



SICILY

**A LAND WHERE
TOURISM AND TRADITIONS
LIVE IN HARMONY**

Introduction

Preserving the memory to preserve the identity. Since 2005, Sicily has created a Register of Intangible Heritage with the recommendation of UNESCO. A container of valuable ethno-anthropological values in which flows the whole heritage of folk traditions: storytelling, theatrical expressions, poetic, artistic and manuals related to the cycles of work, the festivals for the patron saints, religious processions and rituals of pagan memory. The island, in fact, turns cyclically in a open-air stage where the rites of Easter, festivals and re-enactments in costume have all the flavor of life lived. Then like now. An extraordinary journey into the culture of this island in the middle of the Mediterranean, almost a time machine and memory that lives in the present.



The Puppet Theatre is an extraordinary expression of oral culture based on “cunto” (Opera of Puppets), which flourished in Sicily throughout the 800’s with the schools of puppeteers in Palermo and Catania animated by whole families of artists. A great heritage that perpetuates the tradition.



The Puppet Theatre returns today in theatres and soul festivals, museums and squares to take the viewer back in time to childhood, to the world of knights and jousting, in that alchemy of maneuver, combat, sound and acting that fascinates the audience of adults and children.



In the province of Trapani, in the caves of Custonaci at the foot of Mount Erice, for years they have prepared for Christmas a living crib. In a touching re-enactment on stage again hundreds of people intent on representing crafts and simple daily life of farmers, herders, artisans, women using a weaving loom and children in their infancy.

Faith and folklore mingle in Easter processions during Holy Week attracting thousands of worshipers and tourists in the streets to mourn the death of Christ, retracing the agony of the Cross. As well as the “Mysteries of Trapani”, an artistic representation of the Passion and Death of Jesus and a funeral procession parades through the streets of the old town in the wake of the twenty “Vare”, sculptures carried on the shoulders at the sound of the sad fanfare, involving the entire citizenry from Friday to Saturday morning.



The processing of lava rock all over the island is one of the greatest characteristics related to the cycles and traditions of manual labour. The black basalt lava characterizes the entire urban and rural landscape of Etna.



The extraction and subsequent processing of marble have made a major contribution to the construction of buildings and churches of great artistic value. The areas of Custonaci and Valderice, in the province of Trapani, and those of Comiso, Chiaramonte Gulfi and Victoria, in the province of Ragusa, have centuries of old traditions: Grey Billiemi, Pearl and Perlatino of Sicily, Alcamo Red, Stone of Comiso, Stone of Modica just to name a few.





The traditions related to work come alive in the testimonies of the massacre, the ancient art of fishing for bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean. Many tuna traps in the provinces of Trapani and Siracusa, that have not been used for years, now have been restored and opened to visitors.



The “Dammusi”, the traditional stone dwellings of Pantelleria, highly integrated into the natural landscape of the island, have made an image and material culture. Brilliant legacy that the Arabians have succumbed to the area about 900 years ago.



The tradition of ceramics has spread throughout Sicily, evidence of the Arabian artisan. High quality that has become an important driver of the local economy in St. Stefano di Camastra, Marsala, Patti, Burgio and Sciacca. In Caltagirone the craft of pottery has reached a very high standard of quality over the centuries and true dignity of art, with the creation of nativity of clay, with the work of different schools of the city.

Moving inward, survive other rites of Holy Week. Dramatic is the procession on Friday night, organized by the brotherhoods of the Hooded of Enna, in the narrow streets of the historic center illuminated by torches.





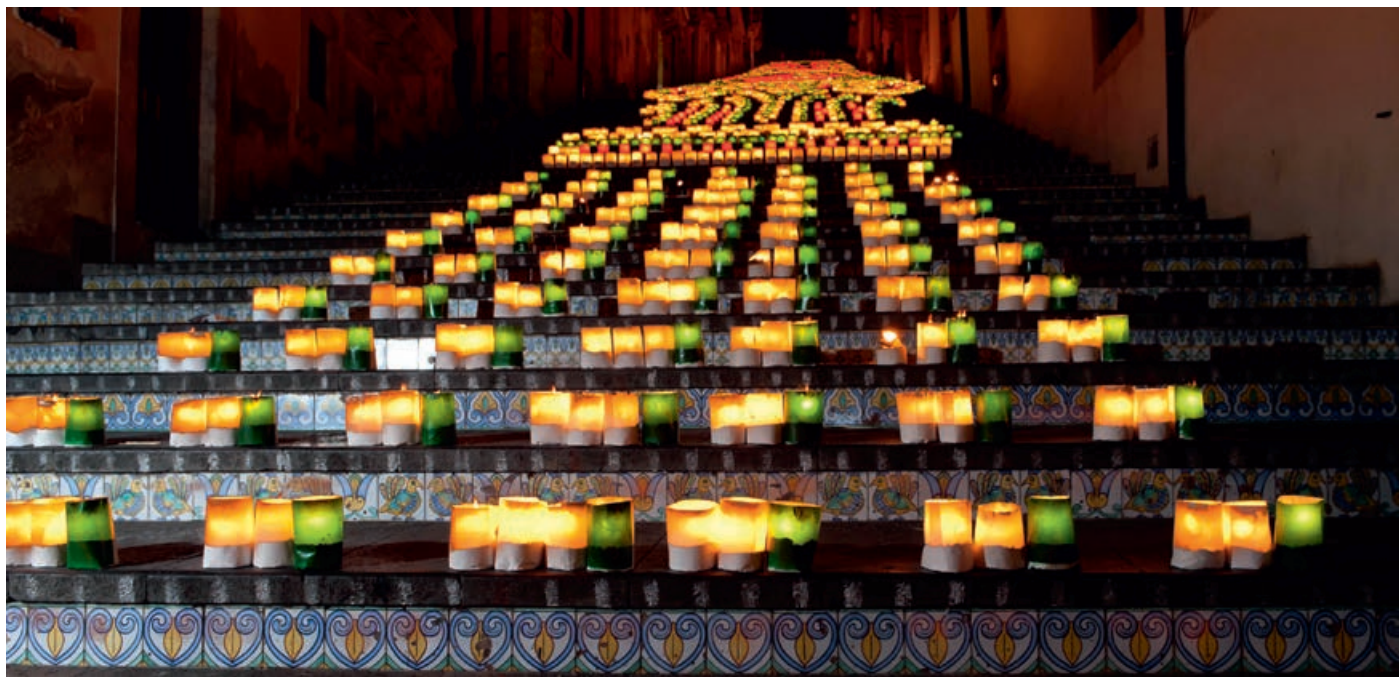
The death and resurrection of Christ is evoked by touching processions followed by hundreds of faithful worshippers in Sicily: Pietraperzia, Enna, Caltanissetta, Marsala are just the most well known.

The archeological landscape of sulphur industry has recently attracted the attention of historians and visitors: a historical heritage to be preserved and recover the memory of places...



The centre of the island with the sounds of weapons and knights for the Palio of the Normans of Piazza Armerina, in the province of Enna, when, regardless to the hot mid-August, the historic districts face off in an exciting carousel of horses that draws atmospheres from the medieval period.





In the nearby Caltagirone, on the nights from the 24 and 25 of July and the 14 and 15 of August, returns the show “La Scala Illuminata” linked to the cult of St. Maria del Monte. Following a centuries-old tradition that originated in the seventeenth century, thousands of candles, prepared and stained by hand, are placed on 142 steps to form one beautiful design. This is a fascinating display of colours that must be seen.

The "dry" walls (a stone wall built without cement) that overwhelmingly characterizes the area, these are the testimonies of the genius loci, and then the interaction between man and environment, personified by the figure of the farmer who interprets and handed down ancient local traditions through the constant action on the territory. Tilling the soil, retrieves the raw material for the construction of stables, wells, containment walls and boundaries, and assembles without the aid of aggregating materials but overlapping the stones in a groove that defies gravity and the action of time.



On the island there are an increasing amount of small museums that preserve the earliest evidence of instruments and tools of the past. Also relives the memory of the rural villages and agricultural farms that allows holidays to go back in time, with many activities very close to nature.



Palazzolo Acreide, Modica, Corleone, Montemaggiore Belsito are just some of the museums in which the instruments of labour of the peasant world are held, next to simple objects of everyday life, have been carefully preserved and restored to be exposed today.



The city of Catania in February devotes to the patron St. Agata, one of the most important festivities in Italy. A “fercolo” (a type of sedan chair in silver containing the relics of the saint), is followed in procession by hundreds of devotees dressed in the traditional clothes: a white tunic, tied by a cord at the waist, black cap, scarf and white gloves. The “fercolo” is followed by eleven candelore, high wooden columns and singing from the faithful unanimous “we are devotees, all devotees...”.



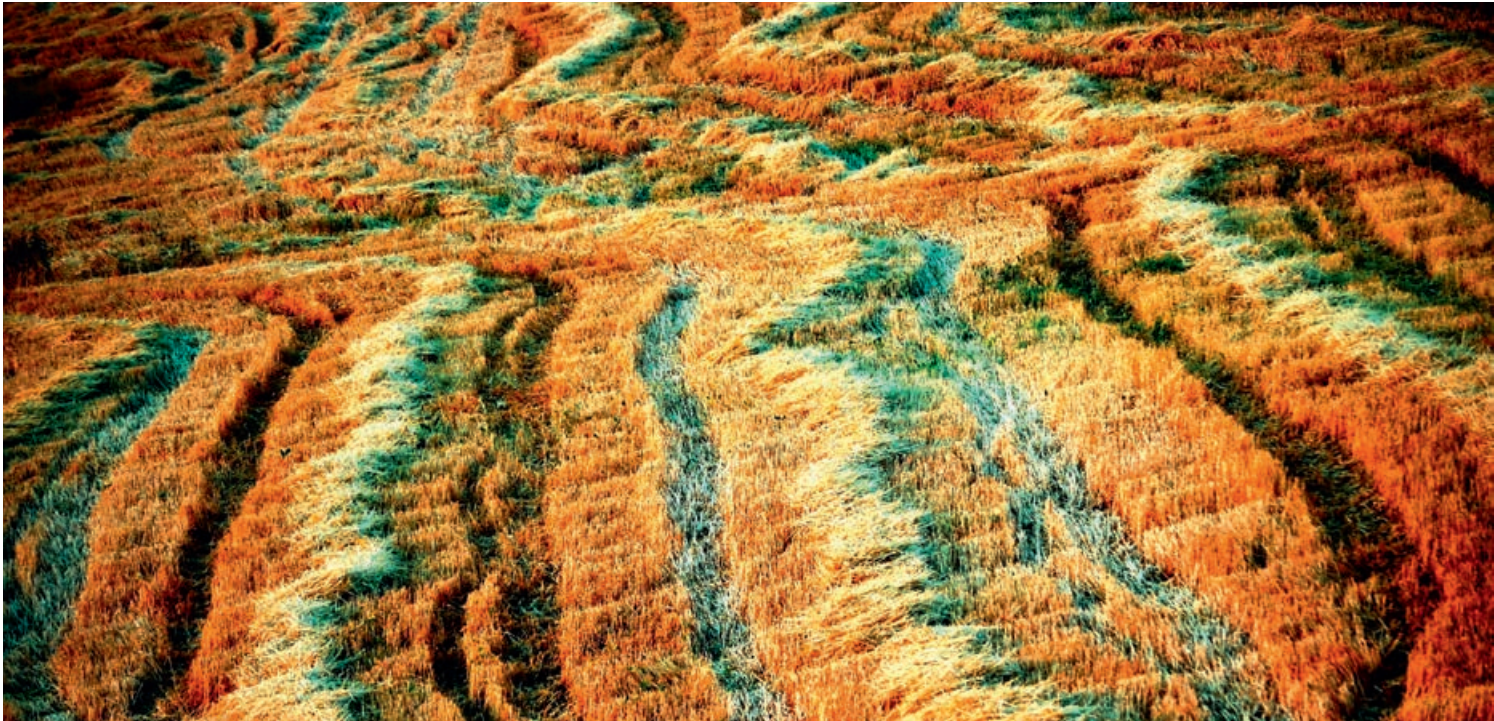
To break the routine of winter we think of the historical carnivals with their festive chaos. Large floats made of paper machè, the music and the crowd explode with the carnivals of Acireale, Sciacca and Termini Imerese.





Fishing for swordfish with a felucca, typical sailing boats that cut through the waters of the Strait of Messina, remains not only a tradition that has survived over time, but also a very important element of the local economy.

The rural landscape of the island is still marked by the cultivation of durum wheat that for centuries has given rise to the production cycle linked to the processing of the harvest into flour for the production of many types of flour for the use of bread, pasta and biscuits etc...





The Sicilian traditions with its myths also passes through the grape harvest and wine production. For many years Sicilian grapes were mainly used for blending with other grapes, today thanks to skilful farmers and winemakers of fame, dignity has been returned to production both nationally and internationally.

The Saracens introduced more than a thousand years ago the tradition of embroidery which was dedicated to young women under the expert guidance of the elderly. A feminine form of craft that survives today in the ancient district of Kalsa in Palermo, Ragusa and Modica, as well as in the villages of Madonie, in the province of Palermo.





Villages of Madonie evoke the folk traditions with the “Giostra dei Ventimiglia” in Geraci Siculo, an event that celebrates the splendor of feudal lords. In Gangi they celebrate the “Festival della Spiga”, an event that evokes the rural character of customs, traditions and culture of country life. In Petralia Sottana, however, the appointment is renewed with the old wedding procession and the “Dance of Cordella”, a hymn of thanksgiving to nature and providence.



The carnival of “Mastro di Campo” in Mezzojuso of the ancient matrix, linked to the feudal world and farmers and it is still celebrated today. “Devils of Prizzi”, an ancient pagan ritual of Easter Sunday in the province of Palermo, an explosion of joy and vigor.





Among the villages of arbëreschë culture in the province of Palermo, in Piana degli Albanesi, Easter is celebrated by rite Greek Orthodox, a ritual that has remained faithful in the language and in the clothes worn by women, from Palm Sunday to the Resurrection.



In the past economy was based on the horse and cart, the most popular means of transport; the carriers, in the places of delivery, had a competition to challenge each other in singing in which each sang a personal melodic line.



The Feast of St. Rosalia in Palermo celebrates the liberation of the city from the plague of 1624 attributed to the intercession of "Santuzza". On the night between 14 and 15 July tens of thousands of faithful and curious people gather along Corso Vittorio Emanuele where the descent of the Holy cart starts. A meeting of folklore and religion, which finds its height in the traditional fireworks display that lights up the whole of Foro Umberto I on the seafront.

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