

*ENGLISH

The archaeological site known as "**Mura Pregne**" - Brucato - is located in the province of Palermo, more precisely in contrada Cortevicchia, about 6 km southeast of Termini Imerese and 4 km north of Sciara, on the western side of Monte Castellaccio that is at the north-east foot of the Monte San Calogero complex (see photo 1). From the administrative point of view, the site is placed in the town of Sciara except for a small strip, located within the borders of Termini Imerese.

Prehistoric and proto-historic phase - Mura Pregne

The complex of Mura Pregne is located on a lithological structure characterized by outcrops of easily fractured Mesozoic limestone, which created several cavities of tectonic origin and with a relatively modest development. These caves were probably frequented by fauna and vertebrates on the island during the "Pleistocene" era. The origin of the toponym which indicated a cavity in the site now disappeared - "cave of the dragon" or "of Polyphemus" - would be due to the presence of remains of *Elephas*, whose skulls have a large central nasal cavity mistakenly identified by the first explorers as the only eye of a cyclops.

In more recent times this and other neighboring caves served as shelters for several family nucleuses already in the Upper Paleolithic - Neolithic (about 13-8 thousand years ago), as Jole Bovio Marconi speculated examining lithic finds and ceramic fragments collected in an essay of excavation in the 30s. It is highly probable, therefore, that the area was trampled by the first men who arrived in Sicily.

Information on Mura Pregne is scarce and fragmented due to a discontinuous and partial archaeological exploration. The different research campaigns that followed (Mauceri in 1877, Bovio Marconi at the end of the 30s, Pesce between 1972 and 1975, more recently a study group of the University of Palermo) were limited to carrying out few excavations or to draw up a cartography of the site. On its dating various hypotheses have been made that place its foundation in the late Bronze Age (about 2,500 years ago) or in the 7th century B.C. We certainly know that on this site for many centuries a city prospered, of which there are few but impressive traces. The most expressive of these is the so-called quadrilateral or enclosure, an area of 450 m² surrounded on two sides by rock outcrops, on another side by the remains of a wall erected with small and medium-sized rocks from which a small door opens, and on the fourth side, facing north-east, it is surrounded by what is called "la grande muraglia" – the great wall – (see photo 2 and 3).

This one is the most evocative aspect of the enclosure, a "cyclopean" artefact made up of large, roughly roughed boulders, which form a wall about 10 meters high, wide at base 3/4 meters for a length of about 25 meters.

Just above the fence, to the south-east, there is a monument of dolmenic aspect (see photo 4), an artifact of uncertain function probably connected to the underlying enclosure.

Both on dating and on the actual function of these structures there is still no clarity of views among the archaeologists who have studied them.

On the eastern side of what in the IGM topography is erroneously referred to as Monte Castellaccio there is a rock necropolis (see photo 5).

This site has been recently reported and consists of at least 6 cave tombs, with no outfit, about 2x0.60 m. The proposed dating is between the first and the average Bronze Age (from 4 to 2.5

thousand years ago.), Without further research, however, a more correct contextualization is problematic.

The Chiusa plateau, north of the Great Wall, was the site of a settlement of uncertain historical period, according to many of the origins of Sicilian civilization, and which later, around the seventh century. B.C., was occupied by the Greeks coming from the nearby colony of Imera. The Greek colonization includes the remains of two necropolises located one South-East of the Chiusa (contrada Franco) and one on the North East side of the hill as well as the rich material found, now kept at the Regional Archaeological Museum of Palermo. The town was then destroyed by Carthaginians led by Hannibal during the Second Punic War in the 2nd century BC . A few traces of the subsequent Roman colonization phase remain on the site, even if recent patrols have highlighted the remains of what could be a Roman farm.

Medieval phase - Brucato

There is more documentation on the Arab presence in the area, as evidenced by the excavations at Brucato: a small but prosperous fortified citadel, built by the Arabs, for the particular strategic position of the fortresses, around the VIII-IX century A.D.

The town was later used as an outpost by the Angevins during the war of the Vespers and finally destroyed by the Aragonese in 1338. Of the old citadel survive the remains of the perimeter walls of the castle (from which the toponyms of "Castellaccio" and of "Cortev ecchia" for the district), the ruins of some houses and the remains of a small church, called "Sant'Elia" (see photo 6 and 7), whose edification, from the examination of the iconography of the apses, is dated XI-XII century A.D. Another small church (see photo 8) was erected in the Aragonese period (XIV century) and then after the destruction of Brucato. It had a single nave and rough structure, whose fragments of walls and base besides a cistern for collecting water (see photo 9) are preserved.

Visits: The artefacts are on private land and can be reached by walking along paths that penetrate the natural vegetation, so we recommend a visit accompanied by guides.

For information and guided tours: Calogero Muscarella (AIGAE Guide - Environmental Guide for Hiking – at the Silene Cooperative).