

Kufic Ornamental Motifs in the Wall Paintings of Six Churches in Southern Italy

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The churches we are concerned with here are in South-eastern Italy where, more than in other parts of Southern Italy (with the exception of Calabria), the Byzantine presence and Byzantine influence were obviously strong.¹ Islam arrived on the Apulian coast from the 11th to 13th century was often mediated by Byzantium: this is verifiable in techniques, iconographies and styles. One case in particular concerns the epigraphic characters of Islamic derivation which abound in many media and, specifically, in architectural decoration: in other words, stone, stucco, mosaic, painting and so on. But, if the Byzantine mediation is evident, it is very important to observe that the labour is always local.² We will look at six churches. They do not constitute a «catalogue», but offer a good «sample» of pseudo-kufic of the 13th century.³ First of all, I wish to present the map of the six churches with frescoes (Fig. 1). Four of them are in Apulia: Gravina (province of Bari), Massafra (province of Taranto), Squinzano (on the road between Lecce and Brindisi) and Otranto (both provinces of Lecce). The other two are in the present-day Lucania (or Basilicata): Matera and the former town of Anglona, near Tursi (province of Matera).⁴ Furthermore, I wish to specify that three of them (those in Massafra, Gravina and Matera) are rock-churches, small chapels hewn out of the rock, without doors.⁵ Before starting the description of the frescoes and, in particular, of their epigraphic cycles, I wish to say few words about the choice of the expression «pseudo-kufic». A great scholar, George Carpenter Miles, coined the word «Kufesque».⁶ In a study published in a volume in honour of Miles, Richard Ettinghausen specified that Kufesque is a synthesis of the two words «Kufic» and «arabesque», i.e. letters in the Kufic style.⁷ But I prefer «pseudo-kufic» not only because its literal meaning is more evident, but above all for a further two reasons. First of all, «pseudo-kufic» allows us to distinguish both the instances of Kufic letters that do not form an Arabic word – i.e. a pseudo-ductus or kufesque – and that (very frequent in Islam itself) of words of real meaning written in Kufic and assembled together without a complete sense, or repeated (once or more times) in progression or in alternation – i.e. a

¹For the historical context Gay (1904) is still very important; but see now also Falkenhausen 1978, 1983; Guillou 1980, with earlier bibliography at p. 403. For a more general and more recent outline, see Arnaldi, Cavallo 1997, with earlier bibliography. Regarding the historical-artistic aspect see, besides the contributions on the influence of Byzantium on Western art in general: Koehler 1941, Kitzinger 1966a, Wietzmann 1966, Demus 1970, see, specifically, Diehl 1894; Medea 1964; Prandi 1964; Guillou 1973, 1974; Belting 1974; Pace 1980, 1983, 1985, 1986; Rotili 1980; Falla Castelfranchi 1991.

² «Rarissimo è il caso [...] di pittori greci attivi sulla sponda italiana del Mediterraneo, ovvero riconoscibili formalmente come tali. Escluse dirette tangenze con i grandi centri metropolitani, quali Costantinopoli o Salonicco, le province dell'impero – dalla Cappadocia alla Grecia, continentale o insulare – possono offrire casi di 'equivalenza' o di 'omogeneità' ma di rado, se non mai, di effettivo interscambio (note 6: Al problema delle «aree omogenee» è stata dedicata una serie di sette convegni organizzati biennialmente dal 1971 al 1984 da C. D. Fonseca per l'Università di Lecce. Ne sono stati editi, a cura dello stesso, i relativi Atti, tutti tranne il primo [Genova, 1975] pubblicati a Galatina [1977-1988]. Con molte inesattezze e carenze bibliografiche, per l'Italia meridionale, il tema è stato anche affrontato da A. J. Wharton, *Art of Empire. Painting and Architecture of the Byzantine Periphery. A Comparative Study of Four Provinces*, University Park, Pa. – London 1988.)» (Pace 1994b, pp. 291, and 301).

³ In the course of this paper we will consider also the minute pseudo-kufic characters of the churches of S. Margherita and S. Gregorio at Mottola, S. Simeone a Famosa at Massafra, and S. Niccolò dei Greci in Lecce, see our notes 34, 37, 42, 55, and Fig. 17a-c.

⁴ About the pseudo-kufic of these churches see Fontana 1990-91, 1993, p. 456 (partially transl. in English: Fontana 1995, pp. 297-98), 1999, 2010; Falla Castelfranchi 1991, pp. 126-33; Safran 1992, p. 124.

⁵ On the overcoming of the expression «Basilian churches» in favour of «rock-churches» see the bibliographical synthesis in Lavermicocca 1978, p. 327. See also Fonseca 1980, with bibliographical references at pp. 403-8.

⁶ Miles 1964, p. 20.

⁷ Ettinghausen 1976, p. 28.

pseudo-writing.⁸ Last, but not least, «pseudo-kufic» allows us to use, similarly, the word «pseudo-cursive» (very frequent in the art of Italian Renaissance) using the same distinctions and for the same purposes as «pseudo-kufic». I would firstly like to draw a distinction between the two uses of pseudo-kufic that can be found in the frescoes of these churches. The most widespread, present in all six of them, is what one may call «decorative», inasmuch as it decorates architectural elements (arches, pillars and corbels) that are either structural or pictorially reproduced. The other, present only in two churches, can be defined as «narrative» or «descriptive» (and therefore «incidental»), and regards the pictorial reproduction of objects (textiles, shields and so on), probably, but not necessarily, of Muslim manufacture, on which these epigraphic or pseudo-epigraphic characters appeared. The following description is based on the division into a number of types of pseudo-kufic «decoratively» used, i.e. the use present in all six of the churches. The fundamental distinction that one will make is between a continuous ductus and an interrupted one. Indeed, one can claim that there are two main types of decorative pseudo-kufic, i. e. of architectural decoration. First (1), an interrupted ductus, formed by groups of small elements (one or more) deriving from Kufic, always resting on a vegetal scroll;⁹ second (2), a continuous ductus without scrolls or any other sort of appendages. This precise distinction that one will find in these frescoes leads us to deduce that the circumstance is not casual and that, very probably, it derives from well defined models. Later, one will see if there is also a different chronological arrangement in the affirmation of the two types.

1. The first type of pseudo-kufic, with an interrupted ductus, can be found in the frescoes of three Apulian churches: S. Pietro at Otranto, S. Maria di Cerrate at Squinzano and S. Marco at Massafra.¹⁰

1.1 The small church of S. Pietro at Otranto (Figs. 1-3) is in the historical centre of the town, surrounded by other buildings.¹¹ Its square plan with a central dome supported by four columns (Fig. 2) is of the very ancient Byzantine type (roughly the 9th century) and its inner wall paintings are not all of the same period. Among the later ones, the half vault of the main apse representing the Virgin with Child and two angels is framed by an arch; this one is painted in blue with white letters in a beautiful foliated and floriated Kufic¹² resting on a red vegetal and continuous scroll (Fig. 3).

1.2 Squinzano lies on the road between Lecce and Brindisi, and the abbey of S. Maria di Cerrate (Figs. 1, 4-5, 7) is situated close to the small town.¹³ An external portico can be found on the left side of the entrance; the interior of the church presents three aisles (Fig. 4). The paintings have not yet been monographically published,¹⁴ but both Valentino Pace and Marina Falla Castelfranchi have paid them a good deal of attention.¹⁵ The half vault of the central apse contains the Ascension of Christ. The arch framing this apse, and all of the eight arches separating the nave from the aisles, are painted in blue with white letters resting on a red vegetal scroll, with odd green leaves (Fig. 5a-c). Unlike the precise Kufic letters of the previous example, these are only a memory of Arabic calligraphy and, in some cases, due to an attempt at a «three dimensional» representation, they bear a close resemblance to «trumpets»; nevertheless one can distinguish some *lām-alif* (also the ل type)

⁸ The bibliography on pseudo-kufic both in Islam and the Byzantine and Christian West is considerable. For pseudo-kufic in Islam, see Sourdel-Thomine 1963; Aanavi 1968, 1969; Bartels 1990. For pseudo-kufic in Byzantine world see, in addition to the works quoted above (notes 6 and 7), Megaw 1934, pp. 104-9; Soteriou 1935; Miles 1964b; Grabar 1971; Nikolić 1982. For pseudo-kufic in the Christian West, see the pioneering essays by de Longpérier 1845; Lavoix 1877. Furthermore, Christie 1922; Soulier 1924a and 1924b, pp. 185-94; Fikri 1934, pp. 255-67; Covi 1954; Erdmann 1953; Spittle 1954; Jairazbhoy 1965, pp. 68-79; Sellheim 1968; Forstner 1972; Schuster-Walser 1978; Auld 1986; Bartels 1990; Fontana 1990-91, 1999, 2002, 2010; Bernardini 1999.

⁹ The use of continuous undulating scrolls with Kufic writing is widespread in Islam, see Flury 1938-39, p. 1744.

¹⁰ The same combination of small groups of pseudo-kufic letters and a vegetal scroll can be found in other regions of Southern Italy, see only the arch of the apse of S. Restituta, below the Cathedral of Naples, 13th century, restored probably in 1592, see Scerrato 1979, p. 304 and Leone de Castris 1993, p. 29, and fig. 102.

¹¹ The literature on this church is considerable, but see the monograph by 1992, with ample bibliography on the history of the building and its paintings.

¹² For these classifications see the fundamental studies by Flury 1938-39 and Grohmann 1957.

¹³ The ancient abbey was built in the small town of Cerrate, called thus because of its position in a place of *cerri*, i.e. a vast expanse of trees (oaks, ashes). The monks who founded it, probably in the 11th or 12th century, abandoned it shortly after the mid-14th century, because of frequent attacks by the Turks, see Coco 1992, p. 48.

¹⁴ They are mentioned by Medea 1939, p. 686, fig. 14, but she does not discuss nor reproduce pseudo-kufic calligraphy.

¹⁵ Pace 1980, pp. 353-354, and figs. 465-6; Falla Castelfranchi 1991, pp. 123-37, and figs. 107-12, 115-19.

and almost two kinds of *kāf*, one of which is «S» shaped (see below and nn. 57 and 75). One of the closest comparisons of pseudo-kufic and a vegetal scroll can be found in the Episkopi church in Mani (Manea), late 12th century, where red pseudo-kufic and a white scroll stand out on a light blue background (Fig. 6; see also below and nn. 24-25). In any case, one cannot help noticing the incredible resemblance between the episodes of Otranto and S. Maria di Cerrate: the same position (in arches) and the same colours.

Furthermore, on the left and right walls of this church there are paintings that, as mentioned before, show some cases of pseudo-kufic of the «descriptive» type. On the left wall one can observe a very damaged fresco depicting St. George (on the left) and St. Demetrius, both on horseback. The shield of St. George – of an oblong shape –, and two round details, both on the coats of their horses, present a black on white pseudo-kufic. While in the details on the coats of the horses the repetition of the letter *kāf* seems to prevail, elsewhere one recognizes the classical motif of *lām-alif*.¹⁶ Around the border of the shield, in particular, each *lām-alif* is over another slightly larger version; the horizontal line of *alif*, joined to *lām* by a semicircle, is proposed again as a mirror image on the background of the shield (this decoration is very popular in the paintings of the late medieval period, as one of the signs indicating the abbreviation by contraction, see below and n. 57).

On the right wall of the church where, presumably in the 15th century, many fragments of paintings were arranged in a patchwork, one observes three separate details of presumably one round shield framed by a *lām-alif* of alternated black or red on white background (Fig. 7). In connection with a same kind of semicircle linking the two letters, a small, tripartite element of the correspondent colour is painted. An Italian example of similar pseudo-kufic painting can be found in the Virgin's throne on the window of stained glass of the Cathedral in Siena (early 14th century).¹⁷

Pseudo-kufic frequently decorates Byzantine and Italian examples of shields: in the middle of the shields (in two mosaics of the Katholikon of Hosios Loukas, in Phocis, 11th century¹⁸) or around the border (in a Byzantine ivory triptych in the Hermitage Museum, 10th century,¹⁹ in two mosaics of the Palatina Chapel in Palermo, first half of the 12th century²⁰) following the use of Islamic writing (e. g. the famous Spanish ivory casket, dated AH 395/AD 1004-1005, in the Museo de Navarra, Pamplona²¹).

1.3 S. Marco is the third church in which can be found groups of pseudo-kufic together with a vegetal scroll (Figs. 1, 8-9); it is a rock-church in the *gravina* of the small town of Massafra, near Taranto.²² Its plan presents three irregular aisles and two apses (Fig. 8). In the first niche on the right, just after the entrance, one observes the painting of the Saints Cosmas and Damian.²³ The arch framing the Saints is painted in yellow with a scroll in black bearing leaves in dark red with black stripes. The groups of pseudo-kufic are formed of two *kāfs* set as a mirror image (Fig. 9). Each group is painted, alternatively, in black or red. These paintings differ, in style and colour, to those in the previous two churches.

I have already spoken about another example in Southern Italy where groups of pseudo-kufic on vegetal scroll appear in a structural arch (see n. 10, above), but I have not yet been able to find this use of lettering on an «arched scroll» in Byzantine painting, although there are examples of linear kind, like in the Episkopi church in Mani (see Fig. 6), and in St. Nicholas to Kyritze, Kastoria, in North-western Macedonia²⁴

¹⁶ For this motif, its use and meaning, see below and note 75; cf. also Fontana 2010.

¹⁷ In this case the *lām-alif* constitutes the galloon of the textile with which the throne is covered in the depiction of the Coronation of the Virgin. Similar motifs can also be seen in the angel's clothes, top right; Carli 1946, pls. III and XIII; see also the drawing in Erdmann 1953, fig. 143.

¹⁸ In the images depicting St. Prokopios (Miles 1964, fig. 55) and St. Demetrios (Miles 1964, fig. 54; for a colour reproduction see Diez, Demus 1931, pl. VII).

¹⁹ The triptych shows the Forty Martyrs and Saints; note the shields of the two saints at the lower left and right (Rice 1963, fig. 2; for a detail of the left shield see also Miles 1964, fig. 57).

²⁰ In Palermo: a mosaic showing St. Demetrios (Miles 1964, fig. 56) and another showing a sleeping soldier, in the episode of St. Peter liberated from the chains placed on him by Herod (for a colour detail see Giordano 1993, fig. 3 at unnumbered p.; in Cefalù: a mosaic showing St. George (for two colours details see Johnson 1994, figs. 5-6).

²¹ For a colour detail see *Al-Andalus* 1992, ill. on p. 201.

²² On this church see Caprara 1979, with earlier bibliography.

²³ On this painting and the other of St. Mark, see Medea 1939, pp. 204-5, and figs. 129-31; De Jerphanion 1939, p. 410: he first recognizes the Kufic characters; Jacovelli 1960, pp. 24-25, and three ills.; Caprara 1979, pp. 63-72, and figs. 24-26. See also Fontana 1999.

²⁴ See Pelekandis 1953, I, pl. 158β.

and the Panaghia at Molivdoskepasto, in North-western Epirus,²⁵ both from the 14th century. An horizontal frieze bearing a vegetal scroll with pseudo-kufic can also be found in Northern Italy, in the hall near the tower at the Rocca Viscontea in Angera (Varese) painted by order of John II Visconti (late 13th-early 14th century).²⁶ It may be interesting to note the combination of Kufic and an animated (ornitomorph) scroll in the stone arch of the portal of the Cathedral of Trani, Apulia, late 12th century (Fig. 10).

2. The second type of pseudo-kufic, with a continuous ductus without scroll, can, in turn, be divided into two sub-groups, according to whether are on structural arches and corbels (2a) or on only painted arches (2b). The church that belongs to the first sub-group is in Basilicata (S. Maria d'Anglona); while two rock-churches in Apulia (Gravina, S. Vito Vecchio; see also n. 34, below) and in Basilicata (Matera, S. Giovanni in Monterrone) belong to the second.

2a. Many friezes with a continuous ductus of pseudo-kufic are painted on the architectural elements of the Cathedral of S. Maria d'Anglona (Figs. 1, 11, 14): the last remains of the Anglona town, a hilltop site near Tursi, in Basilicata. The entrance is sheltered by a portico with a beautiful portal; inside there are three aisles, with six pillars on each side (Fig. 11), and two layers of paintings.²⁷ The earlier one is situated on the vaulted arches: geometric patterns or pseudo-kufic. These last ones are painted only on the first arch on the right (from the entrance), but the fresco is damaged and less than half of the arch remains: a white, foliated Kufic stands out against a light blue background; this Kufic ribbon is framed by a red band outlined in white. The only clear groups of letters that one can distinguish are two unconnected *kāf-alif* and, presumably, *lām-alif*. Furthermore, bands of similar kinds of continuous ductus can be found on pillars and corbels, all dating from the first period of frescoes. To be precise, one can observe pseudo-kufic on pillars and corbels which separate the nave from the right aisle: on the surface of the fourth and fifth pillars (from the entrance, Fig. 14a-b);²⁸ on the corbels of all the

²⁵ See Miles 1964a, fig. 65.

²⁶ See Beltrami 1904, pls. XXV-XXVI; see also the drawing in Erdmann 1953, fig. 115.

²⁷ On this church and its frescoes see Roma 1986, 1989; *Atti. Anglona* (1996), with complete earlier bibliography (see, in particular, the contributions by Castelfranchi 1996 and Pace 1996). Furthermore, it should be noted that, during the excavations carried out in the sixties by David Whitehouse near the church, some terracotta tiles were found (Whitehouse 1969, pp. 68-71, fig. 20, and pls. VI-VIIIa). They are in relief, framed by pseudo-kufic letters (Fig. 12a-b; for colour reproductions see Scerrato 1979, figs. 317-19; see also Fontana 2016). David Whitehouse (p. 71) states «It is not improbable, therefore, that the tiles [...] are distant imitations of stucco panels, carried out in a local style but using a technique imported from Sicily»; he cites as comparative material Sicilian stuccoes and those of S. Maria di Terreti (Calabria), now in the Reggio Calabria Museum (Orsi 1922). These last panels also have frames with pseudo-kufic characters (Fig. 13) – with a ductus that is quite different to that of the terracotta tiles from Anglona – but very similar to those on a sarcophagus marble slab from the Episkopi church at Volo, in Greece, about 1276 (Miles 1964, fig. 53). Furthermore, the Anglona tiles seem to me quite similar to the terracotta tiles from Kievan Rus' (Halych), 12th century, excavated in 1951 in Zolotyi Tik (Western Ukraine), in the L'vivs'kyi Istorychnyi Museum, L'viv (Ukraine; Olenka Z. Pevny, Entry no. 219, with two ill., in Evans, Wixom 1997, p. 319). In fact, as mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the Byzantine mediation played a very important role in the transmission of Islamic motifs, perhaps not so much for Sicily, but without doubt for Calabria. Returning to the tiles of Anglona, Grelle Iusco (1981, p. 28), states: «In questo successivo momento [1253] si aggiunse l'attuale corpo absidale, per il quale il Bertaux [p. 40], datandolo alla seconda metà del secolo notava che le soluzioni decorative ad archetti rampanti, nel timpano della facciata esterna, sono esemplate su modelli della Grecia bizantina, donde probabilmente deriva anche l'impiego di tegole sigillate nel rivestimento dei parametri murari» (see also, in *Atti. Anglona* (1996), the contributions by David Whitehouse, «Santa Maria di Anglona: the Archaeological Evidence», pp. 37-42; and Xenia Muratova, «Sulle piastrelle in terracotta della chiesa di Anglona», pp. 119-120). Comparable terracotta plaques have also been found in Messania, Kalamata, church of St. Kharalampos (Bon 1951, fig. 5; see also Fikri 1934, fig. 319). For a probable example of pseudo-kufic of the «descriptive» type on a cup depicted in the central scene of the painting of Abraham and the three angels on a wall of S. Maria d'Anglona, see ref. in our Note 42 and Fontana 2010.

²⁸ As can be seen from the plan, the two series of pillars, with relative corbels, have been indicated by R = right, and L = left. Furthermore, the numbering of the pillars (p) and corbels (c), from 2 to 6, begins from the entrance; the numbers below (from 1 to 4) refer to the position of the epigraphic bands beginning from the side visible from the nave and proceeding in a clockwise direction. On the pillars one can observe that R4p₁ is painted in red on white, while R5p₁ is in black on white.

pillars, except for the first and fourth (Fig. 14c).²⁹ One also finds a band of pseudo-kufic on the corbel of the sixth pillar on the left (from the entrance).³⁰ The absence of these paintings on the other pillars and corbels could be ascribed to the poor state of conservation and some instances of repainting that, as mentioned before, were carried out in the 15th century. The position and the Kufic ductus on the pillars and corbels are very similar to some paintings in the Episkopi church in Mani where it is possible to locate the closest Byzantine comparison (Fig. 15). There is also a fine continuous ductus in the Hosios Loukas Katholikon, in Phocis,³¹ and in the exonarthex of the church at Daphne (11th century).³² In Northern Italy one can observe a continuous and curvilinear ductus in the capitals in the church of the Saints Vittore and Corona (early 12th century, Fig. 16a-b) at Feltre, near Belluno.³³

2b. A continuous ductus of pseudo-kufic filling not structural but only painted arches can be found in the churches of S. Vito Vecchio at Gravina (Apulia) and S. Giovanni in Monterrone at Matera (Basilicata).³⁴

2b.1 The frescoes from the crypt of S. Vito Vecchio or the Redentor were removed and are now in the Museo Pomarici Santomasi at Gravina where the whole rock-church was rebuilt (Figs. 1, 18-19), with its nave culminating in an apse (Fig. 18). On the two side walls one can see a sequence of standing Saints framed each one by painted arches.³⁵ On the right wall many of these arches are filled with several kinds of pseudo-kufic, all in black on white: (starting from the entrance) the first arch (featuring St. Catherine), the second (Virgin and Child), the fourth (St. Nicholas of Bari) and the fifth (St. Margaret); while the third arch on the right and the other arches on the left wall are filled with different kinds of decorations. One can observe a true pseudo-kufic inventory made up of different forms of *lām-alif* and *kāf*, from the fine Kufic of St. Catherine (Fig. 19) and St. Margaret (where one can recognize a *lām-alif* formed of two *kāf*, set in a mirror image, of the same type of Massafra, and an «horizontal» *kāf* («S» shaped) in the upper middle part of the *lām-alif*) to the special characters of the Virgin and particularly St. Nicholas (*lām-alif* and *kāf*, one will find the same at S. Giovanni in Monterrone: see below for the description and Fig. 21a).

2b.2 One can observe the same scheme in another rock-church in the *sassi* of Matera: S. Giovanni in Monterrone (Figs. 1, 20-21), with an irregular plan and a common entrance with the other rock-church of S. Maria d'Idris (Fig. 20). The arches framing two standing Saints³⁶ are filled with two different kinds of pseudo-kufic painted, alternatively, in black or red on white. The characters are curvilinear in the arch of St. Peter and rectilinear in that of St. James the Lesser. The first (Fig. 21a) is of the type already seen in the arch of the Virgin with Child and that of St. Nicholas in S. Vito Vecchio at Gravina: a *lām-alif* («U» shaped) and a *kāf* («S» shaped) are repeated in a curvilinear and apicated Kufic, according to a model that is almost widespread (see n. 75 and the conclusions). Amongst others, one has to remember both the pictorial examples of similar arches framing either a Virgin with the Child or a St. Bartholomew Apostle in the apse of the rock-church of S.

²⁹ R2c₁ is in white on light blue; the other two, R2c₂ and R2c₃, are painted in red on white. R3c₁ is in red on white; R3c₂ is in white on light blue. R5c₁ is painted in black on white. R6c₁ and R6c₄ are in black on white; R6c₃ is in red on white.

³⁰ On the corbel on the left L6c₄ the pseudo-kufic band is painted in black on white.

³¹ On a corbel of the gallery (see Miles 1964, p. 27, «probably of twelfth century style», fig. 59), and on mortars of many other sites in the exonarthex (Philippidos-Bouras 1970-1972, pls. 8 and 9).

³² In several fragments on the inner faces of the pillar heads (see Miles 1964, fig. 63). The painting showing a building with pseudo-kufic in the Monastery of the Virgin Mary Mavriotissa in Kastoria probably has a more «narrative» function (for a good detail see Moutsopoulos 1967, fig. 76).

³³ The Kufic is nielled on the stone (Alpago Novello 1921, fig. on p. 147, top left).

³⁴ In the same position one finds small elements of the pseudo-kufic type in the 13th century paintings of the two churches of S. Margherita and of S. Gregorio at Mottola (province of Taranto, Apulia). In the first (Fig. 17a-c), both in two contiguous arches framing a Virgin with Child and a St. Lawrence, and in an arch framing another Virgin with Child (Medea 1939, figs. 157-58). In the second, in two contiguous arches framing a Virgin with Child and a St. Bartholomew (Fonseca 1970, fig. 138). See also our Notes 3, and 37.

³⁵ On the frescoes of S. Vito Vecchio see Gabrieli 1936, pp. 40 and 49 (he first recognizes the «elementi alfabetici della lingua araba nella forma cufica corsiva e fiorita») and compares them with those of S. Giovanni in Monterrone at Matera; Medea 1939, pp. 60-66, and figs. 18-22; Medea 1964, fig. 20; Pace 1980, p. 378, and figs. 498-501, 504-5 (he also recognizes the Kufic elements and proposes again the parallel with S. Giovanni in Monterrone); Rotili 1980, pp. 159-60, and fig. 26.

³⁶ On the frescoes of S. Giovanni in Monterrone see Gabrieli 1936, p. 49, no. 114, and pl. I (he recognizes the Arabic letters, see our note 35); Medea 1939, p. 63, note 2; Medea 1964, fig. 19; Pace 1980, p. 378, and fig. 497 (he proposes again the parallel of the Kufic letters with those of Gravina); Rotili 1980, pl. LXII; Grelle Iusco 1981, fig. 54.

Gregorio at Mottola (13th century),³⁷ and other examples such as the mosaics of the Palatina Chapel in Palermo,³⁸ a painted capital from the Crypt of Hosios Loukas, in Phocis, «copied from eleventh-century prototypes»,³⁹ a wall painting depicting a curtain in the Monastery of St John Theologian in Patmos, first decades of the 13th century,⁴⁰ the lower band of the capitals of the church of the Saints Vittore and Corona at Feltre,⁴¹ and the painted kettle in the scene of the Communion of the Apostles in the church of the Holy Apostles at Perachorio, Cyprus (about 1160-80).⁴² The pseudo-kufic of the arch of St. James the Lesser (Fig. 21b) is formed of a motif of *lām-alif* made up of a double *kāf* set in a mirror image, as well as that of the arches of St. Catherine and St. Margaret in S. Vito Vecchio at Gravina (see above),⁴³ where the flourish of the letters is probably reminiscent of that «horizontal» and over positioned *kāf*. In particular, one observes that a very similar pseudo-kufic is also used in a «descriptive» function as a border of the mantle of this saint (in white on red). This is very interesting, because there are not many examples of such kind; one famous example by Giotto is in the Chapel of the Scrovegni in Padua: one kind of pseudo-inscription fills the border of the round medallion framing St. Malachi, and of the saint's clothes.⁴⁴

At present, the dating of the frescoes containing pseudo-kufic characters is as follows:

- late 12th or, more probably, the first quarter of the 13th century: S. Maria di Cerrate at Squinzano;
- first decades of 13th century: S. Marco at Massafra, and S. Maria d'Anglona (about 1200);
- second half of 13th century: S. Pietro at Otranto;
- second half or end of 13th century: S. Vito Vecchio at Gravina, and S. Giovanni in Monterrone at Matera.

Up until 1071, the year of the Norman conquest of Bari, Apulia was part of the Byzantine empire. But all the illustrated paintings with pseudo-kufic have been dated by scholars to no earlier than the late 12th century (S. Maria di Cerrate), at the very beginning of Norman domination. On the other hand, the Byzantine paintings that provide the closest comparisons to our pseudo-kufic decorations (above all Hosios Loukas and the church of the Episkopi in Mani) can be dated to no earlier than the 11th century.

«Dopo quella data [1071] il fenomeno diviene ancora più complesso. In Puglia, in particolare il Salento, ma anche alcune propaggini della Terra di Bari, restano infatti di prevalente religione e cultura greca e le formule figurative non solo per naturale osmosi si mantengono collegate al mondo d'oltremare in quelle aree, ma sono esportate al di là dei propri limiti territoriali».⁴⁵

Most scholars agree in attributing all these paintings to local artists. Valentino Pace, in particular, considers the paintings of S. Maria d'Anglona the work of «italomeridionali», «italo-greci» painters.⁴⁶ Furthermore, all

³⁷ The pseudo-kufic motifs are painted in red on white, «disegni [...] che richiamano le lettere dell'alfabeto» (Fonseca 1970, p. 156, and fig. 138). See also our Notes 3, and 34.

³⁸ On the shield of a soldier, see our note 20. It is less similar the *lām/alif* – *kāf* on the shields of two saints in Hosios Loukas (see our Note 18).

³⁹ Miles 1964, p. 27, and fig. 58.

⁴⁰ Orlandos 1966, fig. 39.

⁴¹ See our Note 33, and Fig. 16a-b.

⁴² See Megaw, Hawkins 1962, fig. 23 (see also Spittle 1954, pp. 141-142, and fig. 12). Only at a distance can one recognize this kind of motif in the pseudo-kufic of a vessel of the same shape painted in the scene of Abraham and the three angels in S. Maria d'Anglona (see Pace 1994b, fig. 365). For other liturgical cups inscribed with pseudo-kufic characters see the following frescoes. In Apulia, the «Last Supper» of S. Simeone a Famosa at Massafra, 13th century (Falla Castelfranchi 1991, colour fig. 146); in Asia Minor, the «Last Supper» of Karanlık Kilise, about 1200-1210 (Restle 1967, II, ill. on p. 235). For an inscribed cup of this shape in Islamic art see the «Baptistère de Saint Louis» (Rice 1953, pl. XXIII; see also Ward 1999). About the whole topic see, more recently, Fontana 2010.

⁴³ For a composition of an angular and apicated *lām-alif* (double *kāf*) in Islamic art, see a Fatimid wool textile, 11th century, of the Bouvier Collection (*Coll. Bouvier* 1993, pp. 261-62, no. 160, and colour fig. 160). Furthermore, it is not identical, but similar as for style, the *lām-alif* (there is no double *kāf*) on the wings of the double-headed eagle of the Spanish 12th-century silk from a reliquary in Quedlinburg, Germany (see von Falke 1913, fig. 185).

⁴⁴ For a good colour reproduction see Semenzato 1970, fig. 34.

⁴⁵ Pace 1994a, p. 289.

⁴⁶ Pace 1994b, p. 283: «Il ciclo fu dipinto nell'iniziale trentennio del XIII secolo da una bottega di pittori che certamente disposero di conoscenze della pittura bizantina quale si era di recente sviluppata tra Patmos e la Macedonia, oltre che nei mosaici di Monreale. Essi non furono comunque 'greci' d'oltremare, ma dovettero

scholars agree on a clear influence of Byzantine pictorial cycles. But although Marina Falla Castelfranchi supports the thesis of there being Byzantine artistic influence, she claims that the artists – specifically she speaks about the pseudo-kufic of S. Maria di Cerrate (see n. 15, above) – were most certainly directly influenced by Islam, with the probable exclusion of a Sicilian mediation. She continues by stating that Egypt and North-Africa would be the Muslim countries most likely to have played this role because of their well-known commercial relations with Italy. Indeed, when observing the use of pseudo-kufic on the arches of this church she claims a direct influence from the inscribed arches of mosques and some Coptic churches in Egypt, while, according to her, such examples would be very rare in Byzantine world.⁴⁷ Furthermore, she compares the colours, the contrast of white on blue, of the paintings of Cerrate with the gold on blue of the mosaics in the Great Mosque of Cordoba. Should one therefore think of a total Byzantine artistic influence, except for the pseudo-kufic characters, i. e. for elements of secondary importance?⁴⁸ In my opinion, that would seem almost difficult. Why not hypothesize – precisely for the same reasons already advanced by Falla Castelfranchi, i. e. the Coptic examples she mentions, and that of some Spanish mudejar churches⁴⁹ – the Apulian artists' intention to adapt the ornamental pseudo-kufic to the Christian use of placing inscriptions on arches? They would after all have found several models in the same Byzantine regions,⁵⁰ that inspired the iconography and style of all the other images they depicted. The Apulian sculptural example of pseudo-kufic used on the arch of the portal of the Cathedral of Trani (see Fig. 10) probably demonstrates a local «habit» of using these motifs on arches.⁵¹

Rather, an important question to ask ourselves is this: how did these motifs arrive in Greece? Miles hypothesizes two ways: direct (due to resident Muslim craftsmen in the Western Aegean area), and indirect (through ceramics and illuminated manuscripts).⁵² The latter is a noteworthy means of diffusion for many Muslim decorations in the Mediterranean area,⁵³ and in particular, besides to ceramics, manuscripts and other materials, I would like to

essere italo-meridionali [...]»; Pace 1996, p. 107: «[...] il ciclo lucano deve essere stato opera di pittori 'italo-greci' [...] attivi a una data che un ragionevole calcolo di probabilità collocherà al '1200 circa'».

⁴⁷ But see the vault painting of the church of the Forty Martyrs in Sivas, Cappadocia, 1216-1217 (see Restle 1967, III, fig. 428); the two curvilinear and incised fragments from the Monastery of Hosios Loukas in Phocis, 11th century (see Soteriou 1935, p. 249, and fig. 22); and also the beautiful slab depicting a lion under a kufic inscribed arch, 11th-12th century (Archaeological Museum, Corinth).

⁴⁸ It is true that in some churches in the Lucano-Apulian area there are representations of people dressed in the Muslim fashion, but these garments have a narrative-descriptive function, indicating the Near-eastern origin of the personages rather than actually representing Muslims. See the example of the three wives of the sons of Noah in the pictorial cycle of S. Maria d'Anglona (see also Roma 1986, p. 101, note 97; Pace 1996, p. 108, and fig. 83; Fontana 2010, p. 47), and especially the three female figures framed by painted arches in S. Margherita at Mottola (Fonseca 1970, fig. 158). Some objects represented in these paintings serve the same narrative function, see Pace 1996, p. 108.

⁴⁹ See, for instance, the paintings on the arches of the women's gallery of the church of San Román in Toledo, from the first half of the 13th century (Pavón Maldonado 1988, pp. 234-35, and figs. XXVIII-XXIX, CXX, CLXVIII), and the sculptured arch of the Northern door of the church of S. Maria del Rey in Atienza (Pavón Maldonado 1984, pls. LXXV-LXXVI).

⁵⁰ In addition to the remaining examples of architectural decoration (see the references quoted in our note 8), the paintings showing buildings decorated with pseudo-kufic motifs help us to understand how widespread the use of such decorations were on buildings of the Byzantine world. See for this the above mentioned painting of Kastoria (see our Note 32), and the painting with three apostles near a building with a pseudo-kufic decoration from the Episkopi church of Eurytania, in Macedonia, first decades of the 13th century (*Byzantine Murals and Icons* 1976, p. 65, and fig. 13, no. 32γ).

⁵¹ Moreover, one must not forget the «rectilinear» use, with close parallels, of the foliated pseudo-kufic on the pillars and corbels of S. Maria d'Anglona, its pictorial cycle including an arch that is filled with pseudo-kufic. The rectilinear use is widespread in Apulia, even in mosaic: let me recall the beautiful foliated Kufic of the Cathedral floor in Taranto, 1160 (Fig. 22a-b; Antonucci 1942, 1st unnumbered ill.), so similar to that of S. Maria del Pàtir in Rossano Calabro, 1101-1105 (Fig. 23; Orsi 1929, fig. 68).

⁵² Miles 1964, above all pp. 31-32. This opinion is shared by Beckwith 1976, esp. p. 271. See also the interesting lecture by J. Sarközi, «The role of writing in the Byzantine and Islamic representations» at the 14th Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants (Budapest, 29th August – 3rd September 1988); unfortunately the paper was not published in the Proceedings, ed. Alexander Fodor, 2 vols., Budapest 1995.

⁵³ See Fontana 1995, pp. 300-1.

consider the important role played by textiles.⁵⁴ A very specific example is that of the depiction of St. James the Lesser in the rock-church of S. Giovanni in Monterrone at Matera: the pseudo-kufic motif on the hem of the saint's mantle (widely used in Muslim *tirāzs*) offers a clue for an understanding of how the background of the painted arches framing the saints in these churches came to be.⁵⁵

There is another circumstance that should probably not be underestimated about the good acquisition of pseudo-kufic, and that is the fact that some characters of the Arabic alphabet bear a resemblance to Greek-Byzantine epigraphic elements. Let us look at some examples. The *lām-alif* of the Ⲛ type corresponds, in the Byzantine realm, to the same graphic sign widely used for «ου»; *lām-alif* with a central decorative element in the horizontal segment which connects the two letters (see below and n. 75) is an «ω» with «flourishing» like that in the inscription of the apse of the church of Kurbinkovo, Macedonia, from the late 12th century.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the letter *kāf* «S» shaped, especially if enriched with minute decorative elements on its extremities and in the middle, is graphically identical (horizontally set) to the sign indicating the abbreviation by contraction of words like Ἰησοῦς or Χριστός, and others.⁵⁷ Besides, the colours and motifs repeated in S. Pietro at Otranto and S. Maria di Cerrate, as well as in some Byzantine examples, i. e. a blue background against which a white pseudo-kufic and a red scroll stand out, can be found on textiles like the beautiful Persian example of the 11th-12th century in the Yale University Art Gallery, The Hobart Moore Memorial Collection⁵⁸. This kind of Kufic with scroll (see n. 9, above), which partly corresponds to the so-called «Oriental Kufic»,⁵⁹ can also be found in Byzantine territory, as the above mentioned examples of Mani (Fig. 6), Kastoria and Molivoskepasto (see nn. 24-25, above) demonstrate. In this regard, I suggest interpreting the combination of scroll and pseudo-kufic in the arch of the Saints Cosmas and Damian in the church of S. Marco at Massafra as a «coincidence». This hypothesis is supported both by the unusual chromatic choice and the kind of scroll that is depicted. Indeed, the latter is typical of the country, also alone, as a matter of fact its particular striped leaf belongs to the scroll decorating the upper part of the arch framing the Virgin with Child and St. Simeon in the rock-church of the Candelora at Massafra.⁶⁰ Moreover, the scroll of S. Marco presents a development similar to that of other scrolls lacking Western epigraphic characters: for example, that framing the image of the Salvator mundi in S. Giovanni in Monterrone⁶¹ and another in the church of the Forty Martyrs in Sivas, Cappadocia, of 1216-17.⁶²

Another important problem that arises not only from these paintings, but more generally from the frequent choice of adopting these pseudo-kufic characters, regards the reasons of this wide diffusion in Western art. In 1947 M. Schapiro affirmed that «the [...] evidence is the frequent practice of western artists [...] to reproduce bits of Arabic writing as an ornament [...], without consulting the possibly un-Christian sense of these inscriptions. [...] The same admiration for the Moslem's art obtained among the Byzantines, who also reproduced as ornament the forms of Cufic writing. [...] This is a common sentiment among the mediaevals in

⁵⁴ See the important observation made by Monneret de Villard 1953, p. 167. Furthermore, in many Byzantine paintings, murals and panels, and also in many miniatures, are depicted textiles with borders of pseudo-kufic, see, for example, the frescoes of the Episkopi church in Manea, and those of the Monastery of Patmos, first decades of the 13th century: Orlandos 1962, figs. 3 and 6; see also the miniature depicting St. Mark in the 11th-century Gospel Lectionary in the Vatican Library, Cod. gr. 1156, fol. 141v: Anderson 1983, fig. 17).

⁵⁵ Pseudo-kufic makes up the decorations of the garments worn by some standing Saint Bishops (of which only the lower parts remain) in the central apse of S. Niccolò dei Greci in Lecce, first half of the 14th century (for a view of the whole painting see Bucci Morichi 1983, figs. 71.10 and 71.12; for the details see Falla Castelfranchi 1991, figs. 207-8).

⁵⁶ See Grabar 1964, ill. on p. 147. In this inscription one can also see an «ου» of Ⲛ type.

⁵⁷ In the Byzantine realm, apart from the mosaics of St. Sophia in Constantinople of the 11th century, I should like to mention the Christ Pantocrator of the dome of the Cathedral in Arta, Epirus, about 1300 (see Grabar 1964, ill. on p. 135). In Italy, in particular, the mosaics of the Palatina Chapel in Palermo and Cefalù Cathedral, both of the 12th century should be mentioned (for recent references see Pace 1994c, note 4). See also the horizontal «S» shaped *kāf* in the arches framing St. Catherine and St. Margaret in S. Vito Vecchio, at Gravina (Fig. 19).

⁵⁸ See Ferber 1975a, fig. 16b. In different colours, a beautiful example of a scroll and a continuous ductus on textiles appears on the 11th century Fatimid fragment of a turban in the Bouvier Collection (*Coll. Bouvier* 1993, pp. 215-18, no. 128, and colour fig. 128).

⁵⁹ See our Note 12, and Grohmann II, 1971.

⁶⁰ See di Capua 1983, I, fig. 90a.

⁶¹ See Pace 1994b, fig. 353.

⁶² See Restle 1967, III, fig. 430.

face with the workmanship of neighbouring and distant peoples».⁶³ Almost twenty years later, S. Ferber, claiming to be unconvinced by this scholar's affirmation, added «Could we not see in this use of Kufic forms a magical sign language, obscure and occult? [...] Perhaps the presence of Kufic forms is indicative of a misguided historicism – the Kufic invoking the image of some pre-Latin, biblical language, or perhaps an early stage in the development of writing?»⁶⁴ The assertion of R. A. Jairazbhoy appears to be suggestive but, frankly, lacks foundation «Since Arabic inscriptions appear so often in conjunction with holy personages, one may well ask if their presence is intended to enhance the holiness».⁶⁵ Finally, to J. Evans the European imitation of Kufic inscriptions is imputable above all to the «moresque» influence and, therefore, «the European use of such Arab Inscriptions [...] gradually declined as the Moorish artificers of Spain adopted European motifs at the expense of oriental».⁶⁶ Undoubtedly, it is not easy to find a reason for all this, though, I believe that one should consider the passage, perhaps not always, but without doubt often, from the above mentioned «narrative» or «descriptive» («incidental») use of pseudo-kufic – deriving above all from the borders of the *ṭirāzs* – to the «decorative» use. This happens when the pseudo-kufic, abstracted from the context of the medium in which it arrived, is used only as a decoration (as can be seen in some medieval Greek and Latin manuscripts). At this point, however, one must ask himself to what degree the meaning of those letters from the Arabic alphabet were unknown.⁶⁷ R. Ettinghausen affirms that «although Arabic writing had a symbolic meaning in the Muslim world, and certain formulas contain religious invocations including the name of Allah, the West apparently did not understand it as such».⁶⁸ One of the most important Western art historians, E. H. Gombrich, is of the same opinion, claiming that «so close, indeed, became the intermarriage of script and decoration in the Islamic tradition that Western craftsmen who admired and adopted these motifs were unable to distinguish the design from the sign, [...]».⁶⁹

In some tiles of the chapel of St. Gregory in the Convento de la Concepción Francisca in Toledo, 1422, González Martí reads words like *Allāh* (God), *al-`āfiya* (health, strenght), *al-yumn* (happiness).⁷⁰ Over the Northern door of the church of Santa Maria del Rey in Atienza (Spain, 1112) Pavón Maldonado reads «la permanencia para Allah».⁷¹ In the famous inscriptions of the right door of the Romanesque Cathedral of Puy, A. Fikri reads *mā shā` Allāh* (God's will [is better for you]).⁷² On the hem of the Child's blanket in the panel of the Madonna and Child by Gentile da Fabriano, in the Museo Nazionale in Pisa, S. Auld attempted to read *lā ilāh illā Allāh* (there is no god but God).⁷³ L. Safran, too, in the epigraphic characters of S. Maria di Cerrate reads *Allāh* and *naṣr* (victory), and, in those of S. Pietro in Otranto, *al-malik* (king, -sic-).⁷⁴ As for reading *Allāh*, help is provided by R. Ettinghausen who, taking up previous studies, affirms that the *lām-alif* that develops an added element in the middle of the connecting segment between the two letters, is an abbreviated formula of *Allāh*.⁷⁵

⁶³ Schapiro 1947, p. 143.

⁶⁴ Ferber 1975b, p. 69. It is above all in Renaissance art that these epigraphic motifs would often be «halfway» between the Hebrew and the Arabic alphabets (in cursive writing), see Aanavi 1968, p. 354; Fontana 1990-91, 1992.

⁶⁵ Jairazbhoy 1965, p. 78, note 52.

⁶⁶ Evans 1975, p. 166.

⁶⁷ See Piemontese 1999.

⁶⁸ Ettinghausen 1975, p. 14. Cf., also, Ettinghausen 1974b, p. 294, and note 2.

⁶⁹ Gombrich 1979, p. 237.

⁷⁰ González Martí 1952, pp. 162-206, with illustrations.

⁷¹ Pavón Maldonado 1984, p. 64, and pls. LXXV-LXXVI.

⁷² Fikri 1934), p. 263, and fig. 328.

⁷³ Auld 1986, p. 264; see also our Note 8, at the end.

⁷⁴ Safran 1992, p. 124; but, maybe, *al-mulk*. I have not been able to decipher this. The last group of letters on the left could perhaps be read as a *lām-alif* (?); while the curvilinear element wound around the *lām* could be an «S» shaped *kāf* (see above, and our Notes 57 and 75).

⁷⁵ Ettinghausen 1976; to the studies mentioned by Ettinghausen: Aanavi 1968, p. 356 should be added; see also Bartels 1990, p. 34. For similar decorative elements in the word *Allāh* in Islamic epigraphy see Grohmann 1967-1971, and Schimmel 1984, p. 9, with illustration; see also the 11th-century Fatimid fragments of a turban in the Bouvier Collection (*Coll. Bouvier* 1993, pp. 213-4, no. 127, and colour fig. 127). For a particular interpretation of the *lām-alif* motif, see Bierman 1989. Abbreviations of this type appear relatively frequently in Islamic epigraphy. An example of particular interest, inasmuch as it also appears in some of our paintings as an «S» (see also Aanavi 1968, p. 355), is the letter *kāf*, used as an abbreviation of one of the most often cited of the ninety-nine beautiful names of God, *al-Kaṭīy* (the Sufficient).

In another Apulian example, on the mosaic band framing the apse floor of the Basilica of S. Nicola in Bari, 1105-1123, F. Babudri reads *Allāh* (Fig. 24).⁷⁶ Identical characters, but simplified in the two external vertical segments, can also be found in the mosaic floor of the Cathedral of Brindisi, mid-12th century.⁷⁷ On the three discs of the left panel of the bronze door of the Bohemund tomb at Canosa (Apulia, 11th century) T. Garton reads the monogram of *Allāh*.⁷⁸ I believe that, in any case, one must make a clear distinction between the intentional use of Arabic letters in a Christian context to express precise contents linked to specifically Christian formulas (as well as the Sanctus, Osanna and Gloria in Arabic, written in white Kufic, outlined in red on a dark blue ground in S. Maria dell'Ammiraglio in Palermo, built in 1143 by George of Antioch⁷⁹), and the casual choice of letters, or groups of letters, drawn from a repertory of pseudo-kufic or Kufic, the meaning of which had been forgotten.⁸⁰

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, I would like now to add a few notes about pseudo-kufic that one concerns, without considering the distinction made up to this point between continuous and interrupted ductus. It is important to underline that in three churches (S. Marco at Massafra, S. Vito Vecchio at Gravina, S. Giovanni in Monterrone at Matera) there are only *lām-alif* and *kāf*. In particular, *lām-alif* made up of a double *kāf* set in a mirror image is present in all three of the churches, while *lām-alif* and *kāf* in their respective «U» and «S» shapes can be observed at Gravina and at Matera, i. e. in the two churches with more similar pictorial cycles.⁸¹ The latter type of *lām-alif* and *kāf* is very widespread (see above and n. 42), and is also comparable to that of the Northern façade of the Panaghia Lykodemou, Athens, 11th century.⁸² If one wish, it is also possible to read *lām-alif* / «U» as *Allāh* and *kāf* / «S» as *al-Kafīy* (see n. 75), and we know that Islam was first to use writing in a symbolic manner.⁸³ What is important is this «guiding thread» that links the paintings of the three churches. The approximate half century that separates the first from the other two justifies the differences, but, at the same time, allows for the graphic continuation. As for pseudo-kufic of S. Maria di Cerrate at Squinzano and S. Pietro at Otranto, of which some affinities have been already emphasized, I would only to add a few notes. The search for a correspondence with Arabic words of some groups of letters – some can be interpreted as *Allāh*, *al-naṣr*, *al-mulk* (?) and perhaps others (see above and n. 74) – cannot be, in my opinion, our first concern. If anything, the cause and the origin of this correspondence are important, and that is, a not excessive moving away (only real or related to the memory and the artistic intention of the artists) from the prototypes. What is puzzling, is the chronological attribution of the two pictorial cycles separated by about a century.

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⁷⁶ Babudri 1941.

⁷⁷ Fabbri 1972, pp. 18-33, and pls. 1-18, 140-42.

⁷⁸ Garton 1973, p. 104, and pl. 5a.

⁷⁹ Amari 1875, pp. 83-90, no. XXIV, and pl. X.5; see also Fontana 2008.

⁸⁰ About Byzantine «repertories» used in Western art, see Kitzinger 1966b, pp. 139-41.

⁸¹ Both in Gravina itself, and in other churches (S. Maria at Montedevio, Apulia, late 13th century: see Pace 1980, fig. 510) the painted arches are filled with a variety of different decorations. This should mean that our pseudo-kufic characters were chosen and used, at least in these cases, basically as an ornament. The use of pseudo-kufic as a purely decorative element in some manuscripts is well-known, a famous and beautiful Apulian example is Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, almost certainly produced in Bari between the late 11th and the early 12th century (Biblioteca Nazionale in Naples, Ms. IV F 3; Orofino 1993).

⁸² See Megaw 1934, fig. 1.

⁸³ See Kühnel 1942; Rosenthal 1961; Ettinghausen 1974a; see also our Note 52, at the end.

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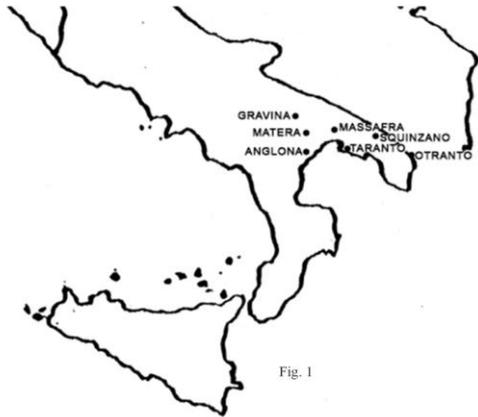


Fig. 1

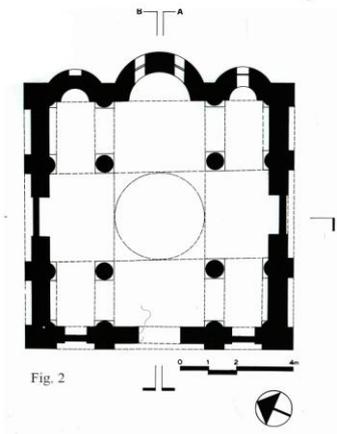


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Fig. 1 Apulia and Basilicata (South Italy). Map of the churches with pseudo-kufic.
 Fig. 2 Otranto (Lecce), S. Pietro. Plan.
 Fig. 3 Otranto (Lecce), S. Pietro. Detail of pseudo-kufic on the left side of the arch of the apse.

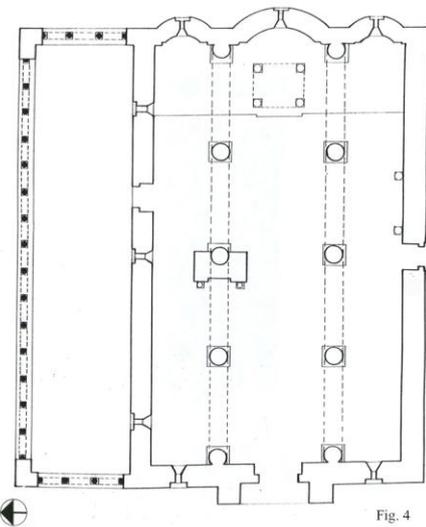


Fig. 4

Fig. 4 Squinzano (Lecce), S. Maria di Cerrate. Plan.
 Fig. 5a-c Squinzano (Lecce), S. Maria di Cerrate. Three details of pseudo-kufic on the apse (5a) and the arches (5b-c).
 Fig. 6 Mani (Manea, Greece), Episkopi church. Pseudo-kufic band on a pillar (photo Author).
 Fig. 7 Squinzano (Lecce), S. Maria di Cerrate. Right wall, detail of the *lām-alif* motif of a shield.



Fig. 5a



Fig. 5b



Fig. 5c



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

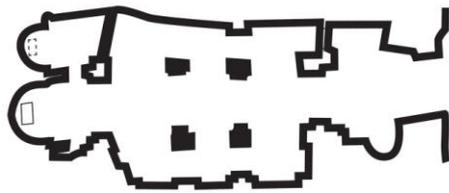


Fig. 8



Fig. 9

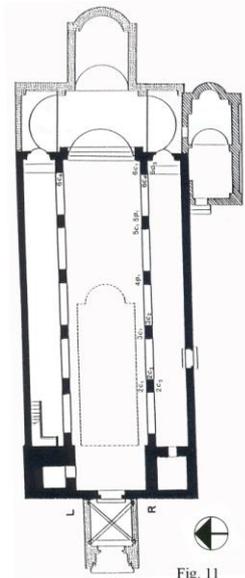


Fig. 11



Fig. 10



Fig. 12a



Fig. 12b

Fig. 8 Massafra (Taranto), S. Marco. Plan.
Fig. 9 Massafra (Taranto), S. Marco. Detail of pseudo-kufic (left side) of the arch framing the Saints Cosmas and Damian.

Fig. 10 Trani (Bari), Cathedral, the stone portal. Detail of pseudo-kufic.

Fig. 11 Anglona (Matera), S. Maria d' Anglona. Plan and arrangement of pseudo-kufic.

Fig. 12a-b Anglona (Matera), S. Maria d' Anglona. Details of pseudo-kufic of terracotta tiles (see note 27).

Fig. 13 Reggio Calabria, Museo Archeologico. Detail of pseudo-kufic of a stucco panel from S. Maria di Terreti (see note 27).



Fig. 13



Fig. 14a

Fig. 14a-c Anglona (Matera), S. Maria d' Anglona. Pseudo-kufic bands on the forth (R4p₁) and fifth (R5p₁) pillars (photos Author) and on the corbel of the sixth pillar (R6c₃) from the right.



Fig. 14b



Fig. 14c

Fig. 15 Mani (Manea, Greece), Episkopi church. Pseudo-kufic band on a pillar (photo Author).



Fig. 15



Fig. 16a

Fig. 16a-b Feltre (Belluno), The church of the Saints Vittore and Corona. Two bands of pseudo-kufic on a capital.



Fig. 16b

Fig. 17a-c Mottola (Taranto), S. Margherita. Details of pseudo-kufic of three painted arches framing a Virgin with Child (O.1), St. Lawrence (O.2), and another Virgin with Child (O.3; see note 34).

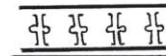


Fig. 17a



Fig. 17b



Fig. 17c

Fig. 18 Gravina di Puglia (Bari), S. Vito Vecchio. Plan.

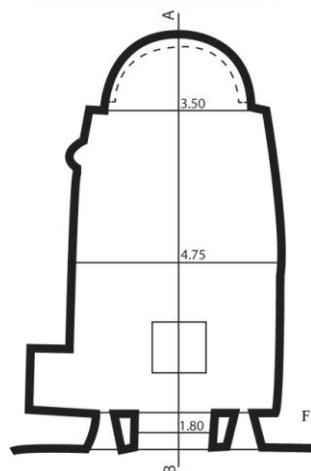


Fig. 18



Fig. 19

Fig. 19 Gravina di Puglia (Bari), Museo Pomarici Santomasi, reconstruction of S. Vito Vecchio at Gravina. Detail of pseudo-kufic of the painted arch of St. Catherine.

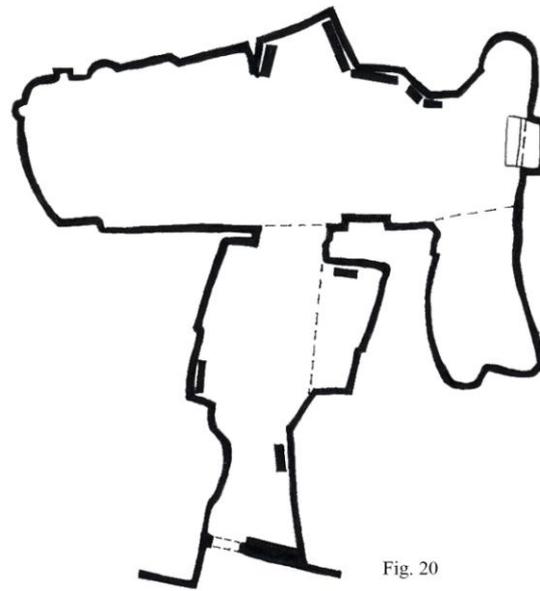


Fig. 20



Fig. 21a



Fig. 21b



Fig. 22a



Fig. 22b



Fig. 23



Fig. 24

Fig. 20 Matera, S. Giovanni in Monterrone. Plan (entrance from S. Maria d'Idris).

Fig. 21a-b Matera, S. Giovanni in Monterrone. Details of pseudo-kufic of the painted arches of St. Peter (21a) and St. James the Lesser (21b).

Fig. 22a-b Taranto, Cathedral, mosaic floor. Two details of pseudo-kufic (see note 51).

Fig. 23 Rossano Calabro (Cosenza), S. Maria del Pàtir, mosaic floor. Detail of pseudo-kufic (see note 51).

Fig. 24 Bari, Cathedral, the mosaic floor of the altar. Detail of pseudo-kufic.