

# MINORI

Ancient “*Rheginna Minor*”

## AMALFI COAST



most important evidence of a Roman - era habitation on the Amalfi Coast. The history of this villa and its habitants breaks off mysteriously around the 5th century A.D.. In the 7th century, with the mysterious arrival of the relics of Santa Trofimena on the shores of Minori, this nucleus moves downhill to create a new settlement along the shoreline. In 987 the former Reginna Minor was raised to the status bishopric, and for more than 600 years live under a succession of 57 resident bishops. In the Middle Ages, Minori was an important centre of ship-building, with close links to the maritime republic of Amalfi, and shared in the fortunes and misfortunes of the neighbour down the coast. In the town centre, along the present - day Corso Vittorio Emanuele, ran the Regginolo, a stream which since the Middle Ages and until well into the 20th century provided power and water to mills in the entire valley, making possible, as well, the production of high quality pasta, such maccheroni and paste minute. Minori was also a centre

for the production of celebrated Amalfi paper, but the agriculture was, most of all, important to mark the history and character of this area. The architectural features of its hillside farms, sloping down to the sea in a series of terraced gardens shored up with mortar less stones walls, with their interconnected system of small canals and large irrigation tanks, are the result of a careful pattern of a farm construction, carried out over many centuries, that testifies to the importance of citrus called “sfusato amalfitano”.

### The Saint coming from the sea - History and worship

To the ninth century, on the occasion of the invention of the relics of St. Trofimena, dates the drafting of a first, brief biography of the Blessed Virgin and martyr enriched in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of news drawn from tradition. From this we can deduce that the cult of St. Trofimena, whose body has been kept in Minori since 640, is very ancient. Protector of the town and patron saint of the Old Duchy of Amalfi, she was martyred under the tyrannical rule and persecution of Diocletian and Maximilian in 304. The body of the saint was found on the beach of Minori in a marble urn on which were engraved verses that told the life, escape and death of the saint.

The idea was to transport the urn to the church, dedicated to the Holy Cross, with the presence of the Bishop of Amalfi Pietro. In the year 838 the relics were moved to Amalfi to avoid that they were stolen by Sicardo, prince of Benevento, who aimed to make his church more powerful,

but unfortunately Sicardo attacked Amalfi and stole the relics of the saint. In the year 839 Sicardo died, through the intercession of Orso, Bishop of Benevento and Pietro II, Bishop of Amalfi, were returned to Minori. The cult of this Saint is deeply rooted in the people of Minori who give her immense faith, especially on the occasion of the three solemn festivities that occur during the year. The relics of the Saint's body are still kept in the crypt dedicated to her. The festivity of July 13, which commemorates the return of the sacred remains to Minori after the rat of Sicardo is certainly the most important. On 5th November martyrdom is celebrated, and the processions take place in the morning. The 27th of November is

a little more special and takes place in the evening. The mass, presided over by the Bishop, is celebrated with pastoral music recalling the imminent feast day of Holy Christmas.

**Basilica of S. Trofimena.** Is dedicated to Santa Trofimena, a Sicilian martyr whose remains arrived on the shores of Minori in 640, according to the historian Pompeo Troiano (1666 - 1738). These relics quickly came to be revered not only by the local population but also by inhabitants of the other coastal town as well, and consequently Santa Trofimena served as patron saint of the entire Amalfi Coast. The Basilica is in the form of a Latin cross with a nave and two side aisles, as well as a series of side chapels. Its magnificent decoration in relief plaster can be seen throughout the whole building, and most notably in the area of the apse. The presbytery houses a valuable painting of the crucifixion attributed to Marco Pino da Siena (1520 - 1587). The crypt, patterned after the architectural theme of the church above it, is the focal point of the town's spiritual life. It is here, in the area of antique chapel dedicated to the Saint, where the venerated remains of the Sicilian martyr are housed in an alabaster urn sculpted by Maestro G. Ragazzino in 1794. The three official celebrations in honour of S. Trofimena, the 13<sup>th</sup> of July, the 5<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of November, with the suggestive penitential rites of the Holy Week, are an extraordinary demonstration of the Minori's habitants intense mind.

**Archconfraternity of the SS. Sacramento.** The first documentary dates back to 1545, when the Bishop of Minori, Giovanni Pietro Buono, established an altar in the Basilica of Santa Trofimena dedicated to the Corpus Christi. In 1606 the confraternity was discussed in the annual pastoral report submitted by the Bishop of Minori, Mons. Brandolini, to the Pope. On 30<sup>rd</sup> of June, in 1920, the brotherhood was raised to the status of an Archconfraternity by the Pope Benedict XV. The building is structured as a single hall notable for its sculpted altar in polychrome marble, a large canvas of the Madonna of the Rosary with Saints (dated 1618), and

a wooden altarpiece dating to the 14th century, with the Madonna of Tenderness, in the centre.

**Church of S. Gennaro at Villa Amena.** An example of Romanesque architecture, and is situated in Villa Amena, along the path that unite Minori with Ravello. The church comprises a nave and two side aisles divided by pillars that incorporate columns from previous historical periods, clearly visible along their capitals, two of which in a Corinthian style. Notable on these pillars are a number of urns, one of which functions as the church's holy water receptacle. The columns and the other architectural structures in the church, date back to the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries. An altar polychrome marble sits in the central apse, at the centre of which is a votive niche containing the statue of San Gennaro. In the aisle, on the left, there is an altar dedicated to Madonna del Carmelo, and a little font dating on 1755. Next to the church is the chapel of Santa Maria delle Grazie, notable for its wooden pews constructed for the members of the Confraternity.

**Church di S. Michele a Torre.** This single-room church features wallpaper decoration from the end of the 1800s. On the right is a 16th century painting of San Pietro d'Alcantara, and on the left an Immaculate from the same period.

**Bell tower of the Church of the Annunciation.** Located on the eastern hillside of Minori next to the ruins of the Church of the Annunciation, there is a belfry, an excellent example of the 12th century architecture. It is one of the last examples of the Byzantine-Arab style of architecture built on Italian soil, and its inlaid wall works is the most extensive from the 12th century Campania still in existence.

### **Church of S. Lucia.**

It rises in the street of the same name. It was built in the 15th century with the adjoining Benedictine convent. In 1520 a lay Brotherhood was established in it, which would provide for its restoration. It has a single nave covered with a barrel vault, while the area of the altar is square.

Of particular interest is the Baroque altar with a wooden triptych of the sixth century with statues of St. Lucia, St. Agatha and St. Apollonia, and the tomb of the founder Giovanni Simone in white marble.

### **“Fountain of the Lions”**

(XII century). It is located at the promenade “California”. This is an interesting monument of great value, consisting of lions from the late eleventh century and a striped column from a classic monument, which is a vase with aquatic plants.

### **Sculpture “Respect”.**

Work donated to the city in 1991 by the internationally renowned Japanese sculptor Kazuto Kuetani. These are two long lines of plastic masses that, facing each other, leave a central void that balances them and from which, as if through an ideal window, one could see beyond. The work, previously located at the waterfront “California”, is now located in Gerardo Amato Street.

## **THE ROMAN VILLA**

The natural beauty of the setting must have amazed the Roman patricians and rich citizens from late republican and early imperial eras who built this maritime villa, the existence of which is attested to by historian Luigi Staibano in the Acts of the Archeological Commission of the Citra Principally, written in 1873-1874. In 1952 other rooms in the complex were accidentally discovered which showed the grandeur and scope of the villa such as it appears today. This building out the seashore, likely dates back to Julio-Claudian eras (1<sup>st</sup> century B.C to 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D), and represents a typical example of a century vacation residence. It spreads out over many levels, following the rise of the valley slopes, with the river Regginolo (called Reginna Minor in the Middle Ages) passing through the center of it. The villa is divided into two sections around the triclinium-nymphaeum ( eating areas with votive nymph's altar ) : the section on the east side features the bathing area, notable for its mosaics with geometric design, while the section apposite is divided into various reception rooms and space suitable for music etc. The mosaic pictorial

decoration confirms dating the structure believe that some of the structural alterations are from the Severian era (3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D) , especially the scene frons (theatrical decorations) and wall structures for the dining beds in the triclinium. The triporticus, a spectacular mooring area for arriving sea craft that provided access to the buildings behind was spread out across the entire front area of the site , with half column windows (since filled in ) that still preserve residual elements of the original pictorial decorations . Of special notes is the pool, which was once in the center of viridarium (garden area) . The antiquities museum , located next to the remains of the uppermost level of the structure, features archeological finds from other areas of the town (testifying to the large area occupied by the villa), as well as those from neighboring districts. It also contains a number of coins from the period.

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