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## CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE WITH CUPOLA(S) IN SOUTHERN ITALY: FOR A THOROUGH INCLUSION IN THE BYZANTINE SPHERE (6<sup>TH</sup>–8<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES)

*Recent studies for the Eastern Mediterranean countries as well as for their Subcaucasian margins, have underlined the decisive importance of vaulting with cupola(s) for the architectural development in these regions during the Early Middle Ages. There are also, however, several publications dealing with South Italian churches, revealing similar constructive features: i.e., two main churches in Canosa di Puglia, another one in Casaranello; there is also a series of small "basilicas" with a triconchial choir in Puglia again and in Sicily, and finally some basilicas with two cupolas in file. Collecting here the results of these punctual investigations, it clearly appears that Southern Italy should be fully included in the general evolution attested in the Eastern Christian world. What is to be explained by historical context: Byzantine presence was still effective there, and its influence noticeably marked, too, was felt in the adjacent areas under Longobard rule; this having been so until the 8<sup>th</sup> century, at least.*

**Keywords:** *Early Byzantine Architecture, Christian Architecture, Cupola Vaulting, Southern Italy, Sicily, Asia Minor, Subcaucasian areas, East-West Relations*

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## ХРИСТИАНСКАЯ АРХИТЕКТУРА С КУПОЛОМ(-АМИ) В ЮЖНОЙ ИТАЛИИ: ДЛЯ ПОЛНОЦЕННОГО ВКЛЮЧЕНИЯ В ВИЗАНТИНСКУЮ СФЕРУ (VI–VIII ВЕКА)

*Недавние исследования, как по странам Восточного Средиземноморья, так и Закавказья, подчеркнули решающее значение покрытия пространства куполом(-ами) для архитектурного развития в этих регионах в раннем Средневековье. Существуют также некоторые публикации, относящиеся к южно-итальянским церквям и обнаружившие в них сходные с закавказскими постройками композиционные особенности, а именно в двух главных церквях Канозы-ди-Пульи, еще одной в Касаранелло, а также в серии небольших «базилик» с трехлепестковым алтарем в Апулии и на Сицилии и, наконец, в базиликах с двумя куполами по соседству. Сбор результатов этих пунктуальных исследований делает очевидным, что Южная Италия должна быть полностью включена в общую эволюцию, выявленную в восточно-христианском мире. Историческим контекстом объяснимо то, что византийское присутствие там по-прежнему было действенным, и его влияние отмечено также в прилегающих районах, находившихся под управлением Лангобардов.*

**Ключевые слова:** *ранневизантийская архитектура, христианская архитектура, перекрытие куполом, Южная Италия, Сицилия, Малая Азия, Закавказский регион, связи Востока и Запада.*

It is now fully admitted that the introduction — then generalization, at large scale at least — of the vaulting system with cupola has marked a decisive step in the evolution of Christian architecture at the turn of Late Antiquity toward the Middle Ages. In this perspective, several important publications must be noted, over the last de-

cares. Without aiming here at exhaustivity, I particularly refer, firstly, to those regarding Asia Minor: i.e., the one of Antonio Iacobini, who paid special attention to the precocity of some achievements in Isauria and Lycia (Iacobini 2003–2004); then the two ones by Nikolaos Karydis, who took very accurately in account the questions of structure

and typology of the vaults, developing by the way fruitful comparisons between the Microasiatic examples and the famous Justinian buildings in Constantinople (St. Sophia, St. Sergios and Bakchos, St. Irene in its state of this period), and some of the major realizations in the Balkans (basilica B of Philippi, especially) (*Karydis* 2011; 2012); and lately, at a lesser degree of course, in the frame of the archaeological panorama of Anatolia coordinated by Philip Niewöhner, the rapid but comprehensive synthesis about church building by Hans Buchwald and Matthew Savage (*Buchwald, Savage* 2017). Still regarding the Eastern countries, but in this case their Subcaucasian margins, must be signaled the important *corpus* produced by Annegret Plontke-Lüning (*Plontke-Lüning* 2007) (and its extensive re-cension by Liudmila Khrushkova (*Khrushkova* 2015)); in relation with its chronological *ambitus* (4<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> century), it deals of course largely with realizations prior to the generalized use of the cupola, which however becomes considered with the monuments belonging to the later phase. On the contrary, this one is particularly discussed in several publications by Christina Maranci<sup>1</sup> and constitutes the true focus of a book by Patrick Donabédian (*Donabédian* 2008), all that with very interesting interpretative insights. And finally, are to be taken in account the copious four volumes published by Armen Kazaryan, which now provide the most useful reference, as well as the much detailed catalogue that they include for the thorough analysis of the main trends, and relative diversity, attested in these areas of crucial importance after the properly Proto-byzantine flowering (*Казарян* 2012–2013). But switching the sight, now, toward what is dealing with Southern Italy (including Sicily) — i.e., toward what I precisely intend

<sup>1</sup> Especially in her most comprehensive book: (*Maranci* 2001). For her later articles, see the list in: (*Kazaryan* vol. IV 2013: 319).

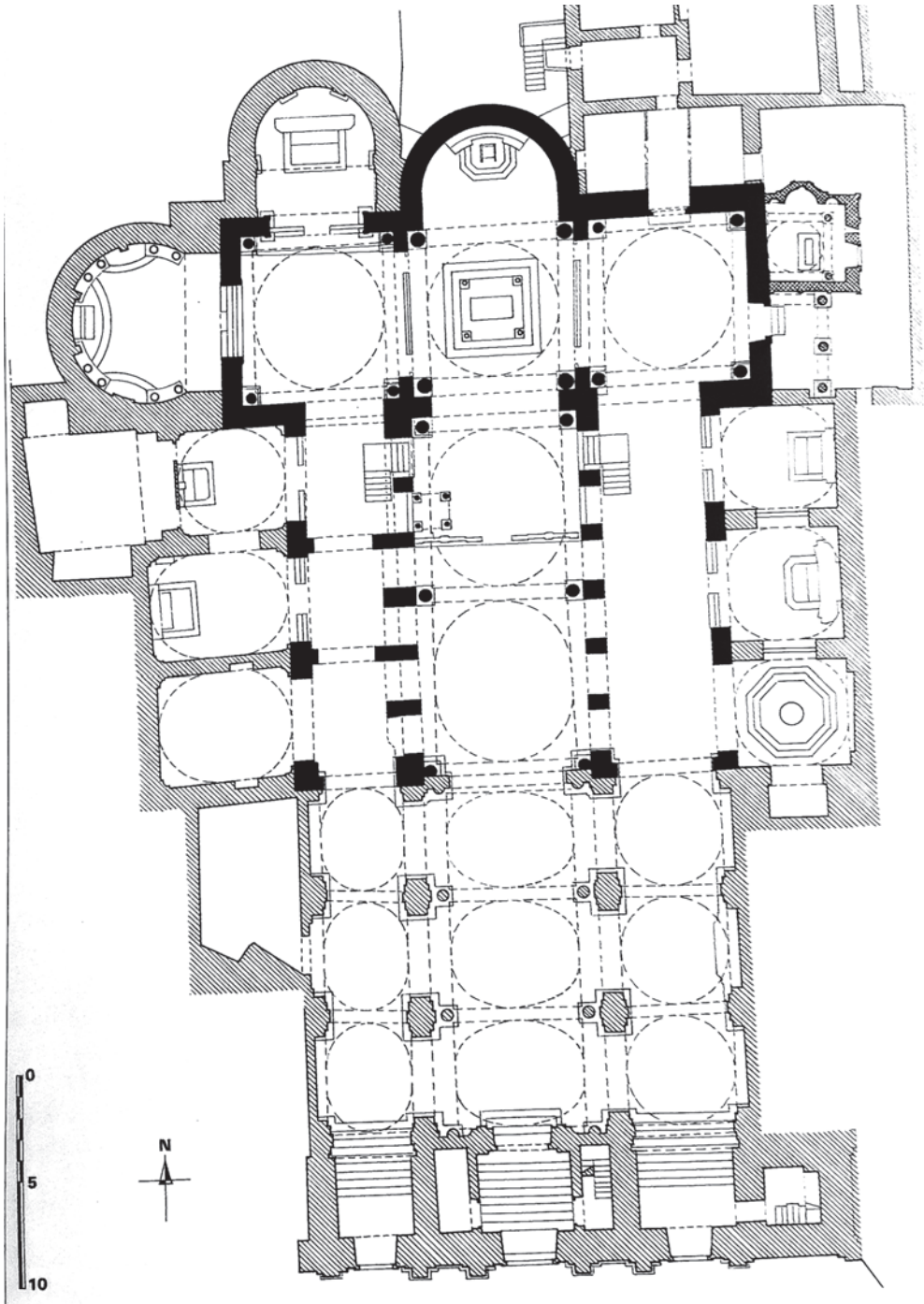


Il. 1. Southern Italy and Sicily. Localization of the sites here discussed

to focus —, the bulk of the studies is also significant enough. I'll have the opportunity, in approaching successively the different examples (il. 1), to duly send back to their respective authors. But before, I just want to underline that here, even if several of them suggested, case by case, some relations with what was simultaneously going on in Eastern Mediterranean regions, it never really tended to consider at once the whole of these realizations as reflecting the full inclusion of this area, too, in the development of Byzantine architecture — which is, precisely, my present purpose.

## The two main churches in Canosa di Puglia

I begin this survey with the actual cathedral of this important Apulian town, about which the recent reexamination of the story of the building —with particular stress on the reports relative to the modifications occurred in the 19<sup>th</sup> century — and of the structures themselves determined a radical reappraisal of the original state and —



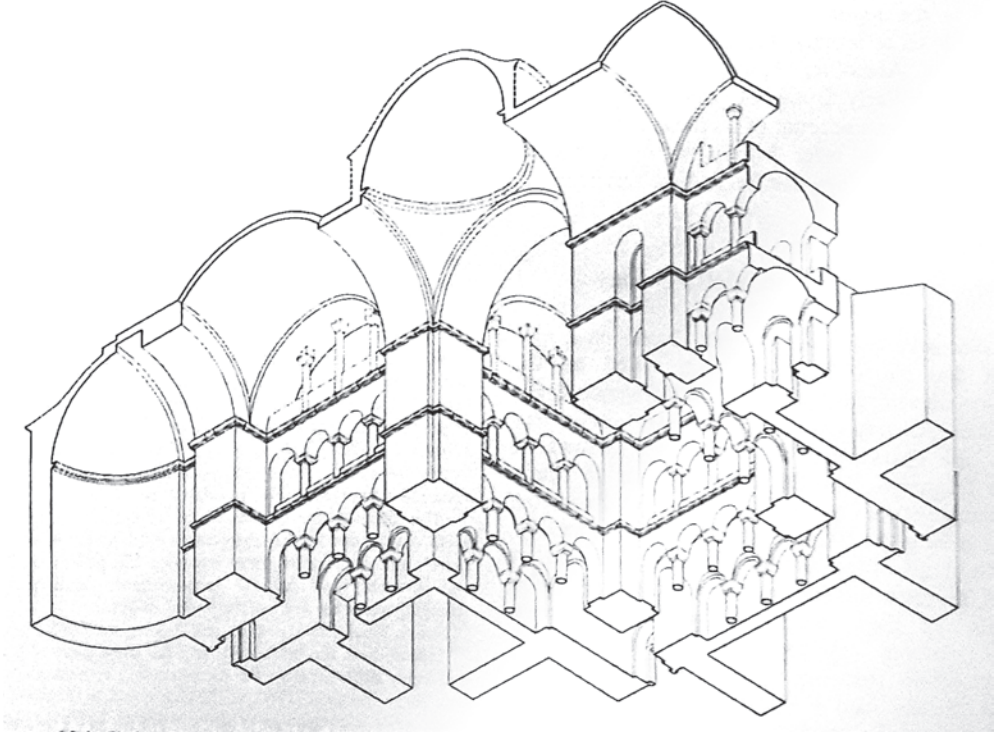
Il. 2. Canosa di Puglia, actual Cathedral. Plan (6<sup>th</sup> century state in dark) (Falla Castelfranchi 2014)

above all — of its date; the results of this investigation have been delivered in papers by Alessandra De Stefano (*De Stefano* 2011) and Gioia Bertelli associated to Angelofabio Attolico (*Bertelli, Attolico* 2011). It now clearly appears that instead of a Romanesque fabric, susceptible to be put side by side with other ones — at Molfetta, Conversano, Valenzano, in particular — belonging to the Norman phase (11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries) of Southern Italy and Sicily, we are facing something conspicuous parts of which must be considered of the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century: i.e., as shown by the restituted plan (il. 2), a nave of two bays flanked by two aisles, a transept and a semi-circular apse; and with no less than five cupolas surmounting, respectively, the two bays of the nave, the crossing, the north and south arms of the transept. The 6<sup>th</sup> century date has been ascertained by comparison of the masonry (several rows of tufa elements, regularly alternating with one row of bricks, for the best preserved parts of the walls and pillars of the nave, the façade of the southern arm of the transept, and for the apse) with several other Canosian building clearly reliable to the same period; also, the presence of 73 bricks stamped by the local bishop Sabinus (who was in charge from 514 to 566)'s monogram, in the covering upper part between the crossing and the north arm of the transept, seems equally decisive. As to the cupolas, it has been observed that the two ones above the nave, as well as the one above the north arm of the transept, largely result from the 19<sup>th</sup> century restoration: this, because their structure then included modern ceramic pipes, aiming at lighten the whole structure. But the cupola surmounting the south arm of the transept has evidently been left untouched, with its constant alternation of one row of tufa with one row of brick (il. 3); and it is the same for, at least, the lower part of the cupola above the crossing, only the upper zone of which was reworked.



Il. 3. Canosa di Puglia, actual Cathedral. Cupola in the south arm of the transept (photo: J.-P. Caillet)

Marina Falla Castelfranchi, didn't miss to establish parallels with some major achievements in the Eastern Mediterranean areas: especially, with St. Sophia and St. Irene (this last one in its 6<sup>th</sup> century state) in Constantinople, and St. John the Theologian in Ephesos (*Falla Castelfranchi* 2011; 2014: 471–473); she also mentions St. Polyeuctos in Constantinople again, but this case must now be rejected after the convincing contestation by Jonathan Bardill, of Rex Harrison's previous restitution (*Bardill* 2011). Regarding the Ephesian *martyrion*, very precise observations lately produced by Nikolaos Karydis for the restitution of the 6<sup>th</sup> century vaulting system permit to advance sensitively further. Karydis has convincingly proposed to distinguish two different types of dome: the one supported by distinctly articulated pendentives (above the crossing in this Ephesian case, and also attested at St. Sophia



Il. 4. Ephesos, St. John the Theologian. Reconstitution of the vaulting (Karydis 2011)

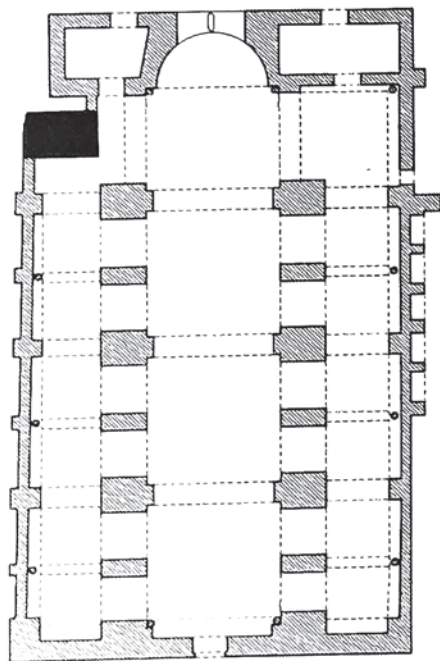


Il. 5. Canosa di Puglia, actual Cathedral. Nave, toward the main apse (photo: J.-P. Caillet)

and St. Irene in Constantinople); and the so-called “pendentive dome”, where the cupola extends itself downwards in four corners, without marked transition, until reaching the piers on which it rests (above the bays of the nave, the transept and the presbyterium at Ephesos) (see especially *Karydis* 2012) (il. 4). So, in Canosa, the system is not quite the same: there is a “pendentive dome” above the south arm of the transept (highly likely with the equivalent above the north arm, originally) and above the crossing (if we consider that, as said before, the lower part of this cupola was not altered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century); and the same type might well also have been adopted, as it is attested today, for the two bays of the nave (this is more hypothetically, it is true; but we can imagine that the late reworking of the upper parts, here, concerned the structures,

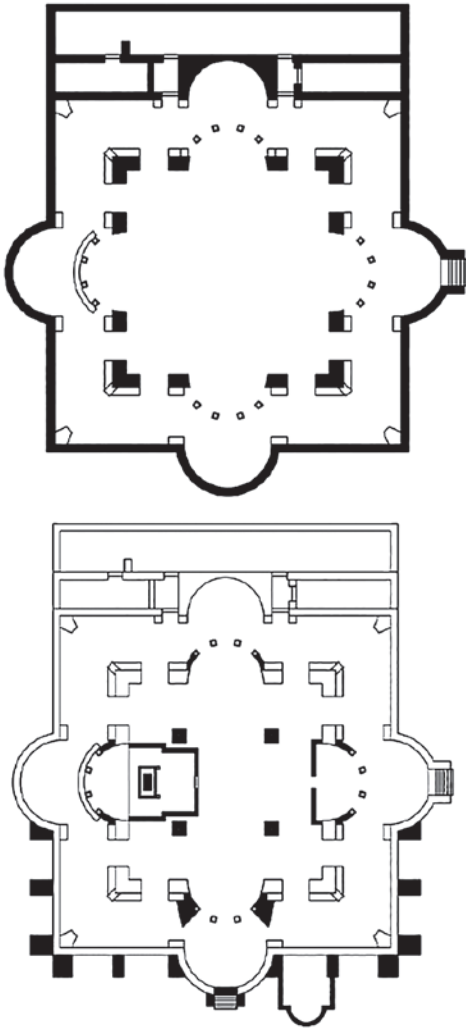
not the shapes) (il. 5). And if it was so originally, a privileged rapprochement then becomes possible with the so-called “Urban Church” in Hierapolis (Pammukale) (Karydis 2011: 18–23) (il. 6). However, another Canosian feature has to be taken into account: the fact the cupolas are resting not directly on piers, as in the Microasiatic examples, but on columns backed by piers (with, in addition, couples of minor pillars between the main ones). This can be due to the relatively modest span of the vaults — just a little bit more than 8 meters, in the nave — allowing the use of a more decorative (or “classical”, for accurately qualifying it) solution; and anyway, the presence of a massive pier associated to each of the columns here in question secures the stability.

There is a second church, in Canosa too, deserving here some comment. It is San Leucio, which recently also has known a thorough investigation by a team of the Roman *La Sapienza* University involving Alessandro D’Alessio, Enrico Gallochio, Laura Manganelli and Patrizio Pensabene (D’Alessio, Gallochio, Manganelli, Pensabene 2012), who propose dealing with the church mentioned as originally dedicated to Cosmas and Damianus in the hagiographic sources relative to its founder, bishop Sabinus again; this being contested by Marina Falla Castelfranchi, who rather thinks to the cathedral here above in question for the invocation to the two *Anargyri* (Falla Castelfranchi 2014: 473–474). The building appears to have replaced a pagan sanctuary. Its design is a rather elaborated one: i.e., a double quadrifoil of 47 × 47 meters of maximal extension. For its initial phase (il. 7a), the excavators conjecturally reconstitute barrel vaults above the arms of the peripheral areas, with half cupolas for the apses, and a possible *volta a padiglione* (i.e. groined vault without lateral arches) above the square central area; and in the second phase (il. 7b) consecutive to dam-



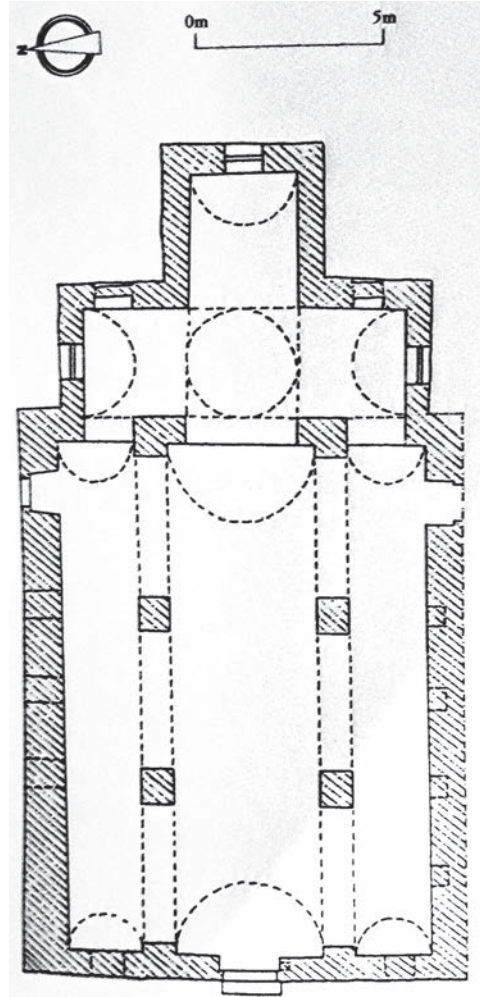
Il. 6. Hierapolis (Pammukale), Protobyzantine church. Plan (Karydis 2011)

ages eventually caused by an earthquake, and still to be dated before the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century in relation with the stylistic features of the floor mosaics, a cupola at the same place, resting on columns backed by L-shaped piers. By comparison with what is attested in the cathedral, this proposition is undoubtedly susceptible to be received; nevertheless, this too remains hypothetical. In any case however, and if it is impossible to say more about its vaulting system, San Leucio may be included in the present survey. The Roman archaeologists recognized that the only Italian equivalent as to the ground design was S. Lorenzo in Milano — but probably erected some 150 years before and for which, because of the severe



Il. 7 a-b. Canosa di Puglia, San Leucio. Plan of the two 6<sup>th</sup> century states (D'alesio, Gallochio, Manganeli, Pensabene 2012)

modifications operated during the Renaissance period, it is equally impossible to have any certainty regarding the initial upper part —, and that, on the contrary, numerous parallels were to be found in Eastern regions: in Syria, perhaps the so-called Golden Octagon in Antioch, then the quadrefoils in Seleucia-Pieria (Samandağ),



Il. 8. Casaranello-Casarano), Santa Maria della Croce. Plan, after Falla Castelfranchi (Bertelli 2004)

Aleppo, Apamea, Emesa, Bosra, Resafa; in the Balkans, the ones in Ohrid, Adrianopolis (Edirne), Peruštica (Plovdiv), Athens; and also in Egypt and Armenia... So, even if the restitution of the vaulting of most of these buildings is as well problematic, their generic design, clearly of the same type as in San Leucio, induces to consider this last one as proceeding of the same Protobyzantine impulse.

### Santa Maria della Croce in Casaranello

Southwards in the Puglia, the Salento region provides another interesting case in the present perspective: the church now — perhaps originally, but no surely at all — dedicated to the Virgin Mary in the locality of Casaranello, near Casarano, and whose exact function remains unfortunately unknown. It is a basilica of medium size (ca. 23 × 13 meters), with a nave of three bays flanked by aisles, a transept not protruding the lines of the exterior walls of the aisles, and a quadrangular apse (il. 8). The vaulting of the choir is the original one, as attested by the mosaics still preserved above the crossing and the apse with, respectively, a kind of “pendentive dome” (rather than a true dome on pendentives, the transition being here marked by the decorative organization, much more than by the structures

themselves) (il. 9) and a barrel vault; and as well, evidently enough, for the barrel vaults of both arms of the transept. As to the barrel vault — and the supporting pillars — in the nave (il. 10), the actual dissimulation of the structures by a coating with later medieval paintings prevents any checking of the initial situation. However, Marina Falla Castelfranchi, whom we are indebted of the main notices about this church (*Bertelli* 2004: 161–175; *Falla Castelfranchi* 2005), rightly doesn't exclude the possibility of their initial existence: in effect — and as we'll have below to come to it, — several buildings, especially in the nearby Sicily, presented the same feature.

It seems also opportune to follow Marina Falla Castelfranchi as to the chronology. In effect, she observes that a previous proposition of locating this church in the 5<sup>th</sup> century doesn't correspond to the



Il. 9. Casaranello (Casarano), Santa Maria della Croce. Cupola of the crossing (photo: J.-P. Caillet)





Il. 10. Casaranello (Casarano), Santa Maria della Croce. Nave, toward the apse (photo: J.-P. Caillet)

stylistic features of the mosaics, for which she evokes 6<sup>th</sup> century parallels in the Near East and in the Balkans; and, mainly, that the vaulting with cupola directs much more to this same period, especially to the Justinian's reign. Let's add that the association of the cupola with barrel vaults above three (and eventually four) arms radiating from the crossing strengthens considerably this orientation.

### **“Basilicas” with triconchial choir**

This type doesn't fundamentally differ from the one in Casaranello because, except for the outer design — i.e., semicircles instead of square endings — the principle of an axial extension and two lateral

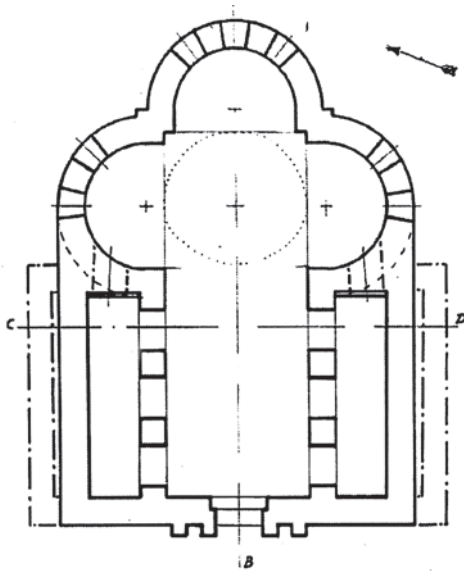
ones articulated with the crossing is identical, and might have corresponded to the same cult necessities<sup>2</sup>. We are mainly faced here with one occurrence in Puglia again: the so-called *tempietto* San Lorenzo in Mesagne (il. 11–12), carefully reexamined by Manuela Andreano (*Andreano* 2009). Then in Calabria, near Squillace, the one in Staletti (il. 13), plausibly identified as a unit of the *Vivarium* monastery founded by Cassiodorus after his return from Constantinople around 554, investigated by a team of the École française de Rome directed by Ghislaine Noyé and François Bougard<sup>3</sup> and about which lately

<sup>2</sup> This being also suggested by (*Margani* 2005: 18), about the Sicilian cases.

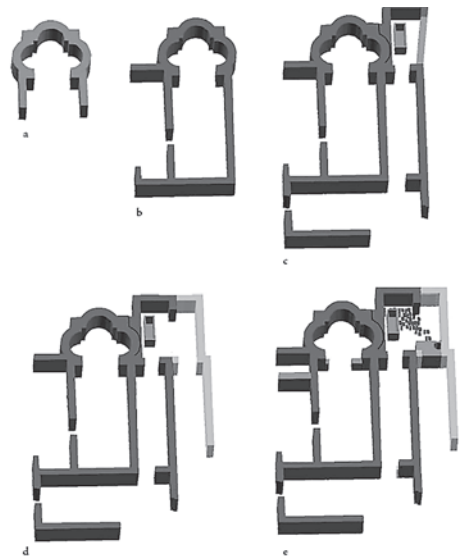
<sup>3</sup> See especially their final report: (*Noyé, Bougard* 1997).



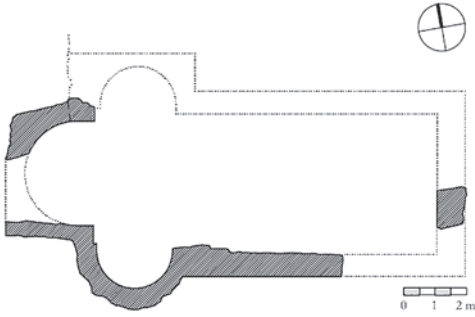
Il. 11. Mesagne, San Lorenzo. Exterior view (photo: J.-P. Caillet)



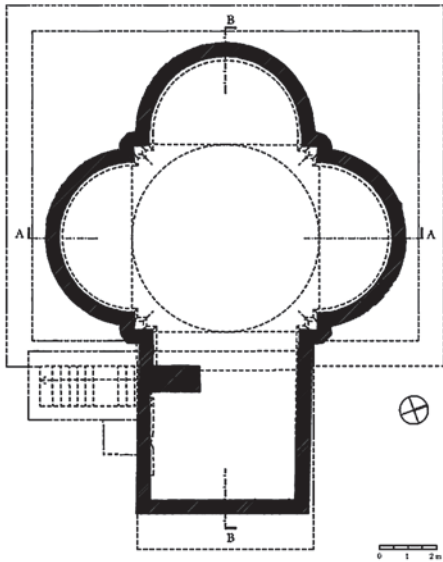
Il. 12. Mesagne, San Lorenzo. Plan (Andreano 2009)



Il. 13. Staletti, triconchial church. Plan of the successive states (Coscarella 2012)



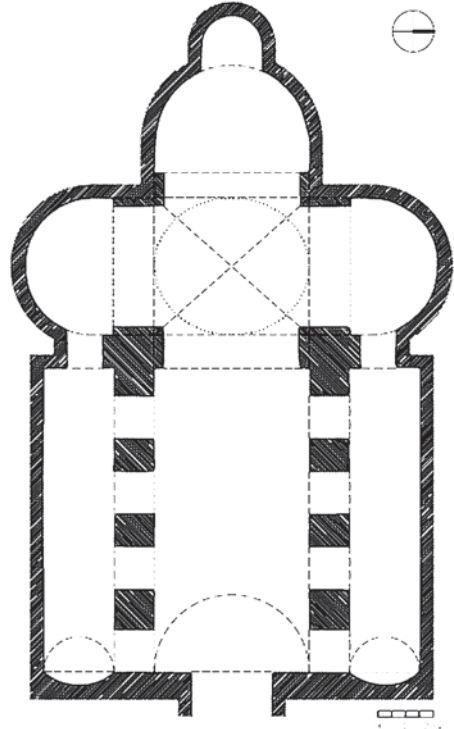
Il. 14. Catania, triconch of the via Dott. Consoli. Plan (Margani 2005)



Il. 15. Cuba Santa Teresa. Plan (Margani 2005)



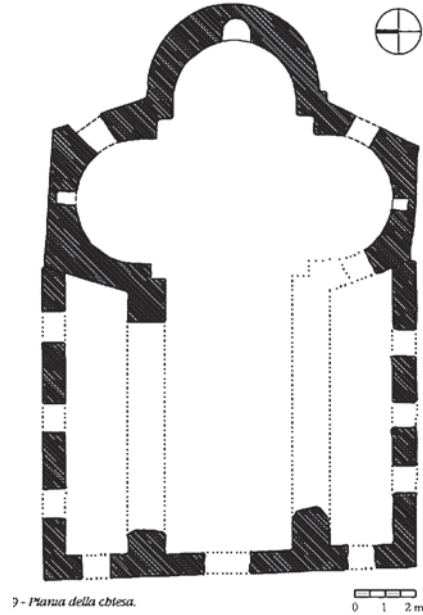
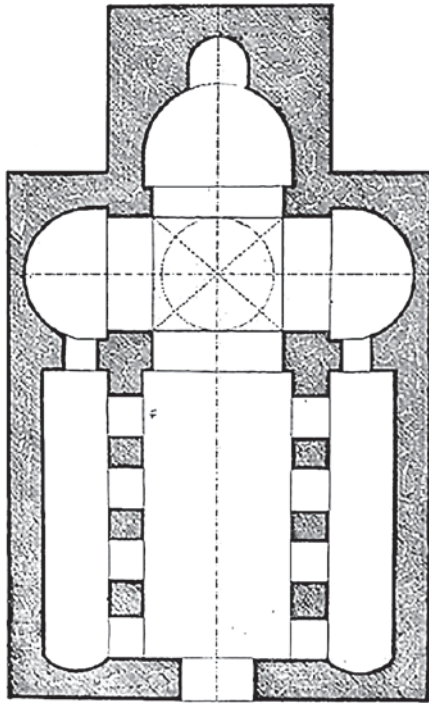
Il. 16. Cuba Santa Teresa. Cupola



Il. 17. Syracuse, Santa Maria ad Baias. Plan (Margani 2005)

came back Adele Coscarella (Coscarella 2012). Then in Sicilia several examples, thoroughly studied by Giuseppe Margani (Margani 2005) must be taken especially into account, here; these that this author gathers as *triconche composte* (i.e. differentiating them from the *triconche semplici* lacking any fore-part): the so-called *martyrium* di via Dottor Consoli in Catania (il. 14), the *cuba* Sta. Teresa near Syracuse (il. 15–16), San Pietro *ad Baias* in Syracuse itself (il. 17–18), San Pancrati in Cava d’Ispica (il. 19), the “church” in Pirrone near Licodia Eubea (il. 20), and San Stefano in Dàgala del Re (il. 21)<sup>4</sup>.

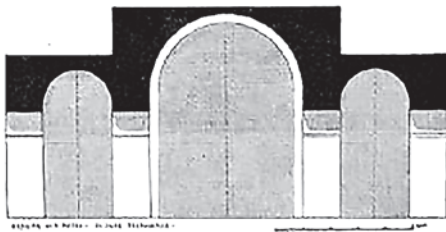
<sup>4</sup> (Margani 2005: respectively p. 91 sq., 93 sq., 108 sq., 113 sq., 119 sq., 121 sq.).



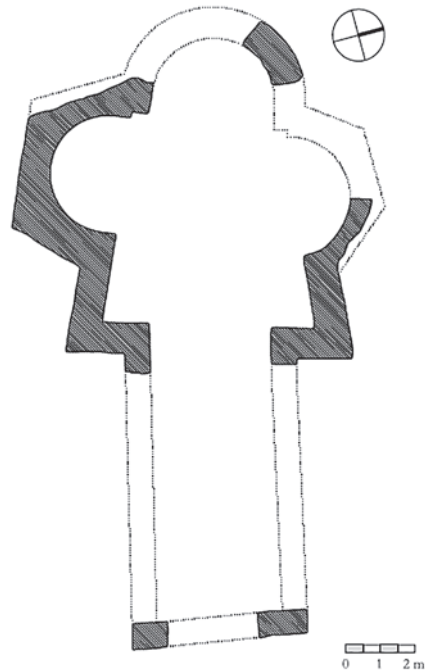
9 - *Planua della cattedra.*

Il. 19. Cava d'Ispica, triconch San Pancrati. Plan (Margani 2005)

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Il. 18. Syracuse, Santa Maria ad Baias. Longitudinal and transversal sections (Margani 2005)



Il. 20. Licodia Eubea, triconch in Pirrone. Plan (Margani 2005)

Except for San Pietro *ad Baias* in Syracuse (about 23 × 12 meters), we have to deal with very modest buildings, as to their dimensions: 14 × 11 meters for San Lorenzo in Mesagne, about 15 × 7 meters for Staletti, and less for the other Sicilians examples. It also must be said that the forepart is various enough, regarding its extension and articulation: so, San Pietro *ad Baias* in Syracuse presents a true nave with

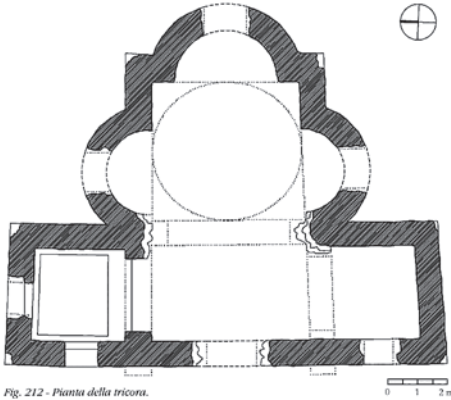


Fig. 212 - Pianta della triconca.

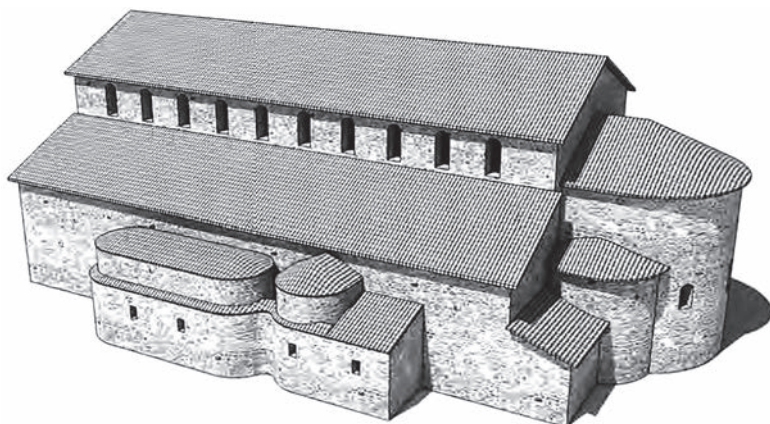
Il. 21. Dàgala del Re, triconch San Stefano. Plan (Margani 2005)

aisles, separated by pillars; the same for San Lorenzo in Mesagne; at Stalettì, it is a nave without aisles (but later flanked by lateral rooms); and otherwise, it may be reduced to a simple unarticulated room, as for the *martyrium* in Catania and at Dàgala del Re. Neither to be neglected is the fact that in some cases, these fore-parts appears to have been added in a second moment: so at Stalettì and Dàgala del Re; it was previously thought to have been the same in San Lorenzo in Mesagne but, referring to what is attested by photographs taken before the restorations in the 1980<sup>1</sup> Manuela Andreano convincingly establishes that, considering the identical structures of the lower parts, trefoiled choir and nave were of contemporary implantation. For our present purpose, however, the main datum remains in the period here considered — i.e., the 6<sup>th</sup> century onwards — the eventual adjunction had everywhere already happened.

As to the vaulting, there is also some diversity. Regarding the fore-parts, the barrel vault is ascertained at San Pietro *ad Barias* in Syracuse (nave and aisles), and plausible at the near-by *cuba* di Santa. Teresa, and at San Pancrati in Cava d'Isipica; but for San

Lorenzo in Mesagne, the tracks of insertion of beams rightly induce Manuela Andreano to reconstitute an original timberwork. Concerning the trefoil choir of this same monument, she rather thinks to an original cupola (the present one resulting of a later refectio); and in Sicily, taking then also into account what is attested for the *triconche semplici*, Giuseppe Margani insists on the predominance of the cupola on squinches — more or less rudimentary conformed — for the “crossing”; nevertheless, the *martyrium* in Catania is undoubtedly characterized by a kind of “pendentive dome”.

Something has to be added, too, about the destination(s) and chronology of these buildings. But it must be recognized that, due to the lack of textual documentation and archaeological attestation of liturgical settings, both of these points remain obscure enough. It has generally been recalled that the trefoil design sends back to profane Roman origins and had been adopted by Christians, at least from the 4<sup>th</sup> century onwards, for sepulchral monuments; then, in a second moment, many of them seem to have known an adaptation for liturgical use properly speaking. It has very probably been the case of Stalettì, the adjunction of the nave and this new function intervening in relation with the foundation of a monastery. And it also might have occurred in several of the Sicilian examples. Concerning this point, Giuseppe Margani insists on the fact that many of these monuments are in close relation with a cemetery area. And reinvestigating the particular case of San Lorenzo at Pachino — an example classified among the *triconche semplici* by Margani — Francesca Buscemi, as to her, not rejecting the probability of a funerary origin, thinks to a later monastic chapel (Buscemi 2016): she puts this in relation with the proliferation of private foundations of monasteries, especially involved in the assistance of the poor in the system of *diaconiae*, firstly established



Il. 22. Nola/Cimitile, basilica nova. Reconstitution of the 5th century state (Ebanista 2017)

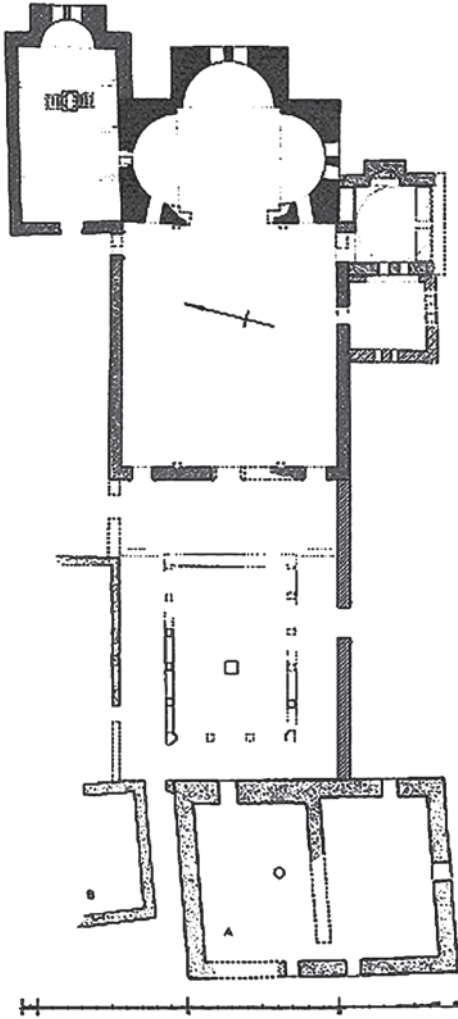
in Egypt but also well attested in Italy from about 600 onwards — Francesca Buscemi conjecturing, precisely, its introduction in Sicily by Oriental monks. But it is perhaps more commendable not to privilege too much the hypothesis of monasteries: a generic function as sanctuary of a *vicus* would still be possible, as is for instance proposed by Manuela Andreano in the case of Mesagne.

Regarding the dates, the uncertainty is of the same order. As to Mesagne, however, Manuela Andreano mentions similar characteristics for its eastern apse and the ones of two churches near Lecce, whose 6<sup>th</sup> century date appears to be the most probable. As to the Sicilian cases — the most numerous — Giuseppe Margani rightly sets aside the eventuality of a posteriority to the end of the Byzantine establishment (i.e. more or less late during the 9<sup>th</sup> century); reinvestigating the particular case of San Lorenzo at Pachino — another Sicilian example, but classified among the *tricore semplici* by Margani — Francesca Buscemi has a marked preference for the 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> centuries, but she recognizes that the analogies that she otherwise mentions — imposed under the squinches, for which she evokes

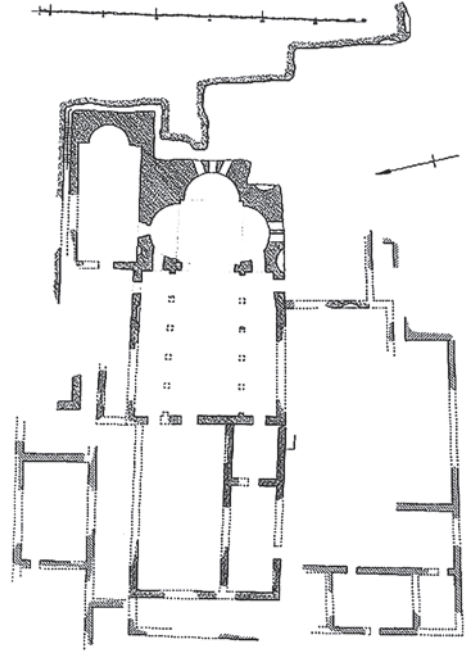
equivalents in Syria, Asia Minor, Cappadocia... — have been in use slightly earlier. So, it seems reasonable not to try to be too precise in this matter.

As it appears from these last remarks, the ties with the Eastern Mediterranean areas are frequently put fore. However, Manuela Andreano considers that, regarding Southern Italy at least, the so-called *Basilica Nova* built by Paulinus at Nola/Cimitile in 401/03 in relation with the martyr Felix's tomb is the main source of these sanctuaries with trefoiled choir. Without radically rejecting this proposal, it seems to me that some observations must be produced. First, the analogy so postulated is not so evident: plausibly restituting the original elevation of the Nolan sanctuary, Carlo Ebanista proposes that it might not have been a true trefoiled choir — i.e., with three equally developed semicircular units, as we are dealing with here — but a predominant main apse, with two smaller and lower annexes articulated on its sides (il. 22)<sup>5</sup>. So, the hypothesis of an Oriental impulse, intervening from the 6<sup>th</sup> century onwards, certainly deserves more

<sup>5</sup> (Ebanista 2017, especially p. 309 sq. and il. 35a.)



Il. 23. Karabel, triconchial church. Plan (Iacobini 2003–2004)



Il. 24. Alacahisar, triconchial church. Plan (Iacobini 2003–2004)

consideration. This, especially if we take into account what upon which Antonio Iacobini drew attention to Asia Minor: i.e., the basilicas with — genuine — trefoiled choir at Karabel (il. 23) and Alacahisar (il. 24) in Lycia; and the second one, in particular, still showing its cupola on pendentives (il. 25)<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> (Iacobini 2003–2004, especially p. 163 sq. and il. 35–36).



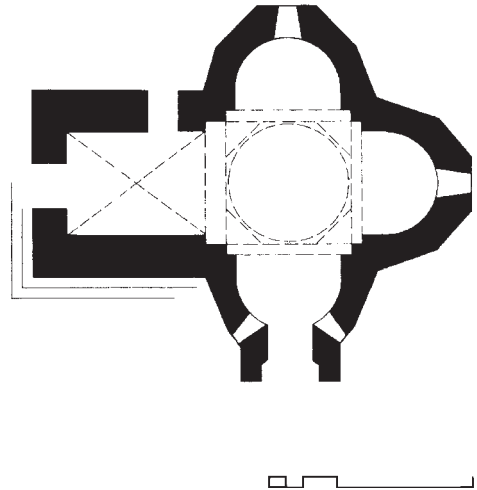
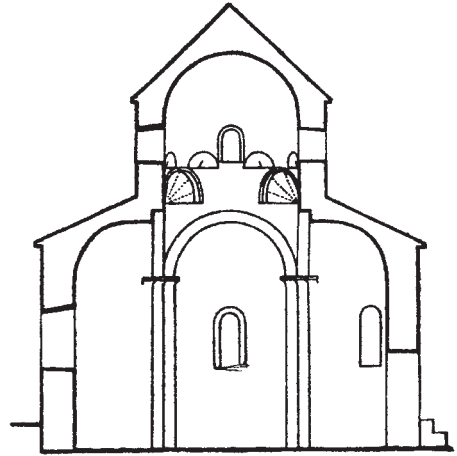
Il. 25. Alacahisar, triconchial church. Pendentives of the cupola (Iacobini 2003–2004)



Il. 26. Alaman, triconch. Exterior view from the Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, St Petersburg (Казарян vol. 2 2012)

Of course, the configuration of the most of the South Italian and Sicilian cupolas is simpler, and several of them have recourse to the squinches; but for this last characteristic, it is also possible to evoke the triconch in Alaman (precisely dated 637) (il. 26 and 27 a-b) and may be the (probably) contemporary one in Korhan, both in Subcaucasia (Казарян vol. 2 2013: 128–134, 135–137). As to the same feature, and as recalled here above by sending back to Francesca Buscemi's remarks, the use of squinches is also attested early enough in Eastern regions; Iacobini, otherwise, pinpointed in particular the case of Kızıl Kilise at Sivrihisar (late 6<sup>th</sup> century, probably). But it must also be underlined that cupolas on squinches have been introduced very precociously in Italy: for the pre-Justinian period, Sergio Bettini, the first one, rightly mentioned the cases of San Prodocimo in Padova, of the Soter baptistery in Naples, and some other ones<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> (Bettini 1936–1937, especially pp. 214–233).



Il. 27 a-b. Alaman, triconch, Plan and section by T. Toramanian (Казарян vol. 2 2012)

And at last, let's insist here on the fact that the use of squinches or pendentives is in fact not at all determinant as to the date: so, up to the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century even, the catalogue produced by Armen Kazaryan clearly establishes the recourse to both systems in Armenia<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> If it is true that the squinches system must be recognized as largely predominant, pendentives are nevertheless attested in Zarinja (Kazaryan





Il. 28. Rutigliano, Sant'Apollinare. Exterior view of the actual state



Il. 29. Rutigliano, Sant'Apollinare. Interior view of the subsisting bay

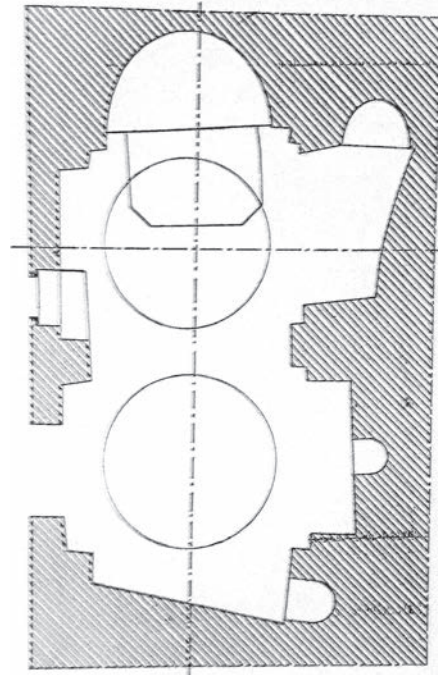
### Basilicas with two cupolas on longitudinal axis

Here again, we are dealing with a true series, in Southern Italy: i.e., in Puglia, Sant'Apollinare in Rutigliano (nave originally with two bays, now reduced to a single one) (il. 28–29), San Pietro di Crepacore near the locality Torre Santa Susanna (il. 30 a-b), San Salvatore in Monte Sant'Angelo (promontory of Gargano) (il. 31) and the so-called *tem-*

vol. 2 2012: 226–237), Aruch (*Kazaryan* vol. 3 2012: 72–105), Talin (*Kazaryan* vol. 3 2012: 146–183), Ddmashen (*Kazaryan* vol. 3 2012: 473–482), Dashtadem (*Kazaryan* vol. 3 2012: 549–555) and Astvatsatsin (*Kazaryan* vol. 4 2013: 49–56).



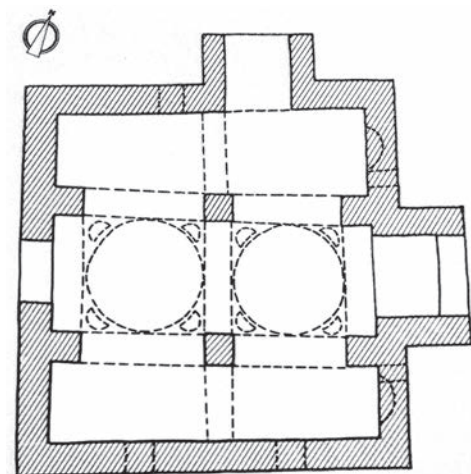
Il. 30 a-b. Crepacore (Torre Sta. Susanna), San Pietro. Exterior and interior views (photos: J.-P. Caillet)



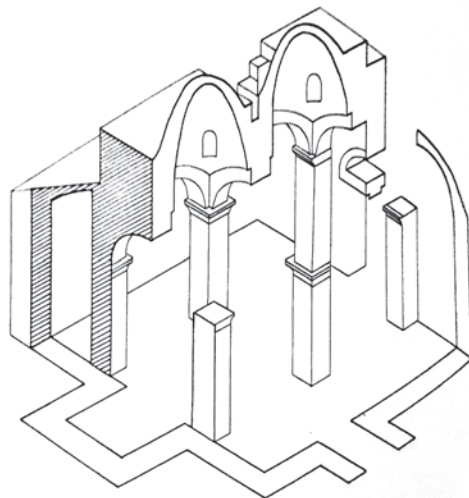
Il. 31. Monte Sant'Angelo (Gargano), San Salvatore. Plan (Falla Castefranchi 1982)



Il. 32. Seppanibale, church. Exterior view  
(photo: J.-P. Caillet)



Il. 33. Seppanibale, church. Plan (Bertelli 2004)



Il. 34. Seppanibale, church. Elevation (Bertelli 2004)

*pietto* di Seppanibale near Fasano (il. 32–35); then, in Campania, Sant'Ilario in Benevento (il. 36–39)<sup>9</sup>. All are of modest dimensions (about 14,50 × 8,5 meters in Benevento, and less than that in the other cases). Considering its position near the city gate on a way coming from the town of Siponto, a particular destination to the pilgrims intending to visit the near-by sanctuary of Saint Michael is conjectured by Marina Falla Castelfranchi

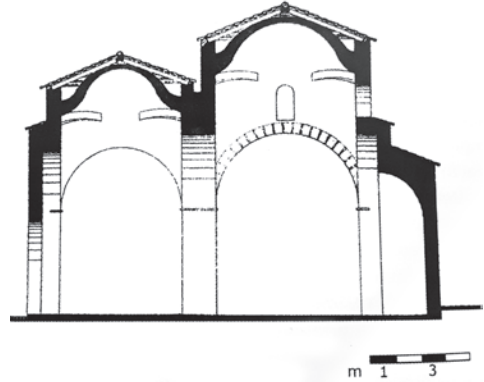
<sup>9</sup> For the main bibliography regarding these buildings, see the following notes.



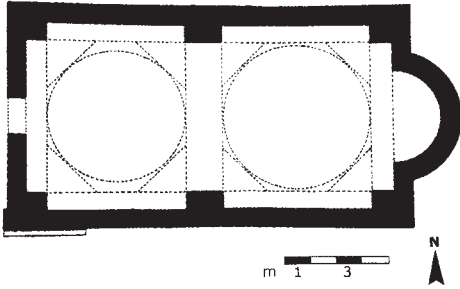
Il. 35. Seppanibale, church. One of the cupolas  
(photo: J.-P. Caillet)



Il. 36. Benevento, Sant'Ilario. Exterior view (photo: J.-P. Caillet)



Il. 38. Benevento, Sant'Ilario. Longitudinal section (Carella 2011)



Il. 37. Benevento, Sant'Ilario. Plan (Carella 2011)

(Falla Castelfranchi 1982)<sup>10</sup>. For the other examples, we are again in great incertitude, the hypothesis of sanctuary of a rural community established on the lands of a former *villa rustica* being advanced by Gioia Bertelli for Seppanibale<sup>11</sup>, and it might have been the same elsewhere.

As for to the “basilicas” with triconchial choir, variants must also be noted here as to the ground design: mononave at Rutigliano, Crepacore, Monte Sant’Angelo, Benevento; and nave with aisles at Sep-

panibale. Variants, too, regarding the typology of the cupolas: recourse to squinches (occulted by coating in order to receive the painted decoration, but nevertheless well attested) at Seppanibale, and well apparent at Benevento; but elliptical domes prolonged downwards without transition — so, roughly adapting the principle of the “pendentive dome” — at Rutigliano and Crepacore; and true “pendentive domes” at Monte Sant’Angelo.

The chronology of these monuments is also very difficult to establish. A foundation by the Longobard prince Arechis II (758–787) is postulated by Marina Falla Castelfranchi for Monte Sant’Angelo (Falla Castelfranchi 1982), but we unfortunately lack any textual source to confirm that. For Seppanibale, Gioia Bertelli thinks also to an — rather late, in this case — 8<sup>th</sup> century date; this in relation with the style of the painted and carved decorations, but also with the result of archaeological investigations in the immediate surroundings, pointing at an abandonment of the site after about 800<sup>12</sup>. For Benevento, whose comprehen-

<sup>10</sup> This being then accepted by: (Carella 2011: 118 (and pp. 114–118 for the whole notice about this church)).

<sup>11</sup> (Bertelli 2010: especially p. 195). See also her previous developed notice in: (Bertelli 2004: 121–138).

<sup>12</sup> (Bertelli 2010: especially p. 195–197); and already her notice in: (Bertelli 2004: 121–138).



Il. 39. Benevento, Sant'Ilario. Interior view of the actual state, toward the apse (photo: J.-P. Caillet)

sive publication of the monument and of the structures upon which it was built is still waited, Marcello Rotili thought to an erection shortly before the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century (Rotili 1986: 182), Silvio Carella argues that the Ilarian invocation (surely attested since the 11<sup>th</sup> century, but perhaps the initial one) might suggest a realization as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> century, so underlining the Longobard's conversion to the Catholic faith by referring to a saint especially known as best adversary of the Arianism<sup>13</sup>; this remark appears in good part valid but, as lately recalled by Vera von Falkenhausen, it is not to be forgotten that in Southern Italy, the conversion in question seems to have been fully achieved noticeably later (only around 700, perhaps) (Von Falkenhausen 2017: 23). For Crepacore, Marina FallaCastelfranchi imagined a first phase (6<sup>th</sup> century ?) with timberwork covering, the cupolas resulting from a 9<sup>th</sup> century modification (Bertelli 2004: 147–160); but Michel Berger and André Jacob have contested this proposal, considering that the painted decoration of the cupolas in question was

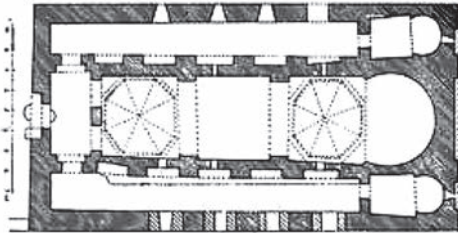
<sup>13</sup> (Carella 2011: 62) (and p. 56–62 for the whole notice about this church).

pre-iconoclastic (Berger, Jacob 2007); a proposal lately accepted, globally, by Valentino Pace (who thinks, as to him, to a plausible date toward the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, or slightly later) (Pace 2017). For Rutigliano at last, Giorgia Lepore tends to consider the rather approximate junction of the cupolas with the lower square bays — irregular enough, themselves — as denoting an experimental stage in an evolution leading to better achieved examples (Seppanibale, in particular), so toward the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century (Bertelli 2004: 111–116); Gioia Bertelli, as to her, conjecturing a much earlier date (Bertelli 2010: 194)... In fact, these speculations about a regularly linear progression have sometimes been invalidated by textual and/or archaeological data: consequently, rough and awkward productions are verified contemporary of very skilful ones, in mere relation with the builder's various capacities. So, it still seems more reasonable to simply stick to a broad *ambitus* embracing from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

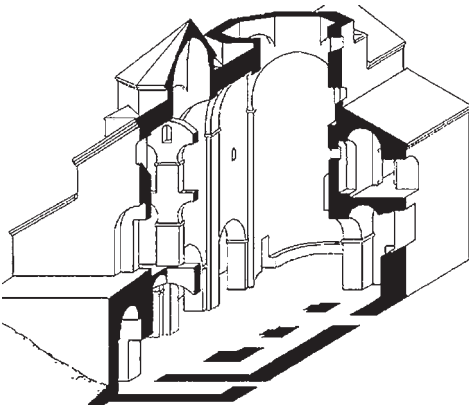
It was generally thought, by the specialists, of a creation of this type in Beneventine context: Sant'Ilario corresponding, so, to the generic model from



Il. 40. Gurdjaani, Kvelac'minda church. Exterior view



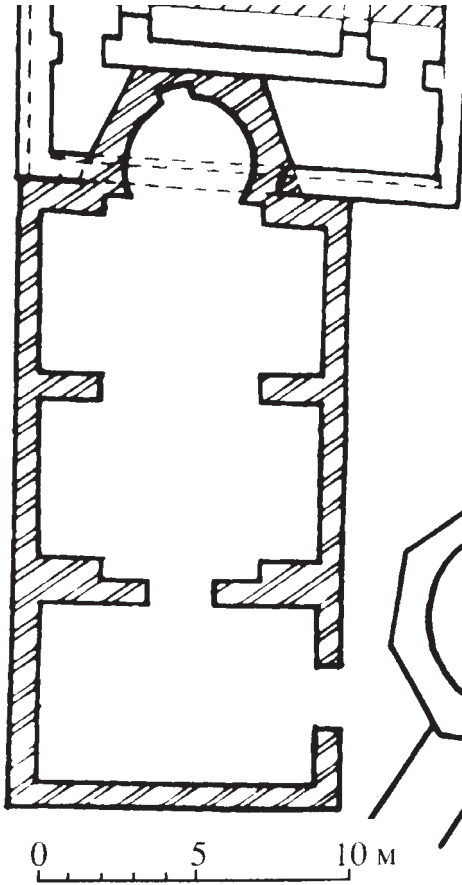
Il. 41. Gurdjaani, Kvelac'minda church. Plan (Чубинашвили 1956)



Il. 42. Gurdjaani, Kvelac'minda church. Elevation by V. V. Beridze (Vinogradov 2017)

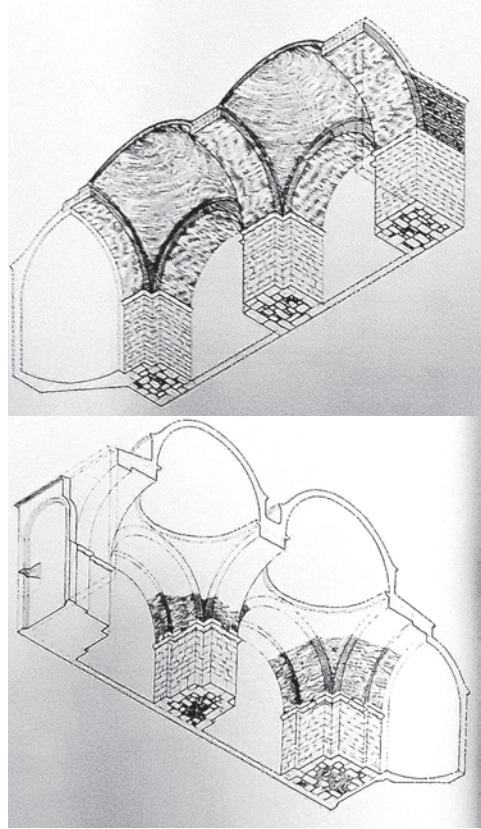
which would have derived the other cases. And lately, Gioia Bertelli, taking in account her proposal as to the date of Rutigliano, rather imagined the progressive amelioration of the formula on the basis of — always regional, all told — attempts (Bertelli 2010: 194). But it is not incongruous, to my mind, to privilege here again the ties with Eastern areas. In Georgia, we are in effect facing the Kvelac'minda church in Gurdjaani (il. 40–42) about which, in spite of some recent propositions<sup>14</sup>, the VIIIth date previously proposed by Giorgi Čubinašvili (Чубинашвили 1956–1959) seems to me the most plausible (i.e. much better corresponding, it's must be emphasized, with the chronology of the other samples of the series here concerned) and whose main nave is covered by two cupolas on squinches; it must be recognized that as to its articulation (on two floor levels, in par-

<sup>14</sup> See in particular: (Виноградов 2017). I here warmly thank Nina Iamanidze for communicating this article and helping me to get exact knowledge of its content.



Il. 43. Picunda, church n. 4. Plan (Khrushkova 2005)

ticular), this building is much more complex than the South Italian cases. But it doesn't appear impossible that another monument, of relatively more comparable size (17,45 × 11,60 meters, "narthex" included, and on one level only) might be taken in account: the (probably) 6<sup>th</sup> century church n.4 in Picunda (ancient *Pityous*) in Abkhazia, which presents a "narthex" then a mononave subdivided in two bays by a couple of very salient pilasters (il. 43). This last feature has rightly induced Liudmila Khrushkova to imagine a vaulting system (Khrushkova 2006: 33, 190, pl. 4 b-c);



Il. 44 a-b. Sardis "building D" (left) and Alasehir/Philadelphia (right). Reconstitution of the vaultings (Karydis 2011)

and the recourse to two cupolas — unfortunately not to check now, the monument being leveled down to the ground — so would have fit especially well. Going further in this path, it must be recalled that in Asia Minor, two major Protobyzantine churches — the so-called "building D" in Sardis and St. John the Theologian in Alasehir/Philadelphia — presents also a mononave covered by two cupolas on longitudinal axis (respectively, cupolas on true pendentives, and "pendentive domes", as restituted by Nikolaos Karydis (Karydis 2011: 13–18)) (il. 44 a-b). And finally, it's not to forget the two cupolas on pen-



Il. 45. Istanbul, St. Irene. Exterior view (photo: J.-P. Caillet)

dentives of the illustrious example of St. Irene in Constantinople in its mid-8<sup>th</sup> century state (il. 45), accurately analyzed by Urs Peschlow (*Peschlow*1977: 212–213). So, even if it would be excessively hazardous to directly put side by side the sample of the capital — and the Microasiatic ones — with the very modest South Italian achievements, this attestation of the relative broad diffusion of a specific type incites not to neglect the eventuality of common reference, as well in the Oriental margins as in Southern Italy, to prestigious models in the core of the Byzantine Empire. As to this point, we can evoke St. Sophia in Benevento, founded by duke Arechis II around the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century; even if, according to what lately argued Laura Esposito, the original invocation would have been to a Roman saint then also venerated in the Longobard duchy, the sources clearly attest that, at least from the 9<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the reference to the Constantinopolitan *Megale Ekklesia* locally prevailed (*Esposito* 2017).

### Conclusive considerations

I expect to have so valorized convincingly enough the formal connections between numerous realizations belonging to two worlds — apparently — much distant from each other. It is now necessary to summarize the reasons of such common features. Considering, firstly, the case of the two churches in Canosa, we simply have to take into account what is known about their very probable founder, bishop Sabinus. As lately recalled by Marina Falla Castelfranchi, he — deceased few years before the Longobard's arrival — had visited Constantinople two times: in 525/26 already, then ten years later for attending the synod convoked by patriarch Menna and held in the portico of the Chalkoprateia; so he got the opportunity to see, especially, the new St. Sophia close to its completion (*Falla Castelfranchi* 2014: 467). The bold application of the cupola system here attested might very well have suggested to him — at lower level, and with variants in the design — something recalling it in the

Canosian churches whose edification probably started the following years.

Regarding all what we have reexamined here above in Salento and Sicily for the late 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century period, the tight connections with the Eastern Mediterranean world can also be explained easily by considering the geopolitical situation as, in particular, comprehensively synthesized by Enrico Zanini: both regions, in fact, had been then maintained under the Byzantine rule (Zanini 1998: 33–104); and it must not to be neglected, furthermore, that Emperor Constans II established himself in Syracuse from 663 until his death in 668 — and practically all of the Sicilian examples here evoked are situated in this same Eastern part of the island. As to Monte Sant'Angelo and Benevento, it's true that these areas fully belonged to the Longobard duchy. But as convincingly demonstrated by Enrico Zanini, the relations between Longobards and Byzantines were less conflictual than it is usually thought, and the whole Southern Italy became then integrated in the Mediterranean circuit of economical exchanges (Zanini 1998: 291–332, 333–340); there is no reason, so, for which it would have differed as to the artistic ones. Regarding the individuals susceptible to have introduced some specific features (and in spite of the lack of precise data concerning the building themselves) Nino Lavermicocca (Lavermicocca 2012: 30), sending back to what already noted by Agostino Pertusi (Pertusi 1964: 92–95, 106–110), records that as soon as the 6<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> centuries, the sources mention “Syriacs” — generic designation of Orientals — settled in many cities of the region ; and in particular, monks from Greece, Constantinople (with possibly people from Subcaucasian regions having moved to the capital) and Aegean-Anatolian areas. Such process of transmission by these agents having always occurred, of course, in adapting the design and the

scale in close relation with the local builders' aptitudes and the — sometimes most reduced — liturgical necessities.

So, the — direct or indirect — historic inclusion of 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century Southern Italy in the Byzantine sphere decisively cannot be doubted. As to its Christian architecture, and beyond the punctual observations up to now produced, this same inclusion probably deserved to be stressed. I have tried here to do it, privileging as “common denominator” a mode of covering destined to become one of the main marks of the realizations in the Eastern world. Of course, it will be necessary to investigate further in this way; the present essay had just the scope to engage more again toward it.

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