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# NORMAN MONUMENTS CHURCHES AND PALACES

by **Maria Katja Guida**

REGIONE SICILIANA  
Assessorato dei Beni culturali  
e dell'Identità siciliana



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## NORMAN MONUMENTS

### Churches and Palaces

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The Sicilian buildings of the Norman era, with their mix of European, Byzantine and Islamic architecture and their arabesque forms and rich mosaic decorations generate, in those who see them for the first time, an impression of something singular and unique. Actually, it could be said that the entire history of the Norman occupation of Sicily should be classified as being singular and unique. Between 1060 and 1090 a small group of warriors of ancient Scandinavian origin, but established for over a century and a half in France, and who spoke French, took possession of Sicily, removing it from two centuries of Muslim domination. Sicily was rich and civilized. Palermo, which in ancient Greece and Rome times was not considered one of the important towns on the Island, had become its capital, and one of the great metropolises of the Islamised Mediterranean area. However the prevalent religion was Muslim, and the laws and customs were Arabic. The Normans, therefore, found themselves obliged to create a completely new Kingdom from the foundations up, certainly unique in Western Europe at that time. Not only did they reorganise politics but they also recreated all civil and religious institutions in the Christian, feudal and Western sense. This unique historical task was rendered, if anything, more complex by the numerical inferiority of the Normans themselves; sufficiently numerous and battle hardened to command, but not to populate and colonise the territory. Adaptable and free from prejudices the Hautevilles chose

a life of coexistence and syncretism throughout the hundred years of their reign. They availed themselves at all levels of their administration, of Byzantine and Muslim bureaucrats, retained as the official language, alongside Latin, both Arabic and Greek; and supported – despite the start of the Eastern schism in those years - both Latin and Greek Orthodox clergy. Due to their dynastic difficulties (the succession of all the Norman kings was troubled), but also because of the historical inclination to Latinise and feudalise the island, this mix of people, customs and languages did not last – as a system - beyond the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century; but it left a very particular imprint that makes Norman Sicily one of the most “exotic” and surprising lands in Western Europe during the Middle Ages.

Operating in a land that belonged to the “infidels”, and which therefore was considered “fair game”, the Norman kings were able to establish a personal domain, the magnitude of which was unimaginable in the rest of feudal Europe. Elsewhere the King was a landowner amongst many, and his landed rights clashed with those of his feudal lords. The rights and property of the Crown on the Island were, instead, extensive. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century the King of Sicily was considered one of the richest kings of Europe, and he was powerful enough to set himself up in relation to the nobility as the “*dominus*” or sovereign and not simply that of *primus inter pares* or first amongst equals.

In order to understand the Norman buildings with their lavish mosaic

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decorations, one must consider their function as a way of enhancing the stature of the sovereign and as tangible manifestations of his wealth. All new rulers need, in order to become established, some method of consecrating and exalting their rise to power. The intense and, in some ways, frenetic building activity commissioned by Roger II and the two Williams, perfectly fitted this necessity. To give importance to this unknown, (for Western Europe), sovereign figure, being created in the Kingdom of Sicily, the Hautevilles turned to the Byzantine world. They knew this world well: before landing in Sicily, they had arrived in Southern Italy as mercenary soldiers, sometimes serving and sometimes opposing the Eastern Empire, which was fighting to conquer Apulia, Calabria and Campania. These unscrupulous and politically skilled warriors were fascinated by the splendour and the ceremonial at the Byzantine court. To add prestige to their new power of *parvenus* in history, they chose the oriental art of mosaics, with its bright, dazzling splendour, the ritualistic solemnity codified through the centuries; and, with the glorification of the earthly authorities, as a manifestation of a superior divine authority. Therefore they imported artists from the capital of the Eastern Empire, who filled the Palatine Chapel, the Cathedrals of Cefalù and that of Monreale, Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio, with gold and vibrant colours. All these mosaics are dominated by the heavenly representation of the earthly monarch, Christ Pantocrator, He who can do everything. And amongst the representations of the Saints and the

stories of the Old Testament and the New Testament, there is always – in a privileged position – a picture that portrays Christ himself investing the sovereign with his earthly powers.

As irony would have it, the ancient Oriental art of mosaics disappeared, for the most part, from its very center of origin: Byzantium, then Constantinople and now known as Istanbul. Two differing iconoclasts should be held responsible: Byzantine and Islamic, after the Ottoman conquest of the 15th century. The richest testimonies of the Byzantine mosaics were preserved in the peripheral lands: in the West, in Ravenna, in Venice and in the Venetian lagoon as well as in the Norman monuments in western Sicily. As a strange paradox, art rendered this historical moment, which normally would be destined to disappear, permanent. Sicily, under Norman rule, was being populated by settlers from northern Italy; the feudal lords, to whom the monarchs assigned the lands of the Kingdom, were dismantling the model of smallholdings previously favoured by the Islamic population; the Latin clergy, supported by Rome, supplanted the Greek clergy. Sicily, in short, was becoming westernised, Latinised, and feudalised; its peculiar cultural mix could not have endured. It was the sumptuous art, created during this era of great wealth, which survived, together with a perennial record (in its own way, a mythology), of the Golden Age in the history of Sicily.

# NORMAN CULTURE FROM THE MAINLAND TO THE ISLAND AND BACK AGAIN

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The conquest of Sicily took place at the end of one of the routes – the one leading towards the centre of the Mediterranean – which the Normans followed in their expansion during the 11<sup>th</sup> century in Europe - to other regions of France, towards England, the north of Spain - and the Middle East. When the conquest of Sicily began, which had been Arabic for centuries, they already had to their credit a history of conquests in Southern Italy: from Campania, to Apulia, Basilicata and Calabria.

## FROM THE MAINLAND TO THE ISLAND

The two youngest of the twelve children of Tancred of Hauteville, Robert Guiscard and Roger I focused on the Campania-Calabria area not only to pursue territorial conquests but also for the systematic assimilation of the cultures of the defeated - Roman and Lombardic in Campania, Byzantine in Calabria – into its own Nordic culture, especially architectural. Robert Guiscard inaugurates a useful marriage policy with the Lombardic principality of Salerno, marrying the princess Sikelgaita, daughter of Prince Guaimar V and such a good friend of the Abbot Desiderio from Montecassino that she later desires to be buried in the Abbey: the “*paradisus huius ecclesiae ante basilicam beati Petri*”, as recalled by Amato from Montecassino in the *Chronica Monasterii Casinensis*. The Guiscard, attracted to this Cassinic and Lombardic culture, had, in Salerno, outclassed the small Lombardic court of Gisulf II with its Palatine Chapel by commissioning the Castel Terracena – where his niece and future Empress Constance of Hauteville would later be lodged – as well as the imposing Cathedral, built on the lines of the Cassinic Abbey. Like the Abbey, it was built as a basilica, preceded by a “*paradisus*”

and embellished with mosaic floors. In Calabria Robert Guiscard and his brother Roger I, Count of Sicily, commissioned, alongside the existing Byzantine churches with a single nave or with a centralised layout, new abbeys and cathedrals of distinct Nordic culture, to the extent that they created what became known as a “*a new Normandy*” in Calabria. Brought to mind are the Abbey della Matina in San Marco Argentano, the Abbey of Sant’Eufemia in the Lamentine plain, the Abbey della Trinità in Mileto where the Count of Sicily also commissioned a Cathedral, the Cathedral of Gerace and the Abbey of Santa Maria e dei XII Apostoli in Bagnara, all characterised by a protruding transept, a retro-choir and tiered apses copied from the layout of the Benedictine-Cluny Abbey of Cluny II, which is also to be found in Saint-Evroult-sur-Ouche, the home of the Abbot and architect Robert de Grantmesnil who introduced the layout of Cluny II to Mileto. The chapel of Santa Maria in Reggio can be considered as the bridging monument to the Sicilian buildings commissioned by Roger I. The historian has traced the similarities between the Chapel of Reggio Calabria - used perhaps for Roger II’s ducal investiture



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in 1127 – and the Palatine Chapel in Palermo. Maria Amalia Mastelloni has recently documented the fact that the greatest concentration of monuments, commissioned for political purposes and extending from Salerno, via Reggio to Palermo, is to be found in Reggio. The spread of Western culture through Campania and Calabria was only one of the aspects of the cultural syncretism of the new rulers. The assimilation of the deeply radicated Islamic substrata of the island becomes of prime importance, to such an extent that Roger II chooses Palermo as his capital; a city that had been the seat of the Emirs, admired by the famous Arab traveller Ibn Giubàyr, who describes Palermo in enthusiastic terms: “Ancient and elegant city, both splendid and gracious, it rises before you in the guise of a temptress: it rises proudly from amongst its squares and its plains, a garden city... dazzles the eye with its rare loveliness. A stupendous city, resembling Cordoba in its architecture”. The chroniclers of the period describe the Royal Palace with similar words of admiration “remarkable for the splendour of the gems and the gold” and Ibn Giubàyr glorifies the King because “...he trusts Muslims very much... and he greatly resembles Muslim kings for the way he enjoys the delights of his kingdom, as well as for his laws, for his customs, for the ability of his ruling class (Optimates), for his magnificent court and the luxury of his attire”. But the main characteristic of the new Norman dynasty is its aspiration to compete with the Byzantine Imperial Court in wealth and splendour. Vera Von

1

*Palermo, Church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio. “Roger II, crowned by Christ”*

Falkenhausen, in an effort to exemplify the relationship and mutual esteem between the Byzantines and the Normans, relates an opinion offered by the Byzantine princess Anna Comnena about the military virtues of the nobleman Niceforo Euforbeno: “*He knew how to wield a spear and protect himself with his shield. Seen on horseback, he did not seem Byzantine, but rather Norman*”. The Normans’ disdain for the military prowess of the Byzantines was amply compensated for by their admiration for their culture and their art as well as their desire to equal the wealth and splendour of Byzantium, “*the Great City*”.

#### THE KINGDOM OF SICILY.

THE AGE OF ROGER II AND WILLIAM I  
This part of history begins with the surge of Constantinople culture brought by Roger II to Sicily – in Palermo and Cefalù – beginning in the 5<sup>th</sup> decade of the 12<sup>th</sup> century with the splendid mosaic decorations executed by Byzantine artists in the church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio, where in one of the panels, the first King (of Sicily) is dressed in the rich garments of the *basileus* (Great King) as he is crowned by Christ himself (**fig. 1**) - and in the Palatine Chapel, where the work continued over a longer period; in the presbytery in the reign of Roger II and in the nave during the reign of William I. Thus the splendid mosaics found in various parts of the presbytery are normally attributed to the first phase of the building of the Palatine Chapel: the one in the dome – dominated by the wonderful Creation with the bust of *Christ Pantocrator*, surrounded



ΡΟΓΕ ΡΙΟΣ ΡΗΞ

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*Palermo, Palatine Chapel. "Christ Pantocrator between angels and archangels"*



by four angels and four haloed archangels, *Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, Uriah*, in imperial robes (**fig. 2**) – and those found in the drum of the dome, in the intrados of the arches, in the apses and in the aisles of the transept.

In the second phase, during the reign of William I, reference is normally made to the mosaics in the central nave. The discussion about the dating of these mosaics takes its cue from the *Cronaca* of Romuald of Salerno, who attributes the realisation of all the decorations to the time of William I. However, recent studies show that the mosaics in the presbytery are irrefutably older, given that the date 1143 is inscribed in Greek at the base of the dome. It should also be said that the carved and painted ceiling and the mosaic flooring must also date back to before the death of Roger II in 1154. They are described in fact by the monk Philagathus of Cerami - who preached the Gospel at Court – in the XXVII Homily preached in the presence of Roger II in the very same Chapel:

*“...this chapel, which he had built in his palaces for the preachers, almost as a foundation and fortification: great and beautiful, noble in its magnificence, full of light, glittering with gold, sparkling with gems, and filled with paintings. This chapel, whoever sees it repeatedly, and returns to view it, will always look at it dumbfounded, as if seeing it for the first time, and will look around in amazement.*

*The roof is so beautiful that one never tires of looking at it, and its mere mention arouses admiration. With fine carvings arranged in the form of small baskets, decorated and*

*glittering with gold, it resembles the sky, when the air is limpid and the stars appear to dance in chorus. Columns perfectly support the arches and lift the roof so high that it appears almost impossible [fig. 3]. And the consecrated floor of the Chapel resembles a meadow in spring, adorned with multicoloured marble tessera. With the added advantage that flowers wither and fade, whilst this meadow will never wither and will last for eternity, preserving its immortal blooms [fig. 4]. And all the walls are covered in marble decorations; of these the higher parts are covered by gold tessera, wherever the walls are not occupied by rows of sacred images...”*

The realisation of this magnificent ceiling appears to bear out Ibn Giubayr's comments regarding Roger II's leanings towards the Muslim culture, with reference to an accentuated syncretism “*in which the hieratic saints originating from Byzantium coexist harmoniously with the Sacred Stories from the Old and New Testament together with the dancers, the lute players and the Arab camel drivers depicted on the stalactite ceilings.*” (**fig. 5**); and anyhow, Arab influences are to be found in other Churches commissioned by Roger II such as those of San Giovanni degli Eremiti and San Cataldo.

The realisation of the floor and the ambon is confirmation of the tendency at that time, to embody the style of architecture originating from Cassino, which had become so popular in Campania during the reign of his father Roger I, Count of Sicily and his uncle Robert Guiscard. Examples of this tendency can be seen in the mosaic





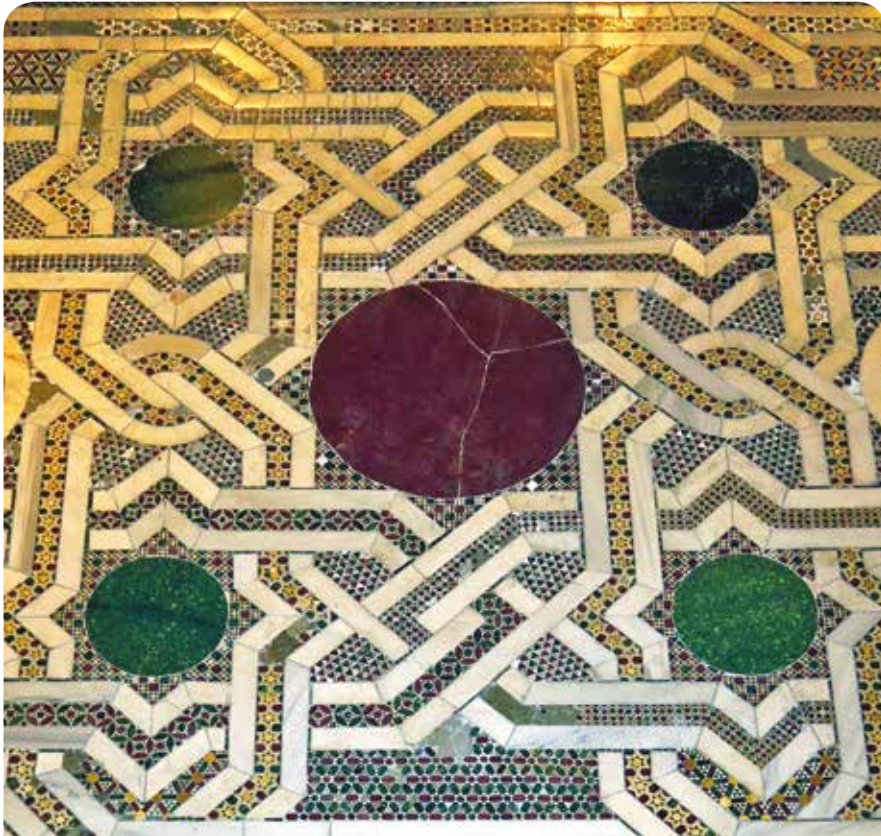
ANNO DOMINI MCCCXXI





flooring in the Cathedrals of Salerno, Ravello, Sessa Arunca and Cava dei Tirreni, and in the nilian Abbey of San Demetrio Corone in Montecassino, Calabria and the Church of San Gregorio in Reggio Calabria. The wall mosaics of the central nave which include *The Genesis Stories* over two registers should however, according to the *Chronicon* by Romuald of Salerno, be attributed to the reign of William I. The soffits are decorated with figures of saints in tondo and the spaces above the columns with figures of standing Saints; finally, two

angels in confrontation in the remaining spaces above the triumphal arch and on the counter-façade there is the *Christ Enthroned* with Saints Peter and Paul above and the royal throne flanked by lions and birds below, corroborating the concept of the Chapel having a dual function –both religious and as an regal audience hall –, both for the presence of the throne and for some particulars of the profane decoration, which is also to be found, further embellished with animals and plants, in the audience hall commissioned later by Roger



3  
*Palermo, Palatine Chapel. View of the inside*

4  
*Palermo, Palatine Chapel. Detail of the floor*

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*Palermo, Palatine Chapel. Detail of the ceiling*

and in the décor of the “*Sala della Fontana*” in the Palace of the Zisa.

Furthermore, in the same Chapel other forms of art are documented, Islamic wood carvings already mentioned and westernised sculptures that adorn the lectern and the Easter candelabrum (fig. 6) made during the late Norman age, correlating them with the belltower and some of the capitals in the cloister of Monreale. However, the Royal Palace, housed other activities, mainly that of the “*Nobiles officinae*” (The Royal Workshops)

mentioned by the chronicler Ugo Falcando where fabrics, embroideries, jewellery, ivory caskets, pitchers and reliquaries in rock crystal were produced to an extraordinary level of artistic excellence. *In primis* we must recall the mantle worn by Roger II, now in the Imperial Treasury (Germ: Schatzkammer) of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, - made of the mineral sammite, richly decorated with a central gold and pearl embroidery of Islamic inspiration depicting two lions in the act of overpowering two camels arranged





symmetrically on either side of the Tree of Life. On the curved edge of the mantle the following words are embroidered in Kufic letters: “*work carried out in the flourishing regal workshop, with happiness and honour, commitment and perfection, proweress and efficiency, satisfaction and good luck, generosity and sublimity, glory and beauty, fulfillment of desires and hopes, auspicious days and nights, without cessation or removal, with honour and care, vigilance and defense, prosperity and integrity, triumph and ability, in the capital of Sicily in the year 528 of the egira (corresponding to 1133-34)*”. On the straight edge of the mantle there is a pearl embroidered frieze alternating with embroideries of gold and diamond shaped plaques with *cloisonnés* enamel, like the two circular plates above the heads of the two lions. These enamels lead one to a further sector of this prestigious workshop that of the goldsmiths and the cloisonné enamels of the Byzantine culture that gave rise to highly refined works of art, all connected by the same technical characteristics: the presence of the filigree, “*like vermicelli*”, a phrase coined by Marc Rosenberg, formed of precious and semiprecious stones and small pearls inserted into the bezels or connected by a fine thread, as written by Ugo Falcando in the *Epistola ad Petrum*, the Church Treasurer in Palermo: “*margarite quoque, aut integrae cistulis aureis includuntur aut... perforatae filo tenui connectuntur*”.

Now scattered, the artifacts were produced in the same workshops but in eras ranging from the reign of Roger II to that of the Swabians and beyond. History records that during the Ruggerian age





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magnificent works such as the reliquary of St. Leonzio in Naples and the reliquary (stauroteca) in the Cosenza Cathedral (fig. 7). The Cosentine works are similar to those of the Byzantine culture current during the reign of Roger II and certainly the work of a talented master artisan from Constantinople - not only for the elegance of the enameling, but also for the deep theological meanings underlying the iconographic themes. This artisan would have been working with the Royal Workshops and almost certainly in close contact with the team of mosaicists working in the Palatine Chapel, the Martorana and the Duomo in Cefalù. Confirmation of the existence of goldsmiths and enamellists from the time of Roger II and continuing throughout those of his successors - William I and William II is provided by the presence of westernised stylistic elements of markedly Limousin influence in works of art such as the portable altar of Agrigento and advanced iconographic choice of topics such as the presence of Thomas Becket from Canterbury not only in the mosaics of Monreale, but also in the cover of the *Gospel Book* of Bishop Alfano in the Metropolitan Church of Capua. Palermo, along with Messina, played an important part in the production of illuminated codices and it has been suggested that illumination may have been practiced at the Royal Palace since the time of Roger II and William I. Whilst some codices show distinct Palestinian and Cypriot stylistic features and generically Byzantine, others are connected to the Palermitan mosaic culture and the

artifacts of the “*Nobiles Officinae*” and are sometimes documented by useful annotations referring to dates as for example “*rege nostro Rogerio*” in *Exultet* now in the National Library in Madrid, thus datable between 1130 and 1154. The activity of the Illuminators continues until the end of the Norman reign; it is worth remembering that the *Gospel Book* in the Central Library in Palermo from about 1180 belonged to Costance of Hauteville (fig. 8-9).

The Cathedral of Cefalù was the other major architectural, sculptural and pictorial complex commissioned by Roger II. The architectural structure reflects the most advanced European architecture in the protruding transept, in the deep presbytery and in the choir area of the church, those parts of the church built during the reign of Roger II. The external decorative detailing imparts a polyhedral character to the building: the crossed arches that surround the upper part of the presbytery and the transept are Arabic in style whilst the zig-zag decorative motifs are western. This design of crossed arches and small semicircular arches will be repeated later in the upper part of the façade and the crenellated tower on the left. Inside the building the decoration of the presbytery – of the apse and the bema that precede it - is due to Roger II, as stated on the decorative inscription at the base of the apse and it is no less fascinating, though less extensive, that of the Palatine Chapel.

*Christ Pantocrator* is also reproduced here, only as a half-bust, but just as beautiful as the three in the Palatine Chapel. The four haloed archangels are once again either side



7  
*Cosenza, Diocesan  
Museum. Stauroteca,  
reverse side*

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10

*Cefalù, Cathedral.  
Decorated Apse*

of the *Praying Virgin - Raphael, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel* in the order indicated by the Greek words – wearing imperial clothes with loros and scepter and their large feathered wings opened against the golden background of the apse. Another imaginative invention is presented in the ribbed vault of the bema with four angels in the central segment and four seraphs - two with their wings closed and two with their wings crossed - each identified by the same Greek letters Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΣΕΡΑΦΗΜ (holy seraph) (**fig. 10**).

In the lower register of the apse and on the walls of the bema the more classic Byzantine portrayal of the apostles and the

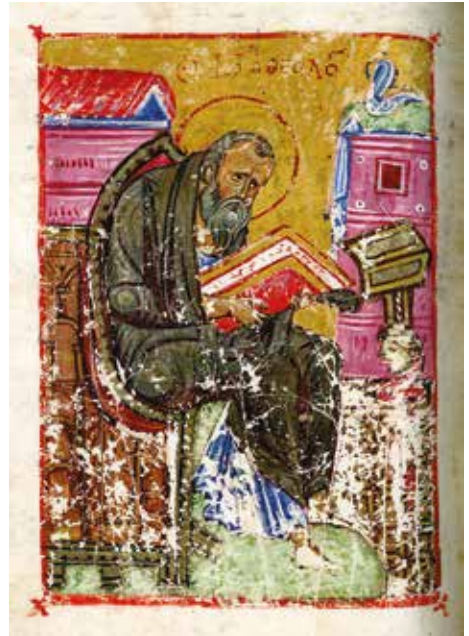
saints indicate a more advanced technique and a slightly later date, post 1148 of that of the apse, or perhaps that the realisation of these mosaics, even though coetaneous are due to different artists. What gives the Cathedral a feeling of innovation, as well as the Islamic and Byzantine connotations discussed earlier, is the presence of capitals that support the triumphal arch, those that follow each other down the aisles and the few that remain in a good state of preservation in the cloister.

They all denote, as annotated by Francesco Gandolfo, a culture initiated by artists “brought in from outside.” According to Roberto Salvini, the first capitals are

8-9

*“Book of the Gospel  
(Evangelion) belonging  
to Queen Constance”.*

*Miniature depicting  
San Luca and San  
Giovanni. Biblioteca  
centrale della Regione  
siciliana*







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11

*Cefalù, Cathedral  
Cloister. Capital  
with griffins*

similar to sculptures from Provence, though Gandolfo maintains that artists from Apulia sculpted the two capitals. Roberto Salvini also suggests that the sculptor of the two capitals was the Master Artisan who sculpted the Telamons of Roger II's ark in the Cathedral in Palermo. He also maintains that the same hand sculpted the 6<sup>th</sup> capital on the right side of the nave, which figures a man, probably a traveller, attacked by a dragon. Some of the capitals in the nave figure more classical imagery, such as the *Visitation* or those where half-busts protrude above the leaves of Egyptian Corinthian

capitals. A more pronounced iconographic and cultural diversity is to be found in the surviving capitals in the cloister: a mix of abstract decorations and profane depicting acrobats, historical depicting the *Stories of Noah* and pagan depicting animals: one in particular portrays a lion typical of Norman culture, with a hairless muzzle and round eyes, another two griffins in confrontation, reminiscent of a certain Islamic elegance (**fig. 11**), and a third two snakelike creatures with flabby and hairless faces on the capital "of the snakes" (**fig. 12**).

12

*Cefalù, Cathedral  
Cloister. Capital  
decorated with snakes*





## THE AGE OF WILLIAM II

A period of stagnation occurred during the reign of William I, in which only the construction of the Zisa was initiated, along with the continuation of the mosaics in the central nave and aisles in the Palatine Chapel and those in the presbytery in Cefalù. But with the succession of William II a new era of constructive activity was ushered in, along with the acceptance of more disparate cultures, ranging from those already experimented by Roger II to new ideas – in particular the choice of the Armenian *goudron* (cushion)

motif also present in Syria, in Egypt and in the doorways and windows of the Basilica of the San Sepulchro and in the new constructions in Palermo such as the church of the Santo Spirito and the Cathedral requested by the Archbishop Walter of the Mill in which the *goudron* motif appears several times in the big windows in the apses and the bell towers. During the reign of Roger II this motif had appeared in the church of Santa Maria dell’Ammiraglio where, according to N. Kanaan Kedar, “George of Antioch exhibited the *goudron* cushion decoration



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13

*Monreale, Cathedral.  
External view of the  
Apse*



in order to let it be known that it was of Syrian origin”.

In the grandest work commissioned by William II – the Cathedral of Monreale – both structural, architectural and decorative motifs return that had already been introduced in the Palatine Chapel and in the Cathedral of Cefalù: the co-existence of the Latin plan of the nave and the Eastern styled presbytery as well as the presence of primarily Islamic decorative motifs such as the crossed arches that in Monreale are arranged on three levels on the external apse and enriched by discs with bicoloured inlays (**fig. 13**).

The internal area is also richly covered with mosaics with the exception of the base of the walls, covered all round the perimeter with marble slabs interspersed by mosaic bands and separated from the mosaics of the upper register by a series of stylised small trees. The mosaic decoration completely covers the upper walls of the Basilica where it divides into three registers: on the upper level angels in tondo, on the other two registers (**fig. 14**) *Stories from the Old and New Testament*; in the soffits of the arches there are images of saints in tondo. While in the biblical scenes there are often iconographic references to mosaics of the central nave in the Palatine Chapel, the most interesting referral regarding the apse decoration is that of the apse in the Cathedral of Cefalù. For example, one finds once again the monumental *Benedictory Christ Pantocrator* in the apse (**fig. 15**), the Virgin - here pictured on the throne – between the archangels in imperial robes and, on the lower register, angels standing. Another significant reminder of



the decoration in the Cathedral in Cefalù, is the presence of seraphim flanking the *Etimasia* – the throne prepared for Christ's return and the four Archangels, in the vault preceding the apse.

Compared to previous works, in Monreale the number of scenes and images increase but what has most often been noted - originally by Ernst Kitzinger - is the introduction of a totally new style that refers back to earlier works in Macedonia, Cappadocia and other Byzantine provinces. The pieces of mosaic, from an iconographic and stylistic point of view, are close to that in the Palatine Chapel and of Cefalù - as in the two scenes with William II as

the protagonist (**fig. 16**) - most of the decorative details are very diverse: the physiognomical rendering, the way the richly embroidered vestments are draped around the body, or ruffled by the wind, the realistic rendering of some of the stories and the marked plasticism created by typical mannerisms in the anatomical rendering, all refer directly to their stylistic derivation from 13<sup>th</sup> century Campania and Apulia.

Even the sculptural decoration has a rich heritage in the complex of Monreale. In addition to almost all the capitals of the nave, which have been relocated, the royal throne and William I's simple sarcophagus

14

*Monreale, Cathedral.*  
"Noah receives the  
dove bearing an olive  
branch"

15

*Monreale, Cathedral.*  
On the following page:  
"Christ Pantocrator"







ΩΝ  
ΟΥΡΑΝΟΥ  
ΚΑΙ  
ΤΗΣ  
ΓΗΣ

Ω  
Ν  
Ο  
Υ  
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Σ





## NORMAN MONUMENTS

### Churches and Palaces



16  
*Monreale, Cathedral.*  
*“King William II offers the Cathedral to the Virgin Mary”*

17  
*Capital in the Monreale Cathedral Cloisters.*  
*“King William II offers the Cathedral to the Virgin Mary”*

of porphyry are important. Of particular interest, – as it provides certain chronological data – are the two bronze doors of the church: one from Pisa where it had been cast by Bonanno Pisano and mounted in 1185 and the other built for the north entrance by Barisano da Trani between 1185 and 1190. However, it is the annexed cloister that houses the most extensive collection of Norman-Sicilian capitals ever realised. All four sides exhibit twin columns decorated with mosaic motifs and at the corners there are groups of four columns richly with plant motifs and birds but also cherubs and lions or lions on their backs, as usually portrayed in the iconography of the time. In the southwest corner the only column in the middle of the cloister is also decorated with an ancient *chevron* motif (succession of inverted V's). The double capitals of the twin or quadruple columns in the four



corners permit the realisation of complex scenes, for example the one in which *William II offers the model of the temple to the Virgin (fig. 17)*, a number of *Stories from the Old and the New Testament* and various allegorical scenes. Their culture has been variously interpreted by scholars who have analysed it: baptised by Roberto Salvini with the name “Masters of the Dedication”, of the Putti, the Eagles, and of the Apostles’ Mission – all influenced by the Provençale culture according to Wolfgang Krönig and Roberto Salvini or that of the Campania-Salerno area according to C.D. Sheppard. Other theories have followed over time; the latest is that of Francesco Gandolfo who believes that the collection of capitals is the work of not one but two important “botteghe” (the workshops): the first already active in Cefalù, the other in the Cathedral of Salerno where they had created the minor pulpit.



## THE RETURN OF CULTURE TO SOUTHERN ITALY

Sicilian Norman culture had a large following originating from the areas that had already been influenced by their Nordic culture as they passed through on their way down i.e. Calabria and Campania which had offered the Conquerors the architectural model of Cassino, integrated with that of Cluny II.

The first to return was the sculpture from Cefalù to Bagnara Calabria and this is fairly obvious given that Roger II had been to Bagnara to ask the monks of the Abbey of Santa Maria e XII Apostoli to take over the Diocese of Cefalù, when, in 1147, the Abbey became a part of it.

A link has been established between the cultures of the Byzantine-Muslim style of the fragment, considered to be an ambon,

nowadays in the Church of the Rosario in Bagnara and the capitals in the cloister in Cefalù, and more specifically the one with the griffins in confrontation. Other instances indicate the adaptation of the Nordic culture of the early Normans, already incorporated into the west door to the newer creations in the cloister of Cefalù. Reference is made to the baptismal font in the Church of Sant'Adriano in San Demetrio Corone that can be considered very similar in style to the serpent's capital in the cloister of Cefalù.

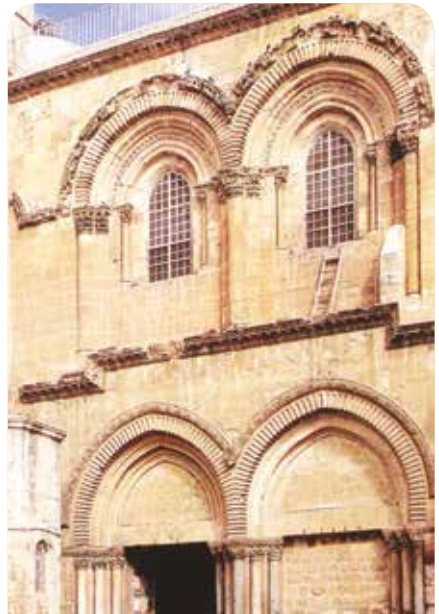
Of equal interest is the Portal of Sambucina, decorated with *goudron* in the style to be found in the Cathedral in Palermo and in the Church of Santo Spirito (**fig. 18**), and also in the Cathedral del Santo Sepolcro (Church of the Holy Sepulchre) in Jerusalem (**fig. 19**): it has been suggested

**18**

*Palermo, Church of the Santo Spirito. Windows decorated with goudron friezes*

**19**

*Jerusalem, Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Windows and portal (narthex) decorated with goudron friezes*



## NORMAN MONUMENTS

Churches and Palaces

20

Rossano, Church of  
Santa Maria  
del Patir  
Detail of the  
“Rotae” floor



that the connecting link is the presence of Joachim of Fiore in Jerusalem, in the Church of the Santo Spirito in Palermo, and in the Abbey della Sambucina at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Also of significance in this context, is the fact that the “rotae” flooring in the Church of Santa Maria del Patir of Rossano (**fig. 20**) is considered to belong to the Sicilian area of influence, in close relationship to the artifacts coming out of the Royal Workshops (Nobiles officinae). Ugo Falcando described in particular the fabrics known as “*exarentesmata, circularum varietate insignita*” (characterised by various circles).

In Campania the influence of Norman culture in its Sicilian version – in the style of Monreale - is present in more than one sector: architectural decoration, paintings

and miniatures. It is worth remembering the intertwined arches on the Amalfi coast and those in Salerno that decorate the 12<sup>th</sup> century Palazzo Fruscione, and Castel Terracena, according to the miniatures by Pietro da Eboli. The artisans who created the minor ambo in the Salerno Cathedral came to Palermo thanks to Archbishop Romualdo Garner around 1180, as noted by Francesco Gandolfo. Similarly the style of the cloister of Monreale influenced, during Matthew d’Ajello’s time, the major ambo of 1180, in the Cathedral of Salerno and other areas of its decoration: of note for example, is the uninterrupted row of stylised trees, mentioned earlier in the Cathedral of Monreale, but already executed in the Palatine Chapel, which are also to be found on the screens that surround the stairs



accessing the ambo (**fig. 21-22**).

The iconic and fresco paintings, in particular, evoke the Monreale culture. The Archangel with outstretched wings depicted in the porch of Sant'Angelo in Formis, for example is a perfect example of 12<sup>th</sup> century Sicilian mosaics; likewise the fragment with an angel in the dome of the apse of the Cathedral of Salerno, as well as the depiction of Saint Matthew on the lunette of the portal, as annotated by Antonio Jacobini. Even the iconic paintings evoke the culture of Monreale; the *Madonna* known as *the Madonna of Sant William* in the Montevergine Abbey Museum, *the Madonna with Child* in the Church di San Francesco in Aversa, *the Madonna of Pilerio* in the Cathedral of Cosenza and in other works which propose

physiognomic and anatomical peculiarities typical of the style adopted in the Monreale (**fig. 23-25**). These are the primary features also used in the illuminated miniatures: in particular those by Peter of Eboli showing, in the *De Balneis Puteolanis*, a connection with the mosaics of Monreale: for example in the anatomy of the naked bodies immersed in the “baths”. However, it is the record of the presence, at Castel Terracena, of the last of the Normans, Constance of Hauteville, addressing the populace that, in the “*Liber ad Honorem Augusti*”, creates an important historical reference to Sicily. She is also to be seen, depicted against the interwoven arches of Castel Terracena, praying for her husband Henry VI, first King of a new dynasty (**fig. 26**).

**21**  
*Monreale, Cathedral.*  
*Decoration of stylized*  
*trees*

**22**  
*Salerno, Cathedral.*  
*Decoration of*  
*stylized trees*



## NORMAN MONUMENTS

Churches and Palaces



23

Monreale, Cathedral.  
"The creation of  
Adam"

24

Aversa, Church  
of San Francesco.  
"Madonna with  
Child"

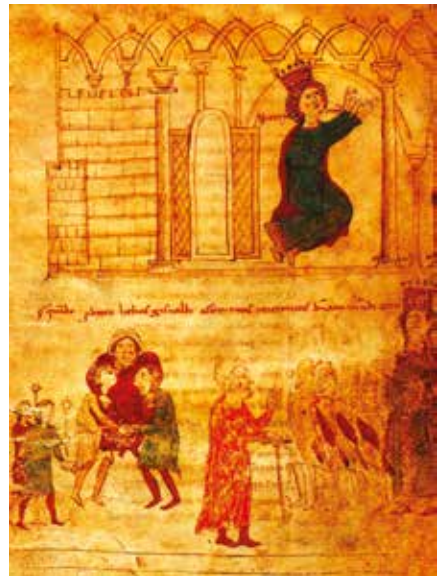


25

Cosenza, Cathedral.  
"Madonna del Pilerio"

26

"The Empress Constance  
of Hauteville prays for  
her husband Henry VI"  
from "Liber ad honorem  
Augusti"



# CHURCHES, CATHEDRALS, ABBEYS

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## THE AGE OF THE COUNTSHIP

With the progress of the conquest of Sicily, lasting about thirty years, the Normans dedicated themselves to the construction of Basilicas, Cathedrals - in Troina, Catania, Messina, and Mazara - and Abbeys to the extent that Guido Di Stefano called it an “architectural crusade “. This can also be connected to the devotion of Duke Robert Guiscard and even more so of Count Roger to certain saints and the Madonna as attested by 17<sup>th</sup> century sources. Ottavio Gaetani for example in *Vitae Sanctorum Siculorum* in 1657 devotes much space to the icons connected to the two crusaders: one was that of the *Vergine della Vittoria* (Virgin of Victory) in Palermo who, whilst the two brothers were besieging the city, “*Vexillum manu praeferens animos faciebat, aditumque in urbem praestabat*“ (holding the banner in her hand, she urged them to enter the city); other episodes are narrated by historians chronicling the Madonna di Ravanusa, Scicli, Piazza Armerina and Mineo. Roger II continues the tradition and dedicates the Cathedral of Cefalù to San Salvatore, who had saved him from a storm at sea and William II, who, having fallen asleep after hunting, dreamt of the Virgin who asked him to build a temple in her honour and indicated where he could find hidden treasure which would pay for its construction.

In the year 1072, straight after the conquest of the city of Palermo, Gregorio Magno writes that the Bishop Nicodemus reconsecrated the ancient Byzantine Cathedral, converted into a mosque during the Arab era. It is presumed that after the death of Roger II in 1101, his

wife Adelaide of Vasto, became Regent, and his second son Roger, chose Palermo as a residence. In the former palace of the Emirs, adapted and modified, Roger was invested as a knight in 1112 and from here in 1113 Adelaide travelled to the East to marry Baldwin, King of Jerusalem.

## PALERMO – THE CHURCH OF SAN GIOVANNI DEI LEBBROSI

.....  
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.....

The Church of San Giovanni Battista is one of the oldest Norman churches, founded, according to tradition, by Robert Guiscard and Roger I in 1071 during the siege of the city, on the ruins of the Castle of Yahia (John), an Arab building of which traces remain on the right side of the building (**fig. 27**). The church was built in the middle of a garden of palm-trees probably created by Arab workers, as testified by the presence of Arabic inscriptions on the capitals. It was only completed around 1150, when a leper colony was added. The interior has a basilica plan with three naves separated by pillars, with a elevated presbytery covered by a dome on stepped pendentives and three apses.

## NORMAN MONUMENTS

Churches and Palaces

27

*Palermo, Church of San Giovanni dei Lebbrosi*

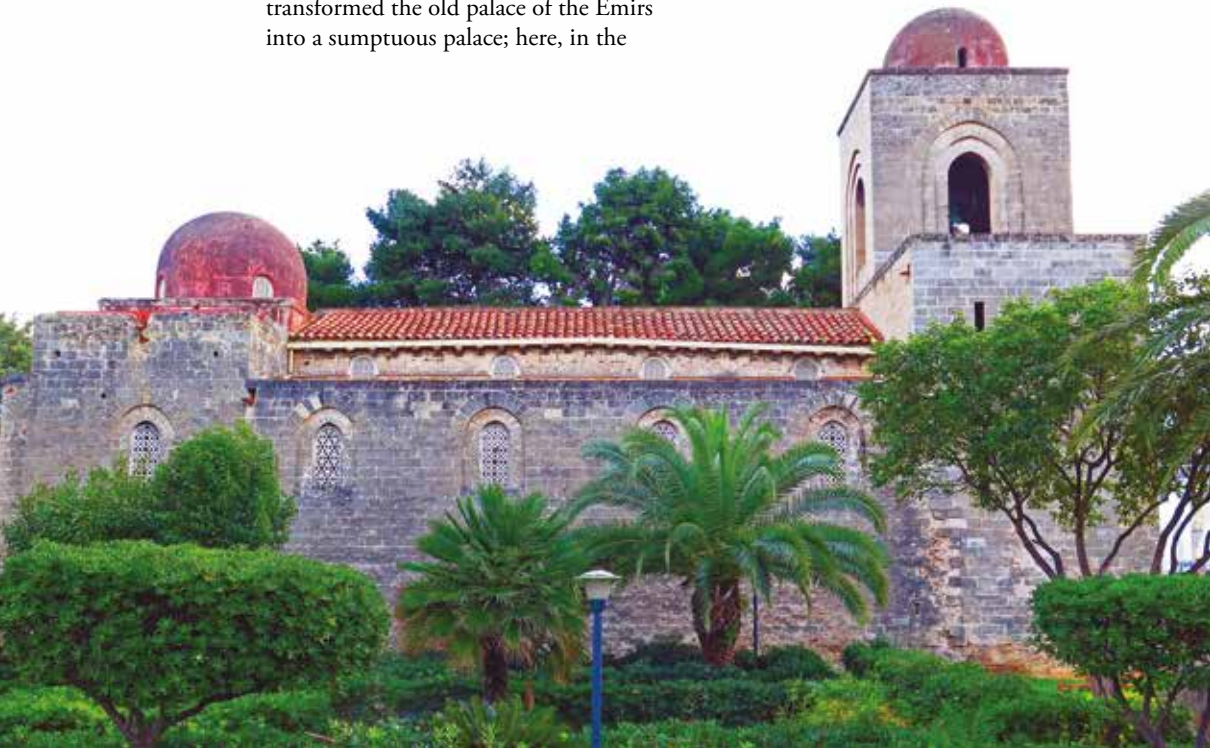
28

*Palermo, Palatine Chapel. "Whitsun"*

FOUNDATIONS DURING THE REIGN OF ROGER II (1130-1154)

In 1130 the antipope Anacleto II elevated Roger II to the rank of royalty for Sicily, Calabria and Apulia. Alexander of Telesse describes the Duke robed for the coronation, which took place on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December in the Cathedral: "And so, when the Duke was led in the Cathedral, regally dressed and was anointed with sacred oils and invested with the royal dignity, words could not describe the splendour of his majesty and his magnificence, nor imagination conceive them. In fact, to all those who actually saw him, it seemed as if all the wealth and the honours of the earth were united in him." Roger II transformed the old palace of the Emirs into a sumptuous palace; here, in the

Torre Pisana, the Audience Hall would be decorated on the walls and soffits with mosaics, depicting hunting scenes, palm trees, centaurs, and lions in confrontation, swans, peacocks, all in pairs, while the ceiling mosaics were most probably created during the age of Frederick II. George of Antioch also played an important role in these architectural achievements. The brilliant and audacious King's Grand Admiral, who commissioned the bridge with seven arches, known as dell'Ammiraglio, still in existence today and the Church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio.





## PALERMO – THE PALATINE CHAPEL

Piazza del Parlamento (entrance from  
Piazza Indipendenza), Palermo  
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The chapel - on the first floor of the Royal Palace - was founded by Roger II probably soon after his coronation. In 1132 the building had to be already at an advanced stage because the Archbishop Pietrola declared it a parish and in 1140 the church must have been almost completed when Roger granted the church its endowment. The Chapel was consecrated in 6651 of the Byzantine calendar, i.e. in 1143 of the Christian era, as attested to by the Greek inscription with a dedication to San Pietro located along the base of the drum that supports the dome. The bronze doors at the two entrances, facing inwards, giving access to the aisles, present classic decorations typical of those from Campania and Cassino that Robert Guiscard had had inserted into the bronze doors of the Cathedral of Salerno. The building has a basilica plan with three naves separated by pointed arches on granite columns, a square central transept topped by a hemispherical dome on corner niches. The wooden ceiling –over the central nave has a coffer and muquarna ceiling (stalactites and honeycombs) and painted with figures and Kufic inscriptions, which, together with the paintings on the small sloping wooden beams of the ceiling constitutes the largest pictorial cycle by the Islamic Fatimid workshop that has survived to this day. There are scenes symbolic of everyday life, festivals and animals. The







sanctuary conserves a rich ambo also decorated with mosaics and an Easter candlelabrum carved with figures, animals and acanthus leaves.

No provision was made for a door in the west wall of the nave because a throne for the King had been planned for that position - which counterbalanced the altar at the eastern end of the church - and the nave was to be a sort of throne hall, justifying the presence of profane motifs in the wooden ceiling. As for the mosaics, it appears doubtful that there existed an overall iconographic project and it has been assumed that the mosaics of the nave-throneroom were not part of the initial project. Critics has long since agreed that the décor was carried out in two distinct phases: the first phase was the decoration, according to the inscription, by 1143, of the presbytery including the dome, the apse (where only the *Pantocrator* is original while the rest was done in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) and the transept - and the second phase was during the era of William I. Here the stylistic differences of the mosaics between those of the nave and those of aisles suggest that different artisans were used.

The execution of the mosaics of the presbytery had to be completed by mid-century because they - in particular those of the south wing of the transept and those in the central square under the inscription of 1143 - clearly show the influence of the mosaic decoration the Cefalù Cathedral in 1148. Furthermore these mosaics also inspired the choice and arrangement of the subject of the mosaics in the church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio, founded by George of

Antioch and finished before his death in 1151.

The mosaics of the central nave and the side aisles were executed instead - according to the *Cronaca* by Romuald of Salerno - under the reign of William I, who had to make the decision to extend the religious iconography to that part of the church which had originally been intended as the throne room and which had already been decorated with silk drapes woven with gold according to the description by Philagathus of Cerami. According to a system elaborated in Byzantium, the fulcrum of the dome is constituted by the *Benedictory Christ Pantocrator*, surrounded by four *archangels* in hierarchical order, bearing the labaro and a globe with a cross and four angels in adoration; in the drum there are eight prophets; in the angular niches of the dome there are evangelists who alternate with *David, Solomon, Zaccharia and John the Baptist*; in the soffits of the arches supporting the dome there are a series of martyrs; and finally the church fathers and holy bishops.

The decoration of the presbytery includes the cycle of the feast days, namely a series of scenes that include the most important events of Christ's life on earth, which in Byzantine art took a canonical form between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries: on the east arch of the central bay the *Annunciation*; in the south wing of the transept the *Nativity* and the *Flight from Egypt* (**fig. 30**), the only scene which is not part of the Byzantine canonical cycle of the feast days; also in the central bay, opposite the *Annunciation* one can find

29

Palermo, Palatine Chapel. "The creation of the sun, the moon and the heavens" and "The creation of the fishes and the birds"

30

Palermo, Palatine Chapel. "Flight into Egypt"

## NORMAN MONUMENTS

### Churches and Palaces

the *Presentation of Christ at the Temple*; in the lower registers of the south wing of the transept the *Baptism*, the *Transfiguration*, the *Resurrection of Lazarus*, the *Entrance into Jerusalem*; The cycle continues in the north wing, on the walls of the area where it was assumed that the Royal Gallery would have been located, the *Cruxifixion*, the *Descent of Christ into Hell* and in the vault, the *Ascension*; and finally, in the south wing, the *Pentecost* (fig. 28).

The classic Byzantine system in the Palermo church was adapted to accommodate the Royal Gallery: the many holy warriors in the soffits of the arches and the concentration of the scenes of the cycle of feast days in the south wing were motivated by the presence of the King who attended functions from the Gallery in the north wing of the church. The presence of the *Etimasia* - the throne for the return of Christ - in the span that precedes the apse with angels on guard, is similar to a Byzantine practice while, in the apse, instead of the classical figure of the Virgin, there is another bust of *Christ Pantocrator* made, however, during the reign of William. In the south apse there is *St. Paul* and in the north apse the figure of *St. Andrew*, almost all of which have been heavily restored. On the wall above the apse on the left, next to a small sized figure of *St. John the Baptist*, the *Madonna with Child*; it has been noted that the Virgin is depicted as the *Odigitria* i.e. as an icon with strong monarchical and military implications, thereby explaining her presence on one of the walls most visible from the Royal Gallery.

On the walls of the nave there are two registers with episodes narrated from Genesis:

from the scene of the *Creation* (fig. 29) to *Jacob's fight with the Angel*. The stories about the Creation are narrated in seven pictures, one for each day of the week. They follow the panels dedicated to *Adam and Eve* and those of *Cain and Abel*. The three successive pictures, instead, were added during the restoration directed by Cardini from Rieti in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in an area that was probably originally occupied by a gallery or a stage. Following on are the *Stories of Noah*, the *Tower of Babel* (fig. 31), and the stories of *Abraham*, *Isaac and Jacob*. In the side aisles, the sequence with scenes from the *Lives of the Apostles Peter and Paul* open, from the eastern end of the south aisle with four scenes from the life of *St. Paul*, five depicting the life of *St. Peter* and three on their meeting in Rome and their triumph over *Simon the Sorcerer*. For the scenes in the aisles Ernst Kitzinger has assumed the use of both Greek and Western models. In the aisles there are also portraits of 84 saints, all chosen from the Latin calendar and identified by their Latin inscriptions: the full-length figure of bishops, in the spaces on the columns in the central nave, the elders on the western walls on the lateral aisles and female saints on the internal walls of the lateral aisles; busts of martyrs and confessors in the medallions of the soffits of the arches of the nave. On the counter-façade, above the throne, the figure of *Christ Enthroned* between the *Saints Peter and Paul* and two adoring angels, probably added at a later date.

The mosaics have undergone numerous restorations, as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century, as annotated by some mosaic inscriptions under the windows in the side





aisles. For example, in the central bay, the image of the prophetess Anna, adjacent to the scene with the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, of which it is a part, has clear traces of restoration carried out in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, while the representation of the town that welcomes the Holy Family in the Escape into Egypt was restored for the first time between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century and again in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even the numerous Greek inscriptions - in particular those which identify the martyred saints in the medallions in the interior of one of the arches - have been badly restored to the extent that they have lost all significance. The restorations intensified in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with restorers called in from Rome. Interventions are particularly evident in the presbytery area, for example in the scene of the Annunciation in the central bay, while some figures were inserted in the frescoes ex novo, in particular those which occupy, in each of the three apses, the space of the central windows walled up in the 17<sup>th</sup> century or, the landscape with a lamb on the

walls of the north wing of the transept. On the central apse only the Benedictory Christ Pantocrator and some traces of the banner below are original, as all the rest is a re-make carried out by Cardini in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Further restorations made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were ordered by King Ferdinand II in 1838, carried out by Rosario Riolo who, in 1840, invented the scene of St. John preaching in the desert which was inserted on the wall surface which had remained uncovered following the removal of the Gallery in the north wing of the transept. In the prothesis St. Andrew, which in the 16<sup>th</sup> century replaced the original St. Peter as well as Christ Pantocrator with St. Paul, which more recently replaced the Praying Madonna.

Other major restoration interventions were implemented starting from 1884, after World War II and in recent times. In the narthex is the icon of the Madonna Hodegetria, dated from around the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and detached from the so-called crypt of the Palatine Chapel.

31  
Palermo, Palatine  
Chapel. "Tower of  
Babel"

## NORMAN MONUMENTS

Churches and Palaces

32

*Cefalù, Cathedral*

### CEFALÙ - THE CATHEDRAL

Piazza del Duomo Cefalù

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33

*Cefalù, Cathedral.  
Decoration of the  
Apse*

Roger II commissioned the construction of the Cathedral (**fig. 32**) in 1131. Before the coronation he had already visited the Abbey of Santa Maria e dei XII Apostoli in Bagnara to convince the Augustinian monks to take on the diocese of Cefalù.

The Cathedral was designed as a dynastic mausoleum. It was endowed with two sarcophagi of porphyry with a semi-cylindrical bath and a sloping double cover - a model adopted by all the Sicilian sarcophagi - one for the king's remains, the other with the unusual role of cenotaph. The sarcophagi, however, after several vicissitudes were transferred to the Cathedral of Palermo and one become the sarcophagus of Frederick II and the other of his father Henry VI. The construction of the building continued slowly and at the death of Roger II in 1154 it was still incomplete and the works came to a halt. The façade, as cited by an inscription, was finished in 1240 and in the 15<sup>th</sup> century a portico was added. The Cathedral was only consecrated in 1267. The interior has a basilica plan with three naves divided by columns with variously figurative capitals, a projecting transept and a deep apsidal presbytery. There is a baptismal font with a marble basin decorated with four lions in reliefs and two choirs at the foot of the nave. The walls of the presbytery and the ribbed vault were covered with mosaics created in 1148, as inscribed on the frieze

at the base of the apsidal decor: "... anno ab Incarnatione Domini Millesimo centesimo XLVIII / indictione XI anno v regni eius XVIII / hoc opus museum factum est".

The position of the figures reflects the Byzantine style which calls for them to be arranged according to the liturgical hierarchy: in the apse the Benedictory Christ *Pantocrator*; in the lower registry the Virgin Praying and the archangels *Raphael, Michael, Gabriel* and *Uriel*; on either side of the centre window *St. Peter* and *St Paul* and the evangelists *Matthew, Mark, Luke* and *John*; on the lower register, displayed in groups of three along the window, the apostles *Philip, James, Andrew, Simon,*



*Bartholomew and Thomas; the Saints and the Prophets on the bema walls; in the cross shaped vault, arranged in four central friezes angels and seraphim (fig. 33).*

On the left wall, in the highest frieze between the figures of Osea and Moses, there is a half bust of Melchizedek in tondo; the lower register holds Joel, Amos and Obadiah; further down the archdeacons Peter, Vincent, Laurence and Stephen; lower still the Saints Gregory, Augustus, Silvester and Dionisius. On the right wall, in the upper register there is the half-length figure of Abraham between David and a full length Salomon; in the lower register the Saints Theodor, George, Demetri and Nestor as well as the Saints Nicholas, John, Christopher and Gregory. Inscriptions identify all the figures: written in Greek in the apse, the vault and the lower part of the right wall, in Latin those on the walls and some in the presbytery, testifying perhaps to the presence of local artisans.

The most obvious restoration is the one carried out by Rosario Rolo, who completely remade some of the figures.

The quadrangular cloister, has a portico on three sides with twin columns – which form a group of four columns (tetrastyle) in the corner - and variously decorated capitals.

The southern corridor is the only one still intact, whilst the western corridor has been rebuilt with stonemasonry previously disassembled; only erratic material remains in the northern corridor; the east side was perhaps destroyed in a fire in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.





## NORMAN MONUMENTS

Churches and Palaces



### **PALERMO – THE CHURCH OF SAN GIOVANNI DEGLI EREMITI**

.....  
Via dei Benedettini, 20 Palermo

tel. +390916515019  
.....

Commissioned by Roger II, built on the site of a pre-existing monastery dedicated to San Ermete, the actual construction date is uncertain. The church plan consists of a nave divided in two spans surmounted by a dome and a presbytery with an apse surmounted by a small dome and flanked by two quadrangles that also have an apse; the bell tower is over the left apse. The right apse leads to a preexisting building thought to have been a mosque. Called the “Arab Room” it has two aisles divided by pillars, a porch with five arches and a courtyard which was a cemetery for the court. In the Arab room, on one wall, there is a fresco showing two saints on either side of an Enthroned Madonna of which only the lower part still exists. In the garden there are the remains of an Arab cistern and a small cloister.

**34**

*Palermo, Church of San Giovanni degli Eremiti*



**PALERMO – THE CHURCH OF SANTA  
MARIA DELL’AMMIRAGLIO**

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The Church of Santa Maria dell’Ammiraglio - called the *Martorana* from the name Eloise Martorana, founder of the Benedictine monastery to whom the church was donated by King Alfonso of Aragon in 1433 - was built at the behest of George of Antioch, a fact attested to both by epigraphs and by contemporary documents. Ibn Jubayr described it as the “most beautiful monument in the world” – but it was remodeled in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when it was transformed into a Latin cross floorplan incorporating the original porch that led

into the church – what remains is the squared off body of the church topped by a hemispherical dome with external drums of Syrian origin and decorated with blind arches Muslim style, ogival windows and the two lower registers of the bell tower with mullioned windows decorated in *goudron*. On the west wall of the narthex there are two mosaics that were placed under the portico destroyed in 1588, perhaps on the original façade: one depicting *Jesus crowning Roger II* dressed as the Emperor (Basileus) and the other with the Grand Admiral *George of Antioch at the Virgin’s feet* (only the head and the hands remain of his original figure) who is interceding on his behalf with Christ, as written in Greek on the scroll held by the Virgin (fig. 36).

35

*Palermo, Church  
of Santa Maria  
dell’Ammiraglio*



## NORMAN MONUMENTS

### Churches and Palaces

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*Palermo, Church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio. "George of Antioch at Maria's feet"*

37

*Palermo, Church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio. Decoration of the Cupola*

The presence of the figure of George of Antioch documents the fact that the mosaics were completed before the Admiral's death in 1151. The original layout of the church is almost fully intact, a Greek cross floorplan enclosed in a quadrangle, decorated completely by mosaics and originally covered with marble on the lower part of the walls. In the dome the *Enthroned Benedictory Christ Pantocrator* among four archangels (**fig. 37**); in the octagonal drum a prophet on each side - *David, Isaiah, Zaccariah, Moses, Jeremiah, Elias, Elisha and Daniel* - each holding in his left hand the scrolls with the prophecies; in the corner niches at the base of the dome the *Four*

*Evangelists*; on the vaults of the north and south arms, in pairs and in confrontation eight large figures of the *Apostles: Peter and Andrew, James and Paul, Thomas and Philip, Simon and Bartholemew*; on the vault of the arm leading to the entrance in confrontation *the Nativity* and the *Passing of the Virgin*; on the vault of the west arm in front of the apse the two archangels *Michael and Gabriel*; the transversal arches that support the dome, in the central bay, in front of the apse, in confrontation *the Annunciation* and the *Presentation at the Temple*; the busts of *warrior Saints* and *bishop Saints* in the medallions on the intrados of the arches. The two small side apses, preceded by mosaic enclosures like the floor are decorated by the half figures of *St. Anne* and *St. Joachim*, whilst the central apse - which originally must have depicted the image of the Virgin - was destroyed in 1683-86 and replaced by the current chapel which functions as the presbytery. On a sidewall, next to the window, the *Saints Cyrus and Gregory* are depicted surmounted by the figure of *St. Ermolaos* in tondo. In their lay out the mosaics clearly indicate their correspondances to images in the Palatine Chapel, both those from 1143 in the dome and the drum, as well as those on the walls of the presbytery which were influenced by the mosaics that were being executed in the apse and in the vault in the Cathedral of Cefalù around 1148. Also part of the original structure are two interesting engraved wooden leaves inserted in the first portal on the right, which prove the involvement of Arab artisans and the sculpted frieze outside the second portal to the left.







## NORMAN MONUMENTS

Churches and Palaces

38

*Palermo, Church of  
San Cataldo. View  
of the Exterior*

### WILLIAM I (1154-1166)

Although the period of his reign was marked by riots and wars, William I completed the mosaic decoration in the Palatine Chapel and the presbytery in the Cathedral of Cefalù. Even the creation of the St. Cristina la Vetere church, behind the Cathedral, is linked to the desire of the king to give the Holy relics a place to rest and it is thought that they were wanted in Palermo by the Archbishop Ugone (1144-1166). The church was built during the reign of Guglielmo II by the initiative of Bishop Gualtiero (Walter of the Mill).

### PALERMO – THE CHURCH OF SAN CATALDO

.....  
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tel. +390916118168  
.....

The church was founded by Maio of Bari, the great Admiral and Chancellor of William I between 1154 and 1160, the year in which he was assassinated. It was a private chapel in his palace, now destroyed, in the immediate vicinity of the S. Maria dell'Ammiraglio church. In 1182 it was given to the Archbishop of Monreale and entrusted to the Benedictine monks until





1787. Since 1937 it has been the seat of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre. Despite tampering with the constructions taking place from the 17<sup>th</sup> and until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and despite the radical restoration of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the original architectural forms are still clear.

The building consists of a medium sized parallelepipedon block – articulated with blind arches and pierced archivolts clearly derived from the Islamic era and three single windows protected by barriers inserted in the facade – the ceiling is surmounted by Arab style merlons and by three small hemispherical domes originally covered by *cocciopesto*, though nowadays it is plastered and painted red; at the west end the apse is slightly protruding. The interior is set on four pillars that divide the three naves with reused capitals variously carved supporting the ogival arches.

The three aligned domes cover the central nave supported by stepped pendentives. This type of church – a basilica with three naves with three domes over the central nave has been connected by historiographers to a group of Benedictine churches in Puglia, more specifically in Conversano, Valenzano and Trani and with the Cathedral of Molfetta built in 1180. These references to Apulia and its dedication to the Irish Saint, Bishop of Taranto, suggest that the project paid homage to the Apulian origins of the founder. Still original are the marble inlays and porphyry and serpentine slabs that line the floor as well as the altar consisting of a marble slab engraved with a cross and the Lamb of God between the symbols of the evangelists.



### 39-40

*Palermo, Church of San Cataldo. View of the Interior*

## NORMAN MONUMENTS

### Churches and Palaces

#### WILLIAM II (1171-1189)

At the beginning of his reign William II commissioned the royal complex in Monreale formed by the Cathedral, the monastery and the royal palace. He wanted to establish a new Archbishopric and create a dynastic monument in the tradition of his predecessors. In particular he wished to outdo for magnificence and grandeur his predecessor, Roger II's complex at Cefalù, and in so doing created, in Monreale, one of the largest decorative collections of mosaics realised in the Middle Ages. Walter of the Mill, archbishop of Palermo from 1169 to 1190 was one of the major patrons. He had been tutor to William II, assuming the name "of the Mill" (Offamilio), a courtly title, and founded the current Cathedral in Palermo, the Church of Santo Spirito and, around 1187, the Church of Santa Maria Maddalena to temporarily house the Royal corpses while waiting for the completion of the new Cathedral. Matthew d'Ajello from Salerno, the King's Chancellor, commissioned the Church of the Magione - founded in 1191 as a Cistercian abbey and entrusted in 1197 to the Teutonic Knights who chose it as the seat (Mansio, Magione) of the Grand Master of the Order. D'Ajello also commissioned the Church of Santa Maria de Latinis or del Cancelliere, later destroyed by bombs during the II World War. The icon with the *Hodegetria* known as *the Imperlata*, dating back to 1171, now kept in the Diocesan Museum (**fig. 41**), originates from the latter Church.



41  
Palermo, Diocesan  
Museum.  
“Hodegetria”

## MONREALE - THE CATHEDRAL

Piazza Guglielmo II, 1 Monreale  
tel. +390916402424

The construction of the complex, part of the Cathedral, was initiated after the beginning of William II's reign and in 1176 must already have been in an advanced stage of construction when a hundred Benedictine monks were transferred from the Abbey del Cava de' Tirreni and it was awarded a regal endowment. It must have been completed by the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 1183, when Pope

Lucius III, whilst issuing the papal bull elevating Monreale to the status of a Metropolitan Seat mentioned, in passing, the very short time span within which the building had been constructed.

The Cathedral is characterised externally by a decoration of interlaced arches of Arab workmanship and two towers – the northern one being incomplete – rectangular in shape, flanking the 18<sup>th</sup> century porch replacing the original one, which leads into the church.

The main portal, decorated with carvings and mosaic bands, houses two bronze

42

*Monreale, Cathedral.  
View of the Exterior*





## NORMAN MONUMENTS

### Churches and Palaces

43

*Monreale, Cathedral. The Portal  
by Bonanno Pisano*



44

*Monreale, Cathedral. Detail with "Adam and Eve"  
of the Portal by Bonanno Pisano*



leaves, cast in 1185 by Bonanno from Pisa, as inscribed along the base: "*Anno Domini MCLXXXVI. III Ind. Bonannus civis pisanus me fecit*". The doors are enriched with 42 panels that depict stories from the Old and New Testament: *the Creation of Adam* to the *Assumption of the Virgin* and *Jesus enthroned amongst the angels*, each described with an inscription in a mixture of Latin and the vernacular (**fig. 43-44**).

On the left side, under the porch, there are two doors made by Barisano of Trani between 1184 and 1190. The 14 panels of the depict at the top *Christ Enthroned amongst symbols of the Evangelists*; on the leaves the *Entombment*, the *Descent into Limbo*, the prophet *Elias*, the *Virgin* and figures of the Saints, including one which depicts *St. Nicholas Enthroned* and is signed "*Barisanus tran. me fecit*" (Barisanus of Trani made me) (**fig. 45**).

The interior of the church has a basilica

45

*Monreale, Cathedral. Detail  
of the Portal by Barisano of  
Trani*

floor-plan with three naves separated by columns with Corinthian figured capitals recovered from classical buildings and has the typical deep presbytery found in Norman churches. The transept and the presbytery are the only covered areas that link the royal palace to the north with the bishopric and the monastery to the south. The two thrones in the presbytery were on the north side for the King, and for the Archbishop on the south side, which is modern but was present in the original project. Although the building is presumed to have been terminated in 1183, it is likely that the 6,430 sq. metres of decorative mosaic were not completed. They were probably completed before the King's death in 1189, or no later than the death of Tancred, in 1194.

The speed with which the work was carried out resulted in a lack of differing styles – far more evident in the Palatine Chapel – and an absolute homogeneity despite the differences in the style of execution – monumental and regal in the apse, agile and narrative in the depiction of the Gospels or the Old Testament stories – as well as stylistic nuances and differing levels of excellence due to the presence of many artisans or groups of artists who had to work simultaneously in different areas of the church. For the most part the pictorial program is similar to that of the Palatine Chapel with which the ties are particularly close and the conventional formulas of the iconography, but in some particulars it does reveal accentuated stylistic innovations. Like those of the Palatine, the mosaics in Monreale represent, on the one hand, *the*



*Array of the Almighty* and the *Heavenly Court* with the prophets, saints and angels, and on the other the story of the history of the world according to the Bible from the Creation up to the stories of the Apostles who founded the church on Earth. On the walls of the main nave there are scenes taken from the Old Testament, from the *Creation of the Sun, Moon and the Heavens* on the extreme eastern end of the right wall (fig. 46) to *Jacob's Fight with the Angel* on far west end of the left wall, which bear an extraordinary resemblance to the scenes involving the Palatine Chapel, where they are located in the same position. Compared to the cycle in the Palatine, some scenes in Monreale have been

## NORMAN MONUMENTS

### Churches and Palaces

46

*Monreale, Cathedral.*  
“Creation of the Sun,  
the Moon and the  
Heavens”

47

*Monreale, Cathedral.*  
“Discussion amongst  
Doctors”

expanded and represented more fully - as for example in the scenes of *Esau hunting* - and others included ex novo - the scenes from Genesis *Adam Resting in the Garden of Eden*, *Eve Presented to Adam*, *Eve Tempted by the Snake*, the *Animals Entering the Ark*, *Jacob's Flight from his Father's Home*.

In the transept *the Life of the Redeemer* is depicted, starting from scenes relating to the Christ's childhood in the central rectangle - the *Presentation in the Temple* or the *Dispute between the Doctors* (fig. 47) on the west wall, the stages of Christ's life are reported in the prophecies unrolled by the two prophets Malachi and Isaiah depicted in the pendentives of the arch - those in the right arm relating to his public life and on the left scenes the Passion and the later episodes - such as the *Holy Women at the Sepulchre*, the *Apparition of Christ to Mary Magdalene* or, in the lower register, the *Incredulity of St. Thomas* - up to the *Ascension* and the *Pentecost*.

This cycle resembles that in the Palatine Chapel only in that it is localised in the area of the transept but due to the greater quantity of available space on the walls of the nave it is far richer in the number of episodes reproduced (for example in the Palatine Chapel the scenes depicting Christ's public life are totally missing) and even those with the same subject seem to derive from different iconographic Byzantine models so that one must presume that there was renewed contact with Oriental Greece.

In the sanctuary, next to the image of *Christ Pantocrator* (total height 7mts; head 3mts; right hand 1.80mts) the important

members of the Heavenly Court are depicted: the *Virgin and Child Enthroned* between the *Archangels*, the *Apostles*, *Cherubins and Seraphim*, *Saints*, *King and Prophets from the Old Testament*.

In the two minor aisles miracles and episodes of Christ's public life are depicted, supplementing those narrated in the transept. In the two chapels on the right and left of the solea (raised walkway connecting the ambo and the bema) are scenes from the life of St. Peter and St. Paul, almost perfect copies of those in the aisles of the Palatine Chapel, both in the manner they are ordered and in the accompanying iconography and captions, with the exception of four scenes - the *Crucifixion of St. Peter* and *the Beheading of St. Paul* and the two scenes identified by Ernst Kitzinger as *St. Paul who delivers letters to Timothy and Silas* and *the Visit of Ananias to the Blind Saul in Damascus* - which do not appear in the Palatine Chapel. The apse and the area immediately adjacent were inspired by the decorations of the apse in the Cathedral of Cefalù, but it was modified: for example the choir was enriched with prophets alongside *Christ Pantocrator*; placing all the apostles beside the Virgin in a single register, thus obtaining space for a row of other saints in the lower register; and in the barrel vault of the bay adjacent to *Christ Pantocrator*, increasing the number of guardian angels alongside the *Etimasia* with a pair of archangels and Tetramorphs with open wings, creatures seen in visions by Isaiah and Ezekiel. In this main scheme there are a number of minor decorations and representations.



In the nave on the dual register of biblical scenes there are 48 medallions with busts of angels, while on the counter façade between four scenes from the Old Testament, there are three scenes from the lives of the saints from Southern Italy Castrense, Cassio and Casto; the overall composition of the seven scenes is completed at the top by a frieze of medallions with angels and underneath with the figure of the Virgin with Child in the lunette above the entrance portal. Opposite, on the arch separating the nave from the transept the *Divine Wisdom* is depicted with the two *Archangels Michael and Gabriel* kneeling before him.

Except for the main nave, the Saints and Martyrs are arranged along all other parts of the church not filled by the main scene: in the minor aisles, on the pendentives on the columns, there are medallions with busts of saints; in the soffits of the arches between the main nave and the minor naves in the upper part of the transept, there are medallions with busts of martyrs; in the transept, above the eastern arch of the central bay there are holy warriors; on the pillars between the central bay and the two arms there are saints; in two side chapels, next to *St. Peter* and *St. Paul* in the apses, figures of the saints.

The selection of saints was generally carried out in accordance with the Byzantine custom, while the presence of some Saints is linked to local custom – for example, in the lower register of the main apse and adjacent walls, the ends of the two rows of saints are concluded by the presence of two Saintly women *St. Agatha* and *St. Mary*



## NORMAN MONUMENTS

### Churches and Palaces

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*Monreale, Cathedral Cloister. Capital decorated with "The Apostles' Mission"*

49

*Monreale, Cathedral Cloister. Fountain*

*Magdalene* who, according to the Byzantine protocol should not be in the immediate vicinity of the main altar - or to contingent cases such as the presence of *St. Thomas Becket*, Archbishop of Canterbury murdered in 1170, probably due to the first wave of veneration that followed his canonisation in 1173 by Pope Alexander III. In the soffits of the arches in the central bay of the transept, in connection with the neighbouring scenes related to the birth and childhood of Christ, there are busts of the progenitors of Christ. In the vaults of the right and left chapels there is respectively the bust of Christ and that of the Emanuel surrounded by Cherubs and Seraphim. On the front of the arch at the entrance to the sanctuary - as was common in Byzantine churches - there is depicted a second scene of the *Annunciation* (in addition to the *Cycle of the Childhood of Christ*). Opposite there is the *Mandyllion* (*the*

*Image of Edessa*) – the cloth with the print of Christ's face which was one of the most valuable relics preserved in the imperial palace of Constantinople - between two adoring angels. Finally, on the surface of the two pillars that support the arch with *the Mandyllion*, two dedicatory scenes are depicted: on the left above the royal throne there is a painting of *William II Receiving the Crown from Christ Enthroned*, and on the right *William II Offers the Church to the Virgin*.

Over the centuries the mosaics were subject to various restorations; two in particular were important: one – carried out at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> or mid 17<sup>th</sup> century – introduced more or less realistic environments into the scenes – floors with tiles drawn in perspective, meadows in flower, rolling hills - especially in the northern nave and in the chapels to St





Peter and St Paul; the other, following the fire in 1811, resulted in a widespread renewal of figures and scenes, especially in the areas above the central bay and in the two arms of the transept, reconstructing the figures on the basis of the inscriptions or the descriptions of Del Giudice. The 19<sup>th</sup> century restorers completed the unfinished work of the reign of William II with the decoration of the lateral walls of the windows of the upper storey of the Church. On the right of the transept there is the red porphyry tomb of William I erected by his son William II and originally topped by a marble white canopy, while that of William II was erected in 1575. On the wall of the left side of the transept, together with the altar of St. Luigi IX where the urn with the heart of the King of France is preserved, who died in Tunis in 1270, there are three marble tombs,

made in 1846, modeled on the old ones destroyed by the fire of 1811: the tombs hold Margaret of Navarre, wife of William I, and of his children Roger and Henry, brother of William II.

The cloister on the southern side of the Cathedral consists of 228 twin columns with multicoloured or plain inlays, with capitals (**fig. 48**) - variously decorated by different artisans - supporting ogival arches with double archivolt decorated with brown limestone and black tuff lava intarsia in a geometric pattern and four groups of tetrastyles with richly decorated columns (**fig. 50**). In the southwest corner, within a small cloister a washbasin is placed on a pedestal decorated with chevron (Inverted V) (**fig. 49**). The chapter house is located in the east wing of the cloister with a semi-circular apse and blind ogival arches along the walls of the longer sides.

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*Monreale, Cathedral.  
Cloisters*





## NORMAN MONUMENTS

Churches and Palaces

51

*Palermo, Cathedral*

### PALERMO - THE CATHEDRAL

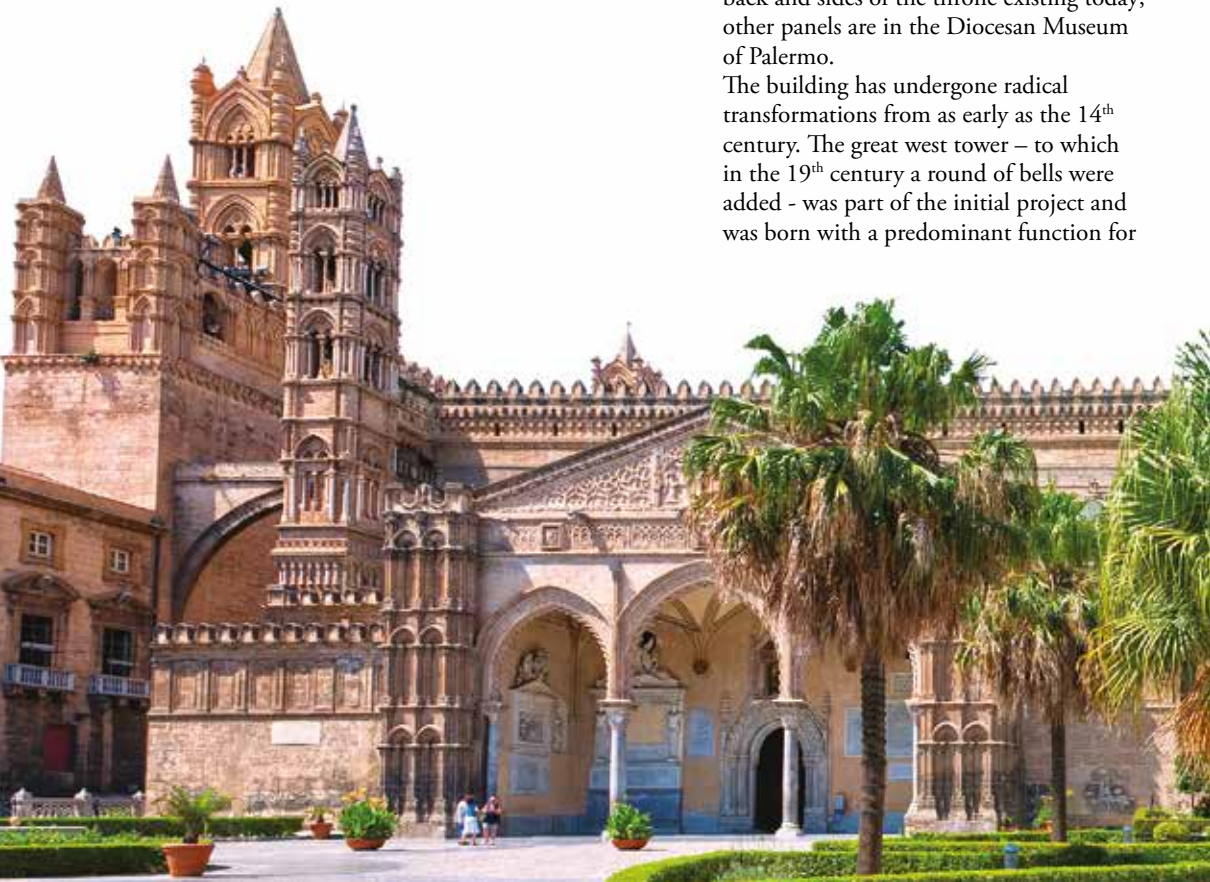
Corso Vittorio Emanuele Palermo  
tel. +39091334373 +390916077244

The current Cathedral (**fig. 51**) was commissioned by Walter of the Mill, destroying the existing building in the process. Two unknown Sicilian chroniclers, one in the 14<sup>th</sup> and one in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, indicate 1184 as the year that construction was commenced, while the date of the

consecration of the church was 1185, as documented by an inscription in verse on the impost of the wooden vault.

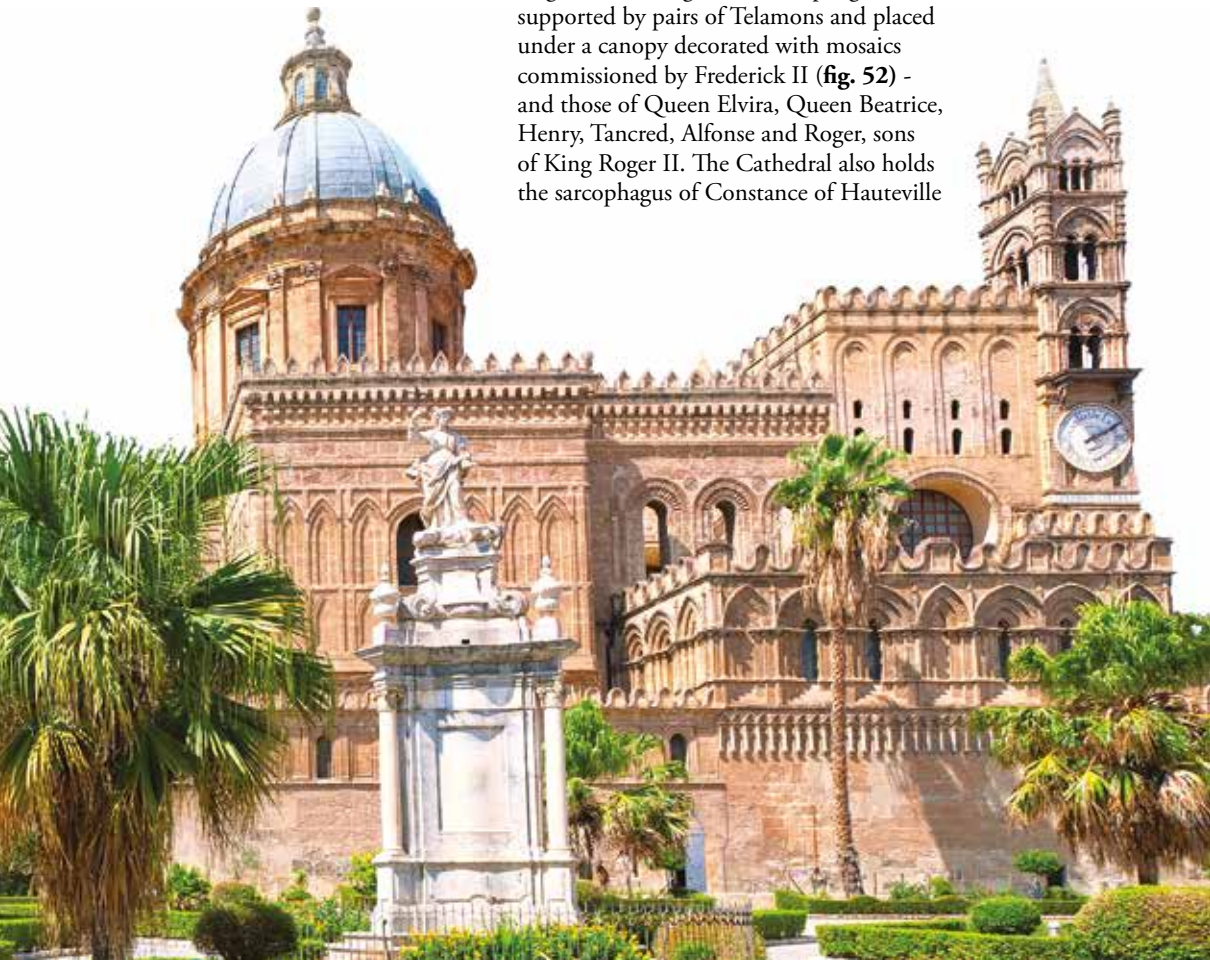
It was built as a funerary temple for the Monarchy and the Archbishops of Palermo and for this purpose two symmetrical spaces on either side of the choir were dedicated to this end, in obvious relation to the two thrones, regal and archiepiscopal, which no longer exist. Only a few mosaic remnants survive of the regal throne and these have now been incorporated into the back and sides of the throne existing today; other panels are in the Diocesan Museum of Palermo.

The building has undergone radical transformations from as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The great west tower – to which in the 19<sup>th</sup> century a round of bells were added - was part of the initial project and was born with a predominant function for



defense. The western side of the tower is the best preserved, on which there is band of intarsia below the line of the crowning cornice. The molding with intertwined arches and archivolt decorated with geometric designs is the only part of the original façade left whilst the apses are relatively intact and present a complex decorative system.

Inside, changes had already been made in the 13<sup>th</sup> century with the creation of chapels along the aisles and further changes were made in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Of the original floors only that in front of the main apse remains, as well as that of the choir, though it was heavily restored in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Cathedral preserves funerary monuments of King Roger - consisting of the sarcophagus, supported by pairs of Telamons and placed under a canopy decorated with mosaics commissioned by Frederick II (**fig. 52**) - and those of Queen Elvira, Queen Beatrice, Henry, Tancred, Alfonse and Roger, sons of King Roger II. The Cathedral also holds the sarcophagus of Constance of Hauteville









52

*Palermo, Cathedral. Sarcophagus of Roger II*

and of the Hohenstaufen: the tomb of Henry VI – who rests in the cenotaph in porphyry erected by Roger in the Cefalù Cathedral - that of Federico II – who rests in the porphyry sarcophagus sitting on two pairs of kneeling lions, also erected by Roger II in the Cefalù Cathedral - and the tomb of Constance of Aragon, wife of Frederick II, composed of a Roman sarcophagus of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD engraved with a hunting scene. From the late 18<sup>th</sup> century 12 tombs, which originally were in the cemetery of the archbishops, including that of Walter of the Mill, are kept in the crypt. One must remember the baptismal font under the second arch to the right of the nave and the candelabrum for the Easter candelabrum with a rich marble intarsia decoration of the shaft.

**PALERMO – THE CHURCH OF THE SANTO SPIRITO**

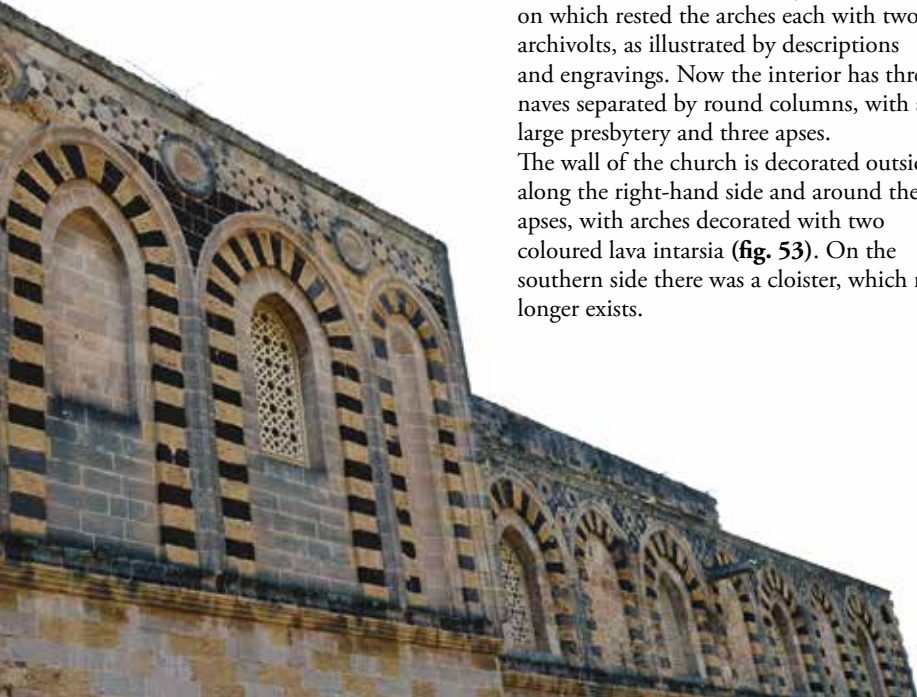
Piazza Sant’Orsola, 2 (within the Cemetery) Palermo  
tel. +39091422691

The church is also known as “del Vespro” because right in front of it, on Easter Tuesday, the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 1282, at the hour of vespers, the Palermo population rose against the Angevines. Commissioned by Archbishop Walter of the Mill for the Cistercians, it was built in 1178 on the ruins of the old Cathedral. Some constructive innovations were made thanks to him such as the two colonnades formed by tetrastyle groups of granite columns each surmounted by an abacus on which rested the arches each with two archivolt, as illustrated by descriptions and engravings. Now the interior has three naves separated by round columns, with a large presbytery and three apses.

The wall of the church is decorated outside, along the right-hand side and around the apses, with arches decorated with two coloured lava intarsia (**fig. 53**). On the southern side there was a cloister, which no longer exists.

53

*Palermo, Church of the Santo Spirito*



**NORMAN MONUMENTS**  
Churches and Palaces



54

Palermo, Church of  
the Santo Spirito.  
View of the Interior

**PALERMO - THE CHURCH  
OF THE MAGIONE**

Via Magione, 44 Palermo  
tel. +390916170596

The last church built under the Normans was the Church of SS. Trinità, founded in 1191 by Matthew d'Ajello as an abbey for the Cistercian monks. Later it was called the Magione because the Teutonic Knights, to whom the church was entrusted, chose it as the *Mansion*

(Magione) of their Grand Master of the Order.

It has 3 naves on columns, a wide transept and three apses. To the left of the church there are the remains of the cloister with ogival arches with double archivolts over twin columns with elegant capitals, by the same artisans, as is evidenced in particular by the semicircular band course in the intrados of the arches.

In the 1920's the 19<sup>th</sup> century front portico was demolished and then restored using the original pieces that had been found.

55

Palermo, Church of  
the Magione





## NORMAN MONUMENTS

Churches and Palaces

# CHRONOLOGY

### 827 AD

Beginning of the Islamic conquest of Sicily

### 895-896

The Byzantine Empire abandons Sicily to the Muslims

### 984-1004

The Kalbit Dynasty takes control of Sicily

### 1059-1060

Ibn at Tumnah, Emir of Syracuse, asks the Normans for help against Ibn-at-Anwas, Emir of Agrigento

### 1060-1092

The Norman conquest of Sicily. Led by Robert Guiscard and Roger Hauteville, the Normans successively occupy Castrogiovanni (1060), Messina (1061), Palermo (1072), Catania (1085), Syracuse (1086-1088), Girgenti (1090), Butera and Noto (1091), Malta (1092)

### 1098

Roger, Count of Sicily, receives from Pope Urban II the powers of apostolic legate

### 1101

Death of Roger. His wife Adelaide of Vasto, daughter of the noble family of the Aleramici of Monferrat, becomes Queen

### 1113

Adelaide marries Baldwin I, King of Jerusalem. Roger II succeeds his mother

### 1117

Pope Paschal II confirms the apostolic legate to Roger II

### 1127

On the death of Duke William, Roger II inherits Apulia

### 1130

Roger II is crowned King of Sicily (including Apulia and Calabria) in Palermo

### 1130-1140

Roger II reinforces the new state

### 1154

Death of Roger II. He is succeeded by William I, known as William the Bad, born in 1120, son of Elvira of Castile

### 1166

William I dies. Margaret of Navarre, his wife, is Regent until 1171, during the minority of his son William II, born in 1153, known as William the Good (1166-1189)

### 1186

Henry (later Henry VI of Swabia), son of the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, marries Constance Hauteville, daughter of Roger II and the French Beatrice of Rethel

### 1190

Tancred succeeds William II, who dies childless

### 1194

Henry VI, Emperor, seizes the Sicilian crown. Death of Tancred and the young William III

### 1194

Frederick II of Swabia, son of Henry VI and Constance is born in Jesi, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December

### 1197

Death of Henry VI

### 1198

Death of Constance, who entrusts Frederick to the protection of Pope Innocent III

### 1212

Frederick II leaves Sicily. He returns in 1220 as Emperor

### 1245

Following the riots, Muslims in Sicily are deported to Lucera, in Apulia

### 1250

Death of Frederick II

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# MAP OF THE CENTRE OF PALERMO



## CENTRE OF PALERMO

- ① Palatine Chapel
- ② Church of San Giovanni degli Eremiti
- ③ Cathedral
- ④ Church of San Cataldo
- ⑤ Church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio
- ⑥ Church of the Magione
- ⑦ Church of San Giovanni dei Lebbrosi
- ⑧ Church of the Santo Spirito

## PROVINCE OF PALERMO

- ⑨ Cefalù - Cathedral
- ⑩ Monreale - Cathedral



