Curial Narratives:
The Seals of Cardinal Deacons 1280–1305
Julian Gardner

The conclave to elect a new pope after the death of the Franciscan Nicholas IV in April 1292 had drawn on for 27 months when Cardinal Latino Malabranca as dean of the Sacred College, claiming divine inspiration, proposed the name of the hermit Pietro da Murrene.¹ The cardinals, initially astonished and cautious, but finally in tearful unison, produced an election decree, still preserved in the Archivio Segreto Vaticano, to which they appended their seals in order of seniority. (AA .Arm. I – XVIII, 2178) (Fig. 1).² Latino’s seal appears first, followed by Gerardo Bianchi, Giovanni Boccamazza, Matteo d’Aqasparta, Hugues Aycelin, Pietro Peregrosso, Benedetto Caetani, Matteo Rosso Orsini, Giacomo Colonna, Napoleone Orsini, and Pietro Colonna. This majestic manuscript provides the essential physical and textual context for the majority of seals which I shall discuss today.

Consensus rapidly soured, as the aged pontiff’s incompetence became daily more apparent, and at Naples six months later, to quote the account uniquely preserved in the register of John de Haldon, Bishop of Carlisle.³ Celestine V, as he now was, came to consistory and spoke briefly in the vernacular, telling the astonished cardinals of his decision to abdicate: he then read a short prepared statement (‘quamdam cedulam’) confessing his inadequacy for the papacy and decision to resign forthwith. ¹

He immediately climbed down from the papal throne, took the tiara from his head and placed it on the floor. Then he divested himself of his robes and his ring, until he was clad solely in an alb. He returned to his chamber and put on his former Benedictine habit: he returned alone and sat on the lowest step of the throne.

Finally he fled back to his chamber pursued by the shouting and tearful cardinals.⁴ After a brief conclave Celestine was replaced by the learned, cynical and violent Benedetto Caetani as Boniface VIII. The new Pope ordered the Curia’s immediate return to Rome.

The documentation concerning the interrogation of the dissident Franciscan Angelo Clareno by the papal authorities describes his personal seal – a scene of St Francis marrying Lady Poverty and beneath the image of a kneeling friar – presumably Angelo himself: ‘est ibi imago beati Francisci desponsantis paupertatem et ipsius paupertatis et in pede est ymago unus fratris genuflessi’.⁵ This iconography is familiar from the great fresco on the crossing of the Lower Church at Assisi, an episode cherished by the Spiritual wing of the Franciscan Order which also recurs in other Franciscan Trecento seals, such as that of the Custody at Chiùisi.⁶ Angelo’s use of the motif bears also on the development of narrative images on seals in late 13th century and 14th-century Rome. Several of the cardinals of Boniface VIII’s curia, with which I shall primarily be concerned, were involved with the Spirituals – Giacomo Colonna and his nephew Pietro and Napoleone Orsini, a member of the great opposing Roman noble family.⁷ Matteo d’Aqasparta had been Minister General of the Order, and Angelo da Clareno in later life was a familiar of Napoleone Orsini.⁸ Self-evidently the Franciscan Order from a very early period used hagiographical episodes on its convent seals – The Sermon to the Birds (Fig. 2), The Flight into Egypt, The Agony in the Garden, and obviously too the Stigmatisation – a scene which almost ontologically incarnates the act of sealing, and

Figure 1 Election Decree for Pope Celestine V. 1294. Archivio Segreto Vaticano AA .Arm. I– XVIII, 2178

Figure 2 Seal of the Custos of the Franciscan Order in Bavaria 1278. St Francis preaching to the birds. Munich Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Nürnberg RU 79
for which in a profound way Christ's Agony in the Garden served as type.  

As earlier remarked, I shall concentrate primarily on the seals of the Roman curia in the generation before the departure of the papacy from Italy in 1305. The seal impressions of 13th-century cardinals are of unsurpassed importance in documenting the arrival of the gothic style in Rome, and demonstrate the avidity with which Italian and French cardinals availed themselves of fashionable seal designs. They place the chronology of the reception of gothic style and iconography in central Italy on a firmer, and more precocious, footing than work in any other medium. They are all vesicas and they are either effigial or hagiographic.

There are good reasons, worth reiterating, for this distinction. The College of Cardinals during the 13th century included six cardinal bishops, representing the original Roman suburbanian sees, Albano, Ostia, Porto, Palestrina, Sabina and Tusculum. The cardinal bishops, with rare exceptions, adhered to the effigial iconography by then customary for the European episcopate. The titular churches of the cardinal priests numbered some 27 in the later Middle Ages, whilst those of the cardinal deacons, technically the most junior members of the Sacred College, numbered approximately 18. The cardinal bishoprics were invariably occupied throughout the 13th and 14th centuries, but the priestly and diaconal tituli, even such apparently important churches as Sta Maria in Trastevere, was a Marian titulus. Conversely, among the diaconate, there was one non-martyrial titulus – Sant’Angelo in Piscinula, but 33% (6 of 18) were dedicated to the Virgin. I shall talk mostly about the seals of martyrly tituli whether priests or deacons, and only in conclusion about senior cardinal bishops.

Italian seals have only quite recently, and sporadically been considered from standpoints other than diplomatic or heraldic, and ecclesiastical seals are no exception. To exemplify an alternative approach I shall illustrate three slightly earlier designs – Ottobuono Fieschi, Cardinal Deacon of Sant’Adriano in Foro, Cardinal Riccardo Annibaldi, Deacon of Sant’Angelo, and the Dominican Annibaldo Annibaldeschi, Cardinal Priest of Santi Apostoli (Figs 3–5). Here as elsewhere I regard it as axiomatic that the matrices were designed and engraved close to the time of the cardinal’s accession, even if preserved impressions date from later in the cardinalate. The Genoese, Ottobuono Fieschi, a member of the most prominent non-Roman curial family of the Duecento, boasting two popes and two cardinals, was a successful papal legate in England and I have elsewhere argued that his seal matrix was made by an English seal-engraver. Like many English bishops the standing legate is flanked by busts in roundels: who were these figures? At times they are plainly Peter and Paul, confirming, so to speak, episcopal authority. English seals like those of Walter de Merton or Edmund of Abingdon demonstrate the point. But for Ottobuono as legate? Yet whether the heads in roundels are supporters, spectators or interlocutors they

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Figure 3 Seal of Cardinal Riccardo Annibaldi della Moliara (1239–76) 1264 (55 x 33mm). Legend: +S’RICCARDI SANCTI ANG..LI DIACONI CARDINALIS . British Library BL 22100

Figure 4 Seal of Cardinal Ottobuono Fieschi (1251–76) 1270 (60 x 40mm). Legend: +S’ OTOBOI. SCI. DIACONI CARDINALIS. Durham Dean and Chapter Muniments 2.2 Arch.1

Figure 5 Seal of Cardinal Annibaldo Annibaldeschi OP (1261–72) OP 1270 (47 x 28mm). Legend: +S’ FRIS ANIBALDI, GL., GRA,... ASU.., ANL.., ANB.., CARD.., British Library BL 22112
convey a temporal dimension. They are in dialogue with the main figure, conferring a denser ideological content to the matrix. Such figural heads also occur on the façade of the Duomo at Genoa where Ottobuono had been a canon, and at Genoa the motif probably derives from the portal at Sens cathedral.

Sant’Angelo in Piscinula was unique among the Roman diaconia in possessing as titular the Archangel Michael, and it was apparently the earliest of the cardinals’ tituli to stimulate a narrative design. Already in the mid-12th century Cardinal Gregorius (1140–54) had adopted the motif of St Michael trampling the dragon as his matrix design. Romano Bonaventura (1216–42/3) in the early 13th century had done the same. A striking stylistic change comes with his successor Ricardo Annibaldi, (1238–76) whose matrix was engraved at his promotion. Here the figure style is evidently gothic, the archangel’s robe forming a series of catenary folds down his right thigh. Michael holds a swathe of drapery over his left hand whilst balletrically driving his lance into the dragon’s throat. There is a novel sense of movement and a moment of decisive action. It is a conception which may be compared with images in contemporary French manuscripts such as the Bible Moralisée. The combat now has been actualised and no longer frozen into a motif.

The last of the earlier seals to which I wish initially to draw to your notice is that of the Dominican Annibaldo Annibaldeschi Cardinal Priest of SS Apostoli (1262–72). His matrix design is that of Pentecost, a choice which demands two comments. Since the middle of the century the Minister Generals of the Franciscan Order had adopted the motif of Pentecost, since the General Chapter of the Order took place on that date – a remarkable example of 1277 is that of Girolamo d’Ascoli, the first Franciscan to be elected pope as Nicholas IV. Annibaldo’s Pentecost, where the standing apostles gesture upwards rather than sit, and where the Virgin is absent – in contrast to the Franciscan example – is summarily located beneath a broad gothic niche structure. Cardinals’ seals precociously adopt the gothic niche, and it undergoes a rich development in Roman seals during the late 13th century. The niche as a sculptural motif, created, one might almost say, as a deliberate constraint for the gothic figure, is here given a topographical charge. The bust-length representation of the seal’s owner below reminds the viewer that the scriptural locus of the episode was in an upper room.

Narratives, however abbreviated or miniaturised, imply an audience – spectator or recipient – which includes not only seal-owner, but the recipient of the sealed document and, ultimately, the modern observer. Seal images, par excellence are travelling images, which move between private and public spheres of attention and lettered and unlettered publics. The development of these miniature scenes in seal matrices can be matched in reliquary design – for example the remarkable Reliquary of the Holy Sepulchre in the cathedral treasury at Pamplona. Matrix and reliquary alike were made by goldsmiths. Narrative episodes also had the advantage of being more readily recognisable, a shift from the summary stereotypical identification of a saint as a figureine with a halo, or a martyr as a person brandishing a palm frond.

Architectural framing could emphasise and locate narrative. That it could be adapted to other contexts can be shown by the 1294 impression of Giacomo Colonna (1278–1318) included on the great letter to Pietro da Murrone (Fig. 6). This is now a fully developed niched structure firmly framing the composition. In the upper section a crowned, half-length Virgin is flanked by two taper-bearing angels. Below Cardinal Colonna kneels before St Peter. Across the architrave above the lower, paired gables runs a canting rebus drawn from Psalm 74: Ego confirmavi columnas ejus. The identification of a great prelate as column of the church was an apostolic topos, but here it acquires an additional pointedness as a play on the cardinal’s family name, and his family’s palace near the Column of Trajan. More pertinently here perhaps the pierced and crocketed gables are borne not on gothic shafts, but spiral columns clearly alluding to the ancient series, which from the 8th century formed a screen across the nave of the Apostle’s martyrial basilica at the Vatican. This romanitè in seal design of an Roman aristocrat was to be retained, in a yet more interesting narrative by Cardinal Giacomo’s nephew Cardinal Pietro Colonna.

While a significant number of late-13th-century cardinals adopt scenes of martyrdom for their matrices, it should be recalled that, with the important exception of Peter of Verona, martyrdom became a largely extra-European phenomenon in the Duecento. Among the scenes chosen by Roman cardinals two martyrs splendidly represented in seal matrices adopt martyrial episodes as their themes, but not the iconography of martyrdom itself. The small church of S. Giorgio in Velabro near the forum had two cardinals with important seal designs Pietro Capocci (1244–59) and Goffredo d’Alatri (1261–82) (Fig. 7). In the late 13th century its apse was frescoed by Pietro Cavallini and his workshop. In that now badly damaged composition George is shown as an equestrian warrior, although he wears the pseudo-Roman armour of many 13th-century Roman frescoes. The seals of Pietro Capocci and Goffredo d’Alatri show the mounted saint combating the dragon, an iconography given new impetus both by crusade and Jacopo da Varagine’s Legenda Aurea. While George is mounted in both matrices their model owes more to Byzantine small-scale models in glyptic or glass-paste, rather than French chivalric models dominating European aristocratic seals by the mid-13th century.
detected on the bronze doors of Monreale by Barisanus of Trani some 70 years previously, although George appears as a standing warrior in the mosaics of S. Marco. The presence of Capocci’s name in the legend is another sign of the tendency to increase personalisation of ecclesiastical seals during the 13th century.

The church dedications encouraged the development of martyrial iconography in late 13th-century Roman art. Laurence had been martyred on the Via Tiburtina and was buried in the cemeterial basilica there. There were other dedications to Laurence; S. Lorenzo in Lucina and S. Lorenzo in Damaso, the first martyrial tituli to be permitted infra muros. The papal chapel in the Santa Sanctorum was dedicated to Laurence, and there a scene of his martyrdom was frescoed. The mysterious English cardinal Hugh of Evesham (1281–7) has undoubtedly a more specific topographical impact. The setting of his martyrdom on a document dated 1284 in the Archivio di Stato left a damaged but nevertheless dramatic representation of the saint kneels on the same level as the stag which presents the Holy Face between its antlers. In the mosaic of S. Lorenzo fuori le mura itself.

Segreto Vaticano no. 103. 'Vultus illa' or Mentorella, a remote spot near Capranica Prenestina adjoining the Colonna family’s own territorial possessions, although no location is given in the Legenda Aurea, a text in Pietro’s personal library. He may also have been responsible for a lost cycle of the saint’s life in his Roman titulus. Unlike Cocconato’s seal the stag springs up the lofty crag which recalls the actual physical setting of Vulturella, and above appears a bust-length Virgin and Child recording the ancient Marian shrine located there. Topographical specificity has been purposively enhanced, and a chivalric episode has been preferred to martyrdom.

The lively and inventive seal matrices of the cardinal deacons began to influence other members of the Sacred College. It is perhaps unsurprising that this trend can early be detected in a Franciscan cardinal, Matteo d’Acquasparta (1288–1302). Matteo had been a teacher at Paris University, and Minister General of his Order. As a preacher he had lovingly developed the topos of sealing, *Creavit Deus hominem ad imaginem suam* (Genesis I, 27). Man’s soul might be reformed and perfected ‘[ad] instar imaginis fusae’, an ultimately classical topos which had been appropriated from earlier Victorine writers by the first Franciscan cardinal, Bonaventura. Matteo’s seal is significant in adopting for the first time a hagiographical scene for an episcopal seal. At the top of the field is a notably gothic crucifixion, with the Saviour’s figure strikingly sunk and curved (Fig. 11). The figure style has been connected to a leading contemporary papal goldsmith, Guccio di Mannaia.

The final seal that I wish to discuss illumines what might be termed the politics of cardinals’ seals. In 1297 Jacopo and Pietro Colonna rebelled against Boniface VIII, claiming that he was not the legitimate pope, although they had willingly subscribed to his election three years before. Boniface reacted with characteristic brutality, razing the ancient Colonna stronghold of Palestrina,
...privando nihilominus eam privilegiis, libertatibus et juribus quibuscumque ipsamque aratro subjici ad vetem instar
Carthaginis Africane ac salem in ea etiam fecit et mandavit seminari, ut nec rem nemo aut titulum habeat civitatis. 33

The venerable cardinal bishopric of Palestrina was renamed Civitas Papalis, and one of Boniface’s closest allies, Theodoric of Orvieto became its first bishop. His remarkable hagiographical matrix emphasised the point (Fig. 12). 34 Christ Crucified between the Virgin and St John is now flanked by Peter and Paul, respectively identified by their attributes of keys and sword. Below, in the now customary niched composition, appear John the Baptist and an unidentified martyr. 35 The striking element here is what one might describe as the ‘politicisation’ of the Crucifixion by the addition of Peter and Paul. Their presence must surely be read as a papal emphasis: Boniface VIII insisted on the establishment of an altar to St Boniface in the Duomo at Civitas Papalis. 36 The choice of the (strikingly gothic) Crucifixion may very well be that of Theodoric himself, who had earlier been Cardinal priest of Sta Croce in Gerusalemme. 37 With the seal of another Franciscan cardinal Gentile da Montefiore it represents perhaps the high point of the gothic figure style in Roman metalwork during the pontificate of Boniface VIII. 38 When the Caetani pope died in October 1303 the seals of the Sacred College were of an unrivalled imaginative range and sophistication of style.

Notes
1 Seppelt 1921, 37–9; Baethgen 1934, 10, 267–317.
3 Tout 1913.
5 Ehrle 1888, I–190, 14–15; Olier 1937, 61–4. A later secret seal of Fra Angelo with a winged angel with raised sword bearing the legend: + FRARER+ ANGELUS+ DE CLARINO is preserved in the Vatican.
6 Muzzi, Tomassello and Tori 1988, no. 682, 260 (vesica, 49 x 28mm). The legend reads: /S. VICARI. FRM. MINOR. CVSTODIE. CLVSINE.
7 Above the figures: BN VEIAT / DNA PAPTA / (Bene veniat... Domina Paupertas) – a quotation from Thomas of Celano Vita II Cap. LX, (Analecta Franciscana X), Quaracchi 1926–41, 186.
12 For the first part of the period see Bautier 1995, 225–42.
13 Benedetto Caetani chosen as Cardinal Deacon of S. Niccola in Carceri in 1281 was translated the Cardinal priesthood of SS Silvestro and Martino ai Monti in 1291. Matteo d’Acquasparta, chosen as Cardinal Priest of S. Lorenzo in Damaso was translated to the Cardinal Bishopsric of Porto in 1291 (Eubel 1913, 10–11).
14 The income of individual titular churches a somewhat mysterious topic, not helped by the fact that the records of the Ecclesiastical Tenth for Rome (although not for the dioceses of Latium, where there are however many lacunae) are lost (Battelli 1946, 3).
16 For Cardinal Rainer Capocci’s matrix see Gardner 1976, 82 and figs 11b. For rituals of destruction see Cherry 2002, 81–96.
17 Bayart 1949, 258–61.
18 Bascapé 1978 is the pioneering exception.
19 Examples of late impressions in the cardinalate are Stefano Conti (1216–54), 1246 (see n. 28 below) and Riccardo Annibaldi (1229–76), 1264.
21 There are many relevant observations in Camille 1992 although he does not discuss seals specifically.
24 Duquet d’Arcq 1863–68, nos 6130 (1226) and 6132 (1229); Gardner 1975, 78.
26 Branner 1977, 32 ff. For example Österreichische Nationalbibliothek 2554 ff. 10,61.
27 Bihl 1911, 425–35; Bascapé 1962, 146–64.
28 The earliest cardinal’s seal design to use a niche is Raniero Capocci whose matrix is in the Collezione Pasqui, Palazzo Venezia (Gardner 1976, 82). Stefano Conti’s seal is Westminster abbey (Muniments 1840 (to June 1246)).
32 L’Art des Rois maudits 1998, no. 121 195 – 7 (D.) (entry by Gaborit-Chopin). Despite its conventional title the reliquary’s sarcophagus bears the inscription De sudario Domini.
33 Sella and Laurent 1937, 27, no. 104.
39 Bourreau 1989; Braunfels-Esche 1976; Didi-Huberman 1994; Porteous 1989; Seton 1989, VI, 392, no. 21. pl. III (Coin of Roger of Salerno with Greek George and Dragon 1112–19; George identified at top F ΕΙΙ ΙΟΕ); de Laborderie 1995, 40; Wentzel 1957; Wentzel 1962 (Windsor cameo S. George Venetian c. 1300).
40 Demus 1984; Walsh 1982.
41 For comments on this trend see Bedos-Rezak 2005.
42 For the cult of Laurence in Rome see Joumel 1977, 271–2.
43 Romano n.d., 38–125, 104, figs 93, 101.
44 Florence Sigilli Staccati no. 30. For Hugh of Evesham, Brentano 1962, 59–6. For the text of his will Paravicini Bagliani 1980, 207–15. Laurence’s martyrdom had appeared at Sta Cecilia in Trastevere 1099–1118. See now Romano 2006, 219–21; there were two 13th-century cycles at S. Lorenzo fuori le mura where the martyrdom was depicted, Waetzoldt 1964; Muñoz 1944, 14–22; Romano 1992, 33 ff. and fig. 1.18. See n. 45 above.
45 Gardner 1976.
46 Sella Laurent 1937, 1, 26–7, no. 103; Gardner 1976, 86.
47 Paravicini Bagliani 1972.
50 In 1701 paintings were noted in the nave of the church ‘...due ordini di pitture a fresco divise in quadri; nel superiore viene rappresentata la vita del Salvatore, nell’altro la vita di S. Eustachio, ma di maniera barbara che dimostrano fatte nel 1300 e forse prima’ (Scatassa 1915, 11–15). This combination of narratives would fit very well with the figural interests demonstrated by Cardinal Colonna in his two surviving seal impressions.
51 Kircher 1665, 7 ff. (Eustace and stag), 84 ff. and 88 (Pars Tertia, De Loco Conversionis S. Eustachij ad Christum), 94, 136 ff., 151 ff. (Sta Maria in Vulturella at Guadagnolo).
55 Thomas, Faucon, Digard and Fawtier 1894–1939, no. 3416 (Anagni 13 June 1299); Mohler 1914, 97–8.
56 Waletzky 1952, 156–7; da Costo 1995, 348, n. 5; Cioni 1998, 67, figs 85, 101; Roth 1957, 40.
57 Thomas, Faucon, Digard and Fawtier 1894–1939, no. 3416 (Anagni 13 June 1299); Mohler 1914, 97–8.
58 St Agapitus, titular of the Duomo Palestrina. Cf. Josi and Cheletti 1961, 313–16. His relics were placed in the crypt in 1116.
60 St Agapitus, titular of the Duomo Palestrina. Cf. Josi and Cheletti 1961, 313–16. His relics were placed in the crypt in 1116.
61 Reg. Bon VIII, no. 3416 (Anagni 13 June 1299) ‘In ecclesia vero B. Agapiti martyris… que quidem ante destructionem civitatis extitit ecclesia cathedralis… altare in honorem B. Bonifatii…’. All reliquaries are in honor of B. Bonifatii…’.
Francis of Assisi is a special saint, above all because he was the first saint whose stigmata were recognised by the Roman Church as the wounds of Christ. His life and works have been subjected to a deluge of hagiographical, theological and poetical writings, as well as innumerable representations in panel paintings, frescoes and glass. As a result art historians have always taken a special interest in St Francis. It is well known that works that represent St Francis in the medium of sculpture form a minority in comparison with the large number of representations of the saint in panel paintings, frescoes or stained glass. Art historical research has already devoted attention to some of these sculpted works, but a comprehensive investigation of them is still lacking.

Representations of St Francis on seals have largely been ignored in art history. Sigillography, in any case, tends to investigate seals not primarily in terms of their iconography, but in terms of their owners. Specific investigations on the representations of Francis on seals in Italy have hitherto been lacking apart from Giacomo Bascape’s studies on the seals of the Franciscan Order. My paper on Francis and seals will concentrate on three thematic fields. First, the specific use of seals in Italy and its deep influence on the Franciscan Order. Second, the images of St Francis on seals and their pictorial language. And third, the hagiographical and theological interpretation of Francis as a sealed saint.

The use of seals in medieval Italy
The use of seals in medieval Italy differs fundamentally from that of other European countries, since in Italy the office of the notary was particularly important, especially in the 13th and 14th centuries. Already in the 12th century Pope Alexander III had issued a decree, in which he had determined the equivalence between the authenticity of documents endorsed with a seal, and deeds endorsed by a public official (per manum publicum), in other words a notary. A large part of the documents written in medieval Italy are in fact notarial instruments or documents in whose drafting notaries were involved in the most varied ways. The importance of the notary’s office for the Franciscan Order can to some extent be inferred ex negativo from Francis himself and from the hagiographical transmission of his life and work.

In 1310 Bishop Teobaldo of Assisi tells of Francis’ visit to Pope Honorius III in 1216 as follows: Francis had travelled to Rome to ask the Pope for an indulgence for the church of Sta Maria degli Angeli, called Porziuncola, that he himself had rebuilt. Francis received the indulgence only by word of mouth. According to Bishop Teobaldo the Pope called back Francis, who had hastened away after the audience: ‘O simplicone, quo vadis? Quid portas tu de huiusmodi indulgentia?’ (Oh, you simleton, where are you going? What will you do with such an indulgence?). Francis answered that the word of the Pope was good enough for him; he did not need any notarial instrument to confirm it, since for him the Virgin Mary was the document, Christ the notary and the angels the witnesses. Here the notary is – ex negativo – likened to Christ. It is telling that this report of the Porziuncola indulgence is found in a document in which the Bishop of Assisi, a Franciscan himself, almost a century later, solemnly confirmed in writing, and authenticated with his seal, the validity of the indulgence. On Bishop Teobaldo’s seal Francis was represented alongside St Rufinus below the Madonna and Child.

The domination of the notary’s office in medieval Italy can also be inferred from the documents issued by the Franciscan Order. For as Alessandro Pratesi has shown, the Franciscans used both kinds of authentication in their documents, namely, both sealing and endorsement through the official hand of the notary, testified by his signature and notarial sign. In the general curia of the Order and in its provincial government, sealed documents were mainly issued following the model of large chanceries, such as the apostolic chancery in Rome. The documents of the Minister General, Vicar General, Provincial Minister and their Guardians, are in the main sealed documents. At the local level, on the other hand, the Italian Franciscans often called on the services of self-employed notaries from outside the Order, to write and authenticate documents. While convents, their guardians and their vicars had the right to use and possess seals, they used them less than their colleagues in other countries. So, the hierarchical structure of the Order produced in Italy not only a hierarchy of seals and their images, as in other countries, but also a hierarchy of documents and the ways and means of authenticating them. The most solemn documents that the Ministers General of the Order produced, the litterae confraternitatis, contained a kind of spiritual contract between the general curia of the Order and the faithful outside the Order. In the 13th century only the Minister Generals and the Provincial Ministers had the right to issue litterae confraternitatis. Through them they guaranteed the participation of the persons to whom they were addressed in all the spiritual goods that the Order daily accumulated, such as masses, vigils, prayers and also liturgical commemorations after death; this was an expression of gratitude for the signs of affection that the recipients of the letters had shown for the Order during their lifetime, for instance in the form of donations. Salimbene da Adam, the 13th-century Franciscan chronicler, transmits the formula of these letters, which goes back to the Minister General, John of Parma, and emphasises that the Minister General authenticated the litterae confraternitatis with his own seal. In fact the litterae confraternitates represent the largest group of documents issued by the Order without notarial intermediation.

The Great Seal of the Minister General of the Franciscans
shows the event of Pentecost. It is first found in an impression of the seal of John of Parma (1247–57) dating to the year 1250.\textsuperscript{14} The legend of the seal: sigillum generalis ministri ordinis fratrwm minorum, does not name the Minister General of the Order, since it was the practice for the matrix to be handed down from Minister to Minister. Already in Constitutions of the Franciscan Order that were issued before the General Chapter of Narbonne (1260) it was prescribed that the seal of the deceased Minister General, as was the practice with relics, should be wrapped with a strip of parchment (cedula) and endorsed with the seal of the Provincial Minister and Guardian of the place where the Minister General had died. The seal should be kept in this way until the next General Chapter, at which the new Minister General would be elected.\textsuperscript{15} Only when the seal was too worn by use, was a new one produced. The first surviving impression of the seal of a Franciscan Minister General is appended to a document issued in Dubrovnik on 9 September 1250. It consists of the confirmation of a notarial transcription of a papal deed issued some 130 years earlier, namely a privilege of Calixtus II dating to 1121. So the Minister General of the Franciscans John of Parma authenticated here not a document he had written himself, but a notarial copy of a papal document, and that means that his seal at this point in time already possessed the publica fides and hence absolute credibility. A further impression of the seal of John of Parma has survived in a deed of 1254: here the Minister General confirmed an agreement reached two years previously between the Guardian and Convent of Minorite Brothers in Ghent and the Benedictine Abbot and Monastery of St Peter in Ghent, in which the right of the Franciscans to be buried is recognised (Fig. 1).\textsuperscript{16}

The small seal of the Minister General represented, by contrast, the central event in the life of St Francis, the stigmatisation,\textsuperscript{17} as exemplified by the papered seal of the Minister General Giacomo da Ancona in a document of 1536; it is impressed in an extremely thin layer of natural wax with a piece of paper laid over it.\textsuperscript{18} The seal of Bernardino da Siena also represented the stigmatisation. Bernardino used it during his period of office as Vicar General of the Franciscan Observants in the years from 1438 to 1442 (Fig. 2).\textsuperscript{19} With these two seal images – Pentecost as a biblical event, with which the Order legitimated its preaching activity – and the stigmatisation with which God had legitimated Francis – the General Curia presented itself within the Order, but also outside it, as it did in the litterae confraterinitatis.\textsuperscript{20}

The representation of St Francis on seals

The bronze ogival seal matrix of the Visitator of the Convents of the Order of Poor Clares is divided into two fields by a cross-bar formed of miniature crosses (Fig. 3).\textsuperscript{21} In the upper field two saints are represented. They are placed in a diptych topped by a triangular crotched gable. In the catalogue of the Bargello the two saints are identified as St Clare to the left and St Francis to the right. The representation of a frontally standing Francis with book in his left hand and cross in his right is one of the most frequent ways of representing the Saint, as for example in the panel from S. Francesco a Ripa in Rome\textsuperscript{22} and the panel of St Francis with four scenes of his miracles in the Museum of S. Francesco in Assisi, presumably dating to the decade 1250–1260.\textsuperscript{23}

Impressions of the second seal of the Cardinal Bishop of Porto and Sta Rufina, Matteo d’Acquasparta, by contrast, show Francis with the book in his left hand and with his right hand raised (Fig. 4).\textsuperscript{24} Matteo d’Acquasparta was Minister General of the Franciscan Order from 1279 and Cardinal from 1288. His seal, which has already been subjected to several historical and art-historical investigations,\textsuperscript{25} shows an elaborate combination of, or interaction between, spatial and temporal planes in which Francis and a female saint beside him are, like statues placed in niches, presented as representatives of the ecclesia militans, and related to the devotional image represented above them: a scene of the Crucifixion between the mourning figures of John and Mary. At the same time the seal is an example of how much the imagery on seals was indebted to images in other genres of art: here an iconography borrowed from painting is presented as an image within the image.

The attribute of the book is common to so many saints that it in itself is not enough to identify the saint as Francis.\textsuperscript{26} Nor is the combination of book in the left hand and raised right hand, with the palm of the hand turned towards the observer,
exclusive to representations of Francis. For St Dominic too is represented in just the same way, as for example in the panel painting now in the Fogg Art Museum, presumably dating to the mid-13th century,27 or on the seal matrix of the Prior of the Dominicans in Bologna dating to the second half of the 13th century.28 Another Franciscan saint, Anthony of Padua, is also often represented with book and raised right or left hand, as for example in the frescoes in the choir of the church of S. Francesco in Gubbio, dating to soon after 1280.29 Here too St Francis is frescoed, this time with the cross in his left and with his right hand raised.

So, St Francis is represented on seals, just as he is in other pictorial media, with changing attributes and gestures. With one essential difference: the Saint’s stigmata are not, or rather cannot easily be, represented on seals, since the small format of seals and their impressions made it almost impossible to visualise them in this genre, with the exception of the wound in the side which due to its somewhat larger format could also be represented on seals. So how can Francis be identified on seals? The answer to this question is simple, but not meaningless. It is the dress, namely the simple habit with hood, fastened round the waist with a cord, which differentiates Francis clearly from other saints. It is the cord round the waist that differentiates the Franciscan habit from, say, that of the Benedictines, as can be seen in the example of the seal matrix of the Abbot of the monastery of S. Benedetto at Savignano30 or that of the Prior and Chapter of the convent of Sta Croce at Monte Bagnolo. The Dominican habit admittedly is girdled like the Franciscan one, but the girdle remains invisible, being covered by the scapular worn over the habit; in any case, it is the mantle, not the habit, that is the distinctive feature of the dress of the Dominican Order, as shown by the examples of the seal matrix of the Priors of the Dominicans in Bologna dating to the second half of the 13th century31 and that of the Dominican Fra Bernardino, on which the Saint is shown, just like Francis, holding the book with one hand and blessing with the other.32

In his representation on seals St Francis, just like other saints, is differentiated from a simple Franciscan friar by his halo, but also by his frontal representation and hieratic stance, which is often further underlined by placing the figure of the saint in an aedicule and thus removing him (as it were) from the dimensions of space and time. But there is an important difference in his representation. For in contrast to representations of other saints on seals such as Dominic and Benedict, in Francis’s case the hieratic stance is often alleviated, and the rigid frontal position relaxed, by a slightly oblique pose. A distinguishing feature of his representation on seals is also the contrapposto of his stance, whether implied or fully expressed. Its visualisation was also facilitated by the above-described characteristics of the Franciscan habit. For the lack of a mantle permitted the anatomy of the body to be more clearly articulated, while the drapery folds created by the cord girdle favoured a clear visual differentiation between the standing leg – the leg on which the weight of the body is supported – and the free leg. The hip of the standing leg is slightly projected outwards below the girdle, and the straightness of the leg visually reinforced by the perpendicular falling folds of the habit. The free leg, by contrast, is three-dimensionally projected forwards from the supporting leg by the outward and lateral deflection of the drapery folds. The Saint’s torso is often shown slightly backward leaning, and his head turned towards the supporting leg. The effect of these subtle changes in pose is to create the image of a more emotional, less impersonal saint: a saint closer to and more participative in the world of the observer. This pictorial effect is heightened even further than in paintings by the three-dimensionality of the seal and also by the natural material of wax.

The contrast between the representation of a simple Franciscan and that of St Francis himself can be shown by the example of the seal matrix of Francesco de Ganebonis, on which is represented a simple Franciscan brother standing and
holding a book,\textsuperscript{23} and the seal matrix of Fra Cristiano from Assisi, which shows a kneeling Franciscan and in its double register the name of the seal owner and a motto from Paul’s Letter to the Philippans ‘Mihì enim vivere Christus est et mori (lucrum)’ (For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain) (Phil 1: 21).\textsuperscript{24}

Michel Pastoureau has drawn renewed attention to the importance of dress in the Middle Ages, its hierarchising and classifying role, and at the same time underlined the precision and wealth of information that seal images give about medieval dress.\textsuperscript{25} In the life of St Francis, too, dress played an important, sometimes crucial role, beginning with his formal renunciation of his father: a public act in which Francis stripped himself of his clothing before the bishop and gave it back to his father.\textsuperscript{26} Later, in a phase of experimentation, he tried out various garments,\textsuperscript{27} including a hermit’s habit with a leather girdle, a staff and shoes on his feet.\textsuperscript{28} Eventually he found his definitive habit; it was intended not only to bear a likeness to the cross but also to crucify the flesh, in accordance with Galatians 5:24.\textsuperscript{29} The third scene of the Life of St Francis in the Bardi Altarpiece in Sta Croce in Florence, which follows the hagiographical version of the Saint’s conversio in the Vita prima of Thomas of Celano; this shows how Francis indicates the cross-shaped habit laid out on the ground with a staff, while in the following scene he puts off the shoes from his feet.\textsuperscript{30}

That Francis can be recognised on seals solely on the basis of his dress should therefore be understood not as a shortcoming, but as a distinction, for the dress is the visible likeness to the cross but also to crucify the flesh, in accordance with Galatians 5:24.\textsuperscript{29} The third scene of the Life of St Francis in the Bardi Altarpiece in Sta Croce in Florence, which follows the hagiographical version of the Saint’s conversio in the Vita prima of Thomas of Celano; this shows how Francis indicates the cross-shaped habit laid out on the ground with a staff, while in the following scene he puts off the shoes from his feet.\textsuperscript{30}

The lack of any representation of the stigmata can also be observed in part in representations of the Saint in sculpture. In the tympanum of the main portal of the church of S. Lorenzo in Vicenza dating to 1342–44, Francis is represented to the left at the side of the Madonna.\textsuperscript{31} The wound in his side is here visualised by a rent in his habit, whereas no stigmata are to be seen on his hands. The Saint’s feet are hidden by his habit and in any case would not have been visible to the observer due to the height of the tympanum above ground level. The standing relief figure of St Francis on the tomb of Giovanni di Gerhardino Ammanati (d. 1286), attributed to Giroldo da Como, also lacks the stigmata on hands and feet, while the place where the wound in the side would be visualised is hidden by the book that the Saint holds with both hands in front of his breast.\textsuperscript{32} Other figures of St Francis in stone, such as the earliest surviving statue in the round in the church of S. Francesco in Siena, dating to the early years of the 14th, by contrast, all too clearly show the stigmata. Here the Saint opens the rent in his tunic to expose the relief-carved wound in his side, while the stigmata in his hands and feet are prominently represented by powerful nail heads of lead.\textsuperscript{33} The majority of the representations of Francis in stone represent the scene of the stigmatisation in reliefs that – as far as we know – were intended for funerary monuments. However, the relief of the stigmatisation that is now to be found at the entrance to the Chapel of the Stigmatisation in La Verna, and that dates to c. 1263, shows a Francis without the stigmata; the rays projected from the seraph’s feet are directed instead at the Saint’s head.\textsuperscript{34} The lack of the stigmata in representations of Francis in stone has been largely explained by a possible coloured pigmentation that would have made them visible.\textsuperscript{35} Seals, like stone reliefs, are plastic works of art. The possibility of the stigmata being represented, or accentuated, by pigmentation can be excluded however both in seal matrices, which were mainly made of bronze, and in wax impressions given their monochrome nature.

Basçapé pointed out that Francis is represented on seals far more frequently that other founders of Orders, such as St Dominic. Clearly the fact that the stigmata of St Francis’s hands and feet could not be directly represented on seals did not lead to any renunciation of the Saint on seals. Francis on seals, as in panel paintings, frescoes and in stained-glass windows, is a pictorial saint.

The hagiographical and theological interpretation of Francis as a sealed saint

According to the hagiographical transmission of Thomas of Celano and St Bonaventura, Francis wrote a first Rule for his Order in 1209. It was compiled using simple words taken from the Holy Gospels and was confirmed by Pope Innocent III, not in writing but by word of mouth.\textsuperscript{36} In 1223 Pope Honorius III solemnly authorised a new and revised version of the Franciscan Rule in writing with his Bull Solet annuere,\textsuperscript{37} whose significance for the Order can be gauged from the fact that it is still displayed together with its appended leaden bulla of the Pope in a chapel in the Lower Church of S. Francesco in Assisi.\textsuperscript{38} Already by the mid-13th century, Hugh of Digne, in his commentary on the Franciscan Rule, interpreted the stigmata of the Saint as ‘authentic seal or bulla’, with which Christ had ‘irrefutably’ confirmed the life of Francis in poverty, humility and obedience\textsuperscript{39} – an interpretation that Bonaventura accepted in his canonical Legendae maior et minor vitae s. Francisci: ‘the stigmata – says Bonaventura – was the seal of Christ, the supreme High Priest, with which he gave the Rule and its author his divine approval’.\textsuperscript{40} The vision of the crucified seraph in the figure of Christ, according to Bonaventura, not only enflamed the Saint’s soul, but sealed his body: ‘it left his heart ablaze with seraphic eagerness and marked his body with the visible likeness of the Crucified. It was as if the fire of love had first penetrated his whole being, so that the likeness of Christ might be impressed upon it like a seal’.\textsuperscript{41} The metaphor of the seal runs through both Bonaventura’s Lives of St Francis, but also his other theological writings.\textsuperscript{42} There he ingeniously combined the theme of the Saint having been sealed through the stigmatisation with his interpretation of Francis as the angel of the sixth seal of the Book of Revelations (Apocalypse 6). Bonaventura’s sermon on Haggai 2: 24 (‘In that day, saith the Lord Almighty, I will take thee, O Zorobabel, the son of Salathiel, my servant, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a seal: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord Almighty’) thus interprets Francis both as the second Zorobabel and the seal of God: ‘I wish to make you my seal. Francis treasured these words, because visible holiness had distinguished him, as became quite plain when the stigmata of suffering left their mark on him’.\textsuperscript{43} Matteo d’ Aquasparta, whose second seal as Cardinal Bishop of Porto I mentioned above, was a pupil of Bonaventura at the University of Paris.\textsuperscript{44} In his sermon on
investigated, with particular reference to seals, the notion of significance of the seal metaphor in Byzantine theology and place in Bonaventura’s hagiographical shift in the interpretation of this scene takes written lives of St Francis, however, a significant likeness the Saint’s sealing by Christ is suggested by the legend of the stigmatisation of the Saint. The interpretation of this event as final seal.’

‘second crown’ by Honorius III, and from ‘Christ receives the primal seal upon his Order’ from Innocent III, is circled with a Franciscan Order. In his reinterpretation Francis receives ‘the primal seal upon his Order’ from Innocent III, is circled with a second crown’ by Honorius III, and from Christ receives the final seal.’

Brigitte Bedos-Rezak has drawn attention to the significance of the seal metaphor in Byzantine theology and investigated, with particular reference to seals, the notion of imago in Byzantine theology and in prescholastic France. I would like to point out another term that was of fundamental importance for the daily use of seals in the Middle Ages, and also for Franciscan theology. I refer to the word impressio, which was the most frequently used term in the Italian Middle Ages for the image on seal impressions or for seal impressions tout court. Sealing clauses (corroboraciones) in deeds and the descriptions of seal impressions in notarial copies provide repeated testimony of this. But impressio is also a basic idea of Bonaventura’s theology, as for example in his teaching on the transcendentials. According to Bonaventura, who is here following the teaching of his master Alexander of Hales, the triune God leaves behind as causality a threefold impressio in the Creation, so that its conformity to its primal origin can be deduced from it. The term of impressio and the metaphor of the seal is also used by Bonaventura to explain the principle of individuation: individuation, he argues, can be deduced neither from matter nor from the form alone, but only from their combination: it arises together out of the conjunction of matter with form, just as the seal cannot be duplicated without wax, nor can wax be numbered unless by the impressions left in it by diverse seals.

The powerful presence of the seal metaphor in Franciscan theology and hagiography may have influenced the iconography of seals itself, just as Bissera V. Pentcheva has shown for Byzantine theology and the iconic graphic type of the orans Virgin with the hovering medallion. Such an influence can be immediately grasped in the seal matrix of St Bernardino of Siena in the Museo Civico of Siena. It represents the stigmatisation of the Saint. The interpretation of this event as the Saint’s sealing by Christ is suggested by the legend of the seal: signiasti domine servum tuum franciscum (Thou, O Lord, hast sealed your servant) (why [J] Francis). To represent the stigmatisation of the Saint in words or images was a difficult and complex undertaking both for hagiographers and for artists on the grounds of the newness of this iconography alone. Texts and images recur in the first place to biblical prototypes and thus mutually influence each other. In the written lives of St Francis, however, a significant hagiographical shift in the interpretation of this scene takes place in Bonaventura’s Legenda maior et minor in 1260. In the earlier written lives of St Francis such as Celano’s Vita prima, the stigmatisation is transmitted as a vision of God in which Francis sees ‘a man standing above him, like a seraph with six wings, his hands extended and his feet joined together and fixed to a cross’. The stigmata only appear in a second phase, when Francis meditates on the meaning of the vision; only then do the marks of the nails begin to appear in his hands and feet. So a clear chronological interval from the vision itself is implied. In Bonaventura’s account, by contrast, the whole way of life of the saint is described as an ascensus spiritualis to God, whose climax is represented by the stigmatisation. Here Francis sees in his vision, while he is praying on the mountain of La Verna, ‘a seraph with six fiery wings coming down from the highest point in the heavens’. The vision descends and comes to rest in the air near him. ‘Then he saw the image of a Man crucified in the midst of the wings, with his hands and feet stretched out and nailed to a cross’. It is thus recognisable as Christ himself. Immediately after the vision of the Crucifix has vanished, the Saint’s body becomes an image (effigies) in which the miraculous likeness of Christ’s wounds is impressed in his flesh. ‘There and then the marks of nails began to appear in his hands and feet, just as he had seen them in his vision of the Man nailed to the Cross.’

How this hagiographical shift in conception was translated into painting has often been described in the art-historical literature. It was represented for the first time in the fresco of the Stigmatisation in the Franciscan cycle in the Upper Church of S. Francesco in Assisi: here a crucified Christ with seraph’s wings is represented instead of a seraph. Less attention, however, has been paid to the representation of Francis himself in the scene of the stigmatisation. As Julian Gardner has shown, artists rapidly found such solutions as replacing the saint’s praying gesture of the raised and clasped hands, usual at the time, with the far earlier gesture of the orans with the palms of the hands exposed to the viewer. The orans gesture of Francis in the stigmatisation scene however is visualised in very different ways: On the one hand, the Saint is represented with arms upraised and stretched out towards the Seraph, and with his whole upper body following the upward-stretched movement, as we see it for instance in the St Francis panel of Guido di Graziano in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Siena, or in Nicola Pisanò’s relief in the Museo Civico in Pistoia. On the other hand, the Saint is represented with his arms raised but bent at the elbows: here the torso is not stretched upwards, but if anything pressed downward and backward instead, as in the fresco of the Stigmatisation fresco in the Upper Church or Pietro Lorenzetti’s fresco in the Lower Church of S. Francesco in Assisi. The former pictorial solution underlines the active role of Francis in the stigmatisation, his fervent prayer and his enflamed love for the Seraph, while the latter presents the Saint as a passive recipient of the stigmata. It is clear that the first pictorial formula, which underlines the active role of the Saint, is more suited for representation of the pre-Bonaventuran interpretation of the stigmatisation. The pictorial solution, which accentuates Francis’s passivity, is more congenial, on the other hand, to expressing Bonaventura’s interpretation of the vision followed immediately – statim – by the Saint’s sealing by Christ, which is additionally visualised by the rays emitted from Christ’s wounds and which generate the stigmata in Francis’ body.
The seal matrix of Bernardino of Siena follows the second pictorial solution, for here we find represented the figure of Christ nailed to the cross, his body covered by the seraph’s wings, and Francis with arms bent at the elbows. His hands exposed in the gesture of the orant are struck by the rays, which in this image are emitted from the feet and right hand of Christ. Yet here Francis is not kneeling, as he usually is in the scene of the stigmatisation, following the iconographic scheme of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, but shown standing and in frontal pose, with his head turned to the right. One reason for the illustration of a standing, instead of the usually kneeling Francis, in the scene of stigmatisation could also have been the elongated form of the seal. The enamel reliquary from the Louvre, which possible represents the earliest portrayal of Francis, shows just such a pictorial solution: it dates shortly after 1228 and was originally the property of a Franciscan convent in Palma de Mallorca.\footnote{Jeffrey E. Hamburger has thus investigated the christomimetic images of St John the Evangelist, who is at times represented as Christ sitting in judgement and sometimes like Francis with raised hands.\footnote{Taddeo di Bartolo’s polyptych for the high altar of the church of S. Francesco al Prato in Perugia in 1403.\footnote{The panel with the Redeemer displaying his wounds was originally placed above Francis in the pose of the orant.\footnote{The popularity of the theme of Francis displaying his wounds on seals can be explained by the fact that this pictorial solution permitted an unmistakable allusion to the stigmata, thanks to the frontal exposure of the palms of the hand.\footnote{But there is also a theological reason for it. For the pose of the symmetrically raised hands is at the same time the pose of the frontally posed Christ sitting in judgement, who presents his wounds, often flanked by the arma Christi as in numerous tympana of the 12th and 13th century, as for example in the tympanum of the cathedral of Santiago de Compostella dating to the mid-12th century.\footnote{Christ sitting in judgement with raised hands is also represented on one of the enamelled panels of the Verdun Altar in Klosterneuburg Abbey (near Vienna), while the surrounding inscription underlines the relation to the Passion of Christ (‘Pro me passum videant iudex quibus assum’).\footnote{According to Emile Mâle, the iconography goes back to Honorius Augustodinensis, ‘who said that Christ would appear in the Judgement as he appeared on the Cross’.\footnote{The parallelism between the stigmatised Francis and Christ at the Last Judgement can also be shown by the seals of the Guardian and of the Franciscan convent of Villingen, which have been preserved in impressions dating to 1411 and 1413 (Fig. 5). The seal of the Guardian represents Francis standing, and pointing to the place where the wound in his side was to be found, while the seal of the convent represents the enthroned Christ with the symmetrically raised hands, the cross between his knees and the arma Christi.\footnote{In a ceiling fresco in the church of S. Francesco in Pisa, on the other hand, Francis himself is shown enthroned in a mandorla, with his raised hands exposing the stigmata.\footnote{This draws our attention to the eschatological meaning of the seal metaphor in Franciscan hagiography, which Bonaventura summed up in the passage cited above from his sermon on Haggai (chapt. 2, verse 24). Francis is not only sealed by Christ and thus in some sense the impression of God’s own seal matrix: the Saint himself is transformed into a seal matrix who seals the members of the three Orders he founded, in the last days before the Last Judgement. So Francis is for Bonaventura both a seal that is impressed on him and a seal

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Impressions of the seals of the Guardian (42x25mm) and of the Franciscan convent of Villingen, 3.11.1403 (47x31mm). Germany, Archive Villingen, DD 16}
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\end{figure}
that is expressed on others (‘sigillum impressum et expressivum’). 84

Against this background, it becomes clear what an effect a seal matrix with the image of St Francis must have had, especially if the Saint was represented in the scene of stigmatisation or presenting his wounds. On the seal matrix of gilt bronze of Fra Perevano from Perugia dating to the first half of the 14th century the owner of the seal is represented as a kneeling devotee in profile below a trefoil arch and with hands clasped in prayer (Fig. 6). The object of his devotion is the scene of the stigmatisation of St Francis represented above him. Its representation on the seal translates into pictorial terms in a masterly way the vehemence of the impression of the stigmata in St Francis’s flesh. 85 The magnificently winged Christ-Seraph is represented with naked upward-flung arms that project deep into the encircling legend, and with palms turned upwards to project deep into the encircling legend, and with palms turned upwards to

1 See Vauchez 1968.
2 See Belting 1990, 427 ff. and English translation 1994, 377 for the early panel paintings representing the saint as ‘Western cult images’ or ‘icons’ developed in Italy soon after the canonisation of St Francis in 1228. For representations of the saint in written and painted hagiographical legends of the 13th century, see Wolff 1996 and Wolf 2002, 94 ff. For Francis as ‘vera ikon’ and 106 for the new manifestations of the ‘authentic image of sainthood’ in the panel paintings of St Francis, legitimated by the stigmata of the saint. Krüger (1992) interprets panel paintings representing St Francis as ‘Beweisbilder der Stigmata’, i.e. images proving the truth of the stigmata.
3 The largest group represents reliefs with the scene of the stigmatisation on funerary monuments: e.g. the tomb of a member of the Piccolomini Salamoneschi family in S. Francesco in Siena; the relief fragment in S. Martino in Siena; and the funerary monument of Catherine of Austria (d. 1323) in S. Lorenzo Maggiore in Naples, where the stigmatisation is represented on one of the two lateral gables.
5 Guth (1983), for example, dealt with the seals of the Franciscan province of Strasbourg and Kingsford (1937) with English Francican seals.
7 For the history and importance of the notary’s office in Italy, see for example Amelotti and Costamagna 1975; Schwarz 1973, 49–92; Meyer 1996; and Tamba 1998. For the connection between the office of notary and the cult of saints cf. Michetti 2004.
8 Decr. Gra. IX, II, 22, 2: ‘Scripta vero authentica, si testes inscripti descesserint, nisi forte per manum publicam facta fuerint, ita, quod apparent aut publica, aut authenticum sigillum habuerint, per quod possint probari, non viden tur nobis aliquiuis firmitatis robur habere.’
9 ‘Dominus papa, videns eum cum abire, vocans eum dixit: O simplicione, quo vadis? Et beatus Franciscus respondit: Tantum sufficit mihi verbum vestrum. Si opus Dei est, ipse suum opus habet manifestare. De huismodo ego nolo aliud instrumentum, sed tandem sit carta beata Virgo Maria, notarius sit Christus et angelii sint testes.’ (Perugia, Archivio di Stato, Corporazioni religiose soppressse, S. Francesco al Prato, perg. n. 58, ff. 10–12). The so-called ‘canon theobaldinus’, i.e. the bishop’s notification of the authenticity of the Porziuncula indulgence, has come down to us in several versions with different dates. The notification of the Bishop of Assisi cited here is dated 10 August 1310, see Abbondanza 1973, 285–8, fig. 42; Sabatier 1990, LXIX–LXXIX, for the document conserved in Assisi.
11 For the litterae confraternitatis of the Mendicant Order see Lippens 1939; D’Acunto 2005; and Villamena 1998–99.
12 Salimbene de Adam, Cronica, vol.1, 434–5: ‘Item iste frater Johannes de Parma fuit primis generalis minister qui recepit devotos et devotas fratrum Minorum ad Ordinis benedicione, dando eius litteras sigillatis suo generali sigillo, per quas multis Deo et Ordini beati Francisci facti sunt miro devoti. Et forte fuit eisista concessio occasio vel causa dimittendi peccata et convertendi ad Deum, tum ex parte devotionis ipsorum, tum etiam quia frater pro ipsis ad Dominum oraverunt. (…) Forma autem litterarum, quam dabat, erat huismodi, mutatis vocabulis personarum et congruum erat. (…)’
13 See, for example, Bartoli Langeli and D’Acunto 1999, 391.
14 Francesco d’Assisi 1982, ii. 10, 25 (Dubrovnik, 9 September 1250 (Dubrovnik, Historical Archive, Acta S. Mariae Maioris, 12th century, n. 5).
15 Cenci 1990, 50–95, no. 3, 67: ‘Statuimus ut, ministro generali mortuo, sigillum ordinis cedula involvitum, signata sigillis ministri et custodis loci, ab eodem ministrio usque ad generale capitulum fideliter conservetur.’
16 Francesco d’Assisi 1982, i.c., 10, 25 (Ghent, June 1254 (Ghent, Archives d’Etat, Chartes Abbaye de St Pierre, n. 644).
18 Il sigillo 1985, 191, no. 199b.
19 Il sigillo 1989, no. 45 (Siena, Museo Civico, Inv. no. 77).
20 Gardner (1975, 83) suggests that the choice of the scene of Pentecost for the Minister General’s seal reflects the Mendicant Orders’ usage of the Feast of Pentecost as the date of their general Chapter. According to this thesis, the seal of the Superiors General of the Dominicans and Carmelites also had to show the scene of Pentecost, yet the seal of the Minister General of the Dominicans, following the resolutions of the General Chapter of the Dominicans in 1249, showed the scene of Christ on the Cross with the Minister General at his feet (see Bascapè 1964, 65). The significance of the scene of Pentecost for the Franciscans with reference to their preaching activity is also made clear by its central position within the fresco cycle in the Upper Church of S. Francesco in Assisi on the entrance wall of the church and its reference to the scene of Francis preaching to the birds (see Wolff 1996, 281–98).
On the portal of S. Lorenzo in Vicenza

The funerary monument is now in the Museo Civico in Pistoia, but
Blume 1983, 153 ff., fig. 35.

Krüger 1992, 76, fig. 141.

Gardner (1975,

Krüger, 1992

Wolff 1996, 154–9, figs 7 and 8.

Legenda maior VI, 2: ‘Dispares iigitur visio post arcanum ac
familiaris colloquio, meminer eum ipsam seraphicam
inflammavit ardens, carmen vero Crucifixo conformi exterius
insignit effigie, tamquam si ad ignis liquefactivam virtutem
praebamulum sigillativa quaedam esset impressio subssecuta.’

See, for example, Bonaventura, Legenda maior IV, 10, and Legenda maior, XV, 8 on the translation of St Francis’s body: ‘Dum atem ille sacer transportaretur thesaurus, bulla Regis altissimi consignatus, miracella plura, ille cuius effigiem praeferebat, operari dignarus est.’ Bonaventura, Apologia Pauperum, III, 10 (VIII, 247): ‘Digne proinde huic pauperculo sacro (Francisco), qui perfectionem Evangelii perfecte servavit et docuit, in apparitione seraphica stigmata sua tamquam sigillum approbativum Christus impressit.’

Bonaventura, De S. Patre nostro Franciscio, sermo I (in Opera IX, 357–575) Assumam te, Zorobabel, filii Salathiel, servum meum, et ponam te quasi signaculum, quia te elegi, Aggaei secundo.’ (…)

For the relief see, for example Krüger 1992, 160 and more recently

Concludo: ‘Ise namine summis futurosor honoron pontificis Christus pauperatem et humiliatem praedictam, ore suo
dictatam; cupiditatis et fastus per quae plurae inam regulam
subverti et monitum in omnem tempora transmisse in maxime repressivam; a sapientibus et prudentibus huius mundi
absconditam, sed parvulius a patre luminat revelationem; in beato parvulorum patre Francisco, contra calumnias impiorum
qui mente corrupti perfectum divinae sapientiae opus ut futurum aut
impurum impugnant, autenticenter excele suorum stigmata
bullaque irrefragabiliter confirmavit. Ut ei nemo fidelis de
corruptionem perfectam divinae sapientiae opus ut futurum aut
impurum impugnant, autenticenter excele suorum stigmata
bullaque irrefragabiliter confirmavit. Ut ei nemo fidelis de

Legenda maior III, 2: ‘Praebat demum secundum regum
promissi, et singulorum generum promissi.’

Legenda maior, IV, 11: ‘Quod ut certius constaret testimoni Dei, paucis admodum evolventur diebus, impressa sunt ei
stigmata Domini lesu digito Dei vivi tamquam bulla summi
Pontificis Christi ad confirmacionem omnium regulae et
commendationem auctoris, sicut post suarum enarrationem
virtutum suo loco inferius describetur. See also Legenda maior
XIII, 9; ‘Per nihilominus sigillum summii pontificii Christi, quo
verba et facta tua tamquam irreprehensibili et authentica merito
ab omnibus accepturum.’

Bonaventura, Legenda maior, IV, 10: ‘Videns beatus Franciscus quod Dominus Deus
apud eum futurum est, quamvis non in data specie, sed in
oratione, et praedictum a Domino dixit.’ (…) ‘Digne proinde huic pauperculo sacro (Francisco), qui
perfecte servavit et docuit, in apparitione seraphica stigmata sua tamquam sigillum approbativum Christus impressit.’

Vita prima Sancti Francisci, 273–424, cap. 15, 290: ‘Cumque
perductus esset coram episcope, nec moras patitur nec cunctatur
annuntiatione pacis et sex primorum Fratrum conversione.’

Bonaventura, Legenda maior III, 2: ‘Praebat demum secundum regum
promissi, et singulorum generum promissi.’

Legenda maior VI, 2: ‘Dispares iigitur visio post arcanum ac
familiaris colloquio, meminer eum ipsam seraphicam
inflammavit ardens, carmen vero Crucifixo conformiexterius
insignit effigie, tamquam si ad ignis liquefactivam virtutem
praebamulum sigillativa quaedam esset impressio subssecuta.’

See, for example, Bonaventura, Legenda maior IV, 10, and Legenda maior, XV, 8 on the translation of St Francis’s body: ‘Dum atem ille sacer transportaretur thesaurus, bulla Regis altissimi consignatus, miracella plura, ille cuius effigiem praeferebat, operari dignarus est.’ Bonaventura, Apologia Pauperum, III, 10 (VIII, 247): ‘Digne proinde huic pauperculo sacro (Francisco), qui perfectionem Evangelii perfecte servavit et docuit, in apparitione seraphica stigmata sua tamquam sigillum approbativum Christus impressit.’

Bonaventura, De S. Patre nostro Franciscio, sermo I (in Opera IX, 357–575) Assumam te, Zorobabel, filii Salathiel, servum meum, et ponam te quasi signaculum, quia te elegi, Aggaei secundo.’ (…) ponam te quasi signaculum, quod multum patuit per impressa sibi stigmata passionis.’

On the life of Matteo d’Acquasparta see Longpré 1928, 375–89.

Matthaei ab Aquasparta O.P.F.M. , S. R. E. Cardinalis Sermones de S. Francisci, de S. Antonio et de S. Clara, ed. Gedeon Gal o F.O.M., Quarrachi, 1962, Sermo II, 38. ‘Et quondam minister beati Francisci passionem Christi affectuostissimam asse attinetissime uigeter cognoscit, tantaque tamque vehemente affectione et compassionem imaginabatur Christum crucifixum, ut videretur sibi coram oculos eius pati, factum est divina virtute, ut caro eius et corpus in
eandem imaginem et similitudinem mutaretur atque in corpore suo impressum divinitur insignicula Crucifixi.'

57 Dante, Paradiso XI: vv. 91–108: ‘ma regalmente sua dura intenzione / ad Innocenzo aperse, e da lui ebbe / primo sigillo a sua religione. (…) di seconda corona redimita / fu per Onorio da l’Eterno Spiro / la santa voglia d’esso archimandrita (…) nel crudo sasso intra / Tevero e Arno / da Cristo prese l’ultimo sigillo, /che le sue membra due anni portarono.’ For the interpretation of St Francis in Dante’s Divina Commedia, see Auerbach 1945, 166–79. For Dante and wax see Casagrande 1997.

58 Bedos-Rezak 2006.


61 Bonaventura, I Sent, d3, p1, a2, q3, concl. (in Opera II, 109b): ‘Ideo est tertia positio satis planior, quod individuo consurgit ex actuali coniunctione materiae cum forma, ex qua coniuncta unum sibi appropriat aliterum; sicur patet, cum impressio vel expressio fit multorum signorum in cera, quae prius erat una, nec sigilla plurificari possunt sine cera, nec cera numeratur, nisi quia imprimatur divinitus signacula Crucifixi.’


63 The pointed oval seal matrix is in the Museo Civico of Siena (Inv.77). It is made of brass and measures 46 x 29 mm; the seal image is engraved. Il sigillo 1998, no. 45.

64 Amid a deluge of literature on the question see, for example, Neri 1924, 289–322 and Frugoni 1993.

65 Vita prima, 94 (Caput III): ‘De visione hominis imaginem Seraphim crucifixi habentis (…) Cogitabat sollicitus, quod posset habe visio designare, et ad capiendum a propheta inter se intelligenter e qua se intelligerent seraphi et serapha, sed a ligno percius et mukrum eius cordis visionis huius novitas insidere, coeperunt in manibus eius et pedibus apparare signa clavorum, quemadmodum paulo ante virum supra se viderat crucifixium.’

66 See, for example, Pompei 1970 and Bougerol 1984, 36 ff.

67 Legenda maior, XIII, 3: ‘Cunque volutu celebrito pervenisset ad aeris locum viro Dei propinquantum, apparuit inter alia effigies hominis crucifixi, in modum crucis manus et pedes extensos habentis et cruci affixos. (…) Dispersum igitur visus mirabiles in corde ipsius reliquit ardorem, sed et in carne non minus mirabilem signorum impressum effigiem. Statim namque in manibus eius et pedibus apparire coeperunt signa clavorum quemadmodum paulo ante in effigie illa viri crucifixi conspexerat.’

68 Neri 1924, 320–2; Frugoni 1993, 210–11.

69 Gardner 1972, 224.

70 Krüger 1992, 131–7; Cook 1999, 205–6, cat. no. 176.

71 Gauthier 1972, 371, no. 128. For the representation of Francis receiving the stigmata on the enamel reliquary from Limoges (1230) see Matro 1906. According to Davidson (1998, 106), the placement of the seraph overhead, and separation of Francis and seraph by a red line ‘serves to represent the temporal separation of the vision and the imprinting’, in correspondence to the description of the stigmatisation of Thomas von Celano in his Vita prima sancti Francisci.

72 Marioli 1985, 50–3, no. 12. A cast of this impression is in the Museo Francescano (Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini) in Rome (Inv. no. 879/31).

73 Van Os 1974, St Francis, 123.

74 Walczak 2001.

75 Hamburger 2002, see for example 61, fig. 51: John in Majesty, Bible, Chartres, c. 1140, Paris (Bibliothèque nationale, Ms. Lat. 116, fol. 1937). I wish to thank B. Bedos-Rezak for referring me to Hamburger’s study.

76 See van Os, 1974 passim and Solberg 1992, 646–56.

77 See Solberg’s reconstruction, op. cit., fig. 23.

78 Other examples of seals with Francis displaying his wounds are to be found in the Museo Francescano (Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini) in Rome (no. 0879/46: Seal of the Commissario generale della Famiglia Cismontana; no. 0880/11 seal of the Minister General of the diocese of Cologne; no. 0881/186 seal of the Guardian of the friar minors of Béthune; no. 0882/258 Seal of the Vicar General of the Observants; 0882/296 seal of the Guardian of the Friar Minors of Vernon.


80 Buschhausen 1980.

81 Cited after Garrison 1946, 218, n. 17.


84 See, for example, Bonaventura, Collationes in Hexaemeron (Collations of the Six Days), XXII, 23 (in Opera V, 441): ‘Iste ordo non floreat, nisi Christus appareat et patiarit in corpore suo mystico. Et dicebat, quod illa apparitio Seraph beato Francisco, quae fuit expressiva et impressa, ostendebatur, quod ister ordo illi respondere debat, sed tamen pervenire ad hoc per tribulationes.’ Razinger (1950) is fundamental for Bonaventura’s theology of history.

85 Sigilli Mus. Naz. 236, inv. no. 303, cat. no. 614. The pointed oval seal measures 39 x 25 mm, the seal inscription reads: s’fisrepervan d’perusio.”
'...in quella era unico al Mondo':
A Reassessment of Cinquecento Seal Engraving and
the Seal Matrices of Lautizio Da Perugia
Matthew Silence

Introduction
The Florentine sculptor and goldsmith, Benvenuto Cellini (1500–71), furnished unprecedented biographical and technical accounts of the creation of seal matrices in his autobiography, or Vita (composed between 1558 and 1565), and a treatise entitled De’ Suggelli Cardinaleschi (‘On Cardinals’ Seals’), included in the editio princeps of the author’s Trattati, or Treatises on Goldsmithing and Sculpture in 1568. In the Vita Cellini mentions one Lautizio de’ Meo di Rotelli, a Perugian goldsmith also known as Lautizio da Perugia, who was allegedly ‘unico al Mondo’ (unique, or alone, in the world) in practising seal engraving professionally in Rome, adding in his Trattati that he ‘practised nothing else but the making of seals for the bulls of cardinals’.1

Over the last 150 years, several extant matrices, impressions and casts of cardinals’ seals from the first quarter of the Cinquecento have been assigned to the Perugian, despite the fact that archival and stylistic evidence does not seem to support these attributions. In fact, they actually appear to disprove Cellini’s account. It is not my intention in this article to reassign seal matrices to known metalworkers. Instead, I intend to illuminate the stylistic variety of Cinquecento seal matrices and to support an argument for three distinct, but presently anonymous, producers of cardinals’ seals, whom I shall call the Viterbo/Passerini Engraver, the Medici/Vich Engraver, and the Della Valle Engraver. Through an examination of the status of late medieval seal engravers and Lautizio’s career, the documented payments to Lautizio for the bulls of cardinals, and stylistic analysis of their designs, I contend that Cellini’s writings have misrepresented the nature of seal production in his own day.2 Moreover, they have impeded art-historical enquiries through the fabrication of a distinctly Renaissance image of artistic authority in the figure of Lautizio da Perugia.

Identification and designation of seal engravers
The identification of seal engravers from historical documents is possible, but provides an incomplete picture of the activity. Of the metalworkers who operated in the late Middle Ages, goldsmiths have most often been associated with seal production in records, as is evidenced by the records of the Goldsmiths’ Company of London. For example, an ordinance of 1370 in the Company’s statute books was addressed to ‘engravers of seals’ and its warden lists mention an Andrew Sealgraver in 1334, a Robert Sealgraver in 1349, and a William Sealgraver in 1368, whose names probably reflect their specialisation.3

Evidence for specialisation can also be found in research conducted by Forrer and Pinchart on metalworkers across Europe between 1300 and 1610. Among the 106 individuals listed by the authors, 53 were referred to as seal engravers, but only eight exclusively so. The majority (41) were also known as goldsmiths.4

A more recent study by Cioni further reveals that even the most prolific producers of seals did not build a career solely on one activity.5 Guccio di Mannaia (fl. 1288–1318), for example, signed a chalice, and was probably responsible for other high-quality enamelled metalwork.6 Lautizio di Meo de’ Rotelli was listed as a member of the company of goldsmiths of Perugia in 1511 and was associated with the city’s Zecca (mint).7 He executed the types of objects produced by Guccio two centuries earlier, as these are mentioned in his will, drawn up in Perugia on 20 November 1523. In the document, it is stated that Cardinal Giulio de’ Medici (1478–1534) (later to become Pope Clement VII, 1523–34) was in debt to Lautizio for a gold and silver chalice, seals and other works that he had undertaken.8 Forrer noted three works attributed to Lautizio, all portrait medals, which I have yet been unable to locate and examine.9 One of these medals is said to represent Gian Lodovico Toscani, whom Giovanni Battista Rossi Scotti identified with the ‘ludovico’ in Lautizio’s will of 1523.10 This attribution seems distinctly tenuous as it was not based on any accepted ‘hand’ of Lautizio. However, Cellini’s Trattati discuss the production of medals by goldsmiths,11 so it is possible that Lautizio had manufactured such objects as well. Although two centuries stand between the works of Guccio and Lautizio, it is most likely that seal engraving at the beginning of the 16th century was still considered as one activity among many performed by a goldsmith. Indeed, Cellini, himself a multi-skilled artist, is a case in point, and though he considers Lautizio unique (‘unico’), he still does not call him a ‘seal engraver’.

1511 provides a terminus post quem for Lautizio’s career as a goldsmith. He appears to have moved to Rome before 1523, for in his will of the same year he referred to several people he knew ‘in Urbe’ and works that he had undertaken there.12 It is, however, in 1525 that Cellini claims he knew the Perugian as an engraver of seals for cardinals.13 It is of course possible that Lautizio was back in Rome in 1525, as further sources, published by Adamo Rossi in 1868, record Lautizio’s involvement with printers in Perugia, and between 1524 and 1525 a ‘Lautizio Perugino’ operated in Rome as a partner to Ludovico Arrighi, a printer working for the papacy.14 It is probable that this is the same person because we know from Benvenuto Cellini’s treatise on cardinals’ seals that steel punches were used to imprint specific details on the seal matrix, such as hands and faces of the figures and characters for the seal legend.15 Punches of this sort were also employed in the creation of printing glyphs for early presses.16

No further records of Lautizio’s activities after 1525 have yet been discovered. If he had been alive and in Rome during the sack of 1527, he may have been offered employment at the Castel Sant’Angelo as, it seems, were other goldsmiths.
including Cellini; it is even possible that he was killed during the turmoil, though this remains speculation. Thus Lautizio’s Roman period will be given as between 1511 and 1525, on the basis of surviving records. To discover whether Cellini’s statement about the authorship of cardinals’ seals can be trusted, it is necessary to establish if there is any documentary evidence for the creation of cardinals’ seals in this period of Lautizio’s career.

Evidence for Lautizio’s seal matrices
The only documented payments to Lautizio for seals are dated earlier than 1525. It was thought that the earliest was 7 March 1522, for two large, round seals and two small seals, which was found by Eugène Müntz in the household account books of Giulio de’ Medici. More recent examination has shown that these are not the account books of Giulio de’ Medici, but belonged to Francesco Armellini de’ Medici (1470–1527), a Perugian who later became an honorary member of the Medici clan at the behest of Pope Leo X (1513–21) (Giovanni de’ Medici, 1475–1521). In these same account books there is an entry dated 10 November 1518, for ‘seals’ – it is not specified how many – but they appear to have had the combined value of 20 ducats. These may have been created for Francesco’s first cardinalitial title of S. Callisto, received 1 July 1517, though the delay in payment is perhaps unusual when payments for other forms of metalwork appear in accounts during the summer of the same year.

As has already been noted, Lautizio was clearly responsible for several seals of Giulio de’ Medici because they were mentioned in the former’s will. However, it is by no means certain that he was the engraver of the matrix that survives in the Museo del Bargello, Florence (Fig. 1), as it is not stipulated what type of seals these were, or indeed if any represented the Cardinal’s three tituli: Sta Maria in Domnica, S. Clemente and S. Lorenzo in Damaso, so the use of the surviving matrix as evidence of Lautizio’s hand is less secure than current scholarship suggests. The only other payment to Lautizio which can be confidently connected to Giulio is that for a ‘sigillo dal piombo doro’ cited by Sheryl Reiss from the registers of Sta Maria Novella, dated 29 February 1524. However, given the description and the date, this is more likely to have been the papal seal, or bulla, of his pontificate. To summarise, Lautizio’s documented seals were all created before 1525. This might be expected if the goldsmith was indeed occupied in the printing trade between 1524 and 1525. There might, then, be a case for dating Lautizio’s seal engraving to a period before Cellini arrived in Rome because the seals created for Francesco Armellini de’ Medici are the earliest, probably made for the Cardinal’s accession in 1517. The July consistories of Pope Leo X in 1517 greatly increased the numbers of cardinals in the 16th century; in all, 31 were either created or transferred to new tituli. Three other matrices were probably created for these consistories, namely those for Egidio da Viterbo (1470–1532), Guillén-Ramón de Vich (1460/1470–1525) and Giulio de’ Medici, which has already been mentioned. These matrices have all been considered as works by Lautizio,
but their stylistic features have not been adequately addressed. Thus the aim of the final section is to highlight their differences and similarities in order to demonstrate that these matrices were not the product of a single artist.

**Stylistic analysis of four cardinals’ seals**

Passerini, Fortnum, Jacobsen, Pope–Hennessy and Avery have attempted to reconcile several surviving cardinals’ seal matrices and casts with Cellini’s account of Lautizio’s status and works. The reasoning for this was that if a seal did not seem to be by Cellini (whose hand is sufficiently well known), then it must therefore be by Lautizio da Perugia because, in Cellini’s words, seals ‘for the other cardinals of Rome […] were nearly all from the hand of Lautizio’.26 The seal matrix of Cardinal Andrea della Valle (1463–1534) (Fig. 2), for example, was assigned to Lautizio by Luigi Passerini in 1873 without question and recourse to other seal designs.21 On 28 April 1885 Charles Fortnum acquired the matrix from the auction of the collection of Edward Cheney and included it in an article in which he attempted to revise previous attributions of four 16th-century seals to Cellini. Like Passerini, he concluded that ‘in the absence of more direct evidence, we may reasonably attribute them to Lautizio da Perugia’.26 Fortnum also dated the Della Valle matrix to 1517, when the Cardinal still held the title of priest of Sta Agnese in Agone, even though he became Cardinal Priest of Sta Prisca, as is clearly stated in the legend of the seal, only in 1525.26 Fortnum assigned Della Valle’s seal to the same group as that of Egidio da Viterbo (Fig. 3), but an examination of the treatment of the figure and drapery, the placement of the figure in fictive space, the positioning of the exergue, and the treatment of the legend reveal significant differences between them.28

Firstly, the clothing of the figures appearing on the seal of Andrea della Valle is rounded and fuller, a contrast to the looser folds on Egidio da Viterbo’s seal. Secondly, the spatial treatment is different, for the semi-naked figure (possibly intended to be St Sebastian) on the Della Valle seal appears to place his weight on his left leg, with his right leg slightly bent as if moving forwards, thus emphasising the recession of the fictive space. In contrast, the figure of St Nicholas of Tolentino stands awkwardly with both feet appearing almost level, tilted towards the viewer. Thirdly, the exergues of the two seals are of different sizes, and on the Da Viterbo seal also incorporates a narrow border which identifies the saints in the main scene. Finally, though the legends are clearly similar, the Roman capitals in the Da Viterbo seal are noticeably more compressed and the inscription, which is bounded by a bead and reel border rather than simple beading, continues into the exergue. There are, I believe, sufficient differences in these details to suggest that the two matrices were not by the same hand. Rather than persist in linking both seals with Lautizio and since neither may be his work, I propose more neutral attributions. The author of the seal of Cardinal Andrea della Valle will therefore be known as the Della Valle Engraver.

Egidio da Viterbo’s seal design is more problematic. I have been unable to trace a wax impression to verify the casts.

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**Figure 3** Metal cast (bronze) of the seal of Cardinal Egidio da Viterbo (1517) (115mm x 76mm). Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Reproduced with permission from the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

**Figure 4** Illustration of the seal of Cardinal Silvio Passerini (c. 115mm x 70mm). Reproduced from D.M. Manni, Osservazioni istoriche di Domenico Maria Manni Academico Fiorentino sopra i sigilli antichi de’ secoli bassi (18 vols, Florence, 1739–44), vol. 13, sigillo VI, p. 57. Photo: © The British Library, All Rights Reserved
available in England, and I am not aware of an extant matrix either. However, Manni’s illustration of the seal of Silvio Passerini (1469–1529), Cardinal Priest of S. Lorenzo in Lucina (Fig. 4), shows clear similarities in composition, most obviously in the use of an identical throne upon which the Virgin and Child are seated, with its distinctive dome-like structure and flanking sphinxes, possibly intended to be the arm rests.\textsuperscript{29} The fact that Silvio Passerini, like Egidio da Viterbo, was created a cardinal by Pope Leo X in July of 1517, makes it plausible that they were the product of the same artist, who I will call the Viterbo/Passerini Engraver.

Giulio de’ Medici’s matrix (Fig. 1) is significantly different from the two designs I have just examined, notably in its use of pictorial space. The scene involves a figure group in the middle ground, and features several musicians blowing with gusto into their instruments. In the foreground is a kneeling figure of the Virgin on the right, and an upright figure of St Lawrence on the vertical axis. Off-centre, behind the figure group, is an architectural feature that creates the illusion of an expansive landscape beyond. The space allocated to the Cardinal’s arms is much greater here. The seal matrix could stand alone as a separate example of a different engraver’s work, but Michael Jacobsen has drawn attention to a plaquette of the seal of Cardinal Guillén-Ramón de Vich (Fig. 5) which could be assigned to the same hand.\textsuperscript{31}

In comparing the two designs, one can see that the exergues occupy approximately the same space and use the same form of division from the main scene above; the coats of arms are of a similar size and the tassels of the cardinal’s hat are also rendered in the same way, though the hat itself has been treated differently.\textsuperscript{32} Moreover, the compositions, though clearly addressing two different subjects, demonstrate some consistencies, such as the use of figure groups and architecture to emphasise fictive space. Based on these similarities, I propose a final provisional author whom I shall call the Medici/Vich Engraver.

Conclusion

To conclude, I have argued that seal engraving during the late Middle Ages was not a discrete activity. The available sources from the 14th century seem to suggest that the production of seals was a specialised activity, but not a profession in its own right, and that this still seems to apply to metalworking in the 16th century. Taking a period in which Lautizio da Perugia can be considered active on the basis of documentary evidence, rather than Cellini’s account, I examined four seal designs belonging to cardinals. On the basis of stylistic analysis and the chronology of the cardinals’ tituli, I conclude that these designs should be assigned to three different hands: the Della Valle Engraver, the Viterbo/Passerini Engraver and the Medici/Vich Engraver.

These attributions are provisional, and surviving matrices or impressions would be required to ascertain the authenticity of the seal designs of Guillén-Ramón de Vich and Egidio da Viterbo, which I have only examined from casts. The only way to verify the hand of Lautizio da Perugia in any of these designs, or indeed others that may come to light, would be by an examination of the seals of Francesco Armellini de’ Medici, who paid Lautizio for four seals in 1522 (and, it should be recalled, was like Lautizio, a Perugian).

A more precise definition of Lautizio’s style may ultimately revise the designations of engravers I have presented here. One can say with some certainty, though, that Lautizio was not ‘unico al Mondo’ as Cellini supposed, for he was evidently engaged in other activities, such as printing, and was certainly not the only engraver of cardinals’ seals operating in Rome between 1517 and 1525. So why did Cellini get it wrong? The answer to this may lie in a literary device that the artist employed in his Vita and Trattati. Cellini constructed his own artistic identity by casting a contemporary artist as a rival, firstly by establishing his specialisation (in this case, engraving seals), secondly, by emphasising his patrons (cardinals), thirdly by highlighting his technical skills (the creation of the matrices).\textsuperscript{33} Cellini then provides the reader with an example of his own work (he uses the seal he executed for Cardinal Ippolito d’Este II in 1539), and is careful to note the approbation he received for it from his own patrons, as he states, ‘everyone said that I had surpassed the great Lautizio’.\textsuperscript{34} In order to excel at seal engraving, Cellini needed a unique opponent against which he could demonstrate his superior skill and authority in goldsmithing and sculpture. As such an individual did not exist, Cellini used Lautizio da Perugia, misrepresenting the latter’s repertoire to bolster his own reputation. Although Cellini’s account provides undeniably valuable details regarding the production of seal matrices for cardinals, our unquestioning reliance on it has in fact obscured a number of...
seal engravers working in Rome in the first quarter of the 16th century, whose careers now deserve our attention.

Notes

1 Cellini Vita 30 (Bull 1956, 40); Cellini Due trattati, fol. 247 (Ashbee 1967, 60).

2 My approach is informed by a study by Mark B. Garrison (1996) that reassessed the value of stylistic analysis in Near Eastern cylinder seals. The identification of certain common features in these impressions, such as the modelling of drapery or the human figure, and their categorisation by such features, tends to be diachronic (i.e., historical). However, a synchronic investigation, one that can isolate the producers of certain seal designs, is possible by stylistic analysis of surviving impressions from the same time and/or place. This method, called ‘hand attribution’, was developed by Giovanni Morelli (1816–91), a 19th-century Italian physician and art critic, and involves the observations of minute details in a work that are considered the ‘signature’ of a particular artist.

3 Jefferson 2003, 126 and, for the names, 2, 32, 114. For the role of goldsmiths in making seals in medieval England, see Kingsford 1940.


5 The term ‘aureific’ is most common. The phrase ‘...aurifici... pro sigillo’ can be found relating to seal matrices by Pacce di Valentino, Filippuccio, Ugucione, Tura di Bernardino, Ciato di Iacomo, Giano (son of Filippuccio), Meio di Gheri, Pietro di Simone, Viva di Lucca, Ugolino degli Vieri, Coccio Prefete, Michele di Ser Memmo and Turino di Sano who executed a range of seals for individuals and corporations between 1257 and 1410 (Cioni 1998, 60). Lautizio was probably associated with goldsmiths who had been producing ecclesiastical and secular seals in Perugia in the late 15th century. One Perugian family in particular – the Rossetti – is a case in point. Fedegero Rossetti, in 1498, is recorded as working on a seal for a Jacopo Fumagioli, and Francesco di Valeriano Rossetti (fl. 1474–1509) is recorded as working on a seal for the magistrati of Perugia. The Rossetti have received substantial treatment in Angelucci 1853, 6, 8, 12–14 and recently featured in Bulgari Calissins 2003, 111–12. In this period, it was not unusual for goldsmiths who had originated and trained elsewhere in the Italian peninsula – often Florence, Milan and the region covered by umbria - to begin working in Rome, and some were evidently employed to engrave seals at the Curia. See, for example, Münz, 234 and 235, n. 2 where the author also provides the example of Bernardino of Modena who received payment in 1496 or 1497 for the seal of the receipts of the Camera Apostolica.

6 Cioni 1998, 58–71. I am grateful to Prof. Elisaabetta Cioni for discussing the activities of Guccio di Mannia.

7 Angelucci 1853, 20, n. 76, who cited fol. 27 in the Biblioteca Comunale Augusta di Perugia, Matricola dell’Arte degli orfici di Perugia, ruo di porta S. Pietro per 1511; Vermiglioli (1816, 101, n. 258) dates Lautizio’s connection with another goldsmith called Cesario who was also working in the city in 1518–20.


9 ‘Come ciò si sia fatto, intagliando bene i detti membretti, stampansi in quei propri caui doue essi sono, cioè dette teste, mani, e piedi con vn martelletto con destri colpi bel Suggello.’ Cellini, Due trattati fol. 291 [sic] (actually 261) (cf. Ashbee 1967, 65). In the Middle Ages Theophilus briefly mentions punches in relation to chasing tools (‘De ferris ad dvctile opvs aptis’) but not the shapes which would feature on them (Dodwell 1986, 71). Pastoreau 1986, 515–22, at 517 notes that punches were ‘non seulement pour les lettres de la légende mais aussi pour certains éléments du type (contour des écus, figures héraudiques, bâtiments et motifs architecturaux, voire pièces du vêtement et de l’armement et même visages)’. For a useful discussion of Cellini’s alphabets, see Von Fleming 2003, 59–88, pl. VI–VII, figs. 1–7 at 63.

10 See McMurtrie 1943, 229–38 for a useful discussion of the processes and materials involved in creating patrices and matrices, and more recently, light has been thrown on this area of metalworking by Smeijers 1996, 55–62. Unfortunately on p. 60 the author incorrectly quotes Cellini’s discussion of using punches in the context of making coins. The passage actually referred originally to the finishing of seal matrices.

11 Chastel 1983, 169–70.

12 The entry in Archivio di Stato, Rome Ms. Camerale I, appendice 18, fol. 113 reads: ‘Marzo 1522 adi 7 rese alo maestr[m]o di Casa Pago a Lautitio / [per] quatro [sic] sigillii dilo Car[dina]le Doi grandi Tondi / e Doi picoli stimati Julii Cinquanta sono d[uc] 6 – 6 – 20’ (Reiss 1992, vol. 1, 416). Reiss states that Müntz and Bascapé used a Registrum Expensarum Cardinalis in the Archivio di Stato in Florence. It is in fact in the Archivio di Stato, Rome. It is possible that one of these seals was actually created for Francesco’s title of camerarius. In the 15th century, Francesco Condulmer used his camerarial seal, which he makes clear in the sealing clause of Archivio Segreto Vatican MS. Fondo Veneto I 1048, date 11 July 1438: ‘sigilli nostri camerarii officii’. The seal legend simply reads: s: francisci: [...]:p: camerarius. and does not mention his titulus of S. Clemente, which he had received seven years earlier from Eugenius IV, but it is present in the incipit of the document. Lodovico Trevisan also used the same phrasing in the sealing clause, but his seal impression, attached to Archivio Segreto Vatican MS. Fondo Veneto I 1073 and dated 6 July 1443, reads: s: lvd: cardinalis: avqilign: dni: pape: camerarius, and does acknowledge his status, if not his titulus. These seals are both illustrated in Martini and Lombardi 2004 under their respective manuscript reference numbers. For a brief history of the office and title held by these men, see Felici 1940, 1–9. For a more recent study, see Del Re 1998, 285–97.


14 References to metalwork, embellished with the Cardinal’s arms, can be found in Archivio di Stato, Rome Ms. Camerale I, appendice 16, fol. 106v–17v.

15 The seal was illustrated and discussed in Passerini 1869, 95–8, pl. IV. The change of a cardinal’s title church should have involved the creation of a new seal because the imagery in the main field in earlier periods referred to his titulus, the saint to whom the church was dedicated. However, it should be noted that by the 16th century, many seal designs had ceased to focus on their owner’s titulus. Caution is also advised when dating matrices that have been re-engraved, such as that created for Giulio de’ Medici, which was adopted and modified by his cousin Ippolito (1511–35) after the creation of a new seal because the imagery in the main field of Santi Medici is present in the incipit of the document. Lodovico Ippolito’s seal, with the arms of S. Clemente, which he had received seven years earlier from Eugenius IV, but it is present in the incipit of the document. Lodovico Trevisan also used the same phrasing in the sealing clause, but his seal impression, attached to Archivio Segreto Vatican MS. Fondo Veneto I 1073 and dated 6 July 1443, reads: s: lvd: cardinalis: avqilign: dni: pape: camerarius, and does acknowledge his status, if not his titulus. These seals are both illustrated in Martini and Lombardi 2004 under their respective manuscript reference numbers. For a brief history of the office and title held by these men, see Felici 1940, 1–9. For a more recent study, see Del Re 1998, 285–97.

16 References to metalwork, embellished with the Cardinal’s arms, can be found in Archivio di Stato, Rome Ms. Camerale I, appendice 15, fol. 182 reads: ‘Adi 10 di novembre 1518 a Lauticio pro sigilli di[us] c. 20.’

17 The seal was illustrated and discussed in Passerini 1869, 95–8, pl. IV. The change of a cardinal’s title church should have involved the creation of a new seal because the imagery in the main field in earlier periods referred to his titulus, the saint to whom the church was dedicated. However, it should be noted that by the 16th century, many seal designs had ceased to focus on their owner’s titulus. Caution is also advised when dating matrices that have been re-engraved, such as that created for Giulio de’ Medici, which was adopted and modified by his cousin Ippolito (1511–35) after the former had become pope. See Muzzi, Tommaso and Tori 1988, vol. 1, 21, cat. no. 33, pl. LXI. It was, somewhat unusually, re-engraved by Ippolito, Giulio’s nephew. The legend: IV. s: lav: in: dam: pbr: cbr: car: de: medici: bon: [...]: n: legat: has been replaced by: h[ir: tt: s: lav: in: dam: dia: car: de: med: s:e: vicecan: per: vmb: cbr: q: zc: legat:]. It is possible, from a slight change in character style, to discern the deletion and re-engraved legend before the ‘car:’ and after the ‘vicecan:.’ Muzzi, Tommaso and Tori believe that this
correction was the cause of the soldering of a metal strip along the border, which is also now becoming slightly detached from the main body of the matrix. Though the authors do not explain exactly why this was necessary, one could posit the following procedure. Effecting changes to the legend would have been more difficult with a border serving as an obstruction to a heated metal tool that may have been employed to erase the previous characters and provide a tabula rasa ready to receive the punches with new letters. It is possible, therefore, that this process caused some damage to the edge of the matrix, and the added border strip thus served to mask the marked surface. I am grateful for Sandy Heslop's comments on the process of re-engraving legends.

...in quella era unico al Mondo

23

Corporazioni religiose soppresse S. Maria Novella, 102, 327, c. 2 (cited in Reiss 1992, 416). The Bargello matrix is gilt bronze, not lead. Though lead papal bullae were common in Europe, most surviving matrices that I have examined are bronze.

24


25


27

Fortnum 1887, 120. The Marian emphasis of the imagery refers to neither title specifically, but as no re-engraving of the legend can be discerned, I will assume that the latter date is correct.

28

Ibid. 120–1.

29

I am also convinced that the seal design of Cardinal Innocenzo Cibo (1491–1550), which survives in a gilt bronze plaquette in the Musée du Louvre, Paris, is by the Della Valle Engraver. The design has been attributed to Cellini on the basis of details of the treatment of the figure that seem to correspond with the artist’s other metalwork, in particular his dies for coins and medals (most recently see Avery 1999, 38–9). However, the matrix was probably created around 1517, when Cibo received the titulus of Sta Maria in Domnica which is rather too early to be a work by Cellini. The depiction of a boat relates very specifically to the church of Sta Maria in Domnica (also called La Navicella), in front of which stood (and still stands) a marble copy of a Roman sculpture of a boat installed by Leo X following the reconstruction of the church from 1513. The details of Cibo’s seal that are reflected in the seal of Cardinal Andrea della Valle concern the pose and treatment of the face and hair of certain figures; a representation of the Trinity, which appears in both designs; the size and shape of the armorial shield; the arrangement of the tassels of the cardinal’s hat in the exergue.

30

Manni 1739–44, vol. 13, sigillo VI, 57. It is also worth noting that Manni almost certainly based his illustrations on seal impressions, not casts. I am grateful to Dr Luca Becchetti of the Archivio Segreto Vaticano for discussing Manni’s work.

31


32

Both seals are very similar in size (De Medici: 109 x 70mm, De Vich: 107 x 70mm) and shape. Mandorla or vesica seals were most common for cardinals early in the 16th century. Rounded oval seals seem to appear after the period of this study.

33

See Cellini, Dve trattati, fol. 1r–2r (Ashbee 1967, 1–6). For a useful discussion of Cellini’s attitude to contemporary artists, see Holman 2005, 512–75.

34

'...ognun diceva, ch’io avevo passato quel gran Lautizio...', Cellini, Vita 185 (Bull 1956, 237).