

**THE UNDERWATER CULTURAL HERITAGE AND THE ARCHEORETE EGADI 2011  
PROJECT**

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**ABSTRACT**

Today we talk a lot about cultural heritage but it is a complex task to define a concept with a thousand shades. This notion, which at first sight seems intuitive, is actually a very labile notion, which lends itself to many definitions and interpretations. The present study addresses the complexity found in being able to define the concept of cultural heritage but even more so of underwater cultural heritage considering that it has been recognized as such in recent times. Therefore, we wanted to study how forms of protection, valorisation and conservation of underwater archaeological heritage have been developed from the internal law of the States and then to international law and thus demonstrate how this sector is governed by law. A path that led to the formulation of the 2001 UNESCO Convention where it is possible to identify the evolution of the concept of cultural heritage from a sparse protection to also including the underwater world and its finds. In my opinion, however, the impression is that of an extremely fragmented and inhomogeneous regulatory framework, far from satisfying the protection requirements. Particular attention was paid to Sicily, the heart of the Mediterranean, a unique heritage of its kind as it embodies the common historical and cultural roots of many civilizations. A place where the Superintendence of the Sea has collected the witness of a glorious tradition of research and studies in the field of underwater archaeological research as demonstrated by the Archeorete Egadi project.