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Inhalt | *Contenuto*

Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz
Max-Planck-Institut
Via G. Giusti 44, I-50121 Firenze
Tel. 055.2491147, Fax 055.2491155
s.vitali@khi.fi.it – martinez@khi.fi.it
www.khi.fi.it/publikationen/mitteilungen

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1 Venice, San Marco,
south façade,
so-called ‘trophy wall’

THE PRODUCTION OF *EX NOVO* SPOLIA AND THE CREATION OF HISTORY IN THIRTEENTH-CENTURY VENICE

Armin F. Bergmeier

The urban make-up of medieval Venice is usually viewed as an array of trophies and spoils of war.[1] In particular, scholars have interpreted the façades of the Basilica di San Marco as a triumphalist display of various building materials, architectural elements, and sculptures without a systematic decoration plan. Even Otto Demus, the most important scholar of Venetian medieval art and architecture, admitted his puzzlement at the lack of order and meaning of the basilica's façades, describing the north façade as an "almost meaningless, if rhythmical, agglomeration of single reliefs".[2] About the reliefs on the south façade he wrote that "most of them remained what they had been when they were shipped to Venice: spoils to be used for enriching the walls of the state church".[3] However, this article seeks to demonstrate that our conceptions of medieval Venetian material culture are deeply flawed. I argue that while almost all building materials were in fact imported – Venice itself lacks any natural resources other than fish and salt – none of them were

[1] The literature mentioning triumphalist readings of Venetian material culture as loot and trophies is vast. See for example Marilyn Perry, "Saint Mark's Trophies: Legend, Superstition, and Archaeology in Renaissance Venice", in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XL (1977), pp. 27–49; Michael Greenhalgh, "*Ipsa ruina docet*: l'uso dell'antico nel Medioevo", in: *Memoria dell'antico nell'arte italiana*, ed. by Salvatore Settis, Turin 1984, I, pp. 113–167: 149–151; Eva Sibylle Rösch/Gerhard Rösch, *Venedig im Spätmittelalter: 1200–1500*, Freiburg/Würzburg 1991, pp. 47–49; Anthony Cutler, "From Loot to Scholarship: Changing Modes in the Italian Response to Byzantine Artifacts, ca. 1200–1750", in: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XLIX (1995), pp. 237–267: 238; Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venice & Antiquity: The Venetian Sense of the Past*, New Haven 1996, pp. 15–29; Thomas E. A. Dale, "Cultural Hybridity in Medieval Venice: Reinventing the East at San Marco after the Fourth Crusade", in: *San Marco, Byzantium, and the Myths of Venice*, ed. by Henry Maguire/Robert S. Nelson, Washington, D.C., 2010, pp. 151–191: 152; Karen R. Mathews, *Conflict, Commerce, and an Aesthetic of Appropriation in the Italian Maritime Cities, 1000–1150*, Leiden/Boston 2018, e.g. pp. 80, 85, 89. For a critique of triumphalist readings (in favor of an apotropaic interpretation) see Fabio Barry, "'Disiecta membra': Ranieri Zeno, the Imitation of Constantinople, the 'Spolia' Style, and Justice at San Marco", in: *San Marco, Byzantium, and the Myths of Venice*, pp. 7–62: 21–25.

[2] Otto Demus, *The Church of San Marco in Venice: History, Architecture, Sculpture*, Washington, D.C., 1960, p. 113.

[3] *Ibidem*, p. 111.

displayed to express triumphalist ideologies or used as visual evidence of the victory over enemies.

This conclusion is inevitable upon realizing that most of the evidence for the Venetian display of spoils of war are arguments *ex silentio* or derive from early modern sources that postdate the decoration of San Marco by at least two centuries. One of the most powerful arguments against triumphalist readings of seemingly reused objects is that many of them were in fact carefully planned and executed in Venice, with only the raw materials having been imported. The Venetian objects discussed here are neither *spolia in se* (actual reused artifacts) nor *spolia in re* (reused formal traits and principles),[4] but recreations that visually argue their identity as reused artifacts from the past. I therefore designate these Venetian artifacts '*ex novo* spolia' in order to indicate their medieval manufacture in the guise of reused sculptural objects. And the fact that these were produced by Venetian artists clearly precludes their identification as spoils of war, which I call 'trophy spolia'.[5]

The article focuses on five case studies. All of them are sculptural works dating to the thirteenth century that adopt a late antique aesthetic. They include the sarcophagi of three doges from the thirteenth century (Jacopo Tiepolo, Marino Morosini, and Ranieri Zen; Figs. 2, 3, 5), the frieze made up of several single scenes inserted above the Porta di Sant'Alipio (Fig. 11), and the relief depicting Christ surrounded by his apostles in the treasury of San Marco, often erroneously identified as a *traditio legis* (Fig. 15). Finally, the article also considers the famous four columns of the ciborium over the high altar, each of which comprise nine bands of superimposed reliefs (Fig. 19), and the *etimasia* relief on the north façade (Fig. 24). Most of these examples were part of the group of objects Otto Demus had subsumed under the term "protorenaissance" in his seminal article from 1955. Here, he demonstrated that they were the result of Venetian craftsmanship, despite their late antique stylistic features.[6] Demus had built on the work of Elisabetta Lucchesi-Palli, who in 1942 published a meticulously argued iconographic study of one of the four columns of the ciborium. She provided strong evidence for a medieval dating by pointing to the fact that theophanic and other motifs simply did not exist in late antiquity but were instead a product of the medieval period.[7]

In the decades since the 1980s, the pendulum has swung back in the other direction. A growing number of scholars have advocated late antique dates for key sculptural objects. Hans-Michael Herzog was cautious in his assessment of the sculpture of the "Protorenaissance" (1986), but re-dated crucial examples such as the frieze of the Porta di Sant'Alipio to the late antique period.[8] The mid-1990s were a watershed for the chronology of high-medieval Venetian sculpture. Wolfram Wolters' catalogue on the relief sculpture of San Marco from 1979 was updated and expanded by Guido Tigler in 1995. The Italian scholar argued strongly against dating the controversial monuments to the Middle Ages. In a short but very influential article, Helga Kaiser-Minn re-dated the *traditio legis* relief in the Cappella delle Reliquie to the fifth century.[9] A few years later, Thomas Weigel has repeatedly voiced his opinion regarding

[4] On these two terms, see Richard Brilliant, "I piedistalli del giardino di Boboli: spolia in se, spolia in re", in: *Prospettiva*, 31 (1982), pp. 2–17.

[5] The term 'spolia' derives from the Latin *spolium*, which signified movable objects taken by force, often spoils of war put on display. In the early modern period, the term has been adapted to signify reused objects from antiquity, thereby losing its association with violent seizure. In order to distinguish the spolia according to this neutral modern meaning from objects taken by force and put on display to illustrate the triumph over others, I use the term 'trophy spolia' when talking about spoils of war. See also Dale Kinney, "Spolia as Signifiers in Twelfth-Century Rome", in: *Hortus Artium Medievalium*, XVII (2011), pp. 151–166: 154.

[6] Otto Demus, "A Renascence of Early Christian Art in Thirteenth Century Venice", in: *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.*, ed. by Kurt Weitzmann, Princeton 1955, pp. 348–361.

[7] Elisabetta Lucchesi-Palli, *Die Passions- und Endszenen Christi auf der Ciboriumssäule von San Marco in Venedig*, Prague 1942.

[8] Hans-Michael Herzog, *Untersuchungen zur Plastik der venezianischen 'Protorenaissance'*, Munich 1986.

[9] Helga Kaiser-Minn, "I due rilievi di marmo nel tesoro di San Marco: nuove fotografie, nuovi aspetti", in: *Storia dell'arte marciana: sculture, tesoro, arazzi*, conference proceedings Venice 1994, ed. by Renato Polacco, Venice 1997, III, pp. 278–288. Her dating has been largely accepted by subse-

the late antique date of the ciborium columns, which have been echoed and expanded upon recently by Jutta Dresken-Weiland.[10] A quote by Guido Tigler succinctly summarizes the general distrust in the Venetian artists' ability to create works in a convincing late antique style, a form he called "falsi in stile":

> La nozione di stile 'neopaleocristiano' nel Duecento veneziano deve essere rimeditata per l'ormai assai probabile datazione al V secolo del sarcofago Morosini e del fregio di Sant'Alipio [...]. Non nego che gli scultori veneziani del XIII secolo abbiano tratto ispirazione dai modelli costantinopolitani del V–VI secolo (ma anche da quelli di epoche successive) presenti in città; non risulta però molto credibile una loro intenzione, e diabolica capacità, di creare 'falsi in stile' così perfetti da eludere le ragioni dell'occhio.[11]

This trend of scholarship is predominantly based on the assumption that style can be used as evidence for dating these works to late antiquity.[12] Style, however, is a problematic criterion when assessing objects that manifestly manipulated stylistic qualities.

Despite recognizing the Venetian origin of several of the pieces that appear to be Early Byzantine originals, Otto Demus has not drawn the obvious conclusion: that the production of these pieces *ex novo* strongly argues against their identity as triumphally staged loot. The notion of the unorganized array of looted spolia from the East reached its climax in Demus' interpretation of the southern wall of San Marco as a "trophy wall" because of its visual resemblance to triumphally amassed spoils of war (Fig. 1).[13] It contains a series of reliefs showing patterns common on late antique and Byzantine relief slabs, some purely ornamental and some showing birds and griffins flanking vases. They are surrounded by colored marble slabs and, on the left corner, the famous group of tetrarchs. A bench of white marble decorated with animal motifs and possibly the earliest inscription in the Venetian dialect acts as a pedestal.[14]

Henry Maguire, however, has convincingly shown that many of the relief slabs on the 'trophy wall' are in fact local products, betraying their Venetian identity in minute details.[15] He has pointed out aspects that run counter to an Eastern Roman origin, such as lily and

quent scholarship: e.g. Ruth Papadopoulos, *Die Skulpturen des 13. Jahrhunderts an San Marco in Venedig*, Würzburg 2002, p. 171; Wladimiro Dorigo, *Venezia romanica: la formazione della città medioevale fino all'età gotica*, Verona 2003, I, p. 218.

[10] Thomas Weigel, *Die Reliefsäulen des Hauptaltarciboriums von San Marco in Venedig: Studien zu einer spätantiken Werkgruppe*, Münster 1997; *idem*, *Le colonne del ciborio dell'altare maggiore di San Marco a Venezia: nuovi argomenti a favore di una datazione in epoca protobizantina*, Venice 2000; Jutta Dresken-Weiland, "Darstellungen neutestamentlicher Mahlszenen auf den Ciboriumssäulen von San Marco in Venedig", in: *Antiquité tardive*, XXVII (2019), pp. 241–253; *eadem*, "Die Darstellungen der Auftraggeber auf den Ciboriumssäulen von San Marco in Venedig und ihre Ikonographie", in: *Das Münster*, LXXIII (2020), pp. 206–215.

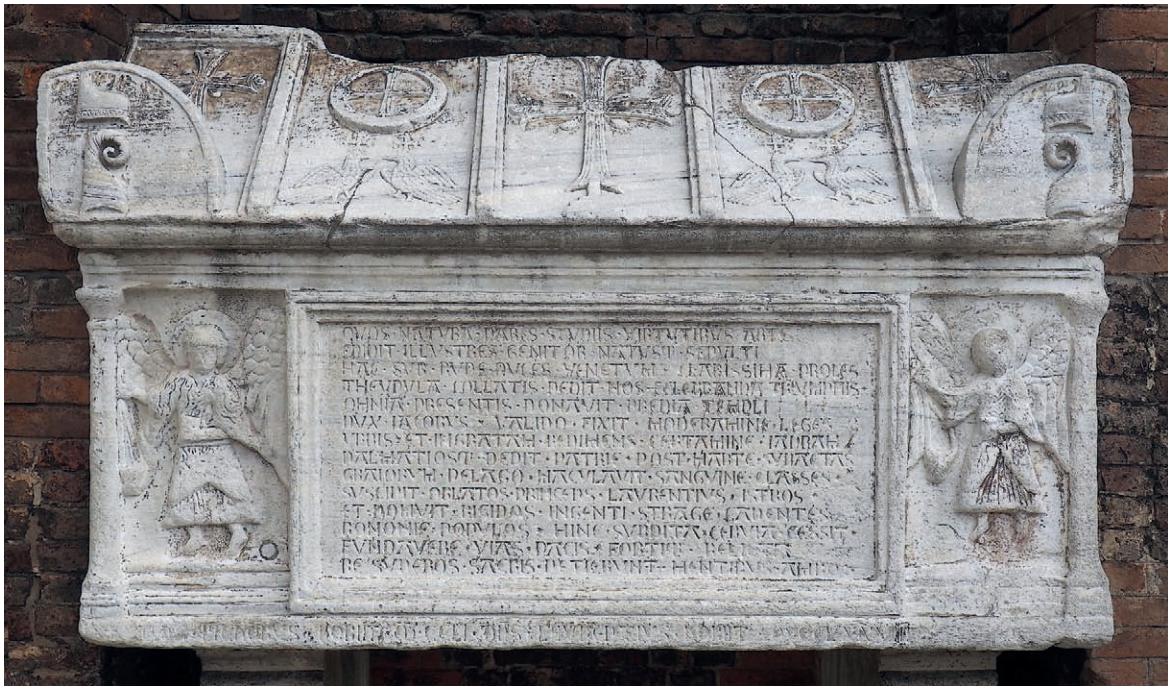
[11] Guido Tigler, "Catalogo delle sculture", in: *Le sculture esterne di San Marco*, Milan 1995, pp. 25–227: 99 ("The notion of a 'neo-paleo-Christian' style in the Venetian Duecento needs to be corrected for the by now very probable dating of the Morosini sarcophagus and the frieze of Sant'Alipio to the fifth century [...]. I do not deny that Venetian sculptors of the thirteenth century have taken their inspiration from Constantinopolitan models of the fifth and sixth centuries [and also from successive periods] present in the city; but this does not make it very credible that they went about with the intention and diabolical capability to create 'stylistic frauds' so perfect that they elude the judgment of the eye").

[12] See particularly Weigel 1997 and 2000 (note 10).

[13] Demus (note 2), p. 113.

[14] On the tetrarchs and the inscription see Luigi Sperti, "Reimpiego di scultura antica a Venezia: proposte e ipotesi recenti", in: *I tondi di Venezia e Dumbarton Oaks: arte e ideologia imperiale tra Bisanzio e Venezia*, ed. by Niccolò Zorzi/Albrecht Berger/Lorenzo Lazzarini, Rome 2019, pp. 161–188: 170–173.

[15] Henry Maguire, "Venetian Art as a Mirror of Venetian Attitudes to Byzantium in Decline", in: *550th Anniversary of the Istanbul University, International Byzantine and Ottoman Symposium (XVth Century)*, conference proceedings Istanbul 2003, ed. by Sümer Atasoy, Istanbul 2004, pp. 281–289. For similar endeavors of attributing works to medieval Venetian artisans, see Simonetta Minguzzi, "Plutei mediobizantini conservati in San Marco", in: *Storia dell'arte marciana: sculture, tesoro, arazzi* (note 9), III, pp. 113–124; Dorigo (note 9), p. 218; Charles Davis, *Byzantine Relief Icons in Venice and along the Adriatic Coast: Orants and Other Images of the Mother of God*, Munich 2006, *passim*; Patrizio Pensabene, "Reimpieghi e percezione dell'"antico', recuperi e trasformazioni", in: *Pietre di Venezia: spolia in se, spolia in re: atti del convegno internazionale*, conference proceedings Venice 2013, ed. by Monica Centanni/Luigi Sperti, Rome 2015, pp. 15–59: 34–39.



2 Sarcophagus of Jacopo Tiepolo, 1249.
Venice, Santi Giovanni e Paolo, west façade

acorn ornaments, leaves that resemble oak and other unusual forms, a strange multitude of drilled holes on one of the lozenge patterns, as well as floral and figural elements that go beyond the image frame. Recently, his article has been republished, but in the same publication Michela Agazzi has weighed in on the topic, arguing against Maguire and thereby re-invigorating the myth of trophy spolia.[16] The Venetian scholar noted that some of the pieces are in fact reworked Early or Middle Byzantine slabs, as has been discovered when they were taken off the wall so that the backsides could be studied.[17] Yet while it is certainly possible that the slabs were reworked when they were still in the East, it is just as likely that the imported marble – ready to be recycled – was re-carved upon arrival in Venice. With several of the slabs on this wall being of Western production, we cannot consider them as trophies visualizing Venice's triumph over the Eastern Roman Empire anymore. As such, Demus' term 'trophy wall' is highly misleading. Furthermore, John Barker has drawn attention to the fact that apart from one instance – the installation of the city gates of Tarsos and Mopsuestia in the walls of Constantinople after Nikephoros Phokas' victorious campaign – there is no written evidence for any permanent display of looted spoils of war in either the Eastern Roman Empire or in Venice.[18]

[16] Henry Maguire, "The South Façade of the Treasury of San Marco", in: *San Marco: la Basilica di Venezia. Arte, storia, conservazione*, ed. by Ettore Vio, Venice 2019, I, pp. 123–130; Michela Agazzi, "Questioni marciane: architettura e scultura", *ibidem*, pp. 90–110: 100–109.

[17] Two photographs are reproduced *ibidem*, figs. 16 and 17.

[18] John Barker, "Byzantium and the Display of War Trophies: Between Antiquity and the Venetians", in: *To Hellenikon: Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis, Jr.*, ed. by John S. Langdon *et al.*, New Rochelle 1993, I, pp. 45–58. Similarly, see also Barry (note 1), pp. 21–27. The gates from Tarsos and Mopsuestia were installed at the north-eastern corner of the walls, near

3 Sarcophagus of Marino Morosini, 1253.
Venice, San Marco, northern narthex

The present study will add to Maguire's and Barker's observations and restitute several of the most prominent examples of the Venetian "falsi in stile" to the thirteenth century. Because the 'spolia' of local Venetian production have not been studied with regard to the reasons and circumstances of their production, this article will also address how and why Venetian artists manipulated the stylistic qualities of their works in such a convincing way that scholars have doubted the possibility of such "diabolical" capabilities. I argue that the reason for the creation of works that expressed themselves fluently in a seven-hundred-year-old visual language lies in the construction of historicity; in a city whose oldest profane stone buildings were realized less than a mere hundred years before, the use of spolia integrated Venice into a Roman legacy still active in the Eastern Mediterranean.[19] Thus, the Venetian visual culture was not geared towards a visualization of victory over the (Eastern) Roman Empire with its capital in Constantinople through the exhibition of spolia-trophies.[20]

I. The Morosini Sarcophagus and Thirteenth-Century Funerary Sculpture

The doges Jacopo Tiepolo, Marino Morosini, and Ranieri Zen, ruling around the mid-thirteenth century, exhibited a remarkable predilection for

the ancient acropolis and at the Golden Gate in the south-west. On the gates see Ewald Kislinger, "Neorion und Prosphorion – die alten Häfen am Goldenen Horn. Mit einem Anhang über die Landeplätze (*skalai*) in diesem Umfeld bis 1204", in: *Die byzantinischen Häfen Konstantinopels*, ed. by Falko Daim, Mainz 2016, pp. 89–97: 94–96.

[19] The buildings of the Procuratoria of San Marco (1172–1178) are the only secular buildings that can be securely dated to the twelfth century (Deborah Howard, *The Architectural History of Venice*, 2nd rev. ed., New York 1981 [first ed. London 1980], pp. 36f.).

[20] Cf. for example Fortini Brown (note 1), p. 17.

late antique visual language. This aesthetic taste expressed itself forcefully in their funerary monuments, which are the earliest securely dated works of this group of objects. Several other sarcophagi in the cloister of Sant'Antonio in Padua and one at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna are likely to date to the fourteenth and the nineteenth centuries, respectively. The earliest of the group, the sarcophagus of Jacopo Tiepolo (r. 1229–1249), located on the façade of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, is a reused object dating to late antiquity (Fig. 2).[21] It conforms to standard forms of sarcophagi with a *tumba* and a lid with *acroteria*. Debra Pincus has analyzed it in detail concluding that the Latin crosses and the crosses in roundels on the lid are part of the original ornamentation, while the hovering angels on the front and the birds on the lid are the results of re-carvings of the thirteenth century. In relation to the angels, Pincus observed that a "rudeness and a deliberate awkwardness of form was always part of the presentation".[22] The heraldic elements with the ducal *corno* on the *acroteria* and the large inscription on the front have been added later, after 1310 and in the fifteenth century respectively.[23]

We can observe a similar 'awkwardness' in the figures of the funerary relief of the subsequent doge Marino Morosini (1249–1253), which was placed in the northern narthex of San Marco after the doge's death (Fig. 3). Regarding the quality of the carving, Demus remarked that "it can hardly be called a work of art".[24] Herzog proposed that the 'inferior' quality of the piece might have been considered a sign of its old age.[25] Recent scholarship has tried to establish a late antique date for the initial carving of the relief. The tomb is, however, largely a product of the mid-thirteenth century.[26] The sarcophagus is decorated with a high relief divided into two registers. The upper zone shows Christ surrounded by his twelve apostles, while the lower zone depicts a female figure (Mary?) flanked by orant figures alternating with monumental censers. The sides show a circular floral ornament in high relief on the right and a cross under a baldachin on the left.

The Morosini sarcophagus has highly unusual proportions, its height measuring almost half the length – a format that has no known parallel in the late antique West. It only finds parallels in *Scheinsarkophag* reliefs such as the ones discovered in the hypogeum at Silivri Kapı in 1988.[27] The iconography is even more difficult to reconcile with a late antique date. Older scholarship and more recently Debra Pincus and Guntram Koch have therefore agreed on a thirteenth-century date.[28] In 1986, however, Hans-Michael Herzog argued that the relief should be viewed as an original from the fifth or sixth century. He suggested that it was looted from Constantinople after 1204, finding a close stylistic comparison in the Petrusrelief at the Museum für Byzantinische Kunst in Berlin.[29] A vital point against a late antique date has been stressed

[21] See for example *ibidem*, pp. 21–24.

[22] Debra Pincus, *The Tombs of the Doges of Venice*, Cambridge 2000, pp. 28f.

[23] *Ibidem*, pp. 14–35. For the angels and the inscription, see *ibidem*, pp. 28f. and Appendix 2, pp. 171–175.

[24] Demus (note 2), p. 351.

[25] Herzog (note 8), p. 55.

[26] *Ibidem*, pp. 36–58, particularly p. 38.

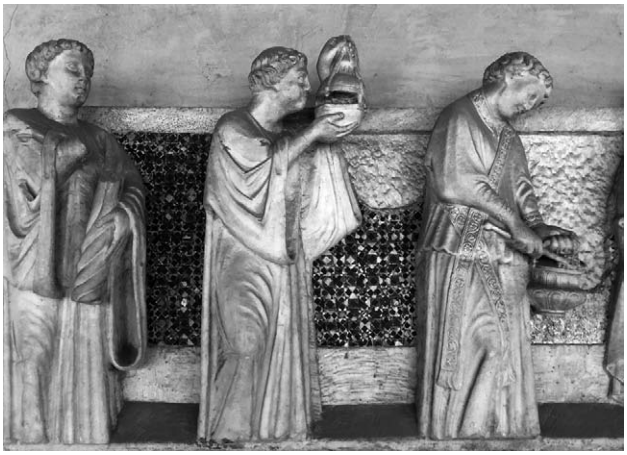
[27] Johannes G. Deckers/Ümit Serdaroğlu, "Das Hypogäum beim Silivri-Kapı in Istanbul", in: *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, XXXVI (1993), pp. 140–163; *eidem*, "Das Hypogäum beim Silivri-Kapı in Istanbul: Die Gestalt des Baus und die Form der Gräber", in: *Akten des XII. Internationalen Kongresses für christliche Archäologie*, Bonn 1991, ed. by Ernst Dassmann/Josef Engemann, Münster 1995, II, pp. 674–681; Johannes G. Deckers/Guntram Koch, *Konstantinopel, Kleinasien – Thracia – Syria – Palaestina – Arabia*, Wiesbaden 2018 (Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage, 5), pp. 101–108.

[28] Pincus (note 22), p. 45; Guntram Koch, *Frühchristliche Sarkophage*, Munich 2000, pp. 455 and 603. For earlier scholarship see Herzog (note 8), pp. 25f.

[29] *Ibidem*, pp. 40f. For the late antique relief see Arne Effenberger, "Studien zu den Bildwerken der Frühchristlich-byzantinischen Sammlung III: Das Petrusrelief von Alaçam", in: *Forschungen und Berichte*, XXVII (1989), pp. 129–154; *idem*, in: *Das Museum für Byzantinische Kunst im Bode-Museum*, Munich *et al.* ²2008, p. 21, no. 3234.

by Lucchesi-Palli: the monumental censers have no parallel in any of the surviving images from late antiquity. While various objects separate the fronts of late antique sarcophagi – including columns, trees, and city gates – censers are not one of them. With the exception of very few examples (e.g. those on the imperial mosaic of Justinian in San Vitale in Ravenna or on the Trier ivory of unknown date), censers were not depicted in late antiquity. In the High Middle Ages, however, censers became ubiquitous and a popular feature of sepulchral art, such as on Arnolfo di Cambio's tomb of Cardinal Riccardo Annibaldi (d. 1289) in the Lateran cloister (Fig. 4). Herzog compiled a list of examples of extant late antique censers (artifacts and images),[30] thereby fundamentally misunderstanding that the problem is not the existence of censers but their lack of representation, particularly as ornamental image-dividers.[31] Furthermore, the overall composition with an upper register of apostles surrounding Christ and a lower one with a female figure surrounded by unidentified orant figures is a unique solution and does not find any parallels in late antique funerary sculpture or other extant images. The surviving theophanic images from late antiquity commonly show Christ in glory in the upper zone and a row of apostles flanking Mary in the lower zone. In all likelihood, the 'awkward' style has been consciously employed to signal age and authenticity, a visual trope also seen in the angels of the Tiepolo sarcophagus and some of the figures on the frieze of the Porta di Sant'Alipio discussed below.

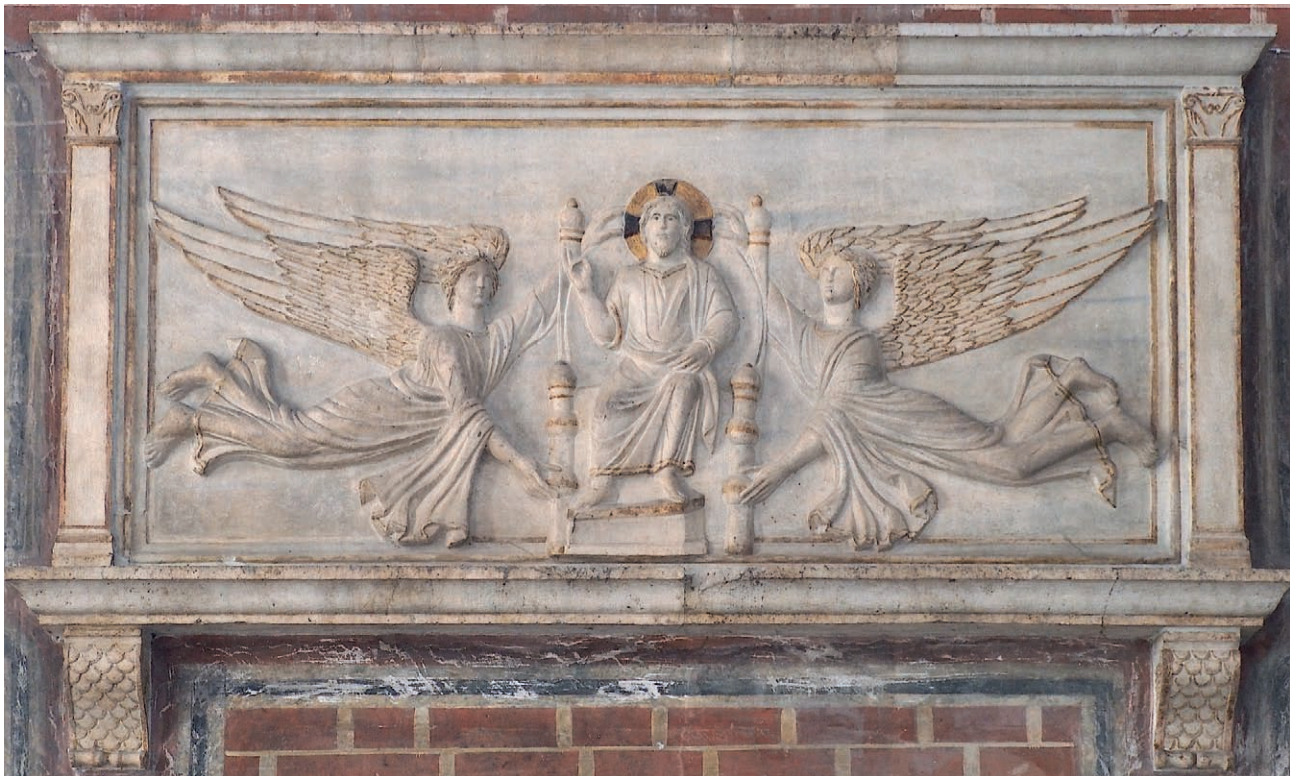
The third example, the sarcophagus relief of Ranieri Zen (1253–1268), is set into the right interior wall of Santi Giovanni e Paolo (Fig. 5). The relief shows an enthroned figure of Christ held up by two angels. While the style of Zen's tomb indicates a moment of production around the time of his death,



4 Arnolfo di Cambio, tomb of Riccardo Annibaldi, ca. 1289, detail of deacons with censers. Rome, San Giovanni in Laterano, cloister

the iconography itself refers back to late antiquity. Angels carrying wreaths with the staurogram and other symbols can be found in almost all media, for example in the mosaics of San Vitale, Ravenna, and on the so-called *Prinzensarkophag* from Sarigüzel, today in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul (Fig. 6).[32] Medallions filled with an anthropomorphic figure of Christ are less frequent, although there are examples of a bust of Christ held up by angels on the famous lintel of Alahan Manastırı (Fig. 7). The full-length image of Christ being carried with his throne by two angels is most likely a conflation of the ancient and late antique iconography with medieval images of the enthroned Christ in a mandorla (*Maiestas Domini*). Similar medieval examples can be found above the entrance to the first cloister in Venice's Frari church, on the tomb of one of the members of the Rogati-Negri family in Sant'Antonio in Padua (Fig. 8), and in the Kunsthistorisches

[30] Herzog (note 8), pp. 30–35.
[31] Pincus (note 22), pp. 31–35.
[32] Deckers/Koch (note 27), pp. 61f., no. 88. Further examples from Istanbul include pp. 62f., nos. 89–91.



5 Sarcophagus of Ranieri Zen, 1268. Venice, Santi Giovanni e Paolo, nave

Museum in Vienna (Fig. 9).[33] A marble slab in the Cappella delle Reliquie in San Marco depicts a far smaller figure of the enthroned Christ (Fig. 10).[34] The scene is set above a mountain with the four rivers of paradise. This quintessentially late antique motif was likely supposed to emphasize the age of the relief. The juxtaposition of the mountain and the flying angels is, however, markedly unusual for the late antique period.

Scholarship largely agrees on the medieval origin of this group of objects depicting Christ between angels.[35] The example in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna is probably an early nineteenth-century copy of the Rogati-Negri sarcophagus. The ensemble with two side pieces was kept at the Habsburgian estate of Catajo and came to Vienna as part of the Este collection in 1896.[36] The modern date is suggested by the industrial precision and the large

[33] For short discussions of each of these, see Herzog (note 8), pp. 126–128.

[34] Demus (note 2), p. 172.

[35] A large cameo in the Münzkabinett in Munich might also be part of this group. Its origin has variously been located at the court of Frederick II, in Venice in the thirteenth century, or in the modern period. A few aspects would be unusual within a Venetian context: Christ's undulated hair, the fact that the angels stand firmly on the ground instead of flying horizontally, as well as the presence of regal insignia (scepter, orb, and crown). See Ingrid S. Weber, *Kostbare Steine: Die Gemmensammlung des Kurfürsten Johann Wilhelm von der Pfalz*, Munich 1992, pp. 170–172, no. 212.

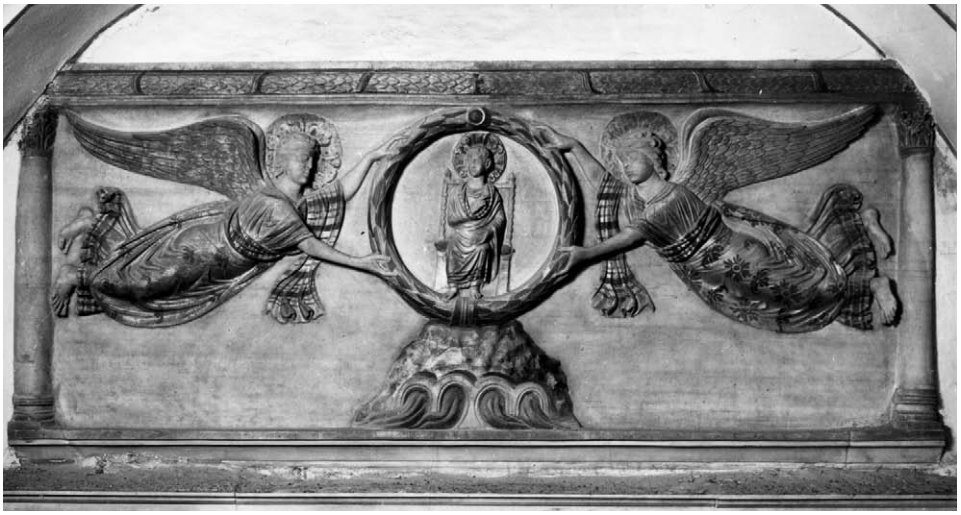
[36] It is not listed in any of the actual catalogues from Catajo, but features as "aus Catajo" in the catalogue compiled two decades after the objects arrived in Vienna (Leo Planiscig, *Die Estensische Kunstsammlung*, I: *Skulpturen und Plastiken des Mittelalters und der Renaissance*, Vienna 1919, pp. 14f., nos. 23–25).

6 Sarigüzel sarcophagus, ca. 380–390.
Istanbul, Arkeoloji Müzeleri

7 Alahan Manastırı,
West Church, lintel

8 Sarcophagus of the Rogati-Negri family,
late thirteenth or fourteenth century.
Padua, Sant'Antonio

9 Venetian-style relief,
early nineteenth century (?).
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum



10 Sarcophagus front,
second half of the thirteenth
century. Venice, San Marco,
Cappella delle Reliquie

empty spaces of the relief. Furthermore, the column capitals are decorated with oak leaves in a Gothic manner; no known example from Venice displays such decoration. The back side, not visible today, shows ornaments that have been dated to the twelfth or thirteenth century, thus around the time of the relief's purported date of production.[37] It is likely to be an early nineteenth-century work that reflects the wave of a renewed fascination with late antique artifacts at the time.

[37] *Ibidem*, p. 15.

2. The Porta di Sant'Alipio

The Porta di Sant'Alipio is known for its famous mosaic depicting the legendary arrival of Saint Mark's relics and the western façade of San Marco already in its current state (Fig. 12). The mosaic can be tentatively dated to 1265 or slightly later, providing an approximate date for the decoration of the façade.[38] A frieze of marble reliefs forms the lower border of the lunette above the door lintel (Fig. 11). It is strikingly fragmented, but in its fragmented state it is of an impressive regularity. A sequence of stand-alone images is strung together to form this faux-lintel. Shell niches with apostle figures separate five main scenes. These five somewhat larger panels depict the miraculous transformation of water into wine at Cana, the image of the three Magi, the Annunciation to the Shepherds, a *traditio legis*-style image of Christ between Peter and Paul, and a panel showing five men, possibly apostles. Two deacons frame the frieze at the left and right ends.

The various iconographies can be said to follow late antique models fairly closely. The only elements that stand out immediately as medieval are the deacons holding large censers. Before the beginning of the twentieth century, scholars generally believed the frieze to be of late antique origin.[39] The first scholar to suggest a thirteenth-century date was Adolfo Venturi, followed by Lucchesi-Palli.[40] The latter has observed that the left deacon relief follows the irregular inclination of the left pillar framing the portal, thus proving that at least this piece has been specially carved for the Porta di Sant'Alipio.[41] It was only in Herzog's publication on 'Protorenaissance' sculpture that the pendulum began to swing back and Lucchesi-Palli's ideas were called into question. Several scholars have since followed in Herzog's footsteps, among them Guido Tigler, who dates the reliefs to the fifth century along with the Morosini sarcophagus.[42]

Apart from the conspicuously large censers held by the deacons, several other elements complicate the late antique dating. The panel of the five men (apostles?) stands out, as those figures seem to lack a purpose. Similarly, the *traditio legis*-style panel appears to cite the late antique motif but fails to depict crucial elements of the iconography: Christ's right hand is not lifted in a gesture of power and protection, and Peter does not receive anything from Christ.[43] The oversized hands of the figures give away their medieval origins most pronouncedly. Big and detailed hands and feet are a common feature of high medieval works and can be observed for example in the prophet figures on the Porta dei Fiori (Fig. 13). This stylistic feature, which precludes a late antique dating, has so far gone unnoticed by scholarship.

While the frieze gives the appearance of being an assemblage of different parts that did not originally belong together, there are far too many correspondences between the various panels to be purely accidental. Most strikingly, all panels are of the same height and style (there are only slight differences between the biblical scenes and the standing single

[38] The mosaics of the façade are mentioned in Martino da Canal's chronicle *Les estoires de Venise* (1.12), written for doge Ranieri Zen (1253–1268) and also including the reign of Lorenzo Tiepolo (1268–1275): "And if anyone would like to verify any of the things I have told you, come and look upon the beautiful church of Monseignor St Mark in Venice, and look right in front of the beautiful church, for the whole story […] [of the theft of the relics of Saint Mark] is written upon it" (Martin da Canal, *Les Estoires de Venise*, trans. by Laura K. Morreale, Padua 2009, p. 10).

[39] Earlier literature in Herzog (note 8), pp. 68–72.

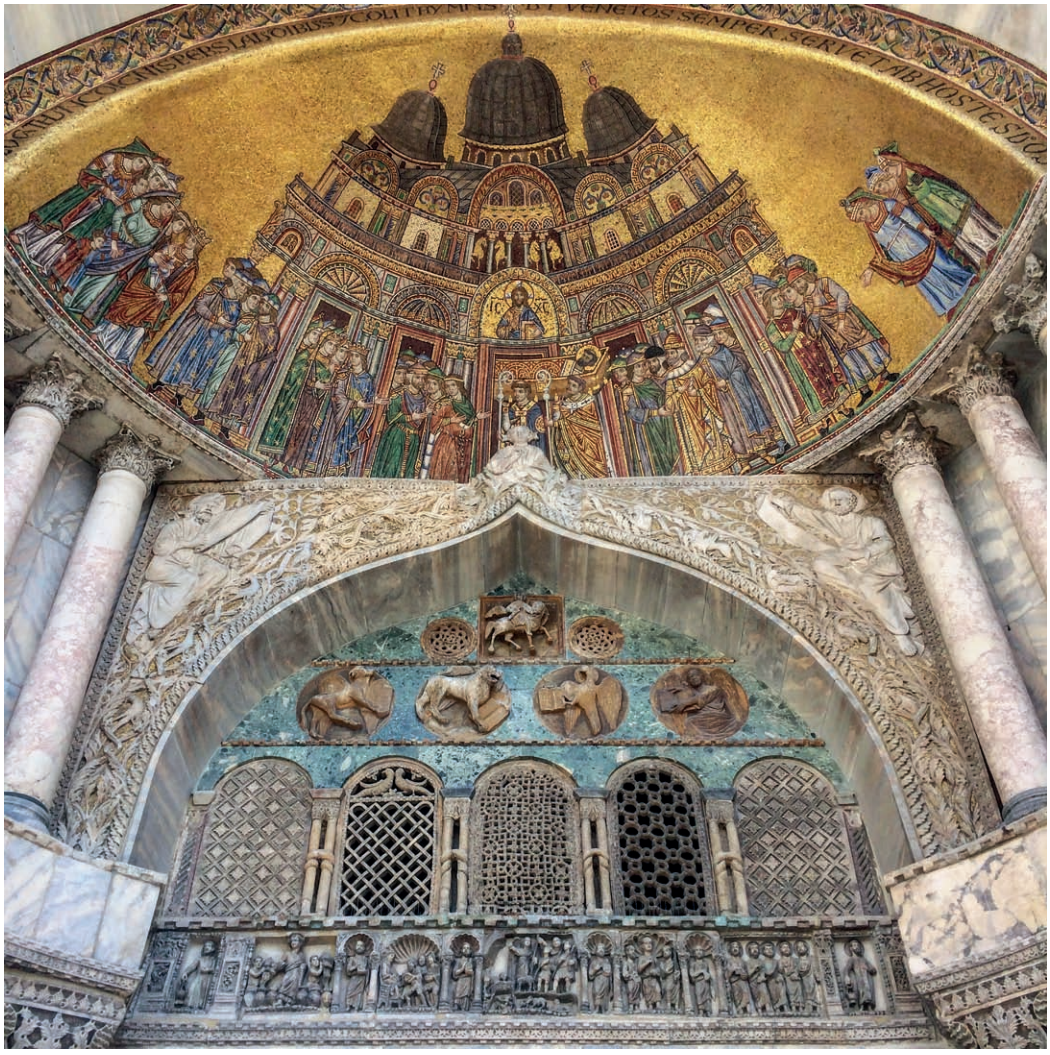
[40] Adolfo Venturi, *Storia dell'arte italiana*, III: *L'arte romanica*, Milan 1904, pp. 100–102.

[41] Lucchesi-Palli (note 7), pp. 153f.

[42] Tigler (note 11), pp. 96–100, no. 97, p. 99. Guntram Koch has voiced disagreement with a late antique date in passing (Koch [note 28], p. 603).

[43] Comparable images of groups of three men can be found on the wooden door of Santa Sabina in Rome and on the Brescia casket (the latter one is often identified as a Transfiguration, but more likely depicts Christ walking on the water). However, in these two late antique images Peter's cross is absent and no relationship with the *traditio legis* is suggested.

11 Venice, San Marco, Porta di Sant'Alipio, frieze



12 Venice, San Marco, Porta di Sant'Alipio, lunette and mosaic with the *Arrival of the relics of Saint Mark in Venice*

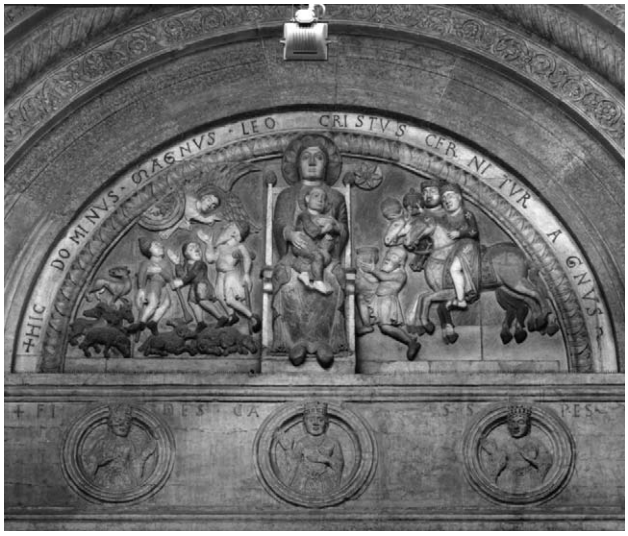
figures). This impression is supported by the ornamental columns which are all of roughly equal size. None had to be severely truncated, only cut at the sides to underline the fictitious late antique nature of the sculptural piece. While a collection of similar pieces of late antique origin would have resulted in reliefs of differing artistic styles and dimensions, the frieze has clearly been carved by one workshop. As a matter of fact, Demus correctly observed that "the heads of the two [deacon] figures – to say nothing of the framing pillars – match the bearded heads of other figures on the lintel so closely that it is difficult to imagine that the various pieces belong to different hands or periods".[44]

The astragal motif that frames most of the single fragments recalls similar frames around two reliefs above the Porta dei Fiori, which are unanimously considered to be of a thirteenth-century date.[45] But even if the astragal ornament had been added to the Sant'Alipio frieze when it was assembled, it rather seems to draw attention to the fragmentation and thereby gives away the deliberate *ex novo* production

13 Venice, San Marco,
Porta dei Fiori,
detail of a prophet

[44] Demus (note 2), p. 168.

[45] *Die Skulpturen von San Marco in Venedig: Die figürlichen Skulpturen der Außenfassaden bis zum 14. Jahrhundert,* ed. by Wolfgang Wolters, Munich 1979, pp. 24f., nos. 24 and 25.



14 Verona, cathedral, tympanum of the main portal

of a late ancient artifact. And while the overall aspect of the frieze visually argues for its old age, it has gone unnoticed that the content is actually very up to date. Scenes related to the Nativity, such as the Annunciation to the Shepherds and the Adoration of the Magi, are common features in contemporary twelfth- and thirteenth-century portal lintels and tympana, for instance of Sant'Andrea in Pistoia or of Verona cathedral (Fig. 14). Besides the Adoration of the Magi and the Baptism of Christ, the liturgical reading for the feast of Epiphany also includes the Marriage at Cana. This explains the presence of this scene, which is otherwise less common on medieval portals. Its iconography – servants pouring wine from smaller into larger amphorae – is also much closer to Late Byzantine examples (for example in the narthex of the Chora monastery at Istanbul) than to late antique depictions of the Marriage at Cana, which lack the wine-bearing youths. The image at the far left on the lintel of the Porta di Sant'Alipio follows a later medieval iconography (for example in the narthex of the Chora monastery from 1321) where servants pour the wine from smaller into larger amphorae. Therefore, the lintel again presents medieval content in a highly convincing late antique guise.

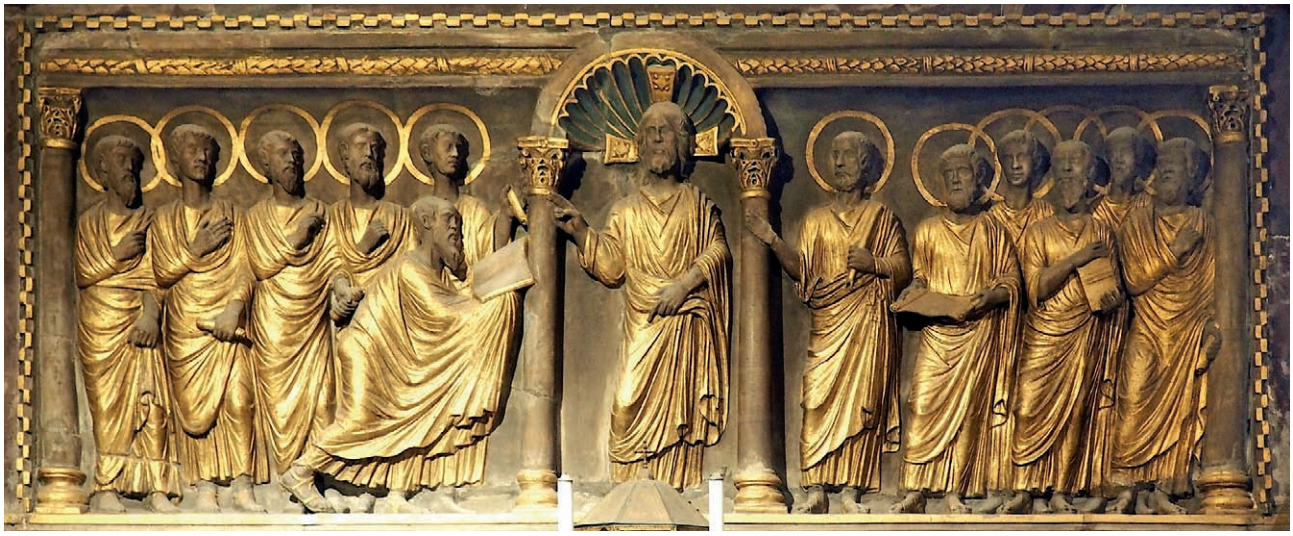
3. The *Traditio Legis* Relief

Measuring 1,21 × 2,73 meters, the *traditio legis* relief (Fig. 15) has almost the same dimensions as the relief showing Christ in a wreath carried by angels placed right above it (Fig. 10). Both were probably installed in their current location in 1530, when the chapel was furnished, but their similar dimensions suggest that they were part of the same ensemble even before.[46] Their whereabouts prior to that year remain unknown, but it is not unlikely that they had already decorated the treasury before its early modern renovation. The iconography of the lower relief derives from a well-known late antique image, referred to by modern scholarship as *traditio legis*. It shows a standing figure of Christ flanked by Peter, Paul, and the other ten apostles. Paul approaches from the left presenting a book, and Peter stands on the right clutching a baton-like object that might have originally been a cross. In the center of the relief, a large triangular piece of marble between Christ's body and Paul's face has been replaced. The panel shows many similarities to late antique images, but also several striking dissimilarities, only some of which can be explained by later repairs.

Arguing against previous scholarship, during an international conference held in Venice in 1994 and published in 1997, Helga Kaiser-Minn proposed a re-dating of this panel to the later part of the fourth century.[47] Scholars have largely accepted this hypothesis, which helped to direct their attention to the question of Venetian agency regarding the reuse of

[46] Kaiser-Minn (note 9), p. 278.

[47] *Ibidem*, p. 283. For earlier scholarship, see Herzog (note 8), pp. 124f.



15 *Christ surrounded by his apostles*, or *traditio legis* relief, late thirteenth century. Venice, San Marco, Cappella delle Reliquie

artifacts. However, several iconographic and stylistic objections demand that her chronology of the relief needs to be reoriented towards a medieval production date. For example, in the depiction of each limb with its veins, Christ's and the apostles' large hands show an attention to detail that is alien to late antique images but very common in the Western Middle Ages, as already noted above in relation to the sculptures of the Porta dei Fiori from the late thirteenth century (Fig. 13).

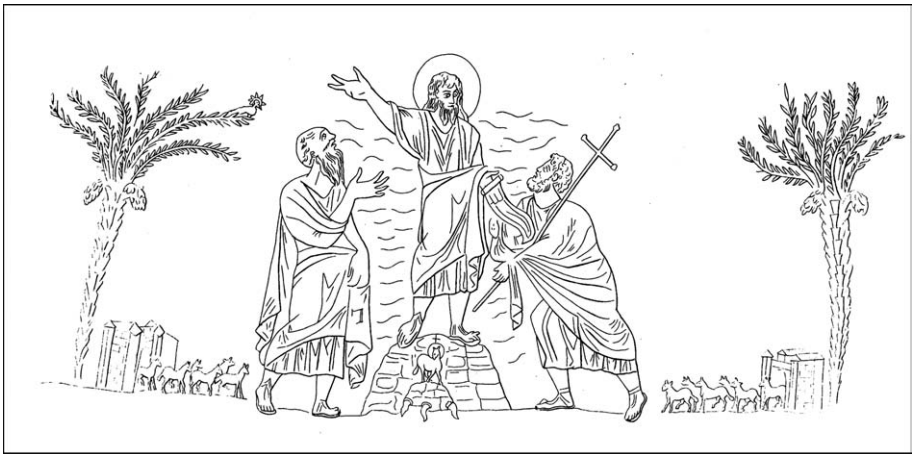
Kaiser-Minn has argued that the original composition had been a typical late antique *traditio legis* until the aforementioned piece of marble encompassing Christ's right arm and Paul's veiled hands with the book was replaced.[48] While a close affinity with the *traditio legis* is obvious, no reconstruction of the original relief is possible that would turn the scene into either of the two standard forms of this late antique iconography.[49] The more common version shows Christ standing on a mountain handing an open scroll to Peter on his left, while Paul stands on his right-hand side. Two palm trees commonly flank the scene, and two processions of lambs converge towards the mountain (Fig. 16). This iconography cannot have originally been depicted here because Christ's left hand is clearly not handing a scroll to Peter but holding his toga. His right hand might have been raised in the purported earlier version, but that would not correspond with Paul, who clearly bends down to either offer or receive something.

A second iconographic version that is sometimes also referred to as *traditio legis* and was more common in Ravenna shows an enthroned Christ presenting a scroll or a book to Paul (instead of Peter), who receives it with veiled hands (Fig. 17).[50] In this scheme, however, Christ is invariably shown seated. Neither

[48] Kaiser-Minn (note 9), p. 284.

[49] For a detailed analysis of the iconography in late antiquity and the Middle Ages, see Armin F. Bergmeier, "The Traditio Legis in Late Antiquity and Its Afterlives in the Middle Ages", in: *Gesta*, LVI (2017), pp. 27–52.

[50] See for example Bas Snelders, "The Traditio Legis on Early Christian Sarcophagi", in: *Antiquité tardive*, XIII (2005), pp. 321–333: 322.



16 Drawing of the burial slab with the *traditio legis* from the Palazzo of Bonifacio VIII, Anagni

of these two versions of the *traditio legis* can have been the basis of the Venetian relief, even assuming profound changes to the piece of marble that has been replaced in the center. And in the surviving examples from late antiquity, the two iconographies have never been conflated.

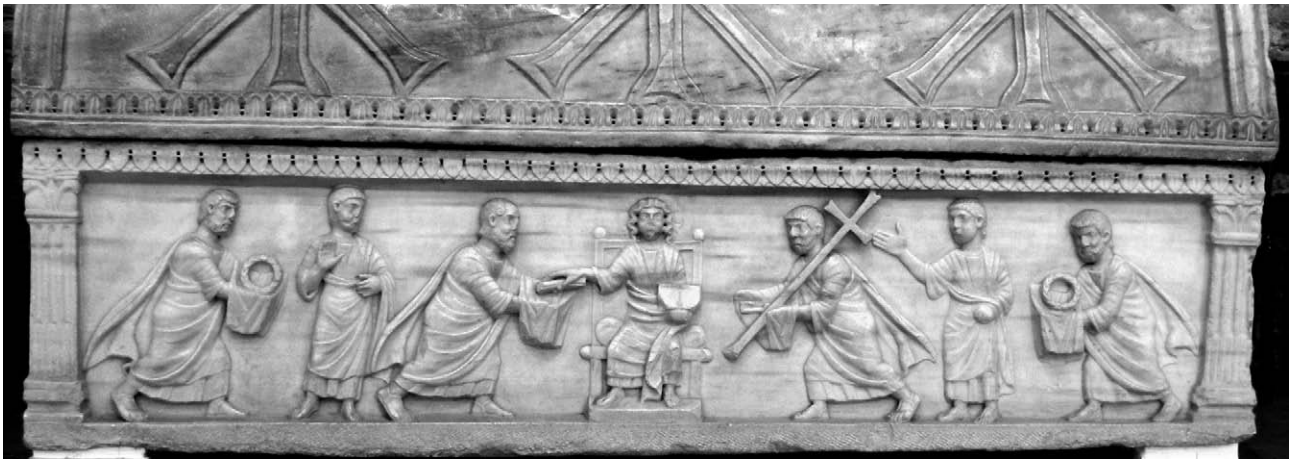
Stylistic features similarly complicate a reading as a *traditio legis*. Kaiser-Minn rightly noted a hard ("academic") style reminiscent of Theodosian sculpture, such as in the Sarigüzel sarcophagus (Fig. 6).[51] This led her to suggest a Constantinopolitan origin for the relief. However, the *traditio legis* was virtually unknown in the Eastern Mediterranean, and examples have only been found in the territory under the jurisdiction of the Roman pope.[52] Guntram Koch rejects the possibility of a Constantinopolitan or late antique origin of the relief because of the style of the heads and of the garments, but acknowledges a deep understanding of Constantinopolitan works.[53] No other Eastern examples exist that are comparable with regard to the iconographic composition of this relief. The harder style therefore points towards a medieval Venetian origin of the object.

It is not unusual that on one and the same sarcophagus the apostles hold both scrolls and books – for instance on the Concordius sarcophagus in Arles. Yet it is strange that all of the apostles on the left side of the relief (except Paul) hold scrolls, while those on the right side hold either scrolls or books. The third apostle from the right presses the pages of an open book against his chest in a highly unusual manner. This iconography might have been inspired by the city-gate sarcophagus in Sant'Ambrogio, Milan (Fig. 18). In the Milan sarcophagus, however, the

[51] Kaiser-Minn (note 9), pp. 279 and 283.

[52] The apsidal mosaic in the church of Cromi, Georgia, depicts an image that has some formal analogies with the *traditio legis* but is not part of this neatly circumscribed iconography. Similar standing figures of Christ with a scroll appear also in other contexts, for example in the sixth-century Rabbula Gospels, today in the Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence (Plut. I, 56, fol. 13v). For the mosaic in Cromi, see the discussion by Ivan Foletti/Irene Quadri, "Roma, l'Oriente e il mito della Traditio legis", in: *Byzantium, Russia and Europe: Meeting and Construction of Worlds*, ed. by Ivan Foletti, Brno 2013 (= *Opuscula Historiae Artium*, LXII [2013], Suppl.), pp. 16–37.

[53] Koch (note 28), p. 456.



17 Sarcophagus, second quarter of the fifth century. Ravenna, Sant'Apollinare in Classe

corresponding book is meant to be presented with its open pages *toward* the viewer. The medieval Venetian artist misunderstood or consciously changed the Milanese model. Similarly, the stump of a cross carried by Peter has no parallel in the surviving visual evidence from late antiquity. Unlike the crosses carried by Peter in similar compositions, which rest effortlessly on his lower arm and shoulder, here he grasps the stick-like object tightly with his left hand. It has, furthermore, frequently been observed that the face of the second apostle from the left shows close similarities to the young prophet on the Porta dei Fiori from the late thirteenth century (Fig. 13);[54] the face of Paul resembles another apostle or prophet figure on the Porta dei Fiori.[55] Having established that the *traditio legis* relief is a medieval work, it seems plausible that both the relief and the portal sculpture have been carved by the same workshop in the second half of the thirteenth century.

18 City-gate sarcophagus (short side), late fourth or early fifth century. Milan, Sant'Ambrogio

[54] *Die Skulpturen von San Marco* (note 45), p. 28, no. 54; Papadopoulos (note 9), pp. 171f.

[55] Tigler (note 11), p. 69, nos. 57 and 62.

19 Venice, San Marco,
ciborium column B

20 Venice, San Marco, ciborium column D,
detail with *Theophany*

4. The Ciborium Columns

The four alabaster columns of the ciborium in San Marco's sanctuary (Fig. 19) are probably the most famous among the late antique revival objects. In nine superimposed relief bands, each divided into nine arches by an arcade, they show scenes from the lives of Mary and Christ. Each arcade is divided from the one above and below by a thick band bearing inscriptions that explain the content of the images. Scholarship largely agrees that these inscriptions are medieval, and Thomas Weigel has shown that they do not predate the early thirteenth century.[56] Column A (rear left) shows scenes from Mary's childhood and youth; column B (front left) begins with the Annunciation and depicts Christ's childhood and some miracles; column C (rear right) depicts further miracles and Christ teaching. Finally, column D (front right) shows the Passion and Crucifixion along with the Anastasis, the Ascension, and theophanic imagery of Christ ruling in heaven (Fig. 20). The latter column has been the focus of Lucchesi-Palli's work, as it furnishes the most obvious evidence for a medieval date.[57]

[56] Weigel 1997 (note 10), pp. 92–97. The medieval style of the letters might reflect a desire for legibility.

[57] Lucchesi-Palli (note 7), particularly pp. 139–148. For an overview of the scholarship see Tigler (note 11), pp. 96–100, no. 97.

21 *Theophany*, ca. 1166.
Kurbinovo, Hagios Georgios

She drew particular attention to the fact that the images of the theophany reflect a later Byzantine iconography that was not yet current in late antiquity.[58] Demus followed Lucchesi-Palli's assessment,[59] as did Hans-Michael Herzog.[60] Renato Polacco referred to the style of the columns as "neo-paleocristiano", comparing the arcades in each band to the thirteenth-century arched frames of the Pala d'Oro.[61] He posited that the columns might have been erected around the year 1209. Wladimiro Dorigo similarly argued that the tabernacle was erected around 1209 when the *procuratore* Angelo Falier renovated "tabulam altaris sancti Marci, additis gemis et perlis, duci issu".[62] Tigler refrained from an assessment and only observed the necessity for an in-depth study of the columns.[63]

A few years later, Thomas Weigel provided this much needed in-depth study, in which he re-assessed the chronology of the four columns. Based on the style of the imagery on the columns, he argued that they are sixth-century spolia from the Hagia Anastasia church in Constantinople.[64] Weigel noted slight discrepancies between the inscriptions and the images, which he considered as an indication that they were not produced at the same time.[65] However, it is best to be cautious when discussing the relationship between texts and images. The seemingly incorrect textual interpretation of images can be better comprehended as evidence of how the Venetians understood these late antique iconographies.

Weigel's central argument hinges on the damages on the upper rim of two of the columns, which according to him suggest that their current presentation is the result of spoliation.[66] Such damages could, however, have been inflicted under a variety of circumstances, for example when the raw columns were

[58] Lucchesi-Palli (note 7), pp. 130–137. Cf. Weigel 1997 (note 10), pp. 29f.
[59] Demus (note 6).
[60] Herzog (note 8), pp. 116–120.
[61] Renato Polacco, "Le colonne del ciborio di San Marco", in: *Venezia Arti*, I (1987), pp. 32–38: 36f.
[62] Quoted from *idem*, *San Marco: la Basilica d'oro*, Milan 1991, p. 128; Dorigo (note 9), p. 218.
[63] Tigler (note 11), p. 99.
[64] Weigel 1997 (note 10), p. 256.
[65] *Ibidem*, pp. 98–127.
[66] *Ibidem*, pp. 41f.

imported to the lagoon of Venice, which of course had no source of marble of its own. A recent scientific analysis of the columns' marble has not been able to solve the question of their production, since the marble originates from different sites in the Eastern Mediterranean, as does most of the reused marble in medieval Venice.[67]

Weigel's stylistic argumentation is largely geared towards undermining Lucchesi-Palli's methodology, accusing her of relying only on iconographic comparisons while disregarding the style.[68] This approach fundamentally misunderstands the character of these objects, which consciously manipulated stylistic features. Stylistic analysis as a hermeneutic tool must fail when assessing images that use older styles for their artistic expression.

Today, Lucchesi-Palli's observations remain the most convincing arguments for a medieval, Venetian provenance of the columns.[69] Theophanic scenes similar to the ones in the upper registers of column D, depicting Christ enthroned and framed by the tetramorph, are well-known from the Middle Byzantine period, for instance on the counterfaçade of Hagios Georgios at Kurbinovo, circa 1166 (Fig. 21), but do not appear earlier.[70] Ascension scenes such as the one on this column are not attested to prior to the *late* sixth century.[71] A similar case can be made for the images of the Anastasis (Fig. 22), which are not manifested before the eighth century. In order to prove his hypothesis, Weigel re-dated the beginnings of the Anastasis imagery in Byzantine art: he rejected the results of Anna Kartsonis' thorough study on the emergence of the Anastasis image in early medieval times[72] without presenting any evidence for the iconography's prior existence.[73] His suggestion that the columns with their depiction of the Anastasis were taken from the church of Hagia Anastasia – a church dedicated to the Resurrection in the fourth century, which was later dedicated to Saint Anastasia – is a questionable argument.[74]

On the same column, the figure of Saint Peter crying into a tissue after having denied knowledge of Christ (Fig. 23) is likely to be a product of the Middle Byzantine period, when highly emotional gestures entered the visual language of depictions of the Passion – the famous images of the Crucifixion at Daphni monastery in Athens (ca. 1080) and of the Threnos in Saint Panteleimon at Nerezi, North-Macedonia (1164) are good examples. Equally jarring is the frequency with which cruciform halos are depicted throughout the columns. Also, the angel swinging a censer next to the Annunciation is a typically high medieval intrusion, as has already been discussed above. Finally, this type of historiated columns and

[67] Lorenzo Lazzarini, "Indagini di laboratorio sui materiali delle colonne del ciborio", in: *Le colonne del ciborio*, Venice 2015 (= *Quaderni della Procuratoria*, X [2015]), pp. 57–63.

[68] Weigel 1997 (note 10), e.g. p. 34.

[69] In addition, Rainer Warland, review of Weigel 1997 (note 10), in: *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, XCIII (2000), pp. 248–251, has noted a wide range of curious iconographic irregularities that are incompatible with a late antique date. His arguments include the resemblance between the scenes depicting Mary in the Temple on column A and at Daphni monastery or the fact that the men presenting the dead Lazarus (column B) do not cover their noses with a tissue or a piece of fabric but by pulling up their shirts in a way that has no parallel in late antique depictions of this scene.

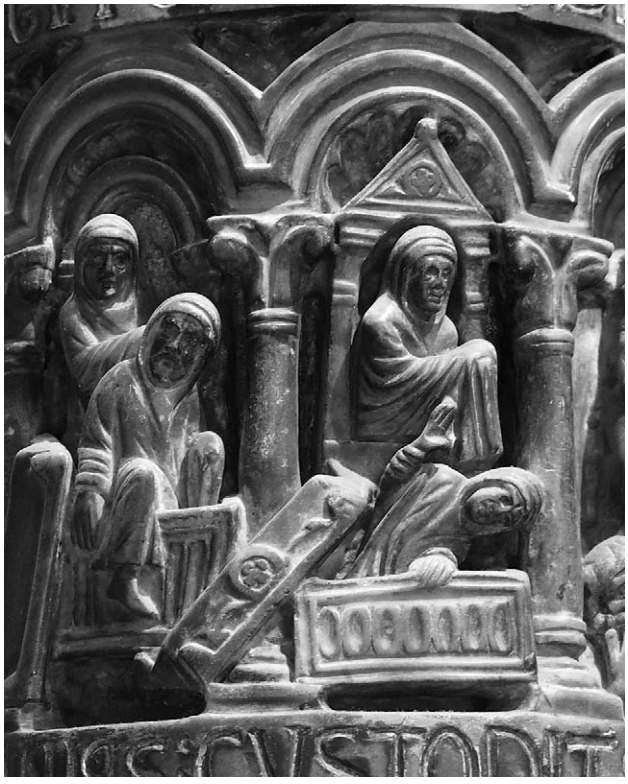
[70] For the tradition of theophanic imagery in late antiquity, see Armin F. Bergmeier, *Visionserwartung: Visualisierung und Präsenzerfahrung des Göttlichen in der Spätantike*, Wiesbaden 2017. Jutta Dresken-Weiland has recently drawn attention to the close resemblance between the tetramorph on column D and on the sixth-century flabellum from the Riha treasure (Dresken-Weiland 2020 [note 10], pp. 207f.). However, this iconography was common in the East; it is rather the theophanic composition in its entirety that is Middle Byzantine. Dresken-Weiland thereby highlights the Venetian artists' impressive knowledge of Byzantine works.

[71] Armin F. Bergmeier, "Behältnisse visueller Erfahrungen: Die Pilgerampullen von Monza und Bobbio", in: *Für Seelenheil und Lebensglück: Das byzantinische Pilgerwesen und seine Wurzeln*, conference proceedings Mainz 2015, ed. by Despoina Ariantzi/Ina Eichner, Mainz 2018, pp. 343–355: 348f.

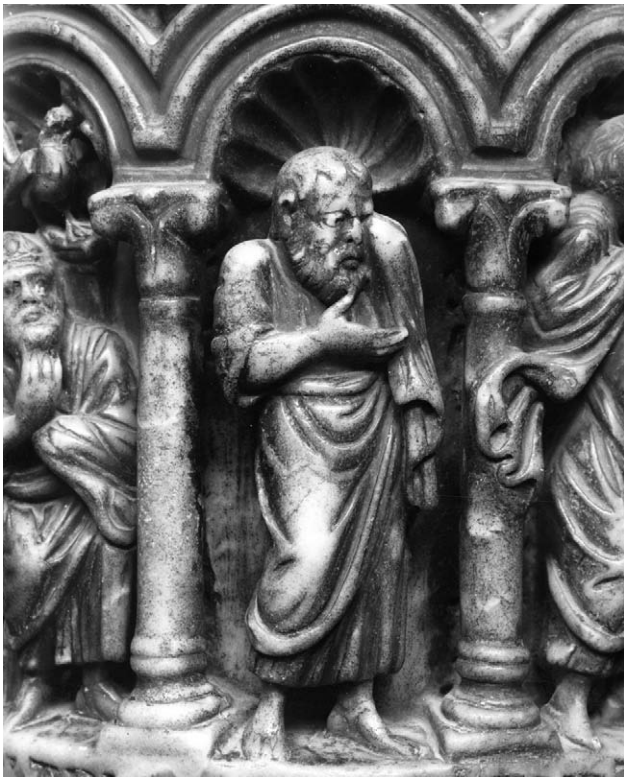
[72] Anna D. Kartsonis, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image*, Princeton, N.J., 1986, p. 70.

[73] Weigel 1997 (note 10), pp. 258–263.

[74] *Ibidem*, pp. 199–216, esp. p. 216. For the dedication of the church, see Albrecht Berger, *Untersuchungen zu den Patria Konstantinupoleos*, Bonn 1988, pp. 445f.



22 Venice, San Marco, ciborium column D, detail with *Anastasis*



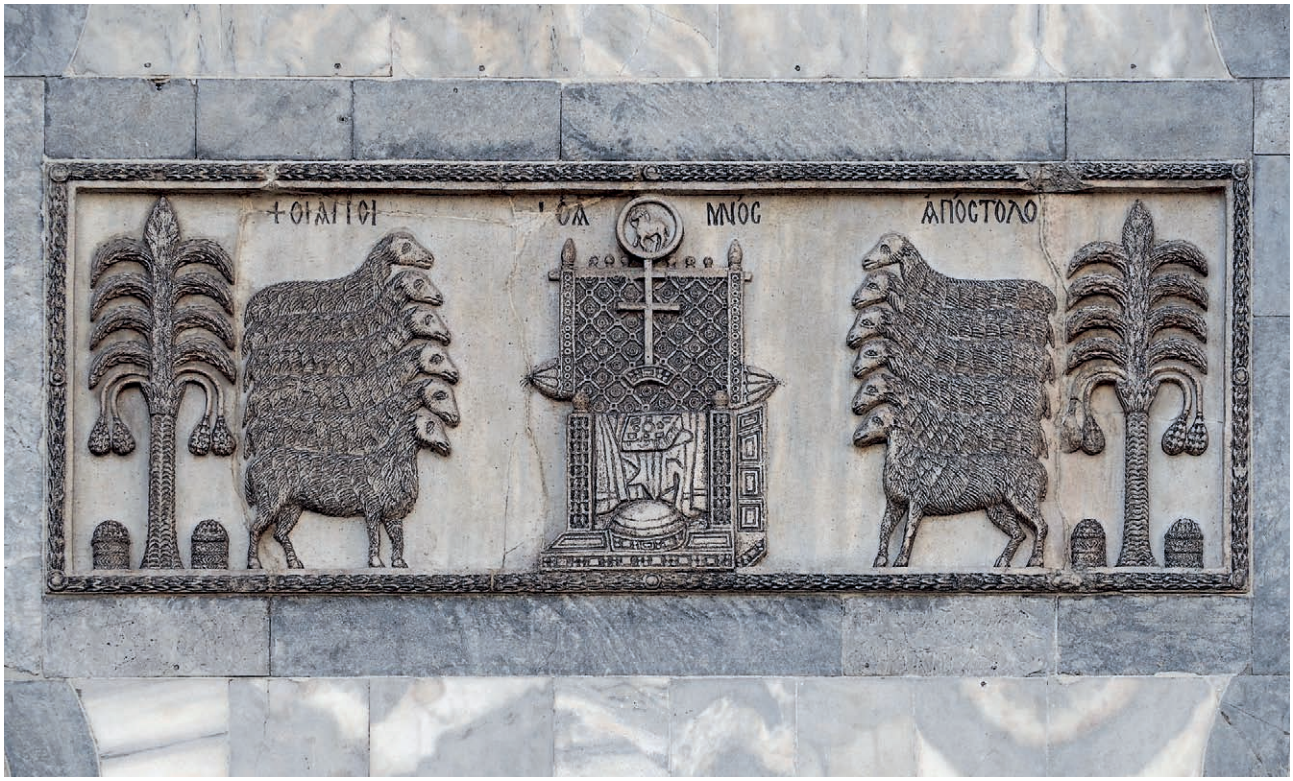
23 Venice, San Marco, ciborium column D, detail with *Saint Peter crying*

the way the images are arranged in nine superimposing bands of arcades are utterly unknown in works from the late antique period.[75]

A unique feature of the columns is the prominence assumed by the Virgin's childhood narrative, which extends over an entire column. These images are without parallel in late antiquity. Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne mentions the Marian images on column A in her two-volume work on the iconography of the Virgin in the East and the West, noting that comparable examples are very rare among the surviving artifacts from before the end of Iconoclasm.[76] In fact, the ciborium column is Lafontaine-Dosogne's only early example. This is but one further indication of a production date in the later Middle Ages, when the life of Mary was depicted frequently in a wide range of media. Again, this shows that medieval Venetian artists did not sacrifice contemporary concerns to the use of an older visual idiom; they combined both productively.

[75] Joachim Kramer, *Kapitelle des 11.–13. Jahrhunderts im Veneto als Nachgestaltungen antiker und spätantik/frühbyzantinischer Modelle und das 'revival' im Kirchenbau*, Wiesbaden 2016, p. 66. Kramer dates the columns to the early or mid-thirteenth century. A similar date is also proposed by Polacco (note 61), p. 37.

[76] Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie de l'enfance de la Vierge dans l'Empire byzantin et en Occident*, Brussels ²1992, I, pp. 35–37 and 184–196, II, pp. 22f. and 154–159. The only image securely dated to late antiquity (possibly sixth century) is an Egyptian or Syriac ivory today in the Hermitage, showing the Annunciation to Anne (*ibidem*, I, p. 185, fig. 40).



24 Venice, San Marco, north façade, *etimasia* relief

5. The *Etimasia* Relief on the North Façade

The *etimasia* relief on San Marco's north façade is located in the third bay, the so-called "arcata delle Pecorelle".[77] It depicts the empty throne (*etimasia*) surrounded by sheep and palm trees (Fig. 24). The two groups of six sheep receding as if superimposed gave the arch its name. Greek inscriptions identify the lamb in a medallion above the throne as the Lamb of God (Ο ΑΜΝΟC) and the sheep as apostles (+ ΟΙ ΑΓΙΟΙ ΑΠΟCΤΟΛΟ[ΙΙ]). This marble relief has rarely been discussed.[78] The volume of the *Quaderni della Procuratoria* dedicated to the north façade does not mention it in any of its contributions, despite reproducing it on its cover.[79] Louis Bréhier dates it to the sixth century because of iconographic similarities with Ravennate art.[80] Due to the "hardness of the forms and the dryness of the composition", Demus categorizes it as a "pseudo-byzantine" work of the eleventh century reworked in the thirteenth century.[81] Polacco cautiously refers to it as having an "intonazione

[77] Uetz and Dellermann argue that the refurbishment of the north façade should be dated to the late Duecento or the early Trecento, as suggested by the size and color of the bricks (Rudolf Dellermann/Karin Uetz, *La facciata nord di San Marco a Venezia: storia e restauri*, Verona 2018, p. 95).

[78] See Tigler (note 11), p. 75, no. 74, for the older literature.

[79] *La facciata nord*, ed. by Irene Favaretto, Venice 2006 (= *Quaderni della Procuratoria*, I [2006]).

[80] Louis Bréhier, *La sculpture et les arts mineurs byzantins*, Paris 1936, p. 62.

[81] Demus (note 2), p. 173. Similarly, Dorigo (note 9), p. 218, dates the "lastra pluteale dell'*Hetoimasía*" to the tenth or eleventh century.

paleobizantina",[82] while Tigler claims that the sixth or seventh century is the most plausible date for its making.[83]

Most visual elements in the image could be compatible with a late antique date. Palm trees and sheep are common iconographic features during that period, for example in depictions of the *traditio legis*, and so are the framing wreath with gem stones and the central image of the empty throne. Hence the late antique date frequently assigned to it by scholarship. Bréhier has observed that this image cannot date from after 692:[84] in that year, the Quinisext Council in Trullo forbade the depiction of Christ in non-human form, and while this order was ineffective in the West, it seems to have been followed in the Greek-speaking East, to which the Greek inscriptions point. Yet, because of the presence of the double cross, the relief can neither be dated long before the year 700, as first observed by Hans von der Gabelentz.[85] The earliest dated example of the cross with two vertical bars can be found on the gold solidus of Emperor Justinian II issued during his second term in office (705–711).[86] The time frame in which the work could have originated is thus limited to the late seventh century. However, the fact that apart from the gold solidus the double cross type is not found in any other media renders such a date very problematic. Holger Klein notes that the double or patriarchal cross does not fully appear in the visual culture before the ninth century.[87] In the realm of sculpture, this does not happen before the tenth century.[88] According to Kartsonis, the double cross only occurs in the second version of the iconography of the Anastasis, from the eleventh century onwards, for instance in the Anastasis mosaic at Torcello cathedral.[89] Therefore, the relief is more likely to postdate the eleventh century. However, this dating is complicated by numerous elements that point to an early date in the fifth or sixth century, including the lamb.

25 *Separation of the sheep and goats*, ca. 493–526. Ravenna, Sant'Apollinare Nuovo

From a purely stylistic perspective, the relief exhibits some unusual visual solutions. We see the throne in perspectival view from the right, while in almost all examples from Early and Middle Byzantine times, the throne is shown frontally. The backrest, located somewhat awkwardly in the middle of the seat, looks as if added onto an otherwise backless throne. Moreover, the type of backrest with pinnacles at the top and a diamond fabric is fairly common from the eighth century up until the High Middle Ages; the

[82] Polacco (note 62), p. 120.

[83] Tigler (note 11), p. 75.

[84] Bréhier (note 80), p. 62.

[85] Hans von der Gabelentz, *Mittelalterliche Plastik in Venedig*, Leipzig 1903, pp. 125f.

[86] See Erich Dinkler/Erika Dinkler-von Schubert, *s.v.* Kreuz. I, in: *Reallexikon für Byzantinische Kunst*, ed. by Klaus Wessel/Marcell Restle, V, Stuttgart 1995, pp. 2–219: 49.

[87] Holger A. Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz: Die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland*, Wiesbaden 2004, pp. 52–54.

[88] Yıldız Ötüken, "Neue Aspekte zur Datierung der mittelbyzantinischen Bauplastik in Kleinasien", in: *La sculpture Byzantine, VII^e–XII^e siècles*, conference proceedings Athens 2000, ed. by Charalambos Pennas/Catherine Vanderheyde, Athens 2008, pp. 105–122: 112f.

[89] Kartsonis (note 72), pp. 204–207.

majority of empty thrones from late antiquity lack a backrest altogether. In comparable examples the insignia (garment, diadem, book, cross) are placed on top of a cushion. The relief on the north façade, however, depicts them as if glued to the seat, while the pointed edges of the cushion appear to be stuck onto the sides of the throne as an afterthought. The absence of the central part of the cushion explains the awkward placement of the cross, which seems to float in the air. And while the oak or laurel wreath that frames the entire slab is a common ornament in fifth- and sixth-century art, in the late antique examples the two ends of the wreath or garland are bound together by one single gem. Thus, the version of the *etimasia* relief with multiple gems is unlikely to have been produced in late antiquity.

Although it can be found throughout late antiquity and the medieval period, it is worth considering the origins and significance of the motif of the empty throne and its transformation over the centuries. It appears as early as the beginning of the fifth century, for instance on the former apse wall of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. During this first stage of its existence, however, it is not yet the throne prepared for Christ's eventual return to the earth (ἑτοιμαςία). Relying on the ancient tradition of the empty chair with the insignia that symbolized the presence of the absent ruler or deity, the Christians of the Theodosian era used this non-anthropomorphic image to visualize their invisible God in the present. It was only in the Middle Byzantine period that this image of the throne was put to a different use, signifying the empty throne on which God will sit at the end of time.[90] It could be used as a stand-alone image, but was most frequently incorporated into images of the Last Judgment. This eschatological meaning had been alien to the late antique images, not because eschatological concepts did not exist but because they were not translated into images before the Middle Byzantine period.

This difference in the image's significance is important when considered in combination with the two sets of sheep. Those have some precedent in late antique iconography, but not in the context of an empty throne. Commonly, processions of sheep are shown with one sheep next to the other. Only one image survives that depicts the sheep in a comparably superimposed manner, namely the mosaic of the separation of sheep and goats on the clerestory wall at Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna (Fig. 25). This image highlights the judicial capacities of Christ in late antiquity. The empty throne, originally an image of invisible presence, acquired eschatological meaning in the context of Last Judgment images starting in the eleventh century. Thus, the conflation of an image that depicts Christ in the act of judging and the motif of the empty throne, which in the Middle Ages came to be associated with the Last Judgment, reveals the date of the relief's making. As such, the image cannot be earlier than the eleventh century. This evidence, combined with the presence of the double cross as discussed above, strongly supports a medieval date.

Here, Venetian artists combined elements from many different visual sources: the palm trees, the wreath ornament and the sheep and goats from various late antique iconographies, the empty throne from Middle and Late Byzantine eschatological imagery, and the medallion with the lamb on top of a cross from contemporary Western traditions. Significantly, the medieval artists conflated two images – empty throne and the division of sheep and goats – that in the High Middle Ages both expressed eschatological concepts. The most likely moment for the production of such visual recreations that subvert styles and cross temporal borders is the thirteenth century.

[90] On the transformation of the iconography of the empty throne, see Armin F. Bergmeier, "Volatile Images: The Empty Throne Iconography in the Early and Middle Byzantine Periods", in: *Making Ends Meet: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on the End of Times in Medieval Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism*, conference proceedings Vienna 2015, ed. by Veronika Wieser, Berlin 2020, pp. 84–122.

6. Beyond Trophies: Sharing a Common Roman History

This study has shown that style is a problematic criterion when assessing objects that consciously manipulate stylistic features. The examples discussed exhibit a deep familiarity with the late antique and Early Byzantine visual language but also reflect the concerns and preoccupations of their time. Censers were frequently inserted as signs of divine presence in medieval works. The faux-lintel of the Porta di Sant'Alipio takes up the liturgical themes of the feast day of Christmas (Nativity and Annunciation to the Shepherds) and Epiphany (Adoration of the Magi and Marriage at Cana) as did similar depictions on many church portals in the twelfth and thirteenth century, such as the tympanum of Verona cathedral. The *traditio legis* relief is a variation of a late antique theme that experienced revivals throughout the Middle Ages.[91] The ciborium columns exhibit a predilection for linear, chronological narrativity, in that they span the Virgin's and Christ's life story, which is very rare in late antiquity. The *etimasia* relief merges the motif of the empty throne with the division of goats and sheep, indicating that medieval eschatological thought not yet present in late antique imagery informed the image.

Similar recreations based on ancient and late antique models have been noted with regard to architectural sculpture, particularly in column capitals in Venice, other cities in the Veneto (especially Verona and Padua), and the entire Italian peninsula from the late eleventh century on.[92] They are *ex novo* recreations, which creatively transformed and adapted earlier models. The churches of Sant'Eufemia,[93] San Giacomo di Rialto,[94] Santi Maria e Donato in Murano,[95] Santa Fosca and the cathedral on the island of Torcello[96] as well as San Marco[97] all exhibit *ex novo* spolia, predominantly column capitals from the twelfth century, which are often mixed with actual reused pieces. What sets Venice apart from other centers in the West is the interest in Eastern-Mediterranean capital types.[98]

A column capital now in Padua, but possibly originating from Venice, illustrates this particular attention to Eastern shapes in Venice and nearby cities. It bears strong visual similarities to the Justinianic sculpture from Hagios Polyeuktos and, sawn in half, flanks the entrance of the *drogheria* Ai due Catini d'Oro on the ground floor of the Palazzo del Consiglio (Fig. 26). It might have been placed there when the arcades were walled up and turned into shops in 1774.[99] It is an à-jour impost capital with floral orna-

[91] See Bergmeier (note 49), pp. 42–52.

[92] For the Norman South, see Patrizio Pensabene, "Contributo per una ricerca sul reimpiego e il 'recupero' dell'antico nel medioevo: il reimpiego nell'architettura normanna", in: *Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale d'Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte*, ser. 3, XIII (1990), pp. 5–118.

[93] Kramer (note 75), pp. 103–108.

[94] Myriam Pilutti Namer, "Il *corpus* di capitelli della chiesa di San Giacomo di Rialto a Venezia", in: *Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale d'Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte*, ser. 3, LXVI (2011), pp. 243–251.

[95] Luigi Sperti, "Originali tardoantichi e protobizantini e imitazioni medioevali tra i capitelli della chiesa di San Donato a Murano", in: *Società e cultura in età tardoantica*, ed. by Arnaldo Marcone, Grassina 2004, pp. 229–253; Kramer (note 75), pp. 51–56.

[96] Myriam Pilutti Namer, "Tra spolia e imitazioni: i capitelli della basilica di Santa Maria Assunta a Torcello", in: *Marmora*, X (2014), pp. 79–100; Kramer (note 75), pp. 30–50. There is not a single spolia capital among those in the cathedral of Torcello.

[97] Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann *et al.*, *Corpus der Kapitelle der Kirche von San Marco zu Venedig*, Wiesbaden 1981, *passim*; Kramer (note 75), pp. 109–144, particularly pp. 110 and 112–115. See also Hans Buchwald, "The Carved Stone Ornament of the High Middle Ages in San Marco, Venice", in: *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft*, XI/XII (1963), pp. 169–210, and XIII (1964), pp. 137–170. For non-figurative relief slabs dating from the late eleventh century onwards, see Minguzzi (note 15); Fulvio Zuliani, *I marmi di San Marco: uno studio ed un catalogo della scultura ornamentale marciana fino all'XI secolo*, Venice 1969, e.g. pp. 118–120, no. 98, and p. 122, no. 99.

[98] Michael Greenhalgh, "The Discovery of Roman Sculpture in the Middle Ages: Venice and Northern Italy", in: *Venezia e l'archeologia: un importante capitolo nella storia del gusto dell'antico nella cultura artistica veneziana*, conference proceedings Venice 1988, Rome 1990, pp. 157–164: 159.

[99] Claudia Barsanti, "I 'Catini d'Oro' di Padova: spoglie costantinopolitane di VI secolo", in: *Florilegium artium: scritti in memoria di Renato Polacco*, ed. by Giordana Trovabene, Padua 2006, pp. 37–48: 38.

ments growing out of kantharoi. Claudia Barsanti has recently argued that the capital is in fact an 'original' sixth-century piece.[100] As early as 1936, Sergio Bettini had voiced his doubts about this capital being an original Constantinopolitan piece from the sixth century calling its style "incerto e rozzo".[101] The shapes and decoration of the vases do not find parallels in the surviving examples from Hagios Polyeuktos. The most striking feature precluding a Justinianic date, however, is a bead molding that frames the central floral motif on each side. It has no parallel in Early Byzantine column capitals, but resembles the medieval astragal molding around some of the motifs in the Sant'Alipio lintel.[102] It is thus most likely a piece created *ex novo* in the thirteenth century after the model of the capitals from Hagios Polyeuktos that had arrived in Venice.

A more in-depth study is needed to understand why Venetian artists worked in such a close adherence to a much older style predominantly found in the Eastern Mediterranean.[103] Some preliminary conclusions about the reasons for the production and display of the *ex novo* spolia discussed here, however, are possible. I hope that these case studies have made clear that the widespread notion of San Marco's trophy spolia needs to be abandoned. The most important church of the city was not built from spoils of war placed on its walls to exhibit the triumph over other nations. Rather, I argue, the newly made artifacts paired with spolia from the Eastern Mediterranean are documents of the strong identification of thirteenth-century Venice with Roman cultural heritage as it had survived in Byzantium. The evidence for the trophy theory is scant, and in fact when re-examined it points in the opposite direction altogether.

First, the chronology regarding the use of spolia in medieval Venice contradicts the trophy theory. It has rarely been observed that the year 1204 does not mark any turning point in the reuse of spolia in the lagoon. For instance, the portal of Santi Maria e Donato at Murano, completed around 1140, already displays ancient spolia pieces flanking the entrance.[104] Other early churches exhibit several reused Eastern Mediterranean capitals among *ex novo* recreations.[105] Therefore, this cultural practice was already well established by the time of the Fourth Crusade. The spolia displayed on San Marco's façades are generally considered to have been put in place around the year 1265. The most recent part of the church, the northern narthex, was not finished before the very end of the thirteenth century.[106] There is, thus, a gap of over half a century during which the whereabouts of the purported trophy spolia cannot be accounted for. Demus and others have assumed that reliefs were transferred from the earlier Contarini façade to the new thirteenth-century façade made up of marble sheathing.[107] The previous façade, however, was characterized by niche decorations in brick typical for Middle Byzantine churches. Those could have included spolia pieces only in very small numbers.[108]

Second, the spolia whose original context is best documented are the ones from Hagios Polyeuktos.

[100] *Ibidem.*

[101] Sergio Bettini, "Padova e l'arte cristiana d'Oriente", in: *Atti dell'Istituto Veneto di Scienze Lettere ed Arti*, XCVI (1936/37), pp. 203–297: 261.

[102] Barsanti (note 99), p. 44, recognizes this unusual feature, but still advocates a sixth-century date.

[103] This question will be addressed by a forthcoming book entitled *Venice, Anatolia, and How to Be Roman*.

[104] Hugo Rahtgens, *S. Donato zu Murano und ähnliche venezianische Bauten*, Berlin 1903, pp. 32f.

[105] For example the four ancient Corinthian and composite capitals of Asia Minor type in San Giacomo di Rialto (ca. 1152): cf. Pilutti Namer (note 94).

[106] On the building history of this part of the church see Karin Uetz/Rudolf Dellermann, "Nordquerhaus und Nordnarthex von San Marco: Bau- und Restaurierungsgeschichte", in: *San Marco* (note 16), I, pp. 110–121: 114.

[107] Demus (note 2), p. 173. For a similar argument, see See Franz Kieslinger, "Le transenne della basilica di San Marco del secolo XIII", in: *Ateneo veneto*, CXXXV (1944), pp. 57–61.

[108] On the original walls beneath the marble revetment, see Uetz/Dellermann (note 106), p. 113 and fig. 7.

26 Padua, Palazzo del Consiglio, impost capital

The circumstances of their recovery by the Venetians, however, do not lend themselves easily to a narrative of war trophies. Hagios Polyeuktos was already in ruins in the late twelfth century, long before the Fourth Crusade.[109] The case is, therefore, better described as one of recycling older building material, since ideally trophies would come from prominent intact locations.[110] A similar situation might have presented itself in the partially ruined Grand Palace, from which a relief slab might have been taken to be installed in the baptistery of San Marco. A nearly identical piece is preserved on the walls of the Ottoman bathhouse of the Küçük Aya Sofya Camii (Hagios Sergios and Bakchos).[111] The case of the four tetrarchs is similarly unclear. While their provenance from the area of Bodrum Camii is proven by the missing foot that was found there, it is impossible to reconstruct if they were still on display and intact before they were shipped to Venice.[112] The fact that the Venetians often imported marble from derelict sites rather than dismantling intact prestigious buildings is supported by two letters from 1304 and 1309. The letters ask Gabriele Dandolo and Giovanni Dandolo, respectively, to import building material from abandoned sites in the Eastern Mediterranean on their way back to Venice.[113]

Third, contemporary sources do not support the trophy theory. The written sources are either silent on the subject or – in the case of Niketas Choniates – only mention relic theft and the destruction of metal

[109] Martin Harrison, *A Temple for Byzantium: The Discovery and Excavation of Anicia Juliana's Palace-Church in Istanbul*, Austin, Tex., 1989, p. 142.

[110] Arnold Esch, "Spolien: Zur Wiederverwendung antiker Baustücke und Skulpturen im mittelalterlichen Italien", in: *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, LI (1969), I, pp. 1–64: 53f.

[111] Urs Peschlow, "Dekorative Plastik aus Konstantinopel an San Marco in Venedig", in: *Makedonika*, V (1983), pp. 406–417: 414f.

[112] See for example: Sperti (note 14), pp. 170–173.

[113] Michael Greenhalgh, *Marble Past, Monumental Present: Building with Antiquities in the Mediaeval Mediterranean*, Boston 2009, p. 434.

objects that were melted down by the Westerners.[114] The letters of Innocent III do not mention stone or larger monumental objects, but appear to be geared at condemning the looting of relics, which is widely attested.[115] The chronicle of Andrea Dandolo, written over a century after the conquest, similarly only mentions relics.[116] Conspicuous monuments are not mentioned in the sources: with regard to the quadriga, the first mention of its Constantinopolitan provenance dates to the fifteenth century.[117] A passage in Niketas Choniates mentions a quadriga displayed in the Hippodrome of Constantinople on the occasion of the visit of the Seljuk sultan Kılıç Arslan.[118] However, in Constantinople alone there were at least two quadrigas (another one was located at the Milion). If the Venetian horses are identical with the ones in the Hippodrome, they are the most likely candidate for being trophy spoils. They also might, however, have been acquired from another city in the Mediterranean before 1265, as may equally be the case for the lion of San Marco. The lion is mentioned in sources as early as 1282, but without any reference to its provenance or function as trophy. Material analyses have established that it was actually made in Anatolia or Syria and is more likely to have been imported to Venice from there, although a detour via Constantinople cannot be ruled out.[119] In 1265, doge Ranieri Zen applied to have the fortunate survival of some of the relics during the 1231 fire recognized as a miracle by the pope. However, his letter failed to mention the Venetian legend, according to which the relics had been taken from Constantinople and gifted by Enrico Dandolo.[120]

Fourth, sources written several centuries after the conquest of Constantinople make frequent mention of spolia and building materials as having been looted or taken as trophies of war. Those do not precede the fifteenth century and are therefore extremely unreliable as evidence. When building material from Constantinople is mentioned in sources before the fifteenth century, the writers do not identify these objects as spoils of victory. A chronicle falsely attributed to Enrico Dandolo, written between 1360 and 1362, mentions that San Marco was built from stones, columns, and beautiful things sent from Constantinople.[121] The source omits to specify the context of these materials as war booty, triumphal spoils, or merely as objects of commerce. Only chronicles dating to the fifteenth century or later mention the decoration of San Marco with spoils of war. The early sixteenth-century *Cronaca Bemba* even credited the ninth-century doge Giustiniano Partecipazio with

[114] Niketas Choniates, *Die Kreuzfahrer erobern Konstantinopel: Die Regierungszeit der Kaiser Alexios Angelos, Isaak Angelos und Alexios Dukas, die Schicksale der Stadt nach der Einnahme, sowie das "Buch von den Bildsäulen" (1195-1206) […]*, ed. by Franz Grabler, Graz/Vienna 1971 (Cologne [1]1958).

[115] For the letters of Innocent III (Reg. 7:208 and 8:133), see Alfred J. Andrea, *Contemporary Sources for the Fourth Crusade*, Boston *et al.* 2000, pp. 151 and 173f. Cf. Joachim Kramer, "Zur Herkunft der Spolienkapitelle", in: Deichmann *et al.* (note 97), pp. 1–8: 5f., who reads Innocent's comments as references to spolia pieces. On the looting of relics, see David M. Perry, *Sacred Plunder: Venice and the Aftermath of the Fourth Crusade*, University Park, Pa., 2015.

[116] Andrea Dandolo, *Chronica per extensum descripta: aa. 46–1280 d.C.*, ed. by Ester Pastorello, Bologna 1938–1958 (*Rerum italicarum scriptores*, ser. II, XII.1), p. 280.

[117] Licia Borrelli Vlad/Anna Guidi Toniato, "The Origins and Documentary Sources of the Horses of San Marco", in: *The Horses of San Marco, Venice*, exh. cat. London 1979, Ivrea 1979, pp. 127–136: 127.

[118] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium: Annals […]*, transl. Harry J. Magoulias, Detroit 1984, pp. 67f.

[119] See, most recently, Romedio Schmitz Esser, "Der Löwe von San Marco", in: *Löwe, Wölfin und Greif: Monumentale Tierbronzen im Mittelalter*, conference proceedings Venice 2017, ed. by Joanna Olchawa, Berlin 2020, pp. 93–120.

[120] Dandolo (note 116), pp. 393f. See also Perry (note 115), pp. 153 and 167; Michael Angold, review of *idem*, in: *Renaissance Quarterly*, LXIX (2016), pp. 706f.: 707.

[121] "San Marco fu fabbricada delle piere colonne et Zoieli adutti de Constantinopoli con Gallie [galee] et Nave" (*Documenti per la storia dell'augusta ducale Basilica di San Marco in Venezia dal nono secolo sino alla fine del decimo ottavo: dall'Archivio di Stato e dalla Biblioteca Marciana in Venezia*, ed. by Ferdinando Ongania, Venice 1886, p. 211, no. 823). On the date of the chronicle and the identification of its author as "Enrico Giovanni detto Spirito", see Antonio Carile, *La cronachistica veneziana (secoli XIII–XVI) di fronte alla spartizione della Romania nel 1204*, Florence 1969, pp. 45 and 48–53. See also Thomas Madden's critique of early modern chronicles claiming that Enrico Dan-

building San Marco from trophy spolia ("spoglie della vittoria") taken from the Islamic rulers of Sicily.[122] The Capitello del Crocifisso, a ciborium with a miraculous painted cross in the nave of San Marco, is mentioned in sixteenth-century sources as having been sent from Constantinople to Venice by Enrico Dandolo.[123] However, the capitals of this ciborium are of thirteenth-century Venetian production. This fact calls into question the assumption that the structure as a whole had been sent back to Venice as a spoil of war by Dandolo or someone else. Therefore, we have no written proof that the Venetians looted the marble used for the ciborium or that they thought of it as trophies before the sixteenth century. The misidentification of the famous Pilastri Acritani near the southern façade of the Basilica is a case in point. For centuries, they had been misinterpreted as trophies conquered in the war against the Genoese, an interpretation based on wrong information from Venetian chronicles dating to the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.[124] The error was only discovered in 1960, when the original site of Hagios Polyeuktos in Istanbul was excavated. The pillars belonged to the ruined late antique complex that was under Venetian jurisdiction in the thirteenth century.

Fifth, when compared with the Pisan attitude towards the display of victory trophies – for which there is no shortage in the sources –, the Venetian rejection of the display of trophy spolia becomes even more conspicuous. The cathedral of Pisa was famously erected from the booty made during the conquest of Mallorca in 1115. The sources pertaining to this event have been recently analyzed and discussed in this journal by Anna Rosa Calderoni Masetti.[125] She considers Pisan chronicles (the *Gesta triumphalia per Pisanos facta*, the *Liber Maiorichinus*, and the *Annales Pisani*), triumphal inscriptions such as the one on the Porta Aurea in the city wall (today over the door of the Chiesa dei Galletti in Lungarno), hagiographic texts, poems, as well as Arab sources recording the taking of loot and slaves. All of these were written in close proximity to the victorious expedition during the twelfth century.[126] The fact that similar expressions are so conspicuously absent from Venetian sources from the thirteenth and even the fourteenth centuries cannot be an accident of history; the absence must reflect reality. Anybody arguing for a triumphalist attitude on the part of the Venetians would have to reconcile its suppression in the sources with the alleged contemporary display of trophies on façades for every visitor to see.

But what, if not triumphalism, was expressed through the imitation of a style that was many centuries old? The reuse of spolia and in some cases even the *ex novo* creation of seemingly old artifacts were common in medieval Italy and beyond.[127] But while most Italian cities turned to classical and often Western

dolo had marble sent to Venice (Thomas F. Madden, *Enrico Dandolo and the Rise of Venice*, Baltimore, Md., 2003, p. 174).

[122] *Documenti* (note 121), pp. 1f., no. 8.

[123] *Ibidem*, p. 211, no. 822. See also Kramer (note 75), p. 118, note 226. Andrea Dandolo does not mention the painted cross among his list of relics sent to Venice after the capture of Constantinople (Dandolo [note 116]).

[124] Robert S. Nelson, "The History of Legends and the Legends of History: The Pilastri Acritani in Venice", in: *San Marco, Byzantium, and the Myths of Venice*, conference proceedings Baltimore, Md., 2007, ed. by *idem*/Henry Maguire, Washington, D.C., 2010, pp. 63–90: 78, note 48.

[125] Anna Rosa Calderoni Masetti, "Prede belliche dai paesi dell'Islam nelle fonti pisane dell'XI e XII secolo", in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, LXI (2019), pp. 146–167. See also Giuseppe Scalia, "'Romanitas' pisana tra XI e XII secolo: le iscrizioni romane del duomo e la statua del console Rodolfo", in: *Studi medievali*, ser. 3, XIII (1972), pp. 791–843; Marc von der Höh, "Trophäen und Gefangene: Nicht-schriftliche Erinnerungsmedien im hochmittelalterlichen Pisa", in: *Stadt zwischen Erinnerungsbewahrung und Gedächtnisverlust*, conference proceedings Esslingen am Neckar 2010, ed. by Joachim J. Halbekann/Ellen Widder/Sabine von Heusinger, Ostfildern 2015, pp. 147–174; Giovanna Tedeschi Grisanti, "Il reimpiego di marmi antichi a Pisa nell'XI secolo" in: *Niveo de marmore: l'uso artistico del marmo di Carrara dall'XI al XV secolo*, ed. by Enrico Castelnuovo, Genoa 1992, pp. 76–78; Henrike Haug, "Beute: Pisa, Genua und die Königin von Mallorca", in: *Bild – Ding – Kunst*, ed. by Gerhard Wolf/Kathrin Müller, Berlin/Munich 2015, pp. 15–25. For Genoa see Rebecca Müller, Sic hostes Ianua frangit: *Spolien und Trophäen im mittelalterlichen Genua*, Weimar 2002.

[126] Calderoni Masetti (note 125), pp. 147–152.

[127] See for example Dale Kinney, "Spolia from the Baths of Caracalla in

Roman models for inspiration, Venice deployed Eastern Roman models (such as capitals with windswept acanthus and various types of Justianianic impost capitals), preferably from the post-classical period. Similarly, within the realm of figurative sculpture, Venice adopted Eastern styles and formats from late antiquity and the Middle Byzantine period. A similar choice of post-classical models can be witnessed in the Eastern Roman Empire before 1204 and after the recapture of Constantinople from the Latins in 1261, when the artists of the Palaiologan period drew their inspiration from Theodosian sculpture of the fifth century.[128]

This focus on the period between Constantine and Heraklios finds a striking parallel in Byzantine history writing. For Byzantine writers looking back to the history of the Roman Empire from its origins to their own present, late antiquity was thought to be its high point. Cyril Mango and more recently András Németh have discussed the fact that late antiquity features prominently in Byzantine historiography, being highlighted as the ideal time period.[129] Thus, by embracing Eastern forms and focusing on exactly this period, Venetians visually expressed a cultural identity and a history they shared with the Eastern Roman Empire. Given that there can be no doubt that the people of the Eastern Mediterranean considered what we today call "Byzantium" to be identical with the Roman Empire, the underpinnings of Venetian visual culture must be re-interpreted.[130] Rather than triumphantly displaying looted objects from Constantinople, the façades of San Marco visually embraced and adopted the notion of *romanitas* as it was epitomized in the material culture over and above the purview of the Roman emperors. Such speaks to the power and longevity of this culture that even after the conquest of Constantinople its appeal was retained throughout the thirteenth century. Only at the beginning of the modern era was a re-orientation of Venice towards Western concepts and aesthetic criteria ushered in.

Sta. Maria in Trastevere", in: *The Art Bulletin*, LXVIII (1986), pp. 379–397; Pensabene (note 92); Mathews (note 1), pp. 43–60.

[128] Hans Belting, "Zur Skulptur aus der Zeit um 1300 in Konstantinopel", in: *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, ser. 3, XXIII (1972), pp. 63–100.

[129] András Németh, *The* Excerpta Constantiniana *and the Byzantine Appropriation of the Past*, Cambridge *et al.* 2018, pp. 165–177. See also Cyril Mango, "Byzantinism and Romantic Hellenism", in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXVIII (1965), pp. 29–43: 33.

[130] On the unfortunate discrepancy between the modern scholarly denomination "Byzantine Empire" and the historically more accurate self-identification as Roman Empire, see Anthony Kaldellis, *Romanland: Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium*, Cambridge 2019.

Abstract

This article argues against the wide-spread assumption that San Marco's façade decoration is an agglomeration of triumphal spolia, often said to be looted during the Fourth Crusade (1204). However, many of the alleged trophy spolia from Constantinople are, in fact, works produced *ex novo* by Venetian artists of the thirteenth century. The five case studies presented in this article demonstrate that these sculptural works are not late antique works, as has been increasingly argued by scholarship since the 1980s, but medieval recreations inspired by late antique and Byzantine visual culture. Instead of reading Venice's medieval material culture as the product of looting and the desire to display trophies, we should understand it as a visual reflection of the city's identification with the cultural heritage of the Eastern Mediterranean. This hypothesis is not only supported by the realization that large parts of the decoration are pieces created *ex novo* instead of trophy spolia, but also by contemporary written sources. No documents from before the early modern period mention any trophies that had been taken from Constantinople to Venice in order to be put on display. The scant evidence we have rather points to the import of marble to Venice from sites that were no longer in use. The reason for this artistic effort is not to create a new Constantinople, but rather to visibly embrace the (Eastern) Roman legacy and to visualize the presence of a sustained and complex Roman history in thirteenth-century Venice.

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