Sassetta's Madonna della Neve. An Image of Patronage

Israëls, M.

Publication date
2003

Citation for published version (APA):
TURINO DI MATTEO, HIS WIDOW LUDOVICA BERTINI
AND THE INSTITUTION OF THEIR CHAPEL

Since De Nicola's publication of 1913, it has been surmised that donna Ludovica, widow of the operaio Turino di Matteo, commissioned Sassetta to paint the altarpiece of the Madonna della Neve for their chapel in the cathedral of Siena in memory of her late husband. Yet Turino's involvement in the project actually surpassed the passive role of tributary and we shall in fact discover that the idea for a chapel originated during his lifetime. By searching for remaining records of the life of the couple we shall give faces to these names, and by probing into the newly found early dispositions regarding the chapel we shall gain a better understanding of the inception of the commission and the motives behind it.

The merchant Turino di Matteo di Turino was an impressive figure in the political and social life of Siena. Turino was 'capitano e gonfaloniere' of the Commune for the bimesters from March to April 1411 and May to June 1415. In September and October 1415 he had another public function as an official of the Dogana del Sale representing the Terzo di Città. He was vessilifero or standard-bearer for the Terzo of Camollia from January until June 1418. ‘Turino di Matteio mercatante’ had been amongst three elected candidates to become rector of the Spedale della Scala in July 1410 (Carlo d'Agnolino Bartoli, who would remain a friend of Turino’s until the end of the latter’s life, was eventually chosen for the job). In the 1410 Lira, Turino's patrimony was estimated at 2300 lire, a large amount of money, which put him amongst the wealthier of the city. Turino then lived in the Terzo di Camollia in the neighbourhood of ‘San Piero a Ovile di sotto’, quite near to the church of San Francesco. For his spiritual and social welfare, Turino turned to the lay confraternity of San Francesco from at least 1409 until his death in August 1423. Turino di Matteo married donna Ludovica, daughter of Francesco di Vanni Bertini and a member of the Sienese aristocracy. The couple were to remain childless.

In 1420 Turino di Matteo was chosen out of three to become the new operaio of the cathedral. The operaio was the superintendent of the Opera del Duomo, the organ which oversaw the administration of the cathedral. Turino was made
operaio and, at the same time, knighted by Agnolo Martinozzi in the Sala del Consiglio on 6th June in the year 1420. His predecessor, Caterino di Corsino, had greatly enhanced the importance of the office, probably taking the initiative for a whole new set of rules for the election of the operaio, that were established in that year. The operaio would now assume the office for his lifetime, instead of the previous semestral terms. Upon accepting his job, he had to commit 1000 florins (4000 lire) to the Opera and, after his death, any goods accumulated during the term. He was to wear the clothes designed for the job, amongst them a hat lined with grey squirrel fur 'birecta foderata di dossi di vaio'. Moreover, it was provided that the operaio be created cavaliere, to add to the prestige of his office. For financial-hereditary reasons, it was a prerequisite to have no children. The operaio earned 100 florins a year and lived in the Casa dell'Opera, situated to the left of the cathedral, more or less on the spot of the present archiepiscopal palace. The widow of an operaio could lay no claim to the salary, but only to the usufruct of the committed 1000 florins. Turino rebelled against two of these provisions: he did not wish to contribute more than 750 florins from his personal wealth to the Opera del Duomo and, amusingly, he refused to wear the squirrel-fur hat.

Turino supervised several projects during his short office. On 18th August 1422 he was amongst those granting Canon Francesco di Biagio Tolomei the patronage of a chapel to be constructed next to the chapel of the Crucifix. Tolomei's chapel would later be dedicated to the Visitation. Gregorio di Cecco painted the altarpiece for this altar with a Virgin and Child amidst music-making angels and lateral saints and dated it 1423 (fig. 38). Turino was also engaged in the decoration of the chapel of the Crucifix, overseeing its decoration on behalf of its patron, the notary Galgano di Cerbone. On 29th January, Turino commissioned Alberto di Betto da Assisi four wooden statues for this chapel at a price of 20 florins (fig. 35). The contract was drawn up by Turino's brother-in-law, notary Nanni di Francesco Bertini.

Turino's attention to the decoration of the cathedral received Turino's attention too: he revitalised the pavement decoration of the cathedral received.
construction of the pavement following a break in the activities of some fifteen years, and added the panel with the wheel with King David in front of the high altar.\textsuperscript{28} The Casa dell'Opera, where Turino himself lived, was also renovated. Outside the cathedral, Turino presided over the commission for the building of the Loggia della Mercanzia. When this commission could not come to an agreement about the design, it appointed fifteen citizens to advise.\textsuperscript{29} At the same time, a lot of Turino's attention must have been absorbed by the preparations for the Council of Siena, which started in July 1423, and for the long-awaited arrival of Pope Martin V in the city.\textsuperscript{30}

Turino di Matteo died on 20th August 1423 after hardly two years in office. Exceptionally, he was not buried in San Francesco by his confraternity. Instead, on 24th August, a funeral procession with many beccamorti and a lot of wax-candles accompanied him to a final resting place in the cathedral.\textsuperscript{31} In his Cronaca, Fecini records the funeral and the place of burial: ‘A di xxini\textsuperscript{32} d'agosto muri misser Turino operaio di duomo stato. Fessi la bandiera col fornimento e i\textsuperscript{33} pennone che li fu donato dal Comune di Radicofani. E sotterròsì onoratamente dinanzi alla porta del Perdono.’\textsuperscript{34} The Porta del Perdono, in the southern transept wall next to the Campanile, where now the Cappella del Voto can be found, used to be the main entrance to the cathedral for those coming from the city centre, as an approach from that direction towards the façade was blocked by the mass of the episcopal palace, now demolished (fig. 1).

Turino di Matteo was the first operaio to be granted the privilege of perpetuating his memory through the decoration of a chapel in the cathedral, as well as being granted burial in a grave situated in front of this chapel. Caterino di Corsino, Turino's predecessor in the office, had been buried in front of a chapel without any further concessions of patronage.\textsuperscript{35} Giovanni Borghesi (operaio 1439-1449) was commemorated by an inscription in the pavement directly out-
side the Porta del Perdono. A cathedral-chapel for an individual operaio would remain an exception to the rule, and only Mariano Bargagli (operaio from 1449 to 1456) enjoyed the same honours as Turino. He was buried in front of the chapel of Santa Maria delle Grazie in the southern aisle-wall, a chapel that was lavishly restructured, at the operaio’s own expense, by Urbano and Bartolommeo da Cortona (figs. 2 nr. 18, 12). The same operaio’s efforts to found an altar for the operai had no success. Only around 1500 did a collective tomb for the operai exist in front of the chapel of Saint John the Baptist. Furthermore, Turino and Ludovica’s chapel was amongst the first privately founded chapels in the Sienese cathedral in general as the bishop, canons and Opera of the cathedral continued to be rather restrictive in their concessions of patronal rights to individuals. Turino and Ludovica’s close-knit circle of influential friends may help to explain how the couple managed to break through this long-standing policy of minimising the presence of the private patron in the Sienese public sphere, and the couple’s weighty entourage will be further studied below.

Ludovica’s eventual choice to dedicate the chapel to the Virgin of the Snow closely reflects the personal situation of the couple as well as Turino’s privileged position at the cathedral. The childless Ludovica and Turino were able to flatter themselves in the close comparison between their circumstances and the miraculous events in Rome, in which the Virgin herself directed a childless couple to use their heritage for a church in her honour. Turino and Ludovica devoutly left their money for the construction of a chapel in the cathedral, a church already named after the Virgin of the Assumption, and a church on whose construction and maintenance Turino had spent the last two years of his

35 LANDI 1655, p. 90 (giving what must be a mistaken date, 1419).
38 The tomb of the operai was instituted by Alberio Aringhieri (operaio from 1480 until 1506) according to LANDI 1655, p. 90. Operaio Ludovico De Vecchi (†1668) and his brother Lorenzo (†1676) were i.e. both buried there: BUTZEK 1996, p. 61.
life working (see chapters vii, viii). We shall now turn our attention to the early stages of the project for the chapel, by means of newly discovered documents pertaining to the testaments of Turino di Matteo.

Turino di Matteo dictated his last will on 24th August 1421. The testament itself has not been preserved, but its contents can be grasped from a rather detailed declaration to the appropriate tax office, or Gabella, by notary Bartolomeo di Guidone (Appendix I, doc. A.I). Turino instituted his wife, donna Ludovica, as his universal heiress, specifying in detail that she was to have all her linen and woollen fabrics, their bed with all its belongings and the house in which they lived, worth 300 florins. Presumably a private property of the couple was intended, since at the time of Turino’s first testament, he and his wife already resided in the house of the Opera del Duomo. It may have been the house in which Ludovica died, which was situated on the Piazza del Sale in the neighbourhood of San Pietro d’Ovile (Appendix I, doc. A.VI). Turino assigned his servant Niccolò di Ciolo of Radicofani 100 florins. To the brothers Nanni and Iboni di Angelo of Santa Regina he left a farmhouse in the borough of Lornano, estimated at 120 florins, as well as a kiln in Santa Regina with some ground, worth 16 florins. Beside some distributions of money to the poor, the rest of Turino’s fortune befell Ludovica, as his universal
Therefore, in August 1421, Turino was not thinking about any pious gifts, let alone about the edification of a chapel.

As appears from another document, it was somewhat later that the devout wish to invest in the salvation of Turino di Matteo’s soul by constructing a chapel was initiated. Moreover, it appears that donna Ludovica was the urging initiator. This document is in itself remarkable (Appendix, doc. A.11). It is an amendment made to the 1421 testament mentioned above, and concerns the interrogation of five witnesses, all of whom were present at Turino di Matteo’s deathbed. At stake was specifically the founding of a chapel in the cathedral. On 27th and 29th November 1423, notary Luca di Nanni of Siena notes down the testimonies of the witnesses in the presence of the three fideicommissaries and executors of Turino’s will: Carlo d’Agnolino Bartoli, rector of the Spedale della Scala, Giovanni di Galgano Bichi, a banker, and Nicola di Guido Finetti, a wealthy wool merchant. They thus legalise Turino’s unwritten codicil to his last will, expressed at his deathbed, *nudis verbis*. The witnesses are heard in order to learn the truth about Turino’s wish to build and endow a chapel: ‘ad veritatem liquidandam, et inquirendam si dictus dominus Turinus disposuerit super quadam hedificatione cuiusdam capelle vel quadam capella dotanda’. The notary aims to elucidate the following questions:

1. Whether the witnesses were indeed present at Turino’s deathbed and overheard his wish to build a chapel.
2. Where Turino wanted to erect this chapel.
3. How much Turino wanted to spend on the chapel and how he intended to finance it.
4. What dedication Turino had in mind.
5. When Turino wanted the chapel to be finished.
6. Who was present when Turino expressed this last wish.

Five witnesses are heard: Turino’s widow donna Ludovica; their servant Minuccia (widow of a Matteo Bertini and therefore possibly related to Ludovica by marriage); Mea di Cristoforo Nutini, *clamidata* of the Franciscan order; Arrigo di Marco of Germany, Turino’s servant and, finally, Ser Leonardo di Francesco di Simone of Campagnatico, priest and chaplain of the cathedral. The diverging social backgrounds of the witnesses are reflected in the character of their testimonies, mostly recorded in direct speech, which are quoted in a mixture of Latin and straightforward *volgare*.

Ludovica states that her husband had fallen ill about two years before his actual death. During this first serious illness he made his testament, which must be identical to the 1421 act (as referred to in Appendix 1, document A.11). However, Turino recovered and, according to Ludovica, repeatedly stated that he wanted to construct a chapel: ‘Io vorrò fare una capella’. Ludovica herself thereupon told her husband that she thought that the Virgin Mary and Saint Francis had cured him. In her testimony, Ludovica then recalls a private

---

39 In Appendix 1, doc. A.1, the *solvit* have been added in 1426, so the inheritance was liquidated according to the *nudis verbis* codicil of 1423 (Appendix 1, doc. A.11).
moment in which Turino once again told her that he wanted to construct this chapel. Turino had not really thought things through, however, as when Ludovica asked him where he would like his chapel, he answered that God would lead the way: ‘Io la farò dove Dio me la farà fare’.

The next episode of the story is told by all five witnesses. On 20th August 1423 Turino lies dying on his bed in the kitchen in the house of the Opera del Duomo and quite a crowd is present. Apart from the above-mentioned five witnesses are domina Antonia, wife of Domenico, Ludovica’s future mediarius or guardian, domina Simona di Bartolomeo Pepi and Andrea, sister of Ludovica and wife of Nicola di Guido Finetti. Turino is about to be administered the Last Sacrament, and Ludovica asks him if he wants to say something: ‘ma sì’ he responds, and, looking about him to all present, asks Ludovica to promise ‘sopra alla tua consciencia’ to make the chapel that they had already discussed ‘per l’amore di Dio et della Vergine Maria’. As to the place where the chapel was to be erected, all witnesses except for Minuccia recall Turino’s confusion. He initially asks for the chapel next to the chapel of the Crucifix in Siena’s cathedral, whereupon Ser Leonardo, chapein and priest of the chapel of San Vittore in the cathedral, gently reminds the dying man that he himself as operaio had given this chapel to Canon Francesco Tolomei.\textsuperscript{40} Ser Leonardo suggests that he choose instead the chapel near to the spot where Turino’s tomb would be.\textsuperscript{41} This corner of the cathedral had actually enjoyed Turino’s special attention: he had overseen the decoration of the chapel of the Crucifix, had conceded the patronage for an altar next to it, and could now choose to edify a chapel of his own in its immediate vicinity (fig. 2 nrs. 13-15). Turino’s own chapel is designated by some witnesses as Turino’s future burial site, by others also as being near to the chapel next to that of the Crucifix, or near (‘presso’) the Porta del Perdomo, while Arrigo and Ser Leonardo even cite the dedication of the chapel, Santa Maria delle Grazie ‘overo di Sancto Yvo’ as Mea adds.\textsuperscript{42} Turino responds simply to Ser Leonardo’s proposal: ‘Io so’ contento’.

At this point donna Ludovica raises the delicate issue of the funding of the chapel, in plain volgare: ‘e di che la fo?’. Turino indicates that he wishes to endow the chapel out of his own means ‘de bonis meis’. Ludovica repeats the question and Turino then specifies that he wants to fund it by means of a shop that he owns, up to a sum of 450 or 500 florins. The shop was known as Nicola di Giovanni di Nerone’s and was located in the shoemakers’ district. The funding out of Turino’s means was an important point for the widow-to-be, since this disposition would allow her to save her dowry and dispose of Turino’s means.\textsuperscript{43} Turino entrusts Ludovica again with the enterprise and urges her to

\textsuperscript{40} Ser Leonardo di Francesco was one of the four chaplains of the chapel of San Vittore. He must have died shortly before 29th January 1425, when his successor Ser Fioriano di Pietro was presented to the bishop and subsequently appointed (28th March); AAS, Bollari 102, fols. 70r–71r.

\textsuperscript{41} Except for Ludovica and Ser Leonardo the witnesses talk about the chapel of the Crucifix itself. This is an imprecision, since Turino had indeed allotted to Francesco Tolomei the chapel next to the chapel of the Crucifix, later known as the chapel of the Visitation.

\textsuperscript{42} This is the only time in the entire known documentation on the chapel that the titulus of Saint Ivo is given. It may have been an older chaplaincy associated with the altar. Chaplaincies at one and the same altar could have different \textit{voce}, see p. 38 below.
bring the chapel to completion as soon as possible. According to Ser Leonardo, Ludovica promises with a hand on her chest: 'domine, et ita faciam'. Turino wants to dedicate his chapel 'ad nomen gloriose Marie Virginis', according to his wife's testimony.

This newly found document greatly augments our knowledge about the chapel of the Virgin of the Snow. Whereas it was previously believed that the project for the chapel dated to 1430 and that Ludovica was the actual commissioner, with obligatory references to her deceased husband, we can now adjust that image. Most importantly, it appears from the documents presented here that the idea of endowing a chapel was already formed in August 1423, predating by seven years Ludovica's commissioning of Sassetta to paint an altarpiece in March 1430, which was previously thought to be the earliest published document relating to the chapel. It is now clear that Turino is in fact, by testamentary wish, the actual commissioner of the chapel. Yet at the same time the documents provide evidence of the pushy nature of his widow Ludovica and her formative role in the birth of the chapel and we can see that it was she who was the major driving force behind the idea.

Ludovica planned for a financially independent life as a widow, safeguarding her dowry by finding a means of disposing piously of Turino's possessions. By channelling Turino's money into the construction of a chapel in the cathedral, she evaded the new legislation which made the Opera del Duomo the main beneficiary of the deceased operaio, ceding the widow only the usufruct during her lifetime. Turino had accepted office on the provision that he would contribute no more than 3000 lire or 750 florins of his personal wealth, and Ludovica now proved her right to most of the remainder of Turino's personal fortune. It is not hard to imagine the reasons why Ludovica would have begged her husband for a chapel. As a childless widow, Ludovica's piety could be expressed through the chapel in a way which was socially acceptable, in devout commemoration of her husband (although not entirely free of vanity on her own part either). Usually, childless widows could not simply act on their own and the supervision of their finances and legal activities was often assigned to a guardian. Ludovica in fact had a mediarius by the name of Domenico whose wife, domina Antonia, also comforted her at Turino's deathbed. It is significant for Ludovica's remarkably autonomous behaviour that the documents relating to the genesis of the chapel record almost nothing of the guardian's input, except when she expresses her discontent about the price at which Sassetta's finished altarpiece was estimated to the court of the Giudici dei Pupilli. In her own testament a new mediarius appears by the name of Matteo Gricciuoli (Appendix 1, doc. A.vii).

At her husband's deathbed, Ludovica was surrounded by influential people. Together with the fideicommisaries entrusted with winding up the inheritance, they seem to have been a carefully orchestrated band consisting of friends and

---

45 The court ruled against 'madonna Ludovica, overo el detto Guido suo procuratore'; Laurent 1935, p. 265; see p. 29 below.
relatives of donna Ludovica, most of whom had positions which were to prove of great practical use for Ludovica’s objectives in the creation of a chapel. Ser Leonardo di Francesco of Campagnatico, priest and chaplain of the cathedral, may well have become a friend of Turino di Matteo during the latter’s office as operaio. His presence must have been instrumental in Ludovica’s success in gaining a foothold in the cathedral, since Turino’s burial chapel was the very first chapel conceded to an operaio. Giovanni di Galgano Bichi was an influential banker, whom Turino had involved in the project for the Loggia della Mercanzia as well as in other transactions by the Opera.46 Giovanni’s brother, Matteo, had been another candidate when Turino had been elected operaio. The wool-merchant Nicola di Guido Finetti was a fideicommissary as well as Ludovica’s brother-in-law.47 His wife Andrea, Ludovica’s sister, was present in the kitchen of the operaio’s house on that sad day in August 1423. As a member of the Arte della Lana, Nicola di Guido Finetti may well have already drawn Ludovica’s attention to Sassetta at this stage of the chapel project as, in the years 1423-1425, Sassetta was busy painting an altarpiece for the Arte della Lana for their annual festival of Corpus Domini.48

Carlo d’Agnolino Bartoli, another fideicommissary of Turino’s will, had provided the wool guild with a baldachin for the Sacrament for its Corpus Domini procession, at the end of which was Sassetta’s altarpiece.49 He was a man of the church who held a high position and had ample contacts. Rector of the Spedale della Scala at the moment of Turino’s death50 Bartoli would remain committed to the execution of Ludovica’s project when he was elected bishop of Siena in 1427, replacing Antonio Casini. Bartoli’s religious interests partly corresponded to the Franciscan ambiance in which the patrons moved, Turino being a member of the Compagnia di San Francesco and Ludovica eventually professing as a Franciscan tertiary. Bartoli built a monastery for the sisters of the third order of Saint Francis in Siena.51 Another clamidata of the Franciscan Order, Mea di Cristoforo Nutini, was also amongst the witnesses to Turino’s last words.

Ludovica’s determination to see the realisation of the chapel is also apparent from other documents. On 27th July 1424 Pietro di San Pietro, the vicar general of Bishop Antonio Casini, approves the settlement of Turino’s will agreed

46 A gilded silver statue of San Crescenzio made by the gold-smiths Turino di Sano and his son Giovanni was paid via Giovanni and Matteo Bichi in 1424-25, following an agreement as previously made with Turino; AOMS, 708 (num. Mosc. 500), fol. 221v, s.a. 1424: ‘Giovanni e Matteo di Galgano Bichi banchieri die avere lire cinquecento otanzette soldi dicienue per altretanti die per noi a Turino di Sano e Giovanni suo figliuolo e cosi a mano posto che Turino detto debi dare in questo libro a una sua ragione a fo. 44 e qualg ei fecie dare missor Turino di Matio alora operaio perché facieasse la figura di Santo Crescienzio/fiorini 0 lire DLXXXVII soldi xviui denari 6.’ Another instalment of lire LXXVI soldi VI denari was paid on 14th June 1424. On the statue see FATTORINI 1996, pp. 128-129, 143-146 note 98.

47 In the year 1410 ‘Nichiolò di Guido Finetta lanaiuolo’ living in the contrada of San Pietro in Chastelvecchio is allirato for the large sum of 5350 lire. His brother Nanni, also a wool worker, lived nearby and was worth 2850 lire: ASS, Lira 42, fols. 71v, 78r. 48 ISRAELS 2001.

49 ISRAELS 2001, p. 536. Bartoli was the son of a wool merchant. Could he even have been ‘el migliore menbro de la citta’ who had provided for the wooden structure of the Arte della Lana altarpiece before 1423 (see IBIDEM, pp. 536, 542 doc. vi)?

50 This was an important post in the city. Bartoli was knighted by King Louis II of Anjou when he assumed office.

by its executors, in terms of the testators' bequests as well as the assignment of Ludovica's dowry (Appendix I, doc. A.111). The vicar then continues with the addition to the will made nudis verbis, that is the endowment of a chapel entitled Santa Maria delle Grazie near the Porta del Perdono in the cathedral. He lays down the conditions that the fideicommissaries have to follow, since these had been omitted from the spoken last will. He establishes that the widow donna Ludovica will be the patron of the altar during her lifetime, a subject which had not been discussed at Turino's deathbed. Ludovica is authorised to present to the bishop a chaplain, who has to start officiating the altar by 1st September 1424 and who will be paid 16 florins per annum. Ludovica will be able to transmit the right to appoint a chaplain to the person who will inherit the patronage after her death. In the event that Turino's inheritance is insufficient to finance the chapel adequately, Ludovica is to make up the amount from her own properties. Up to 400 florins can be taken from Turino's heritage to provide for the ornaments of the altar, that is a chalice, a missal, palliums and other prerequisites ('pro ornamentis dicti altaris, scilicet calice, missali, palliiis et aliis necessariis ad ornamentum dicti altaris'). Yet another addition reveals that, due to conflict, the executors and fideicommissaries had difficulties in collecting Turino's properties and they are therefore given four more years, starting on 1st August 1424, to resolve all problems surrounding the inheritance. These troubles in settling the inheritance are undoubtedly the reason for the long interval between Turino's project to endow a chapel in the cathedral and its materialisation, of which the 1430 contract with Sassetta is the first known practical step. An important outcome of this document is the involvement of the bishop in the project and we must bear in mind the name of Antonio Casini, who would act as an adviser to Ludovica's programme and who is first documented here, through his vicar, as a protagonist in the genesis of the chapel.

On 28th July 1424, a day after the vicar of the bishop had approved of the acts of the testamentary executors of Turino's will, Ludovica's dowry is restituted to her by Carlo d'Agnolino Bartoli and his fellow-fideicommissaries (Appendix I, doc. A.1IV). On that day it is registered in the books of the Gabella that she receives a house ('unam possessionem') located in Santa Regina in the Masse or outskirts of Siena. The Bertini family property had accompanied Ludovica as a considerable dowry at her wedding and it was worth 660 florins. Apart from her dowry, 140 florins were allotted to her as part of the 400 florins destined for the chapel 'pro hedificatione unius capelle fiende in ecclesia maiori civitatis Senensis'.

52 Ludovica eventually bequeathed the property of Santa Regina to the Spedale della Scala (Appendix I, doc. A.1VII). The Spedale paid for the conveyance in the Biccherna: 'E die dare a di 30 di settembre [1433] soldi vintidue paghiamo al notaio di Bicherna e a Meio guardia di Bicherna e al banditore per fare sbatare la posisione de Santa Reina chome inchamara a liro d'uno lcone e sono ascite K. a fo 42 — lire i soldi ii': ASS, Spedale 518, fol. 171v. Other Bertini-owned property in the region may have been passed down the Bertini family. The Peruzzian Villa Piccolomini in Santa Regina (now the property of the Compagnia di Sant'Angela Merici) once belonged to the Venturi-Gallerani family, who in turn succeeded the last Bertini around 1600 (see Appendix II, 1); ROMAGNOLI first decades of nineteenth century, p. 200 (foll. 166r); M. Brogi, 'Economia e territorio nelle masse di Siena tra Sette e Ottocento', in GUERRINI 1996, pp. 57, 80 note 112 (mistakenly believing the villa belonged first to the Piccolomini and then to the Venturi-Gallerani).
The official assignment of the chapel to Ludovica dates to 4th November 1426 (Appendix 1, document A.V.1). It is restated that Turino di Matteo wants to construct ‘unum altare vel cappella’ dedicated to Santa Maria delle Grazie, next to the Porta del Perdono and that his widow Ludovica should be its patron. Ludovica assigns to the chapel a property that houses an inn, a ‘hospitium’, adjacent to the church of San Pietro alla Magione.53 Ludovica can keep the usufruct of the inn during her lifetime, after deducting the 16 florins for the priest of the altar. The property may never be sold, under the threat that it will devolve upon the Spedale della Scala. Under these pacts the operaio Bartolomeo di Giovanni di Cecco, in the presence of the vicar of the bishop and in execution of the last will of Turino, concedes Ludovica the altar of Santa Maria delle Grazie near the Porta del Perdono with all pertinent rights, on the provision that she and those who succeed her in the patronage will embellish the altar.

The expression ‘crescere, et augmentare dictum altare in edificiis’ seems to mean that a simple, pre-existent altar should be transformed or enlarged into a structure. The altar is furthermore to be painted and decorated with, amongst other things, the arms of Turino di Matteo ‘et pingere et pingi facere et ornare dictum altare, cum armis supradicti olim domini Turini ibidem apponendo et pingendo arma supradicti olim domini Turini’. So not only is Turino granted a prestigious chapel in the cathedral, but is even allowed posthumous display of the arms he had only just received. The operaio Bartolomeo furthermore instructs that the chaplain of the newly instituted chapel may borrow the necessary paraments for saying mass from the cathedral sacristy, such as a chalice, a missal, and the priestly vestments. On 27th July 1424 Ludovica had been held responsible for furnishing some of these necessities and indeed in the present document she still promises to provide for the ornament of the altar its paraments, a chalice, a missal and a painting (‘paramentis, calice, missali vel picturis’). She furthermore agrees to spend 50 florins of her own means. The chaplain has to celebrate mass three times a week and on at least two Sundays per month. This might be augmented for the benefit of the successors of the ius patronatus, in case the endowment of the chapel should be increased after Ludovica’s death.

The document then continues with the approbation of the chapel-endowment by Niccolò de’ Ugurgeri, procurator of the chapter of canons of the cathedral, in the presence of the vicar Pietro di San Pietro who was representing Bishop Antonio Casini, recently created cardinal of San Marcello, Giorgio di Andrea di Pietro de Tolomei and provost Niccolò Sozzini. The act is finally passed in the episcopal palace in Siena on 20th November 1426 by notary Carlo di Enrico of Vecchiano.

A second parchment, also drawn up by this notary and dated 4th November 1426, shows that Ludovica loses no time in exerting the powers entrusted to her (Appendix 1, doc. A.V.2). She immediately appoints the honest priest Jacomo d’Antonio as the rector of the chapel of Santa Maria delle Grazie in order, she

---

53 Many inns were owned by wealthy families as well as by hospitals, churches and convents, because their rent provided quite a constant source of income; TULIANI 1994, esp. pp. 83-95, 97-105.
claims, that the altar does not suffer any temporal or spiritual damage by such a vacancy. The same day, in the books of Bishop Antonio Casini, the latter’s vicar draws up the approval of Ludovica’s appointment of a chaplain for her cathedral-chapel of Santa Maria delle Grazie, located ‘iustam portam dictam la porta del Perdono’ (Appendix I, doc. A VI). The chaplain selected by Ludovica had been one of the four chaplains that took care of the altar of San Vittore in the cathedral, possibly on recommendation of Turino’s friend Ser Leonardo di Francesco, who was one of the San Vittore chaplains too. The minister of the hospital of Santa Marta, to whom the patronal rights over the chaplain and his chaplaincy belonged, lost no time in nominating a successor.54

By 1426 Ludovica had organised the endowment and officiation of the chapel, but she still had to commission its decoration. As previously mentioned, the lapse of time between Turino’s testament and the actual construction of the chapel was probably due to some lengthy financial problems. The vicar of Bishop Antonio Casini, the chapter of canons and the operaio kept close control over the institution of the chapel. The documents presented here show that it took nine years to finish the chapel, from the inception of the idea until the completion of Sassetta’s altarpiece in 1432. This shows that it was quite time-consuming to embark on the novel enterprise of constructing a private chapel in the cathedral. The documents presented above testify to the remarkable and unusual events triggered by Turino’s testaments. It is now clear that he was the official testator who provided for the chapel in the cathedral to be built out of a vow of gratitude towards the Virgin and Saint Francis, who had cured him of a previous illness. At the same time it is abundantly clear from the documents that Ludovica was very keen to have this chapel for her husband as well as for herself, and her husband’s testament enabled this female patron to realise her ideas. She was the driving force behind the project and she was to commit many influential people, amongst them two bishops of Siena, to engineer her own and Turino’s finances in a masterly way in order to make a pious monument in the Sienese cathedral for the glory of the Virgin and in the memory of her late husband and herself. As chapter vi will illustrate, the bishop, canons and Opera of the cathedral had on the whole not been keen on much individual propaganda on their altars. It is an indication of Ludovica’s persuasiveness that she was even allowed to show the arms of her recently knighted late husband. These, as well as her own Bertini-shield, would, furthermore, figure prominently on the throne of the Madonna in the future altarpiece of their chapel (plates 1, 11).

54 AAS, Bollari 102, fols. 94v-95r (27th November 1426): ‘electione seu presentatione facta et canonice celebrata per venerabilem virum dominum Bartholomeum Guelfi ministrum hospitalis Sancte Marte de Senis dicto hospitalaniatis ministerio nomine patronum altaris Sancti Victori siti in maiori ecclesia Senensis, de ser Michele Francisci de Vulturris presbitero ad rectoriam et regimen altaris Sancti Victor ii predicti nuper viatis uno cappellano ex quattuor cappellanis dicti altaris Sancti Victori ii per adeptione altaris Sancte Marie gratiarum siti in dicta maiori ecclesia Senensis iuxta portam dictam la porta del Perdono factam per ser Jacobum Antonii olim unum cappellanum ex quattuor cappellanis dicti altaris Sancti Victor ii’. This chaplaincy may be related to the (partial) patronage of the Malavolti over the altar of San Vittore, for which see p. 75 below, and AAS, Sante Visite 18, fol. 17r (December 1489): ‘Santi Vittore cappellani dicunt dictam cappellam fuisse olim constructam per quondam venerabilem episcopum Donisdeum et quod habent stipendia librarum quadraginta pro quolibet a cassitrano [?] hospini Sancte Marte in Podio Malavolotorum’.