Verrocchio’s Christ and St Thomas: chronology, iconography and political context

In memory of Peter von Blanckenhagen

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ANDREA DEL VERROCCHIO’S Christ and St Thomas from the Mercanzia niche at Orsanmichele, Florence (currently under restoration) is widely acclaimed as one of the masterpieces of Florentine renaissance sculpture (Figs. 8 and 9). But, despite the praise it has elicited since the day of its unveiling, it has received little serious scholarly investigation. As a result, the aesthetic character of the monument has been imprecisely analysed and its iconography, patronage and political context have gone wholly uninvestigated. Indeed, even the summary of the archival documentation now widely repeated in print is incomplete and misleading. It is the purpose of this article to publish some recently discovered documents for the Christ and St Thomas, and to explicate their significance for the sculpture’s history and iconography.

Present knowledge of the archival record is due primarily to Giovanni Gaye, who in 1839 published a highly summary account of the chronology of work on the sculpture. Gaye cited few of his sources, squeezed much of his findings into one phrase, published only short extracts from the original registers, and did not analyse their contents. Although a handful of documents have come to light since then, it is still essentially Gaye’s summary - slightly amplified - that is repeated today.

In fact the Christ and St Thomas is among the best documented sculptures of fifteenth-century Florence. The account books of the Università della Mercanzia, the sculpture’s patron, survive from 1479 onwards and include nearly all the payments to Verrocchio, beginning in that year; these have been largely ignored as a source of information on the sculpture. For documentation before 1479, it is necessary to turn to the records of the Mercanzia’s chief executive body, the Sei della Mercanzia. The Mercanzia was the most important tribunal for commercial law in Florence, and the Deliberazioni dei Sei consist largely of legal decisions; only when the Sei had to order or approve payments to be made by the treasurer of the Mercanzia are they mentioned in the Deliberazioni. Thus the Deliberazioni record the decision to make a payment or to initiate a series of payments; normally, they do not record the actual disbursements.

The history of the commission begins on 26th March 1463 when the Parte Guelfa sold all rights to its niche at Orsanmichele to the Università della Mercanzia for 150 florins. Three days later the Sei della Mercanzia appointed a board of five operai to plan and direct work on a ‘statua et seu figura digna et venerabilis’ to fill the niche. However, on 14th May 1466, in a deliberazione to replace a deceased operario, it is stated that the statue had not yet been commissioned. The next reference to the sculpture is in a newly discovered document of 19th December 1466 (Appendix, document 1), which states, for the first time, that the sculpture will be of bronze. The contract with Verrocchio appears not to survive. But, as the document of December does not mention an artist by name, Verrocchio may have received the commission between that date and 15th January 1467 (modern style) when the Sei della Mercanzia authorised a payment to him of 300 florins for the sculpture. The next document is from 24th April 1468 when the Sei and the operai agreed to pay Verrocchio a fee of 25 lire a month for his work on the sculpture.

This document speaks of ‘figuras haeness’ and is thus the first record we have of the intention to fill the niche with more than one figure. One of the monthly instalments of
25 lire is referred to in a deliberazione of 21st December 1469. On 2nd August 1470 the Sei ordered that the bronze and other metals for one of the sculptures be reweighed in the presence of two of the Sei. The sculpture is next mentioned in a newly discovered deliberazione of 21st March 1476 in which Verrocchio is assigned 10 florins ‘for part of the bronze figure to be placed in the tabernacle’ (Appendix, document 2). Since the bronze for one figure is mentioned in 1470 and one figure of bronze is recorded in 1476 there can be no doubt that the figure was cast sometime between these two dates. Moreover, we know from a later document that this must have been the statue of Christ. The group is next documented in another newly discovered deliberazione of 22nd June 1476 when a series of payments to Verrocchio was authorised for work on both figures; the dates and amounts of the payments are recorded in the margin of the document (Appendix, document 3). On 13th January 1477 (modern style), the Sei authorised that another 120 florins be paid Verrocchio in 10 florin instalments (Appendix, document 4). The margin records five payments between February and November 1477, four between January and September 1478, one in 1479, and two in July and August of 1480.

The first entry for the Christ and St Thomas in the Libro di Debitori e Creditori della Mercanzia dates from early 1479 (Appendix, document 5). This key document records a payment to Verrocchio of 148 florins and 317 lire, and states that the figure of Christ is almost finished and the

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14ASF, Mercanzia, 305, fol.163v. First discovered and published by J. Meinil, ‘Les figures de Vertus de la Mercanzia’, Miscellanea d’arte, 1 [1903], p.45. The relevance of this document for the Christ and St Thomas has not been previously noted.

15ASF, Mercanzia, 307, fol.30r. First discovered by Cave, op. cit. at note 3 above, p.370, but unpublished.

16I would like to thank Michael Rocke for his help with this document.

17I would again like to thank Michael Rocke for his help in the transcription of this document.
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statue of St Thomas ready to be cast. The entry specifies that the bronze for the St Thomas weighs 3981 Florentine pounds. The account book next records four payments to Verrocchio between May 1479 and August 1480, the dates and sums of which do not correspond with those for the same period listed in the Deliberazione (Appendix, document 4).

Some time between August 1480 and March 1481 a dispute arose over a payment to Verrocchio of 40 florins and 200 lire. There are no more payments to Verrocchio in this period and all work on the sculpture appears to have stopped. Concerned to see the sculpture finished, the Signoria intervened, and on 26th March 1481 a provisione was passed ordering the payment to be released to Verrocchio. In a deliberazione of 12th April 1481, the Sei stated their intention to make the payment, and the disbursement was entered in the account on 2nd May (Appendix, document 5). According to the text of the provisione, the dispute was over the right of the operaio to make the payment to Verrocchio 'senza la dispensazione de consiglio'. In every other appearance of the word 'consiglio' in the documents for the Christ and St Thomas, it refers to the Three Major Councils of the Florentine government, and that must be the case here as well.

There is no clear evidence, however, as to why the consiglio in 1480-81 could claim control over Mercanzia payments to Verrocchio, a right they had not previously held. Nor is it clear why consent had initially been refused for this payment. Most likely, the dispute was due in some fashion to the financial crisis of 1480-81, which had been brought on by the Pazzi War. Faced with the possible collapse of the Monte Comune, the Florentine funded debt, the government had in June 1480 granted the Three Major Councils, together with the new Council of Seventy, increased control over both the Monte and taxation. It is probable that the power of the consiglio over Mercanzia payments to Verrocchio — temporary though it may have been — was due to their partial authority for either taxation or the Monte. This is all the more likely since it appears that on some occasions around 1480 the Mercanzia paid Verrocchio directly from the Monte. Unfortunately, we cannot know the answer to this problem until the finances of the Mercanzia are investigated in a systematic fashion. Whatever the nature of the dispute, the provisione failed to restart work on the sculpture. There are no more payments to Verrocchio until the Spring of 1483. We do not know if the long interruption was due to problems in the Mercanzia's finances, Verrocchio's involvement in other projects or a combination of both factors. On 22nd April 1483 the Florentine government made another provisione regarding the Christ and St Thomas. More than once the document expresses concern about how little time is left for the completion of the sculpture. This suggests that the immediate cause for the Signoria's intervention may have been the imminence of Verrocchio's departure for Venice to work on the Colleoni Monument. The provisione attempts to resolve all of the problems which might obstruct completion of the group. In brief, it states that the sculptor understands that financial difficulties prevent the Mercanzia from paying him what he rightfully should receive. Nevertheless, Verrocchio, who to date has already been paid 306 florins for his 'magister', agrees to finish the sculpture on condition that he is paid 94 florins by the time of its completion, and another 400 florins afterwards in four yearly installments of 100 florins each. The document also reasserts the authority of the Sei and the operaio to pay Verrocchio.

The provisione set the Feast of St John the Baptist (24th June) as the date target for the completion of the sculpture and Verrocchio appears to have returned to work immediately. There are eight payments to him and to his assistants, Giuliano d'Andrea and Pagolo, between 5th and 30th May 1483 for a total of 53 florins (Appendix, document 5). In June Verrocchio and his co-workers were paid 5 florins at the end of each of the first two weeks of the month, and then 24 florins on 21st June 1483, the day of the unveiling of the sculpture (Appendix, document 5).

Once the sculpture was in place, the Mercanzia stopped paying Verrocchio altogether. Finally, at the end of 1487 Andrea petitioned the Signoria to intercede, and on 19th December 1487 a provisione ordered the Mercanzia to pay Verrocchio. But instead of the 400 gold florins he had been promised in 1483, the Mercanzia now agreed only to deposit, on his behalf, 200 scaled florins over a two-year period in his assistants' accounts in the Monte di Dote, the dowry fund. At the same time, the Signoria ordered that certain minor additions and repairs be made to the niche. On 2nd January 1488 the Mercanzia acknowledged its the same period.

19 'I am indebted to Rolfe Bagemihl for his help in the transcription of the documents from this page of the account book. The existence of the first entry, at the top of the page, was first noted by Milanesi, op.cit. at note 6 above. Milanesi, however, did not report most of the contents of the document and cited it with the incorrect date of 1479. Pasinetti, op.cit. at note 6 above, p.171, noted the correct date but also related only a portion of the information. Neither Milanesi nor Pasinetti noticed the other entries on the page concerning Verrocchio. 20 ASF, Consigli della Repubblica, Registri delle Provisiioni (henceforth, Rep., Prov.), 172, fol. 35v. This document was first discovered and published by Fabbrizi, loc. cit. at note 6 above, pp.225-57, who gave it the incorrect date of 26th March 1482, and, more importantly, misrepresented it to be the authorisation for the Mercanzia to purchase from Verrocchio a terracotta model of St Thomas to be placed in the Palazzo della Mercanzia. For more information on this, see the penultimate paragraph of this article. 21 ASF, Mercanzia, 321, folio numbers missing. 22 On the financial crisis of 1480-81, see L.F. Marks, 'The Finance Officialities in Florence under Lorenzo', in E.P. Jacobs, ed., Italian Renaissance Studies, London [1982], pp.129-.

23 ASF, Rep., Prov., 174, fol. 7v-8v, 22nd April 1483, states that one cannot 'di nuovo gestire il mondo o tornare ad mondo' to fund work on the sculpture. Some form of direct payments from the Monte might also explain why the dates and sums of the payments for 1479 and 1480 in the deliberazioni of 13th January 1477 (modern style) do not agree with those of the Libro di Creditori e Debitori for 227
debt to Verrocchio and also asked his brother Tommaso and his pupil Lorenzo di Credi to ‘fare le lettere da pie a dette figure a nostro ono’ (Appendix, document 5). While this might conceivably refer to the gilded inscriptions along the hem of the figures’ robes, it is more likely that it refers to an inscription on the base of the statue of Christ. No payment records for any of this work survive, however, and it is possible that neither the inscription nor the other additions were executed. 28 In his testament of 25th June 1480 Andrea left the money owed him to his brother Tommaso. 29 The last recorded payment for the sculpture is on 26th November 1488 when Tommaso received half of the money due for his daughters’ dowries (Appendix, document 6). A document in 1490 (Appendix, document 7) acknowledges the Mercanzia’s debt of another 100 sealed florins, but there is no record of an actual disbursement. 30 A final entry in 1490 states that the Mercanzia still owes the Arte di Calimala 400 sealed florins for bronze purchased for the casting of the Christ and St Thomas (Appendix, document 7).

To summarise, Verrocchio was commissioned to make a bronze statue in the fall or winter of 1466. By the spring of 1468 it had been decided that two figures, not just one, be made. Work continued through 1469 and 1470 and was sufficiently advanced by August 1470 for the figure of Christ to be ready for casting. This was done sometime between 1470 and 1476, and it was chased between 1476 and 1479. The model for the St Thomas, on the other hand, appears to have been worked up to a final state only between 1476 and 1479. It was cast in 1479 and chased between 1479 and the autumn or winter 1480, and then again between 9th April 1483 and 9th June 1483.

The loss of the Mercanzia account books from before 1479 makes it impossible to determine accurately both how much Verrocchio was paid and what the total cost of the sculpture was. Moreover, it is impossible to tell from the wording of the deliberazioni which disbursements were for materials and expenses and which for Verrocchio’s workmanship. In April 1483 Verrocchio stated he had been paid to date 306 florins for his ‘magister’. After that date there are documented payments to Verrocchio and his heirs for 173 florins, making a total of 479 florins. 31 Including this sum, the total documented expenses for the sculpture are just over 957 florins, 545 lire. The actual total must have been a good deal higher as one can see by comparison with Ghiberti’s St Matthew, the most thoroughly documented bronze for Orsanmichele, which cost a total of 1750 florins. 32

The documents help to establish more than just the basic chronology of the Christ and St Thomas. They also provide the foundation for reconstructing both the political context of the commission and the iconography of the sculpture. This is immediately apparent when considering the operaio, the men who planned and directed the work. Like most executive and deliberative bodies of the Mercanzia, the initial board of operaio in 1463 consisted of one member from each of five major guilds, the Calimala, the Cambio, the Lana, the Por S. Maria, and the Speziali. The men on the board in 1463 were Piero de’ Medici, Leonardo di Bartolomeo Bartolini, Dicitislivi Neroni, Pandolfo Pandolfini and Matteo Palmieri. 33 In 1466, however, the board’s composition changed: in May, Girolamo di Matteo Morelli replaced the deceased Pandolfini; 34 in September, Neroni was exiled for his part in the anti-Mediccan conspiracy; and, finally, in December, Lorenzo de’ Medici replaced his father, Piero, who, in the wake of the conspiracy, was too busy and too infirm to continue to serve on the board (Appendix, document 1). We do not hear again of operaio by name until June 1483, when Bongiano Gianfiliuzzi and Antonio Pucci are mentioned (Appendix, document 5). Gianfiliuzzi replaced Morelli in his offices in the Mercanzia in August 1480, presumably including that of operaio. Pucci, on the other hand, was a member of the Arte di Speziali, 35 and probably replaced Palmieri after the latter’s death in 1475.

All these men were members of the inner circle of the Medici stato. (This is even true of Neroni until the conspiracy of 1465/66.) Of the original board, all, with the exception of Pandolfo, were as Acoppiatori, 36 the officials who determined which names were placed in the sortition bags for the Three Major Councils and often even selected the Signori a mano in short, the primary agents of Medician political control. Moreover, the operaio held year after year the most important offices of the Florentine government. For example, the Medici re wrote the constitution and restructured the government in a series of Balle in 1466, 1471, and 1489. 37 The names of the operaio always figure among the leaders in these Balle. The ties between Piero and Lorenzo de’ Medici and the other operaio apart from Neroni were strong and lasting. Palmieri was a loyal lieutenant of the Medici throughout his life. 38 Antonio Pucci stands immediately to Lorenzo de’ Medici’s right in

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28 It is important to note that documents for Verrocchio in the Libro de Debitori e Creditori of fol.13L-13R change in nature in 1467. Up to that point, 13L serves as a cross-indexed, summary account of payments made to Verrocchio by the different treasurers of the Mercanzia. After 1467, 13L and 13R are a double entry account of disbursements related to the sculpture. Hence, the fact that the entry for the inscription appears only on the left side implies that the payment was never actually made. The base of the figure of Christ appears not to have an inscription, but a final conclusion must be postponed until the base is cleaned.

29 For the text of the testament, see GAGE, op. cit. at note 3 above, pp.367-70.

30 I would like to thank Gino Corti for his transcription of this document.

31 ASF, Mercanzia, 259, fol.100-104v; published in FABBRI, loc. cit. at note 8 above, pp.55-56.

32 ASF, Mercanzia, 259, fol.104v; published in GIBERTI, op. cit. at note 2 above, p.37.

33 ASF, Mercanzia, 321, fol.1r.

34 ASF, Mercanzia, 163, fol.54v.


36 Ibid., esp. pp.30-32, on the importance of the Accoppiatori.

37 For the Balle, ibid., pp.156-220.

Ghirlandaio's fresco of the Confirmation of the Rule in the Sassetti chapel, which was painted between c.1482 and 1486. His family had been allies of the Medici for several generations and owed their rise in social status to Cosimo's patronage. Indeed, the bonds between the two families were so strong that the amici of the Medici in the 1420s and 1430s were known as the puccini. Girolamo Morelli lent money and men to Piero de' Medici during the crisis of 1466 and was described in the 1470s as one of Lorenzo's most trusted advisors "circa le cose de' importantia". And Bongiano Gianghigliazzi was knighted by Lorenzo himself in 1470. In other words, the men who planned and directed work on the sculpture were Lorenzo de' Medici and his closest political allies.

It is important to note, moreover, that Lorenzo was especially interested in the Mercanzia. Guicciardini stated that Lorenzo sought to control appointments to the Sei della Mercanzia. Indeed, in 1471 Lorenzo de' Medici, assisted by Bongiano Gianghigliazzi, Matteo Palmieri and two others, directed a new scrutiny for the Sei. With the new lists for the Sei packed with Medici partisans, Lorenzo could use the court both to aid friends and to punish enemies, as he did, for instance, against Giuliano Gondi in 1472. What is more, in the 1470s Lorenzo reorganised the judicial system of Florence. Reform was necessary because Florence had a multitude of courts whose areas of juridical competence both overlapped and changed, causing legal chaos. Lorenzo planned reforms for the Mercanzia published by covi, loccit. at note 25 above, p. 101, document II) with a letter by the Fantastico opera of the monument to Lorenzo de' Medici written 11th March 1477 and published by A. Wodrich: The Unfinished Monument by Andrea del Verrocchio to the Cardinal Niccolo Forteguerri at Pistoia, Northampton, Mass. [1932], p.70.


L. Di Sesto: Diario e discussione del Regimento di Firenze, ed. M. Palmarego, Bari [1932], pp.26-37, 57. I am deeply indebted to Alison Brown for generously sharing with me her knowledge of the connections between Lorenzo de' Medici and the Mercanzia.

ASF, Mercanzia, 309, ed.8v, 7th August 1471, is the first reference to this scrutiny.

as early as 1471, but did not carry any out until 1477. In that year, he delimited and defined the scope of the Mercanzia's competence, added to it some of the powers formerly held by the Captain of the People, and made it a court of appeal for the lesser guild courts. What is more, the Mercanzia was at the centre of a shift in the theoretical foundation of law. The reforms of 1477 and 1478 generally diminished the powers of the medieval, professionally trained judiciary and gave these powers instead to laymen whose judgments were founded on common sense, not law. In the words of Bartolomeo Scala, the Sei della Mercanzia were 'chosen not as experts in law but because they are naturally shrewd and good men'. LAurentian judicial reform is characterised, therefore, by a shift from statutory law to executive law, from *ragione di arbitrario*.

Now that is clear who the *operai* were and what their interest in the Mercanzia was, one can ask why these men chose the doubting of St Thomas as the subject of the sculpture. There are two main reasons. First, the doubting of Thomas was commonly associated with justice in fifteenth-century Tuscany. For instance, images of Christ and St Thomas appeared in courtrooms and *sale dell'udienza* in Siena, Certaldo, Scarperia and Pistoia. What is more, there was a Trecento painting of the doubting of St Thomas over the entrance to the Sala dell'Udienza in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence itself. The Mercanzia, moreover, commissioned a panel of the scene for decoration of its Palazzo around 1420 (Fig.10). One key factor in the subject's appeal was that Christ and St Thomas were thought to personify two essential aspects of a just magistrate: clemency, and the desire for truth.

Secondly, St Thomas was a favoured saint of the Medici. The Medici were the principal patrons of the church of S. Tommaso Apostolo in the Mercato Vecchio in Florence. A member of the family (presumably Cosimo) commissioned from Uccello a fresco of the doubting of St Thomas for its façade, and in 1460 Cosimo ordered a new high altar and
altar-piece. Furthermore, in January 1435 as Gonfaloniere di Giustizia Cosimo had the Feast of St Thomas declared a communal holiday.\(^{60}\) (It should be noted that one of the operai, Leonardo Bartolini, was part of the same Signoria in January 1435.)\(^{61}\) Every year on the 21st December the Sei della Mercanzia and the Captains of the twenty-one Guilds processed to S. Tommaso Apostolo and made a donation at the altar.

Given these associations, it would not be surprising to find that Lorenzo and his friends saw the Christ and St Thomas as the perfect emblem of Medicean justice (and of the justice of Medicean rule).\(^{62}\) Indeed, there is evidence that this

\(^{60}\) ASI, Rep., Prov., 125, fol. 210v-11r. This document was first discovered and analyzed by U. Dornini: 'Il culto delle memorie patrie nella Repubblica di Firenze', Rivista nazionale, CLXXIX [1911], pp. 3-25. I was led to this material by H. Treilier: Polite Life in Renaissance Florence, New York (1980), pp. 472-93. It is not known how long the saint's day was celebrated as a communal feast, but it certainly was not celebrated after 1460 when the festival calendar of Florence was reorganized (see Dornini).

\(^{61}\) G. Cammi, Istorie di Giovanni Camo, in J. De San Luigi, ed.: Delizie degli eruditi illustrati, Florence [1789], Vol. XX, p. 135. According to Deb Melchior, op. cit. at note 59 above, p. 485, it was Dietisalvi Nerio who persuaded Cosimo to suspend the communal celebration of the Feast of St Thomas.

\(^{62}\) In late medieval and Renaissance Europe, the virtue of Justice was commonly defined as the habit of action directed towards the common good (see: De Officiis, praef., caps. I.7.20, I.10.33, I.19.63, and St Thomas Aquinas: Summa Theologiae, II-II, Q.58). One of the operai for the Odescalchi group, Matteo Palmeri, gives the same definition of justice in his Della Vita Città (ed., Florence [1882], pp. 4-9, and 151-58, 199). It is this association of justice and the common good that lies behind Sacchetti's poem cited at note 56 above. Furthermore, it was widely believed, e.g. by Coluccio Salutati, that Justice, in the sense of action directed to the common weal, makes any government, whatever its constitutional form, good and legitimate (see Erinner, op. cit. at note 57 above, p. 418). As demonstrated by Brown, op. cit. at note 32 above, throughout the 1470s and 1480s Scala, Landino, and others endeavored to show that Lorenzo de' Medici was a wise philosopher-ruler who administered the state for the common good. The point was to demonstrate that Lorenzo's rule, despite its anti-republican tendencies, was still just and legitimate. Verrocchio's Christ and St Thomas would have served readily as a part of this campaign.
may have been their intention. In the spring of 1478 Lorenzo ordered the reform of another principal organ of the judicial system of Florence, the Otto di Guardia. New statutes for this magistracy were written in 1478 and a presentation copy ordered the following year. The front cover of this book makes clear the extent of Medici pretensions to identify themselves with the state, for it is decorated with the Medici stemma; the arms of the Commune are on the back of the book. More importantly, the illuminated frontispiece shows Christ and St Thomas, set in a tabernacle (Fig. 11). On the base of the tabernacle is the Medici stemma, surmounted by a crown.

Mercanzia documents cast light on the religious iconography of the sculpture as well. From Irenaeus on, the exegetical literature on the Doubting of St Thomas cited John 20:24-29 primarily as a proof text of the bodily resurrection of Christ and of all Christians. In St Augustine’s famous formulation, ‘The scars of the wounds in His flesh healed the wounds of unbelief (in physical resurrection)’. There can be little doubt that this tradition was fundamental to the iconography of Verrocchio’s group. Both provisioni stress the uselessness of the sculpture in the promotion of Christian faith, and the inscriptions on the hems of the figure’s robes—DOMINUS MEUS ET DEUS MEUS ET SALVATOR GENTIUM on Thomas’s mantle, and QUA VIDISTE ME THOME CREDISTI BEATI QUI NON VIDERUNT ET CREDIDERUNT on Christ’s—are taken from John 20:28-29 and constitute Thomas’s declaration of faith and Christ’s reproof.

But the documents suggest an additional aspect of the iconography. To judge from annual payments of up to 164 lire in the 1460s and 1470s, the Mercanzia was a chief patron in Florence of Corpus Christi, a major eucharistic feast of the liturgical calendar. A sacramental interpretation of Verrocchio’s sculpture is perhaps indicated as well by the appearance of Isaiah in the right spanel of the Giovanni Toscano panel. His presence is most likely due to Isaiah 12, a passage which was associated with the Doubting of St Thomas because of its emphasis on the charity of God. The passage ends with the eucharistic imagine, ’Hauristis acupus in gaudio de fontibus salvatoris’ (‘in joy you will draw water from the fountains of the savour’). The illuminated frontispiece of the Statuti degli Otto di Guardia also alludes to the sacramental significance of the Christ and St Thomas: the frieze of the tabernacle which houses the figures is decorated with bunches of grapes in fictive porphyry. Interest in this iconography, which is unmentioned in homiletic and exegetical literature in the Latin West, may have been stimulated in Florence by the study of the two Greek patriarchic authorities for the symbolism, St Cyril of Alexandria and St John Chrysostom.

Finally, we must consider what the archival records do not say. It has often been claimed that the documents mention the existence of a large scale terracotta model of St Thomas which the Mercanzia purchased to place in the Palazzo della Mercanzia. This idea is due to Fabriczy’s reading of the first sentence of the provisioni of 26th March 1481, which states in part ‘... per dar perfezione ad una figura di Santo Tommaso in bella statua di bronzo per porla in Orto san Michele ... et non lasciare guastarsi e perire la boga e principio di si bella cosa’. Fabriczy’s interpretation of the sentence was plausible: the use of et, of course, appeared to indicate that the provisioni was authorising payment for two things, not one; guastarsi and preire seemed to imply something tangible, and one of the meanings of the word boga is ‘model’. Nevertheless, this interpretation must be wrong. To begin with, as we have already seen, the main concern of the provisioni was the contested legality of an unreleased payment. Moreover, the second half of the document, which specifies what the provisioni actually authorises, makes no mention of a model, nor does the notarial description of the contents of provisioni in the margin of the register. Three additional documents record the actual disbursement of this payment to Verrocchio and none of them mentions a model either. Finally, the primary meaning of boga is not ‘model’, but ‘unfinished work’; this must be the meaning of the word in the provisioni.

Although we now know a great deal more about the history, the context and the iconography of Verrocchio’s Christ and St Thomas, much remains to be studied. Above all, one would like to determine Verrocchio’s artistic intentions. The relationship of the figures to the niche, the classical dress and pose of St Thomas, the planning of the sculpture in terms of light and shade, and many other aspects need to be examined. It is to be hoped that its present cleaning at the Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence will stimulate further investigation.

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50 See PELLEGRINI, op. cit. at note 88 above.
51 ST. AUGUSTINE: Sermones, II. M. MULDOONEY, New York [1959], p. 266.
52 The provisioni of 26th March 1481 says the sculpture will stimulate ‘rerovocari et aliter negli animi de credenti’, while that of 21st April 1483, states that the opera desideri ‘ch’io visi de l’religione cristiana che l’degno attica non ringraziar per coda’. See ASF, Mercanzia, 368, non paginato, 22nd June 1471 for the authorisation of this sum for expenses for the Feast of Corpus Christi.
53 For the feast of Corpus Christi in Florence, see E. BORSOOS: Cults and Imagery at San’ Ambrogio, Mitteilungen des Künstliehnen Institutes in Florenz, XXXV [1981], pp. 147-202.
54 VAN Engel, loc. cit. at note 2 above, also discusses the eucharistic symbolism of Verrocchio’s Christ and St Thomas.
55 The other splendored houses Jeremiah, probably alluding to Lamentations 1:22, which was often used as an inscription on images of the Passion in renaissance Tuscany. See H. HELDING: The Image and Its Public in the Middle Ages, II. M. BERTUS and K. MAYER, New Rochelle, New York [1990], pp. 197-98.
57 PELLEGRINI, op. cit. at note 88 above. It should be noted, however, that eucharistic images of Christ and St Thomas before Verrocchio’s do exist. The examples I have found are: Netherlandish, late thirteenth century, Hanover, Landesgalerie; Circle of Dieric Bouts, Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie; Circle of Konrad Witz, Basel, Kunstmuseum.
58 On St Cyril’s eucharistic interpretation of the doubting of St Thomas, see PELLEGRINI, op. cit. at note 88 above, pp. 54-56. St Cyril’s writings were fundamental to the successful resolution of the Council of Florence; and his In Iesum Evangelum, which includes his commentary on the sacramental nature of the doubting of St Thomas, was translated into Latin in 1449 by order of Nicholas V. See J. GILL: The Council of Florence, Cambridge [1961], esp. pp. 219-21, 249-50; and A. STURGIS: Humaneum and the Church Fathers, Albany, New York [1977], pp. 223-24. For the text of In Iesum, see J. WRIGHT: Patrologiae Graecae, Paris, Vol. VII [1863], pp. 752B.
59 See PELLEGRINI, op. cit. at note 88 above, pp. 45-46 for the sermon attributed to St John Chrysostom on the eucharistic significance of the Doubting of St Thomas. The sermon is reproduced in sn. P.L., LII, pp. 601-88. St John Chrysostom was praised and studied in Florence by Poggio Bracciolini, Ambrogio Traversari and others. Moreover, the new humanist Latin translation of his Homilies on St John the Evangelist, which was considered to be a classic in the exegetical tradition of the Doubting of St Thomas, was dedicated to Cosimo di’ Medici in 1429. See Storici, op. cit. at note 74 above, esp. pp. 104 and 127.
60 Seen from the side St Thomas’s robe has the two distinguishing folds, the smar and ambo, of a toga; Verrocchio also clearly modeled Thomas’s sandals after examples in Greek-Roman statuary. The pose of Thomas is extremely close to that of a figure in the Arch of Trajan at Benevento.172
Appendix. Some newly discovered documents for Verrocchio’s ‘Christ and St Thomas’ in the Archivio di Stato, Florence (ASF).

Document 1 (ASF, Deliberazioni della Mercanzia, 300, fol. 77v, 19th December 1466).

Superdicti sex insanuit et abscondit Carolo et Antonio advenientes quod Piersus Coene de Medici esset unus ex operarum pilastri dicti universitatis pilastri et eorum tabernaculi sin in facie et pariete S. Anna videbatur extra et simul statut hec loca. Et siuad in dicto tabernaculo et quod ipse Piersus est adesse infrimitate gravitas et in negociis rei publicae adeo versatus et occupatus quod comodum sin scabrolo tali officio vacare non potest. Et considerantur de virtute et probitate Laurentii filii eiusdem Peri, omni modo ecc. removantur a dicto officio dictum Periun et eius ben elegerunt, nominavantur, et deputavantur discretionem et probum virum profundum Laurentium filium Perii Coenae de Medicis.

Document 2 (ASF, Deliberazioni della Mercanzia, 316, fol. 32r, 23rd March 1476).

Superdicti sex insanuit et servavit servandum deliberavant et staientuvant quod Andrea michelis verocchi florense decem largos pro parte figurae bronzie poneunde in tabernaculo oriente in michelis.

Document 3 (ASF, Deliberazioni della Mercanzia, 316, fol. 110v, 22nd June 1476).

Item florense quadrangulace largos solvendo Andrea michelis del Verocchio pro laborando et condicio opus figurarum domini nostri et sancti Tomassi prout staientuvant per dominos sex pro tempore existent salvo nonce scecece decem largos quidem luisobren nece.

[In margin] 1476/17 augusti folio 29/23 septembri 1478/12 novembre 1470/12 december 1470/10 jan 1476 f. 18


Item deliberavant et staientuvant quod camellias predictus solvere debeat usque in Florentsis centum viginti largos Andrea michelis de Verocchio pro laborando et pro faciendo figurarum domini nostri et sancti Tomassi secundum quod prout staientuvant [7] luis per dominos sex mercante pro tempore existente noncececece florence decem largos quidem luisobren nece de nece in nece per neceo et luisobren et singulatuir et de per ce.

[In margin] 11 Febr. 1478/10/27 Marz. 1477/10/20 maij 1477/10/16 Ottob. 1477/10/20 Novem. 1477/10/14/Ian. 1477/10/11 Aprilis 1478/10/29 Maj 1477/10/9 Seprem. 1478/10/29 Maj 1479/10/27/Iul. 1480/10/20 Agosto 1480 f. 10


+ vista 1479 +

E a dì di Maggio 1483 f. trenta larghi in oro che per noi per istantiamiento di questo di da Giuliano Chiesarello charmarlingo posto aver in questo c. 108.

E a dì di Maggio 1483 f. trenta larghi in oro che per noi per istantiamiento di questo di da Giuliano Chiesarello charmarlingo posto aver in questo c. 108.

E a dì di Maggio 1483 f. cinque per lui a Paghido e Giuliano da Andrea suo lavoratore per istantiamiento che gli da Giuliano Chiesarello charmarlingo c. 108.

E a dì di Maggio 1483 f. cinque larghi per lui a Giuliano suo sopradetto che per noi per istantiamiento da Giuliano Chiesarello charmarlingo f. 100.

E a dì di Maggio 1483 f. cinque larghi per noi da Giuliano Chiesarello charmarlingo posto aver in questo c. 109 per istantiamiento a lui proprio.

E a dì di Maggio 1483 f. cinque larghi da Giuliano Chiesarello charmarlingo per istantiamiento posto aver in questo c. 109, e per lui a Giuliano d’Andrea.

E a dì di Maggio 1483 f. cinque larghi per lui a Giuliano d’Andrea detto che gli per noi da Benedetto di Tanzi chamarlingano posto aver in questo c. 111.

E a dì di Maggio 1483 f. ventiquattro larghi per noi da Benedetto di Tanzi da Nerli chamarlingano per istantiamiento posto aver in questo c. 111.

E a dì di Giugno 1483 f. ventiquattro larghi per noi da Benedetto di Tanzi da Nerli chamarlingano

Rimasti gli a d’arco che l’hai per partito de sei e di mesere Bonigni e Antonio Pauci questo dì di Giugno 1483 Rognato ser Giovanni Ghaldudrini che si giude dice per suo resto di fattura delle figurine holte a di sopra f. 300 larghi e quod più che dira mesere Bonigni Giullialetti e Antonio de Cipri a non passando e la dì f. 400 larghi cioè si gli a dare in tutto e de quals a’ li tuo quato sopra e di valore si che si ragionano e li resten al mare a da dare ogni anno li.

Non che poi effetto.

di poi per istantiamiento de dicto cui per partito de di 2 Gennaio 1487 s’a paghe per resto di maestro di sopradetto figurine f. 200 di suggello infra due anni / A Tanzi suo fratello per dare деле figliole e nipoti de detto Andrea per leghe fatta questo di per gli opportuni consigli e detto Tanzi s’obbligano mischìone che nostro di Credi sì che le dette de dar a rides e dette figliole a nostro oro.

Document 6 (ASF, Mercanzia, 14103, 15r).

E de da detto Andrea a di 13 di Gennaio 1487 di chomissione de mandato [7] sei t. tre larghi doro in ore e lire due piccoli per loro istantiamiento di questo di A Tanzi del Varochio che da Francesco Novi charmarlingo in questo c. 175, per paghare la tazza di una petizione messa in chomissione a questo di.

E a dì di novembre 1488 f.83/3/2 larghi de Suggello per cento d’oro in oro posto Gianfrancesco Terraboni charmarlingo avere in questo c. 184 paghano per istantiamiento di questo di per la metà di f. 200 di suggello per leghe chomissione di detto A Tanzi di Michele Verocci suo fratello e per altri affidati del Monte per suo testamento per fare delle figliole de detto Tanzi e nipoti di detto Andrea.

E a dì di Giugno 1489 f.24/3/18

E a dì di Giugno 1489 f.26/3/18

E a dì di Giugno 1489 f.26/3/18

E a dì di Giugno 1489 f.26/3/18

Document 7 (ASF, Archivio della Mercanzia, Libro di Debitori e Creditori, filza 14104, fol. 261r).

1490

Andrea di Michel del Varochio schultore che se ne fighione di bronzo di Cristo e San Tomaso che sono a ornamento de’ dire per chomione di suo mercante a di primo di febbraio 1490 f. 355 larghi e lire 520 solidi 18 denari 8 piccoli chomagniato per debito l’oro rosso B, c. 13 posto detto libro d’aver in questo c. 7, vagliono f. 485. Sono per tanto dato sì a questo di per parte su meniere de le signore de Cristo e San Tomaso. E ancora resta a avere f. 100 d’oro chom’apare nota a detto libro rosso, c. 13 al suo chomione, meno c. 3 d’oro e lire 2 piccoli ebbe via suo fratello per paghare la tazza della provisione.

L’arte de’ mercantanti e università di detta arte chom’ave a di primo di febbraio 1490 f. quattrocento di suggello, chomagniato per debito l’oro rosso B, c. 9, posto detto libro aver in questo, c. 7.

E a dì di Giugno 1490 f.535/3/8 de” B. Sono per bronzo auta loro per le fighione de Cristo e San Tomaso, ma dice nula partita a detto libro, c. 9, che le tarà Andrea del Varochio e d’oc corre più di f. 50 larghi. Volei contare ch’hora’lo. 233