

[Recepción del artículo: 29/06/2018]
[Aceptación del artículo revisado: 21/10/2018]

**“WHAT THINGS ARE GOOD TO REMEMBER WITH?”
RELICS AND RELIQUARIES AS MEMORY STRUCTURE IN CATHEDRALS
(TRIER TO LANGRES)**

**“¿QUÉ COSAS SON IDÓNEAS PARA PODER RECORDAR?”
RELIQUIAS Y RELICARIOS COMO ESTRUCTURA MEMORIAL EN LAS
CATEDRALES (DE TRIER A LANGRES)**

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ABSTRACT

Cathedrals collected and displayed relics in order to forge a “collective memory” of their origins and affiliations; their relics and reliquaries were, in effect, a material demonstration of ecclesiastical power and its access to salvation. The reliquary staff of Peter is an example, commissioned by an archbishop, of the forging of memories—it supplied Trier Cathedral with a vivid material testimony to its place in the power and hierarchy of the Church. At the French Cathedral of Langres, instead, a very unusual collection of relics argues for the prestige of the institution. Langres’s rededication in the ninth century to Saint Mamas, an Eastern saint with few relics in the West, led to the assiduous collection of bodily relics of the saint, culminating, in the wake of the Crusader capture of Constantinople of 1204, of the 1209 acquisition of Mamas’s head... At Langres, as a result, Mamas was considered to be complete, and said to be able to “speak,” as a powerful patron, but more surprisingly, from the display of his multiple relics, we learn about the abiding power of the dismembered body.

KEYWORDS: Relics and Reliquaries, Relic Display, Saint Mamas (Mamatus, Mammès, Mammás), Langres Cathedral; Reliquary of Peter’s Staff (Trier/Limburg).

¹ A question asked by P. J. GEARY, *Phantoms of Remembrance. Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium*. Princeton, 1994. Geary is rephrasing Claude Levi-Strauss. Of course, my interest is the stress on ‘things’, *Phantoms*, p. 21. I would thank the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, and Patrick Geary himself, for the opportunity and means to complete this work. I also thank Gerardo Boto for the invitation to the VIII Colloquium *Ars Mediaevalis* and to Aguilar de Campoo.

RESUMEN

Las catedrales atesoraron y exhibieron reliquias para forjar una “memoria colectiva” de sus orígenes y afiliaciones espirituales. Sus reliquias y relicarios fueron, a todos los efectos, una demostración material del poder eclesiástico y de su acceso a la salvación. Encargado por un arzobispo, el relicario del báculo de San Pedro es un ejemplo de cómo se forjó la memoria institucional: le proporcionó a la catedral de Trier un vívido testimonio material de su posición en el poder jerárquico de la Iglesia. En la catedral francesa de Langres, en cambio, una inusual colección de reliquias aboga y avala el prestigio de la institución. En el siglo IX Langres fue re-consagrada bajo la titularidad de San Mamés, un santo oriental con pocas reliquias en el oeste de Europa. Langres incrementó su colección de las reliquias corporales del santo, que culminó, tras la conquista de Constantinopla por parte de los cruzados en 1204 y la adquisición en 1209 de la cabeza de Mamés ... Como consecuencia, en Langres se consideró que el cuerpo de Mamés había sido reunido en su totalidad, y se dijo entonces que podía “hablar”, como un poderoso titular. Sin embargo, lo más sorprendente es que la exhibición de sus múltiples reliquias en aquella catedral informa de la consideración que se le concedió al poder perdurable del cuerpo desmembrado.

PALABRAS CLAVE: reliquias y relicarios, exhibición de la reliquia, san Mamés (Mamatus, Mamas), catedral de Langres, relicario del báculo de San Pedro (Tréveris / Limburgo).

Our task in this volume is to explore the memory work of the Cathedral. Many of the fixed materials of the medieval and early modern Cathedral that do this work, especially the burials and their monuments, are amply considered in these essays, however, I would argue that certain of the movable furnishings of the cathedral, that is, relics and their reliquaries, are among the most active and important commemorative objects enlivening the Cathedral space.

Significantly, such movable objects not only animate space, but also interact with “fixed” relics lying at the Cathedral’s very core, buried in the altar, as well as with the burials of deceased members of the community. If we define a cathedral’s treasure as constituted by the sum total of all relics and reliquaries², the name is well deserved, both on account of its material preciousness as well as its societal value. In this essay, I will put forward a thesis about the way that such objects work to create a social memory that insists upon not only local but also universal history. That is, the cathedral treasury authenticates the place and meaning of its institution, establishing it as a space that looks heavenward and is located on a salvational continuum that is directly connected to the court of heaven and its saints. In order to understand this connection, we must think, not only of the saint to whom the Cathedral is dedicated, but also of the other saints gathered in and by the Church space. Above all, reliquaries capture – quite literally encapsulate– the good will and protection of this community of saints, working through the prayers of the devout addressed to them.

² Inventories of treasuries would of course also include books, plate, and other liturgical objects within the category of treasure.

CATHEDRAL RELIC COLLECTIONS VS MONASTIC RELIC COLLECTIONS

Unlike monasteries, which typically celebrated the body of a sainted founder, Cathedrals often had a dedication based on relic fragments which were buried in their altars³. In the fourth century, Victricius of Rouen acclaimed the power of the fragment to stand for the whole, and praised the community of saints so readily created by such fragments⁴. Taking this approach, many Cathedrals across Europe were dedicated to Stephen, or John the Baptist, the True Cross, or the Virgin Mary –universal rather than local cults, and relics that were systematically spread (often in the form of fragments) throughout the Church.⁵ With this sort of dedication, the Cathedral turns outward to ecclesiastical networks rather than inward to a local patron.

Predictably, these differing approaches set up something of a competition between monasteries and cathedrals. Local and powerful saints buried at monasteries – local “fathers” as Thomas Head called them – received particular devotion and inspired pilgrimage⁶. Such activity seemed, however, to rival the reverence due to bishops⁷. This challenge to the power of living bishops and the resultant friction, led some of the most powerful monasteries to seek to free themselves from episcopal control, becoming linked instead to royal or papal interests⁸. In turn, Cathedrals built ever more prestigious and comprehensive relic collections of their own, worthy of the powers of their institutions. Such a contrast between episcopal and monastic relic collections requires a great deal of further study to be fully understood –including perhaps the meticulous comparison of inventories of comparable monastic and episcopal institutions. Nevertheless, an attempt here to suggest the nature of Cathedral collections, based on select examples, is one that may be worthwhile.

CATHEDRALS, RELIC COLLECTIONS, AND THE SUMMONING OF THE COMMUNITY OF SAINTS

By law from the Carolingian period, and commonly from the early Christian period, all altars had relics installed, “buried” in their altars, in the so-called *sepulchrum*⁹. Although

³ See J. BRAUN, *Der christliche Altar in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, Munich, 1924; and “Autel”, in *DACL*, I, part II, col. 3155-3189. Also see, W. JACOBSEN, “Altarraum und Heiligengrab als liturgisches Konzept in der Auseinandersetzung des Nordens mit Rom”, in N. BOCK, S. DE BLAAUW, CH. L. FROMMEL, H. KESSLER (eds.), *Kunst und Liturgie im Mittelalter. Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana. Beiheft zu Band 33*, Munich, 2000, pp. 65-74.

⁴ P. BUC, “Victricius of Rouen, In Praise of the Saints”, in T. HEAD (ed.) *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology*, New York, 2001, passim.

⁵ Francis Bond discusses England up to the 17th century: F. BOND, *Dedications & Patron Saints of English Churches: Ecclesiastical Symbolism, Saints and their Emblems*, Hardpress Publishing, (n.p), 2012. p. 19, but for the earlier middle ages consult the cult of Stephen as in R. BAUERREISS, *Stefanskult und Frühe Bischofsstadt*, Munich, 1963.

⁶ T. HEAD, *Hagiography and the Cult of the Saints: The Diocese of Orléans 800-1200*, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 2-3 and passim. For a visual manifestation see: C. HAHN, “Interpictoriality in the Limoges Chasses of Stephen, Martial, and Valerie”, in C. HOURIHANE (ed.), *Image and Belief: Studies in Celebration of the Eightieth Anniversary of the Index of Christian Art*, Princeton, 1999, pp. 109-124.

⁷ Of course, many Cathedrals celebrated their own founders even if the dedication was not to that founding bishop. See articles in: A. THACKER, R. SHARPE (eds.), *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, Oxford, 2008.

⁸ One thinks of abbeys such as Saint-Denis, or Cluny or Imperial foundations in Germany.

⁹ A.J. SCHULTE, “Altar (in Liturgy)”, in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, New York, 1907, Retrieved June 21, 2018 from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01346a.htm>. Also see: T.M. THIBODEAU, *The Rationale*

customarily the tiniest of relics were placed in this small space, a patron saint might be joined in the altar by the relics of other saints. Moreover, other saints were typically ‘present’ in the cathedral in the form of relics housed in reliquaries, many of which were portable and therefore could be flexibly deployed. Rather than a collection of insignificant fragments, these many bits and pieces of saintly matter were joined together in the understanding of the congregation as the very real presence of a host of saints – the court of heaven in its full glory as the community of the saints. As we will see, such a conceptualization is abetted and sustained by the forms of reliquaries in which the relics are housed. Ultimately, it can be argued, the collection of reliquaries and its display in a cathedral proves essential to the sense of the powers and affiliations of a great institution¹⁰.

Additionally, the liturgical supplement to the relics expands and reinforces the community. As an alternate form of representation, the verbal, the prayerful invocation of the saints in the form of the prayers of the litany, summons a less tangible crowd of heavenly supporters. Finally, yet one other group is ritually summoned to join the crowd. In performances specific to the particular institution, the reading of *liber vitae* and *libri memoriales*, added the names of donors and special celebrated dead. (Furthermore as a material extension of this category, we should include the witness of the many tombs, especially of bishops included in the Cathedral space). Commemorative prayer, of course, is the primary if intangible activity of memory work, as well as an activation mechanism of heavenly power. Thiofrid of Echternach in the *Flores epytaphii sanctorum*, an eleventh-century treatise on relics, claimed that the very names of the saints are like relics¹¹, and, above all, the ceremonial speaking of names of both saints and patrons invoked presence.

Among the many ways that the community of saints and believers is summoned to presence in the space of the Cathedral, reliquaries in representing the “very special dead”, are perhaps the primary instruments and facilitators of prayer, and our focus will be on them¹². We will examine first the way a single reliquary can function (and example from Trier), then turn to the way reliquaries work in groups – because in cathedrals they are always in groups, never alone. In the final part of this essay, a case study considering the relics of Langres Cathedral will highlight both general principles as well as significant variations from what might be a norm.

A SINGULAR RELIQUARY: THE TRIER STAFF OF PETER

A reliquary created for the Cathedral of Trier under Archbishop Egbert, late in the tenth century, is a vivid example of memory work in the form of a reliquary (Fig. 1). In identifying the various issues involved, aspects of this reliquary that should be noted include: its

Divinorum Officiorum of William Durand of Mende: Bk. 1: A New Translation of the Prologue, New York, 2010, 1.7.25, p. 84, in context of a discussion of the consecration of the altar.

¹⁰ Some examples can be seen in collections enumerated in monumental lists as in P. CORDEZ, *Schatz, Gedächtnis, Wunder. Die Objekte der Kirchen im Mittelalter*, Regensburg, 2015, pp. 74-79.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 78.

¹² Peter Brown’s phrase “the special dead” characterizes his ground-breaking treatment of the cult of relics: P. BROWN, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, Chicago, 1981.

inscription, its materials, its use of *spolia*, and its overall form¹³. Each will be considered in turn.

The Trier reliquary carries a long inscription that identifies the relic, gives its provenance and even sums up a dispute over ownership¹⁴. The date of manufacture is included, and Archbishop Egbert is named, a significant patron who founded a workshop to make enamels in order to create beautiful objects.

Inscriptions on reliquaries vary widely, and have not yet received the comparative research they deserve. One study, by Perette Michelli has argued for a consistency of a structure that she describes as triadic in inscriptions on Irish reliquaries – that is, the Irish examples name artist, patron, and saint – that is, maker, sponsor, and dedicatee¹⁵. Similar three-part inscriptions recur elsewhere¹⁶. We should recall that each of these persons is remembered in the inscription for different reasons. The artist is commemorated for pious labor, the patron for the gifting of a donation, and the saint as holy advocate, that is, intercessor. The first two categories in effect pray through the third with such inscriptions and the saint, as a member of the court of heaven, carries prayers to God. This triadic structure, in fact, includes a notion of votive offering and the reproduction, amplification, and preservation of prayers expected from such gifts¹⁷. Michelli notes that these inscriptions feature a social construction as their intention, singling out families and occasions of patronage in the Irish examples.



Fig. 1. Limburg an der Lahn, Cathedral Treasury, “Reliquary Staff of St Peter,” gold on wood with enamels and gems, from Trier c. 980

¹³ Much of this discussion is based on C. HAHN, “What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics?”, *Numen* 57 (2010), pp. 284-316.

¹⁴ BACULUM BEATI PETRI QVONDAM PRO RESVCITATIONE MATERNI AB IPSO TRANSMISSVM. ET A SCO EUCHARIO HUC DELATVM. DIV HAEC AECLESIA TENVIT. POSTEA HVNORVM UT FERTVR TEMPORIBVS METTIS CVM RELIOVIS HVIVS AECLESIAE THESAVRIS DEPORTATUS IBI VSO. AD TEMPORA OTTONIS PISSIMI IMPERATORIS SENIORIS PERMANSIT. INDE A FRATRE EIVS BRVNONE ARCHIEPO ET ANNVENTE VENERABILI VVERINO COLONIAE ARCHIEPO. NE ET HAEC AECLESIA TANTO THESAVRO FRAVDARETVR. IN DVAS EST PARTES TRANSECTVS. VNA SVPERIORI VIDELICET HVIC AECLESIAE REDDITA ET A EBURNEO IBIDEN RETENTA. ANNO DOMINICAE INCARNAT DCCCCLXXX INDIVIII. H. WESTERMANN-ANGERHAUSEN, “Die Goldschmiedearbeiten der Egbertwerkstatt”, *Münster*, 26 (1973), pp. 72-74, esp. p. 36.

¹⁵ P. E. MICHELLI, “The Inscriptions on Pre-Norman Irish Reliquaries,” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 96 (1996) pp. 1-48. Also see R. FAVREAU, “Fonctions des inscriptions au Moyen Âge”, *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale, Xe-XIIIe siècles*, 32 (1989), pp. 203-232; and work on Byzantine reliquaries by B. A. HOSTETLER, *The Function of Text: Byzantine Reliquaries with Epigrams, 843-1204*. Ph.D. thesis, Tallahassee, Florida, 2015.

¹⁶ C. J. HAHN, *Strange Beauty: Issues in the Making and Meaning of Reliquaries, 400-circa 1204*, University Park, PA, (2012), pp. 105-106.

¹⁷ There has been a recent interest in *ex votos*, but these objects are more generally “votive”. I. WEINRYB, *Ex voto: Votive Giving across Cultures*, New York, 2016.

In a discussion of Romanesque Spanish art in which inscriptions are not as explicit – only the patron is named in some – Lucy Pick detects a similar votive dynamic in the gifting of precious reliquaries, she writes:

Gifts of luxury moveables were an important way that medieval people sought to be remembered, and Urraca [Infanta Urraca of Zamora (1033/34–1101)] gave a wide array of objects to the institutions she patronized, some of which have survived and many of which have not, but all these gifts show her taking an active role in ensuring that she would be remembered before and after her death, and how she would be remembered¹⁸.

Urraca gave both a cross “full of holy relics” and a silver *capsulam*, to the monastery of Eslonza, which may (or may not) be a reliquary now in the Art Institute in Chicago (Fig. 2, to which we will return). She also gave gifts to the cathedral of León.

To return to the inscriptions on the Staff of Peter, one should note that like those of the Irish and Spanish reliquaries, the inscriptions amplify meaning, even drawing attention to manufacture and origins. However, in that the staff was made for a cathedral and a powerful archbishop with particular political intentions, they exceed a votive function and address larger concerns – concerns that are further addressed by the use of ornament and *spolia* on the reliquary staff, and reinforced by its very shape.

Over six feet long, much larger than the enclosed relic¹⁹, covered with ornament in repoussé gold foil, as well as enamels and gems set in gold, this object, rather than a staff to be leaned upon, is a baton fit to lead a crowd. It culminates at its apex in a small heavily ornamented orb, and includes not one, but many inscriptions, some very long.

The Latin inscriptions identify not only the “*Baculum beati Petri*,” the very “staff of Saint Peter”, but also claim that the staff was used by an early bishop of Trier to resurrect a man. The reliquary, therefore, represents its contents to be significant as a relic of the Universal church, *as well as* to be a relic of local miraculous significance, recounting a miracle in which its continuing power was demonstrated²⁰.

Similarly, on the staff (which would rarely if ever be opened to reveal its contents), the glittering ornament interweaves images and symbols of universal and local significance, starting at the bottom in reliefs that are flattened by handling. Down the long sides of the staff, paralleling equally long inscriptions, are the low relief portraits of twelve popes and twelve bishops of Trier, ending with the living archbishop and patron, Egbert. Above, the lower curve of the spherical knob is encircled by a series of enamels depicting, in the company of Peter himself, three early Trier bishops including Eucharius who was said to have raised the dead man. A third and fourth row of six enamels each represent the twelve Apostles, again with labels. Finally, the enamels on the upper curve of the knob represent the four Gospel writers and at the very top of the staff, a cross shape arrangement of gems suggests the eternal Cross. The whole is a depiction of the hierarchy of the church and represents Trier’s position as an apostolically founded archbishopric within a grand ecclesiastical “framework”.

¹⁸ L.K. Pick, *Her Father’s Daughter: Gender, Power, and Religion in the Early Spanish Kingdoms*, Ithaca NY, 2017, p. 53.

¹⁹ It encloses an ivory object, also culminating in a knob and also studded with gold and gems.

²⁰ See note 14.



Fig. 2. Chicago, Art Institute, 1943.65, “Reliquary of Adrian and Natalia,” Silver on oak core, c.1100/50

The actual framework of materials is, of course, significant as well. The power of gold and gems is organized into a lattice and series of gems and pearls in fours, sixes and twelves. Many of these gems are *spolia*, or reused and significant materials that were probably received by Trier as gifts – the matched pearls may have been a necklace – we can see that they were drilled to be strung. These evoke a sense of history and tradition. Clearly, this reliquary is a magnificent and powerful enclosure and *representation* of a relic (the staff) which supports the bishopric of Trier in its place in the Earthly Church, and is capable of remarkable miracles that connect it to the heavenly Church and the history of salvation. The primary dedication of the cathedral of Trier is to Peter, and when the Archbishop carried this staff in procession he proclaimed the importance of his diocese.

The inscription claims that the staff had been given to Eucharius by Peter himself²¹. Cologne also, independently, claimed a staff of Peter that, in fact, it never ceded to Trier. Ultimately, the desire to possess such a staff is a consequence of the fierce competition to claim the status of foremost archbishopric of the Ottonian empire, and we find this object in the center of the controversy.

In sum, this reliquary amplifies the typical reliquary messages of donation and significance, and by inscription, imagery, and form claims a premier place in the ecclesiastical hierarchy in order to better serve the aims of its bishopric. Ironically, today this reliquary still carries an amplified message. As an ancient church treasure, it has been moved to the Limburg an der

²¹ T. HEAD, “Art and Artifice in Ottonian Trier”, *Gesta*, 36 (1997), pp. 65-82, at p. 68.

Lahn Cathedral as a consequence of a nineteenth-century political gift to the newly founded bishopric whose territory had formerly been under Trier and Mainz –in its transfer the staff maintains its ability to bring episcopal prestige²².

RELIC COLLECTIONS AND THE AMPLIFICATION OF THE POWER OF PRAYER IN DISPLAY

It is important to recall that the staff was only one part of the rich medieval treasure of Trier Cathedral, a relic collection that endowed the cathedral with its spiritual power²³. What about the collecting of treasures? and how are we to understand the variety of relics and reliquaries in treasuries? In Egbert's time, in addition to the staff, Trier had the sandal of Andrew and a nail of the crucifixion. Later it gained renown for possessing the seamless robe of Christ. Indeed, these relics were the pride of the archdiocese and the populace was very aware of the objects in the cathedral treasury. The congregation prayed to these relics and they saw them in processions as well as in relic exhibitions on important feast days. Special liturgies were celebrated.

As the thirteenth-century bishop William Durandus of Mende writes in the *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, a treatise on the liturgy and its meanings:

On the principal feasts, one exposes the treasures of the Church to the view of the people for three reasons: First, for reasons of precaution namely, that it be made apparent how careful they must be in preserving those things in whose care they are entrusted. Secondly, for the solemnity of the occasion, and Thirdly in memory of their donation. That is to say of those who first offered them to the Church²⁴.

Durandus seems most concerned that the populace sees the riches of the church as a whole (and this would often include the plate and books as a major element.) Such a display facilitates the memory work we have already discussed as well as prompting other memorial functions. The audience would study the treasure during prayer, in order to become aware of what the church owns and to understand its heritage. Reflecting on the glory of the church and its "solemn" liturgies, the congregation would venerate the community of powerful saints, and recall the memory of donors. And surely, one might note, such a viewing would serve to prevent theft – visual memory would preserve the details of these treasures so they could not be alienated or reduced, that is, have gems or parts removed. Manifestly, rather than any individual relic or reliquary, no matter how important, Durandus is concerned with the well-being, establishment, and continuation of the Church and its treasury as a whole.

In this discussion, the Bishop of Mende specifically considers temporary display on feast days, a display that is, unfortunately, very hard for the historian to recover. Fortunately, the festal reliquary display for the Treasury of Basel Cathedral has been reconstructed from a circa

²² K. SCHATZ, *Geschichte des Bistums Limburg*, 1983, Online: <http://publikationen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/frontdoor/index/index/docId/15843>.

²³ Trier Bischöfliches Generalvikariat, *Schatzkunst Trier*, Trier, 1984.

²⁴ THIBODEAU, *The Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, 1.3.42, p. 45. Latin text now in: G. DURANTIS, *Guillelmi Duranti Rationale divinorum officiorum I-IV*, Turnholti, 1995, p. 48-49.

1500 description (Fig. 3)²⁵. The display, on view as many as seven times a year, is aesthetically symmetrical, clearly arranged with an eye to the whole and its balance, focused on a center element, and therefore both hierarchical and easy to remember²⁶. Pre 1500 evidence at Basel demonstrates a persistent effort to manufacture paired reliquaries and indicates that the symmetry of display of the treasure was a long-standing goal for the Cathedral – not just a product of the later Middle Ages²⁷. The same sort of symmetry is also apparent somewhat earlier in a 1410-15 manuscript illumination depicting festal relic displays at the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris (Fig. 4).

A liturgical document from the cathedral of Metz, an Ordinary that Bernard Bischoff dates as early as the twelfth century, clarifies some aspects of yet earlier reliquary display. Instructions in the Ordinary about how the main altar of the Cathedral should be ornamented for particular celebrations are unusually explicit: for the Feast of Stephen, the patron of the Cathedral, some fourteen reliquaries were placed on the altar. These reliquaries were to

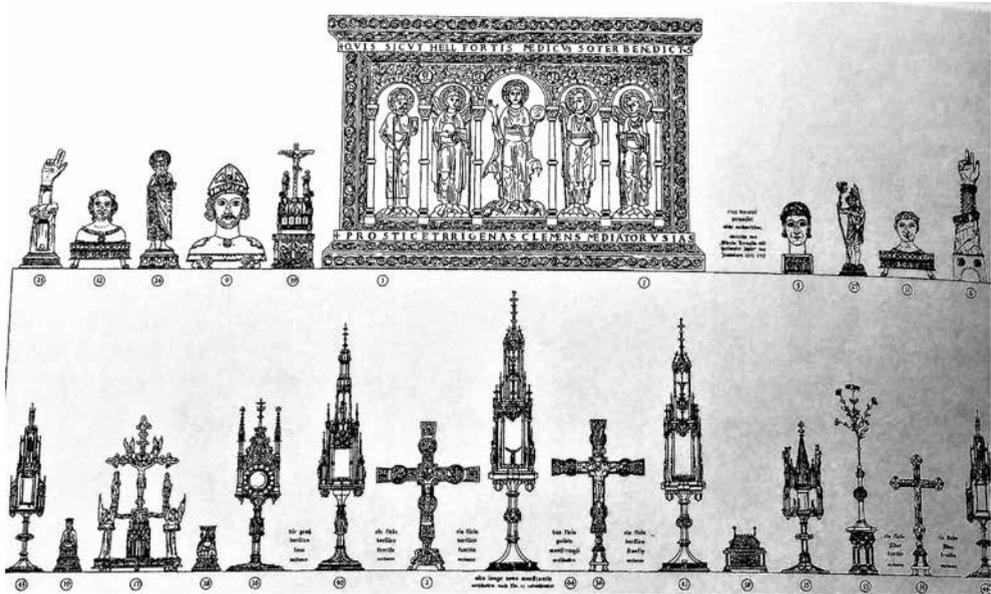


Fig. 3 Reconstruction of Festal relic display at Basel Cathedral c.1500 after Husband, *Treasury of Basel Cathedral*

²⁵ T. HUSBAND, *The Treasury of Basel Cathedral*, New York, 2001, fig. 5, p. 20; citing R. BURCKHARDT, *Die Kunstdenkmäler des Kantons Basel-Stadt*, Basel, 1982, Vol. 2, pp. 15-21, 353-58.

²⁶ This symmetry of display is not unusual in collections, see: L. LAURENCI-MINELLI, “Museography and Ethnographical Collections in Bologna during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries”, in O. IMPEY, A. MACGREGOR (eds.), *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in the Sixteenth- and Seventeenth Century Europe*, Oxford, 1985, p. 19; cited by B. L. SCHLOTHAN, *Intriguing Relationships: An Exploration of Early Modern German Prints of Relic Displays and Reliquaries*, UC Riverside, Master’s Thesis, 2013 Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, pp. 70-71.

²⁷ Moreover, addition to the display seems to have been made with a twofold goal in mind, praise of the imperial donor, Henry II, and amplification of the bishop’s power. HUSBAND, *Treasury of Basel Cathedral*, pp. 16-20.

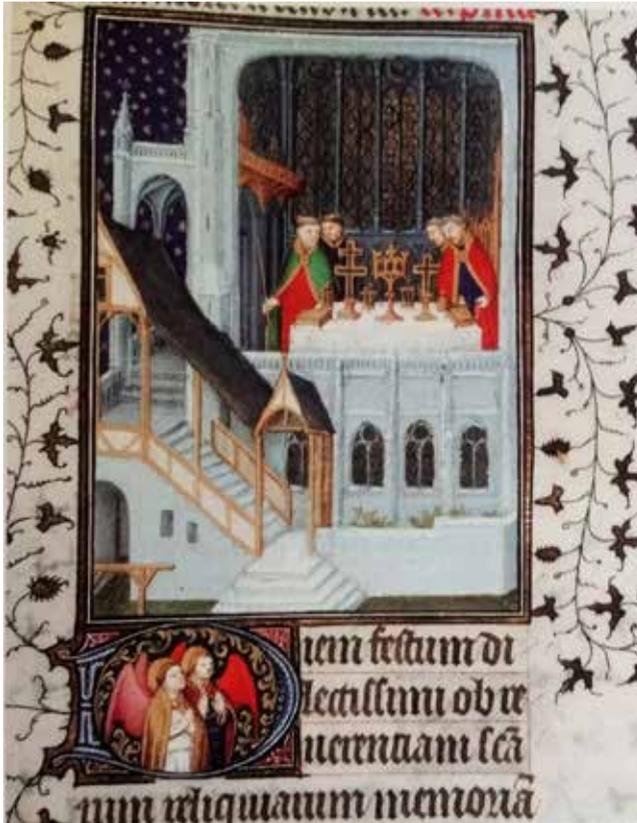


Fig. 4 Châteauroux, Médiathèques, ms 2 fol. 350r; “Festal Display of Relics at the Saint Chapelle,” Breviary from Paris, c. 1410-1415

include the *scrinium* of the Apostles and the silver *capsa* with the arm of Stephen, the latter was hung with phylacteries and accompanied by *vasa*. Reliquaries were stacked according to precise instructions, as many as three layers high, along with chalices, candelabra, and silver and gold-bound liturgical books²⁸. Although there is no indication of whether symmetry was important, it is clear that the wealth of the church was fully and abundantly apparent on the feast of the Cathedral’s patron in what seems an almost excessive display, that includes treasures other than the reliquaries.

The same motivation of inclusive display may also have led to more permanent but less spectacular exhibitions. For example, numerous fragments of saint’s bodies could be placed into one or more reliquaries, and inscriptions, even those on walls or plaques, could do the work of assembling the treasure²⁹. In the later Middle Ages, woodcuts collected by pilgrims

²⁸ Unfortunately, the description does not allow an assessment of what the display looked like, in particular, whether it was symmetrical. B. BISCHOFF, *Mittelalterliche Schatzverzeichnisse*, Munich, 1967, pp. 136-140.

²⁹ The thirteenth-century Grandselve reliquaries, one in the shape of a wonderful cosmic disc, are a good example of this approach: R. FAVREAU, *Épigraphie Médiévale*. Turnhout, 1997, pp. 255-56. Also see verbal lists as detailed in CORDEZ, *Schatz, Gedächtnis, Wunder*, pp. 74-79.

provide documentation of the wealth of treasures and give insight into how treasures were imagined. These *pilgerblätter* present a church’s treasures in a grid display³⁰ – in its symmetry and balance, in effect, such a grid resembles nothing so much as a memory theater³¹.

A CUMULATIVE EFFECT

Despite their importance in memory work, static displays are not the only way that relic collections sought to amplify the prestige, power, and meaning of cathedrals. The sight of shrines and movable reliquaries, and their active use, invoked a complex and potent mix of prayer, commemoration, and ceremonial. Furthermore, dynamic relationships between parts, what one might call a scalar relationship – from movable reliquary to larger shrine and display, and finally to the larger holy space of the Cathedral itself – amplifies the significance of the smaller through its relationship to the larger. The Sainte-Chapelle, a royal chapel rather than a cathedral, may be the best example. The relic of the Crown of Thorns whether displayed in processions or placed in an array in the Grand Chasse (a church-shaped reliquary display at the east end of the chapel), displayed forms in miniature which were reiterated in the larger forms of the Grand Chasse and of the chapel itself. The imagination was encouraged to move from the smaller to the larger, amplifying and proclaiming the importance of the relic³². Another example, the Orvieto reliquary of the corporal which copies forms from design of the Cathedral façade, is even more striking in linking the visual forms of reliquary and Cathedral (Fig. 5)³³. Of note, both Paris and Orvieto examples represent relics that were moved with great ceremony to new locations – such formal declarations of ‘linkages’ may have reinforced the idea of ‘belonging’ in their new homes.

The association of reliquary to cathedral is not, however, accomplished by solely visual means. Instead as noted, it operates in conjunction with the imagination. Above all, memory asserts a core truth, the presence of the relic, but from that knowledge something constructive

³⁰ For a good survey see: SCHLOTHAN, *Intriguing Relationships*; Also see: K. MERKEL, “Die Reliquien von Halle und Wittenberg Ihre Heiltumsbücher und Inszenierung”, in A. TACKE (ed.), *Cranach: Meisterwerke auf Vorrat: die Erlanger Handzeichnungen der Universitätsbibliothek; Bestands- und Ausstellungskatalog ; Ausstellungen: Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nürnberg, 17.6.1994 - 31.7.1994*, Erlangen, 1994, pp. 37-50; A. C. OELLERS, *Pilgerblättchen, Pilgerfähnchen und Erinnerungsdarstellungen zur Aachener Heiligtumsfahrt, Ausstellung, Museum für Stadtgeschichte und Kunstgewerbe, Aachen : 30.4.-25.6.2000*, Aachen, 2000.

³¹ F. A. YATES, *The Art of Memory*, Chicago, 1966 and M. CARRUTHERS, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Cambridge, 1990, both discuss memory theaters and their characteristics. By the later middle ages, indulgences may have increased the interest of such displays. In a 1510 woodcut from Halle by Hans Burgkmair, pilgrims in the lower register clutch papers as they clamor to see the sumptuous exhibition of relics, displayed by clerics on a balcony. For the Halle relic display and the tradition of relic display, See F. RONIG, “Die Schatz- und Heiltumskammern”, in A. LEGNER (ed.), *Rhein und Maas: Kunst und Kultur 800–1400* (exh. cat.), Cologne, 1972, pp. 134–41; H. KUHNE, *Ostensio reliquiarum: Untersuchungen über Entstehung, Ausbreitung, Gestalt und Funktion der Heiltumsweisungen im römisch-deutschen Regnum*, Berlin, 2000; D. EICHBERGER, “A Renaissance Reliquary Collection in Halle and its Illustrated Inventories,” NGA Melbourne, online essay: <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/a-renaissance-reliquary-collection-in-halle-and-its-illustrated-inventories/>

³² This effect, in other churches as well, is further developed in C. HAHN, *The Reliquary Effect: Enshrining the Sacred Object*, London, 2017.

³³ HAHN, *Reliquary effect*, pp. 93-94.



Fig. 5a Orvieto: Ugolino de Vieri, “Reliquary of the Corporal of Bolsena,” 1337-38; Fig. 5b: façade of the Cathedral of Orvieto, 14th century

and active takes over. The reliquaries and their relics through their very presence and materiality work to create a social memory, leading to a sense of identity and allegiance for the congregants of the church. They understood or ‘remembered’ the importance, history, and power of their church and its relics or patron³⁴.

Material glorification, of course, was not superfluous to this process. A telling ninth-century miracle story recorded at Prüm recounts the error of a wealthy woman who turns away from a shrine, despising it because it was unornamented³⁵; Medieval audiences associated gold and silver with sanctity, and ornamentation was considered appropriate to designate the holy and honor it. Furthermore, the ornamentation churches was the obligation of those who were ecclesiastical leaders, especially the bishop as administrator of his diocese – ornament represented episcopal ‘glory’. In turning to a case study, a relatively unusual example, we will hope to understand the norm of such glorification – to pick apart some of the workings of this

³⁴ “Cultural memory – with its thematic bonds and its more or less elaborated, consequential mnemotechnical bonds – reflects a more stable identity. The French Revolution, the Civil War, 1933, the Holocaust or 11 September– in such events, a particular shared memory impresses itself upon us.” M. WELKER, “Memory, Imagination and the Human Spirit”, *Memory Studies*, 9 (2016), pp. 341-347, at p. 344, “this process can instead set free a continuing stream of interpretations which shapes cultural memory and keeps it alive”. p. 345.

³⁵ *Hystoria ss Chrysantii et Dariae* 9, PL 121.676.

sort of constructed memory and constructed identity in its material manifestation in the form of reliquaries.

THE RELIQUARY COLLECTION OF LANGRES. RELICS AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY

In rethinking Maurice Halbwachs definition of collective memory, Patrick Geary has emphasized that, for the middle ages, collective memory, must be considered political. He argues that such memory, in an era in which sources are both oral and written, coalesced with written history rather than being separated from it³⁶. Furthermore, Geary argues that in medieval understanding, memory is not only rooted in societal functions – rather that it is understood as a transcendent phenomenon. He notes that Augustine defined memory as a process of *colligere* – collecting data already stored in the vast chamber of divinely founded memory. To these insights I would add that collective memory, both in the middle ages and today, is fundamentally sustained by the presence of *visual* memory objects – “things” that are present, visible, and “good to remember with.” I will argue that, as revealed in its relics, collective memory at the cathedral of Langres is founded on a divine plan, is an outcome of what can only be termed political events, and is manifestly confirmed in visual testimony.

In the best and most complete document concerning the relics, a translation account, The *Historia translationum reliquiarum S. Mamantis*, by an anonymous cleric of Langres, a story is told that is cast as a form of “memory” with roots deep in the past³⁷. The 1209 text concerns the head of Mamas, the last of four relics to arrive in Langres, but the document fills in information about the acquisition of previous relics and their movements, culminating in what can only be called a completion narrative. That is, not only are multiple relics collected, but the collecting and enshrinement of the relics is presented as a process of institutional definition and understood as part of an inevitable divine plan. Given that the translation occurs within the political environment of the post Fourth Crusade and its aftermath in Europe, it takes place in a context of ecclesiastical ambition and relic appropriation. Finally, the objects in the form of reliquaries and other ornamentation of the cathedral are what ultimately gives us a fuller understanding of the consequences of these events.

At Langres, dedicated to Saint Mamas already in the ninth century, we encounter a story of the assemblage over time of the body of a patron saint – *literally* a construction³⁸. Why was this strategy adopted? One might imagine that the accumulation of additional bodily relics of a saint could be thought to have reinforced the saint’s power. However, as early as the fourth century, theological argument holds that even the tiniest relic possessed a plenitude of holy power. A theologically more acceptable explanation for Langres’ collecting might lie in a different idea: the successful acquisitions of multiple relics may have proved that the saint *wished* to exercise his power at Langres, even if he was originally a saint of the Eastern Church. This is the concept behind *furta sacra*, the sacred theft of relics – that is, it was believed that saints

³⁶ GEARY, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, pp. 10-11.

³⁷ *Canonici anonymi Lingonensis Historia translationum reliquiarum S. Mamantis* in P. É. De Riant, Comte, *Exuviae sacrae Constantinopolitanae*, Geneva, 1877, pp. 26 ff.

³⁸ For Langres: G. Viard, et al. *La Cathédrale Saint Mammes de Langre*, Langres, 1994.

had the power to control the movement of their relics³⁹. Thus, in effect, the people of the Cathedral of Langres drew the relics of Mamas to themselves and their Church through their devotion to the saint, a prominent theme in the translation text. Additionally, at Langres, the multiple relics and the enlarged vision of the saint's imaginary "body" enabled that body to, in some sense, become identical with the Cathedral (the Church as body is a foundational Christian metaphor)⁴⁰. In this understanding, the saint makes the Cathedral his home and thus enhances his status there as a powerful intercessor. We will build this argument about Langres 'collective memory' first with details from the texts of the translation of the relics, supplement with discussion of historical contexts, and finally turn to the evidence of visual testimony⁴¹.

TEXTS AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

The first translation of any relics of Mamas to Langres, according to the 1209 text, involved their transport by an early medieval pilgrim from Langres who, in returning from Jerusalem stopped in Constantinople, and somehow obtained a neck bone of the martyr, an Eastern saint of great fame with a cult spread across the eastern Mediterranean⁴².

Mamas was already known in Gaul before his arrival in Langres through a relic that arrived in the sixth-century in Poitiers and was celebrated in a the *Vita* of the Queen and saint Radegund, written by her monastic hagiographer Baudonivia⁴³. Mamas was also the subject of a ninth-century rhymed life by Walafrid Strabo composed about the time of the first relic translation to Langres. His life was still something of a mystery in the West, and Walafrid claims to have derived his knowledge from Greek sources⁴⁴. His body's location in this period is also something of a mystery – it rightly should have been in Caesarea or Constantinople, however, Baudonivia claims Radegund's relic arrived in Poitiers as a gift from the Patriarch of Jerusalem.

As Baudonivia tells it, a petition for a relic of Mammas was (after c. 560), the beginning of systematic relic collecting for Queen Radegund, and revealed her desire to acquire the relics

³⁹ This is the sort of idea behind *furta sacra*, as explained by P. GEARY, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*, Princeton, 1978.

⁴⁰ See below.

⁴¹ As Patrick Geary argues, a principle issue is how to select among memorabilia to find memoranda (things that ought to be remembered) from which you construct "propaganda" –how things should be remembered. GEARY, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, p. 9. I am particularly intrigued that he argues that a change in the form of storage equals a change in content. He is talking about textual forms of storage, as when individual documents are gathered in a charter, but in the case of reliquaries, the changing of shape is even more significant and we will be especially attentive to that. *Ibidem*, p. 10.

⁴² For the story of the saint see: "Martyr Mamas of Caesarea in Cappadocia", on the website of the Orthodox Church in America: <https://oca.org/saints/lives/2008/09/02/102459-martyr-mamas-of-caesarea-in-cappadocia>; and other details in J. DURAND "Les reliques de saint Mammès au trésor de la cathédrale de Langres", V. DEROCHÉ et al. (ed.), *Mélanges Gilbert Dagron*, Paris, 2002 (*Travaux et Mémoires*, 14), pp. 181-200.

⁴³ Two *vita* exist: ed. B. KRUSCH, *Monumenta Germaniae Historiae, Scriptorum Rerum Merovingicarum*, vol. 2 Hannover, 1888. They are by Venantius Fortunatus, written shortly after the saint's death in 587, pp. 364-77, hereafter *VR I*, and Baudonivia, written a generation later 377-95, hereafter *VR2*. Both are translated in J. A. McNAMARA, J.E. HALBORG, E.G. WHATLEY (eds.), *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, Durham, NC, 1992, pp. 60-105.

⁴⁴ I. MOREIRA, "Provisatrix optima: St. Radegund of Poitiers' Relic Petitions to the East", *Journal of Medieval History* 19 (1993), pp. 285-305, at p. 295.

of important Eastern saints. Her hagiographer describes how Radegund responded to accounts of the martyr Mamas, with something like a physical illness, her “thirst could not be assuaged, so desirous was she for relics of the saint”⁴⁵. The Queen sent an agent and was rewarded with a finger of Mamas, which, in response to her petition, was easily broken from the body. The finger came away so easily that it seemed almost to volunteer itself, a miracle that not only reflected on the faith of Radegund but also served to amplify Mama’s renown.

Although Radegund undoubtedly initiated the Western fame of the saint, a few centuries later, Walafrid in his *vita* stinted no praise, making Mamas an archetype of the innocent shepherd, the wise prophet, and comparing him to the virtues of a host of Old Testament figures – including the patience of Job, and the wisdom and building ambitions of Solomon. When Walafrid turned to the New Testament, he compared Mamas to Paul, Stephen and Christ and for that matter to all the saints of all times.

The Greek texts of the *passio* of Saint Mamas of Caesarea (in Cappadocia) is one of the early Greek hyper-imaginative lives called hagiographic romances by Hippolyte Delehaye⁴⁶. It is filled with stories that each make a point or teach a message, and is embellished with fantastic events evincing the saint’s power as a so called *megalomartyr*. For example, Mamas very name was first spoken when he was an infant, before he should have been able to speak and at the same moment he declared his faith as a Christian. He was said to be born in prison to parents who were persecuted Christians and who died in his infancy. In two different versions, he was either adopted or alternately grew up largely alone – a type of the innocent who finds God, and is sometimes said to derive his wisdom from his mother’s milk– a hagiographic topos of the innocent child of the Church.

Mamas was said to have built a temple on a mountaintop (hence Walafrid’s comparison to Solomon) and was revered by the beasts of the wilderness. He tended sheep, made cheese and offered it to the poor. Finally brought back to civilization by the emperor who heard of his fame from afar, he became a martyr to Christianity, first withstanding flames, then being enclosed with lions who refused to attack, and then stoned. Finally, he is said to have been eviscerated by a trident. This last torture is the one that becomes characteristic (even in Gothic Western images, see Fig. 6).

Mamas’s cult flourished in the East, celebrated already in the fourth century by Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus. His fame was such that he began to appear in litanies and martyrologies in the West. He is named in the litany of Soissons in circa 745 and the Martyrologies of Jerome, Walafrid, Hrabanus Maurus, Florus of Lyon, Notker, Adon, and Usuardus⁴⁷. However, it was Langres collection of relics, beginning in the ninth century, that made the Eastern martyr famous in the West in the later Middle Ages⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ MOREIRA, “Provisatrix optima”, p. 289, citing VR 2:13.

⁴⁶ H. DELEHAYE, *The Legends of the Saints: An Introduction to Hagiography*, trans. V.M. CRAWFORD, 1907, reprinted Notre Dame, 1961. chapter 1, esp. p. 5.

⁴⁷ MOREIRA, “Provisatrix optima”, p. 294 and 295; the Jerome martyrology, assigns the saint’s feast day to 17 August; see H. QUENTIN, *Les martyrologues historiques du Moyen Age*, Paris, 1908. In the East it was celebrated on 2 September.

⁴⁸ MOREIRA, “Provisatrix optima”, p. 294 and n. 30. *PL* 104. Cols. 987-9, 1249-51. The change in cathedral dedication must reflect some contact with the Mamas cult. Moreira notes that a royal charter was granted to Bishop Betto of



Fig. 6 New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 64.101.1497, "Saint Mammès," Copper-alloy statuette, late 15th century

One of the questions we must ask is why Mamas? We can only answer that, like Radegund, the Church of Langres sought to acquire a powerful patron, and looked to the holy East to find a martyr of legendary power and potential. In an earlier moment, Angilbert praised the relic collection of Centula because it came from "the different parts of Christendom"⁴⁹, Fortunatus went even further in declaring the power of the East, stating that the "East bears witness and North South and West acknowledge"⁵⁰. In the era of the First Crusade and Langres' acquisition of the second Mamas relic, Western foundations eagerly sought imperial gifts of important relics on account of the prestige of such Eastern holy matter⁵¹. Finally, in the wake of the Fourth Crusade, although most of the relics acquired in the East were pieces of the True Cross and Passion relics, the crusading cleric Wallon of Langres, as recorded in the 1209 text, continued the local tradition and focused on adding to the relics of his Cathedral's powerful patron saint rather than acquiring dominical relics.

The 1209 text, indeed, boasts that even at the time of the first translation in the ninth century, Mamas's name was "on everyone's lips"⁵². The second translation in the eleventh century, and again from the byzantine capital, represents an important imperial gift. As the 1209 text reports, as an act of devotion, the Langres Bishop Renaud de Bar (1065-85), went to the

East on pilgrimage but also visited Constantinople. He was said to have translated the life of the martyr Mamas from Greek and ingratiated himself at the Byzantine court. As a thanks gift, the emperor (perhaps Michael VII Dukas), purportedly gave him the arm of the martyr from the imperial chapel itself⁵³. The third relic, a leg bone, is mentioned in the 1209 text only in passing. Although now lost, it is documented in later inventories⁵⁴.

Langres in 814 (PL, 104, col. 988) in which St. Mamas is mentioned (but not his relics) although this document has been questioned, E. EWIG, "Die Kathedralpatrozinian im römischen und im frankischen Gallien", *Francia* 3/2 (1975), p. 292.

⁴⁹ CORDEZ, *Schatz, Gedächtnis, Wunder*, p. 63.

⁵⁰ VR 2.13: McNAMARA, *Sainted Women*, pp. 94-5.

⁵¹ J. SHEPARD, "How Saint James the Persian's Head was Brought to Cormery: A Relic Collector around the Time of the First Crusade", *Zwischen Polis, Provinz, und Peripherie: Beiträge zur byzantinischen Geschichte und Kultur*, ed. L. M. HOFFMANN, Wiesbaden, 2005, pp. 287-336, esp. 321.

⁵² De Riant, *Exuviae sacrae Constantinopolitanae*, pp. 22-34, at p. 24.

⁵³ DURAND, "Les reliques de saint Mammès", p. 187; De Riant, Comte, *Exuviae sacrae Constantinopolitanae*, pp. 26-28.

⁵⁴ DURAND, "Les reliques de saint Mammès", p. 189, n. 45; De Riant, *Exuviae sacrae Constantinopolitanae*, p.33.

Finally, the translation of the head of the martyr was the occasion of the composition of the 1209 text. The head, of course, was one of the relics distributed after the Fourth Crusade and the Sack of Constantinople. Perhaps for this very reason – a suspicion that the acquisition represented spoils of war – the translation text takes great pains to demonstrate the deserving status of its recipient, Wallon de Dompierre, a clerk of Langres⁵⁵. The relic Wallon received was the “head”, the bone naked but for two bands of silver encircling the skull, crossing in the shape of a cross, and marked with ancient Greek letters, the latter kindly translated for Wallon by the Greek priests. Indeed, by begging for its return, the Greek priest of the Constantinopolitan monastery dedicated to Mamas assured Wallon of its authenticity. Additionally, a miracle on the voyage home once more confirmed the relic’s authenticity and power and its willingness to move to a new location.

In closing, the 1209 account sums up and ‘reconstitutes’ the body of the saint in a remarkable statement about its value to its new cathedral home:

The first relic sent was the collarbone which contains the arteries which carry a thought which is in the heart so that the tongue might burst forth into voice; the second was the arm, through which work is perceived; third, a long bone which seems to be from the tibia or femur ... Fourth and finally, the head came, as if so that he might speak, since thinking, speaking, and acting are communicated through the collarbone and the arm⁵⁶.

Apparently the clerics and canons of Langres were intent on reassembling this prestigious Eastern saint, the so-called Eastern *megalomartyr* so that he might, in effect, act for them and above all, *speak*. His reassembled body becomes a metaphor for the power of his new home – his body is the body of the church⁵⁷.

This work of consolidation and unification of the many fragments and members that had been disseminated and long held in Eastern locales, is quite an astonishing feat, but such reassemblage is not unknown in the history of sanctity. King Philip II at the Escorial, attempted to recover as many relics of Saint Lawrence as possible and furthermore claimed to be rescuing the relics from desecration as many were from newly Protestant locales⁵⁸. Indeed, Anne Lester argues that Bishop Garnier de Troyes, when he distributed the great riches collected at

⁵⁵ DURAND, “Les reliques de saint Mammès”, p. 193.

⁵⁶ De RIAnt, *Exuviae sacrae Constantinopolitanae*, pp. 33-4.

⁵⁷ Metaphors for the Church as body are numerous in the New Testament, and commonly discussed in commentary: “For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.” I Cor 12:12; “Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.” I Cor 12: 27-28; “For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith.” Romans 12:4-6; and others. I cite just one example from Patristics: “as the breast is joined to the head, so the apostles are joined to the redeemer. As the arms are joined to the breast, so the martyrs are joined to the apostles. As the hands are joined to the arms, so the pastors and doctors are joined through good works to the martyrs.” *Gregory the Great, In Ezechielem*, 1, 6, 9 in *PL*, 76, cols. 832-33.

⁵⁸ HAHN, *Reliquary Effect*, pp. 164-170.

the Sack of the Byzantine Capital, tried to match relics to relics that were already held in the West⁵⁹. For example, Chartres had possession of a significant Marian relic, so Garnier sent relics of Anne, Mary's mother, in order that she might "join" her daughter.

MATERIAL SACRED AT LANGRES

But finally, when we turn to what we can reconstruct of the reliquaries of Langres, in the wake of this effort to provide a "voice", a powerful saint for the Cathedral, it may be surprising to learn that there was no effort to physically reassemble the relics. No Frankenstein saint was brought together in a single reliquary, but instead, the relics are quite purposefully kept apart – housed in differing reliquaries, and used in diverse ways⁶⁰. This is the juncture at which we can attempt to make an intervention about how objects, especially in the form of reliquaries, served memory, and now I start over again with the relic collection, to think about issues of materiality and physical presence. Unfortunately, all the original reliquaries were lost at the time of the Revolution but enough evidence survives to paint a vivid picture⁶¹.

A sixteenth-century relief in the Cathedral recalls some of the material aspects of the first translation and memorializes its importance for the diocese and congregation (Fig. 7). The relief depicts the populace of Langres and a miracle. As noted above, according to the 1209 account, a ninth-century Langres pilgrim returning from Jerusalem or Constantinople obtained the neckbone of Mamas after much prayer and as a consequence of his virtue. (This account of course contradicts the evidence that Mamas's relics were in Caesarea and translated to Constantinople only in the eleventh century)⁶². As the pilgrim neared his home, carrying the relics in a cloth purse⁶³, he stopped, and hung the relics in a tree in order to satisfy the "call of nature"⁶⁴. When he returned to once more take up his journey, the relics refused to move⁶⁵. The pilgrim called upon the bishop of Langres for help, and he arrived with the entire populace of the city in procession, carrying candles, crosses, and books. Only upon prayer and a promise that the dedication of the cathedral would be changed would the relics allow themselves to be moved. On the relief, this "memory" is cast as a heroic moment: the procession enters the town in triumph, the bishop carries the purse. It is no surprise that this scene was illustrated eight centuries after its purported occurrence in this relief; the episode was a key turning point

⁵⁹ From a chapter from her ongoing book project that Anne Lester generously shared with me: "Risks and Fortunes: Assessing the Spiritual and Material Meanings of the Fourth Crusade".

⁶⁰ Only in the post medieval period can efforts to "reconstitute" a saint be documented, see abstracts: A. B. BÁEZ HERNÁNDEZ, "The *Corpi Santi* under the Government of Pius VI, Materiality as a Sign of Identity: First Rapprochements to Novohispanic Cases", in J. REYNIERS (ed.), *Relics @the Lab: International Workshop, Abstracts*, Brussels, 2016; also G. SÁNCHEZ REYES, J. L. VELÁZQUEZ, A. L. MONTES MARREROC, *Sanctity Through the Light of Science: Radiographic Images on Ceroplastic Reliquaries*, in *Ibidem*.

⁶¹ Here I am largely indebted to the work of DURAND, "Les reliques de saint Mammès".

⁶² MOREIRA, "Provisatrix optima", p. 292.

⁶³ DURAND, "Les reliques de saint Mammès", p. 186; De Riant, *Exuviae sacrae Constantinopolitanae*, pp. 23-26.

⁶⁴ This is reminiscent of a similar story in the Merovingian life of Saint Gall. BOLLANDISTES, Société des, *Acta Sanctorum*, Brussels, 1845. [10.] 7,2, October, p. 889.

⁶⁵ Compare to the behavior of relics in GEARY, *Furta Sacra*.



Fig. 7. Langres, Cathedral of Saint-Mammès, “Translation of First Relic of Mammès,” marble relief, 16th century

for Langres and its community. The saint chose his home, the place he wanted to reside, and the people recognized their patron in a celebration that included every member of the congregation, from child to bishop.

The story of the first relic was not manufactured in the thirteenth century. Although the neck bone is not separately noted in the inventories until 1513, we know that Langres was dedicated to Mamas as early as 814⁶⁶. Perhaps it was indeed carried in an early purse or purse reliquary, but in the early sixteenth century, it was recorded as presented in a Gothic *chasse* in the form of a church of gilded silver surmounted by a crucifix and ornamented with figures of saints and a donor⁶⁷. The presence of the arms of the bishop Guy Bernard means the reliquary should be dated after 1453⁶⁸.

The second relic, in contrast, said to be a relic of Mamas’ arm, has a more identifiable material history. Presumably the arm was already encapsulated in a reliquary in the Byzantine chapel from which it derived as gift, however, such a reliquary was unlikely to have had the shape of an arm, as that form was unfamiliar in the East before the fourteenth century⁶⁹. A first documentation of the arm relic at Langres, concerns the removal of a Western reliquary – a gold and gemmed arm reliquary. The gold was melted down and used to pay for the journey of Godefroy de la Roche to the Second Crusade. This sort of Crusader “loan” is not unusual, similar stories are recorded for other reliquaries in other churches, but here the circumstance

⁶⁶ DURAND, “Les reliques de saint Mammès,” p. 186.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 186-7, esp. n. 40.

⁶⁸ See Figure 9.

⁶⁹ I. KALAVRESOU, “Helping Hands for the Empire: Imperial Ceremonies and the Cult of Relics”, H. MAGUIRE (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture from 829-1204*, Washington DC, 1997, pp. 53-79.

might indicate that the arm relic had already been in the treasury for some time, at least before the mid twelfth century⁷⁰. The document, more importantly, also records a miracle. During the removal of the golden sheath, the goldsmith used a knife that slipped and cut the bone of the relic which proceeded to bleed. Perhaps a story that is dismaying to a modern audience, in the medieval source, this story of blood flowing is evidence of the liveliness of the relic and its miraculous nature. The blood was collected in an alabaster vase, which was itself in the treasury until the Revolution⁷¹.

At some later moment, the sheath on the arm was restored and inventories record that the reliquary was silver-gilt and gemmed. This later arm-shaped reliquary was considered representative of the cathedral, so much so that the Chapter used it on their seal (Fig. 8). It seems to have been of conventional form, with the right hand making a gesture of blessing.

This later arm reliquary again is the subject of an important document. It was opened in order to obtain a relic requested by the son of Louis XIV, and the contents of the reliquary were recorded in a *procès-verbal* of 1726⁷². At that time, a number of elements were discovered inside that attested to the Byzantine origin of the relic, including an inscription in Greek and a distinctively Byzantine image of the saint on a seal which Jannic Durand has dated to the tenth century⁷³. Other Western seals and inscriptions were also discovered, but all have subsequently disappeared.

Given that this reliquary in the form of a right arm was created for an arm relic, we might become comfortable with the idea of reliquaries that are appropriately shaped for their contents. The third relic that Langres acquired, however, brings that generalization up short. Also placed in an arm reliquary, this time of the left arm, the third relic of Mamas acquired by Langres was a leg bone. The object, now lost, was recorded in inventories⁷⁴. I once asked, “where are the left arms?”⁷⁵ This is one, and like others, it exists in company with another arm creating a pair of right and left: twin saints Crispin and Crispinian are represented by right and left arms at Osnabrück. At Langres, the production of a left arm seems to answer the need in reliquary displays for symmetry, as discussed above. But one still wonders, why an arm reliquary in this case? The answer is surely that leg reliquaries were rare, and in contrast, arm reliquaries were a quintessential and useful instrument for the liturgy. This sort of reliquary responds to the idea of the arm as a limb, a metaphor of the useful saint as part of the body of the Church, a limb that could implement Christ’s mission in the world. Arms are also good for processions, for signaling blessings, and to use to touch and heal in private encounters with a reliquary (some of which have been documented)⁷⁶.

⁷⁰ J. SMITH, “Portable Christianity: Relics in the Medieval West (c. 700-1200)”, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 181(2012), pp. 143-167, at p. 164 for a similar Crusader use of a reliquary to finance his journey.

⁷¹ DURAND, “Les reliques de saint Mammès”, pp. 187-8; The blood was also used and displayed in other reliquaries, see fn. 43.

⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 189.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 192.

⁷⁴ DURAND, “Les reliques de saint Mammès”, p. 189, n. 45.

⁷⁵ C. HAHN, “The Voices of the Saints: Speaking Reliquaries”, *Gesta*, 36 (1997), pp. 20-31, at p. 20.

⁷⁶ HAHN, “The Voices of the Saints”, p. 22.

Finally the last relic, the most significant one, the skull of Mamas about which the 1209 account was written, was as we have seen, booty of the Fourth Crusade. Upon arrival at Langres, the skull seems to have immediately been encapsulated in a head reliquary, and once again, unfortunately, that reliquary was destroyed in the French Revolution. It was, however, well documented in inventories before its destruction.

The relic itself, a skull encircled by two metal bands, has survived destruction and once again the Byzantine inscription in Greek (mentioned in the 1209 text) both identifies the relic and assures us that indeed it came from the East given its clearly identifiable “Greek” letter types⁷⁷. The 1513 inventory describes the Langres head reliquary that encapsulated the skull as made of gold with gems. Crowned, the bust was supplied with arms which held a gilded copper scepter, and the whole was placed on a gilded copper base. Presumably, the intention was, if we follow the description of the assembled relics in the 1209 text, to make a reliquary so lively it could speak. Many pieces of votive jewelry gifts adorned the figure, testifying to the saint’s power as an intercessor. Other gifts that had been given to the figure were preserved in the treasury. The effect of such a reliquary might be compared to that of the thirteenth-century Catanian head of Agatha which, still powerful today, is similarly crowned, holds a scepter, rests on a platform and is draped with lavish votive offerings of jewelry⁷⁸.

Inventories record that a bigger and better reliquary for the head was produced by the goldsmith Jean Drouot in 1524. Weighing more than 50 kilograms, again the figure was crowned and held a scepter. Perhaps this reliquary was the sort of larger than life size bust common in the sixteenth-century, like the head of Lambert of Liege, which, with its pedestal containing narrative panels, is over six feet tall⁷⁹. The Langres object was lost in the French Revolution and today’s reliquary, the third in the series, rehousés the skull in a less regal image. The final product is quite lovely, but it evokes the imagery of the child saint of the Mamas story rather than the powerful and regal intercessor of the two earlier head reliquaries.

The four separate Mamas reliquaries intended for the major relics (there are yet others mentioned in the inventories which may have contained fragments, and of course there were containers for the blood from the arm)⁸⁰, clearly demonstrate that there is no attempt to bring



Fig. 8. Seal of the Chapter of Langres, 13th century, after E. Vauthier, *Saint Mammès, patron de la cathédrale et du diocèse de Langres*, Langres, 1994, p. 28

⁷⁷ Discussed in DURAND, “Les reliques de saint Mammès”, p. 192-3, with illustrations fig. 6-8.

⁷⁸ ARCIDIOCESI DI CATANIA, *Il tesoro di Sant’Agata : gemme, ori e smalti per la martire di Catania*, Catania [Italy], 2006.

⁷⁹ Image in Wikimedia: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reliquary_of_Saint_Lambertus.jpg

⁸⁰ E. JOLIBOIS (ed.), “Inventaire de la chapelle des reliques de l’église cathédrale de Langres”, *Bulletin archéologiques*, 4 (1847-8), pp. 316-327.

the saint together in one reliquary. Unlike the text, the parts do not come together to make one body, but are kept separate to increase the potential for portability and usability, as well as for spectacle and power. The set of reliquaries reiterates the importance of Mamas's relics, each one enshrined individually in order to proclaim its identity and presence.

Despite the losses of the French Revolution, we are fortunate to have a record that suggests something of the appearance of the Mamas reliquaries (at least of three of the four reliquaries discussed above). In a fifteenth-century Book of Hours made for Langres use and still preserved there (M. 165), the illumination for the Feast of relics depicts the arm, the head and the neckbone of Mamas in their respective reliquaries (Fig. 9)⁸¹. The arm corresponds in gesture and handedness to the arm on the canon's seal (see Fig. 8)⁸². In the center, the head lacks any scepter and is probably somewhat generic in its depiction, although it "looks like" the figure of Mamas on his suffrage page in the same manuscript (M 165, fol. 115v). Finally on the right, the reliquary of the neck bone seems to be housed in a relatively accurate depiction of the lost object – the inventory describes a Gothic *chasse* in the form of a gilded silver "church" topped by a crucifix. The image constitutes our only visual testimony to that lost treasure⁸³.



Fig. 9. Langres, Musées de Langres, Ms 165, fol. 136 r, "Festal display of relics of Mammès," *Book of Hours of Langres use*, end 15th century

⁸¹ J. LAUGA, J.-P. RIBAUT, "Catalogue des manuscrits enluminés, Langres", *Bulletin de la Société Historique et Archéologique de Langres*, 22 (1996-98), pp. 177-78.

⁸² Although one other piece of evidence contradicts this appearance: a *méreau*, or token, used in the cathedral by the canons that is preserved in the Musée de Langres shows a hand with an open palm, although the image is cut off at the wrist. Thanks to Arnaud Vaillant, Régisseur des collections, Musées de Langres for supplying a photograph of this object and answering questions about the Book of Hours as well as supplying that photograph (Fig. 9).

⁸³ DURAND, "Les reliques de saint Mammès", pp. 186-7, esp. n. 40.

Displayed for celebration of a feast – on an altar in front of what is either a cloth of honor or an evocation of heaven, the reliquaries seem to welcome the viewer and his or her prayers and attention. Feasts for which this display could be relevant included: the feast of the relics at Langres cathedral (30 July), the feast of the saint Mamas as well as his translation (17 August, 10 October and octave), and the dedication of the cathedral (26 August and octave)⁸⁴. This image in the Book of Hours illustrates a prayer to “relics” – Mamas is not mentioned specifically and it may be that his relics, in effect, here stand for all the relics of the church (although there were many others of other saints in the Treasury)⁸⁵. Once again, it seems as if the congregation is satisfied in letting their special patron “speak” for them.

CONCLUSION. RELIQUARIES AND MEMORY

How can we generalize about cathedrals from these examples, especially the case of Saint Mamas and Langres? Notably, in certain important ways, Infanta Urraca’s donation of the relics of Adrian and Natalia to Eslonza exhibits a striking parallelism concerning the treatment of relics of parts of the body that demonstrates that the issue is larger than it first appears (Fig. 2). In a multi-part narrative on the silver reliquary in Chicago, the martyrdom of the soldier saint Adrian is recounted with an emphasis on his body and its dismemberment. On a short side of the silver reliquary, Adrian converts. Immediately thereafter, in a dramatic image on the first of the long sides, Adrian, still living, has his hand and foot cut off by a man with an axe, and his wife retrieves his hand (see Fig. 2). On the opposite long side, dead bodies including that of Adrian are depicted on a field strewn with body parts, and at the center, the praying figure of Natalia, again clutching the hand, reaches up with it in a form of prayer.⁸⁶ Finally, on the fourth remaining short side (Fig. 2), Natalia flees in a boat, now holding the hand up in a sort of triumph.⁸⁷

The passion text of Adrian and Natalia, as Lucy Pick calls it, is “a story that promises that the dismembered fragment suggested, although not made visible, by the closed reliquary will eventually likewise be reunited [to the body]”. She adds that “The pair [Adrian and Natalia], were the perfect patrons for the kinds of communities of men and women – dedicated to family memory, prayer, and custody of the dead, with women taking the lead, especially in mourning – that were favored by royalty and nobility in tenth and eleventh century León-Castilla”⁸⁸. In other words, Pick argues that the focus on dismemberment of the body is not just gruesome but also purposeful. Care for and gathering of relic parts is an important function that ultimately points toward the resurrection.

⁸⁴ Information from another Langres book of Hours of 1463, probably for use by a canon, sold at Christies can be found at: <https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/hours-and-ferial-psalter-use-of-langres-5334925-details.aspx>

⁸⁵ I have not been able to consult the calendar or other pages of this manuscript.

⁸⁶ As noted by J.A. MORAIS MORÁN, *La arqueta de San Adrián [the Art Institute, Chicago] y e culto a sus reliquias en el antiguo reino astur leonés*, Valparaiso, 2016, p. 171.

⁸⁷ See the entry on the reliquary on the Art Institute of Chicago website: <http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/46230>; as well as C. M. NIELSEN, and Chicago Art Institute, *Devotion & Splendor: Medieval Art at the Art Institute of Chicago*, Chicago, 2004, pp. 30-31; and now, MORAIS, *La arqueta de San Adrián*.

⁸⁸ Note, Eslonza was a male foundation and the reliquary is usually dated after Infanta Urraca’s death in 1101. The quote at PICK, *Her Father’s Daughter*, p. 187.

However, I would note, relic cults and burials are distinctively separate things. Natalia is more than a simple family memory-keeper, or a monk or nun or noblewoman who prays for the dead, or even a gatherer of relics. She quite literally, represents the Church. As a saint, she is assembling the collective memory of the church, consolidating it and cherishing it⁸⁹. As Caroline Bynum writes: “Division could be generative”⁹⁰, noting that seventy-five of 153 chapters of the *Golden Legend* have dismemberment as a central issue in the story. Breaking and testing the body proves the martyr but also motivates the fragments. It reminds us that the part represents the whole and that it is the duty of the Christian and indeed the Church, here represented by Natalia herself, to cherish and gather relics⁹¹. Natalia’s role in some sense is reiterated in turn by Urraca, as a powerful patron of the saint and institution, and Adrian’s relic was eventually brought to Spain and installed in a church for its continuing veneration (San Adrian of San Pedro de Eslonza)⁹².

As in text, so in materials, memory is constructed piece by piece and its construction is a pious task. But rather than still, static, and monolithic, the final result in the case of the reliquaries is a dynamic many-part whole. As Frances Yates and Mary Carruthers have taught us, rather than Augustine’s vast cave of retrieval of the ideal, the *practice* of memory is perhaps better pictured as taking place in a theater with objects strange and memorable, carefully placed, to be perused and contemplated in turn. In the effort to create a greater whole, a heritage that constituted (and expanded) its cultural memory, Langres took the unusual approach of ‘assembling’ a saint. In seeking the blessings of a universal patron, the cathedral translated the power of its *megalomartyr* from East to West, and at the same time created a simulacrum of the body of Christ in heaven. The parts become the whole; the active and separate limbs imaginatively come together as a body, as an array of relics (of Mamas as well as many other saints) at Langres. The whole becomes the Church.

The result is a means to conjure the power and beauty of heaven and celebrate the fragment. At Langres, Mamas is ready to work as so many parts of a whole. As Caroline Bynum has shown, the parts will reunite at the resurrection, each will retain its incorruptibility – and we recall that Mamas arm bone bled under the knife – rather than “dry bones” they are bones “full of life”. Indeed these relics are “vessels of resurrection,” according to Peter the Venerable, who explains that:

The divine dignity divides his martyr into equal parts, so that he may retain his soul for himself among the mass of the blessed and give, with marvelous largesse, the relics of his sacred body to be venerated by the faithful still living in the flesh⁹³.

⁸⁹ It is a common narrative trope that a woman might remember, and even have cared for forgotten relics until they were recovered for the Church. For example the Passio of Saint Kilian: A. BIGELMAIR, “Die Passio des heiligen Kilian und seiner Gefahrten”, *Herbipolis Jubilans: 1200 Jahre Bistum Wurzburg, Festschrift zur Sakularfeier der Erhebung der Kiliansreliquien (Wurzbürger Diocesangeschichtsblätter, 14/15 (1952/53))*, pp. 1-25. At p. 9 cap. 14.

⁹⁰ C. W. BYNUM, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*, New York, 1992, p. 280.

⁹¹ CORDEZ, *Schatz, Gedächtnis, Wunder*.

⁹² PICK, *Her Father’s Daughter*, p. 186. Although more recent scholarship doubts this gift: MORAIS, *La arqueta de San Adrián*, pp. 242-3.

⁹³ BYNUM, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, p. 264 and relics are “temples of the Lord” and every fragment is incorruptible, “vessels of resurrection.” We should “hoard them as pearls” not “dry bones” but “full of life”, p. 265.

In their many parts, saints serve as many different gifts to benefit many Christians. Or again, as Bynum writes, “The martyrs bear up under unspeakable tortures ... because they know every particle will return in the end”⁹⁴. Like the Eucharist, chewed and digested yet whole... “reassembly is the ultimate promise”⁹⁵.

So what do the relics of Mamas gathered at Langres mean for our understanding of memory? The Cathedral evidently sought a more powerful and distinctive patron than its original dedication to John the Evangelist. Rather than choose the path of monasteries, one which treasured the body of a local saint and patron in his tomb, the canons at Langres chose the approach of a Cathedral, systematically gathering an assemblage of meaningful relics from near and far away. What differed at Langres from a “typical” cathedral was that rather than mimic the litany and the community of saints, as so often in relic collections – with relic fragments of Christ, Mary, Apostles, martyrs, virgins, and confessors, more or less in that order (although Langres had relics of these saints as well)⁹⁶ – Langres focused on assembling a series of substantial relics of a single powerful Eastern martyr, in separate and useful reliquaries, ready for display and ceremony. Above all, the church contends, as the 1209 text repeatedly asserts, that its powerful patron willingly crossed the globe to come to Langres to respond to the devotion and piety of the Langres congregation. Furthermore, the promise remained that, although each relic was incorruptible and whole in itself, in the end times they would reunite to serve as one powerful “vessel of resurrection”, that might speak to God in support of his suppliants or with the phrase that Peter the Venerable used for martyrs, the cathedral blessed with these relics become – a “temple of the Lord”, soaring to the heavens⁹⁷.

So to sum up. Memory as expressed in reliquaries becomes the memory of the donor, the memory of the artist, the memory of the saint. In effect, the *votive* offering of the reliquary by its ecclesiastical and noble or royal patrons is preserved as prayer literally “*treasured*” by its Cathedral and perpetuated through time. Ultimately, these physical and material commemorations work together to create the constructed social memory of the locus (the proper place) of the powerful patron and his community of saints and the faithful, as well as in the place of the Cathedral in the Universal church. The memory that is thus forged promises an identity, a future, and ultimately, salvation for its people at the end of time.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

⁹⁶ I should note that the 1513 reliquary inventory mentions many other relics of many other saints, but in service of their celebration of Mamas, he takes first (and second and third and fourth and fifth place in the inventory): JOLIBOIS (ed.), “Inventaire de la chapelle des reliques”.

⁹⁷ Karmen MacKendrick writes: “Keating and McCarthy note: ‘Saints point not to ‘individual perfection’ but to perfect communion, not to self-sufficiency but to relations that extend our vulnerability and interdependence...The saint is open to God’...[the saints] broken-open bodies remind us of God in the flesh and the constant disruptive emergence of the sacred...They open the community itself to the tug of memory and to the memory of fragmentation”. K. MACKENDRICK, *Fragmentation and Memory: Meditations on Christian Doctrine*, New York, 2008, p. 123, citing J. KEATING, J.M. MCCARTHY, “Moral Theology with the Saints,” *Modern Theology*, 19 (2001), pp. 203-18.

