Egadi Islands – Marettimo, Levanzo & Favignana

Mapmistress

Egadi at the Last Glacial

The Egadi region is located on the northwest bank of Sicily in the Trapani province. It consists of three islands: Marettimo, Levanzo & Favignana. Both Levanzo and Favignana connected at the Last Glacial and there are caves in both regions that show evidence of human inhabitation. The groups living in the caves made paintings of wild horses, deer and other wild animals that they hunted. Genetically, they had the M26 gene associated with other artist cavemen painters in France, Spain & the British Isles. Some of the paintings in this region, the paint only carbon dates to 10,000-11,000 B.C.E., whereas the cavemen groups on the east side closer to the Messina landbridge have much older artwork.

The caves at Grotta del Genovese on Levanzo island have paintings ranging in date from 11,000 B.C.E. through the Neolithic. Presently the Levanzo cave is closed to tourists due to littering and vandalism and is locked behind a fence. But it is
still possible to arrange a private tour if you ask the locals at the Levanzo port or bars to ring up Natale. (It’s a small island.) Grotta delle Uccerie cave on Favignana is more of a stalagmites cave with evidence of human presence. The caves of Saint Nicholas also have cavepeoples’ paintings on Favignana.

At present there is no evidence of humans making it to the island of Marettimo at the Last Glacial Maximum. Most just assume that it was connected and quote finds on Levanzo or Favignana as evidence of Marettimo, but I haven’t yet found someone talking about cavemen at the LGM on Marettimo.

Marettimo Island, Sicily at Last Glacial Maximum

Marettimo island was seven times larger at the Last Glacial. It has lost a lot of land in the present melt with rising sea waters. Sea depths between Marettimo island and the extended coastline of Sicily at the LGM are minus -140 meters to -200 meters on the south end and on the north depths are minus -200 meters to -250 meters. Marettimo just doesn’t connect at the glacial maximum. It’s about a 2-4 mile swim from the Marettimo coast to the Sicily mainland at the LGM.

Other Sites with Info on the Egadi at the LGM
- Caves of Favignana
- Favignana Historical News
- Marettimo Travel Guide

Egadi at the Younger Dryas

Since Malta was colonized by a boat group at the Younger Dryas 10,000 years ago (8000 B.C.E.), I thought I’d just include a little map of Egadi at that same time frame. Right now there’s no specific evidence that any boat group colonized the Egadi region or Marettimo island at this time. The group on Malta would have had agriculture so they’d be easy to spot.
It might just be that the group colonizing Malta by boat with agriculture avoided areas that were inhabited by cavepeoples and since the Levanzo-Favignana region already had a cavemen tribe, they didn’t make an agricultural colony there. However, if Marettimo had no human presence, that particular agricultural boat group might have attempted a colony there. Marettimo just lacks the archeological investigation to state whether or not that happened.

**Egadi at the Neolithic c. 6000 B.C.E.**

Although there exists the possibility of at least four other boat groups colonizing Sicily prior to 6000 B.C.E., in the Egadi northwest region of the island one can definitively say that an agricultural group was living there by 6000 B.C.E. Some of the paintings in Grotta del Genovese on Levanzo do date to the Neolithic period and the type of paintings at the Neolithic were different after agriculture.

The group that most likely colonized at 6000 B.C.E. was some early Sicani group. Technically, the Sicani and Siculi ARE the obsidian miners. They settled around areas of active and extinct volcanoes. There is one obsidian mine around Favignana. They would have mixed early on with the cavepeoples group and taught them agriculture.
The area around Trapani most likely also had an early Neolithic group. Trapani has a legend about its city founded by a group who worshipped an early form of Demeter—the agriculture goddess. But the modern city covers the old agricultural group that used to live there. I tried the best I could to attempt to figure out what possible agricultural group might have been in the Trapani region, if it was indeed just the Sicani, or perhaps some other group.

Boat groups that might have colonized Trapani between 8000-5000 B.C.E. worshipping an early form of Demeter include the following:

1. Sicani: a boat group of obsidian miners who most likely originated from Milos in the Aegean (pre-Greek).
2. A boat group from Crete (pre-Greek).
3. A boat group from Cyprus (pre-Greek, pre-Phoenician).
4. A boat group from Naxos-Paros (pre-Greek).
5. A boat group from the northern Dodecanese islands (pre-Greek).
6. A boat group from another Cyclades island (pre-Greek).
7. A boat group from Rhodes, Tilos, or Astypalaia (pre-Greek).
8. A boat group from the former coast of Miletus (pre-Greek).
9. A boat group from the Northern Sporades (pre-Greek).
10. A boat group from Thassos-Kavala sunken coastline (pre-Greek).
11. A boat group from Thrace to Samothraki sunken coastline (pre-Greek).
12. A boat group from Limnos to Troas sunken coastline (pre-Greek).

There’s twelve possible boat groups that could have founded a colony worshipping Demeter, goddess of agriculture, at Trapani and a complete lack of documentation of plants or possible former crops in the region to determine which group it might have been. Unfortunately, the Egadi region has been rampaged by so many wars between 700 B.C.E. to present that it’s difficult to tell who might have been there in the past. During each war, all the different groups kept trying to erase the history of the other groups. Phoenicians, Classical Greeks, Siracusans, Carthage and Romans have persistently and repetitively erased the history of the early inhabitants.

Egadi Botany Project: Origin of Neolithic Farmers

The only way to know for certain is to do botany tracking of plants that might have been imported by these early Neolithic farmers worshipping Demeter (and probably Persephone). I know when I tracked Maltese groups, it took about a month of research comparing photos of plants online of different species to other regions in the Aegean. But Malta has a huge online database with photos of every plant for comparison. The Egadi region has no online database with photos of all their plants to enable online research.

If someone else would like to take on a similar project that does have access to photos of all the plant life of the Egadi region, plants which would tell the origin of these early Neolithic farmers would be:

1. Track Einkorn Wheat: First grain crop of Neolithic farmers. Most groups stopped planting einkorn as a crop by 2000 B.C.E. therefore the presence of einkorn determines all pre-2000 B.C.E. agricultural (Demeter) groups growing it. Even though most farmers quit growing it 4000 years ago, the little grain continues to grow wild around areas that once cultivated it. If farmers planted new crops over a region that once cultivated
einkorn, the einkorn continues to sprout up and nowadays farmers consider it to be a weed. See my einkorn section to track.

2. **Track Honey-Making and Bee Flowers:** Honey-making is a tradition of each region and flowers for the bees (which changes the taste of the honey) were imported by early Neolithic groups from their region of origin in the Aegean. Track all bee flowers and compare to each region-island in Aegean to denote origin.

3. **Track Purple-Violet Flower Species:** Those that worshipped Demeter, goddess of agriculture, nearly always also worshipped Persephone, her daughter. Persephone’s flower was the violet. But around former temples for Persephone, they always imported a wide range of purple, violet, lilac and lavender flowers that bloomed year round. Although wars ravished the region and Muslims and Roman Catholics would have destroyed such temples, they still left the purple-violet flower breeds that used to be planted all around a Persephone temple. Track photos of purple, violet, lilac and lavender flower breeds of a region and compare to photos of each species in the Aegean to denote origin of the ancient imported flowers.

4. **Track Rare Plant Species:** Each region usually has some unusual plant species that don’t quite fit with the rest of the island. Find out what they are and figure out their origins.

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**Other Sites with Info on the Egadi at the Neolithic**

• Caves of Favignana

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**Egadi at the Early Bronze Age c.3500 B.C.E.**

Once again the history of early bronze age Egadi region has been erased by the wars with Phoenicians, Classical Greeks, Siracusans, Carthage and Romans. It’s nearly impossible to figure out who might have been there at that time. By this point and most likely before (I’d say between 6000-5000 B.C.E.) the Elymi would have been living there. So the Elymi, Sicani and cavemen groups would have mixed, with any other possible boat groups that may have set up colonies in that region.

The Elymi most likely come from the sunken region of the Limnos to Troas coast in the Aegean. Technically they would not be “Trojan” when they arrived as Troy (inland) did not exist yet. But the sunken area from which they came did have Troy-inland later in history. The Elymi colonization of the Egadi coast would have pre-dated the glory of Troy by thousands of years. And later during the Trojan war, Egadi took in refugees from Troy since they were already related to them. Erice is considered to be the site of King Eryx of the Elymi who built a temple there for his mother.
By the Early Bronze Age, Levanzo had just barely become its own island, no longer connected to the coast.

This is also the most likely phase in time that an early group who was an enemy of Corinth might have set up a colony on the west side of the island. Corinthian Greeks later hire the Siracusan army to invade this ancient enemy of theirs with colonies on the northwest and southwest banks of Sicily. Since it was the goal of Corinthian Greeks to wipe the name of their ancient enemy off the history books, there is uncertainty as to who they were. Possibilities include any one of the following: Kerkyra island of the Ionian, Korfu island of the Ionian, Argos, Aegina island, or Evia island.

Bear in mind that the groups living east of Trapani might have had a different origin than those on the Egadi coast. They might be completely different colonies of different migrations.

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**Egadi Region c. 2000 B.C.E. Through Corinthian Greeks c. 700 B.C.E.**

I decided to include a little 2000 B.C.E. clip just to show what the Egadi coastlines looked like prior to the arrival of Phoenicians. What’s interesting is that the Phoenicians seem to have waited before going into the Egadi region, suggesting that they might have been invaders.

Technically, the Phoenicians first presence in the middle Mediterranean was c. 1500 B.C.E. when they set up one colony on Malta. But on Malta they weren’t invaders they just set up an additional colony to the other groups already inhabiting the island. And the Phoenicians didn’t destroy any temples belonging to the other groups there. Yet, in the Egadi region of Sicily, the Phoenicians waited until c. 950 B.C.E. That’s a difference of 550 years. In the Egadi region, the Phoenicians did try to erase the history of the other groups, so I figure that it’s not side-by-side colonies, but rather a war or invasion. Not sure what happened in Egadi.
Even shortly before the Archaic Age of Greece c. 850 B.C.E. (about a hundred years before Corinth Greeks hired the Siracusan army and waged war), Favignana island was still connected. There is a sunken Phoenician city on the east bank of Favignana, which sits at about -12 meters below present sea level about 50 meters from the modern shore. So far it dates only to c. 950 B.C.E. There is also a sunken Phoenician city around the island of Motya, north of Marsala.

The underwater Phoenician city off the Favignana coast that sits at minus -12 meters was destroyed by the Romans. Coastlines of the Roman Empire were minus -12 meters to -8 meters below present sea level (also the coast of the Roman built section of Alexandria in Egypt).

A Quick Hash of the Wars in the Egadi Region

1. Phoenicians wait until c.950 B.C.E. of this region and take over setting up ports and forts, suggesting an invasion since they waited 550 years after they were already in Malta and other nearby areas since 1500 B.C.E. Phoenicians start erasing history of the groups living there and their heritage.
2. Corinth Greeks hire the Siracusan army c. 730 B.C.E. to
I am a cartographer by hobby. It's my creative outlet, not my profession. I began making maps in 2004 when I became dissatisfied with maps on the internet. It began with Ancient Egypt and not being able to find a proper map of the Nile delta and its branches on the internet. So I downloaded a bunch of water imaging satellite scans and created my own detailed map of the Nile delta. And I've been making my own ancient civilization-sunken coastline maps ever since.

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And that's why the region is so difficult to figure out their ancient heritage.

Other sites with info about Egadi History Phoenicians to Modern Times
• Favignana, Sicily: Scuba Diving
• History of Trapani
• Trapani

See also the section on the Southwest Bank of Sicily, Erytheia, and Pantelleria.

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