

Thomas Aquinas's Relics as Focus for Conflict and Cult in the Late Middle Ages

The Restless Corpse





# Thomas Aquinas's Relics as Focus for Conflict and Cult in the Late Middle Ages

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Series Editor Matti Peikola, University of Turku, Finland

## Thomas Aquinas's Relics as Focus for Conflict and Cult in the Late Middle Ages

The Restless Corpse

Marika Räsänen

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#### Introduction

#### The material and allegorical presence of the Saint's remains

But now we beseech you, out of our gratitude and devout affection towards the memory of so great a cleric, so great a father, so great a master, in your generosity to grant us the bones of him now dead whom we could not recover alive; for it were surely in the highest degree improper and unworthy that any town or place other than Paris, than this the noblest of all university cities, should guard the bones of him whose youth was nourished, fostered, and educated here at Paris, which then received from him in return the inexpressible benefit of his teaching. Does not the Church rightly honour the bones and relics of her saints? Then is this not a desire both reasonable and pious that we should wish to give lasting honour to the body of such a master? Thus he whose fame is kept green amongst us by his writings, may also, by the remembered presence of his tomb in our city, live on forever in the hearts of our posterity.

This book is about the dust of one of the most famous medieval philosophers, Thomas Aquinas (1224/5-1274). It is remarkable that, shortly after his death, Thomas's dust was not simply perceived as the physical remains of a philosopher, but as a holy relic. Today, however, Thomas's saintly status is largely forgotten. For Thomas's contemporaries, both the body and the theology seem to have been indistinguishable, as the above letter attests. It was written at the University of Paris in May 1274. Despite this petition, the corpse remained at Fossanova, a Cistercian Monastery in Southern Italy and the place of Thomas death on 7 March. There the remains became the focus of veneration, desires, and disputes between the Cistercians of Thomas's death place and the Dominican friars, not to mention kings, popes, Thomas's own family, and other lay people, from Thomas's death in 1274 until the removal of the most important parts of his remains to France in 1368.

The study seeks to understand how Thomas's remains were perceived during the period when the corpse was guarded in Southern Italy (1274-1368).

<sup>1</sup> The citation is from the letter of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Paris sent to the General Chapter of the Dominican Order on 2 May 1274: Laurent, 1937, pp. 583-586. The translation from Latin into English is by Foster, 1959. The significance of the letter from the viewpoint of the Faculty of Arts is discussed, for example, in Kretzmann and Stump, 1993, pp. 13-14. See Birkenmajer, 1922, pp. 1-32, and 1925.

A special focus of attention is the perception of the Cistercians, the Dominicans, and the laity of Southern Italy—among whom Thomas's family were the most important. Through an interaction between the remains of the theologian and these three groups, the dead body was defined and redefined among contemporaries. The basis of this interaction was the idea of the concrete presence of the saint in his or her relics, which gave the latter their significance. According to the commonly shared theological concept, a saint, from the moment of the death, continued to live both in heaven and on earth in his or her corpse and every piece of it.<sup>2</sup> The relic was a material representation of the Saints' presence in the place where it was located.<sup>3</sup> Together with this corporeal presence, I study the situations in which the presence of Thomas's corpse was created by other media such as texts, liturgy, iconography, or material objects other than body part relics.<sup>4</sup> The saint's presence created by any medium enabled an interaction which affected both the relics and the devotees.

The question of perception thus has two aspects, material and allegorical: the former centred on his actual remains and the latter on Thomas's corpse as 'imagined' through liturgical or other cultic practices and in some rare cases, everyday activities. In both situations the relics were made visible, tangible, audible, and even possible to smell and taste. In other words, if the corpse was not materially present, it was possible to create it verbally, pictorially, or allegorically from elements that were not directly connected to Thomas's remains, to the extent that the presence of the corpse was even perceptible by nose or mouth. Both of these *praesentiae*, physical and imagined, were equally real to the listener or spectator.

My central argument is that although medieval communities were able to create the real presence of Thomas's corpse within them by different techniques, the question of the material presence of Thomas's remains became increasingly important. For this reason, the central thread of the present study is the problematic issue of the possession of the saint's dust, the origins of which I discuss in Chapter I. According to a classic study of Nicole Herrmann-Mascard's *Les reliques des saints. Formation coutumière d'un droit* (1975), medieval Canon law did not provide clear regulations regarding the possession of relics. Herrmann-Mascard suggests, and my study would seem to bear this out, that studying the practices of handling the relics, texts of

<sup>2</sup> Boesch Gajano, 1999a.

<sup>3</sup> Brown, 1983, pp. 10-11.

 $<sup>4 \</sup>quad \text{For a recent and enlightening discussion on the presence of the saint through language and texts in the Middle Ages, see Malo, 2013.}$ 

theologians, and other related matters would reveal case-specific interpretations of the commonly shared conception of rights to possess the relics. The question of the right possessor and location for Thomas Aquinas's corpse had a very powerful influence on the discussion of his sainthood and the texts concerning his afterlife for a hundred years after his death. In Chapter II, I focus on Fossanova during the period when Thomas's physical remains lay in a tomb there, and analyze the ways in which Thomas's corporeal presence was materialized by architecture, iconography, and liturgy to serve the devotion of both monks and laity at the Abbey that was his original resting place. Very few lay communities had the honour of having Thomas's relics in their custody. Even so, the laity perceived the presence of the corpse powerfully within a short distance of Fossanova, or they experienced its presence via single body part relics, or items or places linked to the body or around the Monastery. The imagined presence of Thomas and his corpse in the lay perception is handled in Chapter III.

A view of Thomas that contrasted in some ways to that of Fossanova was created initially by the Dominicans from Southern Italy, eulogized Thomas's thaumaturgic body. They did this through their texts, which were created and used in isolation from the corpse or relics. These narratives reveal a perception of Thomas's remains, even an intense relationship with them, yet without access to them. The Dominicans created Thomas's *praesentia* in their own minds and those of congregations or spectators with the use of the relics through text and ritual, as I will argue in Chapter IV. Even though the relics were not materially present, a devotee could sense the body of Thomas with the help of the liturgy, involving the use of chant, candlelight, incenses, and gestures. We should not, however, allow these experiences of Thomas's presence to lead us to forget that the saint's materiality, especially in his or her relics, continued to be central in late medieval culture.

#### The long last journey of Thomas's dust

Thomas Aquinas died in the Cistercian Monastery of Fossanova on 7 March 1274, and his body was buried in the Monastery. From its beginnings as an ordinary memorial site the tomb grew to become a pilgrimage place.

<sup>5</sup> Herrmann-Mascard, 1975, pp. 313-314.

<sup>6</sup> For similar approaches to materiality through art and liturgy in the Middle Ages, see the studies of Éric Palazzo, especially Palazzo, 2010a, pp. 25-56. The roots of experiencing the presence of the saintly person with all the senses were, however, in Late Antiquity: Brown, 1983, pp. 10-11.

Commemorative and cultic practices were pursued on a large scale at the tomb by the monks of the Monastery, Thomas's family and other laypeople, as well as the Dominican friars on occasion, had a significant role in turning Thomas's remains into valuable relics. The most important reason for the continuous revaluation of Thomas's remains, however, was that Thomas, a member of the Dominican Order, died in a Cistercian house. The Cistercian community considered him theirs, but so too did the Dominicans. According to the Dominicans, it would have been justified and natural to place their spiritual brother and praised saint in one of their own churches. The famous Dominican preacher Remigio de' Girolami expressed this view very clearly: 'Oh, why does Fossanova keep these bones of the venerable Thomas? I beg that they could be moved from there and be kept by the Dominicans'. Nonetheless, the Cistercians managed to hold their treasure and guard it against all rivals, Dominican Preachers, and others, for decades.

The question of the right location for Thomas Aquinas's corpse was, however, far more complex than a straightforward quarrel between two religious Orders, the Cistercians and the Dominicans. The prerequisites for a lively and varied interaction with the dead Thomas were present deep within Southern Italian culture. Thomas was originally from the area where he died, a fact which offered an excellent starting point for his cult at his death place in Fossanova. He was a member of a local family, that of the counts of Aquino. He was born in one of the family castles, at Roccasecca, in an area between the Papal States and the Kingdom of Naples. Although the family was no longer at the height of its power, it was nonetheless important. Thomas's local origins and noble descent were emphasized in the Dominican literature for centuries.

- 7 On the interaction between the dead and the living, see Boesch Gajano, 1999a, p. 20, and 1999b; Canetti, 2002, pp. 26-27, 92.
- 8 'Heu nova cur Fossa / tenet hec venerabilis ossa? / Obsecro tollantur, / a fratribus hec teneantur'. For the edited rhyme, see Salvadori, 1901, p. 505; Laurent, 1937, p. 589. Salvadori does not date the rhyme precisely, but places it between 1270 and 1319, with Remigio's other texts which he has also edited for the article. Thomas's ode can probably be dated to the end of that period.
- 9 Different places have claimed to be Thomas's place of birth, with variable degrees of justification: among them are Roccasecca, Aquino, Belcastro in Calabria, and Naples. See Walz, 1961b, pp. 24-28. Nowadays, scholars are almost unanimous about the birthplace. For a recent study of Thomas's biographical data, see Porro, 2012.
- 10 The roots of the family have been traced back to 887, when Rodiperto, a Lombard, got the title of Castaldus of Aquino from Adenolfo, the Count, later Prince, of Capua: Walz, 1961b, pp. 21-22; le Brun-Gouanvic, 1996, pp. 96-97.
- 11 For example, Ystoria, II; the lections for Thomas's feast day, lectio I, Appendix.

Not only Thomas's family roots, but his intellectual roots, too, could be traced to the area. Thomas's connection with the religious institutes of Southern Italy began in c. 1230, when he was sent to the Monastery of Montecassino at the age of five or six to be educated as a Benedictine monk.<sup>12</sup> After studies at Montecassino, Thomas was sent to Naples to have a more intense education.<sup>13</sup> In 1244, in Naples, Thomas joined the Dominicans. This event was without doubt important for the local Dominicans, as the memory of the occasion lived on among the friars and had already been written down in the general history of the Order by 1259.14 Despite entering the Order of Preachers and making a vow to cut off the bonds with his secular family, as was customary, Thomas maintained close relations with his relatives in Southern Italy. He was often seen as a guest in the castles and estates of his family and friends. 15 Although Thomas had an impressive international academic career, he was most closely linked to Southern Italy. He is most well known as the master of the University of Paris, but he also taught in Italy, in Naples, Orvieto, Rome, and Viterbo. 16

The location of Thomas's tomb, his birth, his family, and his early career as well as his later connections to Naples and the surrounding region made him first and foremost a Southern Italian saint. It is not surprising that on the eve of his feast day, that is, on the vespers of 6 March, the choir began to chant an antiphon 'Blessed Thomas, Doctor of the church, light of the world, splendour of Italy'. At the same time, when the veneration of Thomas penetrated deeper and spread more widely among the Southern Italian communities, the dispute about the possession of his relics became more intense. Finally in 1368, Pope Urban V resolved the quarrel and decided to place Thomas's corpse into the care of the Order of Preachers in Toulouse, the city of his own education and academic carrier. The new feast day for the translation of the corpse (28 January) was set, and the memory, if not the corpse, was divided between two locations, as described at the beginning of the translation festivities: 'Oh,

<sup>12</sup> Opinions are divided on whether Thomas became an *oblatus* of the Monastery or not: more about the different views in Leccisotti, 1940, and 1965; Walz, 1961a, pp. 29-32. On the intellectual culture of the Monastery, most recently: Immonen, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Walz, 1961a, pp. 36-37.

<sup>14</sup> On the story of his entry into the Order: Räsänen, 2010; Tilatti, 2003. The classic study of the subject is Mandonnet, 1924-1925.

<sup>15</sup> On Thomas's career, see le Brun-Gouanvic, 1996. On Thomas's relations with his family, see Tilatti, 2003; Räsänen, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> As regards all the above mentioned themes in Thomas's life, see Torrell, 1996; Weisheipl, 1983.

<sup>17</sup> BAV, Barb. lat. 400, fol. 429vb: 'Felix Thomas doctor ecclesie lumen mundi splendor Ytalie'.

<sup>18</sup> On the politics of the Pope regarding the transfer, see Delaruelle, 1955.

how happy is mother Italy, having sent out the ray of new sun, and equally happy has Gaul become, having acquired the mantle of the sun'. The remains rested in peace in a rebuilt Dominican Church of Toulouse until the years of the Reformation, although discussion of their real location, especially the location of the head, continued during the following centuries. <sup>20</sup>

#### The Thomas relic cults

This book argues that in consequence of the interaction between the relics and communities, as well as individuals, a variety of Thomas Aquinas's relic cults flourished in several places of Southern Italy at the same time. Because of encounters and clashes between different groups of devotees over the relics, Thomas's corpse and its parts were continuously redefined: between the years 1274 and 1368 Thomas's body was translated or elevated several times inside the Monastery of Fossanova, and also two times between the Monastery and the nearby Castle of Fondi after the mid-fourteenth century. In addition, Fossanova donated a number of single relics to individuals and neighbouring communities. Every new location or depiction of the relic affected to the ways in which its (or Thomas') praesentia was created or recreated and perceived. For this reason, the method of examining the sources adopted in this book is to strongly contextualize and localize them, in order to identify place and time-related interaction between Thomas's remains and the community that venerated his physical or imagined relics. However, the study has a wider purpose, as a reappraisal of the significance of tangible and material experience in the Late Middle Ages.

Despite the colourful history of his corpse and his popularity as a philosopher, Thomas Aquinas the saint was largely neglected in modern scholarship until the awakening of interest in his remains in the last decade. It is surprising that Thomas and other medieval Dominican saints, with the sole

<sup>19 &#</sup>x27;O quam felix mater Ytalia / Novi solis enixa radium / Eque felix effecta Gallia / Solis hujus adepta pallium'. See Douais, 1903, p. 238. The translation is from an as yet unpublished article by Constant Mews entitled 'The *Historia translationis sacri corporis Thome Aquinatis* of Raymundus Hugonis'. I am indebted to Professor Mews for sharing his knowledge and several unpublished papers on Thomas Aquinas's cult.

<sup>20</sup> Magnoni Valenti, 1772; Masetti, 1874; Montagne, 1923.

<sup>21</sup> The most recent study concentrating on Thomas's corpse or relics before 2000s is Delaruelle, 1955. To this may be added the recent articles by Mews, 2009a and 2009b; Räsänen, 2005, 2010, 2012, and 2013, and a monograph of Giovanni Maria De Rossi (2013) on the longue durée of Thomas's cult and relics at the Monastery of Fossanova.

exception of Catherine of Siena, have not enjoyed much popularity recently, certainly in comparison with Franciscan saints, and especially Francis of Assisi.<sup>22</sup> The history of Thomas's relics is a tale of devotion and veneration, but also of deviousness, treachery, and aggrandisement. It provides abundant possibilities for study, yet has largely been told in books published in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. Among these books, the most important is a collection of medieval documents relating to Thomas's relics, transcribed by Douais and entitled Les reliques de Saint Thomas d'Aquin. Textes originaux. Also interesting is Cartier's rather free translation of the original texts, as well as Mortier's study of the translation of Thomas's relics from Italy to France.<sup>23</sup> Important among modern works for any study connected to the medieval image of Saint Thomas, mine included, is Claire le Brun-Gouanvic's edition of the Ystoria sancti Thome de Aquino, with a substantial introduction about Thomas's life. 24 Just as important as insightful introductions to Thomas's life and the basics of the cult are Jean-Pierre Torrell's Initiation à Saint Thomas d'Aquin and James A. Weisheipl's Friar Thomas Aquinas. 25

Since the majority of the studies about Thomas Aquinas's relics are more than a century old, there is a necessity for an updated survey with an approach that takes into account the recent and extensive scholarship of hagiography, which has flourished especially from the late 1970s onwards. Especially inspiring to me have been the studies of Sofia Boesch Gajano, Patrick Geary, and André Vauchez. These scholars have emphasized the literary and concrete situations of the interaction between the relic, its location and devotional community to the processes in which the content and significance of medieval relic cults were born, lived, and transformed. Previous scholarship has enabled me to recognize the mechanisms which

- 22 The first three Dominican saints have shared the same fate, although there are some recent and noteworthy studies on Saint Dominic: Canetti, 1996, and on Saint Peter Martyr: Prudlo, 2008.
- 23 Douais, 1903; Cartier, 1854; Mortier, 1907.
- 24 Le Brun-Gouanvic, 1996 and 2005.
- 25 Torrell, 1996; Weisheipl, 1983. One of the most recent biographical studies on Thomas Aquinas is Porro, 2012. In this, however, Thomas's last weeks and afterlife have been condensed into a few pages.
- 26 Geary, 1990 and 1994a; Vauchez, 1989; Boesch Gajano, 2008, 1999a, and 1999b. Other important researchers and their works for the basic formation of my interest in saints' relics have been Angenendt, 1997; Brown, 1983 (orig. 1980); Delahaye, 1961; Heinzelmann, 1979; Herrmann-Mascard, 1975; Webb, 1996; Wilson, 1986. For an interesting overview of the studies of hagiography, see Schmitt, 1984. During the writing process of this book several interesting studies on saints' relics were published, with gratifyingly similar approaches to mine: see especially Malo, 2013.
- 27 For similar ideas of functions and definitions regarding pictures of saints, see Belting, 1996.

changed the perception of the relics.<sup>28</sup> It is clear that there were many similarities between Thomas's cult, and those of other saints. It is, however, important to recognize that the eternal features connected to Thomas's personality and deeds, whatever they had in common with other saint's lives, were always adapted to or interpreted according to the current age and place.<sup>29</sup> This is the main reason why the study of Thomas's relic cult is important as such: scrutiny of the cult opens often a unique perspective to the understanding people had of their surrounding culture.

During the last decade, more attention has been given to the material processes used to make relics more valuable by displaying them in artistically elaborate reliquaries or monumentalized altars, even chapels. Italian medievalists have been among the leading figures in the field, naming the process *tesaurizzazione* of the relics. This aspect of relic devotion is also taken into account in this study. Here it is argued that the positioning and display of the corpse or its parts had a significant effect on the ways in which people interacted with Thomas both physically and devotionally. In a more general sense, I adopt similar approaches to these matters as Herbert Kessler in his important book, *Seeing Medieval Art*. Kessler stresses the importance of tangibility and materiality for constructing the spiritual experience. Taking an even broader view of medieval culture, I wholeheartedly agree with Caroline Walker Bynum, who argued that Christian materiality in the Late Middle Ages needed reappraisal, its importance having long been underestimated. My aim is to continue the discussion on the continuing importance of a saint's material

- 28 Situations which frequently changed the position and perception of a saint in the eyes of contemporaries were natural catastrophes, wars or other large-scale disasters, Rigon, 1995, p. 65. On discoveries of relics and their *praesentia* more generally, Brown, 1983, pp. 92-93 and *passim*. 29 Paolo Golinelli reminds us that although the cults are phenomena of *long durée*, they should be analysed in their historical and social contexts, which are in continuous flux, see Golinelli, 2000, p. 247. The importance of *topoi* and their analysis within their own historical and cultural context has been recognized as a useful method of hagiographical study, at least from the 1980s. On interesting methodological approaches: Lauwers, 1988, p. 22; Roch, 2010. On 'how to read hagiography': recently Birkett, 2010, pp. 1-2, and especially Malo, 2013.
- 30 In art history this process has been inevitable: see for example Hahn, 1997; Kessler, 2004; Cornelison and Montgomery, 2005; Cornelison, 2012.
- 31 See a special issue of the periodical *Sanctorum*, 2 (2005), which is a collection of the papers given in the seminar named *La tesaurizzazione delle reliquie* in Rome in 2004; Canetti, 2002; Sbardella, 2007. The same interest in different disciplines can be seen more internationally in a collection of articles in *Past and Present Supplements*, 5 (2010) edited by Alexandra Walsham, and in the relic exhibition at the British Museum in 2011: the exhibition catalogue edited by Bagnoli et al., 2011. See also Cornelison, 2012; Montgomery, 2010.
- 32 Kessler, 2004.
- 33 Bynum, 2011.

presence in late medieval culture.<sup>34</sup> This materiality existed not only in his or her corpse, the tomb, and other relics or pictures, but in other, more complex substitutes. The substituted elements may have been created allegorically, without any recognizable physical representation of the saint, in which case the place, situation, or recited words provided the interpretative material. In medieval culture, the desire and necessity to envisage the saint's corporeality was so great that it was even possible to perceive it through visions. Materiality was always at the centre of devotional practice in one way or another.

This study places a stronger emphasis on local diversity of relic cults than previous scholarship has done.<sup>35</sup> Interaction always occurred in a certain place, locally, even if it took place in the imagination. I take the precise location of the relic cult as my starting point. Where was the corpse or relic: in a grave under a tombstone, in a shrine, in a reliquary, or concealed behind the altar? A wider context for the object of veneration might, for instance, be a shrine, altar, chapel, church, bedroom, home, castle, village, or town, or even an imagined place. As regards imagined relics, from liturgical sources reveal varying depictions of Thomas's corpse or elements connected with it that do not correspond to anything in the so-called standardized liturgy known from the majority of manuscripts. Similarly, I have found texts which are connected to each other in a particular way inside a codex. I would argue that these peculiarities of style or interpretation are an expression of particular needs or particular viewpoints focused on Thomas's body in the communities which used the books in question. An example par excellence is the Dominican community of Orvieto, which made a glorifying lectionary on Thomas, and especially on his corpse, at the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth century.36 This manuscript and other texts can tell us about the local perception of the imagined corpse in places where there is no record of the real body or body parts ever having been present.<sup>37</sup> The holy topography of Thomas's relics was indeed varied, which quite naturally leads to the argument that this variety equally affected the perception.

<sup>34</sup> Boesch Gajano, 2008; Lehmijoki-Gardner, 2005.

<sup>35</sup> With this emphasis I am particularly inspired by Boesch Gajano, 2008. There exists an extensive literacy on local saints, civic saints, patron saints, and so forth, in villages, towns, monasteries, and other places during the Middle Ages, but these studies rarely discuss one cult in several places, seen from different angles at the same time. One exception is Laura Ackerman Smoller's article, in which she has been able to define different characters of Vincent Ferrer's image in Brittany, Toulouse, and Naples from his canonization processes before 1455: Ackerman Smoller, 2004. On civic cults: Golinelli, 1991 and 2000; Vauchez, 1995.

<sup>36</sup> The case of Orvieto is discussed in Chapter IV, and more deeply in my article 'The Memory of St. Thomas Aquinas' (2016).

<sup>37</sup> Especially BAV, Vat. lat. 10153.

In the ever-developing history of Thomas's relics there were not one but several images of Thomas Aquinas—indeed, I argue that there were as many Saint Thomases as there were relics in the form of his body parts spread throughout Southern Italy. Every image had features in common with the others, but also unique characteristics. This study attests to the value of concentrating on a relatively small geographical area, in the Southern part of the Papal States and the northern part of the Kingdom of Naples, where culture—such as religion, government, economic life—was relatively homogenous. In a geographical context of this kind, where the interaction between Thomas's corpse and devotees quickly created devotional networks and certainly affected the perception of Thomas's remains in the neighbouring community, even slight diversities are revealing. This study, in showing that the remains of Thomas have strong local and time-related emphases in Southern Italy, will encourage a hagiographical approach which takes diversity into consideration as an aspect of a local cult rather than assuming that a given saint's images were homogenous in accordance with guidance from above.

#### Readings of the corpse: textual, allegorical, and iconographic

To find and explore Thomas's relic cults in all their diversity requires recourse to a variety of sources. The sources tell of the encounters and clashes between different groups that aspired to possess Thomas relics, which in turn led to rival interpretations of his sainthood. A source outline for this study is formed on the records of Thomas's canonization inquiries and lives of Thomas, composed mainly in the Dominican *scriptoria*, liturgical texts, descriptions of relic transportations, and histories of the Order of Preachers. Occasionally, various juridical documents, sermons, poems, material objects, and iconographical presentations shed light on the analysis.<sup>38</sup> Architecture and the artistic settings that surrounded or contained the relics are also studied in order to understand more fully the possible ways to perceive Thomas's relics that were open to his devotees in late medieval Italy.

The canonization of 1323 aimed to standardize the cult, and it did indeed have a strong influence on Thomas's image. The purpose of the process was initially to collect and conserve memories of Thomas—and especially memories regarding his saintly life and miracles—for the successful

<sup>38</sup> An important collection of various documents concerning Thomas's life and cult is Laurent, 1937. Douais has edited the principal texts concerning Thomas's relics in 1903.

canonization.<sup>39</sup> In other words, memories and stories of Thomas considered suitable for the process, and ultimately for cultic texts, were selected. Although the purposes of the canonization inquiry may have been limited, this does not mean that careful reading of the testimonies cannot reveal the different attitudes and intentions of the protagonists—quite the contrary. In particular, the testimonies of the Cistercian monks reveal to us many different aspects of the competition over the possession of Thomas's corpse. Later, in the Dominican lives, the Cistercian emphases were interpreted in a more negative light, an approach designed to give a positive slant to Dominican claims that Thomas's corpse belonged with them. Furthermore, the differences in detail between all surviving texts make it clear that even within the Dominican Order, the corpse was perceived differently despite the intention to standardize Thomas's image in the canonization. All in all, my reading of the sources is intended to define the memory of Thomas, establish who maintained that memory (or memories), and examine the ways in which the mechanics that affected the maintaining of the memory were understood and used. I will illustrate this through an introduction to my main sources.

The canonization inquiries offer the most fruitful source material for exploring the ways in which the Cistercians of Fossanova or the laity who lived in the environs of the Monastery, perceived Thomas's body until the end of 1321 when the second inquiry (*Fossanova*) was carried out.<sup>40</sup> The stories about Thomas's last days, death, and *post mortem* miracles were formed inside the monastic and lay communities and kept alive orally. This shared memory of events around Thomas and his body can be perceived from the similar stories of the witnesses. Neverthelesss, the testimonies differ in detail despite their similar framework.<sup>41</sup> I suggest that even certain differences in the Cistercian testimonies are a mark of their communal

<sup>39</sup> See processes Neapoli (1319) and Fossanova (1321). The great majority of the witnesses testifying in these two processes were monks, converses, or other dependents, and also neighbours of Fossanova (altogether 156 witnesses).

<sup>40</sup> During recent decades, canonization processes have been frequently studied. Without doubt the most useful study concerning medieval sainthood is Andrè Vauchez's classic in 1981–I have used the Italian version, *La santità nel medioevo*, 1989. After Vauchez's pioneering study several other researchers have recognized the great potential of the canonization hearings as sources for the history of the medieval layman. To gain an idea of such a wide research field, see the anthology edited by Klaniczay, 2004.

<sup>41</sup> Paolo Mariani has already studied the problem of discrepancies between the collective memory and various details in the depositions of the Cistercian monks of Fossanova: Mariani, 1996, pp, 280-291.

memory. <sup>42</sup> The errors' attest to a living tradition, and they exclude, to my mind, the possibility that the witnesses learned new miracle material by heart in preparation for participation in the hearings. <sup>43</sup> Behind the differences lay an as yet unstable memory of Thomas, influenced by different needs and traditions. I therefore suggest that there are elements in the depositions that tell us about the desires and disputes over Thomas's body and which were a part of the inner politics or devotional life of the Monastery, or came from the outside world. The testimonies of the monks also show how certain individuals of the monastic community were in a better position to affect the memory than the rest.

It is important to bear in mind the way in which the testimonies took shape. As regards the Cistercian monastic memory of Thomas revealed in the canonization inquiries, William of Tocco's role must be noted. William of Tocco, a Dominican friar from Southern Italy, was appointed as a proctor of the process. 44 His position gave him the opportunity to influence the single depositions through his selection of the persons allowed to testify on the content of depositions. 45 He could not, however, influence the Cistercians as easily as the lay or Dominican witnesses. I suggest that William's power over the Cistercian witnesses was mainly in briefing them; he had probably heard the main corpus of stories beforehand and encouraged as well as advised the witnesses to give their testimonies. Later, in his own *Ystoria*, he was able to revise the Cistercian reports if he felt this was needed.

The late medieval canonization process was a highly controlled procedure. There was little room for spontaneity. In Thomas's case it is, however, important to note that the canonization committee did not use *articuli interrogatorii* prepared beforehand, a long list of questions typical for the medieval canonization inquiry. I consider this noteworthy, especially for the testimony of the Cistercian monks, who were free to choose the topics to speak about—although, obviously, always in connection with Thomas's sanctity. Similarly, they could choose the arguments they wanted to

<sup>42</sup> On the Cistercian communal memory, see Birkett, 2010, pp. 115-119; Newman, 1996, p. 10 and passim. For an interesting study of collective memory in more general terms, see Assmann, 1997.
43 The possibility that the witnesses learnt miracles by heart and thus created a so-called group social memory has also been considered by scholars, see Vauchez, 1989; Goodich, 2005a.
44 Official preparations for the canonization hearings began from the Provincial Chapter of the Dominican Order in Gaeta 1317. Scholars have regarded it as possible that William began this project decades earlier because of his own devotion or interest in Thomas's sanctity: le Brun-Gouanvic, 1996; Torrell, 1996, 318. On the roles of the proctors in general: Toynbee, 1929, pp. 157-164; Finucane, 2011, p. 29.

<sup>45</sup> Golinelli, 2004; Finucane, 2011, p. 29.

emphasize. Michael Goodich has pointed out some of the general problems that could ensue in depositions given without a prepared list of questions, arguing that it caused vagueness in the final report, which inquisitors tried to avoid.46 However, it was not exceptional to give some freedom of manoeuvre for the witnesses: as Ronald C. Finucane remarks, sometimes they were allowed to follow their own logic in their depositions, without suffering the restriction of having to respond to the articuli interrogatorii. 47 I argue that the lack of such a prepared list in Thomas's case is beneficial in that it enables the researcher to 'read between the lines' in the testimonies of the Cistercian monks. The issues that I am most interested in are the claims related to the Cistercian rights to Thomas's body. This matter, whether the Cistercians were the rightful guardians of Thomas's body, was not openly discussed in the canonization process. The testimonies have gone through an elaborate process in the Papal Curia, which inevitably had its effects on the final product.<sup>48</sup> However, the memories collected, elaborated, and conserved on parchment from the hearings of Naples and Fossanova form the most complete source to Thomas's relic cult at the Cistercian Abbey and in the surrounding area.49

Besides the canonization hearings, there are only a few other sources on Thomas's cult from the Cistercian viewpoint. The Monastery's library

<sup>46</sup> Goodich, 2005b, p. 143.

<sup>47</sup> Finucane, 2011, pp. 28-29.

<sup>48</sup> On normative aspects and examples comparative to Thomas's case, see Vauchez, 1989; Goodich, 2005b; Mariani, 1996; Golinelli, 2004; Klaniczay, 2004; Katajala-Peltomaa, 2009. The normal procedure consisted of several rewritings after the first time depositions were written down. They were, for example, translated, selected, rearranged, and summarized by the inquisitors and their assistants and notaries. In the Papal Curia, these same documents were normally studied and summarized again. The surviving canonization material usually represents the last stage of this process. For a short and clear exposition of the typical fourteenth-century process, see Toynbee, 1929, pp. 146-169; Finucane, 2011, pp. 13-32.

<sup>49</sup> There are a few signs of the processing of Thomas's canonization material, perhaps in the Curia. J. Rius Serra has published an article in which he gives an edition of the hearings of Fossanova that differs from the Laurent edition I have referred to above. According to the edition of Rius Serra, the report of the hearings contained numerous additions in the margins, concerning, for example, doubts of a writer about miracles. In the manuscript of Paris, which has been the text for Laurent's edition, there are no additions of this kind. It is possible that the version from the Vatican Archives was a preliminary version of the product, which would therefore provide evidence of the processing of the testimonies. This remains speculation, however, as no document with the information Rius Serra gives is now to be found in the Vatican Archives. Surviving medieval manuscript versions: BnF, Ms. latin 3112 (Neapoli); Ms. latin 3113 (Fossanova); ASV, Cam. Ap., Collectorie 434B (a fragment from Neapoli). See also Rius Serra, 1936, pp. 509-529, 576-631; Laurent, 1936, pp. 632-639. On perception of miracles through scholastic theology and Canon law, Goodich, 2004.

and archives are almost completely lost.<sup>50</sup> Luckily, the surviving sources do give a view of the Cistercian world after the canonization, and give a fragmentary insight into the continuity of Thomas's cult at Fossanova. These sources are a document dictated by Petrus de Tardo, a French Cistercian monk, after his visit to Fossanova in 1354, a martyrology identified as originating from Fossanova but nowadays in the Vatican Library, and two medieval frescoes still on the walls of the Monastery.<sup>51</sup> In addition to these sources, I have managed to track down some Cistercian liturgical manuscripts which give evidence of Thomas's cult in the Order in Italy beyond Fossanova.<sup>52</sup> Finally, the most imposing Cistercian source is the Monastery of Fossanova itself. The Abbey stands on its original site, with its largely intact gothic style abbey church, the main venue where the interaction between the Saint and his devotees occurred. The architectural settings are possible to reconstruct to some extent from the written sources and archaeological excavations.<sup>53</sup> The place, its ambience and the form of Thomas's tomb affected the perception of the saint's relics by the inhabitants and visitors to Fossanova.

The canonization hearings include a significant amount of evidence about lay devotion of Thomas's relics. The people of the villages surrounding Fossanova did not testify in Naples in 1319, which was probably the reason for the second round of hearings at Fossanova in 1321.<sup>54</sup> The records conserve testimonies of the lay witnesses which often give accurate depictions of the following matters: when the devotees requested that Thomas come to their aid, where this happened, and how they approached Thomas's tomb in the Monastery. In addition to the testimonies written down according to the oral depositions, there are very few other sources that can tell us about lay veneration or handling of Thomas's relics in Southern Italy. Interestingly, a Dominican text, *Historia translationis corporis Thome de Aquino*, seems to conserve the acts and interests of Honoratus Caetani, the Count of Fondi, involving Thomas in the mid-fourteenth century. Luckily, there are several other sources prepared in the Cistercian as well as lay and other religious

<sup>50</sup> Viti, 1981, pp. 159-160. Recently, Trasselli, 2011. On problems of the provenience presented in the catalogue of the library of Sir Thomas Phillipps in regard to the manuscripts ex-Fossanova: Mews & Welch, 2012.

<sup>51</sup> Jacquin, 1923; BAV, Ottob. lat. 176.

<sup>52</sup> For example BAV, Vat. lat. 6244, 6378; BAV, Barb. lat. 625; BAV, Chigi C.VI.179; BAV, Ottob. lat. 575.

<sup>53</sup> De Rossi, 2013.

<sup>54</sup> Enthusiastic and sufficiently widespread lay devotion was regarded as necessary for a successful conclusion of a canonization project in the Late Middle Ages: Vauchez, 1989, p. 45.

contexts which also comment on the activities of the Count.<sup>55</sup> There is a fresco cycle painted in a family chapel of Aquino in Loreto Aprutino that provides an interesting source for lay perception. The cycle is based on the lives of Thomas written by Dominican friars, but as far as I can see the mural paintings differ from the texts in their emphases.<sup>56</sup> Interpreted with care, these frescoes can divulge the Aquino family viewpoint of the history of Thomas's corpse, or at least aspects of it.

The material produced by the Dominican Order forms the majority of the sources of this study. In the Dominican hagiography, Thomas's corpse became a multi-layered and instrumental reconstruction, fundamentally based on the stories of Christ's life and death, as was customary in the hagiographical genre in general. The first lives were written by William of Tocco—who wrote the *Ystoria santi Thome de Aquino* during the canonization process—and Bernard Gui, who finished his *Legenda* only shortly after William. Both men also created a miracle collection. The Dominicans did not merely express their own requirements and actions related to Thomas and his corpse, but depicted those of the Cistercians and laypeople as well. Cistercian interaction with Thomas's body is often depicted from a negative angle, in such a way as to challenge the monks' methods of taking care of—or failing to take care of—or venerate it. At the same time, when the Dominicans interpreted the Cistercians as 'others', unsuitable to be the custodians of such a valuable body, they emphasized their own ability and identity as the true heirs to the corpse. <sup>58</sup>

From the viewpoint of this study, it is important to see how some narrative elements in Thomas's lives remained the same for centuries, while other were constantly reformulated. <sup>59</sup> One of the changing elements is the reasoning behind the Dominican claim for the possession of Thomas's relics. When the Dominican desire to possess Thomas's corpse grew during the decades after his death, these desires had a significant effect on the meanings of Thomas's relics. I argue that certain adjustments made between Thomas's first lives,

<sup>55</sup>  $\,$  These are editions of the fourteenth-century documents by Jacquin, 1923, Regesta chartarum, and Douais, 1903.

<sup>56</sup> Art historians have taken some interest in the paintings; for the most recent discussion, see Baschet and Bonne, 1998. See also Dell'Orso, 1988; d'Isola, 1958; Marighetto, 2001.

<sup>57</sup> For a wide survey of the hagiographic literature of the thirteenth century, see Goodich, 1982.

<sup>58</sup> On the construction of identity through the 'other': Assmann, 1997, p. 2. On the utility of the Dominican hagiography for creation and recreation of the Order's identity: Dubreil-Arcin, 2011; Canetti, 1996.

<sup>59</sup> The first narrative sources are from the period before Thomas's death. They are texts which depict Thomas without the direct pressure of the proceeding canonization process: *Vitae fratrum, Annales,* and *Bonum universale de apibus*.

such as the *Ystoria* of William of Tocco, the *Legenda* of Bernard Gui, and the chapters in the *Historia ecclesiastica nova* of Ptolemy of Lucca, were caused by the quarrels over the possession of Thomas's corpse. Moreover, I suggest that while Thomas's image was in the process of harmonization and becoming universal and timeless, there remained fragments of local memories and time-related themes in the sources. <sup>60</sup> Besides the lives, the *Historia translationis* text genre—born at the turn of the 1360s and 1370s—brings the same challenge of close reading: the new text group was well constructed on the basis of the older and disappearing tradition that flowered in Southern Italy. With careful and comparative reading of the sources these ancient fragments and locally based elements can be found in the texts meant for universal use.

A very good example of the above-mentioned sources, from the local as well as time-related viewpoint, is the liturgical material and differences between the texts of liturgical manuscripts. After Thomas's canonization in 1323, there was a growing desire for a liturgy proper for his feast day. The liturgy was composed within the Dominican Order and most probably approved in the second half of the 1320s. As was customary, according to the Dominican legislation, the approved liturgy was then copied to be diffused throughout the whole Order. In theory, the requirements for the standardized liturgy, texts, and hymns would mean that the manuscripts retained an entirely congruent Thomas's feast day liturgy. In practice, however, there are many differences between the texts; from synonymous words to different general views and contexts of the texts in which the narratives on Thomas are connected. To identify the standard phrasings and the whole set of the texts for Thomas's liturgical feast, as well as their variations, I have studied dozens of the Dominican liturgical manuscripts from Italy, and a smaller quantity from abroad. <sup>61</sup> They are mainly from the fourteenth century, but some texts from the fifteenth century are included in the research material as it is hoped that the additional use of these will offer a more complete picture of the time-related changes in the texts. As one result of the manuscript studies I have completed, I have attached my transcription of medieval lections for Thomas's feast day, not available as an edition, in an Appendix. I have traced the liturgical manuscript material from the places where Thomas's cult is likely to have been important on the basis

60 On the shaping of an official image of a holy man or woman by the papal canonization process, see Ackerman Smoller, 2004. Hagiography was one of the most efficient tools for standardizing the memory tradition of a saint. In the process of standardization, the hagiography normally offered the basic texts for the liturgy. See Dubreil-Arcin, 2011, pp. 13-30 and *passim*.
61 Among the largest collections are the Dominican manuscripts from both the male and female convents of Colmar, nowadays in the municipal library of Colmar, and the female convent Saint Catherine of Nuremberg, now in the Stadtbibliothek of Nuremberg.

that a Thomas relic or relics were conserved there. I have also chosen some samples from the places that had no material connection to Thomas in cases when I believe they can throw more light on the possible relation between the physical remains and the success of Thomas's cult.

The suspension of the monasteries and convents during the Napoleonic period forms a practical challenge for the study of the liturgical sources. The suspension caused the mass transportation of monastic literature, including the Dominican manuscripts, to the national libraries of Italy where they still are today, mostly poorly catalogued, if catalogued at all, as in Naples. Luckily, the situation with the collections of the Vatican Library is far better as regards the information on its holdings. For this reason, the majority of the manuscripts I have used to form an overall picture on the liturgical material for Thomas's feast day now belong to the different collections of the Vatican Library, although their original provenance covers the Italian peninsula and beyond—for instance, manuscripts from the regions that are now Switzerland and Sicily were included in the source corpus. It is my contention that the liturgical manuscripts selected for this study express contemporary concerns fairly well, including the changing attitudes to the possession of Thomas's corpse within the Dominican Order.

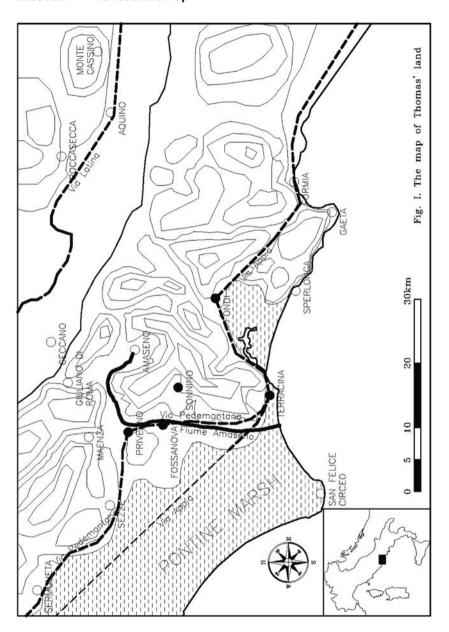
#### A note on the spelling of names

It should be noted that I have changed the Latin/Italian/French names into their English forms only if they are well-known characters whose names are normally written in the English way in English language works. In general, I have kept the name spellings that appear in my sources. There are some exceptions, such as Thomas Aquinas's sister Teodora: she appears in the sources composed mainly in Latin, and consequently her name is in the Latin but I have used the Italianized form to distinguish her from their mother, Theodora. The same applies to Teodora's son Tommaso: by using the Italian name I distinguish between uncle (Thomas) and nephew (Tommaso), and avoid continuous repetition of the family name. Throughout my text, the transliterations of the manuscript sources and the translations from Latin or old Italian into English are mine unless otherwise mentioned.

<sup>62</sup> On the misfortunes and conservation of the archives of the mendicant Orders of Naples, including the Dominicans, see Di Meglio, 2013.

<sup>63</sup> For a similar approach regarding the topicality of the liturgy, see Heffernan, 2005. Agnès Dubreil-Arcin (2011, pp. 28-29) emphasizes the connection between hagiography and liturgy and the utility of studying them together, which is also one of my aims in Chapter IV.

Illustration 1 Thomas's Land map



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