Dusting off records and digging up data on past archaeologies in Sicily (1861-1915)

My aim is to reveal the range of previously unrecognised data on the history of archaeology during the post-Unification period (1861-1915) in Sicily, focussed on the province of Messina (a) and its classical heritage. New information can derive from substantial sets of unpublished archival records, comprising excavation journals, letters, photographs and sketches, financial accounts and legal documents. They come from the Central State Archive of Rome (b) and the Museum of Palermo (e). The proposed research will portray how such previously unexplored archives can be indispensable in reconstructing some of the earliest archaeological explorations in Sicily and emphasize the value of such studies elsewhere.

Materials highlight three remarkable themes:

1) **The noble antiquarian becomes the professional archaeologist**
   - My research will focus on the differences between archaeological research during the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and the post-Unification period in northern Sicily. The Commission of Antiquities and Fine Arts, which was founded in 1827, managed the island’s cultural heritage, authorized the export of finds and excavations in Sicily during the Bourbon period. The Commission was reformed in 1863 and suppressed in 1875. Meanwhile, Antonino Salinas, Director of the National Museum of Palermo, became the first Sicilian professional archaeologist. A major aim of the present research is to examine differences between the previous antiquarians, who were noblemen and lovers of collecting archaeological finds (c), and the new archaeologists, who worked for the new Italian reign professionally (d).

2) **State → Region → Site**
   - Another significant line of research is the relationship between the Ministry of Public Education (Level I: State-Italy), the Museum of Palermo (e) (Level II: Region-Sicily) and the local authorities (Level III: Site-Town). The Ministry coordinated cultural heritage preservation on the national territory, while the Museum of Palermo managed archaeology on the island. Local authorities, such as officials, mayors and custodians, took care of archaeological sites. A notable case study is Tindari (f), the ancient city founded by Dionysus of Syracuse (596 BC), where a keeper controlled the ruins and acquired small finds for the Museum of Palermo. Thanks to the archival research, records reveal substantial data on these complex relationships between government and local authorities.

3) **From Sicily to Scotland: digging and exporting finds**
   - In 1870s Mr Scolarici, a landowner of Lipari (Aeolian Islands), excavated in the ancient graveyard of Lipara, a Greek and Roman site. He dug 20 graves and set up a collection of archaeological finds of the Hellenistic period (4th-2nd century BC), such as vases, plates and masks. In particular, a Greek vase (height: 0.50 m, diameter: 0.44 m) (g) depicted a female figure between two standing satyrs. Scolarici was desirous to sell and export the collection. Thus, A. Salinas was charged by the Ministry to evaluate the collection and consider its potential export. Finally, Scolarici found a buyer, namely James Stevenson (1822-1903), a rich Scottish industrialist, interested in antiquarian collecting. He exported the Scolarici collection to Glasgow, where it is still conserved and displayed (Kelvingrove Museum & Art Gallery) (h). Tracking new archival records will lead to a faithful historical reconstruction on this significant episode of the history of Sicilian archaeology.

References:

Images sources:
- a) Finlay 1874 (modified); c) Paci 1854; d) Columbia 1915; g) Murray 1846; h, e, f, b) by the author.