

Introduction

The significant difference between the knowledge of Calabria in the Middle Ages and the rest of southern Italy is due to a combination of factors, especially the shortage of written sources and the non-systematic nature of historical and archaeological research. It is extremely difficult to judge the real role that Calabria played in the growth of a new Mediterranean that was defining itself after the crushing of the ancient world.

Calabria is a real bridge between East and West, a place of cultural and commercial exchange, a meeting point of diametrically different populations, but it has nevertheless managed to maintain its unique regional identity. The ports of Crotona and Reggio were privileged admissions for centuries of Byzantine fleets, and soon became places of embarkation for the Crusades, pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and for long trade routes to the East. The ports of Tropea and Vibo on the Tyrrhenian coast have guaranteed direct contact with neighboring Africa, Sicily and central Italy, especially with the heart of Rome.

In fact, the forms of appropriation and exploitation of the territory came from foreign experience, which in the region of Calabria have seen completely original results. Despite the great historical and archaeological potential, the social and economic study of this area over several thousand years of domination has not been systematic, comprehensive and interdisciplinary. The information has too often been scattered across different publications belonging to different disciplines, and there is great complexity of historical phenomena, economic and social factors that are almost never fully addressed, or registered, in limited time or space.

This is probably due to the considerable difficulties faced by anyone who decides to take the path of archaeological and historical research in this region. In the early stages of preliminary data collection, you realize that very often the most reliable publications are still those from the Eighteenth century or the first half of the Nineteenth century. Over the past twenty years, archaeological research has outlined settlement patterns and lines of historical development more or less valid for the most part of the region, and in tune with developments in the South of Italy. Not all these studies, however, have taken into account the various types of sites and their interrelations in the same historical periods.

What we have tried to do in this book is to understand how historical events which have marked the entire region of Calabria in the medieval centuries have affected this specific territory. We have aimed to record and circumscribe them in well-defined times and places,

through a multifactorial microscopic analysis, drawing on data and sources of different natures, such as epigraphy, historical maps, aerial photography and archaeological survey, all aimed at the reconstruction of the global history of a particularly important area. We hope to extrapolate the dominant dynamics and reconstruct the fundamental features in homogeneous phases, and finally to understand the outcomes that historical phenomena and regional and extra-regional authorities have had in this area. We hope to be able to understand better Calabria's insertion in the context of the medieval Mediterranean. All studies were made using a "global" and "space" approach, perhaps the most appropriate way to make sense of a series of elements that, when detached, otherwise seem completely arbitrary and meaningless.

More specifically, the present work started from a geomorphological analysis of the territory, with the description of the different geological areas, the characteristics of the coast and the high ground. A census of all the archaeological sites in the Pore was conducted, with an accurate description of their typological characteristics (village, diocese, harbor, fort), and checking them on the field as much as possible, through systematic surveys and site inspections. The analysis of the data and their integration within the historical phenomena allows us to reconstruct the evolution of the Pore between the fourth and fourteenth centuries, placing this project in the context of modern Archaeology of Landscapes.