



SAN
LORENZO MAGGIORE
COMPLESSO MONUMENTALE



ENGLISH



A UNIQUE ARCHEOLOGICAL - MUSEUM AREA FROM 6TH CENTURY B.C. UP TO THE END OF 18TH A.C.

SAN LORENZO MAGGIORE (Saint Lawrence Mother Church)

A LASTING RECORD OF
THE ANCIENT PAST.

The San Lorenzo Maggiore complex may be considered a perfectly preserved historical record, as this city over the ages grew and evolved of and through itself; a continuous melding of the old and the new. At San Lorenzo Maggiore we find layer upon layer of differing constructions; the various urban developments of different historical periods:- alternating layers of diverse civil systems, representing cultural political, and institutional changes over the centuries, all having in common the same central space, which maintains its uniqueness; from the agora to the forum, from the establishment of the paleo Christian basilica to the Franciscan friary citadel which co-exists with the Courthouse of San Lorenzo Maggiore, the seat of city government hosted in the same sites which are now to be included in the 'Museo delle Opere'

NEAPOLIS

Although sources do not give the precise date of the foundation of Neapolis, archaeological data indicate the end of the VIth – beginning of the Vth century A.D. , but records do identify the founding fathers; they were cumian settlers who were later joined by the Caledonians, the Pithecusans (Pithecusa = Ischia), and the Athenians. The urban layout of Neapolis is organized in a regular network of streets, which are still perfectly recognizable in the historic center of the modern city, its northern boundary is Via Foria, whilst Corso Umberto forms its southern

extremity, and via Costantinopoli and Via Carbonara its western and eastern boundaries, respectively.

The ancient urban area corresponded to a tableland which sloped down gradually towards the sea, and was circumscribed by deep culverts which served for defense purposes. These culverts have since been filled in but their outlines are retraced today by the present via Foria, via Pessina, via S. Anna dei Lombardi, and via Carbonara. The surface of the tableland was marked by slopes gradually descending down to the sea, and by a series of hills. The contours of the land were utilized in the setting out of the ancient city, for example fortifications (Vth century B.C. constructions which were later restored in the IVth and III centuries B.C) were built along its ridges, whilst the roads and the isolati (housing blocks) were interiorly placed. The three main arterial roads oriented along an East – West axis, and termed the (plateiai) are via Anticaglia Pisantelli, via Tribunali and via S. Biagio dei Librai. These roads formed a regular grid crossed by a series of secondary roads oriented along a North – South axis, (the stenopoi), and estimated by archaeologists to have numbered between 20

and 23. The crossing of the axes created isolati (housing blocks) 35 m. wide by 185m long. Most of the archaeological remains visible today date back to the imperial age which followed the earthquakes of 62 and 64 A.D. The acropolis, a site of religious buildings including those which housed saints' relics, was constructed on the highest point of the hill, via S. Aniello at Capo Napoli, and was not included in the pattern of road division adopted within the rest of the residential zone. The forum of the Roman city, of which the archaeological area of San Lorenzo Maggiore constitutes a significant sector.

THE CIRCULATION OF MERCHANDISE BETWEEN THE FOURTH AND FIRST CENTURIES B.C.: PRODUCTION AND IMPORTS.

Towards the end of the fourth century B.C., and in particular between the third and the second century B.C., a significant increase in ceramics is evidenced in the San Lorenzo Maggiore area. There is prevalence of amphora's, of diverse origins and of black varnish tableware; the overall increase suggests that the traffic of people through this site was both more stable and structured. A significant number of amphora's bear witness to the consumption of local wine (vite alinea), along with, from the Second century B.C. onwards, the consumption, in lesser quantities, of Adriatic coast wines, whilst the most highly prized wines were those produced on the isle of Rodi. The most numerous were the Punic amphora's, which contained, other than wine, oil, fish sauce or dried meat: these products had probably arrived from North Africa, having been exchanged for Campania region wines, transported in Greco Italian amphora's. Another item of trade was black lacquered kitchenware "campana" also produced in Neapolis, and present in large quantities on those coasts. Oil, even if in

THE LOCAL WINE AMPHORA'S

The container - symbol of this economic expansion is the Greek traditional amphora, the so-called "Greco - Italica", present at San Lorenzo Maggiore in all its various forms, from the most ancient types (from the fourth century to the beginning of the second cent. B.C. to the most recent (from mid the second to first century B.C.). It is replaced in the late republican era (mid of the second to first century B.C.) by a typically Roman amphora (dressed 1), a larger model than those from which it was derived. The production zone has been identified generically as the bay of Naples, but the similarity of the ceramic mix with those of Ischia, Pithecusa could give a more precise indication of its origin. A further clue, this time of an expressly Neapolitan production, was given when furnace waste dumps were discovered in Piazza Nicola Amore, indicating the presence of a workshop in their vicinity.

TABLE AND COOKING CERAMICS.

The increase in and diversification of consumer goods is evident in the phase preceding the construction of the market, between late the first century B.C. and the tail end of the first century A.D. Other than transport amphora's, vases for preparing food and beverages, table crockery and a few examples of ceramics commonly used for cooking have been found.

The use of thin skinned potori table vases of the late republican tradition persists, other tableware includes drinking bowls, glasses and small goblets - mainly of local production and there are plenty of ceramic jugs and bottles of common, low quality, undecorated ceramics for everyday purposes, but,

following the new fashion, red coated drinking bowls and plates make their appearance, the *cd. Earth sigillata*, including those produced locally and in the bay of Naples, those purchased from the workshops of Arezzo and Pisa, and, in lesser quantities, from Gaul and the Orient. A panorama of the work of the different workshops of *sigillata Italica* is provided by the numerous trademarked vases, in which is displayed the name of the vase maker, from the most ancient (end of the first century B.C.), in which the name is contained within a circular trademark, (A.VIBIUS SCROFULA), to the later vases in which the name appears inside a rectangular scroll design, pertaining to the Aretin ATEIUS and the Puteolan MARIUS. The more recent vases, with a base stand, become widespread from 15 – 20 A.D. to the point of replacing all other models. (C. VIBIENUS, A. VALERIUS, FORTUNATUS) they persist in the late Aretin (GN. ATEIUS ARRETINUS) and late Italic (C.P.P., L. RASINIUS PISAIN-TUS) production.

In the kitchen, saucepans with their interiors lacquered in red and pertaining to the late republican tradition, are used to cook solid foods, and during the first century, pans with a wide protruding brim, produced locally to cook semisolid foods, stews and water based dishes, ollas (large terracotta vases), however, designed for boiling are very rare.

As occurred in the preceding period local consumer goods were produced not only for citizen use, but also for trade with neighboring and distant countries, in conformance with the commercial directives of the economic Roman system of this era, which aimed to maintain, and still maintains in today's Italy a certain balance between production and importation.

CERAMICS AND EATING HABITS.

Changes in ceramics revealed through excavations of the various layers corresponding to different ages, are reflections of changes within the San Lorenzo Maggiore area. Some areas, such as those overlooking the stenopòs had been completely deserted. In comparison with that of previous centuries, significant differences in urban consumption, of mainly fine crockery and crockery for daily use, have been found. Sigillata vases made in Africa continue to be used at the table, although new shapes do appear: plates and bowls which formed part of an individual table setting disappear, to be replaced by large second course trays, for meat and fish. Oriental imports are extremely rare (sigillata focea). Local workshops begin to make imitation African vases, but they also produce an original series of large bowls, jugs, amphora's and ollas, either partly or totally coated all in brown or in a red brown color. Only during the seventy century A.D, does ornamentation become more decorative, with the appearance of motifs in bands, contiguous arches, spirals or simple strips and colored splurges. The discovery in San Lorenzo Maggiore of a 'factory second', in the form of a large bowl confirms the presence of these workshops in the city. Also in the kitchen we see different shapes of pots and pans: ollas and baking trays suitable for cooking liquid and semisolid foods have become smaller. The same phenomenon appears also in other central Mediterranean and western Mediterranean sites, suggesting a gradual modification in diet and in food consumption habits.

LIGHTING

Oil lamps also have been found in large numbers, mostly imported from North Africa, the lamps come in one unique lamp model and bear geometrical decorations, some featuring Christian symbols. The success of these types of vases rapidly triggered off imitation productions in the local workshops, proof of this is provided by a mound found near the ancient forum. This phenomenon may be related not only to trade flow, but also to the construction of the basilica in the San Lorenzo Maggiore area. In the seventh century A.D., together with the African products, lamps cd. "siciliane", (initially produced in the East of Sicily), appear and are marketed, all over the Mediterranean, as an accompaniment to foodstuffs sold.

NAPLES AND THE MEDITERRANEAN: SUPPLY AND EXPORT OF FOOD PRODUCTS, FIRST – OF THE SECOND CENTURY A.D.

The amphora is by far the most common item to come to light in the St. Lawrence area, partly because of its ability to pass the test of time, but, mainly because the area, the macellum and tabernae was a market zone. The identification of different types of amphora's allows us to deduce the origin of the containers and of the products transported, and hence the retail goods sold in the city of that time.

For the entire first century A.D., as in previous centuries, the highest consumption of wine is of local or Campania origin but eventually other prized wines are introduced, including salted wines and raisin wines, imported from Greece in amphora's produced in different workshops on the islands of Rodi and of Crete. Other wine arrives from Egypt and Asia Minor, in particular from the Meandro Valley and from Cilicia, but there are also European wines, and, even if in lower quantities, amphora's from the Taragon province (Spain), and, more rarely, from Gaul. The monopoly on the commercialization of fish sauces (garum), on the other hand, is retained by the Iberian peninsula, above all from the province of Betica, and less often from Lusitana and from North Africa. Oil is imported almost exclusively from Roman colonies in Africa, from Tripolitania and then from North Africa. Unlike in Rome, Iberian oil amphora's were rare in St. Lawrence and in the rest of the city.

A large quantity of oil lamps dated at the first century A.D. has been found within the archaeological complex, from the area above the Macellum (market) and from subterranean sites. Among the most common are spiral lamps, featuring a round spout with many different motifs incorporated into the

disc design. The high numbers of these objects may be explained by the need for lighting up the rooms, the open shops on Stenopòs and the Criptoporticus, but in some cases, the lamps show no trace of usage, leading us to hypothesise that they represent stock items, and hence that by the early imperial age the area had already begun functioning as a marketplace.

THE NEAPOLITAN MARKET IN THE IMPERIAL AGE: CHRONOLOGICAL PROBLEMS.

The monument in blocks of the IV - III century B.C. substitutes the nucleus around which an imperial age building was built up. It was organized on two levels, exploiting the natural unevenness of terrain between ground level at via Tribunali, and ground level of the stenopòs, aligned with vico Giganti, which is visible in the subterranean archaeological area. The complex, considered as a whole, seems to be the result of a Unitarian building program but at the moment it is not possible to certify the date of the initial phase of this imposing monumental system. The sector which is currently more easily identified has been dated by the building technique used in the period at between the end of the first and the beginning of the second century A.D., after the earthquakes in 62 and 64 A.D., and the eruption of 79 which necessitated a round of reconstructions, as documented in epigraphic texts and deduced from tests carried out on the monuments. The series of lesena (columns embedded into a wall) Corinthianesque capitals on exhibition may be placed in this context. They all came from the same building and have been dated at the late Julius-Claudius era; they were discovered in a fill layer in that zone of the crypto portico which faces the stenopòs. Very few clues remain of the late republican

and Augustan phases, even though a large number of buildings in the city have been attributed to the emperor Augustus. Some localities constructed with the reticular building technique may be traced back to this period. They are located in the western wing of the subterranean archaeological area and feature mosaic flooring composed of small white tiles with black lateral bands. Also in the same time period we can place, other than numerous ceramic items, some small antefixes in terracotta, a trademarked brick that had formed part of a sacred building dedicated by the Neapolitans to the cult of the emperor Augustus, and a Corinthian capital of a semi column.

THE MOST IMPORTANT BUILDINGS WERE:

1. The enclosed theater
2. The wide open Nerone theater
3. The temple of Dioscuri
4. Decumano superior
5. Decumano inferior
6. Basilica - Curia
7. The Macellum
8. Open Market

THE RECYCLING OF ANCIENT MARBLE IN THE CARLO DI DURAZZO MONUMENT

In the forties of last century, during the restoration of the burial monument of the count of Durazzo, Carlo D'Angio, built between 1383 and 1393 and situated in the lateral chapel, on the left of the transept of the church, four elements originating from the imperial age were discovered, having been recycled in the

construction of this monument, taking care to face the decorated or inscribed surface towards the inside..

THE BEAUTIFUL FUNERAL INSCRIPTION OF THE XTH CENTURY.

It was recycled, with the inscribed part turned towards the inside, in the tomb of Giovanna and Roberto d'Artois, dated in the period between 1383 and 1393, and placed opposite the tomb of Carlo di Durazzo in the lateral chapel, left of the transept. The funeral inscription could have been

removed from one of the tombs which had occupied the area of the palaeo Christian basilica before the construction of the early medieval church. The inscribed text is inserted on the interior of a circular frame decorated with corymbs (inflorescence in which all flowers, form a crown, being all at the same level) and ivy leaves. It refers to a Gregorian solicitor (tribuno), who expressed his conviction of rising, with his wife and children, from the tomb to eternal life.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE UPPER FLOOR, THE MACELLUM

In the imperial age set up, the macellum: the building in which foodstuffs were sold is placed on the upper level, it consists of a porticoed rectangular space in the center of which the tholòs pavilion is situated. From the Hellenic age on, this typology was widespread; in the Campania region other imperial age examples may be seen in Pompeii and at Pozzuoli in the cd. Serapeo. The main entrance must have opened onto the ground level of Via Tribunali, and linked it to the lower level of the monument, at the level of the stenòpos of the underground archaeological area by stairs. A portico covered in marble sheets opens onto the tholòs which is situated in the middle of a courtyard, featuring mosaic flooring formed of large white tiles. Of the circular building only the basement remains, three steps covered in marble slabs, and part of the drainage system, made in terracotta. Today it may be partially observed through the glass oval peep hole installed in the friary cloister flooring. A series of tabernae face onto the portico, on the western side they were discovered underneath the ceiling of the cloister, and on the eastern side in a room underneath the assembly hall of the Angioine age. On the western side they are found at the layer which level corresponds to the construction of the macellum, whilst to the east they are positioned on the vaults of the tabernae below. The walls of the different venues are made of brick, but restorations have been documented, for example during the late imperial age, reticular work façades in large tufelli were installed for reinforcement, and these narrowed the access rooms.

Towards the south nine two partition tabernae appear, each consisting of two communicating rooms with barrel vaults, a brickwork façade, and external and dividing walls in reticulated brickwork. In such rooms we can see elements which indicate the commercial usage of the area, for example, an oven (n. 19) and baths (n.15 and n. 41), which, however, could be and often are indications of how the area was used in an era subsequent to when it was first constructed. To the south the modular system of the tabernae is tied to a cryptoporticus, a long corridor set in a basement constructed with the reticulated brickwork technique with brickwork arches featuring barrel vaults, divided into small communicating rooms. The building exploits the frontage as a supporting wall. The frontage was made of blocks of yellow tufo in the sixth century B.C.

Large benches are affixed to the walls of the cryptoporticus. Their function is unknown, they may have been for displaying foodstuffs for sale, or, maybe, as tricline beds (beds with three sloping sides). Following on from this building, to the south west and to the west, are many large rooms featuring decorated flooring and walls clad in materials recycled from the tufo block structures which preceded them, and opened on to the lower level at the same height as the stenopòs.

THE FLOOR'S MOSAICI

A few segments of the mosaics which decorated the floors of the diaconicon and of the prothesis, (the two areas of service situated on the sides of the apse) remain. The very holey fragment exhibited, belongs to the diaconicon mosaic, it decorated one of the corners of the room until being removed and restored after its discovery in the '50's. It features a double frame with plant and geometric motifs bordering a succession of bird couples along the sides of a vase, in the corner there is a bunch of grapes in red and black tones.

THE HISTORIC BUILD UP

- a) The first edifice was a paleochristian church dedicate to S. Lorenzo (6th century A.C.) and it was built over the market place.
- b) The actual Basilica of S. Lorenzo was constructed on the site of the old Church of the sixth century which was knocked down at the end of twelve century. The new structure was started by the French king Carlo I D'Angiò. During the 17th and 18th centuries, the Basilica was decorated in baroque style with stucco and special sculptured marble. It is possible to see these works marble in the two chapels, one dedicated to our Lady and the other devoted to St. Antony of Padua. In this Basilica the eminent poet Boccaccio fell in love with Fiammetta.
- c) The bell tower was built in 1487. It was customary for the people to gather under the tower for special assemblies or festivities.

THE CLOISTER

The cloister built in 1771 over a preexisting construction of 13th century. Of particular note is the lovely 15th century well in the middle of the cloister and to notice the difference between the black volcanic rock from Vesuvio and the white marble. On top there is the statue of St. Lorenzo.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE MUSEUM

The Museum of Works at San Lorenzo Maggiore, in its 1500's setting, unfolds around a torre civica. It offers an extraordinary slice of the history of Naples, embracing a broad time span 25 centuries long, from the Greco-Roman era right up until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The exhibits have been set out in chronological order, according to the particular historical strata from which they had been extracted during excavations in the San Lorenzo Maggiore complex. The visitor begins viewing Greek age remains, progressing to that of the Roman period, on through its republican and imperial periods, up to the late ancient epoch, the paleo Christian and the Byzantine ages, and continuing on to the late medieval up to the Norman and Swedish civilizations, followed by the Angioine and the Aragonese reigns. Passing from one level of the museum to the next, one 'goes forward in time' up until the last rooms which house the eighteenth to nineteenth century presepio statuettes of the friary's prestigious collection. A particular feature of the exhibition is that the works are presented within their original contexts, aiming in this way to convey a precise and complete picture of the items exhibited, by physically reconstructing the environments in which they were originally set, even attempting to emulate the same light conditions, the same viewing perspectives

and the original motivations for their creations. It becomes even more crucial that these conditions be met, when one considers that the museum housing the works is in itself a space dense with history and resonant with ancient tones, the museum itself may be considered a museum exhibit, the 'Museo di Se Stesso'.

LEVEL I

Greco-Roman and palaeochristian remains, retrieved from the archaeological site under ground level of the San Lorenzo Maggiore complex, are exhibited. They bear witness to the architectural, artistic and commercial evolution of Naples over the centuries.

IN THE FIRST ROOM

Marble fragments of the imperial age later recycled to create funeral monuments are exhibited.

IN THE SECOND ROOM

Dated at the of the second century A.D., we note a large "marble" (actually it's a plastic imitation) base of what was originally the statue of a famous flautist: Publio Elio Antigenide, bearing an inscription honouring his life and achievements. There are also clay bricks and tiles of the of the second century A.D., marked with production stamps in the osca language, representing the reconstruction of the entire area of San Lorenzo Maggiore over the ages.

IN THE THIRD ROOM

Crockery of various epochs (from the fourth century B.C. to the tenth century A.D.) are on display, they originate from the Neapolis area and demonstrate a sizeable food trade business, in particular of oil, wine and a fish paste that was prized by our forefathers.

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LEVEL II - THE FIRST ROOM

Works from the Angioine and Aragonese periods are on display.

Is called the Masaniello room, because, according to legend, in 1647 Masaniello roused up the masses in the square below the piazza, giving rise to revolutionary movements.

IN THE OTHER ROOMS

Three frescoes (staccato) of unknown Giottan Neapolitans are displayed: Saint Frances who gives the Rule of Life to the brothers and to the Clarissans (1330 -35), the Madonna with Child (1355 -65), a second fresco of Saint Frances and some fragments of glass and majolica of different epochs recovered in the ancient church. Furthermore, there are numerous statues and tombstones of nobles and of knights, entombed in the prestigious Angioine building.



lesser quantities, was also imported from Greece, in particular from Corinth. The vivacity of exchanges evidenced by these materials may be interpreted as a reflex of the increase, in Neapolis, of productive activity, from agriculture to craftwork, which resulted in an increased internal consumption and the development of import and export mercantile businesses, in many centers of the Mediterranean, an hypothesis further substantiated by recent discoveries in cities linked to the development of the port and of the coastal strip.

Transformations in the Late Ancient Era and the Construction of the Palaeo Christian Basilica.

The tabernae of the market place show evident transformations in function: some rooms become laundries, ovens are inserted into shops, the entrances onto the road are raised, some windows are closed, and former access openings become windows. Up until the beginning of the sixth century A.D., the area continued to have a public function. In an anecdote told by Procopio set in the years around Theodor's death (526 A.D), (De Bello the Goth, V, XXIV, 22 -7) a mosaic illustrating king Theodor, in a building of the forum, undergoes a slow and continual degeneration, which symbolized for the Neapolitan population the decline and imminent end of the gothic reign. Towards the middle of the sixth century the upper part of the complex, occupied by the macellum, changes role, the northern zone becomes the site of the paleo Christian basilica. The same change in function is documented for many forums of Roman cities in this period and in Naples archaeological evidence records numerous transformations in, or the deserting of public and private spaces. The paleo Christian basilica, founded in the middle years of the seventh century by the bishop of Naples, Giovanni of the second known as 'the Mediocre' (533 -555), was discovered in the fifties of the 20th century under the present church of San Lorenzo Maggiore. Very little remains of the building, having been destroyed by the medieval construction which succeeded it. An approximate reconstruction of the basilica is based on the few remains left. The basilica, with three naves, preceded by a narthex, ended with an ample apse on whose sides two rooms, used for the organization of liturgical services, opened, (on the right is the diaconicon, one the left is the prothesis), the flooring was decorated by mosaics which in part have been conserved, and may be viewed through glass peepholes in the floor of the present church, behind the apse a long narrow room communicated the two areas. The building, smaller than the present church, was contained within the present nave, whilst a refined marble decoration, described in literary sources and unfortunately lost, decorated the

LEVEL III

Works produced between the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth.

THE ATRIUM

Communicates with the third level, and is a room entirely covered in frescoes, bringing to mind a “garden in winter”, for its plant like decorations, created between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

IN THE ROOMS

There is a collection of precious canvases: the Immacolata painted by Paolo Domenico Finoglia (1590 – 1656); the Mystic Vision of Saint Bonaventura, by Domenic Antonio Vaccaro (1676 – 1745), renowned designer of the cloister of Saint Chiara; paintings by Giuseppe Marullo, Silvestro Buono, Marco Pino from Siena and other artists. There are also ceramics (XIV – XVIIIth centuries, produced in Naples, Italy, or imported from Spain), which depict the Franciscan community, telling its story through pictures, and bearing the dates of the capitoli (election and programming assemblies) of the Brothers' community. Furthermore there are numerous sculptures like the Madonna Orante, a tabernacle, a portalino in marble and some putti from a funeral monument. With the restoration a segment of wall in piperno from the tower, together with its original frame has been exposed.

LEVEL IV

The tradition of the Christmas presepio dates back to the eighteenth century: grandiose scenographies in the better known churches built up its prestige status. One of the many famous, presepios was that set up by the junior brothers in the Capella Buonaiuti at San Lorenzo Maggiore .

The splendid statuettes in figura terzina, of polychromatic wood, were actual genuine wooden sculptures produced by the best Neapolitan artists.

Later many more statuettes with moving parts were added, dressed in clothes made from precious cloths, small wigs and shoes, and manikin type statuettes in which the eyes are made of glass whilst the head, hands and feet were made of terracotta. In the murattian epoch, the religious orders were suppressed and their goods were confiscated and sold. Few collections of art survived that difficult period. Thanks to the junior friary brothers some examples of the splendid season of art and history which began with the Aragonese and finished with the Borboni, were conserved, have survived to the present day in San Lorenzo Maggiore, among these is a precious collection of wooden statuettes.