6 = Archaeobotanical analysis from the long-term rural settlement of Contrada Castro (Corleone, Palermo): preliminary data

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The project "Harvesting Memories: Ecology and Archaeology of Monti Sicani landscapes" aims to analyse the long-term relationship of landscape dynamics and settlement patterns in a Mediterranean inland of Central-Western Sicily. The project combined different interdisciplinary approaches of vegetation science, landscape ecology, archaeobotany, history and archaeology in order to diachronically understand and reconstruct the human-society-environment interactions.
From 2017 to 2019 a new rural settlement has been investigated in Contrada Castro (Corleone, Palermo). The excavation in Contrada Castro (1) showed a clear case of long-term occupation of a hill-top site during Late Archaic/Classical age (6^{th}-5^{th} c. BC) and the Byzantine and Islamic period (7^{th}-11^{th} c. AD).
Soils from the archaeological excavation were sampled to obtain evidences about paleo-vegetation and vegetal paleo-diet. Archaeobotanical data (seeds and charcoal remains) represent an informative source in human-environmental dynamics to collect specific data on a small scale in terms of chronology and topography (2). Furthermore, presence of edible plants as cereals, pulses and fruit characterize their use as economical resources. Unfortunately, archaeobotanical analyses from archaeological sites in Sicily are still not very common (3). For the reconstruction of the paleo-environment and the use of woody resources from the three chronological phases of the site, a total of 239 liters of soils were analysed. Taxonomical identification was made by optical microscopy through the comparison with the reference collection and specific atlases (4). More than 400 wood charcoals were observed, about 80% of them was identified. Thanks to comparisons with the current vegetation, so far 9 species have been identified: *Quercus ilex* L., *Quercus* cfr. *pubescens* Willd., *Pistacia terebinthus* L., *Rhamnus alaternus* L., *Fraxinus ornus* L., *Ulmus minor* Mill. subsp. *canescens* (Melville) Browicz & Ziel., *Acer campestre* L., *Ostrya carpinifolia* Scop., *Populus nigra* L. Identification reached the detail of genus or family in 5 cases, *Phillyrea* sp., *Sorbus* sp., *Pyrus* sp. and maybe one species belonging to the family of Moraceae. The woody vegetation is therefore represented by evergreen oaks, semi- and deciduous oaks, maples, ash trees, associated with riparian species such as elm, poplar and hornbeam, and shrub species such as backthorn, terebinth, sorb and plum. Cultivated species are mostly not represented. Despite the widespread presence of the evergreen oaks in the whole record, differences between the three chronological phases were identified, highlighting a selective use of the wild species present in the area and a specific collection of wood for the hearths. Archaeological layers from last phase of occupation of the site are characterised by the presence of pulses and cereal kernels, notably concentrated in some hearths. Their analyses allow to identify staple sources for the village and agricultural techniques in the area.

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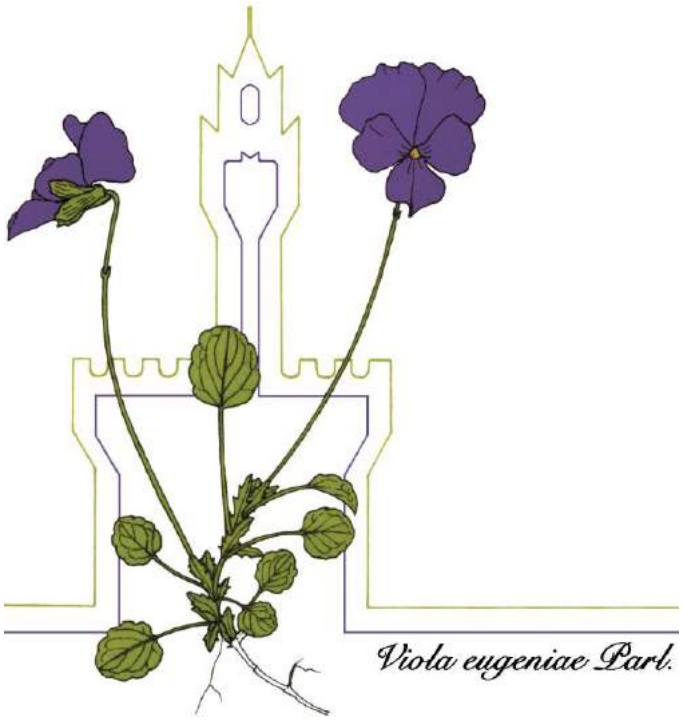

ABSTRACTS

KEYNOTE LECTURES, COMMUNICATIONS, POSTERS

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