



# HISTORY of SICILY

## OUTLINE SUMMARY

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### Week 1: impossibly long ago to 480 BCE: myths to Greek glory

**Prehistory:** Neolithic cave paintings in Levanzo, Copper Age, Bronze Age, influence of Minoan civilization from Crete, trade with Mycenaean Greece. Sikels arrive from mainland Italy. Greeks see Sicily full of monsters & sorceresses. Stories of Daedalus, Odysseus, Aeneas, Cyclops, Circe, Calypso.

**8<sup>th</sup>~7<sup>th</sup>C. BCE: Phoenician.** Phoenicians from the Levant (modern Lebanon) sail westward, found Carthage near modern Tunis, and colonize Sicily, Iberia, & north Africa. Now called Carthaginians, they dominate western Mediterranean; Greeks consider them lying business sharpies.

**735~5<sup>th</sup>C. BCE: Greeks colonize central Mediterranean.** Greeks spread westward, establishing colonies along the coast of south Italy & Sicily. Sikels enslaved or retreat to the interior. Sicily is a battleground between Sicilian Greeks & Carthage for five centuries. Stories of Demeter, Persephone, Heracles, Archias, Arethusa, Pythagoras, Sappho.

**480~412 BCE: Classical Greek.** Victories at Himera, Sicily, & Salamis, Greece, begin a Golden Age. Greeks invent our modern world. Syracuse rises to dominate Sicily. Fractious democracy vies with the tyranny of strong rulers. Athens becomes a bullying superpower, tries to conquer Syracuse (& hence Sicily), but meets disaster. Stories of Gelon, Theron, Hieron I, Pindar, Aeschylus, Empedocles.

### Week 2: 212 BCE~829 CE. Classical world matures, then collapses

**412~212 BCE: Hellenistic Greek. Dominance of Syracuse.** Carthaginian invasions destroy western Greek cities, then Syracuse dominates as largest, most powerful, richest city in the world. In Greece, the rise of Philip of Macedon & his son, Alexander. Rome bullies Carthage into three “Punic” Wars. Rome conquers Sicily & all former Carthaginian lands. Stories of Dionysius, Plato, Timoleon, Pyrrhus, Agathocles, Hieron II, Hannibal, Marcellus, Theocritus, Archimedes.

**211 BCE~ 410 CE: Roman.** Sicily becomes first province of Rome, whose governors steal everything moveable. Romans cut down the trees to plant wheat, but wheat economy dries out the climate, requires large estates, sows social misery (slave revolts) & in the distant future, the Mafia. Arrival of Christianity. Stories of Verres, Cicero, Sant’Agatha, Santa Rosalia, Santa Lucia.

**410~535: ‘Barbarian’.** Vandals rule, then Goths. Sicily continues to speak Greek & keeps the Eastern Rite. Stories of Gaiseric, Odoacer.

**535~829: Byzantine.** Conquest & rule by Byzantine Emperors. Stagnation. Arabs (Saracens) begin raids. Stories of Theodoric, Belisarius, Constans II.

## Week 3: Arabs & Normans create a second Golden Age

**829~1061: Arab.** Saracens arrive from north Africa & only slowly conquer Sicily. They reform agriculture, introducing sugar, citrus, invent pasta, thus invent Sicilian cuisine. Paper-making introduced. Palermo ranks with Córdoba, Baghdad, Cairo as most civilized cities in Western World.

**1061~1194: Norman.** Normans Robert & Roger retake Sicily for Western Christendom, but defy the Vatican by continuing a multicultural, multi-religious society, e.g. the Arabo-Norman artistic style of Palatine Chapel & Monreale Cathedral. Stories of Roger I & II, William I & II.

**1194~1268: Swabian.** Sicily a wedding gift to the Holy Roman Empire, ruled by Germans, especially Frederick II, the “wonder of the world”. Palermo the center of pre-Renaissance culture; Italian language & poetry invented at Frederick’s court. At his death, chaos & conniving by Papacy.

## Week 4: Centuries of Spanish Neglect (Kingdom of the Two Sicilies)

**1268~1282: French (Anjou).** Pope hands Sicily to Charles of Anjou, leading to revolt of Sicilian Vespers, when sexual harassment & bad pronunciation could be fatal. Stories of Charles I.

**1282~1492: Spanish (Aragón).** Aragón (Spaniards) & Anjou (French) war over Sicily. Treaty 1302. Viceroys rule as Sicily becomes a Spanish backwater.

**1492~1713: Spanish (Catalan, Hapsburg).** Unification of Spain, expulsion of Jews. Aristocratic, urban Sicily becomes a showcase of the Spanish empire, wealthy with New World silver, while 90% live miserably as serfs. Stories of earthquakes, Charles V, the Hapsburgs.

**1713~1734: Savoy-Piedmont, Austrian (Hapsburg).** War of the Spanish Succession scrambles European ruling houses, Sicily a prize to be passed around. Given to Savoy king Amadeus, but Sicilians frustrated his well-meaning efforts to improve the place, so he departed after seven years. Fourteen years of Austrian intentions equally frustrated. Banditry. Jews readmitted.

**1734~1860: Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.** Spain takes over again, now a Bourbon monarchy. Jews re-expelled. Jesuits expelled. Sicily ruled from Naples (Kingdom of the Two Sicilies) as the 90% remain sunk in feudal poverty & ignorance. Young radicals ignite revolutions from America to France to Sicily to all the Americas. Tourism begins. Stories of Charles III, Ferdinand IV, Francis I, Ferdinand II, Francis II.

## Week 5: Italy, the Latest Occupier

**1861~1946: United Italy (Monarchy).** Italy unites under the House of Savoy, but poverty, corruption, & oppression of the South continue. The rise of the Mafia, socialist movements, World Wars, Fascism, Futurism, Liberty Style, Mafia nearly defeated. Stories of Garibaldi, Mazzini, Victor Emmanuel, Cavour, Mussolini, Mori, Kesselring, Montgomery, Patton.

**1946~today: united Italy (Republic).** Sicilian autonomy, Mafia revived, Italy has a government per year, prosperity, fashion, style, movies, cars, Mafia wars, Max-Trials, Dirty Hands, assassinations, & political buffoonery. Stories of Dolci, Leggio, Riina, Falcone, Borsellino, Berlusconi, & Italian politics (send in the clowns), new anti-mafia mood holds steady (for now).