

**CULT, RELICS AND PRIVILEGED BURIAL  
AT SAN VINCENZO AL VOLTURNO IN THE  
AGE OF CHARLEMAGNE: THE DISCOVERY  
OF THE TOMB OF ABBOT TALARICUS  
(817-3 OCTOBER 823)**

di

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In the age of Charlemagne relics of saints increasingly came to act as major repositories of sanctity, to serve as focusses of devotion, and to provide occasion for ambitious building projects, in ecclesiastical institutions of all kinds (GEARY 1990). This is nowhere so apparent as in the numerous monasteries which in this period were reformed and rebuilt often on new expanded scale throughout western Europe (DE JONG 1995). In many cases the saints associated with the beginnings and the early histories of these foundations enjoyed open veneration and were closely identified with the very identity of the institutions in question. Familiar examples include St. Dionysius at St. Denis, St. Richarius at Centula, St. Gertrude at Nivelles, and St. Benedict at Monte Cassino. Relics of eponymous patrons were often kept in the principal churches of monastic settlements and were the objects of particular veneration.

However, in other cases, the saints which gave their names to such institutions appear to have had a less tangible presence in the life of the community. This is the case with St. Vincent, at the early eighth-century foundation bearing his name situated at the source of the River Volturno, on the northern confines of the southern Langobard duchy of Benevento. Although this was one of the pre-eminent monastic communities of early medieval Italy, the circumstances which gave rise to its association with St. Vincent of Saragossa, who suffered martyrdom at Valencia in the first years of the fourth century, are unknown. There is precious little documentary evidence to suggest that he enjoyed a prominently featured cult at the monastery in the period of its greatest success, between the late eighth and the middle of the ninth century.

In the account of the foundation of the monastery composed by Ambrosius Autpertus, monk and abbot of San Vincenzo, in the second half of the eighth century, there is no reference to any tradition that the saint played a particularly prominent part in the early history of San Vincenzo (FEDERICI I, 1925, pp. 101-23). Similarly the compositor of the Chronicle of San Vincenzo, the *Chronicon Vulturense*, writing in the first half of the twelfth century, keeps a strange silence on the subject of relics and saints who enjoyed particular cults in the community; although, in the manuscript of the Chronicle, the saint is repeatedly portrayed in image, as the recipient of charters and diplomas issued in favour of the community (FEDERICI 1925-38, *passim*; DE BENEDITTIS 1995, plates at end of volume). However, for the twelfth-century community, St. Vincent did play a role in the pre-history of the monastery. The chronicler recounts a legend that the Emperor Constantine, while on route from Rome to Constantinople, stopped and rested by the banks of the Volturno. While he slept, three heavenly individuals appeared to him and introduced themselves as the deacon-martyrs Stephen, Laurence and Vincent (FEDERICI I, 1925, pp. 147-8). They commanded the emperor to erect a "templum" at a place close to the source of the river. This was, of course, the first oratory on the site of the future monastery, the «oratorium martyris Christi Vincencii nomine dicatum», to which the three founders of the monastery were directed by their spiritual director, Thomas of Maurienne, abbot of Farfa (FEDERICI I, 1925, p. 111).

In the *Chronicon Vulturense*, St. Vincent is identified only as a priest, *levita* and as the archdeacon of Saragossa *apud Cesaraugustam simili archidiaconatus pollens honore* (FEDERICI 1925 I, p. 148) This is St. Vincent of Saragossa, deacon and proto-martyr of Spain. The traditional original resting place of St. Vincent was Valencia; but he was widely venerated in Spain, Italy, Gaul, Dalmatia and Africa in Late Antiquity. In Italy, his cult was celebrated in Rome and Ravenna, and relics are recorded at Ravenna in 550, when Bishop Maximian acquired them, together with those of nineteen other saints, for his new foundation of S. Stefano (AGNELLI 1878, pp. 327-8; MACKIE 1990, pp. 54-5).

Although the Chronicle makes no mention of the presence of relics of St. Vincent at the monastery, there is an early tradition that the community was in the possession of such relics in the ninth century. Sigebert of Gembloux, writing in the 1050s, records the acquisition of relics of St. Vincent by Dietrich I, bishop of Metz, when he was in Italy in 970, with his cousin, the Emperor, Otto I (PERTZ 1841, p. 475. See Appendix 1). Agents of Dietrich obtained the relics, said to have originated in Spain, from a monastery at Cortona. This they did with the compliance of the bishop of Arezzo, who desired to win the favour of the German emperor. Subsequently, when he was travelling in the south, in the territory of Capua, bishop Dietrich actually visited the monastery of San Vincenzo al Volturno, which he found still in a state of devastation, as the result of its destruction by a Saracen raiding party in 881. The few old monks in residence told the bishop that the body of St. Vincent had been brought to the monastery by two monks, from Spain, where it had remained until the Saracen sack, when it was taken to Cortona.

There is corroborating evidence for this story from a ninth-century source. Writing at some time between 858 and 896, Aimoin, a monk of St.-Germain-des-Prés in Paris, which was then under the patronage of St. Vincent, recorded that his monastery tried to obtain the body of the saint from Valencia, the place of his martyrdom. On route to Spain in 858, while at d'Uzès in Languedoc, the monks learnt from a bishop Walefrid that St. Vincent's body had been removed from Valencia to Benevento. However, Aimoin believed that this tradition was false (Aimoin, *De translatione Ss. martyrium Georgii monachi, Aurelii et Nathaliae*, I, 3: *Acta Sanctorum Julii* 1868, p. 460: «compierunt ... corpus memorati almi Vincencii martyris a supra dicta urbe Valentia Beneventum esse transmissum, quod quidem aliter erat»). He seems to have accepted the claim made by the monks of Castres in Aquitaine, that they possessed the bodily remains of the saint (Aimoin, *Historia translationis S. Vincencii: Acta Sanctorum Januarii* 1863, pp. 13-18).

Certainly it would appear that by the time of the reestablishment of the monastery on a new site on the east bank of the river Volturno, under abbots Gerard and Benedict in the years around 1100, any relics that the community had once possessed had been lost. It is recorded in the Chronicle that Pope Paschal II deposited relics of St. Vincent, together with those of fifty other saints, when he consecrated the new basilica in 1115. The words used by the chronicler imply that these were newly imported remains rather than ones already owned by the monastery: «Venerande memorie dominus papa Paschalis secundus hanc ecclesiam consecravit ad honorem summi Dei et vocabulo eius preciosi martyris Vincencii, in qua honorifice suis manibus ipsius beatissimi Vincencii martyris et aliorum sanctorum fere quinquaginta sacras reliquias collocavit» (FEDERICI I, 1925, p. 20).

Excavation at San Vincenzo al Volturno over the past sixteen years has provided some measure of support for the tradition of the presence of relics of St. Vincent at the monastery, as recorded by Sigibert of Gembloux and Aimoin of St.-Germain (HODGES 1993; HODGES 1995; HODGES-MITCHELL 1995; HODGES 1997).

In the last years of the eighth century and in the first decades of the ninth, under the abbot Joshua (792-817) and his successors, Talaricus (817-23) and Epyphanus (824-42), the small original settlement was systematically redesigned and rebuilt on an incommensurably larger scale. By the 830s the monastery covered more than six hectares and consisted of hundreds of buildings, including eight churches on both banks of the river (Fig. 1). This reformation centered round the re-siting of the main abbey church, San Vincenzo Maggiore. The original abbey church of San Vincenzo, a relatively modest building some 21.5 m long, was relocated and replaced by a splendid new basilica some 120 m to the south. This new structure was a three-aisled church, 63.5 m long and nearly 29 m wide, preceded by a large atrium, 29×27 m, the porticoes of which seem to have served as the principal cemetery for the monks in the ninth century (Figs. 2 and 3). The church had three apses, 24 columns in its main arcades, a fine marble pavement and brilliantly painted walls. The great building, completed around 820, was the fulcrum around which the whole monastery was reformed. The occasion for this major reconstruction of the monastery, a reformation which amounted to little less than a refoundation, is not known; but it is very possible that the rebuilding was associated in some way with the arrival of important relics, and that it was at this time that Sigibert's two monks obtained the bones of St. Vincent from Spain and brought them to the source of the Volturno.

A major acquisition of relics of this kind could go some way to account for the exceptional size of abbot Joshua's new basilica and to the emphasis given to the western, sanctuary-end of the new abbey church. A large ring-crypt was constructed in the central apse, supporting a raised sanctuary, in apparent imitation of the crypt of St. Peter in Rome; but with a prominent central transverse chamber for relics – resulting in an overall cruciform configuration (Fig. 2). The corridors of this crypt were painted with an extraordinarily rich and varied scheme of decoration, with figural scenes on the vaults, standing saints in the embrasures of the windows and below a dazzling dado painted in imitation of perspectival panels in *opus sectile* (Fig. 4). These dados confronted a contemporary visitor with an array of colour and pattern, large ornate *rotae* and illusionistic rectangular panels, which in sophistication and exuberance is unparalleled in surviving schemes of wall-painting from early medieval Europe. The fragmentary remains of the pavement of the crypt – sections of red and green porphyry, exotic *africano* and white Proconnesan streaked with grey – show that the floor must have been as brilliantly polychromatic as the walls. The crypt forms the climax of a carefully orchestrated sequence of spaces, in which architecture, building materials and decorative elements were deployed in sequential order to transport the visitor from the entrance of the monastery along routes of increasing elaboration to the culmination of cult and sanctity in the central relic-chamber (HODGES-MITCHELL 1995, chapter 4).

The main relic-deposit in this chamber was in a tiled box set directly beneath the sill of the *fenestella confessionis* (Figs. 5 and 6). This window, located in a deep rectangular niche in the middle of the east wall of the crypt, formed a means of direct access to the relics and a view into the crypt from the western end of the nave of the church. On excavation, the relic-box still contained numerous fragments of glass lamps and the delicate copper chain by which these lamps were once suspended in the little window above. Nothing was found which might throw light on the identity of the relics in this deposit. However, its status and the high honour accorded to its original contents is not in doubt. The large niche which embraces the *fenestella* constitutes the principal focus of the relic-chamber. Its rear wall was differentiated from the other walls of the room by being revetted with real marble (Fig. 6). The window itself is flanked by two figures painted in facing profile, turning in

towards the opening, with hands raised towards the window or perhaps to some painted image just above it. Painted frontal images of standing saints stood round the walls of the chamber; high-ranking aristocratic figures in court attire on the east wall flanking the principal relic-niche and on the opposite wall a secondary order of sainted bishops and deacons.

In two deep niches in the subordinate western wall are painted the large half-figures of two abbots, their hands extended in attitudes of prayer, with "square haloes" framing their heads, to show that these are portraits of prominent contemporary office-holders (Fig. 5). In all likelihood these are the two contemporary abbots who were responsible for the construction of the crypt and the great basilica above it. The older, grey-haired individual in the southern niche must be Joshua, the Frank responsible for starting work on the new church and for creating the new monastic city at San Vincenzo (Fig. 7); and the younger man in the northern niche must be his successor, Talaricus, under whom the work on the crypt was completed (Fig. 8). It is likely that these two niches were designed to hold two large white spirally-fluted Roman vases, reused as reliquaries. The broken remains of these two vases were found nearby during excavation (Fig. 9) (HODGES-MITCHELL 1995, pp. 106-8, ills. 4:4, 60-4, 66; MITCHELL-HODGES 1996, pp. 23-5, figs. 3-5, 7).

The sanctity and special character of this chamber would have been recognized by any visitor from the decoration of its lower walls. Here, instead of a painted simulation of polychrome marble revetment, real silken curtains were hung. In the early Middle Ages curtains were indicators of the highest social status, and outranked ornamentation in coloured marbles. This relationship is clearly visible in similar contexts at other sites in Italy; for instance, in the north, in the upper room in the great tower at Torba, on the river Olona, under Castelseprio (BERTELLI 1988, pp. 33-4, ills. 1-4, 7); and, in the south, in the church of S. Ambrogio near Montecorvino Rovella, to the east of Salerno (PEDUTO-MAURO 1990, p. 23, figs. 4, 12, 13; ORABONA 1995/6).

Here in the central chamber, Joshua and Talaricus, the abbots who directed the great project of reconstruction in the first quarter of the ninth century, were commemorated in portraits set in close proximity to the principal relics in the possession of the community. This close and visually dramatic association both with the saints painted on the walls and with the relics, preserved in the box beneath the *fenestella* and in the two marble reliquary vases, must have been designed to promote the renown of the two building abbots and to throw lustre on the contemporary hierarchy of the monastery.

Further light was thrown on this constellation of architecture, imagery, ornament and relics by excavations in 1996 in the area of the atrium immediately in front of the façade of the basilica (HODGES-MITCHELL-WATSON 1997) (Fig. 2). The initial results show that this area in front of the church was given a complex architectural form. Our working hypothesis, in advance of full excavation, is that the atrium was entered at two levels. Those entering from the raised eastwork which formed the eastern façade of the abbey-church complex, passed through covered porticoes to the principal door into the basilica. Numerous tombs were buried in these porticoes. It would appear that the atrium was also entered from the sides at ground level, and that certain categories of visitor may have passed into a central open court (beneath the elevated porticoes) before climbing up a flight of steps to the main door in the façade of the basilica. Only full-scale excavation will determine whether this interpretation is correct or not.

The most remarkable discovery made in this trial excavation was the tomb of Abbot Talaricus (817- 3 October 823). In our earlier interpretation, we had proposed that work on the great basilica was completed under Talaricus, while his successor, Abbot Epyphanus (824-42), was responsi-

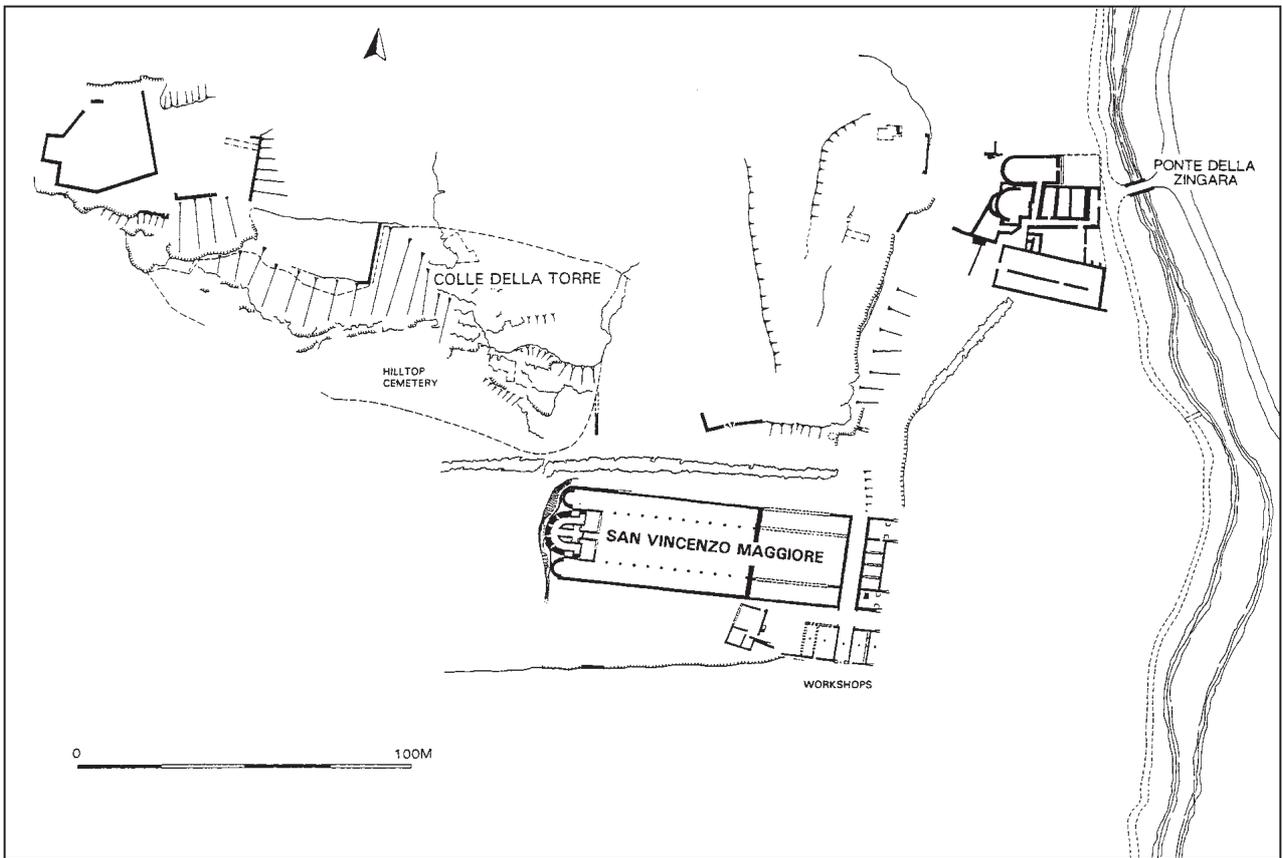


Fig. 1 – Plan of the excavated areas of the early medieval monastic settlement of San Vincenzo al Volturno (Karen Francis).

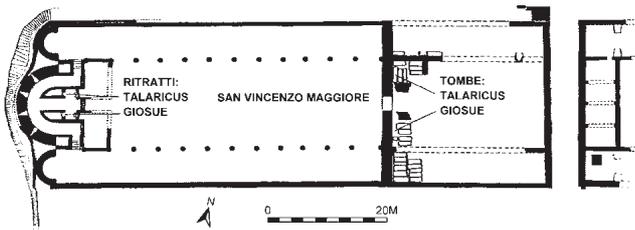


Fig. 2 – Plan of San Vincenzo Maggiore (Karen Francis and Lucy Watson).



Fig. 4 – San Vincenzo Maggiore, detail of the dado in the annular crypt (John Mitchell).

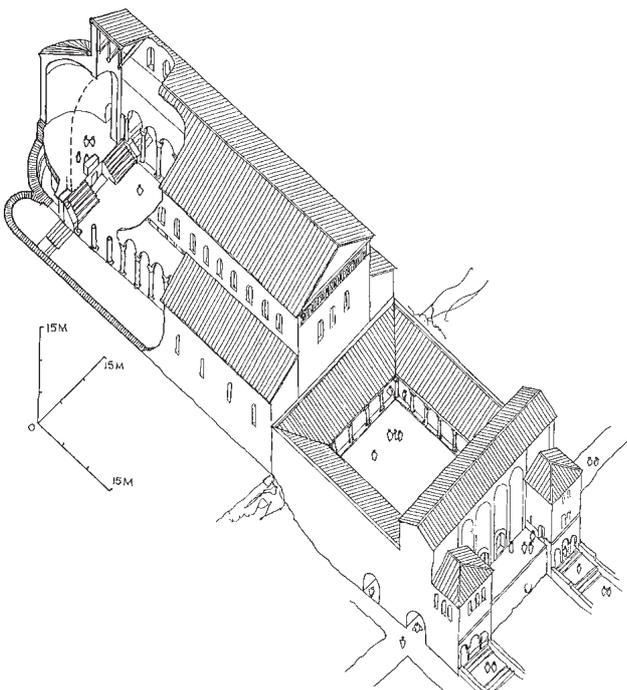


Fig. 3 – Reconstruction of San Vincenzo Maggiore (Sheila Gibson).



Fig. 5 – San Vincenzo Maggiore, central relic-chamber of the crypt, looking westwards (John MITCHELL).



Fig. 6 – San Vincenzo Maggiore, principal niche in the east wall of the relic-chamber of the crypt, with the fenestella confessionis (John Mitchell).



Fig. 7 – San Vincenzo Maggiore, crypt, relic-niche with image of abbot Joshua (John Mitchell).



Fig. 8 – San Vincenzo Maggiore, crypt, relic-niche with image of abbot Talaricus. (John Mitchell)



Fig. 9 – Fragments of a Roman spirally-fluted marble vase (James Barclay-Brown).

ble for the ambitious atrium and eastwork (HODGES-MITCHELL 1995, chapter 2). This hypothesis would now seem to be confirmed by these latest discoveries.

Talaricus' tomb is a carefully constructed block-built structure set against the front wall of the church, immediately to the north of the main door; internally ca. 2.04 m long, 0.66 m wide and 0.64 m deep (Figs. 2 and 10). The head and foot of the tomb are formed of massive squared blocks of local limestone, with gently concave depressions on their inner faces, to form shallow niches, and single large slabs closed the two sides. The cavity was covered by one massive limestone block, carefully cut and rebated to fit over the side walls. This had been partially lifted and fractured into five pieces at an early date. The floor of the tomb is made of five large terracotta floor-tiles. Two of these were inscribed before firing with signatures, IE and MA, in the typical San Vincenzo manner, and a third is marked with a peculiar branching device (MITCHELL 1990, pp. 199-205; MITCHELL 1994, pp. 909-16). The central three tiles are pierced with holes in regular sequence, for drainage. Beneath this floor is a cavity about 0.4 m. deep. The tomb is asymmetrical in construction. The slab which should form the eastern side of the tomb at first glance seems to be missing. Unlike the other sides this side is not plastered and it is set back from the niches, to form the western side of a subsequent block-built tomb to the east. However, the setting of the basal tiles, the finished edges of the plaster on the head- and foot-walls, and the shape of the cover-slab make it clear that the tomb was originally constructed in this way. Whether this was done with the intention of reopening the

tomb from this side to insert further corpses, or for other reasons, remains unclear. Other tombs, including one with a prominent *cappuccino* superstructure, were built to the east and north of Talaricus's grave. Only further excavation will clarify the sequence of these and their relationship to the tomb of the abbot.

The tomb of Talaricus contained the remains of six individuals. One fully articulated and a second partially articulated skeleton overlay a jumbled collection of bones at the foot of the grave, partially destroyed by rodents. A further two articulated lower legs were found within this pile of bones, which contained the remains of four more individuals, earlier occupants of the tomb, and presumably among them the bones of Talaricus himself. Each skeleton had been swept to the foot of the grave as a new corpse was inserted. Preliminary skeletal analysis suggests that, with the exception of one skeleton which shows mild signs of arthritis, the skeletons are of young people, showing almost no signs of bone deterioration indicative of advanced age. Three died in their late teens, judging from the presence of unfused epiphyses on many long bones as well as unerrupted third molars.

The interior walls of the tomb were plastered and painted (Fig. 11). The imagery was sparse but imposing and effective: large crosses on the concave surfaces at the head and foot and on the long west wall. These were expertly and carefully executed, about guide-lines which had been incised into the wet plaster. The arms of the crosses have huge bar-terminals, flat on their outer sides, but on their inner surfaces bulging out in graceful curves – this is an elegant variation on a wedge-bar. Each of the arms of the crosses is

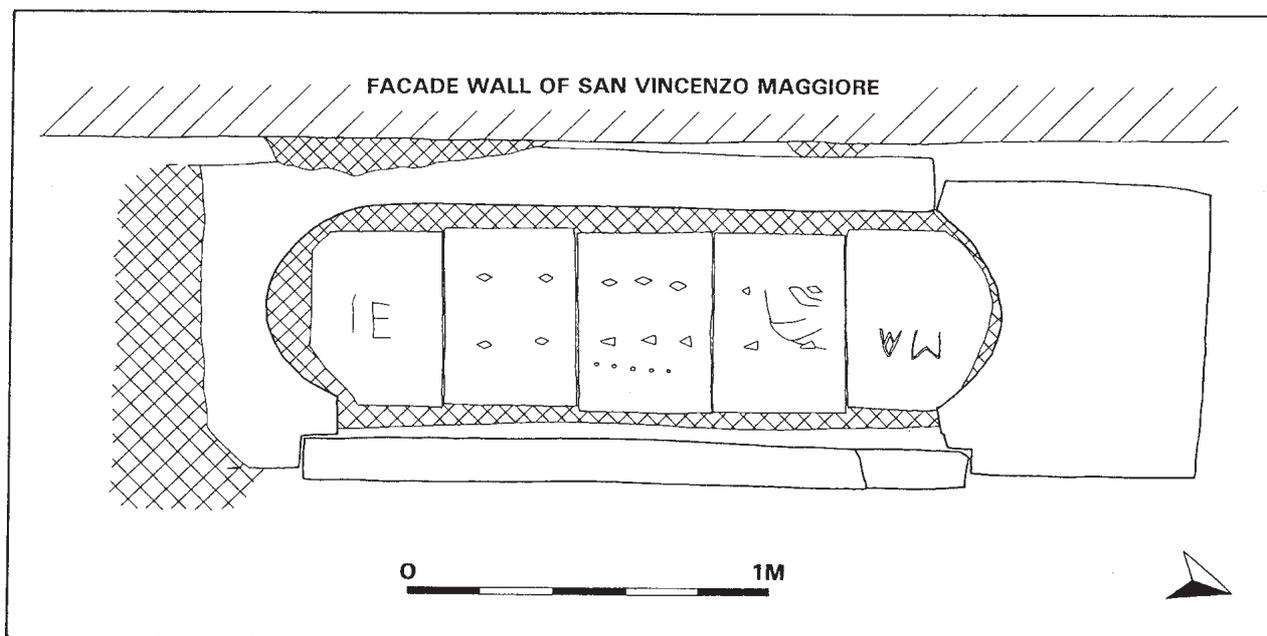


Fig. 10 – Plan of the tomb of Abbot Talaricus, showing construction and floor-tiles (Lucy Watson).

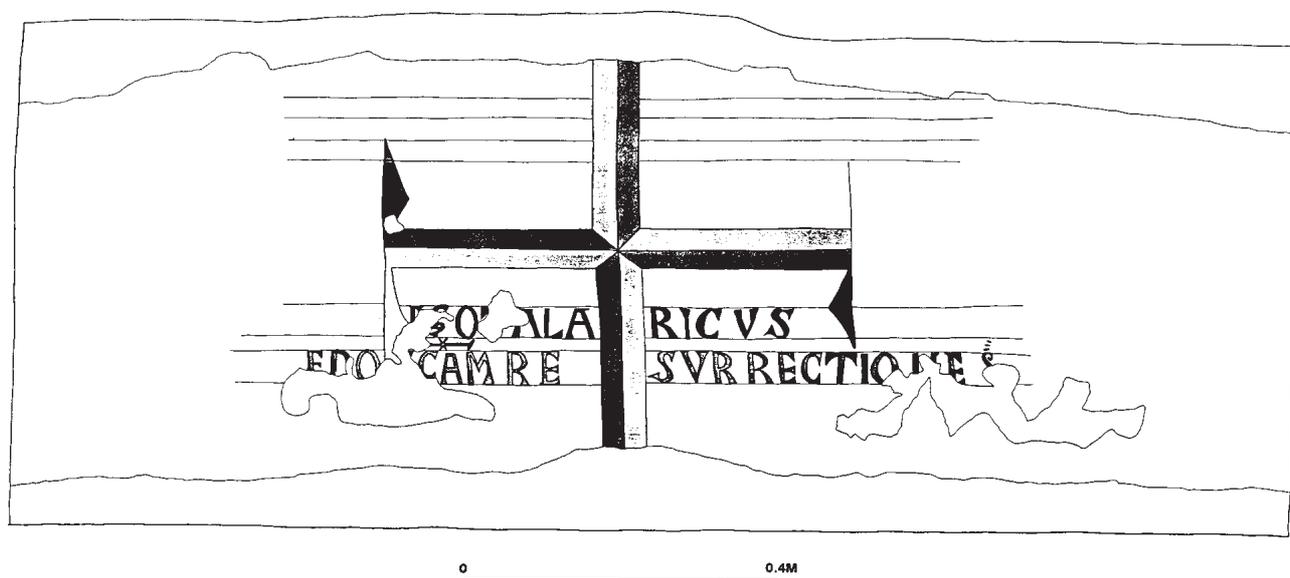


Fig. 11 – West wall of the tomb of Abbot Talaricus (Lucy Watson).

parti-coloured lengthwise, red and pink. Crosses of this kind, parti-coloured and with the same long curvilinear wedge-bars, were widely used in the Italian peninsula in the later eighth and ninth centuries. They are commonly found painted on the sides of tombs, in just this fashion, in the old Langobard northern kingdom, in Milan (DE CAPIOTANI D'ARZAGO 1952, pp. 135-8, pl. XI, figs. 43-9; FIORIO TEDONE 1986, pp. 411-19, figs. 13-15, 19-29), Monza (CASSANELLI 1990), Verona (FIORIO TEDONE 1985, pp. 268-80, figs. 14, 19; FIORIO TEDONE 1986, pp. 420-1, fig. 33), Leggiuno (FIORIO TEDONE 1986, pp. 419), Mantua (FIORIO TEDONE 1986, p. 420), and Pavia (recently discovered tombs in San Felice); and also in the south, for instance at Troia (MAZZEI 1984, p. 361; D'ANGELA 1991, pp. 279-85), and in a splendid painted tomb in the great suburban church of S. Leucio outside Canosa di Puglia. Crosses of this shape were also used extensively at San Vincenzo itself, in a prestigious painted tomb and on carved grave-stones (MITCHELL 1985, p. 158, figs. 6, 33-4, 36; HODGES 1993, pp. 147-50, figs. 9, pp. 27-30). The deployment of this imagery is clearly apotropaic. The crosses surrounding the body protected the newly dead

from the evil spirits and malign influences which could threaten it during the interval before the spirit had fully departed and found definitive rest in the next world.

These crosses in tombs are often associated with painted inscriptions, and this is the case at San Vincenzo. Flanking the cross on the western wall, below the horizontal arms, are the words: EGO TALARICVS / [CR]EDO S(an)C(t)AM RESVRRECTIONE(M) (Fig. 11). These are written in expertly formed capitals, black in the upper line and red in the lower line. The script accords well with what we know of epigraphic practice at San Vincenzo in the first half of the ninth century. The individual letters are characteristic of the distinctive script employed by the masons who carved the commemorative inscriptions on the grave-stones of the monks (MITCHELL 1990; MITCHELL 1994; DE RUBEIS 1996. See Appendix 2).

This tomb was designed to form a pendant to that of abbot Joshua, Talaricus's immediate predecessor, who had been responsible for initiating the construction of the new abbey-church in the first decade of the century, and whose name was spelt out in large gilded bronze letters in a dedica-

tory inscription set high up over the two graves, on the façade of the basilica (FEDERICI I, 1925, p. 221). The Chronicle of the monastery informs us that Joshua was buried in front of his new church, on the right-hand side (FEDERICI I, 1925, p. 287). In the early medieval period, right and left, in the context of a church, tended to be reckoned from the point of view of the officiating priest, standing behind the principal axial altar, facing the congregation and with his back to the apse. By this reckoning, the tomb of Joshua was located on the south side of the principal door. Excavation in 1996 revealed in this position, in precise correspondence to the tomb of Talaricus, a large robber trench. The Chronicle goes on to say that when the community moved to a new location on the opposite bank of the river Volturno, in the years around 1100, the body of Joshua was exhumed and translated to the new site. There, together with the bodies of some of the more prominent early abbots, it was laid in a stone sarcophagus in the atrium before the new abbey-church. It is now clear that not only Joshua's mortal remains, but also his whole tomb, were removed at the time of this translation.

The siting of the tombs of the two founding abbots on either side of the main door into the basilica, like the gilded inscription above, seems to have been part of a strategy to promote the contemporary hierarchy of the monastery and to associate it in the minds of visitors with the central focus of the cult of St. Vincent, located in the ring-crypt at the other end of the church (MITCHELL-HODGES 1996, pp. 23-6). There, in the central relic-chamber, the images of the two abbots, adoring the reliquary vases in the two deep semi-circular niches, are positioned in line with the two tombs flanking the main entrance some 60 m. to the east. To the south, the niche with the older abbot is aligned with the tomb of Joshua, and to the north, the younger man is on axis with the tomb of Talaricus. There can be little doubt that the images in the relic-chamber represent the two abbots who were buried in the two prominent tombs flanking the main door of the great basilica for which jointly they had been responsible.

The excavations at San Vincenzo al Volturno lead us to speculate that the ambitious rebuilding of the monastery in the early ninth century may have owed much to the monastery's recent acquisition – legally or illegally – of the relics of St. Vincent. In effect, abbot Joshua or his immediate successors recognised the significance of the cult to the monastery, as the flow of pilgrims passing down the Via Numicia, close to the site of the monastery, from the Carolingian kingdoms to Adriatic ports steadily increased (HODGES 1997). Further, possession of the relics would have emphasised the political importance of the monastery as it served as a mediating force between the ideology promoted by the new Carolingian masters of the peninsular and the local aristocracy in the principality of Benevento. Finally, the excavations give us cause to reconsider why the monastery was dedicated to St. Vincent in the eighth century, and as a result to re-examine its early history.

### Appendix 1

Sigibert of Gembloux, *Vita Deoderici I: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores* 4, ed. G.H. PERTZ, Hannover, 1841, p. 475.

*De sancto Vincentio levita:* Beatum martyrem et levitam Vincentium in civitate quadam antiquissima, quae ad solum usque iam longo tempore diruta fuerat, Corduno nomine, quae ab Arethio duodecim milibus distat, ex monasterio proximo satis pulchro ornatu, quod multa itidem frequentia venerabatur, Bertaus diaconus, comitante secum quodam clerico episcopi Arietini, cui nomine Crisulfus, indice loci, cum magna licet difficultate, vitae quoque non minimo periculo, transtulit. Hunc ex Hispania in Italiam deportatum firmiter assuerunt. Cuius modum translationis postea, domno praesule Beneventum veniente, dum nurui imperatoriae a Graecia venienti obviam missus esset, plenius cognovimus. Iuxta Capuam siquidem monasterium iam pene dirutum nomine sancti Vincentii reperimus, quod grandi et miro opere quondam a fratribus tribus nobilibus constructum, veterani

qui ibi tunc pauci visebantur monachi dixerunt, et corpus sancti Vincentii postea a duobus monachis ex Hispania ibi clam deportatum, atque deinceps multis temporibus maxima veneratione habitum, donec a paganis eodem monasterio vastato, corpus sanctum inde sublatum et ad praedictam Corduensem civitatem esse translatum. Tunc etiam episcopus Ariethinus non modicam portionem sanguinis beatissimi prothomartyris Stephani in vase cristallino optime auro gemmisque composito, et de sanguine Innocentium in alia pixide, et de capillis sancti Petri, breviculis per singula apposis, quamvis invitus et summo in discrimine apud imperatorem sui suarumque rerum positus, dedit; et quia redemptionis suae facultas eum angustabant, peccatorem suum nostrum venerabilem praesulem per hoc et per corpus sancti Vincentii paravit, atque sic in gratiam imperatoris, eo interveniente, vix rediit. De hoc ipso beato matyre plures Itolorum episcopi iam ante saepe temptaverant ut id adipisci possent; in quibus Ambrosius Bergamensis, pro eo quod sedes episcopatus sui in honore sancti Vincentii esset, et ante breve tempus, cum quibus potuerat, diem quo eum excepturus esset statuerat. Sed Domino ordinante, ut in crastinum ille condixerat, nocte praecedenti a nostris praeoccupatam est. Hoc clerici de monte Romarici tulerunt.

Concerning the priest the holy Vincent. Bertraus the deacon, together with a cleric of the bishop of Arezzo called Crisulf, his guide, with enormous difficulty and no little danger to his life, removed the blessed martyr and priest Vincent from a very old city, which had long been destroyed, called Cortona, which is about twelve miles from Arezzo, from a beautifully decorated monastery in the neighbourhood, where it was venerated by many who went there. They asserted firmly that it had been taken from Spain to Italy. We later learnt more about the mode of translation when our lord the bishop came to Benevento, when he was sent to meet the daughter-in-law of the emperor, coming from Greece. At Capua we found a monastery called San Vincenzo, almost completely destroyed, which had once been built in a marvellous and grand way by three noble brothers, or so the old monks who then appeared to be few in number, said. Subsequently the body of Vincent was brought there secretly by two monks from Spain, and was then held in the greatest veneration for a long time, until the monastery was devastated by the pagans, and the body of the saint was then taken to the aforeaid city of Cortona. Then the bishop of Arezzo gave a sizeable portion of the blood of the protomartyr Stephen in a crystal flask, magnificently worked with gold and gems, and the blood of the Holy Innocents in another pyxis, and hairs of St. Peter, each with written notes attached, since he was out of favour and he and his belongings were placed in utmost danger by the emperor. And because he was beggared by so redeeming himself, he made up to his intercessor, our noble bishop, and in this way and with the body of S. Vincent, and thus just regained the favour of the emperor, through his intercession. Many Italian bishops had often tried to get this blessed martyr, among them Ambrose of Bergamo, because his cathedral is dedicated to saint Vincent, and a short while before he had arranged a day on which he would take possession of the body, together with those he could command. But God ordained that the night before the day he had chosen the body was taken by our men. It was taken by clerics to Remiremont.

### Appendix 2

The discovery of Talaric's tomb establishes another fixed chronological point for dating script at San Vincenzo, joining Abbot Joshua's monumental dedicatory inscription in gilded copper letters on the façade of the new basilica, many fragments of which have been recovered during excavation (FEDERICI I, 1925, p. 221; MITCHELL 1990, pp. 205-16, figs. 12-14; MITCHELL 1994, pp. 916-8, figs. 47-9; MITCHELL forthcoming a: chapter 2), the fine painted inscription naming Abbot Epyphanus (824-42) in the well-known subterranean painted funerary oratory at the north end of the site (HODGES 1993, figs. 7, 21-2), and a number of less precisely dateable carved funerary inscriptions which show signs of burning and must predate the fire of 881. Using this framework it is possible to locate the many other surviving inscriptions from San Vincenzo with some precision. These are fashioned in various media, carved in stone, incised into clay and painted on walls. It is noticeable that greater care was given to some inscriptions than to others. Those associated with abbots – abbot Joshua's monumental gilded inscription from the façade of the basilica, the controlled lettering in the tomb of Talaric and the elegantly formed characters in the crypt-oratory in which Epyphanus is depicted – are all executed in capitals with no trace of uncial elements, and are set within guidelines which form rigid framing matrices. A rather different situation is found in a mid-ninth-century painted arcosolium tomb in the corridor beneath the distinguished guests' *palatium*, where an inscription at the head

of the tomb is written out with scant attention to regularity. The many ninth-century gravestones from the site differ considerably in size and in the care expended on their carved epitaphs. It is clear that graphic distinctions were deployed to emphasize social stratification within the hierarchy of the monastic community (MITCHELL forthcoming b).

We are most grateful to Prof. Saverio Lomartire who told us about the newly discovered painted tombs in S. Felice in Pavia and kindly provided photographs of them, and to Ann Christys for drawing our attention to Aimoin of St.-Germain's reference to the tradition of a translation of the body of St. Vincent from Spain to the principality of Benevento.

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