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Relics as Resource: Dependency from Holy Remains

This paper examines the function of relics in creating, maintaining, and changing political and religious dependencies in late antiquity and the early middle ages.[1] Understanding the function of relics in this context requires two initial steps: firstly, the resource itself, the relics, is presented in their essential features. Secondly, the most important gatekeepers who could come into possession of these holy remains are introduced.[2] The handling of relics by various gatekeepers in the eighth century is then, as a third step, examined more closely. This period is particularly important for understanding how relics functioned as a resource of power, both religious and political, as the triadic relation between Rome, Constantinople, and the Frankish Empire was completely reconstituted during this time. To analyze this re-adjustment, including the abandonment and re-creation of alliances in the eighth century, this paper uses relics as a *tertium comparationis* at different levels. This focus on relics is justified, as there was apparently a permanent agreement in late antiquity and the early middle ages to use this resource to express such alliances. In the fourth and final step, it is then summarized, that although the religious and political dependency relationships shifted constantly, especially in the eighth century, all actors acted inside the traditional continuum and sometimes exhibited more, sometimes less flexibility within it.

1 Since the focus of this paper lies on dependencies, it must be emphasized that the theological role of relics will only be marginally addressed, and their liturgical function will not be discussed.

2 Resources and gatekeepers are considered to have decisive functions in asymmetric dependency relationships, following Julia Winnebeck, Ove Sutter, Adrian Hermann, Christoph Antweiler and Stephan Conermann, "On Asymmetrical Dependency," *Concept Paper* 1, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (2021): 2–3, https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/images/pdf-files/concept-papers/bcdss_cp_1-_on-asymmetrical-dependency.pdf [accessed 25.03.2024]; Christoph Antweiler, "On Dependence, Dependency, and a Dependency Turn," *Discussion Paper* 1, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (2022), https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/images/pdf-files/discussion-papers/dp-1-antweiler.pdf [accessed 25.03.2024].

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1 Resource

Strictly speaking, there should not be any body relics at all.[3] The body of the deceased was considered sacrosanct in antiquity and thus also in late antiquity.[4] Adherence to the idea of sacrosanct graves can be observed in Rome. There, even after the legalization of Christianity, the martyrs were venerated at their tombs. For example, under Constantine, the tomb of St Peter was monumentalized as a place of veneration[5] and Christians also continued to visit the graves in the catacombs.[6] Damasus I, Roman bishop in the fourth century (366–384),[7] is known for developing and expanding the veneration of martyrs. For instance, his measures can be seen in the more than fifty funerary poems from his time that were placed at the burial locations of the martyrs.[8]

3 On the definition of resource used here in the context of dependency, see fn. 2.

4 On the few examples of relics before Christianity, see Andreas Hartmann, *Zwischen Relikt und Reliquie. Ortsbezogene Erinnerungspraktiken in antiken Gesellschaften*, Studien zur Alten Geschichte 11 (Berlin: Verlag Antike, 2010); Andreas Hartmann, "Reliquie," in R*eallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 28, eds. Georg Schöllgen et al. (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 2018): 1170–205. On the *topos* of the *corpus incorruptum*, i.e., the sanctity of the saints' bodies, and the practical realities associated with it, see Arnold Angenendt, "Corpus incorruptum. Eine Leitidee der mittelalterlichen Reliquienverehrung," *Saeculum* 42 (1991): 320–48 and Ursula Swinarski, "Der ganze und der zerteilte Körper. Zu zwei gegensätzlichen Vorstellungen im mittelalterlichen Reliquienkult," in *Hagiographie im Kontext. Wirkungsweisen und Möglichkeiten historischer Auswertung*, eds. Dieter R. Bauer and Klaus Herbers (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2000): 58–68.

5 Recently Hugo Brandenburg, *Die konstantinische Petersbasilika am Vatikan in Rom. Anmerkungen zu ihrer Chronologie, Architektur und Ausstattung* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2017).

6 Vincenzo Fiocchi Nicolai, Fabrizio Bisconti and Danilo Mazzoleni, *Roms christliche Katakomben. Geschichte – Bilderwelt – Inschriften* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 1998).

7 For the biography of Damasus, see Ursula Reutter, *Damasus, Bischof von Rom (366–384). Leben und Werk* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009). A summary is offered by Markus Löx, *Monumenta Sanctorum. Rom und Mailand als Zentren des frühen Christentums: Märtyrerkult und Kirchenbau unter den Bischöfen Damasus und Ambrosius*, Spätantike – Frühes Christentum – Byzanz. Kunst im ersten Jahrtausend. Studien und Perspektiven 39 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2013): 25–32 (with additional literature).

8 For the *Epigrammata damasiana* see Ernst Schäfer, *Die Bedeutung der Epigramme des Papstes Damasus I. für die Geschichte der Heiligenverehrung* (Rome: Ephemerides Liturgicae, 1932); Antonio Ferrua, *Epigrammata damasiana* (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1942); Jacques Fontaine, "Damase poète théodosien: L'imaginaire poétique des Epigrammata," in *Saecularia damasiana. Atti del convegno internazionale per il XVI centenario della morte di papa Damaso I*, Studi di Antichità Cristiana 39 (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1986): 113–45; Paul-Albert Février, "Un plaidoyer pour Damase: Les inscriptions des nécropoles romaines," in *Institutions, Société et Vie Politique dans l'Empire Romain au IVe Siècle ap. J.-C.*, eds. Michel Christol et al. (Rome: Publications de l'École française de Rome, 1992): 497–506; Lucrezia Spera, "Interventi di papa Damaso nei santuari delle catacombe romane: Il ruolo della committenza private," *Bessarione* 11 (1994): 111–27; Marianne Sághy, "Prayer at the Tomb of the Martyrs? The Damasan Epigrams," in *La preghiera nel tardo antico. Dalle origini ad Agostino*, ed. Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1999): 519–37; Marianne Sághy, "'Scinditur in partes populus': Pope Damasus and the Martyrs of Rome," *Early Medieval Europe* 9 (2000): 273–87; Gabriel Wesch-Klein, "Damasus I., der

The funerary poems were part of an architectural setting of the venerated tombs, which were also decorated with images and specially illuminated by a particular lighting arrangement.[9] What is striking about Damasus' known measures is that, although he gave the saints' tombs an architectural and decorative framework, he left the burials themselves untouched. Even where elaborate interventions were necessary, no manipulation of the burials can be observed: Damasus quite obviously respected the sanctity of the tombs and limited his architectural interventions to the catacombs themselves. Damasus' actions suggest that an essential aspect of the Roman concept of saints was their connection to the original place of their burial.

Accounts of the subsequent centuries show that Rome continued its adherence to the sanctity of graves, which becomes evident upon reference to three examples:[10]

– In 519, Justinian (527–565), not yet Emperor but nephew of the one then-reigning, was a high dignitary and the likely successor to the throne. He asked Pope Hormisdas (514–523) to send him relics of the apostles Peter and Paul for the church he had built in his palace in Constantinople. We learn what kind of relics Justi-

Vater der päpstlichen Epigraphik," in *Quellen, Kritik, Interpretation. Festgabe zum 60. Geburtstag von Hubert Mordeck*, ed. Thomas Martin Buck (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1999): 1–30; Reutter, *Damasus, Bischof von Rom*. The frequently encountered number of 59 preserved or surviving epigrams goes back to Ferrua's edition of the *Epigramma damasiana*, although not all the epigrams listed there were once attached to Roman saints' graves (see Steffen Diefenbach, *Römische Erinnerungsräume. Heiligenmemoria und kollektive Identitäten im Rom des 3. bis 5. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* [Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007]: 289 [252]). The inscriptions always name Pope Damasus, mention his deep veneration for the Roman martyrs, whose martyrdom is recounted in most cases, often describe the decorative measures, and frequently remark that the Pope himself discovered the tombs of the martyrs in remote areas of the catacombs.

9 Francesco Tolotti, "Il problema dell'altare e della tomba del martire in alcune opere di papa Damaso," in *Studien zur spätantiken und byzantinischen Kunst. Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann gewidmet*, vol. 2, eds. Otto Feld and Urs Peschlow (Bonn: Habelt, 1986): 51–71; Spera, "Interventi di papa Damaso nei santuari delle catacombe romane"; Albrecht Weiland, "Conposuit tumulum sanctorum limina adornans. Die Ausgestaltung des Grabes der Hl. Felix und Adauctus durch Papst Damasus in der Commodillakatakombe in Rom," in *Historiam pictura refert. Miscellanea in onore di Alejandro Recio Veganzones O.F.M.*, ed. Alejandro Recio Veganzones (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1994): 625–45; Jean Guyon, "Damase et l'illustration des martyrs: Les accents de la dévotion et l'enjeu d'une pastorale," in *Martyrium in Multidisciplinary Perspective. Memorial Louis Reekmans*, eds. Mathijs Lamberigts and Peter van Deun (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995): 157–77; Norbert Zimmermann, "Inhalte und Intentionen bildlicher Kunst in Sakralräumen zwischen Damasus und Sixtus III.," in *Die Päpste und Rom zwischen Spätantike und Mittelalter. Formen päpstlicher Machtentfaltung*, eds. Norbert Zimmermann, Tanja Michalsky, Alfried Wieczorek, and Stefan Weinfurter (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2017): 115–42.

10 These examples are frequently cited, e.g., by Franz Alto Bauer, *Das Bild der Stadt Rom im Frühmittelalter. Papststiftungen im Spiegel des Liber Pontificalis von Gregor dem Dritten bis zu Leo dem Dritten* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004): 121; Gia Toussaint, "Reliquienverehrung in Rom. Von ruhenden und reisenden Leibern," in *Wunder Roms im Blick des Nordens. Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ausstellungskatalog Paderborn*, ed. Christoph Stiegemann (Paderborn: Michael Imhof, 2017): 154–61, here: 157; Martina Hartl, *Leichen, Asche und Gebeine. Der frühchristliche Umgang mit dem toten Körper und die Anfänge des Reliquienkultes* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2018): 119–21, 168–69.

nian sought from an accompanying letter from the papal legate in Constantinople. The letter specifies that Justinian wanted to receive body relics *secundum morem Graecorum* but that it had already been explained to him that this was against Roman custom.[11]

– Empress Constantina (*ca.* 560–605), the wife of Emperor Maurice (582–602), experienced something similar. In 594, she had made a request to Gregory I (590–604), then reigning as the Roman pontiff, that he send her the head or another part of the body of St Paul. The occasion for this request was the erection of a church dedicated to the apostle in the imperial palace in Constantinople. Although Gregory, as he writes, longed to take orders from the Empress, he had to refuse her wish. Instead of body relics, the Pope offered the Empress a modest compensation: splinters of the miracle-working chains with which Paul was bound.[12]
– The Queen of the Lombards, Theodelinda (565–627), also saw her requests for the body relics of Roman saints rebuffed. She also sent a priest to Rome during the reign of Gregory I (590–604) to bring the saints' relics to Monza. When the priest recognized the impossibility of fulfilling the queen's order, he collected the oil from the lamps that burned before the martyrs' tombs and offered them as an alternative to the body relics.[13]

These three examples clearly show that as late as the sixth century, Rome did not give away its saints in the form of body relics, even if the highest dignitaries requested this valuable and scarce resource. Nevertheless, as the letters also clearly show, there was no reason to prevent the distribution of contact relics.[14] Rome was, therefore, quite open to promoting the cult of Roman saints elsewhere, but this was not supposed to be done on the basis of body relics, which had to remain in the city as an

11 Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum 35.2: *Epistulae Imperatorum Pontificum* 218, ed. Kaiserl. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1898): 679–80. For the church of St Peter and Paul, that was nevertheless built by Justinian, see Sabine Feist, "Längs- und Zentralbau in justinianischer Zeit. Die Doppelkirchenanlage der Heiligen Petrus und Paulus und Sergios und Bacchus in Istanbul," in *Anekdota Byzantina. Studien zur byzantinischen Geschichte und Kultur. Festschrift für Albrecht Berger*, eds. Isabel Grimm-Stadelmann, Alexander Riehle, Raimondo Tocci, and Martin Marko Vučetić (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023): 117–26.

12 Gregory the Great, *Registrum epistularum* IV, 30.

13 An index of these oil relics is kept in the treasury of the cathedral in Monza (Alessandro Sepulcri, "I papyri della basilica di Monza e le reliquie inviate da Roma," *Archivio storico lambardo* 30 [1903]: 241–62).

14 Petrine contact relics were probably created already in the time of Pope Symmachus (498–514) (Thomas F.X. Noble, "Michele Maccarrone on the Medieval Papacy," *The Catholic Historical Review* 80 [1994]: 518–33, here: 527); see also Franz Alto Bauer, "Saint Peter's as a Place of Collective Memory in Late Antiquity," in *Rom in der Spätantike. Historische Erinnerung im städtischen Raum*, eds. Ralf Behrwald and Christian Witschel, Heidelberger althistorische Beiträge und epigraphische Studien 51 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2012): 155–70, here: 160–61.

exclusive resource. However, even the contact relics, which could be multiplied more or less limitlessly, were not available to everyone. It is known, for example, that the church of St Peter in Spoleto had to manage without relics. In their place, the location referred to the presence of the Apostle through its *patrocinium*.[15]

With this strict adherence to the sanctity of the graves, Rome was a rather exceptional case, as there are numerous examples where the bodies of the saints were no longer *corpora integra*, where graves were changed or relocated. An early example – even if the dating of the text is disputed – is the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp.[16] We know from this written source about the life and death of Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, who was supposed to be burnt for his faith but was finally killed by a knife because the flames could not touch him.[17] Interestingly, the report does not end with Polycarp's death but continues and asserts that the bishop's body should not be given to the Christian community.

> Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he put the body in front of everyone, as was their custom, and burnt it. And thus, we later collected his remains which were more valuable to us than precious stones and finer than gold proved in fire, and we buried them in a fitting spot.[18]

The importance of bodily remains is clear, even in this early source: they are more valuable than precious stones and more esteemed than gold.[19]

15 Franz Alto Bauer, "Sankt Peter – Erinnerungsort in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter," in *Erinnerungsorte der Antike die römische Welt*, eds. Elke Stein-Hölkeskamp and Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2006): 626–41, here: 638; Bauer, "Saint Peter's as a Place of Collective Memory in Late Antiquity": 161–62.

16 It is possible that the text was written shortly after the event (*ca.* 160 AD) or that it was not written down until the third or fourth century (Boudewijn Dehandschutter, "The Martyrium Polycarpi: A Century of Research," in *Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*, vol. 2, ed. Wolfgang Haase [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993]: 485–522; Candida R. Moss, "On the Dating of Polycarp: Rethinking the Place of the Martyrdom of Polycarp in the History of Christianity," *Early Christianity* 1 [2010]: 539–74; Otto Zwierlein, *Die Urfassung der Martyria Polycarpi et Pionii und das Corpus Polycarpianum*, vol. 1, Editiones criticae [Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014]).

17 Edition and commentary are provided by Zwierlein, *Die Urfassung*, vol. 1.

18 Martyrium Polycarpi 18 (translation after Zwierlein, *Die Urfassung*, vol. 1*:* 11).

19 A very similar significance of the burial of the bodies of the martyrs or at least their remains as in Polycarp's account of martyrdom is also expressed in the letter of the Christian communities of Lyon and Vienne to communities in Asia and Phrygia (Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca: 1537) (see Hans Reinhard Seeliger and Wolfgang Wischmeyer, *Märtyrerliteratur* [Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015]: 47–86; Boudewijn Dehandschutter, "A Community of Martyrs: Religious Identity and the Case of the Martyrs of Lyon and Vienne," in *More than a Memory: The Discourse of Martyrdom and the Construction of Christian Identity in the History of Christianity*, eds. Johan Leemans and Jürgen Mettepennigen [Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2005]: 3–22; Johann Evangelist Hafner, "Religiöser Alltag der Christen in Lyon und seine Unterbrechung," in *Religiöser Alltag in der Spätantike*, eds. Peter Eich and Eike Faber, Potsdamer altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge 44 [Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2013]: 225–42).

The expectations that were associated with relics and their veneration – why the aforementioned requests were even made by members of the imperial house – can be seen in the statements of Church fathers and Church historians[20]:

- Gregory of Nazianzus (329–390), for example, wrote in the fourth century: '[. . .] of whom even the drops of the blood and little relics of their passion produce equal effect with their bodies.'[21]
- Theodoret of Cyrus (393–460) emphasized in the fifth century: 'Although the body has been severed, grace has remained undivided, and this tiny piece of a relic has a power equal to that which the martyr would have had if he had never been carved up.'[22]

According to these passages, the bodily remains, the relics, and even the smallest particles of their bodies were understood as expressions of the saint's power, who had now moved close to God. The relics formed a bridge between the people who remained on earth and heaven. Although the saint was in God's heavenly kingdom, he was also present on earth through his relics: he could be contacted. Consequently, the relics of the saint, like the saint himself, could have wonder-working effects. The cult of the martyrs in late antiquity, this is what Peter Brown has decisively identified, was based on this idea.[23]

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20 Already early Christian exegetes such as Origen and Lactantius emphasize the respectful treatment of the dead body (Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 8, 30; Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones*, 6, 12, 25–26, 3). This view is also shared by Augustine (Augustine, *De civitate dei* 1, 12–13; *De cura cura pro mortuis gerenda* 3, 5), but he also stresses sometimes how unimportant it actually is how or whether martyrs are buried (Augustine, *De cura pro mortuis gerenda* 6, 8) (see also Hartl, *Leichen, Asche und Gebeine*: 15–18). Despite this theological interpretation of the cult of relics, the question of its existence is also disputed in research: Cyril Mango, for example, states: 'The cult of saint's relics, i.e. their bodily parts, is – to me at least – one of the most puzzling manifestations of Early Christianity' (Cyril Mango, "Preface," in *Studies in the Cult of Relics in Byzantium up to 1204*, ed. John Wortley [Farnham: Routledge, 2009]: IX–X, here: IX).

21 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 4, 69 (translation in Julian the Emperor, *Containing Gregory Nazianzen's two Invectives and Libanius' Monody. With Julian's Extant Theosophical Works*, trans. Charles William King [London: George Bell and Sons, 1888]: 39).

22 Theodoret of Cyrus, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 8, 10–11 (translation in Theodoretus, *Graecarum affectionum curatio*, trans. Thomas P. Halton [New York: Newman Press, 2013]).

23 Peter Brown, *The Cult of Saints. Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). In addition to the theological interpretation, there are, of course, other aspects to consider. From a socio-historical perspective, for example, the function of the saints as intercessors for the faithful before God is discussed as an analogy to late antique and early medieval social structures (Stefan Rebenich, "Wohltäter und Heilige. Von der heidnischen zur christlichen Patronage," in *Epochenwandel? Kunst und Kultur zwischen Antike und Mittelalter*, eds. Franz Alto Bauer and Norbert Zimmermann, Sonderband der Antiken Welt [Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2011]: 27–35). Furthermore, the question of ownership and prestige of relics is comprehensively examined (e.g., by Holger A. Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz. Die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland* [Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004]), as well as the importance

However, it was by no means the case that divided bodies or relics only played a role when the bodies of the saints were destroyed by martyrdom. There were also intentional divisions of what were actually *corpora integra* of saints. Ambrose, bishop of Milan (374–397) and contemporary of Damasus I is one of the best-known protagonists of distributing saints' bodies.[24] The various ways Ambrose found to distribute such relics can be traced in the church of Sant'Ambrogio in Milan.[25]

- For the consecration of the church in 386 / 387, Ambrose translocated the bones of the two Milanese city saints, Gervasius and Protasius, from their nearby original burial place to the church.[26]
- The bishop of Milan went one step further and ordered himself to be buried with the two saints – a breaking of taboos for that time.[27]
- The bodies of the martyrs were by no means left intact when transported into the church, but Ambrose divided them and sent them throughout the late antique world.[28]

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and function of relics for late antique cities (Michel Kaplan, "Le saint, le village et la cité," in *Les saints et leur sanctuaire à Byzance. Textes, images et monuments*, eds. Catherine Jolivet-Lévy, Michel Kaplan, and Jean-Pierre Sodini [Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1993]: 81–94; Dennis Trout, "Saints, Identity, and the City," in *Late Ancient Christianity*, ed. Virginia Burrus [Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2005]: 165–87). Recently, the relationship of the faithful to their own object culture and sacred practices has also been examined in greater detail (Karl-Heinz Kohl, *Die Macht der Dinge. Geschichte und Theorie sakraler Objekte* [Munich: C.H. Beck, 2003]; Torsten Cress, *Sakrotope – Studien zur materiellen Dimension religiöser Praktiken* [Bielefeld: transcript, 2019]).

24 Essential to the biography of the Bishop of Milan are still Neil B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan. Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1994).; Ernst Dassmann, *Ambrosius von Mailand. Leben und Werk* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 2004). A summary is given by Löx, *Monumenta Sanctorum*: 32–42. Relic translations existed already before Ambrose. One of the earliest known examples occurred in Antioch, where Caesar Gallus had the relics of the martyr and former bishop Babylas brought from a cemetery outside the city to a martyrdom built for him in Daphne around the middle of the fourth century (the translation of the relics of St Babylas is reported by Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5, 39, 4 and Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5, 19, 13–14. See also Hartl, *Leichen, Asche und Gebeine*: 142–47 with a summary of the events and additional literature).

25 Recently Ivan Foletti, *Oggetti, Reliquie, Migranti. La Basilica Ambrosiana e il Culto dei suo Santi (386–972)* (Rome: Viella, 2018).

26 Ambrose reports in a letter that the people had asked for martyrs' bones on the occasion of the consecration of the basilica (Ambrose, *Epistula* 77, 1–13). A paragraph of the Codex Theodosianus (CTh.9.17.7), which was written shortly before (386), actually forbade such translations.

27 Löx, *Monumenta Sanctorum*: 109–11. Ambrose comments in his letters that the place beneath the altar would actually belong to him (Ambrose, *Epistula* 77, 13). For a critical review of previous research on the original burials of Ambrose, Gervasius and Protasius and a new reconstruction, see Jacob Alois Knechtel, "Porphyr, Heilige und ein Bischof? Die spätantike Grablege des Ambrosius zwischen Heiligen- und Forschungsmythen," in *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 66 (2023): 46–75.

28 E.g., to Florence, Nola, Fundi, Rouen, Brescia, Concordia, Aquileia (Diefenbach, *Römische Erinnerungsräume*: 361 (131); Hartl, *Leichen, Asche und Gebeine*: 75–77).

Ambrose's systematic and excessive division of the saints' bodies not only aimed to spread the cult of Gervasius and Protasius; it also created ties between different communities and cities – the Milanese relics henceforth served as altar relics at their places of destination. Interestingly, relics of the Milanese city patrons were also sent to Rome and served there as altar relics of the church with the titulus Vestinae.[29] The presence of these artefacts in Rome shows that although the eternal city did not share any of its own body relics, it was generous enough to import foreign ones.[30]

This overview of relics as a resource in the late antique and early medieval world shows that relics were accepted as wonder-working and that they were thought to be able to establish a connection between the earthly and heavenly spheres. The resource of relics was handled in very different ways across contexts: in Rome, for example, body relics were not distributed at all. Instead, they were kept as valuable resources or currency. In Milan, however, the bodies of the saints were divided and distributed extensively.

2 Gatekeepers

Some groups and persons who could or wanted to possess relics have already been introduced.[31] In what is probably the oldest surviving account of relics – the martyrdom of Polycarp – the community comes into possession of the physical remains of their bishop. The text mentions that the relics were buried in an appropriate place and, in a passage added slightly later, that people gathered there every year on the anniversary of his martyrdom.[32] What exactly these early Christian gatherings looked like is not known.[33] However, some sources indicate that the official annual meetings

29 Emile Donckel, *Außerrömische Heilige in Rom. Von den Anfängen unter Liberius bis Leo IV. (847). Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklung des stadtrömischen Festkalenders* (Eschweiler, LUX: Charles Hermann, 1938): 51–54.

30 Donckel *Außerrömische Heilige in Rom*; Adrian Bremenkamp, Tanja Michalsky and Norbert Zimmermann, eds., *Importreliquien in Rom von Damasus I. bis Paschalis I. Akten der internationalen Konferenz, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Rom Institut Rom – Biblioteca Hertziana, Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte, 12.–14. Oktober 2020*, Palilia 36 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2024).

31 On the definition of gatekeepers used here in the context of dependency, see fn. 2. In the following, only those gatekeepers are presented who were, more or less, legally in possession of relics. On the theft of relics, see Patrick J. Geary, *Furta Sacra. Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

32 For the later passage, see Zwierlein, *Die Urfassung*, vol. 2: 208–9.

33 It is *communis opinio* that the commemorations at the graves of martyrs were initially still part of the tradition of the pre-Christian cult of the dead (for an overview of the Roman cult of the dead, see Stefan Schrumpf, *Bestattung und Bestattungswesen im Römischen Reich. Ablauf, soziale Dimension und ökonomische Bedeutung der Totenfürsorge im lateinischen Westen*, Bonner Jahrbücher 206 [Göttingen: v+r unipress, 2006]). Essential to this understanding are Franz Joseph Dölger, *Ichthys: Der heilige Fisch*

quickly proved insufficient to satisfy the community's desire to memorialize their fallen bishop. The record shows that people also met at the tombs on other days to hold private commemorative ceremonies.[34] We learn from Bishop Augustine of Hippo (354–430) that people danced, drank, and argued during the memorial feasts.[35] Basil of Caesarea (330–379) reports about what he considered the shameless behaviour of women at these memorial feasts.[36] Along the same line, Jerome (347–420) argues that consecrated virgins should not be allowed to participate in such events.[37] Therefore, it is unsurprising that, though the frequency and truth of such reports paint an abstract picture, the Church soon intervened.[38] The consequence of this development for the access of the local communities to relics was that, from then on, the Church primarily controlled access to the relics.[39] Interestingly, the Milanese bishop Ambrose joined other Church leaders in banning private gatherings at the saints' tombs.[40] How Am-

in den antiken Religionen und im Christentum, vol. 2, Religionen und Kulturen der Antike 2 (Münster: Peter W. Metzler, 1922): 562–63 and Theodor Klauser, *Die Cathedra im Totenkult der heidnischen und christlichen Antike*, Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen 21 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1927): 133–36. Their opinion is followed by, e.g., Elisabeth Jastrzebowska, *Untersuchungen zum christlichen Totenmahl aufgrund der Monumente des 3. und 4. Jahrhunderts unter der Basilika des heiligen Sebastian in Rom* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1981); Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Mahl und Spende im mittelalterlichen Totenkult," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 18 (1984): 401–20, here: 404–09. A comprehensive collection of archaeological as well as epigraphic evidence is offered by Paul-Albert Février, "Le culte des morts dans les communautés chrétiennes durant le IIIe siècle," in *Atti del IX Congresso Internazionale di Archeologia Cristiana*, vol. 1, ed. International Congress of Christian Archaeology (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1978): 211–74; for a summary of the previous research, see Diefenbach, *Römische Erinnerungsräume*: 55–62.

34 See Diefenbach, *Römische Erinnerungsräume*: 168 (331) with contemporary sources and additional literature; see also Hartl, *Leichen, Asche und Gebeine*: 48.

35 Augustine, *Sermo* 326,1 (Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologia cursus completus. Series Latina* 38 [Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1884–1855]: 1449).

36 Basil of Caesarea, *Homilia*, 14, 1 (Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologia cursus completus. Series graeca* 31 [Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1857–1866]: 445C).

37 *Jerome*, *Epistula* 107, 9, 2 (Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum 55: 300).

38 On the corresponding synodal decrees, see Johannes Quasten, *Musik und Gesang in den Kulten der heidnischen Antike und christlichen Frühzeit* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1973): 238–47. One reason for the Church's appropriation was probably also the increasing competition from the private veneration of saints. Through the promise of salvation that the martyrs offered via their dual presence on earth and before God, the cult of the saints was much more immediate than the worship in the parish churches (on this see also, Diefenbach, *Römische Erinnerungsräume*: 63–77, who mainly comments on the aspect of the forgiveness of sins through the Church or saints and in his argumentation partly follows Jochen Martin, "Die Macht der Heiligen," in *Christentum und antike Gesellschaft*, eds. Jochen Martin and Barbara Quint, Wege der Forschung 649 [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990]: 440–74, here: 459–62.

39 Relics in private possession were an exception (Hartl, *Leichen, Asche und Gebeine*: 77–79; for aristocratic circles, see Diefenbach, *Römische Erinnerungsräume*: 359–400; Hartl, *Leichen, Asche und Gebeine*: 75–77).

40 This is reported by Augustine, *Confessiones* 6, 2 (Augustine, *Confessiones*, 13 books, ed. Luc Verheijen, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 27 [Turnhout: Brepols, 1981]: 74).

brose himself dealt with the bodies of the saints has already been explained. He removed them from their original burial locations, placed them in churches, had himself buried with them, and before that, divided the bodies and sent relics throughout the entire late antique world. In his role as gatekeeper, we can thus conclude that for Ambrose, his approach to this specific resource is heterogeneous: on the one hand, he strictly limits relics in terms of accessibility to the community; on the other, he is generous when it concerns his own purposes.

Another gatekeeper was the Emperor, who also joined in the game for relics. The different requests for body relics of Roman apostles and saints in the sixth century, which were all refused or were instead answered with contact relics, have already been mentioned. These requests clearly show that relics became increasingly important, even and especially for Constantinople, a city whose local saints were only constructed by later legends.[41] Thus, body relics were frequently imported into Constantinople, even if they were not from Roman saints or apostles. For example, from a passage of John Chrysostom (*ca.* 344/349–407) from the late fourth / early fifth centuries, we know about the translation of Phocas from Pontus to Constantinople:

> Yesterday our city was magnificent, magnificent and renowned not because it has columns, but because a martyr was in our midst, ceremoniously conveyed to us from Pontus. [. . .] Did you keep away yesterday? At least come today, so that you might see him escorted off to his own location. [. . .] Let no one keep away from this holy festival. Let no virgin remain at home, let no married woman stick to the house. Let's empty the city, and set course for the martyr's tomb. After all, the imperial couple, too, are joining with us in the festivities. What excuse, then, does the private person have, when the imperial couple are quitting the palace and taking a seat at the martyr's tomb?[42]

Such a procession of venerated relics is depicted on the so-called Trier ivory (Fig. 1).[43] Similar to the descriptions offered by John Chrysostom, the ivory panel shows a pro-

41 Kaplan, "Le saint, le village et la cité"; Franz Alto Bauer, "Urban Space and Ritual. Constantinople in Late Antiquity," *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia* 15 (2001): 27–61; Trout, "Saints, Identity, and the City"; Franz Alto Bauer, "Stadtverkehr in Konstantinopel. Die Zeremonialisierung des Alltags," in *Stadtverkehr in der antiken Welt*, ed. Dieter Mertens (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2008): 193–211.

42 John Chrysostom, *De S. Hieromartyre Phoca* (Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 50: 699; translation after Wendy Mayer and Bronwen Neil, eds., *St. John Chrysostom. The Cult of Saints. Selected Homilies and Letters* [Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006]: 77–78).

43 For the Trier ivory, see Kenneth G. Holum and Gary Vikan, "The Trier Ivory. 'Adventus' Ceremonial, and the Relics of St. Stephen," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 33 (1979): 115–33; John Wortley, "The Trier Ivory Reconsidered," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 21 (1980): 381–94; Paul Speck, "Das Trierer Elfenbein und andere Unklarheiten," *Poikila Byzantina* 6 (1987): 253–83; Leslie Brubaker, "The Chalke Gate, the Construction of the Past, and the Trier Ivory," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 23 (1999): 258–85; Paroma Chatterjee, "Iconoclasm's Legacy: Interpreting the Trier Ivory," *The Art Bulletin* 100, no. 3 (2018): 28–47; Sabine Feist, "The Material Culture of Byzantine Iconoclasm," in *A Companion to Byzantine Iconoclasm*, ed. Mike Humphreys (Leiden: Brill, 2021): 261–321, here: 275–77.

cession in which the entire city seems to have participated. The architectural setting indicates that the event took place in Constantinople, with the building in the background as the hippodrome or part of the palace or the *Mese* and the archway on the left as the Chalke – the main gate of the imperial palace – with the famous icon of Christ in the lunette. Two clerics on a horse-drawn chariot hold a reliquary, accompanied by the Emperor and others. The destination of the procession is a church that has just been completed; roofers are still carrying out the final work. In front of the church, the Empress awaits the procession with the relics. On the Trier ivory, it is not the Emperor or Empress at the centre of the procession but the saint or saints in the relics. The relics are honoured in the same way as the Emperor.[44] The celebration of the *adventus* ceremonial, which was reserved for the Emperor, upon the arrival of relics underlines the extremely high significance of their possession – equally for the imperial house and the entire city.[45]

Fig. 1: Trier ivory (Hohe Domkirche Trier, Photo: Ann Münchow).

Even though the Trier ivory was probably only made between 700 and 900, the historical context for its interpretation is usually assumed to be the translation of the arm

44 Steffen Diefenbach, "Zwischen Liturgie und civilitas: Konstantinopel im 5. Jahrhundert und die Etablierung eines städtischen Kaisertums," in *Bildlichkeit und Bildorte von Liturgie. Schauplätze in Spätantike, Byzanz und Mittelalter*, ed. Rainer Warland (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2002): 21–49, here: 25–26.

45 The importance of relics for entire cities becomes evident, for example, by Paulinus of Nola (*Carmen* 19, 329–42), who states that the relics of Andrew and Luke in Constantinople strengthened the walls of the city as double towers (as did Peter and Paul in Rome) (Diefenbach, *Römische Erinnerungsräume:* 315–16 [351] with further examples of the protective function of relics).

relic of the protomartyr Stephen in 421[46]; the first church within the Great Palace was also built for this occasion.[47] Nevertheless, relics do not seem to have been brought to the Palace of Constantinople on a large scale until the reign of Emperor Heraclius (610–641). The critical event during Heraclius' reign was the securing of the relics of the Cross and their transfer to Constantinople, which led to the development of the liturgical veneration of the Cross and made Constantinople, at least during that time, a centre for the cult of the Cross.[48] Although a part of the Holy Cross had probably already come to Constantinople in Constantinian times, the presence of the relic was not used to establish a centre of its cult until later.[49] There is likely a two-fold reason for this delay. First, at that time, the cult of the Holy Cross was still concentrated in Jerusalem. Second, it could be that the Roman system that was mainly based upon body relics was still being closely followed in the new capital.[50] Together with other relics associated with Christ, this "original relic" of the Holy Cross was kept in the church of the Virgin of the Pharos in the imperial palace.[51] Thus the veneration and the Cross itself – which more and more guaranteed the protection and continuity of the empire – were kept by the Emperor in Constantinople, who could control (and distribute) this vital resource according to his own ideas.[52]

As previously mentioned, in the sixth century, not long before the accumulation of relics associated with Christ in Constantinople began to increase, Pope Hormisdas had to teach Justinian and Constantina that it was not the tradition in Rome to disturb

46 The legend of the translation was written only in the post-iconoclastic period, which would fit well with the later dating of the ivory (Feist, "The Material Culture of Byzantine Iconoclasm": 275–76).

47 Albrecht Berger, "Der Kaiserpalast von Konstantinopel," in *Otto der Große und das Römische Reich. Kaisertum von der Antike zum Mittelalter. Ausstellungskatalog Magdeburg*, eds. Matthias Puhle and Gabriele Köster (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2012): 346–49, here: 346.

48 Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz*: 28–47. In 574, during the reign of Justin II, another piece of the Holy Cross was brought to Constantinople. It is possible that Constantinople had already become a place of worship for the Cross as a result of this transfer (on the origin and development of the cult of the Holy Cross, see Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz*: 19–91).

49 The early relic was probably not kept in a church, but in Constantine's column and in the palace; among other things, the silence of the early sources about a corresponding cult practice speaks for a non-public display or veneration of the Cross (Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz*: 26–27, 32–33).

50 For the international success of the Roman veneration of St Peter, which significantly influenced the cult of relics, see Bauer, "Sankt Peter": 639–41; Bauer, "Saint Peter's as a Place of Collective Memory in Late Antiquity": esp. 163–65.

51 Klein, Byzanz, *der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz*: 38–40; Holger A. Klein, "Sacred Relics and Imperial Ceremonies at the Great Palace of Constantinople," in *Visualisierung von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen – Gestalt und Zeremoniell*, ed. Franz Alto Bauer (Istanbul: Ege Yayınlar, 2006): 79–99, here: 91–92. Other relics associated with Christ included the Holy Lance and the Holy Sponge, which also came to the imperial palace under Heraclius. The Crown of Thorns was another relic associated with Christ from an early stage. Later additions included among others, the Mandylion, the Holy Keramidion, and the sandals of Christ.

52 Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz*: 89–91.

the tombs of saints. He also informed them that it was against Roman tradition to move saints' bodies or distribute parts of them. Consequently, he made clear that it was impossible to send the desired relics of the apostles to the new capital. In addition to violating the customary expectations around saints' bodies, moving the relics could also have increased the sacred status of the new capital while diminishing that of Rome. However, since the time of Heraclius, Constantinople had allegedly possessed relics that were even more important than those kept in the old capital.[53] These were not relics of mere apostles, these were relics associated with Christ. Constantinople thus continued to operate within the traditional system based on relics even as it expanded that system by including a currency that it could access more easily.

By contrast, in Rome, as already stated, one could trust that the Roman saints, especially the Apostles Peter and Paul (and to a certain extent Laurence), would remain an eternal source of relics for the city. At the same time, there was also interest in the Holy Cross. It is therefore unsurprising that in the (retrospective) vita of Pope Sylvester I (314–335), the *Liber Pontificalis* already mentions a relic of the Cross in association with the church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme.[54] The next well-attested reference to the Holy Cross occurs in connection with the construction of three oratorios at the Lateran baptistry under Pope Hilarius (461–468), one of the structures is said to have been dedicated to the Holy Cross and to have contained a corresponding relic.[55] The same is assumed for one of the three oratorios at St Peter's built under Pope Symmachus (498–514).[56] Furthermore, while we have already established that Rome did not send its most valuable relics, i.e., bodily remains of the city's saints, to Constantinople, the Emperor at the Bosporus was more generous in dispensing these resources. The cruciform reli-

53 On the difficult categorization of relics in late antique and early medieval times, see Julia M.H. Smith, "Relics. An Evolving Tradition in Latin Christianity," in *Saints and Sacred Matter. The Cult of Relic in Byzantium and Beyond*, eds. Cynthia Hahn and Holger A. Klein (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Press, 2015): 41–60; Hartmann, "Reliquie": 1170.

54 Louis Duchesne and Cyrille Vogel, eds., *Le Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1 (1957; repr., Paris: E. de Boccard, 1981): 179. Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz*: 69. The next mention of the Holy Cross is the controversially discussed letter of the Jerusalem bishop Juvenal to Pope Leo I, in which he expresses his gratitude for receiving a relic of the Cross (Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz*: 70).

55 Duchesne and Vogel, *Liber Pontificalis*: 242–43. Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz*: 70.

56 Duchesne and Vogel, *Liber Pontificalis*: 261. Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz*: 70. Pope Sergius I (678–701) is supposed to have recovered a relic of the Cross in St Peter's (Duchesne and Vogel, *Liber Pontificalis*: 374). It is unclear whether the relic was the one from the time of Symmachus. Nevertheless, Sergius transferred it to the Lateran Basilica. Since this Cross relic was taken to the church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme during a Good Friday procession, there was probably no longer a Cross relic in the latter at that time. Indeed, Santa Croce in Gerusalemme seems to have been replaced by the Lateran Basilica as the centre of Roman veneration of the Cross between the fifth and seventh centuries (Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz*: 70–72).

quary kept in the Tesoro of St Peter's today, which is supposed to contain a particle of the Holy Cross, was a gift from Emperor Justin II (585–578) and his wife, Sophia.[57]

The competition for relics between the Pope in Rome and the Emperor in Constantinople, especially over those associated with Christ, is evidenced by the accumulation of these resources in their respective palace chapels. In Constantinople, relics were kept in the church of the Virgin of the Pharos. In Rome, they were preserved in the Laurentius Chapel, known today as the Sancta Sanctorum.[58] However, though the cult of the Holy Cross had been available to the Roman Popes since at least the first half of the seventh century, it never developed into anything comparable to the one present in Constantinople.[59] Instead, the Apostle Peter stood for the eternal city's protection and continuity.[60]

This overview to the key gatekeepers of relics in the late antique and early medieval world shows that at different times, to different degrees, and in divergent ways, relics were alternately possessed by the community, the Church, the Pope, the Emperor, and by entire cities. Each of these groups used this resource in different, but by no means exclusive, ways. Whether employed as talismans to contact martyrs or to increase the prestige of entire cities, relics were wielded as political instruments by the Church, the Pope, and the Emperor. Perhaps due to the lack of local saints and their corresponding graves, which could have been venerated, and possibly because of the obstacles (both customary and power-political) to moving the bodies of Roman saints to the new capital, Constantinople eventually concentrated on acquiring and displaying relics of the Holy Cross. From the seventh century onwards, the eastern capital employed such relics as a religious and political resource. Though relics associated with the crucifixion of Christ were already present in the new capital in earlier periods, it was not until this later date that Constantinople emerged as a superregional centre for the cult of the Holy Cross. In the early medieval period, the Eastern empire continued to operate within the traditional continuum of veneration but expanded the reliquary system into a form of currency that was at the disposal of the Constantinopolitan Emperor.

57 Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz*: 70. Justin II and his wife donated another relic of the Cross to Poitiers (Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz*: 77).

58 For Constantinople, see Klein, "Sacred Relics": 91–92; for the extension of the Lateran Palace, see Bauer, *Das Bild der Stadt Rom im Frühmittelalter*: 61–80, esp. 75–80 for Sancta Sanctorum. The Chapel of Laurentius is first mentioned in the Vita of Pope Stephen III (768–772) (Duchesne and Vogel, *Liber Pontificalis*: 469).

59 Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz*: 89–92.

60 Despite the unchallenged supremacy of the Petrine relics in Rome, the Pope nevertheless seems to have joined the general race for relics in the early middle ages. In order to establish Rome as the centre of all the saints, Gregory III (731–741) built an oratory in St Peter's, which was consecrated to all the saints (Bauer, *Das Bild der Stadt Rom im Frühmittelalter*: 53–58). The subsequent discovery of the head relic of St George, a truly eastern saint, under Pope Zachary (741–752) in the Lateran Palace must have been interpreted as a measure that was clearly directed against Constantinople (Bauer, *Das Bild der Stadt Rom im Frühmittelalter*: 58–59).

3 Resource and Gatekeepers in New Contexts

When considering relics and the differences between their availability in Rome and Constantinople, one thing must not be forgotten: in late antiquity and the early middle ages, Rome continued to be dependent on the Emperor in Constantinople, at least for a certain time.[61] As the early middle ages progressed, however, support from the Bosporus gradually became less certain. Rome and Constantinople thus became increasingly distant from each other.[62] Over the years, the Pope began to rely more upon the Franks than upon the eastern empire. It was Pope Gregory III (731–741) who first instrumentalized his most important resource, the Apostle Peter himself, in the pontificate's relationship with the Franks. In his letters, he attempts to convince his new interlocutors of the significance and scope of his authority and the foundation of his desire for cordial relations by referring to Charles Martel as the son of the Apostle, and he also is said to have given Charles the keys to St Peter's tomb.[63] Gregory's immediate successor, Zachary (741–752), maintained close ties with the Franks and also con-

61 Florian Hartmann, "Die Cathedra Petri zwischen östlichem und westlichem Imperium. Legitimationsformen und Widerstände der Emanzipation im 8. Jh.," in *Die Päpste und die Einheit der lateinischen Welt*, eds. Bernd Schneidmüller, Stefan Weinfurter, Michael Matheus, and Alfried Wieczorek (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2016): 165–84; Hartmut Leppin, "Der Patriarch im Westen und der Kaiser im Osten – Einige Bemerkungen zur Dialektik von Schwäche und Stärke," in *Die Päpste und die Einheit der lateinischen Welt*, eds. Bernd Schneidmüller, Stefan Weinfurter, Michael Matheus, and Alfried Wieczorek (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2016): 139–64.

62 Thomas F.X. Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State*, 680–825 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984) is still foundational for the triadic relationship between Rome, Constantinople, and the Frankish Empire. Wolfram Brandes, "Das Schweigen des Liber Pontificalis. Die 'Enteignung' der päpstlichen Patrimonien Siziliens und Unteritaliens in den 50er Jahren des 8. Jahrhunderts," *Fontes Minores* 12, 2014): 97–203 (repeated in Wolfram Brandes, "Byzantinischer Bilderstreit, das Papsttum und die Pippinische Schenkung. Neue Forschungen zum Ost-West-Verhältnis im 8. Jahrhundert in *Menschen, Bilder Sprache, Dinge: Wege der Kommunikation zwischen Byzanz und dem Westen*, eds. Falko Daim, Christian Gastgeber, Dominik Heher, and Claudia Rapp, Byzanz zwischen Orient und Okzident 9.2 [Mainz: Propylaeum, 2018]: 63–79) outlines the problematic nature of the sources for this period by reference to several examples. Theologically, Rome and Constantinople were already far apart from as early as the Quinisext Council in 692. For a summary of the conflict between the Pope and the Emperor, see Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter*: 15–23. The beginning of the political disputes is usually seen in increased tax demands at the time of Gregory II (715–731) (Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter*: 28–29). However, Brandes, "Das Schweigen des Liber Pontificalis": esp. 111–24, shows in detail how a misinterpretation of a source gives too much importance to this supposed event and permanently influences research and the perception of the relation between Rome and Constantinople in the eighth century.

63 Codex Carolinus, no. I: 497; Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter*: 44–47; Roald Dijkstra and Dorine van Espelo, "Anchoring Authority in Saint Peter's Grave. Imperial and Ecclesiastical Politics at the Confession from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages," in *Die Päpste und Rom zwischen Spätantike und Mittelalter. Formen päpstlicher Machtentfaltung*, eds. Norbert Zimmermann, Tanja Michalsky, Alfried Wieczorek, and Stefan Weinfurter (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2017): 237–50, here: 245. Nevertheless, the Franks henceforth did not always stand by the Pope and Charles Martel, for example, refused

tinued to act in the name of Peter.[64] However, it is worth noting, that the relationship with Constantinople must not have been particularly bad during that time. The Emperor was simply unable to provide help because of his own conflicts and thus rejected, for example, a request by Pope Stephen II (752–757) that he act against the Lombards in 752.[65]

In the face of this existential threat by the Lombards, Pope Stephen II travelled to St Denis in 753 / 754 to ask the Frankish king Pepin (751–768) for help.[66] In order to make his request as appealing as possible, Stephen again made rhetorical use of the Apostle Peter.[67] He asserted that it was not the Pope who formulated the request to Pepin but the Roman Apostle himself. Thus, it was not the Pope who was to be protected but Peter himself. Pursuant to this argument, Pepin was convinced and assured Stephen of his support. The result was the so-called Donation of Pepin, which is intensely debated.[68]

The alliance between Rome and the Franks continued to exist even following the succession of the Roman papal and the Frankish royal thrones. In the early 770s, Rome was again confronted with Lombard attacks. The Pope, now Hadrian I (772–795), asked the Frankish king, now Charlemagne (768–814), for help, which the latter granted. The renewal of the so-called Donation of Pepin by his son Charlemagne was preserved in St Peter's Confessio.[69] Upon Charlemagne's defeat of the Lombards in 774, the Pope finally broke with the Emperor in Constantinople and thenceforth relied exclusively on Frankish protection.[70]

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help against the Lombards in 739 / 740 (Matthias Becher, *Karl der Große* [Munich: C.H. Beck, 2008]: 35; Dijkstra and van Espelo, "Anchoring Authority in Saint Peter's Grave": 245).

64 Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter*: 51–52.

65 Brandes, "Das Schweigen des Liber Pontificalis": 163–77; Hartmann, "Die Cathedra Petri": 177.

66 Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter*: 71–81.

67 Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter*: 81. Additionally, the Pope anointed Pepin and his sons, officially recognizing them as the Frankish royal dynasty. Thenceforth, Pepin was *patricius Romanourum* (Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter*: 87).

68 On the so-called Donation of Pepin, see Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter*: 83–86; a critical overview of the history of its research is given by Sebastian Scholz, "Pippinische Schenkung," in *Germanische Altertumskunde Online. Kulturgeschichte bis ins Frühmittelalter – Archäologie, Geschichte, Philologie*, eds. Sebastian Brather, Wilhelm Heizmann, and Steffen Patzold (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), https://www.degruyter.com/database/GAO/entry/GAO_87/html [accessed 26.10.2023].

69 Dijkstra and van Espelo, "Anchoring Authority in Saint Peter's Grave": 246. The Confessio was also used for other important and official events, such as making oaths (Dijkstra and van Espelo, "Anchoring Authority in Saint Peter's Grave": 243–45).

70 The distancing between Rome and the Emperor in Constantinople becomes evident in different coinage and the dating of official documents with the indication of the Pope's pontificate. Furthermore, under Frankish protection Hadrian's successor Leo III (795–816), still had to fear the intrigues of his predecessor's supporters in Rome itself. Leo III extended the dating of official documents by including an indication of Charlemagne's years of rule in Italy. The coronation of Charlemagne by Leo III was the culmination of this development (Hartmann, "Die Cathedra Petri": 178–83).

But the Frankish protection came at a price. While the relationship between Rome and the Franks was initially not one of unilateral but of bilateral dependency – Pepin came to the royal throne in 751 only with the support of the Pope[71] –, in the second half of the eighth century the balance of power clearly shifted in the direction of the Franks, who were politically and militarily far superior to Rome. Inferior to Rome were the Franks only in one regard, namely the possession of relics. Interestingly, the Franks continued to operate in the already familiar dependency system that had been shaped above all by Rome and built on the use of relics as a resource. The modes of utilization of this resource also remained unchanged. For example, foreign saints continued to be imported to Rome. Specifically, the Frankish national saint, Dionysius, was brought to the eternal city.[72] Dionysius was considered the first bishop of Paris and was buried in St Denis. Pope Stephen II had already brought relics of the Frankish national saint to Rome from his decisive visit to Pepin in 753 / 754.[73] In addition to importing relics to Rome, the Franks also made extensive use of the distribution of body relics of Roman saints as diplomatic gifts, which had become an established practice in the eighth century.[74]

Nevertheless, these standard opportunities did not satisfy the Franks. Like others before them, they wanted to establish a lasting connection to Rome's most important resource: they wanted Peter. The various requests for relics by prominent persons in earlier periods to access Rome's most sacred body relics have already been addressed. Much had changed in the intervening centuries, but access to these relics was heavily curtailed. It was still only possible in the following ways:

– To make Peter accessible outside Rome, since the time of Gregory I (590–604), it had been possible to distribute contact relics – a practice that has become rare over time.[75]
– Additionally, one could gain a place in St Peter's and the Confessio by donating valuable furnishings.[76]

71 Becher, *Karl der Große*: 38; see also fn. 67.

72 Bauer, *Das Bild der Stadt Rom im Frühmittelalter*: 97–102.

73 Bauer, *Das Bild der Stadt Rom im Frühmittelalter*: 97. Since Charles Martel, Dionysius was regarded as a grandson of Peter and thus had a similar significance for the Frankish Empire as Peter had for Rome.

74 On the relics that were taken to the Frankish Empire and used as altar relics there see, e.g., John M. McCulloh, "From Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Continuity and Change in Papal Relic Policy from the 6th to the 8th Century," in *Pietas. Festschrift für Bernhard Kötting*, eds. Ernst Dassmann and Karl Suso Frank, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum – Ergänzungsbände 8 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1980): 313–24, here: 323; Bauer, *Das Bild der Stadt Rom im Frühmittelalter*: 144–45.

75 At least we know of almost no Petrine relics that would have been taken to the Frankish Empire (an exception is Pope Stephen's II journey to St Denis in 753 / 754 [Bauer, *Das Bild der Stadt Rom im Frühmittelalter*: 99]).

76 During the pontificate of Stephen II, Pepin donated an altar mensa which was placed in the immediate vicinity of St Peter's tomb (Bauer, *Das Bild der Stadt Rom im Frühmittelalter*: 94–96). For a summary of donations of valuable objects to St Peter's, see Bauer, *Das Bild der Stadt Rom im Frühmittelalter*: 95;

As previously stated, in the long run, vicarious presence at Peter's tomb in the form of donations, which was by no means an exclusive Frankish privilege, was not enough for either Pepin or his son and successor Charlemagne. The Franks wanted what Arnold Angenendt called a 'liturgical presence'.[77] How could the Pope satisfy such a request when Rome's prominence relied, at least to a significant degree, upon its exclusive claims to some of the Church's most sacred relics? Regardless of the exigencies of a particular moment, Popes were not allowed to give away Peter's remains. Moreover, the tradition of Peter legitimized their own authority. The Roman monopoly on apostolic tradition, preserved and manifested over the centuries, could not be abandoned even in situations of existential emergency. Nonetheless, to satisfy the demands of the Franks, an (incomplete) complementary resource had to be created. It had to be a resource that was not Peter himself, but that was both directly connected to him and could not exist without him.

This brings us to Petronilla.[78] Petronilla was believed to be the daughter of Peter, but her cult seems to have developed only in the course of the eighth century.[79] It was this same Petronilla, in her function as Peter's daughter, to which Pepin had probably already laid claim in his negotiations with Pope Stephen II in St Denis in 754.[80] In order to fulfil this promise, which was no longer to be carried out by Stephen II himself, but by his brother and successor Paul I (757–767), Petronilla's sarcophagus had to be moved from the catacomb of Domitilla to St Peter's – notably St Peter's in Rome, and therefore not to the Frankish Empire.[81] We can read about this transferal in the *Liber Pontificalis*:

Franz Alto Bauer, "Herrschergaben an St. Peter," *Mitteilungen zur spätantiken Archäologie und byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte* 4 (2005): 65–99, for the Franks esp. 79–87. However, gifts were also rejected or removed (cf. the dispute between an eunuch sent by Emperor Constantius II and Bishop Liberius in 355 [Dijkstra and van Espelo, "Anchoring Authority in Saint Peter's Grave": 239–40]).

77 After Arnold Angenendt, "Das geistliche Bündnis der Päpste mit den Karolingern (754–796)," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 100 (1980): 1–94.

78 For Petronilla, see Patrick Saint-Roch, *La martire Petronilla nella catacomba di Domitilla*, Quaderni del Collegium Cultorum Martyrum 3 (Rome: Pontificia Academia Cultorum Martyrum [?], 1984); Bauer, *Das Bild der Stadt Rom im Frühmittelalter*: 91–94; Roberto Giordani, "Avr(eliae) Petronillae filiae dvlcissimae. Qualche considerazione sulla leggenda di Petronilla presunta figlia dell'Apostolo Pietro," *Studi Romani* 53 (2005): 411–30 (with additional literature).

79 For her legend and veneration, see Giovanni Battista de Rossi, "Sepolcro di S. Petronilla nella Basilica in Via Ardeatina e sua traslazione al Vaticano," *Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana* 3, no. 3 (1878): 125–52, here: 135–39; Bauer, *Das Bild der Stadt Rom im Frühmittelalter*: 92; Giordani, "Avr(eliae) Petronillae filiae dvlcissimae": 414–18. The late dating is supported by the fact that her name appears neither in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* of the fourth century nor in the pilgrim itineraries of the seventh century. During the eighth century, veneration of Petronilla must have increased, because Pope Gregory III ordered an annual *statio* to be held at her burial place in the catacomb of Domitilla (Duchesne and Vogel, *Liber Pontificalis*: 420).

80 Bauer, *Das Bild der Stadt Rom im Frühmittelalter*: 93.

81 For the location of her burial in the catacomb, see De Rossi, "Sepolcro di S. Petronilla": 126–35; for the translation of the sarcophagus, see Bauer, *Das Bild der Stadt Rom im Frühmittelalter*: 92–94; Giordani, "Avr(eliae) Petronillae filiae dvlcissimae": 422–24.

> To fulfil his elder brother and holy predecessor Pope Stephen's advantageous arrangements, immediately that pontiff had died, this blessed pontiff gathered the sacerdotes, the whole clergy and this city of Rome's entire people, and began operations at the cemetery outside the Appian Gate some two miles from Rome where St Petronilla had once been buried. From there he removed her venerable and holy body along with the marble sarcophagus in which it lay and on which were carved letters reading 'To Aurea Petronilla, sweetest daughter'. This made it certain that the carving of the letters could be identified as engraved by St Peter's own hand out of love for his sweetest child. The holy body and the sarcophagus were laid on a new carriage and brought by his Beatitude with hymns and spiritual chants to St Peter's; he placed the holy body in the mausoleum close to St Andrew's, whose dedication in honour of this St Petronilla, Christ's martyr, had been decreed by his brother the holy Pope Stephen while yet living. There he made an adequate provision of adornment in fold, silver and brocades; he restored the church itself and in St Petronilla's honour he embellished it with wondrously beautiful pictures.[82]

This text, which evokes a similar image to that of the description of the transfer of Phocas from Pontus to Constantinople by John Chrysostom, gives us, in addition to the description of the translation, another essential piece of information. We learn from this passage that Petronilla was henceforth to be venerated in the mausoleum close the church of St Andrew the Apostle (Fig. 2).

The choice of this circular building on the south side of St Peter's was no coincidence – the structure had originally served as the mausoleum of the western Roman imperial dynasty.[83] Yet, when Roman dependence on imperial power for protection had been replaced by an alliance with the Franks, the function of the building was changed from an imperial mausoleum to a chapel of the Franks, directly attached to St Peter's in Rome.[84]

4 Relics Create Dependencies

Now that a newly created, incomplete, but complementary reliquary resource has been introduced in the form of St Peter's daughter Petronilla, we can further clarify the persistence and transferability of the mutual religious and political dependencies associated with relics as a resource in late antiquity and the early middle ages. As previously referenced, the Martyrdom of Polycarp, the oldest known source to mention

82 Duchesne and Vogel, *Liber Pontificalis*: 464 (translation after Raymond Davis, *The Lives of the Eight-Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis). The Ancient Biographies of Nine Popes from AD 715 to AD 817* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992): 81). References to these processes can already be found in the Vita of Stephen II (Duchesne and Vogel, *Liber Pontificalis*: 455).

83 Bauer, *Das Bild der Stadt Rom im Frühmittelalter*: 91–94. For a short summary of the late antique mausoleum, see Mark Joseph Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausoleum in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 167–74.

84 Bauer, *Das Bild der Stadt Rom im Frühmittelalter*: 92 with reference to the possibility that the rotunda also served as a burial structure in the time of Stephen II.

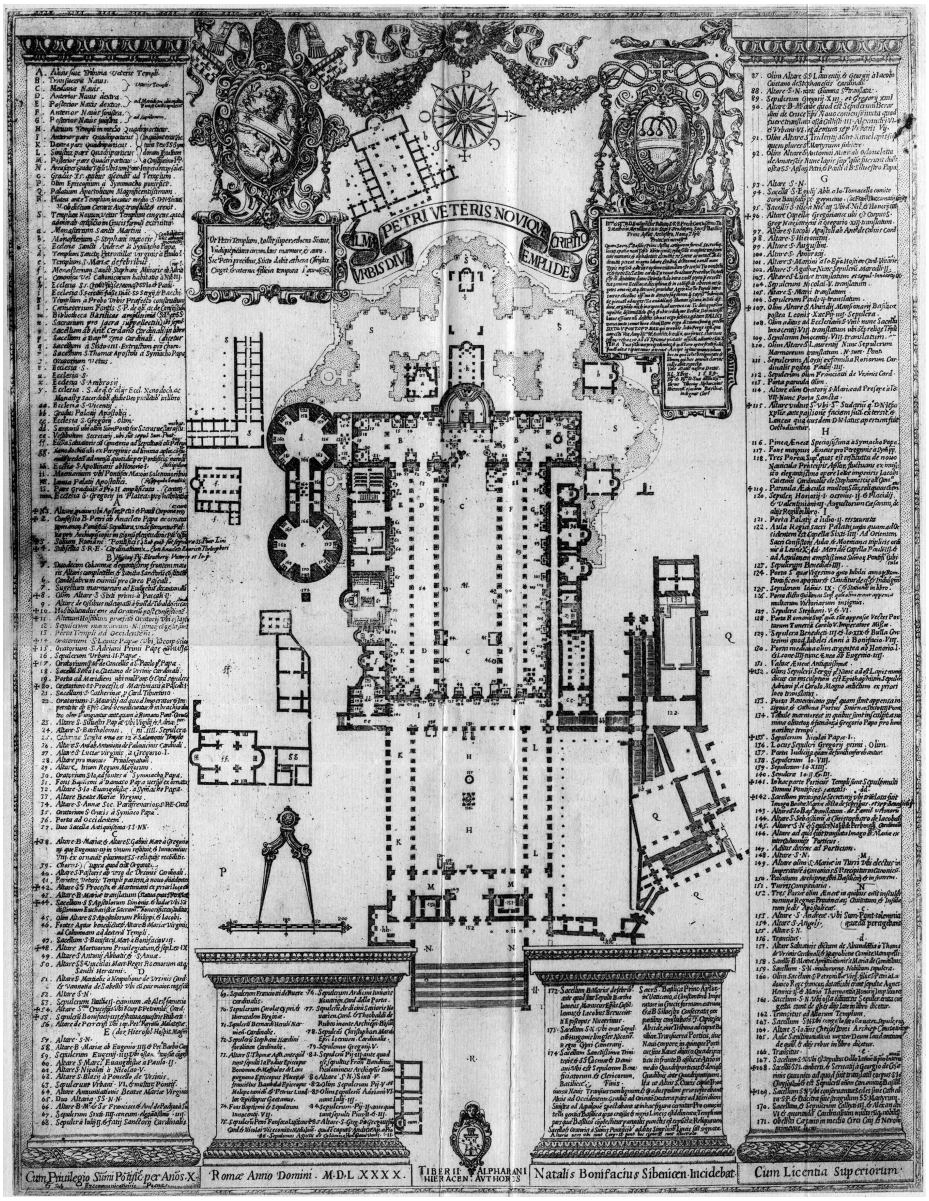

Fig. 2: St. Peter's, ground plan of the basilica and the rebuilding after Tiberio Alfarano (1589/90); the chapel of Petronilla is attached to the southern end of the transept of the basilica (in the ground plan left, the upper of the two round buildings, marked with "d") (Michele Cerrati, ed. *Tiberii Alpharani de basilicae Vaticanae antiquissima et nova structura* [Rome: 1914] Plate 1).

body relics, reveals a balanced relationship between Christians and relics. In this source, it is clear that Christians used relics to form a group identity. That said, it is equally apparent that relics only gained significance after Christian communities venerated them. Otherwise, at least in the case of Polycarp, they would have been thrown away. After the legalization of Christianity, this bilateral relationship was interrupted by the intervention of the Church, namely bishops and clerics. Thenceforth, relics were almost only accessible to Christians via the Church. Nevertheless, communities and bishops were unsatisfied with the exclusively local veneration of particular martyrs. They also sent relics to other communities. Thus, a transregional sacral network was created based on religious faith in venerated relics. Only because all actors adhered to this currency system was it possible to create dependencies through relics.

In this system, Rome has held a monopoly on relics from the very beginning. From the earliest period, Rome refused to share its body relics. The Church there maintained this policy out of respect for the sacrosanctity of the Apostle's tombs and to preserve its status as the home of a multitude of saints. The deliberately limited availability of relics made this resource all the more valuable. In particular, Rome did not share the body relics of Peter, in whose tradition the Roman bishop, the Pope, stood and stands. If Rome had handed over Peter, one of the most important legitimizations of papal primacy would have been lost. Despite this steadfast commitment to keeping Roman relics in Rome, the city did make compromises within the political system that developed around these sacred objects. Rome allowed itself to be integrated into the transregional network of relics. At the same time, the pontificate ensured that the trade in relics remained a one-sided exchange. No Roman body relics were exported from the city, but foreign were imported. The import of relics associated with foreign saints seems to have bolstered Roman prestige while simultaneously conferring special honour on the exporter. Indeed, the Franks even sent their national saint, Dionysius, to the eternal city.

Throughout this time, Peter himself remained accessible in but two ways. First, one could approach the Apostle by donating valuable furnishings and placing them in St Peter's Basilica or directly at the Confessio. Not everyone was allowed to do this, so the granting of this privilege was, itself, a venerable acknowledgement of the benefactor. Second, people could acquire contact relics, which have probably been produced and exported on a large scale since the reign of Pope Gregory I in the late sixth / early seventh century. To receive Peter's contact relics was also considered a special honour that was only granted to select groups or persons and became very rare over the time.

The special status of the Romans and the strict prohibition against distributing body relics could not be countermanded, even in response to inquiries from high dignitaries of the imperial dynasty. Perhaps in response to this policy, the imperial palace in Constantinople was systematically filled with relics associated with Christ from the seventh century onwards. Constantinople thus continued to operate within the framework of the traditional system based on relics as a currency but shifted the balance so that it could better control these valuable resources.

Only when the triadic relationship between Rome, Constantinople, and the Frankish Empire was completely reconstituted and after the Pope was confronted with an existential crisis did Rome soften its strict policy. As the early medieval period progressed, St Peter's body remained entombed in Rome, but his daughter Petronilla was handed over to the Franks as an incomplete but complementary resource. Despite their political and military superiority, the Franks continued participating in the traditional system – a system, which had been decisively shaped over the centuries by Rome and the Pope – and exchanged relics as valuable currency.

With Petronilla, the Pope gave the Franks a saint who was both directly connected to Peter and could not exist without him. Cleverly, the Pope not only handed over St Peter's daughter to the Franks and made her the patron of the Frankish empire, but also, he brought her even closer to the Apostle and, by extension, to himself: he moved her remains into a former imperial chapel directly connected to St Peter's – Petronilla also remained in Rome in the end.

The system handed down over the centuries in which relics were used as an expression or manifestation of ecclesiastical and political alliances remained unchallenged even as the triadic relation between Rome, Constantinople, and the Frankish Empire fundamentally shifted. With Petronilla, the daughter of Peter, the Pope created a new resource which he on the surface handed over to the Franks, but which – as the still most powerful gatekeeper in this game – he ultimately did not surrender, and instead tied not only Petronilla but also initially Pippin and later Charlemagne even more closely to himself and the eternal city.

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