



BRIEF  
Guide

# maranfusa calatrasi

MONTAGNOLA (Roccamena)

SP 27

SP 20

SAN CIPIRELLO

SAN GIUSEPPE JATO

SP 34

SP 20

ALTOFONTE

PALERMO



PALERMO -SCIACCA

SS 624

v.le Regione Siciliana NO



## HOW TO GET THERE

FROM PALERMO [Km 43,5]

From Viale della Regione Siciliana NW take the SS 624, the Palermo - Sciacca. At km 43,8, exit Montagnola, carry on along the SP 107, to Roccamena. Pass the crossroads to the Agriturismo Ponte Calatrasi, turn left into Via Filippo Turati. At around 500 m and near a curb on the right, you pass first a road on the left which takes you to the mill and to the Calatrasi Bridge and then, at about 1 km opposite a photovoltaic system, a road track which takes you to the archaeological site of Monte Maranfusa. Following the Via Turati you will get to the town of Roccamena, about 3km away.

## ANTIQUARIUM

SS 624 > SP 27bis > km 46  
ex-Town Hall  
p.za Indipendenza  
90040 ROCCAMENA

*i*

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This brief guide of Monte Maranfusa/Calatrasi, which follows those already published of Himera, Palermo, Ustica, etc., has also been made for educational purposes of the Archaeological Heritage of the Province of Palermo: a brief text, provided with photos and drawings which, besides showing the importance of the site, may be of stimulus to visit the place and the Museum of Roccamena.

Monte Maranfusa, located in the Belice Valley about 40 km from Palermo, is a vast 487m asl hill and a real isolated stronghold of great strategic importance. On the higher ground of the hill and along the gentle slopes below, the Soprintendenza of Palermo has conducted regular excavations which have enabled us to understand the main phases of life of the settlement and to bring to light and restore the medieval castle of Calatrasi.

The investigation has recorded an occupation of the site, starting from at least the 9th - 8th centuries BC, which seems to have reached its peak in the Archaic Age, between the 7th and the first half of the 5th century BC. In this phase the indigenous peoples, already settled on the mountain for centuries, came slowly in touch with the Greeks of the nearby colonies along the coast, Selinus and Himera, starting those delicate interaction processes which characterize the indigenous world of central-western Sicily.

The Calatrasi Castle is on the southern-eastern rocky spur of the hill, from the Norman Age, whose origins probably belong to the Islamic Age. It is a fortified structure with a triangular plan, perfectly adapted to the rugged morphology of the hill, wide about 1000 sqm which had a clear defensive function of the territory, for its location from where one can dominate the vast right side of the Belice Valley and the Calatrasi Bridge.

The municipal Antiquarium, inaugurated in 2004 in Roccamena's ex Town Hall, and made in collaboration with the Municipality of Roccamena, houses and exhibits a vast selection of the most representative finds discovered during the excavations conducted on Monte Maranfusa from 1986 to 2008, giving, through several didactic panels, a meaningful path of knowledge of the ancient settlement and of the material culture that characterized the indigenous settlement.

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CASTLE OF CALATRASI

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

> Francesca Spatafora

# monte maranfusa/calatراسي

BRIEF  
Guide



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Spatafora, Francesca <1953->

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## THE TERRITORIAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

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Monte Maranfusa, a calcareous hill 487m asl, rises majestically over the left riverbank of the Right branch of the Belice river.

The location and the geomorphologic features of the site, placed within the area between the two river branches of the Belice river, surely had great importance for the history of its settlement (*fig. 1*).





The Belice river, one of the most important hydrographic basins of the island, has its origin from the confluence of two branches: the Right one originates from the southern side of Palermo's Mountains, near Piana degli Albanesi; the Left branch is instead known as the Frattina River closer to the springs located near Rocca Busambra, the highest mountain in western Sicily (*fig. 2*).

The main hydrographic branch has a NE/

SW orientation and, after the confluence of the two branches, it bends to the SE and flows into the sea on the southern coast of the island, near Selinus.

There is no certainty regarding the possibility of sailing along some parts of the river; however, the main environmental aspects, morphologic and hydrogeologic of the basin, its orientation and the accessibility of the vast valley, the gentle slopes and the vast cultivable areas on one side and, on the other side, the narrow valley dominated by isolated rocky outcrops, had to play a decisive role as regards to the complex processes of the anthropization of the area (*fig. 3*).

The whole valley has been densely inhabited since the earliest periods of pre-

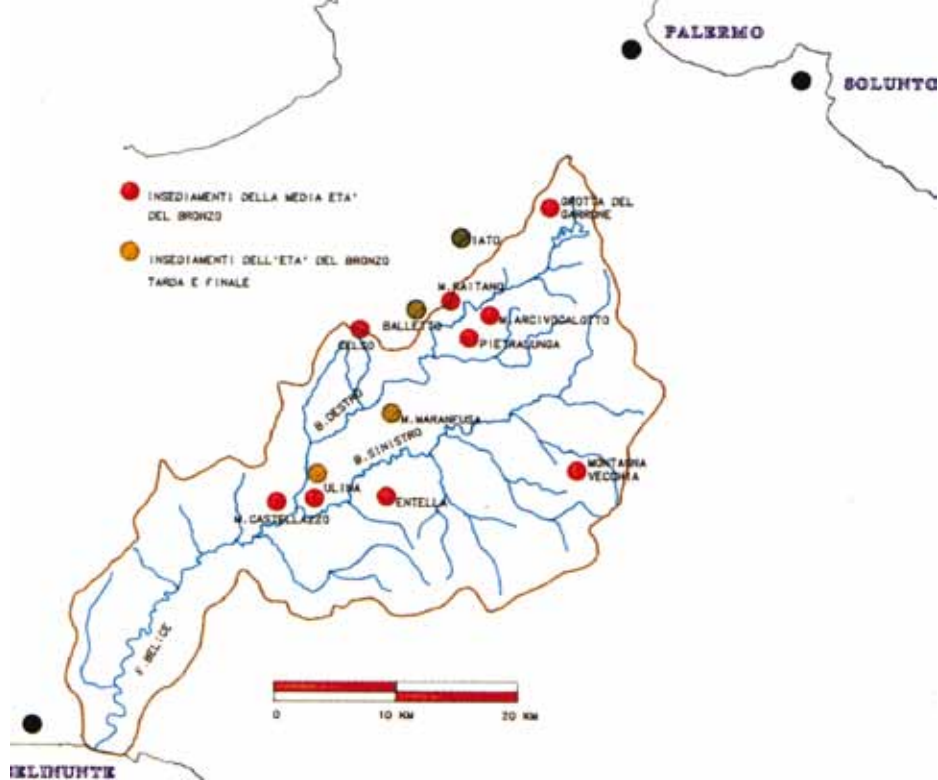


history: to understand the entire layout of the territory from the point of view of the settlements fundamental are the results of systematic field surveys carried out regarding portions of the territory taken as sample areas: the most interesting have been carried out in the area of the upper river of the Right Belice and along the middle river of the Left Belice, enabling to advance some reliable hypotheses about the history of the settlement and of human activity in that area starting from the Palaeolithic up to the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

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Alongside these systematic investigations are several non-intensive field surveys and some fortuitous discoveries which have increased our knowledge of the Belice river area, contributing in a fruitful way to the progress of the research both as regards to the most ancient prehistoric phases and to the study and knowledge of the different historical periods up to the Middle Ages.

For the Early Iron Age emerges a model of a settlement which, based on evidence from different sites, can be traced back very likely to the Final Bronze Age (*fig. 4*); it complies to the double needs of agricultural exploitation of the

territory, due to subsistence needs, and to the needs of control and defence of the people who were living in those places permanently.

Indeed, from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, but with more evidence only from the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, between the upper and middle Belice river valley are distributed some settlements which are over 20 hectares in size located on hilltops easily defensible and controlling the valleys below: from the North to the South there are the ancient *laitas* (fig. 5) which, even though located along the lato river, dominated on its southern side the upper valley of the Right Belice river; the anonymous town on Monte Maranfusa, along the central part of the same river, and, slightly more to the SW, on the Right river bank, the settlement of Monte Castellazzo of Poggioreale.

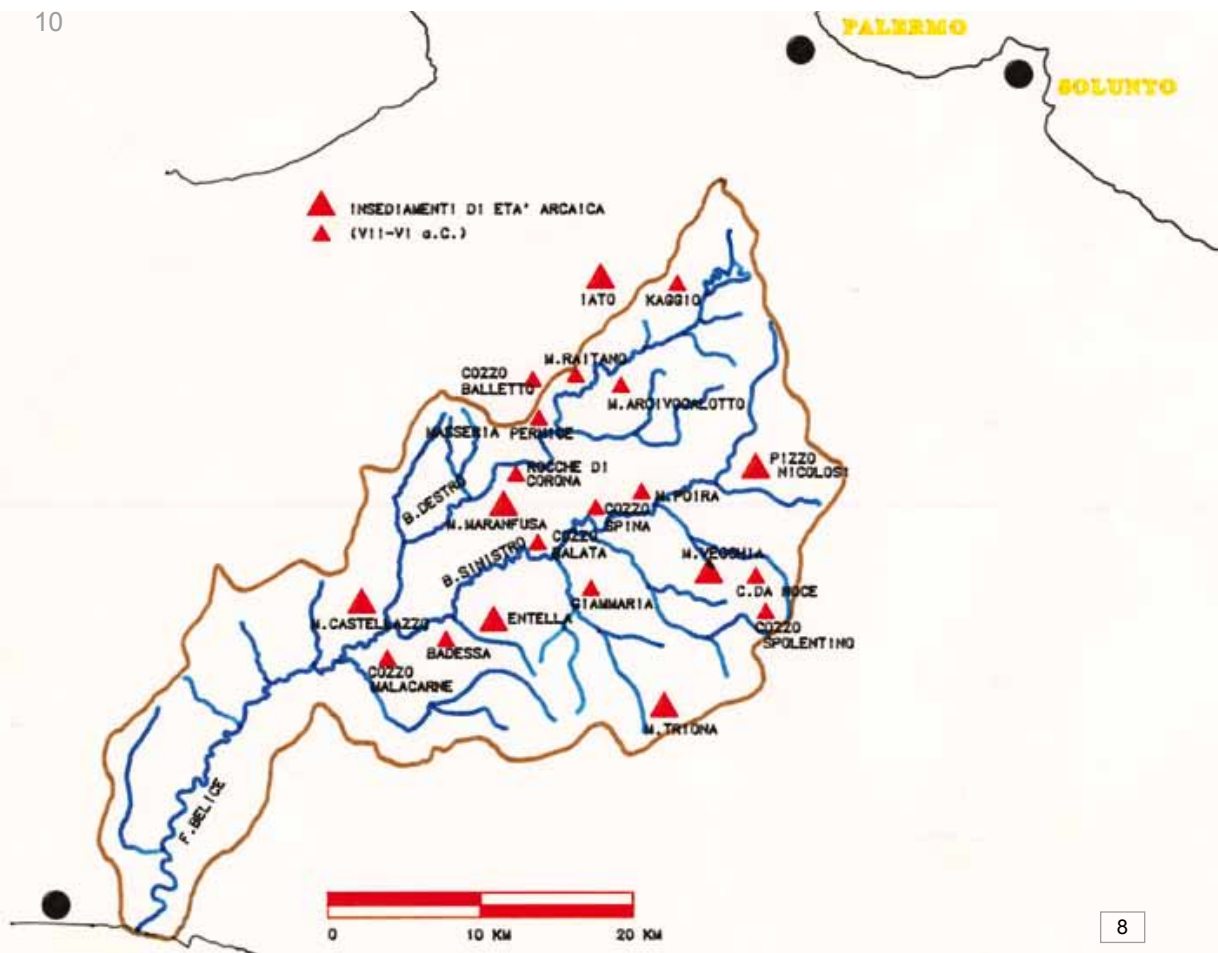




On the opposite side, along the Left Belice river, the Elymian town of Entella dominated on one side the area of confluence of the two river branches and on the other side the southern area of the basin; along its left side tributaries the most significant urban entities were the settlement located on Monte Triona (*fig. 6*), near Bisoquino – a mountain whose peak reaches 1200m asl and marks the watershed line between the Belice valley and the Sosio valley – and the town traditionally identified with Ptolemy's *Schera*, located on Montagna Vecchia of Corleone, a vast calcareous plateau that rises isolated in the

Corleone river valley. Still further north, near Rocca Busambra (*fig. 7*) and the springs of the Belice river, a settlement of significant size rises up on Pizzo Nicolosi, surely with the function of connection with regards to the Eleuterio river valley, just north, and therefore with the northern Tyrrhenian coast. Around these urban settlements of considerable size gravitated, according to a hierarchical system, some villages of smaller size located along the hilltops and many small agricultural settlements placed along the valley floor, evidently with the function of exploiting the fertile land along the river (*fig. 8*).







The history of the area, outlined more evidently from the 7<sup>th</sup> cent. BC, both on archaeological and on literary sources, has always been conditioned, as far as the previous periods are concerned, by the famous passage by Thucydides' (Thuc. VI, 2) where the complex ethnic groupings of the inhabitants settled permanently in the historic age in the western part of the island are retraced: next to the Phoenicians, Sicans and Greeks, the Athenian historian places the Elymians, Trojans who survived the Achaeans and landed in Sicily where they settled on the border with the Sicans and with whom they united, founding Erice, and Segesta.

Thucydides' version is counterposed by Hellanicus' story, which sees the Elymians as a population of peninsular origins, which descended into Sicily just before the Sikel migration: around these two fundamental literary sources and on the following historiographic tradition there have been in these last years several and distinguished interpretations and lines of investigation, all of them tending to establish more clearly the contours, from an ethnic view, of the Elymian people or, at least, defining more clearly its relevant territory of origin. However, the literary and historical evidence is not fully supported by the archaeological results: the aspects of the material culture which characterises the settlements of the area considered "Elymian", that is west of the Belice River, including the Elymian town of Entella, do not differ from the contemporary productions of other parts of the island nor are distinguished for evident peculiarities.

## IL SITO



The geographical setting and the environmental context where Monte Maranfusa is placed (I.G.M. 1:25000 F.258 IV SE, Camporeale) were decisive, in antiquity, as regards to the possibility of settling in the area to the opportunity of founding a large urban agglomerate right on that site dominating a junction of fundamental importance. As a matter of fact, the Belice Valley represented the main access route of the entire area and marked physically the demarcation line of the western end of the island (*fig. 9*).

The high ground, located on the left river bank of the Right Belice river, in the

upper-middle area of the river, is about 25km far from the northern coast of the island, near the Castellammare Gulf, and about 35km from *Panormos*, the Punic emporium; equally distant is the southern coast, where the Belice river flows into the Mediterranean sea.

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The location dominating the valley, the closeness to the river, which laps the western slopes, and its equidistance from the Megarian colony of Selinus and from the important Punic trading town of Panormo, surely made enviable the position of the settlement which, probably since the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> centu-

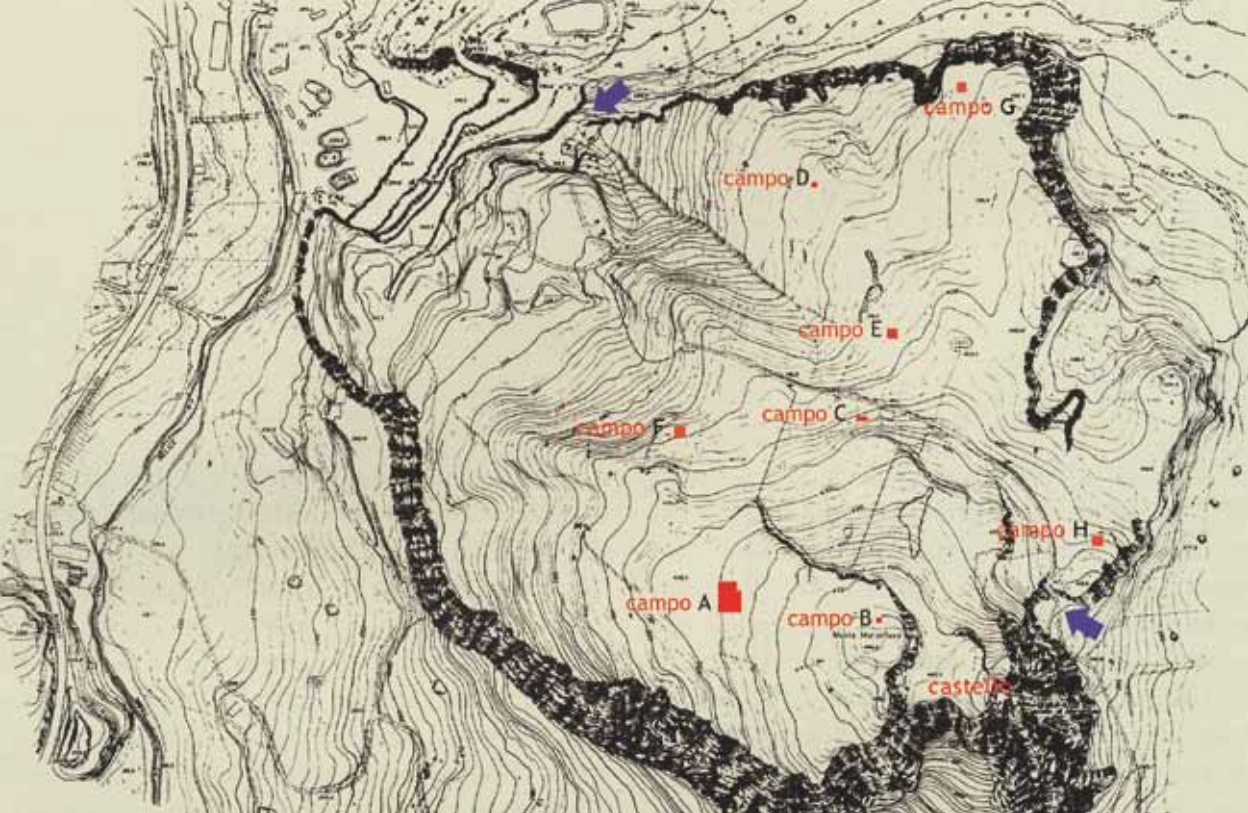


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11 ry BC, was established on Mount Maranfusa, and that certainly found its *raison d'être* even afterwards in the possibility of links and relationships guaranteed by the centrality of the site.

The mountain, a marny calcareous rock, is 58 hectares wide having a very peculiar aspect and rather articulated: shaped more or less like a square (*fig. 10*), it is characterized by inaccessible high steep slopes on the southern and western sides, while the northern slope is lower and less steep with gentle slopes on the eastern side (*fig. 11*). The highest part of the mountain is the southern-eastern one, characterized by the presence of an isolated rugged rocky peak, 487m asl divided, by a deep creek, by another peak, high 486m asl, which degrades smoothly to the NW; on the northern side, in some places, it is rimmed by vertical rocky outcrops which breaks the natural continuity to



the North, giving to the north-eastern area an almost terrace-like aspect, sloping to the NW too, below the upper plateau (*fig. 12*).

The north-western side of the mountain is by now permanently compromised, due to intensive quarry activity which stopped only in 1987, just as irremediably damaged and profoundly compromised are the structures and archaeological layers of the northern area, widely exploited for agricultural purposes.



## THE ANCIENT SETTLEMENT

From an urban and topographic point of view all the mountain, being a natural defensive stronghold, was involved by the presence of the ancient settlement, although in different ways according to the period and to the importance the town had from time to time.

The only area with no natural defences and which probably needed fortification opens, between two rocky outcrops, on the eastern side of the hill and which nowadays seems closed by a fortified wall probably dated to the Late Medieval Age (*fig. 14*).





As regards to the accesses, they seemed limited to two opposed places: on one side, the SE one, a passage between two rocky outcrops might be the main access way to the settlement, as shown by the signs left by the cart wheels on the rocky surface; on the other side, along the northern slopes, there is evidence of a road cut into the bedrock in antiquity, nowadays visible only on cartography, destroyed by quarry activity (*fig. 12*).

As far as the different phases of the settlement are concerned, land survey activity has enabled the researches to verify a much wider extension of the settlement during the Archaic and Late Archaic Ages and also in the Norman Age: pottery dated to those periods are found on the ground all over the hill, even if a significant concentration of materials of the Middle Ages has been noted on the small rimmed plain from

the fortification walls on the NE area of the lower plateau, to the foot of the castle and from it well visible and controllable.

The most ancient material found both on the ground and during the excava-





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tions shows an early occupation of the hill during the Final Bronze Age, becoming more stable and consistent in the Early Iron Age. Anyway, the period of maximum expansion is in the 6<sup>th</sup> cent. BC, a time when all the hill was covered with houses and the higher part of the hill seems to have been the Acropolis, becoming probably the seat of public and sacred buildings. A significant decrease of the population starting from 480 BC, and a probable abandonment, instead, in the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC are attested. There seems to be no significant evidence of persistence of the settlement after that period, while the medieval occupation of the north-eastern plateau



might have been preceded by a small settlement of the Late Imperial Age. It is only with the Arab conquest of Sicily, and above all during the Norman period (*fig. 17*), that the settlement on Monte Maranfusa, and above all its castle, known then by the name of Calatrasi (*figs. 13, 15*), regain vigour and consistency to fade away definitely in the 15<sup>th</sup> cent. AD.

From the same period dates the splendid bridge (*fig. 16*), still intact, placed over the Right branch of the Belice river, single span known also by the name of Calatrasi.



## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The Monte Maranfusa excavation, after a number of land surveys, started in 1986 and, even though discontinuously, continued up to 2008 (*fig. 10*).

The first excavations were conducted on the flat surface of the upper plateau (Camp A) and on the south-western peak (Camp B), the acropolis area, probably having a public function but subject to evident erosion and surface runoff phenomena.

Grid squares, not so wide, were opened in two places of the lower north-eastern terrace (Camp C and Camp D): the excavation verified a situation very much compromised from a stratigraphic point of view and for the conservation state of the structures, certainly due to the thousand-year agricultural use of those lands,



much more exploitable from an agricultural point of view than the rugged allotments of the upper plateau.

Then, the research was extended to a new area (Camp E), on the lower terrace rather promising because of its morphological features.

The last digging campaigns have highlighted the vast extension of the indigenous settlement of the Archaic Age, recorded in several places of the hill: Camp F, always on the southern side of the mountain, NW of Camp A; Camp G, on the northern peak of the hill and Camp H, on the middle eastern side, just NE of the main access to the town. In two cases, Camps G and H, the archaic age structures had been cut into by Islamic burials (*fig. 18*), as it had already been recorded in Camp A (*fig. 19*).



MONTE MARANFUSA  
CAMPO A  
NECROPOLI - PLANIMETRIA -

0 40 100 200  
m.

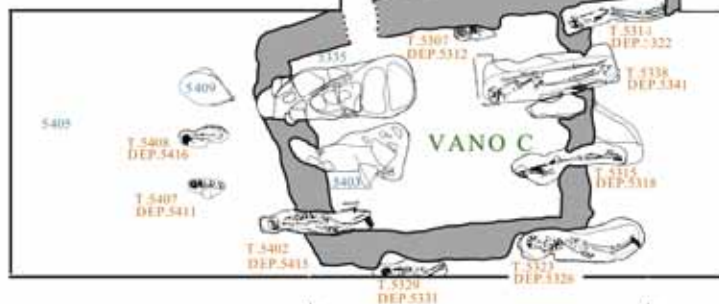


40	30	20	10	0	30	00
41	20	21	11	1	31	01
42	30	22	12	2	32	02
43	32	23	13	3	33	03
44	34	24	14	4	34	04

SCHEMA DELLE AREE DI INTERVENTO

AREA NECROPOLI

EDIFICIO 1





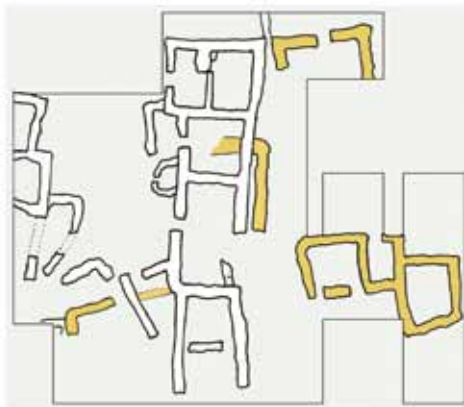
## THE INDIGENOUS SETTLEMENT

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Different living phases have been recorded in the area of the town excavated in Camp A dating from the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century to about 480 BC, when the site was suddenly abandoned, probably due to natural events.

To the initial phase, dated at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> cent. BC, belong some buildings made up of rooms grouped in clusters and organized around wide open spaces or open-air courtyards: a housing unit (Edifice 1) can be dated to this early phase, with three rooms opening on a small porch on the west side and on a courtyard on the east side.

Some structures of this earlier phases survived even during the second phase, datable between the mid 6<sup>th</sup> cent. BC and the first two decades of the 5<sup>th</sup> cent. BC.: in this period, surely because of more intense



PRIMA FASE



SECONDA FASE

- 24 contacts with the Greek colonies, the urban space is organized in a more regular way and the houses are built with a rectangular plan, probably used by more family units, with the longitudinal axis pointing EW and placed along the sides of an open-air space in some places paved. A last and ephemeral use of the structures is recorded by the remaking of some walls and by the construction, over the layers of destruction, of some rough rooms which, in some cases, lean over the more regular walls of the former phase.
- 21 An overall reading of the scant evidence regarding the settlement of the first phase suggests a partial abandoning of the traditional type of house model,



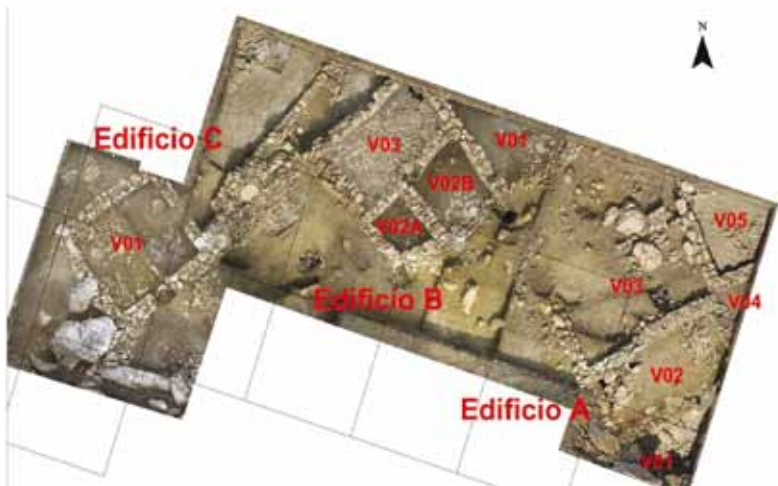
simple in its structure and in the space organization, in favour of more complex systems which show the first contact between the colonialists and the “indigenous people”, a phenomenon which surely had to be at the basis of the first and deep fracture which determined the moving of the settlement to the highest places of the mountain, controlling the fertile valleys below, both to the North up to the natural barrier of the mountains of Palermo, and to the South, dominating the middle and lower part of the Belice river valley.

Therefore, in the second phase it is possible to recognize a more regular organization of the urban space and the existence of a system complying to simple pre-established criteria.

Extremely interesting is the analyses of the movable furnishings collected within the different rooms, which allow us to define the living space and therefore the social structure of the group: everyday tools and furnishings were numerous, above all locally made impressed, incised and painted pottery, very often associated with imported or colonial pottery. Finally, what is interesting is the fact to have isolated two phases preceding the Archaic urban plan: as a matter of fact, one of the rooms overlies and in part destroys a more ancient room characterized by the exclusive presence of incised, impressed and painted pottery and also, in layer under the ground floor, by the presence of red matt potsherds or plumed decorated pottery of the Early Iron Age. Belonging to the same period seems to be the neighbouring hut or semi-circular (*fig. 21*) enclosure with a ring bench, leaning on the bedrock where impressed, incised and red matt pottery was collected together with plain cooking ware, stone tools and a fragment of a model hut/*sacellum* with impressed decoration.

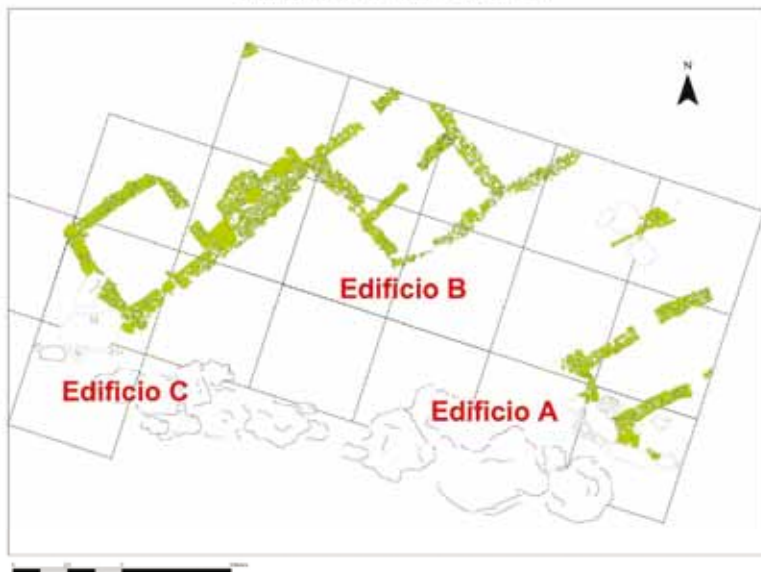
Even though it has been difficult to fully understand the type and function of the building, one might hypothesize a use of a ritual type.

In Camp F, instead, a natural context typified by the presence of a slight slope rimmed by a rocky crag, placed in a barycentric position half way up the mountain and dominating the middle of the Right Belice river, has come to light at



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Monte Maranfusa Campo F - Fase II

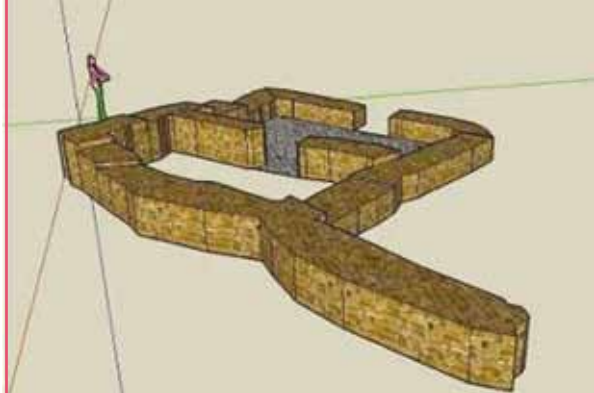


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least three buildings placed in a parallel way following the natural slope of the land. They have a SE/NW orientation and are distributed over three artificial terraces supported by walls (figs. 22-23-24).

Edifice A, on the upper terrace, has three rooms, two of which are adjoined lengthwise partially leaning onto the rocky spur which define the plain on the southern side; a probable road wide 3,50m opening onto a vast open-air space, separates Edifice A from Edifice B which also has three rooms (Rooms 1,2 and 3), two of which totally excavated, adjoined lengthwise and opening to each other. The inner room, with no external openings, must have been, in its early phase, a sort of basement. The outer room, elegantly paved, opened on to the lower terrace featuring an earth-beaten open space (fig. 25), probably a road more or less parallel to the one separating Edifice 1 and Edifice 2, which covered a wall of a previous phase. In a second phase Edifice 2 underwent some changes: room 2 was





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divided into two rooms and the accesses were changed. A massive terrace wall delimited the lower terrace where, up to then, a single square room had been recorded whose walls blended in with the rocky outcrops (*fig. 26*).

A votive offering deposition (*fig. 27*), which happened at least in two separate times within the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> cent. BC, in the corner of the inner room, seems to give a sacred function to the building. The typology and the composition of the offering recalls very much other sacred contexts in the Sicani area: it consists above all in small jugs decorated (*fig. 28*) with painted geometric motifs with a three-lipped rim and a small spilling rim, found together with miniature cooking ware which, evidently, recall symbolically the cooking of the offerings. The presence of two small models of terracotta round huts/sacella is quite significant, one of which, was part of the votive offering, the other one, of the kind of impressed decorated one with a rectangular opening marked by pointed jambs (*fig. 29*), was instead



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found on the floor of Edifice A. It is the most western proof for this kind of artefact, if we exclude the more elaborated model recently found in a house on Monte Iato, dated to the Late Archaic Age where there is, as an acroterio, the figure of a bull, whose representation has, with no doubt at all, a symbolic meaning, re-enforcing the idea of a kind of religion strongly tied to the concept of the reproduction of the species.

In Camp G, an area located on the northern edge of the mountain apparently in

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a peripheral position as compared to the town, the archaeological investigation has highlighted an intensive occupation also in this area. In an area of about 150 sqm, a building with three square rooms has been brought to light placed like an L around an open-air courtyard where a lot of evidence of meal leftovers have been found, fragments of grindstones and a large number of potsherds of indigenous decorated and painted pottery.

One of the rooms was partially paved (*fig. 30*); another one, also with a square



plan, was bigger and kept a stretch of a well-made cobblestone pavement. Under the latest floor there was a more ancient pavement, relatively to some walls and a hearth with bobbin shaped terracotta (*fig. 31*) supports and cooking ware too. Also in the third room two phases have been recorded and a specific area dedicated to cooking food featuring a terracotta four-part hotplate, used as a hearth and some bobbin shaped terracotta supports found on top of the terracotta hotplate. Even in this area, like in Camp A, the Archaic structures (6<sup>th</sup> century BC) have been cut, in several places, by Islamic burials, simple earth graves which often use the ancient walls as a side.

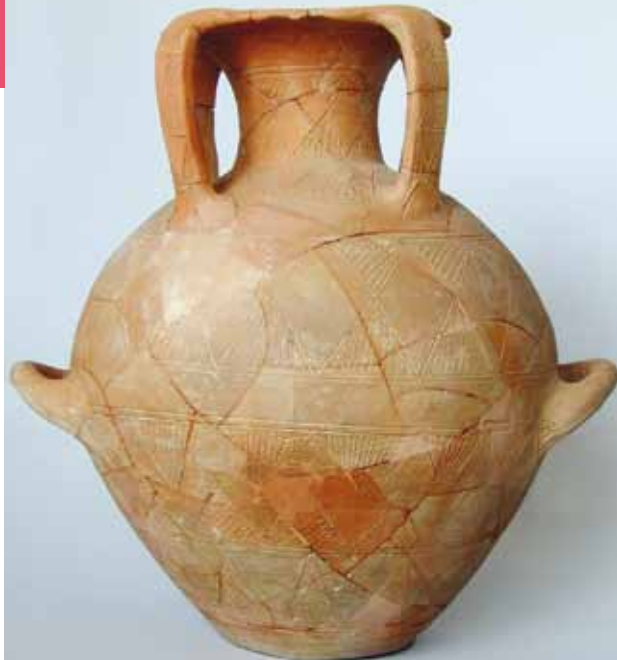




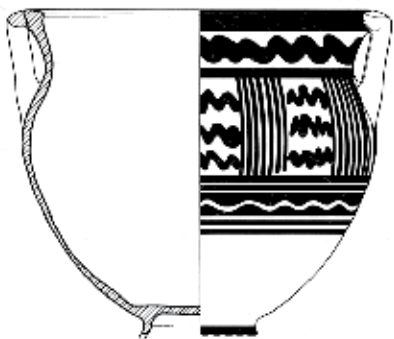
## THE MATERIAL CULTURE

Several artefacts offer precious elements for the reconstruction of everyday life and of the productive activities indispensable for the subsistence of the community that settled on Monte Maranfusa, strongly tied to local traditions, but open to new cultural influences coming from the Greek colonies.

A great number of pottery was found in the houses, both indigenous and Greek, imported and colonial. Among the classes of the local pro-







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duction (*fig. 32*), beside the most common plain ware and cooking ware (*figs. 33-34*), quite widespread is the impressed and incised decorated pottery (*figs. 35-36*) or the geometric painted pottery (*figs. 37-38-39*), with traditional shapes or from the Greek pottery repertoire. Imported pottery (*figs. 40-41*), discreetly widespread

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36 above all from the mid 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, comes mainly from Ionia and Attica besides from the close colonies of Selinus and Himera. For the working of cereals there are stone tools – grinders (*fig. 42*), pestles, ect, - found in different rooms of the settlement, while weaving activity, traditionally done by women, is well attested by several terracotta loom-weights. These findings witness that the most common productive activities were linked to agriculture and to the rearing of some domestic animal, among which were bovines, ovines and swine; however, there were also some wild animals such as deer and fox.



## THE MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT

After the definitive abandoning of the ancient town, the site was re-inhabited in an intensive way only during the Norman Age, when the Calatrasi territory – the name with which the whole district and castle is known in medieval documents and sources – became part of the Diocese of Santa Maria La Nuova of Monreale, donated by William II.

It is still not sure whether the origins of the castle date back to the Islamic Age; however the site might be identified with the one mentioned with the name of Calataczarut in a diploma of donation dated 1093 by Count Roger to the bishop of the diocese of Mazara. In about 1150, Calatrasi is mentioned by the Berber traveller Idrisi as “...striking castle and primitive fortress and valid to be relied on...” and by the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD the Calatrasi territory was given as a fief to the Malconvenant family who handed it back to William II in 1162.

As far as the other places are concerned, mentioned by Idrisi (Gaito and Corleone), they correspond to the ones which has constituted since 1176 the administrative districts of the vast territory donated by the Norman King, William II, to the church of Santa Maria La Nuova of Monreale. As a matter of fact, in 1178 was published a parchment (giarida or platea) which listed “the men of the register” belonging to the territory of the Church of Monreale; in the register “the people of the Calatrasi district” were made up of 424 names whilst “the people of Calatrasi” (the town) had 373 names.

In 1203, Pope Innocence III wrote a letter to the monks of Monreale accusing them bitterly of having rebelled against their Archbishop, and of having made alliance with Guglielmo Capparone and of having gained possession of the castles of Giato and Calatrasi committing all kinds of atrocities and living in luxury. As far as the following years are concerned, a document by Federic II, reported by Riccardo di San Germano is dated “Calatrasi Sept. 10 1222”: from the

document it is understood that Federic II in that year had definitely occupied the Christian-Muslim stronghold of Calatrasi from where he was sending his diplomatic correspondence.

Evidence from the fields about the different phases of the Medieval period are not so clear, above all the earliest ones, concerning the Arab period, while field survey have enabled us to come forward with some hypotheses about the topography of the Norman Age settlement. The castle (*fig. 43*), located on the eastern peak of the mountain, that is the most inaccessible and naturally fortified, overlooks a plain that occupies the north-eastern part of the hill where, judging by the distribution of the material collected on the ground, the Norman village was.

The existence of a previous Arab settlement is recorded instead, at this stage of the research, only by few fragments found on the ground or in layers of fill; on the other hand, the Swabian phase is attested in a significant way only near the Castle and, probably, by the burials found in Camp A and in Camp G. They are simple graves, facing EW, rather irregular rectangular shape, rounded on the shorter sides and featuring, sometimes, a stone slab cover placed horizontally side by side or in an oblique way. The characteristics of the burial are typical of the Islamic ritual: the buried are laying on their right side with the face looking South, the legs are slightly bent and the arms are placed along the body. As far as chronology is concerned, the results of C 14 analyses and the anthropological investigations – which have highlighted that this group of human beings belong to the Berber typology and show strong deficiency pathologies due to a nutritional shortage – are inclined to dating the burials to the Swabian Age. In fact, Calatrasi together with Iato and Entella, were one of the strongholds of the Muslim resistance in Sicily before the final expulsion which happened in 1246.

Very little written evidence have left traces of the castle still surviving in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, even after the final abandon of the settlement founded in the



Norman Age: as a matter of fact, in that time, the Calatrasi Castle is remembered together with the other castles of Giato and Corleone and again in 1396 a certain Francesco Morana is named castellan (keeper or guardian of the castle) of Calatares.

43

In 1435 Alfonso the Magnanimous stopped by for a few days during one of his hunting outings, but already in 1558 Fazello describes it in ruins.



## THE CALATRASI CASTLE

The monument is located on the south-eastern peak of the mountain surrounded on the south-eastern sides and south-western one by rocky steep sides. From here you dominate the vast Right Belice valley and the Calatrasi bridge – which, at that time, was the closest crossing of the river – and the coeval castles, lato in the North, Montagna Vecchia in the East and Entella in the South, are well visible.

The building adapted perfectly to the rough and tormented orography of the place, integrating totally with the steep sides which rim the rocky spur 487m high asl.

The archaeological investigation has highlighted how the structure visible nowadays is the result of destructions and adjustments occurring along many centuries (*fig. 44*).

The architectonic structure occupies a surface of about 1000 sqm having



Fig. 44 - Planimetria del castello (disegno di Mario V. Spaniol)

a 120m perimeter and, at least on the top, had to be a fortress adapted more than anything else to the military defence, provided with towers and rooms which were placed around a central open-air courtyard.

The walls that closed the inner area of the castle were raised directly from the bedrock and the access road was also made adapting to the orography of the places, featuring several hairpin bends; a small tower controlled the uphill route and, probably, even the lower area enclosed by a wall 2m wide (*fig. 45*).

45





42 Probably in the initial phase, together with the enclosure were built the two towers in the NW and NE, which delimited the entrance, and the south-eastern one, inside of which is a cistern with a barrel vaulted cover and with the base made out of the bedrock which was worked and covered with a layer of waterproof mortar.

In a second moment were built the two rooms next to the north-western tower and the service rooms built abutting the eastern fortification wall. Finally, the last phase saw the building of the rooms abutting the western fortification wall.

The scarceness of material collected during the archaeological investigation does not enable us to have an absolute chronology of the different building phases of the monumental complex: they are few fragments of pottery dated between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> century AD, coming from the layers of fill.



## THE CALATRASI BRIDGE AND THE MILL

Less than a kilometre away, SW of Monte Maranfusa, over the Right branch of the Belice river, is the Calatrasi Bridge (*fig. 46*), built during the Norman Age, donkey-back-shaped and pointed arch.

Immediately South of the bridge, along the right bank of the Belice river, are the ruins of a mill (*fig. 47*), whose last production phase is recorded in the mid 1900s (*figs. 49-50*), when in the territory were active two other mills, the Malvello and the Rosamarina.







Among the still visible structures one can notice the presence of some probable pre-existing elements, the most evident one is the pointed arch made of compact (fig. 48) white calcareous stone blocks – cut by the water tower built in dark ochre stone – and probably linked with a wall found during an excavation to which were associated very few shards amphora or jugs with the walls marked with turning grooves, dated between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.



46

The water tower is a square plan structure with a step system narrowing at the top, at the base of which was placed a machine that, fed by the water fall, assured the continuous rotation of the grinder and, by a belt, of the apparatus for cleaning the grain.

In axis with the tower and with the mill ran, underneath the ground floor, a wide drainage channel which, through an open arch on the southern side, assured the drainage of water after the working process. From here, through a system of channels cut into the bedrock, alternated by a system of tanks, the water returned back to the river.



## THE CIVIC MUSEUM

In 2004, within the ex-Town Hall of Roccamena, a small museum was set up showing the history of the site on Monte Maranfusa, from its origin to its definitive abandonment. As far as the indigenous settlement is concerned, the exhibition has been set up on two parallel lines: on one side the finds are exhibited according to homogenous groups (impressed and incised pottery, painted pottery, imported pottery), or for their function (pots for foodstuff, cooking ware, tools for working the grain, metal tools, ornament objects), on the other hand they have privileged the exhibition of entire contexts which could suggest the composition of domestic furniture pertinent to some houses or specific rooms. Of the Medieval Age some significant potsherds, but also some small metal objects, coins and glass tokens have been displayed.



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