



Dextera Domini. The Earliest Inscriptions on Liturgical Gloves

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***Dextera Domini*. The Earliest Inscriptions on Liturgical Gloves¹**

In the Middle Ages, the glove was at the same time *instrumentum*, *signum* and *ornamentum*. On liturgical gloves, one of the seven emblems that distinguished the bishop from the priest, embroidered or enameled medallions were often sewn on the backs. They bore the texts *dextera Domini* on the right hand and *Agnus Dei* on the left hand, inscribed around representations of the Blessing Hand and the Mystic Lamb. What role did inscriptions play in this triple function? How did epigraphy on textiles shed light on the relationship to the body and the sacred? The French collection of the 12th-13th c. (18 gloves) provides a substantial body of evidence for new answers, by exploring first the material links between glove and inscription, then, the earliest inscribed texts as a different discourse from the liturgical exegesis on the glove, and finally, the pairs of medallions as a dialog on the bishop's role.

Der Handschuh war im Mittelalter gleichzeitig *instrumentum*, *signum* und *ornamentum*. Auf liturgischen Handschuhen, Bestandteil der sieben Insignien, die den Bischof vom Priester unterschieden, waren oft gestickte oder emaillierte Medaillons auf dem Handrücken befestigt. Die Medaillons trugen die Inschriften *dextera Domini* auf dem rechten Handschuh und *Agnus Dei* auf dem linken und waren um Darstellungen der Rechten Gottes und des Mystischen Lammes herum angeordnet. Welche Rolle spielten die Inschriften in dieser dreifachen Funktion? Wie beleuchteten die textilen Inschriften die Beziehung zwischen dem Körper und dem Heiligen? Die Sammlung französischer Handschuhe des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts (18 Exemplare) liefert die substanzielle Grundlage für neue Antworten. Dafür werden zuerst die materialen Verbindungen zwischen Handschuh und Inschrift untersucht, dann die ältesten inschriftlich ausgeführten Texte als weiterer Diskurs liturgischer Exegese auf dem Handschuh analysiert und zuletzt die Handschuhpaare als Dialog über die Rolle des Bischofs identifiziert.

¹ I am very pleased to thank P. Scott Brown for his help with the translation and for his valuable comments.

On the purple gloves of François d'Estaing, bishop of Rodez between 1504 and 1529, the golden letters IHS glitter in the middle of a sunburst.²



Fig.1: Glove of François d'Estaing, bishop of Rodez (Musée Fenaille, Rodez). Picture : ©Musée Fenaille, A. MÉRAVILLES. Collections de la Société des Lettres Sciences et Arts de l'Aveyron.

In the 15th-16th c., the monogram of Christ became the most common ornamental element of the episcopal gloves. At this time, this sign was widespread and devotion to the name of Jesus was encouraged in Franciscan preaching, especially by Bernardine of Siena (1380-1444). However, earlier inscriptions on liturgical gloves proposed a more complex discourse: the two hands of the same pair were well differentiated, and each had its autonomy with a different text. The epigraphic texts were more diverse, referring to God, Christ, the Apostles or the Virgin Mary, with biblical and liturgical expressions and quotations, and the usual colour of the gloves was white. The inscriptions varied from one pair to another, though two recurring formulas were common.

If some liturgists of the 12th c., such as Honorius of Autun³ and Hugh of Saint Victor,⁴ saw the origin of these gloves in the first centuries of the Church as a prescription of the apostles,

²This glove is made of purple silk thread, decorated with motifs knitted in jacquard with gold thread. It is 29 cm long and 17 cm wide. It was found during the French Revolution, when the tomb of François d'Estaing was plundered. It is now preserved in the Musée Fenaille of Rodez (Lestoquoit, Rapport de conservation, 1995). Similar gloves have been collected in England, Spain, Italy and France (treasure of the Cathedral of Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges). This form and decoration seem to have been used since the end of the 14th century: a similar glove, worn by Bishop William II, is preserved at the New College of Oxford.

³ Honorius of Autun, *De Gemma Animae* I, CCXIV (PL, t. 172, col. 609). This work is a liturgical treatise with an allegorical view of the liturgy and its practices, written around 1134-1140. This text was very successful (more than 200 manuscripts are preserved). It is composed of four books, and the first one deals with issues of

their use is not really documented before the 6th-7th c.⁵ But when did the inscriptions on the gloves appear? In the absence of written testimonies on the topic we must rely on material evidence, often coming from archaeological discoveries. If, in Germany, examples can be found as early as the second half of the 11th c., such as the arm reliquary of St Basil in Essen,⁶ in French collections, the earliest inscriptions date back to the 12th c. For the 12th and 13th c. we know 18 inscriptions on gloves in France, from Amiens, Troyes, Orleans, Sens, Cahors, Lodève and Conflans: 14 on medallions, 1 embroidered glove, and 3 of uncertain character. 14 of the 18 are still preserved today.

Gloves were bodily and social attributes. Liturgical gloves were one of the seven – or sometimes the nine – emblems that distinguished the bishop from the priest and that symbolized his clerical function during the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, their use was also granted to other ecclesiastics, certain abbots, for instance, as a special privilege. Gloves were part of the clerical identity and the formalism that developed in religious vestments from the 11th to the 14th c. Whereas the gloves veiled the anointed hands of the bishop and participated in the effect of “enfouissement du corps”⁷ by the accumulation of the layers of clothing, the inscriptions related to the transformation that happened during the ritual. The glove was at the same time *instrumentum*, *signum* and *ornamentum* to use the terms of Michel Pastoureau, because it was materially necessary for the exercise of certain activities, but it was above all a badge of power, an attribute linked to various functions and a social marker; it played an important role in many rituals where, rather than protecting the hand, it replaced, extended, transformed, concealed or embellished.⁸ What role did inscriptions play in this triple function? How did epigraphy on textiles shed light on the relationship to the body and the sacred? To answer these questions, from the French collections of the 12th and 13th c., I shall address first the material links between glove and inscription; then, the texts inscribed as a

the sacrifice, the mass, the ceremonies, the prayers, the church, the ornaments, the ministers, the altar and the priestly garments.

⁴ Barraud, *Des gants*, 1867, 209.

⁵ Barraud, *Des gants*, 1867, 203-211. See also the study of Schwineköper, *Der Handschuhim Recht*, 1938, and Beaulieu, *Les gants liturgiques*, 1968, 137-153.

⁶ This arm reliquary wears a glove on which is a circular medallion in gilded silver, depicting the right hand of God with the inscription *Dextera Dei*. This gloved arm reliquary has no comparable example in the arm reliquaries of the Romanesque period. Hermann, *Die Inschriften der Stadt Essen*, 2011, Nr 27.

⁷ To use Odile Blanc's term. See Blanc, *Parades et parure*, 1997, 136-141. This study focuses on the miniatures that adorn sumptuous, late medieval princely manuscripts reflecting courtly costume and fashion. Nevertheless this expression is particularly relevant to describe the layers of liturgical garments that were added during the medieval period.

⁸ Pastoureau, *Le gant médiéval*, 2007, 121-137. For a broad perspective on medieval clothing and its symbolic function as a language of power, see the studies of Gil Bartholeyns, in particular in the same volume: Bartholeyns, *L'enjeu du vêtement*, 2007, 219-257.

different discourse from the liturgical exegesis on the glove; and finally, the pairs of medallions as a dialog on the bishop's role.⁹

The material links between glove and inscription

Of the three parts of a glove – cuff, hand, fingers – the inscriptions were always on the back of the hand. There were two solutions for displaying an inscription or an ornament: either it was knitted, woven or embroidered at the same time as the glove, or it was added afterwards, on a removable and independent medium, sewn to the tops of the gloves. Another solution could have been paintings, because some ornaments were painted with gold on liturgical textiles,¹⁰ nevertheless, as far as we know, there is no such example for gloves.

Only one French inscription used the first technique: the glove of Saint Fulcran in the ancient cathedral of Lodève (Hérault), dating from the mid-13th c.¹¹

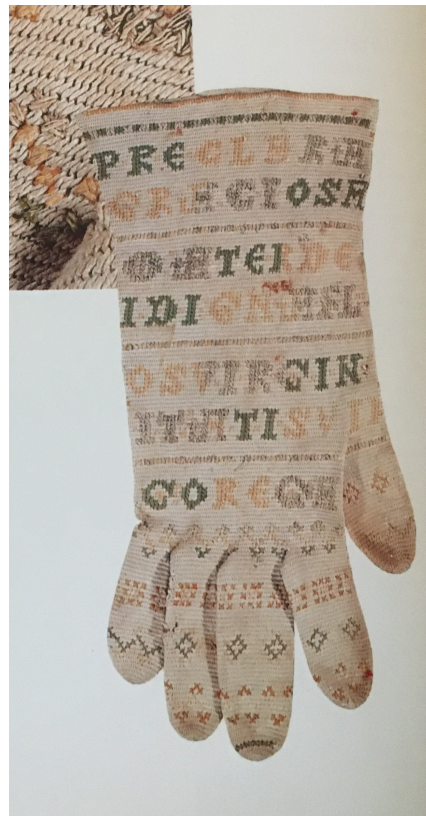


Fig.2: Glove of saint Fulcran, ancient cathedral of Lodève. Picture: from *Fils renoués*.

⁹ Concerning the German collections of inscribed gloves, see the study of Hannes Fahrnbauer in this volume, and his ongoing PhD thesis on clerical gloves of the Latin Middle Ages (11th-beginning 14th centuries).

¹⁰ For instance, Pierre de Charny, bishop of Sens in the 13th century, wore as burial garment a painted alb. As Eugène Chartraire explained, the golden decoration on the purple ground of his alb looked at first sight like sumptuous embroidery, but it was in fact gold painting. Chartraire, *Insignes épiscopaux*, 1918, 31.

¹¹ They are preserved in the treasury of the church Saint-Fulcran in Lodève in the chapel of the relics. The glove is 23.7 cm high by 14 cm wide. The dating was proposed by Robert Favreau based on paleographic criteria, in accordance with analysis of the textile.

The threads of the glove are in white linen, while those of the embroidery are in coloured silk and metallic thread, originally gilded. The technique used is plain interlinking, embroidered with multicolored silk and metallic thread.¹² On the back there are seven lines of writing, on each line the letters are embroidered with three successive colors distributed differently on the lines in a regular sequence: green, yellow, grey-violet (formerly golden). Some letters falling in the change of color are embroidered halfway in one color, halfway in the other: for instance, the R of *mater* is green and then yellow. The text completely covers the hand with the litanies of the Virgin Mary: PRECLARA / GRACIOSA / MATER DE / I DIGNA FL / OS VIRGIN / ITATIS VIR / GO REG(IN)A (illustrious, full of grace, worthy Mother of God, flower of virginity, virgin, queen).

This example remains exceptional. Most inscriptions were not directly on the glove, as in this case, but on another support, a circular plate in the shape of a medallion,¹³ a *lamina*, *tasellus*, *fibula*, *monile*, *paratura*, or even a *circulum* in gold. These were made of fabric or metal plaques. When they were made of fabric, they were made of silk or wool, one reason why they survive the gloves themselves, which were often made of vegetable fibres such as linen. In the Treasury of Sainte-Croix Cathedral in Orléans, the medallions attributed to the bishop Robert de Courtenay (1258-1279) were brocaded with gold thread. The first medallion was embroidered with gold thread on a plain samite background and reads ASSVMPTVS EST VT I(N); the second medallion was embroidered on a very fine taffeta, with the inscription + DEXTERA·D(OMI)NI·.¹⁴ The inscriptions have been embroidered too.¹⁵

¹² For a complete and very detailed description of the technique, see Cardon, *Le Gant de saint Fulcran*, 1993, n°10, 36-37.

¹³ There were also some non-circular examples with rosette or diamond shapes decorated with gemstones and pearls. Braun, *Die Liturgische Gewandung*, 1907, 374.

¹⁴ For a precise description of the stitches used, see Desrosiers, Bedat, *Les vêtements liturgiques*, 2006, 113-141.

¹⁵ The medallions are oval and small: height 5.6/5.4 cm, width 6.2/6 cm. They were discovered during the excavations led by Chenesseau in 1937 inside a sarcophagus among bones and some fragments of liturgical garments along with a crosier, a chalice and a paten of gilded silver, and an emerald. There is no real evidence that this is the burial of Robert de Courtenay. He was first canon of Bourges, then deacon of Chartres before becoming bishop of Orléans. He was a member of the royal family and took part in the Eighth Crusade. See Chenesseau, *Les fouilles de la cathédrale d'Orléans*, 1938, 73-94; Brun, *Mise au jour en 1937*, 1978, 125-142.



Fig.3: Medallions of Robert de Courtenay, bishop. Treasury of Sainte-Croix Cathedral in Orléans. Picture: Jean-Pierre Brouard CIFM/CESCM.

The medallions could also be metal disks. Two Byzantine medallions, perhaps from the South of Italy and dating from the end of the 12th c. or the beginning of the 13th c., survive from a pair of gloves from the tomb of Raoul Groparmi, another bishop of Orléans (1306-1311). The *nomina sacra* of Christ and the Virgin Mary are incised in Greek on each side of the figures: IC XC and MP·ΘY.¹⁶



Fig. 4: Metal disks found in the tomb of Raoul Groparmi, bishop. Treasury of Sainte-Croix Cathedral in Orléans. Picture: Jean-Pierre Brouard CIFM/CESCM.

¹⁶ These slightly domed gold disks are decorated with opaque and translucent cloisonné enamels. Eight small rings placed on the border allowed them to be fixed on the back of the gloves. Taralon, *Les trésors*, 1966, 286, fig. 38; Frolov, *Observations sur les plaques de gants*, 1966, n°1-2, 48-49.

In Cahors, two circular plaques found in the tomb of an unidentified bishop are made of gilded copper and champlevé enamel, engraved with the texts + AGNVS DEI QVI TOLLIT P(ECCATA MVNDI) and + DEXTERA DOMINI have been engraved. These plaques are the only surviving examples of glove ornamentation from the workshops of Limoges, around 1180-1190.¹⁷

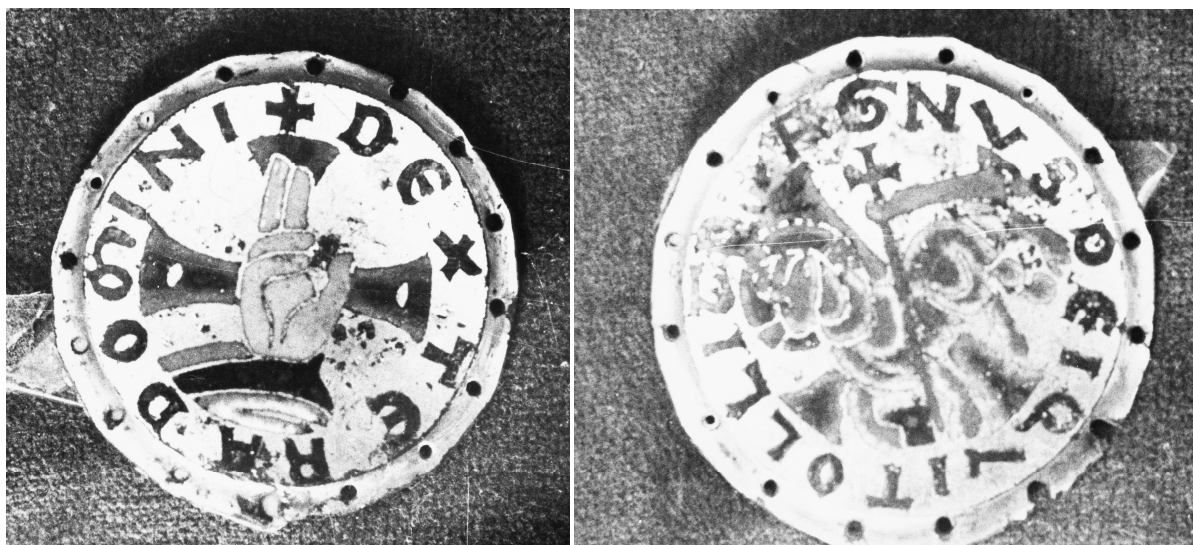


Fig. 5 and 6: Circular plaques found in a tomb of a bishop. Treasury of the cathedral of Cahors. Picture: Jean Michaud CIFM/CESCM.

As they were independent from the glove, the medallion could be adapted in turn to the gloves, as is suggested by the case of Geoffroy de Loudon, bishop of Le Mans (1234-1255), who bequeathed his ornaments to his cathedral, including five pairs of gloves but only two medallions: *quinque paria cirothecarum et duas paraturas argenteas deauratas ad opus earumdem cirothecarum*.¹⁸ The inscribed medallions could also be reused, recycled in the course of time, as is evident from the chronological differences between the dates of fabrication of the metal disks and of the bishops who wore them. The enameled medallions, as those found in Cahors, could also be employed for other purposes, as on a chasse or a reliquary.

One may wonder whether the addition of the medallion was not a paradox, because as Honorius of Autun explained, gloves must be *inconsutiles* (seamless) as the robe of Jesus, and

¹⁷ These two circular plaques (diameter 4,2 cm) were discovered in a tomb beside a crosier in 1872 during work under the choir of the cathedral of Cahors. They are pierced with sixteen regularly spaced holes, which allow them to be sewn to fabric. The identity of the bishop buried with these plaques is not known. The names of Pons of Antéjac (who died in 1235-36) and Anthony of Luzech (1497-1508) have been suggested but without proof. See CIFM 9, Paris 1984, Lot n°5, 86-88; Taburet-Delahaye, *Gloves Plaques*, 1996, 144.

¹⁸ Barbier de Montault, *Les gants pontificaux*, 1876, 442. Nadège Bavoux explained that the bishops, abbots and chapter members of many churches, cathedrals, abbeys or collegiate churches contributed, with their own money, to the enrichment of the wardrobe. Bavoux, *Histoire du vêtement d'autel*, 2012, 152.

because the actions of the prelates must be in accordance with the right faith.¹⁹ Nevertheless, in the *De Missarum Mysteriis* (1195-1197), the future pope Innocent III specified *chirotheca circulum aureum desuper habet*.²⁰

To conclude with material aspect of the gloves, I would like to focus on their contexts of discovery. Most of the glove plaques have been found in a funerary context alongside other insignia. The archbishop of Sens, Pierre de Charny, was buried with his pallium, his gloves, his crosier, his ring and a chalice in August 1274, in the choir of the cathedral.²¹ The *post-mortem* clothing of prelates is clearly represented in sculpture, with gloves carved or with real metal plaques. In the Musée des Augustins in Toulouse, carved medallions can be seen on several gisants of bishops,²² though without inscriptions, or the recess in which a plaque could have been inset.



Fig. 7: Gisant for a bishop, 13th c. Musée des Augustins, Toulouse. Picture: Estelle Ingrand-Varenne.

¹⁹ Honorius of Autun, *De Gemma Animae* I, CCXIV (PL, t. 172, col. 609).

²⁰ Lothar of Segni, *De Missarum Mysteriis* (PL 217, col. 773-916, here col. 795). This treatise, written in Rome between 1195 and 1197 by Lothar of Segni (ca. 1160-1216), shortly before his election as Pope Innocent III, is a linear comment on the text of the Canon of the pontifical mass and of the rites and worship services of the Latin Church. It is one of the most influential commentaries on the liturgy of the mass.

²¹ These gloves are preserved in the Treasury of the Archiepiscopal palace in Sens. Diameter of the medallions: 8,3 cm. See CIFM 21. Paris 2000, n°159, 177.

²² See the gisant for Jean Tissandier, who was first bishop of Lodève in 1322-1324, the bishop of Rieux until his death in 1348.

The gloves of Saint Fulcran offer a different example. Although the context is always *post-mortem*, the 13th century glove never belonged to Fulcran, because he was bishop of Lodève three centuries before, from 949 to 1006. He was considered as a saint, an example of holy bishop. When his cadaver was found intact in his tomb in the 13th c., it was decided to expose his holy body, clothed in liturgical vestments and insignia, every year on his feast day, sitting in an armchair placed on the high altar of the cathedral, with his right arm raised, blessing the worshippers who came to kiss his feet.²³

The inscriptions: a different exegesis?

The gloves share with other pieces of textile three features highlighted by Lieb Ludger: the flexibility (locomobile and elastic, the textiles adapt to the interior they create or encase), the drawing line (they create limits, boundaries, mostly an interior protected from the eyes of those standing outside) and the symbolism (they have surfaces particularly suitable for making symbolic statements, either by the material design of the surfaces or by the application of signs of any kind).²⁴ This third aspect was particularly developed in the medieval period.

With the maniple and the veil, the gloves isolated the bishop's hands when he touched the sacred objects. As both prophylactic artefact, protecting the anointed hands from all contamination, and ornament of the body, the gloves played a key role in the first part of the ritual: worn at the beginning of the mass, they were removed at the offertory. The liturgists of the 12th and 13th c. explained in the *expositio missae* the symbolism of the glove: it veils the hand and allows one to ignore what the other hand is doing, as recommended the Evangelist Matthew (6, 3-4: when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret). Through a synecdoche, the hand represents all the actions done and the golden medallion the good deeds that shine before men and glorify God, according to the Gospel of Matthew (5, 16: let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven).²⁵ The gloves expressed

²³ Vidal, *La première Vie de saint Fulcran*, 1965. 7-20. The bishops of Lodève used the memory, the life and the body of saint Fulcran to affirm the episcopal power by the other bishops against the counts of Toulouse and Rodez.

²⁴ Lieb, *Woven Words*, 2019, 209.

²⁵ William Durand devoted a chapter of his *Rationale divinorum officiorum* to the liturgical gloves (book 3, chapter 12). For the French translation, see: Guillaume Durand, *Rationale divinorum officiorum*, translation Charles Barthélemy. Paris 1854, vol. 1, 255-257.

purity from sin, the performance of good works, and carefulness of procedure; and for William Durand, caution, discretion and the secret.²⁶

The discourse suggested by the inscriptions on the gloves is different though complementary to this liturgical exegesis. Two expressions in particular were recurrent in these inscriptions: *dextera Domini* for the right hand (gloves of Orléans, Cahors, Sens) and *Agnus Dei* for the left hand (gloves of Cahors, Sens, Amiens).

It may seem obvious that the right hand should be qualified as *dextera Domini*, but what does this really mean? Several different expressions were used in the Bible to speak about the hand of God. *Manus Dei/Domini* was the most common, but only two gloves are documented as bearing this inscription: the medallion, found in the tomb of Michel de Corbeil, bishop of Sens (from 1194 to 1199), but now disappeared,²⁷ and the medallion of an abbot of Corbie, preserved in the Museum of Amiens.²⁸



Fig. 8: Medallion of an abbot of Corbie, Museum of Picardie, Amiens. Picture: Collection du Musée de Picardie, Amiens.

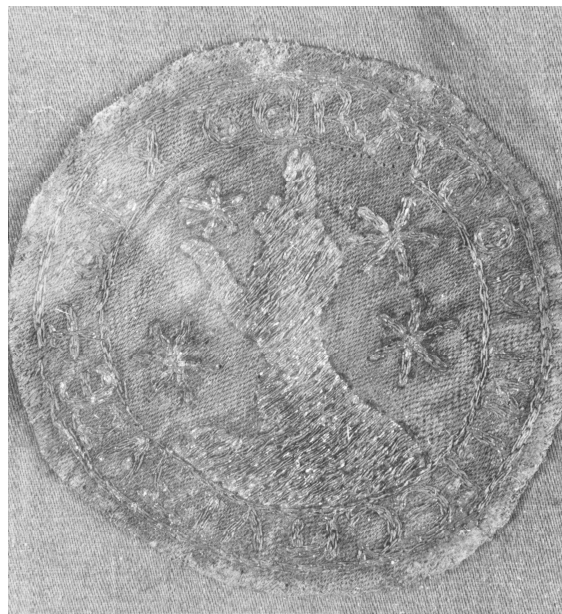
²⁶ Guillaume Durand, *Rational*, 255.

²⁷ See CIFM 21. Paris 2000, n°153, 173.

²⁸ Inventory number: 1875.1453. Catalogue des objets d'antiquités et de curiosités exposés dans le musée communal d'Amiens. Amiens 1875, n° 1453, 149. I thank Jean-Loup Leguay, from the Museum, for this information.

This expression *Manus Dei/Domini* appears mainly in the Old Testament, where it designates the whole of God's action.

The authors of the New Testament on the other hand used *Dextera Dei/Domini*, which was first of all employed to designate a placement: to be or to sit at the right hand of God, i.e. in heaven. However, the glove inscriptions do not designate such a placement. The inscription equates the hand of the bishop with that of God or even evokes the substitution of one for the other. Not only is the bishop an intermediary between secular and divine, but he is God's representative, through the transfer of powers during the episcopal ordination, notably the anointing of hands. Another inscribed medallion from Sens, + DEXTERA ·DOMINI·FECIT·VIRTUTE(M), found in the tomb of Peter of Corbeil, archbishop who died in 1222,²⁹ further develops the meaning of the hand through quotation of Psalm 118 (117), 16: *Dextera Domini exaltavit me: Dextera Domini fecit virtutem* (the right hand of the Lord has unfolded its power, the right hand of the Lord has exalted me). The inscription, embroidered with gold threads, encircles the representation of the hand of God, surrounded by four stars.



[Fig.9: Medallion of Pierre de Corbeil, archbishop. Museum of Sens. Picture: Jean Michaud CIFM/CESCM.]

This antiphon was usually sung at the offertory of the Mass on Holy Thursday, at the beginning of the Easter Triduum; it was also sung at the offertory of Easter Day. Another example shows that the *Dextera Domini* is the benediction gesture: a medallion from Sens for an unidentified bishop (at of the 13th c. or beginning of the 14th c.) bears the text: + IN NOMINE PATRIS ET.³⁰

²⁹ CIFM 21. Paris 2000, n°156, 175.

³⁰ CIFM 21. Paris 2000, n°163, 180-181.

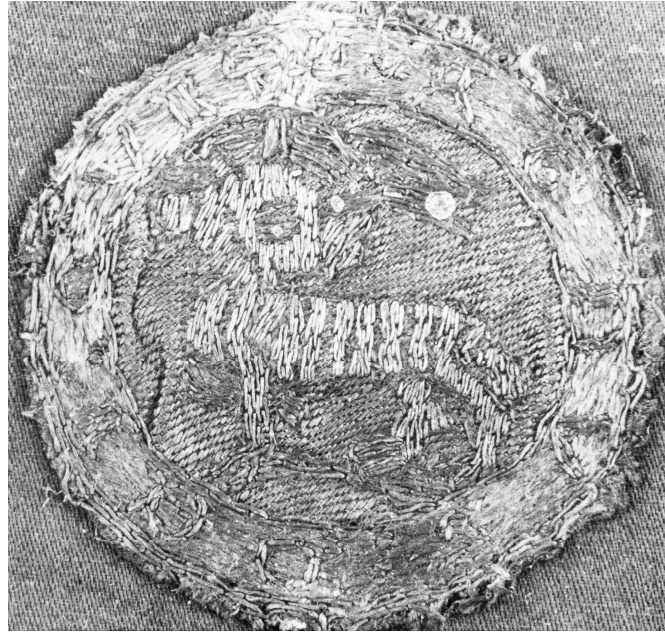


Fig.10: Medallion for an archbishop. Museum of Sens. Picture: Jean Michaud CIFM/CESCM.

It is an active hand. In these cases and others, the biblical and liturgical quotations appeal to the memory of the reader, who is required to participate mentally and figuratively in the construction of the text.³¹

Dextera Domini could also sometimes be read on another part of the episcopal garment: the maniple. The two examples of the maniple of St Ulrich, bishop of Augsburg in the middle of the 10th c.³² and of St Cuthbert in Durham (England)³³ date before the earliest surviving inscriptions on gloves. Indeed, this piece of liturgical attire became ornamental by the tenth century and was highly visible at the end of the braid, when worn over the celebrant's left arm. Beyond the garments, this biblical expression could also be inscribed on liturgical vessels, specifically on the paten, the small plate used to hold Eucharistic bread for consecration during the mass.³⁴

The inscriptions on left hand gloves employed the same layouts as those on the right, though they allude not to God but to Christ. The most common inscription was *Agnus Dei*, for instance on the left hand of the unidentified bishop of Sens.³⁵

³¹ Ingrand-Varenne, *La brièveté*, 2013, 213-234.

³² Coatsworth, Owen-Crocker, *Clothing the past*, 2018, 333.

³³ Hohler, *The stole and maniple*, 1956, 396-408; Coatsworth, *Text and Textile*, 2007, 187-207.

³⁴ For instance, the paten found in the tomb of Udo, bishop of Hildesheim who died in 1114. See Wulf, *Die Inschriften der Stadt Hildesheim*, 2003, Nr. 30. About the paten and the *dextera Domini*, see the recent study of Brandt, *Die Patene im Hochmittelalter*, 2019, 50-58. I thank Clemens M.M. Bayer for this reference.

³⁵ CIFM 21. Paris 2000, n°163, 180-181.

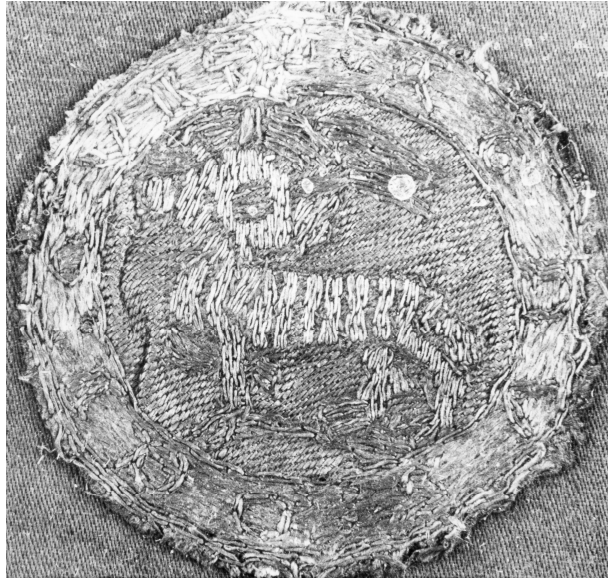


Fig.11: Medallion for an archbishop. Museum of Sens. Picture: Jean Michaud CIFM/CESCM.

It recalls and repeats the gesture and words of John the Baptist pointing to Christ, in the Gospel of John (1, 29): *ecce Agnus Dei* (behold the Lamb of God), because of the bishops inevitable performance of pointing or gesturing with gloved hand repeats, thus fulfilling the verbal interjection *ecce*. The enameled medallion of Cahors develops the quotation further: *Agnus Dei qui tollit p(eccata mundi)*. [see fig.6] This quotation anticipates the phrase that the celebrant will utter during the Eucharistic ritual, particularly during the Elevation, when it is introduced in the 13th century. The medallion on the glove of the left hand of the bishop of Orleans in the second half of the 13th c., Robert de Courtenay, is more original, however, and the layout is quite different. The text does not frame the picture, with a circular form, but the letters are part of the image, scattered here and there around the hand of God.³⁶ The hand is not pointing the three fingers to the top but emerges from a cloud in a reverse order. It is very difficult to read, but it seems that the text was: ASSVMPTVS EST VT I, with arrangement of the letters both vertically and horizontally. [see fig.3] This is probably the end of the Gospel of Mark: *Dominus Iesus assumptus est in caelum, et sedet ad dexteram Dei* (16, 19) which, moreover, evokes the *Dextera Domini*. In this case, the text alludes to the Ascension of Christ and thus also, perhaps, to the elevation, equating or analogizing the two. This example draws together the meanings of the two most common formulas.

The pair of medallions: a dialog on the role of the bishop

Glove inscriptions should not be thought of separately; they work as pairs. Even if the right hand should not know what the left hand is doing, the inscriptions clearly respond to each

³⁶ Ingrand-Varenne, *Inscriptions encadrées/encadrantes*, 2017, 69-90.

other. They are an echo of the words pronounced during the ritual; this resonance takes part in the redundancy, perhaps the saturation of signs. Their presence sheds light on the role of the bishop.

With the *Agnus Dei/Dextera Domini* formula, there is a concentration of the double aspect of the bishop, at the same time the victim and the blessing, the offering and its acceptance. The Lamb of God recalls the sacrifice, which the bishop mystically slaughters on the altar; but the blessing hand of God symbolizes the omnipotence of God, through whose power the Vicar of Christ makes the bread and wine become the body and the blood of Christ.³⁷ In this way, the inscriptions anticipate and reiterate the Eucharistic sacrifice. More generally, the Christological significance of the liturgical vestments became increasingly important in the 11th-12th century. They carried a message addressed to the bishop himself, the first reader of the inscriptions, an element of “enclothed cognition,” to use the expression of Hajo Adam and Adam D. Galinsky, that is to say the vestments had influence and power not only over others, but also on the wearer’s psychological processes. These scholars argue that just like physical experiences, the experience of wearing clothes triggers associated abstract concepts and their symbolic meanings for the wearer. In particular, they posit that wearing clothes causes people to “embody” the clothing and its symbolic meaning. Consequently, when a piece of clothing is worn, it exerts an influence on the wearer’s psychology.³⁸

Until he removed his gloves at the offertory, the bishop constantly saw this message, even if the exact moment when he put the gloves and removed them could differ.³⁹ But to take off the gloves as well as the mitre highlighted the head and the hands, noble parts of the body.

The entirely preserved glove from Essen – without equivalent in France – allows us to take the measure of the duplication that occurs: one hand is covered by another hand (the glove), itself doubled by the image of a blessing hand, around which unfolds the inscription that names the “hand.” There is a stacking, a redundancy, almost a “mise en abyme.”

In the 13th century new inscriptions appeared on the gloves, extending their reference beyond God/Christ to the figure of the Virgin⁴⁰ who building on devotion to Christ and the Eucharist appears as an essential element of the Incarnation. The byzantine medallions found in Orléans featured the portraits and the names of Christ and of the Virgin. [see fig. 4] In Conflans (Savoy), the gloves that would have served Thomas Becket (1120-1170) were inscribed with

³⁷ Braun, *Die Liturgische Gewandung*, 1907, 375.

³⁸ Adam, Galinsky *Enclothed cognition*, 2012, vol. 48, 918-925; Adam, Galinsky, *Reflections on enclothed cognition*, 2019, vol. 83, 157-159.

its influence.

³⁹ Braun, *Die Liturgische Gewandung*, 1907, 380-381.

⁴⁰ We have already seen the reference to saint Fulcran.

the dialogue AVE MA on the right and RIA GRA(TIA PLENA) on the left.⁴¹ These new texts are more like prayers than the previous ones.

This dialog between the hands was not intended to identify a particular person, but a function: that of the bishop. They are part of the liturgical strategy of the sign, which is expressed in a “dress code” and can be considered as a new element of distinction, ornamentation and sacredness. The glove is one of the seven elements that distinguish the bishop from the priest, along with the sandals, the dalmatic, the rational, the mitre, the ring and the staff, while they wear seven garments in common. In Honorius’s list, the glove is in the fifth item, after the mitre and before the ring and the staff, whereas for William Durand, it is the eighth of nine items, between the dalmatic and the ring.⁴² However the decorated glove was not the exclusive privilege of the clergy. Kings wore them, as the effigies of Henry II (1188) and Richard the Lionheart (1199) in the royal abbey of Fontevraud testify; however inscriptions do not seem to be found on royal gloves in the central Middle Ages. The writing and the glove distinguished the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The gloves and their inscriptions, together with the embroidery, enamels and precious metals, contributed to the sumptuousness of the bishop’s costume, an element of the body’s adornment in a regime of identity and identification. The addition of the medallion was an extra layer sacralizing the body of the bishop, reinforced by ritual texts, under the impetus of the Gregorian reform.⁴³

Conclusion:

The inscribed liturgical gloves preserved in the French collections show that the *Dextera Domini* and the *Agnus Dei* were the earliest and the most common texts inscribed on the gloved hands of the bishop in the 12th-13th c. Many variations existed, and these variants often explained or further developed the meaning of these main formulas. Each hand clearly had its own text, but they spoke to each other as complementary pairs, as right to left. These inscriptions also resonated with the exegesis of contemporary liturgists.

The episcopal gloves were embroidered and exhibit textile art, but the inscriptions could appear also on other materials (metal), with the same idea of richness, in order to glorify God. On the top of the gloves, the inscribed medallions were removable and were available to be used –in the case of metal plaques – for other purposes. The gloves are themselves an *ornamentum*, as they helped to differentiate the bishop from the priest. The inscriptions were

⁴¹ Rohault de Fleury, *La messe*, vol. 8, 1889, 194.

⁴² Honoré d’Autun, *De Gemma Animae*, I, 209; William Durand, *Rational*, p. 214.

⁴³ Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 2014, 183.

part of the multiplication of allegorical commentaries on the liturgical vestment, using biblical quotations with echoes in the liturgy to amplify the bishop's role. They reflect the sacralisation of the body of the priest and, even more so, of the bishop, as a proxy or equivalent of Christ. They were a *signum*. To use the expression of St. Paul in the letter to Galatians 3:27, the bishop has "clothed himself with Christ".

The gloves were not the only item of ecclesiastical vestment adorned with inscriptions. One can speak of the epigraphic *textus* of the episcopal body in every sense of the term. It would be interesting to map and to analyze the network of all of these texts on the body of single bishop, with all of its episcopalia.

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