STORING SANCTITY:
SACRISTY RELIQUARY CUPBOARDS IN LATE MEDIEVAL
AND RENAISSANCE ITALY

By

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Abstract

Sacristy reliquary cupboards played significant roles in the ritual activities of most late medieval and Renaissance Italian churches. Best understood as a type of liturgical furniture, these large, wall-mounted structures stored the most valuable sacred objects possessed by a church and their shelves were filled with expensive metal reliquaries that contained powerful relics. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, they often displayed elaborate painted and, occasionally, sculpted, iconic and narrative images on their moveable doors. This study examines the most complex and visually compelling extant examples of this type of church furnishing from the Tre- and Quattrocento. Consideration of reliquary cupboards from two different Italian regions, Tuscany and the Veneto, provides an indication of the variety of iconography, contents and materials utilized in connection with these ritual objects in distinctive historical contexts.

Despite scholars' sustained interest in relics and reliquaries, they have overlooked a significant aspect of how relics functioned in medieval and Renaissance societies, namely how and where they were stored. This dissertation examines a neglected area of relic studies by considering a type of liturgical furniture used to store, protect and augment relic and reliquary collections. During ritual events that required the use of relics, the cupboard would be opened to reveal the sacred objects inside and, often, another visual program on the inside of the doors. Late medieval and Renaissance sacristy reliquary cupboards thus reveal complex and multifaceted interactions between relics, images and rituals. Analysis of the ways in which reliquary cupboards played significant roles in the successful performance of the cult of relics establishes them as a compelling type of liturgical furniture.

Following an introduction that traces the history and meaning of sacred storage and concealment in the Christian tradition, the dissertation is composed of five chapters that each focus on the iconography, contents, ritual use and historical context of a particular reliquary *armadio*. These case studies reveal sacristy reliquary cupboards as a type of ritual object that served a variety of liturgical and extra-liturgical purposes, reassured communities of saintly presence and protection and functioned as an integral part of the sacred visual environment.

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Introduction
Storing the Sacred

Sacristy reliquary cupboards played significant roles in the ritual activities of most late medieval and Renaissance Italian churches. Best understood as a type of liturgical furniture, they stored the most valuable sacred objects possessed by a church and their shelves were filled with expensive metal reliquaries that contained powerful relics. By the late sixteenth century they were a required part of church furnishings but, by that time, most sacristy reliquary cupboards had carved wooden doors with little to no figural decoration.[1] However, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, they often displayed elaborate painted and, occasionally, sculpted, iconic and narrative images. This study examines the most complex, visually compelling and best-preserved examples of this type of church furnishing from the Tre- and Quattrocento. Consideration of reliquary cupboards from two different Italian regions, Tuscany and the Veneto, provides an indication of the variety of iconography, contents and materials utilized in connection with these ritual objects in distinctive historical contexts.

Late medieval and Renaissance reliquary cupboards, or *armadi*, are mutable structures with moveable doors decorated with painted and sculpted iconographical programs that, like the metal reliquaries they contained, simultaneously protected and augmented the saintly presence within them. In that sense, sacristy *armadi* constitute a complex form of reliquary, one that scholars have not adequately recognized. However, sacristy reliquary cupboards possess key features that set them apart from other types of reliquaries. *Armadi* cannot be removed from their sacristy environment and easily transported or displayed to a large congregation, unlike portable, metal reliquaries that were often used to great effect through just such methods. While the entire

[1] St. Charles Borromeo's 1577 instructions on liturgy and church decoration include sacristy cupboards in his list of required furnishings. Carlo Borromeo, *Instructionum Fabricae et Suppellectilis Ecclesiasticae*, vol. 2, ed. Massimo Marinelli (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000), 299.

cupboard clearly could not be moved to another location, the *armadio*'s moveable doors allowed for profound changes in the iconographic program, the objects seen, and the ways in which the reliquary cupboard and its contents affected the sacristy audience. The variations of interaction between the reliquary cupboard's components (decorated cupboard, relic inside the metal reliquary and viewer) significantly differentiated this object from other types of reliquaries, augmenting its mystery and ritual importance.[2]

The relics stored inside the sacristy cupboards could take a variety of forms, including the physical remains of holy persons and items that came into contact with such people during their lives, such as clothing or the instruments of the Passion.[3] Scholars have established the religious, political and social importance of relics from late antiquity through the Renaissance. Major historical studies of the topic such as Peter Brown's *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* and Patrick Geary's *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*, as well as the work of André Vauchez and Richard Trexler, among others, have shown that relics played critical roles in Western cultural and religious history through the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and beyond.[4] These scholars have examined the desire to own relics, to store them in elaborately decorated and expensive reliquaries and reliquary cupboards and then to use them ritually in liturgical celebrations and civic processions. All this stemmed from the belief that

[2] Gertsman, 84.
[3] On the different types of relics see John S. Strong, "Relics," in vol. 12 of *Encyclopedia of Religions*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 277-80.
[4] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Patrick Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Richard Trexler, "Ritual Behavior in Renaissance Florence: The Setting," *Medievalia et humanistica: Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Culture* 4 (1973): 125-44; idem, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Academic Press, 1980); André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

relics represented the presence of the divine and that each fragment, however small it might be, carried with it the complete power of the saint or holy person connected with it.[5]

Any relic had the potential to produce a variety of miracles that included healing the sick, producing or stopping rain and affecting the outcome of military campaigns, as well as more generally providing its custodians with a secure sense of heavenly favor. Even when not actively working miracles, the very presence of a relic implied celestial approval since, as Geary has shown, saints possessed the ability to allow or prevent their remains from being moved.[6] Possession of relics thus indicated holy sanction and augmented the status of any church or city fortunate enough to preserve such powerful objects.

Relic guardians bore the consequent responsibility of honoring the sacred person through the creation of a proper environment. This included providing safe storage to ensure the relic's physical well-being and a reliquary that would encase the relic in the precious materials it deserved. Art historians have explored the development of what were often incredibly expensive metal, jeweled and enameled reliquaries and the ways in which they were used and have demonstrated the complex interrelationships between these metalwork objects, their powerful contents and the larger ritual and visual environments for which they were made.[7]

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[5] See the discussion below, pages 21-22.

[6] For example, St. Lewinna allowed her body to be moved from one English monastery to another in the eleventh century only after extensive prayers and assurances of great devotion on the part of her new guardians. Geary, *Furta Sacra*, 76-78.

[7] The art historical literature on relics and reliquaries is extensive. Recent helpful studies include: Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Joanna Cannon and André Vauchez, *Margherita of Cortona and the Lorenzetti: Sienese Art and the Cult of a Holy Woman in Medieval Tuscany* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Lisa Victoria Ciresi, "A liturgical study of the Shrine of the Three Kings in Cologne," in *Objects, images and the word: Art in the Service of the Liturgy*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 202-30; Sally J. Cornelison, "Art and Devotion in Late Medieval and Renaissance Florence: The Relics and Reliquaries of Saints Zenobius and John the Baptist," PhD diss., The Courtauld Institute of Art, 1999; eadem, "Art Imitates Architecture: The Saint Philip Reliquary in Renaissance Florence," *Art Bulletin* 86 (2004): 642-658; Giovanni Freni, "The reliquary of the Holy Corporal in the cathedral of Orvieto: Patronage and politics," in *Art, Politics, and Civil Religion in Central Italy 1261-1362*, eds. Joanna Cannon and Beth Williamson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 117-78; Isabella Gagliardi, "Le reliquie dell'Ospedale di Santa Maria della Scala (XIV-XV secolo)," in *L'Oro di Siena: Il*

Despite the sustained, multidisciplinary interest in relics and reliquaries demonstrated in the literature, scholars have overlooked a significant aspect of how relics functioned in medieval and Renaissance societies, namely how and where they were stored. For reasons that will be discussed below, most relics were only rarely shown to a wide audience and were most often kept locked away. This dissertation seeks to examine a neglected area of relic studies by considering a significant type of liturgical furniture used to store, protect and augment relic and reliquary collections. Sacristy reliquary cupboards played crucial roles in the ritual activities of the churches in which they were installed. They must also be understood as meaningful components of the sacred visual environment, as they were often decorated with painted and sculpted cycles that relate in a variety of ways to their holy contents and to the larger iconographical programs of their sacristies, churches and cities at large. Therefore, investigation into late medieval and Renaissance reliquary cupboards sheds light on an under-explored connection between relics and images. Moreover, consideration of sacristy reliquary cupboards, as distinct from other kinds of fixed relic containers such as altars or tombs, contributes to an awareness of a significant group of ritual objects and how they functioned within the liturgical environment. This dissertation presents the first extended examination of Tre- and Quattrocento sacristy reliquary cupboards as a particular type of relic-related object and a meaningful component of an Italian church's ritual furnishings.

The massive, wall-mounted cupboards included in this study were permanent installations designed specifically for a particular space within the church, and thus must be

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Tesoro di Santa Maria della Scala, ed. Luciano Bellosi (Milan: Skira, 1996), 49-66; Holger Klein, "Eastern Objects and Western Desires: Relics and Reliquaries between Byzantium and the West," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 283-314; Scott B. Montgomery, "The Use and Perception of Reliquary Busts in the Late Middle Ages," Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1996 as well as the 1997 *Gesta* volume on body-part reliquaries with articles by Barbara Drake Boehm, Cynthia Hahn, Caroline Walker Bynum and Paula Gerson, *Gesta* 36, no. 1 (1997) and the contributions to *Images, Relics, and Devotional Practices in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, eds. Sally J. Cornelison and Scott B. Montgomery (Tempe, Ariz.: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005).

considered within the context of the history and function of church sacristies. In this Introduction, sacristy reliquary cupboards will also be explored in light of their relationship to traditions of sacred storage and the dramatic processes of concealment and revelation that recur throughout Christian liturgy and ritual behavior. Finally, a brief discussion of medieval theories regarding the methods and meanings of sight and, in particular, the sight of relics, is offered to understand better how late medieval and Renaissance audiences might have viewed these large, expensive and multifaceted ritual objects.

Sacred Storage in Christian Architecture: Functions of the Sacristy

The sacristy is an often overlooked, yet prominent and liturgically significant, element in Italian church design of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. While these rooms vary considerably in size, shape and location relative to the rest of the buildings in which they were located, their critical role in the church's liturgical activities made them a vital part of sacred architecture. First and foremost, the sacristy served as the principal site for preparation of the liturgical objects and ecclesiastics involved in performing the Mass or any other rituals. The performance of the Mass in medieval and Renaissance Italy, during which the clerical celebrant reenacts Christ's institution of the Last Supper and his subsequent death, required the participation of several different liturgical objects and adherence to particular ritual acts.[8] The climax of the rite occurs at the moment of transubstantiation, wherein the blessed bread (or Host) and wine miraculously changes to become the flesh and blood of Christ himself.[9] Therefore, through consumption of

[8] On the Roman liturgy used in Italian churches since the fourth Lateran Council in 1215 see Theodor Klauser, *A Short History of the Western Liturgy*, trans. John Halliburton, 2nd ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 76-77; Colum Hourihane, "Introduction," in *Objects, Images, and the Word: Art in the Service of the Liturgy*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 3-5; *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church*, eds. Thomas J. Heffernan and E. Ann Matter, 2nd ed (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Press).
[9] Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 24-38.

either the Eucharistic Host or wine, the Christian devotee participates in Jesus' act of redemptive sacrifice.

Whether the Mass was celebrated at the high altar or any other altar in a church, the clerics performing the ceremony would first need to use the sacristy to prepare themselves and their liturgical objects. Inside this room, usually located at the end of a transept or near the church's choir, priests, deacons, and other participants in the clerical procession at the commencement of the liturgy performed prescribed preparatory acts that made them symbolically and practically ready for the Mass.[10] This included dressing in appropriate vestments, ritually washing their hands in the *lavabo*, often a sculpted basin filled with holy water, and gathering together sacred vessels used in the rite such as chalices, the metal goblets used for holding consecrated wine; patens, elaborate trays on which to carry the Host; and censers for the burning and dispersal of incense.

Having spiritually and physically prepared for the ensuing ritual acts, the participants would then processionally move into the main body of the church and proceed through the prescribed liturgy at the chosen altar.[11] The route varied according to the church's particular plan and the date on the liturgical calendar. The priest and his retinue would most often walk directly across the choir from the sacristy to the high altar. In many fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italian churches associated with mendicant orders, this would have happened mostly out of sight of the lay congregation who stood behind large wood or stone rood screens that effectively hid the apse and altar from the nave.[12] However, on other occasions such as feast days, the

[10] Carlo Borromeo, vol. 2, 141-43.
[11] Klauser, 62-63; Margaret Haines, *La Sacrestia delle messe del Duomo di Firenze*, trans. Laura Corti (Florence: Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze, 1983), 24; Elizabeth C. Parker, "Architecture as Liturgical Setting," in *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church*, eds. Thomas J. Heffernan and E. Ann Matter (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Press, 2001), 281-82.
[12] Those standing behind the rood screen could have only dimly made out what was happening in the choir as iron

procession would take a more circuitous path through the nave. As we will see, these liturgies often required the celebrants to carry relics from the sacristy to the altar; these objects would occasionally be processed through the body of the church so that the congregation could benefit from seeing and being near them.

During all these events, the clerics' exit from the secluded sacristy and entrance into the church proper was announced through the ringing of bells and accompanied by censing and singing or chanting.[13] The sacristy's prestigious location in the church was important for several reasons. While the need for controlled access to the sacristy space and its contents will be discussed below, its role in ritual preparation and the starting point of the dramatic Eucharistic procession made it a liturgically significant place. In fact, clerical preparation for the Mass was so closely tied to the sacristy that the thirteenth-century bishop William Durand of Mende compared this space to the Virgin Mary's womb that sheltered the body of Christ before it was released to the world, just as the sacristy hid the priest just prior to his liturgical activities.[14]

The role of the sacristy as a staging ground for liturgical events, which included both the routine of daily Mass and more exceptional events such as saints' feast days, was complemented by its simultaneous purpose in storing the church's valuable collection of liturgical vessels and vestments. Therefore, the sacristy functioned as both a ritual space and as a treasury. The objects kept here included the chalices, patens and censers mentioned above, as well as costly textiles

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grilles covered the openings in the screen, like the gate seen today in the Rinuccini chapel in Santa Croce's sacristy. The issue of access to the transept and high altar is considered in greater detail on pages 8-10. Marcia B. Hall, "The *Tramezzo* in Santa Croce, Florence, reconstructed," *Art Bulletin* 56 (1974): 325-41; eadem "The *Ponte* in Santa Maria Novella; the Problem of the Rood Screen in Italy," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 37 (1974): 157-73; Ena Giurescu, "Trecento Family Chapels in Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce: Architecture, Patronage, and Competition," PhD diss., New York University, 1997), 180-205; Donal Albert Cooper, "In Medio Ecclesiae: Screens, Crucifixes and Shrines in the Franciscan Church Interior in Italy circa 1230-1400." (PhD diss., Courtauld Institute of Art, 2000), 73-78; idem, "Franciscan Choir Enclosures and the Function of Double-Sided Altarpieces in Pre-Tridentine Umbria," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* 64 (2001), 1-54.

[13] The bell was also rung at the moment of transubstantiation to call attention to the miracle effected at the altar. See Klauser, 120.

[14] William Durand of Mende, *Rationale divinorum officiorum*, trans. Timothy M. Thibodeau (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 16.

and manuscripts, all very prestigious items due to their expensive materials, their laborious production and their ritual use.[15] In addition, the sacristy frequently housed relics and reliquaries that immeasurably increased the sacrality of the space and, indeed, that of the entire church and city. The large number of items stored in the sacristy thus required specially built cupboards to house such valuable collections properly. These pieces of liturgical furniture were often extensively and elaborately decorated with painted or sculpted images that reinforced and even augmented the meaning, identity and power of the precious objects they contained and their role in the ritual life of the sacristy and church.

While the most frequent activity in the sacristy consisted of liturgical preparation, the space could also be used for extra-liturgical purposes. A variety of more secular events regularly took place here. These included signing legal documents, such as wills, marriage contracts or other notarial acts, concluding business transactions, depositing money and documents for safe-keeping, and even holding political meetings.[16] In addition, the sacristy often served as a funerary chapel, perhaps most famously for the Medici at San Lorenzo in Florence.[17] A sacristy

[15] The sacristy sometimes held the Host in preparation for Masses. However, the Host was also frequently reserved in church altars and chapterhouses and, most significantly for this study, does not appear in sacristy inventories from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Molli argues that by the fourteenth century, Italian sacristies were not used as the primary place of Host storage. *La sacrestia del Santo e il suo tesoro nell'inventario del 1396* (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 2002), 13. On the general development of Host storage and Eucharistic tabernacles see Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 43-49; Achim Timmermann, "Designing a House for the Body of Christ: The Beginnings of Eucharistic Architecture in Western and Northern Europe, ca. 1300," *Arte Medievale* IV (2005): 119-29; idem, *Real Presence: Sacrament houses and the body of Christ, circa 1270-1600* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009).

[16] Molli, *La sacrestia*, 12-13; Paula Vojnovic, "La sacrestia di S. Croce in Firenze: Le sue varie funzioni nel '300." *Città di Vita* 62 (2007): 296-97; Richard C. Trexler, "Honor Among Thieves: The Trust Function of the Urban Clergy in the Florentine Republic," in vol. 1 of *Essays Presented to Myron P. Gilmore*, eds. Sergio Bertelli and Gloria Ramakus (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1978), 324. Sacristies could even be used to sign official peace treaties, as the 1343 conflict between the Florentines and the Pisans officially ended in the sacristy of the *pieve* of San Miniato al Tedesco. Haines, *La sacrestia*, 30. See also her history of the sacristy at Santa Maria Novella, Florence, which was used as a vestry, storage space, funerary chapel, pontifical chapel and makeshift chapterhouse at various points from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries. Margaret Haines, "The Sacristy of S. Maria Novella in Florence: The History of its Functions and Furnishings (Part I)," *Memorie Domenicane* 11 (1980): 575-623.

[17] On the Old Sacristy of San Lorenzo, the burial chapel of many of the most prominent Medici of the early Quattrocento, see Howard Saalman, *Filippo Brunelleschi: The Buildings* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 147-75; Roger T. Crum, "Donatello's "Ascension of St. John the Evangelist" and the Old Sacristy as Sepulchre," *Artibus et Historiae* 16, no. 32 (1995): 141-161; Marvin Trachtenberg, "On

burial was perceived as particularly beneficial because of the constant prayers and sacred rituals enacted so close to the deceased's body, which would help to ensure his or her salvation.[18] Proximity to the holy objects present in the sacristy supported and augmented all of these extra-liturgical activities, especially when those items included the physical remains of the saints in the form of relics. Making binding legal and social commitments near such sacred relics promoted the sincerity of the parties involved, as acting falsely before saintly witnesses constituted both moral and theological transgression.

The sacristy's primary functions in ceremonial preparation and storage of many of the church's most precious objects required that the room be secure and secluded from the general public in order to protect and preserve the well-being and mysterious quality of the valuable contents and ritual acts that took place within its walls.[19] To that end, sacristies were usually situated near other restricted areas of the church, such as the choir and high altar. As we have seen, the church controlled access to these spaces in order to heighten the mystery of the liturgy, thus situating the sacristy in this part of the church allowed for easier seclusion of the sacristy's contents and the clerics who used them. For example, in the cathedral of Siena, one gains entrance to the sacristy only from the choir. Such a situation means that any visitor to the sacristy also would have had access to the high altar, the church's most ritually important site and a space

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Brunelleschi's Old Sacristy as Model for Early Renaissance Architecture," in *L'Eglise dans l'architecture de la Renaissance*, ed. Jean Guillaume (Paris: Picard, 1995), 9-39; Sally J. Cornelison, "The Tomb of Giovanni di Bicci de'Medici and the Old Sacristy at San Lorenzo," in *The Sculpted Object, 1400-1700*, ed. Stuart Currie and Peta Motture (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), 25-42.

[18] On the benefits of late medieval and Renaissance burials in sacristies, chapterhouses and baptisteries see Darrell D. Davisson, "The Iconology of the S. Trinita Sacristy, 1418-1435: A Study of the Private and Public Functions of Religious Art in the Early Quattrocento," *Art Bulletin* 57, no. 3 (1975): 315-34; Margaret Plant, "Patronage in the Circle of the Carrara Family: Padua, 1337-1405," in *Patronage, Art, and Society in Renaissance Italy*, ed. F. W. Kent and Patricia Simons (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 177-200; Howard Saalman, "Carrara Burials in the Baptistery of Padua," *Art Bulletin* 69, no. 3 (1987): 376-94; Cordelia Warr, "Painting in late fourteenth-century Padua: The patronage of Fina Buzzacarini," *Renaissance Studies* 10, no. 2 (1996): 139-55.

[19] Borromeo specifically recommends that sacristy doors always be kept shut "to prevent laymen from entering or seeing the sacristy." Borromeo, vol. 1, 139.

denied to the general public.[20] The question of precisely who would have access to the sacristy remains difficult to answer, as surviving documents do not often provide this information. However, the sacristy's location near the choir makes it a prestigious and restricted space and its role in liturgical preparation further supports the idea that clerics formed the most common sacristy audience.

Having said this, the aforementioned secular activities documented in sacristies show that the space was more permeable than it may first appear and on certain occasions, laypeople did indeed enter.[21] The degree to which the non-religious visited the sacristy likely varied in different types of churches and depended on the events happening in the church at a given time. For example, in churches that served the religious needs of entire cities, such as cathedrals or hospital churches, access to the choir and sacristy may have been easier than in some mendicant and monastic churches in which friars often sought stricter liturgical separation.[22] However, scholars have shown that even in mendicant churches certain lay groups, such as confraternities, male and female members of the families who patronized burial chapels and pilgrims seeking saints' tombs located beyond the rood screen, received access to more restricted parts of the church, particularly at times other than Mass.[23]

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[20] Tim Benton, "The design of Siena and Florence Duomos," in *Siena, Florence and Padua: Art, Society and Religion 1280-1400*, ed. Diana Norman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 129-44; Richard Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone: Church Architecture from Byzantium to Berkeley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 101-03.

[21] San Francesco at Borgo San Sepolcro provides a good example of a church in which patrons of transept chapels were likely allowed beyond the rood screen into the choir when Mass was not being performed. This would also allow for a larger audience of the back of double-sided altarpieces like Sassetta's fifteenth-century polyptych that sat on the church's high altar. See Donal Cooper and James R. Banker, "The Church of San Francesco in Borgo San Sepolcro in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance," in vol. 1 of *Sassetta: The Borgo San Sepolcro Altarpiece*, ed. Machtelt Israëls (Florence: Villa I Tatti, 2009), 94-103.

[22] Cooper, "In Medio Ecclesiae," 75-102.

[23] Giurescu, "Trecento Family Chapels," 207-09; Jacqueline E. Jung, "Beyond the Barrier: The Unifying Role of the Choir Screen in Gothic Churches," *Art Bulletin* 82 (2000), 622-34; Sally J. Cornelison, "Accessing the Holy: Gendered Space and the First Tomb of St. Antoninus in Renaissance Florence," in *Let These Bones Live: Community, Identity, and Memory in Medieval Europe*, ed. Marika Räsänen, Gritje Hartmann, and Earl Jeffrey Richards (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

In all types of churches, physically protecting the sacristy's sacred and valuable contents required concerted effort. The wooden cupboards built to hold the relics, vestments and books functioned first and foremost as secure storage devices to preserve safely the church's treasure during all those times other than active use. To that end, sacristy reliquary cupboards had multiple locks; the best surviving example of these can be seen on the cupboard made for the church in the Sienese hospital in Santa Maria della Scala discussed in Chapter Three (figure i-1). Churches sought to provide their powerful relics and expensive reliquaries with the best security possible, as evinced in St. Charles Borromeo's 1577 instructions on the proper storage of relics which emphasize that they be kept in cabinets secured with locks and chains.[24] Control of the sacristy keys was a jealously guarded privilege that often required formal mediation. For example, in 1481 the canons and *operai* (a group charged with church maintenance and decoration) of Siena's cathedral met to decide how they would officially divide the keys, which concluded with the canons taking those that opened the reliquary cupboard and the *operai* managing the cupboards that held the cathedral's other metalwork.[25]

Relic Storage Chambers from Constantine to the Middle Ages

Given that sacristy activities involved ritual connections to the main body of the church, the history and development of the sacristy has consistently been tied to the context of the Christian liturgy and its architectural settings. The concept of incorporating chambers dedicated to liturgical preparation and storage into the fabric of churches dates back to late antiquity and the first centuries of Christian building. Fourth- and fifth-century churches in Antioch and Syria often had rooms to one or both sides of the high altar that could be used for storage or as

[24] Borromeo, vol. 1, 65.
[25] Archivio dell'Opera della Metropolitana di Siena, MS 19, fol. 34.

martyria or baptisteries.[26] The Constantinian basilica known as the Great Church, built on the site later occupied by Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, included a chamber on its northeast side that likely functioned as a sacristy and treasure house.[27] Liturgical and archaeological evidence indicates that the general lay congregation had more access to this early sacristy than later iterations of this type of structure. For example, the Constantinian room had two doors to allow devotees to enter easily into the sacristy, offer their gifts, and then move out into the rest of the church.[28]

The liturgy celebrated at Constantine's Great Church included a clerical procession from the sacristy to the main church to lay the various offerings and liturgical vessels on the high altar. Theodore of Mopsuestia describes such events in his circa 392 *Mystagogical Catecheses*, in which "…the offering that is about to be presented is brought out in the sacred vessels, the patens and chalices [and] you must think that Christ the Lord is coming out, led to his passion…"[29] Accounts of this liturgical element, known as the "entrance of the gifts," demonstrate that a side-room specifically devoted to storage of precious objects and the frequent movement of persons and sacred items from this secluded space to the larger church has been part of the Christian architectural and liturgical tradition since its early years.

In the two centuries following the construction of the Great Church in Constantinople, the inclusion of a room encompassing the main roles of a sacristy appeared in various locations in

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[26] Günter Bandmann, "Uber Pastophorien und verwandte Nebenräume im mittelalterlichen Kirchenbau," in *Kunstgeschichtliche Studien für Hans Kauffmann*, ed. Wolfgang Braunfels (Berlin: Mann, 1956): 19-58; Georges Descoudres, "Die Pastophorien in syro-byzantinischen Osten," (PhD diss., Wiesbaden, 1983), 13-25; Sible de Blaauw, "Architecture and Liturgy in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages," *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 33 (1991): 6-7; Gillian Vallance Mackie, *Early Christian Chapels in the West: Decoration, Function and Patronage* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 80-90.

[27] Construction on the basilica, called the Great Church, was begun by Constantine but finished in 360 under Constantius. It was destroyed in a 404 fire caused by riots in the imperial city following the expulsion of John Chrysostom. Allan Doig, *Liturgy and Architecture: From the Early Church to the Middle Ages* (Ashgate: Aldershot, England, 2008), 54-55.

[28] Ibid, 54.

[29] Translated in Hugh Wybrew, *The Orthodox Liturgy: The Development of the Eucharistic Liturgy in the Byzantine Rite* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1989), 53.

the West.[30] Janet Charlotte Smith has shown that several early Byzantine churches built in Ravenna in the fifth and sixth centuries had rooms flanking the apse for storage and preparation.[31] Such a design continues the tradition of sacred architectural elements that became codified in Byzantine churches in the years following Constantine's death. In these dual chambers, known later as the *prothesis* and *diaconicon*, clerics prepared the Host and stored offerings, vestments, and liturgical vessels.[32] Smith notes that their general function and placement beside the high altar unites the Ravennate examples of side-chambers, but that they vary widely in terms of plan and size.[33]

Despite their heterogeneity as a group, specific aspects of some of these early Ravennate chambers bear striking resemblance to later medieval and Renaissance Italian sacristies. The rooms flanking the apse of both San Giovanni Evangelista (begun circa 420) and San Vitale (begun 527) have grooved niches that indicate the presence of shelving.[34] The storage potential of these chambers takes on further significance at the latter church, where architectural historians have discovered additional rooms above the ground-level space that are deliberately concealed from casual view, with no windows and single, narrow entrances.[35] The relative inaccessibility of, or at least more difficult entrance to, the upper-level storage rooms at San Vitale suggests that they stored the church's most valuable items that required additional layers of physical security.

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[30] Krautheimer lists a room where "the deacons received the offerings and kept archives, library, vestments and the church treasure" as a common feature of fourth-century basilica-plan churches. Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 4th ed. (New York: Penguin, 1986), 95-96.

[31] Janet Charlotte Smith, "Form and Function of the Side Chambers of Fifth-and Sixth-Century Churches in Ravenna," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 49, no. 2 (1990): 181-82.

[32] Molli argues that the two-chambered sacristy system may have influenced the dual sacristies found in some medieval Italian cathedrals. For example, Padua's cathedral has two sacristies, one of which was specifically designated for canonical use only and Siena's single cathedral sacristy is separated into three clear sections based on their different contents. Such division is not found in the mendicant or hospital churches examined in this study. Molli, *La sacrestia*, 9.

[33] Smith, 185.

[34] Unfortunately, none of the early Byzantine churches discussed by Smith retains the actual shelving indicated by the marks left on the walls. Ibid, 187-89.

[35] The church of Sant'Apollinare in Classe has similar storage rooms with difficult entrances. Ibid, 198-99.

Here, as in late medieval and Renaissance churches in Italy, valuable cultic objects required protection, keeping them safe from prying hands and eyes.

The preparatory and storage areas of Byzantine churches in Ravenna also bear similarity to their later sacristy descendants in that by the sixth century these rooms increasingly served as martyria or funerary chapels, effectively storing the bodies of the sacred and secular dead. The sacristies flanking the altars in both the mid-sixth-century Justinianic churches of San Vitale and Sant'Apollinare in Classe have niches that correspond to the size of most sarcophagi, and the practice of burying bishops and prominent lay donors in these chambers became more common in this period.[36] While relics did not necessarily appear among those objects kept in the side-chambers of Byzantine churches in northeast Italy, the funerary function of such rooms indicates the longstanding connection between secure storage and the remains of the honored Christian dead.

Therefore, from the Constantinian churches of the East to Byzantine edifices in Ravenna, a consistent feature of Christian architecture and liturgical practice has been the need for convenient, secure and secluded space for storage and ritual preparation. As the cult of relics grew in scope and popularity, so, too, did the need for appropriate spaces in which to gather together the remains of the saints, a trend reflected in the construction of rooms for reliquaries as well as the incorporation of relics into the stored sacristy collections of vestments and liturgical vessels.

Certainly one of the most celebrated reliquary spaces in the medieval West was the Sancta Sanctorum, rebuilt in 1279 under Pope Nicholas III (r. 1277-80) as the palatine chapel of

[36] Ibid, 196-99.

the basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano, Rome's cathedral.[37] This room, the Holy of Holies, visible only through small windows covered with iron bars, gained its fame from a remarkable collection of relics that included the heads of Sts. Agnes and Euphemia, Jesus' foreskin and umbilical cord, Mary's veil, a lock of her hair and a vial of her breast milk, a fragment of the True Cross, earth from the Holy Land, and the portraits of Sts. Peter and Paul that appeared in a dream to Emperor Constantine in the fourth century.[38] However, the most revered object in the Sancta Sanctorum was the *Acheropita*, a full-length image of Christ nearly covered with gold, silver and jewels believed to have been made by St. Luke.[39] Locked boxes in and around the chapel's altar, itself reinforced with a metal grille, held these sacred objects and their many painted wooden reliquaries in order to ensure their safety and preserve their mystery.[40] The Sancta Sanctorum thus stands as an extremely prestigious early example of a relic collection being safely protected and concealed inside secure and elaborately decorated containers and architectural environments, a model that would be followed with increasing frequency in the sacristy reliquary cupboards of the Tre- and Quattrocento.

Relics and the tensions of space

Reliquary cupboards in church sacristies brought together in a spatially concentrated way an impressive amount of sacred presence and power. If any one relic was understood to contain a saint's complete holiness (or in the case of a Christological relic, the divine itself), how much

[37] On the fresco and mosaic decoration of the chapel see Julian Gardner, "Nicholas III's Oratory of the Sancta Sanctorum and Its Decoration," *The Burlington Magazine* 115, no. 842 (1973): 283-94. For the papal move from the city's cathedral to the Vatican in the fifteenth century see Charles L. Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1998), 264.
[38] Herbert L. Kessler and Johanna Zacharias, *Rome 1300: On the Path of the Pilgrim* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 40-41.
[39] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 63-73, 121; Mario Cempanari and Tito Amodei, *Scala Santa e Sancta Sanctorum* (Rome: Quasar, 1999), 87-99; Kessler and Zacharias, 60-63.
[40] Kessler and Zacharias, 50-55.

more potent was a collection of dozens of relics bound together in a single container? The decision to place powerful groups of relics in a large cupboard in the sacristy rather than another location in the church suggests that their removal from public view and frequent access concerned church authorities.

Situating the relics in the sacristy served multiple purposes, including ensuring the physical security of the relics and the expensive gilded and enameled metal reliquaries that contained them within a controlled space. In addition, restricted and infrequent access to the relics reinforced and even strengthened the sacrality of both the relics and the space surrounding them. Scholars of the liturgy and cultural and architectural history have noted that physical separation often signifies or can intensify the sacredness of a place or object.[41] The effect appears in a 1435 Florentine statute limiting the number of times that the miraculous icon of the Virgin of Impruneta could be processed through the city, which states that "sacred objects and those dedicated to God are normally respected and held in greater reverence if they are rarely seen."[42] The visual and physical withholding of items such as relics or miraculous images, of spaces such as the high altar precinct, and even of people such as priests as they prepared for the Mass, makes their occasional appearance or proximity all the more powerful by virtue of their rarity.

While the dramatic aspect of relics benefited from their usual separation from the rest of the church and casual viewership, the effect that relics had on their surrounding spaces while concealed should not be overlooked. Even in storage inside the reliquary cupboard the relic collection heightened the sacred nature of the sacristy simply through its saintly presence. By

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[41] Richard C. Trexler, "Florentine Religious Experience: The Sacred Image," *Studies in the Renaissance* 19 (1972): 17; Hans Henrik Lohfert Jorgensen, "Cultic Vision – Seeing as Ritual: Visual and Liturgical Experience in the Early Christian and Medieval Church," in *The Appearances of Medieval Rituals*, eds. Nils Holger Petersen, et al. (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2004), 182-88; Kieckhefer, 18.

[42] *…res sacrae deoque dicate raritate ispa videndi commendari maiorique in reverential habere solent…* Published in Trexler, "Florentine Religious Experience: The Sacred Image," 17.

permitting themselves to be in that particular place, the saints and other holy persons in the form of their relics signify their favor and willingness to bless their surroundings, which in turn imbued that space with holiness.[43]

In addition, as Richard Trexler has noted, relics were not always active.[44] They did not constantly perform miracles, affect battles, or heal the sick. It seems that their occasional awesome and miraculous abilities combined with a less specific, but no less important, constant protective power provided by the saints. Pilgrims' actions support the concept of relics consecrating and protecting the space around them. Pilgrims would often travel long distances to crowd around a saint's tomb, usually with the ultimate goal of making actual contact with the holy body or its container. The desire to achieve maximum proximity to the relic results, at least in part, from the understanding that saintly relics sanctify their space and that physical closeness with that holy power is both meaningful and efficacious.[45]

Just as major pilgrimage shrines often found it difficult to accommodate pilgrims' desires amidst necessary security precautions, sacristy reliquary cupboards functioned under an imperative to protect relics through restriction and concealment.[46] However, the simultaneous need to show the presence and power of those same objects to the faithful through access and ostention (the practice of putting relics on display) created a tension of opposing requirements. Keeping the relics safely hidden behind the closed doors of the cupboard and the restrictive

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[43] Richard Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Academic Press, 1980), 46-47; Diana Webb, *Patrons and Defenders: The Saints in the Italian City-States* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 224-26; Brown, 90-105; Geary, *Furta Sacra*, 108-29.
[44] Trexler, *Public Life*, 58-59.
[45] John Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, circa 300-1200* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 32-35.
[46] Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), passim; André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), passim; Joanna Cannon and André Vauchez, *Margherita of Cortona and the Lorenzetti: Sienese Art and the Cult of a Holy Woman in Medieval Tuscany* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 75-78; Robert Maniura, *Pilgrimage to images in the fifteenth century: The origins of the Cult of Our Lady of Czestochowa* (Rochester, New York: Boydell Press, 2004); Crook, 281.

precinct of the sacristy intensified their holy potency and mystery, but they also required occasional removal from their concealed state in order to satisfy the liturgical and devotional needs of the community.

The reliquary cupboard's ability to move between an open and closed state profoundly affected the entire sacristy and, by extension, the church as a whole. When closed, reliquary cupboards and the images on their painted or sculpted surfaces comprised one element of complex, sacristy-wide decorative programs. However, when open, not only did the revealed faces of the cupboard's interior doors often significantly change the iconographic meaning of the space, but the clear sight of row upon row of relics within their elaborate reliquaries would likely have become an irresistible focal point for any audience in the sacristy. Martina Caroli has argued that relic translations (moving these sacred objects from one place to another) functioned as a reminder of holy authority and the power of those who controlled the relics.[47] Such translations often revealed normally concealed relics as they were moved, thus their display proved the saints' continued presence and implied favor towards those who protected and honored them. Although scholars have not recognized it before, the opening of sacristy reliquary cupboards can be understood in much the same way as a relic invention or discovery, as the revelation of the relics inside the *armadio* essentially brought them back to light and allowed them to be used actively in ritual and liturgy.

The dynamics of concealment and revelation at work in the functions of sacristy reliquary cupboards continue longstanding Christian traditions that reflect how the sacred and the hidden can be joined through ritual. The construct of *revelatio* refers to the liturgically and dramatically

[47] Martina Caroli, "Bringing Saints to Cities and Monasteries: *Translationes* in the making of a sacred geography (Ninth-Tenth centuries)," in *Towns and their Territories: Between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds. G.P. Brogiolo, N. Gauthier, N. Christie (Brill: Leiden, 2000), 272-73.

meaningful exposure of a space, object or person.[48] Biblical descriptions of Solomon's temple in which a "curtain shall separate for you the holy place from the most holy," here referring to the demarcation of the Ark of the Covenant from the rest of the temple, set the precedent for performative revelation.[49]

The import of removing or tearing the temple curtain later appears in multiple biblical contexts. For example, following the victory over the Seleucids at Emmaus, the Israelites immediately purify and rebuild the Temple, a reclamation process that specifically includes the re-hanging of the temple curtains.[50] Perhaps most significantly, the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke recount that at the moment of Jesus' death "the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom."[51] Scripture thus establishes a link between the temple curtain and cultural identity and, even more forcefully, between Christ and the temple veil.[52] Furthermore, the rending of Christ's body at his crucifixion set in motion a new understanding of the relationship between the divine and the devotee. Expressed through the metaphor of the curtain, the author of the letter to the Hebrews proclaims that

> …since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith…[53]

Thus, the practice of concealing an object or space with a curtain and the subsequent effects of removing that covering resonated in the Christian theological tradition. Scholars have so far

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[48] Alessandro Nova, "Hangings, Curtains, and Shutters of Sixteenth-Century Lombard Altarpieces," in *Italian Altarpieces 1250-1550: Function and design*, eds. Eve Borsook and Fiorella Superbi Gioffredi (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 179-81.
[49] Exodus 26:33.
[50] 1 Maccabees 4:41-51.
[51] Matthew 27:51. Also in Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45.
[52] Eberlein, "The Curtain in Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*," *Art Bulletin* 65, no. 1 (1983): 68.
[53] Not surprisingly, given its intended audience, this section of the book of Hebrews is an extended discussion of Christ's spiritual refashioning of the temple from the restrictions of Jewish law to the perceived freedom of faith. Hebrews 10: 19-22.

failed to recognize that the complex connections between the veiling of sacred space and the corporeal body of Christ may affect reliquary cupboards, which are in essence elaborate structures of concealment that can, on ritual occasions, be opened to reveal the embodiment of holy presence on earth in the form of relics.

The motif of curtains or the literal veiling of images appears in paleo-Christian visual culture.[54] Johann Konrad Eberlein notes that the first securely datable Christian image incorporating a curtain occurs in a 354 manuscript that includes a representation of Constantius II, whose enthroned figure sits behind two drawn curtains.[55] This composition likely seeks to link the Christian emperor to earlier kings who were hidden from the gazes of their subjects by veils.[56] Therefore, in concert with its theological meaning, the visual signifier of the curtain could indicate the presence of a temporally or spiritually significant person or space.

Renaissance use of the curtain motif includes its representation, perhaps most famously in Fra Angelico's *San Marco Altarpiece* and Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*, as well as methods of physically covering images and holy objects that function in ways similar to reliquary cupboard doors.[57] These practices include the veiling of high altars during Lent that were ritually removed during the Holy Saturday liturgy and the use of cloths hung around the altar to be dramatically pulled back at the moment of transubstantiation.[58] Alessandro Nova has termed another related device that concealed images in the Renaissance a "shuttered altarpiece," which can refer to either a polyptych with moveable wings or a piece of cloth or canvas draped over the image's

[54] The curtain motif is also found in Jewish representations of the Temple. On the use of curtains and columns as cosmic symbols in second-century Jewish art, see Bianca Kühnel, "Jewish Symbolism of the Temple and the Tabernacle and Christian Symbolism of the Holy Sepulchre and the Heavenly Tabernacle," *Jewish Art* 12/13 (1986/1987): 147-52.
[55] The image Eberlein identifies is from the Calendar of 354 (Vatican, Barb. 1st 2154, fol. 13r). Eberlein, 66.
[56] Ibid., 66.
[57] See Eberlein, 61-77; Nova, 180, for discussion of the literature on Raphael's inclusion of the curtain. Curtains were hung over Fra Bartolomeo's 1515 *St. Mark* at the church of San Marco in Florence. See Sally J. Cornelison, "Relocating Fra Bartolomeo at San Marco," *Renaissance Studies* 23, no. 3 (2009): 326.
[58] Nova, 179-81.

surface.[59] Nova notes that the potential mutability of such objects provided physical protection of the painted surface but also allowed for the main cultic images' dramatic revelation on special feast days and other ceremonial occasions.[60]

Through a layering of physical and religious spaces and veils, sacristy reliquary cupboards and their contents maintained a powerful ability to sanctify their surroundings yet withhold immediate saintly presence until the most dramatic ritual moment. The potent combination of images and relics at work in reliquary *armadi* allowed sacristy audiences to experience the sacred presence in two ways: through representations on the cupboard's exterior and through seeing the actual holy objects that the open doors revealed. Tied to the established Christian tradition of curtains and their meaningful removal, the sacristy reliquary cupboard must thus also be understood as a massive reliquary, itself a containing object intimately and specifically bound up with the nature of relics.

Containing Relics

Reliquaries, the protective and prestigious objects that held relics, took a variety of forms throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Often made of extremely valuable materials, such as silver, gold, crystal, enamel, and precious stones, scholars have studied reliquaries in light of their materials, their stylistic development, and their cultic functions.[61] The multiplicity and

[59] While they remain strongly associated with the Northern European artistic tradition, shuttered altarpieces were known in Italy since the Romanesque period. Nova, 177-87; E.B. Garrison, *Italian Romanesque Panel Painting* (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 1949), passim. On Northern altarpieces with moveable elements see Donald L. Ehresmann, "Some Observations on the Role of Liturgy in the Early Winged Altarpiece," *Art Bulletin* 64, no. 3 (1982): 359-69; Barbara G. Lane, *The Altar and the Altarpiece: Sacramental Themes in Early Netherlandish Painting* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984).

[60] Another type of mutable object that utilized concealment and revelation to maximum effect are sculpted enthroned Madonnas that break open to reveal another image of God or Christ within. On these Shrine Madonnas, made throughout medieval Europe, see Elina Gertsman, "Performing birth, enacting death: Unstable bodies in late medieval devotion," in *Visualizing Medieval Performance: Perspectives, Histories, Contexts*, ed. Elina Gertsman (Burlington, Ver.: Ashgate, 2008), 83-96; Nova, 186.

[61] See above note 6.

variety of reliquary forms, locations, and uses have prompted art historians, in particular, to focus their studies on individual objects; however, some aspects of the nature of reliquaries apply to all types of relic containers.

The idea that relics merited and, in fact, required a reliquary originated in late antiquity. Even in this early period of relic cults, theologians and poets, including Prudentius (circa 348-413), Victricius (circa 330-407) and John Chrysostom (circa 347-407), argued that a relic needed some sort of visual augmentation for the faithful to accept it fully as the saint. This attitude largely stemmed from the instability and difficulty of understanding "a body that is not quite a body."[62] Despite the concept of *pars pro toto* in which a saint is completely present in any of his or her constituent parts, which Victricius advocated in his circa 397 sermon *De laude sanctorum* (*In praise of the saints*), the reliquary container's ability to transform the saint's fragment into a complete and finished form helped devotees recognize and properly honor the isolated relic.[63]

In the early Middle Ages, reliquaries often took the form of body parts. These so-called "speaking reliquaries" fulfilled the need for a recognizable and complete form rather than the partial state of the relic inside.[64] The shapes of these body-part reliquaries did not always correspond to the objects preserved inside. Cynthia Hahn has identified many examples of German arm reliquaries from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that held dozens of small, unspecified relics in addition to or in lieu of a saint's arm bone.[65] By the late Middle Ages, reliquaries tended to take a different form, often architecturally inspired rather than figural, and, significantly for this study, displayed their contents rather than concealed them. In these

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[62] Patricia Cox Miller, "Relics, Rhetoric and Mental Spectacles in Late Ancient Christianity," in *Seeing the Invisible in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Giselle de Nie, Karl F. Morrison and Marco Mostert (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2005), 51.
[63] Late fourth-century texts by Victricius of Rouen, such as his *De laude sanctorum*, assert the completeness of saintly power in any relic. For a discussion of Victricius' work see Miller, 44-50. On the development of the related concept of *pars pro toto* see Brown, 2-11; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 299.
[64] Hahn, "Voices of the Saints," 20.
[65] Ibid., 21-22.

ostensory containers, the viewer could easily see the relic behind glass or crystal rather than have it hidden behind opaque sheets of metal.[66] The reliquary cupboards commissioned in the Tre- and Quattrocento thus work in tension with the types of reliquaries they contained in terms of visual access to the relics. As structures that protected sacred objects behind wooden doors, the reliquary *armadi* effectively shut relics away from prying eyes even as many of the metal reliquaries inside openly displayed their holy contents. The use of the reliquary cupboard, which kept relics collectively concealed except for those special occasions when the cupboard doors were opened, points to the desire to maintain the mystery and power of the holy remains as well as physically protect many of the church's most precious possessions.[67]

The direct correlation between material and spiritual value warranted the creation of enormously expensive reliquaries and the cupboards that stored them. The use of precious resources effectively marked the object within as worthy of the ritual and spiritual capital directed towards it.[68] For example, as we will see in Chapter Five, the relic of St. Anthony of Padua's jaw was kept in a large, elaborately decorated silver gilt head-shaped reliquary that subsequently became the focal point of a major feast liturgy at his burial church in Padua. Richard Trexler argues that the viewer learned the value of sacred objects in part through the materials used to frame and protect it.[69] The selection of costly metals, jewels and glass for the reliquary both reflected and produced an understanding of the object within it as holy. The very real importance of properly adorning a relic caused patrons and church authorities to outlay

[66] On Italian architectural reliquaries that often mimic the buildings in which they were kept, see Sally J. Cornelison, "Art imitates Architecture," 649-50.
[67] This concern has continued into the modern period, as a twentieth-century liturgical manual prohibits the sacristan from preparing relics in the sacristy if anyone else and could see them outside of their ritual context. Giuseppe Tamagnone, *Le suppellettili liturgiche* (Padua: Gregoriana Editrice, 1961), 120.
[68] Richard Trexler, "Ritual Behavior in Renaissance Florence: The Setting," *Medievalia et humanistica: Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Culture* 4 (1973): 132-133; Cynthia Hahn, "Metaphor and Meaning in Early Medieval Reliquaries," in *Seeing the Invisible in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Giselle de Nie, Karl F. Morrison and Marco Mostert (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2005), 239.
[69] Trexler, *Public Life*, 92.

fantastic sums to acquire powerful, precious relics and commission their reliquaries. One famous instance of this occurred in 1359, when officials at the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala in Siena paid an estimated 3,000 gold florins for a cache of Passion relics and reliquaries from Constantinople, an act that will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.[70] Incorporated into the ritual life of the hospital and the city, these relics, like countless others in late medieval and Renaissance Italy, gained appreciation not only for their status as Christological relics but also for their elaborate containers made of gold, high-quality enamels, and jewels that reflected the power of their contents.[71]

In the fifteenth century, the Sienese hospital authorities gathered together their relics and placed them in their church sacristy inside a large wooden cupboard painted by Lorenzo di Pietro, known as Vecchietta, thus adding another layer of containment around their existing reliquaries. This commission thus demonstrates that sacristy reliquary cupboards constitute a complex form of reliquary as they, like more traditional metal reliquaries, physically protect and visually enhance the saintly relics and reliquaries within. In addition, the cupboards' painted and sculpted decorative programs, like the precious materials used in other types of reliquaries, aesthetically denote the sacred significance of both the container and the contained.

Seeing the Sacred: Relics and Active Viewing

Whether the reliquary cupboard doors stood open or were firmly fastened shut, visitors to the sacristy experienced the *armadio* primarily visually. Given their sacred power, only a select few had the privilege of physically handling the reliquaries and, by extension, the relics inside them, thus most people would engage with the sacristy reliquary cupboard through sight alone.

[70] Paul Hetherington, "A Purchase of Byzantine Relics and Reliquaries in Fourteenth-Century Venice," *Arte Veneta* 37 (1983): 9-30.
[71] Gagliardi, 49-52.

However, this does not mean that viewers passively interacted with the cupboard, its images and contents. Vision in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries remained tied to medieval understandings of the active eye.

The Christian tradition of the participatory nature of vision dates back to Augustine, who frequently warned of the dangerous potential of sight in his sermons.[72] Augustine's call for caution with regards to vision is based upon antique theories of extramission and intromission. These optical systems, discussed by Plato and Galen, explain human vision in terms of physical connection between eye and object.[73] The theory of intromission posits that the object emits rays that pass to the eye and are then understood as the object, whereas vision through extramission originates in the eye, which sends out rays that travel to the object and then back to the eye.[74] Augustine, in company with other theologians including Chrysostom and later Aquinas, draws upon the idea that looking at an object creates a physical connection between viewer and viewed when he warns the faithful to be vigilant about what they see. Furthermore, the agency given to the human eye in extramission, the dominant optical theory in the Middle Ages, implies that observers bear the responsibility of controlling their vision.

The concept of active vision continued into the Renaissance and would thus have come into play for audiences in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century sacristies. In his 1435 treatise, *De pictura (On painting)*, architect and humanist Leon Battista Alberti describes what he calls

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[72] For example, Augustine laments, "what evils vulgar, shameless curiosity is the cause of, the lust of the eyes…" Augustine of Hippo, *Sermon* 313A, in vol. 9 of *The Works of Saint Augustine, Part III-Sermons*, trans. E. Hill (New York: New City Press, 1994), 67.

[73] On the development of optical theory in the West see Robert S. Nelson, "Descartes's Cow and Other Domestications of the Visual," in *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance*, ed. Robert S. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1-21; Dallas G. Denery II, *Seeing and Being Seen in the Later Medieval World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-18.

[74] Jorgensen, 178-80; Nelson, 4-5.

"ministers of vision."[75] These visual facilitators consist of rays that extend between the eye and object as in the much earlier modes of intro- and extramission. Unlike the early Christian and medieval philosophers and theologians mentioned above, Alberti does not concern himself with whether the rays originate from the object or the viewer; the central idea of vision accomplished through tangible emissions remains.

If medieval and Renaissance viewers understood sight as an activity, the nature of the object seen deeply affected the process. The sight of sacred objects or spaces encouraged belief through a physical demonstration of heavenly presence on earth.[76] Depending on its position, the reliquary cupboard presented an audience with both relic and image, objects and representations that could be seen and used in a variety of ways.[77] St. Thomas Aquinas advocates for the incorporation of images into worship and ritual, arguing that part of their usefulness stems from a mnemonic ability to remind viewers of the example of the saints.[78] Such an assertion seems particularly appropriate in the case of reliquary cupboards, all of which make direct reference to saintly presence, whether in the form of hagiographical narrative, standing figures, or text. In this context, then, images painted or sculpted on the *armadio* doors serve an active function in the mind and soul of the viewer, intended to heighten awareness of nearby sanctity and promote proper devotion.[79]

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[75] Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture*, trans. and ed. Cecil Grayson (Phaidon: London, 1972), 40-41 and Nelson, 5-6.
[76] On the "visual rhetoric of sanctity" around saints' shrines that sought to effectively impart saintly power and presence to the medieval viewer see Cynthia Hahn, "Seeing and Believing: The Construction of Sanctity in Early-Medieval Saints' Shrines," *Speculum* 72, no. 4 (1997): 1079-84.
[77] Hans Belting argues that images could be agents of the heavenly sphere and act in ways similar to relics themselves. Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 301-02.
[78] Patricia Lee Rubin, *Images and Identity in Fifteenth-Century Florence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 178-82.
[79] On the prescribed methods for medieval viewers to emotionally and spiritually prepare for the sight of sacred images and objects see Cynthia Hahn, "Visio Dei: Changes in Medieval Visuality," in *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance*, ed. Robert S. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 169-70.

The actual sight of relics during cupboard openings, or even the potential view of holy remains afforded when the doors were closed, complicated and enriched the act of viewing the reliquary cupboard. As the earthly remnants of holy people and heavenly power, relics possessed special qualities that could be communicated via sight. John Chrysostom energetically praised the effect that being in the presence of martyrs' relics has on the faithful in two early fifth-century sermons, the *Homily delivered after the remains of the martyrs* and the *Homily on martyrs*. In the former he describes how "the grace of the Spirit that accompanies these bones and dwells with the saints both extends towards others who follow it with faith and flows from mind into body…" and in the latter, "…the person returning from viewing martyrs should be recognizable to all – through their gaze, their appearance, their gait, their compunction, their composed thoughts."[80]

The concept that a piece of a saint in the form of a relic carries the full sacred power of that blessed person supports Chrysostom's assertion that seeing relics could produce a spiritual transformation in the viewer. The people who cared for relics and the objects that contained them had to convey properly their sacred presence and simultaneously retain their potency and mystery. The physical environment of relics assisted in this task; indeed, visual augmentation of saintly presence stimulated the viewer's awareness and awe of the holy power in their midst.[81] Therefore, given the belief in active sight and the potential effects relics could have upon those who saw them, the sacristy reliquary cupboard was particularly well suited to its principal task of protecting valuable relics from inappropriate hands and eyes by its sheltering doors, while its

[80] John Chrysostom, *Homily delivered after the remains of the martyrs* and *Homily on martyrs*, in *John Chrysostom*, trans. Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen (London: Routledge, 2000), 88, 97.
[81] It should be noted that, especially in late antiquity, "visual stimulus" could refer to evocative language as well as figural representations. Thus, sacred poetry read at a tomb would be understood as having much the same spiritual effect as a painting. See Miller, 27-28 and 38-40.

decorative program heralded the tantalizing and edifying sacred power that was present, but just out of sight.

Sacristy Reliquary Cupboards in Florence, Siena and Padua: An Overview

Sacristy reliquary cupboards likely appeared in most Italian church sacristies of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance and almost certainly in those prominent establishments that held large collections of valuable relics. Unfortunately, over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries most *armadi* suffered removal from their original settings and disassembly into separate panels. It thus seems probable that the panels of many sacristy reliquary cupboards now hang in museums and galleries without recognition of their former function. The five cupboards discussed here constitute the most visually compelling and well-conserved examples of this type of ritual object produced in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Rather than presenting an encyclopedic or exhaustive compendium of Italian reliquary cupboards, the following chapters are meant to reflect the chronological, regional, institutional, stylistic, material and iconographical variety found in these projects as well as the complex ways in which they interacted with their historical and visual contexts.

The first chapter examines the *armadio* Taddeo Gaddi, Giotto's closest Florentine associate, made for the Franciscan church of Santa Croce in Florence in the early 1330s. Now housed in the Galleria dell'Accademia, the cupboard's twenty-eight painted panels depict two narrative cycles: one of the life of St. Francis of Assisi and the other of the life of Christ. Although the few surviving records related to Santa Croce's relic inventory make it difficult to determine the complete contents of the cupboard beyond a piece of the True Cross and a nail from the Crucifixion, the correlation between the two painted cycles clearly presents the saint

and founder of the Franciscan Order as an *alter Christus* ("other Christ"), a profound message for Trecento friars as debate continued regarding the legitimacy of Francis' miraculous stigmatization in 1224.[82] Furthermore, Gaddi's panels visually link the sacristy cupboard with the tradition of Franciscan narrative paintings, including Giotto's work in the Bardi Chapel in Santa Croce and, to a lesser extent, the fresco cycle of Francis' life in the Upper Church at Assisi.

The second chapter focuses on Siena cathedral's cupboard, installed in that church's sacristy in 1412. On the exterior faces of this large cupboard's doors the little-known Benedetto di Bindo painted a series of thirty-two half-length angels bearing scrolls that identify the different relics stored in the *armadio*. The interior doors present the narrative of the discovery and exultation of the True Cross that relates to the cupboard's function as a storage place for that particular relic. The narrative also highlights the *armadio*'s revelatory nature in that every opening of the cupboard doors symbolically reenacts St. Helena's miraculous invention. Moreover, the decision to commission a new reliquary cupboard for the cathedral at that particular time reflects an urgent desire for reassurance of saintly presence and protection, something that was greatly needed in an early Quattrocento Siena that struggled through waves of plague, warfare and economic depression.

The third chapter considers another Sienese reliquary cupboard, one made for the church of Santa Maria dell'Annunziata in the hospital complex of Santa Maria della Scala. To create the painted panels of this cupboard the hospital authorities hired the prominent local artist Vecchietta. The work was finished and installed in the sacristy in 1445. Instead of the labels seen on the earlier cathedral cupboard, Vecchietta depicted images of the Sienese pantheon of saints on the *armadio*'s exterior, images which call attention to the city's holy favor, but that do not

[82] See the discussion of the *alter Christus* concept on pages 67-72.

correspond to the actual relics stored in the hospital. However, the Passion cycle on the doors' interior does relate to the sacred objects that would have been seen when the cupboard stood open. Since 1359, the hospital had preserved a famous cache of Byzantine relics related to Christ's death that promoted the institution's status as a pilgrimage destination. Both Sienese cupboards, while markedly different in iconography and in their relationships between images and relics, may be understood as attempts to recall a more prosperous and secure time in the city's history through reference to the painting style of the previous century. In addition, both cupboards played important roles in the elaborate ritual and iconographic programs of the cathedral-hospital complex.

The fourth and fifth chapters concern sacristy reliquary cupboards from the northeastern Italian city of Padua and thus provide an opportunity to examine *armadi* in another regional context. Niccolò Semitecolo's 1367 reliquary cupboard for Padua's cathedral combines narrative and iconic images. The exterior cycle depicts St. Sebastian's martyrdom and burial, and a *Trinity*, *Madonna of Humility* and half-length saints appear on the interior panels. The selection of St. Sebastian imagery has never before been analyzed in detail, although the choice seems curious as the church did not possess any of this saint's relics in the Trecento. However, given that Padua experienced a plague outbreak in the mid-1360s, it seems that Semitecolo's emphatic focus on Sebastian's physical suffering, as well as his growing status as a plague saint, indicates that the Paduan cathedral canons sought to draw upon all possible methods to rally heavenly protection.

The fifth chapter, on the circa 1470 reliquary cupboard for the Franciscan pilgrimage church of Sant'Antonio in Padua, considers an example with marble and inlaid wood decorations rather than painted panels. For the sculpted elements, the church authorities hired Bartolomeo

Bellano, a member of Donatello's workshop and a leading sculptor in Quattrocento Padua. He made several large reliefs of Franciscan notables, *putti* and the *Miracle of the Mule*, one of the miracles attributed to St. Anthony of Padua that also relates to the Masses prepared in the sacristy in close proximity to the cupboard. For the woodwork, the church looked to Lorenzo Canozi, a prominent artisan in northeastern Italy, to create the moveable doors and their intricate intarsia (inlaid wood) images of standing Franciscan saints. The Sant'Antonio cupboard provides a rare opportunity to study an *in situ* reliquary cupboard as it is still in use today, although the reliquaries, such as the jaw, tongue and vocal cords of St. Anthony himself, have been moved to a more accessible location. The decision to install such an expensive marble and intarsia structure may reflect Padua's strong sculptural tradition. Moreover, while its iconography promotes the growing Franciscan pantheon of saints, some of the cupboard's contents, such as the military commander Gattamelata's ring and military baton, point to the ways in which secular objects could also be elevated to relic-like status.

Chapter One
A Painted Saint and Passion Relics:
Taddeo Gaddi's Reliquary Cupboard for Santa Croce in Florence

Over the course of the 1320s and 1330s, the Franciscan friars at Santa Croce, one of the largest religious institutions in Florence, witnessed the building and decoration of their sacristy, a vital and liturgically significant part of the newly constructed basilica and convent. This room functioned as a burial chapel for the wealthy Peruzzi banking family as well as the church's main preparatory and storage space and was thus outfitted with necessary liturgical furniture, including an impressive reliquary cupboard. In the early 1330s Taddeo Gaddi, a leading artist in Florence and close associate of Giotto, painted the doors of the *armadio* with twenty-six quatrefoils and a pair of half lunettes filled with scenes from the lives of Christ and St. Francis of Assisi. While Gaddi's panels have been well known since the Renaissance, scholars have neglected to consider how the reliquary cupboard and its iconographic program functioned within the specific sacred environment of Santa Croce in favor of attempts to reconstruct the cupboard's original appearance. In addition, scholars have overlooked the meaningful ways in which this object combines relic and image to promote the special and profound connections between Francis and Christ.

Dedicated, as its name suggests, to the Holy Cross, Santa Croce enjoyed a high status among Florentine religious institutions as the primary Franciscan establishment in the city during the later Middle Ages and Renaissance.[1] Many of the details of the life of St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of this mendicant order, will be discussed below since they appear on the reliquary cupboard panels, but his meteoric and unprecedented rise to prominence deserves a brief initial

[1] On Santa Croce as an important component of Florence's late thirteenth-century growth see Timothy Verdon, "Nella città in crescita sorge a Firenze una grande chiesa," in *Santa Croce nel solco della storia*, ed. Massimiliano Rosito (Florence: Città di Vita, 1996), 33-38.

biographical note. Francis was born in the Umbrian town of Assisi in 1181 or 1182 into a family of prosperous cloth merchants. In his twenties he renounced all worldly comforts in order to live in poverty as an ascetic friar.[2] He soon followed this decision with the formation of a group devoted to charity and vernacular preaching, the Friars Minor, and the composition of a Rule, or set of instructions for communal living. The Franciscan Order grew quite quickly and in 1223 Honorius III gave his official papal blessing for its perpetual continuation. The next year, Francis received the stigmata, the wounds Christ suffered at the Crucifixion, a miraculous event that the Order would argue proved his status as an *alter Christus* or "other Christ." In 1228, only two years after his death, Pope Gregory IX canonized him.

Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Franciscan Order continued to grow in size, importance and wealth. In addition to their public activities as preachers, the friars became increasingly renowned as missionaries and were charged with guarding religious sites in the Holy Land.[3] The Order's expansion and the subsequent building of large, elaborately decorated convents, such as Francis' burial church of San Francesco in Assisi, Sant'Antonio in Padua and Santa Croce in Florence, produced a protracted and bitter rift among the friars.[4] The Spiritual faction believed in a strict interpretation of Francis' instructions to live in poverty and opposed the acquisition of funds and patronage of expensively outfitted churches and convents. On the other hand, the Conventual Franciscans were willing to moderate the original ascetic

[2] Thomas of Celano and St. Bonaventure established Francis' hagiography in the mid-1200s in a series of texts that are discussed below in more detail.
[3] See Kaspar Elm, "La custodia di Terra Santa: Franzikanisches Ordensleben in der Tradition der Lateinischen kirche Palastinas," in *I francescani nel Trecento* (Assisi: Centro di studi francescani, 1988), 127-66; Anne Derbes and Amy Neff, "Italy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Byzantine Sphere," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 449-50.
[4] Duncan Nimmo, *Reform and Division in the Medieval Franciscan Order* (Rome: Capuchin Historical Institute, 1987), 51-204; Rona Goffen, *Spirituality in Conflict: Saint Francis and Giotto's Bardi Chapel* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), 51-78; Joanna Cannon, "Giotto and Art for the Friars: Revolutions Spiritual and Artistic," in *The Cambridge Companion to Giotto*, eds. Anne Derbes and Mark Sandona (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 103-07; Louise Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage in Late Medieval Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 18-31.

mandate in order to minister more effectively to the urban populations of Italy and beyond. Although attempts were made to unite the opposing groups, over time the Order increasingly moved toward the Conventual position and those absolutely committed to the Spiritual ideology left the institution.[5] Such was the case at Santa Croce, where the Spiritual Franciscans originally dominated. After plans were made in the late 1200s to rebuild and expand the basilica they abandoned the Order, and the Conventuals in Florence succeeded in making their church a major site of patronage and artistic activity.[6]

Taddeo Gaddi's reliquary cupboard for Santa Croce served many ritual functions within this contested environment as the secure storage container for the church's most significant relics, which included objects associated with Christ's Crucifixion and Francis' stigmatization. Its historiated panels that were always visible to sacristy audiences should be understood as a complex typological cycle linking Francis to Christ, a message of ongoing importance to the Franciscan Order in the early Trecento as their founder's special status continued to be developed.

The Peruzzi Sacristy at Santa Croce

The basilica of Santa Croce in Florence has been recognized as one of the largest and most significant Franciscan institutions in Italy since its foundation in 1294.[7] The current church, which likely replaced an earlier building used in the 1220s during Francis' lifetime, quickly developed into a favored place for patronage on the part of prominent local families. This

[5] Pope John XXII formally suppressed the Spiritual movement in 1317. John R. H. Moorman, *Medieval Franciscan Houses* (New York: The Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University, 1983), 134-38.
[6] Goffen, *Spirituality in Conflict*, 7.
[7] The church's design is traditionally attributed to Arnolfo di Cambio based largely on his prominence in Florence at this point in time rather than any definitive documentary or stylistic evidence. John White, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1250-1400*, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 30; Moorman, 183.

resulted in Giotto's early Trecento frescoes in the Bardi and Peruzzi chapels and Agnolo Gaddi's high chapel cycle depicting the Legend of the True Cross from circa 1388, to name just a few well-known, surviving examples.[8] Like other mendicant establishments in Florence, the church of Santa Croce functioned as part of a much larger convent that included a series of cloisters, dormitories and workshops used by the friars who lived, worked and prayed there.[9] In keeping with the friars' commitment to popular preaching, the church was intended to accommodate hundreds of people in its enormous nave. Thus, not surprisingly, building took several decades to complete. Work on the side aisles was still ongoing in the 1320s and the nave was likely not finished until the late Trecento.[10]

Construction on the church's sacristy began shortly after the initial building effort in the late thirteenth century. Located just beyond the southeast corner of the right transept, the sacristy's position allowed the friars to process out of that room, through the transept arm and into the choir at the beginning of each service, all while being hidden from the laity by a monumental *tramezzo*, or rood screen, that stretched across the nave (figure 1-1).[11] By the sixteenth century, the path between the sacristy and high altar traveled by the friars and priestly celebrants at Santa Croce required them to walk over dozens of floor tomb slabs embedded in the

[8] The literature on Santa Croce and its decoration is quite extensive. Some of the most helpful studies of the church include Walter and Elisabeth Paatz, *Die Kirchen von Florenz*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1952); Leonetto Tintori and Eve Borsook, *Giotto: The Peruzzi Chapel* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1965); Marcia B. Hall, "The Tramezzo in Santa Croce, Florence, reconstructed," Art Bulletin 56 (1974): 325-41; eadem, *Renovation and Counter Reformation: Vasari and Duke Cosimo in Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce, 1565-1577* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); Eve Borsook, *The Mural Painters of Tuscany: From Cimabue to Andrea del Sarto*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); Andrew Ladis, *Taddeo Gaddi* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1982); *Santa Croce nel solco nella storia*, ed. Massimiliano G. Rosito (Florence: Città di Vita, 1996); Ena Giurescu, "Trecento Family Chapels in Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce: Architecture, Patronage, and Competition," PhD diss., New York University, 1997); Nancy Thompson, "The Franciscans and the True Cross: The Decoration of the Cappella Maggiore of Santa Croce in Florence," *Gesta* 43, no. 1 (2004): 61-79; *Alla riscoperta delle chiese di Firenze, Santa Croce*, ed. Timothy Verdon (Florence: Centro Di, 2004).

[9] Moorman indicates that nearly forty friars lived in the Santa Croce convent in 1340. Moorman, 183.

[10] White, *Art and Architecture in Italy*, 30.

[11] See the discussion of mendicant rood screens in the Introduction, pages 5-6.

church's floor (figure 1-2).[12] Burial here connoted great social prestige as well as spiritual benefit because of the frequent prayers said over the tombs as the friars moved across them. However, the sacristy proper constituted an even more impressive funerary location because of the presence of all the sacred objects stored there and the near constant rituals and prayers performed in close proximity to sacristy tombs. Thus the Peruzzi family financed the initial building of the Santa Croce sacristy in exchange for burial rights.[13]

The exact construction date for this part of the church remains uncertain due to a lack of surviving documentation. Building was probably completed in the late 1320s or early 1330s, as plans for the sacristy's furnishings, including the reliquary cupboard, were underway by this point.[14] The Peruzzi, whose shield decorated with golden pears may still be seen in the upper corners just under the trussed wooden ceiling, had their tomb in the center of the room, although a large wooden vesting table now stands in its place (figure 1-3).[15] As discussed in the Introduction, the souls of the Peruzzi buried here would benefit from all the liturgical ritual enacted in the sacristy and while still on earth their ability to fund a significant portion of the church would have elevated the family's status in Florentine society.

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[12] The inventory of 1596 records 321 burials inside Santa Croce, many of which were in the right transept and date from 1350-1450. See Archivio di Stato di Firenze (hereafter ASF), *Manoscritti* 618, fol. 70-80. For Santa Croce's floor tombs, see Maria Grazia Ciardi Dupré Dal Poggetto, Antonella Chiti and Rita Jacopino, "Un Corpus delle lastre tombali della Basilica di Santa Croce a Firenze," in *Skulptur und Grabmal des spätmittelalters in Rom und Italian*, eds. Jörg Garms and Angiola Maria Romanini (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1990), 331-44; Doralynn Schlossman Pines, "The Tomb Slabs of Santa Croce: A New 'Sepoltuario'," PhD diss., Columbia University, 1985; Marta Battaglia-Nicola Musso and Nicola Musso, "Le tombe pavimentali," in *Tre capitoli per Santa Croce*, ed. Massimiliano G. Rosito (Florence: Edizioni Città di Vita, 2000).
[13] Franco Carbonai, Gianni Gaggio, Mario Salmi, "Santa Croce: Interpretazione attraverso le indagini metriche e documentarie," in *S. Maria del Fiore e le chiese fiorentine del Duecento e del Trecento nella citta' delle fabbriche arnolfiane*, ed. Giuseppe Rocchi Coopmans de Yoldi (Florence: Alinea, 2004), 247; Giurescu, "Trecento Family Chapels," 158. See also the discussion of sacristy burials in the Introduction, pages 7-8.
[14] Paatz, vol. 1, 533; Giurescu, "Trecento Family Chapels," 158-59; Carbonai, et al., 247.
[15] Giuseppe Richa, *Notizie istoriche delle chiese fiorentine*, vol. 1 (Roma: Multigrafica Editrice, 1989), 64; Giurescu, "Trecento Family Chapels," 158. This arrangement would thus have approximated that of the Old Sacristy of San Lorenzo, where several of the Medici family were buried in the center of the room.

The Peruzzi, an extended family who lived in several houses in the Santa Croce neighborhood, had acquired a vast fortune by the late 1200s, based largely on trade in wool and luxury goods, international banking and real estate.[16] Although the company went bankrupt in 1343, during the early decades of the Trecento when the sacristy was built and decorated, the family was enormously prosperous and increasingly participated in city politics.[17] Like other prominent Florentine families in the early fourteenth century such as the Bardi, Baroncelli and Guidalotti, the Peruzzi demonstrated their financial standing and ensured their salvation through patronage at their neighborhood church. Their first major act of patronage at Santa Croce resulted in their securing the rights to a transept chapel, which Giotto frescoed with cycles of scenes from the lives of Sts. John the Evangelist and John the Baptist sometime between the mid-1310s and the early 1320s.[18] Thus the Peruzzi sacristy project quickly followed the transept chapel frescoes and the room's construction may well have begun while work was still underway in the family's other Santa Croce funerary chapel.

By 1365, the Peruzzi sacristy was outfitted with furnishings that supported its other functions as the friars' preparatory room and main storage space for their vestments, ritual implements and relics. This required furniture included Taddeo's reliquary cupboard from the early 1330s that was probably installed on the room's south wall (figure 1-4).[19] No documents survive regarding the cupboard's commission. It is very possible that the Peruzzi provided the funds as part of the decoration of the sacristy as a whole, but the friars themselves cannot be

[16] Edwin S. Hunt, *The medieval super-companies: A study of the Peruzzi Company of Florence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 17-19.
[17] Between 1310 and 1328 members of the Peruzzi family took the office of prior nine times. Hunt, 33-34.
[18] The chapel's bequest dates from the 1292 will of Donato d'Arnoldo di Peruzzi. The date of the frescoes remains a matter of debate. They were likely finished by the early 1320s but could have been painted as early as the mid-1310s. Tintori and Borsook, 7-14; Goffen, *Spirituality in Conflict*, 54-59; Hunt, 31.
[19] No evidence of the cupboard's original location survives on the sacristy walls that have since been covered over with tall Quattrocento cabinets. Marcucci argues for the west wall, while Ladis asserts that the south wall is more likely as its fresco decoration seems to mark it off as the sacristy's principal focus. See Ladis, 116-17.

ruled out as patrons.[20] The sacristy was further decorated by this time with Taddeo, Spinello Aretino and Niccolò di Pietro Gerini's frescoes on the south wall that represent Passion scenes (*Christ Carrying the Cross, Crucifixion, Resurrection* and *Ascension*).[21] In addition to these images that reinforce the message of the Mass for which preparation was made in this room, another small chapel was added onto the eastern end of the sacristy. This space, which Giovanni da Milano decorated with frescoes in the late 1360s, was likely constructed earlier for the Guidalotti family but by this point served as a burial chapel for the Rinuccini family.[22] Further changes in the Santa Croce sacristy occurred in the late 1440s, when an extensive series of intarsiated cupboards attributed to Giovanni di Michele were installed. The presence of the Spinelli family crest on these new storage furnishings indicates that the Peruzzi had given up their rights to the sacristy by this point.[23] However, as the Anonimo Gaddiano describes the Trecento reliquary cupboard in place in the sacristy in 1537, it seems that the new Quattrocento patron's activities did not require the replacement or removal of the earlier storage cabinet.[24]

Therefore, the patronage history of the Santa Croce sacristy demonstrates its importance within the church as a highly prestigious ritual site, one that was sought by wealthy patrons throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The multiple functions of this sacristy, as funerary chapel, preparatory room and secure treasury, point to the ways in which the space was shared by both religious and laymen. The specific sacred and secular acts performed in the

[20] The spotty Santa Croce records from the Trecento indicate that in 1331, Juvenalis de Aglis and Bernardo Pegaloti served as guardians of the convent, a position taken over by Andrew de Tholomeis in 1334. Whether or not the friars paid for Taddeo's work, these high-ranking Franciscans likely played a role in developing the cupboard's complex iconography. On the convent's hierarchy see Moorman, 184.
[21] Ladis, 186-87; Giurescu, "Trecento Family Chapels," 159-60.
[22] Restoration work revealed the presence of the Guidalotti family shield under the extant frescoes, thus it seems that the chapel could have originally been made for them and patronage rights were transferred to the Rinuccini in the 1360s. Giurescu, "Trecento Family Chapels," 160-63.
[23] F. Moisè, *Santa Croce di Firenze, illustrazione storico-artistica* (Florence, 1845), 480-82; Paula Vojnovic, "La sacrestia di S. Croce in Firenze: Le sue varie funzioni nel '300," *Città di Vita* 62 (2007): 305.
[24] See the discussion of the Anonimo Gaddiano on page 9. Anonimo Gaddiano, "La codice dell'Anonimo Gaddiano (codice Magliabechiano XVII in Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze)," in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, series 5, vol. 12, (1893): 46.

sacristy are discussed in more detail below, but one must also recognize that due to its location within the church, Taddeo's reliquary cupboard served a significant role in providing a constant holy presence during all sacristy events through a visual reminder of the relics stored in that room. Furthermore, the cupboard functioned as a powerful confirmation of its Franciscan setting, with both its contents and the images painted on the cupboard doors promoting one of the Order's most important messages: the intense connection between Francis and Christ.

Previous Scholarship

The work of the Florentine painter Taddeo Gaddi (active mid-1310s-1366) has always been intimately linked to Giotto and Santa Croce. Taddeo's career started in and has been defined in large part by Giotto's workshop, where he served as the older master's closest associate for over two decades. Andrew Ladis, whose 1982 monograph remains the most valuable source for information on this artist, has argued that Taddeo participated in workshop projects until Giotto's death in 1337 while also increasingly accepting his own during the late 1320s and the 1330s.[25] Taddeo's production has frequently been measured in comparison to that of his more famous mentor, an issue that will be discussed below in connection to the reliquary cupboard panels, but his independent commissions indicate that he was a sought-after artist in his own right in mid-Trecento Florence.

Having painted alongside Giotto in Santa Croce in the Bardi and Peruzzi transept chapels around the early 1320s, Taddeo already had considerable experience working in this particular Franciscan context by the time he began to fresco the nearby Baroncelli chapel, likely later in the same decade.[26] While Taddeo was at work on a *Life of the Virgin* cycle on the chapel's walls he

[25] Ladis, 17-24.
[26] The precise dating of all these chapel cycles remains a matter of debate. Ladis believes the Baroncelli frescoes were started in 1328, the date inscribed on one of the chapel's tombs that would indicate that the chapel was likely

also began another project at Santa Croce, the painted panels that made up the reliquary cupboard for the church's newly built sacristy. Ladis has dated the panels to between 1330 and 1335 based on stylistic similarities with Taddeo's other work, as well as the likelihood that the Peruzzi sacristy was ready for furnishings by this point.[27]

The Anonimo Gaddiano, the name given to an anonymous sixteenth-century chronicler, provided the earliest surviving mention of the sacristy reliquary cupboard. In his description of many of the most famous buildings in Florence written between 1537 and 1542, he recorded the presence of an *armadio* decorated with many scenes from the life of St. Francis.[28] Giorgio Vasari also noted the reliquary cupboard in his *Lives of the Artists*, first published in 1550, and, significantly for future study of the panels, placed them in the *oeuvre* of Giotto rather than that of Taddeo.[29] Until the early twentieth century scholars followed Vasari's attribution without variation. It was not until 1906 that Osvald Sirén argued on stylistic grounds that the *armadio* was, in fact, designed and executed by Taddeo. This attribution has been accepted ever since.[30]

Although the Santa Croce reliquary cupboard has clearly been known since the Renaissance, it has been the subject of surprisingly little extended art historical study. Considerations of this object in the past fifty years have generally focused on its reconstruction. After its removal from Santa Croce on 17 August, 1810, during the occupying French

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built by that time. Ladis, 115. See also Julian Gardner, "The Decoration of the Baroncelli Chapel in Santa Croce," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 34 (1971): 89-114.

[27] Ladis, 115.

[28] *...nelli armarj della sagrestia di detta chiesa molti historie di sco Franco* (…in the sacristy of said church a cupboard with many stories of St. Francis). Anonimo Gaddiano, 46.

[29] Vasari also attributes the Tree of Life fresco in the Santa Croce refectory to Giotto, although, like the reliquary cupboard, this has now been given to Taddeo. Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, vol. 1, trans. Gaston du C. de Vere (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1996), 99.

[30] Osvald Sirén, "Dipinti del Trecento in alcuni musei tedeschi di provincia," *Rassegna d'Arte* 6 (1906): 81-87; Pier Paolo Donati, *Taddeo Gaddi* (Florence: Sadea Editore, 1966), 35-36; Richard Offner, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting*, Supplement A, ed. Hayden B. J. Maginnis (New York: Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1981), 68-69; Sonia Chiodo, "Storia della vita di Christo," in vol. 1 of *Dipinti dal Duecento a Giovanni a Milano*, eds. Miklós Boskovits and Angelo Tartuferi (Florence: Giunti, 2003), 266-67. For bibliography on the panels see also Ladis, 114-15.

government's suppression of religious institutions, the *armadio* was dismantled and broken up. The half lunettes and twenty-two of the quatrefoils entered the collection of the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence, while the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin and the Alte Pinakothek in Munich each acquired two quatrefoils.[31] Despite admissions that a precise reconstruction is probably impossible, scholars continue to wrestle with the problem, to varying degrees of success and with little examination of other issues besides its original appearance and stylistic place in Taddeo's *oeuvre*.[32]

Giuseppe Richa's mid-eighteenth-century discussion of Santa Croce in his *Notizie istoriche delle chiesa fiorentine (Historical Notes on Florentine Churches)* includes a description of the reliquary *armadio* that predates the early nineteenth-century dismantling of the cupboard.[33] According to Richa, the sacristy quatrefoils were arranged in two horizontal rows with the thirteen scenes from the life of Christ above the thirteen panels of the life of St. Francis in order to reinforce the similarities between the two sacred figures.[34]

Despite this unusually precise description of the cupboard's disposition, at least four major reconstruction theories have been put forth since 1917. Sirén, who first attempted to reconstruct the cupboard, proposed that the Franciscan and Christological cycles each comprised

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[31] The *Gemäldegalerie* in Berlin has the *Pentecost* and *Resurrection of the Dead Child* panels, while the Alte Pinakothek in Munich has the *Trial by Fire* and *Death of the Knight of Celano*. The Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence has the rest of the panels in its collection. Offner, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting*, 67-69; Ladis, 114-15; Chiodo, 252.

[32] Tellingly, Luisa Marcucci begins her reconstruction attempt by pointing out that we will never know exactly how the *armadio* looked in the fourteenth century in "Per gli "armarj" della sacrestia di Santa Croce." *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 9 (1960): 141.

[33] Richa's ten-volume description of Florentine religious institutions was originally published between 1754 and 1762.

[34] *...nel primo ordine veggonsi 13 ovati, ne'quali ha rappresentato la Vita del Redentore, e sue divine azioni, e nel secondo ordine 13 parimente pitture contenenti la Vita di S. Francesco di Assisi in altretanti fatti del Santo corrispondenti agli esempli di Cristo...*(in the first row one sees 13 scenes that represent the Life of the Redeemer and his divine actions and in the second row 13 similar paintings containing the life of St. Francis of Assisi made in such a way that the saint corresponds to the example of Christ). Richa, vol. 1, 65. The current installation of the panels in the Accademia in Florence follows Richa's description of two horizontal rows.

a cupboard door and were arranged in three horizontal rows of four panels.[35] However, this arrangement leaves out one panel from each cycle, as well as the entire lunette with the *Annunciation* and *Ascension* scenes. In 1937 Klara Steinweg suggested that the cupboard doors were decorated on both sides so that the half-lunettes were originally seen when the doors were open, rather than permanently mounted above the quatrefoils.[36] It is difficult to determine how the lunette panels would have comfortably fit on the interior faces of the doors, but she also mentions an intriguing conversation with Richard Offner in which he posited that only the Franciscan cycle was visible on the exterior doors while the Christological panels were installed on the interior doors. According to Steinweg, Offner based his theory on the better state of conservation of the Life of Christ panels as well as the fact that the Anonimo Gaddiano made no mention of the Christological scenes which, if the cupboard doors were closed as they often were, would account for that rather glaring omission.[37]

It seems that, aside from Alessandro Conti's extremely tenuous reconstruction published in 1972, Offner's idea has not been seriously pursued in the literature on Taddeo's reliquary cupboard, despite the fact that it does make the Santa Croce *armadio* more like the other known examples of this type of liturgical furniture discussed in the following chapters.[38] All of the painted, historiated cupboards from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries with which I am

[35] Osvald Sirén, *Giotto and Some of His Followers*, trans. Frederic Schenck (New York: Hacker Art Books, Inc., reprint 1975, originally published 1917), 147-50.
[36] Klara Steinweg, "Due pannelli sconosciuti degli armadi di S. Croce di Taddeo Gaddi," *Rivista d'Arte* 19 (1937): 43-44; Ladis, 116.
[37] Steinweg, 44, n. 1.
[38] Conti proposes double-sided doors but leaves out many surviving panels and argues that some panels were lost without providing suggestions as to what those were. Alessandro Conti, *Pittori in Santa Croce (Firenze), 1295-1341* (Pisa: Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore, 1972); Ladis, 119; Chiodo, 267.

familiar have images on both sides of the moveable doors. Thus, it seems entirely possible, although certainly not definite, that the Santa Croce cupboard could have had a similar design.[39]

The hypothesis Luisa Marcucci published in 1960 provides another examination of the reconstruction issue. It is based primarily on an examination of the panels' carpentry, which revealed that while most of the scenes are painted on poplar, the lunettes and four quatrefoils (the first and last episodes of each cycle) are on walnut.[40] She concludes that the six walnut panels must have been grouped together on the moveable doors rather than on what she suggests were large, stationary side sections of this piece of furniture (figure 1-5). This conclusion stems from her argument that the more expensive material would have been reserved for moments when the doors of the *armadio* were opened to reveal the relics inside.[41] Marcucci's arrangement of the quatrefoils results in a form that appears markedly similar to the bronze doors for the Florence Baptistery on which Andrea Pisano was working at the same time that Taddeo was painting the sacristy panels.[42] However, as Ladis has pointed out, this reconstruction fails to recognize the significance of the iconography of the paintings themselves and thus ignores the typological links between the Christological and Franciscan cycles.[43]

Miklós Boskovits has presented the most recent attempt to determine the cupboard's original appearance, seeking to incorporate many of the other reconstruction ideas discussed above. In his view, the quatrefoils, aligned in two horizontal rows of eleven panels each, made up the doors while the lunettes and four walnut panels were situated permanently on the top and

[39] Double-sided cupboard doors do not solve all the problems with reconstructing this whole *armadio*. It remains difficult to see how the thirteen Franciscan panels would have been comfortably placed on the exterior faces of the doors. However, it may point towards a closer approximation of the original appearance.
[40] Marcucci, 144-45.
[41] Ibid., 144-49.
[42] Marcucci's reconstruction would also make the *armadio* roughly the same height as the Andrea Pisano doors (5 meters high). Marcucci, 143; Ladis, 116.
[43] Ladis, 116-19.

sides of the cupboard to form an immobile frame.[44] While Boskovits' hypothesis seems the most likely of any such effort to date, Ladis' observation that the exact form will probably never be known with total certainty seems apt.

Taddeo's Life of Christ and Life of St. Francis

Despite continued disagreement over the exact arrangement of the *armadio* paintings, it seems clear that Taddeo's iconographical program was designed to link St. Francis visually with Christ through a combination of two narrative cycles of thirteen panels each.[45] The half-lunette panels that most likely comprised the top register of the Santa Croce cupboard present the end and beginning of Christ's time on earth and are meant to be read from right to left, as the left panel depicts his *Ascension* and the right the *Annunciation* (figure 1-6).[46] Like the quatrefoils, the lunette episodes are set against gold backgrounds that immediately situate the events in a heavenly light and remind the viewer of their divine origins. In the chronologically later depiction of the *Ascension*, Jesus floats above the haloed figures of Mary and the Apostles gathered below who gaze up as he physically leaves earth to enter heaven. This supernatural act is the culmination of a life begun in the episode on the right lunette, in which Mary, seen in a cutaway view inside a house, listens to the kneeling angel Gabriel as divine rays come down from heaven to accomplish Christ's Incarnation. These scenes thus demonstrate the way in which Christ's physical body both arrived in and departed the human realm and effectively relate the

[44] Miklós Boskovits, "Taddeo Gaddi," in *Frühe Italienische Malerei*, ed. Miklós Boskovits (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1988), 42-44.
[45] August Rave mapped out the iconographical program in detail in his published 1984 dissertation; however, his study focuses on the textual sources for Taddeo's paintings and lacks extended consideration of panels in connection to the cupboard's function. August Rave, *Christiformitas: Studien zur franziskanischen Ikonographie des florentiner Trecento am Beispiel des ehemaligen Sakristeischrankzyklus von Taddeo Gaddi in Santa Croce* (Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1984).
[46] The unusual, reverse chronological arrangement of the half-lunettes likely relates to the quatrefoil panels that would be seen in conjunction with the *Ascension* and *Annunciation*. However, as we have seen, those exact panels remain uncertain. See pages 40-43.

painted program to the cupboard's function as it contained the remnants of Christ's corporeal existence in the form of two Passion relics, a thorn from Jesus' crown and a piece of the True Cross.[47] In addition, reference to Christ's arrival and departure from earth also recalls his redemptive death, a sacrifice ritually reenacted during every Mass that was prepared in the sacristy.

The twenty-six quatrefoil scenes that made up the body of the cupboard's iconographical program present an impressive variety of events and compositions. The Christological cycle generally follows the Gospels' narrative of Jesus' life from before his birth to after his death. Taddeo's extensive employment of expensive gold backgrounds, wooden panels and high-quality tempera pigments demonstrates the significance of the *armadio* as a ritual object that would warrant such expensive materials. The first of the thirteen Christological panels continues the narrative begun with the *Annunciation* half-lunette and depicts the *Visitation*, the meeting between the pregnant Mary and her pregnant cousin Elizabeth (and, by extension, the first meeting of their respective children, Jesus and John the Baptist), which Taddeo sets in front of a gabled gateway (figure 1-7). The series continues with the *Adoration of the Shepherds*, where Mary rather awkwardly leans over the barnyard manger to attend to the infant Christ while three shepherds stretch their hands out towards the child in devotion (figure 1-8). Then, in the *Adoration of the Magi*, Jesus reaches forward from his position on the enthroned Mary's lap to bless one of the kings who kneels forward to kiss his feet, while the other two Gentile monarchs glance upwards and point toward the star glimmering above the child that denotes his special status (figure 1-9).

The next panel, the *Presentation in the Temple*, shows Mary reclaiming her son from the rabbi, while three other figures look on impassively (figure 1-10). In a departure from the earlier

[47] See pages 26-29.

panels of the cycle, here Taddeo gives us a frontal, rather than oblique, view and situates the figures below an octagonal canopy that shelters the altar fire. *Christ Among the Doctors*, another scene ostensibly occurring in the same temple as the previous episode, in fact displays a markedly different setting that approximates a Gothic church nave with biforate windows punctuating the room's length (figure 1-11). Here, an adolescent Jesus speaks to a group of five men from a raised seat in a niche, while Mary and Joseph stand in the back, looking on as their son demonstrates his remarkable understanding of the law.

Moving chronologically forward, Gaddi depicts Jesus' adult life starting with the *Baptism of Christ*, in which he kneels in the river while John the Baptist stands on the left bank to perform the ceremony and devotees wait on either side with towels at the ready (figure 1-12). In a sign of divine approval, God leans out from heaven to witness the scene and send down the dove of the Holy Spirit. Taddeo then omits Christ's ministry and miracles in favor of another supernatural occurrence, the *Transfiguration*, in which Jesus, now clothed all in white, speaks to the Old Testament prophets Moses and Elijah (seen here kneeling next to his standing figure) while the apostles Peter, James, and John either sleep unaware of or shield their eyes from the divine sight (figure 1-13).

The next three quatrefoils depict scenes from the Passion, the events leading up to and including Christ's death and resurrection. In the first of these, the *Last Supper*, Jesus sits at the head of a table before the twelve Apostles and institutes the ritual of the Mass by commanding his followers to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of his sacrifice (figure 1-14). During this meal he also announces that one of the group gathered there will betray him to the Jewish and Roman authorities. Taddeo then makes Judas' identity crystal clear by denying him a halo

like the other Apostles and by showing him leaning away from Jesus as though in fear and shame.

The *Crucifixion* is accomplished in a much more iconic style, as is fitting for the subject and its importance as an object of devotion for the Franciscan audience in the sacristy (figure 1-15). The frontal orientation and static quality of the figures further links the style of this panel to another significant Crucifixion image that held a particularly prominent place in Santa Croce: Cimabue's late thirteenth-century *Crucifix* that hung over the rood screen.[48] In echoing the earlier master's style, Taddeo and his patrons may have been seeking to create visual continuities between different areas of the church, thus repeating and reinforcing powerful images in the Franciscan tradition. Taddeo strips the subject down to its essentials on the reliquary cupboard panel, showing only Jesus on the cross and John the Evangelist and the Virgin standing to either side. Christ's physical suffering is emphasized through the blood spurting out of the wound in his side towards his mother and his head bowed down in pain. However, in the *Resurrection* panel, Jesus, holding a flag of victory, has triumphed over death to stand in front of his tomb while at his feet two guards sleep on unaware of the miracle happening before them (figure 1-16).

The Christological cycle concludes with three more panels that emphasize Jesus' otherworldly and miraculous powers. In the *Apparition to the Three Maries*, Christ returns from heaven to bless the three kneeling women with his outstretched right hand (figure 1-17). He then appears to the Apostles in the next scene, where he allows Thomas, who doubted the truth of his resurrection, to touch the wound in his side for proof (figure 1-18). During this demonstration of Christ's supernatural status, the other eleven disciples gaze on in rapt attention. The last episode of this narrative depicts *Pentecost*, when the dove of the Holy Spirit descended to Jesus'

[48] Hall, "The *Tramezzo* in Santa Croce," 333-36. On rood screen crucifixes see Cooper, "In Medio Ecclesiae," 145-59.

followers as they were gathered in the same room in which the Last Supper took place and caused them to begin speaking in tongues (figure 1-19). Here, Taddeo shows Mary and the apostles seated behind a marble partition and the central figure of the Virgin clasps her hands in prayer while the dove soars over their haloed heads.

The Life of Christ cycle of panels present a fairly straightforward, chronological account that particularly focuses on his miraculous and posthumous acts. As we will see, this iconographical emphasis of the Christological cycle serves a dual purpose in reminding sacristy viewers of Jesus' divine powers and simultaneously interacts with the cupboard's other narrative to support the conception of St. Francis as an *alter Christus*. This accompanying Franciscan cycle, laid out in thirteen quatrefoil panels like the Christological narrative discussed above, stems largely from the account St. Bonaventure wrote in 1263 and that was approved as the official version of Francis' life in 1266.[49] Bonaventure (1221-74) served as the Minister General of the Order from 1257-1274, a period of intense internal struggle between Franciscan factions. Therefore, his *Legenda maior* (Major Legend), which became the sole, official hagiography of St. Francis, may be understood as an attempt to unify a divided Order behind a canonical narrative.[50]

Taddeo's painted cycle omits the saint's early life and begins with *St. Francis Renouncing his Possessions*, in which the centrally-placed figure of Francis raises his arms in supplication towards his heavenly father, while his earthly parent looks on amazed and holding

[49] The first biography of Francis appeared in the early 1220s and is attributed to Thomas of Celano. By the mid-thirteenth century, the body of Franciscan literature had built up so dramatically that a condensation of approved material was required. Damien Vorreux, "Introduction to Bonaventure," in *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies*, 3rd ed., ed. Marion A. Habig (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977), 615-16.
[50] Goffen, *Spirituality in Conflict*, 51-78; Cannon, "Giotto and Art for the Friars," 103-07; Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage*, 18-31. See also the discussion of the Spiritual and Conventual factions on pages 2-3.

his son's rejected clothes, the symbol of his repudiation of worldly goods (figure 1-20).[51] The bishop of Assisi who stands behind Francis wraps a cloak around him, which signifies his entrance into a religious life. All of this takes place between a crenellated wall and a church façade, which reinforces this scene's choice between a secular or religious life. The cycle then continues with Francis' celebration of a Christmas Mass in the *Crib at Greccio* (figure 1-21). Taddeo sets the scene in a church interior in which two tonsured friars stand before the altar while in a niche on the right Francis sits on a crib surrounded by an ox and donkey and holds a swaddled child. According to Bonaventure, Francis had set up an empty crib in support of his Christmas preaching but a knight attending the service instead saw a vision of the saint cradling a live child, thus demonstrating Francis' piety and his connection to Christ.[52]

The next three panels concern the establishment of the Order, beginning with the *Dream of Innocent III* (figure 1-22). On the right, the haloed figure of St. Peter leans over the sleeping pope, wearing his cope and mitre and laying in a curtained bed, to inspire his dream.[53] This supernatural vision is then depicted on the left side of the panel, in which Francis physically props up the tottering façade of San Giovanni in Laterano, then the papal seat in Rome. Taddeo emphasizes the Church's instability through his depiction of fragile, almost toy-like, architecture that the fixed figure of St. Francis single-handedly prevents from falling completely. As expected, the pope understood the dream as proof of Francis' exceptional ability to support and renew the Church and, in the next panel, he is seen enthroned inside a room decorated with rows

[51] St. Bonaventure, "Legenda maior," trans. Benen Fehy, in *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies*, 3rd ed, ed. Marion A. Habig (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977), 642-43.
[52] Bonaventure composed his biography more thematically than chronologically, thus the *Crib at Greccio* appears much later in the written text. Bonaventure, 710-11. For a detailed analysis of Franciscan interest in this episode and Christmas in general see Beth A. Mulvaney, "The Beholder as Witness: The *Crib at Greccio* from the Upper Church of San Francesco, Assisi and Franciscan Influence on Late Medieval Art in Italy," in *The Art of the Franciscan Order in Italy*, ed. William R. Cook (Leidon: Brill, 2005), 172-82.
[53] Julian Gardner has suggested that Taddeo's inclusion of St. Peter in this scene derives from the predella of the *Stigmatization of St. Francis* altarpiece (Louvre, Paris) attributed to Giotto. See Gardner, "The Louvre Stigmatization and the Problem of the Narrative Altarpiece," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 45 (1982): 227-30.

of heraldic shields while Francis and his followers kneel before him to accept his blessing and the approved Rule, represented by the scroll Innocent holds in front of the genuflecting friar (figure 1-23).[54] The next episode conflates the establishment of the Franciscan Order in perpetuity and the confirmation of Francis' divinely-assisted skill as a preacher. Here, Francis appears before Honorius III (r. 1216-27), Innocent's successor, inside the same room as the previous scene, although he now stands before the pope to deliver a sermon. Although Francis forgot his carefully memorized presentation, the Holy Spirit inspired him to speak so eloquently and convincingly that the audience was deeply moved, and shortly following this event, the Order received final papal confirmation (figure 1-24).[55]

The rest of the cycle is devoted to depictions of Francis' miracles and other supernatural events connected to him. In the *Trial by Fire before the Sultan*, he stands before the enthroned Egyptian ruler and his turbaned, white robed advisors, separated from them by the raging flames of a fire (figure 1-25). Francis' willingness to step into the fire to prove his faith and God's protection so impressed the Muslim sultan that he allowed the friar to go free and attempted to shower him with expensive gifts.[56] The *Vision of St. Francis in the Fiery Chariot* depicts his miraculous appearance to a group of sleeping followers while he was away preaching. He appears to the shocked friars in a flaming chariot, flying above their heads like a new Elijah (figure 1-26).[57] Taddeo used a similarly simple setting for the *Death of the Knight of Celano*, in which Francis and a tonsured companion sit at a table while between them their host has slumped over as angels carry his soul up towards heaven (figure 1-27). Bonaventure writes that Francis rewarded the knight for inviting him to his home and giving him the honor due to a prophet by

[54] Bonaventure, 650-52.
[55] This meeting took place in the eighth year of Honorius' pontificate or 1224. Ibid., 662 and 724.
[56] Ibid., 702-05.
[57] Ibid., 655-56.

telling the knight to prepare himself for death before he sat down to dinner, thus his soul and earthly affairs were all in order when he died as predicted.[58]

The miraculous events of Francis' life continue with his *Stigmatization*, the most significant episode for a Franciscan audience in the mid-Trecento as the Order sought to establish firmly their founder's special stigmatized status, a consideration discussed in further detail below (figure 1-28). Here Taddeo closely follows Giotto's fresco of the same subject over the entrance to the Bardi chapel in Santa Croce's transept, in which Francis kneels on a rocky landscape as Christ, shown on the Cross but with the wings of a seraph, in the upper right shoots down rays of light emanating from all the wounds of the Crucifixion (figure 1-29).[59] These rays then pierce Francis in the same places so that his body becomes physically marked with Christ's suffering with bleeding holes in his hands, feet and side. The similarities between Giotto's transept fresco and Taddeo's sacristy panel of the same subject thus provide a visual link between the two spaces that would be especially meaningful when relics were processed between these two images and areas of the church.

The last four panels of the Franciscan cycle depict a selection of his miracles. The *Resurrection of a Child* illustrates one of the many such acts Bonaventure attributes to Francis (figure 1-30).[60] Here, a seven-year-old boy falls from a tower's loggia in Rome. Francis, hovering above the seated mourners and the child's prone body, reverses his death in response to the prayers of the child's mother, seen stretching out her arms in supplication toward the saint on the panel's left side. The *Apparition at Arles*, like the scene of the fiery chariot, depicts Francis' ability to appear in places without being physically present (figure 1-31). This time the friars gathered in the French city of Arles for a chapter meeting saw him in the room, with arms

[58] Ibid., 713-14.
[59] Ibid., 730-31.
[60] Bonaventure describes eight resurrections effected through Francis' saintly powers. Ibid., 753-57.

splayed out in the shape of the cross, during Anthony of Padua's sermon. Bonaventure asserts that Francis appeared in order to support Anthony's preaching and show approval for the growth of the Order that had by this point spread well beyond Tuscany.[61] The architectural setting Taddeo used for the meeting at Arles is one of the most complex of the cycle. The pointed arch of the central doorway frames Francis' floating body and the two flanking arches are also open to show the gathered group inside. At the top and bottom of the room's façade Taddeo depicts fictive inlaid marble patterns that add visual interest and indicate the Order's prosperity.

The next scene, a combination of the *Death of St. Francis* and *Incredulity of Jerome*, shows a moment during Francis' funerary procession in which a knight who doubted the veracity of the stigmata was convinced by touching the wounds themselves (figure 1-32). Here, Jerome crouches before the bier with his back to the viewer and inserts his hand into Francis' side while a crowd of mourning friars look on and kiss and touch the wounds in his hands and feet. Overhead, angels carry the saint's soul up to the heavens.

The last quatrefoil of the Franciscan cycle shows the *Martyrdom of Franciscans at Ceuta* in 1227 and is the only episode that does not appear in Bonaventure's *Legenda Maior* (figure 1-33). A possible allusion to the event does appear in a slightly earlier text, Thomas of Celano's *Miracles of St. Francis*, composed around 1250. In his celebration of the Order's growth, Thomas mentions those who have "obtained the palm of martyrdom," which may refer to this recent tragic event in Franciscan history.[62] In Taddeo's panel, Francis, joined by the hand of God descending from the top of the panel, hovers above a scene of graphic carnage, as the sword is about to fall on the last surviving Franciscan missionary in Morocco. The decapitated heads of

[61] Ibid., 660-61.
[62] Thomas of Celano, "Miracles of St. Francis," in *Francis of Assisi: Early documents*, ed. Regis J. Armstrong and J.A. Wayne Hellmann (New York: Franciscan Institute of Bonaventure University, 2000), 400.

his five companions litter the ground below the kneeling friar as he prays and accepts his fate, although his salvation is assured by the holy presence standing witness to their martyrdom.

This final scene of mission and martyrdom speaks to Francis' own attempts to convert non-Christians as well as the continued strength of the Order after his death in that his followers were still willing to lay down their lives in spreading the Rule. In addition, this episode may have been included to reflect the current dangers faced by Franciscan missionaries that were similar to those of the thirteenth-century martyrs depicted on the quatrefoil. In the 1320s and 1330s, around the same time that Taddeo painted the *armadio* panels, members of the Friars Minor were executed in Tana, India and Almalyq in modern Uzbekistan, and in 1340 the Chapter General meeting in Assisi offered a special prayer for the Order's threatened missionaries.[63] Therefore, this unusual ending to the Franciscan cycle may be connected to contemporary concerns about the perilous state of those friars continuing Francis' commitment to conversion.

The Reliquary Cupboard and the Tradition of Franciscan Narrative Painting

The typological relationship between the two narrative cycles on the reliquary cupboard will be discussed below in connection to historical developments in the Franciscan Order in the early fourteenth century. Another neglected aspect of the reliquary cupboard regards how Taddeo's Life of St. Francis panels for the *armadio* compare to other iconographically related cycles produced in Tuscany and Umbria in the century following the saint's death and canonization. Several painted versions of his life survive from this period in churches with which

[63] The *Martyrdom at Ceuta* was an uncommon subject before the 1330s; the only other example of which I am aware is a stained glass panel in the Lower Church of San Francesco in Assisi dated to approximately the same time as the reliquary cupboard. S. Maureen Burke, "The Martyrdom of the Franciscans by Ambrogio Lorenzetti," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 65 (2002): 471-78. Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby has argued that Gaddi's reliquary cupboard panel was an important influence on Benedetto da Maiano's circa 1475 marble relief of the same subject for the pulpit in Santa Croce's nave. See her *The Renaissance Pulpit: Art and Preaching in Tuscany, 1400-1550* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 92-107.

Taddeo and his patrons (whether the Peruzzi or the friars) would have been quite familiar, most notably San Francesco in Assisi and Santa Croce.

At Assisi, frescoes in the Lower Church from around 1265 and the more famous later frescoes of the Upper Church both depict Franciscan narratives. In Santa Croce, the subject appears in the circa 1245-1250 Bardi altarpiece and the aforementioned Giotto cycle in the same chapel.[64] Of these, the Bardi chapel frescoes and the paintings in the Upper Church at Assisi bear the most stylistic and iconographic similarity to the reliquary cupboard's Francis panels. However, despite the Santa Croce reliquary cupboard's chronological and physical proximity to these significant Franciscan painted cycles, it has not yet been examined as part of the iconographic tradition of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Tuscan cycles of the Life of St. Francis.[65]

Taddeo's position in Giotto's workshop in the 1310s, 1320s and 1330s would have made him intimately familiar with the fresco cycle in the Bardi chapel. Indeed, given his association with Giotto, he may even have painted there himself. Like the Peruzzi, the many branches of the wealthy Bardi family enjoyed burial rights in multiple Santa Croce chapels: this one dedicated to St. Francis, along with chapels to St. Louis of Toulouse, St. Lawrence and St. Sylvester. The family's first foray into patronage at the church came between 1310 and 1316, when Ridolfo de' Bardi probably committed funds for the chapel's construction and decoration.[66] Not surprisingly given the chapel's titular saint and the mendicant environment, the images chosen depict a condensed version of the Life of St. Francis. The six episodes divided between the left and right

[64] Surviving documentation indicates that the Bardi dossal, whose artist is unknown, was not placed in the Bardi chapel until 1595, although it was likely made for some other chapel altar in Santa Croce. Goffen, *Spirituality in Conflict*, 29-30.
[65] Goffen, *Spirituality in Conflict*, 13-50; Chiara Frugoni, *Francesco e l'invenzione delle stimate* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1993), passim.
[66] On the dating of the chapel see Benjamin Kohl, "Giotto and His Lay Patrons," in *The Cambridge Companion to Giotto*, eds. Anne Derbes and Mark Sandona (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 195 and Goffen, *Spirituality in Conflict*, 54-59.

walls show his *Renunciation of Worldly Goods*, the *Approval of the Rule by Innocent III*, *Francis before the Sultan*, the *Apparition at Arles*, the *Incredulity of Jerome* and the *Visions of Fra Agostino and Guido* (figures 1-34, 1-35, 1-36, 1-37, 1-38).[67] Above the entrance on the outside of the chapel, Giotto also painted the *Stigmatization of St. Francis* discussed above that may have served as a model for Taddeo. All of these episodes, with the exception of the *Visions of Fra Agostino and Guido*, also appear on the reliquary cupboard panels and in several cases display close compositional and stylistic similarities with those later images.

Three of Taddeo's *armadio* panels appear to have been directly inspired by the Bardi chapel scenes, located just a short walk from the Santa Croce sacristy in the church's right transept. Taddeo's incorporation of compositions, architectural settings and iconography from Giotto's Bardi chapel frescoes creates a meaningful visual rhyme that links the ritually important sacristy with the prestigious transept burial chapels and vice versa. Giotto's *Francis before the Sultan* shows the centrally-placed potentate seated on a raised throne and pointing to the left with his right hand stretched across his body. The sultan does so to direct his religious advisors' attention to Francis, who stands on the right side of the composition and prepares to jump into the fire to prove his faith in God's protection. Taddeo essentially repeats the same composition, although the spatial constraints of the quatrefoil require him to reduce the space between figures.

In a similar vein, the reliquary cupboard's *Apparition at Arles* was clearly modeled on Giotto's Bardi version, with its three-arched setting and the miraculous vision of St. Francis with outstretched arms hovering in the central opening. Both paintings utilize open loggia-like settings with the friars gathered inside gazing up towards Francis while Anthony of Padua

[67] The *Visions of Fra Agostino and Guido*, the most damaged fresco of the series, conflates two acts Bonaventure describes, wherein each of these friars experienced Francis welcoming them into heaven. On this subject see Barbara Buhler Walsh, "A Note on Giotto's *'Visions' of Brother Agostino and the Bishop of Assisi*, Bardi Chapel," *Art Bulletin* 62 (1980): 20-22 and Goffen, *Spirituality in Conflict*, 76-77.

preaches on the left side of the room. Each Franciscan cycle includes the *Incredulity of Jerome* positioned next to the *Apparition at Arles*.[68] Here again, the composition of Taddeo's *Incredulity* panel is remarkably like Giotto's fresco. In both paintings Jerome kneels with his back to the picture plane as he puts his hand into the wound in the deceased Francis' side and mourning friars surround their leader's body. On the right, other clerics hold crosses and banners used in the funerary procession and Francis' soul appears at the top of the scene as it is carried to heaven by angels.

Elements of the Bardi chapel *Renunciation of Worldly Goods* and *Approval of the Rule by Innocent III*, while not as closely related to the reliquary cupboard panels as the scenes discussed above, may also have influenced Taddeo's work. For example, both Giotto and Taddeo's show Francis' father in the former episode holding Francis' rejected lay clothes over his left arm and leaning forward toward his son while those standing behind him grasp his arm to hold him back as though he would prevent Francis' definitive commitment to a religious life. In the latter scene, Taddeo depicts a setting similar to the one seen in Giotto's Bardi *Approval of the Rule*, a room with a coffered wooden ceiling and the Pope seated on a raised throne to offer Francis a copy of the official Rule.

The sustained formal connections between both Santa Croce Franciscan cycles indicate that Taddeo drew extensively on the transept frescoes when painting the sacristy reliquary cupboard panels, perhaps in accordance with his patrons' instructions. However, as an artist deeply involved with Franciscan commissions, Taddeo was likely also familiar with the fresco cycle in the Upper Church of San Francesco, the Order's mother church and Francis' burial place in Assisi. These famous paintings, a series of twenty-eight episodes of Francis' life based on

[68] In Taddeo's cycle the *Incredulity* directly follows the *Apparition*. In Giotto's, the *Apparition* and *Incredulity* are positioned on top of one another on the left wall, but the way the cycle reads, they are chronologically separated by *Francis before the Sultan* on the opposite wall.

Bonaventure's *Legenda Maior*, continue to elicit scholarly debate regarding their date and attribution.[69] Given the variation of opinions concerning this cycle, it seems most prudent at this point to take a moderate approach and consider it as the work of multiple artists, possibly including Giotto, from circa 1295-1307.[70] Eleven of the thirteen episodes Taddeo includes in the sacristy *armadio* are also depicted at Assisi. The *Confession of a Resurrected Woman* at Assisi expresses the same message as Taddeo's *Resurrection of a Dead Child* but the earlier fresco cycle any omits reference to Franciscan mission or martyrdom like that seen in the Florentine *Martyrdom at Ceuta* panel. Despite the general correspondence between the iconography of the reliquary cupboard and the Assisi frescoes, Taddeo's panels have much less compositional similarity with this cycle than with the later Bardi chapel paintings. A comparison of the Assisi and *armadio* versions of *Francis before the Sultan* demonstrates these differences. In marked contrast to the Santa Croce quatrefoil and the Bardi chapel scene, the Assisi fresco shows Francis occupying the central space, dividing the scene between the enthroned sultan on the right and the unbelievers fleeing from the fire on the left (figure 1-39).

However, a few of Taddeo's compositions do appear linked to those at San Francesco. As the Order's mother church, formal references to the Assisi frescoes may have been intended as a reminder of Santa Croce's connection to the ultimate seat of Franciscan authority and power. Francis' pose in the *Renunciation of Worldly Goods*, with his hands raised together in supplication towards his heavenly father, is quite similar in both paintings. Both cycles also

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[69] On the "Assisi problem" see Richard Offner, "Giotto, Non-Giotto," *The Burlington Magazine* 74, no. 435 (1939): 258-269; Alastair Smart, *The Assisi Problem and the Art of Giotto: A Study of the Legend of St. Francis in the Upper Church of San Francesco, Assisi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Luciano Bellosi, *Giotto* (London: Constable, 1981), 71-79; Charles Harrison, "Giotto and the 'rise of painting'," in vol. 1 of *Siena, Florence and Padua: Art, Society and Religion 1280-1400*, ed. Diana Norman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 79-93; Bruno Zanardi and Chiara Frugoni, *Il cantiere di Giotto: Le storie di San Francesco ad Assisi* (Milan: Skira, 1996); White, *Art and Architecture in Italy*, 199-224.

[70] For a summary of problems in dating the cycle see James Stubblebine, *Assisi and the Rise of Vernacular Art* (New York: Harper & Row, Inc., 1985), 64-79.

display the same basic organization in the *Dream of Innocent III*, in which the left half of the composition is filled by Francis propping up the falling Lateran façade and the right by the pope asleep in his bedroom (figures 1-40 and 1-41). The only other quatrefoil on the reliquary cupboard that seems formally indebted to the Assisi frescoes, the *Stigmatization of St. Francis*, shares with the frescoed version a rocky outcropping that divides Francis' kneeling figure from the Christ-seraph hovering above to deliver the wounds of the Crucifixion via rays of golden light (figure 1-42).

Examination of Taddeo's Francis cycle in comparison with the frescoes in the Bardi chapel and Upper Church at Assisi indicates that the style of the Florentine reliquary cupboard was more clearly influenced by the former program, which is not surprising given Taddeo's personal experience with Giotto's work on this other major depiction of Francis' life at Santa Croce. However, the long-standing connection between master and associate may not constitute the only reason why Taddeo created a visual link between his *armadio* Francis panels and Giotto's frescoes in the Bardi chapel.

Although scholars have not related the performance of the liturgy to these specific elements of Santa Croce's decoration, those participating in the Mass procession would prepare themselves and their liturgical implements in the sacristy and then move through the right transept to perform the Eucharistic miracle at the high altar. Whether or not the specific liturgy for that day required the inclusion of relics, every time this ritual occurred, the celebrants would move between the sacristy and Bardi chapel Franciscan cycles. In this situation, the strong iconographical and compositional connections between Taddeo and Giotto's paintings would reinforce the paramount importance of Francis' life, death and miracles at Santa Croce and create an environment in which the friars were repeatedly surrounded by images of the Order's founder

that, as we will see, particularly promoted his similarity to Christ.[71] Therefore, not only did Taddeo's formal references to Giotto's earlier frescoes link the reliquary cupboard to a well-known example of the earlier Florentine master's work, the repetition of Franciscan imagery would have provided a powerful devotional stimulus for the friars moving through the church's ritual space.

Relics and Ritual at Santa Croce

The reliquary *armadio*'s painted decoration differed significantly from the other Franciscan cycles discussed above in its close proximity to relics related to the events depicted on the cupboard's doors. This physical relationship resulted in a complex interaction between sacred object and image. A precise list of the relics preserved inside the Santa Croce reliquary cupboard during the Trecento is difficult to compile, largely because of the condition of the church's archival documents. Famously flooded in 1966, the low-lying neighborhood near the Arno River in which the church sits suffered similar damage in 1333 and 1557, causing much of the medieval history of the church and its decoration to be lost.[72] Therefore, we must rely on later descriptions of Florentine churches and rituals to ascertain the nature of Santa Croce's relic collection at the time of the cupboard's installation and determine how Taddeo's visual program relates to the *armadio*'s contents.

Francesco Bocchi's *Le bellezze della città di Firenze (The beauties of the city of Florence)*, first published in 1591, provides the earliest surviving record of the Franciscans' relic

[71] By 1393, the sacristy and high chapel were also iconographically linked through images of the Crucifixion on Taddeo's reliquary cupboard and Agnolo Gaddi's Legend of the True Cross frescoes. See below, pages 66-67.
[72] Carbonai, et al., 243.

cache.[73] He writes that Santa Croce possessed a piece of the True Cross and a single thorn from the crown worn by Jesus during the Passion. In addition to these Christological relics, he also notes a hand from one of the martyrs of the Massacre of the Innocents, the arm of the early thirteenth-century Florentine saint, Gherardo Mecatti da Villamagna, the head of one of St. Ursula's virgins, relics of the Blessed Umiliata de'Cerchi and unidentified relics of St. Christopher and the early Christian martyrs Abdon and Senen.[74] In addition, the church also preserved a piece of the tunic St. Francis wore when he received the stigmata, thus physically connecting the convent with one of the most significant events of their founder's life and one of the defining elements of the Order itself.

A century later, Lodovico Antonio Giamboni's account of Florentine ritual includes an inventory of Santa Croce's relics that reiterates Bocchi's collection and makes a few notable additions. These include relics from Sts. Agnes, Anne, Anthony of Padua, Aaron, and Cosmas and Damian. Their absence from earlier documents indicates that the church likely acquired them sometime in the seventeenth century.[75] Giamboni's list of Santa Croce relics is confirmed in Richa's description of the church, in which he particularly draws attention to the most prestigious relics: those connected to Francis and the Passion as well as those of St. Anne, the Virgin Mary's mother, and Anthony of Padua.[76]

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[73] Francesco Bocchi, *Le bellezze della città di Firenze* (England: Gregg International Publishers Limited, 1971). An English translation has recently been published as *The beauties of the city of Florence: A guidebook of 1591*, trans. Thomas Frangenberg and Robert Williams (London: Harvey Miller, 2006).

[74] *…si conservano in questa chiesa con gran riverenza molte reliquie e cose sante: come un pezzo della croce molo notabile di Giuesu Christo e una spina di sua corona. Ci è una mano d'uno Innocentino, un braccio di S. Gherardo, una testa d'una compagna di S. Orsola, reliquie di S. Cristofano e di Addon e Senen, e un pezzo della tonaca di San Francesco, la quale, mentre che hebbe le stimate, fu forata, come ancora si vede in questo tempo, ci è oltra cio' la testa e tutte le ossa della beata Humiliana de'Cerchi.* Bocchi, 166-67. The presence of the thorn relic in the sacristy is further confirmed by a 1596 copy of a 1439 church inventory that records the "thorn of our lord." ASF, *Manoscritti* 618, fol. 3v. The surviving inventories and payment records for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries do not mention relics. See the relevant collections of documents in ASF, *Conventi soppressi* 92, nos. 2, 344 and 359.

[75] Lodovico Antonio Giamboni, *Diario sacro e perpetuo e guida perpetua per visitare le chiese della città di Firenze* (Florence: Iacopo Guiducci, 1700).

[76] Richa, 74-75.

While we cannot be certain exactly what relics were stored in the Santa Croce sacristy cupboard in the Trecento, it seems clear that during the Renaissance the Franciscan convent made every effort to establish itself as a significant relic repository. However, in the late Middle Ages, the only relics we can confidently place in Gaddi's reliquary cupboard are the Christological objects mentioned above, namely the fragments of the True Cross and Crown of Thorns. These Passion relics likely came to the Franciscans in 1258 as a gift from the French king, Louis IX, who constructed the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris to house properly a large group of relics of Byzantine provenance.[77]

Possession of these Passion relics was exceptionally beneficial for Santa Croce in that they confirmed the convent's dedication to the Holy Cross. As a Franciscan institution, the link between the stigmatized St. Francis and the cross as the reason for those marks was especially meaningful. Devotion to the physical suffering of Christ on the cross was supported at Santa Croce by the actual presence of Passion relics, and in the reliquary cupboard the relationship between the manner of Christ's death and St. Francis' stigmata was emphasized on the painted panels that also protected the earthly remains of Christ's pain stored safely behind them.

The ongoing and direct relationship between the Order and the historical locations of Christ's life and death made the Santa Croce friars' stewardship of Passion relics that much more immediate and meaningful. The Franciscan Order had a long-standing commitment to maintain and protect sacred sites in the East and by 1229 had already established permanent houses in Jerusalem, Antioch and Constantinople.[78] In 1342, Pope Clement VI augmented the Franciscan

[77] On the French king's relic acquisitions in the 1240s see J. Durand, "Les reliques et reliquaires Byzantine acquis par saint Louis," in *Le trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2001), 52-54; Holger Klein, "Eastern Objects and Western Desires: Relics and Reliquaries between Byzantium and the West," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 307-08. On Louis' gift to Santa Croce see Marcucci, 142; Thompson, 61.

[78] St. Francis himself reached the Holy Land in 1219 and later missionaries established a network of Franciscan houses throughout the area. On the Franciscan Order's involvement with the Holy Land, which continues to the

presence in Jerusalem by making the Order the official guardians of Christian sites in the Holy Land. This included the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, the traditional location of Jesus' burial that had had a church built over it since the fourth century.[79]

While the reliquary cupboard had a permanent connection to the Passion accomplished through its painted panels, sacred contents and Franciscan location, the *armadio* also played a part in the celebration of other events during the Christian liturgical year. Scholars have neglected to address the ritual aspect of the cupboard's function, but on certain occasions the cupboard would be opened to reveal the tangible proof of Christ's sacrifice in the form of his relics. Given the nature of these relics, it is not surprising that they were displayed on both dates on the liturgical calendar related to the Cross.[80] According to Giamboni and Richa, the piece of the True Cross was removed from the sacristy cupboard and displayed to the faithful on the feast of the Invention of the Cross (3 May) and the Exaltation of the Cross (14 September).[81] Giamboni mentions the relic's ostention as the central feature of both feasts and further states that during the former liturgy the True Cross fragment was "carried in procession through the church."[82]

While Giamboni's account describes rituals performed on these feasts over three centuries after the creation of Gaddi's reliquary cupboard, such later descriptions often recount practices that had been established long before. Therefore, it is probable that the Trecento liturgy

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present day, see Martinaio Roncaglia*, St. Francis of Assisi and the Middle East*, trans. Stephen A. Janto (Cairo: Franciscan Center of Oriental Studies, 1957); Moorman, 227-28; Derbes and Neff, 449-51.

[79] David Jacoby, *Studies on the Crusader States and on Venetian Expansion* (Northampton: Variorum, 1989), 41-49; Derbes and Neff, 603 n. 15.

[80] On the legends behind these two feasts see Chapter Two, pages 3-5.

[81] *...e due volte l'anno si espone sull'Altare Maggiore* (..and two times a year it is displayed on the high altar). Richa, 75. Giamboni's earlier account is more specific and he describes the relic being used in each feast. Giamboni, 87 and 196-97. See also Luigi Santoni, *Diario sacro e guida perpetua delle feste principali delle chiese della città, suburbia ed arcidiocesi fiorentina* (Florence: Tipografia Arcivescovile, 1853), 36 and 92-93; Thompson, 69.

[82] *...vi stanno esposti più pezzi del legno della Santa Croce, quali la sera si potrano processionalmente per la Chiesa* (…there was exposed a large piece of the wood of the Holy Cross, which was carried in procession through the church). Giamboni, 87.

involved a similar exposition of the relic as the Franciscans would certainly have wanted to use their True Cross fragment ever since they acquired it in the thirteenth century in support of some of the most significant events on the festal calendar. Moreover, Giamboni notes that anyone who attended Mass at Santa Croce on 3 May received a plenary indulgence granted by Pope Sixtus V (r. 1585-90). Thus, we can at least trace the ostention to the late sixteenth century and, as was often the case, the later documentation of the relic display may have simply codified an earlier practice, perhaps dating from a period much closer to the cupboard's creation.[83]

The Franciscans' other Passion relic played a key role in the Easter liturgies, another of the church's most significant annual celebrations. On Good Friday, the day commemorating Jesus' death, the friars of Santa Croce organized a funeral procession through the convent and the city streets that included Passion relics.[84] Although Giamboni's description of the event does not specifically mention the thorn or True Cross, it seems likely that these would have been the objects processed by the friars, as no other mention of Passion relics survives from Santa Croce inventories. Then, on the second Sunday after Easter, the thorn from Christ's crown normally kept in the sacristy cupboard was carried through the city in an evening procession.[85] The appearance of the church's Passion relics in connection with the rituals commemorating Jesus' sacrificial death elevated Santa Croce's status within the Florentine ecclesiastical community by demonstrating the friars' positions as guardians of significant Christological relics. In addition,

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[83] *...è indulgenza plenaria, che può applicare anco per la liberazione d'un'anima dal purgatorio…impresse col segno della Croce, alle quali Sisto V concesse d'indulgenza* (there is a plenary indulgence, that can be applied to the liberation of a soul from purgatory, undertaken with the sign of the cross, to which Sixtus V conceded an indulgence). Giamboni, 87.

[84] *...ed ore 22 in circa de Padri di detto Convento, e da Fratelli di detta compagnia…si celebra il funerale al Nostro Sig. Giesù Christo…portati gl'Instrumenti della Passione...e dopo essere andata la processione buon tratto per la città ritorna alla detta chiesa* (and at 10 pm the friars of the convent and the brothers of the company [the confraternity of the Magdalen]…celebrate the funeral of Our Lord Jesus Christ…carried the instruments of the Passion…and after the procession goes through the city it returns to the church). Giamboni, 333-34.

[85] *...stà esposta una spina della corona di N. Sig. Giesù Christo, la quale dopo il Vespro si porta processionalmente per la città* (… exposed a thorn from the crown of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that was carried processionally through the city after Vespers). Giamboni, 304.

their ownership of objects specifically associated with Jesus' blood and the Cross served as reminders of the Order's founder and his close personal experience with similar corporeal wounds.

The relics Bocchi described in Santa Croce in 1591 were also used in rituals and processions Giamboni and Richa documented in the 1700s that likely reflect events from the Cinquecento, if not earlier. These include relic ostentions on the feasts of St. Gherardo Mecatti (13 May), the Blessed Umiliata de'Cerchi (19 May), Anthony of Padua (13 June), Christopher (25 July), Anne (also on 25 July), Abdon and Sennen (30 July), Francis of Assisi (4 October), and the Massacre of the Innocents (28 December).[86] However, the feast day displays described above were not the only type of occasion during which the relics' presence was brought to bear on events in the church and city at large. They also functioned during ostensibly much more secular events.

As we have seen, the Santa Croce sacristy functioned as a burial chamber for the Peruzzi family, a funerary site whose prestige was enhanced by clerical preparation for Mass and proximity to the church's relics. In addition to playing an indirect role in a lay family's attempts to secure salvation, Richard Trexler has identified another time in which the relics stored in the sacristy may have affected broader lay concerns. This demonstrates how relics and their cupboards could function in a multiplicity of contexts, including, in this case, the world of Florentine banking and politics. In the 1340s, just a few years after the installation of Gaddi's reliquary cupboard, the Florentine government deposited large sums of money seized from failed local companies (including that of the Peruzzi) in the Santa Croce sacristy.[87] The commune put

[86] Giamboni, 96-285.
[87] Richard Trexler, "Honor Among Thieves: The Trust Function of the Urban Clergy in the Florentine Republic," in vol. 1 of *Essays Presented to Myron P. Gilmore*, eds. Sergio Bertlli and Gloria Ramakus (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1978), 324.

the funds in the sacristy in order to guarantee their safety and availability for creditors. However, the site was selected not only because of the room's inaccessibility but likely also because of the relics themselves. Even in a situation where the cupboard remained closed and the relics were not actually seen, their saintly presence still presided over sacristy activities and served as an effective deterrent to theft. By storing the confiscated money in the Santa Croce sacristy, the government thus chose a location that was both physically and spiritually secure, protected by iron locks and constantly guarded by heavenly powers in the form of relics.[88]

The implied presence of the relics in the sacristy even when they remained invisible behind the painted doors also made it an appropriate location for other nominally secular events. For example, Paula Vojnovic has identified several wills signed in the Santa Croce sacristy between 1329 and 1391.[89] The binding nature of this legal act was strengthened by taking place within the sacristy, where it was witnessed not just by the notary and friar witnesses but also by the heavenly relics kept nearby. The sacred nature of the sacristy and its contents also encouraged the selection of Santa Croce as the official storage location of some of the city's election paraphernalia. Election to governmental office in late medieval Florence was accomplished through the selection of eligible names drawn from designated bags.[90] The bags used in these civic events were kept in a special chest in Santa Croce's sacristy where, as was the

[88] This did not, however, stop the government itself from pilfering the *capsa cessantium (chest of the bankrupts*) as in 1351 and 1353 the commune used the funds for its own purposes, acts that were followed by official absolution of the Franciscans charged to protect them. ASF, *Provvissioni* 39, fols. 4-5, 40 and 43, cited in Trexler, "Honor Among Thieves," 324; Vojnovic, 296.
[89] Vojnovic, 297. On notarial procedures, specifically relating to wills, in the Trecento see Shona Wray, *Communities and crisis: Bologna during the Black Death* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).
[90] Martin B. Becker, "Some Aspects of Oligarchical, Dictatorial and Popular *Signorie* in Florence, 1282-1382," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2 (1960): 421-39; John Najemy, *Corporatism and consensus in Florentine electoral politics, 1280-1400* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), passim.

case with the bankruptcy funds and legal proceedings, they could be kept safe, free from tampering and blessed by their holy surroundings.[91]

Therefore, the relics preserved in Gaddi's cupboard took part in various events in the sacred and secular activities of late medieval Florence. On those ritual occasions requiring the ostention of particular relics, the cupboard would have been the focus of the devotional acts surrounding their liturgical use and the doors would have been dramatically opened to reveal the saints' relics and holy objects stored inside. However, the relics could also indirectly affect sacristy events through their constant presence, which was permanently recalled through the cupboard's imposing structure and decorated panels. Even when the relics themselves were invisible, the reliquary cupboard would have reminded any sacristy audience, including those witnessing a legal act or safely depositing the city's funds and items used to keep the government running, of the proximity of the divine sitting just behind the painted panels, which added inestimably to the sacred environment of the sacristy.

The sacristy relics and reliquary cupboard were also connected to Santa Croce's larger decorative program as it developed in the Trecento. In 1388, Agnolo Gaddi, Taddeo's son, began work on a fresco cycle of the Legend of the True Cross in the high chapel.[92] In a series of eight paintings on the right and left walls of the apse Agnolo detailed Empress Helena's discovery of the True Cross in the fourth century and Emperor Heraclius' return of the relic to Jerusalem in

[91] The names of eligible candidates were kept across town in Santa Maria Novella where, as at Santa Croce, on election days a chest with three keys would be opened by the head of the friars, the Captain of the People and the Cistercian bursar of the Palazzo Signoria. Trexler, "Honor Among Thieves," 324.

[92] On Agnolo Gaddi's Santa Croce cycle and its commission from the prominent Alberti family, see Bruce Cole, *Agnolo Gaddi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 21-31; Phyllis Murphy Rambin, "Franciscan Spirituality and Papal Reform: True Cross Cycles in Tuscany, 1388-1464," (PhD diss, University of Georgia, 1999), 39-87; Thomas Loughman, "Spinello Aretino, Benedetto Alberti, and the Olivetans: Late Trecento Patronage at San Miniato al Monte," (PhD diss, Rutgers University, 2003), 179-82; Barbara Baert, *A Heritage of Holy Wood: The Legend of the True Cross in Text and Image*, trans. Lee Preedy (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 350-74; Costanza Cipollaro, *Agnolo Gaddi e la leggenda di Santa Croce: La cappella maggiore e la sua decorazione pittorica* (Foligno: Cartei & Bianchi, 2009), passim; Borsook, *Mural Painters of Tuscany*, xl-xli and 93; Thompson, 68-72.

the seventh century.[93] Therefore, when the True Cross relic was processed between the sacristy and high altar on the feasts of the Invention and Exultation of the Cross this tangible connection to Jesus' death was also moving between painted representations of that event and the subsequent story of the True Cross. The combination of multiple parts of the church's painted decoration thus traced the relic's life from its creation at the Crucifixion to its recognition as one of the most significant objects in the Christian tradition. The relic ostensions enacted against the background of Taddeo and Agnolo Gaddi's paintings for the reliquary cupboard and Cappella Maggiore thus ritually linked these two spaces, adding further layers of meaning to both areas of the church and enhancing the experience of seeing the relic alongside images depicting its prestigious history.

The Reliquary Cupboard and Francis as *alter Christus*

The reliquary cupboard facilitated Santa Croce's ritual program and augmented its sacred environment in several different ways. In addition, the iconography of the *armadio* panels speaks particularly to a significant concern of Franciscans in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, namely the establishment of St. Francis as an *alter Christus*.[94] Very early on in the history of the Order, the special relationship between Francis of Assisi and Christ found visual expression. In the mid-1200s, only thirty years following the founder's death, a fresco cycle in the nave of the Lower Church of San Francesco in Assisi appears to link the two through a series of typologically related images (figures 1-43 and 1-44). These paintings, dated between the early 1250s and early 1260s and attributed to an anonymous Master of St. Francis, depict five events

[93] For more detailed description see Chapter Two, pages 102-03.
[94] Cynthia Hahn argues that Franciscan hagiographical cycles present particularly good examples of artists exploring methods of pictorial narrative in order to visually promote the founder's sanctity and public presence. See *Portrayed on the Heart: Narrative Effect in Pictorial Lives of Saints from the Tenth through the Thirteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 326-27.

from Francis' life: the *Renunciation of Worldly Goods*, *Dream of Innocent III*, *Sermon to the Birds*, *Stigmatization* and *Proving of the Stigmata after Francis' Death*.[95] Across the nave, the same hand created another cycle, this one illustrating episodes from the life of Christ, namely the *Stripping of Christ before the Crucifixion*, *Crucifixion*, the *Deposition*, *Lamentation* and *Supper at Emmaus*. While Chiara Frugoni and Louise Bourdua have argued that the two series should not be read as directly related pairs of images, they do represent an early attempt to link Francis and Christ visually by juxtaposing their lives and giving them equal prominence in size and placement.[96]

In her study of Passion narratives produced for Franciscan settings, Anne Derbes argues that in the mid-thirteenth century, and especially after the approval of the *Legenda Maior*, the Order became increasingly forceful and explicit in using images to connect Francis and Christ.[97] Although scholars have often overlooked the Santa Croce *armadio* in treatments of the subject, Taddeo's reliquary cupboard panels emphatically continue the trend to present a sustained argument for the understanding of Francis as *alter Christus*, a message that would have especially appealed to the mendicant audience most often in attendance in the sacristy.[98]

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[95] Frugoni argues that these paintings were complete by the time the church was consecrated in 1253 but Derbes assigns them to the early 1260s, after the composition of Bonaventure's *Legenda Maior*. In any event, the nave frescoes were significantly damaged in the 1290s when additional side chapels were added to the basilica. Frugoni, 280-82; Anne Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in Late Medieval Italy: Narrative Painting, Franciscan Ideologies, and the Levant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 19-20; Joanna Cannon, "Dating the frescoes by the Maestro di San Francesco at Assisi," *Burlington Magazine* 134 (1982): 65-69; Janet Robson, "The Pilgrim's Progress: Reinterpreting the Trecento fresco programme in the Lower Church at Assisi," in *The Art of the Franciscan Order in Italy*, ed. William R. Cook (Leidon: Brill, 2005), 43-44.

[96] Frugoni, 284-86; Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage*, 2-3.

[97] Derbes, 22-23. The textual linkage between the two reached its height in the late Trecento with the Order's official approval of Bartholomew of Pisa's circa 1390 *De conformitate vitae Beati Francisci ad vitam Domini Iesu* in 1399, in which Francis' life is systematically juxtaposed with that of Christ. Published in *Analecta Franciscana*, vols. 4 and 5 (Rome: Quaracchi, 1906-12).

[98] The deliberate construction of a bond between St. Francis and Christ has been well established. See H.W. Van Os, "St. Francis of Assisi as a second Christ in early Italian painting," *Simiolus* 7, no. 3 (1974): 115-132; Thompson, 61-66.

Even a cursory glance at the Christological and Franciscan cycles that comprise the Santa Croce reliquary cupboard reveals their deliberate iconographic and stylistic relationships. The penultimate scene of each cycle, the *Incredulity of St. Thomas* and the *Incredulity of Jerome*, make their connection quite clear. Both episodes involve proving miracles to a doubting follower. In the former, Thomas questions Christ's ability to reappear to the Apostles following his death while Jerome must put his hand into Francis' wounded side to believe in the presence of the stigmata. Furthermore, the Christological *Resurrection* and the Franciscan *Resurrection of a Dead Child* also seem intended to remind the viewer of Francis' miraculous powers as a repetition of Christ's own. Yet another example of the iconographic ties between the two series appears when one examines the *Transfiguration* and the *Vision of St. Francis in the Fiery Chariot*. These scenes portray Christ and Francis as significantly different from their companions. Christ meets with Old Testament prophets and becomes marvelously clothed in white robes and light and Francis miraculously appears to followers hundreds of miles away in a flying chariot like a new Elijah. Indeed, this biblical figure further links the two panels as the prophet appears in the former alongside Christ and Moses.

The scenes often display marked compositional similarities as well. Occasionally, the comparison remains subtle, as in the *Presentation in the Temple* and *Approval of the Rule*, which both feature the presented object or person (the infant Christ and the rule itself) as the painting's central point within an architectural enclosure. Other pairs make the formal relationship more explicit. Christ and Francis take up similar positions in the *Last Supper* and the *Death of the Knight of Celano*: both are on the left side of the composition, at the heads of their respective tables while John and the knight slump towards them either in sleep or in death.

In addition, the theological meaning of some quatrefoils deepens when read in connection with its corresponding image in the other cycle. This occurs, for example, with the *Adoration of the Shepherds* and the *Crib at Greccio*. Here, the Christ child in the manger in the upper panel is placed directly above the altar of the Francis scene in which the infant Christ appears in the arms of the saint during the 1223 Christmas Mass. The panels both refer to the setting of Christ's birth, but the alignment of the infant Christ in the *Adoration* image and the altar in the *Greccio* panel also calls attention to the eventual sacrifice of Christ's body at the Crucifixion as well as during each celebration of the Eucharist.

The order of Taddeo's Franciscan cycle differs from that in the earlier Bardi chapel and Assisi frescoes, a change that can be explained by the thematic, rather than chronological organization, of the *Legenda Maior*. In the case of the Santa Croce reliquary cupboard, it seems likely that Taddeo organized the St. Francis panels in order to maximize the relationship between them and the established sequence of events in Christ's life. This more easily allows Francis to be visually and theologically compared to Christ within his Order's main church in Florence and prompts the friars preparing for Mass in the sacristy to reflect upon the profound similarities between these two most important figures in their life and work.

The desire to shape Francis as an *alter Christus* through painted juxtapositions of their similarities in character and miraculous and intercessory abilities was supported by the cupboard's contents held just behind the historiated quatrefoils. These images and objects interact with the Order's efforts in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries to solidify recognition of Francis' stigmata. The juxtaposition of the *Crucifixion* and *Stigmatization* panels on the reliquary cupboard demonstrates the relationship between these two most significant events in Franciscan theology. For the audience of friars at Santa Croce, Francis' miraculous

reception of the same wounds Christ suffered served as the most potent and telling indication of his special nature and connection with the Savior.

Franciscan devotion to the Crucifixion, in liturgy, theology and art, has long been noted, thus Taddeo's reliquary cupboard panels must be considered within that tradition.[99] However, the sacristy *armadio*'s function sets it apart from other Franciscan images of the Crucifixion and stigmatization in that here the represented images of the events were joined by their physical remains in the form of the relics of a thorn from Christ's crown, a True Cross fragment and, at least by 1591, a piece of the tunic Francis wore when he received the stigmata.[100] Through a combination of image and relic, the Santa Croce cupboard reinforced the Order's assertion that its founder enjoyed a unique bond with Christ that manifested itself most significantly in the wounds of the Passion, wounds that were made by the very objects held inside the cupboard.

The creation of a painted cupboard to house Santa Croce's relics associated with the Crucifixion occurred during a period in which the Order took steps to institutionalize the recognition of Francis' stigmata. In 1282, a meeting of the Chapter General held in this very church formally launched an inquiry into the veracity of the stigmatization, indicating that doubts as to its authenticity still existed nearly sixty years after the event.[101] During the proceedings, a certain Fra Matteo testified to a vision he received in May of the previous year of Francis showing him the wounds of the Crucifixion.[102] Minister General Bonagrazie di San Giovanni in Persiceto, not surprisingly, then concluded that Francis' stigmata were valid. Thus, Santa Croce

[99] See Claudio Leonardi, "Il francescanesimo nasce all'insegna della santa Croce," in *Santa Croce nel solco della storia*, ed. Massimiliano Rosito (Florence: Citta di Vita, 1996), 17-26; Derbes, 17-19.
[100] See page 59-60.
[101] Gardner, "Louvre Stigmatization," 222-23.
[102] André Vauchez, "Les stigmates de saint François et leurs détracteurs dans les derniers siècles du moyen âge," *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 80 (1968): 604.

in Florence played a role in the permanent establishment of the special relationship between the Order's founder and Christ as the location where the stigmata were officially recognized.

The Chapter General's approval was not the end of efforts to celebrate Francis' unusual divine favor. In the same decade that Santa Croce installed the sacristy reliquary cupboard extolling the connections between the two most significant figures in Franciscan theology, the Order added the feast of Francis' stigmatization to their liturgical calendar.[103] This ritual recognition, instituted in 1337 by the Chapter General meeting at Cahors, elevated the stigmatization to the level of other major feasts such as the Invention of the True Cross and Francis' feast of 4 October.[104] Therefore, the issue of the stigmatization and the connections between Christ and *alter Christus* were very much at play in the Franciscan environment during the period in which Taddeo's panels were created. The reliquary cupboard joined together images that supported the *alter Christus* relationship and contents that tangibly proved the truth of the Crucifixion and, by extension, referred to Francis' wounds. This amalgamation made this ritual object a powerful tool in the Order's campaign to securely establish their founder as a unique saintly personality, an issue of paramount importance to his followers since his death a century before.

The reliquary cupboard's contents and decoration were constant reminders of the physical presence of Christ and the saints at Santa Croce. The historiated panels visually tie the Order's founder to Christ and the church's most significant relics stored inside prove the events depicted on the cupboard doors. Taddeo's reliquary cupboard, made in the tradition of late medieval Franciscan narrative painting, thus stands as a significant ritual object and a functional and permanent glorification and celebration of the Franciscan Order.

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[103] Vauchez, "Les stigmates," 618; Gardner, "Louvre Stigmatization," 223.
[104] Vauchez, "Les stigmates," 618.

Chapter Two
Revelation Reenacted:
Benedetto di Bindo's Reliquary Cupboard for Siena Cathedral

The cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta and the nearby church of Santa Maria dell'Annunziata inside the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala were two of the most significant sacred sites in Siena during the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Their elevated reputations in the city, the surrounding territory (*contado*), and beyond were bolstered in large part by collections of powerful relics, many of which were kept safe and secluded in large wall-mounted painted wooden cupboards in the sacristy of each church. In the fifteenth century both establishments commissioned new sacristy reliquary cupboards. Benedetto di Bindo painted one for the cathedral in 1412, while in 1445 Vecchietta made the cupboard for the hospital church that is examined in Chapter Three. Each cupboard displays a complex iconographic program on both sides of its moveable doors and was deeply involved in the city's ritual life.

As part of the building and decoration of a new sacristy adjacent to the choir, in 1411 the Opera del Duomo, the administrative body in charge of the cathedral, commissioned the Sienese artist Benedetto di Bindo to paint the exterior and interior faces of the reliquary cupboard's eight doors; work was completed the following year. Despite its patrons, prestigious location, and powerful contents, previous examination of Benedetto's cupboard has been superficial and largely focused on how it fits into the artist's little known *oeuvre*. Therefore, this chapter aims to fill a lacuna in scholarship on fifteenth-century Sienese painting through consideration of the cathedral's *armadio* as a significant component within the broader ritual context of the cathedral. In addition, the cupboard must be understood as an object with a mutable iconographic program that speaks to a complex relationship with the tumultuous political and religious circumstances under which it was produced and functioned.

A Cupboard for the Cathedral

A heavenly gathering of thirty-two angels adorns the exterior of the immense cupboard that was installed on the north wall of the sacristy's Chapel of the Relics (figures 2-1 and 2-2). Arranged in groups of four and covering eight separate doors, each angel appears in half-length before a gold background, wearing a mantle of muted red, white, green or yellow.[1] The angels are individuated by slightly different facial structures and, more significantly, by the text of the unfurled scrolls (*cartelli*) they display at their waists. Latin and Italian inscriptions on the scrolls list saints' names, including Stephen and Lawrence, as well as specific relics, such as "wood from the True Cross" and "Virgin's milk."[2]

The iconic, Byzantinizing style of the angels that fill the panels with their slightly tilted heads, sloping shoulders, striated drapery, and flat gold backgrounds call to mind Sienese painting of a century earlier, particularly that of Duccio di Buoninsegna. As Duccio's massive *Maestà* altarpiece sat atop the cathedral's high altar, located in the choir just a few steps outside the sacristy door, it seems especially clear that Benedetto drew upon the earlier master's style when painting the reliquary cupboard. Given the physical proximity of the *armadio* to Duccio's altarpiece, a work so significant to Siena that its installation in 1311 occasioned a procession through the streets, Benedetto's stylistic reference to the Trecento image may be seen as a way to link the sacristy and high altar visually, a connection that was then enacted by the various ritual movements of objects between these two locations that are discussed below.[3]

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[1] Each door of the cupboard is made up of four angels and measures approximately 54" x 39." Each of the eight interior narrative panels takes up the back of one door.

[2] *ligno sci.crucis* and *latte v.gine*.

[3] On the procession and installation of Duccio's altarpiece, see John White, *Duccio: Tuscan Art and the Medieval Workshop* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1979), 192-97; Bram Kemper, "Icons, Altarpieces, and Civic Ritual in Siena Cathedral, 1100-1530," in *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*, eds. Barbara A. Hanawalt and Kathryn L. Reyerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 110-11.

As the panels that were visible when the reliquary cupboard was closed, the images of the *cartello*-bearing angels make up the visual program that was most frequently seen by sacristy audiences. However, on the reverse of these static and iconic images, Benedetto painted an entirely different cycle for the doors' interior faces.[4] These eight panels, which depict the discovery and exultation of the True Cross, were viewed only on those occasions when the reliquary cupboard was opened to allow relics to be removed for ostention. Furthermore, the narrative cycle's retardataire style connects the fifteenth-century *armadio* with Siena's glorious and prosperous past by recalling the architectural constructions and elaborate details of the city's Trecento painters.

The interior cycle draws primarily on the text of the thirteenth-century *Golden Legend* and its description of St. Helena's finding of the Cross in the Holy Land in the early fourth century.[5] The cycle begins with a group of Jews who have gathered together to discuss the arrival of Helena, Emperor Constantine's mother, in Jerusalem (figure 2-3). The spindly columns and vaulted space of the temple in which the men huddle together recall Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Presentation in the Temple*, which had been installed on one of the transept altars in 1342 and that, as we will see, was also closely associated with significant relics housed in the cathedral.[6] In the next scene, Helena sits enthroned under an arcaded loggia while to the right a member of the Jewish community, Judas, sometimes referred to as Judas Cyriacus to distinguish him from Jesus' betrayer, is asked to reveal the location of the cross upon which Jesus was crucified (figure 2-4). The fire at the center of the composition perhaps best indicates the contentious

[4] It should be noted that given the marked stylistic disparities between the narrative panels, especially in terms of architectural setting and even figural type, the presence of workshop assistance in this commission is highly likely.
[5] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1989), 269-76 and 543-50.
[6] K.M. Frederick, "A Program of Altarpieces for the Siena Cathedral," *Rutgers Art Review* (1983): 19-20; Diana Norman, *Siena and the Virgin: Art and Politics in a Late Medieval City State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 77-79.

atmosphere of this exchange, which Benedetto otherwise depicts rather statically, as Helena threatened torture and trial by fire unless the Jews complied with her demands.[7]

Since he initially refuses to disclose the information, Judas, who appears repeatedly as an old, bearded man dressed in a blue robe with a white hood, was sentenced to a long and painful death by starvation inside a well. Benedetto effectively uses this distinctive dress and physical appearance throughout the cycle to differentiate Judas and the Jews from Helena and the Romans and establish them as foreign and other. In the third of Benedetto's panels, Judas agrees to share the secret and is pulled from the well while Helena, flanked by her Roman advisors, again looks on from her throne (figure 2-5). The fourth panel depicts the initial excavations for the Cross, wherein Judas raises his spade while a mixed crowd of Romans and Jews looks on at him and the plank of wood that appears in the open trench (figure 2-6).

The other four scenes recount events following the finding of the True Cross and the relic appears prominently in each composition. After the successful exhumation, the *Golden Legend* recounts that the cross belonging to Christ had to be differentiated from those of the thieves executed alongside him as all three were found buried together.[8] Thus, Benedetto's fifth panel in the cycle shows a crowd grouped around a young man sitting on a bed covered with an elaborate textile (figure 2-7). The attention given to the expensive cloth creates another link with earlier Sienese paintings, such as Pietro Lorenzetti's *Nativity of the Virgin* and Duccio's *Maestà*, both images that figured prominently on and around the cathedral's high altar.[9] Two crosses are visible under the bed while Judas rests another across the youth's lower body. This dramatically foreshortened cross proved itself Jesus' through its ability to revive the man who had been lying

[7] Ibid., 273.
[8] Ibid., 274.
[9] Frederick, 33-35. On Renaissance textiles see Lisa Monnas, *Merchants, princes and painters: Silk fabrics in Italian and northern paintings, 1300-1550* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

there dead until it was laid on his lap. In the next scene, Helena, again enthroned under the loggia, receives Judas and recognizes the cross that has now been confirmed as a powerful relic of Christ's time on earth (figure 2-8).

The final two episodes depicted on the interior cupboard doors take place some three centuries after Helena's discovery of the Cross and depict events from the legend of the seventh-century Byzantine Emperor Heraclius. In the first of these, an angel appears atop the gates of Jerusalem as Heraclius, richly dressed, seated on horseback and followed by cardinals and a bishop, returns the Cross to the city after defeating the Persian king Chosröes (figure 2-9). The scroll the angel carries admonishes the emperor for entering the city not humbly, as Christ did, but in worldly splendor.[10] Thus, in the final panel, Heraclius corrects his mistake and is seen entering the city as a barefoot penitent accompanied by tonsured monks, led by a rope halter around his neck as he carries the Cross towards the gate and its rightful place in Jerusalem (figure 2-10).

The Heraclius panels, which present a significant temporal leap from the first six panels of the True Cross narrative, likely appear for two reasons. First, they visually refer to the feast of the Exultation of the Cross held in Siena every 14 September that celebrated Heraclius' reclamation of the True Cross and, more broadly, the appropriate conservation and reverence due to relics. Secondly, these two panels closely relate to sacristy audiences, who, like Heraclius, sought to show proper devotion to holy relics and supported the safe disposition of such sacred objects within the church. The underlying theme of the correct ownership of relics in the

[10] The *Golden Legend* recounts than an angel appeared over the gate and reminded Heraclius that, "When the King of Heaven, coming up to his Passion, entered in by this gate, he came not in royal state, but riding upon a lowly ass; and thus he left an example of humility." Thus, the Latin text on the angel's scroll reads *XPS HIC A PASSIONIS EGRESSUS EST CUM HUMILITATIS ET MANSUETUDINE*. See de Voragine, 545; Eve Borsook, *The Mural Painters of Tuscany: From Cimabue to Andrea del Sarto*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 94-95; Barbara Tavolari, *Siena, Museo dell'Opera. I dipinti* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2007), 82.

Heraclius panels would have been further reinforced to viewers through their easy legibility on the lower level of the reliquary cupboard, where the cathedral's relics were properly honored and preserved as the narrative advocates.

Each of these interior panels relies on intricate architectural constructions of temples, loggias, and city streets that derive from early Trecento Sienese painting, particularly that of Simone Martini and Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti. As we have seen, the influence of the previous century's painters is evident in Benedetto's paintings on both sides of the reliquary cupboard doors as the angels on the exterior faces are indebted to Duccio's work at the cathedral. These stylistic references seem designed to associate the *armadio*'s images with the storied tradition of Sienese art.

Indeed, the retardataire style of Benedetto's panels may be understood as a visual identification with the city's celebrated past, a past that must have seemed increasingly distant in early fifteenth-century Siena, beset as it was by ecclesiastical strife, plague, political intrigue and economic decline. Luke Syson has argued that the large corporate patrons that represented broad civic interests, such as the Opera del Duomo, were more likely to commission conservative projects in an attempt to preserve civic identity through stylistic continuity.[11] The use of visual culture in the construction of civic identity and memory may well be at play in the decoration of the cathedral's reliquary cupboard, as scholars have argued more generally was the case for much of Quattrocento Sienese painting.[12] Benedetto's stylistic linkage between the *armadio* in the sacristy and the proud history of Sienese culture embodied by the Trecento altarpieces

[11] Luke Syson, "Stylistic Choices," in *Renaissance Siena: Art for a City*, ed. Luke Syson (London: National Gallery Company, 2007), 44. On corporate commissions in Siena, see also Judith Steinhoff, *Sienese painting after the Black Death: Artistic pluralism, politics, and the new art market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), passim.
[12] Stephen J. Campbell and Stephen J. Milner, "Art, Identity, and Cultural Translation in Renaissance Italy," in *Artistic Exchange and Cultural Translation in the Italian Renaissance City*, eds. Stephen J. Campbell and Stephen J. Milner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 5-7; Gabriele Fattorini, "La lezione trecentesca e le immagini dell'identità civica," in *Da Jacopo della Quercia a Donatello: Le arti a Siena nel primo Rinascimento*, ed. Max Seidel (Siena: Federico Motta Editore, 2010), 142-47; Syson, 43-44.

located in the main body of the cathedral ties together the past artistic glories of the city with the continued presence of the saints in the form of their relics. Uniting the style of Siena's zenith with some of its most precious sacred objects, the cathedral's reliquary cupboard thus emphatically asserts ongoing heavenly favor for a city in need of reassurance.

Previous Scholarship

The Opera del Duomo entrusted the decoration of the new cathedral sacristy and its liturgical furniture, including the reliquary cupboard, to an artist from the Sienese *contado* about whom little is known today. However, given the significance of the project, it seems likely that Benedetto's work was appreciated in the early fifteenth century. It is widely accepted that his work in the Duomo sacristy, which included several frescoes and the reliquary and vestment cupboards and was accomplished between 1411 and 1413, constitutes his most prestigious commission.[13]

Born in Val d'Orcia around 1380, modern scholars have never considered Benedetto one of the premier artists of his day.[14] Indeed, despite his rather extensive activity at the cathedral, he has been little studied by art historians. Cesare Brandi included Benedetto in his 1949 book on fifteenth-century Sienese painters, but it is only in the last thirty years that scholars have undertaken more extended studies of his work.[15] The most notable of these, Miklòs Boskovits' 1980 examination of early Quattrocento Sienese painters and Giulietta Chelazzi Dini's 1998

[13] Benedetto's other works include a frescoed *Assumption of the Virgin* in the church of San Niccolò del Carmine, Siena and a fresco cycle in the chapel of Peter Martyr in the Perugian church of San Domenico. Works on panel including a *St. Lucy* (Minneapolis Institute of Arts) and a *Virgin and Child with Saints Andrea and Onofrio* (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena) are also attributed to him.
[14] Bacci cites Perugian records that list his death date as 19 September 1417. Peleo Bacci, "Le storie della Invenzione e Esaltazione della S. Croce dipinte da Benedetto di Bindo e compagni per l'Arliquiera del Duomo di Siena," *Fonti e commenti per la storia dell'arte senese; dipinti e sculture in Siena, nel suo contado ed altrove* (1944): 209-10.
[15] Cesare Brandi, *Quattrocentisti Senesi* (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1949), 29-32.

exhibition catalogue entry, seek to place Benedetto's work within its stylistic context.[16] Both conclude that he was influenced by other, better-known artists such as Taddeo di Bartolo, Simone Martini and the Lorenzetti, but neither scholar explored the ways in which Benedetto's most prestigious works interacted with, and indeed shaped, the liturgical environment of Siena's cathedral.

Wolfgang Loseries recently published an extended analysis of the complex iconographical program of the fresco cycle in the cathedral sacristy. Despite this recent scholarly consideration, Benedetto's contemporary decoration of liturgical furniture has been largely neglected in the literature on Quattrocento Sienese painting and ritual.[17] The painted panels of the cupboards for relics and vestments now hang in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, but only the much smaller (and damaged) vestment cupboard has received any extensive scholarly examination.[18] Appreciation of Benedetto's reliquary cupboard may have suffered from a change in attribution made in the mid-1940s. Prior to Bacci's assertion that the cupboard panels are in fact the work of Benedetto di Bindo most scholars included the reliquary cupboard in the *oeuvre* of one of the most celebrated Sienese painters, Pietro Lorenzetti.[19] Having been denied the status associated with a major painter, study of the reliquary cupboard has been limited and cursory in nature.

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[16] Miklòs Boskovits, "Su Niccolò di Buonaccorso, Benedetto di Bindo e la pittura senese del primo Quattrocento," *Paragone* 31 (1980): 3-22; Giulietta Chelazzi Dini, *Sienese Painting: From Duccio to the Birth of the Baroque*, trans. Cordelia Warr (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1998), 215.

[17] Wolfgang Loseries, "Gli affreschi di Benedetto di Bindo nella sagrestia del Duomo," in *Le pitture del Duomo di Siena*, ed. Mario Lorenzoni (Milan: Silvana, 2008), 98-107.

[18] John Gregory's 1998 article on the panels of the sacristy vestment cupboard considers the *Credo* iconography against the religious landscape of early Quattrocento Siena. He does not, however, broaden his consideration to include Benedetto's other major work on panel, the reliquary cupboard, done during the same period and for the same location. See "The *Credo* of the Siena Cathedral Sacristy (1411-12)," *Renaissance Studies* 12 (1998): 206-27.

[19] These early twentieth-century attributions were based on stylistic considerations that were not confirmed by archival evidence until the 1940s. Both Vittorio Lusini and Piero Mazzoni attributed the panels to Pietro Lorenzetti in the 1910s. See Vittorio Lusini, *Il Duomo di Siena*, vol. 1 (Siena: San Bernardino, 1911), 285-301; Piero Mazzoni, *La leggenda della croce nell'arte italiana* (Florence: Alfani Editore, 1914), 97-100. In his 1930s connoisseurial study of Sienese painting, Berenson suggested that the cupboard panels were the work of Gualtieri di Giovanni. See Bernard Berenson, "Quadri senza casa. Il Trecento senese e il Quattrocento senese," *Dedalo* XI (1930-31): 328-33.

Recent scholarship on the *armadio* relies heavily on Peleo Bacci's 1944 publication that describes Benedetto's program for the cupboard doors and brings to light several archival documents regarding its commission.[20] Following Bacci, treatment of Benedetto's cupboard has come in the form of brief acknowledgments of its existence but little substantive discussion of its function or significance within Sienese sacred culture.[21] Indeed, the two most recent publications on the reliquary cupboard by Italian scholars Silvia Colucci and Barbara Tavolari continue the trend of general, cursory treatment in that both focus on Benedetto's retardataire style after first quickly noting that the iconography seems designed to explain the *armadio*'s contents.[22]

Scholars' tendency to overlook this reliquary cupboard may be attributed to several reasons, including the marginalized status of Benedetto di Bindo in the canon of late medieval and Renaissance artists and the problems presented by the panels' current museum installation, which prevents examination of the True Cross cycle on the interior door faces. Despite these challenges, the cupboard's size, multifaceted decorative program, and extremely valuable contents point to the importance of this object in the ritual life of the cathedral; therefore, the sacristy reliquary cupboard merits more extended consideration.

The Cathedral Sacristy and Its Decorative Program

The *True Cross* cycle was only visible when the doors of the reliquary cupboard were opened and the sacristy was occupied by the clergy and laymen allowed to witness the revelation of these images and the relics they normally concealed. However, simply by virtue of its location

[20] Bacci, "Le storie della Invenzione…," 197-200.
[21] For example, Diana Norman's discussion of the cupboard consists of one short paragraph in which she states that Benedetto and his assistants painted the cupboard on both sides and that it once held a piece of the True Cross. *Painting in Late Medieval and Renaissance Siena (1260-1555)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 149.
[22] Tavolari, *Siena. Museo dell'Opera*, 72-82; Silvia Colucci, "Benedetto di Bindo," in *Da Jacopo della Quercia a Donatello: Le arti a Siena nel primo Rinascimento*, ed. Max Seidel (Siena: Federico Motta Editore, 2010), 124-25.

within the sacristy even the closed cupboard would have been a sight denied to the majority of cathedral visitors. The secluded and privileged nature of the sacristy as well as its contents and activities is evinced by the *Ordo officiorum ecclesiae Senesis*, a text compiled in 1215 that provides detailed instructions for performing the liturgy in Siena.[23] On the subject of the sacristy, the *Ordo* states that priests should dress either there or behind the altar. Perhaps more significantly, the text also emphasizes the need for celebrants to prepare themselves out of sight of the lay congregation before solemnly processing into the visible areas of the church, presumably to heighten the importance and impact of their ritual entry.[24]

The sacristy of Siena Duomo, like that of all churches, thus functioned as a space intimately bound up with notions of sacredness, ritual, and power. A complex program of both fresco and panel painting was installed in the sacristy soon after building was complete in 1409. The construction and decoration of the sacristy in this, the central site of the city's religious life, was accomplished in a continuous campaign from 1407 to 1413 under the direction of the *operaio* Caterino Corsini.[25] Constructed after the rest of the cathedral was finished and built on an arch that spans the Via dei Fusari, the sacristy's trapezoidal shape and site reflects the essentially additive nature of this space.[26] Perhaps as a result of its unusual shape and location, the far end of the sacristy is divided into three chapels, designated, from right to left, the Chapel of the Books (or library), the Chapel of Vestments, and the Chapel of the Relics (figure 2-11).

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[23] Kees Van der Ploeg, *Art, Architecture and Liturgy: Siena Cathedral in the Middle Ages* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1993), 121-23.

[24] *...praeparant se solemnibus indumentis in sacrestia, vel post altare beatae Virginis...* Published in Van der Ploeg, *Art, Architecture and Liturgy,* 70-71.

[25] Walter Haas and Dethard von Winterfeld, "Baugeschichte," in *Der Dom S. Maria Assunta*, vol. 3 of *Die Kirchen von Siena*, eds. Walter Haas and Dethard von Winterfeld (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1985), 478; Jacqueline Mongellaz, "Reconsidération de la distribution des rôles à l'intérieur du groupe des maîtres de la sacristie de la cathédrale de Sienne," *Paragone* 36 (1985): 74-75; Norman, *Painting in Late Medieval and Renaissance Siena*, 147.

[26] Norman, *Painting in Late Medieval and Renaissance Siena*, 128-29. For an extensive discussion of the building of Siena Duomo see Tim Benton, "The design of Siena and Florence Duomos," in *Siena, Florence and Padua: Art, Society and Religion 1280-1400*, ed. Diana Norman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 129-44.

Payment records dating from 1411 show that the entire decorative program of the sacristy eventually came under Benedetto di Bindo's direction, for at that time he began receiving a yearly salary for work carried out there.[27] In addition to fresco cycles in each of the three chapels, Benedetto was responsible for painting the two principal pieces of furniture in the sacristy, the cupboards for vestments and liturgical objects in the central chapel and for relics in the left chapel.[28] The cathedral accounts from August 1412 indicate that at this time Benedetto received payment in the amount of twenty-four pieces of Sienese gold for "four months of work on the doors of the sacristy reliquary cupboard."[29]

The Opera may have commissioned Benedetto to make a painted reliquary cupboard along with the sacristy's other decorations as a replacement for an older furnishing that had served a similar purpose. Silvia Colucci has suggested that a group of early thirteenth-century panels attributed to the Maestro di Tressa held the cathedral's relic of the True Cross, presumably until the new sacristy cupboard was made two centuries later.[30] One of the six panels in this otherwise Christological cycle depicts Heraclius beheading Chosröes, an element of the True Cross legend, but a scene not included in Benedetto's later cycle (figure 2-12).[31] Based largely on the inclusion of this episode, Colucci and Silvia Giorgi have associated this cycle of panels with the cathedral's True Cross fragment, which was displayed on the high altar every 14

[27] The start of Benedetto's involvement with the sacristy is inconsistently reported in the literature on this site. Although Benedetto may have worked here before 1411, it appears that he did not gain control of the entire project until that date, at which time he was also awarded a yearly stipend. See Bacci, "Le storie della Invenzione…," 211-12; Gregory, 209-10 and 227; Mongellaz, 73-89.

[28] Although Benedetto was in charge of the sacristy decoration, payment records indicate that in 1412 he received substantial help from several other artists, including Giovanni di Bindino, Niccolo di Paolo, Giusa di Fruosino and Lando di Stefano. For example, on 12 July 1412 the Opera recorded a payment to Giovanni di Bindino for helping Benedetto to paint the "armario di sagrestia." Archivio dell'Opera della Metropolitana di Siena (hereafter AOMS) 387, fol. 51r. See also Bacci, "Le storie della Invenzione…," 218; Gregory, 210-11; Mongellaz, 73-84.

[29] *…per quattro mesi ci a aitato a lavo[ra]re gli sportelli del l'Arliquiera di Sagrestia…* AOMS 386, fol. 58v.

[30] Colucci, "Benedetto di Bindo," 124.

[31] The other panels associated with this cycle depict the Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity of Christ, Beheading of John the Baptist, and Entry into Jerusalem.

September on the feast of the Exultation of the Cross.[32] However, in the absence of any supporting documentation, the idea that Benedetto's True Cross cycle was intended as a replacement for this earlier group of paintings remains speculative.

We have seen that, in addition to the painted storage cupboards, Benedetto and his workshop produced extensive fresco cycles for the sacristy's three chapels. The first of these, the Chapel of the Books (now repainted) depicted Christian learning with images of the Four Doctors of the Church, the Chapel of Vestments displayed the early life of the Virgin and the Chapel of the Relics was decorated with two intriguing images that emphasize the protective power of sacred objects.[33] Unfortunately, the frescoes of the relic chapel have suffered extensive damage over the years, however the basic iconography of the east and west walls can be deduced from what remains.

On the chapel's east wall Benedetto painted the *Apparition of St. Michael over the Castel Sant'Angelo* and on the west wall the *Apparition of the Virgin to Augustus*. Each of these events is described in the *Golden Legend*: the first in the entry on St. Gregory the Great (also Pope Gregory I, r. 590-604) and the second in the description of the Nativity of Christ.[34] In what remains of the eastern fresco, a procession of figures is set against a cityscape dominated by the round Castel Sant'Angelo, which is surmounted by a winged figure armed with a sword and an icon of the Virgin Mary on the wall of a building to the right (figure 2-13). The sword-wielding angel at the top of the composition clearly represents the Archangel Michael who, according to

[32] Giorgi and Colucci suggest that the horizontal orientation of Maestro di Tressa cycle indicates a probable pairing with a reliquary and the inclusion of the Heraclius scene makes the True Cross relic a likely possibility. However, to date no documents have come to light that indicate how, when or where these panels would have originally been seen in the cathedral. Silvia Giorgi, "Alcune ipotesi sul Maestro di Tressa," in *Imago Virginis*, ed. Maria Lorenzoni (Siena: Opera del Duomo, 2003), 73-76; Silvia Colucci, "Maestro di Tressa," in vol. 1 of *Collezione Salini: Dipinti, sculture e oreficerie dei secoli XII, XIII, XIV e XV*, ed. Luciano Bellosi (Florence: Centro Di, 2009), 41-43.
[33] Enzo Carli, *Il Duomo di Siena* (Genoa: Sacer Editrice, 1979), 86; Norman, *Painting in Late Medieval and Renaissance Siena*, 147-49; Gregory, 208; Brandi, 247-48.
[34] De Voragine, 49 and 179-80.

the *Golden Legend*, alighted on top of Emperor Hadrian's mausoleum and sheathed his sword to mark the end of a plague that had devastated Rome during the 590s.[35] Before the angelic appearance, Pope Gregory had done his part to elicit heavenly relief by leading a procession through the city carrying the icon of the Virgin believed to be painted by St. Luke.[36] Benedetto's fresco thus calls attention to divine intervention in alleviating outbreaks of disease as well as the effective use of sacred objects in appeals for such intercession.

An iconic image of the Virgin figures again in the western fresco in which a gold roundel at the top of the wall contains a half-length depiction of Mary and the infant Christ (figure 2-14). Several figures standing in front of crenellated buildings flank the supernatural image. This fresco depicts an unusual subject from the *Golden Legend*'s account of the Nativity. As part of a compilation of the miraculous circumstances surrounding the birth of Christ, de Voragine included a story of the founding of the Roman church of Santa Maria in Ara Coeli on the Capitoline hill. According to the legend, Emperor Augustus visited the Tiburtine sibyl in Rome on Christmas day to determine whether or not someone greater than himself would ever be born. At noon, the sibyl saw a vision of the Virgin and Child hovering in a golden ring in the sky and a voice from heaven proclaimed "This woman is the altar of heaven (or *ara coeli*)."[37]

Scholars have neglected to observe that Benedetto likely intended the fresco to serve not just as an account of the founding of an ancient Roman church but also as a more immediate

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[35] Ibid., 180. Following this event, Hadrian's mausoleum became known as the Castel Sant'Angelo or Castle of the Holy Angel.

[36] Three Roman churches, Santa Maria Maggiore, San Sisto and Santa Maria in Aracoeli, claim to have the icon Gregory carried in this procession. Claudia Bolgia, "The Felici Icon Tabernacle (1372) at S. Maria in Aracoeli, Reconstructed: Lay Patronage, Sculpture and Marian Devotion in Trecento Rome," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 68 (2005): 29-30; Maria Laura Marchiori, "Art and Reform in Tenth-Century Rome – The Paintings of S. Maria in Pallara," (PhD diss., Queen's University, 2007), 211; Loseries, 103.

[37] Ibid., 49. The same subject also appears in Domenico Ghirlandaio's circa 1485 fresco outside the entrance to the Sassetti chapel in Santa Trinità in Florence. See Eve Borsook and Johannes Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinità, Florence* (Doornspijk: Davaco Publishers, 1981), 30-31; Jean Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 233-34.

reference to miraculous objects and their intercessory powers. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Santa Maria in Ara Coeli preserved an icon of the Virgin thought to be particularly effective in preventing or stopping plague.[38] This holy object may be seen on the wall of a building to the right of the roundel, similar to the way in which the Virgin icon appears in the chapel's other fresco. Invoking this miraculous Roman image may have been intended to harness indirectly the power of that Marian icon as well as more generally confirming the ability of holy objects to protect and heal the faithful, a message that seems quite appropriate for a space that housed the cathedral's relics and a city so strongly devoted to the Virgin Mary.

Therefore, we should now recognize that the frescoes on the east and west walls of the sacristy relic chapel work with the painted reliquary cupboard originally on the chapel's north wall to form a decorative program that highlights saintly intercession facilitated by holy objects. Although the frescoes feature painted icons, these sacred paintings function in ways very similar to the relics stored in the sacristy cupboard in their ability to work miracles and prove saintly favor. The iconographic emphasis on the alleviation of plague would have been especially relevant for the early Quattrocento audience, as in 1410 Siena suffered yet another wave of disease and death, while the selection of Roman events would have called to mind the current state of the Church, which was in profound disarray in this period. The impact of the plague and Schism on the cathedral's reliquary cupboard will be discussed below, but for now the cupboard must be understood as a significant element of the larger visual environment of the sacristy's Chapel of the Relics, which as a whole focused the viewer's attention in multiple ways on the powerful history of miraculous objects and their presence in this particular location.

[38] Loseries, 103.

Relics at the Cathedral

Benedetto's ambitious series of panel paintings on the exterior and interior faces of the cupboard doors effectively preserved and enhanced the safety and prestige of the cathedral's most precious sacred objects. We have seen that on the exterior Benedetto painted thirty-two half-length, scroll-bearing angels. While several of the panels have sustained significant damage, it remains apparent that each angel holds a *cartello* at the waist whose text identifies either a saint, as in the case of Agnes, or a specific relic, such as the Virgin's milk. The correspondence between text and object on the exterior of this reliquary cupboard is unusual in its emphatic advertisement of the relics stored inside. In fact, although it has not been noted before, no other surviving late medieval or Renaissance reliquary *armadio* so closely matches the iconography of the exterior doors with the cupboard's actual contents, nor does any other cupboard make such extensive use of text in combination with figural representations.

The *cartelli* labels on the exterior panels provide some of the most helpful information regarding the cathedral's relics in the early Quattrocento. In addition, several sacristy inventories survive from the period during which Benedetto painted the reliquary cupboard. These documents, dating from 1409, 1420 and 1429 respectively, give some indication of the size and nature of the cathedral's relic collection; however, such descriptions focus primarily on the precious metal reliquaries rather than the relics they contained. While this makes an exact reckoning of the sacristy relics difficult, it does allow for a general understanding of the nature of the saintly objects preserved in the cathedral sacristy. The 1409 inventory, made at the beginning of the new sacristy project, lists nineteen reliquaries but only identifies the contents of two, the aforementioned True Cross fragment and the relics of four unidentified martyrs.[39]

[39] *...dentro ligno de croce...*(inside the wood of the cross) and *...chasse quatro reliqi d santj martiy...*(box with four relics of holy martyrs). AOMS 866, fol. 61r-68r.

Nearly a decade after the cathedral reliquary cupboard's installation, the next official sacristy inventory from 1420 begins with the *armadio* itself and continues on to name several specific saints, Ansanus, Savinus, and Victor, represented by their relics.[40] These three early Christian martyr saints, along with the Virgin Mary and St. Crescentius, made up Siena's premier heavenly patrons, thus their relics were of particular importance to the cathedral's collection.[41] According to the 1429 inventory, the impressive list of relics kept in the cathedral sacristy expanded to include a piece of the Flagellation column and relics of universal saints including Agnes, Stephen, and John the Baptist, as well as those mentioned in earlier inventories.[42] In addition to the valuable metal reliquaries that make up the majority of the inventory records, Benedetto's cupboard also stored wooden reliquary busts of the city's four male patronal saints that were commissioned at the beginning of the new sacristy project from sculptor Francesco di Valdambrino and painted by Benedetto di Bindo and Andrea di Bartolo.[43] Therefore, in the years immediately following the building of the cathedral's new sacristy and the creation of the reliquary cupboard, the church's relic collection seems to have expanded substantially and increased in prestige. This trend may be due, at least in part, to the establishment of a properly secure and appropriately decorated place in which to store the relics that then encouraged donations and acquisitions to the cathedral's saintly cache.

The 1420 sacristy inventory's mention of wooden busts containing the relics of Sts. Ansanus, Victor, Savinus and Crescentius reflects a significant change in the cathedral's disposition of relics in favor of increased sacristy storage and also may provide a new clue

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[40] *...uno arliquierj ornatifiur e bele chornno* (an ornate and beautifully colored cupboard) and *...uno bracio di Santo Sanno...Santo Savino, Santo Vetore*…(an arm of St. Ansanus…St. Savinus, St. Victor). AOMS 867, fol. 2r-v.
[41] On Siena's patron saints see Norman, *Siena and the Virgin*, 35-41.
[42] AOMS 867, fol. 55r-58r. See also Bacci, "Le storie della Invenzione…," 223-28.
[43] Peleo Bacci, *Francesco di Valdambrino emulo del Ghiberti e collaboratore di Jacopo della Quercia* (Siena: Istituto Comunale d'Arte e di Storia, 1936), 152-212; Gabriele Fattorini, "Francesco di Valdambrino," in *Da Jacopo della Quercia a Donatello: Le arti a Siena nel primo Rinascimento*, ed. Max Seidel (Siena: Federico Motta Editore, 2010), 58-61; Carli, *Il Duomo di Siena*, 160.

regarding the impetus for the *armadio*'s commission. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the patronal relics were stored in altars in the cathedral's crypt, a common practice in Italian churches of this period.[44] However, a 1317 decision to enlarge the cathedral involved lowering the floor of the chancel and filling in the old crypt, thus the patron saints' relics had to be moved.[45] The relocated relics required prestigious surroundings that complemented their significance in Sienese sacred history: Savinus (died circa 300) was the city's first bishop, Ansanus (died circa 304) first baptized the people of the *contado* and the Sienese defeated Montepulciano on Victor's (died circa 170) feast day on 14 May, 1229.[46] Therefore, when they were moved up from the crypt the patronal relics were installed in new altars in the transept and chancel that were decorated with the elaborate, painted altarpieces discussed below and they remained in these locations surrounding the cathedral's high altar throughout the Trecento.

In the early years of the Quattrocento, however, these prestigious relics changed location once again, this time to the sacristy, where they were stored alongside many of the cathedral's other sacred objects. Although they are first mentioned in the 1420 sacristy inventory, it is possible that the patronal relics were moved there a decade earlier, as their wooden busts were commissioned in 1408.[47] While it has not been suggested previously, the decision to make new reliquaries for these relics and store them in the sacristy may have been a compelling reason for the Opera to include a large reliquary cupboard among the pieces of liturgical furniture made for the sacristy in 1411 and 1412, as an expensively painted *armadio* would provide appropriate storage for the cathedral's Christological and patronal relics.

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[44] H.W. Van Os, *Sienese Altarpieces: 1215-1460*, vol. 1 (Groningen: Bouma's Boekhuis, 1984), 87; Van der Ploeg, *Art, Architecture and Liturgy*, 59; Benton, 137.
[45] Van der Ploeg, *Art, Architecture and Liturgy*, 109.
[46] In the late thirteenth century and for reasons that remain unclear, Victor replaced St. Bartholomew in the pantheon of Sienese patrons. Van Os, *Sienese Altarpieces*, 77; Norman, *Siena and the Virgin*, 35-40.
[47] Bacci asserts that the reliquary busts were made to hold the ashes of the patronal relics following a fire in September 1407. However, this is not substantiated by any subsequent literature on these objects. See the discussion in Gabriele Fattorini, "Francesco di Valdambrino," 58-60.

The early Quattrocento strength of the cathedral's sacristy relic collection continued through the Renaissance and beyond. Three centuries later, Girolamo Gigli, in the section of his eighteenth-century *Diario Sanese* that deals with the Duomo, notes that many saints' relics were normally kept in the sacristy but were also occasionally removed and carried in processions for public devotions.[48] Gigli particularly calls attention to the fact that the sacristy was the designated storage place for the relics of the Virgin's veil and one of St. Bernardino of Siena's (died 1444) teeth.[49] The addition of many of the relics Gigli mentions to the cathedral's collection postdates the creation of the Quattrocento *armadio*, thus his account is most informative in its confirmation of sacristy relic storage for centuries following its creation.

The exterior angels' labeling of the relics originally kept in the cupboard is significant for several reasons, not least for the relationship between the painted *cartelli* and the actual slips of paper often found inside reliquaries to identify the relics they contained.[50] As we have seen, as far as the documentation allows, it appears that the painted texts on the cupboard doors do indeed correspond to the relics stored inside. In this way the Duomo reliquary cupboard itself may be understood as an elaborate and permanent collective reliquary, providing yet another layer of protection and mysterious cachet for the individual reliquaries stored inside.[51] Other sacristy reliquary cupboards, including that at the nearby Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, use an image of the saint without textual explanation to proclaim the presence of the saints in the form

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[48] …*in occasione di pubbliche preghiere portarsi a processione*...(on occasions of public prayer they [are] carried in procession). Girolamo Gigli, *Diario Senese*, vol. 1 (Siena: G. Landi and N. Alessandri, 1854), 362-63.

[49] Bernardino of Siena died in 1444, some thirty years after Benedetto's reliquary cupboard was installed, therefore relics were clearly added to the cupboard after its creation.

[50] For good images of the *cartelli* often found inside reliquaries see the catalogue edited by Luciano Bellosi, *L'Oro di Siena: Il Tesoro di Santa Maria della Scala* (Milan: Skira, 1996).

[51] For examples of large-scale construction (in most cases works of architecture) with formal and functional connections to reliquaries see John White, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1250-1400*, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 466-68; Giovanni Freni, "The reliquary of the Holy Corporal in the cathedral of Orvieto: Patronage and politics," in *Art, Politics, and Civil Religion in Central Italy 1261-1362*, eds. Joanna Cannon and Beth Williamson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 117-78; Sally J. Cornelison, "Art Imitates Architecture: The Saint Philip Reliquary in Renaissance Florence," *Art Bulletin* 86 (2004): 647-50.

of their relics. Until this point, scholars have failed to ground the reliquary cupboard in the period of spiritual and political unrest during which Benedetto painted the *armadio* panels, but the unusual use of text on the cathedral's cupboard may point to a pressing desire to label and thus more clearly and fully appreciate the continued presence of the powerful holy objects kept safely within.

Performative Furniture: Functions of the Cathedral Cupboard

Although the reliquary cupboard would remain closed for most of the year, it occasionally would be opened to allow various relics to be processed either within the cathedral or through the city or *contado*. Contemporary chroniclers and government statutes indicate that the movement of the reliquary cupboard doors and the subsequent revelation of the relics occurred for a variety of reasons, including designated feast days, the visits of political and ecclesiastical dignitaries, and periods of intense crisis. The success of such rituals depended in large part on the presence and efficacy of the cathedral's relics that simultaneously demonstrated the saints' continued protection of Siena and emphasized the Duomo's importance in the city's devotional activities.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the cathedral relics took part in the rituals performed during some of the largest feasts in the Sienese liturgical calendar. Since the thirteenth century the Virgin Mary was believed to protect the city and the cathedral was dedicated to her Assumption into heaven.[52] On two major Marian feasts, the Annunciation to the Virgin on 25 March and the Assumption of the Virgin on 15 August, the cathedral became the city's liturgical

[52] Sienese devotion to Mary was profoundly intensified by the belief that she interceded on the city's behalf during the Battle of Montaperti against the Florentines in 1260. The role of relics in the rituals performed during the battle is discussed later in this chapter. For a broader understanding of Siena's relationship to the Virgin see especially Diana Norman's *Siena and the Virgin*, passim.

epicenter as Siena renewed its devotion to her most important patron.[53] Often in concert with relics kept in the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, the Duomo relics emphasized the physical presence of the Virgin and her saintly court through the exposition of relics both within and outside of the sacristy.

In his circa 1432 *Cronaca senese* (Sienese Chronicle), Tommaso Montauri notes that on the feast of the Annunciation in 1412, just as Benedetto was completing work on the reliquary cupboard, the city's highest-ranking citizens were allowed to see the relics.[54] Such an event apparently set it apart from others in the liturgical year as Montauri does not always include descriptions of regular feasts and festal celebrations. Moreover, the Opera may have taken the opportunity of the Annunciation celebrations to show off the sacristy decorations and the new reliquary cupboard that strengthened the city's commitment to honoring the saints stored within properly.

A few months later, on the feast of the Assumption, several relics were removed from the cupboard for display on the cathedral's high altar.[55] On this day, after the civic authorities had offered their obligatory donation of wax candles and the archbishop had celebrated Mass, the relics of Sts. Ansanus, Savinus, Crescentius and Victor, were displayed at the high altar.[56] The patronal reliquary busts were also brought to the high altar on the annual feast of the Four Crowned Martyrs every November 8, perhaps in an attempt to link Siena's four male patron

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[53] On the Feast of the Assumption in Siena see Norman, *Siena and the Virgin*, 1-5; Diana Webb, *Patrons and Defenders: The Saints in the Italian City-States* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 256-60.

[54] *...per la festa della Nuntiata, ch'andorono è signori a vedere le reliquie...*(for the feast of the Annunciation, the lords came to see the relics…). Tommaso Montauri, "Cronaca senese," in vol. XV, part 6 of *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, ed. L.A. Muratori (Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, 1931), 773.

[55] On the play likely performed in the nearby baptistery as part of the Assumption day festivities in the mid-Quattrocento see Andrea Campbell, "A Spectacular Celebration of the Assumption in Siena," *Renaissance Quarterly* 58 (2005): 452-60.

[56] Gigli, vol. 2, 110; Françoise Glenisson, "Fête en société: L'Assomption à Sienne et son evolution au cours du XVIe siècle," in *Les fêtes urbaines en Italie à l'èpoque de la Renaissance: Vèrone, Florence, Sienne, Naples*, eds. Françoise Decroisette and Michel Plaisance (Paris: Klincksieck, 1993), 70-72.

saints with this prestigious group of universal saints.[57] Therefore, during these feasts, the cathedral emphasized its connection with a multitude of powerful intercessors and patrons through the ostention of its relics, an act that required the ritual opening of the reliquary cupboard.

Moving the patronal relics out of the sacristy cupboard and onto the high altar also affected the iconographic program of the cathedral's chancel and transept. Since the mid-fourteenth century, a series of paintings on five altars spread across the church's east end had extolled the life of Siena's primary patron, the Virgin Mary (figure 2-15).[58] These altarpieces, Pietro Lorenzetti's *Birth of the Virgin*, Simone Martini's *Annunciation*, Duccio's *Virgin in Majesty* (*Maestà*), Bartolomeo Bulgarini's *Nativity of Christ* and Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Purification of the Virgin* represent the work of the finest artists in Siena in the early to mid-Trecento.[59] While Duccio's immense, double-sided *Maestà* took pride of place on the high altar, the other paintings sat on altars dedicated to the four patronal saints discussed above that were installed shortly after 1317 when the crypt was filled in to support the new chancel area and the old patronal altars were destroyed. Each of these four altarpieces featured flanking standing saints and a narrative predella along with the aforementioned central scenes so that the image of the patron saint and episodes of his life were visible on each altar.[60] Therefore, after 1412 whenever the reliquary busts were removed from the sacristy cupboard and carried in procession

[57] Bacci, "Francesco di Valdambrino," 172; Kemper, 118.
[58] On the arrangement of these altars see Frederick, 19-35; Van der Ploeg, *Art, Architecture and Liturgy*, 109-10; Norman, *Siena and the Virgin*, 68-80.
[59] Norman has noted that each of these altarpiece subjects also correspond to a major Marian feast celebrated in Siena, thus expanding the celebration of the liturgy from the high altar. See Norman, *Siena and the Virgin*, 75-80.
[60] The patronal altarpieces have been broken up and many of the predella scenes have been lost. A sense of their original appearance may be gleaned from the surviving pieces of Bulgarini's altarpiece, where standing *Sts. Victor* and *Corona* flank the *Nativity* panel and the predella had a small panel showing the *Blinding of St. Victor*. See Elizabeth H. Beatson, Norman E. Muller and Judith B. Steinhoff, "The St. Victor Altarpiece in Siena Cathedral: A Reconstruction," *Art Bulletin* 68 (1986): 610-31; Van Os, *Sienese Altarpieces*, 77-79; Norman, *Siena and the Virgin*, 68.

to the high altar, the physical remains of the saints acted in concert with and further augmented the images on the cathedral altars, proving the presence and support of the city's patron saints in a powerful combination of painted representation and precious object.

In addition to their interaction with the patronal altarpieces, previous studies of the cathedral's ritual decorations have overlooked the ways in which the removal of the relics from the sacristy *armadio* and their placement on the high altar during liturgical feasts would have affected viewers' experience of Duccio's *Maestà*, an image noted above for its celebrated status in Siena and stylistic influence on Benedetto's reliquary cupboard panels. The central front panel of the high altarpiece depicts an iconic *Virgin and Child in Majesty*, where rows of richly dressed angels and saints surround the enthroned Mary and Christ (figure 2-16). The kneeling figures of Sts. Ansanus, Savinus, Crescentius and Victor occupy the front row of this heavenly court, thus making the viewer immediately aware of the Virgin and these four male saints, all of whom acted as effective intercessors on behalf of the faithful and protected the entire city.[61] Duccio's composition of Siena's five patrons was copied in the layout of the patronal altars discussed above, as they, like the painted saints, flank the high altar dedicated to the Virgin, resulting in an interesting correlation between this significant image and the physical arrangement of the cathedral's ritual furnishings. Although it has not been noted in the literature on Sienese liturgy, when the patronal reliquary busts were in place on the altar in front of the *Maestà*, they would powerfully reiterate and intensify Duccio's representation by providing physical proof of the saintly pantheon present in Siena's cathedral. Furthermore, the movement of such relics on those occasions when sacred objects were ritually processed between Benedetto's reliquary cupboard

[61] Norman, *Siena and the Virgin*, 40-41. In 1608 Ventura Salimbeni painted two frescoes of Sienese saints and *beati* in the Duomo's choir, thus continuing the tradition of depicting the city's heavenly protectors on and around the high altar. See Gerald Parsons, "*Diversi Santi della nostra Città*: Two frescoes by Ventura Salimbeni in Siena Cathedral," *Renaissance Studies* 24, no. 5 (2010): 710-24.

panels in the sacristy and Duccio's altarpiece in the choir strengthens the stylistic connections between the two painted programs.

After 1460 relics were also removed from the sacristy cupboard when Pope Pius II called for an Easter procession of all available relics and clergy from the cathedral and a corresponding plenary indulgence for participants and observers.[62] This document likely formalized a ritual that had been performed since at least 1424, when Montauri described a large procession of all the city's relics held on Easter Monday.[63] The more detailed instructions for the Easter feast contained in the 1460 statutes thus represent the institutionalization of devotional ritual that dates from just a few years after the completion of the sacristy project and the creation of an elaborate new container for the relics and reliquaries used in these festal events. In addition to the relic procession, the mid-fifteenth-century Easter liturgy calls for Mass and vespers to be sung in the cathedral, ceremonies attended by the city's political elite as well as the confraternities and religious orders.[64] These prescribed services were enhanced by the decoration of the piazza outside, a space through which all participants in the Mass and later procession would move. During Easter, the cathedral and piazza were adorned with banners, cloth drapes, relics and

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[62] *...si faccia una solemne et devotissima processione con tutte le reliquie et religiosi si potranno havere…lo clementissimo dio ci facci degni di tanto dono et gratia ricevuta et in perpetuo ce la confermi…*(a solemn and devout procession is made with all the relics and religious that can be had…it is confirmed that most merciful God gives such a gift in perpetuity). Transcribed from the *Ordo Pasqua* (16 May 1460) in Fabrizio Nevola, "Cerimoniali per santi e feste a Siena a metà Quattrocento," in vol. 3 of *Siena e il suo territorio nel rinascimento*, ed. Mario Ascheri (Siena: Edizioni il Leccio, 2000), 184.

[63] *...una bella e devota procisione con tutti reliquie delle chiese…*(a beautiful and devout procession with all the relics of the churches). Montauri, 803.

[64] *...li detti Magnifici Signori, Capitano del Popolo et Gonfalonieri Maestri sieno tenuti ogni anno insieme con li Ordini et Compagni honorevole, el di sommo de la decta Gloriosa festa andare alla Messa et al vesparo solenne che in decta chiesa cathedrala si celebrara…*(the magnificent Lords, the Captain of the People, and the Guild's Standard-Bearers come together every year along with the Orders and honored Confraternities, and on the said glorious feast they go to the cathedral to celebrate Mass and Vespers). Transcribed from the *Ordo Pasqua* in Nevola, "Cerimoniale per santi…," 183.

metalwork that would publicly demonstrate the honored status of the cathedral and, by extension, the city as a whole.[65]

The Sienese festal calendar underwent a significant expansion in the mid-fifteenth century with the establishment and codification of the Easter liturgy as well as the feasts of Corpus Christi and those of the recently canonized local saints Bernardino (canonized 1450) and Catherine (canonized 1460).[66] The commune-funded celebrations held during the Easter octave remained the largest and most prestigious of these feasts, supported as it was by the large and impressive collection of cathedral relics that displayed the city's continued saintly patronage.[67] These relics were also made visible on several special events, such as the visits of foreign dignitaries and high-ranking clerics. Interestingly, Montauri's chronicle makes no mention of relics during similar events prior to the creation of Benedetto's sacristy reliquary cupboard. As relics must have been utilized in these types of proceedings prior to 1411, it thus appears that the cathedral's new liturgical container could have prompted additional attention from visitors and chroniclers.

In 1412 Sigismund, the king of Hungary who became Holy Roman Emperor in 1433, made a triumphal entry into Siena, stopping first at the cathedral to pay his respects to the Virgin and the saints whose relics were kept there.[68] The following year, Pope John XXIII's legate paused in Siena on his way to France, whereupon he spoke with civic officials in the sacristy, a meeting that would have taken place under the watchful eyes of the reliquary cupboard's angels

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[65] *...fare ornare et ammaiare la piazza dela decta chiesa come si fa per Sancta Maria di marzo o meglio. Et similmente d'ornare la chiesa predecta dei pagi, drappelloni, reliquie, argenti, et alter cose in modo che lo honore publico et dela decta chiesa si mantenghi et acresca...*(to decorate and make charming the piazza of said church as if it was the feast of the Virgin in March or even better. And similarly decorate the said church with drapes, relics, silver and other things that maintain and increase the public honor of the church). Transcribed from the *Ordo Pasqua* in Nevola, "Cerimoniale per santi…," 184.

[66] On the statutes for these feasts see Nevola, "Cerimoniale per santi…," 177-84.

[67] The participation of relics in Easter liturgies continued for centuries, as Gigli's eighteenth-century record mentions several relics being removed from the sacristy for ostention from the cathedral pulpit. Gigli, vol 1, 461-62.

[68] Fabrizio Nevola, *Siena: Constructing the Renaissance City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 31-38.

with their clear reminder of the relics stored just behind the doors.[69] Montauri notes that another (unnamed) cardinal visited from Rome in early June of 1413 and on the 18th of the same month the Pope himself entered the city with eleven cardinals and proceeded directly to the cathedral.[70]

The culmination of ecclesiastical visits to the cathedral in the years immediately following the installation of the sacristy reliquary cupboard occurred in July 1423, when the church council opened in Pavia to discuss various heretical threats and the ongoing Schism was moved to Siena because of an outbreak of plague in Lombardy.[71] When the council reconvened in its new location, a procession was held in the cathedral. As with the other visits discussed above, contemporary descriptions of the event are quite general and do not specifically mention the presence of relics. However, it remains very likely that the cathedral and civic authorities would have shown their precious relics to such high-ranking visitors and, at the very least, they would have seen the imposing reliquary cupboard within the recently completed sacristy.

Although it has previously been overlooked, Benedetto's reliquary cupboard was involved with each of these significant events, including feasts and other exceptional occasions, during which saints' relics were removed from it and displayed for the benefit of the faithful gathered in the cathedral and throughout the city. The cupboard's role during the ritual ostention of the cathedral's relics makes it a significant liturgical object in its own right, an understanding further supported by its multiple iconographical programs and complicated by its interactions

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[69] *...doppo la messa parlamentorno é signori e cardinale in sagrestia, a di 3 di magio 1413* (…after the mass the lords and the cardinal spoke in the sacristy, on May 3, 1413). Montauri, 774.

[70] *Uno altro cardinale entro in Siena a di 3 di giugno…ando a piedi co'la procisione infino a Duomo…Papa Joanni entro in Siena a di 18 di giugno con XI cardinali; entro a la porta Nuova con poca gente; andoli incontra d'signori di Siena con molti citadini e portaro el baldachino di Duomo…*(Another cardinal arrived in Siena on June 3…he went on foot with the procession to the cathedral…Pope John arrived in Siena on June 18 with eleven cardinals; he entered through the Porta Nuova with many men; they went together with the lords of Siena with many citizens carrying the canopy of the cathedral…). Montauri, 774-75.

[71] On the largely ineffectual Council of Pavia-Siena see C.M.D. Crowder, *Unity, Heresy and Reform, 1378-1460: The Conciliar Response to the Great Schism* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), 28-29. The procession is mentioned in Montauri, 798.

with the relics it alternately concealed and revealed. Sadly, due to its current fragmented form and inconvenient installation in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo with the interior panels facing the wall, this aspect of its original function and significance is largely obscured.

Revelation as Rediscovery: Benedetto's True Cross Cycle

The list of occasions for which reliquary cupboard doors were opened includes: regularly scheduled feast days, dignitaries' visits, times of impending battle, plague, or fund-raising, and any other times of profound civic stress or splendor requiring the procession of Siena's major relics. For such events, the doors of the cupboard would be opened and the narrative cycle painted on the interior panels of the doors would frame the relic of the True Cross, the physical manifestation of the represented event. Although this process is little remarked upon in the literature on this piece of liturgical furniture, it warrants attention as it constitutes a meaningful element of the decorative program and points to the complex ways in which relic and image interact in this reliquary cupboard. Furthermore, the *armadio*'s potential to conceal and reveal supports the concept of the reliquary cupboard as in many ways akin to more traditional reliquaries that were often designed as portable, processional objects.[72] Both metalwork reliquaries and the sacristy reliquary cupboard were subject to dramatic changes in meaning and audience when in active use. In the case of the Siena cathedral cupboard its occasional opening resulted in an entirely different iconographic program and a corresponding shift in the relationship between image and relic.

As we have seen, the panels on the interior faces of the doors depict the discovery of the True Cross as recounted in the thirteenth-century *Golden Legend*. Of the eight panels, six are

[72] Recently, more attention has been paid to the ways in which the form of reliquaries may have been influenced by their function as portable, processional objects. For example, see Cornelison, "Art Imitates Architecture," 642-45 and 650-55.

devoted to Helena's finding of the Cross upon which Christ was crucified, and two depict the exultation of this Passion relic by Emperor Heraclius.[73] Such iconography was particularly appropriate for this sacristy space that proudly housed a piece of the True Cross, as well as for the side of the *armadio* doors that would be physically closest to the relic itself.

The interior cycle would be seen only by a select group of clergy and privileged laymen who witnessed the extraction of relics for use in periodic processions. Therefore, as the relics themselves acquired additional prestige and mystery through their infrequent appearance, it stands to reason that the cupboard's painted images, particularly on the inside of the doors, would likewise have been accorded further value due to their hidden status and their close physical proximity to the saints in the forms of their relics.[74] The complex relationship between relic and image in such a situation is largely interdependent, as the painted representations both explain the contained object and simultaneously receive much of their significance from their physical proximity to the item described.[75] Thus, like the clergy's activities in the sacristy and the relics themselves, the images painted on the cathedral's reliquary cupboard must also be seen as potent and mysterious, rarely seen due to liturgical requirements as well as to heighten deliberately a sense of their sacredness.

On occasions such as the celebration of Easter or a cardinal's visit, indeed, anytime when the *armadio* doors were unlocked and opened, visitors to the sacristy saw a narrative cycle depicting the discovery of relics rather than the iconic angels with their labeling scrolls. The exposure of the cathedral's relics effectively mirrored the historical discovery depicted in the

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[73] Bacci, "Le storie della Invenzione…," 224-25; Brandi, 29.

[74] On similar interactions between painted image and relic see Joanna Cannon and André Vauchez, *Margherita of Cortona and the Lorenzetti: Sienese Art and the Cult of a Holy Woman in Medieval Tuscany* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 75-77.

[75] Hans Belting has explored the complex and multilayered relationship between image and relic in its broadest senses, ultimately concluding that images "gained power from their coexistence with relics." Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 301-02.

painted cycle. Just as Helena's actions caused the True Cross to emerge from its place of concealment, the movement of the cupboard doors dramatically revealed the numerous relics kept hidden within the cathedral sacristy. Scholars have entirely overlooked this significant correspondence between Benedetto's interior panels and the cupboard's function, however it profoundly affects the audience and intensifies the experience of seeing the relics. First, it heightens the sense of drama and privilege that must have accompanied the doors' opening as visitors were implicitly likened to St. Helena as they too became participants in the revelation of sacred relics. Secondly, the cycle confirms the provenance of relics in general as Helena is depicted proving the authenticity and power of the Cross. This reassurance, especially seen in such close proximity to the cathedral's relics, can then be extrapolated to those sacred fragments that were actually present in the sacristy.

The function and relative inaccessibility of Benedetto's reliquary cupboard sets it apart from other True Cross depictions dating from the late Trecento and early Quattrocento and perhaps for that reason it is often overlooked in the literature on this subject. Although the cycle appears several times in Tuscan churches the 1380s and 1460s, it is most commonly found in Franciscan establishments and in monumental frescoes rather than panel paintings. Two True Cross fresco cycles that predate Benedetto's *armadio* panels demonstrate the significant iconographical rarity of the reliquary cupboard's version of the subject. Agnolo Gaddi's frescoes in the high chapel of Santa Croce in Florence, completed between 1388 and 1393, present a much more expansive narrative than the one Benedetto depicted two decades later. Beginning with Adam's son Seth planting a tree over Adam's grave and continuing with the queen of Sheba's recognition of the same wood and its eventual use in the Crucifixion, Gaddi's narrative

incorporates a much broader treatment of the *Golden Legend*'s text than Benedetto's.[76] Both cycles include the story of Helena and Judas. However, while this narrative takes up six panels in Benedetto's cycle, Gaddi condenses the tale into a single panel on the lowest register of the right wall in which Judas directs Helena's attention to a pit where three crosses are being removed, after which Helena stands witness to the True Cross' ability to resurrect a dead man.

The opposite wall of Gaddi's Santa Croce cycle presents a much more comprehensive narrative of the Exaltation of the Cross, beginning with Helena's return to Jerusalem with the relic and its installation in the church of the Holy Sepulcher. The cycle continues with Chosröes' theft of the Cross and the angelic apparition to the faithful Heraclius. Finally, on the bottom register of the left wall, alongside Heraclius' violent defeat of the blasphemer Chosröes, Gaddi depicts the former's two attempts to enter Jerusalem, first in worldly splendor and then as a humble penitent. Therefore, while including much more of the Golden Legend's extensive account of the True Cross, Gaddi significantly condenses those episodes that the reliquary cupboard cycle emphasizes.

Cenni di Francesco di ser Cenni's fresco cycle in the church of San Francesco in Volterra closely follows Gaddi's earlier treatment of the subject in minimizing those aspects of the narrative upon which Benedetto's panels focus. Completed in 1410, Cenni's work is clearly based on Gaddi's and presents a similarly broad view of the Golden Legend's text while conflating the Judas and Helena episodes into a single episode.[77] That both significant True Cross cycles produced in Tuscany in the late Trecento and early Quattrocento should present

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[76] Phyllis Murphy Rambin, "Franciscan Spirituality and Papal Reform: True Cross Cycles in Tuscany, 1388-1464," (PhD diss, University of Georgia, 1999), 59-83; Nancy Thompson, "The Franciscans and the True Cross: The Decoration of the Cappella Maggiore of Santa Croce in Florence," *Gesta* 43 (2004): 68.

[77] David Wilkins, "Maso di Banco and Cenni di Francesco: A Case of Late Trecento Revival," *The Burlington Magazine* 111 (Feb. 1969): 81-85; Giovanni Sarti, *Primitifs et Maniéristes Italiens (1370-1470)* (Paris: G. Sarti, 2000), 14-23; Rambin, 95-96.

such a markedly different iconographical emphasis from that of the cathedral's reliquary cupboard may be due in large part to their location within Franciscan institutions. The friars' devotion to the Cross, an extension of their relationship to the stigmatized St. Francis, profoundly influenced much of the art produced by the Order.[78] Furthermore, as guardians of the Holy Land, the Franciscans felt a particular closeness to the Cross' legendary Eastern history. Therefore, it is not surprising that both the Florence and Volterra cycles play up this prestigious saga by calling attention to the Cross' connection to Adam, Solomon and Christ in addition to its later interaction with Helena and Heraclius.[79]

On the reliquary cupboard panels, Benedetto depicts the story of the True Cross in a dramatically different way. By distilling the legend into the interactions between Helena and Judas instead of handling the entire, wide-ranging narrative, he emphasizes the ritual function of the reliquary cupboard and simultaneously reinforces the legitimacy of the Christian church, a message that would have been especially meaningful in the unsettled environment of early Quattrocento Siena. Although scholars have not recognized it as such before, the opening of the reliquary cupboard in the cathedral sacristy essentially reenacts Helena's unearthing of the True Cross. Just as Helena's mission to the Holy Land culminated with the exhumation of the Cross relic from its centuries-old burial place, the movement of the reliquary cupboard doors brought to light hidden, sacred objects that could then be properly ritually venerated. Thus, every time the

[78] On Franciscan visualizations of the Crucifixion see H.W. Van Os, "St. Francis of Assisi as a Second Christ in Early Italian Painting," *Simiolus* 7 (1974): 115-32; Anne Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in Late Medieval Italy: Narrative Painting, Franciscan Ideologies and the Levant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 16-24; Louise Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage in Late Medieval Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 12-13; Thompson, 61-65.

[79] Martinaio Roncaglia, *St. Francis of Assisi and the Middle East*, trans. Stephen A. Janto (Cairo: Franciscan Center of Oriental Studies, 1957); Anne Derbes and Amy Neff, "Italy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Byzantine Sphere," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 449-51. Piero della Francesca's True Cross frescoes from the 1450s in San Francesco, Arezzo also fit the Franciscan iconographical pattern discussed above.

cupboard opened, viewers were again made aware of the continued, miraculous presence of relics in Siena that carried with them the power to protect and bless the city.

The cupboard's revelatory function may account for Benedetto's focus on the story of Helena and Judas, as it is this part of the True Cross narrative that most closely relates to the function of the liturgical object on which the images were painted. When the cupboard doors stood open to frame the cathedral's own fragment of the Cross found by Helena and the many other saintly relics stored there, the painted interior cycle confirmed the prestigious provenance of these objects. In addition, the images also elevated the importance of the cupboard itself, as it, like Helena and Judas, revealed and presented miraculous relics to the Christian faithful.

The iconographical choices made for the True Cross cycle of the reliquary cupboard may have more to do with that object's role in relic concealment and revelation than with earlier cycles of the same subject made in large-scale fresco for significantly different locations and purposes. While contemporary monumental fresco cycles do not dwell upon Helena's finding of the Cross, fully half of the historiated enamel roundels on the Stavelot triptych, a twelfth-century reliquary with moveable wings, are devoted to this story.[80] The Stavelot triptych was produced for a Benedictine abbey in the Mosan region of modern day Belgium and preserved a True Cross relic that was only visible when the wings were opened.[81] The relic and paintings depicting the Discovery of the True Cross were always seen together, as was also the case with the cathedral's reliquary cupboard.

The unusual iconographical emphasis seen in Benedetto's True Cross cycle may also be tied to ongoing crisis within the Church during the period in which the cathedral's new sacristy was decorated. Siena's position on the papal Schism and its political alignment will be discussed

[80] Lavin, 103-05.
[81] *The Stavelot Triptych: Mosan Art and the Legend of the True Cross* (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 1980), 9-26.

in further detail below, but it is important to recognize that by the early 1410s the entire Western Church had been suffering from spiritual and political fracture for more than thirty years and was desperately searching for a permanent solution to the crisis of contested papal authority.[82] The Schism that began in 1378 with the election of a second, rival pope was preceded by several decades in which the pope and his court resided in Avignon rather than Rome under the control of the French king. Although Pope Gregory XI ended the "Babylonian Captivity" and returned the papacy to Rome in 1377, the French monarchy's continued influence contributed to the election of a second pope and the beginning of the Great Schism in 1378.[83]

Scholars have argued that the Judas Cyriacus narrative, in which the Jewish Judas ultimately converts to Christianity upon recognizing the power of the True Cross, presents a broad message of a strong, united and incontrovertible Christian Church.[84] In this construction, Judas stands for the idea that any unbeliever would be converted to Christianity when confronted with proof of Jesus' martyrdom and resurrection. Benedetto's interior reliquary cupboard panels thus may have served to remind viewers of the ability of relics to bring the faithful together in recognition of their sacred and miraculous powers.

We have seen that the True Cross cycle on the interior faces of the cupboard doors presents a markedly abbreviated narrative focus from contemporary versions of the same subject. However, when we take the location and function of these panels into consideration, it becomes clear that Benedetto's concentration upon only a few episodes of the story effectively

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[82] On the Schism, which began in 1378, see Daniel MacCarron, *The Great Schism: Antipopes who split the Church* (Dublin: D.M.C. Universal, 1982); Alison Williams Lewin, *Negotiating Survival: Florence and the Great Schism, 1378-1417* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003).

[83] Pope Gregory XI died in 1378 and was succeeded by Urban VI (r. 1378-1389). The French cardinals returned to Avignon shortly after his election and chose another pope, Clement VII (r. 1378-1394). Charles L. Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1998), 5-6; Crowder, 1-2.

[84] Jan Willem Drijvers, *Helena Augusta: The Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of her Finding of the True Cross* (New York: Brill, 1992), 179-80; Barbara Baert, *A Heritage of Holy Wood: The Legend of the True Cross in Text and Image*, trans. Lee Preedy (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 50-51; Borsook, *Mural Painters of Tuscany*, 95.

emphasizes and augments the mystery and prestige of the reliquary cupboard and its role in ritual revelation. In depicting the most detailed early Quattrocento version of Helena and Judas' finding of the Cross, Benedetto confirmed the validity of that particular relic as well as the cathedral's other saintly objects that would always have been seen in conjunction with the images visible on the open cupboard. The messages relayed by Helena and Judas' actions in bringing the Cross to light and its subsequent ability to unite the faithful and strengthen the Church are perfectly suited to appeal to the *armadio*'s audience. Like the early Christians depicted here, the cupboard's viewers stood witness to the rare exposure of sacred objects and looked to these relics as reassurance and confirmation of the continued presence of the saints in an otherwise uncertain time.

Saintly Intercession and Crisis in Siena

The most regular openings of the Duomo cupboard occurred on the annual Marian and Christological feasts. However, Sienese secular and ecclesiastical authorities also used saints' relics in protective rituals during moments of crisis, as did many other cities in late medieval and Renaissance Italy.[85] In Siena, this custom dates back at least to the Battle of Montaperti on 4 September 1260, when the Sienese unexpectedly defeated a much larger Florentine force, a crucial event that shaped the political, spiritual and psychological history of the city for the next three centuries.[86] On the eve and day of the engagement between the opposing armies, a series of processions were enacted within Siena's walls that were intended to secure the Virgin Mary's protection, and thus ensure a military victory, by dedicating the entire city to her. These processions, described in Montauri's chronicle, included members of the secular elite and high-

[85] On the use of relics during difficult times see Richard C. Trexler, "Florentine Religious Experience: The Sacred Image," *Studies in the Renaissance* 19 (1972): 7-41.
[86] Gerald Parsons, *Siena, Civil Religion and the Sienese* (Burlington, Ver.: Ashgate and Aldershot, 2004), 1-24.

ranking church officials, who moved together through the city to demonstrate the city's unified and total devotion to the Virgin.[87]

The procession on the day before the battle was designed to present the Sienese as distressed supplicants, falling on the Virgin's mercy.[88] During this event, which began with the bishop's sermon in the cathedral and continued to the civic center, the Piazza del Campo and the church of St. Christopher, the participants followed an early thirteenth-century painting of the Virgin now known as the *Madonna degli occhi grossi* that was normally kept on the cathedral's high altar.[89] In this way the Virgin was given a tour of her city and could witness the acts of the citizenry, who went barefoot and bareheaded to demonstrate their penitence. Before the procession, civic officials had gathered inside the cathedral to offer the city's keys to this Marian image so the Virgin was by this point responsible for protecting Siena.[90] On the day of the battle, after the soldiers had left the city, those that remained behind (mostly clergy, old men and women) performed another procession through the city, this time carrying the cathedral's relics. Once again, the participants dressed as penitents without their expensive overclothes, shoes or headcoverings, all the while imploring the Virgin's for help and protection from the dangerous Florentines.[91]

The presence of the cathedral's relics during the Montaperti processions is informative for a number of reasons. First, the fact that relics from the cathedral's collection were publicly displayed means that relics were stored somewhere within the church as early as the mid-

[87] Montauri, 201-22. See also J. Koenig, "Wartime religion: The pre-Montaperti Sienese supplication and ritual submission," *Bullettino senese di storia patria* 105 (1998): 19-25.
[88] Koenig, 19-25.
[89] Montauri, 201; Koenig, 22.
[90] Norman, *Siena and the Virgin*, 28-30; Koenig, 20-21.
[91] Montauri, 204-05.

thirteenth century.[92] While Montauri does not refer to this in his description, in order to be revealed and processed the relics first had to be removed from their usual locations, whether in various altars or possibly an earlier reliquary cupboard. Furthermore, the desire and decision to invoke the saints during the battle through the elevation and devotion of their relics indicates the power that the Sienese attributed to these sacred objects. The inclusion of saints' relics in rituals performed on the day of the momentous battle broadened the range of holy powers that could conceivably aid the Sienese forces from the main intercessor of the Virgin Mary to all those saints present in the city in the form of their relics.[93] In addition, the thirteenth-century instances of the revelation and display of the cathedral's relics provide a precedent for the ways in which the Sienese relied upon these objects not just for the proper celebration of feasts, but also for protection and heavenly assistance in times of crisis.

The impact of the destabilized and anxious atmosphere in which the reliquary cupboard was produced has never been addressed in the scholarship on Benedetto's *armadio*.[94] One hundred and fifty years after the cathedral relics were called upon to assist in the struggle against the Florentines, circumstances in Siena again required saintly aid. In the early years of the Quattrocento, as the new sacristy and its furnishings were commissioned and installed, the city found itself beset by political, economic and social problems that were further aggravated by recurring plagues and the ongoing Schism of the Church. At this time, the city's political and economic circumstances were severely diminished from their peak in the early fourteenth century. The decline of the city in the late 1300s may be attributed in part to a combination of

[92] The exact nature and number of the cathedral relics in 1260 is unknown as the earliest extant sacristy inventory dates from 1388. Van der Ploeg, *Art, Architecture and Liturgy*, 169.
[93] Koenig, 44.
[94] For example, Gregory's study of the *Credo* panels for the vestments cupboard in the central sacristy chapel links that iconography to a need to confirm doctrine during the Schism, but he does not explore how the same political and religious environment may have inflected the reliquary cupboard's iconography of saints and relic invention.

internal political strife that resulted in multiple changes in government and the physical and financial damage caused by raiding mercenaries.[95]

The city also struggled with socio-economic disruption from plagues that struck again and again after 1348.[96] Siena's weakened state was exacerbated when, in early 1410, just months before work began on the reliquary cupboard, the city suffered yet another serious eruption of plague that continued into the next year. Montauri notes the presence of plague from January to August 1410 and again the following summer, when even the wealthy and powerful, such as the knights serving the *podestà* (the city's chief magistrate), succumbed and the pestilence caused the chronicler to stop writing altogether.[97] In July 1411, while the plague decimated the city, Siena's political and religious authorities attempted to end the outbreak by organizing a devotional procession. Participation in this ritual event was mandatory for at least one man per household and centered on the cathedral, its principal aim to demonstrate the city's devotion to God, the Virgin, and "all the celestial court," during what was deemed a time of "tribulation and pestilence."[98]

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[95] Records of no less than 37 raids on Siena in the last 60 years of the fourteenth century have been discovered. For detailed exploration of the impact of mercenary companies and late Trecento Sienese history in general see William Caferro, *Mercenary Companies and the Decline of Siena* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). See also Norman, *Painting in Late Medieval and Renaissance Siena*, 125-27.

[96] Tommaso Montauri's chronicle after 1348 notes plague in Siena in 1382, 1383, 1410, 1411 and 1417. Montauri, 696, 768-70 and 788.

[97] *...in questo tempo era la moria e non potei scrivare del maggio fino a agosto le cose che concorivano...Mori è giudici e cavalieri del podestà a Siena...*(at this time there was plague and I could not write about the things that happened from May to August….The judges and knights of the podestà of Siena died…). Montauri, 770.

[98] *...in ogni stato et in qualunque tempo si debbi ricorrire all'altissimo Dio devotissimamente per ricevere gratia et misericorida, et maxime ne tempi delle tribulationi et pistolenziali...ad laude et riverentia dello omnipotente Idio et della sua santissima Madre sempre Vergine Maria, avocata et protetrice della città di Siena, et generalmente di tutta la corte celestiale, ordinino fare una grande, bella et devota processione per la città di Siena...et debba andare almeno uno uomo per casa...*(in every state and time one must turn faithfully to the Most High God to receive grace and mercy and especially in a time of tribulation and pestilence…to the praise and reverence of omnipotent God and his most holy mother ever Virgin Mary, advocate and protector of Siena, and generally all of the celestial court, a large, beautiful and faithful procession through the city of Siena is ordered…and at least one man per household must go…). Archivio di Stato di Siena, Atti del Consiglio Generale 205, fol. 27.

Although the cathedral's relics are not specifically mentioned in the government's official order for the plague procession, it is virtually certain that they would have been carried through the city in order to encourage saintly favor through this type of devotional act and to confirm the powerful presence of the saints in Siena. Even if the relics were not removed from the church, clerical participants would have probably started and ended the procession in the cathedral's sacristy, surrounded by relics and Benedetto's ongoing decorative projects that call attention to the saints' presence and power. Whether or not they were used in the 1411 procession, the relics, the reliquary cupboard and the chapel frescoes were all involved in the city's broader attempts to stop and then prevent plague outbreaks. The miraculous abilities of the relics, the devotional impact of the frescoes that emphasized divine intercession against disease, and the reliquary cupboard's cataloging of the dozens of saints present in the cathedral all combine to forcefully argue for the continuation of heavenly protection. This message would have been particularly meaningful during a period of disease and crisis in the city.

In addition to the anxiety caused by plague, the authority of the Church in the early Quattrocento was threatened by the continuing papal Schism. Siena, like other cities throughout Europe, found itself politically and spiritually caught up in the decades-old controversy surrounding the identity of the true head of the Church. In 1409, just as the project for the new sacristy was underway, a group of cardinals and other high-ranking clergy assembled at the Council of Pisa.[99] The council sought to end the existence of two rival popes, a situation in which the Church had found itself since 1378; however, they only succeeded in electing a

[99] On the legal difficulties of calling a council without the summons of a universally recognized pope see Crowder, 3-4.

third.[100] Prior to the council, Siena had supported Gregory XII (r. 1406-1415) and had even celebrated his visit to the city in September 1406 with a grand ceremonial entry.[101] Despite this previous show of loyalty, Siena followed the decision at Pisa and abandoned Gregory for the newly elected Alexander V and, when he died in 1410, his successor John XXIII.[102] Their allegiance to the council's choice was cemented in June 1413 with John's visit to the city. It is likely this trip had been set in motion the previous month, when one of the pope's legates held a meeting with city leaders in the cathedral sacristy in the presence of Benedetto's newly finished decorations, including the reliquary cupboard.[103] The city's recognition of a different pope in 1409 was only one event in this extended period of instability within the Church, which continued throughout the cathedral sacristy's building and decoration. Indeed, not until 1414, when the Council of Constance convened, did there appear to be any real solution on the horizon that would end the papal confusion.[104]

John Gregory and Wolfgang Loseries have discussed other elements of the cathedral sacristy's decoration in relation to the tumultuous state of the Church around 1410. However, neither scholar has recognized that the reliquary cupboard, created at the same time as the frescoes and the other sacristy furniture, was impacted by the same tumultuous circumstances.[105] Benedetto's work on the reliquary cupboard, with its heavenly host of angels and textual references to the saints' relics stored there, must also be seen within this context of ecclesiastical

[100] Ibid., 3-7. Just before the Council of Pisa, the two claimants were Benedict XIII, who enjoyed the support of a good share of Northern Europe and Spain, and Gregory XII, the pope recognized by most of the Italian states. The Council of Pisa added Alexander V to the mix, who was succeeded in 1410 by John XXIII.
[101] Montauri, 763.
[102] Gregory, 221-22; Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Poets, Saints, and Visionaries of the Great Schism, 1378-1417* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 10-11.
[103] *...e doppo la messa parlamentorno è signori e l'cardinale in sagrestia...*(and after Mass the lords and cardinal spoke in the sacristy…). Montauri, 774-75.
[104] The Council of Constance (1414-18) deposed all three popes and elected Martin V in 1417. For a summary of the council's proceedings see Crowder, 7-28.
[105] Gregory, 221-22; Loseries, 100-01.

disarray and may be understood as a stabilizing and reassuring force that insists upon the continued favor of the saints even in a time of profound uncertainty and doubt.

Both Henk Van Os and Diana Webb have linked the late fourteenth- and fifteenth-century decline of Siena's security and prosperity to increased devotion to saint's cults, who, as the proclaimed protectors of the city, possessed the ability to help Siena regain her former status.[106] In addition, the very public activities necessary for the perpetuation of major cults provided a source of community cohesion and continuity, which could be beneficial in both a political as well as a spiritual sense.[107] The special relationship between city and saint was thus clearly a two-way street, requiring the proper reverence and devotional activities on the part of the government and citizen-supplicants.[108] That the Sienese, in a troubled time, should have made it a point to maintain the expensive links to their heavenly protectors is an indication of the power the saints commanded.

While the specific abilities of relics to effect all sorts of miracles demonstrates one aspect of these objects' power, saintly presence in the form of relics may also have been a source of more subtle spiritual and psychic reassurance. As Patrick Geary and Peter Brown have shown, the very fact that relics were present in a particular town was taken as an indication of saintly favor and support.[109] The accepted ability of the saints to effect a change in the location of their relics if they so desired thus meant that their continued presence should be understood as a sign of their active and ongoing esteem and approval. In this context, then, the panels of the reliquary cupboard in Siena Duomo, which emphatically announce the present residence of the saints in

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[106] Van Os, *Vecchietta and the Sacristy of the Siena Hospital Church*, 18; Webb, 230.
[107] Webb, 135.
[108] The issue of the nature, quantity and quality of devotions directed at the saints consumed no small part of the Sienese government's time from the mid-fourteenth century on. For specific information on such details as the number and size of the candles and ex-votos appropriated for each saint and how they changed over time, see Webb 276-91.
[109] Patrick Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 108-29; Brown, 90-105; Webb, 224-26.

the form of their relics, may have functioned as a clear and significant reminder of their continued favor. Such an indication was sorely needed in early fifteenth-century Siena, as mercenary raiders, plague, and a Church in conflict all presented very real threats to the city's future success.

Although they have been largely neglected in the scholarship on Sienese painting, the panels of the sacristy reliquary cupboard constituted an integral part of the cathedral's ritual furnishings and may be interpreted as a significant visual confirmation of the continued support of the saints in a city plagued by crisis and uncertainty. Furthermore, the True Cross cycle's unusual iconographic emphasis on the revelation of relics complements and, indeed, reinforces the cupboard's function as an instrument for the dramatic exposure of sacred objects. Such ritual openings were enacted within the larger decorative program of the sacristy's Chapel of the Relics, where Benedetto's frescoes surrounding the cupboard depicted the efficacy of such holy items and their ability to heal and protect the faithful. Within this environment and under the conditions of recurring plague and continued Schism during which Benedetto executed the paintings, the Duomo's reliquary cupboard effectively confirmed ongoing divine favor in the form of the presence of intercessory saints, whose sacred remains were always safely preserved behind the painted doors.

Chapter Three
Caring for the Saints and the Faithful:
The Reliquary Cupboard for the Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala in Siena

Surrounding an irregularly-shaped piazza on a Sienese hilltop sit two of the city's most prestigious institutions, the cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta and hospital of Santa Maria della Scala. During a sermon delivered in 1427, the great Franciscan preacher and future saint Bernardino of Siena likened this complex to a human face, with the two buildings representing eyes and the space between them a nose (figure 3-1).[1] Bernardino's anthropomorphic analogy reflected not only the physical proximity of these two religious entities, but also their prominent status within and beyond Siena. Located on the Via Francigena, a major trade and pilgrimage thoroughfare linking Rome with northern Italy and beyond, the piazza and the buildings surrounding it in many ways presented the city's public persona in conjunction with the seat of secular power at the Palazzo Pubblico in the Piazza di Campo.[2]

The hospital of Santa Maria della Scala to which Bernardino referred was an institution founded in the eleventh century that, by the Trecento, had become second in status only to the cathedral in the ranks of the city's religious buildings.[3] Like other hospitals built throughout Italy in the Middle Ages, Santa Maria della Scala served a variety of purposes. Although it likely originated as a place where pilgrims and travelers passing through Siena could find a decent meal and a safe bed, the hospital was soon regularly distributing alms to the poor and raising

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[1] *...l'ochio ritto è il Vescovato e 'l sinistro è lo Spedale, el naso è la piazza che è in mezzo. Vedi che è lunghetta come è il naso.* Bernardino da Siena, *Le prediche volgari*, vol. II, ed. Carlo del Corno (Milan: Rusconi, 1989), 1206. Cited in Gabriella Piccinni, "L'ospedale di Santa Maria della Scala e la citta di Siena nel Medioevo," in *L'Oro di Siena: Il Tesoro di Santa Maria della Scala*, ed. Luciano Bellosi (Milan: Skira, 1996), 41; Fabrizio Nevola, *Siena: Constructing the Renaissance City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 130-31. Bernardino was canonized in 1450, just six years after his death.

[2] On the economic, political, religious, social and artistic importance of the Via Francigena in the Middle Ages see Aldo Settia, *Chiese, strade e fortezze nell'italia medievale* (Rome: Herder, 1991), passim and Enrico Guidoni and Paolo Maccari, *Siena e i centri senesi sulla via Francigena* (Rome: Bonsignori, 2000).

[3] Kees Van der Ploeg, *Art, Architecture and Liturgy: Siena Cathedral in the Middle Ages* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1993), 16-18, 164.

orphans and foundlings.[4] By the early fourteenth century, the hospital had also taken responsibility for sheltering and healing the sick, so that by the end of the century over one hundred men could be accommodated in its wards.[5] Therefore, Santa Maria della Scala functioned as one of the largest institutions of social welfare in Siena. However, far from being a solely secular entity, the hospital first and foremost was a religious establishment where the Christian virtue and duty of charity could be enacted and received.[6]

A church located within the hospital that was dedicated to Santa Maria dell'Annunziata was an important component of the larger institution, one that became even more significant in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries after an extremely prestigious group of relics from the imperial collection in Constantinople was acquired in 1359. As part of a larger program of renewal at the hospital in the mid-Quattrocento, Lorenzo di Pietro, known as Vecchietta, a prominent local artist, painted an imposing wooden sacristy cupboard to store safely and properly honor the hospital's relics in 1445.[7] Both sides of the moveable cupboard doors are covered with images; on the exterior faces there is a series of twelve standing Sienese saints and *beati* (blesseds) topped by representations of the Annunciation, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection (figure 3-2). In contrast to these iconic panels of holy persons, who are placed against flat gold backgrounds, a narrative of the events leading to Christ's death was revealed when the cupboard doors were open (figure 3-3). Executed in eight separate scenes, Vecchietta's

[4] The many activities coordinated by the hospital are depicted in the mid-Quattrocento frescoes in the Pellegrinaio (Pilgrims' Hall) and discussed in more detail below. Gualtiero Bellucci and Piero Torriti, *Il Santa Maria della Scala in Siena: L'Ospedale dai mille anni* (Genoa: Sagep Editrice, 1991), 52-53; John Henderson, *The Renaissance Hospital: Healing the Body and Healing the Soul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 32; Nevola, *Siena: Constructing the Renaissance City*, 130.
[5] On the "medicalization" of Italian hospitals in the Trecento see Henderson, 14-32; Bellucci and Torriti, 71.
[6] The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37) provided a scriptural basis for the performance of charitable acts, while the Council of Nicea in 325 established hospitality towards foreigners as a duty of the faithful. See Daniela Gallavotti Cavallero, *Lo spedale di Santa Maria della Scala in Siena* (Pisa: Pacini Editore, 1985), 56; Henderson, 31.
[7] The cupboard as a whole is eight feet eleven inches high and six feet one inch wide and is in the collection of the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Siena.

Passion cycle on the inner doors thus visually explains the cupboard's contents that included several objects believed to have come into contact with Christ at the end of his life.

Although the combination of iconic and narrative images on double-sided doors had a nearby precedent in the reliquary *armadio* made for Siena's cathedral in the 1410s, the Santa Maria della Scala cupboard is unusual and noteworthy due to its location within a hospital church. Examination of Vecchietta's cupboard, its contents and its function within this type of religious institution may provide new insight into the role of relics in late medieval and Renaissance hospitals and further deepen our understanding of this type of liturgical furniture within this particular sacred environment. In addition, the cupboard's exterior iconography presents an intriguing lack of correspondence between the local holy men and women depicted on the panels and the saintly relics held inside. It seem that here, unlike the earlier cathedral cupboard, the hospital authorities were more interested in promoting a particularly Sienese pantheon than advertising the exact objects hidden behind the painted doors.

Previous Scholarship

In the early eighteenth century, Girolamo Macchi published a compilation of documents relating to Santa Maria della Scala's history, several of which he had transcribed from the poorly conserved originals.[8] While scholars have since debated the accuracy of some of Macchi's transcriptions, his work, preserved in the Archivio di Stato and Biblioteca Comunale of Siena, still forms the archival foundation of studies of the hospital.[9] In the past twenty-five years, three helpful publications examining the history of the hospital complex have been published. Daniela

[8] The original documents are no longer extant, thus Macchi's transcriptions are now the only surviving records from Santa Maria della Scala.
[9] Girolamo Macchi, *Libro di memoria*, 1716-23, Biblioteca Comunale di Siena MS A XI 23. Macchi's transcriptions are also kept in the Archivio di Stato di Siena as *Ospedale di Santa Maria della Scala* 120.

Gallavotti Cavallero's 1985 book and the one jointly produced by Gualtiero Bellucci and Piero Torriti in 1991 remain the most comprehensive considerations of Santa Maria della Scala from its origins to the present.[10] In addition, Gabriella Piccinni, Isabella Gagliardi and Giovanna Derenzini made noteworthy contributions on the impact of the 1359 relics and reliquaries within the hospital and as significant art objects in their own right in the catalog for the 1996 exhibition, *L'Oro di Siena: Il Tesoro di Santa Maria della Scala (The Gold of Siena: The Treasure of Santa Maria della Scala)*.[11]

Cesare Brandi included the first extended analysis of the hospital's reliquary cupboard in his broad examination of fifteenth-century Sienese painting.[12] Following Brandi's largely stylistic analysis, Van Os' 1974 study of the Santa Maria della Scala sacristy was the next significant investigation of this object and has dominated scholarship on the hospital's reliquary cupboard for the last four decades. Van Os treats Vecchietta's cupboard as one element of the sacristy's overall decorative program and pays particular attention to the *armadio*'s iconography, arguing persuasively that the images on this object were intended as "a kind of anthology from the local hagiography."[13]

Since Van Os' work appeared, scholars have generally dealt with the reliquary cupboard in a cursory way, usually as a brief note within a larger study on some aspect of late medieval or Renaissance Sienese art. For example, in *Siena and the Virgin* and *Painting in Late Medieval and Renaissance Siena*, Diana Norman concisely describes the iconography of Vecchietta's

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[10] Cavallero, 1985; Bellucci and Torriti, 1991.
[11] Gabriella Piccinni, "L'ospedale di Santa Maria della Scala e la citta di Siena nel Medioevo," in *L'Oro di Siena: Il Tesoro di Santa Maria della Scala*, ed. Luciano Bellosi (Milan: Skira, 1996), 39-47; Isabella Gagliardi, "Le reliquie dell'Ospedale di Santa Maria della Scala (XIV-XV secolo)," in *L'Oro di Siena: Il Tesoro di Santa Maria della Scala*, ed. Luciano Bellosi (Milan: Skira, 1996), 49-66; Giovanna Derenzini, "Le reliquie da Constantinopoli a Siena," in *L'Oro di Siena: Il Tesoro di Santa Maria della Scala*, ed. Luciano Bellosi (Milan: Skira, 1996), 67-78.
[12] Cesare Brandi, *Quattrocentisti Senesi* (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1949), 125-28.
[13] H.W. Van Os, *Vecchietta and the Sacristy of the Siena Hospital Church*, trans. Eva Biesta (New York: Abner Schram, 1974), 19.

cupboard and mentions its function as the designated place to keep the hospital's relic collection.[14] Emily Moerer has discussed the *armadio* panel depicting *St. Catherine of Siena* as an image designed to support recognition of that local saint's intense devotional practices in the years preceding her canonization in 1461.[15] Most recently, Cordelia Warr included the reliquary cupboard in her study of clothing in paintings made for charitable institutions, arguing that Vecchietta's depiction of the local Augustinian *beato* Agostino Novello giving a robe to a rector recalls the hospital's obligation to clothe the needy and, furthermore, represents an investment of authority and heavenly reward in the recipient.[16]

While each of these analyses has contributed to an understanding of the hospital reliquary cupboard, to date no scholar has adequately explored the functions of this significant example of liturgical furniture, especially within the specific environment of a hospital church. In addition, issues such as the *armadio*'s profound iconographical connection to Sienese relic cults, the occasions during which it was performatively opened and the complex relationships between image and relic at work through the mutable positions of the cupboard doors require additional examination.

The Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala from Its Origins to the Quattrocento

With Vecchietta's mid-fifteenth-century reliquary cupboard the hospital authorities simultaneously provided an impressive group of relics with a proper storage place and renewed awareness of their possession of said holy objects in a period of economic and political decline.

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[14] Diana Norman, *Siena and the Virgin: Art and Politics in a Late Medieval City State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 155; eadem, *Painting in Late Medieval and Renaissance Siena (1260-1555)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 197-203.
[15] Emily Moerer, "Catherine of Siena and the Use of Images in the Creation of a Saint, 1347-1461," (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 2003), 115-119.
[16] Cordelia Warr, "Clothing, Charity, Salvation and Visionary Experience in Fifteenth-Century Siena," *Art History* 27, no. 2 (2004): 196-204.

As guardians of a significant relic cache, Santa Maria della Scala's rectors and *frati*, members of the hospital's powerful confraternity discussed below, were responsible for ensuring that the sacred objects had adequate physical protection and were provided with honor and devotion commensurate with their importance. Commissioning a large, new, decorated wooden cabinet for the relics constituted one way in which these goals could be accomplished. The Quattrocento reliquary cupboard stands as the culmination of the hospital's investment in relic storage, as their ownership of a particularly prestigious group of relics in large part shaped the liturgical, political and material history of this institution after the mid-fourteenth century.

The legendary founding of the hospital occurred in the late ninth century, when a humble cobbler named Sorore living near the cathedral began sheltering pilgrims in his home as an act of charity.[17] He named the modest hospice Santa Maria della Scala (St. Mary of the Stairs) for his mother's dream on the eve of his birth in which she witnessed children, including Sorore, climbing a ladder toward heaven, an indication of her son's future piety (figure 3-4).[18] Despite the discovery of the Blessed Sorore's body in the early Quattrocento (he had by this time been accorded the status of *beato* by popular acclaim) and his subsequent burial in the hospital's relic chapel no documentary evidence survives to support this account of the hospital's origins.[19] It appears that the legend actually developed in the Trecento at the same time that the hospital's lay confraternity became increasingly influential. This narrative of Santa Maria della Scala's lay

[17] Bellucci and Torriti, 37-38; Norman, *Siena and the Virgin*, 92.
[18] Vecchietta depicted this dream in a fresco from circa 1441 in the Pellegrinaio of the hospital. See Alessandro Orlandini, *Foundlings and Pilgrims: Frescoes in the Sala del Pellegrinaio of the Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala in Siena,* trans. Theresa Davis and Stephen Roach (Siena: Arti Grafiche Pistolesi, 2002), 30-42.
[19] Isabella Gagliardi, "Bisanzio a Siena: Importazione di reliquie, culti e rappresentazione civica tra Trecento e Quattrocento," in *Taumaturgia e Miracoli: Tra alto e basso medievo*, ed. Patrizia Castelli and Salvatore Geruzzi (Pisa: Fabrizio Serra Editore, 2007), 136.

foundation thus provided further support for the confraternity's growing power and became a staple of the hospital's iconography from this point on.[20]

The earliest surviving written record of Santa Maria della Scala dates from 1090, at which time a Sienese couple named Idiello and Netula provided a bequest to the hospital in the form of parcels of land.[21] Two centuries later, in 1275, Pope Alexander IV gave formal permission for the building of a church dedicated to Santa Maria dell'Annunziata within the hospital complex.[22] Over the course of the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Santa Maria della Scala grew dramatically into one of the major political and economic institutions of Siena. Thanks to substantial gifts and bequests from local laymen as well as the donations of pilgrims passing through on their way to and from Rome, the hospital became one of the wealthiest institutions in the entire *contado*.[23] The hospital's prosperity grew further during the period of upheaval that accompanied the Black Death in 1348, as many victims of the plague that claimed, by some estimates, between one half and two thirds of the city's population, donated their worldly possessions to Santa Maria della Scala in an attempt to ensure their salvation through a pious act.[24]

During this period of growth in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, several powerful groups sought control of the hospital, drawn both by its wealth as well as the respect and prestige

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[20] The earliest written account of Blessed Sorore appears in a 1585 publication by Fra Gregorio Lombardelli. See Cavallero, 49; Elda Costa and Laura Ponticelli, "L'iconografia del Pellegrinaio nello spedale di Santa Maria della Scala di Siena," *Iconographica* 3 (2004): 118-20.

[21] Cavallero, 47; Bellucci and Torriti, 38.

[22] Van Os, *Vecchietta and the Sacristy of the Siena Hospital Church*, 3; Cavallero, 60.

[23] Many of these gifts came in the form of arable land, so much so that over the course of the 1200s a grange system was developed whereby the Sienese mother hospital set up satellite hospitals and farms throughout the countryside to directly oversee operations. Some estimates suggest that by the end of the thirteenth century, Santa Maria della Scala controlled a third of the arable land under Sienese control. This system continued into the modern period, as in 1751 82 of the hospital's granges were suppressed. See Stephan Epstein, *Alle origini della fattoria Toscana: L'ospedale della Scala di Siena e le sue terre* (Florence: Salimbeni, 1986), 103-56; Cavallero, 25-28; Bellucci and Torriti, 54-57.

[24] See Tim Benton, "The design of Siena and Florence Duomos," in vol. 2 of *Siena, Florence and Padua: Art, Society and Religion 1280-1400*, ed. Diana Norman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 135-37; Samuel K. Cohn, Jr. "The Black Death: End of a Paradigm," *American Historical Review* 107 (2002): 703-738.

it commanded as one of Siena's premier religious and charitable institutions. Early on in its history Santa Maria della Scala fell under the purview of the cathedral and its chapter of canons, a situation indicated in the 1090 will mentioned above, which refers to the "hospital of the canons of Santa Maria, the episcopal cathedral of Siena."[25] The close connection between the cathedral and hospital was also seen in other cities in late medieval Italy, as a similar arrangement existed between Florence's cathedral and the hospital of San Giovanni Evangelista that sat just north of the church.[26] However, by the early Trecento Siena's cathedral was losing its grip as the communal authorities became more and more involved with the hospital's administration. This transfer of power was alluded to in 1309 by the installation over the hospital's main entrance of the shield of the *Consiglio grande* (Great Council), one of the major governmental bodies in Siena.[27]

The commune's visual assertion of control was followed by changes in the election process of the hospital's rector, the highest position at Santa Maria della Scala. By the 1350s a committee of three high-ranking Sienese citizens and three members of the hospital's confraternity elected the rector; the bishop and canons only confirmed their choice, thus effectively removing the cathedral from the actual decision.[28] Over the course of the Quattrocento, the administrative separation of cathedral and hospital set in motion the previous century came to decisive conclusions. In 1404, the Sienese civil government officially took on sole responsibility for electing the rector, and in 1460 Pope Pius II formally dissolved the role of the cathedral canons in the hospital's administration.[29]

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[25] *...hospitale de canonica Sancte Marie domui episcopio senense.* Archivio di Stato di Siena (hereafter ASS), *Diplomatico*, 29 March 1090.
[26] The Florentine hospital was built in 1030 and destroyed circa 1296. See Marvin Trachtenberg, *Dominion of the Eye: Urbanism, Art, and Power in Early Modern Florence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 30-32.
[27] Piccinni, 39.
[28] Ibid., 40.
[29] Cavallero, 66; Bellucci and Torriti, 53-58.

While the cathedral canons and commune played out their power struggle during the Tre- and Quattrocento, another group was at work at the hospital, both in the wards and in the highest seats of power. In 1195, a confraternity dedicated to the Virgin and devoted to taking care of the poor and sick who came to the hospital for aid appears in the written record.[30] While the exact organization of the confraternity in the thirteenth century remains unclear, by 1305 they adopted a form of the Augustinian rule attributed to the Sienese *beato*, Agostino Novello, who, as we have seen above, figures prominently on the exterior doors of the hospital's reliquary cupboard (figure 3-5).[31] The pious laymen and laywomen who made up the confraternity, often referred to as *frati* (friars) in the same parlance as that reserved for other mendicant orders, appear to have functioned as a tertiary order. This means that, while committed to a charitable life and wearing monastic dress (in the case of Santa Maria della Scala this consisted of a black robe and a white cap), the members did not take the full vows required of other types of religious people and had the option of remaining in their family homes rather than taking up residence inside the hospital.[32]

By joining the confraternity the *frati* helped to ensure their own salvation by performing acts of charity and service at Santa Maria della Scala. In addition, for a select few members, the hospital group could also be a path to political power, as the rector wielded considerable control as the top official of a wealthy and influential civic institution. In the Trecento, the line between

[30] Valerie Wainwright, "Conflict and popular government in fourteenth-century Siena, il Monte dei Dodici, 1355-1368," in *I ceti dirigenti nella Toscana tardo Comunale: Atti del III convegno, Firenze, 5-7 dicembre 1980* (Florence: Papafava, 1983), 70; Odile Redon, "Autour de l'Hôpital S. Maria della Scala à Sienne au XIIIe siècle," *Ricerche storiche* 15, no. 1 (1985): 17; Cavallero, 57; Bellucci and Torriti, 39.
[31] Redon, 31; Cathleen Hoeniger, "Simone Martini's Panel of the Blessed Agostino Novello: The Creation of a Local Saint," in *Art and the Augustinian Order in Early Renaissance Italy*, eds. Louise Bourdua and Anne Dunlop (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 56.
[32] Redon, 25-33; Gagliardi, "Le reliquie," 50-51; Henderson, 187-88. On confraternities in the Renaissance see also the helpful studies in *Confraternities and the visual arts in Renaissance Italy: Ritual, spectacle, image*, eds. Barbara Wisch and Diane Cole Ahl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and *The Politics of Ritual Kinship: Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Nicholas Terpstra (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

hospital rector and government official became ever more blurred as the Santa Maria della Scala rector often also sat on the council of the Dodici, the council of twelve that ruled Siena during the mid-fourteenth century.[33]

In 1359 the rector and *frati* made a decision that would dramatically affect the history of Santa Maria della Scala. Likely using some of the many gifts and bequests conferred upon the hospital during the plague of 1348, the institution facilitated the "donation" of a large group of relics taken from the imperial chapel in Constantinople.[34] While the transfer was called a donation from Florentine merchant Pietro di Giunta Torrigiani, in order to avoid the impropriety of selling holy relics, in actuality Torrigiani received 3,000 gold florins and a house in Siena from the hospital in exchange for the relics.[35] The objects, which Andrea di Grazia, a high-ranking *frate*, secured for Santa Maria della Scala while he was visiting Venice, included a Greek Gospel with an elaborate metal cover, two small silver boxes containing the nail that pierced Jesus' left hand during the Crucifixion and a piece of the purple cloak he wore during the Mocking of Christ. This group of sacred items also boasted other Passion relics, such as fragments of a rod used during the Flagellation, pieces of the sponge, lance and True Cross, as well as strands of hair from Christ's beard. In addition to these Christological primary and secondary relics, the hospital also acquired several Marian relics, including part of her mantle, veil and girdle, and the bones of many significant saints, such as Peter, Paul, Bartholomew, Stephen, Philip, Thomas, Cosmas and Damian, Christina, John the Almoner and John

[33] Wainwright, 71-79. On the development of the Dodici see also S. Moscadelli, "Apparato burocratico e finanze del comune di Siena sotto i Dodici (1355-1368)," *Bullettino senese di storia patria* 89 (1982): 29-118.
[34] Derenzini, 70.
[35] In 1393 Pietro's daughter-in-law donated relics of John the Baptist and the True Cross to Florence. These relics may also have been part of the cache taken from Constantinople. Sally J. Cornelison, "Art and Devotion in Late Medieval and Renaissance Florence: The Relics and Reliquaries of Saints Zenobius and John the Baptist," (PhD diss., The Courtauld Institute of Art, 1999), 161-63; Alessandro Bicchi and Alessandro Ciandella, *Testimonia sanctitatis: Le reliquie e i reliquiari del Duomo e del Battistero di Firenze* (Florence: Mandragora, 1999), 94-96.

Chrysostom.[36] As we will see, the Holy Nail and Marian relics played significant roles in the largest annual Sienese liturgical feasts and became some of the most prized objects in the entire city.

Before selling the relics to the Sienese hospital, Torrigiani had gone to considerable trouble to have them authenticated. A 1357 testament from Bishop Pier Tommaso, who oversaw the diocese of Pera in Constantinople, that was copied and sent to Siena either at that point or upon the actual transaction, certifies that the relics had in fact been part of the Byzantine imperial collection.[37] According to the bishop, Empress Irene, wife of Emperor John VI Cantacuzene (abdicated in 1354), had reluctantly removed these precious objects from the imperial palace, presumably to fund the ransom of her young grandson whom Genoese pirates had taken prisoner in 1356.[38] In a series of undocumented transactions, then, the relics passed from the imperial family to the Venetian authorities in Constantinople to Torrigiani, who transported them to Venice where the hospital's representative effected their donation and arranged their move to Siena.[39]

The significance of securing this relic collection for the Sienese hospital cannot be overestimated.[40] In one fell swoop, Santa Maria della Scala became the repository of one of the largest and most prestigious groups of holy objects in Italy. The importance of these relics stemmed not only from their number or relationship to sacred persons, but also from their

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[36] ASS, *Ospedale di Santa Maria della Scala*, Atto di donazione rogato a Venezia il 28 maggio 1359. Cited in Gagliardi, "Le reliquie," 51 and published in Derenzini, 73-78.
[37] ASS, *Ospedale di Santa Maria della Scala* 120, fol. 10r-11v. Published in Derenzini, 72-73.
[38] Paul Hetherington argues that the Empress in question is, in fact, Helena, wife of John V Palaeologos. Hetherington, "A Purchase of Byzantine Relics and Reliquaries in Fourteenth-Century Venice," *Arte Veneta* 37 (1983): 9. However, Derenzini cites a 1357 document that makes Irene a stronger candidate. Derenzini, 69. See also the discussion of this issue in Cornelison, " Art and Devotion," 161-65.
[39] Derenzini, 69-70.
[40] On the role of relics in augmenting the status of Renaissance hospitals see Henderson, 121; David M. D'Andrea, *Civic Christianity in Renaissance Italy: The Hospital of Treviso, 1400-1530* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2007), 21.

provenance. Indeed, Torrigiani likely sought the bishop's testimony not just to assure potential buyers of the relics' authenticity but as specifically Byzantine objects that had once been part of the imperial collection. Holger Klein has discussed the heightened value ascribed to relics that came from the Eastern empire from the twelfth through fourteenth centuries, arguing that while the fall of Constantinople in 1204 substantially increased the number of Byzantine relics available in the West, the powerfully mysterious and inaccessible aura of Constantinople continued throughout the late medieval period.[41]

The high value placed on such relics also applied to the Byzantine metalwork vessels that protected them, so much so that Hans Belting argued that the reliquaries themselves acquired a status similar to the actual relics.[42] In this sense, Vecchietta's cupboard functions as a massive reliquary itself, one that, like many other relic containers, was decorated with a meaningful iconographic program. The hospital's 1359 acquisition included several Byzantine reliquaries, such as a seventh-century rectangular pendant that contained pieces of the sponge and lance used in the Crucifixion that was inlaid with precious stones and an enamel depicting that event (figure 3-6).[43] The Santa Maria della Scala reliquaries and relics, with their combination of unusual Byzantine origins and impressive quality and number, would have instilled intense devotion and pride on the part of their new Sienese guardians. Donato di Neri's late fourteenth-century chronicle provides support for this idea; in his description of the relics' entry into the city he

[41] Holger Klein, "Eastern Objects and Western Desires: Relics and Reliquaries between Byzantium and the West," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 287-306.
[42] The complex linkages between the frame and framed in the Middle Ages is discussed in detail in Hans Belting, *The Image and Its Public in the Middle Ages: Form and Function of Early Paintings of the Passion*, trans. Mark Bartusis and Raymond Meyer (New Rochelle, NY: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1990), 210-13.
[43] See Mara Bonfioli's catalogue entry in *L'Oro di Siena: Il Tesoro di Santa Maria della Scala*, ed. Luciano Bellosi (Milan: Skira, 1996), 107-10.

specifically notes that these sacred objects "from Constantine's imperial chapel" were received with "great devotion and festivity."[44]

Almost immediately upon its arrival the commune and hospital became concerned with how to properly display their new saintly treasure. In January 1360 the government funded the building of a pulpit on the hospital's façade to facilitate the ostention of the Passion relics and Virgin's girdle to the populace that would gather in the piazza between the cathedral and hospital on the major Marian feasts discussed below.[45] A few years later, in 1366, construction was completed on a new chapel meant specifically to house the Constantinople relics.[46] The chapel was not physically connected to the rest of the hospital church; instead a room that was formerly part of the rector's palace adjoining the hospital complex was repurposed to hold the relics (figure 3-7).[47] In contrast to the fifteenth-century disposition of the relics, the location of this first chapel close to the hospital's entrance on the Piazza del Duomo would likely have allowed for relatively easy and frequent ostentions of the relics to pilgrims and patients.[48]

By 1370 Cristoforo di Bindoccio and Meo di Pero had painted the walls of the relic chapel with a series of standing saints and an enthroned Madonna, most of which are now in an unfortunate state of repair.[49] In addition, an altarpiece from the workshop of Bartolomeo Bulgarini, probably the *Assumption of the Virgin* now in the collection of the Pinacoteca

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[44] *…gli arredi sacri della capella imperiale di Constantino…li santi reliquie venero al porto di Talamone e recare a Siena con grande devozione e festa.* Donato di Neri, "Cronaca senese," in vol. XV, part 6 of *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, ed. L.A. Muratori (Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, 1931), 590.

[45] *...super quo publice et palam decte reliquie omnibus visum…in proximo festo sancta Annuntiationis Virginis gloriose de mense martii…* (...so that above all the said relics may be seen publicly and openly by all at the next feast of the holy and glorious Annunciation of the Virgin in the month of March…). ASS, *Consiglio Generale* 164, fol. 9v. See also Isabella Gagliardi, "Bisanzio a Siena," 127; Norman, *Siena and the Virgin*, 209; Warr, 201.

[46] Luciano Banchi, *I rettori dello spedale di Santa Maria della Scala di Siena* (Bologna: Fava and Garagnini, 1877), 51; Piccinni, 43; Gagliardi, "Le reliquie," 52-53; idem, "Bizanzio a Siena," 127.

[47] Cavallero, 105-06.

[48] Henderson, 117.

[49] Little is known about these two Trecento Sienese painters other than their work on this hospital chapel. Cavallero, 105-06.

Nazionale in Siena, may have been installed in the chapel.[50] But where were the relics stored in this space? Enzo Carli and Daniela Gallavotti Cavallero have suggested that they were kept in a *cassone* (chest) in a wall niche covered with an iron grate.[51] This arrangement would be in keeping with other churches' solutions to protecting their relics in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. For example, it can also be seen in a niche in the right transept of the lower church of San Francesco in Assisi, in Siena at the tomb of the Blessed Andrea Gallerani in San Domenico and in the reliquary altar protected by metal grilles and locks at the Sancta Sanctorum in Rome.[52]

The hospital's prestigious relics remained in their chapel for the next eighty years, until the complex was substantially remodeled and enlarged in the mid-fifteenth century under two ambitious rectors, Giovanni di Francesco Buzzichelli (rector from 1433-1444) and Urbano di Pietro del Bello (rector from 1444-circa 1466). By the 1430s even the once wealthy hospital was suffering from the general economic downturn felt throughout Siena; therefore, Buzzichelli embarked upon a prolonged campaign to improve Santa Maria della Scala's fortunes through increased pilgrimage and pious donations.[53] In an attempt to attract more devotees, he initiated substantial alterations to the fabric of the hospital, as well as a new and extensive decorative program, changes that profoundly affected the relics' storage and display.

One of the most visible of Buzzichelli's changes to the hospital, one that emphasized its history and role in Sienese society, was the decoration of the Pellegrinaio, the main lodging hall

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[50] The *Assumption of the Virgin* remains the most likely candidate for placement in the relic chapel; however, it could also have been the now lost Bulgarini altarpiece of San Giovanni. See Cavallero, 110-12; Judith Steinhoff-Morrison, "Bartolomeo Bulgarini and Sienese Painting of the Mid-Fourteenth Century," (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1990), 47-49.

[51] Enzo Carli, "Sulla *Madonna del Manto* e su altri affreschi nello Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala a Siena," in *Studies in Late Medieval and Renaissance Painting in honor of Millard Meiss*, eds. Irving Lavin and John Plumber (New York: New York University Press, 1977), 80 and Cavallero, 168.

[52] Joanna Cannon and André Vauchez, *Margherita of Cortona and the Lorenzetti: Sienese Art and the Cult of a Holy Woman in Medieval Tuscany* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 65-67. See also the discussion of the Santa Sanctorum in the Introduction, pages 14-15.

[53] Cavallero, 147; Piccinni, 44.

for male pilgrims and patients. Two prominent Sienese painters, Lorenzo di Pietro, known as Vecchietta, and Domenico di Bartolo painted the walls with a series of monumental frescoes between 1440 and 1444.[54] In the same year that these frescoes extolling the roles of the hospital were being finished, Domenico di Bartolo was also at work in the relic chapel, where he painted an image of the *Madonna del Manto* (figure 3-8). This fresco of the Virgin sheltering both religious and laymen under her mantle testifies to the city's powerful protectors as the group Mary draws together includes the significantly larger figures of Pope Eugenius IV and Emperor Frederick III in the foreground.[55] In addition, the image would have been particularly meaningful due to its proximity to the hospital's relic of Mary's cloak that was stored nearby and thus added a further layer of physical proof of the city's heavenly protection.[56] However, the relics and Domenico's fresco were soon separated when in 1445 the saintly remains were moved to a different repository in the hospital church's new sacristy.[57]

A New Sacristy and a New Reliquary Cupboard

At the same time that the Pellegrinaio and relic chapel were receiving new painted decorations, Buzzichelli was also at work securing an indulgence from Pope Eugenius IV in association with the hospital's Byzantine relics. This indulgence, granted in 1443, conferred even more prestige upon the relics and increased pilgrims' incentive to visit the hospital and venerate

[54] On the Pellegrinaio frescoes see Cavallero, 157-67; Bellucci and Torriti, 71-73; Orlandini, 43-56; Gabriele Fattorini, "Domenico di Bartolo, Lorenzo di Pietro detto il Vecchietta, Priamo della Quercia," in *Da Jacopo della Quercia a Donatello: Le arti a Siena nel primo Rinascimento*, ed. Max Seidel (Siena: Federico Motta Editore, 2010), 292-95.
[55] Carli, "Sulla *Madonna del Manto*," 73-82.
[56] Cavallero suggests that the fresco, especially given its curved shape at the top, was originally placed over the relic *cassone*. Cavallero, 168.
[57] The Trecento chapel of the relics became known as the Chapel of the Mantle after Domenico's fresco. The painting remained there until 1610, when another remodeling of the hospital caused it to be moved into the sacristy. Van Os, *Vecchietta and the Sacristy of the Siena Hospital Church*, 12; Cavallero, 165; Norman, *Siena and the Virgin*, 231 n.83; Gagliardi, "Le reliquie," 59-60; Gabriele Donati, "L'opera del Vecchietta per la Sagrestia Vecchia di Santa Maria della Scala," in *Da Jacopo della Quercia a Donatello: Le arti a Siena nel primo Rinascimento*, ed. Max Seidel (Siena: Federico Motta Editore, 2010), 306.

them.[58] That same year work began on the building of a new sacristy for the hospital's church where the relics could be stored more securely. Moving the relics from the chapel near the hospital's entrance to a more secluded location within the larger complex would have effectively improved their physical security, but would also have heightened their mysterious power as concealed and special objects. Between April and December 1445 Vecchietta, who had already done a fresco of the *Vision of the Blessed Sorore's Mother* for the hospital's Pellegrinaio (Pilgrims' Hall), was engaged to paint the new wooden *armadio* intended to store the hospital's relics in the sacristy.[59] A 1445 document records a final payment to Vecchietta for his work painting the cupboard in "colors and gold," an expenditure made on the approval of the new hospital rector, Urbano di Pietro del Bello.[60] This commission was likely one of the first Urbano approved in this position; he became rector only a few months before work began on the *armadio* upon Buzzichelli's death and continued his predecessor's campaign to enhance the hospital's relationship with its relics.[61]

In awarding the commission for the reliquary cupboard to Vecchietta, the hospital authorities secured the services of an established local artist. Vasari's biography of Vecchietta in his *Lives of the Artists* notes only his sculptural production for the high altar of the cathedral and part of the Baptistery font and does not mention any of his painted work.[62] However, Vecchietta, who was born in 1410 and active in the Sienese artists' guild by 1428, first established himself as

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[58] Eugenius' 1443 indulgence was confirmed and extended by Nicholas V in 1447. ASS, *Ospedale di Santa Maria della Scala* 120, fol. 47v; Tommaso Fecini, "Cronaca senese," in vol. XV, part 6 of *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, ed. L.A. Muratori (Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, 1931), 859.
[59] Van Os, *Vecchietta and the Sacristy of the Siena Hospital Church*, 10-11; Cavallero, 79; Donati, "L'opera del Vecchietta," 306.
[60] *...Maestro Lorenzo di Pietro dipentore da Siena, die avere a di 29 di dicembre lire trecento ottanta per huopera fatta di suo cholori e oro nel Armadio...fatto d'achordo cho'misser Urbano nostro rettore...* Published in Van Os, *Vecchietta and the Sacristy of the Siena Hospital Church*, 17.
[61] Fecini, 856.
[62] Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, vol. 1, trans. Gaston du C. de Vere (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1979), 466.

a painter. He likely trained in Sassetta's workshop but is first securely documented working with Masolino in the late 1430s on a fresco cycle in the Collegiata of Castiglione Olona in Lombardy.[63] This formative period spent in the company of the Florentine artist has caused scholars to describe the classicizing elements, especially in architectural settings, seen in many of Vecchietta's painted works as evidence of a progressive and innovative style that sets him apart from many other painters in fifteenth-century Siena.[64] However, as we will see, alongside these classicizing tendencies Vecchietta also drew upon the older, stylistic tradition of Sienese Trecento painting to link the reliquary cupboard to the city's glorious past.

By 1439 Vecchietta had returned to his native city and in 1441 he began his first work at Santa Maria della Scala, the aforementioned fresco in the Pellegrinaio.[65] His decoration of the new sacristy in the hospital church between 1445 and 1449, beginning with the painted *armadio* and continuing with a fresco cycle, was followed by additional work for the institution, most notably his creation of a bronze ciborium for the church's high altar.[66] For the reliquary cupboard project, Vecchietta employed at least two assistants, Sano d'Andrea and Pietro di Nanni di Puccio, to whom Brandi and Van Os have credited a large role in the creation of the Passion cycle.[67]

The hospital's new container for the relics was installed on the south sacristy wall. Since at least 1610, the sacristy's altar has also been situated on the south wall, which has caused some

[63] Andrea Campbell, "The Social and Artistic Context of the Baptistery of Siena," (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2000), 53; Bellucci and Torriti, 77.
[64] See in particular Van Os' characterization in his "Vecchietta and the Persona of the Renaissance Artist," in *Studies in Late Medieval and Renaissance Painting in honor of Millard Meiss*, eds. Irving Lavin and John Plumber (New York: New York University Press, 1977), 445-454.
[65] Orlandini, 30-42; Van Os, *Vecchietta and the Sacristy of the Siena Hospital Church*, 9-10.
[66] Van Os, *Vecchietta and the Sacristy of the Siena Hospital Church*, 11-12; Donati, "L'opera del Vecchietta," 306-09.
[67] This assertion is made on stylistic grounds; in this analysis, the exterior panels are thought to be much more successful than the uneven and formally inconsistent interior images. However, it seems unlikely that Vecchietta would have turned over the entire narrative cycle to his workshop wholesale as this was the more ritually significant part of the project. Brandi, 216; Van Os, *Vecchietta and the Sacristy of the Siena Hospital Church*, 17 and 28-30.

scholars to argue that Vecchietta's reliquary cupboard originally sat over it.[68] While this remains a strong possibility, especially as this was the case with other reliquary cupboards such as that at Sant'Antonio in Padua, no documentary evidence survives to shed light on this arrangement. However, the cupboard's iconographical program would support its positioning as an elaborate altarpiece, since when the doors were opened a cycle depicting the actions leading up to Christ's Passion were revealed along with the tangible relics of those events, both of which would have powerfully augmented the celebration of Mass at the altar below.

Vecchietta had a recent precedent nearby when he began work on the hospital's commission in the form of the cathedral's sacristy reliquary cupboard. Like those on Benedetto di Bindo's earlier cupboard, Vecchietta painted the doors of the hospital *armadio* with a narrative cycle on the interior faces and more iconic compositions on the exterior surfaces. The relationship between these two reliquary cupboards' iconography will be considered in further detail below, but for now it is important to recognize that the hospital cupboard takes a markedly different shape from that of the cathedral. While both *armadi* were part of the liturgical furniture commissioned for newly built sacristies, Vecchietta's, with its lunette-shaped top, is unique for a painted reliquary cupboard that, like the one created by Benedetto di Bindo for the cathedral, are normally in the shape of a rectangular box.[69]

The unusual design of the hospital cupboard may be due to the relics' previous location in a wall niche of the Trecento relic chapel discussed above. Perhaps the curved top of the new wooden reliquary cupboard was intended to recall the relics' initial place within the hospital and

[68] Another renovation of the hospital church in 1610 resulted in the reliquary cupboard being replaced on the south wall with Domenico di Bartolo's Madonna del Manto fresco (originally in the Trecento relic chapel) and an elaborate marble canopy. Van Os, *Vecchietta and the Sacristy of the Siena Hospital Church*, 17-18; Donati, "L'opera del Vecchietta," 306.

[69] The regular rectangular shape is also seen in the reliquary cupboards for Santa Croce in Florence and the cathedral of Padua. See Chapters One, Two and Four.

thus remind viewers of Santa Maria della Scala's long-standing possession of these powerful objects even after their removal to a more secluded and restricted part of the institution. The cupboard's shape may also enhance the images of Sienese saints and *beati* on the exterior doors in calling particular attention to the city's extensive history with holy men and women. The lunette-shaped altarpiece Simone Martini made in the 1330s for the tomb of the Blessed Agostino Novello, who is prominently depicted on the reliquary cupboard, in San Domenico, Siena, bears a remarkably similar form, likely due to its original location in a wall niche (figure 3-9).[70] Given Agostino Novello's role in the history of Santa Maria della Scala as the man credited with codifying the confraternity's Augustinian rule in the early 1300s and, according to some accounts, the designer of the order's habits, it seems reasonable that the hospital would seek to link visually their collection of holy relics with the remains of this significant local *beato* by reproducing the shape of his tomb altarpiece.[71]

Through its emphatic connections with the city's saints, Vecchietta's cupboard functioned as part of a larger program of pro-Sienese iconography in which the hospital and its church's sacristy were integrally involved. It would appear that the hospital authorities conceived of this space in a pilgrimage institution as an appropriate place to bolster the city's image, which was especially necessary in a period of relative decline. Lay access to the sacristy and its relics was perhaps easier than in larger and more formal churches such as the Duomo. This makes the

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[70] The Blessed Agostino Novello's tomb may have further anticipated the reliquary cupboard as the wooden tomb chest itself, located under Simone's altarpiece, may have been painted and outfitted with a door that could be opened to show the relics inside. Andrew Martindale, *Simone Martini: Complete edition* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1988), 32-34; H.W. Van Os, "Due divagazioni intorno alla pala di Simone Martini per il Beato Agostino Novello," in *Simone Martini: Atti del convegno (Siena 27, 28, 29 marzo 1985)*, ed. Luciano Bellosi (Florence: Centro Di, 1988), 83-86; Cannon and Vauchez, 65-67; Hoeniger, 58-66.

[71] Victor Schmidt, "The Lunette Shaped Panel and Some Characteristics of Panel Painting," in *Italian Panel Painting of the Duecento and Trecento*, ed. Victor Schmidt (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2002), 83-102; Margaret Flansburg, "Simone Martini's *Beato Agostino Novello Altarpiece* and Reliquary Altar: Sienese Program and Augustinian Agenda," in *Images, Relics, and Devotional Practices in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, eds. Sally J. Cornelison and Scott B. Montgomery (Tempe, Ariz.: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), 78-82; Norman, *Siena and the Virgin*, 138-39; Warr, 196-97.

propagandistic element of the *armadio*'s exterior panels even more powerful, as pilgrims from far-flung areas could have been confronted with images of their host city's impressive roster of protectors. One should, however, be careful not to assume that the hospital sacristy was completely open to any and all visitors, as Van Os obliquely suggested.[72] While it may indeed have been the case that the hospital's distinctive mission resulted in more sacristy traffic than those in other types of religious institutions as pilgrims and the sick were perhaps granted more access to the powerful objects, the room's expensive decorations and especially its valuable relics and reliquaries, must have necessitated some restrictions on access.

In addition to Vecchietta's elaborately painted reliquary cupboard, those granted entrance into the hospital church's sacristy in the late 1440s would have seen a fresco cycle covering the room's walls and vault. This complex program, which Vecchietta accomplished between 1446 and 1449, presents a typological program of Old and New Testament subjects that represent the articles of the Apostles' Creed.[73] Painted cycles of this Creed, a statement of belief developed in the early Christian period and codified by the late eighth century, were popular in Quattrocento Siena and can also be seen in Vecchietta's frescoes in the Baptistery (circa 1450-1453) and Benedetto di Bindo's panels for the vestment cupboard in the cathedral's sacristy from the 1410s.[74]

In the hospital sacristy, the southern wall that once held the reliquary cupboard has undergone extensive changes and suffered considerable damage (figure 3-10). However, enough of the wall surface remains to determine that it depicted Christ's liberation of the souls in Limbo and his Resurrection and Ascension on the top while Abraham freeing Lot from prison and Jonah

[72] Van Os, *Vecchietta and the Sacristy of the Siena Hospital Church*, 22-23.
[73] The most recent consideration of the cycle is found in Donati, "L'opera del Vecchietta," 306-09.
[74] John Gregory, "The *Credo* of the Siena Cathedral Sacristy (1411-12)," *Renaissance Studies* 12 (1998): 206-227; Barbara Tavolari, *Siena: Cathedral and baptistery guide* (Siena: Opera della Metropolitana, 2008), 104-25; Campbell, "The Social and Artistic Context of the Baptistery of Siena," 51-82.

escaping from the whale appeared in the bottom register.[75] The typological images on the wall therefore emphasize Christ's supernatural abilities and his salvific powers in particular. In combination with the reliquary cupboard and its contents that proved the miraculous abilities of the divine, this sacristy wall thus pictorially confirmed the presence of both universal and local holy figures in Siena through images of Christ and the uniquely civic pantheon on the cupboard's exterior doors.

A City's Saints and a Hospital's Holies: The Cupboard's Exterior Panels

When seen in its closed position, the cupboard forms a horizontally oriented rectangle topped with a shallow lunette. In all, sixteen separate panels make up the *armadio*'s exterior surface; these are joined together by an elaborate wooden framework that is decorated with the heraldic shields of the commune, the Sienese people, the hospital and the rector, thus identifying the structure and its contents as definitively local.[76] The four panels that make up the lunette read, from left to right: *Gabriel*, the *Crucifixion*, the *Resurrection*, and the *Virgin Annunciate*. Vecchietta's consistent use of gold backgrounds and static style creates a cohesive aesthetic that unites these narrative panels with the standing saints depicted below. Thus, the events from Christ's life take on more of the character of iconic images than a narrative sequence, an effect that establishes Christ as another saint present and active in Siena alongside the others featured on the cupboard's exterior doors. These Marian and Christological images were permanently visible whether the cupboard doors were open or closed and would have continually called attention to the corporeality of Christ by emphasizing his human birth and death, which could

[75] Van Os, *Vecchietta and the Sacristy of the Siena Hospital Church*, 31-33; Donati, "L'opera del Vecchietta," 306-07.
[76] Piero Torriti, *La Pinacoteca Nazionale di Siena. I dipinti* (Genoa: Sagep Editrice, 1990), 249.

then complement the cupboard's contents that included objects that he himself physically touched.

The main body of the cupboard is formed by two rows of six standing saints and *beati*, each set against a gold background. The style and iconography of each panel appears designed to emphasize the subject's connection to local concerns. The four panels on the two rows' outer edges are fixed, while the other eight panels make up two moveable doors. On the top row, one sees from left to right Ansanus, Ambrogio Sansedoni, Bernardino of Siena, Agostino Novello, Andrea Gallerani and Savinus. Ansanus and Savinus, bracketing the ends of the row, were fourth-century martyrs and well-established patron saints of Siena whose relic altars, as we have seen in the previous chapter, were located in the cathedral's transept.[77] In contrast, Ambrogio Sansedoni was a thirteenth-century Dominican *beato* beloved in his native Siena for interceding on the city's behalf with an angry Pope Gregory X.[78] Vecchietta here depicts him in his black habit, his head emitting the rays of the blessed rather than being framed by the halo of a canonized saint, while the dove of the Holy Spirit hovers at his ear. Next to him Bernardino of Siena, who stands in his Franciscan robe while prominently holding a tablet emblazoned with Christ's monogram that became his symbol throughout Italy, was a renowned local preacher who had died just a year before the reliquary cupboard's creation but who, much to the dismay of the Sienese, was buried in L'Aquila.[79]

To the right of this mendicant pair stands the Blessed Agostino Novello whose contributions to the hospital are emphatically recalled in the way in which Vecchietta shows him in the act of giving the robe of an Augustinian tertiary to the kneeling rector, a permanent

[77] See the discussion of Siena's early Christian patron saints in Chapter Two, pages 93-94.
[78] Van Os, *Vecchietta and the Sacristy of the Siena Hospital Church*, 20-21.
[79] Bernardino of Siena died in 1444 in L'Aquila. Van Os notes that this is a quite early depiction of the saint who would be canonized in 1450 and that aspects of his traditional iconography, such as angels carrying him to heaven, are omitted here. Ibid., 20.

memory of Agostino's organization of a lay brotherhood devoted to hospital service.[80] Finally, Andrea Gallerani, a Sienese soldier and *beato* who died in 1251, is likely included here for his renunciation of violence and establishment of a confraternity (Santa Maria della Misericordia) associated with another Sienese hospital, this one on the Via della Sapienza.[81] He is depicted holding his prayer beads and a pot with which to feed the city's hungry.

Below, another rank of the holy begins on the left with Victor and continues with Catherine of Siena, Pier Pettinaio, the Blessed Sorore, Galgano and Crescentius. As with the upper row, the saints on the outer edges, here St. Victor and St. Crescentius, were members of the confirmed Sienese patronal pantheon. Again, as before, the four central panels depict significant holy figures associated with aspects of specifically Sienese devotion. Catherine of Siena, pictured here wearing the garb of a Dominican tertiary and kneeling in prayer before a crucifix over an altar, had been a focus of Sienese devotion ever since her death in 1380, although she was not canonized until 1461.[82] In addition to her continually rising status in the religious life of her native city, Catherine had worked at Santa Maria della Scala during her lifetime, thus providing another reason for her appearance on the hospital's cupboard.[83] Facing Catherine to her right stands the little-known Pier Pettinaio. A local Franciscan *beato* who died

[80] The late thirteenth-century rector with whom Agostino Novello worked and is likely shown here has been identified as Ristoro di Giunta Menghi. Ibid., 20-21. On Vecchietta's depiction of clothing and its relationship to the charitable activities performed by the hospital, see Warr, 196-201.

[81] Gallerani's cult was officially recognized by the Sienese commune in 1347, an action which André Vauchez argues stemmed from the growing political power of the hospital he founded. Vauchez, *The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices*, trans. Margery J. Schneider (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 161; Raffaele Argenziano, "L'iconografia dei santi e beati senesi: Un medioevo ininterrotto," in *Santi e beati senesi*, eds. Fabio Bisogni and Mario de Gregorio (Siena: Protagon Editori Toscani, 2000), 17.

[82] The body of literature on Catherine of Siena is extensive. Helpful recent studies of her life, legend and cult include Moerer, 2003; Gerald Parsons, *The Cult of St. Catherine of Siena* (Aldershot and Burlington, Ver.: Ashgate, 2008).

[83] On Catherine's work with the Compagnia della Vergine and the Confraternity of St. Michael Archangel, both active at the hospital, see Moerer, 82.

in 1289, Pettinaio's gesture with a finger over his lips indicates the pious and lifelong vow of silence for which he is best known.[84]

To the right of these Sienese saintly citizens and in a prominent place in the center of the cupboard Vecchietta placed an image of the Blessed Sorore, who is credited with founding the hospital during the ninth century.[85] Here, the charitable cobbler is simply shown in an attitude of prayer, facing the more elaborate image of St. Galgano. The latter saint's prominent halo and detailed background set him apart from the most of the other figures on the cupboard's exterior. A twelfth-century knight (d. 1181) from the Sienese *contado*, Galgano drove his sword into a rock near Chiusdino, where it miraculously transformed into a cross. This panel features the only painted landscape elements on the cupboard's exterior, which may be intended to emphasize Galgano's association with the nearby countryside and claim him as a local saint. Following the pastoral miracle, Galgano abandoned his privileged life to remain near the rock as a hermit, where he was credited with working several miraculous cures.[86] In 1206, a Cistercian monastery named after him was founded on the site of his hermitage, thus cementing St. Galgano's position in the sphere of Sienese religious institutions and popular devotions.[87] The abbey's prized possession, an elaborate and expensive late thirteenth-century reliquary containing the saint's

[84] Van Os, *Vecchietta and the Sacristy of the Siena Hospital Church*, 20. Despite his obscurity in the modern period, Pier Pettinaio was held in high esteem by the medieval Sienese commune, as is evidenced by a 1298 document in which the city government gave 200 lire towards the erection of his tomb (*unum sepulchrum nobile cum ciborio et altare*), sculpted by Tino di Camaino for San Francesco in Siena. G. Bardotti Biasion, "Gano di Fazio e la tomba-altare di Santa Margherita da Cortona," *Prospettiva* 37 (1984): n. 24, p. 18.
[85] See the discussion of the Blessed Sorore in the hospital's history on page 118**.**
[86] Francesca Geens, "Galganus and the Cistercians: Relics, Reliquaries, and the Image of a Saint," in *Images, Relics, and Devotional Practices in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, eds. Sally J. Cornelison and Scott B. Montgomery (Tempe, Ariz.: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), 64-65.
[87] Geens has discussed the ways in which the Cistercians established authority at the site, displacing the other hermits already living there, through a variety of methods including the commissioning of reliquaries that anachronistically incorporate Galgano into their order. Geens, 66-73.

head and decorated with silver reliefs depicting scenes from his life, reflects the intense devotion directed towards him during the late Middle Ages.[88]

Seen another way, then, the images on the cupboard's permanent framework present universal (Mary, Christ) and well-established Sienese patron saints (Ansanus, Savinus, Victor, Crescentius), while the constituent panels of the moveable doors display the figures of much more recent saints and holy figures specifically tied to Siena's religious experience. As mentioned above, the reliquary cupboard has two rectangular doors, each made up of four panels joined together and hinged at the outer edges. The organization of the saints pictured on each door reveals an iconographic program that effectively stresses the long-standing presence in Siena of saints and *beati* and, by extension, heavenly favor. Furthermore, the lunette panels at the top of the cupboard remind the viewer of Siena's primary intercessor, the Virgin Mary, who, along with her son, was present in the form of their relics. Thus, the city's piety and devotion was effectively assured and augmented by the sacristy cupboard's combination of painted images and holy relics.

On the left door, Ambrogio Sansedoni and Bernardino occupy the top row while Catherine and Pier Pettinaio take up position below them. The upper pair references both the Dominican and Franciscan presence in Siena's pantheon, while the lower pair calls to mind the recurrence in Siena of laypeople renowned for their intense piety. On the right door, Vecchietta placed Agostino Novello and Andrea Gallerani on the top and the Blessed Sorore and St. Galgano on the bottom. The figures on this door appear to speak more specifically to the establishment of charitable Sienese institutions, as all four men were involved to various degrees with the foundation of pious service organizations. Taken together, the doors, with their

[88] On the reliquary of San Galgano's head, now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Siena, see Elisabetta Cioni and Giovan Battista Cenni. *Il reliquario di San Galgano: Contributo alla storia dell'oreficeria e dell'iconografia* (Florence: Casalini, 2005), passim; Geens, 55-69.

depictions of recent examples of Sienese holiness, present a forceful advertisement of the city's devout citizens who were literally and figuratively incorporated into the older civic pantheon of early Christian martyrs and universal saints. The number and type of Siena's saintly and blessed protectors dramatically expanded in the Trecento and Quattrocento. Joining the Virgin Mary and saints Ansanus, Savinus, Victor and Crescentius, all of whom had been respected and acknowledged as patron saints since at least the mid-thirteenth century, were those same figures pictured on Vecchietta's exterior panels.[89] These holy persons differed markedly from the older members of the pantheon in temporal proximity to the cupboard's creation and in social status, as many of them were laypeople or tertiaries rather than martyrs or confessors.

Scholars have suggested that the rapid rise in popularity of cults devoted to relatively obscure individuals, such as Pier Pettinaio or Agostino Novello, fundamentally derives from their relative accessibility and approachability.[90] However, it may be just as likely that the apparent wholesale acceptance of new and local saints and *beati* in Siena was simply due to their availability for incorporation. As an economically and politically struggling commune after the Black Death, Siena's authorities would have naturally sought any and all heavenly help that they could secure for their city. Both the 1359 purchase of Passion relics and the inclusion of many recent holy persons into the ranks of the city's intercessors were part and parcel of an attempt to amass in Siena as much saintly favor as possible. This attitude was far from novel, as part of a 1328 sermon exemplifies, "The more advocates…our city has in the court of the One who is its defender, that is, God himself, the greater its chance of remaining entirely secure."[91]

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[89] On the patronal altars in the cathedral see K.M. Frederick, "A Program of Altarpieces for the Siena Cathedral," *Rutgers Art Review* 4 (1983): 18-35.
[90] Van Os, *Vecchietta and the Sacristy of the Siena Hospital Church*, 18-19.
[91] The head of the Sienese Franciscan community delivered this sermon as part of an attempt to persuade the commune to institute a feast for the tertiary Pier Pettinaio. See Francesco Cristofani, "Memorie del beato Pietro Pettignano," *Miscellanea Francescana* 5 (1890): 37-38; Vauchez, *Laity in the Middle Ages*, 164.

The Santa Maria della Scala reliquary cupboard's exterior iconography and composition neatly encapsulates a discussion of the expanded Sienese saintly pantheon. Van Os and Moerer have argued that the way in which the panels are organized, with images of recent, local saints placed centrally on the doors, indicates a decline in the standing of the older saints whose depictions make up the top and sides of the cupboard.[92] However, the inclusion of new saints does not necessitate a pushing out or devaluing of the old, proven intercessors as a decidedly "more is more" philosophy seems to have governed late medieval and Renaissance attitudes towards heavenly protection. In addition, the way in which the established pantheon surrounds the newer blesseds and maintains a permanent position while the central panels move completely out of view when the doors are open indicates, if anything, the higher status of the older, more traditional saints.

In addition, the style of Vecchietta's exterior panels recalls Sienese painting of the previous century, thus visually linking all the saints and *beati* on the cupboard to the city's long-standing sacred traditions. The flat, gold backgrounds and static representations of the reliquary cupboard's holy figures starkly contrast with Vecchietta's frescoes in the Pellegrinaio and hospital church sacristy, which have elaborate architectural and perspective constructions and display classical influences that are more closely aligned with stylistic trends in mid-Quattrocento Florentine painting. As seen in the previous chapter, scholars have argued that drawing upon Trecento style served as one way in which artists and patrons of the fifteenth century could connect themselves to Siena's illustrious past. Therefore, it remains plausible that the retardataire style of the standing saints, which resembles the work of fourteenth-century masters such as Duccio and Simone Martini, was intended to remind the viewer of the history of

[92] Van Os, *Vecchietta and the Sacristy of the Siena Hospital Church*, 18-19; Moerer, 116-117.

the saints in Siena as well as the hospital's more specific experience with significant relics that also dates from the Trecento.

The style of the exterior panels may also tie the closed cupboard to its rarely seen prestigious contents. As discussed above, the 1359 collection preserved inside the *armadio* included several Byzantine metal reliquaries. Some of these, such as the covers of the Gospel manuscript and the small pendant holding pieces of the sponge and lance used in the Crucifixion, featured inlaid enamels depicting standing saints set against gold, filigree-covered backgrounds (figures 3-11 and 3-12).[93] By formally referencing the Byzantine metalwork seen only when the doors stood open, Vecchietta reminded viewers of the unusual and valuable objects the hospital possessed even when, as was usually the case, the cupboard was shut tight.

Relics at Santa Maria della Scala after 1359

While the standing saints on the outside of the hospital's cupboard meaningfully reminded viewers of the powerful relic collection present in Santa Maria della Scala, unlike the cathedral cupboard's exterior labeling of the relics within, the saints depicted on Vecchietta's panels are not representative of the recorded relics stored there. The earliest surviving inventory of the hospital sacristy after the 1359 relic purchase dates from 1575, more than a century after the reliquary cupboard's design and installation.[94] Prior to 1359 the hospital may already have held a few relics, as documents from the late 1200s refer to indulgences granted to those visiting the church on Marian feasts.[95] The inventory of 1575 lists eight Passion relics: a nail, a lock of Christ's beard, pieces of the True Cross, cloak, sponge, club and lance used at the Crucifixion,

[93] Roveno Batignani, "La copertura," in *L'Oro di Siena: Il Tesoro di Santa Maria della Scala*, ed. Luciano Bellosi (Milan: Skira, 1996), 90-103.
[94] ASS, MS 21, fol. 114-121. The inventory is also published in full in Van Os, *Vecchietta and the Sacristy of the Siena Hospital Church*, 81-88.
[95] Gagliardi, "Le reliquie," 50.

and a fragment of the rock that closed Christ's tomb, and four Marian relics: pieces of her veil, bonnet, tunic and girdle, along with bones from the apostles Peter, Paul, Andrew, Bartholomew, Philip and Thomas, twelve relics associated with identifiable saints and objects associated with the emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity in the fourth century.[96]

Therefore, relics had, not surprisingly, been added to the hospital's relic collection since the major Byzantine acquisition in the mid-fourteenth century and others had been removed to other parts of the church or other institutions altogether.[97] However, those in charge of the hospital sacristy had clearly retained an extremely high level in terms of the prestige of their relics since the Trecento purchase and they augmented their Passion relics with the remains of many other universal saints. This expansion continued into the eighteenth century, when Gigli's description of Sienese churches referred to additional relics of Sts. Eufrosina, Maria Egiziaca, Andromacus, Gregory the Great, George and Ambrogio Sansedoni.[98]

By the late sixteenth century, an unusual secular object had perhaps joined this large collection of saintly relics. In his 1599 account of Sienese history, Orlando Maltavolti states that the "white standard of the Sienese Republic" that was carried onto the field during the 1260 Battle of Montaperti against the Florentines was still kept in the church of Santa Maria della Scala.[99] If, in fact, this civic relic that symbolized the greatest military victory in Sienese history was actually stored in the hospital's church it would likely have been safely locked away in the

[96] The inventory identifies relics of St. Biagio, Quirico, Pius Chrysostom, Theodore, Dominic, Hadrian, Cosmas, Stephen the Younger, Castilla, Stephen Protomartyr, Anthony of Vienna, and Christina. The collection also included a painting and a piece of jewelry containing relics, both of which allegedly aided in Constantine's conversion to Christianity in the fourth century. ASS, MS 21, fol. 116r-117r. On the elaborate silver reliquary that was made for the arm of St. Biagio in 1437 see Cavallero, 147 and Giuseppe Cantelli's entry on the reliquary in the 1996 exhibition catalogue for *L'oro di Siena*, edited by Luciano Bellosi, 132-33.

[97] For example, relics were moved from the sacristy to the hospital church's high altar as early as 1478. Timothy B. Smith, "Alberto Aringhieri and the Chapel of Saint John the Baptist: Patronage, Politics, and the Cult of Relics in Renaissance Siena," (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2002), 34.

[98] Girolamo Gigli, *Diario Senese*, 2nd ed, vol. 1 (Siena: G. Landi and N. Alessandri, 1854), 114-15.

[99] *...lo stendardo bianco della republica Sanese, quel che ancor si conserva nel Sacrario di Santa Maria della Scala...*(the white standard of the Sienese republic, that is still conserved in the sanctuary of Santa Maria della Scala). Orlando Maltavolti, *Dell'historia di Siena* (Bologna: Forni Editore, 1982), Book I, part 2, fol. 20v.

reliquary cupboard and its presence here underscores the hospital's status as an institution with broad civic importance. Secular objects did sometimes appear in these *armadi*, such as the ring and military baton associated with Gattamelata in the Franciscan church of Sant'Antonio discussed in Chapter Five. However, little textual support exists beyond Maltavolti's chronicle, thus we must consider the Montaperti standard a possible, but uncertain, component of the hospital cupboard's contents.

The surviving written evidence relating to the hospital's relic collection in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance consistently and significantly makes hardly any mention of the many local saints depicted so prominently on the cupboard's exterior panels.[100] The earliest reference to the hospital owning a relic of Ambrogio Sansedoni occurs in the early 1700s and on all the other saints included in Vecchietta's iconographical program the record is entirely silent.[101] Therefore, as best we can determine, while the cupboard's interior Passion cycle and the *Crucifixion* and *Resurrection* scenes on the exterior face certainly allude to the Christological and Marian relics that the cupboard housed, all the other holy persons depicted on the exterior faces appear to support a recognition of Siena's large civic pantheon rather than identifying the objects that their panels concealed. The sacristy cupboard thus broadly promotes saintly favor in Siena, which corresponds to the hospital's importance to the entire city. In light of the myriad difficulties Siena endured in the Quattrocento, it should not be surprising that the number of saints the city could rely upon expanded considerably and that their presence is made manifest on the hospital's reliquary cupboard, despite the fact that these saints' relics were not physically there. Perhaps the city's need for continued support from any and all heavenly protectors, indicated by their image

[100] Torriti, 252.
[101] Gigli, vol. 1, 114-15.

alone, superceded any desire for a strict correlation between painted representation and contained object at the hospital church.

Relic Ostentions at Santa Maria della Scala

The hospital's relics would not have been displayed every day, but rather only appeared on certain feasts and ritual occasions. The most significant of these annual events was the Feast of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary, held with great pomp and ceremony every 25 March. As one of the major Marian feasts on the liturgical calendar, this represented a good opportunity for Siena to show its devotion to its primary patron saint and the queen of the city. The Sienese also celebrated other Marian feasts, such the Assumption of the Virgin (15 August), that often encompassed multiple religious institutions such as the cathedral discussed in the previous chapter. However, the hospital church's dedication to the Annunciation as well as its possession of significant Marian relics caused Santa Maria della Scala to serve as the main location for the city's public Annunciation rituals.

The hospital's festal role is directly tied to its 1359 relic acquisition. As we have seen, the government funded the building of a pulpit on its façade in 1360 in order to allow for easier public ostention of the Passion relics and the Virgin's girdle in the piazza between the hospital and cathedral, both of which were dedicated to Mary.[102] Until 1720, the faithful in the piazza would have seen the relics displayed from this balcony in conjunction with a Trecento fresco cycle depicting the life of the Virgin.[103] Therefore, when the relics were removed from the sacristy for this special public display they were also moving between decorative programs – from Vecchietta's cupboard to the hospital façade. In each case, the relics meaningfully

[102] See page 125.
[103] The frescoes, removed during an early eighteenth-century restoration, may have been painted by the Lorenzetti or Simone Martini. Norman, *Siena and the Virgin*, 87-90.

interacted with their surrounding images by embodying the represented figures and proving the real presence in Siena of the saintly persons depicted in the painted images. Pulpits, tribunes and balconies like the one constructed at the hospital supported relic ostentions at several sacred sites in Renaissance Italy. These include Donatello and Michelozzo's circa 1438 external pulpit at Santo Stefano in Prato from which the relic of the Virgin's girdle was occasionally displayed to the public and Michelangelo's 1531-1532 balcony on the counter façade of San Lorenzo in Florence that was used every Easter to show the church's Passion relics.[104]

During the two decades following the hospital's massive relic acquisition the commune funded additional changes to the piazza between the hospital and cathedral in order to enhance the public display of the hospital's most powerful relics, including the leveling and expansion of the piazza in 1361 and 1371 and the addition of a bench on the hospital façade in 1379 for the use of civic officials.[105] The expense and effort devoted to improving this ritual space between two significant religious institutions dedicated to Siena's principal patron saint allowed the city to assert better the continued presence and protection of the saints that appeared in the feast rituals, while simultaneously augmenting the authority of the municipal institutions that controlled the relics occasionally seen there.[106] The hospital relics were not just made visible on

[104] R.W. Lightbown, *Donatello and Michelozzo*, vol. 1 (London: Harvey Miller, 1980), 230-47; William Wallace, "Michelangelo's Project for a Reliquary Tribune in San Lorenzo," *Architectura: Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Baukunst* 17 (1987): 45-57; Robert Maniura, "Image and Relic in the Cult of Our Lady of Prato," in *Images, Relics, and Devotional Practices in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, eds. Sally J. Cornelison and Scott B. Montgomery (Tempe, Ariz.: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), 193-96; Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby, *The Renaissance Pulpit: Art and Preaching in Tuscany, 1400-1550* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 113-21.
[105] Norman, *Siena and the Virgin*, 149-55.
[106] The ceremonial entrance of Emperor Charles IV in 1355 demonstrates the importance of this piazza within the city's geography even before the 1359 purchase as it was the site chosen for the city's leaders to pledge their official oaths of allegiance. See Gerritt Jasper Schenk, "Enter the emperor. Charles IV and Siena between politics, diplomacy, and ritual (1355 and 1368)," *Renaissance Studies* 20, no. 2 (2006): 174; Diana Webb, *Patrons and Defenders: The Saints in the Italian City-States* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 17.

the Annunciation feast, they also were used to bless the crowds of faithful, a practiced mentioned in descriptions of this feast from the fourteenth, fifteenth and eighteenth centuries.[107]

The most consistently referenced event in contemporary descriptions of the feast, the display of relics from the façade balcony, constituted one of its most public and significant elements. However, the hospital relics were also used in other parts of the celebratory rituals held that day. For example, since at least 1384 the Passion relic of the Holy Nail was carried in procession through the city along with the cathedral relics.[108] Therefore, the hospital's relic collection was used in multiple ways on the Annunciation feast to demonstrate the city's possession of significant Christological and Marian objects and to promote the hospital's prestigious role as conservator of some of the city's most famous sacred objects.

While the Annunciation undoubtedly took primacy of place in the hospital's liturgical year, other annual feasts also involved their relics and thus required the opening of the reliquary cupboard. The relic of the Holy Nail was displayed in the main body of the hospital church for the benefit of the faithful on Good Friday; this tangible proof of Christ's physical suffering and martyrdom would have provided a particularly powerful devotional focus on the annual commemoration of his death.[109] Furthermore, in 1460, just a few years after the reliquary cupboard was installed, the city revised its Easter liturgy to include a massive procession of all Sienese relics and the piazza between the cathedral and hospital was richly decorated with banners, cloth hangings and precious pieces of metalwork to highlight the occasion.[110]

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[107] ASS, *Ospedale di Santa Maria della Scala* 120, fol. 61r and 68r; Gigli, vol. 1, 114-15.
[108] In a record dated 1384 the Annunciation liturgy includes *...alle processione per la citta portasi il sacro chiodo, dala sotto il palio e portasi avanti alle reliquie del Duomo…* (the holy nail was carried in procession through the city under a banner and carried before the cathedral relics…). ASS, *Ospedale di Santa Maria della Scala* 120, fol. 61r.
[109] Gigli, vol. 1, 114.
[110] Fabrizio Nevola, "Cerimoniali per santi e feste a Siena a metà Quattrocento," in vol. 3 of *Siena e il suo territorio nel rinascimento*, ed. Mario Ascheri (Siena: Edizioni il Leccio, 2000), 184. Also see the discussion of the Easter feasts in Chapter Two, pages 94-96.

In addition to festal celebrations, the hospital reliquary cupboard was also opened to display relics for privileged visitors, as evinced by a notation in Tommaso Montauri's circa 1432 chronicle in which he describes how the visit of the prince of Portugal in 1428 included a stop at Santa Maria della Scala for the express purpose of seeing its relics.[111] Other special occasions in the city's history also warranted the removal of the hospital's relics from their storage location. For example, when St. Bernardino was canonized only six years after his death in 1444, a great celebratory procession was held that included "many worthy relics."[112] As the hospital held some of the city's most famous holy objects and as Bernardino was himself closely associated with the institution, it stands to reason that Vecchietta's cupboard was likely opened to allow some of the relics to be used in the event.

Some thirty years after Siena rejoiced in the canonization of this local saint, the doors of the Santa Maria della Scala cupboard were again moved for an unusual reason, this time in support of civic peace. In November 1482, a series of formal reconciliation ceremonies were held to bring together the Nove and Riformatori factions who had been sparring over control of the commune.[113] On the first of three days of ritual peacemaking, the relic of the Holy Nail was carried in procession from the hospital.[114] These extraliturgical appearances of the hospital's relics that would have required the opening of the sacristy cupboard demonstrate the variety of ways in which these objects could be called upon to prove Siena's prestigious connections with

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[111] *...poi a lo spedale, e ine voles vedere le sante reliquie con grande divotione, e oferi 6 corone d'oro di Francia…*(then [they went] to the hospital, and wanted to see the holy relics with great devotione, and offered 6 French gold crowns…)," Tommaso Montauri, "Cronaca senese," in vol. XV, part 6 of *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, ed. L.A. Muratori (Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, 1931), 809-10.

[112] *A di 15 di giugno se fe' una bella procissione col vescovo di Siena…e tutti li religiosi con molte e degnie reliquie, e ciercoro tutte le vie che si pote andare per Siena…*(On 15 June there was a beautiful procession with the bishop of Siena and all the clergy with many and worthy relics, and it circulated through all the streets that one can traverse through Siena)," Fecini, 861-62. Finished in the late 1400s, Fecini's chronicle continues where Montauri's left off and records Sienese history from 1431-79.

[113] Christine Shaw, "Peace-making rituals in fifteenth-century Siena," *Renaissance Studies* 20 (2006): 233.

[114] Subsequent days were dedicated to the Virgin, during which the Madonna delle Grazie painting was carried, and to the Trinity, during which the Host was processed. Documented in ASS, *Consistoro* 697, fol. 7. See also Shaw, 232-33.

the saints as well as their ability to protect and ensure the city's continued success. Their critical role on Siena's major feast days and occasional participation in special civic and religious events indicate the city's continued devotion to these powerful sacred objects and, by extension, to the elaborate container that from 1445 protected them.

The Passion in Image and Relic: The Cupboard's Interior Panels

On those ritual occasions that required the appearance of the hospital's relics, the sacristy cupboard would open to reveal not only the precious metal reliquaries, but also a Passion cycle painted in eight scenes on the doors' interior faces. The panels on the left door present the first part of the narrative, beginning with the *Last Supper* and followed by *Christ Washing the Disciples' Feet*, the *Betrayal*, and the *Trial before Caiaphas*. On the right door, the story continues with the *Trial before Herod(?)*, the *Flagellation*, the *Mocking of Christ*, and *Christ Carrying the Cross*.

The iconographic relationships between Vecchietta's paintings and other depictions of the same events will be considered in more detail below but at this point it is important to recognize that the narrative of the Passion on the interior doors stops just before Christ's death. While this aspect of the cupboard's decoration has not been considered before, two reasons likely account for this truncation: first, panels of the *Crucifixion* and *Resurrection* make up the lunette at the top of the cupboard. These panels remained visible whether the *armadio* doors were open or closed, thus including these same episodes on the backs of the doors would have been repetitious. Second, anytime the Passion cycle was displayed, the relics relating to these same events were also visible inside the cupboard. Although scholars have overlooked the correlation between the cupboard's function and iconography, Vecchietta's painted

representations were intended to surround the physical proof of Christ's death in the form of the hospital's relics, creating an environment in which image and relic meaningfully complement and augment each other.

Vecchietta begins the narrative with the *Last Supper* in which Christ, seated at the head of a table that is parallel to the picture plane, raises his hand in blessing over the gathered group of Apostles (figure 3-13). In the next scene, *Christ Washing the Apostles' Feet*, the composition is pivoted to provide a deep recession into a rectangular room lined with benches upon which Christ's followers sit and remove their shoes (figure 3-14). Here Jesus kneels at the front of the room as he begins his ritual demonstration of humility by washing St. Peter's feet. Both episodes take place within classicizing architectural settings that include Roman-style entablatures, Corinthian columns and shell-topped niches.[115] However, the illusionistic depth and detailed interior settings in these, as well as several other parts of the cycle, also link these panels to the style of Trecento Sienese artists such as the Lorenzetti. As with the exterior panels' retardataire style, the formal connections between the interior panels and Sienese painting of the earlier century may have been intended to place the hospital's reliquary cupboard in the tradition of the city's celebrated past.

The pair of paintings on the bottom of the left door depicts the *Betrayal of Christ* and the first of two judgments, the *Trial before Caiaphas* (figures 3-15 and 3-16). In the *Betrayal* Judas' kiss is enacted before a tightly packed crowd of soldiers and onlookers, many of whom carry spears, flags and torches pointed upwards towards the hilly background. To the right, the haloed Apostles flee, thereby creating a physical and symbolic gap between themselves and Christ, while Peter calmly crouches over Caiaphas' servant, Malchus, to cut off his ear. The *Trial before*

[115] Van Os attributes the classical tendencies seen here to Vecchietta's prior experience with Florentine painters and in particular his time in Masolino's workshop. *Vecchietta and the Sacristy of the Siena Hospital Church*, 24-25.

Caiaphas returns us to an interior setting, less elaborate than those found in the earlier panels but that still retains many classical elements.[116] Here Christ stands proudly before his enthroned, hooded Jewish judge in a room crowded with soldiers and other witnesses. Jesus' posture, with his right hand outstretched as if to make a pronouncement, may indicate that this is the moment when he declares himself to be the son of God, the main development of this part of the biblical narrative.[117] However, as in many of the other parts of the cupboard's Passion cycle, the episode has a remarkably static quality, an aspect that further links these images to the painting tradition of the Trecento.

Another trial scene continues the story on the cupboard's right door, although this time the enthroned authority figure takes center stage while Christ, his head bowed and hands bound, stands off to the right and seemingly accepts his fate (figure 3-17). It remains difficult to identify Christ's judge with absolute certainty; while the crown and more Roman-style robes (compared to Caiaphas' dress in the previous panel) may at first point to Pontius Pilate, this figure does not match the younger man depicted in the cupboard's *Mocking of Christ* panel who definitely represents the Roman governor of Judea.[118] Especially given the possibility of workshop presence, it could be that the crowned men in both scenes do, in fact, represent the same person despite their inconsistent appearance. However, Vecchietta may instead have intended to depict Christ's trial before Herod Antipas, the imperially-backed secular ruler of Galilee, which would account for his Roman dress. During his encounter with Herod, included only in the Gospel of

[116] It seems likely that the setting was inspired by Donatello's 1427 bronze relief of the *Feast of Salome* on the font in Siena's nearby Baptistery. Ibid., 24.
[117] Mark 14: 60-62.
[118] Three Gospels clearly place Pilate in close proximity to the Mocking of Christ, while Luke omits the entire incident. Matthew 27: 27-31, Mark 15: 16-20; John 19: 1-5. On the representation of Pilate in fifteenth-century art of Italy and Northern Europe see Colum Hourihane, *Pontius Pilate, Anti-Semitism, and the Passion in Medieval Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 296-307.

Luke, Jesus refuses to answer any questions and is thus returned to Pilate for final judgment.[119] Therefore, if he did include Caiaphas, Herod and Pilate, Vecchietta effectively covered all of Christ's judges who were responsible for generating many of the valuable relics that the hospital owned.

The *Flagellation* follows the second trial scene, in which Jesus, now stripped to the waist, stands in the center of the room while on either side men with legs splayed and arms raised prepare to beat him with rods (figure 3-18). Andrea Campbell has argued that this episode, the most dynamic of the entire cycle, demonstrates Vecchietta's understanding of contemporary developments in Florentine art, particularly by Donatello, in which one figure is turned and used again to show a different aspect of the same position, a technique that Vecchietta may have employed for Christ's tormentors as we see one from the front and the other from the back.[120]

In the first of the final pair of panels Christ, now clothed in a white robe and blindfolded, endures further beating and humiliation from a crowd under the eye of Pilate, who sits on a dais on the right side of the room (figure 3-19). *Christ Carrying the Cross* then dramatically widens the viewpoint, as instead of the interior setting of the majority of the paintings, here we see a continuous narrative that takes place on a road leaving a walled city to curve through fields and hills (figure 3-20). The journey through the expansive landscape emphasizes Christ's prolonged physical pain in bearing his cross over such a distance and the hilltop city in the background that resembles Siena's geographical situation may have served to engage viewers with a more

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[119] Luke 22: 6-12.

[120] Campbell, "The Social and Artistic Context of the Baptistery of Siena," 55. Perhaps the most famous use of this device appears in the work of Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo in the later Quattrocento, in graphic work like the *Battle of Nude Men* and paintings such as the St. Sebastian altarpiece for SS. Annunziata in Florence. See Alison Wright, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers: The Arts of Florence and Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 176-81. An earlier example of the technique exists in the *Entry of Christ into Jerusalem* scene from the Passion cycle attributed to Barna da Siena and dated to circa 1350 in the Collegiata of San Gimignano. See S.L. Faison, Jr., "Barna and Bartolo di Fredi," *The Art Bulletin* 14 (1932): 285-88; Eve Borsook, *The Mural Painters of Tuscany: From Cimabue to Andrea del Sarto*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 43-45; Joachim Poeschke, *Fresques italiennes du temps de Giotto 1280-1400* (Paris: Citadelles & Mazenod, 2003), 310-19.

personal understanding of the Passion procession.[121] In both the middle and foreground of the panel, Jesus carries a thin, attenuated Cross as he is hurried forward by menacing horsemen and pulled along on a rope tied around his neck. The suffering of this moment is further emphasized by Christ's glance backwards over his shoulder to the Virgin, Mary Magdalene and several of the Apostles, who wring their hands and weep while watching this procession pass by.

Three of the four scenes on the right cupboard door, the *Trial before Herod(?)*, *Flagellation* and *Mocking of Christ*, take place within the same architectural setting that features a groin-vaulted ceiling decorated with stars and a classically-inspired arcade. As Van Os has observed, the general form of the vaulted, rectangular room is similar to that of the hospital sacristy, therefore the artist may have attempted to connect the fictive painted space to its actual location.[122] Some of the most famous relics owned by Santa Maria della Scala were fragments of the same objects used in these moments of the Passion. Therefore, the painted imitation of the sacristy's architectural design on the reliquary cupboard further confirmed the significance and provenance of the sacred relics that were seen in conjunction with these images.

As Barbara Wisch has noted, independent Passion cycles appear infrequently in central Italian painting in the fifteenth century when compared to their prevalence in the fourteenth and late sixteenth centuries.[123] However, for inspiration for his work on the *armadio* Passion cycle Vecchietta had to look no further than the church across the piazza.[124] Since the late thirteenth

[121] Earlier Sienese paintings, such as Duccio's *Entry into Jerusalem* on the back of the *Maestà*, also referenced the Tuscan city in ostensible images of Jerusalem.
[122] Van Os, *Vecchietta and the Sacristy of the Siena Hospital Church*, 24.
[123] Barbara Wisch, "The Passion of Christ in the Art, Theater, and Penitential Rituals of the Roman Confraternity of the Gonfalone," in *Crossing the Boundaries: Christian Piety and the Arts in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 1991), 238.
[124] The fame of Duccio's altarpiece and its proximity to the hospital argue in favor of its playing a role in Vecchietta's creation of the same subject over such other possibilities as Giotto's Scrovegni Chapel frescoes or Pietro Lorenzetti's circa 1316-19 cycle in the Lower Church at San Francesco, Assisi.

century the cathedral's crypt had displayed a fresco cycle of Christ's Passion on its walls.[125] In all likelihood, however, Vecchietta would not have known these images as the crypt space was effectively closed off after 1317, when construction began on the enlargement of the cathedral.[126]

Although the crypt's late medieval fresco cycle was unavailable to Vecchietta, Duccio's *Maestà* still sat on the cathedral's high altar, a painting that since its celebrated installation in 1311 had come to dominate and define Sienese artistic achievement.[127] A double-sided panel like the reliquary cupboard doors, the back of this monumental altarpiece featured the Passion narrative told in twenty-six panels, many of which may have provided Vecchietta or his patrons with compositional models when he began to paint the same subjects over a century later (figure 3-21). Furthermore, as James Stubblebine has argued, Duccio himself may have drawn on a Byzantine manuscript as an iconographic source.[128] Therefore, referencing the *Maestà* allowed Vecchietta to link his Quattrocento panels with two established and venerated traditions that symbolized Sienese accomplishment and the history of Christian power.

The *Maestà*'s exceptionally large size allowed Duccio to include many more episodes of events leading to Christ's death than Vecchietta could depict on the reliquary cupboard, but the iconographical relationship between the two objects is perhaps best demonstrated by comparing their versions of the *Betrayal* (figure 3-22).[129] Like Duccio, Vecchietta positioned Christ at the center of an angry crowd carrying torches and spears that bristle above the mob's head while the

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[125] Barbara Tavolari attributes the frescoes to Dietisalvi di Speme, Guido di Graziano and Rinaldo da Siena. Tavolari, *Siena: Cathedral and baptistery guide*, 97.
[126] Kees Van der Ploeg, "Architectural and Liturgical Aspects of Siena Cathedral in the Middle Ages," in vol. 1 of *Sienese Altarpieces 1215-1460*, ed. Henk Van Os (Groningen: Bouma's Boekhuis, 1984), 112-14; Benton, 137-40.
[127] James Stubblebine, *Duccio di Buoninsegna and his school* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 31-62; Diana Norman, "'A noble panel': Duccio's *Maesta*," in vol. 2 of *Siena, Florence and Padua: Art, Society and Religion 1280-1400*, ed. Diana Norman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 55-57.
[128] It seems especially likely that Duccio drew inspiration for the *Maestà*'s multiple trial scenes from a Byzantine source, as pre-Trecento Italian Passion cycles tend to conflate those episodes. James Stubblebine, "Byzantine Sources for the Iconography of Duccio's Maesta," *Art Bulletin* 57, no. 2 (1975): 177-79.
[129] Vecchietta's *Last Supper* and Duccio's *Apparition of Christ at Supper* (back pinnacle) also have remarkably similar compositions although they do not represent exactly the same subject.

Apostles turn and run away to the right. Although Peter and Malchus stand on the opposite side and the landscape in the *armadio* painting is far clumsier than Duccio's elegant trees and rocky outcroppings, Vecchietta's overall composition remains quite similar and supports the idea that the later artist looked to Duccio's altarpiece for inspiration. It also appears that Vecchietta was influenced by the earlier master's conventional characterization of Christ's passivity during this chaotic scene, as neither version shows him making an attempt to save himself or prevent Peter's violence.[130] The unusual inclusion of multiple trials in the reliquary cupboard cycle may also reflect the influence of the *Maestà*, which devotes no fewer than eight of its back panels to Christ before his various judges.[131] Furthermore, Jesus' bound hands in Vecchietta's *Trial before Herod(?)* may derive from Duccio's similar pose, a deviation from the norm in Italian painting before the Trecento which Anne Derbes links to Byzantine depictions of the subject (figure 3-23).[132]

While it seems clear that Duccio's cathedral altarpiece influenced the development of the reliquary cupboard's interior decoration, the above discussion is not intended to imply that this painting was the only possible source for Vecchietta. For example, in the reliquary cupboard cycle's final episode, *Christ Carrying the Cross* is significantly different from the version on the *Maestà* (figure 3-24). Vecchietta depicts an elaborate cityscape and continuous narrative while Duccio sets the figures against a flat, gold background. In addition, Duccio has the burden of the Cross being borne by Simon of Cyrene while Vecchietta leaves Jesus without such assistance and further increases his suffering with the rope halter around his neck. The appearance of the

[130] Anne Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in Late Medieval Italy: Narrative Painting, Franciscan Ideologies and the Levant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 40-42.
[131] Stubblebine attributes the unusual frequency of trial scenes in Duccio's altarpiece to Byzantine manuscripts that depict multiple judgments more often than medieval Western Passion cycles. Stubblebine, *Duccio di Buoninsegna*, 49-50.
[132] Derbes, 81.

rope and Simon of Cyrene in representations of the road to Calvary have both been traced to Byzantine sources, therefore it is possible that Vecchietta, like Duccio before him, could also have had access to a Byzantine manuscript or other Eastern painting different from the one Duccio likely knew when he worked for the hospital.[133]

However, the iconographical similarities between Duccio's *Maestà* and Vecchietta's Passion cycle on the cupboard's interior panels, combined with the close physical proximity of the cathedral and hospital and the intense civic pride associated with the earlier panel, indicate that Vecchietta most likely relied heavily upon the Trecento altarpiece as a precedent. The iconographical connection between the hospital cupboard and the cathedral's high altarpiece provides a meaningful link between two of Siena's most powerful religious institutions, both of which housed large relic collections that were used in city-wide feast liturgies and processions. Therefore, Vecchietta's paintings for the hospital's reliquary *armadio* may also be seen as a way to tie together Santa Maria della Scala and the cathedral, thereby strengthening the locus of sacred power around the piazza. When one considers that the Duomo's own sacristy reliquary cupboard, painted only three decades prior to the hospital's, also stylistically draws upon the *Maestà*, the connection between the two institutions and their relics deepens to form a visual web promoting saintly power in Siena with Duccio's altarpiece at its center.

While other altarpieces produced by Sienese artists much closer in time to Vecchietta's work included some of the same episodes of the Passion, they do not bear much formal similarity to the panels of the *armadio*. As Vecchietta's probable teacher, it may be most instructive to compare Sassetta's *Last Supper* for the predella of the Arte della Lana altarpiece (circa 1425)

[133] No specific Byzantine manuscript has been associated with either cycle, thus this supposition is offered only on a hypothetical basis. Anne Derbes has identified the depiction of the rope halter in thirteenth-century Pisan and Florentine painting, which Vecchietta may have known instead. Stubblebine, "Byzantine Sources," 180; Derbes, 115-26.

with the same scene on the reliquary cupboard (figure 3-25).[134] It is immediately clear that Vecchietta's conception of the scene is much closer to Duccio's panel than to Sassetta's composition with a low vantage point and a centrally-placed Christ. Another of Sassetta's polyptychs, made the following decade for the church of San Francesco in Borgo San Sepolcro, also includes an abbreviated Passion cycle as part of its front predella.[135] Of the two surviving panels that overlap iconographically with Vecchietta's paintings, the *Betrayal* and *Procession to Calvary*, the former bears the most similarity to the hospital cupboard in that they share the same basic compositional arrangement of soldiers on the left and fleeing Apostles on the right, but the figural styles and treatment of space remain quite disparate.

Therefore, although the Sassetta altarpieces predate the reliquary cupboard cycle by only a few years and despite Vecchietta's personal association with this workshop, the *armadio* panels seem in many ways to be more closely tied to the traditions of the previous century. Perhaps, as we have seen with the painting style of the cupboard's exterior as well as the cathedral's earlier reliquary cupboard, Vecchietta's Passion cycle was intended to forge a visual link to the city's storied past, during which Siena reached its apogee in part through the successful acquisition of the holy relics seen alongside these images. To its privileged witnesses, the sight of the Passion narrative and the sacred relics made possible by the opening of the cupboard doors would have made a compelling case for continued heavenly favor and the possibility of renewal, which was likely the impetus for Santa Maria della Scala's new sacristy project from the beginning.

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[134] Although associated with the Sienese church of Santa Maria del Carmine, the painting was originally intended for use on a temporary altar during the feast of Corpus Domini. See Machtelt Israëls, "Sassetta's Arte della Lana altarpiece and the cult of Corpus Domini in Siena," *Burlington Magazine* 143 (2001): 532-43; Nevola, "Cerimoniali per santi," 171-84.

[135] Machtelt Israëls, et al., "The Reconstruction of Sassetta's Borgo San Sepolcro Altarpiece," in vol. 1 of *Sassetta: The Borgo San Sepolcro Altarpiece*, ed. Machtelt Israëls (Florence: Villa I Tatti, 2009), 167-77.

Storing Sanctity in Siena: The Cupboards for the Duomo and Santa Maria della Scala

In the early fifteenth century, Siena was coming to terms with a marked change in its political, economic, and religious fortunes that had occurred gradually since the onset of the Black Death in 1348. As we have seen in this and the previous chapter, for the first four decades of the Quattrocento the city was beset by problems on several fronts: economic depression, division within the Church, raiding mercenaries and recurring waves of disease. In the midst of these challenges, however, the Sienese could look to the saints for continued favor and protection. The city famed for its connection to the Virgin had, in fact, assembled a mighty pantheon of heavenly assistance, including the early martyr saints Ansanus, Savinus, Crescentius and Victor and more recently, local holies such as Catherine, Bernardino, Agostino Novello, Galerano and Ambrogio Sansedoni. In this otherwise uncertain environment of Quattrocento Siena, two of the city's largest religious institutions, the cathedral and hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, sought to renew devotion to the saints and call attention to the ongoing presence of the divine in the form of significant relic collections. Therefore, each church built a new sacristy and commissioned a large, decorated cabinet in which its relics could be safely stored and properly venerated.

The sacristy reliquary cupboards in Siena's Duomo and the hospital church of Santa Maria della Scala each present a unique visual program suited to their specific sites. Their iconographical differences are most striking when one considers the exterior faces of both cupboards. As discussed in Chapter Two, the cathedral's cupboard is unusual in its use of text to label the relics preserved behind the doors, while the standing saints on the hospital *armadio* lack any correspondence between represented image and contained object. This aspect of Vecchietta's iconography makes the lineup of saints that were selected for depiction that much more

significant and noteworthy. Here, rather than limiting themselves to representations of only those saints present in the church by virtue of their relics, the hospital visually called upon both the city's tried and true saintly protectors as well as the newer, but potentially efficacious, local blesseds, thereby reflecting the city's continued need for and expectation of heavenly aid. The iconography of the Santa Maria della Scala cupboard may also be connected to its location within a hospital church rather than the city's cathedral. Questions remain regarding the audiences allowed into this type of sacristy, especially on non-festal occasions, but it appears that perhaps the hospital cupboard was more accessible to pilgrims and the sick seeking saintly intercession than similar objects in other types of religious establishments. While the relationship between the hospital audience and the *armadio*'s iconography has been overlooked until now, it may, at least in part, account for Vecchietta's prominent placement of saints and *beati* associated with acts and institutions of Christian charity, especially the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala.

Benedetto di Bindo and Vecchietta's cupboards thus significantly differ in the way that each highlights Siena's association with saintly power and presence on the faces of the closed doors. However, for those special occasions when the doors were opened, each artist produced a complex Christological program on the cupboard's interior panels that meaningfully interacts with the revealed relics and the rest of the sacristy's ritual and decorative program. The cathedral's True Cross cycle and the hospital's Passion narrative each framed prestigious relics of Jesus' death stored inside the reliquary cupboard; in this arrangement, then, both image and relic served as confirmation of Christ's corporality in the sacred space of the sacristy. Such assurance also complemented the preparation for the Mass that was the most frequent activity in these church sacristies, thus connecting the reliquary cupboard to everyday ritual performances as well as those other liturgical occasions involving the church's relics.

The reliquary cupboards located in two of the most significant buildings in the city may, therefore, be understood as a particular type of visual guarantee that Siena still enjoyed the favor of the saints. Combining their relics with painted images that recall the past and present glories of the city by referencing the style of the previous century and the venerable pantheon of Siena's heavenly patrons, the cathedral and hospital of Santa Maria della Scala sought to reflect and renew the connection between city and saints through these significant pieces of liturgical furniture. Furthermore, Benedetto and Vecchietta's *armadi* connected these two significant Sienese establishments through their similar functions and the stylistic influence of Duccio's *Maestà*. As we have seen, both cupboards make clear compositional and iconographical references to the Duomo's high altarpiece, thereby creating a visual triangle from it and the cathedral and hospital sacristies. This formal link joining the two large religious institutions would then be embodied by the rituals performed in the piazza between them, which, as we have seen, often involved relics removed from the sacristy reliquary cupboards. Therefore, the fifteenth-century reliquary *armadi* worked together to support the city's ongoing relationship with the saints and the cathedral-hospital complex's status as Siena's premier sacred site.

Chapter Four
Plague, Pain and Power:
Semitecolo's Reliquary Cupboard for Padua Cathedral

In the late fourteenth century, visitors to the sacristy of the cathedral in the northeastern Italian city of Padua would have seen an elaborate gold and polychrome cupboard among the room's furnishings. This was the work of the Venetian painter Niccolò Semitecolo, who decorated the exterior and interior faces of the wooden cupboard's moveable doors in 1367 with an intriguing combination of narrative and iconic images. The *armadio* protected and preserved the church's valuable and powerful relics, which were themselves contained in elaborate metal reliquaries. In addition to serving a practical function as a piece of liturgical furniture, the cupboard also concealed the relics from public view, thus heightening their mystery and conserving their miraculous powers for sanctioned ritual events.

The sacristy reliquary cupboard originally installed in Padua's cathedral (or Duomo) of Santa Maria has been the subject of limited inquiry in both Italian and English scholarship and is almost exclusively discussed in relation to Semitecolo's place within the stylistic milieu of the Veneto region in the fourteenth century. What scholars have overlooked until this point are the ways in which this significant piece of liturgical furniture functioned within the sacred environment of late medieval Padua. It was created while the city's recently established seigneurial elite increased their influence over Padua's religious institutions and simultaneously consolidated their political and military power. In addition, the *armadio*'s unusual iconographic program likely speaks to Padua's recent experience with plague and its need for renewed saintly protection. Finally, the images on and contents of this reliquary cupboard play a role in the cathedral's centuries-old struggle for prestige among Padua's religious institutions as they securely identify the cathedral as a locus of saintly presence and favor.

Iconography of the Duomo reliquary cupboard

Originally six wooden panels formed the moveable doors of the horizontal reliquary cupboard; some of these panels were painted on both sides to produce two different iconographic programs depending on whether the cupboard was open or closed.[1] The panels present both iconic and narrative images: a *Trinity*, a seated *Madonna and Child* and a cycle of episodes depicting the martyrdom and burial of St. Sebastian. The combination of iconic and narrative subjects frequently occurs in Trecento altarpieces, as in, for example, Simone Martini's circa 1319 *Altarpiece of St. Louis of Toulouse*, in which the narrative predella panels form a base for the iconic main panel depicting the enthroned saint. While the iconographic programs of several other sacristy reliquary cupboards dating from the Tre- and Quattrocento combine narrative and iconic images, the cupboard from Padua's Duomo is unusual in featuring historiated panels on the exterior rather than the interior faces of the cupboard doors.[2] This arrangement thus suggests the significance of the panels depicting St. Sebastian's martyrdom and burial to the iconographic environment of the cathedral sacristy.

The *Trinity* panel (figure 4-1) depicts a three-quarter-length image of a bearded God the Father with the dove of the Holy Spirit perched on his right shoulder. Rays of light shoot down from the dove towards the figure of Jesus, who stands directly in front of his Father. God's splayed hands are placed directly behind those of Christ, who displays the wounds of the Crucifixion in his fully outstretched arms and upright body. The physical overlapping of its three constituent parts reinforces the theological construct of the Trinity and the panel's flat gold background and intricately punched haloes support a further understanding of the mystical, even

[1] Each is painted in tempera on panel and measures approximately 25" x 27". The panels are now hung separately in the Museo Diocesano in Padua.
[2] For example, the sacristy reliquary cupboards at the hospital church of Santa Maria della Scala and the cathedral in Siena both feature iconic images on the exterior doors and narrative cycles on the interior.

supernatural, nature of the divine persons.[3] The other iconic panel presents a similarly otherworldly image of the *Madonna and Child* (figure 4-2). The Virgin Mary, clad in a voluminous blue mantle trimmed in patterned gold embroidery, seems to sit directly on the ground and thus conforms to a type of Marian imagery known as the Madonna of Humility, despite her elaborate and expensive cloak and jeweled crown.[4] In addition, she is depicted as a *Madonna lactans* as the Christ child reaches down for her exposed breast.

Compositionally and iconographically, the other four panels contrast markedly to the *Trinity* and *Madonna and Child*. These historiated panels represent events in the legend of Sebastian, an early Christian martyr-saint. Hagiographies record that Sebastian was a Roman soldier and particular favorite of the late third-century emperors Diocletian and Maximilian. However, Sebastian's healing powers, propensity to convert Roman citizens to Christianity, and destruction of pagan idols ultimately proved too much for the imperial leaders to overlook. His execution proved unexpectedly difficult, as he revived after being shot with a barrage of arrows and was not killed until being subjected to a fatal beating with rods.[5]

The life of Sebastian in the thirteenth-century *Golden Legend*, a popular and widely circulated text, includes examples of posthumous miracles and retributions wrought by the saint's relics in Italy. Of particular note is the assertion that in the seventh century the building of an altar dedicated to Sebastian following the translation of his relics from Rome to Pavia stopped

[3] For a concise, if dated, discussion of the historical circumstances surrounding the Christian doctrine of the Trinity see R.D. Richardson, "The Doctrine of the Trinity: Its Development, Difficulties and Value," *The Harvard Theological Review* 36, no. 2 (1943): 109-34.
[4] On the development of this type of painted Madonna see the classic study by Millard Meiss, "The Madonna of Humility," *Art Bulletin* 18, no. 4 (1936): 435-64 and Beth Williamson's recent contribution, *The Madonna of Humility: Development, Dissemination and Reception, circa 1340-1400* (Bristol: Boydell Press, 2009).
[5] Jacopo de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger (Salem, NH: Ayer, 1989), 104-10.

an outbreak of plague in that Lombard city, a legend that likely promoted the late medieval practice of invoking this martyr saint to ward off plague.[6]

Four panels on the reliquary cupboard doors recall key episodes in Sebastian's martyrdom, beginning with his appearance before his former patrons, the co-ruling Emperors Diocletian and Maximilian (figure 4-3). The emperors sit on a bench inside an architectural enclosure on the left side of the composition, gesturing towards their former favorite. This three-sided building, decorated with a plaid-patterned cloth of honor behind the emperors and two scalloped, round niches that shelter a nude pagan idol and a recently extinguished candle, likely represents one of the Roman imperial palaces. In the center of the room a small dog sniffs the ground, while at the right edge of the building, Sebastian, clearly identified as SBASTIANU above his punchwork halo, stands with his back to the emperors, facing a group of three men and one woman, behind whom loom a larger crowd of armed Roman soldiers.

The saint's pose, as he literally turns away from the imperial authorities, may reflect the idea that it is at this point in his legend that Sebastian begins to convert actively and fortify the Christian community in Rome, definitively abandoning his former life. The group between Sebastian and the soldiers highlights his role as Christian guardian, as they present a list of those whom he converted or strengthened in their faith. The two younger men, dressed in matching belted tunics and hose, stand with their hands crossed and, like the saint, have intricate gold haloes. These figures, the martyred twin brothers Marcellinus and Mark, were those whom Sebastian convinced not to renounce Christianity, despite their parents' protests.[7] His exhortatory speech to the brothers concluded as a white light came down from heaven to surround the saint's body, an event that caused Marcellinus and Mark's jailor, Nicostratus, and his mute wife, Zoe, to

[6] Diana Norman, "Change and continuity: Art and religion after the Black Death," in vol. 1 of *Siena, Florence and Padua: Art, Society and Religion 1280-1400*, ed. Diana Norman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 187.
[7] De Voragine, 105-06.

convert as well. Thus Zoe, whose conversion miraculously gave her the ability to speak again, kneels before Sebastian in the *armadio* panel while her husband stands just behind her.

This initial narrative panel also identifies the artist, as in the bottom left corner, just below the seated emperors, an inscription states that "*nicholeto simitecholo da veniexia inpese*" (Nicholetto Semitecolo of Venice painted this). The entire composition displays an elaborate, even courtly, decorative sense, emphasized by the gold background and the detailed and expensive clothing of the main figures. Sebastian, far from appearing as an ascetic or bedraggled future martyr, is dressed in a richly floral-patterned tunic and mantle, as befits his high status in the Roman social order.

Having established the saint's commitment to Christianity in *St. Sebastian before Diocletian and Maximilian*, the next panel depicts *St. Sebastian Shot by Arrows*, the Romans' first attempt to execute him (figure 4-4). Here, against the same shimmering gold background, the scene has been changed to include a loggia arcade from which the emperors direct the punishment. To their right, the completely nude Sebastian stands bound to a stake. Stripped of his fancy garb and twice the size of his executioners, Sebastian's imposing body is pierced by dozens of arrows shot from the bows of the soldiers surrounding him. The emphasis on the saint's physical presence and pain reaches an apogee in this scene; this is continued in a different way in the last two panels, which instead focus on Sebastian's dead body.

St. Sebastian's Beating and Death (figure 4-5) presents the most crowded composition of the group. While essentially repeating the imperial loggia of the previous scene, the saint's second, successful execution is set against a dramatic, craggy mountainous landscape topped with more arcaded buildings. Sprawled across the foreground, Sebastian, once again enveloped in voluminous and expensive robes, is surrounded by men armed with long wooden rods. Two of

these make contact with his lowered head, while the executioner in the center has raised his rod to deliver yet another blow. In a continuous narrative device not used elsewhere in the cupboard's decoration that allows Semitecolo to include more of the saint's story, the line of the rising mountain separates Sebastian's fatal beating from the subsequent disposal of his body. This event is presented in the panel's right upper corner, where two plainly dressed men hold Sebastian's lifeless body upside-down, presumably just before dropping him into the sewer as his legends recount. This physical indignity served an added purpose for the Roman authorities in that, if they could not be recovered, the martyr's remains could not be venerated as relics.

The final scene, the *Burial of St. Sebastian* (figure 4-6), skips over St. Lucina's retrieval of the desecrated body and proceeds directly to Sebastian's burial. The saint's sarcophagus is shown in front of two churches, opened here to reveal the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul.[8] These apostolic references provide an architectural framework for the main subject, the Christian community surrounding and mourning over Sebastian's prostrate body as he is laid in the tomb. In a subtle echo of the *Trinity* and *Madonna and Child* panels, Sebastian's sarcophagus is decorated with a sculpted Christ Enthroned in the middle and Gabriel and the Virgin Annunciate at either end. Therefore, these two final scenes physically and symbolically foreground Sebastian's death and, more specifically, the final disposition of his bodily remains. They were also the easiest to see when the cupboard was mounted on the wall, thereby forcing the viewer to confront Sebastian's pain and martyrdom. Omitting references to his post-mortem appearances to Roman contemporaries described in the *Golden Legend*, Semitecolo's panels instead focus on the saint's lifetime acts rather than his posthumous saintly powers.

[8] Although Semitecolo ostensibly sets the scene for burial in front of the Roman churches of St. Peter's and San Paolo fuori le mura, architectural historians point to the painted interiors as rare indications of what Padua's Romanesque cathedral may have looked like. Giulio Bresciani Alvarez, "Le fasi costruttive e l'arredo plastico-architettonico della cattedrale," in *Il Duomo di Padova e il suo battistero*, eds. C. Bellinati, U. Gamba, G. Bresciani Alvarez, L. Grossato (Padua: Edizioni Lint, 1977), 93.

None of the narrative panels, *St. Sebastian before Diocletian and Maximilian*, *St. Sebastian Shot by Arrows*, *St. Sebastian's Beating and Death*, and the *Burial of St. Sebastian*, depict his mortal or posthumous miracles. Instead, the chosen narratives emphasize Sebastian's piety and bodily suffering and martyrdom. The corporeal focus of the narrative scenes corresponds to and strengthens the iconography of the iconic panels that highlight Christ's humanity as nursing child and executed man. Furthermore, pictorial references to a saintly body on the outside of the cupboard visually reinforce awareness of the actual fragments of other such bodies concealed just behind the painted images.

The *Trinity*, *Madonna and Child*, and *St. Sebastian* panels seen when the reliquary cupboard was closed were certainly the most visible images on the cupboard, but they were not the only ones included in the decorative program. The *St. Sebastian before Diocletian and Maximilian* and *St. Sebastian Shot by Arrows* have been sawed apart to separate these images from those on the interior faces. The back of the former panel is painted with a half-length depiction of St. Sebastian, who is set against an otherworldly gold background and holds a palm branch that signifies his martyrdom (figure 4-7). The back of the *St. Sebastian Shot by Arrows* panel was painted with a similarly iconic saintly image, but this time a local saint is depicted. St. Daniel, a second-century Paduan deacon and martyr (d. 168), holds a standard in addition to his more traditional attribute of a city model, referencing his role as one of Padua's protectors (figure 4-8). The cathedral's crypt had served as Daniel's burial place since the late eleventh century; his appearance on the sacristy cupboard effectively ties together two significant relic sites within the church.

The original arrangement of the images that made up the reliquary cupboard has been debated for decades. However, all analyses agree that some of the panels were moveable so that

the relics within their elaborate reliquaries could be revealed to fortunate viewers on special occasions. Until the late 1970s scholars followed Sergio Bettini's proposal regarding the cupboard's composition, which presented a vertically-oriented structure with three rows of paired panels.[9] In this reconstruction, the middle pair of panels (*St. Sebastian before Diocletian and Maximilian* and *St. Sebastian Shot by Arrows*) could flip down to open the cupboard and reveal the relics as well as the interior images. Bettini, and later Luciano Grossato, suggested that originally a third saint was painted across the join of the Sebastian and Daniel panels and became visible when the cupboard doors were open. They also argued that this saint was most likely St. Giustina (d. 304), an early Christian virgin martyred under the reign of Diocletian and another of Padua's patron saints.[10]

Bettini's reconstruction proved incorrect after the appearance in a 1978 exhibition of another cupboard panel in Switzerland that depicts a half-length dead Christ flanked by Mary on the left and St. John the Evangelist on the right (figure 4-9).[11] Examination of the Swiss panel with the cupboard's other two interior panel reveals that they very likely were placed in a row – from left to right, Sebastian, the Dead Christ, and Daniel – as vestiges of the Virgin's blue robe appear on the edge of the Sebastian panel and likewise with John's green mantle on the image of Daniel. This discovery means that the cupboard must have originally been horizontally oriented and arranged in two rows of three panels each.[12]

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[9] Sergio Bettini, "Contributo al Semitecolo," *Rivista d'arte* 12 (1930): 163-74.
[10] The large Benedictine church dedicated to Santa Giustina was one of the most important Paduan religious sites in the Middle Ages. See Luciano Grossato, *Da Giotto al Mantegna* (Milan: Electa, 1974), cat. no. 36.
[11] The cupboard appears to have undergone a series of panel separations throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. All the interior images were removed from the exterior panels by 1927. Claudio Bellinati, "Le tavolette del Semitecolo (1367) nella Pinacoteca dei Canonici di Padova," *Atti e memorie dell'Accademia patavina di scienze, lettere ed arti* 104 (1991-1992): 142-44.
[12] Bellinati, "Le tavolette del Semitecolo," 145.

Claudio Bellinati and G. Rossi Scarpa have both proposed reconstructions that take the new orientation into account, with Scarpa presenting the most compelling argument.[13] In this arrangement, when the cupboard was closed the viewer would have seen *Sebastian before Diocletian and Maximilian*, the *Trinity*, and *Sebastian Shot by Arrows* on the top row, with *Sebastian's Beating and Death*, the *Madonna and Child*, and *Sebastian's Burial* below. On those occasions when the cupboard was opened, the top panel would flip down and the viewer would then see the iconic *Sebastian*, *Dead Christ*, and *Daniel* surmounted by a row of precious metal reliquaries.[14] Therefore, when closed the cupboard's program focused attention on the physical suffering and sacrifice of St. Sebastian, an effective intercessor, and Christ, whose human nature is also emphasized on the cupboard's exterior as a man crucified and a nursing child. This represented corporality was then made tangible when the cupboard was opened to reveal the relics. Together with the powerful combination of universal and local saints on the interior faces of the door, the open cupboard stressed the very real presence of the holy in Padua's cathedral to those who witnessed it.

The reliquary cupboard of Padua's cathedral has suffered considerably over the nearly 700 years that have passed since its creation. Housed today in the Museo Diocesano located in a wing of the archbishop's palace adjacent to the cathedral, the painted surfaces of the cupboard doors have undergone the stress of being sawed apart and survive in varying physical conditions. While the narrative cycle of St. Sebastian's martyrdom has survived, with a few exceptions, in remarkably good condition, the interior panels showing *Sts. Sebastian* and *Daniel* have been

[13] G. Rossi Scarpa, "Nicoletto Semitecolo nel Duomo di Padova," in *Dipinti veneti: Collezione Luciano Sorlini*, ed. Renato Polacco (Carzago di Calvagese della Riviera, 2000), 388.
[14] Bellinati's reconstruction reverses the top and bottom rows as well as the exterior and interior panels of the top row, so that the iconic images appear when the cupboard is closed and the narratives are revealed when open. This arrangement confuses the narrative order and proposes a confusing situation in which some narrative panels are always visible and others are not. See Bellinati, "Le tavolette del Semitecolo," 143.

damaged the most, especially in the upper third of the panels, where there has been a significant amount of paint loss and regilding.

Niccolò Semitecolo

The panels of the Duomo reliquary cupboard constitute one of the most significant commissions of Niccolò Semitecolo's known *oeuvre*. A native of Venice, as indicated by his signature and a 1353 document that lists him as a resident of the San Luca neighborhood, Semitecolo's life is otherwise poorly documented.[15] The 1367 reliquary cupboard panels for Padua's cathedral appear to have been the major project of his career prior to a 1370 fresco cycle depicting the story of the Volto Santo, literally the "Holy Face", a miraculous wooden crucifix kept in the Tuscan city of Lucca, for the Lucchese community's chapel in Santa Maria dei Servi, Venice.[16] Indeed, Semitecolo's work prior to the *armadio* panels are now considered tentative attributions that include some parts of a fresco cycle in the Paduan church of the Eremitani and an altarpiece depicting the *Coronation of the Virgin*.[17]

Despite his Venetian background, Semitecolo's frequent activity in Padua has prompted scholars to consider his work most often within that stylistic and cultural milieu. Among those painters working in fourteenth-century Padua who have been the focus of intense scholarship, such as Giotto, Altichiero and Giusto de'Menabuoi, Guariento is most frequently associated with Semitecolo's style; indeed, the Paduan Guariento and the Venetian Semitecolo have been intertwined since their lifetimes.

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[15] "*Donatus et Nicholetus Semithecollo pictores sancti luce,*" Published in Rodolfo Pallucchini, *La pittura veneziana del Trecento* (Venice: Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, 1964), 120.
[16] Francesca d'Arcais, "Nicoletto Semitecolo," in vol. 1 of *La pittura nel Veneto: Il Trecento* (Milan: Electa, 1992), 547.
[17] The attribution of the *Coronation of the Virgin* altarpiece dated to 1355 in the Thyssen collection in Lugano has been debated since the 1930s. For a succinct summary see Miklós Boskovits, *Early Italian Painting 1290-1470: The Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection*, trans. Francoise Pouncey Chiarini (London: Sotheby's Publications, 1990), 162-63.

Guariento di Arpo, a painter active in the mid-fourteenth century (circa 1338-1370), enjoyed the patronage of the highest echelons of Paduan society. Due to his naturalistic style and effective manipulation of space he is often extolled as the best representative of Paduan painting in the decades after Giotto's work in the city in the first years of the Trecento.[18] A native of Padua, early on in his career Guariento completed an altarpiece of the *Coronation of the Virgin* for the cathedral of Piove di Sacco, a small town a few miles southeast of Padua. Soon thereafter Guariento began receiving commissions from members of the Carrara court, Padua's seigneurial rulers since the mid-Trecento.[19] For example, in 1350-1351 he undertook the frescoes for the elaborate tomb of Ubertino and Giacomo da Carrara in Sant'Agostino.[20] His last major Paduan commission, a cycle dated to 1360-65, covered the choir and apse of the church of the Eremitani with episodes of the lives of Saints Philip, James and Augustine.[21] Finally, he frescoed the Sala del Maggior Consiglio of the Doge's palace in Venice with a large and imposing *Coronation of the Virgin*, which was unfortunately mostly lost to fire in 1577.[22] Therefore, Guariento's prestigious projects of the 1350s and 1360s positioned him as one of the premier artists working in the Veneto at that time.

While undocumented, it is possible that Guariento may have met the younger Semitecolo on a 1361 visit to Venice.[23] In any event, given Semitecolo's multiple projects in Padua and Guariento's work in Venice, it seems likely that their paths crossed at some point. Rodolfo Pallucchini and Francesca d'Arcais have argued that Semitecolo assisted Guariento with work on the impressive Eremitani cycle, particularly the *St. Augustine at the Foot of the Cross* and the

[18] Anna Maria Spiazzi, "Padova," in vol. 1 of *La pittura nel Veneto: Il Trecento* (Milan: Electa, 1992), 117-22.
[19] On the role of the Carrara in Paduan history, see below pages 177-80.
[20] Ibid., 158.
[21] The Eremitani frescoes suffered heavy damage from bombing in World War II. As a result, only the scenes from the left wall of the choir and a small part of the apse survive intact. Francesca d'Arcais, *Guariento* (Venice: Alfieri, 1974), 64-65 and eadem, "Pittura del Duecento," 160.
[22] Spiazzi, "Padova," 121.
[23] D'Arcais, "Nicoletto Semitecolo," 548.

Crucifix in the apse.[24] The scale and prominence of the Eremitani cycle, along with the experience of working with an artist of such high stature as Guariento, may have made Semitecolo an attractive candidate when the cathedral canons were awarding the commission for the Duomo *armadio*.[25]

Semitecolo's connection to Guariento was, of course, not the only influence on his work. As an artist growing up in mid-Trecento Venice, it is assumed that he was either a student of or at least deeply affected by the dominant figure of Paolo Veneziano.[26] Maestro Paolo maintained a large workshop and is credited with profoundly influencing the elaborate, Gothic style of a large part of fourteenth-century Venetian painting.[27] Thus, the intricately patterned clothing St. Sebastian wears in the reliquary cupboard panels may stem from the type of ornate, detailed textiles frequently seen in Maestro Paolo's work, such as the panel depicting the *Madonna and Child with Doge Francesco Dandolo* in the basilica of the Frari in Venice.[28]

More specifically, the format of the Duomo reliquary cupboard bears marked similarity to one of Maestro Paolo's major works, the Pala Feriale in San Marco, Venice completed in 1345 (figure 4-10). This large wooden altarpiece covered the Pala d'Oro, the magnificent Byzantine metal, jewel and enamel altarpiece on the Venetian church's high altar, except for those special festal occasions when the precious object was revealed.[29] In addition to functioning like the Pala Feriale as a painted moveable cover for sacred liturgical objects, both Maestro Paolo and

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[24] Pallucchini, 123.
[25] To date, no extant contract for the *armadio* has been found. Given its location in the cathedral sacristy and the absence of reference to any particular lay donor on the cupboard itself or in any published documents, it seems likely that the cathedral canons commissioned the cupboard as part of their decoration of the church interior.
[26] Pallucchini, 120; Spiazzi, "Padova," 123.
[27] Mauro Lucco, "Pittura del Trecento a Venezia," in vol. 1 of *La pittura in Italia: Il Duecento e il Trecento*, ed. Enrico Castelnuovo (Milan: Electa, 1986), 176-82.
[28] Ibid., 176.
[29] Doge Andrea Dandolo commissioned the Pala Feriale in 1345 around the same time as he was also refurbishing the Pala d'Oro. Rona Goffen, "Paolo Veneziano e Andrea Dandolo: Una nuova lettura della pala feriale," in *La pala d'oro*, eds. H.R. Hahnloser and R. Polacco (Venice: Canal, 1994), 173-75; eadem, "La pala feriale de Paolo Veneziano," in *La basilique Saint-Marc de Venise*, ed. Ettore Vio (Paris: Citadelles & Mazenod, 2001), 306-09.

Semitecolo's works combined iconic representations with narrative cycles in two horizontal registers.[30] The upper row of the Pala Feriale features seven panels with the dead Christ in the center flanked by other half-length depictions of the Virgin, St. John the Evangelist and four other saints. The bottom row presents a cycle of St. Mark's life and martyrdom as well as the translation of his relics to Venice. It therefore seems entirely likely that Semitecolo was influenced by Maestro Paolo's famous work when he came to paint the Paduan reliquary cupboard as he incorporated the Byzantinizing half-length figures, particularly the central Christological group, and the historiated saint's cycle in the reliquary cupboard's composition. The iconographical and formal similarities between the reliquary cupboard and the Venetian altarpiece thus links Padua cathedral's relic collection to a prestigious predecessor and serves to elevate the status of the cathedral and the city at large.

Previous Scholarship

Art historians' tendency to cast Semitecolo's work in the shadow of Maestro Paolo and Guariento has played a significant part in the literature on the panels of the Padua cathedral reliquary cupboard. In 1930 Sergio Bettini and Luigi Coletti argued that the panels should be divided into two groups, one attributed to Semitecolo and another to a painter they identified as the Pseudo-Guariento.[31] In their analysis, the narrative panels remain attributed to Semitecolo, largely due to the fact that one of them bears his signature, while the iconic panels are removed from his *oeuvre* due to variation in the figures' proportions and the markedly different iconographic approach.[32] They assert that the contrast between the narrative panels' "Veneto-

[30] Luciano Grossato, "Pitture, sculture e opera di oreficeria," in *Il Duomo di Padova e il suo battistero*, eds. C. Bellinati, U. Gamba, G. Bresciani Alvarez, L. Grossato (Padua: Edizioni Lint, 1977), 147; Scarpa, 388.
[31] Bettini, 163-74; Luigi Coletti, "Studi alla pittura del Trecento a Padova," *Rivista d'arte* 12 (1930): 323-80.
[32] Bettini, 163-64.

Byzantine" style and what they found to be a less decorative and more naturalistic style in the iconic panels demonstrates Semitecolo's Venetian-trained hand in the former group and a more Guarientan hand in the latter.[33] However, Evelyn Sandberg Vavala disputed Bettini and Coletti's division, arguing convincingly that the inherent differences between narrative and iconic images are just as likely to cause stylistic disparities among the panels, and more recent scholars have not supported Bettini and Coletti's attribution of the *Madonna of Humility*, *Trinity*, and half-length saints to a Pseudo-Guariento.[34]

However, over the past twenty-five years art historians have still consistently downplayed Semitecolo's role as an independent master within the artistic milieu of the Trecento Veneto. The studies of late medieval painting in Venice and Padua produced by Francesca d'Arcais, Anna Maria Spiazzi, and Mauro Lucco characterized Semitecolo as a competent craftsman, but one whose success came as a result of his connections with more significant artists such as Guariento.[35] Little mention of Semitecolo is made in the English art historical literature on this period. Diana Norman's discussion of his reliquary cupboard panels remains one rare exception; however, in large part she continues the stylistic analysis established by the Italian scholars mentioned above as she emphasizes the intricate, courtly aesthetic seen in the St. Sebastian cycle.[36]

By privileging discussions of Semitecolo's style, art historians have neglected the fact that his reliquary cupboard panels functioned as part of a broad and complex sacred environment. The *armadio* was a functional object in the cathedral sacristy and was intended to

[33] Coletti, 374-79.
[34] Evelyn Sandberg Vavala, "Semitecolo and Guariento," *Art in America and Elsewhere* 22, no. 1 (1933): 2-3; Spiazzi, "Padova," 123; Norman, 186-87.
[35] D'Arcais, "Pittura del Duecento," 150-71; Spiazzi, "Padova," 88-177; Lucco, 176-92.
[36] Diana Norman, "Change and continuity: Art and religion after the Black Death," in vol. 1 of *Siena, Florence and Padua: Art, Society and Religion 1280-1400*, ed. Diana Norman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 185-88.

facilitate the liturgical rituals of the church. Due to its position as a designated storage place for relics, the reliquary cupboard was an integral part of the devotional and ceremonial activities that circumscribed the ritual movement of relics within and outside the cathedral's walls. The Duomo's significance to all of Padua connected its relics and their decorative surroundings to the larger political and spiritual contexts of the city. Furthermore, events in Paduan history at the time of the reliquary cupboard's creation directly affected the religious environment of the cathedral that housed it and its valuable contents.

Padua: Commune and Carrara

The political history of late medieval Padua, characterized by the emergence of the Carrara family, the city's transition from a republican commune to seigneurial rule and frequent conflict with other states in northeast Italy, formed a cultural environment in which the patronage of and influence within religious institutions such as the Duomo could be used to solidify and consolidate power. This period of seigneurial control came to an end in November 1405, when the Venetian government accepted Padua's surrender, marking its incorporation into the Venetian state and officially concluding the Paduan nobility's final attempt to retain autonomous control under the Carrara.[37] The city of Padua had its origins in another empire, this one ruled by Rome, in the first century CE. Its location on the Brenta River provided first the Romans and then the Byzantines with strategic access to the Adriatic and the settlement flourished as a military base until the seventh century. Successive invasions from northern tribes significantly depressed the city's economic and political fortunes for several centuries but in the twelfth century an increase in trade and economic prosperity supported the rebuilding of the circuit of

[37] Benjamin Kohl, *Padua under the Carrara 1318-1405* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 331-34.

protective city walls and churches, such as the cathedral and Benedictine monastery of Santa Giustina.[38]

An aristocratic class developed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries alongside Padua's economic and population growth, supported largely by extensive landholdings in the Paduan *contado*.[39] As occurred throughout the Italian peninsula during this period, ongoing conflict between the papacy and the Holy Roman Emperor encouraged factionalism in Padua and its surrounding region. The Guelf (pro-papacy) and Ghibelline (pro-imperial) divide erupted in Padua when Ezzelino da Romano, with the support of Emperor Frederick II, swept through the eastern Veneto and overthrew the pro-Guelf, communal government in 1236. The ensuing twenty years of Ezzelino's despotic rule fomented increasing outrage on the part of Guelf nobles in Padua. However, it was not until the death of Ezzelino's imperial patron in 1250 and after many outspoken local dissenters were executed that Padua's nobility eventually defeated the tyrant in 1256, thereby also raising the popularity and power of surviving Guelf families.[40]

In 1318, the leader of one of these prominent Guelf families, Giacomo il Grande da Carrara, was elected *dominus generalis* by the communal government.[41] The Carrara, who fought against and suffered under Ezzelino da Romano (the head of the family, Giacomo, was executed by the Ghibelline ruler in 1240), was by the early Trecento one of the most powerful and well-connected families in Padua.[42] Their political position enjoyed a boost with Giacomo il Grande's 1318 election, which gave him control of the Paduan army in an attempt to build a

[38] Ibid., 3-4.
[39] Ibid., 14-16.
[40] Ibid., 35.
[41] The Carrara claimed to be descendants of tenth-century German knights. By the twelfth century they were feudal lords over the land surrounding the village of Carrara and their holdings eventually extended over a good share of the southern Paduan *contado*. Kohl, *Padua under the Carrara*, 35.
[42] Shrewd marriages in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries placed the Carrara in the kinship circles of influential noble houses in Genoa, Milan, and Venice, thus giving them what Benjamin Kohl termed "unmatched" connections when compared to other Paduan nobles. Kohl, *Padua under the Carrara*, 37.

strong, centralized military force capable of fending off external threats from cities such as nearby Verona and discouraging internal attempts at tyranny.[43] The predominantly military character of Giacomo il Grande's role was further expanded by administrative control in the appointment of magistrates and taxation, powers that at this point he shared with the communal councils.[44]

The invasion by Frederick of Hapsburg in 1320, followed by the heavy-handed involvement of the Della Scala rulers of Verona in Paduan affairs, limited the city's autonomy and the powers of the Carrara family. It was not until 1337 that, with the considerable help of Venetian forces, Padua finally freed itself from Veronese influence, and not until 1350 did its Carrara leaders begin to pursue actively a policy of increasing seigneurial rule.[45]

In the three decades following Giacomino and Francesco il Vecchio da Carrara's election in 1350 as co-leaders of the Paduan state the Carrara family pursued a variety of methods to expand and solidify their power. By 1355 Francesco il Vecchio had secured sole control and proceeded to expand the powers of the *dominus generalis* by revising the communal statutory code in 1362. Significantly, he placed the selection of Padua's *podestà*, the judicial and military head of the city, under his purview rather than that of the communal council. In addition to controlling this pivotal position, Francesco il Vecchio systematically promoted and rewarded those families most closely allied to his own, thus creating a politically and financially powerful Carrara-backed elite in Paduan society. Carrara enthusiasm for territorial expansion also encouraged the growth of a privileged noble military class that rose at the political expense of

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[43] Benjamin G. Kohl, "Government and society in Renaissance Padua," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 2 (1972): 206-07; Silvana Collodo, "Padova nel Trecento," in *Cultura, arte e committenza nella basilica di S. Antonio di Padova nel Trecento*, eds. Luca Baggio and Michela Benetazzo (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 2003), 3-4.
[44] For a brief overview of the ways in which the Carrara built their political power in the mid-Trecento see Kohl, "Government and society," 206-12.
[45] Ibid., 206-07.

Padua's older guild and merchant class. Therefore, over the course of the 1350s, 1360s and 1370s Francesco il Vecchio steadily transformed Padua's social and political landscape from an often vulnerable, but resilient, republic to a militaristic seigneurial state.

The establishment of secure Carrara power in Padua in the fourteenth century constituted a constant struggle, marked by foreign conflicts and internal complications. By accepting Venetian assistance to free themselves of Veronese interference in 1337, the Carrara had effectively tied themselves to an increasingly acquisitive foreign power. Political tension and resentment between the two states deepened over the mid-Trecento and finally exploded in two wars of the 1370s.[46] The second of these, the War of Chioggia (1379-1381), definitively ended any appearance of friendship between the two cities, as Padua entered into an ongoing conflict between Venice and Genoa to fight against her erstwhile ally.[47]

The political and military difficulties weathered by the Carrara and their allies were accompanied by further challenges resulting from recurring plagues throughout the second half of the Trecento. Outbreaks of pestilence in 1359, 1361-1364 and again in 1384 affected the city's patterns of trade, social interaction and spiritual activities. Rampant disease prompted the Carrara rulers to take action to ensure the city's physical and economic health. For example, after the 1359 outbreak, Francesco il Vecchio attempted to augment the surviving workforce by granting amnesty to any exiled convicts who would agree to return to Paduan territory and work for at least three years. The 1384 advent of disease forced the opening of a new Jewish cemetery.[48] In sum, for Paduans in the mid-Trecento, the combination of ongoing military conflict, recurring plagues and changing political power must have resulted in an atmosphere of instability and

[46] Sarah Blake McHam, "Padua, Treviso, and Bassano," in *Venice and the Veneto*, ed. Peter Humfrey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 207.
[47] The initial cause for conflict between Venice and Genoa, control of the island of Tenedos, was quickly overshadowed by each state's gathering of foreign allies. Kohl, *Padua under the Carrara*, 205-18.
[48] Ibid., 140-41.

uncertainty. In such circumstances then, the political and religious authorities increased attention towards devotion to and care of helpful intercessor saints, including the commission of a new reliquary cupboard that would properly honor and protect their relics.

Padua Cathedral

By the mid-1300s the Franciscan church of Sant'Antonio on the city's southeastern edge had established itself as a major pilgrimage center and was enjoying the benefits of donations from wealthy devotees from near and far.[49] As befit their status as leaders of the city, throughout the fourteenth century the Carrara solidified their social and religious status through patronage at various Paduan churches; the prestige of the cathedral within Padua's ecclesiastical environment was in turn supported and enhanced by elite lay patronage. The newly established Carrara and the families allied to them participated in patronage activities at the city's sacred sites for multiple reasons: to aid their own hopes of salvation, to augment their standing within the town elite and to intensify connections between Padua's political and ecclesiastical institutions.[50] Therefore, they commissioned projects of all sorts throughout local churches, donating everything from silver chalices at the Franciscan church of Sant'Antonio to financing a large fresco cycle at the city's baptistery.[51]

Within this broader patronage trend, the Carrara particularly associated themselves with the cathedral in the second half of the fourteenth-century. This may be due in large part to the close proximity of their main family residence to the cathedral precinct. The Carrara palace, begun in the 1330s under Ubertino da Carrara, was situated just behind the Bishop's palace that

[49] On Sant'Antonio's development as a pilgrimage destination see Chapter Five.
[50] Giovanna Baldissin Molli, "La committenza delle oreficerie," in *Cultura, arte e committenza nella basilica di S. Antonio di Padova nel Trecento*, ed. Luca Baggio and Michela Benetazzo (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 2003), 243-45.
[51] For discussion of the types of donations, particularly in metalwork, given by the Carrarese elite in the Trecento see Molli, "La committenza delle oreficerie," 245-50.

also adjoined the cathedral. Therefore, the nearby Duomo also served as their family parish.[52] In the late Trecento Francesco Novello da Carrara intended to finance the replacement of the cathedral's wooden roof with stone vaults, a major project abandoned in the first decade of the Quattrocento due to Venice's defeat of the Carrara.[53] Prior to this plan, in the 1370s, Fina di Buzzacarina, Francesco il Vecchio's wife, commissioned a major fresco cycle from Giusto de'Menabuoi for the baptistery that is attached to the cathedral's façade, a space that also served as the ruling couple's mausoleum.[54] The Carrara also involved themselves in the cathedral's liturgical and ritual activities as when, for example, Stefano da Carrara donated a large metal chalice that was kept in the sacristy.[55] Thus, at the time the reliquary cupboard was created in the 1360s, the Carrara and their allies were deeply involved in properly maintaining and decorating the cathedral. No contract survives for Semitecolo's commission so we cannot know if Padua's rulers contributed funds to the canons' new reliquary container. However, it should be noted that the *armadio* was made in an atmosphere of widespread Carrara patronage and influence at the cathedral. In addition to helping to consolidate their power within the city, such conspicuous and expensive patronage of the cathedral complex by Padua's political authorities provided spiritual benefits for the generous patrons and reinforced the cathedral's status as a site of significant religious and civic devotion.

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[52] Cesira Gasparotto, *La reggia dei Da Carrara* (Padua: Societá Cooperativa Tipografica, 1968), 6-7.
[53] Giulio Bresciani Alvarez, "La cattedrale," in *Padova: Basiliche e chiese*, ed. Claudio Bellinati and Lionello Puppi (Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 1975), 85.
[54] Howard Saalman, "Carrara Burials in the Baptistery of Padua," *Art Bulletin* 69, no. 3 (1987): 381-82; Margaret Plant, "Patronage in the Circle of the Carrara Family: Padua, 1337-1405," in *Patronage, Art, and Society in Renaissance Italy*, eds. F. W. Kent and Patricia Simons (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 190; *Padua, Baptistery of the Cathedral: Frescoes by Giusto de'Menabuoi*, ed. Pietro Lievore, 2nd ed. (Padua: G. Deganello, 1994); Benjamin Kohl, "Fina da Carrara, née Buzzacarini: Consort, Mother, and Patron of Art in Trecento Padua," in *Beyond Isabella: Secular Women Patrons of Art in Renaissance Italy*, eds. Sheryl E. Reiss and David G. Wilkins (Kirksville, Mo.: Truman State University Press, 2001), 19-36.
[55] *calyx magnus que donavit de Sthefanus de Carraris*…(the great chalice Stefano da Carrara donated). Archivio e Biblioteca Capitolare nella Curia vescovile di Padova (hereafter ACP) MS E 66, 4, fol. 5v. The above record appears in the 1405 sacristy inventory; the 1407 inventory likely lists the same chalice as well as one given by the Gonzaga duke of Mantua. ACP MS E 66, 5, fol. 5r.

By the time the Carrara strengthened their power in Padua in the 1310s and subsequently became involved with projects at the Duomo, decades of conflict with civic authority had considerably weakened the cathedral's bishop and canons. Statutes enacted in the late 1200s and early 1300s restricted episcopal jurisdiction and minimized the clergy's exemption from taxes and legal immunity.[56] These constrictions, combined with a tradition of absentee bishops, left episcopal powers vulnerable to exploitation by the rising Carrara elite. Thus, the Carrara and their allies increasingly augmented their fortunes with the tithes of villages and whole *contado* districts, a source of wealth that the bishop was empowered to grant to chosen laymen. Benjamin Kohl has argued that the revenue provided by these awarded tithes was one reason why the Carrara directly involved themselves in the election of Paduan bishops after 1359.[57] In fact, the bishop under whose tenure the cathedral's reliquary *armadio* was made, Pileo da Prata, was Francesco il Vecchio's first cousin and a few years later Carrara power over the office reached its height when Francesco il Vecchio's illegitimate son, Stefano, was elected bishop in 1393.[58]

The seigneurial influence at work on Padua's cathedral community in the second half of the Trecento was preceded by over one thousand years of religious activity at the site, which lies in the center of the city's ancient Roman foundations.[59] The cathedral was dedicated to the

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[56] Kohl, *Padua under the Carrara*, 22-23.

[57] In the Middle Ages, a bishop's role generally included the ability to reward his allies with the funds from the tithes those people living in the bishopric were required to pay. As seen with the Carrara and the bishops of Padua in the fourteenth century, this system could be exploited to further support powerful laymen. Kohl, *Padua under the Carrara*, 23-25; Collodo, 12-13.

[58] Saalman, "Carrara Burials," 383-84; Holgate, 24; Collodo, 24-5. The tradition of political machinations connected with the appointment of Padua's bishop continued after the Carrara's defeat, such that nearly every fifteenth-century bishop was a member of the Venetian nobility. Ian Holgate, "Paduan culture in Venetian care: The patronage of Bishop Pietro Donato," *Renaissance Studies* 16, no. 1 (2002): 4; McHam, "Padua, Treviso, and Bassano," 213-14.

[59] Alvarez asserts that the original church built on the site and dedicated to Santa Maria did not serve as Padua's cathedral until the tenth century, as in the ninth century the bishop of Padua was identified as the "*episcopus ex aecclesie sancta Iustine pataviensis*" (the bishop from the Paduan church of Santa Giustina). Indeed, it seems quite possible that the original episcopal seat in Padua was in fact located at the church of Santa Giustina on the outskirts of town and that the title was transferred to the more centrally located church of Santa Maria by the mid-tenth century, when Bishop Ildeberto convened a diocesan council in 964 "*…in cathedra sui episcopatus in domo sanctae Mariae…*" (at Santa Maria, the seat of our bishop). "La cattedrale," 77-79; A. Gloria, *Codice diplomatico padovano*

Virgin Mary until 1754, when it received the more specific title of Santa Maria dell'Assunta (Virgin Mary of the Assumption). Excavations in and around the present cathedral indicate that the church was rebuilt several times between the late 900s and the mid-1500s.[60] Niccolò Semitecolo's reliquary cupboard was installed in a building that dated from the late twelfth-century and that featured a raised choir above a crypt. This plan caused clerical preparation and storage of vestments and liturgical implements to occur in multiple locations in the cathedral. Alvarez posits the presence of two sacristies flanking the choir, used for ritual preparation and storage.[61] The lower crypt level was also occasionally used for liturgical preparation in the same way as a more traditional sacristy space.[62] The crypt's main function was as a burial place for bishops and saints, and the attendant need for liturgical and devotional activities around these tombs may well have prompted the cathedral canons to utilize all available space for ritual preparation.

Padua's cathedral was profoundly altered in the mid-Cinquecento (figure 4-11). The construction of a new choir had been planned since 1399 when Bishop Stefano da Carrara obtained a bull from Pope Boniface IX that called for repairing and expanding the church.[63] However, it was not until a model by Michelangelo was delivered in 1551 that Andrea da Valle oversaw actual building work between 1552 and 1564.[64] The remodeling resulted in a church

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dal secolo sesto a tutto l'undecimo (Venice: Deputazione Veneta di Storia Patria, 1877), doc. 47, p. 69-72, published in Francesco Gregorio, "Il problema della sede episcopale a Padova," *Padova e il suo territorio* 14 (1999): 31.

[60] Bishop Odelrico consecrated a church in 1075 that may have replaced an earlier structure that invading Hungarian forces destroyed in the early tenth century. This church was severely damaged by an earthquake in 1117 but was rebuilt by 1180, when the patriarch of Aquileia consecrated the church that stood largely unchanged until dramatic remodeling in the mid-sixteenth century also prompted the removal of much of the interior decoration, such as the fresco cycles on the nave walls. Francesco Gregorio, "La cattedrale di Padova in età medievale," *Padova e il suo territorio* 14 (1999): 8-11.

[61] Alvarez, "La cattedrale," 82.

[62] Ibid., 84.

[63] Alvarez, "Le fasi costruttive…," 93.

[64] Giulio Bresciani Alvarez, "L'architettura sacra del secolo XVI a Padova," *Bollettino del Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura* 19 (1977): 167-74; Gregorio, "La cattedrale di Padova," 11; Claudio Bellinati, *Michelangelo e il "nuovo coro" della cattedrale di Padova (1551-1582)* (Padua: Schiavo, 2005), 5-10.

with a nave and two side aisles punctuated by chapels. Changes to the choir also necessitated alterations in the disposition of the cathedral's sacristy space. By 1564, two newly remodeled sacristies were in use, the *sacrestia maggiore* ("great sacristy," also known as the *sacrestia dei canonici* or "canons' sacristy") to the left of the high chapel and the *sacrestia dei massari* or "lay sacristy" on the right. The sacristies' date of completion stems from records pertaining to the *sacrestia maggiore*'s new decorative program. Domenico Campagnola and his workshop painted the walls with a fresco cycle depicting Paduan saints that was in place by 1565.[65] The previous year, a new wooden cupboard carved out of walnut and decorated with the images of four of Padua's patron saints (Giustina, Prosdocimus, Daniel and Anthony), had been installed in the *sacrestia maggiore* and was serving as the cathedral's primary place of relic storage (figure 4-12).[66] The unusual decision to commission a sculpted cupboard may have been, at least in part, a response to the marble and intarsia reliquary *armadio* that the Franciscans at the Santo in Padua had installed in the 1470s to great acclaim.

The sacristies' sixteenth-century remodeling has further complicated the already murky issue of where exactly the Semitecolo cupboard was originally located in the cathedral. The earliest record of these panels dates to 1765, at which point they were kept in a room "near the Canons' library."[67] It seems that no document written between 1367 and 1765 survives that describes its location, although given the appearance of the wooden reliquary cupboard it seems clear that the Trecento container had been removed from the sacristy by 1564. Lacking textual evidence, we are left to rely on circumstantial evidence, thus, given the late medieval practice of

[65] Alvarez, "La cattedrale," 89; Bellinati, "Contributo alla storia del Duomo," 37.
[66] This enormous object, made by an unknown artisan, is still in use as a reliquary cupboard. Claudio Bellinati, "Contributo alla storia del duomo di Padova (1076-1797)," in *Il Duomo di Padova e il suo battistero*, eds. C. Bellinati, U. Gamba, G. Bresciani Alvarez, L. Grossato (Padua: Edizioni Lint, 1977), 37; idem, *Michelangelo e il nuovo coro…*, 18.
[67] *…in una stanza vicina alla biblioteca de'Sigg. Canonici.* Rossetti only describes the four narrative panels, thus the cupboard must have been broken down into several pieces by this time. Giambatista Rossetti, *Descrizione delle pitture, sculture, ed architetture di Padova*, 3rd ed. (Padua: Seminario, 1780), 140.

keeping relics in secure church sacristies as well as the panels' acknowledged function as a relic container, we can be reasonably sure that the Semitecolo cupboard was installed in the sacristy. However, it should be noted that the cupboard is not particularly large and would not have been able to accommodate all of the cathedral's relics, therefore additional reliquary cupboards may well have been in use. This may account for an intriguing record from 1562 in which the chapter decided to repair the old sacristy cupboards where the church treasure is stored.[68] The need for more, now destroyed or lost, cupboards to properly protect the cathedral's metalwork is supported by the growth of its relic collection in the late Trecento, which in turn may be attributed to a combination of the desire to support the Carrara neighborhood church and the difficult circumstances of war and plague present during this period that encouraged Paduans to search for saintly protection.

Relics and Reliquaries at the Cathedral

Padua's cathedral enjoyed a prominent position as home to a prestigious collection of relics, particularly those of local saints. The cathedral's consecration in 1075 was quickly followed by the translation of the relics of St. Daniel there from the basilica of Santa Giustina on the outskirts of town.[69] Bishop Odelrico smoothed the way for this transfer of the remains of the early Christian deacon and martyr through frequent substantial donations to the Benedictine monastery, and finally succeeded in installing his relics in the crypt of the new cathedral, where they joined those of St. Fidenzio and the eighth-century bishop Tricidio and further enhanced the cathedral's prestige.[70] Indeed, this eleventh-century translation would later make the cathedral

[68] *Il 4 aprile 1562 veniva deliberato in Capitolo che fossero riparati i vecchi armadi della sagrestia maggiore…* (On 4 April 1562 the chapter decided that the old cupboards in the large sacristy could be repaired…). ACP *Acta*, 4 aprile 1462, fol. 66r. See also Bellinati, "Contributo alla storia del Duomo," 36.
[69] Gregorio, "La cattedrale di Padova," 11.
[70] Alvarez, "La cattedrale," 81; Gregorio, "La cattedrale di Padova," 11.

competitive with other Paduan churches that by the mid-thirteenth century built up large relic collections and pilgrimage activity. Perhaps most notably, Santa Giustina held St. Luke the Evangelist's relics and Sant'Antonio had the body of its eponymous saint.[71] Therefore, the cathedral enjoyed a longstanding, beneficial relationship with relics that significantly promoted its status within the city's religious hierarchy and this connection was deepened through the effort and expense of creating a dedicated, decorated reliquary cupboard in the Trecento.

The earliest surviving sacristy inventory dates from 1339 so we are left with a frustrating lack of information regarding the cathedral's relic collection from the twelfth to the early fourteenth centuries.[72] However, in the decades immediately preceding the creation of Semitecolo's reliquary cupboard, it appears that the collection was expanded under the auspices of Bishop Ildebrandino Conti, who personally donated several relics and reliquaries to his church. Conti enjoyed a long tenure as Padua's bishop, retaining that title from 1319 to 1352.[73] Conti's most significant addition to the cathedral's existing cache of relics of Paduan martyrs, deacons, and bishops was a fragment of the True Cross, for which he also commissioned an expensive and elaborate silver reliquary in 1339 that mirrored its contents in cruciform shape (figure 4-13).[74]

The True Cross piece was undoubtedly the focal point and most significant relic Conti donated at this time, but it was not the only relic encased in and enhanced by this silver reliquary

[71] Alvarez, "L'architettura sacra del secolo XVI a Padova," 178. See also Chapter Five on Sant'Antonio's relics.
[72] ACP MS E 66, 1.
[73] Kohl characterizes Conti as one of Padua's many "absentee" bishops. This approach to the office seems to have prevailed until Francesco il Vecchio took an active role in selecting and controlling the city's leading ecclesiastical authority in the 1360s. Kohl, *Padua under the Carrara*, 24-25.
[74] Elisabetta Cioni and Gert Kreytenberg assert that it has a marked stylistic affinity with Sienese metalwork of the 1320s and 1330s. Kreytenberg has gone so far as to attribute at least the flanking figures of the Virgin and John the Evangelist to Goro di Gregorio. On the reliquary see Andrea Moschetti, "Il tesoro della cattedrale di Padova I," *Dedalo* 6, no. 2 (1925): 94-102; Gert Kreytenberg, "Goro di Gregorio vor 1324," *Städel-Jahrbuch* 13 (1991): 138-40; Elisabetta Cioni, "Precisazioni sulla Croce di Ildebrandino Conti della Cattedrale di Padova," *Prospettiva* 91-92 (1998): 29-30.

cross. On the last page of a late thirteenth-century missal, Bishop Conti wrote a description of other various relics included in the reliquary, namely fragments of Sts. Gregory, Agatha and Lucy, among many others.[75] The 1350 cathedral inventory indicates the variety of other precious objects the bishop provided, such as two candelabra, a chalice and reliquary caskets.[76] Finally, the 1359 inventory mentions two more Conti cross reliquaries, which he must have given close to the end of his life in 1352.[77]

While Bishop Conti's expensive gifts significantly augmented the collection, in the final analysis they became part and parcel of the Duomo's larger relic cache. No inventory survives from between 1359 and 1405 and the latter list mentions many more relics than those in the Trecento documents, such as fragments of Sts. George, Andrew and Stephen.[78] Therefore, while we cannot be sure as to exactly what years these relics entered the cathedral, it does appear that the relic collection grew substantially around the same time that the Semitecolo cupboard was made. Furthermore, this inventory reveals that during the late Trecento several members of the Paduan elite donated reliquaries that were kept in the cathedral sacristy. Some of these, such the reliquary of Sts. Basil and Geminian given by a certain Bartolomeo da Rio, as well as the one donated by a cathedral canon, Orfeo, for the remains of Sts. Anatolia and Emerentiana, served as

[75] *…in primis Lignum Crucis Dominice, in loco ubi est crux aperta et superscriptio. Item Sancti Gregorii, Sancti Blasii martirum, Sancti Medardi confessoris, Sancti Geminiani, Sancti Cornelii martirum, Sancti Cesarii dyaconi et martiris, Sancte Agathe, Sanctarum virginum Digne et Emerite martirum, Sancti Romani, Sancte Lucie martiris…* (…first there is wood from the cross of our Lord, in one place the cross opens and there is an inscription. There are also relics of St. Gregory, St. Basil Martyr, St. Medardi the Confessor, St. Geminiani, St. Cornelius Martyr, St. Cesare the Deacon and Martyr, St. Agatha, Holy Virgins and Martyrs, St. Roman, St. Lucy Martyr…). ACP MS B 26, fol. 300v.

[76] ACP MS E 66, 2, fol. 12v.

[77] ACP MS E 66, 3, fol. 8r. Conti's contributions represent the cathedral's first significant group of metalwork and established it as a locus of such prestigious objects. See Giovanna Baldissin Molli, "Debieme adure tuti li ornamenti de oro i quali porta vostre moyere e vostre fiole ale rechie": Note sull'oreficeria padovana nel Trecento," in *Giotto e il suo tempo*, ed. Vittorio Sgarbi (Milan: Federico Motta Editore, 2000), 267.

[78] ACP MS E 66, 4, fol. 3v.

new, more elaborate containers for relics already mentioned in earlier inventories.[79] Others, such as the reliquary of St. Andrew that Nicolò da Vigonza commissioned, seem to be recently acquired additions to the saintly group.[80] Thus, at and immediately following the reliquary cupboard's creation in 1367, the cathedral relic collection included a variety of saintly remains and impressive reliquaries, thus reflecting the earthly and spiritual wealth of Padua's cathedral and its patrons. Although scholars have not noted it before, the contemporaneous expansion of the relic collection and installation of the reliquary cupboard may indicate an increased focus on relics in Padua during the late Trecento. Given the atmosphere of prolonged warfare and recurring plague at this time, the city and its rulers may well have felt a renewed need for saintly intercession.

Ritual and Liturgy at Padua Cathedral

The combined saintly power of the relics and reliquaries Conti and others donated to Padua Cathedral added substantially to the church's prestige and spiritual efficacy. Functioning as a concentrated locus of relic activity and power, the sacristies stored and protected the valuable objects that made up a good share of the cathedral's treasure. The *Ordinarium saeculum XIII*, a Paduan liturgical text compiled between 1235 and 1256, indicates that the sacristies flanking the choir housed relics within reliquary caskets and thus provides evidence for relic storage in the cathedral sacristy a century before Semitecolo's painted *armadio*.[81]

The relics kept safely in the sacristy functioned within a larger system of liturgical and devotional rituals enacted in and around the cathedral. Their occasional active presence in cultic

[79] Basil and Geminian were both fourth-century bishops while Anatolia and Emerentiana were early Christian virgin martyrs. Conti's note on the relics included in the True Cross reliquary includes those of Basil, Geminian and Emerentiana, while the jaw relic of Antolia is mentioned in the earlier 1339 inventory. ACP MS E 66, 1, fol. 2r.
[80] The first note of the Andrew relic appears in the 1405 inventory, ACP MS E 66, 4, fol. 3v.
[81] ACP MS E 57. Claudio Bellinati, "Luoghi di culto a Padova," in *Padova: Basiliche e chiese*, eds. Claudio Bellinati and Lionello Puppi (Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 1975), 21; Alvarez, "La cattedrale," 82.

activity reinforced their status as powerful holy objects and simultaneously enhanced the political and spiritual significance of both the cathedral and the city. On most occasions, the cathedral relics moved within the church as part of the celebration of the Mass or minor feast day liturgies. Andrea Cittadella's 1605 description of Paduan religious activities lists nearly thirty such feasts in addition to all the feast days of Mary, the Apostles, the Evangelists and the city's patron saints.[82] However, other events required the relics to be taken outside the church, at which point they solicited an even more widespread saintly intercession. One of Padua's most prominent and firmly established relic-related rituals occurred during the Feast of the Ascension, held forty days after Easter to celebrate Christ's entrance into heaven. For three days before the feast day, the bishop, his clerical retinue, and members of the lay population processed around the city from the cathedral to over fifty churches in Padua.[83] Setting forth from the cathedral each day, the participants walked behind a processional cross borne by children and a barefoot acolyte who carried relics from church to church.[84]

Claudio Bellinati has suggested that the profound political changes of the fourteenth century caused the populace to seek out places and institutions where order, normalcy and calm prevailed.[85] During decades of political upheaval, warfare and plague, the church, with its ongoing liturgy and constant encouragement of devotional rituals, would likely have served as one such dependable institution. The idea of widespread interest in ecclesiastical activities during this period, especially in the form of large processions, is supported by the establishment of ever-

[82] Andrea Cittadella, *Descrittione di Padova e suo territorio con l'inventario ecclesiastico brevemente* (Conselve: Padova Editrice, 1993), 34.
[83] Bellinati, "Luoghi di culto a Padova," 21-22.
[84] Ibid., 21. Bellinati does not specify the relics carried in this procession, although he does mention that they were likely transported in a painted box, which might refer to the sacristy box mentioned above or a casket reliquary, which might be the same object.
[85] Bellinati, "Luoghi di culto," 25.

increasing circuits of the city's churches in the fourteenth century.[86] These Trecento processions sometimes required the participants to visit as many as thirty churches in a single day, but how ever much the itinerary grew, they usually began and ended at the cathedral. Paduan processions and the ostention of the cathedral's relics thus consistently privileged the cathedral and its central role among the city's religious foundations.

In addition to those processions that occurred during the regular liturgical calendar, examples exist of the cathedral being the focal point of more specialized rituals in the years following the reliquary cupboard's creation. Twelve days following Padua's victory over Venice at Castelfranco on 15 December 1380 during the War of Chioggia, the bishop processed through the city in celebration along with representatives of the nobility, the populace and the other religious institutions.[87] Furthermore, in September 1399 the Bianchi, the members of a penitential movement who wore white robes while performing a pilgrimage including fasting and flagellation, came to Padua.[88] During the nine days that it lasted, the cathedral served as the starting point for each processional itinerary, which encompassed a total of 44 churches. Unfortunately, Galeazzo and Andrea Gattari's sixteenth-century chronicle, the best surviving description of these events in which the cathedral featured so prominently in the city's ritual life, does not specifically reference what liturgical objects, including relics, the participants carried with them. However, given their size and importance, it seems probable that the cathedral's precious relics were either borne in procession or at least shown to high-ranking participants as further incentive and proof of the city's saintly approval and protection.

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[86] Ibid., 26-28.

[87] Sberti, citing the chronicle of Galeazzo Gattari, states that *fu in Padova una solenne processione nella quale fu il vescovo con tutta la chiesa di Padova, il Signore, e tutto il popolo…*(there was a solemn procession in Padua in which the bishop with all the churches of Padua, the Signoria and all the people [took part]). A.B. Sberti, *Degli spettacoli e delle feste che si facevano in Padova* (Padua: Adolfo Cesare, 1818), 76. See also Galeazzo and Andrea Gattari, *Cronica di Padova*, Biblioteca Civica di Padova MS 1370.

[88] Ada Francesca Marciano, *Padova 1399: Le processioni dei Bianchi nella testimonianza di Giovanni di Conversino* (Padua: Centro grafico editoriale, 1980), 175-76.

Just as the sacristy served multiple functions within the ritual life of the cathedral, the reliquary cupboard installed in the Duomo played various roles depending on how it was used, a facet of the *armadio*'s meaning that has been overlooked. Its different functions caused significant changes in the way in which the cupboard's images were viewed and how these painted depictions related to the contents of the cupboard. We have seen above that when the doors were closed and the relics in their metal reliquaries were concealed behind them, the viewer was confronted with the narrative cycle of St. Sebastian framing the iconic *Trinity* and *Madonna and Child* panels. These images, which focus attention on the saint's physical suffering while simultaneously recalling the overarching power and awareness of the divine, thus visually remind the viewer of the presence of saintly power in the form of the relics that were kept safely and mysteriously just out of sight.

However, on those occasions when the relics it contained needed to be fully visible and play an active part in sacred or civic ritual, the reliquary cupboard in Padua's cathedral would undergo a transformation. In order to extract selected relics from the *armadio*, the top row of panels would open downwards, revealing the reliquaries inside and presenting entirely different images to the viewer. Now, moving from the top down, one would see the glittering array of powerful relics in their reliquaries atop half-length depictions of St. Sebastian, Christ with the Virgin and John the Evangelist, and St. Daniel. Therefore, it seems that when the relics were visible, the narrative scenes that called attention to the corporeal acts and traumas of the saints were no longer necessary. The revealed relics, the physical proof of their bodily existence, were instead accompanied by iconic images of the holy persons. The panels seen when the cupboard was opened harnessed a remarkable variety of both universal and local power in recalling the Crucifixion group of Christ, Mary and John alongside St. Sebastian and St. Daniel. This

demonstration of the cathedral's heavenly favor helped to solidify its status as a major player in local devotions that should be considered alongside the city's other, better known, large religious institutions, especially Sant'Antonio and Santa Giustina, which housed the bodies of St. Anthony of Padua and the Apostle Luke respectively, in that it advertised their ownership of powerful saintly relics and sacred images. The reliquary cupboard, by virtue of its mutability, was thus able to present two different messages to viewers, the first emphasizing the human pain experienced by the celestial pantheon that made them uniquely suited to intercede on behalf of the faithful, and the second confirming the actual presence of otherworldly, suprahuman saints.

Plague and Pain: The Function of the St. Sebastian Cycle

The images visible when the cupboard was closed were certainly the most frequently seen elements of its decorative program. The narrative cycle of Sebastian's death connects the cupboard and its saintly contents not only with the Christian belief in martyrdom and intercession but also with contemporary events in Padua. In the early 1360s, just a few years before Semitecolo began to paint the cathedral reliquary cupboard, an outbreak of plague swept through Padua.[89] The selection of imagery related to St. Sebastian rather than some other saint such as Daniel or another specifically Paduan figure, may thus be related to this event and the belief in Sebastian's effective protection from disease. Interestingly, to date, none of his relics are recorded in the cathedral's collections before 1472, the year in which an inventory mentions a St. Sebastian reliquary bearing the heraldic arms of the Manzoni family (figure 4-14).[90] If the cathedral did not possess any of the Roman martyr's relics in the fourteenth century then the decision to decorate the sacristy reliquary cupboard with images of his death and burial is

[89] Kohl, *Padua under the Carrara*, 141.
[90] ACP MS E 66, 6, fol. 2r. The Manzoni crest is identified in Andrea Moschetti, "Il tesoro della cattedrale di Padova II," *Dedalo* 6, no. 5 (1925): 285-86.

curious indeed, a fact scholars have consistently glossed over. However, the cycle may be explained in large part by recent events in Padua that would have caused canons and parishioners alike to seek effective saintly protection in any way possible.

The wave of pestilence that swept across Europe in 1348 has undoubtedly become the most recognized and studied plague outbreak in pre-modern history. While the devastation it wrought and the profound shock it caused as the first such event should not be downplayed, the 1348 plague was far from the last for Trecento Europeans. Indeed, only twelve years later another plague epidemic moved across the continent, striking Germany and France in 1360 and moving south to Italy the next year.[91] Jean Glenison has argued that the plague of the early 1360s was even more psychologically difficult than the earlier outbreak because European communities were just beginning to recover from the demographic, economic and societal disruptions of 1348 when it struck. Furthermore, this second wave had an especially high mortality rate among children and adolescents, so survivors of 1348 were forced to watch the next generation succumb to disease.[92]

Northern Italy suffered significant losses between the advent of plague in 1361 and its waning in 1364. The best estimates indicate that 20,000 people died in Venice, perhaps twice that number perished in Parma, and Milan, Modena, Verona and Padua were also hard hit.[93] The Ufficio di Sanità (Health Office) was not established in Padua until 1438 so we have little in the way of official documentation of the epidemic there, however, Petrarch's letters provide some

[91] Further significant plagues appear in European records in 1374-75, 1381-84, 1388-91, 1397-1400, 1405 and sporadically over the next several centuries. See Jean Glenison, "La second peste: L'épidémie de 1360-2 en France et en Europe," *Annuaire-bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de France* (1968): 27-36; Richard John Palmer, "The Control of Plague in Venice and Northern Italy 1348-1600" (PhD diss, University of Kent, 1978), 27-49; Samuel K Cohn, Jr. "The Black Death: End of a Paradigm," *American Historical Review* 107 (2002): 707-10.
[92] Glenison, 29-35; Cohn, 734-35.
[93] Glenison, 36.

indication of the situation.[94] In late 1361 the great poet lamented his son's death from plague in Milan, an event that he says "has surpassed the devastations of that earlier year, especially here in northern Italy."[95] Petrarch would also lose one of his oldest friends, Belgian musician Lodewyck Heyliger, to the disease and in late summer 1362 he abandoned Padua for Venice in an attempt to escape the outbreak.[96] Surprisingly, scholars have failed to recognize that the cathedral commissioned its new reliquary cupboard only three years after this plague ended. In such an atmosphere it seems likely that the canons would have chosen imagery that promised the most efficacious divine intercession for themselves and their city in order to ward off further suffering, whether or not it corresponded to their current relic collection. Perhaps they considered the combination of the physical presence of the saints they did have alongside the representation of a powerful plague saint to offer the most comprehensive plea for heavenly protection.

How did Sebastian become the saint of choice in warding off plague? Scholars have noted that the earliest accounts of Sebastian's life do not specifically connect him to healing or disease, instead they emphasize his association with Rome, so much so that by the early seventh century he became one of the city's patron saints alongside Peter and Paul.[97] An outbreak of plague in Pavia in 680, during which time a Sebastian relic was brought from Rome in an attempt to stop the outbreak, is often referred to as proof of the saint's role as a plague healer. However, Sheila Barker has argued that the decision to send a relic of this saint has as much to

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[94] Palmer, 48.
[95] From a letter to Francesco Nelli, translated in Morris Bishop, *Letters from Petrarch* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1966), 223.
[96] Ernest Hatch Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 182-86; Bishop, 224; Glenison, 32-33.
[97] Louise Marshall, "Manipulating the Sacred: Image and Plague in Renaissance Italy," *Renaissance Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (1994): 485-88; Sheila Barker, "The Making of a Plague Saint: Saint Sebastian's imagery and cult before the Counter-Reformation," in *Piety and Plague: From Byzantium to the Baroque*, eds. Franco Mormando and Thomas Worcester (Kirksville, Mo.: Truman State University Press, 2007), 90-91.

do with cementing a political alliance between the two cities as it does with any particular belief in Sebastian's personal effectiveness with this issue.[98] Although Sebastian may not have had any special connection to plague prior to the Pavia outbreak, Jacopo de Voragine's inclusion of the incident in his enormously popular *Golden Legend* essentially forged Sebastian into the plague saint known and celebrated throughout the later Middle Ages and beyond.[99]

By the 1330s a cult had built up around Sebastian's ability to counter plague. For example, every year on his feast day of 20 January devotees in Pavia wore arrow amulets and consumed special breads thought to counter disease.[100] Not surprisingly, the disasters of the mid-Trecento solidified this cult and henceforth Sebastian became a significant part of religious observance throughout Italy; in Florence the future bishop Filippo di Neri dell'Antello credited the saint with saving his life in 1348 and by 1457 the Signoria mandated the attendance of guild consuls at Sebastian's feast celebrations in order to ensure the saint's favor and protection from disease.[101] Increasingly, images of the saint began to be used in conjunction with defense against disease, as can be seen in fifteenth-century banners carried in procession during plagues that Michael Bury suggests functioned as "visual prayers" directed towards the saint.[102] Given the function of these plague-related images, the combination of efficacious relics in the Duomo cupboard with the protective images present on the *armadio* doors may reflect recent local

[98] The Pope had only recently formed a political alliance with the Longobards who then controlled Pavia when the plague struck in 680, thus he might have wished to send a relic of a Roman patron as a marker of friendship and support rather than because Sebastian was recognized as a plague saint. Barker, 91-93.
[99] De Voragine, 109-10; Barker, 97.
[100] Barker, 97.
[101] Alison Wright, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers: The Arts of Florence and Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 213; Barker, 99-102.
[102] Michael Bury, "The fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century *gonfaloni* of Perugia," *Renaissance Studies* 12, no. 1 (1998): 67-86; idem, "Documentary Evidence for the Materials and Handling of Banners, Principally in Umbria, in the Fifteenth and early Sixteenth Centuries," in *The Fabric of Images: European Paintings on Textile Supports in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. Caroline Villers (London: Archetype Publications, 2000), 21-26.

experience with disease and the subsequent reliance on saintly protection.[103] The development of Sebastian's cult and the belief that he took an active role in preventing or abating waves of disease like the one that struck Padua in the early 1360s may well have prompted the cathedral authorities to depict his martyrdom on the doors of the reliquary cupboard in an attempt to harness both the intercession of the saints present in the form of their relics inside the cupboard and that of a dedicated plague saint through representations of his mortal sacrifices on the cupboard's face.

The function of Semitecolo's narrative cycle may also be understood in light of other images of the saint produced in Italy during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Such examination reveals that the Padua panels are both iconographically and formally unusual and seem designed to emphasize Sebastian's physical suffering. The reliquary cupboard presents one of the earliest cycles of the saint; in fact, the only real precedent is a much earlier medieval fresco program in the nave of the Roman church of Santa Maria in Pallara. As in the Semitecolo panels, these late tenth-century images depict Sebastian before the emperors, his being shot by arrows, his beating, the disposal of his body in the sewers, and his burial but also include other scenes not on the reliquary cupboard, such as Sebastian converting and comforting followers and Irene healing his arrow wounds.[104] The Padua cupboard, however, confines attention to the events directly related to martyrdom, leaving out any real trace of previous relationships or alleviation of pain.

[103] The Quattrocento sacristy reliquary cupboard from Santa Maria della Scala in Siena also bears images of saints whose relics were not held by the church. However, in the Sienese case, these images are mixed in with depictions of saints who are physically represented by their relics and, furthermore, they are all local saints. The situation at Padua cathedral, which focuses almost exclusively on a saint without local ties, is thus quite different.
[104] The cycle was destroyed during a seventeenth-century remodeling and is now known only through drawings. Barker, 94-95; Maria Laura Marchiori, "Art and Reform in Tenth-Century Rome – The Paintings of S. Maria in Pallara," (PhD diss., Queen's University, 2007), 188-99.

In the decades following the creation of the reliquary cupboard, several Sebastian narratives were produced in Italy but none of these exhibits the same level of intense focus on the saint's suffering and death as that of the Semitecolo cycle. In fact, only one of these, Giovanni del Biondo's circa 1374 altarpiece for a chapel in Florence's cathedral, includes episodes of his martyrdom aside from his being shot with arrows (figure 4-15).[105] The central panel of Biondo's altarpiece depicts an elevated Sebastian, tied to a stake and bristling like a porcupine with the arrows being shot into him by a crowd of archers below. On either side, a series of four narrative panels relate events from his life and death; of these, only the one on the top right, which depicts his beating and disposal in the sewer, also appears in the Semitecolo panels. The iconographical rarity of the scenes on the reliquary cupboard becomes even more profound in the fifteenth century, during which time the figure of Sebastian shot with arrows dominates any other representation of the saint.

One of the most striking aspects of Semitecolo's depiction of Sebastian's attempted execution by arrows is the exaggerated size of the saint's tortured body. This proportion is markedly different from most later versions of the same scene, such as Benozzo Gozzoli's circa 1465 fresco in San Gimignano, Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo's circa 1475 altarpiece for SS. Annunziata in Florence, and Andrea Mantegna's paintings made throughout the late fifteenth century.[106] In keeping with general stylistic trends of the Quattrocento, in the aforementioned images Sebastian's body is idealized and, significantly, fully and naturalistically integrated into

[105] Marshall argues that the narrative cycle on Biondo's altarpiece serves to highlight his active protection of the faithful in a period of uncertainty and fear, therefore he is shown converting and casting out demons. Louise Marshall, "Reading the Body of a Plague Saint: Narrative Altarpieces and Devotional Images of St. Sebastian in Renaissance Art," in *Reading Texts and Images: Essays on Medieval and Renaissance Art and Patronage in honour of Margaret M. Manion*, ed. Bernard J. Muir (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), 245-47. See also Luisa Becherucci, "Giovanni del Biondo," in vol. 2 of *Museo dell'Opera del Duomo di Firenze*, ed. Luisa Becherucci and Giulia Brunetti (Milan: Electa, 1989), 283-84.

[106] Avraham Ronen, "Gozzoli's St. Sebastian Altarpiece in San Gimignano," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorisches Institutes in Florenz* 32 (1988): 86-112; Keith Christensen, *Andrea Mantegna: Padua and Mantua* (New York: G. Braziller, 1994); Wright, 208-15.

the rest of the composition in stark contrast to the exaggerated hieratic scale of the reliquary cupboard's saint. The reliquary cupboard literally emphasized the magnitude of Sebastian's physical pain and sacrifice to viewers seeking his protection from their own suffering. In combination with the actual relics of other saints located just behind Semitecolo's paintings, this unusually graphic and dark cycle of Sebastian's martyrdom may have functioned as a calculated plea for saintly intercession from an audience that was itself intimately acquainted with the agonies of the body.

The iconographic complexity of the reliquary cupboard at the cathedral, with its combination of narrative and iconic panels, reflects and complements the multiple functions of this piece of liturgical furniture. As a storage place for relics and reliquaries, the *armadio* practically protected these valuable objects and shielded them from potential danger. In addition, the cupboard served as another layer of reliquary, containing within its decorated wooden frame precious fragments of saints, and visually providing a further reminder of the profound holy power mysteriously hidden, yet always present, behind the doors. The cupboard's occasional opening for liturgical events and citywide processions deepens an understanding of Semitecolo's cupboard as a performative object that played an active role in the sacred environment of the cathedral church and the broader devotional life of Trecento Padua.

The patronage activity of prominent religious and lay people in and around the reliquary cupboard, such as Bishop Conti and members of the ruling Carrara family, speaks to the status and popularity of Paduan relic devotion and the cathedral church at large. In supporting the church and its collection of relics, these patrons beneficially associated themselves and their city with the relics' power and implied saintly blessing. The cathedral enjoyed a reciprocal increase in prestige amongst the city's religious houses by virtue of its association with powerful lay

sponsors and the valuable objects they provided. Furthermore, the reliquary cupboard's visual appeal to a saint not represented in the cathedral's relic collection constitutes an attempt to channel saintly protection against the plague through whatever means they could. In soliciting protection for the entire city through an interlace of images and relics, the cathedral's reliquary cupboard forms a complex ritual object that played a significant, albeit secluded, part in the sacred atmosphere of late medieval Padua.

Chapter Five
"Does any city enjoy such glory as this?": The Reliquary Cupboard at Sant'Antonio, Padua

The reliquary cupboard created during the late 1460s and 1470s for the sacristy of the large Franciscan pilgrimage church of Sant'Antonio in Padua demonstrates the liturgical and devotional significance of the space in which it is located, its contents and its decorative program. The unusual variety of expensive materials Bartolomeo Bellano and Lorenzo Canozi used to create the sculptural and intarsia (inlaid wood) decoration of the cupboard's framework and doors firmly connects the *armadio* to Padua's impressive artistic heritage. As such, it also represents a serious financial commitment on the part of the church's patrons and sends a powerful message regarding the importance of the objects that it contained. Moreover, the cupboard's iconography, by affirming the make-up of the Franciscan pantheon of saints and, above all, the sacred presence of Anthony of Padua (1195-1231), firmly situates the cupboard and its holy contents within their particular mendicant context.

St. Anthony's burial church (commonly referred to as the Santo) was shaped, both literally and figuratively, by its relationship to relics. Anthony's death, burial, and posthumous miracles through his relics prompted several waves of new building and decorative projects. In a broader sense, the success of the visual programs and devotional activities associated with Anthony in Padua also aided the widespread and phenomenal growth of the Order to which he belonged. While the main draw for the majority of pilgrims always remained the more easily accessible tomb of the Franciscan saint, the impressive collection of saintly relics stored in the sacristy cupboard must not be overlooked, nor should the monumental container that protected and preserved them. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, the reliquary cupboard at the Santo played an integral role in many types of liturgical and extraliturgical performances. This

represents the first attempt to examine the *armadio* within the context of the Santo's ritual environment. Furthermore, an examination of its patronage, which scholars have not yet adequately explored, highlights the complex interaction between the sacred and the secular in Quattrocento Padua.

The enormous reliquary cupboard installed in the Santo's sacristy in the 1470s takes up the entire west wall of the large room (figure 5-1). Circumscribed by a fictive curtain made from pink Verona marble, the cupboard's unusual composition of sculpted reliefs and intricate intarsia panels represents the work of several different artists and a tremendous expense for its religious and lay patrons. While the disputed role painter Francesco Squarcione played in the cupboard's overall design will be discussed below, documents show that between 1469 and 1472 Bartolomeo Bellano, once a member of Donatello's Paduan workshop, created the marble reliefs, and that Lorenzo Canozi, the most celebrated woodworker in northern Italy, worked on its ten intarsia doors between 1474 and 1477.

The most imposing single element of the cupboard, Bellano's *Miracle of the Mule*, dominates the entire top register (figure 5-2). This white marble relief depicts an episode from St. Anthony's life in which he convinced a skeptic of the doctrine of transubstantiation by offering the man's mule a consecrated Host, before which the animal knelt in recognition of the divine presence. Two standing Franciscan friars flank the rectangular panel and beside each of these figures Bellano placed a further relief with floral motifs and an angel who holds the red curtain open.

A heavy entablature decorated with classicizing egg and dart patterns in its frieze and a seated *putto* in the center separates the upper register from the two below. The middle zone, composed of four marble pilasters and six intarsia panels that function as cupboard doors, begins

about three feet off the floor and extends upwards for nearly six feet. Two pilasters are situated on the outside edges of the cupboard and the other two separate the six doors into three pairs. Each highly decorative strip is topped by a Corinthian capital and displays the looped braid crest of the Narni family above a freestanding figure who stands on a projecting corbel (figure 5-3). These figures, each approximately three feet in height, represent angels on the outer pilasters and Sts. Louis of Toulouse and Bernardino on the interior two (figures 5-4 and 5- 5). Between these sculpted elements hang six large wooden panels, each featuring the image of a single standing saint in inlaid wood, that served as the moveable doors that alternately concealed and revealed the main relic cache stored in the cupboard. From left to right, the doors depict Sts. Bernardino, Jerome, Anthony of Padua, Francis, Louis of Toulouse and Bonaventure (figures 5-6, 5-7, 5-8). The centrally placed saints, Anthony and Francis, stand before perspectival cityscapes while the others are represented under simple round arches.

Below Canozi's large doors, Bellano carved a delicate egg and dart cornice that sets the intarsia saints off from the cupboard's shorter, lower register. The pilasters continue to the floor below the corbels, here displaying reliefs of music-making *putti* (figure 5-9). This section has undergone the most change since the Quattrocento and today four intarsia doors remain visible; each depicts an illusionistic view of shelves and liturgical objects and books like those that made up the usual contents of a church sacristy (figure 5-10). Given its size, height and shape, an altar may have originally concealed the central section of this register; however, a large vesting table and set of drawers now occupies this space.[1]

The reliquary cupboard's mixture of media complements its multifaceted iconography and functions. A repeated emphasis on the Franciscan pantheon of saints and the miraculous

[1] The placement of a reliquary cupboard over an altar has precedent in Quattrocento Siena, where the painted *armadi* at the cathedral and at the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala were situated over sacristy altars. See Chapters Two and Three.

power of Anthony in particular is evident in both the sculpted and intarsia panels. The frequent depiction of standing saints visually demonstrates their presence, which was understood to be accomplished in the form of their relics, even when, as was usually the case, the doors were shut and the physical remains themselves were hidden.[2] Such a message is entirely in keeping with the cupboard's main function as a secure storage place for the church's relic collection that included the prized group of Antonine relics that were often used for liturgical celebration and public processions. Moreover, the *Miracle of the Mule* and illusionistic liturgical objects that frame the saints in the middle register remind the viewer of the celebrant's preparation for the Mass, the main purpose of church sacristies. Finally, the prominent inclusion of the heraldic device of the family of military commander Erasmo da Narni (better known as Gattamelata) on the marble pilasters indicates the connection between powerful lay patrons and this deeply sacred project, a relationship that may have gone even further than the placement of his arms on the cupboard's exterior.

Previous Scholarship

Despite the intriguing complexities of the Santo reliquary cupboard, it has been the subject of surprisingly little sustained scholarly interest. The massive *armadio* has been regularly mentioned in guidebooks to the city and the Santo since the sixteenth century, including Valerio Polidoro's 1590 *Religiose memorie* and Pietro Brandolese's *Pitture, sculture, architetture ed altre cose notabili di Padova* from 1795.[3] However, study of the cupboard in recent decades has rarely gone past discussions of Bellano and Canozi's stylistic tendencies or the place of the

[2] See pages 208-14 for a discussion of the cupboard's contents and their relationship to the saints depicted on the cupboard's decoration.
[3] Valerio Polidoro, *Le religiose memorie* (Venice: Paolo Meietto, 1590), 38-41; Pietro Brandolese, *Pitture, sculture, architetture ed altre cose notabili di Padova* (Padua: Arnaldo Forni Editore, 1795), 31-32.

cupboard in their respective *oeuvres*.[4] Indeed, only two scholars of the past fifty years, Antonio Sartori and Giovanna Baldissin Molli, have extensively analyzed the reliquary cupboard and their work provides the foundation for the present study.

Fra Sartori's contributions to the study of the basilica of Sant'Antonio are far too numerous to describe here, but his transcriptions of archival documents related to the building and decorative history of the church, published in four volumes in 1983 as the *Archivio Sartori*, are of particular relevance to the reliquary cupboard. Moreover, his 1962 article on the *armadio* is the first modern extended study of this liturgical object. In it Sartori identifies many of the significant documents pertaining to its commission and confirms that the cupboard was used to store the basilica's major relics.[5] More recently, Molli's 2002 publication on the Santo sacristy has clarified the building history of this part of the church (particularly the 1588 renovation of the sacristy) and, in addition, provided a full transcription of an inventory of 1396, the earliest surviving document of this type pertaining to Sant'Antonio.[6] Molli discusses the reliquary cupboard at some length as part of the sacristy furnishings and, in this and other publications, has helpfully elucidated many of the relics and reliquaries owned by the church in the late Trecento and early Quattrocento.[7]

Concerned primarily with identifying and transcribing archival documents and the historical development of the sacristy, Sartori and Molli's work on the Santo reliquary cupboard

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[4] See, for example, the two volumes edited by Giovanni Lorenzoni, *Le sculture del Santo di Padova*, vol. 4 of *Fonti e Studi per la storia del Santo a Padova* (Venice: Neri Pozza Editore, 1984) and *Basilica del Santo: Dipinti, Sculture, Tarsie, Disegni e Modelli* (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 1995); Lionello Puppi, "La Scultura e la pittura al Santo: Evidenza e peripezie nella ricerca di un significato," in *La Basilica del Santo: Storia e Arte*, ed. Claudio Bellinati (Rome: Edizioni de Luca, 1994), 238-40.

[5] Antonio Sartori, "L'armadio delle reliquie della sacrestia del Santo e Bartolomeo Bellano," *Il Santo* 2 (1962): 32-58.

[6] Giovanna Baldissin Molli, *La sacrestia del Santo e il suo tesoro nell'inventario del 1396* (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 2002).

[7] Giovanna Baldissin Molli, "La committenza delle oreficerie," in *Cultura, arte e committenza nella basilica di S. Antonio di Padova nel Trecento*, eds. Luca Baggio and Michela Benetazzo (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 2003), 241-60.

has not adequately considered it as an active part of the church's liturgical environment that effectively preserved the physical safety and ritualized mystery of the saintly relics. They and other scholars have also neglected to appreciate the unusual nature of this marble and intarsia cupboard, which sets its materials and expense distinctly apart from all other late medieval and Renaissance examples of this type of object. Furthermore, to date there has been no attempt to assess the impact of the cupboard's distinguished patronage on its iconography and the message it might have conveyed to its privileged viewers, many of whom traveled long distances to venerate the Santo's impressive collection of relics.

City and Saint: Padua and St. Anthony

Padua retains much of its medieval character as a pilgrimage center. Since the thirteenth century the city's association with the Franciscan saint, Anthony of Padua, has profoundly affected its political, commercial, architectural, artistic and devotional history. Ferdinand of Lisbon, better known to history as St. Anthony of Padua, first established his fame as a close associate of St. Francis of Assisi and as a renowned preacher active in the Veneto region.[8] In addition to exercising his considerable oratorical skills in fulfillment of the Franciscans' preaching mission, the Order entrusted Anthony with significant administrative duties, for he served as the provincial minister for the Franciscan district of Lombardy.[9]

Although his role within the Franciscan hierarchy, his renowned holy life, and his status as a preacher and "Hammer of Heretics" may well have caused Anthony to be remembered as a

[8] Anthony's mortal presence and posthumous acts combined to cause many Franciscan establishments in the Veneto to claim foundation by the saint himself. See Louise Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage in Late Medieval Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 16-17.

[9] In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, Padua was included in the Franciscan administrative unit known alternately as the Province of the Trevisan March and the Province of St. Anthony. For a map of the province, see Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage*, 4.

popular and influential early friar, it was his death that truly secured his primary position in Paduan history. On 13 June, 1231, Anthony collapsed while preaching in the town of Camposampiero and asked to be taken to the small Franciscan church of Santa Maria Mater Domini in nearby Padua.[10] However, his deteriorating condition caused his entourage to stop instead at the Clarissan convent at Arcella, just north of the city, where Anthony died.[11] In a theme repeated again and again in Anthony's hagiography, popular acclamation and devotion directed towards the friar began immediately and in great force.[12] The Franciscan community at Santa Maria Mater Domini ran into considerable opposition from the people of Arcella when they tried to collect Anthony's body for removal to Padua, so much so that the bishop and *podestà* were called in for several days of negotiation before the friars were allowed to translate the future saint's holy remains.[13]

Soon after his body arrived in Padua, Anthony was credited with effecting posthumous miracles through his relics, most of which involved healing pilgrims who came to the church and touched his tomb.[14] The development of a strong, sustained Antonine relic cult is part of a consistent trope throughout his life. Indeed, according to his hagiographers, it was the 1220 arrival in Lisbon of the relics of five Franciscan friars martyred while proselytizing in north Africa that inspired the young Ferdinand to join the Franciscan Order and change his name to

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[10] *Vita Prima di S. Antonio (o "Assidua")*, trans. Vergilio Gamboso (Padua: Edizioni Messaggero, 1981), 358-69.
[11] Franciscan presence in the Veneto had been established in the 1220s. Bourdua argues that the Order's success in the region was bolstered by the early move of Franciscan houses inside the city walls, as was the case with Anthony's desired place of death in Padua, S. Maria Mater Domini. Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage*, 17-18.
[12] The first recorded life of St. Anthony appeared in the years just after his canonization (circa 1232-34). Known as the *Vita Prima* or *Assidua*, the unknown author was likely a fellow Franciscan seeking to spread Anthony's cult. A revised version of the hagiography, which includes accounts of the miracles worked by Anthony's relics, was commissioned by the Order in 1276. In 1435, inspired by recent relic miracles, a Paduan professor and humanist, Sicco Polentone, wrote another biography of the saint. This version, translated into Italian and published in 1472, was widely distributed. For a succinct discussion of these textual sources, see Sarah Blake McHam, *The Chapel of St. Anthony at the Santo and the Development of Venetian Renaissance Sculpture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 8-13.
[13] *Vita Prima*, 370-81.
[14] McHam, *The Chapel of St. Anthony*, 9.

Anthony.[15] Given that his Franciscan life began with a relic experience, the power and devotion associated with his own relics housed in Padua thus seems quite fitting.

The immediate demonstrated saintly power of Anthony's relics, combined with the popular devotional activity concentrated on his burial place, resulted in his remarkably quick canonization by Pope Gregory IX on 30 May, 1232.[16] Thus, only six years after the death of their founder, the Franciscan Order could claim two canonized saints, Francis and Anthony.[17] Given the prestige inherent in possessing the latter's body and the practical demands of pilgrims, it is not surprising that the Franciscans of Santa Maria Mater Domini soon sought to enlarge their church. Indeed, this small building, which consisted of a single square room in the 1230s, suddenly found itself second in cultic importance only to the Franciscan mother church in Assisi, the burial site of St. Francis himself.[18] Such symbolic, devotional and administrative importance demanded a larger architectural foundation in Padua.

Saintly Bodies at the Santo

Sant'Antonio's building history is directly tied to the preserved and protected saint's body inside. The arrival of Anthony's remains in 1231 prompted the initial push for a larger structure. While little documentation on the construction survives prior to 1259, it seems that the two decades following Anthony's death saw the construction of a much larger single-nave

[15] *Vita Prima*, 286-99. Eventually, the conversion inspired by the Franciscan relics led Anthony to Padua, because his Franciscan calling as missionary and preacher was the reason that he came to Italy in the first place.
[16] Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage*, 90; Alberto Vecchi, "Le dimensioni della devozione antoniana," in *La Basilica del Santo: Storia e Arte* (Rome: Edizioni de Luca, 1994), 39-42.
[17] Francis of Assisi died in 1226 and was canonized in 1228. On the usually protracted process of canonization in the Middle Ages see André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), passim.
[18] Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage*, 89. Sarah Blake McHam has pointed out that the whereabouts of St. Francis' body were kept secret so as to focus attention on the personality and human accomplishments of the saint. This is in marked contrast to the cult of relics that developed around St. Anthony at Padua. See *The Chapel of St. Anthony*, 15-16.

church, erected adjacent to the original structure of Santa Maria Mater Domini. This new church provided more room for the circulation of pilgrims and was more suited to its role as Anthony's burial place.

Sarah Blake McHam and Louise Bourdua have suggested that the political situation in Padua from the 1230s to the early 1250s prevented the Franciscans from building an even larger basilica immediately after the saint's canonization. Padua's despotic Ghibelline ruler, Ezzelino da Romano, who eventually seized power in 1237, had frequently sparred with Anthony. Given Ezzelino's rise to power in the years following Anthony's death, McHam and Bourdua assert that the Franciscan friars may have felt politically constrained in their ability to publicly and monumentally celebrate the new saint.[19] However, Anthony's legendary role in the city's liberation from Ezzelino overcame any such difficulties, for during the siege of Padua in 1256, constant prayer vigils for Ezzelino's fall held at Anthony's tomb were credited with assuring the success of the papal armies and the despot's defeat.[20] Such perceived activity on behalf of the city promoted Anthony's role as a kind of "pater Paduae" and intensified his status as a civic saint, a position that resulted in the Franciscan preacher being named an official saintly protector of Padua in 1257.[21]

The enlargement of Anthony's church in Padua maximized cultic activity during this early period of official civic endorsement. Instead of restricting access to the saint's remains by hiding them away in a crypt (as was the case with St. Francis in Assisi), the single nave of the new church was connected to the older structure of Santa Maria Mater Domini, which was

[19] Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage*, 91; McHam, *The Chapel of St. Anthony*, 10; Benjamin G. Kohl, "Government and society in Renaissance Padua," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 2 (1972): 208-21.
[20] McHam, *The Chapel of St. Anthony*, 10-11; Diana Webb, *Patrons and Defenders: The Saints in the Italian City-States* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 149.
[21] Anthony became the fourth patron saint of Padua, joining the early Christian saints Prosdocimus, Daniele and Giustina. Vecchi, 62; McHam, *The Chapel of St. Anthony*, 10.

transformed into a relatively accessible burial chapel.[22] The original church, now annexed to the larger basilica, contained the saint's body until 1263, when it was moved for protective and cultic reasons and still concealed from sight in a marble tomb.

The significant role of Padua's newly liberated government in Anthony's cult and church was made explicit and visible in 1265, when the commune instituted a substantial annual subsidy for building at the church, now officially dedicated to Sant'Antonio.[23] It should be noted that government subsidies continued throughout the late Middle Ages and Renaissance despite numerous changes in Paduan leadership, most notably the establishment of seigneurial rule by the Carrara family in 1318 and the city's incorporation into the territory of the Venetian Republic in 1405.[24] The sustained financial and political support of the civic authorities allowed the Franciscan church to expand the Santo's physical fabric dramatically, creating a fully equipped pilgrimage church, complete with side aisles, transept, ambulatory, radiating chapels, and *campanili* (bell towers).

Communal backing at the Santo appeared justified by activities surrounding the saint's relics in the 1260s. In 1263, ongoing construction near Anthony's tomb threatened to restrict pilgrims' access to the thaumaturgic relics, prompting the body's movement from its original burial place to a more prominent location in a marble sarcophagus raised on columns in front of

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[22] On cultic activities surrounding Anthony's tomb, including devotional circumambulation, see Vecchi, 42. The site of Santa Maria Mater Domini is today the Cappella della Madonna Mora, a space that by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was used as a family burial chapel and a focus for confraternal activity. Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage*, 104-07. The Franciscans at Assisi kept the burial place of the Order's founder relatively inaccessible. See Cooper, "In Medio Ecclesiae," 165-81.

[23] The 4,000 *lire* subsidy came at the same time as much smaller donations made to the Paduan Dominicans and Augustinians, thus supporting the idea that the civic authorities favored Anthony's powerful cult. Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage*, 91. The civic subsidy was upheld by the Venetian government after it took control of Padua in 1405, thus reflecting not only the tenor of much of Venetian policy towards its new territory but also the importance of the Santo in the spiritual and secular economy of the region. See Ian Holgate, "Paduan culture in Venetian care: The patronage of Bishop Pietro Donato," *Renaissance Studies* 16, no. 1 (2002): 2-4; Sarah Blake McHam, "Padua, Treviso, and Bassano," in *Venice and the Veneto*, ed. Peter Humfrey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 214.

[24] On late medieval Paduan political history see Kohl, *Padua under the Carrara*, 39-338.

the high altar.[25] At this time, under the supervision of Minister General St. Bonaventure of Bagnaregio, the saint's body was examined, and the tongue, Anthony's celebrated instrument of communication during his ministry, was found to be miraculously and perfectly preserved.[26] Immediately following the recognition of Anthony's incorrupt tongue, Bonaventure removed that significant relic, as well as the jaw and left arm, from the tomb so that they could be placed in elaborate metal reliquaries.[27] Such an arrangement allowed the Franciscans to display the relics for public processions, feast day celebrations, visiting dignitaries and the like.

The recognition, removal and celebration of relics so closely tied to Anthony's fame as a remarkable communicator was followed by continued building and devotional activity at the Santo. While there remains some confusion regarding the exact location of Anthony's body after 1310, scholars agree that the saint lay in his present chapel in the left transept by 1350.[28] The chapel of St. Anthony was decorated with a fresco cycle by Stefano da Ferrara that depicted miracles of the saint, especially those tied to his relics.[29] Although the paintings do not survive, the cycle provides a precedent at the Santo of images surrounding, enhancing and advertising the power of relics.[30]

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[25] Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage*, 92; McHam, *The Chapel of St. Anthony*, 10; Vecchi, 64.
[26] Antonio Sartori, "La festa della traslazione di S. Antonio e il culto alla sua sacra lingua nel corso dei secoli," *Il Santo* 3 (1963): 69-70; Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage*, 92; Vecchi, 64-66.
[27] The history of these relics in relation to their reliquaries is complex and, at times, murky. It appears that the three relics removed in 1263 were kept in separate reliquaries until the mid-fourteenth century, at which point the arm and jaw were put together in a new container Cardinal Guy de Boulogne commissioned in 1349. The tongue relic may have originally been in the tree and pulpit reliquary that now contains a lock of the saint's hair but was moved into the current reliquary by 1466. See Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage*, 94-96; Giordana Mariani Canova, "Il Trecento," in *Basilica del Santo: Le Oreficerie*, ed. Marco Collareta, et. al (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 1995), 37-38. The tongue relic remains the most valuable in the Santo's collection, to the point that during World War II it and its reliquary were removed from the church and hidden to ensure their survival. See Claudio Bellinati, "La Basilica di Sant'Antonio nella storia della citta di Padova," in *La Basilica del Santo: Storia e Arte* (Rome: Edizioni de Luca, 1994), 120.
[28] McHam argues that the body was moved to an ambulatory chapel during these four decades to avoid construction and provide maximum pilgrimage access. *The Chapel of St. Anthony*, 11. Alberti Vecchi, however, is a proponent of the traditional view that the body was translated to the transept chapel in 1310. Vecchi, 66.
[29] McHam, *The Chapel of St. Anthony*, 62-63.
[30] On the late Quattrocento and Cinquecento redecoration of the Chapel of St. Anthony, which continues the tradition of visually supporting the efficacy of a relic cult see McHam's 1994 publication devoted to the chapel.

The early history of St. Anthony's cult and relics at the Santo played an integral role in bringing the spiritual and economic benefits of pilgrimage to Padua, while the saint's intercession on behalf of the city added a layer of political significance to him and his burial place. Civic support and, indeed, active promotion of Anthony's cult has been interpreted as a way both to reemphasize and reinvigorate the city's pantheon of saints, which until the Trecento was comprised of early Christian bishops and martyrs.[31] It has also been read as a competitive strategy against nearby Venice, which claimed the Evangelist St. Mark as its patron saint.[32]

Anthony's status as a saint particularly tied to Padua should not, however, eclipse his equally significant role in the Franciscan sphere. Indeed, Bourdua argues that the Order vigorously supported his cult in a sort of "keeping up with the Joneses" response to the Dominicans, whose second saint, Peter Martyr, was canonized in 1253 and became the focus of his own relic-based cult in Milan.[33] Whatever the combination of undoubtedly complex motivations behind the Paduan devotion to Anthony, the centuries of impressive resources dedicated to the proper care and celebration of his relics demonstrate a robust tradition of relic activity at the Santo, which continued well into the seventeenth century.

Sacristy Relics

Although the bulk of daily cultic activity at the Santo was primarily focused on the easily accessible, grand marble tomb that held Anthony's body, by the mid-fifteenth century the friars had gathered together in the sacristy some sixty relics of saints, apostles and martyrs, often

[31] McHam, *The Chapel of St. Anthony*, 28.
[32] Ibid., 23-28.
[33] Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage*, 92-94.

brought from such pilgrimage centers as Rome and the Holy Land.[34] Given that a profound connection to saintly bodily presence directly shaped the history of the Santo, these relics in the sacristy must be understood as part of a larger ritual environment deeply marked by and devoted to the power of relics. Furthermore, the portable relics stored in the sacristy cupboard could be displayed to the faithful and easily used in processions, blessings and feast rituals. These relics and their container thus could function in very different, and more widely accessible, ways than those concealed within the saint's marble *arca* in the transept chapel.

As is frequently the case with metalwork, identifying the exact relics and reliquaries the Santo possessed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries remains a difficult task. Inventories provide the lion's share of information regarding these objects; such notations are often frustratingly brief, vague or fail to distinguish individual items. This, combined with historical circumstances such as war and economic need that may have occasioned the melting down or sale of valuable metal vessels, hinders the attempt to assemble a secure, comprehensive list of the Santo's relics during the Middle Ages. The actions of Francesco Novello da Carrara, Padua's last seigneurial ruler, makes an accurate reckoning particularly difficult in this case because in 1405 he appropriated a substantial portion of the church's metalwork in a last ditch effort to fund his military efforts to stave off defeat by the Venetian forces.[35]

We are fortunate in that several inventories and sacristy descriptions survive from the decades preceding the creation of the Santo reliquary cupboard. The most detailed date from 1396 and 1466 and include not only reliquaries, but also chalices, assorted liturgical vessels,

[34] On the Franciscan role as special protector of relics in the Holy Land, see Anne Derbes and Amy Neff, "Italy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Byzantine Sphere," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 449-87.
[35] Canova, 36; Molli, *La sacrestia*, 50-51.

vestments, and manuscripts.[36] Such inventories served practical purposes for the sacristan and prior in verifying the church's possessions and keeping track of a large number of valuable objects.[37] These documents now allow for the compilation of an approximate list of the nature and number of the relic collection that the monumental cupboard was created to contain in the 1470s.

The earliest surviving sacristy inventory, preserved as Biblioteca Antoniana MS 572 and 573, dates from 1396. However, relics had almost certainly been stored in the sacristy since the mid-thirteenth century, following St. Bonaventure's removal of Anthony's jaw, tongue and arm from his tomb in 1263. By the time the 1396 inventory was taken the sacristy held fifty relics, ranging from several Antonine relics to secondary ones connected with Christ's Passion to fragments of a variety of other saints. Anthony's presence in the sacristy had expanded to include a piece of his scalp and a tooth as well as the major relics of the tongue and jaw recognized in the previous century.[38] Furthermore, secondary relics of Christ and the Virgin appear in the collection in the form of a piece of the flagellation column, wood from the True Cross, one of the Virgin's fingernails and a lock of her hair.[39] The inventory also lists a bone of St. Stephen, a section of St. Andrew's cross, one of St. Lawrence's toes and a finger bone of St. Louis of Toulouse, as well as unspecified relics of Sts. Hermacore, Fortunati, Catherine, George, and

[36] The last official sacristy inventory was conducted in 1793, when the Venetians ordered a complete account of the basilica. For the transcription of that late document see Giovanna Baldissin Molli, "Un inedito ed 'esato' inventario delle oreficierie e delle suppellettili di uso liturgico nel Basilica del Santo." *Il Santo* 34 (1994): 3-33. In 1851 Bernardo Gonzati produced another detailed description of the church's relics, which by this point were kept in the reliquary chapel in the apse. Gonzati, *Il Santuario delle Reliquie: Il tesoro della basilica di S. Antonio di Padova* (Padua: Antonio Biachi, 1851).
[37] K.W. Humphreys, *The Library of the Franciscans of the Convent of St. Anthony, Padua at the Beginning of the Fifteenth Century* (Amsterdam: Erasmus, 1966), 2.
[38] Molli, *La sacrestia*, 88-89.
[39] Ibid., 89-91.

Agnes.[40] Molli has argued that lay donations of relics and reliquaries were quite scarce in the Trecento, as only four of the above objects can be connected in any way with secular patrons; however, it may also be that the sacristan was simply more likely to record lay patrons and heraldic marks for other, less prestigious items, such as chalices and missals.[41]

Over the course of the fifteenth century the Santo's relic collection continued to expand, although the Antonine relics never ceded primacy. Indeed, in his 1445 *Libellus de magnificis ornamentis regie civitatis padue (Book on the magnificent decoration of the Paduan state)* Michele Savonarola highlights just these relics in this literary celebration of his native city, noting the saint's miraculously incorrupt tongue in particular in his description of the Santo sacristy and the sixty-one relics then stored there.[42] Examination of the sacristy inventory begun in 1466 shows that since the 1396 inventory the church had maintained and even augmented its status as a pilgrimage center with the acquisition of several more prominent relics.[43] The Franciscans could now boast that they possessed a vial of earth from the Holy Land, a fragment of stone from Gethsemane and another stone Christ used when he washed the Apostles' feet, bones of Sts. Bartholomew, Martin, Agatha, and indeterminate relics from Sts. Vincent, Gregory, Cosmas and Damian, Anthony Abbott and the Paduan patron saints Prosdocimus, Daniel and Giustina. In addition, more Franciscan relics, including pieces of St. Clare's veil and the hoods

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[40] Giovanni Mariacher, "Il 'Tesoro' della Basilica di S. Antonio," in *S. Antonio 1231-1981: Il suo tempo, il suo culto e la sua citta*, ed. Giovanni Gorini (Padua: Signum Edizioni, 1981), cat. 94; Molli, *La sacrestia,* 37-39 and 88-91; Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage*, 28.

[41] For example, the reliquary for Anthony's tooth was marked with the heraldic device of Niccolò da Carrara. Additions to the 1396 inventory made between 1405 and 1419 indicate that several noble patrons did donate reliquaries to the Santo at that time, which Molli suggests was in repayment for those requisitioned by Francesco da Carrara. Molli, *La sacrestia*, 52.

[42] *...apostolicam Linguam, beatissimumque Caput… vivens et incorrupta a Domino relicta est* (…apostolic tongue and most blessed Head…he remains living and incorrupt in God). Michele Savonarola, "Libellus de magnificis ornamentis regie civitatis padue," in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* XXIV, part XV, ed. L.A. Muratori (Citta di Castello: S. Lapi, 1902), 18-19.

[43] The inventory itself, Archivio della Veneranda Arca del Santo (hereafter AdA) 74, begins with a date of 26 September 1466. However, it apparently was not completed until 20 February 1477, when it was signed by Francesco Sansone and that year's three other Arca officials (AdA, 74, fol. 1v). Published in full in Antonio Sartori, *Archivio Sartori*, vol. 1 (Padua: Biblioteca Antoniana, 1983), 783-88.

of Sts. Francis and Bernardino of Siena, as well as a Host containing blood from Francis' stigmata, were now in the Santo sacristy.[44] Therefore, at the time of the reliquary cupboard's creation in the 1470s, the Santo was renowned as a pilgrimage center with a varied collection of dozens of powerful relics, which contributed to the high standing of this church within the city of Padua, the Franciscan order and the Veneto region.

Records dating from one century later indicate that the church continued to be recognized for its exceptional relics, both the holy body in the saint's tomb and those in the sacristy. For example, in February 1580 the king of Portugal asked to have a relic of St. Anthony, whereupon the jaw relic was removed from the cupboard so that a tooth could be extracted for the royal devotee.[45] The continued status of the Santo sacristy as a significant repository of relics after the construction of the sculpted cupboard is further attested to in Valerio Polidoro's 1590 guide to the church, the earliest publication devoted solely to the basilica. Polidoro devotes two entire chapters to the sacristy relics, in which he particularly highlights the Christological and Antonine objects but also mentions many more not included in the Quattrocento inventories.[46] The accuracy of Polidoro's catalogue notwithstanding, it seems clear that the elaborate reliquary

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[44] Sartori, *Archivio Sartori*, vol. 1, 783-88. On the reliquaries made for these relics see the catalogue entries in *Basilica del Santo: Le Oreficerie*, ed. Marco Collareta, et. al (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 1995), 83-190.

[45] *...ex accepto tabernacolo in quo repositor maxilla inferior... ex ipsa exhaxit unum dentem...* (out of the usual tabernacle in which the lower jaw rests…out of this one tooth was taken…). The notice of the gift, dated 5 January 1581, appears in AdA, *Reliquie del Santo e oblazione* 184, fol. 247r. This was not the first, nor the last, time the church was asked to share its relics. In 1428 Prince Anthony of Portugal was given a piece of Anthony's scalp and in 1439, Elizabeth, the wife of Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy, received another piece of the same relic for her personal collection. See Archivio di Stato di Padova (hereafter ASP), *Notarile*, 523, fol. 249v and Rizieri Zanocco, "Reliquia di S. Antonio di Padova donata alla Duchessa di Borgogna (1439)," *Le venezie francescane* 1 (1932): 45-49. Later, the Venetian rulers of Padua seem to have kept up a constant demand for Anthony's relics, as in the late 1600s a great deal of diplomatic energy was spent on stopping the flow of relics from the Santo to Venetian churches. See AdA, *Reliquie del Santo e oblazione* 184, fol. 277; Sartori, *Archivio Sartori*, vol. 1, 752-55.

[46] Polidoro lists the following relics not appearing in official sacristy inventories: three thorns from the Crown of Thorns, the Virgin's belt and the bed on which she died, numerous Old Testament relics including those of Jonah, Aaron and Moses' basket, relics from the Massacre of the Innocents, as well as relics of dozens of popes, martyrs and other saints. He also mentions the presence of a Host tabernacle, which is the first secure reference to the sacristy as a repository for this type of object, although the Host may well have been stored here prior to 1590 and not recorded in the inventories that are overwhelming concerned with metalwork. Polidoro, 41-47.

cupboard made in the late Quattrocento served its purpose in continuing to ensure that the sacristy was the appropriate and safe home to an impressive number of powerful saintly relics and, as such, a significant and concentrated sacred space within the church. Accordingly, the expensive cupboard commissioned to store them appropriately honored the relics and visually advertised their presence and power.

The healing power attributed to the relics at the Santo drew crowds of the faithful to Padua. Yet, in addition to the possibility of the miraculous, pilgrims were further encouraged to worship with the Franciscans by the repeated granting of indulgences tied to the church's relics, and not just those associated with St. Anthony. The first of these, promulgated by Pope Gregory IX in 1232, gave one year's indulgence to those who journeyed to Anthony's tomb during the octave of his feast.[47] Then, in 1296, the Franciscan Pope Nicholas IV instituted a policy of indulgence for pilgrims visiting the non-Antonine Santo relics kept in the sacristy.[48]

Most significantly, shortly after ascending to the throne of St. Peter in 1471, Francesco della Rovere (1414-1484), who took the name Sixtus IV, granted a plenary indulgence to pilgrims who visited the Santo relics.[49] Sixtus, a member of the Franciscan Order, had strong personal ties to the Paduan community as he attended and taught at the university there and led the convent at the Santo between 1448 and 1464, during which time plans were first made for the new reliquary cupboard and Squarcione's drawings were commissioned. Thus, Sixtus' decision to institute such a desirable indulgence for his former home not only served to raise the Santo's prestige within the larger body of the Church, it also quite practically and dramatically enhanced

[47] Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage*, 90.
[48] *...ad ecclesiam S. Anthonii Confessoris de Padua accedentes, anchonam in ipsius ecclesiae sacristia positam cum devocione ac reverencia visitaverint, reliquias multorum sanctorum, apostolorum videlicet martyrum confessorum et virginum*...(…for those coming to the church of S. Anthony the Confessor of Padua, visiting the sacristy in this church with devotion and reverence, it is permitted to see the many relics of saints, apostles, martyrs, confessors and virgins…) Published in Sartori, "L'armadio delle reliquie," 33.
[49] McHam, *The Chapel of St. Anthony*, 18. For a biography of Sixtus IV see Lorenzo di Fonzo, "Sisto IV: Carriera scolastica e integrazioni biografiche (1414-1484)," *Miscellanea Francescana* 86 (1986): 195-685.

the revenues that the convent received from increased pilgrimage. Sixtus' indulgence did not directly fund the ongoing work on the sacristy reliquary cupboard; however, this papal involvement with the church and the corresponding resurgence of the Santo's prominence was directly tied to the relics held there. Therefore, the sacristy reliquary cupboard was clearly part and parcel of a period of renewed spiritual and pragmatic importance for relics at the Santo.

Storing the Relics

Given the sizeable collection of relics present in the sacristy at least since the late Trecento, it is not surprising that a series of storage structures predated the Bellano and Canozi cupboard because for security and liturgical reasons the friars would have required some way to store their reliquaries safely. The first possible reference to such an object in the sacristy is made in the 1331 will of Aicarda Guiciardi da Vicenza, the widow of Pietro da Carrara.[50] In her testament, she mentions a large sacristy "*banchum*," a general term that indicates a counter, bench, or vesting table that could also have storage capabilities.[51] Unfortunately, no other documentary evidence survives to shed light on the appearance of this early piece of sacristy furniture; however, more information remains concerning another cupboard made a century later.

The records of the Veneranda Arca del Santo from 1434 show several payments to Fra Filippo Lippi, the Florentine Carmelite painter, for work on a reliquary tabernacle for the sacristy.[52] The Veneranda Arca, a committee formed in 1396, was charged with the demanding task of coordinating and overseeing the maintenance and renovation of St. Anthony's church, although according to Giovanna Baldissin Molli some type of lay group had been performing

[50] Molli, *La sacrestia*, 24.
[51] *Item reliquid banchum suum magnum qui est in sua camera sacristie dicti conventus fratrum minorum* (Thus is left a large bench in the sacristy of the said convent of the friars minor). Sartori*, Archivio Sartori*, vol 1, 42.
[52] AdA, *Libri della intrada e spesa* 330, fol. 3r and fol. 34v. Also published in Jeffrey Ruda, *Fra Filippo Lippi: Life and Work with a complete catalogue* (London: Phaidon, 1993), 26.

these administrative tasks since the mid-thirteenth century.[53] The communal authorities took a large role in formally establishing the group in the late Trecento and at its inception its membership was comprised of two Franciscan friars and four citizens-at-large, a roster that changed after annual elections.[54] Given its charge, the Arca and its members essentially constituted corporate patrons as they took responsibility for the majority of artistic commissions within the Santo. The potentially delicate political balancing act inherent in the Arca's patronage system represents one of the ways in which communal and mendicant, secular and spiritual interests were bound up together in the decorative programs at this major pilgrimage center.[55]

In July 1434 the Veneranda Arca reimbursed Lippi for the cost of ultramarine and wood incurred in the course of his work on a "*tabernacolo de le reliquie.*"[56] Lippi's two-year stay in Padua occurred early in his artistic career and, in addition to the tabernacle project, he apparently painted a fresco on one of the Santo's piers and decorated the chapel of the Palazzo del Podestà, none of which survive.[57] We know of the lavish appearance of Lippi's painted reliquary container from Michele Savonarola's description from 1445, which praises this "gem-set object, most elaborately ornamented in gold."[58] Andrea de Marchi has suggested that a *Pietà* in Esztergom, Hungary, and a *Grieving St. John the Evangelist* in the Princeton Art Museum made

[53] Molli, *La sacrestia*, 35.
[54] Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage*, 101; Molli, *La sacrestia*, 35-39.
[55] Such patronage systems were common in late medieval and Renaissance Italy. For example, commissions at the Baptistery in Florence were controlled by the Calimala guild. Antonio Paolucci, ed., *Il Battistero di San Giovanni a Firenze*, 2 vols. (Modena: F.C. Panini, 1994). See also the patronage studies in F.W. Kent and Patricia Simons, eds., *Patronage, art, and society in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
[56] *Have Fra Philipo da Fiorenza che adorna, over de'adornare, lo tabernacolo de le reliquie per onze II de azuro oltramarin, per ducati dui oro per onza…L. 22* (For Fra Filippo of Florence decorating the tabernacle of the relics two ounces of blue ultramarine at two gold ducats an ounce…). AdA, *Libri della intrada e spesa* 330, fol. 3r. See also Eliot Rowlands, "Filippo Lippi and his experience of painting in the Veneto region," *Artibus et Historiae* 10 (1989): 53; Ruda, 515; Molli, *La sacrestia*, 24 and n. 60.
[57] Eliot Rowlands, "Filippo Lippi's stay in Padua and its impact on his art," (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 1983), 15; Andrea de Marchi, "Un raggio di luce su Filippo Lippi a Padova," *Nuovi Studi* 1 (1996): 5.
[58] "*Locus etenim lapideus auro ornatissimus*…," Savonarola, 18.

up part of the tabernacle, but as no other accounts of the early Quattrocento cupboard survive, we are left to speculate on its size, exact location and full iconographic program.[59]

Less then thirty years later, the Santo authorities determined that their relic collection warranted a new, monumental and visually impressive protective container, and in 1461 the Veneranda Arca dell'Santo commissioned drawings for a new reliquary cupboard from local painter Francesco Squarcione, better known today as Andrea Mantegna's teacher.[60] Eliot Rowlands has suggested that by the 1460s the Lippi cupboard may have seemed stylistically passé or had been damaged, thus necessitating a replacement.[61] In addition, as the above discussion of sacristy inventories has shown, the Santo's relic collection grew dramatically over the course of the mid-fifteenth century and spatial constraints may have also prompted the commission of a much larger storage container.

Squarcione's designs for the cupboard do not survive, however the Veneranda Arca records indicate that he produced five drawings, for which he was paid in three installments.[62] The reliquary *armadio* constituted a final chapter in a rather long history between the artist and church, as throughout the 1440s Squarcione had completed several much smaller projects, including painting ribs in the vaulting and a now lost image of Christ in the sacristy.[63] Thus, by the time he was called upon to submit designs for the Franciscans' monumental new cupboard, the painter was already well acquainted with the site. Squarcione was also well aware of the artist whose work he was replacing, as in 1434, when Lippi painted his reliquary cupboard, the

[59] This argument is based less on evidence relating to the tabernacle itself and more on the stylistic influence that de Marchi thinks these panels had on the development of mid-Quattrocento painting in the Veneto. If these panels were for private devotional use (the earlier function attached to these works) they would likely be markedly less available for artists' perusal. See de Marchi, 9-10.
[60] Deborah Lipton, "Francesco Squarcione," (PhD diss, New York University, 1974), 158-95.
[61] Rowlands, "Filippo Lippi's stay in Padua," 18.
[62] *Francesco Squarzon per resto de sua fadiga de conque designi fati per mostra de l'armaro*…(Francesco Squarcione for his efforts in making five designs for the cupboard). In AdA, *Libri della intrada e spesa* 344, fol. 15. The other payments are recorded in the same volume on fols. 13r and 17v.
[63] Lipton, 151-52.

two men served together as expert appraisers for a case being heard at the episcopal curia in Padua.[64]

Despite preliminary work on the reliquary cupboard, the Arca did not act immediately to put the work in motion. This is most likely due to their 1462 decision to renovate the Santo's choir stalls with expensive intarsia work by Lorenzo Canozi.[65] With considerable financial resources now tied up in such a prominent part of the church, plans for a new sacristy reliquary cupboard languished for nearly a decade. However, in 1469 the sacristy project was again the subject of the Arca's attention, when they gave the commission for the marble reliefs to Bartolomeo Bellano, at which point the cupboard finally began to take form.[66]

Records concerning the commission of both the sculpted and intarsia elements survive to give us a good idea of the duration and expense of the project. One set of documents relating to Bellano's sculptures indicates his work began in 1469 and continued into 1472. Sixteen entries in the Arca's expense books between April 1469 and January 1470 that total 728 *lire* likely reflect the flurry of initial costs for materials; Bellano's signature acknowledging receipt of the funds appears following the list.[67] Further notations for transporting the marbles to the worksite give a rich sense of the significant cost and logistical difficulties of constructing a large-scale, sculpted

[64] The dispute, between one of the cathedral chaplains and painters Giacomo and Niccolò dei Mireti, was over the appropriate cost of an altarpiece. See Rizieri Zanocco, "Un nuovo documento su Fra Filippo Lippi a Padova," *Rivista d'arte* 18 (1936): 107-09; Ruda, 515.
[65] Giovanni Lorenzoni, "Dopo Donatello: Da Bartolomeo Bellano ad Andrea Riccio," in *Le sculture del Santo di Padova*, ed. Giovanni Lorenzoni, vol. 4 of *Fonti e Studi per la storia del Santo a Padova* (Venice: Neri Pozza Editore, 1984), 98; Lionello Puppi, "La Scultura e la pittura al Santo: Evidenza e peripezie nella ricerca di un significato," in *La Basilica del Santo: Storia e Arte* (Rome: Edizioni de Luca, 1994), 240; Sartori, "L'armadio delle reliquie," 36.
[66] Lorenzoni, "Dopo Donatello," 99.
[67] AdA, *Libri della intrada e spesa* 347, fol. 41r.

cupboard.[68] In 1474, five years after Bellano's commission, the Arca paid Lorenzo Canozi for his work making "all the doors for the new sacristy cupboard of the relics."[69]

While the cupboard's attribution is thus secure, what remains unclear is the degree to which Canozi utilized the earlier Squarcione drawings when he became involved a decade later. Scholars have noted that the Canozi doors do not seem to bear much stylistic affinity to work securely attributed to the painter; however, one must also keep the inherent differences in medium in mind with regards to such a comparison.[70] In addition, the argument that the drawings must not have been used because Squarcione produced only five of them while the cupboard has ten doors does not necessarily mean that Canozi did not use his designs in any way. That said, the intarsia panels' similarity to Canozi's earlier work, especially in the illusionistic lower panels, would indicate that he had at least some agency in the final design, even if the Squarcione drawings continued to be of influence.[71]

It must also be noted that the exact place within the sacristy for which Bellano and Canozi produced their work is likely not the same as the cupboard's current location. As Molli has shown, in 1588 the Santo sacristy underwent significant modification.[72] Prompted by an attempted theft, the Arca reoriented the furniture in an effort to heighten security, at which point the reliquary cupboard was dismantled and moved to its current position on the west wall. Molli argues that the *armadio* was originally situated on the south sacristy wall, which would have placed it on axis with the Trecento doorway that connected the sacristy and the antechamber that

[68] AdA, *Libri della intrada e spesa* 346, fol. 19v-20v.
[69] *Maistro Lorenzo dal choro, da Lendenara, a tolto a fare tute le portelle de li armary novy de la sagrestia de le reliquie.* Published in Sartori, "L'armadio delle reliquie," 37.
[70] Sartori, "L'armadio delle reliquie," 38 and Lipton, 242-43.
[71] For images of earlier Canozi works, such as the illusionistic panels in Modena and Parma cathedral, see Pier Luigi Bagatin, *L'arte dei Canozi lendinaresi* (Trieste: Edizioni Lint, 1990).
[72] On the 1588 document (ASP, *Notarile* 2501, fol. 773-75) see Molli, *La sacrestia*, 26 and 109.

led to the ambulatory.[73] Therefore, in conjunction with the enlargement of the sacristy as a whole, moving the reliquary cupboard and its precious contents to an even more secluded spot would have helped ensure its continued safety.

The Arca's concern for the reliquary cupboard in the late sixteenth century continues their predecessors' investment in an elaborate and honorable place in which to store their powerful relics.[74] The scale and quality of the intarsia, combined with the numerous and expensive marble reliefs made for the cupboard, indicate a high level of significance attached to the project as such costly materials would not be selected for an object of little importance. Furthermore, recognition of the rarity of this sculpted and intarsiated *armadio* enhances the special nature of the Santo cupboard, seeing as how the other fourteenth- and fifteenth-century reliquary cupboards discussed above were painted.[75] Why would the Veneranda Arca ultimately choose these media for the reliquary cupboard rather than more traditional panel painting, for which there was already a Paduan precedent in the cathedral? Perhaps the intarsia commission, coming directly on the heels of Lorenzo Canozi's well-received work in the choir, was seen as a decision that promised a high quality product. Even more significantly, Padua enjoyed a strong sculptural tradition that was especially pronounced at the Santo, as seen most notably in Donatello's work on the bronze figures for the high altar and the equestrian monument to

[73] The antechamber between the sacristy and ambulatory was decorated with a now damaged Trecento fresco cycle depicting Antonine miracles. To the left of the current sacristy entrance, the site of the previous doorway remains clearly visible under a lunette decorated with the Virgin and Child. Tiziana Franco, "Aspetti dell'arte a Padova ai tempi di Sant'Antonio," *Padova e il suo Territorio* 10 (1995): 16-18; Molli, *La sacrestia*, 29-31.

[74] In 1745 the sacristy reliquary cupboard was replaced by an elaborate Chapel of the Relics constructed in the apse. Anna Maria Spiazzi, "Gli armadi delle reliquie nella cappella del Tesoro," in *Basilica del Santo: Le Oreficerie*, eds. Marco Collareta, et. al (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 1995), 15-17.

[75] I am not aware of any other sculpted sacristy reliquary cupboards, and only one other from the Veneto was decorated with extensive narrative intarsia panels. This cupboard, created by Antonio and Paolo Mola between 1486 and 1493, is in the basilica of St. Mark in Venice. See Catarina Schmidt Arcangeli, "Les marqueteries de la sacristie de Saint-Marc: Lecture iconographique," in *La basilique Saint-Marc de Venise*, ed. Ettore Vio (Paris: Citadelles & Mazenod, 2001), 312; Lydia Hamlett, "The Sacristy of San Marco, Venice: Form and Function Illuminated," *Art History* 32, no. 3 (2009): 458-84.

Gattamelata in the piazza outside. Indeed, the church's recent experience with the Florentine master may well be reflected in the artist chosen to craft the cupboard's marble elements.

Bartolomeo Bellano

Bartolomeo Bellano (circa 1437-1496), a native Paduan and the son of a goldsmith, in many ways exemplifies the mid-Quattrocento artistic ties between Padua and Florence.[76] An undocumented, yet probable, assistant to Donatello during the later years of the Florentine artist's sojourn in the Veneto from 1443-1453, it is supposed that Bellano joined the older artist when he left Padua in 1453, but Bellano is not recorded in Florence until 1456.[77] Except for a few short trips away from Florence for commissions that are now lost, Bellano remained based in Tuscany for over a decade.[78] During the last years of Donatello's life, Bellano was involved in some capacity with creating the pulpit reliefs at San Lorenzo; however, his most secure and well-preserved work remains in his native Padua.[79]

Bellano returned home in 1468 to work on the funerary monument for his fellow Paduan Raimondo Solimani in the church of the Eremitani. Neither the wall tomb nor its reclining effigy survives, although they are generally known from the proceedings of a later legal dispute

[76] On the political and artistic ties between Padua and Florence in the mid-fifteenth century see McHam, "Padua, Treviso, and Bassano," 214-15.

[77] John Pope-Hennessy cites a document from October 1456 that names Bellano as one of Donatello's associates in Florence. Pope-Hennessy, *Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, vol. 2 of *An Introduction to Italian Sculpture*, 4th ed. (London: Phaidon, 1996), 414. Donatello worked in Padua from 1443-1453. Given Bellano's young age during this period, it seems likely that he did not enter the workshop until the late 1440s or early 1450s.

[78] Bellano's most significant work outside of Florence during this period is a lost bronze statue of Paul III, completed in 1467 for a church in Perugia. Pope-Hennessy, *Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, 414. Vasari asserts that Bellano went to Rome in 1464 to work for the same pope. If this was the case, no specific work identified with the Paduan sculptor has been securely identified. Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, vol 1, trans. Gaston du C. de Vere (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1979), 521.

[79] Vespasiano da Bisticci refers to Donatello's four assistants at work on the San Lorenzo pulpits. As Bellano is known to be in Florence during the 1460s it is assumed that he was one of these workshop members. However, Krahn argues that Bellano could not have played a large part in finishing the pulpits as by 1466 he was busy with the papal statue in Perugia. Volker Krahn, "Bartolomeo Bellano," in *Donatello e il suo tempo: Il bronzetto a Padova nel Quattrocento e nel Cinquecento*, ed. Vittorio Sgarbi (Milan: Skira, 2001), 63-65.

concerning the church.[80] The next year, Bellano began his first work at the Santo and the largest stone sculpture of his career when he was commissioned to complete the sculptural elements of the enormous reliquary cupboard in the sacristy.[81] By 1472, he had completed a major relief of the *Miracle of the Mule* flanked by standing figures of Sts. Francis and Anthony, several angels, decorated pilasters, and the red Verona marble drape that frames the entire structure.

Bellano's reliquary cupboard reliefs, like his entire *oeuvre*, have struggled to step out of the critical shadow of Donatello and, to a lesser extent, that of his own student, Andrea Riccio. Bellano's bronze work was praised by Vasari**,** who singled out his later series of ten bronze reliefs on the exterior of the Santo's choir depicting episodes from the Old Testament as remarkable for the diversity of the figures' expressions.[82] However, this praise is diminished by Vasari's repeated and partisan assertion that any talent shown by Bellano, even in this late work of the 1480s, is due entirely to Donatello's influence. This perceived dependence on Bellano's part is so profound that Vasari indicates that Bellano used equipment and designs left to him by Donatello when he made the great choir reliefs.[83] Essentially removing Bellano's creative agency from the project, perhaps not surprisingly Vasari's life of the Paduan sculptor largely functions as further demonstration of the older, Tuscan sculptor's talent.

Even before Vasari's inclusion of Bellano in the *Lives*, in the years immediately following the artist's death, humanist Pomponio Gaurico indelibly branded him with the epithet

[80] Krahn, "Bartolomeo Bellano," 65.
[81] Pope-Hennessy, *Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, 414; Lorenzoni, "Dopo Donatello," 99-100; Krahn, "Bartolomeo Bellano," 65.
[82] Vasari, 520. Krahn points out that Vasari's opinion of Bellano's work was likely not the result of personal viewing, instead he likely received a report from the Paduan Girolamo Campagnola, who apparently chose the bronze choir cycle as the most significant component of Bellano's *oeuvre*. On the choir cycle see also Krahn, "Bartolomeo Bellano," 69-72.
[83] Vasari, 520.

"*ineptus artifex*" (or "crude craftsman") in the 1504 publication of *De sculptura.*[84] Art historical treatments of Bellano have not often looked very far past Pomponio's early, disparaging label. Until recently, discussions of Bellano's work have largely compared it to that of his famous teacher and mentor and the student has usually been found wanting. Giovanni Lorenzoni, for example, describes the Paduan as "a rough sculptor," who never learned to create a convincingly illusionistic sense of space in the manner of Donatello.[85] John Pope-Hennessy treats Bellano as the "legatee of a long tradition of encyclopedic naturalism," a competent, if ultimately provincial, craftsman, indelibly tied to conservative Veneto tastes despite his extensive experience with the Florentine sculptural milieu.[86]

However, some studies produced in the last twenty years have begun to alter critical opinion regarding Bellano's style and importance. Volker Krahn's monograph on the artist has updated and refreshed Planiscig's work from the 1920s and provided a base upon which to launch further investigation.[87] Lionello Puppi argues that the prestige and prominence of his commissions indicates that, at least in Padua, Bellano enjoyed a position as a respected and sought-after sculptor. In addition to the reliquary cupboard, Puppi cites in particular Bellano's association with the wall tomb of Erasmo da Narni in the Santo.[88] This elaborate funerary monument, begun in 1456 for the famed *condottiere* better known as Gattamelata, appropriately reflects the wealth, power and status of the entombed soldier. Such a commission also implies a

[84] Pope-Hennessy, *Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, 414. On the Neapolitan born Pomponio Gaurico, who visited Padua in the first decade of the sixteenth century see Erasmo Percopo, "Pomponio Gaurico, umanista napoletano," *Atti della reale academia di archaeologia, lettere e belle arti di Napoli* 16 (1891-93), 143-261; Elma Barnes, "Biographical Note," in *Pomponio Gaurico: De Sculptura*, ed. Elma Barnes. (New York: Broude International Editions, 1981), vii-ix.
[85] Lorenzoni, "Dopo Donatello," 100.
[86] Pope-Hennessy's treatment of Bellano leads into his much more favorable opinion of Riccio's bronzework. *Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, 296.
[87] Leo Planiscig, *Andrea Riccio* (Vienna: A. Scholl & Co., 1927); Volker Krahn, *Bartolomeo Bellano: Studien zur Paduaner Plastik des Quattrocento* (Munich: Scaneg, 1988).
[88] Puppi, 238.

high opinion of Bellano's sculptural abilities, as Erasmo's family was unlikely to select an inferior artist to craft this significant family monument.[89] The sacristy reliquary cupboard, with its precious contents, large size, and expensive materials, thus continues Bellano's history of prestigious projects at the Santo, although its status as liturgical furniture, and thus a "minor art," has contributed to its marginalization in the scholarship on his *oeuvre*.

In addition to calling attention to the prominence of the various Paduan commissions associated with Bellano, both Krahn and Puppi have described Bellano's sculptural style in positive terms as dramatic and theatrical.[90] This scholarly placement thus positions Bellano as a contrast to other sculptors at work in the Santo, such as Riccio and Pietro Lombardo, whose more classicizing style has received praise in the literature, in part for reflecting roughly contemporary Florentine aesthetic developments.[91] The characterization of Bellano's flair for the dramatic is perhaps best supported by the Santo reliquary cupboard, where the draped, red marble curtain permanently imitates and intimates the mystery of the hidden and revealed, which was physically enacted by the occasional opening of the cupboard doors.

The iconography of the reliquary cupboard's marble elements appropriately draws attention to its setting within a church specially connected to St. Anthony. The large relief surmounting the cupboard depicts the *Miracle of the Mule*, one of the miraculous events of Anthony's life recounted in the earliest hagiographies and amplified by later versions.[92] In the fullest descriptions, Anthony visited Rimini as part of his Franciscan missions and encountered Bononillo, a man who did not believe in the doctrine of transubstantiation. Eventually the

[89] The tomb monument extends the links between Gattamelata, Donatello and Bellano already established by the celebrated bronze equestrian statue of the military leader placed in the piazza outside the Santo in 1453.
[90] Krahn, *Bartolomeo Bellano*, 59-60; Puppi, 240.
[91] McHam, for example, links the form of Pietro Lombardo's circa 1464 tomb of university professor Antonio Roselli to that of the wall tomb of Carlo Marsuppini, sculpted for Santa Croce, Florence, by Desiderio da Settignano. "Padua, Treviso, and Bassano," 222-23. See also Puppi, 240; Pope-Hennessy, 296-97.
[92] *Assidua*, 316-21. Gamboso notes that Bartolomeo da Pisa, writing in the late 1300s, introduced the element of the mule. The earlier texts credit only Anthony's preaching with Bononillo's conversion. *Assidua*, n. 9.9.

unbeliever was converted by the actions of his humble mule that refused to eat for three days until Anthony offered the animal a consecrated Host, whereupon the mule knelt down in recognition of the presence of Christ's body. This episode communicates a dual message: Anthony's saintly ability as a missionary and with animals (a skill not coincidentally reminiscent of St. Francis) and the broader power and validity of the Eucharistic miracle, the fundamental and continually performed ritual of the entire Church.

In Bellano's version of the narrative, Anthony bends toward the kneeling mule as he offers the Host to the reverential animal. Anthony, serving as a compositional fulcrum, is positioned before an altar draped with an intricate floral-patterned cloth and outfitted with an open book and chalice. To further set the liturgical scene, the lower half of an altarpiece featuring St. John the Baptist, the Virgin and Child, and St. Sebastian is visible behind the Franciscan saint. Two Franciscans stand to the right of the altar, however, the bulk of the astonished crowd is made up of a tightly packed group of laypeople, many of whom lean together to discuss or point out the miraculous event to their neighbors. Seen from below, the viewpoint of those who opened, closed or changed the contents of the cupboard, the figures in the foreground more clearly form a compositional crescendo that leads the eye to the interchange between Anthony and the mule, thus highlighting an event that helped to prove his saintly powers.

Bellano's version of the *Miracle of the Mule*, while particularly suited to its location within the sacristy and its proximity to a large collection of relics, joined other renderings of the narrative already in place at the Santo. Stefano da Ferrara's Trecento fresco cycle in the chapel of St. Anthony, the other major locus of relics at the church, included the episode as one of the saint's significant acts. These paintings were replaced by a sculptural program initiated in the

first decade of the Cinquecento. The plan for this monumental cycle of marble reliefs undertaken by such artists as Antonio and Tullio Lombardo and Jacopo Sansovino originally included the *Miracle of the Mule*, although it was omitted in the final sequence when the decision was made to focus on the representation of Anthony's posthumous miracles.[93]

Another depiction of Anthony and the mule, one with which Bellano would have been quite familiar, remains on view on the Santo's high altar. Bellano clearly drew upon some aspects of this earlier sculptural treatment of the miracle, one of four bronze reliefs of Antonine miracles that Donatello created between 1446-1453 for the church's main altar in the choir (figure 5-11).[94] Comparison of the two panels reveals that Bellano utilized the same general structure, notably a centrally placed Anthony and mule surrounded by incredulous crowds. However, Donatello's detailed, illusionistic arcade contrasts sharply with the low, compressed space Bellano created. In addition, the restrained surprise of Bellano's crowd is a marked departure from the riotous shock Donatello's witnesses exhibit.

While the stylistic differences between these two versions of the miracle effectively demonstrate some of the reasons why Bellano's work has suffered in comparison to his teacher, the location of each relief must also be taken into account. The reliquary cupboard, situated in an area of the church where the friars constituted the primary audience during ritual preparations, effectively stresses the liturgical act wherein Anthony offers the consecrated host. As the space in which the friars prepared to act out the same ritual themselves, such an emphasis is entirely appropriate. Conversely, Donatello's dramatic focus on the astonished crowd suits its highly visible location before the lay congregation in the nave, gathered together like those in the relief to witness the Eucharistic miracle.

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[93] McHam, *The Chapel of St. Anthony*, 93.
[94] On Donatello's larger project for the Santo altar see the classic study by H.W. Janson, *The Sculpture of Donatello* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 162-87.

The iconography of the largest single component of the reliquary cupboard's decorative program supports and strengthens the corporeal nature of the *armadio*'s contents. In addition to demonstrating his saintly ability, the narrative establishes Anthony's close relationship with the Eucharist, understood to be the body of Christ on earth.[95] Therefore, the host bears conceptual similarity to a relic in that it receives its spiritual powers by virtue of its connection to a physical body, in this case the body of Christ.[96] Scholars have so far neglected to note that Bellano's relief, through its focus on the Eucharistic relic of the host, indirectly references those other relics housed safely just underneath the sculpture.[97] The relief may be understood, then, as serving a dual symbolic function, reminding the viewer of the relic collection that was present but usually kept out of sight while also celebrating the ritual of the Eucharist and the Santo's special connection to that sacrament through St. Anthony.

While the *Miracle of the Mule* relief constitutes the largest narrative element of the reliquary *armadio*, Bellano also executed several standing figures for the cupboard's face that enhance and expand the symbolic and practical functions of the cupboard as a whole. On either side of the historiated relief Bellano situated a statue of a Franciscan in front of a shallow, illusionistic niche. Krahn has identified these friars as Anthony on the left and Francis on the right.[98] The watchful presence of the Franciscan saints in combination with the narrative relief that speaks directly to the Santo's experience with Anthony's miracles thus effectively reminds the viewer of the location of the cupboard within a particularly Franciscan environment.

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[95] On the development of doctrines relating to the Eucharist see Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 12-49.
[96] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 86-88.
[97] The earliest secure reference to the practice of storing the Host in the Santo sacristy dates from 1590. Polidoro, 41-47.
[98] Krahn, *Bartolomeo Bellano*, 48.

Moreover, these Franciscan saints become part of a visual pantheon of saintly power when seen within the program of the cupboard as a whole.

In the middle of the cupboard, Bellano placed four more standing figures on the bases of the marble pilasters. The outer framing pilasters each bear a scroll-carrying angel, while the central two depict Louis of Toulouse and Bernardino of Siena, thus extending the Franciscan focus of the cupboard's upper zone. These saints, as well as the fixed relief and standing saints in the upper zone, would always remain visible whether the doors of the cupboard were opened or closed, a marked contrast to the mutable viewing conditions of the intarsia work on the cupboard.

Canozi and the Intarsia Panels

If Bellano's hand in the sculpted portions of the sacristy reliquary cupboard may be understood as an example of the continued connection between the artistic heritage of Padua and Florence due to his training in Donatello's workshop, the intarsia doors may also link the cupboard to the broader development of Quattrocento decorative methods, albeit in a less immediately apparent way. Canozi's wooden panels form the fully functional doors of the cupboard and served a practical role in protecting the sacristy relics in addition to their ability to conceal and reveal these mysterious and powerful objects.[99] However, the inlaid wood technique that constitutes so much of the cupboard's decoration has not received as much scholarly attention as other common Renaissance media, such as fresco and marble.[100]

[99] The handles and locks on the doors today are modern replacements, likely installed during a late nineteenth-century restoration. However, reliquary cupboard doors required effective security and some Renaissance era locks remain attached as can be seen on the doors for the reliquary *armadio* for the Sienese hospital church of Santa Maria della Scala discussed in Chapter Three.

[100] Wood intarsia, also known as marquetry, involves cutting out thin sheets of wood and fitting them together on a solid base, usually also made of wood. For discussion of the history of intarsia and marquetry in Europe, see Pierre

The lack of adequate appreciation for intarsia is particularly surprising when one considers the prominent patrons and expense of large intarsia programs that appear throughout Quattrocento Italy. Perhaps the most famous examples of this type of project, Federico da Montefeltro's *studioli* in the Palazzo Ducale in Urbino and Gubbio, were designed and executed by Florentine artists in the same decade as the reliquary cupboard.[101] The seigneurial predilection for intarsiated rooms and the Santo sacristy cupboard share unexpectedly similar iconography in that both feature elaborate illusionistic panels depicting fictive shelving and objects stored behind the doors as well as standing figures often placed before perspectival niches or cityscapes. Therefore, just as intarsia was considered an appropriate decorative technique in the *studiolo*, a place where powerful laypersons kept their treasures, it could also be effectively used in sacred storage spaces, such as sacristies.[102] From 1463-1465 Giuliano da Maiano decorated Florence Cathedral's north sacristy with intarsia cupboards that displayed *trompe l'oeil* shelves holding various liturgical objects, Florentine saints and narrative panels of the *Nativity of Christ* and the *Presentation in the Temple*.[103] The Santo sacristy reliquary cupboard's doors should thus be understood within the larger tradition of intarsia projects in Italy in the second half of the fifteenth century.

For the intricate intarsia panels, the Veneranda Arca employed Lorenzo Canozi (1425-1478), one of the best-known and experienced masters of the technique in northern Italy, who

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Ramond, *Marquetry*, rev. ed, trans. Jacqueline Derenne, et. al. (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2001), 7-18.

[101] See Luciano Cheles, *The Studiolo of Urbino: An iconographic investigation* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986); Robert Kirkbride, *Architecture and Memory: The Renaissance studioli of Federico da Montefeltro* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

[102] On the Renaissance *studiolo* as a private treasure house, see Wolfgang Liebenwein, *Studiolo: Storia e tipologia di uno spazio culturale*, trans. Alessandro Califano (Modena: Edizioni Panini, 1988), 7.

[103] Margaret Haines, *La Sacrestia delle messe del Duomo di Firenze*, trans. Laura Corti (Florence: Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze, 1983), 126-41.

hailed from Lendinara, a small town situated between Padua and Ferrara.[104] Lorenzo and his brother Cristoforo first worked at the Santo in the 1460s on the intarsia choir stalls.[105] These celebrated pieces of liturgical furniture, mostly destroyed by fire in 1749, seem to have put Lorenzo foremost in the Arca's collective mind when it came time to award the commission for the sacristy *armadio*.[106] On 12 March, 1474, Canozi accepted the commission for the reliquary cupboard doors and shortly thereafter began work on its lower section.[107] The upper panels depicting the various saints were finished by 1477 or 1478; Lorenzo received his last payment in January 1477 and his son-in-law and student Pierantonio degli Abbati continued working through at least July 1477.[108] Therefore, it seems probable that Pierantonio was entrusted with finishing the project given Lorenzo's impending death and the need to complete the decorative program of the massive sacristy reliquary cupboard. Lamentably, all the intarsia panels have been extensively restored or replaced and today remain in fairly poor condition.[109]

The four panels on the cupboard's lower register resemble the type of intarsia Canozi had produced for the choir stalls of the cathedrals of Modena and Parma.[110] These compositions feature illusionistic, partially opened doors that reveal common liturgical objects, such as

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[104] Prior to his work at the Santo sacristy, Canozi had already worked on the choir stalls of the cathedrals of Modena and Parma. For discussion of Lorenzo Canozi's entire career, see Bagatin, *L'arte dei Canozi lendinaresi*, 79-142.
[105] The April 27, 1462 contract calls for 52 large and 38 small stalls with varied prospectival views. Bagatin, 67.
[106] The two surviving choir stalls are housed today in the Museo Antoniana. Canozi was also responsible for the decoration of the sacristy *banchi*, today in the Museo Antoniana. Giovanni Lorenzoni, ""Le sculture e le tarsie lignee," in *Basilica del Santo: Dipinti, Sculture, Tarsie, Disegni e Modelli*, ed. Giovanni Lorenzoni, et. al. (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 1995), 18.
[107] Mauro Lucco, "Il Quattrocento," in *Le pitture del Santo di Padova*, ed. Camillo Semenzato, vol. 5 of *Fonti e Studi per la storia del Santo a Padova* (Venice: Neri Pozza Editore, 1984), 141-42; Lorenzoni, "Le sculture e le tarsie lignee," 18; Bagatin, 135.
[108] Bagatin, 137. Pierantonio accepted another commission for work in the Santo sacristy in 1489 that called for four cityscape panels for a sacristy bench. See Giovanna Baldissin Molli, "*…e con le forme varie dan commodo d'allogare I reverendi arnesi*": Le tarsie di Pierantonio degli Abbati nella sacrestia del Santo." *Il Santo* 39 (1999): 785-90.
[109] In 1887, the Santo authorities supported an extensive restoration of the basilica, which included "unfortunate" work on the *armadio*'s delicate intarsia panels. At the same time, Canozi's *banchi* were replaced with copies. Giovanna Baldissin Molli, "Il Museo Antoniano. Le raccolte di pittura, di scultura e di arte applicata," in *Basilica del Santo: Dipinti, Sculture, Tarsie, Disegni e Modelli*, ed. Giovanni Lorenzoni, et al (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 1995), 26; Lorenzoni, "Le sculture e le tarsie lignee," 18.
[110] Bagatin, 79-142.

chalices, patens and books, arranged haphazardly on shelves.[111] In the sacristy setting, the iconography of these panels on the foundational level of the cupboard speaks to the fundamental function of the space as the designated location for preparation for the Mass. However, while every Christian sacristy served this role, the intarsia and marble elements of the cupboard's upper zones draw attention to the exceptional contents of this particular sacristy.

Each of the six larger intarsia doors of the middle register depicts a single standing saint or *beato*, identified from left to right as Bernardino of Siena, Jerome, Anthony of Padua, Francis, Louis of Toulouse and Bonaventure. The saints on the cupboard doors present a powerful Franciscan saintly presence that reaches from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. Francis and Anthony receive the central places of honor due to them as the most significant leaders of the first decades of the Order. On the far right, Bonaventure, the minister-general from 1257-1274, reminds the viewer of the successful continuation of the Franciscan administration despite times of internal strife as he strove to reconcile the Conventual and Spiritual factions.[112] Although he was revered by the entire Order, Bonaventure was distinctly tied to Paduan relics as he conducted the 1263 translation of Anthony's body and the recognition of his tongue relic. Bonaventure's inclusion on the reliquary *armadio* also coincided with the last stages of his canonization, finalized by Sixtus IV in 1482; therefore, his depiction on the cupboard can be read as visual confirmation of his impending saintly status.

Louis, a late thirteenth-century member of the ruling Angevin family in Naples and eventual bishop of Toulouse, stands second from the right as another Franciscan saint, one with

[111] This type of fictive revelation is perhaps more often associated with fifteenth-century intarsia made for secular environments, such as the studiolo of Federico da Montefeltro in the ducal palace in Urbino. However, as Canozi's *oeuvre* demonstrates, these designs were also favored in sacred spaces that had similarly restricted access.
[112] Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage*, 18-21.

especially high standing due to his royal blood.[113] The figure on the far left, Bernardino of Siena (canonized in 1450) was another charismatic Franciscan preacher in the mold of Anthony of Padua, who visited the Santo several times during his life and was still physically present through the secondary relic of his cap.[114] It should be noted, however, that the figure of Bernardino has undergone extensive reworking at some point in its history, which is apparent from the strangely youthful, feminine appearance of the intarsia depiction as compared to most other versions of the saint, including Bellano's marble figure on the cupboard, in which he is shown as a rather haggard, older man.[115] The church possessed its Bernardino relic by 1466, several years before the doors were made, so a new acquisition does not explain the alteration. At this point, it seems more likely that the figure was changed (perhaps from St. Clare) to fit in with what was otherwise a completely male iconographical program.

The second figure from the left is identified as St. Jerome because of his large hat and long beard, common attributes of this early Christian hermit and exegete. In addition, the model of a church that he holds was particularly popular in representations of the saint in northeastern Italy.[116] It has not been remarked upon in the existing literature on the cupboard, but Jerome's inclusion seems an unusual choice as he is the only non-Franciscan and is also dramatically and temporally removed from the rest of the medieval and Renaissance saints on the cupboard doors. Furthermore, the first reference to the Santo holding any Jerome relics does not appear until

[113] On St. Louis of Toulouse's historical background, see Diana Norman, "Politics and Piety: Locating Simone Martini's *Saint Louis of Toulouse* Altarpiece." *Art History* 33 (2010): 597-600.
[114] Lorenzo di Fonzo, "Santi e beati Francescani al Sano di Padova," in *Liturgia, pieta, e ministeri al Santo*, ed. Antonino Poppi, vol. 2 of *Fonti e Studi per la storia del Santo a Padova* (Venice: Neri Pozza Editore, 1978), 63-64.
[115] I thank Sally Cornelison for her observation about the oddly reworked appearance of the figure.
[116] George Kaftal, *Iconography of the Saints in the Painting of North East Italy* (Florence: Sansoni, 1978), 478-506. Rice asserts that the model refers to the Church, which Jerome "illumined with his teaching." Eugene F. Rice, Jr. *St. Jerome in the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 33.

Polidoro's 1590 description**,** thus his appearance cannot have been part of any decorative system that served to advertise the cupboard contents.[117]

Why would the friars have opted to include Jerome among this pantheon of Franciscan holy men? Pier Luigi Bagatin argues that Jerome serves as a symbol of the "sacred learning" utilized by Anthony in his ministry, yet Padua's celebrated preacher never indicated any particular affinity for this early Christian ascetic.[118] Another explanation for Jerome's unexpected inclusion that has not been suggested before might be found in the saint's own writings, particularly his *Contra Vigilantium* of 406. In this screed against Vigilantius, a prominent theologian in early Christian France, Jerome attacks the Gallic priest's rejection of the cult of relics.[119] His role as an early champion of relics might have made him an attractive figure for the reliquary cupboard door and furthermore, recognition of his stance as a defender of orthodoxy links him to Anthony's reputation as a hammer of heretics. Therefore, Jerome's representation on the cupboard ties Anthony and the Santo's community to the very beginnings of Christian devotion to relics as well as the ongoing struggle against theological dissension.

A connection with the accepted orthodoxy and the promotion of stability would also have been attractive to the Santo's friars when one considers the state of the Franciscan Order in the late Quattrocento. Almost immediately following St. Francis' death in 1226 tensions had existed between the Spirituals, those who believed in living out a strict observance of his belief in simplicity and lack of personal property, and the Conventuals who wished to enjoy more of the fruits of the Order's success.[120] The divisive situation continued well into the fifteenth century;

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[117] Polidoro, 42.
[118] Bagatin, 142.
[119] St. Jerome, "Contra Vigilantium," published in J.P. Migne, *Patrologiae Latina*, vol. 23 (Paris: Garnier, 1883), 354-69. See also Eugene F. Rice, Jr. *St. Jerome in the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 19-22; David G. Hunter, "Vigilantius of Calagurris and Victricius of Rouen: Ascetics, Relics and Clerics in Late Roman Gaul," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7, no 3 (1999): 407-10.
[120] See the discussion in Chapter One, pages 33-34.

indeed, the chapter general meeting held in Padua in 1443 ended dramatically with the Santo's Conventual friars bodily ejecting the most conservative nominee for Minister General.[121] Therefore, in a period of internal conflict, Padua's Conventual community may have appreciated the figure of Jerome as a visual tie to institutional continuity and stability.

A *Condottiere's* Cupboard?: Erasmo da Narni and the Santo *armadio*

The Franciscan, perhaps even more specifically Antonine, iconography of Bellano and Canozi's work in the Santo sacristy is complemented and complicated by the references to lay patronage also present in the cupboard's decoration and contents. Throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, several patrons of high social and ecclesiastical standing donated relics and reliquaries to the Santo's collection.[122] However, the sacristy *armadio* is more closely linked to Erasmo da Narni, who earned his fame as a hired military general commanding the Venetian armies in battles against Milan in the late 1430s. For his successful service to the Serenissima, the Umbrian soldier became a Venetian nobleman after accepting that state's gift of the title of Lord of Valmareno.[123] Following a lingering, debilitating illness, he died in Padua on 16 January, 1443, leaving his wife, Giacoma della Leonessa, and young son, Giovanni Antonio, with both his wealth and the responsibility to memorialize him properly.[124]

Gattamelata's death set in motion a series of several significant commissions at the Santo, beginning with Donatello's equestrian monument installed in the piazza in 1453. In conjunction

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[121] The Franciscan Order eventually made an official split in 1517. Geraldine A. Johnson, "Approaching the Altar: Donatello's Sculpture in the Santo," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52, no 3 (1999): 643-44.
[122] Molli, *La sacrestia*, 50-54.
[123] Before moving north in 1434, Erasmo da Narni worked as a papal *condottiere*. On his employment by the Venetians, especially his noteworthy escape from the Milanese after the siege of Brescia in 1438-1439, see Michael Mallett, *The Military Organization of a Renaissance State: Venice circa 1400 to 1617* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 38-40.
[124] The exact date of birth for Erasmo's son is unknown, but a 1447 document indicates that he was "about to come of age," on that basis Janson argues he was likely born circa 1427. Janson, 155-57.

with Arca officials, Erasmo's wife and her brother, Gentile della Leonessa, coordinated the creation of this famous bronze memorial, as well as those to follow.[125] Gattamelata's last will, dated 30 June, 1441, requests that he be buried in the Santo if he died in Padua.[126] Accordingly, in 1456, shortly following the premature death of her son, Giacoma initiated the process to acquire the rights to the chapel of SS. Francis and Bernardino in the Santo, for which she then commissioned tombs for both her son and husband.[127] While not certain, it remains possible that Bellano was involved with the early stages of the tomb designs before he left Padua for Florence.[128] Perhaps Bellano's stature as a member of Donatello's workshop put him in mind for the tomb, as by the time of the sepulchre's commission in 1456 Donatello's bronze equestrian statue honoring the soldier had been standing in front of the Santo for three years.

Gattamelata and his family actually maintained stronger ties with cities in the Veneto other than Padua, as not only was Erasmo employed by the Venetian Senate, but Giacoma and Giovanni Antonio lived primarily in Verona. Thus, it is significant that the family situated their major monuments in Padua and specifically at the Santo. This request conforms to a larger trend in the Tre- and Quattrocento in which prominent lay patrons concerned about their spiritual welfare sought out burial in Franciscan churches and the Santo's position as a major pilgrimage

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[125] The project began in 1447 and continued until 1453, at which time the final payments were arranged between Donatello and Giovanni Antonio di Gattamelata. See Janson, 152-53; John Pope-Hennessy, *Donatello Sculptor* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1993), 201-02.

[126] *...si contigerit ipsum decedere in partibus istis citra Padum ... corpus suum sepelliri et sepulturam suam fieri in civitate in qual vel in eius districtu occurrerit ipsum decedere in ecclesia Fratrum Minorum S. Francisci, quae sit principalior in praedicto loco* (…if he should die in Padua…his body should be buried and entombed in that city in which his death occurred, in the church of the Friars Minor of St. Francis, which is first in the said place). AdA 186, fol. 156.

[127] Giacoma's request for patronage rights in the chapel is dated November 15, 1456. In her will (dated April 25, 1457) she bequests further funds for the burial chapel and its decoration. *...hoc legato sue capelle…San. Francisci et S. Bernardini in ecclesia S. Antonii Confessoris de Padua…* (thus bound to these chapels…the above named St. Francis and Bernardino in the church of St. Anthony the Confessor of Padua…). Published in Giovanni Eroli, *Erasmo Gattamelata da Narni: Suoi monumenti e sua famiglia* (Roma: Salviucci, 1876), 367.

[128] The tombs were actually sculpted by Gregorio di Allegretto, although Puppi suggests Bellano was the original choice of artist. Janson, 157; Puppi, 238.

center would have further increased its desirability as a prestigious and holy final resting place.[129]

The burial chapel and equestrian monument, while certainly the most visible manifestations of the Gattamelata family's involvement at the Santo, were not the only instances of their patronage that sought to promote the memory of the general and his family at the church. Although the document no longer survives, evidence exists to support the traditional belief that the general's family helped fund the reliquary cupboard; as Gattamelata's son died in 1456, five years before the first drawings for the new reliquary cupboard were commissioned, it is perhaps more likely that his mother, Gattamelata's widow and previous Santo patron, was the family member who designated funds for the project.[130] Polidoro's guide of 1590 is the earliest textual source to connect Gattamelata definitively to the *armadio*; he describes the pilasters as bearing "the signs and arms of the most famous knight Gattamelata, because of his faith all the stone work [of the cupboard] was made with his funds."[131] In keeping with this assertion, Volker Krahn, drawing on the earlier work of George von Graevenitz, states that the *condottiere* left a bequest to fund the sculptural work on the sacristy reliquary cupboard.[132]

The *condottiere*'s family has a prominent visual presence on the cupboard through its coats of arms on the pilasters. Their device composed of three looped braids also appears on the marble pedestal of Donatello's equestrian statue and at the top of the family tombs in their burial

[129] The practice is perhaps best known in the church of Santa Croce in Florence, where throughout the fourteenth and into the fifteenth centuries, wealthy families patronized elaborate funerary chapels.
[130] None of Giacoma's will or codicils (made in 1457, 1459 and 1467) mentions the cupboard specifically and none of the payment entries in the Arca's records links the Gattamelata family with the project. It is therefore difficult to determine to what extent the family funded the cupboard, although it seems likely that it was a combined effort between Gattamelata's heirs and the Santo authorites. See AdA 186, fols. 163, 169-80, 300-01.
[131] *...le insegne, & Arme di Gatamelata famosissimo Cavalliero, per le quali si crede che tutta l'opera di pietra in quella parte, fosse fatta a sue spese.* Polidoro, 39.
[132] Neither Krahn nor von Graevenitz cite a particular document related to the donation. It thus seems likely that this argument is based on iconographic, rather than archival, evidence. Krahn, "Bartolomeo Bellano," 65; George von Graevenitz, *Gattamelata und Colleoni und ihre Beziehungen zur Kunst* (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1906), 59.

chapel. Therefore, Bellano's pilaster reliefs contribute to an iconographic connection between Gattamelata and the Santo that runs from the piazza outside, to the burial chapel in the nave, to the sacristy. Spanning several types of sacred spaces, from the decidedly public piazza to the relatively secluded sacristy, for several decades Gattamelata and his heirs carried out a program to ensure their salvation and their legacy in a variety of visual forms at this pilgrimage church. While it has not been adequately emphasized, the Gattamelata family's association with the reliquary cupboard would have also reminded any privileged viewer of their piety and status, and even more significantly, visually and liturgically connects their patronage with many of the Santo's most holy objects.

The heraldic reference to the Narni family on the cupboard's pilasters may have had a specific connection to the contents of the cupboard. Inventories from the early eighteenth century describe two objects linked to Gattamelata, a gilded ring and a military baton, that were stored alongside the relics in the *armadio*. The presence of the commander's ring in the cupboard is less controversial than the identification of his baton. Gattamelata's baton, which he holds aloft in Donatello's equestrian monument, was a gift from the Venetian Senate, made in 1438 in recognition of his victories in Trento and Arco to symbolize his command of the Serenissima's armies.[133] Eroli, Graevenitz and Krahn all assert that this is the *mazza* listed in sacristy inventories, however Sartori suggests that in fact the "club" mentioned was not Gattamelata's but one that the king of Poland gave to the Santo in 1702.[134]

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[133] Gonzati, 218; Antonio Sartori, "Il cosidetto bastone di comando del Gattamelata," *Il Santo* 1 (1961): 335.
[134] Eroli, 177, Graevenitz, 59; Krahn, "Bartolomeo Bellano," 65. Sartori cites AdA, reg 98, fol. 12, which lists *...una mazza argento dorata e lavorata, tempestato in cima di turchine, gia donata dal re di Polonia Subieschi nel tempo ch'era Generale del rego… Nell'armadio della sacrestia, vicina alla mazza, c'e un annello argento dorato detto di Gattamelata* (…a silver gilt, worked baton, encrusted with a Turkish top, donated by Sobieski, the King of Poland, in the time that he was general…in the sacristy cupboard, near the baton, there is a silver gilt ring called Gattamelata's). Published in Sartori, "Il cosidetto bastone," 337.

Even if Gattamelata's baton has been misidentified, the presence of his ring amongst the sacred objects in the cupboard remains an intriguing possibility. Storing an object owned by a mercenary commander in close proximity to saints' relics begs questions regarding the sacred roles of secular objects and the relationship between ecclesiastical entities and military powers in the Quattrocento. At the very least, the inclusion of his ring within the ranks of saintly remains unusually elevates the *condottiere*. Gattamelata's ring and coat of arts demonstrate his role as patron, but furthermore, they may also situate the great soldier as another type of Paduan protector, one who, like the saints, acted to safeguard the city in times of strife and insecurity. Whether as patron or secular saint, the reliquary cupboard's references to Erasmo, whose high status was already visually established at the Santo through his tomb and equestrian monument, effectively link the ritual activities performed in the sacristy with the complex political and military circumstances of fifteenth-century Padua.

O Lingua Benedicta: The Functions of the Santo Reliquary Cupboard

Devotional activities at the Santo centered on the tomb of St. Anthony, such as circumambulation and the donation of ex-votos, took on a decidedly public tone given the prominent position of the saint's *arca*.[135] In addition, the saint's burial chapel played a role in major citywide processions, such as the one held annually on the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin (15 August) that began at the cathedral and moved across town to the Santo.[136] These rituals, while grounded in the veneration of relics, were performed within a markedly different atmosphere from those that took place in the sacristy.

[135] On ritual circumambulation at Anthony's tomb, which often involved the donation of various ex-votos, especially wax candles and figures see Vecchi, 42-44.
[136] Vecchi, 42; Antonio Giuseppe Nocilli, "La liturgia della basilica del Santo nei suoi aspetti ad evoluzioni secolari," in *Liturgia, pietà, e ministeri al Santo*, ed. Antonino Poppi, vol. 2 of *Fonti e Studi per la storia del Santo a Padova* (Venice: Neri Pozza Editore, 1978), 41.

As discussed above, the sacristy served a multiplicity of roles necessary for the successful performance of the liturgy at the Santo, as was the case with any significant church in Renaissance Italy.[137] Some of these rituals were decidedly routine, as when the priest dressed and spiritually prepared to say Mass at the high altar or any of the other chapels in the basilica. The large, open room of the sacristy was primarily intended to facilitate this preparation for Mass; therefore, the benches and tables built into the architectural framework provided the tools necessary for the celebrant dressing and collecting necessary liturgical implements before proceeding out into the body of the church proper. The deliberately secluded nature of the space allowed the priest to ready himself in an environment in which distractions were kept to a minimum. Although priestly preparation was the most common liturgical occurrence to take place here, other rituals took place in the Santo's sacristy that facilitated the function of the entire church.

From the basilica's establishment in the thirteenth century, relics were an integral part of many different types of significant events at the Santo, and, as was the case with the other churches considered in this study, seem to have been used particularly during feast day celebrations and the arrivals of visiting dignitaries. Liturgical books, conventual statutes, and descriptions of special ceremonies all record occasions on which relics were made visible, both inside and outside the confines of the reliquary cupboard. The rarity of this profound visual experience in which the supplicant directly confronted the remains of the saints often caused chroniclers and antiquarians to include these occurrences in their description of the church. Indeed, the appearance of such relics had the ability to affect the history and liturgy of the Santo.

In 1263 St. Bonaventure's revelation and removal of Anthony's tongue from his body entombed within its sarcophagus prompted him to compose a prayer, "*O Lingua Benedicta (O*

[137] See Introduction, pages 4-11.

Blessed Tongue)," thanking God for the manifestation of this powerful relic.[138] In practical terms, Bonaventure's recognition meant that the saint's blessed tongue could now be seen by the faithful whenever it was brought out of the sacristy and processed through the church or city, a helpful addition to a saint's cult otherwise focused on a body perpetually hidden in a marble tomb. The practice of ostention was significantly enhanced when donors, such as Cardinal Guy de Boulogne-sur-Mer, commissioned expensive reliquaries for several of the Santo's relics in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. For example, Fra Bartolomeo Rinonico, in his late fourteenth-century chronicle, notes that the enormous tongue reliquary funded by the aforementioned cardinal was displayed on an altar Sartori understood to be located in the sacristy.[139]

Those occasions on which an Antonine relic was made visible certainly derived a fair share of their dramatic and devotional impact from the fact that these sacred objects were rarely visible, restricted to feast days or the visits of dignitaries. The earliest recorded ostentions notably occur in conjunction with the visits of Bonaventure and the established tradition of displaying the sacristy relics to prominent pilgrims continues throughout the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. In fact, the Santo's official liturgical protocols called for visiting cardinals and bishops to be taken into the sacristy for the express purpose of showing them the relics.[140]

The practice of making an exception to the sacristy's usual inaccessibility to notable visitors also allowed several of the basilica's chroniclers to include a description of the space and

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[138] The prayer begins *O lingua benedicta, quae semper benedixisti Dominum ac etiam alios tu benedicere fecisti, nunc manifeste apparet quanti exstitisti meriti apud Deum…* Antonio Sartori, "La festa della traslazione di S. Antonio e il culto alla sua sacra lingua nel corso dei secoli," *Il Santo* 3 (1963): 70.

[139] Luciano Bertazzo, "Le reliquie antoniane," in *Basilica del Santo: Le Oreficerie*, ed. Marco Collareta, et. al (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 1995), 10; Antonio Sartori, "I reliquiari della lingua di s. Antonio," *Il Santo* 3 (1963), 35.

[140] *...al Altare di Santo et in Sacrestia quando voligono vedere le reliquie…* (…to the Santo altar and the sacristy when they want to see the relics…). The earliest surviving comprehensive Santo ordinal dates from 1738. However, this is before the sacristy relics were moved to the Chapel of the Relics in the apse, thus it likely reflects at least the fundamental rituals in place during the Renaissance. Fra Antonio Maria Sanseverino, *Ordine e cerimoniale di tutte le funzioni che si fanno nella chiesa del Santo* (Biblioteca Antoniana MS 677, 1738), 51-52.

its contents. Just as church authorities intended, the sense of special treatment may also have heightened these writers' understanding of the sacristy's sacrality, such that publications from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries all emphasize the prestige and power of the sacristy as well as its decoration. Michele Savonarola's mid-fifteenth-century description presents the cupboard and its contents as objects of civic pride, going so far as to ask whether any other city enjoys such glory as that found in the Santo sacristy.[141] Polidoro, who devotes four chapters to the sacristy, begins his circa 1590 account of the space with an assertion that it is "very secure and strong," which is appropriate given that it is "full of the most sacred relics."[142] His chapter on sacristy security states that both the room and the *armadio* are kept under lock and key and that the security devices made of wood and iron ensure the preservation of the precious objects inside.[143] Furthermore, Pietro Brandolese's eighteenth-century guide to Padua's art and architecture makes special mention of the Santo sacristy and its massive cupboard and, in contrast to modern scholarship's bias, he draws attention to the intarsia panels rather than the sculpted elements.[144]

In addition to providing us with a better understanding of how one experienced the Santo sacristy and its reliquary cupboard, the visits of dignitaries and chroniclers shed some light onto their sporadic audiences. However, recognition of the groups allowed inside the sacristy to benefit from the relics' proximity and to witness their dramatic revelation may be furthered through analysis of the sacristy reliquary cupboard's functions during feast day celebrations. The

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[141] *Quam mihi civitatem dabis, que tanta fruatur gloria?* Savonarola, 18.
[142] *...nella Chiesa del Santo, dalla Sacrestia sua, ripiena di santissime Reliquie, e preciosissimi adobamenti, che pero il luogo e' assai honoreuvole, e molto sicuro e forte*...(…in the church of the Santo, the sacristy is full of the most sacred relics and precious objects that therefore the place is very honorable and very secure and strong…). Polidoro, 38-39.
[143] *...i piu preciosi tesori di Chiesa, ben custoditi sotto piu chiavi… d'acuni tavoloni di fortissimo legno, coperti di dura piastra di ferro… al custodia molto forte, e sicurissime le cose custodite* (…the most precious treasures of the church, well kept by many keys…some panels of strong wood, covered with strong iron…a very strong case and the most securely stored things). Polidoro, 40-41.
[144] Brandolese, 32.

Santo's liturgical calendar was filled with commemorations of major Christian events as well as individual saints; proper observance of these feasts often required the use of specific liturgical objects as well as relics. Feast liturgies took on a variety of forms and could be performed anywhere from a single chapel to a succession of churches throughout the city.

Despite their diversity, what most feasts celebrated at the Santo had in common was the sacristy since it was there that the celebrant collected all the necessary feast implements. Although scholars have previously overlooked this aspect of feast ritual it means that before and after each major liturgical event in the basilica the priest (often together with select lay devotees) came into either direct or indirect contact with the sacristy reliquary cupboard. For example, Christmas Eve and Palm Sunday services called for eighteen torch-bearing lay brothers to exit the sacristy at the beginning of the liturgy and return there following the Mass.[145] The ordinal does not mention the presence of holy relics during these services, however their presence would surely have been called to the lay brothers' attention during their preparation in front of the monumental cupboard.

Of course, some of the Santo's major feasts required the direct participation of relics. In order for these powerful objects to be used, a sequence of preliminary events had to be enacted in the sacristy, as the massive doors of the reliquary cupboard in which they were kept had to be unlocked and opened, which then allowed the reliquaries to be removed and prepared for display. The opening of the *armadio* doors fundamentally affected the experience of seeing the relics as well as the cupboard's elements, adding layers of ritual revelation to liturgical acts that have not been adequately appreciated. Scholars have also not acknowledged the permanent presence of the cupboard's iconography during all rituals involving relics at the Santo.

[145] Ibid., 27-30.

As St. Anthony's burial church, the observance of his particular feasts took pride of place in the Santo's liturgical calendar. Indeed, more detailed descriptions of the celebrations related to his main feast day on 13 June and that commemorating his 1263 translation, held on 15 February, survive than those pertaining to broader Christian events, such as Christmas or the Passion of Christ. Both of Anthony's feast liturgies depended heavily on the display of his relics and their removal from the sacristy for the veneration of the gathered faithful.

The feast of the Translation of St. Anthony served as an annual focal point for his relic cult at the Santo. A liturgical rite celebrating Bonaventure's recognition and removal to the sacristy of those relics directly tied to the saint's renown as a preacher, namely his tongue and jaw, was in place as early as 1310.[146] On 15 February 1350, the visiting papal legate, Cardinal Guy de Boulogne-sur-Mer, whose recent recovery from a serious illness he attributed to Anthony's intercession, commissioned an elaborate new silver gilt reliquary for the jawbone (figure 5-12).[147] The following year, the Franciscan Order decreed that the feast would be fixed on that date in perpetuity.[148]

The long and prestigious history of the Translation feast was further enhanced in the Quattrocento when in 1476 the commune added their approval to the Santo's rites, ordering that the relics be displayed annually on the feast day and venerated by the entire city.[149] The government's deliberate association with the Santo relics comes just as the sacristy reliquary cupboard was being completed, which may point to the renewed attention and sense of prestige that the expensive *armadio* project fostered in relation to the relics.

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[146] ASP, *Diplomatico* 43, perg. 4937. See Sartori, "La festa della traslazione," 71.
[147] Sartori, "La festa della traslazione," 71; Canova, 37-38.
[148] Sartori, "La festa della traslazione," 71-72. The feast is still celebrated annually on that date and periodically includes the ostention of the relics in Anthony's tomb as well as those kept in portable reliquaries. The most recent ostention of this type occurred in 1981 and 2010 and drew thousands of pilgrims to the Santo.
[149] *...quod talis dies celebretur per universam civitatem et artes…clausae stent in ostensione dictae sollemnitatis…* (…on this day the entire city and guilds will celebrate…and the concealed stand in view for the said solemnities…). ASP, *Atti del Consiglio* 9, fol. 4v. Transcribed in Sartori, "La festa della traslazione," 77.

The new reliquary cupboard also played an integral part in the Translation feast processions, the earliest record of which dates to 1498.[150] The ritual that developed for the procession involved multiple participants and, significantly, began and ended with the dramatic movement of the cupboard's intarsia doors. Before the fourteenth-century reliquary containing Anthony's jaw (the main focus of the procession) was revealed to the waiting audience, all the celebrants had to kneel before the small altar that likely stood directly in front of the cupboard doors.[151] Having properly shown the respect due to the forthcoming holy sight, the cupboard doors were drawn open to reveal the dozens of saints inside, then the sacristan removed the jaw reliquary and placed it on the altar table, whereupon several deacons and subdeacons liberally censed the air around it.[152] The preparations thus complete, the relic was carried out of the sacristy, into the nave of the church and placed upon the high altar, accompanied by the president of the Arca, prominent church rectors and city officials.[153] Following the Mass, the liturgical drama was repeated in reverse in order to return the relic to its secure storage place and the entire ritual concluded with the recitation of Bonaventure's "O Lingua Benedicta" praising Anthony's miraculous abilities and the opportunity for the procession participants to kiss the reliquary

[150] *...per far portar dopieri per la prozesion de la translation de s. Antonio* (…in order to carry both in the procession of the translation of S. Anthony). AdA, *Libri della intrada e spesa* 365, fol. 2. See also Sartori, "La festa della traslazione," 76.
[151] The earliest and most detailed description of the procession comes from Sanseverino's 1738 ordinal. Sanseverino, 3-4.
[152] *...Sagrestano con Cotta e Stola levara' il Santo Mento dal suo luogo, e Lo' dava' in mano alli dai assistenti quali Lo ponervanno sopra d altarino… con diacono subdiacono, et due ippodiaconi, cio' fatto il sacerdote poneva' incenso nelli torriboli et incensata la d~a Santa Reliquia* (…the sacristan in surplice and stole raised the Holy Jaw from its place and gave it to his assistants who put it over the little altar…with the deacon, subdeacon and two hypodeacons, thus the priest put incense in the censer and censed the said Holy Relic). Sanseverino, 4.
[153] *...la portaranno all'adorazione sopra l'altare di santo; Cio fatto s'incaminaranno all'altare maggiore y' cantare la messa* (…they carried it to be adored over the altar of the saint. Thus they walked to the high altar and sang mass). Sanseverino, 4.

before the closing doors of the cupboard once again hid the saintly remains behind their images.[154]

One particular aspect of this festal liturgy that has escaped scholars' attention concerns the iconographical link between the tongue relic's prescribed place of storage and public display. During the Translation feast, the reliquary moved between two reliefs depicting Anthony's *Miracle of the Mule*: Bellano's marble version atop the sacristy cupboard and Donatello's bronze on the high altar. Although Donatello's relief was but one part of the larger altar project, the fact remains that the major Antonine relics were consistently seen in conjunction with representations of this miracle. The combination of relic and image visually emphasized the saint's simultaneous power and presence in the form of his relics, which were understood to have the same miraculous abilities that Anthony displayed in the narrative reliefs. The high altar and sacristy both functioned as places especially bound up with saintly relics and the Eucharist, thus during special feast rituals the saint's relics followed the same path from the sacristy to the high altar as the priest and liturgical vessels did before and after performing the miracle of the Mass. Therefore, the reliquary cupboard also contributed to the formation of ties between the sacristy and high altar created by the liturgy, objects and iconography of these sacred spaces.

Anthony's February feast rites accordingly centered on those first relics translated in the early history of the basilica and the saint's cult. However, the other feast associated with the saint, celebrated on 13 June, involved a much wider range of the relics stored in the sacristy cupboard. Polidoro's detailed description of the procession established by the late 1500s is the best surviving indication of how the Santo relics were used in such events during the Middle

[154] *...si cantara' "O lingua benedicta" et incensata...dara' detto sacerdote la benedizione e poi dara' a baciare detta reliquia alli eccmi Sig. Rettori al Mmi Deputati alli Sigli curiali et illmi deputati della Sant'Arca...* (…one sings "O lingua benedicta" and censed it…the said priest gives the benediction and then gives the rectors, deputies of the curia and other deputies of the Arca the relic to kiss). Sanseverino, 5-6.

Ages and Renaissance. Anthony's festal procession featured a large cast of characters that moved around the city, following impressive examples of the basilica's reliquaries and metalwork. The groups that participated in the procession demonstrating the city's devotion to the saint and ensuring his reciprocal care included representatives of guilds and confraternities, the city's orphans, government officials such as the podestà, and doctors from the university, as well as the Santo's own religious community.[155]

Witnesses would have seen a series of carts, many of which were covered with canopies, interspersed in the procession that transported particularly precious objects along the route. Five of these carts displayed the reliquaries of many saints, carried in "honor and greatness."[156] Following these unspecified relics came five more carts holding the remains of Anthony and Christ (presumably Passion relics) usually kept in the sacristy cupboard; significantly, Polidoro notes that these relics presented a very pious sight, thus drawing attention to one of the most remarkable aspects of such a procession, the fact that these sacred objects had left their sacristy storage and were now temporarily available for public visual consumption.[157]

In order to become the focal points of the civic and religious events that Polidoro describes on St. Anthony's feast day, the physical remains of the saints had to be removed from the Santo reliquary cupboard. As with relic activities confined to the basilica (such as those prescribed for the Translation feast), Bellano and Canozi's cupboard underwent spatial and

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[155] Polidoro, 86-89.

[156] *...cinque carette, che portano in maesta e grandezza, Reliquie de molti Santi, conservate in ricchi Vasi d'argento*... (…five carts, that carry in majesty and grandeur the relics of many saints, conserved in rich silver vases…). Polidoro, 87.

[157] *...cinque altre Carrette, sopra lequali fanno devotissima vista alcune venerande Reliquie del Santo, e del Saluatore*, *riposte in tanti conservatoi d'argento meravigliosamente lavorati*... (…five other carts, atop which is the most blessed sight of some holy relics of the saint and the Savior, resting in marvelously worked silver containers…). Polidoro, 87.

iconographical changes that complemented and even augmented the ritual.[158] When the intarsia doors were in their usual closed state, the sacristy visitor confronted a clear program of the Franciscan pantheon conveyed through their represented figures that implied the saints' presence behind the doors. However, scholars have overlooked the fact that when the doors were unlocked and opened in order to allow for the relics' removal, the intarsia images were replaced by what must have been an overwhelming display of gilt silver, enamel, jewels, crystal and the fragments of the saints' bodies. In this position, some or all of the reliquary cupboard doors and marble pilasters could be obscured depending on which doors stood open. Nevertheless, the *Miracle of the Mule* relief and the drawn red curtain were constantly visible, thus emphasizing the dramatic nature of the relics' revelation and their status as tangible links to the sacred power of the saints exemplified by Anthony's miracle. In this way, then, the reliquary cupboard both facilitated and participated in the festal and liturgical rituals enacted in the Santo sacristy that sought to venerate properly and ensure the favor of the basilica's patron saint.

Padua's Reliquary Cupboards

The reliquary cupboard at the Santo in many ways stands in marked contrast to its predecessors, both at that Franciscan institution and at the cathedral across town. Its lavishly expensive sculpted and intarsia elements indicate the value and prestige of its contents as well as its roles within the church's ritual life. Furthermore, as chroniclers and critics have noted since its creation, Bellano and Canozi's cupboard became one of the city's celebrated treasures, a

[158] In the centuries following the installation of the Santo reliquary cupboard, references appear to other occasions in the liturgical calendar that involved the procession of relics stored in the sacristy. These include the feasts of the Immaculate Conception and St. Francis, as well as a Lenten ostention of Passion relics known as the Most Holy Thorns. All these feast processions were established by the early 18th century but not described in Polidoro's account. Sanseverino, 25-27; Nocilli, 42-45. On the reliquaries that held the Passion relics, most of which were substantially altered in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see catalog entries 23, 28, 45, 47, 48 by Anna Maria Spiazzi and Marco Collareta in *Basilica del Santo: Le Oreficerie*, eds. Marco Collareta, et. al (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 1995).

notable feat for a type of object that was secluded from public view. The use of marble and inlaid wood instead of painted panels in the Santo's *armadio* likely reflects Padua's earlier Quattrocento experiences with Donatello and Canozi, but it also signals a shift in reliquary containers at large. After this, both the Santo and the Duomo used sculptural, rather than painted, decoration for their later reliquary cupboards and relic chapels. The success of the Santo cupboard can thus be understood as a template for later examples of similar objects.

The size of the Santo cupboard and sacristy, as well as the busy atmosphere of throngs of pilgrims in the church outside, would have made the experience of seeing the *armadio* there much different from the comparatively much smaller cupboard at the quieter cathedral. While each cupboard's iconography stresses saintly presence in and around the container, their programs do so with quite different emphasis. The Santo's foci on the Franciscan Order and the convent's role as St. Anthony's burial church, accomplished primarily through the use of standing saintly figures, contrasts starkly with the visceral, graphic narrative of Sebastian's martyrdom and the otherworldly iconic images of Christ and the Virgin.

Despite these differences, both Paduan reliquary cupboards effectively protect and conceal their precious contents while simultaneously properly honoring and advertising the presence of the saints who had the power to effect miracles and intercede on behalf of the city's faithful. By virtue of their ability to move and, as a result, drastically change their iconographic programs, these cupboards also served multiple roles within the rituals of both churches. Moreover, the creation of each *armadio* intersected meaningfully with the political circumstances of the period in which they were made, whether under the influence of the Carrara or the legacy of Gattamelata, and further demonstrates the significance of these objects within the broader sphere of late medieval and Renaissance Padua.

Conclusion

After 1500, Italian churches continued to commission large sacristy cupboards for the storage of their most precious and valuable objects. While the sacristy reliquary cupboard maintained its status as a significant aspect of church furnishing, its decoration in the sixteenth century and beyond underwent a drastic shift. Rather than perpetuating the tradition of elaborately painted and sculpted cupboards with complex iconographical programs that we have seen in the Tre- and Quattrocento, later sacristy cupboards lack extensive figural decoration. Although high quality materials, usually carved wood, were used for these cupboards, they most frequently display geometric or abstract intarsia patterns, if any at all.[1] This trend in the appearance of reliquary cupboards is in keeping with general developments in sacristy decoration. Thus, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when sacristies displayed large fresco cycles, altarpieces and, occasionally, tomb sculpture, the reliquary cupboards occupying the same space were designed to fit in with their overall visual environment in terms of complicated figural decoration. Then, after the early sixteenth century, as sacristies became increasingly visually sparse spaces, *armadi* designs followed suit.

The five sacristy reliquary cupboards examined in this dissertation explore the many variations found in this type of liturgical furniture in the Tre- and Quattrocento. These *armadi* come from two different Italian regions and three distinct major kinds of religious institutions: cathedrals, hospitals and Franciscan convents. The iconographic programs seen in these ritual objects present complex iconic and narrative cycles, some of which appear designed to announce the relics found behind the cupboard doors and others selected for more obscure reasons. The

[1] For well-preserved examples of sixteenth-century sacristy reliquary cupboards, see the *armadi* still *in situ* in Padua cathedral and Santa Maria Novella in Florence.

site-specificity and diversity of reliquary *armadi* makes it difficult to generalize about these furnishings. However, it seems clear that in all cases they were intended to play critical roles in the church's liturgical activities as they were dramatically opened whenever relics needed to be displayed or processed. In addition, their consistently elaborate, exterior decoration indicates that even in their usual closed position, reliquary cupboards provided sacristy audiences with an effective reminder of the saintly presence stored safely just behind the doors.

The functions of sacristy reliquary cupboards in simultaneously protecting and enhancing relics support an understanding of these *armadi* as a type of reliquary. Scholars have not adequately recognized sacristy reliquary cupboards as reliquaries, ones that bring together a large number of relics and their own rich containers. However, like the portable reliquaries sitting on their cupboard shelves, the *armadi* ensured the safety of the relics inside them and provided those sacred objects with appropriate honor and devotion through elaborate and expensive decoration.

One of the most frequently studied aspects of the individual relics and metal reliquaries kept inside sacristy cupboards regards those times when they were removed from their storage place and displayed in another part of the church or carried in procession through the city. Such ostentions had the potential to unite disparate locations and groups of people physically and symbolically through common devotional acts focused on relics. The function and decoration of reliquary cupboards also linked them to other sacred spaces and reinforced the status of the sacristy and its liturgical roles. The reliquary *armadio* often effectively connected the sacristy to the church's choir and high altar. As we have seen, the ritual movement of people and relics between the sacristy and the high altar created a kinetic tie that the cupboard's decoration visually reinforced. Artists frequently made iconographical and stylistic references to high

chapels and altars. Taddeo Gaddi's Santa Croce *armadio* and Bartolomeo Bellano's reliefs for the Santo cupboard evince the former as, in these cases, the reliquary cupboards' iconographical programs respectively serve as a prequel to the narrative that culminates in the high chapel and reiterate motifs from the decoration of the high altar. Both Benedetto di Bindo and Vecchietta clearly drew upon Siena's illustrious Trecento painting tradition in their panels for the cathedral and hospital reliquary cupboards. The fifteenth-century artists promoted a sense of civic pride and identity by incorporating stylistic characteristics of the many well-known examples of fourteenth-century painting prominently on view in the cathedral choir and transept into the reliquary cupboard panels. Thus, as a group, sacristy reliquary cupboards must be understood as objects that maintained a deliberate dialogue with the larger visual and ritual environments of late medieval and Renaissance Italian churches.

The five reliquary *armadi* all functioned within specific contexts that occasioned the variety of iconography, materials and contents explored in this study. In keeping with their site-specificity, every church that commissioned a reliquary cupboard exhibited its own conception of the relationship between relics and images in the sacristy. However, when we examine the events surrounding the creation of each late medieval and Renaissance reliquary cupboard, a significant pattern comes to light. Each church devoted resources to the design and construction of a reliquary *armadio* during a period of distress, whether economic, political or spiritual, acute or chronic. Therefore, sacristy reliquary cupboards reflect their patrons' concerted attempts to ensure saintly favor by honoring their relics in an appropriately rich and prestigious container. In addition, these objects reassured the faithful of the continued holy presence through a powerful combination of represented saints and tangible relics.

Late medieval and Renaissance sacristy reliquary cupboards reveal complex and multifaceted interactions between relics, images, ritual and historical circumstances. Analysis of these factors and the ways in which reliquary cupboards played significant roles in the successful performance of the cult of relics establishes them as a compelling type of liturgical furniture. In addition, greater understanding of reliquary cupboards expands and deepens knowledge of relics in medieval and Renaissance Italian society as the sacristy *armadi* provided a nearly constant shelter for these powerful sacred objects.

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Figures

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