

The history of the castle Castello dei Tre Cantoni in Scicli in the light of archaeological sources as a contribution to discussion on the origin, function and sociotopography of medieval power centres in Sicily.

The project concerns the history of a local centre of power, known as Castello dei Tre Cantoni (also Castelluccio), located in the town of Scicli in the southeast of Sicily. The castle occupies the top of the hill of St. Matthew towering over the city. The time when this castle was built, and the period of their operation remains the subject of research by archaeologists, historians and architectural historians. So far, no extensive archaeological work has been carried out on this site. The first small scale excavations were carried out in 1991 and 2018.

The Centre for Late Antique and Early Medieval Studies of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Wrocław started excavation research in this area in connection with a broader research programme on the role of Normans in shaping the cultural face of medieval Europe based on a scientific cooperation agreement with Soprintendenza per i Beni Culturali ed Ambientali di Ragusa with the support of local volunteers. From the point of view of the programme mentioned above, it is essential to capture the Norman phase during the functioning of the Castello dei Tre Cantoni (Castelluccio).

Preliminary research carried out by the Polish team in the vicinity of Castelluccio in 2018 using non-invasive methods: GPR, magnetic and electrical resistivity imaging allowed to determine the places where the remains of the old walls may be located. Based on further activities of this type, maps of the variability of the magnetic field components, maps of the apparent resistance composition of the soil, as well as pseudo-3D visualization and two-dimensional geophysical data planes will be developed. This work will allow us to determine the extent of the archaeological site and to document the presence of various structures resulting from human activity. It will also allow determining places where archaeological excavations will be carried out.

The amount of data on the structure and spatial development of the castle will be expanded both thanks to the documentation of the newly discovered walls as well as formal and typological analysis of movable artefacts discovered during excavations.

Radiocarbon dating of both masonry mortars and artefacts (e.g. animal and human bones) obtained during excavations will play an important role in determining the time of the construction and operation of the castle. In turn, the knowledge about the socio-economic changes of the studied complex will be expanded by physicochemical analyses of the discovered objects made of glass and pottery.

The task of the project is not only to establish the chronology but also to define the nature of changes in the functions performed by the castle over the centuries, in the period until the earthquake in 1693, which put an end to their existence.

The author of the project undertook the problem of the chronology of power centres and the changes in their functions in the socio-economic system of medieval Sicily as part of broader research on the functioning of medieval states (powers?), the economic role of the network of power centres. For this purpose, he uses the possibilities of economic archaeology in the field of supplementing historical knowledge with information on material culture and everyday life of the lower social strata, less described in written sources. The experience of the IAiE PAN Wrocław centre, gained during several decades of research in Central Europe, has been used since 2014 during research on the socio-economic changes which were initiated in the Norman period in Sicily.

Studies on the material culture of the Middle Ages in Sicily developed significantly in the last few decades, always remaining in the shadow of research on the Antiquity.

The research of the castle complex in Scicli will expand the set of information about this type of site in Sicily, bringing new elements to the discussion that has been going on for years about the causes and nature of the process of building castles in the early Middle Ages, the so-called *incastellamento*.

The results of the excavation work will be presented on the project website in Polish, Italian and English. The swift dissemination of information about the results of excavations is of fundamental importance both in terms of the expectations of the local community and their value for the future Polish-Sicilian scientific cooperation in this field of research.