



Eus qui unu
genita tuu dnu
Anno 15. m.

1 Relics as historical objects

Overview, methods, and prospects*

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What is a relic? What are they for? How did their cult develop? Which are the most venerated? These questions immediately come to mind and are of interest both to scholars, in all disciplines, and to the general public.

As André Vauchez notes: “While there has been a remarkable expansion among medievalists since the mid-1960s in the historical study of forms of sanctity, hagiographic texts and miracles, relics have only recently come within the purview of research”.¹ Relics have become historical objects.

The word, from the Latin *reliquiae, -arum*, feminine plural, denotes remains.² In ecclesiastical language it is identified as the holy remains of Christ, the saints, and the blessed, and by extension as objects sanctified by their touch. It was used in this sense for the first time by St Augustine in 397.³

First, we must clearly define the actual nature of the object. The basic terminology of relics distinguishes between *corporeal* and *historical* relics. The former are bones and blood, the latter all objects associated with the memory of Christ or of a saint, their legend as well as their history, those that they used or owned, in fact or by repute: Clothing, everyday items, instruments of their penance, captivity, or torture. A third category comprises *representative* or contact relics, objects contained in reliquaries that have absorbed the holy *virtus*, the “living, miraculous, protective force”, by proximity to other relics: Tombs, strips of cloth touched to tombs (*brandea*), or any other object.

An overview

The Middle Ages saw a prolonged development of the cult of saints, a pervasive element of the medieval mindset. Relics played a considerable part in this process, as the saint was considered to be present and to exercise power through their intermediation. While the quintessential examples are bones, there was a whole series of other relics. The Holy Shroud and the Holy Cross are well known, and some secular ostentations (public showings or displays) and pilgrimages are still practised today. Too often only the spectacular aspect of relics has been considered: Their trafficking seems

shocking to us. But the research domain is vast, and there are numerous centres of historical interest. Relics are outstanding instruments of communication with profound media power in society. The cult of relics runs through every historical period, from Late Antiquity onward; it concerned Christ and every saint, or group of saints, though the sworn devotion of both religious and lay people. Relics have become a new and real historical field.⁴

The ongoing systematic publication of the holdings of church treasuries is providing new documents. The opening of shrines by skilled archaeologists has made it possible to compile reliable inventories of their contents and publish the results. The written sources that have been discovered, quite apart from their obvious palaeographic interest, sometimes throw light on the history of a religious building or an artwork – the container, the reliquary – and mention the names of saints, places, and characters. The archaeological objects that accompany them are of various kinds. All this maps out the “routes of faith” and, in a broader sense, reveals the traces of human contacts, a remarkable puzzle to piece together, falling largely outside the strictly hagiological domain. The circulation of property and people and the networks put in place are revealed by these multifarious material traces, which greatly contribute to our knowledge of the past. Here begins “the job of the historian”.

Actually, interest in relics is not new; what has changed is their interpretation: The perspectives we have acquired have altered our approach to the subject. I have long been arguing for a new approach to this new historical object, entirely setting aside its spectacular dimension and working in a calm, dispassionate manner conducive to research.

By way of an overview,⁵ in the French-speaking context, I would first like to pay tribute to two general works that represent milestones in the field: The proceedings of the colloquium organized by Edina Bozóky and Anne-Marie Helvetius in Boulogne in 1997, and then the volume of *Pecia* edited by Jean-Luc Deuffic in 2005.⁶ And I would also like to recall here the memory of Marie-Madeleine Gauthier, a pioneer in this field in relation to art history.

The general survey I published on relics was subtitled “the fourth power”, referring in general terms to media and channels for disseminating information and to means of communication in a broad sense.⁷ I chose this short and incisive expression in apposition to the word “relics” to underline the pervasive influence exerted by relics on society, in the Middle Ages, obviously, but also long afterwards, and to venture a comparison with the current ubiquity, indeed pre-eminence, of information. I am of course aware of the liberty I have thereby taken with the exact meaning of the expression, and especially with its historical meaning. The further I pursue my research, the more I am amazed by the role of relics as a mediator (a medium, an “intermediary”), the media power they exerted and how deeply embedded they were at every level of society, quite apart from the recognized intercessory role of saints. Relics were involved in grand ceremonies which shaped opinion, but they also played a major role in people’s private lives. These sacred objects were

instruments of communication, media *avant la lettre*, even if they were primarily thought of as “leading us to the hereafter”.⁸

English-speaking scholars have a knack for synthesis, and also perhaps for catchy titles. Both Peter Brown⁹ and Patrick Geary were quickly translated.¹⁰ The title *Thefts of Relics* made an impression at the time: The book was particularly useful for providing a rapid means of referring to the most important thefts. Ireland, in turn, is also very fertile territory for research; one recalls the importance Colomanus († 615) attributes to relics in his letters.¹¹

Scandinavia is revisiting its saints and their relics.¹² The Netherlands, despite the ravages of the Wars of Religion, still has interesting relics,¹³ and some beautiful examples are preserved in the Catherijneconvent Museum in Utrecht. Here, as elsewhere, we find ourselves in the realm of exhibitions.¹⁴

The Swiss, for their part, have not only expatiated on the term “Treasury”¹⁵ but also restored one of their most ancient examples, that of Agaunum (Saint-Maurice).¹⁶

Philippe Cordez’s thesis serves as a transition to Germany, as it has also appeared in German.¹⁷ In the Germanic sphere, Hedwig Röckelein has been working for a long time on relics and treasuries:¹⁸ She adopts an interdisciplinary perspective that the Centre d’Études Médiévales d’Auxerre has been developing for a number of years.¹⁹ A remarkable research instrument for Cologne is provided by H.-J. Kracht and J. Torsy,²⁰ following Anton Legner’s exhibitions, which include *Ornamenta ecclesiae* in 1985.

And of course there are the treasuries themselves, those that have survived through the centuries, those that have disappeared, and those whose holdings have been dispersed. Renovation makes it possible to take a new approach to the works that have constituted their basis and ensured their development. So it is with Agaunum, Halberstadt, Quedlimburg, and Essen, among many others, and indeed also Liège, where we have just completed the renovation begun over 20 years ago.²¹

On the Iberian region, let me just mention Marc Sureda i Jubany’s research on Vic,²² from the art history point of view, and the corpus of crosses valiantly undertaken by César García de Castro Valdés in Oviedo.²³ Oviedo has just recently taken a critical look at its treasury.²⁴ In Santiago, as well as the Instituto de Estudios Gallegos Padre Sarmiento, I would like to mention José Suárez Otero and his archaeological excavations.²⁵

This international survey could be continued, but it is doomed from the outset to be inexhaustible, whether we turn to Italy, Poland, the Baltic or Adriatic coasts, or Byzantium. In this inventorial spirit, we should adapt a phrase from a Mosan list of relics of around 1185 to our overview: The monk had had enough of copying out the names of the relics and ended his writing with the comment “whose name only God knows”,²⁶ which had already occurred in relation to the Holy Ark of Oviedo: *e aliis quam plurimis sanctis quorum nomina sola dei sciencia coligit* (“and of many other saints whose names only the wisdom of God can recall”).²⁷

Treasuries of relics led to cabinets of curiosities. The shift from the sacred to the profane took place gradually, depending on the objects the treasury came to contain, such as those reliquaries made from coconuts or ostrich eggs, or the use of coral or unusual precious stones to decorate reliquaries. In a kind of inventory of the treasuries of churches in Venice, it is recorded that “En la Maison Dieu de Venise est l’un des gros dens d’un jayant c’om appelloit Goliast, lequel jayent David occist. Et sachiés que icellui dent a plus de demypié de long” (“In the Almshouse in Venice is one of the large teeth of a giant who was called Goliath, and David killed this giant. And you should know that this tooth is more than half a foot long”).²⁸ Hence the definition I have proposed: A church treasury becomes the memory and the historical and artistic consciousness of a community, a town, or a region. It preserves that community’s relics of saints as its primary remains, but also a large number of the most disparate objects, a precious collection, spiritual but at the same time also material, foreshadowing museums, the favoured conservators of art.

A typology of archaeology and art history

As early as the beginning of the 18th century, Dom Jean Mabillon noted that in a religious building, everything revolves “around the cult of saints and their relics”. Over the centuries, the space in churches was indeed gradually organized so as to enhance the visibility of the saint’s tomb and the internal traffic of the liturgy. In Late Antiquity, the first meetings of Christians were held near the traditional funerary cult. They later moved from the funerary mausoleum to the crypt: From the *martyrium* highlighted by André Grabar to the various types of crypts.²⁹ A masterly reading of the 375 most significant crypts in France has been conducted by Christian Sapin, making comparisons with nearby countries.³⁰

The transformations of monuments over time make them difficult to interpret. Interment *ad sanctos* developed them so as to secure the saints’ protection by occupying these privileged burial places beside them. The whole arrangement was thus devised to house the relics and present them to pilgrims as a focus of devotion within the building. Basilicas *ad corpus* were established over existing mausoleums in the Merovingian period, when the cult of saints was consolidated, sometimes in two-tier constructions.³¹

The cult began at the saint’s burial place, its actual foundation, eventually located by archaeological excavations: The stone sarcophagus with a human figure (*c.* 730) of Chrodoara († *c.* 634), also known as St Ode, buried under the choir in Amay-sur-Meuse,³² or that of St Gertrude († 659) in Nivelles.³³

This was the origin of the crypt in the usual sense of the term. From the ninth century, vaulted crypts, as opposed to wooden-roofed buildings, became the appropriate place for the veneration of saints (reliquary crypts). Laid out under the chevet were annular crypts (semi-circular passages), as in Rome, others in the form of angled passages for straight chevets, as in

Saint-Gall, or yet others with complex structures reflecting the success of the pilgrimages. In Auxerre, the Carolingian construction (before 841) reconfigured the space and incorporated the tomb of St Germain († 448) while preserving his original place of interment and the basic masonry: A deambulatory was created around the ancient oratory with its crypts, described by Martène and Durand in 1717 as “perhaps the most venerable place in the kingdom”.

A list of all the publications on Saint-Germain d’Auxerre³⁴ would enable me to cite numerous authors working directly or indirectly on this subject³⁵.

It would be unthinkable not to mention here the pioneering studies of Carol Heitz († 1995),³⁶ on the relationship between architecture and liturgy in the Carolingian period, secondary altars and station liturgy – and the celebrated reformer Chrodegang († 766).

The nine ivory plaques attached to the lower (back) cover of the celebrated Drogo Sacramentary (Paris, BN Ms 9428, Metz, c. 845) show nine scenes from a Eucharistic celebration in Metz Cathedral. On plaque no. 1 (actually no. 6), we can see the bishop sitting at the back of the apse with the deacons on stools in front of him; further away is the altar surmounted by its ciborium, and in the background, the relic pouches hanging from a rood beam. This arrangement was used again in the 11th-century cathedral. The text of the cathedral’s *Caeremoniale* says that these pouches (*phylacteria*) were hung from a beam (*trabes*) at the entrance to the liturgical choir.

At Ponthieu, in the diocese of Amiens, the rich sanctuary then known as Centula, before taking the name of Saint-Riquier after its legendary founder, St Richarius, under the direction of Abbot Angilbert († 814), son-in-law and adviser to Charlemagne, became the prototype of the western ante-church or “westwork”.³⁷ Angilbert’s Carolingian abbey is known from texts and from the famous print of 1612, before the Gothic reconstruction. The outer crypt was added by Abbot Gervin († 1075): It has four altars containing numerous relics, close to the tomb of St Richarius. François Héber-Suffrin and Anne Wagner³⁸ have clearly shown that the crypt of Saint-Riquier seems to be related to a Mosan group (Stavelot, Malmedy, and Fosses, for example),³⁹ which follows an ancient tradition developed in the Carolingian period. At a time when an increasing number of ambulatories were appearing in France, Lower Lotharingia, particularly the Meuse region, remained faithful to the old tradition of the outer crypt, extending the western end of the building. Gervin designed his sanctuary annex, his burial place, with the intention of adhering to Angilbert’s original plan, founded on relics. In the spiritual conception of his crypt, Gervin’s initiative exalted Richarius’s tomb still further, and at the same time, it sought to recreate and expand the inherited historical memory of relics assembled by Angilbert, which Norman looting, in particular, had diminished.⁴⁰

A deep trace remained in the minds of Angilbert’s successors, reflected in the 11th-century crypt, later on in the Gothic abbey church, and then in certain renovations in the modern era. Indeed, when the sanctuary was

restructured in the 17th century, reliquaries were installed in it in a similar arrangement on the beams connecting the columns of the Gothic hemicycle.

The buildings gradually came to be seen as vast monumental reliquaries.⁴¹ Churches and altars were the normal places for preserving relics. In certain cases, they were hung over altars, at Laon and Stavelot, for example. Crucifixes in churches sometimes contained relics. At Ringelheim, the relics were placed in the head of the Bernward Crucifix (Hildesheim, *c.* 1000). The monumental cross at Niedermünster (2.70 m high), a masterpiece of the medieval silversmith's art, in Alsace, halfway up the famous Mont Sainte Odile, disappeared during the Revolution. In 1197, it was converted into a reliquary cross; five cavities housed relics (the foreskin of Christ, wood from the Cross, the robe of the Virgin, arms of St Basil and St Denis). Relics were sometimes immured, for example at Angers and at San Clemente in Rome, or enclosed in columns (Magdebourg, Monte Cassino) or capitals (Magdebourg Cathedral, Saint-Michel de Cuxa, St Michael's Church in Hildesheim). At Mont-Saint-Michel, relics were placed in the cross on top of the church tower, at the highest point of the hill, as they were at Nantes and Reims in the ninth and tenth centuries. As Jean-Pierre Caillet has rightly written, "This pattern serves all the better to reflect the idea that the saints, whose relics are arranged in each of the apsidal chapels around the perimeter, constitute the true seat of the kingdom of God".⁴²

Dominique Iogna-Prat examines the *Maison Dieu* ("House of God"): From 800, this "comprehensive enterprise of social construction" in Charlemagne's Christian Empire established "a hierarchically ordered set of complementary centres and functions".⁴³ The development of a doctrine of places of worship in the West led to the earthly visibility of the Church through the establishment of specific places, especially churches and cathedrals. The phenomenon of the "monumentalization" of the Church as a community and of its "petrification" in church buildings began from the first known images in mosaics, around 400, of the bishop carrying a model of his church in Ravenna (fifth–sixth centuries), reaching its first turning point in the Carolingian period. It was then that architectural symbolism acquired a sacramental aspect in the form of an ecclesiastical hierarchy and a merging of container and content, metonymically embodied to perfection around 845 in a miniature in the celebrated Drogo Sacramentary, already mentioned for its cover (Paris, BN Latin 9428, fol. 87^v, at the beginning of the collect of the Mass of St Paul). The initial *D* of *Deus* is inhabited by a church, which in turn contains a representation of the ecclesiastical community: The priest, standing behind the altar, on which there is a chalice, under a ciborium, is celebrating mass facing the faithful gathered in the nave.⁴⁴

On 2 October 1049, Pope Leo IX presided over the ceremonies for the consecration of the Basilica of Saint-Remi in Reims, which are very well documented.⁴⁵ The translation of the body of St Remigius, Apostle of the Franks, and its installation in its new Romanesque resting place was carried out in three phases over two days. First, the Pope received the relics of

St Cornelius, brought by the monks of Saint-Corneille in Compiègne, who were fleeing from the acts of violence committed against their church. Then, a procession of the shrine of St Remigius was organized in the church, followed by a circuit that included the urban space around the city walls, and finally, the consecration, with a triple circuit of the crosses and saints' relics around the building. St Remigius's shrine was placed on the high altar and remained there for the duration of the following synod, in a "spatialized staging of the saint, the pope and the Church".

Either relics were associated with the altar or they were displayed in a specific place. At Saint-Vanne in Verdun, according to the chronicle of Hugues de Flavigny (11th century), the front of the choir in the church was occupied by three altars with shrines and the altar of St Peter was installed at the back of the apse. Rouen had 14 shrines at the end of the 12th century. From the mid-ninth century, at least, reliquaries could take their place on the altar.

This became common practice for displaying relics,⁴⁶ all the more so since their weight often made them difficult to move; in certain cases, moreover, small reliquaries were hung above the altar. From the Carolingian period, altars were equipped with suitable fittings to hold reliquaries. A raised device resting on the table foreshadowed Gothic altarpieces.

The Paliotto or Golden Altar of St Ambrose in Milan, made by the goldsmith Vuolvinus around the middle of the ninth century, consists of two faces, with a small door in one of them opening onto the *loculus* for relics. At Grandmont, the remains of a high altar have made it possible to reconstruct an altarpiece with two steps which supported the monumental shrine of St Stephen of Muret, of around 1190–1230. The device exalted the main dedicatee saint.

Thus, the altar on which the Body of Christ is made present,⁴⁷ is related to the holy bodies, buried under the Eucharistic table, hidden in their "sepulchre" in the altar stone, displayed on the altar itself or placed in its vicinity.

Through his study of rituals, Éric Palazzo leads us to portable altars, of which Michel Budde has compiled an inventory.⁴⁸ In 1940, Joseph Braun listed and classified reliquaries in a monumental work,⁴⁹ which provided a basis for interdisciplinary studies. The reliquary absorbed the *virtus* of the relic and the image became a key to understanding the medieval mind.

The special issue of *Gesta* (1997) on *Body Parts and Body-Part Reliquaries* brought together what Brigit Falk had already sought to establish by cataloguing bust reliquaries.⁵⁰ That of St Lambert in the Treasury of Liège Cathedral, the largest of the late Gothic period, alone provides a complete compendium of medieval symbolism from a historical and liturgical perspective, clearly intended by the Bishop of Liège around 1512.

The role of the sponsor, the iconographic programme, the symbolism, the levels of reading and the meaning of reliquaries, their liturgical role, and their impact on a mostly illiterate audience all lead us to reconsider the role of images in the Middle Ages,⁵¹ according to the approach of the École Pratique des Hautes-Études to "image-objects". Jérôme Baschet, taking up

a concept created by Jean-Claude Bonne, has defined the latter as images “inseparable from the materiality of their support, but also from their existence as objects, acted upon and acting, in specific places and situations, and involved in the dynamics of social relations and of connections with the supernatural world”.⁵² This definition particularly highlights the importance of the materiality of the support and of involvement in a relational dynamic in which the celebrant, the faithful, and of course Christ are here engaged. Words act through the material density that perpetuates them even as it exposes them to view. The body of words suggests the body of Christ.

Wibald, Abbot of Stavelot and Malmedy (1130–58), with whom I must confess I feel very familiar, perfectly illustrates what I am saying. In 2004, Suzanne Wittekind dissected the meaning of the artworks produced under the patronage of this prelate. Patrick Henriët goes even further, with a subtle analysis of the parchment included in the centre of the table of Wibald’s portable altar and its Trisagion, *Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus*.⁵³ Like all the altars in which holy bodies were secreted, the Stavelot portable altar was also a reliquary. By virtue of their size and their rich ornamentation, portable altars lent themselves particularly well to this link between altar and reliquary. Patrick Henriët suggests that at the heart of this contrivance there is an identification with the body of Christ. As is often the case, the structure of the Stavelot altar consists of a wooden core with a cavity designed to hold the relics. Under the altar is a cross encircled by an inscription executed with particular care in brown varnish: RELIQUIE SANCTORUM. A kind of symbolic axis therefore links the relics of the saints (we do not know which; the relics and their authentication labels have disappeared) to the Trisagion, the sign of Christ’s body. Moreover, the position of the parchment bearing the triple *Sanctus*, under a rock crystal cover, cannot fail to remind us of Eucharistic monstrances and reliquaries fitted with a window enabling the holy body or object to be seen, which appeared in the 13th century and became the rule by the end of the Middle Ages.⁵⁴ These reliquaries were doubtless the first to include openings that made it possible to see the fragments of bodies offered for the devotion of Christians.

Finally, specific sites or pieces of furniture, reliquary chapels, and treasuries were constructed.

A typology of hagiography

In 1971, Patrice Bousset († 1985) published his book *Des reliques et de leur bon usage* (“Relics and how to use them properly”), with a cover illustrated by the cartoonist Topor, aiming to debunk all that is shocking in the mish-mash of relics accumulated over the centuries, rather as Luther and Calvin had done, *mutatis mutandis*, in the Reformation.

First, Christ and dominical relics: All those related to the person of Christ incarnate. To take an example from Turku in Finland, an authentication label for Christ’s sweat refers to the sweat of Christ on the Mount of Olives

mentioned in the Gospel of St Luke (22:44). It is therefore both a dominical and an evangelical relic, if one wishes to establish a more precise typology and terminology. In the same spirit, we note the presence of a “handkerchief” of Christ at Clairvaux and at Mont-Saint-Michel. These, then, are relics brought back from the Holy Land, in the way we nowadays bring a drop of water back from the grotto at Lourdes or of oil from the tomb of St Nicholas in Bari.

Among representative dominical relics, the most famous, after the Cross, is the Holy Shroud. The history of the Turin Shroud, which has several times been thought to be a closed issue, has been revived once again by Andrea Nicolotti.⁵⁵ He has become its historian, following the noted research he has also conducted on the Image of Edessa (*Mandyliion*).⁵⁶ There is an objective difficulty in confronting pseudo-historical and pseudo-scientific propaganda;⁵⁷ new research leads on the Shroud are particularly concerned with its encomiastic and propagandist function as a dynastic relic of the House of Savoy⁵⁸ and its relationship to the Italian royal court.⁵⁹ Other holy shrouds are attested, such as those in Besançon,⁶⁰ Oviedo,⁶¹ and Cadouin.⁶²

The representation of Christ’s face has a whole history behind it. The Edessa Image, an *acheiropoieta* or portrait of Christ made “without hands”, is the origin of an iconographic type that was widespread from the sixth century. Transferred as a relic to Constantinople, in 944, it was known as the *Mandyliion* and was associated with the shroud of which it was the face: They were regarded as forming one and the same relic. It is hardly necessary to mention that research on the Turin Shroud has continued, as have its ostentations, the last of which was in 2015. Its history is full of twists and turns: “Never, perhaps, has a relic constituted such an enigma”.⁶³ For we are indeed speaking of relics. The Passion of Christ generated a whole series of relics – everyone knew the story from the Gospel – which served to give material expression to the sacred text, including many representative relics, since by the Ascension, Christ’s body had left the earth. Veils and cloths were image relics, which had retained the imprint of Christ’s face. The *Mandyliion*, the prototype of every image of Christ, was supposedly given by Jesus to the envoy of King Abgar of Edessa; the Veronica or *vera icon* (“true image”) was thought to have been brought to Rome by the holy woman to cure the emperor.⁶⁴ Jean-Claude Schmitt traced the core principles of relic images at the Boulogne colloquium,⁶⁵ and Edina Bozóky those of relics and power.

Other relics of Christ are His prepuce, His precious blood,⁶⁶ and His letter sent from Heaven;⁶⁷ here too, imagination produced representative relics.

After Christ comes the Virgin, whose most important relics were collected together at Constantinople: Her mantle (*maphorion*) and her girdle served to protect the city. A large number of Marian images played the same role as relics: Miraculous icons with majestic *sedes sapientiae* (throne of wisdom) sculptures, sometimes filled with relics, both Marian (milk, hair of the Virgin, and all the mementos of her time on earth) and others. Eastern and Western sanctuaries vied with each other in the originality of those they

possessed. As for the *casa sancta*, the Virgin's house, it was supposedly transported by angels from Nazareth to Loreto in Italy.

The "major" saints have colloquia and publications devoted to them. Let me offer an updated bibliography of some of them: Colloquia on St Nicholas in Bari and Lorraine;⁶⁸ on St Martin, from Hungary to Tours;⁶⁹ St Louis, the saint-king;⁷⁰ St Michael, from Monte Sant'Angelo to Mont-Saint-Michel,⁷¹ and we should also recall here the pioneering study by my teacher, Dom Jacques Dubois, on the lost treasure of this famous sanctuary; St Agatha, with splendid publications in Catania;⁷² St Catherine.⁷³ I need hardly say that Georges Kazan is passionately interested in John the Baptist.⁷⁴ The cult of the Eleven Thousand Virgins and the Theban saints is an extraordinary phenomenon running right through the Middle Ages and continuing in the modern period. St James is also receiving a great deal of attention.⁷⁵ Some years ago, Jacques Stiennon studied a journey from Liège to Santiago in 1056, and I have extended his research with the discovery of a tiny reliquary box of the period, found in an altar of the Benedictine Abbey in Liège dedicated to the Apostle of Galicia.⁷⁶

Local saints, regional saints, international saints: We could imagine very useful exhibitions or publications region by region, such as those at Geneva and Turin.⁷⁷ The quality of relics was important of course, but so was the quantity: One sometimes has the impression that the more saints there were, the better. Régimbert introduced a feast of relics at Echternach on 9 November. Here too it would be interesting to follow its development.

A chronological typology

The lion's share of the cult of relics belongs to the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, it developed in Late Antiquity, survived into the modern era, even after the Council of Trent, and continues in contemporary times. These periods are therefore not to be overlooked and must be explored as well, all the more so since they very often illuminate the Middle Ages.

The publication of ancient texts enables us to mark out the route leading to this observable crescendo of reliquiophilia: Each sanctuary, each region, offers increasingly spectacular examples. Two general surveys have been published on Byzantium and on the Eastern Roman Empire,⁷⁸ which had already been the object of a great deal of research; I am thinking particularly of the work of Jannic Durand.

Relics were fragmented and dispersed; this fragmentation reinforced the phenomenon. The example came from Rome. From the eighth century, the great sedimentation of holy bodies began in the West: Their multiple particles travelled. *Authenticae* or "authentic documents" are inscriptions on various materials (parchment, papyrus, paper, metal, stone, etc.) identifying the relic, mostly by the name of the saint, and/or authenticating it, and explicitly or implicitly authorizing its public veneration. The term is most commonly used to denote those very narrow strips of parchment (some of

them 5 to 6 mm by about 10 cm), those labels, certificates, or captions, so tiny that they curl up and sometimes bear only the name of a saint. Authentication labels started to be written, around the end of the seventh century, according to the earliest examples so far discovered in the Lateran area of Rome, for a practical reason. At the end of the eighth century and the beginning of the ninth, the papacy, as a matter of “policy”, had numerous bodies lying outside the walls exhumed to move them inside the city, where they were then divided into fragments, which went to enrich the altars and treasuries of churches in regions of Christendom that lacked them. From the ninth century, there was a large influx of Frankish bishops and abbots to Rome, who procured precious remains, by purchase or theft, particularly in the catacombs, to take them to France or Germany. This systematic pillaging, as a result of which a great many false relics were put into circulation, continued uninterrupted until the 11th century and was actually encouraged by the evolution of liturgical practice, since it then became the custom in the West to insert relics into every altar on which the Eucharistic sacrifice was offered. Even the most modest village church therefore had to possess them, and this contributed to speeding up the process of dismembering and dispersal of holy bodies.

From the Early Middle Ages, a considerable number of relics from the Holy Land, acquired in the Crusades to deliver Christ’s tomb, further served to intensify the phenomenon, not to mention the sack of Constantinople in 1204, which brought so many artworks and relics to the West.

The great pilgrimage sites (Aix-la-Chapelle, Saint-Martin in Tours, Santiago, and so on) also provided real or representative relics.

By the end of this process, around the year 1000, relics were present everywhere and occupied a central place in the religious life of the faithful, as is clearly shown by the writings of an author like Rodulfus Glaber. The Church could only rejoice in the fact, since the spread of relics had been a powerful instrument for Christianizing Western society.

In particular, the cult of relics helped to propagate a very strong and concrete sense among the laity of the communion of saints, that is, of the mysterious communication between the living and the dead by virtue of which men and women here on earth could benefit from the merits of the saints in paradise, whose intercession could help them – and if not them, their loved ones and their dead – to face the difficulties of life or the perils of the hereafter.

For the modern and contemporary periods, research centres particularly on the subject of politicization of relics, to judge from the colloquia organized in 2015 in Madrid and Poitiers under the direction of Albrecht Burkardt (Limoges) and Jérôme Grévy (Poitiers).⁷⁹ The subject has gradually shifted here from the religious domain to the secular world, which has thus been able to create its own relics, involving processes of a transfer of sacredness. These objects may acquire a variety of political meanings and uses. The close relationship between civil and religious power was already evident in the Middle Ages and even during the Ancien Régime. At Limoges,

for instance, the keys of the city enclosed in the shrine of St Martial are a fine example.⁸⁰ It is perhaps not anachronistic to point to politicians who still today, whatever their religious or philosophical proclivities, appear at important religious festivals in which relics retain all their symbolism. One thinks of the great Marches of Entre-Sambre-et Meuse in Wallonia, which continue to carry the relics of patron saints through the countryside and the town, at Gerpinnes, Walcourt, or Waulsort, or better still the *Car d'Or* at Mons, the gilded dray that conveys the shrine of St Waltrude (Waudru) to her collegiate church on Trinity Sunday. The most astonishing event of this kind is undoubtedly the procession of St Agatha in Catania, with all the mysteries it still holds, amid an immensely fervent flood of people.

Historical anthropology has also set its sights on “modern relics”, from the critiques in Jean Calvin’s *Treatise on Relics* (1543) to the *Dictionnaire critique des reliques et des images miraculeuses reliques modernes* of Collin de Plancy (1794–1881).⁸¹ Indeed, the Early Modern period falls between two episodes of massive and violent destruction of relics, the first linked to the Reformation and the second to the French Revolution. The creation of the Sacred Congregation of Rites in 1588 and the publication of new liturgical books of the Roman Rite – the Breviary, the Missal, the Martyrology, the Ritual, and so on – led to a demand throughout the Catholic world for investigation of local saints and the diocesan Proper, culminating in approval and often revival of the ancient cult. This multifaceted re-Catholicization revitalized local devotion and attachment to a sense of identity focused on relics, between tradition and continuity, in a period of great upheavals.⁸²

Mass distribution of “holy bodies” extracted from the catacombs in Rome and their modern “invention”, from 1578 to the 19th century, is a fascinating laboratory for “total history”, as Pierre Toubert described it.⁸³

Another possible facet of the cult of relics is the comparison of different religions. The exhibition in the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam adopted this approach,⁸⁴ as did the 2013 volume *Pilgrims and Pilgrimages as Peacemakers in Christianity, Judaism and Islam*.⁸⁵ I am thinking particularly of the relationship with the Orthodox world, where saints’ bones have retained considerable importance, but from a more sociological perspective, the comparison could undoubtedly be extended to Islamic or Buddhist cults. And to take up the well-chosen title of Jean-Claude Schmitt’s book *Les saints et les stars*, quite a number of contemporary stars nowadays attract the kind of devotion formerly professed to saints. After all, on the death of her husband, Madame de Gaulle destroyed everything associated with the General’s private life for fear of a cult of relics. I mention this example merely to illustrate their widespread currency.

A method/methods

The authenticity of relics is of no direct concern to historians.⁸⁶ In other words, whether they are genuine or false, an often prominent and even

over-sensationalized aspect of relics,⁸⁷ is of course a fact to be taken into consideration, but it is not an essential or fundamental issue for the historian. Broadly speaking, I would even say that the more false relics are, the more interesting they are to us. The concept of falsehood in the Middle Ages, as diplomatic sources saw it, is applicable to the domain of relics. The medieval perception of historical truth was not the same as ours.

On this issue, the Benedictine monk Guibert de Nogent is the true sage and his reflections in his treatise on relics are still pertinent today. Two such works are found in the Middle Ages: Those of Guibert and Theofrid of Echternach.

Around 1100, in his treatise *De pignoribus sanctorum*, Guibert was already denouncing certain abuses associated with devotion. Observing that no fewer than three heads of St John the Baptist were venerated in three different places in France in his time, he was led to wonder whether it would not be better to let the saints enjoy their eternal rest, which they richly deserved, moreover, rather than paying unwarranted honour to dubious objects. These critiques had no immediate impact on the faith of believers and clergy in the power of their relics, but they did give rise to a process of reflection which from the second half of the 12th century led the Roman Church, through hagiography and soon through canonization processes, to stress the example provided by saints in their lifetimes and their virtues rather than the beneficial influence emanating from their remains. In any case, as Guibert remarked, it does not matter if simple people pray to a false saint: God can see into their hearts.

In his fascinating treatise *Flores epytaphii sanctorum* (literally “flowers scattered over the tombs of the saints”), divided into four books and written around 1100,⁸⁸ the Abbot of Echternach, Thiofrid, sketched out a typology of relics, a sort of catalogue of their forms (their outward appearance): First, corporeal relics (Book I), including the tombs in which holy bodies rest (Book II), and representative relics, which he calls *appendicia*; he divides these into “positive appendices” (Book III), objects used by the saint in his lifetime, liquids of every kind, and so on, and “negative appendices”, instruments of martyrdom (Book IV). A relic is an object defined in relation to the senses: It is the substrate through which the divine power which works miracles is exercised. Thiofrid compares the manifestation of Christ in the Eucharist with that of the saints in their relics. This work and that of Guibert de Nogent are the only two medieval treatises devoted to the cult of relics and their reception was limited. Guibert regards corporeal relics of Christ as an “infinite absurdity” and relics of saints as useful but not necessary to health.

If we bring a little order to the chronology of studies on relics, the various disciplines that have concerned themselves with this subject are immediately apparent.

The facet addressed by Nicole Herrmann-Mascard († 2014) in her book *Les reliques des saints: Formation coutumière d'un droit* is law.⁸⁹ Rules

were gradually established with regard to relics: The formation of customs sometimes gave rise to written law for the purpose of recognizing them and encouraging or opposing the development of their cult. The author explains the complex and contradictory conciliar and synodal legislation in detail.

One of the main stages to be noted in this process is the Carolingian regulations, which called a halt, so to speak, to the aberrations observed in the Merovingian period. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) prohibited the sale of relics in its Canon 62, and reference was made to this for a long time afterwards; the Bishop of Angers recalled it in 1493. The Canon also prohibited displaying relics to the faithful outside reliquaries and non-authenticated relics. In addition, the Council of Trent dealt with the subject in its Session XXV in 1563. But what must be borne firmly in mind is that, as always, there was very often a wide gulf between theory and practice.

In the Middle Ages, relics were brought out of their traditional context of preservation to intervene directly in legal proceedings and decide cases, in the manner of a judgement of God.⁹⁰ The *Miracula sancti Columbani*, written by a monk of Bobbio in the mid-tenth century, is an account of translation of relics: The king's justice was administered using a sort of ordeal centring on a historical relic, the cup of Columbanus. Let me underline a promising line of attack with an open question: "Are we to suppose that the mobilisation of saints in legal disputes remained the exception to the difference from what can be observed north of the Alps?"⁹¹

Finally, relics were also the object of proceedings.⁹²

The theology of relics, that is, a systematic analysis of the writings of Church Fathers and medieval authors, and especially their reception in the different regions, has yet to be written. The theologian Arnold Angenendt has produced various general surveys.⁹³ Historians, swimming against the theological tide, will unhesitatingly feel that relics are even more interesting when they are false, since then the reasons behind the deviations need to be explained. It is a fertile and difficult field, especially the relationship between theory and practice. Producing a theology of relics involves many important names and many stages. The theological legitimacy of the cult of relics was established by St Jerome († 420) and St Augustine († 430).

Stéphane Boiron acutely analyzes the initial legal definition of relics in Roman religious law as *res sacrae*, that is to say, as material objects devoted to the service of divine worship, and then the distinction introduced by canon law from the 12th century, in a context of simony, as *res spirituales*. The inalienability of relics and the ban on selling them followed from this but were subject to compromises before the attacks of the Reformation.

Prospects

Relics are a booming field of research.⁹⁴ I have long argued for compiling databases on relics.⁹⁵ Up to now, the project has seemed so ambitious that many have been deterred (myself in particular). Moreover, there is such an

abundance of material that the particular slot must be carefully chosen; an interdisciplinary approach multiplies the work involved.

Art

For myself, as a museum curator, art history is obviously one of my prime concerns. How can one begin to investigate a reliquary without knowing the history of its relics? I have been inspired by Mosan art in particular, as this period, namely the 12th and 13th centuries, is the golden age of devotion to saints in the Meuse region,⁹⁶ and I would add the Rhine as well after the celebrated Rhine-Meuse exhibition in Cologne and Brussels in 1972.

History

Written sources are the bread and butter of historians. Thus, relic authentications entered the historical field some 40 years ago. The University of Heidelberg, in its international conference *Reliquienauthentiken: Kulturdenkmäler des Frühmittelalters* (Relic Authentications: Cultural Monuments of the Early Middle Ages) (2017), has conducted a review of the “written sources that enable relics to be identified” in the Merovingian and Carolingian periods. For a long time now, following the fruitful path marked out by Dom Jacques Dubois for Mont Saint-Michel, I have been saying repeatedly that the first step is to publish inventories of treasures. The late Bernhard Bischoff started work on a *Mittelalterliche Schätzenverzeichnis* (Register of Medieval Treasures).

Relic types could also be a line of attack. I am thinking particularly of the book by Patrice Boussel cited earlier: An international inventory could be drawn up for each particular type.

Literature

Until recently, vernacular literary sources had been somewhat neglected by medievalists. The colloquium *Saintuaire*, organized by Sophie Albert and Hubert Heckmann at the University of Rouen and the Sorbonne (2012–15), led to the discovery of a whole series of relics and reliquaries in French texts of the 11th to 16th centuries, texts produced in the medieval period on relics and reliquaries, on the one hand, and the contribution of the humanities to capturing and understanding these developments, on the other. The history of the body, the image, and the object was addressed from literary, aesthetic, and poetic perspectives. Several common threads ran through all the contributions: How relics are related to space and time, to the dead body or the living body, to its materiality or its voice; the construction of a range of types of sanctity, more or less dependent on religious models; specific linguistic or stylistic parallels between relics and other referents; aesthetic and poetic analysis of texts whose principles, logical structures, and modes

of coherence highlight the substantial symbolic investment in which relics are at stake. Relics thus become literary objects in the light of humanities and social sciences.⁹⁷

Anthropology and the exact sciences

Science has long shown its interest in relics. First, anthropology: The person's height, diseases suffered, anatomy, and reconstruction of the features of historical figures. The remarkable reconstruction of the bodies of St Benedict and St Scholastica must be mentioned here. In the 1980s, we attempted to apply this method to our Mosan saints. The substantial advances in the identification techniques used by the police and by medical science increase the possibilities considerably. DNA has entered our files. The leading treasuries of relics are based on whole bodies of saints. In 2016, the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage in Brussels organized a workshop on the analytical study of relics, "Relics @ the Lab", with the Oxford Relics Cluster, in which Georges Kazan took part.⁹⁸

The domain of relics extends in many directions, and it is impossible to be competent in every area. An interdisciplinary approach is indispensable, as we have seen, but it is very difficult to organize, in both financial and human terms.⁹⁹ Caution is also called for in opening reliquaries. Although enthusiasm is essential to research, it must be channelled scientifically, and we need to take time, care, and thought in preparing our files. But the administrative and bureaucratic emasculation imposed for no apparent reason by our contemporary societies on gaining access to certain artworks should be resisted as far as possible. Moreover, work on many files is in abeyance or has not even begun. Amid the prodigious number of publications with which we are routinely bombarded nowadays, we must take account of the earlier discoveries of our learned predecessors, which are too often ignored, and of unpublished material. Providing an overview is a necessary task, but precise mention should be made of existing knowledge, and the perspective, above all, should be to look forward to further study.

Notes

- * I have pleasure in dedicating this article to the Congregation of Daughters of the Cross, who entrusted the artworks from their convent in Liège to the Cathedral Treasury before leaving the city. The body of their foundress, Mother Marie-Thérèse Haze, beatified in 1992, was translated to Liège Cathedral on 29 April 2017.
- 1 In this preface to my book *Reliques*: Vauchez, "Préface", 11.
- 2 *Leipsana* in Greek, from which the term *lipsanoteca*, a container designed to hold relics of a saint, is derived.
- 3 Dubois and Lemaitre, *Sources*, 248.
- 4 I have been interested in relics since the 1980s and my investigations have expanded from the local to the regional, diocesan, national, and international level. There is no point here in reiterating my research, most of which has been

- published (orbi.ulg.ac.be); this study is intended as a summary of the current state of knowledge, with a few new leads.
- 5 Since 2013, the literature has proliferated; see, for example, Bock, “Reliques”.
 - 6 Bozóky and Helvétius, *Les reliques*. I had the pleasure of participating in these two publications, which opened up broad perspectives. I produced three successive bibliographical articles on relics: George, “Les reliques des saints”.
 - 7 George, *Reliques*, to which the reader is referred in general from now on.
 - 8 Deuffic, *Reliques*.
 - 9 Brown, *The Cult*.
 - 10 Geary, *Furta Sacra*; Freeman, *Holy Bones*; Robinson, *Finer*; Barlett, *Why Can*. In a different vein, combining history, art, and the macabre, Koudoumaris, *Heavenly Bodies*, examines the cult of the relics of martyrs from the catacombs discovered in Rome in 1578.
 - 11 Picard, “Le culte”, and Stalmans, *Saints d’Irlande*.
 - 12 Räsänen, Hartmann, and Richards, *Relics*, and my review in *Le Moyen Âge*, 122 (2017): 759–60. I would just like to cite the research of my colleagues Jussi-Pekka Taavitsainen and Aki Arponen on Finland, Christian Lovén and Bertil Nilsson on Sweden, Øystein Ekroll on Norway, and Lars Bisgaard, Kurt Villads Jensen, and Jens Vellev on Denmark. I took part in the colloquium on St Canute, King of Denmark († 1086) in Odense, in Denmark, in November 2017.
 - 13 Northern Brabant is the object of A.-J. Bijstervelde’s research: Accessed 11 November 2019. <https://research.tilburguniversity.edu/en/persons/arnoud-jan-bijsterveld/publications/> and Utrecht that of Kruijff, *Miraculeus*.
 - 14 Os, Kooij, Staal, and Tromp, *De Weg naar*.
 - 15 Burkart, Cordez, Mariaux, and Potin, *Le trésor au Moyen Âge: questions*, and Burkart, Cordez, Mariaux and Potin, *Le trésor au Moyen Âge: discours*. My review in *Revue d’Histoire Ecclésiastique* 107, no. 1 (2012): 678–9. The “roving concept” of treasuries passes from one discipline to another, making it essential to adopt an interdisciplinary approach if one wishes to take a serious interest in the subject.
 - 16 Antoine-König and Mariaux, *Le Trésor*, and Andenmatten, Ripart and Mariaux, *L’Abbaye*.
 - 17 Cordez, *Trésor*, and my review in *Revue d’Histoire Ecclésiastique* 112, no. 3–4 (2017): 883–8.
 - 18 Hoernes and Röckelein, *Gandersheim*, and Röckelein, *Reliquientranslationen*. I am not addressing international relations here, as Charles Mériaux and Paul Bertrand do, for example, on Northern France and Magdebourg; Bertrand and Mériaux. “Cambrai-Magdebourg”.
 - 19 Its bulletin, *BUCEMA*, was founded in 1999 and is now online: <https://cem.revues.org/>.
 - 20 Kracht and Torsy, *Reliquarium*, and my review in *Revue d’Histoire Ecclésiastique* 99, no. 3–4 (2004): 819.
 - 21 The publisher Schnell und Steiner has become the specialist in editions of treasury catalogues. On the Treasury of Liège Cathedral, see George, “Le trésor des reliques”.
 - 22 For example his article, Sureda i Jubany, “Las reliquias”.
 - 23 Corpus edited by García de Castro, *Signvm* and García de Castro, “La Cruz”; García de Castro, “La Arqueta”; García de Castro, “Datos”. The moving and restoration of the Holy Ark of Oviedo has enabled him to carry out a remarkable review of the documents, recovering the inscription of the Ark, used as a reliquary and not as the altar of the Chapel of St Michael, and dating it to around 1090–1100.
 - 24 Fernández and Alonso, *Las reliquias*.
 - 25 Suárez, “The Cult”, and Suárez, “*Locus Iacobi*”.

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- 26 See George, *Les Reliques de Stavelot-Malmedy*, 54–6.
- 27 Reconstruction of the inscription of the Holy Ark by García de Castro, “Datos”, 149.
- 28 Ogier, *Avoué* of Théroouanne († 1412), wrote *Le saint voyage de Jherusalem* (see: Anglure, *Le saint voyage*): The journey was motivated by piety; mention is made of the absolutions and indulgences to be obtained. Pauphilet, *Jeux*, 381.
- 29 Grabar, *Martyrium*.
- 30 Sapin, *Les cryptes*, 44–110. An important chapter in this book discusses “the place of holy bodies and relics (sixth – ninth centuries)”.
- 31 Relics were also deposited in baptisteries (North Africa, Lyon?) and the custom of placing an altar there was maintained until the Carolingian period.
- 32 Amay celebrated the 40th anniversary of this discovery in 2017 with a one-day conference. Pending the possible publication of its proceedings, see Dierkens, *Le sarcophage*.
- 33 Chantinne and Mignot, “La collégiale”.
- 34 These include the proceedings of the colloquium: Sapin, *Avant-nefs*.
- 35 Alain Dierkens, Guy Lobrichon, Daniel Russo, Michèle Gaillard, Didier Méhu, and Anne Wagner, among others.
- 36 Heitz, *Recherches*, and Heitz, “Rôle”.
- 37 The *Westwerk* of Corvey (Corbeia Nova), built between 873 and 885, is the best surviving example of this architectural feature. The links between antechurches and the Easter liturgy – and thus the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem – are attested by Angilbert’s liturgical instructions. From the tenth century, the original version of the *église-porche* tended to fade out or to be associated with other monumental types, such as the western counter-apse (Mittelzell-Reichenau, Essen).
- 38 Héber-Suffrin and Wagner, “Autels”.
- 39 Well studied by Genicot, *Les églises*.
- 40 François Héber-Suffrin has returned to this question in Sapin and Guillon, *Cryptes médiévales*.
- 41 Treffort, *L’Église*. See the bibliography of J.P. Caillet in his *Mélanges*: See Blondeau, Boissavit-Camus, Boucherat and Volti, *Ars Auro*, and my contribution to these *Mélanges* with the significant title: George, “Architecturer”.
- 42 Caillet, “Reliques”, 182.
- 43 Iogna-Prat, *La Maison*, 109, 114; see my review: George, “La Maison”.
- 44 Éric Palazzo has produced a remarkable study of the illustrations of the church dedication rite (tenth–12th centuries) and their “architectural framing” (Palazzo, *L’évêque*).
- 45 Leo IX conducted some 30 consecrations, primarily in Lotharingia; see Iogna-Prat, “Léon IX”. Papal consecration established a special link between Rome and the local Church, and Dominique Iogna-Prat establishes remarkable parallels between the pope’s peregrinations and Roman station liturgy and the *chevauchée du roi* (“king’s ride” or royal tour), which enabled the monarch to physically take the measure of his kingdom.
- 46 Even though Odon de Cluny († 942) and the author of the Miracles of St Bercharius considered that the altar should be reserved for God (Herrmann-Mascard, *Les reliques*, 173). Barbier, “Les images”.
- 47 Rauwel, *Autour*, and Jurković, *The Altar*.
- 48 Palazzo, *L’espace rituel*, and Budde, *Altare*.
- 49 Braun, *Die Reliquiare*.
- 50 Falk, “Bildnisreliquiare”. The reliquary of St John the Evangelist, known as the Effigy of Frederic Barbarossa, around 1155, preserved at Selm-Cappenberg, should also be cited; see Corbet, “Henri de Carinthie”: The Emperor’s head was turned into a reliquary.

- 51 Belting, *L'image*.
- 52 The notion of the image-object was first proposed in Bonne, “Représentation”, 566. See also Baschet, *L'iconographie*, 25–64.
- 53 Henriot, “Relire”.
- 54 On the art of crystal-carving, see Hahnloser, “Début”; Tixier, *La monstration*.
- 55 Nicolotti, *I Templari*; Nicolotti, *Il processo*; and especially Nicolotti, *Sindone: storia*. Recently Nicolotti, “Le Saint Suaire”.
- 56 Nicolotti, *Dal Mandylion*; English translation: *From the Mandylion*. See my review in *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 107, no. 1 (2012): 673–4.
- 57 Prinzivalli, Campanella, Saggiolo, Bella, and Nicolotti, “Forum”; Nicolotti, “La Sindone”.
- 58 Nicolotti, “I Savoia”.
- 59 Cozzo, Nicolotti, and Merlotti, *The Shroud*.
- 60 Nicolotti, *Le Saint Suaire de Besançon*. See my review in *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 111, no. 1 (2016): 385.
- 61 Nicolotti, “El Sudario de Oviedo”.
- 62 Fournié, “Une municipalité”. Fournié, “Dévotions”; Fournié, “Les miracles”; Fournié, “Le saint suaire”; Fournié, “Les suaies”.
- 63 To quote Fage, “Saint Suaire”.
- 64 Sansterre, “Variations”, 217–29.
- 65 Schmitt, “Les reliques”, 147–9.
- 66 Vauchez, “Du culte”.
- 67 Delehay, “Note”. Edessa prided itself on this “Letter of Christ” sent to King Abgar, which was also acquired by the Byzantines, in 944, as war booty.
- 68 Cioffari and Laghezza, *Alle origini*; and Gazeau, Guyon and Vincent, *En Orient*. I worked on the cult of this saint in the diocese of Liège for a paper in 2015: George, “Orval”.
- 69 The proceedings of the latest colloquium on St Martin in Tours are in press. Accessed 11 November 2019 <https://figmartinienne.sciencesconf.org/> and Diocesmuseum, *Hic est*.
- 70 See, for example, the catalogue of the exhibition in Angers: Vacquet, *Saint Louis*.
- 71 Bouet, Otranto, and Vauchez, *Culto e santuari*, and Casiraghi and Sergi, *Pellerinaggi*.
- 72 Tixier, *Sant'Agata*.
- 73 Guyon, “Par la roue”.
- 74 Kazan, “Arks”.
- 75 See here 10th International Colloquium Compostela. “Relics, shrines and pilgrimages in the European historical context”, Santiago de Compostela 26–28 September 2016, and Denise Péricard-Méa’s site: www.saint-jacques.info/
- 76 George, “Le millénaire”.
- 77 Aballéa and Elsig, *L'image*.
- 78 Hahn and Klein, *Saints*, and Cronnier, *Les inventions*.
- 79 Colloque: Reliques Politiques 1, Madrid, Casa Velázquez, 19–20 March 2015 at <http://criham.labo.univ-poitiers.fr/colloque-reliques-politiques-1/> and Colloque: Reliques Politiques 2, Université de Poitiers, 11–12 June 2015 at <http://criham.labo.univ-poitiers.fr/colloque-reliques-politiques/>. Accessed 12 October 2019.
- 80 Andrault-Schmitt, *Saint-Martial*.
- 81 Boutry, Fabre, and Julia, *Reliques*.
- 82 Ducreux, *Dévotion*, illuminates the place of hagiography and the Breviary as matrices of a vernacular literature in Central Europe and suggests the plasticity of iconographic and rhetorical models that adapted themselves to a vast range of modern conceptions of the sacred, up to the eve of the Enlightenment.
- 83 Baciocchi and Duhamelle, *Reliques*.
- 84 Os, Kooij, Staal, and Tromp, *The Way to Heaven*.
- 85 Pazos, *Pilgrims*.

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- 86 The same goes for prayer, which is also a matter of faith; on the other hand, historians may take an interest in its function in society; see Henriot, “*Invocatio*”. This article also studies the relationship between “saints’ names” and relics. Ménager, “Doute”.
- 87 I was not very enthusiastic about the publication of Strydonck, Eryvynck, Dandenbruaene and Boudin’s *Relieken*, whose very title serves to over-sensationalize the subject without sufficiently contextualizing it. The use of technical resources sometimes seems to me superfluous.
- 88 Thiofridus, *Flores*. This work was presented in Ferrari, “*Lemmata*”.
- 89 Herrmann-Mascard, *Les reliques*. What a drubbing it received from the critics! As a colleague wrote, it is the book everyone uses but no one cites. In any event, it is remarkable for the period in its comprehensive view of the subject, even though, of course, it errs here and there on details.
- 90 Maquet, “Les reliques”.
- 91 Dubreucq and Zironi, *Miracula*, 19.
- 92 I refer readers to Bougard, “La relique au procès”.
- 93 Angenendt, *Heilige*, and Angenendt, *Die Gegenwart*.
- 94 We must draw our conclusions from the 53 Colloque de Fanjeaux, *Corps saints et reliques dans le Midi*, Fanjeaux, 3–6 July 2017, devoted to holy bodies and relics in the South of France.
- 95 Guyard, “Les reliques”.
- 96 I have coordinated four publications related to relics in the Liège Treasury in *Feuillets de la Cathédrale de Liège* series: George, *De reliquiis*, and in *L’oeuvre de la Meuse* volumes 1 and 2: George, *Orfèvrerie mosane*, and George, *Orfèvrerie septentrionale*, following the example of the remarkable *L’Œuvre de Limoges* project, launched by the late Marie-Madeleine Gauthier: Gauthier, *Émaux méridionaux*. To these should be added the beautiful and original little exhibition “Châsses. Du Moyen Âge à nos jours”, curated by Jean-Claude Ghislain at the Archéoforum (Liège) in 2013.
- 97 I took part with a study of a 14th-century chronicler from Liège, Jean d’Outremeuse: George, “Jean d’Outremeuse”.
- 98 Royal Institute, “Book”.
- 99 Having engaged in large projects, like many others, I intend to withdraw in the coming years to my work of publishing written sources that make it possible to identify relics, with some as yet unpublished treasures, and of course to the field of art history. One has to choose between the ephemeral and the perennial: Exhibitions provide a flash of illumination, but too often it is a flash in the pan. I have agreed to write the “Relics” article for the *Dictionnaire d’Histoire et de Géographie ecclésiastiques*, with Edina Bozóky.

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