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***Festa* and *Feria*: on the exhibitions of Christ relics during fairs and the coordination of sanctuary and merchant calendars in the Middle Ages**

Among the many avenues opened up by Jacques Le Goff for an anthropology of the Middle Ages is the dialectical opposition between two conceptions of time that could be summed up in these two irreconcilable propositions: “time belongs only to God” (the time of the Church) and “time is money” (the time of the merchant).¹ According to this logic, the rise of commerce would have been accompanied by a gradual secularisation of time, which would have become more measured and controlled, gradually freed from the hold of the Church.

Recent historiography has nuanced this opposition. Firstly, it has reassessed the relationship between the Church and money. Giacomo Todeschini has shown that we must abandon the naïve picture of a medieval Church reluctant to the idea of wealth. At the very least, the clergy participated in the emergence of a new conception of wealth, valued by Christian discourses as well as new techniques and practices for the administration of goods and capital.² On the very question of time management, Jean-Claude Schmitt underlines the nuances to be brought to a supposed rationalisation of time and shows that these new market rhythms did not make the “old rhythms” disappear.³

Fairs, often named after the saint of the day, are a good example of the ever-present synchrony between professional and religious time. Moreover, the Church was far from turning its back on these commercial events. On the one hand, the bishops and abbeys were responsible for founding numerous fairs and

1 Jacques Le Goff. *Au Moyen Âge: temps de l'Église et temps du marchand*. *Annales E.S.C.* 15:3 (1960): 417–433.

2 Giacomo Todeschini. *I mercanti e il tempio. La società cristiana e il circolo virtuoso della ricchezza fra medioevo ed età moderna*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002. See also Clément Lenoble. *Avant l'ascèse intramondaine. Comptabilités ecclésiastiques, gouvernement et rationalité économique (XIII^e–XV^e siècles)*. *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions*, 66^e année, 195 (2021): 51–81; Susanne Rau. Rhythmusanalyse nach Lefebvre. In *Taktungen und Rhythmen. Raumzeitliche Perspektiven interdisziplinär*, Sabine Schmolinsky, Diana Hitzke, Heiner Stahl (eds.). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2018, 9–24. I would like to thank both Jean-Louis Gaulin and Suzanne Amy Foxley very much for their help and comments.

3 Jean-Claude Schmitt. *Les rythmes au Moyen Âge*. Paris: Gallimard, 2016, 556–563.

markets from which they reaped substantial profits.⁴ On the other, they accompanied them with rituals—for example, by blessing the fair ground, as happened at the Lendit fair in Saint-Denis which has been documented since the early twelfth century.⁵ Étienne de Givry's Pontifical, dating from around 1405–1410, includes among its additions the text of this blessing of the field, performed by the bishop of Paris, and an image of this ritual.⁶

This case is not unique: many markets and fairs in the Middle Ages saw their calendar coincide with that of specific religious events and particularly with that of the *ostensions*, the ceremonies at which the relics were displayed. In these cases, did the merchants align their calendar with that of the relics or did the relics follow the merchants' rhythm? Our aim here is to study a series of synchronies between the ostensions of relics and fairs. We will confine ourselves to the relics of Christ, especially to the Holy Shrouds which were regularly the subject of this type of event.⁷

The invention of a pious origin: the cases of Saint-Denis and Saint-Corneille of Compiègne fairs

An important document narrated the origins of both the cult of the relics of Saint-Denis and the Lendit fair—the *Descriptio qualiter Karolus Magnus clavum et coronam Domini [. . .] ad Sanctum Dionysium retulerit*,⁸ written by a monk of the abbey during the second half of the eleventh century. According to this legend,

4 Michel Bur. Les autres foires de Champagne. In *Städtelandschaft—Städtenetz—zentralörtliches Gefüge. Ansätze und Befunde zur Geschichte der Städte im hohen und späten Mittelalter*, Monika Escher, Alfred Haverkamp, Frank G. Hirschman (eds.). Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2000, 349–365.

5 Rolf Große. Reliques du Christ et foires de Saint-Denis au XI^e siècle. A propos de la *Descriptio clavi et corone domini*. *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France* 87 (2001): 357–375.

6 “Ordo in die benedictionis indicti,” Pontifical d'Étienne de Givry, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter BnF), ms. lat. 962, 264r^o–268v^o.

7 For this inquiry, I used several documents transcribed from my doctoral thesis. See Nicolas Sarzeaud. *Copie et culte. Le Suaire du Christ, une relique reproductible (xiv^e–xvi^e s.)*. PhD diss., EHESS, 2021 and *Les Suares du Christ en Occident du Moyen Âge à nos jours*. Paris: Cerf, 2024.

8 Anne Lombard-Jourdan. Les foires de l'abbaye de Saint-Denis: revue des données et révision des opinions admises. *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes* 145 (1987): 274–338. On this text, see also Matthew Gabriele. The Provenance of the *Descriptio qualiter Karolus Magnus*: Remembering the Carolingians in the Entourage of King Philip I (1060–1108) before the First Crusade. *Viator* 39:2 (2008): 93–117; Carla Rossi. Le Voyage de Charlemagne: le parcours vers Jérusalem et les reliques. *Critica del testo* 2:2 (1999): 619–653; Große, Reliques du Christ.

Charlemagne was called to the rescue by the Byzantine emperor and regained Jerusalem. He was then rewarded with the gift of a collection of the relics of Christ, the Virgin, and saints, brought them back to Aachen, and made the announcement (*indictum*) of their display to the faithful. The *Descriptio* narrated the unfolding of this ritual and the order given to repeat this *indictum* every year on the Wednesday of the second week of June: this is the Lendit.⁹

This document is very early in the history of the rituals of ostensions. While procession-type celebrations existed earlier, during the early Middle Ages, the term *ostensio* referred only to a specific stage of the *translatio*: when a relic was moved from one place to another, it was briefly exhibited to the crowd of worshippers. Here, Charlemagne was placed in the position of creating a certain mode of organising the ritual, a regular *ostensio*, which gave rise to the Lendit trade fair.¹⁰ This association between the sovereign and the ostension serves as a model, and from the thirteenth century onwards, kings used it in the Sainte-Chapelle.¹¹

Of course, Charlemagne never went to Jerusalem, but there's more to the story. At the very time that this text was written, during the second half of the eleventh century, no sources described annual ostensions of relics at Saint-Denis. The only known ritual to which this text may refer was a one-off event—the opening of the reliquaries at Saint-Denis Abbey in 1053–1054, in connection with the appearance of other Saint-Denis relics at Saint-Emmeran Abbey in Regensburg. According to Rolf Große, this event may have given rise to the idea of developing this narrative.¹²

9 *Postea vero rex ipse cum clero dei laudibus vacante in promunctorium quoddam foris iuxta castrum venit secum sancta deferens; deinde circumstanti populo omnique clero que apportaverat prememorata sancta satagebat denuotare; preterea qui aderant sancti viri fecerunt sermonem ad populum atque quotannis fieri indixerunt indictum spinee corone domini, clavi et ligni crucis sudariique ac plurimarum sanctarum reliquiarum et hoc semper in Iunio mense et in ebdomada secunda, in ieiunio scilicet quatuor temporum quarta feria.* In *Die Legende Karls des Grossen im 11. und 12. Jahrhundert*, Gerhard Rauschen (ed.). Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1890, 98–125, esp. 120–121. The original can be found at BnF, ms. lat. 12710.

10 Hartmut Kühne. *Ostensio Reliquiarum. Untersuchungen über Entstehung, Ausbreitung, Gestalt und Funktion der Heilumsweisungen im Römisch-Deutschen Regnum*. Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2000. See also Christof L. Diedrichs. *Vom Glauben zum Sehen. Die Sichtbarkeit der Reliquie im Reliquiar. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Sehens*. Berlin: Weissensee, 2001; Gia Toussaint. *Kreuz und Knochen. Reliquien zur Zeit der Kreuzzüge*. Berlin: Reimer, 2011.

11 Murielle Gaude-Ferragu. *Le trésor des rois. Sacré et royauté, des rois maudits aux princes de la Renaissance*. Paris: Perrin, 2022, 167–177, esp. 174–175 for the Carolingian model.

12 Große, *Reliques du Christ*, 371.

For its part, the Fair of June was already well under way when this text was written. The existence of this fair can be documented since the early Middle Ages, initially in the form of a market, probably spontaneous, institutionalised as the Lendit in connection with the writing of the *Descriptio* and the setting up of an ostension ritual. It experienced significant success in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The date on which the *Descriptio* was written is debated, but this narrative of an old and holy foundation was clearly an attempt to provide a Christian origin to an existing economic event in which the abbey was financially interested.¹³ The ritual of blessing the fair ground, which appeared in the documentation at the beginning of the twelfth century, was part of this logic: it is described by Abbot Suger around 1140, who also mentioned the presence of pilgrims during fairs.¹⁴

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, Étienne de Givry's Pontifical described the benediction of the fair ground, after a Mass said on the morning of June 11.¹⁵ The clergy carried a piece of the True Cross in procession through the cemetery, where they sang for the dead, "to the place of the Lendit (*usque ad locum indicti*)" where the bishop began the hymn *O Crux* "holding the relics in his hands (*tenens inter suas manus reliquias*)." On the highest spot (*in altiori loco*), the archdeacon initiated the Kyrie, then the bishop, "holding the relics, turn[ed] towards the East signing the people with the sign of the holy cross," then repeated the motion to the south, west, and north, before singing the *Humiliate nos*.¹⁶

In addition to this call to humility, the liturgy included psalms—notably Psalm 44, *Deus auribus nostris*—praising the work done by the Lord during his own days, emphasising for the actors of the fair the theme of the working week. Interestingly, this ritual is called *benediction* and not ostension, even though it is the term chosen in the *Descriptio*. It does, however, give the festivity its full religious dimension, placing the places and times of commerce under the *signum* of the Church.

This case is not isolated. In 1092, a charter from the Capetian king, Philip I instituted a fair in honour of the Shroud of Christ at Compiègne. It recounted the

13 Lombard-Jourdan, *Les foires*, 286–294.

14 Suger, *De consecratione ecclesiae sancti Dionysii*. In *Œuvres complètes de Suger*, Albert Lecoy de la Marche (ed.). Paris: Renouard, 1867, 216, 230. See also „Vita Ludovici regis“, *op. cit.*, 120.

15 Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 962, 264r°–268v°.

16 *Cum vero pontifex primam pertulerit orationem sanctas tenens reliquias vertat se ad orientem signando populum ex eis signo sancte crucis. Cum secundam dixerit se dirigat ad meridiem. Cum tertiam respiciat ad occidentem. Quartam pennunciet versis vultibus ad aquilonem. Eodem modo, ut prius signans populum, ut sit populus dei sancte crucis signo salubri munitus ex omni parte climatis tueatur ab hostibus*. Paris, BnF, ms. lat. 962, f. 266v°.

translation of the relic in the Abbey of Saint-Corneille, which would have taken place a few years earlier, probably on 3 March 1079, in a gold shrine offered by Matilda of Flanders, Queen of England.¹⁷ The Shroud of Compiègne is part of the collection of Charlemagne's relics, and the *Descriptio* tells us that the object was deposited at Saint-Corneille by Charles the Bald before he brought the rest of the collection to Saint-Denis. As Matthew Gabriele has shown, both the *Descriptio* of Saint-Denis and the Charter of Compiègne demonstrated a growing interest within the networks of the Capetian royalty in the figure of Charlemagne, particularly glorified through the narrative of his mythical pilgrimage to Jerusalem.¹⁸

To commemorate this translation, Philip instituted a fair on Lætare Sunday, at the half of Lent, “*Mi-Karesme*” in Middle French. It was initially the fair of the Abbey of Saint-Corneille, but a disjunction occurred in the twelfth century between a three-day fair benefiting the abbey and a two-week fair benefiting the city of Compiègne and the king. The fair was at its peak during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries but declined after the raids of the Hundred Years' War in northern France.¹⁹

Although *Mi-Karesme* was placed under the patronage of the Shroud, the documentation does not mention any regular ostensions. The only ritual known to us, at a late date, is the placing of a candle by the town in front of the relic on the day of Lætare.²⁰ Moreover, as in Saint-Denis, a market was already active in the Carolingian era: after the *translatio*, Philipp just added some special rights to the abbey. In both cases, then, the cult of the relic appeared after the economic event, used as a means of endowing it with a Christian founding narrative, situating their *raison d'être* around the relics of Christ that these shrines claim to have possessed for a long time. In these two cases, it was not the merchants who secularised the Christian calendar but, on the contrary, sanctuaries who gave religious meaning to secular events.

17 Philip I of France. Charter on the Shroud's *translatio* (1092). In *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Corneille de Compiègne I*, Émile Morel (ed.). Montdidier: Bellin, 1904, 52–53.

18 Gabriele, Provenance; Matthew Gabriele. *An Empire of Memory. The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks, and Jerusalem Before the First Crusade*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 58–60.

19 Louis Carolus-Barré. Le *mi-Karesme*, foire de Compiègne au Moyen Âge et sa survie jusqu'en 1792. *Bulletin de la Société historique de Compiègne* 26 (1979): 19–72.

20 “Item jour le fraict du cierge du saint Suaire renouvelé le jour du dimanche Letare pour ce: X sous parisis.” Municipal Deliberations of Compiègne, 30 August 1530, Compiègne, Archives municipales, BB18, f. 65r^o. See also Sarzeaud, *Copie et culte*, 32.

The rise of ostensions and their connection with fairs

Local festivities in honour of the relics—known as *festas reliquiarum*—first appeared in the eleventh century and became more common by the thirteenth century. They were celebrated through dedicated liturgical services but could also be the subject of processions or ostensions.²¹ These displays tended to become regular occurrences, with fixed dates on which pilgrims converged to see the relics.

The precise chronology of this change is difficult to establish due to the scarcity of prescriptive documents. One exception, however, has been much debated. In 1215, the sixty-second canon of the Fourth Lateran Council observed:

Because some people exhibit the relics of the Saints for money (*reliquias exponunt venales*) and show them indiscriminately (*ostendunt passim*), the Christian religion has often been diminished. In order to prevent this from happening any further, we decree that ancient relics shall no longer be displayed outside their reliquaries or exhibited for money.²²

An ambiguity remains here: at what point should an ostension of relics be considered venal? If any kind of collection of offerings is targeted, then would this be tantamount to banning ostensions altogether? Most of the canonists of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries perceived it as a more limited ban—the prohibition of the trade of relics, which was flourishing under the reign of Innocent III, just after the sacking of Constantinople in 1204.²³

The synodal assemblies of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries proposed various interpretations of this canon, some of which, by slavishly repeating the formula of Lateran IV, seemed to forbid in general the removal of relics from their shrines.²⁴ Others treated the adverb *passim*—“here and there”—as the key

21 Kühne, *Ostensio Reliquiarum*, 522–580; François Dolbeau. La prédication pour les fêtes de reliques. In *Ad libros! Mélanges d'études médiévales offerts à Denise Angers et Joseph-Claude Poulin*, Jean-François Cottier, Martin Gravel, Sébastien Rossignol (eds.). Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2010, 139–161.

22 *Cum ex eo, quod quidam Sanctorum reliquias exponunt venales et eas passim ostendunt, christianae religioni detractum sit saepius: ne posterum detrahatur, praesenti decreto statuimus, ut antiquae reliquiae amodo extra capsam nullatenus ostendantur nec exponantur venales.* In *Les décrets: Nicée I à Latran V. Les Conciles œcuméniques*, vol. II, Giuseppe Alberigo (ed.). Paris: Cerf, 1994, 560–561.

23 Kühne, *Ostensio Reliquiarum*, 556–558.

24 The Synod of Bordeaux in 1255 prescribed “quod amodo reliquiae extra capsam nullatenus extrahantur, nec exponantur venales.” See *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, Giovanni Domenico Mansi (ed.). Venice: Zatta, 1758–1798, t. 23, col. 85. The Synod of Bayeux in 1300 prescribed: “quod antiquae reliquiae amodo extra capsam nullatenus ostendantur, nec ve-

to reading this prohibition. For example, the Synod of Budapest in 1259 forbade “the relics to be shown outside the shrines except on special feasts and, for this purpose, to pilgrims arriving out of devotion, as prescribed by the praiseworthy custom of certain Churches.”²⁵

Fixed ostensions would therefore be authorised, but less regulated practices would be in sight of the Church. For example, around 1200, Philip Augustus granted a “*sauf-conduit*” to the religious of Saint-Corneille of Compiègne who were transporting the relic within the royal domain during an itinerant quest.²⁶ We can imagine that ostensions were made “*passim*” on this occasion. Whatever the correct interpretation of the sixty-second canon of Lateran IV, the situation observed from the end of the thirteenth century onwards was indeed the same as that described in Budapest—in an increasing number of places, regular rituals of ostension on fixed dates were documented.

One of them is none other than Rome. Boniface VIII instituted a jubilee year in 1300, following the same principle of concentrating the flow of pilgrims over a specific period of time, during which the clergy performed an ostension of the relics, in particular of Saint Veronica in the Vatican. For Hartmut Kühne, the success of the jubilees may have served as a model, explaining the marked expansion of relic ostension liturgies in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.²⁷

The period saw the emergence of numerous events combining fairs and ostensions of relics. In some cases, it is possible to document the intention of associating a fair with an existing liturgy, taking advantage of the influx of the faithful. This is the case for the Shroud of Cadouin, transferred to Toulouse in September 1392. A letter from Charles VI, dated January 1393 and sent to his seneschal, mentioned the following request from the ‘*capitouls*’:

[They] told us that, since the Holy Shroud [. . .] has recently been brought to Toulouse, they hope that many people will come out of devotion to see and adore it. For this reason, it would be profitable for the public institution of the city if two fairs were held [. . .] during

nales exponantur.” See *Sacrorum conciliorum*, Mansi (ed.), t. 25, col. 68. The Synod of Marsac in 1326 and Lavaur in 1368 prescribed: “ut antiquae reliquiae amodo extra capsas vel vasa nullatenus ostendatur, nec exponantur venales.” See *Sacrorum conciliorum*, Mansi (ed.), t. 25, col. 793, t. 26, col. 522.

²⁵ “ut amodo reliquiae extra capsam nullatenus ostendatur, nisi in praecipuis festivitibus velad hoc ex devotione concurrentibus peregrinis, sicut quarumdam ecclesiarum laudabilis consuetudo exposcit.” See *Sacrorum conciliorum*, Mansi (ed.), t. 24, col. 283.

²⁶ Philippe Auguste. Safe-conduct letters for Shroud carriers. In *Cartulaire*, Morel (ed.), vol. I, 257–258.

²⁷ Kühne, *Ostensio Reliquiarum*, 579–580.

which the Holy Shroud would be shown [. . .] that is to say one at Easter and the other on the feast of the Assumption, and that each of them last eight days.²⁸

The king commanded additional information to the seneschal: there is no trace of such fairs, which the administration may not have seen fit to organise. The argument put forward by the city councillors nevertheless remains interesting. They argued that these fairs should be established in honour of God and the Holy Shroud and associated with the days of displays. The idea here is to promote a synergistic effect between fairs and ostensions, bringing together merchants and pilgrims.

Without necessarily turning into fairs, other cases show that the influx of pilgrims to relics tended to generate significant markets on the days of display. We can take, for example, another Shroud, the one of Turin: during its presence in Chambéry, it was celebrated by public ostensions on Good Friday and on 4 May (called “Holy Shroud Day”), becoming stronger and stronger in the first three decades of the sixteenth century.²⁹

The influx of pilgrims compelled the syndics—elected governors of the city—to issue “*ordonnances*” for the days of display. These included security measures as well as controls on commerce to prevent merchants from taking advantage of the situation and oversell goods, and to ensure that the increased commercial activity did not clutter and dirty the streets. For example, in 1518:

[A]ll, hoteliers, tavern-keepers, confectioners, bakers and all retailers [should] stock up on bread, wine, flesh, hay, straw, oats and all other foodstuffs, made up by weight, measure and at reasonable prices in the town and according to the current rate, and [. . .] no one [should deign] to oversell them, on pain of losing the goods and 25 pounds.

28 “Nos bien amez les capitolz de notre ville de Thoulouse nous ont exposé que pour ce que de nouvel le saint suere en quoy nostre Seigneur Jhesu Christ fu miz ou saint sépulcre a esté apporté en la dite ville de Thoulouse, ils espèrent que plusieurs personnes par devocion y vendront de cy en avant pour le voir et adourer. Et par ce, seroit expédient à la chose publique de la dite ville qu’il eust en icelle encores deux foires, avec celles qui y sont a certains jour en l’an, aux quelz le dit saint Suere seroit monstré. Et pour ce nous ont supplié que pour honneur de Dieu et du dit saint Suere, et pour le bien de la ville, nous leur vouldissions octroyer les dites deux foires chacun an dorenavant en la dite ville, avec celles qui y sont, c’est assavoir une à Pasques et l’autre à la feste de l’Assumption Notre-Dame, et que chacune d’icelles dure huit jours.” Charles VI of France. Letters to the seneschal of Toulouse about the Shroud’s fair, January 1393, Toulouse, Archives municipales, AA36/107; Sarzeaud, *Copie et culte*, 76–77. About this devotion, see Michelle Fournié. Une municipalité en quête de reliques. Le saint suaire de Cadouin et son dépôt à Toulouse à la fin du Moyen Âge. *Mémoires de la Société Archéologique du Midi de la France* 71 (2011): 127–162.

29 Andrea Nicolotti. *The Holy Shroud of Turin: The History and Legends of the World’s Most Famous Relic*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2020, 153–165.

Retailers were also forbidden from buying goods until two o'clock in the afternoon to prevent obstructions in the streets and to regulate the slaughter of sheep and calves in homes.³⁰ This success of the Shroud had a knock-on effect on other cities, such as Geneva, where a measure to provide the city with bread was taken while several pilgrims were “going to the Shroud of Chambéry.”³¹

Coordinating ostension relics and fairs at Besançon in the first half of the sixteenth century

Besançon is known to be a significant venue for fairs, especially exchange fairs in the sixteenth century, studied by Domenico Gioffré.³² From the eleventh century, an important fair was held on 3 October, the day of the dedication of St. Stephen's Cathedral. As early as 1268, Lombards appeared, especially as money changers, and in 1384 the town added four new annual fairs to the four old ones that remained. One of these fairs lasted for a week from the day before Ascension Day. Merchants from Besançon were forbidden to open their shops during these events.³³

30 “Item que l'on nectoie les chymynees et que l'on garde le feu, que Dieu le garde. Item que tous, hostelliers, tavernyez, patissie, bolongiez et tous revendeurs, fassent provision dez payn, vin, chers, feyn, palliez, avoyne et de tous autres vivres, fait a pois, mesure et pris reysonable de laz ville et selon le taulx qui est apresent et quel nul nez soiet, si ose nez si ardi dez les survendre sus la poyne de perdre laz dicte marchandise des vivres et de XXV livres. [. . .] Item que l'on deffend a tous hostelliers, tavernyers, patissiers, et toctes autres gens, qu'ils nez soient, si ose nez si ardi de tue moton nez veaulx en leur meyson nez autre par sans apoynte avecque l'ovre, sus la poyne de perdre la marchandise et de XXV livres. Item que lon deffend a tous revendeurs et revenderesses quel soient, si ose nez si ardi dez achete riens en laz placez jusques a deulx hores apres mydi, sur la poyne de perdre laz marchandise et de XXV livres [. . .]. Item que lon deffend a tous revendeurs et revenderesse qu'el nez tiegnent poent de banc nez autres choses quelconques empachemens devant leur tavernes, sus laz poyne de perdre la marchandise et de XXV livres.” Deliberation of the Chambéry's syndic, 25 April 1518, Archives départementales de Savoie (AD Savoie), 189E, dépôt 80, f. 294r°–295v°, also f. 314r°–315v°. Ed. in Sarzeaud, *Copie et culte*, 50–51.

31 *Registres du conseil de Genève*, 30 April 1518 and 6 May 1522. Geneva: Société d'histoire et d'archéologie, 1906-, t. 8, p. 230 and t. 9, p. 168. A similar case occurred in 1487, when the elected officials of Bergerac took emergency measures to replenish their wine stocks, which had been emptied by pilgrims on their way to the Shroud of Cadouin and Notre-Dame de Rocamadour. See Sarzeaud, *Les Suaires du Christ*, 59, 225, note 54.

32 Gioffré Domenico. *Gênes et les foires de change. De Lyon à Besançon*. Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1960.

33 See Michel Vernus and Daniel Greusard. *Foires et marchés en Franche-Comté*. Saint-Avertin: Allan Sutton, 2012.

During the 1530s, the city significantly strengthened this activity with, on the one hand, the arrival of Genoese merchants and, on the other, the appearance in the documentation of a “*foire du Suaire*.” The arrival of the Genoese reveals the proactive strategy of the citizens of Besançon in the matter of fairs. At this time, the merchants established in Lyon faced significant challenges, particularly relating to tensions between the Duchy of Savoy, the French Crown, and Charles V. The Genoese turned to Montluel and then Chambéry, from where they were expelled by the Duke of Savoy in 1534.

After passing through Lons-le-Saunier and Lucerne, the Genoese held fairs in Besançon in 1535. Indeed, the city was very keen to host the Genoese and took numerous steps in this direction.³⁴ Thus, on 2 February 1535, the governors wrote to the Genoese in Lons-le-Saunier. One Genoese person in particular—Colonel Gianbattista de Insula, a resident of Lucerne—had come to plead their cause. He can also be found in the decade as an ambassador of the cities of Lucerne, Ury, Suintz, Underwalle, and Zug, to Clement VII and Charles V. The governors expressed

[. . .] the desire of the people and ourselves to honour and gratify you with a good treatment as much as ourselves, well assured that it will be the honour, profit and convenience of all parties [. . .]. Very ready to do you all pleasures, honours and services, depending on our powers.³⁵

After this kind welcome, the Genoese stayed in Besançon, playing a role in the affirmation of the economic power of the city. The Genoese presence, however, was not without its challenges, and several documents indicate that while the civic government treated the Genoese relatively well, their presence in the city was not well-received by the people of Besançon.³⁶

³⁴ Letters from the Gouverneurs of Besançon to the Genoese merchants, being at Lons-le-Saunier, 10 February 1535 (n.st.), Bibliothèque municipale de Besançon (hereafter BMB), BB 17, f. 34v°–35v°.

³⁵ “pour vous remercier en premier lieu la bonne volonte et reputacion que pourtes aladite cité et vous assurer que, ledit cas advenant le traictement, que recepvres pourtera par effect tesmoignaiges du desir que le peuple d’icelle a nous avons vous y veoir honorer et gratifier en bon traictement astant que a nous mesmes, bien assurez que ce sera l’honneur, prouffit et commodite de toutes parties aussi chose tres agreable à l’impériale maiesté, selon que par iceulz nos commis le pourrez plus amplement entendre lesquelz, surce il vous plaira croire que nous mesmes et estre certains que en toutes choses ou vous nous vouldrez emploier, servir, sans aucune retardacion, tres prestz a vous faire tous plaisirs, honneurs et services deppendens de noz pouvoirs.” BMB, BB 17, f. 35r°–v°.

³⁶ To keep the thread of our argument, I summarise here the findings of my investigation on the Genoese in Besançon. According to the Municipal Deliberations, in July 1552, safe-conduct was granted to Baptiste Impérial Balien, a Genoese merchant who settled in Besançon where his

In March 1523, the canons of Saint-Etienne de Besançon announced in their registers a “mystery of the Resurrection” on Easter Sunday, showing a shroud. It was, in fact, a completely new object, a cloth copying the Shroud of Chambéry, which was to be exhibited by clerics re-enacting the role of the holy women who found the empty tomb. Two months later, it was described as the Holy Shroud, to be shown on Easter Day and Ascension Day.³⁷ The following years were marked by the growing of these annual public ostensions of a new holy relic.

In 1529, the town intervened to take measures comparable to those of Chambéry because of the “great influx of people to see the Holy Shroud.” In addition to measures to make the city safer and cleaner, many concerned the control of trade, limiting the prices and profits taken by hoteliers and innkeepers on bread, wine, and meat, and furthermore, taking steps to ensure that retailers were adequately supplied with bread and meat. As for wine, “there’s no need to issue a policy, because citizens will sell enough.”³⁸

brother was already living (BMB, BB 26, f. 125). On 7 July 1557, the city took advantage of a correspondence with the Bernese to transmit the protestation of his compatriots of good reputation residing in Besançon, concerning a Genoese imprisoned in Lausanne for debts made in Lyon and whose life had been threatened, following which governors asked for clemency (BMB, BB 28, f. 19v°). On 5 May 1560, following the murder of one Milanese person by another, the governors decided to forbid all Genoese, Lucquois, Milanese, and Italians from carrying weapons in the city without a license (f. 357v°). On 15 July 1561, justice was rendered to a Genoese, Flore de Torrente, who brought a lawsuit against Jean Gauthiot d’Ancier, a member of a prominent family from Besançon. D’Ancier had caused Flore de Torrente to be injured by his servants and had to pay reparations to both the city and the victim (f. 529).

37 Andrea Nicolotti. *Le Saint Suaire de Besançon et le chevalier Othon de la Roche*. Vy-lès-Filain: Franche-Bourgogne, 2015; Sarzeaud, *Les Suares du Christ*, 113–116.

38 “Item lesdits quatre [gouverneurs, Jacques Bonvallot, Charles Prévost, Symon Gaulthyot, Adryen Jouffroy] ordonneront a tous hostelliers et cabarettiers prendre seulement ung nicquet de pouffit par pinte sur le vin et vendre le pain blant deux engroignes et non plus à peine l’emender arbitrairement. [. . .] Du pain: La charge du pain est commise au tresourier et aultres officiers du grenier a bled, lesquels mesmes ledit tresourier feront toutes ordonnances et commandemens aux bolangiers estre bien pourvez en facon que necessité ne survienne. Du vin: Il n’est ja besoing y donner police pour ce que les citiens d’eux mesmes en vendront assez. Des bouchiers: L’on ordonne esdits bouchiers estre bien pourvez de toutes chars selon la presente sayson et la vendre seulement au pris qu’ilz font au jour d’huy a penne d’en estre pugny arbitrairement. Et pour ad ce avoir regard depputons Pierre Charmel en la grand boucherie et Jehan Bietrux en la boucherie Saint-Quantin dont ilz feront serment aux saints evangilles de dieu touchez fayre executer ceste presente ordonnance et rappourter par escript les defaillans et transgresseurs. Publiees en l’hostel consistorial de la cité de Besançon en presence des quatre des sept bannières et bouchiers et de ladite cité le jeudy XXIX jour d’avril l’an mil cinq cens vingtz et neufs. [Signé Lambelin].” Ordinance for the ostension of the Shroud of Besançon, BMB, ms. 719, f. 30r°–31v°.

The display during the Ascension period quickly became very crowded. In 1533, the town announced 33,000 foreign worshippers; in 1534, 16,000, which would have been a massive influx, the town having 8–10,000 inhabitants.³⁹ Moreover, in May 1533, the town sent a letter to the Archbishop of Besançon, Antoine de Vergy, asking him to hold the ostension of the Shroud not on Thursday, but on the Sunday after Ascension Day:

[F]or the honour and great convenience of both your church and the inhabitants of the city, it has seemed best from now on to show the most precious jewel of the Holy Shroud of our Benedict Redeemer, which it is customary to show, on the Sunday following Ascension Day, for several good reasons, advantages and prudence may fairly be considered [. . .].⁴⁰

Three days later, the canons announced in their register that they had agreed to move the date. They added a *caveatur*: “Warning from the churchwarden of Saint Etienne that no merchant may set up his bench or stall on the day the Shroud is to be shown in the churchyard of Saint Etienne.”⁴¹

39 Besançon municipal deliberations, 23 May 1533: “Le jour feste ascension notre seigneur xxiii^e jour de may, le Saint Suaire a esté monstré et y avoit plus de trente mil parsonnes estrangières. La veille, le jour et lendemain de ladite feste ascension, fut vendu et distribué du pain a vendre de ladite cité, cinquante cinq mil pains blancs d’ung lyard piece, sans le pain bis.” 15 May 1534: “Dymenche de Exaudi, xvii de may 1534, le saint suaire a esté monstré en la place près l’église saint Estienne de ceste cité de Besancon et y estoient gens estrangiers, plus de seize mil personnes.” BMB, BB15, f. 491v^o and BB17, f. 86r^o; Sarzeaud, *Copie et culte*, 183.

40 “par l’avis des commung et peuple de ceste cité hier assemblez pour l’honneur et très grande commodité tant de votre église que des habitans en icelle, a semblé pour le myeulx dorésnavant debvoir monstrier le très précieux joyaul ou saint suaire de nostre benoist rédempteur au dymenche suyvant le jour de l’ascencion, que l’on a accoustumé de monstrier, pour plusieurs bonnes considérations que votre vertu et prudence de votre conseil peult assez considerer, dont monseigneur suyvant noz devoirs n’avons voulu failly vous en adverty, par et pourteur que pource envoyons expressément et supplier très humblement en vouloir par icelluy escripre et mander deans demain votre bon plaisir et avis à messieurs du vénérable chappitre de votre église, afin monseigneur selon qui vous plaira y adviser a l’honneur d’icelle votre église, commodité et contentement dudit peuple et commung de ceste cité, en faire publicacion à jeudi prouchain quant il se monstrera, laquelle monseigneur et tous vous nous treuverez tousiours prestz vous faire le service qui vous plaira nous commande.” Municipal deliberations, 17 May 1523, BMB, BB15, f. 460; Sarzeaud, *Copie et culte*, 184.

41 *Caveatur per matricularium sancti Stephani ne aliqui mercatores sua banna et stellagia apponent, eadem die qua ostendetur predictum sanctum sudarium, in cimiterio ecclesie sancti Stephani*, Besançon municipal deliberations, 17 May 1533. *Stellagium* designate an “*étallage*,” stalls for merchants. *Bannum* is probably here equivalent to *bancum*, the bench. Deliberations of the Besançon chapter, 23 May 1533, Archives départementales du Doubs (hereafter AD Doubs), G193, f. 317; Sarzeaud, *Copie et culte*, 124.

If the city's "good reasons" to transfer the ostension are not specified, the most convincing one is precisely to associate the ostension, which welcomes a large number of faithful, and the fair, which traditionally began on Monday. The two are particularly linked in the records—as, for example, in 1537, when the city announced that, because of the plague, the ostension of the Shroud and the fair beginning on the Monday after the Ascension would be cancelled.⁴² This case illustrates the adjustments made to the liturgical calendar, with the ritual originally designed for Ascension being shifted to facilitate the synergy with a commercial event.

Nothing indicates that the Genoese played any role in this Shroud Fair, which appears to be much more eclectic than the exchange fairs. However, it seems clear that the governors were particularly involved in promoting different types of fairs in the decade of the 1530s and after. In particular, they took ordinances for the influx of pilgrims and merchants in Ascension, particularly in 1551 and 1555, reminiscent of those taken in Chambéry.⁴³ They prescribed an obligation for butchers and bakers to be well provided and not to oversell, but also for hoteliers not to receive people carrying weapons. Travellers were to be "treated honestly, without taking excessive payments" (*"qu'ilz les traictent honnestement sans prendre payement excessifz"*). Butchers were forbidden to blow into carcasses to give the impression that they were bigger, and female butchers were specifically asked to put the food on the benches and to clean the square around the stand.

In addition to measures on trade, fines were imposed on merchants who had violated the ordinances. Thus, in 1548, Roland Briselorz, a baker at the oven of François Thiébaud, with the appealing nickname "Malcuyt," received 60 sous of fines for having cooked bread without having paid for his entry in the trade. On 10 June 1550, the parchment-maker Adrien Chay, a citizen of the town, was fined "for having bought, killed and sold meat in his house on the day of the ostension

42 "pour raison et crainte tant de la peste que aultres diverses et contagieuses maladies présentement régnantes, l'on remet la monstre du très précieux et saint suaire de nostre sauveur et redempteur Jhesucrist pour la presente année, tans en feste de pasques que dymenche après l'ascencion monseigneur prouchain venant, pour ceste foys seullement, et jusques a ce que lesdits dangiers de peste et maladie seront cessez. Dont lors et du jour que se pourra estre mesmes publications en sera faite, item au semblable l'on fait savoir que sur la foyre accoustumé tenu en ceste cité le lundy après le dymenche de la feste ascencion monseigneur prouchain venant ne se tiendra pour ceste foys, pour les causes et considérations susdictes." Besançon municipal deliberations, 22 March 1537, BMB, BB 18, f. 509r^o; Sarzeaud, Copie et culte, 185.

43 Municipal deliberations, 30 April 1551 and 22–25 May 1555, BMB, BB 25, 369–370 and BB 27, f. 129v^o–130v^o; Sarzeaud, Copie et culte, 197–199, 203–204.

of the Holy Shroud.”⁴⁴ Similar to Chambéry, where slaughtering livestock was prohibited, this could be a health directive aiming to avoid odours and organic waste during the peak of the crowd. Alternatively, it might have been the punishment of a deviation from the regulations of the “*métiers*,” with a vendor attempting to capitalise on the influx by improperly selling meat.

Security measures prevented the entry of people who came from places experiencing epidemics and those with warlike intentions, but also, more generally, the poor and people without jobs were debarred. They were given a charity donation at the gates so that they did not enter. The gates and bridges were secured, as was the loop of the Doubs, a natural barrier protecting the city. The shuttles were suspended, and all the boats were asked to be taken out of the water to prevent intrusions.⁴⁵ In 1564, strangers were described as going into the town with armour and pistols and refusing to lay them down despite two requests from a city officer. The guard was sent to confiscate the weapons of these eighteen strangers. They were returned on Monday with a reprimand.⁴⁶

Among other measures, in 1555, the porters were asked to inform the merchants entering the city with carts to sell wood and coal that next year these carts would be forbidden. They also had to direct the cattle towards Chamars⁴⁷ to avoid too much congestion in the town, giving us a view of the type of goods sold in this Ascension Fair as well as of the topography of this fair. Among the expenses of the city, those for the guard were numerous, but others were related to musical instruments. The salary of François Aubriot, ordinary trumpeter of the city, was mentioned “for having sounded the trumpet on the Sunday that the Holy Shroud is shown.”⁴⁸ The trumpet was usually used to introduce the publication of the edicts of the city in the squares and crossroads.

44 “pour avoir acheté, tué et vendu en sa maison le jour de la monstre du saint suaire char, contrevenant aux ordonnances des dits sieurs sur ce faictes aux bouchers d’icelle.” Municipal accounts of Besançon, BMB, CC 109, f. 119r°; Sarzeaud, *Copie et culte*, 242.

45 Municipal deliberations, 11 May 1556, BMB, BB 27, f. 246v°–247r°; Sarzeaud, *Copie et culte*, 205.

46 Municipal deliberations, 1 and 3 April 1564, BMB, BB 29, f. 291r°–v°; Sarzeaud, *Copie et culte*, 218–219.

47 “Les pourtlers diront a tous charretiers estrangiers amenans boys et charbon à vendre, quant ilz partiront ce jourd’huy de la cité, qu’ils n’amènent leurs chariotz le jour de la prouchaine foire, affin ne donner empeschement en icelle cite pour ladite foire. L’on fera aller le bestial à vendre en Champmars, a scavoier les chevaux en l’hospital de Champmars, les beufs et vaches en La Mortie, esquelx iceux se tiendra la foire dudit bestial.” Municipal deliberations, 25 May 1555, BMB, BB 27, f. 130v°; Sarzeaud, *Copie et culte*, 204.

48 “Plus a payé le dit tresorier cinq groz viez monnoie à Francois Aubryot, trompette, pour ses peignes d’avoir sonnè la trompette au dimanche que l’on monstra le saint suaire.” Municipal account, May 1535, BMB, CC96, f. 197v°.

The governors also paid musicians, particularly flute and tambourine players, to play on the Shroud's Day.⁴⁹ These instruments, generally of a military nature, must be understood as being intended for the city's guard companies. At the Ascension Day of 1559, the governors gathered to "see several beautiful breast-plates (*hallectretz*)"⁵⁰ distributed to soldiers of the guard (which were, in fact, citizens in duty) who had been chosen by the captain. The manifestation of Ascension provided the opportunity for a military parade, the guard representing the city as an institution to its visitors. Generally, with the measures of guarding, cleaning, orders to the merchants, and so on, we can observe that the governors wanted to take advantage of the fair to show the city in its best light.

The extent of this celebration was probably mainly regional, as the few origins of people mentioned are mainly from Franche-Comté, and news such as the cancellation of the fair for one year was specifically spread in the diocese of Besançon. In 1579, however, the chapter reports that people coming from afar had not been warned of the cancellation and were therefore put on the spot. They asked whether or not the Shroud should be shown, which the governors refused, but canons decided to do so anyway.⁵¹

The relics, objects of fair

Around 1369, a document listed the relics of St. Vitus of Prague, including a shroud, which was to be displayed on the second Friday after Easter.⁵² This document stated that these relics should be displayed on the cattle marketplace. There were probably some practical reasons for this: this very large square (the current Place Charles IV) was perfect for accommodating the crowd. Simultaneously, this

⁴⁹ See, for example, municipal accounts, September 1535 and 1 June 1547, BMB, CC 96, f. 226v° and CC106, f. 155v°; Sarzeaud, *Copie et culte*, 236 and 239.

⁵⁰ "Le présent conseil a esté assemblé pour veoir plusieurs beaux hallectretz appartenans à Claude Monnet et a esté ordonné à messieurs Bonvalot et de Nobilers capitaines de la bende que doibt aller par la ville aujourd'huy et demain, à la monstre du saint suayre, qu'ilz choisissent telz personnaiges que bon leur semblera pour porter lesdits hallectretz, leur donnant quand à ce tout pouvoir nécessaire." Municipal deliberations, 6 May 1559, BMB, BB28, f. 239r°; Sarzeaud, *Copie et culte*, 208.

⁵¹ Municipal deliberations, 19, 22, and 30 May 1579, BMB, BB 37, f. 172r°, 173r°, and 176v°; Sarzeaud, *Copie et culte*, 230–231.

⁵² List of the relics of St. Vitus of Prague to be displayed on the second Friday after Easter, c. 1369, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 6686, f. 324v°. In *Karl IV: 1316–2016*, Jiří Fajt, Markus Hörsch (eds.). Prague: Národní galerie v Praze, 2016, 157. On Charles IV and the relics, see also Pierre Monnet. *Charles IV: Un empereur en Europe*. Paris: Fayard, 2020, 223–234.

choice reflects the resonances between the grand celebrations associated with relics and markets—the gathering of numerous individuals, coming from afar, assembled in a unique location. The visual dimension is also common: the term “*monstre*,” used to describe the exhibition of items at the beginning of the fair before the transactions, also refers in Middle French to the display of relics, particularly in Besançon. These comparable conditions sometimes prompted the organisers of these two types of events to combine them, strengthening the attendance of both and facilitating event management by concentrating the organisational tasks over a shorter period. We can note that the cases studied tend to show that ostension fairs were generally large markets or general fairs, which had everything to gain by diversifying their audience, rather than professional fairs, such as those of the Genoese money changers.

If we address the question in terms of a chicken-and-egg problem, it is not always clear in the records whether it was the relic that adjusted its calendar to coincide with the fair or vice versa, but at the very least, the picture does not correspond to the narrative of the secularisation of a liturgical calendar. Various situations are observed—commercial events created in connection with an ostension, as in Toulouse, or conversely, an adjustment of the liturgical calendar in Besançon to align the display with the fair. In some cases, such as in Saint-Denis and Compiègne, there was even the outright creation of a ritual to impart a Christian dimension to an existing market. Here, it was the Church that saw all the economic and pastoral benefits of aligning itself with the rhythm of the merchants.

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