COLOUR AND CONTEXT: RECONSTRUCTING THE POLYCHROMY
OF THE STUCCO SAINTS
IN THE TEMPIETTO LONGOBARDO AT CIVIDALE

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The church of Santa Maria in Valle, better known as the Tempietto Longobardo, at Cividale del Friuli (Udine) was built and decorated around the mid-8th century. Situated in the local seat of the gastaldus, it was a royal Longobard foundation functioning as a cappella palatina. The commissioners – referred to in the dedicatory inscription as ‘pies auctores’ – were probably Astulf and Giseltrude (749-756) or Desiderius and Adelchis (756-774). The small oratory (ca 10 x 6.25 m int.) consists of a presbytery covered by three barrel vaults and a square aula covered by a groin vault. The interior is lavishly decorated: the clear surfaces are corrupted over time, and a degradation process takes place in contact with the humidity of the air which causes pigments to disappear. Evidence from various sites proves that monuments once brightly painted can be totally colourless now. For instance, it is generally acknowledged that Greek sculpture, both freestanding and architectural, was polychrome; this includes the Parthenon marbles. But like the Greek sculpture, both freestanding and architectural, was polychrome; this includes the Parthenon marbles. But like the female saints were retouched and the ornaments of their dresses redone (‘a tutte le statue vennero rimessi gli ornamenti deperiti nelle vesti’). The extent of these stucco restorations is uncertain, but it cannot be ruled out that due to changing aesthetic ideals, whatever remained of colour may have been removed or covered deliberately. In fact much of the present surfaces were at some point in time coated with a chalk layer (‘una velatura moderna a calce’). In the 1990s Paolo Casadio et alii examined the stuccoes; although they did not search for or discover remains of polychromy, they concluded unequivocally that the stuccoes must originally have been painted. Actually, there are several indirect indications in support of colour.

**Reasons for polychromy**

Stucco is used mainly for architectural sculpture and ornamentation. At times it substitutes marble as it is cheaper and easier to work. Unfortunately it totally lacks the beauty and shine of marble. Since a fine and valuable material like marble was normally painted, it would indeed be surprising if stucco was
left raw. With its dull and lifeless surface, it required some kind of surface treatment. Both ancient and medieval stuccoes from both East and West, including other Longobard sites such as Brescia, show remain of colour and sometimes of gilt. Similarly written sources mention the polychromy of stuccoes: thus Hrabanus Maurus explains that ‘the plastic art is the decorating of walls with images and signs in gypsum painted in colours’ («plastice est parietum ex gypso effigies signaque exprimere, pingereque coloribus», De universo XXI, 8).

In the Tempietto, ornaments in elegant open-work stucco frame lunettes and windows, while bands of stucco rosettes border the saintly figures. In the centre of some rosettes are still fragments of inlay in green glass proving that the plastic decoration was not intended to be monochrome. As for the female figures a detail such as pierced earlobes for separately attached earrings shows that colouristic accents were part of their design.

The incised surface of the garments with detailed pattern and ornament is difficult to make out from a distance without colour. It seems likely that these incised lines, as in Archaic Greek sculpture, served to demarcate coloured areas and to guide the painter. Placed high above the floor, flowers, tendrils and lightly incised patterns are barely visible without colour. Similarly, not being highlighted in colour, it is difficult to make out the individual elements of the garments – three, four, even five clothe items are worn on top of each other.

Colours are intelligible visible formulae with a communicative value. The variously coloured borders, ornaments, belts and jewellery are signifiers of social status. Foremost is the relationship between colour and holiness: colours animate a figure. In hagiographical iconography crosses and crowns are essential in order to identify the persons as saints. The figures are more convincing representations of holy women when important insignia, haloes and garments of symbolic value are defined by means of colour as in painting and mosaic. Without colour the images appear rather ghost-like.

Thus material, technical, aesthetic, semantic and symbolic considerations all speak in favour of polychromy. Conventions also play a part, thus in mediaeval sculpture, whether in stone,
METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the reconstruction of the Tempietto’s hypothetical polychromy the main problem is that visible evidence of paint is lacking. Therefore the reconstruction by necessity will be by analogy, that is the colours to be suggested for garments and insignia must be based on textile remains, literary descriptions and representations in various media such as wall and floor mosaics, paintings and illuminated manuscripts. As for representations in artistic media, certain techniques to some extent distort the colours represented. Being set mainly in natural stone, the hues of floor mosaics are limited and they seldom have strong colours such as, for instance, ultramarine or bright orange. As a consequence it can be surmised that the colour of clothes represented in floors are generally paler and less intense than real garments, i.e., a vermillion set with natural stones tends to be closer to terracotta and a purple to have a brownish tint. This must be taken into account when referring to pavements in the discussion. In the glass mosaics of walls and vaults colours were far less restricted. Here we have recourse to a large number of visual sources from Rome, Ravenna and elsewhere. The wall paintings in the
Tempietto itself provide an important clue to possible colours used. Another methodological problem is the issue of real clothes versus representations of clothes. An important instance is the Theodora panel in San Vitale, Ravenna where the empress and her court present a varied imagery of 6th-century fashions [3], [19]. Recently Liz James and Shaun Tougher propose that the representation in San Vitale need not reflect real clothes actually worn at the court. This is not convincing. Although artists were restricted by pictorial conventions, and one must allow for some artistic licence, there would be no point in illustrating court fashions which were not in fashion. With a thriving silk industry in the East and a Byzantine love of pokilia, court attire would undoubtedly have been rich, varied and colourful. [21]

A significant point is that the artists did not simply invent clothes at their own fancy. Each item had its intrinsic meaning and there were regulations as to which colours and which fabrics could be worn and by whom. [21] Clothes and jewellery are important signifiers and markers of status. It is hardly a coincidence that the San Vitale mosaic depicts Empress Theodora’s gold earrings as enhanced with emerald, pearl and sapphire. Precisely these stones were reserved for imperial use (Cod. Iust. XI.11). Just as the empress is dressed in a purple clamyx, reflecting her actual appearance (and the artist could not possibly have dressed her in, for instance, light blue), the escorting women must likewise be assumed to illustrate fashions appropriate for their rank and position at the court. It is worthwhile to record the colours and patterns of these female garments. On Theodora’s left (our right) are seven women, the five in the front displaying colourful dresses: the first wears a dalmatica (over-tunic) in a patterned two-tone purple weave, on top of which is a palla (large shawl) in white and grey (silver); the dalmatica of the second displays blue birds on a silver ground, the palla has red flowers on yellow (gold); the third woman wears what looks like shot silk in silver with greenish-blue floral decoration; while the fourth is dressed in a green dalmatica decorated with red birds, and with a dark orange (vermillion) palla; finally the partly concealed woman at the outmost right wears a white dalmatica and a yellowish palla. If some should suspect that these colours were chosen at random, it pertainst o note the dominant hues of the attires: purple + silver, silver + gold, silver + white, green + red, white + yellow/gold. Since purple, silver and gold are higher values than white, green and red, it is obvious that the women are depicted in diminishing scale of importance in accordance with their intimacy to the empress. Similarly, the faces of the first two women are more individualized than those of the rest.

The third woman is singled out by her elaborate Juwelkranz with pendant blue sapphires. She displays an elaborate border at the hem of her dress: a reticulate pattern of white and yellow on dark purplish ground and with a red ‘bud’ in the centre of each grid. The reticulate pattern is one of the most common in extant textiles, for instance a related design in white on red is preserved in an 8th-century Coptic silk fragment in the Benaki Museum, Athens and on many Coptic fragments at Ravenna. [23] Should one still doubt the documentary value of the mosaic, a detail can be noted. The lady next to the empress is dressed in a purple dalmatica with clavi (vertical bands down the front and back). The clavi are lined with a border of consecutive ‘triangles’. The latter detail is not a whim from the artist’s side; the triangles are probably weft twining or fausses tresses, which reinforce the weave on the weak points, such as both sides of the tapestry clavi. [24] Similarly, details of dress, insignia and weapons in the Justinian panel appear strictly realistic. Accordingly there is no reason to doubt that multicoloured clothes like the ones depicted in the Ravenna mosaic were, or could potentially be, worn by ladies at the Byzantine court. For the reconstruction of the polychromy in the Tempietto, comparative material serves as an index of the colours used in representations and in preserved textiles. While as far as possible near contemporary parallels will be sought, the comparative material adduced covers the period from ca. 400 to ca. 800. Although a dress item from the 8th century was not made precisely like one from the 5th, fashions did not change as rapidly as today and garments remained quite consistent in design over several centuries. Most important, the clothes worn by the holy women in the Tempietto are hieratic and therefore bound to adhere to a conservative rather than to an avant-garde dress code. Besides the choice of various colours another problem consists in evaluating their intensity and style. Were colours – and gilding – used mainly to accentuate details such as insignia and decorated borders, or were the figures coloured all over, leaving only skin parts bare? Was paint applied in a thin wash or were the stucco figures brightly coloured? Such questions can only be approximated by analogy. While modern taste tends to prefer a delicate look, from the appearance of remains of polychromy on medieval sculpture, I rather suspect that the Tempietto saints could have been brightly polychrome. [25]

RECONSTRUCTING THE POLYCHROMY OF THE SAINTS

In the hypothetical reconstructions discussed here I present various solutions based on the visual evidence of late antique/early medieval representations. In particular I take as a guiding line the colours in the 8th-century paintings in the Tempietto. Samples taken from the Christ lunette [4] below the stucco women are established as yellow ochre, red ochre, terra verde, chalk white and ‘false blue’ (a colour without blue pigments which appears bluish to the eye). [26] With these pigments other hues could be obtained through mixing: dark purple, reddish purple, blue, golden yellow and shades of white [5]. The style of the paintings leaves little doubt that they were made by Byzantine artists or by artists trained in the Byzantine tradition. It is not inconceivable that artists who fled from Constantinople in the Iconoclastic period may have come to work for the Longobard court. [27] The walls of the ambulatory are laid out in accordance with a Byzantine modular system of proportions with sculpted and painted zones of equal height. As can be deduced from the fact that some wall-painting at places overlaps the stucco, the stuccoes must have been applied to the wall before the wall-paintings were executed. [28] Because of the integrated layout, it is reasonable to assume a common workshop responsible for the entire decoration and consequently that the artists who made the frescoes were also assigned to painting the stuccoes. Accordingly the pigments used for the frescoes may likewise have been employed for the figures and reliefs in stucco. This implies that some of the colour preferences and combinations of the wall-paintings are likely to have been reflected in the polychromy of the plastic figures.

The stucco figures presumably stood out against a coloured ground. Blue is used for the background in the Tempietto paintings, and is the colour most frequently encountered in late antique and early medieval painting, mosaic (either blue or gold), and polychrome relief; tellingly it is established for the 8th-century Altar of Ratchis at Cividale, further one can refer, e.g., to the dedication page of the Vienna Dioscurides and the ceiling paintings from the Palace at Trier. [29] Therefore blue is the most likely background colour.

Since the Tempietto was a cappella palatina decorated by Byzantine or Italo-Byzantine artists, and since the female saints are dressed like aristocratic or imperial women, it will be
assumed that the aesthetic expressed in the polychromy was an aulic aesthetic in keeping with the Byzantine tradition. It is further assumed that since the female figures flank a window, symbol of Christus Lux, their appearance reflected ideas of light and hence hues associated with light and brilliance, such as yellow, red and purple. Thus the internal criteria to be used as a guiding line in the reconstruction of polychromy are respectively material: the colours of the Tempietto frescoes, ideological: the Longobards' staging of a cappella palatina according to Byzantine court aesthetics, and, most importantly, religious: the association of the saints with the symbolic apparition of the Divine light emerging from the window between them [6].

The identity of the female saints has not been established, so the stuccoes will be referred to by letters from A through F (from left to right). Since the figures to some extent form pairs: C and D (the figures flanking the central window) are mirrored images, A and F (closest to the walls) are dressed alike, as are B and E, they will be presented according to the typology of their garments.

Saints C and D: palla

C and D stand on either side of the window which they are turned towards in three-quarter profile acclaiming. Their attire consists of a palla (maphorion) that covers the head and falls to well below the middle of the body; under this they wear a dalmatica (tunica). Under that again they have an under-tunic, the tight sleeves of which are visible at the wrists. Without colour it is difficult to distinguish the three pieces of the attire [7]. That C and D are not to be imagined in versicoloured patterned dresses can be deduced from the fact that except for the sleeve band of the inner tunic and a shallow wavy hemline of the dalmatica, their garments have no incised decoration.

Dark purple palla over dark purple dalmatica is by far the most common combination: the personifications of Ecclesia ex circumcisione and Ecclesia ex gentibus in Santa Sabina, Rome, ca 430, the Virgin enthroned and the donor Turtura in the Commodilla catacomb, 528-530 [8], the Virgin in the Basilica of Euphrasius at Parenzo, ca 550, the Virgin in the Rabhula Gospels, Ascension scene, 586, the Virgin next to Saint Theodore in a 7th century mosaic at Saint Demetrios, Thessaloniki,
and the Virgin in the Crucifixion scene in the Chapel of Theodotus, Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome, 741-753. In these images *dalmatica* and *palla* share a single colour in comparatively dark purple. A dark red is seen in Santi Nereo e Achilleo, Rome, 795-816. In these cases the dress items make up a set.

While single colour is usual, there are also instances of a distinction between the *dalmatica* and the *palla*: the Theotokos in the Panagia Angeloktistos at Kiti on Cyprus, probably 7th century, wears reddish violet *palla* on top of darker violet. Purple (reddish violet) *palla* over white *dalmatica* with golden *clavi*, is worn by the 7th-century Maria Solomone in Santa Maria
12. Cividale del Friuli, Tempietto Longobardo, saint A, hypothetical reconstruction of polychromy (drawing Author).

13. Rome, Basilica of Santa Susanna, saint dressed in dalmatica (photo Author).


16 (right). Cividale del Friuli, Tempietto Longobardo, saint E (after Torp, Il Tempietto Longobardo).
Antiqua. Bluish violet *palla* over yellow/golden *dalmatica* is presented by the enigmatic figure on Christ’s left in the Adoration scene on the triumphal arch, Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome 432-440. Red *palla* over ochre are the colours chosen for the unknown female saint in the Theodotus chapel, Santa Maria Antiqua.

In the Visitation in the Euphrasiana, Parenzo, Elizabeth wears a yellow *palla* and a purple *dalmatica*. The colour combinations then are purple with yellow, white or red, or two tones of purple. But most often, both *palla* and *dalmatica* are purple or violet. In the Tempietto wall-paintings the Virgin's *palla* is dark purple [9]. Unfortunately it is difficult to establish the exact hue of her tunic of which there are only very slight remains. The fragments appear dark greensish suggesting a bluish or yellowish pigment. Whatever the hue, it is conceivable that the stucco saints would not have been dressed exactly like the Virgin. On the combined evidence it seems likely that the *pallae* and *dalmaticae* of C and D were purple, although a contrasting *dalmatica* cannot be excluded [10]. If the dress was purple, the hemline probably contrasted in golden ochre. Since C and D are identically formed and placed symmetrically, it is reasonable to assume that they wear the same colours.

**Saint A: diagonal dalmatica**

By far the most elaborate attire is presented by A and F, the figures next to the lateral south and north walls. Since F is less well preserved, I take my point of departure in A. She is dressed in complex multi-layered garments: the sleeve of the under-tunic is visible at the right wrist; over this is a wide-sleeved tunic; then the distinctive diagonal *dalmatica* decorated with floral medallions, and with a *palla* or shawl thrown over the left shoulder [14]. Colours would have helped to distinguish the various dress items.

The lower border of the dalmatic is badly preserved but it seems partly to echo the stucco ornament framing the west window. The richly patterned fabric with medallions containing a four-petal rose is detailed with petals, small leaves and tendrils. The pearl-lined *clavi* are common both on silk, wool and linen textiles. The motifs inside the roundels vary from geometric to floral and figurative. On a fragment from Antinoe the ground of the fabric is blue, that of the roundels red bordered by white pearls on black. Another fragment from Egypt preserves a flower very close to the one on A’s dress. The colours are red, green and yellow on a blue ground. The floral decoration of A’s diagonal *dalmatica* could be either multicoloured, as in the Egyptian fragments, or it could be a bi-coloured silken weave in purple and gold. The latter is an imperial colour symbolism, stressed in literary sources (e.g. Claudian, de Stil. II, 333-334: ‘Twice have we dipped the thread that goes to make the cloth in purple dye and interwoven therewith ... gold.’). Visual representations show different fashions in diagonal dalmatic. In the Vienna Dioscurides, ca 512, the princess Anicia Juliana wears a golden dalmatic with purple *clavi*. There seems to be slight remains of purple patches on top, suggesting that the *contubulata* originally had some decoration. Similarly Maria Regina in Santa Maria Antiqua, ca 550, is sumptuously dressed in a purple diagonal dalmatic [11]. It is heavily bejewelled and has golden pearl-lined decoration as well as golden embroideries on the sleeve-bands of the under-tunic. Since the diagonal dalmatic worn by figure A is lined with a jewelled border the imperial connotation is strong. In mosaics the ovals are usually represented as blue sapphire, with the squares as green emeralds.

The colour of the *palla* is open to discussion. Thrown over the shoulder, it is smaller and more shawl-like than the type covering the head (as worn by C and D). In the Vienna Dioscurides, Anicia Juliana is flanked by the personification of Megalopsychia with a greenish *palla* thrown over one shoulder, while her companion, Phronesis, wears a red *palla*. In other instances, the fabric may be white. In the hypothetical reconstructions I have left the *palla* white, painting the *dalmatica* purple in accordance with imperial dress codes [12].

**Saint F: diagonal dalmatica**

The holy woman F is badly preserved; in fact most of the surface is worn off and the lower half of her body is restored in stucco. It seems that the border of F’s contabulated garment bears a variant design from that of A. A look at the crown discloses difference in the pearl setting: while the pearls of A are identical round, those of F alternates in the central row with ovals as in an astragal border [2]. Minor variations in design may suggest variation in colour. While such variation could be partly an aesthetic choice, it is reasonable to see it as a deliberate way of individuating the saints represented. However on account of F’s poor state of preservation I refrain from a reconstruction, suffice to say that for the sake of symmetry, F would plausibly have been dressed predominantly in purple with variation chiefly in the colouring of ornaments.

The prevalence of purple suggested for A, F and C, D, is supported by the prominence of that hue in the Tempietto’s wall-paintings (mixed by red and false blue or black pigments). It is used in a dark red-violet for the Theotokos’ *palla*, a medium red-violet for Christ’s *pallium* and for the *chlamys* of a military saint on the north wall, furthermore for the *clavi* on the archangel’s tunic, for the background to the monumental dedicatory inscription, in addition to on various ornaments.

**Saint B: dalmatica with clavi**

The middle figure B is dressed in under-tunic, a second tunic (both visible only at the sleeves) and a wide-sleeved *dalmatica* with *clavi* down the front and back and with a high-set jewelled belt. At each shoulder is an *orbiculus* with incised tendril. The pearl-lined *clavi* and the sleeve-bands are likewise ornamented with tendrils. Along the hemline runs an elaborate border with floral ornaments in pearl-lined lozenges [15]. The *dalmatica*, or over-tunic, was the usual female everyday wear, found both in sacred and secular images and in a variety of colours. The status of the dress would be determined by the fabric – linen, wool, silk – and by the richness of its decoration. A significant feature is the flaring sleeve with wide opening. From late antiquity through the Middle Age it is apparent that wide impractical sleeves were a status symbol. They are conspicuous also in the presentation of Maria Regina in Santa Maria Antiqua. Finely decorated bands at neckline, hemline and cuffs, and *clavi* would signify the social position of the wearer. Indeed, such bands may be seen as diacritical signs, much in the manner that colour codes in Roman dress, by means of different coloured bands, showed what kind of person one was facing.

The vertical bands usually contrast with the rest of the dress: dark *clavi* on light dalmatic or vice versa. In the Benaki museum, Athens, a fragment from a looped hanging with two standing orants, from 4th century Egypt, shows a bright red dalmatic with black and orange patterned *clavi* and dark red *palla*. The *rincaeu* on B’s *clavi* is found in almost identical form both in real and represented clothes, for instance, in purple on white on Coptic textile fragments. Similarly a purple-clad orant in the Priscilla catacomb in Rome displays a purple *rincaeu* on ochre ground. In depictions of the Byzantine court
the high-ranking woman next to the empress in the San Vitale mosaic wears a purple dalmatica with floral clavi [3]. While it is possible to reconstruct B’s garment in accordance with this evidence, due to the fact that both A and C in all likelihood were dressed predominantly in purple, it seems more likely that B (and E) wore contrasting colours.

A late 4th-century mosaic from Mariamin in Syria (Hama museum) is of interest for displaying various elegant garments of varied design worn by six female musicians: a white dalmática with high-set belt and with golden sleeves, a white with zig-zag trimmings at neckline and hem and a sort of golden stola, a silver-striped white dalmática with a red belt and a dark border at the neckline, a fine purplish tunic with golden sleeve-bands worn with a golden wide-sleeved dalmática, a tunic in white with round golden appliqué on a dark red ground and a white dalmática with black clavi, on which are remains of silver. Although it is difficult to tell how far costumes worn on stage differed from clothes worn off-stage, the dresses represented at Mariamin intimate a certain hierarchy inasmuch as the finest costumes, in purple and with rich gold trimmings are worn by the most accomplished musicians. Although the Mariamin dresses differ from those at Cividale, they provide a good illustration of the colours and designs of late antique dalmaticae.

Saint E: dalmatica without clavi

At first sight B and E look quite alike, but there are variations. E’s sleeves are less voluminous and her dalmatica are without clavi [16]. Even though some restoration of the surface must be reckoned with (next to the heavily damaged F, E is the second most damaged sculpture), there is no evidence for her having had these vertical bands. In the Theodora panel in San Vitale only the woman next to the empress sports clavi. Thus based on attire, E appears to be of slightly lower rank than B. Yet the border at the hem is the broadest and most elaborate of all. The heart-shaped floral motif of this border is preserved in various designs: in one textile are purple hearts, while in another blue, green, yellow and red alternate.

As extant textiles prove, Byzantine silks came in a wide colour range. Yellow is a favoured hue in the Tempietto paintings, both for dresses and as background colour to a classicizing floral ornament [5]. In mosaic and painting female saints are often depicted in yellow garments: the female saints in the Sant’Apollinare procession at Ravenna, as well as those in medallions at Parenzo are dressed in yellow suggesting gold. A good example is the fragmentary late 8th-century wall-paintings from Santa Susanna, Rome, where Santa Agatha and her companion, probably Susanna, both wear pearl-studded dalmaticae in yellow ochre [13]. Yellow is also worn in the early 9th-century by Santa Prassede and other female saints, both in the Santa Prassede apse and in the San Zeno chapel [18]; similarly in the apse of Santa Cecilia, the titular saint displays a golden yellow dalmatica with high-set belt.57

Taking a lead from the various representations of female dresses – the white, yellow, purple range at Mariamin and the golden ochre present on male saints in the Tempietto – it may be proposed that in order to set a different accent from that of the saints flanking them, the colours for E and B lie in the gold-en-yellow range [19]. Since E and B’s dresses are of different type and design, they may, however, have been differently coloured. As a minor indication, with coloured stones, E’s cross would have stood out more clearly against an ochre-based garment than B’s cross. Accordingly in the tentative restitution here proposed I have chosen yellow ochre for E, but have left open the possibility that B also could have worn either red, light yellow or white [20].

Belts and shoes

B and E’s dalmaticae are belted. Weather in metal, leather or encrusted with stones belts are a further indicator of social rank, the more sumptuous, the higher the status. While most belted dalmaticae simply had a string or band tied in front or at the side, as in the Mariamin mosaic, pearl- and jewel-studded belts were worn only by the top levels of society. For example, a statue of a late antique empress in Naples presents a high-set belt with two rows of pearls and a central jewel, almost like a large diadem. On the Monza diptych, ca 400, the emperor Theodosius’s adoptive daughter Serena wears a high-set, buckled belt, decorated with oval and squares, suggesting blue sapphires and green emeralds. In the Tempietto the single row of white pearls may have been set off against a red band.

In most late antique and early medieval depictions female shoes are red, although other colours are seen. Examples of red shoes: the two Ecclesia in Santa Sabina, the enigmatic palla-clad woman on the triumphal arch in Santa Maria Maggiore, the female saints in Sant’Apollinare Nuovo, the Virgin at Kitò, the ladies in waiting of Theodora in San Vitale, and Anicia Juliana in the Vienna Dioscurides. C and D wear strapped shoes, partly covered by the ankle-length dress. A Coptic shoe in the Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens preserves part of the vertical strap. The shoe is red and decorated with a gold leaf cross in a circle [17]. A dark red ankle-boot is adorned with a bust in an eight-pointed star; another pair has various squares, while a child’s shoe shows remains of a cross. The shoes, of different design with rounded, pointed or square toe, are made of leather coloured red or perhaps purple. Archaeological remains therefore confirm that footwear was brightly coloured with gilded decoration and, not least, that the decoration carried a symbolic meaning, crosses and magic squares being apotropaic devices. It is here suggested that the Tempietto ladies’ shoes were red, perhaps highlighted with gilt.

Jewellery and insignia

Except for C and D, the saints wear earrings and a jewelled collar. Jewelled collars are found in both ecclesiastical and secular contexts in late antiquity: human and divine figures on the Piazza Armerina floors, personifications in Antioch pavements, holy women in Santa Maria Maggiore, etc.44 The variety in colour and design is conspicuous. In the Tempietto merely two designs are employed: jewels arranged like a fleur-de-lis (A, E, F)
18. Rome, Basilica of Santa Prassede, San Zeno chapel, mosaic showing Santa Prassede (photo Marconi, Genova).

19. Cividale del Friuli, Tempietto Longobardo, saints B and E, hypothetical reconstruction of polychromy (drawing Author).

20. Cividale del Friuli, Tempietto Longobardo, saint B, hypothetical reconstruction of alternative colours (drawing Author).

and a uniform design of elongated jewels (B). Based on the crowning element of Theodora’s diadem in San Vitale, it is here proposed that the *fleur-de-lis* could consist of a central blue stone flanked by two white ones. The variant worn by B could be all blue, although other colours are of course possible [19-20].

The holes in the earlobes indicate that the saints were adorned with attached earrings, the distance from earlobe to shoulder defining their maximum length. Since it is reasonable to suppose that the items would harmonize, the elongated ovals of the jewelled collar may indicate a design. Thus it is possible that the earrings had large, elongated ovals. Since B shows a variant collar design, her earrings may have differed somewhat. It is likely that precious stones were imitated in glass paste, thus a sapphire could be designed in dark blue glass, and emerald in green glass or emerald root (*smaragdoritza*) while a bronze wire could suggest gold. In order to be visible from the ground, the earrings must have had a comparatively simple design with two, maximum three elements suspended from the ring. Among preserved Jewellery, gold and glass paste earrings in the Benaki and in the Byzantine Museum, Athens, give an idea of late antique designs. Similarly the early 5th-century Carthage treasure in the British Museum includes a pair with a square green stone set in gold and an oval blue/lilac stone. When not found in a datable context such earrings are difficult to date, because the style did not change radically from the 4th to the 7th century, when more complex designs came into vogue. For represented earrings, those of Theodora in San Vitale, as noted, are composed of a golden ring, a square emerald set in gold, a large pearl and finally a blue oval sapphire [3]. The design is close to the earrings preserved in Athens and London, and they have been adapted also for the Tempietto ladies.

The crowns worn by A, B, E and F differ slightly. But the defining feature of all is the *fleur-de-lis*. This triple jewel is common in imperial iconography, surmounting diadems and crowns from ca 425 onwards, and remaining a distinguishing feature of medieval insignia. Again variation may suggest different rank, B’s crown being the most elaborate. Theodora’s diadem consists of square emeralds and oval rubies set in gold, lined with two rows of pearls and topped with a blue and two white sapphires set in a *fleur-de-lis*; these colours are used in the Tempietto reconstructions [19].

Four saints carry crosses and crowns. A holds a *stephane* with *palla*-covered hand, B and E present their crowns in their open palms, while with *palla*-clad hand F tilts her crown in diagonal view. In the fragmentary wall-paintings from Santa Susanna, Rome, two saints flank the enthroned Maria Regina with Child. The frontally presented haloed saints are comparable to our figures B and E with regard to hairstyle, elaborate crown, pendant earrings, dalmatic with sumptuous jewelled collar and *orbiculi*, cross in right hand, crown in the left.

Since the crowns presented by B, E and F are similar to the ones on their heads, they are likely to have had similar colours.
Hair and eye colour

The ladies’ faces and hands were presumably left white, or only lightly tinted. Their hair is parted in the middle, falling to the ear in striated waves, and caught up at the back. If we consider a golden/ochre halo, golden diadem and light skin, then dark hair would obviously be easier to see. Still, for instance in Sant’Apollinare Nuovo the hair of the female saints is light-brown. In the Tempietto’s west lunette Christ’s hair is mainly rendered in yellow ochre, whereas the male saints have red-brown hair painted in red ochre. This colour would suite the female saints, a dark reddish brown being set off against the golden nimbus. However less naturalistic colours should not be excluded, since the Christ child on the north wall has purple hair.79 Although the thought of purple hair for female saints may appear unlikely, in effect the majority of the male saints in the early Byzantine mosaics in the Rotunda at Thessaloniki appear in purple on the right eyebrow of D.77

Garments as Communication

In the preceding pages I have discussed the use of colour as an artistic medium. Yet the (presumed) colours and designs presented by the Tempietto saints are not simply a matter of aesthetics, but of symbolic significance. The specific choices of attire are a means to an end, namely to define and show the rank and social position of the female saints. Colour, fabric, texture, ornamental bands, accessories and insignia, all serve to communicate to the viewer the status of the persons presented.

There is a striking contrast between the ornate fashions worn by saintly figures in visual representations and written sources’ prescription of the proper manner for a pious woman to dress.75 Many like Caesarius of Arles (ca 470-542) had spoken against bright colours, purple trim, purple dye and silk, tokens of earthly and imperial splendour.71 In the suggested reconstructions I have argued that purple hues were prominent. In addition to its prevalence in the Tempietto wall-paintings, the fact that the Tempietto is a cappella palatina, a royal foundation, supports this assumption.

In late antiquity there were strict regulations regarding which purple hues were generally allowed and which were exclusive to the emperor. Thus blatta (presumably dark reddish purple), oxyblatta (a sharper more reddish hue) and hyacinthos (blush purple) made from the murex shells were reserved for the imperial house (Cod. Iust. 4.40.1). Concerning purple silk made for the household of the emperor, the Codex Theodosiani prescribes that outside imperial control ‘no threads dyed with purple dye shall be interwoven, nor shall threads coloured by the same dye be spun out’ (Cod. Th. 10.2.3, year 424). Woven gold borders and silk interwoven with gold were likewise forbidden (10.21.1-2).75 By virtue of its connotations with the imperial realm purple would give an image authority. In addition to being a colour of opulence, purple (porphyros, purpura) was also perceived as a colour of light, the word denoting brilliance and lustre. Pliny had noted that Tyrian purple from the murex shell ‘illuminates every garment’ (NH IX 36, 127). Describing different types of dye stuff, he distinguished one with a dark hue, another with a red sheen, a precious purple which ‘gleams with the hue of a dark rose’ (IX, 36, 126).76

Whereas pious men and women were expected to refrain from such luxury and wear plain, drab, simple clothes, after having suffered martyrdom the holy person appeared in different splendour, a splendour which could best be visualised by mimicking earthly exuberance. In the early Byzantine mosaics in the Rotunda at Thessaloniki, the military saints are portrayed as men of high social rank. But while most soldier saints are dressed in white chlamydes, two stand out in purple as elite officers of the imperial court.73 It is my contention that the female saints in the Tempietto in similar manner are characterized by visual means; it is not simply a matter of varietas which lead to theirs being depicted in different style garments.

The Tempietto saints are clearly delineated as belonging to three different categories [21]. A and F are dressed in the diagonal dalmatica, a female ‘power suit’ derived from the male toga contabulata (toga picta); it was worn particularly by imperial women who displayed status by adopting versions of male dresses which connoted power and authority. B’s orbiculi were also originally a male dress element, placed at each shoulder and over the knees. Displayed by high-ranking officers and members of the imperial guard, these roundels were enriched by gilded embroidery.78

Although the diagonal dalmatica is not exclusively imperial, it was in the 5th to 7th centuries more or less restricted to the imperial house and the aristocracy, showing the wearer as femina clarissima. Similarly, although the dalmatica was the usual female garment in late antiquity, the fine borders and jewelled belts of B and E prove that these are most elaborate versions, again pointing to elite culture. The pearl-lined clavi of B’s dress is a further mark of distinction, since tapestry-woven ornaments in silk and gold file made the clothes particularly valuable. From Diocletian’s Price Edict of 301 it goes forth that with purple clavi the price of a dress might be tripled.79 It is obviously difficult to correlate the costs recorded in the Edict and represented clothes, but it is beyond doubt that the more ornate and the finer the workmanship, the more expensive and prestigious the garment.80 Hence patterned dresses like those worn by A and F, if in purple and gold, would have been the most expensive and prestigious, followed by clothes with woven decoration or embroidery in gold, as presented by B and E.

The pallia (maphorion) is less socially specific. Since a figure dressed in this can represent a whole range of personages, the garments of C and D are polyvalent. The pallia is often presented as the dress of the Roman matrona, that is, the simple, everyday dress, worn also by the lower classes. In late antique and medieval art, pallatae are seen in various contexts. The problems of interpretation are illustrated by the enigmatic seated figure in the Adoration scene depicted on the triumphal arch in Santa Maria Maggiore. Dressed in bluish violet pallia and golden dalmatica her identity has been sought in some ten different personifications and Biblical figures.81 In Christian iconography, the dress of the Roman matrona had become the garment worn by the Virgin and saintly and devout women. While four stucco figures wear aristocratic garments, their holiness indicated by crowns and crosses, two are portrayed in accordance with the manner of representing pious women devoted to Christ. Leading the procession of saints portrayed in accordance with the manner of representing pious women devotion the holy person appeared in different style garments. The Tempietto and its decoration to some extent can be understood as intercessors addressing Christus Lux on behalf of the believers present in the chapel. This is in keeping with Hjalmar Torp’s interpretation of the total pictorial programme as a visual prayer.82 In the final years of their rule, the Longobards were squeezed politically and militarily between the rivalling powers of East and West. The Tempietto and its decoration to some extent can be perceived as a visual manifestation of hope through belief in Christ. When power stability is threatened conservative visual images function as symbols of continuity. It can be claimed that in their conservative dresses with connotations of richness, power and faith, the saintly figures served the rhetorical
function of proclaiming the catholic orthodoxy and legitimacy of Longobard rule. If this line of thought is accepted, female attire is no trivial matter.

CONCLUSION

Given that the female saints in the Tempietto – and their now lost companions on the two adjacent walls – were originally polychrome, colours served to define the individual parts of the garments and make the saints and their insignia more easily visible from the floor. Framing the presentation of the saintly women, the plastic rosettes above and below with green glass, colour and potential gilding would have put the final touches on the visual impression of opulence and beauty [22]. Colours would have been chosen for their symbolic value, to animate the figures and make them more convincing images of holy persons. It is argued here that certain hues are more likely to have been used than others. As a lead in the reconstruction of the polychromy, the Tempietto's wall-paintings with their dominance of purple, red-purple and golden ochre have been taken to strike the general tenor of the colour scale. In addition to this material evidence, the context into which the saints are set, the royal patronage of the chapel, has been considered. For the saintly women are dressed in early Byzantine court attire; therefore it is reasonable to assume that the prestigious imperial purple would have been prevalent. Since the women take part in a procession heading for Christus Lux, it is more than likely that their garments would have been illuminated by colours of light: yellow or red together with purple.

The graphic reconstructions here presented do not pretend to recreate the original appearance of the saints, and precise hues are obviously open to discussion. Still, the various colour combinations lay bare the difference between a monochrome and polychrome aesthetics of stucco, and compel one to reconsider the question of colour in medieval art.

NOTES


3 Preliminary considerations were presented at the conference XVIII secolo: uno inquisto, see B. Kilerics, The Rhetoric of Materials in the Tempietto Longobardo at Cividale, in XVIII secolo: uno inquisto, «Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Storia dell'Arte, Cividale 4-7 dicembre 2008», ed. by V. Pace, Cividale 2010, pp. 93-102, cf. also B. Kilerics, Antik mode i langobardisk regi, «Klassisk Forum», (2009), 1, pp. 38-51. The present study brings together a larger comparative material and gives a more in depth analysis of the individual dresses.


5 For the stucco figures, see L’Orange, La scultura.

6 Ibid., p. 30: «La policromia e per apporto il medium attraverso cui l’arte in stucco realizza pienamente se stessa e le sue intenzioni intrinseche».

7 Polychromy was suggested already by P. Toesca, Storia dell’arte italiana, Il medioevo, II, Torino 1927, p. 792. (Un tempo colori compa- vano gli stucchi) and C. Cecchelli, I monumenti del Friuli dal secolo IV all’XI, I, Cividale, Milano-Roma 1943, p. 138.

8 Torp, L’architettura, pp. 103-104. The later history of the Tempietto is discussed by V. Foramitti, Il tempietto longobardo nell’ottocento, Udine 2008.


10 B. Bourgeois, P. Jockey, Polychromie Hellenistique Sculpture in Delos: Research on Surface Treatments of Ancient Marble Sculpture, ASMOsia, VI (2002), pp. 497-506: 497, refer to the non-discovery of polychromy at the turn of the twentieth century. That little attention was given to colour is apparent even in later instances. For example, the 1952 publication of the royal palace at Persepolis makes no mention of polychromy on sculptural or architectural elements, yet in the archives from the excavator Herzfeld records remains of paint and slight gilding on some members. I owe this information to Dr Alexander Nagel.
Vienna 1997, pls. 48A-B, 50A-B, the ‘purls’ of these middle Byzantine examples are either white, red or dark. cf. also Ball, Byzantine Dress, p. 106; ‘roundels were the most popular design for any type of textile’.


47 In the Middle Byzantine period the sleeves could reach a span of around 80 cm, Dawson, Propriety, Practicality and Pleasure, p. 50. In the late medieval West, the span increased still further, see, M. Scott, Medieval Dress and Fashion, London 2007, e.g., p. 138, fig. 83. For the importance of sleeves in various cultures, see E.J.W. Barber, The Curious Tailor of Byzantium: Long-Sleeved Fashion in Europe and Anatolia, ed. by L. Welters, Oxford 1999, pp. 111-134.

48 In the Roman period a wearer of a triumphal trabea could be distinguished by the colour of the bands, thus the god wore purple with gold, the emperor purple with white and others purple with scarlet border, see L. Wilson, The Roman Toga, Baltimore 1924; A. Alföldi, Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser, «Römische Mitteilungen», L (1935), pp. 135-158.


53 Du Bourguet, Les Étoffes, p. 111, no. C65: purple hearts, 6th century; L. Kyralova, Koptische Stoffe, Prague 1967, p. 139, fig. 91; many colours, 6th-7th century; L’Orangé, La scultura, figs. 140-145, for examples in marble, silver and floor mosaic.

54 According to Muthesius, Byzantine Silk Weaving, pp. 27-33: 31, bright reds, blues, greens and yellows were prevalent in the 8th to 9th centuries, and purple was always popular (ibid. pp. 32-33). It is sometimes unclear whether a silk fragment derives from a dress or from a curtain or hanging.

55 Terry, Maguire, Dynamic Splendor, figs. 70-80.


57 Colour photo in G. Matthaei, Mosaici medievali delle chiese di Roma, 1967, pl. XXXVIII.


60 Kalamara, Le sistema vestimentaire a Byzence, p. 52-55; Dawson, Propriety, Practicality and Pleasure, pp. 57-59, noting red as the most popular colour for female shoes.

61 D. Konstantios et alii, Byzantines Syllages. Étouméth étéske, Athens 2007, fig. 55, 5th to 8th century. Unfortunately there is no exact provenance or date for these items.


63 A headless marble statue of an empress (?) in the Norwegian Institute in Rome wears a particularly elaborate pair of shoes. Since the toes are visible through the fabric the shoes were plausibly made of either very thin leather or a soft fabric. They have front lacing and are decorated with nail-heads or pearls, B. Kiilerich, Late Fourth Century Classicism in the Plastic Arts. Studies in the so-called Theodosian Renaissance, Odense 1993, pp. 98-100, fig. 47; S. Sande, Statua di Augusta o personificazione, in Moda, costume, pp. 81-89.


66 Ibid., p. 3, fig. 11, and colourplate p. 33, pl. 11.


69 Dipinti murali in frammenti, for colour photos and restoration history.

70 Torp, Una Vergine, p. 586.


72 Saenger, La scultura, p. 30; red lips, iris and eyebrows of C. purple on right eyebrow of D. It cannot be excluded that red was a preparation layer for gilding, a practice used in Greek marbles statues.

73 Whether a sumptuous dalmatic or a hair-shirt, garments are important signifiers, cf. R. Krawiec, ‘Garments of Salvation’: Representations of Monastic Clothing in Late Antiquity, «Journal of Early Christian Studies», XVII (2009), 1, pp. 125-150, discussing the ethos of dressing poorly For the Church and dress, see M. Harlow, The Impossible Art of Dressing to Please: Jerome and the Rhetoric of Dress, in Objects, in Context, pp. 531-547.
La policromia delle sante in stucco nel Tempietto Longobardo di Cividale

Bente Kiilerich

L’articolo discute la policromia delle sante in stucco conservate sulla parete occidentale del Tempietto Longobardo di Cividale, databili intorno agli anni 750-770. Sebbene siano rimaste solo scarce tracce di colore (su occhi e labbra), non c’è dubbio che le sculture in origine fossero dipinte. La presenza di fori ai lobi delle orecchie suggerisce anche l’esistenza di orecchini in metallo. Le sante indossano vesti composte. A distanza, sarebbe stato difficile individuare i singoli indumenti – impresa impossibile vista l’assenza di prove materiali – ma suggerire come i colori cambino l’aspetto generale dell’opera. Più importante però è il fatto che la policromia avuto un significato del tutto particolare, dato che le vesti e le insegne sono d’importanza essenziale per indicare lo status sociale e agiografico delle donne.

Nel tentativo di ricostruire la policromia delle sante mi sono servita soprattutto degli affreschi coevi nel Tempietto stesso; credo infatti che gli autori delle pitture abbiano colorato anche gli stucchi. Di conseguenza, le vesti, ulteriori indicazioni di colore sono date dai mosaici tardo antichi e bizantini, da descrizioni di abbigliamento nelle fonti scritte e da frammenti tessili conservati. Poiché il Tempietto fungeva da cappella palatina prevaleva probabilmente il colore porpora imperiale.

La colorazione delle sante qui proposta non è che un suggerimento. Importante non è stato ricostruire l’aspetto esatto delle sante – impresa impossibile vista l’assenza di prove materiali – ma suggerire come i colori cambino l’aspetto generale dell’opera e ne rinsaldino l’interpretazione storica e iconologica.