grave goods discovered were black-glazed tableware and kitchen and storage jars both achromous and decorated with band circling. There are many examples of

figured pottery: of particular importance the cinerary vase depicting Heracles and the lion Nemeo (**fig. 18-19**), the oldest artefact found in the necropolis dating back to 375-350 BC, and attributed to a Proto-Siciliot potter identified as the 'Pittore di Polizzi' [the Painter from Polizzi]. There are also excellent examples of figured terracotta (**fig. 21**), including a series of figurines showing distinct theatrical attributes, ascribable to the '*Commedia Nuova*' (Nea or Greek New Comedy). There are also numerous '*strigili*' [instruments used by athletes to remove oil and dust from their bodies]. Overall it would appear that the Hellenistic residential





**18**  
*Polizzi Generosa, Archaeology Museum. Amphora (cinerary urn) by the Pittore di Polizzi depicting Heracles and the lion Nemeo, 375-350 BC*



**19**  
*Polizzi Generosa, Archaeology Civic Museum. Detail of the cinerary urn, 375-350 BC*

## ARCHAEOLOGY

### The Inland Sites



area was an active commercial centre. The **Polizzi Archaeological Museum** is located inside the Town Hall, once the 17<sup>th</sup> century Jesuit College. The artefacts found in the excavations in the area around Contrada San Pietro are exhibited in two sections, Stratigraphical and Typological. In the stratigraphical section the artefacts are grouped as grave goods, from the most recent to the oldest, as they were found in the various layers of the site.

R.M.C.

20

*Polizzi Generosa.  
Material U.S. 02B  
from the Main Church*



21

*Polizzi Generosa.  
Archaeological Civic  
Museum. Votive  
terracotta figurines of  
Athena Lindia, 4<sup>th</sup>  
century BC*



# VALLEY OF THE RIVER TORTO

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## MURA PREGNE AND BRUCATO

The site of **Mura Pregne** is located in the lower valley of the River Torto, at the foothills of the Mount San Calogero, in the Municipality of Sciara, an area that has been heavily populated ever since Prehistoric times.

The settlement was of extreme importance, as attested by the uniqueness of the building remains that have survived. Unfortunately most of site was destroyed by the careless activities of a quarry in the area, opened in the 1950's and only closed, thanks to the intervention of the Soprintendenza per i Beni culturali di Palermo, in 1983, after a fierce legal battle. The ruins on the Castellaccio—one of the topographical names given to this area—are already mentioned by Fazello in the 16<sup>th</sup>

century, but the earliest excavations in this area date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Mura Pregne became one of the first Prehistoric settlements in western Sicily to be studied. Later archaeological excavations carried out by Bovio Marconi in the 1930's, brought to light evidence that the Prehistoric settlement was located in an area where three uplands were connected by perimeter walls, of which only the most eastern plateau has survived, together with two colossal walls.

On the site were found the only fragments discovered in Sicily dating back to Neolithic Diana culture (the final phase of the Neolithic Age, 4000-3500 BC), as well as obsidian imported from Lipari. There are also significant archaeological remains from the Eneolithic Period (3000-2200 BC circa) and the Bronze Age (2000-1000 BC circa).



**22**  
*Mura Pregne.*  
*The pseudo dolmen.*

23

*Mura Pregne.  
Megalithic wall,  
northern face*

The megalithic walls also date back to this period. They are almost 6 metres thick, in dry stonewalling, made of rough-hewn, large blocks. The interesting structure made of stone slabs, to the Northeast of the wall, resembles a *dolmen*, albeit smaller, suggesting that the construction was some kind of funeral parlour (**fig.22**).

Immediately following the founding of the town of Himera (mid 7<sup>th</sup> century BC), the

lower valley of the River Torto became part of the area of influence of the Greek city state or '*polis*'. The Greek settlement was only a few kilometres far from the native one and it is certain that the two were in contact, even if most probably not always peacefully, though it should be noted that indigenous ceramic pottery has been found from the earliest times in this Greek colony [from the Greek town of Chalcis].

After the destruction of the '*polis*' by the Carthaginians (409 BC), the settlement probably came under the influence of the Greeks from *Thermai*, during what is known as the Punic Eparchy [rule]. In fact the site flourished once more, attested by the construction of new fortifications. During the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, that is during the military operations of the first Punic War, the site was abandoned and on the relief there are no traces of occupation during the Roman era. Later, in the Middle Ages, the highest part of the site was once again occupied and the new settlement is already noted in historical records dating from the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD, under the name of **Brucato**.

The village was later conquered by the Normans and continued to expand under the Swabian domination. During the Wars of the Vespers, the village supported the Angevin dynasty and for this reason was besieged and destroyed in 1339 by the Aragonese troops.

Excavations on site, carried out in the 1970's by a French team of archaeologists, under the aegis of the Soprintendenza of Palermo, have turned up remains from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Remains of some of the dwellings as well



as two churches are still visible on the relief. One of the two churches, dedicated to St. Elijah (*Sant'Elia*), is a building with three naves. The earthenware remains from this period, found on the Brucato site, are on show in the Antiquarium of Himera.

Of particular interest is what is known as a 'pilgrim's flask', made of terracotta, decorated with an eagle.

**24**  
*Brucato. Earthenware water bottle with a crowned eagle, 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century*

M.C.



25

*Colle Madore, Lercara Friddi. Village of Lercara Friddi and Colle Madore in the background.*



26

*Colle Madore. Storehouse room*

**COLLE MADORE**

Colle Madore is located in the heart of the Sicanian area—[the *Sicans* or *Sicani* were one of Sicily’s most ancient peoples, one of the Greek’s oldest names for Sicily was *Sikania*]*—*between the valleys of the rivers Torto and Platani, in the area known as Lercara Friddi.

This important settlement is built on



the top of a small relief, with very steep hills to the north and the east and whose morphology has been totally altered by centuries of sulphur mining, which has certainly changed the initial orographical configuration of the place.

The area was inhabited as early as the late Bronze Age [11<sup>th</sup> century BC], as attested by the discovery of 13 fragments of stone moulds intended for the casting of metal objects: axes, blades, javelin heads and swords, which can be dated back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC.

The continuity of the life of the settlement during the Protohistory Age is attested by some sporadic findings, including two bronze *fibulae* (brooches) of native manufacture, dating back to between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. This period was very important for the development of the Sicanian communities in central and western Sicily.

At the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century various rectangular shaped rooms were discovered, sited on the southern side of the relief on





27  
*Colle Madore. Base  
 of a black-glazed cup  
 painted with Greek  
 inscription*

superimposed terraces. This constitutes proof that there was initial contact with the Greek culture also on Colle Madore.

Among the remains there was also what was probably a small sacred building, in which a votive deposit with indigenous and Greek materials was found. An interesting group of embossed bronze belts, found quite by chance before excavations were initiated, are almost certainly from the same context. Various finds have been collected, and then partly recombined, off the floor of the sacred building, including an “*aedicule*” representing Heracles at the fountain; the presence of four transport amphorae of Greek production and two large native earthenware containers, one engraved and the other painted is also of significance. One of the rooms discovered underneath the terrace of the temple was being used as a warehouse (fig. 26) and contained, aligned along the walls, twelve large water-pots partially fixed to the ground; another space contained elements necessary for processing metal: a small combustion

chamber, irregular lead fragments pressed on the surface of the burner and drainage built into the floor, all indicating metallurgic activity.

The last phase of the settlement can be dated to the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, when, on top of the layers of destruction from the late Archaic period, poorly constructed new structures were built with complete disregard for the old spatial organisation.

M.C.

28  
*Colle Madore, Lercara  
 Museum. Blades and  
 bronze belts, pertinent  
 to local armour*



29

*Grottoes 'della Gurfa'.  
Entrance*

**THE GURFA GROTOS**

The Gurfa Grottos are situated 5 kms from the residential area of Alia, along a secondary branch of the ancient via Messina through the Mountains and they open onto the southern flank of the hill known as *'dei Saraceni'* [of the Saracens] On the rocky high side numerous opening can be distinctly seen shedding light into the grottos, defined by L. Tirrito in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a "magnificent *casamentum* [block of houses] cut out of the rocks".

The complex has two entrances, the eastern one leads to a semi-circular space of 12.50 metres in diameter and it is more than 16 metres high; this is what is known as a *tholos*, the room, that for its very size, is the most impressive of the complex.

The western entrance, on the other hand, leads into a vast almost rectangular space (9.60 x 9.15 mts), with a very particular double sloping ceiling, known as (*stanza a tenda* or tented room). Access to the upper rooms is external, via stairs carved into the rock face, which leads into four communicating rooms and with the *tholos*, at a height of 8 metres above floor level.

The second floor is more complex and has been reconstructed several times, in an effort to make it conform to more modern buildings built of brick, in fact there are cupboards, windows, chairs and fireplaces all carved out of the rock face.

The origins of the complex are not clear: some scholars suggest that the excavations might have been carried out in Prehistoric times and that the bell shaped spaces could well have had some function for worship.

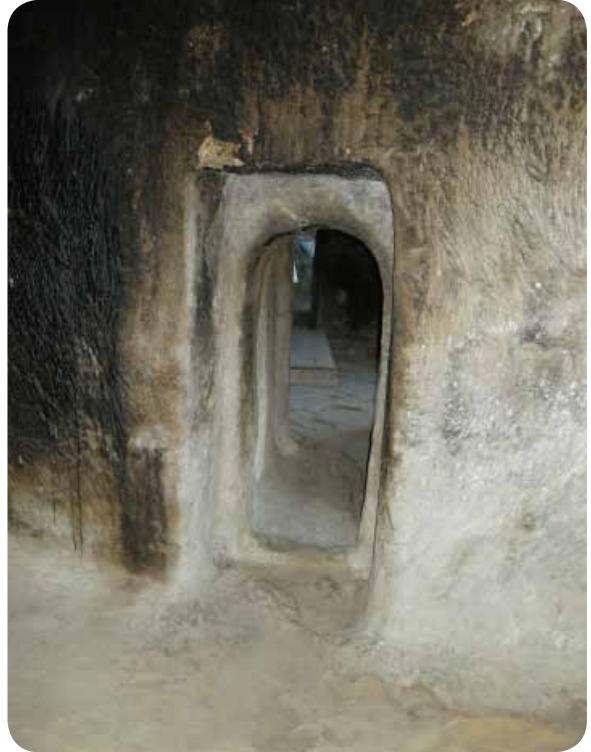
The Grottos would seem not to have been carved out as a single design project but over at least three distinct periods of time. Initially to the South some tombs *'a grotticella'* [like a grotto], were carved out at some time during the Bronze Age (2<sup>nd</sup> millenium BC).

Later on, probably during the Late-Mediaeval Period (5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century AD), the large bell-shaped room was created, to serve as a granary, as suggested by the term *'Gurfa'* of Mahgreb origin. Only later,



probably some time later between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century, were the other rooms supposedly dug out.

Under the Normans, the *casamentum* or housing complex gets included into the Hospital of 'San Giovanni dei Lebbrosi' (St. John of the Lepers) in Palermo and then the Gurfa becomes part of the estate of the 'Magione' (Knights Templar) and the Knights of the Teutonic Order, who administered the estates of the Church of that name and the lands belonging to the



Hospital of San Giovanni dei Lebbrosi. The productive and strategic values of the vast territories of the fiefdom were epitomised by the presence in the *Gurfa* of a Grand Master of the Military Order, who administered the Teutonic possessions in the area.

**30**  
*Grottoes 'della Gurfa'.  
Internal passage*

M.C.

# VALLEY OF THE RIVER SAN LEONARDO

31

*Vicari. Towers on the north slope of the castle (photo by E. Canzonieri)*

32

*Vicari. Plans of the Castle (Illustration by E. Canzonieri)*

## VICARI

The modern town of **Vicari** is situated at the foot of a cliff 700 metres above sea level, in the middle valley of the River San Leonardo, a district rich in signs of human habitation since Prehistoric times.

An axe and two bronze *fibulae* (brooches), now lost, were found at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the Misaddi area, at the north foothills of the rocky outcrop, ceramic fragments datable back to the Bronze Age have also been found.

It is probable that a Sicilian settlement developed subsequently; in fact some of the remains found on site, date back to between the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. The grave goods unearthed at the foot of the rock in Misaddi were artefacts decorated with embossing and engraving. The foundation of the city of Himera will have certainly influenced this territory, not so far from the polis; in fact the fragments of Greek ceramics dating back to the early 6<sup>th</sup> century, were found in the area of Vicari.

The inhabited centre survived, with alternating degrees of success up until the Roman Period, attested by a marble urn, with inscriptions in Latin, which is now walled inside the Main Church. The first nucleus of the fortifications of the ‘*Rocca*’ probably dates to the Byzantine era, whilst the subsequent phase of human habitation in Late Medieval times must have wiped out all preceding settlements, even if the remains of the Byzantine Church of





**33**  
*Vicari. Cuba of  
 Ciprina (photo by  
 E. Canzonieri)*

Santa Maria in Boikòs are still visible at the foothills.

It has not yet been excavated, and given a first walled perimeter of limited dimensions, was probably built in the 8<sup>th</sup> century during the encastellation of Sicily in the Byzantine era.

The first time Vicari is mentioned in a chronicle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, narrating the Islamic conquest of Sicily; in 1077, the Count Roger establishes himself at 'Brica', creating a strategic base for the assault on Castronovo.

In mid 12<sup>th</sup> century, Idrisi includes the description of Vicari in his work. The three towers constructed along the northern side of the fortifications are also from that time. The central tower (*Porta Fausa*) is open on the inner side, as referred in Mediaeval war treatises, so that, were the tower to fall into enemy hands, it would not be possible for the besiegers to entrench themselves inside it.

The Castle is subsequently quoted in the chronicles of the Angevin era; after the War of the Vespers, the Vicari fortress was ceded to a local noble family, and then later to the Chiaramonte.

The imposing complex of cisterns was also edified around this time, with a vaulted roof and four rooms, situated at the centre of the fortifications.

Vicari today is a conglomeration of various residential complexes, originally congregated around the fortified '*Rocca*'.

On the western slopes of the cliff lies the *Terravecchia* complex, which has maintained its strong medieval character.

To the Southwest of the modern residential area, along the old road that connected Vicari with Castronovo, the *Cuba of Ciprina* is still standing. This construction, cuboid and with a domed roof, was influenced by Islamic culture.



34

*Ciminna, the Pizzo.  
South slope*

**THE PIZZO OF CIMINNA**

The Pizzo of Ciminna is about 50 kms from Palermo; the slight hill occupies a strategically significant position, dominating the middle valley of the San Leonardo River, an important affluent providing a waterway into the hinterland of the Island.

The hill is not easily accessed, and is known as the Pizzo [in Italian Peak or pointed-shaped hill] for its peculiar shape, with very steep slopes and a short tableland on the top.

The existence of a native Hellenised inhabited centre has been known for some time, as badly preserved walled remains were still visible on site together with a rampart that probably obliterated a fortified wall protecting the settlement. Another stretch of the wall, at the highest point of the site, probably defended a small natural acropolis.

The area was only particularly active between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC; the development of the site in the early Hellenistic Period coincides with the economic, cultural and artistic flowering that characterised Sicily in

that era and it is likely that the complex was under the Punic Eparchy, playing the role of intermediary between the large coastal dwellings and the centre north of Sicily.

Three excavation campaigns were carried out at the Pizzo at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, by the Birbeck College of London and, later, by the Archaeological School of Specialisation of Matera, always under the aegis of the Soprintendenza of Palermo. The excavations brought to light a part of the inhabited area, and in particular a religious complex which covers at least three terraces and is formed of connecting rooms, partly constructed and partly dug out of the rock face. Unfortunately the building has been badly damaged by clandestine digs.

The organisation of the spaces, the unusual apse shape of one of the rooms and the type of remains suggest the possibility that it could be an urban sanctuary dedicated to a female divinity, perhaps Demeter [goddess of harvest].

A large number of archaeological remains, such as figured terracotta, depicting a female figures, small jars in miniaturist style, small domestic altars, small pedestal cups, scent burners, drinking cups, plates, scent bottles, tableware, strainers and amphorae.

The site was abandoned for some unknown reason, and there are no archaeological traces of some traumatic event that could have caused a precipitous end to the settlement. Certainly by Roman times, the inhabited area was already semi-deserted.



**35**  
*Pizzo Ciminna,  
Hydria (amphora)  
with a female head,  
end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century  
BC*

**MOUNT FALCONE OF BAUCINA**

**Mount Falcone** is a modest highland (695 metres), in the vicinity of the modern town, on which a surface survey in the 1970's discovered an indigenous inhabited centre, in this area that is rich in archaeological remains dating back to Prehistoric times.

The Mount is extremely steep to the North and the West, but is accessible from the South and the East, where a saddle connects it to the nearby Mount Carrozza. Here there is a vast indigenous centre that during the course of the 6<sup>th</sup> century and above all the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC was influenced by the culture of the neighbouring Greek colony of Himera.

The Soprintendenza and the University of Palermo have excavated the Mount several times, extending operations to include the necropolis in the mountain pass that separates it from Mount Carrozza.

Although clandestine excavations have devastated the area, it was still possible to bring to light a significant number of tombs, most of which lie facing Northeast/Southwest. These burials are a mixture of local and Greek rites.

Some of the tombs were of the type known as 'a grotticella' (chamber tombs) used for collective burials; unfortunately they had all been violated, but a small fragment of an indigenous engraved krater, dated back to the Archaic Period, was found in the earth of one of the largest chambers. The

36

*Baucina, Necropolis of Mount Falcone. Inside a hypogeic tomb (photo by Giuseppe Bordonaro)*







37

*Baucina, Necropolis of Mount Falcone. Simple ditch tomb (photo by Giuseppe Bordonaro)*

tombs, in which the Greek burial rituals had prevailed, were both of the simple ditch type—cut out of the chalk rock face (fig. 37)—and with a small, sloping roof covering *‘alla cappuccina’*, whilst infants were buried in transport amphorae, the practice known as *enchytrismòs* and placed in a separate area reserved for infant burials. In the area above the lower level several cremated remains were found, some secondary, of which one was contained in a Punic type amphora.

The necropolis was used in a subsequent phase in the Middle Ages, when other populaces inhabited the region and, consequently, the burial rituals were probably Islamic.

The town of **Baucina** has created a **small museum** where some of the grave goods found by the Soprintendenza during

excavations of the necropolis are exhibited, together with material remains found during the archaeological surveys carried out in the territory of the Municipality by the Cattedra di Topografia dell’Italia Antica (Department of Topography of Ancient Italy) of the University of Palermo, and of remains confiscated in the area in January 2012 by the Carabinieri, the Italian Military Police [Nucleo Tutela del patrimonio culturale dei Carabinieri], which almost certainly originated in the necropolis of Mount Carrozza.

M.C.

## VALLEY OF THE RIVER PLATANI

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38

*San Luca. Southeast corner of the peristyle*

### SAN LUCA, THE KASSAR AND THE ROCCA OF SAN VITALE

**San Luca** is a *contrada* (an area or district) along the road that connects the towns of Prizzi and Lercada Friddi; the area offers everything necessary for human habitation and ground surveys have confirmed that there was sustained activity in the area from Prehistoric times. In the Roman Period there was a country villa, typical of the buildings of the time of northwest Sicily. In 2004/5 the Soprintendenza of Palermo resumed the excavations of the site, started ten years earlier.

The oldest material remains found in the area are a few fragments of clay and some stone flakes; there is also an interesting bronze coin from Himera, which can be

dated back to 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. A villa with peristyle, connecting rooms and a courtyard with storehouses for agricultural products, which may be dated back to the late-Republican era. It was inhabited up until late 2<sup>nd</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, but was then partly abandoned and in the 6<sup>th</sup> century a thick layer of alluvial deposit obliterated the building, and a new apsidal building was built on top of the peristyle. The area was still inhabited in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, attested by the finding of a bronze coin with the effigy of the Byzantine Emperor Heracles.

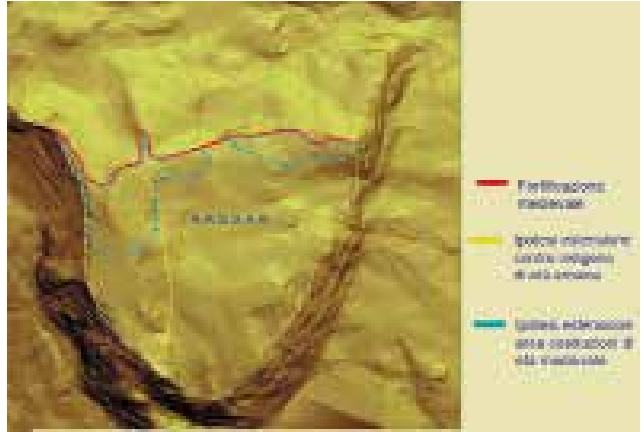
**Mount Kassar** is located downhill from the Valley of the Platani, straddling an important thoroughfare that used to connect Palermo with Agrigento. The

39

*San Luca. Oil lamp with Nike in flight, from the Roman-Imperial Period*



plateau, dominating the modern city of Castronovo, was part of a fortified area, already in existence in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a chance discovery was made of an important group of indigenous figurative bronzes (bulls, rams and birds) dating back to the 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century BC and all had the same characteristic base decorated with engravings. The area of the Kassar, probably already populated in Roman times, must have been uninhabited at the time of the first fortifications. In fact the walls have been dated back to the Byzantine period and the chronology has been confirmed by the first systematic excavations carried out on site by the Soprintendenza. Furthermore historical archives indicate an intensification of the defensive systems, in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century, when most of the Byzantine settlements on the Island were fortified. These covered an area of some 90 hectares and went from a height of 870 mts to 1,000 mts; the walls,



double faced, are roughly 3.5 mts thick. 11 towers are spaced along its length and there are two entrances. The east Gate must have been closed by a wooden door, of which the iron horizontal lintel has been unearthed. It was probably protected by a portcullis, of which only the side grooves on the side towers remain.

40  
*Kassar. Layout*



41  
*Castronovo Cassero.  
West gate seen from  
inside*

## ARCHAEOLOGY

### The Inland Sites

42

*Castronovo Cassero.  
Part of the fortifications*



43

*Castronovo Cassero.  
The small mediaeval church*



Sources confirm that *Castellum Novum* – in Arabic *Qasr al gadid* – capitulated in 857-858 and it is likely that the Kassar can be identified as the *Qasr* and the burnt remains found during excavation of the east Gate, seem to attest to the siege of the settlement by the Islamic army.

**The Rocca of San Vitale** has recently been excavated by the University of Viterbo, under the aegis of the Soprintendenza of Palermo; in the area—and in the actual town of Castronovo—there was probably a settlement from the Arab era, subsequently conquered by the Normans.

44

*Kassar, Archives  
of the A. Salinas  
Regional Museum.  
Site inspection of the  
fortifications by the  
archaeologist Pirro  
Marconi in the 1920's*





On the rocky outcrop dominating the town of Castronovo, there are the remains of a fortification, which, following the contours of the land, ends to the North in a circular tower. Attached to the perimeter wall are the remains of the Church of the Giudice Giusto, dating back, according to archaeological findings, to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. In the centre of the settlement, the relative dating of the archaeological remains has unearthed strata from the Late Middle Ages and a small stash of silver coins, which may be dated from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the fortress was used as a prison.

M.C.



45

*Kassar. Panorama from the East with the Kassar, Castronovo di Sicilia and to the left, the rocky spur of San Vitale*

46

*San Vitale. The Mount with the Church of San Vitale in the centre*

47

*San Vitale, Archives of the A. Salinas Regional Museum. Site inspection of the Mount of San Vitale by the archaeologist Pirro Marconi in the 1920's*

48

*San Vitale. Castle. Stairs in the tower, known as the House of the Emir*

## VALLEY OF THE RIVER SOSIO

49

*Mountain of the  
Horses. The theatre*

### MONTAGNA DEI CAVALLI AND THE PRIZZI CIVIC MUSEUM

The site, identified as being the ancient city of Hippana, was situated in the upper valley of the River Sosio and was destroyed by the Romans in 258 BC, during manoeuvres to encircle the city of Palermo in the First Punic War.

The settlement is on Mount San Lorenzo, in the district of Prizzi, known as the ‘**Montagna dei Cavalli**’ (Mountain of the Horses), and during the Middle Ages was called *Montis Ypana*, in the territory of Prizzi.

The site, naturally fortified, was originally an indigenous Sicilian centre, from around 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. After a period of decadence, a significant expansion of the centre occurred, due also to the arrival of a new group of inhabitants. The urban reorganisation of the settlement was a complete recreation of the city, modifying its entire structure.

The new settlement covered roughly 30 hectares and was protected by a double fortified curtain wall; terraces supported by immense containing walls must have created an urban layout with an impressive scenographic effect.

The inner curtain wall enclosed the area of the Acropolis, with the *agorà* and some public and religious buildings—the Orphic gold laminetta with a single anthropoid figure with three faces (Latin “*Vultus Trifrons*”)—(fig. 50) was found here.

During the same period a theatre was built, the supporting walls of the *cavea* (seating area) and the corridors giving access to the orchestra, are still standing. The external

structures of the building are monumental, built on rock and with a double outer wall. Furthermore, recent excavations have unearthed several rows of lower seats in the *cavea*.

The massive circulation of Punic bronze coins in the settlement confirms that the settlement was part of the Carthaginian *eparchy* (province), with an important strategic and economic role in this part of the Island.





The **Prizzi Civic Museum** houses a small selection of the artefacts unearthed at Hippana, amongst which is the thin sheet of gilded silver decorated with a triformal bearded face, mentioned above. The fragments of some ornamental headbands with an embossed foliate decoration were found in the western necropolis, unfortunately looted by scavengers.

The pottery on show also comes from the necropolis; *pyxides*, bottles, *lekythoi* (ointment jars) and a good quantity of figurative terracotta. The fragment of the base of the column of a *louterion* or small basin embossed with a representation of Scylla amongst a refined decoration of spiny acanthus leaves and spiral tracery.

The numismatic section is mainly composed of Punic coins depicting a pony and palmettes, which may be dated back to the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> and the first decades of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC as well as numerous Syracusian coins.

#### 50

*Prizzi. Prizzi Civic Museum. Silver plaque gilded, embossed with a head seen front left and right. From the Acropolis, building B, late 4<sup>th</sup> to early 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC*

#### 51

*Prizzi. Prizzi Civic Museum. Bronze litra coin from Syracuse. Obverse, head of Zeus Hellenios. From the Acropolis, north-east fortifications. 287-278 BC*

#### 52

*Prizzi, Prizzi Civic Museum. Punic bronze coin, perhaps from the Sicilian mint. Reverse, horse and palmette, late 4<sup>th</sup> century, early decades 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC*

M.C.

## VALLEY OF THE RIVER ELEUTERIO

### LA MONTAGNOLA OF MARINEO (MAKELLA) AND THE MUSEUM OF THE VALLEY OF THE ELEUTERIO

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‘**The Montagnola**’, situated to the Northwest of Marineo, is a hill—known as the Hillock—(623 mts above sea level) surrounded by steep slopes. Access is from the southeast side, which dominates the entire valley of the Eleuterio River, the natural waterway, of fundamental importance, between the south Mediterranean and the northern Tyrrhenian coasts. The first local occupation of the site dates from the First Iron Age. The hill was more heavily populated in the Archaic Period, when the site, known as **Makella**

in classical sources, due to the unearthing of tiles stamped with the name of the city, must have played an important role in relations between the indigenous centres, the colonial Greeks and the Punic cities. The settlement knew a moment of maximum development between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, when the entire area of central-west Sicily was under the domination of the Carthaginians. More ambivalent is the Archaeological evidence relating to the period following the Roman conquest, consisting of annotations in sources and an inscription on a rostral column (triumphal arch), discovered in 1565 on the Arch of Septimius Severus in Rome. The Arabs reoccupied the hillock in 840

53  
*Marineo. The  
'Montagnola'. Aerial  
photo*







**54**  
*Marineo, Museum of the Valley of the Eleuterio. Votive deposit in the fortifications. Bronze Calcidise helmets, late 6<sup>th</sup> century BC*

and dwellings from the Norman era have also been uncovered. Archaeological surveys carried out by the Soprintendenza of Palermo since 1968 have identified sections of the settlement and of the fortifications.

Simple oval huts of stone and rammed earth (*pisé*), characterises the first phase of life in the indigenous village between the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> beginning 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. From the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC the old huts are surmounted with square elements, with rounded corners and covered by reeds and canes, which have surrendered a great number of artefacts.

The successive phase from the 6<sup>th</sup> century is amply documented due to the discovery, in an area behind the perimeter wall, of a **votive depository**, probably dating back to the 6<sup>th</sup>, early 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, containing arms from the Archaic Period, extremely unusual for Sicily, but perhaps in memory of some epic victory. On the floor, next to a structure, probably a votive altar, two bronze shin guards (armour for the

protection of the legs), three helmets (**fig. 54**), a small votive shield as well as abundant colonial pottery and local pottery of excellent manufacture (**fig. 55**).

There is also reason to suppose of the existence of a sacred area to the West of the altar, used for libations and sacrifices, attested by the find of a ditch-fireplace and a terracotta cooking piaster. Animal bones were found close by numerous pottery fragments, a bronze pendant in the shape of a face and an ivory plaque reproducing a ram kneeling.

Dated to the mid 4<sup>th</sup> century BC is another round of buildings, attesting to the prosperity of the city at that time. Large portions of the inhabited area were unearthed as well as an important architectural complex comprising a **large cistern** connected to a public building. The cistern, partly built of plastered squared blocks and partly dug out of the rock face, is elongated in shape and covered by a barrel vault. Inside, the elongated, two storey building with plastered

walls and an *opus signinum* (in modern Italian ‘*cocciopesto*’) floor, were found many fragments of roof-tiles, stamped with the place-name ‘*Makella*’ (fig. 56) which confirm the public vocation of the building.

There are ambivalent traces referring to the periods post the Roman conquest and not much documentation on the centuries of the Empire and the Byzantine era, during which the site was only marginally inhabited. However, the settlement flourished once again, during the Norman period, when the city was rebuilt on the Hellenistic-Roman remains and buildings in various parts of the mountain have been uncovered, as well as abundant pottery artefacts.

The **perimeter wall** was constructed in the Late-Archaic Period, reinforced during the first Hellenistic Period, destroyed in the First Punic War and then partially reused during the Norman era. The ample section excavated comprises parts constructed from square blocks of local limestone and some continuous rocky outcrops. In the northwest sector, protecting one of the accesses to the city, there is a tower, made from a rock base, which provided a plinth for a stone structure. The flooring and the small plastered cistern are to be attributed to the restructuring from the Hellenistic era. The cistern, an irregular rectangular shape, is backed up against the inside wall, destroyed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. After the wars of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, a blacksmith set up outside the walls. The structures located to the North of the fortifications are Mediaeval and were reactivated and reinforced in Norman times.

The **Museum of the Eleuterio Valley**, located in the restored wing of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Castle Beccadelli Bologna in Marineo, functions as the local Civic Museum. The archaeological section, consisting of eight rooms, was opened to the public in 2004.

The collection consists of artefacts from the Valley of the Eleuterio River, which has been subject to intense adaptation to human needs since Antiquity, as well as a substantial nucleus of artefacts found in the settlement of the Montagnola of Marineo. There are also grave goods from



the vast *'sub divo'* (open air) necropolis of late Roman era, sited in the Contrada **St. Agata** (in the Borough of Piana of the Albanesi), comprising tableware, numerous lamps, ornaments and often glass artefacts of exceptionally good manufacture. The rooms dedicated to the site on the Montagnola offer a historical timeline of the settlement. The structural remains of the various phases are illustrated by large wall panels together with the presentation of a great deal of material. Of particular importance are the remains of the extraordinary **votive deposit** from the



late Archaic period, found near the curtain walls and those from the various necropolis around the Montagnola, which reflect the wealth and the impressive demographic growth of *Makella* during the Hellenistic Period.

**55**  
*Marineo, Museum of the Valley of Eleuterio. Votive deposit in the fortifications. Indigenous painted Hydra water jar, 6<sup>th</sup> century BC*

A.M.G.C.

**56**  
*Marineo, Museum of the Valley of Eleuterio. Tile with the inscription MAKELLA*



## VALLEY OF THE RIVER BELICE

57

*Mount Iato.  
Panoramic view of the  
north face*

### MOUNT IATO AND THE ANTIQUARIUM OF CASE D'ALIA

**Mount Iato** (853 mts above sea level), roughly 30 kms Southwest of Palermo, dominates the towns of San Cipirello and San Giuseppe Iato, overlooking both the valley of the River Iato, controlling the passes to the north coast of the Island, and, from the South, the Valley of the river Belice (Right), which connected the valley with the south coast and, more particularly, with the Greek colony of Selinus.

The systematic excavations carried out by the Archaeological Institute of Zurich University, starting in 1971, have documented an uninterrupted occupation of more than two thousand years, as attested by a complicated stratigraphy. The name of the city, in Greek 'IAITOIY',

used in the genitive (of Iaitas), appears on some of the roof tiles and on a series of coins, unearthed during the excavations. *Giato* is the name used in Mediaeval sources.

The first stable habitation of the site by indigenous groups occurs at the beginning of the first Millenium BC. After the initial contact with the Greek civilisation in the late 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, more frequent contacts during the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC led to a pacific cohabitation between the Greeks and the locals. The original settlement was transformed into a Greek city with monumental type buildings, both religious and private. At the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, the city was restructured with important new public buildings and luxurious private dwellings. In the First Imperial Age, the town began to lose its





lustre and although the settlement lasted throughout the Imperial and Byzantine Periods, standard of living was definitely lower.

After the Arab conquest *Giato* became, once again, a flourishing urban centre and during the Norman reign one of the most important administrative districts amongst those donated by William II to the Diocese of Santa Maria Nuova of Monreale. After it had become one of the bastions of the Islamic rebellion against the Swabian dynasty, it was totally destroyed in 1246 by the troops of Frederick II. This resulted in the deportation of the entire surviving population to Lucera in Apulia. The site was then definitively abandoned.

The urban area extends over some 40 hectares on the large summit plateau of Mount Iato. There was a partial perimeter wall to the east and south sides. The main entrance on the east side, the only side accessible, was heavily defended by two imposing flanking towers.

Remains of simple huts of stone and rammed earth (*pisé*) date back to the Early Iron Age (9<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century BC). The documentation for the Archaic Period is more substantial (8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century BC): a great deal of Greek common-ware was uncovered, together with some dwellings consisting of a single room with a dirt floor and a fireplace. Constructed in the Greek monumental style, dating from mid-6<sup>th</sup> century BC, are buildings, both religious (**Temple of Aphrodite**) and private like the **Late Archaic** period house on two floors with a courtyard, which is almost the largest discovered up until now from the Greek world. A great quantity of excellent

quality artefacts, both traditionally indigenous as well as ‘imported’ were found in the house. Around 300 BC the city was completely restructured. A wide road, paved with sandstone, led from the entrance gate to the centre of the city, where the **agorà** was situated, also paved with sandstone slabs. The square was enclosed on three sides by a colonnade; the northern side, composed of two naves with Doric columns, forms a single complex with the *bouleuterion* (the place where the public assembled), and could accommodate some 70 people. The west side of the square, built in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, is formed of a double colonnade, a new and larger Council room, a semi-circular *cavea* (seating) with 200 seats and a temple built on a podium with an altar in front. On the south side of the square, two religious buildings have been unearthed: a temple perhaps dedicated to *Tyche* [Goddess of Good Luck, the Roman Goddess Fortuna], given the bust of a big statue found nearby, together with a religious Punic building. In the northwest corner of the Agorà, was the **theatre**. The *cavea* (seating) built partly on the natural slope and partly on a deep artificial bulwark, was composed of 35 rows of seats for some 4,400 people. The decoration included four large sculptures of maenads and satyrs on the façade of the scenic building (**fig. 61**), two limestone lions and an element decorated with volutes,

58

Mount Iato. House  
with peristyle1.  
Bathroom



59

Mount Iato.  
The Theatre

which closed off the front *analemata* (external retaining walls of the cavea). The decoration of the older scenic building was completed by the antefixa (decorative elements of the roof terminals) in terracotta, in the form of theatre masks, whilst the tiles on the newer roof were stamped with the word ΘΕΑΤΡΟΝ (in Greek: theatre).

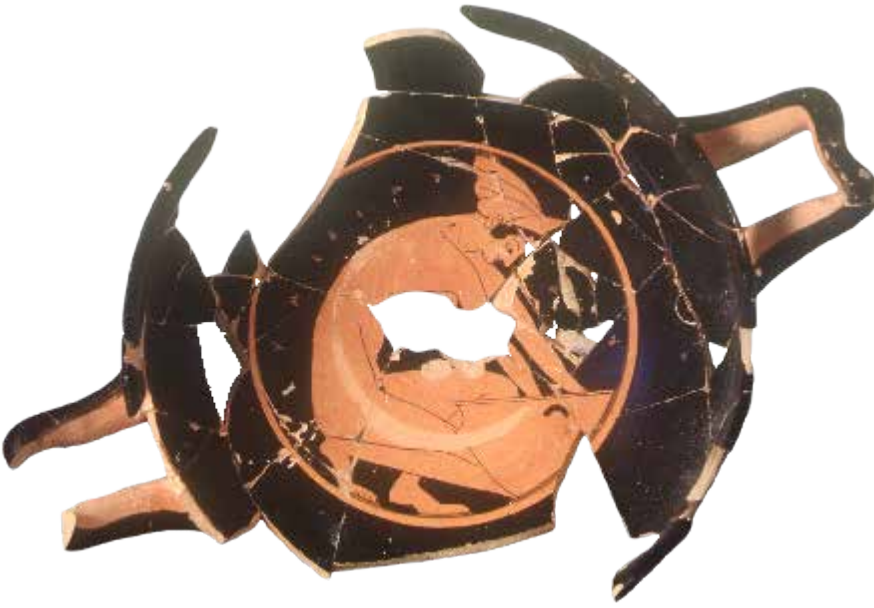
The private dwellings built during the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, are very luxuriously decorated internally as well as externally in stone and coloured stucco. The most important of these buildings is the ‘*casa a peristilio 1*’ (house with peristyle 1), in the western quarter of the city. This imposing structure, one of the largest of the Hellenistic period yet discovered, is built on two floors with numerous rooms for a total of 1.600 sqmts. The peristyle is composed of 12 Doric columns on the ground floor, and Ionic-

Siciliot on the upper floor.

Three large reception rooms, covering both floors, overlook the courtyard, the central exedra [semi-circular room for conversation] and the two symmetrical *andrones* [lobbies] either side. Around the year 200 BC the house was enlarged, a service wing was added with a courtyard and a bath room, which has been preserved almost intact, with a bath and basin served by a limestone water pipe, finishing in a lion’s head. The plastering on the walls, the *opus signinum* flooring, the niche above the basin, the extremely efficient method of heating the water make the bathroom particularly luxurious and a rarity.

There are few remains from the Imperial Roman and successive Byzantine eras. There are, however, numerous dwellings from the Middle Ages, documenting the end of the lifespan of the city itself, and houses were built hurriedly on top of ancient foundations, recycling material from the ruins.

The **Antiquarium of Case D’Alia** is located on two floors of a 19<sup>th</sup> century country villa, situated inside the Archaeological Park of Mount Iato. Inaugurated in July of 2010, it has a modern layout, pleasing to a non-specialist public. The exhibition is dedicated to archaeology and to the history of the ancient *Iaitas*, with reference to its territorial framework. The material artefacts have been organised according to a logic of seriation and typology, creating a chronological itinerary divided into various sections—the territory, the urban



**60**  
*Mount Iato, Antiquarium of Case D'Alia. Red-figure Attic cup with a young woman kneeling at a laver (shallow basin of water) from 500 BC*

characteristics, the public buildings, the private buildings, the materialistic culture, the mediaeval city and the numismatic collection (chronological itinerary). In the ground floor rooms, dedicated to the architecture of public buildings, the architectural elements and the remains pertaining to buildings from the Hellenistic-Roman period are on show. Illustrated panels and large perspective reconstructions of the actual buildings allow the visitor to 'view' the public buildings such as the Agorà and the Theatre. The single artefacts are exhibited on pedestals, whilst the tiles and pottery are in showcases.

On the first floor the architecture of the private buildings is exhibited in historical order. The settlements from the early Archaic Period are in showcases with some illustrative panels; the remaining space is dedicated to the numerous and excellent remains from the luxurious peristyled city houses. The scenographic reconstruction of the peristyle of 'Casa' 1, together with the numerous architectural remains on

display and the plans and photographs on the walls, offer a visit, not only intended as a discovery of the artefacts themselves but also as an aesthetic and emotional experience.

A.M.G.C.

**61**  
*Mount Iato, Antiquarium of Case D'Alia. Statue of Satyrs and Maenads from the theatre*



## MOUNT MARANFUSA

Mount Maranfusa, known during the Middle Ages as *Calatrasi*, rises 487 mts above sea level in the middle valley of the River Belice Destro ('Right Belice') in the Borough of Roccamena. Sheer cliffs on all sides render it inaccessible, and the only approach is from the east side, via a pass between two rocky ridges. There are two plateaus at the summit, separated by a deep saddle.

The area was systematically surveyed by the Soprintendenza of Palermo between 1986 and 2008. The site was first inhabited by indigenous groups in the Late Bronze/Early Iron Age.

The settlement developed significantly in the Archaic Period (7<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century BC), entering into contact with the Greek colonies via the natural access route of the Belice waterway, and in particular with Selinunte nearby, but this did not last

beyond the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. The highland plateau was once again inhabited during the Middle Ages.

Only the ruins of the castle on the northeast summit, as well as three necropolises remain of the Norman settlement, which according to sources, was known as '*Calatrasi*'. Frederick II destroyed the settlement during the course of the Arab revolt, but the castle remained active until the 15<sup>th</sup> century. There are also the remains from the Norman era, of a single spanned bridge across the Belice.

Nothing more is known of the structure of inhabited area, probably dating from the last phases of the Late Bronze and the Early Iron Age, whose existence is attested by remains found in Square E on the lower terrace and by a circular structure with a loading platform in Square A.

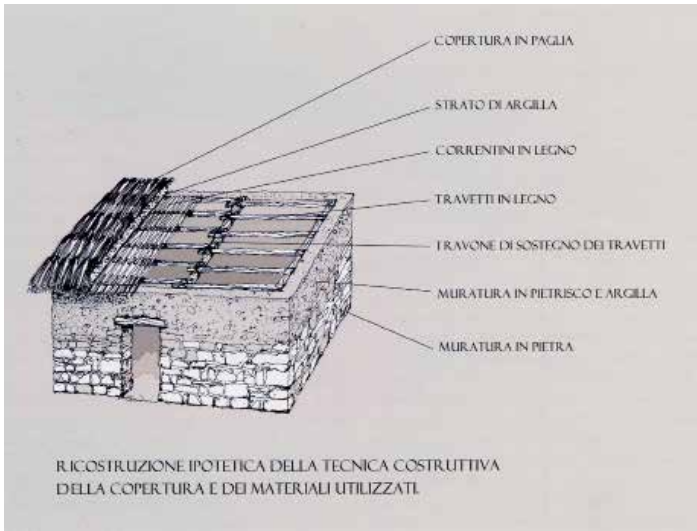
In the sector of Archaic habitation most intensively excavated (Square A), located at the base of the plateau on the southwest

62

*Mount Maranfusa, south slope. On the left the Bridge of Calatrasi*







summit of the Mount, three different occupational periods have been uncovered, dating between the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC and 480 BC, at which point, most likely, some natural calamity led to a precipitous withdrawal from the area. Building 1 belongs to the oldest phase, and consists of three rooms, opening onto a small portico facing West and a courtyard facing East. During the second phase, most likely dating from between mid 6<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, the urban configuration is completely reorganised according to a preordained programme that documents the intensification of relations with the Hellenic world, attested also by finds of numerous vases of Greek or Colonial provenance.

The rectangular buildings consist of several rooms in succession that adapt to the steep slope with a system of terraces and overlook an open space, which was probably either public or a courtyard or a road. Building 2, was subdivided into at least two or three living units, connected by a communal space, destined for the conservation of foodstuffs. On the basis of the abundant number of artefacts found, it was possible to determine what each space had been used for—grinding of cereals, preparation and cooking of food, weaving—all necessary for normal everyday subsistence, but also for reasons of worship. The last, brief occupation of the area is documented by the rebuilding of some of the walls, above the level of destruction, of a few of the buildings.

In another sector of the inhabited area (Square F), situated to the Northwest of Square A, three parallel buildings on

three terraces supported by walls were all uncovered. It is a sacred building, as attested by the deposition of an offering, found in Building B, which connects to other sacred Sican contexts (brooches with geometric painted decoration, miniature kitchen moulds, and clay models of the huts). The remains of an edifice which can be ascribed to the Archaic settlement have been found in an area on the northern edge of the Mount (Square G).

A.M.G.C.

**63**  
*Mount Maranfusa,*  
*dwelling in the*  
*inhabited area*

**64**  
*Mount Maranfusa.*  
*Hypothetical*  
*reconstruction of a*  
*building*

**CASTLE AND BRIDGE OF CALATRASÍ**

The remains of a Norman-Swabian **castle** rise from the highest of the summits of mount Maranfusa, to the Southeast. It has a triangular plan with a central court and three towers on the vertex, connected by a thick wall, inside which were water-cisterns and store rooms. At the foot of the castle are some massive [curtain] walls.

The **bridge**, realised in 1160 at an important crossing point of the River Belice Destro, was a connecting point between the various roads that joined Calatrasi with other centres of the territory. Its structure, a single span with two centres of curvature and double archivolts, is 40 mts long by 4 mts wide, known as a *humpback bridge*. Heavy interventions in the 1980's have altered the original aspect.

65

*Calatrasi. Castle*





Across the bridge on the right bank of the river, there is a **mill**, constructed mid 19<sup>th</sup> century on an existing Mediaeval structure, probably a *fulling* mill, made for the fulling of the coarse woollen fabrics, heavily commercialised during the Middle Ages.

Operational until the 1958, it has been recently restored.

**66**  
*Calatrasi. The Bridge*

A.M.G.C

67

*Roccamena.  
The Antiquarium*

**ANTIQUARIUM OF ROCCAMENA**

The Antiquarium, inaugurated in 2004, in the rooms inside the Town Hall (*Casa Municipale*), has an ample selection of artefacts found on site at Mount Maranfusa. The exhibition is laid out according to typology: classified, categorised and backed up by extensive didactic information are numerous examples of vases, both indigenous and imported Greek and Colonial. Moreover, to give an idea of the distribution and use of the artefacts inside the domestic spaces, one of the showcases is arranged to resemble a particular setting whilst another is dedicated to everyday life as well as those activities indispensable for survival such as the preparation and cooking of food, spinning and weaving.



68

*Maranfusa,  
Antiquarium of  
Roccamena. Indigenous  
Hydra with geometric  
decoration, embossed  
and engraved, 6<sup>th</sup>  
century BC*



69

*Maranfusa, Square  
H, Antiquarium  
of Roccamena. Bell  
Krater on pedestal  
painted with little  
columns and geometric  
decoration*



## COZZO SPOLENTINO

Situated roughly half way between the actual centre of Corleone and Prizzi, the Cozzo Spolentino dominates from a height of 1,000 mts, the dividing line between the Valley of the Belice and that of San Leonardo. The Mount, with its characteristic pointed summit and steep cliffs, with the north side sloping towards a flat central zone, is strategically placed, dominating an important arterial route, later retraced by the Republican consular road, as attested by the '*milliarium*' [milestone] of the Consul *C. Aurelius Cotta*, found in the Contrada Zuccarone, near the Cozzo Spolentino and nowadays on show in the Civic Museum 'Pippo Rizzo' in Corleone.

The interventions of the Soprintendenza of Palermo, conducted in 1993 and in 1996, have unearthed, along the north flank of the Mount, the layers of a Hellenistic settlement, probably dating back to the Archaic Period, and at the foot of the southwest summit, the remains of a High Mediaeval dwelling.

Interesting remains of votive artefacts, probably dating back to between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, were found outside the city walls, coming from a small sanctuary, dedicated to a divinity connected to the female world, protectress of young women and fertility, documented by the offerings related to toiletries and other feminine activities. Different sectors of the Hellenistic Period of the settlement have been excavated, as this was the period in

70  
*Cozzo Spolentino*



## ARCHAEOLOGY

### The Inland Sites

71

*Cozzo Splentino, reproduction of the 'Milliarium'—milestone naming Aurelius Cotta*

72

*Cozzo Splentino. Assay III. Domestic dwelling destroyed by fire*

which the site, under the control of the Carthaginians, shows clear signs of having been under Punic domination.

Of interest is the large room found in the V Assay, in which three very large *pithoi* (large containers similar to water jars) were brought to light. It may well have been the communal storehouse for food, as well as the III Assay, a domestic area, where abundant diagnostic material was found on the floor—pottery, weaving frame weights, metal objects—crushed under the ruins caused by a violent fire, which caused the site to be abandoned around mid 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.

A.M.G.C.





## CORLEONE - "PIPPA RIZZO" CIVIC MUSEUM

The Pippo Rizzo Museum, located in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Palazzo Provenzano, in the historical centre of Corleone, exhibits the archaeological remains found in the surrounding area. The material collected and exhibited covers a vast chronological panorama, which documents the continuous habitation of the territory from the Neolithic to the Middle Ages. The actual exhibition is temporary.

The most important artefact of the collection is without doubt the *'milliarium'*, a Roman mile stone, uncovered in 1954 in the district of Zuccarone near Corleone. The milestone, dating back to 252 or 248 BC, and attributed to the consul *C. Aurelius Cotta*, is, at the moment, the only one of its kind to have been found in Sicily. The milestone must have been placed along the consular road built during the Roman Republic, already in existence during the First Punic War and rebuilt as the road connecting Palermo to Agrigento in the Imperial Age. Other exhibits include those found in Cozzo Spolentino such as the *pitthoi* (large container jars) from the Public Assembly Hall, as well as the numerous artefacts from Montagna Vecchia—that according to sources, could well be the place once known as *Schera*, mentioned in the sources—which cover a long chronological period: there is indigenous pottery decorated with embossing, engravings and paintings, from the Classical and High Hellenistic period vases, both black-glazed and red-figure, bronze and glass necklaces, coins from various Sicilian mints and mediaeval fragments of ceramics and coins.

## **ENTELLA AND THE ANTIQUARIUM OF CONTESSA ENTELLINA**

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The **Rocca of Entella**, is an irregular relief at 557 metres above sea level, dominating the left bank of the river Belice Sinistro or 'Left Belice' (Hypsas), in the municipality of Contessa Entellina, at the crossroads of the principal access roads into western Sicily. It is situated on steep cliffs, which make it inaccessible from three sides. The fourth side, to the North, which is the only route to the tableland on the summit, slopes down towards the river, passing between two valleys, separated by a central rocky spur.

*Laboratorio di Topografia Storico-Archeologica del Mondo Antico* of the Scuola Normale of Pisa and by the Soprintendenza of Palermo, have confirmed that the site was occupied continuously from the end of the Eneolithic Period to 1246 AD.

Ancient sources considered it to be one of the three cities of Elymian origin, together with Eryx and Segesta, but mercenaries from Campania, with the aid of the Carthaginians, overran Entella. Having lost its political autonomy, it became embroiled in the conflict between the people of Syracuse and Carthage, during the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC and suffered various setbacks. During the first years of the First Punic War, it was repeatedly abandoned then repopulated by the refugees and prisoners of war. The decrees of Entella and Nakone (the latter has not yet been located) refer to this difficult historical moment.

Definitively abandoned mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, it was once again inhabited late 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century it was the



centre of Arab resistance against Frederick II, which concluded with the deportation of all the inhabitants and the site was once again abandoned.

The ancient city was built on the plateau at the summit of the rock. There are few chronological remains from the Bronze to the Archaic Period. The first fortifications





were built in the Late Archaic Period, around the artisan quarter to the West of the necropolis A, the *oikos* formed temple (a simple chamber with no colonnades) and a formidable containing wall in the west ravine of the Rock.

The diagnostic remains become far more consistent for the Hellenistic Period

when the fortifications are strengthened with the addition of ramparts and towers and the addition of an external perimeter wall. The complex containing all the public buildings, including spaces probably destined as religious edifices and storehouses, are all situated along the western edge of the ravine. The **grain**

**73**  
*Entella Rock. View of  
the northeast slope*



74

*Entella. Monumental supporting wall of the Temple at oikos. (photo Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa)*

**storehouse**, built during the last decade of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC and destroyed by an extreme fire in the mid of the following century, is structured by two bodies, detached by a staircase. The northern one is composed of five communicating rooms. The artefacts found on the floors—large *pitthoi* (containers similar to jars) for the conservation of cereals, an oven, a weaving frame, of which both the wooden parts and the earthenware weights are still intact and ceramic kitchen and tableware—attest

to the fact that the building was probably used both as a storehouse/office and as the private dwelling of the magistrates in charge of distributing the grain. In the northwest corner of the building the remains of a votive foundational deposit was unearthed, consisting of earthenware feminine statuettes, lamps and ceramics. To the North of the public complex a factory for the production of oil and wine or for the carding of wool (*fullonica*) was also uncovered. The main expansion of the

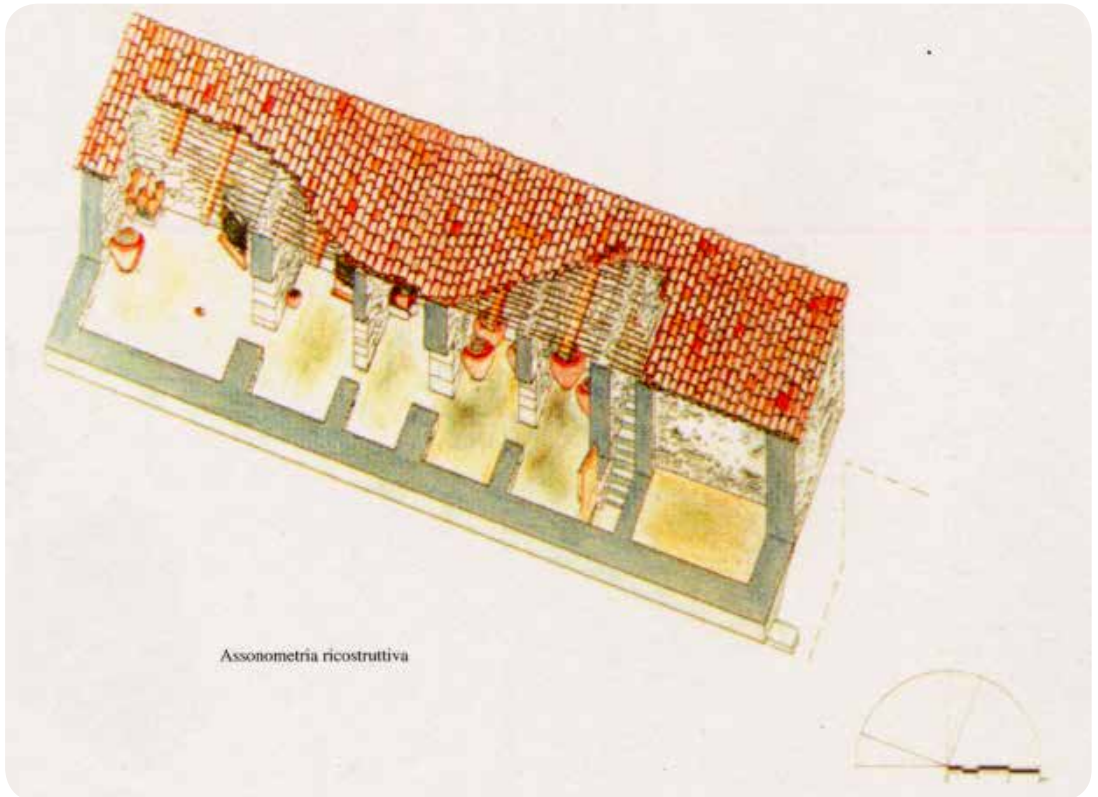
**extramural sanctuary** was between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.

Situated in the **Contrada Petrarò**, not far from the northwest town gates, sources date the original occupation from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Its topographical location, the layout of the spaces and the votive offerings—thousands of earthenware statuettes, multi-nozzle lanterns, and miniaturistic ceramics—qualifies the sacred area as a *thesmophorion*, the sanctuary

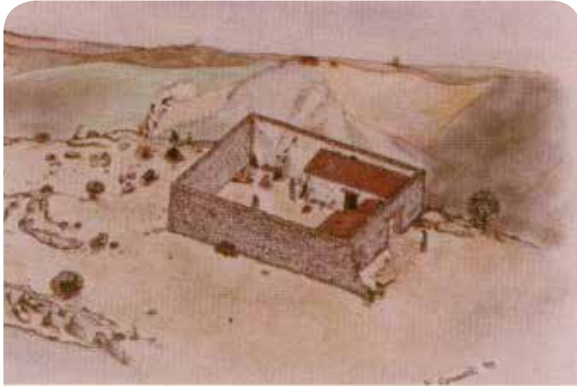
where the sacrificial rites of animals, banquets and night-time processions in honour of the Goddess Demeter, goddess of the harvest and of the fertility of the earth, and her daughter Kore [also called Cora or Persephone]. Only one of the three **necropolises**, located alongside the access roads to the city, has been excavated, the necropolis A, on the south foot of the Rock, and numerous burials were uncovered, presumably dating back

75

*Entella. Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Reconstruction of the public granary*



*Entella. Fortified palazzo from the Medieval era. Building phases*



to the Hellenistic Period and Late Middle Ages. The burials during the Hellenistic period differ—they are in simple graves; in ditches; *'a cappuccina'*, that is, covered in sloping tiles; or with the coffin covered in slabs—and grave goods were also found, consisting of unpainted, black or red figured, vases lamps and *alabastra* (ointment jars) in alabaster. Particularly interesting, because they confirm the presence of Campanian merchants in Entella, are two tombs from early 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, belonging to a warrior, characterised by a bronze belt of Italian manufacture, by the arms and the strigil (a bronze tool for the cleansing of the body by scraping off dirt, perspiration and oil), and to a woman that at the moment of burial was wearing brooches of Italian manufacture. The *trapeza*, (the base of the altar stone) on which sacrifices were carried out in honour of the dead, dates from the Late-Republican Period (2nd to 1st century BC). Little is left of the Mediaeval settlement, but there are traces of three large fortified structures. On the Pizzo della Regina exists a fortified complex with a vaulted cistern, opposite is a castle with a perimeter wall and on the southern ridge a fortified palazzo of awesome dimensions and an extraordinary *hamman* (Turkish baths). Five Arab cemeteries have also been uncovered, dating back to mid 9<sup>th</sup> and mid 13<sup>th</sup> century AD.

The **Antiquarium of Contessa Entellina** was opened in 1995 and displays diagnostic remains and historical artefacts from the archaeological area of Entella. The itinerary passes through all the various



sectors. The first four are dedicated to the general area and to the **Decrees of Entella** (bronze inscriptions), precious documents of inestimable importance for the understanding not only of the events and the buildings of the city, but also of the historical context of the whole Sicily throughout the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC. Of the eight authentic tablets in existence, seven from Entella and one from Nakone, all of which were looted and sold on the black market, three have been recuperated, whose casts are displayed.

The other sectors display a selection of ceramics, local and of importation from the Prehistoric to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, amongst which there is an amphora with plastic and geometrical decorations, found in a 7<sup>th</sup> century BC tomb; artefacts

77  
Entella. Antiquarium  
of Contessa Entellina.  
Decree of Entella  
A2=VIII Nenci

78  
Entella. Antiquarium  
of Contessa Entellina.  
Small vases, statuettes  
of female offerers and  
a kernoi (cluster vases)  
from the sanctuary of  
Demeter in Contrada  
Petraro

from the granary and the necropolises, and illustrative panels; and the full size reconstruction of a Hellenistic burial, together with the grave goods, in chronological order. Another sector is dedicated to the Middle Ages, with the artefacts typologically organised, whilst another section is organised with didactical intentions and the last section illustrates some aspects of daily life: grinding of cereals, weaving, lighting and toiletries.

In the sector dedicated to the local territory and the ancient road system, a showcase offers a panorama of the materials from the extramural Sanctuary in Contrada Petrarò. The large room that concludes the itinerary exhibits the *pitthoi* (large jar like containers) found in the public granary together with many other transport amphora, epigraphic material and numismatic artefacts.

A.M.G.C.

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