



ITALY

**ISLAMIC  
COMMUNITY  
IN NAPLES**

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THE MERCATO DISTRICT, LOCATED IN THE CENTRE OF NAPLES, HOSTS A HUGE PART OF THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY OF THE TOWN. THE VIEW OF THE BELL TOWER OF THE BASILICA OF SANTA MARIA DEL CARMINE MAGGIORE, NEAR THE MOSQUE, EVOKES THE LOOKS OF A MINARET.

NAPLES HAS ALWAYS BEEN A CROSSROADS OF PEOPLE AND CULTURES. FOR CENTURIES, DIFFERENT INFLUENCES HAVE VISUALLY SHAPED THE CITY AND ITS SOCIAL FABRIC, MAKING IT VERY OPEN TO CONTAMINATIONS AND PRONE TO HOSPITALITY. SPECIFICALLY, THANKS TO ITS GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION AND ITS UNIVERSITY CALLED "L'ORIENTALE", NAPLES HAS ALWAYS BEEN A FAVORITE PLACE FOR MUSLIMS COMING FROM THE OTHER SHORES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA. MORE: THE STRONG ISLAMIC PRESENCE FAVORED, IN THE LAST DECADES, A REMARKABLE GROWTH OF THE CONVERSIONS AMONG LOCALS. THIS TREND BECAME SO IMPORTANT THAT ONE OF THE MAJOR MOSQUE IN TOWN IS NOW RUN BY TWO ITALIANS: THE IMAM AGOSTINO YASIN GENTILE AND ITS PRESIDENT MASSIMO ABDULLAH COZZOLINO. THE MOSQUE IS THE ONE IN PIAZZA DEL MERCATO: TODAY A LANDMARK FOR THE SPREADING OF THE ISLAMIC CULTURE AND A FIRST AID AND CARE CENTRE FOR MIGRANTS. ALTHOUGH IN THE PAST IT HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN ANTI-TERRORISM INVESTIGATIONS.

(ONGOING PROJECT)



FAKIR MOHAMMED, AN ENGINEERING STUDENT FROM MOROCCO LIVING IN ITALY FOR ALMOST TWENTY YEARS, IS THE VICE-COORDINATOR OF THE NAPLES SECTION OF ANOLF 2G, AN ASSOCIATION CARING ABOUT INTEGRATION AND RIGHTS OF THE YOUNG SECOND GENERATION MIGRANTS. IN THE PICTURE, HE'S WITH A FELLOW STUDENT IN THE CLOISTER OF SAN PIETRO MARTIRE, HEADQUARTERS OF THE FACULTY OF LIBERAL ARTS AT THE UNIVERSITY FEDERICO II OF NAPLES.

MASSIMO ABDALLAH COZZOLINO, A FORMER FRANCISCAN FRIAR WITH A DEGREE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE AND NOW THE PRESIDENT OF ISLAMIC CULTURAL ASSOCIATION ZAYD IBN THABIT. WITH THE NEAPOLITAN IMAM AGOSTINO YASIN GENTILE, HE HAS BEEN MANAGING THE MOSQUE OF MERCATO SQUARE SINCE 2004.





THE MOSQUE OF MERCATO SQUARE, OFFICIALLY: ISLAMIC CULTURAL ASSOCIATION ZAYD IBN THABIT, IS ONE OF THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT MOSQUES IN NAPLES. THE PLACE, IN THE PAST AT THE CENTRE OF SOME ANTI-TERRORISM INVESTIGATIONS, IS NOW A FIRST CARE CENTRE FOR MIGRANTS, OFFERING LEGAL AND SANITARY SUPPORT. IT OFFERS ALSO A CANTEEN, SHOWERS FOR THOSE IN NEED AND IT'S A REFERENCE FOR THE DIFFUSION OF ISLAMIC CULTURE. THE FRIDAY PRAYER HERE IS SO CROWDED, AND THE AVAILABLE ROOM SO MINIMAL, THAT DEVOTEES ARE FORCED TO PRAY ON THE STREET IN FRONT OF THE MAIN ENTRANCE OF THE MOSQUE, TEMPORARILY STOPPING THE TRAFFIC.

ASSOCIAZIONE CULTURALE  
ISLAMICA  
ZAYD IBN THABIT  
الجمعية الثقافية الإسلامية زيد بن ثابت



THE FRIDAY PRAYER IN THE MOSQUE OF MERCATO SQUARE.

AHMAD AMAR IS HARETH'S YOUNGER BROTHER AND SON OF IMAM ABDALLAH.  
IN THE PICTURE, AN EXAMINATION DURING AN ARABIC LANGUAGE CLASS IN THE MOSQUE OF CORSO ARNALDO LUCCI.  
FLORIANA AISHA VASSALLO (LEFT) AND CLAUDIA ZAYNAB BARONE (RIGHT) ARE TWO ITALIANS CONVERTED TO ISLAM.





DANILO ALÌ MARRAFFINO, AKA “’O TRE”, MC OF THE NEAPOLITAN HIP HOP DUO “ANNURÀ”, WAS BORN IN NAPLES AND CURRENTLY STUDIES “ELECTRONIC MUSIC AND SOUND ENGINEERING” AT THE CIMAROSA CONSERVATORY IN AVELLINO. HE CONVERTED TO ISLAM ABOUT 12 YEARS AGO.

AGOSTINO YASIN GENTILE, THE NEAPOLITAN IMAM OF THE MOSQUE OF MERCATO SQUARE, DURING A DA'WA IN A MOSQUE IN EBOLI. THE TERM DA'WA INDICATES THE ACTION OF PROSELYTISM CONSIDERED A DUTY FOR ANY GOOD MUSLIM. DURING THIS MEETING THE EXPERIENCE OF GIOVANNI MADHY MANNA, A NEAPOLITAN CONVERTED TO ISLAM, WAS INTRODUCED. IN 2009, GENTILE PRAYED FOR "DIALOGUE AMONG RELIGIONS" ON THE INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY IN FRONT OF THE WALL USED TO EXECUTE THE DEPORTEES INSIDE AUSCHWITZ CONCENTRATION CAMP.



DURING A PRAYER AT HOME. HABIBA EL BKIRI (LEFT) WAS BORN IN REGGIO EMILIA FROM A MOROCCAN MUSLIM FATHER AND AN ITALIAN, COMMUNIST AND ATHEIST MOTHER. GIULIANA MARINO (RIGHT) IS FROM CALABRIA, A REGION OF SOUTH ITALY. THEY'RE ROOMMATE, COMING FROM VERY DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS BUT ARE BOTH SUFI MUSLIMS, AND IN NAPLES TO STUDY AT THE EASTERN UNIVERSITY IN NAPLES.





THE EID AL-FITR IS THE SECOND HOLIDAY FOR IMPORTANCE IN THE ISLAMIC CULTURE. IT MARKS THE END OF RAMADAN, THE FASTING MONTH, AND IN NAPLES IS USUALLY CELEBRATED OUTDOOR, AS MOSQUES ARE TOO SMALL. EVEN OUTSIDE, WOMEN PRAY IN A DEDICATED AREA.



A DEVOTEE IN THE MOSQUE OF MERCATO SQUARE DURING AN INDIVIDUAL PRAYER.



HABIBA EL BKIRI.  
SHE WAS BORN IN REGGIO EMILIA, FROM A MOROCCAN MUSLIM FATHER  
AND AN ITALIAN, COMMUNIST AND ATHEIST MOTHER. SHE LIVES AND STUDIES IN NAPLES.



HARETH AMAR IN THE FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE OF THE FEDERICO II UNIVERSITY IN NAPLES, WHERE HE STUDIES. HE'S THE PRESIDENT OF THE YOUNG MUSLIMS OF ITALY.



GIOVANNI YUNES ARGANO, A RETIRED RAILWAYMAN, CONVERTED TO ISLAM IN 2009 AND STARTED TO STUDY THE ARABIC LANGUAGE. HIS FAMILY, PRACTICING CATHOLIC, SLOWLY ACCEPTED HIS CONVERSION, BUT NOT LIVING WITH HIS LOVED ONES HIS RELIGION CAUSE GIOVANNI, EVEN AFTER YEARS, A SENSE OF SOLITUDE.



INSIDE THE MOSQUE OF MERCATO SQUARE.



THE ISLAMIC FRIDAY IS THE DAY IN WHICH MUSLIMS GO TO THE MOSQUE FOR THE PUBLIC PRAYER OF MIDDAY (JUMU'AH). AN INJURED LEG DIDN'T STOP THIS DEVOTEE TO BE THERE, AND HE'S EXCUSED TO DO THE RITUAL MOVES.



FLORIANA AISHA VASSALLO CONVERTED TO ISLAM IN 2014. SHE WAS AN ATHEIST, NOW SHE STUDIES ARABIC IN THE MOSQUE AND THINK ISLAM GAVE HER SELF-ESTEEM. "IN THE WESTERN WORLD, WOMEN'S BODY ARE OFTEN OBJECTS IN THE HANDS OF MEN. IN THE ISLAMIC ONE, A WOMAN OWNS HER OWN BODY" SHE SAYS.



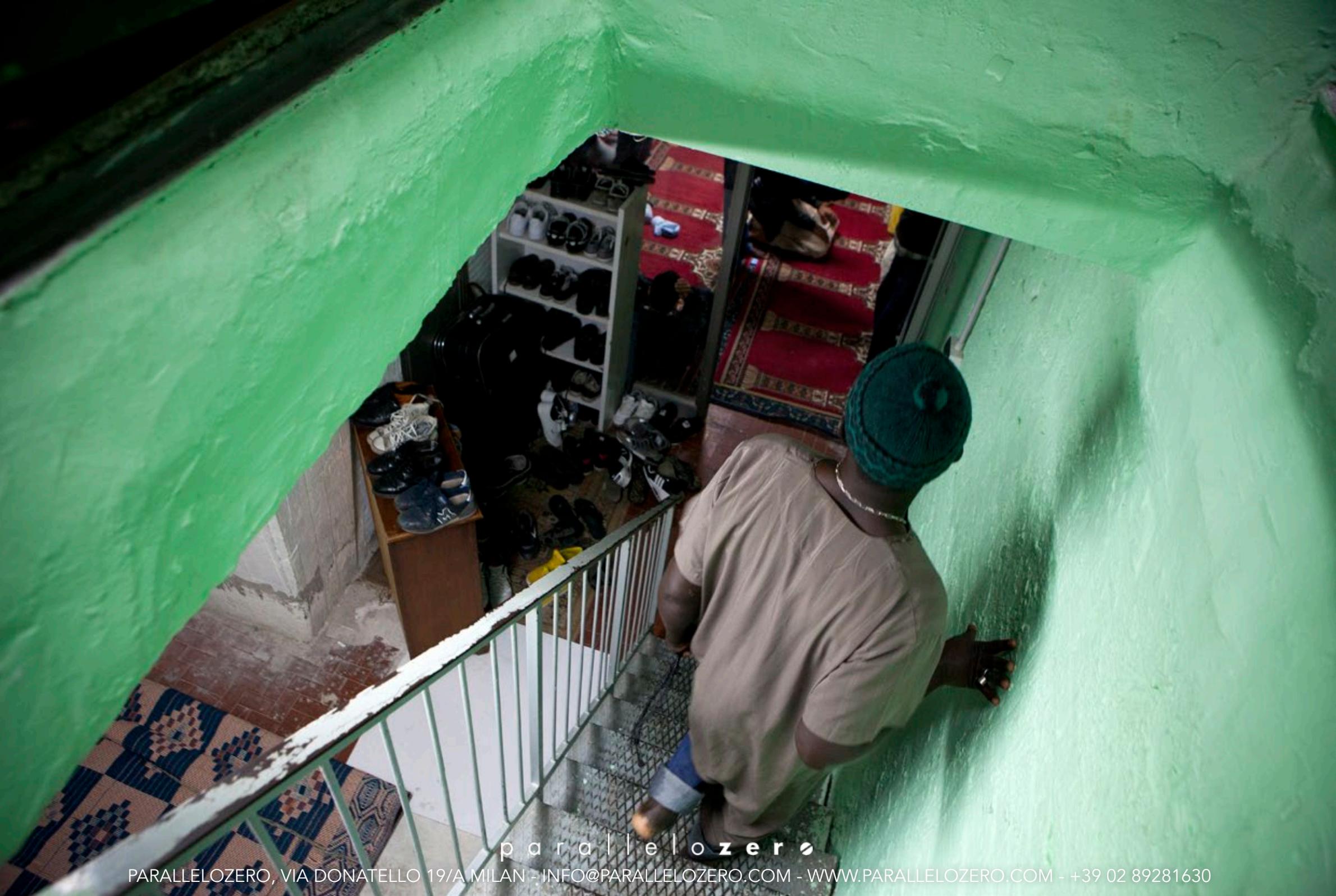
G., AN ITALIAN CONVERTED TO ISLAM, DISCUSSES WITH OTHER DEVOTEES BEFORE THE PRAYER OF THE AFTERNOON IN THE MOSQUE OF CORSO ARNALDO LUCCI.



THE FRIDAY PRAYER USUALLY STOPS FOR A WHILE THE TRAFFIC IN A STREET OF THE AREA,  
BUT THIS DOESN'T SEEM TO BE A GREAT PROBLEM FOR RESIDENTS.  
AT THE END OF THE RITE, SOME DEVOTEES QUICKLY CLEAR THE ROAD FROM CARPETS.

TO NAME A CONVERSION, MUSLIMS USE THE VERB "TO COME BACK".  
HERE IS CLEMENTE OMAR SGAMBATO, AN ITALIAN WHO "CAME BACK" TO ISLAM.





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