



Niccolò di Tommaso, *Saints* (wing of an altarpiece).  
Formerly Florence, Albright Collection  
(Auction Sotheby's Florence, April 14, 1986).

## A HIGH ALTARPIECE FOR SAN GIOVANNI FUORCIVITAS IN PISTOIA AND HYPOTHESES ABOUT NICCOLÒ DI TOMMASO

by Andrew Ladis

The fourteenth-century account books of the church of San Giovanni Fuorcivitas in Pistoia present a fascinating picture of almost continuous artistic activity involving paintings, sculptures, and lesser works. One well-known project for a high altarpiece took at least eight years and at one point required an inquiry to identify the leading painters still living in the aftermath of the Black Death. The document listing the best available masters in Florence, Siena, and Lucca is, by virtue of its uniqueness, one of the most instructive in the history of trecento Tuscan painting, particularly as the work finished by Taddeo Gaddi still stands in the Church. The altarpiece was completed in 1353, when Taddeo received a final payment for his work, but previously unpublished records show that Taddeo's picture did not long retain its place of honor: less than two decades after it was finished, another painting replaced it on the high altar.<sup>1</sup>

The plans for a new picture were quickly conceived but slow to take shape. The project was not funded at once by a single bequest but by numerous donations from the community at large. The *operaii*, or governors of the church, collected money for the project and apparently paid for whatever they could afford step by step, a method earlier adopted for Taddeo's altarpiece. The project was well advanced by 1364, for in that year the *operaii* accepted a contribution "per aiuto all tavola nuova, la quale è facta all'antare di Sancta Maria", also called the "altare maggiore", and on December 29th of that year paid "per fatura della tavola", that is, for its construction. Once assembled and in the possession of the *Opera*, the picture was not immediately painted, because it remained unfinished two years later in 1366, when the *operaii* recorded a gift "per fare aiuto ala taola a dipingniere." Actual painting in fact began no earlier than 1370, when a "maestro Nicholò dipintore da Firenze", later also called "maestro Nicolao da Fiorenza", received a partial payment for the "tavola di Santa Maria che de[v]e dipingere." This "maestro Nicolao" finished painting the new altarpiece by 1372, when at an unspecified moment in that year he received a final payment for his work. Thus, within two decades after Taddeo Gaddi had finished one painting for the high altar of San Giovanni, another took its place.<sup>2</sup>

Although the documents are imprecise, one can believe that the "maestro Nicolao" they mention is the Florentine Niccolò di Tommaso. This identification stems largely from Niccolò di Tommaso's well-known activity in Pistoia, where he painted his greatest surviving work, the murals in the former convent chapel of the Tau (i.e., of St. Anthony the Great). A document in fact records that "Maestro Niccolao da Firenze" was painting in the Tau in November 1372, the very year that the high altarpiece for San Giovanni Fuorcivitas was finished.<sup>3</sup> More intriguing is the fact that both churches and the painter Niccolò di Tommaso had links to a single individual, Fra Giovanni Guidotti, "precettore della magione di Sant'Antonio di Firenze" and founder of the Tau. When Guidotti decided to build, for the salvation of his undying soul and those of his family, a chapel in Pistoia he presented his plan on 26 February 1361 to the prior and canons of San Giovanni Fuorcivitas, in whose parish the chapel and convent



1 Niccolò di Tommaso, *Altarpiece with St. Anthony Abbot Enthroned and Sts. Francis, Peter, John the Evangelist, and Louis of Toulouse*. Naples, Museo di San Martino.

were to stand on land contiguous with their church. Obtaining consent, Guidotti pursued his plan, which was celebrated by Matteo Villani in his *Cronica fiorentina*, even after he was transferred to Naples in 1369.<sup>4</sup> In this same year a Niccolò di Tommaso, probably the painter, appears twice in the rolls of the Florentine *Prestanze*, but his assessment went unpaid, possibly indicating his absence from the city.<sup>5</sup> Niccolò may have left for Pistoia to begin his work in the Tau, which as early as 8 May 1362 was described as being “pro majori parte constructam”.<sup>6</sup> Guidotti, who probably knew of Niccolò di Tommaso in Florence and who employed him in the Tau, may well have been the intermediary who also secured for him the commission from the Anthonite church in Naples, for which Niccolò produced his only signed work, an altarpiece dated 1371 (Fig. 1). Because Niccolò di Tommaso’s career paralleled the movements and activities of Guidotti, it appears likely that the “Maestro Niccolao da Fiorenza” working in San Giovanni Fuorcivitas was none other than Niccolò di Tommaso, who may have been recommended to the *operaii* of that church by his patron Giovanni Guidotti.

That the painter’s name is once given in the documents for San Giovanni Fuorcivitas as “Nicolao” tends to support his identification as Niccolò di Tommaso. It is perhaps a significant coincidence that documents in the vernacular tend to adopt the variants “Niccolao” or “Niccolao” rather than the more common “Niccolò” by which the painter is known in art historical literature. In addition to the document of 1372 identifying the painter of the Tau as “Maestro Niccolao da Firenze”, another from the same year says that “maestro Niccholao da Firenze”



2 Jacopo di Cione and Niccolò di Tommaso, *Zecca Coronation*. Florence, Accademia.

restored a picture in the Cathedral of Pistoia. The Florentine *Prestanza* of October 1375 records him as “Niccolao di Tomaso dipintore”<sup>7</sup>, and as one of those who are invited to render an opinion for the Opera del Duomo in 1366-1367, he is once referred to simply as “Nicholao”, even though the documents, all of which are in Latin, elsewhere adopt the Latinized form “Niccholaus”.<sup>8</sup> Thus he may well be the “Niccolao” mentioned in Franco Sacchetti’s well-known story (*novella* CXXXVI) involving Taddeo Gaddi, Orcagna, and Alberto Arnoldi, all of whom were Niccolò di Tommaso’s contemporaries.<sup>9</sup>

The painter’s idiosyncratic name leads to a controversial subject, viz., Niccolò di Tommaso’s possible connection with two documented altarpieces roughly contemporary with his activity in Pistoia (Figs. 2, 3). Both pictures were painted by Jacopo di Cione, but they were begun by a painter that the surviving documents, with inconvenient brevity, call simply “Nicholao” in one case and “Niccolao” in the other. According to a document dated 30 October 1372, the *Coronation* produced for the Florentine mint or Zecca was commissioned from two painters, “Nicholao” and Simone “pictoribus civibus florentinis”, who were to produce the “*imaginem gloriose Virginis Marie...et etiam imagines quorundam aliorum sanctorum...*”. At some later moment “Nicholao” and Simone, whose full identity is unknown, apparently abandoned the picture, thus on 31 October 1373 “Iacobus Cini”, now universally identified as Jacopo di Cione, received 138 *lire* (little more than the 134 *lire* given to “Nicholao” and Simone for their part) “*pro complemento picture gloriose virginis Marie, matris Christi, et aliorum sanctorum dei.*” Offner and Marcucci, following Gaye and Sirén, identified this “Niccolao” as Niccolò di Pietro Gerini, who indeed did collaborate with Jacopo di Cione in 1383 in Volterra, but Boskovits, following Berenson’s suggestion, rejected the identification with Gerini in favor of one with Niccolò di Tommaso.<sup>10</sup> The latter view is correct on grounds of style. The drawing of certain heads, particularly the female profiles (St. Catherine on the extreme left and St. Reparata on the extreme right), may be compared to heads in the Tau (e.g., the profile head, second from the extreme left, in a scene depicting the wives of Esau and the head of a groom at the extreme right of the *Adoration of the Magi*). Moreover, the draperies of Sts. Matthew and John the Evangelist who kneel in the foreground of the Zecca *Coronation*, recall the broken rhythms of the kneeling angels’ garments in Niccolò di Tommaso’s signed St. Anthony *Altarpiece* of 1371 and those of the angel Gabriel in the Tau *Annunciation* (Fig. 4).<sup>11</sup> The case of the San Pier Maggiore *Coronation* now in London is slightly different. This impressive work, which is documented from 1370-1371, also involved a collaborative effort between a painter called “Niccolao”, who in November 1370 provided the design of the picture, Jacopo di Cione, who provided the color, and two other painters, Matteo di Pacino and Tuccio di Vanni. This “Niccolao” was paid the substantial sum of twelve florins (for fourteen days’ work over the course of three weeks) “*per disegnare la tavola*”, which probably meant incising the compositions into the surface of the panel. Boskovits correctly asserted that here too the designer “Niccolao” is to be identified as Niccolò di Tommaso, but evidence of his draughtsmanship is more difficult to discern, perhaps because in this case the painted surface is completely Jacopo di Cione’s work. Nevertheless, the kneeling figures and the profile heads again recall Niccolò di Tommaso, even though the painted contours frequently depart from the lines “Niccolao” incised into the surface.<sup>12</sup> Now, strictly speaking, the identification of the “Niccolao” who designed the San Pier Maggiore *Altarpiece* in 1370, the “Nicholao” who began the Zecca *Altarpiece* in 1372, the “Maestro Nicolao da Fiorenza” who painted a high altarpiece for San Giovanni Fuorcivitas between 1370 and 1372 as being one and the same with the “Maestro Niccolao da Firenze” who was working in the Tau in 1372 — that is, Niccolò di Tommaso — is a hypothesis, but is both plausible and probable.

The lively demand for the skill of this master ought not to surprise. The patronage of Giovanni Guidotti may have helped to bring Niccolò di Tommaso the commissions for Naples and



3 Jacopo di Cione and Niccolò di Tommaso, *Saints*, wing of the San Pier Maggiore Coronation. London, National Gallery.



4 Niccolò di Tommaso, *Annunciation*. Pistoia, Chapel of the Tau. Detail: Angel Gabriel.

San Giovanni Fuorcivitas as well as for the Tau, but his hiring would not have been merely a matter of expediency. In the years around 1370, the years immediately following the deaths of Taddeo Gaddi (d. 1366), Orcagna (d. 1368), and Niccolò's friend and colleague Nardo di Cione (d. 1365), Niccolò di Tommaso was by default, if not by talent alone, one of the leading painters a depleted Florence could offer, and the large number of his surviving works attest to his industry.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, none of his extant pictures can be identified with certainty as the high altarpiece for San Giovanni Fuorcivitas, but one at least cannot be ruled out. The badly damaged left wing of a large altarpiece (Color Plate p. 2) formerly in the Albrighti Collection in Florence but put up for auction at Sotheby's in Florence in 1986, is related to Niccolò's Naples *Triptych* of 1371 as well as to the Zecca *Coronation* begun by Niccolò in 1372. Above all, in terms of style, quality, and therefore dating, the panel is closest to the murals in the



5 Niccolò di Tommaso, Kneeling Female Saint (sinopia). Pistoia, San Francesco.



6 Niccolò di Tommaso, Two Angels (fragmentary mural). Quarrata, Baldi Papini Collection.

Tau. What makes the stylistic evidence tempting is the prominent position of three saints, shown kneeling in an arrangement usually associated with images of the Virgin's Coronation, appropriate for a Pistoian provenance: St. John the Evangelist, patron of San Giovanni Fuorcivitas and in the place of honor, is followed by St. James the Great, patron of Pistoia, and St. Anthony Abbot, who holds a book emblazoned with the letter "T".<sup>14</sup>

In view of the range of Niccolò's activity in Pistoia, it would not be surprising to learn of other works in that city. Indeed, his hand may be recognised in a fragmentary *sinopia* from San Francesco (Fig. 5). The haloed figure of a female saint has fallen to her knees and, casting her glance above, draws one hand to her chest in a gesture that underscores her devotion. With her left hand she tenders a summarily sketched object, perhaps an attribute that in the finished painting might have helped to identify her. The drawing is confident and, in the upper half of the figure, careful. The painter took pains in describing the head, whose simplified features are indicated by strong contours. Apparently he began here, with the head and torso, then added the arms, which are indicated by a much softer, more fluid, unshadowed line. Similar lines across her forehead, cheek, and chest define the edges of a transparent wimple and the collar of her dress. The use of the wimple, common in female figures by Nardo di Cione but also by Niccolò di Tommaso, as well as the simplified shape of the torso, the long cylindrical neck whose entire length is modeled under the chin, the placement and shape of the ear, the characteristically spatulate fingers of the extended hand, the uncertain placement of the



7 Niccolò di Tommaso, *Last Judgement*. Pistoia, Chapel of the Tau. Detail.

raised arm, and above all the profile, notably the long pointed nose, the short mouth, and the rounded tip of the chin, all find close parallels in the work of Niccolò di Tommaso (Figs. 6, 7).<sup>15</sup>

The expansion of Niccolò di Tommaso's activity in Pistoia during the early 1370s has implications for the painter's poorly documented life. In recent years Bologna, Boskovits, and Tartuferi have argued that Niccolò di Tommaso painted his only signed work, the *St. Anthony Altarpiece* of 1371 while in Naples, and they have even assigned a group of murals and panels in Naples and the surrounding region to the same painter and, therefore, to the same moment.<sup>16</sup> The validity of these attributions and their dating lies outside the scope of this essay, but if Niccolò di Tommaso is to be associated with these many projects then one must allow for the possibility that he traveled to Naples a second time, after his Pistoian sojourn. Possibly not before 1373 did he leave Pistoia, for as late as 22 December 1372 Niccolò is recorded restoring an altarpiece in the Cathedral, and the decoration of the Tau, which was still in progress in November 1372, may have extended into the following year. Thus, when in 1373 the

account books of San Giovanni Fuorcivitas mention “Maestro Nicholò dipintore”, this again, despite the form of the name and imprecision about his citizenship, may well be Niccolò di Tommaso. In any case, instead of an artist called to Pistoia for a single work, one sees an artist whose activity was wider and whose presence was more notable.

How long or whether Niccolò di Tommaso remained in Pistoia after 1373 cannot be stated with certainty, but in any event he was probably absent from Florence, for his name fails to appear in the records of the *Prestanze* for 1373 and 1374.<sup>17</sup> Apparently he returned to his city by 1375, because the *Prestanza* for October of that year puts his residence in the quarter of San Giovanni, *gonfalone* Drago, *popolo* San Cristofano; however, he is listed among the delinquents for this *Prestanza*, and when his assessment is eventually collected on 17 May 1376 it is from a third party on Niccolò's behalf. In the *Prestanza* for August 1376 his name is again dropped, perhaps because he had once again left the city or because this time death had claimed him.<sup>18</sup>

But precisely when Niccolò di Tommaso died remains a mystery. No document after 1376 states or implies that he is alive. He is probably not the “Niccolò dipintore” found in the quarter of San Giovanni, *gonfalone* Drago in the *Prestanza* for May 1380 (actually paid on 6 June 1380), for the listing disagrees with the way his name is usually given in these records.<sup>19</sup> One cannot know with certainty whether he is the “Niccolao Masi” listed in the rolls of the painters' Company of St. Luke; for although the patronymic is dissimilar, this name appears two before that of Nardo di Cione, and the improbably late date of 1405 appended to this name is written over another, now-illegible figure.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps, however, he is the “Niccolao dipintore” who in 1402 is mentioned as already dead (for how long?) and whose will was at last taking full effect in that year. According to the terms of this testament, which remains untraced and whose date therefore is unknown, “Niccolao's” property had been bequeathed to his widow and two nieces and subsequent to their deaths was to be divided equally between the Company of St. Luke and the Convent of Santa Felicita. This notice is intriguing because the parish of Santa Felicita was Niccolò di Tommaso's earliest known address, so recorded in the *Estimo* of 1351, five years after his matriculation into the guild after January of 1346. The painter's connection with this neighborhood continued because some years later, in Nardo di Cione's will of 1365 and in the *Prestanze* for 1363 and 1364, he is said to be residing in the adjacent *popolo* of San Giorgio.<sup>21</sup>

Much remains uncertain about Niccolò di Tommaso's career, but one may begin to reconstruct his activity after 1367, date of his last participation in deliberations about the Florentine Cathedral; as early as 1369 Niccolò di Tommaso left Florence possibly for Naples but more likely for Pistoia (to begin his work in San Giovanni Fuorcivitas? in the Tau?); in the following year he received partial payment for the high altarpiece of San Giovanni Fuorcivitas, which he had not yet begun to paint; setting aside the altarpiece for Pistoia and possibly leaving the decoration of the Tau in abeyance, he traveled to Naples as early as 1370 to undertake an altarpiece, completed in 1371, for the church of Sant'Antonio there; returning to Pistoia he completed the altarpiece for San Giovanni in 1372 and pursued his work in the Tau and in the Cathedral of Pistoia; at some point in the same year he was in Florence to begin the *Zecca Coronation*; in 1373 he perhaps received an additional payment from the church of San Giovanni Fuorcivitas. His death may have come as early as 1376. If in the end Niccolò di Tommaso remains as elusive to us in death as in life, he is now more than a speck in the distance. Little by little he and his art have grown clearer, and we are beginning to see that for a brief time long ago he was an artist of considerable standing and popularity, an artist perhaps overshadowed by his friend Nardo di Cione to whom his art owes so much, yet nevertheless capable of an admirable child-like poetry all his own. One day we may hope to know him better and to have facts rather than hypotheses.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> For the altarpiece by Taddeo Gaddi and its documentation, including the notice seeking the artists best able to paint it, see A. Ladis, *Taddeo Gaddi: Critical Reappraisal and Catalogue Raisonné*, Columbia and London 1982, pp. 58-61, 159-161, 255-258. For the documents concerning the replacement for Taddeo's picture, see the Appendix, Doc. I below. I am grateful to Gino Corti for corroborating my transcriptions of the documents published in the Appendix. For artistic activity in the church of San Giovanni Fuorcivitas, Pistoia, see L. Zdekauer, *Opere d'arte senese nella chiesa di San Giovanni Fuorcivitas di Pistoia*, in: *Bull. Senese di Storia Patria*, vol. VIII, 1901, p. 180. There were, of course, projects besides those involving Sienese artists. One was initiated as early as 1352, that is, the year before Taddeo Gaddi received final payment for his work on a high altarpiece. A notice from 1354 records the substantial deposit of twelve florins, reserved from the income of two years before, to be used toward "le dipinture." The subject but not the medium of these paintings is specified in a later notice. On 19 May 1357 the deposit was given to the prior of the church "per fare fare a dipingere la maestà e la donna nostra cholla storia de' magi" according to the wishes of a single patron, one monna Salvagia di Michele. (AS Pistoia, Patrimonio Ecclesiastico C 450, San Giovanni Fuorcivitas: *Libro d' Entrata e Uscita*, 1353-1376, fol. 14r and 61r.) Probably the paintings were to be murals, because elsewhere the documents tend to be specific when referring to panels, whereas for murals, which are sometimes identified only by the context, they are not. For example (and to give yet further evidence of art made for this church), one reads in the *Entrata* for 1344; "Item. avemo da monna Barotta donna di Ser Matteo per l'anima sua e de' suoi morti per aiuto della dipintura di sancta Katerina...soldi XI." As the following entries from the *Uscita* of 1344 explain, this "dipintura" is a mural: "Item. demo [per] facitura li ponti quando si dipinse la trave...soldi III, denari VI" and "Item. demo a Lazzaro dipintore, per ché dipinse in nella trave grande in su che stanno le taule dipinte e la croce grande, la storia di madonna santa Maria e di santa Katerina...libri X, soldi XVI." (AS Pistoia, Patrimonio Ecclesiastico C 449, San Giovanni Fuorcivitas, *Libro d' Entrata e Uscita*, 1320-1350, fol. 189v - 190r.)
- <sup>2</sup> That Taddeo's picture should have been replaced so soon after its completion is a striking departure from usual practice. Altarpieces were remarkably durable and could be expected to have a long life; indeed, Taddeo's picture could not have suffered some catastrophic accident, for it survives, albeit damaged, to this day. Documents specify that Taddeo's picture was intended for the high altar, but after its completion the *operai* clearly changed their minds about its function. Perhaps its iconography no longer satisfied.
- <sup>3</sup> The attribution of these murals to Niccolò di Tommaso depends, above all, on the compelling arguments of Offner, who related them to the painter's signed altarpiece of 1371 formerly in the church of Sant'Antonio Abate in Naples and now in the Museo di San Martino there, and, secondarily, to the corroborating evidence of a document stating that a "maestro Niccolao da Firenze" was painting in the Tau in 1372. For the documentation concerning Niccolò di Tommaso and the Tau, see Lucia Gai, *Nuove proposte e nuovi documenti sui maestri che hanno affrescato la Cappella del Tau a Pistoia* in: *Bull. Storico Pistoiese*, vol. LXXII, 1970, pp. 75-94, especially p. 88. Gai's proposal that part of the chapel was painted by a second master whom she identifies as Antonio Vite fails to persuade. To be sure, the painting in the Tau is uneven, sometimes dramatically so (one need only compare the loveliness of the *Fall of Adam and Eve* with the crudeness of the stories of Bishop Athanasius), but the variations in quality are more easily explained as the result both of participation by assistants and of Niccolò di Tommaso's own erratic procedure. For Niccolò di Tommaso, see R. Offner, *Niccolò di Tommaso*, in: *Art in America*, vol. XIII, 1924, pp. 21-37; *id.*, *Niccolò di Tommaso and the Rinuccini Master*, in: *Studies in Florentine Painting: The Fourteenth Century*, intro. by B. Cole, New York 1971 (first published 1927), pp. 109-126; *id.*, *A Ray of Light on Giovanni del Biondo and Niccolò di Tommaso*, in: *Flor. Mitt.*, vol. VII, 1956, pp. 173-192; and *id.*, *A Legacy of Attributions*, ed. by H. Maginnis, New York 1981, pp. 87-92. For more recent research on Niccolò see F. Bologna, *I pittori alla corte Angioina di Napoli, 1266-1414, e un riesame dell'arte nell'età fridericiana*, Rome 1969, pp. 326-328; M. Boskovits, *Pittura fiorentina alla vigilia del Rinascimento*, Florence 1975, pp. 35-36 and 202-204, nn.108-115; and A. Tartuferi, *Appunti tardogotici: Niccolò di Tommaso, il Maestro di Barberino e Lorenzo di Bicci*, in: *Paragone*, vol. XXXVI, 1985, pp. 3-16.
- <sup>4</sup> E. Carli, *Gli Affreschi del Tau a Pistoia*, Florence 1977, p. 3. The documents were published by S. Ferrali, *L'ordine ospitaliere di S. Antonio Abate o del Tau e la sua casa a Pistoia*, in: *Il Gotico a Pistoia - Atti del 2° Convegno internazionale di studi*, Pistoia 1966 (actually published 1972), pp. 181-245. The reference to Villani, who dated the foundation of the convent 1340, is cited in F. Gurrieri, *La Chiesa di S. Antonio Abate o del Tau* in: *Bull. Storico Pistoiese*, III series, vol. V, 1970, p. 4.
- <sup>5</sup> This Niccolò di Tommaso's failure to pay his assessments for the *Prestanze* in 1368/9 may be significant, since he did not usually default: on seven of eight occasions in 1363/4 he is recorded as having made a payment. But is the man residing in the quarter of Santo Spirito, *gonfalone* Scala, *popolo* San Giorgio the painter? The fact that the documents fail to give his profession does not invalidate them, since trecento

sources do not always do so. To give one example: on 27 October 1367 a notice concerning the Cathedral includes among dozens of others the names of Matteo di Pacino, Giovanni Bonsi, and Andrea di Cione, none of them identified as a painter. (C. *Guasti*, *Santa Maria del Fiore: La costruzione della chiesa e del campanile*, Florence 1887, pp. 202-205, doc. 190.) What makes the *Prestanze* notices significant is that their Niccolò di Tommaso lived in the same section of the city as the Niccolò di Tommaso who witnessed Nardo di Cione's will in 1365. Although the Niccolò di Tommaso who is mentioned in the latter document is not identified as the painter, scholars have rightly assumed that he was, for the close affinity between the styles of the two painters suggests a personal connection as well. Thus the Niccolò di Tommaso mentioned in Nardo's will of 21 May 1365 is probably the same one recorded in the *Prestanze* in 1363-1364 and in 1368-1369, since both resided in the *popolo* of San Giorgio. For Nardo's will, see G. *Milanesi*, *Nuovi documenti per la storia dell'arte toscana dal XII al XV secolo*, Rome 1893, p. 58, no. 77. There is another difficulty with the documents. Two volumes of the *Prestanze*, those recording the assessments of March 1368/9 and of 28 June 1369 (ASF, *Prestanze* 132, fol. 40r and *Prestanze* 143, fol. 31v), record the name in a way that differs from the nine volumes for 1363-1364 (*Prestanze* 78, fol. 12v; *Prestanze* 86, fol. 10v; *Prestanze* 89, fol. 14v; *Prestanze* 99, fol. 13v; *Prestanze* 109, fol. 11v; *Prestanze* 112, fol. 40v; *Prestanze* 116, fol. 11v; *Prestanze* 120, fol. 150r, *Prestanze* 123, fol. 11v.). Instead of "Niccholaus Tomasii", they record "Nicholaus hospes Tomasii", that is, Nicholaus a tenant of Tomasii. Since the residence is the same, the variation is apparently an error on the part of the scribe. Such apparently was not the case for Niccolò di Tommaso's friend Nardo, who in the *Prestanza* of 23 March 1362/3 (*Prestanze* 35, fol. 63r) is listed in the quarter of San Giovanni, *gonfalone* Vaio, *popolo* San Rossello and is said to be the tenant of a gentleman with an odd nickname: "Forte Bezzolis vocatus Bambo" immediately precedes "Nardus Cionis pictor hospes dicti Bambi." Both men paid their assessment (three florins each) on the same day, 8 April 1363. This document offers further evidence that Nardo never married. At the time of the census for San Giovanni Fuorcivitas in 1348 he apparently was living with his brother Orcagna and at the time of his death he left no wife and no children. On the question of Nardo's marital history see *Offner*, *Corpus*, sec. IV, vol. II, 1960, pp. IX-X, n.6.

<sup>6</sup> *Carli* (n.4), p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> ASF, *Prestanze* 262 (1372), fol. 41r.

<sup>8</sup> *Guasti* (n.5), p. 178, doc. 156. This same document also takes the liberty of calling Andrea di Bonaiuto by his nickname, "Andreuzco." Niccolò di Tommaso also is mentioned in five other related documents, see pp. 167-189, docs. 141, 142, 155, 169, and 170.

<sup>9</sup> F. *Sacchetti*, *Il Trecentonovelle*, ed. by A. *Lanzi*, Florence 1984, pp. 272-274 and 651. *Lanzi* identifies this Niccolò as Niccolò di Beltramo who in 1351 worked alongside Alberto Arnoldi on the Florentine Campanile, but the identification with Niccolò di Tommaso is accepted by *Offner* 1924 (n.3), p. 36; and *Boskovits* (n.3), p. 204, n.115.

<sup>10</sup> For the *Zecca Coronation*, now in the Accademia in Florence, see *Gaye*, *Carteggio*, vol. II, pp. 432-433; *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. 1, p. 595; O. *Strén*, *Giottino und seine Stellung in der gleichzeitigen florentinischen Malerei*, Leipzig 1908, pp. 80 with n.2, and 90 and the appendix by G. *Poggi*, pp. 101-102; L. *Marcucci*, *Gallerie Nazionali di Firenze: I dipinti toscani del secolo XIV*, Rome 1965, pp. 99-101; *Offner*, *Corpus*, sec. IV, vol. III, 1965, p. 37, n.10; and *Boskovits* (n.3), p. 209, n.33.

<sup>11</sup> See the illustrations in *Carli* (n.4), plates 29, 44, and 45.

<sup>12</sup> For the San Pier Maggiore *Altarpiece*, see R. *Offner*, *A Florentine Panel in Providence and a Famous Altarpiece*, in: *Studies (Rhode Island School of Design)*, 1947, pp. 43-61; M. *Davies*, *National Gallery Catalogues: The Earlier Italian Schools*, London, 2nd ed., 1961, pp. 389-396; *Offner* (n.10), pp. 2, 4, 38, and 42; and *Boskovits* (n.3), p. 202, n.107.

<sup>13</sup> See the list of pictures in *Boskovits* (n.3), pp. 202-203, n.108.

<sup>14</sup> See *Boskovits* (n.3), p. 203, n.108 and fig. 66; also illustrated in R. *Fremantle*, *Florentine Gothic Painters from Giotto to Masaccio etc.*, London 1975, Fig. 356.

<sup>15</sup> The image was published with the attribution to a Florentine painter of the early fifteenth century by U. *Procacci*, *Sinopie e Affreschi*, Florence 1960, p. 239 and plate 41. *Procacci* does not give its precise provenance.

<sup>16</sup> Bologna, followed by *Boskovits* and *Tartuferi*, attributed to Niccolò di Tommaso a tabernacle in the chapel of the *castello* of Casaluce. This mural depicts *Pope Celestine V Enthroned* and, in the intrado of the arch, the patron, Raimondo del Balzo, who died in 1375. See *Tartuferi* (n.3), p. 3 and p. 12, n.2 with earlier bibliography. The attribution was also accepted by D. *Wilkins*, *Review of Bologna* (n.3) in: *Art Bull.*, vol. LVI, 1974, p. 129. In addition, two other pictures have been linked, more or less directly, to Niccolò di Tommaso's Neapolitan foray: first, a *Virgin Enthroned with Saints and Donors* in the Certosa of San Giacomo at Capri and, second, a *Crucifix* in the church of the *Disciplina della Croce* in Naples. For the latter pictures again see *Tartuferi* (n.3), pp. 3-5 and 12, nn.5 and 7 with earlier bibliography.

<sup>17</sup> Niccolò's name is not found in any of the four quarters of the city in volumes of the *Prestanze* for 1373

- (ASF, *Prestanze* 226, Santo Spirito; 227, Santa Croce; 228, Santa Maria Novella; and 231, San Giovanni) and for 1374/5 (ASF, *Prestanze* 234, Santo Spirito; 239, San Giovanni and Santa Maria Novella but possibly incomplete; 240, Santo Spirito; 241, Santa Croce; and 243, San Giovanni and Santa Maria Novella).
- <sup>18</sup> ASF, *Prestanze* 262 (October 1375), fol. 41r lists “Niccolao di Tomaso dipintore” among those who failed to pay their assessment for the *Prestanza* for October 1375. The volume for the quarter of San Giovanni (*Prestanze* 261, fol. 118v) lists “Niccolaus Tomasi pictor”, who only satisfied the authorities when a “Stephanus Johannis Bonacursi” paid on his behalf on 17 May, presumably of the following year, 1376. Niccolò’s name fails to appear in the “Registro” covering the quarter of San Giovanni for the years 1375, 1376, 1378, and 1379 (*Prestanze* 298), and it fails to appear in volumes specifically for other sections of the city in August 1376: *Prestanze* 294 (Santo Spirito), 295 (Santa Croce), 296 (Santa Maria Novella); and in April 1378: *Prestanze* 332 (Santo Spirito), 333 (Santa Croce), 334 (Santa Maria Novella).
- <sup>19</sup> ASF, *Prestanze* 420 (May 1380, San Giovanni), fol. 217v. This “Niccholò” is not Gerini who is listed in the *gonfalone* Chiavi on fol. 235 of the same volume. In May 1380 (*Prestanze* 418, fol. 107v) a “Niccholò di Tommaso lengnialiuolo vocchato Boccio” is listed in the *gonfalone* Leone Nero of Santa Croce, but this is clearly a homonym. The same may be true for the Niccolò di Tommaso recorded in the *Sega* of 1354 (fol. 301v) as living in poverty in the *gonfalone* Rota of Santo Spirito, according to *Colnaghi*, Dictionary, pp. 190-191.
- <sup>20</sup> *Procacci*, Bonaccorso di Cino e gli affreschi della chiesa del Tau a Pistoia, in: Giotto e il suo tempo, Rome 1971, pp. 356-357, n.22. The notice was first published by G. Masselli, *Memorie italiane riguardanti le belle arti*, ed. by M. Gualandi, ser. VI, Bologna 1845, p. 186.
- <sup>21</sup> See Appendix, Doc. II below. The notice from the *Estimo* is recorded in G. Milanese’s notes, see Siena, Biblioteca Comunale, MS, *Carte Milanesi*, vol. III, fol. 201r. For the date of his matriculation in the Arte dei Medici e Speciali, see Irene Hueck, *Le matricole dei pittori fiorentini prima e dopo il 1320*, in: *Boll. d’Arte*, LVII, 1972, pp. 114-121. Niccolò’s name immediately follows Orcagna’s; Nardo di Cione’s follows ten later, after those of Daddo Daddi, Andrea di Bonaiuto, and Puccio di Simone. As *Procacci* ([n.15], p. 256) stresses, Niccolò’s matriculation is the earliest reference to him in trecento documents, and the assertion (advanced by *Crowe-Cavalcaselle*, vol. 1, p. 335; also repeated in the ed. by E. Hutton, London 1908, vol. I, p. 281) that Niccolò di Tommaso was, along with Jacopo del Casentino and Bernardo Daddi, one of the founding members of the Company of St. Luke is an oft-repeated error.

## APPENDIX OF DOCUMENTS

DOC. I: Pistoia, Archivio di Stato, Patrimonio Ecclesiastico, C 450 (San Giovanni Fuorcivitas: *Libro d’ Entrata e Uscita*, 1353-1376)

fol. 127r (*Entrata* 1364)

Avemo da mona Mazzea, donna che fue di Bianchalana, per aiuto all tavola nuova la quale è facta all’antare di Sancta Maria per anima sua... fiorini II d’oro

fol. 130v (*Uscita* 1364)

Demo [a] Stefano di Canbino di XXVIII di diciembre per fatura della tavola di Sancta Maria omine XLVI di grano per soldi X l’omina monto libre XXIII, e di contanti li demo, secondo che fuorono li patti tra noi e llui, libre XXXVIII soldi IIII, siché la tavola ci v[i]ene in tuto fiorini dicioto d’oro...libre XXXVIII, soldi IIII

fol. 144v (*Entrata* 1366)

Avemo da mona Melda per fare aiuto ala taola a dipingniere, omine XIII di grano, avemone ...libre VI, soldi X

fol. 176v (*Uscita* 1369)

Demo a di XXVIII di novembre a prete Filippo per uno choperchio della tavola nuova ch’è factto all’atate maggiore...libre III, soldi XV

fol. 188r (*Uscita* 1370)

Demo a maestro Nicholò dipintore da Firenze, come apare a libric[i]uolo a foglio [lacuna], per parte di pagamento della tavola di Santa Maria che def[ve] dipingere...fiorini XVI d’oro, libre O, soldi O

fol. 201r (*Uscita* 1372)

Demo ditto di a Zari per achonciare la taola di Sancta Maria... libre I

Demo a maestro Nicolao da Fiorenza per resto della taola di Sancta Maria, fiorini XIII 1/2 d’oro e soldi IIII vagliono...libre XLVI, soldi II

fol. 207v (*Uscita* 1373)

Demo al maestro che pionbò i ferì della chortina della taula nuova...libre 0, soldi XVI

Demo a Bartolino fabro per libre LXXX di ferì della cortina della taula nuova...libre X, soldi XII, denari VIII

Demo a Zari per lo sopracielo dell'altare nuova [sic] e dipi[n]tura e taule e ponitura...libre IIII

Demo a Bati, dipinse la cortina...libre 0, soldi X

Demo a una don[n]a, chuscìo la chortina...libre 0, soldi V

Per libre XXXI onçe II di pionbo per li ferì...libre III, soldi II, denari IIII

Per XXXVIII anella per la cortina... libre 0, soldi V

fol. 208v (*Uscita* 1373)

Demo al detto Jachopo [Ciani] per la detta Opera, a foglio 6, nel ditto quaderno ischritti per mano del sopradetto Angnolo, promesse per maestro Nicholò dipintore, fiorini due d'oro...fiorini II d'oro

DOC. II: Florence, Archivio di Stato, Conventi Soppressi 83 (S. Felicità 112, *Memoriale* 1357-1405)

fol. 21r. 31 novembre 1402

Memoria e ricordanza che a dì ultimo del mese di novembre nel MCCCCII Ser Lorenzo di Bartolo cappellano del monistero di Santa Felicità di Firenze et Ambruoio di Bencivenni dipintore dierono uno lodo tra monna Cubella donna fu di Niccolao dipintore, per l'una parte, e monna Monnina e monna Anna nepoti furono del detto Niccolao, per l'altra parte, sopra i beni che furono del detto Niccolao, i quali beni debbano rimanere al detto monistero e alla compagnia de' dipintori a ogniuno per metà dopo la vita delle soprascripte tre donne e chome più distesamente si contiene nel detto lodo scripto per mano di Ser Tomaso di [lacuna] notaio dell'arte degli speziali di Firenze

#### RIASSUNTO

È noto che esiste un collegamento fra Niccolò di Tommaso e la città di Pistoia, dove l'artista eseguì la più importante fra le sue opere; è però probabile che l'attività pistoiese di Niccolò sia stata ben più vasta di quanto si è finora ritenuto. Alcuni documenti rivelano che nella chiesa di San Giovanni Fuorcivitas a Pistoia si volle sostituire, in tempi sorprendentemente brevi, l'altare completato da Taddeo Gaddi nel 1353. Il nuovo dipinto fu eseguito fra il 1370 e il 1372 da un artista nominato "maestro Nicolao da Fiorenza", qui identificato come Niccolò di Tommaso. In quegli anni il pittore eseguì altri lavori nella stessa città, in particolare nella Cappella del Tau; è possibile, inoltre, che la sua attività a Pistoia e a Napoli fosse legata a una sola persona, Fra Giovanni Guidotti. Uno dei dipinti di Niccolò ancora esistenti, un pannello in una collezione privata, potrebbe essere identificato, in via ipotetica, nell'altare per San Giovanni Fuorcivitas. Un frammento di sinopia, anch'esso attribuibile all'artista, fornisce un'ulteriore prova della sua rilevante presenza nella città toscana. L'ampia attività svolta a Pistoia solleva interrogativi e offre spunti sia sul ruolo di Niccolò in due importanti commissioni fiorentine, sia sulla cronologia delle sue opere e della sua vita.

Photo Credits:

Alinari: Fig. 1. - Anderson: Fig. 2. - National Gallery, London: Fig. 3. - Fototeca Berenson, Villa I Tatti, Florence: Fig. 4. - Gabinetto Fotografico, Florence: Figs. 5, 6. - Aurelio Amendola, Pistoia: Fig. 7.