

...*IN FINIBUS LUCANIAE*. HISTORICAL CARTOGRAPHY OF THE TYRRHENIAN COAST AND DEMOGRAPHIC FLUCTUATIONS

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Abstract – Water, through rivers, lakes and seas, draws the territory, draws its boundaries: cities are born near the largest and smallest watercourses but the swamping of a stretch of coast represented the loss of population and also of markets and trade. On the maps, depopulation is highlighted with different cartographic symbols according to the period in which the map was drawn: for a long time there are two Maratea, the one above and the one below, only since 1881 the construction of the port and, therefore, the birth of a nearby village and, to the south, Castrocucco perched on a motta that was depopulated and never rebuilt. The nearby towns of Calabria such as Tortora, Aieta and Praia a mare with the Dino island and the Fiuzzi village gravitated towards Castrocucco and Maratea and are an integral part of this study. Although divided by the Noce river they are in finibus Lucaniae and up to Borgo Fiuzzi they seem to belong to the same conformation as Castrocucco with vast coasts and beaches of very large dimensions and steep rocky walls full of caves. Historical cartography reports information on these watchtowers built in the sixteenth century with the great project of militarization of the coasts of the Kingdom of Naples to defend themselves from the invasions of the Turks with the order of Pietro da Toledo of 1532 and that of Pedro Afan de Ribera del 1563. Over the centuries, on the border between Basilicata and Calabria we have witnessed very particular demographic variations and fluctuations. The city of Blanda identified in recent archaeological excavations in the territory of Tortora which disappears in the 5th century AD, the birth of Tortora and Aieta in the Apennine mountains according to that typical name of the castle of the early medieval period, the settlement in the Fiuzzi district of Praia a Mare and on its rocky pediment and full of caves, settlements of Italian-Greek monks. With the arrival of the great migrations of Albanians after the advance of the Turks, villages with the presence of these populations were born in this area too: in the territory of Praia that belonged to Aieta the village of Plaga Sclavorum was born, most likely in the area located between Torre Fortino and Fiuzzi. With the twentieth century and the mass tourism of the 60s, Aieta and Tortora begin a slow process of depopulation that leads to the birth of settlements towards the sea with Tortora marina and Praia a mare which had already become an autonomous municipality in 1928. Settlements on the coasts also take effect with the repopulation of the new Castrocucco located on the sea near the area of great tourist attraction called the Secca, in Aieta there are about 750 inhabitants and in Tortora, a town about 500 inhabitants.

Text

The title of this work was suggested to me by some memorable pages written by the Lucanian intellectual Giacomo Racioppi who, with the nickname Homunculus, in 1875

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published a booklet entitled *Paralipomeni della storia della denominazione di Basilicata*¹. This volume specifies Racioppi's theories on the name Basilicata / Lucania with precise references to the area north of Maratea and especially to Cilento and its territory². Without wishing to enter the jumble of opinions on the names Lucania and Basilicata, in this contribution we will study the countries, the populations who settled on the fleeting borders between Basilicata and Calabria in the stretch of coast between Castrocuoco di Maratea, the district further south of Maratea in Basilicata, and Praia a Mare and its district Fiuzzi with the Dino island which are in Calabria. The choice of this stretch of coast to talk about demographic fluctuations stems from the awareness that in a few kilometers of coast many settlements have formed, over the centuries, some of which have depopulated and disappeared, others have transformed into the cyclical alternation that, throughout history, they have seen men prefer to live on coasts and plains or on hills and mountains. Certainly this stretch of coast has always been man-made but there have never been very large settlements, there have been many and, according to the period, one has grown more than the other almost in rotation.

“Dal Paleolitico inferiore, attestato da uno stanziamento all’aperto rinvenuto a Tortora si passa al Paleolitico medio le cui industrie litiche sono state scoperte a Torre Talao di Scalea, ed al Paleolitico superiore del Riparo del Romito a Papisidero, che ha restituito la prima manifestazione artistica calabrese con il graffito del “bos primigenius”, e della Grotta della Madonna di Praia a Mare. Il Neolitico è rappresentato dai reperti a Favella della Corte, a Cassano Ionio, a Praia a Mare. L’età dei metalli è illustrata da numerose scoperte, le più significative sono quelle che si riferiscono alla cultura appenninica, i cui resti provengono soprattutto da una grotta a Praia a Mare ed alla prima età del ferro, che vide i primi colonizzatori greci in Calabria”³.

The settlement choice of men has always been determined by the particular landscape beauty of this stretch of Italian coast which, even today, has a border that unites and welcomes languages and traditions from the two neighboring regions.

Even the river Noce and its mouth in the territory of Tortora which was and is considered the natural border between the two regions, today represents a watercourse super protected by the Calabrian population of Lucania and a point of strong union, especially in the last period, to prevent its waters from being polluted throughout its course that crosses territories and valleys of both regions. The Calabrian-Lucanian populations united to prevent the reopening of a waste disposal plant that was closed because it was not up to standard and located in Sansano, a district in the Tortora area.

It must immediately be specified that the difference existing between the cartography produced regarding the borders is not always very precise compared to the documentation of the chancellery of the Neapolitan kings and viceroys and this dyscrasia led, for example, to moments of serious tension between the Calabrian Capuchin Friars of

¹*Paralipomeni della storia per la denominazione di Basilicata per Homunculus* (1875), Tipografia Barbèra Roma, 58-60.

²IDEM. In addition to the volume of Giacomo Racioppi which remains the most anticipated and equipped with many documents of the vexata questio Lucania Basilicata, I allow myself to report V. Aversano (1983), *Il coronimo Cilento e il suo territorio (1034-1552)*, in “Studi e Ricerche di Geografia” VI-1, 78-127, still today it is an important work and comparison tool.

³G. GUIDA (1991), *Aieta. Pagine della sua storia civile e religiosa*, Cosenza, 11.

Mormanno and those Lucani di Maratea for the right to begging during the seventeenth century. On July 8, 1669, Father Fortunato da Cadore ordered that *Aieta per pane e vino sia solamente dei frati di Maratea, per l'olio, legumi, frutta ed ogni altra cosa sia dei frati di Mormanno...che la terra di Tortora e di Laino Borgo seguiti ad essere della Provincia di Basilicata e resti il Castello di Laino a Cosenza*⁴. It is clear that Father Fortunato followed common sense more than the real geographical divisions also inherent in the ecclesiastical Provinces, it is well known that the Franciscan families of Tortora were in the Province of Basilicata since the late sixteenth century due to the presence of the Osorio Exarque family who founded the convent of the Santissima Annunziata di Tortora after they bought the fief and were in close relations with the Franciscans of Lauria.

If I had to give a starting point to tell the evolution of this small stretch of coast, I would certainly start from the city of Blanda which no longer exists and was searched for a long time between Maratea and Cirella. It is certainly mentioned in the Tabula Peutingeriana as a statio of the Antonine Itinerary and in many other sources but, only in 1891, Michela Lacava identified Blanda near Tortora by going to the place and bringing to light a series of important finds between the Noce and Fiumarella rivers of Tortora⁵.

Since then, many reconnaissance and excavation campaigns have followed which continue today⁶ and which have been able to reconstruct the evolutions of this inhabited area that from a city enotra of the sixth century BC. it became Lucanian and then a Roman municipium with the transformation of its name into Blanda Julia in honor of Augustus and its abandonment in the 5th century AD.

A new site was established near the Fiumarella di Tortora with the foundation of a diocese: the discovery of a church with a central plan and three apses with burials can be dated between the 6th and 7th centuries⁷. This is more than a thousand years of history in which Blanda was the protagonist and capital city of this stretch of territory which, with the birth of the diocesan seat, brought together Lucanian and Calabrian localities, making it clear how traditionally the communities that were born around the Noce river were united, and its tumultuous tributaries.

But it is necessary to clarify that this is the period of the great territorial and diocesan reorganizations that will result in new state and local political organizations during the eighth century and also religious upheavals that will give rise to new aggregations.

I refer to the formation of new centers of power with the settlement of the Lombards in some areas and the Byzantines in others, the always unclear dividing line between the various territorial powers led the population to decrease and to cause the loss of some inhabited centers and to the birth of others who, slowly, left the coastal plains to take refuge in hilly and mountainous areas.

⁴ G. LEONE (1986), *I Cappuccini e i loro 37 Conventi in Provincia di Cosenza*, Cosenza, vol. I, 57-58.

⁵ M. LACAVA (1891), *Del sito di Blanda, Lao e Tebe Lucana*, Reale Tipografia Giannini e figli, Napoli.

⁶The bibliography is extensive but there are only a few texts with an extensive bibliography that tell the story of the important discovery and its excavations. F. Mollo (2001), *Archeologia per Tortora: frammenti del passato – Guida della Mostra di Palazzo Casapesenna*, Potenza; G.F. LA TORRE e F. MOLLO (2006), *Blanda Julia sul Paleocastro di Tortora. Scavi e ricerche (1990-2005)*, in "Pelorias" 13 – Dipartimento di Civiltà antiche e moderne di Messina.

⁷New studies are hoped for in order to better understand whether it should be considered an early Christian diocese in the Lucanian or Calabrian territory.

From the many publications of local history lovers one could deduce the strong presence of Greek monasticism right in this stretch of coast, the writing production on this area by Biagio Moliterni is considered of great quality, who with great precision collects information on the origins of the communities of Aieta, Tortora and Praia a Mare⁸ and that have been of great help to me for this study which aims to focus attention on coastal settlements and population cycles.

Add to this the brief but very interesting study on Castrocuco di Maratea by Luca Luongo⁹ who immediately states that the territorial boundaries of the Feud of Castrocuco are only known from the 18th century land registry from which it is clear that the border with Tortora was naturally marked by the river Noce but the one with Maratea caused tensions and quarrels as it was made up of the line drawn by *Regia Torre di Caja, sita in questo territorio [di Maratea] sopra gli scogli del mare verso ponente fino alla falda del monte detto del Piscopo* towards the East¹⁰.

Castrocuco was born in the same period in which the settlements of Aieta and Tortora were formed. Tortora is mentioned for the first time in the life of Saint Elias who lived in the 10th century¹¹. Aieta, on the other hand, is mentioned in the life of San Saba di Collesano and, subsequently, in a deed of donation to the abbey of Cava dei Tirreni by Ugo and Emma d'Avena, from the monastery of San Giovanni *in loco Layta, qui est prope castro Mercury* in 1186.

Castrocuco is remembered in a document of the archbishop of Salerno Alfano of 1067 much investigated for some diplomatic contradictions that have been overcome in a study by Biagio Moliterni with many proofs to support the veracity of the document (considering the territories on the border between two administrative realities, the disappearance of the diocese of Blanda Julia, the territorial reorganization of the diocese of Cassano and many other sources linked to the birth of the towns in the area in question)¹².

But to better understand how this territory was being reorganized, it is not enough just to consider the famous phenomenon of fortification and the widespread preference of the populations of that period to settle on the hills and mountains, fortifying and militarizing these small towns.

Other documents from the 60s of the 11th century describe the situation of the Byzantine theme of Calabria which was divided into two *turmae*: one of these is mentioned since the 10th century in an hagiographic text “*con il suo centro ad Aieta; essa sicuramente a Nord si estendeva sino al Noce che costituiva la frontiera del tema di Calabria; e ad Ovest sino alla turma del Merkurion, che apparteneva al tema lucano*”¹³. In a Greek map of

⁸ B. MOLITERNI (2003), *La chiesa di San Zaccaria e l'origine del Santuario della Madonna della grotta di Praia a mare*, in “Archivio storico per la Calabria e la Lucania” LXIX, 19-26; Idem (2009), *Laos: fiume e città nella Geografia di Strabone*, in Idem LXXIV, 5-29; Idem (2010), *Laos: fiume e città negli scritti, nella cartografia e nella ricerca archeologica dal XVI al XX secolo*, in Idem LXXV, 95-128; Idem (2013), *Alfano, Pietro e la diocesi di Policastro*, LXXIX, 7-36.

⁹ L. LUONGO (2019), *Il castello di Castrocuco. Note storiche*, in “La squilla”, 77-93.

¹⁰ Ibidem, 80-81.

¹¹ V. SALETTA (1972), *Vita di S. Elia Speleota secondo il Man. Crypt. B. XVII*, in “Studi Meridionali” V, 87.

¹² B. MOLITERNI (2013), *Alfano, Pietro* cit.

¹³ A. GUILLOU, *Geografia amministrativa del Katepanato bizantino d'Italia*, in *Calabria Bizantina. Vita religiosa e strutture amministrative*, Atti del primo e secondo incontro di Studi Bizantini, Reggio Calabria 1974, pp. 120-121.

1065, reference is made to a church called San Zaccaria and Sant'Elia, to the church of San Nicola de Digna and to that of Santa Venere. It is necessary to report the part of the document that is interesting for this study: *...et in valle que Mercurii nuncupatur abbatiam Sancti Petri que dicitur Marcanito, et ecclesiam Sancti Helye et Sancti Zacharie cum omnibus pertinentiis earum, et ecclesiam Sancti Nicholai de Digna cum vineis et terris et silvis et marino portu, et abbatiam Sancti Nicholai de abbate Clemente cum vineis et terri et silvis et ecclesiam Sancte Venere cum casale*¹⁴. The toponym Digna indicates the Dino island of Praia a mare: I do not know the reason why all the literature on the subject believes that the church of San Nicola is not located on the Dino island but it is a church of the nearby San Nicola Arcella which was previously called San Nicola dei Greci. Why should they mention the Dino island in the document if the church is located in San Nicola Arcella? The same is true of the port which has been identified with that of San Nicola Arcella. It is believed that the landing on the island is a natural harbor in at least two points close to the mainland - called Capo d'Arena - and it can be assumed that the church of San Nicola was located on the rocky island of Dino.

Also as regards the church of Sant'Elia and San Zaccaria or as many write the two churches of Sant'Elia and San Zaccaria, I believe they are located in the territory of Praia a Mare. Other documents come to our aid: *“Ego Normannus et uxor mea Adeliza et Robertus privignus meus et filii mei et pro anima Goffredi de Aita et omnium parentum suorum atque meorum dono et concedo omnipotenti Deo monasterium sancti Nikolai de Tremulo cum pertinentiis suis et ecclesiam sancti Zacharie, que est iuxta mare suptus Aitam, et totam vineam, que est circa eam, una cum cripta, que est iuxta eam et tota terra, que est da Falconara usque ad Mali canale*”¹⁵. The second document speaks only of the church of San Zaccaria which is located near the sea below Aieta which, before 1928, the year of the birth of Praia a Mare as an autonomous municipality, included the entire territory of the current Praia a Mare. It should also be noted that there is still toponymic memory of a district of Sant'Elia which is located near a huge cave, sanctuary of the Madonna della Grotta di Praia a Mare, which around it has a series of small caves that could be the cells where the monks of the church of Sant'Elia were hospitalized.

It is agreed with the hypothesis that the church of Sant'Elia was located near the cave of the Sanctuary of the Madonna if not inside the Marian sanctuary also in consideration of another document which shows that the church and / or monastery di Sant'Elia was the same to which about a century and a half later, precisely in 1198, Giovanni Scullando, lord of Aieta, donated some funds to the Petricella, including the 15 farmers involved in their cultivation¹⁶.

We just have to locate the church of San Zaccaria which we know was near the sea surrounded by vineyards and which was located near a cave. In a document of King Robert dated 12 March 1338 and reconfirmed on 6 February 1408 by King Ladislao, the boundaries of Scalea are described, which at the time also included San Nicola Arcella: in

¹⁴ A. PRATESI (1958), *Carte latine di abbazie calabresi dell'archivio Albobrandini*, Città del Vaticano, 254.

¹⁵ L. MATTEI-CERASOLI (1938), *La badia di Cava e i monasteri greci della Calabria superore*, in “Archivio Storico per la Calabria e la Lucania”, VIII, 177-178.

¹⁶ F. TRINCHERA (1865), *Syllabus graecarum membranarum*, Napoli, n. 243, 328-329.

the final part the document handed down *et exinde ad fontem de Caballarum, et ab ipso fonte vadit p. caput Mali Canalis, et a Canale ipso usque in viam turturis per Arcum Maris*¹⁷.

To come up with a hypothesis for the location of the church of San Zaccaria, it is advisable to quote a small passage from the volume by Vincenzo Lomanaco of 1858:

*“L’ aria della Praja è poco salubre da luglio ad ottobre per lo ristagno delle acque nella contrada detta Pantano, le quali, benché fossero incanalate, non cessano però nei calori estivi d’influir sulla salute di quegli abitanti. Da novembre a tutto giugno le più agiate famiglie di Ajeta vi villeggiano ne’ propri casini sotto un cielo delizioso dolce e ridente. La popolazione del villaggio trovasi stremata da un fiero malore, detto il torcicollo, che nel 1841 mietè molte vittime, e spense intiere famiglie. Oggi non ascende che a 200 anime, di cui parte è addetta alla pesca, e parte alla coltura... In virtù di decreto della Ruota del Regio cedolario dei 18 Agosto 1695 D. Giovanni Francesco Cosentino marchese di Ajeta soddisfece alla Regia Corte ducati 450 per ancoraggio e falangaggio. Nel relievio della terra di Ajeta del 1704 si legge la seguente tassa ducati 6 per pascoli, ducati 12 e grana 66 per decima del pesce, ancoraggio e falangaggio della Taverna dell’Arco. La prestazione annua per l’isoletta di Dina era in carlini sei. Debbo tali notizie al prefato Ch. Camillo Miniери Riccio... In questo luogo ebbe morte onorata un tal Vitigno condottiero degli Ajetani che in agosto 1639 combattè valorosamente contro i Turchi che capitaneggiati d’Amurat Rayt con sei vascelli prima assalsero Dina; di poi Scalea, onde furono respinti dal Principe Francesco Spinelli che vi lasciò miseramente la vita come narra Giannone Stor. lib. 35. cap. 1. Ciò avvenne essendo Viceré di Napoli il Conte di Lemos. La morte di Vitigno é decantata con mediocri versi dall’Abate, Molitemo (Poesie Liriche Nap. 1760 p. 166). La tradizione di questo avvenimento si conserva tuttora dai terrazzani, e si ripetono di frequente i versi che descrivono il coraggio e la pietà di quell’ eroe e martire cristiano, il quale ferito letalmente, sopraffatto dall’oste che discendeva folla dai legni barbareschi, ebbe rifugio io un antro, ove si trovò poi spento intriso nel sangue col rosario in roano, ineffabile conforto dei veri credenti nell’ora solenne del supremo tragitto”*¹⁸.

Trying to put in order the information that comes from both the documents and the literature on the subject, it is believed that San Zaccaria was located on the spur of rock that stands near the tower of Fiuzzi, in front of the island Dino since it is close to the sea and it is located within the boundaries of the territory described in the document of 1338 which speaks of a land that starts from the Falconara tower and arrives at the Malocanale located near an Arco del Mare along the road that leads to Tortora. The reference is to that canal located immediately after the Tower of Fiuzzi which is still smelly and divides the territory of Fiuzzi from that of San Nicola. The arch of the sea is the natural arch of rock placed on the beach under the tower that allows you to continue walking on the beach without entering the water and leading up to Tortora. Near that arch there was a Taverna because it was certainly located on a busy road that connected Scalea to Tortora. In this document, the boundaries of the current Praia a Mare are well explained, at least on the marine side. Right on the spur of rock above that arch stood the monastery of San Zaccaria overlooking the sea

¹⁷ G. CELICO (2000), *Scalea tra duchi e principi mercanti filosofi e santi*, Diamante, 22 e 64, nota 39.

¹⁸ *Monografia sul Santuario di nostra Donna della Grotta nella Praja degli Schiavi e sul Comune di Ajeta in Provincia di Cosenza per VINCENZO LOMONACO giudice della Gran Corte Civile di Napoli e socio dell’Accademia Ercolanense, Cosentina, Pontaniana ed altre* (1858), Terza Edizione, Tipografia della Sirena, Strada Nuova de’ Pellegrini n.20, Napoli, 10 e 19.20.

and with a breathtaking view (today a famous nightclub is born). Opposite the island of Digna was the church of San Nicola and between the island and the spur where the coastal tower was built, a small port was born. Even the description that Lomonaco offers us of the valiant death of Vitigno in 1639 makes us understand that it took place in a cave located near the Dino island and near the spur of rock where the monastery of San Zaccaria stood; it is unthinkable to think that gravely injured vine could have reached the Grotto of the Sanctuary of the Madonna which was located quite far from the island and at the top of a steep slope.

Furthermore, I consider very important the description of the marshy area of Praia a Mare called Pantano and which was uninhabitable until the reforms of the early twentieth century. He makes us understand that in Praia you could live high up as the Basilian monks did by locating their churches and monasteries in the caves near that of the Sanctuary of the Madonna or on the island of Dino or on the spur overlooking the sea on which San Zaccaria stood.

When a colony of Schiavoni settled in Praia it is assumed that other upheavals were taking place in this stretch of coast: we were at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In Castrocuco the site was depopulating: Luca Luongo describes this depopulation by dates making the death of this inhabited center even more bloody and truthful, the ruins of which, still today, stand on the top of a cliff overlooking the sea, noticeable even from a great distance: *“nel 1470 Re Ferrante investì Galiotto Pascale di Policastro del castello diruto e disabitato di Castrocuco in Provincia di Valle di Crati e Terra Giordana, cum eius arce iuribus etc. Nel 1563 il detto castello fu venduto a Giulia De Rosa dall’incantatore del Sacro Regio Consiglio per esecuzione contro Antonio Varavalle. Nel 1573 lo stesso castello fu venduto a Giovan Cola de Giordano... Nel 1603 era possessore di Castrocuco, Fabio Giordano... Nel 1680 Domenica Giordano, Baronessa di Castrocuco, legittima moglie di D. Bonaventura Salone Caracciolo donò a D.a Francesca Greco sua figlia primogenita la Terra seu Castello di Castrocuco sito in Provincia di Basilicata”*¹⁹.

Since then Castrocuco lost its autonomy as an independent fiefdom and after 400 years of life it disappeared from the historical scene as Blanda Julia. The few survivors who, probably, begin to settle in other small mountain villages towards Maratea, will gravitate from this period onwards towards Basilicata and completely detaching themselves from the primeval Calabrian vocation. Castrocuco still remains the gateway to Basilicata on the Tyrrhenian Sea and it would be necessary to restore the uninhabited city with a restoration, redevelop it also by illuminating it to make it a tourist destination even at night in consideration of the breathtaking landscape that can be enjoyed from that height.

While Castrocuco depopulated a colony of Schiavoni from Eastern Europe, following the advance of Turks and the fall of many cities they settled in Praia which, from this moment on, finally had a name.

“Sulla frontiera del tenimento Calabro si vede una spiaggia popolata di bei casini, ricca di giardini fichi vigneti gelsi ed aranci, di una larga estensione che per più miglia corre in linea retta; circondata da colline coperte di alberi, e principalmente di olivi. A cavaliere della spiaggia suddetta si scorge una montagna, nella cui cavità accorre frequente popolo diverso di abili e di costumanze. Il nome del villaggio è Praja degli

¹⁹ L. LUONGO (2019), 86-87.

*Schiavi (Plaja Sclavorum), così detto dagli Schiavi o sia Schiavoni, che molti secoli fa vi lasciarono una piccola colonia. Si ignora il commercio che esercitarono in questi lidi i legni Dalmatini, e precisamente Ragusei, i quali son chiamati anche oggidì Schiavi e Schiavoni. Il monte che siede a cavaliere del vasto lido e del delizioso paesetto, ed in gran parte lo domina contiene nel grebbo un'ampia grotta incavata nel vivo sasso*²⁰.

The information that Lomonaco offers us makes us understand that it is a colony of the many Albanians, Greeks and Schiavoni who reached the south of Italy from the Albanian, Greek and Slavic coasts and was well received by the kings of the Kingdom of Naples. Many colonies were born that went to repopulate many depopulated centers during the demographic crisis of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that gripped not only Italy but the whole of Europe²¹. The colony of refugees came from Ragusa as Lomanaco tells us and it is very likely that the colony of Ragusans reached Praia a Mare in the last years of the fifteenth century²². Probably the first settlement of Praia a Mare was born between Località Mantinera and Fiuzzi but it is a hypothesis to be supported with other elements and will be the subject of another study.

The militarization of the coasts of the Kingdom of Naples and the construction of many coastal towers led to new forms of reorganization of these territories with the populations frightened by the landing of Turkish vessels that besieged the entire Gulf of Policastro with great vehemence. The bloody history of Vitigno is proof of this, they fought hand-to-hand on small vessels to defend the settlements that stood on the heights immediately behind the wide beaches.

Downstream of the town of Castrocuoco, now almost uninhabited, the Caina tower was built which communicated with the Filocaio tower in the territory of Maratea and the Nave tower, the first defensive bulwark of the Calabrian coast. In 1566 the Nave tower was also built and the next one called the Fumarolo. Transformed into a fort in the Napoleonic age it was called Fortino; in 1935 it was restored and became the seat of the Liceo Classico of Praia.

The largest of all the towers of this stretch of coast is that of Fiuzzi which was erected on a large rock with an external staircase and a drawbridge. It is also called the Arco tower because to pass from the north to the south of this large rock, you pass under a natural stone arch that connects to another spur of rock on which the church of San Zaccaria stood. The defensive chessboard of Praia is closed by the tower of the Dino island built on the western tip of the island. All these buildings are in a fairly good state of conservation and characterize coasts and beaches in a decisive way, making the panorama even more impressive.

The geographical map (Fig. 1) that best represents what has been written in this work is the one defined as Aragonese with the indication of the ancient Iulitta which is exactly the place where the most important finds of Blanda came to light.

The stretch of coast described has not undergone excessive overbuilding and is still full of natural corners with characteristic flora and fauna, such as the sea lily.

²⁰ *Monografia sul Santuario di nostra Donna della Grotta* (1858) cit., 4.

²¹ On the subject I would like to point out A. PELLETTIERI (2020), *Il Mediterraneo fra le due sponde adriatiche. Le migrazioni albanesi fra i secoli XV e XVIII*, in Bravo Caro Juan Jesús, Roldán Paz, Lorena e Ybáñez Worboys, Pilar (eds.), *El Mediterráneo: sociedades y conflictos*, Madrid, 83-116.

²² M. SPREMIC (1987), *Ragusa tra gli Aragonesi di Napoli e i Turchi*, in "Medievalia" 2 7, 187-197.

For about 50 years we have been witnessing another phenomenon that characterizes all the towns that rise on the top of hills and mountains, namely the abandonment to settle flat areas and on the seashore.

If Aieta already in 1928 had definitively freed itself from Praia a Mare which became an autonomous municipality and which had dragged on its development for about 1000 years, today the opposite must happen. Aieta, with only 750 current inhabitants, will remain the elegant and good living room of Praia that will have to drag the beautiful and characteristic mountain center towards a different development. In this period Praia a Mare can be considered the capital of this stretch of coast especially for the natural and scenic beauty of Fiuzzi and the island of Dino.

The same happened to Tortora which developed with a large settlement towards the sea for tourist reasons and only 500 inhabitants live in the historic center. Tortora country, as it is defined, is also the parlor of Tortora marina also with the creation of a very interesting museum on the excavations of Blanda which is being redeveloped and enhanced for better use.

Castrocucco is also experiencing a moment of strong enhancement due also to a project that involves the construction of a large tourist port that would create new tourist opportunities also on nearby Tortora and Praia.

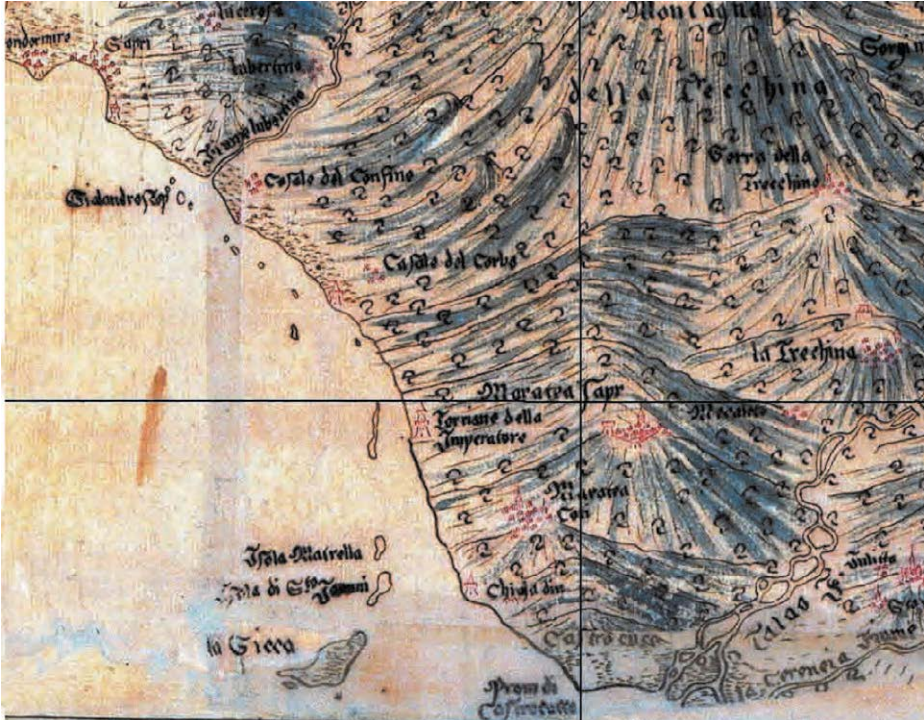


Figure 1 – Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF, Cartes et Plans, GE AA 1305-4).

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