

NEAPOLITAN LANGUAGE, (NAPULITANO), AN ACADEMY FOR A WORLD HERITAGE

This document is dedicated to any people contributed to the glory of Neapolitan Heritage and Language and to any Neapolitan unfairly forced to leave from Naples.

In memory of Prof. Carlo Iandolo

Naples, Language and World Heritage.

Naples, its cultural heritage is a world heritage, a patrimony of all humanity, as **UNESCO** reminds us when it decrees the **Historic Center** of the city of Naples as a world heritage, recognizing the uniqueness of the *cultural identity* of Naples and its cultural contribution to all Europe and beyond (**Icomos**).

Neapolitan linguistic heritage is part of this heritage.

That is why this patrimony must be defended by any interference and violation and this is the international work of the **Neapolitan Academy** presided by Massimiliano Verde, especially because in Italy this heritage is often treated, as who speaks it, in a villainous and very degraded way. So Neapolitan Language is not taught, it's treated as the language of the mafia and the ignorants or ridiculous people.

The Neapolitan Academy works and cooperates internationally to promote this cultural heritage, jointly and favoring the dialogue with the other cultural communities that suffer the same or similar problems.

The President of the Neapolitan Academy, **Massimiliano Verde**, made the first *Certificate of the Neapolitan language and culture of European level* (CEFR skilled) recognized in its cultural value by the Municipality and the Mayor of Naples, and this is a historical fact considered the *recognition / patronage of the maxim public institution of the city of Naples*.

The work of Massimiliano Verde is a work to recovery the historical and cultural memory and for social and moral dignity of Neapolitans, wherever in the world and finally for human rights.

The Neapolitan Academy offers its cooperation for study projects and cultural protection of these rights both in Europe and abroad.

Neapolitan language, history and problems.

Massimiliano Verde uses the term *Language* and not dialect for Neapolitan because that is the *language* of the *cultural community* and heritage also to the same Neapolitan *identity* as that developed over the centuries. In fact it's impossible to talk of Neapolitan heritage without to consider the language in which this heritage developed. *The linguistic Neapolitan heritage is itself Neapolitan heritage.*

Neapolitan is a Romance language spoken in its diatopic variations along the mainland of Southern Italy. **It is not a deformation or a minor Italian language.**

Neapolitan is not a derivation of the written or classical Latin, but of vulgar (popular) Latin and has received during the passage of time "loans" by several nations, mainly by pre latin, oscan (there are famous Pompeian inscriptions, attested in the IV book of "*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*") and Greek and only after Latin, Norman, Provençal, Catalan, Valencian, Arabic, Spanish, Anglo-American.

Nevertheless the Neapolitan has influenced with its material and immaterial cultural expressions the culture of the whole world (Icomos-Unesco).

The Neapolitan language is a Romance language which, with Italian is widely spoken (not only in Southern Italy, but also abroad among the thousands of immigrants that Massimiliano Verde calls "*Neapolitanphones*") in their many diatopic variations; it's spoken in the regions of Campania, Basilicata, Calabria, Abruzzo, Molise, Puglia and southern Lazio, on the border with Campania, with all its variables due to origin or geographical location.

In fact UNESCO writes: Neapolitan or otherwise South Italian language, following the ancient frontiers, not only about the language, of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, without Sicily, which has its own language.

Naples, the largest city of ancient "Magna Graecia" for a long time maintained its Doric Greek, later influenced by the "Latin spoken" of the Roman soldiers, merchants, settlers, administrators, etc.

Because already in Roman time a *Greek-Neapolitan* was spoken, (influenced by the speech of the natives), in its phylogeny and modification Neapolitan language, not only in Italy, but also internationally, is of the age of the city of Naples.

In the Middle Ages there is a diffusion of this Vulgar Latin, although there was a partial recovery of the "Greek" language, while dependence on Byzantium (especially in the VI-VII-VIII AD centuries). Thanks the influences of other pre-Latin languages, like Oscan, **Neapolitan basic linguistic system is not indebted to any external influence during the Middle Ages.**

In the drafting of the **Capuano Placius** of 960 AD, first of the four Placiti (also called Placiti of Cassino) from 960 to 963, for the first time we find the *full awareness of the distinction between vulgar and classical Latin, and the conscious use of this distinction.*

The Placiti are four judicial decisions in the vernacular language: the judge was called to resolve a conflict between the monks of the abbey of the monastery of Montecassino.

When the judge hears the testimony on behalf of the Benedictine monks, he transcribes the contents using the *vernacular language of the territory of Campania*, which was the language used by the witnesses themselves. This is for the first time the **official use of the vernacular for legal reasons as opposed to Latin**. For these reasons, the Placito Capuano is considered the first real vernacular Italian text

And is in the Neapolitan language.

Then a short text in Neapolitan, dating from around 1200, contained in a code that is preserved in the National Museum of Paris takes us to the oldest song in the language of Naples, "**Jesce Sole**" (Comes out sun!). The document was a work of **Frederick II**, king of Sicily and Germany and emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (1194-1250): with this document, we have the "official" birth of the **Neapolitan Villanella**.

Villanella is the first form in which a song in Neapolitan language be documented.

The imposition of the Tuscan language (*Tuscanese* in the Neapolitan language) was a hegemonic medium for the banking and mercantile of Florence, it was not imposed for its "superior" cultural value (such as for the Italian state television after the Second World War, with the imposition of Italian) but only for **historical and policies reasons**.

As well proven by excellent teachers and experts, **Dante Alighieri** constituted a language "at desk" that is to say, *inventing* it, step by step. The vulgar Fiorentino prevailed for political and economic reasons, as it is the case of a properly "*constructed*" language.

We must not forget in this sense recent evidence of the theory that the Italian language born at the beginning of the thirteenth century *by the revolt of the Sicilian poets against the ecclesiastical Latin*.

This is the case of fragments of important poems found in Lombardy and attributed among others to authors as **Giacomo da Lentini**, the Notaro, founder of the Sicilian school and to the Emperor-poet, **Friedrich II**, who was his brilliant promoter.

Also remarkable a manuscript, discovered by Luca Cadioli in the attic of a noble house of Milan, that contains the unique faithful translation of the of the *Lancelot du lac*, a novel about the love of Lancelot and Geneva, remembered by Francesca da Rimini in the V Chant of the Hell.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century, in the Neapolitan language, appears "*The history of the destruction of Troy*" by Guido delle Colonne, while the first work in prose is commonly considered a text by Matteo Spinelli, mayor of Giovinazzo, known as "*Diurnalis*" and the "*Cronicón of the Kingdom of Sicily*". Remarkable the "*Epistle*" of **Boccaccio** which is in the Neapolitan language and which is the first text of dialectal literature in prose, written precisely in Neapolitan. Among other documents in Neapolitan we find the "*Letters from the queen **Giovanna I of Naples** and Luigi de Taranto to Niccolò Acciaiuoli*" from March to June 1356.

In 1442 by decree of **Alfonso V of Aragon**, Neapolitan as well replaces the Latin language in the public documents and meeting's court in Naples, (see also in this regard the Code of Aragon of 1458-1460).

Let us return to the traditional Neapolitan song, which is one with the language of Parthenope: the Villanella

The **Neapolitan Villanella** is an alive explosion of sounds, harmony and rhythm and attractive sound of harpsichords, lutes, harps, cymbals, drums, harps and flutes: a mixture of poetic texts, written in Neapolitan language

This type of Neapolitan song spread rapidly, even in Europe.

In the '500 **Giulio Cesare Cortese** y **Giambattista Basile** give a literary and artistic dignity to the Neapolitan language.

Giovan Battista Basile, **Giulio Cesare Cortese**, **Felippo Sgruttendio de Scafato**, in fact adopt the Neapolitan in their literary works.

A true Literary tradition in Neapolitan language born in the first half of the eighteenth century

The Neapolitan literature knew a flowering in all the genres of poetry, prose, theater.

Cortese, Basile and Sgruttendio had in the context of Naples, the same influence to that exerted, in Tuscany and in Italy by Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio. The works of Basile, Cortese and Sgruttendio represent, in fact a basic element to write in Neapolitano at least, until the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Giulio Cesare Cortese is the author of a vast production in Neapolitan, he encompasses several genres, from the poem in octaves (*The journey of Parnassus*), the novel (*Li travagliuse ammore of Ciullo and Perna*), the pastoral fable, the heroic poem.

The **Pentamerone** of Giambattista Basile of Giugliano in Campania (Naples) is a true literary work that anticipates novels like those of the brothers Grimm and Andersen (The gatta Cennerentola is Cinderella, Nennillo Nennella, The Sleeping Beauty, etc.)

Cortese and Basile are the fathers of the Neapolitan language, they give it a real literary dignity.

Lo Cunto by li Cunti (*The Tale of Tales*) or *The Pentamerone* of **Giambattista Basile** from Giugliano in Campania (Naples) is a true literary work that anticipates novels like those of the brothers Grimm and Andersen (*La gatta Cennerentola* will be Cinderella, *Nennillo e Nennella*, Brother and Sister; *Sole, Luna e Talia* will be Sleeping Beauty, etc.).

La Gatta Cenerentola will be remaked by Maestro **Roberto de Simone** in a theatrical masterpiece in the '70.

For its phonetics, morphology, syntax and vocabulary the language of the *Lo Cunto de li Cunti* corresponds to the *really Neapolitan spoken by the people*.

Critics have called **Lo Cunto de li Cunti** the first and most illustrious among the tales'books in the all European civilization

Lo Cunto de li Cunti became a bestseller, it was translated into other European languages : authors such as Perrault, the brothers Grimm and others inspired their works to the Cunto.

The philosopher **Benedetto Croce** who translated the Cunto into the Italian, defined it like "the oldest, richest and most artistic of all popular fables".

However, and incredibly **in Italy this work of the world literature is not studied** because it's in Neapolitan.

That's cause Neapolitan Language is considered in Italy a *degrading subcultural expression* of the Italian language so, in the other side and curiously, the famous cinematographic works expressly dedicated to the Cunto de li Cunti reports just a translation in Italian for the title of the movie (removing even the original neapolitan title)!

In the 18th century, the golden age of the Neapolitan musical school *sees the light*, it is appropriate to use this term the masterpiece of **St. Alphonsus of Liguori** "*Quanno nascette Ninno*" (He comes down from the stars, 1754), a true work of "evangelization" in Neapolitan language. This work is universally known and intimately connected to the marvelous popular tradition of **Neapolitan Nativity**.

Also, once again, we find immortal works of traditional folk singing in Neapolitan language as *Cicerenella*, *Lu Cardillo*, *Lo Guarracino*, and other masterpieces like "*L'osteria di Marechiaro*" (music of **Paisiello**).

The Neapolitan linguistic heritage comes from this extraordinary international tradition.

Only after the Second World War the Italian language was imposed as a national language by the Italian Radio and state television even if Neapolitans continue with their own mother tongue speaking Neapolitan as well.

In fact it's very important to say that (*and this is not just for the popular classes of Naples*) a Neapolitan child for example, (but this is normal also for graduated people) *thinks in Neapolitan*, his own mother tongue and *translates* that he wants to say in Italian. Before to speak *he forms his thought and the correspondent sentence or word* according Neapolitan linguistic structure.

That's proven overall in the case of low or no-scholarized people in a forced situation (interview, for example): they try to speak Italian but express in an Italian-Neapolitan. That's also a bad consequence of a legal imposition of a language, the Italian and a national cultural and mass media politics of denigration of the Neapolitan language. In this situation they think to speak in Italian is better.

That moves a *real cultural conflict*. The value of this bi-lingualism is denied in Italy. Unfortunately this happens not only for not popular classes: *so Neapolitan becomes something to remove*. That's a real violence against a cultural identity.

However Naples is the only city in old Europe where there is still a *people* that speaks its own language as its mother tongue in spite of everything.

Between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there is the international diffusion of the Neapolitan language by the emigration (we have to remember that the great emigration of the Neapolitans, a true **diaspora**, begins with the unification of Italy in 1861) with the triumph of classical Neapolitan song thanks to Authors and poets as Salvatore di Giacomo, (**Era de Maggio, A Mmarechiaro**), Vincenzo Russo (**I' te vurrià vasà**), Ferdinando Russo, (**'O surdato 'e Gaeta**, neapolitan poem); Giovanni Capurro and Eduardo Di Capua (**'O sole mio**), sung by all the great artists and other great tenor of all time, such as **Enrico Caruso**, such as the "king" of the Neapolitan melodrama, **Mario Merola**; de Curtis (**Torna a Surriento**, Comes back to Sorrento), Peppino Turco and Luigi Denza (**Funiculì Funiculà**, the first modern jingle, Aniello Califano (**'O surdato 'nnammurato**) Pino Daniele (**Napul'è, Terra mia**), Renato Carosone (**Maruzzella, Te vuó fà l'americano**) Sergio Bruni, Mario Trevi....and more and more..

One interminable epos of songs in Neapolitan language that everyone knows ...

In the theater, the poetry and the cinematographic side Neapolitan Language (in this sense we have to remember that *Neorealism* was born in Naples) from the nineteenth century until today Naples has produced family of artists like **di Maio's, Barra, de Filippo's** and authors like **Eduardo Scarpetta, Raffaele Viviani, Antonio de Curtis-Totò, Massimo Troisi, Nino Taranto, Roberto de Simone, Gilda Mignonette** (Griselda Andreatini- the "Queen of the Emigrants" - **Luciano de Crescenzo, Luisa Conte**, and many others such as **Mariano Rigillo**, *director of the School of Theater of the Stabile's Theatre of Naples.*

Dr.Mariano Rigillo signed a note of recommendation for the initiatives of the Neapolitan Academy such as for the Verde's method to teach Neapolitan language

Current situation, problems and violations of cultural, linguistic rights and dignity of the Neapolitan community

For all of the above, Neapolitan should be *institutionally* protected and revalued as a literary, and artistic language, a language of the theater, poetry, movie....

This is even more necessary cause especially young people, nowadays they write in an absurd Neapolitan quite as a code to decipher: they omit evanescent vowels, use diacritical signs without any reason, mixing vulgar neologisms or worse using words derived by criminal slangs....

This last phenomenon is amplified by Italian mass-media for their commercial purposes: unfortunately they seem to promote a **unique and unilateral negative representation** of the Neapolitan reality, culture and of the South of Italy in general.

This *univocal* negative mass-media's representation about the city of Naples contributes even more to the diffusion among the young Neapolitans of a bad *subculture*: that induces, in a dangerous dominoes effect, this new generation to change its Neapolitan pronunciation and vocabulary in a "violent" way. On the other side Neapolitan speakers are presented as nice ignorants (this is the case of a Telecom advertising in the example of Gennaro, the fool) or loafers (Red bull's advertising). Even cartoons, where negative personages speak with Neapolitan accent (Italian version of **Zootopia**)

Thus Neapolitan language so loses its best characteristics: musicality and expressiveness, which made it internationally famous: young Neapolitan people seem adapt their language (and habits) to the mass media's models: Neapolitan language is presented just as the language of Mafia and mafiosos as "heroes".

Unfortunately there are also Neapolitan artists who lend themselves to this unequivocal representation for the same commercial purposes, contributing to the development to such social models and to the cultural and social *degradation* of this noble language and community, precisely the Neapolitan

This unequivocal media representation about the identity, the community and the Neapolitan language leads to a repeated cultural, social and linguistic **violence** with respect to an entire population and cultural community, which is precisely Neapolitan's and Southern Italy.

For the Italian educational system, at all levels, the question does not arise: Neapolitan is considered just a *worthless dialectal form*, at worst, a *degradation* of the Italian. It has not be taught, pupils and students talking in Neapolitan are *reprimanded*. Worse: Neapolitan mothers are influenced to reprimand their sons if they speak in Neapolitan.

On the other hand there are sterile "academical" polemics among "self-referential" authors who have not concretely come to nothing till today.

To get out of this historic *impasse*, **Massimiliano Verde** with his Academy proposes a *didactic method* according to the studies of two among the most experts on the subject, **Carlo Iandolo** and **Raffaele Bracale**: these distinguished scientists of the Neapolitan language have shown their awareness for the project of the Neapolitan Academy for a concrete phonetic and orthographical arrangement about the Neapolitan language and grammar and for real didactic projects.

This sort of interest about Verde's work is also by the poets **Gennaro Picone** and **Raffaele Pisani**.

Neapolitan should not be identified with the language of the ignorance, illiteracy, vulgarity, but on the contrary with the language of the culture, the poetry and art, in fact this is another work of the Neapolitan Academy of Massimiliano Verde: *to educate* the Neapolitan youth to the correct orthographic use of the Neapolitan language through poetry, songs, theater, finally to educate them to the historical and cultural *value* of this language.

It's a real pedagogical project that Massimiliano Verde desires to spread everywhere because everything Naples has produced it was in this noble language that's the Neapolitan!

On the contrary, today, unfortunately, the Neapolitan, as **UNESCO** reminds, is a vulnerable language, since it is not spoken or correctly written, nor it's *protected* by the Italian Government, although in Italy, Neapolitan - *in its territorial variations* - is the most widely spoken language after Italian.

Also we have to remind the many "*Neapolitanphones*" in the world : it means everyone with or not Neapolitan or Southern Italian origins able to express, to understand, and also to write at least a dialect of the Neapolitan language.

In the USA, Neapolitan is considered title in in the case of private companies, both for the public administration and in Argentina there are university courses of "Napolitano" In the USA italian-american slangs (or expressions) are definitely neapolitan (or sicilian)-american slangs or expressions. In Brazil also there are the largest community of Neapolitan origins (San Paolo)

In Argentina, without considering the contribution of the Neapolitan language to the *Lunfardo* for example, we highlight Neapolitan influence on the **Porteño** of Buenos Aires: the inhabitants in the port area talk a Spanish with a *intonation* closer to that of the Neapolitans than that of any other language as claimed by the researcher **Jorge Gurlekian** of the Laboratory of Sensory Research of Conicet.

Emphasis should also be placed too on the fact that large sections of the population of the Campania region and the "Mezzogiorno" are still **bilingual** and indeed very often their first language is not Italian, but Neapolitan or its variants. Neapolitan is the *first language* immigrants learn when they arrive in Naples.

Today it can also be said that, partly because of the **great migration** of the postwar years in northern Italy, there is also a certain "influence" of the Neapolitan in the Italian language, especially through *song, gastronomy, popular religious traditions*, all the filmography and theater (it is the case of terms like 'A *pucundria* that the encyclopaedia **Treccani** inserted in its dictionary of the Italian language).

It is therefore *unbelievable* that Neapolitan is neither taught nor protected, bearing in mind, on the contrary, that the **European Union** respects cultural, religious and linguistic *diversity*. such as for the **Convention of Faro**, signed by the Italian state) and it refers precisely to the respect of **human rights**, which are protected at the international level.

In this sense he was a Neapolitan himself, Mr. **Arfè**, to raise the recognition and promotion of linguistic rights and the *protection of linguistic diversity* in Europe (Resolution of the European Parliament on the protection of ethnic and linguistic minorities, of 16 October 1981).

For this reason, the **Neapolitan Academy** has made the first course of Neapolitan language of European level *with patronage of the Municipality of Naples* according to a method of teaching QCER / CEFR on viewing and respecting the studies of Prof. Carlo Iandolo and Dr. Raffaele Bracale already members of the Academy.

More, Verde realized official documents in Neapolitan like a tourist information map of the third Municipality of Naples, a documentary paper about his course of Neapolitan and he redacted the **first public document in the Neapolitan language of the 21st century**, than due by the City of Naples, exhibitions, etc.

For all that, it would be very useful at that time, especially nowadays, to apply the Neapolitan language, according to the philological and grammatical studies to which Verde inspires his work, to the most common and social network tools: this is another work task of Massimiliano Verde. He also proposes his courses and lectures both in Italy and abroad (this is the case of didactic programs in France in Brazil, etc.) overall for Neapolitan communities of origin

The Neapolitan language and its linguistic heritage, as we have seen, is in fact *universally* celebrated in all artistic and cultural manifestations, from cinema to theater, singing, poetry (and again, in the choral tradition, the **Mediterranean diet**, of the excellence of ceramic art, etc.) but paradoxically is not taught nor is it properly protected and therefore, in time is *at risk*.

In Italy on the contrary Neapolitan (and anyone speaks it) is *ridiculed* with very stupid stereotypes that usually concern the *mediatic representation* of the citizens of Naples or more of the South of Italy. All that with a concrete effect of **discrimination and offense** to the language, the territory and the same Neapolitan identity, in **violation** of the language's rights as cultural rights and in violation of the fundamental principle of the **Freedom of expression** of the human being, principles recognized and protected in international forums and in the **Italian Constitution** itself.

The cultural and social work for the dignity of the language and the Neapolitan identity is the work of the Neapolitan Academy of Massimiliano Verde

Documentary References by C.Stromboli, C.Iandolo, R.Bracale, Noemi Ghetti, Cecilia Draghi Para LA NACION, Francesco SABATINI