

# Preface

In recent years, archaeoastronomy, and more generally cultural astronomy, has had great visibility and consideration in Sicily, and this thanks to scientific and cultural activities triggered by the writer and the Institute of Sicilian Archaeoastronomy, a cultural association born in 2014 based in Novara di Sicilia, a small village located in the province of Messina.

The Fifteenth Congress of the Italian Society of Archaeoastronomy (SIA) is the first annual meeting which takes place in Sicily in the history of the SIA; however, it is in Sicily that several archaeoastronomy's pioneers began the studies of this multidisciplinary science. In the nineteenth century, the German archaeologist Heinrich Nissen began a campaign of studies on the orientation of temples of many Greek cities in Sicily, work that was published in his book *Das Templum* and in several articles published in the journal *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*. Moreover, at the end of the nineteenth century, Koldewey, Puchstein and Penrose realized others archaeoastronomical studies on the Greek temples in Sicily.

After about 100 years, in the late twentieth century, there were new archaeoastronomy's studies in Sicily, works done by Profs. Sebastiano Tusa, archaeologist and current Superintendent of the Sea of the Sicilian Region, and Giorgia Foderà Serio, astronomer of the Palermo Astronomical Observatory now retired. The studies of Profs. Tusa and Foderà Serio were dedicated to the orientation of Sesi of Pantelleria and of Sicilian prehistoric tombs, mainly to the shaft and rock-cut tombs.

In 2009, during the International Year of Astronomy launched by the UN to celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of the first astronomical observations with instruments made by Galileo Galilei in 1609 and the first findings obtained with these observations, I had the idea of creating a winter festival of cultural astronomy that in 2016 celebrated its seventh consecutive year. This festival, which is held every year in different historical places being itinerant, has been enormously successful, and helped to disseminate to the public the ancient astronomy and archaeoastronomy. Moreover, in 2012, I created another festival dedicated to the 'science of the stones and the stars': the summer festival entitled 'Stones and Stars'.

This festival, which in 2016 has become biannual, has involved thousands of people.

Following these activities, the Institute of Sicilian Archaeoastronomy has enabled prestigious research collaborations with Sicilian organizations and foreign universities; in particular, I want to mention the collaborations concerning: the study about the orientation of the Greek temples of Agrigento, held together with the Politecnico of Milan and the University of Waikato, and the study of the so-called megalithic spiral of Balze Soprane, realized together with the Superintendent and the University of Catania.

I hope that after this meeting and future studies, the archaeoastronomy can earn a worthy space within one of the universities of Sicily.

Catania, Italy

Andrea Orlando  
Editor and Chair of SIA2015 Meeting

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