THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

SESSION 8 – MILAN AND NAPLES – RENAISSANCE UNDER PRINCES
Session Topics

Session 1 – The Renaissance in Context
Session 2 – Brunelleschi’s Dome
Session 3 - Leonardo Bruni – The Ideal Humanist
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Causes of Renaissance Culture – Context is everything

In Florence:
Wealth dispersed over a relatively wide population of a commercial, “common” class
A Republican government with intense competition for recognition and *dignitas*
Appreciation and identification with classical western Roman history and order in public life
A Catholic culture supporting seeking indulgences

In Venice:
Wealth dispersed over a relatively wide population of a commercial, “common” class
An aristocratic semi-Republican government with an emphasis on consensus
Appreciation and identification with classical eastern Roman history
A Catholic culture supporting seeking indulgences
In Rome:
An aristocratic controlled violent pseudo government
Status asserted by violence and resulting disorder
A poor agricultural economy
No non noble middle class
Milan the Principality

- Milan the capital of the Western Roman Empire in 4th and 5th century

- Milan began its late Medieval history as a principality (autocratic city-state) with sovereignty derived from the Holy Roman Emperors.

- By 1311, the Visconti family had managed to defeat all other challengers to Milan autocratic leadership and established a 140 year monarchical dynasty.
  - Visconti family, eager for strengthened legitimacy by acceptance into the fraternity of European dynasties, began of marrying Visconti princesses into foreign ruling houses, including France.

- These marriages would establish inheritance claims against Milan that that would be made in the early 1500s by France, resulting in a loss of Italian liberty for over 300 years.
Strengthening Milan

- The Visconti worked an imperialistic program to increase Milan’s Northern Italy controlled territory to increase cash and population growth.

- Under Giovanni Visconti (1290–1354), who was both archbishop and lord of Milan, the city grew in power and stature.

- Giovanni extended Milan’s hegemony to include Bologna and Genoa, seeking to acquire a large territorial state in north-central Italy and greater riches for the dynasty.

- Giovanni was the patron of the Renaissance poet Petrarch, who spent eight years in Milan.

- Giovanni’s successors would continue his expansionist policies, making Milan the most powerful state in northern Italy by 1400.
The End of the Visconti dynasty

Beginning in 1378, Giangaleazzo Visconti, who purchased the ducal title from the Holy Roman Emperor, moved swiftly to consolidate Milan’s control over Northern Italy.

- Giangaleazzo will use his mercenary forces to conquer Northern Italy towns and then towns in Tuscany. (It was Giangaleazzo who dies in the siege of Florence in 1402.)

- Had Giangaleazzo not died in 1402 before he could conquer Florence, the history of Italy might have been very different.

- Unfortunately, Giangaleazzo’s heirs, first, Gianmaria and, later, Filippo Maria, were troubled and vicious. With the death of Filippo in 1447 came the end of the legitimate Visconti line.
The people of Milan rose in revolt and declared the formation of a republic. They hired the mercenary captain/entrepreneur Francesco Sforza to protect their city against the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III who wanted to step into the Visconti inheritance and name his own duke.

Sforza used his military strength and links by marriage with the Visconti family to secure Milan as its autocrat and eliminate the republic.

Sforza was financed by Cosimo de Medici, who would act as de facto foreign minister of Florence to forge a sphere of influence treaty (the Peace of Lodi) among Milan, Florence and Venice that would produce peace in Northern Italy until the 1490s.
Milan’s Contributions to Renaissance Culture

Milan gained wealth through its rich agriculture and manufactures of silk and the finest weapons in Europe.

Milan also served as an entrepôt (where goods are brought for import and export, and for collection and distribution) between Italy and northern Europe.

Francesco son and heir, Giangaleazzo, was a patron of art, commissioning both the great cathedral of Milan and the Certosa of Pavia.

The Certosa ("Charterhouse") of Pavia

A monastery and church complex in Lombardy situated near Pavia.

Certosa is renowned for the exuberance of its architecture in both Gothic and Renaissance styles, and its collection of artworks which are particularly representative of the region.
Giangaleazzo resided and maintained his court in Pavia, the former capital of the Lombard kings and of the kingdom of Italy.

The Certosa of Pavia to serve as a mausoleum for the Visconti dynasty.

Ambrogio da Fossano, Duke Gian Galeazzo donates the Charterhouse to the Madonna.
Bergognone, Coronation of the Virgin between Francesco Sforza, Ludovico Sforza and Saints Fortunatus, George and Peter of Verona (apsidal basin), below, altarpiece by Giovanni Battista Crespi.

Giovanni Cristoforo Romano, Benedetto Briosco, tomb of Gian Galeazzo Visconti.
The Central Nave

The Interior of the Church
Naples in the Renaissance

*Fluctuating Rule*

With the collapse of the Roman Empire in 476, the Byzantine and Lombard powers filled the vacuum in southern Italy, while Sicily was conquered by the Arabs.

During the twelfth century the Normans drove out the Arabs and unified Sicily and southern Italy, establishing the "Kingdom of the Two Sicilies," Naples and Sicily, recognized by the Papacy and given the status of a "papal fief."

Normans ousted by the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry VI (1194–98), whose son, Frederick II (1198–1250), inherited his father's title and dominion over Germany, southern Italy and Sicily.
After the death of Frederick II, imperial authority in southern Italy and Sicily disintegrated and the kingdom passed, with papal assistance, to Charles I of Anjou (1266–85), son of Louis VIII of France.

In 1288 a violent revolt against Charles in Sicily, the so-called “Sicilian Vespers”, led to the Sicilian rebels proclaiming Peter of Aragon (in present day Spain) as their king and the kingdom split between Sicily (controlled by Aragons) and Naples (controlled by the Angevins of present day Spain).
The Angevins “ruled” in Naples until 1435; imposed the political and cultural values of the French court on their kingdom.

By 1400 their power was on the decline as a string of ineffective rulers failed to cope with corruption and civic unrest.

Queen Joanna II (1414–35), after an argument with her heir, Louis III of Anjou, replaced Louis as her heir in 1421 with Alfonso V, King of Aragon and Sicily (1416–58).

Joanna changed her Will in 1423, disinheriting Alfonso in favor of Louis III’s brother, René of Anjou.

Joanna II’s death in 1435 was followed by war between the rival Aragon and Angevin claims for the succession (1435–42) and it was Alfonso of Aragon who emerged victorious as new King of Naples.
Alfonso of Aragon (r. 1432-1458)

To reinforce his legitimacy in Naples, Alfonso engaged in a building and cultural program to show his affinity and himself part of Italian Renaissance culture.

Drawing deliberately on the imagery of imperial Rome, Alfonso rode into the city in a chariot with a huge procession of his soldiers and courtiers through specially-decorated streets and squares that culminated in an imposing triumphal arch, the Roman symbol of military victory, and his conquest was ‘legitimized’ by a figure representing Julius Caesar.

On his Castello Aragonese (Castello Nuovo) in Naples, Alfonso commissioned a relief of his procession.
- With a population of nearly 100,000, Naples was much the same size as Milan, but not as prosperous.

- Mostly an agricultural community with persistent claims of authority by local nobility.

- Angevin economic policies had discouraged the growth of an urban middle class and the Aragon-Angevin war had damaged the city’s economy as well as its architecture.

- The Florentine Banks made loans to Alfonso and managed its grain trade with Florence, growing richer.
Alfonso’s appreciation of Italian culture

- Created a cosmopolitan court dominated by Spaniards but included Flemish musicians and painters and Italian central and northern humanists employed as secretaries in his administration.

- Alfonso attempted to create an “Academy” environment between fighting Rome and other Italian city states.

- Alfonso I’s humanists provided propaganda to legitimize his position as King of Naples which was insecure at a variety of levels.
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Recognition from Italian powers came slowly. Initially, only the Este rulers of Ferrara established links with the new régime: Leonello d’Este married Alfonso’s daughter, Maria (1444) and sent his younger brothers to train at the court. Florence and Venice finally recognized Alfonso I as legitimate ruler of Naples in 1450.
Before he captured the crown of Naples, Alfonso had a reputation as a scholar, bringing with him from Aragon and Palermo a substantial library and the desire to converse with learned men.

Alfonso, like the artistic patrons of Northern Italy, saw patronage of scholarship and culture as a means of celebrating his rule and dynasty.

Alfonso extended invitations to a great many celebrated humanists, some of whom refused, like Leonardo Bruni, and to Antonio Beccadelli (1394–1471) who had been born in Palermo, hence his academic nickname of “Panormita” (from the ancient Greek name for Palermo).
Panormita employed as a secretary employed by Alfonso to deal with diplomatic affairs.

Panormita wrote a biography of Alfonso stressing his religious devotion, military skills and political acumen.

Panormita underlined the success and power of ancient Roman Emperors who had been born in Spain, notably Trajan and Hadrian, as precedents for Alfonso’s rule in Italy.

Roman Circus ruins in present day Tarragona, Spain
Notable characteristic of Alfonso's court was the evening literary discussions, readings of plays, and “learned” conversations that followed dinner.

These informal dialogues seem after about 1447 to have been shaped by Panormita into a kind of humanist academy.

The kind of competition which we have seen as so important to the development of the Renaissance north of the Kingdom of Sicily was transported in a highly concentrated form to Naples, building a context for cultural excellence.

However, native nobles were still indifferent to Roman culture.
One of the most prominent humanists from the North to enter Alfonso’s orbit was Lorenzo Valla (1407–57).

Some of the most influential works of the Italian Renaissance outside of Florence were consequently produced in Naples by Valla: On Free Will, On the Profession of the Religious, and his Annotations on the New Testament.

Most revolutionary of Valla’s texts was the cataclysmic On the False Donation of Constantine.

Valla’s text was purposely composed to destroy the papacy’s claim to feudal suzerainty over Naples and written to support Alfonso’s struggles with the pope.
The Italian Renaissance in summary

Rebirth of Culture based in part on Ancient Rome

Development through theory and experience of Republican government

Commercial explosion in trading providing movable wealth to spend on art and architecture

Artistic development of realistic figures and Classical building and sculpture styles

Developed most fervently in Florence and Venice, commercial centers and Republican governance allowing diverse input
Thank you for your attendance, questions and curiosity.
In the future, the Italian Renaissance, Part II – The High Renaissance.