



Interno del Castello



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COMUNE DI NAPOLI
DIPARTIMENTO GABINETTO



Castel dell'Ovo
(literally "Castle of the egg")
Naples

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It stands on the islet of "Megaris", made up by two rocks joined with a great arch.

In the mid-seventh century some people from Cuma landed there and founded the city of Partenope on the Monte Echia lying behind (in 1949 the necropolis was discovered at 10, Nicotera Street during the excavations for the construction of a building that replaced the previous one destroyed by the bombardments of the last war).

During the Roman domination (first century B.C.) on the islet and on the Monte Echia the famous villa of Lucullus was built. It was probably extended with gardens and fountains up to the actual Town Hall Place, as it seems to show a structure brought to the light by the recent excavations under Castelnuovo (literally, "new castle").

The last Roman emperor Romolo Augustolo was confined in the villa (it was fortified by the Emperor Valentiniano III in the mid-fifth century) and he died there after a little while (476 A.C.). His death marked the end of the Roman empire in the west. Afterwards on the islet and on the Mountain Echia some monks and nuns from the East founded a lot of monasteries. They had left their countries dur-



ing the iconoclastic struggle moved by the emperor Leone III Isaurico and they brought with them relics of saints.

Neapolitan people destroyed the fortress at the beginning of the tenth century in order to prevent the Saracens from settling there. The Normans reconstructed it (XII century) so tracing, together with Castel Capuano, two lines of development, of communications and of commerce, one toward the sea and one toward the hinterland. After the construction, the Castel dell'Ovo was inhabited only occasionally.

During the reign of Charles

I the court of the Regal Chamber and the Treasury of the State were moved. In the fifteenth century, the Aragonese - because of the damages suffered during the war between Charles III and Giovanna I and of those provoked by the presence of mercenary troops during the regency of Queen Margherita of Durazzo, widow of Charles III - had to renovate and to transform the castle. So it assumed the form represented in the Table Strozzi.



A visit of the castle must include: the two towers, called Normandia and Maestra, the rests of the church of S. Salvatore, a vaulted Gothic room, an ogive loggia of the fourteenth century, that was changed into chapel in the nineteenth century, the so-called hall of columns, the rests of a fifteenth-century loggiato, the cells of the monks and the jail of Queen Giovanna and the great panoramic balcony with the Spanish guns turned toward the town.

As for the origin of its name (probably due to the form of the construction), a medieval legend tells us that it goes back to the egg that Virgilio would have hidden inside a cage in the undergrounds of the castle, whose destiny as well as the one of the whole city of Naples, would be tied to the destiny of the egg. The chronicles report that, at the time of Queen Giovanna I, the castle was badly damaged because of the collapse of the large arch that joined the two parts of the islet upon which it stands. Therefore the queen was forced to declare solemnly that she had replaced the egg in order to prevent the spreading of the panic throughout the city.