

# Graffiti found at ancient Italian prison

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Graffiti left by prisoners held by the Inquisition in Sicily more than 200 years ago have been found on the walls of an ancient prison.

The Steri, the Inquisition's headquarters, is being converted into a museum, the Italian news agency ANSA reported. Between 1601 and 1782, hundreds of people the Catholic Church suspected of heresy or witchcraft were held there for questioning and torture, few of them emerging alive.

Historians have been able to identify some of the prisoners from information they left behind on the wall. Archaeologists have also discovered elaborate artwork, including an entire wall depicting the Battle of Lepanto.

"Many of the victims were simply intellectuals or artists whom the church considered a threat to its power," Domenico Policarpi, who heads the project, told ANSA.

The graffiti provide a window into a world that is little-known because the viceroy in Palermo in 1782 ordered Inquisition documents burned.

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