

The pavement mosaic of Otranto Basilica, Lecce (Salento) and the “Tree of life” Symbolism

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The lecture has as scope the iconographic analysis of the mosaic paves of the Otranto Cathedral (*opus tessellatum hydruntinum*), in province of Lecce, South Italy. One strongly peculiarity of the Salento territory, crossways of people and cultures between East and the West, is its ability to amalgamate and to assimilate heterogeneous elements as testimony the core of the debate on the popular religiosity. In fact, Salento, in the past constantly was craft from the religious spirit of the orthodox monasticism. Following a particular comparison guidelines we are going to enjoy a journey to the world of the myth. The pavement mosaic of Otranto Cathedral is an excellent artist production of the greek-orthodox monacism. and reporting very fascinating iconographic themes similar to the prehistoric archetypal iconographic motives. That happens through the observation of its evocative polychromic oil cakes that they introduce you the scenic reason standardizes to through out of the millennia. Therefore, do not surprise us that just a byzantine monk, named Pantaleone under commission of the Archbishop *Hydruntinum* Iona, realized such sacred *capolavoro* between 1163 and 1165. The construction of the Cathedral *basilica*, was realized under the duke Norman Robert Guiscardo in the years between 1080 and 1088. Its detach architectonic character are a concoction of enriched Romanesque architecture with the palaeochristianic byzantine elements. The mosaic occupies an equal surface to 1000 mq. distributed along the nave, the presbytery, the apse and long the two aisles giving space to three “Trees of Life”. Its particularity, especially for southern Italian, is in the fact that is the *unicum* byzantine mosaic example that entertain representations of human figures. Similar Italian comparisons founded in S. Demetrio Corona, S. Adriano, Brindisi (Apulia) and in Maria of Patire at Romano Calabro near S. Demetrius, Calabria.

(More on this subject see the *ppt* presentation)

Ref.: Cosmelli F., *L’elefante, l’albero e l’obelisco* in “Storia dell’arte”, n°66, a. 1989, pp.109-118.

