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THE CHURCH OF *SANTO STEFANO*:

ITS ARTISTIC TREASURES

“The Temple of San Stefano, located beyond the Parish Church, towers above all other parish churches of this district because of its majestic appearance & beauty. Santo Stefano was completed in 1325. The German structure of its body is filled with ornaments & rich marbles & columns and very spacious: worthy of being mentioned as being among the best in the city for beauty and size”. This is how, in 1581, Francesco Sansovino[[1]](#footnote-1) described the church of Santo Stefano for the first time in written documents. Its cornerstone had been laid with great solemnity on June 7, 1294, after the Hermits of St. Augustin had bought some houses in an area between the Sant’Angelo and San Maurizio canals, with the intention of building a convent and a church there.

However, the analysis of the building’s structural and decorative elements belies the completion date indicated by Sansovino, because of their fifteenth-century features, and this observation[[2]](#footnote-2) has given rise to a long historiographical debate concerning the dating of the church, as well as the times and ways it was rebuilt. The problem is still far from being laid to rest, even if based on current knowledge, it can be reasonably stated that the original fourteenth-century structure, whose earliest design has not been clearly identified yet, was profoundly modified at the beginning of the following century.[[3]](#footnote-3) On the basis of what has emerged during the excavations carried out during the 1971-3 restoration work, it was hypothesized that it used to be “a rather small building, which stretched from the presbytery as far as where the second pillar is currently located, close to the entrance”.[[4]](#footnote-4) Others, on the other hand, believe that the perimeter walls of the central nave of the original church, comprised of three naves, are still preserved (without the terminal late Gothic frieze).[[5]](#footnote-5)

About the original church, however, we have documents mentioning the existence of a choir dominated by a large cross in the central nave (1380),[[6]](#footnote-6) and of altars dedicated to Saint Catherine (1382)[[7]](#footnote-7) and to Saint Michael (1392)[[8]](#footnote-8) in the aisles.[[9]](#footnote-9) The primitive erection of the altar of the Annunciation of Our Lady, the second in the left aisle,[[10]](#footnote-10) is also to be dated around 1383, the year when the School of the German *Calegheri* (shoemakers) was established, a guild recognized precisely on July 15th of that year by the Council of Ten.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The beginning of the great transformation, which involved construction work affecting even the church foundations and the modification of part of the pre-existing building, can be dated to the beginning of the XV century. In Nicolò Zorzi’s will, dated June 30, 1407, he bequeathed a perpetual endowment to the church of Santo Stefano “pro emendo lapides et calcinam pro reparatione ipsius ecclesie …”[[12]](#footnote-12) and again in 1423 and in 1437 we find donations to build the church or the convent”,[[13]](#footnote-13) which even in those years (1434) was being built “with new and more modern buildings”.[[14]](#footnote-14) On the other hand, a date by which the later construction work would have been completed cannot be established, although these operations crucially define the current appearance of the church.

As a whole, Santo Stefano differs from the other Gothic conventual churches in Venice because its apses, its internal structure, and the façade, display a significant “set of Renaissance features underlining new tendencies and experimentation willingly enriched by ancient forms”. The fifteenth-century renovation of Santo Stefano, therefore, preserved the original structure with three naves, adding the greater length required by the enlargement of the presbytery and the apse. The renovation, through an extraordinarily audacious architectural move, stretched the structure beyond the Santissimo canal behind the primitive church thanks to a bridge, a unique example in Venetian church construction.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Little information has been preserved regarding the decoration of the original church, of which the twelve monolithic columns in red Verona marble and Greek marble remain. They alternate both along the length and the width of the church, and separate the central nave from the lateral ones. The distance and the height of the columns, as well as that of the ogival arches supported by them, form an extraordinary integration of the aisles, and create a vastness that seems to herald the sense of space typical of the Renaissance. Rather than as a series, the columns appear as unique elements, singularly characterized by elegant capitals decorated in gold and lapis lazuli, shaped as a cropped cube with rounded edges. A series of wooden chains, stretch across the aisles corresponding to each column, and “creates a dense aerial texture segmenting the interior space”[[16]](#footnote-16). This bears witness to the persistence of a late-Byzantine tradition even at this date, which is also documented by the chromaticism of the whole interior, a unifying element of great beauty. The chromatic effect is accentuated by the fresco decoration, which, almost like a gigantic tapestry, covers the walls of the nave, borrowing from the marble walls of the Ducal Palace the motif of fake white and red bricks arranged in diamond shapes with inserted crosses. On the arch of the presbytery and on the extrados of the ogival arches, the decorative scheme used on the arch of the portal, in the frieze with crumpled foliage, is reproduced monochromatically. At its apex, each arch supports the half figure of an Augustinian saint.[[17]](#footnote-17) The figures display features distinguishing the collaboration of at least two different master painters linked to the mid-fifteenth century Paduan area: their style is still recognizable despite the extensive re-painting of the years 1901-1910, when the whole frescoed walls of the church were uncovered and restored, after having been whitewashed in the early 17th century.[[18]](#footnote-18)

The beautiful hull-shaped, wooden ceiling with a five-lobed section is painted and richly decorated with rosettes. It is one of the rare wholly preserved examples of this kind in Venice, and it could be modeled after the church of the Hermits of St. Augustine in Padua,[[19]](#footnote-19) as well as being very similar to the contemporary one in the church of San Giacomo dell’Orio. The polychrome frame, which has hidden its elegant corbels (rediscovered with the 1971 restoration and visible close to the altar), was perhaps added in the sixteenth century.

It is not certain that the ceiling and chains were originally painted. However, the general appearance of the fifteenth century interior was presumably similar to the current one (fig. 1), specifically featuring the presence of the choir in the central nave and the location of the main altar at the end of the apse. There were several side altars (as well as two more, located on the inside of the façade), leaning against the walls of the smaller aisles; in ancient documents, they are defined as “chapels”, so that it remains to be ascertained whether they were autonomous covered structures. In this case, the separation between the chapels would have been formed by balustrades or pews, arranged perpendicularly to the nave. In this regard, it is interesting to cite the document related to the altar of the Annunciation of Our Lady[[20]](#footnote-20), which lays out in excruciating detail the dimensions of the corresponding “chapel” in terms of length, width, and depth. It turns out to be particularly interesting in view of a hypothetical reconstruction of the fifteenth-century church: the “chapel” -and this is likely to apply to the others as well- extended from the wall behind the altar (the wall of the left nave) up to the step that already marked the difference in height between the floor of the nave (lower) and that of the lateral ones, and it had a sepulcher in front of it,[[21]](#footnote-21) as well as pews for the confrères’ use.

Among the fifteenth-century altars, the oldest to be documented is the first one in the right aisle, called today *Saint Anne’s Altar* or *Altar of Mary’s Nativity*, originally dedicated to the Virgin Mary and called in Venetian “altar de la Madona granda in canton” [altar of the large Virgin Mary in the corner], whose wooden structure had been erected at the expense of Giacomo Bernabò de’ Catenacci from Monte Pulciano, a wealthy silk merchant, who had wanted his own burial in front of it - completed in 1438 while he was still alive.[[22]](#footnote-22) In his last will, he had left “1000 ducats from my loans” to the Hermits of St. Augustine, as well as a perpetual bequest of a golden ducat “every year to the church ... to repair the sacred ornaments, chalices, and books and other necessary things.”[[23]](#footnote-23)

In the early 1940s,[[24]](#footnote-24) Antonio Vivarini painted the *Polyptych of Saint Monica* for the fourth altar of the left aisle dedicated to that saint, and comprised of a series of stories arranged on separate rows. These were arranged vertically on the left and the right of the polychrome statue of the saint, carved in wood. Once the sculpture had disappeared[[25]](#footnote-25), the pictorial fragments of the altar-piece identified so far, stylistically all ascribable to Antonio Vivarini, are now dispersed in various collections: the *Marriage of St. Monica* is located at the Accademia Galleries in Venice (fig. 2), the *Birth of St. Augustine* at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London, the *Conversion and Death of Patri*ck, *St. Monica's Husband* at the Detroit Institute of Arts, the *St. Monica’s* *Vision* in a private collection in Milan and the *Baptism of Saint Augustine* at the Carrara Academy in Bergamo[[26]](#footnote-26).

1441 was an important year for the decoration of the church. Sansovino confirms that in that year Antonio Vivarini and Giovanni d’Alemagna painted the *Polyptych of St. Jerome* for the ancient wooden altar dedicated to the saint, the second in the right nave, paid for by the Molin family, and carved by Gaspare Moranzone[[27]](#footnote-27). The polyptych, which is the oldest example of the collaboration between the two brothers-in-law, is a very innovative work and marks a significant turning point in Antonio’s oeuvre, previously still a purely Gothic artist. The Saint Jerome in the polyptych has been rightly compared to Giovanni’s *Saint Jerome*, which is signed and dated 1444[[28]](#footnote-28). Perhaps it is precisely thanks to Giovanni’s influence that the figures in the polyptych are conceived as polychrome sculptures within a space with a new, refined concept of perspective.

In the same year 1441, arrangements were also made for the erection of the Corbelli altar, then dedicated to St. Nicholas of Tolentino, which *ab origine* is one of the most important in the church. On August 24, 1441, the Augustinians granted to Andrea Corbelli a location in which to erect an altar and place a sepulcher, in the left aisle of the church, near the altar of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, by the then extant pulpit. It was agreed that the structure would be built in marble and brick, covered by a vault and closed by a marble balustrade[[29]](#footnote-29). Apparently, however, even in Andrea Corbelli’s last will and testament, drawn up in 1447, there is an explicit reference to the altar and to the newly built chapel[[30]](#footnote-30). In 1450, the work has not yet been completed and the agreement is repeated, specifically mentioning the dedication to St. Nicholas of Tolentino, who in the meantime (1446) had been canonised.[[31]](#footnote-31)

The original appearance of the complex can be deduced, even if just as a rough idea, from the record of the expenses incurred in 1584 by Luca Corbelli and his son Girolamo, an Augustinian friar with the name of Salvatore at the convent of Saint Stephen in order to “restore and spruce up” the altar, or rather the chapel of the Corbelli Family.[[32]](#footnote-32) The altar was made of partially gilt and polychrome marble (sky-blue, yellow, and red), with a marble altarpiece, and covered by a brick vault, ornamented with the *Four Evangelists*. The original altarpiece was produced by Pietro Lombardo and his aides, modeled after the one in the Martini Chapel in the church of St. Job by Antonio Rossellino’s workshop between 1471 and 1476.

Three full-relief statues of standing saints from the original altarpiece are preserved: *St. Nicholas of Tolentino*, which Nicolai[[33]](#footnote-33) attributes to Pietro Lombardo, to whom the Augustinians paid 300 ducats for it, and on either side *Saint Jerome* (fig. 3) on the right and *Saint Andrew*, the art patron’s patron saint on the left. These statues are currently located in the disproportionate structure of the new altar, refurbished in the eighteenth century. They were supposed to be originally located within shell-shaped niches, possibly against a sky-blue background and inserted within a partially gilt frame, with sculpted pillars in the shape of racemes according to Lombard taste.

| Footnote #32 continues here [it did not fit at the bottom of the preceding page] |
| --- |
| In order to dispose of the waste, total ——- lire 5;  For more porters to move the old and new paintings, and the two altarpieces up and down from the painter in the church and from the church to the painter to try it out and for the carpenter to put up, and fix it with four porters and for the nails of for the painting to be fixed, in total five lire and four soldi ——- lire 5; 4;  In order to give maestro Francesco the blacksmith for work on the altarpiece lire 4, as maestro Zorzi and others know ——- lire 4;  For two large tiaras for the Virgin Mary and the angel, and for other little things ——- lire 2;  For the food and drink for several days and several times a day for brick layers, carpenters, stonecutters, painters, gold foil painters, cleaners, porters, for bread, wine, complement, I have spent 8 soldi several times, on several days ——- lire 8;  In order to carve the altar doors in walnut wood——- lire 10;  For the tin hinges of the altar doors——- lire 4;  In order to fix the stucco where it is broken——- lire 11;  For two iron chandeliers and candles for said altar, for the cinnabar for the branches, for the rest ——— lire 2;  To fix the pew between St. Nicholas and the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary and for the star ——— lire 2;  For the gold leaf on the lines of the half-columns next to the two paintings, for a nice pair of embossed leather pieces and their trimmings ——— lire 5;  Walnut wood pews by the two great pillars ——— lire 55; 16;  For the stone cutters to clean the white column and start the pink one ——— lire 31;  In order to fix the sepulcher and add the pieces to the marble altarpiece, fix the shutters ——— lire 58;  Lire 196: 0  Lire 584: 8  —————-  Lire 780: 8’’  This record of expenses is completed by another one (ibid.) “November 25, 1584. Expenses for St.Nicholas’s altar ordered by father Salvatore.  For six fir boards for the sun of said altarpiece for soldi 40 each total ——- lire 12;  For 8 pine boards for said altar for the covering and the parapet and the steps at 55 soldi each, which will be placed on the said of said altar and one for the door for soldi 55 at 25 soldi each for a total of ——- lire 13 soldi 18;  For 2 pine boards to fix the pews of said altar at 10 soldi each——- lire 1 s. -;  In order to carry said wood, the boat, and for the porters to carry it in total——- lire 1 soldi 2;  For the glue to glue together all of the above——- lire soldi 4;  The following in order to carry all of these items into the church——- soldi 12;  The following for 100 canal-type nails——- lire soldi 12;  The following for 100 canal-type nails——- lire soldi 12.” |

The structure was possibly completed by a lunette and at least as far as the iconography is concerned, the decoration of the chapel vault was modeled after the Martini Chapel in the church of Saint Job[[34]](#footnote-34), which also featured the *Evangelists[[35]](#footnote-35)*. On the whole, therefore, one could argue that it was the grafting of renaissance taste onto the Gothic context of the church. The statues, among which *St. Jerome[[36]](#footnote-36)* stands out for its quality, can hardly be dated with exactitude. Their stylistic affinity with those on the funerary monument of the Doge Pietro Mocenigo in the church of Saints John and Paul, also carved by Pietro Lombardo, however, suggest a date between the years 1475 and 1480 ca.[[37]](#footnote-37).

The original altar of the ‘Calafati’ (or caulkers, workers of the Venetian Arsenal), the fifth one in the left aisle, was built a little later than that of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino and was dedicated to the saints Mark and Phocas, their patrons. In February 1454 the ‘Scuola dei Calafati’ [Caulkers’ Guild] established a tax for its own confrères to be collected “until the construction and decoration of an altar they aim to build in the church of Santo Stefano is completed”.[[38]](#footnote-38) The following August 1st, on the occasion of the transfer of the Guild from its original location in the church of the Carmini to that of Santo Stefano, an agreement was reached with the Augustinian friars, who granted among other privileges “a place …to erect an altar in the church on the side towards the cloister”, and to “lend them the altar next to the sacristy until they erect their own…”[[39]](#footnote-39). The fifteenth century altar had a wooden structure[[40]](#footnote-40) and, according to what Sansovino[[41]](#footnote-41) states, it had an altarpiece representing Saint Mark, which is now lost, by Giorgio Veneziano, a secondary and rather obscure character among fifteenth century Venetian painters. In September 1726, the painting, which was then still on the altar, was described as the “image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, our protector, and of Saint Mark and Saint Phocas our patrons”.[[42]](#footnote-42) The name of the author and the subject of the painting find a significant correspondence with those of a panel depicting *Saint Mark* (Milan, Brera), signed “georgius. pinxit.” and dated 1454.[[43]](#footnote-43) This date perfectly coincides with that of the erection of the altar, so as to suggest that the painting in Milan may be the surviving part of an original polyptych, in which the Virgin Mary appeared in the center and the saints Mark and Phocas at her sides: St. Mark on the left and St. Phocas on the right.

Furthermore, we find that the friars offer to Marchesina Mocenigo the fourth altar in the right nave,[[44]](#footnote-44) dedicated to St. Nicholas of Bari, as attested by her last will dated 1466;[[45]](#footnote-45) she provides for its construction, which is eventually left incomplete.

In ancient times, according to a typical custom of Venetian monastic churches, also in Santo Stefano the choir was placed in the central nave, occupying the breadth of two arches. This is how Sansovino described it: “The choir is divided by a marble parapet, above which some noble columns support the life-sized marble statues of the Apostles, sculpted by Vittorio Gambello.”[[46]](#footnote-46)

Its structure, which in Sansovino's description would seem to recall the iconostasis of the Basilica of San Marco, can in other respects be considered very close to that of the only choir of this type preserved in Venice: that of the church of the Frari. The wooden stalls were surrounded by a wall and separated from the rest of the nave by a marble *septum* or alternatively, by a low parapet holding up the columns supporting the decentralized entablature with the statues and decorated with reliefs and sculptures.

The main access was in line with the main altar. It is reasonable to hypothesize that, similarly to the Frari, such structure was not leaning against the presbytery, but rather that the last arch was left empty and thus created a sort of virtual transept, necessary for processional purposes. This hypothesis, on the other hand, is also confirmed by the original placement of the pulpit, adjacent to the current location of the altar to Saint Stephen, and it is plausible to surmise that it was originally leaning against the choir’s *septum.[[47]](#footnote-47)*

At the beginning of the seventeenth century (1613 ca.), in accordance with the rules laid down by the Council of Trent, the structure was dismantled: the stalls were partially transferred and reassembled in the main apse, while the two fronts of the *septum* were heavily reworked. Thus, the proportions were altered with arbitrary marble and stucco insertions, they were leant against the walls of the presbytery, and the structure of the access portal was possibly “walled up, as well as cut up and, in part, clumsily rebuilt, in the center of the apse between the two series of wooden stalls.” This was done in order to frame the door opened in 1526 by Gabriele Dalla Volta to connect the convent and church directly. This is the ideal reconstruction of the choir offered by Mariacher on the basis of preserved parts: “the two wings of the *septum* consisted of a plinth with marble squares alternating with contoured posts among marble squares alternating with niches and statues, and on which a series of columns supported an entablature with the statues of the twelve Apostles (6 on each side). Between the niches, shell-shaped rounds with the busts of the Evangelists, of St. Stephen and St. Gregory [sic]”.[[48]](#footnote-48)

Considering its transitional character, the architectural design of the choir is attributed to Antonio Gambello, although his work for Santo Stefano has not been recorded anywhere. If this attribution is accepted, Gambello’s death (1481) provides a *terminus ante queen* for the design of the choir, which does not deviate from the chronology documented for the beginning of the work carried out on the wooden parts (before 1482), and completed in 1488.[[49]](#footnote-49) Even the construction and finishing of the stone elements had to last a long time, as confirmed by the stylistic analysis of both the decorative parts and the figurative ones, which display evident archaisms if compared to the more clearly Renaissance-like elements. The statues were created by a group of students in all likelihood belonging to Lombardo’s workshop, among whom emerges the personality of Giovanni Buora, to whom we owe the four major figures located within the niches: *Saint Nicholas of Tolentino* and *Saint Simplician* on the left wall of the presbytery, *Saint Chiara from Montefalco* and *Saint Paul the First Hermit* on the right one. The Lombardo-like features of the *Saint Simplician* are modeled after *Saint Mark* by Pietro Lombardo, once part of Doge Pietro Mocenigo’s tomb (1476-1481 ca.) and still located today in the church of Saints John and Paul. However, elements such as the hesitant plastic treatment of the figures, their static poses, and the simplification of their drapery allow us to date them around 1480. These would then be some of Buora's first works.[[50]](#footnote-50)

The late fifteenth-century altar of the *Madonna of the Snow* is also traditionally associated with Pietro Lombardo’s name, but it is more probably Giovanni Buora’s work, Lombardo’s disciple. This is a small altar for private acts of devotion erected between 1488 and 1493 by doctor Jacopo Suriano from Rimini on the inside of the façade, on the left when entering from the main door, mirroring the original altar of Saint Stephen. Its bronze relief (fig. 4) was among the only four altarpieces mentioned by Sanudo as being among the “notable things in various churches” in 1493.[[51]](#footnote-51) In 1742, since it had not been used for a long time[[52]](#footnote-52) because of its particular location, incompatible with the norms established by the Council of Trent, “the Augustinians asked the patrons to dismantle it in order to place there the pew financed by the Company or School of the Centurati in its place, which otherwise encumbered the church's central nave, and promised to remove “the platform and steps, with the sacred commitment to leave the altarpiece and the remainder of the altar unscathed” and also asking “to raise all of this a little more, so that it may be seen better”.[[53]](#footnote-53) The demolition was granted by the heirs at the beginning of 1744 and immediately carried out. The bronze altarpiece was affixed to the wall, where it remained until the 1847-1852 restoration,[[54]](#footnote-54) when it was moved to the right aisle, between the door of the sacristy and the altar of Saint Augustine. It was attributed to Giovanni Buora, whose iconographic sources have been identified in the contemporary paintings of sacred conversations, from the triptych by Giovanni Bellini in the church of the Frari to the *Treviso Altarpiece* by Alvise Vivarini currently at the Gallerie dell’Accademia museum.

Buora's relief depicts the *Madonna with Child Enthroned Between Saint James the Great and Saint James the Lesser and the Donors Jacopo and Eugenia Suriano* and is still located within its original frame, albeit this has been admittedly altered. Despite some weaknesses in the perspective layout and the donors’ dimensions, the altarpiece affords considerable interest, and attests this as an early, ambitious attempt to create a conversation with tridimensional figures in bronze. This typology explicitly recalls Donatello’s altar in the Basilica of Saint Anthony in Padua, but it will be successfully reproduced in Venice only twenty years later, in the altarpiece of the Zen Chapel in San Marco’s cathedral.[[55]](#footnote-55)

The pride for the fame that the Rimini physician had acquired in Venice is expressed not only in the altar, but also in the funeral monument for the same Jacopo Suriano, still *in situ* and also currently attributed to Pietro Lombardo’s disciple Giovanni Buora.[[56]](#footnote-56) In 1488, Suriano had bought a location for his own sepulcher in the church of the Frari. For unknown reasons, possibly because too much time had elapsed, this was erected instead next to the main door of the church of Santo Stefano, probably still according to the original design. In the past, the sepulcher was attributed to the Lombardo workshop and the sculptures were possibly by Pietro Lombardo himself. It displays the typological features typical of the funerary monuments of the Doges, and it is clearly modeled after Pietro Lombardo’s style, in particular after Doge Nicolò Marcello’s ten-year-older funeral monument in the church of the Santi Giovanni e Paolo, whose central part he isolates and reproduces. Like its model, the *Suriano Monument* is comprised of an arch framed by pillars placed behind columns, and it encloses a supine figure supported by a sarcophagus decorated with “Lombard-like” motifs. It has a bas-relief lunette in the upper area where the deceased is introduced by St. James the Great to the Madonna with Child, in the presence of St. Nicholas of Tolentino. In spite of the good quality of many of its parts, the whole work reveals some inconsistencies and lack of proportions.

The sixteenth century saw a significant expansion of the spaces adjacent to the church, especially the main Sacristy, for the construction of which the Hermits of St. Augustine petitioned the Senate on April 5, 1521.[[57]](#footnote-57) The chosen architect was the Augustinian Gabriele Dalla Volta, who was later also in charge of the reconstruction of the first cloister of the convent[[58]](#footnote-58), destroyed on January 1st, 1529 by a fire which also required the reconstruction of the Contarini chapel in its present form.[[59]](#footnote-59)

In the first half of the 1530s, the left chapel in the apse, originally sponsored by the Siega or dalla Sega family and dedicated to Saint Sebastian,[[60]](#footnote-60) passed to the Zorzi family and was perhaps on that occasion newly dedicated to Saint Joseph.[[61]](#footnote-61) In his last will and testament

of February 1st, 1532, Marino Zorzi senior, a senator and philosopher, bequeathed to the Augustinians, together with other precious objects, “my mother’s altarpiece, when I can have the chapel of the Siega family so I can put it on the altar, upon my spouse’s death”.[[62]](#footnote-62) This altarpiece can be identified as the *Holy Family and Saints Mary Magdalene and Catherine of Alexandria*, now in the main Sacristy (fig. 5). Ancient sources, starting with Ridolfi,[[63]](#footnote-63) attribute it to Jacopo Palma il Vecchio [senior], while part of the most recent critics prefers to suggest it is by Bonifacio de’ Pitati and dated in the late 1520s.[[64]](#footnote-64) Nicolai states that it was donated by Marino Zorzi’s heirs, presumably after the family was granted the chapel on the left of the apse and because of it.[[65]](#footnote-65) To this day, Marino Zorzi’s funeral monument is located on the left wall of the chapel, even though in his will Zaccaria Siega explicitly mentions “our chapel of San [Se]Bastian purchased by me” in 1612 and, declaring himself as the only survivor of his family, he states that he “bought said chapel and burial site and I myself or my heirs have the authority to destroy Marino Zorzi’s tomb that is located in it, if and whenever we please”.[[66]](#footnote-66)

Originally on the wall of the left aisle, and at present in the left chapel of the apse, the *Urn of Giovanni Boldù* (who died in 1537) is located above the monument of Marino Zorzi, and characterized by brackets decorated with putti heads. The *Funeral Monument of Giovanni Battista Ferretti*, a jurist from Vicenza, is located on the right wall of the chapel. His wife Giulia had it erected in 1557.[[67]](#footnote-67) Originally, it was also on the wall of the left aisle, between the altars of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary and that of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, and it was authorized by the heirs to transfer it to the door that leads into the cloister on February 1st, 1705,[[68]](#footnote-68) however, the transfer was not actually carried out until 1709, when the Ferretti family demanded that the friars move it in the pre-established location within the term of fifteen days.[[69]](#footnote-69) The new transfer in the current position took place in 1742, to make room for the *Monument to Bartolomeo d'Alviano*, following the displacement of the organ above the right side door. It was on that occasion that the family obtained the return of the “old bust”, replaced then by a copy on the actual monument.[[70]](#footnote-70) The monument constitutes a typical example of figurative epitaph with the bust of the deceased arranged according to a very popular typology at the time. A specialist of said artistic fashion was namely Alessandro Vittoria, the documented author of the portrait.[[71]](#footnote-71) The same Vittoria, with his collaborators, is also the author of the monument, characterized by elegant volutes on the sarcophagus, which rests on lion-footed corbels. As in other figurative epitaphs of the period without sacred images, the bust of the deceased and the praise of his merits *are* the central message (the original tombstone, lost during the eighteenth-century transfers, was replaced at that time).

The original altar of Saint Stephen was reconstructed at the same time, and placed to the right of the main door, where it had stood since the foundation of the church and was later granted by the friars to the Zorzis, a noble family.

In his will of May 20, 1561,[[72]](#footnote-72) senator Antonio Zorzi, arranged to be buried in Santo Stefano, in a “in a big monument, as tall as the one on the other side of the main entrance” (Jacopo Suriano’s tomb), spending a total of five hundred ducats for the sepulcher and the altar. The altarpiece by Antonio Foler with the *Martyrdom of Saint Stephen*, was placed on the reconstructed altar, and it is currently on the fourth altar of the left aisle, one of the best works among the few ones that are known to be by the artist. It was placed there when the demolition of the altar on the interior side of the façade was decided, in accordance with the regulations of the Counter-Reform. *Antonio Zorzi’s funeral monument* was thus conceived of to be in symmetry with that of Jacopo Suriano, also from a structural point of view. The monument is stylistically comparable to work from the workshop of Alessan- [the rest is cut off, missing pages: 262-284]

[Text starts again on page 285]

During the nineteenth century, works from the demolished church of Sant’Angelo and from other churches came [to Santo Stefano], which caused transfers *of* and interventions *on* the existing works: consequently some paintings and statues were lost.[[73]](#footnote-73)

The first nineteenth century description of the church is to be found in the *Guidebook* [It. title *Guida*] by Moschini in 1815.[[74]](#footnote-74) Many works came from Sant’Angelo: from the altar of the Sacrament (currently in the right chapel in the apse; fig. 10), to the baptismal font with Battista del Moro's statue (located in the original Contarini chapel, which was transformed into a baptistery at that time). The altarpiece by Giuseppe Angeli with *Saint Luigi Gonzaga, Saint Anthony the Abbot and Saint Francis Saverio* also came from Sant’Angelo. This is a work rich in details that remind the viewer of Giovanni Battista Piazzetta’s style and that was painted in 1775. It is presently located on the second altar of the right nave, where it was placed instead of the canvas by Pellegrini, which was moved at the time to the main sacristy on the right of the altar and was subsequently lost. Also from Sant’Angelo is a canvas with *Saint Michael the Archangel* by Gregorio Lazzarini, placed on the altar of the Annunciation, by destroying the preexisting sacred representation. Other minor changes are documented by the French edition of the Guide[[75]](#footnote-75) and then by Soravia,[[76]](#footnote-76) by Paoletti,[[77]](#footnote-77) and by Zanotto.[[78]](#footnote-78)

Subsequently, during the 1847-1852 period, a vast restoration involved further alterations: the bronze altarpiece of the Suriano altar, removed from the inner side of the façade, was placed in its current position to the right of the door to the main sacristy.[[79]](#footnote-79)

It is precisely at this time that the main sacristy takes on that museum-like aspect that still characterizes it:[[80]](#footnote-80) some of the works were almost certainly once preserved in the nearby convent, such as *St. John the Baptist and St. Jerome* and the *Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine with the Donor* by Giovanni Agostino of Lodi. Paintings from the deconsecrated churches of St. Cosmas and St. Damian on the Giudecca island[[81]](#footnote-81) have also been temporarily housed in the main sacristy between the 1800s and the 1900s: the two side panels of the dismembered triptych of San Vidal by Bartolomeo Vivarini painted in 1475 ca.,[[82]](#footnote-82) and the large canvases reminiscent of Tintoretto from Santa Margherita’s church: the *Last Supper*, *Christ Washing the Apostles’ Feet*, and the *Prayer in Garden of Gethsemane.*[[83]](#footnote-83)

Between 1900 and 1911, the original Gothic aspect of the church was restored (excepting the altars, of course),[[84]](#footnote-84) while a total restoration of all structures was carried out during the years 1971-1973.[[85]](#footnote-85) Further restoration work is currently under way.

1. F. SANSOVINO (1581), *Venezia città nobilissima e singolare…*, Venice, c. 49 v. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. P. PAOLETTI (1893), *L’architettura e la scultura del Rinascimento in Venezia*, vol. I, Venice, 57-58. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. A. FOSCARI (1995), *L’architettura quattrocentesca della Chiesa di Santo Stefano*, Conference on the 5th Centenary of the Consecration of Saint Stephen’s Church, November 10th, 1995, 123-159. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. A. NIERO (1978), *Chiesa di Santo Stefano in Venezia*, Padua, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. H. DELLWING (1990), *Die Kirchenbaukunst des spaeten Mittelalters in Venetien*, Worms, p. 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In the will dated October 2, 1380 (Venice State Archives = [Italian abbreviation:] A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b. 6a, proc. VIII, c. 12), published for the first time by PAOLETTI (*L'architettura e la scultura*, p. 58. footnote # 4), Francesco da Masiero refers to a lamp he kept in front of the large cross placed above the choir in the church: «Mr. Francischi a Maseris de confinio Sancti Angeli ... dimitto fratribus heremitanis pro librarum sexcentarum de meis imprestitis pro una missa dicendo omni die pro anima mea ... et pro illa lampada, quam teneo nunc ad praesens ante crucem magnam positam supra corum in ecclesia Sancti Steffani » [Mr Francesco da Masiero … I hereby leave to the Hermits of St. Augustin 600 Venetian lire invested in the City’s public loans so that they will say mass once a day for the benefit of my soul … and that lamp, which is currently located before the big cross above the choir in St. Stephen’s Church].

   In this document, as in later transcriptions of original documents, the punctuation and the use of upper and lower case letters are crucial. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In his will dated July 17, 1382 (A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b. 6a, proc. 1, c. 12), a certain Zuanne Muraro bequeathed a calyx to the Augustinian monks, requesting in exchange that they say mass once a day in perpetuity on the altar to St. Catherine in their church. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. In his last will (A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b. 6a, proc. VIII, c. 18), Lorenzo Valentin established the friars’ obligation to say mass at the altar to St. Michael, according to the good habits established after the building of said altar. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. In the will dated July 16, 1364 (A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b. 6a, proc. V, c. 7) Lorenzo Soranzo arranges for the completion of the Chapel devoted to Saint Stephen, providing it with pews, books, ceremonial decorations, and missals among other things. This chapel was probably also located in the church, especially because two years later, Andrea Soranzo, in his testament dated May 8, 1366 (idem, c. 45), spends 1000 ducats to arrange specifically for a chapel to be built in St. Stephen’s monastery “wherever they please”, as long as it is located outside the church. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. A document dated October 10, 1483 (A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b. 31, CCCCXXX, c. 22) concerning the use of the chapel by the School [=Guild], with particular reference to the sepulcher for the burial of its members. This document certifies the centuries-old existence of the chapel itself and its altar, defining its dimensions (ibidem, c. 23): “... ipsam iam ab diet societate fabricatam capellam cum suo et consueto iam centum annis elapsis altari Annunciatae Virginis Mariae cum spatio et fundo soli (...) latitudinis tredecim pedum quantum tenent columnae ipsius capellae; longitudinis vera a pariete qui est post ipsum altar usque ad gradum magnarum columnarum ecclesiae Sancti Stephani, qua quidem longitudo est vigintitrium pedum iam facta mensura coram me notario infrascripto ... ».

    The chronology thus defined rectifies the one proposed by this author in a lecture delivered on November 10, 1995 and subsequently published in M.A. CHIARI - A. GALLO - E. MERKEL (eds.) (1996), *Chiesa di Santo Stefano, arte e devozione*, Venice, p. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. F. APOLLONIO (1911), *La chiesa e il convento di S. Stefano in Venezia*. *Memoria*, Venice, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b. 6a, proc. IX, c. 10. "Ser Nicolai Georgio quondam Petri ... Item volo et ordino quod a decimo anno ultra ipsum residuum detur perpetuo ecclesie Sancti Stephani pro emendo lapides et calcinam pro reparatione ipsius ecclesie ..." The document was published for the first time by PAOLETTI (*L’architettura e la scultura*, op. cit., p. 46). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. On February 10, 1423 (1422 according to Venetian usage) the maestro Nicolò da Teramo (A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b- 6a, proc. V, c. 6) left a sum for the construction of the convent or the church in his will.

    On July 4, 1437, Orsa, Girolamo Trevisan’s widow, arranges for an endowment to be bequeathed for the construction of Santo Stefano (A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b. 6a, proc. V, c.n.n.). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. L. Torelli (1680). *Secoli Agostiniani*. Bologna, p. 654.

    According to what A. Nicolai states, the members of the Scuola di Santo Stefano to the saint would gather in the right chapel of the apse between 1434 and 1455 (ca. 1750. *Memoria manoscritta spore la chiesa e il monastero di S. Stefano*. Venice, Correr Library, ms. Cicogna 1877, c.n.n.). The altar in that chapel was devoted to Saint Augustine. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. FOSCARI, *L'architettura quattrocentesca*, op. cit., 144-146. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. U. FRANZOI - D. DI STEFANO, 1975, *Le chiese di Venezia*, Venice, p. 333. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. From the left: *Simone da Todi*, with a cartouche; *Agostino Novello*, with a closed book; *St. Paul the First Hermit*, with an open book; *St. Augustine*, with a crozier and a book; the *Blessed Tommaso of Rimini* with a book; *Giovanni Bon of Mantua*, with a closed book. From the right: *St. Nicholas of Tolentino*, with a book and a lily; *Cristopher of Pedimonte*, with a book; *Francesco da Venezia* (possibly identifiable as Francesco Contarini), pierced through by arrows; *St. Monica*, with an open book; *St. Simplician*, with an open book; and *St. William*, with an open book. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. APOLLONIO, *La chiesa e il convento*, op. cit., pages 10, 55-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. A. Foscari. *L’architettura quattrocentesca della Chiesa di Santo Stefano*, Conference on the 5th Centenary of the Consecration of Saint Stephen’s Church, November 10th, 1995, p. 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Cf. footnote # 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. The location of sepulchers in front of the chapels is attested by the aforementioned document relating to the altar of the Annunciation (cf. footnote # 10) and also by Andrea Corbelli’s last will in 1447 (see *infra*, footnote # 30). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. His tombstone is now located within the cloister wall of the Church of Our Lady of Deliverance [It. *Chiesa della Salute*], where it was transferred when the church floor was refurbished. As the inscription on the tombstone attests: “Sepulcrum nobilis et circumspecti viri S. Iacobi Bernabobi de Catenacys de Montepulciano provide mercatoris et civic venetiarum completum ipso vivente die prima Iunii MCCCCXXXVIII” (APOLLONIO, *La chiesa e il convento*, op. cit., p. 11). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. PAOLETTI, *L’architettura e la scultura*, op. cit., p. 178, docs. 89-90. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. In the same period, according to NIERO (*Chiesa di Santo Stefano*, op. cit., p. 14), the German *Pistori* (bakers), whose confraternity had founded a hospice in San Samuele in 1433 for the poor of that profession, had also erected their own altar, the third in the right aisle, placing there wooden statues of the Virgin Mary, Saint Catherine and Saint Barbara. However, no document in this regard has been preserved. According to APOLLONIO (*La chiesa e il convento*, op. cit., p. 13), this altar was dedicated to the saint “since the origins of the church”. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, when it was decided to dismantle the original altar of Saint Stephen, located on the inside of the façade. The Saint Monica altar was then dedicated instead to the church’s eponymous saint, renewing the ancient wooden structure in marble. This occurred between 1708, the year for which we have documents that attest the dedication to Saint Monica of the fourth altar in the left nave, and January 1734 (1733 according to Venetian practice), as attested by the inscription affixed under the altarpiece by Antonio Foler with the *Martyrdom of Saint Stephen*, which was then transferred there from its original location. On that occasion, the statue of Saint Monica was transferred to the church of the Franciscan tertiaries at Spilimbergo “as well as the paintings, which were around said image” (NICOLAI. *Memoria manoscritta*, op. cit., c.n.n.). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. For the particular typology of the altarpiece in the context of Venetian Gothic painting, see: P. HUMPHREY (1993), *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice*, New Haven and London, 165-167.

    For individual paintings cf.: S. MOSCHINI MARCONI, *Gallerie dell’ Academia di Venezia. Opere d’arte dei secoli XIV e XV*, Roma, 1955, p. 35, n. 34 (with previous bibliography); R. PALLUCCHINI (1962), *I Vivarini*, Venice, p. 97; G. NEPI SCIRÈ (1991), I *capolavori dell’arte veneziana. Le Gallerie dell'Accademia*, Venice, p. 53, n. 16 (with previous bibliography). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. SANSOVINO, *Venetia città nobilissima*, op. cit., C. 50 r .: “And in the Church on the right [is] the altarpiece of San Hieronymus by Giovanni & Antonio Vivarini, who made it in the year 1441 & the carving of the altar was done by Gaspare Moranzone”.

    At the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the Santa Monica altar, the fourth in the left aisle, was dedicated to Santo Stefano, replacing the one dismantled from the inside of the façade (see note #25), it was considered appropriate to dedicate to Saint Monica the second altar of the right aisle. The *Polyptych of St. Jerome* was transferred to the refectory and then given to the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, where it is still preserved.

    On the polyptych, see: PALLUCCHINI (1962), *I Vivarini*, op. cit., p. 96, n. 6; K. CHRISTIANSEN (1987), *Venetian Painting of the Early Quattrocento*, «Apollo», 1987, p. 169 .; K. CHRISTIANSEN (1987), ‘La pittura a Venezia e in Veneto nel primo Quattrocento’, in *La Pittura in Italia. Il Quattrocento*, vol. I, Milan, p. 142; *Die Gemaeldegalerie des Kunsthistorisches Museum in Wien. Verzeichnis der Gemaelde*, edited by S. FERINO PAGDEN, 1991, Wien, p. 133 and table 12.

    There are no documents concerning the altar. Already in the *Catastico delle scritture tutte ritrovate nell’archivio delli reverendi padri Agostiniani del monastero di Santo Stefano di Venezia* del 1727 (A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, bb. 2a, 2b) the ‘box’ containing documents CCCCLXV titled *Altar di San Girolamo e Marco da Molin* (A.S.V.. Santo Stefano, b. 2b, ca. 1498) is in fact empty. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Regarding this, see: F. ZERI (1971), ‘Un 'San Girolamo’ firmato di Giovanni d’Alemagna’, in *Studi di storia dell’arte in onore di Antonio Morassi*, Venezia, 40-49.

    K. CHRISTIANSEN, *La pittura a Venezia*, op. cit., p. 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. A.S.V. *Santo Stefano*, b. 9, proc. XXXXVI, c. 1. August 24, 1441: “...Circumspectus egregius vir ser Andreas de Corbellis, quondam ser Benvenuti de contrata Sancti Her- macore ... pacta, compositiones et conventiones fecerunt et contraxerunt ad invicem in hunc modum videlicet: quod praedicti fratres et capitulum per se et successores suos ac nomine praedicti eorum conventus et monasterii concesserunt, dederunt, tribuerunt, consignaverunt, assignaverunt, atque concedunt, dant, tribuunt, consignant et assignant eidem ser Andreae de Corbellis, presenti, recipienti, stipulanti et recipienti, locum in dicta ecclesia eorum Sancti Stephani sub pulpito, quod ad presens est in dicta ecclesia, apud murum partem ecclesiae, introeundo dictam ecclesiam per portam magnam ad manum sinistram; qui locus est apud altare Annunciationis Virginis Mariae, ex opposito archae Rorai praedictae ecclesiae, ad dictam manum sinistram. In quo quidem loco sic dato, concesso et assignato, dictus ser Andreas de Corbellis possit et valeat atque debeat fieri facere et fabricari unum altarem, ornatum secundum condecentiam praedictae ecclesiae et ornatum et constructum lapidibus marmoreis et coctis cum volto superius et clausum circum circa de colonellis marmoreis. Et ante ipsum altare in terra etiam possit et valeat dictus ser Andreas de Corbellis fieri facere unam archam, seu sepulturam, pro ut sibi videbitur et placuerit, pro seppelliendo; et in qua seppelliri possit corpus, sive cadaver suum in dicta archa sive sepultura, cum ipse decesserit de hoc seculo…”. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. A.S.V. *Santo Stefano*, b. 8, proc. XXXXV, c. 2. August 1, 1447: “...et volo et ordeno corpusmeum seppelliri deberá in ecclesia Sancti Stephani, ordinis fratrum Eremitarum de Venetijis in arca et sepultura mea nova quam fieri feci in dicta ecclesia, posta in dicta ecclesia ante capellam meam quam noviter fieri feci in dicta ecclesia…”. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. A.S.V. *Santo Stefano*, b. 8, proc. XXXXIV, c.n.n.. August 23, 1450. Reference is clearly made to the document dated August 24, 1441 (cf. footnote # 29), whose instructions are confirmed once again. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b. 9, proc. XXXXVIII, c.n.n.: “1584 on the first of September. Record of the expenses for St. Nicholas of Tolentino’s altar, the one that was commissioned by the very noble sir Andrea Corbelli ‘the Secretary’, i.e. Corbelli senior, and now the above mentioned very noble sir Luca Corbelli on his own behalf and on his son’s behalf, the honourable sir Jerome, or father Salvator da Venecia from the monastery of Saint Stephen. The friars have imposed on me the duty to repair and restore it to its original form; thus, in the name of God and His glorious mother, and St. Nicholas and the whole celestial court, I hereby decree to let the work begin.

    All marble stones must first be cleaned and scrubbed from top to bottom by the cleaners, and to make them set up platforms etc., I pledge 40 Venetian lire;

    In order to take down the old painting, dispose of it and for the twilled canvases to paint on, and tables for the painter, and to fix the canvas onto the picture frame, and for the platforms, and for the job of the painter itself, and under the large painting the statues of the four evangelists on the sides, in total I am giving 102 Venetian lire;

    In order tomato the cement to hold together the terra cotta bricks, the stones, the concrete and sand and the base for said bricks and for the mix, in total 60 V. lire;

    For the rental of the platforms and scaffolding for the construction workers, for four pine girders, 26 trusses, 20 sails, and containers for the construction, and porters to load, unload, and carry to San Basegio, and for the brick layer, the construction worker, and concrete of two different types, sand, stones to fix the face of the 4th evangelist and in other places where everything was broken 35 V. lire;

    For the gold I am buying everything during February 1585 in order to gilt said altar where needed, or I will buy 2150 pieces of gold at 6 lire, for a total of 133 V. lire;

    In order to hire maestro Zorzi, the gold foil expert, and work with said gold for two lire per carat for a total of lire 43:

    For the colours sky-blue and yellow, cinnabar, linseed oil for the altar and for the tools, in total 16 lire and ten soldi spent by the above mentioned maestro Zorzi ------------------ lire 16;10;

    In order to smear said sky-blue and yellow, cinnabar, linseed oil where needed I am giving in total or to maestro Zorzi---------------- lire 10: 10;

    For the pine boards I have myself bought and three pieces of copper for the said altar, besides the ones that maestro Francesco the carpenter to compensate him for his work--------------- lire 60;

    In order to hire maestro Zuanmaria Veronese and the other stone cutters and masons and for the concrete, and to fix the altarpiece where it was broken, pieces, iron forks, lead, stucco, and in order to open an area on the wall to place the two paintings, and to cover with red the said pieces, and place the red and white stones, 12 ducats, or lire 74 and 8 soldi---------------- lire 74: 8;

    In order to place the stones before the altar where they were missing, and for the big brass lamp and its glass, and ropier total lire 18; 10;

    For several iron connectors for the altar, and two iron supporting beams, and the metal to connect the brass lamp, and to put the processional candles in it when the Blessed Sacrament in total lire 8, soldi 10———— lire 8; 10; [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. NICOLAI. *Memoria manoscritta*, op. cit., c.n.n.. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. About this cf. HUMPHREY, *The Altarpiece*, op. cit., 277-279; A. GALLO-G. NEPI SCIRÈ (1994), *Chiesa di San Giobbe, arte e devozione*, Venice, 28-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. See footnote #32. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. The sculpture is signed ‘PETRI LOMBARDI’ on its pedestal. The inscription, however, is considered apocryphal by J. BURKHARDT (*Il Cicerone*, Florence 1952, p. 680). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. In light of this reconstruction, it could perhaps be hypothesized on an iconographic basis (after all, the same saints flanked St. Nicholas of Tolentino in Lombardo’s altarpiece) that the two fifteenth-century wooden statues of *Saint Andrew* and *Saint Jerome*, now in the sacristy, could have been part of a previous decoration of the altar. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b. 9, proc. XXXXIX, c. 1. February 27, 1454 “... it was established ... that each caulker is obliged to pay every week a soldo and a soldo for each footman, the money from the footmen will be demanded until the construction and decoration of an altar they aim to build in the church of Santo Stefano is completed”. A similar decision would be taken in the following April, which ratified the one taken on February 27th, and established that every “maestro” enrolled in the brotherhood must pay three ducats a year and every servant 16 soldi until ‘said construction’ was complete.

    These documents, as others contained in the same box, are eighteenth century copies. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b. 9, proc. XXXXIX, c. 4. Copy of the official document agreed upon on August 1st, 1454 between the Augustinian friars and the caulkers, which also contains the copy of another document dated February 1454: “Let it be known to each person who sees this writ as the honourable provincial and the honourable prior from the parish of Santo Stefano in Venice, in name of all its friars, on the one hand, and the Chamberlain of the Caulkers’ Guild in Venice and his confreres within the profession, on the other hand, that said friars agree and promise to give to the caulkers a place to meet within their upper refectory so often as they want per year. The friars also promise to give the caulkers a place to set up an altar in the church on the side of the cloister and the caulkers will be responsible for all expenses; they also promise to lend them the altar next to the sacristy until they have their own ... ". [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. As can be gleaned from the proposal for its reconstruction, advanced by Giacomo de Zorzi, chamberlain of the Caulkers’ Guild, in September 1726: “We all know, dear brethren, that we own an altar in the church of the reverend fathers of Santo Stefano by virtue of a solemn official instrument agreed upon by these reverend fathers since the year 1454 August 1st, built at our expense and on which we have placed the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, our representative, and of Saint Mark and Saint Phocas our patrons, but because this was made of wood, it finds itself at present in a sorry state and falling apart, and we cannot use it for religious celebration unless we repair it.

    Therefore they said reverend fathers have on several occasions urgently tried to incite our piety and requested from our chamberlains and bankers to provide the means to reconstruct the alter, and to rebuild in stone, so that it can last. This would be similar to what the other brotherhoods and guilds have done in the same church, so that it can be perfectly appareled for the higher honour of Our Lord. I, Giacomo de Pierro de Zorzi your chamberlain, through our bank, was moved by their request and I encourage you to feel as much piety to contribute to such necessary work… I am therefore sending you this request, as your chamberlain and treasurer of this chapter, for us to contribute to the refurbishing of said altar in marble according to the drawings I am now showing you and for us to spend ca. 1250 ducats for it …” (A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b. 9, proc. XXXXIX, c. 6). The request was not accepted. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. F. SANSOVINO, *Venetia città nobilissima*, op. cit., c. 50 r. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. See footnote # 40 about this. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Concerning the problem of the authenticity of the inscriptions and the dating of the panel, see: M. LUCCO (1990), In the volume *Pinacoteca di Brera. Scuola Veneta*, Milan, p. 174, footnote # 92 (and previous bibliography). The provenance of the painting from the Magistrate’s Petitions’ Court at the Palazzo Ducale does not contradict the hypothesis suggested here. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. At present, the altar of Saint Augustine. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. October 12, 1466. She requests to be buried in the church of Santo Stefano by the altar in St. Nicholas’s Chapel, which they ‘have now started to build’ (A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b. 6a, proc. IX, c. 25). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. F. SANSOVINO, *Venetia città nobilissima*, op. cit., c. 49 v. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. An analogous location for the pulpit is also indicated in the 1441 agreement between the friars and Andrea Corbelli. See footnote # 29 about this. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. G. MARIACHER (1959), ‘Contributi all’attività di scultori caronesi e comaschi a Venezia nei secoli XV-XVI’. In *Arte e artisti dei laghi lombardi*, edited by E. ARSLAN, Como, 191-195. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. There are 36 preserved stalls from the wooden choir, divided up into four sections, with carved and inlaid squares, arranged in two rows, and at present located in the main apse. The backs of the lower row are decorated with floral motifs, whereas the top of those in the upper row is crowned by a shell-shaped niche ending in a spire supporting a prophet or a saint. The squares of the upper row also display a diamond decorated with a rosette and four allegorical figures in each corner. The work was begun by Leonardo Scalamanzo, prior to the first months of 1482, when, on the occasion of a dispute arisen with the Augustinians, they were condemned to pay the debt incurred with the carver, who in turn would have had to deliver a still incomplete series of elements by Easter of the same year (F. STEFANI (1885), *Il vero autore de' sedili del coro di S.* *Stefano in Venezia*, “Venetian Archive”, XXIX , 193-196). At present it is not possible to establish the role actually played by the Scalamanzo in designing the choir or to find out who the real creator was. It is traditionally accepted that the famous Marco Cozzi is the “Marco da Vicenza” who left the inscription engraved on the side of one of the seats on the left entering from the presbytery, signing and dating the work on October 25, 1488. This is also stated by V. BARICHELLA ((1885), *Ancora sull’autore del coro di S. Stefano in Venezia*, “Venetian Archive”, XXX, 449-451), but it is at odds with Cozzi’s death (on August 20, 1485). On the other hand, identifying this Marco with a carver fromVicenza of the same name and who died some time before 1520 is also not beyond doubt (APOLLONIO, *La chiesa e il convento*, op. cit., 27-30).

    Following the 1902 restoration, thirty-four shells, thirteen statues of prophets (which bear the date of 1903 on the back), parts of frames and other elements were completely reworked by Vincenzo Cadorin (APOLLONIO, *La chiesa e il convento*, op. cit., 56-59). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. R. MUNMAN (1976), *Giovanni Buora: the «Missing» Sculpture*, ‘Arte Veneta’, XXX, 54-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. M. SANUDO (1980). ‘De origine situ et magistratibus urbis Venetae (1493-1530)’, edited by A. CARACCIOLO ARICÓ, Milan, p. 51: “In Saint Stephen’s church, there’s the sepulcher of Jacopo Surian from Rimini, a physician. The altar above it is made of bronze.” [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. The devotee to this altar would then have been turned in the opposite direction from the Holy Image of Christ, located on the main altar. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. The document was transcribed by NICOLAI (*Memoria manoscritta*, op. cit., doc. I). [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. P. SELVATICO - V. LAZZARI (1852), *Guida di Venezia*, Venice-Milan-Verona, p. 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. See HUMPHREY, *The Altarpiece*, op. cit., 282-286 and p. 348 footnote # 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. MUNMAN, *Giovanni Buora*, op. cit., 41-52. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b. 24, proc. CCCLXV, c. 1.

    In the same folder (proc. CCCLXV, c. 44), a ducal document dated September 28, 1521 is also preserved, which grants permission to build the main Sacristy, as well as a “Bill of expenses for stones and other things incurred in the construction of the Sacristy and the mason’s invoice” (proc. CCCLXV, c. 1). Also preserved there is a series of documents and invoices related to the construction and the restoration of the bell tower (proc. CCCLXV). [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Notes on the activity of Gabriele Dalla Volta for the church and the convent of Saint Stephen are to be found in E. MERKEL, ‘La sacrestia maggiore’, in M.A. CHIARI - A. GALLO - E. MERKEL (eds.) *Chiesa di Santo Stefano*, op. cit., 41-43. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. The chapel was rebuilt at the expense of Gentile Contarini, the protonotary apostolic. The altarpiece with *Christ’s Baptism*, attributed to Pomponio Amalteo and presumably painted in the 1530s.

    In 1810, when Santo Stefano became a parish church, the chapel was used as a baptistery. On that occasion, the beautiful 1592 baptismal font by Giulio del Moro, with a basanite bowl topped by a powerful statue of the *Baptist*, was transferred from Sant’ Angelo’s church to Santo Stefano. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. *Saint Sebastian*'s head could perhaps be connected to this ancient dedication attributed to Tullio Lombardo, which is still preserved in the church to this day. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Already on January 13, 1538 (1537 according to Venetian usage) Elena, Marino Zorzi’s widow, in her *mansionaria* [list of things the person making the will wants to have done?] refers to the “tomb where my magnificent and noble spouse is buried in our chapel in Santo Stefano” (A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b. 13, proc. CXXXIV). [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b. 6a, IV, c. 47. February 11, 1532. Testamento di Marino Zorzi. He bequeaths several objects to the friars, together “my mother’s altarpiece, when I can have the chapel of the Siega family so I can put it on the altar, upon my spouse’s death”. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. C. RIDOLFI (1648), *Le maraviglie dell’arte*, Venice, edited by D. von HADELN, Berlin 1914-1924, I, 138-139. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. About this cf. P. RYLANDS (1992), *Palma Vecchio*, Cambridge, p. 307, footnote # A68 (with previous bibliography). [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. NICOLAI. *Memoria manoscritta*, op. cit., no page numbers. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. In the above mentioned *Catastico* dated 1727 (A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b. 2a, c. 542; see footnote # 26) there is a reference to the will of Zaccaria Siega dated November 26, 1612: “… we have to place the *mansionaria* done by Prudenza in the San Bastian chapel that I purchased in the church of Santo Stefano… I also want an epitaph in the vulgar tongue made and placed in said chapel that reads that there lie the bones of Francesco della Siega, who was formerly Grand Councillor for 31 years and that I am the only surviving member of my family and I have purchased said chapel and sepulcher, and I myself or my heirs have the authority to destroy Marino Zorzi’s tomb, if and whenever we please”.

    The box containing folder CXXXIII entitled “Mansionaria di Prudenza Siega - Marin Zorzi Senior” should be preserved in b. 13, but it is in fact missing. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b. 31, proc. CCCCXXXVIII, c. 1. November 9, 155 7,“… in perpetuum dedit et concessit, pro ut dat, et concedit eidem magnificae Iuliae praesenti, stipulanti ac accipienti locum in muro dicte eorum ecclesiae dictorum fratorum Sancti Stephani Venetiarum existentem intra altare Annunciationis Virginis Mariae et altare Sancti Nicolai de Tolentino, in quo quidem loco sive muro eadem magnifica domina Iulia deinceps quandocumque melius sibi visum fuerit, possit et valeat construi facere sarcophagum sive sepulcrum lapideum, vel marmoreum in memoriam predictae piae memoriae excellentissimi domini Ioannis Baptistae Ferretti olim viri sui, ea forma, latitudine et altitudine pro ut ei melius videbitur, et placuerit, et in eo arma quaecumque, insignia et inscriptiones possi facere absque aliqua tamen expensa dicti sui monasterii; nec possit dictum sarcophagum sive sepulcrum tempore futuro aliqualiter inde removeri, nec alias mutari, sed perpetuo remanere debeat in ea forma prout fuerit constructum…”. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b. 31, proc. CCCCXXXVIII. February 1st, 1705 (1704 according to Venetian practice) “… it is hereby granted permission to transfer the tomb of the highly regarded Dr. Giambattista Ferretti, at present between the altar of the Holy Annunciation of the Virgin Mary and that of the glorious Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, located in the church of the very reverend friars and place it above the door of the church leading to the cloister of the said monastery…”. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b. 31, proc. CCCCXXXVIII c. 5. March 7, 1709. The document states how, according to the agreement dated February 1st, 1705, Ferretti’s tomb was removed and the altar erected, but also how over the years it had not been possible to transfer the sepulcher to the established location, i.e. above the door leading to the cloister, and that the friars will have to comply within fifteen days. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. The relative correspondence is preserved in the aforementioned folder (A.S.V., *Santo Stefano*, b. 31. proc. CCCCXXXVIII). On September 24, 1742, an agreement was reached between the Augustinians and the Ferretti family: “... that the reverend fathers have permission to remove the family’s tomb from its existing location above the cloister door at their own expense ... and that it be transferred to the chapel of Saint Thomas from Villanova in cornu Epistulae and that instead of their ancestor’s tomb, they may then place the public funerary monument of General d’Alviano… We also promise… to exchange Giovanni Battista Ferretti’s bust facing the church entrance door, all at the friars’ expense… as long as they return the old bust to the Ferretti family…”. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. F. CESSI, (1962), *Alessandro Vittoria scultore (1525-1608)*, part I, Trento, p. 383. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. A.S.V., *Notarile testamenti*. *Atti notaio Antonio Marsilio*, 1209. 552. May 20, 1561. “… my corpse must be laid to rest in Santo Stefano, in a big monument, as tall as the one on the other side of the main entrance… as I have already discussed with the friars, as well as with Mr. Alvise, my son-in-law. And said friars have promised it to me, and I allocate 500 ducats to be spent on the sepulcher and the altar in the way that my heirs consider best…”. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. [footnote # 133 in the text] The changes suffered by the artistic patrimony of the church during the nineteenth century were effectively summarized by NIERO (*Chiesa di Santo Stefano*, op. cit.,28-36). [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. [footnote # 134 in the text] G. A. MOSCHINI (1815), *Guida di Venezia*, I, part II, Venice, 574-594. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. [footnote # 135 in the text] G. A. MOSCHINI (1819), *Itinéraire de la ville de Venise* ..., Venice, 160-166. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. [footnote # 136 in the text] G. SORAVIA, *Prepared materials* op. cit.. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. [footnote # 137 in the text] PAOLETTI, *Il fiore di Venezia*, op. cit., 134-140. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. [footnote # 138 in the text] F. ZANOTTO (1847), *Venezia e le sue lagune*, II, part II, Venice, 144-150. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. [footnote # 139 in the text] The restoration intervention was promoted by the parish priest Msgr. Piccini and financed by Maria Loredana de Gattenburg Morosini, and is described in detail by NIERO (*Chiesa di Santo Stefano*, op. cit., p. 33), who also records his sources. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. [footnote # 140 in the text] After the restoration of the room itself, which brought to light its markedly Renaissance-like architectural structure (1995), a new set-up for the works of art preserved in it was also created. About this cf.: E. MERKEL, ‘La sacrestia maggiore’, in M.A. CHIARI - A. GALLO - E. MERKEL (eds.) *Chiesa di Santo Stefano*, op. cit., 43-46. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. [footnote # 141 in the text] Among them *Moses causes water to spring from a rock* by Sebastiano Ricci. About this, cf.: J. DANIELS, *L'opera completa di Sebastiano Ricci*, Milano 1976, p. 121. footnote # 357. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. [footnote # 142 in the text] About this, cf.: E. MERKEL (1991), in *Restituzioni ’91. Quattordici opere restaurate*, Catalogue of the exhibition. Vicenza, 45-48, footnotes ## 10-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. [footnote # 143 in the text] About this, cf.: E. MERKEL (1993), in *Le siècle de Titien*, Catalogue of the exhibition. Paris, p. 681, footnote # 266 (with previous bibliography). [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. [footnote # 144 in the text] The restoration is described in detail in APOLLONIO, *La chiesa e il convento*, op. cit., 53-73. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. [footnote # 145 in the text] E. ZUCCHETTA, ‘Chiesa di Santo Stefano’, in *Venezia restaurata 1966-1986*, Milan 1986, 164-165. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)