



Borgo Pantano









G

oing back in time, we come across events that have marked Europe's history and has had a sharp impact on Sicily's evolution.

The sites concerned by these events have suffered immeasurable transformations, sometimes little studied and understood. The lack of historical consciousness has not allowed the generations that succeeded, to retain the "knowledge" of the communities, that quite suddenly, overnight, have found themselves losing everything: citizenship, property, power and, above all, identity.

The changes caused by globalization have led to a growing competition between sites and territories, with a tendency to obscure

its own historical and cultural peculiarities in order to achieve the consent of a society doomed to follow conformed patterns.

The new global trend, aimed at creating an approved and approval system on a supranational scale, regardless of the socio-territorial context, has caused a standardized reproduction of the places against which many researchers take sides.

Faced with the rapid spread of this "cultural levelling" the only possibility of distinction and self-assertion of territorial specifics is represented by local identity recovery.

The territory today is no longer considered only as a spatial paradigm, but as a determining factor in the production of knowledge.

In such a scenario, the concept of cultural heritage has gradually gone beyond the aesthetic values, and has encompassed social, ethical and environmental impacts too, including both intangible and territorial material aspects.

Today cultural heritage means a range of knowledge much broader and more diversified from the past when it was considered something of humanities's exclusive interest, becoming a concept which involve all the anthropic processes about a specific physical and social environment.



THE LACK OF HISTORICAL  
AWARENESS DOES NOT  
ALLOW THE GENERATIONS  
WHICH HAVE BEEN SUCCEEDED  
TO SAVE THE **"KNOWLEDGE"**





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orgo Pantano is a project of ethical and sustainable local development started shortly before 2000 thanks to the passion and efforts of Maria Cannuli and her descendants, through Incanti & Memorie Society.

The village lies in the municipality of Rometta (ME) and is located about 6 km from the homonymous junction of the A20 Messina-Palermo, along the provincial road 54 bis, which connects Rometta-Mare to Rometta-Monti.

Inhabited until the middle of 1900, the small town rural consists of a hilly area of about 15 hectares. It is made up of thirty buildings distributed on two rows that develop along the ground level lines.

The village reveals an old and complex cultural stratification. The historical memory of the last inhabitants does not help the past's reconstruction, but some clues raise fascinating questions.

It's likely that, by defense's instinct, certain segments of local history have been intentionally erased; this hypothesis makes it even more interesting research and gives the village an air of mystery that pervades the surrounding area.

As Antoine de Saint-Exupéry wrote: "the essential is invisible to the eye", also here, in this corner of Sicily, there are many stories and mysteries waiting to be unraveled."





**"THE ESSENTIAL IS  
INVISIBLE TO  
THE EYE"**





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he restoration project is highly conservative, focused not to erase the signs of the times and drawing a significant part of the local identity, bringing out a precise vision about the sedimentation of memory through the architectural stratification.

Around the village fortifications do not appear or guard enclosures. Actually, the most important buildings overlook on the outside of town. This configuration is unusual for both the Middle Ages and the territory. The urban plan is still enjoyable today by its astonishing completeness, being barely touched by time and by human neglect.

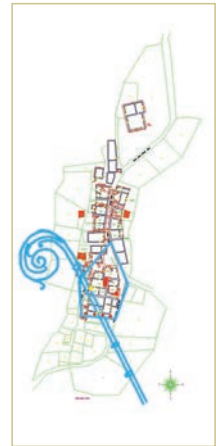
The city grid, like that of many ancient villages, is oriented on the axis north-south, while the houses, built according to precise architectural

specifications, denote the kind of materials and aesthetic character very unusual for this area.

Every building took advantage of the natural sources of energy, both for ventilation and heating. Specific constructive artifices guaranteed the accumulation, distribution and storage of solar energy.

For the ventilation, they used underground air ducts, which took the cooled and moisture-laden air from the inside of the tanks present in every home. A level of comfort certainly unusual for the time, especially considering the standard of the surrounding area. Evidently the technical skills of the community settled there, were not those simple and typical of the peasant societies.

Therefore, the project's goal is to recover the knowledge of older workers and enhance the existing structures preserving the place's soul.





RECOVER THE KNOWLEDGE OF  
OLDER WORKERS AND  
ENHANCE THE EXISTING  
STRUCTURES WITHOUT  
ALTERING THE PLACE'S **SOUL**





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orgo Pantano is surrounded by an aura of mystery that pervades the whole territory, and it is a difficult task to interpret the signs left by ancient inhabitants.

Many clues allow us to conclude that Pantano's original inhabitants belonged to the Jewish community: the adoption of sophisticated hydraulic techniques, water care and the cultivation of plants for medicinal purposes.

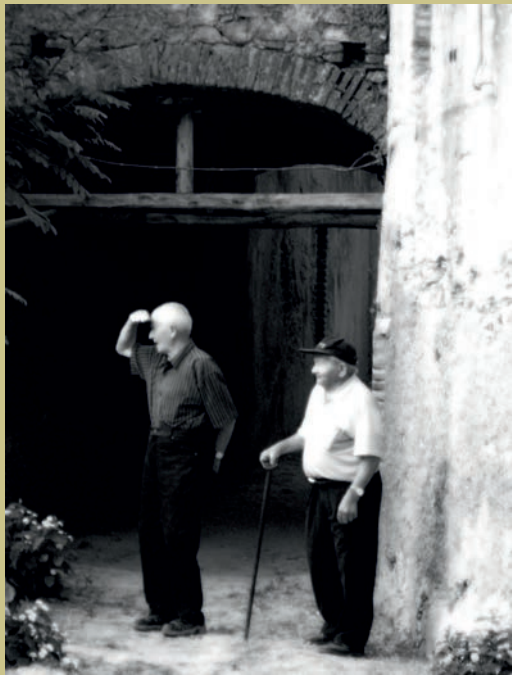
The village has its origins in the late Middle Ages and is contemporary with the famous and nearby Pharmacy Rocca (Roccavaldina).

Some historical and architectural elements permit the comparison of the Pharmacy Rocca to Pantano, particularly: the building architecture and materials and the sixteenth portal in Tuscan style.

In addition, the documented, belonging to the viceroy Castagna dei Casali of Rocca and "Pantani" and the presence of a bali to administer these farms, provide a possible answer to our questions and put Pantano in a geo-economic game of not only local importance.

Most likely the village was an essential element of the pharmaceutical production chain linked to the Rocca. We can assume that medicinal plants produced in Pantano were essential activities for the pharmacy and in which Jews excelled.

AN AURA OF MYSTERY PERVADES  
THE WHOLE **TERRITORY**





## Parish Map mappa della comunità

Samekh... *"La fine è innescata  
nel principio"*

'Samekh', lettera dell'alfabeto ebraico che simboleggia la guida alla riscoperta delle tracce e dell'esistenza del Divino nel mondo delle leggi naturali e del pensiero umano, rappresenta per noi uno stimolo e il faro che illumina la rotta sulla quale navigano le nostre azioni.

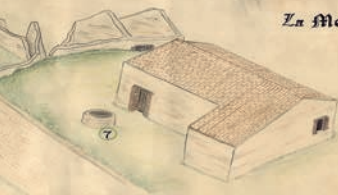
## Legenda

- 1) Santa Maria delle Grazie (Luce Senza fine)
- 2) Torre del Baly
- 3) Pigiatoio - C. T. T.
- 4) Dammus
- 5) Archeologia medievale: forni a legna
- 6) Pergolati storici
- 7) Pozzi di comunità
- 8) Lo scrigno dei segreti: la chiave di Salomone
- 9) Solstizio d'estate
- 10) Equinozio di primavera
- A) Canali sotterranei
- B) Medichessa
- C) Flos Coeli e transiti Lunari

# orgo Pantano



*La Medichessa*



*Insula Sacra*



*Canalizzazione sotterranea  
Aqua vitae, Aqua permanens ♀*



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n many aspects the development of the village reflects the complex evolutionary dynamics that, from a historical and social point of view, concerned the Sicilian towns. The urban layout, typically medieval, shows centuries-old architectural stratification, with a variety of items from the fifteenth century that go through the modern age through to the contemporary age: wells, cisterns, courtyards, alleys, covered passageways, doorways and stone frames, with a ingenious rainwater collection system, which has been carefully studied by the Faculty of Architecture of Reggio Calabria .

The religious and popular aggregation center of the village was the small Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, of uncertain date, however, prior to 1604, where every year, on July 2, we are continuing to celebrate the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the church there was a framework dating back to 1773, which unfortunately was stolen and of which we keep a copy. From a careful painting analysis, from the symbology used by the artist, by the inscriptions present on the canvas and by certain similarities with other works we can assume the Jewish origins of Pantano.

The Tower of the Baly, located in the village northern quadrant, is a historic landmark of considerable interest. In it, the baly, commissioned by the Dianchelele Palermo (maximum Sicilian Jewish authorities), administered justice, and certain economical matters.

The old millstone is the first building that was restored in Pantano. In it, there's now the so-called "CIT" (Territorial Interpretation Center): a place equipped with non-invasive "smart city", dedicated to the research, data collection and analysis of environmental emergencies of the territory, as well as for conferences, and for cultural, educational and training activities.







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ere, are some important cultural and scientific initiatives already implemented or being implemented in Pantano:

- The Knowledge's Census, that is the oral memories of the territory, elaborated in a written trilogy. The first volume presents a collection of fairy tales that Pantano's grandparents and parents used to tell their children during long walks in the neighboring districts. The second volume contains historical documents and local memories necessary to pass down the territory tradition and the local identity to the future generations. Finally, the third volume collects important correspondence between the Curia of Messina and the inhabitants of Pantano, that consists of 66 letters written since 1879 until 1887, a sort of "Decameron" of the time.

- The Memory's Roots, a cultural event that occurs every year on July 2 to celebrate, with dancing and singing in front of Santa Maria delle Grazie, the village's patron.

The Ecological Footprint. a study of the environmental impact of the village and the surrounding area during the '50s, calculated by a group of researchers, which demonstrates the sustainability of the economy of Pantano and its extension nowadays, with the appropriate integration of existing technologies and life models. The work was presented at an international scientific conference held in Cairo in 2005 and published in the conference proceedings.

- The Ethical Protocol with Rometta's Municipality, drawn up in 2006 which is based on the environmental, historical and anthropological village's value and is based on the will to enhance it by promoting rural culture awareness putting sustainability, fairness and ethical issues in the middle of every process.

- The realization of a Parish Map, that is a "community map", a cultural process through which the community has defined the contours of its assets, a detailed mapping of tangible and intangible assets.

- The Stage carried out in 2005 by a group of Reggio Calabria' University students by the Faculty of Architecture, and called Structural restoration and recovery of the Pantano village historic buildings.

- MOTRIS - From research to the implementation: an international traveling conference, aimed at creating a supply mapping of relational tourism in Sicily. Promoter and organizer of the event was Prof. Leonardo Urbani from the University of Palermo.

- Various dissertations presented and discussed in the faculties of Architecture and Engineering, and in undergraduate courses in tourism economy and in the Academy of Fine Arts.

- The Hortus Simplicium of Marsh, a scientific and naturalistic publication that is connected with the "environmental education Notebook", another publication of ecological nature.

- The Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Mediterranean Association of Herbalists and the one that is being defined with the Schola Medica Salernitana, in the Middle Ages the most important European medical institution. For that, today it's considered the forerunner of modern universities.







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he tourism plan will be put into effect by the implementation of a project called "PASS – Peloritani's environmental sustainability development", which aims at achieving two goals:

1. Make available the territory, through the creation of a naturalistic green path that integrates the historical areas of Pantano village with landscapes and environmental treasures such as the surrounding wooded areas, also with an archaeological site nearby where it has had important renaturalisation and bioengineering intervention, including specially equipped areas, in the nearby Contrada Inadà of Monforte S. Giorgio;

2. The creation of an educational trail through the Village adequately signposted and supported by new information technologies, QR-code, that delve into aspects of the sites: from "pagghiari" (huts), atavistic elements of the territory's rural culture, to bird watching points, and to the experiential vegetable garden, where it has involved cultivation of native species, including within the ponds. Activities monitored by the Botanical Gardens of the University of Messina. In this goal there is also the creation of a collection system and the recycling of waste, of a system for the exploitation of photovoltaic and solar dryers, works necessary for the protection of the biodiversity of the habitat.

In short, a path of environmental, historical and cultural studies that strengthen local skills and develop a territorial self-awareness process. A laboratory for sustainable economic development, conservation of resources, but also educational and cultural, that addresses issues and problems in a timely manner, with which the new generations will increasingly have to confront.



A CONSTRUCTIVE **ENERGY** FOR THE  
GROWTH OF THE PLACE COSCIENCE  
AND ITS REINTERPRETATION IN NEW  
DEVELOPMENT STYLES





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he Village aims to become a cultural center of physical and psychological well-being. A place where it is possible to regain the ancient practice of Otium: a time for reflection, introspection and meditation. Understood in its original meaning, it means to take care of the mind and body in a rural setting, one of great serenity and in contact with nature like Demeter, the Great Mother Earth of the Mediterranean culture.

The relationship with the land involves the reviving of the ancient herbal medicine, agricultural and handicraft traditions that characterise the territory. Therefore, working towards the new concept of archaeological agriculture, in order to create and

maintain a geo-cultural context and landscape - by not adding to the devastation of globalization. This is an integrated developmental model, aiming at preserving and enhancing the identity of the place. This project hopes to reveal the beauty of anthropological exploration; the role of the community and its individuals. This model could be transferred to other contexts, opening up to a world of research and to all those who share the philosophy and spirit of our project.







AN IDEA OF **BEAUTY** THAT  
HIGHLIGHTS THE HUMAN ACTIVITY,  
THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY AND  
ITS INDIVIDUALS















#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Orazio Bisazza - Amministratore Incanti &  
Memorie s.a.s. di Maria Cannuli & C.

Telefono mobile +39 3485176902

Mail: [vivapantano@libero.it](mailto:vivapantano@libero.it)

Siti internet di riferimento:

[www.progettopantano.it](http://www.progettopantano.it) - [www.pantanocit.it](http://www.pantanocit.it) - [www.atsspass.org](http://www.atsspass.org)



Tel. 348.5176902 - [orabis@tiscali.it](mailto:orabis@tiscali.it) - [www.progettopantano.it](http://www.progettopantano.it)