

*VIè Seminari Arqueologia i Ensenyament
Barcelona, 26-28 d'octubre, 2006
Treballs d'Arqueologia 12, 2006*

Com.Hera: Akragas and Eraclea Minoa

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Introduction

Sicilian territory, as the rest of national territory, sees the presence of many historical testimonies defining the landscape as a space-time continuum where historical events give their contribution to the conformation of a such typical landscape. Its structure is, therefore, the result of a stratification of oro-geological elements with a millenary stratification of social and historical events creating an extraordinary beauty and evocative strength loved and appreciated by travellers all over the world. The recent discovery of historical and cultural patrimony as a possible means of economic and social development has given new stimulus to modalities and instruments of patrimony enhancement with the final aim to promote tourist activities.

It is necessary to create a popular instrument able to enhance

the territory as an indissoluble tissue of historical and natural elements, not only its parts in state of emergency which, out from its own context, has no meaning. The interactive comparison between present and past, the reconstruction of social and historical environment where monuments and archaeological sites were born, strengthen the value of the poorest ruin. Curiosity and expectations of tourist revive and a simple tourist trip becomes a fascinating tour searching for usages, customs and ancient traces still present within culture, colours and flavours. Awakening public opinion to the importance of care and enhancement of our historical-archaeological patrimony as factor of civil, economic and social development is of primary importance for the safeguard of it. The main work of increasing the value of a cultural patrimony is spreading the knowledge of its meaning in the widest and most

effective way.

Multimedia instrument

Multimedia instruments, in their widest meaning, are the best solution for the realization of a popular work promoting cultural patrimony. Traditional publications often preclude the knowledge to people who do not have a scientific background. Traditional publications regarding architectonic representation require a good knowledge of projective geometry while for most people the easiest plan becomes unintelligible. It is necessary an instrument able to satisfy requests of scientific exactness and, in the same time, striking communication according to the possibilities offered by the present technologies of virtual simulation of reality.

The instrument in itself is not enough to the popularize and give value to the patrimony, to raise curiosity and expectations of tourists. Its communication efficacy depends on the ability of authors in increasing the potentials of instrument, in mixing rightly different arguments in order to create new contents. The use of this multimedia work should be a unique experience, completely different from the ones obtainable with different

communication instruments.

This project is realized by Altair 4 Multimedia as the result of a long research for new products regarding the enhancement of cultural and artistic patrimony of Italy and Mediterranean area. During these years, the Altair 4 Multimedia collaborating with important public and private institutions, has tried to define a new methodology regarding the enhancement of artistic patrimony, with the aim to apply the results of this research to new editorial realizations to put on market.

The results obtained, measured on the reaction of public, have been used as input for a new research, to further improve the first results.

This scientific methodology, called recursive check, enables the creation of product very successful on the market.

The realization of this project about the province of Agrigento follows the same methodology. We are not speaking of using the same successful recipe. Each work has its own peculiar characteristics and success depends only on a strict methodology able to check the most suitable relation between work and final purposes. Some guide-lines of

this methodology are described in the following chapters.

The work

General Features

The project aims to create a multimedia and interactive instrument on DVD-ROM for Personal Computer and a web site (Italian/English) regarding the cultural enhancement of Agrigento province, with a particular attention to the ancient sites of Eraclea Minoa and Agrigento (Akragas). Both of them have been the heart of one of the most ancient and fully-developed civilization within the Mediterranean area. Their history is particularly suitable for multimedia enhancement: wonderful geographical position; importance of the cities in the development of territory; relationships with other Mediterranean civilizations of which Agrigento was the most important one as cultural and commercial crossroads; achievement of an own cultural identity which greatly influenced other cultures.

A multimedia publication dealing with the complexity regarding the analysis of archaeological sites after a long period of historical sedimentation should give prominence to connections and relations between events of

different nature. It is necessary to provide user with the greatest number of means of analysis and interpretation, in order to ease a global and aware vision. (Figs. 32-35)

Principal features of the work

Three-dimension reconstruction of isle geomorphology underlining geographical and oro-geological elements which have determined its development.

Reconstruction of historical events during the colonization of the isle, through the interactive visualization, on the map of Mediterranean Sea, of migratory flow of people and of commercial exchanges between the isle and other civilizations and between the various colonies.

Reconstruction of morphology and location of the main natural events characterizing social and economic development during the course of history with the origin of the two cities Eraclea Minoa and Akragas.

Regarding the city of Eraclea Minoa:

Volumetric reconstruction of the ancient city with its defensive structure.

Reconstruction and virtual tour of theatre together with the pot-

ter shop.

Reconstruction of II A house with decorations in I style.

Interactive superimposition of reconstruction hypothesis to images of the present state.

Regarding the city of Akragas:

Reconstruction of city sight including walls, temples and blocks of houses.

Reconstruction and virtual tour of the main archaeological sites: Temple of Concord.

Temple of Hercules.

Temple of Olympian Jupiter.

Ekklesiasterion / Oratory of Phalarides.

Reconstruction of the Hellenistic-Roman Quarter, particularly the insula among Card I and Card II with scenes of everyday life.

Reconstruction of defensive structures and correlation with epochal military structure and organization.

Interactive superimposition of reconstruction hypothesis to images of the present state.

Reconstruction of buildings

structural systems.

Architectonic settings, historical events, everyday life scenes and various social, economic and political aspects will be reconstructed and explained using ancient historical sources and memories of famous travellers of the past.

Navigation structure

From Macro to Micro

Navigation structure is characterized by a constant correlation between the macro scale of historical events and phenomenon (Mediterranean area and regional scale) and their interaction with the micro scale of local events and reality (province and cities). These last ones are the general tissue through which it is possible give a meaning to each historical-environmental event, monuments, structural systems and cultural and social life.

From the macro scale of events characterizing the history of the isle to the micro scale of each archaeological and typological element a deep correlation exists. A continuity of shapes, colours, space and time often not understood by people who perceive fragments disconnected from the complexity of the whole.

Our final aim is to represent the complexity of these interconnections, to recreate them thanks to the help of experts, and provide the user with the elements apt to create own personal interconnections through the comparison of sources and contents.

Contents

The contents of this work are made of contents of different origin and nature. Texts, graphics, reliefs, photos, maps, etc. After having been changed and worked out will be part of the navigation structure.

VR Reconstructions

This is the most demanding effort of this work and represents the visual synthesis of contents. The realization of VR reconstructions follows the collection and cataloguing of material present on internet, together with historical and iconographical documentation regarding the typology to reconstruct. Reconstructions are realized by experts with powerful 3D modeling and simulation informatics tools and showed to users thanks to a simple virtual navigation instruments enabling them to freely move inside the reconstructed environments and to superimpose reconstruction hypothesis with its present state.