

**An Archaeology of Memory:  
The 'Reinvention' of Roman Sarcophagi in  
Provence during the Middle Ages**

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## Abstract

This thesis is an exercise in the archaeology of memory. It investigates the reuse and ‘reinvention’ of late antique sarcophagi during the Middle Ages in the southern part of Gaul, with a particular emphasis on their reinvention for saints. The region of Provence has a large number of sarcophagi reused for the burial of saints (at least 20), including many of its most important holy figures such as Mary Magdalene, Cassian and Honorat.

I shall analyse three groups of sites: the Alysamps in Arles, Saint-Maximin and Tarascon (the sites connected with Mary Magdalene and her companions) and the monastery of Saint Victor in Marseille. In each case, the sarcophagi became part of an invented narrative created around the imagined antiquity of the site. These narratives varied significantly: some were monastic, others episcopal or biblical, still others heroic: but all were created around antique sarcophagi. Antiquities thus became monumental realms of memory for individuals and events that were thought to have been of significant historical importance in Provence. They formed part of the popular history and collective identity of the region. I will show that their association with saints changed the very function of these objects, as many were no longer seen simply as tombs but also as relics in their own right.

I use a variety of sources to help reconstruct this imagined history, particularly saints’ *vitae* that often provide information about cults, particularly regarding the location of sarcophagi and sometimes even details of miracles that they produced, but also medieval *chartae*, sermons, and pilgrims’ descriptions of sites and rituals.

The results of this study show that sarcophagi were of major importance in the religious history of Provence during the Middle Ages, as they became "proof" of the antiquity of local cults and of the histories based on these legends that the region created for itself. My work contributes to our knowledge of medieval Provence and the history of its collections of sarcophagi.

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## List of Abbreviations

<i>ASR</i>	<i>Archive de sociologie des religions</i>
<i>ABull</i>	<i>Art Bulletin</i>
<i>AKG</i>	<i>Archiv für Kulturgeschichte</i>
<i>AM</i>	<i>Annales du Midi</i>
<i>AntJ</i>	<i>The Antiquaries Journal</i>
<i>BAAT</i>	<i>Bulletin de l'association pour l'antiquité tardive</i>
<i>BE</i>	<i>Bulletin Epigraphique</i>
<i>BM</i>	<i>Bulletin Monumental</i>
<i>BMC</i>	<i>Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs</i>
<i>BPSR</i>	<i>Papers of the British School at Rome</i>
<i>CCM</i>	<i>Cahiers de la Civilisation Médiévale</i>
<i>CH</i>	<i>Church History</i>
<i>CPE</i>	<i>Connaissance des Pères de l'Eglise</i>
<i>CRAI</i>	<i>Comptes rendu des scéances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres</i>
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oak Papers</i>
<i>JA</i>	<i>Journal des Anthropologues</i>
<i>JSAH</i>	<i>Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>The Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JFR</i>	<i>Journal of Folklore Research</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>The Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JS</i>	<i>Journal des Savants</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>JWCI</i>	<i>Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</i>
<i>MIHP</i>	<i>Mémoire de l'institut historique de Provence</i>
<i>MA</i>	<i>Museum Anthropology</i>
<i>MMAB</i>	<i>Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin</i>
<i>NLH</i>	<i>New Literary History</i>
<i>OAJ</i>	<i>Oxford Art Journal</i>
<i>PH</i>	<i>Provence Historique</i>
<i>RAC</i>	<i>Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana</i>
<i>RHR</i>	<i>Revue de l'Histoire des Religions</i>
<i>RHEF</i>	<i>Revue d'histoire de l'Eglise de France</i>
<i>RM</i>	<i>Roemische mitteilungen</i>
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Revue des Sciences Religieuses</i>
<i>RSTP</i>	<i>Revue des sciences théologiques et philosophiques</i>
<i>SCH</i>	<i>Studies in Church History</i>
<i>SM</i>	<i>Studia Monastica</i>

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## Introduction: An Archaeology of Memory

Let us start with a quote from Ausonius:

‘Lucius is definitely one letter, but divided off by two points; thus, this is how one letter makes the praenomen. Next, an M is inscribed. At least, I think so, but it is not entirely clear; the top is damaged, chipped from a break in the stone. Nor can anyone know certainly whether a Marius, a Marcius or even a Metellus lies here. The shapes of the letters lie disfigured, with their forms mangled, all have fallen in the confusion of marks. Should we be surprised that men should die? Monuments crumble; death comes even to stones and names.’<sup>1</sup>

Ausonius believed that meaning (through the inscription) and a monument are intrinsically linked. In this view, a monument ‘dies’ when its meaning has been forgotten. Yet, until the monument disappears entirely, the history of archaeology has shown that while the historically correct interpretation of an object might be lost, the monument still lives. Under some circumstances, it might take on another meaning, be associated with new traditions and be reinterpreted several times during its history. As long as it stands, it still exists and continues to entice the imagination.

In this thesis I will look at the ways in which new meanings became ascribed to Roman sarcophagi in Provence during medieval times. I will focus on the sarcophagi, which, over time, became invented as the tombs of saints who were believed to have been in Provence during antiquity.

A new interpretation was attributed to these objects because their previous history had been forgotten. Such phenomena are not unusual in the history of archaeology; monuments were often reinvented to fit new ideas. A good example to illustrate this point is Stonehenge, one of the oldest monuments in Britain, whose original meanings have still not been entirely unlocked. For several millennia, it has stood and been associated with many different traditions and folklore.<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth offered an interesting theory to explain the site in his XIIth century *Historia*

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<sup>1</sup> Ausonius, *Epitaphs*, XXXIL

<sup>2</sup> For a wide-ranging overview of these different traditions see J. Michell, *Megalithomania : artists, antiquarians and archaeologists at the old stone monuments* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982).

*Regum Britanniae*. He imagined the monument to have been built by Merlin, the legendary wizard. An illustration of this theory is found on a folio of the *Roman de Brut* (Figure 1) by Wace, dating from about 1150.

Similarly, the history of sarcophagi in Southern France was largely forgotten, providing people in the Middle Ages with a wonderful opportunity to create their own versions of the history of these antique tombs. For example, a sarcophagus in the village of St.-Maximin became the tomb of Mary Magdalene in the XIIIth century, while a cemetery containing many antique sarcophagi in the cemetery of the Alyscamps was transformed into a memorial site in the XIIth century celebrating the heroism of fictitious heroes of the then-popular chansons de geste, and the XIIth century crypts in the monastery of St. Victor in Marseille became a museum of antique monasticism in which the sarcophagi on display were thought to have belonged to early monks and saints, the heroes of Christian hagiography. Finally, the sarcophagi in the basilica of St. Honorat in Arles presented a specific episcopate to the city, one built largely on values of commonality and collectivity as can be seen through the iconography of the sarcophagi and their communal display. The sarcophagi themselves – as objects - are the common link to all these legends, they became their foundation and part of Provence's constructed history.

However I should point out that the subject matter of this thesis, the study of the reinvention of antique sarcophagi, came about unexpectedly. Initially my research focused on Late Antiquity. Inspired particularly by one of the La Gayole sarcophagi (Figure 2) on which the iconography could be considered as Christian and/or pagan,<sup>3</sup> I wanted to look at the transition from pagan to Christian iconography on sarcophagi found in Provence.

I soon started to realise that the problem was more complex than I had initially envisaged mainly because the sheer number of reused sarcophagi made the history of each tomb more difficult to retrace. More importantly, I was perplexed by the number of pagan sarcophagi reused in a Christian context, particularly in the case of clerics. Like others before me, I started to question the traditional divide between pagan and

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<sup>3</sup> F. Baratte, 'Les Sarcophages de La Gayole et l'influence attique en Gaule,' *Akten des Symposiums "125 Jahre Sarkophag-Corpus", Marburg, 4.-7. Oktober 1995 Mainz am Rhein* (1998), 248-261, especially 249.

Christian sarcophagi, realising that the boundaries were less clearly defined than I initially expected.<sup>4</sup>

My surprise was even greater when I noticed that many of these sarcophagi had been reused and reinvented as the tombs of some of the most important saints in the region and formed the basis of their cult. Saints were fundamental to medieval society; they acted as intercessors between heaven and earth. This made me ponder how important these sarcophagi must have been in the medieval Provençal religious landscape, as landmarks of some of the most important beliefs of the region. Yet, this phenomenon has been repeatedly mentioned in academic discourse as a ‘problem’ which made it impossible to study many of these sarcophagi in their original context.<sup>5</sup> Instead, I chose to look at this phenomenon as a question in itself, that is interesting in its own right, and the answers to which could help classical archaeologists reconstruct ancient history.

## 1. Building ‘lieux de mémoire’

My approach will be based on the idea that the past was reconstructed to fit new realities in Provence. In other words, historical events were reinvented or rethought to fit contemporary ideas and circumstances. This ‘presentist’ approach is based on the works of the sociologist Halbwachs who pointed out that memory is essentially a reconstruction of the past in the light of the present.<sup>6</sup> In his essay ‘The Sacred Topography of the Gospels’<sup>7</sup> he looked at the ways in which observers from Late Antiquity and later crusaders described the Holy Land according to their knowledge and understanding of it. His conclusion was that the descriptions made by each group were completely dependent on the period during which they visited the Holy Land, or as Louis Corer sums it up: ‘they imposed what was in their own eyes on the land they

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<sup>4</sup> J. Elsner, ‘Introduction,’ *Life, death and representation : some new work on Roman sarcophagi*, eds. J. Elsner and J. Huskinson (New York: De Gruyter, 2011), 1-21, especially 5.

<sup>5</sup> see V. Gaggadis-Robin. ‘Le remploi des sarcophages païens en milieu chrétien’ *D’un Monde à l’autre: Naissance d’une chrétienté en Provence*, ed. J. Guyon and M. Heijmans (Arles: Musée de l’Arles Antiques, 2002), 68-70, especially 69 and F. Benoît, *Sarcophages paléochrétiens d’Arles et de Marseille* (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1954), 8.

<sup>6</sup> See his major study on memory: M. Halbwachs, *The collective memory*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).

<sup>7</sup> M. Halbwachs, *La topographie légendaire des Évangiles en Terre Sainte : étude de mémoire collective*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1941).

thought they were only describing.<sup>8</sup> Halbwachs points out that this was not only due to physical changes that followed political turmoil in the Holy Land, but primarily it was the result of changes of attitude in people's imagination and their internal perception of the Holy Land, following physical isolation as access to it became increasingly complicated and risky. The collective memory of the Holy Land changed between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, and the way that each individual perceived and described the Holy Land was dependent on that memory. For medieval Christians, the Holy Land became an almost inaccessible mythical land of which memories were old, lost and totally disconnected from reality.

What Halbwachs has shown is that memory functions in a collective context, and although a person can have individual memories, the remembrance of events that preceded him is based on collective memory. For instance, a crusader's initial recollection of the Holy Land was based on what others told him about it and on the pictures he saw and the books he read, all of which were shared in a wider social network. As was the case for the Holy Land, the context in which memory is recollected can change drastically over the years, thus completely altering the perception one will have of it. Schwartz warned that taken to the extreme, such a presentist approach would suggest that there is no continuity whatsoever in history.<sup>9</sup> He believed that the past is always a combination of persistence and change, of continuity and newness but keeps certain characteristics. For instance, while the Holy Land might have changed over the centuries, it nevertheless had persistent characteristics and qualities that are shared by no other land.

These sociologists have enabled us to understand what was remembered and what external factors affected our memory, but it does not help us understand how these memories were remembered. It is this problem that Connerton tackled; in his view, images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past are conveyed by performances.<sup>10</sup> He argued that if a memory is to survive, it needs to be re-performed in some way or another, either through ceremonies or rituals. However, he agreed with

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<sup>8</sup> See L. Coser 'Introduction' ,*The collective memory*, 1-38, especially 5.

<sup>9</sup> B. Schwartz, 'The Social Context of Commemoration: A Study in Collective Memory,' *Social Forces* 61.2 (Dec., 1982), 373-402,

<sup>10</sup> see P.Connerton, *How societies remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

Halbwachs that these performances are not necessarily static but are in fact manipulated and updated over time with different regimes, religions, etc.

Some of these performances are included with what Nora called *lieux de mémoire*, and are 'vestiges, the ultimate embodiment of a commemorative consciousness that survives in a history which, having renounced memory, cries out for it.'<sup>11</sup> They can be anything from a ritual, or national celebrations, to material objects; they are realms that carry the illusion of eternity, but with time have lost their intrinsic meaning because the vivid memories that were once attached to them have slowly drifted away from our consciousness.

Over the centuries there has been a clear tendency shared by almost all communities, to defy the idea that the past is always changing through the erection of monuments. The very purpose of a monument is to challenge and transcend the past and eternalise a specific memory or idea. It is moreover meant to extend beyond individual memory and at the same time be experienced individually with each individual 'remembering' what he himself may not have experienced. It is thus supposed to create a common memory and by 'creating common spaces for memory, monuments propagate the illusion of a common memory'.<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, it is the performances and rituals around the monument that redefine and reconstruct its meaning and build the 'illusion' of time. This thesis will focus on this constructed common memory in an attempt to understand the processes and ways in which these sarcophagi became remembered as important tombs of saints.

## 1.1 Medieval Provence: a Christian land

The collective perception of Provence was that it was, in Goudesenne's words, a 'land of hagiographic legends.'<sup>13</sup> Medieval Provence was strongly linked with many

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<sup>11</sup> P. Nora *Realms of memory : rethinking the French past vol.1.* trans. L. Kritzman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 6.

<sup>12</sup> J. Young, 'Memory/Monument,' *Critical terms for art history*, eds. R. Nelson and R. Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 233-267, especially 237.

<sup>13</sup> J.Goudesenne, 'Les offices des saints patrons provençaux : apports de la musicologie à l'histoire ecclésiastique d'Arles et Marseille (X-XIVe siècle),' *Hagiographie et culte des saints en France méridionale, XIIIe-XVe siècle* ed. J.Biget, vol. 37 (Toulouse: Privat, 2002), 113-146, especially 113.

legends that were thought to have originated within the region during ‘Antiquity’ and this constituted a strong regional identity for the Provençaux. In fact, in their introduction to their book on medieval Provence, Aurell, Boyer and -Sébastien Coulet stated: ‘Provence stood out as a fully independent regional principality with its own strong identity between the 970s when it became a Marquisate and in 1482 when it became attached to France.’<sup>14</sup> Aspects of this ‘outstanding identity’ are still present today, as the region is still well-known for its most ‘exuberant rituals.’<sup>15</sup> This identity is particularly marked by the famous individuals who left their footprint on the history of the region.<sup>16</sup>

Many of these individuals were believed to have lived during Antiquity, and this was the period during which they supposedly evangelised the region and forged its special character. They include Mary Magdalene, her sister Martha and her brother Lazarus, who were said to have been banished from the Holy Land and sent away on a boat with no sails which drifted to Marseille. There, they evangelised the region of Provence. It was also thought that Cassian, an eastern monk, came to Marseille in the Vth century and built a monastery there through which he propagated eastern monasticism in the West. Furthermore, the late antique bishops in Arles were at the centre of strong regional devotion. They were thought to have exceptional moral qualities and some of them were even imagined to have fought Saracen attacks in Provence, alongside such heroes of Occitan literature as Vivian and Roland, some of the more celebrated Reconquista warriors. As I shall show, many of these figures are legendary while others probably existed and lived in the region, but their history became highly mythologised during the Middle Ages.

Provence faced many changes during the Middle Ages, particularly with the Islamic invasions which came to be seen as symbols of the destruction of culture, although the extent to which Saracens actually ravaged the region might have been exaggerated.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> M. Aurell, J-P. Boyer and N. Coulet, *La Provence au Moyen âge*. (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 2005), 5.

<sup>15</sup> These terms were used by L-S.Fournier in his anthropological analysis of the culture of Provence, see L-S. Fournier, ‘Le discours régionaliste en Provence (France),’ *JA*.104-105 (2006), 247-264, especially 247.

<sup>16</sup> M. Aurell, J-P. Boyer and N.Coulet, *La Provence au Moyen âge*, 5.

<sup>17</sup> D. Carraz, *L'ordre du Temple dans la basse vallée du Rhône, 1124-1312 ordres militaires, croisades et sociétés méridionales* (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 2005), 24.

Many 'new' legends became popular and were justified by claiming that the ancient stories had been forgotten during these attacks and that their material culture had been destroyed or hidden to protect them. Many sarcophagi were believed to be material manifestations of these legends, and their presence in Provence was a testimony of the ancient culture that enriched the region. Hence, their 'rediscovery' during the Middle Ages was seen as a direct revival of these legends and more broadly, of the ancient culture of Provence. Through their association with the 'old' legends, sarcophagi reminded the viewer that this land was once sacred because it used to be the home of Christ's entourage, that early monks from the East brought monasticism with them, settled in Provence and disseminated their way of life there, and finally that some of the greatest warriors who fought for Christianity came from Provence. The sarcophagi were the unifying elements of these legends and proof of their antiquity, so that they became Provence's ultimate '*lieux de mémoire*'.

## 1.2 The Provençal legendary landscape

Legends are thus of central importance in this thesis, as it is they that gave the tombs their specific medieval meaning. Therefore, I am dependent on hagiography, *chansons de geste*, miracles and any other accounts which provide information about how these legends were received and cults were established.

There are few studies of these legends. Duprat was one of the first to study them comprehensively in his *Histoire de Légendes Saintes de Provence* in 1940. He studied the context in which the legends came into being and how they were received. But his account was punctuated by a strong tone of criticism when he started his article by writing that the Provençaux 'driven by excessive provincial self-esteem, somewhat blinkered local patriotism, and a natural propensity to be nourished by fiction, the 'maintainers' of these legends did all in their power to justify their historical truth, despite contradictions against not only history but also plausibility.'<sup>18</sup> He claimed that he was not like Faillon, a XIXth century Tarascon historian who forcefully defended the legends because he believed them to be true, but that his line of thought was more in

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<sup>18</sup> E. Duprat, 'Histoire des Légendes saintes de Provence,' *MIHP* XVII (1940), 118-203.

agreement with sceptics such as Jean de Launoy, a professor at the Sorbonne, who criticised the legends in the XVIIth century and even Doncieux, who later in the XIXth century had revised the legends to prove their falsehood.<sup>19</sup>

These ‘sceptics’ were not particularly interested in the legends from an academic viewpoint; they were more preoccupied in showing that they were theologically unfounded. They realised the importance of the legends to the Provençaux and could not accept their naivety in defending them. Duprat was no different from the others, failing to grasp the fundamental reason that made the legends important to people. Like his predecessors, he was alarmed by historical inaccuracy and the lack of any theological justification, and simply by the fact that common people believed them. But for many Provençaux, legends had become part of their tradition, their regional history and their identity. For instance, the ‘*Tarasque*’ region is even named after the dragon that Martha, Mary Magdalene’s sister, supposedly slayed when she arrived in what is now Tarascon.<sup>20</sup> The dragon is now featured on the city's coat of arms and there is an annual festival at the end of June to celebrate its death. A village was named Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer as it was thought that it was the location to which Mary Magdalene and her company drifted.

Despite Duprat’s lack of sympathy with the material he studied, we can nevertheless benefit from his broad learning about the legends. Since, there have been some attempts to look at specific aspects of this history. For instance one of the most famous books dealing with France’s ethnology is *Ouvrage sur la Tarasque* written by Dumont in 1951, which is a ‘descriptive essay of ethnographic aspects of a local story.’<sup>21</sup> The author studied the practices and rites associated with beliefs surrounding the figure of St. Martha in Tarascon. A chapter was dedicated to the history of the legend from its beginnings in the XIIIth century to the XIXth century. Interest in these legends has been slowly reviving during recent decades.<sup>22</sup> But no one has successfully

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<sup>19</sup> See G. Doncieux, ‘Les sarcophages de Saint-Maximin et la Légende de Marie-Madeleine,’ *AM* (1895), 270-286.

<sup>20</sup> Interestingly enough, the legend was added to the list of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2005.

<sup>21</sup> L. Dumont, *La Tarasque essai de description d'un fait local d'un point de vue ethnographique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987).

<sup>22</sup> Most studies concentrate on specific saints, as opposed to studying the ‘complete’ sacred landscape of Provence. For instance, many studies have been done on Saint Victor (see for instance P. Boulhol ‘Observations sur les deux plus anciens récits hagiographiques relatifs à Saint-Victor de Marseille: à propos du livre de J.-CL Moulinier’ *Saint-Victor de Marseille: études archéologiques et historiques*

mapped the importance of these legends for people during the Middle Ages, when they became part of not only the history of Provence, but also the Provençal religious landscape.<sup>23</sup>

## 2. Historical discourse

Of course one of the many difficulties when studying these reinvented sarcophagi is accepting their ‘multiple personalities.’ A classicist will see them as signifying classical antiquity, the wealth of Roman aristocrats in Provence and Arles in particular, and conversion of the Roman World to Christianity. On the other hand, it took a long time for medievalists to consider these sarcophagi as an appropriate subject for study, because after all they are not of medieval facture. My aims in this thesis are to write the medieval history of several Provençal sarcophagi, and show why they should form part of the academic discourse of medieval history in Provence. For, despite their importance as part of the Provençal landscape, the post-antique history of these sarcophagi has never been fully explored. One of the main reasons is that they do not fit into any traditional historical template. According to Foucault, each period in history has its own ways of viewing the world through a specific mindset. In *les Mots et les Choses* he claimed that science is limited by its epistemes, that are the ‘intellectual certainties’ of knowledge at particular times.<sup>24</sup> He explained his concept during an interview in 1972: ‘The epistemes for a particular era are composed of relational phenomena between sciences or between different discourses in different scientific disciplines.’<sup>25</sup> In other words, there is a structure, a hierarchy in knowledge that defines what we see and accept as science.

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(Turnhout: Brépols, 2009 ),163-174) and on Mary Magdalene (the most complete work on the saint is by V. Saxer, *Le culte de Marie Madeleine en Occident: des origines à la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris: Librairie Clavreuil, 1959) but none have attempted like Etienne Duprat to examine the relation between these cults.

<sup>23</sup> Criado Boado, Parceró-Oubiña and Santos Estévez who wrote about ‘rewriting landscape’ noted: ‘the process of inventing a tradition incorporates the use of earlier sacred spaces: rewriting tradition is also rewriting landscape.’ See F. Criado Boado, C. Parceró-Oubiña and M. Santos Estévez ‘Rewriting landscape : incorporating sacred landscapes into cultural traditions,’ *World Archaeology* 30 (1998), 159-176, especially 174.

<sup>24</sup> see M. Foucault, *Les mots et les choses une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994).

<sup>25</sup> M. Foucault, *Dits et écrits 1954-1988*, eds. D. Defert and F. Ewald ( Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 24.

Similar ideas were formulated by the Italian philosopher and historian Eco at about the same time. He wrote: ‘In each era, the way in which the various art forms are organised mirrors the manner in which science, or in any case contemporary culture sees reality, in the broad sense by similarity, metaphor, or resolution of the concept concerned.’<sup>26</sup>

In both of these views, scholarly endeavour at large is enslaved to the period in which it is written, and consequently, historians are, ironically, victims of their historical period. The set of values that are visible in a specific time affects the way that history will be written and even thought. This is why Foucault attempted to study discourses (even historical discourses) as events, subjects of study, and questioned the way that they came into being and the motivation behind their purpose.<sup>27</sup> He presented himself as an archaeologist, one who studies discourses that describe objects rather than the objects themselves.

## 2.1 The cult of saints

Discourses in the field of history have broadly opened up to new ways of thinking as new participants from diverse backgrounds started to include their own vision within disciplines that had sometimes been conservatively guarded by scholars. New ways of thinking started to become integrated into traditional discourses, giving way to imaginative, creative and varied views of the past.

Therefore, I will introduce this thesis by looking at the reasons why the medieval archaeology of sarcophagi has been set aside in a number of academic discourses. I will present an archaeology of discourses from which the sarcophagi have been traditionally excluded, and see how and why they should be included.

Of course, academic discourse is always evolving, including certain aspects while excluding others. Recently, the trend in humanities has been to study phenomena in an ‘interdisciplinary’ setting, through which discourses and ways of thinking used in

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<sup>26</sup> U. Eco, *L' Oeuvre ouverte 'Opera aperta'* trad. Chantal Roux de Bézieux (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1965), 28.

<sup>27</sup> This idea is especially explored in M.I Foucault, *L' archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008).

one discipline are transferred to another. This promotes sharing of methods among departments and of course cooperative work between individuals from different fields.

A good example of such interdisciplinary exchange is given by Brown, who used anthropology to open the field of history to new ways of thinking. As Yarrow pointed out, Brown's aim is to bring the history of popular beliefs into the line of general historiography.<sup>28</sup> In *The Cult of Saints*, he emphasised the importance of saints and their special status in late antique and medieval societies.

Brown had an innovative approach. As Cameron pointed out, he was stepping into the fields of social anthropology 'using a wide range of 'data' to construct a social definition of a 'holy man' from Late Antiquity rather than a saint, as a typically interstitial figure exercising a patronage role based on the symbolic capital of his perceived authority.'<sup>29</sup> He avoided the term saint for this early period because there was no official bestowal of sainthood, and instead explored the spiritual and social concept of 'holiness,'<sup>30</sup>

Following Brown's approach, I shall study saints as part of a society in which they had a direct impact on people's lives, rather than in isolation. They were of central importance to medieval society, and were omnipresent in religious life as becomes very clear when looking at the dedication of Churches, the names of children and feasts that punctuate the year. People went to see them when they were ill in the hope of a cure and prayed to them, as witnessed by many accounts of miracles and an impressive amount of literature celebrating saints in the form of *vitae* that describe their lives and in some cases their martyrdom.<sup>31</sup>

Many of their miracles were performed through their relics, for it was believed that the saints had defied death and that miracles were their way of reaffirming their presence on Earth. At first, most of the miracles were thought to take place at the tombs

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<sup>28</sup> S. Yarrow, *Saints and their communities miracle stories in twelfth century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 13.

<sup>29</sup> A. Cameron, 'On Defining the Holy Man,' *The cult of saints in late antiquity and the Middle Ages : essays on the contribution of Peter Brown*, ed. J. Howard-Johnston and P-A. Hayward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 27.

<sup>30</sup> A. Cameron, 'On Defining the Holy Man,' 27.

<sup>31</sup> For the importance of Saints during the Middle Ages and their function in society see P. Brown, *The cult of the saints : its rise and function in Latin Christianity*, Haskell lectures on history of religions (London: SCM Press, 1981) and S. Efthymiadis, *Hagiography in Byzantium : literature, social history and cult* (Farnham: Ashgate Variorum, 2011).

of the saints since it was there that their relics were thought to rest.<sup>32</sup> This is why many pilgrims sought the burial place of a saint, hoping to get into contact with the divine.

However, these cults were eventually dispersed as relics became fragmented and taken to many different places, multiplying the number of sacred places and creating specific sacred geographies. For instance, the relics of St. Foy were taken from Agen and moved to Conques in the XIth century,<sup>33</sup> while the body of Mary Magdalene was thought to have been taken from Provence and moved to Vézelay.<sup>34</sup> During the Middle Ages, relics were broken into pieces and different parts were taken to various places.

Relics became some of the most valuable items during Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages as they were thought to be the physical presence of the saint on earth. The term 'relic' itself (from the Greek and Latin) means 'things left behind'. Unlike the bones of normal people, the relics of saints were thought to be uncorrupted and maintained a connection to their holy souls after their death.<sup>35</sup> As Krueger has pointed out, 'such special bodies mediated between humanity and the divine.'<sup>36</sup> In Wharton's terms, a relic 'records duration and postpones oblivion'. It offers reassurance that the past retains its authority.<sup>37</sup>

These precious relics became extremely important during the Middle Ages: they were fought for, stolen, used to consecrate altars and also exchanged as diplomatic gifts.<sup>38</sup> They were part of the social and religious fabric of medieval life.

However their study has been somewhat brushed aside from the field of medieval archaeology and art history. Historically, most studies have concentrated not

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<sup>32</sup> A. Angenendt, 'Relics and their Veneration,' *Treasures of heaven : saints, relics, and devotion in medieval Europe* (London: British Museum, 2010), 19-28, especially 23.

<sup>33</sup> For an overview see J-L. Biget, 'Introduction,' *Hagiographie et culte des saints en France méridionale, XIIIe-XVe siècle* ed. J-L. Biget, vol. 37, Cahiers de Fanjeaux (Toulouse: Privat, 2002), 9-28, especially 15-16.

<sup>34</sup> On the translation of the body of Mary Magdalene from Provence to Vézelay see P. Geary, *Furta sacra : thefts of relics in the central Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 43.

<sup>35</sup> D. Krueger, 'The Religion of Relics in Late Antiquity and Byzantium,' *Treasures of heaven: saints, relics, and devotion in medieval Europe*, (London: British Museum, 2010), 5-18, especially 5.

<sup>36</sup> D. Krueger, 'The Religion of Relics in Late Antiquity and Byzantium,' 5.

<sup>37</sup> A. Wharton, *Selling Jerusalem : relics, replicas, theme parks* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 9-10.

<sup>38</sup> J. Smith, 'Rulers and Relics c.750–c.950: Treasure on Earth, Treasure in Heaven,' *Relics and Remains*, ed. A. Walsham (Oxford: Oxford Journals, 2010), 73-96, especially 82.

on relics but on reliquaries, which were deemed to have art historical quality.<sup>39</sup> But the relic itself and its importance to medieval society is a relatively recent topic of interest. In fact, George wrote about them: ‘The word itself – relics – always carries a strong religious overtone, with the well-known catholic and popular excesses.’<sup>40</sup> He adds that in his opinion, relics are of value only in as much as they can tell us about a specific historical period.

I agree with his view that, from a scientific perspective, an archaeologist should dissociate himself from one who believes in the power of a relic, yet at the same time, in order to understand the importance of the object to people in the past, it is essential to understand how relics took part in their beliefs. My approach adopts an anthropological understanding of these objects, it is essential to realise that they were sacred to the people who believed in the legends with which they were associated.

In the introduction to *Furta Sacra*, one of the most important accounts of the cult of relics during the Middle Ages, Geary states that ‘the subject of this study is not, as one might expect from the title, relics, but rather people.’<sup>41</sup> He further continues that he would:

‘not attempt to discriminate between genuine and false relics, to provide a criticism of this peculiar manifestation of religious devotion, or even to trace the developing forms of reliquaries. The relics themselves, physical remains of saints, are essentially passive and neutral, and hence not of primary importance to historians. It is the individuals who came into contact with these objects, giving them value and assimilating them into their history, who are the proper subject matter of historical inquiry.’<sup>42</sup>

This offers a good summary of my approach in this thesis, for I will not argue whether or not the relics and the legends are of any historical validity. I shall simply accept that they were important for the people who considered them to be true. As such, I will explore how and why they imagined these sarcophagi to be sacred, how they constructed them as such and how they interacted with them. In short, I shall look at how the objects became described, rethought and rewritten.

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<sup>39</sup> P. George, ‘Les reliques des saints : un nouvel objet historique ’ *Les reliques: objets, cultes, symboles*, eds. E. Bozoky and A-M. Helvetius (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 229-238, especially 230.

<sup>40</sup> P. George, ‘Les reliques des saints : un nouvel objet historique, ’ 239.

<sup>41</sup> P. Geary, *Furta sacra : thefts of relics in the central Middle Ages*, 3.

<sup>42</sup> P. Geary, *Furta sacra : thefts of relics in the central Middle Ages*, 3

The roles of the sarcophagi were multiple; due to their very function they testified to the presence of the saint and as a result became associated with miracles. This is partly because, as Angenendt notes, saints ‘prefer to work miracles at their earthly graves with which their souls in heaven remained in contact.’<sup>43</sup> That is why St Augustine suggested that miracles which took place at tombs containing relics should be recorded.<sup>44</sup> An examination of 5,000 reports of miracles in the eleventh and twelfth centuries showed that around 40% of the 1,102 miracles in which the relic is mentioned took place immediately after uttering an invocation at a saint’s shrine or upon touching a relic.<sup>45</sup>

One of my arguments in this thesis will be that many of the sarcophagi became relics themselves during the Middle Ages. This is known in the literature as the phenomenon of ‘holy contagion’<sup>46</sup> whereby the sanctity of saints’ bodies could be transferred to associated objects such as their clothing, the dust from their graves and their graves themselves.

Many miracles were performed at the locations of these sarcophagi, and some accounts even relate that touching a sarcophagus could cure a diseased person. To be sure, the miraculous nature of sarcophagi is not an unheard of phenomenon. While the sarcophagi in Provence’s ‘power’ might have been forgotten because most are now displayed in museums and are thus divorced from their religious context, a sarcophagus in Arles-sur-Tech in the Pyrénées Orientales Department of France called the ‘Sainte Tombe’ (Figure 3) is a good present-day example of how such an object can remain the centre of popular devotion. The tomb is thought to have been associated with the local martyrs Abdon and Sennen and is believed to fill up miraculously with sacred water capable of healing. Even today, it is still the centre of a long tradition by which many villagers collect precious water from the tomb. Surprisingly, there has been little

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<sup>43</sup> A. Angenendt, ‘Relics and their Veneration,’ *Treasures of heaven : saints, relics, and devotion in medieval Europe*, 23.

<sup>44</sup> see H. Keller, C. Meier and T. Scharff, *Schriftlichkeit und Lebenspraxis im Mittelalter : Erfassen, Bewahren, Verändern : (Akten des Internationalen Kolloquiums 8.-10. Juni 1995)* (Munich: W. Fink, 1999), 9-23.

<sup>45</sup> A. Angenendt, ‘Relics and their Veneration,’ 23.

<sup>46</sup> J. Smith, ‘Rulers and Relics c.750–c.950: Treasure on Earth, Treasure in Heaven,’ 74.

academic interest in the rituals that surround the tomb, though many scientific studies have been made to explain the hydraulic phenomenon.<sup>47</sup>

However, the ritual surrounding the ‘miracle water’ shows the popular devotions that exist around such tombs and the traditions that become associated with them. One of our sarcophagi was also thought to have contained miracle water, but like nearly all sarcophagi that were once sacred in Provence, it no longer carries any such meaning. It is one of my goals in this thesis to write some of that history that has been dissociated from them and explore how these tombs became sacred, and more particularly the rituals that became associated with sarcophagi at some point in their lives.<sup>48</sup>

### 3. A cultural archaeology

In other words, what my research seeks to show is an example of cultural archaeology that looks at the object within a constructed social context, related directly to the legends with which they became associated. Hence, it is impossible to study the medieval re-inventions of these sarcophagi without considering the legendary narrative in which they became embedded. The sarcophagi offered a direct access to the construction and implementation of these legends in Provence, as they became their material proof.

Yet, their history has never been integrated into archaeological discourse. One long lasting bias in archaeology is related to the fact that material culture has rarely been studied outside its sphere of production. As a result, most archaeologists hardly look at the after-use of objects, such as the medieval reception of sarcophagi. Hence, this thesis studies the ‘biography’ of these sarcophagi in Provence, the way that meaning was changed and renegotiated throughout their ‘lives’ and particularly their

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<sup>47</sup> Some studies made on the cult were : P. de Vincens de Causans, *Notice sur les saints martyrs Abdon et Sennen et sur le sarcophage qui contient quelques-unes de leurs reliques et une eau miraculeuse, à Arles-sur-Tech (Pyrénées-Orientales)* (Perpignan: imprimerie de P. Bardou Job, 1868) and M. Oliviéro, *Le Mystère de la sainte tombe d'Arles-sur-Tech* (Paris: Société d'anthropologie, 1928).

<sup>48</sup> It should also be noted that two of the sarcophagi that were associated with saints from our corpus even had ‘fenestrella’ drilled into them. These are holes through which pilgrims could pour oil or water that would then touch the relic and come back sanctified.

medieval life.<sup>49</sup> The term ‘biography’ as applied here is borrowed from Kopytoff who realised that objects were incompletely understood when studied at only a specific point of their existence because they have the faculty of accumulating meaning and history.<sup>50</sup> Much like living beings, the life of objects follows a certain pattern which Holtorf has described quite simply as birth, ageing and death.<sup>51</sup> There is a tendency in archaeology to focus on the ‘birth’ stage of the object, stating its purpose at the time that it was produced and sometimes the way that it was consumed or experienced.

Many archaeologists have recently started to question the way in which the past is studied, and have begun to reflect upon how their own subjective perspectives influence the ways that they ‘read’ or ‘invent’ objects. A recently published collection of papers compiled in a book entitled ‘Invention and Reinvention in Archaeology: Perceptions and Archaeological Practice’ sought to bring to light many aspects of such biases and to question the core of the archaeological approach.<sup>52</sup> The authors studied the ‘episteme’ of archaeology, the traditional tools used for field studies, and started questioning them.

This thesis is consistent with this line of thought, it will investigate the ‘ageing’ process, the way that sarcophagi acquired new layers of meaning over time. Meaning was influenced by events happening in each historical period and people’s view of history and the past in general. In fact, as Gosden and Marshall have noted, questions about links between people and objects are central to the notion of the biography of

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<sup>49</sup> The term ‘lives’ was coined by Davis who used to study Indian images, see R. Davis, *Lives of Indian images* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). Similarly, its applications to sarcophagi were explored by Huskinson in J. Huskinson, ‘Habent sua fata: Writing life histories of Roman Sarcophagi,’ *Life, death and representation : some new work on Roman sarcophagi*, eds. J. Elsner and J. Huskinson (New York: De Gruyter, 2010), 55-82, and in F. Prado-Vilar “Tragedy’s Forgotten Beauty: the Medieval Return of Orestes,” in *Life, Death and Representation: Some new Work on Roman Sarcophagi*, eds. J. Elsner and J. Huskinson (New York: De Gruyter, 2010), 83-118.

It should also be noted that the biography of objects has been receiving more attention in recent years. For instance, a complete issue of *World Archaeology* was dedicated to the topic and contained a compilation of articles that demonstrated regularly repeated reuse. See *The Cultural Biography of Objects*, *World Archaeology*, ed. Y. Marshall and C. Gosden (London: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>50</sup> I. Kopytoff, ‘The cultural biography of things: commodizations as process,’ *The social life of things : commodities in cultural perspective*, ed. A. Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64-91.

<sup>51</sup> C. Holtorf, ‘The life-histories of megaliths in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern,’ *World Archaeology* 30 (1998), 23-38, especially 23.

<sup>52</sup> T. Pruitt and D. Yates, ‘Introduction to Invention and Reinvention: Perceptions and Archaeological Practice,’ *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 24.1 (2009), 2- 15.

objects,<sup>53</sup> and it is this link that is at the core of this study, based on the premise that people reinvented and recreated the object. This is why I will look at the social and political context in which these sarcophagi were recreated to understand the underlying motivations behind this process.<sup>54</sup>

### 3.1 Sarcophagi and spolia

I am not the first to have raised the question of the reuse of sarcophagi. Ragusa already looked at the phenomena as a subject of a study over 50 years ago, in her studies of the reception of sarcophagi.<sup>55</sup> An entire conference was organised on the topic in 1982.<sup>56</sup> Their collection has been studied by Settis<sup>57</sup> while Elsner wrote about the reuse of sarcophagi as altars in Southern France during the Counter-Reformation, thus pointing out the constant re-use of these sarcophagi over time.<sup>58</sup> Huskinson recently studied the biographies of three different sarcophagi over time showing the ways in which they were reused, and also pointing out specificities and commonalities between different histories of reuse.<sup>59</sup>

Recent years have seen a noticeable interest in the study of the reuse of antique materials in general during medieval times. Sarcophagi are probably some of the most interesting examples for the variety of their reuse and exemplify innovative ways of

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<sup>53</sup> C. Godsen and Y. Marshall, 'The Cultural Biography of Objects,' *The Cultural Biography of Objects*, ed. C. Godsen and Y. Marshall, World Archaeology (London: Routledge, 1999), 160-178.

<sup>54</sup> The idea that objects can effectively contribute to building an identity is quite commonly applied in the field of anthropology. Hoskins for example looked at ways in which objects were used to create and sustain certain meanings in people's lives. See J. Hoskins, *Biographical objects : how things tell the stories of people's lives* (London: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>55</sup> I. Ragusa, 'The Re-use and Public Exhibition of Roman sarcophagi in the Middle Ages' (Unpublished MA Dissertation, New York University, 1951).

<sup>56</sup> S. Settis and B. Andreae, *Colloquio Sul Reimpiego Dei Sarcophagi Romani Nel Medioevo: Pisa 5.-12. September 1982: Marburger Winckelmann-Programm 1983*, ed. S. Settis B. Andreae (Pisa: Verlag des Kunstgeschichtl. Seminars, 1984).

<sup>57</sup> S. Settis, 'Collecting ancient sculpture: the beginnings,' in *Collecting sculpture in early modern Europe*, eds. N. Penny and E. Schmidt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 219-245.

<sup>58</sup> J. Elsner, 'The Christian Museum in the South of France: Antiquity, Display and Liturgy from the Counter-Reformation to Aftermath,' *OAJ* 31 (2009), 181-204.

<sup>59</sup> J. Huskinson, 'Habent sua fata: Writing life histories of Roman Sarcophagi,' 55-82. For the 'lives' of sarcophagi see also D. Verkerk 'Life after Death: the Afterlife of Sarcophagi in medieval Rome and Ravenna', in eds É.Ó Carragáin and C. Neuman de Vegvar (2007): *Roma Felix: Formation and Reflections of Medieval Rome* (Aldershot and Burlington VT), 81-96.

rethinking of the past. Greenhalgh noted that they were the most common antique objects reused in Antiquity;<sup>60</sup> In addition to being reused to hold new bodies, they were also reused in architecture. For instance, during medieval times a late antique sarcophagus representing Christ surrounded by his Apostles (Figure 4) was observed embedded above the entrance to the monastery of Lérins in the XIVth century, thereby emphasising the antiquity of the monastery itself.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, Guyon has shown that a sarcophagus that is now preserved at the Calvet Museum in Avignon was used to decorate the door of the Church of St. Eutrope of Orange during the Middle Ages.<sup>62</sup> The church, that used to be on a hill overlooking the town, was destroyed in the XVIIth century, but the sarcophagus was preserved, recognised as an antiquity in that time.

Nevertheless, the study of the reuse of sarcophagi in architecture cannot be limited to the Middle Ages. In the XVIth century, the Minims Fathers became responsible for the Alyscamps site in Arles and used the sarcophagi in a variety of different ways; for instance the sarcophagus known as the Olivaison (Figure 5) became used as a water fountain. Laymen seem to have been similarly inventive, for instance a fragment of sarcophagus figuring Putti and dolphins dating from 140-150 (Figure 6), was used as the sill of a house around the Minims' living quarters.<sup>63</sup> There was a particularly large number of such reuses in Provence although the phenomenon is not restricted to this region. A good example is the sarcophagus in Tarragona, Catalonia, that was reused above the door of a cathedral.<sup>64</sup>

When used in an architectural setting, the reuse of sarcophagi can be considered within the larger framework of spolia, referring to the reuse of objects and architectural pieces from antiquity in a later period, typically for architectural purposes. Spolia have been extensively studied in art history, especially during the last decade. Historically, the use of spolia has been assumed to be a response to the lack of resources

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<sup>60</sup> M. Greenhalgh, *Marble past, monumental present : building with antiquities in the mediaeval Mediterranean* (Boston: Brill, 2009), 38.

<sup>61</sup> For more on the medieval reuse of this sarcophagus, see Y. Codou, 'Le paysage monumental,' *Histoire de l'abbaye de Lérins*, ed. B. Aubertin (Bégrolles-en-Mauges: Abbaye de Bellefontaine ARCCIS, 2005), 56.

<sup>62</sup> see J. Guyon, 'Jeu de puzzle au Musée Calvet à Avignon : deux pièces antiques à replacer au linteau de l'église Saint-Eutrope d'Orange,' *Vivre, produire et échanger reflets méditerranéens mélanges offerts à Bernard Liou*, eds. L. Sciallano and M. Rivet (Montagnac: M. Mergoïl, 2002), 527-534.

<sup>63</sup> see V. Gaggadis-Robin, *Les sarcophages païens du Musée de l'Arles antique* (Arles: Edition du Musée de l'Arles et de la Provence antiques, 2005), 158-159.

<sup>64</sup> M. Sotomayor, *Sarcófagos romano-cristianos de España estudio iconográfico*, (Granada: Facultad de teología, 1975), 47.

that became a problem during Late Antiquity due to strong economic decline. The Arch of Constantine (Figure 7) is often used as a basis for discussion of the term because it integrates different types of spolia including elements from monuments commemorating various earlier Emperors.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, Vasari claimed that the use of spolia was the result of a lack of skilled masters, and he judged the work he attributed to be contemporary to the arch as ‘very rude as well as crude.’<sup>66</sup> This conservative view was challenged by L’Orange’s essay in 1939 on sculptural decoration<sup>67</sup> of the Arch and Deichmann’s article in 1940 on spoliated colonnades in Early Christian basilicas.<sup>68</sup> Both stressed the coherence of antique objects in their late antique setting rather than discontinuities. This of course is a major breakthrough because it suggests that there would have been some interest in aesthetics and harmony in the use of spolia, and not necessarily just the response to a lack of skill and material.

Arnold Esch’s article of 1969<sup>69</sup> established the term as a distinctive cultural practice rather than a subcategory of classical archaeology. Indeed, he took spolia and analysed them for their own sake. Spolia can thus be studied on their own and understood within the social, political and religious context of the time. There have been many followers of these ideas, who have started to review some of the most famous cases of spolia in a different light. For instance, Bosman analysed Old St. Peter’s, in which large quantities of spolia are believed to have been used, and does not accept that the theory of lack of available material is the sole explanation. He even goes so far as to claim that there was no shortage of material in Rome at all during that period.<sup>70</sup> He believed instead that the best available materials were sought for the Church and to achieve the wide array of colours used in the colonnades that defined the

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<sup>65</sup> P. Pensabene and C. Panella, ‘Reimpiego e progettazione architettonica nei monumenti tardo-antichi di Roma,’ *Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia: Rendiconti*, 66 (1996), 11-283, for more on the arch of Constantine see J. Elsner, ‘From the Culture of Spolia to the Cult of Relics: The Arch of Constantine and the Genesis of Late Antique Forms,’ *PBSR* 68 (2000): 149-184. For a wider examination of spolia see B. Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Urban Public Building in Northern and Central Italy ad. 300-850*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 203-229.

<sup>66</sup> G. Vasari, *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, vol. 1. trans. A. Hinds (London: Penguin, 1963), 7.

<sup>67</sup> H-P. L’Orange, *Der spätantike Bildschmuck des Konstantinsbogens*, Studien zur spätantiken Kunstgeschichte 10 (Berlin, 1939).

<sup>68</sup> F. Deichmann, ‘Saule und Ordnung in der frühchristlichen Architektur’ *RM* 55 (1940), 114-130.

<sup>69</sup> A. Esch, ‘Spolien. Zur Wiederverwendung antiker Baustücke und Skulpturen im mittelalterlichen Italien’ *AKG*, 51 (1969), 1 – 64.

<sup>70</sup> L. Bosman, *The power of tradition: spolia in the architecture of St. Peter’s in the Vatican* (Hilversum : Uitgeverij Verloren, 2004), 142.

nave and the aisles on each side.<sup>71</sup> He thought that one of the primary motivations was aesthetic.

This new understanding of spolia has influenced the way that I have chosen to study these sarcophagi. There is no doubt that economic decline and lack of available material were the main factors explaining their reuse, but this does not mean that a study of the ideological and aesthetic effects of spolia should not be undertaken. At present, we are still at the level at which reuse is mostly mentioned to explain the loss of archaeological history of the pieces. In fact, the only article that dealt specifically with the subject was a short article by Gaggadis Robin in the catalogue for the exhibition on the beginnings of Christian Art in France.<sup>72</sup> However, she explains this phenomenon predominantly by focusing on the ‘conservative’ Vasari type of approach and emphasises the lack of resources and possibly good craftsmen. She fails to look at the social context of the period that could contribute to alternative or complementary explanations, and does not look at reception. And yet what we see in the South of France are very innovative reuses of sarcophagi in different types of architectural settings and for different functions.

### **3.2 The reuse of sarcophagi**

Sarcophagi were more frequently reused to contain the bodies of newly deceased persons. We see many sarcophagi reused for new occupants starting in Late Antiquity. Again, in most cases the lack of resources probably became one of the most important factors in explaining reuse, especially when dealing with plain sarcophagi. A good illustration of this can be seen in many cemeteries from which many sarcophagi have been plundered, for instance Périn points out the Merovingian cemetery at la Butte d’Isle-Aumont for which drawings show only a few sarcophagi remaining in place.<sup>73</sup> In some cases, reuse became a very common practice, as seems to have been the case on the Menerbes site where only 3 of the 28 sarcophagi were not reused in the Middle

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<sup>71</sup> L. Bosman, *The power of tradition: spolia in the architecture of St. Peter's in the Vatican*, 143.

<sup>72</sup> see V. Gaggadis-Robin. ‘Le remploi des sarcophages païens en milieu chrétien,’ 69-71.

<sup>73</sup> P. Perin, ‘L’assimilation ethnique vue par l’archéologie,’ *Dossiers de l’Archéologie* (1981), 38-47, especially 40.

Ages.<sup>74</sup> Another less spectacular example is in the necropolis of St. Vincent where it is estimated that 15 to 30% of sarcophagi were reused in the Middle Ages.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, we do not know the frequency of these reuses since the site was continuously occupied from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, making it difficult to pin down the date of the first reuse. The Alyscamps is another good example where many plain sarcophagi were reused.<sup>76</sup>

As Raynaud has shown, the phenomenon first started by placing bodies in a tomb, pushing the initial body to one side.<sup>77</sup> Complete reuse has also been observed in several cases, in which the initial occupant was removed from his or her own sarcophagus. The evolution of the practise is slow and poorly dated, but we can safely state that the trend had certainly started during Late Antiquity.<sup>78</sup>

While the reuse of sarcophagi existed among pagans, it became much more common among Christians. This was partly due to the change of resource availability, but also potentially the fact that most pagan beliefs held that the soul of a deceased whose tomb had been violated would return to haunt the newly buried body.<sup>79</sup> There was potentially a double in death that was present in the tomb ready to defend the integrity of its second home, and that would torment and violate the earthly remains of the new occupant.<sup>80</sup>

There were also some legal constraints; the Theodosian Code banned the reuse of a sarcophagus, and heavy fines were inflicted on anyone who violated these constraints (Cod. Th. 9.17.4, in 346). The reuse of materials from tombs was also condemned. The topic continued to be a polemic as was evident in the 585 Council of Macon which ruled against reuse before decomposition.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> I. Cartron, Y. Godou and M. Fixot, 'Saint-Estève de Ménerbes,' *Provence historique: autour de Paul-Albert Février* 42 (1992), 167-208, especially 167-168.

<sup>75</sup> C. Raynaud, 'Le monde des morts,' *Gallia* 63 (2006), 137-156, especially 153.

<sup>76</sup> For an overview of the excavations and the sarcophagi in the Alyscamps, see F. Benoît, 'Fouilles aux Alyscamps: 'Areae' cimetiérales et sarcophages de l'école d'Arles,' *PH* 10 (1952), 115-132.

<sup>77</sup> C. Raynaud, 'Le monde des morts,' 154.

<sup>78</sup> E. Crubezy and C. Raynaud, 'Le passage de la sépulture individuelle à la sépulture collective au IIIe au XIIe dans le sud-ouest de la France,' *Anthropologie et histoire ou anthropologie historique ?*, ed. L. Buchet, vol. 24 (Paris: Éd. du CNRS, 1988), 195-208.

<sup>79</sup> C. Raynaud, 'Le monde des morts,' 153.

<sup>80</sup> E. Jobbé-Duval, C. Lecouteux and O. Cosma, *Les morts malfaisants larvae, lemures d'après le droit & les croyances populaires des Romains* (Chambéry: Éd. Exergue, 2000), 51-54.

<sup>81</sup> E. James, *The Merovingian archaeology of south-west Gaul* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1977), 163.

At the same time according to Rebillard, the Church's attitude towards tomb violators is rarely mentioned in the abundant documentation that has come down to us, and when it is mentioned it is usually in reference to civil law.<sup>82</sup> He notes that from a religious point of view, Christians were less offended than pagans by the concept of reuse.<sup>83</sup> This seems further emphasised by the very number of sarcophagi reused by Christians. Hence, there are also ideological changes independent of the lack of available resources that explain the reuse of sarcophagi.

Reuse seems to have been even more conscious in the case of important people whose standing was reflected by the use of an antique and typically decorated sarcophagus. For instance, the sarcophagus of Archbishop Theodore (Figure 8) in S. Apollinare in Classe was an earlier sarcophagus reused by him at the end of the seventh century.<sup>84</sup> There is also the sarcophagus known as 'Christ the Conqueror' in Arles dated from the end of the IVth century and that was reused in the VIth century.<sup>85</sup> There are many other examples that one could cite, and probably also many other cases about which we know nothing because the sarcophagi in question were reused many times during the Middle Ages.

There are several good examples in Arles alone. For instance, we know that the wife of Flavius Memorius living in Arles during the IVth century, chose to reuse a hunt sarcophagus with griffons for her late husband.<sup>86</sup> Other good examples were found in La Gayole near Brignoles, where two sarcophagi were reused during Late Antiquity, one of which bore the iconography of Orestes and the other a 'mixed' iconography (Figure 2) was an Attic coffin that could be interpreted as either Christian or pagan.<sup>87</sup>

To be sure, this phenomenon of reuse remained very frequent throughout the Middle Ages, when it seems there were few problems in reusing sarcophagi. Several modest examples are also found in Alyscamps cemetery, for example the IVth century

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<sup>82</sup> E. Rebillard, *The care of the dead in Late Antiquity*, (Ithaca, N.Y.; London: Cornell University Press, 2009), 28.

<sup>83</sup> V. Zucchini, *Corpus della scultura paleocristiana bizantina ed altomedievale di Ravenna, II : I sarcophagi a figure e a carattere simbolico* (Roma: De Luca edition, 1968), 60.

<sup>84</sup> V. Zucchini, *Corpus della scultura paleocristiana bizantina ed altomedievale di Ravenna, II : I sarcophagi a figure e a carattere simbolico*, 26.

<sup>85</sup> B. Christern-Briesenick, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage Vol 3. Frankreich Algerien Tunesien / bearbeitet* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 2003), 537.

<sup>86</sup> V. Vassiliki Gaggadis 'Sarcophages d'Arles : Art attique et influences micrasiatiques' *125 Jahre Sarkophag-Corpus*, Marburg, 4-7 Oktober 1995 Mainz am Rhein (1998), 272-277, especially, 272-274.

<sup>87</sup> F. Baratte, 'Les Sarkophages de La Gayole et l'influence attique en Gaule,' 249.

sarcophagus with Christ and strigilation was reused in the Middle Ages.<sup>88</sup> Some of the most unusual examples are found in noble families who sometimes reused the same sarcophagus, for example this was the case for the Savelli family with the sarcophagus S. Maria in Aracoeli which contained the bodies of several members of the family.<sup>89</sup>

Reuse became a common trend, particularly among distinguished individuals.<sup>90</sup> Some of the most famous are Charlemagne and his brother and son who were all buried in late antique sarcophagi.<sup>91</sup> Some popes were also buried in such sarcophagi, perhaps in the hope of creating a visual lineage between themselves and the antique tradition from which they had descended.<sup>92</sup> Some of their choices of reuse tell of very individual associations, for instance the reuse of the porphyry sarcophagus of Helena (Figure 10), Constantine's mother, by Pope Anastasius IV may imply that he was linking himself with the foundation of Christianity by being buried in the sarcophagus of one of Christianity's most important characters.<sup>93</sup>

### 3.3 Sarcophagi for saints

Interestingly, antique sarcophagi also became quite prevalent for those whom Brown had called the 'special dead', namely saints. This is illustrated is a scene representing the entombment of Christ in a fresco inside Sant' Angelo church in Formis

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<sup>88</sup> M-P. Rothé and Marc Heijmans, *Arles, Crau, Camargue* (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, 2008), 537.

<sup>89</sup> G. Agosti, V. Farinella, D. Gallo, G. Crisanti, 'Visibilità e reimpiego: a Roma anche i morti e le loro urne camminano' in *Colloquio Sul Reimpiego Dei Sarcofagi Romani Nel Medioevo: Pisa 5.-12. September 1982*, ed. by B. Andreae (Marburger: Winckelmann-Programm, 1983), 155-170, especially 158.

<sup>90</sup> R. Krautheimer, *Rome: profile of a city 312-1308* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 212-213.

<sup>91</sup> A. Dierkens 'Autour de la tombe de Charlemagne. Considérations sur la sépulture des souverains carolingiens et des membres de leurs familles,' *Byzantion* LXI (1991), 156-180.

<sup>92</sup> For instance Pope Innocent II was buried in Emperor's Hadrian's porphyry sarcophagus and Pope Hadrian IV was buried in a reused pagan sarcophagus while Pope Marcellus II and Pope Pius VI were buried in reused Christian sarcophagi. See M. Erasmo. *Death: antiquity and its legacy* (London, Tauris, 2012), 5, see also E. Ó Carragáin and C.. Neuman de Vegvar, *Roma felix : formation and reflections of medieval Rome* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 91.

<sup>93</sup> Although J. Drijvers emphasised that we do not know whether Anastasius wanted to be buried in the sarcophagus of Helena. However, he does point out that she was by this time especially famous for her discovery of the True Cross. J. Drijvers. *Helena Augusta: The Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of Her finding the True Cross* (New York: Brill, 1992), 76. See also D. Verkerk 'Life after Death: the Afterlife of Sarcophagi in medieval Rome and Ravenna,' 81-96.

dating from about 1072-1086 (Figure 11), in which it is clear that the artist was depicting a late antique strigilated sarcophagus similar to those often found in early Christian models. A similar sarcophagus was depicted in a manuscript illustration of the life of St. Benedict (Figure 12) dating from around 1071. These medieval artists probably believed that the 'ideal' or expected sarcophagus for a saint was antique.

Antique sarcophagi became particularly common in Gaul for use by saints (Edward James counted at least thirty examples),<sup>94</sup> the most notable being those related to the legend of Mary Magdalene and the monks in St. Victor, but there are others such as St. Mitre in Aix, St. Véran, bishop of Cavaillon during the VIth century, whose relics were moved to a Vth century sarcophagus in the Church of Fontaine-de-Vaucluse, probably around 1034 when the church was renamed St. Victor.<sup>95</sup> The tomb is made of limestone with a late antique saddleback lid, reusing five fragments of Carolingian decor of which the internal parts are dated to the XIIth century. Confusingly, another bishop also named Véran was venerated during the Middle Ages in the Cathedral in St. Paul de Vence.<sup>96</sup>

There are also examples in Southwestern France. For instance, Ward-Perkins has shown that the sarcophagus of St. Félix, Bishop of Bourges, made of Parian marble was probably reused, confirmed by the fact that its lid was made from another type of marble, which he claimed strengthened the argument for reuse because if the sarcophagus had come from a contemporary workshop there would have been no reason for them to have used two different types of marble.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, there are good examples outside Gaul, for instance the sarcophagus in Osino in Italy, which is another early example believed to have been reused in the VIth century.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> E. James, *The Merovingian archaeology of south-west Gaul*, 41.

<sup>95</sup> No mention of the saint's remains was made before 1034 when Isarn, the abbot of St. Victor of Marseille, was appointed to govern and to restore this monastery. It is emphasised that this donation to the monastery included the church that at the time was under the double patronage of St. Marie and St. Véran and was the resting place for the body of Véran.

<sup>96</sup> Y. Codou, 'Une mémoire de pierre : chantiers romans et monumenta paléochrétiens en Provence, ' *Lérins, une île sainte de l'Antiquité au Moyen Âge*, eds. Y. Codou and M. Lauwers (Turnhout Brepols Publishers, 2009), 565-600, especially 585.

<sup>97</sup> J. Ward-Perkins, 'A carved marble fragment at Riom (Puy-De-Dôme) and the chronology of the Aquitanian sarcophagi,' *AntJ* 40 (1960), 25-36, especially 26. Although the article by Van Keuren et al. shows that mixing of different types of marble in sarcophagi was not unusual, see F. Van Keuren et al 'Multimethod Analyses of Roman Sarcophagi at the Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome,' *Life, death and representation : some new work on Roman sarcophagi*. Eds. J. Elsner, and J. Huskinson. (New York: De Gruyter, 2011), 119-148.

<sup>98</sup> M. Greenhalgh, *The survival of Roman antiquities in the Middle Ages*, 29.

### 3.4 Reuse versus reinvention

However, this thesis takes a particular interest in sarcophagi that were *reinvented* for saints rather than sarcophagi *reused* by saints. The term reinvention here implies that their previous meaning had been forgotten (deliberately or not), and that a new meaning had been ascribed to them. We have seen the case of Stonehenge that during the Middle Ages Geoffrey of Monmouth imagined to have been built by Merlin, because he did not know what the monument meant. He thus reinterpreted elements through a history that he knew, and reinvented the monument through the constructed history that he created.<sup>99</sup>

A similar case can be made for many sarcophagi in the South of France for which the previous history had been forgotten, and that became reinvented through elements that people wished to be associated with the sarcophagi. I shall thus look at how at some point in history these tombs changed from being regular tombs to the tombs of saints, and how that affected the way that these sarcophagi were viewed and understood.

There are many such cases in Provence, from the sarcophagi of bishops in the Alyscamps, via the sarcophagi of the *chansons de geste* in the same cemetery, the tomb of Saint Mitre, martyr of Aix-en-Provence, the tomb of Mary Magdalene and her company in Saint Maximin to the tombs of early monks and saints in St. Victor Abbey in Marseille. As I shall show, most of these cases are medieval reinventions.

## 4. Towards an Archaeology of Memory

Dio Chrysostom claimed: ‘The statues of Rhodians are like actors ... assuming different roles at different times.’<sup>100</sup> Our sarcophagi are similarly like actors, taking on new roles, new identities and reflecting different ideals at different times. In each chapter, I shall show different types of roles assigned to these sarcophagi. Since the subject is so vast, I have focused on a specific timeframe, namely Late Antiquity and

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<sup>99</sup> For a study of such phenomena see J. Elsner, ‘From the Pyramids to Pausonia and Piglet: Monuments, travel and writing’ *Art and Text in Ancient Culture*, eds. S. Goodhill and R. Osborne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 224-254.

<sup>100</sup> Dio Chrysostom *Oratio*, 31.

the Middle Ages. But even during this limited time span, I shall show that each reinvention is unique and presents a very specific 'type' of antiquity.

Most of this invented history has been forgotten, largely because of the French Revolution, which saw Christianity as an enemy and destroyed many cult sites.<sup>101</sup> Hence, a large number of the sites that I shall consider were plundered during that time and the sarcophagi were often mutilated, as can be seen from numerous examples on which the heads of figures have been chipped off. In the long term, the Revolution brought wide-spread scepticism by the French people and scholars alike towards Catholicism and its cultural expressions, such as saints' cults. The sarcophagi came to be seen as the remains of Classical Antiquity rather than as the tombs of saints. This trend was reinforced by antiquarianism that first developed in Early Modern Europe. Antiquarians were passionately interested in antiquity and antique objects, and much less interested in their medieval and religious reuses. One of the most famous antiquarians in Provence was de Peiresc who drew various sketches of sarcophagi, some which are lost today or severely damaged.<sup>102</sup>

Today, most of these sarcophagi are displayed in museums as remains of antiquity, completely 'divorced' from their sacred late antique and medieval settings. My aim in this thesis is to unveil the late antique and medieval history of these sarcophagi that has been hidden, since the French Revolution. I will do this using a wide array of materials, notably *vitae* which often tell us much about the cult, particularly regarding the location of relics and sometimes even accounts of miracles that they produced. A good example is the *vita* of Hilary written in the Vth century that tells us the location of the body of the bishop in the basilica of St. Honorat in Arles. It also gives us details about the nature of the cult and its early importance. Other sources like the *sermo* of St. Mary Magdalene contain important information about construction of the legend in Provence and, although this is rare, describe the sarcophagi in which the saint was thought to lie in considerable detail.

I will also use medieval *chartae*, visitor descriptions of sites and cults, because they relate what visitors thought they saw at least as much as what they actually saw,

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<sup>101</sup> See S. Neely, *A Concise History of the French Revolution* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 200-201. A more substantial overview of the effect of the Revolution on the sarcophagi will be provided in the Conclusion.

<sup>102</sup> For more on de Peiresc and his activities in Provence see P. Miller, *Peiresc's Europe : learning and virtue in the seventeenth century* (Yale, 2000).

including legendary narratives associated with the cults. I shall also examine descriptions of many antiquarians giving details about the sarcophagi themselves and sometimes the social history with which they were associated. Such is the case for instance for Millin, who throughout his voyage in Provence described not just the sites and objects that he saw, but also recounted the traditions that were thought to have been associated with them.<sup>103</sup> Hence, we have various accounts of travellers who describe local traditions in Provence with curiosity. A popular local Provençal movement emerged in the XVIIIth century that sought to defend the legends and their traditions. One of the most emblematic figures of that movement is Faillon who attempted to revive credibility of the cult in Provence, in his book on Mary Magdalene in the XIXth century.<sup>104</sup>

In brief, my thesis will explore an archaeology of memory: I will excavate data from the pages of *vitae*, *chansons de gestes*, accounts of miracles and antiquarian descriptions to find out what role these sarcophagi played for people during the Middle Ages. I will explore four different types of reuses and reinventions, all reusing the past in various ways.

Chapter I examines how sarcophagi displayed a distinctive episcopal history, Chapter II shows how sarcophagi were used to claim antiquity to a monastery. Chapter III focuses on the antiquity of cults and legends displayed through these sarcophagi and Chapter IV describes how sarcophagi thought to have belonged to the warriors of the Reconquista were used to create a tradition for the warrior martyr that became prevalent during the Crusades.

The first chapter that focuses on the collective burials of Arles bishops is perhaps the most distinctive. It is the only case of reuse that can claim true historical continuity with its antique past. In Late Antiquity, several bishops were buried in a late antique basilica near the martyr saint of the city, hence forming an exclusive collective burial. The collective setting of the group was kept unchanged during the Middle Ages as other individuals were added in late antique sarcophagi, but the overall character of the group evolved. We shall see how these sarcophagi contributed to creating that

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<sup>103</sup> A. Louis Millin, *Voyage dans les Departements du midi de la France* (Paris: Imprimerie Imperiale, 1759-1818).

<sup>104</sup> E. Faillon, *Monuments inédits sur l'apostolat de Sainte Marie-Madeleine en Provence, : et sur les autres apôtres de cette contrée, Saint Lazare, Saint Maximin, Saint Marthe et les Saintes Maries Jacobé et Salomé*, 2 vols. (Paris: Chez l'editeur, 1848).

continuity, and how they became part of the specific Episcopal tradition in Arles that sought to retrace its origins to Antiquity.

Some of the main actors in ‘revamping’ antique sarcophagi in a medieval context were the monks in St. Victor. They took possession of the basilica in Arles and used the site, including its sarcophagi, to create a new past for the episcopate in Arles that was compatible with the monastic ideal promulgated by the monks. They were also responsible for revamping other cults in the region.

Of course, most of their efforts focused on themselves. Hence in Chapter II, I will show how during the Middle Ages the monks of St. Victor invented a prestigious late antique past for their monastery based on the figure of Cassian, an Eastern late antique monk, who famously built a monastery in Marseille through which he imported eastern monasticism to the west. Around Cassian, they collected the remains of various saints in late antique sarcophagi, all displayed in the crypts of the church called the ‘primitive church,’ giving the impression that the space itself had been a church ever since antiquity. They used the supposed antiquity of their monastery to fashion themselves as the descendants of late antique monastic traditions. Again, my main sources will be *vitae*, miracle accounts, chartae and later XVIth and XVIIth century travellers' descriptions.

Sadly, there are few primary sources from the period covered by these two chapters describing the sarcophagi in detail. This will be fundamentally different in Chapter III, which examines how hagiographers described the iconography that they imagined on the sarcophagus of Mary Magdalene in considerable detail. During the Middle Ages, this sarcophagus was accompanied by at least one other late antique sarcophagus, both of which were ‘found’ during the XIIIth century.

Mary Magdalene's sarcophagus became the centre of one of the most important pilgrimage cults in the West during the Middle Ages. Another nearby late antique sarcophagus in the city of Tarascon was believed to have belonged to her sister Martha. Consequently, Chapter III will focus on the religious landscape that was built around these cults and of which the sarcophagi were among the main characters: they authenticated the cult and were the proof that these legends were true.

The last case of reinvention considered in this thesis is very different from the examples above. Chapter IV investigates a new type of martyr, the warrior martyr, who became popular starting in the XIIIth century through *chansons de geste* that, among

many other stories, recounted the deeds of famous warriors, particularly Charlemagne and his nephew Roland. This was in correlation to ongoing events in the Holy Land, namely the crusades.

Starting in the XIIth century, the Alyscamps cemetery became associated with some of the most famous 'warrior martyrs', namely Charlemagne, his nephew Roland and his nephew Vivian. The site itself was thought to have been the site of a bloody battle, and the sarcophagi were believed to have been the tombs of the warriors who fought to defend their lands. The site thus became a site of memory and triumph, and in this case the sarcophagi became direct reminders of these martyrs' deaths.

Hopefully, all these examples will give the reader a clearer view of the visibility and importance of these sarcophagi in Medieval Provence and open up a debate through which such a study could be extended to include other regions and other periods.

## Chapter 1

### The Community of the Dead: Monk-bishops in Arles

In Van Gogh's 1888 painting of the Alyscamps in Arles (Figure 13), the focus lay on the long straight road flanked by sarcophagi and tall poplar trees. Barely visible at the end of that road is the basilica of St. Honorat, a XIIth century church built over a IVth century basilica in honour of the late antique Arlesian martyr, Genesius. The display of sarcophagi as two seemingly straight lines as portrayed by the painter, is actually not the original display. Rather, it is the result of action taken by the Minim monks who, faced with a vast number of sarcophagi in the XVIth century, sought to make sense of the collection on the site after it had been left in ruins for years and damaged by the construction of the Craponne canal. Unfortunately, their work was facilitated to some extent because by that time the city had already lost many sarcophagi; some had been given to important visitors,<sup>105</sup> while others had been vandalised and destroyed.<sup>106</sup>

Hence the Alyscamps as portrayed in the painting, while offering an excellent picture of its late nineteenth century configuration, is only a poor reflection of what the site had been in the past. The necropolis already existed in antiquity, but it really gained popularity in Late Antiquity through its association with the body of St. Genesius who was believed to have been buried there.<sup>107</sup> After he was executed in Trinquetaille near Arles, his body was thought to have been interred in the Alyscamps. A sermon from the Vth century notes that 'he sanctified one bank by his triumph, another by his tomb.'<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> See for example F. Benoît, 'Sarcophages arlésiens dans le Lyonnais,' *MIHP* 11 (1934), 115-121.

<sup>106</sup> The destruction was so bad that in 1702, Archbishop of Arles de Mailly threatened to excommunicate all those who were found firing on Stone near buried tombs in Alyscamps cemetery. See the Decree issued by the Archbishop de Mailly, 16<sup>th</sup> of November 1702, Arles Mediathèque (Fonds spéciaux) ms. 242.

<sup>107</sup> For a full account of the site during antiquity see M. Heijmans, *Arles durant l'antiquité tardive : de la duplex Arelas à l'urbs Genesii* (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 2004), 297.

<sup>108</sup> *Sermo de Vita sancti Genesii* in S. Cavallin, 'Saint Genès le notaire,' *Erano*, XLIII (1945), 1168.

A basilica was built in the IVth century to accommodate and commemorate the body of the martyr,<sup>109</sup> and sarcophagi belonging to people who wanted to be buried near the saint were found all around the building.<sup>110</sup> Proximity to his tomb became an important testament of faith, in fact a fragment of sarcophagus was found in the cemetery with an epitaph of a woman named Silvina, suggesting that she was buried close to the tomb of St. Genesisus.<sup>111</sup> It was reported that bodies were sent from all around the city and beyond; throughout antiquity and in the Middle Ages, it is said that barges carried corpses on the Rhone to be buried on the site.<sup>112</sup>

The space covered by the necropolis was vast, starting at the south-east boundary of the city and extending towards the heights of the village of Pont de Crau flanking the Via Aurelia.<sup>113</sup> In fact, it is believed to have been one of the biggest 'communities of the dead' in the Roman world. The collection of sarcophagi in the Musée d' Arles Antique in Arles, which includes many of the sarcophagi from the Alyscamps, is thought to be the second largest collection after the Vatican.<sup>114</sup>

Sarcophagi of all sorts were found in the necropolis including some very ornate ones that have often been associated with the tombs of the many Roman officials who moved to Arles when it became the seat of the Praetorian Prefect around 407.<sup>115</sup> Of course, similar communities were not unusual, elsewhere in the empire, for example there is the pagan cemetery of the *Isola Sacra* situated west of Rome, in constant use from the final years of Trajan until the middle of the third century and built on an

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<sup>109</sup> Nothing of the primitive church is visible today, in fact Benoît believed that the original chapel is now buried two meters underneath a church that was built over it during the Middle Ages. See F. Benoît, 'Fouilles aux Alyscamps : 'Areae' cimetiérales et sarcophages de l'école d'Arles, 115.

<sup>110</sup> This was principally because it was thought that being buried close to a saint would reflect positively on a person's life and on his or her chances of success in the afterlife. See Y. Duval, *Auprès des saints, corps et âme l'inhumation 'ad sanctos' dans la chrétienté d'Orient et d'Occident du IIIe au VIIIe siècle* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1988), 191.

<sup>111</sup> M-P. Rothé and M. Heijmans, *Arles, Crau, Camargue*, 564.

<sup>112</sup> See Gervase of Tilbury's *Otia Imperialia* in S. Banks and J.W. Bins *Otia Imperialia*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 293-299 and E. Duprat, 'Appendice : Les Alyscamps et leurs cimetières,' *MIHP*, 18 (1941), 126-155, especially 130, see also P. Marion and H.i Vidal, *Les Alyscamps et leurs légendes* (Arles: Presses de la Tarasque, 1994), 4.

<sup>113</sup> On the antique site of the Alyscamps see F. Benoît, *Arles*, (Lyon, imprimerie A. Rey, 4, rue Gentil: 1927), 87 and F. Benoît, *Les Cimetières suburbains d'Arles dans l'antiquité chrétienne et au moyen âge* (Città del Vaticano, Roma: Pontificio Istituto di archeologia cristiana, 1935).

<sup>114</sup> J. Guyon, 'Les premiers temps chrétiens,' *La Provence des origines à l'an mil*, eds, P-A. Février et al. (Rennes, Éditions Ouest France, 1989), 381-442, especially 386.

<sup>115</sup> M. Heijmans, *Arles durant l'antiquité tardive : de la duplex Arelas à l'urbs Genesisii*, 59.

artificial island.<sup>116</sup> Hundreds of tombs were found there, from plain sarcophagi to house-tombs.<sup>117</sup>

Such ‘communities’ meant that the sarcophagi that housed the body of the deceased were not meant to be seen in isolation, but amongst many others. In this chapter I shall look at the collective identity of different ‘communities of the dead’ by studying the collective context in which they were buried, specifically during Late Antiquity and continuing into the Middle Ages. I shall investigate how sarcophagi were distributed in different locations that became associated with different types of communities. There are of course many types of commonalities, for instance there are familial burials of which there are a few good examples in the South of France. Each belonged to a specific family and displayed the projected collective identity of that family.

To demonstrate my point I shall study a very specific and exceptional type of commonality, that is the collective burial of the Episcopal community in the basilica St Genesius in Arles which started in Late Antiquity and continued to thrive throughout the Middle Ages. We know that Bishops Hilary, Honorat and probably Concordius were buried at the site of the basilica of Saint Genesius in Late Antiquity, alongside the martyr Genesius. We also know that the sarcophagi of Bishops Virgilius, Rotland and Aeonius were in the basilica by the Middle Ages, but we do not know how and when they arrived there. Together, they form a good example of a common form of burial that lasted for centuries and never lost its essential character.

I shall first explore the particularity of that community, which is that it was largely influenced by monasticism since many of the bishops first attended the monastery of Lérins before they took up their Episcopal office. This will lead to the specifics of that community that is often described as ‘monk-bishops.’ I will look at the dual nature of their creative personality, and how the group as a whole fashioned themselves. Being bishops, they were public figures in the city and at the same time, as monks, they lived a life dictated by ascetism and sought to follow strict rules of conduct, denying themselves the sensual pleasures of life through a communal life of

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<sup>116</sup> For more on the Isola Sacra see G. Calza, *La necropoli del Porto di Roma nell'Isola Sacra* (Roma: La Libreria dello stato, 1940).

<sup>117</sup> J. Toynbee, *Death and burial in the Roman world, Aspects of Greek and Roman life* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1971), 70.

renunciation. I shall look at the ways in which their common burial alongside a martyr contributed to constructing their complex identity.

This sacrifice of one's life in the interests of the collective was a core monastic value, and was reflected in the iconography of many of the sarcophagi that were to be associated with Arlesian bishops, and also with the martyr Genesius. This will lead me to explore the ways in which the iconography was part of a monastic rhetoric of commonality and sacrifice.

Finally, the special nature of this community distinguished them from the rest of the community of the dead. I shall finish by looking at the particular nature of their sarcophagi, which were fundamentally different from all the other sarcophagi that surrounded them in the cemetery.

## 1. Communal Burials

Sharing a common space promoted the community as a whole rather than its individuals; as Yasin has pointed out, in communal burials the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.<sup>118</sup> She uses the example of military cemeteries in which individuals are grouped in a common cemetery, usually in similar-looking tombs.<sup>119</sup> In this case, the individual is commemorated not for his own individual qualities, but rather because he forms part of a greater community, the military. Different types of commonalities are visible in burial patterns, all reflecting the character of a specific community. For example, the logic followed in the layout of the Vth century tombs in Maraval cemetery in Marseille resembles that used in a military cemetery, hundreds of plain tombs were found around the sarcophagi of two saints.<sup>120</sup> In this case it was the collective identity as Christians that was emphasised, by being buried in their community among other Christians and alongside saints.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> A-M. Yasin, 'Funerary Monuments and Collective Identity: From Roman Family to Christian Community,' *ABull* 87.3 (Sep., 2005), 433-457, especially 433.

<sup>119</sup> A-M. Yasin, 'Funerary Monuments and Collective Identity: From Roman Family to Christian Community,' 434.

<sup>120</sup> M. Moliner, 'La memoria de la basilique paléochrétienne de la rue Maraval à Marseille, premières approches,' *Saint-Victor de Marseille : Etudes archéologiques et historiques*, eds. M. Fixot and J-P. Pelletier, vol. 13 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols 2009), 107-125.

<sup>121</sup> Though it should be noted that some cemeteries were both pagan and Christian, at least for a period before Christianity became the main widespread religion and before Christians had their own cemeteries.

Family mausoleums follow the same logic on a smaller scale; individuals are grouped in a monument to commemorate the family identity as a whole rather than its individual members. Such family hypogea are interesting because they are found in various cultures and in different geographies. Frequently cited examples of such structures include the Etruscan Volumni hypogeum dating from the IIIrd century BC<sup>122</sup> and the hypogeum of the three brothers in Palmyra (160 to 91 AD).<sup>123</sup> Perhaps one of the best-known cases is the mausoleum of Augustus in which his remains and those of illustrious members of his family were preserved.<sup>124</sup> Interestingly, Tiberius's and perhaps also Claudius's ashes were later placed in the mausoleum, thus emphasising the dynastic basis for the Julio-Claudian identity.<sup>125</sup> The incorporation of their ashes within that space promoted their association with Augustus himself.<sup>126</sup>

To be sure, other less prestigious examples were also common. For example the octagonal mausoleum in the Villa Pueblanueva (in Toledo) included a crypt in which three sarcophagi were found, once again probably presenting a family burial.<sup>127</sup> An example of such a structure in the Provence region is the mausoleum dating from around the IVth century in Saint-Maximin, thought to have belonged to a wealthy late antique family and in which at least two Christian sarcophagi were found.<sup>128</sup> One had the iconography of the Anastasis flanked by four niches (Figure 14) and the other had a central depiction of the Anastasis (Figure 15). Two other sarcophagi are also associated with the site today, but it is unclear whether this was a medieval addition or whether they had been there since Late Antiquity.<sup>129</sup> Judging from the quality of the sarcophagi,

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<sup>122</sup> F. Prayon, 'Architecture' *Etruscan life and afterlife: a handbook of Etruscan studies*, ed. L. Bonfante (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1986), 174-201, especially 184.

<sup>123</sup> C. Kraeling, 'Color Photographs of the Painting in the Tomb of the Three Brothers at Palmyra,' *Annales archéologiques de Syrie*.1 1-12 (1961-1962), 13-18.

<sup>124</sup> For information about the mausoleum of Augustus see H. von Hesberg and S. Panciera, *Das Mausoleum des Augustus: der Bau und seine Inschriften* (München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften: in Kommission bei C. H. Beck, 1994).

<sup>125</sup> J. Arce, *Funus imperatorum los funerales de los emperadores romanos* (Madrid: Alianza, 1988), 74-75.

<sup>126</sup> This presented them as descendants of Augustus who was himself linked to Julius and therefore also demonstrated that the Julii family were descendants of Venus. Caesar's full account of his family's ancestry goes as such: '[...] therefore, our family has both the sanctity of kings, the mightiest of men, and the ceremony due to gods who rule the kings themselves.' In *Divus Iulius* 6.1.

<sup>127</sup> see T. Hauschild, 'Das Mausoleum bei Las Vegas de Puebla Nueva,' *Madridrer Mitteilungen* 10 (1969), 296-316, especially 296.

<sup>128</sup> M. Fixot, *La Crypte de Saint-Maximin la Sainte-Baume* (Aix-en-Provence: Edisud, 2001), 3, see also P-A.Février, 'Saint-Maximin: Mausolée antique,' *Les premiers monuments chrétiens de la France. 1, Sud-Est et Corse*, ed. N. Duval (Paris: Picard, 1995), 175-180, especially 180.

<sup>129</sup> See chapter IV.

it is obvious that they belonged to the elite, in fact Février believes that it reflected the conversion of the elite and Christianisation of the region.<sup>130</sup> Moreover, four plaques with Christian iconography were found in the crypt and have probably been there since antiquity, thereby again emphasising the Christian identity of the group. There is another similar example nearby in Trinquetaille, where excavations in 1973 revealed three sarcophagi found together in the same location, a very rare example to have remained intact since antiquity.<sup>131</sup>

Similarly, another site dating from around the Vth century in La Gayole was thought to have been a mausoleum in which at least three sarcophagi were found in the same chapel,<sup>132</sup> all were reused pagan sarcophagi<sup>133</sup> and all had Christian inscriptions. The structure, which is now covered by a medieval construction, was thought to date from the Vth century.<sup>134</sup> The link between the individuals is not clear, however archaeologists agree that it was a mausoleum for Christian usage.<sup>135</sup>

Each of these groups of sarcophagi sought to represent an ideal collective identity. Hence, these burials should be understood as a construction, a display, a theatre of how the community wanted to be remembered. This is equally applicable to the mausoleum of St. Maximin in which all members wanted to show their new identity as Christians and hence followers of the new official faith, and the mausoleum of Augustus in which all members of the group could retrace their origins to deities. In other words, these burials do not replicate the group as such, rather an ideal reconstruction of it.

Perhaps the best examples of such group construction are the famous house tombs of the Roman world, which derive their name from their supposed replication of

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<sup>130</sup> P-A. Février, 'Saint-Maximin: Mausolée antique,' 179.

<sup>131</sup> see J-M. Rouquette, 'Trois nouveaux sarcophages chrétiens de Trinquetaille (Arles),' *CRAI* 118.2 (1974), 254-277.

<sup>132</sup> F. Baratte, 'Les Sarcophages de La Gayole et l'influence attique en Gaule,' *Akten des Symposiums*, ' 248-261. The third sarcophagus has been lost.

<sup>133</sup> One had the iconography of Orestes, and the other had an iconography which can be read as either pagan or Christian. For a discussion on these two sarcophagi, see F. Baratte, 'Les Sarcophages de La Gayole et l'influence attique en Gaule,' 248-261.

<sup>134</sup> G. Demians d'Archimbaud, M. Fixot, J-P. Pelletier and L. Vallauri, 'La Celle: Eglise Notre-Dame de la Gayole,' *Les premiers monuments chrétiens de la France. 1, Sud-Est et Corse*, ed. N. Duval (Paris: Picard, 1995), 167-174, especially 167.

<sup>135</sup> J-P. Brun and M. Borréani, *Le Var* (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 1999), 333.

the family house.<sup>136</sup> They were all meant to replicate the living family through their incorporation of nearly all its members. As Wallace-Hadrill pointed out, the tomb became a public representation of the intimate core of the family, in which the family unit was put on public display.<sup>137</sup> In this context, the individual was not very important in himself, he became defined through his relation to other members of his community, in this case members of his family and through the family's collective identity.

## 1.1 The rhetoric of commonality: communal episcopal burials

However, these types of communal burials were not limited to kin families. A very good example lies in the mausoleums of Constantine and Justinian attached to the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. Many Byzantine emperors were buried there and formed groups of imperial tombs.<sup>138</sup> The bishops of Arles presented a similar type of communal burial as many of them were buried in the basilica of St. Genesius in the Alyscamps, for example Bishops Concordius and Hilary<sup>139</sup> (who was a monk at the monastery of Lérins), and also Honorat<sup>140</sup> who was the founder of the monastery, and much later, the medieval additions of Bishops Virgilius, Aeonius and Rotland.

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<sup>136</sup> The tomb-as-house metaphor has been studied by V. Hope, "A roof over the dead: communal tombs and family structure," *Domestic Space in the Roman World: Pompeii and Beyond*, eds. L. Ray and A. Wallace-Hadrill (JRA supplement 22, 1997), 70-88, and N. Purcell, "Tomb and Suburb," *Römische Gräberstraßen Selbstdarstellung – Status – Standard*, ed. H. von Hesberg and P. Zanker (Munich: 1987), 25-41.

<sup>137</sup> A. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Housing the Dead: The Tomb as House in Roman Italy,' *Texts and Artifacts in Context. Studies of Roman, Jewish and Christian Burials*, eds. R. Saller, L. Brink and D. Green (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 39-77, especially 40.

<sup>138</sup> G. Downey, 'The Tombs of the Byzantine Emperors at the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople,' *JHS* 79 (1959), 27-51, especially 27.

<sup>139</sup> We know this mainly through his sarcophagus which is contemporary with the bishop's death. The lid of this sarcophagus on which there is an inscription dedicated to the bishop has been dated to the Vth century, see M-P. Rothé and M. Heijmans, *Arles, Crau, Camargue*, 546. Also, his vita written by Honoratus of Marseille in the Vth century recounts that his body was left overnight after his death in the basilica dedicated to Stephen and that it was then moved to the basilica dedicated to Saint Genesius. C. Sintès and P. Arcelin, *Musée de l'Arles antique* (Arles: Actes sud, 1996), 159.

<sup>140</sup> Although his vita does not say much about his burial, it did allude to the basilica: 'Is there any man within our city walls who did not visit our basilica as if overwhelmed by personal grief?' *Vita Honoratii*, 35 thus suggesting that the body was inside the basilica. Moreover, Rothé and Heijmans believe that the bishop was buried in the Alyscamps because the church that was rebuilt over the basilica during the XIIth century was named after him. They believed that it was improbable that the basilica would be renamed after a bishop who had not been worshiped within the Church, instead of a martyr saint who had been venerated for centuries. M-P. Rothé and M. Heijmans, *Arles, Crau, Camargue*, 297.

Few wide-ranging studies have been done on Episcopal burials. According to Dabrowska, most were made in earlier centuries, often by amateurs, and their studies are often incomplete.<sup>141</sup> She also notes that many sanctuaries have been destroyed and dispersed, so that there is very little remaining evidence.<sup>142</sup> Nevertheless, she attempts to set down several rules, for example noting that bishops are usually buried in their home cities, even if they died elsewhere.<sup>143</sup> She also notes that they were inhumed inside a building, sanctuary, crypt or mausoleum.<sup>144</sup>

Although they were rare, communal Episcopal burials did exist during Late Antiquity and Medieval times. In the case of Auxerre for instance, many bishops were buried in the funeral chamber near Bishop Germanus, who died in 428. All Germanus's successors including Alodius, Fraternus, Censurius, Ursus and Theodosius (still in office in 511) and Gregorius had their tombs placed near him.<sup>145</sup> This sanctuary was thus where all the city's bishops were buried over a century and a half, with only two exceptions that we can be sure of.<sup>146</sup> Another good example is Vienne, where all bishops from Mamert (who died in 475) to Adon (875) were buried within the basilica of St. Peter.<sup>147</sup> And later in the VIth century in Ravenna, a cult was created around the first bishop, Apollinnaris, and most bishops were inhumed alongside him starting with Iohannes (II) Romanus until the IXth century.<sup>148</sup> Of course, the most prominent example is in Rome where nearly all popes starting from Gelasius (who died in 486) were buried in St. Peter's, apart from Leo the First (461) and Simplicius (483), popes who died in exile such as Silverius (537) and Martin I (653), and popes who were not considered worthy, such as Virgilius (555).<sup>149</sup>

These common Episcopal burials bear many resemblances to the family burials discussed above. Each family burial sought to represent the specific collective identity

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<sup>141</sup> E. Dabrowska, 'La sépulture des évêques et des abbés dans la Gaule du IVe au VIIe siècle' in *Actes du XIe congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne* (Rome: Publications de l'École française de Rome, 1989), 1259-1266, especially 1259.

<sup>142</sup> E. Dabrowska, 'La sépulture des évêques et des abbés dans la Gaule du IVe au VIIe siècle,' 1259.

<sup>143</sup> E. Dabrowska, 'La sépulture des évêques et des abbés dans la Gaule du IVe au VIIe siècle,' 1259.

<sup>144</sup> E. Dabrowska, 'La sépulture des évêques et des abbés dans la Gaule du IVe au VIIe siècle,' 1259.

<sup>145</sup> J-C. Picard, 'Espace urban et sépultures épiscopales à Auxerre,' *RHEF* LXII (1976), 211.

<sup>146</sup> J-C. Picard, 'Espace urban et sépultures épiscopales à Auxerre,' 211.

<sup>147</sup> P-A. Février and X. Barrali, *Province ecclésiastique de Narbonne (Narbonensis Prima)* (Paris: De Boccard, 1989), 140.

<sup>148</sup> J-C. Picard, *Le souvenir des Évêques : sépultures, listes épiscopales et culte des évêques en Italie du Nord des origines au Xe siècle* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1988), 180.

<sup>149</sup> J-C. Picard, *Le souvenir des Évêques : sépultures, listes épiscopales et culte des évêques en Italie du Nord des origines au Xe siècle*, 177.

of the family. Similarly, common Episcopal burials presented the history of their episcopate, typically around their first bishop.<sup>150</sup> This was the case for instance in the basilica Sant' Apollinare in Classe, which made a claim to the antiquity of the see around the figure of St. Apollinare.<sup>151</sup> It eventually contributed to constructing a strong history for the episcopate independent from Rome.<sup>152</sup>

## 1.2 The episcopal identity of Arles: a community of monk-bishops

The specific identity of the Episcopate of Arles and the most defining characteristic of its clergy were their links to monasticism. Many of its bishops had been monks in earlier life and became what are commonly called 'monk-bishops'. This combination of monastic and episcopal virtues elevated this group into a 'religious elite', in Chéné's words.<sup>153</sup>

Honorat founded the monastery of Lérins, one of the biggest monasteries in Gaul during Late Antiquity, which was attended by Hilary, Virgilius and Caesarius.<sup>154</sup> All these monks who went on to become bishops retained their identities as monks and as bishops, as essential components of their personality, for example one half of the narrative in the *Vita Honoratii* relates to his life as Abbot of Lérins, and the other half to his life as Bishop of Arles. That specific identity became key to their community and

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<sup>150</sup> The interest in displaying lineage in the clerical community was also demonstrated by writing catalogues such as the Chronical of Hippolyte *Liber generationis* (Book of Generations) which contains elements of the computus and chronological documents. However, the most prominent catalogue was the *Liber Pontificalis* (Book of Popes) which was started in the IVth century and continued until the IXth and the XIVth centuries. They were thought to have been written to establish the temporal role of Popes and the leadership of the church to Peter. It became the prototype for the *gesta episcoporum* (A History of Bishops), which were lists of bishops compiled in diverse cities, hence displaying the antiquity of each episcopate. No such book exists for Arles. See R. McKitterick, 'La place du Liber pontificalis dans les genres historiographiques du haut Moyen Age,' *Liber, Gesta, histoire : écrire l'histoire des évêques et des papes de l'Antiquité au XXIe siècle*, eds. F. Bougard and M. Sot (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 25-35, especially 27 and 'Introduction' in F. Bougard and M. Sot, *Liber, Gesta, histoire écrire l'histoire des évêques et des papes de l'Antiquité au XXIe siècle* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 6-24, especially 6.

<sup>151</sup> D. Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 259.

<sup>152</sup> D. Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, 283.

<sup>153</sup> J. Chéné and J. Pintard, *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin 24 Aux moines d'Adrumète et de Provence texte de l'édition. bénédictine* (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1962), 24.

<sup>154</sup> M. Labrousse, *Saint Honorat fondateur de Lérins et évêque d'Arles* (Bégrolles-en-Mauges: Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1995), 37-51.

their most defining element, as they all tried to combine both identities in their lives and their deaths.

However, these two positions seem somewhat at odds: monks made a virtue of living a secluded life, while bishops were some of the most important figures in the lives of cities. Juggling those two different worlds was praised by some, for instance according to Sulpicius Severus, a Christian writer in Gaul from the late IVth century, the dual nature of Martin of Tours who was also a monk and then later a bishop (secluded and public) made him superior to the Anchorites in the Orient.<sup>155</sup> Bishops were indeed public figures and their role included political functions. They implemented Christianity and made it essential to the city as can be seen by common changes, for instance it was not unusual for an Episcopal palace to be built on top of the Roman forum, thus illustrating bishops' re-appropriation of cities.<sup>156</sup>

Their responsibilities included maintaining stability within the city, providing assistance for the widowed, orphans and sick (particularly lepers) and also visiting prisoners. Even though their status did not include any official municipal or administrative positions, they came to be quite important political figures.<sup>157</sup> In other words, bishops performed lay functions for their city quite independently from their Christian functions.

Monks on the other hand, particularly those from Lérins where many bishops of Arles were educated, sought to devote themselves to God as perfect recluses. The very site of the monastery on a lonely island fortified that feeling of remoteness, as many monks sought to live a hermit's life within a community of devout men. In fact, Hilary describes it as an uninhabited lonely desolated island full of snakes when Honorat arrived.<sup>158</sup> An interesting miniature (Figure 16) is found in a manuscript

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<sup>155</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogus*, I.

<sup>156</sup> M. Miller, *The bishop's palace: architecture and authority in medieval Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 18.

<sup>157</sup> for more on the role of bishops during Late Antiquity see C. Rapp, *Holy bishops in Late Antiquity: the nature of Christian leadership in an age of transition*, Transformation of the classical heritage (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) and H. Chadwick, 'The Role of the Christian Bishop in Ancient Society,' *Thirty-fifth Colloquy of the Center of Hermeneutical Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 1-14.

<sup>158</sup> *Vita Hilarii*, 15, see also the discussion on the insularity of the island in R-M. Dessi and M. Lauwers, 'Désert, Eglise, Ile sainte. Lérins et la sanctification des îles monastiques de l'Antiquité à la fin du Moyen Age,' *Lérins, une île sainte de l'Antiquité au Moyen Âge*, eds. Y. Codou and M. Lauwers (Turnhout Brepols Publishers, 2009), 231-281, especially 234-238.

ornamenting the *Vita Honoratii* in which Honorat, dressed as a monk, can be seen combating these snakes with the deserted island behind him.<sup>159</sup>

The *vitae* of monk-bishops sought to defend that transition from monk to bishop. Honorat's, Hilary's and even Caesarius's *vitae* emphasise the significance of having been to Lérins for their future role as bishop in later life. But nowhere is this better explained than in Caesarius's sermon about the holy island: 'It nourishes all these illustrious monks that it sends forth into all Provinces as bishops. They arrive as children, and they leave as Fathers. It admits them as recruits, and it makes kings out of them.'<sup>160</sup> It is seen as a passage that promoted personal growth.

The time spent by monks at Lérins thus had a lasting impact on them, and contributed to their particular character as bishops. For instance, as Klingshirn pointed out, Caesarius remained a monk and an ascetic at heart even after his election as a bishop, and would not accept Episcopal duties that were not compatible with a monastic way of life.<sup>161</sup> As a monk, he ate simply, devoted himself to prayer, dressed modestly, etc.<sup>162</sup> Moreover, as a bishop, he created a monastery in Arles specifically for women. He is also known to have written two monastic rules, one of which was destined to the monials of the monastery of St. John.

Thus, the principle of Lérins wasn't simply to create a secluded place in which a monk could exercise his faith protected from the temptations of the world. Lérins was a transition during which many monks would learn to renounce the world and then readapt to it with a different attitude and way of life, and become bishops. The monk-bishops of Arles thus formed a very particular community,<sup>163</sup> which continued to thrive for centuries.

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<sup>159</sup> C. Caby, 'Ecrire la vie d'Honorat à Lérins au début du XVe siècle. Autour de la Vita Honorati du manuscrit Stresa, Biblioteca Rosminiana, 4' *Lérins, une île sainte de l'Antiquité au Moyen Âge*, eds. Y. Codou and M. Lauwers (Turnhout Brepols Publishers, 2009), 669-728, especially 680.

<sup>160</sup> Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon*, 25.

<sup>161</sup> W. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles : the making of a Christian community in late antique Gaul*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 88-89.

<sup>162</sup> *Vita Caesarii*, 1.37.

<sup>163</sup> However it should be noted that many monks from Lérins became bishops all over Provence and not just in Arles (although the highest concentration was in Arles). For example Maximus and Faustus who were both Bishops of Riez, Loup of Troyes and others. Another example is Eucherus who became Bishop of Lyon in 432, his sons Salone and Vérán also attended Lérins and became Bishops of Geneva and Vence, a certain Vincent became Bishop of Saintes. Sidonius Apollinaris also mentions Antiolus but his episcopate remains unknown (see *Epistle*, 8 14). Barralis cites many other monks who became bishops, see V. Barralis, *Chronologia Sanctorum et Abatum Insulae Lerinensis* (Lyon: 1613), III. This inspired Cooper-Marsdin to describe it as a 'nursery of bishops', A. Cooper-Marsdin, *The History of the*

Moreover and perhaps most importantly, the monk-bishops used their monastic background to preach ascetism to the people of their city. Guyon for instance noted that many Arlesian bishops dreamt of a congregation who lived like monks themselves<sup>164</sup> and Giovanni pointed out that many of them, like Caesarius, offered an ascetic ideal to Christians in Arles that borrowed many aspects of monastic prayer. The bishop also instigated a ternary rhythm of prayer in Arles cathedral in which clerics and laymen participated. In 529 at the Council of Vaison over which he presided, he instituted Presbyte schools in which young Christians could learn to read by learning the psalters by heart.<sup>165</sup>

Efforts made by the bishops to spread the ascetic ideal did not go unnoticed, Sidonius Apollinaris celebrated the example of Faustus of Riez, a former abbot at Lérins, who introduced monastic prayers to his city:

You know by experience the prayers of the islands that you brought back from the hermit congregation's schools and the assembly of Lérins monks to introduce them into the town in which you lead the religious life of the church, without the bishop that you had become losing anything of the monk that you were for the simple reason that you did not see your new tasks as a pretext for relaxing the rigour of the old discipline.<sup>166</sup>

Thus the bishops did not renounce their monastic life and ideals, on the contrary they used the public nature of their offices as bishops to diffuse them into the lay community.

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*Islands of the Lerins. The monastery, saints and theologians of S. Honorat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), 128. However, the almost systematic placement of bishops within their cities as in Arles did not occur in any other city.

<sup>164</sup> J. Guyon, 'D'Honorat à Césaire. L'évangélisation de la Provence,' *Césaire d'Arles et la christianisation de la Provence* eds. D. Bertrand and M-J. Delage (Paris: Éd. du Cerf, 1994), 75-108, especially 76.

<sup>165</sup> S. Gioanni, 'Etre véritablement moine' : les représentations de l'identité ascétique dans la pastorale lérinienne (Ve-VIe siècles),' *Lérins, une île sainte de l'Antiquité au Moyen Âge*, eds. Y. Codou and M. Lauwers (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2009), 141-167.

<sup>166</sup> Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistle*, XVI (*Thanksgiving to Bishop Faustus*).

### 1.3 The monastic commonality

One of the most defining elements of monks in general is perhaps their sense of community. While the meaning of *monachos*, the Greek for Monk, is one who lives alone, it quickly came to mean something radically different. Early monks attempted to adopt a hermit type lifestyle in the Egyptian desert, but they soon attracted followers and thus created loose clusters of cells called *laurae*. Shortly afterwards, Pachomios (290-346) founded large monasteries in Upper Egypt which quickly became *koinobia* in which monks practised communal prayers and became economically self-sufficient.<sup>167</sup> Thus, the communal aspect of monasteries quickly became one of their most important features. In fact in the *Vita Antoni*, it is suggested that one cannot consider a monk independently from the community to which he belongs and that ascetism cannot be thought as an individual experience.<sup>168</sup>

In Lérins, Pope Gregory the Great congratulated the abbot of the monastery for its communal living and declared ‘the entire community lives in perfect harmony’, to which he added that they followed a salutary rule that assured the well-being of all who followed.<sup>169</sup> Such specific rules of conduct were written in order to guide the monastic lifestyle, for instance the rule of Benedict. As Lawrence pointed out, ‘St. Benedict’s idea of the monastic life is completely cenobitic. His community of monks is a spiritual family living under one roof, or at any rate around one patio, under an abbot who is father to the community – in fact a villa monastery.’<sup>170</sup>

This concept of re-creating a family through spiritual ties is shared by almost all monastic communities. Hence for monks, as Rousseau noted, a ‘new community

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<sup>167</sup> For more on early monasticism see C. Rapp, ‘Early Monasticism in Egypt. Between Hermits and Cenobites,’ *Female 'vita religiosa' between Late Antiquity and the High Middle Ages : structures, developments and spatial contexts*, ed. G. Melville and A. Müller (Berlin: LIT-Verlag, 2011), 21-42 and J. Goehring, *Ascetics, society, and the desert : studies in early Egyptian monasticism* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999).

<sup>168</sup> See A-M. Talbot, ‘A Monastic World,’ *The social history of Byzantium*, ed. J. AlHaldon (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 162-178, especially 162. For more references on early monasticism see Jeremy Driscoll and Mark Sheridan, *Spiritual progress : studies in the spirituality of Late Antiquity and early monasticism* (Roma: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1994) and H. Dey and E. Fentress, *Western Monasticism 'ante litteram' the spaces of monastic observance in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011).

<sup>169</sup> Gregory the Great, *Epistles*, VI.

<sup>170</sup> H. Lawrence, *Medieval monasticism : forms of religious life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed. (Harlow: Longman, 2001), 24.

was created based on different values, not by blood or the will of men but rather the different parties had to realise that they could appeal to some different set of ideals that would oblige them to cooperate at a new level of spiritual endeavour.<sup>171</sup> Blood ties were thus replaced by celestial ties, an interesting example is Evagrius's response when he was told that his Father had died, answered 'Cease blaspheming, for my Father is immortal.'<sup>172</sup> In his view his father was God, and he had implicitly renounced all his prior terrestrial ties. Hilary expressed this view on the matter in a strong tone in writing 'The height of nobility is to be numbered among the sons of God, the glory of our ancestors is wholly irrelevant and the only way of adding lustre to one's 'dignity' is by showing contempt for all those empty and superfluous honours.'<sup>173</sup> Therefore in theory they left their previous ties to fully embrace their new family in the monastic community.

It comes as little surprise that, in the same way as for family mausoleums like that in Saint-Maximin, monks often sought to be buried among other monks in an exclusive space. In fact by the VIth century, many monasteries in Gaul had their own cemetery.<sup>174</sup> Furthermore, as McLaughlin has pointed out, those who breached the monastic rule were not allowed to be buried in the monastic common space.<sup>175</sup> She notes for example that in his *Dialogues*, Pope Gregory the Great, in setting an example, described the treatment of the body of a monk who had kept money for himself: the pope refused to allow him be buried among the other monks, and instead ordered that his body should be thrown onto a dung heap.<sup>176</sup> Thus the cemetery was restricted to people who fitted in the monastic community's ideals and projected a collective identity.

Therefore the 'space' was clearly defined. In fact, although lay people were sometimes buried in monastic cemeteries and monks in lay cemeteries, there was nevertheless usually a demarcation between the two groups, especially during the Middle Ages. Specific plots of the cemetery were assigned to different groups, for

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<sup>171</sup> P. Rousseau, 'Blood-relationships among Early Eastern Ascetics,' *JTS* 23 (1972), 135-144, especially 138.

<sup>172</sup> Evagrius, *Tractatus Tractatus Practicus vel monachus*, 95.

<sup>173</sup> Honorat (Bishop of Marseille), *Vita Hilarii*, 2.

<sup>174</sup> M. McLaughlin, *Consorting with saints : prayer for the dead in early medieval France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 48.

<sup>175</sup> M. McLaughlin, *Consorting with saints : prayer for the dead in early medieval France*. 226.

<sup>176</sup> M. McLaughlin, *Consorting with saints : prayer for the dead in early medieval France*, 227.

instance in Christ Church in Canterbury, we see that the monastic cemetery was shared with laymen, but the monks' area was delimited by a gated wall and clearly labelled.<sup>177</sup> As a general rule, Coppack believes that the graves of the religious were typically located in the cemetery on the north side of the Church, thus separated from the lay cemetery.<sup>178</sup> To be sure, cathedrals often had a walled cemetery exclusively for the religious called 'paradise', derived from the Persian and Hebrew words meaning garden.<sup>179</sup> Hence, like families, monks wanted to be buried together.

Interestingly, in some monasteries the dead were also buried among the living. In fact, Gilchrist and Sloane pointed out that cemeteries were a central part of monastery complexes to the extent that they were often planned in relation to other major buildings.<sup>180</sup> For instance, in the nunnery of Arles, Caesarius planned the spaces dedicated to the tombs of the nuns when he drew up the plans. By including them within the building plan he was introducing the dead into the community from its inception. Therefore their tombs became part of the architecture and the design, they were part of the everyday life of the nunnery and included within the monastic family.

Interestingly, after he died Caesarius was buried in the nunnery that he had created. He thus forms an exception to Monk-Bishops in Arles, as he is one of the rare few who were not buried among their predecessors in the basilica. Nevertheless, much like them, he was still buried in a communal setting among his spiritual rather than his biological 'family'.

## 2. Community of the Dead

Hilary and Honorat, on the other hand, were buried in St. Genesis' basilica and as I will show, also among their 'spiritual family'. This family included the 'first'

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<sup>177</sup> See R. Willis, *The architectural history of the conventual buildings of the monastery of Christ Church in Canterbury: considered in relation to the monastic life and rules, and drawn up from personal surveys and original documentary research* (London: Printed for the Kent Archaeological Society by Taylor & Co., 1869), 3-4. A wall also divided the lay cemetery from the priory, see J. Driver et al., *Excavations in the Cathedral precincts, 2 Linacre Garden, Meister Omers' and St Gabriel's Chapel* (Maidstone: Published for the Canterbury Archaeological Trust by the Kent Archaeological Society, 1990), 95-97.

<sup>178</sup> see G. Coppack, *Abbeys & priories* (Stroud: Tempus, 2006), 60 and R. Gilchrist and B. Sloane, *Requiem: the medieval monastic cemetery in Britain* (London: Museum of London Archaeology Service, 2005), 60.

<sup>179</sup> P. Binski, *Medieval death: ritual and representation* (London: British Museum Press, 1996), 36.

<sup>180</sup> R. Gilchrist and B. Sloane, *Requiem: the medieval monastic cemetery in Britain*, 31.

figure associated with the basilica, the one revered by every bishop, the martyr Genesius. He was of course the most important member of the community, the most charismatic member, with whom the bishops wanted to be associated and around whom they wanted to be buried. He was the Apollinaris of Arles.

But unlike Apollinaris, Genesius was not a bishop, nor could he promote the antiquity of his city's see as Ravenna's bishop did. In fact, starting from the Vth century, Arles also had its early bishop, proving the antiquity of its episcopate, in the figure of Saint Trophimus, who was believed to have been sent by Peter himself to evangelise Provence. However, the story was virtually unknown before the Vth century<sup>181</sup> and there is no late antique evidence that he was included in the crypt. The first mention that we have of his presence in the basilica was in 1152 when his relics were translated from St. Honorat to the Cathedral of St. Trophimus (then St. Steven).<sup>182</sup> This suggests that the relics were in the basilica before that date, but there is no late antique mention of them so they may well have been invented at a later date. There is little doubt that they would have been mentioned if they had existed during Late Antiquity. Moreover, despite use of the figure of Trophimus by the bishops of Arles to claim the antiquity of their see, they never associated themselves with him in the same way as they did with Genesius, who was the most important saint in Arles and its martyr. I shall demonstrate that this is reflected in the common burial of bishops with the martyr and also in the *vitae* of the bishops that seek to show a clear relation between the martyr and the bishops.

The shared space promoted this relation by including bishops within a highly exclusive space that until then had been reserved for the martyr Genesius. In the same way as the inclusion of Bishop Iohannes Romanus in St. Apollinare in Classe drew a line of continuity between himself and Apollinare, and the addition of Tiberius in Augustus's mausoleum prompted the viewer to think of the relation between Tiberius and Augustus and to see Tiberius's achievements in the light of Augustus's, the almost systematic inclusion of Arlesian bishops within this space made the viewer rethink the links between the lives of Genesius and the bishops, and presented the bishops as the

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<sup>181</sup> J. Guyon, M. Heijmans and J-M. Rouquette, *D'un Monde à l'autre: Naissance d'une Chrétienté en Provence, IV-VIème siècle* (Arles: Musée de l'Arles Antique, 2002), 88.

<sup>182</sup> J. Guyon, M. Heijmans and J-M. Rouquette, *D'un Monde à l'autre: Naissance d'une Chrétienté en Provence, IV-VIème siècle*, 88-89.

spiritual descendents of Genesis. I shall argue that this is because of the monastic identity of the bishops of Arles which in their view, bore similarities to the sacrifice of life made by Genesis.

## 2.1 Living death

All the bishops in the basilica were thought to be the 'living dead'. In fact, to reuse Finucane's words, speaking of a dying monk could be seen as being tautological, for in theory monks were already dead to this world.<sup>183</sup> It was understood that they had left life when they accepted the monastic robe. In fact, when describing the life of monks in the monastery of Sinai, Procopius defined it as a 'living death.'<sup>184</sup> In Rich's words, 'the awareness of his coming death and judgment, combined with renunciation of secular life, led a monk to 'regard himself as dead.'<sup>185</sup> Death was not just an inevitable reality of life, it was also seen as an ideal because it reflected the life of an ascetic, refusing himself any pleasures in life.<sup>186</sup>

To be sure, Ephraem Syrus, a IVth century Syrian theologian, used the term 'death' as a metaphor of ascetic life when he wrote 'everyone who bends his neck (to the monastic life) and serves in this institution is regarded as dead.'<sup>187</sup> But death for monks was not only equal to extreme asceticism, it also included interior tranquility through which they had in Zecher's words 'severed attachment to the transitory goods and pleasures and to their own ego.'<sup>188</sup> Typically, this included the loss of 'self' in emotions and material means, all for the interests of their monastic community. Death to self thus became an ideal, particularly for the Desert Fathers. As Zecher explained,

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<sup>183</sup> R. Finucane, 'Sacred Corpse, Profane Carrion: Social Ideals and Death Rituals in the later Middle Ages,' *Mirrors of mortality : studies in the social history of death*, ed. J. Whaley (London: Europa, 1981), 40-61, especially 44.

<sup>184</sup> See A. Cameron, *Procopius and the sixth century* (London: Duckworth, 1985), 96.

<sup>185</sup> A. Rich, *Discernment in the Desert Fathers : diakrisis in the life and thought of early Egyptian monasticism* (Bletchley, Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), 219.

<sup>186</sup> see discussion in J. Zecher, 'The Symbolics of Death and the Construction of Christian Asceticism: Greek Patristic Voices from the Fourth through Seventh Centuries,' PhD Thesis, Durham University, 2011, 119-122.

<sup>187</sup> Evagrius Ponticus, *Tractatus Practicus vel Monachus*, 40, and A. Voobus, *Literary, critical and historical studies in Ephrem the Syrian* (Stockholm: ETSE, 1958), 102.

<sup>188</sup> J. Zecher, 'The Symbolics of Death and the Construction of Christian Asceticism: Greek Patristic Voices from the Fourth through Seventh Centuries,' 121.

for monks ‘a vocabulary of death emerges by which they were able to describe important practices and ideals of asceticism.’<sup>189</sup> As a result, they often described themselves as dead or compared themselves with the dead, who could not speak, feel or sense.<sup>190</sup>

This is well exemplified by the monk Macarius the Egyptian in his answer to someone who wanted advice about how to be saved. Macarius said ‘Go to the cemetery and insult the dead.’ So he did and when he returned, the monk asked ‘Did they say anything to you?’ to which the man responded negatively. So Macarius told him to go again and this time praise them, and so he went and called them ‘apostles, saints, and righteous men!’ Upon his return, Macarius asked what the dead had answered, and the man said nothing at all. Macarius then explained ‘You know how much you dishonoured them, and they did not respond; and how much you praised them, and they said nothing to you. So also must you be, if you wish to be saved: considering neither the abuse nor the glory of humans, just like the dead, and you can be saved.’<sup>191</sup>

## 2.2 Martyrs and bishops

However all monks did eventually die like all other beings, though as we can see for example through the *vita* of Caesarius, death was a liberation for the saint and a tragedy for the living.<sup>192</sup> Genesisius on the other hand did not ‘live’ death in the same way as the monk-bishops, but experienced and embraced it as a martyr. The act of death, which all living beings confront, was glorified for some early Christians when their death was the result of persecutions against their faith.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> J. Zecher, ‘The Symbolics of Death and the Construction of Christian Asceticism: Greek Patristic Voices from the Fourth through Seventh Centuries,’ 120.

<sup>190</sup> J. Zecher, ‘The Symbolics of Death and the Construction of Christian Asceticism: Greek Patristic Voices from the Fourth through Seventh Centuries,’ 121.

<sup>191</sup> As cited in J. Zecher, ‘The Symbolics of Death and the Construction of Christian Asceticism: Greek Patristic Voices from the Fourth through Seventh Centuries,’ 20-23. For more on Macarius see D. Brakke, ‘Macarius’s Quest and Ours: Literary Sources for Early Egyptian Monasticism,’ *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Coptic Studies, September 2008*, ed. R. Boutros (Leuven: Peeters). Forthcoming

<sup>192</sup> ‘Alas, alas! It gets worse every day! Because the world did not deserve to keep such a profit, such a godly man, any longer.’ in *Vita Caesarius* 4.5.

<sup>193</sup> P. Brown, *The cult of the saints : its rise and function in Latin Christianity*, 69-85.

They became the most revered characters because as Brown pointed out, they were thought to have triumphed over death by dying for their beliefs.<sup>194</sup> It was thus the very fact of dying for their cause that set them apart from everyone else, much like Christ himself who also died for his faith. This was fundamentally different from the monk-bishops' experience of death as has been demonstrated above. For them, death to self was through renunciation, loss of self and hence extreme asceticism. This created a distinction between monks and martyrs unless they too had died for their faith. This difference was highlighted as early as 177 in a letter written by Christians in Lyon stating that a confessor was someone who had proclaimed his faith but had not been executed like a martyr.<sup>195</sup>

The focus on the death of a martyr is nowhere as clear as in their *vitae*. According to Barnes, while *vitae* were written for the edification of the individual, their main purpose was to 'preserve and to hand on to posterity the memory of martyrs and their glorious deaths',<sup>196</sup> thereby once again emphasising the importance of death and the circumstances that surrounded it. In Eusebius's words, martyrs only received the 'crowns of martyrdom when all was done.'<sup>197</sup>

Almost problematically for monks, persecutions in the IVth century were no longer an intrinsic part of Christian reality, making it more difficult to die for one's beliefs and thus become a martyr. In many ways, it was believed that monks (and other members of the Church) were victims of their historical period, because unlike their predecessors they did not have the privilege of living in an age in which they could die for their faith. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in Honorat's *vita* written by his successor, Hilary: 'You suffered like a martyr ... like a persecution against your faith ... Nobody can deny that you only lacked the opportunity, not the courage, to become a martyr.'<sup>198</sup>

As a result, the definition of a martyr was altered when ascetics started to appropriate it in an attempt to equate their lives with those of earlier martyr saints. They believed that renunciation of their own lives through adherence to the monastic

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<sup>194</sup> P. Brown, *The cult of the saints : its rise and function in Latin Christianity*, 75.

<sup>195</sup> see J-C. Picard, 'Les saints dans les églises latines des origines au IX siècle,' *Dictionnaire de spiritualité, ascétique et mystique* (Paris: 1990 ), 203.

<sup>196</sup> T. Barnes, *Early Christian hagiography and Roman history* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 151.

<sup>197</sup> Eusebius, *The ecclesiastical history*, V.

<sup>198</sup> *Vita Honoratii*, 38.

ideal meant termination of earthly pleasures which therefore made them martyrs too because they had, as we have seen above, experienced ‘living death’ throughout their lives. They described renunciation as a perpetual combat with themselves and with the world, as is made clear in Faustus’s Sermon to monks in which he wrote : ‘We did not come here [to Lérins] to rest, we came to face combat and strife. We need to fight against the passions within us, within the confines of this peaceful retreat inside this spiritual camp, through daily contrition and tireless struggle.’<sup>199</sup>

It was the virtuous character of the individual, his ability to ‘live death’ which became the defining point of an ascetic rather than death itself. This had an important impact on hagiographic narrative and changed the way that the story was told. For example, Kitchen showed that the moral character of the hero started to become central to the narrative in the IVth century.<sup>200</sup> There was less emphasis on details surrounding the death of the saint, but rather on his life and moral dilemmas.

The hagiographers hence tried to create what scholars have called ‘bloodless martyrs’. As Kitchen pointed out, the term ‘martyr’ came to emphasise will rather than blood as the validating mark of genuine ‘witnessing’.<sup>201</sup> To be sure, this is made clear in one of Caesarius of Arles’ sermons in which he writes:

‘I repeat again as I have frequently admonished you, dearly beloved, that no one of you should think that martyrs cannot live in our time. Martyr is a Greek word, which in Latin means witness. As we have often said, anyone who bears witness to Christ for the sake of Christ is without a doubt a martyr. Likewise, anyone who resists the champions of dissipation and persecutors of chastity out of love for God will receive the crown of martyrdom.’<sup>202</sup>

Sulpicius Severus wrote in the IVth century that Bishop Martin of Tours (who had also been a monk before he became a bishop) attained the plenitude of a martyr without having lost a drop of blood.<sup>203</sup> Bishop Germanus was described by Fortunatus

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<sup>199</sup> Faustus’s *Sermo* in M. Labrousse, *Saint Honorat fondateur de Lérins et évêque d’Arles*, 141-142.

<sup>200</sup> For more an overview on ‘hagiographic displacement’ see J. Kitchen, *Saints’ lives and the rhetoric of gender : male and female in Merovingian hagiography* (New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 53-57.

<sup>201</sup> J., *Saints’ lives and the rhetoric of gender : male and female in Merovingian hagiography*, 52-53.

<sup>202</sup> Caesarius of Arles *Sermons*, 52.

<sup>203</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Epistulis*, 2.12.

as having ‘acquired martyrdom ... in a time of peace’<sup>204</sup> and, as Labrousse mentioned, Honorat’s successors in Arles were quick to point to the martyrial quality of the bishop,<sup>205</sup> for example Caesarius of Arles wrote that Honorat was a martyr without having suffered the passion.<sup>206</sup>

Therefore as Kitchen rightly pointed out, hagiographers were ‘displacing’ the term and putting it into a new historical period.<sup>207</sup> This is also reflected in the communal burial in Arles, where bishops chose to be buried next to Genesisius. Much like what we have seen for example in family tombs or the Episcopal tombs in Ravenna, a shared burial created a link between individuals. Everyone who was under the same roof was part of the same community, this meant that they shared similar characteristics and in the case of Arles this characteristic was that of martyrdom or rather death, regardless of whether it was lived or experienced. The monk-bishops and Genesisius were thus part of the same ‘family’, they had both lived or experienced death for their faith.

The inclusion of a bishop in a martyr’s burial space was not unheard of. One of the most interesting examples is perhaps Ambrosius in Milan who was buried alongside the martyrs Gervase and Protasius in the basilica consecrated to them.<sup>208</sup> Another good example is in Rome where an important shift took place starting with Pope Sylvester who decided to bury his predecessor Marcel in the Priscilla cemetery next to the martyrs Félix and Philip instead of in the usual Papal Crypt.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> for more on Germanus’s vita written by Fortunat see J. Kitchen, *Saints' lives and the rhetoric of gender*, 52-53.

<sup>205</sup> M. Labrousse, *Saint Honorat fondateur de Lérins et évêque d'Arles*, 44-45.

<sup>206</sup> Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon*, 214 It should also be noted that the concept of having ‘lived’ as a martyr became quite widely recognised by the VIIth century. This is clearly illustrated in the *Cambrai Homily*: ‘There are three types of martyrs that man can emulate to help him bear his cross, namely white martyrs, violet martyrs and red martyrs. A white martyr isolates himself from everything that he loves for God, but without fasting or labour. A violet martyr separates himself from his desires through fasting or labour and endures labour through repentance and penitence. A red martyr suffers the passion of the cross and violent death like Christ, as happened to the apostles due to the persecution.’ For the full homily see See W. Stokes and J. Strachan, *Thesaurus palaeohibernicus, a collection of Old-Irish glosses, vol. 2* (Cambridge: 1901), 244-247.

<sup>207</sup> see ‘the idea of Hagiographic displacement’ in J. Kitchen, *Saints' lives and the rhetoric of gender : male and female in Merovingian hagiography*, 53-57.

<sup>208</sup> P. Boucheron, ‘Au coeur de l'espace monumental milanais. Les emplois de Sant'Ambrogio (IX-XIIIe siècles),’ *Emploi, citation, plagiat conduites et pratiques médiévales, Xe-XIIIe siècle*, eds. P. Toubert and P. Moret (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2009), 161-190, especially 163-164.

<sup>209</sup> J-C. Picard, ‘Etude sur l'emplacement des tombes des papes du IIIe au Xe siècle,’ *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome* 81 (1969), 725-782, especially 734-735.

In the same way as in Arles, the proximity of popes' and martyrs' tombs not only brought attention to the tomb of the pope, it also prompted the viewer to think about relations between individuals. The basilica of St. Genesius then represented a monument to what bishops wanted to be remembered by. They wanted the viewer to think that they emulated a martyr's death throughout their lives by devoting themselves to Christ, they were Genesius's spiritual descendants. Their sacrifice was not just their deaths, but their whole lives through their 'living death' in the interests of their community and their faith.

### **3. Medieval Memory: renegotiating and rebuilding the past**

The story of the Episcopal 'community of the dead' did not end in Late Antiquity. On the contrary, it found a fruitful 'after-life' during the Middle Ages. The community was preserved: Hilary, Honorat and Genesius were still thought to have been buried in the same location, although there were a few alterations to fit new needs.

Around 1040, a former monk of the monastery of St. Victor in Marseille, Rimbaud of Reillanne the Bishop of Arles donated St. Genesius's basilica to the monks of St. Victor. A monk called Arduin came to be head of the basilica during the installations and reconstructions of the building and is often believed to be the scribe employed under Isarn, one of the most important abbots in the history of the Marseille monastery.<sup>210</sup> Among many reconstructions, one of the monk's most important changes to the basilica was its change of name, as it was now put under the double patronage of 'Saint Genesius and Saint Honorat', after the holy bishop of Arles who founded the monastery in Lérins.

The church remained under double patronage during the XIth century, but as early as 1135, Pope Innocent II calls it the 'monasterium Sancti Honorati.' Later, in 1152, when Trophimus's relics were transferred from St. Honorat to St. Trophimus's cathedral, the Church was only known through Honorat's name (the body of the blessed French apostle Trophimus was moved to this very church in Arles from Saint Honorat's

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<sup>210</sup> As evidence of this, see B. Guérard, *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Victor de Marseille* (Paris: C. Lahure, 1857), acts 166, 171, 172, 458, 604, 631.

church in Alyscamps about December 29 and many holy relics were found in his tomb).<sup>211</sup>

This change of patron made sense to the monks of St. Victor who preferred to have a monk like themselves as patron for the Arlesian basilica rather than a martyr. Moreover, Honorat had contacts with Cassian, the supposed founder of the Victorine monastery, who wrote rules of conduct for monks. Cassian had actually dedicated one of his books to Honorat, thereby testifying links between the two men.<sup>212</sup> And he was thought to have been very much in awe of ascetic life on the island.<sup>213</sup>

The late antique monastic tradition was obviously what the Victorine monks were interested in, and more particularly its connection with the monastery of Lérins by promoting the monk Honorat. This was especially true at a time when Marseille monks were attempting to create an antique history for their monastery with the aim of presenting themselves as direct descendants of Cassian and early monasticism in general.<sup>214</sup>

It is interesting to note that at the time of St. Victor's acquisition of the basilica, the Bishop of Arles, Rimbaud of Reillanne, and two of his predecessors had been monks in the Marseille monastery, hence were themselves monk-bishops. There was a clear interest in reinvigorating the monk-bishop tradition through promotion of the monastic community in Arles. This 'reinterpretation' of the identity of the basilica was not well received everywhere, especially by the rival monastery Montmajour.<sup>215</sup> There, the monks wrote a Provençal text entitled 'Le Roman de St Trophime' between 1221 and 1226, in which they accused the monks of Saint Victor of manipulating the

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<sup>211</sup> See J. Hyacinthe Albanès, *Gallia christiana novissima* (Marseille Valence: 1899), Act 568 'factae est translatio corporis beatissimi Trophimi, Galliarum apostoli, in ipsam ecclesiam Arelatensem, ab ecclesia Sancti Honorat in Alis campis, IV. Kalendas januarii, in cuius tumba inventae sunt multae sanctorum reliquiae'

<sup>212</sup> For the relations between the two, see M. Dulaey, 'Les relations entre Lérins et Marseille : Eucher et Cassien,' *Lérins, une île sainte de l'Antiquité au Moyen Âge*, eds. Y. Codou and M. Lauwers (Turnhout Brepols Publishers, 2009), 63-83.

<sup>213</sup> see S. Gioanni, 'Moines et évêques en Gaule aux Ve et VIe siècles : la controverse entre Augustin et les moines provençaux,' *Médiévales* 19.38 (2000), 147-167, especially 150.

<sup>214</sup> This will be the topic of the next chapter. Many medieval monks sought to live a life similar to the early monks in the desert. On the medieval revival of early monasticism see H. Lawrence, *Medieval monasticism : forms of religious life in Western Europe in the Middle Age*, 146-171.

<sup>215</sup> The disagreements between the monastery of St. Victor and the monastery of Montmajour had been long ongoing and worsened in 1081 when the latter lost its dependence to the Victorine monks as a disciplinary punishment because of scandals. Unhappy about the decision, the monks of Montmajour managed to regain their independence after 1096. See G. Barthelemy Manteyer, *La Provence du premier au douzième siècle. Études d'histoire et de géographie politique* (Paris: Picard, 1908), 302-303.

history of the basilica of the Alyscamps by creating traditions fitting to the monastery's history.<sup>216</sup>

### 3.1 Recreating the tradition

One of the Victorine monks' most important reconstructions in the abbey became the crypts. Sadly, we do not know exactly what they looked like because they were reorganised again in the XVIth century by the Minims fathers. But we do know that the sarcophagi of the saints were displayed there. Many of the saints who were thought to have been in the basilica in Late Antiquity were still there, and a few other bishops and one extra martyr had been added to the community. In the XIIIth century, Michel of Mouriès, the Archbishop of Arles, made a compilation of the bodies in the crypts and mentioned Bishops Concordius, Honorat, Hilary, Aeonius, Aurelianus, Virgilius, Roland and also the martyrs Genesisius and Dorothy.<sup>217</sup>

It remains unclear whether the extra bishops and the martyr Dorothy were added at the time of the construction of the crypts, or whether their association would have been earlier. The case of Bishop Rotland is one of the few cases of obvious medieval additions, he was a bishop who lived in the VIIIth century and is often thought to have combated the Saracens and died in captivity. Duport who wrote a History of Arles in 1690 thought that the bishop had been brought to the basilica after his death and put in a tomb that he had had made for himself before his death,<sup>218</sup> which is impossible since according to Véran's description of the sarcophagus (that is now lost), it would have been a late antique sarcophagus with an iconography of Christ flanked by the Apostles, thus probably reused and taken from the Alyscamps.<sup>219</sup> Similarly, other

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<sup>216</sup> see J. Gazay, 'Le Roman de Saint Trophime de l'abbaye Montmajour' *AM* 25 (1913), 5-37, especially 12 and 25. There seems to have been the belief that Marseille monks were also active in promotion of the traditions relating to Vivian (see chapter V), though there is little evidence to confirm this point. See R. Weeks, 'Etudes sur Aliscans,' *Romania* 34 (1905), 234-277, especially 276.

<sup>217</sup> M-P. Rothé and M. Heijmans, *Arles, Crau, Camargue*, 546.

<sup>218</sup> G. Duport, *Histoire de l'église d'Arles, tirée des meilleurs auteurs anciens et modernes* (Paris: G. Cavelier, 1690), 161.

<sup>219</sup> P. Véran, *Musée d'Arles en réunion de tous les monuments antiques de cette ville, indice de ceux qui ont été enlevés et explications de quelques uns de ceux qui restent* (Arles, 1805), Arles Mediathèque, ms. 734.

Episcopal sarcophagi that might have well been added during medieval times or perhaps even in Late Antiquity, can all be dated from Late Antiquity.<sup>220</sup>

There have been several cases of the medieval reorganisation of crypts in which bodies of late antique bishops were reassembled to form a common group. For instance in Le Mans around 840, the bodies of bishops inhumed outside churches were brought into the Cathedral inside the city. In Naples, Bishop John IV (842-849) reassembled the bodies of all the bishops, most of which were in the catacombs of San Gennaro, to bring them into the Cathedral inside the city. And finally in 935, the ten first bishops of the city of Mainz were translated into Mainz Cathedral.<sup>221</sup> Interestingly in Arles, St. Honorat's basilica was not a cathedral and had already contained the bodies of bishops during Late Antiquity, unlike the above cases. So what we see there is a continuation rather than a 'creation' of a common space, to which bishops were added subsequently at some point in history to a communal burial that was already in place.

It is interesting to note that while the monks of St. Victor reorganised the crypts and rearranged the hierarchy of these saints, they nevertheless kept a display similar to that adopted for the ancient basilica, namely a communal display, all in the same building. The sarcophagi were shown in an almost museological manner, grouped together in a single dedicated space, much as they were in St. Victor as we shall see in the next chapter. As far as we know they were not separated, and Mouriès points out that they were together in the crypt.

This type of display was not necessarily the most common in Medieval times, many saints in the South of France were displayed in isolation. For instance, according to Codou the sarcophagus of St. Véran in the Cathedral of Vence was possibly already there in the XIth century, and constituted the basis of his cult.<sup>222</sup> And as we shall see in chapter III, there is also the example of St. Martha in Tarascon who was displayed alone in the XIIIth century.

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<sup>220</sup> A more detailed review of the sarcophagi will be given below. However, all the sarcophagi that remain and that are traditionally attributed to the saints (Concordius, Hilary, Honorat Aoenius, Virgilius, Dorothy and Roland) are late antique sarcophagi. We have lost the sarcophagus of Aurelius and no description was ever been made of it.

<sup>221</sup> P. Boucheron, 'Au coeur de l'espace monumental milanais. Les emplois de Sant'Ambrogio (IX-XIIIe siècles), 171.

<sup>222</sup> Y. Codou, 'Une mémoire de pierre : chantiers romans et monumenta paléochrétiens en Provence,' 589-591.

In contrast, the crypt of St. Honorat followed its late antique pattern of the communal ‘family display’ of the monk-bishops and expanded it by adding new members who were part of the same group. Of course, the monks made a few changes at the same time as these renovations. As Zimmerman rightly pointed out, the claim to continuity was often used to hide innovation.<sup>223</sup> In this case, the innovation was the promotion of Honorat who was presented as the bishops' spiritual father figure instead of Genesisius. But while he was singled out within the community as the patron saint, his sarcophagus was still left within the crypts among the other bishops who were revered during Medieval times because, like Honorat, they were thought to belong to a long antique tradition although perhaps they did not enjoy the same devotion as he did. It is interesting that the first bishop of Arles, Trophimus, was again excluded from this community as he was transferred to the Cathedral of Arles. This again emphasises the special nature of this community which, unlike Ravenna for instance, was interested in creating a monastic rather than apostolic character for their late antique Episcopal community.

We can thus clearly see an interest in the Middle Ages in creating continuity with this past, and preserving it. This chapter presents an exception to this thesis, because it is the only instance in which medieval renovations of a cult and of sarcophagi were made through a veritable historical continuity. All other examples I shall look at will claim continuity, but are actually invented traditions, most of which had little or no grounding in Late Antiquity.

### 3.2 Medieval legends

The history of the community grew not only through archaeology and architecture but also through text. Starting from the XIIth century, we see a new array of literature which narrates the story of the community of St. Honorat.<sup>224</sup> Most of the

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<sup>223</sup> M. Zimmermann, ‘Tutelle des anciens ou protection de l’innovation ? L’invocation du droit et la terminologie politique dans les représentations médiévales en Catalogne,’ *L’autorité du passé dans les sociétés médiévales*, ed. J-M. Sansterre (Rome: Ecole française de Rome 2004), 27-56, especially 31.

<sup>224</sup> For a discussion on the medieval lives of Honorat see C. Caby, ‘Ecrire la vie d’Honorat à Lérins au début du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle. Autour de la *Vita Honorati* du manuscrit Stresa, Biblioteca Rosminiana,’ 669-728.

texts focused on Honorat himself who became enormously popular during the Middle Ages.<sup>225</sup> Some dealt with various epic stories which started to become associated with the site during the XIIth century as I shall demonstrate in chapter IV. In some of these tales, the bishops were thought to be contemporary with later medieval figures, for instance Saint Honorat and Saint Trophimus were thought to be contemporaries of Charlemagne who was thought to have freed Arles from the Saracens. Saint Genesius became Roland's brother (Roland, Charlemagne's nephew was also thought to have freed Arles), and Vivian (another medieval knight thought to have freed Arles) became Honorat's friend.<sup>226</sup> Thus, the figures of the bishops were reinvented to fit contemporary beliefs.

Furthermore, the community described in these texts became very tightly knit, even in death. This is made particularly clear in one of the medieval Latin *vitae* of Honorat written by an anonymous author in the mid-XIIIth century, which seeks to show that Honorat's relics belonged to the Alyscamps because of the bishop's association with the site and with the other saints. As a result, it is said that soon after Honorat's death, the monks of Lérins came to Arles and attempted to steal his body.<sup>227</sup> The other saints in the Alyscamps, including some heroes from *chansons de gestes* who were thought to be in the cemetery,<sup>228</sup> combated these monks who wanted to steal one of the members of their community.

The community kept on evolving with bishops being added and their stories being updated to suit new situations present in the city. But it is interesting to note that no other 'types' of saints were added to the community in the basilica. All the members had 'martyrial qualities' because they had been either martyrs or bishops of Arles, typically after having been monks at Lérins. Even the XIIth century martyrs from the *chansons de geste* who became immensely popular during the Middle Ages, as will be seen in Chapter IV, were not included in the basilica. Instead, they were placed outside

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<sup>225</sup> For his medieval cult in Provence see G. Butaud, 'Le culte de saint Honorat en Provence et les pratique dévotionnelles sur l'île sacrée' de Lérins (XIIIe - début XVI siècle), *Lérins, une île sainte de l'Antiquité au Moyen Âge*, eds. Y. Codou and M. Lauwers (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2009), 601-668, especially 601-602.

<sup>226</sup> A. Moisan, 'Les sépultures des Français morts à Roncevaux,' *CCM* 24, (1981), 11-41, especially 39-41.

<sup>227</sup> See G. Butaud and Y. Codou, 'Honorat moine et évêque : ses reliques d'Arles à Lérins,' *BAAT* 16 (2007), 42-50.

<sup>228</sup> Chapter V examines martyrs glorified in *chansons de geste* and buried in Alyscamps cemetery.

the building among all the other tombs. Therefore the community was sacred and exclusive, reserved for members of a specific group. And that exclusivity was respected throughout time, as no bodies that did not fit into the community were ever added.

#### 4. The iconography of the collective

Moreover, while sarcophagi might have been added over time, it is interesting to note that many of them bore a similar iconography: Christ flanked by his apostles. And as I will show, that specific iconography reflected the rhetoric of commonality present in monastic life.

In a study of the antique sarcophagi found in Arles, Février concluded:

‘Our sarcophagi lead to a certain way of viewing death – a death that does not want to be anonymous, a death through which social differences remain sensitive, profoundly marked both in the material and its sculpture.’<sup>229</sup>

His conclusion was based on the study of the specific iconography of each sarcophagus, which for many included a choice of narrative that corresponded to the image that the deceased wished to project of himself to the passerby.

The subject of iconography in relation to the tomb has been widely studied in the field of art history, particularly for pagan sarcophagi.<sup>230</sup> Elsner has shown that many Christian sarcophagi have iconographies that emphasise confessional aspects and make a claim to a sectarian religious identity.<sup>231</sup> It is this Christian identity that I shall explore in the iconography on the tombs in the Arles basilica, particularly in a monastic context. I shall look at how collective life emphasised in the iconography on these sarcophagi fits into a monastic rhetoric.

To be sure, it should be noted that the ‘collective’ iconography stands out in the corpus of Christian sarcophagi in Southern France even outside the Episcopal

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<sup>229</sup> P-A. Février, ‘Sarcophages d’Arles’ *Congrès archéologiques de France*, 134 (1979), 317-354, especially 354.

<sup>230</sup> See for instance R. Turcan, *Messages d’outre-tombe l’iconographie des sarcophages romains*, de l’archéologie à l’histoire (Paris: De Boccard, 1999) or M. Koortbojian, *Myth, meaning, and memory on Roman sarcophagi* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>231</sup> J. Elsner, ‘Image and Rhetoric in Early Christian Sarcophagi: Reflections on Jesus’ Trial,’ *Life, death and representation : some new work on Roman sarcophagi*, eds. J. Elsner and J. Huskinson (New York: De Gruyter, 2011), 359-386, especially 360.

sphere. For example, one might think of the many examples of the Crossing of the Red Sea in which Moses is depicted leading the group of the faithful with the help of God across the Red Sea.<sup>232</sup> This motif was popular during the mid- to late IVth century, especially in Provence where no less than four examples have been found. Many of these follow a similar pattern, depicting the Pharaoh's army on the left and Moses guiding his people on the right, on the two sides of a chaotic battle taking place in the centre of the sarcophagus. As Mathews has pointed out, it is the only narrative iconographic scheme of the Old Testament that occupies the whole visual field of any sarcophagus, without the addition of any New Testament scenes.<sup>233</sup> Let us look for example at the sarcophagus (Figure 17) that was initially in the Alysamps and is now in Aix-en-Provence. The division between the two groups is made particularly clear; on the right we see a community which Jaś Elsner noted has a noticeable family emphasis with men, women and children.<sup>234</sup> This community, following their leader Moses, comes out of the battle victorious. Thus, it is all about individuals putting their courage and hope into the community led by a charismatic figure. In fact, Jaś Elsner notes that it is a Christian appropriation of Jewish triumph to fit the theme of Christian salvation.<sup>235</sup> Typologically it is not unusual to see Moses prefiguring Peter who became the leader and the 'rock' of the Catholic Church. The Crossing of the Red Sea in many ways echoed the collective concept of the faithful following their spiritual leader for salvation.

Of course, the most important leading figure for Christians is Christ himself, and the Southern French corpus includes numerous sarcophagi with Christ surrounded by his Apostles, often teaching them the scriptures. A magnificent example of this type, representing Christ in the midst of his apostles, is a IVth century sarcophagus in Aix-en-Provence which housed the relics of St. Mitre, the martyr saint of the town, that was

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<sup>232</sup> C. Rizzardi, *I sarcofagi paleocristiani con rappresentazione del passaggio del Mar Rosso* (Faenza Fratelli Lega, 1970).

<sup>233</sup> T. Mathews, *The clash of gods : a reinterpretation of early Christian art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 75.

<sup>234</sup> J. Elsner, 'Pharaoh's Army Got Drowned?': Some Reflections on Jewish and Roman Genealogies in Early Christian Art,' *Judaism and Christian art : aesthetic anxieties from the catacombs to colonialism*, eds. H. Kessler and D. Nirenberg (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 10-15, especially 12.

<sup>235</sup> J. Elsner, 'Pharaoh's Army Got Drowned?': Some Reflections on Jewish and Roman Genealogies in Early Christian Art,' 14.

moved to Saint-Saveur Cathedral in 1383 (Figure 18).<sup>236</sup> Apostle motifs are also found in a IVth century sarcophagus in Manosque<sup>237</sup> (Figure 19) and a IVth century example in Nimes originating from the Alyscamps<sup>238</sup> (Figure 20). Most are more formally organised than the one in Aix-en-Provence, some even including a separation between apostles by the inclusion of columns. Others, like the sarcophagus of St. Aeonius in Arles even replaced Christ with the Cross (the Anastasis with a crown above it), but all the apostles remain turned towards the centre, thus again showing their devotion to their faith. Interestingly, the front of a sarcophagus reused for Saint Trophimus, the first bishop of Arles and displayed in the cathedral named after him also bore an apostle motif (Figure 21).<sup>239</sup>

One of the most impressive collections of this type of sarcophagus is found in the basilica of St. Genesius where all the sarcophagi except that associated with Hilary bore an Apostolic iconography. The IVth century sarcophagus that became associated with Honorat is a good example.<sup>240</sup> It represented Christ in the centre holding a volumen flanked by two strigilated panels at the extremities of which there was an apostle on each side (Figure 22). The iconography was particularly appropriate for Honorat, a monk-bishop who devoted his life to Christ and brought Christianity to the city of Arles and among his monks in the monastery that he had founded.

Similarly, the sarcophagus thought to have been associated with St. Genesius in St Honorat,<sup>241</sup> called the sarcophagus of Hydria Tertulla and Axia Aeliana because of its previous occupants and inscription, is another good example of such iconography (Figure 23). It represents the Traditio Legis, Christ as a doctor handing over the law to

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<sup>236</sup> B. Christern-Briesenick, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage Vol 3. Frankreich Algerien Tunesien / bearbeitet*, 11, no. 25.

<sup>237</sup> B. Christern-Briesenick, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage Vol 3. Frankreich Algerien Tunesien / bearbeitet*, 140, no. 282.

<sup>238</sup> B. Christern-Briesenick, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage Vol 3. Frankreich Algerien Tunesien / bearbeitet*, 190-191, no. 411.

<sup>239</sup> B. Christern-Briesenick, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage Vol 3. Frankreich Algerien Tunesien / bearbeitet*, 75, no. 33.

<sup>240</sup> For the dating see B. Christern-Briesenick, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage Vol 3. Frankreich Algerien Tunesien / bearbeitet*, 57, no. 77. See also M-P. Rothé and M. Heijmans, *Arles, Crau, Camargue*, 558.

<sup>241</sup> Another sarcophagus in Trinquetaille was also thought to have been associated with Genesius. According to popular beliefs, it was believed that the orant figure was Genesius himself, and the screen and lock were interpreted to be an axe and a stool, instruments of his martyr. E. Le Blant, *Étude sur les sarcophages chrétiens antiques de la ville d'Arles*, (Paris: 1878), 57. Furthermore, there are four scenes representing biblical miracles depicted on the sarcophagus B. Christern-Briesenick, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage Vol 3. Frankreich Algerien Tunesien / bearbeitet*, 53-54, no. 70.

Peter who is accompanied by an apostle.<sup>242</sup> On Christ's right are two other apostles in front of a palm tree. Similarly, the sarcophagus of Bishop Aeonius (491-502)<sup>243</sup> also known as the sarcophagus of the Anastasis,<sup>244</sup> made of Carrara marble at the end of the IVth century,<sup>245</sup> depicted the cross of the Anastasis flanked by two groups of six apostles (Figure 24).

This was probably a medieval addition to Saint Honorat, along with the sarcophagus of Dorothy<sup>246</sup> made of St. Beat marble,<sup>247</sup> that dates from the second third of the IVth century<sup>248</sup> and represents Christ in the middle surrounded by four apostles on the two sides, with the two closest to Christ holding bread and a fish (symbol of the Eucharist) (Figure 25). The New Testament characters are flanked by Abraham and Daniel in the outermost niches. Among these medieval additions we should also count the sarcophagus of Bishop Rotland which is now lost but V éran who saw and described it in 1824, tells us that it also represented eight apostles in niches flanking Christ.<sup>249</sup> Little can be said about the sarcophagus of Virgilius, since it has now been lost.<sup>250</sup> Nor do we know much about Caesarius's sarcophagus except that it was late antique, because it was destroyed, probably by Frankish or Burgundian troops.<sup>251</sup>

As I have already suggested, we do not know exactly when most sarcophagi were attributed to their respective saints because much of their history was reinvented during the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, the idea of the collective was one that lived for centuries, because we know that it started quite early with the sarcophagus of

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<sup>242</sup> For more on this sarcophagus see B. Christern-Briesenick, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage Vol 3. Frankreich Algerien Tunesien / bearbeitet*, 45-47, no. 62, and M-P. Rothé and M. Heijmans, *Arles, Crau, Camargue*, 556.

<sup>244</sup> For more on this sarcophagus see F. Le Blant, *Étude sur les sarcophages chrétiens antiques de la ville d'Arles*, 26-28.

<sup>245</sup> B. Christern-Briesenick, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage Vol 3. Frankreich Algerien Tunesien / bearbeitet*, 35, no. 49, and Rothé and Heijmans, *Arles, Crau, Camargue*, 554.

<sup>246</sup> The oldest remaining source associating the sarcophagus to the Saint is M. Fabre, *Annales des Minimes*, Arles.

<sup>247</sup> F. Benoît, *Sarcophages paléochrétiens d'Arles et de Marseille*, 37.

<sup>248</sup> B. Christern-Briesenick, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage Vol 3. Frankreich Algerien Tunesien / bearbeitet*, 45, no. 61.

<sup>249</sup> P. V éran, Musée d'Arles en réunion de tous les monuments antiques de cette ville, indice de ceux qui ont été enlevés et explications de quelques uns de ceux qui restent.

<sup>250</sup> M-P. Rothé and M. Heijmans, *Arles, Crau, Camargue*, 562.

<sup>251</sup> For more on his tomb see F. Benoît, 'La tombe de saint Césaire d'Arles et sa restauration en 883,' *BM* 94 (1935), 137-143.

Concordius<sup>252</sup> dating from 380-390,<sup>253</sup> which had been designed for him as testified by the epigraph.<sup>254</sup> This is the perfect example of the genre, Christ is represented in the middle as a doctor handing over the law through the Bible (Figure 26). The apostles surround him and are turned towards him, listening, the evangelists holding gospel books with their names on them.

Such sarcophagi emphasise the bishops' role as men of God. They were not remembered through any qualities other than as followers of Christ and who accepted their loss of self in the interests of the collective. It is interesting to note that this kind of iconographical choice was not exceptional for bishops. For instance, a similar sarcophagus was reused for St. Clair, a bishop of Toulouse (Figure 27).<sup>255</sup>

Furthermore, the use of apostle-related iconography in a monastic context is not unknown. A reused sarcophagus similar to those occupied by bishops in Arles and representing Christ and his Apostles was reused during medieval times to decorate the entrance to Lérins monastery (Figure 4),<sup>256</sup> offering another reminder of the collective role of monks in following their leader, Christ. It may have been brought to Lérins and displayed as part of the architecture in 1391.<sup>257</sup>

Other interesting recurrent iconographic themes on our sarcophagi relate to baptism and conversion. For example, the sides of the sarcophagus that became associated with Bishop Aeonius (Figure 24) depict the baptism of Christ (Figure 28) and the miraculous spring from Moses/Peter's stick (Figure 29), thus an iconography of baptism and conversion.<sup>258</sup> Again, the iconography of baptism relating to conversion and salvation was quite fitting in the monastic rhetoric. The conversion scenes emphasise the new lives of these men as monks while the apostles reflect their collective dedication to Christ, through which they could hope for eternal salvation. A

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<sup>252</sup> For more on this sarcophagus see M-P Rothé and M. Heijmans, *Arles, Crau, Camargue*, 556-557, and also B. Christern-Briesenick, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage Vol 3. Frankreich Algerien Tunesien / bearbeitet*, 48-49, no. 65.

<sup>253</sup> For dating see J. Guyon and M. Heijmans, *D'un monde à l'autre naissance d'une chrétienté en Provence IVe-Vie*, 209.

<sup>254</sup> see M-P. Rothé and M. Heijmans, *Arles, Crau, Camargue*, 557.

<sup>255</sup> B. Christern-Briesenick, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage Vol 3. Frankreich Algerien Tunesien / bearbeitet*, 246, no. 514.

<sup>256</sup> Y. Codou, 'Le paysage monumental.' 258. For more on the sarcophagus, see Christern-Briesenick, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage Vol 3. Frankreich Algerien Tunesien / bearbeitet*, 134-135, no. 269.

<sup>257</sup> F. Benoît, *Sarcophages paléochrétiens d'Arles et de Marseille*, 39.

<sup>258</sup> For more on this sarcophagus see E. Le Blant, *Étude sur les sarcophages chrétiens antiques de la ville d'Arles*, 19-22 and M-P. Rothé and M. Heijmans, *Arles, Crau, Camargue*, 555.

specific iconography was chosen for these bishops, and while most of these sarcophagi had been reused, we can see that there was a consistent selection process at play during late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.

## 5. A Charismatic group

But what made the sarcophagi themselves special was not just their iconography or even their material, it was their association with saintly characters. It is that simple fact that made them different from all the other sarcophagi found scattered around the cemetery. In fact, medieval historians often believe that during medieval times cemeteries became a transient space and were reused over time, as Binski wrote:

‘Corpses were manipulated and divisible for essentially practical reasons: graveyards were sites of recycling and their earth and worms participated in a sacred ecology. For this reason the bones and skulls that litter medieval graveyards are not signs of macabre neglect; they simply reflected the fact that coffins were used for transport not burial. Once a body had been buried and decomposed to the point of defleshing, it was normal to exhume it and to store the bones in a charnel house.’<sup>259</sup>

Though this view has been controversial in the field of medieval social history,<sup>260</sup> we can see that especially in the Alyscamps, the cemetery was in continuous use until the late Middle Ages and that a vast quantity of sarcophagi have been reused over several generations.<sup>261</sup> But the Episcopal group forms an exception, their association with space changed very little from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages.

This was because unlike most dead bodies, the bodies of these saintly bishops were believed to be sacred. As was common starting from Late Antiquity, relics which were typically the residue of a saintly person or objects attributed to him were believed to hold special powers. During their life, and particularly after their death, bishops of Arles were considered to be saints, and very quickly their bodies and everything that touched them became ‘relics’. This is made particularly clear in their *vitae*, for instance

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<sup>259</sup> P. Binski, *Medieval death : ritual and representation*, 55.

<sup>260</sup> R. Gilchrist and B. Sloane, *Requiem : the medieval monastic cemetery in Britain*, 30.

<sup>261</sup> see F. Benoît, ‘Fouilles aux Alyscamps : ‘Areae’ cimetiérales et sarcophages de l’école d’Arles,’ 115-132.

in the *Vita Hilarii* written by Honorat of Marseille, it is mentioned that at Hilary's funeral:

‘Everyone attempted to tear off a strip of material and touch the body. Saint Basil was now the supreme pontiff (he was bishop of Aix) and found an ingenious solution: he tore the sheet covering the body with his two hands, picked up the largest part and moved some distance away, and then tore it into shreds and shared them among the crowd.’<sup>262</sup>

Similarly, in the *Vita Honoratii*, Hilary wrote that at a bishop's funeral:

‘People vied with each other to heap faith on this holy body, and then even more so at the funeral service to lay him almost bare; the materials that had covered him and thereby become holy received no respect from a faith that considered nothing to be more valuable than a fringe attached to his clothes.’<sup>263</sup>

A similar emphasis on the possession of a ‘relic’ of the bishop is highlighted in the *Vita Caesarii*:

‘The entire sobbing host of the faithful fought with pious violence for the clothes that he had worn in his sainthood, and us priests and deacons present at the time found it very difficult to restore order so that everyone could wait patiently to receive a relic.’<sup>264</sup>

Hence the term relic was already employed to refer to bishops' remains. It was used again in the *vita* ‘These are the relics through which God allows a cure to the sick.’ The narrator goes on to recount that once a man ‘all shrivelled and trembling with ague’ who was following one of St. Caesarius's assistants asked ‘Give me a piece of St. Caesarius's fabric! Its decoration works wonders against the fever! I want to drink it!’<sup>265</sup> The clerk accepted the prayer. ‘When we arrived in the cell, we washed our hands and then I brought him one of the towels used to wipe the holy body of our sweet

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<sup>262</sup> *Vita Hilarii*, ii. See also J-M. Rouquette, P. Allard, R. Bertrand and M. Heijmans, *Arles histoire, territoires et cultures* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale éd., 2008), 243-242.

<sup>263</sup> *Vita Honoratii* 36.

<sup>264</sup> *Vita Caesarii*, 2.

<sup>265</sup> *Vita Caesarii*, 5. See also J-M. Rouquette, P. Allard, R. Bertrand and M. Heijmans, *Arles histoire, territoires et cultures*, 242.

Lord. I took a piece to give to him' and of course the man was cured. The *vita* went on to say that the relics became mutilated by overuse.

Hence, from their very death, their bodies and everything that became associated with them, became relics.<sup>266</sup> In that context the sarcophagi took on the role of reliquaries for they were containing and displaying the sacred bodies.<sup>267</sup> They preserved the relics of the bishops in the long term and henceforth perpetuated the physical presence of saints in Arles.

As Hahn has pointed out, reliquaries were special because they did more than just contain the relics, they also defined them. She adds 'the act of selection and subsequent enframement in some sense make the relic rather than the reverse.'<sup>268</sup> In the case of sarcophagi, which were fairly commonplace tombs among the late Roman world, the reliquary was asserting that it contained not just part of the body, but the whole body.

This made a tomb one of the best suited elements to suggest the presence of the body, and this is perhaps why sarcophagi became fairly common place as reliquaries, as will become apparent throughout this thesis. In fact miniature sarcophagi obviously derived from the sarcophagi themselves had become a fairly common type of reliquary. They seem to have become common starting in the Vth and VIth centuries, particularly in the East.<sup>269</sup> A good example dating from between 400 and 600 is the one that is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Figure 30) in New York, the lid is marked with the inscription 'In fulfilment of a vow of John the Bishop', perhaps given to a Church in memory of a miracle. Other examples exist including one which is now in the New Museum in Berlin along with another example now found in the Louvre in Paris from Symar dating from the VIth or VIIth century.

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<sup>266</sup> As Geary pointed out, it is the social context and the belief that remains are sacred that creates a relic: 'the bare relic – a bone or a bit of dust – carries no fixed code or sign of its meaning: divorced from a specific milieu it is unintelligible and incomprehensible.' P. Geary, *Furta sacra : thefts of relics in the central Middle Ages*, 5.

<sup>267</sup> For the treatment of the dead during medieval times see E. Hallam and J. Lorna Hockey, *Death, memory, and material culture* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), Chapt. 6.

<sup>268</sup> C. Hahn, 'Objects of devotion and desire: Relics, Reliquaries, Relation and Response,' *Objects of devotion and desire : medieval relic to contemporary art*, ed. Cynthia Hahn (New York: Hunter College of the City University of New York, 2011), 8-20.

<sup>269</sup> For more on these reliquaries see A. Aydın, *Lahit Formlu Rölikerler = Reliquaries of the sarcophagus type* (Antalya: Suna ve Inan Kirac Akdeniz Medeniyetleri Arastirma Enstitüsü, 2011).

These small reliquary sarcophagi, probably designed a few centuries after the saint had died, were a vivid reminder that the object contained the actual body of the saint. Designed in the shape of an antique sarcophagus that had been around for centuries, they reminded the viewer of the atemporality of the bones of the saints.

In fact, as Hahn noted, that atemporality is exactly what most reliquaries seek to show, as the relics inside them were ‘pregnant of a historical moment worthy of remembrance in which they will be preserved forever without change.’<sup>270</sup> Most sarcophagi during antiquity and the Middle Ages were designed so that the memory of the deceased would live on forever, even after the subject’s death. After all, that was the point of relics, in Walsham’s words to ‘sublimate, crystallise, and perpetuate memory in the guise of physical remains, linking the past and present in a concrete and palpable way.’<sup>271</sup> And the presence of these bishops in Arles was indeed perpetuated until medieval times, as is demonstrated in the medieval *vitae* and *chansons de geste*.

## 5.1 Sarcophagi as valuable containers

Moreover, antique sarcophagi, especially those that were nicely carved and made of rare material, were believed to be extremely valuable. This was especially true during Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages at a time where there was a serious shortage of marble.<sup>272</sup> The quality of the material in certain cases might have been of primary importance in the choice of sarcophagi to be reused. For instance, the sarcophagus used for Bishop Apollinaris was plain but made from Greek marble.<sup>273</sup> When Gregory of Tours visited Hilary of Dijon’s pagan sarcophagus, he did not dwell on details of the tomb but simply noted the exquisite material from which the sarcophagus was made.<sup>274</sup> And when the historian Agnellus in his *Liber Pontificalis* described the sarcophagus of Maurus in 830, he wrote: ‘he was buried in a marvellous tomb in the *ardica* of Saint

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<sup>270</sup> C. Hahn, "Objects of devotion and desire: Relics, Reliquaries, Relation and Response," 9

<sup>271</sup> A. Walsham, 'Introduction: Relics and Remains,' in *Relics and Remains*, ed. A. Walsham (Oxford: Oxford Journals, 2010) 9-36, especially 13.

<sup>272</sup> see M. Greenhalgh, *Marble past, monumental present : building with antiquities in the mediaeval Mediterranean*, 207-212.

<sup>273</sup> Only small pieces of this sarcophagus remain, see M. Mazzotti, 'La Cripta di S. Apollinare in Classe,' *RAC* 3-4 (1956), 201-208, especially 207-208.

<sup>274</sup> Gregory of Tours, *De Gloria confessorium*, XLII.

Apollinaris in Classe' without giving any more details about the actual tomb. Similarly, the sarcophagus of Hilary of Arles (Figure 31), which is unique in our corpus as it is the only non-apostolic sarcophagus, is also a pagan sarcophagus.<sup>275</sup> Some archaeologists believe that the sarcophagus itself was probably the original one reused in the Vth century after his death,<sup>276</sup> and represents the iconography of Prometheus, therefore a strictly pagan theme. While some have been bold enough to see some sort of Christian interpretation in this iconography, I suggest a much simpler explanation. Hahn wrote that the construction of many reliquaries with the use of precious materials contributed to emphasising the fact that the relic is intrinsically valuable.<sup>277</sup> Thus, using one beautiful pagan sarcophagus for Hilary of Dijon and another for Hilary of Arles made sense because the aesthetic value of the sarcophagi emphasised the importance of the deceased that they contained.

## 5.2 From Tombs to relics

The question remains, when did these sarcophagi change from being regular sarcophagi to reliquaries? As I pointed out earlier, many bishops were already considered to be saints during their lives, and at the time of their death many of their faithful were eager to collect a piece of their clothing, for example.

The importance of the tomb itself seems to have been noted very soon after their death, for instance on Honorat's tomb, his successor Hilary mentioned:

'The grace of his tomb confers exceptional trust because we can have no doubt that the person whose bones are resting herein protects us in heaven [...]. In his goodness, the Lord allowed me to stay not too far from his tomb, offering you inspiration in the choice of my humble person [...]. Perhaps he already realised that in doing so he found a place for me in your love, close to his own tomb.'<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> This sarcophagus has been discussed in F. Baratte and C. Metzger, *Catalogue des sarcophages en pierre d'époques romaine et paléochrétienne* (Paris: Ministère de la culture, Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1985), 115-118. and M-P. Rothé and M. Heijmans, *Arles, Crau, Camargue*, 548.

<sup>276</sup> F. Benoît, *Les Cimetières suburbains d'Arles dans l'antiquité chrétienne et au moyen âge*, 44

<sup>277</sup> see C. Hahn, 'What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics?', *Numen* 57 (2010), 284-316, especially 309-310.

<sup>278</sup> *Vita Hilarii* in M. Labrousse, *Saint Honorat, fondateur de Lérins et évêque d'Arles*, 136-137.

Hilary believed that the tomb itself already held special powers because it contained the body of a saint. And with time, the association between the sarcophagi and the saints led to the invention of many traditions that became linked with the tomb. According to XVIIIth century reports, many miracles were thought to have been performed at Genesisius' tomb, though it remains unclear when this belief started.<sup>279</sup> It was believed that the sarcophagus had curative powers; it was thought that a pilgrim would be healed by touching it. Others were healed by the miracle water that it was thought to produce; it was said that the sick would drink water filtered through the sarcophagus to help them heal.<sup>280</sup>

A similar belief but also with an untraceable origin was associated with the sarcophagus of Concordius (Figure 26). A miraculous legend was created for the tomb, it was believed that it miraculously filled with water and then emptied again depending on the phase of the moon, thus gaining its nickname '*le tombeau de la lune*' (the moon tomb).<sup>281</sup> A similar legend was attributed to two other sarcophagi, one in Saint-Seurin in Bordeaux and the other one in Arles-sur-Tech, which people today still believe holds water with healing power.<sup>282</sup>

Finally, some devices were added to some sarcophagi, for instance a hole was driven in the sarcophagus of Roland so that pilgrims would be able to see the relics through it. There is no doubt that with time these sarcophagi became much more than simple tombs, they became reliquaries and as Hilary's testimony suggests, this happened quite early. These devices and beliefs were necessary to reassure the faithful about the saints' power and presence. They were a reminder that the community was sacred and that they had retained all their power throughout the years.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> F. Benoît, *Les Cimetières suburbains d'Arles dans l'antiquité chrétienne et au Moyen Age*, 43.

<sup>280</sup> F. Benoît, *Les Cimetières suburbains d'Arles dans l'antiquité chrétienne et au Moyen Age*, 42-43.

<sup>281</sup> Benoît, *Les Cimetières suburbains d'Arles dans l'antiquité chrétienne et au Moyen Age*, 43.

<sup>282</sup> see P. Causans, *Notice sur les saints martyrs Abdon et Sennen et sur le sarcophage qui contient quelques-unes de leurs reliques et une eau miraculeuse, à Arles-sur-Tech (Pyrénées-Orientales)*, 4.

<sup>283</sup> Moreover it should be noted that the case of bishops was always special, and although earlier bishops were deceased, their power nevertheless continued to exist. Breukelaar has shown that the Histories of Gregory of Tours record that the bishop was present in two forms, firstly as a living being on Earth and secondly as a living being in heaven acting posthumously on Earth. His activities in heaven are similar to what they were previously, he performed miracles much like he did when he was on Earth and he exercised the same patronage. The heavenly bishop helped the earthly bishop in some matters, particularly in deciding upon sentences, and was able to decide upon corporal punishment and death sentences, because according to Breukelaar, the saint and former bishop had access to the Council of God who has the power over the life and death of mortals. See A. Breukelaar, *Historiography and episcopal*

Hence, the bishops even performed posthumous miracles collectively. This is reminiscent of Einard's belief in 830 that saints performed miracles collectively, especially in the case of Peter and Marcellinus as he noted: 'since those who are believed to have equal merit before God, are thought, and not absurdly [so] to work in common when performing miracles.'<sup>284</sup> While it is not clear whether the bishops of Arles worked together to perform miracles, we do know that they performed miracles in a collective setting alongside the other bishops in the basilica.

### *A Monument through time*

This chapter presents the communal burial of an exceptional community that became defined through monasticism. The longevity of this community, from late Antiquity to the Middle Ages, shows the monk-bishops' remarkable impact on the city and on the region as a whole, in that the monks of St. Victor were eager to appropriate their story.

The community changed, first clustered around the figure of Genesius at a time when martyrs were revered, then around Honorat when, during the Middle Ages, early monasticism started to become the new ideal to be emulated, but nevertheless, it stayed true to its basic tenet and only members who were worthy of the ideal could be included.

Moreover, the space in which the monk-bishops were buried reflected their community as a whole in the Alyscamps, the biggest necropolis in the city hence among their citizens, proving that they were a fundamental part of the city. At the same time, their exclusive burial in a confined space among other martyrs reflected their important role as men of God.

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*authority in sixth-century Gaul : the Histories of Gregory of Tours interpreted in their historical context*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 259.

<sup>284</sup> Einhard in P. Edward Dutton 'The Translation and Miracles of Saints Marcellinus and Peter,' *Carolingian civilization : a reader* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1993), 230-231.

## Chapter 2

### The Medieval Crypts of the Monastery of St. Victor: Appropriating Antique Christianity

In 1391, a late antique sarcophagus stood embedded in the walls of the monastery church of St. Honorat on the island of Lérins.<sup>285</sup> From its prime position at the entrance to the holy building, it reminded monks of the antiquity of their monastery which was thought to have been founded by the Vth century monk, Honorat.

The sarcophagus (Figure 4) depicting Christ in the middle with apostles surrounding him, echoed the monastic community, united around the figure of Christ. The monks sought to present a clear image of the monastery, untouched since antiquity. Reuse in this instance was designed to show continuity with the past. Despite the monastery's supposed attacks from Saracens,<sup>286</sup> it was still standing during the XIIth century and continued to uphold the same principles that it had upheld since Late Antiquity.

The use of archaeology to construct an image and ethos of continuity was quite common in Provence. As Toubert has pointed out, during the XI and XIIth centuries, the region saw a return towards early Christian models of art. According to her, this renewed interest in early Christian art sought to suggest a return of the Church towards early Christian ideals, which had become popular through Gregorian Reforms.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> The sarcophagus was probably brought to Lérins from Arles in 1391, see F. Benoît, *Sarcophages paléochrétiens d'Arles et de Marseille*, 39.

<sup>286</sup> M. Lauwers, 'Porcaire, Aygulf et une île consacrée par le sang des martyrs (début du xiii<sup>e</sup> siècle), Lérins, une île sainte de l'Antiquité au Moyen Âge, eds. Y.Codou and M. Lauwers, (Turnhout Brepols Publishers, 2009), 445-455, especially 455.

<sup>287</sup> See H. Toubert, *Un Art dirigé réforme grégorienne et iconographie*, (Paris: Ed. du Cerf, 1990), 55.

Starting from the XIth century, early Christian art and architecture in Provence became reminders of the region's ancient Christian past.<sup>288</sup> This is particularly visible in baptisteries, which were restored and seen as relics of Provence's early Christianity.<sup>289</sup> As Février has shown, restorations and even entire renovations<sup>290</sup> were made to early baptisteries in Marseille, Fréjus, Aix, Gap, Die and Venasque. Some, like that in Fréjus, were extremely well preserved, while others were reconstructed, partly using materials from antiquity like the baptistery in Aix-en-Provence which is still standing today. While it was often thought that this building had been unchanged since antiquity, Guild has shown that the elevations that can be seen today are in fact reconstructions made during the XIth century.<sup>291</sup> This shows that there was a clear desire to go back to the aesthetics of the early days of the Church.

Late antique sarcophagi were used in a similar way but had a different set of meanings. Unlike the baptistery in Fréjus, for example, sarcophagi were not only testaments of the antiquity of the monument.<sup>292</sup> They displayed and testified to the antiquity of individual people, with whom the caskets had become directly associated in a remarkable process of mythologism. In other words, a sarcophagus was often associated with a specific individual, and the presence of the sarcophagus within a specific building not only proved the antiquity of the building, but also the antiquity of the tradition that related a specific individual to that space.

The monastery of St. Victor is one of the most impressive examples of this type of use of antique sarcophagi that were on display in the crypts, creating a veritable 'museum of antiquity'. These sarcophagi were thought to house relics of various saints, some of whom were imagined to have been there since antiquity.

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<sup>288</sup> Février coined the expression that many buildings had an 'archaic character', see P-A. Février, *Le développement urbain en Provence de l'époque romaine à la fin du XIVe siècle; archéologie et histoire urbaine* (Paris: Edition de Boccard, 1964), 174-176. For more on the idea of Ancient Christianity see R. Markus, *The end of ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>289</sup> P-A. Février, *Le développement urbain en Provence de l'époque romaine à la fin du XIVe siècle; archéologie et histoire urbaine*, 174.

<sup>290</sup> See P-A. Février, *Les baptistères de Provence pendant le Moyen Age* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1957), 423.

<sup>291</sup> R. Guild, *La Cathédrale d'Aix-en-Provence étude archéologique* (Paris: Edition du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1987), 23.

<sup>292</sup> It has often been noted that the baptistery in Fréjus was used to remind viewer's that Christianity had been accepted in Fréjus since Late Antiquity. It thus also had implications for the antiquity of Fréjus' Episcopate. For more on the baptistery in Fréjus see P-A. Février, *Le groupe épiscopal de Fréjus* (Paris: Caisse nationale des Monuments Historiques, 1981) and M. Fixot and E. Sauze, *Fréjus la cathédrale Saint-Léonce et le groupe épiscopal* (Paris: Monum Éd. du Patrimoine, 2004).

These saints had a didactic function, their ‘lives’ served as exempla of early Christianity ideals from which the monks claimed to descend. In this chapter I shall explore how monks made use of that past as they self-fashioned themselves as the inheritors of early Christianity through their connection with early Christian martyrs and fathers whose bones were thought to be in their monastery. Hence, monks used the sarcophagi to prove the antique foundations of their thoughts and their own thinking and traditions.

This chapter will look at how medieval monks appropriated material culture to construct their own identity. The sarcophagi became the key elements in a dialogue between the past and the present. And this constructed narrative remained dominant for centuries thereafter, although it was renegotiated over time. While this chapter looks mainly at the construction of traditions rooted in the XIth century, it will also examine the endurance of these beliefs and their modifications over time, as elements were added and traditions developed.

## 1. A created History?

When describing the city, Alexandre Dumas wrote:

‘Marseille, Ionian city contemporary with Tyr and Sidon, sprinkled with perfumes of the feasts of Diana, moved by tales of Pytheas; Marseille, Roman city, friend of Caesar’s enemy Pompey, over excited by civil war and proud of the place assigned to it by Lucan, Marseille, Gothic city with its saints, bishops, shaven foreheads of its monks and the hoods hiding its consuls’ foreheads; Marseille, daughter of the Phoceans, emulates Athens, the sister of Rome as it says itself in the inscription that it wears around its head; Marseille has kept nothing or almost nothing of its different ages.<sup>293</sup>’

Although Marseille is an antique city, a visitor today might see nothing antique. This was probably a sentiment that was also shared during Medieval times.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> A. Dumas, *Nouvelles Impressions de voyage (midi de la France)* (Bruxelles: Hauman, 1841), 67-68.

<sup>294</sup> Many buildings seem to have been abandoned or reused as living space during the end of antiquity, see L-F. Gantès, M.I Moliner and H. Tréziny, ‘Lieux et monuments publics de Marseille antique,’ *Marseille trames et paysages urbains de Gyptis au roi René actes du colloque international d’archéologie, Marseille, 3-5 novembre 1999*, eds. M. Bouiron and H. Tréziny (Aix-en-Provence: Édisud, 2001), 295-212.

Although the city had been an important Christian centre during Late Antiquity, little seems to have survived to testify to the importance of its past.<sup>295</sup> For instance, recent excavations in Marseille have uncovered a Vth century basilica on rue Maraval surrounded by hundreds of plain tombs as well as two ornamental ones, which were probably attributed to saints.<sup>296</sup> It was, however, disused as early as the VIIth century.

Nonetheless, evidence of the city's glorious past and particularly its late antique past, has been left in writing. A large number of sources show that the city attracted many great thinkers, as it became what Loseby called a 'theological Bear Garden.'<sup>297</sup> Early fathers of the church such as Paulinus of Pella claimed that they were drawn to Marseille because of the presence of so many renowned *sancti*.<sup>298</sup> Some noteworthy figures of the time included Salvian and Prosper. And it has often been assumed that one of the most important Christian figures associated with Marseille, Cassian, was drawn to the city partly because of that reputation.

## 1.1 Cassian

Cassian was an eastern monk thought to have arrived in Marseille in about 416 and to have introduced Eastern monasticism to the West. In Merton's words he was the 'Master of spiritual life par excellence for monks – the source for all in the West'<sup>299</sup>. His main work was his *Conferences* written as a guide for monks, because it contains an outline of how a monastery should be organised and how monks should live in order to achieve perfection. It clearly stated that being a monk was not enough to achieve divine grace: spiritual actions were far more important.

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<sup>295</sup> Though it should be noted that there was an important Episcopal centre which was built in the IVth or Vth century, and which was modified and reconstructed during the XIth century. For a survey on the Episcopal group in Marseille see F. Paone and M. Bouiron, 'Le groupe épiscopal de Marseille, nouvelles données,' *Marseille trames et paysages urbains de Gyptis au roi René actes du colloque international d'archéologie, Marseille, 3-5 novembre 1999*, eds. M. Bouiron and H. Tréziny (Aix-en-Provence: Édisud, 2001), 225-234.

<sup>296</sup> M. Moliner, 'La basilique funéraire de la rue Malaval à Marseille,' *Gallia* 63 (2006), 131-136 and more recently M. Moliner, 'La memoria de la basilique paléochrétienne de la rue Maraval à Marseille, premières approches,' 107-125.

<sup>297</sup> S. Loseby, "Marseille: A Late Antique Success Story?," *JRS* 82 (1992), 168-185, especially 180.

<sup>298</sup> Paulinus of Pella, *Eucharisticon*, II.

<sup>299</sup> T. Merton, *Cassian and the Fathers: initiation into the monastic tradition* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2005), 99.

Each quality that a monk was required to possess was illustrated with examples of perfect ‘lives’, which have been seen as purely mythological, to emphasise this point.<sup>300</sup> Each of these lives exemplified specific virtues that monks should seek to emulate.

According to Loseby, Cassian’s teachings had an enormous impact in Provence and in Marseille in particular. He claims that people in Marseille were particularly receptive to monasticism and were eager to learn more about the ways that things were done in Egypt, home to early monasticism, and to learn about models of ascetic perfection as described in Cassian’s writings.<sup>301</sup>

Despite our fragmented knowledge of his life, we know that Cassian was probably born in Romania and then moved to Egypt and later to Marseille. There, according to Gennadius in his *De Viris Illustribus* written in 460, he founded two monasteries, one for women and one for men.<sup>302</sup>

It remains unclear whether the monastery described by Gennadius is the same monastery as that called St. Victor during the XIth century. The first evidence throwing any light on that subject was a *charta* written in 1040, clearly stating that the monastery was founded by the emperor Antoninus and claiming that Cassian was associated with the monastery.<sup>303</sup>

However, this attribution has been questioned, particularly by Février, who expressed his scepticism in 1973.<sup>304</sup> Much like Duprat before him,<sup>305</sup> he noted that the 1040 charter was the only evidence and that its authenticity was questionable. Both Amargier and Moulinier disputed that scepticism, noting three concomitant donations of Episcopal and/or aristocratic origins made in Marseille, in the presence of donating

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<sup>300</sup> H. Weingarten, *Der Ursprung des Mönchtums im nachconstantinischen Zeitalter* (Gotha, 1877), 62.

<sup>301</sup> S. Loseby, *Marseille in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages*, D.Phil Thesis, Oxford University, 1993, 41.

<sup>302</sup> M. Lauwers, ‘Cassian, le bienheureux Isarn et l’abbé Bernard, un moment charnière dans l’édification de l’église monastique Provençale (1060-1080),’ 223.

<sup>303</sup> For information about the *charta* see E. Duprat, ‘La Charte de 1040, relative à la consécration de l’église Saint-Victor à Marseille, est-elle authentique?’ *MIHP XXII* (1947), 69-96.

<sup>304</sup> P-A. Février, ‘Introduction,’ *Saint-Victor de Marseille : Site et monument*, eds. Arnaud Ramière de Fortanier, Geneviève Drocourt and Daniel Drocourt (Marseille: Imprimerie municipale, 1973), 2-7, especially 4.

<sup>305</sup> E. Duprat, ‘La Charte de 1040, relative à la consécration de l’église Saint-Victor à Marseille, est-elle authentique?’ 69-96.

bishops in mid-October 1040 during the dedication of a church.<sup>306</sup> Nevertheless, as Fixot has pointed out, the original documents proving these claims have disappeared and we are only left with copies.<sup>307</sup>

What remains certain, however, is that no evidence attesting to the presence of Cassian's remains or Cassian's involvement in the monastery that we now call St. Victor was presented earlier than the *charta*. Many sources after 1040 relate that St. Victor was founded by Cassian, for example it is mentioned in the *Vita Isarni*<sup>308</sup> and many churches were donated to the monastery in Provence, particularly those that were put under Cassian's name.<sup>309</sup> Furthermore, another *charta* in 1062 confirms this association by testifying that it was from this monastery in Marseille that 'customs and rules observed in Gaulish monasteries' were distributed through the *Institutions and Conferences* composed by the father and founder, Cassian.<sup>310</sup> The *charta* thus marks the invention or promotion of a history that had been largely forgotten.<sup>311</sup>

## 1.2 The martyr Saint Victor

In addition to having a monastic 'superstar' as their founder, the monks could also claim that the monastery itself was founded on ground sanctified by the blood of martyrs. According to one of the oldest *vitae* of the saint, the Vth century *Ancient Panegyric*, Victor and his companions were tortured and finally executed because they

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<sup>306</sup> see P. Amargier, *Un âge d'or du monachisme Saint-Victor de Marseille, 990-1090* (Marseille: P. Tacussel, 1990), 96-97 and J-C. Moulinier, *Saint Victor de Marseille les récits de sa passion* (Città del Vaticano: Pontificio istituto di archeologia cristiana, 1993), 351-361.

<sup>307</sup> M. Fixot, 'Saint-Victor, saint Victor, à propos d'un livre récent,' *Marseille trames et paysages urbains de Gyptis au roi René actes du colloque international d'archéologie, Marseille, 3-5 novembre 1999*, eds. M. Bouiron and H. Tréziny (Aix-en-Provence: Édisud, 2001), 235-253, especially 237.

<sup>308</sup> *Vita Isarni*, 2

<sup>309</sup> For a list of church donations to St. Victor see E. Magani, 'Pastorale monastique et pratique de l'écrit. 'Les actes de donation de Saint-Victor de Marseille (XIème siècle),' *Saint-Victor de Marseille: études archéologiques et historiques* eds. M. Fixot and J-P. Pelletier (Turnout: Brepols, 2009), 239-255, especially 240.

<sup>310</sup> CSV 827 act of donation to St. Victor from the monastery of Vabres in the diocese of Rodez, see M. Lauwers, 'Cassian, le bienheureux Isarn et l'abbé Bernard, un moment charnière dans l'édification de l'église monastique Provençale (10060-1080),' 223.

<sup>311</sup> E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, *The invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 3.

refused to pay homage to pagan idols. The Christians then took their bodies and hid them on a hillside. The same *vita* describes the scene as such:

‘They hid their remains in the hillside after quickly carving out the rock, so that this being with boundless energy would receive a fitting end and that their country would not deny what it owed to its saints; they were paid homage and protected at the same time.’<sup>312</sup>

The current monastery of St. Victor was built in an ancient quarry, and so it is possible that the site that they describe is indeed the site of the present-day monastery. But there are many rock sites in Marseille, and the description made in the *vita* could have been applicable to many other locations. Moreover, the recent discovery of the Maraval complex which was thought to have been a church with hundreds of devotional tombs around it shows that Marseille is a city with a largely unknown late antique history and archaeology.<sup>313</sup>

However during the Middle Ages, it became commonly accepted that the site described in the old *vita* was the monastery of St. Victor in Marseille. This suggestion was reinforced in another *vita* called the *Amplified Panegyric* that Moulinier thinks was composed by Raimbaud of Reillanne, an Archbishop of Arles who was a protector of the Victorine abbey, and was probably written in the XIth century to prove this association. It described the site and the event as follows: ‘their bodies were buried in a crypt lovingly carved in the rock with great difficulty, and are blessed with miracles even to the present day.’<sup>314</sup>

Hence in this scenario, the site had been sanctified by the presence of the martyrs ever since antiquity. Consecration of a sacred site by the blood of martyrs is not unheard of. For instance, the monastery of Lérins was thought to have been blessed by the blood of the martyrs Porcaire and Aygulf.<sup>315</sup> As emphasised in chapter I, the body of St. Genesis in Arles was thought to have blessed two sites, the site of his death

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<sup>312</sup> *Ancient Panegyric* in J.C. Moulinier, *Autour de la tombe de saint Victor de Marseille textes et monuments commémoratifs d'un martyr* (Marseille: P. Tacussel, 2000), 161

<sup>313</sup> M. Moliner, ‘La memoria de la basilique paléochrétienne de la rue Maraval à Marseille, premières approches,’ 107-125.

<sup>314</sup> J.C. Moulinier, *Autour de la tombe de saint Victor de Marseille textes et monuments commémoratifs d'un martyr* texte, 12.

<sup>315</sup> M. Lauwers, ‘Porcaire, Aygulf et une île consacrée par le sang des martyrs (début du xiiie siècle),’ 448.

and the site on which he was buried in St. Honorat. There was a belief that relics and spilt blood had a living force, and were thus symbolically protecting the site.<sup>316</sup>

### 1.3 Constructing continuity

The discontinuity between antique and medieval history was further attributed to the fact that the monastery had been attacked during Saracen invasions and partly destroyed. This was emphasised in the 1040 *charta* and also the *Vita Isarni* written at the end of the XIth century ‘at that time, there was nothing left but ruins of the antique structure of this monastery built by the blessed Cassian and known throughout the world, then destroyed by vandals.’<sup>317</sup> There have been several cases of the destruction of monasteries and Churches during the Middle Ages in Southern France, for instance Lérins is thought to have been sacked along with many other institutions such as the Cathedral of Elne.

All this destruction did not succeed in causing the end of the monastery, as Burchard of Worms noted in his XIth century collection of canons ‘places that have once been dedicated to God as monasteries shall remain monasteries perpetually, lest they later become secular dwelling spaces.’<sup>318</sup> Thus, a consecrated space would be forever consecrated, despite any attacks or destructions.

These destructions only caused a temporary loss of history and explained the loss of former glory. They enabled the monks to create a prestigious history for their monastery because they felt free to add legendary elements to their past. After having been ‘redesigned’ as the place where St. Victor died and where Cassian distributed his *Conferences*, the monks gave themselves and their monastery a very strong legendary identity making them the bearers of an impressive antique tradition.

We cannot be sure that the medieval monastery of St. Victor is the same as the antique monastery founded by Cassian. Nevertheless, it is clear that the medieval

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<sup>316</sup> see E. Bozoky, ‘Paganisme et culte des reliques. Le topos du sang vivant la végétation,’ *Proceedings of the Conference Paganism in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance Cambridge University, 19-20 September 2006*, eds. J. Marenbon and C. Steel (Cambridge). *Forthcoming*.

<sup>317</sup> *Vita Isarni*, iii.

<sup>318</sup> Burchardus (Bishop of Worms), *Decretorum libri*, XX.

monks of St. Victor were promoting this antique history for their monastery, and that this history must have been successful because the monastery gained great distinction in the region based on its supposed antiquity. Starting in the XIth century, it became one of the most important abbeys in the Mediterranean region and many monasteries were dependent on or attached to St. Victor after the Papal Reformation in 1080.<sup>319</sup>

St. Victor was far from being the only monastery that re-created a mythical identity for itself based on legendary figures. The late XIth and XIIth centuries were periods of significant social reordering caused in part by ecclesiastic reforms. Remensnyder rightly points out that an abbey's statement of identity, as told through its legends, sketched out its desired place in the world of changing social relations.<sup>320</sup>

The monastery was thus free to create a new identity for itself and it fashioned itself as a haven of early Christianity. It was sanctified by the blood of a martyr and was founded by Cassian, one of the most important monks of Late Antiquity. Thus, the mission of a Victorine monk was simple, he had to keep that tradition alive and disseminate it throughout the region.

## 2. The Authority of the Past

These founding and patron saints were seen as exemplary figures to be emulated by contemporary monks. They became of key importance, because figures of the past were seen as good role models at a time when many fundamental changes were taking place.

There was a widespread fear during the XIth century that the world was deteriorating and each generation was worse than the previous one.<sup>321</sup> As Constable pointed out, this created a sense of inferiority towards the past and the feeling that the world was decaying as it approached its end, and any change was necessarily for the

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<sup>319</sup> M. Zerner, 'Les cartulaires de Saint Victor de Marseille,' *Les cartulaires méridionaux: actes du colloque / organisé à Béziers les 20 et 21 septembre 2002 par le Centre historique de recherches et d'études médiévales sur la Méditerranée occidentale* (Paris: École des chartes, 2006), 5-231, especially 165.

<sup>320</sup> A. Remensnyder, *Remembering kings past : monastic foundation legends in medieval southern France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 284.

<sup>321</sup> G. Constable, 'Past and Present in the eleventh and twelfth Centuries. Perceptions of Time and Change' *L'Europa dei secoli XI e XII fra novità e tradizione : sviluppi di una cultura : 10 Settimana internazionale di studi medioevali* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1989), 153-171, especially 158.

worse. There was thus what he called a backward looking attitude towards Antiquity which was seen as the Golden Age, while the present and *res novae* were associated with tyranny, revolution and late heresy.<sup>322</sup> It was even sometimes believed, particularly in the East, that human exploits were impossible in the present and were only a thing of the past.<sup>323</sup>

Such pessimistic views of the present were particularly well expressed by the XIth century cardinal bishop Pierre Damian. In a letter that he wrote to his hermits, he said: 'we know that only thin remnants of the great and arduous life of the past remain. And just as we have failed to complete our ancestors' omissions, our descendants will be unable to recreate what is lost through our negligence.'<sup>324</sup> In order to limit the effects of decay, he suggested that the current generation should attempt to transmit the human heritage intact without any changes. He added that all their efforts would achieve nothing but a poor replica of the actual heroic past.<sup>325</sup>

This longing to go back to the ideal of early Christianity was well reflected in the Gregorian reforms which had the aim of restoring what was seen as the discipline of the primitive church. As a consequence, the Papal Curia asked scholars to search libraries to find early sources of canon law and new collections were produced containing the ancient law – the law that governed the church of the early centuries.<sup>326</sup>

This seems to have affected monasticism particularly strongly. The wealth accumulated by various monasteries was criticised starting in the XIth century; it was pointed out that they had little in common with primitive monasticism in which monks were generally poor and secluded.<sup>327</sup> As a result, many new orders and particularly the Carthusians (1084), the Cistercians (1098) and the Premonstratensians (1120) sought to return to an apostolic life. A new attitude developed by which voluntary poverty was

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<sup>322</sup> G. Constable, 'Past and Present in the eleventh and twelfth Centuries. Perceptions of Time and Change,' 159.

<sup>323</sup> V. Déroche, 'L'obsession de la continuité : Nil de Rossano face au monachisme ancien,' *L'autorité du passé dans les sociétés médiévales*, ed. Jean-Marie Sansterre (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 2004), 161-202, especially 163.

<sup>324</sup> Pierre Damian's letters are published in K. Reindel, *Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani*, 4 vols. (München: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 1983), 137 III 472. See also J-M. Sansterre, 'Le passé et le présent dans l'argumentation d'un réformateur du XI siècle : Pierre Damien,' *L'autorité du passé dans les sociétés médiévales*, ed. Jean-Marie Sansterre (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 2004), 221-235, especially 224.

<sup>325</sup> K. Reindel, *Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani*, 137 III 472.

<sup>326</sup> H. Lawrence, *Medieval monasticism : forms of religious life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, 146.

<sup>327</sup> See J. Leclercq, 'The monastic crisis of the eleventh and twelfth centuries,' *Cluniac monasticism in the Central Middle Ages*, ed. Noreen Hunt (London: Macmillan, 1971), 212-237, especially 217.

believed to have played an important role in the monastic tradition and it was hoped that it could be re-established.<sup>328</sup>

It thus became an ideal to live as the early fathers had done, and there was a clear will to maintain some continuity with the past and this was particularly the case at St. Victor which was a reformed monastery. In this respect, the monks' interest in the past wasn't driven particularly by historical curiosity, they were more interested in a theological past that could improve their present lives.

## 2.1 The location of the past

The past was then idealised and glorified, those who could claim a connection with the past improved their distinction in the present. This was equally true for those who 'owned' spaces associated with specific events of the past. For example, Lebecq has shown that building a monastery among the ruins of an ancient Roman Fort became a popular choice, particularly in Britain. He argues that this gave the monastery a certain authority over the past, a past which may be gone but which through re-appropriation came back to life in a completely different way.<sup>329</sup>

The monks of St. Victor made similar use of the past of their site as it became 'remembered' to have encompassed the burial space of Victor and many of his companions who had made it sacred since early Christianity. Archaeologically, the monastery seems to have a more complex history than that described by the monks. We know that it was a stone quarry before the monastery existed. Later, during the Vth century, it became a cemetery; tombs were carved in the rock surface and closed with rock lids. Several hundred sarcophagi were found while excavating under the foundation of the crypts, including some decorated caskets such as the sarcophagus of the *traditio legis*, found with a female skeleton dating from the Vth century inside it,

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<sup>328</sup> see H. Lawrence, *Medieval monasticism : forms of religious life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, 146-171 and L. Little, *Religious poverty and the profit economy in medieval Europe* (London: Elek, 1978).

<sup>329</sup> S. Lebecq, 'Monasterium constructum in castro quod lingua anglorum enobheresburg vocatur (Bède, Hega, III 19). De l'attraction exercée par les fortifications romaines sur les fondations monastiques dans l'Angleterre du très haut Moyen Âge ' *L'autorité du passé dans les sociétés médiévales*, ed. J-M. Sansterre (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 2004), 277-295, especially 291-292.

accompanied by some funeral accessories (mostly Christian).<sup>330</sup> Many loculi that would once have contained sarcophagi were found in the excavation.<sup>331</sup> It is even thought that there was a small funeral chamber called the ‘area’, that Fixot and Pelletier believe probably belonged to a family or some other type of social group.<sup>332</sup> Other sarcophagi were found placed within the wall of the XIth century crypt.<sup>333</sup>

As was previously pointed out, St. Victor’s tomb was described in his *vita* as having been in ‘rapidly excavated rocks’ which could be applicable to many of the loculi dating from Late Antiquity. In fact, Fixot believed it might even have been in one of these loculi.<sup>334</sup> In the B map of 1777 (Figure 32) the tomb is referred to as the ‘ancient tomb’ of St. Victor. His relics might well have been moved to another sarcophagus at a later date,<sup>335</sup> but it was thought that his initial tomb was probably one of the rustic tombs found in the crypts.

The cemetery would initially have been in the open air, but believing that the site was the burial place of a famous martyr, the monks closed the site by building a roof over it around the year 1000.<sup>336</sup> In doing so, the monks were enclosing a space which used to be open, and also appropriating and containing it.<sup>337</sup> But it was not only the tomb of St. Victor that came to be commemorated in this enclosed space, it was the site as a whole which included the tombs of his companions who were thought to have been buried in sarcophagi in the same site. This is made clear in the XIth century *Amplified Pangeric*:

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<sup>330</sup> see R. Boyer, *Vie et mort à Marseille à la fin de l'Antiquité* (Marseille: Atelier du patrimoine, 1987), 54-93.

<sup>331</sup> M. Fixot and J-P. Pelletier, *Saint-Victor de Marseille de la basilique paléochrétienne à l'abbatiale médiévale* (Marseille: Images en manoeuvre éd. Agence pour le patrimoine antique Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur, 2004), 23.

<sup>332</sup> M. Fixot and J-P. Pelletier, *Saint-Victor de Marseille de la basilique paléochrétienne à l'abbatiale médiévale*, 23.

<sup>333</sup> M. Fixot and J-P. Pelletier, *Saint-Victor de Marseille de la basilique paléochrétienne à l'abbatiale médiévale*, 21.

<sup>334</sup> M. Fixot and J-P. Pelletier, *Saint-Victor de Marseille de la basilique paléochrétienne à l'abbatiale médiévale*, 22.

<sup>335</sup> perhaps in a more expensive looking one

<sup>336</sup> M. Fixot and J-P. Pelletier, *Saint-Victor de Marseille de la basilique paléochrétienne à l'abbatiale médiévale*, 23.

<sup>337</sup> The concept of ‘enclosing’ a tomb by erecting a building on top of it started in Gaul in Late Antiquity during the Vth century, for example Crook noted the case of Martin’s tomb on which a tall basilica was built. However, the practice became more popular during Medieval times, see J. Crook, ‘The Enshrinement of Local Saints in Francia and England,’ *Local saints and local churches in the early medieval West*, eds. A. Thacker and R. Sharpe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 189-225, especially 193-206.

‘The mercy of the Lord who made martyrs of them, placed their tomb where we see it, so that no-one there could doubt their glory and that their memory could be honoured and venerated more closely here.’<sup>338</sup>

The crypts continued to hold many of these rustic sarcophagi throughout the years, despite architectural changes. Excavations discovered some under the foundations, others within the walls, and some even under stairs. Furthermore, while excavating the Chapel of Saint Mauront, Pelletier and Vallauri demonstrated that a sarcophagus had been concealed by a two-meter wide staircase during construction in the XIIIth century.<sup>339</sup> As they note, the tomb could not have been visible for very long, only for the short period after construction of the crypts and before construction of the staircase (between the XIth century and XIIIth century). This does show that there would have been visible tombs present in the crypts before the XIIIth century. Unlike today, many rustic sarcophagi would have been disseminated all around the site, in the walls, under the stairs or simply exposed.

The tombs in the crypts thus served as a memento for the lives of the martyrs and became vital to the monastery that claimed Victor as its patron saint. The crypts were enlarged and reconstructed over many years, and in so doing, the bones of martyrs were repeatedly packaged through layers of stone into the architecture. The whole building was thus a reliquary for the crypt in which all the martyrs were buried. Metaphorically speaking, the crypt and the monastery were standing through these martyrs.

### 3. The Sarcophagi

The crypts were not thought to have included only the remains of these martyrs, many other saints were added to the collection over time. It was perhaps the number of sarcophagi that were already in the crypts that might well have motivated the monks to create a story for some of them. Starting from the XIth century, many sarcophagi were associated with different saints and martyrs who had never been

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<sup>338</sup> *Amplified Panegyric* in J-C. Moulinier *Saint Victor de Marseille les récits de sa passion*, 162.

<sup>339</sup> J.P. Pelletier and L.Vallauri, 'Les fouilles de la chapelle Saint-Mauront,' *Saint-Victor de Marseille : Etudes archéologiques et historiques*, eds. M. Fixot and J-P. Pelletier, vol. 13 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols 2009), 125-141.

associated with Victor.<sup>340</sup> This is clearly stated in the *Vita Isarni* in which the hagiographer writes that other saints (virgin saints, martyrs, Child Saints, etc) were in the crypts.<sup>341</sup> He also makes reference to the tombs: 'Isarn, under God's guidance, walks carefully between the tombs of martyrs.'<sup>342</sup> Later, he writes that '[The monks], accompanying the religious zeal of the young man with admirable charity, satisfy his desires and make the man quickly visit all the holy tombs.'<sup>343</sup>

Furthermore, the architecture was also eventually designed to incorporate sarcophagi. Pelletier and Vaullauri have shown that Saint Mauront Chapel was reconstructed in the XIVth century to contain the sarcophagus of Saint Mauront, showing that these sarcophagi were integrated into the design at that time.<sup>344</sup> Unfortunately, little is said in our medieval texts about which sarcophagus was specifically associated with which saint.

One of the few known attributions that we do have is for the sarcophagus of Isarn, present from the XIth century, as was already discussed in his *vita*, thought to have been written in 1079. His sarcophagus was a gisant tomb that made use of a plaque from a late antique sarcophagus, possibly one found on the same site.

While there is little reason to doubt that other saints were associated with specific sarcophagi, there is little to tell us which ones. It is not impossible that some sarcophagi that we assume to have been associated with specific saints today were not the ones that were associated with them in the XIth century.

Later descriptions do not shed any more light on the matter. The sarcophagi were only rarely included in descriptions before the XVIth century. For instance, the tomb of Isarn is only mentioned twice, once by Von Waltheim in 1474 and once by

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<sup>340</sup> However, it should be noted that some of the sarcophagi found in the crypts predate the cemetery (some date from the IInd century and are therefore pagan). Nevertheless, the tombs found on the site leave little doubt that this would have been a predominantly Christian community. And looking at the examples from La Gayole and the tomb of Hilary, it is not impossible that early Christians chose to reuse these early tombs for their own burial. But they might also have been moved there at a later date, for example Grosson thought that some sarcophagi, and particularly the sarcophagus of St. Eusebia, initially came from the Paradis cemetery that was under the control of the Victorine Abbey. Therefore the original locations of many of the decorated sarcophagi before the Middle Ages are somewhat speculative.

<sup>341</sup> *Vita Isarni*, ii.

<sup>342</sup> *Vita Isarni*, iii.

<sup>343</sup> *Vita Isarni*, iii.

<sup>344</sup> J.P. Pelletier and L. Vaullauri, 'Les fouilles de la Chapelle Saint-Mauront,' 140.

Platter in 1597.<sup>345</sup> Yet, there is no reason to think that the tomb would have been hidden between when these observations were made and the time of Isarn's death, rather it was just not mentioned.

Interestingly, when the protestant Thomas Platter visited the monastery, he mentioned the presence of the tombs of the Seven Sleepers, Cassian, Hugues, Eusebia, Hadrian and Herman.<sup>346</sup> He also copied the inventory of relics sold at the monastery in his travel diary and it did not include the tomb he described in his diary, suggesting that the tomb and the relics had become dissociated.

This is possibly because some tombs had been moved in 1363 and then opened, displacing the bodies inside them during Urban V's campaign of reconstructions to fortify the monastery.<sup>347</sup> Thus the relics became separated from the sarcophagi, though some might have been moved back after the constructions.

Furthermore, many pilgrims started to focus specifically on elements in the crypts related to Mary Magdalene that were attracting increasing interest in the XIVth century, and ignored the rest of the monastery.<sup>348</sup> Both Munzer and Waltheym, for instance, described episodes relating to her and her sister at length, but make little or no reference to the other saints in the monastery.<sup>349</sup>

It was not until the XVIth century that antiquarians made the first real descriptions of sarcophagi, and they were interested principally in their aesthetic qualities, paying more attention to formal analysis and less to tradition. De Pereisc mentioned a few sarcophagi,<sup>350</sup> but de Ruffi was the one who gives us the best information in his second book on the history of Marseille, even producing some drawings of the sarcophagi. However, he fails to give us any historical accounts of them and simply states that they were associated with certain saints through 'tradition.'

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<sup>345</sup> G. Audosio, 'Les reliques de Saint-Victor au XVI siècle: Identité et Curiosité,' *Saint-Victor de Marseille : Etudes archéologiques et historiques*, eds. M. Fixot and J-P. Pelletier, vol. 13 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols 2009), 337-344, especially 340.

<sup>346</sup> see his notes in R. Keiser, *Beschreibung der Reisen durch Frankreich, Spanien, England und die Niederlande, 1595-1600 . Im Auftrag der Historischen und antiquarischen Gesellschaft zu Basel, herausgegeben von Rut Keiser* (Basel: Stuttgart, Schwabe: 1968), 34.

<sup>347</sup> For information about the reconstructions, see M. Chaillan, *La vieille église de Saint-Victor de Marseille et le Pape Urbain V* (Marseille: Tacussel, 1929).

<sup>348</sup> See chapter IV

<sup>349</sup> see L. Stoff, 'Deux voyageurs allemands à Arles à la fin du XVe siècle,' *PH* 41 (1991), 567-573, especially 570.

<sup>350</sup> de Pereisc, *Recueil de manuscrits et dessins*, Bibliothèque Nationale, 1626, ms. Lat. 6012 and ms. 9530, 5.

Consequently, we have few sources on which we can rely for analysing the medieval context of these sarcophagi. Only a small number of sources from the XIth to the XIIIth century have survived. In later descriptions made in the XIVth century, writers were no longer particularly interested in the diversity of saints on display in the crypts. In the few references between the XIth and XIVth centuries that we do have, there is a sense that the emphasis was less on the sarcophagi themselves than on the relics that they were thought to contain. There is no known description of the sarcophagi found in the crypts. In this respect, the sarcophagi themselves were interesting only insofar as they were related to a saint, and it is that connection that made them special and worthy of collection by the monks.

Thus for the purposes of this chapter, we will accept the attributions of the sarcophagi suggested by de Ruffi and others before him, bearing in mind that XIth century attributions might have been different for some specific sarcophagi.

### **3.1 The sarcophagi of saints from the monastery**

Having tombs of saints within the monastery was a vivid reminder that they had been there since antiquity. Cassian of course was believed to have founded the monastery, hence his sarcophagus was probably one of the most important in the crypts. Nevertheless, little is known about his tomb in the XIth century since neither the charta of 1040 nor the *Vita Isarni* mentions it. The hagiographer did not mention the tomb of Victor either (though as we have seen in the *Amplified Pangeric*, it would have already existed) although he did mention that there were tombs of ‘countless confessor saints and ancient monks’<sup>351</sup> possibly including Cassian among the ‘ancient monks’.

The sarcophagus that is associated with Cassian today was described by de Ruffi in the XVIIth century (Figure 33).<sup>352</sup> He did not say much about it other than that it was ‘supported by four white marble pilasters demonstrating its antiquity, and was marked with a decor composed of carved figures.’<sup>353</sup> The antiquity of the sarcophagus was further emphasised by the use of classical columns. They also promoted its

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<sup>351</sup> *Vita Isarni*, iii.

<sup>352</sup> see A. de Ruffi, *Histoire de la ville de Marseille* (Marseille: H. Martel, 1696), 359.

<sup>353</sup> A. de Ruffi, *Histoire de la ville de Marseille*, 361.

importance because as far as we know, it was the only one to have been supported in this way. The sarcophagus was thus distinctive and special, probably because it would have been one of the most important pieces in the monastery.

It is evident that the sarcophagus was not designed for him and therefore that it had been reused. It is a Vth century sarcophagus, probably from Rome and designed for a child, judging by its size. Furthermore, the iconography has been interpreted by Le Blant (and accepted as such ever since) as representing parents (on the left) presenting their child to Christ holding a Cross in the middle.<sup>354</sup>

It was believed that Cassian brought relics of the Martyred Innocents with him from the Holy Land, increasing Eastern influence on the monastery and proving his association with it. This fact was already established in the *Vita Isarni*. The relics were also described by both de Beatis and Platter in the XVIth century.<sup>355</sup>

At some point they were thought to have been kept in a reused pagan sarcophagus (Figure 34) that is thought to have been initially made for a child<sup>356</sup> and that de Ruffi believes was taken from an old public cemetery in Marseille.<sup>357</sup> It had a pagan iconography that represented putti forging weapons for Mars, two winged putti are working on the right and one of them was holding a shield.

The Victorine monks also collected later saints, for instance one sarcophagus became associated with the VIIIth century Saint Eusebia (Figure 35). Verne related that she was part of Marseille's local history and was an important saint for the city<sup>358</sup>. It is thought that she was one of the nuns in the convent believed to have been built by Cassian, and according to Verne she lived a pious and exemplary life. As a result, she became the mother superior of the convent. However when the Saracen invasion arrived, the invaders sought out the place where Eusebia and her companions were hiding to rape them. Eusebia decided to take an iron and burn her mouth and her nose to repel the enemy, and the act was repeated by her 40 companions. The Saracens

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<sup>354</sup> E. Le Blant, *Les sarcophages chrétiens de la Gaule* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1886), 55 and B. Christern-Briesenick, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage Vol 3. Frankreich Algerien Tunesien / bearbeitet*, 146-147, 296.

<sup>355</sup> M. Havard de la Montagne and H. Cochin, *Voyage du cardinal d'Aragon en Allemagne, Hollande, Belgique, France et Italie (1517-1518)* (Paris: Perrin, 1913), 45.

<sup>356</sup> though it was also sometimes believed to house the relics of St. Victor Goubault

<sup>357</sup> A. de Ruffi, *Histoire de la ville de Marseille*, 345.

<sup>358</sup> S. Verne, *Sainte Eusébie, abbesse, et ses 40 compagnes, martyres à Marseille* (Marseille: Imprimerie marseillaise, 1891), 2.

finally found them and killed them, thus creating their martyrdom. They then pillaged the convent and burnt it down. The inscription added on the sarcophagus dated this event as *pridie kalendas octobris, indicatione VI* (September 30 738.)<sup>359</sup> It is not clear when her cult began in the monastery, however the hagiographer in the *Vita Isarni* notes that the crypts contain a ‘host of consecrated virgins.’<sup>360</sup> It is likely that he was referring to Eusebia and her company, suggesting that she was already in the crypts in 1078.

Verne believes that some pious Christians went to Saint Victor to collect the remains of the saints and put them in the crypt to preserve them under the paving stones in front of the Chapel of Notre Dame de la Confession, where they were apparently found in the year 1000.<sup>361</sup> The story of the saint is thus directly linked to that of the abbey. It relates a story that many monks and nuns experienced during these times of invasions, since both the convent and the monastery were thought to have been destroyed by Saracens. Indeed, de Rey wrote:

‘When the Saracens were inflicting so many victims, when they pitilessly slaughtered men, women, children, monks and priests every day, the deaths of Cassianites were seen as one of many painful events of the war, but it did not make them into martyrs.’<sup>362</sup>

The inclusion of Eusebia’s tomb in the crypts made a lot of sense. It contributed to retelling the dark period of the monastery. While Victor and Cassian represented its foundation, Eusebia represented the next period in history, seen in the monastery as a period of destruction and void. Eusebia thus occupied an essential place in the monks’ narrative and contributed to proving their version of the past.

Her sarcophagus is quite interesting, the original deceased is depicted on it in very fine detail (Figure 35).<sup>363</sup> Judging from his clothing, he was probably of senatorial rank. He is isolated from the rest of the scene by the clypeus, which separates him not only from the rest of the iconography but also from the world of the living. This type of

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<sup>359</sup> G. Drocourt-Dubreuil, *Saint-Victor de Marseille art funéraire et prière des morts aux temps paléochrétiens IVe-Ve siècles*, 4.

<sup>360</sup> *Vita Isarni*, iii.

<sup>361</sup> S. Verne, *Sainte Eusébie, abbesse, et ses 40 compagnes, martyres à Marseille*, 33.

<sup>362</sup> as cited in G. de Rey, *Les saints de l’église de Marseille* (Marseille: 1885), 144.

<sup>363</sup> B. Christern-Briesenick, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage Vol 3. Frankreich Algerien Tunesien / bearbeitet*, 155, no. 305.

representation was quite common in pagan sarcophagi, which were probably the source of the influence. He is holding a closed rotulus towards which he is also pointing with his other hand. Interestingly enough, according to Verne people often thought that Eusebia herself was depicted on the sarcophagus because of the mutilated face. Thus they associated the sarcophagus with her to such an extent that people imagined that she was depicted on it, and more importantly that it had been designed for her.<sup>364</sup> It also shows that she was the subject of strong popular devotion in the monastery.

The visitor could thus 'live' the history of the monastery through the crypts in a relic- and pilgrimage-related museology.<sup>365</sup> Firstly in St. Victor's resting place, then where Cassian established his monastery and from where he distributed his *Conferences*, and finally where monks and nuns like Eusebia were killed by pagan invaders.

### 3.2 Types and emulation

However, these saints not only came from different periods and different places to retell the history of the site, they emphasised the universality of sanctity as a concept which defied time. In fact, as Geary pointed out while studying different *vitae* from various time periods, the main focus was nearly always on characteristics common to all saints rather than on personality or individuality.<sup>366</sup>

Although the saints had individual lives, what rendered them holy and thus made them interesting was that they all corresponded to collective types of sanctity. In this respect, they were constructed figures to correspond to an ideal, which Delooz described well:

‘the reputation of sanctity is the collective mental representation of someone as a saint, whether based on a knowledge of facts that have really happened, or whether based on facts that have been at least in part constructed if not entirely imagined. But in truth, all saints, more or less, appear to be constructed in the sense that being necessarily saints in

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<sup>364</sup> S. Verne, *Sainte Eusébie, abbesse, et ses 40 compagnes, martyres à Marseille*, 33.

<sup>365</sup> The term 'pilgrimage-related' museology is borrowed from J. Elsner, 'The Christian Museum in the South of France: Antiquity, Display and Liturgy from the Counter-Reformation to Aftermath,' 201.

<sup>366</sup> P. Geary, *Furta sacra : thefts of relics in the central Middle Ages*, 9.

consequence of a reputation created by others and a role that others expect of them, they are remodeled to correspond to collective mental representations.<sup>367</sup>

Cassian, Victor and Eusebia were indeed reconstructed to fit a collective idea and therefore specific types of sanctity: Victor through his martyrdom, Cassian through his monastic vocation and Eusebia through her virginity and her martyrdom. Hertling was one of the first to study the typology of saints by studying their *vitae*, he noted that specific elements defined a specific category of saints.<sup>368</sup> This idea was later taken over by the sociologist Pitirim Sorokin who pointed out that saints were social types, as he built composite pictures of saintly personalities by what he called a ‘statistical consensus’ based on 3090 saints for whom he compiled information such as status, death, how they became saints, etc.<sup>369</sup> Each type represented specific qualities of an ideal Christian life, and each saint in the monastery had his or her own specific qualities which they shared with saints of the same ‘type’.

These saints thus shared characteristics essential for sainthood and this contributed to making them into ideals, or what Huizinga called ‘historical life-ideals’ that may be defined as any concept of excellence that man projects into the past.<sup>370</sup> Their ‘life-ideal’ made them examples of perfect lives to be emulated, a concept that was powerful during the Middle Ages. Naturally, some of the most emulated sources were Christ and the Apostles. St. Bernard himself described this concept well, in answer to the question ‘What did the apostles teach us, and teach us still?’ he said ‘They have taught me to live.’<sup>371</sup> Monuments were erected in honour of these saints so that the viewer could remember and imitate that life, as is made clear by Saint Augustin as he wrote:

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<sup>367</sup> P. Deloos, ‘Pour une étude sociologique de la sainteté canonisée dans l’Eglise catholique,’ *ASR* 13 (1962), 17-43, especially 23.

<sup>368</sup> L. Hertling, ‘Der mittelalterliche Heiligentypus nach den Tugendkatalogen,’ *Zeitschrift für Askese und Mystik* 8 (1933), 260–268.

<sup>369</sup> P. Aleksandrovich Sorokin, *Altruistic love : a study of American 'good neighbors' and Christian saints* (New York, Kessinger Publishing: 1969), 5.

<sup>370</sup> J. Huizinga, ‘Historical Ideals of Life,’ *Men and ideas : history, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance; essays* (New York: Meridian Books, 1959), 55-83, especially 80, a similar concept has been argued by G. Klaniczay, ‘Legends as Life Strategies for Aspirant Saints in the Later Middle Ages,’ *JFR* 26.2 (1989), 151-171.

<sup>371</sup> Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sancti Bernardi in C. Robustel Sancti Bernardi abbatis primi Claræ-vallensis volumen* (Paris: 1719), 995.

‘...Christians surround the memories of martyrs by religious solemnity, to encourage themselves to imitation (of their courage), to associate themselves with their merits and to help them pray, yet they do not sacrifice themselves to any of the martyrs although they do erect altars in martyrs' churches.’<sup>372</sup>

This idea of emulation had already been noted earlier by Cassian in his *Conferences* as he made use of mythological figures to represent each ‘virtue’ to which monks should aspire. If a monk wanted to achieve perfection, he should aspire to live a life that resembles the lives of these imagined monks. The saints in the crypts operated in a similar way, each became a historical ideal of a life that monks should seek to emulate, and therefore their lives became examples from which one could learn and corresponded to specific types of virtues. This is well emphasised in *Vita Isarni* which relates how Isarn seeks to learn all about the lives of these saints in great detail and it was after seeing their tombs that he wanted to join the monastery, to learn about and to be among these many martyrs and of course, to become one of them.<sup>373</sup>

### 3.3 The ‘new’ saints

The monks' interest in collecting saints did not diminish over the centuries. On the contrary it grew stronger. They came to ‘collect’ other saints, some of whose lives were unrelated to the monastery. Nevertheless, like the saints discussed above, these saints also matched specific ‘types’, some resembled the local saints and others did not. We should be cautious in associating some of these saints with the monastery at a too early date due to the lack of any mentions of their names in the *charta* and other pilgrim descriptions (though it should be noted that many relics are thought to have been lost when the City of Marseille was ravaged by Alphonso, King of Aragon, in 1423).<sup>374</sup> All the saints discussed below were associated with the monastery in the XVIIth century (and perhaps earlier), because they are all discussed by de Ruffi, though there is no

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<sup>372</sup> Saint Bishop of Hippo Augustine, *Contro Fausto manicheo*, L.XX.

<sup>373</sup> *Vita Isarni*, iii.

<sup>374</sup> A. de Ruffi, *Histoire de la ville de Marseille*, 471.

evidence that they would have already been in the crypts during the XIth century and no mention was made of their relics at that time.

One of the most interesting types collected in the monastery was perhaps that of the virgin martyrs. As Tibbetts Schulenburg has pointed, for female saints, the status of *virgo intacta* was nearly always a prerequisite for sainthood. She notes that during most of the Middle Ages, the ideal life for a woman as articulated by the Church included *integritas*, total virginity.<sup>375</sup> We have already seen details of the life of Eusebia of Marseille, a virgin saint by excellence, she and her company chose to mutilate themselves to avoid being raped, hence preserving themselves which made them untarnished and eligible to pass through the gates of Heaven.

The sarcophagus of the company of a similar saint called Ursula was thought to have been located inside the crypt (Figure 36). It was believed that she and her company were martyred in Cologne by the Huns in 452 because she did not want to marry a pagan prince and preferred to die as a virgin<sup>376</sup>. According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, many versions of her martyrdom were written in various *vitae*: ‘this legend, with its countless variants and increasingly fabulous developments, would fill more than a hundred pages. Various characteristics of it were already regarded with suspicion by certain medieval writers, and since Baronius have been universally rejected.’<sup>377</sup>

The number of women included in Ursula’s company differs widely. The tradition of Ursula and her virgin martyrs in Cologne during the Vth century limited the number to around half a dozen, depending on the source. A later IXth century source mentioned 11,000.

The main tradition maintains that she and her companions' relics are contained in St. Ursula Basilica in Cologne, and therefore it remains unclear how, when and why her cult started in St. Victor and how their tombs arrived in Marseille. The sarcophagus of St. Ursula and the sarcophagus containing some of her companions was partly

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<sup>375</sup> J. Tibbetts Schulenburg, *Forgetful of their sex : female sanctity and society, ca. 500-1100*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 128.

<sup>376</sup> For more on the legend see P. Sheingorn and M. Thiébaux, *The passion of Saint Ursula; and The sermon on the birthday of Saint Ursula* (Toronto: Peregrina, 1996).

<sup>377</sup> A. Poncelet "St. Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 15. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912. 5 May. 2012 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15225d.htm>>, see also ‘Saint Ursula’ *New Catholic Encyclopedia vol. 14* (Detroit: Thomson/Gale, 2003), 345.

described by de Peirese<sup>378</sup> (in the early XVIIth century) and the two were displayed in the Chapelle Notre-Dame according to the map of 1777 called the ‘B map’ (Figure 32). This was where the bones of Eusebia were thought to have been hidden during the Saracen attacks, thus associating the site with her, as it was thought to have been her ‘tomb’ for many years (1 on the B map). Having said this, both de Peirese and de Saint Vincent mention that the sarcophagus of Ursula’s company was in fact near the pavement of St. Isarn.<sup>379</sup> Furthermore, according to Guesnay in 1652, the sarcophagus of Eusebia’s company was in fact also in Notre Dame chapel.<sup>380</sup> Thus, according to Drocourt-Dubreuil it is possible that the author of the map known only as the ‘B map’ confused Ursula’s and Eusebia’s company.<sup>381</sup>

In other words, the sarcophagus attributed to Ursula’s company in the Notre-Dame chapel in the B map should have been attributed to Eusebia’s company. According to this scenario, Ursula’s sarcophagus and the sarcophagus of Eusebia’s company would have been located inside the chapel for centuries, thus strengthening links between these stories. This would also correlate with the description noted in the *Vita Isarni* ‘a host of consecrated virgins also lies separately over there’ thus illustrating the remoteness of their tombs and their consecrated space. This made the chapel of Notre-Dame very special. According to the monastery’s legend, no woman could enter this chapel because of its holiness, and if she did so she would lose her eyesight. In one specific miracle, a woman entered, lost her eyesight which was then returned to her after she prayed to other saints in the crypts.<sup>382</sup> This phenomenon shows the powerful forces thought to emanate from the crypts, and recalled Eusebia’s own story through which she mutilated herself to make herself look undesirable, and thus became too repulsive to look at. Her act was supposedly so powerful that it maintained its power even after death.

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<sup>378</sup> He described the sarcophagus of his companions, see F. de Peirese, *Recueil de manuscrits et dessins*, 6.

<sup>379</sup> See F. de Peirese, *Recueil de manuscrits et dessins*, 7 and F. de Saint-Vincens, *Notice des monuments conservés dans l’église de l’abbaye de Saint-Victor de Marseille* (Marseille: Mossy, 1774), 15.

<sup>380</sup> J-B. Guesnay, *Cassianus Illustratus* (Lyon: 1652), 471-473.

<sup>381</sup> G. Drocourt-Dubreuil, *Saint-Victor de Marseille art funéraire et prière des morts aux temps paléochrétiens IVe-Ve siècles*, 115 .

<sup>382</sup> This might also explain why the sarcophagus of Eusebia was not in the Chapel in the map of B. It enabled women to see the sarcophagus without risking blindness.

However, it would be a mistake to think that all virgin saints had to be women. Virginity, although particularly important for women especially among the laity, would also have been important for men in the monastic context. For example this is emphasised in the *Vita Isarni* which describes how he remained a virgin. His hagiographer wrote: ‘And it is said that he kept his virginity intact till the end of his life.’<sup>383</sup>

Moreover, chastity was a recurrent theme in many of Cassian’s conferences. For instance, he notes how Abbot Serenus ‘was blessed with the gift of abstinence so that he never felt himself disturbed even by natural incitements even in his sleep.’<sup>384</sup> He also wrote that another holy father, Germanus, would have said ‘But we should like to know whether a lasting grant of it can be secured so that no incitement to lust may ever disturb the serenity of our heart, and that thus we may be enabled to pass the time of our sejourning in the flesh free from this carnal passion, so as never to be inflamed by the fire of excitement.’<sup>385</sup>

Chastity was then also a quality of primordial importance for monks. In fact, the crypts also contained the sarcophagus of a male virgin Chrysanthus with his virgin wife Daria (Figure 37). According to de Ruffi, Chrysanthus was a wealthy man from Alexandria who converted his fiancé Daria, a virgin from Minerva, to Christianity.<sup>386</sup> They both lived together staying virgins and were martyred under Numerian in 284.

It is unclear when their devotion started in Marseille, although Gregory of Tours noted a miracle relating to translation of the relics of saints to Marseille during a tempest, therefore it is quite possible that the monks of St. Victor appropriated that tradition.<sup>387</sup> Moreover, it is interesting to note that the cross in the middle of their sarcophagus seems to have disappeared, much like the sarcophagus of Eusebia or even the sarcophagus of Mary Magdalene. As we shall see in chapter IV, the cross probably disappeared from her sarcophagus because of popular devotion.

The Virgin saints were particularly revered because of their life-long sacrifice, which correlated with the lives of many monks. However, many early martyrs were

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<sup>383</sup> *Vita Isarni*, ii.

<sup>384</sup> Cassian, *Conferences*, vii.

<sup>385</sup> Cassian, *Conferences*, xvi.

<sup>386</sup> A. de Ruffi. *Histoire de la ville de Marseille*, 357.

<sup>387</sup> Cited by A. de Ruffi. *Histoire de la ville de Marseille*, 357.

more revered for their death which typically opened the gateway for them to become martyrs, than for their life's prowess. This was usually the case for what Isnart called 'legionary saints' who were very popular in the Alpine regions of Savoy, Piedmont and all peripheral territories.<sup>388</sup> For example, St Victor was a legionary saint by excellence and became revered because he accepted death over life to accord with his religious ideals.

Similarly, a martyr called Maurice and his companions whose sarcophagi had been 'collected' (Figure 38 and Figure 39) and kept in the crypt suffered a similar fate. The legend of St. Maurice is discussed in the *Golden Legend*, where it says that he was the chief of the Theban region under the reign of Diocletian and Maximian where he was thought to have a legion of 6600 soldiers (or 6666 in other texts).<sup>389</sup> Much like St. Victor himself, he and his companions were asked to combat Christians and sacrifice to pagan gods. They refused and were therefore martyred in 277 in a town that is now named St. Maurice in Valais.

The story of the relics is complex. It was believed that a certain Theodore, the bishop of Valais between 370 and 380, built a little sanctuary against a rock face which then became a highly frequented pilgrimage site. Furthermore, Saint Maurice was a highly regarded saint, especially in the region of Magdeburg because Otto the Great had made Maurice the patron saint of the city.<sup>390</sup> We have no mention of the translation of his relics to the monastery in Marseille, so it was perhaps a medieval invention.<sup>391</sup> However, we do know that the monastery possessed a church called St. Maurice in Moustier in the diocese of Riez at some time during the Middle Ages.<sup>392</sup> It is possible that the relics would have arrived through that connection, and were once associated

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<sup>388</sup> C. Isnart, *Saints légionnaires des Alpes du Sud ethnologie d'une sainteté locale* (Paris: Edition de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2008), 3.

<sup>389</sup> The first accounts we have about this martyr came through Eucher of Lyons in the middle of the Vth century, and they were not questioned until the Reformation period. It was then rejected, especially by Voltaire in his *Treaty on Tolerance* who claimed that the legend was absurd. See J-M. Roessli, 'Le martyre de la légion Thébaine et la controverse autour de l'historicite du XVI au XVIII ' *Mauritius und die thebäische Legion: Akten des internationalen Kolloquiums, Freiburg, Saint-Maurice, Martigny, 17. - 20. September 2003*, 258-271.

<sup>390</sup> J-M. Roessli, 'Le Martyre de la Légion Thébaine: Culte et diffusion de l'antiquité tardive au Moyen-Age,' *CPE* 92 (2003), 4-8, especially 5.

<sup>391</sup> However, there was no mention of his name in the official inventory of 1562.

<sup>392</sup> The exact date remains unclear, see J-M. Roessli, 'Le Martyre de la Légion Thébaine: Culte et diffusion de l'antiquité tardive au Moyen-Age,' 6.

with the site,<sup>393</sup> though Fauris de Saint-Vincens thinks that the attribution of the sarcophagi was only made in ‘modern times’.<sup>394</sup>

Other saints collected in the crypts are the Seven Sleepers (Figure 40) who were seven men from Ephesus who refused to sacrifice to idols during the time of the emperor Decius.<sup>395</sup> Their relics were mentioned by de Beatis and the sarcophagus was also noted by de Peireisc.<sup>396</sup>

Lastly, the monastery was thought to house the relics of Saints Marcellinus and Peter. While the latter was an exorcist, Marcellinus was a priest and they were both victims of the persecutions by Diocletian. Marcellinus and Peter are the patrons of a big III-IVth century catacomb in Rome.<sup>397</sup> According to Sigebert, Aimoin and Rabanus Maurus, some relics associated with them had been translated from Seligenstadt in Germany in the IXth century.<sup>398</sup> It was thought that Pope Gregory IV sent them to Einhard, Secretary of Charlemagne. However it is unclear how the relics were thought to have made their way to Marseille, though de Ruffi believed that the relics were transferred to the sarcophagus during the time of Gregory IV (828-844), although once again there is no evidence to confirm his claim.<sup>399</sup>

No formal description of these sarcophagi was made, so we have little indication about what they may have looked like. However, there have been suggestions that two fragments of sarcophagi might have belonged to them. Both of these pieces were fractured and one of them *had* a fenestella. As Fixot and Pelletier pointed out, it might have been there to create a link with the relics or it might have put there so that pilgrims could leave small wish-notes in the hole.<sup>400</sup>

Although we have no details about the history of which saint was housed in each specific sarcophagus, it is clear that the crypts remained of prime importance

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<sup>393</sup> as is testified in the ‘Bulles’ of consecration of the goods of St. Victor in 1079, 1113, 1135.

<sup>394</sup> F. de Saint-Vincens, *Notice des monuments conservés dans l'église de l'abbaye de Saint-Victor de Marseille*, 3.

<sup>395</sup> They went to hide in a cave near the city where they were then discovered and miraculously fell asleep until the reign of Theodosius. At this point, they woke up to testify to the miracle, and then went back to another, much longer sleep, the sleep of death. They were thus ‘martyrs’ in the Greek sense of the word, as they ‘witnessed’ and recounted the early persecutions.

<sup>396</sup> F. de Peireisc, *Recueil de manuscrits et dessins*, Bibliothèque Nationale, 5.

<sup>397</sup> R. Giuliani, ‘Ad duas lauros, un exemple emblématique de christianisation,’ *Les dossiers d'Archeologie*, 330 (2008), 48-57.

<sup>398</sup> A. de Ruffi, *Histoire de la ville de Marseille*, 495.

<sup>399</sup> A. de Ruffi, *Histoire de la ville de Marseille*, 495.

<sup>400</sup> M. Fixot and J-P. Pelletier, *Saint-Victor de Marseille étude archéologique et monumentale* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 39.

throughout the centuries as different traditions were created in the XIth, XIIIth and even the XVIth centuries.<sup>401</sup>

### 3.4 The saints and their sarcophagi

While all the saints we have seen so far had different characteristics, they all had in common that they had given up their lives for their beliefs although in different ways, and they continued to be seen as exemplary figures throughout the years. They were an inspiration for monks as they became exemplars of ideal historical lives, and helped holy men to find their path to perfection through their example. Therefore, the monks of St. Victor were extremely privileged and holy because of their proximity to this sanctity.

The sarcophagi of the saints in the crypts promoted that closeness; they proved that the relics were in the crypts and therefore to a certain extent that the saints themselves were there. Let us not forget the words of Gregory of Nazianzus, a late IVth century Archbishop of Constantinople, on the subject: ‘the bodies of martyrs have the same power as their holy souls, they can either be touched or venerated.’<sup>402</sup> It was common to imagine saints in Marseille interacting with pilgrims and other monks through miracles, sometimes even telling them what to do.<sup>403</sup>

It is this connection with the saint and this physical testimony that, among other things, made the sarcophagi important. This is why the specific iconography on the tombs was not very important, and consequently was not usually described. The hagiographer in the *Vita Isarni* made it clear that the young monk was inspired by seeing the tombs of confessors, martyrs and virgins, and makes no actual physical description of the tomb. This is precisely because the iconography was not important to

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<sup>401</sup> It should be noted that more tombs were thought to have been in the monastery, for instance in Thomas Platter’s testimony in 1597, mentioned the sarcophagi of Hadrian, Herman and Hugues. While Antonio de Beatis mentioned the sarcophagus of Pope Urban V, see G. Audosio, ‘Les reliques de Saint-Victor au XVI siècle: Identité et Curiosité,’ 339-340, However, they are no longer visible/available or their attribution has been lost.

<sup>402</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio*, V.

<sup>403</sup> As it was suggested in the *Vita Isarni*, xvi.

him, it was the association, the fact that he thought that the sarcophagi contained the relics, that made them special.

Judging from all the sarcophagi considered above, it seems clear that at some point there was an interest in associating saints with decorated sarcophagi. Some of the sculpted sarcophagi had perhaps already been on the site in the primitive cemetery, after all, a decorated sarcophagus of the *Traditio Legis* (Figure 41) that had been untouched since antiquity was found during excavations in the 70's, proving that there would have been some sculpted sarcophagi in the late antique cemetery.<sup>404</sup> It is possible that they were singled out during the Middle Ages or later as the tombs of important saints because of their decorations.

#### 4. The crypts: walking through time and geography

According to his *vita*, Isarn wanted to join the monastery because of the presence of holy saints in the crypts. The hagiographer claimed that the monks described it as such:

‘This place is protected by a genuine army of martyrs that have never ignored supplications made to them. Through all these so broad fields, they are surrounded by a countless host of confessor saints, ancient monks at this place. And in a separate location over there lies a host of consecrated virgins. [...]’<sup>405</sup>

At the sight of this, Isarn was said to have exclaimed ‘God, How terrible is this place and I didn't even know it. In truth, this place is nothing less than the House of God and the Gateway to Heaven.’<sup>406</sup> It was further pointed out that Isarn had the habit of surreptitiously entering the crypts during the night to pray to the saints.<sup>407</sup>

The tombs of the saints were thus of central importance to the monastery because they were its main claim to the traditions from which the monks claimed to descend. It is interesting however to notice the diversity of saints in the crypts, who all came from different geographical regions and times. Despite these differences, with

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<sup>404</sup> For more on this sarcophagus see R. Boyer, *Vie et mort à Marseille à la fin de l'Antiquité*, 45-94.

<sup>405</sup> *Vita isarni*, iii.

<sup>406</sup> *Vita isarni*, iii.

<sup>407</sup> *Vita isarni*, ix.

few exceptions, they are mostly interred in similar-looking sarcophagi. No specific effort was ever made to differentiate between tombs depending on the provenance of a saint or even a specific timeframe. For instance, Eusebia was buried in a IIIrd century sarcophagus, although she was in fact an VIIIth century saint. As we have seen, the fact that various pieces were missing from the main protagonist on her sarcophagus believed by pilgrims to be Eusebia, lends weight to the idea that people really did believe that this was her sarcophagus.

To a modern mind, this is profoundly confusing. Were they not aware that that the VIIIth century and the IIIrd century were two distinct periods? According to Zimmerman, medieval people did not conceive of history as we do today with different events marking each period, but rather that ‘the past has depth; the conscious use of precise terms or references suggests that there are at least several degrees of pasts if not several pasts for which no equivalent authority is recognised.’<sup>408</sup>

Unlike today, there was no equivalent of the concept of ‘historical periods’. The English historian William of Malmesbury exemplifies this idea well. In his view, people dating before the Christian era were ‘*antiqui viri*’, the Anglo-Saxon Saint Cuthbert (VII) became *antiquus pater*, while Pope Alexander II (1061-1073) from a fairly recent past was among the *antiqui patres*.<sup>409</sup> Furthermore, as Lettinck has shown, he referred to the authors of XIth century *vitae* as ‘*antiqui scriptores*’.<sup>410</sup>

It is interesting to see that the adjective ‘antiquus’ is used in all these cases. However, Zimmerman has argued that it should not be understood in the same way as our use of the term ‘antiquity’ which is now related to a specific period. Rather, it referred to the past loosely with no further specificity.<sup>411</sup>

William of Malmesbury also used the term to describe material culture and architecture. When he went to Glastonbury, the monks showed him around their abbey,

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<sup>408</sup> M. Zimmermann, ‘Tutelle des anciens ou protection de l’innovation ? L’invocation du droit et la terminologie politique dans les représentations médiévales en Catalogne,’ 27-56, especially 40.

<sup>409</sup> For a study and a discussion of those terms see W. Stubbs, *Willelmi Malmesbiriensis monachi De gestis regum Anglorum libri quinque ; Historiae novellae libri tres*, (London: Printed for Her Majesty’s Stationary Office by Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), 347.

<sup>410</sup> N. Lettinck, ‘Comment les historiens de la première moitié du XIIe siècle jugeaient-ils leur temps ? ’ *JS* 1-2 (1984), 51-78, especially 63.

<sup>411</sup> M. Zimmermann, ‘Tutelle des anciens ou protection de l’innovation ? L’invocation du droit et la terminologie politique dans les représentations médiévales,’ 29-31.

called by the Anglo-Saxon name Ealdechirche (Old Church). He used the word ‘antiquitas’ in his treaty several times to describe it.<sup>412</sup>

Could it be then, that medieval people saw the sarcophagi simply as ‘antique’ and that their specific historicity became irrelevant? As I have shown in chapter I, bishops from the IVth and VIIth century were buried in similar looking tombs, despite the obvious chronological difference. Guenée observed that the only clear distinction made by several historians from the XIIth century was between ancient history and recent history. Recent history was transmitted through written documents or oral traditions. More generally, these historians seemed to believe that recent history referred to events that could be described through one’s own memory or an elder’s memory whose memory could take him back 65 to 100 years.<sup>413</sup>

Despite being from different times in history, the sarcophagi and the saints were all ‘antique’ in the medieval sense of the word. Cassian was simply part of an older antiquity than Eusebia. This explains why it was not seen as problematic to bury various saints from different periods in similar looking sarcophagi, because all saints were antique.

Moreover, in many ways the saints were thought to be still present in the crypts, at least spiritually. After all, the relics and their tombs were thought to produce miracles and pilgrims thought that they could pray to them due to their proximity. There was a sense that the saints were atemporal, they defied history. Although they died at different times, they nevertheless suffered a similar martyrdom. Victor, Maurice and Eusebia were all persecuted by pagans. All the saints renounced the pleasures of life for their beliefs in one manner or another, either through death as martyrs or through monasticism like Cassian.

A visitor thus saw his or her visit to the crypt as a journey through history, and a cyclical history. For example, placing the tomb of Eusebia alongside the tomb of Ursula makes the parallel between both histories clear, the saints had suffered a similar fate even though they came from a different geography and a different time period. The

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<sup>412</sup> J. Scott, *The early history of Glastonbury : an edition, translation, and study of William of Malmesbury's De antiquitate Glastonie ecclesie* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1981), 52.

<sup>413</sup> B. Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident médiéval*, Collection historique (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1980), Chapter 1.

crypt was often referred to as the ‘antique Church’, and was a bridge between different histories, it became ‘antique’ in the medieval sense of the term: simply from the past.

#### 4.1 A Journey through history

Hence, when the visitor went to the crypt he would embark on a veritable journey while remaining on the same site. In fact, in the *Vita Isarni* it is said that his strolls are described as 'circumambulations' as he carefully wandered between the tombs of martyrs. As Cabby points out, the term *circumambulation* was used in devotional ‘tours’ or ‘circuits’, which brought the faithful to different suburban sanctuaries and places of martyrdom during Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.<sup>414</sup>

Typically, these circuits and tours that can be associated with pilgrimage, were inextricably tied to the idea of travel. Specific pilgrimage itineraries became common in the form of routes, so that pilgrims would stop at specific points on their way to their final destination. These ‘stops’ became an essential part of the pilgrimage.<sup>415</sup> Many chapters in the *Pilgrim's guide to Santiago de Compostella* were dedicated to these ‘stops’ like Arles, St. Gilles, etc.<sup>416</sup>

Tombs were often the focus of a pilgrimage enterprise, as it was believed that certain miracles would be performed there and acted as direct mementos and proofs of saints' lives.<sup>417</sup> In fact, the hagiographer of the *Vita Isarni* describes them as monuments to saints.<sup>418</sup> Tombs were of central importance in Christian pilgrimages, one only needs to think of the tombs of Saint Martin in Tours, Saint Hilary in Poitiers, Saint Nicolas in Bari, Saint Julien in Brioude, Saint Gilles in Provence, Saint Foy in Conques, Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury and of course Mary Magdalene in Vézelay. In Marseille, all these ‘stops’ were placed in the crypts, which contained various important martyrs.

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<sup>414</sup> see C. Cabby, *Vie d'Isarn abbé de Saint-Victor de Marseille, XIe siècle*, 111, and also L. Pani Ermini, *Christiana loca : lo spazio cristiano nella Roma del primo millennio* (Roma: F.lli Palombi, 2000), 221-230.

<sup>415</sup> D. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1998), 52.

<sup>416</sup> W. Melczer, *The Pilgrim's guide to Santiago de Compostela* (New York: Ithaca Press, 1993), 60-63.

<sup>417</sup> see E. Labande, 'Recherches sur les pèlerins dans l'Europe des XIe et XIIe siècles,' *CCM*\_1.1-3 (1958), 262-265.

<sup>418</sup> *Vita Isarni*, iv.

Thus, simply by going down the stairs of the Church and walking to the crypt and viewing these tombs, the visitor could ‘travel’ to many lands and many historical periods, from Germany to the Holy Land passing through Marseille. All the benefits that were typically associated with pilgrimage were contained within the crypts.

These ‘stops’ kept accumulating. Eventually, the crypt did not simply encompass tombs (hence saints) but also ‘events’. As we shall see in more detail in chapter IV, the XIIIth and XIVth centuries saw the emergence of a highly popular cult in Provence, that of Mary Magdalene. A popular legend described how she and her sister Martha with her brother Lazarus were expelled from the Holy Land on a boat with no sail. They drifted to Provence and, according to some sources, reached Marseille where Lazarus evangelised the city because his sister, being a woman, could not. A chapel in the crypt was dedicated to him in the XIIIth century, and he was even sometimes thought to have been the Bishop of Marseille, probably due to confusion with an early bishop of Marseille who was also called Lazarus. And indeed the figure of Lazarus was an important one because he was the figure thought to have evangelised Marseille and the region.

Having said this, the most cited element noted in pilgrimage accounts beginning in the late XIVth century is Mary Magdalene’s grotto, thought to have been in the crypts and the location where she first hid when she arrived in Marseille. The monastery further claimed to have a rock on which she kneeled to pray and one of her fingers, according to Platter in 1597 and the inventory in 1562.<sup>419</sup>

As we have already mentioned, the cult of Mary Magdalene in St. Victor eventually overshadowed the other saints in pilgrimage accounts, thus showing the haste with which the monks adapted to new popular regional traditions and incorporated them within their own history.

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<sup>419</sup> G. Audosio, ‘Les reliques de Saint-Victor au XVI siècle: Identité et Curiosité,’ 339-340.

## 4.2 Building the Antique

The crypts were thus in constant evolution, many chapels were created in the crypts and named after specific saints or monks, some of whom seem to have had no connection with Marseille. Several architectural elements were redesigned in the XIth and later in the XIIIth centuries to emphasise the antiquity and atemporality of the crypt, and thus to prove their descentance from the past and early saints.

It is known that many elements were added to the crypts between these dates because many late antique artefacts have been found on the site that were probably used as decoration.<sup>420</sup> Many antique elements were also added, for example like the classical looking columns in Saint Lazarus's chapel, probably during the XIIIth century.

But perhaps its most important element was an antique altar (Figure 42) that Benoît believed was previously in the Notre-Dame-de-Confession chapel, because 'its dimensions correspond to the dimensions of the altar of Notre Dame, flanked by two niches that were placed adjacent to the Eastern wall of the central nave during the XVIIIth century.'<sup>421</sup> On the other hand, both Demians d'Archimbaud and then Rouquette believed that it was the altar of the Chapel Saint Mauron built in the XIIIth century.<sup>422</sup> In both views, it would have been in the crypt.

The anterior face of the altar represents two series of six doves with a central Chi-Rho emblem, and the letters alpha and omega, enclosed in a laurel crown. The doves here have to be understood as apostles, in a fairly common depiction during Late Antiquity. On the posterior side is a procession of sheep all facing towards the central sheep, here probably symbolising Christ. The procession of sheep can be imagined as representing apostles, Narasawa has noted that this is the usual interpretation in Provence.<sup>423</sup> On each side were vines that represent Christ himself. This was a popular

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<sup>420</sup> For a full list, see the large lists of fragments found in the crypts, see M-P. Rothé and H. Tréziny, *Marseille et ses alentours* (Paris: Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres Ministère de l'éducation nationale Ministère de la recherche, 2005), 644-647.

<sup>421</sup> F. Benoît, *L'Abbaye de Saint-Victor et l'église de la Major à Marseille* (Paris, H. Laurens: 1937), 22-23.

<sup>422</sup> J-M. Rouquette and G. Barrauol, *Provence romane* (Saint-Léger-Vauban: Zodiaque, 1974), 444.

<sup>423</sup> Y. Narasawa, 'L'autel paléochrétien de Saint-Victor et les autels apparentés : essai de chronologie,' *Saint-Victor de Marseille : Etudes archéologiques et historiques*, eds. M. Fixot and J-P. Pelletier, vol. 13 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols 2009), 45-69, especially 47.

late antique motif, often used to fill empty spaces, a particularly good example of which can be seen in Ravenna in an arch of the mausoleum of Galla placidia (Figure 43).

An altar is usually the heart of a Church, and as Rorimer points out it has always been the focal point for the celebration of Mass and other rites.<sup>424</sup> He also noted that whenever possible, due to its importance, it would be constructed from the finest and the most valued materials and decorated with jewels and precious metals, enamels, painted woods, etc. Here, the most valuable aspect of the piece became its antiquity, its use as an altar in the crypt further confirmed the site's 'identity' as it had been in place for centuries.

The crypt was thus the most important part of the monastery, it became key to the monks' medieval identity as it proved the identity of the traditions from which they believed that they descended. This antiquity thus became the most important element of the crypt, and was emphasised through the architectural constructions of the crypts, including late antique elements that added to their overall aesthetics.

## 5. The monks and the saints

While early Christianity was looked upon with nostalgia, the monks in the monastery of St. Victor sought to make it clear that contemporary Christianity could be just as worthy. This is especially clearly stated in the *Vita Isarni* which starts by stating 'This is why we have decided to write this *vita*, to prevent the glory of antiquity from overshadowing the sainthood and renown of his [Isarn's] miracles.'<sup>425</sup>

In fact, the hagiographer of the *vita* went even further in his assumptions, because he believed that all the saints in the crypts handed their power over to Isarn. He wrote 'The Lord grants the cures [for sick pilgrims] so quickly to those who ask for them with piety, that it might be believed that all other saints had abandoned their power to him'. The idea was taken further when the martyrs in the crypts refused to cure a woman of blindness 'But the martyr saints preferred to allow their favourite Isarn to bask in the glory of the miracle. Indeed, the woman heard a voice in her dreams

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<sup>424</sup> J. Rorimer, 'A Byzantine Altar Frontal,' *MMAB* 34.5 (1939), 116-118, especially 116.

<sup>425</sup> *Vita Isarni*, i.

entreating her to go to the monastery and to pour water that Father Isarn had used to wash his hands on her eyes to restore her sight.<sup>426</sup> She did what she was told, and fully recovered her vision.

If we believe the same hagiographer, Isarn did not just live through a single martyrdom, but two.<sup>427</sup> He achieved his first martyrdom by adopting the monastic way of life, a life of renunciation that is directly associated with Cassian who in his *Conferences* described how a monk should live his life. Indeed, Isarn was described in his *vita* as being a monk who lived a plain life who refused all frivolities and dedicated himself to God and prayers therefore adopting all monastic rules set down by Cassian.<sup>428</sup>

He was often thought to have been the ‘refounder’ of the monastery, or in the word used by the hagiographer of the *vita*, ‘the constructor’,<sup>429</sup> the one who restored St. Victor to its former glory. He was typically quoted as being the one who re-instated the monastic discipline of the times of Cassian, thereby reinvigorating the antique traditions of the monastery. Furthermore, he was said to have been in charge of major architectural projects such as the Tower of Isarn which now constitutes the bulk of the monastery.<sup>430</sup> In many ways, he was the new Cassian.

His second martyrdom was earned by saving monks, when he ‘gave his life to free captives in Spain’ despite a dreadful and painful disease. He accepted death as a possible consequence of his activity, and thereby accepted that sacrifice. Therefore, his life was equivalent to the martyrdom lived by St. Victor, who accepted death as a consequence of his actions in defiance of paganism.

He thus combined all the major characteristics of the most important saints of the monastery and became the perfect composite figure, following the examples of his elders and updating them to contemporary situations. In that respect, it wasn’t only the

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<sup>426</sup> *Vita Isarni*, xxii.

<sup>427</sup> the term ‘double martyr’ (*duplicis martyrii*) is used in *Vita Isarni* xxv.

<sup>428</sup> Isarn’s continual prayer is described in Chapter IV as recommended in Cassian's *Cenobic Institutions* (II,i), his secrecy and his vigils are also recommended by Cassian *Institutions* (II,xiii), his youth and his attitude at the table, pretending to eat with other monks in Chapter IX, resemble yet again the behaviour of another father described in the *Conferences* (xvii, xxiv).

<sup>429</sup> *Vita Isarni*, i.

<sup>430</sup> For Isarn’s contribution to the tower, see G. Demians d'Archimbaud, ‘Les fouilles de Saint-Victor de Marseille,’ *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, 115e année* 1 (1971), 87. He is also said to have been in charge of renovations of churches and abbeys dependent on the monastery. For a full account see P. Amargier, *Un âge d'or du monachisme Saint-Victor de Marseille, 990-1090*, 14.

monastery that became renovated, but also the monks themselves. Although they were not early church fathers themselves, they benefited from the example of these early Christians through their relics. As a result, they managed to not only match their lives, but also to surpass them by incorporating many elements from 'lives' different from their own.

## 5.1 Isarn's sarcophagus

Isarn's sarcophagus (Figure 44), probably made in the late XIth century, reflects this blend of Ancient and Medieval Christianity well. It was a mix of the old and new, the lid was composed of a plaque, which according to Gaboriat and many others, was recovered from the base of the sarcophagus made of marble of Saint Beat and dating from the II<sup>nd</sup> or III<sup>rd</sup> century.<sup>431</sup> The initial iconography on the sarcophagus was a scene of a lion hunt and was hidden facing down. The body of the sarcophagus in which the body was laid was also late antique.

An inscription was added to the visible side of the plaque, praising the qualities of the monk. The plaque was supposed to 'cover' the sculpted body of the monk, so that we could see only his head and his feet. The depiction of the deceased on tombs became fairly common during the Middle Ages, they were called 'gisant tombs', and it is often assumed that the sarcophagus of Isarn constitutes one of the first examples of its kind.<sup>432</sup>

Many medieval art historians have studied this sarcophagus, due to its exceptional nature.<sup>433</sup> For example Shapiro saw a revivification inspired by antique portraits.<sup>434</sup> Indeed, the portraiture has often been recognised as having been an outstanding achievement in such an early example.<sup>435</sup> Furthermore it is rare and

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<sup>431</sup> J-R. Gaborit, 'Section on the tomb of Isarn,' *La France romane au temps des premiers capétiens, 987-1152 : Paris, musée du Louvre, 10 mars-6 juin 2005*, ed. D. Gaborit-Chopin (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2005). The same author notes that the tomb was probably designed soon after the *Vita Isarni*, 37-38.

<sup>432</sup> P. Ariès, *Images de l'homme devant la mort* (Paris: Seuil, 1983), 43.

<sup>433</sup> One of the most comprehensive studies made on the formal aspect of the sarcophagus is J. Bousquet, 'La tombe de l'abbé Isarn de Saint-Victor de Marseille' *PH* 46 (1996), 97-130.

<sup>434</sup> M. Shapiro, *The Romanesque sculpture of Moissac* (New York: G. Braziller, 1985), 19.

<sup>435</sup> The sarcophagus has also been mentioned by E. Panofsky, *Tomb sculpture : its changing aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964), 57 and also E. Panofsky, *Renaissance*

interesting to see that his body was ‘covered’, thus concealing everything that limited and constrained the saint on earth and that constituted his sinful humanity. A few similar examples can be noted, for instance the tomb of Losinga (who died in 1119) whose body was also hidden by an inscription. Bousquet also notes that the centrality of the inscription can be related to antique traditions of funerary and commemorative tomb inscriptions, particularly in the case of Isarn.<sup>436</sup>

What makes the sarcophagus very special apart from its early date is the Romanesque face sculpture, a combination of old and new. It is not a conventional gisant, to repeat Bachrach's words, it was a gisant in an antique fashion.<sup>437</sup> Surprisingly, this has captured little attention from art historians, who focused on a more formal analysis rather than studying the context in which the sarcophagus was designed.

And yet, the inclusion of an antique sarcophagus within the whole design is essential to the whole piece. The reuse of antique sarcophagi was common during the Middle Ages, many important figures chose to be buried in them to show their spiritual link with antiquity. I have already mentioned the sarcophagus of Emperor Hadrian reused by Innocent II who died in 1143, or Anastasius IV who died in 1153-1154 and used the sarcophagus of St. Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great. Many also used the sarcophagi of unknown people that were simply reused for the quality of their materials.

But the sarcophagus of Isarn makes a very different use of antique sarcophagi, it is not a simple reuse like the examples mentioned above. There is a clear attempt to modernise the whole design with the gisant attributes. Therefore, the antique sarcophagus was ‘updated’, combining new and old traditions and reflecting Isarn’s own use of antiquity throughout his life, his desire to update antique traditions to contemporary times. It was a direct ‘modernisation’ of the other sarcophagi found in the crypts, and reflects the image that his *vita* tried to build of him as a contemporary of Cassian and Victor, who by following their examples managed to surpass them.

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*and renaissances in Western art* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1965). Adhémar saw it as the beginning of Romanesque Art in Provence, in J. Adhémar, *Influences antiques dans l'art du moyen âge français recherches sur les sources et les thèmes d'inspiration*, (London: The Warburg institute, 1939), 87-88.

<sup>436</sup> J. Bousquet, 'La tombe de l'abbé Isarn de Saint-Victor de Marseille', 121.

<sup>437</sup> B. Bachrach, *Fulk Nerra, the neo-Roman consul, 987-1040 : a political biography of the Angevin count* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 245.

Another interesting aspect should be noted. Isarn was celebrated as a saint soon after his death as is suggested by the speed at which his *vita* was written and the belief that many pilgrims went to his tomb in the hope of a miracle. In this respect, the tomb was much more than a repository for his bones, it became also a reliquary almost immediately after it was made. Porter has noted that most tomb reliquaries had a representation of Christ or the Virgin or even the Apostles, but almost never a gisant.<sup>438</sup> Thus, almost for the first time, it was the individuality of the saint that was promoted.

## 5.2 The sarcophagus of St Mauront

While Isarn was the most venerated medieval monk in St. Victor, other monks were also thought to be remembered in the monastery. Of course, none of their tombs had quite the same impact as Isarn's. A beautiful late antique pagan sarcophagus (Figure 45) that initially belonged to Julia Quitina is associated with Saint Mauront, a supposed monk at Saint Victor and also a bishop who died in 780. According to Gaggadis-Robin, this sarcophagus dates from the II<sup>nd</sup> century and depicts the mythological theme of the meeting of Bacchus on the left and Ariane on the right in the company of a cortège of centaurs, cherubim and satyrs.<sup>439</sup> This recalls another pagan sarcophagus that was used for a Christian cleric, the sarcophagus of Hilary (who died in 449) that bore a Prometheus motif. As shown in chapter I, the church of St. Honorat in the Alyscamps was in the possession of the Victorine monks by 1040, so they were aware of this tradition.

Again, we have little information regarding the history of the sarcophagus, and as Rothé and Tréziny pointed out, it could already have been reused as the tomb of the monk at the end of the VII<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>440</sup> but it could also have been reused later, for example in Isarn's time. According to de Ruffi, the monks decided to bury the monk in this sarcophagus because it was rare and magnificent, and he claims it to be the most

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<sup>438</sup> A. Kingsley Porter, 'Review of Romanische Skulptur in Deutschland, 11 und 12. Jahrhundert by Hermann Beenken,' *Speculum* 1.2 (1926), 233-242, especially 236.

<sup>439</sup> V. Gaggadis-Robin 'Les sarcophages' *Marseille et ses alentours* eds. M-P. Rothé and H. Tréziny (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, 2005), 631-652, especially 634-635.

<sup>440</sup> M-P. Rothé and H. Tréziny, *Marseille et ses alentours*, 634-635.

beautiful in the crypts.<sup>441</sup> At some point it became the altar of Mauront Chapel in the crypts.

This is an example of a much more common type of reuse, unlike Isarn's case; no changes were made to the sarcophagus in an attempt to change it to suit contemporary taste. This is much more like the reuse of St. Helena's tomb made for Anastasius IV, a reuse designed to show the antiquity of their traditions and thoughts and in the case of Mauront, to give the same honours as had been given to their spiritual ancestors in the crypts.

### 5.3 The sarcophagus of St. Arduinus

A third interesting case is the sarcophagus of Arduinus, who was a monk at Saint Victor from 1005 to 1057. His sarcophagus (Figure 46) is made of marble and is perhaps the plainest in our collection; it is an assemblage of three plaques of carrara marble from sarcophagi. The sarcophagus lid that Gaggadis-Robin claims was added in the XIth century was made of La Couronne stone and was completed by a 'dale frustre' (rough-cut slab).<sup>442</sup>

It was found in the '*Porche d'Isarn*' in 1971. As is quite clear from the picture of its discovery, the tomb was placed directly 'within' the walls. The sarcophagus thus became part of the architecture of the monastery, and by extension, so did Arduinus. Interestingly, it was positioned at the entrance to the monastery and not in the crypt.

The sarcophagus itself bears no depiction in its iconography, except for a cross in the middle in a very geometrical pattern. The three carrara marble plaques, according to Gaggadis-Robin, date from the end of the IVth century or the Vth century and were made in Rome<sup>443</sup> like many of these sarcophagi. Little importance was attached to iconographic detail, most emphasis was placed on the cross instead. Each side of it is strigilated, which was popular at that time. The lid bears the inscription '*Hic requiescit*

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<sup>441</sup> A. de Ruffi, *Histoire de la ville de Marseille*, 212.

<sup>442</sup> V. Gaggadis-Robin, 'La sculpture funéraire paléochrétienne à Marseille : les sarcophages, *Saint-Victor de Marseille : Etudes archéologiques et historiques*, eds. M. Fixot and J-P. Pelletier, vol. 13 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols 2009), 69-89, especially 76.

<sup>443</sup> V. Gaggadis-Robin, 'La sculpture funéraire paléochrétienne à Marseille : les sarcophages,' 76.

*Arduinus Monachus*’ and it is believed to be a medieval addition made of La Couronne stone added when the sarcophagus was reused in the XIth century.<sup>444</sup>

## 5.4 Display

All these sarcophagi emphasised the theme of antiquity, Isarn’s used a late antique plaque, an entire pagan sarcophagus was used for Mauront, and Arduinus’s sarcophagus was composed of pieces of several antique sarcophagi. This was asserted not only through the reuse of ancient sarcophagi as tombs, but also through the positions of specific sarcophagi within the monastery. I have shown in chapter I how being buried in a common space had social and religious implications on the deceased. To some extent, the collective identity became more important than one’s individual identity. In the display of tombs in the monastery we can see that there is also an interest in building a ‘collective identity’ and in associating particular monks with specific saints by studying the places in which the tombs were situated.

Of course, most early writers were not interested in the location of these tombs within the crypts. There is much disagreement about where they would have been located in the XIth, XIIth and XIIIth centuries. While the *Vita Isarni* clearly states that the sarcophagi of the martyrs were in the crypts, little can be said about the location of Isarn’s, beyond the vague description that ‘among the countless monuments of the army of saints who lie here, was the tomb of the Blessed Abbot Isarn.’<sup>445</sup> Thus, if we accept that the tomb was among the other saints, there is good reason to believe that it might indeed have been in the crypts.

Later sources contradict this. In a description made by Notary Jean Duranti of Marseille in 1444, it is noted that the some sarcophagi were arranged *in ecclesia super arcus qui erant in principio cori*, thus probably in the ‘new’ church and not opposite the crypts.<sup>446</sup> This could well be the result of Urban V’s reconstruction of the crypts in 1363 when some saints’ tombs were rearranged to modify their hierarchy within the

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<sup>444</sup> G. Demians d’Archimbaud, ‘Les fouilles de Saint-Victor de Marseille,’ 100-101.

<sup>445</sup> *Vita Isarni*, i.

<sup>446</sup> For more on the ‘new church’ see C. Marius, *La vieille église de Saint-Victor de Marseille et le Pape Urbain V*. (Marseille: Tacussel, 1929).

monastery.<sup>447</sup> He had been a Benedictine monk himself in a monastery dependant on St. Victor, and perhaps wanted to promote the medieval image of the monastery.

As a result of these modifications, Jean Duranti noted that there were three sarcophagi at the right of the choir belonging to Abbot Bernard de Millau, Abbot and Bishop Mauront and Abbot Guifred.<sup>448</sup> A similar structure on the left held three other sarcophagi, 'the sarcophagus of Abbot Isarn along with two others.' This does not seem to be consistent with the later description provided by de St. Vincent in the XVIIIth century, as he wrote that the tomb of St. Isarn was placed in the crypts in the chapel of St. Isarn along with the sarcophagus of two of Ursula's companions, Vincentia and Benedicta.<sup>449</sup> Thus, there was always a clear reorganisation of the sarcophagi to satisfy specific agendas for each different time period.

Hence, at the time of Urban V, the monks' sarcophagi would have been transferred to the new church (if they had indeed been in the crypts), thus creating a clear delimitation between the two histories. There was a clear division between the 'old' monastery's history as illustrated in the crypts, and the more recent history testified in the new church. While one was 'built' on the other, it nevertheless became of prime importance during the Middle Ages because it showed what contemporary monks were able to achieve, while descending from the traditions of early saints.

This again seems to have been reorganised at some point in history, because the 'B map' produced in 1777 (fig. 2) shows a completely revised display of this history. All monks and martyrs were moved into the crypts, thereby all becoming 'antique' figures in their own right. Furthermore, most monks and local saints were buried alongside non-local martyrs. For example, this is the case with the sarcophagus of St. Mauront,<sup>450</sup> which according to the B map was placed adjacent to the sarcophagus of Maurice and his companions. According to de Saint-Vincens, St. Mauront's antique tomb of Julia Quintana became the altar of St. Mauront chapel in which it was displayed, making him the most important saint in the chapel, more important even than St. Maurice and his companion. It is also thought that three statues would have been

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<sup>447</sup> For more information on the constructions, see P. Barnardi, 'Les travaux d'Urban V à Saint-Victor de Marseille,' *Saint-Victor de Marseille : Etudes archéologiques et historiques*, eds. M. Fixot and J-P. Pelletier, vol. 13 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols 2009), 141-149, especially 147-148.

<sup>448</sup> C. Marius, *La vieille église de Saint-Victor de Marseille et le Pape Urbain V*

<sup>449</sup> F. de Saint-Vincens, *Notice des monuments conservés dans l'église de l'abbaye de Saint-Victor de Marseille*, 3.

<sup>450</sup> M. Fixot and J-P. Pelletier, *Saint-Victor de Marseille étude archéologique et monumentale*, 131.

displayed in the same room, one of Mauront, one of Maurice and one of Elzear of Sabran<sup>451</sup>, thus again emphasising the link between these individuals. On the other hand, Guesnay relates that Isarn was buried with the sarcophagus of two of Ursula's company, Vincentia and Benedicta.<sup>452</sup>

The change in their arrangement clearly shows that the sarcophagi continued to be of key importance throughout time, and each generation tried to renegotiate its history to suit contemporary values. The importance of these tombs lay in their association with key figures. Each period appropriated them and recreated a setting for them in accordance with the history of the site that they were trying to promote, and although we have not been able to study details of each specific history for each period because this would be too lengthy, it shows that monks made use of the history embedded in the sarcophagi even after the monastery's golden age in the XIth and XIIth centuries.

The past was thus constantly updated to satisfy contemporary needs, used and appropriated by the monks who fashioned themselves as its sole inheritors. According to this scenario, the sarcophagi became the dialogue between past and present, and re-created the past in the present church

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<sup>451</sup> M. Fixot and J-P. Pelletier, *Saint-Victor de Marseille étude archéologique et monumentale*, 131.

<sup>452</sup> J-B. Guesnay, *Cassianus Illustratus*, 5.

## Chapter 3.

### The Tombs of Mary Magdalene and her sister Martha: building a Holy Land in Provence

After lying in a dark crypt in the town of Saint-Maximin for hundreds of years, a late antique sarcophagus came to play a pivotal role in the creation of the most important legend in Provence, that of Mary Magdalene. The sarcophagus was believed to have been the tomb of the saint which made it the third most important in Christendom according to Lacordaire, a French Dominican monk who lived in the XIXth century.<sup>453</sup> Although this is an exaggeration, it nevertheless became an important pilgrimage site in the West during the Middle Ages.<sup>454</sup>

The belief that this sarcophagus was associated with Mary Magdalene stems from a legend that did not originate from Provence, but from Vézelay Abbey in Burgundy, following its XIth century claims to possess her relics. The monks in the abbey needed to explain how the relics came to be translated to Burgundy, so according to Pinto-Mathieu it was decided that a hagiographer from the abbey would write a *vita* explaining how the relics arrived in Vézelay.<sup>455</sup> He invented a legend in the mid-XIth century in which Mary Magdalene with her brother Lazarus and sister Martha were expelled from the Holy Land and set out in a boat with no sails that drifted onto the coast of Provence.<sup>456</sup> After landing, the saints dispersed throughout the region and stayed there for the rest of their lives. This explains how the relics of Mary Magdalene originally came to be in Provence, and it was said that many years later a knight named Adelelmus went to retrieve them to save them from the Saracens who were ravaging

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<sup>453</sup> H-D. Lacordaire, *Sainte Marie-Madeleine* (Paris: Mme Ve Poussielgue-Rusand, 1860), 3.

<sup>454</sup> For more on pilgrimage in Provence see B. Montagnes, 'Le pèlerinage Provençal à Marie-Madeleine au XVe siècle' *RSTP* 85 (2001), 679-695.

<sup>455</sup> E. Pinto-Mathieu, *Marie-Madeleine dans la littérature du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1997), 74.

<sup>456</sup> This version is known as the *Sermo de Sancta Maria Magdalena* and can be found under BHL 5488. A translation of this sermo is available in R. Clemens, 'The cult of Mary Magdalen in late medieval France,' *Medieval hagiography : an anthology*, ed. T. Head (London: Routledge, 2001), 661-663.

Provence, and subsequently brought them to Vézelay. Many different versions of this legend were written varying the companions of the saints,<sup>457</sup> the precise geographic locations of events and even the name of the individual who retrieved the relics from Provence.<sup>458</sup>

The cult of Mary Magdalene was the reason why Vézelay Abbey became one of the major pilgrimage sites in Western Europe during the XIIth century,<sup>459</sup> and one of the reasons why the second crusade was preached there.<sup>460</sup> At the same time, the legend gave rise to two rival cults in Provence, one in Aix-en-Provence<sup>461</sup> and the other in Saint-Maximin, both claiming that the relics had never left the region. But it was only in 1279, when the Dominican monks in Saint-Maximin claimed that Charles II of Salerno had discovered the sarcophagus of the saint in Saint-Maximin (Figure 15), that the cult started to receive widespread recognition.<sup>462</sup> The object itself dates back to the mid-IVth century, the last period of large-scale production of Roman sarcophagi, and was probably made in Rome and shipped to Gaul via the port of Marseille. It was found in a hypogeum dating from the last quarter of the IVth century and had probably originally belonged to a wealthy late Roman family.<sup>463</sup>

At least one other sarcophagus was found with Mary Magdalene's, but there is no medieval evidence that there were any others. One of the first visitors to the sarcophagus, the Dominican inquisitor Bernard Gui wrote in his *Flores Chronicorum* completed in 1316 that there were 'several sarcophagi' (mentioning one belonged to

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<sup>457</sup> In later versions such as the *Vita Apostolica* or the *Translatio Posterior* both dating from the late XIth century, Mary Magdalene travelled with Maximinus, known as Maximin in France. For extracts of these vitae, see V. Saxer, 'La crypte et les sarcophages de Saint Maximin dans la littérature du moyen age,' *PH* 21 (1955), 196-231.

<sup>458</sup> In both the *Vita Apostolica* and the *Translatio Posterior*, Adelelmus is replaced by a monk named Badilo who came to Provence to fetch the relics in 745 (749 according to some accounts).

<sup>459</sup> V. Saxer, *Le dossier vézelien de Marie Madeleine : invention et translation des reliques en 1265-1267 : contribution à l'histoire du culte de la sainte à Vézelay à l'apogée du Moyen Age*, (Bruxelles: Société des bollandistes, 1975), 22.

<sup>460</sup> For the reasons why the abbey was chosen as the launching point for the crusades, see J. Phillips, *The Second Crusade : extending the frontiers of Christendom* (New Haven, Conn. ; London: Yale University Press, 2007), 67.

<sup>461</sup> For more on this cult see: V. Saxer, *Le culte de Marie Madeleine en Occident : des origines à la fin du Moyen Age*, (Auxerre Paris: Publications de la société des fouilles archéologiques et des monuments historiques de l'Yonne ; Librairie Clavreuil, 1959), 105.

<sup>462</sup> V. Saxer, 'La crypte et les sarcophages de Saint Maximin dans la littérature du moyen age,' *PH* 21 (1955). 197.

<sup>463</sup> see N. Duval, *Les premiers monuments chrétiens de la France. 1, Sud-Est et Corse*, Atlas archéologiques de la France (Paris: Picard, Ministère de la culture et de la francophonie, Direction du patrimoine, Sous-direction de l'archéologie, 1995), 180. (175-180), and also M. Fixot, *La crypte de Saint-Maximin-la-Sainte-Baume, Basilique Sainte-Marie-Madeleine* (Aix-en-Provence: Édisud, 2001), 4.

Mary Magdalene) but did not give an exact number. It remains unclear whether 'several' refers in fact to only two sarcophagi or whether there would have been even more than the four now present in Saint-Maximin. The only fact that we can be sure of is that there were at least two sarcophagi because he briefly describes them; he wrote that Mary Magdalene's was recognised because of the good smell emanating from the tomb and added that when it was officially opened there was a note inside it 'proving' that the relics had never left the site because the Cassianite monks, who were then looking after the relics, had realised the dangers brought by the Saracens and had transferred the relics of the saint to the nearby sarcophagus of Sidonius. Consequently, the monks in Vézelay had the relics of Sidonius. The cult in Provence gained major importance at the expense of the cult in Vézelay.<sup>464</sup>

Another cult originating from the same legend was created in the nearby town of Tarascon. In 1187, claims were made that the sarcophagus of Martha (Figure 47), Mary Magdalene's sister, had been uncovered in Tarascon and that a marble plaque had been found inside it confirming its attribution.<sup>465</sup> The sarcophagus is made of marble and, like the sarcophagus of Mary Magdalene, was produced in mid-IVth century Rome.<sup>466</sup>

Churches were constructed over the locations of the tombs on both sites to commemorate the saints; Charles II of Anjou built a large basilica for Mary Magdalene in Saint-Maximin in 1295 above the hypogeum in which Mary Magdalene's sarcophagus had been found, thus changing what had once been a private late antique burial building into a crypt below the church. Martha's church was built over an earlier church that had been constructed on the site at which coincidentally the sarcophagus had supposedly been discovered. The new church was dedicated to Martha and its purpose was to commemorate her through her cult.<sup>467</sup>

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<sup>464</sup> It should be added that the downfall of Vézelay was not uniquely due to the growth of the cult in Provence; for a full account of the reasons for its decline see V. Saxer, *Le dossier vézelien de Marie Madeleine : invention et translation des reliques en 1265-1267 : contribution à l'histoire du culte de la sainte à Vézelay à l'apogée du Moyen Age*, 122.

<sup>465</sup> L. Labande, 'Eglise Sainte-Marthe de Tarascon,' *Congrès archéologique de France L* (1909), 262-273, especially 270.

<sup>466</sup> Christern-Briesenick, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage Vol 3. Frankreich Algerien Tunesien / bearbeitet*, 244. No. 511.

<sup>467</sup> L. Labande, 'Eglise Sainte-Marthe de Tarascon,' 262.

The construction of churches and the setting completely altered the way in which these sarcophagi were perceived. Mary Magdalene's sarcophagus was no longer a late antique sarcophagus in a hypogeum belonging to a wealthy late antique family, it became an important tomb of a biblical saint preserved in a church crypt, and Martha's sarcophagus, of which the previous history remains unknown, also became the centre of an important cult.<sup>468</sup>

The interest of this phenomenon lies in the ways in which the two cults relate to each other rather than their individual features. As will be shown in this chapter, they were both part of a wider narrative set in Provence in which the topography was constructed to ventriloque Palestine through the creation of *lieux de mémoire* (realms of memories). These *lieux de mémoire* were diverse, for example there was the Sainte-Baume where it was said that the saint had lived in retreat for thirty years, and St. Victor in Marseille where it was believed that her brother Lazarus preached and converted the local population. My main argument will be that the sarcophagi were the ultimate *lieux de mémoire* as they were believed to be the proof of the saint's presence within Provence and one of the region's main elements of identification with the Holy Land. It will be shown that these sarcophagi became central elements in the creation of a Holy topography within Provence.

## 1. Remembering the Holy Land

What was seen as a devastating event in Christendom during medieval times occurred in 1009 when Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah ordered the destruction of the Holy Sepulchre.<sup>469</sup> Christians regarded the Holy Sepulchre as one of the most important buildings, marking the traditional sites of Christ's crucifixion, entombment and resurrection,<sup>470</sup> and saw its destruction as a major offence. According to Schein, this became one of the foremost motivations for starting the crusades, she has shown for

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<sup>468</sup> For more on the cult of Martha see J. Smith, *The Lives of St. Mary Magdalene and St. Martha* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1989), xv-xvi; M. Daas, 'From Holy Hostess to Dragon Tamer: The Anomaly of Saint Martha' *Literature and Theology* 22 (2008), 1-15, especially 11 and D. Peters, 'The Life of Martha of Bethany by Pseudo-Marcilia', *Theological Studies* 58 (1997), 441-460.

<sup>469</sup> O. Peri, 'Islamic Law and Christian Holy Sites: Jerusalem and its Vicinity in Early Ottoman Times,' *Islamic Law and Society* 6.1 (1999), 97-111, especially 101.

<sup>470</sup> R. Ousterhout, 'Rebuilding the Temple: Constantine Monomachus and the Holy Sepulchre,' *SSAH* 48.1 (1989), 66-78, especially 66.

example that Iter / via Sancti Sepulcri was one of the terms used to designate the first crusade during the four years of its existence.<sup>471</sup> The importance of the building was inestimable, the destruction of what was believed to be the tomb of Christ was seen as a major disaster at a time when the devotion of the cult of saints was strong.

More generally speaking, many scholars agree that the wider motivation for the first crusade was to regain Jerusalem as a whole.<sup>472</sup> Christians had lost the city in 638 AD and the destruction ordered by Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah revived memories of that earlier trauma. Jerusalem in the XIIth century was seen as the heart of the Terra Sancta and more widely speaking, the centre of the Earth<sup>473</sup> and part of the Latin Christian World, as testified by Rodulfus Glaber, a writer from the XIth century, who referred to the Holy Land as 'our continent from this side of the sea.'<sup>474</sup> Christians thus experienced the attacks ordered by Al-Kahim bi-Amr Allah as a destruction of a part of their identity. The aim of the pilgrimage soon became not just to save the Holy Sepulchre, but to retrieve Jerusalem itself.

## 1.1 The Provençal crusaders

When Urban II set the first Crusade in motion with his famous speech in Clermont on November 27 1095, people from all parts of Europe answered his call but as Mayer pointed out, this response was especially strong in what is now Southern France.<sup>475</sup> One of the most famous characters to take part in this expedition was Raymond IV, Count of Toulouse, who marched with a substantial number of nobles

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<sup>471</sup> S. Schein, 'Jerusalem: Objectif originel de la première Croisade?' *Autour de la première croisade : actes du Colloque de la Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East : Clermont-Ferrand, 22-25 juin 1995*, ed. M. Balard, vol. 14 (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1996), 119-26.

<sup>472</sup> J. Cowdrey, 'Pope Urban II's Preaching of the first crusade,' *History* 55 (1970), 177-188. J. Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the idea of crusading* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 13-60, P. Cole, *The preaching of the crusades to the Holy Land, 1095-1270*, (Cambridge, Mass: Medieval Academy of America, 1991), 1-36, C. Hatch MacEvitt, *The crusades and the Christian world of the east : rough tolerance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 5.

<sup>473</sup> For more on Jerusalem as the center of the Earth see D. French, 'Journeys to the Center of the Earth : Medieval and Renaissance pilgrimages to Mount Calvary ' *Journeys toward God : pilgrimage and crusade*, ed. B. Nelson Sargent-Baur, vol. 30 (Kalamazoo, Mich: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1992), 45-81.

<sup>474</sup> J. France, 'War and Christendom in the thought of Rodulfus Glaber,' *SM* 30 (1988), 105-120.

<sup>475</sup> H. Mayer and J. Gillingham, *The Crusades*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 9-11.

from the south including Adhemar, the papal legate and Bishop of Le Puy. Raymond IV is a fascinating figure in his own right, his biographers describe him as being the only crusade leader who remained true to the spirit of the crusade,<sup>476</sup> and he was the first French noble to enlist in it.<sup>477</sup> He is described as being first and foremost a pilgrim who believed in the cause of the crusade and led an army of Christians to the Holy Sepulchre.<sup>478</sup> His army was called the Army of the *Provençaux* (although it also included people from Toulouse and the Southern Alps)<sup>479</sup> and was said to have been the biggest in the crusade. Camau believed this strong response in Provence may have been due to the ravages that had been caused by the Saracens in Provence<sup>480</sup> and therefore the memory of what had happened to their own country motivated them to free the Holy Land, while Hill believed that the relative stability in Southern France enabled its inhabitants to focus on the Holy Land.<sup>481</sup> Regardless of their motivations, the presence of the *Provençaux* was of crucial importance for the crusade.

Raymond went even further in his devotion, as a true testimony of his will he took a vow never to return to France, instead he stayed and died in the Holy Land, where he contributed to laying the foundations of Tripoli which became one of the Latin principalities in the Levant, and his official title became Count of Tripoli. As Richard has shown, Raymond kept strong ties with his native South of France<sup>482</sup> and he also created a family lineage in Southern France and the Holy Land when his son came to Jerusalem after his death to follow in his father's footsteps and claim his land. Interest in the crusades was enduring in the region, as witnessed by the popularity of military orders which were often associated with the crusader movement itself.<sup>483</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> J. Hill, and L. Hill, *Raymond IV de Saint-Gilles, 1041 (ou 1042)-1105*, (Toulouse: E. Privat, 1959), 141.

<sup>477</sup> C. Ferguson O'Meara, *The iconography of the facade of Saint-Gilles-du-Gard*, Outstanding dissertations in the fine arts (New York: Garland Pub., 1977), 22.

<sup>478</sup> J. Hill and L. Hill, *Raymond IV de Saint-Gilles, 1041 (ou 1042)-1105*, 6.

<sup>479</sup> For more on the composition of the *Provençaux* see J. Hill and L. Hill, *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*, Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1968), 244.

<sup>480</sup> E. Camau, *La Provence à travers les siècles : T. 3. Premières Croisades, Croisade contre les Albigeois, etc* (Paris: 1924), 4.

<sup>481</sup> J. Hill and L. Hill, *Raymond IV de Saint-Gilles, 1041 (ou 1042)-1105*, 3-4.

<sup>482</sup> J. Richard has shown that he made several donations to churches in Provence including St. Victor in Marseille, see J. Richard, 'Le Chartier de Sainte-Marie-Latine et l'établissement de Raymond de Saint-Gilles a Mont-Pellerin,' *Mélanges d'histoire du Moyen Age : dédiés à la mémoire de Louis Halphen*, eds. C-E Perrin and L. Halphen (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1951), 605-612, especially 608.

<sup>483</sup> F. Mazel, *La noblesse et l'église en Provence, fin Xe-début XIVe siècle : l'exemple des familles d'Agoult-Simiane, de Baux et de Marseille* (Paris: Editions du CTHS, 2002), 244-246.

## 1.2 Re-thinking Western landscape

Another phenomenon, which relates to the loss of the Holy Land and is often seen as a response to it, was what the Turners described as the 'post-Islamic trend' of creating a sacred landscape in Europe through the implantation of the cult of saints from Palestine and the Near East.<sup>484</sup> As Coleman and Elsner pointed out, 'sanctified sites could, in effect, duplicate the shrines of the Holy Land, either through imitation, the appropriation of relics from Palestine itself, or the generation of indigenous local relics.'<sup>485</sup> Although the cult of saints in the West started in Late Antiquity<sup>486</sup> when both local and non-local saints were collected, the form of these cults changed during the Middle Ages. Geary notes an important shift starting during the XIth century; he signalled a decrease in the importance of local saints and an increase in the importance of the cult of universal saints and more importantly cults related to Christ.<sup>487</sup>

More broadly speaking, this phenomenon promoted an interest in relics from the Holy Land. One of the more interesting examples is the 'symbolic translation' in 1061 of the Holy House that emerged as a shrine in Walsingham (England).<sup>488</sup> Another competing cult was created in Loreto, Italy, where according to tradition, angels had translated the Holy House to Italy in the XIIIth century.<sup>489</sup> Other examples include elements such as the skin<sup>490</sup> and blood of Christ<sup>491</sup> that were popular in various shrines. At a time when relics were considered to be threatened in the Holy Land, the creation of these cults in Europe can be seen as a way of preserving the relics and also bringing them closer to the West.

Provence also took part in this process, but in a most unusual and exceptional way. Not only did the *Provençaux* create a site to commemorate Mary Magdalene, they

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<sup>484</sup> V. Witter Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and pilgrimage in Christian culture : anthropological perspectives*, Lectures on the history of religions (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 175.

<sup>485</sup> S. Coleman and J. Elsner, *Pilgrimage past and present in the world religions* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 104.

<sup>486</sup> See P. Brown, *The cult of the saints : its rise and function in Latin Christianity*, 1-2.

<sup>487</sup> P. Geary, *Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*, 25.

<sup>488</sup> S. Singer, 'Walsingham's Local Genius: Norfolk's 'Newe Nazareth'', *Walsingham in literature and culture from the Middle Ages to modernity*, eds. D. Janes and G. Waller (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 23-35, especially 27.

<sup>489</sup> D. Sox, *Relics and shrines* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1985), 147-154.

<sup>490</sup> C. Walker Bynum, *Holy feast and holy fast : the religious significance of food to medieval women*, New historicism (Berkeley ; London: University of California Press, 1987), 377.

<sup>491</sup> C. Walker Bynum, 'The Blood of Christ in the Later Middle Ages,' *CH* 71.4 (2002), 685-981.

also implanted the Vézelay legend into the topography of the region through which elements of the lives of Mary Magdalene and her companions could be retraced. Moreover as I will show, they did not restrict themselves to using the *vitae* distributed by Vézelay, they also completed the legend by writing their own.

Officially, the first cult to have sprung up in response to the legends was that of Martha in Tarascon in 1187, just a few years before the second crusade. In her late XIIth century *vita* written in Provence, it was said that she had delivered the city of Tarascon by slaying the dragon, locally known as the *Tarasque*, that had been traumatising the city for centuries and that she converted the city to Christianity.<sup>492</sup> As a result of all these achievements in Provence, Daas believed that although she was a biblical saint, her medieval popularity stemmed more from her Gallic accomplishments.<sup>493</sup> The cult of Martha was followed by the creation of the cult of Mary Magdalene in the town of Saint-Maximin in 1272, and at about the same time, the Monastery of St. Victor in Marseille also claimed to possess the rock at which the saint prayed when she landed in Provence with her brother Lazarus.<sup>494</sup> Furthermore, she was said to have lived in a grotto in the Sainte-Baume hills near Saint-Maximin for thirty years, the hills were even named after the grotto, Sainte-Baume being *Provençal* for 'Holy Grotto'. Her brother Lazarus was imagined to have evangelised Marseille, and the monastery of St. Victor claimed to possess his tomb during the XIIIth century.<sup>495</sup> Later in the XIVth century Anne, the mother of the Virgin, was also imagined to have been on the boat and to have retired to the town of Apt which still commemorates her cult.<sup>496</sup> A pilgrimage in Provence was formed around these cults, in which pilgrims would travel from site to site to see the places in which these saints had lived, and to view and touch their relics.<sup>497</sup>

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<sup>492</sup> For an analysis of this *vita* see D. Peters, 'The life of Martha of Bethany by Pseudo-Marcilia,' 442.

<sup>493</sup> M. Daas, 'From Holy Hostess to Dragon Tamer: The Anomaly of Saint Martha,' 3.

<sup>494</sup> G. Audosio, 'Les reliques de Saint-Victor au XVème Siècle : Identité et curiosité,' 339.

<sup>495</sup> For a list of the relics and 'spaces' in Saint-Victor associated with the cult of Mary-Magdalene, see G. Audosio, 'Les reliques de Saint-Victor au XVème Siècle : Identité et curiosité,' 339-340.

<sup>496</sup> J. Barroul, *Sainte Anne d'Apt, d'après une documentation nouvelle* (Apt: Imprimerie F. et M. Reboulin, 1964), 3.

<sup>497</sup> On the pilgrims to these sites in Provence see B. Montagnes, 'Le pèlerinage Provençal à Marie-Madeleine au XVe siècle', 679-695.

## 2. Describing the Topography

The exceptional nature of this *Provençal* pilgrimage is better understood when looking at other types of pilgrimages. Elsner and Rubiés presented three models of pilgrimage in the West,<sup>498</sup> the first ‘scriptural’ model relates mainly to the Holy Land whereby pilgrims would see the topography of the land through the Bible. There are two examples in this category, the most important being the pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and the other the cult of Peter and Paul in Rome. In this context the text, in the form of the Bible, justified the interpretation of the sites mentioned in it as being worth visiting and ‘the site provided material proof of the actual setting and context of any scriptural event.’<sup>499</sup> The second model is ‘charismatic’ meaning that bones of saints were venerated at the site of their ‘invention’ (i.e. discovery) or translation, these sites thus became sanctified through their relation to the relics that they were holding. Most cults in the Medieval West are built around this model, in which relics were found and translated to specific sites which then created a cult around them. Finally, the third model that is of less interest to us is that practised in Celtic Christianity in which there were no particular material objects or goals to attain – only the journey itself.

Pilgrimage in Provence is exceptional in Western Europe as it can be seen as a scriptural pilgrimage with unusual charismatic elements. It is scriptural because the scriptures became the *vitae* in which the stories of the saints were set in the specific topography of Provence, therefore pilgrims came to see and experience the sites at which the saints lived and died. But it is also charismatic because the saints were imported to the West from the Holy Land, and the specific places to which their bodies were transposed in Saint-Maximin, Tarascon, Apt, etc., became the focus of their cults in the West.

This scriptural characteristic shared between Provence and the Holy Land established certain parallels in the pilgrimage experience at each destination. Indeed, pilgrims in both lands were seeing the landscape and the monuments through the texts they were reading; it was thus the texts that shaped the landscape, and the landscape was composed of *lieux de mémoire* that were the material proof of the text. Pilgrims

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<sup>498</sup> J. Elsner and J. Rubiés, *Voyages and visions : towards a cultural history of travel* (London: Reaktion, 1999), 16.

<sup>499</sup> J. Elsner and J. Rubiés, *Voyages and visions : towards a cultural history of travel*, 17.

would not restrict their visit to a single site, but would see several sites through which they could experience the lives of the saints they longed to see.

This similarity can be noted in the ways in which pilgrims themselves came to experience the sites in Provence. For instance, interesting analogies can be drawn between the Bordeaux Pilgrim's accounts of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 333 and Hans von Waltheim's accounts about his later Mary Magdalene pilgrimage to Provence in 1474. When the Bordeaux pilgrim embarked for his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, he wasn't expecting to discover new things and learn about an unknown distant place, he went there with the precise idea of finding elements of a history that he already knew.<sup>500</sup> During his travel to various sites, he emphasised a number of details such as natural wonders and diverse episodes experienced by biblical figures of the past. Therefore, it is through his eyes and through the recounting of these stories that this land became Holy. He viewed Jerusalem not through its contemporary characteristics, but focused on the way it was described in the Bible, thereby ignoring many aspects of the city. In other words, he viewed his own physical version of the past through a collective memory described in the Bible. The pilgrim's biblical knowledge of the objects and sites he planned to see prevented him from perceiving them in any way other than through a religious interpretation.

As a result, pilgrims travelling to the Holy Land tended to focus on monuments with a direct relation to the Bible so as to relive biblical stories. This sought-for experience created an institutionalised sort of routine pilgrimage in which specific sights were highlighted as 'must sees'.<sup>501</sup> As Coleman and Elsner pointed out, with this process the biblical story could be told through topography in utterly tangible and experiential terms, by taking a walking tour through Jerusalem.<sup>502</sup>

Pilgrimage in Provence was experienced in a similar manner. However, unlike the Holy Land itself, its sources were not found in the Bible, the Bible being replaced by

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<sup>500</sup> For an account of his travels see J. Elsner, 'The Itinerarium Burdigalense: Politics and Salvation in the Geography of Constantine's Empire,' *JRM* XC (2000), 181-195, especially 191-195.

<sup>501</sup> S. Coleman and J. Elsner, *Pilgrimage past and present in the world religions*, 83.

<sup>502</sup> S. Coleman and J. Elsner, *Pilgrimage past and present in the world religions*, 84.

the *vitae* that were widespread during the XIIth and XIIIth centuries<sup>503</sup> and oral stories that contributed to making the legend so popular in Provence.<sup>504</sup>

## 2.1 An example of pilgrimage in Provence: Hans von Waltheim

Hans von Waltheim's 1474 pilgrimage<sup>505</sup> from Germany to see the relics of Mary Magdalene in Provence is one of the best illustrations of this type of pilgrimage. During his travels, he visited various sites in the region on his way to see Mary Magdalene, most of which were part of the legend of the Magdalene. He thus went to Marseille, Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer in the Camargue, Tarascon, Avignon and Apt and although he visited many sites and other places at which he stayed during his travels, one sixth of his volume is dedicated to the description of Saint-Maximin and the Sainte-Baume, showing their predominance over all the other sites to which he had been.

His narrative focuses entirely on the ultimate goal which was to visit places associated with saints. For instance, he writes that the reason he first went to Marseille was to see Mary Magdalene's grotto thought to be in the crypts in the monastery of St. Victor. He does not mention any of the other artefacts found in the crypts, for instance nothing is said about the remains of Saint Cassian, a great Vth century monk who brought Eastern monasticism to the West. Instead, he focused on an alabaster vase that was thought to have contained Mary Magdalene's perfume that she used to wash Jesus's feet. His next destination was to climb the hill to the Sainte-Baume where it was believed that the saint had retreated for thirty years. He finally ended his tour by going to the basilica of Saint-Maximin to see the relics of the saint and the place at which she was buried.

Like the Bordeaux pilgrim whose knowledge of the Bible prevented him from seeing Jerusalem in any context other than as the Holy City in the Holy Land, in

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<sup>503</sup> One of the most popular examples can be found in the *Golden Legend* compiled in 1260.

<sup>504</sup> Hans von Waltheim notes how monks were showing him the artefacts both in St. Victor and St. Maximin while relating the legends, see L. Stoff, 'Deux voyageurs allemands en Provence à la fin du XVe siècle (Hans von Waltheim en l'an 1474, Jérôme Müntzer en l'an 1495),' *PH* 41.166 (1991), 567-573.

<sup>505</sup> A full account of his travels can be found in L. Stoff, 'Deux voyageurs allemands en Provence à la fin du XVe siècle (Hans von Waltheim en l'an 1474, Jérôme Müntzer en l'an 1495),' 567-573.

Provence knowledge of the legend prevented pilgrims from seeing and experiencing the site of Mary Magdalene and other places in the region in any way other than as related in the legend. In fact for pilgrims, the sites that they saw became the physical evidence of the legends.

### 3. Inventing the sarcophagi

The *vitae* on which the legends in Provence were based were written before the *Provençaux* started to create these sacred spaces, and although the *vitae* were specific about the region in which the events unfolded, their descriptions of the exact locations within Provence were much less precise. It was then up to the *Provençaux* to create specific spaces and monuments in the region consistent with the *vitae*.

The *vitae* presented the sarcophagi as proving the legends because they were the proof that the bodies of the saints were in Provence. Therefore, the history of the sarcophagi later discovered in Saint-Maximin and Tarascon had to reconcile the story of the sarcophagi as ancient objects with the *vitae* and with the region's own history. The history of the sarcophagi had to fit into the scheme as a whole, it had to correlate with the history of the saints described in the *vitae* starting with their death and continuing into medieval times when the cult was actually created. This was problematic since the sarcophagi had never been associated with the saints before the creation of the cult in the XIIth century, despite claims made by the *Provençaux*.

The discontinuity between the *vitae* and the history of the sarcophagi was, much like in St Victor, resolved through a temporary loss of history. It was believed that the sarcophagi in Saint-Maximin and in Tarascon had been hidden for centuries to protect them from Saracen attacks, and they were 'rediscovered' when they were no longer under threat.<sup>506</sup> Luckily, this part of the story was confirmed in the *vitae*, since the monks in Burgundy had to explain why there had been no saint cults in Provence before the sarcophagi were discovered. As Geary had pointed out, in the case of Mary Magdalene these attacks also explained why the relics had to be 'rescued' from

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<sup>506</sup> For Saint-Maximin these attacks were first described in *Sermo de Sancta Maria Magdalena*; for Tarascon, see D. Peters, 'The Life of Martha of Bethany by Pseudo-Marcilia,' 443.

Provence and hence justified the translation.<sup>507</sup> Faillon thought that the sarcophagi were then re-buried under the threat of yet another Saracen attack.<sup>508</sup>

Saracens in Provence were a real threat, but they were also a benediction in the context of history creation as was already suggested in chapter II. Their ravages provided many excuses for the *Provençaux* to claim a temporary loss of their past, they were portrayed as destructors of history which enabled the *Provençaux* to devise new ways of thinking about their past, and more broadly their identity.<sup>509</sup> As I have shown, this is illustrated especially by buildings such as Saint Victor which was also said to have been attacked by the Saracens and which was re-invented as a major late antique pilgrimage site during the Middle Ages based on its supposed antiquity.

Geary coined the expression 'century of forgetting'<sup>510</sup> to describe the tenth and eleventh centuries during which the legend was initially invented. The *Provençaux* followed this line of thought and made considerable efforts to erase part of their past, continuously blaming the Saracens. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that the *Provençaux* knew the actual history of the building or the artefacts they were reinventing for Saint-Maximin or Saint Victor. Geary tells us that during the Middle Ages, people were unable to 'understand the previous systems within which these elements had had coherence' and he also adds that people used them to form their own individual and corporate sense of identity.<sup>511</sup> As a result, it seemed only natural to assign a new mnemonic role to artefacts like sarcophagi that made sense to contemporaries, notwithstanding the fact that this role had never actually existed.

### 3.1 Describing the sarcophagi

The problem I mentioned of inconsistencies between *vitae* and history is nowhere as clear as in the descriptions of Mary Magdalene's sarcophagus presented in

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<sup>507</sup> P. Geary, *Furta sacra : thefts of relics in the central Middle Ages*, 114.

<sup>508</sup> This was Faillon's theory, see E. Faillon, *Monuments inédits*, 445.

<sup>509</sup> This can also be understood as a wider phenomenon studied in anthropology through myths which link periods of decline followed by periods of rebirth, see A. Smith, *The ethnic origins of nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 192.

<sup>510</sup> P. Geary, *Phantoms of remembrance : memory and oblivion at the end of the first millennium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 29.

<sup>511</sup> P. Geary, *Phantoms of remembrance : memory and oblivion at the end of the first millennium*, 25.

her *vitae* written in the XIIth and XIIIth centuries. These descriptions influenced the way in which the sarcophagus in Saint-Maximin was experienced by pilgrims. As I have already mentioned, pilgrims would go to see elements of the cult armed with previous knowledge about them that was disseminated through oral history or through books.

One of the most important examples can be found in the popular *Golden Legend* compiled around 1260 by Jacobus de Voragine, in which he described Mary Magdalene's sarcophagus as 'a sepulchre in which the marble sculptures obviously proved the presence of the relics of Saint Mary Magdalene; the bas-reliefs really did illustrate the saint's history'.<sup>512</sup> Vincent of Beauvais wrote a more specific account of the sarcophagus in his *Speculum Historiale* in the XIIIth century, stating that the tomb is:

'adorned with sculptures representing the saint who had come to meet the master in the house of Simon, offering the Lord her humility and perfume without being ashamed to weep among the guests.'<sup>513</sup>

The *vita* of the saint compiled by a XIIIth century hagiographer about whom we know very little – not even his name – contained a very similar description of the iconography of the tomb:

'Her white marble sepulchre can be seen, on which the lines of the saint are sculpted at the feet of the Lord in the house of Simon as she presented her perfume to Christ in homage for his humanity, with no shame for the tears that she shed among the guests.'<sup>514</sup>

And finally, another *vita* that Saxer chooses to call the *Vita Apostolica* dating from the XIIth century relates another very similar interpretation of the iconography of the sarcophagus which had:

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<sup>512</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *Aurea Legenda*, Saint Mary Magdalen.

<sup>513</sup> Vincent de Beauvais, *Speculum hystoriale*. Lib. X. cap. Ciii.

<sup>514</sup> As cited in V. Saxer, 'La crypte et les sarcophages de Saint Maximin dans la littérature du moyen age,' 191-231, especially 202 and E. Faillon, *Les Monuments Inédits*, vol. II, 435-436.

[...] sculptures showing the Magdalene at the feet of Christ in the house of Simon where she was forgiven for her sins and offered care to Christ because of his humanity, in full view of the sepulchre.<sup>515</sup>

These interpretations can be very confusing for the modern viewer. Indeed, archaeologists today agree that Mary Magdalene is not represented on the tomb associated with her in Saint-Maximin (Figure 15). Far from being unique, the iconography is fairly common in other sarcophagi found in Southern Gaul. The main scene that is now damaged was a triumphal cross, flanked on each side by a sleeping soldier.<sup>516</sup> Most of the scenes on the sides can still be distinguished, on the far left is the execution of Paul in which we can also see his executioner. Next to Paul is a scene in which an arrest is being made. There are three men, the head of the man in the middle has been lost and the other two are looking towards the left as if they were watching Paul's fate. This scene has been viewed as either another scene from Paul's or possibly Peter's life.<sup>517</sup> The scenes on the right represent scenes from the Passion of Christ: the scene on the extreme right is Pontius Pilate washing his hands, and next to it is a scene in which Christ is standing between two guards.

This quick analysis bears no resemblance to the medieval descriptions of the tomb found in the *vitae*, and this is because they were not describing this sarcophagus. In fact, the descriptions were the result of a medieval invention, intended to explain how Adelemus initially recognised the sarcophagus and were based on the imagination of a hagiographer. Later writers then repeated the evidence from that previous source,<sup>518</sup> thus explaining the homogeneity of the descriptions.

Problematically, earlier critics tried to associate the iconography in the *vitae* with the iconography in Saint-Maximin. One of the prime examples is Doncieux who explained:

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<sup>515</sup> V. Saxer, 'La crypte et les sarcophages de Saint Maximin dans la littérature du moyen age,' 203 and Faillon, *Les Monuments Inédits*, vol. 2, 445.

<sup>516</sup> M. Fixot, *La crypte de Saint-Maximin-la-Sainte-Baume, Basilique Sainte-Marie-Madeleine*, 16 and B. Christern-Briesenick, *Repertorium der Christlich-Antiken Sarkophage*, 233, no. 497.

<sup>517</sup> M. Fixot, *La crypte de Saint-Maximin-la-Sainte-Baume, Basilique Sainte-Marie-Madeleine*, 19.

<sup>518</sup> In hagiography, the process of repetition of a common 'invented' source is quite common, it was assumed that repetition gave credibility to the text. See M. Zimmermann, 'Ouverture du colloque,' *Auctor et auctoritas : invention et conformisme dans l'écriture médiévale* ed. M. Zimmermann (Université de Versailles-Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines: Ecole des chartes, 14-16 juin 1998), 1-7.

'But consider a spectator unaware of Christian archaeology and imagine that he doesn't think about Pilate, there is nothing to stop him from seeing a very different meaning; the seated man could equally well be Christ, the stool and the bowl could be a simplified representation of a table with a meal served on it; the figure with the ewer looks very much like a woman holding a jar of perfume; finally, the person in the background could easily be confused with Christ's host, Simon The Leper; in short, Bethany's ointment would replace Pilate washing his hands.'<sup>519</sup>

In other words, he believes that it was the iconography that duped the medieval world and was the core of the whole legend. He believed that if the artisan had decided to sculpt something else, perhaps there would never have been a cult built up around it.<sup>520</sup> His mistake arose because he thought that pilgrims and churchmen alike read the iconography on the sarcophagus and that the cult was based on this specific iconography.

As mentioned above, the description of the iconography on the sarcophagus in the *vitae* was presented as further proof of the legends. Voragine's quotation is perhaps the best example to illustrate this point, he did not give specific examples of the iconography, instead he emphasised the fact that the bas-relief 'really' did illustrate the saint's history and also 'proved' that this sarcophagus was hers. This tradition of belief was applied to the sarcophagus in Saint-Maximin when it was deemed to be the one described in Mary Magdalene's *vitae*. When Bernard Gui visited the sarcophagus in Saint-Maximin in 1316, he wrote in his *Flores Chronicorum* that it was 'historiated and sculpted'<sup>521</sup> but gives no further details on the specifics of the iconography. The fact that the sarcophagus in Saint-Maximin was indeed sculpted was enough for Bernard Gui to create links between the descriptions of the *vitae* and the sarcophagus. This is what neither Doncieux nor Bouche, a XVIIth century historian who was a firm believer in the legend, understood. Bouche clearly saw that there was no representation of Mary Magdalene in the iconography of the sarcophagus and his way of resolving the enigma

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<sup>519</sup> G. Doncieux, 'Les sarcophages de Saint-Maximin et la Légende de Marie-Madeleine,' 357.

<sup>520</sup> G. Doncieux, 'Les sarcophages de Saint-Maximin et la Légende de Marie-Madeleine,' 359.

<sup>521</sup> As cited in V. Saxer, 'La crypte et les sarcophages de Saint Maximin dans la littérature du moyen âge,' 205.

was to think that the deteriorated central part had once represented the saint.<sup>522</sup> What neither of them accounted for was the fact that no such iconographical reading had been made, and that the description was made purely by invention before the sarcophagus was even found. The scriptural nature of the cult of Mary Magdalene in Saint-Maximin meant that its interpretation was largely dependent on the *vitae* in which the cult was described.

Nevertheless, this did not discourage the *Provençaux* from adding elements to the legend in Provence to prove their claims. For instance, starting with Bernard Gui's account in *Flores chronicorum* which influenced the histories of later chroniclers,<sup>523</sup> there was a belief that the sarcophagus of Mary Magdalene was made of alabaster, and this idea was then copied in Philippe de Cabassoles' *Libellus hystorialis* written in 1355, in which he describes it as the 'alabaster sarcophagus'. Finally, the material was confirmed by Faillon, an XVIIIth century *Provençal* who was eager to promote the legend, when he claimed that the sarcophagus was found with an inscription, of which he does not cite the provenance, that he copied:

'On December 6 in the year of our Lord 710 during the reign of Good King Eudes of France during the raids by the perfidious Saracens, the body of the beloved and venerable Saint Mary Magdalene was very secretly transferred during the night from the alabaster sepulchre into the marble sepulchre from which Sidonius's body had been removed, because it was a better hiding place'.<sup>524</sup>

The choice of alabaster as the material is particularly interesting, it is referred to in the Bible in the description of the 'alabaster box' in an account of a visit to the House of Simon where a woman, Mary (who became known as Mary Magdalene) came to Christ with this box of precious ointment and anointed him with it as he was sitting there. As we have seen, some medieval writers described this scene on the iconography of the sarcophagus in the *vitae*, the claim that the sarcophagus was made of alabaster can thus be seen as a way to introduce links between the iconography described in the

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<sup>522</sup> H. Bouche, *La défense de la Foy et de la piété de Provence, pour ses Saints tutélaires Lazare et Maximin, Marthe et Magdalène, contre le livre : 'Joannis, Etc., Varia De Commentitio Lazari Et Maximini, Magdalenae Et Marthae in Provinciam Appulsu Opuscula* (Aix: J.-B. et E. Roize, 1663), 19.

<sup>523</sup> R. Clemens, 'The cult of Mary Magdalen in late medieval France,' *Medieval hagiography : an anthology*, ed. T. Head (London: Routledge, 2001), 665-663, especially 658.

<sup>524</sup> E. Faillon, *Monuments inédits*, 762.

*vitae* and this specific sarcophagus. The material also emphasised the specificity of the sarcophagus as opposed to the other more common-place marble one in the crypt that Bernard Gui mentioned.

### 3.2 The sarcophagi of Mary Magdalene's companions

Most descriptions made by hagiographers and pilgrims focused on Mary Magdalene's sarcophagus because it was associated with her and she was the most important saint in the legend. Very little has been found describing the other three sarcophagi in the crypt in Saint-Maximin that date from the mid-IVth century.<sup>525</sup> They are now associated with Saints Maximinus, Sidonius and Marcella (Martha's servant).

These saints are very important to the cult in Provence, legend tells us that Maximinus was buried next to Mary Magdalene since he was the one who performed her funeral rituals and he asked to be buried close to her,<sup>526</sup> which strongly suggests that one of the sarcophagi would have been dedicated to him. In fact, Pseudo Rabanus Maurus's *vita* of Mary Magdalene written in the XIIth century reports that his sarcophagus was immediately adjacent to Mary Magdalene's.<sup>527</sup> But Sidonius's sarcophagus was just as important to the *Provençaux* if not more so than Maximinus's, because it justified their claims that Mary Magdalene's bones had been transferred to Sidonius' sarcophagus to protect them from the Saracens, which explained why Vézelay had the wrong relics. And finally, Marcella was a key figure for the cult of Martha, as it was believed that it was she who wrote Martha's *Provençal vita*, therefore having her relics in Saint-Maximin would further substantiate the link between the sites of Saint-Maximin and Tarascon.

And yet, despite the importance of the saints there are not many descriptions of the crypts. One of the few that we have was written in 1316 by Bernard Gui who stated that there was a marble sarcophagus to the right of the crypt and an alabaster one (thought to be Mary Magdalene's) to the left, but it remains unclear whether there were

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<sup>525</sup> B. Christern-Briesenick, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage*, 233-238.

<sup>526</sup> As can be seen in the *Vita Apostolica* and the *Translatio posterior*

<sup>527</sup> See V. Saxer, 'La Vie de Sainte Marie Madeleine attribuée au pseudo-Raban Maur, oeuvre claravaliennne du XlIs. , ' *Mélanges St. Bernard* (Dijon: 1953), 418-421, especially, 410.

any other sarcophagi,<sup>528</sup> or even any other saints. The only real attribution we have comes later in 1474 when Hans von Waltheim wrote that there were the tombs of St Mary Magdalene, St Maximinus and all the ‘other dear saints who are buried there’.<sup>529</sup> He at least gives us the name of Maximinus, but fails to mention the others and he does not describe the sarcophagi for any of them.

Thus, very little is found describing these sarcophagi, in fact their associations with the different saints seem to have changed several times. Recent scholarship throws some light on the attributions, and the most impressive sarcophagus (Figure 14) is now associated with Sidonius.<sup>530</sup> Its iconography is appropriate for holding the remains of the saint who had been cured of his blindness by Jesus; it represented the healing of the blind and, according to Doncieux, the iconography would have been enough for people to make the connection between the saint and the iconography<sup>531</sup>. He thought that medieval people would have made this association, although there is no proof that this sarcophagus was associated with Sidonius in medieval times. Based on our sources, it is equally probable that people in the XVIIth, XVIIIth and XIXth centuries had associated the sarcophagus with Sidonius because of the iconography, as there is very little mention and no description at all of his tomb during medieval times. Indeed, some of the first comments about this association date from Bouche<sup>532</sup> and Etienne Faillon<sup>533</sup> who described it.

The other two sarcophagi in the crypt are much more complex. Recent scholarship associates them with Maximinus and Marcella, however there is no medieval source to substantiate this claim. In fact, Bernard Gui and Etienne de Conty refer to both of these saints as secondary patrons of the basilica,<sup>534</sup> but nothing is mentioned in official documents issued by the pope’s officials. Neither of these two sarcophagi was described during medieval times and Marcella’s tomb isn’t even mentioned in any source.

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<sup>528</sup> E. Faillon, *Monuments inédits*, 762.

<sup>529</sup> See his travels in L. Stoff, ‘Deux voyageurs allemands en Provence à la fin du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle (Hans von Waltheim en l’an 1474, Jérôme Müntzer en l’an 1495), 567-573.

<sup>530</sup> see M. Fixot, *La crypte de Saint-Maximin-la-Sainte-Baume, Basilique Sainte-Marie-Madeleine*, 19.

<sup>531</sup> G. Doncieux, ‘Les sarcophages de Saint-Maximin et la Légende de Marie-Madeleine,’ 280.

<sup>532</sup> H. Bouche, *La défense de la Foy et de la piété de Provence*, 14

<sup>533</sup> E. Faillon, *Monuments inédits*, 762.

<sup>534</sup> As cited in E. Faillon, *Monuments inédits*, 780 and 98.

Even though Maximinus would have been crucial in the legend, it is still uncertain even today which sarcophagus should be attributed to him. Hans von Waltheim's account tells us that one of the sarcophagi in the crypt was associated with Maximinus in 1474, but there is no way of knowing which. Most scholars associate him with the city-gate sarcophagus (Figure 48) and this belief was shared by Doncieux, who thought that the iconography of the Holy Innocents on the lid was enough for medieval people to make the connection with St. Maximinus,<sup>535</sup> but there is no evidence for Doncieux's claim because we have no remaining medieval descriptions of the sarcophagus.

Other scholars today and particularly Brun and Borréani, the editors of the Var artefacts catalogue, believe that the sarcophagus most likely to be Maximinus's is the one with the Orant (Figure 49) that is now usually associated with Marcella.<sup>536</sup> This view was shared by Faillon who thought that it was adorned with a representation of Christ accompanied by St. Maximinus himself.<sup>537</sup> As for Marcella, nothing is said of her sarcophagus before the XVIIth century and the lack of medieval evidence suggests her sarcophagus in Saint-Maximin wasn't attributed to her before the XVIIth century.

The important conclusion about these four sarcophagi in Saint-Maximin is that only one sarcophagus has been persistently associated with a specific saint, and that is Mary Magdalene's. Associations between the other saints and the other sarcophagi are confusing and inconclusive. We have little medieval evidence about these three sarcophagi found in the crypt, this may be because pilgrims could not see all of them or because they had not yet been rediscovered.<sup>538</sup> Or it could simply be that all attention was focused on Mary Magdalene and her sarcophagus, and the other saints were much less significant. This is also reflected in the *vitae* on which the cult was based, Mary Magdalene was the only saint who was mentioned consistently whilst the other saints who accompanied her varied in different versions.

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<sup>535</sup> G. Doncieux, 'Les sarcophages de Saint-Maximin et la Légende de Marie-Madeleine,' 280.

<sup>536</sup> J-P Brun and M. Borréani, *Le Var*, Carte Archéologique de la Gaule. (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 1999), 665-667.

<sup>537</sup> E. Faillon, *Monuments inédits*, 789.

<sup>538</sup> Bernard Gui and Philippe of Cabassole both claimed that the sarcophagus of Mary Magdalene was found by digging, 'effossa humo' said Bernard Gui, see E. Faillon *Monuments inédits* ', 704, and Cabassole's *Libellus historialis* written in 1355 and cited in E. Faillon, *Monuments inédits*, 792. If they are right in their affirmation, it is possible that the other sarcophagi had not yet been dug up.

### 3.3 Martha's sarcophagus

The situation in Tarascon was very different, there was never any confusion that the Tarascon sarcophagus might have belonged to another saint because Martha was the only saint whose body was said to have been in the city and there was only one sarcophagus. We have no medieval description of the sarcophagus, much more attention was paid to the miracles associated with it as will be seen later. This did not discourage Faillon from claiming that the central character is Martha herself,<sup>539</sup> but there is no remaining medieval evidence to back up this claim.

It is interesting to note that as far as we know, Bouche and Faillon in the XVIIth century were the first to describe the sarcophagi in Saint-Maximin and Tarascon – except for Mary Magdalene's – and this was when the iconography on Mary Magdalene's sarcophagus was questioned for the first time within the broader context of scepticism of the legend as a whole.<sup>540</sup> This created the need for Faillon to imagine the figure of Maximinus on the sarcophagus that is now associated with Marcella, and the figure of Martha on her sarcophagus in Tarascon. This interpretation is still popular today with some of the local population who believe that the sarcophagi are indeed associated with the saints.

Thus, the descriptions of these sarcophagi are not a mere affirmation of what the pilgrim or writer saw, but a confirmation of what he believed, and this was equally true during medieval times and in the XVIIth century. These descriptions are in many ways more discursive than based on observation, the scriptural nature of the pilgrimage meant that a pilgrim's experience of the sarcophagi was largely influenced by the legends described in the texts.

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<sup>539</sup> E. Faillon, *Monuments inédits*, 635.

<sup>540</sup> The main source of criticism was J.de Launoy, *Varia de commentitio Lazari et Maximini, Magdalenae et Marthae in Provinciam appulsu opuscula, quibus tractatus accedit de cura Ecclesiae pro sanctis et sanctorum reliquiis ac sacris officiis ab omni falsitate vindicandis* (Paris: apud E. Martinum, 1660).

## 4. The sarcophagi as relics

During the 2nd half of the IVth century, Cyril of Jerusalem and Bishop of Jerusalem pronounced the words 'others merely hear but we see and touch.'<sup>541</sup> He thus emphasised the importance that pilgrims attached to the physical presence of an object, and being able to see it. This is fundamentally opposed to some accounts that we have seen above, where many of the descriptions were made through collective memory.

The descriptive process contributed to placing the object in a precise historical context. It did not require any physical contact with the sarcophagus, all that was required was knowledge of the belief that accompanied it. On the other hand, touch or sight obliged the pilgrim to approach the relic and internalise the pilgrimage experience by having a personal and individual contact with the relic.

This does not mean that each experience was fundamentally different for each pilgrim, as they all believed that each saint had his or her own specific powers, but the way in which these experiences were lived depended on the individual's personal story. All pilgrims believed that relics were sacred, in fact Geary saw relics as being a physical representation of spiritual reality,<sup>542</sup> and he went even further in asserting that relics were actually the saints themselves, continuing to live among men.<sup>543</sup>

The relics thus became the whole purpose of a pilgrimage, in which pilgrims sought to see and touch the saint through them. A very wide variety of relics were associated with saints, mostly bones of saints or parts of their clothes, or objects associated with them during their lives, but less personal objects were also accepted as relics.<sup>544</sup> In fact, there seems to be no clear definition of what makes a relic, other than that there must be a relation between the relic and the body of the saint.

Tombs of saints were sometimes considered as relics in themselves. One of the most important of all relics in Christendom is the tomb of Christ, which is an empty tomb in the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The presence of the tomb reminds pilgrims that Christ ascended to heaven *in corpore*. Another important example is the tomb of St. Peter in Rome on which the church was built, to preserve the bones and also to commemorate the saint.

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<sup>541</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lecture*, VIII

<sup>542</sup> P. Geary, *Furta sacra : thefts of relics in the central Middle Ages*, 34.

<sup>543</sup> P. Geary, *Furta sacra : thefts of relics in the central Middle Ages*, 34.

<sup>544</sup> For more on Relics see D. Sox, *Relics and Shrines*.

The cases of Mary Magdalene and Martha are very similar, their tombs became enshrined in churches which were destined specifically to commemorate the saints. The tombs were of central importance, in the case of Mary Magdalene the entire basilica was built above the hypogeum to preserve the tomb. The sarcophagi were thus themselves relics that needed to be preserved, they were the most lasting elements of the cult, the only items that could not be moved easily or completely broken down into pieces.

This leads to the most important aspect of this particular type of relic which is its immobility and thus its relation to a specific space. In his study of ritual theory, Smith wrote: ‘The specificity of the place... is what gives rise to and what is perpetuated in memorial.’<sup>545</sup> Indeed, in the case of Mary Magdalene, her tomb marked the location of a special event, the death of the saint. The tomb in the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem points to the location of the ascension, and a similar idea is expressed in Saint-Maximin, where the site was chosen at the location at which the saint was entombed and therefore where her soul left her body before rising to heaven. It was the final resting place of the saint and was thus thought to have been unmoved since she died. Moreover, this is emphasised by the fact that, according to the legend described in the *vitae*, she chose this resting place herself indirectly because she descended into the town of Saint-Maximin to die when she felt that her time had come. She came to see Maximinus who himself enshrined her at the current location and asked to be entombed next to her when he too would pass away.

Holy sites were permanent and unchanging,<sup>546</sup> and the site of Mary Magdalene’s tomb in Saint-Maximin was believed to have been sacred ever since her death because of the imagined association between herself and the hypogeum.<sup>547</sup>

In the light of all this, the fundamental difference between tombs and other types of relics is the immobility of the tomb that became associated with a place. This gave tombs an advantage over many other relics in that they embodied permanent places of worship, unlike relics that provided more portable vehicles for anything

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<sup>545</sup> J. Smith, *To take place : toward theory in ritual*, (Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 22, 86.

<sup>546</sup> R. Ousterhout, ‘Architecture as Relic and the Construction of Sanctity: The Stones of the Holy Sepulchre,’ *JSAH* 62.1 (2003), 4.

<sup>547</sup> this idea is emphasised in the *Sermo de Sancta Maria Magdalene* (BHL no. 5488), where it is explained that it is because of the: ‘signs of the power of Mary Magdalene that the monks of Vézelay successfully came to the place, where afterward the saint was made known by her many signs [...]’.

sacred.<sup>548</sup> And it is true that as far as we know these tombs were never taken out of the crypts. This cannot be said about Mary Magdalene's body which, after its discovery in the sarcophagus, was removed and then carelessly dismembered and distributed. Most of her remains were placed in reliquaries, one of the most important being her skull which was put in a separate reliquary in Saint-Maximin, while others were displayed in a silver casket. Other parts of the body seem to have been set aside to be given to various individuals who wanted to take a part of the saint back with them.

Nevertheless, while these tombs were indeed static, they shared more similarities with other relics than one might initially expect. When looking at the state of the sarcophagi of Mary Magdalene and Martha, one cannot help but notice the damage that they have sustained. Popular belief held that the damage to Martha's sarcophagus occurred because it was placed inside a newer sarcophagus in the XVIIth century, damaging the relief of the sculptures.<sup>549</sup> A close examination of the sarcophagus suggests more precise damage as if a specific part of the sarcophagus had been removed, and this is especially true for the heads of individuals, for Christ's arm and pieces from the resurrection of Lazarus.

This was probably done during the French Revolution when Republicans chiselled off the heads of statues and other relief as a sign of desacralisation. This is different from what occurred on the sarcophagus of Mary Magdalene, from which pieces of the sarcophagus were chopped off rather clumsily by enthusiastic pilgrims. One of the best testimonies we have of such an event comes from Hans von Waltheim, a pilgrim in 1474:

'After vespers, the venerable and honourable Jean de Pontevès, the prior and senior prelate, took me into the underground crypt and chapel once again and once again showed me all the relics, he sent the king's jeweller to fetch a chisel and broke off a large piece of Mary Magdalene's tomb, and gave it to me. I took the piece back home with me.'<sup>550</sup>

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<sup>548</sup> S. Coleman and J. Elsner, *Pilgrimage past and present in the world religions*, 109.

<sup>549</sup> see E. Faillon, *Monuments inédits*, 271.

<sup>550</sup> Cited in L. Stoff, 'Deux voyageurs allemands en Provence à la fin du XVe siècle (Hans von Waltheim en l'an 1474, Jérôme Müntzer en l'an 1495)', 15.

Another report illustrating the same practice comes from a much later account given by the XVIIIth century historian, Bouche:

'Due to the indiscrete zealously of pilgrims in their desire to carry away something belonging to the saint, all that remains of these figures carved in relief on the alabaster sepulchre are a few angels, all the larger figures that represented the life of Saint Magdalene have been torn away, broken or cut off by stones or chisels, and the debris has been taken away as relics of this saint'.<sup>551</sup>

Bouche seems to think they were interested mostly in elements associated with the saint and yet Hans von Waltheim's testimony shows that pieces broken off were never selected based on iconography. Judging by the current condition of the sarcophagus, it seems as though most pieces were taken from its centre which was probably deemed to be more important. Nevertheless as a result, while the bulk of the sarcophagus remained unchanged, pieces of it were chopped off in the same way as was done for other types of dismembered relics.

Links between relics are even more apparent when looking at the miracle-working nature of each. While there is no specific evidence left of the miraculous powers of the Mary Magdalene sarcophagus, many accounts collected in the book of miracles written by Gobi in the first quarter of the XIVth century recount the power of the relics of Mary Magdalene. Indeed, as illustrated by most of her miracles, the Saint-Maximin site was of primary importance because that was where her body rested and was inhumed, and the sarcophagi were the principal reminder of this fact.<sup>552</sup>

It was believed that the saint herself was present and could interfere with the lives of people who came to her, and in that context the miracles were a proof of the presence of her body. Many miracles were performed, not just because of the closeness of the site but through direct interaction with the relic, consisting principally of the saint's bones. Several miracles occurred after touching the relic, one interesting story is about Miracle no. 10, according to which a man came to see the saint and touched the saint's arm bone with his ring finger while wearing his ring. After the pilgrimage he was tempted to commit adultery but was incapable of doing so. He took the ring off his

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<sup>551</sup> H. Bouche, *La Défense de la foy et de la piété de Provence*, 570.

<sup>552</sup> J. Schlafer, *Miracles de Sainte Marie-Madeleine*, Sources d'histoire médiévale (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1996), 24.

finger – without knowing why – and was then able to commit the crime. Once the deed was done, he could no longer put his ring back on. He went back to see the saint, repented and confessed, and was then able to slide his ring back on.<sup>553</sup>

Other examples include a man who kissed the arm of the saint and recovered his vision,<sup>554</sup> and a woman whose hearing was restored by doing the same thing.<sup>555</sup> There are many examples illustrating the purifying power of touching the relic, although most relate to touching the saint's arm and nothing is said about the sarcophagus.

This is very different from the sarcophagus in Tarascon. According to Martha's *vita* written in the late XIIth century, in the IVth century Clovis was suffering from a kidney disease, and was cured instantly when he touched the tomb. The hagiographer added that many sufferers of diverse illnesses were cured at the saint's tomb. Of course, all these examples are nothing but constructions, however, they do emphasise the type of belief promoted at the time, that the sarcophagus was working miracles.

The importance of the sarcophagus is further emphasised by an attempt to put the sarcophagus inside a new sarcophagus during the XVIIth century. Little has been said about the motivation for such a gesture, and popular belief was that the old one was simply old-fashioned. This does not seem very plausible considering that a plaster copy of the façade of the late antique sarcophagus was made at the same time to be displayed in the crypt to show what the original sarcophagus looked like.

This process of packaging the sarcophagus inside another reliquary proves the importance of the sarcophagus, showing that it not only needed to be protected, but also needed to be put inside a container worthy of it. Specially shaped reliquaries were sometimes made to match the type of relic they were to contain and the German term *redende Reliquiare* (speaking reliquaries) was coined for them. They would usually be the same shape as the part of the body they were supposed to contain. An example is the reliquary bust of Mary Magdalene shaped like a bust and which holds the skull of the saint. In this case, the reliquary was shaped like a tomb, and not just any tomb but that of a gisant as it bore an effigy of the saint herself, reminding the pilgrim of the presence of her body in Tarascon. This shows the lasting importance of the sarcophagi,

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<sup>553</sup> *De tactu reliquiarum contra* in J. Sclafer, *Miracles de Sainte Marie-Madeleine*, 69-71.

<sup>554</sup> *Item de visu Gobi* in J. Sclafer, *Miracles de Sainte Marie-Madeleine*, 90-91.

<sup>555</sup> *Incipiunt de auditu* see miracle 5 in J. Sclafer, *Miracles de Sainte Marie-Madeleine*, 102-103.

since even several centuries after they were re-invented as tombs of saints, the cults were still changing to fit new ideas.

The aim of this chapter has been to show the importance of sarcophagi in the process of identifying Provence with the Holy Land. They became *lieux de mémoire par excellence* through which saints were remembered, praised and even touched; the sarcophagi were integrated into the Holy Topography through their relation to other sites in the region, and they became some of its most important pilgrimage destinations because they were seen as proof of the saint's presence in the region. As Peebles and Zumthor have stated, Christianity is a religion of space rather than time,<sup>556</sup> and the creation of spaces around the lives of biblical saints was a way of establishing parallels between Provence and the Holy Land because it is through these spaces that these saints had lived, died and worked miracles, creating Provence as a Holy Land in the West.

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<sup>556</sup> C. Peebles and P. Zumthor, 'The Medieval Travel Narrative,' *NLH* 25.4 (1994), 809-824, especially 812.

## Chapter 4

### From Song to Stone - The Creation of a War Monument in the Alyscamps.

‘Do not destroy the pagan temples, only the idols that are found in them. As for the monument, sprinkle it with holy water, erect altars and place relics there’.

Gregory of Tours, *Patrologia Latina*, LXXVII.

People in the Middle Ages had a different understanding of the past than we have today because, as Schnapp pointed out, there was no sense that there had been a rupture and they thus interpreted the past through elements that they knew.<sup>557</sup> These were quite limited, as Trigger showed, the only reliable knowledge of the past at that time was believed to be contained in the Bible, the surviving Histories of Greece and Rome and historical records incorporating traditions going back to the Dark Ages.<sup>558</sup> Other frequently used sources were popular legends or folklore in circulation during the Middle Ages.<sup>559</sup>

Sometimes stories from specific popular accounts were transposed onto sites. For example, Geoffrey of Monmouth’s popular *Historia Regum Britanniae*, and Chrétien de Troyes’ revision of it in the late XIIth century, probably provided the inspiration for a XIIIth century reinterpretation of a cemetery in Saint Emiliand in the Saone-et-Loire Department of France. This was thought to have been the very location at which the knights of the Arthurian legends fought against the ‘Romans’.<sup>560</sup> Various

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<sup>557</sup> A. Schnapp, *The discovery of the past : the origins of archaeology* (London: British Museum Press, 1996), 32.

<sup>558</sup> B. Trigger, *A history of archaeological thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 31. For a more general discussion on memory in the Middle Ages, see also L. Doležalová, *The making of memory in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

<sup>559</sup> Mango's studies of antique statues in Constantinople have shown that their meaning was forgotten in medieval times and as he puts it, ‘a new ‘folkloristic’ significance arose in popular imagination. C. Mango, ‘Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder,’ *DOP* 17 (1963), 55-75, especially 59.

<sup>560</sup> M. Lauwers, *Naissance du cimetière lieux sacrés et terre des morts dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris: Aubier, 2005), 181.

tombs on the site became associated with the tombs of no less than the famous knights Arthur, Yvain, Gauvain and Erec and their companions.

The cemetery was then reinvented through the specific knowledge available to Medieval people. Similar associations between cemeteries and fierce battles described in popular literature and folklore were not at all unusual in France. For example, St. Seurin in Bordeaux was thought to have been the location of a battle between invading Saracens and Franks described in the very popular *Chanson de Roland* and to be the resting place for the bodies of the valiant Gaifer, Engelier, Lambert and Begon who fought alongside 5000 other Franks who fell in battle.<sup>561</sup>

Another example is none other than the Alyscamps in Arles, which was the city's main cemetery. Much like Saint Seurin, the Alyscamps was thought to have been the site on which some ancient battle was fought. Moreover, the cemetery was believed to contain the bodies of Vivian, the nephew of William of Orange, William himself and Roland, all of whom died in battle defending Southern Europe against Saracen invasions, as related in various songs. Some of these knights were enumerated by the Bishop of Arles, Michel of Mouriès, in the lists of saintly bodies preserved in the Alyscamps between 1202 and 1217, as he wrote:

[...] This church had a large cemetery inside which lay the countless bodies of those who had distinguished themselves by offering their own blood after a triumphal combat led by the blessed Charles, the blessed William and his nephew Vivian.<sup>562</sup>

The inspiration for these beliefs came from various *Chansons de Geste* that were songs about epic deeds, and chronicles that were immensely popular in France during the Middle Ages, such as the *Chanson de Roland* (early XIth century), the *Chanson de Guillaume* (1140), the *Aliscans* (1180) and many others. Most of these songs dealt with Saracen attacks during their invasions of Spain and Southern France.

This reinterpretation of the Alyscamps was mostly due to the fact that its original history had been forgotten, and it was therefore reinterpreted within a framework compatible with contemporary beliefs about history as disseminated in the *chansons*.

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<sup>561</sup> A. Moisan, 'Les sépultures des Français morts à Roncevaux,' 34.

<sup>562</sup> cited in M. Lauwers, *Naissance du cimetière lieux sacrés et terre des morts dans l'Occident médiéval*, 183.

Hence, this chapter will focus on the medieval reinterpretation of the Alysamps. It was thought that it had been a military cemetery for several hundred years, and thus established precedents for a strong militaristic tradition in Provence. We will study the invention of this tradition and the role of the monuments that became associated with it and which, in turn, acted as mementos of it.

The first part of this chapter contains a literary archaeological study of the Alysamps. In other words it looks at the literary material which ‘created’ the Alysamps as a military cemetery. Of course, this is different from a conventional historical analysis based on what we might loosely call empirical scientific evidence. Although the songs which ‘created’ the monument are not historically accurate, it was firmly believed that they were, as I shall show. Hence the Alysamps, which was understood through fictional literature, was believed to be a historical monument. This is why I will compare it with other historical monuments such as military cemeteries commemorating World War I (the battle of Verdun in particular). In very much the same way, the Alysamps was believed to be a memento of a war that had happened on that very site.

The second part of this chapter explores the **context** in which this ‘monument’ was created. Reinterpretation of the site was particularly active during the XIIIth century under the driving force of the ongoing crusades. I shall examine how the monument, which was thought to contain the tombs of soldiers who had fought the Saracens in Spain and Provence, became reinterpreted through a crusading rhetoric in the light of ongoing events in the Holy Land. In particular, I will see why it became used to create a militaristic tradition in Provence during the crusades.

## Part I - A Realm of Memory

### 1. The site as a monument

As Giedion has pointed out, monuments are ‘things that remind, things to be transmitted to later generations.’<sup>563</sup> And the Alysamps became just that, a reminder of the sacrifices described in the song made by men to free Southern France. It fits into a wider tradition of military memorials, which are some of the most common monuments in the Western world. From the Arch of Titus to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, they have played a major part in the monumental history of cities and countries.

In many cases, cemeteries themselves became monuments. One famous case is Douaumont ossuary in Verdun. Although not a traditional cemetery, it is a building containing the remains of soldiers who died during the Battle of Verdun.<sup>564</sup> The building, along with the hundreds of identical plain crosses around it, was a vivid reminder of the massacre that took place during that one battle. Other less known examples are found in Finland, where collective memory was inscribed in what Petri Raivo has called the cemeteries for ‘fallen heroes’. An example of this is in the village of Sippola in Anjalankoski, south-eastern Finland, some 50 km from the Russian border, where 214 victims of the Second World War are buried close to a large stone memorial decorated with a relief statue as a symbol of the holiness of the site.<sup>565</sup> Both of these monuments were originally practical repositories for bones, but subsequently became reminders of the terror and atrocities of war.

Another type of war monument commemorates a specific place. As Young puts it ‘when the killing stops, the sites remain.’<sup>566</sup> In some cases then, the most fitting memorial became the site itself. Perhaps one of the most striking examples of such a monument is the *Trench of the Bayonets* in France, which was a WWI trench covered

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<sup>563</sup> S. Giedion, *Architecture, you and me; the diary of a development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 28.

<sup>564</sup> which has the status of a national monument see : A. Prost, ‘Verdun,’ *Realms of memory : rethinking the French past*, ed. P. Nora, vol. 3 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 377-401, especially 389.

<sup>565</sup> P. Raivo, ‘This is where we fought’ : Finnish war landscapes as a national heritage,’ *The politics of war memory and commemoration*, eds. T. Ashplant, G. Dawson and M. Roper (London: Routledge, 2000), 145-164, especially 153.

<sup>566</sup> J. Young, *The texture of memory : Holocaust memorials and meaning* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 1993), 119.

by a concrete shell. As Winter wrote, the idea of such an act was of a special kind, the site 'was frozen in time and preserved not only by but from art.'<sup>567</sup> Other examples of preserved sites are extermination camps in Germany.<sup>568</sup> They are still visited today, and remind visitors of the dreadful events that had unfolded on the very ground on which they stand. In both cases, the sites were kept almost unchanged so as to preserve the original, untouched memory.

The Alysamps became a very interesting monument as it combined nearly all the elements mentioned above. It became a cemetery commemorating those who had died during war, but also a specific place as it was sometimes believed that a battle was fought on the site. In its wider sense, it became what Nora called a 'realm of memory' which he defines as spaces or objects, in this case a monument, that are remnants of an older history which no longer exists, but through which a sense of continuity remains.<sup>569</sup> They exist because the history or events that they try to capture no longer exist and because society has a will to preserve that specific memory.

## 1.1 Remembering the Saracen invasions

The specific memory that was remembered through the Alysamps was one that was firmly embedded in collective memory in Southern France.<sup>570</sup> It referred directly to the battles against the Saracens who invaded Southern France and Spain. The coming of Islam into Provence was part of the Arab-Berber advance in the Iberian

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<sup>567</sup> J. Winter, *Sites of memory, sites of mourning : the Great War in European cultural history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 102.

<sup>568</sup> For a full discussion of concentration camps as monuments, see J. Young, *The texture of memory : Holocaust memorials and meaning*. For the 'creation' of these monuments, see K. Hoffmann-Curtius and S. Nurmi-Schomers, 'Memorials for the Dachau Concentration Camp,' *OAJ* 21.2 (1998), 21-44 and H. Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau : the uses and abuses of a concentration camp, 1933-2001* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 187-212.

<sup>569</sup> P. Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,' *Representations* 26 (1989), 7-24, especially 7.

<sup>570</sup> For more on the impact of Saracen attacks on Provençal cultural memory, see D. Carraz, *L'ordre du Temple dans la basse vallée du Rhône, 1124-1312 ordres militaires, croisades et sociétés méridionales*, 46. For more on the impact of Saracens on literature in Provence, see E. Simon, *Li Sarrasin dins la literaturo provençalo, Bibliouteco d'istori literari e de critico Bibliothèque d'histoire littéraire et de critique* (Toulon: l'Astrado, 1972).

peninsula.<sup>571</sup> Starting in 714, Muslims had been threatening Languedoc and from there the Rhone Valley. Arles alone was attacked in 842, 850, 859 and 869.<sup>572</sup> These invasions did indeed lead to battles and the destruction of buildings as well as monuments. Around 890, the Council of Valence was deploring that ‘the Saracens had destroyed Provence and turned it into an enormous desert.’<sup>573</sup> That memory was nourished through buildings such as the monastery of St. Victor in Marseille that were thought to have been reconstructed after Saracen devastation.<sup>574</sup> However, as Carraz has pointed out, the extent to which this was true was perhaps slightly exaggerated.<sup>575</sup> Nevertheless, the memory of these destructions had a lasting impact in Provence and as Carraz notes, created a particular psychological climate.<sup>576</sup>

As the years went by, that memory was revived through epic deeds which were imagined to have taken place in the region. For example, the holy war in Spain guided by Charlemagne and his knights became confused with the memory of the combat against the invaders in Provence. Many of these events were transposed into Provence, as is particularly striking in the immensely popular *chansons de geste* that recounted various battles and the valiant deeds of Christian knights in combat against the Saracens. The main theatre of these stories slowly shifted to Provence, and the Alysamps became one of its major battlegrounds making it one of Provence’s most important sites. Furthermore, the cemetery was believed to contain the tombs of famous knights praised in the songs, including Roland.

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<sup>571</sup> for a full account, see E. Baratier, ‘Entre Francs et Arabes,’ *Histoire de la Provence*, ed. E. Baratier (Toulouse: Privat, 1980), 101-111.

<sup>572</sup> J-P. Poly, *La Provence et la société féodale 879-1166, contribution à l'étude des structures dites féodales dans le Midi* (Paris: Bordas, 1976), 5.

<sup>573</sup> ‘les sarrasins aient détruit la Provence et fait d’elle un vaste désert’ P. Labbe and G. Cossart, *Sacrosancta concilia, ad regiam editionem exacta, quae nunc quarta parte prodit auctior* (Lutetiae Parisiorum: impensis Societatis typographicae, 1671), 424.

<sup>574</sup> See chapter on Marseille (Chapter 2).

<sup>575</sup> D. Carraz, *L’ordre du Temple dans la basse vallée du Rhône, 1124-1312 ordres militaires, croisades et sociétés méridionales*, 45.

<sup>576</sup> D. Carraz, *L’ordre du Temple dans la basse vallée du Rhône, 1124-1312 ordres militaires, croisades et sociétés méridionales*, 45.

## 2. Towards a ‘Literary Archaeology’: from chansons to sarcophagi.

As Treffort has pointed out, ‘literary archaeology’ as a discipline does not exist.<sup>577</sup> However, there are few better examples than the Alyscamps to justify its creation. The *chanson de geste* became the only element that provided a means of understanding the site, since it offered the viewer a historical explanation for the ancient remains. While the cemetery of the Alyscamps existed before the *chansons*, it is only through them that it acquired its new meaning that became interpreted starting around the XIIIth century. Of course, this meant that its interpretation was entirely dependent on the songs as it became quite clear in the XIIIth century when Michel of Mouriès, the Bishop of Arles, described the cemetery with reference to the song: ‘As we can read in Charles’s *chanson de geste*, the cemetery is a mile long and a mile wide.’<sup>578</sup>

The reason he cited the *chanson* was because these songs were accepted as being serious historical sources.<sup>579</sup> In fact, many of them include a prologue that emphasises their veracity, unlike fictional literature that they describe as being composed of fables and lies.<sup>580</sup> Some also point to the antiquity of the song or the reliability of its sources.<sup>581</sup> Yet these ‘historical truths’ offer different versions of history. There are large variations between the locations of events and the protagonists who took part in them. For instance, there are many details that differ in different *Chansons de Roland*. The oldest *chanson de Roland*, usually referred to as the Oxford copy (from the late XIth century), is very different from the later Norse version of the same song (XIIIth century).

The reason for such variations within songs is still the object of debate among medievalists. As *chansons*, they were transmitted orally with the result that their style

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<sup>577</sup> C. Treffort ‘Des sarcophages reels aux légendes épiques: réflexions autour d’une archeologie littéraire’ *De l’écrin au cercueil. Essais sur les contenants du Moyen Age*, eds. D. James-Raoul and C. Thomasset (Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 2007), 93-116, especially 93.

<sup>578</sup> Cited in ‘M. Lauwers, *Naissance du cimetière lieux sacrés et terre des morts dans l’Occident médiéval*, 132.

<sup>579</sup> see J. Bédier, *Les légendes épiques Recherches sur la formation des chansons de geste III. La Légende des ‘Enfances’ de Charlemagne et l’Histoire de Charles Martel. Les Chansons de geste et le pèlerinage de Compostelle. La Chanson d’Oxford pour l’établissement du texte de la Chanson de Roland*, 3e éd. ed. (Paris: librairie ancienne Honoré Champion, 1929), 347-353.

<sup>580</sup> Good examples are found in *la Prise d’Orange, de Renaud de Motauban, de la Destruction de Rome, Chevalier au Cygne and Godefroy de Bouillon*.

<sup>581</sup> See for example *Simon de Pouille* and *Jehan de Lanson*.

and content changed over the years. Some believe that they were created from collective memory,<sup>582</sup> and consequently *jongleurs* (those who recited the songs) would add minor details as the story was repeated.<sup>583</sup> Louis thinks that the *jongleurs* who recited them modified them to fit new historical situations.<sup>584</sup> Frappier puts forward another suggestion; he believes that the result is rather due to artistic concerns. He notes that one has to distinguish between historical reality and poetic reality. In his view the changes were not due to the desire to change the historical record, rather they were conscious modifications designed to render the song more powerful.<sup>585</sup>

And indeed the songs depicted warriors who set new standards. Many exploits drawn from epic medieval traditions were added to their lives and they were henceforth described as ideal medieval knights.<sup>586</sup> In fact, the Latin word *gesta* means ‘deeds’, so these were songs of deeds, or in this context deeds of valour. And this aspect rather than the reality of the protagonists became emphasised in the songs.

In some ways, these songs share similar traits with the *vitae* of saints which also mythologised the lives of their protagonists. In fact, Jean de Grouchy (a late XIIIth century knight) saw them as being the same genre. While many would agree that they share similar characteristics, they do have fundamental differences which put them in different categories. Saxer explained this difference well while examining the *vita* of Gérard de Rousillon which had hagiographical and epic form and concludes:

‘The two forms of legend are distinguished by their public and their setting, style and purpose. A hagiographic work is intended to form part of a liturgical service; the purpose of a pious legend is to motivate rather than dazzle, its heroes are put forward as

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<sup>582</sup> One of the partisans of this view is Rychler who believes that the *chansons* are purely the result of lyrical ‘*complaintes*’ see J. Rychner, *La chanson de geste essai sur l'art épique des jongleurs*, Société des publications romanes et françaises (Genève: E. Droz Giard, 1955), 9-27. However, it should be noted that there is some opposition to this idea, for instance Bédier sees them as the result of cooperation between monks and minstrels on pilgrimage routes along which individual poets would glean heroic local traditions and work them into epic form. See J Bédier, *Les légendes épiques Recherches sur la formation des chansons de geste III*, 122-138.

<sup>583</sup> For such a view, see R. Louis, *L'Épopée française est carolingienne* (Zaragoza: 1956).

<sup>584</sup> R. Louis, *L'Épopée française est carolingienne*, 449-451.

<sup>585</sup> J. Frappier, ‘Réflexions sur les rapports des chansons de geste et de l'histoire’ *Histoire, mythes et symboles: Etudes de littérature française* (Genève: Publications romanes et françaises 1976), 1-19.

<sup>586</sup> A. Dickman, *Le Rôle du surnaturel dans les chansons de geste* (Genève: Slatkine, 1974), 5.

exemplary clergy rather than warriors, which is why the hagiographer will recount the virtues rather than the exploits of his subjects.<sup>587</sup>

As Boutet pointed out, the Romanesque chansons are usually addressed to a public of laymen attracted more to the marvellous than to the exaltation of sanctity.<sup>588</sup> As a result of the popular interest in the songs, they would have been repeated and sung among various individuals.<sup>589</sup> Madelénat believes that this ‘orality’ is their most defining feature:

‘The powerful structure of the medieval saga open to oral creativity and influenced by learned and early Romanesque works opposes the stability of the homeric model that is limited to the erudite. The genres are not well regulated [...].’<sup>590</sup>

What Madelénat is thus emphasising is the difference between oral traditions that are open to change and written traditions which, by definition, are much less subject to modifications. Yet many *chansons* were written down, either by scribes who attended sung representations or by poets who started writing them down.<sup>591</sup> Thus a particular written account is based on one of the many versions of the songs. However, Delbouille thinks that the changes should also be attributed to the transcriber himself who might have added certain elements in order to adapt the story to text.<sup>592</sup> In any case, as Boutet puts it, the *chanson de geste* is inherently changeable and no two versions are exactly the same.<sup>593</sup>

We shall see how the evolution of the Alysamps site relates to certain versions of the *chansons de geste* and how the interpretation of the site was dependant on them. We shall thus see how the monument was created through the few songs that are still available to us.

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<sup>587</sup> V. Saxer, ‘Légende épique et légende hagiographique. Problème d'origine et d'évolution des chansons de geste,’ *RSR* 33 (1959), 372-398, especially 373.

<sup>588</sup> D. Boutet, *La chanson de geste: forme et signification d'une écriture du Moyen âge* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1993), 46.

<sup>589</sup> D. Boutet, *La chanson de geste: forme et signification d'une écriture du Moyen âge*, 40.

<sup>590</sup> D. Madelenat, *L'Épopée* (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1996).

<sup>591</sup> J. Dugan, ‘La Théorie de la composition orale des chansons de geste : les faits et les interprétations,’ *Olifant* 3 (1981), 238-255, especially 252.

<sup>592</sup> see M. Delbouille, ‘Les chansons de geste et le livre’ *La technique littéraire des chansons de geste* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1959), 295-405.

<sup>593</sup> D. Boutet, *La chanson de geste: forme et signification d'une écriture du Moyen âge*, 66.

## 2. 1 The Chronicle of Pseudo Turpin

The first known inclusion of Arles within literature is in the *Chronicle of Pseudo Turpin*. This immensely successful Chronicle<sup>594</sup> dates from the XIIth century and is written in Latin. It is largely based on one of the versions of the *Chanson de Roland* that the author had at hand,<sup>595</sup> and includes a few added elements that probably originate from the author's own imagination.<sup>596</sup>

One of these elements is the inclusion of Turpin, the Archbishop of Reims in Charlemagne's time, as the narrator of the chronicle. Another important addition was the inclusion of Arles, as it relates that Charlemagne and Turpin helped the Burgundians to bury some of their soldiers who had fallen in the *Ailis Campis* in Arles after their combat with the Saracens in Roncevaux.<sup>597</sup> Hence, the Alysamps was thought to be a military cemetery for some of Charlemagne's warriors.

Moisan believes that the author of the chronicle saw the size of the cemetery in Arles and decided that it would have been an ideal place to have contained the bodies of 10,000 men.<sup>598</sup> According to this view, the association was thus motivated by the cemetery itself. This sounds quite plausible because it was said to have been one of the largest cemeteries in Europe and much of its history seemed to have been lost. For instance, *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela* in the XIIth century describes it as follows:

‘The cemetery is a mile long and a mile wide, and there is nothing like it for its numbers of marble tombs. They are carved in different styles, and engraved with Latin letters in

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<sup>594</sup> see A. Moisan, 'L'exploitation de la 'Chronique du Pseudo-Turpin' *Marche Romane* 31.3-4 (1981), 11-41.

<sup>595</sup> for more on the sources, see A. Moisan, 'La transposition de la 'Chanson de Roland' dans la 'Chronique du pseudo-turpin': contrefaçon ou sublimation?', *Actes du XIe Congrès International de la Société Rencesvals, Barcelona* (1988), 81-96, especially 81. We only have fragments of the many *chansons de Roland*, so it is impossible to know what came from the *chansons* and what came from the author's imagination.

<sup>596</sup> A. Moisan, 'La transposition de la 'Chanson de Roland' dans la 'Chronique du pseudo-turpin': contrefaçon ou sublimation?', 82.

<sup>597</sup> A. Moisan, 'La transposition de la 'Chanson de Roland' dans la 'Chronique du pseudo-turpin': contrefaçon ou sublimation?' 140.

<sup>598</sup> A. Moisan, 'La transposition de la 'Chanson de Roland' dans la 'Chronique du pseudo-turpin': contrefaçon ou sublimation?' 92.

an unintelligible, ancient language. The further you look, the more tombs you will see.<sup>599</sup>

This impressive number of sarcophagi, whose previous history had been forgotten to the extent that it had become ‘illegible’, must surely have sparked the imagination of medieval people. Re-imagining the cemetery to have been some sort of ‘military cemetery’ does not seem that far-fetched.

The number of fallen heroes varied from song to song, but it is always thought that there were many. As we mentioned, the *Chronicle of Pseudo Turpin* claimed that 10,000 men were buried in the Alysamps. Although the tombs were unmarked, the number of sarcophagi gave the viewer an inkling of the human sacrifice that had been made during that one battle in Roncevaux. Again, a comparison can be made with the countless crosses scattered around Douaumont cemetery or the Commonwealth WWII cemetery in Enfida (Tunisia)<sup>600</sup> which contains hundreds of tombs. In both these cases, all the tombs and crosses were made to resemble each other to show the egalitarian and collective nature of the warriors who had given their lives for a common cause.<sup>601</sup>

This idea of collectivity was not unknown to medieval people, in fact it became very important in many of the songs. For instance, the XIIth century song *Girart de Roussillon* recounts several battles including the battle of Civeaux in which it said that 7000 men had died. In reply, Girart declared: ‘I would rather be buried with them than near Saint Thomas in Saint Peter’s cemetery.’<sup>602</sup> There is thus a sense that the community remained, even in death.

## 2.2 Arles as the place of an epic battle

A slightly later source, the *Kaiserchronik*, the German Chronicle of Emperors written in Middle High German verse in Regensburg around 1147, offers an additional

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<sup>599</sup> W. Melczer. *The Pilgrim’s Guide to Santiago de Compostela*, 74-75.

<sup>600</sup> For more on Enfida see D. Wharton Lloyd, *Battlefield tourism : pilgrimage and the commemoration of the Great War in Britain, Australia and Canada, 1919-1939* (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 41.

<sup>601</sup> see A. Prost, ‘Verdun,’ 382.

<sup>602</sup> ‘Mais vuel ob es jacer per sain Thomas,  
Qu’el monester sain Pierre, dins lo compas! (v. 6042-6043)

element to the cemetery. In the part dealing with Charlemagne, it recounts how he freed Arles:

‘The emperor Charles laid siege to a well-defended town called Arles. He stayed there more than seven years. The besieged army held him in contempt, they used an underground canal to obtain an abundant supply of wine and everything they needed to keep them alive, but Charles was wily and diverted the canal so that they could not hold out any longer. They opened the gates and fought fiercely. The dead were indistinguishable when God showed them to the emperor, he found all the Christians in ornamentally carved stone tombs’<sup>603</sup>

The Alyscamps as related in the *Kaiserchronik* was more than a military cemetery, it was also the historic site on which battle took place. It was not unusual in songs to place epic battles in cemeteries. For example, René Louis remarked that the *Chanson de Girart de Roussillon* made broad use of Merovingian cemeteries as the battlefields of its hero.<sup>604</sup> *Quarré Les Tombes* is a particularly remarkable site because of the number of its ancient sarcophagi.

When the legends themselves did not mention the site, it became common to associate a site with a battle. One example that has already been mentioned was the cemetery in St. Emiliand, reimagined to have been the site on which the Knights of the Round Table fought. More generally, as Delahaye has shown, one cemetery in the Yonne was renamed ‘*Champ de Bataille*’ (Battlefield) while another was called ‘*Vallée de Sang*’ (Blood Valley) because of popular belief that the cemeteries were once the sites of a bloody battle.<sup>605</sup> In these cases, the cemeteries became more than a monument to the dead warriors, they also became a monument to the battle itself.

In Arles, it was probably the nature of the site that motivated such beliefs because of the size and layout of the cemetery, described by Dante in his *Inferno* as he compares it with the Dis (lower hells circles 6 through 9):

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<sup>603</sup> M. Maria, *Helff Studien zur Kaiserchronik*. (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1930), v.14885-908.

<sup>604</sup> R. Louis, ‘Cimetières mérovingiens et chansons de geste’ *Études mérovingiennes actes des journées de Poitiers, 1er-3 mai 1952*, ed. E-R. Labande (Paris: Picard, 1953), 201-218.

<sup>605</sup> G-R. Delahaye, ‘Nécropoles du haut Moyen Age et champs de bataille épiques,’ *La Chanson de geste et le mythe carolingien : mélanges René Louis*, ed. R. Louis, vol. 2 (Saint-Pere-sous-Vézelay: Musée archéologique régional, 1982), 807-921, especially 808.

‘As at Arles, where the Rhone stagnates, or Pola, near the Gulf of Quarnaro, that confines Italy, and bathes its coast, the sepulchres make the ground uneven, so they did here, all around, only here the nature of it was more terrible.’<sup>606</sup>

The description offered by Dante is truly frightful, making Arles (the Alyscamps) seem the ideal place for a bloody battle. The accumulation and unevenness helped to recreate the chaos of the battle as it was described in many songs. According to the *Kaiserchronik*, tombs replaced dead bodies. They thus themselves became the material representation of the dead soldiers scattered around the battlefield.

### 2.3 The tomb of Roland

Finally, an interesting addition was made in the late XIIIth century when renowned knights started to become associated with the site. Yet another Charlemagne Chronicle, the Icelandic *Karlamagnus Saga* written in Norse in the late XIIIth century and thought to be a compilation of various *chansons de geste*, placed Roland’s tomb in Arles:

‘[...] Charlemagne then had large perfectly matched biers made and had the bodies of Roland and twelve peers and barons who had died with him placed in the biers, and set off accompanied by his troops with great pomp and ceremony. They travelled to the city of Arles, the capital of the country called Provence.’

Thus for the first time, Roland himself was imagined to have been in Arles, which is surprising because according to the *Pilgrim’s Guide*, Roland’s tomb was thought to have been in Blaye.

The idea that his tomb was in Arles is probably the result of medieval confusion. A bishop in Arles called Rotland famously battled against the Saracens.<sup>607</sup> In 869, he was seen by the Saracens supervising preparations for the defence of the Camargues region where 300 Provençaux were killed in battle, and the bishop was also

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<sup>606</sup> Dante, *Inferno Canto*, IX.

<sup>607</sup> A. Carraz, *L’ordre du Temple dans la basse vallée du Rhône, 1124-1312 ordres militaires*, 211.

killed later. The Provençaux then transferred his body to Arles and supposedly buried him in St. Honorat church in the Alyscamps, alongside their other bishops.

Rotland could have been confused with Roland years later, perhaps long after the original history of the bishop had been forgotten. After all, several legends in Arles prove that people had little sense of history and geography. Popular and clerical imagination made Saint Honorat (an Arles IVth century bishop), Saint Trophimus (the first Bishop of Arles) and Saint Porcaire contemporaries with Charlemagne. Saint Genesius, the martyr saint who died during the IInd century, became Roland's brother and Vivian became Honorat's friend.<sup>608</sup>

Of course, these beliefs made Roland and his uncle Charlemagne very popular in Arles. For example, Charlemagne and two knights, Roland and Olivier, were depicted on the capitals of St. Trophimus's cloisters. But their inclusion within the history of Arles is nowhere more noticeable than in Montmajour Abbey, known to have been one of the main rivals of the monastery of St. Victor in Marseille. The monks claimed that Charlemagne had reconstructed the abbey after the Saracens had destroyed it and also that they were in possession of the sepulchres of Franks who had died in battle.<sup>609</sup> This was proven through an ancient inscription on the walls of the Church of St. Cross founded in 1421 by Johan of Pomo, *prieur claustral*, which describes the victory of Charlemagne's army over the Saracens, his reconstruction of the abbey, the endowment of goods to the abbey and the sepulchres of Franks who had died in combat.

## 2.4 Vivian

Another tradition that came to be associated with the city of Arles was that of Vivian, William of Orange's nephew known to have died tragically in battle. Vivian was a popular figure during the Middle Ages and the hero of various songs of which the

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<sup>608</sup> A. Moisan, 'Les sépultures des Français morts à Roncevaux,' 140.

<sup>609</sup> They also claimed that on one of his hunting trips, Clovis's son Childebert came across some impoverished monks and constructed a Church for them that became the primitive monastery. See J-M. Rouquette and G. Barraol, *Provence romane*, 361 and for more on the abbey, see L. Stouff, 'Saint-Pierre de Montmajour et la ville d'Arles' *L'Église et la vie religieuse à Arles et en Provence au Moyen âge* ed. idéologies et croyances au Moyen âge Equipe de recherches Sociétés (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 2001), 23.

most famous are the *song of William of Orange* (1140) and the song of the *Aliscans* (1180). Unlike Roland and Charlemagne, the earliest account of Vivian's relation with Arles comes from a description of the cemetery rather than from epic literature.

Our first source is Archbishop Michel of Mouriès who described the cemetery between 1202 and 1217. He mentions Roland, Vivian and William. Around the same time (in 1210), Gervase of Tilbury wrote his popular *Otia Imperialia* in which he also describes the cemetery:

‘After the holy bishops had made the solemn consecration, Christ appeared to them in all his humanity as a brother near the Eastern end now dedicated to the Holy Virgin, blessing their works and granting this grace to the cemetery and to everyone who would be buried in it: whoever’s remains are buried here shall be protected against all diabolical trickery as described in the Gospel [...]. Henceforth, due to the grace of this blessing of the Lord and the consecration of these very holy men, it became the custom among the most eminent princes and churchmen of Gaul that the sepulchres of the most powerful warriors who died fighting pagans in Gaul, the Pyrenees and the Alps would be in Alysamps cemetery. Some were brought by carriage, others in carts, by horse or on the Rhone, to lie alongside Vivian, Count Bertrand, Aistulf and countless other pious men.’<sup>610</sup>

The *Otia* is supposed to be an encyclopaedic history of the Wonders of the World, and it is not surprising that Gervase of Tilbury included Arles in it. We know that he had lived in Arles for several years and was appointed Marshall of the Kingdom of Arles in 1198, hence before he wrote his account. He thus knew the local traditions because he had lived there.

There are few reasons to believe that this tradition was widespread outside Arles. The only two other accounts which put Vivian's tomb in Arles are from local sources. One of them is the *vita* of St. Honorat written in Latin in 1250. While it was written to celebrate Honorat, the bishop of Arles and founder of Lérins monastery, it also mentioned many other heroes associated with Arles:

‘After begging Leo, Emperor of Constantinople, in vain for aid at the time of the persecutions of Christians by Aygolant, Marsile and Arnulphe, Pope Etienne decided to hand the Empire over to the Latins ; he wanted to crown Charles, Duke of Bavaria, as

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<sup>610</sup> Gervais de Tilbury in S. Banks and J. Binns, *Otia imperialia recreation for an emperor*, 52.

Holy Roman Emperor. On his way to Rome, Charles was accompanied by a noble called Uezianus and as they were crossing the Alps, they met Honorat at Argentière pass. Uezianus was finding the voyage difficult so he remained in Honorat's hermitage and the two men became friends. After returning from Rome, Charles set siege to the Town of Arles. Prince Atrapensis killed Uezian and Charles took the town.<sup>611</sup>

This largely understudied *vita* is fascinating for our purpose. First, it ignores time, making Charlemagne contemporary with the Vth century Bishop Honorat. Second, it includes the tradition of Vivian.

The other inclusion of Vivian is in Bertrand of Boysset's little known *Roman d'Arles* written in Provençal in 1375. While the novel comprises many imagined elements of the city's history, it has an important section on Arles' Saracen past in what is commonly called the epic part of the novel in which many heroes who appear in all the chronicles described above are brought together in an attempt to recapture the City of Arles, thought to have been held by the Saracen king Thibault. These heroes were no less than Charlemagne, Roland, William and Vivian. The novel contains a medley of many songs, as Chabaneau wrote it is a

'confused and much abbreviated extract from one or several French *chansons de geste* about William of Orange in which several features appear that could easily have been taken from known poems such as *Aliscans*, *Foulque de Candie*, *Galien* and *Fierabras*.'<sup>612</sup>

The *Roman d'Arles* is perhaps one of the last epic interpretations that included Arles. It is also the one that best illustrates the Alyscamps site as it includes many saints and knights from St. Honorat to Vivian, who eventually became associated with the site.

It is thus most probable that this association between Vivian and Arles was local because all sources are local (except for Gervase of Tilbury but he had lived in Arles and therefore had probably heard the history of the site from locals). This is different from the traditions related to Roland that were also known outside Arles as is

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<sup>611</sup> See H. Haupt and B. Boysset, *Le Roman d'Arles dans la copie de Bertran Boysset (manuscrit Aix-en-Provence, musée Paul Arbaud, M.O.63) études et édition*, (Tübingen: A. Francke, 2003), 55.

<sup>612</sup> C. Chabaneau, *Le roman d'Arles* (Paris: J. Maisonneuve, 1889), 479.

testified by the variety of sources that allude to them. But why add the tradition of Vivian to Arles when the traditions of Charlemagne and Roland were already present?

One possible answer can be found in the songs referring to William and Vivian. In them, there is a gradual change in the name of one of the battles in which William of Orange fought and Vivian died. Weeks has shown that in the *Chanson de Guillaume* written about 1140, the site was called Archamp, or Larchamp (which is probably a place in Spain).<sup>613</sup> The same story was narrated later in 1180, with a few changes in which the site came to be called *Aliscans* and this became the name of the new song. The resemblance between the names of Alyscamps in Arles and *Aliscans* the battleground might thus have been coincidental, particularly if like Robert Lafont we believe that the site described in the song would have been situated somewhere in what was Narbonne at the time.<sup>614</sup> Having said this, it seems entirely possible that the Arlesians themselves made the connection between the two names and started to imagine the site to have been in Arles.

Thus, the two traditions of Roland and of Vivian became associated with the Alyscamps site. Both knights were eventually thought to have their tombs on the same site, although this was not mentioned in any of the early songs or chronicles. Therefore, the site is a fusion of two distinctive literary traditions and came to be understood as mementos for both. It also became interpreted as the site of an epic battle through these same songs.

The Alyscamps offered a perfect example of literary archaeology, in that it was born and understood through *chansons*. Although the site had been there since antiquity, it was only through these songs that it acquired its new epic meaning.

### 3.The Sarcophagi of heroes

A very small number of these many sarcophagi were associated with specific heroes. They were somewhat ornamented and sought to commemorate a specific hero rather than the proverbial unknown soldier, unlike most other tombs that were generally

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<sup>613</sup> for a study on the location of the battle of the *Aliscans*, see R. Weeks, 'Etudes sur *Aliscans*,' 274.

<sup>614</sup> R. Lafont, 'Le mystère de l'Archamp,' *Medioevo romanzo* XIII.2 (1988), 161-180, especially 163.

plain.<sup>615</sup> We know about only three such sarcophagi, those of Vivian, Turpin and Roland. We know nothing of the tombs of the other knights who were thought to have been in the Alyscamps, no description has been made.

Sadly, Vivian is the only one of the three heroes whose tomb is left. He became associated with the sarcophagus that had once belonged to an individual called Memorius during the IVth century (Figure 9).<sup>616</sup> This sarcophagus is very interesting for two reasons, firstly because of its iconography and secondly because it had already been reused during Late Antiquity.

This sarcophagus dates from the II<sup>nd</sup> century and depicts a hunting scene.<sup>617</sup> On the front are two centaurs fighting a lion that is attacking one of them. This scene is an action shot, a specific moment in time in which a killing action is being played. One of the centaurs is holding a lance ready to use it on the lion, while the other is armed with a stone, also ready to make use of it. On the back is a vase (that Esperandieu interpreted as an urn)<sup>618</sup> flanked by two griffons that are touching it, perhaps as a sign of protection. Two sphinxes are depicted on the short sides each with a paw facing upwards towards the hunting scene, thus suggesting that it was meant to be seen as the face of the sarcophagus.

Its reuse for Memorius had a considerable impact on the sarcophagus. His epigraph was added on both sides of the sarcophagus on the frieze above the main scenes. The sarcophagus might have been reused for him because of its iconography. Memorius had a military career<sup>619</sup> and the hunting scene might have reflected his prowess and courage. After all, as Anderson has pointed out, hunts were often seen as exercises for war and were therefore often linked with some specific aspect of courage

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<sup>615</sup> for a full account of all the sarcophagi found in the Alyscamps, see F. Benoît, 'Fouilles aux Alyscamps : 'Areae' cimetiérales et sarcophages de l'école d'Arles.' 115-132 and F. Benoît, *Sarcophages paléochrétiens d'Arles et de Marseille*.

<sup>616</sup> P. Saxi, *Pontificum Arelatense*, (Aix, 1620), 200 ; M. Fabre, *Annales des Minimes*, 1686, Bibliothèque d'Arles, ms. 166, 86 ; J. Seguin, *Les antiquitez d'Arles*, vol 2 (Arles, 1687), 28 and A. Arnaud, *Récit des anciens monuments d'Arles* (Arles, 1739), 72.

<sup>617</sup> V. Gaggadis 'Sarcophages d'Arles: Art attique et influences micrasiatiques' *125 Jahre Sarkophag-Corpus*, Marburg, 4-7 Oktober 1995 Mainz am Rhein (1998), 270-274.

<sup>618</sup> E. Espérandieu, *Note sur quelques sarcophages d'Arles. Note sur deux inscriptions du XIVe siècle* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1894), 1-12.

<sup>619</sup> for more on his life, see C. Jullian, 'La carrière d'un soldat au IVE siècle,' *BE* (1884), 1-12.

admired in men. Koortbojian sees hunts as serving as an example, being a sign of virtue and a model of conduct.<sup>620</sup>

Newby has pointed out that many hunt sarcophagi should be seen as aspirational sarcophagi that assert a symbolic meaning to the life of the deceased rather than a literal representation of him or her. There is no human representation in our case, even though the iconography represents a hunting scene. It is thus a representation of an imaginary hunt between centaurs and lions. Newby has argued that the use of hunt scenes on this type of sarcophagus ‘mythologised’ the deceased in the same manner as mythological sarcophagi.<sup>621</sup>

Thus, this sarcophagus was obviously a good choice for a warrior like Memorius. In this light, it would have made sense to reinvent it as the sarcophagus of a famous knight like Vivian.<sup>622</sup> At that time the sarcophagus was probably not interpreted simply as a hunt scene, but also as a combat scene.

This point is well illustrated by comparing Vivian’s hunt sarcophagus with the earlier yet still relevant late XIth century sarcophagus of the nun Doña Sancha<sup>623</sup> (Figure 50) who was the daughter of Ramiro I, the King of Aragon. Her father was one of the heroes of the *Reconquesta* and one of the most representative heroes of the crusades in Spain. He set siege to Graus in 1063, and was killed there by a Muslim. His death is often said to have had an enormous impact on the western world.

This is reflected in some aspects of the iconography on the sarcophagus of his daughter. The anterior face of the sarcophagus, which is the only part that we still have today, depicts three scenes, the central scene showing a soul in a mandorla with a bishop carrying a cross on one side and Sancha surrounded by three women on the other

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<sup>620</sup> M. Koortbojian, *Myth, meaning, and memory on Roman sarcophagi*, 35.

<sup>621</sup> Z. Newby, ‘In the Guise of Gods and Heroes: Portrait Heads on Roman Mythological Sarcophagi,’ *Life, death and representation : some new work on Roman sarcophagi*, eds. J. Elsner and J. Huskinson (Berlin: Gruyter, 2010), 217.

<sup>622</sup> According to Saxio and others before him, the sarcophagus had been associated with Vivian since the XIIIth century. However, the primary evidence that they used for their proof has been lost. L. Estoublon, C. de Nostredame and J. Pillier, *Pontificium arelatense, seu Historia primatum sanctae arelatensis ecclesiae, cum indice rerum politicarum Galliae ac Provinciae tempore uniuscujusque primatis, auctore Petro Saxio* (Aquis Sextiis: typis J. Roize, 1629). 200 ; M. Fabre, *Annales des Minimes*. 86 ; J. Seguin, *Les Antiquitez d'Arles traitées en matière d'entretien et d'itinéraire...* (Arles: C. Mesnier, 1687), 28 and A. Arnaud, *Récit des anciens monumens d'Arles* (Arles: 1739), 72.

<sup>623</sup> A. Kingsley Porter, ‘The Tomb of Doña Sancha and the Romanesque Art of Aragon,’ *BMC* ,45.259 (1924), 165-179, see also J. Mann, *Romanesque architecture and its sculptural decoration in Christian Spain, 1000-1120 : exploring frontiers and defining identities* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 81.

side. More importantly for us, the posterior face contained a scene with two knights on horses confronting each other with spears. In another arcade, a young knight is stepping on a lion, forcing the jaw of the beast open (triumph of virtuous strength over brute force).

The two knights battling on the left have been said to represent a Christian and a pagan (Muslim).<sup>624</sup> But the scene of the knight slaying the lion is more interesting to us. It is clearly not represented as a hunt, but rather as a battle against brute and animalesque force. Here we get a glimpse of how the Saracens were seen, through the figures of lions. After all, in many *chansons*, they were described as having ‘animalesque’ qualities. For example, in the *Aliscans* they are represented as being almost at the edge of humanity with red eyes, horns, claws and making yapping noises, and it was not unusual to see Saracens illustrated with such qualities in visual culture. In a later manuscript illumination of the *Grands Chroniques de France* (Figure 51) dating from 1370 we can see Charlemagne and his Christian knights opposed to the devilish, animalistic looking Saracens. In the illustration of the Battle of Roncevaux (Figure 52) in the same book, Christians are opposed to two Saracens with animalesque features holding shields, one depicting an unknown creature and the other a lion/tiger. Another interesting example is found in an illustration of the mid-XIth century Oscott Psalter (Figure 53), where a Saracen in the margin has a tail and lion legs, threatening praying Christians. A Saracen ‘monster’ can also be found in a 15th century pew end in Norfolk (Figure 54), bearing resemblance to a dragon and armed with a scimitar<sup>625</sup>. Finally, Higgs Strickland claims that the famous tympanum at the abbey Church of La Madeleine (Figure 55), completed in 1130, in which the second crusade was preached, depicted monstrous races which she suggests might have been interpreted as the Saracens themselves.<sup>626</sup>

They thus represented some of the worst forms of evil, and the depiction of the lion on Sancha’s sarcophagus represents what has to be fought. Reminiscent of an older Christian iconography, Samson slaying the lion, the battle should be seen as being between good and evil. After all, things were seen as being very clear cut, as is

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<sup>624</sup> R. Lejeune, ‘Le heros épique’ *La légende de Roland dans l’art du Moyen-âge*, eds. R. Lejeune and J. Stiennon (Bruxelles: Arcade, 1967), 5-28, especially 26-28.

<sup>625</sup> D. Strickland, *Saracens, demons, & Jews : making monsters in Medieval art* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), 184.

<sup>626</sup> D. Strickland, *Saracens, demons, & Jews : making monsters in Medieval art*, 159.

expressed quite simply in the *Song of Roland*: ‘Pagans are wrong and Christians are right’.

As Morris has shown, there was a growing interest in the imagery of Psychomachia from the XIth century onwards.<sup>627</sup> Knight combat scenes were generally very popular.<sup>628</sup> Many combat scenes from the *Song of Roland* were particularly popular among illustrators, and were depicted all over Europe. One example is the XIIth century lintel of the tympanum in the cathedral of Angoulême, which depicts the combat of Roland’s warriors who assure the triumph of the Christian faith (Figure 56).<sup>629</sup> It also depicts Archbishop Turpin in combat with Abime and other specific scenes described in the legends. Other examples in Santa Maria in Cosmedin feature XIIth century frescoes from the cycle of Charlemagne, including some specific scenes set in Jerusalem.<sup>630</sup>

There are thus good reasons to believe that Vivian’s sarcophagus would have been seen more as a battle scene than as a hunt. Depictions of hunts were fairly popular in the Middle Ages. However such depictions resemble a status symbol rather than strength, because royalty and nobility were the only classes who had the wealth and leisure to engage in hunts for sport.<sup>631</sup> The so-called sarcophagus of Memorius was thus indeed a fitting sarcophagus for Vivian, the martyr of the *Aliscans*. While it did not represent him directly, the hunt scene would have been a symbolic representation of his actions in combat through the rhetoric of crusading.

Unfortunately, a similar study cannot be made for any other famous knights in the Alysamps because we no longer know which specific sarcophagi were assigned to them. Our understanding of them is thus heavily dependent on primary and secondary sources. Having said this, the tomb of Roland is mentioned in a few instances but there are no lengthy descriptions.

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<sup>627</sup> C. Morris, ‘Propaganda for War: The Dissemination of the Crusading Ideal in the Twelfth Century,’ *SCH* 20 (1983), 79-101, especially 93-101.

<sup>628</sup> C. Morris, ‘Propaganda for War: The Dissemination of the Crusading Ideal in the Twelfth Century,’ 100.

<sup>629</sup> R. Lejeune and J. Stiennon, ‘Le linteau d’Angoulême et la chanson de Roland,’ *La légende de Roland dans l’art du Moyen Age*, eds. R. Lejeune and J. Stiennon, vol. 1 (Bruxelles: Arcade, 1967), 29-43.

<sup>630</sup> R. Lejeune and J. Stiennon, ‘Les peintures murales de Santa Maria de Cosmedin,’ *La légende de Roland dans l’art du Moyen Age*, eds. R. Lejeune and J. Stiennon, vol. 1 (Bruxelles: Arcade, 1967), 43-51.

<sup>631</sup> A. Cavallo, *The Unicorn Tapestries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 29.

As we have already suggested, the tomb that was once attributed to Roland was probably the tomb that was first attributed to Bishop Rotland. It has briefly been described by many visitors, for instance in 1474 Hans von Waltheym observed ‘Roland, the Grand Prince of Christendom, fought the pagans outside the town of Arles, as witnessed in the bones’. Sinceri’s *Itinerarium Galliae* written in 1649 also mentions the presence of Roland’s tomb.<sup>632</sup>

Only Veran provided a description of the iconography as he wrote that it depicted ‘eight apostles in niches including two in the middle niche.’<sup>633</sup> Unlike the tomb of Vivian which seems to have been chosen for its warrior iconography, the tomb of Roland had a more clerical meaning with its apostle iconography that had probably been chosen for its original owner, Rotland.

In this respect it would have been interesting to have seen the sarcophagus that was once attributed to Bishop Turpin. Since he was a bishop himself and also active in combat, there would have been a large spectrum of suitable sarcophagi for him. However, the mystery is absolute because we do not know which sarcophagus was once associated with him. Having said this, Benoît claimed that his sarcophagus was situated in St. Polycarpe Chapel in the church of St. Honorat with an inscription showing a ‘hexagonal pyramid roof surmounted by a cross.’<sup>634</sup> Judging from the testaments of people who asked to be buried close to his tomb, it seems more likely that the sarcophagus was in the cemetery, but it could have been moved inside the chapel, for instance during the time of the Minims in the XVIIth century. Nevertheless, we do not know which sarcophagus Benoît was referring to.

Whichever sarcophagus it was, we know that it was of some importance to Arles. The testament of Henri Giraud, shepherd of Foz, shows that the tradition of his tomb had not been forgotten on the date on which it was written, on the February 18 1432 - ‘Now that my body is weak, I would like my tomb to be placed in Saint

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<sup>632</sup> see J.Zinzerling, *Jodoci Sinceri Itinerarium Galliae, ita accommodatum, ut ejus ductu mediocri tempore tota Gallia obiri, Anglia et Belgium adiri possint ; nec bis terve ad eadem loca rediri oporteat ; notatis cujuscunque loci quas vocant deliciis. Cum appendice de Burdigala, ac verborum indice* (Amstelodami: apud J. Jansonium, 1649), 133.

<sup>633</sup> J-D. Véran, *Notice des anciens monumens d'Arles* (Paris: Véran), 45.

<sup>634</sup> F. Benoît, *Les Cimetières suburbains d'Arles dans l'antiquité chrétienne et au moyen âge*, 36.

Honorat's Cemetery in Alyscamps near to or even inside Bishop Turpin's sepulchre.<sup>635</sup> There were many other earlier testaments that made a similar request. Furthermore, a priest Domi claimed to have seen his tomb in 1420.

Therefore, unlike many sarcophagi attributed to various warriors in the Alyscamps, these three sarcophagi were associated with specific individuals. They became symbols of the memory of some of the most revered figures of the Middle Ages. The site on which they were located, thought to have been the very space on which the battle had taken place, reminded the viewer of the tragedy of their death

Therefore the monument as a whole became multilayered, it became as complex as the songs with which it was associated. The site was a memento of a fictional battle and the sarcophagi of the death of its heroes.

## Part II - The context of the re-invention

### 4. Reconquesta and Crusade

The 'war memorial' in the Alyscamps and the songs and chronicles which inspired it were not reinvented immediately after the Saracen invasions in the South of France, but hundreds of years later when the Saracens were no longer a threat in the region. As Poly has pointed out, texts earlier than the Xth century depict these invasions very differently from texts written during and after the XIth century.<sup>636</sup> This was partly because of ideological changes that came about with the crusades. These events fundamentally changed the way that the history of the region was viewed, no longer isolated but as part of a much wider crusading process.<sup>637</sup> In the second part of this essay, I shall look at ways in which the Alyscamps would have been interpreted in the light of this new ideology.

The song the *Aliscans* describes this new mindset well:

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<sup>635</sup> 'Eligo, fragili meo corpori, sepulturam in cemeterio santi Honorati de Aliscampis, prope tumulum episcopi Turpini, quondam ibidem tumulati' in L. Stoff, 'Les Provençaux et la mort dans les testaments (XIIIe-XVe siècle),' *Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 33 (1998), 199-222, especially 202.

<sup>636</sup> J-P. Poly, *La Provence et la société féodale 879-1166, contribution à l'étude des structures dites féodales dans le Midi*, 57.

<sup>637</sup> D. Carraz, *L'ordre du Temple dans la basse vallée du Rhône, 1124-1312 ordres militaires, croisades et sociétés méridionales*, 89.

‘Or seront mes Sarrazin repose  
 N’avront mes guerre en trestot lor ae  
 François abessent mes ils sont amonte  
 He! Douce France, come chaies en viltel.  
 Encor ravront Orange ma cite  
 Tote ma terre et de ong et de le;  
 James par home ne eront contreste,  
 Par tote France feront lor volonte;  
 N’I avra messe ne matines chante,  
 Si destruiront sainte crestiente’ (v. 911-912, 917-922)<sup>638</sup>

The fear of the destruction of Christianity in the last sentence shows the universality of the dispute. The *chanson* sets the battle of the *Aliscans*, thought to have been somewhere in the South of France, within a larger framework. While the narrative is focused on one battle, it lies in the much wider setting of a religious war between Christians and Saracens.

To be sure, the concept of ‘crusades’ was loosely understood during the Middle Ages, particularly in the *chansons de geste*. It did not simply encompass the expeditions to the Holy Land, but also events in Southern Europe, mainly in Spain and in the South of France.<sup>639</sup> In fact, O’Callaghan believes that the Reconquesta became transformed into a crusade during the second half of the eleventh century.<sup>640</sup> More

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<sup>638</sup> ‘Now (the) Saracens will be better rested  
 Never again will they wage war in their lifetime.  
 The Franks diminish, but they are amplified.  
 Alas! Sweet France, you have been disgraced!  
 They will recapture Orange, my city,  
 All my land, far and wide.  
 Never will they be opposed by man.  
 They will have their way throughout France.  
 No mass or Matins will be sung  
 (And) they will destroy holy Christendom’

<sup>639</sup> While historically the Reconquesta was thought to have been mostly in Spain, as we have seen on p.160, the *chansons de geste* placed many of its main events in Provence, and thus introduced Provence into the Reconquesta. For more on this subject, see D. Carraz, *L'ordre du Temple dans la basse vallée du Rhône, 1124-1312 ordres militaires, croisades et sociétés méridionales*, 33.

<sup>640</sup> J. O’Callaghan, *Reconquest and crusade in medieval Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 24.

generally, Stuckey has shown that the Reconquesta began to conform to the ideology of the crusades and became a substitute for a Crusade to the Holy Land.<sup>641</sup>

Relations were forged between each event, and their specificities became merged because they both sought to defend Christian Lands. They became quasi-synchronous and the reconquesta was no longer seen as an isolated struggle, but rather as an event that prefigured the crusades.

The term *crusades* was even sometimes employed for these 'Reconquestas'. In the XIIth century German version of the song of Roland, the *Rolandslied* by Pfaffe Konrad, before going to Southern France and Spain, Charlemagne declared 'I'll lead such a Crusade that they [the Saracens] will regret ever having been born. They shall all perish shamefully.'<sup>642</sup> These 'crusades' were described using a similar rhetoric, promoting the need to liberate a land and avenge Christianity.<sup>643</sup> Both lands - Western Europe and the Holy Land - were seen as fundamentally Christian under wrongful occupation. Carraz has pointed out that the Reconquesta in Provence was often described employing the terms *liberation* and *reconquest*.<sup>644</sup> Similarly in Spain, Pope Gregory VII wrote that it 'belonged from ancient times to St. Peter in full sovereignty and though occupied for a long time by the pagans, it belongs even now – since justice has not been set aside – to no mortal, but solely to the Apostolic See'. Shortly afterwards, Pope Urban II called for a war of liberation to free the Eastern Churches from the Muslims and to free the city of Jerusalem from the servitude into which it had fallen.<sup>645</sup> As Urban II pointed out, the warriors of these crusades became 'liberators of the Church' which was under wrongful occupation.<sup>646</sup>

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<sup>641</sup> J. Stuckey, 'Charlemagne as Crusader? Memory, Propaganda, and the Many Uses of Charlemagne's Legendary Expedition to Spain,' *The legend of Charlemagne in the Middle Ages : power, faith, and crusade*, eds. M. Gabriele and J. Stuckey (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 139. See also J. Flori, *La Guerre sainte la formation de l'idée de croisade dans l'Occident chrétien*, Collection historique, (Paris: Aubier, 2001), 50-60.

<sup>642</sup> J. Thomas, *Priest Konrad's 'Song of Roland'*, Studies in German literature, linguistics, and culture (Columbia: Camden House, 1994), 45.

<sup>643</sup> J. Stuckey, 'Charlemagne as Crusader? Memory, Propaganda, and the Many Uses of Charlemagne's Legendary Expedition to Spain,' 140.

<sup>644</sup> D. Carraz, *L'ordre du Temple dans la basse vallée du Rhône, 1124-1312 ordres militaires, croisades et sociétés méridionales*, 49 and also J-P. Poly, *La Provence et la société féodale 879-1166, contribution à l'étude des structures dites féodales dans le Midi*, 28.

<sup>645</sup> J. Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the idea of crusading*, 18.

<sup>646</sup> J. Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the idea of crusading*, 18.

## 4.1 From reconquesta to crusader knights

The role of the knights who had fought to defend Spain and France was similar to the role of crusaders in the Holy Land. This is why their deeds became some of the most popular historical events described in songs starting from the end of the XIth century.<sup>647</sup> Their inclusion within Christian narrative was part of a larger ideological change. The Church was interested in building the image of a warrior in a positive light compatible with Christian ideals. To quote Keen's words, it sought to 'develop knighthood (and warriorhood in general) as a Christian vocation.'<sup>648</sup>

This was very significant because the warrior concept had traditionally been diametrically opposed to the teachings of the Church that had a pacific tradition, influenced mostly by monasticism.<sup>649</sup> It generally viewed 'militia' in a negative light. For example, Urban II referred to them as 'you, oppressors of orphans, robbers of widows, murderers, destroyers of everything sacred, violators of the rights of others [...].'<sup>650</sup>

There was thus a keen interest in creating a tradition of Christian warriors. Hobsbawm showed that traditions are often built on the illusion of repetition<sup>651</sup> and in this case it was done by building the illusion that the Christian warrior had been around for centuries. Therefore, an interest was created in everyone who had ever fought for Christianity. In 1260, Humbert of Romans wrote his *De predicatione crucis*, a book destined to be an instruction manual for aspiring preachers of the crusades, in which he said that preachers should emphasise the great courage of earlier Christian warriors, especially scriptural figures from the Old Testament.

Derbes has shown how this idea was also translated into art in which scriptural iconography was presented with a crusading agenda in mind.<sup>652</sup> Similar studies were also made by Weiss who concluded 'The medieval west constructed its rationale for propagating religious wars in the Holy Land in large part by appropriating biblical

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<sup>647</sup> D. Boutet, *La chanson de geste: forme et signification d'une écriture du Moyen âge*, 4.

<sup>648</sup> M. Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 1984), 46.

<sup>649</sup> M. Keen, *Chivalry*, 46.

<sup>650</sup> as cited in J. Flori, *L'Essor de la chevalerie XIe-XIIIe siècles*, Travaux d'histoire éthico-politique (Genève: Droz, 1986), 82.

<sup>651</sup> E. Hobsbawm, *The invention of tradition*, 25.

<sup>652</sup> A. Derbes, 'Crusading Ideology and the Frescoes of S. Maria in Cosmedin' *ABull* 77.3 (1995), 460.

precedents – especially from the Old Testament.<sup>653</sup> The New Testament was also reinterpreted as rhetoric for crusade, especially by Bernard of Clairvaux, who took some of its passages and radically reinterpreted them.<sup>654</sup> Furthermore, the cult of military saints flourished,<sup>655</sup> especially the cults of St. Michael and St. George, the latter having been popular especially during the second half of the eleventh century.<sup>656</sup> The reinterpretation of previous holy figures became casuistic, to say the least. Through typology, they were transformed into proto-crusaders who set a precedent for the new defenders of Christianity, the crusaders.

The warriors who took part in the ‘Reconquestas’ in Spain and Provence were also painted as protocrusaders. In his *De predicatione crucis*, Humbert of Romans also used figures such as Roland and his companions as examples of ideal Christian knights who should be emulated. In fact in most *chansons de geste*, famous crusaders were compared with Roland or Oliver,<sup>657</sup> who in Boutet’s words were universal examples of a perfect and ideal knight.<sup>658</sup> Their character became perfected to the extent that they ceased to be historical individuals and instead reached an almost mythical status.<sup>659</sup>

These attempts at setting these epic knights as exemplars to be emulated seem to have been fairly successful. Poly showed that starting in the XIth century, knights frequently named themselves Oliver, Roland and even Vivian.<sup>660</sup>

Perhaps the figure that became the most mythologised was Charlemagne. As Folz has shown, mythological associations developed between him, the Holy Land and the Reconquesta, starting from the Xth century.<sup>661</sup> Morrissey wrote that the figure of

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<sup>653</sup> D. Weiss, ‘Biblical History and Medieval Historiography: Rationalizing Strategies in Crusader Art,’ *Modern Language Notes* 108.4 (1993), 710-737, especially 712.

<sup>654</sup> C. Tyerman, *Fighting for Christendom : holy war and the crusades* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 96-97.

<sup>655</sup> M. Keen, *Chivalry*, 47.

<sup>656</sup> C. Erdmann, M. Whithed Baldwin and W. Goffart, *The origin of the idea of crusade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 255-260.

<sup>657</sup> D. Trotter, *Medieval French literature and the crusades 1100-1300*, Histoire des idées et critique littéraire (Genève: Droz, 1988), 111-112.

<sup>658</sup> D. Boutet, ‘Aliscans et la problématique du héros épique médiéval,’ *Comprendre et aimer la chanson de geste à propos d’Aliscans*, ed. M. Gally (Paris: Ens. diff. Ophrys, 1994), 47-63, especially 48.

<sup>659</sup> J-C. Vallecalle, ‘Aspects du héros dans Aliscans,’ *Mourir aux Aliscans : ‘Aliscans’ et la légende de Guillaume d’Orange*, ed. J. Dufournet, vol. 39 (Paris: H. Champion, 1993), 177-196, especially 182.

<sup>660</sup> J-P. Poly and E. Bournazel, *The feudal transformation : 900-1200* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1991), 112.

<sup>661</sup> see R. Folz, *Le Souvenir et la légende de Charlemagne dans l’Empire germanique médiéval* (Paris, Belles Lettres, 1950), 114-158.

Charlemagne in the *Karoli Magni* represented him as ‘the model of the crusading king, an image that was later adopted for expeditions to the Holy Land.’<sup>662</sup> Stuckey writes that by the mid-XIIth century, he had become a broad exemplar for crusading in both Spain and the Holy Land, as ‘further military exploits in Spain were grafted into the story of Roland in the so-called Latin Pseudo-Turpin.’<sup>663</sup>

Other stories emerged making the parallel between the two ‘crusades’ even more striking. For example, Ekkehard of Aura reported a story circulating about the time of the first crusade which related that Charlemagne rose from the dead to lead the campaign in the Holy Land.<sup>664</sup> Another good illustration of this point is in the Stained Glass of Chartres Cathedral which are thought to date from around 1210-1220 and which depict Charlemagne delivering Jerusalem from the Saracens alongside depictions of his triumph during the Spanish crusades.<sup>665</sup>

One of the most interesting monuments commemorating him was probably his tomb in Aachen that was a late antique sarcophagus. It is thought to have dated from the II<sup>nd</sup> century and was probably made in Italy, representing the kidnapping of Proserpina.<sup>666</sup> Obviously, this sarcophagus was not chosen to create a pretence that his death occurred during an earlier century, but rather because there was a desire to tie him to a wider tradition by *imitatio imperii*.<sup>667</sup>

Interestingly, Charlemagne’s brother Carloman and his son Louis the Pious were also buried in reused antique sarcophagi. Louis’s sarcophagus was thought to have come from Arles and had the iconography of the Crossing of the Red Sea.<sup>668</sup> As Melzak has suggested, the historical (and biblical) figure of Moses on his sarcophagus is

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<sup>662</sup> R. Morrissey, *Charlemagne & France : a thousand years of mythology*, Laura Shannon series in French medieval studies (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 51-52.

<sup>663</sup> J. Stuckey, ‘Charlemagne as Crusader? Memory, Propaganda, and the Many Uses of Charlemagne’s Legendary Expedition to Spain,’ 141.

<sup>664</sup> Ekkehard of Aura, *Chronicon*, MGH, 6: 215. ‘Inde fabulosum illud confictum est de Karolo Magno quasi de mortuis in id ipsum resuscitato et alio nescio quo nihilominus redivivo, fribolum quoque illud de ansere quasi dominam suam deducente, multaque id genus.’

<sup>665</sup> see C. Maines, ‘The Charlemagne Window at Chartres Cathedral: New Considerations on Text and Image,’ *Speculum* 52.4 (1977), 801-823.

<sup>666</sup> J. Nelson, ‘Carolingian royal funerals’ *Rituals of power : from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages*, eds. Fans Theuws and Janet. Nelson, vol. 8 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 152.

<sup>667</sup> J. Nelson, ‘Carolingian royal funerals,’ 151.

<sup>668</sup> For more on their tombs see A. Dierkens, ‘Autour de la tombe de Charlemagne. Considérations sur la sépulture des souverains carolingiens et des membres de leurs familles.’ *Byzantion* LXI (1991).156-180.

cited as an exemplar of the qualities of Louis's kinship.<sup>669</sup> There was thus an interest in bridging the gap between present and past, to show continuity and to present these rulers as descendants of a great imperial and religious tradition.<sup>670</sup>

Of course, the tombs in the Alysamps were not 'chosen' for reuse, rather they were invented, imagined to have always housed the bones of these epic warriors. The antiquity of their sarcophagi reminded the viewer of the antiquity of these warriors who had fought a similar struggle to theirs hundreds of years before. It thus contributed to the creation of a seemingly old tradition of a Christian warrior that had already been in place for a very long time.

## 4.2 The new martyr

Many of these knights were celebrated not just because of their courage in battle, but also because of their sacrifices. This is partly because, following Urban's call, it was believed that anyone who died for God in battle would meet him in the eternal kingdom and all their sins would be pardoned that day. This is why Bishop Adhermar, the Papal legate, made it clear that knights should not fear death but should seek it.

Throughout this thesis, and especially in chapters I and II, I have discussed the various ways in which people have sought to equate their status with martyrdom. The crusades offered an opportunity to attain that status, if one was willing to die in an attempt to defend Christianity.<sup>671</sup> Hence in songs and other media it was common to see various knights being martyred and ascending to the Heavens. For instance, the *chanson of Roland* clearly states that God will receive those who died in battle into his Kingdom. The words *martirie*, *martyrie* and *martirs* are often employed in the text.

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<sup>669</sup> R. Melzak, 'Antiquarianism in the Art of Metz' *Charlemagne's heir : new perspectives on the reign of Louis the Pious (814-840)*, eds. R. Collins and P. Godman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 629-649, especially 631.

<sup>670</sup> J. Nelson, 'Carolingian royal funerals,' 155.

<sup>671</sup> For more see H. Cowdrey, 'Martyrdom and the First Crusade,' *Crusade and settlement* ed. P. Edbury (Cardiff: University College Cardiff Press, 1985), 46-56 And J. Flori, 'Mort et martyre des guerriers vers 1100. L'exemple de la première croisade,' *CCM* 34.2 (1991), 121-139.

Another example is before the battle of Dorylaeum in 1097, as Frankish leaders reminded their followers of the strength that willingness to achieve martyrdom brought, whether the outcome was life or death in battle.<sup>672</sup> The *Gesta Francorum* relates another mass entry into the afterlife on March 6 1098 ‘more than a thousand of our knights or foot-soldiers were martyred and we believe, ascended to heaven where, clad in white, they received the robe of martyrdom.’<sup>673</sup> Yet another example was Raymond of Toulouse who, when dying in battle, swallowed three blades of grass and invoked the Holy Trinity, angels then bore his soul to Heaven singing the Te Deum. And then Konrad’s *Song of Roland* relates:

‘four hundred and ten Christians died and were received with angel’s song in the holy place where those of God’s children go who suffer martyrdom for His sake. Having served their Lord well, they were now rewarded with great honour.’<sup>674</sup>

But, perhaps the reconquesta knight who is most equated with martyrdom is Vivian, who was thought to have been buried in the Alysamps. In many ways he represented the perfect ‘type’ of proto-martyr crusader.<sup>675</sup> He became the symbol of the martyr hero who was fearless of death.<sup>676</sup> In the *Aliscans* he throws himself into a *mêlée sauvage* (furious skirmish) in which nothing other than death can stop him from massacring Saracens.<sup>677</sup> He refuses to flee from certain death and therefore accepts the consequences. Hence in this crusader vision, Vivian’s acceptance of death became an ideal towards which knights should strive.

In this context, Vivian’s sarcophagus acted as a reminder of this sacrifice. The very nature of the sarcophagus made it less a monument to his life than to his death. It was a vivid reminder of his fate and the ultimate sacrifice that he had made to defend Christendom. A similar case can be made for all the sarcophagi found in the

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<sup>672</sup> Guibert de Nogent, ‘Historia quae dicitur Gesta Dei per Francos,’ *Recueil des historiens des croisades Historiens occidentaux*, ed. (Leiden : Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres, 1879), II.

<sup>673</sup> B. Lees, *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolymitanorum* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 40.

<sup>674</sup> J. Thomas, Priest Konrad’s ‘Song of Roland,’ 47.

<sup>675</sup> For a discussion on Vivian, see J. Frappier, ‘De Vivien à Aiol. De la sainteté du martyr à la sainteté commune,’ *Essor et fortune de la chanson de geste dans l’Europe et l’Orient latin Actes du IXe Congrès international de la Société Rencesvals pour l’étude des épopées romanes, Padoue-Venise, 29 août - 4 septembre 1982*, ed. Société Rencesvals Société Rencesvals Congrès international (Modena: Mucchi Ed., 1984).

<sup>676</sup> D. Boutet, ‘Aliscans et la problématique du héros épique médiéval,’ 54.

<sup>677</sup> J-C. Vallecalle, ‘Aspects du héros dans Aliscans,’ 188.

Alyscamps. All became a reminder of someone's sacrifice, and their consequential rise to martyrdom.

## 5. From Chivalry to Crusaders

These sarcophagi were adjacent to the basilica of St. Honorat that was said to contain the bodies of some of the first bishops of Arles considered to be martyrs of their time.<sup>678</sup> All bishops who were buried in the basilica, without exception, were buried in late antique sarcophagi. And yet the statuses of bishops and crusaders were radically different.

Bishops accepted strict discipline and sought spiritual combat, while crusaders adopted an aggressive, earthly combat. However as I have shown, they were promised that if they died in combat they would receive eternal life. It thus offered a layman a relatively easy way to attain martyrdom and collect its reward. One no longer had to become a churchman to be promised the Heavens as is described by Guilbert of Nogent:

‘in our time God instituted holy warfare, so that the arms-bearers and the wandering populace, who after the fashion of the ancient pagans were engaged into mutual slaughter, should find a new way of attaining salvation; so that they might not be obliged to abandon the world completely, as used to be the case, by adopting the monastic way of life or any other form of professed calling, but might obtain God's grace to some extent while enjoying their accustomed freedom and dress, and in a way consistent with their own station.’<sup>679</sup>

Of course, individuals like Bernard of Clairvaux who became an abbot believed that the clergy still held moral superiority. In his view, the leaders of the world are the ecclesiastics who dedicate themselves to God by renouncing worldly pleasures. However, that life was not appropriate for everyone, unlike warfare which was easily accessible - at least theoretically - and imposed fewer restrictions than the clergy.<sup>680</sup>

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<sup>678</sup> see chapter I for a full discussion of their status as martyrs.

<sup>679</sup> Guilbert of Nogent *Gesta dei per Francos*, II, Occ 4.

<sup>680</sup> A. Vauchez and D. Bornstein, *The laity in the Middle Ages : religious beliefs and devotional practices* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 50.

And in Arles we see that status difference at play. As shown in chapter I, only those who had accepted martyrdom by retiring from the world and embracing a clerical life could be buried within the walls of the church of St. Genesius-St. Honorat. And much like Bernard of Clairvaux suggested, there was a radical difference between the status of clerics and crusaders, and this was quite clearly implied in the way that the two groups were buried in the Alyscamps.

Although clerics and crusaders were buried in late antique sarcophagi, an honour that was not granted to all, the location in which their tombs were placed was radically different. Unlike all the famous Episcopal saints who were thought to have been venerated in the Alyscamps, knights were not placed inside the basilica. Michel Mouriès mentioned that Vivian, William and Charles were in the cemetery and not in the basilica. The sarcophagus of Turpin was probably also in the cemetery if we can rely on the testament of Henri Giraud who asked to be buried near Turpin's tomb. Finally, when Fabre described the crypts in the XVIIth century, he did not include the names of any of the heroes, with the exception of Roland, probably because he associated Rotland with the bishop and not the hero of the song.

There is thus a clear delimitation between the clerical history of the city and the lay history portrayed by these heroes. While these knights did fight for Christianity, they were not part of the clergy (with the exception of Turpin), unlike the bishops inside the basilica. These heroes were thus a new type of saint to whom people could relate. They became 'saints' using a pathway that laymen could hope to follow.

## **6 An ever-evolving Monument**

Just as they did for saints, people wanted to be buried close to knights and there were beliefs that their tombs were producing miracles.<sup>681</sup> In some ways, these saints became a contemporary version of St. Honorat and other saintly bishops buried in the basilica, but were more accessible.

This accessibility can be seen in the layout of Alyscamps cemetery. Stouff has shown that the cemetery remained a popular burial site well into the late Middle Ages. He showed that 46% of people in Arles chose the Alyscamps as their burial place for

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<sup>681</sup> H. Vidal, *Les Alyscamps et leurs légendes*, 5.

most of the period between 1376 and 1400.<sup>682</sup> Interestingly, 47% of those who chose the Alyscamps were nobles. He noted that they preferred to be buried in the prestigious Alyscamps cemetery rather than around their local parish Church. Moreover, if we believe Gervase of Tilbury, people from outside Arles were also eager to be buried in the famed cemetery.<sup>683</sup> It enabled all these people to become part of the tradition themselves by being buried among these figures.

The majority of these people came from the highest classes of society, and some of them may have had direct connections with crusaders. As has been shown many times, Southern France and Provence in particular was one of the leading regions in its response to the Crusade movement and a large number of crusaders came from Arles.<sup>684</sup>

Among these were notably the Porcelets family known for their active involvement in crusades. Among other actions they were involved in the Majorca crusades and they helped the Galicians against the Muslims in Spain in 1120. In fact, they gained nobility for their family through war, and remained militarily active throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>685</sup>

Therefore, it is not surprising that they chose to build a chapel in Alyscamps in the XIVth century. Although as far as we know it was not a mausoleum, it became a monument to the memory of the Porcelets family and their shield flanked the entrance to the chapel. Inclusion of their monument inside the cemetery contributed to making them part of that grander military tradition.

It is believed that there would have been other funeral chapels on the site, however most of them have now been destroyed, although there are still a few such as the chapels of the Mollégès family (XVth century) and the Oraison family (XVIIth century), both adjacent to the Church of St. Honorat.

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<sup>682</sup> see L. Stoff, 'Mourir à Arles aux derniers siècles du Moyen Âge,' *Mélanges Michel Vovelle sociétés, mentalités, cultures [en] France, XVe-XXe siècles volume aixois* (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 1997), 393- 402, especially 397-398 and L. Stoff, 'Les Provençaux et la mort dans les testaments (XIIIe-XVe siècle), 199-222.

<sup>683</sup> See H. Vidal, *Les Alyscamps et leurs légendes*, 10.

<sup>684</sup> For a full discussion on the involvement of Provence in the crusades see Chapter IV part 2.

<sup>685</sup> M. Aurell 'Une famille emblématique : Les Porcelets,' *Arles histoire territoires et cultures*, eds. Jean-M. Rouquette et. al. (Paris : Imprimerie Nationale, 2008), 289-295, and more generally M. Aurell, *Une Famille de la noblesse provençale au Moyen âge, les Porcelet*, Archives du Sud (Avignon: Aubanel, 1986).

The cemetery then came to hold some of the city's most important personalities, who became linked to the heroes of the cemetery through their shared space. All those who decided to be buried in this cemetery were agreeing to symbolically become part of that history and tradition in Provence.

## 6.1 A monument for propaganda?

The final question I wish to ask is what was the underlying meaning of such a monument. When studying the *Chanson d'Antioche* written in 1180, Edington showed that the song should not be read as a history of the first crusade, but rather as a 'subtly devised piece of propaganda for the third.'<sup>686</sup> She writes that the song concentrates on the military prowess of its heroes and their participation.<sup>687</sup> As another example, Suard tells us that the *Chanson of Aspremont* is a call to the Princes of Christianity for unison and to forget their differences and rivalries, at least temporarily.<sup>688</sup>

Other elements have been identified as propaganda for the crusades, in fact Morris went as far as to say that preaching of the crusades was 'a spectacularly successful example of propaganda, and one of the major reasons for its success was the fact that it was not completely controlled and regulated by a central authority.'<sup>689</sup> He showed that one of the most interesting aspects of this propaganda is that it showed a remarkable capacity to spread outside the official program of preaching, and was 'welcomed by new social groups and transmuted into a form which embodied their own aspirations.'<sup>690</sup> Of course, as he himself acknowledges, only a fraction of the total amount of XIIth century propaganda that existed still remains.<sup>691</sup>

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<sup>686</sup> S. Edington, 'Holy Land, Holy Lance: Religious Ideas in the Chanson d'Antioche,' *SCH* 36 (2000), 153.

<sup>687</sup> S. Edington, 'Holy Land, Holy Lance: Religious Ideas in the Chanson d'Antioche,' 142-153, especially 153.

<sup>688</sup> F. Suard, *Aspremont chanson de geste du XIIIe siècle*, Champion Classique Série Moyen Âge (Paris: H. Champion, 2008), 15.

<sup>689</sup> C. Morris, 'Propaganda for War: The Dissemination of the Crusading Ideal in the Twelfth Century,' 100.

<sup>690</sup> C. Morris, 'Propaganda for War: The Dissemination of the Crusading Ideal in the Twelfth Century,' 100.

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He did uncover a few elements, mainly songs that were sung. We see that many of them are recruiting songs. For instance, *Ahi, Amors!* written by Conon of Bethune before his departure for the third crusade '[... for all good men will go upon crusade]'. Another example is the extract from the song *Parti de Mal* written around 1189 by an unknown composer:

‘Now God has called us to join his fight,  
Let no true gentleman hold back in fear.  
Since on the cross he was humbled and slain  
We should be glad to give recompense here.  
We were redeemed by his dying pain.’

Propaganda songs were thus sung among people recalling the merits and the eternal rewards that knights would reap. By singing these songs, people were helping to propagate crusading propaganda.

Similarly, Gosman sees the *chansons de gestes* as a porte-parole of unofficial ideology.<sup>692</sup> The message was then forwarded by *jongleurs* who recited these songs to the people who would then propagate them among themselves. As the material representation of these songs, the Alysamps also became part of that programme.

Moreover, let us not forget that Arles was on the road to Santiago de Compostela, one of the most popular pilgrim routes during the Middle Ages. It led to the Cathedral of St. James that legendary accounts tell us contained relics transported by boat from the Holy Land to Spain. According to other legends written by Pseudo-Turpin in the *Chronicle* in the VIIth century, Charlemagne himself freed Santiago from the Saracens after St. James had appeared in his dreams. Pilgrims visiting the Alysamps thus saw it as part of a wider narrative that they were visiting through their pilgrimage.

The Alysamps was thus perfect for such propaganda. The numerous tombs reminded visitors of the courage of their ancestors who fought to the death to defend

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<sup>692</sup> M. Gosman, 'La propagande de la croisade et le rôle de la chanson de geste comme porte-parole d'une idéologie non officielle,' *Actes du XIe Congrès International de la Société Rencesvals, Barcelona* (1988), 291-306, especially 292.

their land. At the sight of all this past heroism, viewers could not have helped but feel indebted to these courageous men who sacrificed their lives for this land. While the numerous tombs reminded them of the dreadfulness of these attacks, it also reminded them of the outcome of the massacre – victory. Despite the human losses, Arles was still Christian at the time of the crusades and the viewer was not in occupied territory. It also reminded pilgrims on the road to Compostella of past combats that had been necessary, for example to preserve the relics of St. James.

The imagery of victory and triumph was important, as Lejeune has pointed out, most of the iconography of Roland shows him as being victorious.<sup>693</sup> And as Morris has also pointed out ‘it was important to represent not only the conflict between faith and unbelief, but also its victory.’<sup>694</sup> The monument in Arles represents exactly that, a symbol of victory. Therefore the message became a powerful one, it set a positive precedent for the ongoing crusade in the East.

## 7 A unique site

The Alyscamps is an exceptional site, displaying a constructed legendary narrative through a crusading rhetoric. It is not the only site of its kind, Roncevaux in Bordeaux was another cemetery with similar claims, and which to a certain extent carried a similar message.

However, the Alyscamps is unique because of the mix of its epic and antique legends, showing the evolution of the concept of the saint and of the martyr in particular, on a single site. This was a radical change; Isaac of Stella in the mid-1100s had already identified the irony in the concept of Christ’s martyrs who died in combat, when he pointed out that the real martyrs of the antique Church did not even want to oppose their persecutors.<sup>695</sup> In many ways, the crusaders were the opposite of these early martyrs because they did not withdraw from active life to devote themselves to God, but they renounced their lives by at least theoretically accepting the idea of potential death.

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<sup>693</sup> R. Lejeune, *La Légende de Roland dans l'art du Moyen-âge* (Bruxelles: Arcade, 1966), 8.

<sup>694</sup> C. Morris, ‘Propaganda for War: The Dissemination of the Crusading Ideal in the Twelfth Century,’ 203.

<sup>695</sup> Isaac of Stella, *Sermo*, 48.

Of course, as Mayer quite rightly pointed out, most crusaders did not go on a crusade to die and they hoped to come back.<sup>696</sup> But if they should die, the many *chansons de geste* and the Alysamps presented death in a positive light. Despite being a cemetery it was a monument that deconstructed death because it was presented as a means through which knights could achieve martyrdom rather than as an end in itself. It was a reminder that glory would henceforth be bestowed upon those who joined the crusades, and had done so for many years.

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<sup>696</sup> H. Mayer and J. Gillingham, *The Crusades* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 264-295.

## Conclusion: From Relics to Artefacts

This thesis has examined the importance of sarcophagi as proof of different legends that eventually formed part of the popular history and collective identity of Provence. It has described four different types of reuse and reinvention of late antique sarcophagi for saints which all became a fundamental part of the new identity that Provence sought to create for itself, specifically Arles' claim to an Episcopal community of ascetics based on the Lérinian monastic ideal, the claim to antiquity made by the monks of St. Victor's, the partial substitution of Provence for the Holy Land in crusading times and finally the invention of a local tradition of holy knights.

All have different histories of reinventions and reuses. The site in Saint Maximin shows a reinvention of sarcophagi at the time of their 'rediscovery', hence after they had been lost for many years. This kind of rediscovery of sarcophagi became fairly common during the Middle Ages, when forgotten cemeteries were often discovered, perhaps as a result of population growth over old necropolises.<sup>697</sup> The history of the crypts in Marseille was also reinvented, as was the association with warrior saints in the history of the site of Alyscamps cemetery. In contrast, the reuse and later the reinvention of sarcophagi for the bodies of Arles bishops started in Late Antiquity and continued throughout the Middle Ages.

Hence the corpus of Roman and late antique sarcophagi in Provence shows the longevity of reuse and reinvention of this category of ancient material from Late Antiquity itself (see the example of Bishop Hilary in the Vth century) to knights in *chansons de geste* during the Middle Ages. There are many other cases in other parts of the former Roman Empire in which sarcophagi have been reused and reinvented, but

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<sup>697</sup> See for example the two Modenese vessels that were found 'while digging the ditches of the upper suburbs' in M. Greenhalgh, *The survival of Roman antiquities in the Middle Ages*, 55.

Provence contains a particularly high proportion of them, as well as a remarkable diversity and richness in their reinventions.

That this topic has not been studied systematically before is partly due to the difficult - because dual - nature of these sarcophagi as antique artefacts and medieval relics. This story cannot be told without accepting these two facets of their history and the underlying historiographical conflict between externalist 'scriptures' and internalist 'believer narratives'. It was their antiquity that enabled sarcophagi to be seen as relics in their own right during medieval times, as they became proof of the authenticity of the cults with which they were associated. But throughout modern history, there has been a tendency to ignore the medieval identity of these sarcophagi, to divorce them from their medieval meanings. They evolved from being relics to becoming artefacts.

By way of a conclusion, I shall look at the historical and theological reasons that led to the loss of this medieval history over time and the reasons why the subject has never been approached in this manner before. Three events can be singled out; first, the influence of the Protestant Reformation, second, that of the French Revolution, and third the rise of antiquarianism. While these three movements were discrete and separate, they shared an aversion for the Catholic medieval character of our sarcophagi as relics and as objects forming integral parts of a cult.

## **1. Reforming the Relic**

Already in the Vth century, St. Augustine questioned the identity of several relics and tried to denounce those that he felt were not authentic. But it was not until the Protestant Reformation that the culture of relics was genuinely challenged. In 1537, Martin Luther created a catalogue of 'papist' superstitions in which he included relics that he associated with indulgences. However, the most direct attack on relics came with John Calvin in 1543 in his famous treatise on relics, in which he lamented:

'[...] and it will thus be found that, to have relics is a useless and frivolous thing, which will most probably gradually lead towards idolatry, because they cannot be handled and looked upon without being honoured, and in doing this men will very soon render them

in honour which is due to Jesus Christ. In short, the desire for relics is never without superstition and what is worse, it is usually the parent of idolatry.<sup>698</sup>

To prove the absurdity of relics, John Calvin created an inventory cataloguing various relics held throughout Europe, pointing out their implausibility. He found 13 foreskins of Christ, twelve bodies of Mary Magdalene, two bodies of Anne (one in Apt and one in Lyon) and three bodies of Lazarus (including the one in Marseille). This led him to conclude that the worship of relics is ‘against reason.’<sup>699</sup> As Eire pointed out, this suspicion of relics and idolatry was already part of a larger Reformed tradition, however it was Calvin who ‘turned this into an explicit guiding principle and devoted his energies to making it understood.’<sup>700</sup>

As Philippe Joutard stated, John Calvin believed that the only historical event worth remembering is Christ’s sacrifice, fostered in the sacrament of the last supper.<sup>701</sup> As he puts it ‘because human works play no role in salvation, they do not deserve to be remembered.’<sup>702</sup> John Calvin himself made sure that the location of his grave would remain unknown, so as to not promote another form of idolatry.

There was some response to these criticisms, particularly among Catholics during the Counter-Reformation movements in the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council of Trent that reaffirmed that bodies were part of the Church community and did intervene in matters on Earth, but nevertheless a series of cautions was issued regarding these holy objects.<sup>703</sup> Similar criticisms were repeated by many reformers during the XVIth century. Pastor Pierre du Moulin, a theology professor in Sedan wrote with irony in his ‘Bouclier de la foi’ that ‘followers of the Roman church worship bones, milk and hair’. He added ‘What is this religion that hides the writings of the apostles behind bones?’<sup>704</sup> He believed that the cult of relics testifies to a materialistic approach that detracts from

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<sup>698</sup> Jean Calvin in V. Krasinski, *A treatise on relics* (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1854), 219.

<sup>699</sup> Jean Calvin Institutes of the *Christian Religion* 6, translated in C. Eire, *War against the idols : the reformation of worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 228.

<sup>700</sup> C. Eire, *War against the idols : the reformation of worship from Erasmus to Calvin*, 233.

<sup>701</sup> P. Joutard, ‘The Museum of the Desert: The Protestant Minority,’ *Realms of memory : rethinking the French past*, eds. P. Nora and L. Kritzman, vol. 1, European perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 353-379, especially 354.

<sup>702</sup> P. Joutard, ‘The Museum of the Desert: The Protestant Minority,’ 354.

<sup>703</sup> For an overview of the Counter-Reformation see M.O’Connell, *The Counter Reformation, 1559-1660* (New York: Harper & Row) and K. Randell, *The Catholic and Counter Reformations* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990).

<sup>704</sup> see in A. Joblin, ‘L’attitude des protestants face aux reliques,’ *Les reliques: objets, cultes, symboles*, ed. A-M. Bozóky and E. Helvétius (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 109-121, especially 121.

the writings of the Apostles. These criticisms became even stronger in the XVIIth century, creating virulent controversies between Protestant and Catholic theologians.<sup>705</sup>

The direct Calvinist impact was very strong in some countries in Europe, and especially in France which, though it remained Catholic, saw a change of climate in that many started to question some of the most fundamental principles of their society.<sup>706</sup> In practice, it even affected rituals adopted by cults of relics, in some cases directly because there was a fear of including a relic in a procession because it might provoke insults or sacrilege. On a wider level, as Alain Joblin pointed out, it questioned the identity of relics and the cohesion of the Catholic community as a whole.<sup>707</sup> This change of attitude affected the way that the sarcophagi studied in this thesis were seen. A shadow of suspicion was cast over many of them, creating a heated and interesting debate surrounding their supposed power.

## 1.1 Refuting Mary Magdalene

A good example of such a polemic was the cult of Mary Magdalene, which was not surprisingly the cult in Provence that was most severely criticised by reformers. Its validity was questioned on the grounds of weak historical evidence. The most pronounced view on the matter came in 1641 by Jean de Launoy, a professor from the Sorbonne known as a ‘*Saint Hunter*’. He was well known for his controversial views and ideas, or as Grès-Gayer puts it his ‘art of provocation,’ and became known for tackling questions with theological and historical rigour.<sup>708</sup> This typically earned him a large array of responses from individuals who sought to defend their legends or ideas,

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<sup>705</sup> Quoted in A. Joblin, ‘L’attitude des protestants face aux reliques,’ 120.

<sup>706</sup> For the impact of Calvinism in Europe and in France in particular, see A. Le Roy, *Le Gallicanisme au XVIIIe siècle : La France et Rome de 1700 à 1715, histoire diplomatique de la bulle ‘Unigenitus’ jusqu’à la mort de Louis XIV, d’après des documents inédits* (Paris: Perrin, 1892), VII, A. Pettegree, ‘Calvinism in Europe,’ *John Calvin’s Impact on Church and Society, 1509-2009*, eds. M. Ernst Hirzel and M. Sallmann (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2009) and the essays in A. Pettegree, A. Duke and G. Lewis, *Calvinism in Europe, 1540-1620* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>707</sup> A. Joblin, ‘L’attitude des protestants face aux reliques,’ 110.

<sup>708</sup> see J. Grès-Gayer, ‘L’électron libre du gallicanisme : Jean de Launoy (1601-1678),’ *RHR* 3 (2009), 517-542, especially 521.

frequently resulting in long-lasting polemics that would usually end in his favour.<sup>709</sup> He was particularly critical of the Jesuits whom he accused of bad faith, and also of some Dominicans.<sup>710</sup> As a Gallican, he was very wary of many traditions that became associated with the Church, and sought to return to a 'pure' Roman church without any deviations. Unlike John Calvin, his objections lay not in the problem of idolatry in many of these cults, but rather in their lack of historical validity.

Of course, the legend of Mary Magdalene in Provence was an easy subject to criticise. Pointing to its weak historical justification as well as its questionable theological stance, he refuted the legends in his treatise with the loaded title of '*Dissertation on the untrue arrival of Lazarus, Maximinus, Magdalene and Martha in Provence.*' This Parisian assault did not go unnoticed in Provence and led to a large array of responses. The Dominicans, who were the most fervent defenders of the legend, called Launoy 'anonymous', a 'phantom' and a monster.<sup>711</sup> A similar wide-ranging vocabulary was used by lay Provençals, for example André Rivet noted 'his life wouldn't be worth much if he went to Provence.'<sup>712</sup> This is because, as Pierre de Brive resumed it well, 'Launoy has offered an insult to all Provence and to the memory of Saint Magdalene who made our Province holy by her preaching and her retirement.'<sup>713</sup>

The strong defence by Provençal scholars of the legends against such accusations was intended to prove the veracity of what they felt was their local history and tradition and also the authenticity of the sarcophagi associated with them. The debate lasted many years, with both sides under the impression that they had won the argument.<sup>714</sup> It went beyond theological questions, since it was ultimately about national and regional identity.

Jean de Launoy's treatise had many followers and particularly George Doncieux, who demonstrated the weak foundations of the cult by attacking sarcophagi

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<sup>709</sup> J. Grès-Gayer, 'L'Aristarque de son siècle', *le Dr Jean de Launoy (1601-1678)*, 'Papes, princes et savants dans l'Europe moderne. Mélanges à la mémoire de Bruno Neveu', eds. J-L. Quantin and J-C. Waquet (Genève: 2006), 269-285, especially 269-275.

<sup>710</sup> J. Grès-Gayer, 'L'électron libre du gallicanisme : Jean de Launoy (1601-1678)', 542.

<sup>711</sup> See for instance *Pierre Deburc to Suarez*, July 2 1642. Vatican Library, Barb. Lat. 3001, 49-50.

<sup>712</sup> as cited in M. Feuillas, 'La controverse magdalénienne au milieu du XVIIe siècle. Ripostes provençales à Jean de Launoy,' *Marie Madeleine dans la mystique, les arts et les lettres actes du colloque international, Avignon, 20-21-22 juillet 1988*, ed. E. Duperray (Paris: Beauchesne, 1989), 89-115, especially 94.

<sup>713</sup> *Pierre de Brive to Suarez*, 6<sup>th</sup> of June 1642. Bib. Vaticane, Barb. Lat. 3052, f. 173

<sup>714</sup> M. Feuillas, 'La controverse magdalénienne au milieu du XVIIe siècle. Ripostes provençales à Jean de Launoy,' 99.

themselves as the very proof of the legends in Provence. He pointed out that the iconographical reading made in the Middle Ages was confused and dictated by tradition rather than analysis. He believed that the cult based on sarcophagi was the result of medieval confusion and ignorance.<sup>715</sup>

While the Magdalene legend may well have continued to thrive in Provence, it nevertheless started to die within academic and historical discourse because its historical grounds were seen to be too weak. It became relegated to ‘folklore’ and like many other cults, was sidelined from most academic studies.<sup>716</sup>

## 1.2 St. Victor and the French Revolution

The French Revolution affected France as a whole in profound ways that changed how the sarcophagi were perceived among the general population and the elite. In an attempt to rebuild a society built on equality and liberty, the revolutionaries were suspicious of Christianity and all its material expressions such as relics and religious images. The Revolution sought to destroy much of France’s Christian history more so than any other event that the country had seen. The Revolutionaries rewrote the calendar, removing saints’ feast days from everyday life. They changed the name of Christian sites, they melted church bells, destroyed Christian art and renamed and reattributed churches making them into secular symbols of the State. Van Kley even opened his book by asking ‘What revolution before the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 became more anti-Christian than the French Revolution of 1789?’<sup>717</sup>

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<sup>715</sup> G. Doncieux, ‘Les sarcophages de Saint-Maximin et la Légende de Marie-Madeleine.’ Similarly, it was during that time that an ‘iconographical’ analysis of the sarcophagi in relation to the cults might have started. For instance, Faillon started to ‘imagine’ the figure of Martha on her sarcophagus and similar iconographical readings were made for the sarcophagus of Genesius in Arles. It could be argued that the ‘creation’ of this iconography was made in an attempt to legitimise the cults during this controversy. It is probably also during that time that many of the sarcophagi became clearly attributed to specific saints, although there is no way of confirming this without further primary sources.

<sup>716</sup> With the exception of Saxer who published a wide range of books on the construction of the cult in particular V. Saxer, *Le culte de Marie Madeleine en Occident : des origines à la fin du Moyen Age*.

<sup>717</sup> D. Van Kley, *The religious origins of the French Revolution : from Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560-1791* (New Haven:Yale University Press, 1996), 1.

As the same author points out, the Revolution had an ‘uncanny resemblance to Calvinist iconoclasm more than two centuries earlier.’<sup>718</sup> There was a will to destroy religious symbols, relics and statues although, unlike the Reformists, the motivation of the Revolutionaries was to discredit the power of the Church as a whole. For instance, the cathedral of Notre Dame was renamed as a ‘Temple of Reason.’<sup>719</sup> Of course the sarcophagi that not only contained but effectively became relics during Medieval times became obvious targets.

The heads of figures on many sarcophagi in the corpus have been neatly chopped off, particularly on those that became associated with saints. One good example is the sarcophagus that became associated with St. Genesius (Figure 23) on which all the individuals are headless. This might have been done when the Church of Saint Honorat was ransacked, and many precious reliquaries were emptied and melted down.<sup>720</sup> The sarcophagus dedicated to Mary Magdalene’s sister Martha suffered a similar fate, with all persons depicted on the sarcophagus being decapitated. We know that the reliquary that was displayed in the Church of St. Martha and that had been a gift from Louis XI was melted down during the Terror and eventually replaced by a copy.<sup>721</sup> Contrary to some other cases in which heads had been lost due to wear, what happened in both these examples is a systematic decapitation, while other body parts are still in remarkably good condition. During the Revolution, it became common practice to decapitate statues of anyone thought to oppose the Revolution in an attempt to discredit their power. One of the best collections of decapitated statues is composed of the statues of the Kings of Judah that used to ornate the façade of Notre Dame and is now in the Cluny Museum in Paris. They were mistaken for the monarchs of France by revolutionaries, and were all decapitated.<sup>722</sup>

Of course, the beheading of the figures on these sarcophagi is directly associated with their nature as relics, which made them ideal targets for revolutionaries. As Stacy Boldrick wrote ‘As long as there are things which people worship, there is also

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<sup>718</sup> D. Van Kley, *The religious origins of the French Revolution : from Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560-1791*, 13.

<sup>719</sup> B. Poland, *French Protestantism and the French Revolution; a study in church and state, thought and religion, 1685-1815* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 200.

<sup>720</sup> E. Mathé-Rouquette, *Le goût de l'antique : quatre siècles d'archéologie arlésienne* (Arles: Le Musée, 1990), 45.

<sup>721</sup> L. Dumont, *La Tarasque essai de description d'un fait local d'un point de vue ethnographique*.

<sup>722</sup> S. Neely, *A Concise History of the French Revolution*, 200-201.

(the threat of) destruction of those things, and also some attempt to make the victimisation of the material manifestation of the supposedly imperishable.<sup>723</sup>

Such iconoclasm is far from being an ignorant act, as Dario Gamboni pointed out, the fact that we usually assign such acts with pure ignorance contributed to the stigmatisation of iconoclasm. He added that iconoclasts are presented as ‘blind not only to the value of what they destroy, but to the very meaning of the very act they perform’<sup>724</sup> But on the contrary, the revolutionaries were far from blind, they were very conscious of the importance of the sarcophagi and their association with saints, and that is precisely why they attacked them. In doing so, they were once again reinventing these sarcophagi, not as relics or antiquities, rather as objects that reflected the revolutionaries' power and the impact and irreversibility of the Revolution. Through these decapitated figures on sarcophagi, the revolutionaries were sending a message and showing the revolution's power to suppress everything that did not conform to the revolutionary doctrine.

The conversion of religious objects and space thus had a direct ideological agenda. As I have noted, Notre Dame cathedral was renamed to have a new Revolution-friendly name (the Temple of Reason). It became common to reuse a Christian space as a public secularised space. Perhaps one of the most interesting statements on the reuse of space during the Revolution was the monastery of St. Victor. After it had been put under siege by the revolutionaries, they decided to convert the building into something less glamorous than a museum, and it became a prison for Galerians from 1804.<sup>725</sup> Those who opposed the Revolution were ‘stored’ in the crypts, where Cassian, Victor and their entourage had lain for centuries and hence symbolically among the saints who had just lost all their power. The monastery itself suffered severe damage during the years of the Terror, and as a result some sarcophagi were found in fragments, others were encrusted in the walls in an attempt to replace missing parts of the architecture.<sup>726</sup>

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<sup>723</sup> S. Boldrick and R. Clay, *Iconoclasm : contested objects, contested terms* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), 16.

<sup>724</sup> D. Gamboni, *The destruction of art : iconoclasm and vandalism since the French Revolution, Picturing history* (London: Reaktion, 2007), 13.

<sup>725</sup> F. Benoît, ‘Le musée des cryptes à Saint Victor de Marseille’ in *MIHP*, XI, (1934), 2-22, especially 8.

<sup>726</sup> See for instance the Sarcophagus of Saint Maurice, G. Drocourt-Dubreuil, *Saint-Victor de Marseille art funéraire et prière des morts aux temps paléochrétiens IVe-Ve siècles*, 13.

After the revolutionary wave had passed, the entire structure was no longer maintained and fell into a state of serious decay after the revolutionaries completely dismantled the cloisters. The only surviving elements of the monastery were the church and its crypts, all that had once made the site glorious such as inscriptions, religious symbols, relics and antiques (including sarcophagi) had been taken away or destroyed, and pieces were found scattered all around, especially in the Chapel of Saint Mauront.<sup>727</sup>

In an attempt to salvage what had survived, M. Thibodeau reassembled them and displayed them in a high school that was the former convent of the Bernadines. This marked an important step in the life of the sarcophagi, for divorced from their saints and their religious context, they ceased to be seen as relics and became considered as vestiges of the past.

This move to the museum prompted the author Fauris de Saint-Vincent to catalogue all the surviving artefacts in his '*Notice des monuments antiques conservés dans le Musée de Marseille*' (Compilation of antique monuments kept in the Marseille Museum) in 1805. The collection soon became too large to keep in the high school, so the sarcophagi were transferred yet again to the *Musée Borély* in 1863. As Fernand Benoît pointed out, most complete and spectacular sarcophagi were moved to the museum, although some fragments were left in the crypts.<sup>728</sup>

## 2. Provençalism and national narrative

Religion was not seen as the only enemy of the Jacobin Revolution, so were also regionalists and regionalism. Revolutionaries sought to create a common national identity for the whole country.<sup>729</sup> This came through promotion of the French language and French national identity as an integral part of revolutionary ideals, as a way to

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<sup>727</sup> G. Drocourt-Dubreuil, *Saint-Victor de Marseille art funéraire et prière des morts aux temps paléochrétiens IVe-Ve siècles*, 8.

<sup>728</sup> F. Benoît. 'Le musée des cryptes à Saint Victor de Marseille,' 10.

<sup>729</sup> The systematic doubts cast over regional histories had been present before the revolution, but it was only afterwards that there became a strong national movement to create a national identity at the expense of regional entities.

destroy privileges and differences.<sup>730</sup> The famous declarations of Grégoire de Barère reflect this ideology quite well as he calls regional languages ‘jargon forming the last vestiges of destroyed feudalism.’<sup>731</sup> As Albert Soboul notes, after 1789 Provence lost many of the ideals that it had nurtured as an independent political entity so that it could be integrated into national unity, as it was argued that this was the only way to overcome the ancient Regime.<sup>732</sup> This started what the Provençalist Stéfaniini has called ‘l’ecrasement du pays d’oc’ (the crushing of Occitania).<sup>733</sup>

Of course, the Jacobin ideal was not without its challenges because many regions, including Provence, had very strong regional identities. Many Provençaux sought to idealise the region’s roots through a constructed version of its medieval history, which was seen as prosperous, glorious, poetic and mythical, this was part of a movement that Emmanuelli has called ‘Provençalism.’<sup>734</sup> According to the same author, Provençal historians like Honoré Bouche, Abbot Papon or Claude-François Achard, some of whom were strong defenders of Mary Magdalene’s legends, were driven by the pride of belonging to a people with exceptional qualities and a rich historical past.<sup>735</sup> For instance, Papon in his preface to the ‘Discours’ (Volume 1), notes

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<sup>730</sup> For more on the effects of the Revolution on Regionalism in France, see J. Wright, ‘Jean Charles-Brun and the birth of regionalism in France, 1890-1914,’ Thesis (D Phil ), University of Oxford, 2001, his later book J. Wright, *The regionalist movement in France, 1890-1914 : Jean Charles-Brun and French political thought* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2003) and also C. Gras, G. Livet, Centre de recherches d'histoire moderne Colloque, Groupe de recherches sur les sociétés contemporaines and Colloque, *Régions et régionalisme en France du XVIIIe siècle à nos jours*, Publications de la Société savante d'Alsace et des régions de l'Est (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1977) and A. Soboul, ‘De l’Ancien Régime à la Révolution. Problème régional et réalités sociales,’ *Régions et régionalisme en France du XVIIIe siècle à nos jours*, eds. C. Gras and G. Livet, vol. 13 (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1977), 25-55.

<sup>731</sup> See in D. Droixhe, *Une histoire des Lumières au pays de Liège: livre, idées, société* (Liège: Éditions de Liège, 2007), 167.

<sup>732</sup> A. Soboul, ‘De l’Ancien Régime à la Révolution. Problème régional et réalités sociales,’ 34. Regional unities were still strong towards the end of the Ancient Regime, to the extent that Mirabeau defined the kingdom as ‘Un agrégat inconstitué de peuples désunis.’ See A. Soboul, ‘De l’Ancien Régime à la Révolution. Problème régional et réalités sociales,’ 26.

<sup>733</sup> J. Stéfaniini, *Un provençaliste marseillais : l’abbé Féraud, 1725-1807* (Aix-en-Provence: Editions Ophrys, 1969), 202 and 216.

<sup>734</sup> F-X. Emmanuelli, ‘De la conscience politique à la naissance du ‘provençalisme’ dans la généralité d’Aix à la fin du XVIIIe siècle. Prélude à une recherche.’ *Régions et régionalisme en France du XVIIIe siècle à nos jours* eds. C. Gras (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1977), 119-136. Though it should be noted that this was centralised in certain parts of Provence, for instance particularly in Arles there was a class of elite antiquarians interested in Provence’s antiquity, as I will show later on.

<sup>735</sup> F-X. Emmanuelli, ‘De la conscience politique à la naissance du ‘provençalisme’ dans la généralité d’Aix à la fin du XVIIIe siècle. Prélude à une recherche,’ 121.

that France's history is one that is defined by provinces, and that of Provence is preferable to the others.<sup>736</sup>

As I have shown, the sarcophagi were the main proof of many of the legends that became associated with the Provençal region, particularly the sites of Saint-Maximin and Tarascon. They became the Provençal '*lieux de mémoire*', symbols which constitute part of the regional identity. Of course, the destruction of the sarcophagi in the crypts of St. Victor can also be seen as a way of erasing one of Marseille's most prized local histories. But the real consequences of the Jacobin ideal were long term, in that the legends surrounding Provence were no longer seen as having any historical interest. We have seen that they had been demoted from historical to the realm of folklore even earlier, starting in the XVIth century with Jean de Launoy's treatise against Provençal legends. Henceforth, they were thought to be backward and irrational beliefs and as such unworthy of academic study. The responses to the 'attacks' on these legends by authors such as Honoré Bouche and Claude-François Achard shows a profound will to keep the history of the region independent from the national narrative imposed by the Jacobins.<sup>737</sup> However, the regional discourse became weaker making way for a strong, more centralised national history.

## 2.1 Arlesian Antiquarianism

History had thus impregnated the life of these sarcophagi in many ways. Through the Revolution, the legends associated with the sarcophagi came to be seen as regional folklore, and their status as relics was challenged by Reformists and demolished by Revolutionaries.

Of course, the difficulty with our sarcophagi lies in the fact that they are antique pieces. Once their religious meaning that had been added during the Middle Ages is stripped from them, they signify antiquity. Unlike other relics and reliquaries,

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<sup>736</sup> See F-X. Emmanuelli, 'De la conscience politique à la naissance du 'provençalisme' dans la généralité d'Aix à la fin du XVIIIe siècle. Prélude à une recherche,' 121.

<sup>737</sup> For more on the Jacobian bias see P. Vigier, 'Régions et régionalisme en France au XIXe siècle,' *Régions et régionalisme en France du XVIIIe siècle à nos jours*. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1977), 161-176.

one cannot melt them down to make new items, although many sarcophagi had been chopped into pieces. Once a sarcophagus is dissociated from its religious context, it looks like any other antique sarcophagus and no longer carries a religious message.

Starting in the XVIth century, there had been considerable interest in the antiquities in Provence, particularly by the Provençal elite, who became less interested in the medieval history of their region and more in its antiquity. This is part of the antiquarian movement that was widespread in early Modern Europe. Antiquarians became increasingly interested in all remnants of antiquity, and among other aims, sought to retrieve antiquities in general and particularly those from ancient Rome.<sup>738</sup> As Arnaldo Momigliano has shown, ‘no cult of the Middle Ages had developed to compete with the idealization of Antiquity.’<sup>739</sup> He notes that the histories of Greece and Rome became canonical, but that there were no canonical histories of England, France, Spain or the rest of Italy because they were seen as being less fundamentally important than the history of classical Rome.<sup>740</sup>

People who took part in this practice were called ‘antiquarians’ and a good self-definition of them comes from Fabri de Pereisc, as he wrote:

‘Many people loudly scorn our studies, saying that they bring no glory to those who pursue them and no usefulness to others. The only ones who deserve such reproach are those who seek scholarship of a meretricious sort, even worse, content themselves with collecting antiquities to adorn their cupboards and decorate them. On the other hand there are those who are entirely praiseworthy and do not waste their time in any sense – they research the antiquities, study them and publish them in order to throw light on the works of the classical historians to illustrate the unfolding of history, the better to impress upon the minds of men its personalities and their deeds, and great events.’<sup>741</sup>

Antiquarians read ancient texts, and drew and collected antiquities. Fabri de Pereisc, one of the best known antiquarians of his time, happened to be Provençal.<sup>742</sup>

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<sup>738</sup> R. Sweet, *Antiquaries : the discovery of the past in eighteenth-century Britain* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), xiii.

<sup>739</sup> A. Momigliano, ‘Ancient History and the Antiquarian,’ *JWCI* 13.3/4 (1950). ’ 285-315, especially, 293

<sup>740</sup> A. Momigliano, ‘Ancient History and the Antiquarian.’ 293.

<sup>741</sup> P. Gassendi, J-J. Bouchard, G. Naudé and C. Saumaise, *Viri illustris Nicolai Claudii Fabricii de Peiresc, senatoris aquisextiensis vita , per Petrum Gassendum* (Parisiis: sumptibus S. Cramoisy, 1641), 235.

<sup>742</sup> P. Miller, *Peiresc's Europe : learning and virtue in the seventeenth century* (Yale, 2000), 1.

He contributed to the discovery of several sarcophagi in Provence, for instance those at La Gayole of which he drew two. Some of his drawings and descriptions of artefacts are essential to us as they are sometimes our only source of knowledge about objects that have been lost. He was not interested in the social history of these objects, he was interested in the objects themselves and more particularly in their classical quality. The interest in the ‘antiqueness’ of objects is made quite clear by one of Fabri de Pereisc’s friends, Casaubon who wrote:

‘antiquarians are so taken with the sight of old things, not as doting upon the bare form or matter but because these visible surviving evidences of antiquity, represent unto their minds former times, with as strong an impression, as if they were actually present and in sight, as it were.’<sup>743</sup>

The antiquarian movement came to be about re-creating an imagined version of antiquity through whatever objects were available. As Alain Schnapp pointed out, it became a matter of taste and a status symbol, more than gaining knowledge although that too was considered important.<sup>744</sup>

This interest in antiquity was particularly strong in ‘Little Rome of Gaul’, Arles. Many Arlesians sought to build an identity for their city based solely on antiquity and some who started to write about the city were from the region, some even from Arles itself. In 1616, Antoine Agard published a catalogue of antiquities of Arles introducing the city as ‘within the walls of our very antique, well known and flourishing City of Arles, formerly the sixth colony of the Romans.’<sup>745</sup>

Many antiquarians in Provence showed an enormous interest in describing all the artefacts that they encountered, as did their fellow antiquarians in Italy. For example, Joseph Séguin and also Father Etienne Dumont and Jean-Louis Jacquemin described many of the city’s artefacts, and one of the most noteworthy contributions is Lantelme de Romieu’s ‘*Histoire des antiquités tardives*’ in 1574. It describes the city in great detail and offers a view of what was left in the XVIth century, thus before the revolution. In Estelle Mathé-Rouquette’s words, there became ‘a pride in being

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<sup>743</sup> Casaubon, *Treatise of Use and Costumes* (1638) as quoted in J. Aubrey, T. Gale, J. Evelyn, R. Legg and J. Fowles, *Monumenta Britannica, or, A miscellany of British antiquities, III* (Sherborne: Dorset Publishing, 1982), 666-667.

<sup>744</sup> A. Schnapp, *The discovery of the past : the origins of archaeology*, 138.

<sup>745</sup> E. Mathé-Rouquette, *Le goût de l'antique : quatre siècles d'archéologie arlésienne*, 15-23.

Arlesian in the attentive search for vestiges revealing the munificence of the antique city.<sup>746</sup>

In their searches, these antiquarians were slowly but surely obliterating the medieval history of Arles. This was undoubtedly not a conscious act on their part, unlike the Revolutionaries who actively aimed at destroying a specific history. Antiquarians were simply not interested in anything other than antiquity, and this lack of historical methodology and understanding earned them many criticisms.<sup>747</sup> Francis Bacon for instance considered antiquarians to be ‘imperfect historians who helped salvage relics of the past too fragmentary to be the subject of proper history’; they dealt with ‘static descriptions’ of previous life, as opposed to ‘historical expositions.’<sup>748</sup> By focusing on one aspect (antiquity) rather than historical expressions as a whole, they narrowed their field and weakened their understanding of the past.

Nevertheless, they left their impact on Arles in particular, by promoting its antique past while silencing its medieval history. Sarcophagi, antique objects par excellence, started to be seen for their aesthetic value rather than for their historical importance. Probably without being aware of it, antiquarians started a process of ‘delaying’ their medieval history, a process which is still prevalent today because many of these sarcophagi are still studied within the realm of classical antiquity and as antique objects.

### **3 The Minims and reuse of the Alyscamps**

Of course, this loss of medieval history is also due to the fact that time had played its part, particularly in Arles which forms a good example of ‘collective forgetting.’ Many sarcophagi in the Alyscamps have been plundered, taken and sold. The basilica of St. Honorat also lost many of its most precious relics, for instance in 1329 the body of St. Honorat was transported to Ganagobie for safety because Arles was being ravaged by attacks, and then in 1391 it was transferred to the fortified

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<sup>746</sup> ‘ There was a pride in being Arlesian that was manifested especially in the frenetic search for ruins that so clearly illustrated the munificence of the ancient city’ E. Mathé-Rouquette, *Le goût de l'antique : quatre siècles d'archéologie arlésienne*, 4.

<sup>747</sup> A. Momigliano, ‘Ancient History and the Antiquarian,’ 292.

<sup>748</sup> see A. Momigliano, ‘Ancient History and the Antiquarian,’ 292.

monastery of Lérins that Honorat had founded.<sup>749</sup> Eventually, the patronage of the martyr St. Genesis was forgotten, in 1639 no chapel dedicated to him was even mentioned.<sup>750</sup>

But some sarcophagi were still left in the church and in the cemetery, and as a result, the sisters of the monastery of St. Honorat in Tarascon who owned the site, sold it to the Minims order in 1616 under the condition that the monks would keep and maintain the antiquities on the site.<sup>751</sup> However, they found the site in a state of ruin, and the report made after visiting the site in 1612 stated that the church was ‘extremely ruined and desolate, the floor stones were broken, the walls separated from each other in several locations, the convent was open, the altars bare and there was no glass in the windows.’<sup>752</sup>

The Minims is a little known monastic institution, considered one of the most austere orders and that lived in a sort of perpetual Lent. They were known to take a fervent interest in the classical past,<sup>753</sup> so it is not surprising that they were eager to take on the site. Many lived in ruins and built their monasteries out of old remnants of the past.<sup>754</sup>

Their idea of preservation was somewhat different to what curators would have in mind today. They used many of the sarcophagi as spolia, encrusting them in the walls and shaping them into useful devices. One of the sarcophagi, called the Olivaison, had holes pierced into it to make it into a fountain. Others were encrusted into the walls as part of the architecture, for instance Emile Fassin mentioned that some sarcophagi were used as stairs. While this might seem strange to us today, it was nevertheless compatible with the Minim ideology, living with very little and ‘reusing’ the vestiges of the past as opposed to creating new pieces.

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<sup>749</sup> M. Fabre. *Annales des Minimes*, ms. 166, 59.

<sup>750</sup> M-P. Rothé and M. Heijmans, *Arles, Crau, Camargue*, 390.

<sup>751</sup> ‘The Minim Fathers will be obliged to keep all antiquities in the said church and in the cemetery, and also all antiquities found in the ground while digging the foundations of the said convent ... and neither said fathers nor their descendents shall be able to order their removal from the said cemetery so that the appearance and the mark of such a beautiful antiquity will be available to posterity’ Arles, Mediathèque ms. 788.

<sup>752</sup> L. Bonnemant, *Communautes*, Bibliothèque d’Arles, I, ms.159, 629.

<sup>753</sup> P. J. S. Whitmore, *The order of Minims in seventeenth-century France*, International archives of the history of ideas, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967).

<sup>754</sup> P. J. S. Whitmore, *The order of Minims in seventeenth-century France*, 133.

Nevertheless, this ‘utilitarian’ reuse left little room for preservation of the specific historical meaning of each sarcophagus. The objects became ruins, which symbolised the past in general. For instance, the cemetery as a whole lost its association with *chansons de geste*. Hence, many sarcophagi were rearranged along the path that led to the basilica with little thought to the specific historical meaning of each. A good illustration of the new display can still be appreciated in the drawing made by Etienne Tassy in 1797 (Figure 57). An earlier drawing dating from 1789 by Etienne Advinent (Figure 58) also shows the ruins of the basilica and the new display of the sarcophagi. We can see the sarcophagus that had belonged to Memorius that had been reinvented during the Middle Ages as Vivian’s sarcophagus, in a privileged position at the left of the drawing. However, as I have argued in chapter IV, the hunt scene that was probably the reason why it became associated with Vivian, was facing the wall. This exemplifies the Minim Fathers’ lack of interest in the ‘medieval’ character of the sarcophagi, a history that they either ignored or did not know.

Although monks might have forgotten or lost interest in the legends built around the knights in *chansons de geste*, they nevertheless preserved those related to Arlesian bishops, perhaps because their story was more compatible with their ideal life. They rebuilt the crypts, that were in a very bad state,<sup>755</sup> on a smaller scale and in which eight sarcophagi were displayed in the middle.

In 1710, a plaque of marble on which an inscription celebrated the origins of the tombs was displayed at the entrance to the crypts.<sup>756</sup> Fabre tells us that the tomb of St. Genesis was on the floor supporting the sarcophagus of Bishop Rotland, on top of which was the sarcophagus of Concordius.<sup>757</sup> Next to them was the sarcophagus of Virgilius (who Fabre thought had built the Church). Next to the sarcophagus of Concordius was the tomb of Aurelian (another bishop of Arles) and the tomb of Hilary. The tomb of Dorothy was also in the crypt, while the tomb of Honorat who was after all

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<sup>755</sup> M-P. Rothé and M. Heijmans, *Arles, Crau, Camargue*, 389.

<sup>756</sup> D.O.M. Hic est locus veneratus in quo D. Trophimus unus ex Chris(ti) discipulis pe. Arel(at.) Ecclediae Praesul primusque Galliarum apost. Prima christianae religionis fundamenta Jecit. Hic fons aquae salutiferae ex quo tota Gallia fidei rivulos accepit. Hic crypta sacra in qua SS. Honorati, Hilarii, Eonii, Aurelii, Concordii, Virgillii, Rotlandi et Aliorum Arel(at) pontif(icum), nec non sancti Genesis mart(yris) arel(atensis) et Dorotheae v(irginis) m(artyris) beat(issima) corpora quiescunt. Hanc utem anno Christi 1710, piissima ac religiosissima Minorum familia fidelium oculis exhibere censuit, ut qui venerabundi ad eam accesserint, tantor(um) patron(um) auxilio, apud deum omnium bonorum largitorem, sentient effectum.’

<sup>757</sup> M. Fabre. *Annales des Minimes*, ms. 166, 59.

the most important bishop in the collection, had become the main altar of the Church.<sup>758</sup> Hence the community in the basilica still remained even during these difficult times, and although it had evolved somewhat since Late Antiquity, it still kept its specific character.

But despite everything, there was discontent in the way that the sarcophagi were treated, particularly by many antiquarians.<sup>759</sup> Indeed, the Minims' 'utilitarian' view of history was not very compatible with the antiquarian collector's approach. Yet as Rouquette points out, not all the monks' input was negative, they did contribute to preservation of the artefacts, even if it meant 'using' them in an unorthodox manner.<sup>760</sup> Aside from the spoliation, they created a display that resembled many of our museums today, where artefacts are put together and displayed so as to present the objects rather than contextualise them.

In fact, on December 7 1794 the councils signed a convention for the creation of a public museum in the convent.<sup>761</sup> A Minim monk, Father Dumont, was one of the initiators of this project. He wished to 'collect and assemble the various monuments to antiquity that were scattered around the town or on its land in a single location so that the curious might visit them more easily.'<sup>762</sup>

The monk did indeed reassemble many artefacts,<sup>763</sup> and he was also commissioned to write a comprehensive book on the antiquities of Arles. He was thought to be in a good position to do so because he had stayed in Rome, and could build a display like those that he had seen in Rome, where all antiquities were grouped in a single location. He was given 1000 pounds to complete this project in 1783 and the public museum was opened the next year.<sup>764</sup>

While this might have been a positive step for preservation of the artefacts, it nevertheless had a negative effect on preservation of the specific history of each artefact. In wanting to create a display similar to those that he had seen in Italy,

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<sup>758</sup> M-P. Rothé and M. Heijmans, *Arles, Crau, Camargue*, 542.

<sup>759</sup> E. Mathé-Rouquette, *Le goût de l'antique : quatre siècles d'archéologie arlésienne*, 36.

<sup>760</sup> E. Mathé-Rouquette, *Le goût de l'antique : quatre siècles d'archéologie arlésienne*, 37.

<sup>761</sup> The Convention can be read in Arles, Mediathèque, ms 788

<sup>762</sup> E. Mathé-Rouquette, *Le goût de l'antique : quatre siècles d'archéologie arlésienne*, 53.

<sup>763</sup> 'All the other tombs, lids, simple or profiled stones, or stones with portraits, bas relief slabs almost all marked with inscriptions and that are not among the six articles that were transported and placed at the expense of the community and belonging to it' see F. Benoît, 'Notes et documents d'archéologie arlésienne. XI, Le P. Dumont, antiquaire arlésien' *MIHP* (1934), 2-27, especially 11.

<sup>764</sup> E. Mathé-Rouquette, *Le goût de l'antique : quatre siècles d'archéologie arlésienne*, 54.

Dumont was trying to present a collection of antiquities, as opposed to emphasising the particular history of artefacts in the Alyscamps. Artefacts such as the statue of Jupiter and the portrait of Bacchus were mingled with what had been in the cemetery. He brought the altar of Jupiter that was put in the south wall of the convent into the nave of the Church, thus again ‘classifying’ the site. Nevertheless, this ‘collection’ effort characterised the period well, putting artefacts together by type rather than specific history following a methodology that is still applied today to a certain extent.

#### 4. The Museum Translation

Many of our sarcophagi were eventually transferred to museums, officially for their preservation. Some Arlesian sarcophagi were taken to Paris, such as the sarcophagus of Prometheus that had become associated with Bishop Hilary during Late Antiquity. The capital city attempted to plunder more of Arles’ artefacts claiming that Arles was incapable of preserving its own heritage.<sup>765</sup> But Millin, an Arlesian archaeologist who worked at the French Academy, and V éran managed to keep many sarcophagi in the city by opening a new museum in the church of St. Anne in 1812 that had no longer been used for religious purposes since the Revolution and that became the ‘Lapidaire’ museum of Arles for the next 150 years.<sup>766</sup> All antiquities found in the city, including those in the Alyscamps, were transferred to it. The crypt in the Alyscamps thereby lost its sarcophagi and its community of bishops.

In the meantime Arles lost some more of its sarcophagi, for instance in 1801 Delacroix, the Prefect of the Bouches-du-Rhone Department of France, confiscated the sarcophagus of Memorius (associated with Vivian during medieval times) to take it for his new museum (the Borély museum) in Marseille in which antiquities were displayed.<sup>767</sup>

A similar situation occurred in Marseille where the sarcophagi in St. Victor that had been temporarily transferred to a school after the Revolution, were put into the

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<sup>765</sup> For more on this project see see E. Mathé-Rouquette, *Le goût de l'antique : quatre siècles d'archéologie arlésienne*, 57-60.

<sup>766</sup> E. Mathé-Rouquette, *Le goût de l'antique : quatre siècles d'archéologie arlésienne*, 60.

<sup>767</sup> see (Letter from the Prefect of the Bouches-du-Rhone Department dated the 22 of the Month of Fructidor in Year 10)

Borély Museum that was actually opened in 1802. The sarcophagi were not transferred back to the crypt supposedly because it was dark, and more importantly Michel Clerc notes that ‘in the church, they had been exposed to mutilation during important holidays when crowds were present, of which they still bore marks and from which they are now protected.’<sup>768</sup>

What this exemplifies is a profound lack of interest in the religious aspect of these sarcophagi, to concentrate solely on their aesthetic qualities. It embodies the divorce of the object from its devotional purpose because, when the object is put in a museum, one cannot touch it nor see it in its earlier context in a crypt dedicated to the martyr.

It was the object themselves that became important to Michel Clerc and others, rather than the story associated with them. As Alexander Nagel has shown, after the XVIth century, attention drifted from the relic to the reliquary for its aesthetic qualities.<sup>769</sup> In losing its meaning and power, the relic in isolation became useless in itself, however the reliquaries that were typically made of expensive material became praised for their artistic quality. He explained ‘Attention drifted from the relic to the reliquary not so much as a symptom of secularization as an extension to an established pattern of installation and display, in which containers become displays in larger containers.’<sup>770</sup> In our case, the containers were antique sarcophagi and it was their antique qualities that became valued.

#### **4.1 Disengaging the reliquary**

While studying the display of Buddhist icons in museums, Fabio Rambelli and Eric Reinders pointed out that objects suffer from a loss of meaning as they are

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<sup>768</sup> F. Benoît, ‘Le Musée des cryptes à St-Victor de Marseille,’ 12.

<sup>769</sup> A. Nagel, ‘The Afterlife of the Reliquary’ *Treasures of heaven : saints, relics, and devotion in medieval Europe*, eds. M. Bagnoli (Cleveland, Ohio: Cleveland Museum of Art, 2010), 211-222, especially 213.

<sup>770</sup> A. Nagel, ‘The Afterlife of the Reliquary,’ 213.

decontextualised. This had led them to suggest that museums function as agents of a form of iconoclasm, for there is ‘violence against the meaning of the object.’<sup>771</sup>

A similar argument can be made in the case of many Christian relics, that in a museum context become disengaged from their original function. In museums displaying European or Western art, an emphasis is usually put on ‘causality’ of artefacts, in other words the context in which they had been created, their maker and their relation to other objects.<sup>772</sup> Thus, all artefacts that shared similar physical characteristics were put together, for example all XVIIth century Dutch paintings were put in the same place, displayed together.

This originates from the idea that what characterises the artefact is fundamentally visual. This seems logical for objects that have a very straightforward history and function. It becomes much more complicated when that function is religious or ritualistic. Such an object put into an exhibition has been divorced from its previous location and its previous function.

A relic is constructed from meaning and narrative that became attributed to it. As Katarzyna Rutkoski quite rightly pointed out, the ‘story’ knits the material thing into coherence, lending wholeness and life to a fragmented inanimate object. The relic is based on narrative, and of course if that narrative is put into question then the relic itself loses all its justification.<sup>773</sup> Thus, when a relic is showcased disengaged from its medieval narrative, the relic ceases to exist.

## 4.2 Classical relics or Christian relics?

The problem lay not simply in the fact that the sarcophagi were put in a museum, but in the character of the museum in which they were displayed and of the other pieces that accompanied them in the display. The display, or the context in which

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<sup>771</sup> F. Rambelli and E. Reinders, ‘What does iconoclasm create? What does preservation destroy? Reflections on iconoclasm in East Asia,’ *Iconoclasm : contested objects, contested terms*, eds. S. Boldrick and R. Clay (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 15-35, especially 18.

<sup>772</sup> D. Preziosi ‘Art, Art History, Museology,’ *MA* 20, 5-6.

<sup>773</sup> K. Rutkowski, ‘The Reformation of the Relic: Lydgate's and Milton's Saint Edmund ’ *Medieval and early modern devotional objects in global perspective : translations of the sacred*, eds. E. Robertson and J. Jahner, *The new Middle Ages* (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 135-154, especially 135.

an object is displayed, creates a new narrative for the said object. Barbara Serrell writes ‘design plays a crucial role – not just in presenting content, but in actually creating it.’<sup>774</sup>

During the Middle Ages, it was the context that created these objects as reliquaries, and eventually as actual relics of saints themselves. Similarly, during the modern period, it became the museum context, largely influenced by antiquarian ideals that re-created a narrative for these objects. They became presented as relics of antiquity rather than Christian relics, displayed amongst classical artefacts such as Apollo’s altar.

In this context, the sarcophagi became just another example of antique tombs, rather than examples of medieval devotion. This was largely because of the manner in which the sarcophagi were ‘labelled’, and on this subject Benjamin Ives Gilman questioned ‘are the labels really more important than the exhibits; or are the exhibits more important than the labels in a museum?’<sup>775</sup> as early as in 1915. The label defines, explains and contextualises the object. The way in which a sarcophagus is labelled is thus very revealing about the way that curators wished to project the sarcophagi.

While these museums in which sarcophagi were displayed no longer exist, the catalogues that presented the museums are still available to us and we can use them to determine how they presented these sarcophagi. The catalogue of the *Musée Lapidaire* of Arles of 1924 describes the location of each artefact in the museum in great detail, all in a disaffected church and supposed to portray Arles during antiquity. Each group of artefacts was composed of a particular type of antiquity, and was displayed in a separate chapel. It is interesting to note that little effort seems to have been made to distinguish between Christian and pagan sarcophagi, for instance Apollo’s altar was displayed among Christian sarcophagi.<sup>776</sup> As far as we know, no element in the museum was dedicated to celebrating the medieval past of the city.

Moreover, the description of each sarcophagus is quite telling. Nothing is said about their medieval re-attribution, the only bishop who is mentioned is Concordius, and only because his name was inscribed on the sarcophagus. Similarly, the lid of the

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<sup>774</sup> B. Serrell. *Judging Exhibitions: A Framework for Excellence* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2006), 33.

<sup>775</sup> B. Gilman, ‘The Problem of the Label,’ *Proceedings American Association of Museums* 5 (1911), 15-25, especially 15.

<sup>776</sup> A. Agard, *Le Musée Lapidaire d'Arles* (France: Imprimerie Générale du Sud-Ouest, 1924), 11-14.

sarcophagus of Hilary (whose name was inscribed on it) is also mentioned, but it had been separated from its pagan case that had been sent to Paris. The only comment about the bishop in the catalogue of the Musée Lapidaire is that it was he who in '446, made such persistent efforts to brutally destroy the Antique Theatre.<sup>777</sup> Hence, he is only mentioned as a destroyer of antiquities, nothing is said about his work as a bishop or of the episcopal history of Arles as a whole.

The sarcophagus that became associated with Genesius was referred to simply as the Sarcophagus of Jesus and the 12 apostles, and even that of Honorat's as a strigilated Christian sarcophagus.<sup>778</sup> They were thus completely divorced from their medieval context that became invisible in the new display and descriptions.

### **4.3 Modern layers of history**

The museum display decontextualised these objects from their historical context as well as from their religious context alone. They no longer stood as a reminder of Cassian's presence in Marseille or Honorat's important regional cult. These associations were erased when they were translated into a museum and through the absence of any mention of the saints in their new display. This was a way of negating and forgetting their association with the legends, and hence the legends themselves.

The sarcophagus for which links with the cult remained strongest is perhaps that of Mary Magdalene, because it is still in its medieval context in the basilica dedicated to the saint and in the crypt among the other saints in the same legend. As a result, people still go to the site and pray to the saint to the present day. It is still a pilgrimage site and remains very much part of Provençal regional identity. It is still a 'lieu de mémoire'.

What this quick modern biography of these sarcophagi has shown is that their story continues to evolve. The objects are repeatedly reused to assert different ideals

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<sup>777</sup> A. Agard, *Le Musée Lapidaire d'Arles*, 12.

<sup>778</sup> A. Agard, *Le Musée Lapidaire d'Arles*, 4.

that become prevalent during each period. We cannot assign any single preponderant event to the history of these objects, because there are many.

Fitted into a new historical narrative, their regional and religious rhetoric was torn from them so that they could be cherished as antiquities, and henceforth influenced their study even to the present day. The sarcophagi stopped being relics and became antiquities at a time when antiquity was valued. Even revolutionaries reused the objects as affirmation of their ideals: no-one could stop the Revolution and revolutionaries would tolerate no opposition, they were stronger than any saint or any cult.

While there was some sort of modern response for all sarcophagi, no two seem to have lived quite the same history because each was treated differently in each historical event. For instance, the sarcophagi dedicated to Mary Magdalene and her company were fairly safe during the Revolution, which reflects the relative calm and remoteness of the city of Saint-Maximin during those events. The same cannot be said for the sarcophagi in Marseille, principally because the city was one of the revolutionaries' strongholds. But unlike Arles, Marseille has never prized its antique past. Arles on the other hand, known as the 'Little Rome of Gaul', became the classical city par excellence, and it was its antique past as opposed to its medieval past that became highly valued.

## **5 Epilogue: the sarcophagi today**

The specific identity that each city projects of itself influences the way that their sarcophagi are displayed today. Hence, the history of sarcophagi in Marseille is very different from the history of those in Arles. In fact, the sarcophagi of St. Victor that probably had the most tormented history were eventually returned to the monastery's crypts. On October 25<sup>th</sup> 1967, the priest of St. Victor, Canon Seinturier, produced a list of the specific objects that he wished to be returned to the basilica, including most of the sarcophagi that had become associated with the saints. He had obviously not forgotten the medieval history of these sarcophagi as they were after all associated with some of Marseille's most valued saints from Late Antiquity and the arrival of the monk Cassian who brought monasticism to the West. The then-mayor of Marseille, Gaston Defferre, agreed on November 24 1967, and the priest started to draw a display plan which resembles the B map drawn in 1777 (Figure 32). While the project

was not finalised until around 1970, because of excavations done on the site, it nevertheless shows an effort made by the priest and the mayor to recontextualise these sarcophagi and hence effectively promote a pre-revolution historical project within the city.<sup>779</sup>

In one of the few publications dedicated to the sarcophagi in the crypt, Geneviève Drocourt-Dubreuil took care to name the sarcophagi not only by their iconography, but also with respect to the saint/martyr with whom they had become associated during the Middle Ages.<sup>780</sup> However, she made the mistake of excluding pagan sarcophagi from the collection, even though some saints, for example the Martyred Innocents, had been associated with them.<sup>781</sup> Nevertheless, the inclusion of the medieval tradition in her book could have been influenced by the very space in which they were located, in their monastic context. Such a study has never been made for the sarcophagi in Arles, and they have never been re-displayed in their medieval religious context.

St. Honorat's basilica is now in ruins, and no efforts have been made to keep it up in modern times. As already mentioned, the sarcophagi found in it were moved around the city many times until most recently in 1995, when most seem to have found a permanent home in the newly built *Musée de l'Arles Antique*.<sup>782</sup> The Museum was designed to hold all the antiquities of the city in a single space. Once again, both antique and Christian sarcophagi were displayed alongside each other, but problematically, the sarcophagi that had become associated with bishops and martyrs are still not mentioned as such. Moreover, the sarcophagus of Memorius that was transferred from Marseille back to Arles, is displayed in the antique collection with no mention of its medieval associations.

Hence, the collection is now completely decontextualised from its medieval history. Perhaps one of the most interesting examples of this decontextualisation is the sarcophagus that was reused for Bishop Hilary, which bears a pagan iconography of

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<sup>779</sup> G. Drocourt-Dubreuil, *Saint-Victor de Marseille art funéraire et prière des morts aux temps paléochrétiens IVe-Ve siècles*, 214.

<sup>780</sup> see G. Drocourt-Dubreuil, *Saint-Victor de Marseille art funéraire et prière des morts aux temps paléochrétiens IVe-Ve siècles*.

<sup>781</sup> For example, the sarcophagus of Bacchus is absent from the catalogue.

<sup>782</sup> For a history of the collection of sarcophagi at the Musée de l'Arles Antique see, V. Gaggadis-Robin and Musée départemental Arles antique, *Les sarcophages païens du Musée de l'Arles antique*, 12-14.

Prometheus.<sup>783</sup> It was transferred from Provence to the Louvre and is now displayed in the antique section, completely divorced from its association with one of the most important bishops in Southern Gaul. The lid which bore an inscription to Hilary was left in Arles where it is now displayed in the *Musée de l'Arles Antique*, thus separating the sarcophagus from its late antique and medieval identity as well as its Christian claims.

To the passerby, an average museum visitor, this sarcophagus displayed among Roman antiquities signifies antiquity at large. It fits into the collection of antique sarcophagi (many of which were brought with the Borghese collection from Rome in the XIXth century), and the history of the tomb of Saint Hilary appears to be similar to the history of all the other sarcophagi in the Louvre. Little does the visitor know that it was once associated with a saint, that it became a relic, that hundreds of pilgrims touched it and prayed in front of it, and that miracles were thought to have happened before this very carved coffin.

But to say that a sarcophagus in this context is no longer a relic is a dangerous assumption. While its meaning has fundamentally changed, it still bears reliquary qualities. It is now a relic of Antiquity, it presents one of Southern France's biggest prides - its extraordinary antique past. Sarcophagi are often noted for their materials and quality of manufacture, reflecting the level of sophistication that the region once enjoyed.

These sarcophagi are not just relics, nor are they 'antiquities'; they are complex objects to which layers of meaning have been added during each historical period. While this thesis has focused on the medieval reuse of these sarcophagi, it has also aimed at presenting the complexity of these objects and the rich history that became associated with them throughout their lives.

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<sup>783</sup> F Baratte, and C. Metzger. *Catalogue des sarcophages en pierre d'époques romaine et paléochrétienne*. Paris: Ministère de la culture, Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1985, 115-118.

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