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## MEDIEVAL PAINTED CALENDARS

The theme of the calendar, generally understood as being essentially an illustration of the activities connected with each of the months, had great success in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In the twelfth century the majority of calendars took the form of sculptures, whereas in the thirteenth century there was an increase in the number of painted calendars (frescoes, stained glass windows and illuminated manuscripts): the majority of these date to the thirteenth century and, more precisely, to the second half of this century<sup>1</sup>. On a grand scale, in France only 20.5% of calendars were painted, and so frescoed calendars from the thirteenth century are therefore generally rather rare, but in Rome, specially within the monastic sphere, they are relatively numerous, indicating that the genre was popular in this city. Besides those which we will consider for their functions as vehicles of the liturgical calendar, we should recall the medallions with the months and other allegorical subjects in Rome, work of the Maestro di San Saba in a setting of unclear function at the foot of the bell-tower of the Aventine basilica, and those enclosed within mixtilinear squares, recently dated to the end of the thirteenth century and found in the senatorial Palace, as well as the fragmentary calendar of the months beneath the image of the Trinity in the sanctuary of Monte Autore (near Subiaco)<sup>2</sup>. We should note that none of the cycles of the months in French frescoes catalogued by Perrine Mane contains the liturgical calendar - this appears to be only a central-Italian peculiarity.

In 1970 during a process of restoration, Carlo Bertelli noted the alleged presence of a fresco containing a calendar in the Cistercian Abbey of Tre Fontane in Rome situated in the portico facing the countryside, al-

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<sup>1</sup> M. A. Castiñeiras González, s. v. *Mesi*, in *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Medievale*, VIII, 1997, pp. 325-335; P. Mane, "Comparaison des thèmes iconographiques des calendriers monumentaux et enluminés en France, au XII<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles", *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 29, 1986, pp. 257-264; P. Mane, *Calendriers et techniques agricoles (France-Italie) XII<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris, 1983.

<sup>2</sup> A. Iacobini, "La pittura e le arti suntuarie: da Innocenzo III a Innocenzo IV (1198-1254)", in *Roma nel Duecento. L'arte nella città dei papi da Innocenzo III a Bonifacio VIII*, a cura di A. M. Romanini, Torino 1991, pp. 237-319: 276; F. Gandolfo, *Aggiornamento scientifico all'opera di Guglielmo Matthiae. Pittura romana del Medioevo*, 2 voll. a cura di M. Andaloro, F. Gandolfo, Roma 1987-1988, v.II, pp. 348-349, fig. 27; M. Liverani, "San Saba sul piccolo Aventino: il ciclo dei mesi", *Bollettino della Unione Storia ed Arte*, 1967, pp. 80-83; P. Testini, *S. Saba*, Roma 1961, p. 43; S. Romano, "La facciata medievale del Palazzo Senatorio: i documenti, i dati, e nuove ipotesi di lavoro", in *La facciata del Palazzo Senatorio in Campidoglio*, Pisa 1995, pp. 39-61.

though he thought there was no hope of being able to find the actual traces of it<sup>3</sup>. The fresco had been seen and noted by Mabillon in his *Museum Italicum*: “*In claustro infirmorum variae sunt picturae.. in eodem claustro Kalendarium festorum, quae per totum annum in Ordine celebrari olim mos erat, item depictum est. Fugientes litteras atque picturas illustriss. Commendator a Puteo depingi curavit. Picturaeque utraeque annos quadringentos excedunt*”<sup>4</sup>.

Further documentary evidence can be found in two drawings in the Séroux d'Agincourt<sup>5</sup>, again identified by Bertelli; these, however, depict the same semester. Under a series of arches we see juvenile half-bust figures holding parchments in both hands on which were written the names of the days and the saints of every month, in gothic capitals. The figures are inserted within trilobal arches, resting on simple column capitals; between the arches we find cosmatesque decoration. The calendar could certainly be linked with the allegorical figurations of the upper part of the wall, now external, of the monks' wing and form a part of the same decorative programme since the trilobal arches are overhung by a decorative fascia with a vine-motif frieze also found on a white background with red shoots and blue flowers, following the series of nine scenes of the Encyclopaedia or Human Life, a factor that indicates its adherence to the same pictorial exploit<sup>6</sup>.

The first known painted liturgical calendar in Rome was in Santa Maria de Aventino, residence of the Roman preceptory of the Templars. Now vanished, the work is recorded by the public notary Giacomo Grimaldi, who saw it in September 1619 placed in an *antiquissima porticu*, then part of a structure of which no trace remains. Some 17th century water-colours in Cassiano dal Pozzo's *Museum chartaceum* reproduce the two panels containing the frescoes with the calendar, both with lunetted frames in the upper area<sup>7</sup>. Although these are very different from the ar-

<sup>3</sup> C. Bertelli, “Calendari”, *Paragone*, 245, 1970, pp. 53-60.

<sup>4</sup> J. Mabillon, *Iter Italicum*, I, Parigi 1687, p. 142; J. Osborne, A. Claridge, *Early Christian and Medieval Antiquities*, I, *Mosaics and Wallpaintings in Roman Churches*, *The Paper Museum of Cassiano Del Pozzo series*, A, I, London 1996, p. 199.

<sup>5</sup> Cod. Vat. Lat. 9847, folii 17 e 18.

<sup>6</sup> M. Mihályi, “I Cistercensi a Roma e la decorazione dell'ala dei monaci nell'abbazia delle Tre Fontane”, *Arte Medievale*, s. ii, 5, 1991, 1, pp. 155-189; S. Romano, *Eclissi di Roma. Pittura murale a Roma e nel Lazio da Bonifacio VIII a Martino V (1295-1431)*, Roma, 1992, pp. I, 16, pp. 17-19, 83-94; M. Mihályi, “Pittura profana a Roma al tempo del primo Giubileo”, in *Bonifacio VIII e il suo tempo. Anno 1300 il primo Giubileo*, edited by M. Righetti Tosti-Croce, cat., Martellago 2000, pp. 65-68.

<sup>7</sup> T. Klauser, “Ein Kirchenkalender aus der römischen Titelkirche der heiligen vier Gekrönten”, in *Scientia sacra. Miscellanea in onore del cardinal Schulte*, Köln 1935, repr. in *Theodor Klauser. Gesammelte Arbeiten zur Liturgiegeschichte, Kirchengeschichte und christlichen Archäologie*, edited by E. Dassmann, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum. Ergänzungsband 3, 1974, pp. 46-70: 50; Osborne, Claridge, *Early Christian and Medieval Anti-*

caded model of the calendar at Tre Fontane, the presence of a frescoed liturgical calendar within a portico in a Templarian building is in itself an interesting phenomenon. Dated for hagiographic reasons to before 1232, these therefore constitute the earliest known example of this theme, centred in Rome during the thirteenth century. As already pointed out by Bertelli, the very similar typology of the ornamental element of the candelabras which divide the scenes alludes to that of the calendar frescoes in Santi Quattro Coronati, and are therefore considered not much earlier than those.

The Calendar of Santi Quattro Coronati<sup>8</sup>, the only one of the liturgical calendars in Rome still partially visible - seen by Muñoz in 1914 in an already fragmentary condition - is located in the space beside the entrance to the oratory of S. Silvestro: twelve figures that Muñoz defined as 'colossal', standing behind the calendar, were shown facing outwards beneath as many arches, and holding long parchments. Of these figures, whose bodies are concealed behind the open scrolls only the torso and perhaps the feet were visible (two headless figures survive, representing the months of January and February); beneath them ran a fascia divided into squares. From the iconographic point of view this is the closest example to the calendar of Tre Fontane as a whole, due to the presence of the figures under the arches and with the large tabular sheets showing the days of the months in their hands; as at Tre Fontane the effect aimed for was that of an architectonic painting, exploiting three walls of the room. The dating of the calendar of the Santi Quattro Coronati has been indicated between 1235 and 1253/54<sup>9</sup>. At the Tre Fontane the classicizing arches of the Santi Quattro Coronati are replaced by gothic trilobal arches decorated with cosmatesque mosaics. As far as we can tell from the Séroux's drawings, the drapery appears to be more plastic, more gothic, in the Cistercian rendering compared to the figures of Santi Quattro Coronati, the youths seem less inert, since they hold up the parchments and they fold them in order to grasp them with both hands, allowing us to almost feel to feel their weight and consistency; the straight edges of the sheets are folded and the parchments curve so as to suggest

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*quities*, cit., nrr. 73-76, pp. 194-199, Windsor RL 9217; A. Ilari, "Il Gran Priorato Giovannita-Gerosolimitano di Roma. I monasteri di S. Basilio e di S. Maria all'Aventino "de Urbe". Analisi delle fonti", *Studi Melitensi*, 3, 1995, pp. 113-156; A. Peroni, S. Riccioni, "The Reliquary Altar of S. Maria del Priorato in Rome", in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West. Essays in Honour of Donald A. Bullough*, a cura di J. M. Smith, Leiden 2000, pp. 135-150: 148, n. 43.

<sup>8</sup> A. Muñoz, *Il restauro della chiesa e del chiostro dei Santi Quattro Coronati*, Roma 1914, p. 130 ss.; F. Hermanin, "Di alcune pitture medievali romane sconosciute", *Atti della Regia Accademia d'Italia. Rendiconti*, s. VII, 3, 1943, p. 299ss.; Bertelli, *Calendari*, cit., n. 5.

<sup>9</sup> A. Sohn, "Bilder als Zeichen der Herrschaft. Die Silvesterkapelle in SS. Quattro Coronati (Rom)", in *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae*, 35, 1997, pp. 7-47: 15.

an opening, thus suggesting that the niches are fairly deep. It is not only the similarities in the iconographic theme and its presentation, with figures and cartouches, which arouse interest and suggest a connection with the example of Santi Quattro Coronati.

The complex studied by Lia Barelli was commissioned by Stefano Conti, Cardinal of Santa Maria in Trastevere and, from 1245, *vicarius urbis* of Pope Innocent IV (1243-1254), who built a sumptuous residence, referred to by documents of the time as a *palatium*, with the chapel of S. Silvestro (consecrated in 1246)<sup>10</sup>. The upper floor housed a system of halls, of which the so-called 'gothic hall' formed the central point; in the course of works in the northern wing of the convent carried out by the Soprintendenza per i Beni Ambientali e Architettonici di Roma - comprising the restoration of the Chapel of S. Silvestro, of the Sala del Calendario and the areas above these - an extended pictorial cycle was found which, together with the grandiosity of the hall, indicates a luxury residence; the paintings, described by Andreina Draghi<sup>11</sup>, are of extraordinary richness and variety and comprised, within inflected arches forming dolphins with interlaced tails, the representation of the twelve months of the year, surmounted by an entablature with corbels represented in perspective as being populated by birds and, above this, the figures of the Arts, Grammar, Geometry, Music, Mathematics, Astronomy, and another now lost; in the groin of the vault are depicted the Four Seasons, the Winds, and in the sails, signs of the zodiac and planets; in the second span we find the militant Virtues (Sobriety, Harmony, Largesse, Religion), which are in attendance at the side of King Solomon. For this reason Drago speaks of "strong links to contemporary Roman painting and that of later decades (Sancta Sanctorum)" and of "an enormous distance [...] from the paintings of S. Silvestro".

The Santi Quattro Coronati form another link with the only known liturgical calendar outside of Rome, but it also is a largely Roman artefact. In the rectangular room of the Abruzzese oratory of San Pellegrino at Bominaco - a secondary building respecting the Benedictine Abbey of S. Maria, but tied to the cult of the martyr saint and of its relics, one of the more precious assets of the monastery - is a frescoed calendar on the

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<sup>10</sup> P. F. Pistilli, "L'architettura tra il 1254 ed il 1308", in *Roma nel Duecento. L'arte nella città dei Papi da Innocenzo III a Bonifacio VIII*, Torino 1991, pp. 59-71; L. Barelli, M. Falconi, "I SS. Quattro Coronati a Roma: nuove acquisizioni sugli edifici annessi alla basilica carolingia", *Palladio*, n.s., VIII, 16, 1995, pp. 5-14; Sohn, op. cit., pp. 20-22; L. Barelli, "Il palazzo cardinalizio dei Santissimi Quattro Coronati a Roma nel Basso Medioevo", in *Il Lazio tra Antichità e Medioevo. Studi in memoria di Jean Coste*, edited by Z. Mari, M. T. Petrarca, M. Sperandio, Roma 1999, pp. 111-124.

<sup>11</sup> A. Draghi, "Il ciclo di affreschi rinvenuto nel convento dei SS. Quattro Coronati a Roma: un capitolo inedito della pittura romana del Duecento", *Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale d'Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte*, 54, 1999, pp. 115-166.

lower part of the vault of the third span, a semester on each side<sup>12</sup>. This is the only frescoed Italian liturgical to survive complete: its pages are inserted between the series of the months which run under trilobal arches. The calendar at Bominaco is extremely similar to the one used by the Roman Curia in the thirteenth century: alongside specifically local festivities and Benedictine saints, the majority of the feast days shown in this Abruzzese calendar recur in the calendar of the Franciscan *Regula* derived from the revision of Honorius III's *Libro* commissioned by the Cardinal Orsini in around 1255. It is a work of elegant, up-to-date and learned artists; and whereas Andaloro emphasised the Swabian influence, asserting that mainstream Abruzzese painting until the end of the fourteenth century avoids in constant way the city and the culture of Rome, Bertaux classified them instead among those medieval paintings of which the Roman school is the origin and centre, just as Carli himself found "many points of contact with the Roman artistic environment of the 12th - 13th centuries": very recently, the Roman hypothesis has been restated and substantiated by Lucherini, who associates them with a Roman-based culture of the middle of the century supported by the gothic script of illuminated manuscripts such as *De Balneis Puteolanis*, also for example in the shape of the illuminated 'C', where courtly grace does not erase all traces of a rapport with the jousting horses in the oratory of S. Silvestro. If such 'Roman' connections link the paintings of Bominaco to the series of thirteenth century calendars in our area of interest, and if the small trilobal arches approach the typology of those of the calendar of Tre Fontane, the differences between the Cistercian example and that of the Benedictine - which represents an authentic fusion between the months and the liturgical calendar and which forms a surface panel without architectural function, almost like a cloth - suggest a need to look elsewhere for possible analogies in the typology of the arches and in their function.

The greatest similarity in the typology of the small trilobal arches can be found instead in the blind trefoil of the chapel of the Sancta Sanctorum<sup>13</sup>, consecrated probably in 1279: the second level of the walls con-

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<sup>12</sup> J. Baschet, *Lieu sacré, lieu d'images. Les fresques de Bominaco (Abruzzes, 1263). Thèmes, parcours, fonctions* (Images à l'appui, 5), Paris-Rome 1991. Another calendar in Abruzzo: V. Lucherini, "Pittura tardo-duecentesca in Abruzzo. Gli affreschi di Fossa e l'attività della bottega di Gentile da Rocca", *Dialoghi di Storia dell'Arte*, 8-9, 1999, pp. 80-89; V. Lucherini, "Una proposta 'romana' per gli affreschi duecenteschi di San Pellegrino a Bominaco (L'Aquila)", *Napoli nobilissima*, s. V, 1, 2000, pp. 163-188.

<sup>13</sup> M. Righetti Tosti-Croce, "Il Sancta Sanctorum: architettura", in *Il Palazzo Apostolico Lateranense*, edited by C. Pietrangeli, Firenze 1991, pp. 51-58; M. Righetti Tosti-Croce, "L'architettura tra il 1254 e il 1308", in *Roma nel Duecento*, cit., 1991, pp. 73-143: 109; *Sancta Sanctorum*, edited by C. Pietrangeli, F. Mancinelli, Milano 1995; I. Herklotz, "Die Fresken von Sancta Sanctorum nach der Restaurierung", in *Pratum Romanum. Richard Krautheimer zum*

sists of twisted columns of two types - one similar to the classic type, the other forming a soft double spiral - which support pointed trilobal arches moulded to create a blind arcade that runs along all four sides. This formula, together with its *a crochet* capitals is without precedent in the architecture of the city of Rome and has been linked many times with the transept of the upper church of Assisi<sup>14</sup>, being built in more or less the same period: according to Kessler “the source is quite specific and the allusion explicit. The band of arches has been copied from the transept of the church of St Francis in Assisi. The standing figures beneath the arcade, with scenes set above them have an obvious counterpart in the right transept at Assisi.” But the scholar recognises that “it’s exceptionally difficult to disentangle the nature of that relationship. The decorative vocabulary used in the frames at Assisi differs fundamentally from that used in the Roman chapel” but the adaptation of the raised transept of the of the upper church of Assisi is obvious<sup>15</sup>. Other scholars have identified the significance of this connection as lying rather in a common origin of the motif, deriving from French *rayonnant* culture, than in a direct influence. Beneath the saints of the arcade painted under commission by Sixtus V is hypothetical without other previous decoration, since the restoration has revealed the existence, under the sixteenth century plaster, of an older layer of painted plaster.

For the calendar of Tre Fontane the typological reference is also discernible in the false trefoils forming small trilobal arches on small columns, in the large lunettes in the transept and the apse of Assisi, these show a distinctive analogy also in form of the apex of the small arch touching the fascia above, whose terminal part appears to be cut short. It is at Assisi that the architectural plan emphasises gothic elements, within a programme of decorative enrichment which takes place as the upper church is completed. Within this programme, alongside the extension of stained glass windows to the transept and to the nave, we find the initial context of the decoration of the upper church, constituted by the frescoes known as ‘oltremontani’ of the upper zone of the northern transept and comprising the false fretwork *a gâble* interspersed with roundels with busts of angels on the walls above the pseudo-trefoil arches.

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100. *Geburtstag*, edited by R. L. Colella, M. J. Gill, L. A. Jenkins, P. Lamers, Wiesbaden 1997, pp. 149-180.

<sup>14</sup> A. Cadei, “Le prime immagini”, in *Basilica patriarcale in Assisi. San Francesco. Testimonianza artistica messaggio evangelico*, Milano 1991, pp. 77-117; A. Cadei, “Assisi, S. Francesco: l’architettura e la prima fase della decorazione”, in *Roma anno 1300. Atti della IV Settimana di studi di storia dell’arte medievale dell’Università di Roma La Sapienza, Roma 1980*, edited by A. M. Romanini, Roma, 1983, pp. 141-162.

<sup>15</sup> Unlike Assisi the ‘gallery’ deserves no practical function, but is merely a decorative frame for painting: H. Kessler, J. Zacharias, *Rome 1300. On the Path of the Pilgrim*, New Haven and London 2000, pp. 43-44.

The decorative programme conceived as a more or less casual superimposition of a painted covering on the architectural base, but rather as a re-interpretation of it, or as a clarification of its figurative meaning; in the upper part of this transept the painting works in harmony with the architecture: the structural transparency, that is the illusory dilation of the space created by the arcades of the false trefoil, is more explicit through the participation of the painted figures, with the apostles who seem to walk within a space defined by the colour, and the false gothic pediments alternating with pinnacles above small arches, which complete the architectural programme.

The trilobal arches of Tre Fontane are, from a typological point of view, similar to those of the Sancta Sanctorum and the trefoil of Assisi, the way in which figures are placed within them, and their entirely pictorial form (as opposed to the mixed form occasionally found) find their most obvious counterpart in the *a gâble* niches of the upper part of the longitudinal body of the basilica of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, "resolved in not dissimilar spatial and decorative terms" from those of the calendar of Tre Fontane. Unfortunately, following the destruction of the wall decorations due to the eighteenth century reconstruction of the inside of the building, only the apex portion of the aedicula containing figures of saints who were placed along the nave, between the windows has been conserved. The close parallels with the shapes of the Arnolfian ciborium of Santa Cecilia have been interpreted as the result of a collaboration between the two artists, and the painted architecture by Cavallini's *bottega* between the windows are considered a translation on to the wall of the Arnolfian style which appears on the ciborium, completed on the twentieth of November 1293; for the frescoes the dating is thought to be early, approximately 1292-1293<sup>16</sup>. The architectural divisions between the windows constitute a very original passage of this complex, not too dissimilar in visual impact from that formed in the upper church of Saint Francis in Assisi of the same years: this is true of the painted niches that enclose figures of male and female saints under an *a gâble* open-worked structure and - though different to Tre Fontane - a flamboyant arch *a gattoni*; the niches are painted the background on a base that appears as a mo-

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<sup>16</sup> A. M. Romanini, "Il restauro di S. Cecilia a Roma e la storia della pittura architettonica in età gotica", in *Tre interventi di restauro, VI Assemblea Generale ICOMOS. Congresso internazionale di Studi. Nessun futuro senza passato* (Roma, 1981), Roma 1981, pp. 75-78; A. M. Romanini, "«Stil novo» e «Maniera greca» nella pittura italiana alla fine del Duecento", in *Il Medio Oriente e l'Occidente nell'arte del XIII secolo, Atti del XXIV congresso internazionale di storia dell'arte (Bologna, 1979)*, edited by H. Belting, vol. II, Bologna 1982, pp. 137-152; A. Tomei, *Pietro Cavallini*, Cinisello Balsamo 2000, pp. 64, 68; A. M. Romanini, "Arnolfo all'origine di Giotto: l'enigma del Maestro di Isacco", *Storia dell'arte*, 65, 1989, pp. 5-26: 12-13.

saic of cosmatesque style, with triangles and rhombuses in red, white, blue and gold. Today the sequence is only visible in small legible fragments, since the repainting has been recovered with motifs which appear to be a marble encrustation of antiquarian style. The exemple at Saint Cecilia similar to that of Tre Fontane, has been defined by Gandolfo as a “modernisation in Cavallinian key of the genre of the Roman painted calendar” of the type of Santi Quattro Coronati<sup>17</sup>, is interesting perhaps not only for the gothic cadences - for example at Tre Fontane the absence of a *gâble* in the arches renders them distinctive - as much as for the presence of both gothic cadences and cosmatesque decoration, which characterises the painted gallery as undoubtedly Cistercian. This is testimony to the ‘stylistic’ modernisations that were implemented in such close proximity to the more important workshops of the late thirteenth century, and with them works of the highest artistic quality: for example, the altar frontal with the Virgin enthroned between angels and saints, the Crucifixion and the history of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, is a masterpiece of *opus Romanum* and dated to the last decade of the thirteenth century. The work shows the upper fascia with a sequence of small trilobal arches on simple small columns and capitals quite close to those of our calendar, with figures that - as Bertelli observed at Tre Fontane - in which each one has a ‘movement’, that is, a different direction in the way the figures are settled behind the large cartouches, a good free space and a certain variety of position. The work is of greatest relief.

An observation of the painted liturgical calendars in the Roman area demonstrates a preference for being located within the a monastic sphere. In Rome they appear predominantly on the ground level of the Abbey and Convent buildings. In the case of both Tre Fontane and Santi Quattro Coronati, in their notable rich and distinctive decorative contexts - they contain the arches of the calendar and the figures positioned within the more substantial painted cycles of the moral schema of the work. These correlate with the environments for which they were intended and as such they appear functional more to the life of the cenobium than to that of highly-placed personages, both inside and outside the community.

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<sup>17</sup> Gandolfo, *Aggiornamento* cit. p 319.