



Yossi Maurey - Context for Athens lectures, May 2018

At the heart of the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris lie some of the most prized relics of Christendom, namely the Crown of Thorns and other Passion relics. King Louis IX (1214-1270) conceived and built the church expressly to house these relics, which soon became a monument at once to the Passion of Christ and to the cult of kingship. The so-called Sainte-Chapelle Proser (copied between 1250 and 1270) transmits 156 sequences for the Sanctorale, of which 22 are dedicated to a single group of feasts originating at the Sainte-Chapelle. Most of these sequences are *unica*, and have never been published or studied before. There are four for the Dedication feast (26 April), nine for the Crown of Thorns (11 August) and nine for the Reception of Relics (30 September). The excessive amount of sequences per feast would have allowed for a most rigorous veneration, with sequences dotting not only the feast-day itself, but also each and every day during the octave.

The cult of relics is virtually synonymous with medieval culture. Considered to be inert authentications and witnesses to some of the most formative events at the basis of the Christian faith, relics conjured up the proximity of saints and events that were chronologically and geographically distant, and thus put the faithful in touch with the most fundamental facets of their faith. Inert objects, relics could not accomplish much without being 'activated' one way or the other. One of the most effective ways in which churches could lay claim to relics was by music and liturgy, the only truly mass media of the Middle Ages.

In the course of my two lectures at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens I will examine the ways in which these 22 sequences articulate ideologies central to the spiritual and political messages of the Sainte-Chapelle in particular and of the Capetian dynasty in general. I will explore the musical and theological underpinnings of these sequences, mostly originating in circles close to the French monarchy, including the Dominican Order. The arrival of the Relics in France gave rise to an elaborate liturgical apparatus through which France was imagined to be the rightful possessor of those relics, as if order had been restored and historical justice made.

Lecture I: Two Takes on a Single Crown: Music and Liturgy at the Sainte-Chapelle

The lecture explores various aspects of the liturgy composed to honor the reception of The Crown of Thorns, acquired by King Louis IX in 1239. The standard liturgy commemorating this important relic (11 August) chronicles the arrival of the Crown of Thorns in France in a history-lesson fashion. The liturgy is rife with allusions to Paris, France, and King Louis, underscoring the crown's centrality as a common source of pride and joy for all of France, "regardless of gender, dignity or rank." Owing to the feast's unequivocal association with a unique Parisian establishment, the feast became a marker of identity not only for Louis and the Capetians as a whole, but by extension, also of the city of Paris. Whereas the Parisian liturgy promotes an agenda of national and personal self-aggrandizement, the Dominican liturgy for this feast is decidedly not nationalistic, focusing less on the glory of France, its monarchy, and the supremacy of Paris, but more so on the Passion of Christ and the theology of the feast. Both music and text of this little-known liturgy serve to articulate ideas and conjure up specifically Dominican contexts in their conception.

Lecture II: Relics, a New Promised Land, and the Sequences of the Sainte-Chapelle

Passion relics at the Sainte-Chapelle, a church built by Louis IX expressly to house them. Celebrated annually on 30 September, the arrival of the Relics in France gave rise to an elaborate liturgical apparatus through which France was imagined to be the rightful possessor of those relics, as if order had been restored and historical justice made. The paper will bring into focus a number of sequences *de sanctis reliquiis* composed for the Sainte-Chapelle, examining their music, text, and dissemination, and above all, their religious and political meaning. It is mainly through liturgy that we can understand what those Relics meant at the Sainte-Chapelle and at the French Court, how they connected the royal and the salvific, becoming a musical monument of authority.