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Artistic syncretism between East and West in the roundels on the right door leaf of Bohemond I's mausoleum in Canosa (early 12th century)

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Abstract

Among the several examples of Islamic influences on the medieval art and architecture of the southern Italy, the mausoleum of Bohemond I in Canosa (Apulia) stands out for importance. Numerous studies have been devoted to this monument, and in particular to its famous bronze door, but still no attention has been paid to the decoration of its right leaf. A mixture of Islamic and Byzantine elements can be found in its decorative roundels, which betray the syncretic influences that built up the artistic background of Bohemond I himself.

Keywords: Canosa, Bohemond I, bronze door, Islamic art, Byzantine art.

Early in 1932, in an article published in *Oriens Christianus* Franz Taeschner wondered about the role played by Christians and Muslims in shaping and developing Islamic art.¹ The mausoleum of Bohemond I in Canosa (Apulia) is well suited into this theme, as a Christian monument where the two artistic cultures dialogued and both Christianity and Islam left their mark.

1. See Taeschner 1932.

1. Bohemond I, a Christian ‘prince of Syria’

Much has been written about the person and personality of Bohemond I, the hero of the first Crusade whose striking deeds inspired often-imaginative stories. His family background strongly affected the beginning of his life. Though the son of Robert Guiscard and Alberada of Buonalbergo, the annulment of his parents’ marriage left him disinherited. After his father’s death he obtained, at the price of a fight with his half-brother Roger Borsa,² only some territories in the southeast of Apulia (Taranto, Otranto, Conversano, Bari and Gallipoli), and the lands and harbours facing the eastern Mediterranean. The East then became the horizon to look at. Since his childhood Bohemond I was aware that homeland would have offered no fortune, therefore he should build his way outside of Italy, relying on his personal skills and the warfare techniques he learnt from his father.³ The eastern bank of the Mediterranean appeared to him the perfect place where he could have conquered the position he missed by family line.

Bohemond I’s approach towards Byzantines and Muslims is the favourite topic of many stories telling his adventures. As far as the former are concerned, his hostility towards the *basileus* is unanimously recognized. Across the years, he ran with the emperor a political game made up of contradictions and controversial attitudes, from time to time concealing or discovering his real intentions. It is very likely, however, that

2. Roger Borsa was the son of the princess Sikelgaita, the second wife of Robert Guiscard. See Marin 1997: 152-154.

3. Robert Guiscard brought Bohemond with him during the war campaign he led in Greece from 1081 to 1085. That experience was highly formative for the young Bohemond, who developed his skills of *condottiero*. *Ibidem*.

the Byzantine territory was Bohemond I's target from the very beginning. It would be worthy to remind that, in 1071, Robert Guiscard had conquered Bari, the last standing Byzantine possession in Italy, acting as the Pope's vassal.⁴ Therefore, Bohemond I was raised and trained during a period characterized by conflictual relations between Normans and Byzantines.

On the other hand, opinions on Bohemond I's attitude toward the Muslims differ. Older historiography looks inclined to emphasise the opposition between Crusaders and infidels portraying Bohemond I as a champion of the Christian faith.⁵ Recent studies, instead, underline his open-mindedness and consideration of the Muslims as political interlocutors. For instance, his attempts to prevent massacres by the Crusaders are attested, coherently with a custom that the Normans had already happily applied in Sicily.⁶

Few words are due to clarify who were the 'Turks' faced by the Crusaders and briefly retrace the history of the region in the period under discussion. When the Crusaders arrived, Syria had already been a disputed region, being at the crossroads of the main stakeholders on the scene, namely, the Byzantines, the Seljuqs and the Fatimids (though the latter caliphate was already reduced to a military vizierate in Egypt only nominally under their dominion).⁷

4. The relationship between the Pope and Byzantium had deteriorated significantly after the papal excommunication in 1054 resulted in the schism. See Holt 1986: 17.

5. See Huillard Bréholles 1844; Michaud 1877.

6. See the report provided by the anonymous author of the chronicle of the First Crusade in Marin 1997: 152.

7. For further information, see Holt 1986.

The Seljuqs were a dynasty of Turkmen origin, who from 1055 had supplanted the Buyids (945-1055) in the protection and *de facto* control of the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad. Bearing the title of sultans, they carried out a significant expansion culminating in the pivotal victory of Manzikert (1071) over the Byzantine Roman Diogenes. Thus, a branch of the Seljuq family established the Sultanate of Rum (a term used to indicate 'Rome' and, therefore, the West) in the Anatolian region, that once was the seat of the Roman Empire. By 1079, the whole area including northern Syria, Antioch and Jerusalem had come under the reign of sultan Malik Shāh (1072-1092), whose rule marks the apogee of the dynasty.

The Fatimids, on the other hand, kept only the coastal strip on the south of Tyre, and their recapture of Jerusalem was a very ephemeral one, lasting just a year before the Crusaders took hold.

What is of interest in this paper are the artistic influences that Byzantines and Muslims may have exerted on Bohemond I and the design of his mausoleum.

Where Bohemond I died is still a matter of debate. Some indicate the northern Italy,⁸ some others the Palestine⁹ or, more precisely, Antioch.¹⁰ In any case, it is certain that his remains were transferred to the cathedral in Canosa, which he had contributed to build, where they rested until the completion of the adjacent mausoleum dedicated to him. The patron of

8. See Grabar 1980: 166.

9. According to Jairazbohy (1965: 69), Alberada brought back to Italy the body of Bohemond I.

10. See Fonseca 2015: 22.

this work is alternatively identified in his mother Alberada¹¹ or his wife Constance.¹² Whether it was the mother, who could not protect his fate after she had been repudiated, or the wife, who had followed him on his travels through France and then probably to the East, it is likely that one of the two closest women to him was committed to make his memory timeless.

To identify the mausoleum's patron counts in explaining the stylistic choice made in designing both the architectural and decorative project. Already travellers from the 17th century onwards,¹³ as well as scholars,¹⁴ stressed the untraditional shape of the structure and its similarity to Islamic buildings. In particular, domed mausoleums with square or octagonal plans are abundant in the Syrian region. The fact that a man, depicted as a proud Crusader, was buried in a building that resembles an Islamic *qubba* is enough to raise some questions. Such a choice can hardly be considered a random one. It is not to be excluded that Bohemond I himself left dispositions about his own burial. In fact, one may take for granted his knowledge of the eastern monuments that might have served as architectural models for his mausoleum: the architectural reliquary of Athanasius (10th-early 11th century) in

11. See Bertelli 2015: 248.

12. See Derosa 2015: 280; Andenna 2015: 158. In 1106, Bohemond I married Constance of France, daughter of the king Philip I, in Chartres during his campaign of propaganda in favour of a new crusade against the Byzantines. See Ieva 2015: 331-332.

13. See Ieva 2015: 303.

14. See Bertaux 1895: 419-453; Grabar 1980: 166. Derosa (2015: 269) underlines that the model is common to the 12th century Islamic east, but otherwise unknown.

Antioch and the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.¹⁵ His arrogant, resolute character described by contemporary sources¹⁶ fits well with the picture of a man who wanted his feats in the Holy Land to remain impressed in the memory of those who would have come after him and, why not, of those in his homeland (i.e. the southern Italy) who had underestimated his value.

Bohemond I's attachment to the East can be easily deduced by some episodes of his history. Antioch was perhaps the only land he ever truly perceived as his own, which he obtained through the sweat of battle and the shrewdness of his own talent (fig. 1). A proof of it can be found in the moment when he disdained to continue the march towards Jerusalem as the other Crusaders did after the taking of Antioch, to stop there and consolidate his power.¹⁷ Furthermore, the consecrations of two archbishops destined to Tarsus and Mamistra and a bishop for Artah, which he obtained during his pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1099, represent strategic decisions to strengthen his influence on the surrounding territories. The same is true of the various raids and conquest's attempts he made in northern Syria to expand and secure his principedom against the threat posed by the Muslims to the east and by the Byzantines to the north. One of these expansionist attempts, precisely the one he carried out to-

15. See Ieva (2015: 331-332).

16. The portray sketched by Anna Comnena is revealing; see for instance Marin 1997: 153.

17. Antioch was of strategic importance to all the contenders from a territorial point of view. Moreover, it embodied a strong symbolic meaning for Christianity, as it was the first episcopal seat of the apostle San Peter – a status it shared with Rome itself. See Russo 2015: 134.



Fig. 1. Antioch's fall. *Histoire de Guillaume de Tyr*, end of 1096 – beginning of 1097. Lione, Bibliothèque municipale, Ms. 828, detail of fol. 42 (after Chiellini Nari, M. 1997. "Iconografia delle crociate." In Rey-Delqué, M. ed. *Le Crociate. L'Oriente e l'Occidente da Urbano II a San Luigi 1096-1270*. Milano: Electa. 176).

wards Melitene (Malatya, on the north of Antioch), in the territory under the control of the Danishmendids (a Turkmen dynasty, 1071-1178), costed him three years of imprisonment from 1100 to 1103.¹⁸ The memory of those years deeply marked Bohemond I, who during his trip to France stopped in Limoges specifically to thank Saint Leonard – a saint patron of prisoners – bringing as a gift silver chains, symbol of his imprisonment and liberation.¹⁹

18. See Asbridge 2015: 167-168. Ghāzi Gümüştegin, emir of Sebasteia (Sivas), alternatively rival or allied of the Seljuqs, seized Bohemond I near Melitene (Malatya). See von Falkenhausen 2015: 106.

19. See Russo 2015: 159.

The inscriptions on the door of the mausoleum recall Bohemond I as *miles Christi*; those on his tomb define him as the ‘magnanimous prince of Syria’. These are therefore the titles by which Bohemond I lasts on Earth, underlining once again a duality between Christianity and the East that appears free from any contradiction in his point of view.²⁰

2. The roundels on the right door leaf

The bronze door, as well as the whole mausoleum, has been the subject of numerous investigations, especially by scholars of Western art. The references to this architectural element from the point of view of Islamic art are perhaps less well known.

The door is composed of two leafs that present differences in size, in technical manufacturing, as well as in the formal composition. A frame filled by a vegetable motif borders both of them, also dividing the surface of the right leaf into four panels. Conversely, three roundels decorate the smooth left door leaf (fig. 2). The detailed analyses of the door’s layout and its manufacture have already been exhaustively presented, just as the proposed dating hypotheses.²¹ The numerous and evident Christian elements of the door have been studied in depth by eminent art historians and

20. See Ieva 2015: 317.

21. The right door leaf is made by massively cast and then recomposed tiles. Such technique was unknown in Europe; the only evidence comes from the southern pair of doors at the western entrance of the Cappella Palatina (see Zorić 2006: 33-46). The right leaf of Canosa would have been a model for them; see Cadei (2009: 433-434) for an exhaustive summary and the related bibliography. About the inner doors on the west side of the Cappella Palatina, see Gasbarri 2016.

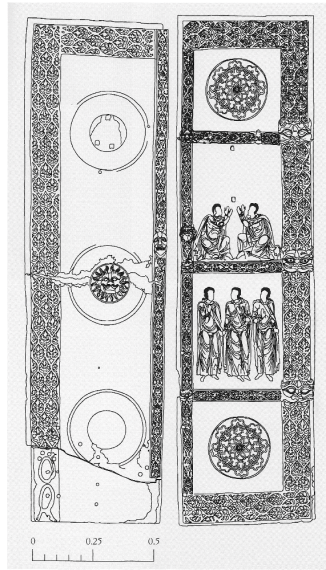


Fig. 2. Drawing of the bronze door of the mausoleum of Bohemond I in Canosa (by L. Manganelli, after Cadei, A. 2009. “La porta del mausoleo di Boemondo a Canosa tra Oriente e Occidente.” In Iacobini, A. ed. *Le porte del Paradiso. Arte e tecnologia bizantina tra Italia e Mediterraneo*. Roma: Campisano Editore. 429-470, fig. 19).

attention has been paid also to the three roundels of the left leaf, whose pseudo-Kufic decoration suggests a direct connection with Islamic art.²² This kind of motif inspired to Islamic epigraphy had a considerable diffusion in many monuments and works of art (textiles, paintings, sculptures and others) of southern Italy.²³ The focus of this brief paper, instead, are the geometric, vegetal and zoomorphic motifs that adorn the roundels on the right leaf of the mausoleum, which have been little investigated so far.

22. See Jayrabzboy 1965; Garton 1973: 104, pl. 5a; Beckwith 1976: 273; Napolitano 2017.

23. See Fontana 1999; *Ead.* 2001: 217-225.

The date of production of the door can be set between 1111 – the year of Bohemond I's death – and 1120.²⁴ As confirmed by the studies led so far, the left door leaf was probably produced at the beginning of the 11th century for the cathedral of Canosa, and then adapted to the narrower space of the mausoleum's door.²⁵ Accordingly, the decorative roundels on the left door leaf – which bear a pseudo-Kufic ornament – precede chronologically the 'geometric' roundels on the right leaf and represent their (at least formal) model. Thus a different ornament, equally connected to the Islamic artistic tradition, was proposed. The words chosen by Michele Amari in his description of the bronze door of Canosa are revealing: he uses an adjective as strong as "servile" to stress how closely such decoration imitated Islamic art.²⁶

As already said, the right door leaf is divided into four panels: the two central panels include engraved figurative scenes of Christian theme; the two 'geometric' roundels, identical to each other, stand out in the upper and lower panels, as to frame them.

The manufacturing technique is the same used for the roundels on the left leaf: a circular, raised fillet limits the ground covering decoration moulded on the inside. The composition is rather dense, so it need to be analysed one element at a time (fig. 3).

Two intersected squares, each rotated of 45 degrees with respect to the other, design the perimeter of an eight-pointed

24. See Jairazbhoy 1965: 70. The burial of Bohemond I in the mausoleum is mentioned in the diploma (1118) of William II of Hauteville, who made generous donations to the cathedral. See Ieva 2015: 305.

25. See Garton 1973.

26. Amari (1939: III.3, 886) mentions "arabeschi finissimi e complicati".

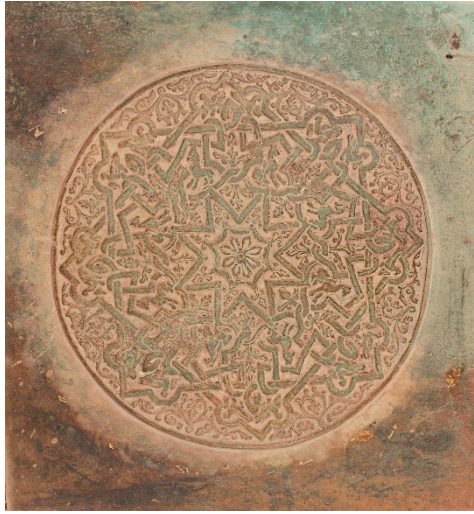


Fig. 3. Roundel with geometric pattern on the right door leaf of Bohemond I's mausoleum in Canosa (©Maria Vittoria Fontana 1999).

star. Each star's vertex is flanked by two half-lobes, which greatly accentuate the motion of the design, as well as giving rise to niches useful for housing zoomorphic elements to which we will return later.

The eight-pointed scheme originates from the roundel's central nucleus and propagate centrifugally from an eight-petal flower, echoed by an octagon with slightly concave sides, followed by a narrow eight-pointed star. These are the clearest geometrical elements.

In the space between these and the two squares there is a sort of octagon with concave sides that reproduces to a greater extent the one in the nucleus. Its reading is not easy since the shape is composed of a continuous ribbon developing interlaces, binding on top of the squares' sides and running as a chain motif outside the eight-pointed star.

The two squares look autonomous, while the pattern they include, and which is linked to them, seems to be generated by a single, continuous ribbon. It is a self-sufficient type of interlace, concluded in itself, which includes its own edges: the ribbon's origin is not visible, nor there is any contact point between the edge of the roundel and the geometric design inside it.²⁷ Therefore, it belongs not to the type of interlace that ideally continues beyond the boundaries of the decorative space and tends towards infinity. Nevertheless, this perception of a virtually uninterrupted pattern is expressed by the interlace that occupies the middle section of the roundel. Its visual complexity, the difficulty in chasing its boundaries, in seeking – in vain – the beginning and the end, transmit a continuous, perpetual movement, which is quite different from the static, central, eight-pointed star. The resulting space is also ideally open, divided into compartments originating from the interlace itself but deprived of any further frame. According to Trilling, the interlace can play an apotropaic role, for this reason it often appears on entrances in both the Christian and Islamic contexts, and by extension on the covers or first pages of the sacred books as well.²⁸ In the complex geometric scheme, it is possible to identify some references to the Islamic art. The eight-petal flower of-

27. See Trilling 1995: 61.

28. See Trilling 1995: 76. Patterns made of interlaced ribbons occur also in the geometric discs on the right flank of the cathedral in Troia (Foggia) and into a roundel on the flank of the episcopal cathedral in Monte Sant'Angelo (Foggia; see Gabrieli and Scerrato 1979: figs. 353-354, 361). The latter monument was important as the national sanctuary of the Longobards in southern Italy, and then became an essential stop during the travel to the Holy Land.

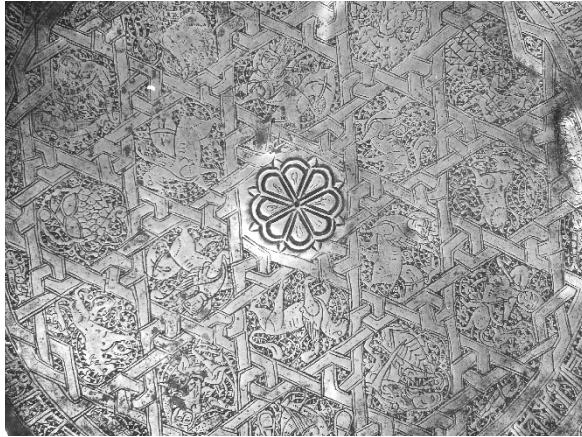


Fig. 4. Detail of a copper alloy basin from the Eastern Iranian lands, 12th century, ©IsIAO archive.

ten occurs on Islamic metalwork, occupying the cavetto of open vessels. The shape of the two flowers is not identical, but it is composed of the same number of petals, thus producing the same geometric echo in designs out of them. The continuous ribbon, concluded in itself, that runs within a perimeter giving life to geometric spaces is also a common motif in Islamic art (fig. 4).

Considering in particular the two turned squares, it is necessary to specify that they represent a less usual version of the most famous six-pointed star scheme composed of two triangles. Yet, an important reference can be found in the milieu of Norman art, even if in a later work: the mantle of Roger II (fig. 5), made in the royal factories of Palermo and dated to 1133-1134 on the basis of the Kufic inscription it bears, whose ornamental design is linked to the artistic tradition of the Fatimid court. The squares appear above the lions' heads, inside a circular stud of cloisonné enamel surrounded



Fig. 5. Mantle of Roger II, Palermo, 1133-1134, Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (Inv. no. XIII 14; after Bauer, R. 2006. "Il manto di Ruggero II e le vesti regie." In Andaloro, M. ed. *Nobiles Officinae. Perle, filigrane e trame di seta dal Palazzo Reale di Palermo*. 2 vols. Palermo: Giuseppe Maimone Editore. II, 403-407).

by coloured stones and glasses, which probably refers to a cosmic meaning. Two squares are superimposed to form an eight-pointed star, which encloses a solar image. This cosmogram (also repeated in the star-shaped niches on the ceiling of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo) might originate from the Coptic textile art.²⁹

The geometric motifs described so far would satisfy enough the Islamic taste but the cultural richness of this work includes other ornaments that deserve to be analysed: the zoomorphic

29. For both parallels, see Bauer 2006: 47.

and vegetal elements filling in the roundels. The insertion of zoomorphic elements within geometric patterns is not unusual in the Islamic context, especially with regard to metalwork. In fact, the representation of animals played a major role in metalwork already during the first centuries, especially with moulded elements, reaching a full development in the 12th and 13th centuries with zoomorphic elements both moulded and engraved. The decoration is characterized by a rigid allocation of space; any free representation is avoided. The animals represented on the roundels of Canosa are not included into a cartouche or frame nor they have dedicated slots, but still they are comprised in very small spaces resulting in the meshes of the complex geometric scheme. In this respect, a comparison with metalwork basins from the eastern Iranian territories, where real and fantastic animals are inserted in a similar way, comes to mind (fig. 4). Another relevant example comes from a fabric showing birds included into an interlaced design composed by dragons (or snakes)' bodies.³⁰

Animals on the left door leaf are grouped in four pairs repeating identically: quadrupeds are inserted in the chain motif in the intermediate section of the roundel, while birds are arranged under the semi-lobes and vertices of the squares mentioned above. Thus, each pair appears disposed in a back-to-back scheme even if the animals are separated. Such arrangement reveals a high attention to order. The birds are portrayed by three quarters, with partially open, wide wings and a long, thick tail reminiscent of a peacock. The big legs are spaced out as if to suggest a movement. Some

30. The fragment (published in Curatola 2010: cat. no. 76) is among those possibly belonging or related to the lining of Roger II's mantle. About them see Andaloro 2006; Caratsch 2006.

details are engraved, but they limit to those strictly necessary also because the very small size would not allow otherwise. Conversely, in Islamic metalwork birds usually show a rigid position, and abundant details are engraved with precision. As far as the identification of quadrupeds is concerned, it can be observed that they are animals of a certain height, as shown by the long legs ending in a hoof, the long neck and the slender body; the ears and the elongated muzzle as well point to equines.³¹ The incision of further details varies from one specimen to the other; generally, the element occupying the right position in the pair appears to be the worst successful probably due to a flaw in the mould: a sort of addition on the back of the animal was perhaps meant to represent a saddle (?). Equines are not linked to the concept of royalty, a role often played by lions; nor are they heraldically disposed, as it often happens with other animals in official and celebratory contexts (particularly on fabrics);³² nor are they represented in hunting scenes. The size of these zoomorphic elements represents a pivotal feature on which it will be worthy to spend few words. They appear miniaturized, a feature that reminds the artistic context of manuscripts and fabrics, of both Christian and Islamic origin. Animals of the miniaturized type recur, above all, in manuscripts devoted to fairy tales (from Aesop to Bidbao), which derives from oriental models,³³ and in

31. Horses are not so common in Islamic zoomorphic representation, but they are attested on a Byzantine bowl retrieved in the region of Urals bearing scenes of court festivities and dated to the 12th century. See Darkevic 1975: 84.

32. See Scerrato 1962: fig. 69; Falcetano 2016.

33. See Grabar 1980: 167-169.

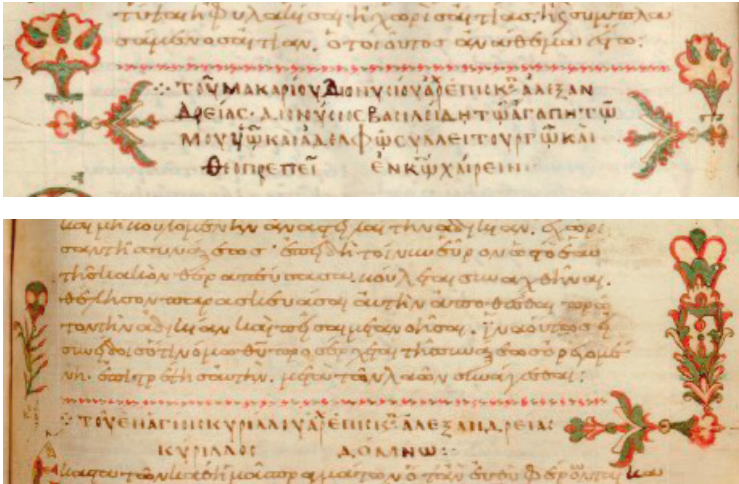


Fig. 6. Details of manuscripts compiled in Greek in Southern Italy, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Ms. Suppl. grec 1085, foll. 114 v, 155 (after Grabar, A. 1972. *Les manuscrits grecs enluminés de provenance italienne IXe-XIe siècles*. Paris: Bibliothèque de Cahiers archéologiques).

the famous representations included in the manuscript of Rabano Mauro.³⁴ A further example of miniaturised animals is attested in the prestigious – and thus highly visible – decoration of St. Cuthbert’s dalmatic. The body of the saint was transferred to the cathedral of Durham in 1104, and his fabric is described in the account of a monk (1175) through the following words: “the most subtle figures of flowers and little beasts, very minute in both workmanship and design, and interwoven in this fabric”.³⁵ Small, freely arranged animals recur on some Egyptian fabrics dating from the 12th-13th century.³⁶ The scenes

34. See Cavallo 1996.

35. See Schapiro 1947: 138-139.

36. See *Tissus d’Egypte* 1993: cat. no. 179.

depicted in the lining of Roger II's mantle are also enlivened by birds.³⁷ Caratsch identifies them as derived from the late Carolingian illuminated manuscripts whose influence reached as far as Montecassino and inspired the production of southern Italy.³⁸ Such an opinion rests on the observation already advanced by André Grabar regarding the Greek manuscripts illuminated in southern Italy in the 10th-11th century (fig. 6), in which he recognised the arabesques' bands traditionally employed in the Islamic context to adorn the headings of Quranic *suras* or as separators between one *sura* and the following.³⁹

The numerous vegetal elements appearing on the bronze roundel can be considered as ground fillers: a palmette stands at the top of each vertex of the small, internal octagon; upside-down turned palmettes of bigger size, composed of three scrolls and inserted in the resulting spaces of the eight-pointed star, correspond to this. Identical palmettes repeat beyond the chain motif. Finally, an arabesque fills the outer spaces spared by the two large squares.

From a typological point of view, these patterns are hardly comparable with the repertoire of Islamic metalwork; however, a closer examination allows recognising that the type of palmette here employed was widespread in the Umayyad period (661-750) – especially taking into account the larger ones, developed horizontally near the outer edge of the roundel. They can be compared to the palmettes recurrent in the mosaics adorning ancient Islamic architectures of high symbolic value such as the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

37. The lining is reputed earlier than the mantle. See Caratsch 2006: II, 183.

38. *Eadem* 2006: 187.

39. See footnote n°. 33; see also Grabar 1972.

3. Vehicles of Islamic artistic influence to Canosa

The analysis of the roundels that adorn the right leaf of the bronze door in Canosa leads to a substantial confirmation of the stylistic syncretism evident in the whole mausoleum. As it has been already said, elements of Islamic and Christian-Byzantine origin coexist harmoniously. It would be useful to recall some of the numerous sources and the ways of influence detected.

The area of Canosa had already known the domination of the Aghlabids (9th century) and, even after the expulsion of the Muslims (10th-11th century), artisans of Islamic artistic background remained in Apulia ensuring a continuity in the repertoire and style that should not be underestimated as a possible source of inspiration. The adoption of Islamic models is also confirmed by the Apulian zoomorphic sculptures.⁴⁰ Many elements lead us to imagine Roger of Melfi,⁴¹ the artisan who signs the door of the mausoleum (perhaps the author of the whole building),⁴² as belonging to such a school.⁴³

40 The reference probably points to the carved marble capitals featuring double-bodied, monocephalous lions and griffins in the cathedral of Otranto founded by Bohemond I in 1080 that are clearly inspired to Islamic models most likely derived from fabrics. See Gabrieli and Scerrato 1979: figs. 351-352.

41. With regard to the possible interpretations of the signatures, see Bertaux 1895; Cadei 2009: 431; Bertelli 2015.

42. See Ieva 2015: 302.

43. The left leaf may have been made by Roger of Melfi for another monument (the inscription mentions the plural *has ianuas*) or it might have been adapted by him. The addition of the now lost tile bearing the image of Mary with the child would have been added to transform an originally Islamic leaf into a Christian one. Cadei (2009: 431-432, 438-439) excludes not to interpret the inscription with a locative sense, which would imply that a foundry was established inside the monument during

Moreover, it should not be forgotten that the war spoils brought to Troia from Palermo by Robert Guiscard in 1073 included iron doors, and marble pillars and capitals. According to Jayrabdhoy, these architectural elements and furnishings could explain the close relationship between the Sicilian gates and those of al-Mahdiyya.⁴⁴

Along with the local production, mobile objects – fabrics,⁴⁵ manuscripts, wooden and ivory boxes, etc. – must be considered as well. Their import and wide circulation in Italy is well known. Although the poor conservation of these goods makes it difficult to demonstrate their role as direct models, it is certainly plausible to assume that Bohemond I carried easily movable objects that would have represented refined gifts at the time. They may have been an additional vehicle of Eastern – Coptic and Islamic – artistic traditions to Apulia. Byzantine art, in addition to its direct influences, must have also had a significant role as a vector of Islamic influences in the Christian territory: this is widely testified in southern Italy, in particular on the Adriatic side for reasons of geographical proximity.⁴⁶

Among western scholars, Cadei is certainly the most attentive one in searching for the Islamic influences on the door of Ca-

its construction. So the door would have been made in Canosa. Taking into account its reduced dimensions, at least the right leaf must have been made specifically for the mausoleum.

44. The city was founded on the Tunisian coast in 914 by the Fatimid caliph al-Mahdi; it became the capital in 921.

45. The diffusion of Islamic fabrics is largely attested by the numerous robes bearing borders decorated with Kufic or pseudo-Kufic characters that appear in Italian representations of Christian saints. See Fontana 2016: 56-73.

46 See Fontana 1999: 62-75.

nosa. He recalls the Andalusian sculpture⁴⁷ and carpentry, as well as Seljuq Iran.⁴⁸ To such references, it will be appropriate to add that the motif of the two rotated squares inscribed within roundels is attested on a fabric from Spain ascribed to the second half of the 12th century. In the centre of the squares stands an eight-petal flower with a very soft profile. Even more interesting is the position held by the roundel in the fabric's layout, since it resembles closely that of Bohemond I's door. The roundels, in fact, follow one another within two vertical panels – resembling two leafs – whose space is bordered by frames.⁴⁹ The success of such graphic arrangement is demonstrated by the existence of another fabric, a reproduction that re-proposes the 10th-12th-century style. It shows two roundels in vertical succession alternating with rectangular panels (all including an epigraphic content). An epigraphic frame encloses the design.⁵⁰ The mentioned specimens should not be taken as direct models for the door in

47. Cadei (2009: 435, fig. 16) draws the attention on the spiny acanthus carved on the capitals of the mausoleum, in which he recognises a 'caliphal' type attested at Madinat al-Zahra and in the Cordoba mosque (9th-10th century).

48. *Idem* (2009: 445, fig. 27) identifies in the 10th-century Andalusian carpentry the cultural root that, spreading in the Mediterranean, influenced Spain and France for many centuries to come in the decoration of wood and stone. From such a context, derive the Auvergne doors (see Cahn 1974) and that of the mausoleum of Bohemond I. The latter is the first application to bronze of such tradition. Moreover, he suggests an interesting comparison with a small, Iranian, wood door leaf dating back to the end of the 11th century. It bears an eight-point star in the middle of the bigger discs, which is identical to that appearing in the bronze roundels on the door of Bohemond I's mausoleum.

49. See Otavsky & Salim 1995: cat. no. 92.

50. *Idem*: cat. no. 150.

Canosa, still they demonstrate a style that was widespread at the time and that highly probably circulated across territories and materials.

Despite the numerous studies already carried out, Bohemond I's mausoleum continues to raise questions and open up new avenues of research. The reason why this building is able to keep the interest constantly alive probably lies in the cultural mixture faithfully reflecting the history of the crusader hero who elected Antioch as his principedom. Derosa has perhaps provided the best fitting description of the mausoleum, defining it "*summa della geografia boemonda*", thus interpreting it as the converging point of artistic suggestions of Western and Eastern origin that found in southern Italy the perfect field of application.⁵¹

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51. See Derosa 2015: 280.

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