Located in southeastern Sicily, the Greek polis of Kamarina was situated on a plateau, the Cammarana hill, 60 m above sea level (figure I.2). Surrounded by water on three sides, the slopes of the promontory descended toward the western sea, the Oanis River (now the Rifriscolaro stream) flowed in the south and the Hipparis River (now the Ippari River) in the north. The Hipparis bled into a marsh to the northeast, called the lacus camarinensis, which acted as a natural defensive barrier. Framing the eastern border were two low hills, known today as Eracle and Casa Lauretta. Nestled among these natural boundaries we find the setting for the story of Kamarina and its necropoleis. Although there are many ways to tell a tale, this narrative is presented in three parts. It opens with a brief historiography, continues with a summary of the history and archaeology of Kamarina, and concludes with a discussion of Kamarina’s necropoleis and the previous studies conducted there. Collectively, these sections present a synthesis of previous scholarship concerning Kamarina and provide the necessary historical and cultural context for the study of the burials of the Passo Marinaro necropolis.

**History of Archaeological Exploration**

Although no longer a vital urban center, Kamarina remained in the social memory of the peoples who inhabited southeastern Sicily. The plateau upon which the ancient city sat was called Camerana (today Cammarana; Orsi 1899, 202–3). Etymologically it was an effortless task for 16th century scholars, with ancient texts in hand, to determine that the ruins at Camerana must have been the remnants of the Kamarina described by Thucydides (6.75.4) and Herodotus (7.154.3, 7.156.2; Mattioli 2002). This identification was positively confirmed centuries later with the discovery of civic administrative inscriptions recorded on a cache of lead tablets (ca. 461 BCE) that were deposited near the city’s main sanctuary (Cordano 1992).
The first recorded modern visit to Kamarina was by Tommaso Fazzelo in 1544. Fazzelo, a Dominican friar known as the “father of Sicilian history,” was traveling around the island with the intention of recording its topography and history for his book *De Rebus Siculis Decades Duae* (1558). Fazzelo returned to Kamarina ten years after his initial visit, and to his great dismay, significant destruction had taken place: both Kamarina and nearby Gela had been robbed of their stone for the reconstruction of the nearby city of Terranova (Shaw 2003, 31–44). In the 17th century Prince Ignazio Paternò Castello di Biscari, accompanied by the French painter Houël, conducted archaeological excavations in the necropoleis and in various spots throughout the city (Paternò 1781; Houël 1782–87). Artifacts recovered by the prince found their way into his private collection, and this marked the beginning of the systematic plundering of the necropoleis. Locals immediately recognized the value of the objects being unearthed and understood the potential for financial gain that might be derived from selling their cultural heritage. Since they knew where to dig, these *clandestini* were often hired by amateur archaeologists, such as Benedetto Spadaro, Pacetto da Scicli, and Ludovico Landolina di Rigilifi (the latter a noted numismatist), who excavated at the Passo Marinaro necropolis in 1872 (Spadaro 1855). In 1864 Julius Schubring, a medical doctor, went to Kamarina and conducted a topographical, numismatic, and historical study of the site, which he subsequently published in a monograph (1873). At the time of Schubring’s arrival few ruins were visible. A portion of the cella wall of the sanctuary of Athena Polias (literally, Athena “of the city”) was the only standing structure of note (figure 2.1). After the publication of Schubring’s work, the director of Sicilian antiquities, Francesco Saverio Cavallari, recorded his observations about Kamarina in his own monograph (1881). Soon after its publication, Sir Arthur Evans visited Kamarina in 1887, 1889, 1890, 1892, and 1896 in his capacity as keeper of the Ashmolean Museum. Evans traveled to Sicily with his wife and her sister, the daughters of E. A. Freeman, whose four-volume history of Sicily (1894) is still a fundamental scholarly work. Evans’s primary objective was to collect antiquities for the museum (mostly from Gela), but he also recorded the topography of the ancient cities he visited (figure 2.2; Vickers 2004, 239).

Officially sanctioned archaeological excavations at Kamarina resumed in 1896. Paolo Orsi, who worked at the site until 1912, was concerned primarily with the necropoleis since their tombs had been plundered at that point for approximately a hundred years. In addition, Orsi explored other areas of the city, most notably in and around the sanctuary of Athena Polias, where he found evidence of a prehistoric settlement (Orsi 1904–5; Buongiovanni
and Pelagatti 1985, 300–2). Orsi was succeeded by Biago Pace, who had worked with him since 1889. Pace excavated the site until 1955, and during his tenure at Kamarina he continued Orsi’s work in the necropoleis but also investigated the city walls and gates, the chora, and some of the streets (Pace 1927; Buongiovanni and Pelagatti 1985, 301–4). Next, Antonio Di Vita spent two seasons at Kamarina in 1958 and 1961 (Di Vita 1956; 1958; 1983; Buongiovanni and Pelagatti 1985, 305–6). Di Vita dug on the acropolis in the hopes of locating the agora, which, unbeknownst to him, was to be found elsewhere. Although the agora eluded him, Di Vita’s excavations on the acropolis confirmed Thucydides’ foundation date of 599–598 BCE based on the complete and conspicuous absence of occupational material dating to earlier than the beginning of the 6th century BCE. Also of note, Di Vita uncovered a portion of the city wall and a defensive tower (which contained a store of barley) that had been burned during the Carthaginian sack of the city in 405 BCE (Di Vita 1983, 31).

Much of what we know about Kamarina is owed to the excavations of Paola Pelagatti, Di Vita’s successor, who worked at the site from the 1960s to the 1970s (Pelagatti 1966; Pelagatti 1970; Buongiovanni and Pelagatti 1985, 306–13). Her early explorations focused on the sanctuary of Athena Polias and its chronological development. In the mid- to late 1960s Pelagatti had uncovered enough of the city to determine the orientation and organization
Figure 2.2. Sir Arthur Evans's map of Kamarina from his journal “Sicily 1889–1890” (p. 17). Photo © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.
of Kamarina’s Hippodamian plan. She also discovered the Provide Kiln, located outside the city walls, which she determined was used from the 5th to the 3rd century BCE for the creation of tiles and terracotta figurines. In the early 1970s she found additional portions of the sanctuary’s cella wall, fully reconstructed the city’s defensive wall, and located a road, rutted from wheeled-traffic, that connected the city to the Rifriscolaro necropolis and the chora (both positioned east of the city). Pelagatti also continued her predecessors’ excavations in the Rifriscolaro and Passo Marinaro necropoleis (Pelagatti 2006), and during her final seasons in the late 1970s she identified ten farms in the chora and discovered the location of the heretofore elusive agora (Pelagatti 1984–85; Di Stefano 2002, 113; Di Stefano 2009b).

In 1975 Pelagatti granted permission to archaeologists from the University of Bristol (under the direction of A. J. Parker and J. D. Blackman) to explore the waters around Kamarina. Bristol’s scuba divers and snorkelers located Kamarina’s ancient harbor at the mouth of the Hipparis river and its ancient shoreline, which at the time was 6 m offshore (probably farther today due to coastal erosion; Blackman 1976–77, 608–9). These discoveries were made using resistivity survey, a technique that further allowed them to detect the location of the ancient lake and the remnants of an inner harbor on the Hipparis (near the lake). Inadvertently, the Bristol archaeologists also found a shipwreck, later dubbed Kamarina A, which contained giallo antico columns from imperial quarries in Tunisia. Based on an analysis of oil lamps associated with the wreck, the ship was dated to ca. 175–200 CE (Blackman 1976–77).

For the past thirty years Giovanni Di Stefano has been the principal investigator of the excavations at Kamarina (Buongiovanni and Pelagatti 1985, 312–14; Di Stefano 2000a, 210–12; Di Stefano 2009a, 687–702). Beginning in the agora, Di Stefano uncovered the western stoa, which contained 600 amphorae that burned in a fire in the 3rd century BCE. He also determined the dimensions of the agora, specifically two plateia wide, and discovered a series of shrines and altars located in the northeastern portion of the agora. Near the sanctuary of Athena Polias a cache of lead administrative tablets (ca. 461 BCE) were found that listed names of Kamarinean citizens. From 1980 to 2000 Di Stefano discovered a total of six farms and numerous roads (with what appear to be rest stops) in the chora, which revealed that the hinterland was laid out on the same grid as the city proper. In addition he continued excavations in the necropoleis and the agora, where in the latter he found the southern stoa, a monumental public fountain, and more altars and shrines. Of special note is that his tenure at Kamarina was also one of
increased interest in underwater archaeology. The wreck of Kamarina A was studied in more detail, and four more wrecks, Kamarina B–E, were located (Di Stefano 1998a).

In the past decade, excavations at Kamarina have halted due to lack of funds. For the same reason, most of the archaeological park is currently closed, overgrown with weeds and inaccessible to the public. The museum, however, remains open, and energy has been redirected to the publication of previously excavated material (e.g., Salibra 2003). Yet despite financial difficulties, the site of Kamarina faces an even greater challenge, that of human destruction. The area around Kamarina has become an upscale tourist venue; Club Med Kamarina sits on property adjacent to the museum storehouse, and a pleasure harbor was built at the base on the Cammarana plateau. The construction of the harbor has caused rapid coastal erosion, and Kamarina is in danger of slipping into the sea. Plastered across the hillside of the plateau are banners, large enough to be read from the harbor, that cry “S.O.S. Kamarina.” Although the future of Kamarina is uncertain, it is because of the tireless work of the aforementioned archaeologists that the story of its past will be preserved.

The History and Archaeology of Kamarina

The history of Kamarina begins in the prehistoric period. Although it appears that the settlement was uninhabited at the time of Greek colonization, signs of occupation dating to the Early Bronze Age (ca. 3000–2000 BCE)—three lava stone axes, numerous spindle-whorls, and various prehistoric pottery sherds—were discovered at the site that was to become the sanctuary of Athena Polias (Orsi 1904, 762–64). These finds are consistent with those from other coastal Early Bronze Age habitations in southeastern Sicily (Leighton 1999, 116–19). Sometime after the Early Bronze Age the site was abandoned, and it remained vacant until the arrival of the Greeks.

Kamarina was founded as a colony of Syracuse ca. 599–598 BCE (Thucydides 6.5.3). Its oikists, Daskon and Menekolos, were purportedly Syracusan and Korinthian, respectively (Cordano 1987). Syracusan expansion into the southeastern corner of Sicily began in the 7th century BCE, with the establishment of military outposts at Heloros on the east coast (ca. 700 BCE; Voza 1980b, 134) and Akrai and Kasmnai in the Hyblaian mountains (ca. 664 and 644–643 BCE, respectively; Voza 1980a; Hansen and Nielsen 2004, 205). Kamarina differs from these early Syracusan colonies in that it was designed to be more than a military post. Fertile hinterland