

This article was downloaded by: [Ittai WEINRYB]

On: 24 October 2011, At: 06:48

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Word & Image

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/twim20>

### The inscribed image: negotiating sculpture on the coast of the Adriatic Sea

Ittai Weinryb

Available online: 17 Oct 2011

To cite this article: Ittai Weinryb (2011): The inscribed image: negotiating sculpture on the coast of the Adriatic Sea, Word & Image, 27:3, 322-333

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02666286.2011.541133>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

# The inscribed image: negotiating sculpture on the coast of the Adriatic Sea

ITTAI WEINRYB

On the morning of 8 December, 1100, an unoccupied boat reached the Adriatic shore near the city of Ravenna. On the boat, so the legend informs us, was only one object: a relief icon of the Virgin in an orant posture, bearing only the abbreviations of her title as the Mother of God (figure 1). The sculpted icon bore no further inscriptions, nor any text that might indicate the circumstances behind its making.<sup>1</sup>

Like other objects washing up from the sea, the orant of Ravenna represented otherworldly forms. At the very least, it was perceived as presenting a form foreign to its place of arrival.<sup>2</sup> Its having come without concrete circumstances to narrate and, in many ways, to decipher may very well have contributed to its mystique as an object that was alien to the environment in which it was installed.<sup>3</sup>

The Ravenna orant forms part of a larger group of works that produced a similar otherworldly awe and that scholarship has labeled Byzantine relief icons. They appear on the coast of the Adriatic, from Caorle in the north to Messina in Sicily. Although fragmented, their survival indicates a more extensive phenomenon of monumental Byzantine sculpture on the Adriatic coast. In many cases, these relief icons were installed on the exterior of churches, but were not part of a large decorative program.<sup>4</sup>

Ever since Reinhold Lange published his works on Byzantine sculpture, which cataloged some of the surviving relief icons, their origins and the circumstances of their making have been at the center of scholarly debate.<sup>5</sup> Scholars have distinguished between Venetian relief icons, especially those installed on the exterior of the church of San Marco, and the relief icons scattered along the Adriatic coast. Masters of stylistic analysis, such as Otto Demus, dealt with the problems of the dating and provenance of these icons through extensive sets of comparisons. Until now, however, no definitive study of the making and installation of the relief icons on the Adriatic coast has been undertaken. Some claim that they arrived as part of the loot of the Fourth Crusade of 1204.<sup>6</sup> Others see the icons as objects made in Constantinople in the late thirteenth century and later sent from Constantinople to Italy.<sup>7</sup> Yet another school of thought declares these icons were carved in Italy and suggests dates spanning from the later eleventh century to the late thirteenth.<sup>8</sup> Reliefs like the one of St. Demetrios located on the façade of San Marco present such high-quality carving that it is extremely hard to affiliate it

with other works originating in Constantinople, thus strengthening the possibility that it was carved in Italy, perhaps even in Venice itself. It must be noted, however, that the entire debate concerning the provenance and dating of the relief icons has been conducted by scholars of Byzantine art who avoid looking into the development of sculpture in twelfth-century Italy.<sup>9</sup>

Only in the 1928 dissertation of Trude Krautheimer-Hess, which deals with the development of Romanesque sculpture in eastern Lombardy, does one find a strong and convincing argument for the influence of Byzantine sculpture on works of early Romanesque sculpture bordering the shores of the Adriatic.<sup>10</sup> For example, Krautheimer-Hess suggests that the carving of the folds in the lower front part of the dress worn by the Virgin by Niccolò on the portal of the Cathedral of Ferrara bears a resemblance to that of the Ravenna orant. Similar folds, as well as the carving of features such as the round and clear face of the Virgin, can also be found in another work signed by Niccolò on the tympanum of the Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta in Verona (figure 2).<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, the work of Krautheimer-Hess has been completely overlooked by Byzantinists working on the question of the relief icons. This article will follow Krautheimer-Hess's argument to the effect that the Byzantine relief icons, or at least some of them, were carved in the late eleventh or early twelfth century — before the development of the sculpture of Niccolò. Its goal, however, is neither to date the relief icons nor to determine how and to what extent they represent early precursors to the Romanesque sculpture of Niccolò, but rather to focus on the interaction between these two types of sculptural expression along the Adriatic coast.

Apart from both being carved out of a single stone, the basic affinity between the icons and the sculpture of Niccolò lies in their similar place of installation. Many relief icons were incorporated into the façades of churches.<sup>12</sup> A striking example can be found in Ancona, where the icon is installed over the threshold to the church of Santa Maria della Piazza (figure 3).<sup>13</sup> Similar examples, like the now-lost relief of St. Clement, which was installed above the threshold to a chapel by the same name in the church of San Marco in Venice, testify to the unique nature of these images as Byzantine markers of thresholds. Given that they date to the second half of the eleventh century, they represent pre-Romanesque examples of monumental



Figure 1. Relief icon of Mary in Orant. c. 1100. Ravenna, Santa Maria Porto Fuori. Photo: Scala/Art Resources, NY.

sculpture on the exterior of churches. Even if these relief icons were carved in situ and then installed on church façades, they undoubtedly represent a primordial moment of monumental sculpture on the exterior of churches along the Adriatic coast of Italy.<sup>14</sup>

This group of relief icons shares one further critical aspect: other than the abbreviations marking the name of the sculpted figure, inscriptions were not used as tools to mediate between image and viewer.<sup>15</sup> By virtue of their placement on the exterior of the church, however, the relief icons nevertheless became part of the medieval public environment where texts in the form of inscriptions were still the dominant medium. Denuded of text and thus devoid of history, icons such as the orant of Ravenna arrived in a western medieval environment in which

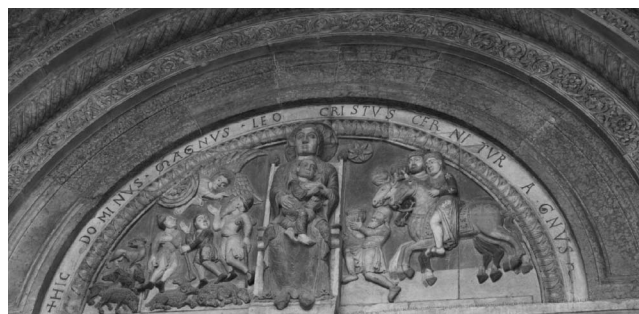


Figure 2. Nicolò, Mary enthroned. Twelfth century, before 1178. Verona, Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta. Photo: Author.



Figure 3. Façade with relief icon above the tympanum, first half thirteenth century. Ancona, Santa Maria della Piazza. Photo: Author.

public inscriptions — that is to say, inscriptions covering the outside walls of edifices — decorated the civic landscape. These inscriptions functioned not just as bearers of literary content that could be deciphered by an attentive reader, but also as authoritative representations of those texts. As signs, inscriptions also functioned as representational markers of text, that is, as references to the existence of literacy as a form of cultural distinction rather than an embodiment of functioning literacy itself.<sup>16</sup>

In one of the pioneering studies of the history and function of the public inscription, Armando Petrucci refers to, among others, the inscription on the Cathedral of Salerno which was made in the second half of the eleventh century, around the time when the relief icons appeared on the Adriatic coast. He explains it not just as a return to ancient epigraphic models, but also as a means 'of conveying of a political message that was expressed through innovative aesthetic-formal solutions.'<sup>17</sup>



Petrucci believes that the aesthetic mode specific to public inscriptions has its origins in concepts of invasion — he names the Norman invasion of Italy in 1075–1076 as the beginning of the tradition of medieval public inscriptions — or at least in the interrelations between communities that resulted from the occupation of lands. Taking Petrucci's thesis as a point of departure, we should consider what effect the appearance of icons such as the Ravenna orant had on the predominately inscription-centered public environment of the Italian coast. This new form of sculpted image, itself part of a revived medium, must have altered the way in which the public environment was perceived.

The monumental sculpture that developed in response to the arrival of the Byzantine relief icons shares many characteristics with the relief icons. For instance, the tympanum sculpture that developed in the early twelfth century in the Veneto, Emilia Romagna, and the Marche shared aspects of both placement and functionality with the icons.<sup>18</sup> The sculpture of St. Zeno on the tympanum of his eponymous church in Verona offers an example (figure 4). Like the relief icons, it is cut from a single stone.<sup>19</sup> The sculpture of St. Zeno, in keeping with the rest of the Romanesque sculpture from the area of this period, also presents a problematic history in terms of its dating. Although all scholars agree that it was sculpted after the great earthquake of 1117, there is disagreement as to how long after that disaster it was actually made. Some scholars, based on sporadic inscriptions, date it to 1178, whereas others date it earlier, to 1138.<sup>20</sup> A tympanum of the church dedicated to St. George in Argenta, which has several features in common with the Zeno tympanum, is securely dated by an inscription to 1120 (figure 5). The date of the Argenta tympanum pushes the dating of the Zeno closer to the first half of the twelfth century.<sup>21</sup>

The sculpture of St. Zeno belongs to a group of tympana which are ascribed to a sculptor who signed his name as Niccolò. In addition to St. Zeno, Niccolò's name is also attached



Figure 4. Niccolò, St. Zeno. Twelfth century, before 1178. Verona, San Zeno Maggiore. Photo: Author.

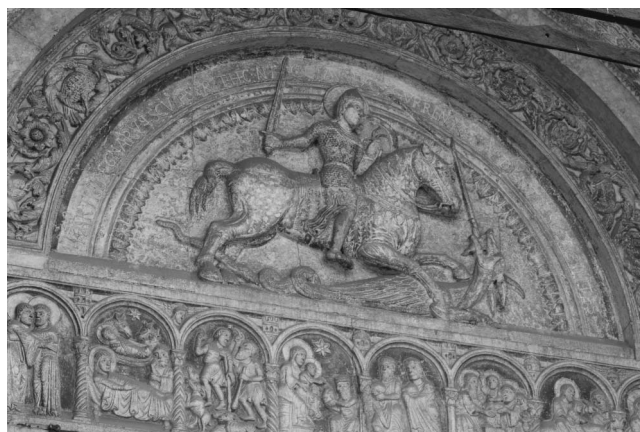


Figure 5. Niccolò, St. George fighting the Dragon. Twelfth century, before 1178. Ferrara, Cathedral of San Giorgio. Photo: Author.

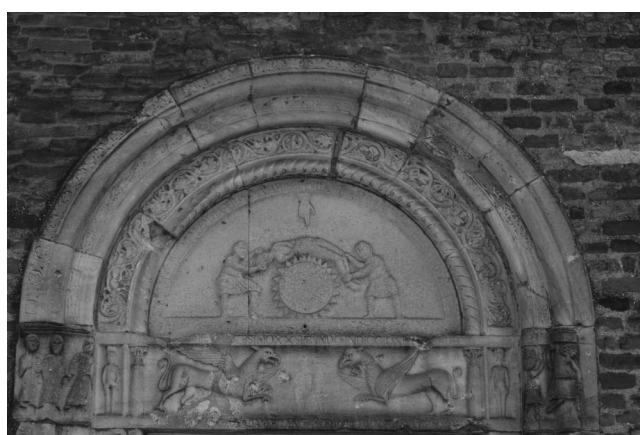


Figure 6. Niccolò, The martyrdom of St. George. Argenta, 1120. San Giorgio in Argenta. Photo: Author.

to tympanum sculpture at the cathedral of San Giorgio in Ferrara (figure 6) and the Cathedral of Verona. Together with the tympanum at the church of San Giorgio in Argenta, these provide the first instances of tympanum sculpture on the shores of the Adriatic and represent the earliest moments of iconic, non-narrative tympanum sculpture in north-east Italy.<sup>22</sup> The tympana sculptures are linked to the relief icons in that they both present themselves as iconic sculptures and share a similar functionality on the threshold of the holy house. As the icons and the tympanum sculptures also share the same environment on the Adriatic coast, it would be useful to try to look at the tympana together with the relief icons not as a part of a diachronic historical development of sculpture along lines of stylistic and iconographical argumentation, but rather as corresponding images operating in a defined spatial setting. It is important to reiterate that relief icons such as the orant of Ravenna were objects that, according to legend, entered into the environment of the Adriatic coast. Thus, in this case, the horizontal movement of objects across geographical terrain

generated an alteration of type and means of image production in the defined geographical environment into which they were imported.

The Adriatic coast, especially its northern stretches, was, at least from the seventh century, an area with a notable Byzantine presence. Since that period, Latin rule over these places had changed hands through endless conquests. By the twelfth century, the presence of Greek settlement was not as strong as it has been and cannot be compared with the continuing Greek presence in the south. As a result, looking into two similar but distinct sculptural forms that share the same environment becomes less a question of political identification than a question of taste. As the Byzantine icons were placed on the thresholds of churches at an earlier date than the Latin tympana, changing taste or theological considerations — at least those concerned with religious problems relating to the manufacture of sculpture in that early stage — are more probable reasons for the creation of the Latinized tympana as competing sculptural objects on the outside of the church.<sup>23</sup>

Although the icons and the tympana shared a certain functionality and some stylistic affinities, they diverged insofar as the latter include lengthy inscriptions. In all the Adriatic tympana, the borders of the lunette are typically framed by an inscription that traces the base of the lunette as well as its hemispherical borders. In the San Zeno tympanum, the words circumscribe Zeno and the supporting figures, thus creating a border between the pictorial plane of the tympanum and the rest of the façade. Throughout the corpus of Adriatic tympana, as in the case of St. Zeno, the inscription serves to frame or enclose the sculpted body in the center of the tympanum.

Lengthy inscriptions on church exteriors were traditionally intended to commemorate construction. However, when accompanying sculptures or painting, inscriptions also served as captions and thus functioned as didactic tools in the narration of and commentary on the images they accompanied. At San Zeno, for example, an inscription on the tower dated to 1049 commemorated construction, and another inscription on the south-east wall, just right of the façade, dated to 1178, recorded the completion of the renovation of the church.<sup>24</sup> Yet these inscriptions are more than just passive records of historical facts. By virtue of their monumentality, they also commemorate eternally the foundation of the church in the public environment. Like the monumental image, the monumental inscription serves to revivify past time in a present, communal space.

Inscriptions also participate in the decorative programs of other churches on the Adriatic. Quotations from the Old Testament, as well as captions commenting on specific scenes, create a grid of text that is part of the overall pictorial program of these churches, yet at the same time function in the same sphere in which commemorative inscriptions operated. Rather than being simply on display, therefore, inscriptions accompanying images had a role as an intermediary between the image and the viewer. The role of the accompanying inscription has been traditionally understood as didactic. In other words, their

function is understood as being to narrate, explain, and decipher the image. In many cases, these inscriptions are regarded as captions, the function of which was to comment on what was happening in the image, perhaps providing a rationale for the existence of the image itself. Inscriptions could also refer to a historical event, the commemoration of which was the reason for creating the image.<sup>25</sup>

The exterior of the church — the public sphere where these inscriptions and the early phases of images such as the relief icons appeared — became an experimental site for the development of early twelfth-century art. Not only images, but also texts in the form of inscriptions were rediscovered as bearers of literary content that would be deciphered by the reader, as well as authoritative representations of a text. In the public environment, in the field exterior to the church, monumental words and images constantly refashioned their relations to other media, thus creating reciprocal experience between observer, epigraphy, and image on the outside of the church.

The interrelationship of inscription and image raises multiple issues. Scholars such as Jean-Claude Bonne, M.T. Clanchy, Kirk Ambrose, and Stefano Riccioni have advanced the notion of 'visual poetics,' according to which inscriptions deliver a supplementary meaning that is not connoted by their content or their role as text accompanying an image.<sup>26</sup> From this point of view, the text and the image constitute two independent visual fields that relate to one another, first and foremost because of their juxtaposition. Text and image are thus combined into a dense visual display that is more than the sum of the meanings of each medium. A certain reception of an image could be derived from understanding the amalgam which the image and inscriptions created together. The ontological question of text and image and their interrelation as a composite is the striking feature in the Adriatic tympana, as well as their main point of departure from the Byzantine relief icons.

The Adriatic tympana group is the earliest example of Italian monumental sculpture to include a circumscribing inscription bordering their lunettes.<sup>27</sup> As such, they respond to the uncircumscribed relief icons that appeared along the Adriatic coast.<sup>28</sup> They also present, for the first time, life-size sculpted bodies on the exterior of churches. In doing so, the tympana correspond with another primordial example of monumental sculpture on the Adriatic coast: ecclesiastical thrones. Thrones such as that at the Cathedral of San Nicola in Bari (figure 7), traditionally dated to the late eleventh century, are often thought to mark the origins of monumental sculpture in medieval Italy. Other examples include the throne at the Cathedral of San Sabino in Canosa di Puglia (figure 8), dated to the first half of the twelfth century, and the throne at San Clemente in Rome (figure 9), composed of fourth-century spolia. Both the thrones at Bari and Canosa di Puglia are adorned with very minimal figurative sculpture. The thrones' backrests are circumscribed by inscriptions indicating for whom the throne was made and on what occasion. When a bishop sat enthroned, the inscription circumscribed his very body, creating a textual border. The



Figure 7. Episcopical throne. c. 1100. Bari, San Nicola. Photo: Author.

body of the bishop was thus enclosed by the inscription in the same manner that the sculpted body on the tympana was circumscribed.<sup>29</sup>

The backrest inscriptions were not carved to be read in a normal fashion. Rather, they were positioned more as ornamental banderoles than as easily legible texts. Visually, these inscriptions functioned as ornament encircling the body of the bishop and effectively defining his limits. This definition of limits, which also expresses a certain understanding of space, is especially evident in the throne at San Clemente in Rome. The throne there is carved from a fourth-century tombstone; the word *Martyr* is still visible from its previous use. The throne was fabricated during the so-called restoration of Rome in the twelfth century, and though it was composed of a piece of spolia, its makers considered it necessary to add the circumscribing inscription. Thus, for the fourth-century tombstone to operate as a twelfth-century ecclesiastical throne, it was deemed necessary to add a circumscribing inscription that would frame the body of the seated bishop.<sup>30</sup> The backrest of another twelfth-century throne, this one in San Pietro di Castello, the erstwhile Cathedral of Venice (figure 10), was fashioned from an Islamic tombstone. Arabic script proceeds around the semicircular edges of the backrest, and would have thus framed the seated bishop with an Arabic text, once again highlighting his borders. In sum, the trend



Figure 8. Episcopical throne. Early twelfth century. Canosa di Puglia, Cathedral of San Sabino. Photo: Author.



Figure 9. Throne. Early twelfth century. Rome, San Clemente. Photo: Author.

of furnishing the backrests of thrones with a circumscribing inscription that borders the seated bishop corresponds with the concurrent tendency to circumscribe the sculpted bodies





Figure 10. Throne. First half twelfth century. Venice, Cathedral of San Pietro in Castello. Photo: Author.

displayed on the tympana of churches along the Adriatic. In the initial encounter between viewer and inscription, the letters would appear first and foremost as a visual marker, functioning as border and frame, and only secondarily as a bearer of literary content.<sup>31</sup>

Such semicircular inscriptions have an ancient pedigree and a persistent function that further articulates the meaning behind the circumscribed sculpted figures on the tympana and the seated bishop on the throne. Bordering or delimiting the space occupied by the body has a long tradition that extends to pre-Christian Roman roots. The *imago clipeata*, the iconic image of a ruler, was originally painted on round shields, thus creating an image of the ruler enclosed in a circle. The portrait of the ruler enclosed in a roundel became part of the imperial cult and often served as an apotropaic device.<sup>32</sup> Circular frames were also standard in representations of the dead in late Roman culture. The rich dual meaning of the circumscribed image — as a protective device of the ruler or as a commemorative frame for the deceased — was appropriated by Christian art and employed throughout the Middle Ages. In Christian contexts, the circular frame most often connoted the divine nature of

the God who had ascended into the heavens, whom the frame actively separates from the terrestrial world.<sup>33</sup>

Defining the limits is a process in which the circumscribed person, for instance, the bishop on the throne, is made contiguous with borders external to his own body. The question of selfhood and its so-called rise in the twelfth century is a much debated issue. Colin Morris has dealt with the notion, showing how the humanism considered characteristic of the Renaissance existed already in the twelfth century.<sup>34</sup> He argues that self in the modern sense of the word, as a reciprocal process of self-fashioning, was actually a medieval invention. In the controversy that followed the publication of Morris's book, medieval scholars discovered that in the twelfth century self meant something different from what it means in modern times. In a path-breaking article on the self, Caroline Walker Bynum explained that the twelfth-century discovery of the self was actually a discovery of group identity (and thus one's ability to elect an affiliation with a group) rather than the realization of modern individuality.<sup>35</sup> Jean-Claude Schmitt, Bernard McGinn, and Jérôme Baschet all demonstrated that the so-called discovery of the self actually meant the rise of interest in anthropology and in the other, by which the definition of a group selfhood could be generated.<sup>36</sup>

According to these scholars, the classical definitions of medieval self changed in the twelfth century into a category that permitted groups to define themselves and the environments in which they were situated. In her study of the relation between the self and space in the twelfth century, Sarah Spence observed: 'Space and the body (the self) had come to assume preeminence denied them in the early Middle Ages.'<sup>37</sup> For Spence, a body could also mean the corpus of a political organism. Just as an individual corporeal body operates in space, so too the metaphorical body of society operates within a specific setting. Inscriptions that border thrones or sculptures limit the body, whether human or sculpted, and define the space that remains exterior to the inscription. In the moment of the rise of iconic sculpture on the thresholds of churches and the construction of ecclesiastical thrones celebrating the foundation of these churches, the articulation of a particular communal self embodied by the public figure of the bishop or the sculpted body of the saint could very well represent a self-conscious counter to other types of images made in the same medium, such as relief icons. In any case, it is significant that the notion of the self, either as part of a group identity or as involved in a process of anthropological investigation of 'others' to arrive at a definition of the self, coincided with the rise of the public image and the public inscription.

Thus far, I have avoided reading the circumscribing inscriptions found on the tympana. Reading these inscriptions, however, only further clarifies their function. Indeed, moving into the interpretation of each of the inscriptions in the group illuminates how the function of these circumscribing inscriptions extends beyond their pictorial use as a bordering ornamental device or a mere 'word displayed.' The exterior inscription

on the San Zeno tympanum reads: 'Let us praise Niccolò, the skilled craftsman who sculpted this; and let us beg the Lord Christ to grant him the Kingdom of Heaven above.'<sup>38</sup> The semicircular inscriptions around the other Niccolò tympana denote the same idea. For instance, on the main tympanum of the Cathedral of Ferrara, above the sculpture of St. George fighting the dragon, the inscription reads: 'May the peoples coming to visit this place forever praise Niccolò, the skilled craftsman who sculpted this.'<sup>39</sup> At the Cathedral of Verona, the inscription circumscribing the Adoration of the Magi and the Annunciation to the Shepherds reads: 'Here the Lord, the great lion, is seen as a lamb.'<sup>40</sup> The viewer who raises his or her gaze sees in a roundel above the tympanum a figure of Christ as a lamb and immediately above it an inscription that proceeds across the entire width of the porch: 'The peoples coming to visit forever praise him — Niccolò, the skilled craftsman who sculpted this.'<sup>41</sup> Here, the inscription celebrating the work of the artist borders, so to speak, not just the tympanum itself but also the eight sculpted figures of Old Testament prophets and the hero Roland that flank the door of the church to both sides and may explain why the inscription not only proceeds around the tympanum but, in a sense, circumscribes the entire porch.

The final example of the group of Adriatic tympana is found at the church of San Giorgio in Argenta. The small-sized church, which dates back to late antiquity, is found on the road leading from Ravenna to Ferrara, in the heart of the Marche. During renovations in the first half of the twelfth century, it was decorated with one of the earliest sculpted tympana of Romanesque Italy. The tympanum, dated to 1120, represents, to my knowledge, the first depiction of the martyrdom of St. George in the Latin West and is preceded by only a few representations of this scene in Byzantine manuscripts and frescos.<sup>42</sup> This early image, located almost on the shores of the Adriatic, where the Ravenna orant was said to have arrived, depicts George tied on his back to the wheel with two flanking figures. The tympanum's lunette is framed by an inscription that runs around its border then proceeds, in two different tiers, along the lower part of the tympanum.

In its iconography, this portrayal of the martyrdom of St. George generally follows a depiction of Ixion, the king of the Lapiths, in his moment of death, a subject which could only be found as sculpture in the surviving relief fragments at the Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello (figure 11), dated to about 1100.<sup>43</sup> Like the orant of Ravenna, the otherworldly Byzantine sculpture of Ixion as presented in Torcello influenced the appearance of the new Romanesque sculpture at Argenta, while the addition of a circumscribing inscription delimited the image of the martyrdom. The inscription on the lunette of San Giorgio reads: 'The man spurned the wheel which broke him in all his limbs and which gave life to the man to whom it thought it was giving death.'<sup>44</sup> On the lower part of the architrave we find the words: 'These shining things sculpted by John of Modigliana gleam. Those who see these let them beg for him with a daily



Figure 11. The death of Ixion. c. 1100. Torcello, Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta. Photo: Foto Böhm.

prayer.'<sup>45</sup> The iconography of the martyrdom of St. George adapted from the scene of the death of Ixion was framed by an inscription celebrating the maker John of Modigliana. John of Modigliana is the initiator and the person operating both media (sculpture and epigraphy) together in the creation of a new type of agency.<sup>46</sup> Argenta thus presents a conglomerate of artistic moments condensed into the single pictorial plane of the tympanum: a first depiction of the martyrdom of a saint, an adaptation of otherworldly Byzantine sculpture portraying a scene from classical mythology, and an inscription that circumscribes the scene.

As in the Niccolò tympana, the inscription framing the tympanum sculpture at Argenta celebrates the artist's skills. While the Ravenna orant was a precursor to the Niccolò group in terms of its style, at Argenta the framed image is also a result of horizontal mobility, insofar as the artist adopted not just the style but also the iconography of a Byzantine image itself channeling ancient mythology. The foundational moment of a novel iconographical depiction of St. George is thus also the moment when the image transforms from a borderless Byzantine sculpture depicting Ixion from Greek mythology into an iconic depiction of a saint in his moment of martyrdom.

By virtue of their very inclusion of manufactured stone figures circumscribed by inscriptions, all four tympana — at San Zeno, the Verona Cathedral, the Ferrara Cathedral, and at Argenta — boldly proclaim their origins as man-made, physical objects intended for contemplation, as opposed to relief icons with enigmatic, perhaps even divine, origins. The inscriptions featured on the tympana, of the type traditionally known in the scholarship on Romanesque sculpture as the 'celebratory inscription,' belong to a historical trajectory of inscriptions that culminate in the lengthy inscriptions made by Nicola and Giovanni Pisano. Cornelius Claussen has interpreted these inscriptions as expressions of twelfth-century humanism, whereas Albert Dietl has



linked them to the aforementioned twelfth-century notion of the 'rise of self'.<sup>47</sup> As Kendall summarized the situation, sculptors like Niccolò were 'urban artisans who were conscious of themselves as autonomous artists and who took the means at their disposal to perpetuate their fame through their art'.<sup>48</sup>

All five inscriptions acknowledge three basic participants in the interaction between the sculpted object and the viewer. There is an understanding, at least by the maker of the inscription, that someone will look at the image and even read the text. The first participant in the interaction between the reader and the inscription is thus the object (referred to as 'this,' *hec*), the second is the act of sculpting (the verb 'to sculpt'), and the third is the viewer who has, in response to his interaction with the object, to react and pray for the salvation of its maker.

Epigraphy, both on account of its esthetic quality as border and its meaning, served a crucial role in the making of public, monumental sculpture in areas of contact like the Adriatic coast. The artist acted as a master mind controlling the sculptural event in which stone and word interacted not for didactic and instructive purposes, but rather to balance and control the opposing medium. The celebratory inscription on the Adriatic tympana was a tool for regimenting the exterior sculpture rather than deciphering and amplifying its representation.

Whereas the relief icons, like that at Ravenna, were by dint of their otherworldliness closer to what we might call living or miraculous images, the early phases of Romanesque sculpture on the Adriatic purported to be nothing other than artifacts made at a specific moment by a human being who begs favor for his creation. The proclamation of temporality — the understanding of past, present, and future as it appears in the inscriptions — identifies the sculpture as nothing more than a man-made object. All five tympana are located in areas that are either in direct contact with or in close proximity to the Adriatic coast. In all five tympana, it is the act of making, not some legend of miraculous creation or arrival from otherworldly domains, that is emphasized by the inscription. To enlarge further on Krautheimer-Hess's study, the horizontal movement of Byzantine sculpture and its installment in churches along the Adriatic coast led to a Romanesque response of circumscribing inscriptions that objectified the sculpted body. At the meeting point of the Italian and Byzantine worlds, against the borderless Byzantine relief sculpture, the word and its letters functioned as a tool to negate the efficacious presence of the image as a cult object and subsequently as a miracle-working object.

When considering what it meant to be the author or maker of a work of early Romanesque sculpture, with respect to relief sculpture in the early twelfth century, it is helpful to think of the author functioning as a mediator between local and otherworldly images. In the assimilation of Byzantine relief sculpture into a western environment generally, as well as in the creation of the Adriatic tympana specifically, the role of the author as mediator between viewer and image was crucial. Furthermore, the artistic energy expressed in these first instances of monumental sculpture must be viewed as an inherently different

expression of artistic self: it is crucial that the inscribed statements are not made to glorify the maker but to lessen the value of his creation, to insist on it being an artifact rather than an otherworldly icon or miracle-working image.<sup>49</sup>

When the orant of Ravenna appeared in the Latin West, bearing no inscriptions and following Byzantine traditions of making, it could not have been regarded as anything but a working miraculous or cult image.<sup>50</sup> A sculpted image intended for worship, it possessed three-dimensional qualities similar to other working images, such as the Holy Face of Lucca, the cult of which gained popularity around this time.<sup>51</sup> As opposed to the Holy Face of Lucca, however, the Byzantine relief icons were placed on the exterior of churches, where the Adriatic tympana were operating against them. The circumscribing inscriptions guaranteed that they would be understood as nothing more than mere artifacts on the threshold of the holy house.<sup>52</sup>

At the point where the sea meets the land, and where Byzantium interacts with Latin Europe, media displayed in the public environment, whether inscription or sculpture, conveyed not only ideas regarding the relations between the image and the edifice it represented, but also deeper and more thoughtful ideas about image making. As Willibald Sauerländer argued long ago, the thresholds of churches, with their sculpted tympana, could be compared to modern-day Las Vegas billboard signs. The relief icons on the Adriatic coast, as well as the subsequent Romanesque tympana, were, so to speak, advertising their own church in the public domain. Although the Byzantine relief icons were made according to Byzantine image theory, the western images, with their fear of sculpture as resonating idols, used the artist inscription as a tool to negate the image by proclaiming its presence as a man-made object that does not merit worship.<sup>53</sup>

Geographical orientation played a crucial role in the making of twelfth-century art, especially in relation to epigraphy and monumental sculpture. Public environments where inscriptions and images were consumed and where forms of civic and economical exchange took place responded to the arrival and the horizontal movement (or, in the case of the relief icons, seeming movement) of artifacts across geographical terrain. Around the Mediterranean basin, the movement of objects, and their circumscription or lack thereof by words, was a preliminary moment in the making of monumental sculpture across the Italian peninsula. Within this geographical terrain, the placement of words on the exterior of churches and the existence of epigraphy as part of a visual field that constructs the public environment of the early twelfth century interacted during a dense moment on the coast of the Adriatic. The sculptor's inscription, more than his carvings, offers an acute tool for understanding the dialog between types of communities. In the rise of monumental sculpture, the public inscription functioned as both an image and a mediator, a conveyer that both limited and expanded the image it accompanied — not through patterns of direct visual relations, but rather through a complex referential relationship between epigraphy, maker, and object.<sup>54</sup>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sections of this article formed part of my dissertation written under the supervision of Herbert Kessler at Johns Hopkins University. I thank him for his support and encouragement of this project. A version of this article was first presented at a session organized by Jeffrey Hamburger at the Medieval Academy of America's annual meeting in New Haven, 2010. I thank him for the invitation to participate in the session as well as to publish the article in this special volume of *Word & Image*. In addition, I thank him for his valuable comments on various drafts of the article. This work also benefited greatly from comments and advice offered by Beate Fricke, Ashley Jones, Richard Leson, and Jannette Vusich. Any residual error, however, remains my own.

## NOTES

1 – The orant of Ravenna would have been labeled in Byzantium an icon of the type of the Virgin Blachernitissa. As this article focuses on the presence of this icon in the Latin West, I shall continue to refer to it as the Ravenna orant. On the Ravenna orant at the church of Santa Maria in Porto, see the recent discussion in the exhibition catalog edited by Angela Donati and Giovanni Gentili, *Deomene: l'immagine dell'orante fra Oriente e Occidente* (Milan: Electa, 2001), pp. 133–34. See also Reinhold Lange, *Die byzantinische Reliefikone* (Recklinghausen: Bongers, 1964), p. 51 and Clementina Rizzardi, 'Il rilievo marmoreo con l'immagine della cosiddetta Madonna Greca in Santa Maria in Porto di Ravenna,' *Felix Ravenna* 113–4 (1977), pp. 289–310. The most comprehensive bibliography found on the orant is in Charles Davis, *Byzantine Relief Icons in Venice and along the Adriatic Coast: Orants and Other Images of the Mother of God* (Munich: Fundamenta Arte, 2006), p. 29. Available online at: <http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/artdok/volltexte/2007/270> (accessed 11 August 2010).

2 – The arrival of objects in new environments could present possible misinterpretations of the objects, or misconceptions, and both could lead to labeling these objects as foreign to their environment. See, for example, the legends surrounding the arrival of panel painting in Italy or interpretations of objects such as the San Marco Cup: Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 330–48; Alicia Walker, 'Meaningful mingling: Classicizing imagery and Islamicizing script in a Byzantine bowl,' *The Art Bulletin* 110/1 (2008), pp. 32–53; Avinoam Shalem, 'Hybride und Assemblagen in mittelalterlichen Schatzkammern: neue ästhetische Paradigmata im Hinblick auf die 'Andersheit,' in *Le Trésor au Moyen Âge: Discours, pratiques et objets*, ed. Lucas Burkart (Firenze: Sismel Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2010), pp. 297–313.

3 – The sea as a generator of artifacts and as a relevant geographical entity in the production and consumption of art has rarely been an avenue of research explored by art historians. Recent calls in this direction, however, can be found in: Hannah Baader, 'Gischt: zu einer Geschichte des Meeres,' in *Das Meer, der Tausch und die Grenzen der Repräsentation*, ed. Hannah Baader and Gerhard Wolf (Berlin: Diaphanes Verlag, 2008), pp. 15–40. In the same volume, see also Beate Fricke, 'Schaumgeburten: zur Topologie der Creatio ex nihilo bei Albrecht Dürer und ihrer Vorgeschichte,' pp. 41–66 and Alessandro Nova, 'Kirche, Nation, Individuum: das stürmische Meer als Allegorie, Metapher und Seelenzustand,' pp. 67–94.

4 – The principal literature on Italian relief icons includes André Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines du Moyen Âge: (XIe–XIVe siècles)*, (Paris: A. et J. Picard, 1976); Lange, *Die byzantinische Reliefikone*; Otto Demus, 'Die Reliefikonen der Westfassade von San Marco,' *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 3 (1954), pp. 87–107 and *The Church of San Marco in Venice: History, Architecture, Sculpture* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1960), pp. 125–37; Hans Belting, 'Eine Gruppe

Konstantinopler Reliefs aus dem 11. Jh.,' *Pantheon*, 30 (1972), pp. 263–71; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, pp. 195–207; Henry Maguire, 'Observations on the icons of the west façade of San Marco in Venice,' in *Byzantines eikones: technē, technikē kai technologia: diethnes symposio, Gennadeios Vivliothekē, Amerikanikē scholē klasikōn spoudōn*, 20–21 Phevroariou 1998, ed. Maria Vasilakē (Hērakleio: Panepistēmiakes Ekdoseis Krētēs, 2002), pp. 303–12; Arne Effenberger, 'Die Reliefikonen der Theotokos und des Erzengels Michael im Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Berlin,' *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 48 (2006), pp. 9–45; Davis, *Byzantine Relief Icons in Venice and along the Adriatic Coast*. 5 – Lange, *Die byzantinische Reliefikone*. 6 – Demus, 'Die Reliefikonen der Westfassade von San Marco,' pp. 87–107 and *The Church of San Marco in Venice*, pp. 125–37; Guido Tigler, *Il portale maggiore di San Marco a Venezia: aspetti iconografici e stilistici dei rilievi duecenteschi* (Venezia: Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti, 1995), p. 90ff. And also Anthony Cutler, 'From loot to scholarship: Changing modes in the Italian response to Byzantine artifacts, ca. 1200–1750,' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49 (1995), pp. 237–67. 7 – Effenberger, 'Die Reliefikonen der Theotokos und des Erzengels Michael im Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Berlin,' pp. 9–45. 8 – André Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines du Moyen Âge: (XIe — XIVe siècles)*; Lange, *Die byzantinische Reliefikone*; Belting, 'Eine Gruppe Konstantinopler Reliefs aus dem 11. Jh.,' pp. 263–71; Davis, *Byzantine Relief Icons in Venice and along the Adriatic Coast*. 9 – Maguire, *Observations on the Icons of the West Façade of San Marco in Venice*. 10 – Trude Krautheimer-Hess, 'Die figurale Plastik der Ostlombarder von 1100–1178,' *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 4 (1928), pp. 231–307. 11 – From the vast bibliography on Niccolò, see: David M. Robb, 'Niccolò: A north Italian sculptor of the twelfth century,' *The Art Bulletin* 12 (1930), pp. 374–420; Trude Krautheimer-Hess, 'The Original Porta dei Mesi at Ferrara and the art of Niccolò,' *The Art Bulletin* 26 (1944), pp. 152–74; Evelyn Kain, 'An analysis of the marble reliefs on the façade of S. Zeno, Verona,' *The Art Bulletin* 63 (1981), pp. 358–74; the essays in Angiola Maria Romanini, ed., *Nicholaus e l'arte del suo tempo; (atti del seminario tenutosi a Ferrara dal 21 al 24 settembre 1981)* (Ferrara: Corbo, 1985); Kain, *The Sculpture of Nicholaus and the Development of a North Italian Romanesque Workshop* (Wien: Böhlau, 1986); Christine Verzár Bornstein, *Portals and Politics in the Early Italian City-State: The Sculpture of Nicholaus in Context* (Parma: Università degli Studi di Parma. Istituto di Storia dell'Arte. Centro di Studi Medievali, 1988); Andrea von Hülsen-Esch, *Romanische Skulptur in Oberitalien als Reflex der kommunalen Entwicklung im 12. Jahrhundert: Untersuchungen zu Mailand und Verona* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1994), pp. 119–231; Giovanna Valenzano, 'Dall'ellenismo al medioevo: alcune considerazioni a margine di Nicholaus,' in *Memor fui dierum antiquorum: studi in memoria di Luigi De Biasio*, ed. Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini and Attilio Mauro Caproni (Udine: Campanotto, 1995), pp. 447–61; Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, 'Le origini di Nicholaus e l'immagine della riforma fra secolo XI e secolo XII nella 'Lombardia,' in *Medioevo: immagine e racconto*, ed. Arturo Carlo Quintavalle (Milano: Electa, 2003), pp. 213–36; Valenzano, 'Uso, riuso, abuso: Nicholaus e le citazioni dagli antichi,' in *Medioevo: il tempo degli antichi*, ed. Arturo Carlo Quintavalle (Milano: Electa, 2006), pp. 441–50; Quintavalle, 'Nicholaus, la chevalerie e l'idea di crociata,' *Medioevo mediterraneo: l'Occidente, Bisanzio e l'Islam*, ed. Arturo Carlo Quintavalle (Milano: Electa, 2007), pp. 546–68. 12 – The place and function of church thresholds is a dense and complicated topic. Generally, see: Francesco Gandolfo, 'La facciata scolpita,' in *L'arte medievale nel contesto (300–1300)*, pp. 79–103; Jérôme Baschet, *L'Iconographie médiévale* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008), pp. 79–91; Xavier Barral i Altet, *Contre l'art roman?: Essai sur un passé réinventé* (Paris: Fayard, 2006), pp. 168–85; Dominique Iogna-Prat, *La Maison Dieu* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2006); Charles Altman, 'The Medieval marquee: Church portal sculpture as publicity,' *Journal of Popular Culture* 14 (1980), pp. 37–47; Jean-Claude Bonne, *L'Art roman de face et de profil: Le tympan de Conques* (Paris: Le Sycomore, 1984); Michael Camille, '“Seeing and lecturing”: disputation in a twelfth-century tympanum from Reims,' in *Reading Medieval Images: The Art Historian and the Object*, ed. Elizabeth Sears and

Thelma K. Thomas (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), pp. 75–87; Christine B. Verzar, 'Medieval passageways and performance art: Art and ritual at the threshold,' *Arte medievale* 2 (2004, 2005), pp. 63–73; Caroline Roux, 'Essai sur la symbolique et les fonctions du portail d'église en France entre le XI<sup>e</sup> et le XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle,' *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 82 (2004), pp. 839–54; Willibald Sauerländer, 'Über die Komposition des Weltgerichts-Tympanons in Autun,' *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 29 (1966), pp. 261–94. More recently, see Marcel Angheben, 'L'Iconographie du portail de l'ancienne cathédrale de Mâcon: Une vision synchronique du jugement individuel et du jugement dernier,' *Les Cahiers de Saint-Michel de Cuxa* 32 (2001), pp. 73–87; Willibald Sauerländer, 'Romanesque sculpture in its architectural context,' in *The Romanesque Frieze and Its Spectator*, ed. Deborah Kahn (London: Harvey Miller, 1992), pp. 17–43; Sauerländer, 'Omnes perversi sic sunt in tartara mersi: Skulptur als Bildpredigt: das Weltgerichtstympanon von Sainte-Foy in Conques,' *Romanesque Art: Problems and Monuments* (London: Pindar Press, 2004), pp. 268–93. See also the articles dealing with thresholds within the sacred space of the church: Sharon E.J. Gerstel, ed., *Thresholds of the Sacred: Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical, and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

13 – Manlio Marinelli, *L'architettura romanica in Ancona* (Ancona: Camera di Commercio Industria e Agricoltura, 1961), pp. 172–75; Mara Bonfioli, 'Ancona, Santa Maria della Piazza: un problema ancora aperto,' in *Studi in memoria di Patrizia Angiolini Martinelli*, ed. Silvia Pasi (Bologna: Ante Quem, 2005), pp. 75–87.

14 – Narratives of 'development' and 'rise' usually follow linear chronology. My attempt here is to look at artistic interaction on the Adriatic coast as part of an event occurring in a specific geographical location rather than as part of a long and unrelated art historical sequence. The story of the development of monumental sculpture in the Italian peninsula is narrated in these classic studies: Robb, 'Niccolò: A north Italian sculptor of the 12th century,' pp. 374–420; George Crichton, *Romanesque Sculpture in Italy* (London: Routledge, 1954); Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, *Da Wiligelmo a Niccolò* (Parma: Studium Parmense, 1966). The narrative still persists in most surveys, as is evident in: Joachim Poeschke, *Die Skulptur des Mittelalters in Italien* 2 vols. (München: Hirmer, 1998–2000), On the 'rise' or 'revival' of monumental sculpture in general, see: Harald Keller, 'Zur Entstehung der sakralen Vollskulptur in der ottonischen Zeit,' in *Festschrift für Hans Jantzen*, ed. Kurt Bauch (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1951), pp. 71–91; Hubert Schrade, 'Zur Frühgeschichte der mittelalterlichen Monumentalplastik,' *Westfalen. Hefte für Geschichte, Kunst und Volkskunde*, 35 (1957), pp. 33–64; Ilene H. Forsyth, *The Throne of Wisdom: Wood Sculptures of the Madonna in Romanesque France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972). Recently, the question has been reevaluated in: Beate Fricke, *Ecce fides: die Statue von Conques, Götzendienst und Bildkultur im Westen* (München: Fink, 2007) and also Herbert L. Kessler, 'Image and object: Christ's dual nature and the crisis of early medieval art,' in *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe: New Directions in Early Medieval Studies*, ed. Jennifer R. Davis and Michael McCormick (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 291–320. See also the interpretation of the 'revival' of monumental sculpture in Italy as part of the outcome of the Gregorian Reform in Dorothy F. Glass, *The Sculpture of Reform in North Italy, ca 1095–1130: History and Patronage of Romanesque Façades* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

15 – In the Byzantine tradition, icons of the post-iconoclastic period were marked with the abbreviations of the saintly figure they represented. There is an ongoing debate as to why these types of abbreviations developed after iconoclasm. See Henry Maguire, *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Karen Boston, 'The power of inscriptions and the trouble with texts,' in *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium*, ed. Antony Eastmond and Liz James (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 35–57. Another type of inscription found on icons is votive ones and they develop in Byzantium, especially in aristocratic culture. See Titos Papamastorakis, 'The display of accumulated wealth in luxury icons: Gift-Giving from the Byzantine aristocracy to God in the twelfth century,' in *Byzantine eikones*, pp. 35–49; Anthony Cutler,

'Uses of luxury: On the functions of consumption and symbolic capital in Byzantine culture,' in *Byzance et les images*, ed. André Guillou and Jannic Durand (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1994), pp. 287–327; Bissera V. Pentcheva, 'Epigrams on icons,' in *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture*, ed. Liz James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 120–38.

16 – Different inscriptions in different languages function to state the presence of specific communities. This happens especially where communities are diverse, as Linda Safran has shown in regard to south Italy: there, she claims, the inscription serves as an expression for the presence of community as much as for rendering information in a language that is coherent to only part of the community. See Linda Safran, 'Language choice in the medieval Salento: A sociolinguistic approach to Greek and latin inscriptions,' in *Zwischen Polis, Provinz und Peripherie: Beiträge zur byzantinischen Geschichte und Kultur*, ed. Lars M. Hoffmann (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), pp. 853–82 and 'Cultures textuelles publiques: Une étude de cas dans le sud de l'Italie,' *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 52 (2009), pp. 245–63. In regard to distinction as a form of cultural elites, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

17 – Armando Petrucci, *Public Lettering: Script, Power, and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 3.

18 – On the architectural context of the development of the tympanum, see: Richard Hamann-MacLean, 'Les Origines des portails et façades sculptés gothiques,' *Cahiers de la civilisation médiévale Xe-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles* 2 (1959), pp. 157–75.

19 – Evelyn Kain used this point to argue for a later dating of the Zeno figure suggesting that the sculpture was inserted last as part of a consecration ceremony; see 'An analysis of the marble reliefs on the façade of S. Zeno, Verona,' pp. 358–74; also *The Sculpture of Nicholas and the Development of a North Italian Romanesque Workshop*. On the consecration of churches, see generally Éric Palazzo, *Liturgie et société au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Aubier, 2000), pp. 71–75. The sculpture of Zeno is also the corner stone of the tympanum; 'corner stone' is a loaded term in Christian symbolism. Cf. most recently Eric Thunø, 'Looking at letters: "Living writing" in S. Sabina in Rome,' *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 34 (2007), pp. 19–41. Peter Low, "'You who once were far off:" Enlivening scripture in the main portal at Vézelay,' *The Art Bulletin* 85/3 (2003), pp. 469–90; and the classic study by Gerhart B. Ladner, 'The symbolism of the biblical corner stone in the Medieval West,' *Medieval Studies* 4 (1942), pp. 43–60.

20 – Krautheimer-Hess, 'Die figurale Plastik der Ostlombarden von 1100–1178'; Giovanna Valenzano, *La Basilica di San Zeno in Verona: problemi architettonici* (Venezia: Neri Pozza, 1993); Giovanni Lorenzoni and Giovanna Valenzano, *Il Duomo di Modena e la Basilica di San Zeno* (Verona: Banca Popolare di Verona, 2000).

21 – On Argenta, see Sauro Gelichi, ed., *Storia e archeologia di una pieve medievale: San Giorgio di Argenta* (Firenze: All'Insegna del Giglio, 1992); Maria Pia Fabbri, 'La pieve di San Giorgio ad Argenta,' *La Pie* 69/3 (2001), pp. 132–34; Fabio Coden, 'Micant hic fulgida: il portale della pieve di San Giorgio ad Argenta,' *Felix Ravenna* 153/156 (2004), pp. 81–134.

22 – On the history and topography of medieval Ferrara, see Anna Maria and Visser Travagli, ed., *Ferrara nel Medioevo: topografia storica e archeologia urbana* (Casalecchio di Reno: Grafis, 1995).

23 – Francesca Bocchi, 'Noti di storia urbanistica Ferrara nell'alto medioevo,' *Atti e memorie della Deputazione provinciale ferrarese di storia patria* 18 (1974), pp. 17–33; Bocchi, *Le città emiliane nel Medioevo, in Storia dell'Emilia Romagna*, ed. Aldo Berselli (Bologna: Bologna University Press, 1975), pp. 405–33. See also Sauro Gelichi, 'Flourishing places in north-eastern Italy: Towns and emporia between late antiquity and the Carolingian age,' in *Post-Roman Towns, The Heirs of the Roman West*, ed. Joachim Henning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), vol. 1, pp. 77–104.

24 – Valenzano, *La basilica di San Zeno in Verona*, pp. 221–23; see also: Lorenzoni and Valenzano, *Il duomo di Modena e la basilica di San Zeno*, pp. 133–35.

25 – See Arwed Arnulf, *Versus ad picturas: Studien zur Titulardichtung als Quellengattung der Kunstgeschichte von der Antike bis zum Hochmittelalter* (Munich:



Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1997); Robert Favreau, *Épigraphie médiévale* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997); and Cécile Treffort, *Paroles inscrites: À la découverte des sources épigraphiques latines du Moyen Âge (VIIIe–XIIIe siècle)* (Rosny-sous-Bois: Bréal éditions, 2008). See also Herbert L. Kessler, *Neither God nor Man: Words, Images, and the Medieval Anxiety about Art* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 2007).

26 – See Bonne, *L'Art roman de face et de profil*; M.T. Clanchy, 'Reading the signs at Durham Cathedral,' in *Literacy and Society*, ed. Karen Schouboe and Mogens Trolle Larsen (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1989), pp. 171–82; Kirk Ambrose, 'Visual poetics of the Cluny hemicycle capital inscriptions,' *Word & Image* 20 (2004), pp. 155–64; Stefano Riccioni, *Il mosaico absidale di S. Clemente a Roma: 'exemplum' della chiesa riformata* (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2006).

27 – In my search I found no Roman precursors to the circumscribing inscription in what could be defined as a public exterior image. By definition, Romanesque art saw its origins in the monumental sculpture of the Roman period. This is not the case with the circumscribing inscription. From the plethora of studies on the relation between Romanesque and Roman sculpture, see recently in regard to Niccolò: Giovanna Valenzano, 'Uso, riuso, abuso,' pp. 441–50.

28 – Germany and Spain supply early precursors to the circumscribing inscription of the Adriatic tympana. Examples occur at Jaca, Alpirsbach, and in the stucco sculpture on the exterior of the church dedicated to St. Emmeram in Regensburg. On these precursors see: Sauerländer, 'Romanesque sculpture in its architectural context,' pp. 17–43; Franziska Morgner-Fanderl, 'Das Majestats-Tympanon der Klosterkirche in Alpirsbach,' *Zeitschrift für württembergische Landesgeschichte* 49 (1990), pp. 97–122; Serafin Moralejo Álvarez, 'La Sculpture romane de la Cathédrale de Jaca: État des questions,' *Les Cahiers de Saint-Michel de Cuxa* 10 (1979), pp. 79–106; Günter Lorenz, *Das Doppelnischenportal von St. Emmeram in Regensburg: Studien zu den Anfängen des Kirchenportals im 8. bis 11. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt a. Main: Peter Lang, 1984); Hans-Rudolf Meier, 'Ton, Stein und Stuck: Materialaspekte in der Bilderfrage des Früh- und Hochmittelalters,' *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 30 (2003), pp. 35–52.

29 – André Grabar, 'Trônes épiscopaux du XIème et XIIème siècle en Italie méridionale,' *Wallraf Richartz Jahrbuch* 16 (1954), pp. 7–52. See also Lawrence Nees, 'Forging monumental memories in the early twelfth century,' *Memory & Oblivion: Proceedings of the XXIXth International Congress of the History of Art held in Amsterdam, 1–7 September 1996*, ed. Wessel Reinink (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1999), pp. 773–82; and Francesco Aceto, 'La cattedra dell'abate Elia: dalla memoria alla storia,' in *Medioevo: immagine e memoria*, ed. Arturo Carlo Quintavalle (Milano: Electa, 2009), pp. 132–43.

30 – On San Clemente in Rome, see Francesco Gandolfo, 'Reimpiego di sculpture antiche nei troni papali del XII secolo,' *Rendiconti/Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* 47 (1974), pp. 203–18.

31 – Paolo Rizzo, *Cattedrale di S. Pietro di Castello* (Venezia: Marconi, 1998), pp. 36–38; Stefano Carboni, *Venice and the Islamic World, 828–1797* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), cat. no. 87; Tarif Al Sammam, 'Arabische Inschriften auf den Krönungsgewändern des Heiligen Römischen Reiches,' *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 78 (1982), pp. 7–34.

32 – Cornelius C. Vermeule, III, 'A Greek theme and its survivals: The Ruler's shield (tondo image) in tomb and temple,' *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 109/6 (10 December 1965), pp. 361–97; Rudolf Winkes, *Clipeata imago: Studien zu einer Römischen Bildnisform* (Bonn: Habelt, 1969); Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, pp. 103–114. See also: Kessler, 'Real absence: Early medieval art and the metamorphosis of vision,' in *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), pp. 104–48; Rabun Taylor, *The Moral Mirror of Roman Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 137–68.

33 – Circumscription in Christian art has a long tradition rich in symbolism. Since the Second Council of Nicaea, when God was identified as 'uncircumscribable,' every circumscribed image is by definition not a physical image of the divine. On the complexity of this notion, see the articles in François Boespflug and Nicolas Lossky, eds, *Nicée II, 787–1987:*

*Douze siècles d'images religieuses; Actes du Colloque International Nicée II, tenu au Collège de France, Paris, les 2, 3, 4 octobre 1986* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1987); Olivier Christin and Dario Gamboni, eds, *Crises de l'image religieuse: De Nicée II à Vatican II = Krisen religiöser Kunst: vom 2. Nicaenum bis zum 2. Vatikanischen Konzil* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1999); Kessler, 'Real absence: Early medieval art and the metamorphosis of vision'; Charles Barber, *Contesting the Logic of Painting: Art and Understanding in Eleventh-Century Byzantium* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

34 – Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual 1050–1200* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987); Morris, 'Individualism in twelfth-century religion: Some further reflections,' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31 (1980), pp. 195–206.

35 – Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Did the twelfth century discover the individual?' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31/1 (1980), pp. 1–17. See also Susan Kramer and Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Revisiting the twelfth-century individual: The inner self and the Christian community,' in *Das Eigene und das Ganze: Zum Individuellen im mittelalterlichen Religiosentum*, ed. Gert Melville and Markus Schuerer (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2002), pp. 57–85, which includes an overview of the state of research on the question.

36 – Jean-Claude Schmitt, *La Raison des gestes dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990); Bernard McGinn, *Three Treatises on Man: A Cistercian Anthropology* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1977); Jérôme Baschet, 'Âme et corps dans l'occident médiéval: Une dualité dynamique, entre pluralité et dualisme,' *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 112 (2000), pp. 5–30; Horst Bredekamp, 'Das Mittelalter als Epoche der Individualität,' in *Individualität: Akademievorlesungen* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2000), pp. 191–240.

37 – Sarah Spence, *Texts and the Self in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 2.

38 – +ARTIFICEM GNURAM QUI SCVLPSERIT HEC NICOLAVM + OMNES LAVDEMVS CRISTVM. DOMINUMQUE. ROGMVS + CELORVM REGNVN SIBI DONET VT IPSE SVPERNVN. On the inscription, see: Albert Dietl, 'In arte peritus: zur Topik mittelalterlicher Künstlerinschriften in Italien bis zur Zeit Giovanni Pisanos,' *Römische historische Mitteilungen* 29 (1987), p. 104 and *Die Sprache der Signatur: die mittelalterlichen Künstlerinschriften Italiens*, of vols (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2009) vol. 3, pp. 1762–68; Valenzano, *La basilica di San Zenò in Verona*, p. 228, inv. no. IV; Calvin B. Kendall, *The Allegory of the Church: Romanesque Portals and their Verse Inscriptions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), pp. 179, 293–94; Christine B. Verzar, 'Text und Bild in der norditalienischen Romanik: Skulpturen, Inschriften, Betrachter,' in *Studien zur Geschichte der europäischen Skulptur im 12./13. Jahrhundert*, ed. Herbert Beck and Kerstin Hengevoss-Dürko (Frankfurt a.M.: Henrich, 1994), p. 138.

39 – +ARTIFICEM GNARVM QUI SCVLPSERIT HEC NICOLAVM + HVC [CON]CVRRENTES LAVDENT PER SAECULA GENTES. On the inscription, see: Giovanni Uggeri, 'Il reimpiego dei marmi antichi nelle cattedrali padane,' in *Nicholaus e l'arte del suo tempo*, p. 622; Kendall, *The Allegory of the Church*, pp. 176, 225; Verzar, 'Text und Bild in der norditalienischen Romanik,' p. 497; Dietl, *Die Sprache der Signatur*, vol. 2, pp. 832–36.

40 – HIC DOMINVS MAGNVN; LEO CRISTVS CERNITVR AGNVN~.

41 – +ARTIFICEM GNAURVM QUI SCVLPSERIT HEC NICOLAVM ~ HVNC CONCVRRENTES LANDAVNT PER SECVLVA GENTES~. On the Verona Cathedral inscriptions, see: Kendall, *The Allegory of the Church*, pp. 179, 294–95; Verzar, 'Text und Bild in der norditalienischen Romanik,' p. 497; Favreau, *Épigraphie médiévale*, pp. 227–29 and Dietl, *Die Sprache der Signatur*, vol. 3, pp. 1768–71.

42 – On the iconography of St. George and its arrival to the west, see: Temily Mark-Weiner, 'Narrative cycles of the life of St. George in Byzantine art,' PhD dissertation, New York University, 1977, pp. 143–58; Mario Iadanza, 'San Giorgio nell'agiografia latina,' in *San Giorgio e il Mediterraneo: atti del II colloquio internazionale per il XVII centenario (Roma, 28–30 Novembre 2003)*, ed. Guglielmo De' Giovanni-Centelles (Città del Vaticano,

2004), pp. 77–96; Linda Safran, ‘The art of veneration: Saints and villages in the Salento and the Mani,’ in *Les Villages dans l’empire byzantin (IVe–XVe siècle)*, ed. Jacques Lefort, Cécile Morrisson, Jean-Pierre Sodini (Paris: Lethielleux, 2005), pp. 179–92. The arrival of St. George to Italy is traditionally paralleled with that of St. Nicholas; see Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, ‘The Vita icon and the painter as hagiographer,’ *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 53 (1999), pp. 149–65 and, more recently, Michele Bacci, ed., *San Nicola: splendori d’arte d’Oriente e d’Occidente* (Milano: Skira, 2006); Michele Bacci, *San Nicola: il grande taumaturgo* (Roma: Laterza, 2009).

43 – Renato Polacco, *La Cattedrale di Torcello* (L: Altra Riva: ‘Canova’, 1984) and ‘Il prebiterio della cattedrale di Torcello: trasformazioni e restauri,’ *Arte documento* 9 (1996), pp. 45–51; Guido Tigler, ‘Cronologia e tendenze stilistiche della prima scultura veneziana,’ in *Torcello: alle origini di Venezia tra Occidente e Oriente* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2009), pp. 132–47 and in the same volume, Gerhard Wolf and Manuela De Giorgi, ‘I tempi e lo spazio delle immagini,’ pp. 148–161.

44 – ISTE ROTAM SPRETEVIT QUEM MEMBRA PER OMNIA FREGIT + VITAM DONAVIT CVI MORTEM FERRE PVTAVIT.

45 – ANNI D[OMI]NI MIL[LESIMO] [CE]NTESIMO XX SECVNDO INDICIONE Q[VAR] TA DECIMA and SCULPT(A) A IOHA[NN(E)] MICAT H[IC] [F]ULGID(A) A MUTILIANO + PRO QUO QUIUE UIDENT ROGITENT PRECE COTIDI[ANA]. On the Argenta inscription, see: Coden, ‘Micant hic fulgida,’ pp. 102–09; Verzar, ‘Text und Bild in der norditalienischen Romanik,’ p. 497 and Dietl, *Die Sprache der Signatur*, vol. 2, pp. 565–68.

46 – See Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 1–28 and ‘The technology of enchantment and the enchantment of technology,’ in *Anthropology, Art, and Aesthetics*, ed. Jeremy Coote, and Anthony Shelton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 40–66; Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, pp. 297–310; Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. Alan Schapiro (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988).

47 – Peter Cornelius Claussen, ‘Früher Künstlerstolz: mittelalterliche Signaturen als Quelle der Kunstsoziologie,’ in *Bauwerk und Bildwerk im Hochmittelalter: anschauliche Beiträge zur Kultur- und Sozialgeschichte*, ed. Karl Clausberg (Giessen: Anabas Verlag, 1981), pp. 7–34; Dietl, ‘In arte peritus,’ p. 104; Dietl, ‘Italienische Bildhauerinschriften: Selbstdarstellung und Schriftlichkeit mittelalterlicher Künstler,’ in *Inschriften bis 1300: Probleme und Aufgaben ihrer Erforschung*, ed. Helga Giersiepen (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995), pp. 175–211. Dietl continues with the classical assertion of what ‘self’ meant in the twelfth century, and follows the study of Morris rather than the more elaborated notions developed by Walker Bynum. Recently Albert Dietl published a four-volume *opus magnum*, where he enhances his argument concerning the place and function of Romanesque artist’s inscriptions: Albert Dietl, *Die Sprache der Signatur*. See also recently: Anton Legner, *Der Artifex: Künstler im Mittelalter und ihre Selbstdarstellung; eine illustrierte Anthologie* (Köln: Greven, 2009).

48 – Kendall, *The Allegory of the Church*, p. 184.

49 – The question of the role of the signature in relation to the entire workshop and the role of Niccolò as a workshop headmaster has also been raised. More recent theories of workshop practice in the Middle Ages suggest the role of the headmaster to be a moderator of different styles of

the artists constituting the workshop, rather than an author-creator in the modern sense of the word. See: John White, ‘The reliefs on the façade of the Duomo at Orvieto,’ *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 22 (1959), pp. 254–302; Kain, *The Sculpture of Nicholas and the Development of a North Italian Romanesque Workshop*; Roberto Cassanelli ed., *Cantieri medievali* (Milano: Jaca Book, 1995); and Bruno Zanardi, *Giotto e Pietro Cavallini: la questione di Assisi e il cantiere medievale della pittura a fresco* (Milano: Skira, 2002) and ‘Giotto and the St. Francis cycle at Assisi,’ *The Cambridge Companion to Giotto*, ed. Anne Derbes and Mark Sandona (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 32–62.

50 – From the vast literature, see Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, pp. 208–310; the articles in: Erik Thunø and Gerhard Wolf, eds, *The Miraculous Image in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance: Papers from a Conference Held at the Accademia di Danimarca in Collaboration with the Bibliotheca Hertziana (Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte), Rome, 31 May–2 June 2003* (Rome: ‘L’Erma’ di Bretschneider, 2004); and Bissera V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), pp. 145–65.

51 – See especially Lucca, *il Volto Santo e la civiltà medioevale: atti, convegno internazionale di studi, Lucca, Palazzo Pubblico 21–23 ottobre 1982* (Lucca: Pacini Fazzi, 1984); Herbert Kurz, *Der Volto Santo von Lucca: Ikonographie und Funktion des Kruzifixus in der gegürteten Tunika im 11. Jahrhundert* (Regensburg: Roderer, 1997); Jean-Claude Schmitt, ‘Les Images d’une image: la figuration du Volto Santo de Lucca dans les manuscrits enluminés du Moyen Âge,’ in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation: Papers from a Colloquium held at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome and the Villa Spelman, Florence, 1996*, ed. Herbert L. Kessler and Gerhard Wolf (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1998), pp. 205–27; and the articles in Michele Camillo Ferrari and Andreas Meyer, eds, *Volto santo in Europa: culto e immagini del crocifisso nel medioevo; atti del convegno internazionale di Engelberg (13–16 settembre 2000)*, (Lucca: Istituto Storico lucchese, 2005).

52 – The affinity between the circumscription of the sculpture and the seated bishop contributes to the pertinent concept of the possible enlivenment of sculpture. A life-size sculpture may very well present the same efficacy and demand the same response from a viewer as a living person would. See David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 283–316 and Horst Bredekamp, ‘Schlussvortrag: Bild — Akte — Geschichte,’ in *Geschichts Bilder: 46. Deutscher Historikertag vom 19. bis 22. September in Konstanz*, ed. Clemens Wischermann (Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2007), pp. 289–309.

53 – Sauerländer, ‘Romanesque sculpture in its architectural context,’ p. 3.

54 – For recent studies which view the Mediterranean as an integral geographical region of artistic production, see: Michele Bacci, ‘Greek painters, working for Latin and non-Orthodox patrons in the late medieval Mediterranean: Some preliminary remarks,’ in *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence*, ed. Jaynie Anderson (Carlton: The Miegunyah Press, 2009), pp. 164–68 and also in the same volume: Gerhard Wolf, ‘Fluid borders, hybrid objects: Mediterranean art histories 500–1500, questions of method and terminology,’ pp. 134–37. See also the articles in the volume edited by Eva Hoffmann, *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).