

Some pictures with cintamani seen in North Italy, in and around Turin.

Novalesa Abbey

The Abbey of Novalesa is about 8kms before Susa, Piedmont. In the chapel of San Eldrado where all the walls are painted with 12thc frescos of very high quality and in excellent condition, many cintamani are seen: on the hem of the dying saint's blanket:



on the embroidered shoulder band of Christ in Majesty:



three sets on the blanket in which the poor girls are sleeping:



on St Nicholas' sleeves and on the wood of the chair:



and on the braid of St Nicholas's cloak on this image:



as well as in a few other details. I am not ignoring the fact that the 4-dot motif and some other decorations are visible too, but I note that the triple-dot has been used sparingly but very deliberately, always to draw attention and to give extra dignity.

I wondered if the use of cintamani is common in this area and, indeed, found it on frescos at the Abbey of Vezzolano, East of Turin. These are in the cloister, and date from ca.1240:



Here they are decorations among vine leaves and portraits of worthies around a Christ in Majesty.

On a Crucifixion of ca.1290, we see them on a saint's cloak and also decorating the leaf & ribbon border:



They do not appear on other frescos in this cloister with the possible exception of one set of triple dots on the knee of another Christ in Majesty:



It seems unlikely that this should have any significance, but those three triangulated dots did not get there by accident.

**Icon of the Death of the Virgin by Andrea Rizo, late (15thc) Cretan (Candia)
Galleria Sabauda Turin, on the third floor of the Egyptian Museum**



It is not immediately obvious, but, on further examination, there are gold cintamani on the red cloth on the Virgin Mary's catafalque. Incidentally, two figures seem to be wearing garters – quite unusual, though plain garters are also seen on several figures at Novalesa..



There are no other cintamani anywhere else on that icon, nor are there any elsewhere on any of the thousands of artifacts covering over 3000 years, on the three floors of that building. The third floor has nothing to do with Egypt but is an art gallery, the “Galleria Sabauda” (Savoyard) housing the private collection of Princes of Savoy who became the first kings of modern Italy.

Andrea Rizo (1422-1498) also painted this triptych:



43. *Madonna della Passione tra S. Giovanni Teologo e S. Nicola da Bari.*



43. *Madonna della Passione tra S. Giovanni Teologo e S. Nicola da Bari, part.*

The Madonna della Passione, where the cintamani are just on the Christchild's shirt. Icon painters have very strict conventions and Andrea Rizo will have been painting according to a long-established code.

This angel with cintamani on his clothes may be a fresco from the chapel in the Castello of Selvico in the Eastern Tyrol, near Trent:



I found it in a book of Romanesque art of North Italy, but have lost the reference.

I have mentioned two abbeys in the Torinese region and one icon that (though in Turin now) came from elsewhere. This takes us from the 1100s to the late 1400s, but as we know, the tradition of decorating with cintamani goes back much further.

On the assumption that the frescos with cintamani from Novalesa and Vezzolano probably found their way into the artists' repertoire by way of MS illustrations, I looked (via the Internet) at a MS book that existed near Turin at Ivrea.

The Sacramentary of Warmondo or Warmund, Bishop of Ivrea, is a very beautiful volume dating from ca. 969-1011

http://peregrinations.kenyon.edu/vol3_1/current/vol3_1_allarticles.pdf p.8 et seq.

(Even earlier is the Sacramentary of Charles the Bald, Metz, ca.870):



Charlemagne has cintamani on his golden tunic; there are Popes on each side.

The Sacramentary of Bishop Warmondo of Ivrea, has several pages with the triple dot motif:



The Virgin crowns Otto III (enlarged detail below):





The 3-dot motif decorates two towers; a third tower has a similar 6-dot motif in pyramid form.



3 and 4-dot motifs decorate this “V” from the Sacramentary.

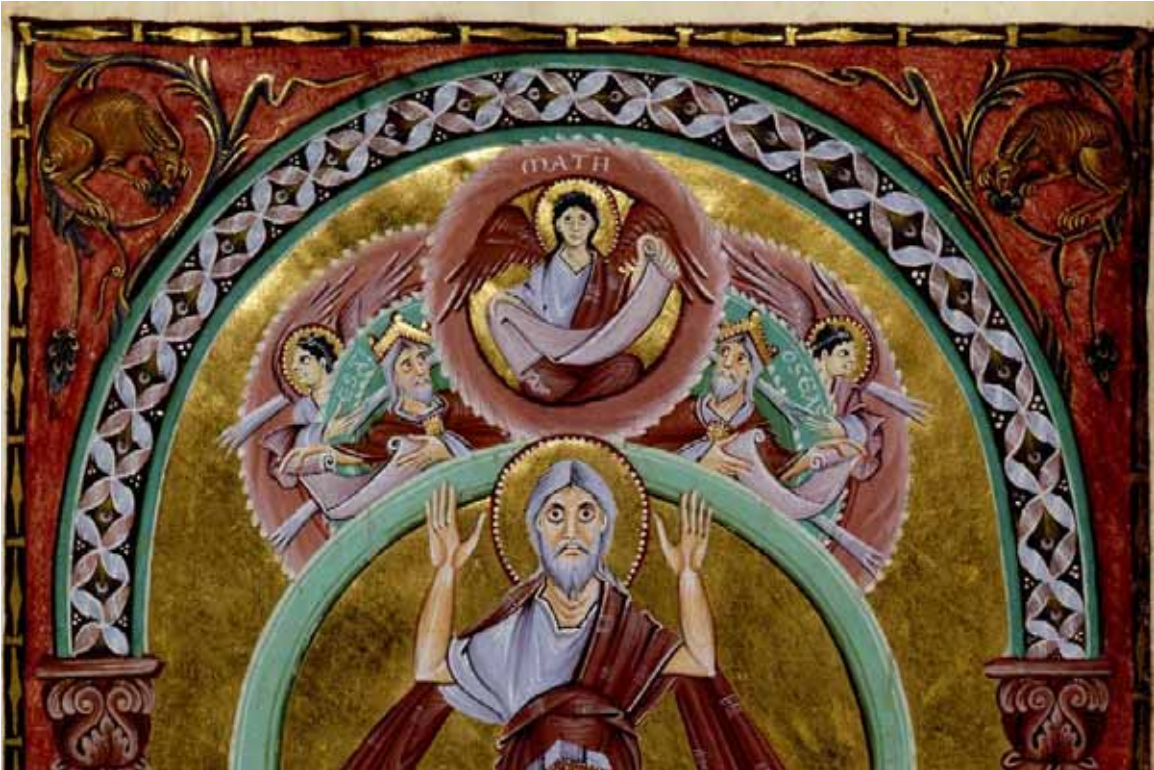


http://peregrinations.kenyon.edu/vol3_1/current/vol3_1_allarticles.pdf p.13

Ordination of a bishop, Sacramentary of Warmundo, ca 1000, Ivrea

This may be an example of a design that was inspired by a textile from the Sassanian Empire or Asia Minor – probably wrapped round a relic. We have already seen artifacts where both the “Eastern” and “Western” styles of cintamani have been used.

The decoration below is similar to examples of Germanic MS we have already collected:



Gospels of Otto III – cintamani on the arch over God & St Mathew – ca. 1000, Bayerisches Staatsbibliothek, Munich

It may have led to its use on frescos such as those at Vezzolano – at many removes.

It would seem that thus use of the triple dot motif in Romanesque and pre-Romanesque Northern Italy is no less frequent than in France, Spain, Macedonia and elsewhere in Christendom.