

## Medieval Rometta: a Byzantine *kastron* and its artistic legacy

This project, promoted by the *Insula Felix Foundation* with the collaboration of the *Horcynus Orca Foundation*, is dedicated to the religious architecture of Rometta (ME) during the period when the small town, perched on the Tyrrhenian slope of the Peloritani Mountains, adhered to the Byzantine Empire. *Rametta* was the last stronghold of the Greek-Christian identity against the Kalbite advance until its tragic fall in 962.

The interdisciplinary group of scholars involved will investigate the so-called 'Byzantine church' (also known as the church of Santa Maria dei Cerei or of Jesus and Mary), a building of controversial dating whose origins date back to a time before the Norman conquest. The project involves the study of the architectural elevation of the building and a careful analysis of the archaeological and urban context of *Rametta*, with the aim of specifying the chronology and evolution of the architectural structure in the medieval period. In parallel, the team will study the medieval artifacts of artistic nature preserved in Rometta, particularly the precious objects intended for Christian worship: a reliquary-box and an embossed copper astylar cross, precious witnesses to the town's prestige still evident during the time of the Normans and the *Regnum Siciliae*.

The team consist of young researcher and postgraduate students (undergraduate and PhD candidates), particularly those specializing in art-history and cultural heritage conservation. Interaction with other experts in the academic field, particularly in architectural surveying, archaeological research, and historical-architectural studies, is planned as a structural element of the research project. Engagement with institutions responsible for the protection of architectural and artistic heritage, as well as with other local entities involved in cultural curation and promotion, will also be pursued.

The planned activities include study camps, workshops both *in situ* and at the premises of the two promoting foundations, the organization of a conference on Byzantine Rometta (in 2025), and the subsequent publication of a monographic volume with the research result and additional contributions useful for the reconstruction of the historical and artistic context, involving internationally renowned scholars.

A further aspect of the project is the dissemination to a broader audience of users of the monumental site and its heritage, including local residents as well as enthusiasts from outside contexts and/or those involved in sustainable tourism circuits. This objective is part of a broader territorial promotion project, curated by the *Horcynus Orca Foundation* in collaboration with Prof. Martina Corgnati, of the Brera Academy - Department of Communication and Art Education, who, together with Antonino Tranchina (Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna / University of Udine), coordinates the project.



From the left: Adriano Napoli, Sara Salvadori, Martina Corgnati, Antonino Tranchina and Mimmo Calcagno