

Relíquias em projeto

**Relics
in project**



**MUSEU
SÃO ROQUE**

Relíquias em projeto

Relics in project

jornada 2 | journey 2

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SANTA CASA
Misericórdia de Lisboa

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Será que as relíquias merecem atenção de outros investigadores, outros métodos e perspectivas de estudo?

Este foi o tema de fundo das segundas jornadas do projeto *reliquiarum*. Conhecer e debater relíquias ouvindo casos internacionais bem diferenciados e com focos de investigação diversificados.

Conseguiram-se recolher informações, como percursos biográficos dos investigadores, práticas de estudo, perceber formas de financiamento e, ao mesmo tempo, o desenho de objectivos de cada projeto.

Assim fazendo, continuou a alimentar-se a rede internacional que vem dando corpo a uma equipa de conhecimento e de posicionamento crítico que contribui para a sustentabilidade do projeto *reliquiarum* do Museu de São Roque da Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa.

Até às próximas jornadas!

Do relics deserve attention from other researchers, other methods and perspectives of study?.

This was the underlying theme of the second Workshop of the *reliquiarum* project. To get to know and discuss relics by listening to well differentiated international cases and with diversified research focuses.

It was possible to collect information, such as the biographical paths of researchers, study practices, to understand forms of funding and, at the same time, the design of the objectives of each project.

In this way, the international network continues to be nurtured, giving body to a team of knowledge and critical positioning which contributes to the sustainability of the *reliquiarum* project of the St. Roch Museum (Museu de São Roque) of Santa Casa da Misericórdia of Lisbon.

See you all in the coming Workshop!

Relic Studies: Material evidence for a sacred reality

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resumo

O presente artigo procura conceptualizar relíquias e consolidar diversas abordagens metodológicas ao seu estudo, de modo a estabelecer um quadro para o desenvolvimento de estudos de relíquias. Tal parte da investigação recente do autor sobre este assunto, assim como de diversos estudos de caso interdisciplinares de materiais relíquia que liderou durante a última década. O artigo explora as questões: *O que é uma Relíquia?*, *Como devemos estudar as Relíquias?* e *Porque é que o estudo das relíquias é importante?*

palavras-chave

Relíquias; Cristianismo; Materialidade; Arqueologia; Ciências Naturais; Neurociência; Cognição

abstract

This article seeks to conceptualise relics and consolidate various methodological approaches to their study, in order to establish a framework for the development of relic studies. This builds on the author's recent research on this subject, as well as on the numerous interdisciplinary case studies of relic material that he has led over the past decade. The article explores the questions *What is a Relic?*, *How should we study Relics?* and *Why is the study of relics important?*

keywords

Relics; Christianity; Materiality; Archaeology; Natural Science; Neuroscience; Cognition

The study of relics provides a unique framework through which to explore the relationship between people and things, through concepts such as materiality and lived religion. Crucially, I would propose, it also provides a means to bridge conceptual and empirical research. Building on my existing research¹, this article explores three questions *What is a relic?*, *How can we study relics?* and *Why is the study of relics useful?*

What is a relic?

The concept of a relic can be understood in various ways. For example, in the 19th and 20th c., the English term «relic» could simply refer to a piece of archaeological material evidence.² Of course, the word *reliquia* has a far longer history in Latin, predominantly associated with human remains and the cult of Christian relics. In seeking a fuller understanding of what the term «relic» might mean, I therefore begin by exploring its context within the Christian tradition.

Relics in the Christian tradition

In Christianity, the Word of God (the second person of the Trinity) is the pre-existent principle of God, active at the Creation, which became incarnate in human form as Jesus Christ to reveal to humankind God's plan for its salvation. The Holy Spirit (the third person of the Trinity), meanwhile, acts as the agent of God's divine power. The Holy Spirit has the power to grant life and a host of other spiritual and physical gifts to those who receive it, and also provides its recipients with the insight to perceive and understand in its fullest sense the Word of God, with its message of salvation. The Holy Spirit is thus sometimes described as the «Spirit of Truth».

As a result, the Holy Spirit is believed to dwell within all those who have received Christ's message. This can be observed in St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 3: «16. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? 17 [...] for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.»

1 Corinthians 6: «15. Do you not know that your bodies are the members of Christ? [...] 19. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.»

This concept has relevance to how relics were perceived within Christian thought, notably with regard to the question of whether the Holy Spirit remained present in human remains after death. In the Latin West, Christian theology from St Augustine to St Thomas Aquinas and beyond has generally refrained from explicitly encouraging belief in any holy power residing in relics themselves. Instead, according to St Thomas Aquinas, God does honour to relics by performing miracles in their presence.³ In 1563, at the Council of Trent, the Catholic Church decreed that:

Sanctorum quoque Martyrum, & aliorum cum Christo viventium sancta corpora, quæ viva membra fuerunt Christi, et templum Spiritus sancti, ab ipso ad æter-

*nam vitam suscitanda, & glorificanda, a fidelibus veneranda esse: per quæ multa beneficia a Deo hominibus praestantur.*⁴

In the Greek East, meanwhile, a somewhat different perspective prevailed. In his homily *De S. Hieromartyre Babyla*, St John Chrysostom states that the martyr's death is not death.⁵ He stresses that Christians should not merely pay attention to the bare relics of St. Babylas, deprived of his human soul, but look beyond these to the fact that his bodily remains are empowered with the grace of the Holy Spirit. In his homily on the relics of St Ignatius, Chrysostom goes further, declaring that «*not just the bodies but the saints' coffins themselves, too, are full of spiritual grace.*»⁶

This idea that the healing power of the Holy Spirit can be transmitted through contact is evident throughout Byzantine sacred literature and art.⁷ Moreover, such contact could include non-physical contact with the sacred. Holy icons provide an example of this, with the Holy Spirit creating a «sacramental bond of communication» between the subject depicted and the viewer.⁸ As noted earlier, Christianity teaches that the Holy Spirit manifests itself to enable the faithful to perceive a holy reality hidden to others.⁹ For the faithful viewer, the remote subject depicted would thus acquire a sort of «co-presence» within its icon, enabling ordinary materials to be experienced as an extension of a sacred personality or consciousness, sharing in their power and becoming sacred themselves as a result. This can be seen, for example, in the sixth-century *Life of St Symeon the Younger*, who exclaims to a devotee «*when you look at the imprint of our image, it is us that you will see.*»¹⁰ By bringing about these virtual encounters with the sacred, God's Holy Spirit was believed to bless both object and viewer with its holy presence and sanctity, sometimes evidenced by the working of miracles.

This intense form of mental encounter with the sacred transcends traditional boundaries such as that between subject and object, and has been termed the «*the Eye of Faith*».¹¹ This process also occurs during encounters between Christian faithful and holy relics.¹² In A.D. 386, Gregory of Nyssa describes such an encounter with a relic:

*For as if it is the same body, still alive and flourishing, those beholding it embrace it with the eyes, the mouth, the ears. And when they have approached it with all the senses, they pour tears out over it from piety and emotion. And as if he was intact and appearing, they address to the martyr a plea that he would intercede on their behalf.*¹³

One notes, however, that a relic might appear sacred to one viewer, and ordinary to another. For example, in Jerome's *Contra Vigilantium* (ca. AD 400), an opponent of relics ridicules the veneration of «*some unknown dust kept in a little vessel, wrapped in costly*

cloth.»¹⁴ I therefore conclude that the viewer plays an integral part in an object becoming established as a holy relic. In Christianity, the relic connects its viewer to its sacred subject through the agency of the Holy Spirit, present in all Christian faithful. This may not take place when relics are encountered by non-Christians or those of insufficient faith. This would seem to be the case regardless of whether one considers that the Holy Spirit lies latent within relics by virtue of their holy origin (as in the Byzantine tradition), or that to honour relics, the Holy Spirit manifests itself only on certain occasions (as in the Latin tradition). While examples are recorded of non-believers suffering harm when seeking to disturb or harm relics, the principal function of relics – to connect the viewer to, and thus enable them to draw benefit from, a sacred subject – depends on the faith of the viewer.

Relics and holy images are, meanwhile, not the only things able to trigger the Eye of Faith, according to Christian sources. Pilgrim texts and cult miracle collections, for example, describe similar encounters or visions taking place during visits to holy shrines or sacred locations, or simply as a result of a person's faith.¹⁵ The belief that God's Holy Spirit was present in such places encouraged the faithful to take souvenirs (or *eulogia*), such as earth, water or oil, from these places, in order to make portable the power of its blessing. This strongly resembles practices relating to relics. Indeed, in modern Catholicism, objects that have been in physical contact with a holy person or relic can be termed «third class relics» in their own right. This recalls the concept of contagious sanctity noted above. This would extend the sacred power of the Holy Spirit to the material context associated with the cult of a relic or holy person (e.g. incense, wine or oil used in their veneration, or the reliquary holding their remains). As I have argued, such materials might also be considered as sacralised by their role in triggering in their viewers a spiritual encounter with the divine. While they might do this in their own right, I would argue that, in addition to the relic and the viewer, this material context can play a critical role, enabling the viewer to identify an ordinary object as a relic, triggering their encounter with its holy subject.

Based on the above, one might conclude that any material that triggers in its viewer a mental encounter with an invisible, sacred subject might be considered holy (in that this ability is associated with the action of the Holy Spirit) and even defined as a relic. It would thus follow that all relics, regardless of their actual origins, must to some extent be «invented» (i.e. found or identified) in the mind of their viewer.

At first glance, such a definition appears problematic, since it would not depend on a relic's material nature or actual origins, nor reflect the fact that the term «reliquia» seems to specify that a relic is something left over from the past. Since the rise of the cult of relics in the 4th c., Christian churches have placed a great importance on the distinction between relics that are objectively authentic (i.e. are the actual physical objects that they are claimed to be) and those that are not.¹⁶ However, I have encountered several

examples where an object's ability to inspire the faith of its audience has been considered sufficient for it to be venerated as a relic. The Spanish King, Philip II (1527-1598), for example, was highly devoted to the cult of relics, regardless of his awareness that a number of these were not genuine. «No nos engañaran, pues no perderemos nuestro merecimiento delante de Dios reverenciando a sus Santos en los Huesos, aunque no sean suyos.»¹⁷ More recently, speaking about the British Museum's Treasures of Heaven exhibition in 2011, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, then Archbishop of London, acknowledged the role of a relic in

*the connecting of this moment with the treasured moment of the past. And if that connection is made through an object which maybe forensically won't stand up to the test, that's of secondary importance to the spiritual and emotive power that the object can contain.*¹⁸

While these comments have been considered controversial by some, given that the Catholic Church teaches Christians not to venerate false relics, Catholic churches continue to expose for veneration relics that are known to be duplicates (e.g. the Holy Tunic of Christ, claimed both by Argenteuil in France and Trier in Germany), or have been scientifically dated to later periods (e.g. the Titulus Crucis or Holy Shroud of Turin). In the case of the Shroud of Turin, a sermon of St John Paul II also provides valuable insights.¹⁹ Here, the Pope acknowledges both the sanctity of the Shroud and its scientific dating, and urges respect for both scientific methodology and the sensibilities of believers. He explains that

For the believer, what counts above all is that the Shroud is a mirror of the Gospel, that every sensitive person feels inwardly touched and moved at beholding it, that the Shroud does not hold people's hearts to itself, but turns them to Christ, as a truly unique sign that points to Jesus, the true Word of the Father, an image of God's love that is made almost tangible.

The sermon concludes: «May the Spirit of God, who dwells in our hearts, instil in everyone the desire and generosity necessary for accepting the Shroud's message.» This emphasises, once again, the role of the relic in the Christian tradition as a form of communication between the faithful and its sacred subject, made possible by the Holy Spirit. In St John Paul II's analysis, divine reason and human science are not incompatible in their assessment of a relic's nature and authenticity. While the divine may manifest itself through Christian materiality, it is not restricted by it. As such, while the term «reliquia» implies a direct connection with the past, I would argue that the longstanding Christian context of this term encourages a definition of relics as material objects for which that direct connection with the past may be either physical or spiritual.

How can we study relics?

For the past decade, I have been trying to establish parameters for the study of relics, collaborating with scientists, conservators, philosophers and churches to advance its development as a field in its own right. During this time, I have been pleased to witness the growth of this field, assisted by an increasing number of workshops and conferences, notably the first International Conference on Relic Studies held in Porto in 2021, and the workshop and exhibition held at the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa that has resulted in the present publication.

As I have argued, relics, their material context and their audiences are intimately connected. Relic studies enable us to study the history of all three elements over time. In the case of the Christian cult of relics, archaeology provides a useful medium through which to assemble and study the diverse surviving evidence. Typically, archaeological studies take either a conceptual (e.g. anthropology and archaeological theory) or empirical approach (e.g. archaeological science). Empirical approaches currently benefit from considerable momentum, thanks to the rapid pace of technological advance since the year 2000.

Empirical approaches: relic objects

Analyses such as radiocarbon dating, ancient DNA, and Gas Chromatography Mass Spectrometry offer information concerning two main questions:

- 1) A relic's origin: many relics consist of the remains of a living individual (i.e. a human, animal or plant). By applying scientific analyses to a relic object of this type, one can obtain specific information on that individual's life history (such as their health, diet, geographical movements, sex, genetic origin, appearance, relationships to others, life-style, age and cause of death).
- 2) The relic's history as an object: material evidence that an object has accrued during its use as a relic, such as exposure to holy oils or decorative pigments, as well as materials from its wider context (e.g. textile wrappings, reliquaries, inscriptions etc). By analysing such materials, one can obtain details on the history of the object as a relic, such as how and when it was venerated, decorated, sealed in a reliquary, opened for inspection, and resealed.

These modern scientific methods provide new ways to study relics, enabling us to address some important questions concerning their history.²⁰ While these analyses can also establish whether it is possible or impossible that a relic originates from a specific individual or object, examples such as the cult of the Shroud of Turin have shown that this information can be of varying interest to a relic's religious audience. Recognising the importance of audiences to the cult of relics, I have begun to con-

sider the application of modern scientific methods to these also. New methods in cognitive neuroscience and experimental psychology (including the use of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) of brain activity), enable mental processes such as the Eye of Faith to be researched empirically. Such research has led scholars to conclude that:

1. Our perception of reality is not solely determined by direct sensory input. *«The visual world that we experience is a collaborative project between memories of the past, current stimulation, and predictions about the future. In other words, much of what we experience does not come directly from retinal stimulation, but originates from inside the brain.»*²¹
2. Imagined and perceived images are processed using the same parts of the brain that our human sensorium uses to perceive the world around us, with mental imaging said to function like a weak form of perception.²² This recalls Pope St John Paul II's description of the Shroud of Turin making the Divine *«almost tangible»*.
3. Conscious visual experiences may occur without a corresponding retinal stimulus. These are termed «phantom perception», and may occur voluntarily or involuntarily.²³
4. Involuntary phantom perception can occur automatically, triggered by specific cues, to construct in a reality independent of the present, a concept described as *mental time travel*.²⁴

Involuntary phantom perception is commonly documented in the case of powerful negative memories, for example, in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).²⁵ I would suggest that relics, meanwhile, provide precisely the sort of cue required to trigger phantom perceptions of powerful positive memories, transporting the minds of the faithful into virtual mental encounters with cherished persons and events. The relic encounter described by Gregory of Nyssa, cited above, seems to describe precisely this process: the faithful *«approached it with all the senses»*, with *«piety and emotion»*, and then address the saint *«as if he was intact and appearing»*. Any sensory cue – a sight, sound, smell, taste or touch – might, therefore, activate an encounter with a sacred subject, recalling the examples described above (e.g. icons, holy places, and cult material contexts).

Conceptual approaches

Given their similarities to holy icons, it is also possible to approach relics from conceptual perspectives used to consider the subjects of art and representation.²⁶ Indeed, scholars in these fields have already begun to explore relics, variously interpreting these as a distinct type of sign or index.²⁷ It has thus been argued that in recognising

an *object* as a relic, the viewer must be able to interpret this as an image of a remote original, (the relic's *subject*) by learning a semantic association and being able to recall it.²⁸ From this perspective, relics thus serve as intermediaries between the audience and the prototype that they represent, a sacred portrait that the viewer looks through rather than at.²⁹

Whereas Christianity attributes this process to the agency of the Holy Spirit, to modern science the ability of relics to function in such a way depends not only upon their own material condition, but also upon the mind of each individual viewer.

Relics can also be approached from other conceptual perspectives in the arts, humanities and social sciences, such as New Materialism, to gain insights into the minds of past communities over time. The study of relics, material expressions of the immaterial, offers a rare opportunity to test and develop such philosophy of mind approaches by integrating these with data acquired using empirical scientific analyses. For example, as demonstrated by studies such as the Relics of Turku Cathedral Project, relics and their packaging are not fixed but evolve over time.³⁰ Items may be lost, added, modified or connected to new or additional objects. Analyses such as radiocarbon dating enable the construction of robust chronologies of such changes over time. This further supports the application to relics of New Materiality concepts, such as that of the *itinerary*.³¹ This offers an analytical and narrative device for reconstructing and presenting object histories, as well as enabling a broader and more nuanced understanding of object trajectories through time. Furthermore, relics and relic collections can be studied as documents of human decisions to assemble, preserve, modify and dispose of material objects. In studying these, I would therefore apply another concept – that of the *assemblage*.³² This envisions things such as objects, social entities and events as complex constructions of component parts, which can function as part of an *assemblage* or independently, and can be displaced and replaced fluidly within and among other *assemblages*. Since the concept of *assemblage* has no preset limits, it can be scaled as required to include data from a single relic package, or multiple relics and materials within a single collection, or evidence from a range of wider geographic contexts (local, regional, international). The *assemblage* formed by the relic, its material context (e.g. its packaging, *authentica*, reliquary, and other relics preserved in the same collection), and also its human audience, is critical to the definition of a relic's meaning. This meaning evolves over time, affecting and affected by the itineraries of its material context and by local *imaginaries* concerning the relic and its subject.³³ It is defined during relic encounters. Since many relics are often securely sealed for long periods of time, these encounters may be limited to occasions such as inventories, translations, or thefts, for example. The study of these relic assemblages can thus provide rare localised snapshots into the minds of past individuals at precise moments in time, which empirical data enables us to segment chronologically. This material evidence provides

a history of human actions towards the relic and, importantly, the subject it represents, each implying a premeditative thought.

In studying this valuable evidence, scholars must, however, be mindful that relics are an endangered form of evidence. In addition to fire, theft, and vandalism, an important threat to relics is decay. Relics may appear safe, wrapped in textiles and locked inside their reliquaries, but these and the relics themselves remain at dangers such as mould or desiccation. In some cases, communities are aware of a problem, but do not have the funds to address it. Because of this, scientific intervention in relic collections can be essential. If relic studies can commit to providing an evaluation of the condition of the heritage by an experienced professional, and the execution of any cleaning or conservation necessary, they can offer a win-win basis for collaborations between churches and researchers. Meanwhile, it is important that relic studies do not pose a danger to the survival of this precious heritage. For example, the development of best practice guidelines for relic studies would help to protect this material evidence. In particular, where interventions are made into relic assemblages, for example for the purpose of scientific sampling, these should be as minimal as possible, and guided by a clear question. The relic and its material context (i.e. the relic assemblage) should be documented extensively beforehand, including through high definition photographs and measurements. Ideally, a summary of actions taken and results found should be sealed alongside the relics to guide future studies, using safe materials (e.g. acid-free paper).

Relic audiences, I have argued, must be carefully considered within relic studies. To certain groups, relics may serve both as archives and as mnemonics, evoking a spatiality of memory and establishing consensus, thus enabling the creation of shared identities.³⁴ If the field of relic studies is to proceed in an ethical and sustainable manner, the rightful interests of these groups must be respected. In addition to being sacred to their primary audience, relics may be seen as an ethically sensitive research material because many consist of human remains. Given increasing global interest in human rights issues, I would advise curators and researchers to keep up to date with the latest research and guidance in this area. According to the Deutscher Museumsbund, for example, there are only three circumstances in which scientific research should be conducted on human remains:

1. there is a great deal of scientific interest
2. the human remains have a known provenance, and
3. the method of acquisition of the human remains is no source for concern.

In the UK, meanwhile, the Human Tissue Act (2004) has led to increased focus on the ethical treatment of human remains, and the UK Government's 2005 *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museum Collections* is particularly useful.³⁵ The International

Council of Museums requires that human remains and material of sacred significance should be treated «*in a manner consistent with [...]the interests and beliefs of members of the community, ethnic or religious groups from which the objects originated, where these are known.*»³⁶ However, identifying these groups is not always a straightforward process, and draws us back towards the subjective questions of «What is a Relic», and «Why are Relics Important?»

In the case of Christian relics in churches, it is necessary to seek permission and guidance of the relevant church authority. In the case of relics in Catholic churches, for example, I would refer researchers to the recent instruction, *Relics in the Church: Authenticity and Preservation*, issued by the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, previously named the Congregation for the Causes of Saints (Latin: Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum).³⁷ This specifies the role of experts in establishing the authenticity of relics and in work relating to their preservation. Importantly, such work should only take place with the consent of the bishop of that diocese. In some cases, relics and reliquaries may also be classified as national treasures or cultural heritage, making it necessary to obtain special authorisation from civic authorities, in addition to that of the relic's owner or keeper. In addition to its religious uses, where a relic has a role within a society, be it cultural (e.g. by being on public display, or forming part of public activities), or economic (e.g. by attracting visitors) it may be a worthy consideration, from an ethical viewpoint, to consult representatives of these stakeholders also, even if they do not regard the relic as sacred but find value in it nonetheless.

For these reasons, and others, researchers in the field of relic studies might choose to adopt certain measures to ensure that this research remains sustainable in the future. They could develop, for example, a research consent form that provides information about the process that the study will follow, and agree basic standards for undertaking and documenting relic studies and conservation. Furthermore, if data obtained by relic studies can be recorded in a digital format, it can be processed using trustworthy Artificial Intelligence applications much more rapidly than by the human mind, revealing new patterns and connections. Scholars noted already in 2011 the «*lack of broad biomedical and interdisciplinary studies on relics, supporting the necessity to increase their number in order to form an expert and detailed database of relics and their characteristics.*»³⁸ I am encouraged by the increasing number of databases and interdisciplinary studies of ancient relics, which regularly take place in collaboration with Christian churches.³⁹ As these studies increase, it would be useful for researchers to discuss a standard format for data storage, in keeping with the principles of Open Science, in order to support the sharing and consolidation of this data.

Why is the study of relics useful?

Whether they relate to an established religion or represent the personal keepsake of a single individual, relics enable humans to materialise and engage with a cherished subject as something sacred and worth preserving. As such, one might argue, relics are inherently religious objects, regardless of their origin and so-called authenticity.⁴⁰ Relics therefore enable the study of both the physical and metaphysical aspects of a culture, its body and its soul.⁴¹ Relic studies can help us understand more fully what it means to be human. As a result, any additional work or consideration that the sacred and sensitive nature of relics may require is fully justified.

I have suggested that relics, their material contexts and the audiences are mutually dependent, with each defining the other. However, the importance of relic studies extends far beyond these. The need for an established link between the approaches of natural sciences, and those of social sciences and the humanities has long been recognised as a major challenge in a number of fields. As Ian Hodder notes, archaeology, for example,

*remains bedevilled by an opposition between objectivity, science and evolution on the one hand, and society and history on the other. [...] As a result there has been a lack of integration between, for example, materiality studies and materials science. [...] if we break across this divide there is a large reservoir of fascinating issues to be researched and explored.*⁴²

By proposing a means to connect empirical studies, based in the Natural Sciences, with conceptual and cognitive approaches, the methods proposed here for the study of relics offer an exciting new medium, ideal for the comparative analysis of human societies.⁴³ Through science, we are able not only to explore the rich treasure of material scientific evidence that relics preserve, but also to examine the diverse human realities to which relics, through faith and memory, serve as the bridges. In turn, such studies can also offer numerous insights with relevance to modern material culture, including perceptions of the physical and the virtual, opening fresh avenues through which to explore the social anthropology of things.

1. KAZAN (2018), pp. 570-572; KAZAN and HIGHAM (2019), pp. 142-167; KAZAN (2021).

2. COLLINGWOOD and KNOX (1946), pp. 212, 282.

3. MORTENSEN and ALARCON (2012), vol. 7, *Tertia Pars*, 1-59, quaestio 25 (*De adoratione Christi*), art. 6 (*Utrum sanctorum reliquiae sint adorandae*): «*Deus hujusmodi reliquias convenienter honorat, in earum praesentia miracula faciendo.*»

4. SCHROEDER (1941), p. 483 (XXVth session): «*the holy bodies of the holy martyrs and of others living with Christ—which were the living members of Christ and the temple of the Holy Ghost, to be awakened by Him to eternal life and to be glorified, are to be venerated by the faithful, through which many benefits are bestowed by God on men.*»
5. MIGNE (1862), coll. 527–534 (*De Sancto Hieromartyre Babyla*).
6. MAYER and BRONWEN (2006), p. 116.
7. Examples include reliquaries with channels for the sanctification of oil, and the portable *eulogia* («blessings») – consisting of ordinary materials sanctified by contact with the Divine- taken by pilgrims from holy shrines.
8. NASSIF (2012), p. 47.
9. In the Gospels, Christ is often described curing those whose senses are impaired, such as the blind and the deaf. This might be interpreted as a metaphor for non-Christians being helped to perceive the Word of God.
10. VAN DEN VEN (1962–1970), vol. 1, pp. 205–206 (cap. 231).
11. See FRANK (2000), p. 133.
12. Cf. CHIDESTER (2018), pp. 82–83.
13. CAVARNOS (1990), pp. 61–71. Translation: LEEMANS, ALLEN, MAYER, DEHANDSCHUTTER (2003), pp. 82–91 (p. 85).
14. MIGNE (1845), coll. 339–352 (*Liber contra Vigilantium* 4–5): coll. 342–343.
15. This power of places to trigger a mental encounter with associated persons and events is also found in the pre-Christian concept of *vis admonitionis* described by Cicero: SCHICHE (1863), lib. 5, cap. 2. For a connection of this concept with the cult of Christian *eulogia*, see POESCHEL (2018), pp. 34–50, 67–84.
16. E.g. Canon 83, Fifth Council of Carthage (A.D. 419), MANSI (1760), vol. 3, col. 971: «*Et omnino nulla memoria martyrum probabiliter acceptetur, nisi ubi corpus aut aliquae reliquie sunt, aut origo alicuius habitationis, vel possessionis, vel passionis fidelissima origine traditur.*» Translation by PERCIVAL, SCHAFF, WACE (1900), Vol. 14: «*And no memory of martyrs should at all be accepted, unless where there is found the body or some relics, on which is declared traditionally and by good authority to have been originally his habitation, or possession, or the scene of his passion.*»
17. Archivo del Palacio Real, legajo 1816, 4. Translation by LAZURE (2007), pp. 58–93: «*They won't fool us; we don't lose our merit before God by revering his saints in bones, even if they are not theirs.*»
18. BARRETT (2011).
19. ADDRESS AT THE CATHEDRAL OF TURIN BEFORE THE SHROUD (1998).
20. To explore these, I have undertaken a number of interdisciplinary case studies e.g. KAZAN and HIGHAM (2020), pp. 225–246; AA. VV. (2020).
21. PEARSON and WESTBROOK (2015), pp. 278–284.
22. PEARSON, NASELARIS, HOLMES and KOSSLYN (2015), pp. 590–602.
23. PEARSON and WESTBROOK (2015).
24. RASMUSSEN and BERNTSEN (2014), pp. 1063–1075.
25. E.g. RAHMAN and BROWN (2021).
26. Cf. BABICH (2002), pp. 265–278.
27. Relics as signs: SADOWSKI (2009), pp. 96, 105; relics as indices: LEONE (2014), pp. 549–583.
28. SADOWSKI (2009), p. 96. This process evokes the aesthetic approach applied in the consideration of artworks: BABICH (2002), p. 272.
29. Cf. BARBER (2002), p. 29.
30. ARPONEN, MAIJANEN and IMMONEN (2018), pp. 149–83.

31. JOYCE and GILLESPIE (2015).
32. DELEUZE and GUATTARI (1988); DELANDA (2006); HAMILAKIS and JONES (2017), pp. 77-84.
To my knowledge, the concept of *assemblage* has only been applied to relics to study the process of creating of cero-plastic *corpi santi* structures as literal assemblages of bones and other materials, in NAPOLITANO (2017), pp. 524-526.
33. ANDERSON 2006.
34. See LUTZ (2015), pp. 5, 56. This is further discussed in KAZAN (2018).
35. *GUIDANCE FOR THE CARE OF HUMAN REMAINS IN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS* (2005).
36. INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF MUSEUMS (2017), p. 10.
37. INSTRUCTION «RELICS IN THE CHURCH: AUTHENTICITY AND CONSERVATION» (2017).
38. PETAROS, ČAVKA and ŠKROBONJA (2011), pp. 28-35.
39. See section Databases, below.
40. TILlich and KIMBALL (1959), p. 42.
41. CORDEZ (2007), pp. 102-116.
42. HODDER (2011), p. 186.
43. VAN DIJCK (2007), pp. 27-52.

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Corpi santi in Portugal. An overview

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resumo

Após 1578, milhares de esqueletos atribuídos aos primeiros mártires cristãos foram exumados em massa das catacumbas de Roma e enviados para os países ocidentais desmontados ou dentro de relicários de tamanho real que simulavam os corpos dos mártires. O artigo aqui apresentado resulta de um trabalho pioneiro em Portugal, o qual foi iniciado com a tese de doutoramento de J. Palmeirão e continuará sob o projeto *Holy Bodies* (Corpos Sagrados) (2022.01486.PTDC).

palavras-chave

Catacumbas romanas; culto de relíquias; *corpi santi*; simulacros de mártires; inventário nacional; Projeto *Holy Bodies* (2022.01486.PTDC)

abstract

After 1578, thousands of skeletons attributed to the first Christian martyrs were massively exhumed from the catacombs of Rome and shipped to the Western countries unassembled or inside life-size reliquaries that simulated the martyrs' bodies. The paper here presented results from a pioneering work in Portugal that started with J. Palmeirão's PhD thesis and will continue under the *Holy Bodies* project (2022.01486.PTDC).

keywords

Roman catacombs; relics cult; *corpi santi*; martyrs' *simulacra*; national inventory; *Holy Bodies* Project (2022.01486.PTDC)

The context for *corpi santi*

Between the late 17th century and the mid-19th century, thousands of skeletons attributed to the early martyrs of the Roman Catholic Church – named *corpi santi* (holy bodies) or catacomb saints – were massively exhumed from their resting places (*loculi*) in the subterranean cemeteries of Rome and displayed in simulated bodies.¹ Made with the finest materials and complex manufacture procedures by nuns or craftsmen skilled in embroidery, *papier mâché*, plaster, wood, or wax techniques, these full-body life-size reliquaries were nobly dressed as ancient Roman legionaries or virgins and displayed with the signs of martyrdom. The *simulacra*, mimicking the human body, were exhibited in polychromed, gilded wooden urns especially commissioned for them or inside the altars. The visual contact with these profusely decorated *bodies*, as models of virtue and triumph over pain and death by an exceptional faith in God, intended to consolidate in the faithful the reward of eternal life with Christ.²

The decree *On the Invocation, Veneration, and Relics of Saints, and on Sacred Images* from the XXV session of the Council of Trent, defined the status and the holy relics' role as intercessors of the living and the invocation of the saints to achieve benefits from God through Christ:

*(...) the holy bodies of holy martyrs, and of others now living with Christ—which bodies were the living members of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Ghost, and which are by Him to be raised unto eternal life, and to be glorified—are to be venerated by the faithful, through which (bodies) many benefits are bestowed by God on men (...).*³

The public cult of the relics and pilgrimage to the saint bodies were practices of devotion fully legitimised by the Council to enhance the status and prestige of religious communities, parishes, and churches. Besides, it was also expected to answer the liturgical demands after major destructions of relics during the Reformation iconoclast movement, particularly in German-speaking European countries, and to encourage devotion in Christian communities.⁴

A second event joined the renewed legitimacy of the cult of saints and the veneration of their relics. On 31 May 1578, excavations accidentally brought to light the entrance to a perfectly preserved ancient Christian hypogeum (*coemeterium Jordanorum*) on a vineyard along *via Salaria Nova*, a road starting from the ancient *Porta Collina* in Rome.⁵ Although the Jesuits and Oratorians previously knew about the existence of the catacombs and investigated their interior,⁶ the discovery of a long-forgotten cemetery from the first centuries of Christianity opened the door to an eminent spiritual event that caught the attention of the faithful, scholars and pioneers of Christian archaeology. The leading figure then, Antonio Bosio, author of the *Roma sotterranea* – published in

1632 after his death – brought to light *around thirty completely forgotten ancient paleo-Christian cemeteries of Late Antiquity*,⁷ some assumed as Christian martyrs. The Roman catacombs would become the biggest supplier of holy bones of the saint-martyrised heroes and heroines, victims of the wrath of the Roman emperors.⁸

Encouraged by the Council of Trent legislated norms and an infinite source of martyr's bones, the next three centuries became a period of faith, pilgrimage, excavations, and massive translation of those *corpi santi* to the four corners of Christendom. Practices that soon after gave rise to an intense debate and severe disapproval, a criticism that would last a few centuries.⁹

In the 19th century, religious fervour gradually lost freshness, including towards this typology of relics. The bones that once nourished Christianity became a kind of embarrassment to the Catholic Church due to their questionable origin. Archaeological controversies and scientific evidence have discredited the martyrs of the catacombs. One particular case was the blood vessel, unquestionable proof of martyrdom (*martyrii signa*) according to the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Relics (10 April 1668). However, scientific analyses have shown that blood could hardly be found in those vitreous ampoules studied, to say it positively.¹⁰ The blood vessel could no longer be considered archaeological evidence to distinguish ordinary Christians from authentic martyrs, making the usage of this criteria uncomfortable. To put an end to this practice, Pope Leo XIII prohibited the bones' exhumation in 1881.¹¹

Over time, the information that *simulacra* were devotional receptacles containing bones from the catacomb martyrs was lost. In Portugal, many were removed from their worship place or left to oblivion. Others were lost or still face devastating circumstances from a conservation point of view. Few remain available for public veneration and are often mistaken for incorrupt corpses due to the resemblance between the *simulacrum* and the human body, which deviates the cult from its original form.

***Corpi santi* in Portugal: unassembled bones or *simulacra*?**

The first known references to catacomb saints arriving in Portugal were given by William Telfer (1932). According to him, the church of São Roque in Lisbon received, in 1594, relics from Saints Paschasius, Saturninus, Oemenius, Febus, and Simplicianus, among others, obtained from Callixtus cemetery. Some of these relics were given to Father João Alvarez, the Jesuits' Provincial in Portugal when he attended the *Comitia Generalia* of the Society of Jesus in Rome. As mentioned, Pope Clement VIII (1592-1605), who called the *Comitia*,

*made it an occasion for permitting «extraction» from the catacomb of St. Callixtus, so that the departing Fathers, after the Comitia, should take back relics to their provinces.*¹²

Another description of the holy bones coming from Rome some years later is supplied by Jorge Cardoso (1652). The three *entire bodies*¹³ of Saints Clemente, Hilário and Anastácia/o¹⁴ were offered to D. José de Melo, agent in the Roman Curia from 1604 to 1608 and later archbishop of Évora (1611-1633). D. José de Melo brought the relics in solemn procession to the extinct Convent of Chagas in Vila Viçosa at two different moments, before his official activity in Rome (1600) and after it (1610), as mentioned by Cardoso.¹⁵ Although the context may suggest that they were dealing with entire skeletons, opening a window to *simulacra*, the information in the *Inventário Artístico de Portugal* from 1975 points out that the relics of Saints Anastácio and Clemente were enclosed in mother-of-pearl silver containers and the one of Saint Hilário, in a turtle silver vault.¹⁶ One could hypothesise that the relics of the three saints inventoried in the 20th century were the survival remains of the entire skeletons that once arrived in Portugal from the catacombs of Rome. In fact, several socioeconomic and political events marked Portugal's history in the last three centuries, contributing to the vanishing or destruction of many relics and reliquaries, as others suffered irreparable damage. Nevertheless, in the 17th century, Jorge Cardoso also mentioned that the body of Saint Clemente was kept *in a vault greatly venerated, in the choir chapel, with other holy relics*,¹⁷ confirming that a small container with high-quality and costly materials encased the sacred bones. Consequently, one can argue that the holy martyrs Hilário, Clemente, and Anastácia/o arrived in Portugal as unassembled skeletons and still were not the first *simulacra*.

Another example are the relics of Saints Caio, Vital, Teodora and Cristina, which were also removed from Callixtus' catacomb and sent to Portugal in 1620, according to Father João Baptista de Castro (1747). The author mentioned that *the four entire bodies*¹⁸ were transferred from Rome to Portugal by Heitor da Sella Falcão, archdeacon of Braga, accompanied by a bull signed in Rome by Pope Paul V (1605-1621) on 8 September, 1620.¹⁹ Falcão was the nephew of the founder of the extinct Poor Clares Monastery of São Luís, explaining why the relics were exposed there for veneration. Although the four saints are called *entire bodies*, they were doubtfully *simulacra*. The information provided by Augusto Pinho Leal in 1876 is crucial for this interpretation, since he states that in São Luís Monastery were:

*much of the bodies of six Saints [...] in a large golden cabinet, with 18 drawers in 3 rows of 6, and with glass so that they can be seen and venerated [the relics] by the faithful.*²⁰

Thus, it is likely that the first bones exhumed from the catacombs were sent in boxes, either as entire or partial skeletons, with the legal documentation stating their authenticity (*authenticae*) and the saint's name (the given name or the Christian name). To be used in liturgy and cult, many of these relics were later enshrined in sumptuous

containers, as small vaults, urns or anthropomorphic reliquaries, mimicking the medieval arm or bust reliquary.²¹ In turn, the *simulacrum* model was a particular type of container used during the modern period (17th-19th centuries) and distinct from the body-part reliquary. It included the whole skeleton or a substantial part of it. With this in mind, the authors propose that the expression *entire bodies* began to be used specifically for the relics of the holy martyrs (*corpi santi*) exhumed from the Roman underground cemeteries, independently they were sent to the Western countries unassembled or mounted as *simulacra*.

In Portugal, many of these *corpi santi* were undoubtedly destroyed and the in-situ documentation was lost during the Lisbon earthquake (1755), the French invasions (1807-1811), the extinction of the religious Orders (1834), and the 19th Portuguese Liberal Revolution. One would not know about some *simulacra* if it was not for the surviving historical references. That is the case of Saints Liberato and Bono, destroyed in the Lisbon earthquake, whose notice was given by João Baptista de Castro:

*No less tragic was the loss of innumerable Relics, which occupied and filled four Altars; among the precious ones were those of two entire bodies of S. Liberato and S. Bono [...].*²²

Gathering information from archives and libraries allowed the authors to confirm that almost one hundred *corpi santi* were sent to Portugal between the 17th and 19th centuries. *San Cesario Martire*, still venerated in Santa Maria Maggiore church in Vasto (Italy), is thought to be the oldest known martyr's *simulacrum* made in Italy, dating from 1695. Based on that, it is unlikely that the bones of the catacomb saints displayed on martyrs' *simulacra* arrived in Portugal before the 18th century.

The inventory of martyrs' *simulacra* in Portugal

The scientific research behind the *simulacrum* of Saint Aurélio Martyr, belonging to Oporto's Cathedral, the first of its kind in Portugal, was conducted in 2015.²³ What appeared to be a unique case in Portugal, together with the *simulacrum* of Saint Pacífico deposited in the same cathedral, turned into the first of at least five dozen *simulacra* brought directly from Rome in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Primarily found in the north and centre of Portugal, these sacred bodies were kept in churches and private chapels, exposed, or stored away from the public. As said before, the *simulacra* were adversely affected either by neglect or willful damage, and decay. Some were even relocated due to demolition works on their original place or were offered to new owners. This last option seems to be the case of the *corpi santi* included in the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Almada church's inventory of 1949. Five

out of six *simulacra*, nowadays belonging to the institution, were donated by the Count of Caparica in the 1830s. Still, they were first displayed in the private chapel of the Marquis of Valada (his father). Also, the *simulacrum* of Saint Prima, currently in the Mitelo Palace, was first placed in the private chapel of Montalvão, which no longer exists, as stated by João de Saldanha Oliveira e Sousa (1934). The author explains that her bones came with those of Saints Vitória, Eleonora, and Burcio as a gift from Pope Clement XIV (1769-1774) to Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, Marquis of Pombal²⁴. The most recent known offer occurred in 2020 when six *simulacra* were donated to the Regalis Lipsanoteca, a sanctuary for relics in Ourém, under a protocol signed by the Directorate-General of Cultural Heritage (DGPC) and the Oureana Historical-Cultural Foundation. The relics were under state protection and stored away from public veneration since the Implantation of the Republic (1910),²⁵ and their original location is still unknown.

Until now, fifty-four martyrs' *simulacra* were already inventoried. They are located in the dioceses of Lisbon, Oporto, Leiria-Fátima, Setubal, Braga, Coimbra, Vila Real, Lamego, Guarda, and Viana do Castelo. When possible, the *simulacra* were examined in situ, and if the access was difficult, the available photographic records were analysed. In addition, the existing authentication documents were also evaluated.

Only twenty-one of the fifty-four *simulacra* have been dated, using historical information or their certified documents. As to the rest, the information regarding the exhumation, donation, and arrival in Portugal remains unknown. Casa de Mateus Foundation is an example of good practice regarding these assets: it kept all the documentation referring to the *simulacrum* of Saint Marcos, which is exhibited in the altar on the Gospel side in the private chapel of the former Mateus Palace (Vila Real). Also, the owners of the *simulacra* of Saints Paulo and Félix, in São João da Pesqueira (Lamego), still objects of devotion and active pilgrimage, maintained the official documentation well preserved. Saint Clara in Bonfim (Oporto) is also a documented case. Her body was exhumed from the catacomb of Ciriaca in 1777 and offered to José Teixeira Barreto, a painter and former Benedict friar, who at the time was studying in Rome.²⁶ Protector of seamen, mothers with labour pains and children with speech difficulties, Saint Clara of Bonfim has her feast day on the first weekend of September since 1803. The authentication document of Saint Vicente, in turn, was lost. The *simulacrum* was translated in solemn procession to the church of São Nicolau in Oporto, on 21 December 1785, by Tomás da Rocha Pinto, a wealthy merchant and Knight of the Order of Christ.²⁷ He is presently kept from public view and veneration due to the priest's decision to cover the altar in the 1970s when the faithful carried out uncontrolled and exaggerated practices in disagreement with acceptable devotional procedures. According to the parish priest of São Nicolau church, 50 years ago, large amounts of underwear were deposited in the altar where

Interestingly, Saint Vicente of Penafiel is one of the latest *simulacra* arriving in Portugal in 1826 and the best-documented case. A substantial volume of documentation is held by the Venerável Ordem Terceira de Nossa Senhora do Carmo, owner of the *simulacrum*, namely the authentication document, the correspondence referring to the acquisition expenses, and the records of miracles, among other documents regarding the cult. In a letter from 2 July 1825, signed by Bento Cosmelli, it is stated that the Venerável Ordem Terceira do Carmo asked the Roman Curia for a body named Saint Maurício. However, as there was not any *corpo santo* with this name and authenticity documented, it was suggested to António Joaquim de Carvalho, the institution treasurer, that another name should be chosen from those available in a small list attached to the letter, ordered alphabetically (fig. 1). A curious detail in the list is that several possible names are marked, namely, those of *S. Prosperi m[artyr]*., *S. Placidi m.*, *S. Pii m.*, *S. Simpliciani m.*, among others, including a saint *Victoriae m.*

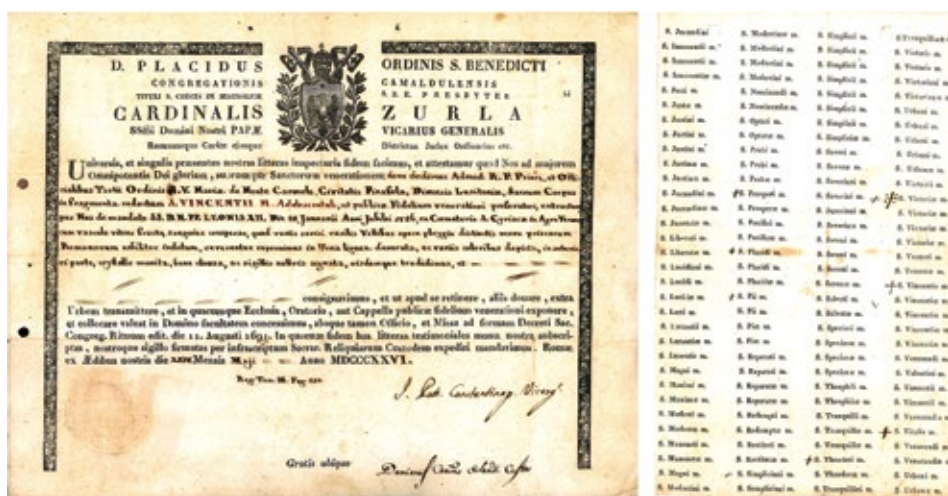


Figure 1 – Authentication document of Saint Vicente of Penafiel, signed on 24 May 1826 (left); list of the possible names for the *corpo santo* of Saint Vicente, sent from the Roman Curia to the Venerável Ordem Terceira de Nossa Senhora do Carmo, in 1825 (right). Venerável Ordem Terceira de Nossa Senhora do Carmo. © Arquivo Municipal de Penafiel, 2020

and the future *S. Vincentis m.* Two hundred and twenty-two thousand, one hundred and ten *reis*²⁸ (222\$110) was the total expense with the acquisition and arrival of Saint Vicente *simulacrum* and his reliquary-urn, and twelve relics of other saints also requested by the Venerável Ordem Terceira do Carmo. All the documentation is currently preserved in the Municipal Archive of Penafiel.

As stated previously, and unfortunately, the historical sources and the authentication papers are scarce or did not survive the centuries for most inventoried *simulacra*. Nevertheless, the visual inspection of almost fifty case studies allowed us to distinguish different materials used in the *simulacra* production and body positioning. Since the late 17th century, this typology evolved materially, technically, and stylistically till the mid-19th century. The face and limbs became more realistic, giving the impression of an authentic living face and body while using moldable materials such as plaster or wax (figs. 2-4).



Figure 2 – *Simulacrum* of Saint Justina (1777) (left) and detail (right). Church of Santo Antônio, Lisbon. © Joana Palmeirão, 2020



Figure 3 – *Simulacrum* of Saint Clemente (1782/3) (left) and detail (right). Church of Santo Antônio dos Congregados, Oporto. © Joana Palmeirão, 2019

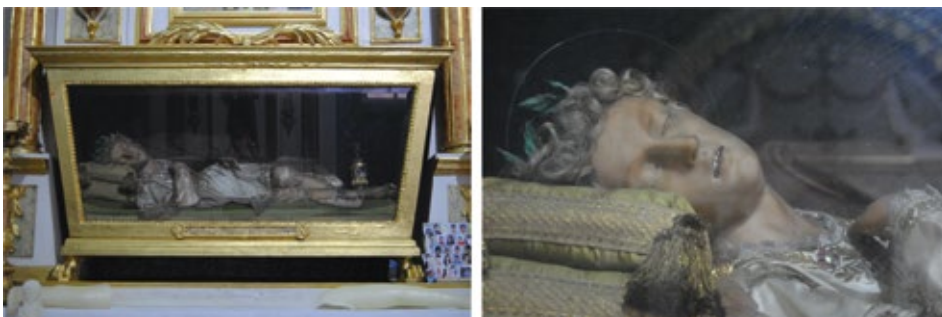


Figure 4 – *Simulacrum* of Saint Vicente (1826) (left) and detail (right). Church of Nossa Senhora do Carmo, Penafiel. © Joana Palmeirão, 2020

Among the iconographic representations, the model lying in eternal rest was the most common representation of the catacomb martyrs. The model lying on an elbow with the head resting on the hand was also used.

The gathered data from the *simulacra* visual assessment was used to establish probable production dates for the case studies whose documentation was lost. Saint Clemente from Bom Jesus do Monte Sanctuary in Braga exemplifies this procedure. Similarities between this *simulacrum* referring to the treatment of face and limbs, type of textiles, and decorative adornments with those of Saints Liberato and Fortunato in Coimbra, both acquired in 1779 according to their authentication documents, could be used to establish a probable date for the production of Saint Clemente and its arrival in Portugal (**fig. 5**). The analysis of the documentation belonging to the Confraria do Bom Jesus do Monte Historical Archive allowed us to suggest a probable arrival date between 1778 and 1780, aligned with the aforementioned date.



Figure 5 – *Simulacrum* of Saint Clemente (1778-1780). Bom Jesus do Monte Sanctuary, Braga (left); simulacrum of Saint Liberato (1779). Church of Major Seminary, Coimbra (right). © Joana Palmeirão, 2021 and 2020

Holy Bodies | An Atlas of the Corpi Santi in Portugal Project (2022.01486.PTDC)

The extensive work under Joana Palmeirão's PhD uncovered a topic entirely unknown to researchers in the Portuguese context. Nevertheless, many questions remain unanswered due to the complexity of the pieces and the extent of information to look for. The *Holy Bodies* project was born to fulfil the lack of knowledge on *corpi santi*, taking the discussion on *simulacra* further away.

Holy Bodies is a three-year project, that has started on 12 March 2023, and funded by Fundação para Ciência e a Tecnologia in Portugal. It plans to extensively map Portugal's *corpi santi*, especially the *simulacra*, going beyond the inventory already established. The aim is to bring these assets to a multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary discussion under the supervision of a broad background team, consultants, and advisors.

The historical research, one of the project pillars, will be focused on selected Roman and Portuguese archives to be surveyed to gather information on commissioning from Portugal and create a roadmap for the *corpi santi* arriving to the country between the 17th and the mid-19th century. The devotional practice around *simulacra* is also a fundamental topic still in its first steps that will allow to understand the cult practices carried out and their role in the religious atmosphere of modern times in Portugal. At the same time, their impact on Art History and the Portuguese cultural atmosphere should be comprehensively discussed, considering the *simulacra* theatrical narratives enframed by other decorative and integrated arts in the Baroque period. Bringing the *simulacra* to an ethical dialogue is another aim of the project due to their peculiar composite nature that includes human remains and their veneration by the Catholic Church as martyrs. Finally, the materiality associated with the bones, the structure that supports them and the garments and objects that brought them to life will be deeply characterised using different approaches. The project team includes several conservators who will work on the conservation issues associated with these assets and good practices that are orientated by the established ethical guidelines. The project also intends to gather information on similarities and discrepancies concerning stylistic aspects, materials and techniques used in their production, and relics cult between the *simulacra* in Portugal and Italy and German-speaking countries to characterise later interventions in Portugal and define a Portuguese typology.

Several outputs are planned for the project. One significant is a prosopographical database with entries for each *simulacrum* and a library containing the gathered information coupled. Digitalisation, virtual interaction with 3D models and immersive reality experiences will take the *simulacra* to a more interactive approach for young people. They will also be crucial for spreading information on the *simulacra* to scholars and the general public. At the end of the project, a roadmap for Portugal's *simulacra*

with the available data will be offered to researchers and the general public. Finally, under the project, a European network on relics is already emerging, and it will join researchers worldwide at the RelicS2 International Congress.

Following the *Holy Bodies* project, *mutatis mutandis* Tertullian's Apologeticus, the martyrs' bones are seeds of knowledge.

Final Considerations

The study and inventory of *corpi santi* is a pioneer investigation in Portugal. Like many other Catholic countries, Portugal also received the sacred bones of the holy martyrs after the *rediscovering* the Roman catacombs in 1578 until the second half of the 19th century.

Although the XXV session of the Council of Trent (1563) directly influenced the massive translation of the martyrs' skeletons from the catacombs, it is still unknown why the *simulacrum*'s model began to be produced. The authors suspect that the evolution of different artistic styles (e.g., Rococo, Baroque, etc.) and human creativity influenced the production of these simulated bodies. But considering the importance played by the body-part relics in anthropomorphic containers in the devotional practice during the centuries, the entire skeleton in full-body reliquaries or *simulacra* must have profoundly impacted the faithful, moving their hearts and shaping their actions towards the eternal life in God through Christ. Ultimately, they were also intended to strengthen the religious practice after the Protestant Reformation and constituted a sign of power and influence for those who ordered them.

Regardless of the reasons for the production and distribution of these sacred reliquaries, *simulacra* constitute a unique heritage of great cultural and religious value that must be preserved. Despite their remarkable artistic creation and manufacturing techniques, many were left in oblivion for dozens of years. Unnoticed or ignored by the devotees, owners, and the general public, several inventoried *simulacra* were abandoned inside the altars or urns and left to degrade. The few still in public worship are frequently mistaken for incorrupt corpses.

Most *simulacra* keep their original textiles. Still, some have already suffered restoration works, sometimes by unspecialised hands, with changes in clothes, pillows' fabrics, and body position.

When collecting relevant information for history, worship, exhibition context, manufacturing techniques and conservation status, the authors aim, besides establishing an exhaustive inventory of martyrs' *simulacra* in Portugal, nonexistent to date, to elaborate proposals for their safeguarding. Otherwise, many testimonies will irreversibly fade by time and oblivion. The *Holy Bodies* project will uncover much information and push forward the research on *corpi santi* in Portugal and Europe.

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1. AA.VV. (2011); BOUTRY (1979); BOUZA ÁLVAREZ (1990); GHILARDI (2013); JOHNSON (1996).
 2. BOUZA ÁLVAREZ (1990); KOUDOUNARIS (2013).
 3. WATERWORTH (1848), p. 234.
 4. JULIA (2009); JOHNSON (1996); KOUDOUNARIS (2013).
 5. BOUTRY (1979); GHILARDI (2005); REBILLARD (2016).
 6. GHILARDI (2018).
 7. *circa trenta antichi cimiteri paleocristiani completamente dimenticati dai tempi della tarda antichità*. GHILARDI (2013), p. 104.
 8. BOUTRY (1979); DITCHFIELD (2017).
 9. MABILLON (1698); BOUTRY (2016); JULIA (2009); REBILLARD (2016).
 10. ACHERMANN (1979); HASSETT (1907).
 11. BOUTRY (1979).
 12. TELFER (1932), p. 170.
 13. *corpos inteiros*.
 14. The gender of the Saint varies from one author to another. Nevertheless, he or she is always referred together with the same companions Hilário and Clemente.
 15. CARDOSO (1652), p. 530.

16. *Inventário Artístico de Portugal* (2000).
17. *em cofre com grande veneração, na capella do choro, com outras sanctas reliquias*. CARDOSO (1657), p. 56.
18. *os quatro corpos inteiros*. CASTRO (1747), p. 363.
19. This information concerns the bodies of Saints Caio, Vital and Teodora. It seems that the body of Saint Cristina was obtained in 1604, during the papacy of Clement VIII, by D. João Pacheco (Marquis of Vilhena), who gave it to João Corbo whom, in turn, offered it to Heitor da Sella Falcão. According to the historical information, it is presumable that the relics of Saint Cristina had been placed in the Monastery of São Luís at the same time as those of her companions of martyrdom. CARDOSO (1657); SOUSA (1744).
20. *grande parte dos corpos de seis santos [...] em um grande armario dourado, com 18 gavetas em 3 fileiras de 6, e com vidros para poderem ser vistas e veneradas [reliquias] pelos fieis*. LEAL (1876), p. 86.
21. HAHN (1997).
22. *Não ficou sendo menos deploravel a perda de innumeraveis Reliquias, que occupavaõ, e enchiaõ quatro Altares; entre as quaes erão preciosas as de dous corpos inteiros de S. Liberato, e S. Bono (...)*. CASTRO (1758), p. 681.
23. PALMEIRÃO (2015) (2019).
24. SOUSA (1934).
25. FUNDAÇÃO OUREANA CELEBROU PROTOCOLO DE COLABORAÇÃO... (2020).
26. PASSOS (1935).
27. COSTA (1789).
28. Old currency in the kingdom of Portugal, which lasted until the Implantation of the Republic (1910).

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O Património das Misericórdias. Nova Realidade – Novos Desafios

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resumo

As Misericórdias Portuguesas são detentoras de um excecional património, que nas suas diferentes realidades – imóvel, móvel, arquivística e imaterial – constituem o testemunho da sua missão e o garante de uma identidade única e secular. O programa de inventário, que tem permitido identificar verdadeiros tesouros e aportar informação de enorme relevância para a história destas instituições, revelou-se indispensável à participação da UMP no projeto *reliquiarum*. Neste âmbito, e conscientes da relevância desta nova abordagem, torna-se essencial alargar o estudo, contextualizando a tipologia dos relicários e o culto das relíquias existentes nas Misericórdias em Portugal.

palavras-chave

Misericórdias; Inventário; Património; Relicários; Relíquias

abstract

Portuguese *Misericórdias* are holders of an exceptional heritage, which in its different realities – immovable, movable, archival and intangible – are the testimony of its mission and the guarantee of a unique and secular identity. The inventory programme, which has made it possible to identify real treasures and provide information of enormous relevance for the history of these institutions, has proved indispensable to UMP's participation in the *reliquiarum* project. Within this context, and aware of the relevance of this new approach, it is essential to extend the study, contextualising the typology of reliquaries and the relics cult existing in *Misericórdias* in Portugal.

keywords

Misericórdias; Inventory; Heritage; Reliquaries; Relics

O Património das Misericórdias

As Misericórdias são detentoras de um património único em Portugal. Os mais de quinhentos anos de existência e atividade contínua, permitiram-lhes reunir imóveis de grande interesse arquitetónico e obras de arte valiosas de enorme significado e simbologia.

Os imóveis e bens patrimoniais que foram edificados para suporte da sua ação quotidiana ou vieram à posse das Misericórdias por doações e legados, são merecedores da maior atenção, constituindo matéria, muito disponível, para estudos académicos e científicos.

Tanto pela diversidade, como pela tipologia das proveniências, este património caracteriza-se por uma grande singularidade, pois representa o testemunho da vontade de um povo que, em cada comunidade, se organizou para auxílio dos mais necessitados. Esta circunstância, permite que encontremos nas Misericórdias um património humanizado e muito representativo da identidade destas instituições.

As Misericórdias, ao longo da sua existência, vão reunindo património também pelo imperativo de satisfazer as necessidades sociais que são impelidas a assumir em cada tempo. Reúnem e gerem também outro tipo de património resultante de doações de beneméritos e filantropos. Desta dupla proveniência o património das Misericórdias apresenta características muito próprias que importa conhecer, proteger e divulgar.

A construção e incorporação de património nas Misericórdias conhecem várias etapas ao longo de cinco séculos de existência, estando, sempre e intrinsecamente relacionadas com uma função primordial de assistência e serviço, quer de natureza material, quer de índole espiritual. A problemática da resposta social em Portugal tem as suas raízes nos grandes desafios que a sociedade foi conhecendo, muito especialmente, no acompanhamento e apoio na doença e na pobreza.

Outro aspeto a considerar é o fato destas respostas terem nascido de forte inspiração cristã, e numa consciência de que o homem se realiza em sociedade e, por isso, deve ter direito ao bem-estar e ser merecedor, quando necessário, da ajuda dos seus semelhantes.

A organização da caridade e solidariedade baseia-se pois nesta trilogia: assistentes, assistência e assistidos. A forma, muito peculiar, de organizar esta resposta, vai marcar a identidade das Misericórdias, cuja missão influencia diretamente a arquitetura e decoração dos espaços e a cultura humanista que promovem, tão evidentes na documentação dos seus arquivos bem como nas tradições e manifestações publicas de fé.

Numa primeira versão de assistência aos outros, encontramos em Portugal as Gafarias ou Leprosarias reservadas aos leprosos ou para assistência ao gafo, como se denominavam então. Conhecemos numa fase seguinte pequenos Hospitais para

acudir aos enfermos e as Albergarias mais destinadas a acolhimento de peregrinos e pobres.

Neste propósito de resposta cívica, observamos uma conceção de caridade imediata e visível. Acudir ao necessitado e pobre que deambula pelas ruas das aldeias, vilas e cidades.

Num tempo posterior e confrontados com uma nova realidade de pobreza envergonhada e mais duradoira, surge a resposta que se vai corporizar nas Mercearias. Esta pobreza, pela condição social dos seus protagonistas que não podiam publicamente estender a mão à caridade, leva à génese destas estruturas, mais vocacionadas já para acolhimento de órfãos e outros necessitados.

Também uma diferente realidade, a dos Hospitais assumidos pelas Irmandades e Confrarias, vai proliferando na organização da sociedade com ação, por vezes, desorganizada e competitiva entre si.

É neste quadro que surgem as Misericórdias, que reforçando o ideário cristão da caridade e serviço ao outro, vão assumir também muito do espaço de intervenção das anteriores entidades. Também os bens e imóveis destas primitivas estruturas vão constituir a base de projeção das Misericórdias. Refira-se especialmente as Confrarias do Espírito Santo, que, mais próximas do tempo da criação das Misericórdias, vão marcar muito a tipologia do seu património, nomeadamente religioso, onde se verifica uma direta transferência de imóveis. Ainda hoje podemos observar inúmeras capelas da Misericórdia em espaços de antigas capelas do Espírito Santo.

As Misericórdias aparecem assim como a estrutura mais organizada para responder a todas as necessidades locais. Com base no programa das catorze obras de misericórdia estas instituições vão inovar na forma de fazer o bem, estendendo a sua atividade a todas as áreas mais desprotegidas da sociedade. Assumem claramente a assistência na saúde, mas também acolhem peregrinos, saciam quem tem fome, acompanham os presos, tratam dos pobres e desvalidos, protegem os órfãos e expostos, enterram os mortos e, coroando toda esta atividade mais terrena, assumem a vertente espiritual na promoção do culto e na evangelização piedosa dos seus irmãos para salvação das almas.

Este fenómeno, de atuação organizada e abrangente, vai apresentar-se inovador na sociedade e o prestígio das Misericórdias portuguesas, com uma sobrevivência contínua ao longo dos tempos, deve-se, em muito, a esta missão traduzida num amplo serviço ao outro.

É também por esta relevante ação que as Misericórdias vão ser reconhecidas, por todos, como entidades de grande valia local e por isso merecedoras do maior apreço, ajuda e admiração. Neste contexto vão surgindo manifestações de apoio às Misericórdias, com doações e legados, que estas instituições rapidamente colocam ao serviço do bem comum.

Porque são instituições genuinamente criadas pelo povo, para o povo, as benemerências e mais tarde a filantropia vão ser uma constante na vida das Misericórdias. Este aspeto irá influenciar fortemente a diversidade e tipologia do património que encontramos atualmente nestas instituições.

Embora inspiradas na realidade italiana, onde as Misericórdias asseguravam, sobretudo, cuidados hospitalares, as instituições portuguesas assumem um programa mais ambicioso e alargam a sua ação, como já referimos, a todas as áreas mais necessitadas da sociedade. É este fenómeno que, seguramente, lhes confere grande prestígio e sustentabilidade ao longo dos tempos.

Se nos retemos nesta apreciação identitária da génese das Misericórdias é porque o património, que vão acumulando e gerindo ao longo de séculos, resulta desta sua atividade e aumenta ou diminui perante circunstâncias sociais e políticas do País.

A este propósito não podemos deixar de assinalar que, apesar das várias convulsões da História de Portugal, o património das Misericórdias é, na maioria dos casos, poupado e salvaguardado, fenómeno a que não será alheio o reconhecimento da ação meritória destas instituições e a sua característica única de ser uma organização local, criada e gerida pelos homens da terra. Este aspeto protegeu sempre as Misericórdias.

O património, sobretudo imóvel, permanece assim intocável e é mesmo aumentado em conjunturas específicas como a da extinção das Ordens Religiosas, em que muitos Conventos são entregues às Misericórdias para aí instalarem serviços e respostas sociais. Atualmente, a realidade conhecida em matéria de preservação e salvaguarda do património, passa por uma forte aposta das Misericórdias em assumir o propósito de respeitar o legado do passado, mas também de assumir um novo edificado que lhes permita desempenhar a sua missão.

A sensibilidade que prolifera, na intervenção ao património, revela uma vez mais que as Misericórdias assumem uma identidade própria, adaptando-se aos tempos, reafectando espaços a outras funções, ou seja, reinventando e atualizando, nos nossos dias, a prática das obras de misericórdia.

Um património que fala por si, que foi construído e reunido com o objetivo de serviço público. Tudo foi pensado para apoio à comunidade, numa gestão de afetos e emoções. Porque falamos de Misericórdias, o nosso verdadeiro património começa também na atitude e disponibilidade de pessoas que se preocupam com o outro e se dispõem a dar o seu tempo e a doar os seus bens para ajudar os mais necessitados.

É por isso que este património imóvel, móvel, documental e imaterial, é diferente e resiste no tempo.

Falamos de um património único de grande importância artística e cultural para Portugal. A especificidade dos bens das Misericórdias, resultado da sua atividade, reúne elementos antropológicos e sociais que dificilmente encontramos noutras instituições. Todo o programa arquitetónico e artístico que as Misericórdias apresentam foi

influenciado pelas adaptações que estas instituições foram sofrendo ao longo de séculos, pois tanto os edifícios de caráter civil, como os religiosos e as obras de arte em geral, são verdadeiros testemunhos da atividade da instituição.

No quadro do património imóvel identificamos programas arquitetónicos únicos em Portugal, tanto nas Igrejas da Misericórdia, com a Tribuna ou Cadeiral dos Mesários, como nas Salas de Sessões com o tradicional Oratório, até à especificidade dos Hospitais anexos à Igreja, com os edifícios interligados, permitindo também assegurar o apoio espiritual aos doentes.

Outra realidade patrimonial das Misericórdias passa pela gestão de imóveis e equipamentos que receberam em doação, onde podemos encontrar, Praças de Touros, Teatros, Jazigos, Conventos, Capelas, Hotéis, Solares, Montes, Quintas, Museus, Casas Museu, Farmácias, Bairros Sociais, entre outros.



Imagem 1 – Igreja da Misericórdia de Tentúgal.

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No que ao património móvel diz respeito, são também, as Misericórdias entidades muito específicas.

A um acervo principal de obras de arte religiosa, de alfaías litúrgicas e objetos de apoio à sua ação quotidiana, juntam-se coleções muito interessantes de outras obras de arte e acervos resultantes de legados e heranças.

Destacamos os espólios ligados à saúde, conjuntos de botica, instrumentos de enfermagem e outros equipamentos hospitalares como testemunho de uma atividade secular e permanente nas Misericórdias.

O programa de inventário do património móvel é integrado que tem vindo a ser promovido junto das Misericórdias, revela esta mesma realidade, o que permite uma maior compreensão da atividade destas instituições ao longo dos séculos.

A caracterização e classificação destes espólios, como já referido, poderá ser agrupada em duas grandes famílias, o conjunto de objetos adquiridos pela Misericórdia para o exercício da sua missão e um outro conjunto de peças, não menos significativo, oferecido em legados e benemerências.

No primeiro grupo destacam-se, pela sua preponderância, os objetos de cariz litúrgico como, entre outros, imaginária mariana e da paixão de Cristo, as Bandeiras da Misericórdia e Vultos da Paixão, lanternas, esquifes, matracas, varas da irmandade, paramentaria e objetos devocionais.

Encontramos também neste tipo de espólio, importantes tipologias de mobiliário, utensílios de cozinha, acessórios de farmácia, materiais hospitalares, bem como interessantes galerias de retratos e insígnias de representação institucional.

Num segundo grupo, onde identificamos os bens provenientes de legados, encontramos coleções muito variadas que comportam arte sacra, armaria, fotografia, gravura, mobiliário, numismática, porcelanas, prataria, ourivesaria, cerâmica e outros conjuntos de peças reunidas pelos protagonistas das diferentes doações.



Imagem 2 – Mesa de Sessões – Misericórdia de Abrantes.

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No campo documental as Misericórdias são detentoras de relevante espólio a começar pelos seus estatutos, denominados Compromisso, que representam testemunhos históricos únicos em Portugal. Também a documentação da atividade secular destas instituições representa um manancial de informação de grande valia, pois a história socioeconómica, assim como a história da saúde e assistência em Portugal, têm nesta documentação uma das melhores fontes de investigação.

Da documentação existente nas Misericórdias, pela sua relevância histórica, destacamos, para além dos Livros de Compromisso ou Estatutos, o manancial de Livros de Atas da Mesa Administrativa, Livros de Tombo, Livros de Assento de Receita e Despesa, Livros das Amas, Livros dos Expostos, Livros dos Defuntos, Livro de entradas e saídas do Hospital e Livros dos Irmãos.

A documentação, rica em informação local, permite aceder, com abordagens multidisciplinares, à descrição pormenorizada da atividade da instituição e da comunidade onde esta se insere. Pela particularidade e especificidade da informação existente nas Misericórdias, destacamos ainda a documentação relacionada com a atividade hospitalar, que permite conhecer, de forma sistemática e comprovadamente científica, a história e evolução da saúde em Portugal.



Imagem 3 – Compromisso da Misericórdia de Lisboa.

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Outra vertente do património das Misericórdias, sempre existente na sua ação, mas mais recentemente reconhecida e valorizada, é o seu património imaterial, demais evidente nas suas tradições, rituais e manifestações públicas de fé e piedade.

Nas tradições mais antigas destas práticas religiosas, para além da Festa da Visitação, encontramos a organização, por parte das Misericórdias, das cerimónias evocativas da Paixão e Morte de Cristo.

A Espiritualidade das Misericórdias esteve sempre marcada por valores que imanam diretamente da Paixão de Cristo que se humilhou sofrendo, que perdoou e morreu por amor aos outros, e que deve ser exemplo inspirador para os membros destas instituições. As Misericórdias, fazendo memória deste mistério de fé, vão vivenciando, século após século, as manifestações desta prática cristã. Promovem o culto a Nossa Senhora da Piedade, símbolo máximo do sofrimento materno pelo martírio do Filho.

Incentivam e divulgam a devoção aos Passos da Paixão que conduzem ao momento final da morte de Cristo na Cruz e ao sofrimento supremo de sua Mãe. Neste quadro se resume e representa o conceito supremo de Misericórdia.

Esta espiritualidade é fruto, como já vimos, de uma identidade própria destas instituições. Todos os rituais de integração de irmãos na Misericórdia, assim como o seu propósito de atuação, estão intrinsecamente ligados às obras de Misericórdia do Evangelho. Desta forma a manifestação pública da devoção e de afirmação da mensagem das Misericórdias distribui-se ao longo deste tempo quaresmal por inúmeras manifestações de fé.

Destacamos, só a título de exemplo, a participação das Irmandades das Misericórdias nas Procissões do Senhor dos Passos que, nos últimos Domingos da Quaresma, se realizam em todo o País. Nesta procissão as Misericórdias integram-se com as Bandeiras, Vultos da Paixão, Bandeira Real e as insígnias dos Irmãos e Mesários. Em muitas localidades a Misericórdia, nesta procissão, assume ainda a preparação e condução do andor de Nossa Senhora das Dores, promovendo com grande emoção o quadro bíblico do Encontro no qual Maria se aproxima de seu Filho carregando a Cruz em sofrimento e o acompanha na via dolorosa até ao Calvário.

No Domingo de Ramos, muitas são as Misericórdias que acolhem nas suas Igrejas a cerimónia da Bênção dos Ramos e a partir daí organizam a procissão até à Igreja Matriz.

Outro momento participado pelas Misericórdias, embora em menor número, por estas cerimónias se deixarem de realizar em muitas localidades, é o Ofício das Trevas realizado na Quarta-feira da Semana Santa. Nesta cerimónia os mesários assumiam um conjunto de tarefas nomeadamente na leitura de textos bíblicos e na colocação dos cirios no candeeiro das trevas. No momento evocativo das trevas e no período que ia até à Vigília Pascal, eram ainda os irmãos da Misericórdia que faziam soar as matracas.

Na Quinta-feira Santa, dia Grande da Misericórdia ou da Reconciliação é o momento alto da mobilização das Instituições. Neste dia a Misericórdia promove na sua Igreja a celebração da Instituição da Eucaristia e a cerimónia do Lava-pés. No final desta

celebração organizam a procissão do Santíssimo até à Igreja Matriz onde as partículas sagradas são colocadas na arca tumular, em altar próprio preparado para o efeito.

Na Quinta-feira Santa tem lugar também, por iniciativa da Misericórdia, a Procissão de Endoenças, onde voltam as participar todos os Irmãos da Misericórdia e onde na maioria das localidades é transportado o andor do Senhor da Cana Verde ou Ecce Homo assim como o da Senhora das Dores.

Na Sexta-feira Santa são organizadas as cerimónias da Adoração da Cruz e a Procissão do Enterro do Senhor. Nesta procissão é apresentado, para além do Esquife do Senhor Morto, o andor da Senhora das Dores e um terceiro andor com a Senhora da Piedade ou Pietá. As Misericórdias assumem estas procissões com especial dedicação e muita devoção. Diga-se, a este propósito, que as principais imagens e alfaia religiosas utilizadas nestas cerimónias são, na sua maioria, propriedade da Misericórdia e estão guardadas ou expostas nas suas Igrejas.

As Misericórdias estiveram e estão em cada comunidade, nos momentos altos da celebração da fé cristã. Esta particularidade vem coroar a sua ação quotidiana, em que a par das obras corporais realizadas diariamente nas repostas sociais, as Misericórdias assumem a sua vertente espiritual de profunda identidade cristã.

Tradição, Fé e Devoção são também elementos fundacionais da identidade das Misericórdias Portuguesas.



Imagem 4 – Procissão com bandeira / Vultos da Paixão.

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É sobre esta realidade que temos vindo a trabalhar, com o objetivo de inventariar o património nas suas diversas manifestações.

Esta herança das Misericórdias portuguesas representa um dos mais importantes testemunhos da portugalidade pois, como instituições fundadas em cada comunidade, apresentam características únicas, tanto na ação desenvolvida, como na materialidade que a suporta. Durante séculos foram criando, reunindo e recebendo património que as caracterizam e lhes conferem uma identidade própria.

É a este património que a União das Misericórdias Portuguesas tem vindo, nas últimas décadas, a afetar importantes recursos, desenvolvendo projetos de estudo, sistematização e registo de dados.

Quem não conhece devidamente os seus bens, nunca será sensível à necessidade de os preservar, defender e valorizar. Só conhecendo verdadeiramente o património e a missão de que este é testemunha, se poderá fortalecer o espírito de pertença, a identidade e os valores que estão intrinsecamente associados à ação das Misericórdias.

Este princípio basilar tem motivado o trabalho ao longo dos anos e, pese embora a um ritmo menos célere do que o desejado, permitido avançar com intervenções estruturais, que, em matéria de património, muito têm beneficiado as Misericórdias em Portugal. De todas as iniciativas promovidas, destaca-se pela sua importância, presente e futura, o programa de inventário do património, imóvel, móvel e integrado. Conhecer os imóveis e respetivos acervos, identificar a sua origem e proveniência e, sobretudo, registar com normas científicas os dados que os caracterizam, são passos de um trabalho de grande valia e de importância crucial para a gestão do património destas instituições.

Cuidar do património foi sempre uma constante na vida das Misericórdias. Embora com objetivos mais institucionais, a obrigação estatutária de existência do livro de tomo ou inventário, traduz claramente a preocupação de registo e proteção dos bens. Esta prática foi de tal forma valorizada que, no ato solene de tomada de posse dos novos dirigentes, a par do juramento do compromisso, havia lugar à simbólica e pública entrega das chaves, do livro de atas e do livro do inventário.

A preocupação de conhecer e registar os bens da Misericórdia, nomeadamente propriedades rústicas e urbanas, esteve sempre presente nas instituições, acrescentando-se em muitos destes registos as existências de património artístico integrado e objetos do tesouro da Misericórdia.

Contribuíram igualmente para esta prática, as contrapartidas inerentes às benemerências e legados pios, que vinculavam as Misericórdias a determinadas obrigações. Estes registos permitem-nos conhecer importantes dados da história social, económica, religiosa e cultural de cada comunidade, bem patentes na documentação referente a inúmeros acervos.

Um outro fator que muito contribuiu para este procedimento nas Misericórdias, relaciona-se com o cuidado do tributo aos benfeitores e pela exposição, em galeria pública, dos retratos de provedores. Esta tradição de reconhecimento público e memorial, fornece-nos igualmente matéria muito relevante sobre a história e vida das Misericórdias e suas comunidades.

É perante esta realidade que a União das Misericórdias Portuguesas, em boa hora, decidiu encetar a ambiciosa tarefa de fazer o levantamento e inventário dos bens móveis das Misericórdias. Pois se o registo de bens imóveis estava minimamente assegurado, pelas obrigações legais, com o património móvel, a par do arquivístico, tal não acontecia na grande maioria das instituições.

Graças a este trabalho e neste contexto é agora possível conhecer uma realidade que permanecia localizada e por vezes oculta em muitas instituições. A intervenção efetuada em cada Misericórdia permite identificar acervos específicos e atuar de forma criteriosa sobre estas novas realidades.

Conhecer corretamente os bens das Misericórdias, interpretando-os e contextualizando a respetiva função, tem permitido retomar a sua correta utilização e fruição, bem como reforçar a aposta na sua divulgação e dinamização.

Nova Realidade – Novos Desafios

A participação da União das Misericórdias no projeto Reliquiarum permitiu um olhar mais atento à realidade dos relicários e relíquias em posse das Misericórdias portuguesas.

A partir de um trabalho, ainda em curso, é possível, atualmente, identificar já cerca de uma centena e meia de relicários nas Misericórdias. A tipologia destas peças e a sua proveniência, bem como a sua verdadeira utilização nas instituições, está, na maioria dos casos, por decifrar, pois na ausência de estudos aprofundados e documentação acessível é arriscado avançar com caracterizações definitivas.

No entanto, pela tipologia e nomenclatura das peças já conhecidas, podemos agrupar, sem grande risco de controvérsia, alguns dos relicários existentes nas Misericórdias.

Um primeiro grupo, e mais numeroso, comporta um conjunto significativo de Cruz relicário com partícula do Santo Lenho, como é o caso da peça da Misericórdia de Proença-a-Nova, trazida de Roma pelo Padre Pedro da Fonseca em 1588. A esta realidade não será alheia a obrigação da Misericórdia assumir a organização e promoção de manifestações publicas de fé, nomeadamente na Quinta-feira Santa, a procissão de Endoenças.



Imagem 5 – Relicário Santo Lenho – Misericórdia de Proença-a-Nova.

© União das Misericórdias Portuguesas

Um outro conjunto de relicários, também expressivo nos inventários conhecidos, respeitam a acervos de antigos conventos que vieram à posse das Misericórdias aquando da extinção das Ordens Religiosas em Portugal, como será provavelmente, entre outros, o caso das Misericórdias de Setúbal e Santarém.

Também encontramos neste universo, relicários relacionados com a atividade hospitalar que as Misericórdias sempre assumiram e protagonizaram. Não totalmente comprovado, é uma hipótese que avançamos tendo em conta a importância da relíquia como recurso espiritual na cura das variadas enfermidades físicas e psicológicas. As relíquias de S. Marcos da Misericórdia de Braga, que sempre aí estiveram depositadas e ligadas ao Hospital local, são exemplo desta realidade. Também a oferta da cabeça relicário de S. João Batista à capela privativa da Misericórdia do Porto, feita pelo boticário dos hospitais da instituição, pode considerar-se como exemplo nesta tese.

Imagem 6 – Arca Relicário de S. Marcos – Misericórdia de Braga. © União das Misericórdias Portuguesas



Por último, somos confrontados, também em matéria de relicários, com a prática das doações particulares às Misericórdias, onde identificamos duas realidades distintas. Por um lado, a doação de uma relíquia à Misericórdia feita por alguém que deseja beneficiar a instituição da sua terra, como é o caso da Misericórdia de Celorico da Beira, onde o padre Geraldo José Rodrigues lhe oferece em 1793 as relíquias de São Vicente e S. Teotónio. Por outro lado, e não menos significativo, temos os relicários que vêm à posse das Misericórdias por legados e benemerências de pessoas que ao longo da vida reuniram e colecionaram essas peças, como é o caso da Misericórdia do Crato que por via do legado da Casa-Museu Padre Belo, fica detentora da sua coleção de relicários.



Imagem 7 – Relicário de S. José – Misericórdia do Crato.

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Imagem 8 – Relicário do Cravo – Misericórdia de Ponte de Lima.

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O trabalho da União das Misericórdias Portuguesas, neste campo de investigação, tem de ser reforçado e aprofundado, pois o novo olhar que se pretende no âmbito do presente projeto, incentiva a que se desenvolvam mais pesquisas e diferentes abordagens.

Para além da natural integração da informação dos relicários e relíquias das Misericórdias no Portal Reliquiarum, cumpre-nos, junto dos responsáveis destas instituições, promover uma maior sensibilização para o estudo e valorização destas peças, tendo presente o seu potencial de abordagem multidisciplinar. Compreender a presença das relíquias e relicários nas Misericórdias, o seu contexto e significado, bem como as devoções a si associadas, permitirá uma nova abordagem à história destas instituições.

Assumimos que ao estudar e registar o património das Misericórdias estamos a contribuir para preservar um legado nacional, transmitindo-o convenientemente identificado a todos os que nos sucederem.

As Misericórdias reúnem a singularidade de instituições que sempre foram amadas e protegidas pelas populações locais. Reúnem espólios que utilizaram ao longo de séculos, para promover o culto, assim como para prestar serviços aos seus utentes. Souberam acolher e preservar os legados que foram recebendo, respeitando, na maioria dos casos, a identidade e memória dos seus benfeitores.

Têm no panorama da arte e da arquitetura em Portugal, um lugar próprio, pois são detentoras de bens, documentos e registos imateriais, que nenhuma outra instituição pode apresentar com esta perenidade e singular ligação aos territórios. É esta particularidade e esta riqueza que importa preservar e, sobretudo, dar a conhecer, porque a cultura constitui um elemento indispensável à existência humana e o património é um dos meios de adoção e transmissão dessa cultura. As Misericórdias mantendo e reforçando o seu percurso de séculos de serviço na área social, da saúde e educação, estão também fortemente empenhadas em valorizar o seu património cultural, porque aí reside a afirmação da sua verdadeira identidade e dos valores que defendem.

Nesta caminhada de séculos, cumpre-nos, no curto tempo e espaço que habitamos, continuar esta missão, acrescentando valor, ambição e prestígio ao património das Misericórdias.

É ao mesmo tempo a melhor forma de homenagear todos os que, durante mais de cinco séculos, fundaram e deram corpo às Misericórdias. Neste olhar atento ao património construímos as bases para o fortalecimento da identidade destas instituições, garantido que a sua forte presença no território estará sempre comprometida com os valores e a missão do seu ideário fundador. As gerações vindouras certamente reconhecerão o mérito deste trabalho e o contributo científico que lhes legamos.

Como responsáveis transitórios por este património, temos a estrita obrigação, com os meios técnicos e critérios científicos ao dispor, de acrescentar conhecimento ao conhecimento, transferindo-o, enriquecido e valorizado, às novas gerações.

Passados mais de quinhentos sobre a fundação destas instituições, em que pela primeira vez se aposta estruturalmente no estudo, preservação e divulgação do seu património, honramos os que nos antecederam, preservamos a sua memória, afirmando valores e ideais e transmitimos ao futuro a identidade material e espiritual das Misericórdias de Portugal.

Global Bones and Local Pains. The 1578 Translation Procession of the Roman Relics in Mexico City

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Institute of Art History, University of Bern
SNSF-Project: Global Bones. Entangled Histories, Transfers
and Translations in the Early Modern Age

resumo

O artigo analisa a procissão solene organizada pelos Jesuítas para a translação de uma coleção de relíquias recebidas de Roma na Cidade do México a 1 de novembro de 1578. Descreve os múltiplos significados locais, transregionais e globais das relíquias, como uma transferência da *Ecclesia Romana* para a Cidade do México, como parte de uma rede global de relíquias e como formas de sublimação e sacralização das experiências locais de dor e miséria.

palavras-chave

Procissão de relíquias; Translação de relíquias; Transferência de relíquias; Rede de relíquias; Jesuítas; Sublimação

abstract

The article analyzes the solemn procession organized by the Jesuits for the translation of a collection of relics received from Rome in Mexico City on November 1, 1578. It describes the multiple local, transregional, and global meanings of the relics, as a transfer of the *Ecclesia Romana* to Mexico City, as part of a global relic network, and as forms of sublimation and sacralization of local experiences of pain and misery.

keywords

Relic procession; Relic translation; Relic transfer; Relic network; Jesuits; Sublimation

The celebration held in 1578 by the Jesuits in Mexico City to honor the receipt of a shipment of relics from Rome was one of the largest public events in New Spain during the early modern period.¹ The eight-day festivities – consisting of theatrical performances, poetry

contests, dancing, and playful tournaments such as the *juego de cañas* – began with a great procession on All Saints’ Day (November 1), whereby the relics were solemnly transferred from the city’s cathedral to the Colegio Máximo de San Pedro y San Pablo. With reference to historical descriptions, this article explores the meanings attached to the relics in the context of the Jesuit mission and the local circumstances in the capital of the viceroyalty during the preparation and orchestration of the procession. It will be shown that the translation of these saintly relics represented as complete a transfer as possible of the tradition and structure of the *Ecclesia Romana* to Mexico City. Whereas from a global perspective the bones served to construct a Christian-Jesuit network, on a local level their value and significance were highly context dependent: in view of the destruction of the coterminous capital of Tenochtitlan by the Spaniards only two generations prior and the enormous inequalities in New Spanish society, processing and overcoming such experiences of pain became a central theme of the relic procession.

Relics on the move

Movement is an essential feature of the Christian cult of relics. Following the first relocation of such mortal remains via exhumation – known as the *elevatio*, in the sense of their elevation to the altar or another site of public veneration – relics were commonly moved within public space, whether as part of recurring processions or while being transferred to another place of safekeeping (*translatio*). In these usually presentational movements, the social significance and efficacy of relics manifested themselves to a particular degree.² The processions within urban space, in their various forms, have been increasingly studied in recent years,³ with emphasis both on their function as a symbolic form of communication and on their aspect of performativity:

Processions do not simply ‘signify’ something; rather, they constitute reality, i.e. through their enactment, they produce something that cannot be accessed otherwise. In this respect [...] they are media of approaching the intangible, are performative practices of constructing an interstice between the factual and the imaginary.⁴

On a theoretical level, the procession’s performative constitution and transformation of reality have been examined through the concept of liminality.⁵ Indeed, translations and processions of relics can be understood as *rites de passage*, with the capacity to effect change not only in the meaning assigned to the relics⁶ but also in the actors and spaces involved.⁷ The liminality traversed during relic processions holds the possibility of desired transformations, such as the warding off of evil and the sanctification of the space in question, along with undesirable ones, including the unintentional sacralization of certain sites or even the loss of relics.⁸

As pertains to the procession's quality of mediating between the factual and the imaginary, the bilocation attributed to the saints – their ostensibly simultaneous presence on earth and in heaven – is of particular importance. Through their relics, the holy persons were understood to be corporeally present and to take an active part in the procession.⁹ At the same time, these sanctified figures had already entered the heavenly community and thus could act as intercessors before God. The connection to the transcendent established by the relics and the resulting possibility of the transmission of divine grace are concretely reflected in miracle reports, which were a central element in the description of translations, testifying to the legitimacy and success of the relic's movement.¹⁰ While such sources speak to the results of processions, the performativity of the actions themselves as they unfolded is difficult to grasp on the basis of the written descriptions and the few pictorial representations. If chroniclers portray the actual experience of procession at all—the interwoven optical, acoustic, olfactory, and tactile stimuli of lights, gold, and velvet, of the sound of bells, singing, and silence, of incense, fragrant water, and sweat, the feeling of taking part in an extraordinary communal undertaking, and the aching limbs of the participants as they slowly made their way over the course of hours—they do so in often compressed and standardized linguistic tropes. The Jesuit Juan Sánchez Baquero, for example, describes the sensory impressions of the 1578 procession as paradisiacal («*parecía un paraíso*»).¹¹

Reports of the procession and a missing «rock»

The celebration of the relic translations in Mexico City in 1578 is a historiographical stroke of luck, as various authors reported on it. Among the descriptions of the feast, that of the Jesuit priest Pedro de Morales is the most important. Morales, a doctor of theological and secular law from Salamanca, in Spain, came to the Colegio Máximo de San Pedro y San Pablo as a teacher in 1576 and was most likely involved in the organization of the feast.¹² His *Carta*, published only a year after the event, gives a detailed account of the whole festival, from describing the design of the reliquaries and the ephemeral architectures to reproducing the submissions to the poetry contests. In addition, his report contains the complete script of the tragedy *Trionfo de los Santos*, which thematizes the importance of the early Christian martyrs and was written specifically for the reception of the relics. While the *Carta* incorporates texts by other authors and describes itself as a mere report to the Jesuit general,¹³ in its detailed ekphrasis it has the character of an artistic work in its own right. Through its parallel use of Italian, Latin, Nahuatl, and Spanish in rendering various poems, chants, inscriptions, and emblems, the *Carta* evokes the plurality of New Spanish society as well as the enormous importance of linguistic and cultural translation for the mission.¹⁴ Two other reports, probably also written by eyewitnesses, are included in histories of

the first decades of the Jesuits in New Spain. Juan Sánchez Baquero, who had been in Mexico City since 1572 and later worked as a teacher at the Jesuit college, probably wrote his account around 1609.¹⁵ The other description was likely penned after 1620 by an anonymous Jesuit author.¹⁶ These two sources are less comprehensive than Morales's *Carta* but sometimes contain additional information.

The only account not written by a Jesuit is that of the historian Domingo Francisco de San Antón Muñón Chimalpahin Cuauhtlehuanitzin, who descended from a local noble family. His history of Mexico was written in Nahuatl around 1620. Chimalpahin devotes only a few lines to the feast of 1578 and emphasizes, above all, the beauty of the procession and the participation of the local population.¹⁷ It is noteworthy that he mentions a relic of the apostle Peter in this context. In fact, such a relic is kept, next to one of Saint Paul, in a reliquary that was donated by the mine owner and benefactor of the Jesuits Alonso de Villaseca in the immediate aftermath of the procession (fig. 1).¹⁸ However, the information Chimalpahin relays about the procession is

otherwise not reliable. For example, he falsely identifies its destination as the «iglesia mayor» rather than the church of the Jesuit college.

The other authors, too, give contradictory accounts of the procession. While Sánchez Baquero mentions that the most important relics (*la Santa Espina Y Lignum Crucis, y algunas otras reliquias de las principales*) had been personally brought to Villaseca, who then commissioned reliquaries for the Passion relics and for the relics of Peter and Paul (fig. 1),¹⁹ Pedro de Morales explicitly notes the absence of a relic of Saint Peter from the procession.²⁰ The Roman gift's inclusion or exclusion of this particular relic, the one most clearly embodying the tradition of the papacy, was obviously an important – if fraught – issue for the historiographers.²¹



Figure 1 – Anonymous artist, Reliquary of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, New Spain, Mexico City (?), after 1578, Gilded silver, embossed, chiseled, crystal and precious stones, 47 x 14cm, Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Tepotzotlán, OR/002

Traveling bones

Unfortunately, the prehistory of the compilation and dispatch of this gift of relics remains largely unknown, as many letters from Mexico have been lost, the majority of survivals being letters of reply from the Jesuit superior general Everard Mercuriano. However, the Jesuit correspondence attests to a consistent demand for relics in New Spain.²² The *Societas Iesu* was not present as a missionary order in this territory until 1572, some fifty years after the arrival of the Franciscans (1522), the Dominicans (1526), and the Augustinians (1533). As newcomers, the Jesuits aspired to establish themselves as mediators between New Spain and Europe and as innovators of evangelization.²³ Morales speaks of the *Societas* obtaining a papal decree in 1572 that allowed agents of the order to take relics from Rome and other places as a means of addressing the lack of saintly remains in the newly founded houses in Brazil, Peru, Japan, and New Spain.²⁴ In any case, the 1578 consignment was preceded by one of probably equal importance, the contents of which were lost in a shipwreck of 1575. This gift of relics—of which Sánchez Baquero reports to have been recovered only a thorn from the crown, a small cross made of the wood of the True Cross, and some unidentifiable bones²⁵—was addressed to the archbishop of Mexico Pedro de Moya y Contreras. In parallel, the Jesuits planned another shipment to the newly established *Colegio Máximo* de San Pedro y San Pablo. It may well be that this batch was augmented after the loss of the first one, being declared a gift from the pope himself to the Mexican people. In any case, speaking to the extraordinary importance of both relic compilations is the fact that the second shipment likewise included highly venerated Passion relics, namely a thorn from Christ's crown and a piece of the Cross. Even after 1578, correspondence with Rome repeatedly mentions relics being brought to Mexico, with Mercuriano promising the archbishop a replacement for the items lost in the shipwreck; in 1594, Pedro Morales would bring what was probably the first complete martyr's body from the catacombs of Rome, along with a veil of the Virgin Mary.²⁶ Compared to all the other documented relic transfers, however, the 1578 consignment, consisting of 214 relics, clearly stands out in terms of volume alone. The shipment from Rome arrived at the port of San Juan de Ulúa (Veracruz) on September 7, 1577, but preparations for an appropriate celebration of the relics' arrival dragged on for over a year. In addition to some concerns about how to properly communicate the importance of the holy remains to the Indigenous population,²⁷ in his letter to Rome Morales attributes this delay to the need to first repair damage to the roof of the college church.²⁸ Undertaken with the help of two hundred locals, the repair began six months before the inaugural celebration. Despite being the middle of the rainy season, the rain ceased for the duration of the construction work—to everyone's amazement. This meteorological phenomenon is the only miraculous

event, in the broadest sense, mentioned by Morales in his report on the reception of the relics. That the clerics of Mexico City were hardly prepared to receive a shipment of relics of such size and importance is also evident in Morales's report to Rome, one and a half years later, that only a hundred silver reliquaries and a retable had thus far been produced for the storage and presentation of the bones, with the manufacture of the remaining vessels still underway. Nevertheless, Morales expresses his hope that, once the work is complete, the Jesuit college would become a center and sanctuary of relics and devotion for all of New Spain.²⁹

A church of bones

Not only was Pope Gregory XIII's donation of relics to the Jesuits significant in terms of quantity: it also contained bones of extremely high rank.³⁰ Upon their arrival, the relics were first approved by the archbishop and made accessible to a smaller circle in the college church. Next, a list of all the contents was drafted and, together with information about the indulgences that the pope and archbishop had granted for the celebration, was printed and distributed throughout New Spain.³¹ While the organizing principle of this register is not completely apparent, it seems largely related to the perceived importance of each group and saint within an ecclesiastical hierarchy (**app. 1**).

Appendix 1

List of the relics sent from Rome, Mexico City, 1578, from MARISCAL HAY (2000), pp. 19-22.

Una espina de la corona de Nuestro Señor Iesu Christo

Una cruz pequeña del *Lignum Crucis*

Huessos de Apóstoles y Evangelistas

De sant Pablo Apóstol, de sant Mathías Apóstol, de sant Bartholomé Apóstol, de Santiago el Menor, Apóstol, de sancto Thomás Apóstol, de sant Andrés Apóstol, de sant Bernabé Apóstol, de sant Tadeo Apóstol, de sant Matheo Apóstol y Evangelista, de sant Lucas Evangelista, de sant Marcos Evangelista.

Huessos de Sanctos Doctores

De sant Ambrosio, de sant Agustín, de sant Hierónymo, de sant Gregorio, de sancto Thomás de Aquino, de sant Iuán Chrysóstomo, de sant Athanasio, de sant Basilio, de sant Gregorio Nazianzeno, de sant León Papa, de sant Cipriano Obispo y Mártir, de sant Hilario, de sant Isidro, de sant Dionisio Obispo y Mártir.

Huessos de Sanctos Mártires

De sant Estevan Prothomártyr, de sant Laurencio Mártyr, de sant Vincente Mártyr, de Sant Clemente Papa y Mártyr, de sant Lino Papa y Mártyr, de sant Sixto Papa y Mártyr, de sant Marcello Papa y Mártyr, de sant Martín Papa y Mártyr, de sant Aniceto Papa y Mártyr, de sant Silverio Papa y Mártyr, de sant Ygnatio Obispo y Mártyr, de sant Apollinar Obispo y Mártyr, de sant Valeriano Obispo y Mártyr, de sant Iustino Praesbítero y Mártyr, de sant Grisógono Mártyr, de sant Gorgonio Mártyr, de sant Christóval Mártyr, de sant Georgio Mártyr, de sant Adriano Mártyr, de sant Eugenio Mártyr, de sant Archenio Mártyr, de sant Bonifacio Mártyr, de sant Prosdócimo Mártyr, de sant Antonino Mártyr, de sant Pancraccio Mártyr, de Sant Iuliano Mártyr, de sant Hippólito Mártyr, de sant Basíledes Mártyr, de sant Anastasio Mártyr, de sant Colocerio Mártyr, de sant Anceias Rey y Mártyr, de sant Eugenio Rey y Mártyr, de Sant Fabián y Sant Sebastião, de sant Marcellino y sant Pedro, de sant Cosme y sant Damián, de sant Protho y Iacinto, de sant Tiburcio y Valeriano, de sant Tiburcio y Susanna, de sant Crispín y Crispiniano, de sant Felcissimo y Agapito, de sant Abdón y Senén, de sant Vital y Argícola, de sant Tranquillino, y sancta Martia, de sant Vital y sant Timotheo, de sant Nemesío y Lucilla, de sant Félix y Adaucto, de sant Chrísanto y Daría, de sant Ioán y Sant Pablo, de sant Sergio y Bacho, de sant Faustino y Iovita, de sant Nabor y Félix, de sant Nereo y Archileo, de sant Alexandro, Evencio y Theódolo, de sancta Simphorosa y sus hijos, de sant Mauricio y sus compañeros, de sant Ciriaco, largo y Smaragdo, de los Siete Durmientes.

Huessos de Sanctos Confesores

De sant Ioseph, de sant Paulino Obispo, de sant Martín Obispo, de sant Nicolás Obispo, de sant Fulgencio Obispo, de sant Gelasio Papa, de sant Máximo Obispo, de sant Buenaventura Obispo, de sant Anselmo Arçobispo, de sant Briçio Obispo, de sant Eusebio Obispo, de sant Benito Abbad, de sancto Domingo, de sant Bernardo Abbad, de sant Pablo, primer ermitaño, de Sant Luís Rey de Francia, de sant Bernardino de Sena, de sant Antonio de Padua, de sant Hilarión Abbad, de sant Gil Abbad, de sant Honofreo, de sant Mauro Abbad, de sant Leonardo Abbad, de sant Alexo.

Huessos de Sanctas

De sancta Ana, de sancta María Magdalena, de Sancta Lucía Vírgen y Mártyr, de Sancta Cecilia Vírgen y Mártyr, de sancta Ynés Vírgen y Mártyr, de sancta Elena, de sancta Constancia Vírgen y Mártyr, de sancta Prisca Vírgen y Mártyr, de sancta Potenciana Vírgen, de sancta Dorothea Vírgen y Mártyr, de sancta Sabina Vírgen y Mártyr, de Sancta Bibiana Vírgen y Mártyr, de sancta Flora, de sancta Eufemia

Vírgen y Mártyr, de sancta Beatríz, de sancta Cirilla, de sancta Christina Vírgen y Mártyr, de sancta Margarita Vírgen y Mártyr, de sancta Susana Vírgen y Mártyr, de sancta Felícitas, de sancta Victoria Vírgen y Mártyr, de sancta Catherina de Sena, de sancta Clara Vírgen, de sancta Mónica, de sancta Petronilla Vírgen, de sancta Anastasia Mártyr, de sancta Sophía y sus hijas: Fe, Esperança y Charidad.

De otros sanctos cuyos nombres se ygnoran. Son por todas dozientas y catorze reliquias.

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Named first are the Passion relics: the thorn from Christ's crown and the wood of the Cross (*lignum crucis*). The list continues with the relics of apostles and evangelists. In lieu of a relic of Peter, the group was expanded to include Paul and his teacher, Barnabas, who were important for the early Christian mission. John is missing among the evangelists. These founding figures central to Christianity are followed by the saintly doctors (*santos doctores*), beginning with the four Church Fathers: Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory the Great. The bishops Dionysius and Cyprian are referenced as martyrs. It is noteworthy that this group is not limited to early Christian teachers but also incorporates Thomas Aquinas, as one of the most important scholastics.

After the doctors, the list proceeds to name martyrs, the blood witnesses of Christ, leading with the protomartyr Stephen. The also highly venerated martyrs Lawrence and Vincent are then mentioned. In keeping with the ecclesiastical hierarchy, these are followed by popes, bishops, and a presbyter. In the series of martyrs without ecclesiastical office, the patron saint of New Spain, Hippolytus, comes relatively late yet precedes Saint Anceais and Saint Eugenio, dubbed as kings.³² The assembly of martyrs concludes with several pairs of martyrs and three of the seven sleepers. Named first among the confessors (*confessores*) is Joseph, the stepfather of Christ. He is followed by bishops, popes, abbots, King Louis of France, as well as such central saints of the Middle Ages as Bernard of Clairvaux, Dominic, and the Franciscans Anthony of Padua and Bernardine of Siena. The desert father and proto-hermit Paul of Thebes is also mentioned here.

Among the female saints, the text again leads with those who were directly connected to Christ: Anne, the mother of Mary, and Mary Magdalene. Listed next are early Christian women distinguished by their martyrdom, virginity, or both. But here again, the lineage of early Christian martyrs is supplemented by other eminent women, such as Emperor Helena, who discovered the True Cross, and the medieval mystic Catherine of Siena. In the last category fall the bones of saints whose identities could not be confirmed. It is not entirely clear how many of the 214 relics belong to unidentifiable martyrs,

since elsewhere the list makes summary mention of Saint Maurice and his comrades (*sant Mauricio y sus compañeros*), i.e. members of the Theban Legion. However, assuming that the latter subgroup was not too large, the unidentified bones seem to have constituted around twenty percent of the relic donation.

The variety of categories and subcategories into which the respective saints are divided in the inventory characterizes this gift of relics as a kind of *translatio ecclesiae*. Indeed, the contents range in rank from the relics that came into contact with Christ during the Passion to those of unknown saints, via those of the apostles and evangelists, the Holy Family, the most important late antique and medieval scholars of the Church, early Christian martyrs, holy virgins, kings and an empress, from the relics of canonized popes, key saints of the Christian orders, popular preachers to those of hermits and mystics: the assembly encompasses most of the central persons and ways of life recognized by the Church to be holy. The community of saints gathered in the papal relic donation did more than help Christianize the new territory.³³ The presence of these saintly bodies enabled the Jesuits to actualize a desire the Christian missionaries had articulated repeatedly since the conquest of Tenochtitlan: to establish Mexico as a new, Latin American Rome.³⁴

The procession

The night before the translation procession, a small group of clerics carried the relics from the Colegio Máximo de San Pedro y San Pablo to the cathedral, which was the point of departure for the event. There, they spent the night in prayer. Despite the distance being little more than a kilometer between the two institutions, the procession, which began at seven o'clock in the morning, lasted until the afternoon because of the series of Masses, dances, and chants that took place at the various stations, followed by the celebration of Mass at the college church.³⁵ The processional route was punctuated with ephemeral architectures, eight arches and a tabernacle, dedicated to different saints and themes (**fig. 2**).³⁶ Five of the arches were triumphal, with a classicizing European form, and were donated by different civic and religious groups.³⁷ The three remaining arches were decorated with flowers, plants, and feathers, having been made by representatives of the Indigenous population.

The procession itself comprised five rows.³⁸ At the center were the bearers of the relics—contained in ephemeral reliquaries, most of which were specially made for this occasion—as well as the porters of processional crosses and standards. Flanking the relics, in the inner rows, were ecclesiastical dignitaries of various orders from all over New Spain. The outermost rows consisted of secular persons and numerous processional platforms (*andas*) designed and carried by Indigenous people and on

positioning and grouping in the reliquaries, formed compositions comparable in certain principles to history painting, as Anton Legner has noted for the arrangement of relics within panel reliquaries and staurotheques.³⁹ However, these reliquary «paintings» were alive in two respects: on the one hand, because the saints, via their relics, were presented as active participants and, on the other hand, because they were carried through space by living persons and interacted with the audience and the urban landscape in a variety of ways. Of particular importance in this regard were the ephemeral architectures with their pictorial representations and inscriptions, along with the interventions made at the various stations. These external elements of the procession not only served to highlight the high rank of the participating saints but, moreover, made concrete their corporeal presence, in the here and now, for all those involved.

..... **Appendix 2**

Order of reliquaries and bearers in the translation procession from MARISCAL HAY (2000), pp. 23-24.

1. Sant Hyppólito – sacerdote anciano
 2. El cofre – un otro sacerdote
 3. Los Sanctos Casados – un otro sacerdote
 4. Los Sanctos de la Orden de Sant Agustín – un otro sacerdo
 5. Sancto Domingo – un otro sacerdote
 6. Sanctos Abbades – Abbdad del Cabildo de los Sacerdotes desta ciudad
 7. Sanctas Vírgines – un Canónigo de la Puebla de los Ángeles
 8. Sagrados Mártires – un Canónigo de Guatemala
 9. Los Sanctos Doctores de la Yglesia – un Canónigo de Mechuacán
 10. Las Sanctas Magdalena, Egipciaca y sancta Helena – otro Canónigo de Mechuacán
 11. Los Sanctos Marcos y Lucas Evangelistas – a un Canónigo de Guaxaca
 12. Sant Matías y Sant Bernabé Apóstoles – Thesorero de Guadalajara
 13. Sanctiago el Menor y Sant Thadeo Apóstol – Chantre de Guadalajara
 14. Sant Bartholomé, sant Matheo Apóstol – Arcediano de Mechoacán
 15. Sant Andrés Apóstol – un Canónigo de esta Sancta Yglesia
 16. and 17. Sant Pablo, la Casa de Loreto, Sant Ioseph y Sancta Ana – dos Racioneros desta Cathedral delante del palio
 18. La Sanctissima Cruz – un Canónigo de esta Sancta Yglesia
 19. La Sagrade Espina – Señor Inquisidor, electo Obispo de Xalisco
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Histories of pain

The relic of Saint Hippolytus was given special prominence in the procession, in contrast to its subordinate position in the initial inventory of the Roman shipment. Displayed in a large, silver arm reliquary, it led the procession. The choice to place this relic at the forefront of the procession linked the celebration's central theme of early Christian martyrdom to the story of the Spanish conquest of the city. After the victory over the Aztecs and the destruction of Tenochtitlan on August 13, 1521—the same day on which this saint's feast is celebrated annually—Hippolytus was elected patron saint of Mexico City and New Spain. Leading the 1578 procession, his raised arm now paved the way for an ecclesiastical conquest of the city.⁴⁰

The importance of this relic was further emphasized by the first arch (**fig. 2, no. 1**), which stood at the entrance to Calle Santo Domingo and was dedicated to him and the other martyrs. Centered on the entablature of the arch was a painting depicting the saint's martyrdom by being tied to horses and dragged to death. A later painting of the same subject by Alonso Vázquez, which echoes Morales's description in many respects, gives a sense of what the image on the arch might have looked like (**fig. 3**).⁴¹ The saint is shown being pulled by horses into an urban space, and it is in the execution of this movement—which was reenacted by the relic procession—that he suffers his graceful martyrdom. Thus, right at the beginning of the procession, the performative nexus of triumphant architecture, history painting, and the martyr's relic intoned, as an underlying theme of the event, a fundamental connection between the movement of bodies and the experience of pain and grace.

The figure of Hippolytus seems to have exemplified in particular the suffering experienced by the Christian conquistadors and missionaries, who saw themselves as martyrs in the spread of Christianity.⁴² That their sacrifices were not in vain was attested within the procession by a dance of native children dressed in the manner of local tradition, who sang, in Nahuatl, praises to the saints and especially their patron saint, Hippolytus, with accompaniment from an organ and native instruments. The saint, tortured in Rome, thus found his exaltation in Mexico thanks to the Spanish «martyrs.»⁴³

Meanwhile, the figure of Hippolytus could represent only inadequately or not at all the unspeakable suffering of the Indigenous people at the hands of European invaders and as a result of the destruction of their culture. From the missionaries' point of view, this human suffering may largely have been a necessary evil. Nevertheless, the procession made a gesture of identification with these past and present hardships on the part of the Indigenous population by foregrounding a reliquary that addressed this theme in a suggestive way. Morales mentions a box of crimson velvet, richly studded with silver, that was carried immediately behind the reliquary of Hippolytus, thus being assigned



Figure 3 – Alonso Vázquez, The Martyr of Saint Hippolytus with Hernán Cortés at prayer, oil on canvas, 103 x 71 cm, 1605-7, Mexico City, Museo Nacional de Historia, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, inv. 10-23823

second position in the procession. This vessel, with relatively modest dimensions of about 40 cm long and 30 cm high, must have contained more than 130 relics, namely all the contents of the Roman shipment not otherwise displayed in reliquaries.⁴⁴ Given the size of the box, it is clear, firstly, that most of its contents must have been very small pieces. Therefore, in addition to the approximately twenty percent of the relics that could not be identified, a large portion of those that could in fact be matched to known saints remained anonymous by being gathered in this single reliquary for the procession. The box thus symbolizes the treasury of the saints, whose individual stories and identities need not be named or even known in order for them to be recognized before God. The anonymity and semantic indeterminacy of many of the relics, amplified in the case of those that were communalized within this treasure chest, speaks to the liminal character of martyrdom itself—martyrdom being a process, beyond the purview of the earthly church, of sublimating suffering into grace.

The conqueror-patron of Mexico, Hippolytus, was thus immediately followed by a reliquary that epitomized the value even of anonymous and institutionally unremembered suffering when endured for the glory of God. Precisely because names and other signs were missing from this reliquary chest, its shape and materiality may have been of particular semantic significance. As with the design of its silver mountings, which Morales describes as «romano,» viewers would likely have associated the velvet of the chest with a European origin. Moreover, it is not far-fetched to imagine, in the context of the relics of martyrs, a connection being drawn between the crimson velvet and dried blood. The material of silver, on the other hand, carried strong local implications. North of Mexico City, the Spanish operated silver mines in Pachuca, Ixmiquilpan, Guanajuato, and Zacatecas.⁴⁵ Morales himself emphasized the material's Mexican identity, stressing the local origin of the silver employed in the creation of the arm reliquary of Hippolytus.⁴⁶ This connection becomes even clearer when one recalls that Alonso de Villaseca was the greatest sponsor of the Jesuits in New Spain, including funding the construction of the Jesuit college and the manufacture of important reliquaries in the procession's aftermath. Villaseca, nicknamed «el rico,» was one of the owners of the New Spanish silver mines—and thus one of the men most enriched by the exploitation of the Indigenous population.⁴⁷ Indeed, the productivity of the silver mines in the decades following the conquest was largely maintained through various forms of forced labor. In addition to local Indigenous inhabitants, convicts were also forced to perform the arduous and extremely dangerous labor in Villaseca's mines.⁴⁸ According to Cubillo Moreno's account, the death toll from mine labor contributed not insignificantly to the horrendous decimation of the Indigenous population of New Spain.⁴⁹

Their suffering and martyrdom being closely bound to the mining of silver, the Indigenous people thus made a very concrete contribution to the ornamental appearance of the procession and to the appreciation of the holy bones. The theme of the Indigenous

subjects' sacrifice of treasures was reiterated elsewhere in the festive decoration, this time being explicitly linked to the reliquary chest. The rich adornment of the college's garden included eleven panels of *hieroglíficas* (emblematic combinations of image and text), one of which showed a personification of the city of Mexico in indigenous garb. She held gold and silver in her left hand, signaling her refutation of such riches, while with her right she received the chest of relics (*el cofre de la Sanctas Reliquias*). The words of the personification, given in the text associated with the image, refer to a classic topos of disdain for material wealth over spiritual treasure: «*Exchanged be my riches, for before this treasure, silver is straw and gold is mud.*»⁵⁰

While the reliquaries and triumphal arches encountered throughout the procession introduced further thematic aspects, the suffering and triumph of the martyrs remained the basso continuo from the outset. In specific, the martyrs were again honored with their own reliquary at the eighth spot in the processional order; however, Morales does not specify the saints presented therein (**app. 2**). The theme culminated with the staging of the last reliquaries—around in the middle of the procession, a place traditionally reserved for the most important relics.⁵¹ Here, the Passion relics were carried by an unnamed Jesuit canon and the newly elected bishop of Xalisco, Francisco santos García, who was also the grand inquisitor of New Spain.⁵² The instruments of the Passion represented the sacrifice of Christ as the model for all Christian martyrs and, at the same time, the actual power of the institution that possessed the relics. It is certainly no coincidence that the thorn—the instrument of suffering that, due to its shape, most clearly demonstrated the pain it was capable of inflicting—was presented in the hand of the grand inquisitor. In Europe more broadly, the Crown of Thorns and the individual *spinae Christi* were relics often associated with secular power.⁵³ The event was thus also an expression of the Church's claim to power and of its right to exercise this power by secular means. This statement of ecclesiastical authority was upheld by the representatives of secular power— from the leaders of the city government and the city judiciary, who carried the canopy under which the two Passion relics were presented, as well as from the viceroy and the members of the Real Audiencia, who followed directly after them, without carrying any relics themselves.

«*Con los huesos predicamos*»

By distributing the relics in the procession among a total of nineteen reliquaries, and through their designing of the triumphal arches, the Jesuits were able to develop further themes. In addition to the category of *santos casados*, i.e. married saints, which was newly defined for the procession,⁵⁴ the group of virgins, whose relics were gathered in their own reliquary, and the triumphal arch dedicated to the Holy Family (**fig. 2, no. 6**) each emphasized the importance of certain social behaviors and institutions

propagated by the Church. Another theme of social relevance was Christian education. This concern, central to the Jesuits,⁵⁵ was highlighted by the reliquary of the *santos doctores* as well as by the arch specially dedicated to them, which had been donated by the youth of the city (**fig. 2, no. 8**).⁵⁶ Other processional reliquaries, such as those containing the relics of Saint Dominic and Saint Augustine, certainly served a function within internal Church politics, incorporating and honoring the religious orders that had been present in New Spain before the Jesuits.

The Jesuits generally attributed to the sacred bones an outstanding ability to convey Christian content. This was made clear by another hieroglyph panel in the garden of the college. Above the image of a pulpit, which in lieu of a preacher showed a bone surrounded by light, toward which the Indigenous people turned, appeared the verses: «*With our tongues we cannot / do what we wish / with the bones we preach.*»⁵⁷ Similar to what contemporary ecclesiastical author Gabriele Paleotti assumed for Christian images,⁵⁸ relics here were assumed to be able to convey meaning even across linguistic barriers. In this sense, the Jesuits presented the bones as an important means of encouraging faith in Christian saints and as a tool in the fight against acts of heresy and idolatry by the Mexicans.⁵⁹

It is remarkable that the Jesuits in their descriptions gave little space to the thaumaturgic powers usually attributed to relics. Besides the already mentioned meteorological peculiarity of the lack of precipitation during the repair of the church's roof, not a single miracle is mentioned in connection with the translational celebrations. It was not until two years after the feast that Morales reported to the general of the order, without specifying further, that water that had come into contact with the Holy Thorn made present the miracles of the Lord every day.⁶⁰ By emphasizing their ordinariness (*cada día*), Morales deprives the miracles of their essential characteristic of exceptionality. With this renunciation of supernatural events in their texts, Morales and his friars clearly set themselves apart from medieval reports of relic translations, in which miracles played a central role.⁶¹ The extent to which this departure from traditional accounts of miracles—a departure evident also in descriptions of the circulation of sacred images at this moment⁶²—is a Jesuit peculiarity or corresponds to a general post-Tridentine caution cannot be discussed further here. What is clear is that the Jesuits, assuming that (Indigenous) people were very much influenced by the external senses,⁶³ spared no effort to convey the Christian message by all available material and aesthetic means, recognizing also the need for linguistic and cultural translation.

A global network of holy bones

In the Christian mission, the bodily relics of the saints not only served to sacralize and spiritually take possession of certain sites—for example, in the course of the

consecration of altars—or to communicate Christian dogmas and discourage heresy: they also connected distinct places that shared, in the form of relics, the body of a saint. This calls to mind Carneiro da Cunha's notion of relics as vehicles that transport memories as well as places.⁶⁴ Pierre-Antoine Fabre has proposed that, simultaneous with the Jesuit college in Mexico, the college in Rome received a papal gift of relics, a «transfer simultanée» that reinforced and deepened the relationship between these two Jesuit sites.⁶⁵ Similarly, Coello de la Rosa sees the distribution of relics, as well as the much better researched missionary use of sacred images,⁶⁶ as part of a global strategy on the part of the Jesuits.⁶⁷

The translation of the institution of the Roman Church that was symbolically accomplished by the Jesuits through the transfer of the relics, and through which Mexico City was to become the Rome of the New World, was in fact only the first step toward more far-reaching goals. The first triumphal arch in the procession, donated by the Jesuits themselves and dedicated to the apostles (**fig. 2, no. 7**), illustrated the mandate resulting from the relic donation. Between the columns on the lower register of the arch appeared an unidentified figure, described by Morales as a philosopher; an accompanying panel of text articulated that, in the future, Mexico City itself should become a transmitter of relics: «*Times will see that from here / they will go further / [From] Goa to Japan, [from] Mexico to China / They will send Holy Bones and fine people.*»⁶⁸ The philosopher's prophecy deliberately plays with the linking of different, and somewhat unclear, spatial and temporal locations. If «here» (*de aquí*) is understood to indicate Rome, then the prediction would have already been fulfilled with the arrival of the Roman martyrs in New Spain. However, by shifting the «here» to Mexico, it can also be read as a reference to the future mission emanating from the viceroyalty.

A pressing concern for the Societas was that its brothers who had been murdered in the course of missionary activity be recognized as martyrs and, as possible, be beatified or canonized. This was achieved first with the cofounder of the Societas, Francis Xavier, who had died of fever on Shangchuan Island, off the coast of China. He was canonized in 1620, and from Goa (present-day southwestern India) his bones were disseminated globally.⁶⁹ For New Spain, however, it was Felipe de Jesús who, through his martyrdom suffered in Japan in 1597, fulfilled the prophecy pronounced on the triumphal arch. Born in Mexico City in 1572, Felipe was the first Mexican to be beatified, in 1627, being subsequently canonized in 1862, and his bones are venerated on various continents.⁷⁰ Felipe was not a Jesuit but a Franciscan. However, according to his later hagiographers, he had been a Latin student at the Colegio Máximo de San Pedro y San Pablo (**fig. 4**). Though there is no evidence of this in the archives of the college,⁷¹ Felipe's alleged period of training served to link the martyrdom of the Mexican future saint to the tradition of ancient martyrs whose relics were transferred from Rome, thus further spinning the global web of holy bones.



Figure 4 – José Montes de Oca, The boy Felipe de Jesús as student of Grammar at the Colegio Máximo de San Pedro y San Pablo, from *Vida de San Felipe de Jesus protomartir de Japon, y patron de su patria Mexico*, Mexico City 1801, fol. [IV r.], engraving and etching, 23.2 x 16.4 cm

Conclusion

The large shipment of relics from Rome embodied an almost complete assembly of the most important saints and representatives of forms of holy life, thus signaling a transfer of the foundation of the *Ecclesia Romana*, along with its traditions and hierarchies, to Mexico City. At the same time, by highlighting individual saints while incorporating others into various subgroups within lists, reliquaries, and the sequence and program of the translation procession, the Jesuits were able to address a variety of religious and social issues. The case of the 1578 procession demonstrates the enormous potential of relics—as embodiments of persons, places, memories, divine grace, and worldly power—to generate meaning in the course of their performative activation. Particularly relevant, yet little studied, with regard to the bodies of the martyrs is the ability of relics to represent pain and suffering and to reinterpret it as a form of triumph and grace.⁷² Asserting control over past, present, and future pain was among the essential goals of the translation procession. The regional foundation of ecclesiastical power that was accomplished with the transfer of these relic holdings was, at the same time, part of a global strategy to present Mexico City as a new center within a global network of holy bodies. Mexico was not only to be the recipient but also the sender. Analysis of the early modern dissemination of bodily relics—not only from Rome but running in multipolar networks among the Americas, Asia, Africa, and Europe—is a desideratum that can only be successfully undertaken via similar multipolar networks, through the cooperation of many disciplines and expertises.

1. Authoritative for later analyses of the feast is the 1579 description by the Jesuit Pedro de Morales, edited by Mariscal Hay. MARISCAL HAY (2000). On the Roman gift of relics and its transfer to New Spain FABRE (2016), (2014), (2011). On Indigenous participation RUBIAL GARCÍA (2010), pp. 199-203; ARACIL VARÓN (2008). On theatrical performances ARRÓNIZ (1979); JOHNSON (1941).

2. FOLETTI (2018), p. 64: «*il potere dei santi si manifestava con più facilità quando questi ultimi erano in movimento.*» See also REUDENBACH (2015), p. 145.

3. HENRIQUES (2022); LUCHERINI (2018); RIHOUE (2017); DEFRIES (2010); LEGNER (1995), pp. 120-133.

4. GVOZDEVA and VELTEN (2011), p. 12: «*Prozessionen ,bedeuten' nicht einfach nur etwas, sondern sie konstituieren Wirklichkeit, d.h. sie stellen im Vollzug etwas her, das außerhalb ihrer selbst als Referenz nicht verfügbar ist. Insofern [...] sind sie Medien der Annäherung an dieses Unverfügbare, performative Praktiken der Konstruktion eines Zwischenraums von Faktualität und Imaginärem.*» Translation my own.

5. GEORGE (2018), p. 37; SCHMITT (2011).

6. FABRE (2014) shows that the spatial translation of relics can be accompanied by a recontextualization and thus a possible change in their meaning.

7. LUCHERINI (2018), p. 18.

8. On the dangers of relic processions DEFRIES (2011).
9. GEARY (1986), p. 172; BÄRSCH (2015), pp. 175–176.
10. HEINZELMANN (1979), pp. 63–64, 102.
11. SÁNCHEZ BAQUERO (1945), p. 117. On the problem of the reproduction of performativity in written sources and the text's own performativity, see GVOZDEVA and VELTEN (2011), pp. 13–15.
12. MARISCAL HAY (2000), p. XLIV.
13. On the title page of the 1579 edition. <https://repositorio.tec.mx/handle/11285/637201?show=full>.
14. RUBIAL GARCÍA (2010), p. 203 sees this as the expression of a universalistic claim.
15. SÁNCHEZ BAQUERO (1945), pp. 8–9.
16. *Relacion breve* (1995), pp. 43–56. Later descriptions by Jesuit historiographers, such as Francisco de Florencia and Alegre Francisco Javier, are not considered here.
17. CUAUHTLEHUANITZIN CHIMALPAHIN (1965), pp. 283–284.
18. GARZA RÍOS DE CREEL, Beatriz and BOLAÑOS DE ARAIZA (1999); SÁNCHEZ REYES (2004), pp. 291–293.
19. Sánchez Baquero does not explicitly state that Villaseca was presented with a relic of Saint Peter. SÁNCHEZ BAQUERO (1945), p. 126.
20. MARISCAL HAY (2020) p. 49.
21. SÁNCHEZ REYES (2004), pp. 291–293 has studied this case and suspects that the relic was sent to Mexico at a later date or forged.
22. ZUBILLAGA (1956), pp. 104, 192–193, 213, 430.
23. ALCALÁ (2011), p. 170.
24. MARISCAL HAY (2000), p. 18.
25. SÁNCHEZ BAQUERO (1945), p. 115. The report about the recovered relics is also not credible, as Sánchez Baquero claims that the ship sank off the coast of Mexico and that the relics washed up. However, the subsequent Jesuit correspondence with Rome makes clear that the ship sank while still in the Mediterranean.
26. *Relacion breve* (1995), p. 55.
27. MARISCAL HAY (2000), p. 3f. On the hesitant acceptance of Roman relics and their relatively minor role in the mission in New Spain compared to the veneration of images, see FABRE (2014) and (2016).
28. In the annual report of Pedro de Morales. See ZUBILLAGA (1956), p. 437.
29. ZUBILLAGA (1956), pp. 521–522.: «[C]onfiamos en la divina Majestad que ha de ser este colegio santuario de reliquias y devoción para toda esta Nueva España.»
30. The prestige of a church treasury depends less on the quantity than on the reputation of its relics. GEORGE (2018), p. 40.
31. MARISCAL HAY (2000), p. 18.
32. The identities of the two men, who are also mentioned in GONZALEZ DE MENDOZA (1616), p. 822, as kings of Persia and of Africa, respectively, could not be determined. Holy kings of this name are not found in the *Acta Sanctorum*.
33. On this aspect of missionary relic use, see for example CYMBALISTA (2006).
34. See RUBIAL GARCÍA (2010), 199–201.
35. MARISCAL HAY (2000), p. 93. The author of *Relacione breve* (1995), p. 54, describes that the celebration on that day went deep into the night.
36. The exact location of the ephemeral architectures is not clear in many cases. In particular, the location of the final arches around the Jesuit Colegio is hypothetical and requires on-site investigation.

37. For reconstruction of the arches, see HERNÁNDEZ TELLES (2018).
38. MARISCAL HAY (2000), pp. 24-25.
39. LEGNER (1995), p. 69.
40. RUBIAL GARCÍA (2010), p. 203.
41. MARISCAL HAY (2000), pp. 29-30.
42. Thus, the soldiers of Hernán Cortéz interred the bones of the comrades sacrificed by the Aztecs in the church they built in the urban area, which they consecrated "Los Martires." See DÍAZ DEL CASTILLO, Bernal (1632), p. 153r. The example of Hippolytus, however, was restored to the larger context of early Christian martyrs by the side archways dedicated to the protomartyr Saint Stephen and Saint Lawrence, whose relics were among those translated but were not specifically highlighted in the procession.
43. On the back of the arch was an inscription reading «*Hyppólito glorioso, [...] que si Roma os arrastrado / México os ensalçar.*» MARISCAL HAY (2000), p. 30. Regarding the song STEVENSON (1976), pp. 203-204.
44. MARISCAL HAY (2000), p. 7.
45. CUBILLO MORENO (1991), p. 146.
46. MARISCAL HAY (2000), p. 7.
47. CUBILLO MORENO (1991), p. 197: «*[L]a verdadera fuente de riqueza era el trabajo indígena que sin él, esos metales quedarían estáticos y sin valor en el seno de la tierra.*» On the proverbial wealth of Villaseca, see FLORENCIA (1694), p. 303.
48. ZAVALA (1985), pp. 160-161.
49. CUBILLO MORENO (1991), p. 201.
50. MARISCAL HAY (2000), p. 98: «*Trocado sea mi riqueza, que delante tal thesoro, plata es paja y lodo el oro.*» See also REUDENBACH (2002).
51. DEFRIES (2011), p. 586.
52. *Relacion breve* (1995), p. 54.
53. LEGNER (1995), pp. 79, 88.
54. Although of the saints present among the relics, only Chrysanthus and Daría are recognized as a married couple.
55. Pedagogy was of enormous importance to the Jesuits in New Spain, as evidenced not least by the founding of numerous colleges and schools. ARRÓNIZ (1979), p. 148f.
56. MARISCAL HAY (2000), p. 67.
57. MARISCAL HAY (2000), p. 96. «*Con la lengua no pudimos / hacer lo que deseamos / con los huesos predicamos.*»
58. PALEOTTI (1961), p. 221. According to Paleotti, images were a common language (*linguaggio comune*) understood by people from all nations.
59. MARISCAL HAY (2000), p. 4.
60. ZUBILLAGA (1956), p. 522. Similarly vague is the *Relacion breve* (1995), pp. 54-55, which speaks generally of miracles of healing with the thorn and the *lignum crucis*. More specific are the subsequent descriptions of weather-related miracles with reference to the copy of the icons of Mary from Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, which arrived before the relics.
61. HEINZELMANN (1979), pp. 63-66.
62. In the course of the diffusion in the Indian mission territories of copies of the icon of Mary from Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome—an icon attributed to the evangelist Luke and central to the Jesuits—there is no evidence of miracles. Rather, the Jesuits' reports emphasize the artistic-aesthetic potency of the image. See SAVIELLO (2017).

63. MARISCAL HAY (2000), p. 4: «*los naturales (que tanto por lo exterior se mueven)*.»
64. CUNHA (1996), p. 81.
65. FABRE (2014), p. 219.
66. For the construction of a network of copies of the icon of the Virgin Mary from Santa Maria Maggiore, see D'ELIA (1954); SAVIELLO (2021).
67. COELLO DE LA ROSA (2018).
68. MARISCAL HAY (2000), p. 54: «*Tiempos vernán que de aquí / yrán más adelante / [De] Goa à Giapone, [de] México a la China / Osse Sancte daran, é gente fina.*»
69. SCHURHAMMER (1965).
70. On the spread of the cult of the twenty-seven martyrs of Nagasaki in 1597, see OMATA RAPPO (2020).
71. On the life of Felipe de Jesús, see CONOVER and CONOVER (2011), p. 462.
72. Brown emphasizes the connection between the pains suffered by the martyrs and the healing miracles associated with their relics. Brown (2009), p. 79: «*At the root of every miracle of healing at a martyr's shrine of late antiquity there lay a miracle of pain [...].*»

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Mapping Saint's Cults in Medieval Sweden and Finland: A Digital Humanities Project

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resumo

O artigo apresenta o projeto de humanidades digitais sueco *Mapping Lived Religion* (Mapeamento da Religião Vivida). O objetivo do projeto consiste em construir uma base de dados sobre cultos medievais de santos na Província Eclesiástica Sueca de Uppsala, incluindo a atual Finlândia. As relíquias de santos constituem uma parte vital dos dados e o artigo oferece um relato de ponta das fontes. Um número limitado de relíquias ainda persiste, mas as principais fontes de conhecimento quanto a relíquias e à sua utilização consistem em testemunhos escritos – cartas, testamentos, listas de relíquias, coleções de milagres e protocolos de apreensão – ou índices materiais, tais como relicários existentes mas vazios e caixas-altar para relíquias.

palavras-chave

Manifestação de Culto; Base de dados; Humanidades Digitais; Finlândia; Mapeamento; Cultos de santos; Altar

abstract

The article presents the Swedish digital humanities project *Mapping Lived Religion*. The objective of the project is to build a database on medieval cults of saints in the Swedish Ecclesiastical Province of Uppsala, including today's Finland. Saints' relics make up a vital part of the data, and the article gives a state-of-the-art account of the sources. A limited number of relics are still in existence, but the major sources of knowledge regarding relics and relic use are either written testimony—letters, wills, relic lists, miracle collections, and confiscation protocols—or material indices such as extant but empty reliquaries, and altar boxes for relics.

keywords

Cult Manifestation; Database; Digital Humanities; Finland; Mapping; Saints' cults; Shrine

The database

Mapping Lived Religion: Medieval Cults of Saints in Sweden and Finland is a five-year project, funded by the Swedish Research Council.¹ The main project members are researcher Sara Ellis Nilsson, associate professor Anders Fröjmark, professor Lena Liepe, and researcher Sofia Lahti, all Linnaeus University; and researcher Terese Zachrisson and research engineer Johan Åhlfeldt, Gothenburg University. The project's objective is to develop a comprehensive, open-access, online database of art historical, archaeological, and historical documents on the cult of saints, with a mapping component; hence, the working title of the database is *Mapping Saints*. The database will provide open access to a broad range of data related to the cults of saints in the medieval Ecclesiastical Province of Uppsala, which included most of present-day Sweden plus Finland. Chronologically, the database covers the time span from 1164, when the ecclesiastical province was formed, to 1593 when the Swedish Protestant Reformation was consolidated.

The database will offer scholars, and anyone with an interest in medieval saints and their veneration, the possibility to search for and analyze information about saints' cults in Sweden and Finland, geographically and chronologically, across the medieval and early modern periods. It will allow for investigations that combine data acquired from a variety of sources: not only texts, such as calendars and liturgical texts for saints' feasts and various diplomas and miracle collections, but also church art, liturgical textiles, church and altar dedications, features in the landscape that have been associated with local saints – and, of course, reliquaries and relics. This rich array of source material will enable interdisciplinary analyses that link different categories of source material that have up until now been largely studied in isolation from one another by specialists in separate fields such as art history, history, archaeology, and philology. With the database, different kinds of data can be interlinked and combined to provide a fuller understanding of the medieval and early modern cults of saints.

Key to the development of the database is the project's collaboration with cultural heritage institutions, giving access to data from digitized cultural heritage collections that are thus included in the resource and made publicly accessible. The source material of the database consists of medieval texts and objects, early modern inventories, and topographical and antiquarian reports. At the start of the project, the state of this source material varied from unedited/undigitized to digitized, and a large portion of the project work has involved editing, transcribing, translating of sources, and manual data input.

Lived religion

The name of the project is *Mapping Lived Religion*. The theoretical concept 'lived religion' (LR) provides the principled motivation for the initiative to build a database on saints' cults and has guided its construction. LR explores lay religiosity and its manifestations in the daily lives of ordinary people. It is distinguished from the study of institutionally defined creeds and prescribed behavior in that it focuses on religion-as-lived, i.e., the attitudes, customs, and experiences of individuals. Its aim is to include in the understanding of religion the layers of everyday beliefs and practices that subtend and feed into the 'explicit' religious life of a period. LR as an approach to the study of religion goes back to the 1920s and the Annales school.² Seen through LR lenses, religion is not primarily something one believes but something one does, in many forms. Religion is understood situationally; it exists and unfolds within the domain of everyday life, practical activity, and shared beliefs. LR sees religion as cultural work, performed by individuals when they construct their worlds and, in their turn, are fundamentally shaped by the worlds they are making. LR exceeds the personal level: it exists as part of everyday life and an expression of interpersonal social communities – which includes the saints. It has been a *leitmotif* in religious education research for decades and is nowadays widely adopted also in theological studies. The LR perspective is of obvious relevance for the study of medieval relics and relic use; in fact, since the veneration of relics was never strictly formalized and regulated by the Church in the Middle Ages but instead prevailed as a popular phenomenon largely initiated by the lay, it appears in many ways as a manifestation of LR *par excellence*.

Mapping saints

The key concept of the database is mapping, building on the location of the saints' cults in time and space as the determining parameters, and on so-called cult manifestations as the basic units. Every manifestation of a veneration of a saint, in a particular place and with a particular content, constitutes a cult manifestation and becomes an entry in the database: a saint's feast, a miracle, a diploma dating, a market, a landscape feature such as a holy well or a stone – or a relic. Each cult manifestation is linked to coordinates on a digital map where the geographical location of the manifestation is visualized. Further, each cult manifestation is recorded with a date interval covering the period it was in function. If it is known when it was created – as in the case of artworks that commonly can be dated with a satisfying degree of accuracy – this is entered; otherwise, the "first indication date", i.e., when the manifestation first appears in the sources, is given. Also recorded is the "function time period", the period during which

the manifestation can be assumed to have been active: generally, from its creation until the end of the Middle Ages.

The construction will enable the user to search the map, chart the geographical spread of cults, and visualize changes over time in the “cultic landscape” of a region. To take an example, the entry illustrated on **fig. 1** concerns a late medieval relic cabinet. On the map to the left is shown the location of the church in Övre Ullerud whence the cabinet derives, and a timeline above will highlight the time span from the date of the reliquary until the Reformation (i.e., its function time period). The point on the map is connected to the timeline so that if the marker of the timeline is placed earlier than the fifteenth century, the point on the map that represents the Övre Ullerud cabinet as a cult manifestation will disappear.

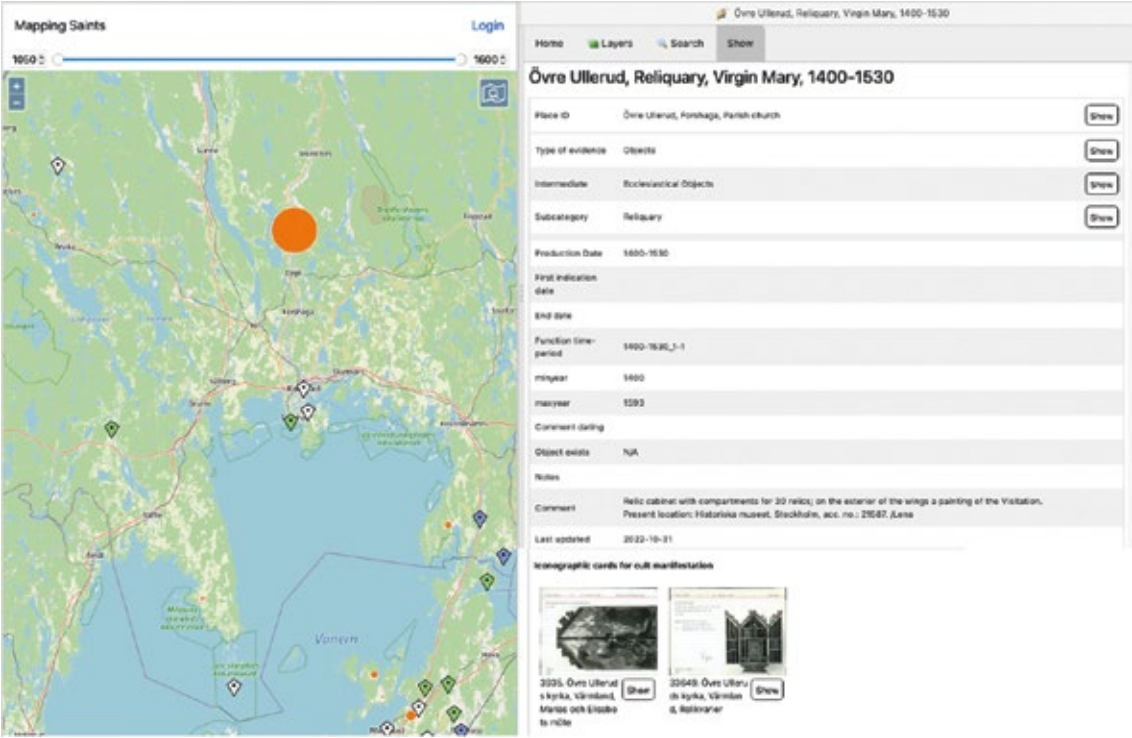


Figure 1 – Mapping Saints database, entry for relic cabinet in Övre Ullerud church, Värmland. Screenshot from March 23, 2023, of the Mapping Saints input interface, currently under development. (CC BY-SA Mapping Lived Religion Project).

The relics

The database grows daily as more and more cult manifestations are entered: at the time of writing (March 2023), it comprises nearly eight thousand cult manifestations, whereof 361 entries concern relics. The sources to our knowledge of relics are varied: most consist not of still extant relics, but of evidence for relics that have once existed but are long since gone. Such evidence comes either in the form of material objects such as reliquaries, relic jewelry, and lead boxes from altars that have contained altar relics³; or it is made up of written sources. Some of these are medieval, e.g., letters and wills that mention relics: in a letter dated 9 January 1382, for instance, the archbishop of Sweden grants indulgence to Vingåker Church on account of the church having received a relic of St. Eric of Sweden. Another example is a will made by the king Karl Knutsson Bonde in 1470, where he bequeaths a reliquary on a necklace to his son, and a glassed panel set with relics to his wife. There are also a handful of consecration records from altars, listing the relics laid down there by the bishop when the altar was consecrated. Thus, a record found in the main altar in Björksta Church reveals that relics of St. Andrew, St. Catherine, St. Olaf of Norway, and St. Eric of Sweden were deposited there in 1349.

Other kinds of written sources are lists of relics in the possession of an ecclesiastical institution, and miracle collections. In 1344, a list was made of the relics, other than those in the altars, of the Uppsala Cathedral. The cathedral possessed relics from 57 named saints plus a non-specified number of relics from "many other martyrs, confessors, and virgins". All main categories of saints are found on the list: apostles, martyrs, confessors, doctors, and virgins and widows, and universal as well as Swedish and Nordic saints. Not included in the list is the cathedral's shrine with the remains of St. Eric, Sweden's national saint who was martyred in 1160 but was translated only in the mid-thirteenth century. Numerous pilgrims came to the cathedral to pray for help or to give thanks for help received in the form of miracles. Their testimonies were recorded by the clergy, and the collected documentation of miracles ascribed to St. Eric is a vital source of information to the importance of the shrine for late medieval popular devotion and piety. Similar collections also exist for St. Brynolf of Skara, St. Henry of Finland, St. Nicolaus Hermanni of Linköping, and St. Catherine of Vadstena.⁴ Other sources are post-medieval. An important resource in this respect are the confiscation protocols from the Reformation in the 1520s and 1530s. During the Reformation, all sorts of valuables were expropriated by the crown from churches all over Sweden and Finland. Everything thus taken was carefully listed, including the occasional reliquary: in several cases, in fact, it is only through the protocols that we know that an ecclesiastical institution even had a reliquary and, it must be presumed, relics, in its possession. The relics that came with the reliquaries are never mentioned,

though: they had no monetary value and so were irrelevant to the bailiffs. Nonetheless, the very existence of reliquaries is sufficient proof that the churches in question held relics besides those in the altars, although the knowledge of from whom – from which saints – the relics derived is lost to us. Nor do we know what happened to the relics when the reliquaries were confiscated: if they were thrown away or if the parishioners were able to keep them. It is theoretically possible that some congregations were allowed to hold on to their relics at least up to 1544, when the cult of saints was finally prohibited by decree: but there is no way of knowing for certain.

Yet a source of information are antiquarian reports from the seventeenth century and later. As the historical interest in the nation's past grew, initiatives were taken to search out and document all sorts of antiquities and ancient monuments. Records were made of various phenomena related to the history of the parish and the local neighborhood, including relic finds in altars and elsewhere in the churches.

Finally, a limited number of actual relics are still in existence. The total amount is a couple of hundred at most, either in the form of single relics found in an altar, or as part of larger collections of relics from major church institutions. Considering that every church must be assumed to have had one or several relics deposited in the altar, and that the existence of reliquaries indicate that not only major cathedrals and abbey churches, but also local parish churches, could possess relics outside of the altars, the very few that survive represent a minuscule fraction of what has once existed. Most of these are altar relics: tiny fragments of bone, wood, or textile, some labelled but many today anonymous, that are contained in small boxes made from lead or wood that have been found in altar *sepulcra* and subsequently incorporated in museum collections.

A few more significant relics and relic collections have survived as well. In Uppsala Cathedral, the abovementioned relics of Sweden's national saint king Eric, who was killed outside the church of Old Uppsala in 1160, are kept in a shrine that was made in the 1570s on the order of the then king Johan III, who had had the late medieval shrine taken away and melted down. Johan III likewise had a new shrine made for the remains of St. Birgitta of Sweden, as a replacement for an early fifteenth century silver shrine which had also been confiscated and melted down in the early 1570s. The shrine commissioned by Johan III has since disappeared. A skull that of tradition is said to be that of St. Birgitta, together with a skull allegedly from her daughter St. Catherine, and bones from other saints, remain in the Vadstena abbey church, in a wooden shrine that was originally made for the translation of St. Birgitta in 1391. Scientific analyses of the two skulls have, however, resulted in datings that do not agree with the lifetimes of either St. Birgitta or of St. Catherine. As to St. Eric of Sweden in Uppsala, on the other hand, recent analyses reveal that the skeleton does derive from a man of the right age who was beheaded. Hence, the possibility that it is the authentic remains of Erik Jedvardsson, posthumously known as St. Eric of Sweden, that are laid to rest in the cathedral, cannot be ruled out.

A major, and quite wonderful find consists of the almost one hundred relics that were discovered in the early twentieth century in the Turku Cathedral in Finland: part tucked away in a wooden box inside a late medieval shrine construction, part hidden in a walled-up niche in the wall of the cathedral sacristy. Some of the relics were still wrapped in their original linen swathes and labelled with *cedulae* that name in all thirty saints, among them St. Henry of Finland, St. Eric of Sweden, St. Margaret of Antioch, St. Birgitta of Sweden, St. Pancras, and a stone from Gethsemane. The collection has been the object of an interdisciplinary research project since 2007 with the purpose of determining, by means of modern scientific methods, the relics' material substance, age, and origin.⁵

Admittedly, the sources to relic veneration in Sweden and Finland in the Middle Ages are few and far between. Of the thousands of relics once existing in altars and reliquaries only snippets remain. Mentions in written sources are likewise scarce and cannot cover the full extent of the phenomenon as it once unfolded as part of the lived religion of the individuals who turned to the relics with appeals for help from the saints. Paradoxically, among the richest information is what can be gleaned from the confiscation protocols that testify to the dismantling of saints' cults. Nonetheless, taken together, the various sources offer at least a glimpse of the role played by the relics in the devotional life of medieval people in Sweden and Finland. The inclusion of relics as cult manifestations in the database will allow for cross connections with other forms of devotion; a search can combine, for instance, the relics of a specific saint with instances of the same saint's appearance in visual art, or as a patron of a church or altar, or as addressee of prayers and other devotional acts. The database will thus offer the user the possibility to explore the cults of saints in medieval Sweden and Finland from a multitude of perspectives where relics and relic use is but one, albeit vital, element in a much broader picture. A preliminary public version of the *Mapping Saints* database is accessible on <https://saints-public.dh.gu.se>. Please be aware that the present interface is still (2023) under construction and will continue to be developed until the database is formally launched in 2024. The project can be followed on [Twitter](#), and on the [project blog](#).

1. Cf. ELLIS NILSSON (2020); AA.VV. (2023), and the project's webpage: <https://nu.se/en/research/research-projects/mapping-lived-religion-medieval-cults-of-saints-in-sweden-and-finland/>

2. ARNOLD (2014); BOWMAN and VALK (2012); DESROCHE and LE BRAS (1970); HEIMBROCK (2007); LIEPE (2020).

3. See LAHTI (2019) for a thorough study of surviving and documented relic containers in the Nordic region.

4. KRÖTZL (1994).

5. TAAVITSAINEN (2011); TAAVITSAINEN, OINONEN and POSSNERT (2015).

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Sinopses

Synopsis

Georges Kazan

Relic Studies:

Material evidence for a sacred reality

The study of relics provides a unique framework through which to explore the relationship between people and things. Crucially, I would propose, it also provides a means to bridge conceptual and empirical research. Building on my existing research, this article explores three questions *What is a relic? How can we study relics?* and *Why is the study of relics useful?*

In seeking a fuller understanding of what the term 'relic' might mean, I start by exploring its context within the Christian tradition. In Christianity, God's Holy Spirit has the power to work miracles and grants to the faithful the ability to perceive the spiritual truth of Christ (the Word of God), which is hidden to others. The Holy Spirit also enables the faithful to experience spiritual encounters with saints and the Divine through relics, icons, and other associated materials. When such encounters take place, not only the relic or holy thing itself but also its material context (which could serve to identify the relic) and its viewer were blessed with the presence of the Holy Spirit. All three, I conclude, play a critical role in the 'invention' (i.e. finding or identification) of a relic. Christian sources suggest that while the Divine may manifest itself through materiality, it is not restricted by it. Therefore, while the term 'reliquia' may imply a physical connection to the past, I would understand relics in Christianity as material objects that possess a direct connection to a sacred person or event that may be either physical or spiritual (as perceived by the faithful, through the Holy Spirit).

In order to study relics, therefore, scholars should examine not only relic objects but also of their audiences and material context, using both conceptual (e.g. New Materialism) and empirical approaches (e.g. Archaeological Science). While the study of relic audiences in fields such as aesthetics and communications theory has already begun, I propose that cognitive neuroscience and experimental psychology can provide an empirical counterpart to such approaches, and to Philosophy of Mind research more generally. Furthermore, while relics represent sensitive and often endangered material, the study of which merits a number of specific considerations, data collected from these using empirical analyses, such as radiocarbon dating, can also be used to inform conceptual studies.

Relics embody the physical and the metaphysical, bridging the divide between subject and object. As such, they enable us to explore diverse human realities across space and time through the social anthropology of things. The value of relics as a concept therefore extends beyond the domain of established religion, offering multiple insights for the study of modern material culture, including our diverse perceptions of physical and virtual realities.

Estudos de Relíquias:

Evidências materiais de uma realidade sagrada

O estudo de relíquias oferece um quadro único através do qual se pode explorar a relação entre as pessoas e as coisas. Crucialmente, proporia eu, fornece também um meio para fazer a ponte entre a investigação conceptual e empírica. Partindo da minha investigação existente, o presente artigo explora três questões: *O que é uma Relíquia?*, *Como podemos estudar as Relíquias?* e *Porque é que o estudo das relíquias é útil?*

Ao procurar uma compreensão mais abrangente do que o termo “relíquia” pode significar, começo por explorar o seu contexto dentro da tradição cristã. No cristianismo, o Espírito Santo de Deus tem o poder de fazer milagres e concede aos fiéis a capacidade de perceber a verdade espiritual de Cristo (a Palavra de Deus), que está escondida aos outros. O Espírito Santo também permite aos fiéis experienciar encontros espirituais com os santos e o Divino através de relíquias, ícones e outros materiais associados. Quando tais encontros ocorrem, não só a relíquia ou coisa santa em si, mas também o seu contexto material (que poderia servir para identificar a relíquia) e o seu espetador foram abençoados com a presença do Espírito Santo. Os três, concluo, desempenham um papel crítico na “invenção” (isto é, achado ou identificação) de uma relíquia. Fontes cristãs sugerem que, embora o Divino se possa manifestar através da materialidade, não é restringido pela mesma. Assim, embora o termo “relíquia” possa implicar uma ligação física ao passado, entenderia as relíquias no cristianismo como objetos materiais que possuem uma ligação direta a uma pessoa ou evento sagrado que pode ser físico ou espiritual (conforme percebido pelos fiéis, através do Espírito Santo).

Para estudar as relíquias, portanto, os estudiosos devem examinar não só o objeto relíquia mas também o seu público e contexto material, utilizando tanto abordagens conceptuais (por exemplo, Novo Materialismo) como empíricas (por exemplo, Ciência

Arqueológica). Embora o estudo do público das relíquias em campos como a estética e a teoria da comunicação já tenha começado, proponho que a neurociência cognitiva e a psicologia experimental possam fornecer uma contrapartida empírica a tais abordagens, e à investigação da Filosofia da Mente em termos mais gerais. Além disso, embora as relíquias representem material sensível e frequentemente ameaçado, cujo estudo merece uma série de considerações específicas, os dados recolhidos a partir destas utilizando análises empíricas, tais como a datação por radiocarbono, podem também ser utilizados para informar estudos conceptuais.

As relíquias encarnam o físico e o metafísico, colmatando a divisão entre sujeito e objeto. Como tal, permitem-nos explorar diversas realidades humanas no espaço e no tempo, através da antropologia social das coisas. O valor das relíquias como conceito vai portanto para além do domínio da religião estabelecida, oferecendo múltiplas perspectivas para o estudo da cultura material moderna, incluindo as nossas diversas percepções das realidades físicas e virtuais.

Joana Palmeirão, Maria Coutinho, Eduarda Vieira and Teresa Ferreira

Corpi santi in Portugal. An overview

Excavations on 31 May 1578 publicly opened the way to the long-forgotten underground cemeteries of Rome. Consequently, the next three centuries would be marked by the massive exhumations of the skeletons of the first Christian martyrs, called *corpi santi* (holy bodies) or catacomb saints.

The Roman martyrs' bones were first sent unassembled to Portugal, with the documents certifying their authenticity. They were later encased in a particular type of full-body reliquaries, simulating the martyrs' bodies. Shaped with fabric, paper, plaster, wood, or wax, the martyrs' *simulacra* were dressed in richly decorated Baroque clothes as Roman legionaries or virgins and exhibited with the signs of martyrdom. Encouraged by the Council of Trent XXV session's decrees, these sacred bodies were then sent for public veneration in churches and oratories throughout the Western Catholic world. Portugal was no exception. Nevertheless, in the 19th century, archaeological evidence and scientific analysis discredited the blood vessel and the martyrs' bones from the Roman catacombs and exhumations were prohibited in 1881.

In Portugal, the martyrs' *simulacra* have been unnoticed and ignored for decades despite their historical background and outstanding artistic work. Since 2017, Joana Palmeirão's PhD work has focused on the historical and scientific study of *simulacra* in Portugal. While establishing a national inventory, the study of the historical documentation has shown the Roman origins of the sacred bones, their religious value, and the popular devotion associated with them. Besides, scientific research has highlighted the manufacturing techniques and materials adopted in their production. Nevertheless, *corpi santi* are still a topic little explored in Portugal, and the work associated with it is innovative. The Holy Bodies project (2022.01486.PTDC), funded by Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, started on March 2023, will deepen the knowledge on *corpi santi*, especially in *simulacra*, under different approaches and will bring them to the European context.

Corpi santi em Portugal. Uma visão global

Escavações a 31 de maio de 1578 abriram publicamente o caminho para os cemitérios subterrâneos há muito esquecidos de Roma. Consequentemente, os próximos três séculos seriam marcados pelas exumações maciças dos esqueletos dos primeiros mártires cristãos, chamados *corpi santi* (corpos sagrados) ou santos de catacumbas. Os ossos dos mártires romanos foram, primeiro, enviados desmontados para Portugal, com os documentos que atestam a sua autenticidade. Mais tarde, foram encerrados num tipo particular de relicário de corpo inteiro, simulando os corpos dos mártires. Moldados com gaze, papel, gesso, madeira ou cera, os *simulacra* dos mártires foram vestidos com roupas barrocas ricamente decoradas, como legionários romanos ou virgens, e expostos com os sinais do martírio. Encorajados pelos decretos da XXV sessão do Concílio de Trento, estes corpos sagrados foram então enviados para as igrejas e oratórios de todo o mundo católico ocidental para veneração pública. Portugal não foi exceção. No entanto, no século XIX, evidências arqueológicas e análises científicas desacreditaram o vaso sanguíneo e os ossos dos mártires das catacumbas romanas, e as exumações foram proibidas em 1881.

Em Portugal, os simulacros dos mártires têm passado despercebidos ou sido mesmo ignorados durante décadas, apesar do seu contexto histórico e do trabalho artístico notável que encerram. Desde 2017, o trabalho de doutoramento de Joana Palmeirão tem-se focado no estudo histórico e científico de *simulacra* em Portugal. Ao estabelecer um inventário nacional, o estudo da documentação histórica tem mostrado as origens romanas dos ossos sagrados, o seu valor religioso e a devoção popular a eles associada. Além disso, a investigação científica tem destacado as técnicas de fabrico e os materiais adotados na sua produção. No entanto, os *corpi santi* são ainda um tema pouco explorado em Portugal e o trabalho a ele associado é inovador. O projeto Holy Bodies (2022.01486.PTDC), financiado pela Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, iniciado em março de 2023, aprofundará os conhecimentos sobre os *corpi santi*, especialmente os *simulacra*, sob diferentes abordagens e trá-los-á para o contexto europeu.

Mariano Cabaço

O Património das Misericórdias – Nova Realidade – Novos Desafios

As Misericórdias são detentoras de um património único em Portugal. Os mais de quinhentos anos de existência e atividade contínua, permitiram-lhes reunir imóveis de grande interesse arquitetónico e obras de arte valiosas de enorme significado e simbologia.

Os imóveis e bens patrimoniais que foram edificados para suporte da sua ação quotidiana ou vieram à posse das Misericórdias por doações e legados, são merecedores da maior atenção, constituindo verdadeiros testemunhos da ação material e espiritual destas instituições.

Tanto pela diversidade, como pela tipologia das proveniências, este património caracteriza-se por uma grande singularidade, pois representa a vontade de um povo que, em cada comunidade, se organizou para auxílio dos mais necessitados. Um património que fala por si, que foi construído e reunido com o objetivo de serviço público. É por isso que este património imóvel, móvel, documental e imaterial, é diferente e resiste no tempo.

Falamos de um património único de grande importância artística e cultural para Portugal.

A especificidade dos bens das Misericórdias, resultado da sua atividade, reúne elementos antropológicos e sociais que dificilmente encontramos noutras instituições. É perante esta realidade que a União das Misericórdias Portuguesas, em boa hora, decidiu encetar a ambiciosa tarefa de fazer o levantamento e inventário dos bens patrimoniais das Misericórdias. Graças a este trabalho, e neste contexto, é agora possível conhecer uma realidade que permanecia localizada e por vezes oculta em muitas instituições. A intervenção efetuada em cada instituição permite identificar acervos específicos e atuar de forma criteriosa sobre estas novas realidades, como atesta a participação da União das Misericórdias Portuguesas no projeto *reliquiarum* que veio permitir um olhar mais atento à realidade dos relicários e relíquias em posse das Misericórdias portuguesas.

A partir de um trabalho, ainda em curso, é possível, atualmente, identificar já cerca de uma centena e meia de relicários nas Misericórdias. A tipologia destas peças e a sua proveniência, bem como a sua verdadeira utilização nas instituições, está, na maioria dos casos, por decifrar, pois na ausência de estudos aprofundados e documentação acessível é arriscado avançar com caracterizações definitivas.

Neste sentido, impõe-se um reforço do trabalho da União das Misericórdias Portuguesas, neste campo de conhecimento, onde o novo olhar que se pretende no âmbito do presente projeto, incentiva a que se desenvolvam mais pesquisas e maiores investigações.

Para além da natural integração da informação dos relicários e relíquias das Misericórdias no Portal *reliquiarum*, cumpre-nos, junto dos responsáveis destas instituições, promover uma maior sensibilização para o estudo e valorização destas peças, pois a presença das relíquias e relicários nas Misericórdias, o seu contexto e significado, bem como as devoções a elas associadas, permitirá uma nova abordagem à história destas instituições.

The Misericórdias Heritage – New Reality – New Challenges

The *Misericórdias* are holders of a unique heritage in Portugal. More than five hundred years of existence and continuous activity have allowed them to accrue buildings of great architectural interest and valuable works of art of enormous significance and symbolism.

The buildings and patrimonial goods that were built to support their daily action or came into the possession of the *Misericórdias* through donations and legacies are worthy of the greatest attention, constituting true testimonies of the material and spiritual action of these institutions.

Both because of its diversity and the type of provenance, this heritage is characterised by a great uniqueness, as it represents the will of a people who, in each community, have organised themselves to help those most in need. A heritage that speaks for itself, that was built and brought together for the purpose of public service. That is why this immovable, movable, documentary and intangible heritage is different and endures over time.

We are talking about a unique heritage of great artistic and cultural importance for Portugal.

The specificity of the assets of the *Misericórdias*, the result of their activity, brings together anthropological and social elements that are difficult to find in other institutions.

It is in view of this reality that the *União das Misericórdias Portuguesas* (the Portuguese *Misericórdias* Union) decided to undertake the ambitious task of surveying and inventorying the assets of the *Misericórdias*. Thanks to this work, and within this context, it is now possible to know a reality that remained localised and sometimes hidden in many institutions. The intervention carried out in each institution makes it possible to identify specific collections and to act carefully on these new realities, as attested by the participation of *União das Misericórdias Portuguesas* in the *reliquiarum* project which allowed a closer look at the reality of the reliquaries and relics in the possession of the Portuguese *Misericórdias*.

Based on work that is still in progress, it is currently possible to identify around one hundred and fifty reliquaries in the *Misericórdias*. The typology of these pieces and their provenance, as well as their true use in the institutions, is, in most cases, undecipherable, since in the absence of in-depth studies and accessible documentation it is risky to advance with definitive characterisations.

In this sense, it is necessary to reinforce the work of the *União das Misericórdias Portuguesas*, in this field of knowledge, where the new look that is intended in the scope of this project encourages more research and greater investigation.

Besides the natural integration of the information on the reliquaries and relics of the *Misericórdias* on the *reliquiarum* Portal, it is up to us, together with those in charge of these institutions, to promote a greater awareness for the study and valorisation of these pieces, since the presence of the relics and reliquaries in the *Misericórdias*, their context and meaning, as well as the devotions associated with them, will allow a new approach to the history of these institutions.

Alberto Saviello

Global Bones and Local Pains. The 1578 Translation Procession of the Roman Relics in Mexico City

The celebration held in 1578 by the Jesuits in Mexico City to honor the receipt of a shipment of a relic gift from the Pope in Rome was one of the largest public events in New Spain during the early modern period. The eight-day festivities – consisting of theatrical performances, poetry contests, dancing, and playful tournaments – began with a great procession on All Saints' Day (November 1), whereby the relics were solemnly transferred from the city's cathedral to the Jesuit Colegio Máximo de San Pedro y San Pablo. Based on historical descriptions, the article reconstructs the preparation and orchestration, the route and course of the procession. In doing so, it explores the meanings attached to the relics in the context of the Jesuit mission and the local circumstances in the capital of the viceroyalty. The article shows that the translation of the saintly relics represented as complete a transfer as possible of the tradition and structure of the *Ecclesia Romana* to Mexico City. From a global perspective the bones of the saints served to construct a Christian-Jesuit network. Through the relics, Mexico became the Latin American heiress of Holy Roman tradition and should subsequently transform herself from a recipient to a transmitter of sacred bodies. On a local level the value and significance of the body relics were highly context dependent: in view of the destruction of the coterminous capital of Tenochtitlan by the Spaniards only two generations prior and the enormous inequalities in New Spanish society, processing and overcoming such experiences of pain became a central theme of the relic procession. The article argues that the solemn procession, especially of the relics of Christian martyrs, served to sublimate and give Christian meaning to the enormous experiences of misery and pain of the local population.

Ossos Globais e Dores Locais. A Procissão de Translação das Relíquias Romanas de 1578 na Cidade do México

A celebração realizada em 1578 pelos Jesuítas na Cidade do México para honrar a recepção de uma oferta de relíquias realizada pelo Papa em Roma foi um dos maiores

eventos públicos na Nova Espanha durante o início do período moderno. As festividades de oito dias – consistindo em representações teatrais, concursos de poesia, danças e torneios lúdicos – começaram com uma grande procissão no Dia de Todos os Santos (1 de novembro), na qual as relíquias foram solenemente transferidas da catedral da cidade para o Colégio Jesuíta Máximo de São Pedro e São Paulo. Com base em descrições históricas, o artigo reconstrói a preparação e orquestração, o percurso e o decurso da procissão. Ao fazê-lo, explora os significados ligados às relíquias no contexto da missão jesuítica e as circunstâncias locais na capital do vice-reinado. O artigo mostra que a translação das relíquias sagradas representou uma transferência tão completa quanto possível da tradição e estrutura da *Ecclesia Romana* para a Cidade do México. De uma perspectiva global, os ossos dos santos serviram para construir uma rede cristã-jesuíta. Através das relíquias, o México tornou-se o herdeiro latino-americano da santa tradição romana e deveria subsequentemente transformar-se de recetor em transmissor de corpos sagrados. A nível local, o valor e o significado das relíquias corporais eram altamente dependentes do contexto: tendo em conta a destruição da capital contígua de Tenochtitlan pelos espanhóis apenas duas gerações antes e as enormes desigualdades na sociedade da Nova Espanha, processar e superar tais experiências de dor tornou-se um tema central da procissão de relíquias. O artigo defende que a procissão solene, especialmente das relíquias de mártires cristãos, serviu para sublimar e dar sentido cristão às enormes experiências de miséria e dor da população local.

Lena Liepe

*Mapping Saint's Cults in Medieval Sweden and Finland:
A Digital Humanities Project*

The article presents the Swedish digital humanities project *Mapping Lived Religion*. The objective of the project is to build a database on medieval cults of saints in the Swedish Ecclesiastical Province of Uppsala, including today's Finland. The database will be an open-access, online resource to art historical, archaeological, and historical documents on the cult of saints, with a mapping component. It will provide open access to a broad range of data related to the cults of saints in the medieval Ecclesiastical Province of Uppsala, which included most of present-day Sweden plus Finland. Chronologically, the database covers the time span from 1164, when the ecclesiastical province was formed, to 1593 when the Swedish Protestant Reformation was consolidated.

With the database, different kinds of data can be interlinked and combined to provide a fuller understanding of the medieval and early modern cults of saints. Key to the development of the database is the project's collaboration with cultural heritage institutions, giving access to data from digitized cultural heritage collections that are thus included in the resource and made publicly accessible. At the start of the project, the state of this source material varied from unedited/undigitized to digitized, and a large portion of the project work has involved editing, transcribing, translating of sources, and manual data input.

The key concept of the database is mapping, building on the location of the saints' cults in time and space as the determining parameters, and on so-called cult manifestations as the basic units. Every manifestation of a veneration of a saint, in a particular place and with a particular content, constitutes a cult manifestation and becomes an entry in the database. Each cult manifestation is linked to coordinates on a digital map where the geographical location of the manifestation is visualized. Each cult manifestation is also recorded with a date interval covering the period it was in function.

Saints' relics make up a vital part of the data, and the article gives a state-of-the-art account of the sources. A limited number of relics are still in existence, but the major sources of knowledge regarding relics and relic use are either written testimony – letters, wills, relic lists, miracle collections, and confiscation protocols – or material indices such as extant but empty reliquaries, and altar boxes for relics.

The theoretical platform of the project is 'lived religion,' a concept that stands for the exploration lay religiosity and its manifestations in the daily lives of ordinary people. Lived religion focuses on the attitudes, customs, and experiences of individuals: religion as practice, rather than as institutionally defined creeds and prescribed behavior. Since the veneration of relics was never strictly formalized and regulated by the Church in the Middle Ages but instead prevailed as a popular phenomenon largely initiated by the lay, it represents a manifestation of lived religion *par excellence*.

Mapear os cultos de santos na Suécia e Finlândia medievais: um projeto de Humanidades Digitais

O artigo apresenta o projeto de humanidades digitais sueco *Mapping Lived Religion* (Mapeamento da Religião Vivida). O objetivo do projeto consiste em construir uma base de dados sobre cultos medievais de santos na Província Eclesiástica Sueca de Uppsala, incluindo a atual Finlândia. A base de dados será um recurso online de acesso livre a documentos artísticos, arqueológicos e históricos sobre o culto de santos, com uma componente de mapeamento. Fornecerá acesso livre a uma vasta gama de dados relacionados com os cultos de santos na Província Eclesiástica Medieval de Uppsala, que incluiu a maior parte da Suécia mais a Finlândia atual. Cronologicamente, a base de dados cobre o período de 1164, quando a província eclesiástica foi formada, até 1593, quando a Reforma Protestante Sueca foi consolidada.

Com a base de dados, diferentes tipos de dados podem ser interligados e combinados para oferecer uma compreensão mais abrangente dos cultos medievais e dos primeiros cultos modernos de santos. A chave para o desenvolvimento da base de dados é a colaboração do projeto com instituições do patrimônio cultural, dando acesso a dados de coleções digitalizadas do patrimônio cultural que são assim incluídos no recurso e tornados acessíveis ao público. No início do projeto, o estado deste material-fonte variou de não editado/não digitalizado a digitalizado, e uma grande parte do trabalho do projeto envolveu a edição, transcrição, tradução de fontes e introdução manual de dados.

O conceito chave da base de dados é o mapeamento, baseado na localização dos cultos dos santos no tempo e no espaço como os parâmetros determinantes, e nas chamadas manifestações de culto como unidades básicas. Cada manifestação de

veneração de um santo, num determinado lugar e com um determinado conteúdo, constitui uma manifestação de culto e torna-se uma entrada na base de dados. Cada manifestação de culto é ligada a coordenadas num mapa digital onde a localização geográfica da manifestação é visualizada. Cada manifestação de culto é também registada com um intervalo de datas que cobre o período em que esteve em função. As relíquias de santos constituem uma parte vital dos dados e o artigo oferece um relato atualizado das fontes. Um número limitado de relíquias ainda persiste, mas as principais fontes de conhecimento quanto a relíquias e à sua utilização consistem em testemunhos escritos – cartas, testamentos, listas de relíquias, coleções de milagres e protocolos de apreensão – ou índices materiais, tais como relicários existentes mas vazios e caixas-altar para relíquias.

A plataforma teórica do projeto é a “religião vivida”, um conceito que representa a exploração da religiosidade laica e as suas manifestações na vida quotidiana das pessoas comuns. A religião vivida centra-se nas atitudes, costumes e experiências dos indivíduos: a religião como prática e não como credos institucionalmente definidos e comportamento prescrito. Uma vez que a veneração das relíquias nunca foi estritamente formalizada e regulada pela Igreja na Idade Média, mas antes prevaleceu como um fenómeno popular largamente iniciado pelos leigos, esta representa uma manifestação da religião vivida por excelência.

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