



BRIEF  
Guide

colle madore

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PALERMO



SS 189

PALERMO - AGRIGENTO

SS 121



## HOW TO GET THERE FROM PALERMO [Km 68,5]

Go along the road that links Palermo to the Motorway A19, PA-CT, and at the exit for Villabate take the SS121 for Agrigento. Once you reach the Manganaro junction (at km 61) take the SS189, always for Agrigento, up to Lercara Friddi (km 68,5). Driving through the town, where you will find the directions for the temporary seat of the Museum (awaiting transfer to Villa Rose), you will reach Colle Madore.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL AREAS OF COLLE MADORE

This brief guidebook about Colle Madore has been planned in continuation with the former guidebooks edited by the Soprintendenza of Palermo, of some of the most important archaeological sites of central northern Sicily: Himera, Palermo, Solunto, Iato, Ustica and the Montagnola of Marineo. The aim is to provide an easy to read booklet but, at the same time, with proper scientific information, followed by a good number of photos that can fully show the archaeological site and be, at the same time, a stimulus to visit in person the site and the local museum where the most important finds are being displayed. Among these stand out the bronze sheet plaques of indigenous armour decorated with human faces and the Aedicula with the sculpted relief of Herakles at a Fountain, which is linked to the myth of the Greek hero and which shows the tight link between this territory of the Sicilian inland with the great Greek religious tradition, probably influenced by the colony of Himera, whose territory comprised this area as well.

Colle Madore, an archaic indigenous Sicilian settlement located between the valleys of the rivers Torto and Platani, half way between the Tyrrhenian coast and the Mediterranean one, is a great example of how the collaboration between the Soprintendenza, the Municipality of Lercara Friddi and local historians, have given in few years not only important scientific results but also long lasting results thanks to the immediate organization of a first exhibition, awaiting the final display in the prestigious location of Villa Rose, nowadays an important place for all the citizens of Lercara Friddi, who through the rediscovery of their own most ancient history can, in a certain way, compensate the difficult times of their recent history of a town which has gone through the economic drama and the hard social reality of the sulphur mines in the 19th and 20th centuries.

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Indigenous bronze sheet plaque

soprintendenza beni culturali ed ambientali  
sezione per i beni archeologici | palermo

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# colle madore

BRIEF  
Guide



assessorato dei beni culturali e  
dell'identità siciliana

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Chiovaro, Monica <1963->

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# Colle Madore

The research carried out on Colle Madore (Madore Hill), in the heartland of central-western Sicily, has brought to light archaeological remains which document one of the most interesting periods of the history of ancient Sicily for the great cultural changes following the Greek colonization. The foundation of new towns and their rapid development triggered in the island, from the coasts to the most inland valleys, an unrepeatabe process of transformation of the traditional Indigenous society contributing to designing a renovated cultural, political and economical order which will have a deep effect in Sicilian history.

Within this historic framework, and limited to the events in central-western Sicily, the settlement of Colle Madore, not far from the town of Lercara Friddi, is an important point of reference for the study of the indigenous settlements of Sicania, of that area of inland Sicily, between the valleys of the rivers Platani and Salso-Himera, where the presence of the indigenous Sican people was stronger and lasted longer (**figs.1-2**).



**1** The upper valley of River Platani, in the morning mist, from the top of Colle Madore.



The discovery of a small sanctuary on the southern side of the hill, comprising several rooms dominated by a small sacred building, gives us, in fact, a precious testimony to better understand those extraordinary changes of the indigenous peoples, which occurred in western Sicily above all during the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Deep transformations which determined – through the confrontation and the assimilation of Greek cultural elements brought in by the colonies of Himera and Selinus, founded in the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC respectively on the Tyrrhenian and Mediterranean coasts – the passage of the traditional indigenous communities to a “new” organization of the towns, deeply pervaded by features acquired and made theirs own, thanks to the meeting with Greek colonial reality. The discovery of the archaeological importance of Colle Madore is quite recent going back to 1993, when following a fortuitous discovery of significant finds on the hill, immediately reported by Antonio Caruso, the Soprintendenza of Palermo started a number of excavation campaigns allowing them to explore the sacred area of the southern slope and recover a great number of archaeological finds, nowadays exhibited in Lercara Friddi, in a small display room, becoming soon an important point of reference for the historic knowledge of the territory.

### Geographic context

Colle Madore is located in western Sicily along an important natural route of the valleys of river Torto, in the north, and river Platani in the south, which connects the Tyrrhenian coast to the Mediterranean one (**fig. 3**). It is a bare, low hill located south of Lercara Friddi (**fig. 4**),



- 2 Panorama from Madore of the River Torto valley; in the background the town of Alia and the Madonie mountains
- 3 Western Sicily: Archaic Age settlements



having steep slopes on the northern and eastern sides under constant erosion, while the other sides are connected by gentle slopes degrading into the surrounding terrain, nowadays used for vineyards and for crops. The top of the hill, seat of the ancient settlement,



- 4 The town of Lercara Friddi, in the background Colle Madore

## 5 Ruins of buildings used for mineral exploitation on Colle Madore



appears nowadays totally devastated by centuries of sulphur and limestone mining, which has changed the original conformation (**fig. 5**).

However, in antiquity, because of the presence of mineral resources, but above all for its central position within the communication routes of central-western Sicily, Colle Madore was chosen as a place for a settlement which flourished between the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium and the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Research has confirmed a phase of particular vitality in the Archaic and Late Archaic Age (from the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC) when, under the cultural and, probably, also political influence of the Greek colony of Himera, located between the mouths of Torto and Imera rivers, a small sacred area was reconstructed on the southern slope of Colle Madore (**fig. 6**).

## *Living phases of the settlement*

### *Prehistoric and Proto-historic Ages*

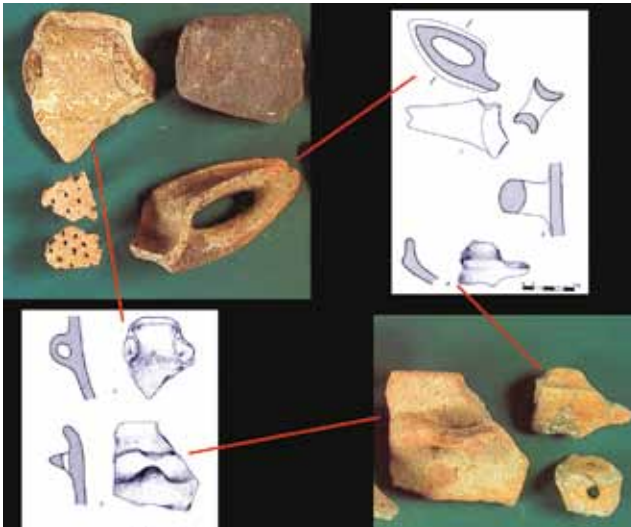
History of the settlement begins in the Bronze Age, between the so-called Rodi Vallelunga and Thapsos phases, around the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC (**fig. 7**); some sporadic findings of potsherds has confirmed the existence of a first stable settlement on the southern slope of the hill. The discovery of 13 fragments of stone moulds for casting metal objects – axes, blades, javelin heads, swords, sickle blades – dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC is strong evidence of a fully active settlement in the Late Bronze Age. In fact, the existence of these moulds presumes the presence of artisans on Colle Madore able to prepare the forms and run the complex technical activity of metalworking. In addition, the supply of raw materials, presumably bronze, suggests a community with a flourishing economy, such as to afford buying raw metal.



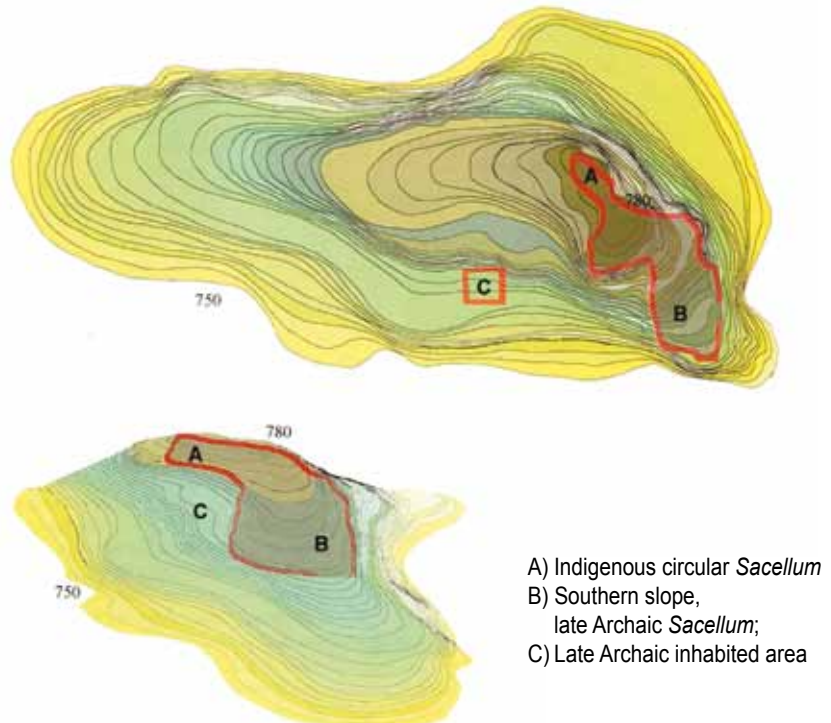
Sporadic findings like the two bronze fibulae of indigenous production, one dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC the other one to the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, confirm a continuity of life on Colle Madore for several centuries. A phase of great importance for the development and consolidation of the Sican communities in central–western Sicily, one of the most important peoples that settled in Sicily before the coming of the Greeks, known from historic sources, but still unknown from an archaeological point of view as regards to the social and cultural organization of their settlements.

### *Archaic Age*

Even on Colle Madore, as on many other indigenous sites of these valleys, the first contacts with the Greeks are confirmed by the earliest evidences dated to the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. The earliest vases of colonial production found on the hill are dated to these decades, arriving in the heartland through connections with Himera, founded in 648 BC not far from the mouth of river Torto. Its valley constituted the privileged and direct natural connection route between Colle Madore and the coast.



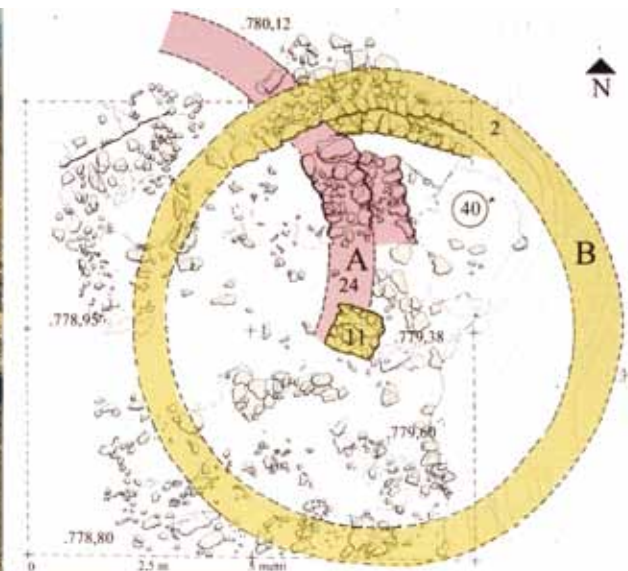
**Sacred Indigenous buildings with circular plan:** The sole masonry structures relative to this indigenous phase are probably the few remains of a circular building brought to light on the top of the hill, dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, with a diameter of about 8/10 metres. Considering its dominant position and comparing it to other indigenous sites – above all the important sanctuary placed on the top of the nearby Sicani town of Polizzello, half way down the river Platani valley – it could be identified as a building with a sacred function (**figs. 8-9**). The discovery of a dump of ashes and burnt animal bones (bovines, ovines, boars and deers) would let us believe they are remnants of cultural sacrifices or votive banqueting linked to rituals which characterized indigenous ceremonies; however, the religious aspects of the Sicani are still mysterious and little known.



Around the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, another building was built over the most ancient one, also with a circular plan, surviving, unfortunately, only for a short part of the outer wall. Therefore, the poor ruins on the small summit plateau of the Madore hill would attest a sacred destination of this important part of the hill, and this is a further reason of regret for the very poor state of conservation of the structure to be considered by now irretrievably lost.

**The sacred area of the southern slope.** On the steep southern slope, just below the top of the hill, a number of rooms along superimposed terraces have been brought to light, built by cutting into the rock and connected by a winding path going up hill. The presence of a small Greek type sacred building (*Sacellum*) placed at the centre characterizes the place and suggests a sacred function for all the complex of buildings built over an area of a few hundred square meters. The organization of the small sanctuary, which probably covered a previous indigenous cult area, is dated to the Archaic Age (**figs.10 -11**).

*The Sacellum:* the sacred building has a rectangular plan (m.7x9) with an east-west orien-

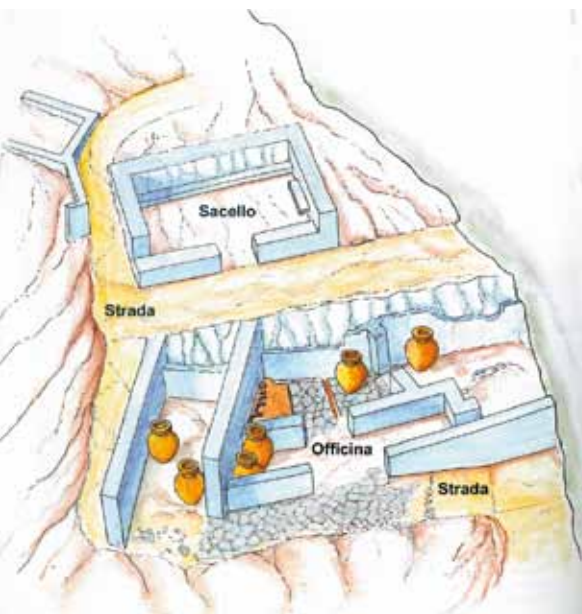


9 Foundation ruins of the indigenous sacred buildings on top of the hill

## 10 Schematic plan of the area



A- Sacello (trio-antico); B- strada; C- vano officina; D- vano magazzino



tation and an opening probably on the southern side (**fig.12**). The inside space is characterised by two benches running along the northern and eastern walls, where vases and votive objects must have been placed. As some fragments of tiles suggest (*kalypteres hegemonas*), the gable roof was decorated with hanging palmette elements (antefixes) placed at the front of the lowermost tiles of a well documented type from the buildings of Himera, where they were probably imported from.

The construction of the *sacellum* can be dated to the third quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. A votive deposit placed in the foundation of the southeastern corner of the building is dated to these years; such deposit, sealed at the time of construction, according to a well-attested tradition in antiquity, comprised several objects of both Indigenous and Greek production (**figs.13-14-15**).

The presence of more ancient objects – such as two bronze fibulae, one of which is a South Pantalica type (9<sup>th</sup> century BC), the other one a Finocchito type (7<sup>th</sup> century BC) – could be the proof that objects kept for a long time were placed in this deposit. Perhaps they are from a votive deposit of a previous sanctuary,

11 Axonometric reconstruction of the sacred area

12 The Late Archaic *Sacellum* of the sacred area at the end of the excavation; in the background the Sicilian Mountains





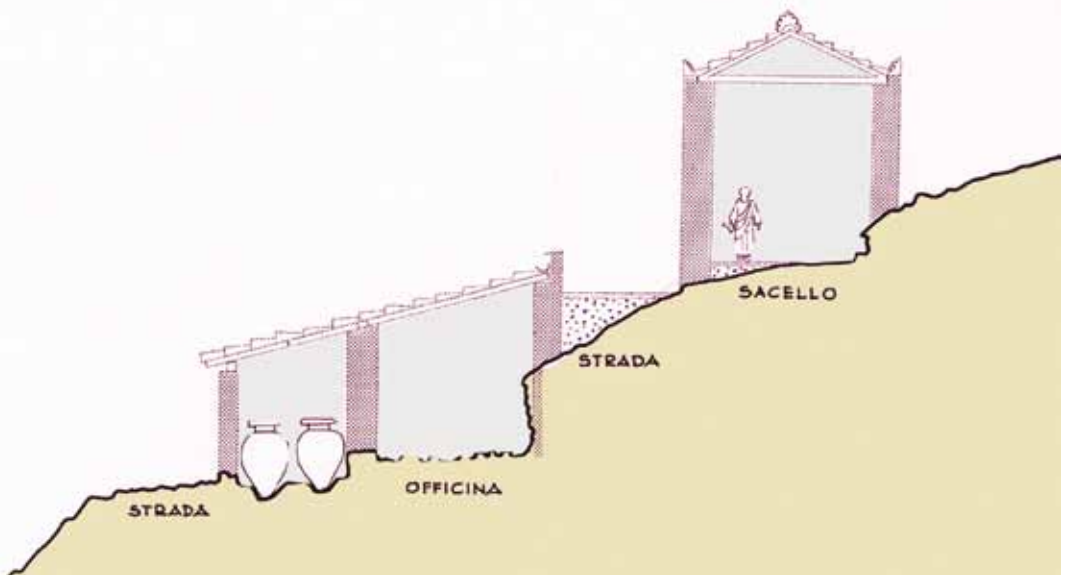


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1

MADORE  
08.06.'95  
AREA I  
AMBIENTE I

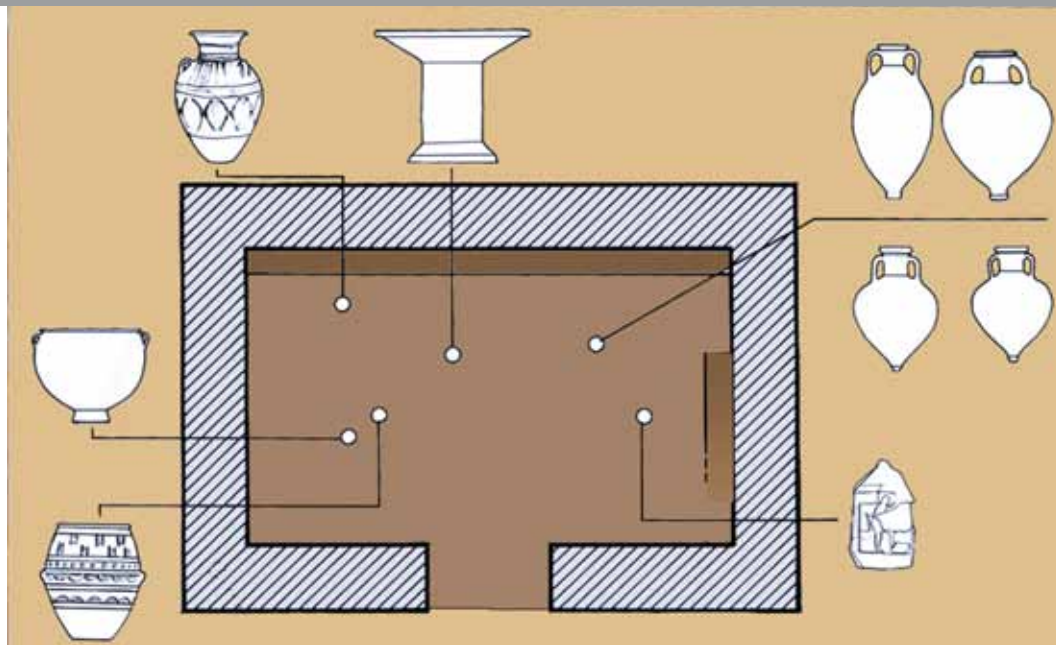


**13** Profile of the sacred area with the schematic reconstruction of the buildings

**14** Vases of the votive deposit discovered in the foundation walls of the *sacellum*

**15** Foot of an Attic black glazed vase with inscription

16 Plan of the *Sacellum* with the most meaningful objects found inside



and by respecting their sacred use, they were re-placed in the votive deposit at the time of the construction of the new *sacellum*.

Probably to this deposit belongs a group of repoussé decorated bronze sheets, discovered fortuitously before our excavation, associated to indigenous armour, and therefore, probably, to offerings to the sanctuary on behalf of warriors. Within the *sacellum*, in the strip along the northern wall, in a layer which testifies quite well the violent destruction that happened between the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> and first decades of the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, several objects were discovered particularly significant for the interpretation of the monument (**fig.16**). They all bare traces of the violent fire that caused the destruction of the building.

The most important find is doubtless the Aedicula (small shrine) of Heracles at the Fountain, which we have interpreted as a votive cult object. The image of the Greek hero suggests a



17 Archaic Age paved road in the sacred area



link of the Colle Madore community with the nearby colony of Himera; actually, Diodorus Siculus tells us that Heracles passed through the territory of Himera, where the nymphs made the thermal waters gush out so he could take refreshment. It is also possible to think of some forms of religious syncretism between the Sican community and the Hellenic world, finding in Heracles one of those subjects that with more force and more conviction the indigenous people made their own.

In addition, the other objects found within the *sacellum* have a particular meaning. There are different types of big containers, among which: four Greek transportation amphoras, two indigenous decorated pithoi and a *deinos*, all of them linked to the presence and use of water, and maybe also of wine, which could be connected to ritual practices that would have been carried out within the sacred building. A big terracotta basin (*louterion*) could be



**19** Store-room floor with the basis of large containers partially buried in the ground

linked to the use of water and cult practices, probably used for the sprinkling and purification of the sacred place.

The *sacellum* of Colle Madore with its strong Greek features, evident in its architectonic structure, decoration and objects found within it, is a clear symptom of the fact that the Indigenous communities of the Sicilian area, already in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, around a hundred years after the foundation of Himera on the northern coast and of Selinus on the southern coast, were radically changing their centuries-old culture, not only within the religious sphere, but also in other aspects of their society. A process of transformations traditionally called in Ancient Sicily studies as “Hellenization”, a term nowadays often put into question or refused. However, according to us, it could be still used if referred to the deep changes attested archaeologically in the indigenous towns of the island between the 6<sup>th</sup> and above all in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. They reveal a progressive metamorphosis of their own cultural identity, running over all

the main manifestations of cultural life: the religious sphere, funerary practices, language, urban planning, artistic and funerary culture, etc.

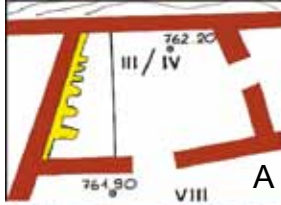
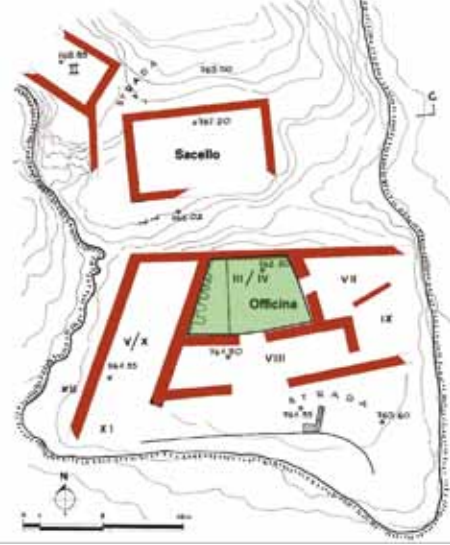
*Buildings south of the Sacellum:* On the terrace below the sacred building, some rooms were discovered oriented east west and almost totally investigated. One can access the area by a section of a road characterized by an exceptional limestone slab paving (fig.17).

The conservation state of the masonry structures and of the Late Archaic layer of destruction is often excellent and in some cases the walls survive intact for a good height, even over 2metres high. The presence of a number of big and medium sized terracotta containers and space organization, allows us to assign this complex of rooms to a function tied to working areas and storage, related, probably, to the overall sacred destination of all the complex (figs. 18-19-20).

Room V/X, opening on the south, is a storeroom, where at least 12 large terracotta containers (*pithoi*) were placed along the walls with

20 One of the big containers (*pithos*) of the store-room, being excavated





## ROOM III / IV

**21a** A: plan, B: layers of burnt relative to the destruction of the room by fire; C) Details of a little oven

**21b** General plan

**21c** Dry clay bench with the little ovens lined up along the wall







their basis partially buried in the floor and used for stocking up large quantities of water or food. The presence of large *pithoi*, which in some cases could contain even hundreds of litres of water, constitutes a constant within the whole complex of buildings.

Room III/IV is, without doubt, the most significant among those investigated, since the archaeological evidence allows us to hypothesize an area intended for metalworking. The room has a trapezoidal shape and is big 30square metres (**figs. 21a-21b**). A thick layer of collapse, consisting of the burnt wooden roof and tiles, sealed the floor which was divided

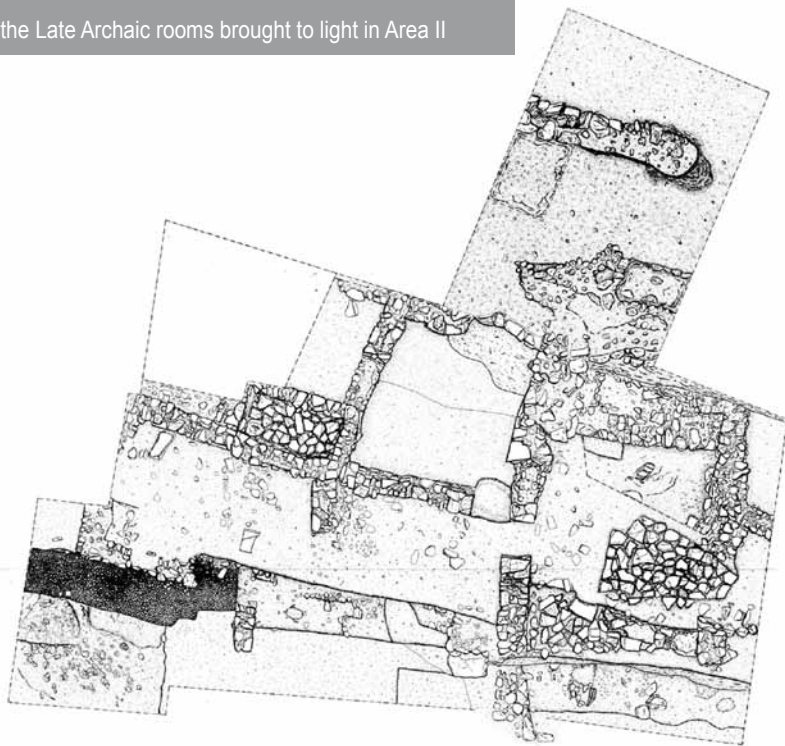


into two separate areas on two different levels; the central and eastern part are paved with irregular shaped limestone slabs, placed, however, with discreet attention (**fig. 22**). A bench made of dry clay, some 20/25 cm higher than the floor (**fig. 21c**), instead occupies one third of the floor, along the western side.

The most important feature is a set of seven small ovens aligned along the wall, also made



**24** Beginning of the excavation in Area II, on the southern slope



of clay with a U or circular shape, all of them opening onto the inner part of the room, wide from 20cm to 50cm and on average 20cm high. The presence of these small firing chambers – in which the temperatures reached were very high, as the white colouring of the inner parts reveal –, and the finding of shapeless pieces of flat lead on the floor in front of the ovens, a small channel cut into the pavement and the presence within the same room and those next to it of big terracotta containers, are all elements that made us think that room III/IV was a metalworking workshop. Alternatively, they might have been small ovens used for cooking food, therefore linked to the life and practices of the sanctuary. However, wanting to privile-



**26** Picture of the complex stratigraphy of the rooms in Area II



ging, at the actual state of investigation, the metalworking workshop hypothesis, it would be a very interesting discovery, being basically the sole evidence of Archaic Sicily, and, above all, in an indigenous settlement, even though profoundly Hellenized (**fig. 23**).

**Area II.** The indigenous settlement expanded along the southern slopes of the hill on terraces laid out on different levels, sloping from the top of the hill to the valley below. In this area, nowadays seriously damaged by mining activity, a vast trench was opened for investigation, not very far from the Sacred area, which brought to light some rooms of the Archaic Age village (**figs. 24-25-26**). The state of conservation of the walls, made of limestone



blocks, is quite good and it was possible to fully investigate two rooms, one of which – having a central hearth – was used for domestic activities, such as cooking and probably eating. Pots found on the floor were being used at the moment of the destruction of the house, which happened suddenly at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. The finding of a number of vases for food conservation or for liquids (such as the transportation amphoras or the *pithoi*) and cooking pots smashed by the collapse of the structure of the house, points out that also this area of the Colle Madore town was suddenly abandoned with no chance of recovering the objects left behind in the rooms (**figs. 27-28-29-30**).



### *Destruction of the area*

Around the end of the 6th and first decades of the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC a traumatic event marked the destiny of this complex of buildings on the southern slope, causing the end of a flourishing phase; traces of an immense fire and the collapse of the roofs are evident everywhere. The fact that within these layers of destruction are present objects of everyday use is an eloquent sign that after that event this area was abandoned for some time (**fig. 32**). The destruction of the Colle Madore sanctuary at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC could have been determined by facts not mentioned by the historical sources, but can be connected to



**30** Potsherds, among which are cooking pots, in one of the rooms of Area II, probably used as a kitchen



the tragic events in general that characterized western Sicily in those years and which led to the great conflict between Carthaginians and Greeks in 480 BC, ending with the victory of the coalition of Himera, Syracuse and Akragas, in front of the city walls of Himera. In those years, the Colle Madore settlement, of indigenous tradition, but for some time under the cultural and perhaps political influence of Himera first, then of Akragas, could have been the victim of the climate of tension and clashes that preceded or followed the battle of Hi-



**31** Female terracotta statuette, with a long dress, holding in her hand a small animal (a hare?)

mera in 480 BC. At the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, the ancient settlement of Colle Madore suffered a violent destruction in a time of intense vitality and centrality within the geopolitical context of the territories of central Sicily.

After some decades, in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, a number of new rooms with poor building technique were set up over the late archaic layers of destruction, without respecting the ancient layout. The finding of some bronze coins of Himera within the layer of preparation of the earthen floor dated between 430 and 409 BC (**fig. 31-33**) give a precise indication for dating this new limited phase of reoccupation of the hill. However, it is likely that this phase, characterized by a certain precariousness, lasted only a few years as it appears by the fact that after the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC there is no evidence at all of life on Colle Madore. It is probable that in the years that preceded the Carthaginian



**32** Masonry structures  
at the end of the  
5<sup>th</sup> century BC



Wall of the final phase  
of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC

Filling

Layer of burnt:  
destruction beginning  
of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC

Slab stone pavement  
of the Archaic Age

**33** Bronze coins of Himera, with the type Satyr riding a goat, and the laurel crown one, which document the last living phase on Colle Madore at the end of the 5th century BC.

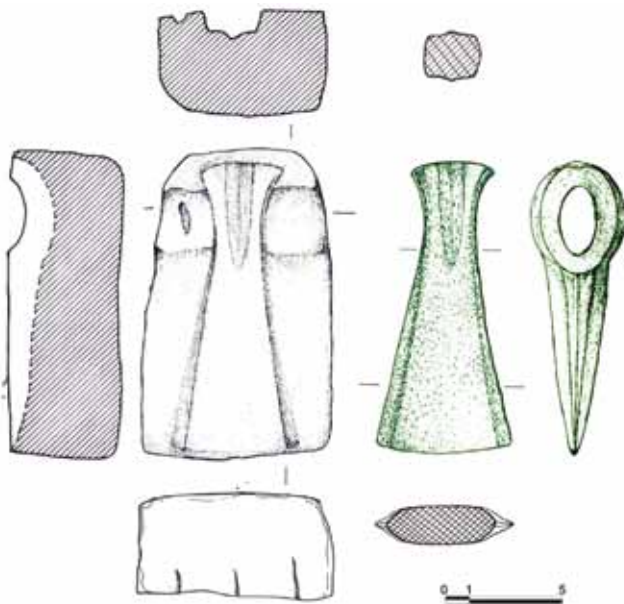


expedition to Sicily in 409 BC, which caused the destruction of Selinus and Himera, a general climate of political instability in western Sicily gave rise to a reoccupation even partial of Colle Madore, perhaps by Himera, for its important strategic value and for its centrality within the connecting routes of central-western Sicily. Only future investigation can better define the kind and the modalities of this last phase of life of Madore; in fact, after the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, there are no signs of stable occupation on the hill, and the site seems definitely abandoned.

**Stefano Vassallo**

A first exhibition of the most important finds from Colle Madore has been made in the rooms of the Public Library of Lercara Friddi; there we can also find a model of the archaeological site and potsherds found during the survey of the territory.

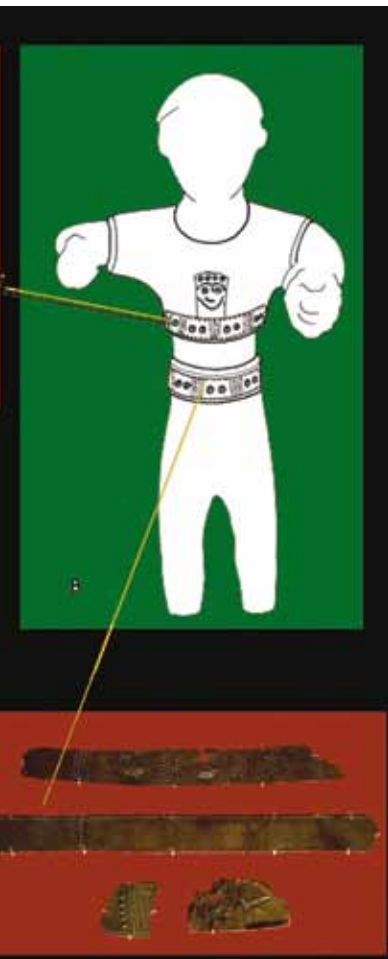
The most ancient finds are some fragments of stone moulds (**fig. 34**) coming from the southern slopes of the hill and dated to the Late Bronze Age. Among the tools a fragment of an eye axe stands out, a type attested in the Italian peninsula at the beginning of the Final Bronze Age. On the opposite side of the same mould is a fragmented form of the blade of a sickle; on another mould is the imprint of a blade of a type of sword widely used in the Late Bronze Age. The casting moulds of Colle Madore are very important because it is very unlikely to find such objects in indigenous sites of the island



34 Stone mould for casting bronze axes



35 Bronze sheets with *repoussé* decoration



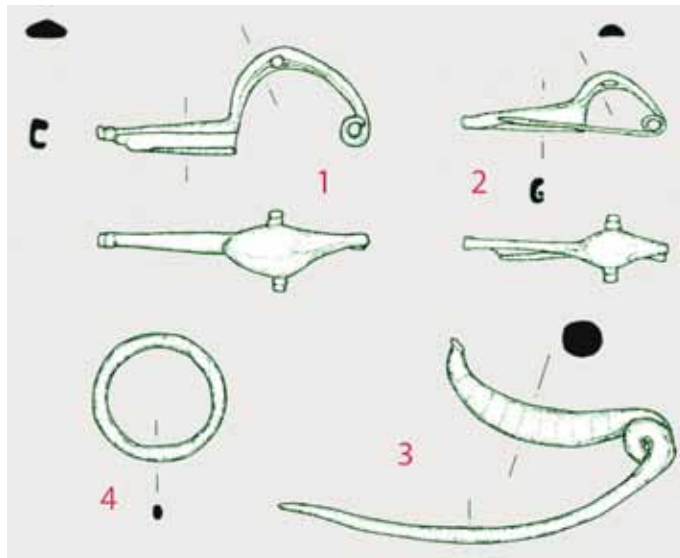
contemporary to ours; other moulds dated to the same period have been found in Cannatello, Sabucina, and Mokarta and in central – eastern Sicily, in Morgantina and Pantalica.

### *The Sacellum votive deposit*

The composition of the votive deposit found within the foundation wall of the sacred building shows the situation of an indigenous context run over by the changes brought by the Greek colony of Himera to the territory; in fact, there are objects of both indigenous and Greek tradition. Within the deposit, there was an exceptional group of bronze sheet plaques with repoussé decoration (**fig. 35**) to be interpreted probably as elements of a belt. They are made up of a sheet connected to a trapezoidal shaped one placed on top and weld with hammered nails at the centre of the sheet; two, in particular, have relief decorations of a human face rendered synthetically, where the eye is underlined with an evident apotropaic value. Furthermore, in both sheet plaques the hair seems to be represented while the arched eyebrows are connected to the nose; the wolf's teeth motif might suggest a Greek influence on these objects, such as the hair lock by using pendent spirals, a rare feature in the indigenous Sicilian iconography. The rendering of stylized faces is essential and confirms the liveliness of the local artistic production in the interpretation of human features, according to a language of great immediateness and efficacy. The shapes and the decorations recall similar objects found in few other indigenous contexts of the Sican area of central Sicily, such as Sabucina (3 examples) and Terravecchia di Cuti (2 examples); a similar find is kept in the trove of bronzes in Mendolito. The discovery of Colle Madore seems to confirm the hypothesis that locates the production of these sheet plaques in central-western Sicily and constitutes, for the anonymous site of Colle Madore, one of the most meaningful aspects con-

cerning indigenous material culture; as a matter of fact, they are objects of great interest which are likely to be connected to ornamental elements of body armour, perhaps made of leather, pertinent to indigenous types of armour upon which they were fixed either on the lower part or as pectorals. Should this hypothesis be confirmed, the finds could be a warrior's offering within the sacred area and the faces featured on the "belts" could be that of a god, with evident apotropaic and magic value.

Also interesting is the sheet plaque decorated with taurine faces, a *unicum* that has its own roots in ancient Mediterranean cultural traditions; its shape allows us to consider it as a find with a similar function of the ones already mentioned above. Among the bronze objects of the "deposit" worth mentioning are three indigenous fibulae (**fig. 36**), of which the most ancient one is to be dated to the passage from the Cassibile to the South Pantalica phase, around the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC. From the same context come two fibulae of the Finocchito, type, with a simple bow, widely distributed especially in eastern Sicily, while for central Sicily, for example, it is attested in the nearby necropolis of Polizzello. The chro-



**36** Indigenous bronze *fibulae*;  
1-2 Finocchito type;  
3 Cassibile type;  
4 ring



37 Jugs from the votive deposit of the *sacellum*



nology is comprised between the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. One of the bronze rings found in the deposit was placed around the pin of the most ancient fibula.

Two miniaturistic *oinochoai* are of indigenous production (**fig. 37**); they are painted on the neck with a metope decoration, filled in with vertical zigzags and delimited by a bundle of horizontal lines; on the body is a group of vertical lines.

Also from the deposit of the sacred area comes a group of Greek and colonial production vases, above all Himerean, which confirms the interest – since the first generations of colonists – for the fertile inland territory, rich in resources run by the local people. There are common types of Corinthian, pottery, such as the *kotyliskos*, dated to the Late Corinthian that is between the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC and the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Among the closed forms deriving from eastern Greek prototypes, there are some *olpai* with band decorations, two trilobate jugs and a so-called “Ionic” cup (**fig. 38**), of the intermediate



38 Small cups from the votive deposit of the *sacellum*



39 *Aedicula* with the image of Heracles at the fountain

40 Etruscan mirrors with the image of Heracles

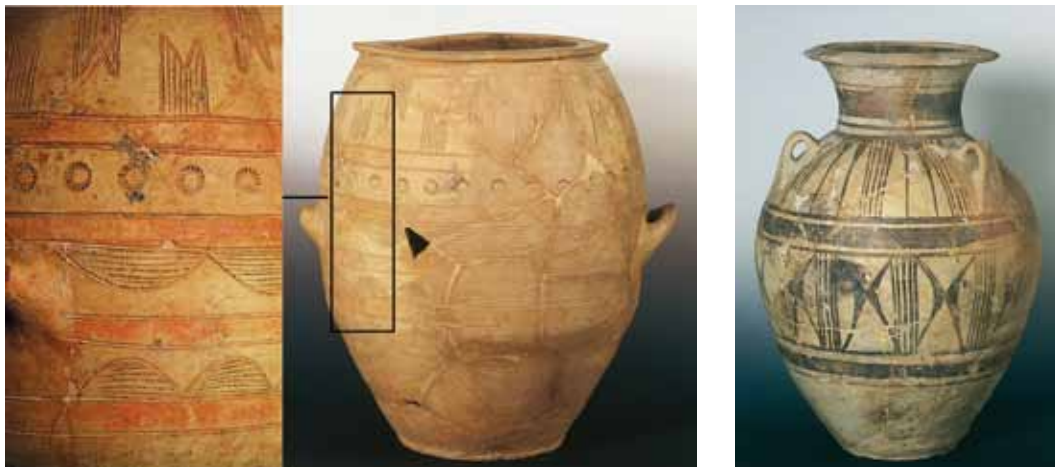
## 41 Amber object



type A2/B2 and dated between the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the following century. This cup is of a type also attested in Himera, cultural point of reference for the anonymous indigenous site of Colle Madore. From the deposition comes also an amber bead of a necklace (**fig. 41**); the trading of this precious material started in the Prehistoric Age involving above all north-eastern Europe; the presence of this precious fossilized resin is attested in the Final Bronze Age and the attestations of these luxury goods started to be more widespread. The Madore necklace bead shows that the cultural level of the inhabitants was able to appreciate precious goods such as this kind.

#### *Objects found within the Sacellum*

The most important find is a sandstone *aedicula* (votive stele) (**fig. 39**) with a low relief decoration of a figure of a bearded man at a fountain, the relief was probably enriched with painting. The finding of a late archaic *aedicula* of this kind, with a likely cult function, is a unique case in Sicily. The most



42 Big Indigenous container decorated with incised geometric motifs

43 Big Indigenous amphora with painted geometric motifs



likely hypothesis – based on comparisons with iconographies of Attic pottery and Etruscan mirrors (**fig.40**) – is that it is the representation of Heracles drawing water from a fountain; this hero was particularly worshiped in the Sicilian colonial area, above all in the territory of Himera, where, according to a legend, the demigod, tired because of his ventures, stopped to have a rest by the hot springs that the nymphs had made for him. Colle Madore is located in the inner part of the territory of Himera, where the colonists probably introduced the hero's cult, bringing together with the religious practices a substantial acceptance of the Greek element. In fact, the aedicula testifies that the worship of the hero was felt even in the anonymous indigenous town, where a sacred space was destined to him and where, this must be underlined, at the foot of the Madore hill there is a spring of sulphurous waters; the low relief could be the most ancient attestation of the connection between the hero and thermal waters in north-western Sicily. Furthermore, the hero, often represented in opposition to the indigenous element, could have been in the Madore case hosted within the *sacellum* and that would testify the transformation of the hero in a “cultural mediator”.



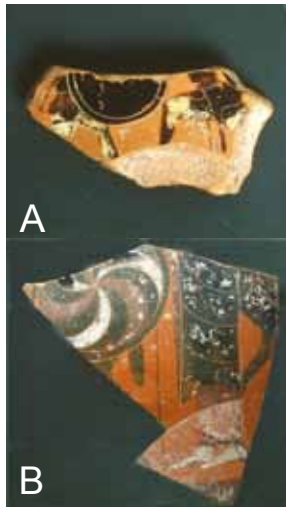
44 Transportation amphorae: A: Corinthian type; B: Samian type; C-D: Western – Greek type

45 Greek type vase (*deinos*) with painted band decoration

Within the sacred building there were some big indigenous terracotta containers, transportation amphoras and a *louterion* (basin), probably used for the ceremonies that took place in the *sacellum*. The context they were found in is dated between the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, even if the two indigenous vases might be more ancient and used for a long time within the sacred area. The first of the two has impressed and incised geometric motif decorations and has a slender shape, horizontal rim, and, half way down the body, two oblique handles (**fig. 42**). It is decorated with elements that cover the upper part of the body, repeated but variegated, made with pointed tools before firing, with punches and probably with a rotating punch. The elements featured are of indigenous tradition but they also show – above all, for the syntaxes on the surface of the vase – influences from the Greek Geometric; worth noting, in particular, the original motif of a row of semicircles and, as the Editor calls it, the “Banner” decoration filled in with dots.

The painted vase has an oval shape and three handles on the shoulders (**fig. 43**) decorated with a pattern of rays alternated with bundles of vertical lines; half way down the body there is a band decorated with metopes and clepsydra pattern.

The transportation amphoras come from different production areas, such as Greece, we-



46 A-B: Attic black figure potsherds



47 A: multiple lamp (*Kernos*); B: terracotta model of an indigenous hut



48 Big bowl

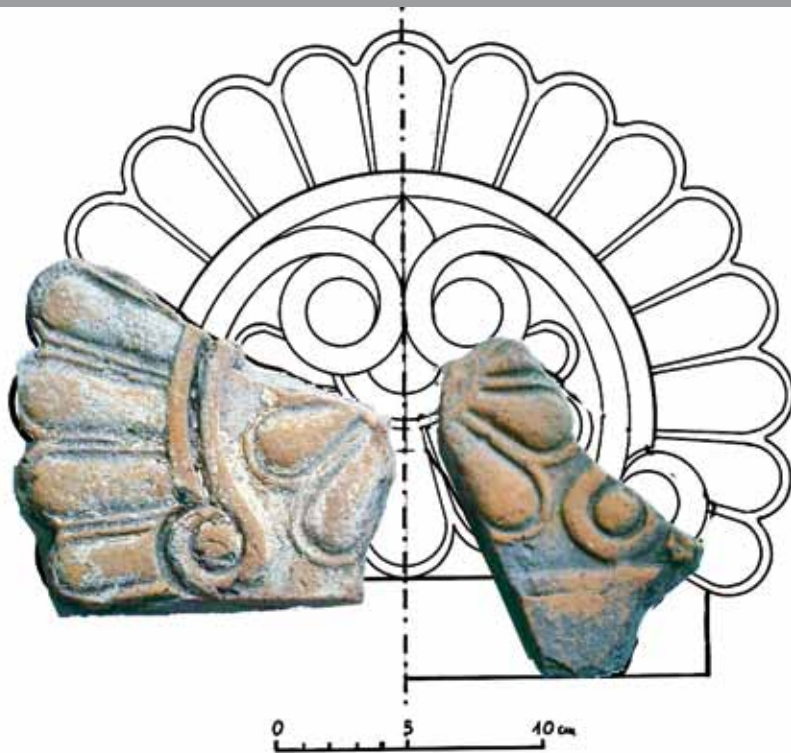
49 Potsherd of an amphora with Punic inscription

stern Greece, the Etruscan and Punic areas (**fig. 44**); these attestations are useful to better understand the trading exchanges between the colonies and the indigenous areas in the Archaic Age. The findings confirm the importance of Colle Madore, a settlement half way between the *polis* of Himera in the north and Akragas in the south, within a trading area of goods that also included valuable products such as olive oil and wine. In particular, a Corinthian type A amphora, from the layer of destruction, has an epigraphic mark, an upside-down sigma that probably indicated the maker's name; one of the amphoras is Samian, and two are of the so-called western-Greek type.

The *deinos* from the *sacellum* is quite interesting (**fig. 45**); the shape is hybrid, because of the high-truncated conic foot and the hemispheric shape of the vase, which is decorated in bands. The type recalls insular-Aegean products and is quite close to vases brought to light in Magna Graecia, but also in Sicily, from the Fusco necropolis of Syracuse and in the eastern necropolis of Himera. The Madore vase is, up to now, an important *unicum* within an indigenous context.

#### *Vases found within the area surrounding the sacellum*

From this area comes a rare terracotta model of a round hut (**fig. 47B**), surmounted with a handle. It is an object attested sporadically in settlements in central Sicily and it could be a representation of a sacred building, similar to models of religious architecture widely distributed in Sican towns, for example in Polizzello, Sabucina and maybe also in Colle Madore,



should the ruins of the circular structure on top of the hill be interpreted as such. This peculiar type can be directly compared to similar models – even if more elaborated – coming from Polizzello and Vassallaggi. The discovery of Colle Madore extends to the west the distribution area of these significant finds, which have been linked to the Aegean and Cretan world, re-proposing the wider problem of relationships in the Proto-historic Age between central-western Sicily and the eastern Mediterranean area. Chronologically these finds are generally dated between the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.

From the same area come two multiple vases, with band decorations and three little care-



nated bowls connected to each other by small holes, similar to the so-called *kernoi* (**fig. 47A**). This typology is quite rare in Sicilian indigenous sites; the Colle Madore vases are comparable to similar ones found in Metapiccola (Lentini), Cittadella di Morgantina, and at Montagnoli di Belice, near Menfi. The origin of this type of pottery is a quite complex problem, finding yet again interesting references in the Cretan and Cycladic area. As far as the function of the Colle Madore vase is concerned, it is more likely to be a multiple lamp, because the three bowls are connected to each other. From a chronological point of view, the find can be dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. Even a potsherd of a black figure crater with a probable departure scene (**fig. 48 B**) comes from the layers of abandon of the rooms near the *sacellum*; it has been suggested to attribute the potsherd to the Berlin Painter 1686, active in Athens in the third quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.

Among the finds culturally close to the Himerean production worth mentioning, are fragments of a Campanian type pending palm leaf antefix (**fig. 50**) probably relative to the decoration of the roof of the *sacellum*. The date should be between the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. The distribution of these artefacts is attested only in those





towns on the Tyrrhenian coast – besides Colle Madore – an indication of the direct relationship between this area and Campania. A plain unglazed basin (**fig. 48**) found within the area is a well known type in Greek colonies of the Archaic Age; the characteristics of the clay and of the shape remind of the great number of similar vessels found in Himera. Quite interesting is the Punic inscription (**fig. 49**) incised on the neck after firing, of a “Western-Greek” amphora found in the layer of destruction of the rooms around the *sacellum*. The writing, easy to read, is of a male’s first name, which up to now has no other attestations in the Punic-Phoenician area, interpreted as “the lioness’s client”, where the last word can be meant as an epithet of a female divinity. Probably the writing indicates the owner of the amphora. What is quite interesting is that it is incised on a Greek amphora found in an indigenous site far from the Punic towns of the northwestern coasts of Sicily.

Finally, from the sacred area comes a long spit (*obelos*) used in sacred ceremonies, a spear head with a leaf shaped blade dated to the Late Archaic Age and a billhook (**fig. 52**), meaning that farming tools must have been objects frequently offered in Sican sacred areas.

### *Finds from the Survey*

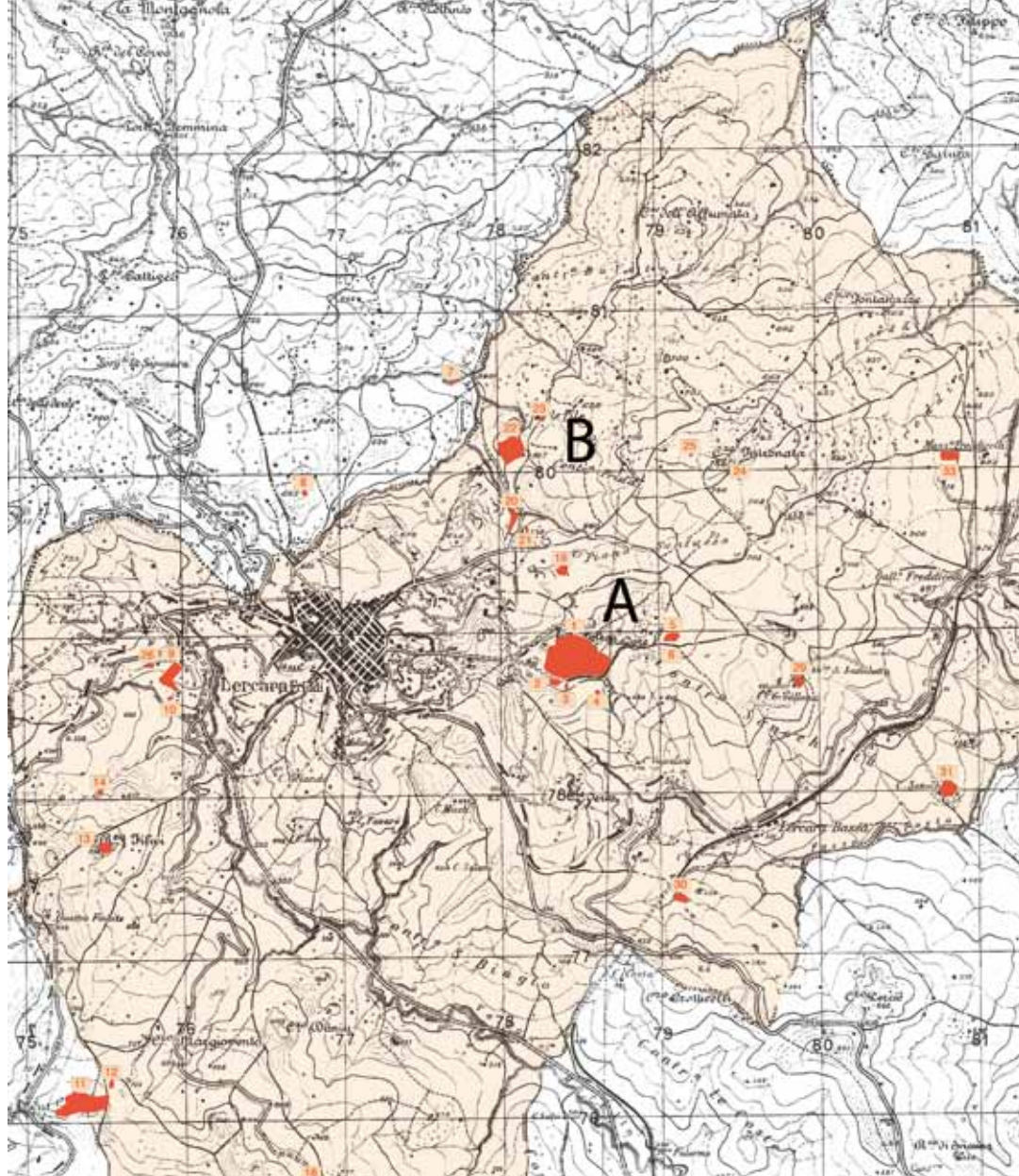
From the survey carried out before the beginning of the systematic research on Colle Madore comes a potsherd of a black figure crater with the representation of Heracles probably fighting against an Amazon (recognizable by the hanging paws of the *Leontè* along his sides) (**fig. 46A**). Even this fragment, together with the one previously described and a significant number of black figure potsherds, confirm the importance of this anonymous settlement on Colle Madore, placed within a distribution network of precious goods imported from Greece.

Another sporadic find is an intact “arula” decorated with two racing

quadrigae (**fig.51**). The production of these small household altars had a discreet success in Sicily and Magna Graecia already in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC; the form of the arula from Colle Madore is quite widespread, less frequent, however, is the iconographic motif, finding a very close comparison in Gela. Furthermore, the quadriga theme, of Corinthian origin, has the special nature of being duplicated, which makes the Madore arula a “*unicum*”.

Finally, in the exhibition are the most important finds found in the territory of Lercara, especially from the Friddi district, just north of the town (**fig. 53**). It is a vast site occupying the top and the eastern slopes of a modest hill, placed along Landro valley, where a great number of potsherds and pieces of metal and glass have been identified on the surface. The settlement was vital for a period quite long, from the Hellenistic to the Late Imperial Ages and it was placed in an important location of the Sicilian road system in Roman times. The potsherds regarding the Hellenistic Age are mainly black glaze, but there are also terracotta fusiform oil flasks, several loom weights and *oscilla*; dated to Roman Age are some potsherds of Sigillata Italica ware (plain or with relief decoration) two of them with *planta pedis* stamp. There is also Sigillata type A and D terracotta lamps both of African and Sicilian imitation, African and Aegean amphoras, African cooking ware as well as from Pantelleria, many fragments of glass and bronze objects, besides some coins.

**Monica Chiovaro**



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## GLOSSARY

*Sacellum*: small cult building.

*Kalypteres hegemonas*: Imbrex tile.

*Antefix*: decorative element of the roofs.

*Pithos*: large terracotta container for foodstuff.

*Deinos*: wine container.

*Louterion*: basin.

*Oinochoe*: table ware, mainly used for wine.

*Kotyliskos*: miniaturistic Corinthian cup with two handles.

*Olpe*: Jug.

*Kernos*: multiple lamp.

*Polis*: City-state, independent and autonomous, typical of Classical Greece.

*Obelos*: long spit used during the sacred ceremonies.

*Leontè*: Lion Nemea's skin, strangled by Heracles. The hero wore it for protection in his adventures.

*Oscillum*: small round terracotta or stone object, with pass-through hole, probably used as a loom weight.



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ARCHAEOLOGICAL AREAS IN PALERMO PROVINCE



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Arial view with road signs to reach the site from SS 121-189



Indigenous amphora (detail)

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