

TRANSFERABLE PASSION: A STUDY OF TRUE CROSS RELIQUARIES IN THE LATIN EAST

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Relics and reliquaries were central to the goals of crusading and the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem.¹ Rescuing relics from perceived Muslim captivity was a major concern of the First Crusade, and maintaining custody of them was paramount to further crusading initiatives.² The kinds of relics circulating and leaving the Levant between 1099 and 1291 varied widely, from tomb dust to whole bones of biblical figures.³ They served to impart their agency upon believers by representing faith within material reality. A relic's agency was transmitted through narratives they were connected to or the holy figures they came from.⁴ Crusaders used this agency to justify crusading, crusade violence, and occupation in the Levant. For example, during the First Crusade at the siege of Antioch, the crusaders seemed doomed until they miraculously discovered the Holy Lance that pierced Christ's side, and it

¹ For further reading on the crusading and the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem see Andrew Jotischky, *Crusading and the Crusader States* (Routledge, 2017); Paul M. Cobb, *The Race for Paradise: An Islamic History of The Crusades* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

² For further reading on relics and how they functioned in crusading initiatives see Anne E. Lester, "What Remains: Women, Relics and Remembrance in the Aftermath of the Fourth Crusade," *Journal of Medieval History* 40, no. 3 (2014): 311–28, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03044181.2014.917834>; Nicholas Paul, *To Follow in Their Footsteps: The Crusades and Family Memory in the High Middle Ages*, None (Cornell University Press, 2012), 90–133, but this paper will be focusing on William Purkis, "'Holy Christendom's New Colony': The Extraction of Sacred Matter and the Colonial Status of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem," *The Haskins Society Journal* 30 (April 2020): 184, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781787449060.009>.

³ Purkis, "'Holy Christendom's New Colony,'" 185.

⁴ M. Cecilia Gaposchkin, "Notre Dame of Paris, Ansel's True Cross Relic of 1120 and the Power of Relic Narratives," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 76, no. 4 (2025): 744, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046924001520>.

motivated the knights to break the siege with a storied cavalry charge.⁵ The Holy Lance exemplifies the role relics played in crusading initiatives from the very beginning. Additionally, the role of relics was emboldened by their reliquaries, especially when shipped back to Europe. There was already a relic material culture in Europe long before the crusade, but the relics of the Holy Land were far superior, as they were connected to Jesus Christ himself. Reliquaries became the vehicles of relic agency and were as important as the relics themselves.⁶ Reliquaries ranged from humble sacks of cloth to the ornately adorned containers like the one this paper focuses on.⁷ The True Cross Reliquary in the Louvre Museum known as the “Staurothèque: reliquaire de la Vraie Croix” (OA 3665), is a stunning example of reliquary material culture from the Latin East.⁸ It survives as a representation of the essential materiality of Christianity in the Latin East, and how relics were authenticated through narrative, colonially extracted, and transmitted the agency of Jesus Christ.

The Staurothèque is comprised of three objects that can be combined and separated at will depending on transport or display needs. There is the primary cruciform piece, a rectangular casket or *tabula* with a proprietary depression for the cruciform, and a sliding, removable lid for the casket.⁹ The cruciform has two sets of arms, a smaller one at the top and a larger one near the center. When all parts are combined, it is 18.3cm high, 9.5cm wide, and 2cm deep.¹⁰ All three objects are covered on all sides with gold or gold-colored metal paneling, except for the back of the cruciform which has silver-colored paneling. The paneling on all objects is elaborately embossed using the *repoussé* technique.¹¹ Due to the paneling’s age, some has flaked off revealing that each object has a wooden construction the paneling is affixed to. A section of decayed paneling on the upper cruciform arms was replaced with newer golden-colored metal, as the patina does not match the rest of the object. It is not apparent nor recorded when this repair took place. Also, there are two sections of intentionally exposed wood on the front of the cruciform where the two arm sections meet the center. These wood sections are cross-shaped.

⁵ Jotischky, *Crusading and the Crusader States*, 60; Beth C. Spacey, *The Miraculous and the Writing of Crusade Narrative*, NED-New edition (Boydell & Brewer, 2020), 75–83, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvrd0w9>.

⁶ For further reading on relics, reliquaries, and their impact on those that interact with them see Cynthia Hahn, *The Reliquary Effect: Enshrining the Sacred Object* (Reaktion Books, 2017).

⁷ Julia M. H. Smith, “Portable Christianity: Relics in the Medieval West (c.700–1200),” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 181, no. 2012 (2012): 143–67.

⁸ “Staurothèque: Reliquaire de La Vraie Croix (a: Logette à Double Traverse Surmontée Par 2 Bustes d’anges) et Croix Du Reliquaire à Double Traverse (b),” Museum Archive, Louvre Collections, Louvre Museum, July 17, 2024, <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010114441>.

⁹ Zina Uzdenskaya, “The Domestication of an Itinerant Object: The True Cross Reliquary from the Louvre Museum,” *Hiperboreea* 4, no. 1 (2017): 25.

¹⁰ Louvre Museum, “Staurothèque: Reliquaire de La Vraie Croix (a: Logette à Double Traverse Surmontée Par 2 Bustes d’anges) et Croix Du Reliquaire à Double Traverse (b).”

¹¹ Louvre Museum, “Staurothèque: Reliquaire de La Vraie Croix (a: Logette à Double Traverse Surmontée Par 2 Bustes d’anges) et Croix Du Reliquaire à Double Traverse (b).”

The embossments depict human, animal, and mythological figures surrounded by “vegetal” and patterned filigree, and inscriptions.¹² The only place without embossing is the back of the casket, suggesting it was intended to be laid down horizontally. The cruciform embossments depict an eagle at the top, two griffons at the ends of the larger arms, an angel near the bottom, and “an image of the Holy Sepulchre with an oil lamp hanging from the vertex.”¹³ There are recesses around the presented wood where precious stones were set to emphasize the wood’s status as fragments of the True Cross. On the back, in the silver section, there is a lamb with a halo and two lances protruding from its back, one with a banner and spearhead, the other with a cross. Embossing inside the casket depicts two angels in the upper corners. In the lower corners there are two saintly figures “of St. Helena, traditionally credited with the invention of the True Cross, and her son Constantine, the first Christian [Byzantine] emperor.”¹⁴ These four figures flank the cruciform when it is inside. The inscriptions on the casket and the lid combine to make one coherent message. They consist of a combination of Greek and Latin, and describe this reliquary as a container of the True Cross that was discovered by Constantine and St. Helena, and brought to Jerusalem.¹⁵ The lid depicts the crucifixion of Jesus Christ with “the archangels Gabriela and Michael” hovering above Jesus, and “the Virgin Mary and St. John at the foot of the Cross.”¹⁶ Jesus appears to have already died, as his head is limp and his eyes are closed.

The reasonably small size and immaculate decoration suggest this reliquary was designed to be an easily portable and deeply ceremonial object that made their faith a material reality. It was also designed to be modular, interactive, and protective. Owners of this reliquary could display it closed, open, or with the cruciform separated from the casket without detracting from the significance of the object. The cruciform could be removed for ceremonies or rituals where the relic could be interacted with or displayed.¹⁷ This would bring legitimacy to ceremonies as the *Staurouthèque* provided a material focal point for celebrations and rituals.¹⁸ In this way, the relic and reliquary connected clergy and congregation to the narrative of the ceremony beyond regular liturgy. It also provided legitimacy by connecting European ceremonies directly to the Holy Land. To arrive safely at those ceremonies, the casket and lid protected the fragments of the True Cross on their long journey from east to west.¹⁹ Finally, with the Byzantine imagery, double-armed cross, and the mixed-language inscription, this

¹² Uzdenskaya, “The Domestication of an Itinerant Object,” 24.

¹³ Uzdenskaya, “The Domestication of an Itinerant Object,” 25.

¹⁴ Uzdenskaya, “The Domestication of an Itinerant Object,” 25.

¹⁵ Uzdenskaya, “The Domestication of an Itinerant Object,” 26.

¹⁶ Uzdenskaya, “The Domestication of an Itinerant Object,” 25.

¹⁷ Nikolas Jaspert, “The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West: Mediterranean Connections and Institutional Agency,” in *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem* (Brepols Online, 2014), 220, <https://doi.org/10.1484/M.CELAMA-EB.5.103078>.

¹⁸ Jaspert, “The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West,” 207; Smith, “Portable Christianity: Relics in the Medieval West (c.700–1200),” 220.

¹⁹ Smith, “Portable Christianity: Relics in the Medieval West (c.700–1200),” 156.

reliquary is a *staurotheke*, also evident in the Louvre's French name for it, the *Staurothèque*.²⁰ A *staurotheke* is a traditional Byzantine True Cross reliquary, even though the cruciform was made in Latin-controlled Jerusalem after the First Crusade (c. 1150), and the casket and lid were made in an Italian Workshop much later (c.1200).²¹ However, to understand the context of reliquaries like the *Staurothèque* in the Latin East, the culture surrounding relics must be examined, as materiality was one of the greatest concerns of pilgrimage and crusade.

Relics were a great motivating factor for western pilgrimage to the Holy Land as they transmuted the Holy Land's narratives into material reality. For both pilgrims and crusaders, relics became the memorabilia of visiting (or conquering) the sites of religious narratives, lending materiality to the stories of saints and prophets.²² In fact, the religious materiality of objects and places was the entire purpose of western pilgrimage to the East. Pilgrims could visit and connect with the places mentioned in the Bible, and acquire a material representation of that connection. One of the most important sites of pilgrimage was the Holy Sepulchre. Here, pilgrims could visit the physical space where Christ's body laid after his crucifixion and there was widespread concern for acquiring a relic from the tomb.²³ This displays materiality at the core of western pilgrimage to the East. This pilgrimage allowed pilgrims a connection to divinity through physical locations and objects that could not be found in Europe. In this way, relics took on "Eucharistic undertones," where a material object transforms into a connection to divinity while remaining material.²⁴ This made portability the most important physical aspect of relics.²⁵ Through them, the Holy Land's sanctity became transportable in "objects that could be touched, kissed, carried around, possessed, stolen, bequeathed and counted."²⁶ Thus, relics were material evidence of a pilgrim's beliefs, allowing them to access religious narratives wherever they went. Chief amongst these relics, "galvanized by... the First Crusade" and the establishment of the Kingdom of Jerusalem (1099), were fragments of the True Cross.²⁷ These could be slivers, splinters, or sections of the Cross that were "nodes within larger narratives of place, locality, identity, universal history, and salvation" through the Passion of Christ.²⁸ They were particularly

²⁰ Uzdenskaya, "The Domestication of an Itinerant Object," 25.

²¹ Louvre Museum, "Staurothèque: Reliquaire de La Vraie Croix (a: Logette à Double Traverse Surmontée Par 2 Bustes d'anges) et Croix Du Reliquaire à Double Traverse (b)."

²² Purkis, "Holy Christendom's New Colony," 198-203

²³ Purkis, "Holy Christendom's New Colony," 202-203; Renana Bartal, "Relics of Place: Stone Fragments of the Holy Sepulchre in Eleventh-Century France," *Journal of Medieval History* 44, no. 4 (2018): 408, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03044181.2018.1487872>.

²⁴ Bartal, "Relics of Place," 411.

²⁵ Smith, "Portable Christianity: Relics in the Medieval West (c.700–1200)," 156.

²⁶ Jaspert, "The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West," 207; Smith, "Portable Christianity: Relics in the Medieval West (c.700–1200)," 156.

²⁷ Gaposchkin, "Notre Dame of Paris, Ansel's True Cross Relic of 1120 and the Power of Relic Narratives," 736; Jaspert, "The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West," 213.

²⁸ Gaposchkin, "Notre Dame of Paris, Ansel's True Cross Relic of 1120 and the Power of Relic Narratives," 746.

important relics of the Latin East and Crusading, as they could only be legitimately acquired in the Holy Land. It was the sole place where the narratives of Constantine, St. Helena, and Jesus Christ authenticated a True Cross relic's holiness.²⁹ Therefore, these narratives were painstakingly engraved and embossed into reliquaries like the Staurothèque, as it made the narrative as material as the relic. This preserved the relic and its substantive narrative during the reliquary's travels. Narrative authentication can be seen in documents written at the height of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, during the rule of Amalric I (r. 1163-1174).³⁰ The Staurothèque cruciform would have been circulating in this period before the casket was made.³¹ The practice appears in "authentic" documents, which functioned to authenticate a relic and record its transfer from one party to another.³² A common receiver was Maurice II of Craon, a crusader and eclectic relic collector, who appears in many surviving authentic.³³ These documents never tell the full story, but fragments of narratives often appear to validate the transferred relic. For example, when Maurice received a piece of Jesus's whipping post, it refers to "that sacred column to which the sacred limbs of Christ were bound while he was scourged."³⁴ The author cannot help but include the narrative, stemming from equal parts authentication and veneration. There is a clear necessity to highlight the materiality of Christ's suffering and resurrection that is imbued in these objects through the Passion narrative. These authentic are documented proof used for the essential quality of narrative in relic culture, and informed contemporaries of their relic's legitimacy. That narrative is then manifested in a reliquary like the Staurothèque and its decorations.

Transferable and authenticated sanctity swelled the prevalence of relics amongst pilgrims of all kinds. This is especially true for militarized pilgrims as "devotion to the True Cross [marked] crusading spirituality from its very beginnings."³⁵ Pledging crusade oaths was called 'taking the cross,' aligning a crusader's suffering with the Passion. Even though the crusader's taken cross was metaphorical, their actions were dedicated to the materiality of the True Cross, through symbology and narrative. The narrative itself validated a crusade, just as "the different narratives associated with or attached to a relic... authenticated it."³⁶ This bound crusading and relics to the same "ideological, devotional, and political work" that defined the Latin East and the Crusades.³⁷ Crusaders were not passively accessing

²⁹ Gaposchkin, "Notre Dame of Paris, Ansel's True Cross Relic of 1120 and the Power of Relic Narratives," 724.

³⁰ Arthur Bertrand de Brousillon, *La Maison de Craon, 1050-1480: Étude Historique Accompagnée Du Cartulaire de Craon* (Alphonse Picard, 1893), 2:3; For reign of Amalric I see Andrew Jotischky, *Crusading and the Crusader States* (Routledge, 2017), 99–101.

³¹ Louvre Museum, "Staurothèque: Reliquaire de La Vraie Croix (a: Logette à Double Traverse Surmontée Par 2 Bustes d'anges) et Croix Du Reliquaire à Double Traverse (b)."

³² Bertrand de Brousillon, *La Maison de Craon, 1050-1480: Étude Historique Accompagnée Du Cartulaire de Craon*, 2:1.

³³ Bertrand de Brousillon, *La Maison de Craon, 1050-1480: Étude Historique Accompagnée Du Cartulaire de Craon*, 2:1–5.

³⁴ Bertrand de Brousillon, *La Maison de Craon, 1050-1480: Étude Historique Accompagnée Du Cartulaire de Craon*, 2:2.

³⁵ Jaspert, "The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West," 210.

³⁶ Gaposchkin, "Notre Dame of Paris, Ansel's True Cross Relic of 1120 and the Power of Relic Narratives," 724.

³⁷ Gaposchkin, "Notre Dame of Paris, Ansel's True Cross Relic of 1120 and the Power of Relic Narratives," 724.

their religious narratives, but violently participating in them. One could only imagine the monumental significance of an authentic relic to a crusader's beliefs. Additionally, relics were often rewarded for military action. Crusaders, members of the Holy Orders like the Knights Templar and Hospitallers, and Latin Christian royals were giving and receiving relics for military service.³⁸ This meant that Latin Christian knights were willing to die for religious materiality. Thus, it was paramount to protect these dust-piles, woodchips, and desiccated remains in reliquaries like the *Staurothèque*. Their contents were more important to a crusader than any material spoils of war, which was especially true for fragments of the True Cross. Whether a pilgrim was rich or poor, vacationing or conquering, relics served as material validation of the pilgrim's faith by materially manifesting the narratives of their religion.

Transport of the Holy Land's sanctity to Europe through relics was more vital to the Kingdom of Jerusalem than the personal piety of pilgrims.³⁹ Portability of relics, their narratives, and their holiness was crucial to the "commercial and colonizing side of the crusading movement" that brought "translation of divine favour to the west."⁴⁰ If their portability was not directed toward Europe, reliquary culture and infrastructure would have remained in the East. However, reliquaries like the *Staurothèque* were prevalent in Europe, and buildings like King Louis IX's *Sainte-Chappelle* housing Passion relics in Paris, prove that colonial transfer of relics was a primary goal of the Levantine occupation.⁴¹ Latin Christians needed to maintain control over their "'treasury of heavenly things'... that could be visited and mined repeatedly" for relics to benefit Europe.⁴² The Latin East does not fit the "traditional definitions" of a European colony with a singular "homeland" that benefits from colonial exploitation.⁴³ However, if the benefactor is "the homeland of 'holy Christendom,'" then the Latin East becomes a "'religious colony'" that exploits sanctity through relics.⁴⁴ Relics were the pious commodity used to stimulate Europe's spiritual economy like later powers used colonial resources to fuel their nations' monetary economies.⁴⁵ In this way, westerners were transporting the materiality of the Holy Land to Europe, ascending Europe to the same hallowed status.⁴⁶ Crusades and the Latin East were incredibly expensive for Europe to maintain, with economic returns far below the investments.⁴⁷ However, the Latin East was maintained for nearly two centuries with this asymmetric investment

³⁸ Jaspert, "The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West," 183,191.

³⁹ Purkis, "'Holy Christendom's New Colony,'" 177.

⁴⁰ Purkis, "'Holy Christendom's New Colony,'" 179; Gaposchkin, "Notre Dame of Paris, Ansel's True Cross Relic of 1120 and the Power of Relic Narratives," 743.

⁴¹ Jaspert, "The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West," 216–21; Gaposchkin, "Notre Dame of Paris, Ansel's True Cross Relic of 1120 and the Power of Relic Narratives," 742.

⁴² Purkis, "'Holy Christendom's New Colony,'" 187.

⁴³ Purkis, "'Holy Christendom's New Colony,'" 180.

⁴⁴ Purkis, "'Holy Christendom's New Colony,'" 183–84.

⁴⁵ Purkis, "'Holy Christendom's New Colony,'" 186.

⁴⁶ Gaposchkin, "Notre Dame of Paris, Ansel's True Cross Relic of 1120 and the Power of Relic Narratives," 746.

⁴⁷ Purkis, "'Holy Christendom's New Colony,'" 183.

strategy, so the beneficial returns were religious. Crusaders, Knights, and European and Latin Eastern Kings were not transferring large amounts of monetary wealth back to Europe, instead, they were transferring relics.⁴⁸ The Latin East had wealth, but so did the European kings, which is evident in their ability to fund the Crusading project throughout its lifespan. So, the reason they spent so much money and shed so much blood to “maintain custody of the holy places” was materiality.⁴⁹ Latin Christians yearned for material connection to their faith and were willing to sacrifice their lives and treasuries to get it. This is exemplified in how they viewed “the threat of Islam in the Holy Land... [as] a direct assault upon the materiality of their faith.”⁵⁰ Thus, materiality is at the core of the identity of the Latin East as its culture, diplomacy, expeditions and wars were defined by gaining and maintaining connection to religious materiality. For the Staurothèque and other *staurothekai* like it, this is the specific context in which they were crafted in Jerusalem.⁵¹ Contemporary documentation points to “the transmitters of these *staurothekai* were definitely... the canons of the Holy Sepulchre” from 1114 to 1291.⁵² These documents record the transference and purpose of relics once they left the canons and arrived in Europe. They outline relics from all over the Holy Land being used as an amalgamated surrogate for the Holy Sepulchre.⁵³ It claims that any person who wanted to take the cross, but was “oppressed by infirmity or the burden of poverty,” could “fulfill his vows to the Most High” by making an offering to these relics.⁵⁴ This evidence displays the significance of eastern relics in Europe as Europeans believed they could “recreate the sacred space of the Holy Sepulchre” at home.⁵⁵ If an impoverished person sacrificed what little they had at the surrogate Holy Sepulchre, they gained the same indulgences crusaders campaigned to acquire. Additionally, relics could make European individuals or institutions fabulously wealthy. Outside of religious transference, a powerful relic in a beautiful reliquary like the Staurothèque can turn the location it is kept into a pilgrimage site.⁵⁶ This attracts pilgrims who are wealthy enough to travel to come to see the relic and make donations or purchases at its location. The spiritual and monetary gain explains the desirability of relics as a material resource of a “religious colony.”⁵⁷

The final, paramount aspect of Holy Land relics was the agency of Christ. All previously discussed aspects of relics occurred because of it. Relics were narratively authenticated and colonially

⁴⁸ Purkis, ““Holy Christendom’s New Colony,”” 185.

⁴⁹ Purkis, ““Holy Christendom’s New Colony,”” 184.

⁵⁰ Purkis, ““Holy Christendom’s New Colony,”” 184.

⁵¹ Jaspert, “The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West,” 218–21.

⁵² Jaspert, “The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West,” 218–19.

⁵³ For an example of how relics and reliquaries were used as a surrogate Holy Sepulchre see Micheal Stephan, ed., *Die Urkunden und die ältesten Urbare des Klosters Scheyern* (C.H. Beck, 1988), 28–33.

⁵⁴ Stephan, *Die Urkunden und die ältesten Urbare des Klosters Scheyern*, 28–33.

⁵⁵ Bartal, “Relics of Place,” 420.

⁵⁶ Jaspert, “The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West,” 220.

⁵⁷ Purkis, ““Holy Christendom’s New Colony,”” 184.

extracted because they offered direct, material access to Christ's agency. This is exemplified by the concept of *furta sacra* or 'holy theft.'⁵⁸ It is the concept that relics contained the power and presence of the holy figures they were connected to. A power that could not be controlled by mortals. For example, if a relic was stolen, then it was not the agency of the thieves removing the relic, but the holy figure deciding their relic should be moved. Thus, the figure's agency is contained within the relic and dictates its location. Many of the objectives and successes of crusading and the Latin East can be attributed to *furta sacra*, as crusaders were led to believe their extraction of relics was part of Jesus's decision to leave the Levant and go to Europe.⁵⁹ Jesus's agency is not defined only by his personal agency in *furta sacra*, but also by the "physical testimonies of the life of Christ" granted to medieval Christians.⁶⁰ To a contemporary Christian, the stories, teachings, and works of Christ could be contained within a relic, and the power of those narratives could be transmitted through interaction. Relics made the words and deeds of Jesus material. Then, a Christian's actions when affected by the interaction with the materiality of Jesus is the impartation of Christ's agency. Christ's containment in relics can be seen in the "authentic" documents with their narrativizing.⁶¹ In another transfer to Maurice II to Craon, he receives "the hammer by which the most precious body of Christ was taken down from the cross."⁶² The specific mention of the body suggests Jesus's essence is imbued in the hammer through contact. Therefore, interacting with the hammer allows a Christian to materially contact Christ's body. This would undoubtedly affect a believer's thoughts and actions, manifesting Christ's agency through the relic. Material contact like this granted Latin knights the justifications and objectives of violence, and Kings of Jerusalem validation for their sovereignty. The agency of Christ was transmitted to them, via the True Cross relic of Jerusalem, through the affects of the Passion and Resurrection narratives.⁶³ It allowed them to act believing their sacrifices were holy, their sins were absolved, and their salvation ensured. The Battle of Hattin (1187) exemplifies this when they were "bereaved of... the Jerusalem fragment of the Cross," after it had been "a potent battle standard and was led to war on no fewer than thirty-nine occasions."⁶⁴ Losing the relic is the key example of why it was so important. Their material connection to Christ and his agency was so foundational, that its capture was seen as losing the kingdom more than territorial forfeiture. Their access to Christ's agency

⁵⁸ For a detailed analysis of holy theft see Patrick J. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages - Revised Edition* (Princeton University Press, 2011).

⁵⁹ For a recent, detailed study of the metaphysical and prophetic nature of relic transfer to Europe see Nicholas L. Paul and Wolfgang P. Müller, *How the Holy Cross Came from Antioch to Brogne: A Critical Edition and Translation of Quomodo Sancta Crux Ab Antiochia Allata Sit in Broniense Cenobium* (Boydell & Brewer, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.30826925>.

⁶⁰ Gaposchkin, "Notre Dame of Paris, Ansel's True Cross Relic of 1120 and the Power of Relic Narratives," 737.

⁶¹ Bertrand de Brousillon, *La Maison de Craon, 1050-1480: Étude Historique Accompagnée Du Cartulaire de Craon*, 2:1.

⁶² Bertrand de Brousillon, *La Maison de Craon, 1050-1480: Étude Historique Accompagnée Du Cartulaire de Craon*, 2:2.

⁶³ Jaspert, "The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West," 213.

⁶⁴ Jaspert, "The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West," 210, 213.

was stolen by Saladin, and potential access to further agency was halted by his conquest of Jerusalem. However, according to *furta sacra*, it was not Saladin's battlefield victory that decided the relic's fate, it was Christ himself. Crusaders would have believed that it was Christ's choice to leave the Latin Christians and go with Saladin. Emboldening this example was the response to Hattin from European Christendom. Pope Gregory VIII issued the *Audita tremendi* as an immediate call for the retaliatory Third Crusade.⁶⁵ In this crusade, "recovery of the [True Cross] ... was of such overriding importance that one might term the Third Crusade a 'crusade of the True Cross.'"⁶⁶ The Third Crusade was a massive response to one of the greatest cataclysms for the Latin East, displaying that crusading and Latin Eastern rule were centered around material access to the agency of Christ. The fact that reclaiming the theft of their material connection to Christ was the main focus of the Third Crusade displays how crucial materiality was to the faith of Latin and European Christians. Without a material connection to Christ, it was as if they lost him completely, which is why relics were foundational to the Latin East.

Further emphasis on Christ's agency applies to relics being extracted from the Holy Land to Europe. In removing a relic from the Holy Land, it loses its context by association, and the reliquary becomes as important as the relic itself. This is due to "iconographic citation,"⁶⁷ which is how reliquaries "functioned as visual constructs" of their relics' validation. A relic can be rendered meaningless with insufficient context to legitimize it. A reliquary makes this context material, so that it can be transported along with the relic. So, regarding transference of agency, reliquaries not only protect but project the relic inside. In this sense, object and container would be useless without one another. The relic is the material connection to the holy, and the reliquary is the material representation of its holiness. Only together are they capable of manifesting the agency of Christ into material reality. In this way, the Staurothèque transmits the agency of Christ through its iconography. It is a gleaming representation of the "functional dimension of relics' visibility" that *staurothekai* were made to provide.⁶⁸ Their gilded decorations visually project the power and presence of the True Cross relics they contained. The canons of the Holy Sepulchre used *staurothekai* in rituals across Europe as "mnemonic devices [that] played a part in regularly calling Jerusalem to mind within Christian society."⁶⁹ The largest and most detailed embossing on the Staurothèque is the crucifixion narrative affixed to the front of the lid.⁷⁰ Jesus is displayed in the narrative that infuses his agency into the True Cross relic's materiality. Even if the cruciform is removed from the casket and the lid is not present, its

⁶⁵ Jaspert, "The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West," 210.

⁶⁶ Jaspert, "The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West," 211.

⁶⁷ Jaspert, "The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West," 216.

⁶⁸ Jaspert, "The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West," 220.

⁶⁹ Jaspert, "The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West," 220–21.

⁷⁰ Louvre Museum, "Staurothèque: Reliquaire de La Vraie Croix (a: Logette à Double Traverse Surmontée Par 2 Bustes d'anges) et Croix Du Reliquaire à Double Traverse (b)."

cross-shape commits the same function. Therefore, the narrative was the most visually prevalent part of the reliquary in whatever context it was in, superseding the visibility of the relic. This means that the reliquary is essential to the materiality of the relic. Only through this iconography can the relic be interactive and affective, and it is only through interaction and affect can it impart Christ's agency. The reliquary's material representation of Christ allows the interactor access to Jesus's agency, and without it, the relics would lose this power.

Examples like the Staurothèque serve to answer a major question about the significance of relics in crusading and the Latin East. The question is: Regardless of the messaging of internalized faith within Christian doctrine, how important was materiality to Christianity in the Latin East?

Reliquaries prove that materiality was essential. That is why churches, religious artworks, manuscripts, and reliquaries were made with great concern for beauty. Hours of artisanal labour was poured into the Staurothèque on two separate occasions because of this concern. The artisans know its beauty must validate and venerate the material reality of Christ's agency it houses. If materiality was unnecessary, there would be no relics or reliquaries, and no expeditions to acquire them. Without essential materiality, there may have never been Crusades, nor Latin East. Thus, relics and reliquaries, with their narratives, transferable sanctity, and impartible agency were essential to the very fiber of the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

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