

Envisioning Christ on the Cross: Ireland and the Early Medieval West

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The *Volto Santo*'s legendary and physical image

MICHELE BACCI

In the last decades, art historians have frequently laid emphasis on the 'cultic' role played by images in the religious experience of the Middle Ages, although no special efforts have been made to provide the ambiguous term 'cult' with a more circumstantiated meaning.¹ Actually, this word can be safely used as a generic expression to hint at both individual and collective forms of religious expression, including liturgical rites, devotional acts and mystical experiences, as well as private, domestic and votive practices. The way in which images are involved in such religious manifestations may vary according to different factors: they can prove to be simply instrumental to the performance of ritual and pious acts, or play a much more decisive role as visual foci of a well consolidated cultic phenomenon, being invested with relic-like, documentary or miraculous qualities. The latter case was much less widespread than the former and, as some scholars have remarked, was much more an outcome of the early Modern era, rather than a hallmark of medieval spirituality.²

Yet, medieval religious literature was indeed responsible for working out many legendary motifs that described Christian images as vehicles of God's intervention in the human dimension: widely disseminated by both devotional and liturgical texts and eventually used as theological and didactic arguments, such stories happened in the course of time to be associated with material images and used as rhetorical tools to shape the latter's 'personality' in universally recognizable and powerful terms. This encounter caused a most crucial shift of status, by virtue of

which an ordinary image was gradually credited with possessing supernatural qualities, resulting from its identification with the mythical protagonist of a renowned miracle. Such a process usually proves to be very difficult to illustrate, as we are often no more able to recognize the whole range of connotations between the ideal archetype and its material counterpart: one can wonder, for example, if and to what extent the transformation of an image into a cult-object implied a more or less thorough reshaping of its material appearance, and if and to what extent the latter could be expected to visualize its mythical counterpart, for example by adopting compositional, iconographic and stylistic features that conveyed an idea of ancientness and exotic otherness. In the present essay, I would like to analyse such dynamics by offering a different look at the *Volto Santo* in Lucca. This very odd object is especially interesting because of its controversial perception as both cross and image, holy face and whole body, three-dimensional statue and icon, piece of furnishings and cultic object, true-to-life portrait and disappointing artwork at the same time. In order to decide how to interpret such contradictory features, it proves necessary to explore the *Volto Santo*'s long-lasting cultic prehistory, starting from the age of the iconoclastic controversies.

On 11 March 843, the *basilissa* Theodora put an end to the long-lasting iconoclastic controversy by celebrating a solemn procession with icons through the streets of Constantinople. Such an event was perceived by the Byzantine church as the final victory over heresy and as the beginning of a new Christian era: this implied, as Marie-France Auzépy has pointed out, a thorough rethinking of collective identity, which was achieved by means of an increased emphasis on the concept of tradition, intended as an allegedly uninterrupted transmission and observance of the usages that had been established in the apostolic past and could be repeated without alteration in the extra-temporal dimension of the liturgy.³ Icons ceased to be either mere manifestations of devotional piety or subjects of legendary fiction and started to be perceived as material symbols of orthodox self-awareness. Gradually, during the late ninth and tenth century, these icons began to play the role of protagonist in the annual commemoration of the Triumph of Orthodoxy over iconoclasts, a commemoration that was celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent. Starting on the evening of Saturday's *ton kolyvon* (that is, 'of the cakes', a feast commemorating a famous miracle of St Theodore Tiron), this celebration was meaningfully superimposed on the earlier commemoration of Moses and Aaron, probably in order to assert that image worship, prohibited by God's words on Mount Sinai, was now made possible and even necessary by the

¹ Reference to the scholarly trend inaugurated by Hans Belting's famous book *Bild und Kult: eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst* (Munich, 1990) is here implied. ² See, especially, the papers gathered in E. Thunø and G. Wolf (eds), *The miraculous image in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Rome, 2004).

³ Marie-France Auzépy, 'La tradition comme arme de pouvoir: L'exemple de la querelle iconoclaste' in J.-M. Sansterre (ed.), *L'autorité du passé dans les sociétés médiévales* (Brussels and Rome, 2004), pp 79–92 at p. 90. Compare also Andrew Louth, 'Introduction' in Andrew Louth and Augustine Casiday (eds), *Byzantine orthodoxies: papers from the thirty-sixth spring symposium of Byzantine studies, University of Durham, 23–25 March 2002* (Aldershot, 2006), pp 1–11.

new covenant manifested by Christ's Incarnation. It was also known as 'the day of dedications' since the most emotionally charged moment in the celebration of 843 had consisted in the re-consecration of all churches profaned by the Iconoclasts.⁴

As in 843, the Feast of Orthodoxy consisted of solemn offices and public processions with icons and crosses, which shared the same space as their believers; there, the latter had the chance to look at holy images and learn that, in worshipping them, they were acting as true Orthodox Christians. It was in front of these icons that the *synodikon* of orthodoxy was publicly read, as well as several other texts, including pseudo-Damascene's *Third homily on images*, the so-called *Epistola synodica*, and, most notably, accounts of a number of miracles performed by icons in the past. Such miracles were often selected on the basis of alleged authorship by certain of the church Fathers, which enabled them to sound as authoritative as the traditional readings from John Chrysostom's works used in Lent and included in the *Triodion*.⁵ One such miracle was the story of the injured image of Beirut, which was commonly attributed to Athanasius of Alexandria and, as such, had been cited in the sessions of the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 787; it was especially favoured as it described an act of iconoclasm *ante litteram*, with an image of Christ that, after being stabbed by some Jews, had started pouring forth large quantities of blood that had immediately proved to operate miraculous healings; such details as the final mass conversion of the Beirut Jews to Christianity and the dedication of the town synagogue to the Holy Saviour enabled defenders of image-worship to establish a direct parallelism with the events of 843.⁶

The Beirut narrative, which was by far the most common of the liturgical lessons for the Feast of Orthodoxy, was often associated with other stories, including those of the Edessa Mandylion, the Hierapolis Keramidion, the Marian *acheiropoieton* in Lydda, the icon of the Virgin Mary that had spoken to St Mary the Egyptian in Jerusalem, and the image of Christ stabbed with a knife by a Jew in the Hagia Sophia of Constantinople (which was itself a local variant of the Beirut archetype). Such a selection was instrumental in establishing a direct connection with the images celebrated by tradition and a number of icons and holy mementoes being worshipped in the Byzantine capital and probably involved

4 Jean Gouillard, 'Le synodikon de l'Orthodoxie: Édition et commentaire', *Travaux et mémoires*, 2 (1967), 1–316 at 45, 134–5; Dimitra Kotoula, 'The British Museum Triumph of Orthodoxy Icon' in Louth and Casiday (eds), *Byzantine orthodoxies*, pp 121–30 at p. 124. 5 Gouillard, 'Le synodikon', 129–38. 6 Michele Bacci, 'Quel bello miracolo onde si fa la festa del santo Salvatore: studio sulle metamorfosi di una leggenda' in Gabriella Rossetti (ed.), *Santa Croce e Santo Volto: Contributi allo studio dell'origine e della fortuna del culto del Salvatore (secoli IX–XV)* (Pisa, 2002), pp 7–86. See also Michele Bacci, 'The Berardenga Antependium and the *Passio ymaginis* office', *JWCI*, 61 (1998), 1–16; Jean-Marie Sansterre, 'L'image blessée, l'image souffrante: quelques récits de miracles entre Orient et Occident (VIe–XIIe siècle)' in J.-M. Sansterre (ed.), *Les images dans les sociétés médiévales: pour une histoire comparée* (Rome, 1999), pp 113–30 at pp 116–22.

in the annual celebrations: the Beirut image itself, which was said to display a crucifixion, had been preserved since 975 in the Chalke chapel in the Great Palace in Constantinople, whereas the Mandylion and Keramidion were included in the treasure of the Pharos chapel, and the icon of St Mary the Egyptian was displayed on the main entrance of the naos (nave) of the Hagia Sophia.⁷

This association with local tradition was probably deliberate and aimed partly at pleasing the audience of Lenten sermons, and partly at emphasizing that God's miraculous intervention by means of holy images was by no means restricted to ancient and geographically alien icons. Such a process was already fully accomplished by the late eleventh century, when sermons including up to five stories set in Constantinople itself started to circulate: these included an episode of injury to the famous Hodegetria icon, the image in the Hagia Sophia, and the icons of Maria Rhomaia and Christ Antiphonetes, which were said to have been committed by Patriarch Germanos to the waves of the Bosphorus at the start of iconoclasm.⁸ By such means, the space-time dimension of legends happened to overlap with the believers' everyday environment, that is, with the cult-places, streets and squares that, on the occasion of the Feast of Orthodoxy, were enlivened by long processions led by the very effigies that were evoked in sermons, as is shown by a late icon (c.1400) in the British Museum, where the palladium of Constantinople, the Hodegetria, plays the role of protagonist.⁹

In approximately the same period, the church in Rome (which had been a stronghold of the iconodulic party) seems to have developed a special liturgical celebration, known as the *Passio imaginis Domini* or *Festum Salvatoris*,¹⁰ in analogy with the Feast of Orthodoxy. It consisted of the commemoration of the Beirut miracle, which already by the tenth century had been fixed on 9 November in Catalan and Italian calendars.¹¹ The story, known from Anastasius the Librarian's translation of the Acts of the Council of Nicaea, dating from c.873,¹² circulated in at least four different variants including important additions: one told that, in order to commemorate the miraculous event, the bishop of Beirut had solemnly converted the local synagogue into a church dedicated to the Saviour and had

7 On these narratives and the sacred objects associated with them, see Ernst von Dobschütz, 'Coislinianus 296', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 12 (1903), 534–67 at 545–6; Bacci, 'Quel bello miracolo', pp 15–16. 8 Ernst von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder: Untersuchungen zur christlichen Legende* (Leipzig, 1899), pp 213**–32**. 9 Kotoula, 'The British Museum Triumph of Orthodoxy Icon'. Athanasios Markopoulos, 'Ο θρίαμβος της Ορθοδοξίας στην εικόνα του Βρετανικού Μουσείου: Τα πρόσωπα και τα κείμενα', *Δελτίον της χριστιανικής αρχαιολογικής εταιρείας*, ser. IV, 26 (2005), 345–52. For the importance of place to the development of liturgical processions, see Van Tongeren, this volume. 10 Bacci, 'Quel bello miracolo', pp 16–40, and texts published at pp 60–70. 11 The earliest witness is a passion in the archives of Girona Cathedral (MS 11, fo. 117v): see Luís Serdà, 'Los martirologios de la Marca Hispánica en la evolución litúrgica de la misma', *Ausa*, 1:9 (1952–4), 387–9 at 388. For further evidence, see Bacci, 'Quel bello miracolo', pp 27–8 and texts at pp 60–1. 12 Anastasius the Librarian, *Translation of the Acts of the 7th Ecumenical Council*, ed. Giovan Domenico Mansi (53 vols, Florence and Venice, 1759–98), xiii, cols 23–31.

instituted an annual feast on 9 November.¹³ Another one stated that the image was an authentic portrait of Christ painted by the pharisee Nicodemus in the night following Christ's crucifixion and that many ampullae filled with the holy blood shed from its surface had been disseminated throughout the Christian world on the initiative of the bishop of Beirut.¹⁴ The feast of the *Passio imaginis* was widespread in several areas of Europe at least until it started being substituted by the feast of the dedication of the Lateran basilica from the twelfth century onwards. By means of the latter, the Roman curia attempted to transpose into a Roman setting the basic motifs of the ancient Eastern legend, and especially the final conversion of the Beirut synagogue into a church dedicated to the Holy Saviour; in the view of Lateran canons, it was important to assert that the 'Basilica Salvatoris' in Rome had been the first one to bear such a venerable dedication.¹⁵ Yet, before this process of 'Romanization' was enacted, the feast of 9 November had constituted a specifically Western way of celebrating victory over the iconoclastic heresy, focused on the most widespread of Byzantine liturgical readings on images, and imbued with a strong Christological meaning.

In my view, the choice of 9 November instead of the first Sunday of Lent was aimed at maintaining the original association with the feast of St Theodore Tiron, which was not movable in Roman tradition, but fixed on the aforementioned date. The Roman church felt that it had preserved the memory of the dedication of the Beirut synagogue as a consequence of its long-lasting Petrine association with the patriarchate of Antioch, within whose jurisdiction the Lebanese town fell; given that the story described nothing more than a re-enactment of the crucifixion, it worked out a specific Office modelled on those used for the Invention (3 May) and the Exaltation of the Cross (14 September). Yet, the connection with the Byzantine Feast of Orthodoxy is best revealed by a number of passionals pertaining to the most important Roman churches, where a selection of miracles performed by images is included among the lessons for the *Festum Salvatoris*.¹⁶ The passionall composed by canon Bibianus for the Lateran basilica in the late eleventh century includes a short sermon on the *Dedicatio ecclesiae lateranensis*, followed by five Byzantine stories: the stabbed image of the Hagia Sophia, the *acheiropoietia* of Lydda and Gethsemane, the Edessa Mandylion and, last but not least, the Beirut image itself.¹⁷ Moreover, the use of multiple lessons is confirmed by the expression

¹³ Edited in *PG* 161, 819–24. ¹⁴ First witnessed by an eleventh-century manuscript in the Vatican Library (Rome, Vatican Library, lat. 641, fos 134–6), ed. Pietro Savio, 'Ricerche sulla Santa Sindone: Icone del Salvatore', *Salesianum*, 18 (1958), 578–640 at 610–16. See E. Galtier, 'Byzantina', *Romania*, 29 (1900), 501–27. ¹⁵ Frederick George Holweck, *Calendarium liturgicum festorum Dei et Dei matris Mariae* (Philadelphia, 1925), p. 380; Policarpo Radó, *Enchiridium liturgicum* (Rome, Freiburg im Breisgau and Barcelona, 1966), ii, p. 1313; Pierre Jounel, *Le culte des saints dans les basiliques du Latran et du Vatican au douzième siècle* (Rome, 1977), p. 306; Bacci, 'Quel bello miracolo', pp 34–9. ¹⁶ Bacci, 'Quel bello miracolo', pp 32–4. ¹⁷ Rome, Archivio del Vicariato, Fondo Lateranense, MS A80, fos 223–26v. See Jounel, *Le culte des saints dans les basiliques du Latran*

Miracula de imagine Domini, which occurs in a number of lectionaries, and by the association of the Beirut legend with the story of the Hagia Sophia icon, and the legend of the Lucca *Volto Santo* in several later manuscripts.¹⁸ The unique combination of readings in the late twelfth-century passionall from Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, which includes only stories within a purely Roman setting (such as the Veronica, the Lateran *acheiropoieton*, and the *Arcus Pietatis*), can be considered to represent a clear attempt at thorough Romanization of the feast.¹⁹

Yet, notwithstanding all efforts on the part of the Lateran canons, the 'Basilica Salvatoris' continued to be regarded as owing its dedication to the special worship of the Beirut image. An ampulla of holy blood was kept among the basilica's most precious relics and such authors as Iacobus of Varagine and at least some of the manuscripts of Guillelmus Durandus' *Rationale divinarum officiorum* had no doubts in identifying it with one of the ampullae filled by the bishop of Beirut;²⁰ moreover, when the regular canons of Bergen Cathedral in Norway received a holy thorn of Christ's crown on 9 November 1214, they discovered in their books that the date corresponded, in Roman usage, to the commemoration of the translation of the blood ampulla from Beirut to the Lateran basilica and of its subsequent dedication to the Holy Saviour.²¹ By the late twelfth century, an image of Christ located in the Lateran Patriarchium at the entrance to the chapel of St Sylvester started playing the role of cultic substitute of the Beirut image: a number of later sources state that it had shed blood, later preserved in the ampulla, after being struck with a stone by a Jew during the feast of the dedication of the Lateran basilica on 9 November. Unfortunately, there is no documentary evidence from which to ascertain whether this image was purposefully created to play this role or whether it was an older artwork previously used as a visual focus in the *Passio imaginis* feast. Yet, it is interesting to observe that some extant texts, while witnessing that it displayed Christ on the cross,²² describe it as either 'the Lord's face' (*vultus dominicus*)²³ or 'a painted image of the Lord's majesty' (*dominicae maiestatis depictam imaginem*).²⁴

et du Vatican, pp 305–7; Sansterre, 'L'image blessée', p. 119; Bacci, 'Quel bello miracolo', p. 32 and n. 66. ¹⁸ Bacci, 'Quel bello miracolo', p. 32 and n. 68; idem, 'Nicodemo e il Volto Santo' in Michele Camillo Ferrari and Andreas Meyer (eds), *Il Volto Santo in Europa: Culto e immagini del Crocifisso nel Medioevo. Atti del Convegno internazionale di Engelberg (13–16 settembre 2000)* (Lucca, 2005), pp 15–40 at p. 34. ¹⁹ Rome, Vatican Library, Fondo S. Maria Maggiore, MS 2, fos 234–49v. See Michele Bacci, 'San Salvatore "prope Arcum Pietatis"' in Francesco Caglioti (ed.), *Giornate di studio in ricordo di Giovanni Previtali* (Pisa, 2002), pp 15–28. ²⁰ John of Varagine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni (Florence, 1998), pp 934–5; Guillelmus Durandus, *Rationale divinarum officiorum*, ed. A. Davril and T.M. Thibodeau (Turnhout, 1995), p. 64. ²¹ *Lectiones Bergenses*, in *Exuviae sacrae Constantinopolitanae*, ed. Paul de Riant (2 vols, Geneva, 1877–8), ii, pp 5–6. ²² Stefano, rector of Santa Maria in Impruneta, *Prolagho* [c.1370], in *Capitoli della Compagnia della Madonna dell'Impruneta* (Florence, 1866), p. 9. ²³ Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia imperialia* (c.1214–15), iii, p. 25, ed. S.E. Banks and J.W. Binns, *Gervase of Tilbury, Otia Imperialia: Recreation for an Emperor* (Oxford, 2002), pp 604–5. ²⁴ Gerald of Wales, *Gemma ecclesiastica*

Much the same semantic ambiguity characterizes the complex history of the Holy Face of Lucca (pl. 15), the legendary and cultic physiognomy of which, as several authors have pointed out, is closely related to the tradition concerning the Beirut image.²⁵ Its origins are still most controversial: first witnessed in the mid-eleventh century, its renown was already so widespread in the early twelfth century as to be invoked by English kings and worshipped by pilgrims from several parts of Europe.²⁶ Its cult emerged in the peculiar context of the cathedral church of San Martino (previously dedicated to the Holy Saviour), which was by then ruled by the same regular canons established in the Lateran basilica; it is a well-known fact that, in the wake of the Gregorian Reform (especially under Bishop Rangerius in the second half of the eleventh century), many efforts were made to imitate in Lucca the usages and traditions of the Roman church. In a way, the cult of the cross was especially enhanced in this period: the offices of the Invention and Exaltation were most solemnly performed and, as we learn from a document dating from c.1070,²⁷ two altars connected with the worship of the cross faced each other, as in Roman basilicas, in the middle of the nave: one was located 'before the old cross' and one *ante vultum*, before the Holy Face, which had been built in honour of several saints, including Cornelius and Cyprian. The very fact that the latter's feast fell on 14 September, the day of the Exaltation, indirectly corroborates the identification of the *vultus*, already in this early phase, with a figurative cross or crucifix.²⁸

[1197], i, 31, ed. John Sherren Brewer, *Giraldi Cambrensis opera* (London, 1862), ii, p. 103. The image is mentioned also in the following sources: Albinus, *Gesta* [c.1180], xi, p. 3, ed. Paul Fabre and Louis Duchesne, *Le 'Liber censuum' de l'Église romane* (2 vols, Rome, 1905–10), ii, p. 123; Cencius Camerarius, *Ordo Romanus* [1192], 58, *ibid.*, p. 312; anonymous, *Mirabilia urbis Romae* [c.1360], ed. Gustav Parthey (Berlin, 1869), p. 52. See Gerhard Wolf, *Salus populi Romani: Die Geschichte römischer Kultbilder im Mittelalter* (Weinheim, 1990), pp 80, 106, 276, n. 345; Bacci, 'Quel bello miracolo', pp 37–8. ²⁵ Francesco Paolo Luiso, *La leggenda del Volto Santo: Storia di un cimelio* (Pescia, 1928), pp 36–9; Chiara Frugoni, 'Una proposta per il Volto Santo' in Clara Baracchini and Maria Teresa Filieri (eds), *Il Volto Santo. Storia e culto* (Lucca, 1982), pp 15–48 at p. 20; Jean-Claude Schmitt, 'Cendrillon crucifiée: à propos du Volto Santo de Lucques' in *Miracles, prodiges et merveilles au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1995), pp 241–69 at pp 246–7; Michele Camillo Ferrari, 'Imago visibilis Christi: le Volto Santo de Lucques et les images authentiques au Moyen Âge', *Micrologus*, 6 (1998), 29–42, at 40–1; *idem*, 'Il Volto Santo di Lucca' in Giovanni Morello and Gerhard Wolf (eds), *Il volto di Cristo* (Milan, 2000), pp 253–62; Michele Bacci, "Ad ipsius Christi effigiem": il Volto Santo come ritratto autentico del Salvatore' in the Municipality of Lucca (ed.), *La Santa Croce di Lucca, il Volto Santo: Storia, tradizioni, immagini* (Lucca, 2003), pp 115–25; *idem*, 'Nicodemo e il Volto Santo'; Raffaele Savigni, 'Lucca e il Volto Santo nell'XI e XII secolo' in Ferrari and Meyer (eds), *Il Volto Santo in Europa*, pp 407–97 at p. 408. ²⁶ On the early history of the Volto Santo, see especially R. Savigni, *Episcopato e società cittadina a Lucca da Anselmo II (†1086) a Roberto (†1225)* (Lucca, 1996), pp 376–94; *idem*, 'Il culto della croce e del Volto Santo nel territorio lucchese' in the Municipality of Lucca (ed.), *La Santa Croce di Lucca*, pp 131–72; and Ferrari, 'Identità e immagine del Volto Santo di Lucca' in *ibid.*, pp 93–102; G. Concioni, *Contributi alla storia del Volto Santo* (Pisa, 2005). ²⁷ First published by Almerico Guerra and Piero Guidi, *Compendio di storia ecclesiastica lucchese* (Lucca, 1924), p. 54. See Piero Guidi, 'Per la storia della cattedrale e del Volto Santo (note critiche)', *Bollettino storico lucchese*, 4 (1932), 169–86. ²⁸ Bacci, 'Nicodemo e il Volto Santo', pp 33–7. On the altars

Liturgical manuscripts from either Lucca or the Tuscan churches taking inspiration from Lucchese usages demonstrate that the *Passio imaginis* was one of the major feasts of the liturgical year.²⁹ By the thirteenth century, if not earlier, its office was performed in front of the *Volto Santo* itself and included lessons from the Beirut narrative.³⁰ The close connection with the latter is pointed out, in any case, by the many analogies and direct references to it which can be detected in the so-called Leobinian legend, the story of the *Volto Santo* most probably composed in the early twelfth century:³¹ explicit hints are represented by the attribution to Nicodemus and the mention of an ampulla of holy blood among the relics associated with the image.³² The identification of the original *Volto* with the present-day monumental wooden crucifix has often been disputed in the scholarly debate, on both historical and artistic grounds.³³ Some have wondered why a three-dimensional image should have been labelled as 'holy face' – an expression that would have been more appropriate in connection with such images as the Edessa Mandylion or the Veronica in the Vatican basilica.³⁴ Yet, contemporary documents witness that the word *vultus*, often employed to indicate holy portraits such as those painted by St Luke, could indeed be used as synecdoche to indicate crucifixes; in more general terms, it conveyed the idea of the image as true-to-life reproduction of Christ's physical appearance and height that was asserted in the *Passio imaginis* story.³⁵

ante cruces facing each other at the middle of the nave in Roman basilicas, see Sible De Blauuw, *Cultus et décor: Liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardoantica e medievale: Basilica Salvatoris, Sanctae Mariae, Sancti Petri* (Rome, 1994), pp 192, 261, 670–1. ²⁹ Bacci, 'Quel bello miracolo', pp 30–1. ³⁰ As recorded by the late thirteenth-century *Ordo officiorum* of San Martino: Lucca, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS 608, fo. 63v. ³¹ *Relatio Leobini diaconi*, ed. Gustav Schnürer and Joseph M. Ritz, *Sancti Kümmernis und Volto Santo* (Düsseldorf, 1934), pp 127–34. ³² Bacci, 'Nicodemo e il Volto Santo', pp 25–6. ³³ The late eleventh-century document published by Guerra and Guidi, *Compendio*, p. 54, which witnessed the existence of both an 'old' and a 'new' cross in the church of San Martino, has been used as evidence for the substitution of an older cult-object with a new sculpted crucifix: see Gustav Schnürer, 'Sopra l'età e la provenienza del Volto Santo in Lucca', *Bollettino storico lucchese*, 1 (1929), 77–105; Geza de Francovich, 'Il Volto Santo di Lucca', *Bollettino storico lucchese*, 8 (1936), 3–29; A. Pedemonte, 'Ricerche sulla primitiva forma iconografica del Volto Santo', *Atti della R. Accademia lucchese di scienze, lettere ed arti*, n.s., 5 (1942), 119–44; Reiner Hausscherr, 'Das Imerwardkreuz und der Volto Santo-Typ', *Zeitschrift für Kunstwissenschaft*, 16 (1962), 129–70; Hansmartin Schwarzmaier, *Lucca und das Reich bis zum Ende des 11. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen, 1972), p. 353; Clara Baracchini and Antonino Caleca, *Il Duomo di Lucca* (Lucca, 1973), pp 14–15; Antonino Caleca, 'Il Volto Santo: un problema critico' in Baracchini and Filieri (eds), *Il Volto Santo: Storia e culto*, pp 59–69; Romano Silva, 'La datazione del Volto Santo di Lucca: un problema irrisolto' in the Municipality of Lucca (ed.), *La Santa Croce di Lucca*, pp 76–81; Valerio Ascani, 'Il Crocifisso tunicato di Rocca Soraggio e la diffusione dell'iconografia del Volto Santo di Lucca nella Toscana del Duecento' in Antonia D'Aniello (ed.), *Il Volto Santo di Rocca Soraggio: storia e restauro* (Lucca, 2009), pp 9–18. ³⁴ Hansmartin Schwarzmaier, *Movimenti religiosi e sociali a Lucca nel periodo tardo-longobardo e carolingio (contributo alla leggenda del Volto Santo)* (Lucca, 1973), pp 14–17 and 24; Frugoni, 'Una proposta', pp 16 and 19. ³⁵ Bacci, 'Nicodemo e il Volto Santo', pp 15–17; *idem*, "Ad ipsius Christi effigiem", pp 115–18.

By the end of the twelfth century, when the Leobinian legend was enriched with an appendix devoted to its most famous miracles, the role of the *Volto Santo* as an authentic portrait was further emphasized by alleging that Nicodemus had sculpted it by exactly reproducing the size, breadth and height of Christ's body as imprinted on his funerary shroud.³⁶ In my view, such a reference might be explained as a strategy to rationalize the conceptual hiatus between monumental cross and holy face implied by the *Volto Santo*, by connecting it with the only extant *acheiropoieton* displaying Christ's whole body: the latter was the holy shroud first described as being in the church of Blachernae at Constantinople by the Crusader Robert de Clari in 1204; it is possibly (yet not necessarily) identical with the *sindone* later worshipped in Liray, Chambéry and Turin. This Byzantine relic was publicly exhibited on Fridays and reproduced on liturgical textiles employed in Easter rituals.³⁷

According to Chiara Frugoni's view, it may well be that a kind of *acheiropoieton* or holy imprint on a textile was worshipped in Lucca before being substituted by a monumental crucifix;³⁸ yet, the specific context of the Saviour cult, in its close connection with the story of the injured icon of Beirut, makes this unlikely. In reproducing both the Saviour's appearance and height (as stated by the Leobinian legend), a monumental crucifix could efficaciously convey the idea of a true-to-life portrait that had suffered the same outrages and tortures inflicted on Christ better than any other kind of image. And in many respects it constituted a truthful, almost sacramental, replica of his body. Moreover, both Eastern and Western believers were accustomed to attribute to a cross-shaped object the role of documenting the real dimensions of the Saviour's body: such was the famous *crux mensuralis*, a tall golden cross that was worshipped in the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and was frequently indicated as a unit of measurement in the medieval West.³⁹

The idea of an original *Volto Santo* as distinct from the one presently worshipped in Lucca was born out of the stylistic reading proposed by such scholars as Geza de Francovich and others, who connected it with the art trends inaugurated by Benedetto Antelami and accordingly dated the crucifix to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century.⁴⁰ Subsequently, scholars have made many efforts to reconstruct the Lucchese prototype: in the 1990s, the radiocarbon dating

³⁶ *Relatio Leobini diaconi*, I, p. 128; *Miracula*, 6, Lucca, Biblioteca Statale, MS Tucci-Tognetti, fo. 12v.

³⁷ Irina Shalina, *Relikvii v vostochnochristianskoy ikonografii* (Moscow, 2005), pp. 113–32.

³⁸ Frugoni, 'Una proposta', pp. 26–32. ³⁹ G. Majeska, 'Notes on the Skeuophylakion of St Sophia', *Vizantijskiy Vremennik*, 55 (1998), 212–15. On the impact of the *crux mensuralis* on Western cult-phenomena, see M. Bacci, 'Vera croce, vero ritratto e vera misura: sugli archetipi bizantini dei culti cristologici del Medioevo occidentale' in Jannic Durand and Bernard Flusin (eds), *Byzance et les reliques du Christ* (Paris, 2004), pp. 223–38. ⁴⁰ See the essays cited in n. 34. For detailed analysis of Antelami's Deposition at Parma, see Parker, this volume.

of the wood of the *Volto Santo* in Borgo Sansepolcro to the eighth century seemed to offer an extraordinary solution, which was, however, viewed with much suspicion, given that formal solutions displayed by the image seemed more compatible with a twelfth-century dating.⁴¹ Most recently, it has been proposed that the Lucchese image presents affinities with German wooden sculptures of the last decades of the eleventh or the early twelfth century.⁴²

Be this as it may, it seems clear that the use of a wooden crucifix as a visual focus in the special worship of the Saviour in Lucca (first clearly implied by the term *vultus lignetus* employed by an author writing in c.1172),⁴³ was nothing more than the final outcome of a cultic process rooted in the Roman-oriented liturgical usages of the regular canons and in the celebration of an unconventional feast honouring an image instead of a holy person. More difficult to ascertain is whether the *Volto Santo*'s iconographical features must be explained against the same background. On the whole, they seem to rely on very archaic models, such as the outward appearance of the face, with its long bifurcate beard and hair falling down onto the shoulders, and the long-sleeved tunic, closed with a belt that is usually interpreted as hinting at the second coming of Christ according to Revelation 1:13, where the Son of Man is described as 'dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest'.⁴⁴ Did the *Volto Santo* contribute to the spread of such an iconography or did it simply adopt an already widespread type?

The second hypothesis seems to be the more likely one. Only a few of the crucifixes represented in a long-sleeved tunic can be clearly recognized as copies of the Lucchese archetype, such as the one in Bocca di Magra (itself connected with the cult of the blood shed by the Beirut image),⁴⁵ the cross in Rocca Soraggio (at some time worshipped in a church whose main feast fell on 9 November),⁴⁶ and

⁴¹ *Il Volto Santo di Sansepolcro: Un grande capolavoro medievale rivelato dal restauro*, ed. Anna Maria Maetzke (Cinisello Balsamo, 1994); Anna Maria Maetzke, 'Il Volto Santo di Sansepolcro' in Ferrari and Meyer (eds), *Il Volto Santo in Europa*, pp. 193–207. See especially the critical remarks by F. Gandolfo, 'Due questioni aretine', *Confronto*, 3:4 (2004), 100–23. ⁴² Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, 'Rosano e i crocifissi viventi della riforma: dal "Volto Santo" di Lucca a Batlló', *OPD restauro*, 20 (2008), 139–70. ⁴³ Rorgo Fretellus de Nazareth, *Descriptio de locis sanctis* [1172], 74, ed. Petrus Cornelis Boeren, *Rorgo Fretellus de Nazareth et sa description de la Terre Sainte: histoire et édition du texte* (Amsterdam, 1980), p. 42. ⁴⁴ Hausherr, 'Das Imervardkreuz', pp. 156–8. See also Herbert Kurz, *Der Volto Santo von Lucca: Ikonographie und Funktion des Kruzifixus in der gegürteten Tunika im 11. Jahrhundert* (Regensburg, 1997); Francesca Pertusi Pucci, 'I crocifissi tunicati di Force e di Amandola nell'ascolano: Osservazioni e ipotesi', *Rivista dell'Istituto nazionale di archeologia e storia dell'arte*, ser. III, 8–9 (1985–6), 365–98; idem, 'I crocifissi lignei in abito regale e sacerdotale: Ipotesi sulla origine e diffusione di un culto' in Rossetti (ed.), *Santa Croce e Santo Volto*, pp. 87–118.

⁴⁵ Agostino Pertusi and Francesca Pertusi Pucci, 'Il crocifisso ligneo del Monastero di Santa Croce e Nicodemo di Bocca di Magra', *Rivista dell'Istituto nazionale d'archeologia e storia dell'arte*, s. III, 2 (1979), 31–51; Fulvio Cervini, 'Volto Santi in Liguria e in Lombardia' in Ferrari and Meyer (eds), *Il Volto Santo in Europa*, pp. 41–66 at pp. 41–4. ⁴⁶ Stefano Martinelli, 'Il Volto Santo di Rocca Soraggio: un inedito crocifisso ligneo medievale nell'Alta Garfagnana' in D'Aniello (ed.), *Il Volto*

other crucifixes preserved in Tuscany.⁴⁷ Other examples, such as the Sondalo crucifix with its distinctive chiton-like tunic, or even the famous crucifix of Imerward in Brunswick Cathedral, which was described by Erwin Panofsky and Reinhold Hausherr as closely connected to the *Volto Santo* on stylistic and compositional grounds, can hardly be considered to replicate directly the Lucchese archetype, given that no evidence is available concerning their relationship to the cultic phenomena and liturgical practices connected to the latter.⁴⁸ Moreover, the hypothesis about the early worship of a direct copy of the Holy Cross of Lucca in Bury St Edmunds, England, as proposed by Diana Webb, is only conjectural.⁴⁹

In Ireland, where the Beirut legend was well known and the long-sleeved tunic had often been employed in the representation of the crucifixion, the worship of a monumental crucifix of this type seems to have developed in the twelfth century, before the Anglo-Norman conquest in 1171.⁵⁰ According to Gerald of Wales (d. 1223), there was in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, 'a most miraculous cross, displaying the crucified Jesus' face' (*crux quaedam virtuosissima, vultus praeferens crucifixi*).⁵¹ As in a number of like stories, it was considered to be especially efficacious in protecting economic transactions. The miniature accompanying the text in the London manuscript of the *Topographia Hibernica* (pl. 26) represents it as a monumental crucifix with long-sleeved tunic; its wide folds and the lack of a prominent belt seem to rule out any direct hint at the Lucca *Volto Santo*.⁵²

In the same way, specific reproductions of the Lucchese cult-phenomenon are completely unknown in twelfth-century Catalunya, where a large number of crucifixes with long-sleeved tunic (locally known as *majestats*) were carved.⁵³ On the contrary, the *Passio imaginis* feast was well rooted in that area and associated with the liturgical life of the regular canons, whose connections with Rome, as for instance in Santa Maria in Besalú, have been frequently pointed out. In at least

Santo di Rocca Soraggio, pp 19–54. 47 Clara Baracchini and Maria Teresa Filieri, 'L'immagine del *Volto Santo* nell'arte sacra' in Baracchini and Filieri (eds), *Il Volto Santo: Storia e culto*, pp 95–100.

48 Erwin Panofsky, 'Das Braunschweiger Domkruzifix und das "Volto Santo" zu Lucca' in *Festschrift für Adolf Goldschmidt* (Leipzig, 1923), pp 37–44; Hausherr, 'Das Imerwardkreuz'. On the representations of the *Volto Santo* in manuscripts, see Jean-Claude Schmitt, 'Les images d'une image: La figuration du *Volto Santo* de Lucca dans les manuscrits enluminés du Moyen Âge' in Herbert L. Kessler and Gerhard Wolf (eds), *The Holy Face and the paradox of representation* (Bologna, 1998), pp 205–27. 49 Diana Webb, 'The Holy Face of Lucca', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 9 (1986), 227–37. See also Audrey Scanlan-Teller, 'The *Volto Santo* in the British Isles' in Ferrari and Meyer (eds), *Il Volto Santo in Europa*, pp 499–525.

50 Mullins discusses the *Passio imaginis* in an Irish context in her essay in this volume; for further discussion of Gerald of Wales' account of the Christ Church crucifix, see Ní Ghrádaigh, this volume. 51 Gerald of Wales, *Topographia hibernica*, ii, 44–6, ed. James F. Dimock (London, 1867), pp 128–9. 52 London, BL, MS Royal 13 B VIII, fo. 23v. 53 Manuel Trens, *Les majestats catalanes* (Barcelona, 1966); R. Bastardes, *Las talles romàniques del Sant Crist a Catalunya* (Barcelona, 1978); Jordi Camps, 'L'escultura en fusta' in Manuel Castiñeiras and Jordi Camps (eds), *El Romànic a les col·leccions del MNAC* (Barcelona, 2008), pp 136–63 at pp 145–50. For further discussion of the *majestat* iconography, see Camps, this volume.

one case, that of the *majestat* in Beget, we know that even in the present day its feast is solemnly celebrated on 9 November. Such circumstances even led Marcel Durliat to suggest that all *majestats* were indeed visual interpretations of the legendary Beirut icon and were originally connected with altars dedicated to the *Passio imaginis*.⁵⁴

Yet, even this latter hypothesis risks being misleading. The main difficulty in establishing a direct connection between the '*Volto Santo*'/'*Majestat*' types and the Beirut image lies in the fact that the few extant representations explicitly hinting at it simply display it as a standard crucifix with perizonium. Such characteristics are shown by a fifteenth-century wooden statue in Valencia Cathedral, which at least in the eighteenth century was reputed to be the original Beirut image,⁵⁵ and by the earlier and later narrative cycles, such as the miniature in the twelfth-century Stuttgart Passional,⁵⁶ the Berardenga Antependium (dating from 1215; pl. 16),⁵⁷ a French miniature of the fourteenth century,⁵⁸ and the late fifteenth-century carved retablo in Felanitx, Mallorca.⁵⁹ It seems clear that such images basically aimed at representing the profaned object in the most standard and conventional way; therefore, it proves more useful to postulate that the cult of the *majestats* and the *Volto Santo* echoed some traits of the legendary Beirut image and that the latter's widespread renown, made possible by its liturgical commemoration, corroborated the idea of an archetypal crucifix, whose generic appearance was occasionally manifested by adopting old-fashioned features taken after eastern Mediterranean models.

One such feature was represented by facial hair, with its distinctive bifurcate shape.⁶⁰ By the eleventh century, the representation of Christ as a long-bearded and long-haired man was not especially popular in the West, where a clean-shaven face was still often preferred. According to Isidore of Seville and other authors, a beard and all other superfluous down had to be avoided, as they manifested male viciousness.⁶¹ Yet, replicas of the *acheiropoietic* portraits of Christ contradicted this

54 Marcel Durliat, *Christs romans: Roussillon, Cerdagne* (Perpignan, 1956), pp 33–4; idem, 'La signification des Majestés catalanes', *Cahiers archéologiques*, 37 (1989), 69–95. On the *Passio imaginis* in Catalunya, see also Josep Gudiol i Cunill, *Nocions de arqueologia sagrada catalana* (Vic, 1902), pp 318–19; Juan B. Ferreres, *Historia del misal romano* (Barcelona, 1929), pp 131 and 310–12.

55 Carlos Espí Forcén, *Recrucificando a Cristo: Los judíos de la Passio imaginis en la isla de Mallorca* (Mallorca, 2009), pp 57–60; Luís Arciniega García, 'La *Passio imaginis* y la adaptiva militancia apologética de las imágenes en la Edad Media y moderna a través del caso valenciano', *Ars Longa*, 21 (2012), 7–94. 56 Albert Boeckler, *Das Stuttgarter Passionale* (Augsburg, 1923), p. 22; Heinz Schreckenberg, *The Jews in Christian art: an illustrated history* (New York, 1996), p. 259.

57 Michele Bacci, 'The Berardenga Antependium and the *Passio Ymaginis* Office', *JWCI*, 61 (1998), 1–16; Raffaele Argenziano, *Alle origini dell'iconografia sacra a Siena* (Florence, 2000), pp 147–70.

58 Schreckenberg, *The Jews*, p. 260. 59 Carlos Espí Forcén, 'Jews desecrating a crucifix: a "*Passio imaginis*" altarpiece from Mallorca', *Iconographica*, 8 (2009), 83–97; idem, *Recrucificando a Cristo*, pp 63–82. 60 Pertusi Pucci, 'I crocifissi lignei in abito regale e sacerdotale', p. 100. 61 See especially Robert Burchard and Constantijn Huygens, 'Introduction' in *Apologiae duae. Gozechini*

view by showing the Saviour with a long, bifurcate beard and flowing hair: such a detail, which is constantly repeated in the copies of the Edessa Mandylion, was also appropriated, from the thirteenth century onwards, by devotional replicas of the Roman Veronica.⁶² They both relied on physiognomic types that had been established in the Syro-Palestinian area in the proto-Byzantine period and aimed originally at characterizing Christ as a Nazorean – that is, a man consecrated to God according to the Book of Numbers (chapter 6), whose hair and beard should have never been touched by any razor.⁶³ Latin translations of Byzantine literary portraits of the holy personages happened to stress again such a connection: in the *Letter of Lentulus*, possibly dating from the thirteenth century but relying on much earlier texts, it was clearly stated that Christ had long hair and bifurcate beard according to the standard Nazorean look.⁶⁴

The long-sleeved tunic was another means to attribute a deliberately archaic appearance to the image of the Saviour.⁶⁵ By the eleventh century, this feature, without the knotted belt, was relatively widespread in the arts of northern Europe: it was commonplace in Ottonian book illumination, as is revealed by the famous miniatures in the Uta Codex and the Gospels of Henry II, and had been preceded by a number of earlier representations, many of them being detectable in Insular and more specifically Irish art, such as the Durham Gospels, the Athlone Plaque and the incised stone on the Isle of Man.⁶⁶ The occurrence of such solutions on small metalwork objects, such as some pectoral crosses from tenth-century Scandinavia,⁶⁷ may hint at compositional and morphological connections with Byzantine and Near Eastern *encolpia*, which were frequently embellished by

epistola ad Walcherum: Burchardi, ut videtur, abbas Bellevalis Apologia de barbis (Turnhout, 1985), pp 47–150. ⁶² Gerhard Wolf, 'From Mandylion to Veronica: picturing the "disembodied" face and disseminating the true image of Christ in the Latin West' in Wolf and Kessler (eds), *The Holy Face*, pp 153–79. ⁶³ Michele Bacci, 'L'invenzione della memoria del volto di Cristo: osservazioni sulle interazioni fra iconografia e letteratura prosopografica prima e dopo l'Iconoclastia' in Arturo Carlo Quintavalle (ed.), *Medioevo: immagine e memoria* (Milan, 2009), pp 93–108. ⁶⁴ *Epistola Lentuli*, ed. Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, p. 319**. See also Cora Elizabeth Lütz, 'The letter of Lentulus describing Christ', *Yale University Library Gazette*, 50 (1975), 91–7. ⁶⁵ On the so-called *tunica manicata* and its variants, see especially Trens, *Majestats*, pp 26–8; Klaus Wessel, 'Die Entstehung des Crucifixus', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 53 (1960), 95–111; Hausherr, 'Das Imervardkreuz'; Ernst Hagemann, 'Zur Ikonographie des gekreuzigten Christus in der gegürteten Tunika', *Niederdeutsche Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte*, 13 (1974), 97–122; M. Armandi, 'Regnavit a ligno Deus: Il crocifisso tunicato di proporzioni monumentali' in Maetzke (ed.), *Il Volto Santo di Sansepolcro*, pp 124–35; Elizabeth Coatsworth, 'The "robed Christ" in pre-Conquest sculptures of the crucifixion', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 29 (2001), 153–76; Lawrence Nees, 'On the image of Christ crucified in early medieval art' in Ferrari and Meyer (eds), *Il Volto Santo in Europa*, pp 345–85. See also Camps, this volume. ⁶⁶ See the bibliographic survey by Nees, 'On the image', pp 349–51. Detailed discussion of the depiction of Christ in these and related Insular works is offered by Ní Ghrádaigh and Murray, this volume. ⁶⁷ For a notable example unearthed in Novgorod, see V.Ya. Petrukhin and T.A. Pushkina, 'Novye dannye o protsesse khristianizatsii Drevnerusskovo gosudarstva' in Leonid Belyaev (ed.), *Archaeologia abrahamica: Issledovaniya v oblasti archeologii i khudozhestvennoy traditsii Iudaizma, khristianstva i Islama* (Moscow, 2009), pp 157–68 at pp 163–4 and fig. 9.



11.1 Marble altar screen from the church of Tsekbelda, seventh–eighth century. Tbilisi, Shalwa Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts (photograph by the author).

incised images of the crucified with long garments rendered in a linearly simplified way. The clothing solution displayed by such objects as a small reliquary cross from the eleventh century in a private collection in Germany,⁶⁸ for example, could be easily misunderstood as a long-sleeved tunic, even if its closest model was probably the sleeveless *kolobion* widespread in proto-Byzantine iconography, especially in the Syro-Palestinian area (notable examples are the miniature of the crucifixion in the Rabbula Gospels, the crucifixion icon on Mount Sinai, and the early eighth-century mural painting in Santa Maria Antiqua in Byzantine-ruled Rome).⁶⁹

Pectoral crosses undoubtedly played a role in disseminating such an iconography and one can wonder, with Reinhold Hausherr, if the long-sleeved tunic was anything more than a Western misunderstanding of the Byzantine *kolobion*. Yet, the latter is sometimes rendered in a peculiar way, with portions of the garment extended over Christ's arms, as in a cross in the Benaki Museum in Athens,⁷⁰ or looking much like an authentic long-sleeved robe, as in a sixth-century gold pendant in the British Museum in London,⁷¹ another pectoral cross in the

⁶⁸ *Rom und Byzanz: Archäologische Kostbarkeiten aus Bayern*, ed. Ludwig Wamser and Gisela Zahlhaas (Munich, 1998), p. 201, no. 291. ⁶⁹ Nees, 'On the image', pp 346–9. ⁷⁰ *Byzantium, 330–1453*, ed. Robin Cormack and Maria Vassilaki (London, 2008), p. 429, no. 197. ⁷¹ Wessel,



11.2 Crucifixion, detail of the stone pillar from Satskhenisi, sixth century. Tbilisi, Shalwa Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts (image after Machabeli, *Early medieval Georgian stone crosses*, 2008).

Byzantine Museum in Athens,⁷² and, even more clearly, in a sixth-century Egyptian *encolpion* now in the Dumbarton Oaks collection in Washington.⁷³ Some hitherto neglected artworks point out that such variants were by no means unknown in the arts of the Eastern Christians.

A marble altar screen dating from the seventh or eighth century from the Georgian church of Tskelda, now in the Shalwa Amiranashvili Museum of Fine

⁷² 'Die Entstehung', fig. 5. ⁷³ Inv. no. T234; see Brigitte Pitarakis, *Les croix-reliquaires pectorales byzantines en bronze* (Paris, 2006), p. 57 and fig. 35. ⁷⁴ *Byzantium, 330–1453*, p. 411, no. 129.



11.3 Crucifixion, detail of a Syrian silver bowl, ninth–tenth century. Ushguli (Zemo Svaneti), Chazhashi tower-museum (photograph by the author).

Arts in Tbilisi, shows Christ clad in a tunic that covers at least his shoulders, as it is possible to recognize even in its present precarious state (fig. 11.1).⁷⁴ In the same museum, the sixth-century stone pillar from Satskhenisi

⁷⁴ Shalwa Amiranashvili, *Monumentalnaya skulptura Gruzii: Figurnye releyf V–XI vekov* (Moscow, 1977), p. 61 and fig. 61.

(fig. 11.2) is carved with Gospel scenes including a crucifixion with Christ accompanied by the two thieves: whereas the latter are shown naked, Jesus is clearly wearing a long tunic, with a large band – looking much like a priestly *homophorion* – starting at each side of the neck and crossing the middle of his body. A narrow transversal strip, being still visible to the left on the lower portion of the body, can be viewed as a remnant of a now vanished belt.⁷⁵

An enigmatic silver bowl (fig. 11.3) preserved in the village of Ushguli in the remote region of Upper Svaneti displays still another version of the robed Christ: in the crucifixion scene, the tunic is rendered in a strongly geometrical way, with flowing hems on the back and one uninterrupted band hanging, like a necklace, over the chest. Such an unusual solution may be interpreted as the outcome of a late artist's misunderstanding of an already old-fashioned formula: even if this controversial item (displaying a combination of Gospel scenes and figures of holy horsemen) has been described as a sixth-century Georgian work,⁷⁶ such details as the use of niello, the Arabic inscription in the Nativity scene and the fully developed iconography of the equestrian saints make much more plausible that it was executed in Syria some time in the ninth or tenth century. The use of archaizing models is hinted at all the more by the representation of the adult Christ within a hexagonal font in the baptism scene (here represented twice), according to a solution rooted in Syriac artistic tradition.⁷⁷

The presence of Syrian metalwork in such a remote location as Ushguli is a self-evident witness to the strong connections between Georgia and the Christian communities of the Syro-Palestinian area. That the theme of the long-sleeved tunic variously embellished with strips and bands originated in Syria and was disseminated from there is confirmed by its use in a ninth- or tenth-century paten now preserved in the Hermitage (fig. 11.4). Though found in the region of Perm, in the Urals, it is made of a silver alloy that can be connected with the area of Semireche, in present-day Kyrgyzstan, where Nestorian communities were active in the Middle Ages. As such, it displays what can be considered to be a specifically Syrian iconography, representing Christ in the facial type with short beard and curling hair that was connected with the Syro-Palestinian area. He and the two thieves are clad in a long-sleeved garment, with a band crossing over their chest. Such a scheme probably proved to be instrumental in conveying the Nestorian concept of Christ as both 'impassible and passible', suffering in the flesh yet being

⁷⁵ Kitty Machabeli, *Early medieval Georgian stone crosses* (Tbilisi, 2008), p. 122 and pl. 34.

⁷⁶ Nina Iamanidze, 'Art and identity of eighth-century Georgia: the case of sculpture' in Valentino Pace (ed.), *L'VIII secolo: un secolo inquieto* (Udine, 2010), pp 228–31, esp. p. 230. A later date in the seventh or eighth century was proposed by Giorgi N. Chubinashvili, 'Siriyskaya chasha v Ushgule', *Vestnik muzeya Gruzii*, 11:2 (1941), 1–19 [repr. in idem, *Voprosy istorii iskusstva* (Tbilisi, 2002), pp 128–31]. ⁷⁷ N. Iamanidze, 'Rite et aménagements baptismaux à l'époque paléochrétienne: le témoignage des sources archéologiques géorgiennes', *Zograf*, 32 (2008), 13–22, esp. 16.



11.4 The silver paten of Semireche, ninth-tenth century. Saint Petersburg, Hermitage (photograph by the author).

beyond suffering in the nature of his Godhead; anyway, its general meaning was not bound to any specific theological tradition and could work equally well as a visual tool to hint at Christ's 'body of Resurrection' as prefigured by his sacramental body.⁷⁸

At the same time, the iconographic formula of the Crucified wearing a long tunic found its way also to Western Europe, and a carved stone from pre-Conquest England – found in Thornton Steward, Yorkshire⁷⁹ – indicates that even the variant with crossing bands was occasionally employed. The inclusion of a belt instead of crossing bands eventually succeeded in conveying analogous messages,

⁷⁸ Vladislav P. Darkevich and B.I. Marshak, 'O tak nazyvaemom siriyskom blyude iz Permskoy oblasti', *Sovetskaya arkheologiya*, 2 (1974), 213–22; Boris I. Marshak, *Silberschatze des Orients* (Leipzig, 1986), pp 320–4; Grigori L. Semënov, *Studien zur sogdischen Kultur an der Seidenstrasse* (Wiesbaden: 1996), pp 66–7; *Khristiane na vostoke. Iskusstvo melkitov i inoslavnykh khristian* (Saint Petersburg, 1998), pp 194–5, nn 261–2; Wassilios Klein, *Das nestorianische Christentum an den Handelswegen durch Kirgizstan bis zum 14. Jahrhundert* (Turnhout, 2000), pp 107–8. ⁷⁹ Coatsworth, 'The "robed Christ"', pp 169–70 and pl. IIIc.

and in associating it more strictly with the Apocalyptic prophecy; incidentally, in some pilgrims' tokens from the fourteenth century and a fifteenth-century miniature reproducing the *Volto Santo*, the belted *tunica* seems to be combined with overlapping bands.⁸⁰ In general terms, the use of the *tunica manicata* and its many variants in connection with crucifixes that displayed Christ in both his historical and parousiac dimension aimed at providing a consistent number of worshipped images with a specifically 'exotic' and old-fashioned appearance, connected with Eastern Christian or even Islamic art. 'Otherness' was eventually emphasized by such means as the use of a definitely 'Oriental' ornamental repertory, like the roundels in the Batlló Majestat, which have been recently connected with decorations used in the Islamic lands of Central Asia.⁸¹ The widespread liturgical worship of the *Passio imaginis* disseminated from Rome throughout Europe may have encouraged believers to associate it with concrete images and to use the latter as visual foci during the celebrations. In such a context, a deliberately archaizing appearance, such as that displayed by the Lucca *Volto Santo*, the crucifix of Imerward, the Dublin cross and the Catalan majestats, would have been perceived as both a specific way to evoke the legendary Syriac icon of Christ stabbed in Beirut, and a more conventional tool to convey the alleged portrait-like authenticity and miraculousness of an old image of the crucified Saviour.

Yet, in the specific case of the *Volto Santo*, there is one more detail which deserves to be emphasized in this respect: not unlike many of the oldest monumental crosses of Ireland (of the Clonmacnoise and Ossory groups), it makes use of a peculiar type of cross, which appears to be intersected by a circled crossing, or ring. Such a solution was peculiar enough to be reproduced and emphasized in the first official image of the famous cult-object in the illuminated manuscript made for the local confraternity of the *Volto Santo* in the early fourteenth century,⁸² and was constantly included in almost all of the representations of its miracles during the late Middle Ages.⁸³ Probably this element contributed to enhance the perception of the Holy Face of Lucca as an old-fashioned and exotic artefact, as was so frequently (and often irreverently) pointed out by many authors in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁸⁴ By then, nobody would have been able to understand its meaning, which was rooted in the

iconographic conventions of early Christianity.⁸⁵ With its circular shape, looking like the wreaths of victory widespread in early Christian iconography, it was instrumental in evoking Christ's triumph over death: its occurrence in a number of Coptic and Syriac artworks of the sixth/seventh century (as well as in later examples from Nubia) makes plausible the suggestion that it originated in the Near East, and more specifically in the visual manifestations of the cross-worship that were worked out in its major cult-centre, Mount Golgotha in the holy city of Jerusalem.

80 *Il Volto di Cristo*, pp 273–5, entries nn VI.8, VI.10, VI.11. 81 Eva Baer, 'The Majestat Batlló: a wooden crucifix in Eastern style' in Martina Müller-Wiener, with Christiane Kothe, Karl-Heinz Golzio and Joachim Gierlichs (eds), *Al-Andalus und Europa zwischen Orient und Okzident* (Petersburg, 2004), pp 183–8. 82 Lucca, Archivio arcivescovile, MS Tucci-Tognetti, fo. 2r. *Il volto di Cristo*, p. 272, entry no. VI.5. 83 Schmitt, 'Les images d'une image', pp 218–20. See also M. Seidel and R. Silva, *Potere delle immagini, immagini del potere. Lucca città imperiale: iconografia politica* (Venice, 2007), pp 91–130, 251–66. 84 Matthew G. Shoaf, 'Image, envy, power: art and communal life in the age of Giotto' (PhD, University of Chicago, 2003), pp 53–99.

85 Martin Werner, 'On the origin of the form of the Irish high cross', *Gesta*, 29 (1990), 98–110.