

ITALY

Parva Grecia



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p a r a l l e l o z e r o



A group of hikers rest in a clearing overlooking the Amendolea valley.

- ▶ Almost thirty centuries after the first settlements colonised Magna Graecia, the remnants of the culture that transformed the south of Italy into the fulcrum of the Mediterranean still survive
- ▶ Grecanico is a language that has traversed three thousand years of history and continues to live in the voices of those few dozen people in the southern region of Calabria who still use it each day
- ▶ A river, the ancient Halex Flu, today called the Amendolea, was the gateway for the colonisation, which headed upstream and inland. Along its banks there are still some visible signs of that golden age
- ▶ Today the area is suffering the consequences of a constant depopulation. Nevertheless, some of its inhabitants resist tenaciously and fight to preserve their unique heritage
- ▶ The territory of the ancient Halex Flu, with its wild and barren nature and its historical relics, has become an attraction for tourists, who each year are growing in number



A country road in Amendolea.



Bruno, a shepherd and resident of the village of Gallicianò (part of the council of Condofuri), on the Vespa that he uses to travel the paths of the valley to check on his grazing animals.



Gallicianò, houses in Piazza Alimos. In the foreground is "la pietra del corvo" (the crow's stone).



The final stretch of the fiumara Amendolea as it reaches the Ionian Sea.



The Orthodox Church in Gallicianò, dedicated to the Greek Madonna. Built by modifying a stone house in the upper part of the village, it opened for worship in 1999. The lectern holds some prayers written by the congregation for their dear ones.

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Little Greece, or rather the remnants of Magna Graecia, or Greater Greece, that great civilisation of migrants and colonies that, from the 8th century BC, brought commerce, art and culture to the south of Italy, enriching it in unthinkable ways and making it the genuine centre of what the Romans later called Mare Nostrum, the Mediterranean.

These remnants have resisted tenaciously: one of the most tangible is grecanico, an intriguing language that has survived for millennia, resisting the barbs of progress, the most recent of which being the fascist era, when the government attempted to eradicate it by prohibiting its use. A language, which the UNESCO Red Book classifies as being among those at risk, that is almost magical, that survives through the few dozens of people that still use it in their everyday conversations.

A throbbing artery of Magna Graecia was Halex Flu (the ancient name of the Amendolea river), which was navigable in its lower stretches and thus played a strategic role in the Greek colonisation of the entire valley. The backbone of the grecanica area, where Calabrian Greek is still spoken, the river winds extends for 38km. Those who travel from its source to its estuary find numerous testimonies of the transformation of the territory and its later abandonment. The life and identity of its people, however, has not stopped: there are still those who actively choose to cherish the heritage of their homeland and choose to talk about it.

People like Rosy, a young woman who is head of the Gallicianò Grecophone Study Centre Cultural Association, who passionately defends the linguistic and historical roots of the small village, holding grecanico courses for children and adults together with Domenico, the architect and custodian of the little orthodox church in the village. Like Raffaele, who in five years, with the help of many donors, has created the Gallicianò ethnographic museum. Or like Francesco, who with the tours organised by his archaeological group, accompanies tourists along the Amendolea paths. Each year an increasing number of tourists are attracted by the barren charm of the landscape, the power of nature and the ancient sound of the language.



Antonella, student and volunteer in the National Civil Service, on a day dedicated to ecology and regenerating spaces to give back to the community.



A herd of goats climb the road that passes the Ruffo castle.



The Ruffo Castle in Amendolea. The castle dates back to the 11th century. The fiumara (dry rocky river bed of the Amendolea) can be seen in the background.



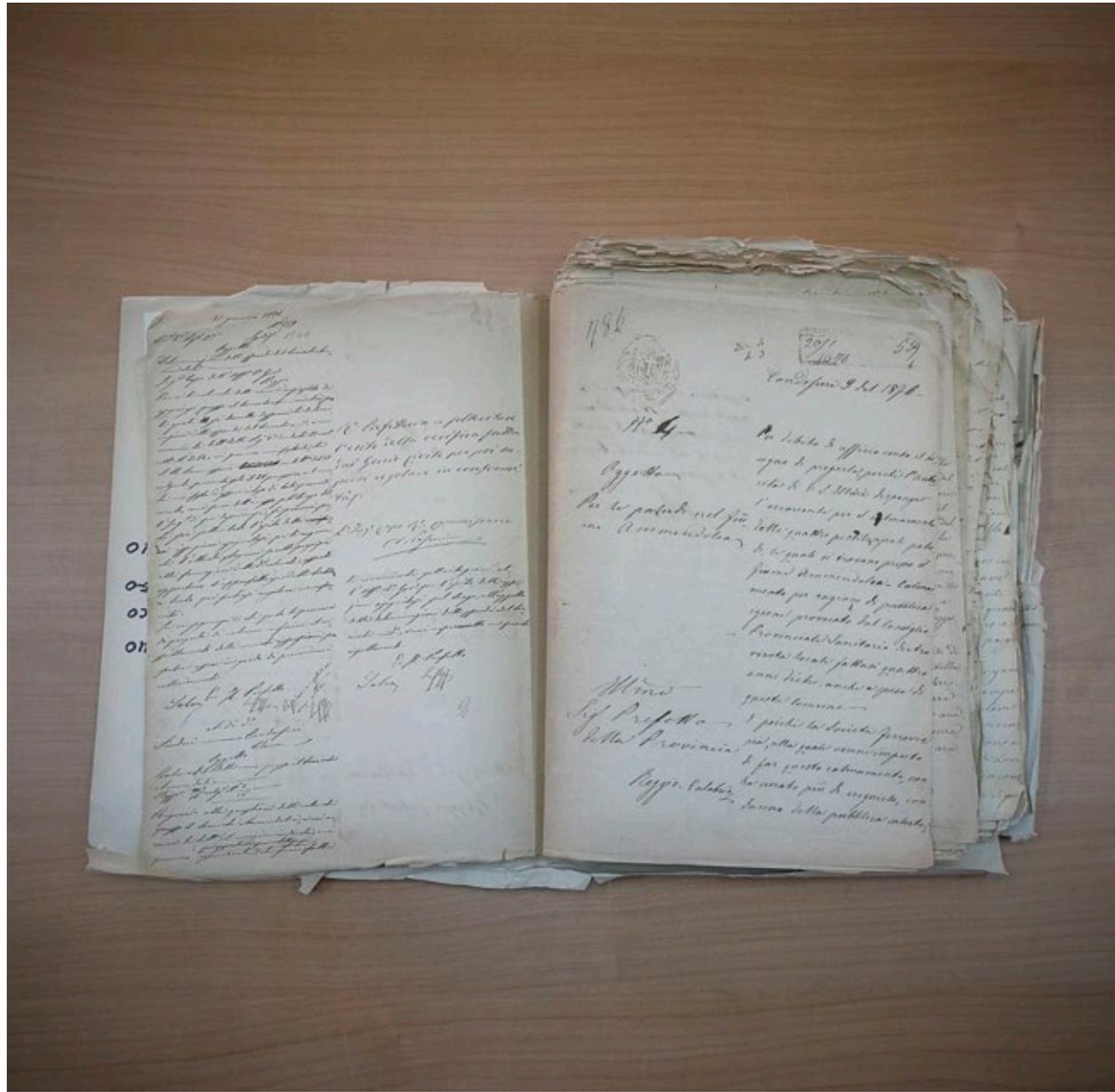
The Menta Dam, built on the river of the same name, one of the main tributaries of the Amendolea. Situated in the Aspromonte National Park, it was created in order to help supply water to the city of Reggio Calabria.



A view of the village of Gallicianò taken from the small amphitheatre overlooking the valley.



Nino, a builder. At weekends he runs a little trattoria in the village of Gallicianò. Having emigrated in 2003 to Germany, after 5 years he decided to return to his homeland.



Official document relating to the request to build river defences, dating back to 1876.



A man crosses the rocky river bed carrying a tree trunk on his shoulders.



Giuseppe and Pietro, artists from Reggio Calabria, chose the Amendolea castle as the first site for their project linked to the roots of the territory.



A Greek flag at the entrance to the village of Gallicianò.



Roghudi Vecchio. Today it is a ghost town declared completely off limits following the floods of October 1971 and January 1973. The population was moved to neighbouring villages.



A cow on the SP23 road that leads to the municipality of Roccaforte del Greco.



Gallicianò, the only village inhabited entirely by Greek speakers. It has a population of 40.



Mimmo ("the artist"), architect and custodian of the Orthodox Church in the village of Gallicianò. Together with Rosy he teaches courses in grecanico for children and adults.



Rocca del Lupo (The wolf's rock), a watershed between the fiumara Amendolea and the fiumara Condofuri.



The fiumara Amendolea descends the valley and flows into the Ionian sea.



Francesco, president of the "Amendolea Valley Archaeological Group", organises trekking excursions all over the grecanica area.



Flocks of sheep rest after walking up the valley.



An abandoned forest shelter between Gallicianò e Roccaforte del Greco.

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