The Macksey Journal

Volume 1 Article 57

2020

Visible Invisibility: The Shape of the Chicago Châsse

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Abstract

This paper argues that a 13th-century-Limoges reliquary casket at the Art Institute of Chicago, expresses the immaterial holy spirit of the relics within by its shape. Its shape suggests a "steeped-roof" architectonic model. Scholars have discussed two possible interpretations of the morphology: it could be either a solid Roman sarcophagus used circa 4th-5th centuries, or a portable Gothic church miniature in 1200s, if the shape ultimately descended from the sarcophagus used for a saint's burial (Distelberger 21). This hypothesis sheds light on a morphological metamorphosis while implying this a portable church model was derived from a giant antique sarcophagus. Other voices, however, claim the object as a Gothic church miniature in specific. This paper proposes that the object retaining ambiguous architectonic form, dwells a sophisticated iconographical manifestation of the sacred space. Moreover, this is meant to unveil a sustainable iconographic metamorphosis from a pagan culture to Christian one among the course of ecclesiastical development from early to late Christendom. The subject is not new, but typically scholars written in English have analyzed the Limoges châsse reliquaries for their production histories. This paper rather reviews the iconography for Limoges' cult artistry.

Keywords: Medieval Reliquary, Cult of Relics, Gothic Cathedrals, Pilgrimage

Introduction

The Chicago Châsse (Plate 1) takes the form of a right-angled pentagon. My paper argues that this shape integral to the object's expression of its relics' holiness. Recent scholarship has identified two possible archetypes of this ambiguous architectonic reference: it could be an architectonic sarcophagus from pagan Roman era, or a Christian church built in late medieval Christendom. I propose that this architectonic shape is a symbol that enacts a transition from Late Antiquity to Christianity, one which unveils and reflects of a sacred sanctum in two distinct socio-cultural milieus. The micro-architectonic representation appeared on Chicago Châsse is a response of the history of medieval church architecture as the multivalent space for the religious, social, even political functions. Considering the closeness between the relics and church, the church symbol appears on a reliquary emphatically reinforce the importance of relics in the 13th century Christian history—making perfect sense of its expressive shape.

Pagan Roman Sarcophagus

The affinity between a pagan Roman sarcophagus and a châsse is crucial, yet this nexus remaining fundamental for their constant architectonic symbolisms. One early evidence of this hypothesis was claimed by Joseph Braun—sarcophagus is a type of tomb, a type of building that used for burial bodies, like that of these Christian casket reliquaries." (Hanan 4) The casket produced in such shape, like Chicago Châsse, falls into this reliquary category. Casket reliquaries had been conceived as a long-standing category of medieval reliquary design, rather being as an intentional creation, implying a sense of model. Etymology of it matters too, the châsse's linguistic origin, *caspa*, is the Latin word for box (Lautier 174). These evidences emphasizes the function of the sarcophagus: to store the corpses of ancient heroes, although without the guarantee that the body within will be venerated beyond the moment of its interment.

Regarding that of Limoges reliquaries, Élisabeth Taburet-Delahaye in 1996 claimed that one of these châsse from Limoges, the *Châsse of Bellc* (Plate 2), as "the first reliquary [that] takes on the form of a casket" (Taburet-Delahaye 88). The "steeped-roof" schema of Limoges reliquary, as shown in Chicago châsse, then is in fact a derivation from a primordial schema as one speculated above, while Dom Jean Becquet had elaborated such speculation with historical explanation. In Becquet's report, there was an ecclesiastical reform in 1088 in which reliquaries were constructed to house massive acquisitions of saints' relics: "the enameled reliquary [reliquary of *Le Chalard*] is realized in imitation of the ancient shrines and inspired by devotion to a saint whose presence was still felt" (Becquet 31). The term "ancient shrines", anew, suggests a primordial archetype, the Roman sarcophagus standing at a close proximity for this archetype.

The giant Roman sarcophagi were mainly produced between the 2nd and 5th centuries for elites living across the Empire. Full-sized sarcophagi bear lavish, decorated exteriors, and usually incorporate architectonic frames, such as the steeped roofs or the *acroteria* at four sides (Plate 3), echoing the pediments in Greco-Roman architecture. Derek Kruger considers such a miniatured-architectonic-lid sarcophagus a "House of the Dead." Sarcophagi like these were disposed at necropolis on the outskirts of Roman cities, where the burials called the "Street of Death". Therefore, the form then plays a vital role in making the case that the sarcophagus could be understood as a form of architecture for a single body—or body part, if this logic is exerted to the meaning of Christian reliquary later. There were two predominant types of sarcophagi available for depositing bodies of elites. One type was the non-architectonic version—the surface covered by garlands and mythological reliefs. This type of sarcophagus does not necessarily resemble a house. The architectonic sarcophagus, however, does refer to a freestanding building that correlates with the idea and the sign of a dwelling for the dead. Seeing their outward configurations correspond to the contemporaneous Roman

architectural structure, these exuberant architectonic ornamentations indeed also reflect the high status of their owners, and presumably, dignify them. Esen Öğüş has analyzed a series of architectonic sarcophagi made circa the 250-300 CE, from the Hellenistic city of Aphrodisias, in contemporary Turkey (Plate 4). Öğüş treats these specific arcaded architectural details on sarcophagi as imitations from the contemporaneous architecture in this region, while arcaded structured civic buildings like basilicas and bath halls were ubiquitously found in Hellenistic Aphrodisias (Öğüş 126). Öğüş also conjectures that the carved statues standing within arcaded columns visible on the sarcophagi would only have appeared on the officials:

> These statues dominated the civic architecture of Aphrodisias and were placed in the colonnaded facades and porticoes of many public buildings. These were the highest honors one could achieve and surely were looked on by the lower classes with feelings of awe…. Such statues were essential elements of the cityscape in a Greek city and immortalized the represented individual in a most honorable manner (Öğüş 127).

This kind of civil architecture embellishment draw on the legitimacy of their referents. On this hand, the Classic researcher Edmund Thomas cites another architecture template which the architectonic sarcophagus may have emulated: that of a theater. The evidence can be found on a mid-2nd-century sample, the Velletri sarcophagus (Plate 5). Its entire decoration has been divided into three stories, recalling the interior seating of a theater. Columns, pediments and Greek mythological figures are systematically displayed and arranged on each story. Being a theater in concept, these lavish scenes are allegorical with implying metaphors, the theatre symbol hinting at the Latin saying *mimus vitae*, where the life is a drama, a play (Thomas, 405). The rhetoric dramatizes the unseen person inside, who therefore to be honored.

The glorification of the deceased plays a role in assuring that the deceased concealed inside had deserved a peaceful afterlife in this "house," as in the late antiquity, some early Christian saints were also buried in such Roman sarcophagi, taking this ritual vocabulary in their funerals in turn. Christian communities preserved their dead brothers' corpses during the Diocletianic Persecution periods (circa 303-314 CE). These martyred bodies were often fragmented, then collected, and consequently commemorated whole in the subterranean catacombs as later places being pilgrimage sites (Bagnoli 7). The earliest record of worshipping a martyred saint was St. Polycarp (69-115 CE) from Smyrna:

> Followers took up his [Polycarp] bones, which are more valuable than precious stones and finer than refined gold and deposited them in a suitable place. There gathering together, as we are able, with joy and gladness, the Lord will permit us to celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom in commemoration of those who have already fought in the contest. (Krueger 7).

The dismembered flesh of Christians was considered as the Christian relics later on. Early Christian funerals clandestinely venerated these heroes around their sarcophagi, in catacombs by the 3rd and the 4th centuries, for their heretical nature under the Roman jurisdiction. These large-scale sarcophagi for Christians served preserve the holy memories of these martyred saints. Sophisticated socio-cultural and religious indices retained this architectonic symbol from giant sarcophagus to be successfully functioned in Christian portable reliquary. In eyes of Anne O' Connor, this succession was reasoned by the abiding concern for proper venerations among the community in the ecclesiastical practice— both Romans, and later Christianized Romans understood the significance of the sarcophagus expressing faithful commemoration from the communal side, no matter for family or for Christian communal— mourning, grieving, and remembrance (O' Connor 22). Yet Christian doctrines shifted the meaning of the same shaped ritual objects, relics, altering the interpretations of the

architectonic form later. The cult of relics developed alongside the codification of medieval Christian theology and cultural practices, which brings us to another possible referent for the châsse: the Christian church.

Christian Church

The shape of the Chicago Châsse suggests a church, if the specific reference could be a gabled-roof church or a Gothic Cathedral, if one takes account of three soared pinnacles. The medievalist Caroline Walker Bynum confirms this specific architecture archetype:

> In the twelfth century, relics containers shaped like churches became popular. Both their forms and decorations of gold, brilliant enamel, and precious gems suggest that the bodily fragments and dust within are lifted to heavenly glory and gathered into a whole, just as believers are incorporated into the body of Christ, the church (Bynum 73).

The church was understood as ideal space for circulating and enlivening relics, this symbolism history is complex. Early Christian funeral practices shared some similarities with Roman rituals. Christians believed their departed comrades who became martyrs should be commemorated by beholders who could pay their respects before their full bodies (Freeman 10). However, the belief that these bodies were capable of initiating miracles emerged as early as the 4th century (Wiśniewski 24). A relic's thaumaturgical strengths made them into immortal agencies connected to God (Brown 6). After the legalization of Christianity in 380, collections and venerations of scattered pieces of relics had been recorded and promoted by contemporaneous bishops like Hilary of Poitiers (315-368 CE) in *De Trinitate*. Relics embody the power of *praesentia*, the divine power of healing (Trainor 272). St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) acknowledged the almighty occult force that the relics acquired for healing based on his firsthand account of two saints' relics in Hippo claimed that performed miracles (Trainor 277). Similar events of relics' healing miracles in tombs in Milan and Bologna were recorded (Wiśniewski 25). The first canonical figure who exhumed and consecrated relics

from underground crypts to public altars was St. Ambrose of Milan (c. 340-397 CE). In 386, Ambrose ordered the holy *translatio* (translation) of the bodies of two saints, St. Gervasius and Protasius (both dead circa 300 CE) to the altar of the in his new church: Basilica of Ambrogio. Ambrose attempted to "establish a correspondence between heaven and earth" (Bagnoli 21). This event instantiated the paradigm of venerating the relic which would be taken in communal and official venues, the church. The rituals became a more commonplace from this point forward. The idea of the church as a sign of *loca sancta* (a sanctified space for communal liturgical practice) had been consolidated and codified to theorize a church's sanctity in general—the church not only witnessed the sanctity, but also *represents* the sanctity (Ousterhout 7).

In the Second Council of Niceaca in 787, relics are church were bound together for unified sanctity, decreed by the canon. No church should be dedicated with placing relics on their altars. This doctrine was discoursed to both Eastern Orthodox and Catholic church; the Catholic Latin West had nourished and developed the impressive cult of relics. In western Christendom, this religious practice was sharing a political resonance. During Carolingian period in the 8th century, relics were also precious gifts for diplomatic and political affairs; their exchanges were frequent with proclaiming the episcopal power of Frankish Kingdom (Abou-El-Haj 11). Relics had been patronized and licensed by royal authority, performing beyond the spiritual domain. Barbara Abou-El-Haj posits that the emperor Charlemagne (742-814 CE) significantly elevated this meaning:

> [Charlemagne believed that] People who, as if acting out of love of God and the saints, whether martyrs or confessors, transfer the bones and remains of holy bodies from place to place and there construct new basilicas and exhort whomever they can that they should donate their goods to it (Abou-El-Haj 11).

Given in this fact, churches' interior typologies were wisely designed for allowing more pilgrims to experience saints' evangelistic presences—alive! The altar thus became the paramount central element in a church's plan. St. Gall made circa 820 perfectly instantiate this ethos. The annular crypt in the plan is sanctum for displaying relics. Its affiliated church being the core of the whole plan (Palazzo 105). The holy presence by relic as the immaterial holy spirit was then been represented as a concrete, material enclosure—Christian church. Such symbolic union reached its apex in light of pilgrimage. Pilgrimage in the 13th century was the most important and frequent religious activity relating to relics. Churches erected on pilgrimage routes were all solely served pilgrims' peregrinations (Lyman 85). Thomas W. Lyman attests that pilgrimage churches once existed in Limoges, or in Conques, and Saint-Etienne between the 11th and 13th centuries. Lyman observes that they all featured extended ambulatories with radiating chapels for relics. He believes this structure would allow more pilgrims to pass through while viewing the relics on display:

> The choir is separated from the ambulatory only but a short step, in a manner comparable to Cluny III that suggests a function more effective for displaying relics than for letting pilgrims approach the secreted objects of their veneration (Palazzo 103).

Worshipping was a sensory experience that emphasized the visual effect of piety. The desire to see relics in an optimal condition was codified in a theoretical register according to Thiofrid (?-1110 CE), abbot of Echternach. Thiofrid articulated this in *Flores epyaphii sanctorum*:

> Monk Thiofrid proposed a typology of the forms of relics based on their physical, sensory qualities rather than on the hierarchy of saints in heaven or other symbolic-categories…. Thiofrid's treatise emphasized that saints' relics are not only "sacred"

> objects of cult and religious devotion but also objects intended to quicken the senses in the liturgy (Palazzo 47).

Thus, churches as accessible holy sanctums which allowing pilgrims to express their piety toward relics via direct sensorial encounters. The embedded relics are the indispensable components that rendered the its holiness palpable and informed reliquary design, given that reliquaries were devoted to "sensual piety" (Hahn, "The Reliquary Effect" 37) Additionally, Bynum claims that the church is the temple of the saint's body, relics then is the heart of the saint, as this logic extends to the relic-church relationship. Churches as religious enclosures were consecrated by gathering and earning relics, where the church, monarchs, and the whole town would claim their ecclesiastical authorities and boundaries, along with attracting more pilgrims and more wealth (Hahn, "What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics" 308).

Metamorphosis across Two Cultures

Roman sarcophagi and the Christian church were not contradictory archetypes. Instead, both point toward the miniaturization and creation of a holy space, one that is restrictive and concealing of the deceased elite; for the other, its expressiveness justifying the immortal sainthood of relics.

The commemoration of death and faith in posthumous life in pagan Rome influenced the casket reliquary produced in Christian ritual with the vicissitude of time. Venerating corpses in sarcophagi bore a twofold purpose in pagan Roman ideology: to prevent the corpse's putrefaction from polluting the air and avoid these impure and polluted corpses spreading ominous spirit (Toynbee 11). During the commemorative days, food and drink were prepared and offered to the dead as rituals by family members. Families of the dead went to the tomb hall and cooked in an individual chamber. One mausoleum at Isola Sacra dating to the year 200, vividly restages such veneration (Plate 6). In the central plan, sustenance for the dead

had been prepared in the rectangular chamber. Then, they would be put directly into the burial site located underground for dead to eat the food.

This intimate veneration mode had been preserved for sarcophagus-shaped reliquaries later, as the shape contending to be the same. Sarcophagus-shaped reliquaries are generally much smaller in scale than Roman sarcophagi, but they nonetheless signaling collective calls for faith in Christian pilgrimages that sarcophagi facilitated at Roman funerals (O' Connor 31). Commemorations and worships to relics occurred in pilgrimages were to receive blessings from the relics—particularly, for type of reliquaries. Numerous gabled caskets made circa the 8th and 9th centuries had been chiseled with tiny cavities beneath their lids (Plate 7). These hollows are points of access for pilgrims to pour in oil and water which, when it flowed back out, was believed have been sanctified. Pilgrims then applied these substances to their clothes. This effect of a tangible devotional object was reproduced, in the form of an amulet, into an auspicious souvenir, acting as a special kind of reliquary: a brandea, the cloth reliquary (O' Connor 54). The dissemination of amulets served to expand certain saints' visibility and cults of worship (O' Connor 32). Viewing this ritual mechanism, sarcophagus caskets is the source of the holy spirit, as the sanctity of relics would be recognized via their practical contexts, at foremost.

Then one might consider how the sarcophagus, as architecture for the body, effectively urged or called mourners to venerate the dead in a metaphorical sense. A Roman sarcophagus represented a closed mystical space for the dead, speaking to the dead's sacredness. Likewise, the casket reliquary shelters its relics in a dignified space, attesting to and in effect claiming this sanctified enclosed space in nature.

The Romans believed souls would depart from the flesh and travel to the underworld and should therefore be undisturbed by people in the living world (Toynbee 11). Recalling from the previous knowledge, while the arcaded architecture decorations in Roman times as

appeared on sarcophagi were dedicated to offer the dignity to the death. Verity Platt argues that an architectonic sarcophagus is a rigid frame for death, they mediate between life and death. Whereas the architectonic elements on reliefs, such as doors and thresholds, guard the dead inside (Verity 219). As illustrated by a 2nd-century sarcophagus now in Museo Capitolino in Rome, the architectonic decoration on sarcophagus effectively protects the inner void by reinforcing the mystic and occult nature of the dead (Plate 8). The central panel depicts a half-opened threshold to the left of the entrance as the gate of Hades. Its carvers captured the dramatic moment when Hercules is exiting through this gate, to the world of the living, as the rare figure who carried a dead person's soul to the domain of Hades. This is a salient representation of the materialization of death: the abstract door on the sarcophagus was supposed to be opened, but it was not easy to enter: only for heroic characters like Hercules can access. This rhetoric, especially the opened door on the relief produced a "delicate balance between invitation and exclusion" (Verity 221).

This visualization of such an unattended and mystical space flew to Christian casket. Jaś Elsner articulates that relics revealing the hidden nature of God in the early Christian ideology. Relics are otherwise never be accessed (Elsner 16). The Pola Casket made in the 5th century in Brescia, its relief on its rear side narrates a scene which Elsner called "play of closure and ostentations" (Elsner 21). The relief displays a pair of columns, and the arcs suggest that the setting is a pagan temple—the whole casket is an architecture model. The pilgrims depicted in the relief who stand outside; two of them impatiently waiting and anxiously knocking at the closed door (Plate 9). This desire to open the door and to worship relics has been agitated and elevated in this drama, as the interior space of this "temple" locked to both viewers of the 5th century and of current—forever! One here sees an apodictic demarcation between exterior and interior is being well articulated. It might be understood as

a spiritual barrier that echoes the reliquary's role as a sacred space decorated like the representative architecture.

Once the cult of relics had matured around the 7th century, relics' miraculous and immortal nature make their containers as animated and elegant for consecrating holy relics—a powerful and an ennobled heavenly accommodation. In Cynthia J. Hahn's research, all Christian sacred containers follow the structural templates described in Scriptures: Noah's Ark and Ark of the Covenant (Hahn, "The Reliquary Effect" 40). Both spaces were constructed under the determination of God. These containers followed these archetypes could also instruct and aspire holy imaginations of God.

Church architecture had been inspired some designs of reliquaries in general. In overarching Christendom, these objects had been found in both Eastern Orthodox theology and the Latin Catholic brands. The individual architectural archetypes embrace the immaterial holy spirit via their architectural structures. The reliquary for St. Anastasios is a good example of the Orthodox practice. It displays a typical Orthodox rotunda: a dome, two transepts, and a door. Mabi Anger discovers these miniatured Byzantine Orthodox objects are always accommodating the Eucharist, as they distinguish themselves from other Orthodox liturgical objects (Plate 10). A rotunda on the St. Anastasios reliquary suggests God's permanent residence (Anger 65). The vast vault space is iconized as the zone where the invisible God resided—in the forms of visible light—shimmering and enlightening the whole rotunda (Mcvey 39).

For the other branch, the Gothic church in Latin West Christendom is an inspirational model for liturgical objects. In the 13th-century-ritual practice, objects display some selected Gothic architectural features could properly stage the God (Guérin 54). It is unconvincing at first to see Limoges had no Gothic constructions during this time. However, one insists to

connect the Gothic cathedral as the archetype. Initially, Limoges reliquaries had already adopted Gothic visual traditions before 1200—the blue enamel:

> From the end of the twelfth century and into the fourteenth, Limoges enamels were characterized by a predominantly blue palette, an aesthetic shared with Gothic manuscript illumination and stained glass. Sapphire was the color associated with the doors of the Heavenly Jerusalem and with the feet of God himself in Scripture (Bohem 41).

The absorption of the Gothic "blood" in Limoges reliquary was impressive. Michael Camille praised the invention of Gothic architecture as demonstrations of a new way of seeing God and experiencing its holy presence (Camille 14). This was a vantage point in medieval religion history. The erection of these edifices was much benefited from the unique socio-cultural milieus in Western Europe. Charles H. Haskins proposes the notion of Renaissance of the Gothic Age: "the epoch of the Crusades, of the rise of towns […] it saw the culmination of Romanesque art and the beginnings of the Gothic […]" (Haskins 15). Crusades occupied the route for the Jerusalem, the pilgrimage activities then focused on Latin West, eminent destinations were Santiago de Compostela for St. James and St. Martial for Limoges. Limoges, in its own right, from the 12th century onward was one of the global centers leading the practice of cult of relics, also in part due to its proximity to the Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage trail (Becquet 29). The Abbey of St. Martial received uncountable gifts and donations, an opulent institution justifying the ecclesiastic ambition circa 1200s (Barriere 23). This material opulence of the Abbey had transformed into patronizing liturgical objects' production and enamelworks, interior refurbishments, and manuscripts productions (Barriere 23).

To what extent the pilgrimage activities in Western Europe bourgeoned, along with frequent erections of Gothic edifices—the collective desire of massive layman to see Heavenly Jerusalem. On the opening page of 13th century, scholastics' aspirations of

imagining and interpreting God inspired the design of Gothic edifices. Richard Kraumeither notes that the iconography appeared on these Gothic architectonic religious objects like the *Chicago Châsse* corresponding at least in part to Jerusalem, then regarded as the most holy space in the world (Krautheimer 26). Historically, Jerusalem was a prohibitively distant site for 13th century Christians in the west (Stopford J. 61). The desire to observe this unapproachable Holy Land was satisfied Gothic cathedrals. They relocate and recreate the spectacular Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem (Hahn, "Reliquary Effect" 91). Thus, Gothic cathedral was a favored and an epitomized model in cult artistry.

In the words of Walter Heil, "there is no other period in the history of art in which architecture dominates other arts as completely as it does in the Gothic" (Heil 50). The Chicago Châsse equates immaterial holiness with the intelligence and formidable God applied in representing a Gothic edifice. Gothic edifice in France like Chartres, Remis, and Sens, their monumental scales and ambitious decoration programs are all highpoints of medieval scholasticism. The soared pinnacles surmounted the roofs or flying buttresses can bestow a sense of magnificence, as John's vision for Heavenly Jerusalem as a "wall great and high" edifice contended (Camille 29). Peter Fingesten treats the intricate and extravagant exterior visuality of Gothic cathedrals to explain how medieval scholastics contemplated and iterated a cosmos: the stone connects to the star, the whole silhouette of the cathedrals, especially their geometric assemblages, are peaks of small hills (Fliegel 13). The echoes the medieval scholar's love of nature as a holy entity—the most spectacular creation of God (Fligel 14). This sense of holiness conveys Godly wisdom on an aesthetic level—the knowledge of geometry was applied in the design of architecture details like the pinnacles: the linear contours and sinuous singularity of the pinnacles are impressive. Otto G. Simson goes: "craftsmen started with a square base, then followed strict geometric proportions on the diminished base and height" (Von Simson 7). Simson admires the wisdom of these medieval

cathedral workmanship, the lucid geometric principle pairing with the elaborated complexity of these elegant structures is conveyed (Plate 11). On the other side of the coin, Francois Bucher agrees the sophistication engendering from simplicity. Bucher takes the side that the draftsmen were experimentally and inventively incorporating the shape in the design, not rigorously: "medieval craftsmen in the 13th century would only have basic some basic modular: square, triangle, and circle. However, they assembled these modular in an intuitive manner" (Bucher 52) As the architecture encapsulates the astute of workmanship in impressive mode, medieval geometry per se is a divine approach to understand the virtue of God; arithmetic was also believed to be a link between the immaterial spirit of God and calculatable orders on earth. The aesthetics of geometry in Gothic architecture is deep and spiritually charged. The application of this committed and refreshed Gothic aesthetics to liturgical objects was an effective strategy to express the ineffable holiness.

Conclusion

The journey of deciphering this ambiguous architectonic iconography of the Chicago Châsse brings unexpected knowledge that enriching understandings on the subject of medieval spirituality. Its transcendental nature which could be identified as a pagan ritual object or a Christian one unveils two paradigms of constituting sacred spaces in unique architectonic references. The commemorational efficacy of solid sarcophagus was critical as its architectonic enframement implying and glorifying the reverent image of the dead—samples adopted from the civic buildings and theatre. On the other hand, another discreet prototype, portable church miniature could seamlessly demonstrate the official religiosity of relics, the miraculous potencies that they embraced, under the name of Christ and God. Church architectures are the sanctioned sanctums for communal worships, enacting as God's residence for guiding pieties, under the witness of consecrated relics on altars. Relics and churches are one, engrafting God's spirituality to this profane world. Seeing the same

representation accordingly, the iconic church miniature plays a role in assuring that holy relic could be properly staged, invoking worships and denoting godly spirits. However, a more profound meaning of these architectonic ritual vessels are their discreet methods of demonstrating this holy space for relics. A Roman architectonic sarcophagus strengthens the concealment and mysteriousness of a sanctuary for death, working under the Roman belief of death. In contrast, church, perhaps in a Gothic style, embarking the simulacrum of Heavenly Jerusalem—the soared pinnacles. This specific church epitomizes the immortality of relics. Gothic cathedrals dignified the relics for their critical socio-political and cultural locus in the 1200-Christendom, elegant Gothic cathedrals would commensurate these spiritual substances by ennobling their occult images in these designated enclosures. It is an open-ended discussion for one, reconciling these two quasi-antithetical morphologies. The topic rhetorically summarizes the effaceable holiness of invisible relics had been displayed in concrete and visible grammar via its shape. The matter of this charismatic architectonic symbol, whether being a transcendental icon or a Christocentric invention awaits us to grapple at another time.

Appendix: Illustration Plates

1. Anonymous, "Reliquary Casket." gilt copper, c.1200. Champlevé enamel over wood core. *Art Institute of Chicago*, https://www.artic.edu/artworks/46253/reliquary-casket. Accessed 21 Sept. 2019.

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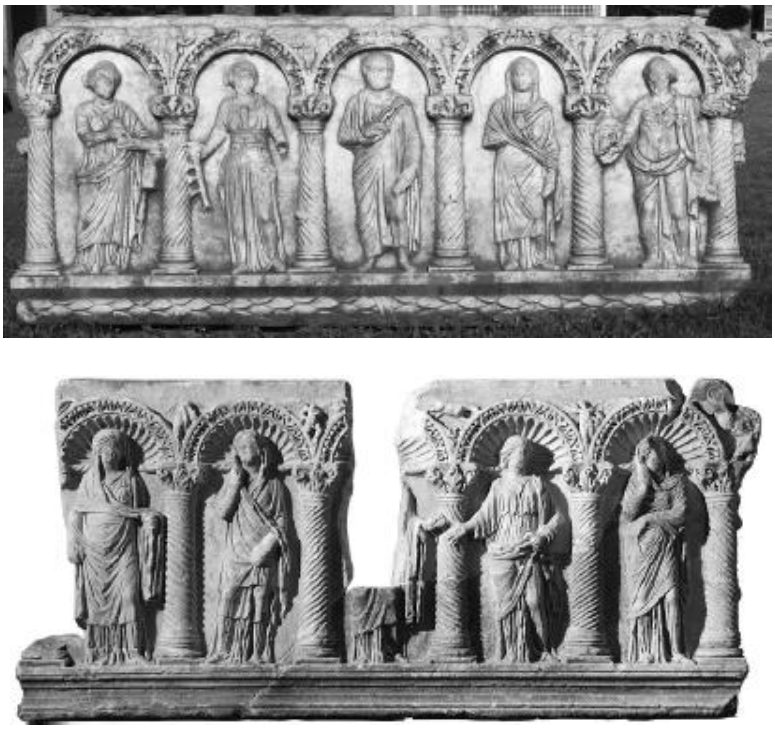
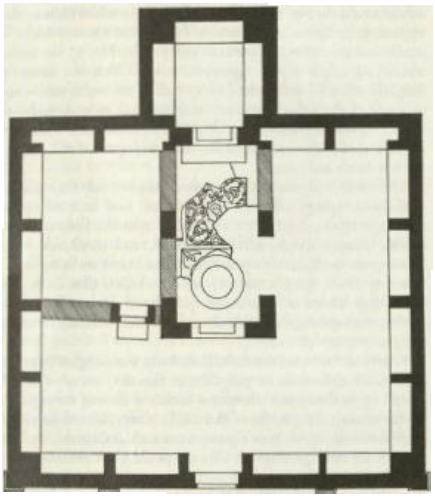


4. Anonymous, “Heroes (upper) and Ideal Females (lower),” 446, Öğüş, Esen. 2014, “Columnar Sarcophagi from Aphrodisias: Elite Emulation in the Greek East,” *American Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 118, no. 1, 2014, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/10.3764/aja.118.1.0113. 123. Print.

5. Anonymous, "Velletri Sarcophagus," 405, marble.
Museo Civico Archeologico Oreste Nardini Velletri, Velletri.



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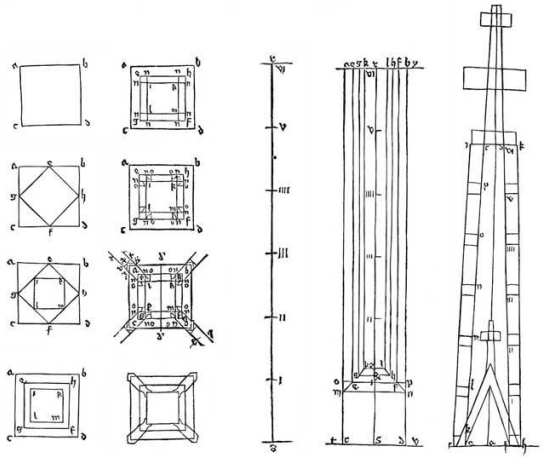
7. Anonymous, “Reliquary in the Shape of a Sarcophagus,” c. 400-600, marble. *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/473288. Accessed 21 November. 2019.

8. Anonymous, “Strigilated sarcophagus with Hercules and Cerberus emerging from central doorway,” Platti Verity. “Framing the Dead on Roman Sarcophagi,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 61/62, 2012. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23647830. 219. Print.

9. Anonymous, “Pola Casket,” circa. 400, ivory,
Museo di Santa Giulia, Brescia. Accessed Jan 15, 2020.

10. Anonymous, “Artophorion (Reliquary of St. Anastasios the Persian),” 969-970, silver repoussé, gilding and niello, Aachen Cathedral Treasury.
https://projects.mcah.columbia.edu/treasuresofheaven//relics/Reliquary-of-St-Anastasios-the-Persian.php. Accessed by Feb 16, 2020.



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