

Serra Ferdinandea rises not far from Mount Kronio (Sciaccia) where probably the most ancient wine in the whole West dating back to 6,000 years ago was discovered, as well as the Phoenician/Greek wine vat carved into the rock named “della Risinata” (Sambuca in Sicily). This dates to circa the 6th and 7th centuries BC and it was probably used to supply the then powerful city of Selinunte. So, we are in an area where vines have some of the most ancient roots if not the most ancient in the Mediterranean, as the archeological finds seem to evince. We have been speaking of horizons in a technical sense, referring to the ground. The name Serra Ferdinandea also refers to another horizon, the one south-south-west created by the sea and sky. Roughly 19 miles off, you could have seen a small Island on this horizon in July 1831: *Isola Ferdinandea* or Graham Island in English. The ancient myth of the mysterious island which appeared and disappeared actually materialized in this stretch of the Strait of Sicily thanks to the underwater volcano, Empedocle. After all the fish died from the heat and gas of the eruption, the island emerged into view in July 1831 and progressively rose until it was two and a half miles in diameter, with a 262-foot peak. According to international law at the

time, a country could take possession of a new island by getting there first. Soon, two flags from Britain and France were planted, but none from the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies which was evidently not as quick. King Ferdinando di Borbone however, had no intention of recognizing other people's rights over an island that he felt properly belonged to Sicily. He rechristened the island *Isola Ferdinandea* after it had already been christened Graham Island by the English and *Ile de Iulia* by the French. The island became the subject of a lively diplomatic contest that ended with neither winners nor losers. The island with all of its flags crumbled back into the sea which received everything in November of the same year. It seems that it tried to pop back up twice in the decades following, but it never got bigger than a reef. An underwater mountain called Graham Shoal is all that is left of the island whose peak rises to just 20 feet below sea level. There are several calderas in the mountains, the remains of various eruptions. We cannot however exclude as we face south-south-west in the future, that we will once again see *insula in mari nata*, this island born from the sea on the horizon, disputed by nations, but never belonging to any.