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Amalfi, Byzantium, and the Vexed Question of Artistic ›Influence‹

Among the many scholarly interests Rainer Kahsnitz has pursued over the course of his long and successful curatorial and academic career, the study of Western medieval and Byzantine ivory carving and investigation of various aspects of their style, iconography, patronage, and production has resulted in a rich treasure trove of publications that have become a cornerstone not only for our knowledge of specific objects, but also for a better understanding of an entire field of art-historical research. This article, which relates to some of the broader questions Rainer Kahsnitz has explored with regard to the activities of Western artists and patrons and their knowledge of Byzantine iconographic prototypes, renders homage, albeit in a modest way, to a scholar whose always insightful and often path-breaking contributions have done much to address the vexed question of Byzantine artistic ›influence‹ and the impact of Byzantine iconographic models on artists and patrons in much of Western Europe as well as in different regions of the medieval Mediterranean.

In his »Deeds of Robert Guiscard«, written around the year 1100, William of Apulia described Amalfi as »a city rich in resources and seemingly filled with people. None is richer in silver, gold and textiles from all sorts of different places. Many sailors live in this city, skilled in the ways of the sea and the heavens, and many different things are brought here from the royal city of Alexandria and from Antioch. Its people cross many seas. They know the Arabs, the Libyans, the Sicilians and Africans. This nation is famed throughout nearly the entire world, because they export their merchandise and love to carry back what they have bought«. William’s description of Amalfi


and its inhabitants conjures up the image of a cosmopolitan port city and bustling commercial hub whose wealth was primarily based on the successful activities of an entrepreneurial merchant class engaged and experienced in long-distance trade and travel⁴. Indeed, the steady influx of merchandise from overseas, most notably of luxury goods made of silver, gold, and silk, imported from Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople, had established and secured the city’s fame and fortune already by the middle of the tenth century, as witnessed by Liudprand of Cremona, who famously defended his attempted export of purple-dyed silks from the Byzantine capital by claiming that such textiles were readily available through Venetian and Amalfitan traders in Italy⁵. The Arab traveler Ibn Hawqal likewise praised Amalfi as «the most prosperous town in Lombardy, the most noble, the most illustrious on account of its conditions, the most affluent and opulent».⁶ Having gained political independence from the Duchy of Naples already in 839, Amalfi’s continued acknowledgement of Byzantine suzerainty and the establishment of colonies of Amalfitan traders not only in Constantinople and Durazzo (Dyrrhachium), but also in Antioch, Alexandria, Cairo, and Jerusalem, played a crucial role in securing the political and commercial prosperity of the city and duchy of Amalfi for more than two centuries⁷. While the Norman conquest of South Italy and their taking control of Amalfi’s political fortunes in 1073 may have resulted in a cooling of official relations with the Byzantine Empire, commercial contacts between the city’s merchants and Byzantine lands seem to have remained active throughout the twelfth and into the thirteenth century, not least due to the presence of a now sizable community of Amalfitans in the Byzantine capital, who, as Niketas Choniates describes them in his account of the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204, «had been thoroughly nurtured in Roman [i.e. Byzantine] customs […] and who had chosen to make Constantinople their home»⁸.

None of the sources quoted here are new or unknown. On the contrary, they have frequently been cited as evidence for the high reputation Amalfi and its citizens enjoyed in various parts of the medieval


Mediterranean, and the wide network of relations its merchants were able to establish and maintain in the coastal cities of Sicily, North Africa, the Levant, and the Byzantine Empire. However, they do not help us to assess how Amalfi’s contacts with their Byzantine and Arab neighbors changed or modified the city’s everyday life and elite «culture», its artistic production, and the «habitus» of its inhabitants vis-à-vis their Christian neighbors or Muslim and Jewish business partners. If Niketas Choniates calls the Amalfitans residing in Constantinople «thoroughly nurtured in Roman customs», what exactly does he mean by that? Did the Amalfitans blend in more easily than their Venetian, Pisan, or Genoese neighbors? Were they more eager to adjust to Byzantine tastes in their private lives or to Byzantine habits in the way they conducted their businesses? Surely, Choniates considered them more assimilated than other groups who «had chosen to make Constantinople their home», as he put it. But again, what exactly does it mean in a late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century Byzantine context that the Amalfitans were considered more «thoroughly nurtured» in contemporary Greek customs than their Latin neighbors? And furthermore, was the phenomenon of cultural assimilation thus described a process that took more than two centuries of cohabitation to manifest itself, or was it a general disposition of receptiveness that characterized those Amalfitan sailors, merchants and their families, who had decided to make Constantinople «their home» already during the tenth and eleventh centuries? As is well known through the testimony of Liudprand of Cremona, a sizable community of Amalfitans must have existed in Constantinople even before the middle of the tenth century, where they are said to have actively participated in Byzantine military and political affairs. If Paul Magdalino’s assessment of the situation is correct, it may have been Emperor Romanos Lekapenos who not only bestowed the prefect of Amalfi with the title of a patrikios around 922, but also granted the Amalfitans trading privileges and assigned them a designated area near the Golden Horn to establish their storage facilities and businesses. By 968, when Liutprand visited Constantinople again as imperial legate, the Amalfitan colony in the Byzantine capital must have been quite sizable. While his later complaint that Venetian and Amalfitan merchants freely imported precious cloths — among them purple-dyed silks — from Byzantium to Italy in such quantities that «even cheap women and parasitic dependents» were able to wear them may seem somewhat exaggerated, it nonetheless casts a spotlight on the apparent success of the Amalfitan trading enterprise in Constantinople and highlights that Byzantine

12 Liudprand of Cremona (note 5), ch. 45, p. 207; English translation after Squatriti (note 5), p. 266.  
luxury wares must have been widely accessible and appreciated by members of the Amalfitan elite back home. Interestingly, not a single imperial chryso-bull has survived that would help to shed some light on the specifics of Byzantine trading privileges extended to the Amalfitans, raising the question whether such codified privileges simply disappeared from the historical record or never existed because trading concessions were made with individual merchants and their families rather than with the government on behalf of its citizens, as attested for Venice, Genoa, and Pisa. It is only through such an agreement with Venice in 992 that we know about a specific prohibition for Venetian ships to carry Amalfitan and certain other cargo. Another chryso-bull, issued around 1082 by Emperor Alexios to the Venetians, specifies that the Amalfitans of Constantinople were required to pay a tribute to the church of San Marco in Venice, thus testifying to a changed political landscape as a result of Amalfi’s submission to Robert Guiscard in 1073. The document further indicates that the church of St. Andrew in Durazzo, which had a sizable Amalfitan community, was to be handed over to the Venetians in what seems to amount to a set of punitive actions against Amalfitans and Amalfitan possessions across the empire. However, the attested presence of a monastery associated with the Amalfitans on Mount Athos since the last quarter of the tenth century and of a church or monastery in Constantinople since at least the 1060s may be taken as a general indication that the Amalfitan community remained active and vibrant in the Byzantine Empire also during this more difficult period. There are even indications that Amalfitan activities in the capital reached a new peak in the late eleventh century, as famously argued by Adolf Hofmeister, whose study of the monk and translator John revealed a whole network of connections with members of the Amalf-
ian family of Count Mauro in Constantinople in the second half of the eleventh century. The wealth and ambition of this family can be gleaned not only from a reference in Amatus of Montecassino’s History of the Normans, which reports that Gisulf II of Salerno and his entire retinue were hosted at the house of Pantaleo, son of Mauro, during their visit to Constantinople in 1062, but also from the record of artistic patronage associated with Pantaleo, who commissioned Byzantine bronze doors for the cathedral of Amalfi, the church of San Paolo fuori le mura in Rome, and most likely also the church of St. Michael on Monte Sant’Angelo, and his father, Mauro, who commissioned not only the famous Farfa casket, but also the Byzantine bronze doors of the abbey church of Montecassino.

With respect to the wider Amalfitan trade network established during the tenth century in other parts of the Mediterranean, especially on the Iberian peninsula, in North Africa, and the Levant, one may ask whether Amalfitans residing in Cordoba, Antioch, Jerusalem, Cairo, Alexandria, or Al-Mahdia, for instance, would likewise have been considered “nurtured” in the customs of the respective “Leitkultur”, or whether life in a predominantly non-Christian environment resulted in more resistant rather than affirmative social and cultural behavior. Yahya of Antioch’s report of the massacre of 160 Amalfitans in Old Cairo in May 996, is indicative not only of existing tensions between the indigenous population and those who were considered agents of foreign powers, but also of the life of an apparently sizable colony of merchants, who seem to have resided either within or in close proximity to the compound that served to store their merchandise and was plundered on the occasion. Much like the Muslim merchants in Constantinople.


stonantinople, who lived in a distinct compound (»mitaton«) in close proximity to the Amalfitans at the »crossing« (»perama«) of the Golden Horn, the Amalfitan merchant colony in Old Cairo seems to have inhabited a strictly defined area in which they remained noticeable as a distinct social group with its own cultural affinities and regional identity. While the scraps of surviving literary evidence attesting to Amalfitan trade relations with the Arab world do not allow for any definite judgment on the matter, it seems unlikely that Amalfitan and other merchants residing in North Africa and the Levant during the Aghlabid, Fatimid, and Ayyubid periods remained immune to the cultural and artistic achievements, amenities, and life-style of these regions’ secular elites.

What they took to Arab lands and brought back to Amalfi can be pieced together from a variety of sources, which name grain, linen, and wood among the cargo taken to North Africa, and olive oil, wax, cloths, spices, dyes, incense, perfumes, papyrus, and gold among the various goods imported from Byzantium, Egypt, Ifriqiya, and the Levant. It is also interesting to note that Amalfitans seem to have taken what appear to be Byzantine textiles to the Umayyad court in Cordoba, where they were greatly appreciated as coming from »their country«, as recorded in the Kitab al-Muqtabis fi Tārikh rijal al-Andalus of the eleventh-century Muslim historian Ibn Hayyan. »They [the Amalfitans] arrived under the protection of the government with extraordinary materials from their country, from brocades to excellent purple [cloths] and other precious merchandise. Al-Nasir bought most of these at half price and what remained was left to the inhabitants of his kingdom and the merchants of the capital [...]«28. Rather than taking such luxury merchandise directly to Al-Andalus, purple silks and other precious commodities seem first to have reached Amalfi before being exported to where there was a suitable market in other parts of the Mediterranean.

Unlike the scattered evidence for the importation of silks and other luxury wares to Amalfi, no direct literary evidence exists for the arrival of ivory tusks in the city or region.29 However, based on an impressive number of surviving artifacts, some of which are associated with members of prominent Amalfitan families through inscriptions while others form part of a large group of ivory panels likely deriving from a single object that was presumably made for Salerno Cathedral, it has been argued that Amalfi or Salerno served as the home of a highly productive ivory workshop during the second half of the eleventh century.30 While incontrovertible evidence is lacking to prove the existence of such an ivory workshop in either city, Robert Bergman sketched out what he
identified as three distinct stages, or stylistic phases, in the life of a single workshop based in Amalfi, whose products were all characterized, albeit to varying degrees, by a conspicuous blending of earlier Western medieval, Middle Byzantine, Islamic, and local Italian or Lombard iconographic and stylistic features. The so-called Farfa Casket (Fig. 1), which preserves a lengthy inscription naming its donor, a certain Maurus, together with his six sons, is the prime witness for Bergman’s localization of the responsible ivory workshop in Amalfi and central monument in his first subgroup. Displaying close affinities to earlier Western and local Italian traditions, the iconography of most narrative scenes on the casket is based, as has

31 For a summary of the arguments, see Bergman 1974 (note 30), pp. 163–186. — On the issues of style, date, and origin of the group, see also Bergman 1980 (note 30), pp. 76–91.

long been observed, on Late Antique and earlier Carolingian iconographic models such as the so-called Reidersche Tafel\textsuperscript{33} (Fig. 2) or the Drogo Sacramentary\textsuperscript{34} (Fig. 3) rather than the equivalent Middle Byzantine image formula, as preserved, for instance, on the lid of the so-called Stuttgart Casket\textsuperscript{35} (Fig. 4)\textsuperscript{36}. Likewise, the dominant style of the carvings on the Farfa Casket bears closer affinities to earlier Lombard or central Italian works such as the Rambona Diptych (Fig. 5) than to earlier or contemporary Byzantine

\textsuperscript{33} Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Inv. Nr. MA 157. See Rom und Byanz (note 2), Nr. 9, p. 84–90 (Rainer Kahnsnit) with a bibliography of the most important secondary literature. — Wolfgang F. Volbach: Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters (Römisch-Germanisches-Zentralmuseum zu Mainz, Kataloge vor- und frühgeschichtlicher Altertümer 7). Mainz 31976, Nr. 110, pp. 79–80.


\textsuperscript{36} For another example depicting the more common Middle
had already been filtered through an earlier Western tradition\textsuperscript{38}. The same is true for the scene of the Washing of the Feet on one of the small sides of the Casket (Fig. 6), which includes motifs not typically found in Middle Byzantine images of the scene, namely the use of a faldistorium as the seat for St. Peter and the apostle’s gesturing toward the basin with his right hand\textsuperscript{39}. Like the near contemporary workshop responsible for the fresco cycle of Sant’ Angelo in Formis, the Amalfitan artist presumably worked from Byzantine-inspired intermediaries, or Byzantine sources that were not properly understood\textsuperscript{40}. This view may be supported by the omission of the lower body of the apostle standing directly between St. Peter and the apostle on the far left, who is taking off his shoes. It can only be explained as the result of an erroneous adaptation of a model, in which the lower part of the apostle’s body was not shown because he was standing behind a bench, as seen, for instance, in the mid-eleventh-century Byzantine iconography of Christ’s Ascension, see the Byzantine ivory plaque preserved in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello in Florence, Inv. Nr. 37 C. See Goldschmidt/Weitzmann (note 35), II, Nr. 58 p. 42–43. — Bergman 1974 (note 30), p. 167, Fig. 6 (with wrong caption!).


works\textsuperscript{37}. Even for the single most ‘Byzantine’ scene on the Farfa Casket, namely the majestic representation of the Virgin’s Dormition, the responsible artist does not seem to have copied a Byzantine koimesis directly, but rather a Western, probably local Campian intermediary: small details such as the apostle with the palm branch behind the Virgin’s deathbed and the representation of the Virgin’s soul as a small child rather than a swaddled infant, are, as Antonio Braca recently emphasized, a clear sign that the Byzantine iconography employed on the Farfa Casket

Byzantine iconography of Christ’s Ascension, see the Byzantine ivory plaque preserved in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello in Florence, Inv. Nr. 37 C. See Goldschmidt/Weitzmann (note 35), II, Nr. 58 p. 42–43. — Bergman 1974 (note 30), p. 167, Fig. 6 (with wrong caption!).
5. ‘Rambona Diptych’. Vatican City, Musei Vaticani, 2442
most distinguished Middle Byzantine caskets such as the ones in Troyes\textsuperscript{44} and Stuttgart, are indeed made of solid ivory, and at least one of these solid ivory caskets, namely the one in the Palazzo Venezia collection in Rome, follows a similar shape\textsuperscript{45}. Even if, as Bergman suggested, the Farfa Casket’s decoration with scenes from the Life of Christ may be considered indicative of a more local, Western taste, caskets of Carolingian or Islamic origin must not necessarily be considered as more likely models than Byzantine ones\textsuperscript{46}.

A perhaps even more subtle indication of the workshop’s knowledge and understanding of Byzantine artistic prototypes and conventions may finally be de-
tected in the casket’s dedicatory inscription, which so fortunately and conveniently allows for its placement in the cultural environment of Amalfi’s cosmopolitan merchant aristocracy in the eleventh century. Enclosing the Christological and Marian scenes on both the body and lid of the long sides of the Farfa Casket, the lengthy inscriptions are not arranged in a single direction, but run in distinct portions from the upper left corner of each panel to the bottom right. This particular arrangement is, to my knowledge, rather uncommon in the West, where a tendency prevails to inscribe an object in a more straightforward fashion even where Byzantine artifacts were encountered directly as spolia: Bernward of Hildeheim, for instance, keenly aware of the inherent power of the Byzantine image formula of the Deesis, stretched his invocation &s pia qveso tvo bernvwardo trina potestas & across the upper and lower frame of the Byzantine ivory plaque, leaving the frames on either side blank (Fig. 9). Bishop Berthold of Toul, who was the likely patron of a reused Byzantine ivory plaque in Berlin (Fig. 10), circumscribed and thus enclosed the image.

47 On the Farfa Casket’s inscription and the patronage of Mauro, see most recently Braca (note 32), pp. 166–168, and above note 20.

8. Washing of the Feet. Monreale, Duomo, Transept (detail)


Casket reveals that either the artist responsible for its execution or its Amalfitan patrons were keenly aware of contemporary Byzantine epigraphic conventions, a knowledge that goes well beyond the narrow use of a single model for the casket’s format, style, and iconography.

The interest and reliance on Byzantine artistic models seems to have only increased during what Bergman identified as the second phase in the life of this presumed Amalfitan workshop51. As far as the so-called Salerno ivories are concerned, there can be little doubt that some of their New Testament scenes were more or less directly dependent on the so-called Grado Chair ivories, a group of fourteen ivory plaques likely made in the seventh or eighth century52. While

of the Mother of God fully clockwise with the words »presulis imperis bertoldi clavidivr omnis textvs evangelii redimitvs honore decenti«49. Dedicatory inscriptions similar to the ones on the Farfa Casket are, however, frequently found in the context of Middle Byzantine dedicatory poems and epigrams such as in the ivory staurotheke of the Skeuophulax Stephanos in Cortona (Fig. 11), which can be dated to the reign of Nikephoros Phokas in the late tenth century50. If nothing else, the dedicatory inscription on the Farfa


52 On the so-called Grado Chair ivories, see most recently Francesco Tasso: The Grado Chair: A Review of the Histor
such direct dependencies between the two groups are most poignantly witnessed in the classic comparison between the Nativity plaque at Dumbarton Oaks\(^53\) (Fig. 12) and the corresponding panel representing the Nativity and Flight into Egypt in Salerno (Fig. 13), the model-character of the Raising of Lazarus plaque in the British Museum in London\(^54\) (Fig. 14) may, at first glance, seem less compelling\(^55\). Certainly, in the respective scene on the Salerno ivory plaque (Fig. 15), the figure of Christ with his long scepter and the attendant apostle behind are immediately comparable to the British Museum plaque\(^56\). However, both figures were reduced to a bust-length format on the Salerno ivory to accommodate the scene of the Entry to Jerusalem below. The rest of the scene, namely Martha and Mary kneeling at Christ’s feet and the bound Lazarus with the attendant figure unwrapping his body, was taken from another source, which Bergman readily identified as Middle Byzantine, pointing to the tenth-century Lazarus plaque in Berlin\(^57\).


59 For the respective text of the Gospels, see John 11,39 (Douay-Rheims translation): »[ ] Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith to him: Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he is now of four days«. — For the fresco of the Raising of Lazarus at Sant’Angelo in Formis, see Gian Marco Jaco-
to one, and rather than holding his nose with his bare hand, he uses his exceedingly long sleeve for this purpose, a small yet noticeable change in iconographic detail. While Bergman briefly mentioned this distinct motif, he did not comment on it in any detail, even though he recognized that Byzantium was the single most important source for the Salerno style, and [that] the south Italian carvers, despite the impact of other sources and the exercise of their own creativity, cast their series in an obvious Byzantine mode.60

In order to substantiate his claim that Middle Byzantine art served as the dominant source not only for the distinct style of the Salerno ivories but also for aspects of their iconography and the choice of certain motifs, Bergman pointed to ivories of both the Nikephoros and Triptych groups as possible models for the Salerno ivories’ drapery style61. Equally convincing in terms of iconographic models were his references to the lectionary illustrations in Dionysiou Cod. 58762. Details such as the cross-topped column and Christ’s blessing the waters of the river Jordan in the scene of his Baptism (Fig. 18) or the placement and gestures of the apostles Peter, John, and James in the

15. Ivory Plaque: Samaritan Woman at the Well, Raising of Lazarus, Entry into Jerusalem. Salerno, Museo Diocesano

Transfiguration (Fig. 19) served to show that the carver of the Salerno ivory (Fig. 20) had access to current Byzantine iconographic sources and made conscious and creative use of them. With regard to the relationship between the Salerno and Grado Chair ivories, Bergman’s conclusions remained firm but cautious: «The Grado Chair ivories served directly as models but the Middle Byzantine iconographic types may not have been derived directly from a Greek source. They may have been filtered through the intermediary of an earlier Italian cycle – perhaps from Monte Cassino – that also contained Italian icono-
direct use of Middle Byzantine sources can be further substantiated. Perhaps one of the shortest discussions in Bergman’s book on the Salerno ivories is the one-sentence entry in his chapter on the “Iconography of the New Testament” devoted to the Lazarus scene: «Consideration of the role of the Grado Chair ivories indicated that the central section of this scene – the figures of the two women and the soldiers holding his nose – was derived from a Middle Byzantine model and then combined with other elements based on the Grado Chair version of this episode»65. As mentioned

above, Bergman himself had referred to the Berlin ivory of the Raising of Lazarus as the closest Middle Byzantine iconographic parallels for the scene, while Antonio Braca\(^66\) pointed to contemporary and later

\(^66\) Braca (note 30), p. 119–120, here p. 120. — See also the summary in L’enigma degli avori medievali (note 30). Vol 2, p. 368–370 (Maria Teresa Tancredi).


\(^68\) For the mosaics of the Capella Palatina in Palermo, see Ernst Kitzinger: La Capella Palatina: i mosaici del presbiterio (I mosaici del periodo normanno in Sicilia, fasc. 1 and 2). Palermo 1992–1995, here Fig. 191–192.
Cod. 587 (Fig. 21)\(^ {69} \). Breathing through the extended sleeve of his red shirt and holding one end of Lazarus’s burial shroud in his free hand while unwrapping the newly resurrected body of the deceased, this attendant figure seems to become a regular feature in the Byzantine iconography of the Lazarus scene only in the eleventh century, but is frequently found in manuscript illuminations, panel paintings, and mosaic decoration from then onward\(^ {70} \). Both the mid-twelfth-century Trebizond Gospels at the Walters Art Museum\(^ {71} \) (Fig. 22) and a twelfth-century icon in the Byzantine and Christian Museum\(^ {72} \) in Athens (Fig. 23), for instance, show him tightly holding the sleeve to his nose as he starts to unwrap Lazarus’s body. The popularity of this “exceedingly-long-sleeve” motif, as I would like to call it, especially during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, is attested in a further example of the Lazarus iconography at the Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai (Fig. 24), where the scene is integrated into a lengthy feast cycle on a painted epistyle beam\(^ {73} \).

With the two women prostrate before Christ and the attendant holding his nose as he begins to unwrap the resurrected Lazarus, the iconography differs little from earlier and contemporary renderings of the same scene. However, added to the basic iconography are two additional attendants carrying away the slab from Lazarus’s tomb, and one of them doubles the “exceedingly-long-sleeve” motif while carrying his heavy load. A second epistyle beam on Mount Sinai, probably of somewhat later date, repeats the basic composition, but leaves out the additional attendants

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\(^ {69} \) Dionysiou Monastery, Cod. 587, fol. 44v. See Pelekanides (note 41), Nr. 221, p. 180.

\(^ {70} \) The wide dissemination of the motif is attested throughout the twelfth-century Mediterranean, and can be found, among other places, in the mosaic decoration of the Capella Palatina and Monreale in Sicily as well as in the Psalter of Queen Melisende, illuminated in a scriptorium in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, now in the British Library in London (Ms. Egerton 1139). — For the mosaics of Palermo and Monreale, see Kitzinger (note 68), Fig. 191–192 and Kitzinger (note 41), Fig. 80–84. — For the Psalter of Queen Melisende, see most recently, Barbara D. Boehm and Melanie Holcomb, eds.: Jerusalem 1000–1400: Every People Under Heaven (exhibition catalogue New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 2016–2017). New York 2016, Nr. 121, p. 244–246 (Jaroslav Folda).


in front of the tomb. Instead, the artist added a group of bystanders to the side and behind the attendant unwrapping Lazarus. One final example, namely a fourteenth-century polyptych with feast scenes (Fig. 25), likewise from the icon collection of the Monastery of St. Catherine, attests to the long life and enduring popularity of the “exceedingly-long-sleeve” motif in Middle and Late Byzantine iconography of the Raising of Lazarus. Slight changes in the figural composition are once again noticeable, with one of the two women now appearing behind the male attendant and the tomb slab placed diagonally in front Lazarus’s rock-cut tomb.

But where did the “exceedingly-long-sleeve” motif and the fashion it reflects originate? And how did it find its way into the Lazarus iconography? While earlier artists who illustrated the Raising of Lazarus already explored ways to visualize the biblical reference to the decaying body’s stench – compare, for instance, the sixth-century Rossano Gospels (Fig. 26), where the attendant has pulled the collar of his tunic up to cover his mouth and nose, or the already mentioned tenth-century Berlin ivory (Fig. 16) featuring the attendant holding his nose with his bare hand – using a

74 Egypt, Holy Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai. See Glory of Byzantium (note 44), Nr. 248, pp. 377–379.
narrow, exceedingly long sleeve for this purpose seems to be an eleventh-century invention. Garments of the type represented in the lectionary illustration of Dionysios Cod. 587, namely tunics with narrow, exceedingly long sleeves, are first attested in manuscripts of the eleventh century. Maria Parani has cited the eleventh-century Menologion76 (Ms. 14) in the Monastery of Esphigmenou (Fig. 27) on Mount Athos and the twelfth-century Illustrated Chronicle of Ioannes Skylitzes77 at the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid (Fig. 28), where high court officials (Madrid Skylitzes) and imperial attendants (Esphigmenou, Cod. 14) wear such outer garments – both ankle-and knee-long – with covered hands crossed in front of


77 Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, Cod. Vitr. 26–2, fol. 13, 42v, fol. 47, and elsewhere. See Vasiliki Tsamakda: The Illustrated Chronicle of Ioannes Skylitzes in Madrid. Leiden 2002, p. 49, Fig. 9 (fol. 13); p. 83, Fig. 93 (fol. 42v); pp. 89–90, Fig. 107 (fol. 47). – It is interesting to note that in the latter miniature the garment is worn by both the attendant to the ruler of Syria and men in the retinue of Ioannes Synkellos, indicating that for the artist of the ‘Madrid Skylitzes’, at least, the tunic with narrow, exceedingly long sleeves was a type of garment that transcended cultural boundaries and was not identified as a strictly Byzantine or Arab court costume.
their chests, as the earliest pieces of evidence. To these two codices must be added a late eleventh- or early twelfth-century manuscript of the story of Barlaam and Ioasaph at the Monastery of Iveron (Cod. 463) on Mount Athos, where such tunics with narrow, exceedingly long sleeves are similarly depicted as the garment of choice for various unidentified Indian courtiers and noblemen (Fig. 29). Given that the artists responsible for the execution of these manuscripts depicted the tunic with narrow, exceedingly long sleeves as a type of garment worn by both Byzantine and foreign elite figures, it must be assumed that its use transcended the cultural boundaries of its time. Indeed, Maria Parani has pointed out that “tunics and coats with extremely long, narrow sleeves [...] were known in the Middle East by the ninth century if not earlier.” Their depiction in eleventh-century Byzantine manuscripts may therefore suggest that they had become fashionable enough among Byzantine secular elites during the Middle Byzantine period to leave their mark on the visual arts. While literary evidence is lacking, it is tempting to suggest that the inclusion of the “exceedingly-long-sleeve” motif into the eleventh-century iconography of the Raising of Lazarus was a playful response to contemporary elite behavior, namely a way to poke fun at the manner in which courtiers used their fancy garments to avoid unpleasant smells and offensive odors.

The appearance of the “exceedingly-long-sleeve” motif in the Salerno ivory’s Raising of Lazarus scene is insofar noteworthy, as it is one of the earliest in Western art, predating both the miniatures of the Madrid Skylitzes and the Raising of Lazarus scene in the Capella Palatina. When the workshop responsible for the execution of the Salerno ivories worked out the iconographic and compositional scheme for the series of Christological plaques, its artists seem to have been eager to integrate this and other relatively new Byzantine motifs – the cross-topped column and blessing Christ in the scene of Christ’s Baptism in the river Jordan, for instance – into their own visual and

79 Greece, Holy Monastery of Iveron, Mount Athos, Cod. 463, fol. 4v, and elsewhere. See Pelekanides (note 76), p. 61, Fig. 56. — Examples for this type of garment are numerous in the manuscript. Compare, for instance, fol. 18 (Pelekanides, II, p. 64, Fig. 66); fol. 44 (Pelekanides, II, p. 69, Fig. 79), fol. 74v (Pelekanides, II, p. 75, Fig. 96); fol. 89v (Pelekanides, II, p. 78, Fig. 102), fol. 107v (Pelekanides, II, p. 82, Fig. 112); fol. 114v (Pelekanides, II, p. 84, Fig. 116).
81 For the most recent discussion of the date of the Madrid Skylitzes, see Elena Boeck: Imagining the Byzantine Past: The Perception of History in the Illustrated Manuscripts of Skylitzes and Manasses. New York 2015. — For the mosaics of the Capella Palatina, see Kitzinger (note 68), Fig. 191–192.
But they decided to blend and combine these motifs with elements not commonly found in Middle Byzantine iconographic contexts such as the representation of the wellhead in the Samaritan Woman at the Well (Fig. 15), which seems to be modeled on early Byzantine exemplars, or the scepter-bearing Christ, who finds his closest parallel in the elegant figure of the Grado Chair ivory at the British Museum (Fig. 14). While one may speculate that, in some cases at least, physical artifacts imported from Constantinople and elsewhere in the Byzantine Empire provided artistic inspiration for the presumed Amalfitan workshop responsible for the Salerno ivory series, any attempt to define the function of Byzantine artifacts more clearly, and to probe their role in the process of artistic adaptation and amalgamation, must necessarily remain unsatisfying. Like other scholars before him, Robert Bergman tried to identify the mechanisms of artistic cross-fertilization in South Italian ivory workshops in terms of a “great wave of artistic influence fostered by Desiderius of Monte Cassino”.

82 For the scene of Christ’s Baptism, see L’enigma degli avori medievali (note 30). Vol. 2, Nr. 46, pp. 352–355 (Maria Teresa Tancredi); Braca (note 30), pp. 109–110.

83 For an early Byzantine representation of the Samaritan Woman from Sant’Apollinare Nuovo, see Braca (note 30), p. 115.


[and] realized through the importation of Byzantine artists as well as Byzantine works of art.84 While he subsequently modified Wilhelm Koehler’s original concept of a great wave of Byzantine influence that swept over much of Western Europe, speaking instead of an »inundation« that »directly or indirectly […] must have been a significant factor in the shift of stylistic orientation in the workshop that produced the Salerno ivories,85 the wave metaphor itself and
the concept of artistic influence were not further questioned. Critical theory and new approaches toward the study of Mediterranean cultures have, over the last three decades, cautioned art historians in their efforts to explain evidence of artistic exchange in terms of simple constructs such as the ‘teacher-student-model’ and have led to a profound distrust in both the assumption of specific ‘object lessons’ and broad generalizations of so-called ‘artistic influences’. Whether attempts are successful to explain practices of cultural and artistic blending in Amalfitan ivory workshops with certain predispositions and general attitudes rooted in its merchant culture, as Jill Caskey has recently suggested for later Amalfitan artistic and architectural production, remains to be seen.

Looking at the production of a single ivory workshop to determine degrees of stylistic and iconographic indebtedness to Byzantine, Western, or Islamic models is but one way to explore aspects of artistic, political, and religious ‘appropriation’ of foreign models by local patrons. But whether it can lead to a better overall understanding of the cultural production of a society in which rulers sealed with Byzantine-style lead bullae, as attested for Manso I, where penalties and fines could be set in Byzantine gold solidi, prices for goods were commonly specified in Fatimid gold tari, and Byzantine objects as small as devotion-
al ivory plaques or as large as monumental bronze doors were imported by wealthy patrons at home in more than one culture, is a question that will likely occupy future generations of scholars as much as it inspired the work of those who came before them.


89 For the seal of Manso I, see Antonino Salinas: Sigillo greco di un Mansone patrizio e doge di Amalfi. In: Archivio storico per le province napoletane 19 (1894), pp. 692–695.