Chapter 11

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There's a Town in Sicily Where Greek Heroes Go to Die: The 'Tomb of Minos' at the Gurfa Caves and Alia's Need for a Mythical Past

§1. There's a town in Sicily: introduction.

When I was still a little kid growing up in Central Sicily, I felt some sort of jealousy towards the inhabitants of those cities on the coast whose richly documented history began with their foundation as Ancient Greek colonies: unlike Agrigento, Gela, or Siracusa, which could boast to have witnessed Peloponnesian and Punic wars, or the Fall of the Roman Empire and the Barbarian Invasions, my hometown, Caltanissetta, was founded by either Byzantine or North-African settlers during the Early Middle Ages. Even though I have since developed a keen interest in this time period as well, I would have probably felt some relief back then, if only someone had shared with me the main topic of this paper: there is a group of Sicilians who regard the territory of Alia, a small town not so far away from my childhood home, to be the place of burial of an Ancient Greek mythical king, Minos.[1]

1 This contribution was originally written between September 2019 and March 2020. For valuable criticism, discussion, or help with several aspects of this article, it is my pleasure to thank Alessandro Belgiojoso, Giuseppe Castelli, Andrea Lorenzo Covini, Guglielmo Ginevra, Pippo Oddo, Luciano Schimmenti, Maria Zielenbach, and, especially, Penelope Kolovou. I have also been able to enjoy the kindness and helpfulness of Carmelo Montagna, father of the Gurfa Myth, and of several citizens of Alia, among others: Elisa Chimento, Tania Di Marco, Damiano Drago, Gioacchino Ganci, Nino Gancitano, Calogera Gattuso, Vincenzo Rinchiuso, and Salvatore Ventimiglia, as well as then mayor Felice Guglielmo and former mayors Gaetano D'Andrea and Francesco Todaro. I am indebted to Ganci, Guglielmo, Todaro, and especially Chimento and Montagna for providing me with various materials and for agreeing to the interviews quoted in this article, which were carried out, filmed, and recorded on 24 April (Chimento, Ganci, Guglielmo, Todaro) and 28 Apr. (Montagna) 2019 by Maja Tschumi, whose help and inspiration I gladly acknowledge, and me; I am also indebted

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Alia is a small municipality (*comune*) of roughly 3,500 inhabitants which lies on the south-eastern side of the former Province of Palermo (currently known as *Area metropolitana di Palermo*) and borders the northern side of the former Province of Caltanissetta (currently known as *Libero consorzio comunale di Caltanissetta*). The town's official foundation may be traced back to the 17th century, when the agricultural fiefdom of *Lalia* was populated thanks to a royal decree of King Philip III of Spain (then ruler of Sicily as well); ever since, agriculture has remained the prevalent sector of Alia's economy, with the population of the town steadily increasing through the centuries, until reaching its peak in the 50s. In the past decades, however, like most (both smaller and bigger) towns located in the innermost part of Sicily, Alia has been subject to a constant demographic decline, caused by a struggling economy which has particularly suffered from the impact of the 2008 crisis and which has been unable to enjoy the advantages which the global growth of tourism has offered to other Sicilian localities.

According to some, however, the situation may be changing for the better, as in the past years the territory of Alia has been attracting a small but constant flow of tourists visiting a nearby complex of artificial caves, the so-called Gurfa Caves (*Grotte della Gurfa*). Their fame is due not only to their undisputable beauty, but also to the theories of various non-academic scholars, who have drawn comparisons between the Caves and a number of underground structures built by ancient Mediterranean civilizations, going so far as to propose identifying the complex with the 'Tomb of Minos', the mythical king of Crete in Ancient Greek literature. The archeologists of Palermo's Superintendency (*Soprintendenza*, the local divisions of the Regional Department of Cultural Heritage),[2] however, have harshly criticized these interpretations, labeling them as non-scientific; in contrast, the town government has encouraged them in an attempt to promote Alia as a tourist destination.

The present contribution will not engage in the discussion on the actual origin of the Gurfa Caves, which lies outside the scope of this collective volume, and will rather focus on how the Caves have come to be interpreted as the 'Tomb of Minos' and on how the cultural production revolving around the town of Alia has

to D'Andrea for agreeing to a telephone interview on 20 October 2019. I also wish to thank Robert Tegethoff for improving my English version. Finally, I am deeply grateful to my parents Claudio Ginevra and Maria Lombardo, as well as to my aunt Francesca Lombardo, for letting me know about the Gurfa Myth in the first place, for providing essential support to this research, and for constantly reminding me of the material beauty and the intangible wealth of Central Sicily. The usual disclaimers apply. The translations of Ancient Greek passages are adapted from Frazer (1921, Apollodorus), Godley (1922, Herodotus), and Oldfather (1939, Diodorus Siculus); all sources and interviews in Italian are translated by me.

2 As Sicily is one of Italy's five autonomous regions with special statute, Sicilian superintendencies are divisions of the regional and local governments, rather than of Italy's Ministry of Cultural Heritage (as they are in other regions).

been consequently influenced by the myth, allowing modern audiences to vividly encounter an ancient narrative. In order to do so, we shall firstly identify those elements of the myth (as attested in the Classical sources) which are most relevant to this investigation (§2). Secondly, an attempt will be made to outline a sketch of the history of the rediscovery of the Gurfa Caves during the last decades of the 20th century and of the path which has led to their association with the myth of Minos during the first decades of the 21st century (§3). Then, an account will be provided of the intermedial way in which the cultural memory of this classical myth has been promoted in the territory of Alia, as well as on how it has been incorporated into, e.g., artworks, plays, and school activities (§4). Finally, we will draw some conclusions, attempting to identify some motives which may have inspired a group of citizens of a small Sicilian town to adopt a millennia-old Ancient Greek myth as an important part of their everyday life (§5).

§2. Daedalus's Sicilian residence and the tomb of Minos: the myth.

The saga of Minos, legendary king of Crete and undisputed ruler of the Aegean Sea, has been influencing European culture ever since Ancient Greek (mostly Alexandrine) and Roman authors drew inspiration from it to compose their poetry. This thread connects the six brief mentions of Minos in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (1st millennium BCE) with the masterful account of Ariadne's ill-fated passion for Theseus in Catullus's *Carmen* 64 (1st century BCE), or Monteverdi's *Lamento d'Arianna* (1607–1608 AD) with Picasso's *Guernica* (1937 AD), one of several works reflecting the famous painter's obsession with the Minotaur.[3]

Within this contribution, however, we shall focus on a definitely less known episode of the saga, namely Minos's expedition to Sicily in search of Daedalus, which led to the Cretan king's gruesome killing by his Sicilian hosts. This mythical tradition, possibly already attested in a Sicilian terracotta relief from the 6th century BCE (Basel BS 318),[4] was treated in the 5th century BCE by Herodotus in his *Histories* (7.170) and by Sophocles in his lost play *Kamikioi* (FF 323–327 Radt), and is later attested, inter alia, in Apollodorus's *Library* (Ep. 1.14–15) and in Diodorus Siculus's *Historical Library* (4.77–79). The latter provides the most detailed account of this narrative and will thus serve, in what follows, as our primary source for the identification of the six elements (a–f) which are most relevant to our investigation.

3 On Minos's mythical saga in general, cf. Gantz (1993: 259–275). On the construction of Minos's character in Ancient Greek literature, cf. Caldesi Valeri (2009). On the fortune of Minoan myth in later periods, see e.g. Ziolkowski (2008).

4 Cf. Gantz (1993: 275).

(a) The wings of wax and Daedalus's escape from Crete

According to Diodorus, some ancient authors (including perhaps Sophocles)[5] explicitly connected the myth of Daedalus's residence in Sicily and of Minos's death to the renowned story of Daedalus's escape from Crete: after he was imprisoned by Minos together with his son Icarus for helping Theseus kill the Minotaur and survive the Labyrinth (having been asked to do so by Minos's daughter, Ariadne, who had fallen in love with the youth), the famous architect escaped by means of cunningly devised wings made of feathers and wax, a ruse which, however, also led to his son's death.

> 'As for Icarus, because of the ignorance of youth, he made his flight too far aloft and fell into the sea when the wax which held the wings together was melted by the sun, whereas Daedalus, by flying close to the sea and repeatedly wetting the wings, made his way in safety, marvellous to relate, to Sicily.' (Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library* 4.77)[6]

(b) Daedalus's residence and work among the Sicans

After Daedalus landed in Sicily, he was welcomed by the Sicans, an indigenous people which inhabited the island before the Greek colonization. There, he was honored as a personal guest by their king Cocalus, for whom he designed several wonderful constructions, among which was the unconquerable fortress of Camicus, which became the royal seat.

> 'Daedalus, however, […] landed in Sicily near the territory over which Cocalus reigned as king, who courteously received Daedalus and because of his genius and his renown made him his close friend. […] Daedalus spent a considerable time with Cocalus and the Sicani, being greatly admired for his very great skill in his art. And on this island he constructed certain works which stand even to this day. […] Also in the present territory of Acragas on the Camicus river, as it is called, he built a city which lay upon a rock and was the strongest of any in Sicily and altogether impregnable to any attack by force; for the ascent to it he made narrow and winding, building it in so ingenious a manner that it would be defended by three or four men. Consequently Cocalus built in this city the royal residence, and storing his treasures there he had them in a city which the inventiveness of its designer had made impregnable.' (Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library* 4.77–78)

(c) Minos's expedition to Sicily in search for Daedalus

Daedalus's achievements did not escape the attention of Minos, who had been searching for him: as soon as he heard of them, the king readily embarked on an expedition to request the architect from Cocalus.

> 'Minos, the king of the Cretans, who was at that time the master of the seas, when he learned that Daedalus had fled to Sicily, decided to make a campaign against that island.

5 Cf. F 327 Radt.

6 Cf. also Apollodorus, *Epitome* 13: 'But Daedalus made his way safely to Camicus in Sicily.'

> After preparing a notable naval force he sailed forth from Crete and landed at a place in the territory of Acragas which was called after him Minoa. Here he disembarked his troops and sending messengers to King Cocalus he demanded Daedalus of him for punishment.' (Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library* 4.79)

Apollodorus's *Library* provides us with a more detailed description of the ingenious way in which Minos found out where Daedalus was hiding (in all probability attested by Sophocles's *Kamikioi* as well).[7]

> 'And Minos pursued Daedalus, and in every country that he searched he carried a spiral shell and promised to give a great reward to him who should pass a thread through the shell, believing that by that means he should discover Daedalus. And having come to Camicus in Sicily, to the court of Cocalus, with whom Daedalus was concealed, he showed the spiral shell. Cocalus took it, and promised to thread it, and gave it to Daedalus; and Daedalus fastened a thread to an ant, and, having bored a hole in the spiral shell, allowed the ant to pass through it. But when Minos found the thread passed through the shell, he perceived that Daedalus was with Cocalus, and at once demanded his surrender.' (Apollodorus, *Epitome* 15)

(d) Minos's violent death

There followed what Herodotus calls Minos's 'violent death' (βίαιος θάνατος),[8] which took place after the Cretan king had entered the palace of Cocalus as a guest, thus under the unbreakable protection granted by the sacred right of hospitality.

> 'But Cocalus invited Minos to a conference, and after promising to meet all his demands he brought him to his home as his guest. And when Minos was bathing Cocalus kept him too long in the hot water and thus slew him; the body he gave back to the Cretans, explaining his death on the ground that he had slipped in the bath and by falling into the hot water had met his end.' (Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library* 4.79)

According to another tradition attested by Apollodorus's *Library* and Pausanias's *Description of Greece* (as well as by Callimachus's *Aetia*),[9] Minos was actually killed by Cocalus's daughters, who had grown fond of Daedalus out of admiration for his art.

> 'Cocalus promised to surrender him, and made an entertainment for Minos; but after his bath Minos was undone by the daughters of Cocalus; some say, however, that he died through being drenched with boiling water.' (Apollodorus, *Epitome* 15)

> 'He was so much admired by the daughters of Cocalus for his artistic skill that to please him these women actually plotted against Minos to put him to death.' (Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 7.4.6)

7 Cf. F 324 Radt.

8 Cf. Herodotus, *Histories* 7.170: 'For Minos (it is said), having gone to Sicania, which is now called Sicily, in search for Daedalus, there perished by a violent death.'

9 Cf. F 43 Pfeiffer.

(e) The underground tomb of Minos

At this point, Diodorus's narrative attests a detail which is not found anywhere else: the construction by the hands of Minos's soldiers of a monumental underground tomb for the king surmounted by a sanctuary of Aphrodite.

> 'Thereupon the comrades of Minos buried the body of the king with magnificent ceremonies, and constructing a tomb of two storeys, in the part of it which was hidden underground they placed the bones, and in that which lay open to gaze they made a shrine of Aphrodite. Here Minos received honours over many generations, the inhabitants of the region offering sacrifices there in the belief that the shrine was Aphrodite's; but in more recent times, after the city of the Acragantini had been founded and it became known that the bones had been placed there, it came to pass that the tomb was dismantled and the bones were given back to the Cretans, this being done when Theron was lord over the people of Acragas.' (Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library* 4.79)

(f) The settlement of Cretan soldiers in Sicily

Finally, the narrative ends with the 'Cretans of Sicily' (οἱ κατὰ τὴν Σικελίαν Κρῆτες) settling down in the island, founding two towns, Minoa and Engyum.

> 'However, the Cretans of Sicily, after the death of Minos, fell into factious strife, since they had no ruler, and, since their ships had been burned by the Sicani serving under Cocalus, they gave up any hope they had had of returning to their native land; and deciding to make their home in Sicily, a part of them established on that island a city to which they gave the name Minoa after their king, and others, after wandering about through the interior of the island, seized a place which was naturally strong and founded a city to which they gave the name Engyum after the spring which flowed forth within the city.' (Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library* 4.79)

The narrative's ending points to its origin as a Greek colonial myth aimed at providing a 'precedent of presence'[10] to the 'Rhodian-Cretan colonial enterprise in a Si[c]anian territory'.[11] It may be noted, however, that Herodotus and Strabo have the Cretans rather leave Sicily by sea and found various towns in Southern Italy.[12]

After Classical Antiquity, the episode of Minos's death in Sicily seems to have fallen into oblivion, being apparently not particularly beloved by later authors. Even though characters from Minos's saga occur in medieval literature,[13] the myths surrounding the Cretan king were largely ignored by Winckelmann and the Neoclassical movement,[14] and it was only after Arthur Evans's discovery of the so-called 'Palace of Minos' in Knossos in 1900 that interest in these stories

10 Malkin (1994: 47).
11 Caldesi Valeri (2009: 128).
12 Cf. also Herodotus, *Histories* 7.170; Strabo, *Geography* 6.2.
13 Cf. e.g. Minos's and the Minotaur's portrayals in Dante's *Inferno*, 5.4–24 and 12.1–27 respectively.
14 Cf. Ziolkowski (2008: 118).

arose.[15] The Sicilian episode of Minos's saga thus re-surfaces during the 20th century in novels such as Ernst Schnabel's *Ich und die Könige* (1958) and Michael Ayrton's *The Maze Maker* (1967), as well as in poems like *Daedalus in Sicily* by Nobel laureate Joseph Brodsky (1993).[16]

In an attempt to relocate Minos and his kingdom from the realm of myth to that of history (prompting the suggestion that the scholar 'had created, not discovered, the Minoans'),[17] Evans even went so far as claiming that the palatial complex of Knossos had been 'executed for Minos by the craftsman Daedalus'.[18] Evans's activity of 'historicization' of Minos's kingdom was apparently successful, given that its influence may still be observed in contemporary Sicily, where the interpretation of Minos and his 'mythical entourage' as historical personalities was essential in the development of the identification of the Gurfa Caves of Alia as the 'Tomb of Minos', as we shall see in the following section.

§3. North-African settlers, Teutonic knights, and Ancient Greek heroes: the Caves.

The Gurfa Caves are an abandoned artificial cave complex, consisting of several spaces cut into a hill of sandstone (fig. 11.1 and fig. 11.2).

The greatest of these chambers, mostly referred to as the 'Bell-shaped Chamber' (Italian *vano campaniforme*) or as the 'Tholos Chamber' (fig. 11.3), is a highly remarkable artefact both for its noteworthy dimensions (12,50m in diameter and more than 16m in height) and for its 'oculus', a circular opening in the center of the roof, which scarcely lets light in from above, creating a suggestive atmosphere which is often described as 'mystic' or 'spiritual' by visitors.

The toponym *Gurfa* is first attested in an official document from the Middle Ages, where it occurs as the name of a farmstead, part of a donation to the Church of San Giovanni dei Lebbrosi by King of Sicily Roger II of Hauteville (first half of the 12th century). The farmstead, however, had probably already been established during Islamic rule (10th–11th centuries), as its name must clearly be traced back to Arabic *ghurfa*, 'room, chamber, compartment', a term which is still used today in some North-African countries to refer to a type of structure employed for the storage of grain.[19] In 1219, King Roger's grandson, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, entrusted the Gurfa farmstead to the Teutonic Knights; as the decline of the German dynasty of Hohenstaufen (following the death of Frederick II in 1250) also led to the decline of the

15 Cf. Ziolkowski (2008: 9–11).
16 Cf. Ziolkowski (2008: 131–134), Schnabel (1958), Ayrton (1967), Brodsky (2000: 144).
17 MacGillivray (2000: 353).
18 Evans, apud Ziolkowski (2008: 12).
19 On the parallels between the Gurfa Caves and these North-African structures, cf. Pellitteri (1997).

Teutonic Order's power in Sicily, however, the Gurfa Caves came into the possession of various, less known owners.[20] In 1943, the upper half of the great 'Tholos Chamber' was still being used by farmers for the storage of grain, whereas the lower levels and the smaller chambers on the side housed sheep and other domestic animals, a situation which apparently went on until the late 70s.[21]

In a sense, the current interest of the wider public in the Gurfa Caves may be traced back to a topic which has never been more relevant than today, namely environmentalism, or, more specifically, landscape conservation and promotion. After serving as a farmstead for centuries, the Gurfa complex came into the possession of Filippo Chimento (also known as *Scarpuni*, 'Big Shoe') and of his family, who were, however, fated to be the Caves' last private owners, as between the 70s and the 80s the town authorities of Alia began a process of expropriation of the complex, which ultimately led to the institution of a 'Suburban Park of the Gurfa Caves' (*Parco suburbano Grotte della Gurfa*) in 1999. Roughly at the same time, the year 1981 marked the organization of the first socalled 'Long Walk' (*Marcialonga*) or 'Way of the Bread' (*Via del Pane*), a secular, joyful procession in which the people of Alia departed from the town center and walked all the way to the Caves (younger participants apparently took part in a cross country race), where they spent the day listening to live music shows, tasting local food products, and even attending a celebration of Mass; in the evening, the participants would walk back to Alia carrying torches. The 'Long Walk' was organized by a prominent local non-profit association (the *Associazione Sportiva Alia*) with the aid of the local authorities and of several volunteers; a number of photos (kept at the association's offices) and videos (available on YouTube) document this practice, which went on until the first half of the 90s.[22] Both these initiatives of members of Alia's community, namely the expropriation of the Caves and their use as the ultimate goal of the 'Long Walk', can hardly be kept apart from the significant rise in concern about environmental and landscape-related issues of the Italian public opinion during the 1980s,[23] which saw, among other things, the foundation of major environmentalist NGOs like *Legambiente* (1980, as *Lega per l'Ambien-*

20 On the Gurfa farmstead during the Middle Ages, cf. the literature in Brunazzi et al (2017: 7 fn. 16).

21 Witnesses of this phase include, among others, Giovanni Mannino, who was a refugee in Alia during the 1940s (Mannino [2016: 3, 8, 14]), as well as Francesco Todaro (interview), who first visited the Caves in the 70s as a child.

22 Cf., inter alia, the series of videos 'La Marcialonga - La Via del Pane - 1988 Alia (Pa)' on YouTube: see, for instance, part 1 for the start of the 'Long Walk', including youths running cross country (https://youtu.be/uMDWpQEZkwI; last accessed 16 Mar. 2024), and part 5/5 for live music shows and tastings of local food (https://youtu.be/j-ZEY2tKCIU; last accessed 16 Mar. 2024).

23 Cf. e.g. Biorcio and Lodi (1988), who show how approximately 25% and 60% of environmental activists in Italy got involved after the years 1975 and 1980, respectively.

te), as well as the institution of Italy's Ministry of the Environment (1981, as *Ministero dell'Ambiente*).[24] Sicilian activists played a central role in this phenomenon: for instance, on 18 May 1980, two thousand protesters gathered for the so-called 'Walk of the Zingaro' (*Marcia dello Zingaro*) organised by *Legambiente* and other NGOs, which successfully prevented the construction of a road in the Province of Trapani and led to the establishment of the Zingaro Natural Reserve and of various further natural parks by the Sicilian regional government a year later, in 1981.[25] During Alia's 'Long Walk' to the Gurfa Caves, the organizers would indeed encourage the participants to 'celebrate the encounter with nature and with our culture' and they would speak explicitly about 'the hope that this world may change and become more respectful towards nature, which is essential to human life'; at least once, in 1988, a member of the WWF was even invited to address the crowd at the Gurfa Caves.[26]

All these details thus seem to support a connection between, on the one hand, the rise of environmentalism in Italy and Sicily in the 80s and, on the other hand, the expropriation and re-discovery of this monument by Alia's community, which ultimately led to its 'mythical' intepretation as the Tomb of Minos. In fact, the town authorities soon funded restoration activities of the Gurfa Caves and assigned them to an architect from Palermo, Silvana Braida Santamaura, who, in a 1984 publication, first suggested a comparison with the Neolithic Ħal Saflieni Hypogeum in Malta and with the Bronze Age tholos tombs of Mycenae;[27] already in 1981, the architect had attempted to involve a prominent scholar in the field of Maltese prehistoric archaeology, John Davies Evans, in her research.[28] It is probably due to Braida Santamaura's activity that, in the 90s, the town's authorities, led by then mayor Gaetano 'Tanino' D'Andrea, began to organise a series of conferences on the historical and archaeological interpretation of the Gurfa Caves. The first conference took place in 1995 and featured, among others, a study by Father Benedetto Rocco, who suggested the identification of a Phoenician inscription inside the Caves and attempted to further explore the supposed similarities with the 'Treasury of Atreus', arguably the most famous Mycenaean tholos tomb (fig. 11.4). In that same year, the Gurfa complex was also (albeit briefly) featured in the film 'The Star Maker' (*L'uomo delle stelle*) by Sicilian Academy Award-winning director Giuseppe Tornatore. The second conference, organized by Antonino Pillitteri in 1997, included a photo exhibition and focused on the parallels with North-African *ghurfa* structures (on which see above).

24 See the "Legge 8 luglio 1986, n. 349".
25 See the "Legge Regionale 6 maggio 1981, n. 98".
26 See the YouTube videos quoted above, fn. 22.
27 Cf. Braida Santamaura (1984: esp. pp. 40–41).
28 Cf. Montagna (2005: 145–151).

Fig. 11.1: External view of the Gurfa Caves (photograph: Alessandro Belgiojoso, 2009; printed with permission by the creator)

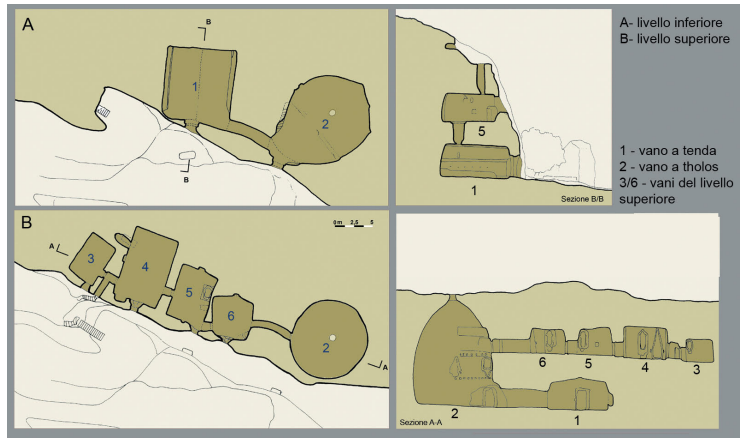

Fig. 11.2: Planimetry of the Caves (from Brunazzi et al. [2017: 13])

Fig. 11.3: The ‘Bell-shaped Chamber’ or ‘Tholos Chamber’ (photograph: Alessandro Belgiojoso, 2009; printed with permission by the creator)

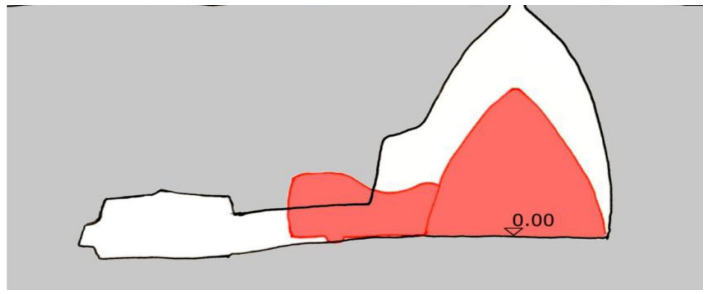

Fig. 11.4: Rocco’s comparison between the Gurfa Caves and the Treasury of Atreus (the latter in red; from Mannino [2016: 9])

Braida Santamaura and Rocco's comparison of the Gurfa Caves with architectures from the Aegean Sea and, particularly, with the Treasury of Atreus were influential in the development of the theories of architect and art historian Carmelo Montagna, who organized a third conference in 2004 with the main title 'In the footprints of Minos' (*Sulle Tracce di Minosse*). In the conference's proceedings, as well as in various later talks and publications, Montagna has been advocating for an interpretation of the Gurfa Caves as the 'Tomb of Minos' or the 'Treasury of Minos', a megalithic artefact to be dated to the first half of the 2nd millennium BCE. Presuppositions of his analysis, which aims to identify precise matches between features of the Caves and elements of the myth of Minos's death, are the belief that myth must always be based on some kind of truth (either historical or not) and the observation that Ancient Greek authors Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus did not express any doubts about the historicity of the narrative about Minos's death. Some of the main correspondences according to Montagna's account may be summarized as follows:[29]

(1) The Gurfa Caves are located in the valley of the Platani river in the western half of Sicily, which, according to ancient sources, was inhabited by the indigenous Sicans before the Greek colonisation, matching elements (c–d) of the myth (cf. *supra*, section §2), i. e. Minos's expedition to the Sican kingdom in search for Daedalus and his death in their territory.

(2) The remarkable dimensions and shape of the 'Tholos Chamber' allow for the assumption that it had once been the burial site of a high-ranking chief with an Aegean cultural milieu, matching element (e) of the myth, i.e. the magnificent burial of Minos, king of Crete, in a monumental building comprising an underground chamber.

(3) The mastery of construction techniques required for the design and realisation of the Gurfa complex, together with its Aegean features, would fit the identification of the author as a 'Daedalic' architect, i.e. the member of a school of architects which may have been mythically traced back to Daedalus, matching the element (b) of the myth, namely Daedalus's residence and work among the Sicans.

In Montagna's view, the Gurfa complex may thus be traced back to a flourishing period in the history of Minoan civilization, before the Thera eruption (17th–16th century BCE), and thus several centuries earlier than the construction of the Treasury of Atreus in Mycenae (14th–13th century BCE); any remains of the temple of Aphrodite associated with the tomb of Minos, as well as any inscriptions bearing the name of Minos, would have been destroyed when the tomb was dismantled during the reign of Theron of Acragas, as told by Diodorus (see above §2 [e]).

29 Cf., e.g., Montagna (2005: 90–93, passim), Montagna (2009).

As we shall see in the next section, this reconstruction was soon adopted and spread by means of various media by the local authorities of Alia, as well as by individuals and non-profit associations; Montagna’s hopes that his theories would inspire specialists in the prehistory and protohistory of Sicily to further investigate the Gurfa Caves and the surrounding areas from an archaeological perspective, however, were not met warmly. In 2009, during a conference on the Caves organised by Massimo Cultraro and Francesca Spatafora at the National Research Council (*Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche*) in Palermo (in conjunction with the exhibition treated below, §4 [1]), specialists and archaeologists of the local Superintendency rejected the interpretations of Montagna (who was among the speakers as well) and rather spoke in support of an origin of the ‘Tholos Chamber’ during the Early Middle Ages as a pit for the storage of grain, which would have originally been much smaller, only reaching its present-day dimensions after centuries of continuous use and modifications; the upper lateral chambers may have been excavated much later, when the site was under the control of the Teutonic Knights (13th century, see above), whereas the lower levels may have not even been there before the second half of the 19th century (as they are not mentioned by a visitor in 1873). The analysis of the Gurfa ‘Tholos’ as a grain pit had already been advanced by Henri Bresc in 1979 and has been extensively discussed in more recent publications by Giovanni Mannino, Valeria Brunazzi, Monica Chiovaro, and Stefano Vassallo.[30]

To sum up briefly, after centuries in which the Gurfa complex had been exploited by North-African settlers, by the Teutonic Knights, and by, of course, Sicilian farmers and shepherds, the expropriation and re-discovery of the Caves by the Aliese community (in conjunction with the rise of environmentalist concerns in Italy and Sicily) during the 80s led to the gradual development of an ‘Aegean Theory’ of the origin of the complex, which culminated in their interpretation as the ‘Tomb of Minos’, first advanced by Carmelo Montagna and later rejected by Palermo’s Superintendency. Our summary deals, of course, only with a selection of the publications and initiatives on the Gurfa complex: a thorough account of the scholarship on the Caves and of the on-going debate on their origin would clearly exceed the scope of this contribution.

§4. King Minos is dead, long live King Minos: promotion of the ‘Gurfa Myth’ in Alia.

Even though it was soon rejected by the Superintendency’s specialists, the idea that the Gurfa Caves should be identified as the ‘Tomb of Minos’ proved to be particularly appealing to (at least some) members of Alia’s community, as well as to the town’s authorities, who established a particularly fruitful collaboration with

30 Cf., e.g., Mannino (2016); Brunazzi et al. (2017).

Montagna during the administration of former mayor Francesco Todaro, between 2007 and 2017. This period saw the birth of various Aliese associations, such as *Rabat*, *La Fucina*, and the local branch of regional association *BCSicilia* (actually established in January 2018), which have engaged in the promotion of not only Alia's cultural heritage in general, but also of the Caves, more or less explicitly presented as the 'Tomb of Minos'. In August 2009, a group with the specific aim of promoting the Gurfa complex was formed by 17 volunteers, led by Gaetana 'Tania' Di Marco, who in 2019 became head of the town's Department of Touristic Promotion within mayor Felice Guglielmo's administration. The group's activities, which included the supervision of guided tours, the sale of tickets (3€ at full price, plus various reductions), as well as standard maintenance works, stopped in 2013, leaving the complex almost 'undefended'; by 2015, however, one of the volunteers, Gioacchino Ganci, had become the unofficial caretaker of the Caves, spending most of his time there on a daily basis and acting as a guide for the tourists who wanted to visit the area, access to which had become free of charge.

This synergy between father of the 'Gurfa Myth' Montagna, the town administration, and local associations and volunteers has resulted in the manifold promotion of Alia and the Gurfa Caves as the location of the myth of Minos's death and in the organisation of a number of related activities. The following is a selection of notable events, which may serve as examples of this intermedial appropriation of the myth:

(1) Starting on 6 July 2009, in conjunction with the opening of the international documentary film festival 'Sole Luna', the Modern Art Gallery Sant'Anna in Palermo hosted a 2-month exhibition (until the first week of September) with the title 'Terra e luce. Dalla Gurfa al Roden Crater di James Turrell / Land and Light. From Gurfa Caves to James Turrell's Roden Crater', in which photographs and small-scale models of American land artist Turrell's ongoing project (an installation located in Arizona's Painted Desert) were displayed in juxtaposition with a photographic project on the Gurfa complex by Italian photographer Alessandro Belgiojoso (see, e.g., fig. 11.1 and fig. 11.3), a comparison which was largely based on Montagna's theories on the function of the Caves and on their origin as the work of a protohistoric 'Daedalic' architect; a bilingual Italian-English exhibition catalogue was published in the same year, featuring texts on the Gurfa complex by, among others, Belgiojoso and Montagna.[31] The exhibition was later transformed into a permanent display at Alia's Museum of Photography, established for the occasion in 2010.

(2) In December 2009, the Caves were officially included as one of the locations of the myth of Daedalus and Minos within the section 'Locations of the heroes and of the heroic legends' (*Luoghi degli eroi e delle leggende eroiche*) of

31 Cf. Belgiojoso, De Rosa, et al. (2009).

the ‘Regional Charter of the Locations of the Identity and of the Memory’ (*Carta Regionale dei Luoghi dell’Identità e della Memoria*) issued by Sicily’s Regional Department of Cultural and Environmental Heritage and of Public Education;[32] the inclusion has been criticised by Palermo’s Superintendency functionary Giovanni Mannino.[33]

(3) In March 2015, after a public competition was held in 2014 within the (mostly EU-funded) project for the renewal of Alia’s Belvedere,[34] the town administration commissioned five panels on themes related to the Gurfa complex,

Fig. 11.5: A detail of Croce Taravella’s ‘Gurfa Myth’ mural (photograph: Luciano Schimmenti, 2016; printed with permission by the creator)

as well as to the four seasons, from Palermo-based artist Croce Taravella.[35] The mural, entitled ‘The Gurfa Myth at Alia’s Belvedere’ (*Il Mito della Gurfa al Belvedere di Alia*), was inaugurated by then mayor Todaro in an official ceremony held on 11 November 2016; a catalogue of photographs of the mural by Luciano Schimmenti (see, e.g., fig. 11.5), featuring texts by, among others, Todaro and Montagna, was published for the occasion.[36] As may be guessed already from its title and as stated by the author in various interviews, Taravella’s artwork has

32 See the ‘Decreto assessoriale n. 8410 del 03/12/2009’.
33 Mannino (2016: 2).
34 Project identification number (CUP): F92L10000230006; competition identification number (CIG): 5975348528.
35 See the ‘Determinazione n. 2 del 20-03-2015 del registro settoriale, n. 201 del registro generale’.
36 Cf. Schimmenti (2016).

been heavily influenced by his conversations with Montagna on the original function of the Gurfa complex as the 'Tomb of Minos' and a proto-historic sanctuary: the mural features depictions of rituals which, according to Montagna's interpretations, would have taken place inside the complex, such as a celebration of the spring equinox (cf. below, [6]) by a crowd gathered inside the 'Tholos Chamber' (fig. 11.5; note the 'oculus' in the center of the roof spreading light on the people below), or a ritual descent through a hole into a burial chamber which, according to Montagna, had to be performed by aspiring kings (matching descents of heroes into the Realm of the Dead attested within Greek mythology and beyond).[37]

According to then mayor Todaro, the renewal of Alia's Belvedere and, more specifically, the commission of an artwork on the 'Gurfa Myth' from a renowned contemporary artist were only a part, though an essential one, of a larger project aimed at making Alia a touristic destination by intercepting the flux of visitors to the 'Tomb of Minos': given that the Gurfa Caves are ca. 5 km from the town, it should not be taken for granted that tourists interested in the complex come to Alia as well. The intended function of Taravella's 'mythological' mural at Alia's Belvedere was thus to act as a thematic link between a visit to the Caves and a stop in town, where tourists would have ideally been invited to taste local food and wine products as well, making sure that the local shops and restaurants benefit from the promotion of the Gurfa complex as a touristic attraction. The prospected increase of visitors to Alia, however, has not met expectations, probably due to the difficult situation of the roads leading to Alia and the Gurfa complex (see below §5); furthermore, Todaro has complained about the (in his opinion) insufficient efforts that have been later made to promote and explain the artwork both to tourists and to the local community.

(4) On the night of 9 August 2017, an experimental play (with no dialogues) was performed at the Gurfa complex by members of the association *Generazione Sicilia*, bearing the same title as Montagna's 2004 publication, namely 'In the footprints of Minos' (*Sulle Tracce di Minosse*). Several Aliese citizens took part in the performance, not only as actors, but also in directing and in the preparation of the scenography; the action took place both inside the chambers and in front of the entrance of the Caves. Attendance by the community was high and the event was apparently well appreciated by the public.[38] A video of the play is available on YouTube,[39] attesting, on the one hand, the authors' faithful adoption of Mon-

37 See e.g. the video interview with Taravella published online by Palermo's edition of national newspaper *La Repubblica* on 1 Dec. 2015 ('Alia, ultimato il murales di Croce Taravella che racconta i miti della Gurfa'; https://video.repubblica.it/edizione/palermo/alia-ultimato-il-murales-di-croce-taravella-che-racconta-i-miti-della-gurfa/220461/219660; last accessed 16 Mar. 2024).

38 According to Gioacchino Ganci (interview).

39 See 'Alia Grotte della Gulfa. Sulle tracce di Minosse' (https://youtu.be/ewOHZFbnoDQ; last accessed 16 Mar. 2024).

tagna’s mythological interpretation of the Gurfa complex (as already clear from the title), and, on the other hand, their fairly accurate enactment of the myth of Minos’s death in Sicily as told by Diodorus Siculus, matching most of the elements identified above (§2): for instance, it may be noted that among the elements (a–e) of the myth which were dramatized in the play, only (b–e) have a role in Montagna’s theories, whereas element (a), namely Daedalus’s escape from Crete, does not; it must have thus been included in an effort to provide the audience with a more complete picture of the myth, as well as with an immediate link to a more famous myth (Daedalus and his son Icarus’s flight with wings of wax).

The enactment of the myth was one in a series of summer entertainment events in 2017, referred to as ‘Summer of Alia’ (*Estate Aliese*); according to former mayor Todaro, however, the play grew out of a project to create a Minos-themed production with larger funds (sufficient to, e.g., hire a nationally well-known director) to be performed at the Gurfa complex (possibly on a detachable stage, that would have been disassembled after the event). The aim would have been to promote the Caves as a location for the performance of Greek drama after the model of other archaeological sites such as the ancient theaters of Segesta (in the former Province of Trapani) and Siracusa. These sites are indeed very successfully employed for such events, but they are also relatively harder to reach for tourists visiting the Northern Sicilian coast. These may have thus been, in Todaro’s view, intercepted by Alia and the ‘Gurfa theater’, creating (at least some) job opportunities for the Aliese community; at a later time, the Minos-themed play may have also been performed in local schools as part of the town’s cultural heritage. This larger project was, however, never actually carried out, and the relatively small 2017 event may possibly remain the only enactment of the myth of Minos’s death at Alia, and perhaps even world-wide, given that this less-known myth is not actually related in any major Ancient Greek poetic work, and thus unlikely to be performed in a contemporary setting.

(5) From March to June 2017, sixty schoolchildren from Alia, aged 5 to 12, took part in a series of educational workshops entitled ‘The shape of the landscape’ (*La forma del paesaggio*), organised with the sponsorship of the town administration by Elisa Chimento and Calogera Gattuso, president and vice-president of Aliese association *Rabat*, respectively. The workshops took place at Alia’s Museum of Photography (see above, [1]) on Thursdays and Fridays, from 3 pm to 7 pm, totaling twenty-five meetings and a hundred hours; only fifteen meetings had originally been planned, but ten additional ones were organised due to high participation. According to Chimento, the general aim of the initiative was to increase the kids’ level of awareness concerning the value of Alia’s cultural and environmental heritage, as some, e.g., had never heard about the Gurfa complex before. During the first two meetings, the young participants were instructed at

length about Minos's mythical saga, using Diodorus Siculus (the only author who attests the 'Tomb of Minos' myth) as a primary source; after hearing for the first time about Minos, Ariadne, Theseus, the Minotaur, the Labyrinth, as well as Daedalus and Icarus, the kids were invited to make drawings inspired by episodes of the saga (fig. 11.6), e.g. Ariadne's rescuing of Theseus from the Labyrinth by means of the famous thread (fig. 11.6, upper left), Daedalus's and Icarus's escape by means of wings made of wax from the Labyrinth (fig. 11.6, upper right), and Minos's death in boiling water after being invited to a bath by Cocalus's daughters (fig. 11.6, lower left). During the second two meetings, the children visited the Gurfa complex, accompanied by the organisers, by unofficial Gurfa caretaker Gioacchino Ganci, and by photographer Giuseppe Centanni; after being invited to narrate what they could still recall of the Minos myth (impressively much, according to Chimento), they were told about the Caves' mythical associations (as per Montagna's theories); the kids were later asked to make drawings inspired by their visit, which attest how closely the young artists have come to associate an extremely ancient myth with a place they have been able to experience first-hand (see, e.g., a smiling King Minos at the Gurfa complex in fig. 11.6, lower right). A small exhibition was organised at the end of the series of workshops, in which the

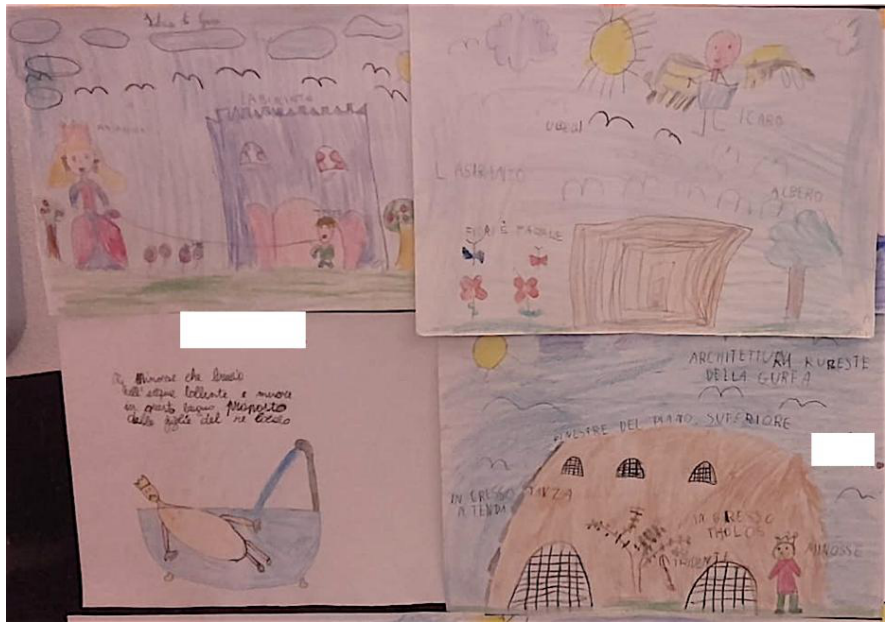

Fig. 11.6: Some drawings of the Minos saga by Aliese kids who took part in the 2017 workshops 'The shape of the landscape' (names have been deleted; pictures printed with permission by *Rabat*)

drawings were displayed together with small-scale clay models of the ‘Tholos Chamber’ which had been made by the kids during later meetings.

(6) Further (usually free of charge) ‘mythological’ activites have been organised with regularity at the Gurfa complex: some of them implicitly dealt with the Caves’ interpretation as ‘Tomb of Minos’, whereas others were explicitly linked to it.

To the former type may be ascribed, e.g., regular group observations of the spring equinox inside the Gurfa ‘Tholos Chamber’: for instance, on 23 March 2019, after a guided tour of the Caves by Montagna, participants were to witness a specific lighting phenomenon occurring at noon, before being invited to taste local food products around 13; then mayor Felice Guglielmo attended the event as well.

As for the activities explicitly associated with the myth, one may mention, e.g., a public reading of (Pseudo-) Plato’s dialogue *Minos*, which was organised on the evening of 22 June 2019 at the Caves by the associations *BCSicilia* and *Paideia* with the support of the local administrations of Alia and of nearby town Valledolmo.

Before passing on to our conclusion, we may briefly note that the way in which the myth of the adventures of Daedalus and Minos in Sicily has been re-interpreted and newly constructed in Alia is impressively manifold: ranging from more formal photograph exhibitions and public artworks to amateur plays and educational workshops with children, the public outreach of the Gurfa Myth has been characterised by creativity and diversification, to a degree which rarely finds matches in the activities of scholars working in more academic environments.

§5. Where Greek heroes go to die (and be reborn): conclusions.

Let us thus come back to the last of our research questions, namely: Why does a small, but dynamic troop of present-day Sicilians believe that an Ancient Greek myth may help provide a better future to Alia’s children? Our sketch of the history of the Gurfa Caves’ re-discovery by the Aliese community and by various scholars (§3), as well as of their intermedial promotion as the ‘Tomb of Minos’ (§4), allows us to identify three main thematic areas.

(1) Economy, or, more specifically, tourism: already in 1995 – well before the development of the Minos theory (cf. §3) – then mayor Tanino D’Andrea spoke of a long-term project of development of a Gurfa-centered touristic economy for Alia, ‘grounded on the re-discovery, promotion and fruition of cultural heritage, as well as on culture seen as an economic resource’;[40] similar views were often voiced by the Gurfa Myth’s enthusiasts. Former mayor Francesco Todaro repeatedly pointed to the need for the economic growth and work opportunities which

40 Cf. Cumbo et al. (1995: 6).

an increase of tourism may provide as the main reason for his administration's promotion of the Minos theory (see above §4, [3] and [4]); even though Todaro expressed his willingness to accept any convincing theory on the origin of the Gurfa complex, he also stated his belief that, 'as this one [i. e., the mythological interpretation, *R. G.*] is very suggestive, it may intrigue and attract more people'. Father of the Minos-theory Carmelo Montagna argued that 'among all these rocks [i. e., that make up the landscape of Central Sicily, *R. G.*], one of them actually tells a story: let us invest in it', advancing a parallel with '2019 European Capital of Culture' Matera, a city in Basilicata (Southern Italy) known for the ancient cave dwellings which make up its historical center (referred to as the *Sassi*, 'Rocks'). Though committed to his theory, the scholar admitted that, even if his 'Daedalic' attribution of the Caves proved to be wrong, the designation 'Tomb of Minos' should be employed nevertheless for 'marketing purposes', in the same way as Heinrich Schliemann's clearly mythological designations of the tholos tomb of an unknown Mycenaean chief as the 'Treasury of Atreus' or the 'Tomb of Agamemnon' may still legitimately be used today for its suggestive power, without being regarded as historically inaccurate; a thematically even closer parallel may be Arthur Evans's mythological identification of the Palace of Knossos in Crete as the Minotaur's Labyrinth (see the end of section §2). The association with an ancient myth thus seems to be regarded by our interviewees as the best chance to promote the Gurfa complex (and thus Alia) as a touristic destination; in the words of unofficial caretaker (and leading authority on Gurfa tourism) Gioacchino Ganci (interview):

> '[…] if you reach a place, and you've been told it's just a grain pit, you look at it, you leave, and you never come back; if they tell you it's the tomb of Minos, […] then maybe it's not, but in that moment you get a different feeling, a different energy from the visit […], it makes you come back [later] […]'.

(2) Environmentalism, or, more specifically, landscape conservation and promotion: as argued above (cf. §3), the time of the expropriation and re-discovery of the Caves by the Aliese community closely matches the rise of concern about environmentalist issues of the Sicilian (and Italian in general) public opinion during the 80s, issues which are indeed explicitly mentioned, e.g., in videos of the 'Long Walk' from Alia to the Gurfa Caves. Ironically, however, the Gurfa complex itself may have actually suffered permanent damage from the 80s onwards as a consequence of its uncontrolled fruition, as lamented by Superintendency functionary Giovanni Mannino;[41] in any case, Alia's landscape has remained generally intact, as the pollution found in other areas of Italy has been prevented by the delay in the development of an industrial sector. The promotion of the 'Tomb of Minos' as one of the most remarkable landscape features of Alia's territory was

41 Cf. Mannino (2016: 4, 7, 27).

clearly essential in the organisation of, e.g., the series of educational workshops ‘The shape of the landscape’ (cf. above §4, [1] and [5]). The Minos myth thus seems to have been adopted by the Aliese community as a sort of ‘geomyth’ (a term coined by geologist Dorothy Vitaliano) in respect to the Gurfa Caves, i. e. as a narrative whose main function is to explain the origin of a certain unusual feature of the landscape: countless examples of such narratives are attested all over the world, ranging from Native American myths seeking to explain (by invoking the claws of a giant bear) the origin of a very steep hill in North America (‘Devil’s Tower’ in Wyoming)[42] to the Kenyan myth about the outstanding vegetation of ‘Ndega’s Grove’ (involving a tragic love story between two mythical characters);[43] an even more relevant parallel may actually be that with various Ancient Greek local traditions attempting to make sense of remarkable landscape features of Sicilian localities, such as those mentioned by Pindar in his so-called ‘Sicilian *Odes*’.[44] There can be no doubt that the Caves may be perceived as a strikingly unusual feature of Alia’s landscape: the wonder felt by anyone admiring for the first time the Gurfa complex and, particularly, the inner part of the ‘Tholos Chamber’ (as e.g. the young participants of the educational workshops, according to Chimento) was repeatedly mentioned by all interviewees and, for what it’s worth, even personally experienced by the author of this contribution. From this perspective, the official interpretation of the ‘Tholos Chamber’ as a medieval pit for the storage of grain has apparently been regarded as not satisfying by some, i. e. as an insufficient match to the awe caused by a visit to the Caves; this function seems instead to be better fulfilled by the Minos myth, perhaps paralleling the processes that gave rise to local myths in Antiquity and beyond.

(3) Local identity and cultural heritage: already in 1995, then mayor D’Andrea claimed that ‘our interest in the studies that we are inaugurating today [i. e., with the first conference on the Gurfa complex, *R. G.*] is thus no pure curiosity, no desire of erudition, but a fundamental life need, an anthropological interest’;[45] indeed, the Gurfa Myth seems to have served a function which transcends both the economic and the environmental levels: as admitted by Montagna himself, local pride was an essential factor for his theory’s success in Alia. The interpretation of the Caves as the ‘Tomb of Minos’ seems to have (at least partially) fulfilled the community’s need for a high-profile cultural identity, catapulting the town and its citizens from one of Italy’s most socio-economically depressed areas

42 Cf. Vitaliano (2007: 1–2). In Vitaliano’s terminology, ‘geomyth’ can also refer to myths narrating geological events which have actually happened (such as historically ascertained volcanic eruptions or earthquakes).

43 Cf. Chesaina (1997: 60–62).

44 Cf. Lewis (2019: passim).

45 Cf. Cumbo et al. (1995: 6).

directly into the millennia-old stage of a mythical adventure, an ancestral kingdom where ingenious architects arrive by flying and build architectural wonders, and where powerful kings struggle for prestige and kill each other by means of cunning tricks. The Gurfa Myth enthusiasts have transformed the territory of Alia from an area which had apparently been ignored by Greek colonists during Antiquity, into the first place of encounter between the indigenous Sicans, here understood as the most ancient (Central) Sicilians and thus ideal ancestors of the Aliese community, and the Minoans, one of the most advanced civilisations of the ancient Mediterranean, here also serving as ideal ancestors of the fathers of European civilisation *par excellence*, the Greeks. Furthermore, rather than being regarded as 'uncivilised savages', the indigenous people of Central Sicily (and proxies of the Aliese) are here assigned both advanced technological achievements (see element [b] of the myth, i. e. Daedalus's residence and work among the Sicans) and victory against the most powerful sea-king of the time (element [d], i. e. Minos's death), even indirectly causing the arrival of the first 'Greeks' in Sicily (element [f], i. e. the settlement of Cretan soldiers in the island). In Montagna's words, the Tomb of Minos at the Gurfa Caves 'was already archaeology' by the time the first Greek colonies were founded on the coast of Sicily: rather than a depressed area which has been struggling to reach the development levels of the coast, the territory of Alia is thus constructed as the now-ruined heart of a once-rich kingdom, a sort of Sicilian Atlantis which is only waiting to be discovered again.

For reasons related to Alia's economic, environmental, and socio-political situation, some members of its community have thus embraced the mythological interpretation of the Gurfa Caves, hoping that it may help the area reach a new resurgence; at the moment of writing, however, the development promised by the myth has yet to come. One of the major issues faced by Alia and the Gurfa complex is the very poor state of local roads, the importance of which has been stressed by former mayors Guglielmo and Todaro, as well as by Minos-theorist Montagna (interviews). Another major issue which has often been mentioned by the Gurfa Myth's enthusiasts is a perceived indifference of the Superintendency towards the Caves (probably due to the non-academic status of the 'Tomb of Minos' theory), which has, in their opinion, hindered their promotion, leaving volunteers and local associations alone; at any rate, it is desirable that future town administrations improve the collaboration with the Superintendency in the research and promotion of the Gurfa complex.

As is often the case within mythological narratives, the (supposed) location of Minos's death has also come to be the place where the Cretan king has been brought back to life, together with Daedalus, Cocalus, Ariadne, and the other characters of his saga, resuscitated by the efforts of a group of Sicilians who still

believe in the power of myth; whether King Minos will reward Alia and its citizens with renewed prosperity, however, is a question which must remain open.

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