

Constructing Identity in the Middle Ages: Relics, Religiosity, and the Military Orders

By Tomasz Borowski and Christopher Gerrard

In the decades after the First Crusade, an innovative form of monasticism emerged in the Holy Land that combined the military role of the knight with religious dedication and obedience. These “military religious orders” were first established in the early twelfth century to protect and provision pilgrims on their travels to shrines throughout the *loca sacra* of the Holy Land, but their role soon extended to the defense of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. The most powerful of these groups of fighting monks were the Templars, the Hospitallers, and the Teutonic Knights.¹ In the Holy Land, Mount Tabor, Bethany, and Emmaus (Abu Ghosh, Israel) were among the biblical locations in the possession of the Hospitallers, while the early headquarters of the Templars could be found at the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, at the epicenter of events recounted in the Old and New Testaments. While other local orders flourished too, it was these three institutions, with their specific geographical links in the Eastern Mediterranean, that proved especially successful at establishing convents throughout Europe to administer to their lands, raise financial surpluses, and attract new recruits.

Given their distinctive dual role as “soldiers of Christ” and the apparently contradictory behaviors this description seems to embrace, it is no wonder that scholars have been interested in the many dimensions of their collective social and cultural identity. Historians have noted the careful self-presentation and promotion of reputation enshrined in their regulations, their representation at royal and papal courts,

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¹ The Templars, otherwise known as the Knights Templar or the Poor Fellow Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon; the Hospitallers, also known as the Knights of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem and later as the Knights of Malta; and the Teutonic Knights, or the Order of the Teutonic Knights of Saint Mary’s Hospital in Jerusalem. A good general introduction to the topic is Alan Forey, *The Military Orders: From the Twelfth to the Early Fourteenth Centuries* (Basingstoke, 1992). Recent treatments include Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Knights Hospitaller in the Levant, c. 1070–1309* (Basingstoke, 2012); Adrian J. Boas, *Archaeology of the Military Orders: A Survey of the Urban Centres, Rural Settlements and Castles of the Military Orders in the Latin East (c. 1120–1291)* (London, 2006); Aleksander Pluskowski, *The Archaeology of the Prussian Crusade: Holy War and Colonisation* (London, 2013); Sam Zeno Conedera, SJ, *Ecclesiastical Knights: The Military Orders in Castile, 1150–1330* (New York, 2015); Nicole Bériou and Philippe Josserand, eds., *Prier et combattre: Dictionnaire européen des ordres militaires au Moyen Âge*, with a preface by Anthony Luttrell and an introduction by Alain Demurger (Paris, 2009); and the various volumes in the Ashgate Military Orders series. For brevity the term “military orders” is used throughout, though “military religious orders” reflects better their purpose and role.

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and their literary texts.² Archaeologists have mainly approached this same discourse through a consideration of the military orders' buildings and their use of space. These findings show that, while their layouts usually depart from the standard monastic plan because they lack a formal cloister, there are clear geographical groupings with shared architectural grammars. For example, the *castrum*-type rectangular castles of the Teutonic order in the Prussian state, well suited to their role in crusading and territorial consolidation on the frontiers of Christian Europe, differ from the two-story halls and moats of Western Europe, which more closely resemble secular and ecclesiastical elite residences.³ Despite their similar and sometimes shared rules and regulations, the only architectural stipulation applied in the orders' buildings seems to be a high degree of spatial integration, and this has led some to question whether there was really any consistency at all in the architecture and material culture of the military orders.⁴

Differing expressions of identity have also been explored in a wide variety of monastic contexts, including imagery and the arts, dress, writing, food and nutrition, foundation legends, liturgy and devotional practices, organizational practices, the practices of religious women, and environment and settlement, among other aspects.⁵ The military orders in particular were characterized by an elaborate hierar-

² Some literary texts were produced specifically for the orders, among them works for the Teutonic Order on the legend of the Holy Cross. See Helen Nicholson, *Templars, Hospitallers and Teutonic Knights: Images of the Military Orders, 1128–1291* (Leicester, 1993), 102–24.

³ For archaeological assessments see Bériou and Josserand, *Prier et combattre*; Roberta Gilchrist, *Contemplation and Action: The Other Monasticism, The Archaeology of Medieval England 5* (London, 1995), 62–105; Pluskowski, *Prussian Crusade*, 140–95; Eva Mol, *Hidden Complexities of the Frankish Castle: Social Aspects of Space in the Configurational Architecture of Frankish Castles in the Holy Land, 1099–1291*, *Archaeological Studies Leiden University* 25 (Leiden, 2012), 177–83. Exceptions include head houses; see, for example, Barney Sloane and Gordon Malcolm, *Excavations at the Priory of the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, Clerkenwell, London*, Museum of London Archaeology Service Monograph 20 (London, 2004).

⁴ Anthony Luttrell, "Introduction: History and Archaeology," in *Archaeology and Architecture of the Military Orders: New Studies*, ed. Mathias Piana and Christer Carlsson (Farnham, 2014), 4.

⁵ For imagery and the arts, see Anik Laferrière, "The Augustinian Heart: Late Medieval Images of Augustine as a Monastic Identity," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 66/3 (2015): 488–508; Terry N. Kinder and Roberto Cassanelli, *The Cistercian Arts: From the 12th to the 21st Century*, trans. Joyce Myerson, McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Religion 71 (Montreal, 2014); for dress, Allison D. Frizzard, "Shoes, Boots, Leggings, and Cloaks: The Augustinian Canons and Dress in Later Medieval England," *Journal of British Studies* 46/2 (2007): 245–62; language (speech and silence) and writing, Westley Follett, *Céli Dé in Ireland: Monastic Writing and Identity in the Early Middle Ages*, *Studies in Celtic History* 23 (Woodbridge, UK, 2006); food and nutrition, Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1988); foundation legends, Amy G. Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past: Monastic Foundation Legends in Medieval Southern France* (Ithaca, 1995); liturgy and devotional practices, e.g., Susan Boynton, *Shaping a Monastic Identity: Liturgy and History at the Imperial Abbey of Farfa, 1000–1125*, *Conjunctions of Religion and Power in the Medieval Past* (Ithaca, 2006); organizational practices, Karen Dale and Gibson Burrell, *The Spaces of Organisation and the Organisation of Space: Power, Identity and Materiality at Work* (Basingstoke, 2007); regional identity, Cassandra Potts, *Monastic Revival and Regional Identity in Early Normandy* (Woodbridge, UK, 1997); religious women, Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (London, 1994); gender, Megan Walker, "Can a Woman be a Monk? On Gender and Monastic Identity," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 42/4 (2007), 403–31; and the environment and settlement, Ellen F. Arnold, *Negotiating the Landscape: Environment and Monastic Identity in the Medieval Ardennes*, *The Middle Ages Series* (Philadelphia, 2012); Aleksander Pluskowski, Adrian J. Boas, and

chical organization, regulated lives, military (and sometimes medical) responsibilities, extensive financial resources, and property ownership, as well as by their Christian religious affiliation, shared duties, and mutual responsibilities. Although expressions of self-identity might center on one's age, gender, ethnicity, status, religion, function and role it might be argued in the case of the military orders that one's identity as a member of an order was further informed and reinforced by the institutional community and then embedded over time, while the "self" was partially dissolved.⁶ As Lynn Meskell explains more generally, "There are two levels of operation: one is the broader social level in which identities are defined by formal expressions or mores: the other is the individual or personal level where a person experiences many aspects of identity within a single subjectivity, fluid over the trajectories of life." Here we are concerned largely with the former but do occasionally catch glimpses of the latter.⁷

In this paper we consider the extensive collections of religious relics accumulated by the military orders in the context of promoting and sustaining their collective group identity. Singled out by Jacques de Molay as a significant component of his order's religious heritage, the last grand master of the Templars claimed that he did not know of "any other Order in which the chapels and churches had better or more beautiful ornaments and reliquaries relating to the divine cult and in which the divine service was better performed by its priests and clerics, except for cathedral churches."⁸ Even in places of later significance to the military orders, such as Malta (for the Hospitallers) or Malbork in Poland (for the Teutonic order), the visible presence of relics instantly created new spiritual centers where few had existed previously.⁹ To investigate further, we take a broad geographical sweep from the crusader territories of the Latin East and the Baltic across the preceptories of heartland Europe to Spain between the twelfth and the sixteenth centuries. The focus is on the objects themselves, their biographies and cultural settings, and we seek to explain why and how relics were sought out with such enthusiasm, what messages they were intended to convey, how they were displayed, what this might say about the character of their owners, and whether their management differed from that of other religious communities. As we will see, the military orders were far from naive about the benefits of assembling relic collections and used them for more than merely publicizing their activities in the East: relics were actively deployed both to construct and to maintain social identities.

Such a project inevitably presents challenges, not least because in many countries relics are "live" ritual material still embedded in social and religious life. Modern scholars of the military orders, meanwhile, tend to downplay the religious experi-

Christopher Gerrard, "The Ecology of Crusading: Investigating the Environmental Impact of Holy War and Colonisation at the Frontiers of Medieval Europe," *Medieval Archaeology* 55/1 (2011): 192–225.

⁶ For an introduction to archaeology and identity, see Timothy Insoll, *The Archaeology of Identities: A Reader* (London, 2007).

⁷ Lynn Meskell, "Archaeologies of Identity," in Insoll, *Archaeology of Identities*, 23–43, at 24.

⁸ Malcolm Barber, *The New Knighthood: A History of the Order of the Temple* (Cambridge, UK, 2012), 199 n. 70.

⁹ For consistency and ease of identification, the authors use modern place names when referring to medieval locations. The only exceptions are cases where there is a widely accepted English equivalent, such as, for example, Acre or Famagusta. Modern countries are also used throughout the text.

ence in favor of analysis of their political, economic, and military roles,¹⁰ while the scholars of the liturgical arts may focus exclusively on the aesthetic qualities of relics.¹¹ Archaeologists, for their part, only occasionally recover venerated objects from their excavations,¹² although reliquaries in museum collections have long been disassembled and forensically examined to reveal their constructional elements and contents.¹³ To collate and digest these many and varied approaches, which span documents, visual culture, architecture, and artifacts, is no easy matter. Even the relics themselves defy easy categorization, ranging from the preserved remains of a saint or holy person (corporeal relics), to the objects with which they came into physical contact (secondary or contact relics), to bodily fluids such as blood, oil, or milk (effluvial relics), to, more rarely, the water or wine with which other relics were washed.¹⁴ No reliable national catalogs exist,¹⁵ and relics and their reliquaries have routinely been moved, refurbished, and modified through the centuries. Contemporary architectural settings too can be profoundly altered or else erased altogether by later structures, thereby complicating any appreciation of their original presentation. Among the Western preceptories of the military orders, few today portray an accurate sense of their medieval setting, and only a handful have been subjected to high-level architectural and archaeological investigation sufficient to understand their chronology and phasing in any detail.¹⁶

¹⁰ But see Nicholson, *Templars, Hospitallers and Teutonic Knights*; Jonathan Riley-Smith, *Templars and Hospitallers as Professed Religious in the Holy Land*, The Conway Lectures in Medieval Studies (Notre Dame, 2010); Waldemar Rozynekowski, *Studia nad liturgią w zakonie krzyżackim w Prusach: Z badań nad religijnością w późnym średniowieczu* (Toruń, 2012).

¹¹ Though there are some notable exceptions; for example, Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton, 2013); the papers in Cynthia J. Hahn and Holger A. Klein, eds., *Saints and Sacred Matter: The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond* (Washington, DC, 2015); and Maria Starnawska, *Świętych życie po życiu: Relikwie w kulturze religijnej na ziemiach polskich w średniowieczu* (Warsaw, 2008).

¹² For example, an icon fragment—a painted panel—from Montfort, a thirteenth-century castle of the Teutonic Order near Acre, discovered during excavations in 1926; see Jaroslav Folda, “Before Louis IX: Aspects of Crusader Art at St. Jean d’Acre,” in *France and the Holy Land: Frankish Culture at the End of the Crusades*, ed. Daniel H. Weiss and Lisa Mahoney (Baltimore, 2004), 138–57. Several examples of Limoges enameled figures that were made to be attached to reliquaries or crosses have been reported by metal detectorists in the United Kingdom under the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

¹³ For example, Thomas P. F. Hoving, “The Face of St. Juliana,” *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* 21/5 (1963): 173–81; Visa Immonen and Jussi-Pekka Taavitsainen, “Finger of a Saint, Thumb of a Priest: Medieval Relics in the Diocese of Turku, and the Archaeology of Lived Bodies,” *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* 23 (2014): 141–73; Christopher Norton, *St. William of York* (Woodbridge, UK, 2006).

¹⁴ For recent work on relics and shrines, see Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*. For a valuable discussion of categories of relics, see Starnawska, *Świętych życie po życiu*, 65–133. She includes some examples of pilgrims who drank the water used to wash the Piece of the True Cross and another example in which the water and wine distributed among the faithful were first used to wash the skull of a saint.

¹⁵ Though there have been several encyclopedic attempts to record surviving reliquaries, e.g., Joseph Braun, *Die Reliquiare des christlichen Kultes und ihre Entwicklung* (Freiburg, 1940).

¹⁶ But see examples in Piana and Carlsson, *Archaeology and Architecture of the Military Orders*.

EXPLAINING THE DESIRE FOR RELICS

The military orders were dependent on public support for both financial contributions and new recruits and the mere possession of relics was in itself a potent sign of their piety. Furthermore, at their trial in France in 1307, the Templars stated that the relics of Saint Euphemia would not have chosen to accommodate themselves with the order had its faith not been true,¹⁷ a claim based on the conviction that her relics were the medium through which the saint could actively manifest her will. In other words, Saint Euphemia had entrusted her own remains to the military order and, in return, its members venerated them and promoted her cult so that they might benefit from the saint's intercessory power. This negotiation was well understood by the Christian faithful. On the one hand, it demonstrated devotion and divine support, on the other it implied a sense of continuing stewardship towards the relics on the part of the owner, which the military orders and others could exploit to their own advantage. In 1400, for instance, the Teutonic order was quick to advertise the visits of the wife of their political rival, the grand duke of Lithuania, to some of their best-known relics at Uschakowo (Russia), Starogród (Poland), and Kwidzyn (Poland).¹⁸ The political and social capital that relics embodied was well understood among the elites of medieval Europe.

What were the specific benefits to the military orders of collecting relics? Along the Christian frontier, relics took an active role in campaign and conquest. The True Cross of Saint Helena, allegedly discovered by crusaders in Jerusalem, was taken by them into battle against the Egyptians at Ramla in 1105,¹⁹ just as holy relics were carried by the Teutonic knights at the battle of Dzierzgoń in 1248, one of the first major encounters in the conquest of Prussia;²⁰ and again by the Christian army in 1365 when a tiny piece of the True Cross was transported in a jeweled processional cross during the attack on Alexandria.²¹ The relic was perceived as a movable holy place; and thus all the Christians who assembled around it could be identified as pilgrims and, by extension, violence could be justified as a defense of the relic and a

¹⁷ Helen J. Nicholson, "The Head of St. Euphemia: Templar Devotion to Female Saints," in *Gendering the Crusades*, ed. Susan B. Edgington and Sarah Lambert (New York, 2002), 108–20.

¹⁸ To visit the relics of Saint Catherine and Saint Barbara and the grave of Saint Dorothy of Montau, respectively; see Sławomir Józwiak and Janusz Trupinda, *Organizacja życia na zamku krzyżackim w Malborku w czasach wielkich mistrzów (1309–1457)* (Malbork, 2007), 469. For saints' lives after death, see Starnawska, *Świętych życie po życiu*.

¹⁹ Thomas Asbridge, *The Crusades: The War for the Holy Land* (London, 2012), 135. For a wider discussion on the use of the True Cross in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, see Alan V. Murray, "Mighty against the Enemies of Christ: The Relic of the True Cross in the Armies of Kingdom of Jerusalem," in *The Crusades and Their Sources: Essays Presented to Bernard Hamilton*, ed. John France and William G. Zajac (Aldershot, 1998), 217–38.

²⁰ Mikołaj Gładysz, *Zapomniani krzyżowcy: Polska wobec ruchu krucjatowego w XII–XIII wieku* (Warsaw, 2002), 46.

²¹ Kenneth Meyer Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204–1571)*, vol. 1, *The Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Philadelphia, 1976), 284. This cross, first given in 1360 by Syrian Christians to Pierre Thomas, the Latin patriarchate of Constantinople, and later in the possession of the grand chancellor of Cyprus, can today be found in the Scuola of S. Giovanni Evangelista in Venice. Subsequent miracles associated with this relic were the subjects of paintings by Venetian masters.

service to the Christian flock.²² Relics might even intercede in the action of battle. The Teutonic knights, for example, promoted the story of a Polish gunsmith who had lost his sight during the siege of Malbork (Poland) after aiming his cannon at the giant figure of Saint Mary positioned on the exterior of the apse of the main church of the convent where holy relics were kept.²³ In practical terms, shared veneration might improve the cohesiveness of a Christian army, as it did during the Turkish siege of Rhodes in 1480 when the Hospitaller defenders knelt before their relics and implored the Virgin Mary to spare them.²⁴ This not only reassured the defenders of divine support for their cause but also unified the sense of Christian identity among the Latin and non-Latin Christians living in the city. Relics, it might be argued, acted especially effectively in this binding role among the cosmopolitan communities so often inhabited by the military orders and transcended ethnic and faith boundaries at times of acute crisis. The population of crusader Acre, described in 1216 as consisting of Greek, Jacobite, Nestorian, Armenian, and Georgian communities, as well as Latin Catholics,²⁵ is said to have implored the Templar brothers to carry a particular cross in procession through the streets of the city and so bring an end to a severe drought “with the aid of divine clemency.” The cross had been fashioned from a tub or trough in which Christ was said to have bathed.²⁶

Relics also had a role in stabilizing the frontier, occasionally through active conversion, as was claimed at Caravaca (Murcia, Spain), where the miraculous appearance of a True Cross relic in 1231–32 convinced local Muslims to convert to Christianity.²⁷ A few years later, the same cross was in the hands of Templars who took possession of the town.²⁸ More often a prestigious collection could attract the attention of the Christian faithful either by encouraging visits from campaigning knights, as at Teutonic Malbork (Poland),²⁹ or else making unpromising locations somewhat more attractive to Christian settlers, as relics did at Templar Ascó (Tarragona,

²² Riley-Smith, *Templars and Hospitallers as Professed Religious*, 12, suggests that a marching crusading army was like a “nomadic crusading monastery” devoted to penitential warfare.

²³ Józwiak and Trupinda, *Organizacja życia na zamku krzyżackim*, 110.

²⁴ Theresa Vann and Donald Kagay, *Hospitaller Piety and Crusader Propaganda: Guillaume Caoursin's Description of the Ottoman Siege of Rhodes, 1480* (Farnham, 2015), 301.

²⁵ Jonathan Riley-Smith, *Crusaders and Settlers in the Latin East* (Farnham, 2008), 129.

²⁶ Malcolm Barber and Keith Bate, eds., *The Templars: Selected Sources*, Manchester Medieval Sources Series (Manchester, 2002), 116–77. The cross was believed to have curative powers and “freed the dead from their evil spirits” (Barber, *The New Knighthood*, 199). It was probably the same cross first shown to pilgrims in the Temple precinct in Jerusalem; see Denys Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A Corpus*, vol. 4, *The Cities of Acre and Tyre with Addenda and Corrigenda to volumes I–III* (Cambridge, UK, 2009), 170.

²⁷ The cross is kept in a silver box that was donated around 1390 by Lorenzo Suárez de Figueroa, grand master of the order of Santiago, which is decorated with fig leaves (for his surname, Figueroa), the cross of the order, and the double-arm Caravaca cross. An inscription around the box reads, L[A] VRENÇII ÇUAREII DE FIGUEROA ME FECIT; see Indalecio Pozo Martínez, “Las torres medievales del Campo de Caravaca (Murcia),” *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 32/1 (1996): 263–85.

²⁸ Gregorio Sánchez Romero, “Ensayo histórico sobre el acontecimiento religioso de la Vera Cruz de Caravaca y su santuario,” *Murgetana* 104 (2001): 43–89. This relic was first associated with the Templars from 1266, when Caravaca was donated to the order, and later with the Order of Santiago in 1344. Until the seventeenth century the relic was housed in the base of a tower inside the preceptory-fortress, where it became an important object of pilgrimage locally.

²⁹ Pluskowski, *Prussian Crusade*, 163.

Spain) in the lower Ebro valley³⁰ and at Atlit (known as Château Pèlerin, Israel) in the Holy Land.³¹ In some places, relic collections like these could attract tangible financial benefits, as at thirteenth-century Marburg (Germany), where the first Gothic church in Germany built to house the tomb of the newly canonized Saint Elizabeth was funded through indulgences.³² Gifts from pilgrims could be of substantial value, and by 1452 the relics of Saint Barbara at Teutonic Starogród (Poland) had attracted a bejeweled gold crown, another in gilded silver, silver belts with gilded fittings, over one hundred gold and silver rings, and numerous figurines in the form of fish, ships, and mimetic body parts offered up in fulfillment of prayers.³³ A surviving inventory of donations from visitors to the True Cross of Caravaca from 1480 includes textiles, silks, altar cloths, and candles, many of them given by grateful members of the Order of Santiago.³⁴ Economic and religious benefits merged seamlessly into one, nowhere more so than at Vera Cruz de Marmelar in Portugal, the location of a Hospitaller commandery and an important royal cult of the True Cross from at least the mid-fourteenth century.³⁵ In the mid-fifteenth century, a fair was granted here to coincide with the feast day of the Invention of the Cross on 3 May each year, when forty men were ordered to guard the relic.³⁶ When one factors in the likelihood that these men also had families, the size of this troop is significant; the need for the guard guaranteed the presence of an established and stable population, for whom the fair was a lucrative bonus.

TAKING POSSESSION

The fragmentation and translation of relics was already a well-established custom by the later Middle Ages,³⁷ and the military orders were willing participants. The relics of Saint Barbara were seized at Sartowice (Poland) by Teutonic knights in 1242; the looting of relics motivated by pious devotion was seen as commendable (*furtum sacrum*) and to be distinguished from common theft, motivated by greed

³⁰ Joan Fuguet, *Templers i Hospitalers*, vol. 2, *Guia de les terres de l'Ebre i dels castells Templers del Baix Maestrat* (Barcelona, 1998), 45.

³¹ Cedric Norman Johns, *Pilgrims' Castle ('Atlit), David's Tower (Jerusalem), and Qal'atar-Rabad ('Ajlun): Three Middle Eastern Castles from the Time of the Crusades* (Aldershot, 1997), 16.

³² Paul Crossley, "The Architecture of Queenship, Royal Saints, Female Dynasties and the Spread of Gothic Architecture in Central Europe," in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne J. Duggan (Woodbridge, UK, 1997), 263–300, at 266; Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, 72–76.

³³ Mieczysław Haftka, *Zamki krzyżackie w Polsce: Szkice z dziejów* (Malbork, 1999), 295.

³⁴ Indalecio Pozo Martínez, "Donantes y limosnas a la Santa Vera Cruz de Caravaca (ss. XIV–XIX)," *Murgetana* 118 (2008): 55–74.

³⁵ Paula Pinto Costa and Maria Cristina Pimenta, "The Knights of Marmelar: Peace and Conflict in a Country of Pilgrimage," in *Pilgrims and Pilgrimages as Peacemakers in Christianity, Judaism and Islam*, ed. Antón Pazos, *Compostela International Studies in Pilgrimage History and Culture* (Farnham, 2013), 229–42.

³⁶ A second annual fair was added in the sixteenth century, again to coincide with liturgical feast days; see Ana Pagará, Nuno Vassallo e Silva, and Vítor Serrão, *Igreja Vera Cruz de Marmelar* (Portel, 2006), 41, 56.

³⁷ Peter Brown, *The Cult of Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981); Patrick J. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1978).

and punishable by excommunication. In the story of these relics popularized in the fourteenth century, the Teutonic knights justified their actions by claiming that the original owner of the relics, Duke Swantopulk, had acquired them dishonestly by stealing them from a papal legate traveling to Denmark. An older version of the same legend, no doubt originating in Swantopulk's court, claimed that the relics had been stolen in Rome by pious pilgrims whose ship was brought to Pomerania during a storm, where the duke generously protected their relics from bandits.³⁸ Either way, the faithful observed how the saints' relics had abandoned their original owners for more deserving guardians, and there are several cases of saints' relics seemingly acting in their own best interests in exactly this way. The relics from Hospitaller Belver were already en route to Lisbon when they miraculously turned back and returned themselves to the village again, sailing up the Tagus in a wooden chest lined with red silk and decorated with silver.³⁹ A fragment of the True Cross on its way to the cathedral at Evora was similarly diverted to Hospitaller Marmelar after the donkey carrying it declined to advance any further.⁴⁰ In both of these Portuguese examples, the relics displayed an independence of mind that, in turn, underpinned the Hospitallers' claim to be their most suitable host. Needless to say, this logic could work the other way. Wigand of Marburg was forced to admit that during their sack of the cathedral in Gniezno in 1331 the Teutonic knights had wanted to retrieve the relics of Saint Adalbert and remove them to Prussia (where he had been killed in 997), but they were unable to do so because the relics were concealed from their eyes.⁴¹ Most likely, the knights intended to transfer the relics to their newly built cathedral in Kaliningrad (formerly known as Königsberg, now Russia), which they had prematurely dedicated to Saint Adalbert in 1302. Without the relics, however, that dedication was less appealing, and in later years the cathedral received another patron, Saint Elizabeth, whose principal relics were already safely in the order's possession.

Most relics changed hands peaceably, and some were certainly acquired in person by knights who visited the Holy Land. Being portable and light, they were easily moved over long distances. Following an exchange of prisoners in 1185, Templar Walter of Marengiers visited the monastery at Saydnaya, thirty kilometers north of Damascus, where he received a phial of oil exuded by the miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary.⁴² Given that physical traces of Mary, the mother of Jesus, were extremely rare and Marian liturgies were popular in the later Middle Ages, this oil was in demand in the monasteries of Europe, among them the abbey of Altavaux

³⁸ Starnawska, *Świętych życie po życiu*, 162–63.

³⁹ Natália Maria Lopes Nunes, "O culto das Santas Relíquias de Belver (Concelho de Gavião)," *Mundos sociais: Saberes e práticas; VI Congresso Português de Sociologia* (Lisbon, 2008), <http://www.aps.pt/vicongresso/pdfs/153.pdf>.

⁴⁰ According to a seventeenth-century account, the cargo exploded, water flowed from a new spring, and a pine took root on the same spot. The tree was later made into crosses by passing pilgrims; see Pagará, Vassallo e Silva, and Serrão, *Igreja Vera Cruz de Marmelar*, 50–51; Jorge Cardoso, *Agiologio Lusitano dos sanctos varoens illustres em virtude do Reino de Portugal*, vol. 3 (Lisbon, 1666), 55.

⁴¹ Starnawska, *Świętych życie po życiu*, 170.

⁴² Mat Immerzeel, *Identity Puzzles: Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 184 (Walpole, MA, 2009), 45.

(Haute-Vienne, France) and the Templar house at Peñíscola (Castellón, Spain), which had obtained two ampullae by the beginning of the fourteenth century. The Hospitallers also sent a phial of the same oil to Henry III of England in 1235, together with several other relics,⁴³ and Saydnaya itself was felt to have merited inclusion in pilgrim's guides to the Holy Land. However, although knights did sometimes obtain relics on their own initiative, as Walter had done, their purpose was usually more strategic. The right arm of Saint John the Baptist, presented in 1484 to the Hospitallers by the Turkish Sultan Bayezid in exchange for a promise of support (Fig. 1), illustrates how relics could achieve the status of a diplomatic gift.⁴⁴ There are several instances of this, including the presentation to Pope Innocent IV of a nail and a hammer from the Crucifixion and the hand of Saint Thomas, which had been acquired by the Hospitallers and Templars in 1245 and subsequently exported to Rome. Similarly, the Templars made a presentation of important relics of the Passion and the life of Christ to Louis IX of France in 1241,⁴⁵ the same year that Ferdinand III of Castile gave the Cross of Caravaca to the Templars. The two episodes are entirely unconnected but help to illustrate the constant process of relic movement and exchange that sustained cohesion among the medieval elite across Europe.

Gifts bestowed voluntarily showed loyalty and favor. When Emery d'Amboise, the Hospitaller prior of France, donated a gold plate embedded with a fragment of the skull of Saint John the Baptist in 1501,⁴⁶ his generosity to his own order reflected well on his virtues as a donor. This may also explain why Richard of Hastings (d. 1185), the Templar provincial master, gave three relics to the Augustinian canons at Osney (England),⁴⁷ and it was most likely through gifts such as these that the cathedral of Frombork (Poland) obtained "particles" of the relics of Saints Barbara, Catherine, Margaret, Elizabeth, and Mary Magdalene from the Teutonic order for one of their main altars. Unfortunately, only in a handful of cases are the precise motives for gift giving more fully understood. In 1424 the Hospitaller

⁴³ Michele Bacci, "A Sacred Space for a Holy Icon: The Shrine of Our Lady of Saydnaya," in *Hierotopy: Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow, 2006): 132–35; Sebastián Salvadó, "Icons, Crosses and the Liturgical Objects of Templar Chapels in the Crown of Aragon," in *The Debate on the Trial of the Templars, 1307–1314*, ed. Jochen Burgdorf, Paul Crawford, and Helen J. Nicholson (Farnham, 2010), 183–93; Bernard Hamilton, "Our Lady of Saidnaiya: An Orthodox Shrine Revered by Muslims and Knights Templars at the Time of the Crusades," in *The Holy Land, Holy Lands, and Christian History*, ed. Robert Norman Swanson, *Studies in Church History* 36 (Woodbridge, UK, 2000), 207–15. For the Virgin Mary as a saint, see Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, 151–62.

⁴⁴ Anthony Luttrell, "The Rhodian Background of the Order of Saint John on Malta," in Luttrell, *The Hospitallers of Rhodes and Their Mediterranean World* (Aldershot, 1992), 11; for a broader discussion regarding the use of relics in diplomacy in the medieval Kingdom of Poland, see Starnawska, *Świętych życie po życiu*, 557–60.

⁴⁵ Denys Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem*, vol. 1, A–K (Excluding Acre and Jerusalem) (Cambridge, UK, 1993), 155; William Chester Jordan, *Louis IX and the Challenge of the Crusade: A Study in Rulership* (Princeton, 1979).

⁴⁶ Ann Ball, *Encyclopedia of Catholic Devotions and Practices* (Huntington, 2003), 154; José Antonio Melgares Guerrero, "Bases antropológicas de la devoción a la Cruz de Caravaca en América Hispana," *Revista Murciana de Antropología* 13 (2006): 95–103, at 96. This item was taken to Malta in 1530; see Helen J. Nicholson, *The Knights Hospitaller* (Woodbridge, UK, 2001), 97.

⁴⁷ Tom Licence, "Templars, Hospitallers, Christ and the Saints," *Crusades* 4 (2005): 39–57, at 51.



Fig. 1. *Turkish Spokesman Presenting the Hand of Saint John the Baptist*, an illustration by Guillaume Caoursin in his *Obsidionis Rhodiae urbis descriptio*, fol. 51r, the official Latin account of the victory of the order over the Ottomans, published in 1496. (Image from Digitale Sammlungen—Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Darmstadt and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, with permission.)

master advised a group of *officiales Terrae Sanctae* (probably Franciscans) to present a thorn from the Crown of Thorns and the Virgin Mary's veil to Władysław II Jagiełło, accompanied by a letter in which the master expressed the hope that the gift would persuade the Polish king to provide Rhodes with aid against the Turks. At other times, the gifting of relics represented something more personal, as was the case in 1349 when Juan Fernández de Heredia gifted the head of Saint Beatrice to Hospitaller Alfambra; and in 1361 when he gave the head of Saint Odile of Alsace to Villed (both Teruel, Spain) in acknowledgement of the personal links that existed between the grand master and the two preceptories where he had been commander in the 1330s.⁴⁸ The heads themselves had originally been presented to Fernández de Heredia by the papacy in acknowledgment of services rendered. On other occasions, relics changed hands simply as an expression of gratitude. The gift of pieces of the True Cross and several other relics sent by the master of the Temple to London in 1272 marks the year when Prince Edward of England departed Acre after a year spent campaigning against the Egyptian Mamluks. Likewise, the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen gifted a fragment of the True Cross to the Teutonic knights, the only military order to support the excommunicated emperor during his stay in the Holy Land and at his coronation as king of Jerusalem.⁴⁹ Sometimes there is a hint that gifts were arranged in lieu of payment. Count Charles of Anjou, for example, donated relics, among other items, to the Hospitaller preceptory at Aix in 1272 in compensation for the burial of his first wife, Beatrix of Provence, in the order's chapel there.⁵⁰ Relics were certainly accepted as pledges for loans, and this is probably how the Knights Templar obtained the bust of Saint Polycarp, which had been pledged by the abbot of the Temple of the Lord and never reclaimed. A better-documented example is the large quantity of relics offered by the commune of Zadar (Croatia) to the Hungarian and Slavonian master of the Templar order in return for a loan redeemed in April 1308.⁵¹

Alternatively, if not stolen or acquired as a gift, payment, or loan, relics could be appropriated. Thus, at Marburg the Teutonic order took control of the hospital, church, and burial place of Elizabeth of Hungary despite the princess's own wish for the premises to be presented to the Hospitallers after her death; following her canonization the site became a significant pilgrimage destination.⁵² In other circumstances the promise of capable management and greater security evidently proved persuasive. In the Kingdom of Jerusalem in the 1250s the Hospitallers acquired both the nunnery of Bethany, built over the Tomb of Saint Lazarus, and the mon-

⁴⁸ For Władysław II Jagiełło, see Starnawska, *Świętych życie po życiu*, 162–63. For Heredia, see Juan Manuel Cacho Blecua, *El gran maestre Juan Fernández de Heredia*, Colección Mariano de Pano y Ruata 12 (Zaragoza, 1997), 18.

⁴⁹ Małgorzata Jackiewicz-Garniec and Mirosław Garniec, *Zamki państwa krzyżackiego w dawnych Prusach: Powiśle, Górne Prusy, Warmia, Mazury* (Olsztyn, 2009), 130. This is the relic venerated at Elbląg.

⁵⁰ Dominic Selwood, *Knights of the Cloister: Templars and Hospitallers in Central-Southern Occitania, c. 1100–c. 1300* (Cambridge, UK, 2009), 97.

⁵¹ Barber, *New Knighthood*, 200. This may also explain how a fragment of the True Cross came to be on loan to King Denis of Portugal in 1322 by the Hospitallers at Marmelar and why, through the terms of his will, the king sought to return it; see Pagará, Vassallo e Silva, and Serrão, *Igreja Vera Cruz de Marmelar*, 53.

⁵² Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, 75.

astery of Mount Tabor, built over the cave where the Transfiguration of Christ was believed to have occurred.⁵³ At these and other sites the military orders were not above a certain tendency at self-promotion when it came to the accompanying historical narrative. The hospital in Jerusalem, for example, was claimed as the venue for the Last Supper and the introduction of the Eucharist, though this never gained wider acceptance.⁵⁴ Dorothy of Montau (1347–94), a holy woman and stigmatic who spent the last thirteen months of her life walled up in a hermit cell in Kwidzyn Cathedral (Poland) with the permission of the Teutonic chapter of the bishopric of Pomerania, is another case in point. After her death, when Dorothy's visions were set down on paper, her tomb quickly became a major pilgrimage center in Prussia; between 1404 and 1406 the papal commission recorded more than three hundred witnesses' accounts of her life and miracles.⁵⁵

A more dependable strategy was to regenerate new from old, thereby propagating an existing cult. The bones of Saint Cordula, one of the thousands of companions of Saint Ursula, were allegedly unearthed in a vineyard belonging to a Hospitaller preceptory near Cologne in 1278 and reburied under the altar of the chapel there. More bones were discovered later and the entire collection exhibited in 1327.⁵⁶ A large silver reliquary containing the head of one of the martyred virgins could be found on the altar of the Temple of Paris in the early fourteenth century, and there was another in the preceptory of the Teutonic order in Venice in later centuries,⁵⁷ just as there were in many cities and monasteries across Europe.⁵⁸ Similarly inexhaustible, the oil that flowed miraculously from the tomb of Saint Elizabeth in Marburg was widely distributed by the Teutonic order. In turn, these phials themselves came to be venerated and kept either in other Teutonic chapels or used to establish new churches, often under the patronage of the saint.⁵⁹ Likewise, the Templars kept a holy image of the Virgin Mary in the cathedral in Tartus (Syria), venerated by Christians and Muslims alike, from which holy oil was extracted for distribution to pilgrims.⁶⁰ Springs and rivers provided limitless supplies; the sacred

⁵³ Denys Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem*, vol. 1, A–K, 122; and vol. 2, L–Z (*Excluding Tyre*) (Cambridge, UK, 2009), 68. Curiously, the Teutonic order showed far less interest in the holy places in Outremer.

⁵⁴ Licence, "Templars, Hospitallers, Christ and the Saints," 47.

⁵⁵ The formal process of canonization was put to an abrupt halt after the defeat of the Teutonic knights at Grunwald in 1410 and not completed until 1976; see Marian Biskup and Gerard Labuda, *Dzieje zakonu krzyżackiego w Prusach: Gospodarka, społeczeństwo, państwo, ideologia* (Gdańsk, 1986), 432.

⁵⁶ Klaus Militzer, "The Hospitaller Fraternity of St. John at SS Johan and Cordula in Cologne," in *The Military Orders*, vol. 3, *History and Heritage*, ed. Victor Mallia-Milanes (Aldershot, 2008), 253–57, at 254. Several heads of Saint Ursula existed; see Scott B. Montgomery, *St. Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins of Cologne: Relics, Reliquaries and the Visual Culture of Group Sanctity in Late Medieval Europe* (Bern, 2010), 39.

⁵⁷ Nicholson, "The Head of St. Euphemia," 108–20.

⁵⁸ Like that of Saint Ubaldesca, the head of Saint Ursula was donated to Caspe (Zaragoza) by Hospitaller Grand Master Juan Fernández de Heredia in 1394; see Cacho Blecua, *El gran maestre Juan Fernández de Heredia*, 201.

⁵⁹ Nicholson, *Templars, Hospitallers and Teutonic Knights*, 118. Examples include the Gothic church at Kassa (Košice, Slovakia).

⁶⁰ Immerzeel, *Identity Puzzles*, 45. The cult continued on Cyprus even after Tortosa was lost to the Christians. The monastery of Our Lady of Tortosa in Famagusta became a pilgrimage site in 1318

water from the River Jordan guarded by the Hospitaller castle at Belvoir was distributed in ampullae and reputed to calm tempests when thrown into the sea by sailors.⁶¹ At Abu Ghosh (Israel), a place identified with the biblical Emmaus, where Christ appeared to his disciples after the Resurrection, the Hospitallers constructed a fortified church in c. 1141 with a two-story nave above an underground crypt containing a sacred spring, which could be accessed by visiting pilgrims.⁶² In those cases where the order held the principal fragments of a relic, the usual practice was to split off smaller pieces. The fragment of the True Cross from Hospitaller Marmelar was divided into two in 1340 after its influential role at the battle of Tarifa, one half being given to the cathedral at Évora in exchange for a relic of Saint Andrew.⁶³ Likewise, the relic collections at Teutonic Malbork included those of Saint Elizabeth, whose main relic was held by the order in Marburg, and Saint Barbara, whose remains could be found at Starogród (Poland).⁶⁴

Finally, the military orders also promoted new saints, such as Saint Dorothy of Montau, revived previous cults, and made discoveries of their own. This was the case in June 1327 when one of the Hospitallers in Syracuse had a vision of Saint Constantine, who informed him that a saintly knight worthy of veneration was buried in a ruined Templar church outside the city. The Hospitaller immediately orchestrated a search in the nave of the ruined church and soon discovered the burial place of Saint Gerland of Poland (died c. 1244), otherwise known as John of Germany. In the seventeenth century the Hospitaller historian Giacomo Bosio claimed that the sanctity of the relics had been immediately confirmed by the heavenly aroma surrounding them; miracles began three days later. About a hundred miracles were allegedly recorded in the first month alone, and the site subsequently became a significant religious center.⁶⁵

These strategies for obtaining or multiplying relics were aided by the military orders' strong presence in the Eastern Mediterranean, which provided them with privileged access to sites and materials. Once more, their international structure and military character facilitated the safe movement of relics across Europe; for example, a crystalline phial containing Christ's Blood sent by the patriarch and the Church of Jerusalem to Henry III of England in 1247 was transported there by the Templars.⁶⁶ Safety was paramount, given that relics like the head of Saint Barbara could be stolen; a relic of Saint Sebastian disappeared when the Hospitallers departed Rhodes in 1523, only to appear again on Majorca.⁶⁷ Their repeated trans-

when indulgences were granted by the papacy to those who visited it; see Nicholas Coureas, *The Latin Church in Cyprus, 1313–1378*, Cyprus Research Centre Text and Studies in the History of Cyprus 65 (Nicosia, 2010), 300.

⁶¹ Avinoam Shalem, *Islam Christianized: Islamic Portable Objects in the Medieval Church Treasuries of the Latin West*, *Ars Faciendi* 7 (Frankfurt, 1998), 21.

⁶² Riley-Smith, *Templars and Hospitallers as Professed Religious*, 21; Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem*, vol. 1, A–K, 7–17.

⁶³ Pagará, Vassallo e Silva, and Serrão, *Igreja Vera Cruz de Marmelar*.

⁶⁴ Michał Woźniak, "Dyptyk relikwiarzowy elbląskiego komtura domowego Thiele von Loricha," in *Praeterita posteritati: Studia z historii sztuki i kultury ofiarowane Maciejowi Kilarowskiemu*, ed. Mariusz Mierzwiński (Malbork, 2001), 481–500, at 485.

⁶⁵ Licence, "Templars, Hospitallers, Christ and the Saints," 39–57, 53–54.

⁶⁶ So says Matthew Paris, though another account names the Hospitallers; see Nicholas Vincent, *The Holy Blood: King Henry III and the Westminster Blood Relic* (Cambridge, UK, 2001), 2 n. 7.

⁶⁷ Nicholson, *Knights Hospitaller*, 96.

lation was not an infrequent occurrence and could lead to an exotic biography of travels, as Fig. 2 shows. The relics of the early fourth-century martyr Saint Euphemia were allegedly taken by the Templars from Constantinople after the city was sacked in 1204 during the Fourth Crusade, first to Atlit (Château Pèlerin) in the Holy Land, then to Cyprus in 1291, and finally, with the Hospitallers, to Rhodes and Malta, before ending their days with Napoleon's fleet at the Battle of the Nile in 1798.⁶⁸ Each stage of the journey provided opportunity for further fragmentation to occur, with minor relics first passing to at least one Templar house in the West (Peñíscola, Spain) and later to Malbork with the Teutonic knights.⁶⁹

It should be no surprise then that the military orders could amass substantial relic collections and so create highly visible cults. At their headquarters on Rhodes, the Hospitallers gathered relics such as thorns from the Crown of Thorns, the thirty silver pieces paid to Judas, a cross allegedly made from the True Cross, the arm of Saint Catherine, and relics of Saint Anthony, among a great many others.⁷⁰ The knights swore upon their relics when they came to elect a new grand master, or so traveler Pero Tafur tells us in the 1430s.⁷¹ The collection of relics gathered by the Teutonic order in their headquarters in Malbork by the end of the fourteenth century included the relics of Saint Catherine of Alexandria (a gift from the Holy Roman emperor Charles IV),⁷² the relics of Saint Liborius of Le Mans (presented to them by the bishop and chapter of Paderborn in 1359), two fragments of the True Cross (one from Charles VI of France), a relic of Saint Veronica,⁷³ the head of Saint Agatha, a relic of Saint George, the jaw of Saint Anthony, and the head of Saint Euphemia,⁷⁴ as well as relics of both Saint Elizabeth and Saint Barbara, the latter probably generated from larger relics held by the order elsewhere. Even the most unassuming of preceptories could accumulate quite sizable assemblages; in 1308 the Templar preceptory of Saint Eulalia (Aveyron, France) possessed no fewer than nine reliquaries containing a "wealth of relics,"⁷⁵ while the Hospitaller chapel of Saint Blas at the castle at Belver in central Portugal preserved part of the Holy Manger, pieces of the True Cross and the Holy Shroud, drops of milk from the Virgin Mary, relics of Saint John the Baptist, hair from Mary Magdalene, the sackcloth of Saint Thomas, relics of Saint Margaret, and much else besides.⁷⁶ An exceptional

⁶⁸ Although the saint's body is said to be still intact in the patriarchal church of Saint George in Istanbul.

⁶⁹ Nicholson, *Templars, Hospitallers and Teutonic Knights*, 117; Nicholson, "The Head of St. Euphemia," 108–20.

⁷⁰ Luttrell, "The Rhodian Background," 10–14, provides further details.

⁷¹ Malcolm Letts, *Pero Tafur: Travels and Adventures 1435–1439* (London, 1926), 52.

⁷² Woźniak, "Dyptyk relikwiarzowy," 485; for a discussion of oaths on relics in medieval Poland, see Starnawska, *Świętych życie po życiu*, 405–14.

⁷³ This passage has been interpreted in different sources as referring either to relics of Saint Veronica (see Stefan Kwiatkowski, *Klimat religijny w diecezji pomezjańskiej u schyłku XIV i w pierwszych dziesięcioleciach XV wieku*, Roczniki Towarzystwa Naukowego w Toruniu 83 [Toruń, 1990], 87) or to the image of Saint Veronica (see Józwiak and Trupinda, *Organizacja życia na zamku Krzyżackim*, 468).

⁷⁴ Probably obtained from Nicosia on Cyprus after the dissolution of the Templars; during the Templar trial it was certainly there.

⁷⁵ Selwood, *Knights of the Cloister*, 201.

⁷⁶ Nunes, "O culto das Santas Relíquias de Belver."

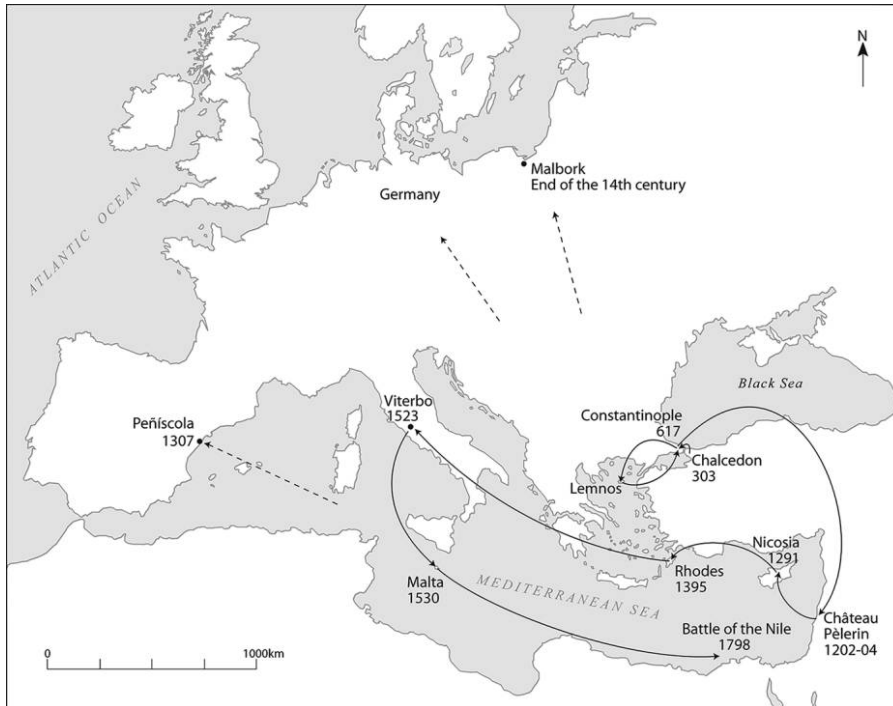


Fig. 2. The alleged translations of Saint Euphemia's relics around the Mediterranean and across Europe. Euphemia was martyred at Chalcedon (present day Kadköy) in 303 and her remains placed in a church dedicated to her there. In 617 her relics were transferred to Constantinople, then taken to the island of Lemnos, and in 796 returned to Constantinople. During the Fourth Crusade (1202–4) the relics fell into the hands of the military orders. (© Alejandra Gutiérrez.)

case is that of Caspe preceptory in Zaragoza (Spain) where Hospitaller grand master Juan Fernández de Heredia chose to be buried in a chapel dedicated to the Holy Christ and to which he donated some important relics in 1394, including a fragment of the True Cross, a thorn “on which Christ’s Blood can be seen,” and three head relics.⁷⁷

Relics like these were highly portable and had traveled long distances. None, though, were decorative or intact; they were deliberately broken into fragments, which were themselves symbolic of the whole.⁷⁸ This process of fragmentation created three different sets of associations. First, it linked those individuals implicated in the act of exchange and circulation and established relationships between givers

⁷⁷ Cacho Bleuca, *El gran maestre Juan Fernández de Heredia*, 201. The perceived hierarchy of relics is often reflected in the order in which they are listed in church inventories; for example, in the fifteenth-century lists of relics at Hospitaller Mała Jasienica (Poland), male martyrs (Christopher and Anthony) are listed before female ones (Anne and Ursula); see Starnawska, *Świętych życie po życiu*, 138–39.

⁷⁸ For more on fragmentation in archaeology, see John Chapman and Bisserka Gaydarska, *Parts and Wholes: Fragmentation in Prehistoric Context* (Oxford, 2007).

and recipients. Second, it expanded and interconnected the virtual network of places and institutions which had obtained parts from the same body. This was possibly an important consideration when the geographical density of the military orders' institutions was not high. Third, as the relics accumulated, the amassing and recontextualizing of a collection juxtaposed dislocated body parts from different saints, crisscrossing cultural, chronological, and geographical boundaries. Ultimately, every assemblage of relics was unique and active, and each contributed to the construction of identity of the individual preceptories and of the institution as a whole, in some cases over a period of time measured in centuries. What makes relics so unusual is that they were largely indistinguishable and could not, in themselves, be fixed to either place or person. Although their wrappings of silks and reliquary containers tapped into a visual and tactile vocabulary of luxury familiar to later medieval court culture, their identification ultimately depended upon verification from participants in the circulation network itself.

WHAT KIND OF RELICS?

Passion Relics

Later medieval relics were not always associated with saints. Those with the greatest spiritual value were linked with the Passion of Christ because they provided tangible reminders of Christ's suffering. Among the most treasured possessions of the Templars was a thorn from Christ's Crown, which passed to the Hospitallers⁷⁹ and was later matched by Heredia's specimen. The Crown was associated with teachings about Christ's kingship and gained particular prominence in the thirteenth century⁸⁰ when sermons on the humility of Christ the King became popular, something that had implications for all earthly kings. For the military orders, with their extensive secular powers in Rhodes and their palatinates in the Holy Land,⁸¹ this symbol of royalty had a special resonance. It was not, however, their only or most significant Passion relic. That distinction was held by the True Cross, which was a symbol of both victory and salvation⁸² and the symbolic ensign of the crusader army.⁸³

⁷⁹ Nicholson, *Knights Hospitaller*, 96–97.

⁸⁰ Christopher Olaf Blum, "Art and Politics in the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris," *Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 4/2 (2001): 13–31.

⁸¹ Barber, *New Knighthood*, 83.

⁸² Barbara Baert, *A Heritage of Holy Wood: The Legend of the True Cross in Text*, trans. Lee Preedy, *Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions: Medieval and Early Modern Peoples* 22 (Leiden, 2004), 133–42. This was not a novel association; once transferred from Jerusalem to the imperial palace at Constantinople in the seventh century, the relic of the True Cross had accompanied Byzantine armies into battle on more than one occasion. See Holger A. Klein, "Constantine, Helena, and the Cult of the True Cross in Constantinople," in *Byzance et les reliques du Christ*, ed. Jannic Durand and Bernard Flusin (Paris, 2004), 31–59; John Wortley, "The Wood of the True Cross," in *Studies on the Cult of Relics in Byzantium up to 1204*, ed. John T. Wortley, *Variorum Collected Studies* 935 (Ashgate, 2009), 1–19. This tradition was known in the West and, when a new relic of the True Cross was allegedly rediscovered in Jerusalem on 5 August 1099, it is no surprise that when the crusaders confronted the Egyptian army north of Ascalon six days later Arnulf of Chocques, the patriarch designate of Jerusalem, carried this alleged relic of the Crucifixion; see Alan V. Murray, "Mighty against the Enemies of Christ."

⁸³ Jaroslav Folda, *The Art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land 1098–1187* (Cambridge, UK, 1995), 35.

The Templars do not seem to have carried the principal fragment of the True Cross venerated in Latin Jerusalem into battle themselves—that rare privilege usually fell to the patriarch of Jerusalem⁸⁴—but from the moment of its rediscovery in 1099 to its loss at the battle of Hattin in 1187 they guarded the Cross whenever it traveled outside the city. However, many smaller fragments of the True Cross did make their way to Templar preceptories in Western Europe, particularly during the twelfth century. The Templar house in London counted wood from the Cross among its relics,⁸⁵ as did Toulouse (France), where the Templars housed a large cross inlaid with two fragments of the True Cross among forty-five precious stones,⁸⁶ and Templar Peñíscola (Spain), where no less than five fragments could be found;⁸⁷ a recent listing suggests some forty-six fragments of the *lignum Domini* housed in thirty-six reliquaries in Templar houses at the time of their trial.⁸⁸ The popularity of the cult of the True Cross in the Templar churches across Europe reflects not only its association with the Holy Land but also the order's particular devotion as the militia of Christ.⁸⁹

Other military orders also held the True Cross in high esteem. The seal of Raymond le Puy (1118–c. 1158/60) depicts the second Hospitaller grand master kneeling before it,⁹⁰ and in the 1170s the Hospitallers were reminded by Pope Alexander III (in *Piam admodum*) of their duty to engage in battle only if a fragment of the Cross was traveling with the Christian army.⁹¹ The fragment of the True Cross from Hospitaller Marmelar was duly carried at the battle of Tarifa in 1340.⁹² The use of the Cross in battle at Dzierzgoń in 1248 by the Teutonic knights, mentioned earlier, suggests a similar obligation,⁹³ and by the fifteenth century the

⁸⁴ Murray, "Mighty against the Enemies of Christ."

⁸⁵ Virginia Jansen, "Light and Pure: The Templars' New Choir," in *The Temple Church in London: History, Architecture, Art*, ed. Robin Griffith-Jones and David Park (Woodbridge, UK, 2010), 45–66.

⁸⁶ Selwood, *Knights of the Cloister*, 202.

⁸⁷ Salvadó, "Icons, Crosses and the Liturgical Objects," 183–93.

⁸⁸ Jochen Schenk, "The Cult of the Cross in the Order of the Temple," in *As Ordens Militares: Freires, Guerreiros, Cavaleiros; Actas do VI Encontro sobre Ordens Militares*, ed. Isabel Cristina Ferreira Fernandes, 2 vols. (Palmela, 2012), 1:207–19.

⁸⁹ Licence, "Templars, Hospitallers, Christ and the Saints," 44. The name of Christ appears eighteen times in the Latin version of the Templar rule, more frequently than in the rule of Saint Benedict and the Hospitaller rule combined. The Temple of the Lord (Dome of the Rock), one of the centers of Christocentric cult, was portrayed on Templar seals with the legend "Sigillum militum de Templo Christi," although that temple was in fact administered by Augustinian canons in the twelfth century. Hospitaller seals depicted the Holy Sepulchre. Western Europeans would have struggled to differentiate one domed building in Jerusalem from another; for discussions, see Laura J. Whatley, "Visual Self-Fashioning and the Seals of the Knights Hospitaller in England," in *Remembering the Crusades: Myth, Image, and Identity*, ed. Nicholas Paul and Suzanne Yeager (Baltimore, 2013), 252–69, at 256.

⁹⁰ Folda, *Art of the Crusaders*, 294.

⁹¹ Riley-Smith, *Templars and Hospitallers as Professed Religious*, 18.

⁹² By a priest on a white donkey; see Pagará, Vassallo e Silva, and Serrão, *Igreja Vera Cruz de Marmelar*, 54.

⁹³ Although this practice was by no means restricted to the military orders: when Louis IX announced the Second Crusade he did so accompanied by relics of the True Cross and the Crown of Thorns (see M. Cecilia Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis: Kingship, Sanctity, and Crusade in the Later Middle Ages* [Ithaca, 2008]), while Alfonso I carried relics of the True Cross and those of Holy Mary with him during the Reconquest in Spain (see Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* [Philadelphia, 2004], 193).

knights held at least four pieces of the True Cross in Prussia, one each at Elbląg (Poland) and Brodnica (Poland) and two at Malbork.⁹⁴ The importance of these relics was also echoed in Teutonic art, notably the fourteenth-century tympanum above the southern portal to the grand master's burial chapel in Malbork. Dedicated to Saint Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary, this stone sculpture depicts the story of the True Cross from its discovery by Saint Helena through to its restoration by Heraclius (Fig. 3). More portable reminders of the suffering of Jesus include a late medieval badge (fourteenth–sixteenth centuries) excavated in 1991 at 5 Uus Street in Pärnu (Estonia), which depicts the nails, the Crown of Thorns, and the crucifix of the Passion of Christ.⁹⁵

Life of Christ Relics

Belief in a resurrected Christ might seem to deny the possibility of bodily relics, but there was a restricted and highly prized collection associated with his childhood, such as hair and milk teeth, as well as fluids lost at the time of death. A rare example of individual devotion is an offering made by Teutonic grand master Ulrich Von Jungingen, through a messenger, to the relic of the Holy Blood kept in Wilsnack before the war with Poland and Lithuania in 1409.⁹⁶ Perhaps the value and scarcity of these relics generally excluded the orders from obtaining them for themselves, but there was also a vibrant market for lesser contact relics, among them Christ's washing bowl, held by the Templars;⁹⁷ the stone water jar in which Christ turned water to wine, at the Hospital of Saint John in Jerusalem;⁹⁸ and one of the six jars of Cana, which was transferred to the Hospitaller priory of Clerkenwell, London, in 1269.⁹⁹ Lesser preceptories were especially tempted by these more incidental treasures: the Templars at Ascó (Spain) kept "a stone taken from the house where Jesus was born," "a stone from the place where Christ was crucified," and "wax imprinted with a coin owned by Jesus."¹⁰⁰ Ascó also obtained a rare contact relic associated with the Vir-

⁹⁴ Kwiatkowski, *Klimat religijny w diecezji pomezanańskiej*, 95.

⁹⁵ Aldur Vunk, "Eesti arheoloogilised palverändurimärgid," *Eesti Archeologia Ajakiri / Journal of Estonian Archaeology* 6/1 (2002): 25–49, at 48.

⁹⁶ Józwiak and Trupinda, *Organizacja życia na zamku krzyżackim*, 475. For Wilsnack and the Blood of Christ, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia, 2007). One intriguing site is Akeldama, or the Potter's Field, which was supposedly purchased by Jewish priests with Judas's bribe money and acquired by the Knights Hospitaller in 1143. This place was considered to be sanctified with the Blood of Christ, and miraculous properties were attached to its soil, including the granting of eternal life for those buried there. The Knights established a charnel house on the site to house the bones of pilgrims and then enclosed the site but would seem to have permitted the removal of earth to found distant cemeteries, including in Pisa and Rome. The Pisan Camposanto is argued to have been modeled on the charnel house at Akeldama in the thirteenth century. See Neta B. Bodner, "Earth from Jerusalem in the Pisan Camposanto," in *Between Jerusalem and Europe: Essays in Honour of Bianca Kühnel*, ed. Renana Bartal and Hanna Vorholt (Leiden, 2015), 74–93.

⁹⁷ Nicholson, *Knights Hospitaller*, 96–97.

⁹⁸ Nicholson, *Templars, Hospitallers and Teutonic Knights*, 118.

⁹⁹ Whitworth Porter, *A History of the Knights of Malta; or, The Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem*, 2 vols. (London, 1858), 2:282.

¹⁰⁰ Fuguet, *Templars i Hospitallers*, 45.

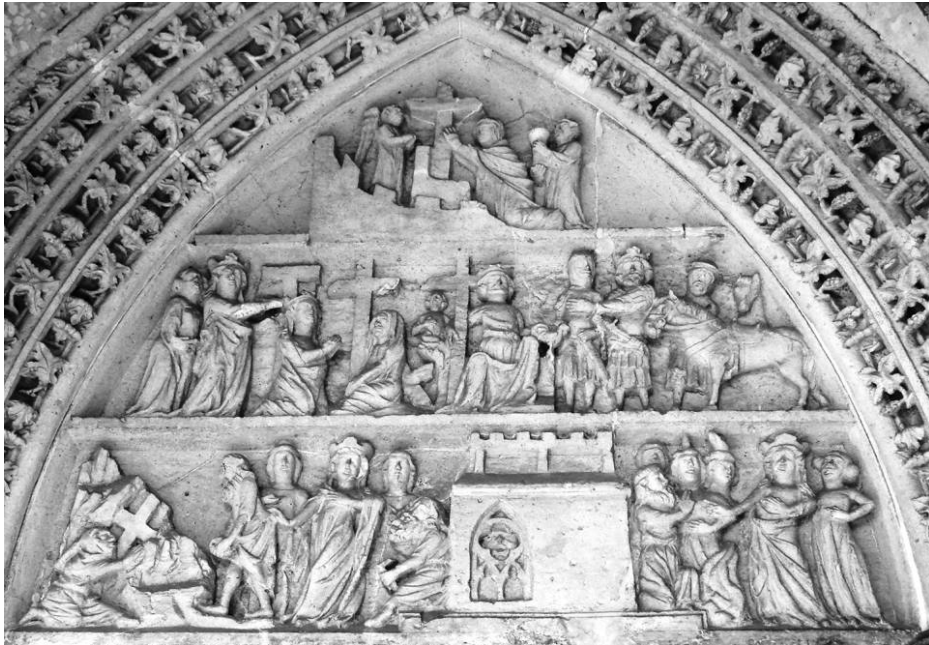


Fig. 3. The fourteenth-century tympanum above the southern portal of the chapel of Saint Anne at the Teutonic castle of Malbork (Poland). The tympanum emphasizes the importance of the relic of the True Cross held by the knights at Malbork. (© Tomasz Borowski.)

gin Mary, the patron saint of the Templar order, though the cult of Saint Mary was not generally inspired by holy relics.¹⁰¹ Archaeology does, however, provide evidence of the popularity of her cult in the Baltic, where the Teutonic order also took up her dedication. Three badges retrieved during excavations in 2004 from the granary island in Gdańsk (Poland) depict Saint Mary sitting on the throne with the infant Christ;¹⁰² and from Tallinn (Estonia) there is also a fourteenth-century pilgrim badge from the French shrine of Our Lady of Rocamadour.¹⁰³

Saints' Relics: The Female Martyr Saints

Particularly popular among the military orders were female martyr saints. Templar Peñíscola, for example, held some relics of Saint Margaret and Saint Mary Magda-

¹⁰¹ The rich iconography of Saint Mary in the art of the military orders has been a subject of extensive studies, especially in the context of the Teutonic Order, who, for example, named her their patron and commissioned a colossal 8 m high statue of Saint Mary with Christ for Malbork; see Tadeusz Chrzanowski and Marian Kornecki, "Madonna Tronująca: Uwagi do ikonografii maryjnej w średniowiecznej sztuce Prus," in *Sztuka w kręgu zakonu krzyżackiego w Prusach i Inflantach*, Studia Borussico-Baltica Torunensia Historiae Artium 2 (Toruń, 1995), 217–40.

¹⁰² Ewa Trawicka, "Plakietka Pielgrzymia z 'Tronującą Marią z Dzieciątkiem,'" in *Fundacje artystyczne na terenie państwa krzyżackiego w Prusach*, vol. 1, *Katalog wystawy w Muzeum Zamkowym w Malborku*, ed. Barbara Pospieszna (Malbork, 2010), 324–25.

¹⁰³ Vunk, "Eesti arheoloogilised palverändurimärgid," 48.

Speculum 92/4 (October 2017)

lene, among others.¹⁰⁴ The list is extensive¹⁰⁵ but quickly reveals a preference for saints associated with the East whose relics were controlled by the military orders, namely Saint Barbara and Saint Catherine of Alexandria. The Teutonic order kept—in addition to the head of Saint Elizabeth at Marburg—the head of Saint Barbara in Starogród and the relics of Saint Catherine in Ushakovo (Russia) and celebrated their cults through schemes of artistic decoration at Kaliningrad, Kwidzyn (Poland; held by the Teutonic chapter of the bishop of Pomerania), and at the main altar of their chapel in Grudziądz (Poland),¹⁰⁶ as well as at lesser Baltic convents such as Bratian and, further afield, at Monterazzano (Viterbo, Italy).¹⁰⁷ The same saints also appear in the coats of arms of many Teutonic cities in Livonia and Prussia, such as Hanseatic Kuldiga (Latvia) and Działdowo (Poland); but more personal and intimate preferences are suggested at Malbork, where depictions of Saint Barbara and Saint Catherine, together with images of Saint Dorothy and Saint Margaret, adorn the walls of the probable bedchamber of the Teutonic grand masters. In Fig. 4, the exterior of a fourteenth-century reliquary commissioned by the Teutonic commander of Elbląg, Thiele von Lorich, depicts him (here on the left) wearing the white mantle of the order and praying to Christ and the Virgin Mary with the help of Saint Barbara, who holds a symbol of the tower in which she was imprisoned. On the interior (right) the commander is assisted by Saint Barbara and Saint Catherine of Alexandria, who holds a sword and a representation of the wheel on which she was tortured. On the lower level, Saint Dorothy of Caesarea, Saint Margaret, Saint Peter, and Saint Paul are surrounded by relics that are wrapped and authenticated.¹⁰⁸

Saint Barbara and Saint Catherine were by no means venerated exclusively by the Teutonic order. The cult of Saint Barbara found favor in the Hospitaller church of San Juan del Hospital in Valencia (Spain), where a chapel dedicated to the saint was constructed to house the remains of Constance of Nicaea on her death in 1306. Also transported here from Constantinople was a column to which the saint had allegedly been tied, the link being that the empress had attributed her miraculous cure from leprosy to her devotion for Saint Barbara.¹⁰⁹ Burial in the Valencian chapel became so popular subsequently that a new crypt had to be constructed at the end of the sixteenth century. Elsewhere, the arm of Saint Catherine was venerated by the Hospitallers in the chapel of the grand masters on Rhodes in 1458;¹¹⁰ and one of the fifteenth-century gates there bears her dedication, as does the chapel of the grand

¹⁰⁴ Salvadó, “Icons, Crosses and the Liturgical Objects,” 183–93.

¹⁰⁵ As is associated iconography, for example the Hospitaller church of Saint Mary of the Castle on Rhodes has a very beautiful fourteenth-century fresco of another Holy Virgin, Saint Lucy, after whom one of the Hospitaller ships on Rhodes was named; see Erhard P. Opsahl, “The Hospitallers, Templars, and Teutonic Knights in the Morea after the Fourth Crusade” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1994), 129.

¹⁰⁶ Władysław Łoś, “Das Bildprogramm des Grudenzer Altars,” in *Sztuka w kręgu zakonu krzyżackiego w Prusach i Inflantach*, 203–16.

¹⁰⁷ Giulia Rossi, “Originality and Adaptation: The Architecture of the Teutonic Order in Italy,” in Piana and Carlsson, *Archaeology and Architecture of the Military Orders*, 193–218.

¹⁰⁸ For a detailed study of this reliquary, currently held in the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw, see Woźniak, “Dyptyk relikwiarzowy,” 481–500.

¹⁰⁹ Gaspar Escolano, *Década primera de la historia de la insigne y Coronada Ciudad y Reyno de Valencia*, 2 vols. (Valencia, 1610), 1:988–89.

¹¹⁰ Nicholson, *Knights Hospitaller*, 96.



Fig. 4. The fourteenth-century reliquary commissioned by the Teutonic commander of Elbląg, Thiele von Lorich. (Polish Army Museum, Warsaw.)

master, where the walls were decorated with tapestries illustrating her martyrdom.¹¹¹ Depictions of Saint Catherine also decorate the walls of many Templar churches, such as the ones in Metz (France) and Chwarszczany (Poland), where frescoes of the Holy Virgins, including Saint Catherine and Saint Barbara, originally commissioned by the Templars, were later refreshed by the Hospitallers in testament to their enduring popularity.¹¹²

Female martyr saints possessed several qualities well understood in medieval European visual culture, which made them suitable candidates as patrons and protectors of male communities. They were neither children nor spinsters but represented an idealized femininity. Particular iconographic motifs, such as long, loose hair and their crowns and garlands, underlined these saintly qualities. The former signified beauty and maidenhood, the latter their virginity, dedication to Christ, and the martyr's death; while the long dress with long sleeves was considered aristocratic.¹¹³ For the military orders, there was much that resonated here, including perhaps the symbolic association of women with towers and strongholds of faith. Helen Nicholson¹¹⁴ argues that the female virtues of patience, modesty, and humility were something to aspire to in a military male community. Certainly, these female saints were depicted at the peak of the "curve of life," according to Aristotelian conceptions of the ages of man so popular in later medieval convention;¹¹⁵ and they were, in a sense, the spiritual alternative to highborn ladies of court, a counterpart to the idealized secular knight. Saint Elizabeth was a Hungarian princess, while Saint Catherine is described as a sovereign queen, a privileged woman of great learning; their cults might therefore be read as an affirmation of the wealth and nobility of the dev-

¹¹¹ Élias Kollias, *The Knights of Rhodes: The Palace and the City* (Athens, 1991), 72.

¹¹² Teresa Mroczko and Marian Arszyski, *Architektura gotycka w Polsce*, 4 vols. (Warsaw, 1995).

¹¹³ Kim M. Phillips, "Maidenhood as the Perfect Age of Woman's Life," in *Young Medieval Women*, ed. Katherine J. Lewis, Noël James Menuge, and Kim M. Phillips (Stroud, 1999), 1–24, at 12–20.

¹¹⁴ Nicholson, "The Head of St. Euphemia," 108–20.

¹¹⁵ Phillips, "Maidenhood as the Perfect Age of Woman's Life," 2–3.

otee, or at least the assumption of it.¹¹⁶ More specifically, these saints were chaste—they had dedicated their virginity to Christ, just as the military orders professed sexual abstinence and themselves sacrificed both marriage and parenthood. They, too, found themselves frail and in peril in a non-Christian world that required bravery and fortitude, strengthened through the power of God's love, to resist pagan suitors, incarceration, and torture.

More loosely, the Eastern associations of Saint Barbara and Saint Catherine were a clear reference to the order's origins and duties in the Holy Land. Access for pilgrims to Saint Catherine's monastery in Sinai had been made easier after the First Crusade in 1096–99; and a future grand master of the Templars, Philippe de Milly, visited Mount Sinai in the 1160s and personally extricated a relic of Saint Catherine from her shrine.¹¹⁷ That relic was subsequently presented to a French monastery and, with this translation, fostered awareness of her cult and strengthened the links between the noble families in the West and those away from home in the crusader kingdoms. Her image as a strong woman and an idealized virgin who preached the faith and converted unbelievers was well suited to the self-image of the military orders, with their commitment to celibacy and faith. The fact that Sinai was a remote pilgrimage destination mattered little, as the papacy took Sinai under its direct protection;¹¹⁸ and Saint Catherine long remained a popular choice in iconography.¹¹⁹ For example, a new altar in the Hospitaller church at Clerkenwell (London) was dedicated in 1385 to Saint Anne, Saint Catherine, Saint Margaret, and the Blessed Mary Magdalene; and another chapel built nearby in 1433 was dedicated to Saint Catherine, Saint Ursula, and Saint Margaret.¹²⁰ The iconography on display here, as elsewhere, often reflected a blend of saints who were popular in the local region and those who were distinctive to the military orders;¹²¹ though there were always exceptions according to personal preference, such as the devotion to the relics of Saint Thomas (Becket) the Martyr at Templar Tomar (Portugal) in the 1170s.¹²²

Military and Patron Saints

The second group of saints with a seemingly obvious appeal to the military orders were military men and soldiers. This large group includes figures such as Saint Theo-

¹¹⁶ Katherine J. Lewis, "Model Girls? Virgin Martyrs and the Training of Young Women in Late Medieval England," in Lewis, Menuge, and Phillips, *Young Medieval Women*, 25–46, at 33.

¹¹⁷ Christine Walsh, *The Cult of St. Catherine of Alexandria in Early Medieval Europe* (Aldershot, 2007), 42–44.

¹¹⁸ At least until the late fourteenth century the monastery owned lands in Latin-ruled Cyprus and Crete; see Coureas, *The Latin Church in Cyprus*, 470–74.

¹¹⁹ The first major cult center for Catherine in the West was at Rouen in the 1030s; see Walsh, *The Cult of St. Catherine*, 150.

¹²⁰ Sloane and Malcolm, *Excavations at the Priory*, 91.

¹²¹ For Italian examples, see Giulia Rossi, "Originality and Adaptation," 214.

¹²² Duggan explains the installation of a Becket shrine in light of the close links between England and Portugal and the appeal of Becket as a "churchman of heroic mould"; many crusaders regarded Saint Thomas as their patron. See Anne J. Duggan, "Aspects of Anglo-Portuguese Relations in the Twelfth Century: Manuscripts, Relics, Decretals and the Cult of St. Thomas Becket at Lórvão, Alcobaca and Tomar," *Portuguese Studies* 14 (1998): 1–19. The Tomar relics seem to have been blood and fragments of brain contained in a small flask.

dore, Saint Demetrius, Saint Maurice, and Saints Sergius and Bacchus. Yet despite their eastern origins and military credentials, the only military saint who inspired widespread devotion among the knights was Saint George. His relics could be found at the Templar grand priory of Auvergne in 1292,¹²³ while his arm and iron from his lance were recorded at the Hospitaller site at Moures on Cyprus between 1418 and 1420 by a visiting pilgrim from Gascony.¹²⁴ An inventory from 1437 records a statue of Saint George with a relic stored in the chapel of Saint Bartholomew in Malbork, but, surprisingly, its possession of the relic did not merit the inclusion of Saint George as one of the patrons of the chapel.¹²⁵ Elsewhere the evidence is largely artistic, the best-known depictions being the wall paintings in the Templar chapels at Cressac (Charante, France) and Metz and the frescoes dated c. 1200 in the Hospitaller chapel at Crac des Chevaliers,¹²⁶ though there are others, including the Teutonic convent in Lochstaedt, near modern Pavlovo (Russia) in the Baltic. Relief sculpture in stone, probably of the early sixteenth century, survives in the Hospitaller church in Ambel (Zaragoza, Spain);¹²⁷ and statues were also commissioned, including one in the Templar castle at Safad and another, 1.5 m high, commissioned in wood in 1380–90 for the Teutonic order at Stara Kościelnica (Poland).¹²⁸ The feast days of Saint George were occasionally celebrated also, and all those who visited the Templar chapel of Saint George at Somelaria (Regba, Israel) on his feast day (and those of Saint Julian and Saint Martin) were granted indulgences by Pope Nicholas IV in May 1291.¹²⁹ That said, none of these was a major site, and Saint George never seems to have attracted as much interest as the female martyrs. Even when the Hospitallers were granted property close to Lydda (Israel), the birthplace of Saint George,¹³⁰ there was little appetite to exploit this opportunity, and the saint's role as patron of the Order of the Sword Brethren lasted for little more than thirty years, until its incorporation into the Teutonic order in 1237. Other military saints were largely overlooked too; Saint Maurice, together with Saint Mary, was depicted on the banner of the Livonian branch of the Teutonic order, but it is unclear whether any of the Teutonic chapels in the region were dedicated to him.¹³¹ Relics of Saint

¹²³ Selwood, *Knights of the Cloister*, 99.

¹²⁴ Claude Delaval Cobham, ed. and trans., *Excerpta Cypria: Materials for a History of Cyprus* (Cambridge, UK, 1908), 30.

¹²⁵ For Saint George in Malbork, see Rozykowski, *Studia nad liturgiá*, 127.

¹²⁶ Barber, *New Knighthood*, 202; Folda, *Art of the Crusaders*, 402–3.

¹²⁷ Christopher Gerrard, *Paisaje y señorío: Arqueología, arquitectura e historia de las Órdenes Militares del Temple y del Hospital* (Zaragoza, 2003), 139.

¹²⁸ Monika Jakubek-Raczekowska, "Figura Świętego Jerzego z Kościoła w Starej Kościelnicy, 1380–1390," in Pospieszna, *Fundacje artystyczne na terenie państwa krzyżackiego w Prusach*, 1:107–8. Another statue is known to have been venerated in the chapel of the Templar castle of Safed; see Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem*, vol. 2, L–Z, 207; Riley-Smith, *Templars and Hospitallers as Professed Religious*, 32.

¹²⁹ Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem*, vol. 2, L–Z, 333.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹³¹ Anu Mänd, "Saints' Cults in Medieval Livonia," in *The Clash of Cultures on the Medieval Baltic Frontier*, ed. Alan V. Murray (Farnham, 2009), 191–223, at 205. In Livonia, for example, the cult of military saints was particularly popular among unmarried merchants, who founded the Brotherhood of the Black Heads, named after Saint Maurice. The Black Heads in Riga (Latvia) possessed a wooden statue of Saint George containing a relic of the saint, while their counterparts in Tallinn (Estonia) promoted the cult of Saint Victor, another military saint; *ibid.*, 204.

Speculum 92/4 (October 2017)

Hubert were venerated in Prussia, in the Teutonic convent chapel in Papowo (Poland), in Przeworsk (Poland), and, most likely, in Grudziądz (Poland), Ostróda (Poland), Ushakovo (Russia), and Kaliningrad, too.¹³² Though associated with knighthood, Saint Hubert had no connection with the Holy Land, and his cult seems to have been restricted to hunting and the welfare of animals, which were listed by Teutonic writers among the beneficiaries of his miracles. Overall, it is not clear why the military saints inspired such limited devotion; one possible explanation is that the military saints were often elevated to sainthood because of their refusal to participate in warfare, in contrast to the knights of the military orders, who were expected to fight and kill, albeit in defense of Christians. The ethos of a military saint seems to have resonated more forcefully in secular culture.

The patron saints of particular orders were deeply venerated. This is a varied group, exemplified by Saint John, the patron saint of Hospitallers, whose feast day on 21 November was widely celebrated in their houses across Europe¹³³ and whose relics the order made every effort to acquire. This process was not without its setbacks. In the twelfth century the knights could claim that the hospital in Jerusalem was founded by Saint John's father, but they appear to have possessed only a small, unidentified particle of his relics, which could be found inside a small reliquary alongside others.¹³⁴ In the thirteenth century the arm of Saint John the Baptist, venerated at Groningen in Frisia, was said to have been abstracted from the hospital in Palestine by a devout woman who had taken advantage of the lustfulness of one of the senior Hospitallers stationed there.¹³⁵ In fact, it was only on Rhodes that the Hospitallers eventually accumulated more significant relics, both arm and skull fragments.¹³⁶ Perhaps it was doubt over the ability of the order to collect the earthly remains of its patron saint that led the order to construct a chapel at Siena Cathedral in 1492–1504, when the saint's right arm and hand were acquired there.¹³⁷ Certainly the Hospitallers promoted their association through other means: the image of Saint John can be found on terracotta plaques and seals from English preceptory sites, for example;¹³⁸ and the severed head of the Baptist resting on the salver appears on some sixteenth-century coins minted by the order.¹³⁹

¹³² Rozykowski, *Studia nad liturgia*, 131–32.

¹³³ Cristina Dondi, "Liturgies of the Military Religious Orders," in *The Genius of the Roman Rite: Historical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspectives on Catholic Liturgy*, ed. Uwe Michael Lang (Chicago, 2010), 143–58, at 146.

¹³⁴ Edwin James King, *The Knights Hospitaller in the Holy Land* (London, 1931), 236–37.

¹³⁵ Riley-Smith, *Knights Hospitaller in the Levant*, 161. Of course, the order could deny such accusations, but the story illustrates how the lack of possession of certain relics could be used to undermine the authority of the military orders. It also shows that some people, at least, found it easy to imagine a senior Hospitaller breaking his vows.

¹³⁶ Nicholson, *Knights Hospitaller*, 96–97.

¹³⁷ Timothy Smith, "Up in Arms: The Knights of Rhodes, the Cult of Relics, and the Chapel of St. John the Baptist in Siena Cathedral," in *Images, Relics, and Devotional Practices in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, ed. Sally Cornelison and Scott B. Montgomery, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies* 296 (Tempe, 2005), 213–38.

¹³⁸ Gilchrist, *Contemplation and Action*, 95–96.

¹³⁹ Timothy Smith, "Alberto Aringhieri and the Chapel of Saint John the Baptist: Patronage, Politics, and the Cult of Relics in Renaissance Siena" (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2002), 174.

PROMOTING THE CULTS OF RECRUITS TO THE MILITARY ORDERS

Celebrated women associated with the Hospitallers include the lay saints Saint Ubaldesca from Pisa (d. 1205/6) and Saint Toscana at Verona (d. 1343/44). Neither was a sister in a Hospitaller community or was formally canonized.¹⁴⁰ In 1394 grand master Juan Fernández de Heredia gave Saint Ubaldesca's head to the Hospitaller house at Caspe (Zaragoza).¹⁴¹ Saint Fleur (Flora) (d. 1347), on the other hand, did enter the priory of Hospitaller nuns at Beaulieu in Quercy (Cahors, France), but her spiritual heritage does not appear to have evolved sufficiently to encourage the movement of her relics, which probably remained at her convent.¹⁴² The cult of knights, too, was surprisingly poorly developed. The Teutonic order paraded no saints at all of their own brethren, and only a handful of Templar knights were venerated locally, among them Jacquelin de Mailly, who died in battle in May 1187.¹⁴³ Similarly, the surviving inscription from the tomb of the Templar marshal Hugh de Quilugo at his burial place in the chapel of Saint Michael in Ascalon (Israel; now in the Ustinov collection in Oslo) suggests a developing cult; Hugh was struck by a mangonel stone, probably at the siege of Ascalon in 1153, where many Templars died.¹⁴⁴ Gerland of Poland, already mentioned, was a Templar knight whose cult was suppressed after their trial and was subsequently revived and adapted by the Knights of Saint John.¹⁴⁵ Documents from the trial also suggest that the head of Hugh of Payns, the founder of the Temple, was kept in a reliquary and venerated by the knights of the order;¹⁴⁶ and when the last Templar grand master Jacques de Molay and Geoffroi de Charnay, master in Normandy, came to be burned in Paris in 1314, his ashes and bones were collected "as sacred relics" by friars and "carried away to holy places."¹⁴⁷

A similarly brief list can be produced for Hospitaller brethren. The body of the founder of the Hospital, Gérard, who had died in 1120 in Jerusalem, was to be found in the Hospitaller chapel in Manosque, in Provence, in 1283 in a "very pre-

¹⁴⁰ Anthony Luttrell and Helen J. Nicholson, "Introduction: A Survey of Hospitaller Women in the Middle Ages," in *Hospitaller Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Anthony Luttrell and Helen J. Nicholson (Aldershot, 2006), 1–42; Anthony Luttrell, "Saint Ubaldesca di Calcinaia," *Ordines Militares Colloquia Torunensia Historica: Yearbook for the Study of Military Orders* 18 (Toruń, 2013): 287–91.

¹⁴¹ Cacho Blecua, *El gran maestre Juan Fernández de Heredia*, 201. Other relics of Saint Ubaldesca could be found on Malta and at the celebrated Hospitaller nunneries at Sigena (Huesca, Spain) at the end of the sixteenth century; see Luttrell, "Saint Ubaldesca di Calcinaia," 287–91, at 288; Wifredo Rincón-García, "Iconografía de Santa Waldesca y Santa Toscana, monjas de la Orden de San Juan de Jerusalén, en el monasterio de Santa María de Sijena," *Archivo Español de Arte* 82 (2009): 410–17. Relics of Saint Toscana were added to the Hospitaller collection on Malta from Padua in 1685; see Johannes A. Mol, Klaus A. Militzer, and Helen J. Nicholson, eds., *The Military Orders and the Reformation: Choices, State Building, and the Weight of Tradition* (Amersfoort, 2006), 290.

¹⁴² And now to be found at Saint-Julien d'Issendolus; see Paulette L'Hermite-Leclercq, "Fleur de Beaulieu (d. 1347), Saint of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem," in Luttrell and Nicholson, *Hospitaller Women in the Middle Ages*, 209–31.

¹⁴³ Nicholson, *Templars, Hospitallers and Teutonic Knights*, 120.

¹⁴⁴ Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem*, vol. 1, A–K, 61.

¹⁴⁵ Licence, "Templars, Hospitallers, Christ and the Saints," 54.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁴⁷ Philip H. Wicksteed, ed., *Villani's Chronicle: Being Selections from the First Nine Books of the "Croniche Fiorentina" of Giovanni Villani*, trans. Rose E. Selve, 2nd ed. (London, 1906), 381.

cious silver gilt box with many precious stones,” but Gérard was never recognized as a saint, despite his reputation over the centuries.¹⁴⁸ A number of miracles, including the changing of water into wine, were also attributed to the canonized Hospitaller brother chaplain Hugh of Genoa (d. 1230), at whose shrine exorcisms were performed.¹⁴⁹ A later relic is the head of Hospitaller brother Melchor de Monserrat, which still lies in the former conventual church at Ambel (Zaragoza). Melchor died defending the fort of Saint Elmo on Malta in June 1565, and his head was apparently venerated for a time on its return to Spain, his body having been found “uncorrupted” after the siege ended.¹⁵⁰ None of this came to anything, however, perhaps because papal canonization was such a costly and lengthy procedure, or perhaps due to a lack of coordination or literary expertise in promoting posthumous cults.¹⁵¹ Much depended upon the abilities of a saint’s biographer to promote his deeds and miracles and shape the saint’s character. It is of course feasible that the lack of earlier evidence for short-lived Eastern cults masks a stronger tradition for self-promotion than we now recognize;¹⁵² or possibly there was opposition to elevating those who had shed blood on the battlefield, like Melchor, just as there was opposition to the idea of crusading.¹⁵³ Alternatively, what might now be interpreted as failure may signal a positive preference for the promotion of individuals with more universal appeal and well-understood values. Perhaps, too, there was a certain reluctance to celebrate the achievements of the individual over and above those of the orders as a whole. Either way, these failed cults and relics remind us that the evolution from recognition to veneration could be competitive and uncertain.

MILITARY ORDERS’ RELICS AS OBJECTS

Sacred oils and water were distributed to pilgrims in the Holy Land in inexpensive lead ampullae and mold-made ceramic bottles suitable for liquids. Several of them are known from excavations in Israel, and the discovery of an unfinished ampulla together with six stone molds and some raw lead in the northeast corner of Acre shows that they were manufactured in the Latin Levant.¹⁵⁴ They also appear occasionally in the inventories of European preceptories, and a small number are known from archaeological excavations, including a fourteenth-century pew-

¹⁴⁸ These remains were dispersed during the French Revolution. The skull is now at Saint Ursula’s Convent in Valletta, Malta; see Anthony Luttrell, “The Skull of Blessed Gerard,” in *The Order’s Early Legacy in Malta*, ed. John Azzopardi and Mario Buhagiar (Valletta, 1989), 45.

¹⁴⁹ Licence, “Templars, Hospitallers, Christ and the Saints,” 56.

¹⁵⁰ Gerrard, *Paisaje y señorío*, 382–83; Christopher Gerrard and Alejandra Gutiérrez, “Melchor de Monserrat,” *Treasures of Malta* 63 (2015): 61–68; Juan Agustín de Funes, *Coronica de la ilustrissima milicia y sagrada religion de San Juan Bautista de Jerusalem*, 2 vols. (Zaragoza, 1639), 1:538.

¹⁵¹ Licence, “Templars, Hospitallers, Christ and the Saints,” 39–57.

¹⁵² Jonathan Riley-Smith, “Hospitaller Spirituality in the Middle Ages,” *Journal of Spirituality 2: Towards a Spirituality of Communion* (Rome, 2002): 17–23.

¹⁵³ Outspoken critics of the Crusades included Englishman Ralph Niger or Isaac of l’Étoile; for discussion, see Nicholson, *Templars, Hospitallers and Teutonic Knights*, 38.

¹⁵⁴ Adrian J. Boas, *Crusader Archaeology: The Material Culture of the Latin East* (London, 2005), 155; Folda, *Art of the Crusaders*, 294–96, for examples from Jerusalem.

ter ampulla decorated with a depiction of Christ's face, which was excavated from a latrine pit in the old town of Teutonic Elbląg (Poland) in the southern Baltic (Fig. 5).¹⁵⁵ Lesser relics were generally stored in ivory caskets or boxes, and some of these were also produced for export, among them the cross-shaped containers and caskets manufactured by goldsmiths and silversmiths in Jerusalem. Revered fragments of the True Cross were encased in double-armed Byzantine crosses with bejeweled silver-gilt coverings,¹⁵⁶ but as yet there is no evidence for their export to the military orders' preceptories in the West in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Instead, the distinctive double-armed cross style was sometimes copied to house relics of the True Cross, presumably as a visual reminder of its contents; others were kept safe in Limoges-enameled reliquaries, in crystal crosses, or else presented in humbler ways inside small silver crosses.¹⁵⁷ We can assume that these smaller fragments traveled unadorned from the Holy Land and were only later adapted and encased; the lack of consistency in the manner of their presentation would certainly suggest that to be the case. Judging by the lengthy inventory of relics from Templar Peñíscola in 1311, the majority were simply enfolded in silk or purple, yellow, or red cloth and then tagged with paper or a length of linen, which identified the relevant saint and provided authentication.¹⁵⁸ In Teutonic Prussia, as elsewhere, minor particles of relics were held and displayed within statues, as parts of paintings, or in monstrances and could be involved in the ceremony of Mass during the passing of the Pax (the kiss of peace). Body parts were also sometimes sheathed to resemble the limb from which the relic had come, as was the case for the right-arm fragment of Saint John the Baptist kept by the Hospitallers on Rhodes.¹⁵⁹ This relic, now in the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul, is encased in Italian metalwork and stamped in honor of its workshop and patron with the Venetian lion and the Maltese cross.¹⁶⁰ The reliquary not only served to keep the relic inside safe from covetous hands but also promoted it visually and aided its identification for the visitor.¹⁶¹ In this case, a small opening in the encasement allowed the viewer to inspect the bones within. The same motive lay behind the reliquaries found in the parish church of Saint John in Teutonic Malbork (Poland), where particles of female saints were contained in two mid-fourteenth-century female busts made of gilded lime wood,¹⁶² but there is nothing distinctive about this

¹⁵⁵ Grażyna Nawrońska, "Ampulka pielgrzymia, XIV wiek," in Pospieszna, *Fundacje artystyczne na terenie państwa krzyżackiego w Prusach*, 1:323.

¹⁵⁶ Boas, *Crusader Archaeology*, 158. For the Barletta double-armed cross, c. 1135, see Folda, *Art of the Crusaders*, 167–68.

¹⁵⁷ Schenk, "The Cult of the Cross." For example, in 1302 at Templar Peñíscola there was a Limoges reliquary box; see Jordi Rubió, Ramon d'Alós, and Francesc Martorell, "Inventaris inèdits de l'Orde del Temple a Catalunya," *Anuari de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans* 1 (1907): 384–98, at 391.

¹⁵⁸ Rubió, d'Alós, and Martorell, "Inventaris," 384–98.

¹⁵⁹ The Hospitallers had received the arm in 1484 from Constantinople, where it had been since 956, when it arrived from Antioch.

¹⁶⁰ Ioli Kalavrezou, "Helping Hands for the Empire: Imperial Ceremonies and the Cult of Relics at the Byzantine Court," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire (Washington, DC, 1997), 53–79.

¹⁶¹ Caroline Walker Bynum and Paula Gerson, "Body-Part Reliquaries and Body Parts in the Middle Ages," *Gesta* 36/1 (1997): 3–7, at 4.

¹⁶² Anna Sobocka, "Herma relikwiarzowa z kościoła św. Jana Chrzciciela w Malborku, ok. 1350," in Pospieszna, *Fundacje artystyczne na terenie państwa krzyżackiego w Prusach*, 1:101. It should be *Speculum* 92/4 (October 2017)



Fig. 5. A pewter ampulla of the fourteenth century from Teutonic Elbląg (Poland), 6.2 × 4.8 cm (Archaeological Museum, Elbląg). (Photo courtesy of Robert Korsak.)

practice. Indeed, there is no link at all to be detected between reliquary forms and particular orders or between forms and geographical regions. The preference for decapitated heads and dismembered arms was universal in the medieval church, perhaps because these particular body parts had a special capacity for communication

noted, however, that “body-part reliquaries” did not always contain the part of the body depicted, hence the preference by some scholars for the term “shaped reliquaries”; see Bynum and Gerson, “Body-Part Reliquaries,” 3–7. In many cases we do not know what is contained within. For a broader discussion of physical and visual contact between pilgrims and relics in medieval Poland, see Starawska, *Świętych życie po życiu*, 581–99.



Fig. 6. The thirteenth-century reliquary of Saint Elizabeth at Teutonic Marburg (Germany). (Photo courtesy of Allie Caulfield, CC BY 2.0.)

and expression, but the end product was also a portable object of appreciable proportions that could be stationed inside a church or chapel or viewed during processions outside.¹⁶³ The same function was fulfilled by composite reliquaries, among them the rock crystal miter found in the crypt of the church of Saint John the Baptist in Jerusalem and thought to be associated with the Hospitallers.¹⁶⁴ Dating to the 1150s, it contains relics of the True Cross and of Saint John the Baptist and Saint Peter, as well as several other apostles and saints, including the Northumbrian Saint Oswald. The intact bodies of saints—*reliquare insignes*—were far rarer and were often kept inside tombs or else presented to pilgrims in large, decorated reliquaries resembling sarcophagi or miniature churches. This was the case for the mid-thirteenth century reliquary of Saint Elizabeth at Marburg, the most important pilgrimage site controlled by the Teutonic order in the Holy Roman Empire. This casket-shaped reliquary resembles a Gothic church with a pitched roof (Fig. 6). Made of oak, copper, silver, and gold and inlaid with semiprecious stones, pearls, and glass, its upper frieze is stamped with scenes from the life of Saint Elizabeth, while the sides are decorated with reliefs of Christ, the apostles, and the Virgin with the infant Christ on her lap.

¹⁶³ Bynum and Gerson, “Body-Part Reliquaries,” 3–7.

¹⁶⁴ Folda, *Art of the Crusaders*, 297–99.

Large “artifacts” like this one were inevitably less portable but offered a significantly greater degree of control over their use.

Personal ostentation, however, does not seem to have been favored by the military orders, and there is little to suggest that relics were routinely displayed on the body as ornaments. Other than a small number of pendants,¹⁶⁵ few dress accessories are known; there are no reliquary rings, for example, and while the wearing of pectoral crosses on a neck chain would certainly have been familiar in the Holy Land,¹⁶⁶ such objects are rare in military orders contexts. One example from the late thirteenth century, evidently transferred at some point from the Holy Land to the Baltic, was recovered during excavations at the castle and pilgrimage site of Brodnica (Poland), where the Teutonic order held a fragment of the True Cross. This artifact, illustrated in Fig. 7, takes the form of a small bronze Latin cross, 9.5 cm high, in which the relics would have been placed behind the front panel. The cross is decorated with the central figure of Christ flanked by Saint Mary and Saint John the Evangelist and has two small ring attachments at top and bottom indicating that it was designed to be suspended.¹⁶⁷

At the top there are depictions of the sun, signifying Christ; the moon, representing the church reflecting Christ’s light; and another cross. A very similar reliquary cross, again of the thirteenth century and Byzantine in origin, was discovered recently in a potato field near the Teutonic castle in Sątoczno (Poland).¹⁶⁸ Another Teutonic object, this time of the fifteenth century and of Adriatic origin, is a small box with a rock crystal lid and carrying ring, which contains a gold-mounted particle of the True Cross.¹⁶⁹ Grandeur still is the fragment of the True Cross encased in a pectoral cross (Fig. 8), which was given as a personal gift to the Hospitaller grand master Juan Fernández de Heredia by Pope Clement VII in 1394 and later donated to Caspe (Zaragoza).¹⁷⁰ This relic, whose dimensions are 14.8 × 22 cm, was sheathed in the fourteenth century in a fine gold frame in the shape of the cross. Later, in the sixteenth century, it was encased within an ornate cross with a slightly elongated vertical arm, probably to conform to the proportions required for processional use. At that time, one fragment was split off and given to the Hospitaller preceptory at Ambel (Zaragoza), while another was donated to Calaceite (Teruel, Spain) in 1734. In Heredia’s case, the wearing of the original pectoral cross must have contributed in a very self-conscious way to the projection of his identity and biography; such display was

¹⁶⁵ Eleanor Standley, *Trinkets and Charms: The Use, Meaning and Significance of Dress Accessories 1300–1700* (Oxford, 2013), 107–8, for an English example; a German pendant with a Templar cross from the first half of the sixteenth century can also be seen in the Treasury of the Teutonic Order in Vienna.

¹⁶⁶ In 1164, on the eve of battle, King Amaury vowed to send his pectoral cross with a relic of the True Cross to Clairvaux; see Folda, *Art of the Crusaders*, 391.

¹⁶⁷ The cross may have belonged to a pilgrim or a guest of the Teutonic knights rather than to a member of the order; see Kazimierz Grażawski, “Enkolpion, k. XIII w.,” in Pospieszna, *Fundacje artystyczne na terenie państwa krzyżackiego w Prusach*, 1:116.

¹⁶⁸ Jackiewicz-Garniec and Garniec, *Zamki państwa krzyżackiego w dawnych Prusach*, 396.

¹⁶⁹ This object can be found in the Treasury of the Teutonic Order in Vienna.

¹⁷⁰ Ángel San Vicente Pino, “Cruz pectoral, en su relicario,” in *El espejo de nuestra historia: La diócesis de Zaragoza a través de los siglos*, ed. María del Mar Agudo Romeo (Zaragoza, 1991), 349; Miguel Caballú Albiac, *La Vera Cruz de Caspe*, Empelte 11 (Caspe, 1996), 20–21.



Fig. 7. A thirteenth-century enkolpion found during excavations in the northern wing of the Teutonic castle in Brodnica (Poland) (Museum in Brodnica). (Kazimierz Grażawski, “Enkolpion, k. XIII w.,” in B. Pospieszna, ed., *Fundacje artystyczne na terenie państwa krzyżackiego w Prusach* [Malbork, 2010], 1:116. Photo courtesy of Kazimierz Grażawski.)

generally reserved for monarchs and popes and did not suit the more austere character of the military orders.

The portability of relics was also put to advantage in other ways. It has been suggested that a mid-twelfth century reliquary from the Hospitaller conventual church in Jerusalem was carried with the campaigning army,¹⁷¹ and this is probably also

¹⁷¹ King, *Knights Hospitaller in the Holy Land*, 236–37. This reliquary contains eighteen relics, including a piece of the True Cross as well as the relics of Saint Peter and Saint John the Baptist.

Speculum 92/4 (October 2017)

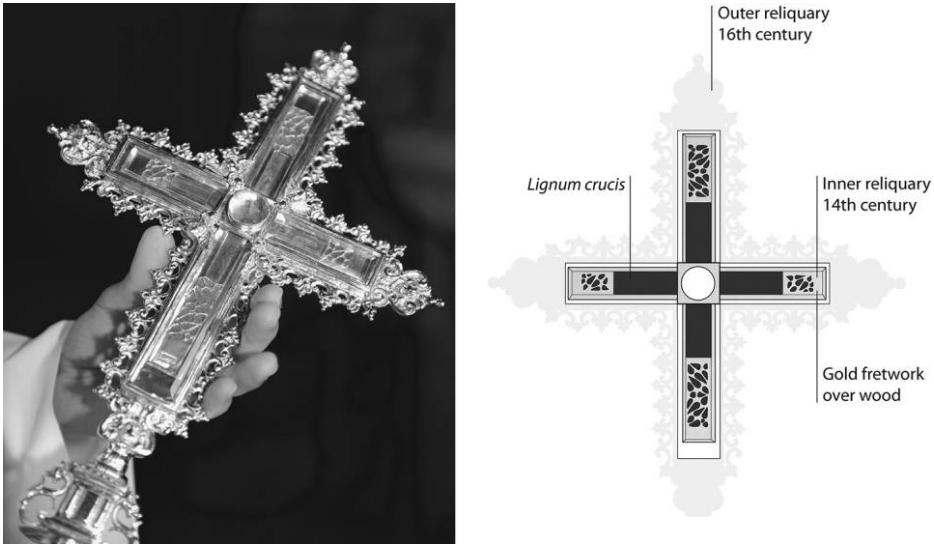


Fig. 8. *Lignum Crucis* from Caspe (Zaragoza), an encased pectoral relic given by Pope Clement VII to the Hospitaller grand master Juan Fernández de Heredia in 1394. (Photo courtesy of Marcos Sánchez and José Luis Bel. Drawing © Alejandra Gutiérrez.)

true of small reliquary altars, such as a late fourteenth-century triptych decorated with the images of Saint Catherine and Saint George, which is known to have belonged to the Teutonic order.¹⁷² A diptych made for the Teutonic commander of Elbląg in 1388, which contains fifty-eight relics, has two iron rings on each of its sides that suggest its identification as a field altar, the rings having been used to carry and secure it.¹⁷³ Some of the artifactual evidence therefore begins to indicate a set of specialized adaptations suited to a military purpose, although the number of examples currently known is too small to allow further generalization.

THE PRESENTATION OF RELICS

At their European preceptories, relics could generally be found in conventual chapels, and this raises the question of where and how they were displayed. Most chapels were simple structures;¹⁷⁴ but others, particularly the wealthier possessions of the Templars and the Hospitallers, had distinctive layouts, with a central rotunda, an encircling aisle, and a chancel to the east. Several plans of this kind have been recovered through excavation, among them the Templar commandery in Prague ex-

¹⁷² This altar, now in the Vienna Treasury, has a fifteenth-century base and later additions.

¹⁷³ Woźniak, “Dyptyk relikwiarzowy,” 484–86. Alternatively it may have been attached to a chest, possibly even during battle.

¹⁷⁴ Pál Ritoók, “The Architecture of the Knights Templar in England,” in *The Military Orders: Fighting for the Faith and Caring for the Sick*, ed. Malcolm Barber (Aldershot, 1994), 167–78.

cavated beneath the church of Saint Anna¹⁷⁵ and the headquarters of the Hospitalers in England at Clerkenwell;¹⁷⁶ others are also known from surviving architecture, such as the Temple Church in London, whose nave arguably dates to the 1150s.¹⁷⁷ This particular plan form was typologically inspired by the fourth-century *Anastasis* rotunda of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which has a long history of artistic representation and architectural mimesis.¹⁷⁸ As is now well understood, European knowledge of this and other sites inspired a variety of iconic architectural elements in the West, including west porches that mimicked the aedicule constructed over Christ's Tomb inside the Holy Sepulchre Church,¹⁷⁹ chancels with apsidal ends, tapered chancels, crypts under the east end of the chancel—the latter perhaps another reference to the Tomb of Christ¹⁸⁰—and octagonal layouts that evoked the *Templum Domini*, or the Dome on the Rock (Qubbat as-Sakhra, built 691–92). This symbolism was never consistent, nor was it intended to be copied accurately; features were scaled up or down in order to convey the idea of the whole. At the same time, the design was neither exclusive to the military orders nor common to all of them; for example, the Teutonic order did not favor round churches, perhaps because their role in the Levant was less important than it was elsewhere, and they were not as closely connected with Jerusalem, where the headquarters of both the Templars and Hospitalers were once located. More generally, however, the aim was to recall a historic past, a salvation history, and to place the visitor in a multimedia representation of core elements of the sacred topography of Jerusalem. As Bianca Kühnel has intimated on the basis of a wider range of evidence, these spaces, architectural shapes, and forms were mnemonic devices “meant to smooth the way of the spectator towards identification with the scene, in order to remember or internalize it without difficulty.”¹⁸¹

We do not know precisely how the circular spaces in these Templar churches were used. Possibly the churches operated as chapter houses¹⁸² as well as having a liturgical and devotional purpose; the Templar rule hints that the round nave could have

¹⁷⁵ Libor Jan and Vít Jesenský, “Hospitaler and Templar Commanderies in Bohemia and Moravia: Their Structure and Architectural Forms,” in *The Military Orders*, vol. 2, *Welfare and Warfare*, ed. Helen J. Nicholson (Aldershot, 1998), 235–49.

¹⁷⁶ Sloane and Malcolm, *Excavations at the Priory*, 4–8.

¹⁷⁷ Ritoók, “The Architecture of the Knights Templar in England,” 167–78, for English evidence; Christopher Wilson, “Gothic Architecture Transplanted: The Nave of the Temple Church in London,” in Griffith-Jones and Park, *The Temple Church in London*, 19–43.

¹⁷⁸ Bianca Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem: Representations of the Holy City in Christian Art of the First Millennium* (Rome, 1987).

¹⁷⁹ Wilson, “Gothic Architecture Transplanted,” 19–43, at 43.

¹⁸⁰ Gilchrist, *Contemplation and Action*, 94; Bianca Kühnel, “Virtual Pilgrimages to Real Places: The Holy Landscapes,” in *Imagining Jerusalem in the Medieval West*, ed. Lucy Donkin and Hanna Vorholt (Oxford, 2012), 243–64; for a specific case study of architectural commemoration of Jerusalem's holy places, see Robert G. Ousterhout, “The Church of Santo Stefano: A ‘Jerusalem’ in Bologna,” *Gesta* 20/2 (1981): 311–21. Other examples are provided in Bianca Kühnel, Galit Noga-Banai, and Hanna Vorholt, eds., *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem* (Brepols, 2014).

¹⁸¹ Kühnel, “Virtual Pilgrimages to Real Places,” 264. A more detailed comparison of Templar and Hospitaler church plans and the Anastasis rotunda is needed, including, for example, analysis of the numbers of internal columns and piers and their symbolism.

¹⁸² Helen J. Nicholson, “At the Heart of Medieval London: The New Temple in the Middle Ages,” in Griffith-Jones and Park, *The Temple Church in London*, 1–18.

served as seating for the congregation attending Mass, with the chancel being reserved for chaplains.¹⁸³ It is also possible that the space was used for reception ceremonies, and the layout would be well suited to the exhibition of relics in the center of the rotunda. This would allow pilgrims and other visitors to circulate around the outside in the aisle, thereby replicating on a smaller scale the processional routes in ambulatories around the main altar at other pilgrimage destinations, such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (where the aedicule of Christ's Tomb stood in the center) and the church of the *Templum Domini*. We know from the evidence given at the Templar trial that pilgrims venerated relics in the Temple church in London and that visitors prayed there;¹⁸⁴ the broad ambulatories such as that encircling the octagonal arcade in the Romanesque church at Templar Tomar (Portugal) are suggestive of well-defined circulation patterns suited to mental pilgrimage.¹⁸⁵ Two features worth noting more generally are the presence of two-story churches and multiple towers, which were sometimes connected to rotundas. The former, a relatively common feature of some military orders churches,¹⁸⁶ is probably to be explained by the attendance of lay workers at the ground-floor level, the upper stories being reserved for the preceptor and brethren, who would then gain privileged views of the altar. The presence of multiple towers¹⁸⁷ is usually explained by their function as treasuries, which might have included the housing of relics.¹⁸⁸ At Templar Caravaca (Murcia, Spain) the ground floor housed the True Cross relic (see below), while the first floor functioned as a chapel in honor of the miraculous appearance of the Cross in 1231, and the second floor acted as a *conjuratorio* from which the relic was displayed to the faithful when bad weather threatened.¹⁸⁹ On Rhodes, where the Knights Hospitaller gathered some of their most important relics, the order may have attempted something altogether more ambitious by the beginning of the sixteenth century: a topographical evocation of Jerusalem itself, which incorporated

¹⁸³ Jansen, "Light and Pure," 57.

¹⁸⁴ Helen J. Nicholson, "Relations between Houses of the Order of the Temple in Britain and Their Local Communities, as Indicated during the Trial of the Templars, 1307–12," in *Knighthoods of Christ: Essays on the history of the Crusades and the Knights Templar, Presented to Malcolm Barber*, ed. Norman Housley (Aldershot, 2007), 195–207.

¹⁸⁵ Paulo Pereira, *The Convent of Christ, Tomar* (London, 2009).

¹⁸⁶ For example, Templar South Witham, England; Hospitaller Ambel, Spain; and elsewhere; see Philip Mayes, *Excavations at a Templar Preceptory: South Witham, Lincolnshire 1965–67*, Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 19 (Leeds, 2002), 62–69; Gerrard, *Paisaje y señoría*; Gilchrist, *Contemplation and Action*, 90.

¹⁸⁷ Such as Temple Bruer; see Ritoók, "The Architecture of the Knights Templar in England," 167–78.

¹⁸⁸ More elaborate arrangements, such as multistory rotundas with altars at different levels, are known at the Church of the Vera Cruz outside Segovia (Spain) belonging to the Order of the Holy Sepulchre; see Marqués de Lozoya, "Algunos antecedentes de la iglesia de la Vera Cruz de Segovia," *Boletín de la Sociedad Española de Excursiones* 58 (1954): 5–19; Elie Lambert, "L'église de Templiers de Laon et les chapelles de plan octogonal," *Revue archéologique*, 5th ser., 24 (1926): 224–33. In view of research by Bianca Kühnel and others into the sophisticated twelfth-century modes of commemorating the Holy Sepulchre and other parts of the Jerusalem complex at Pisa and Bologna, a reconsideration of these architectural components and their spatial relationships and topography is overdue.

¹⁸⁹ Jorge Juan Eiroa García, "La fortaleza de Caravaca a finales de la Edad Media," in Jorge Juan Eiroa García, Ángel Luis Molina Molina, Jorge A. Eiroa Rodríguez, José Luis Andrés Sarasa and Cayetano Espejo Marín, *Evolución urbana y actividad económica en los núcleos históricos* (Murcia, 2002), 71–88.

an architectural copy of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre into an early Stations of the Cross, with measured distances between stopping points.¹⁹⁰

Fig. 9 uses access analysis to evaluate the location of relics at Teutonic Malbork in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, one of a handful of sites where an almost complete architectural reconstruction of a military order's set of buildings is feasible. This technique helps visualize the degree of permeability of various chambers, corridors, and open courtyards within the building complex by representing graphically the number of architectural spaces needed to travel from one location to another. Those spaces that require the greatest number of steps from the entrance lie deepest within the complex and are the least accessible. In Fig. 9 all the transitional spaces, guarded spaces, and areas dominated by religious art are highlighted with symbols to emphasize the inaccessibility of certain spaces, even though these spaces were readily visible from the exterior.¹⁹¹ As we can see, at Malbork relics could be found in four or perhaps five locations,¹⁹² which included the private chapel of the grand master dedicated to Saint Catherine, probably in reference to the relics inside. Together with the grand master's bedchamber, this chapel was of extremely limited access and lay deep within the complex; a total of twelve spaces had to be negotiated from the entrance to gain access. Despite this, the exterior façade of the apse of the chapel was extruded outwards into the middle courtyard of the castle so that it dominated architecturally the entrances to the palace of the grand masters and the great refectory where feasts in honor of visiting crusaders were held. The majority of relics at Malbork, however, were probably held in the main conventual church of Saint Mary, which lay still deeper inside the complex. Walking here would take the visitor through a total of fourteen transitional spaces, of which as many as nine may have had Christian iconography, and seven were guarded. The use of this church was largely reserved for the knights of the order whose dormitories lay nearby, but its exterior visibility was greatly enhanced by a huge 8 m high statue of Saint Mary, which was positioned on the apse. On the one hand, the piety of the order was thus widely announced, but, on the other, public devotion to the order's relics was hardly encouraged on a daily basis. For that reason one of the most important relics at Malbork, a splinter of the True Cross, was installed in Saint Lawrence's chapel in the forecastle in a more easily accessible location.¹⁹³ In March 1358 pilgrims visiting this modest structure on several feast days were rewarded with a forty-day indulgence in a document signed by sixteen cardinals from the papal curia.¹⁹⁴ The more

¹⁹⁰ This scheme was replicated in 1504 at Hospitaller Fribourg (Switzerland) and on personal initiative at Romans-sur-Isère (France). See Michele Bacci, "Locative Memory and the Pilgrim's Experience of Jerusalem in the Late Middle Ages," in Kühnel, Noga-Banai, and Vorholt, *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, 67–75; Pnina Arad, "Is Calvary Worth Restoring? The Way of the Cross in Romans-sur-Isère, France," in Bartel and Vorholt, *Between Jerusalem and Europe*, 154–72.

¹⁹¹ For a detailed spatial analysis of Teutonic Malbork and other castles of the military orders see Mol, *Hidden Complexities of the Frankish Castle*, 161–69.

¹⁹² It is uncertain whether there were relics in the infirmary chapel or in the chapel of Saint Bartholomew, which probably served guests of the order.

¹⁹³ Józwiak and Trupinda, *Organizacja życia na zamku krzyżackim*, 462.

¹⁹⁴ The feast days included the Feasts of the Assumption of Saint Mary, Christmas Day, the Circumcision of Jesus, Epiphany, Good Friday, Resurrection Sunday, the Ascension, Corpus Christi, the Invention of the Cross, the Birth and Death of Saints John, Peter, Paul, Lawrence, and over a dozen more.

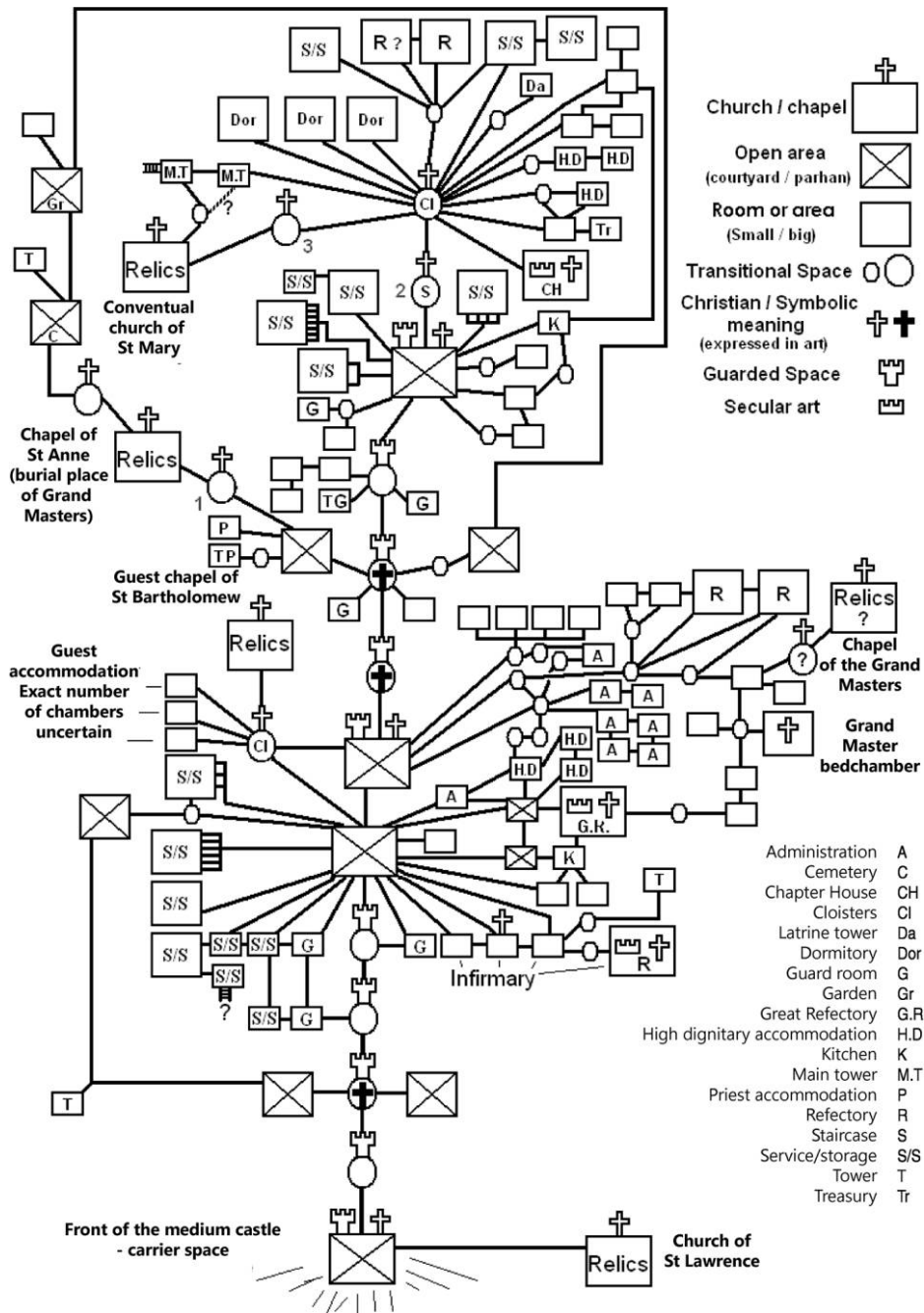


Fig. 9. Access analysis is used here to evaluate the location of relics at Teutonic Malbork (Poland), in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century (based on a partially reconstructed plan published by C. von Steinbrecht, *Schloss Marienburg in Preussen* [Berlin, 1891]).

inaccessible relics safeguarded within the castle, such as those in the conventual church of Saint Mary, were extracted for ceremonial processions held once every five years on the feast day of the apostles Philip and James (1 May), participants having been granted indulgences by Pope Urban VI in 1389.¹⁹⁵ Such events are well documented; one Teutonic document from 1399 records relics being carried outside the castle and presented in reliquaries, which were positioned on a high platform held by six high-ranking officials of the order.¹⁹⁶

Malbork provides examples of powerful, well-traveled relics presented with great care to their audiences. Clearly this was a well-regulated encounter that created a very different experience for members of the order from that of the lay public, an experience that varied according to the spaces they were given access to but ensured controlled and secure conditions overall. Few military orders buildings could boast such an impressive setting, but more lowly preceptories also invested in specific structures to house their relics, either wall niches inside chapels close to the high altar, as at Hospitaller Marmelar (Portugal) (Fig. 10), or at the base of towers, as at Templar and, later, Order of Santiago Caravaca (Spain). Here the relic of the Holy Cross was kept in a medieval chest reliquary, which was set into the wall of the chapel and locked shut with seven keys, one for the church door, two for the chapel door, and five to secure the reliquary itself.¹⁹⁷ With grilles in position and locked wall niches, access remained highly restricted. On a casual visit it would have been difficult to view the relics at all, the visitor being forced to engage with controls over access that he or she might never overcome but which heightened appreciation when a solution was offered. In that sense, the relic niche itself is not without interest. It served to embed the relics into the structural fabric of the church and so transformed the entire space into a reliquary; on that basis, touching and seeing the relic may not always have been deemed either appropriate or essential. A second feature seen at Malbork is the careful regulation of physical engagement; public displays of relics were occasional and therefore kept special. Processions, like that shown in Fig. 11 and akin to those of the modern day, were both a means of sharing the relics with the local population and a reminder of devotion.¹⁹⁸ Details of medieval practices associated specifically with the military orders are scant, but in Caravaca at the end of the fourteenth century the relic of the Cross was certainly carried by a fourteen-year-old local child during a procession attended by “many people.” In this case the relic seems to have been placed in a box and was therefore not on open display.¹⁹⁹ Relics were also brought out at times of need, as at Acre in the thirteenth

¹⁹⁵ Another indulgence was granted between 9 November 1396 and 9 November 1397 by Pope Boniface IX.

¹⁹⁶ Józwiak and Trupinda, *Organizacja życia na zamku krzyżackim*, 466.

¹⁹⁷ By 1671 the wall niche had three keys: one was always with the commander, the second was held by the prior of the church, and the third was with a local villager chosen by the commander.

¹⁹⁸ For example, in 1560 on Malta the body of Saint Euphemia was venerated in processions each year on her saint's day; see Juan Agustín de Funes, *Coronica de la ilustrissima milicia y sagrada religion de San Juan Bautista de Jerusalem* (Zaragoza, 1639), 1:427.

¹⁹⁹ The event is recorded because of a miracle attributed to the Cross that occurred during the procession. After a loud noise was heard inside the box, witnesses opened it to discover that the silver reliquary had burst. The spot at which the noise was heard was chosen as the site for the parish church; see Juan de Robles, *Historia del misterioso aparecimiento de la Santissima Cruz de Caravaca e innumerables milagros que Dios N. S. ha obrado* (Madrid, 1615), 79.

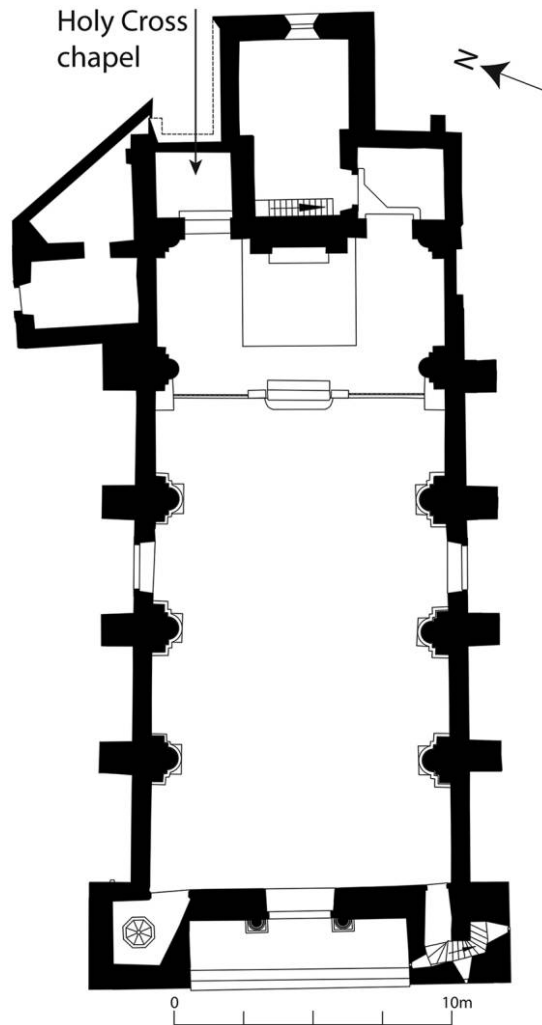


Fig. 10. Church at Vera Cruz de Marmelar (after Ana Pagará, Nuno Vassallo e Silva, and Vítor Serrão, *Igreja Vera Cruz de Marmelar* [Portel, 2006], 58, 124).

century when the patriarch of Jerusalem accompanied the Templars and a cross made from Christ's bath on a *pro pluvia* procession.²⁰⁰ Veneration of this kind could only promote the spiritual authority of the military orders in the eyes of onlookers and was typical of their use in other religious contexts, such as saints' feast days.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Barber and Bate, *The Templars*, 116.

²⁰¹ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, 296–303.

Prior ecclesie Rhodi: processionaliter sacram manum deferens:



Fig. 11. *Prior ecclesie Rhodi: Processionaliter sacram manum deferens*, an illustration by Guillaume Caoursin in his *Obsidionis Rhodiae urbis descriptio*, fol. 53v. A rare graphic illustration of a relic being carried in procession (published in 1496). (Image from Digitale Sammlungen—Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Darmstadt and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, with permission.)

THE MILITARY ORDERS AND THEIR RELICS

In gifting, exchanging, and distributing relics, the military orders were participating in a transnational late medieval religious economy with which all those in authority were familiar. As precious objects and “sacred commodities,” relics were exploited for their monetary value and, uniquely, their “freight of spiritual meaning.”²⁰² The wider archaeological context for this relic economy, however, makes it clear that an extensive assemblage of other crusader memorabilia also made its way to Western Europe, including ceramics from the Damascus region, metalwork, textiles, spices, glass, and other trophies, such as topaz, finger rings, Arab horses, and even the bodies and body parts of dead crusaders.²⁰³ Some of these artifacts have been excavated by archaeologists at the preceptories of the military orders in Western Europe; for example, a thirteenth-century sherd of Raqqa-type ware was recovered from the excavations at South Witham (Lincolnshire), perhaps having arrived as a container for some exotic foodstuff.²⁰⁴ This item and others like it attest to an informal network of institutional and personal channels through which relics must also have moved. The port of Acre seems to have been especially important as a destination for foreign merchants and traders, crusaders, and the thousands of pilgrims who visited the Holy Land each year between 1187 and the fall of the crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1291.²⁰⁵ The desire for relics therefore should be linked to a growing demand for Eastern objects, represented in the archaeological and historical record by prestige artifacts and textiles from the East.

Given their involvement in commercial trade and moneylending and their role as protectors of holy sites and pilgrimage routes in the Holy Land and in the Baltic, the military orders were better able than most to engage with the acquisition and exchange of relics. This privileged access is distinctively reflected in their relic devotions, which consistently focused on the life of Christ (with, for example, Passion relics), on female martyr saints, on their own patron saints (such as Saint John the Baptist), and on a selection of saints who had strong geographical associations with the Holy Land (for example, the martyr knight Saint George, Saint Catherine, Mary Magdalene, Saint Veronica, and Saint Peter). The list also includes saints of local standing (such as Dorothy of Montau) and those who had had appealing and relevant qualities of character, such as Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, with her

²⁰² Patrick J. Geary, “Sacred Commodities: The Circulation of Medieval Relics,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai, Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology (Cambridge, UK, 1986), 169–91; Alexandra Walsham, “Introduction: Relics and Remains,” in *Relics and Remains*, ed. Alexandra Walsham, *Past and Present*, supplement 5, 206 (2010): 9–36, at 31.

²⁰³ John Hurst, “Near Eastern and Mediterranean Pottery Found in North-West Europe,” *Archaeologica Lundensia* 3 (1968): 195–204; John Cotter, “Islamic Pottery from the Longmarket Excavation,” in *Canterbury’s Archaeology 1989–1990* (Canterbury, 1991), 50–52; Rachel Tyson, *Medieval Glass Vessels in England, AD 1200–1500: A Survey* (London, 1996); Nicholas L. Paul, *To Follow in Their Footsteps: The Crusades and Family Memory in the High Middle Ages* (New York, 2012), 103–10.

²⁰⁴ Philip Mayes, *Excavations at a Templar Preceptory: South Witham, Lincolnshire 1965–67*, Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 19 (Leeds, 2002), 128.

²⁰⁵ David Jacoby, “Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim World, and the Christian West,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 197–240; Edna Stern, *Akko 1: The 1991–1998 Excavations; The Crusader-Period Pottery*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 2012).

charitable dedication; Saint Liborius, who had died a “good death” in the arms of his friend Martin of Tours; and Saint Agatha, the female martyr whose Christian faith was unwavering under torture. These choices faithfully reflected the mixed military and religious identity of the orders, but occasionally we do also glimpse individual preferences, as at Tomar in Portugal, where the relics of Thomas Becket were sought out by the Templar master, probably because of his personal empathy with Becket’s political position as a champion of the church.²⁰⁶ These cults were, however, never entirely exclusive to the orders. *Staurothekai*—reliquaries containing pieces of the True Cross—were widely trafficked both before and after the Crusades in contexts far removed from the military orders, for example.²⁰⁷

When we review their chronology, we see that early martyrs feature strongly among the orders’ relics, particularly those of the fourth century, such as Saint Euphemia, Saint Margaret, and others. Given that relics served to link the present with the past, this preference perhaps served to authenticate their historic pedigree. Certainly, the relics of saints of the fifth to tenth centuries are rarely associated with the military orders in spite of their high numbers. The head of Saint Odile of Alsace (c. 662–c. 720) is an exception here, though this was a papal gift and an important reminder that not all relics were of the orders’ choosing. Relics of later saints among the orders’ collections include those of Thomas Becket (d. 1170), Elizabeth of Hungary (d. 1231), Gerland of Poland (d. 1244), and Dorothy of Montau (d. 1394) and are mainly associated with Eastern Europe, where the Teutonic order was so active at the time.²⁰⁸ Geographically speaking, a few traits are also worth highlighting: the relics of saints from France, the Iberian Peninsula, the British Isles, the Low Countries, and Scandinavia are less obvious on the list, whereas Italy and Eastern Europe are better represented. In part this pattern reflects the density of houses of the orders across Europe, although the Iberian Peninsula emerges with a surprisingly low count, given the activities and influence of the orders there. In fact, Spain and Portugal are generally poorly represented in saints in the Middle Ages, certainly in comparison to Italy. Finally, we should note that, although there were many more male saints than female saints, it was the female saints who were decidedly more popular among the military orders.²⁰⁹ Here, too, the loyalties of the military orders were by no means exclusive. Cistercian, Premonstratensian, and Benedictine houses all obtained and venerated the relics of Saint Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins of Cologne,²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ Duggan, “Aspects of Anglo-Portuguese Relations,” 11, asserts that the appeal of Saint Thomas was based on the fact that he was a contemporary saint “whose triumph in death appealed to knights, soldiers and crusaders.”

²⁰⁷ Nikolas Jaspert, “The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West: Mediterranean Connections and Institutional Agency,” in Kühnel, Noga-Banai, and Vorholt, *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, 207–21. Jaspert confirms that the canons of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, another military order that held priories in the West, were a source of *staurothekai*.

²⁰⁸ Although the chronological range of saints from whom the orders acquired relics is of interest, another project would be to chart their acquisition by date, where possible, and to compare these timelines between the different orders.

²⁰⁹ Given the uncertainties inherent in counting saints and considering their chronology and geography, and given the limited selection of saints’ cults preferred by the military orders, detailed statistical analysis is unlikely to be meaningful. The broad patterns are interesting nevertheless. For analysis of types of saints generally, see Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, 137–238.

²¹⁰ Montgomery, *St. Ursula*, 28.

to name but one example; and many of the other aspects of the religiosity of the military orders, most obviously their Marian devotion, held universal appeal for medieval Latin society.

Omissions from their list of relics are also telling. The orders seem to have been relatively indifferent to the cult of the apostles, which was more strongly associated with ecclesiastical sees and the bishops who often competed locally with the military orders for religious authority. So-called political saints were also typically ignored, together with confessor saints such as doctors, bishops, abbots, and hermits (with the exception of Saint Dorothy of Montau), Old Testament saints, and male saints with a reputation for saintly virginity, such as Edward the Confessor.²¹¹ Most notably, as we have seen, the military orders singularly failed to inspire cults around their own brethren, as other monastic orders seemed capable of doing. In a similar geographical context, the Carmelites in late fourteenth-century Famagusta were able to promote the cult of one of their own friars, Saint Peter Thomae, who was said to have performed posthumous miracles for Latin as well as Greek, Syrian, and Armenian pilgrims.²¹²

The architectural setting and presentation of relics by the military orders has great potential for further study, and our Malbork case study shows what might be achieved at other sites in understanding the perceptions and daily experience of their visitors. Regional studies of medieval iconography, dedications, and cults of saints are currently lacking and could target known preceptories and mapped estates in holistic fashion. This might be combined with a more nuanced understanding of the use of relics in church liturgy, such as in devotional Masses for favored saints, celebrations of feast days, and days celebrating the invention and translation of relics. For the moment, it seems that many of the practices of the military orders were shared with other religious groups and that the range of presentational options was remarkably wide. While some relics were removed altogether from sight and bodily contact and concealed within a cavity, or *sepulchrum*, inside the altar,²¹³ others could only be viewed by pilgrims under the tightest restrictions. By contrast, newly acquired relics could be openly exhibited, just as the finger of Saint Mary Magdalene and the image of Saint Veronica were shown off upon their arrival at Hospitaller Aix (France) in 1286.²¹⁴ On other occasions especially prestigious collections were periodically laid out as a group for public viewing, as at the Hospitaller preceptory near Cologne, where a large collection of relics relating to Saint Ursula was placed on display in 1327.²¹⁵ These promotions seem to have been designed to enhance the reputation of the institution at a particular moment in time; but more usually relics were presented in a controlled fashion to the parish on specific

²¹¹ These categories are derived from Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, 145–221.

²¹² Joachim Smet, *The Life of St. Peter Thomas by Philippe de Mézières* (Rome, 1954); Coureas, *The Latin Church in Cyprus*, 487–88.

²¹³ For example, at Hospitaller Ambel (Spain) where a fourteenth-century box containing a mid-sixteenth century relic collection was miraculously rediscovered in August 1682, triggering a successful *pro pluvia* procession the very next day; see Caballú Albiac, *La Vera Cruz*, 26.

²¹⁴ Selwood, *Knights of the Cloister*, 99.

²¹⁵ Klaus Miltzer, “The Hospitaller Fraternity of St. John at SS Johan and Cordula in Cologne,” in *The Military Orders*, vol. 3, *History and Heritage*, ed. Victor Mallia-Milanes (Aldershot, 2008), 253–57, at 254.

days marked out on the Christian calendar: a fragment of the Crown of Thorns was held aloft by Templar priests on Easter Thursday in Acre;²¹⁶ at Templar Mas Deu (Trouillas, France), where there was a True Cross reliquary, the relic was venerated three times a year, at the Feasts of the Holy Cross in September and May as well as on Good Friday;²¹⁷ and on Hospitaller Rhodes, so pilgrim William Wey tells us in 1462, a thorn from Christ's Crown bloomed on Good Friday when the Passion was read, changing the color of its flowers from red to green.²¹⁸ These relics and reliquaries were likely placed on the altar for such occasions—an array of fabulous objects in silver, crystal, glass, and ivory decorated with precious and symbolic gems.²¹⁹ The reception of the object by the viewer, under the flickering light of candles and lamps, perhaps, reminds us of how powerful the element of performance in medieval church liturgy was, not least when reinforced by sounds, smells, and an encapsulating visual environment of iconography on altarpieces and sculpture.²²⁰ Viewers' experience of relics fully engaged the senses, from the moment of their arrival, accompanied by music and the pealing of bells,²²¹ to the annual celebrations and processions that underlined the devotion of all the Christian faithful. Once again, however, these experiences were in no way novel to the military orders. Even the geographical and strategic deployment of relics was not unusual in the context of other religious orders. The Cistercians also understood the benefits of locating relics in unpopulated areas, including their pilgrimage chapels on Chelmska Mountain near Koszalin in Pomerania (Poland) and in the village of Marino (Russia) near Kaliningrad, in former eastern Prussia.²²² The Cypriot Franciscans, meanwhile, actively promoted their biblical associations just as the military orders had done. In the fifteenth century they identified a spot behind the altar of their thirteenth-century church in Famagusta as the location at which Saint Catherine learned to read.²²³ This spot was venerated by both local Greek and Latin speakers and thus encouraged common interests in a diverse population in a manner reminiscent of Templar and Hospitaller processions in Acre and Rhodes.

Relics therefore performed several important roles for the military orders. First, they were an important element in the promotion of military activities to the public. Specifically, they highlighted their geographical links with events in the East and

²¹⁶ Barber, *New Knighthood*, 199.

²¹⁷ Schenk, "The Cult of the Cross."

²¹⁸ Francis Davey, ed., *The Itineraries of William Wey* (Oxford, 2010), 126.

²¹⁹ Cynthia Hahn, "What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics?," *Numen* 57 (2010): 284–316.

²²⁰ On smells and relics, see Paul Anthony Brazinski and Allegra R. P. Fryxell, "The Smell of Relics: Authenticating Saintry Bones and the Role of Scent in the Sensory Experience of Medieval Christian Veneration," *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology* 23/1 (2013): 1–15.

²²¹ For example, in Jerusalem in the twelfth century and Malta in the early seventeenth, when gun salutes were fired; see Folda, *Art of the Crusaders*, 83; Michael Galea, *Grandmaster Aloph de Wignacourt 1601–1622: A Monograph* (Malta, 2002), 63.

²²² In both cases, the pilgrimage chapels were managed by Cistercian nuns from convents located in nearby cities, Koszalin and Kaliningrad, respectively; see Zofia Krzymuska-Fafius, "Kaplica pielgrzymkowa cysterek koszalińskich na Górze Chelmskiej i jej wyposażenie," in *Cystersi w kulturze średniowiecznej Europy*, ed. Jerzy Strzelczyk (Poznań, 1992), 329–49, at 329; Jerzy Domasłowski, "Znaczenie klasztorów cysterskich dla średniowiecznej sztuki Pomorza Wschodniego," in Strzelczyk, *Cystersi w kulturze*, 241–65, at 246.

²²³ Cobham, *Excerpta Cyprica*, 35.

their knowledge of distant monuments in the *loca sacra* of the Holy Land, underlining their distinguished campaigns and publicizing their historical and pseudo-historical deeds. Here was a means through which a relatively youthful set of religious orders could claim their backstory and establish a lineage. For “armchair crusaders,” as they have been called,²²⁴ a selection of prestigious relics was undoubtedly useful in providing assurance that their donations were being put to good use, and they must also have been a persuasive recruitment tool, especially so during periods of military reversal. Crucially, both the medium and the message carried by their relics were controlled by the orders and, alongside ritual, spoken word, visual images, and architecture, relics were one means through which social memory could be transmitted independently of writing. Second, the very presence of relics demonstrated God’s approval of their enterprise in a tangible and visual way and celebrated the orders’ piety and fortitude, especially when relics attracted miracles or when the arrival of new relics kept them in the public eye. This was important, given that the military orders relied heavily on oral tradition in which relics would have played their part.²²⁵ Third, through the use of relics the orders could promote shared interests at the highest social levels within the papal and royal courts. By acquiring relics and exchanging them, the military orders were participating in an exclusive trade, access to which legitimated their difference from other later medieval institutions and helped frame their collective social position. In other words, relics are implicated in the development and sustaining of the military orders’ identity and helped to bind their communities both locally and at the international level. What sets the military orders apart from other monastic communities is that they maintained secular and military control over large lordships, for example around Atlit, Tartus, and Crac des Chevaliers in the Levant and on Rhodes and in the Baltic. Their absolute control over the relics and pilgrimage sites in these areas enforced not only the religious but also the secular authority of the knights and forged a special bond between the orders and their subjects. This became increasingly important in the fifteenth century, when Hospitallers and Teutonic knights used relics to muster the support of local populations in defense of their endangered realms. The collections of relics in Malbork and Rhodes were thus deployed for ends that were similar to those of secular rulers in Paris or London.

CONCLUSION

Later medieval society was deeply marked by communality in the organization and operation of its villages, guilds, urban communities, and, most obviously, its monastic orders. Teasing out the individuality of self- and communal expression in these groups through historical and archaeological evidence is an difficult challenge because there is rarely any single identity consistently or permanently reflected, whether that be gender identity, social identity, or religious identity. In the case of the military orders, the collecting of religious relics was central to their ideology and religiosity, both in war and peace. Arguably, the use of relics conveyed a more

²²⁴ Gilchrist, *Contemplation and Action*, 67.

²²⁵ Nicholson, *Templars, Hospitallers and Teutonic Knights*, 107.

consistent sense of identity than could be expressed through the built environment of architecture, where there were more varied regional opportunities and constraints. On the one hand, relics subtly communicated and reinforced the roles of the orders because they were linked to stories, incidents, and miracles that defined their the orders' wider purpose, enhanced their sense of belonging, and drew in the interests of the Christian faithful. Relics' biographies could be activated and contextually revised depending upon local circumstance. To a great extent, these interests transcended geography, not least because relics specifically underlined the seriousness of the orders' Christian mission and promoted this cause to potential recruits, benefactors, and pilgrims through liturgy and public performance in the form of relic exhibition and processions. On the other hand, should we be tempted to think that the orders' engagement with their relics was merely material, we should remember that relics also represented a meaningful spiritual bargain through which members of the order gained support from the charismatic selection of saints they championed. From a more general perspective, the acquisition of relics confirmed the orders' engagement with Europe's Christian elite and sent a strong signal about their social standing. Relics were one of the means through which the orders constructed and maintained their historical authority to rule independently over lordships that were as large and populous as kingdoms, and which were not, and could not have been, theirs by inheritance.

Tomasz Borowski is curator of the medieval gallery in the Polish History Museum, Warsaw, Poland (e-mail: Tomasz.Borowski@muzhp.pl)

Christopher Gerrard is Professor of Medieval Archaeology at Durham University, Durham, UK (e-mail: c.m.gerrard@durham.ac.uk)

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