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Inscribing Presence

Script, Relics, Space in Salerno Cathedral

In *Messages de Pierre*, Vincent Debiais suggests that the "context" is one of the crucial elements of the study of epigraphy and its *mise en place*. Semantically and conceptually context could have different meanings. In the case of inscriptions, it could be understood in the first instance from the perspective of space: the context of an inscription is very much the space in which it is located—the space it occupies, its support—and its visual, structural and topographical environment. Yet context cannot be understood exclusively as the material setting of script: it could also be impalpable referring, for example, to the cultural milieu, in terms of ideas or concepts embedded within the script.[1] In epigraphy, script and space are strictly intertwined. Letters and words populate a defined surface, for instance a slab, creating an inscribed space. At the same time, the built environment is activated by these words. Words and inscriptions have the potential to determine and characterise the viewing experience and, through it, the functions and meaning of a given space.

The relationship between text and context takes on a specific connotation in relation to saints and their mortal remains. For example, painted or carved texts narrate saints' lives, often complementing hagiographical visual cycles; inscriptions mark saints' burials and celebrate their memory, sacralising and transforming monumental cityscapes.[2] Relics and holy bodies, as Patrick Geary argues, carry "no fixed code or sign of its meaning" by themselves, therefore inscriptions, either on altars, church walls or in the shining tesserae of mosaics, identify these remains, and through the

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1 Debiais 2009, 65–91.
2 Favreau 1995; Damasus of Rome 2015, 39–47.

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act of identification they validate their sacred nature.[3] The bond between words and relics, however, is significant not only on a semantic level, as a mere tool for identification. Ontologically, the saint's inscribed name reveals its real presence—otherwise invisible—through the medium of the relics. These, however, are only some of the aspects of the "context" of inscriptions referring to saints. We might pursue further questions related to the spatial and topographical dialogues created between the inscribed words and the mortal remains. In terms of space and location, how and to what extent do inscriptions interact with relics?

This article explores the above issues focusing on five inscribed slabs found in the twentieth century in the crypt of Salerno Cathedral, which list the names of more than fifteen saints whose mortal remains had been concealed in that space in March 1081. Exploring the ways in which these objects might have defined the topography of the built environment and the relations between the inscribed names and relics, it considers how script could have enhanced the presence of these holy figures, acting as proxies for their mortal remains.

1   Salerno Cathedral as Inscribed Space

The cathedral of Salerno, constructed following the conquest of the city (1077) by the Norman duke Robert Guiscard (1015–1085), can be defined, for the number and quality of the inscriptions, as a *Schriftraum*, an inscribed space. As discussed by Dorothy Glass, Valentino Pace, Francesco Gandolfo, Giuseppa Zanichelli and Chiara Lambert, amongst others, these inscriptions reveal in the first instance a complex network of patronage.[4] A twelfth-century viewer moving from the streets of Salerno into the cathedral atrium would have first encountered on the portal lintel an inscription mentioning a certain (unnamed) Duke and Jordan, prince of Capua, a likely celebration of the peace reached between Robert Guiscard (*Dux*) and Jordan of Capua in July 1083 (Fig. 1):

> May the Duke and the noble Prince Jordan of Capua rule with the people dwelling in a Salerno ever-enduring.[5]

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3 Geary 1990, 5; Cuscito 2012; Gagné 2010; Thunø 2015, 172–205.
4 Glass 1991, 18–27; Gandolfo 1995; Gandolfo 1999, 20–27; Pace 1997; Braca 2003, 13–49; Zanichelli 2012; Pace 2016; Zanichelli 2017; Lambert 2017.
5 DUX ET IORDANUS DIGNUS PRINCEPS CAPUANUS REGNENT ETERNUM CUM GENTE CO-LENTE SALERNUM. Trans. by Bloch 1986, 87, note 1. For this interpretation see, most recently, Pace 2016, 11. Alternatively, if the prince is identified with Jordan II of Capua, who held the title between 1120 and 1127, the *dux* might refer to William, the last heir of Robert the Guiscard and duke of Apulia, thus the inscription might date to the first half of the twelfth century (Braca 1994, 190–191). Gandolfo 1999, 24–25 instead has suggested that, while the inscription dates from the early phases of the Cathedral, the lintel was inserted in its position only around 1130.

Fig. 1: Salerno, Cathedral Atrium, portal, detail of lintel and inscription.

After passing under this inscription and standing in the space of the atrium (Fig. 2), the viewer would have been captured by another monumental inscription on the pediment of the church's façade (Fig. 3):

> To the patron of the city Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist, the *Dux* of the Roman Empire Robert, triumphant, at his own expenses.[6]

In this inscription, Robert Guiscard is directly referenced by his name and title, a monumental proclamation of the legitimacy of his new rule in the city. Furthermore, as highlighted by Armando Petrucci, this inscription "marks a new use of monumental writing for the conveying of a political message […] expressed through innovative aesthetic-formal solutions".[7] The inscription affirms the recently established dyad of power in the city: the terrestrial ruler, Robert, and the celestial patron, Matthew.[8] The apostle is also mentioned in a third inscription on the lintel of the main portal (Fig. 4):

> A church has been given to thee, O Apostle, by Duke Robert. In return for his merits, may he be granted the kingdom of heaven.[9]

Other inscriptions populate this space, adding to the dense textual network of patronage, such as those on the bronze door, attesting that it was donated by Landolfo and his wife, and on the bell tower, which carries the name of Bishop Guglielmo (1137–1152).[10] Once at the interior of the church, the viewer would have encountered in the apse a lengthy inscription celebrating Bishop Alfanus (r. 1058–1085) made in the third

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6 M(ATTHAEO) A(POSTOLO) ET EVANGELISTAE PATRONO URBIS ROBBERTUS DUX R(OMANI) IMP(ERII) MAXIM(US) TRIUMPHATOR DE AERARIO PECULIARI. Lambert 2017, 35 noticed that in this inscription Matthew is elevated to the role of patron of the city.

7 Petrucci 1993, 3.

8 Pace 2016, 11.

9 A DUCE ROBBERTO DONARIS APOSTOLE TEMPLO / PRO MERITIS REGNO DONETUR ET IPSE SUPERNO. Trans. by Bloch 1986, 83, note 2.

10 Braca 2003, 64–73, 75–77.

Fig. 2: Salerno, Cathedral Atrium.

Fig. 3: Salerno, Cathedral, façade, inscription.

Fig. 4: Salerno, Cathedral, portal, detail of lintel and inscription.

decade of the twelfth century, as recently argued by Zanichelli.[11] Only a few decades later, Bishop Guglielmo added an inscription on the new choir screen that stated that he raised the altar and enclosed it in order to prevent people from entering into the sacred area.[12]

These inscriptions have long attracted the attention of scholars, as they evoke networks of patronage, celebration and commemoration, populating and determining the sacred space of the cathedral, at both its interior and exterior. An additional five marble inscriptions located in the crypt enrich our understanding of Salerno Cathedral as a *Schriftraum*. Since their discovery in the second half of the twentieth century under the floor of the crypt, their inscribed surfaces facing downwards, they have attracted the attention of scholars.[13] On the one hand, these inscriptions constitute a precious source for reconstructing hagiographical traditions in Salerno.[14] On the other, each explicitly dated 1081, they are often discussed as the earliest archaeological elements that can be linked to the reconstruction of the cathedral.[15] However, many more issues still remain open to discussion, starting with their original intended visibility. Were these inscriptions intended to be buried, exactly as they had been found in the twentieth century, as recently suggested?[16] If this is the case, what implications might this have had on their visual appearance, that is, on the ways in which the text is articulated on the written surface? And finally, whether visible or

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11 Zanichelli 2012. The inscription and the apse decoration mosaic are the result of the restorations of the mid-twentieth century.
12 Longo/Scirocco 2016, 199–204.
13 Carucci 1974.
14 Lambert 2017, 36.
15 Braca 2003, 17; Vaccaro 2017, 21.
16 Lambert 2017, 36.

invisible, how might these inscriptions have related to the space of the crypt and to the presence of the saints' mortal remains it contained?

In what follows, the five inscribed slabs will be considered firstly in their textual dimension, as the identificatory tool for the relics concealed in the crypt. This includes an assessment of their relevance in the redefinition of the landscape and geography of sanctity of Salerno. Secondly, I will explore the *mise en espace* of these inscriptions, considering the spatial and topographical nexus between words and relics, and how the slabs themselves could have embedded the memory of the consecration of the crypt. Finally, I will turn to their iconic dimension, questioning how, through their visuality, words made palpable the *praesentia* (presence) of the saints listed on the marble surface, that is, the relationship between the physical, inscribed word, and the sacred organic remains.

2 Inscriptions, Saints and Hagiographical Traditions

The five marble slabs are currently preserved in the crypt. The crypt itself, while substantially modified at the beginning of the seventeenth century and re-vested in marble around 1732, still maintains its original medieval footprint.[17] After their re-discovery, three of the inscribed marble slabs were installed in the Cappella delle Reliquie, a chapel in the north wall of the crypt built on that occasion. The first inscription (75 × 130.8 cm), mounted on the west wall (Fig. 5), reads:

> † HIC REC(ON)DITE SUNT R(ELIQUIAE) · S(AN)C(T)O/RU(M) · C(ON)FESSORUM EL/-PI/DII · /CIO/NII / ELPI/TII · / ~~ET AU~~/~~STERII~~ / A DOMNO ALFANO AR/CHIEP(ISCO-P)O · TE(M)PORIBUS / DO(MI)NI ROBB(ERTI) · EXIMII DUCIS / ANNO D(O)M(IN)ICAE INCARNATIO/NIS · MLXXX~~I~~ · M(EN)SE M(A)R(TIO)
>
> Here are concealed the relics of the holy confessors Elpidius, Cionius, Elpitius and Austerius by the lord Alfanus archbishop at the time of the Lord Robert distinguished duke. In the year of the incarnation 1081, in the month of March.

All the inscribed slabs present a similar text. In March 1081, the archbishop Alfanus, in the presence of Robert Guiscard, placed the remains of the saints in the cathedral crypt. These inscriptions are remarkably different from the epigraphic corpus at the exterior of the building. The role of Robert has shifted from donor and patron to a simple witness; moreover, in their textual composition, they do not show the literary complexity and sophistication of the inscriptions discussed above. Instead, they echo the formulary used in contemporary documents.[18] The only major textual variations amongst these inscriptions relate to the names of the saints. The first function of

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17 For the transformations of the crypt: Restaino 2012.
18 Lambert 2017, 37.

Fig. 5: Salerno, Cathedral, crypt, slab of the Confessors (*Elpidius* [...]).

these texts was indeed to identify the holy mortal remains, connecting semantically the relics with their respective saints. However, the inscriptions do not provide any further details about these holy figures. For this reason, in order to reconstruct their hagiographical traditions, following the work of Amalia Galdi, it will be necessary to refer to what is recorded in the *Chronicon Salernitanum*, written in the second half of the tenth century, and in the so-called *Breviarium*, a liturgical collection attributed to the bishop Romuald II Guarna (1152–1181), transmitted in a fifteenth-century manuscript.[19]

The first inscription mentions the name Elpidius, traditionally identified as a bishop of Atella, a site between Naples and Capua. His cult was associated with those of the presbyter Cionius and the deacon Elpicius. While it is not known when the bodies of the three saints were translated to Salerno, this slab is the earliest evidence of their cult in the city.[20] In the same inscription we find also Austerius (or Eusterius), whose name was later removed from the slab, mentioned in the *Breviarium* as bishop

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19 Galdi 1994; Galdi 1996; Galdi 2000; Galdi 2002–2003.
20 Carucci 1974, 50; Galdi 2000, 118–122.

of Salerno.[21] The cult for this saint predates the eleventh-century reconstruction of the cathedral, as a 1056 donation mentions a church dedicated to his memory, identified with a chapel in Valle di Olevano, 30 km east of Salerno.[22]

On the floor at the centre of the chapel, the second inscription (69.3 × 138.6 cm) presents the names of six holy confessors (*sanctorum confessorum*): Cirinus, Valentinianus, Quingesius, Bonosus, Priscus and Grammatius, the latter has been subsequently deleted (Fig. 6).[23] According to the *Chronicon Salernitanum*, the bodies of Cirinus and Quingesius had been translated in the mid-ninth century by Bishop Bernard (849–860), from Faiano, located 20 km east of Salerno, to the church dedicated to their memory in the city.[24] Furthermore, while the *Breviarium* does commemorate them as confessor saints from Salerno, it does not mention whether they were bishops.[25] Conversely, the same manuscript explicitly commemorates the other three saints mentioned in this inscription (Valentinianus, Bonosus, Grammatius) as bishops of Salerno.[26] Finally, while the inscription does not mention explicitly the origin of Priscus, in the local liturgical tradition he is commemorated as the first bishop of Nocera, but the circumstances in which his remains were translated to Salerno are still unknown.[27]

On the east wall of the same Chapel, a third inscription (71.1 × 124 cm) lists the bodies (*corpora*) of the virgins Marina and Constance, and of the sisters of saint Priscus, here explicitly called bishop of Nocera (Fig. 7).[28] These saints do not have a proper hagiographical tradition, the sole information transmitted by the *Breviarium* is the day of their liturgical commemoration (28 January).[29] A fourth inscription is found in a *caveau* in the central apse of the crypt, visible through an iron grille (Fig. 8). It

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21 Galdi 2000, 101.

22 Carucci 1974, 51; Galdi 2000, 108–109. Another donation to the bishop of Salerno, apparently dated 968, mentions the church "in onorem Sancti Eusterii martiris". This document, however, is a forgery (Giordano 2014, 8–11).

23 † HIC REC(ON)DITE SUNT R(ELIQUAE) S(AN)C(T)ORU(M) / CONFESSORUM · CIRINI ·/ VALENTI/NIANI / ET QUINI/ESI ·/ A DOMNO ALFANO ARCHIEPIS/COPO · TEMPORIBUS DOM/NI ROBBERTI EXIMII DUCIS ·/ ANNO AB INCARNATIONE DOMI(NI) · MLXXXI · M(EN)·SE M(ART)I / S(ANCTUS) BONOSUS / S(ANCTUS) PRI/SCUS / ~~ETS(ANCTUS)~~ / ~~GRA/MATI(US)~~.

24 Galdi 1994, 9–10.

25 Galdi 2000, 101–102; Carucci 1974, 49.

26 Galdi 2000, 101; Carucci 1974, 48–49.

27 Galdi 2000, 114–117; Carucci 1974, 50.

28 † HIC REQUIESCUN(T) / CORPORA S(AN)C(T)ARU(M) / VIRGINUM MA/RI/NE ·/ CON/STAN/TIAE · / ET SORORU(M) S(ANCTI) PRI/SCI NUCERINI EPI(SCOPI) ·/ REC(ON)DITAE A DO(MI)NO / ALFANO ARCHIEPI(SCOP)O / TE(M)PORIBUS DO(MI)NI / ROBBERTI EXIMII / DUCIS · ANNO D(OMI)NI/CE INCARNATIONIS · M/LXXXI ·M(ENSE) M(A)R(TIO). The unusual ductus of AE of *reconditae* might suggest that it is a mistaken *E* which has been subject to an attempted correction (*recondita*). Furthermore, the passage *soror(um) s(ancti)* could be read as *soror v(irgo)*: for this interpretation see Lambert 2017.

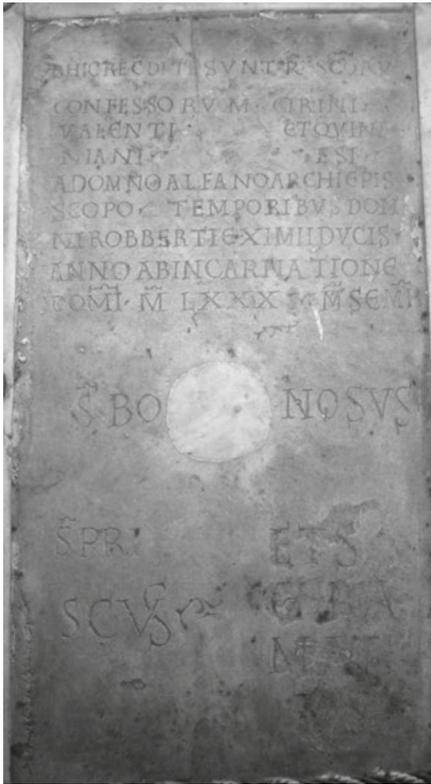**29** Carucci 1974, 50; Galdi 2000, 124.

Fig. 6: Salerno, Cathedral, crypt, slab of the Confessors (*Cirinus* […]).

Fig. 7: Salerno, Cathedral, crypt, slab of the Virgins.

lists the names of the martyrs Fortunatus, Caius, Anthes.[30] The *Chronicon Salernitanum* attests that Bishop Bernard (849–860) translated their remains, from a suburban church dedicated to them near the river Irno, to the church of San Giovanni (whose construction started at the time of his predecessor Pietro) inside Salerno's city walls.[31] Following this translation, there is no evidence for the cult of these saints until they appear again in this inscription.[32] The identification of the fourth saint listed in this

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30 † HIC REC(ON)DITE / S(UNT) · R(ELIQUIAE) S(AN)C(T)ORU(M) · MAR/TIRU(M) · FOR/TU-NA/TI / GAII · / AN/THES · / ET FE/LICIS·/ A DO(MI)NO ALFANO / ARCHIEP(SCOP)O · TE(M)-PO/RIBUS DO(MI)NI ROBB/(ER)TI EXIMII DUCIS ANNO DOMI/NICE INCARNATIONIS · MLXXXI / M(ENSE) M(A)R(TIO).

31 Galdi 1994, 10–12. A different tradition is suggested by the *Breviarium*, according to which the translation was carried out at the time of prince Gisulf, that is, at the same time of the translation of Matthew, in the mid-tenth century. However, it is more likely that the translation was carried out during the ninth century. Carucci 1974, 32–35.

32 Galdi 1994, 17.

slab, Felix, is unclear. In an anonymous hagiographical narration, a bishop of Thib-iuca (Carthage) with this name is associated with the three patrons of Salerno, Fortunatus, Caius and Anthes.[33] But Felix could be also identified with the priest and confessor whose body had been translated by Bishop Bernard, mentioned above, to the church of San Salvatore, Salerno.[34]

The fifth inscription, located within the tomb of St Matthew at the centre of the crypt, is currently not visible. The wording follows the same structure as the other inscriptions, presenting only minimal variations and explaining that the body (*corpus*) of Matthew was concealed by the archbishop Alfanus in the presence of the august emperor Michael and the duke Robert.[35] The emperor mentioned here is likely an imposter, claiming to be the former Byzantine emperor Michael VII, deposed during a military coup in March 1078.[36] In the inscription on the façade of the cathedral, Matthew is mentioned as the patron, while the text in the crypt attests to the presence of his body. According to his *translatio*, contained in a manuscript dating from the second half of the eleventh century, Matthew's body was found in 954, after the saint appeared in vision to a woman living not far from *Paestum*, and it was subsequently obtained by the prince Gisulf of Salerno.[37] The presence of the saint is attested to in a 1032 document, addressed to the cathedral, "the church of the blessed apostle and evangelist Matthew, whose body we truthfully believe to possess".[38] The body was then found again during the Norman reconstruction of the crypt, as attested to by a letter dated 18 September 1080.[39]

The similarities between the five inscriptions do not relate exclusively to their textual components. The slabs have been carved out of precious marbles and stones, probably *spolia*, thus reusing materials from earlier monuments, a practice employed elsewhere in the church during the Norman reconstruction. Similar in dimensions, all but one slab contain at their centre a *fenestella confessionis*, that is a circular or square hole with a diameter of circa 16 cm. Furthermore, the script on the different slabs is very similar, and presents many epigraphic connections also with the inscription of the church portal. Thus, the crypt inscriptions were likely carved when the

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33 Galdi 1994, 20–29; Galdi 2000, 155.

34 Galdi 2000, 103–104.

35 † HOC CORPUS GLO/RIOSISSIMUM MA/THEI APOSTOLI ET / EVANGELISTAE EST / HIC RECONDITUM / AB ALFANO ARCHI/EP(ISCOP)O PRE/SENTE MIC/HELE IMPERATO/RE AUGUSTO / ET DUCE ROBBERTO / ANNO DOMINICAE INCARNATIONIS / MLXXXI IV IND. M. M.

36 The Emperor, after his deposition, joined the monastic community of St John Studios in Constantinople, ending his life as archbishop of Ephesus (Loud 2000, 213–214).

37 For a critical discussion of the hagiographical traditions related to St Matthew in Salerno, see Galdi 1996.

38 "in ecclesia Beati apostoli et evangeliste [M]athei, cuius corpus veracissime optinere credimus" (Giordano 2014, 31–32); see also Vaccaro 2017, 22.
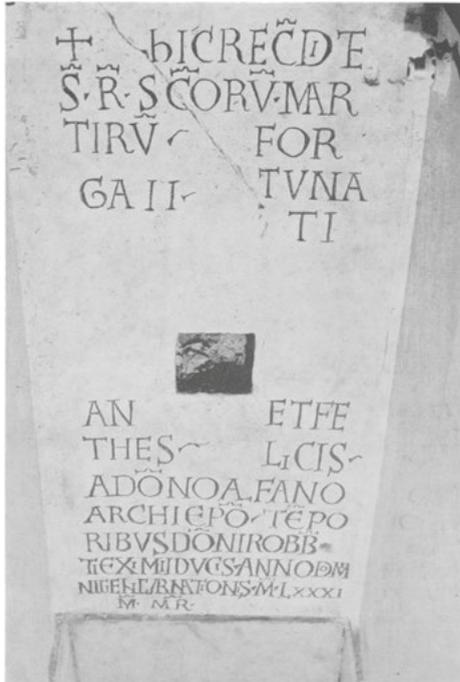
39 Galdi 1996, 71.

Fig. 8: Salerno, Cathedral, crypt, slab of the Martyrs.

relics were concealed in that space (or shortly beforehand), probably in the year 1081 as reported on the slabs themselves.[40]

The combined analysis of the inscriptions and the hagiographical traditions not only offers significant insights into the location, transfers and displacements of these holy bodies and relics before and after the reconstruction of the cathedral; it suggests a rationale for the arrangement of the saints' material remains within the space of the crypt. Of the five inscriptions, four are related to at least three saints simultaneously buried underneath each of them: two are dedicated to the confessors, one to the martyrs, and one to the virgins; the fifth slab refers to Matthew alone. Furthermore, understanding these inscriptions as hagiographical sources themselves allows us to formulate a working hypothesis related to the shifting definition of sacred geography in Salerno between the ninth and the eleventh centuries. Of the relics and bodies of the sixteen saints listed, at least six had been translated into the city during the ninth century (but not to the cathedral) by Bishop Bernard.[41] Furthermore, seven of these saints, namely Cirinus, Quingesius, Felix, Fortunatus, Caius, Anthes and Austerius,

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40 All the inscriptions present the following similarities: A with straight or angular medial crossbar; vertical short strokes at the extremities of T; short horizontal strokes at the top of A. Furthermore, uncial and/or square E appear in all the inscriptions with similar ductus. The shapes of G, A and T in the crypt inscriptions and on the portal present many similarities.
41 For these translations, see Galdi 2003.

previously buried at other sites, are related for the first time to the cathedral through these inscriptions. Due to lack of documentation, it is difficult to ascertain beyond any reasonable doubt whether these inscriptions attest to the situation before the Norman reconstruction of the cathedral, or if all these saints were translated to it by Bishop Alfanus around 1080. However, if the latter proves correct, these translations would have reshaped dramatically the sacred topography of the entire city, consolidating it within the cathedral crypt. Secondly, the inscriptions themselves dedicated to the confessors, in addition to what can be argued in relation to the translation and deposition of their mortal remains, suggest that Alfanus, in this instance at least, re-defined episcopal commemoration in Salerno.[42] If the hypothesis presented here proves correct, the case of Salerno would not be an isolated case and it should be inserted into a wider tradition attesting to the dynamic reshaping of the sacred topography of a city within the episcopal see. For example, in the mid-tenth century, the archbishop of Ravenna, Peter IV, translated to the city's cathedral the body of one of its first bishops, Probus, from the church dedicated to his memory, together with the remains of seven other bishops. Also in this case the bodies were located in a crypt, built specially for that occasion.[43]

3 Relics and Bodies

The inscriptions do not only name and identify the saints present in the crypt through their relics, they also define and clarify the nature of their mortal remains. In relation to Matthew, Marina, Constance and the sisters of Priscus (Fig. 7), the inscriptions mention their bodies (*corpora*), while the remains of all the other saints are defined as relics (*reliquiae*). Considering that the textual structure of the different inscriptions presents only minimal variations, is this distinction between relics and bodies a conscious decision? In a text written to celebrate the arrival of relics at Rouen, sent by St Ambrose, the bishop Vitricius (393–407) stated that "there is nothing in these relics that is not complete"; furthermore "Let no one, deceived by vulgar error, think that the truth of the whole of their bodily passion is not contained in these fragments".[44] From the theological perspective evidenced in these words, each part of the body of a saint *is* the whole body. If this is the case, is the semantic variation between relics and bodies in the inscriptions significant? Across time, different terms have been adopted to refer to the remains of saints, reflecting the shifting attitude towards these very materials. When Constantina, wife of the emperor Maurice, requested the head of St Paul, Gregory the Great replied in a letter (594) explaining that the Romans

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42 Galdi 2002–2003, 14.
43 Tosco 2016, 60–61.
44 Quoted and discussed in Bynum 1995, 107.

never disturb the tombs of saints and that they do not distribute corporeal relics. In his missive, the pope refers to *reliquiae* as both corporeal remains and objects that had come in contact with bones and bodies of saints. As argued by John McCulloh, "*reliquiae* were spiritually, if not physically, equivalent to bodily remnants".[45] Relics, whether physical remains or objects invested by contact with saints' bodies could be moved and translated, carried to gain personal protection, offered to reinforce links between religious and lay communities.[46] Furthermore, early medieval sources, as highlighted by Caroline Goodson, suggest the idea of a "rhetorical fluidity of words like *corpora*, *ossa*, *reliquia* and *membra*, used with only minimal distinction in guides, epigraphy and references to relics".[47] Can we attribute the variation between *corpora* and *reliquiae* in the Salerno inscriptions to such a "rhetorical fluidity"? In other words, are these terms invested with the same substantial meaning?

Another inscription, found in 1948 in the atrium of the cathedral, might suggest a potential solution to these questions. The inscription dates from 1078 and attests that the relics of the saints Fortunatus, Gaius, Anthes, John, Paul, Cosma and Damian were concealed by the archbishop Alfanus.[48] This inscription does not belong to the cathedral. Instead, its provenance has been traced to the destroyed church of San Fortunato in Salerno, where it was discovered in 1629.[49] Predating, by at least two years, the cathedral inscriptions, it testifies that Alfanus has concealed relics of the same saints, Fortunatus, Gaius and Anthes, but arguably *different* relics, in both San Fortunato and the cathedral. Thus, the simultaneous presence of relics of the same saints in two distinct sites—and the fact that the cathedral text uses the word *reliquiae* in relation to them—might suggest that in distinction between the terms relics and bodies, *reliquiae* and *corpora*, might have been a deliberate decision. While from a spiritual or theological perspective relics are the bodies of the saints, in their material essence they are fragments, the result of a process of division of the material wholeness of the body of a saint and, as such, they can be duplicated and multiplied. Thus, the relics of the three martyrs could be, at the same time, in both the cathedral and in San Fortunato. In contrast, a body is defined by its uniqueness and can be present, in its entirety, in only one place. It is certainly not a matter of coincidence that, in his letter sent to Alfanus (1080), pope Gregory VII emphatically celebrates the invention of the remains of St Matthew, explicitly referring to his body (*tanti corporis inventione*), and not to his relics.[50]

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45 McCulloh 1976, 181.
46 Boesch Gajano, 1999.
47 Goodson 2007, 55.
48 MLXXVIII / ANNO D(OMI)NICAE INCARN(ATI)O(N)IS / RELIQUIAE S(AN)C(T)ORU(M) MART(YRUM) / FORTUNATI GAII ET ANTHES / IOH(ANN)IS ET PAULI COSMAE ET / DAMI-ANI NAZARII ET CELSI / HIC REC(ON)DITAE SUNT / AB ALFANO ARCHIEP(ISCOP)O / TE(M)-P(ORE) ROBBERTI P(ER)CELLENTIS/SIMI DUCIS.
49 Balducci 1957.
50 Galdi 1996, 71.

4 Words and Space

The Salerno slabs make the mortal remains of the saints recognisable through their identification. From this perspective, they share many similarities with lists of relics carved in stone or written on parchment that identify and preserve the memory of the saints. However, the Salerno inscriptions cannot be understood exclusively as relic lists, as they call attention to space and location. Each inscription starts with the adverb *hic* (here) or the demonstrative adjective *hoc* (this), suggesting they could have been intended to be linked, spatially and physically, with the remains of the saints whose names they carry. Debiais has suggested that in funerary epigraphy the expression *hic iacet* could have been used simply as a textual formula, without necessarily referring to the location of the burial.[51] In order to discuss whether the Salerno inscriptions suggest an intimate, spatial, material and substantial connection with the saints they name, it will be necessary to consider other examples where epigraphy has been used as a vehicle for showing the presence of saints' remains.

Despite the relatively distant chronology and geographical location, the comparison of the Salerno slabs with a ninth-century inscription from San Primo and Feliciano in Leggiuno (Varese) proves useful in understanding the relationship between relics, words and space. This inscription attests that in this place (*hic*) lays the body (*corpus*) of the martyr St Primus, that the pope Sergius conceded to Erembertus to translate from Rome; the body was subsequently concealed (*reconditum est*) with the relics (*reliquis*) of St Feliciano.[52] While there are many textual resonances between this inscription and those in Salerno, such as the distinction between relics and body, or the use of *reconditum*, it served a clear function. Probably linked, perhaps even physically, to the remains of the saints, the inscription traces the saints' story and provides details of their translation. Other inscriptions, such as in San Vincenzo in Galliano near Cantù (Province of Como), simultaneously commemorate the translation of the remains of the titular saint and the dedication of the church (1007).[53] These comparisons show the relative lack of information contained in the Salerno inscriptions. Not only is there no mention of the histories of the relics, but it is not even suggested whether their deposition was accompanied by the dedication (or consecration) of the altars. Furthermore, the inscriptions in Salerno can be compared only superficially with the long and often monumental lists of relics carved on stone (often marble) and found, for example, in Roman churches between the eight and the ninth centuries,

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51 Debiais 2011.

52 † HIC S(AN)C(T)I PRIMI MARTYRIS CORPVS / VENERANDVM IN CHRISTO HVMATV(M) QVIESCIT / QVOD D(E)O DIGNVS SERGIVS PAPA IVNIOR / EREMBERTO INLVSTRI VIRO CONCESSIT · AB VRBE ROMA [...] RECONDITVM EST CORPVS BEATI PRIMI MARTYRIS / CVM RELIQVIS S(AN)C(T)I FELICIANI [...]. For the inscription see: Petoletti 2001.

53 † VI · NO(NAS) · IVL(II) · TRANSLACIO / S(AN)C(T)I · AD(E)ODATI · ET DEDIC(ATIO) · ISTIVS / ECCL(ESI)E [...]. For the inscription see: Petoletti 2007, 123–127.

Fig. 9: Gazzo Veronese, Santa Maria, inscription.

such as those in Sant'Angelo in Pescheria, San Silvestro in Capite or Santa Prassede. The latter presents the names of eighty-six saints in types, such as popes, bishops, priests, martyrs, female martyrs, virgins; in the final line it declares that the remains belong to 2,300 saints.[54] Similarly, also the inscription in Santo Stefano in Verona mentions all the relics contained in the entire church.[55] Lists of relics could be carved also on altars (or on slabs attached to the altar), usually commemorating not only the names of the saints but also the date of consecration or dedication of the altar itself, such as in Santa Maria in Gazzo Veronese, near Verona, now walled at the exterior of the building (Fig. 9), or in Rome, in the altar of Santa Galla (1073) or the inscriptions in Santa Pudenziana (1077), San Lorenzo in Lucina (1112), San Salvatore in Primicerio (1112), Santa Maria in Cosmedin (1123) or San Tommaso in Parione (1139).[56] All of these inscriptions serve the primary function of identifying the relics by carrying the respective names of the saints. Furthermore, they link relics with the altars within which they are preserved (Gazzo Veronese or Santa Galla), commemorate translations

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54 Goodson 2010, 204–211, 228–234.

55 Tosco 2016, 75–76.

56 Santa Galla and Santa Pudenziana: Riccioni 2008; Claussen/Mondini/Senekovix 2010, 280, 307; San Salvatore in Primicerio, San Tommaso in Parione: Koch 2007, 171–173; Santa Maria in Cosmedin: Riccioni 2000, 143–145; Gazzo Veronese: Bottazzi 2012, 104–107, 127 note 102.

(San Primo in Leggiuno, San Vincenzo in Galliano, Santa Prassede) or provide a list of the feast days associated with the relics (San Silvestro in Capite).

Despite the chronological, geographic and epigraphic differences, all of these inscriptions share a common, substantial aspect, as the names of the saints are listed in one stone slab, that is, in just one inscribed space. Something distinct is at play in Salerno, as here what could have been easily confined to a single inscription has been multiplied, keeping the same textual formulary, with only minimal variations, across the different slabs. This textual re-iteration calls attention to the multiplication of the slabs, which, in turn, can be understood only by considering the inherent idea of space, that is, their *mise en espace*, the function and the presence of these physical objects within the built environment of the crypt. The hypothetical reconstruction of the location of these inscriptions within the space of the crypt raises immediately a crucial question related to their visibility. Were the inscriptions intended to be seen, and was their text readable? Or, on the contrary, were they intended to be buried, as they had been discovered in the twentieth century? In order to approach this issue, it is necessary to trace their material history, beginning with their discovery.

5 Tracing a Sacred Topography

The first inscription was unexpectedly discovered in 1953. While moving the altar in the central apse of the crypt (Fig. 10, b), the archbishop ordered the exploration of this area in order to search for the relics that the local ecclesiastical tradition associated with it. During this work, a recess (170 × 73 cm) was found 1.80 meters under the floor, covered with a marble slab containing a *fenestella* on its upper surface.[57] Once removed, this slab revealed, on the surface facing downwards, the inscription referring to the martyrs Fortunatus, Gaius, Anthes et Felix (Fig. 8). An alabaster amphora was also found in this recess without any other *authentica* or inscription. A few years later, in 1957, underneath the floor of the south apse of the crypt the two inscriptions of the confessors were found (Figs. 5, 6), one (Elpidius etc.) above the other (Cirinus etc.). In the following decade, the inscriptions related to St Matthew (1961) and to the Virgins (1967) were discovered, respectively in the tomb of the patron and in the north apse of the crypt (Fig. 7). The former was not removed, serving still today as the ceiling of the *loculus* of the patron saint. Thus, all the inscriptions were found under the floor, their surface carrying the inscriptions facing downwards.

Before their discovery, the slabs and their inscriptions had probably not been visible for a long time. It is certain that they were not visible after the seventeenth-cen-

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[57] For the discovery of the inscriptions: Bergamo 1972, 22–30, and the detailed official report in the Diocesan Archive of Salerno, collected in the folder Curia Arcivescovile Salernitana, Verbale di riposizione delle reliquie nella cripta del Duomo, Salerno 27 Giugno 1970.
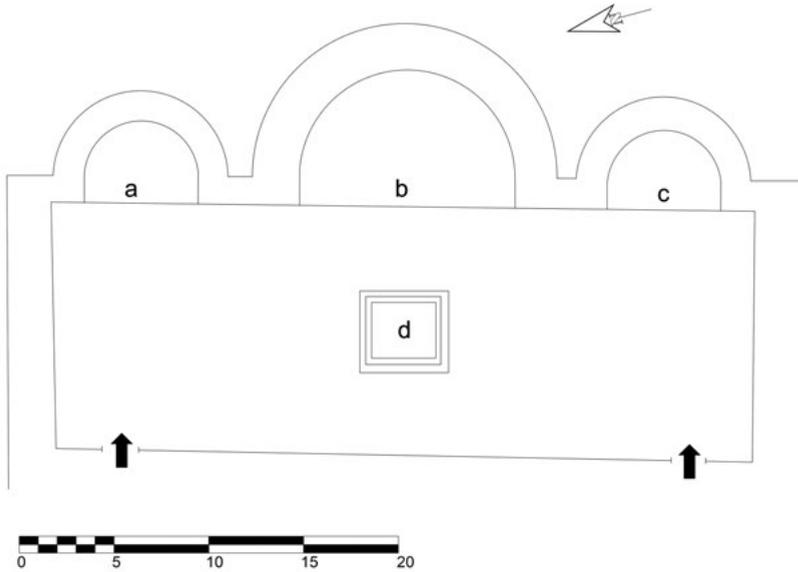
Fig. 10: Salerno, Cathedral, schematic plan of the crypt: (a) Virgins, (b) Martyrs, (c) Confessors, (d) Matthew.

tury restoration of the crypt, as they are not mentioned by Antonio Mazza, who transcribed all the inscriptions of the cathedral (1681).[58] Even before this date the inscriptions were probably not visible. In the acts of the 1575 pastoral visit, the archbishop Colonna mentions *tabellae* carrying the names of saints, but these lists as reported by the archbishop differ from what is carved on the slabs. It should be noted, however, that even if the inscriptions were not visible, the memory of the sacred burials was transmitted across time. Colonna mentions, in addition to the altar of the patron, the altars of the Virgins with the remains of Marina and Constance, that of the crucifix, where the bodies of Fortunatus, Caius and Anthes are preserved, and that of the Holy Spirit, with the bodies of the saints Austerius and Grammatius.[59] Furthermore, the prelate mentions that the crypt houses the burials of fifteen saints in total, that is what is listed in the eleventh-century inscriptions.[60]

Thus, the memory of burials and of relics was transmitted, even if the inscriptions, at the time of the pastoral visit, were not visible. The invisibility of the inscriptions in the sixteenth century, however, does not necessarily imply that this was what was intended at the time of their creation. Documentary evidence suggests that the burials

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58 Mazza 1681.

59 Balducci 1963–64, 120–124.

60 Columnae 1580, 80–81: "In quo quidem specu […] sunt etiam quindecim sanctorum corpora recondita".

of some of the saints were modified as early as the thirteenth century, probably affecting also the inscribed slabs. Bishop Caesarius of Alagna (r. 1225–1263), in fact, collected the bodies of the saints Quingesius, Cirinus and all the other confessors under the altar with the same title (Holy Confessors) in the crypt (*inferior basilica*).[61] Unfortunately, this source does not explicitly mention the provenance of these remains, whether they were originally located in two different altars in the same crypt, or if they were moved from another area of the cathedral.[62] However, the testimony might explain the very unusual setting of the inscriptions of the confessors as found in the twentieth century, one above the other, in the very same space under the floor.

The documentary evidence discussed thus far suggests that, whether visible or invisible, these inscriptions were likely associated from their conception with different altars in the crypt. While inscriptions on altars referring to relics are indeed common, rarer is the case, as in Salerno, when multiple coeval inscriptions are associated with different altars in the same space.[63] A similar example can be found in the church of St Peter in Petersberg near Fulda, where three inscriptions were discovered in the crypt at the beginning of the twentieth century, all but one subsequently reused as altar frontals (Fig. 11). Dating from the ninth century, these inscribed stones also contain a small *fenestella confessionis* at the centre. One (62 × 70 cm) mentions that the altar is dedicated in honour of the Virgin Mary, mother of the Lord, and to all the holy virgins; the second (64 × 80 cm) explains that in the altar are contained the relics of the Lord, of the place of his Ascension and of the twelve Apostles; the third, fragmentary as it was reused already in the mid-twelfth century, suggests that an altar was dedicated to the Choir of Angels.[64] These inscriptions were originally associated, respectively, with the central altar of the main choir (in honour of Christ); in the crypt, with altars in the south and central apses, dedicated to the Angels and to the Virgin Mary. Probably, according to Gregor Richter, these inscriptions were originally intended to serve as altar stones, and not as altar frontals, as they have been set after their rediscovery.[65]

Another example of multiple inscriptions referring to relics in one space can be found in the former collegiate church, now cathedral, of Essen, where four inscribed slabs are preserved above the capitals of the crypt (Fig. 12). These slabs are smaller than those in Petersberg (ca. 38 × 40 cm) and do not have *fenestellae confessionis*, as

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61 "Sanctorum Confessorum Quinigesii, Cirini et aliorum insuper confessorum corpora simul collegit et in altari sub eodem vocabulo in Inferiori ipsius Ecclesiae Basilica recondidit." (Musca 1594, 44).
62 Musca 1594, 15, 21–22.
63 For altar inscriptions referring to relics, see: Michaud 1999.
64 The inscriptions read: HOC ALTARE DEDICA(TUM) E(ST) IN HONORE SCAE MATRIS D(O-MI)NI ET OMNIVM S(AN)C(T)ARUM VIRGINUM; IN HAC ARA CONTINENTVR RELIQ(UIAS) S(AN)C(T) I SALVATORIS. DE LOCO ASCENSIONIS EIVS ET RELIQ(UIAS) XII APOSTOLO-RUM; HOC ALTARE DEDI . . . CORV(M) ANGELORV(M) (Kenner 2014, 285–293).
65 Richter 1907.

the text covers their entire surfaces. The first inscription attests that the oratory (*hoc oratorium*) was dedicated in 1051 by the archbishop Herimannus.[66] The other three inscriptions list the relics contained in each altar, without mentioning their respective dedications.[67] In this case a connection between the inscriptions and altars might be suggested by the textual emphasis on proximity (*in hac ara*; *in ista ara*; *in hoc altari*).[68]

The examples of Petersberg and Essen are of crucial importance in the analysis of the Salerno inscriptions. What could have been a list of relics, contained in just one place, has been spread across different slabs, thus generating inscribed objects which can be located in different places within the built environment. In the first instance, it appears that the Salerno inscriptions could have been originally linked with the different altars in which the relics and bodies were concealed. If this was the case, the text, with its emphasis on *hic* and *hoc*, would correctly point, through the altars, to the proximity between the inscriptions and the actual remains of the various saints listed. However, ascertaining how these inscriptions were displayed and if they were intended to be visible prove extremely difficult. The inscriptions at Petersberg likely served, originally, as altar stones, each slab forming the horizontal element of the altar. It is unlikely that the Salerno slabs would have had a similar function, as the text is laid out vertically in the rectangular space of the stone. More likely, if used as altar stones, the inscription would have been carved horizontally. Thus, is it possible that they could have been originally intended as altar frontals, as the Petersberg inscriptions were used after their rediscovery? In this case, again considering the vertical development of the slab, the altar would have been quite high, exceeding ca. 130 cm.

A further aspect calls attention to the idea of proximity. While the Essen inscriptions refer explicitly to the altars (*in hac ara*; *in ista ara*; *in hoc altari*), those in Salerno, instead, mention only relics and bodies. In other words, in Essen the inscriptions reference the material remains through an altar. In Salerno, instead, the inscriptions

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66 ANNO INCARNACI/ONIS DOMINICAE MIL(LESIMO) / · LI/ · INDICT(IONE) · IIII · V · ID(VS) SEP(TEMBRIS) / DEDICATV(M) E(ST) HOC ORATORI/V(M) A VENERABILI ARCHIEP(ISCO-P)O / HERIMANNO P(RE)CATVNO/BILISSIMAE SORORIS / SVAE THEOPHANV ABB(ATIS-S)AE (Hermann 2011, 29, Nr. 13).

67 The inscriptions read: IN HAC ARA HA/BENTVR RELIQVIAE / S(AN)C(T)ORV(M) · (CHRIS-TO)PHORI / CYRICI · CYRIACI · CORNELII · CY/PRIANI · PAN/[C]RACII · [N]EREI / [ACHIL-LEII] (Hermann 2011, 30f., Nr. 14); IN HOC · ALTARI CONTI/NENTVR RELIQVIAE S(AN)C-(T)O/RV(M) IOH(ANNIS) BAPT(ISTAE) · IOHANN(IS) / EVVANG(ELISTAE) · MA[THEI] E[VV] ANG(ELISTAE) / QVINTIN[I M(A)R(TYRIS) ·DIOMISII] / RVSTICI GEORGII CLE/MEN[TIS] BLASII ·INNO/CENTIV(M) GORGONII (Hermann 2011, 31f., Nr. 15); IN · ISTA · ARA HA/BENTVR RELIQVIAE / S(AN)C(T)ORV(M) · IOHANNIS / PAVLI · MAVRICII / EXVPERII LAND/BERHTI · CRISPINI / CRISPINIANI · SE/BASTIANI · ALBANI (Hermann 2011, 32f., Nr. 16). For the inscriptions see also: Klinkhammer 1972.

68 These inscriptions are relevant also in relation to the grouping of saints, as here those originating from Rome are clustered in one slab: Bodarwé 2000, 352–354.

point directly to the relics or bodies, suggesting proximity between the script itself and the relics. The closeness between the inscribed stone and the material remains of the saints is strengthened by the presence, in all but one of the slabs, of the *fenestella confessionis*. This feature, usually found in the side of the altar facing the nave, permitted contact, from the exterior, with the relics contained within itself.[69] That the *fenestellae* of the Salerno slabs are original and coeval with the inscriptions is proven by examination of the one dedicated to the confessors (Fig. 6): here the name Bonosus has been carved, in its entirety, taking into consideration the gap of the *fenestella*. Yet if these slabs were made with the intention of being buried, what is the purpose of including the *fenestella*?

These slabs, through the identification of the saints, on the one hand call attention to the proximity between script and material remains; on the other, they emphasise the sacred bond between these holy figures, implicitly offering an explanation for why they were clustered according to their category (virgins, martyrs, confessors). Together with the main altar of St Matthew at the centre (Fig. 10, d), these groups served to define (from North to South) the altar dedications of the crypt.[70] Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine, due to the lack of documentary evidence, whether such a configuration of altars and burials was planned during the eleventh-century reconstruction of the cathedral, or if it was inherited from the pre-existing building.[71] Nevertheless, the altar dedications in Salerno would not have been unique, as this type of arrangement finds correspondences north of the Alps. For example, the church of St Arnulf in Metz presents a similar situation, as in addition to the altar of the titular saint (Arnulf), and the main altar (St John the Evangelist), the dedications of the other four altars have been grouped according to the types of saints, namely, martyrs, virgins, confessors, monks, and holy innocents (consecrated 1049).[72] A similar situation is recorded also in relation to the 1148 consecration of the Euchariuskirche in Trier by Pope Eugene III.[73]

The similarities in the altar dedications between Salerno, Metz and Trier probably do not relate to a direct contact between the three sites; rather, they would seem to refer to common sources or practices. The *Ordo ad Benedicendam Ecclesiam* (ordo 40) of the Romano-German Pontifical—the dedication rite of churches transmitted in many manuscripts, such as the so-called Pontifical of Henry II (Staatsbibliothek

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69 De Blaauw 2001, 982–983 suggests that at the time of Pope Simmacus (r. 498–514) and immediately afterwards, the *fenestellae* show the complete integration between altar and confession.

70 Mazza 1681, 55–59. The altar dedications appear in the acts of the 1575 pastoral visit (see Balducci 1963–64, 120–124), and their location corresponds to where the inscribed slabs have been found. The altar of St Matthew is described before the sixteenth-century modifications in Balducci 1963–64, 120–121.

71 For the Cathedral preceding the Norman reconstruction: Vaccaro 2017.

72 "Dedicationes Ecclesiae S. Arnulfi" (1879), 547.

73 Braun 1924, I, 727.

Bamberg Msc.Lit. 53, fols. 31r.–31v.)—might suggest a potential explanation. During the ritual of the consecration, the celebrating bishop invokes the intercession of saints through a litany.[74] The order of the litany is particularly relevant here: the invocations to the Saviour, Virgin Mary and angels are followed by those to the apostles, the martyrs, the confessors and the virgins. Obviously the two sequences of saints, those in the litany and those in the Salerno slabs, differ substantially, as in the latter exclusively local saints are enumerated. However, it might not be a coincidence that the saints are grouped according to the same categories, and these very categories are explicitly mentioned in the inscriptions: *confessorum*, *virginum*, *martirum*. Furthermore, the progression of the litany could be pursued, mentally or physically, in the space of the crypt, from the altar of St Matthew (one of the apostles, Fig. 10, d) to that of the martyrs in the central apse (Fig. 10, b), from the altar of the confessors (Fig. 10, c) to that of the virgins (Fig. 10, a) on the two minor apses from south to north. In this case, the progression of the litany, if not its ritual performance, would trace an ideal cross in the space of the crypt, a cross with a vertical arm that extends the west-east axis, and the horizontal arm that connects the two altars in the two minor apses (south-north). The placement of bodies and relics, clustered according to the same categories as in the consecration litany, through their location in different altars could have recalled and fixed in time the performance of the consecration.[75]

6 Script as Presence

The analysis of the Salerno slabs reveals how their *mise en espace* would have shaped the built environment of the crypt, defining its sacred topography through the memory of the bodies-relics and, potentially, the consecration of the space itself. However, the extent to which this memory would have been visible is still open to discussion. It has recently been suggested that, from the very beginning, these slabs were intended to be buried, and that these inscriptions are, following the terminology of Cecile Treffort, *endotaphs*, inscriptions, usually associated with burials, visible and legible only from the interior.[76] Inscriptions hidden from plain sight do not relate only and exclusively to burials: invisible, for example, was the inscribed stone attesting the consecration of the altar from the destroyed church of Saint-Cybard-du-Peyrat,

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74 Iogna-Prat 2006, 260–277; the different sources are analysed in Méhu 2007.

75 The Salerno slabs cannot be easily classified as "inscriptions of consecration", as they do not explicitly refer to altars, to their dedications, or to the fact they have been dedicated. The only element commemorated and emphasised in these inscriptions is the concealment of bodies-relics themselves, which could be indeed part of the ritual of dedication. For inscriptions related to consecrations see Treffort 2007b. It should also be highlighted that these inscriptions present many anomalies vis-à-vis altar dedicatory inscriptions. For the latter: Favreau 1995, 77–79.

76 For endotaphs: Treffort 2007a, 23–42. For the hypothesis in relation to Salerno: Lambert 2017.

contained within the altar itself.[77] In this and similar examples, the importance of the text lies not in its readability, but in its presence—a presence that, in this case, is restricted (*restringierte Präsenz*).[78]

The conceptual paradigm of restricted presence can be further nuanced, as recently suggested by Wilfried E. Keil, through consideration of temporality and audience. In relation to the latter, inscriptions can be in plain sight, but their visibility can be restricted to a particular audience, such as the individuals allowed in the choir of Worms Cathedral. Other artefacts, such as the inscribed foundation stone of St Michael in Hildesheim, have been only temporarily visible to human eyes, before being buried or hidden (*temporär sichtbar*).[79] The Salerno slabs can indeed be investigated from the perspective of *temporär sichtbar*: while their presence was restricted (from an undermined time) until their discovery, at the very least, these inscribed words would have been themselves visible at the time of their inception, even if only temporarily. More problematic, however, is to understand for how long they would have been visible, as documentary evidence does not offer any clear indication; we cannot argue with absolute certainty one way or the other whether the slabs were originally intended to be visible or invisible, and if the inscriptions they carry were intended to be read. This issue is even more complex in the context of the cathedral as a *Schriftraum*, with its coeval (or slightly later) inscriptions, where the graphic elements are carved to be explicitly visible, such as on the façade and on the portals, where the public nature of script functions only through the act of seeing and reading.

Whether their own presence was restricted or not, the crypt slabs would have been linked with another presence, that of the organic remains of the saints. Thus, even if invisible in their carved letters, the slabs and their inscriptions were inextricably attached to the holy individuals they list. Names do not only make relics recognisable, they affirm the material presence of the saints themselves. This might be suggested through analysis of the conscious erasure of the names of Austerius and Grammatius. It is possible that the relics of these two saints eventually never reached the cathedral: the only church dedicated to St Austerius in the area, at Olevano sul Tusciano (40 km south-east of Salerno), attested to for the first time in 1056, was probably the first burial site of the bishop.[80] An even stronger case can be suggested in relation to Grammatius. When the Salernitan church dedicated to him, already attested in the eleventh century, was demolished in the seventeenth century, a wooden urn was found under the altar, containing the mortal remains of the saint. Furthermore, his funerary inscription, dating between the fifth and the sixth century, was discovered

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77 Treffort 2007b.

78 Hilgert 2010, 99 note 20; Frese/Keil/Krüger 2014.

79 Keil 2014a; for foundation stones: Keil 2014b; for patron inscriptions: Keil 2018.

80 Giordano 2014, 8–11; De Simone/Rescigno/Manzione/De Mattia 2001, II, 252.

in the same place.[81] Unfortunately, documentary evidence does not allow us to follow the history of the relics-body of St Grammatius. It is not possible, therefore, to posit whether he was buried in the cathedral when it was consecrated (as suggested by the eleventh-century inscription in the crypt) to then be translated (certainly before the seventeenth century) to his titular church, or if his translation to the cathedral was never performed. Equally problematic is how the memory of the burial of these two saints in the crypt was transmitted until the sixteenth century, when it is recorded by Colonna (1575). Neither is it possible to suggest when, and under which circumstances, the name of the saint was deleted from the inscription in the crypt. However, despite all these uncertainties, the conscious and voluntary erasure of the names of the saints, on the one hand, implied that when this act was performed these slabs were visible; on the other, it should be linked to the absence of their mortal remains at the site, offering new insights in the relationship between script and relics. The saint's name does not only identify the mortal remains, but links them in its substantial materiality and presence.

The connection between names, relics and presence, rather than relating to the slabs' visibility, can be explored by focusing on their visuality, defined by Dider Méhu, as "the potential of imagination and conceptualization provoked by the visible characters of the script".[82] The potential of imagination in these inscriptions is enhanced and expressed through their peculiar *mise en page*, as the linear succession of words and letters is here modified and interpolated. The inscriptions are visually articulated, breaking the linearity of the text. The letters forming the name of each saint are clustered in specific parts of the available writing space, producing a peculiar effect. The names themselves are carefully orchestrated, clustered and grouped on the support, breaking the linearity of the text, and leaving empty space on the plain surface which could, on occasion, take the shape of a cross (as in the inscriptions of the confessors and of the martyrs). Script can here be explored in its iconic dimension and treated like an image, with the saints' names defining the *Sakralen Schriftraum* of the support itself. While many factors could have influenced the dynamic interaction between script, space and presence, we might suggest that the names are located in correspondence with the remains of the saints.[83] Here script maps relics and bodies on the marble surface, defining their physical presence through the materiality of the letters themselves. The erasure and the spatial articulation of the script in the written space suggest that in this example the names of the saints do not only have a mere textual component, and they do not only identify relics and remains. Rather, these names seem to show the presence of the saints to which they refer. Visually, the letters

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81 † DEP(OSITIO) S(AN)C(TAE) M(EMORIAE) GRAMMATII EPI(SCOPI), SUB DIE VIII KAL(EN)D(AS) FEBR(UARIAS), CON(SULE) PROBO V(IRO) C(LARISSIMO) IUN(IORE), QUI VIXIT IN PACE ANN(OS) XLI (Lambert 2008, 143–144; Galdi 2002–2003, 16–18).
82 Méhu 2016, 259.
83 Carucci/Pecoraro 1984, 61.

articulate the space of the burial; substantially, they create a link between text and remains: the inscribed names acted as a proxy for the relics of the saint.

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