Living Connections with the Dead: An Anthropological Exploration of Relics Cared for by the Roman Catholic Diocese, London, Ontario.

Sydney Durham, Naomi Nakahodo, Natalie Stephens, Ashley Ward, and Kaylee Woldum.

Edited by Naomi Nakahodo, Andrew Nelson, Ashley Ward, and Kaylee Woldum.

Western UNIVERSITY · CANADA

DIOCESE OF LONDON

Published by Western University

Department of Anthropology

1151 Richmond St. London, Ontario, Canada, N6B 3A2

Printed in Canada

The photo on the cover page is the box that has held the relics of St. Laurentia, a martyr, translated to London, Ontario, by Bishop Walsh. These relics are housed in the archive of the Diocese of London. Photo courtesy of Ashley Ward.

Corresponding Editor: Andrew J. Nelson

anelson@uwo.ca

ISBN XXXXXXXXXXXXX

Table of Contents

Instructor's Forward

This monograph is the class project for a course entitled "Mortuary Archaeology". The goal of the course is to engage students with the cross-cultural and deep temporal examination of how different societies deal with death. According to the syllabus (see Appendix 1):

> ""…Tis impossible to be sure of anything but Death and Taxes" (Christopher Bullock, 1716, The Cobbler of Preston). There are myriad ways in which societies have dealt with this stark reality, and the rituals they construct shed important light on the society at large. In mainstream North America, we have a very uniform, hygienic and medicalized view of death and burial, while the range beliefs and practices of other contemporary and ancient cultures is quite remarkable."

The course begins with an introduction to the overall topic of mortuary archaeology, followed by the broad anthropological/theoretical examination of variability and structure of mortuary rituals cross-culturally. The examination of actual rituals begins with a reflexive look at mortuary rituals in North America, followed by a sequence of discussions of the development of mortuary rituals across time and space. The course closes with a discussion of death and popular culture. The course syllabus is included here as Appendix 1.

The major assignment for the course is a group project. In the first incarnation of the course, we undertook the study of potters fields, parts of cemeteries where those who lived and died at the margins of society were buried (see Atkinson et al. 2020). In a remarkable stroke of luck, we fit a ground penetrating radar survey of the Woodland Cemetery's potters field in the week between losing the snow, and the shut down of COVID-19. This year, with COVID very much still part of our lives, I sought out a more stable and predictable topic that would nonetheless fit the themes of the course and engage the students. The perfect topic presented itself in a web site I had seen in 2018 and had printed off and tucked away to think about at some point… *relics*.

The web site in question describes the collection of relics in the archives of the Diocese of London in the care of archivist Debra Majer, MLIS (see section 5.2.3). I thought that relics could be an excellent topic for the group project, because relic

veneration has been widely practiced throughout space and time, many relics are actual human remains and so their veneration is a form of mortuary ritual, and as such, there would appear to be an inherent contradiction between the Christian belief in the integrity of the body required for resurrection, and the collection, translation and display of body parts of divine saints. Lots of rich comparative and theoretical material to plumb there for archaeologists used to studying material and human remains in the absence of their historical context!

Relic veneration would also appear to be an excellent example of the recent theoretical development within bioarchaeology entitled "post-mortem agency" (or "secondary agency"). This is a concept borrowed from art and museum theorists, where inanimate objects are seen to have the power to affect the social order (cf. Gell 1998, Pearce 1992, Robb 2004). Extending this concept to the bioarchaeological record, "Crandall and Martin (2014) have argued that human remains, in the form of memento mori, saints' relics, skeletons, and mummies, have the power to shape social relations, behavior, and action because they embody the essence of humanity, they reflect our mortality, and they record the history in life and after death of the individual. Thus, from the emic perspective, human remains have agency in a specific cultural context and understanding" (Nelson 2019: 13). This concept emerges repeatedly throughout this collection of papers.

Initial contact was made with Ms. Majer in June of 2021, by email, followed by a visit with Andrew Walsh to the Diocese on August 3, 2021. During that visit Ms. Majer showed us the collection and we discussed a range of possible research topics. The conversation proceeded over the fall semester and then picked up in earnest in January of 2022, when the topic was introduced to the class, and when Ms. Majer joined us via Zoom. That was followed by a class visit to the Diocese and archives in early February, when we also met Fr. John Comiskey. Following that visit, the students gradually refined their specific topics and undertook their research. The individual papers were written by early April, and the three graduate students, Naomi Nakahodo, Ashley Ward and Kaylee Woldum did the final edit and assembly.

This project is a nice example of a University-Community collaboration. Ms. Majer and Fr. Comiskey were extraordinarily accommodating, answering no end of questions, and hosting many individual visits to the collection. They also allowed the students to take their priceless relics off site to be illuminated using x-rays and subjected to

comparative analysis in the faunal lab. The final product is focused on the tradition of relic veneration within the Christian, and more specifically the Catholic tradition, but it brings an anthropological lens to issues of the historical context of relic veneration, and relic authenticity, movement, meaning and interpretation. As such, it definitely met and exceeded the goals and expectations for the course project.

Andrew J. Nelson

Bibliography

CRANDALL, J. J., & MARTIN, D. L. 2014. Special section: The bioarchaeology of post-mortem agency: Integrating archaeological theory with human skeletal remains. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 24: 429-435.

GELL, A. 1998. *Art and agency: An anthropological theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

NELSON, A.J. 2019. Mummies, memories and marginalization: the changing social roles of mummies from antiquity to today. In: M.L. Mant & Holland, A.J. (eds.), *Bioarchaeology of marginalized people*, pp: 11-32. Academic Press: London.

PEARCE, S. M. 1992. *Museums, objects, and collections: A cultural study*. Leicester: Leicester University Press.

ROBB, J. 2004. The extended artifact and the monumental economy: a methodology for material agency. In E. DeMarrais, C. Godsen, & C. Renfrew (Eds.), *Rethinking materiality. The engagement of mind with the material world,* pp: 131-139). Cambridge: McDonald Institute Monographs, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.

Students' Forward

This project arose from conversations between the course instructor, Andrew Nelson, and the archivist for the Roman Catholic Diocese of London, Debra Majer, in August of 2021. After an initial meeting with Debra on February 9th, the students began the process of building project proposals surrounding the theme of sacred relics. After approval by Nelson and Majer, the five students from Western University started their individual projects from February to April of 2022. During this time, the students communicated with both Nelson and Majer regarding their projects, two of which included the direct analysis of some of the Diocese's relics. In this sense, this volume is a mix of both theoretical work and experimental approaches in the study of sacred relics from the Roman Catholic Church.

Acknowledgments

The students would like to thank Andrew Nelson for facilitating this opportunity and teaching us new techniques. Thanks also to Andrew Walsh for providing a valuable collection of resources on relics. We would all like to thank the Museum of Ontario Archaeology Ancient Images Lab for providing access to their equipment. Most of all, the greatest of thanks to Debra Majer, Archivist, Fr. John Comiskey, and the Diocese of London for their time, help and enthusiasm during this project. The access you have trusted us with and the knowledge you have shared has been invaluable.

Introduction

"Relics are not meant to be worshipped, the act of worship is reserved for God; relics are meant for people to feel connected to and venerate martyrs of the ancient church."
Fr. John Comiskey, personal communication, February 9, 2022.

In general terms, a relic is a physical object connected to a particular individual and/or a place or event related to the person (Walsham 2010). Relics can also be understood as acts of remembrance, as they materialize and preserve memories in the shape of physical remains (Walsham 2010). There are two main types of relics: corporeal and non-corporeal, the former being body parts (e.g., bones, blood, teeth, fingernails, hair), while the latter are objects that were owned by the individual or came into contact with them, such as clothes, jewelry, books, etc. (Walsham 2010). In this sense, some characteristics that are associated with relics, but are not found in all relics are durability, resistance to decay, and portability (Walsham 2010). Relics are not mere representations of the divine, rather they are *"an actual physical embodiment of it, each particle encapsulating the essence of the departed person,* pars pro toto*, in its entirety"* (Walsham 2010:12). In short, as physical manifestations of the divine, relics are vehicles of memory that illuminate and connect groups of people across time and space (Kjellström 2017; Immogen & Taavitsainen 2011).

A key feature of relics is their ability to hold and channel power that is inherent in them, which makes them vehicles for the holy and bridges between the mundane and the divine (Walsham 2010). Not all dead bodies are created equal, and the same goes for relics (Walsham 2010; Arnold 2014). Rather, relics are socially constructed under the beliefs, behaviours, and symbolic capital that people imbued them with, and thus, the symbolism and value behind them are subjective to their context (Walsham 2010; Arnold 2014). From a post-processual theoretical perspective, relics can be analyzed through the lens of post-mortem agency, a type of secondary agency that explores the ways in which dead bodies can potentially influence the social relations and behaviours of the living (cf. Crandall & Martin 2014).

In the Christian and particularly the Catholic tradition, relics are associated with martyrs and saints whose bodies were sanctified after enduring pain, suffering, and violent 'good deaths' for Christ and the Christian faith (Nafte 2015). In the early years of the Church, the bodies of martyrs were fundamental for the growth and expansion of the institution and its faith, which made the production of relics an important practice (Nafte 2015; Castello 2019). The Catholic Church divides relics into three classes: first-class relics are corporeal relics such as the remains of a person, which can include bones, mummified remains, hair, etc.; second-class relics are non-corporeal objects that the person touched in life, such as their clothes, rosaries, textbooks, etc.; and third-class relics are non-corporeal objects that have touched first-class relics, such as dirt around a martyr or saint's body, wood from a coffin, etc. (Hooper 2004; Fr. John Comiskey, personal communication, February 9th, 2022). The following five chapters will elaborate on the post-mortem agency of relics, each of them with a special focus on the history, creation and production, authentication, social value, and translation of sacred Catholic relics throughout the centuries.

In Chapter 1, Naomi Nakahodo will explore the post-mortem agency of sacred relics through a historical lens that will focus on the ways in which relics became religious, political, and economic assets to Church leaders and European rulers, with a focus on the Middle Ages. This analysis will start in late Antiquity (2nd to 4th centuries A.D.) with the beginning of the translation of relics (the circulation of relics) of early Christian martyrs and their role in the expansion of the Church. It will continue throughout the Middle Ages (5th to 15th centuries A.D.) when there was a high demand for relics in Europe and the Middle East, where rulers collected relics to assert their divine connections and political status, and to forge diplomatic networks between kingdoms. Lastly, in the modern era (1500 A.D. – present), relics will be explored through an economic lens by analyzing their role in the pilgrimages thousands of believers do every year and the revenue they bring to their respective cities.

Transformation is a key and the initial process in the life of a relic. In chapter 2 Ashley Ward will explore the nature of transformation via the analysis of the remains of St. Laurentia, who was translated to the London Diocese by Bishop Walsh (Bishop of London from 1867–1889). Phenomenological perspectives have suggested that transformation begins with the life of the saint and is continuous, relying on a dialectic relationship between them and the believer. The life of St. Laurentia, in the context of

the Great Persecution, will be used to examine this perspective. Meanwhile an analysis of St. Laurentia's bones themselves, looking at whether they are human and at other diagnostic features, will be the jumping off point to examine if transformation is a continuous process, and finally, the relationship between transformation and agency.

In the Catholic tradition, the authentication of relics involves intensive written documentation to provide proof of the authenticity of a relic, known as physical authentication. However, archaeological authentication is subjective and relies on the individual's perception of value to determine the objects that can be venerated through exhibitions and archaeological collections. In chapter 3, Sydney Durham examines the concept of 'authentication' and its meaning by comparing physical and subjective authentication in the Catholic tradition and the archaeological record. Similarities and differences in what constitute physical and subjective authentication between relics and the Catholic tradition and artifacts in the archaeological record will be explored, and how, despite the lack of physical authentication, significant meaning can still be placed onto objects to them relics.

In chapter 4, Kaylee Woldum will examine relic manifestation and questions regarding the importance of relic class and material to the people who house reliquaries. X-ray and micro-computed tomography (micro-CT) analysis of six paper sachets borrowed from the Diocese of London located in London, Ontario, Canada. These analyses were performed on six paper sachets containing relics intended to be housed within reliquaries. However, unlike the other reliquaries seen within the Diocese of London, these sachets are opaque, and relic class and material cannot be determined upon initial observation. For this reason, non-destructive analyses were conducted on a small sample of these paper sachets to assess the possible materials contained within. The results of this analysis will assist in the examination of questions regarding the value placed on relic class in comparison to the associated saint and how the connection that people feel towards a particular saint provides the dead with secondary agency.

Relics, by their very nature are meant to move around. Using a post-processualist framework, translation is the focus of chapter 5 with Natalie Stephens discussing the movement of relics between people and institutions mainly in the present-day. Her work outlines how relics are translated within the Catholic Church, distinguishing between the different classes of relics, and it addresses misconceptions about the process. Turning to e-commerce, Stephens critically examines the relationship

between sites such as eBay and the Church, considering their various roles in the movement of relics. Finally, she turns towards the recipient or buyer of relics considering how relics exert agency and can be a driving force of human behaviour, influencing the means and lengths people will go to obtain the relic they want.

The variety of topics explored in these chapters will illustrate the dynamic nature of relics, their place in the Catholic Church and their importance to the faithful. Relics are a focal point of memory, creating connections between the living and the dead, the human and the divine. Furthermore, relics embody the connection that the faithful have with the saints and that faith imbues these objects with the ability to affect the actions of the living. Belief, in this sense, is a powerful tool; capable of bringing people together and breaking down the barrier between the sacred and the profane.

Bibliography

ARNOLD, B. 2014. Life after life: Bioarchaeology and post-mortem agency. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 24: 523–29. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0959774314000572.

CASTELLO, M.G. 2019. The cult of relics in the Late Roman Empire, legal aspects, in S. Cavicchioli & L. Provero (ed.) *Introduction*, 1st ed. New York : Routledge, [2020] | Series: Routledge approaches to history ; vol 32: Routledge. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781000751864. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429295904.

CRANDALL, J.J. & D.L. MARTIN. 2014. The bioarchaeology of postmortem agency: Integrating archaeological theory with human skeletal remains. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 24: 429–35. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0959774314000584.

HOOPER, S. 2014. A cross-cultural theory of relics: on understanding religion, bodies, artefacts, images and art. *World Art* 4: 175–207. https://doi.org/10.1080/21500894.2014.935873.

IMMONEN, V. & J.-P. TAAVITSAINEN. 2011. Finger of a saint, thumb of a priest: Medieval relics in the Diocese of Turku. *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* 23: 141–73.

KJELLSTRÖM, A. 2017. Tangible traces of devotion: The post-mortem life of relics. *Current Swedish Archaeology* 25: 151–75.

NAFTE, M. 2015. Institutional bodies: Spatial agency and the dead. *History and Anthropology* 26: 206–33. https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2015.1030636.

WALSHAM, A. 2010. Introduction: Relics and remains. *Past & Present* 206: 9–36. https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtq026.

Chapter 1: A Religious, Political, and Economic History of Relics

By T. Naomi Nakahodo

Abstract

The sacred relics of martyrs and saints have been a fundamental part of the Christian Church since its beginning and they were a key element in medieval life. The post-mortem, or secondary agency given to relics was centered on their religious potency, but they also held political and economic value beyond the materials in which they were encased. This paper will explore the secondary agency given to relics by examining the mechanisms through which they were used as religious, political, and economic assets from late Antiquity to modern times, with a focus on the Middle Ages.

1.1 Introduction

Physically speaking, relics of saints and martyrs were not different from any other human corpse – or body part – during the Middle Ages (Geary 1994). Furthermore, when removed from their expensive and elaborate reliquaries, they lost most of their economic and decorative value (Geary 1994). Additionally, Christian beliefs, such as the association of human remains with contamination and the resurrection of the body, are inconsistent with the vast collection of bones and other remains of martyrs and saints that have been dispersed around the world over the centuries (Walsham 2010; Cavicchioli & Provero 2019). Despite this, relics were an integral part of medieval civilization across social groups (Geary 1990).

Saints and martyrs' relics changed the landscape of the places in which they were buried, as people built holy spaces on them, such as St. Peter's Basilica and the church of St. Denis in France (Nafte 2015). These holy places and the relics themselves created both a physical and spiritual link between the martyrs and saints and the people, and for the aristocracy they signified a way to claim authority (Walsham 2010; Nafte 2015; Pazos 2020). For the Church, relics created political, religious, and economic power, as the institution owned and controlled the tombs and relics of martyrs and saints. This fact allowed for the expansion of the Church through their translation and attracted pilgrims and their donations (Castello 2019). This paper will explore the post-

mortem agency of sacred relics by analyzing how they became religious, social, political, and economic assets to European rulers and Church members with a focus on the Middle Ages.

1.2 Late Antiquity (Second to Fourth centuries)

The lives of early Christian martyrs were fundamental to Christian culture and religion, and their bodies, along with those of other saints, were indispensable for religious veneration and the expansion and legitimization of the Church (Nafte 2015; Castello 2019). The early veneration of Christian martyrs centered around their tombs, and later churches, bringing a physical change to the landscape in which they were buried (Geary 1990; Nafte 2015). Building on the promise of resurrection, the presence of the martyrs' bodies, sacred bodies, was a physical reminder of salvation to Christian believers, thus physical proximity to them was perceived as beneficial and it encouraged the preservation of things beyond the body, such as a bloody handkerchief (Geary 1990).

With the spread of the cult of martyrs came the start of the translation of their relics, a practice which started and proliferated in late Antiquity and was a prominent practice by the fourth century (Jensen 2014). Starting in the middle of the fourth century A.D., Christian rulers looked to associate themselves with the cults of Christ and his martyrs for political purposes by collecting relics in Constantinople, and Church leaders began the transformation of martyrs' relics to further expand the Church, which was influenced by the encouragement of pilgrimages to tombs of saints (Geary 1990; Smith 2010; Jensen 2014; Castello 2019).

Such is the case of the relics of Saints Peter and Paul, used by bishop Ambrose of Milan (339 – 397 A.D.) to counter Arianism in Rome (Carlà-Uhink 2010; Castello 2019). Ambrose also used the relics of Saints Gervasius and Protasius to make a claim of Milan as not only the Imperial capital of the Western Roman Empire, but also the Christian capital, as these two saints were recognized as patrons of Milan and were associated with Ambrose's Basilica (Carlà-Uhink 2010). Additionally, Ambrose used the relics of these two saints to fight Arianism in Italy by gifting them as *"physical proof of good relations"* between his bishopric and the Christians who adhered to the *"real faith"* to create an ecclesiastical and political network of alliances and contacts between cities (Carlà-Uhink 2010:206). These early accounts showcase the use of relics

as political and ecclesiastical strategies to consolidate cities and alliances in the Late Roman Empire.

1.3 The Middle Ages (Fifth to Fifteenth centuries)

By the fifth century A.D., the bodies of early Christian martyrs were in high demand in Europe and the Middle East (Nafte 2015). During the Middle Ages, there was an eagerness for rulers to acquire as many relics as possible, especially towards the Late Middle Ages (Smith 2010; Nafte 2015). These desires to collect relics resulted in enormous collections, such as the one of Frederick the Wise of Saxony, who had almost 19,000 relics in his possession by 1520 A.D. (Walsham 2010). Starting from the sixth century, the production and trade of relics was an important activity for the European people, who collected the remains of local saintly individuals, the clergy, and nobility to make their own relics (Nafte 2015).

The Byzantine emperors of the seventh to fifteenth centuries established and perpetuated their positions as safekeepers and distributors of the most important holy relics of Christianity, those associated with the Passion of Christ and the Virgin (Klein 2004). Holding ownership of these sacred relics asserted the emperors' divine connection and bestowed a political and religious status upon his position that other Christian kings wanted, thus the use of these relics as gifts became a device to showcase the emperor's superiority over Western rulers and his control over the translation of these holy relics (Klein 2004). Similarly, the exchange of relics between the patriarchs of Constantinople and the popes in Rome became a common diplomatic practice that signaled various purposes, such as appealing to Western leaders, both political and religious (Klein 2004).

During the first half of the eighth century, Charlemagne's father started his dynasty by anointing himself King of the Franks, relying on saints' relics as an additional divine support by carefully associating his family with saints, which remained with the lineage during the reign of Charlemagne (Smith 2010). He inherited a royal collection of relics that helped him build and consolidate his empire through gifts and perhaps even keeping a smaller collection with him as he travelled as means to sacralise his presence much like King Alfred of Wessex (Smith 2010). Charlemagne's use of relics strengthened their cult through their empire, especially in Church legislation, judicial reforms, and political programs, including propaganda against the

East (Geary 1990). One of the ways in which relics were included and influenced the judicial system of the Carolingian Empire was their incorporation into the practice of oath taking, which became the norm in 803 A.D., although the use of relics for oath taking had been occurring since the Merovingian dynasty (mid-fifth century to 751 A.D.) (Geary 1990). Decades later, the holy relics in Charlemagne's collection would become one of the reasons for the rivalry of his descendants, especially the relics most closely associated with him, as they represented support, historical legitimacy, and resources (Smith 2010). The True Cross supposedly was given to Constantine I, the first Christian Roman emperor, by his mother, Helena, as a legitimization of his authority (Smith 2010). In this sense, relics of the True Cross held both religious and historical potency (Smith 2010). During the Carolingian empire, pieces of the True Cross conferred dynastic legitimacy and authority to their owners and were used in times of political turmoil to solidify the monarchs (Smith 2010).

During the eighth and ninth centuries, Carolingian churchmen also translated the relics of various Italian and Spanish martyrs to protect and strengthen the Frankish Church and solve society's illnesses, giving relics agency to respond to the crisis of their social and political systems (Geary 1990). This circulation of relics at this time happened as gift-giving between rulers and Church leaders, such as the case of Alcuin of York, the head of Charlemagne's palace school and abbot of many monasteries (Geary 1994). He requested gift relics from other rulers and churchmen across Europe, and these transactions occurred with the promise of daily prayers as countergifts (Geary 1994). Until the mid-eighth century, popes refused to distribute relics from the Roman catacombs (Jensen 2015). Such is the case of Pope Gregory I, who opposed to the translation of the relics of Saints Peter and Paul to Constantinople, as they were the remains of prestigious founding apostles that belonged to the Church of Rome (Jensen 2015). After the mid-eighth century, popes began exploiting the Roman catacombs' relics to create and maintain relationships between the Roman church and the Frankish church of the northern territories (Geary 1994). Translation of relics has been associated with monarchical pretensions by the papacy and the assertion of Rome's autonomy and supremacy in regard to Constantinople, showing the subordinance of the recipients to the pope by the ties the distribution created (Geary 1994; Walsham 2010).

Some territories in the West developed cults locally for people without the status of martyrs or saints, such is the case of Firminius, who was not a saint but a bishop, but

the people still gave his remains secondary agency by making him powerful in their eyes (Geary 1990). This was in part due to the limited number of martyrs during this period because there was little persecution of Christians during the expansion of the Carolingian Empire (Geary 1990). To counter this short supply of relics, churchmen sought the alternative of redistributing martyrs. However, they were met with the need for regulation for the translation of relics, which resulted in the Church ordering that the circulation of relics needed to be approved by a Church leader to prevent exploitation (Geary 1990). However, this did not stop ecclesiastic men from extracting relics from Rome to take them to their own towns, such as Abbot Hilduin of St. Medard of Soissons (Geary 1990). This created tensions between churchmen, as they saw pilgrims redirect their attention to Soissons, which meant their prestige was in danger, and so was one of their main sources of income (Geary 1990). The accuracy of accounts of the theft of relics is impossible to determine, but there was in fact theft of saints' relics during the ninth and tenth centuries (Geary 1990). The reasons varied, and Geary (1990) proposed six circumstances in which relic theft occurred: for the expansion of the Church through the foundation of new parishes and religious communities that needed relics; the centralization of religious devotion on the physical remains of saints; the need of relics to solve political crises through the protection of saints; religious competition between communities and parishes; the need for communal prestige through the patronage of a saint; and that possessing sacred relics could compensate for lack in other areas, such as relics increasing the income of a town that had lost money in other ways. Miracles, one of saints most notorious capacities, was only one of many qualities, and not the most important for medieval communities (Geary 1990). For them, the divine protection and providence provided by relics and saints was what mattered most, as these assured prosperity and spiritual security to the community (Geary 1990). It is interesting to note that the post-mortem agency given to saints (and their relics) by Christians included that saints could *choose* who to help and even change their minds in order to favor another community with their powers, regardless of how 'correct' prayers and offers had been (Geary 1990). The presence of sacred relics in a community had a two-fold result in the continuity of material offerings and in the fear saints' powers inspired to those bringing harm (Geary 1990). The commerce of relics was also a way in which these items circulated around Europe, and it occurred simultaneously with the processes of gift-giving and theft (Geary 1994). One of the best documented trades of relics was between Frankish churchmen and Italian merchants in the ninth century, with Roman deacon

Deusdona, who is known for his role as a merchant and trader of holy relics (Geary 1994). He negotiated the trade of the remains of Roman martyrs in the 820-830s A.D. to associates of Alcuin, mentioned in a few paragraphs above.

By the tenth century, the political meaning behind relics was well established in Europe and rulers were collecting them to assert political superiority, especially in northern Europe, where kings were consolidating dynasties and claims to territory (Smith 2010; Walsham 2010). As diplomatic gifts, relics enhanced both the giver and the receiver. Such was the case of King Athelstan in tenth-century England, who used relics to build political and religious allegiances by circulating them to and from his court (Smith 2010). Similarly, when he married his half-sister to Hugh the Great, Duke of Francia, the latter sent relics, such as pieces of the True Cross and the Crown of Thorns (Smith 2010). Although the reliability of the sources of these stories remains debatable (Smith 2010), the significance of relics in the political landscape of the Middle Ages is clear. The control and custody of sacred relics also attributed power to monastic institutions such as local churches and imbued them with divine protection and approval, and rather than diffusing the importance of the institutions, their prestige was increased (Geary 1994; Walsham 2010). Additionally, with the invasions and raids of the ninth and tenth centuries, monasteries from the Carolingian Empire used relics as a way to reconnect with the past to remain relevant in the present by tapping into the relics' power to protect them (Geary 1990). On an economic level, saints and their relics were actors that increased the State's income as they were *"vital means of inspiring the generosity of the faithful"* (Geary 1990:21). The towns that held the relics of saints also saw an increase in their economic influx through pilgrims, both local and from across the European continent, who visited their lands for their associated saints (Geary 1990). This was particularly important during the High Middle Ages, when economic productivity was low, including in monastic places, which is why the translation of relics for the purposes of raising funds became popular during the tenth century (Geary 1990). Thus, the demand for saints during the High Middle Ages was not only encouraged by kings looking to establish themselves and their monarchies, but also by Church members who desperately wanted to keep their churches relevant in their communities, although it is not farfetched to propose that pride, envy, and greed were also present in their intentions.

The eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries allowed for the widespread circulation of relics through Europe making it so that saints could now be honored from anywhere, not just their tombs and churches (Geary 1990). One of the major contributors to the spread of relics during this time was the crusades, especially the Fourth Crusade (Geary 1990). After the sack of Constantinople in 1204 AD, many Byzantine relics, which included those of the Passion of Christ and the Virgin, were taken by westerners and brought back to their own countries (Klein 2004). The looted objects were distributed among the actors of the Fourth Crusade, from leaders to subordinates, by Garnier de Trainel, Bishop of Troyes. This brought chaos to the handling of relics, as some were bring sold or showcased for status (Klein 2004). It is then that in 1215 A.D., the Fourth Lateran Council decreed that old relics could be exposed for sale or showcased outside of their reliquaries (Klein 2004). By 1240 A.D., with Baldwin II, the last Latin Emperor of Constantinople, imperial relics became commodified as the movement of relics stopped being non-commercial, prominently moved around as gifts, and this activity turned into a commercial transaction of sale and purchase given the economic crisis of the empire (Klein 2004). This is exemplified by the purchase of the relic of the Crown of Thorns by Louis IX in the late 1230s A.D. from Baldwin II in exchange for financial support to defend the empire (Klein 2004). The commodification of relics continued with the Byzantine emperors who followed, turning the distribution of relics from an imperial favor to a financial necessity and making the eastern relics lose their priceless value (Klein 2004).

1.4 Modern era (1500 – present)

The early sixteenth century saw the rise of the Reformation period, which among other things, criticized the veneration of relics (Walsham 2010). This resulted in a decline in the use of relics by the Church and the destruction of many, but during the Counter-Reformation period relics became highly relevant again as instruments for the revitalization of holiness, especially in regions that were loyal to the faith of Rome (Walsham 2010; Nafte 2015; Pazos 2020). Additionally, the Council of Trent (1545–1563) approved the veneration of saints and relics and endorsed pilgrimages (Rey Castelao 2020). Walsham (2010:22) argued that the Reformation resulted in a *"redefinition of the relic as a symbolic memento rather than a miraculous divine entity."*

The collection of relics by Philip II of Spain during the sixteenth century has been proposed both as a political and religious mechanism to secure the Habsburg dynasty through the sacralization of the lineage and the monarchy, as well as the triumph of the Catholic Church over its Protestant and Muslim counterparts in Spain (Lazure 2007). In this sense, the relics were *"an active instrument of a broader rhetoric of power"* that allowed Philip II to shape his image as the new king and to establish his authority as a Christian ruler (Lazure 2007:62). In similar fashion, the recovery and translation of new relics during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was key for the revitalization of the Church of Rome and the Holy Roman Empire, as well as the colonization and evangelization of the Americas (Walsham 2010).

Starting in the nineteenth century, the pilgrimages surrounding relics signified a source of income to the towns and cities that held their patronages (Pazos 2020). In early 2008, the body of Padre Pio, a 'Rock-Star' saint of the Catholic Church, was exhumed from his crypt and in April of the same year he was put on display in a shrine at Santa Maria delle Grazie, and later in 2010 the relics were moved to the church of Saint Pio, where thousands of faithful pilgrims visit him every year (Fisher 2008; Povoledo 2018). During the first year of display, around 750,000 people made reservations to visit the saint, which was perceived as an opportunity *"to turn religious tourism into mass tourism"* (Fisher 2008:1). In addition to the pilgrimage, Italian authorities hoped tourists would also explore the rest of the city and province and buy Padre Pio souvenirs to take home (Fisher 2008). Multiple countries, such as Ireland, The Netherlands and Switzerland, have started to revisit their saints and relics, some of which are preserved in museums (George 2020). George (2020:13) argued *"we find ourselves in the realm of exhibitions"*. As we see, in modern times relics have strongly maintained their role as an economic asset for the towns that hold their patronages, as they bring revenue from pilgrims from around the world.

Modern distinctions between 'real' and 'copy' have become more and more blurred with the rise of technologies, such as the printer, and the same has happened to the relationship between relics and their replicas (Walsham 2010). Back in Medieval times, church people reconciled the existence of *"multiple heads of John the Baptist and an improbably vast forest of splinters of the True Cross"* by treating the phenomenon as a synonymous to the gospel story where Jesus Christ multiplies bread and fishes (Walsham 2010:12). In this sense, it seems that people today care less and

less about the certifications and authenticity of relics, and more about the spiritual meaning they bring (D. Majer, *personal communication*, April 30th, 2022). For instance, during the Summer of 2019, a group of people came to the Diocese of London to create third-class relics from rosaries by brushing them against the collection of first-class relics (D. Majer, *personal communication*, April 30th, 2022). These new third-class relics did not have any authenticity certification and were given away as gifts (D. Majer, *personal communication*, April 30th, 2022). On a more religious note, during the Summer of 2018, a priest from the West Coast approached Debra Majer because he was interested in picking some relics, as he was part of a group that dealt with exorcisms (D. Majer, *personal communication*, April 30th, 2022). This priest, just like the group from the story above, was not interested in the authentication of the relics from the Diocese, because he believed were real regardless. Rather he was interested in bringing the saints' spiritual power with him, and thus was particular about which saints he wanted based on their attributes (D. Majer, *personal communication*, April 30th, 2022). Lastly, Debra Majer shared that, in her experience, relics bring a shift in people regardless of their religious or spiritual background, as she has given Catholic relics to non-believers and people from the Eastern Orthodox Church (D. Majer, *personal communication*, April 30th, 2022).

1.5 Conclusions

Relics represent both a physical and spiritual/religious connection between communities all over the world, and they have provided the foundations for many churches, parishes, and religious communities and practices. During late Antiquity, the cult of martyrs' relics centered mostly around their tombs, and their post-mortem agency, which was mainly derived from their divine potency, allowed for the rapid expansion of the Church with the normalization of the practices of transformation and translation of relics. During the Middle Ages, relics became a fundamental part of civilization and they fulfilled different societal functions depending on the communities in which they were venerated. The secondary agency given to relics drove their rise in popularity during medieval times, as they were sought after due to their religious potency to cure society's illnesses, political power to assert and maintain monarchies, and economic potential to bring income to the churches and towns in which they were housed. For medieval people, the divine protection and providence provided by relics and saints were what mattered most, as they assured prosperity and spiritual security to

the community. The presence of sacred relics in a community had a two-fold result in the continuity of material offerings and in the fear saints' powers inspired to those bringing harm. For the Church, relics were a source of religious and divine potency that aided their attempts to cure society of its ills and protect the Church, while also providing economic vitality for Christian institutions and their members. For rulers, relics were a form of political asset that allowed them to create and maintain alliances and networks with each other through diplomatic gift-giving. Additionally, sacred relics helped create divine connections between rulers and their lineages to God, which in turn allowed them to reinforce and maintain authority and their positions of power. Although theft and commerce of relics were present during the High Middle Ages, the commodification of relics by rulers in return for financial support from other rulers became common during the thirteenth century onward. In sum, over the Middle Ages, the uses of relics evolved from political and status assets in the Early and High Middle Ages, where the primary form of distribution was gift-exchange, to economic goods during the end of the Late Middle Ages onward. During modern times, the economic potency of relics has remained, not as items to be sold and purchased, but rather as attractions that bring pilgrims and visitors from all over the world, similar to museum exhibits. Additionally, relics still hold religious importance among the public and church members, as they are sought after for multiple purposes, such the spiritual powers they can channel.

1.6 Bibliography

BRITANNICA, T.E. of E. 2019. Second Council of Nicaea. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/event/Second-Council-of-Nicaea-787.

Canon 1237. 2022 *Code of Canon Law - Book IV - Function of the Church: Part III: Sacred places and times (Cann. 1205-1243)*. https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_lib4-cann1205-1243_en.html.

CARLÀ-UHINK, F. 2010. Milan, Ravenna, Rome: Some reflections on the cult of the saints and on civic politics in late Antique Italy. *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 45: 197–272.

CASTELLO, M.G. 2019. The cult of relics in the Late Roman Empire, legal aspects, in S. Cavicchioli & L. Provero (ed.) *Public Uses of Human Remains and Relics in History*, 1st ed. New York : Routledge, [2020] | Series: Routledge approaches to history ; vol 32: Routledge. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781000751864. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429295904.

CAVICCHIOLI, S. & L. PROVERO (ed.). 2019. *Public uses of human remains and relics in history*. 1st ed. New York : Routledge, [2020] | Series: Routledge approaches to history ; vol 32: Routledge. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781000751864. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429295904.

FISHER, I. 2008. Italian saint stirs up a mix of faith and commerce. *The New York Times*, April 25. https://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/25/world/europe/25padre.html?action=click&module=RelatedCoverage&pgtype=Article&region=Footer.

GEARY, P.J. 1990. *Furta sacra: thefts of relics in the central Middle Ages*. Rev. ed (Princeton Paperbacks). Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.

—. 1994. *Living with the dead in the Middle Ages*. Cornell University Press. https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.7591/9781501721632/html. https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501721632.

GEORGE, P. (ed.). 2020. Relics as historical objects. Overview, methods, and prospects, in *Relics, shrines, and pilgrimages: sanctity in Europe from late antiquity*: 11–38. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge.

JENSEN, R.M. 2014. Saints' relics and the consecration of church buildings in Rome, in J. Day & M. Vinzent (ed.) *Including papers presented at the Conferences on 'Early Roman Liturgy to 600' (14.11.2009 and 27.02.2010) at Blackfriars Hall, Oxford, UK*: 153–69 (Studia Patristica Vol. 71). Leuven: Peeters.

KLEIN, H.A. 2004. Eastern objects and Western desires: Relics and reliquaries between Byzantium and the West. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58: 283. https://doi.org/10.2307/3591389.

LAZURE, G. 2007. Possessing the sacred: monarchy and identity in Philip II's relic collection at the escorial. *Renaissance Quarterly* 60: 58–93. https://doi.org/10.1353/ren.2007.0076.

NAFTE, M. 2015. Institutional bodies: spatial agency and the dead. *History and Anthropology* 26: 206–33. https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2015.1030636.

PAZOS, A.M. (ed.). 2020. Introduction. Relics, holiness, and devotion, in *Relics, shrines, and pilgrimages: sanctity in Europe from late antiquity*: 1–10. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge.

POVOLEDO, E. 2018. Pope Francis makes pilgrimage to honor a rock-star saint. *The New York Times*, March 17. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/17/world/europe/pope-francis-padre-pio.html.

REY CASTELAO, O. (ed.). 2020. Visiting the apostle Santiago. Pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela in the 16th to 19th centuries, in *Relics, shrines, and pilgrimages: sanctity in Europe from late antiquity*: 92–108. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge.

SMITH, J.M.H. 2010. Rulers and relics c.750-c.950: Treasure on earth, treasure in heaven. *Past & Present* 206: 73–96. https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtq013.

WALSHAM, A. 2010. Introduction: Relics and remains. *Past & Present* 206: 9–36. https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtq026.

Chapter 2: The Profane as Manifest Divinity. The Transformation of Relics[1]

By Ashley C. Ward

Abstract

The fragmentary remains of St. Laurentia were translated to the London Diocese by Bishop Wash (Bishop in London from 1867 to 1889) and were subject to a macroscopic analysis at the University of Western Ontario, guided by the questions: are the remains human? and what biographical information may be evident in the remains? Most of the fragments were human, six nonhuman fragments were identified as likely belonging to a red deer. The reclassification of the nonhuman fragments from first to third class relics raises the question about the timing and nature of a relic's transformation. This will be explored through the remains of St. Laurentia.

2.1 Introduction

When resting in my palm, there is a weight to my grandmother's wedding ring that is greater than just its metal and stone. Where it touches my skin, a space is made where I, and the world, are in contact with one another and it becomes clear the ring's extra weight includes over 50 years of experiences in which I play the roles of granddaughter, daughter, niece, cousin, sister, and aunt. The ring is a relic, embodying my grandparents' and my family's relationships, crystallising their memories, and exercising agency by illuminating my place in a larger network of people across time and space (Walsham 2010; Immonen & Taavitsainen 2011; Kjellström 2017).

Memory and connection are key features of relics, in terms of the Catholic Church, allowing individuals to form a connection between themselves, the ancient Church, and God (Fr. John Comiskey, personal communication, February 9, 2022). However, these properties are not intrinsic to the object itself, but are the result of a

[1] Please note that this chapter will include images of human remains and description of the violent treatment of human remains.

transformative process where the profane becomes an embodiment of the divine – a *hierophany* (Immonen & Taavitsainen 2011; Kjellström 2017). This chapter will focus on this transformative process focusing on St. Laurentia, whose remains presently reside at the Diocese of London. According to the *Roman Martryology*, St. Laurentia lived in Ancona, Italy, and was the slave of St. Palatias during the emperorship of Diocletian. In the early Third Century A.D. St. Laurentia brought about the conversion of St. Palatias, and they were subsequently executed for being Christians. There is no further biographical information about the woman, or the treatment of their remains – analysis of the fragments may illuminate some of these unknowns.

The phenomenological perspective taken by Immonen and Taavitsainen (2011) suggests transformation begins during the life of the saint and is continuous, relying on a dialectic relationship with the believer. This process will be investigated by considering the place and relationship between martyrs and relics in the early Church. From there we will consider whether this process is continuous by discussing the implications of analysing St. Laurentia's remains, and finally we will discuss the implications of this transformation via the place of relics in Catholic law and their agency in the world.

2.2 Material and Methods

The following analysis focused on the highly fragmented bony remains of St. Laurentia (*n=430).* Fragments were sorted into two groups – those < 20mm and those > 20mm. Fragments under 20mm were not subject to further analysis due to their lack of diagnostic features. Those > 20mm were examined macroscopically paying attention to the features discussed below. Fragmentation of the remains has prevented an assessment of sex, but a portion of the pubic symphysis and medial metaphasis of the clavicle were identified which using standard methods has allowed a broad generalisation of age. Bones suspected to belong to animals were compared to specimens in the University of Western Ontario's zooarchaeological collection to narrow down the possible species.

2.2.1 Differentiating Between Human and Nonhuman Bone

While a fundamental part of any osteological work, distinguishing between animal and human bones can be a difficult task, especially when the remains are fragmentary. Bioarchaeologists rely on macroscopic and microscopic techniques; here we will focus on the macroscopic. Macroscopic analysis relies on an understanding of

how bone morphology is affected by variations in types of features, locomotion and distribution of biomechanical stress (Fig. 2-1) Therefore, anthropologists look at the orientation of various bony features, the length, width and general shape of bones or features – especially the shape of joints – as well as muscle attachment sites which tend to be more prominent in animals compared to humans (Mulhern 2016).

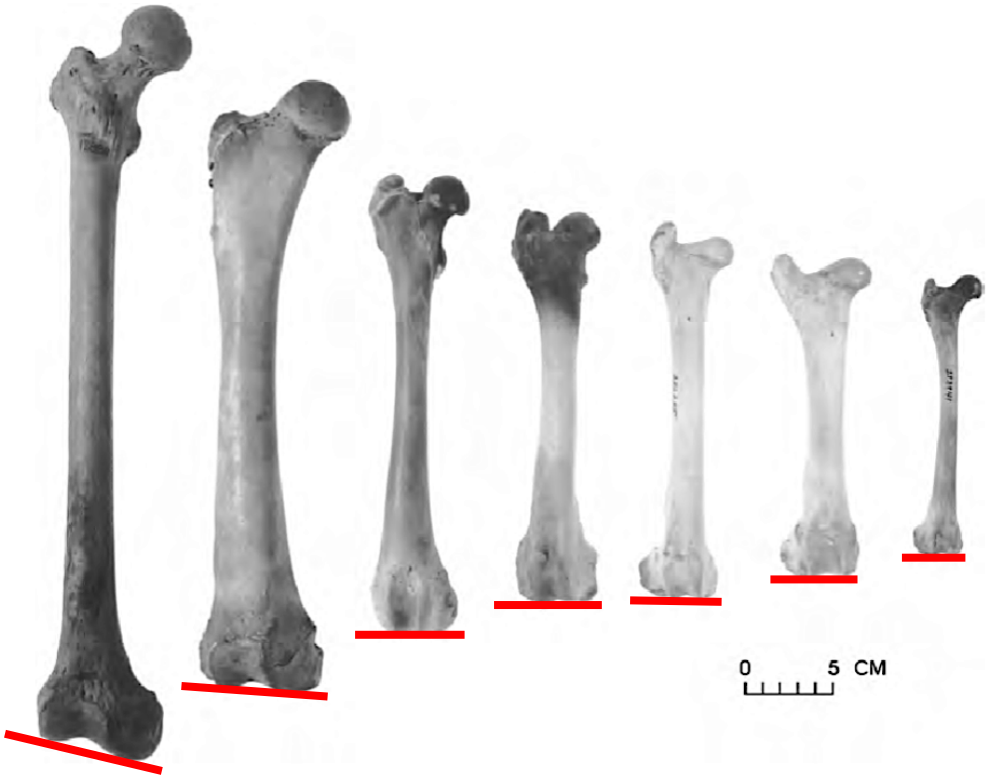


Figure 2-1: *An adult human femur as compared to various animals. The red line shows the angles created by the femoral condyles as elated to locomotion. From Mulhern (2016), reproduced from Ubelaker (1989).*

Above is an image of adult human femur compared with a black bear, large dog, hog, deer, and a small domestic dog (left to right), note the red lines that highlight the angle made at the distal end of the femur – the angle in humans is related to our bipedal locomotion.

2.3 Results

Of the 430 fragments, only 185 fragments were > 20 mm and subject to further analysis. Most fragments were human, but six fragments were identified as non-human: one fragment was from a metapodial, three were part of a cervical vertebrae and two fragments were teeth. Within the human fragments, part of the clavicle and pubic

symphysis were identified. The lack of fusion on the clavicular metaphysis, and the appearance of the pubic symphysis suggests that St. Laurentia was likely in her early 20s when she was martyred, while the 95% confidence range for the pubic symphysis indicates an age of 15-24 years old (Buikstra & Ubelaker 1994; Brooks & Suchey 1999; White & Folkens 2005). Her age is not specified in the *Martyrology,* so this adds to our picture of her martyrdom. The results of analysis and observations are in Tables 2-1 and 2-2.

Table 2-1: *Total number of fragments and breakdown of fragment size.*

Fragments	
Total	430
< 20mm	245
> 20mm	185

Table 2-2: *Analysis and identification of fragments > 20mm, both human and nonhuman, and general observations.*

Human	**Number of Fragments**
No diagnostic features	169
Proximal Tibia	3
Mandible	1
Tarsal	1
Clavicle (medial metaphyseal end)	1
Distal Femur	1
Pubic Symphysis	1
Distal Humerus	1
Glenoid Fossa	1
Nonhuman	
Teeth	2
Cervical Vertebrae	3
Metapodial	1
General Observations	
- The bones are highly fragmented varying in size from < 20mm to 50mm length and in various stages of mineralisation.	
- Some cortical fragments are large enough to identify a spiral fracture pattern, this would indicate that the bones were 'wet' – had a high collagen and moisture content making the bone more pliable – when broken. This suggests that the breaks occurred perimortem or shortly thereafter during the post-	

mortem period prior to the decomposition of the collagen matrix (Wieberg & Wescott 2008).

- The cortical and trabecular bone of several fragments are heterogenous in colour, the cortical being a darker greyish brown while the trabecular bone is a lighter beige-caramel colour. There are also fragments where the outer cortical bone is the same colour as the bone exposed by the fracture. The presence of both heterogenous and homogenous colouring suggests fractures occurred at different points of time, the former at or close to the time of death and the latter more recently (cf. Wieberg & Wescott 2008).

Of the fragments with no diagnostic features:

- One fragment – likely part of a long bone – has transverse striations (~2mm wide x ~10mm long) on the surface.
- One fragment – mainly trabeculae with small portion of cortical – is burnt. The trabeculae transitions from a mainly beige white-beige on one side, to a mainly white white-beige on the other side and towards the cortical. On cortical half is a grey brown while the other half is white beige in colour. This suggest that only a portion of this bone was exposed to fire, the beige white-beige portion consistent with 'untreated bone' while the white white-beige and grey-brown colours are consistent with bones exposed to temperatures of 100°C and 200°C, respectively (Greiner *et al.* 2019). It is unclear whether this is a fragment of St. Laurentia as there are no other burnt fragments, nor are there any signs of heat exposure on any of the fragments. This would suggest this fragment is not part of St. Laurentia, but without access to the fragments currently in alter stones around the Diocese this conclusion cannot be confirmed. This element could be an accidental inclusion from a Roman cremation.

Clavicle:

- Metaphyseal face is pitted and there is no evidence of fusion starting, which is consistent with the other age indicators.

Pubic Symphysis:

- The face has prominent billowing with distinct ridges and furrows. There is no evidence of rim formation. Age (15-24 years) determined following Brooks & Suchey (1999).

2.4 Discussion

2.4.1 Transformation

Within the Christian tradition, the transformation of a person's remains into a relic, or relics, involves the manifestation of the divine in what is a profane object. In

doing so a space is created where the traditional conceptual barriers are broken and Heaven and Earth meet (Brown 1981; Kjellström 2017). Transformation involves two types of transcendence. Firstly, transformation results in the elimination of the body's liminal period. Due to their connection with God, Saints, upon their death, immediately passed from earth to heaven, bypassing the period of 'silent and inglorious sleep' between their body's physical death and its resurrection at the Last Judgement (Brown 1981; Fox 1986; Kyle 1998). Secondly, saints transcended the fears related to somatic resurrection. Concerns about getting a proper, i.e. whole, burial was a result of idea that abuse done to the body in death would be manifested in the person's resurrected body at the Last Judgement (Kyle 1998). In the case of relics, each fragment, the manifestation of the divine meant that even when physically divided, the "*grace remains undivided"* (Immonen & Taavitsainen 2011: 152). Each fragment of an individual thus represents them *pars pro toto* – in their entirety (Walsham 2010; Kjellström 2017). Finally, transformation involves the imparting of the relic with *potential* or *virtus,* conferred by God that allows them, and the things close to them to interact with the world in ways that confirm the saint's connection with the divine, such as the testimony of Sister M. Cecilia, "*On March 13th, 1880… I was suddenly and miraculously cured of hip disease, the crutch left at St. Laurentia's Shrine bearing testimony to the foregoing fact"* (Sister M. Cecilia 1899).

2.4.2 When Does Transformation Begin?

Examining when this transformation process begins involves considering the role and nature of martyrdom during the Church's early history – it is a question of whether the transformation process begins with the recognition of an individual's connection with God (through formal canonisation or informal acclamation), or whether it begins during the individual's life (Kjellström, 2017; Fr. John Comiskey, personal communication, April 6, 2022).

St. Laurentia was martyred by "*fatigue and ill-treatment"* near Ancona, Italy during Diocletian's 'Great Persecution' (303 to 312-313 AD). During this period several edicts were issued that resulted in the destruction of churches, social and political exclusion of Christians, the incarceration of the clergy and amnesty upon them by sacrificing to the Roman Gods and the requirement that *"all inhabitants of the empire sacrifice to the Gods upon pain of death"* (Catholic Church & Gibbons 1916; de Ste. Croix 1954: 77). Even prior to rescript, Christians were regarded with suspicion

and hostility during the first centuries A.D., often being charged with *sacrilegium* and *maiestas* – sacrilege and treason – not because of their beliefs, but due to their abstention from the quotidian rituals of the games, sacrifice and the emperor cult (Fox 1986; Kyle 1998). Consequently, Christians were *noxii,* public enemies, with a hatred of humankind, and in threatening *pax decorum*, "*a [person] guilty of every crime, the enemy of the gods, emperors, laws, morals, [and] of all Nature together"* (Kyle 1998: 244). In short, while not directly persecuted for their beliefs, Christian beliefs and practices were intrinsic to their persecution, which brings up questions about the nature of the body, normal Roman burial practices, the nature of martyrdom, and the relationship between the three.

2.4.2.1 Normal Roman Burial Practices

While there was cultural, geographic and temporal variation in Roman burial practices there are a few general points surrounding the treatment of the body that are pertinent to this discussion. Firstly, the bodies of the dead were buried outside of the city as people feared that their polluted state would harm the sacred spaces within the city walls (Davies 1999). Amongst Romans both cremation and burial were accepted forms of disposal and it was thought that in Rome, cremation was the predominant form of corpse treatment by the end of the first century. However, for bodies that were buried, they were first laid out, washed, equipped with Charon's coin before being brought to the cemetery and laid into the grave, with handfuls of dirt tossed onto the deceased by family members (Davies 1999; Graham 2006). Davies (2006) noted that there was limited distinction between Roman, Jewish and Christian burials prior to the Fifth Century when Christians began intramural burials. Before this all dead were interred extramurally. Both Christians and Jews abstained from cremation, burying their dead in catacombs, but these spaces were highly decorated by Christians with biblical motifs. The important theme for Roman society *en masse* was a concern for physical bodily integrity as it relates to spiritual corporeal manifestation in the various conceptions of the afterlife.

2.4.2.2 The Body

As intimated above, Christians had a radically different view of the body from others in the Roman Empire, including the Jews for whom the uncleanliness of the grave was enshrined in Mosaic Law (Fox 1986). In contrast, the body is a primary focus

of Christianity as both a symbol of hope, 'sleeping' until the final transformation of their physical remains, but also as a means of interacting with and sensing both the physical and spiritual worlds – this is enshrined in the story of Saint 'Doubting' Thomas for whom touching Jesus' wounds provided a tangible means of affirming his faith (Fox 1986; Wood-Gagnon 2019).

Thus, the body can be understood as two intertwined entities, the soul – the spiritual body uncorrupted by disobedience – and the physical one, which, while mortal, is necessary for personhood, the joint action of the two producing the self via our interactions with the physical and spiritual world (Wood-Gagnon 2019). Christian practice is an embodied practice as seen through periods of waiting, such as Lent or Advent, and rites such as the Eucharist where adherents consume the transubstantiated body and blood of Christ in the bread and wine. Self-flagellation is also demonstrative of this point. This practice brings the individual's physical body into a realm of pain and suffering that allows them to hold a special communion with Christ and the martyrs and illuminates a path towards forgiveness and grace (Wood-Gagnon 2019). The embodiment of practice leads Fox to argue that whether or not it is acknowledged, behind every martyrdom is the self-sacrifice of Jesus. Martyrs, through their confession of faith embody the "*example and promise of Jesus, who had gone passively to his death, refusing to explain to his judges the truth, in his view, of his mission*" (Fox 1986: 830).

As it relates to relics, the conjunction of the two entities allows physical bodies to act a "*temples and instruments of the Holy Spirit"* (Wood-Gagnon 2019: 24). People's physical remains can manifest their relationship with the divine through the embodiment of their actions, experiences and relationships with others. For St. Laurentia, her conversion of St. Palatias and their martyrdom – an immediate manifestation of her connection with God - was embodied in her physical remains through her death and subsequent disposal.

2.4.2.3 Martyrdom

The concept of Martyrdom was not new in St. Laurentia's time, and can be found in Jewish literature, inspired by the Maccabean revolt against King Antiochus IV (173-164 B.C.) where the heroes became idealised as martyrs for their adherence to, and observance of, the law. Importantly, under this conception, the individual's 'sentence' is

coincident with their death, and as ideas of polluted bodies were enshrined in Mosaic law before the idea of the 'immortal martyr,' veneration of Jewish martyrs was not part of public worship in the synagogue, although memorials to heroes – their bodies elsewhere – may have been incorporated into private worship (Fox 1986). Kyle (1989) discussed that in the Second Century A.D., there was a shift in the meaning of martyr among Christians from 'witness' to 'dying for a cause.' For Christians, martyrdom was a process that began with sentencing and ended in death due to their refusal to take part in pagan rituals (Fox 1986). The time between sentencing and death created a space where individuals could be reimagined as fighters in supernatural combat where victory over Satan was directly tied to a fervent and consistent confession of faith (Fox 1986).

The Christian concept of Martyrdom is interesting not only for how it is linked to perceptions of the body, discussed above, but also for how it exemplifies the embodied nature of Christian practice. As commented previously, the Romans did not persecute Christians based on their beliefs, but because their practices were seen to undercut *pax decorum,* the punishment for which was a public death – whether that be in the arena or by other means (Kyle 1998). The inextricable nature of belief and practice meant that a persecution of practice was also a persecution of belief, therefore normal modes of punishment could embody spiritual warfare over temptation and doubt. Furthermore, this connection would suggest that persecution did not end with the martyr's death, but extended to the treatment of their remains by the Roman State and the collection of their remains by fellow Christians.

The presence of spiral fractures among the remains of St. Laurentia suggest there is more to her martyrdom than is recorded in the *Martyrology,* and these fractures are illustrative of the extension of persecution to after the martyr's death. Spiral fractures occur during death or shortly thereafter, when the higher levels of collagen and moisture make the bone more plastic (Wieberg & Wescott 2008). It is likely, in accordance with the reported events of St. Laurentia's martyrdom and the nature of punishment for being *noxii*, that these fractures occurred post-mortem. For being *noxii,* the fate of a martyr's body was often at the discretion of the magistrate and generally involved a high degree of desecration (Fox 1986). Describing the treatment of Christian remains in Lyon, Eusebuis described how after their death, the bodies of martyrs were thrown to dogs, guarded day and night by individuals who were unmoved by begging or bribes. After 6 days of exposure, the remains were then collected, burned and the ashes

were deposited in the Rhone (Kyle 1998). Fox (1986) commented on how the Jews in 150 A.D. kept the body of Polycarp to prevent Christian from creating a cult around it, and Kyle (1998) further commented on how the bodies of some buried martyrs were exhumed and thrown into the ocean. The destruction of remains was in line with the Empire's treatment of perceived threats and religious contaminations. Simultaneously, this treatment also reflected the Roman's concern with Christian beliefs about the resurrection and the rise of martyr cults, suggesting there was an understanding on behalf of the Roman State, whether it was recognised or not that martyrdom resulted in some sort of transformation that elevated a martyr's status to being 'very special dead,' (Brown 1981; Fox 1986; Kyle 1998).

2.4.2.4 Transformation – Conclusion

The embodiment of Christian belief in practice means that the physical body can manifest and reflect a person's relationship with the divine, and would suggest there is credence to Immonen & Traavitsainen's (2011) perspective that transformation begins during the saint's life, or at least during their martyrdom. The physical body is shaped by its interactions with the world, these interactions result in the sedimentation – the embodiment – of these experiences which are then present in each new interaction (Immonen & Taavitsainen 2011). This suggests two things: firstly, transformation begins during the saint's life as their physical body must interact with God in order to manifest their close connection; and secondly, while recognition is not necessary for transformation, it is key for legitimising the divine nature of the relic – explored below.

2.4.3 Is Transformation a Continuous Process?

Figure 2-2: *Image of the vertebral frament among remains of St. Laurentia (left – brown color) in comparison to vertebra of an elk (Cervus elaphus canadensis, right), a sub-species of red deer (C. elaphus).*

The size, elongated body and elliptical shape of the inferior vertebral facets indicated that the bone illustrated here was likely the remains of a red deer that were found amongst the bones of St. Laurentia (Fig. 2-2). Finding animal remains among human relics is not unprecedented. Mouse bones joined the remains of St. Peter the Apostle at an unknown point and when found, due to their proximity to the saint's bones, they were classified as third-class relics and placed in their own reliquaries (Fr. John Comiskey, personal communication, April 6, 2022). The change in class that these nonhuman

remains will undergo would suggest that transformation is an ongoing process, and it could be argued that the process recognizes a relic's 'relic-hood' – via its *potentia* or *virtus*. This idea ignores the nature of relic classes. The mouse bones are not considered to be a 'lesser relic' as class refers to the nature of the object rather than its power or perceived value (Fr. John Comiskey, personal communications, April 6, 2022). This suggests that transformation and legitimation (or authentication, discussed in Chapter Three) are in fact two distinct processes and that transformation is not ongoing, as once divinity is manifest, it cannot be unmanifest.

2.4.4 Transformation and Agency

The tactile nature of relics, that they create physical, mental and emotional connections between the past and present, the human and the divine, brings us to the topic of agency. Post-mortem agency describes how remnants of the dead have active roles in the world of the living (Crandall & Martin 2014). The agency of relics is exemplified in stories of healing such as that given by Sister M. Cecilia given in section 2.4.1 (Sister M. Cecilia 1899), suggesting that agency is in fact an aspect of transformation. The reciprocal relationship between relics and people was also highlighted by Kjellström (2017), who noted that a community's experience with a relic strengthens the legitimacy of the relics themselves and subsequently the power and agency of the relics themselves. This brings us to a consideration of memory and how it relates to the agency of relics.

As vehicles of memory, thus delaying oblivion, relics are threatened by forgetting (Walsham 2010). After a CBC article regarding the relics in care of the London Diocese, Debra Martin was inundated with calls from people requesting relics of 'Rockstar' saints such as St. Francis of Assisi, or ones with whom the supplicants had a personal connection (Debra Martin, personal communication, January 17, 2022). Fr. John Comiskey (personal communication, April 6, 2022) commented that the remains of St. Laurentia have no special meaning, i.e. above their meaning as a point of connection between the early and present Church, to the Diocese of London, despite their translation to Canada during an important period of Diocese's expansion. These two experiences suggest that the memory of relics operates at two distinct levels. Firstly, there is a social memory that is tied to people's individual experiences and their connection with specific saints. Stephens (Chapter 5, this volume) discusses the agency

that is tied to social memory. Secondly, operating at a deeper level is the institutionally ingrained form of remembrance that is manifested in works such as the *Roman Martyrology* and the numerous saintly feast days celebrated in the Church calendar and acts. This suggests that the amount of agency a relic will exercise is not tied to transformation, but to memory.

2.5 Conclusion

Transformation is the initial stage in the life of a relic. As explored through remains of St. Laurentia, this is a process that begins during the saint's life through the embodiment of their connection with the divine and is further brought forth through their martyrdom. The process of transformation belies two fundamentally human aspects of death. Firstly, the saints transcend the liminal period between death and the last judgement, and secondly, they transcend the fears related to somatic resurrection, as each fragment is *pars pro toto.* This second point is especially important in relation to the treatment of martyrs' remains by the Roman State both during and after death. For St. Laurentia, this involved her death via exposure and the subsequent desecration of her remains. This last point was previously unknown but is evident due to the presence of spiral fractures in some fragments.

Transformation is a finite process that cannot be undone. The identification of red deer bone is similar to the identification of mouse bones among the remains of St. Peter the apostle. The deer bones, like the mouse's, will be redesignated as a 'third-class' relic – a label that denotes type, not value – and will be removed from St. Laurentia's remains. Importantly, the deer bones are still 'relics', acting as objects of memory that connects the past and present Church.

Finally, the legitimation of relics by community experience is related to memory and the agency of the relics rather than their transformation. The relationship between memory and agency is interesting, both as are intrinsically linked, and the former operates on two levels – the social and institutional – suggesting that while transformation is irreversible, the agency of relic may be tied to other, external, factors.

2.6 Bibliography

BROOKS, S. & J.M. SUCHEY. 1999. Skeletal age determination based on the os pubis: A comparison of the Acsádi-Nemeskéri and Suchey-Brooks methods. *Human Evolution* 5: 227–38.

BROWN, P. 1981. *The cult of the saints: Its rise and function in Latin Christianity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

BUIKSTRA, J.E. & D.H. UBELAKER. 1994. *Standards for data collection from human skeletal remains*. Fayetteville, AR: Arkanas Archaeological Survey Research Series 44.

CATHOLIC CHURCH & J. GIBBONS. 1916. *The Roman martyrology*. Baltimore: J. Murphy Co.

CRANDALL, J.J. & D.L. MARTIN. 2014. The bioarchaeology of postmortem agency: Integrating archaeological theory with human skeletal remains. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 24: 429–35.

DAVIES, J. 1999. *Death, burial and rebirth in the religions of antiquity*. London: Taylor & Francis Group.

DE STE. CROIX, G.E.M. 1954. Aspects of the 'great' persecution. *The Harvard Theological Review* 47: 75–113.

FOX, R.L. 1986. *Pagans and Christians*. London: Penguin Books.

GRAHAM, E.-J. 2006. *The burial of the urban poor in Italy in the late Roman Republic and early Empire*. Archaeopress Publishing.

GREINER, M., A. RODRÍGUEZ-NAVARRO, M.F. HEINIG, K. MAYER, B. KOCSIS, A. GÖHRING, A. TONCALA, G. GRUPE & W.W. SCHMAHL. 2019. Bone incineration: An experimental study in mineral structure, colour and crystaline structure. *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* 25: 507–18.

IMMONEN, V. & J.-P. TAAVITSAINEN. 2011. Finger of a saint, thumb of a priest: medieval relics in the Diocese of Turku. *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* 23: 141–73.

KJELLSTRÖM, A. 2017. Tangible traces of devotion: The post-mortem life of relics. *Current Swedish Archaeology* 25: 151–75.

KYLE, D.G. 1998. *Spectacles of death in ancient Rome*. London, New York: Taylor & Francis Group.

MULHERN, D.M. 2016. Differentiating human from nonhuman skeletal remains, in S. Blau & D.H. Ubelaker (ed.) *Handbook of Forensic Anthropology and Archaeology*: 197–212. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.

SISTER M. CECILIA. 1899. Testimony of Sister M. Cecilia. Document on file at the Diocese of London.

WALSHAM, A. 2010. Introduction: Relics and remains. *Past and Present* 206: 9–36.

WHITE, T.D. & P.A. FOLKENS. 2005. *The human bone manual*. Academic Press.

WIEBERG, D.A.M. & D.J. WESCOTT. 2008. Estimating the timing of long bone fractures: Correlation between the postmortem interval, bone moisture content, and blunt force trauma fracture characterstics. *Journal of Forensic Science* 53: 1028–34.

WOOD-GAGNON, S. 2019. *The hearts of relics: Catholic relics, affect, and the heart of Brother André*. Masters Thesis, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, University of Regina.

Chapter 3: An Analysis of Catholic Relics and the Archaeological Record through Physical and Subjective Authentication.

By Sydney G. Durham

Abstract

There is a two-fold paradigm in the authentication of relics and objects from the archaeological record, through physical written documentation and subjective means that include individual agency, replication, and exhibition. The process of authenticating reliquary collections is governed through authoritative doctrine and Canon Law. Similarly, the archaeological record maintains its authenticity through the lens of multi-disciplinary action in the context of conservation and preservation. However, subjectivity in the authority of both relics and archaeological remains, such as those from the St. Winefride's collection, King Tutankhamen's facsimile and the Turin Shroud (explored here) which demonstrate the agency and meaning that can be attached to objects despite a lack of physical authentication.

3.1 Introduction

The act of understanding and defining authentication is quite immense and often dependent on the medium to which it refers. In general, authenticity refers to the original, whether through means of ownership, materiality, or form (Van Leeuwen 2001: 392). Authenticity can also refer to "representation", something revered from its original with authority to call it authentic (Van Leeuwen 2001: 293). This chapter attempts to look at authenticity in its entirety, and at the similarities and differences between relics and the archaeological record. For the sake of this paper, "authenticity" has been divided into a two-fold definition in an attempt to understand the various contexts that revolve around the authentication processes.

"Physical authentication" is used to refer to authentication through unyielding authoritative means such as written documentation and respective laws and guidelines. The authentication of Catholic relics is strictly governed by Canon Law that outlines rules and regulations in the process of authentication. For the Catholic Church, the importance of relic authentication is significant, as it acts to maintain the integrity of the veneration of relics on account of Sainthood (D. Majer, personal communication, March 22, 2022). Since the thirteenth century A.D., the legal processes of the canonization of Saints have been formalized, which led to a drastic turn in the techniques and laws involving authenticity (Campbell 2012: 166-167). The examples of three relics in the Diocese of London Collection – the True Cross (1782), St. Aloysius Gonzaga (1959), and St. Simon Stock (2001) – display written authentication that accompanies the reliquary collection and the uniform continuation of authentication processes across numerous centuries (Diocese of London 2022). There are parallels in the ways the archaeological field has discussed and maintained authentication under the umbrella of conservation and preservation (Odegaard & Cassman 2014). For the archaeological record, "authenticity" has been challenged throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century by multiple authorities as the "authenticity" of the original object, remain or kind.

Secondly, "Authentication of the Subjective" has been used to refer to the context in which aspects of meaning (e.g., relic and object visitation, emotion, conservation, and preservation, etc.) can be analyzed in the absence of physical authentication. This term stems from Lindholm's (2002:335) "subjectivity of the seeker", which has been used as an anthropological paradigm to describe an individual's connection to various ideas, objects, or concepts through the lens of authenticity (Lindholm 2002). To explore authenticity, one must understand the tendency of human nature through fascination and feeling to relate to objects whether they have been authenticated. In the examples of St. Winefride unauthenticated relic display (see 3.2.2 below), King Tutankhamen's burial facsimile (3.3.2 below) and the controversy of the Turin Shroud (3.3.3 below), parallels of subjective authentication are found within both relics and the archaeological record.

3.2 Authentication Processes of Relics from the Catholic Church

3.2.1 Canon Law and Written Authentication

There are multiple components that involve the authentication of relics within the Catholic Church. All processes of authenticity related to relics are governed through Canon Law, which outlines vital regulations such as authoritative figures involved in authentication and how relics can be authenticated (Vatican Canon Law 2022). The authenticity of relics is immensity important to the integrity of veneration and collection of reliquaries. Canon Law dictates that,

> *"Can. 1187: It is permitted to reverence through public veneration only those servants of God whom the authority of the Church has recorded in the list of the saints or the blessed.* (Vatican Archive: Canon Law 1187)".

The importance of authenticity not only ensures that the relic pertains to a saint recognized and canonized by the Church, but it maintains the ability to venerate them. Under the scope of Canon Law, veneration may only be given to canonized Saints and the authenticated relics that contain their remains and/or contents (Vatican 2017).

In conjunction with Canon Law, the next authoritative body is the *Congregation for the Cause of Saints* governed by the Vatican, that oversees both the instructions for relic authenticity as well as the means of canonization. Under the umbrella of these two authoritative bodies, authenticity is outlined through the means of ecclesiastical individuals allowed to guarantee authenticity and the significance of handling authentic relics (Vatican 2017). In the Instruction "Relics in The Church: Authenticity and Preservation" (Vatican: Rome 2017), the specific procedures were recently updated in the handling and recognition of authentic relics. The Congregation for the Cause of Saints strictly states,

> "*The body of the Blessed and of the Saints or notable parts of the bodies themselves or the sum total of the ashes obtained by their cremation are traditionally considered significant relics. Diocesan Bishops, Eparchs, those equivalent to them in law and the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints reserve for these relics a special care and vigilance to assure their preservation and veneration and to avoid abuses. They are, therefore, preserved in properly*

sealed urns and are kept in places that guarantee their safety, respect their sacredness, and encourage their cult" (Vatican 2017: *Introduction*)

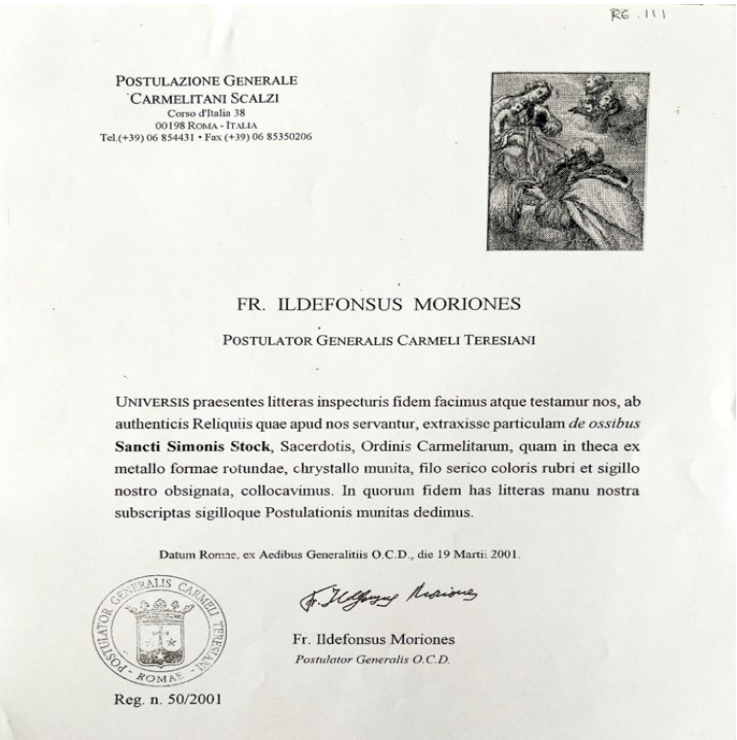
Those outlined as individuals able to guarantee authenticity are restricted to Postulators, Diocesan Bishops, Eparchs, and those defined through Canon Law as notable ecclesiastical individuals (Vatican 2017: Article 23). The Postulator, who oversees the canonization and beatification for sainthood, will sign for authenticity of a particular relic (Vatican 2017: Article 23). The importance of authenticity coincides with both the translation of relics as well as the insurance of canonized sainthood. Therefore, authenticity in the context of relics is a multi-disciplinary task that aims to maintain the proper handling and preservation of relics (Vatican 2017). As per "Part III: Pilgrimage of the Relics" of the Congregation for the Cause of Saints, relics

"… undergo checks along the process of establishing the relic as valid through the process of pilgrimage when it is removed from its urn, all accompanying documents are further examined to ensure its body and identity match its accompanying document…" (Vatican 2017: Article 35).

It is vital to maintain all accompanying written documents that detail the ecclesiastical figures who signed off on authenticity, which saint the relic belongs to and all other necessary information (e.g., which class of relic (Type 1, 2, 3), date of authentication, contents of the Saint imbedded in the relics, issue number, etc.) (D. Majer, personal communication, March 22, 2022). The authenticity of relics is intertwined with both the honor of sainthood and the integrity of documentation.

With reference to the storing of relics, authenticating documents are housed in archival files and given matching issue numbers from each document to relic (Diocese of London, 2022). On each document, the name of the saint, authenticating individuals – such as (Figure 3-1.) Fr. Ildefonsus Moriones, the General Postulator -, date of authentication, and contents of the relic in Latin (D. Majer, personal communication, March 22, 2022). For example, a part of the authentication document of the relic of St. Simon Stock (Figure 3-1), a brief translation reads,

"To all who inspect the present letter, we make it true and testify that we have extracted a piece from the bones of St. Simon Stock, priest of the Order of Carmelites,



POSTULAZIONE GENERALE
CARMELITANI SCALZI
Corso d'Italia 38
00198 ROMA - ITALIA
Tel.(+39) 06 854431 • Fax (+39) 06 85350206

FR. ILDEFONSUS MORIONES

POSTULATOR GENERALIS CARMELI TERESIANI

UNIVERSIS praesentes litteras inspecturis fidem facimus atque testamur nos, ab authenticis Reliquiis quae apud nos servantur, extraxisse particulam *de ossibus* **Sancti Simonis Stock**, Sacerdotis, Ordinis Carmelitarum, quam in theca ex metallo formae rotundae, chrystallo munita, filo serico coloris rubri et sigillo nostro obsignata, collocavimus. In quorum fidem has litteras manu nostra subscriptas sigilloque Postulationis munitas dedimus.

Datum Romae, ex Aedibus Generalitiis O.C.D., die 19 Marti 2001.

Fr. Ildefonsus Moriones
Postulator Generalis O.C.D.

Reg. n. 50/2001

Figure 3-1. *Authentication Document of St. Simon Stock (Diocese of London, 2022: Scanned March 22, 2022).*

Figure 3-2. *Frontal Image of St. Simon Stock Relic, label, and bone fragment (Diocese of London, 2022).*

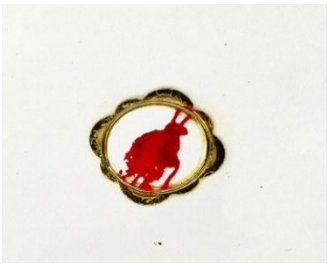


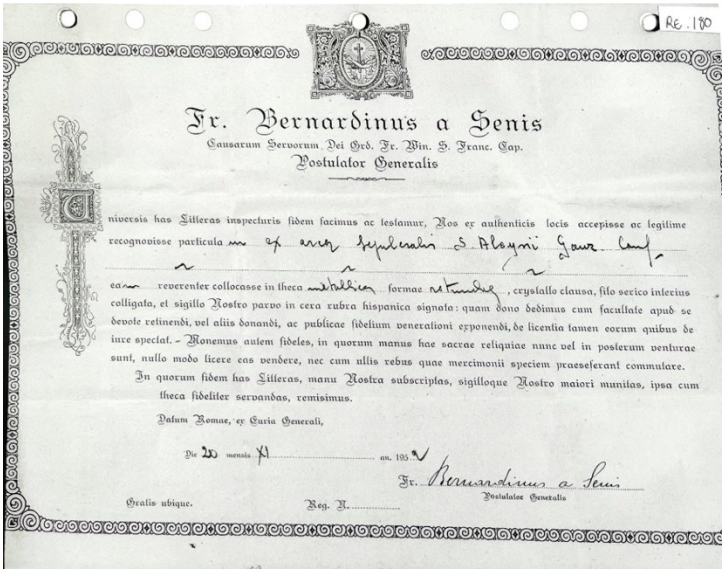
Figure 3-3. *Dorsal Image of St. Simon Stock Relic, wax seal and theca (Diocese of London, 2022).*

from the authentic Relics which are preserved among us …" (Cassell 1968; Google Translate 2022).

The authentication document contains a stamped seal of authentication which matches the wax seal given to the back side of the relic (D. Majer, personal communication, March 22, 2022). The seal contained two thin pieces of thread called the "theca" (Figure 3-3.); if the theca is broken or the wax seal does not match its accompanying document, the relic is no longer considered authentic (D. Majer, personal communication, March 22, 2022). Each relic contains the saint's name and contents – for example, "*de ossibus*" is the bone fragment in Figure 3-2. – which must match the document of authentication (D. Majer, personal communication, March 22, 2022). The process of authentication, as mentioned by Debra Majer, Archivist at the Diocese of London, has been a uniform process since before the eighteenth century in comparing some of the collection's oldest relics – such as the 1782 True Cross relic (Figure 3-4. and 3-5.) and the 1959 St. Aloysius Gonzaga relic (Figure 3-6., 3-7., and 3-8.). Individuals attend the Diocese and other reliquary collections for an array of reasons pertaining to the Saint's attributes (D. Majer, personal communication, March 22, 2022). The physical authenticity of relics is vital for their veneration, it is preserved

across time, and the connection of individuals to the attributes of Sainthood, outlined by Catholic doctrine and Canon Law.

Figure 3-5. *True Cross frontal scan, 1782 (Diocese of London 2022).*



Fr. Bernardinus a Senis
Causarum Servorum Dei Ord. Fr. Min. S. Franc. Cap.
Postulator Generalis

universis has Litteras inspecturis fidem facimus ac testamur, Nos ex authenticis locis accepisse ac legitime recognovisse particula ex ara Sepulcrali S. Aloysii Gonz. Conf.

eam reverenter collocasse in theca argentea formae rotundae, crystallo clausa, filo serico interius colligata, et sigillo Nostro parvo in cera rubra hispanica signata: quam dono dedimus cum facultate apud se devote retinendi, vel aliis donandi, ac publicae fidelium veneration exponendi, de licentia tamen eorum quibus de iure spectat. - Monemus autem fideles, in quorum manus hae sacrae reliquiae nunc vel in posterum venturae sunt, nullo modo licere eas vendere, nec cum ullis rebus quae mercimonii speciem praeseferant commutare.

In quorum fidem has Litteras, manu Nostra subscriptas, sigilloque Nostro maiori munitas, ipsa cum theca fideliter servandas, remisimus.

Datum Romae, ex Curia Generali,

Die 20 mensis XI an. 1959

Fr. Bernardinus a Senis
Postulator Generalis

Gratis ubique. Reg. N.

Figure 3-6 *St. Gonzaga Relic, Document of Authentication 1959 (Diocese of London 2022).*

Figure 3-7 (Left) *St. Gonzaga Relic, frontal scan 1959 (Diocese of London 2022).*

Figure 3-8 (Right). *St. Gonzaga Relic, dorsal scan, theca and wax seal intact, 1959 (Diocese of London 2022).*

3.2.2 Authenticity of the Subjective: St. Winefride Collection (Holywell, Wales)

In north Wales, the St. Winefride well and shrine, accompanied by a museum, have generated much discussion and visitation for many years (Stumpe 2009: 64). The museum and well comprise a pilgrimage site for the 1st class relic of St. Winefride, offered for veneration and services in the museum collection (Stumpe 2009: 64). The collection also contains remains of the True Cross and undocumented martyrs (Stumpe 2009:67). St. Winefride, a virgin martyr from the seventh century A.D., was said to have been beheaded and later restored to fulfill a life as a nun (Stumpe 2009: 67).

In the nineteenth century A.D., her remains were identified, she later canonized as a saint, and her relics were given to the museum in Holywell, Wales to be put on display (Stumpe 2009:69). The museum also contains other known relics of saints preserved in glass desktop cases, such as St. Thomas Cantilupe, the Bishop of Hereford and several unauthenticated seventeenth century A.D. martyrs whose identity has been lost (Stumpe 2009: 70). While the veneration of unauthenticated relics is technically prohibited (Vatican Archive, Can. 1187), displays of both authenticated and unauthenticated relics are frequently visited by the public and given gifts of prayer, touching, hymns, candles, and flowers (Stumpe 2009: 71, 74). Due to the popular history of martyrs, Stumpe (2009) suggests that there is virtually no difference in the visitation, preservation, and veneration of both displayed authentic and "unauthentic" relics, despite their respective accompanying documentation and authenticating contents (e.g., theca and wax seal) on visual display (Stumpe 2009: 75). While the cases of the True Cross and St. Thomas Cantilupe are on higher display (Figure 3.9.), the display and remains of the unknown unauthenticated martyrs are given almost identical care (Figure 3.10) (Stumpe 2009: 73). The consistent visitation, similar veneration of from the public and preservation of both authenticated and unauthenticated relics from St. Winefride's Well demonstrate the lack of distinction between the two in the mind of the general public (Stumpe 2009: 77). As mentioned by Lindholm (2002), the increasing curiosity and self-needs within faith allow people to find sacredness in multiple avenues of relics and objects pertaining to the Catholic Church (Lindholm 2002: 337).

Figure 3-9 *Display of authenticated relic of St. Thomas Cantilupe. Photograph from St. Winefride's Parish Well Committee, September 2007. (Stumpe 2009: 73).*

Figure 3-10 *Display of unauthenticated relics of unknown martyrs in museum front room. Photograph from St. Winefride's Parish Well Committee, September 2007. (Stumpe 2009: 73).*

Lindholm states there is a "… general desire for the experience of the divine…", which, through the veneration of relics and death of saints, individuals may find the agency within authentication to attach their faith too, as demonstrated in the collection at St. Winefride's well (Lindholm 2002: 337).

Interestingly, this concept of the agency of faith can further be applied in the analysis and display of the True Cross. The True Cross, believed to have been remains from the cross that Jesus Christ died on, is given special care and regard above other saintly relics (D. Majer, personal communication, March 22, 2022). It arose with the foundations of relic veneration during what Meacham *et al.* (1983) described, "the 326 expeditions to Jerusalem of Constantine's mother and distribution of shavings of wood throughout the empire" (Meacham *et al.* 1983: 292). However, it is not guaranteed for certain that the relics throughout history have all contained the remains of *the* cross of Christ (Figure 3-5.) but is recognized through Canon Law and defined ecclesiastical figures that it may be authenticated (Stumpe 2009: 66). Therefore, despite this lack of certain authenticity, is it still given physical documentation (Stumpe 2009: 71). Physical contact and veneration to both the unauthenticated martyrs at St. Winefride, and the True Cross at Holywell and Diocese of London demonstrate the ability to attach significant meaning to these genres of relics.

3.3 Authenticity in the Archaeological Record

3.3.1 Authentication through Conservation and Preservation: Discussions in Archaeology

Authenticity within the scope of archaeology should be understood in the context of conservation and preservation. Much discussion has been given to the distinct definition of the "authentic", previously referred to as material conditions of objects and remains during the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries A.D. (Odegaard & Cassman 2014: 702). Today, "authenticity" is defined in conjunction with new techniques, such as CT scanning, carbon dating and stratigraphic analysis (Odegaard & Cassman 2014: 702). Authenticity can generate many avenues of meaning in both an archaeological and anthropological paradigm, such as social values, original materials, veneration, etc. (Odegaard & Cassman 2014: 702-703). At the meeting of the 1994 World Heritage Committee, the Nara Document established great global discussion on authenticity in

archaeology, despite its ranging critiques (Odegaard & Cassman 2014: 705). The Nara Document, referring to the authentication of archaeological sites, states,

> "*4.1 Authenticity is a concern relevant to human communities as well as material remains. The design of a heritage interpretation programme should respect the traditional social functions of the site and the cultural practices and dignity of local residents and associated communities"* (Cleere 2014: 724).

The document essentially outlined key judgements in the realm of archaeological authentication and the considerations of conservation (Odegaard & Cassman 2014: 705). The American Institute for Conservation Code also declares,

> "*… statements about age, origin or authenticity should be based on the physical evidence derived from an object, rather than on opinions and should include an explanation that scientific data alone cannot provide definite attributions*" (Odegaard & Cassman 2014: 705, 708).

Physical authenticity in archaeology can also be understood in the manner of scientific method and the constant drive to uphold the newest and most trusted analysis in the authentication process (e.g., carbon dating, stratigraphy, CT and digital scanning, historical recording, multi-disciplinary intervention, etc.) (Odegaard & Cassman 2014: 708; Mickel 2018: 725).

Authenticity in an archaeological framework follows similar methods in the maintenance of the record, as with reliquaries. Within the archaeological record, restoration, and handling of objects, such as those overseen by curators and museum collections, are governed by a common understanding of cultural value (Scott 2016: 12-13). These origins of authentication relate to objects closest to their original state (Scott 2016: 13). For example, archaeological objects put on display in museums after being given physical authentication through scientific methods, undergo a second perception of authenticity in their preservation, such as the unfinished cleaned "Victorious Youth" Greek bronze status from 300-1000 B.C. (Figure 3-11.) (Scott 2016: 29). Physical authenticity in both the context of relics and curatorial theory is key to maintain legitimacy through means of preservation and conservation. The Venice Charter in

1964, International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, established to repair damage to monuments during World War II, aimed to create further conversation about physical authenticity of archaeological heritage, stating "… it is our duty to hand them on the full richness of their authenticity" (Scott 2016, 96). The contents of the charter were critiqued for the inevitability of artifact replication and issues in authentication techniques that arose throughout the twentieth century (Odegaard & Cassman 2014: 705). Therefore, through the physical authentication of archaeological remains, a field of subjectivity arose in the twentieth century distinguishing originality of remains and restoration projects (Scott 2016: 97).

Figure 3-11 *Greek Bronze Status "Victorious Youth, 300-1000 BC. (Scott 2016: 29)*

3.3.2 Authentication via Replication, Restoration and Exhibitions

Authentication of the subjective within the context of archaeology stems from the growth of replication and restoration. There are great distinctions between the context of "forgeries" and "replications for exhibitions" (Scott 2016: 33, 47). The growing fascinations with forgeries and artifact copying display expressions of those who forge, as well as authenticity involved with communal groups of people, such as those sold through eBay and other selling means (Gamble 2002: 3). This will be discussed in Chapter 5. However, replication of authenticated objects for the purpose of exhibition, experimental archaeology and conservation has provided a new context of authenticity that can find meaning in its record (Carrell 1992: 4). Immense numbers of archaeological objects within museums are copies and replicas, as Brenna, Christensen and Hamran call it "authenticity through accessibility" (Brenna, Christensen and Hamran 2018: 3). Museums maintain a level of integrity and visitation to people despite the lack of authentication in many exhibitions (e.g., the paper-mâche replicas of tongues and larynx in the National Museum of Scotland) (Brenna, Christensen and Hamran 2018: 16). At the National Gallery of Art for a technical study, several small bronze busts of Pope Paul III Farnese (Figure 3-12) were examined to discover their origin from Guglielmo della Porta's workshops from the sixteenth

century AD (Barbour and Glinsman 1993: 15). Several of the busts were found to have been misdated given their high zinc content and were most likely created as replicas during the nineteenth century, distinct from the famous Renaissance workshops (Barbour and Glinsman 1993: 25). Despite this knowledge, the busts have maintained their prominence in museum collections for their demonstration of traditional long-wax method of creation, despite their unauthenticity (only few of the seven busts were unauthenticated) (Barbour and Glinsman 1993: 26). Examples of replications for the purpose of public awareness and conservation include the Lascaux II, virtual Paleolithic caves and paintings, the 32,000-year-old Grotte Chauvet replica that opened in 2015 and most notably, the 2014 King Tutankhamen's funerary chamber facsimile that was erected at the entrance to the Valley of the King's in Luxor, Egypt (Lending 2016: 79, 81). Replicas of King Tut's funerary objects had been in circulation since its grand opening and discovery in 1922. However, the exhibition of the facsimile (copy of the burial chamber), according to Lending (2016), was rooted "within the field of sustainable tourism, new objects marking a salvage operation in situ" (Lending 2016: 79). The aspect of authenticity regarding this exhibition was to provide cultural and meaningful connection to ancient history through the phenomenon of replication (Lending 2016: 81). Through multidisciplinary involvement from archaeologists and historians, the construction of King Tut's facsimile attracts over 500,000 people per year to the burial chambers and contents within them (Lending 2016: 81). The act of archaeological replication and experimental archaeology ranges for many reasons, from cultural heritage, preservation, public attention, and technological study. However, from the perspective of authenticity, replication has received criticism for its ambiguous nature; can it truly be authentic if it is not the original (Lending 2016: 82)? Archaeology of replicas and exhibition should be understood in the context of subjectivity and ambiguity where

Figure 3-12 *Bronze small bust of Pope Paul III Farnese, various replicas, and original molds from Guglielmo della Porta. National Gallery of Art,*

certain objects and remains can be given replicable status while others cannot (Lending 2016).

The Diocese of London has similar replicas and homemade relics that during a past moment in time, were authenticated relics made into new ones (D. Majer, personal communication, March 22, 2022). The handmade relic of Pope Pius P.P. X (Figure 3-13) is thought by the Diocese (2022) to have been made from old relics into a newly sewn cushion decorated with the Saint names from the old relics, such as St. Curé d'Ars and St. Félix (Figure 3-14). While these relics are prohibited from veneration as stated by Canon Law, there is great admiration and fascination given from the public, as each Saint associated with the relics possesses their own particular attributes (D. Majer, personal communication, March 22, 2022). There are great differences and similarities in the physical and subjective authentication of the archaeological record and remains of relics.

Figure 3-13 *Handmade Relic of Pope Pius P.P. X, frontal scan.*

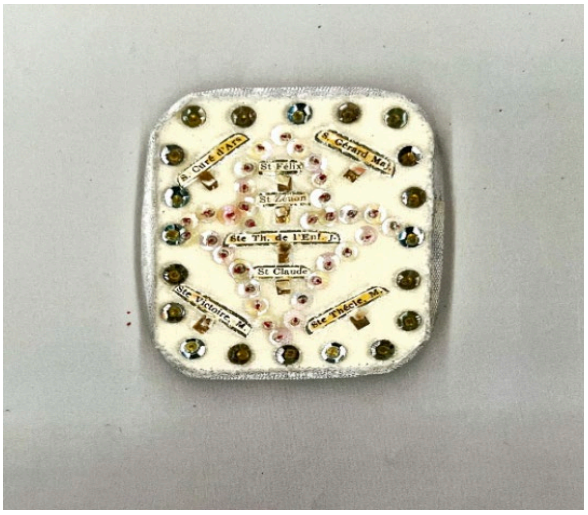


Figure 3-14 *Handmade Relic of Pope Pius P.P. X, dorsal scan, names of various saints imbedded in the cushion.*

3.3.3 Controversy in Authentication: Turin Shroud

As a final case study of the parallels of authentication between relics and the archaeological record, the controversy of the Turin Shroud will be briefly analyzed to explore subjective authenticity and public religious agency. A cloth first recorded from 1357 France has experienced mass attention for several hundred years (Meacham *et al.* 1983: 283). The Turin Shroud, believed to have been the original burial cloth of Jesus

after his crucifixion, has been both venerated and challenged as to whether it is truly authentic (Meacham *et al.* 1983: 283). When it first began to be photographed in 1898, the life-like imagery of a bearded man's face became topic of great conversation among scholars and academia (Meacham *et al.* 1983: 283). In the early twentieth century, Yves Delage noted its "anatomically flawless" (Figure 3-15) state for is depiction of rigor mortis, blood flows on the cloth and bodily fluids, while maintaining a lack of decomposition due to its holy nature (Meacham *et al.* 1983: 284-285). Despite the shroud's original imagery, its historical documentation was flawed, having only been recorded a handful of times, and it contradict various biblical accounts (e.g., wounds from the Gospels align with the imagery on the shroud, however the bloodstains contradict the washing of Christ's body in John 19:40) (Meacham *et al.* 1983: 287). Through various other aspects of scientific study, such as wound replication or evidence of removal from the body, many scholars in the 1980s believed archaeological authenticity ought to be given as a burial shroud no less (Meacham *et al.* 1983). Interestingly, in 1988, the radiocarbon date produced for the shroud was from 1260 - 1390 A.D. (Gove 1990) matching its first historical reference. This chapter does not attempt to prove or disprove the shroud's authenticity, rather to showcase its controversial nature and apparent popularity despite its questioned authority. The Turin Shroud, as both a potential relic and archaeological remain has caused great discussion of authentication, as well as emotional sentiment through faith to the Catholic Church and scientific inquiry to the archaeological field. The controversy of the Turin Shroud as both a burial shroud and possible shroud of Christ can be interpreted as a display of subjective authenticity and meaning given to both a relic and archaeological artifact (Meacham *et al.* 1983: 295).

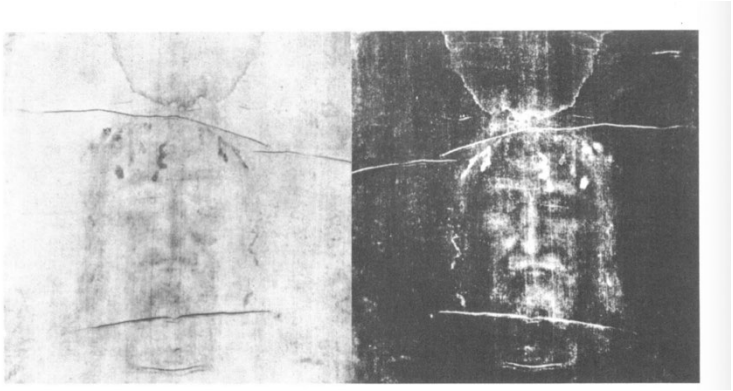


Figure 3-15. *Turin Shroud scanned (left) and black light photograph (right) of facial "imprint" on the burial cloth. Photograph from G. Enrie 1933. (Meacham et al. 1983: 284).*

3.4 Conclusion

Authentication can be both understood in a framework of documentation and subjective means of individuality. When referring to the physical authentication of relics, there are strict guidelines outlined through Canon Law and defined ecclesiastical authorities that oversee the maintenance of authentic relics, including those of the True Cross (1782), St. Aloysius Gonzaga (1959), and St. Simon Stock (2001) (Diocese of London 2022). In contrast, the subjectivity of relic "veneration" and symbolic meaning is witnessed through the unauthenticated and authenticated display of martyr relics at St. Winefride and the controversy of the Turin Shroud's authentication (Stumpe 2009; Meacham *et al.* 1983). Furthermore, the physical authentication of archaeological remains has been discussed and outlined through the processes of conservation and preservation (Odegaard & Cassman 2014). The parallel in subjectivity stems from the realm of replication and exhibitions, such as the reconstruction of King Tutankhamen's tomb (Lending 2016). Authenticity is a complex framework that when applied to relic veneration and the archeological record, demonstrates the agency of individual meaning as well as the processes that govern authentication. As stated by Lindholm, "the sacred is where you find it" (Lindholm 2002: 337).

3.5 Bibliography

BARBOUR, D., & GLINSMAN, L. D. 1993. An investigation of renaissance casting practices as a means for identifying forgeries. *Studies in the History of Art*, *41*, 14–29. http://www.jstor.org/stable/42621819

BRENNA, B., DAM CHRISTENSEN, H., & HAMRAN, O. 2018. *Museums as cultures of copies: the crafting of artefacts and authenticity.* Boca Raton, FL: Routledge.

CAMPBELL, M.M. 2012. Sanctity and identity: the authentication of the Ursuline relics and legal discourse in Elisabeth von Schönau's *Liber Revelationum*. *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, *38*, 159–192. https://doi.org/10.5325/jmedirelicult.38.2.0159

CARRELL, T. L. 1992. Replication and experimental archaeology. *Historical Archaeology*, *26*(4), 4–13. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25616188

CLEERE H. 2014. Authenticity in archaeological conservation and preservation. In: Smith C. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-0465-2_447

DIOCESE OF LONDON. 2022. Reliquary Collection. London, ON (visited 22 March, 2022).

GAMBLE, L.H. 2002. Fact or forgery: dilemmas in museum collections. *Museum Anthropology.* DOI: 10.1525/mua.2002.25.2.3

GOVE, H. E. 1990. Dating the Turin Shroud—an assessment. *Radiocarbon*, 32(1), 87-92.

LENDING, M. 2016. Reciting the tomb of Tutankhamen. *Perspecta*, *49*, 77–88. http://www.jstor.org/stable/45215771

LINDHOLM, C. 2002. Authenticity, anthropology, and the sacred. *Anthropological Quarterly*, *75*(2), 331–338. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3318264

MEACHAM, W., ALCOCK, J. E., BUCKLIN, R., BURRIDGE, K. O. L., COLE, J. R., DENT, R. J., JACKSON, J. P., MCCRONE, W. C., MALONEY, P. C., MUELLER, M. M., NICKELL, J., OTTERBEIN, A. J., PELLICORI, S. F., SCHAFERSMAN, S., TAMBURELLI, G., & WHANGER, A. D. 1983. The authentication of the Turin Shroud:

An issue in archaeological epistemology [and Comments and Reply]. *Current Anthropology*, *24*(3), 283–311. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2742663

MICKEL, A. 2018. Authenticity in archaeological writing and representation. In: Smith C. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51726-1_1564-2

ODEGAARD, N., & CASSMAN, V. 2014. Authentication and conservation in archaeological science. In: Smith C. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology.* https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-0465-2_336

SCOTT, D.A. 2016. *Art: Authenticity, restoration, forgery.* California: The Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press

STUMPE, L. H. 2009. Display and veneration of holy relics at St Winefride's Well and Stonyhurst. *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, *22*, 63–81. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41417138

VAN LEEUWEN, T. 2001. What is authenticity? *Discourse Studies*, *3*(4), 392–397. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445601003004003

VATICAN CANON LAW: *Holy See, The 2003 [1983]. 'Book IV, Part II, Title IV:* Available at: www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_P4D.HTM>. (Accessed 25 March 2022).

VATICAN: *Congregation for the cause of saints "Relics in the Church: Authenticity and preservation (Rome 2017)".* Available at: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/csaints/documents/rc_con_csaints_doc_20171208_istruzione-reliquie_en.html (accessed 25 March 2022).

Chapter 4: Relic Manifestation - X-Ray and Micro-CT analysis of Relics

By Kaylee Woldum

Abstract

Individuals interested in housing relics typically do so in reliquaries. However, before their placement within reliquaries, the Diocese of London keeps some relics in paper sachets which obscure said relics from view. X-ray and micro-computed tomography (micro-CT) analysis was performed on six sachets to determine their contents. These analyses found potential bone within four of the six sachets. Instead of further analyses, it was determined that the saint's name available on the sachet itself might hold more power than the physical relic, as it is the saint's name where the connection lies; remove it, and a relic cannot exist.

4.1 Introduction

4.1.2 Connection to relics

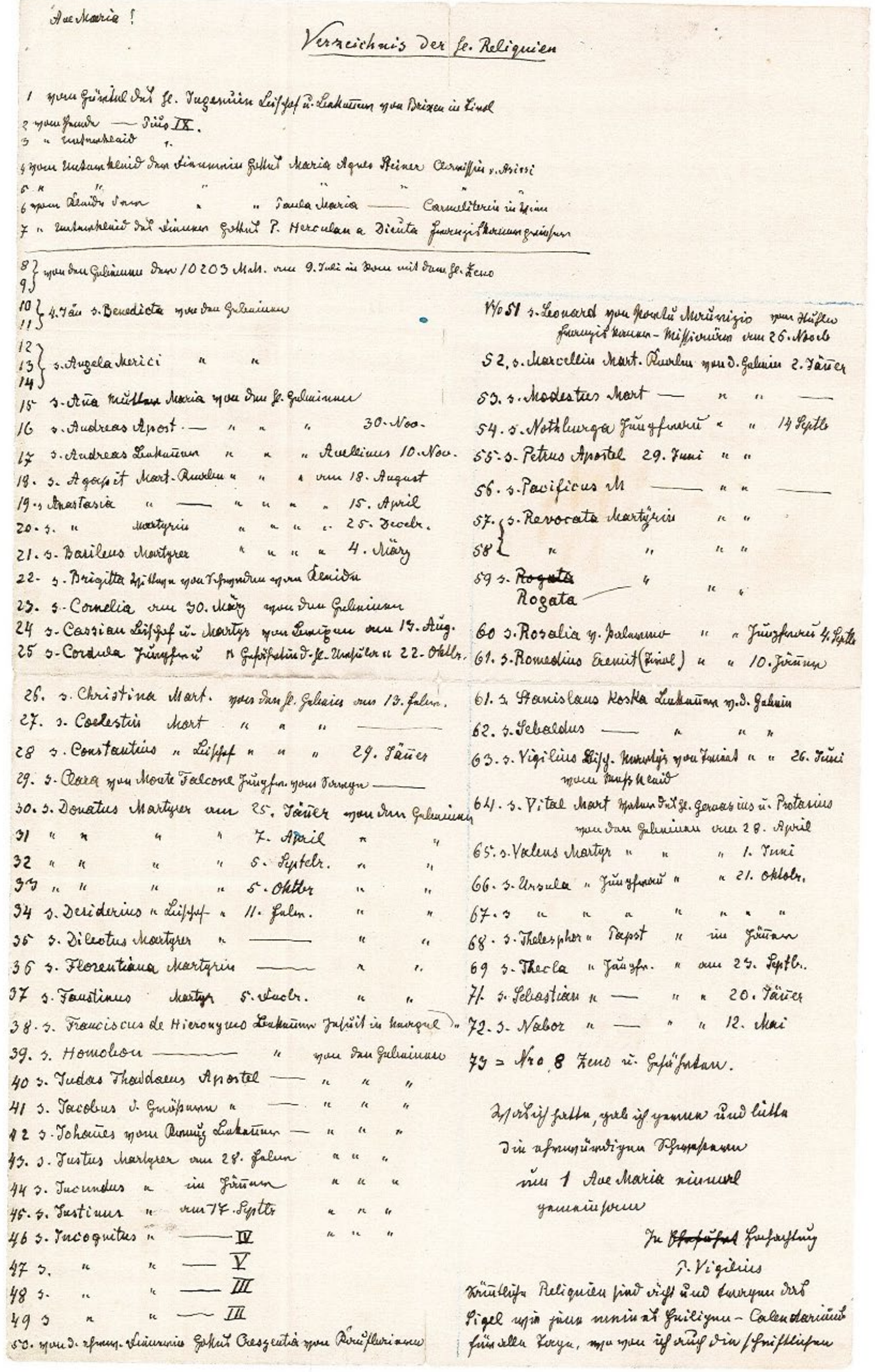
In the Catholic tradition, a relic is an object typically consisting of the physical remains of a saint, although second and third-class relics are also common. Second-class relics are usually a personal effect of the saint, such as clothing, while third-class relics are typically something associated with a first-class relic, such as dust on their tomb (Walsham 2010: 11). Relics are not just symbols of a divine presence but an embodiment of it, a physical object directly linked to those who are divine or saintly (Walsham 2010: 12; Hooper 2014: 191). Individuals who seek to house relics of their own typically do so in elaborate reliquaries, containers for relics usually displayed for remembrance (Walsham 2010: 31). However, during a trip to the Diocese of London, located in London, Ontario, Fr. John Comiskey noted that relics were not meant to be worshiped, as such an act of reverence is reserved for God; instead, relics are meant for the living to explore a connection felt towards a particular saint. Those who house relics often feel a strong connection to the associated saint, and it is this connection to saints through relics that this paper will investigate.

4.1.3 Research objectives

This paper aims to better understand relic manifestation by examining six relics enclosed in paper sachets from the Diocese of London. Paper sachets are the initial

storage system for first, second, and third-class relics typically seen in much more elaborate reliquaries. Although, unlike the elaborately decorated reliquaries seen in the Diocese of London, these paper sachets provide a much more modest host for their relics. Little information is included on these paper sachets themselves aside from the name of the associated saint and the original wax seal. However, the presence of a wax seal on the sachet itself, in this case, does not indicate the relics' authenticity without a matching seal present on a certificate of authenticity (D. Majer, personal communication, February 9, 2022). These authentication certificates often contain information about the relic, such as its material and whether it is a first, second, or third-class relic.

Unfortunately, the paper sachets at the Diocese of London do not have accompanying authentication certificates, However, they do have a document cataloguing information about both the reliquaries and paper sachets in the collection. The document was initially written in French but was later translated to English for records management at the Diocese of London. Figures 4-1 through 4-4 display the French and English documents, respectively. It is important to note that these documents are not a replacement for a certificate of authentication; there is less overall information about the relics in question when compared to a certificate of authentication, as well as a higher likelihood of errors in the initial recording as it is unclear when the document was made and when the relics were brought to the diocese. Errors in translation and numbering can be seen throughout the translated document. However, information about the relic material can be seen in association with some of the paper sachets.



Ave Maria!

Verzeichnis der hl. Reliquien

15 s. Anna Mutter Maria

16 s. Andreas Apost. 30. Nov.

17 s. Andreas

18. s. Agapit Mart. vom 18. August

19. s. Anastasia 15. April

20. s. Martyrin 25. Decbr.

21. s. Basileus Martyrer 4. März

22. s. Brigitta

23. s. Cornelia am 30. März

24 s. Cassian Bischof u. Martyr am 13. Aug.

25 s. Cordula Jungfrau 22. Oktbr.

26. s. Christina Mart. am 13. Febr.

27. s. Coelestin Mart

28 s. Constantius Bischof 29. Jänner

29. s. Clara von Monte Falcone Jungfr.

30. s. Donatus Martyrer am 25. Jänner

31 7. April

32 5. Septebr.

33 5. Oktbr

34 s. Desiderius Bischof 11. Febr.

35 s. Dileotus Martyrer

36 s. Florentiana Martyrin

37 s. Faustinus Martyr 5. Decbr.

38. s. Franciscus de Hieronymo

39. s. Homobon

40 s. Judas Thaddaeus Apostel

41 s. Jacobus d. Größere

42 s. Johannes

43. s. Justus Martyrer am 28. Febr.

44 s. Jucundus

45. s. Justinus

46 s. Incognitus IV

47 s. V

48 s. III

49 s. II

51 s. Leonard

52 s. Marcellin Mart.

53. s. Modestus Mart

54. s. Nothburga Jungfrau 14 Septb.

55. s. Petrus Apostel 29. Juni

56. s. Pacificus M

57. s. Revocata Martyrin

58

59 s. ~~Rogata~~ Rogata

60 s. Rosalia v. Palermo

61. s. Romedius Eremit (Tirol) 10. Jänner

61. s. Stanislaus Kostka

62. s. Sebaldus

63. s. Vigilius Bisch.

64. s. Vital Mart 28. April

65. s. Valens Martyr 1. Juni

66. s. Ursula Jungfrau 21. Oktobr.

67. s.

68. s. Thelesphor Papst

69 s. Thecla Jungfr. am 23. Septb.

71. s. Sebastian 20. Jänner

72. s. Nabor 12. Mai

73 = Nro 8 Zeno

1 Ave Maria

P. Vigilius

Figure 4-3. *Diocese of London Original (French) Archival Document Detailing Relic Information (Page 1 of 2).*

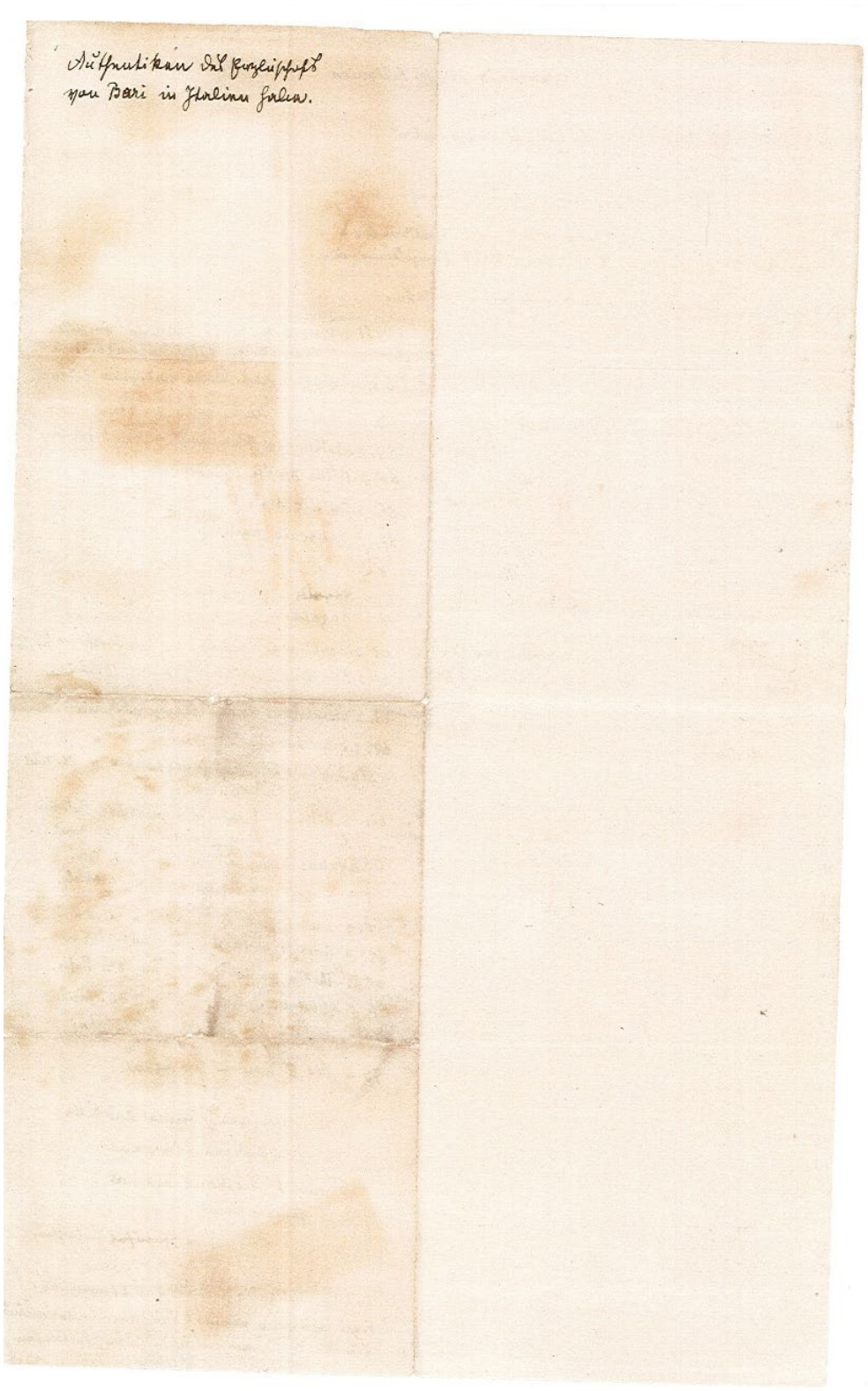
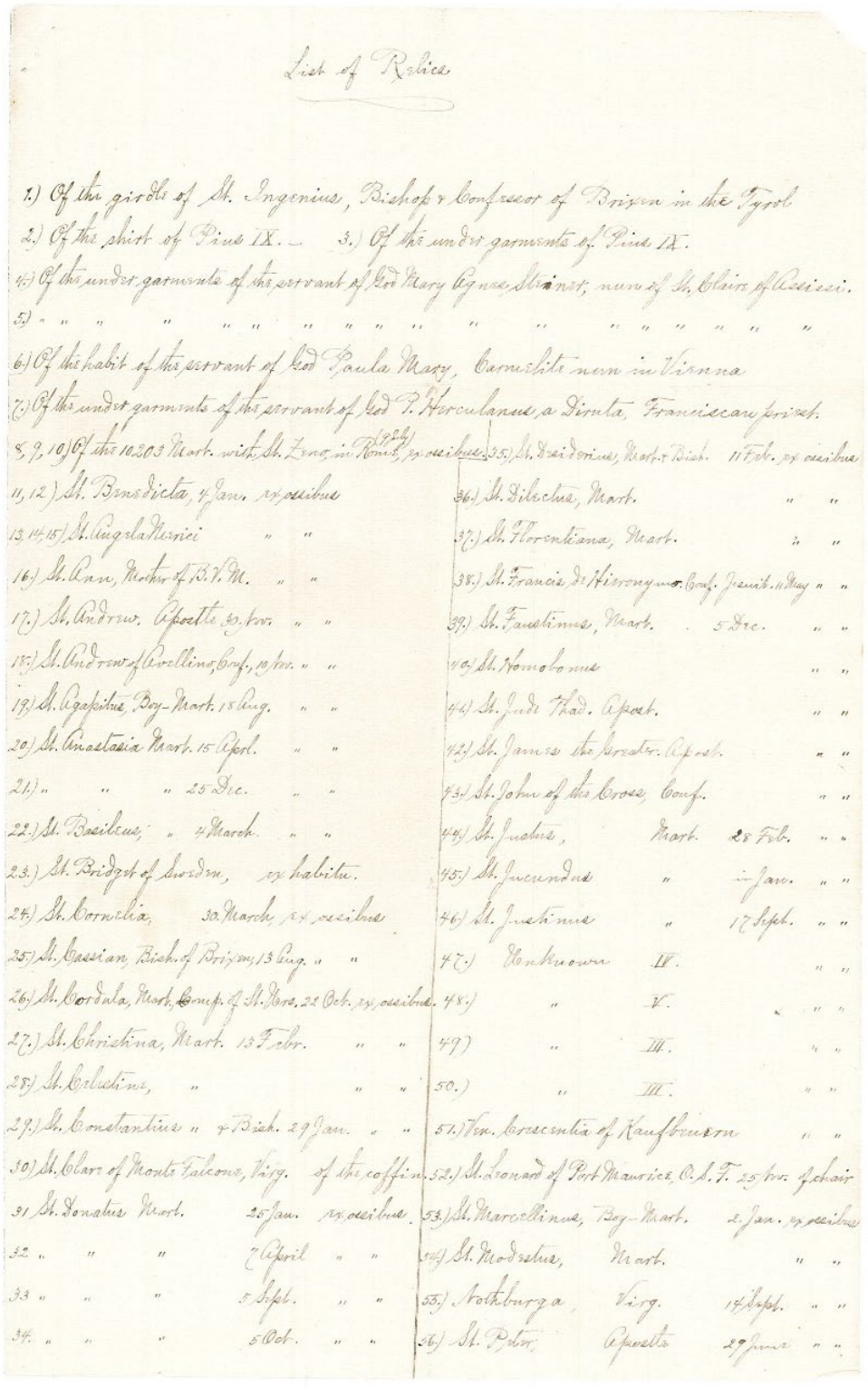


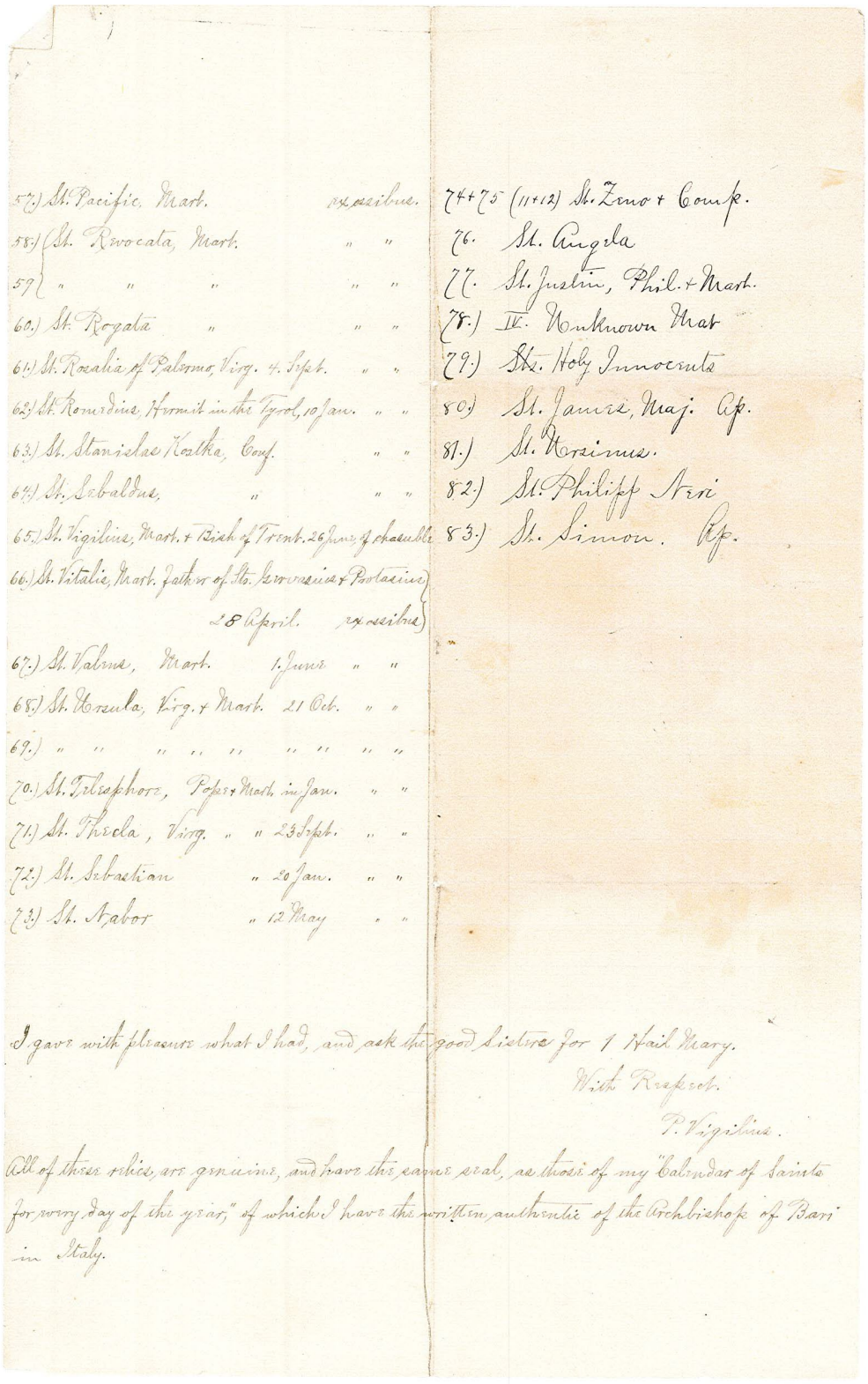
Figure 4-4. *Diocese of London Original (French) Archival Document Detailing Relic Information (Page 2 of 2).*



List of Relics

1.) Of the girdle of St. Ingenius, Bishop & Confessor of Brixen in the Tyrol
2.) Of the shirt of Pius IX. — 3.) Of the under garments of Pius IX.
4.) Of the under garments of the servant of God Mary Agnes Steiner, nuns of St. Clara of Assissi.
5.) " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " "
6.) Of the habit of the servant of God Paula Mary, Carmelite nun in Vienna
7.) Of the under garments of the servant of God P. Herculanus a Dirita, Franciscan priest.
8, 9, 10) Of the 10203 Mart. with St. Zeno in Rome (22d) ex ossibus
11, 12.) St. Benedicta, 4 Jan. ex ossibus
13, 14, 15) St. Angela Merici " "
16.) St. Anna, Mother of B.V.M. " "
17.) St. Andrew. Apostle 30 Nov. " "
18.) St. Andrew of Avellino, Conf., 10 Nov. " "
19.) St. Agapitus, Boy-Mart. 18 Aug. " "
20.) St. Anastasia Mart. 15 April " "
21.) " " " 25 Dec. " "
22.) St. Basilcus, " 4 March " "
23.) St. Bridget of Sweden, ex habitu.
24.) St. Cornelia, 30 March, ex ossibus
25.) St. Cassian, Bish. of Brixen, 13 Aug. " "
26.) St. Cordula, Mart, Comp. of St. Ursa, 22 Oct. ex ossibus
27.) St. Christina, Mart. 13 Febr. " "
28.) St. Celestine, " " "
29.) St. Constantius " & Bish. 29 Jan. " "
30.) St. Clare of Monte Falcone, Virg. of the coffin
31 St. Donatus Mart. 25 Jan. ex ossibus
32 " " " 7 April " "
33 " " " 5 Sept. " "
34. " " " 5 Oct. " "
35.) St. Dardonius, Mart. & Bish. 11 Feb. ex ossibus
36.) St. Dilectus, Mart. " "
37.) St. Florentiana, Mart. " "
38.) St. Francis de Hieronymo Conf. Jesuit. 11 May " "
39.) St. Faustinus, Mart. 5 Dec. " "
40.) St. Homobonus " "
41.) St. Jud. Thad. Apost. " "
42.) St. James the Greater. Apost. " "
43.) St. John of the Cross, Conf. " "
44.) St. Justus, Mart. 28 Feb. " "
45.) St. Jucundus " in Jan. " "
46.) St. Justinus " 17 Sept. " "
47.) Unknown II. " "
48.) " V. " "
49.) " III. " "
50.) " III. " "
51.) Ven. Crescentia of Kaufbeuren " "
52.) St. Leonard of Port Maurice, O.S.F. 25 Nov. of chair
53.) St. Marcellinus, Boy-Mart. 2 Jan. ex ossibus
54.) St. Modestus, Mart. " "
55.) Nothburga, Virg. 14 Sept. " "
56.) St. Peter, Apostle 29 June " "

Figure 4-5. *Diocese of London Translated (English) Archival Document Detailing Relic Information (Page 1 of 2).*



57.) St. Pacific, Mart. ex ossibus.
58.) St. Revocata, Mart. " "
59.) " " " " "
60.) St. Rogata " " "
61.) St. Rozalia of Palermo, Virg. 4. Sept. " "
62.) St. Romedius, Hermit in the Tyrol, 10 Jan. " "
63.) St. Stanislaus Kostka, Conf. " "
64.) St. Sebaldus, " " "
65.) St. Vigilius, Mart. & Bish. of Trent. 26 June of chasuble
66.) St. Vitalis, Mart. father of St. Gervasius & Protasius, 28 April. ex ossibus
67.) St. Valens, Mart. 1. June " "
68.) St. Ursula, Virg. & Mart. 21 Oct. " "
69.) " " " " " " " " "
70.) St. Telesphore, Pope & Mart. in Jan. " "
71.) St. Thecla, Virg. " " 23 Sept. " "
72.) St. Sebastian " 20 Jan. " "
73.) St. Nabor " 12 May " "
74+75 (11+12) St. Zeno & Comp.
76. St. Angela
77. St. Justin, Phil. & Mart.
78.) IV. Unknown Mart
79.) St. Holy Innocents
80.) St. Janus, Maj. Ep.
81.) St. Maximus.
82.) St. Philipp Neri
83.) St. Simon. Ep.

I gave with pleasure what I had, and ask the good Sisters for 1 Hail Mary.

With Respect.

P. Vigilius.

All of these relics, are genuine, and have the same seal, as those of my "Calendar of Saints for every day of the year," of which I have the written, authentic of the Archbishop of Bari in Italy.

Figure 4-6. *Diocese of London Translated (English) Archival Document Detailing Relic Information (Page 2 of 2).*

X-ray and micro-computed tomography (micro-CT) analysis of six paper sachets was performed to determine and or assess the type of material and class of relic within each sachet. This paper will then discuss the results of these non-destructive analyses of relics, issues in interpretation, suggestions for future work, and the aspects of human entanglement with the dead and how relics are manifestations of these relationships. Finally, this paper aims to answer the following research questions: (1) what do these relics embody? (2) how important is relic class for a reliquary? (3) how important is the associated saint? And (4) does authentication or scientific confirmation of relic material affect how relics are perceived?

4.2 Methods

4.2.1 Relic Selection

Six paper sachets from the Diocese of London were x-rayed and micro-CT scanned to identify the material within. Figures 4-5 and 4-6 display the front and back of these sachets. The paper sachets were chosen at random, aside from RE. 041 and RE. 059, which were chosen because they looked as though they contained the largest amount of material.

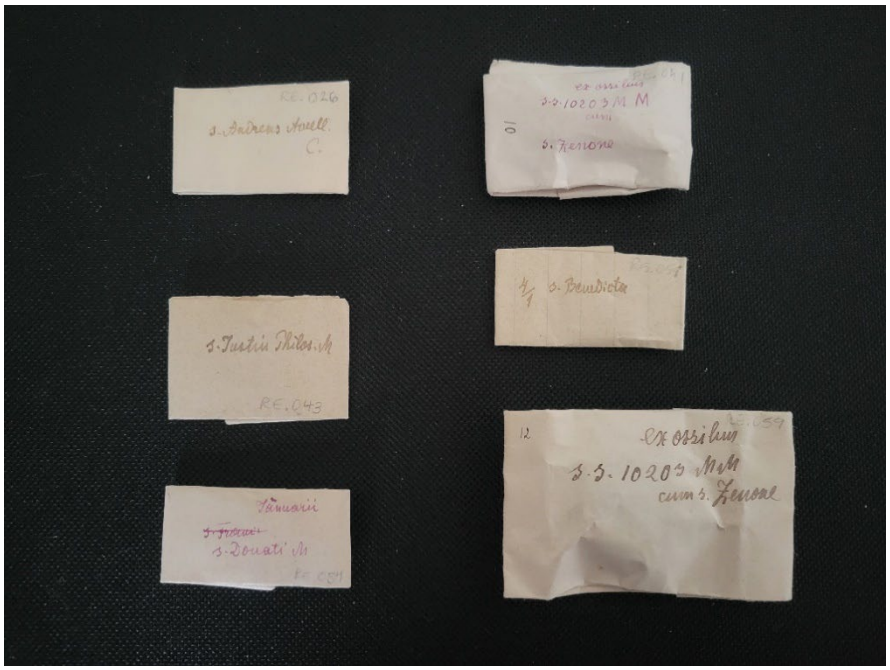


Figure 4-5. *Front of the six sachets analysed in this study.*

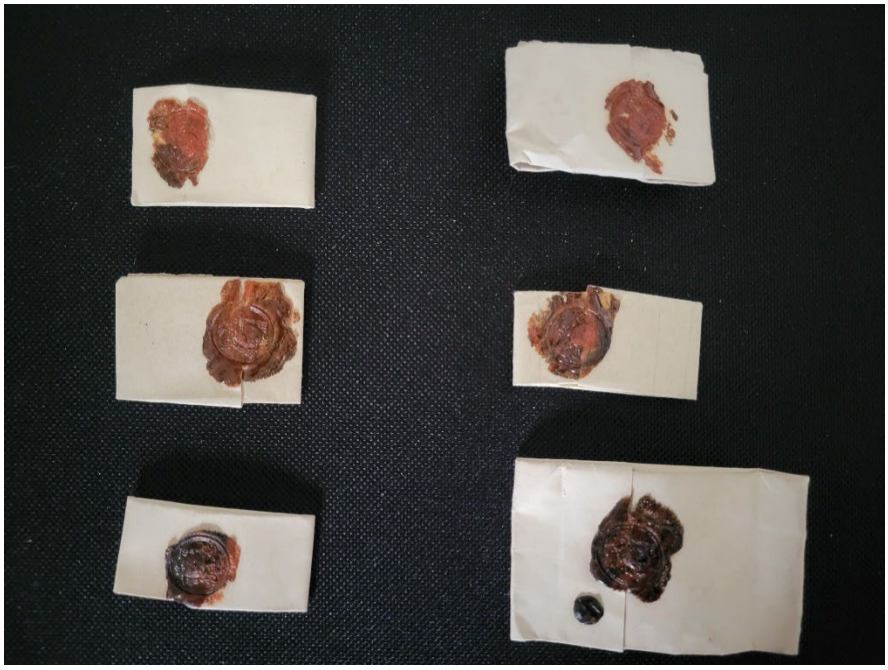


Figure 4-6. *Back of the six sachets analysed in this study.*

On the front of the paper sachets, the registration numbers from the Diocese are displayed as the letters RE followed by a number and the name of the saint associated with the sachet. Table 1 lists the registration numbers, associated saint, and relic material if provided by the documents in Figures 4-5 and 4-6.

Table 4-1. *Relic registration number, associated saint, and material according to the Diocese of London's archival documents.*

Registration Number	**Saint**	**Patron Saint of**	**Material (according to archival documents)**
RE. 026	St. Andrew Avellino (confessor)	Naples and Sicily	N/A
RE. 041	St. Jerome (martyr)	Librarians and libraries	Bone
RE. 043	St. Justin (philosopher and martyr)	Philosophers and philosophy	N/A
RE. 051	St. Benedicta	Europe	N/A
RE. 054	St. Sonati (martyr)	Unknown	Bone
RE. 059	St. Jerome (martyr)	Librarians and libraries	Bone

Three sachets containing *Bos taurus* (cow) rib fragments were created as generic examples of (mammalian) 'bone': one containing a large fragment of bone (~1 inch in diameter), one containing small bone fragments (>5mm), and one containing a mix of bone fragment sizes, courtesy of Ed Eastaugh and the Department of Anthropology's zooarchaeology lab. Figure 4-7 displays the sachets containing cow rib. Control samples were used in this study to compare what was being seen in the x-rays and micro-CT scans of the relic sachets to sachets containing bone fragments.

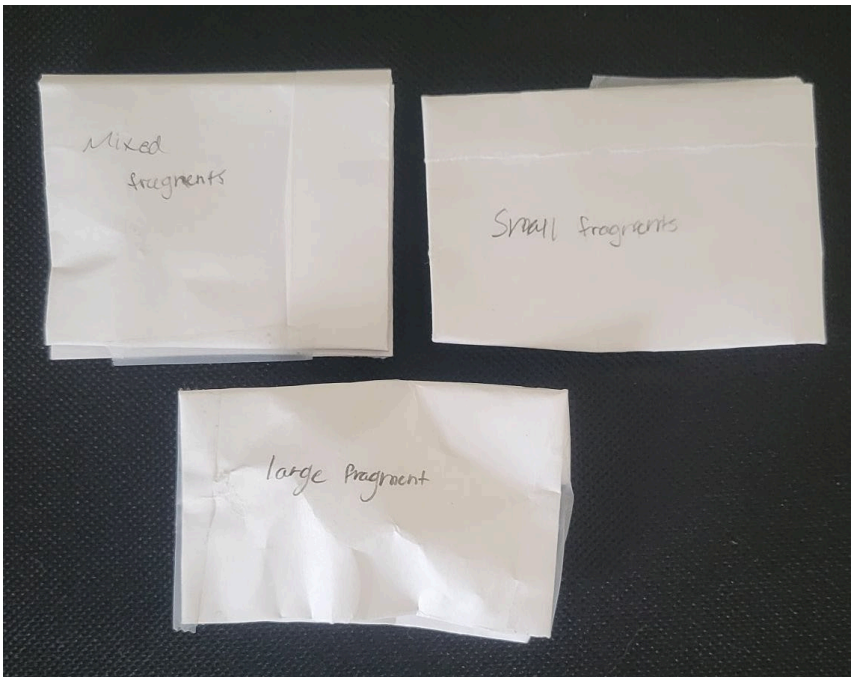


Figure 4-7. *Comparative sachets containing example bone fragments.*

4.2.2 X-ray Analysis

This analysis was done using the Nikon XT H 225 ST micro-CT scanner at the Museum of Ontario Archaeology in London, Ontario. All six sachets were x-rayed along with two of the comparative sachets, the one containing a large bone fragment and the one containing small bone fragments. The micro-CT scanner was used in radiography mode to capture digital x-ray images of the relics. Each sachet was placed in a clear plastic nametag holder clamped within the x-ray machine. Figure 4-8 displays an example of this for RE. 051. Table 2, below, displays the sachets and their corresponding x-ray settings.

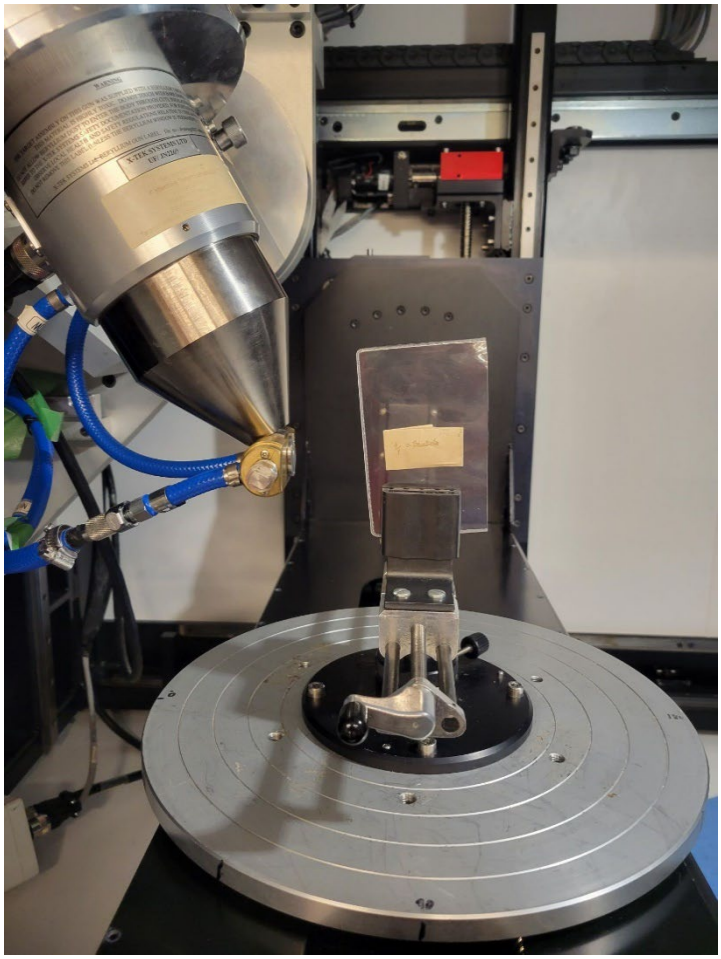


Figure 4-8. *X-ray setup.*

Table 4-2. *Radiography settings for the sachets.*

Registration Number	Kilovolts (kVp)	Microampere (µA)	Pixel Size (µm)
RE. 026	90	80	15.5
RE. 041	108	80	14
RE. 043	98	80	15.5
RE. 051	95	80	15.5
RE. 054	100	80	15.5
RE. 059	88	80	10
Large Bone Fragment Control Sachet	110	75	20
Small Bone Fragments Control Sachet	90	75	20

4.2.3 Micro-CT Analysis

Micro-CT scans were completed for two out of the six relics in this study: RE. 041 and RE. 059. These relics were chosen to undergo micro-CT scanning because they contained the most material of the relics. A micro-CT scan allows for a 3D reconstruction of the x-rayed material, allowing for precise navigation through the objects. The Nikon XT H 225 ST micro-CT scanner was set to CT mode to capture the micro-CT scans. Both RE. 041 and RE. 059 underwent relatively short scans lasting about 26 minutes each, where 1571 projections were captured. The comparative sachet containing a mix of large and small bone fragments also underwent a short micro-CT scan. RE. 59 underwent an additional scan lasting about four hours, using minimize rings mode, four times frame averaging, and 3141 projections were captured.

Dragonfly Pro 2021.3, an Object Research Systems (ORS) software, was used to visualize the micro-CT scan in a 3D format to determine whether any material with the sachets could be identified as bone. A plastic nametag holder was used for the initial short scan for RE. 059. However, it was determined that the plastic interrupted the 3D visualization in Dragonfly. For this reason, all other scans were done without the plastic holder; instead, using Floral Foam to stand the sachets in an upright position. Figure 4-9 displays this setup for RE. 059. Table 4-3 displays the sachets and their corresponding micro-CT-scan settings.

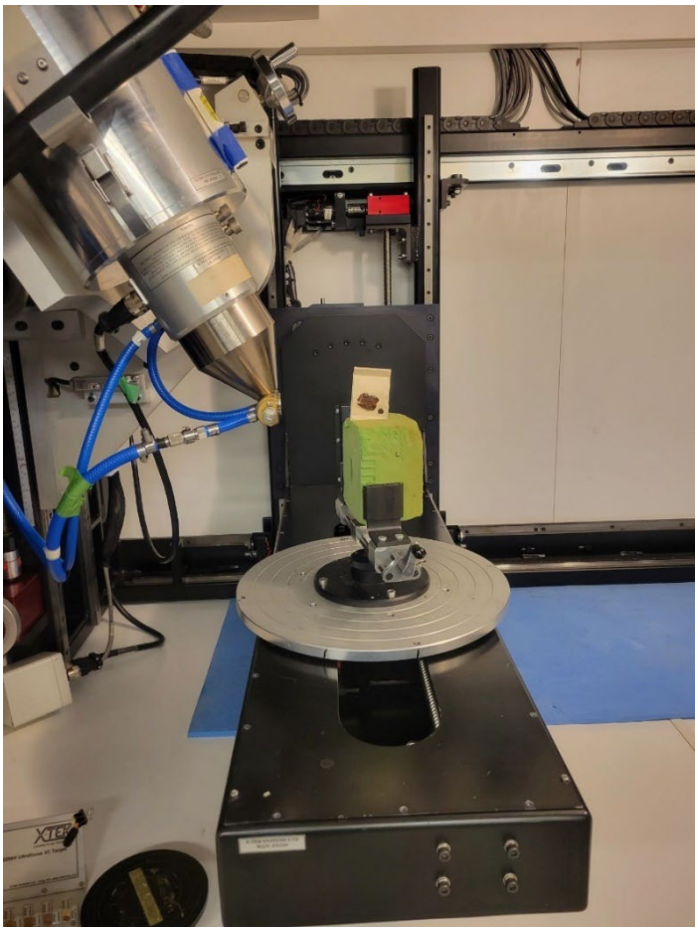


Figure 4-9. *Typical micro-CT-scan set up.*

Table 4-3. *Micro-CT-scan calibrations for the sachets.*

Registration Number	Kilovolts (kVp)	Microampere (µA)	Voxel Size (µm)	Scan Length (scan recon 2)	Approximate Number of Projections Taken	Exposures	Number of Frames Averaged
RE. 041	90	75	20	~26 minutes	1570	1 second exposures	1
RE. 059	90	80	20	~26 minutes	1570	1 second exposures	1
RE. 059	90	75	20	~ 5 hours	3141	1 second exposures	4
Mixed Bone Fragments Control Sachet	90	75	20	~26 minutes	1570	1 second exposures	1

4.3 Results

4.3.1 X-ray results

The x-rays scans for the relics displayed possible bone in RE. 059 and RE. 043. However, the results for the remaining x-rays of the relics were inconclusive due to either a lack of visible material in the sachets themselves or an unclear comparison to the comparative bone samples. Table 4-4 displays the x-ray and micro-CT-scan results and potential material compared with the relic material provided by the documents in Figures 4-1 through 4-4 and Table 4-1.

Table 4-4. *Possible materials within sachets according to x-ray and micro-CT-scan analysis.*

Registration Number	Saint	Material (according to archival documents)	Material (according to x-ray and micro-CT scans)
RE. 026	St. Andrew Avellino (confessor)	N/A	Small Specks of Soil or Dust
RE. 041	St. Jerome (martyr)	Bone	Possible Bone Fragment
RE. 043	St. Justin (philosopher and martyr)	N/A	Possible Bone Fragment
RE. 051	St. Benedicta	N/A	Soil Mass
RE. 054	St. Sonati (martyr)	Bone	Possible Bone Fragment
RE. 059	St. Jerome (martyr)	Bone	Possible Bone Fragment

4.3.1.1 RE. 026

The x-ray results for RE. 026 displayed minimal material present within the sachet. Figure 4-10 displays the straight-on and oblique views of RE. 026. The wax seal is the most visible feature of this x-ray. However, small speckles of what is assumed to be soil can be seen within the sachet. The specks within RE. 026 can be seen more clearly in Figure 4-11, where some of these specks are circled in red. The material in RE. 026 is too sparse and small to make any definitive suggestions about its composition. Therefore, the material in RE 026 is identified as specks of dirt or dust.

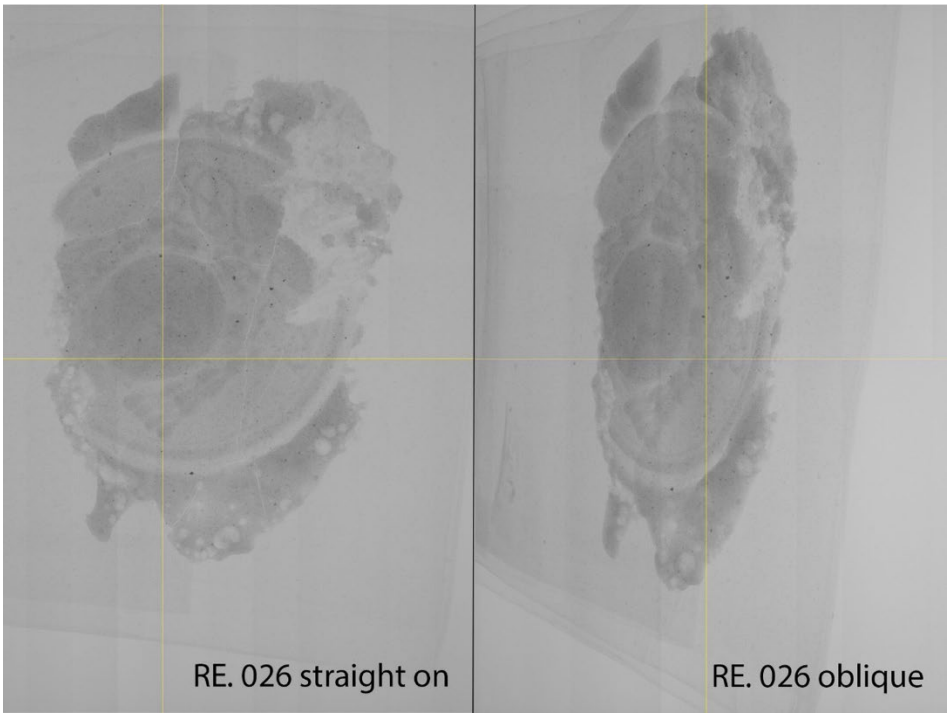


Figure 4-106. *Straight on and oblique views of RE. 026*

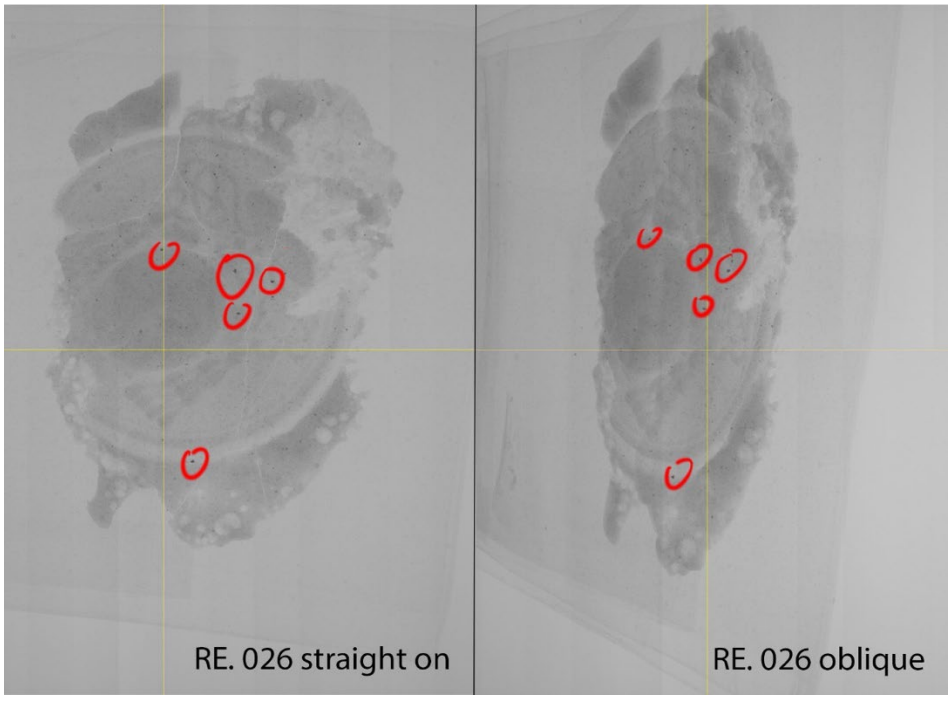


Figure 4-7. *Straight on and oblique views of RE. 026 with contents circled in red.*

4.3.1.2 RE. 041.

RE. 041 enclosed the largest amount of material, aside from RE. 059. Figure 4-12 shows the straight-on, oblique, and sideways angles of the contents of this sachet. The x-rays depict a soil mass. There is little detail within the individual x-rays to assist in differentiating materials based on texture or density. When compared to the x-rays of the bone sample, there were no similarities, which could indicate the presence of bone. For this reason, the presence of bone cannot be positively identified in this image, and the results are inconclusive. However, the soil mass may be encasing a bone so that it cannot be seen on an x-ray. Further analysis was done on this sachet via a micro-CT scan, which will be discussed later.

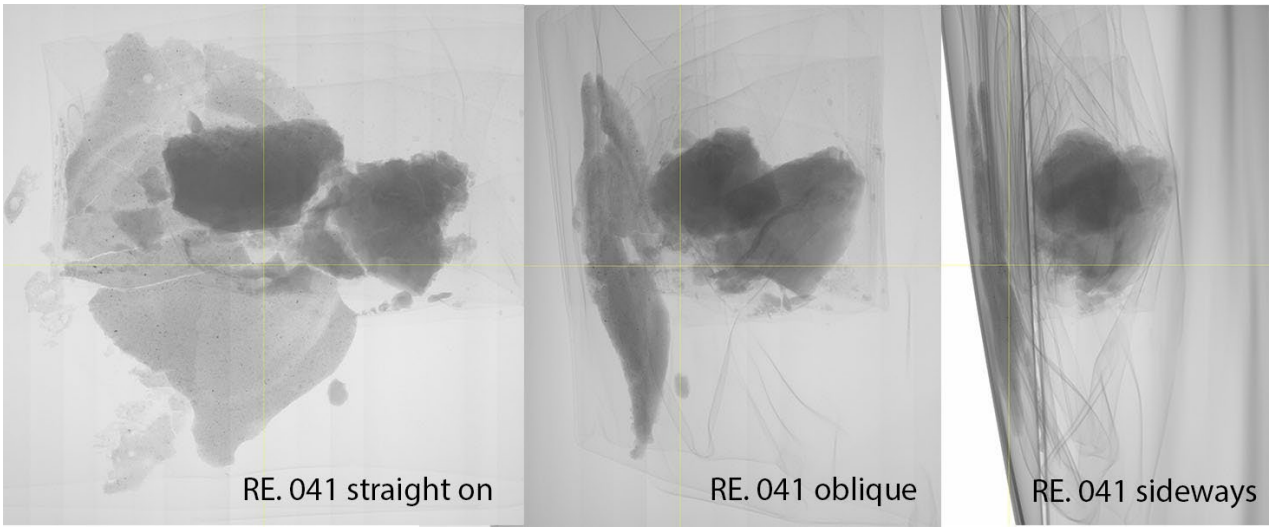


Figure 4-82. *Straight on, oblique, and sideways views of RE. 041.*

4.3.1.3 RE. 043

Figure 4-13 displays the straight-on and oblique x-rays taken of RE. 043. A small mass to the left edge of the wax seal can be seen in the x-rays of this sachet. This mass is slightly darker in colour (denser) than the wax seal, and a few similarities could be seen compared to the x-rays of the small cortical bone sample fragments. Figure 4-14 displays a side-by-side comparison of RE. 043 and the small bone fragments. Faint evidence of parallel lines is present on RE. 043. These parallel lines are also present on the comparative sample from the bone, indicating the contents of RE. 043 may be a very small, worn fragment of cortical bone. However, it is important to note that this is only one possible interpretation. It is also likely that the material within RE. 043 is a soil mass due to its similarities to the contents RE. 041 and RE. 059 with a possible bone

fragment. Therefore, it can be stated that the contents of RE. 043 display a possible bone fragment, with further analysis necessary to confirm.

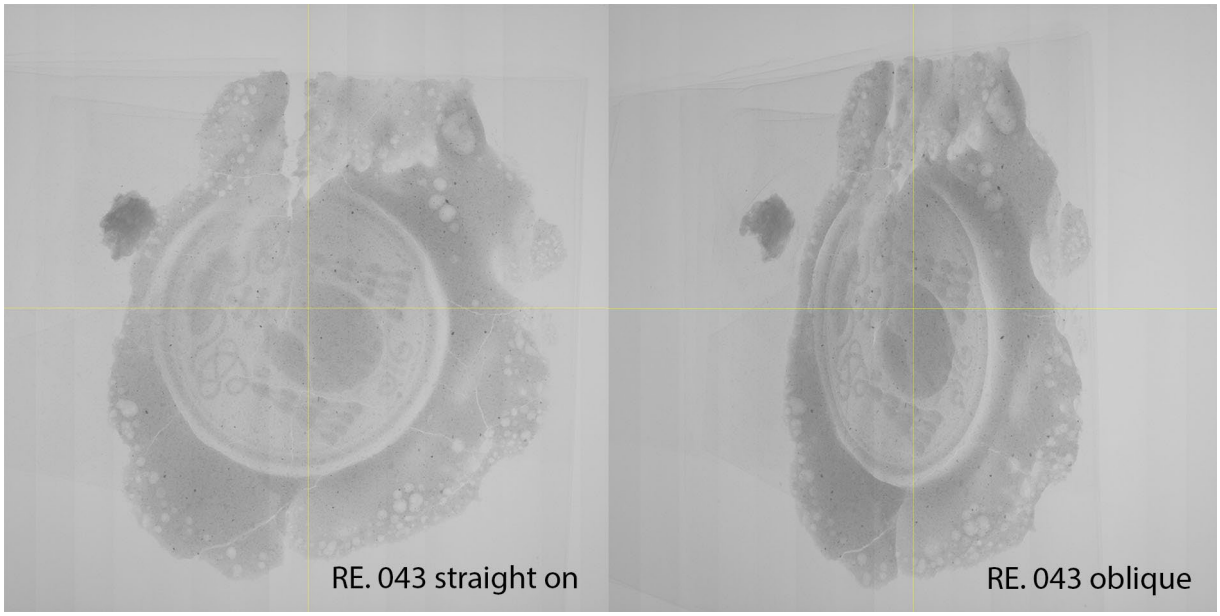


Figure 4-93. *Straight on and oblique views of RE. 043.*

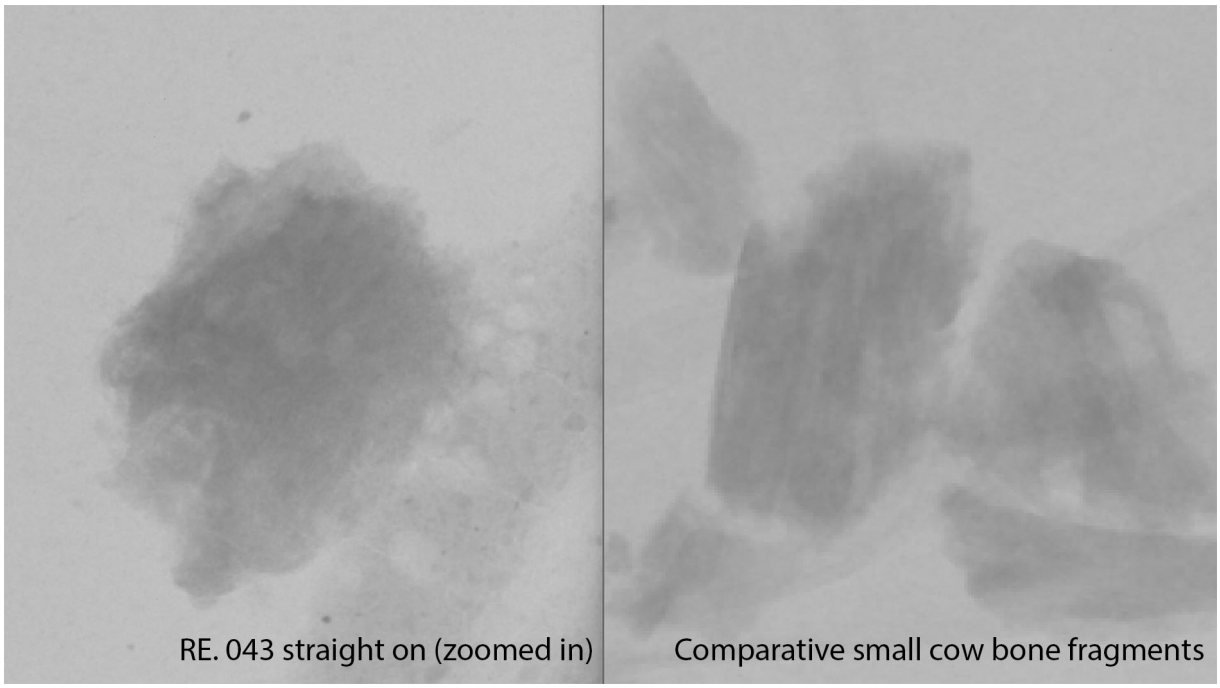


Figure 4-14. *Comparison of RE. 043 and the small bone fragments.*

4.3.1.4 RE. 051

Figure 4-15 shows the straight-on and oblique x-rays taken of RE. 051. A small mass can be seen on the lower center of the wax seal in the straight-on view of the sachet and to the left of the wax seal in the oblique view. The cloudy appearance of this mass would suggest that it is comprised of material that is clumped together, such as soil or dirt. Figure 4-16 displays a side-by-side comparison of RE. 051 and the small bone fragments. Few similarities can be seen in the structure of the material between the bone sample and the contents of RE. 051. A comparison between RE. 041 and RE. 051 can be seen in Figure 4-17, in which the clumpy structure of the contents is considerably more similar. Therefore, the contents of RE. 051 are identified as a soil mass.

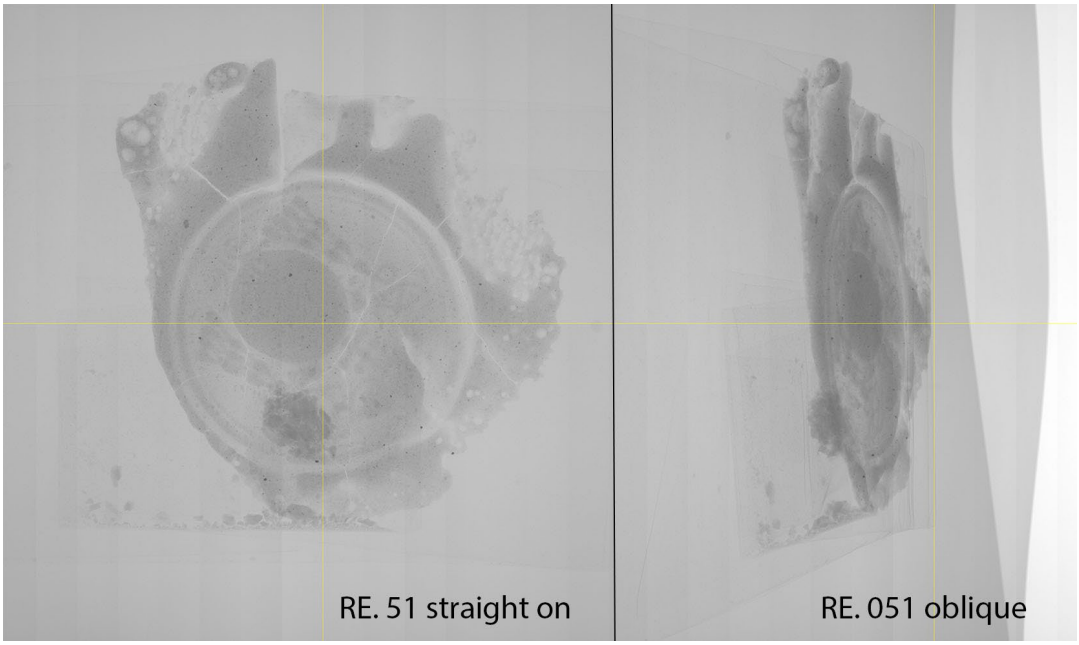


Figure 4-115. *Straight on and oblique views of RE. 051.*

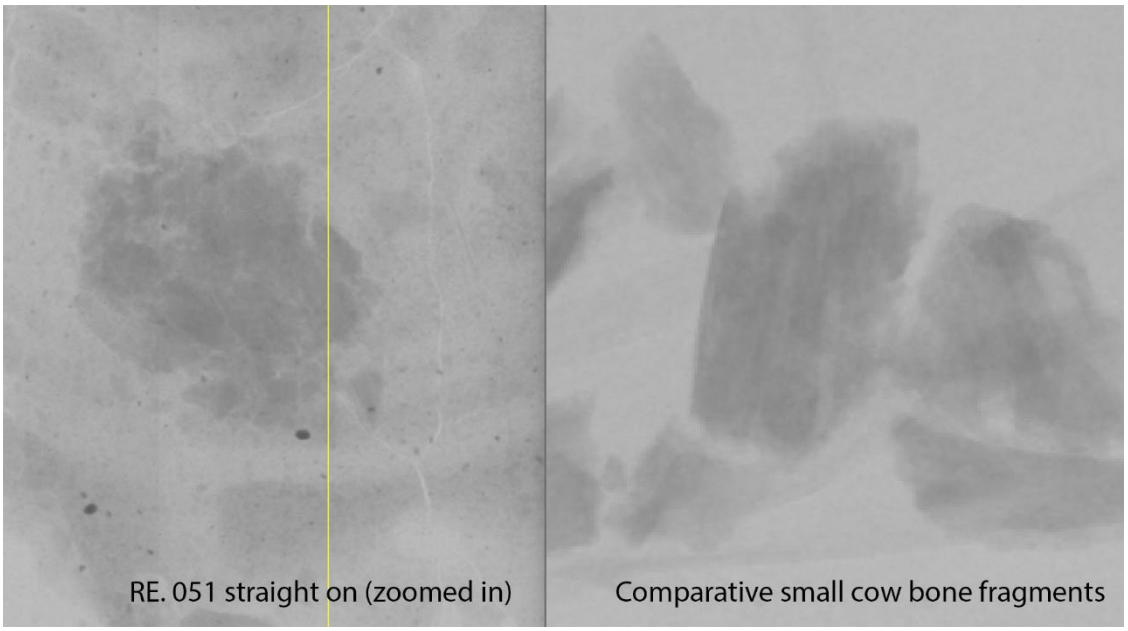


Figure 4-10. *Comparison of RE. 051 and the small bone fragments*

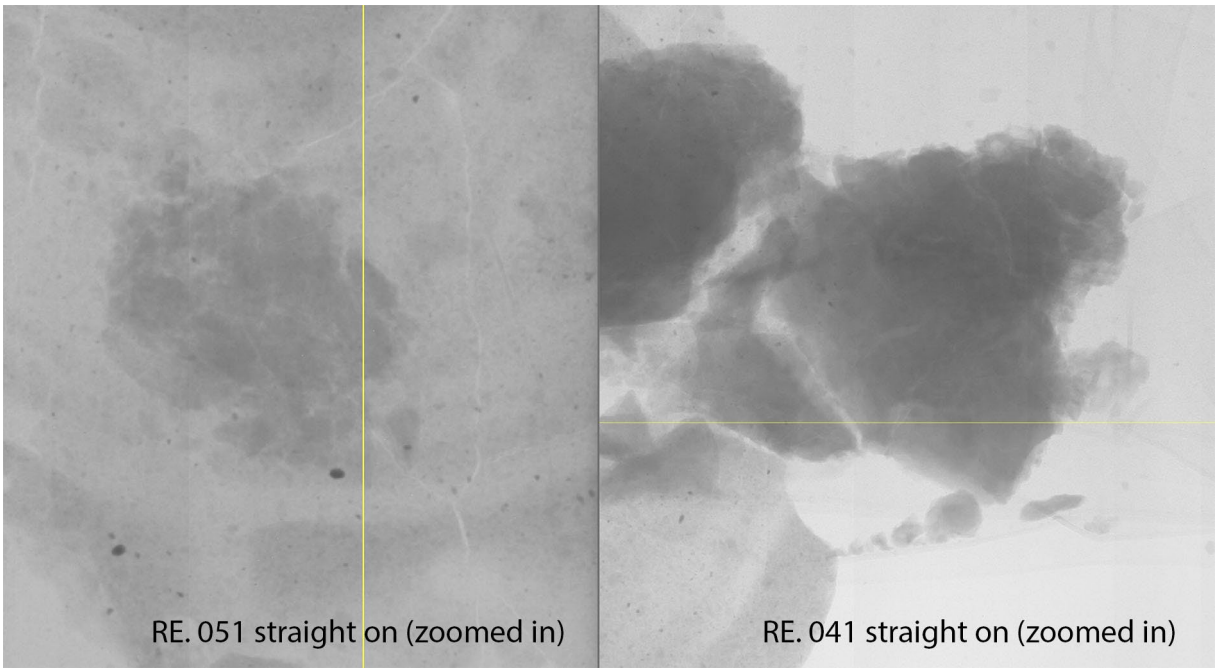


Figure 4-17. *Comparison of RE. 051 and RE. 041.*

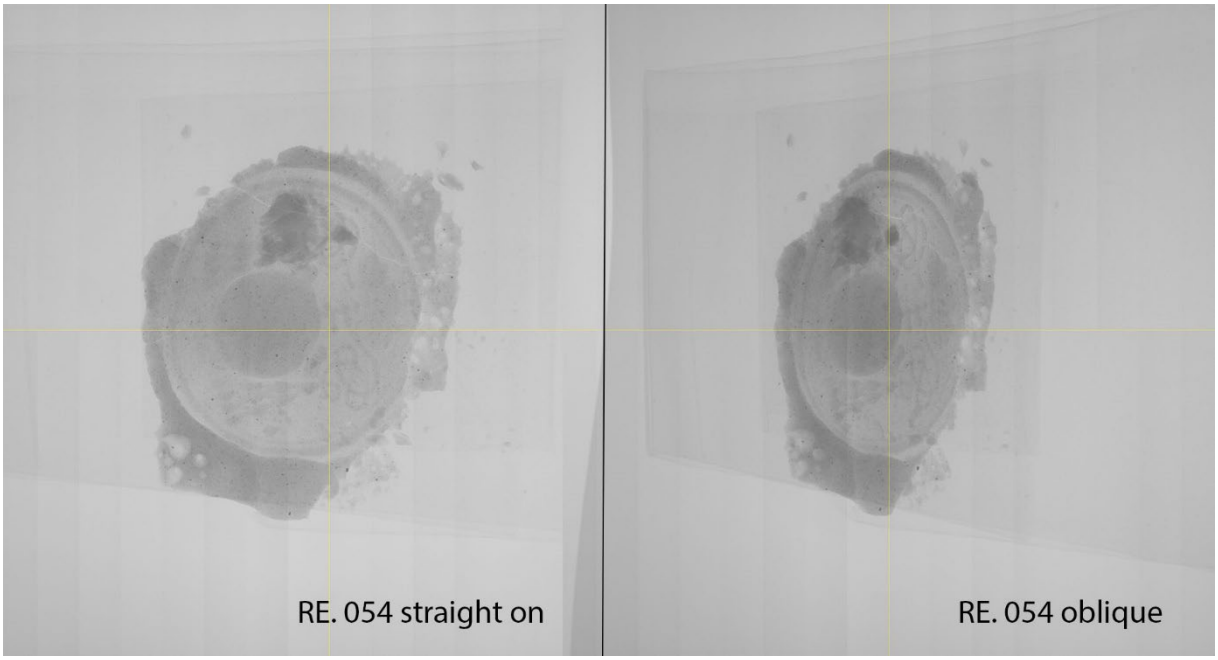


Figure 4-12. *Straight on and oblique views of RE. 054.*

4.3.1.5 RE. 054

Figure 4-18 displays the straight-on and oblique x-rays taken of RE. 054. A small mass of a slightly darker colour (denser) can be seen in the upper right quadrant of both views. On close inspection of the mass, there appear to be parallel striations that could indicate bone. Similar striations can be seen compared to the small and large bone

samples, as seen in Figure 4-19. Alternatively, when compared to the potential soil mass of RE. 41 in Figure 4-12, there are no striations, suggesting that the material within RE. 054 is structurally different from the material within RE. 041. Therefore, it can be stated that the contents of RE. 054 display a possible bone fragment, with further analysis necessary to confirm.

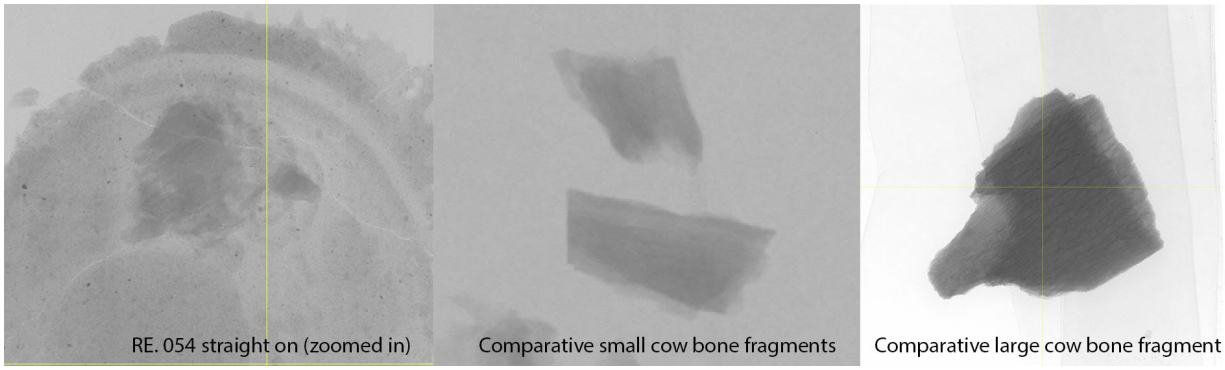


Figure 4-19. *Comparison of RE. 054, the small bone fragments, and the comparative large bone fragment.*

4.3.1.6 RE. 059

RE. 059 enclosed the largest amount of material of the relics analyzed for this study. Figure 4-20 displays the straight-on, oblique, and sideways x-ray views. The majority of the material within RE. 59 appears to be a potential soil mass, similar to the one seen in RE. 041. A comparison between the straight-on views of RE. 041 and RE. 059 can be seen in Figure 4-21. However, an object in the top center displays faint striations in the bone sample; a comparison between RE. 059 and the small bone sample can be seen in Figure 4-22. Therefore, it can be stated that the object identified in figure 4-20 is a potential bone fragment. Further analysis was done on this sachet via a micro-CT scan, which will be discussed later.

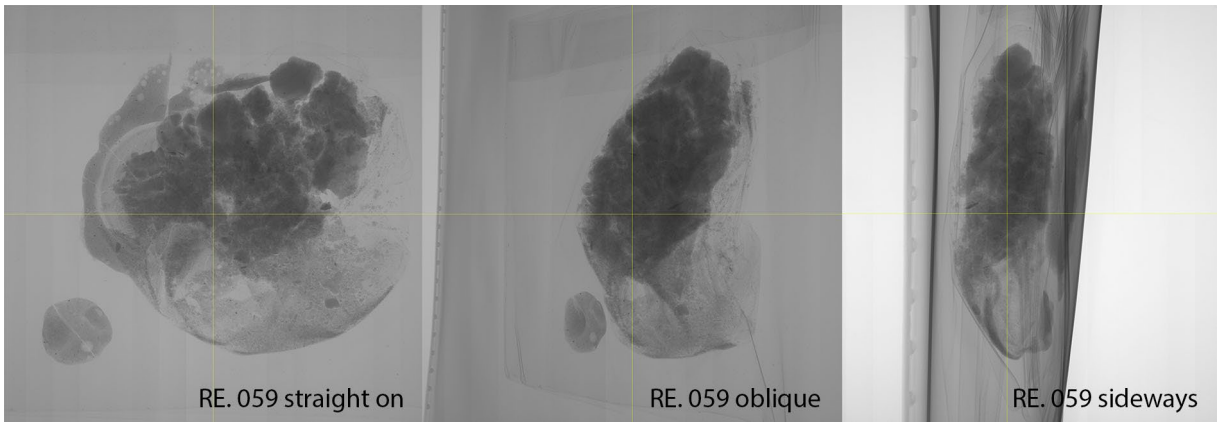


Figure 4-130. *Straight on, oblique, and sideways views of RE. 059*

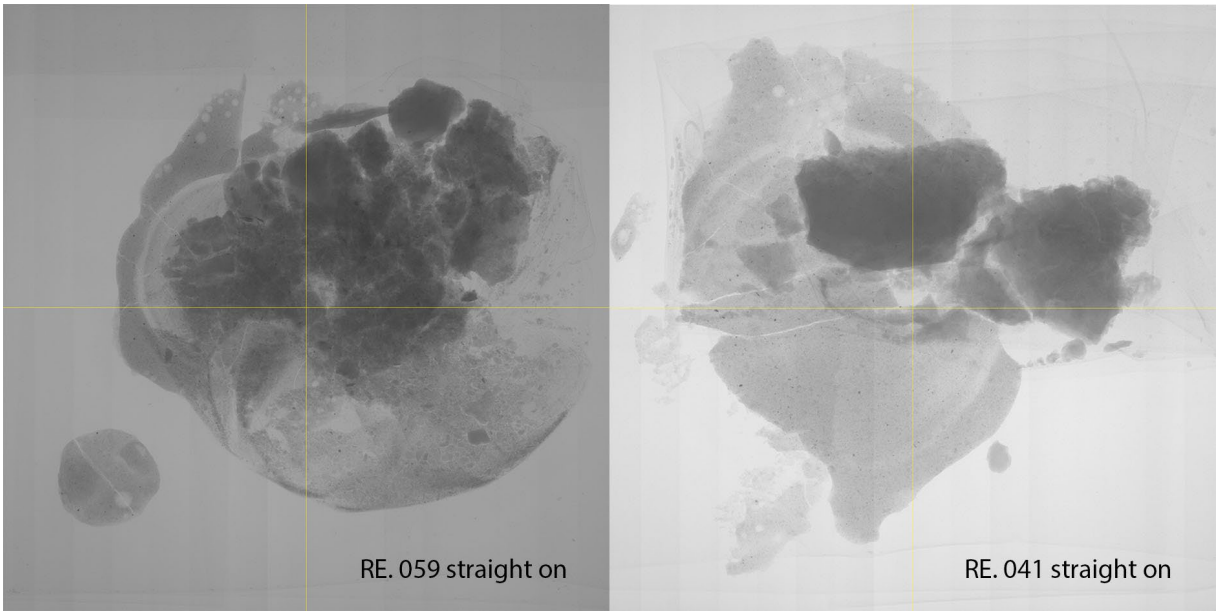


Figure 4-21. *Comparison of RE. 059 and RE. 041*

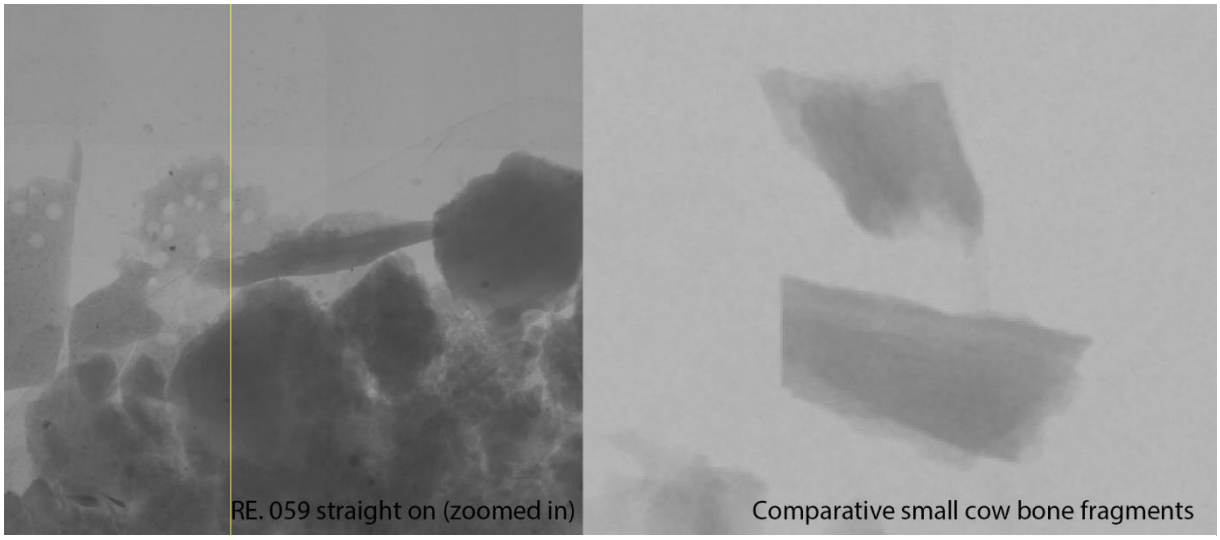
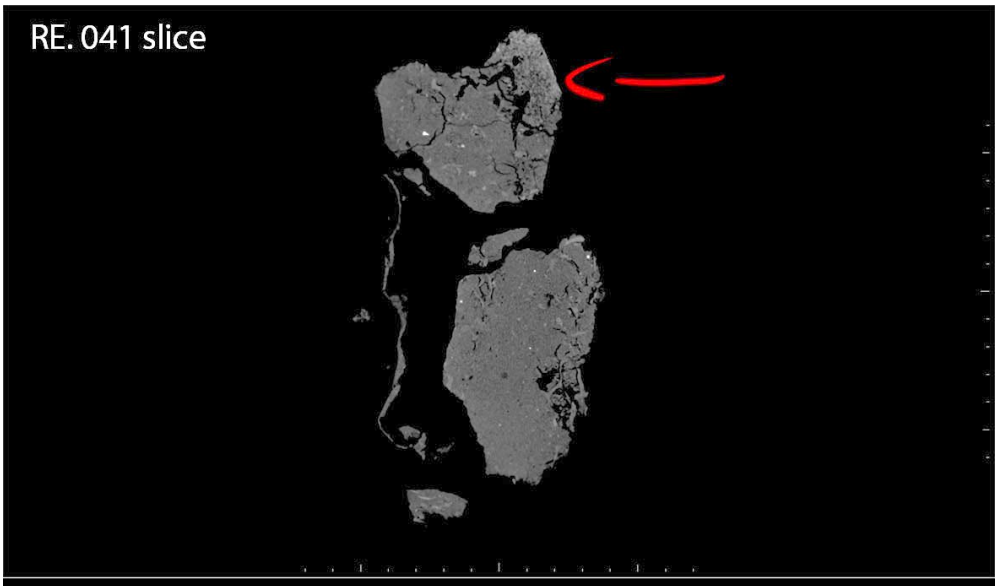


Figure 4-14. *Comparison of RE. 059 and the small bone fragments.*

4.3.2 Micro-CT-Scan Results

4.3.2.1 RE. 041

Following the micro-CT analysis of RE. 041, it was determined that a potential bone fragment, which did not appear on the x-rays, was present within its contents. Figure 4-23 displays an example slice and a zoomed-in view of this potential bone fragment in the upper right of the mass. This object appears to be composed of a different material than its surroundings; striations and possible osteons are also present within it. Figure 4-24 displays these potential osteons more clearly, in the upper left of the mass. The micro-CT scan of RE. 041 was then compared to the micro-CT scan of the sachet containing large and small bone sample fragments. Figure 4-25 displays the similarities between the bone fragments and the object seen in RE. 041. Therefore, this indicates the presence of a potential bone fragment within RE. 041.



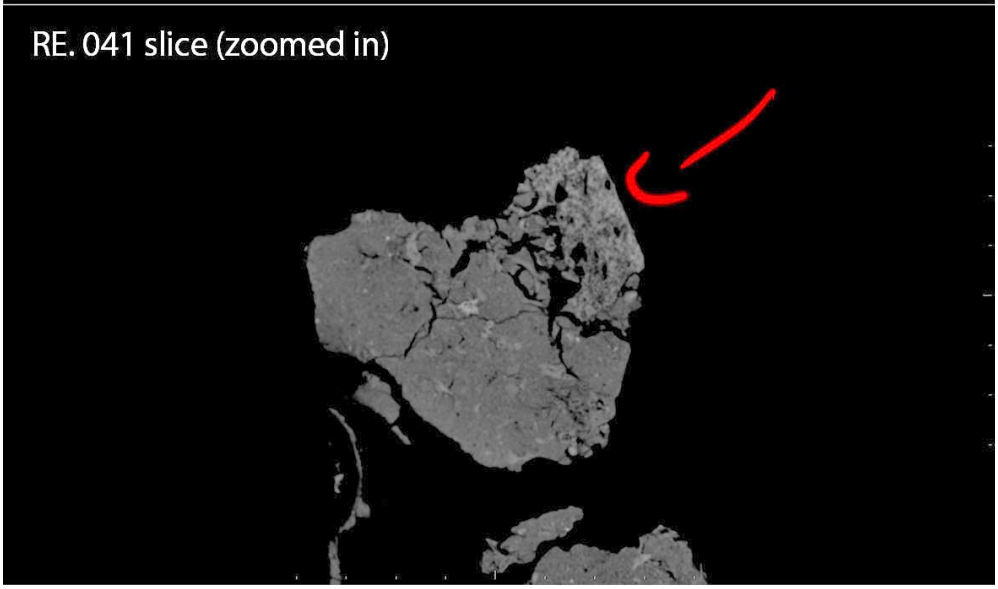


Figure 4-15. *RE. 041 example slice, and example slice zoom showing potential bone fragment.*

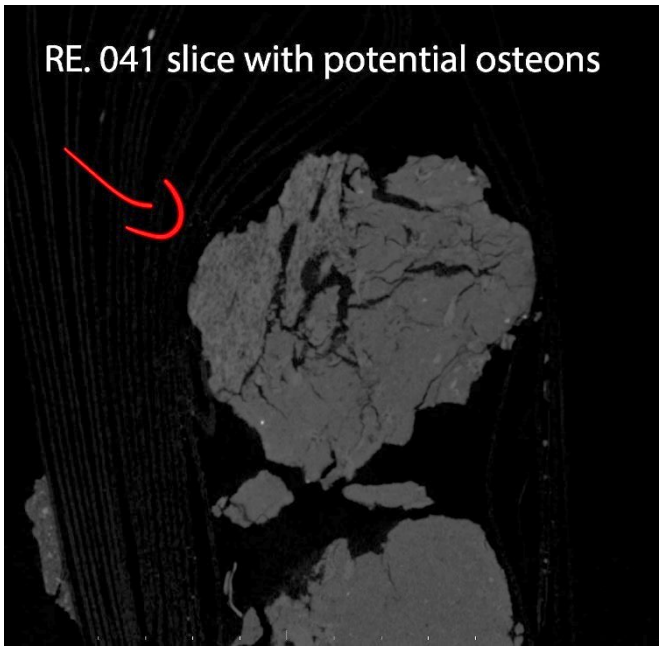


Figure 4-164. *RE. 041 slice displaying potential osteons on in the upper left of the mass*

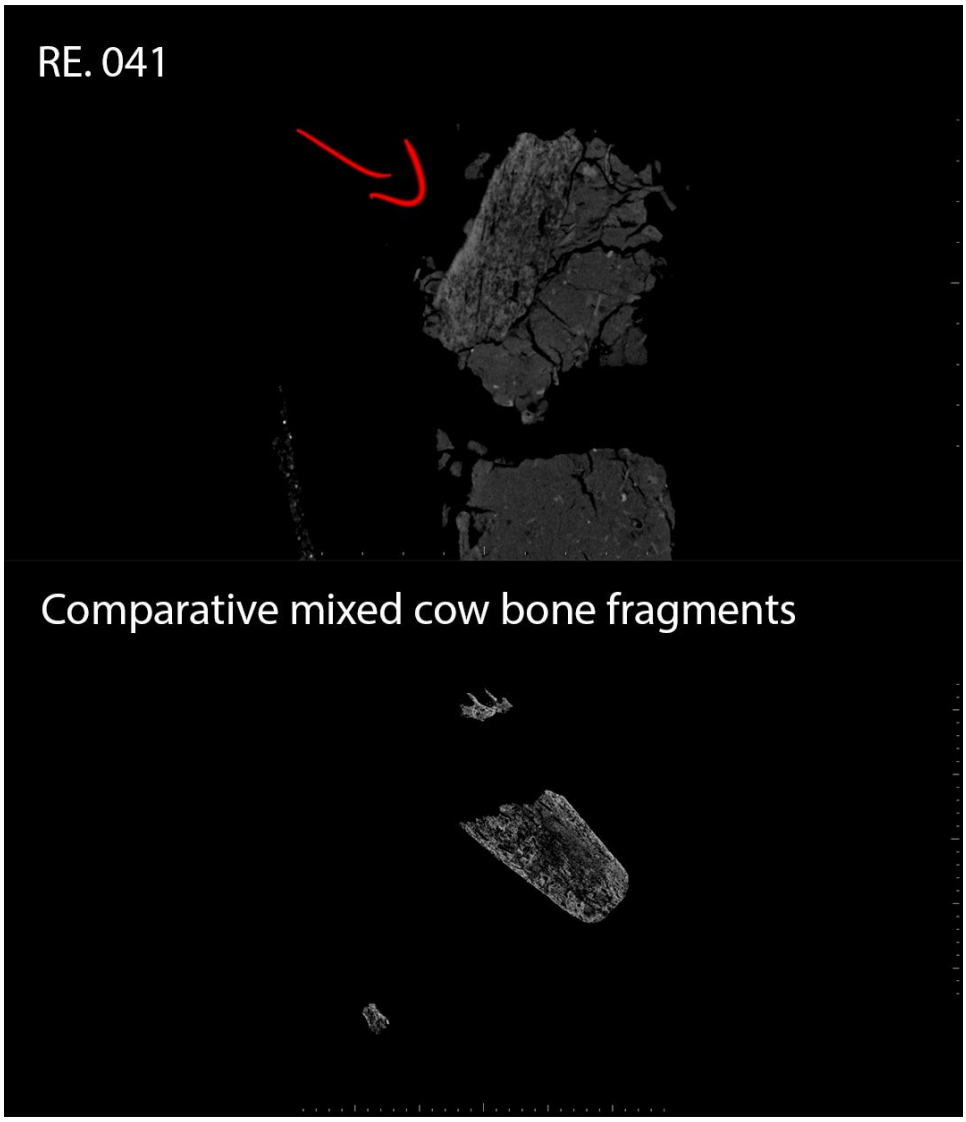


Figure 4-175. *Comparison between possible bone in RE. 041 and bone fragments*

4.3.2.2 RE. 059

Two micro-CT scans were performed on RE. 059, the first of which, a shorter scan, displayed with more clarity for potential bone fragment than seen in the initial x-ray. Figure 4-26 shows a straight-on view of RE. 059 with the potential bone fragment located on the bottom center of the image. Two dark oblong shapes resembling osteons can be seen within the potential bone fragment. However, the clarity of the image suffered due to the limited number of projections taken during the initial scan.

For this reason, an additional, much longer scan was performed to increase the quality of the image. Figure 4-27 displays a more detailed image of RE. 059 taken from the second scan, with the possible bone being situated in the top left quadrant. The striations and possible osteons are much clearer, allowing for a more confident identification that this feature is a probable bone fragment. Two videos were created using the imagery from the long scan of RE. 059 and ORS Visual SI (Scientific Investigation) software: a 3D video walkthrough and a side to side scroll video. These videos display the micro-CT images in their entirety, providing a complete view of the micro-CT imagery of RE. 095.

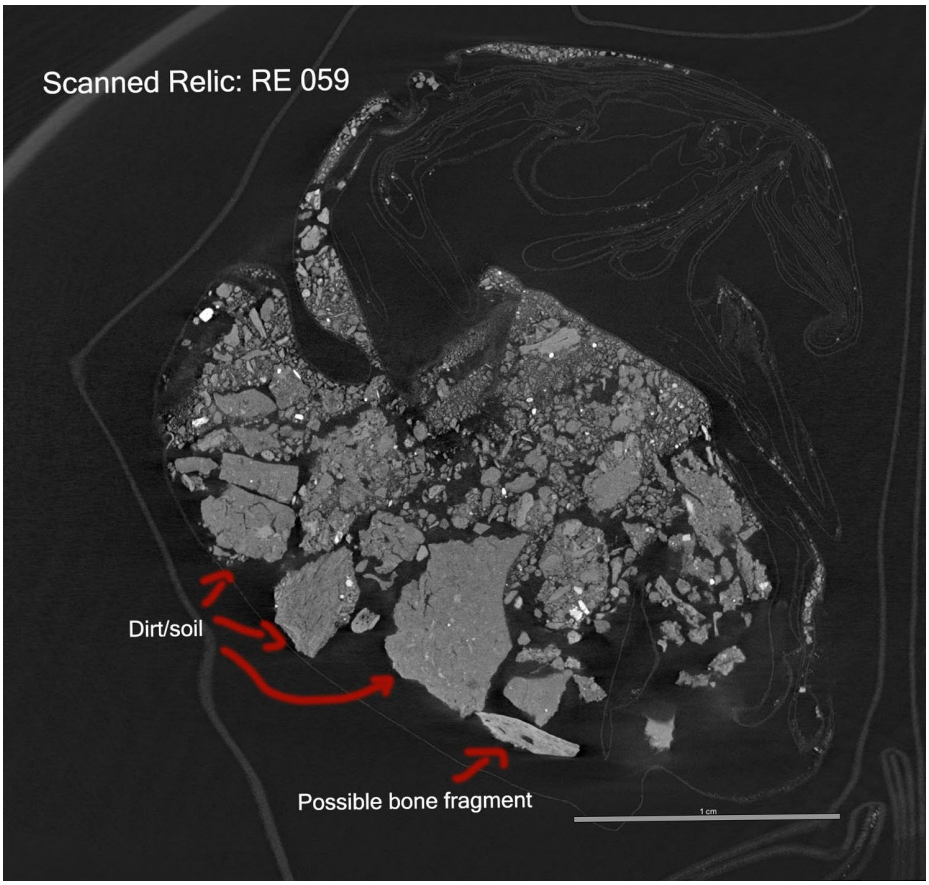


Figure 4-26. *Slice of RE. 059 taken from the first scan, displaying potential bone fragments at the bottom of the mass.*

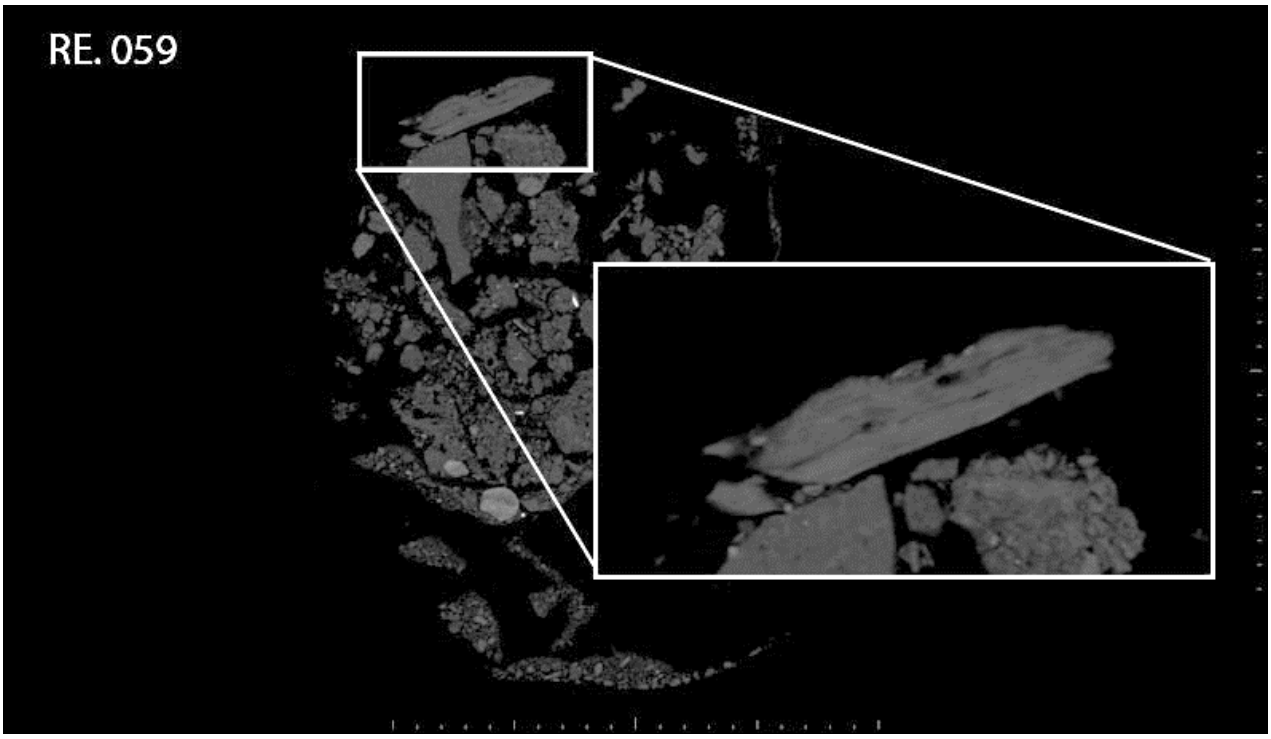


Figure 4-187. *Slice of RE. 059 taken from second scan, displaying potential bone at the top of the mass.*

4.4 Discussion

4.4.1 Possible Interpretive Errors

Given that this research focuses on a long-held spiritual practice in the Catholic tradition, it is important to detail the possible interpretive errors of analyzing enclosed relics in this way. There is a high probability of human error in interpreting the data, especially the x-ray images, which have much less flexibility as two-dimensional images compared to the 3D navigation offered by the micro-CT scans. In addition, lack of experience in interpreting x-ray images may have led me to miss some features indicative of bone or to falsely identify non-bone structures as bone in my analysis.

4.4.2 Interpretation of Results

The results from the x-ray analysis of the paper sachets found a potential bone fragment in three of the six sachets analyzed: RE. 043, RE. 054, and RE. 059. However, it is important to note that these interpretations are informed only by the single still images taken during the x-rays and the comparisons to the bone samples. The results from the micro-CT scans were more informative and added another sachet, RE. 041, to the list of sachets containing a potential bone fragment. This suggests that the 3D navigation of the contents of these sachets provided by micro-CT scans can assist in

material identification to a much greater extent than x-ray imaging on its own. Nevertheless, due to the uncertainty in the x-ray results compared to the micro-CT scan results, it is recommended that further analysis be done on unscanned sachets to determine their contents with higher certainty.

The potential bone fragments seen in RE. 041, RE. 043, RE. 054, and RE. 059 are too small and fragmented to positively identify whether or not they belonged to a human. During a trip to the Diocese of London, the Fr. John Comiskey informed me that everything associated with the saint is collected when collecting bones for reliquaries, including known faunal remains such as rats (personal communication, March 11, 2022). Fr. Comiskey said that the animal bones were not to be separated from the saint's bones because of this association (personal communication, March 11, 2022). However, despite the lack of certainty, each of these sachets is associated with a saint, and this association makes them real to the faithful. Therefore, it is possible that secondary relics were collected and stored as primary relics with little way to differentiate one from the other. This then leads to the question does authenticity matter for reliquaries? The answer depends on those who house said reliquaries. These relics often do not come with authentication certificates, and many of the people who desire relics do not feel the need for authentic ones in this sense (D. Majer, personal communication, March 11, 2022). The main drive for individuals looking for relics for a reliquary is their connection to the saint. It is likely that the stronger a connection a person feels to a particular saint, the less confirmation that they will need of a relic's authenticity. This represents the secondary agency of the dead (Arnold 2014: 525; Hooper 2014: 198; Keane 2014: 319). Figure 4-28 displays how secondary agency is agency that is bestowed upon the dead by the living (Arnold 2014: 525; Hooper 2014: 198;

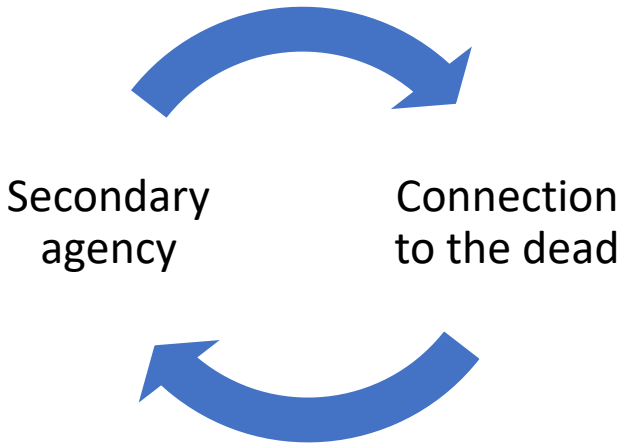


Figure 4-28. *Illustration of how the connection to the dead and secondary agency rely on each other.*

Keane 2014: 319). In this sense, humans allow the dead to affect their lives in a cyclical relationship of power exchange between the living and dead.

A stronger connection to the dead may result in a stronger secondary, post-mortem agency. Perhaps if one felt a strong enough connection to St. Andrew Avellino, the sparsity of material making up the relic itself would be of secondary importance to the saint's name, and the connection one feels toward him. Given that the x-ray of RE. 026 displayed what looked to be small speckles of dirt or dust; it may very well be that the sachet contains a third-class relic such as dust from St. Andrew Avellino's tomb.

4.5 Conclusion

At the beginning of this paper, a definition of religious relics was provided and stated as physical objects, either the human remains of a saint, or anything associated with a saint. However, relics are, above all, an idea that is both held and imbued with power by people. The longstanding catholic tradition of saint adoration through the procurement, distribution and housing of relics would not exist without the deep connection between living people and the saints they admire (Arnold 2014: 525; Hooper 2014: 198; Keane 2014: 319). The object itself, in this case, the relic, has no meaning or power without those who provide it. In this sense, a relic is a manifestation of the connection felt between living people and the dead. The lack of scientific confirmation regarding a relic's authenticity should then, in theory, have little to no impact on its validity as a relic to the individual possessing it.

According to Fr. Comiskey (see pg. 1), the intent of these relics is not to worship them but to instead feel a direct connection to a particular saint (personal communication, February 9, 2022). Perhaps then, the material remains of these relics are of secondary importance to the associated name. If this is the case, then the saint's name and what they are the patron saint of is where the connection between the living and dead lies; the material remains act then only as a conduit by which the living can express their adoration toward said saint. This is all to say that perhaps the material remains that hold the title 'relic' are much more fluid than traditional definitions would suggest. If the Church provides a relic associated with a saint of particular interest to an individual, said relics' provenience or authenticity does not necessarily play a particularly significant role in its manifestation. The name of the saint is of the utmost importance regarding relic manifestation. And while further research via micro-CT

scanning into the relics housed within the remaining paper sachets may be of interest to the Diocese of London, for the purposes of information about the collection, the additional information that these scans may provide will likely prove less influential in the selection of relics then the already available names of the saint.

4.6 Bibliography

ARNOLD, B. 2014. Life After life: Bioarchaeology and post-mortem agency. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 24: 523–29. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0959774314000572.

HOOPER, S. 2014. A cross-cultural theory of relics: On understanding religion, bodies, artefacts, images, and art. *World Art*.

KEANE, W. 2014. Rotting bodies: The clash of stances toward materiality and its ethical affordances. *Current Anthropology*, *55* supp 16, S312-S321.

WALSHAM, A. 2010. Introduction: Relics and remains. *Past & Present* 206: supp 5, pp.9-36.
https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtq026.

Chapter 5: Translation - Movement and Circulation of Sacred Relics

By Natalie B. Stephens

Abstract

Scholars from various backgrounds have long been interested in the circulation of relics. However, a relatively understudied aspect of relic circulation is their movement in the modern era. In this chapter, an exploration of questions regarding the normative patterns of present-day relic circulation will be provided, alongside a consideration of departures from these norms in the form of Internet-based relic circulation. These considerations will aim to examine the significant role played by the Catholic Church in establishing normative patterns in relic circulation, and the impact of departures from the norm on the Catholic system of relic veneration.

5. 1 Introduction

For centuries and continuing into the present, individuals have engaged in the veneration of relics. When considering the fascinating realm of sacred relics, the manner in which these objects circulate throughout the modern global context proves to be a compelling area of study. Although not restricted to it, the veneration of relics has long been practiced within the Roman-Catholic religious tradition and the Church continues to play a significant role in the use and circulation of relics (Cruz 1984; Geisbusch 2008; Nafte 2015). In the first section of this chapter, the role of the Catholic Church in establishing normative processes surrounding the translation of sacred relics from one location to another, and the nature of these procedures, will act as a focal point. This section will also consider existing misconceptions about the process. From there, the chapter's focus will shift to relic movements occurring outside of these normative patterns through a consideration of the circulation of relics within e-commerce contexts such as eBay and other online platforms. A final focus will be applied to the post-mortem agency of sacred relics which act as driving forces of human actions. Through these key focal points, this chapter aims to provide possible answers to the question of what normative and non-normative patterns exist in the movement of sacred relics

throughout the modern world?, and what do departures from the norm reveal about the system of relic veneration? From these considerations, it will be established that the Catholic Church continues to maintain a powerful role in the movement of relics in the present day, yet the circulation and procurement of relics within e-commerce platforms impacts the authority of this role. Given the broad nature of relic veneration and the study of contemporary relic circulation being in its infancy, this chapter is non-exhaustive in nature.

5.2 The Catholic Church and Normative Patterns in the Movement of Relics

In this section, the manner in which relics are translated within the context of the Catholic Church will be explored. This consideration will function to establish the normative patterns that exist to regulate the movement of relics in the modern context and the role of the Catholic Church in these normative processes. Here, it is important to note that the term 'translation' in reference to sacred relics can be defined as the official act within the Roman-Catholic tradition of moving a relic to a new location such as a church or altar for the act of veneration (Di Giovine 2012: 127).

5.2.1 The Movement of Relics and Canon Law

Far from being an outdated custom, relics remain a prevalent aspect of the Catholic Church in the modern context. As a key feature which sets them apart from other objects, relics possess a sacred character, resulting in the perception of them as a connection between the mundane and the divine (Walsham 2010). Additionally, relics as objects perceived to channel redemptive forces, blessings, and miracles of healing have resulted in the prevalence of incorrect interests in and valuation of relics. These have led to an interest in relics as "objects of consumption, accumulation, and display" (Walsham 2010: 31). Therefore, it is suggested that relics have been sold, purchased, stolen, gifted, and divided in both historic and contemporary contexts (Geary 1986: 169) (see Chapter 1 for a discussion of Middle Age relic circulation). Evidently, these interests must be understood as going against the valuation of relics within the context of the Catholic Church, where it is asserted that relics must be regarded as possessing only spiritual value (D. Majer, personal communication, February 9, 2022). Here, I suggest that for the Catholic Church, the importance of maintaining control over, and the subsequent tightening of regulations over, the movement of relics stems from long-

standing relic commodification, relic profanation, and illicit and unregulated movements motivated by views of relics as objects with monetary value, rather than spiritual value. In this way, attempts to maintain control over the circulation of relics have led to the creation of laws which aim to preserve relics and prevent the illicit trade of these sacred objects, as codified in The Code of Canon Law and overseen by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints (Fiejdasz-Buczek 2018; Office of Canonical Service 2022). Notably, these laws are universally applied and function to "bind everywhere all those for whom they were issued," yet mechanisms of enforcing Canon Laws relating to relics are vastly different from those of other prominent legal systems and are essentially non-existent (Peters 2001; Code of Canon Law: Canon 12 §1; D. Majer, personal communication, April 25, 2022). Further, mechanisms of enforcement such as canonical policing or jail systems do not exist, resulting in the Catholic Church being unable to legally enforce Canon Law. In the absence of such mechanisms, Catholic bishops cannot enforce, but rather only encourage adherence to these laws through aligning their own actions in accordance with the rules and guidelines pertaining to relics asserted within canonical law (Peters 2001). Despite this reality, Canon Laws pertaining to the processes involved in the movement of sacred relics continue to be adhered to and upheld by many individuals in good conscience.

A key aspect of the normative procedures surrounding the translation and circulation of relics as defined by the Catholic Church is stated in The Code Canon Law, Canon 1190 §1 which asserts that "it is absolutely forbidden to sell sacred relics" (Code of Canon Law: Canon 1190 §1). An additional aspect of the Catholic Church's procedures pertaining to the circulation of relics can be further observed in Canon Law as attempts to limit the alienation, through transfer or donation, of relics without the approval of the Holy See (Fiejdasz-Buczek 2018: 189). This is asserted in Canon 1190 §2 of The Code of Canon Law, which asserts that,

> *"relics of great significance and other relics honoured with great reverence by the people cannot be alienated validly in any manner or transferred permanently without the permission of the Apostolic See" (*Code of Canon Law: Canon 1190 §2*).*

When considering these Canon Laws, it is evident that the Catholic Church aims to continue the honouring of sacred relics in a religious spirit and to protect these objects from commodification and unregulated or illicit circulation. Here, I argue that the

establishment of, and encouraged adherence to, Canon Law is a key aspect of normative patterns in the circulation of relics in the modern context. In this way, the creation of and adherence to laws pertaining to relics reveals the significant role of the Catholic Church in controlling the contemporary circulation of sacred relics. An example of the adherence to Canon Law pertaining to relics is displayed through the inclusion of the above-mentioned Canon's in the "Policies and Procedures Manual for the Archives of the Diocese of London" (Office of Canonical Service 2022: 24; D. Majer, personal communication, March 21, 2022). Evidently, the adherence to these Laws reflects the manner in which normative procedures are followed by individual Catholic dioceses in the modern context. In addition to the Canon Law being imperative to the control of relic circulation and creation of normative procedures, the 2017 Instruction *Relics in the Church: Authenticity and Preservation* also functions to assert control over relic translation, highlighting the significant role of the Catholic Church in the circulation of relics.

5.2.2 The Instruction on "Relics in the Church: Authenticity and Preservation and the Movement of Relics

A key aspect of the Catholic Church's procedures concerning the circulation of relics is the Instruction "*Relics in the Church: Authenticity and Preservation"*. The text of this document was developed by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, with its status being a legal instruction. This Instruction became legally binding in December 2017 following approval of Pope Francis (Fiejdasz-Buczek 2018). A critical aspect of this document includes to whom the Instruction is addressed. Importantly, the Instruction aims to address the actions of both Catholic diocesan Bishops and Eparchs, in addition to all that engage with the relics of Saints and the blessed (Fiejdasz-Buczek 2018). Further, the Instruction aims to define what is required in engaging with these sacred objects. In doing so, the Instruction presents the canonical procedures which must be followed in order to assure the preservation and continued veneration of relics (Congregation for the Causes of Saints 2017). A key aspect of this preservation is defined in the Instruction is the canonical procedures on the translation and movement of relics. In accordance with Canon Law, the instruction refers to Canon 1190 §1, asserting that,

> "*The commerce (that is, the exchange of a relic for something else or for money) and the sale of relics (that is the cessation of ownership of a relic for a*

> *corresponding price), as well as their display in profane or unauthorized places, are absolutely prohibited"* (Vatican Congregation for the Causes of Saints 2017: §2 Article 25).

Evidently, Article 25 reflects the importance placed on preventing the illicit and unregulated circulation of relics by the Catholic Church, as well as the necessity of regarding relics as only possessing spiritual, rather than monetary value. Additionally, the Instruction presented the procedures to be followed in the event of a relic being translated within the same diocese or eparchy, or to another diocese or eparchy. In doing so, the Instruction states in "Chapter III Translation of the Urn and Alienation of Relics":

> *"If the operation involves the translation of the mortal remains of a Servant of God or of a Venerable within the confines of the same diocese or eparchy, the urn is to be closed and bound with ribbons fixed with the seal of the Bishop and, without any solemnity is to be placed in the same place or in the new place of burial"* (Congregation for the Causes of Saints 2017: §1 Article 26).

> *"If the relics or the remains will be definitively transferred to another diocese or eparchy, after having observed the prescription mentioned in Art. 2 § 1 of the present Instruction, the Bishop of the diocese or eparchy where they are preserved is to nominate a member of the Christian Faithful (priest, consecrated man/woman, layman/laywoman) to act as Guardian-Porter"* (Vatican Congregation for the Causes of Saints 2017: §1 Article 27).

As evidenced in Articles 26 and 27, the Vatican presents procedures which control the movement, or translation, of relics both within and between Catholic institutions. From this, I suggest that these procedures function to regulate the movement of relics in order to preserve their sacred character, prevent desecration, and prevent the clandestine trade of relics. In turn, this reflects the significant role that the Catholic Church plays in the circulation of relics in the present-day. Additional aspects of relic circulation exist within in the modern context that are important to consider, including the processes of requesting relics of the blessed and saints which belong to the Catholic Church Order. These however, have resulted in misconceptions surrounding the circulation of relics.

5.2.3 Relics in the Diocese and Requesting Relics

In addition to the official translation of relics both within and between Catholic institutions, there exists other aspects of relic circulation between people and Catholic institutions. An important aspect of relic circulation in the modern context is the arrival of relics at dioceses outside of Rome, such as those at the Diocese of London, Ontario. It is known that, beginning in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, relics were translated by Bishops to the New World as part of the Catholic Church's mission to evangelize these new lands and carry on the ancient tradition of placing sacred relics within the altar stones of new churches (Walsham 2010; D. Majer, personal communication, March 21, 2022). In the years since the colonization of the New World, many parishes, churches, and other Catholic institutions which housed relics have recently been closed. This led to the regulated movement of relics from these institutions to diocese archives that act as a safe space for relics. Often times, this resulted in diocese archives coming to possess large amounts of relics- as is the case at the Archives of the Diocese of London (D. Majer, personal communication, March 21, 2022).

When in possession of relics, a diocese may be able to fulfill official requests for relics upon permission from the Diocese Bishop, however, policies and procedures dictated by the Catholic Church remain in effect. Yet, in the extraordinary case of the Diocese of London, a falsely informed news article led members of the public to develop the incorrect impression that the Diocese was liquidating their relic collection and subsequently supplying these to anyone who requested them, bringing in hundreds of requests for relics from across the globe (D. Majer, personal communication, March 21, 2022). As a result, the Diocese was forced to decline these requests as they went against the normative procedures surrounding relic translation and movement, especially the requests in which reflected a non-spiritual valuation of relics. This instance reflects the adherence to Catholic procedures in the movement of relics, and the development of misconceptions surrounding the circulation of Catholic relics as some individuals are under the impression that these objects circulate freely and in an unregulated manner. In order to address these misconceptions and in conjunction with Canon Law and the Instruction, one method of preventing the unregulated translation of relics in response to external requests can be seen in the use of a system of norms established by the Order of the Discalced Carmelites. In this context, it is the Office of

the Postulator General that is in control over the custody and distribution of relics. In requesting relics from this Order, it is stated that the following norms must be observed:

> *"2. Every petition must be delivered to the Office of the Postulator General by means of correspondence on letterhead with the signature of the responsible officer and the seal of the office"* (Order of the Discalced Carmelites General Postulation of the Causes of Saints 2022).
>
> *"3. Normally, only petitions from parish pastors or superiors of religious community are accepted. They must always specify that the relics are for public veneration by the faithful and must clearly indicate the place within the church or public chapel where the relic will be placed for veneration by the faithful"* (Order of the Discalced Carmelites General Postulation of the Causes of Saints 2022).
>
> *"4. Requests by laity (seminarians included) will not be considered except in exceptional cases. Requests by relic collectors will not be considered. Only one relic of a particular saint or blessed will be given"* (Order of the Discalced Carmelites General Postulation of the Causes of Saints 2022).
>
> *"5. Requests are accepted for places where there is an existing veneration or where it is desired to increase devotion"* (Order of the Discalced Carmelites General Postulation of the Causes of Saints 2022).

As an additional aspect of how relics circulate in the modern context, the act of requesting relics is strictly regulated by Catholic institutions. Importantly, it is clearly asserted in these norms that relics should remain in locations to be worshipped by the faithful and not in possession of 'relic collectors', or individuals who regard relics as possessing value that is other than spiritual. Evidently, the regulation of relic requests through norms such as those described here reflects an additional mode to which the Catholic Church is able to control the movement of relics, therefore continuing to preserve and protect these sacred objects. In this way, I suggest that the significant role of the Catholic Church in the circulation of relics in the modern world is further observed in, and established by, the regulation of requests for relics, which ultimately reinforces the normative procedures to be followed in the movement of relics between people and institutions in the present-day. As evidenced throughout this section, the Catholic Church asserts control over the movement of relics through Canon Law, the

Instruction, and the regulation of relic requests. Despite the normative procedures created and perpetuated by the Catholic Church, many relics are actively bought and sold on the Internet through websites such as eBay and other online platforms. These departures from the normative patterns surrounding relic circulation will be further considered in the following section.

5.3 The Nature and Impact of Non-Normative Relic Circulation

This section aims to examine modes of relic circulation that go against the normative patterns established by the Catholic Church. The potential impact of deviations from the norm on the role of the Catholic Church in relic circulation will also be examined. The interpretations presented in this section were developed through consultation with scholarly literature, as well as through primary online research on eBay and other online platforms. A critical first step in this online research was gaining an understanding of the platform's policies pertaining to relics. Within eBay's Customer Service statements, under the "Human body parts policy" it is stated that, "Human body parts or items containing body parts are not allowed, including first class relics" (eBay n.d.). However, as discovered in my research and suggested by Huffer & Charlton (2019) despite website policies clearly prohibiting the sale of first class or body relics on Internet platforms, these sales remain plentiful. The sale of first-class relics was demonstrated through a simple product search on eBay. This simple search presented over two hundred-fifty results from across the globe for first-class relics for sale, up for auction, or recently sold. Many listings displayed photographs of the relics and their accompanying documents (Figures 5-1 & 5-2), ranging in listing prices of a few hundred Canadian Dollars to several thousand Canadian Dollars.

In a similar nature, the sale of first-class relics also occurs on other online sites such as the Netherlands-based Flumenalis, which describes itself as "the largest religious antique specialists worldwide…offering the worlds largest collection of relics & reliquaries" (Flumenalis, 2022). This platform does not display a terms of service statement or policy which may pertain to prohibiting the sale of first-class body relics, but rather asserts that "bringing relics-back-to the right people and bringing relics-back-to the right place, is no sin!" (Flumenalis, 2022). Upon undertaking this online research, it became evident that relics are circulated across a global scale in a manner which deviates from the normative patterns established by the Catholic Church. This was evidenced through the sale of relics resulting in individuals gaining profits of hundreds

to thousands of dollars, as well as through the reality that upon sale, these relics are often shipped across the world without guardianship. Evidently, this mode of Internet relic circulation goes against both Canon Law and the Instruction, as outlined above. In this way, I suggest that this unregulated and non-normative method of relic circulation goes against the Catholic system of relic veneration as it assigns a monetary value to relics rather than a strictly spiritual value, which in turn functions to blur the boundaries between sacred and profane (Geisbusch 2008).

Figure 5-1. *Advertisement of first-class relic for sale dating to the 19th Century. Retrieved from https://www.fluminalis.com/inventory/reliquary-relics/first-class-multi-reliquary-relics-s-clementis-s-severini-s-innocentii-s-incondemii-s-valerii-s-claudii-s-quirini-s-abudantii-s-valentini-en-brass-bronze-glass-wax-seals-belgium-19th-century-2455736 .*

Figure 5-2. *eBay Advertisement for First-Class Relic of St. John Vianney Jean-Baptiste-Marie + Document, 2022. Retrieved from https://www.ebay.ca/itm/265230790417?hash=item3dc0fcaf11:g:jnsAAOSwHj9g73Ay .*

As platforms for the circulation of relics outside of Catholic institutions, it is critical to consider the potential impact of websites such as eBay and Fluminalis. Geisbusch (2008) suggests that such websites possess a mercenary aspect in that by

engaging in the sale of sacred relics, many users are primarily concerned with making a profit at the expense of ethics and going against normative procedures as asserted in Canon Law and other Catholic documents. In addition to commercializing the circulation of relics and rendering these objects as commodities to be purchased and sold, the auction aspect of these platforms also creates a sense of competitiveness amongst the users. Resultingly, this calls into question whether users engaged with and sought out these objects due to their appreciation of the spiritual and religious value of relics, or for their perceived monetary value that would allow them to make a profit. In this sense, platforms such as eBay and Flumenalis may become spaces characterized by competition, self-interest, and to some extent secularism (Geisbusch 2008). In this way, I suggest that this mode of relic circulation brings into question the Catholic Church's control over the movement and veneration of relics in the modern context as it fundamentally blurs the boundaries between engaging with relics in a spiritual and mercenary manner.

Despite some users engaging in the circulation of relics on Internet platforms because of an appreciation for a perceived monetary value, other users may be motivated by different appreciations and values. A portion of users who sought to purchase relics have been interpreted as using these platforms to promote Catholic piety, furthering their agency as Catholic subjects, or to retrieve these sacred objects from misuse and return them to safe spaces such as diocese archives (Geisbusch 2008; D. Majer, personal communication, March 21, 2022). In this sense, it is evident that the circulation of relics through Internet platforms is a multifaceted phenomenon that does not allow for a clear distinction between profane uses and sacred uses. Evidently, the circulation of relics within platforms such as eBay and Fluminalis simultaneously attracts users who aim to profit, users who aim to circumvent the authority of the Catholic Church on making relics accessible, users attempting to rescue relics from profane uses, and users who attain relics to promote Catholic piety (Geisbusch 2008). Here, I suggest that the mode of non-normative relic circulation via Internet platforms can simultaneously question and reinforce the system of Catholic relic veneration, and the Church's control over the circulation of these sacred objects. In this way, it is the nature of the user's appreciation of relics that determines the manner in which the Catholic relic veneration system is impacted. A key underlying factor in the various modes of relic circulation discussed in this chapter is the post-mortem agency possessed

by the sacred relics themselves and how these objects can potentially influence the behaviour of humans in seeking out their desired relic. This will be briefly considered in the following section.

5.4 Post-Mortem Agency in the Circulation of Relics

An underlying dictating factor in the circulation of sacred relics throughout the modern world must be recognized as the post-mortem, secondary agency possessed by these objects. This concept can be understood as the way in which dismembered body parts, such as the physical remains that make up first-class relics, remain socially active despite being in a post-mortem and dismembered state; therefore functioning to have profound impacts on the behaviour of the living (Tung 2014; Kjellström 2017). Evidently, this notion is applicable to sacred relics in that the behaviours of both the devoted and non-devoted can be highly influenced by these objects. As suggested by Geisbusch (2008), sacred relics exist within the modern world as entities that fundamentally structure human desires and actions, often provoking responses such as monetary spending. My research made it evident that the post-mortem agency of sacred relics spans across spaces and institutions. This was particularly evident in the above-described case of the Diocese of London where individuals from across the globe contacted the archivist requesting and pleading to receive a relic from their collection (D. Majer, personal communication, March 21, 2022), as well as the array of eBay advertisements from various nations such as the United States, Ireland, and Italy. Here, I suggest that in the case of Internet-based relic circulation, the influence of relics on human behaviour was clear as individuals were driven to assert their own agency through spending large amounts of money in competing for objects, increasing their devotion, or rescuing sacred relics from misuse. Another manner in which relics effect living human behaviour through post-mortem agency is evidenced through human desires to be in close physical contact with relics. As suggested by Kjellström (2017), individuals within the Catholic community and other emotional communities often experience an attraction to, and veneration of, relics via close physical contact, causing individuals to go great lengths to achieve physical closeness. This was evidenced through individuals asserting effort to request relics and spending immense sums of money to achieve physical contact with the sacred object, where in both cases individuals were motivated by an emotional involvement influenced by the post-mortem agency of the relic (Kjellström 2017; D. Majer, personal communication, March 21,

2022). Evidently, when considering sacred relics, it is clear that these objects have immense influence on the behaviour of the living as physical remains of once living saints. In sum, it is clear that the post-mortem agency possessed by relics has the capability to influence and structure human actions.

5.5 Conclusion

The present-day circulation of sacred relics is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. Despite this, the Catholic Church has long played a significant role in the continued use and circulation of relics in both institutional and private contexts (Geisbusch 2008; Nafte 2015). As suggested throughout the first section of this chapter, the Catholic Church has established clear guidelines dictating the normative procedures surrounding relic translation and circulation. This was evidenced through an in-depth consideration of the procedures asserted in Canon Law, the Instruction on *"Relics in the Church: Authenticity and Preservation",* and the norms involved in requesting relics. This consideration functioned to establish that the Church continues to play a significant role in controlling the movement of relics in the modern world. Despite this significant role, this chapter also established through a consideration of the Internet as a platform for relic circulation that significant departures from the normative procedures do exist in the modern context. This consideration revealed that users' actions in purchasing and circulating relics through online platforms may simultaneously go against, and reinforce, the Catholic system of relic veneration depending on the nature of their appreciation for relics. In the final section of this chapter, the post-mortem agency possessed by sacred relics was briefly examined in order to establish this as a key factor underlying the present-day circulation of relics. Relic circulation is a complex feature of the veneration of these objects, yet considerations of this phenomenon evidently yield fascinating information and insight.

5.6 Bibliography

1 First Class Multi Reliquary Relics : S. Clementis, S. Severini, S. Innocentii, S. Incondemii, S. Valerii, S. Claudii, S. Quirini, S. Abudantii, S. Valentini. - Reliquaries & Relics I. 2022 *Fluminalis*. Accessed April 17. https://www.fluminalis.com/inventory/reliquary-relics/first-class-multi-reliquary-relics-s-clementis-s-severini-s-innocentii-s-incondemii-s-valerii-s-claudii-s-quirini-s-abudantii-s-valentini-en-brass-bronze-glass-wax-seals-belgium-19th-century-2455736/.

CRUZ, J.C. 1984. *Relics*. Huntington, Ind: Our Sunday Visitor.

DI GIOVINE, M. 2012. Padre Pio for sale: Souvenirs, relics, or identity markers? *The International Journal of Tourism Anthropology* 2: 108–27.

FIEJDASZ-BUCZEK, L. 2019. The concept of relics and Canonical recognition, transfer and preservation of the mortal remains of servants of God according to the instruction of the Congregation for the causes of Saints of 8 December 2017. *Roczniki Nauk Prawnych* 28: 185–200. https://doi.org/10.18290/rnp.2018.28.3-11en.

First class relics: Search Result | eBay. 2022. Accessed April 17. https://www.ebay.ca/sch/i.html?_from=R40&_nkw=first%20class%20relics&_sacat=0&_sop=3#item3dc0fcaf11.

Fluminalis Home. 2022 *Home*. Accessed April 17. https://www.fluminalis.com/home.

GEARY, P. 1986. Sacred commodities: the circulation of medieval relics, in : 169–92. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511819582.008.

GEISBUSCH, J.W. 2008. Awkward objects: Relics, the making of religious meaning, and the limits of control in the information age. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

HUFFER, D. & N. CHARLTON. 2019. Serious enquiries only, please: ethical issues raised by the online human remains trade, in K. Squires, D. Errickson & N. Márquez-Grant (ed.) *Ethical Approaches to Human Remains*: 95–129. Cham: Springer International Publishing. http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-030-32926-6_6. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32926-6_6.

Human body parts policy. 2022 *eBay*. Accessed April 17. https://www.ebay.ca/help/policies/prohibited-restricted-items/human-body-parts-policy?id=4325.

JANZER, S. 2018. Bones, teeth, and hair from saints rests in the archives of the Diocese of London. 2 April 2018. Available at: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/roman-catholic-relics-london-windsor-1.4579307

KJELLSTRÖM, A. 2021. Tangible traces of devotion: The post-mortem life of relics. *Current Swedish Archaeology* 25: 151–75. https://doi.org/10.37718/CSA.2017.17.

NAFTE, M. 2015. Institutional bodies: Spatial agency and the dead. *History and Anthropology* 26: 206–33. https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2015.1030636.

OFFICE OF CANONICAL SERVICE. 2022. Policies and Procedures Manual for the Archives of the Diocese of London.

Order of the Discalced Carmelites General Postulation of the Causes of Saints. 2022 *Normatives*. Accessed April 17. 2022. https://www.postocd.org/index.php/en/relics/normatives.

PETERS, E. 2001. Five things every bishop needs to know about Canon Law. *Canon Law Info.* Available at: https://www.canonlaw.info/a_fivethings.htm

Reliquaries & Relics I. 2022 *Fluminalis*. Accessed April 17. https://www.fluminalis.com/inventory/reliquary-relics/.

TUNG, T.A. 2014. Agency, 'til death do us part? Inquiring about the agency of dead bodies from the ancient Andes. *Cambridge archaeological journal* 24. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press: 437–52. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0959774314000614.

VATICAN. 2017. Instruction 'relics in the Church: Authenticity and conservation' (8 December 2017). *Congregation for the Causes of Saints Instruction "Relics in the Church: Authenticity and Preservation*. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/csaints/documents/rc_con_csaints_doc_20171208_istruzione-reliquie_en.html#_ftn4.

—. 2022. Canon 1190. *Code of Canon Law - Book IV - Function of the Church (Cann. 1166-1190)*. Accessed April 17. https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_lib4-cann1166-1190_en.html#PART_II.

WALSHAM, A. 2010. Introduction: Relics and remains. *Past & Present* 206: 9–36. https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtq026

Chapter 6. Conclusion

Relics and what constitutes a relic are dependent on the relationship between the saint and the divine, and later the relics and the people who venerate them. As a result, conceptions of relics vary across time and space and within the Christian tradition itself.

Nakahodo's discussion on the history of relics and post-mortem agency detailed the importance of relics to religious individuals throughout history and the lengths that they would go to venerate significant saints and martyrs. Pilgrimages to holy places were performed as a way for living individuals to access the divine connection that relics can provide and the agency that the dead have through this practice. The analysis of Saint Laurentia's bones by Ward in chapter 2 examined the nature of transformation and the relationship between transformation and agency. She demonstrated that transformation occurs during the saint's life through the embodiment of their relationship with the divine. Furthermore, while agency is tied to transformation, the amount a relic can exercise is related to memory. Durham's chapter reviewed the idea of 'authentication' by comparing physical and subjective authentication in both the Catholic tradition and archaeology, finding that even if a relic or artifact was subjectively authenticated, it still holds power and agency for the living. The power of subjective authenticity and its influence on relics in the Catholic tradition was further examined by Woldum, who used non-destructive analyses to determine the material of relics held within paper sachets. It was found that the connection that people feel towards a saint will be more influential in their decisions to house these relics and create reliquaries than the knowledge of relic material or class. Finally, Stephens' discussion on the translation of relics examines how relics can influence human behaviour. She found that relics express agency through their movement, both within the official channels of the Church and outside channels such as eBay, and that people will go to great lengths to obtain these relics.

A common theme amongst these chapters was that the concept of a relic is more fluid than the definitions would suggest. Individual interpretation and connection to the dead play a critical role in a relics' life and its ability to be venerated. It is less what the relic is physically, and more what the relic embodies. A divine connection, the attributes of a saint, non-physical concepts that can be associated with a physical relic. Furthermore, this exploration highlights the importance of institutions in collective

memory, the recording of names and martyrdoms, the mass housing of relics, and incorporation of saints into their calendar of worship ensures that oblivion continues to be delayed even after the living memory of the person has already been subsumed by death.

Appendix 1 – Course Syllabus and Weekly Topics Grid for:

ANTHROPOLOGY 4426G/9104B
Advanced Special Topics in Anthropology/Advanced Bioarchaeology
Mortuary Archaeology

Anthropology 4426G/9104B

Mortuary Archaeology

Department of Anthropology

Winter term, 2021-2022

Class time: Monday 1:30 to 4:30 pm

Classroom: SSC-3227 or on Zoom

Instructor: Dr. Andrew Nelson

Email: anelson@uwo.ca

Office: Social Science Centre 3323

Office Hours: Wednesdays 11-noon

Phone: 519-661-2111 x85085

Credit Value: 0.5 credit

Prerequisites: Registration in fourth year in Anthropology and permission of the instructor via application. The application can be accessed through the Course List page on our website.

Antirequisites: None

Course Syllabus: "…Tis impossible to be sure of anything but *Death* and *Taxes*" (Christopher Bullock, 1716, *The Cobbler of Preston*). There are myriad ways in which societies have dealt with this stark reality, and the rituals they construct shed important light on the society at large.

In mainstream North America, we have a very uniform, hygienic and medicalized view of death and burial, while the range beliefs and practices of other contemporary and ancient cultures is quite remarkable.

This course takes a cross-cultural and deep temporal perspective on how different societies have dealt with the loss of one of their members. Mortuary archaeology draws on many different threads in Anthropology, including ethnography, cultural theory, bioarchaeology, archaeological theory, forensic analysis to name only a few. It also

reaches beyond the bounds of Anthropology to draw on research in Sociology, Biology and other disciplines to take a truly interdisciplinary approach to how societies deal with death.

This is a lecture/seminar course open to senior undergraduate students. Weekly meetings will start with a short lecture, outlining the major points for discussion, and then the seminar will include student presentations and class discussions. Class participation is mandatory. The critical evaluation of the literature will be emphasized.

An updated course schedule including a week-by-week breakdown of topics and assigned readings will be available on the course's OWL site before the first day of class.

Learning outcomes:

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- describe how societal structures and beliefs shape ritual behavior (observed through ethnographies), particularly in the mortuary context
- recognize how archaeology has contributed to our understanding of variability in societies' responses to death
- integrate perspectives from several disciplines in the analysis of an archaeological mortuary context
- reflect on how modern beliefs and norms shape how we act and react in the face of the death of a loved one
- work with your peers in a collaborative framework

Readings:

Readings will be available on the course OWL site. Students will provide additional readings as part of the weekly discussion. There is no textbook.

Course delivery with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic:

Although the intent is for this course to be delivered in-person, the changing COVID-19 landscape means that we will be doing class remotely for at least the month of January, and perhaps longer should the situation demand it. The class will be held synchronously at the times indicated in the timetable over Zoom. The grading scheme will not change. Any assessments affected will be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

Evaluation:

- Weekly reflection papers/Class participation – 20%
- Assignment #1 – ethnographic example of a mortuary ritual – 20 % - powerpoint presentation on January 31st (this will be done by sharing screens on Zoom)
- Assignment #2 – research paper on the analysis of an archaeological mortuary context – ca. 2500 words (undergraduate students) or 3500 words (graduate students) – 20% - due March 14th
- Assignment #3 – group project on relics – 40% - due April 11th
- there is no midterm or final exam
- graduate students write a longer research paper than the undergraduate students and are responsible for the assembly of the group project

Details of the Assignments:

- Weekly assignments/Participation - write a 500 word reflection paper on the week's readings and one additional paper that you find. What is the key point of the readings? How are they relevant to you and to the week's theme? Bring the paper to class and be prepared to present your papers to the class and to discuss the papers brought by the other students.

- Assignment #1 – find an ethnographic account of a contemporary (or penecontemporaneous) society that describes and discusses a mortuary ritual. Craft a detailed description of this ritual and then analyze it using principles discussed in class. Important components of the analysis will include: does the ritual fit with the general structure of rites of passage rituals outlined by Van Gennep? Does the ritual reflect the sociopolitical complexity of the culture? What might this ritual look like in the archaeological record?
    - the results of this assignment will be presented to the class as a power point presentation in week 4 (January 31st).

- Assignment #2 – write a 2,500 (undergraduates) or 3,500 (graduate students) word research paper on an archaeological mortuary context not discussed in class. You will need to present a short description of what is known of the archaeological culture and the specific context in order to undertake an analysis of how the mortuary context reflects the society as a whole. Draw on all appropriate ethnographic analogies, archaeological theories and anthropological models in your analysis.
    - the results of this research will be presents as a manuscript for submission to the journal *Antiquity*. Please see the instructions for authors page found on this site.
    - This assignment is due in week 9 (March 14th)

- Assignment #3 – the final assignment will be a group project on relics. This year's topic has yet to be determined. You will find the final report of the 2020 course on this site. Each student will have a unique topic that is related to the overall topic and the graduate students will be in charge of assembling the final product. This will be due April 11th (the date is dictated by the requirement to submit undergraduate grades for courses with no final exam within a week of the end of classes). I'll post

stuff to OWL for this – but in the meantime you can check out this web site on the relic collection at the Roman Catholic Diocese here in London.

Course Specific Statements and Policies:

The essays will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com.

Late Assignments: Extensions on assignments will only be given in the case of major medical or personal emergencies as first approved by the academic counselling office. Without an approved extension each day past due (including weekends) will result in the deduction of 5% off the grade for that assignment. Assignments more than five days late will not be accepted, and the student will receive a grade of zero for that assignment.

Western's Academic Policies:

All students should familiarize themselves with Western's current academic policies regarding accessibility, mental wellbeing, accommodation for medical illness, and plagiarism and scholastic offences. These policies are outlined in Western's academic policies by clicking on this link: Western's academic policies

Weekly Discussion Topics and Example Readings (subject to revision)

Week	General Topic	Specific Topics	Example Readings
week 1 Jan 10th	Introduction – discussion of the definition and evolution of Mortuary Archaeology	Mortuary Archaeology; Archaeothanatology	Binford (1971) Mortuary practices: Their study and potential; Knüsel (2014) Crouching in fear: Terms of engagement for funerary remains
week 2 Jan 17th	Ethnographic studies of mortuary rituals; Broad anthropological/ sociological analyses of mortuary rituals	Tripartite structure of rites of passage	Parker Pearson (1982) Mortuary practices, society and ideology: an ethnoarchaeological study; Van Gennep (1909) Rites of passage; Huntington & Metcalf (1991) Celebrations of death
week 3 Jan 24th	The mortuary ritual in the modern world	The North American funeral industry	Jackson (2009) "Death Becomes Them"; A funeral home ethnography
week 4 Jan 31st	Presentations of assignment #1	Ethnographic studies of mortuary rituals	
week 5 Feb 7th	Death and burial in the Neolithic	The first mortuary monuments – *Tombs for the Living*	Fleming (1973) Tombs for the living
week 6 Feb 14th	Death and burial in the paleontological record	Contexts of discovery of fossil hominin remains; *Homo naledi;* Neandertals	Randolf-Quinney (2015a, 2015b)
Feb 21st	Reading Week		
week 7 Feb 28th	Cannibalism and mortuary ritual	The anthropology of anthropophagy	Forsberg (2019)
week 8 Mar 7th	Death and burial in Ancient Egypt	The Book of the Dead; Mummies and the industry of death	Meskell (2001) The Egyptian way of death
week 9 Mar 14th	Death and burial in Classical Antiquity Assignment #2 due today	The use of mortuary ritual to reinforce fledgling states	Pollock (1991) Of priestesses, princes and poor relations: the dead in the Royal Cemetery of Ur
week 10 Mar 21st	Death and burial in Pre-Columbian Peru	The venerated ancestors	Isbell (1997) Mummies and mortuary Rituals
week 11 Mar 28th	Death and burial in Middle Age Europe	Mortuary rituals and mass death – The Black Plague(s)	Antoine (2008) The archaeology of the "plague"
Week 12 Apr 4th	Death and burial in popular culture	Deviant burials; Hollywood and the undead	Durkin (2003). Death, dying and the dead in popular culture.

END