

CASTELLO DI MELFI

Museo
Archeologico
Nazionale
del Vulture e Melfese



The Museum is hosted in the restored rooms of two floors of the Castle where the very rich findings from the tombs and the dwellings are displayed. The chronological and territorial setting, as well as the thorough investigation of the subjects, offer the visitor a complete outline of the ancient past.

THE TERRITORY OF MELFI

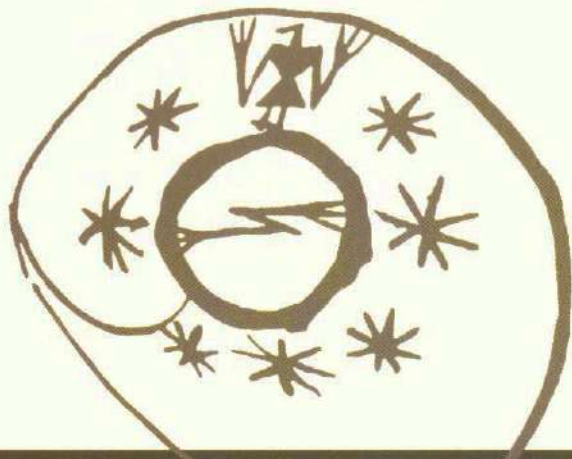
The territory of Melfi, a meeting point of Italic populations inhabiting the plains along the Adriatic coast, was in ancient past a major crossroads of important routes in the fluvial valleys. Melfi's area is characterized by the alluvial plains of the Ofanto river and by a wide hilly belt between the Vulture massif, the Murge and the Lucanian Appennines. This territory had in ancient past



Mount Vulture

a significant strategic value being a place of intersection of the routes linking Melfi with Campania in the west and with the Daunian coastal territories (today

Stylized human figure in mourning pose. One foot is raised, while the other rests on a sphere surrounded by seven stars, a lightning in the middle. First half of the 4th century B.C., from Ripacandia



Apulia) in the east through the Ofanto-Sele axis. Following the valley of Bradano river it is possible to reach the Ionian coast. The central position of Melfi in the network of communication between the mountainsides of southern Italy together with the fertility of the land and the availability of water, favoured since protohistoric age the settlement in the territory of Italic populations mainly inhabiting the hilly areas.

TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION AND PEOPLING

Since the end of the 7th century B.C. built up areas begin to be organized in scattered groups of huts interspersed with spaces devoted to agricultural activities and cattle breeding as well as with burial grounds. The archaeological

findings testify to the relationship with Apulia: new routes linking Melfi with Etrurian Campania and with the Greek colonies of the Ionian coasts allowed the trading of luxury items. Since late 6th century B.C. the tombs reveal a Greek influence in funerary outfits belonging to men and women of the aristocracy, suggesting the adoption of the banquet with roasted meat and the symposium. After the Greek fashion Daunian chiefs built dwellings with stone foundations and terracotta tile roofs, abandoning since the end of the 6th century the traditional huts. Major changes took place during the 4th century B.C. Daunian population still inhabited the

Daunian attingitoia (pail), 6th century B.C., from Lavello



areas in proximity of the Ofanto river, while the remaining territory of Basilicata was gradually occupied by the Lucanians, Osco-Samnite peoples who settled in the territory of Potenza and substituted the original populations of North-Lucanian origin, confronting the Greek colonies on the Ionian coast. Mercenary chiefs from Samnium, on the Appennines of Central Italy, arrive on the scene in this period. The Samnite presence in the region until Roman conquest is testified by the archaeological findings displayed in the Museum. At the end of the 4th century B.C. Rome begins to occupy Southern Italy, following the foundation of the colonies of Luceria (314 B.C.), Venusia (291 B.C.) and Paestum (273 B.C.).

THE TOMBS

The study of the tombs is particularly significant in order to increase the knowledge of the culture and the social organization of the indigenous settlements in the territory of Melfi (Ruvo del Monte,

*Funerary outfit
of a warrior,
5th century B.C.
from Banzi*



Melfi, Lavello, Banzi). The typology of the tombs, strictly connected with the funerary rites, is the chief indicator of the social standard of the deceased. In the territory of Melfi the necropolises contain single and less frequently double burials; they were often used by several members of the family group. Daunian and North Lucanian populations always buried their dead crouched in foetal position as in the maternal womb. Beside the bodies clay vases, often figured, were laid, while in the richer graves metal vessels have been found, certainly used in funerary banquets.

"Princely" tombs since the end of the 7th century B.C. contain precious items of Etruscan and Greek production (especially bronze vases). The funerary items reveal how much the local nobility had adopted customs and rituals of the Greek aristocracy. In many

tombs however, a large quantity of locally manufactured pottery with red and black geometrical patterns, mainly from Canosa, has also been found. The complex rituals adopted by Daunian and North Lucanian populations in honour of the deceased, as well as their social status, are described by the archaeological findings. Warriors are accompanied in the grave by their swords and armours and women by the ornaments worn for particularly important occasions such as the wedding.

AMBER

Amber jewellery, widely traded since the 7th century B.C. stands out among the ornaments displayed in the Museum. The most ancient



*Winged warrior;
amber pendant from
the necropolis of Melfi*

items are found in women's tombs: necklace parts, pendants or decorated *fibulae*, earrings and dresses such as those found at Lavello, Banzi and Melfi. A series of carved amber jewels of a very high standard has been found at Melfi-Pisciolo in the tombs of an aristocratic couple. The wife and even the husband wear sumptuous *parures* of ornaments in gold, silver, ivory and amber: winged feminine heads hint at mythical figures inhabiting the Afterlife, such as Harpies and Syrens, and a winged warrior, naked and with shield and sword, personification of Thanatos (Death) or Hypnos (Sleep) evokes all the mythical creatures accompanying the deceased during his journey beyond this world.

PYTHAGOREAN WORLD AND THE HOPE OF SALVATION

The production of a pottery workshop at Ripacandida, a centre of North Lucanian culture, is specially interesting due to its figured vases inspired by Pythagora's doctrine. On a

small pitcher the heavenly journey into immortality is depicted. During the 4th century B.C. cults of Greek origin are adopted by the Italic populations of Melfi territory, mainly connected with Dionysus and promising a life after death. The crowns laid in the tombs are probably linked with hero worship following Greek usage.

THE TERRITORY OF MELFI AND CANOSA

Large chamber tombs excavated in the rock, which substituted the traditional graves, revealing the influence of Canosa, have been found at Forentum (Lavello), a site well known thanks to archaeological excavations. Intended to receive entire family groups these monumental tombs have façades which remind those of tombs found in the kingdoms of Northern Greece (Macedonia, Epirus). In funerary outfit pottery from the specialized workshops of Canosa predominates: polychrome vases in full relief, painted in white, pink, light blue, black and

Italic-Calcydian bronze helmet, 4th century B.C., from Lavello



brown. "Gilded" and plastered pottery imitate precious prototypes in gold and silver. The craftsmen of Canosa also exported up to the second half of the 4th century B.C. red figured vessels imitating Greek models, made by capable and refined artists.

Terracotta female head, 4th century B.C., from Lavello





The Castle of Melfi, abode of popes and kings, seat of parliaments and councils, tells its visitors the ancient history of this part of Basilicata not only through the archaeological testimony but also thanks to the atmosphere of its rooms and its outer spaces still bearing the traces of the great Frederick II of Swabia. The first square nucleus with corner towers, of Norman origin, was built between the 11th and the 12th century by order of Robert de Hauteville the Guiscard, made duke of Apulia and Calabria by Pope Nicholas II. Four councils were held in the castle between 1059 and 1101 and the First Crusade was proclaimed here in 1089. Important renovation and enlargement works were carried out by Emperor Frederick II of Swabia (1194-1250) who chose Melfi as one of his residences, there enacting the famous "Constitutiones Melphitanae" (1231) the first text of written laws of medieval age, compiled by Pier delle Vigne and Riccardo da Capua. The Castle became subsequently the residence of Charles I of Anjou, King of Sicily, who in 1280 ordered the building of a few rooms adjoining the Throne Hall, of the whole north-east wing with its boundary wall and of three courtyards. Further enlargements were carried out in 1460 by Giovanni II Caracciolo. In 1531 the Emperor Charles V donated the fief of Melfi to Admiral Andrea Doria as a reward for services rendered. Between the 16th and the 18th century the fortress was transformed into a nobiliary abode by the Dorias who remained owners of the castle until 1952 when Andrea Doria Pamphilj donated it to the Italian state. The Castle, due to the numerous renovation and enlargement works, is today an irregular polygonal structure, with eight towers and surrounded by a moat crossed by a bridge, once a drawbridge. The 18th century portal in white stone is surmounted by an inscription with a dedication to Zenobia, daughter of Marcantonio del Carretto and bride of Gian Andrea Doria, prince of Melfi (1590).

THE CASTLE

THE RESTORATION OF THE CASTLE

Restoration and consolidation works have been long and complex owing to the size of the monument, seriously damaged by frequent earthquakes, and to the numerous building extensions which had taken place in the course of the centuries. Important data on the Castle and its history have been acquired thanks to the restoration works carried out by the Soprintendenza per i Beni Architettonici of Basilicata between 1965 and 1968, the first and most significant being the restoration of the Guardroom, the Throne Hall and the original central nucleus of Norman age. In 1970, when the co-operation between the Soprintendenza per i Beni Architettonici and the Soprintendenza Archeologica began, the Castle having become the seat of the Archaeological Museum, several rooms and spaces on the ground floor had to be consolidated to allow the opening of the first section of the Museum. In 1980 a violent earthquake caused serious damages. It became therefore necessary to carry out major strengthening works which led to the completion of the Museum spaces.

DORIA PICTURE GALLERY

A number of paintings are displayed on the first floor, in the 'Doria Rooms'. The Castle was inhabited by the Dorias chiefly during the hunting season and that is why so many pictures of hunting subject were sent from Genoa to be hung on the walls of Melfi Castle. The main body of the picture gallery is formed by a series of fifteen paintings of hunting subject, a nucleus of paintings of sacred subject and by the telero (large canvas) depicting the State of Melfi.



The monumental microasiatic sarcophagus (2nd century B.C.) from nearby Rapolla is displayed in the belfry



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Soprintendenza per il Patrimonio Storico Artistico ed Etnoantropologico



Città di Melfi
Amministrazione Comunale

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del Vulture e Melfese

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Opening hours

Monday 2:00-8:00 P.M.

Tuesday to Sunday 9.00 A.M.-8:00 P.M.

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*Bronze emblem with chimera
in the middle of a round shield,
probably made of perishable material
(leather), beginning of the 5th century B.C.,
from the "Chariot Tomb", Melfi*