

31. COLAPESCE

The legend of **Niccolò Pesce**, known as Colapesce or “Nick the Fish” he was such a good swimmer, originated in the Middle Ages. It was said that the young man had **webbed fingers, fins and scales**: half man and half fish, he could live at the bottom of the sea. Legend has it that Niccolò Pesce, when he wanted to travel long distances, got a huge fish to swallow him and then, when he got to where he wanted to be, cut open the belly of the fish and climbed out.

Colapesce lived in the sea between **Naples and Messina**, which is why the king of Naples once invited him to go down into the depths and see what secrets they hid. Colapesce told the king that the bottom of the sea was covered in priceless treasure; when he came back up he brought huge amounts of jewels he had found in the caves and channels under the island of Megaride.

A **bas-relief** on the front of a building in **via Mezzocannone**, which shows a **bearded, hairy man** with knife in hand, is thought to be Colapesce. This is because people in XVII century remembered him as a **wild-looking man** who sometimes came up from the sea to talk to sailors and tell them what he had discovered. This man became the symbol for the Port area.