

## Sicilian History: An Abbreviated Chronology

8000 BC	Unknown occupiers	The discovery of the Grotta dell'Uzzo in north western Sicily between Capo San Vito and Scopello in 1975. It appears to be about 10,000 years old based on radiocarbon dating (Holocene epoch). Archeologists found implements similar to those found in the Cala dei Genovese grotto on the island of Lévanzo. (Spoto, Sicilia Antica)
7000 BC	Unknown occupiers	Earliest traces of humans found in the Addaura Caves on Monte Pellegrino near present day Palermo and in the Grotto Cala dei Genovesi on the island of Lévanzo.
6000 BC	Sicans	Sicans arrive on the island. They are village-dwellers and farmers. Chief settlement was Sant' Angelo Muxaro near Agrigento. Click on the link to see an interactive version of the pie chart that graphically depicts the time from 6,000 BC to the present and relates the time period to the occupying power.
1400 BC	Sikels	First known occurrence of Sikels, who probably migrated from or through Italy. They lived in fortified hill towns and left large necropolises. They are said to have co-existed peacefully with the Sicans although they appear to have displaced the Sicans in the eastern part of Sicily.
1200 BC	Elymians	The Elymians settled in western Sicily, in Eryx (Erice), Segesta, and Entella. Possibly descendents of the Trojans, according to Thucydides and Plutarch. (Spoto, 94) All traces disappear after Hellenization of the island.
1000 BC	Phoenicians	The Phoenicians settled along the coasts of Sicily. After the arrival of the Greeks, they withdrew to Motya, Solus, and Panormos, current day Palermo.
814 BC	Carthage	The Phoenicians establish the city of Carthage on the coast of Tunisia.
800 BC	Greeks and Carthaginians	Both established outposts on the island. The Greeks eventually go as far west as Himera on the north coast and Agrigento on the south coast. The Carthaginians maintain control of western Sicily including Palermo.
735 BC	Greeks	The Greeks begin to colonize Sicily starting with a group from Chalcis in Euboea who settle at Naxos.

500 BC	Greeks	The leading Greek city, Syracuse, established control over the other Greek colonies of Agrigento, Gela, Catania, Himera, and Messina.
480 BC	Greeks	Gelon, tyrant of Syracuse, defeats general Hamilcar at Himera in 480 BC, bringing Carthaginian eastward expansion in Sicily to an end.
452 BC	Greeks	An unsuccessful rebellion of the Sikels in southern Sicily, led by Ducetius. He was exiled to Corinth. Ducetius later led a group of Corinthians and Sikels back to Sicily where he established the city of Kale Acte on the northern shore, about midway between Himera and Messina.
440 BC	Greeks	Ducetius falls ill and dies.
413 BC	Greeks	Syracuse defeats Athenian invaders at the Assinaros River
400 BC	Carthaginians	Carthage maintains control of the western half of the island including Palermo.
366 BC	Greeks	Plato returns for another visit to Sicily at the invitation of Dion. (Spoto, 295)
287 BC	Greeks	Birth of Archimedes (287-211 BC) of Syracuse.
269 BC	Greeks	Hieron II is king of Syracuse.
264 BC	Greeks - Romans	The Romans intervene against the Carthaginians in Sicily, precipitating the First Punic War (264-241 BC). (Punic, Poenicus or Phoenician.) After the Roman victory and the death of Hieron II of Syracuse (216 BC), Rome gained control of most of the island. They exploited the island economically. Sicily became known as the Breadbasket of Rome.
211 BC	Greeks - Romans	Marcus Claudius Marcellus conquers Syracuse: Sicily under the Romans. Archimedes assassinated.
63 BC	Romans	Pompey sacks Jerusalem and brings Jews to Italy as slaves. Roman Proconsul Crassus is said to have sold thirty thousand Jewish slaves. (See the Cipolla entry in the Bibliography.)
410 AD	Vandals and Goths	Sicily was taken by the Vandals (Germanic).
493 AD	Goths	Sicily under the dominion of Theodoric the Great (c.454-526) king of the Ostrogoths.
535	Greeks	General Belisarius wins back Sicily from the Goths for Byzantium.

827	Arabs	Sicily falls to the Muslim Arabs. (827 - 1072) The Arabs begin their thirty year battle to gain control of Sicily with their landing at Cape Granitola on the south western tip of Sicily, south of Mazara.
903	Arabs	The Arabs under the Aghlabite caliphs (Sunnis) gain control of all of Sicily which they divided into three sections. Conversion to Islam could be avoided by payment of the gezia tax.
909	Arabs	The Fatimids (Shiites) overthrew the Aghlabites. During their rule they promoted both economic and cultural development.
969	Arabs	The Fatimids under Jawhar, founded a new city near al-Fustat, named al-Mansuriyah. The name was changed to al-Qahirah, or Cairo. This then became their capital. At about this time Sicily was made a semiautonomous emirate.
972	Arabs	First documentary mention of a Jewish Quarter in Palermo.
1061	Normans	May 18 the Normans land in Sicily. By 1091 with the fall of Noto, they had conquered all of Sicily from the Arabs. Norman Sicily was marked by linguistic and religious tolerance. Hebrew, Arabic, Latin, and Greek were recognized as official languages. Roger I was both the ecclesiastical and secular leader.
1066	Normans	On October 14, 1066, while Roger I was conquering Sicily, his cousin William, the Duke of Normandy, defeated King Harold II of England at the Battle of Hastings and assumed the English crown as William I.
1101	Normans	Death of Roger I. During the minority of Roger II, his mother Adelaide was regent. Roger II reigned for 42 years starting in 1112. He is the first king of Sicily (1130-1154). He was an able successor to Roger I and brought his kingdom to the pinnacle of political, economic, and cultural achievement.
1139	Normans	ROGER II was recognized (1139) by Pope Innocent II as the first king of Sicily (1130-1154) and of the Norman territories in southern Italy.
1154	Normans	William (I) "the Bad" (1154-66) was a much less able ruler but he secured the treaty of Benevento. Benevento was the papal residence at that time.

1156	Normans	Treaty of Benevento agreed to by Pope Adrian IV. The pope's emissaries were Roland of Siena and Oddone Frangipane. William I of Sicily sent Maio of Bari and two ecclesiastics, Hugh of Palermo and Romuald of Salerno. William was recognized as King of Sicily, Apulia, Calabria, Campania, Capua and the coastal cities of Amalfi, Naples, and Gaeta.
1166	Normans	William (II) 'the Good' (1166-1189) died at age 35 without heir.
1172	Normans	William II orders the building of the Basilica of Monreale in 1172. It was largely completed by 1185, an incredible achievement. The interior walls of the Cathedral are decorated with 139 mosaics telling the stories of the Old and New Testaments.
1190	Normans	Tancred - Sicilian barons rebel and choose Tancred, a grandson of Roger II to be king of Sicily.
1194	Swabians	Frederick II (1194-1250) - Through the marriage of Constance, heiress of the last Norman king, to Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI, a son of Frederick I Barbarossa (1122-1190) Sicily passed in 1194 to the Hohenstaufen dynasty. Their son, Holy Roman Emperor FREDERICK II, spent his childhood in Sicily. He was a child of four when his mother died and Pope Innocent III governed Sicily until 1208 when Frederick II reached the age of 14. Like Roger II, Frederick held brilliant court and effected important administrative reforms. His first of three wives was Constance of Aragon. She died in 1222. He married Isabella in 1225. She brought him the crown of Jerusalem as a dowry. She died in childbirth in 1228. His third wife was Bianca Lancia of Piedmont. He knew Latin, Sicilian, Greek, Arabic, French, and of course, German. He had his own private zoo, wrote a treatise on falconry. He was even versed in philosophy and mathematics. He unified weights and measures, imposed taxes on everything, abolished gambling. He required the Jews to wear identifying clothing (a precursor to Hitler's yellow star).
1215	Swabians	On June 15, 1215 while the Swabians were still ruling in Sicily, the Barons in England succeeded in wresting from the Angevin King John, 63 articles which have come to be known as the Magna Carta. They established the rights of the church, the supremacy of the rule of law, the principle of judgement by peers, etc.
1231	Swabians	The Constitutions of Melfi are considered to be Frederick II's outstanding legislative accomplishment. After his death (1250), his weak successors were outmaneuvered by the papacy.
1266	Angevins	The pope placed the Angevin CHARLES I on the throne of Sicily and Naples as a papal vassal.

1282	Sicily	In this Abbreviated Chronology of Sicilian History, this is the only entry that lists Sicily as the ruling power. This came about as the result of the spontaneous uprising that came to be known as The War of the Sicilian Vespers--the revolt of the Sicilians against the rule of the ANGEVINS--begun spontaneously at the time of vespers (evening worship) on Easter Monday, 3/31/1282, at the Church of The Holy Spirit in Palermo and over the next several months it resulted in the massacre of almost the entire French population of Sicily. This brief flirtation with Sicilian Independence and self rule ended with the involvement of Peter III of Aragon whose help had been sought by the revolutionaries. Seeking the help of Peter of Aragon was a colossal blunder on the part of the Sicilians and resulted in 572 years of Spanish domination.
1282	Aragon	Rejected by the Pope, the Sicilians turned to Peter III of Aragon for support. After a five day trip from Africa, he lands at Trapani on August 30, 1282. Although the Aragonese secured control of Sicily, the Angevins retained Naples, and wars between the two continued until 1372.
1283	Aragon	The execution, by decapitation of Il Gualtiero di Caltagirone on May 22, 1283 in the piazza S. Giuliano. This act signaled the triumph of Aragon and the end of any lingering aspirations for Sicilian Independence born with the Vespers.
1296	Aragon	Frederick III (1296-1337) King of Sicily.
1299	Aragon	On July 4 the naval battle of Capo d'Orlando was fought so furiously that it is said to have turned the sea red with the blood of its victims. Although the Sicilians ultimately lost the battle, the enemy forces were so devastated that they could not proceed to attack Messina, which was the capitol of Sicily at that time. A tragically significant battle during the War of the Sicilian Vespers.
1302	Aragon	Frederick III 1272-1337 King of Sicily (1296-1337) the third son of Peter III of Aragon. In the Peace of Caltabellotta (1302) Charles of Anjou and Pope Boniface VIII recognized Frederick as king of Trinacria for his lifetime.
1372	Aragon	Treaty of Avignon ends the wars between Aragon and the Angevins, with the papacy also giving up its claim to temporal rule of Sicily.
1479	Spain	Queen Isabella of Castile starts the Inquisition as a domestic policy to secure control. After her husband Ferdinand becomes king of Aragon, he exports the inquisition to the entire kingdom.

1492	Spain	<p>On March 31 King Ferdinand decrees the expulsion of Jews. Sicilian notables write a petition to the Spanish King, only succeeding in delaying the expulsion. After a presence of more than 1500 years, Jews officially disappear from Sicily.</p> <p>In 1492 the Jews are expelled from Spain; and on June 18 of the same year the order of expulsion also arrives in Sicily and Sardinia (belonging to Spain); an order that is carried out, after a brief delay, within 1492. Not a single Jew remains in Sicily; the majority of the Sicilian Jews find refuge in the cities of southern Italy.</p>
1542	Spain	Short but serious earthquake in eastern Sicily and Caltagirone.
1672-1678	Spain	<p>The revolt of Messina (1672-78) In 1672, the artisans of Messina (the <i>marvizzì</i>) revolted against patrician rule (the <i>merri</i>) and took control of the city, a social revolt which did not question Spanish rule. In July 1674 a patrician force overcame the rebel force; the patricians retook control of the city, expelled the Spanish governor and called for French aid. France, since 1673 at war with Spain (Dutch War of Louis XIV., 1672-1678), dispatched several expeditions to aid Messina, while the Dutch Republic sent a fleet (1675) under Michiel Adriaenszoon de Ruyter, who temporarily blockaded Messina (April 1676), but then fell in battle against the French, commanded by Du Quesnes (April 22nd 1676, Battle of Sicily/of the Etna; the battle was a Dutch victory). Messina held out until the end of the war; when peace was negotiated in 1678, the French withdrew their support, and the Spanish reestablished control.</p>
1693	Spain	Most of eastern Sicily destroyed by earthquake on Jan 11.
1713	Savoy	Sicily passed briefly to the house of Savoy. The Peace of Utrecht (1713-14) made Victor Amadeus II king of Sicily.
1720	Austria	Sicily traded to the Austrian Habsburgs for Sardinia.
1734	Spain	During the War of the Polish Succession, both Sicily and Naples were conquered by the Spanish Bourbon Prince Charles.
1759	Spain	Charles succeeded to the Spanish throne, Sicily and Naples passed to his son Ferdinand I. The Spanish Bourbons ruled from Naples until the French forced Ferdinand to flee to Sicily in 1806.
1767	Spain	Jesuits expelled from Sicily, their university in Caltagirone was closed.
1776	Spain	In the New World, the American Colonies declare their independence from the United Kingdom of Great Britain on July 4, 1776.

1782	Spain	March 16 - The Tribunal of The Holy Office, known as the Holy Inquisition is abolished in the Kingdom of Sicily by King Ferdinand III. The 225th anniversary of the abolition was noted by Giuseppe Scianò, Secretary of the Frunti Nazziunali Sicilianu (FNS) on March 15, 2007.
1795	Spain	Francesco Paolo Di Blasi (1753-1795) is decapitated on May 20th in Palermo. He was accused of wanting to establish a free and independent Republic of Sicily. Di Blasi was a jurist, historian, philosopher and writer.
1812	Spain	Adoption of a constitution, approved by the Sicilian parliament on July 19 and sanctioned by the king on August 10. It reiterated the independence of Sicily from Naples.
1816	Spain	After the Napoleonic Wars, Ferdinand I adjourned parliament, abolished the constitution of 1812 and formally combined his realms as the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.
1820	Spain	Riots of 1820 were put down with such force that it resulted in the spread throughout Sicily of the secret society, the Carbonari.
1837	Spain	The tombs in the wall around the Church of the Holy Ghost were filled in three weeks by the dire pestilence which devastated Sicily. (Amari, v 1, 179)
1848	Spain	January 12 - Revolution of 1848 ruthlessly put down with naval bombardment of Messina (1848) and Palermo (1849). Ferdinand II becomes known as King Bomba. With the surrender of Palermo on 15 May 1849, head of state, President Ruggero Settimo goes into exile on Malta.
1860	Spain	May 11 - Giuseppe Garibaldi lands at Marsala, Sicily with a 1000 man force of volunteers (Red Shirts) and eventually routs the Spanish forces, taking Sicily and southern Italy, which then joined the Kingdom of Savoy (plebiscite October 21) and ultimately became part of a united Italy (1870).
1861	Spain	Francis II formally abdicated.
1862	Italy	January 1 - revolt at Castellammare del Golfo against the annexation of Sicily to the Kingdom of Italy.
1866	Italy	The revolution of Sette E Mezzo, September 15-22, 1866, called into question the so-called plebecite favoring annexation. The revolution was suppressed by a fierce three day Italian naval bombardment of Palermo and an artillery offensive led by General Raffaele Cadorno. Fierce repressive measures followed. Sicilian folklore now includes the expression, "Succede un Sette E Mezzo" to describe a catastrophe.

1882	Italy	Giuseppe Garibaldi died on June 2, 1882 at Caprera.
1908	Italy	Disastrous Messina - Reggio earthquake of 1908 combined with subsequent tsunamis result in the total destruction of the city of Messina and the death of as many as 100,000 people in the Reggio Calabria and Messina areas. The epicenter was in the Straits of Messina.
1922	Italy	Mussolini comes to power. He eventually bans the use of all languages other than Italian. All Sicilian language publishing is forbidden. Even today (1997) there is no Sicilian language newspaper in Sicily.
1943	Italy	During World War II, Sicily was the scene of heavy fighting. The Allies launched an invasion from North African bases on July 9-10, 1943. Patton landed forces at Licata and Gela and Montgomery landed at several places south of Syracuse. By the end of the year the Fascists were overthrown and Italy, under a provisional military government led by Pietro Badoglio, joined the Allies. The Nazi still held central and northern Italy.
1944	Italy	The Massacre of October 19, 1944. Unarmed protesters peacefully demanding bread and work were fired upon by Italian soldiers on Via Maqueda in Palermo. 24 of the protesters were killed and 158 were seriously wounded by grenades and rifle fire, turning the street red with the blood of innocents.
1945	Italy	April 25, Rome is liberated.
1945	Italy	New nation is formed. A monarchy under Victor Emmanuel III.
1946	Italy	Umberto II is King of Italy. Sicily becomes one of five autonomous regions (1946).
1948	Italy	With the adoption of the new constitution on June 2nd, Italy transitions from a Monarchy to a Republic.
1949	Italy	Italy joins the NATO alliance.
1958	Italy	Italy joins the European Common Market.
1964	Italy	Andrea Finocchiaro Aprile died in Palermo on January 15. He had been the leader of the Sicilian Independence Movement from 1943 to 1948.
1968	Italy	A huge earthquake rocks a large area of western Sicily late Sunday night, January 14. The towns of Gibellina and Salaparuta suffered the heaviest damage at 90%.

1982	Italy	The Mafia murders General dalla Chiesa. Magistrate Giovanni Falcone gathers information against the Mafia including detailed information from informant Tommaso Buscetta.
1986	Italy	Hundreds of Mafiosi are indicted in super-trials.
1992	Italy	<p>On May 23 the Mafia murders Magistrate Giovanni Falcone, his wife Magistrate Francesca Morvillo, and three bodyguards, Antonio Montinari, Rocco Di Cillo, and Vito Schifani in a massive explosion on the highway from the airport.</p> <p>On July 19, Paolo Borsellino and five bodyguards: Claudio Traina, Eddie Walter Cusina, Emanuele L Muli, Agostino Catalano, and Emanuela Loi are murdered by a car bomb on Via D'Amelio. There are massive anti-Mafia demonstrations in Palermo.</p>
1997	Italy	On Friday, September 26, twenty four mob bosses were convicted of the murder of Giovanni Falcone, his wife, prosecutor Francesca Morvillo, and three bodyguards. The twenty four received life sentences. Six others were given lesser terms. The seven judge court in Caltanissetta, Sicily took 25 days to reach its verdict.
1998	Italy	March 14 - First UMass Journalism invasion of Sicily during Spring Break. Life of Rosa Rizza changed forever.
2001	Italy	A Jet Propulsion Lab News Release on July 25, 2001 reported on the Mount Etna Volcanic explosion. It said, in part, "...the Mount Etna volcano exploded on July 22, 2001. Etna is located near the eastern coast of Sicily, to the southwest of mainland Italy. Major eruptions have been issuing from both summit and flank vents. Fine ash falling onto the Province of Catania closed the local airport, and a state of emergency was declared for the town of Nicolosi, which was threatened by lava flows from the southern flanks of the volcano." The picture from outer space shows the huge ash plume.