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Liturgical Drama as a Source of the Monreale Mosaics

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The New Testament cycle of Monreale cathedral mosaics, the work of Constantinopolitan artists (1180–1189), includes several scenes unusual to Byzantine monumental painting. The subject Christ's Appearance to the Emmaus travellers is generally rare in Byzantine monumental art, but it has received a unique treatment in the Monreale mosaics. It is presented in four scenes that occupy the middle register of the northern wall of the transept. The first of these scenes shows the meeting of the apostles Luke and Cleophas with Christ on the road, the second depicts the supper in the Emmaus inn, and in the third one the apostles are depicted behind the same table, but in place of the seated Christ is an empty aperture in the wall. In the fourth scene Luke and Cleophas meet the other apostles in Jerusalem, telling them about the appearance of Christ on the Emmaus road (fig. 1). Luke and Cleophas also participate in the continuous scene of The Incredulity of Thomas (fig. 2), located on the western wall of the transept (north)[1].

Emile Mâle and Ernest Kitzinger explain the incorporation of these three first scenes with the Emmaus travelers in the Monreale mosaics as being influenced by 'Peregrinus liturgical drama[2]. In the Catholic Church such plays were a part of vespers on Easter Sunday or following it on Easter Monday. The practice was popular from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries[3]. The incorporation of these scenes into the Monreale mosaics reminds us of a similarity in forms of worship within the Catholic Church. Certainly this is true of the Monreale Benedictine monastery, which ordered the mosaics.

However the question is whether the Monreale scenes with the Emmaus travellers were a mere borrowing of iconographical schemes of Romanesque art (and E. Mâle and E. Kitzinger most likely share this view), or whether it is possible to speak about the direct influence of a liturgical drama on Byzantine artists working in Monreale?

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[1] KITZINGER 1995, figs. 131–53; *The cathedral of Monreale*, 39, 42.

[2] MALE 1924, 138, note 6; KITZINGER 1995, 12.

[3] YOUNG 1933, vol. 1, 451–52.

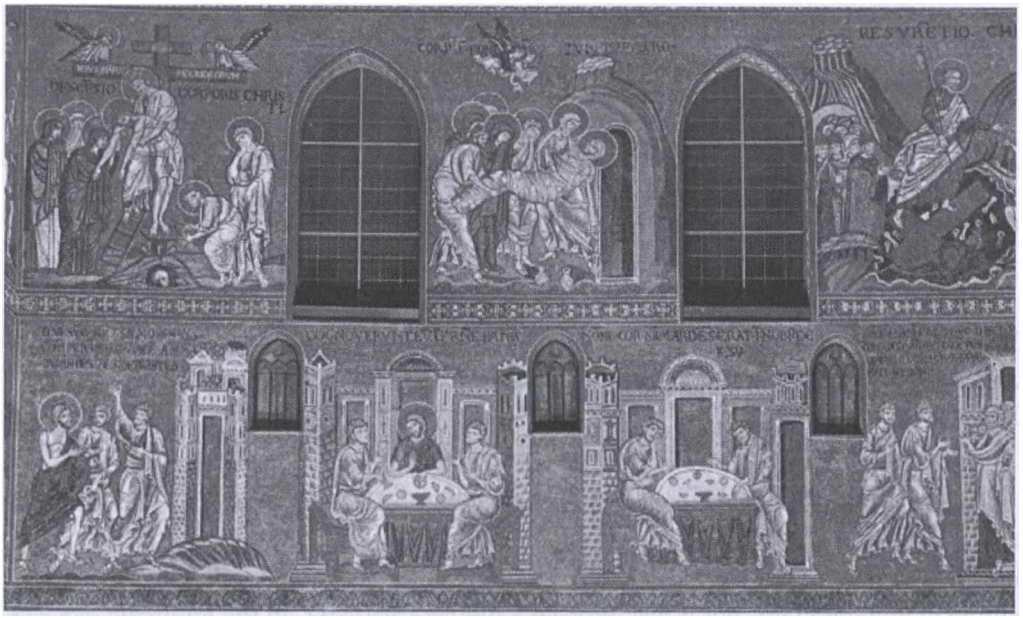

Fig. 1. Scenes of the Passions, the Resurrection, Christ's Appearance to the Emmaus travellers, the meeting of Luke and Cleophas with the other apostles . Monreale cathedral mosaics. Northern wall of the transept. 1180–89 (after *The cathedral of Monreale*)

In Southern Italy liturgical dramas became a part of the annual cycle of church services in the Benedictine monasteries in the tenth century[4]. In the twelfth century Benedictine monks transferred them to Sicily where they predominated at the time of the Norman rulers[5]. It is possible to deduce that liturgical dramas, including Peregrinus plays, were performed in the monasteries of Palermo: two church service manuscripts of the twelfth century, from Sicily, contain the text of Peregrinus and other dramas in the Easter cycle. There are Graduale (Madrid, la Biblioteca Nacional, *MS Vitr. 20–4* [Ant. Sing. C 132])[6] and Tropario (Madrid, la Biblioteca Nacional, *MS 289* [Ant. Sing. C 153])[7]. The first of them, famously decorated, contains in folio 99v the name of King Roger II ("[...] Rege nostro Rogerio") and for this reason can be dated to 1130–54[8]. Researchers also connect its origin with Palermo[9].

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4 YOUNG 1933, 207–15.

5 WHITE 1938.

6 Parchment, 240 fol., 219 x 150 mm, with musical notation; gold figured initials with colour on fol. 12v, 23r, 103r, 134r; many red and blue initials (YOUNG 1933, I, 476–81; ANGLES, SUBIRA 1946, I, (No 23) 54–66; JANIN, SERRANO 1969, (No 197) 246–47.

7 Parchment, 155 fol., 200 x 150 mm, with musical notation (YOUNG 1933, I, 458–61; ANGLÉS, SUBIRÁ, 1946, vol. 1, [No 19] 18–36; JANIN, SERRANO 1969, [No 17]75).

8 JANIN, SERRANO 1969, 246.

9 ANGLÉS, SUBIRÁ, 1946, vol. 1, 54.

Fig. 2. The Incredulity of Thomas. Monreale cathedral mosaic. 1180–89
(after *The cathedral of Monreale*)

E. Kitzinger thinks that the proof of iconographical borrowing by the Monreale mosaic artists of Christ 's Appearance to the Emmaus travellers is to be found in the illustrations of the *St. Albans Psalter* (1120–30), which contains the three scenes with the Emmaus travelers (Hildesheim, Dombibliothek, *MS St. Godehard 1*, p. 69–71)[10]. These scenes obviously reflect the influence of Peregrinus liturgical drama in their detail. The Manuscript of Eadwine Psalter of the twelfth century (Victoria and Albert Museum, *MS 661*) also contains three miniatures with similar iconography[11].

However, the Emmaus travelers are present in five scenes of the Monreale mosaics, uniting them in a uniform small cycle. This cycle, more consistently and completely than the miniatures, corresponds with the composition of the Peregrinus liturgical drama, mostly in a version of the Sicilian manuscript of 1130–54 (fol. 105v–108) where Thomas enters as the third part. It is a rare version of Peregrinus.

What do we notice when we compare each of the mosaic scenes with the text of the drama and with the miniatures from England? Actually the most interesting parts for us are the drama comments, the author's notes which specify character costume details, their poses, their gestures and their relative position. We also notice that the location where the action took place is named consistently.

[10] KITZINGER 1995, 12–13, figs. C, D, E.

[11] DAVIDSON 1983, 468.

According to the comments in the majority of the versions of the Peregrinus, the Saviour must have in the first scene a pilgrim staff in his hand, a bag on his shoulder and a cap upon his head. This particular attire for the Christ character can be explained by the fact that the Saviour, appeared to his disciples on the Emmaus road, is named in the Gospels as a pilgrim, i.e. a traveller: "Tu solus peregrinus es in Jerusalem" (Luke 24: 18). The realities of the epoch gave a new meaning to this evangelical text: in the twelfth century the pilgrimage to Jerusalem had reached its peak, and everyone who visited the city was considered a pilgrim. Therefore the image of Christ in the drama reflected several features of real pilgrims of the twelfth century. That is why in the miniatures (mentioned above) Christ is depicted wearing a cap on his head, and a bag on his shoulder (fig. 3; exactly as the stage directions demanded[12]). The Monreale atist depicted Christ carrying the bag and the staff with the left shoulder and both legs naked (fig. 1).

Fig. 3. The meeting on the road to Emmaus. The miniature of the *St. Albans Psalter*. 1120-30. Hildesheim, Dombibliothek, *MS St. Godehard 1*, p. 69 (after KITZINGER 1995)

The majority of drama texts indicate that the first scene, the meeting on the road to Emmaus, was played in the main nave[13]. This scene looked especially impressive in the Monreale cathedral. As we know, in the eastern part of Monreale cathedral there was a high solid barrier (or transenna) with an arch aperture in its centre and two pulpits on columns before it[14]. A similar choir-screen, dated back to 1180, can be seen in San Matteo cathedral in Salerno[15] (fig 4). It represented Jerusalem not only in a symbolic manner. It was even reminiscent of a real city wall with the towers and the central cathedral nave which led to it surely being meant to represent the road to Jerusalem[16] (fig. 5). Clergymen repre-

[12] The version of liturgical drama Peregrini from Rouen (*Bibl. de la Ville, MS 222*, thirteenth century) is the most interesting in description of gaments and atributs of characters: "Duo de ij [ii] sede...induti tunicis et desuper cappis transversum, portantes baculos et peras in similitudinem Peregrinorum, et habeant cappelos super capita et sint barbati. Exeant a vestiario... tunc quidam sacerdos de majori sede... indutus alba et amictu, nudsus pedes, ferens crucem super dextrum humerum, voltu demisso, veniens usque ad eos per dextram alam ecclesie...". ("Two of the lower row [who set in the lower stalls of the choir, here pitty-canons – editor's note]... cloused in tunics and copes, go across, carring staffs and wallets in the likeness of travelers; they have caps upon their heads and are being bearded... a priest from the upper row... closed in an alb and an amice, barefooted, bearing the cross upon his right shoulder, with a downcast countenance, come up to them through the right aisle of the church..."); quoted after *Cheif Pre-Shakespearen dramas*, 21–22.

[13] For example, the manuscript from Rouen (*MS 222*). The manuscript from Palermo does not contain comments for the first scene of Peregrinus.

[14] LELLO 1595; DEMUS 1949, 106. There are some fragments of the choir-screen in the Monreale cathedral now (DUNCAN-FLOWERS 1994, 39).

[15] GLASS 1991, 66–67; DUNCAN-FLOWERS 1994, 42; BRACA 2001, 34-39.

[16] EVSEEVA 2009.

senting Christ and the apostles met in the middle of the nave. There was an exchange of cues, and one of the apostles, after pronouncing the words "Sol uergens ad hoccasum suadet ut nostrum uelis hospitium"[17] ("the Sun is going down and calls us to look for a shelter") would lift his hand up as if he were pointing at the sun . This gesture was stimulated by the words "sol uergens ad hoccasum" in the drama text, which replaced the words of the Gospel text on this subject: "et inclinata est jam dias" ("... the day is far spent"; Luke 24: 29). With this particular gesture, one of the apostles is depicted in the Monreale mosaic so as in the above-mentioned miniatures. However, the disposition of figures in the miniatures is quite different.

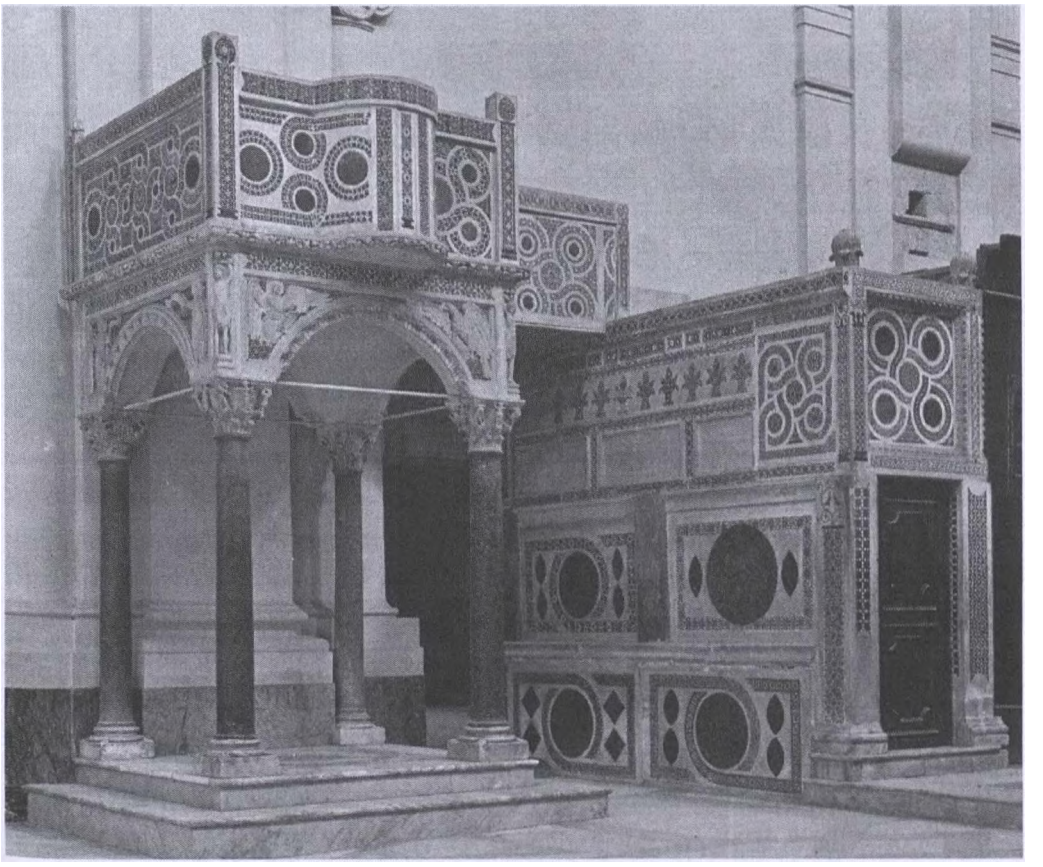

Fig. 4. Choir-screen in Salerno cathedral. About 1180 (after DI STEFANO 1966).

[17] Madrid, la Biblioteca Nacional, *MS Vitr. 20-4*, fol. 106r (quoted after YOUNG 1933, I, 478).

Fig. 5. Monreale cathedral. The main nave. 1180–89 (after BELLAFIORE 1966)

The drama comments point out that it is necessary to have for the action of the second scene "tabernaculum, in medio nauis ecclesie, in similitudinem castelli Emmaus preparatum"[18] ("the structure in the middle of the nave of the church, prepared in the likeness of the fortress Emmaus"). It was erected usually as a platform, with a structure on the back where the curtain was fastened more often[19]. The architectural design of two mosaic compositions on the theme of the supper in Emmaus looks like a wall with three wide apertures and two towers on the sides. It is similar the architectural background of the miniatures of the manuscripts from England. It can be suggested that the architectural background of the mosaics and the miniatures represents a real «theatrical requisite» of the performance. Thus, the architectural design of the mosaic compositions is quite comparable with that of the church, which had a scenic platform once arranged in its nave.

[18] Rouen, Bibl. de la Ville, *MS 222*, fol. 43v (quoted after YOUNG 1933, I, 462). The manuscript from Palermo does not contain a comment about "castello".

[19] YOUNG 1933, vol. 2,, 404.

Fig. 6. The supper in Emmaus. Monreale cathedral mosaic. 1180–89
(after *The cathedral of Monreale*)

A table and seats were placed on the platform. There was a variety of the drama comments, one of them informed the reader by such words: "Quo cum ascenderint et ad mensam ibi paratam sederint, et Dominus inter eos sedent panem eis fregerit..."[20] ("Where they ascended and sat down at the table which was standing where the Lord sitting between them divided the bread for them...").

In the second scene, in the mosaic and in the miniatures, all its participants are sitting at the table, Christ sits at the centre. In the mosaic He is in his usual garments. Several round breads and a wide vessel, reminding chalice, lie on the table (fig. 6). These objects are precisely in tune with the text of the liturgical drama from Palermo where "pane et uino" are particularly mentioned[21]. In the mosaic Christ blesses the bread, in the miniatures He breaks it (fig. 7). Both of these actions were particularly mentioned in the Comments. It can be considered that the iconography of these two mosaic scenes is generally similar in both miniatures and Comments.

[20] Rouen, Bibl. De la Ville, *MS 222*, fol. 43v (quoted after YOUNG 1933, vol. 1, 462). The manuscript from Palermo does not contain a comment aout «hospicium».

[21] Madrid, la Biblioteca Nacional. *MS Vitr. 20- 4*, fol. 106r (quoted after YOUNG 1933, vol. 1, 478).

Fig. 7. The supper in Emmaus. The miniature of the *St. Albans Psalter*. 1120–130. Hildesheim, Dombibliothek, *MS St. Godehard 1*, p. 70 (after KITZINGER 1995).

Fig. 8. Christ' disappearance at the supper in Emmaus. The miniature of the of *St. Albans Psalter*. 1120-–130. Hildesheim, Dombibliothek, *MS St. Godehard 1*, p. 71 (after KITZINGER 1995)

In the third scene one of the illustrators of the manuscripts has depicted Christ's disappearance as His Ascension (fig. 8), the other as the action of walking away. The author of the mosaic shows the empty space shining gold in the wall where Christ was standing (fig. 1). This image is closer both to the text of the Gospel, and to the Comments of the drama from Sicily: "... ac post ab oculis eorum euanescat"[22] ("... after it He vanished out their sight"). The clergyman playing the role of Christ in the performance disappeared immediately. Possibly, he hid himself behind a curtain or under a tablecloth.

The last part of the Peregrinus drama, The Incredulity of Thomas, was performed in Palermo churches "in medio choro" ("in the middle of the choir"), as Comments of Sicilian text indicate[23]. Thus, in Monreale it was behind the wall of the choir screen while the parishioners located in the nave and were able to see the performance only through the open space in the choir screen. In the first scene of the third concluding part, according

[22] Madrid, la Biblioteca Nacional. *MS Vitr. 20- 4*, fol. 106v (after YOUNG 1933, vol. 1, 478).

[23] Madrid, la Biblioteca Nacional. *MS Vitr. 20- 4*, fol. 107r (after YOUNG 1933, vol. 1, 479).

to the drama Comments of the Palermo version[24], ten clergymen, representing apostles, participated. Mosaic depicts the following scene only: in Jerusalem Luke and Cleophas meet the other apostles and inform them about seeing Christ. According to the drama text, the apostles then declared: "Vidimus Dominum"[25] ("We have seen the Lord") - and then Thomas approached them with the words about his doubting. It was followed by the scene of Christ's appearance and Thomas' assurance. In the mosaic scene "The Incredulity of Thomas", Luke and Cleophas are depicted also as being witnesses of the preceding Christ appearance (fig. 2).

The drama in the Palermo version ends with Thomas's declaration to the people. As the comment specifies: "Thomas uertat uultum suum ad populum; dicat: Misi digitum meum in fixuram clauorum, et manum meam in latus eius et dixit: Dominus meus, et Deus meus alleluia"[26], ("Thomas turns his face to the people and speaks: I have put my fingers into wounds from nails, and my hand I have thrust into His side, and I tell: my Lord, my God, alleluia"). In the mosaic scene of The Incredulity of Thomas the young Phillip, with his face and apparel similar to those of Thomas, is positioned symmetrically to Thomas, in a similar pose, having turned his face to the spectators, as though he is representing the Thomas's reference to the people. So, all the details of this mosaic scene correspond with the text of the Palermo version of the drama. More than that, the architectural structure in the mosaic is horizontally stretched, with the arch in the centre as though it were repeating the shape of the real choir-screen of the Monreale cathedral (the similar choir-screen of the cathedral of Salerno had the arch in the centre which is now incorporated into transept southern wall[27]). So, the mosaic scene can be considered to be having a certain reflection of the real theatrical action which was performed in the Monreale cathedral.

As a result, all of the above observations make it possible to conclude: the iconography of the first two scenes of the theme of the Emmaus travellers in the Monreale mosaics and in the miniatures from England share lots of common details relating to widely known Peregrinus drama comments. The iconography of the miniatures differs in the mosaics in certain ways. The iconography of the next three scenes of the mosaic is connected with performance of the Peregrinus drama in the churches of Palermo: these are Christ's disappearance in the third scene, the composition with the ten apostles in Jerusalem, and with the particularities of The Incredulity of Thomas. The major thing is that all three parts of the drama of the Palermo version are represented in the mosaics. There are five scenes (the Palermo drama has eight scenes). A similar representation of the theme of the Peregrinus liturgical drama cannot be found in Romanesque art.

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[24] Madrid, la Biblioteca Nacional. *MS Vitr. 20- 4*, fol.. 107r (after YOUNG 1933, vol. 1, 479).

[25] Madrid, la Biblioteca Nacional. *MS Vitr. 20- 4*, fol.. 107r (after YOUNG 1933, vol. 1, 479).

[26] Madrid, la Biblioteca Nacional. *MS Vitr. 20- 4*, fol. 108r (after YOUNG 1933, vol. 1, 480).

[27] BRACA 2001, 35.

Fig. 9. The Ascension. Monreale cathedral mosaic. 1180–89
(after *The cathedral of Monreale*)

Besides, an artistic interpretation of these five compositions has a number of differences with artistic interpretation of the majority of other New Testament scenes of Monreale. First of all it is possible to name their special staginess which we understand as a precise correlation of figures in space and personal communication of personages, expressed by looks, turns of heads, poses and gestures. Each personage has individual emotional expression on his face. These features makes the compositions different from, for example, "The Ascension" (fig. 9) or "The Descent of the Holy Ghost" (The Pentecost) on the same northern wall of the transept. This difference can be explained by the fact that the source of expressionism of the mosaic scenes with the Emmaus travellers in Monreale lays in performances of the Peregrinus drama, their stage settings and the manner of their action.

Theatre historians, relying on the comments contained in the text of dramas, certain testimonies of contemporaries, and also numerous theatrical treatiees of Renaissance authors, characterize liturgical drama of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries as having the action in them similar to those performed in ancient or medieval Oriental theatres[28]. It had mostly a statuary character – the main part was singing and reciting. As for the actors acting (they were clergymen) it was the art of impersonation with certain features of it relating to reality[29]. The major elements of expressiveness were the pose of the actor, the position of his head and the gestures

[28] YOUNG 1933, vols. 1–2,; COLLINS 1972; AXTON 1974; BATE 1983.
[29] YOUNG 1933, vol. 1, 80.

Fig. 10. The three Marys at the tomb. Monreale cathedral mosaic. 1180–89
(after *The cathedral of Monreale* sine data)

of his hands[30]. According to the author of the twelfth century, Honorius of Autun, those gestures were rather expressive (about which he speaks in his work *Gemma animae*[31]). The characters, most likely, showed on their faces a certain emotion which did not change during the entire performance. So, the actors' faces reminded the masks[32]. The characters' glances would have been fixed upon each other or on the spectators,as though inviting them to share their emotions. Similar features characterize all five of the Monreale mosaic compositions depicting the Emmaus travellers.

Besides the cycle with the Emmaus travellers, the Monreale mosaics contain some other scenes reflecting other distinctive influences of liturgical drama which might be also mentioned. Those are "The Burial of Christ" located on the same northern wall of transept (fig. 1) and "The three Marys at the tomb" on its west wall[33] (fig. 10). The composition of "The Burial of Christ" is rare in a monumental painting of the twelfth century, but in Monreale this scene is presented as the main one in the entire Easter cycle: it is depicted in the very centre of the upper section of the northern wall. "The Burial "and "The three Marys at the tomb" have lots of similarities in their composition and details. In the first scene the body of the Saviour wrapped in linen (or *sindon*), is brought to the tomb, located in the rock on the right side of the composition. The three Marys stay on the left, behind the other participants in the burial rite. In the scene with the angel the tomb is of the same shape and is also located as far to the right as is depicted as far to the left, the figures of the three Marys. These two scenes reflect a ceremony and a liturgical drama of the Catholic Church, namely the burial of the cross wrapped up by a linen cloth in a tomb which was established

[30] DAVIDSON 1983; BERTRAM 1964.
[31] HARRISON 1965, 93.
[32] BROOKE 1967; LASCOMBRES 1983.
[33] KITZINGER 1995, fig. 116, 107, 125–29; *The cathedral of Monreale*, 39, 42

in an altar on Holy Saturday, as well as a demonstration of the same empty cloth taken from the tomb during the performance of the liturgical drama *Visitatio Sepulchre* on Easter morning[34]. The inquiring looks and gestures of the women in the mosaic as well as the large size loosely laying cloth are very similar to their depiction in the early eleventh century miniature from the manuscript of the monastery San Gall (San Gall, Stiftbibliothek, *MS 391*, p. 33; fig. 11). In Karl Young's opinion, it was significantly influenced by the drama action *Visitatio Sepulchre*[35].

Fig. 11. The three Marys at the tomb. The miniature of the manuscript. San Gall, Stiftbibliothek, *MS 391*, p. 33 (after YOUNG 1933)

All of this testifies that the Byzantine artists who worked in Monreale were moved by performances of the liturgical dramas they personally had seen, most likely, in Palermo churches, and in Monreale cathedral in particular. Possibly these Constantinopolitan artists had found it quite admissible to scoop out those new sources of artistic impressions because they considered performances in church to be a part of liturgy. And the church ceremony was always a source of new iconographic schemes and graphic motives for the Byzantine artists.

Moreover some features of the liturgical drama are really close to the additional singing church services (ᾀσματικῶν ἀκολουθία) held in Constantinopolitan Hagia Sophia, which also bore a dramatic character.

But it is not a coincidence that among Middle Age theologians as much as among contemporary scholars there were, and still are, numerous disputes, as to whether additional singing church services were a certain theatrical action, or whether they have a different nature based rather on old traditional Constantinopolitan ordinances. The metropolitan of Thessaloniki, Symeon, in his fifteenth century treatise *Dialogus contra Haereses*[36],

[34] YOUNG 1933, vol. 1, 113-34, 249-50.

[35] YOUNG 1933, vol. 1, 272, fig. 1.

[36] DMITRIEVSKIJ 1894, 574.

thought, as do many of modern researches[37], that the additional singing church services, including that of "The three Children in the Furnace", are not religious plays and are independent from the western tradition. They see their basic difference from a liturgical drama in their symbolical representation of sacred persons[38] and in the absence in their action of the act of impersonation[39]. The western idea of liturgical drama can be strongly characterized by containing impersonation of an actor playing a certain part into his hero[40]. This action necessarily embraces certain features of real life and its observation.

As a result of borrowing from performances of liturgical dramas, the Byzantine masters reproduced in Monreale mosaics particular life features which aesthetically assimilated actions of the dramas. This conclusion is made on the basis of the fact that liturgical drama has had a strong influence on Romanesque art. And the way it was influencing the artists was, as a rule, a direct one[41].

The Byzantine artists used these innovations of their artistic language also in other *New Testament* scenes of the Monreale mosaics which were not a subject of drama performances at all (for example, in a cycle of Christ's miracles located in the lateral naves).

The new features of style which we observe in the Monreale mosaics (first and foremost are the individual emotional expression of personages' faces as well as their certain actions) are very similar to Romanesque art. However, as we've already tried to show, it was not a mere copying of certain masterpieces of Romanesque art. It is also difficult to imagine that the Byzantine masters borrowed from western paining only one thing - its vividness and true-to-life certainty. A similar strict differentiation of art influence (like the singling out of a certain part of art impression and then using it in their own work) was not revealed in artistic practice of that time. It looks like the mediaeval masters considered artistic style as something whole, and not something which could be divided into single components.

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[37] MANSVETOV 1880; MANSVETOV 1885, 229, 233, 236–45; DMITRIEVSKIJ 1894; GOLUBCOV 1911.

[38] The metropolitan of Thessaloniki Symeon, wrote in his *The book about the temple*, 20–28, that the priest may represent the Christ in the church services, as received Christ's forth through chirotony. And this forth is represented symbolically by priest vestments, having mystic spiritual significance (see this text translated in Russian in: DMITREVSKIJ 1993, 390).

[39] The metropolitan of Thessaloniki Symeon wrote in his *Dialogus contra Haeresies*: "If [the Latins] reproach us for the furnace of three children, they should not congratulate themselves. Because we light up not a furnace but candles and lights, and we offer incense to God according to custom; and we represent the angel [in painting], and it is not a man that we send. Furthermore, we place three boys, pure as those children, to sing canticle according to tradition"(*Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne, vol. 155, col. 113, translation from Greek after VELIMIROVIČ 1962, 352). Miloš M. Velimirovič thinks that there are elements of the impersonating here on the part of singers, but Symeon underlines that three boys which are placed to sing the canticle are similar The Children real, by his natural purity – and there is no an act of impersonating. Another modern researches are sure that liturgical drama exit in Byzantium. But their opinion bases on very inaccurate descriptions of West visitors to Constantinople (BAUD-BOUVY 1938), or on very wide definition of liturgical drama (LA PIANA 1936; VELIMIROVIČ 1962). But Byzantine indisputable works of this kind are unknown.

[40] YOUNG 1933, vol. 1., 80; DONOVAN 1958, 7.

[41] MALE 1924, 142–45; EVANS 1950, 90–95.

Hence, we might conclude that the Byzantine masters have acquired the basic pathos of Romanesque art culture not through painting itself, but through related artistic phenomena belonging to other types of art, and particularly through liturgical drama. Study of Romanesque art led to natural differentiation of artistic impression and finally to a borrowing: the Byzantine masters, as a matter of fact, used only the graphic component of the drama action, in this sense we can only talk about transferring expression or certain true-to-life character positions, gestures, looks, as well as composition of scene.

As a source of Romanesque artistic cultural influence the liturgical drama was especially significant in Sicily, taking into account the fact that in the 1180s, when the Monreale mosaics were created, only about a hundred years passed since the island had been conquered by the Normans, Christianity restored, and Catholic monasteries had been built. Probably masterpieces of Romanesque art were rather rare on the island: there were neither ensembles of monumental painting there, nor large hundred-year-old monastic libraries where codices containing cycles of miniatures were kept, though separate manuscripts with illustrations as well as icons could have been brought to the island. Certainly, some Romanesque books of models created by western artists were known there - but their depiction of Romanesque style features was rather limited. Consequently it cannot be excluded, that the basic Romanesque art message to the Greek artists was that contained in the liturgical drama, brought to the island by Benedictine monks who were the major carriers of this tradition.

It is possible, that the Benedictine monastery which ordered those mosaics valued such features of Romanesque art as expression and the true-to-life certainty of images. It can be explained in many respects by the spiritual practice of the order. The main precept of St. Benedict: "ora et labor" ("pray and labour") - and the Benedictines' rules for the monastic life, which were the source of the active character of this order, possibly inspired their desire to express the same active root in art works. This suggestion may be basically proved by the frescoes of Benedictine Saint Angelo's cloister in Formis created in 1072–85. Most likely, Greek artists in Monreale were challenged by the task of the creation of similar images. Typically the Old Testament cycle of the Monreale mosaics included such iconographic schemes of Romanesque art as "The Adam and Eve's labours after their expulsion from Paradise", "The construction of the ark" and "The erection of Babel tower", all of which were filled by creative pathos. Two of these themes are depicted in the frescoes of Saint Angelo's in Formis. These themes were especially significant for the Benedictines. However Greek artists in these compositions were not strictly required to simply copy Romanesque models, and particularly their style. As with the whole of the Old Testament cycle in Monreale, they were created in the Byzantine style. But the style of this cycle was a little bit more narrative than most of the monumental Byzantine painting of the twelfth century. The narrative character of the mosaic scenes is connected with specific features of illustra-

tions of the twelfth century Byzantine *Octateuchs*, which were repeated basically in the Old Testament cycle of the Monreale mosaics[42]. The *Octateuchs'* miniatures were keepers of the Byzantine knowledge of nature (naturalism in depiction of nature, particular images of animals, birds and fish) and knowledge of the nature of human beings, even with rather vivid physiological features (for example, they include the scene of childbirth)[43]. And the realistic features of the *Octateuchs'* illustrations carry some similarities with Romanesque artworks.

While working on the New Testament cycle of the Monreale mosaics the artists were conscientiously following the manner of liturgical drama actions. Thus they found the way to fill their artwork images with the expressionism and with the peculiar "reality" of Romanesque art. As a result a new independent style of monumental painting was born in Monreale. It was generally recognized by the Western world and started being repeatedly duplicated[44].

Through bringing to light the influence of liturgical drama on Byzantine artists we open to ourself one of the mechanisms of Romanesque art influence on Monreale artists. It also lets us bring to light and declare the problem of the interconnection of the Latin order of mosaic decoration of the cathedral with its Greek executors. The order had not compiled a programme of mosaics only, and come up with separate particulars of its iconography, but the artists had become active participants in the artistic design of the Monreale mosaics. On the other hand the reference of the Greek masters to artistic particularities of the liturgical drama testify to the Greek masters' deep understanding of the order's rules and conditions.

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[42] EVSEEVA 2005.

[43] The artists of the miniatures of the *Octateuchs* copied illustrations of ancient medical and occupational treatises, botanic and zoological books, Claudius Ptolemy's *Geographica* and others ancient scientific works directly in their very ancient examples (WEITZMANN 1999, 300–07) or through *Christian Topography* by Cosmas Indicopleustes (HUNT 1979; LOWDEN 1992, 121).

[44] DEMUS 1970, 150–61 (there are a large bibliography on these question here); OAKESHOTT 1972; EVSEEVA 2002; MURATOVA 2004.

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