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Medieval Holy Sepulchre Chapels: Experience and Memory of Jerusalem

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Abstract: This paper explores the rituals enacted in or connected with two medieval churches, one walrus ivory cross and a central topic of medieval devotion, Christ's passion. During Easter Week these memorialised the site in Jerusalem dedicated to the burial of Christ, the holiest place in Christendom. It focuses on the physical elements, the spaces, the paintings and sculpture, the ceremonial objects and relics and the performative nature of rituals associated with them. The *Regularis Concordia*, composed in Winchester at the end of the 10th century for the use of Benedictine monasteries included sung liturgical enactments based on the gospel accounts of Christ's burial and resurrection. At the same time, in Saxony, the Abbey at Gernrode was founded for the use of women, secular canonesses, with a space in the south aisle that seems to have represented Christ's place of burial and was later incorporated into two chambers evoking the Holy Sepulchre Chapel in Jerusalem. In the 12th century in Winchester Cathedral, a Holy Sepulchre Chapel was decorated with wall paintings depicting Christ's death and resurrection. Around this time, the walrus ivory cross known as the *Cloisters Cross* was created and appears to have been designed for use in the increasingly elaborate liturgical enactments. The paintings at Winchester Cathedral, the sculpture at Gernrode and the *Cloisters Cross* each evidence the significance of evoking Christ's passion and how liturgical space and objects served to bring it to life.

Keywords: Holy Sepulchre; Winchester; Gernrode; *Cloisters Cross*; *Regularis Concordia*; women; Byzantium; Jerusalem

Citation: Hennessy, Cecily. 2024. Medieval Holy Sepulchre Chapels: Experience and Memory of Jerusalem. *Religions* 15: 741. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15060741

Academic Editors: Barbara Crostini and Vlad Bedros

Received: 28 March 2024
Revised: 22 May 2024
Accepted: 27 May 2024
Published: 18 June 2024

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1. Introduction

Taking as its focus the Holy Sepulchre, the site of Christ's purported resurrection in Jerusalem, this paper explores connections between it and buildings, their decoration, and objects associated with commemorating it, including relics. Within these settings, performances took place to bring alive or memorialise the events that were recorded in the gospels. Of all the Christian sites, the Sepulchre is the one most often recreated, frequently with images recalling the events of Christ's passion including the deposition and lamentation, the women visiting the tomb, Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalene after his resurrection (noli me tangere) (John 20:14–17), and the harrowing of hell. Some of these buildings were used for liturgical enactments which recreated and commemorated Christ's final days and resurrection.

The appearance of the Holy Sepulchre site in Jerusalem changed over time but maintained its core, the cave where Christ was said to have been buried and the place of his resurrection. In the early 4th century, Emperor Constantine I's bishop of Jerusalem, Makarius, had, with the emperor's finances, excavated and then built over this cave tomb. At the entrance to the cave an aedicule with an entry chamber was constructed. Around this was a columned ambulatory with a circular domed roof, known as the *Anastasis* (resurrection) rotunda. It was adjacent to a courtyard enclosing Golgotha and, beyond that, a vast basilical church. This church was abandoned by the middle of the 11th century and smaller chapels built. The site was then restructured under the crusaders who took Jerusalem in 1099. However, the central focus of the site, the cave and aedicule, remained in situ (summarised

in Pringle 2007, vol. III, no. 283, pp. 6–72; Biddle 1999, pp. 91–98). Pilgrims visited the site from the earliest times, of which the most well-known is Egeria in the 4th century (381–384) (Egeria, *Itinerarium pelegrinatio*, XXIV–XXV; Wilkinson 1981, pp. 142–47; on the reception of pilgrims' experiences, see also (Moore 2017)). Knowledge of its form and the events that took place there in the Middle Ages, especially at Easter, came to the west in numerous accounts (for instance, Wilkinson et al. 1988; Ousterhout 2009). It has also been discussed at great length in terms of buildings that conveyed its symbolic meaning and the idea, as expressed by Richard Krautheimer, of architectural iconography (Krautheimer 1942), as well as the translation of objects from the Holy Land (for instance, Bartal et al. 2017, especially pp. xxiii–xxxiii).

From the 10th century at least, cenobitic liturgies used physical enactments, words, and music to relive key events in Christ's life, and particularly his burial and resurrection (Ogden 2002, pp. 19–38, 141–53; Kroesen 2000, pp. 147–73; Lipphardt 1975–1990; Bevington 1975, pp. 3–44; Boor 1967; Young 1920, 1933). These performative rituals flourished by the 12th century. They were held in either temporary or permanent installations associated with the Holy Sepulchre. Clergy or members of monastic communities re-enacted the final days of Christ's life and ceremoniously 'buried' a representation of his crucified body for three days in order to triumphantly 'resurrect' it on Easter morning.

This paper focuses on three areas associated with this ritual: two key sites and one object seemingly used as part of the liturgy. At the English cathedral priory of Winchester, ritualised enactments of Christ's passion were formalised in texts in the 10th century and a chapel was decorated with images in the 12th. At the Abbey of Saint Cyriacus for secular canonesses in Gernrode, Saxony, women took part in such enactments within a space specifically designed to memorialise Christ's place of resurrection. An unusual and elaborately carved walrus ivory cross, the *Cloisters Cross*, may have been designed to be used in such ceremonies (New York, Metropolitan Museum, The Cloisters Collection, Acc. No. 63.12). Selected from many other examples, these are chosen to be examined here since the first organised text prescribing Easter liturgical enactments for widespread use was developed at Winchester, and a physical space for Easter liturgy was created in the Cathedral in the 12th century; the earliest site representing the Holy Sepulchre south of the Alps is in Gernrode, and liturgical texts appear to evidence its use for Easter liturgical enactments in which women took part in the 12th century; and the *Cloisters Cross*, with its great complexity of images and texts, is a key object from the 12th century apparently demonstrating detailed references to the Easter rituals. Discussed here are the physical elements, the spaces, the paintings and sculpture, the ritual objects and relics associated with these rituals.

By looking at the texts associated with the two Holy Sepulchre Chapels, the *Regularis Concordia* for Winchester, and a Processional used at Gernrode, it is possible to conceive how these sites were used in the 12th century, establishing a connection between the architectural spaces as we now have them and the dynamic re-enactments that took place there. Understanding the texts and the iconography on the *Cloisters Cross* and placing it in the context of the Easter liturgy, heightens an understanding of the elaborate meanings conveyed during the liturgical experience. The three case studies each have an intimate visual connection with the performances which took place.

2. Winchester

Early examples of the ritual enactments of events of Christ's passion and resurrection were compiled and reformulated at Winchester. It is a significant site in terms of Easter enactments as it also has a physical space, now known as the Holy Sepulchre Chapel which, from its decoration, appears to have been designed for use in the Easter liturgy (Crook 2021, pp. 110–16; Park 1983; Oakeshott 1981; Flynn 1980, pp. 139–206; Lee 1975; Oakeshott 1972, pp. 131–36).

The Old Minster building there had a role as both cathedral and church of the Benedictine monastery, St Swithun's Priory, which was founded at about the same

time as the rebuilding of the cathedral church by Bishop Aethelwold (963 to 984) in 971 (Willis [1846] 1980, pp. 3–18). During this period, maybe 965 to 975, Aethelwold and Dunstan, the archbishop of Canterbury, took part in a council called to write up a code of Benedictine monastic practice, known as the *Regularis Concordia* (Ogden 2002, p. 19; *Regularis Concordia* 1953; London, British Library, Cotton MS Faustina B3, late 10th/11th century; London, British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius A3, ca 1050–1100). It drew on traditions already current in England as well as in mainland Europe and, combining the liturgy with new music and words, it led to new practices throughout Europe using tropes (extra liturgical words) or brief plays (Chaguinian 2023, pp. 22–26; Ogden 2002, p. 20).

At Winchester Cathedral, which was rebuilt towards the end of the 11th century, a special area, set between the two northern piers of the crossing seems to have been made as a Holy Sepulchre Chapel. Its construction may have occurred under Henry of Blois (bishop 1129–1171), although there is no proof of this, and the painting may well date to slightly later in the century (Crook 2021, pp. 110–16; Park and Welford 1993, p. 128). Its decoration suggests it was used in the liturgy relating to the events of Christ's passion (first noted by Milner 1798–1799, vol. II, pp. 73–74; Crook 2021, p. 110; Park 1983, pp. 49–51).

The earliest records of ritual enactments of the events of Christ's passion and resurrection are found in manuscripts dated 920 to 960 from St Martial in Limoges and Saint Gall. These monasteries had links to Ghent and Fleury which also had representatives assisting Aethelwold in putting together the *Concordia* (summarised in Forse 2002, p. 56). The texts focus on the three Marys visiting the tomb, where they find an angel who sings to them 'quem quaeritis', 'for whom are you looking'? (Bjork 1980; for controversial views, see pp. 47–48). These are not the words of an angel in any of the four gospels but are said by Christ to Mary Magdalene in John 20.15 (Forse 2002, pp. 58–59).

According to the *Concordia*, the enactments took place over a week, beginning with Palm Sunday (*Regularis Concordia* 1953, pp. 34–35). Some of these events are particularly significant regarding the *Cloisters Cross*, the scenes depicted in the Winchester chapel and the layout and sculpture of the Gernrode chapel and so bear outlining here. On Maundy Thursday, the brethren go to the doors of the church holding a staff in the shape of a serpent; fire is struck and blessed and a candle in the serpent's mouth is lit. This is repeated on Good Friday and Holy Saturday. On Good Friday comes the adoration of the cross. This takes place at Nones after various readings. A cross is set up before the altar, and, after the singing of antiphons, it is laid on a cushion and then unveiled with deacons singing 'Ecce lignum crucis, Crucem tuam adoramus Domine, Dum Fabricator mundi', 'Behold the wood of the cross, we adore your cross, Lord, while you are the Maker of the world'. The abbot and the brethren then prostrate themselves before the cross (*Regularis Concordia* 1953, pp. 42–43).

For the enactment on Good Friday, a curtain can be hung in front of the altar: 'on that part of the altar where there is space for it there shall be a representation as it were of a sepulchre, hung about with a curtain, in which the holy cross, when it has been venerated, shall be placed'. This is permitted to strengthen the faith of 'unlearned common people and neophytes' (*Regularis Concordia* 1953, p. 44). The deacons wrap the cross in a napkin and carry it 'to the place of the sepulchre'. They lay the cross in it 'in imitation as it were of the burial of the Body 'of Christ' (*Regularis Concordia* 1953, p. 45). Mass is then celebrated on the altar.

On Easter Saturday, the fire in the serpent's mouth, known as the new fire, is brought in to light the candle in front of the altar as well as a second candle, and from these all the church lights are lit (*Regularis Concordia* 1953, pp. 47–48). On Easter Sunday, the cross is 'set in its proper place' (*Regularis Concordia* 1953, p. 49). Then the major enactment takes place. While the third lesson is being read, four monks dress in costume, one taking the role of a single man/angel and the others the three Marys. The man/angel, wearing an alb (a long white vestment), goes stealthily to the 'sepulchre' and sits there quietly holding a palm. The other three, holding thuribles, take the roles of the female followers of Christ and go hunting about at the sepulchre. When asked whom they are looking for, the 'women'

answer that they are seeking Jesus of Nazareth, and the angel replies, 'Non est hic. Surrexit sicut praedixerat. Ite, nuntiate quia surrexit a mortuis','He is not here. He is risen as he foretold. Go and announce that he is risen from the dead'. The men representing the women then turn and sing 'Alleluia. Resurrexit Dominus', 'Alleluia, The Lord is risen'. The man/angel then invites them to see the place where the cross had been lain on Good Friday. He lifts a veil and shows them an empty space, with only the linen napkin remaining. The 'women' then put their thuribles in the sepulchre and hold up the cloth to show Christ has risen singing 'Surrrexit Dominus de sepulchro', 'The lord is risen from the sepulchre' and lay the linen on the altar. They then all sing the Te Deum Laudamus hymn and the bells of easter morning peal (*Regularis Concordia* 1953, pp. 49–50).

Considering Winchester's key involvement in the formulation of the text prescribing the ritual, it seems more than likely that it was enacted somewhere within the Old Minster in the 970s. The altar referred to in the *Concordia* is presumably the main altar as it simply called 'the altar'. At first the enactment may have taken place next to or in a curtained space representing the Holy Sepulchre, as mentioned in the *Concordia*. Such a construction is indicated in wall paintings at Kempley in Gloucestershire, dated to 1130–40 (Rickerby and Park 1991). Various church records indicate the presence of wooden frames, nails and so on used to construct these temporary erections, which were used only in Holy Week and became common from the 12th century (Rickerby and Park 1991, p. 28; Sheingorn 1987).

It seems probable that the structure of the Holy Sepulchre Chapel at Winchester and its wall paintings were designed to provide the setting for the liturgy of Holy Week (Park 1983, p. 50). The earliest extant paintings there are probably from the 1180s and are perhaps datable to the fall of Jerusalem in 1187 (Park 1983, p. 51). They are positioned on the east wall (on the history of their discovery and preservation see summary in Park 1983, p. 38, with references). Some remnants of paintings on other walls survive, but it is not possible to conceive the entire programme. There is no surviving crucifixion, and this may not have been present. A description of the crucifixion is not included in the *Concordia*. The focus on the east wall, the most significant, is on the events following Christ's death which lead to knowledge of his resurrection.

The deposition is on the upper register of the east wall and the Entombment combined with the Lamentation of Christ on the lower register (Figures 1 and 2) (Park 1983; Oakeshott 1981; Flynn 1980, pp. 139–206; Lee 1975). In the upper scene, in the centre Christ's body is lowered from the cross by, on the left, Joseph of Arimathea. Nicodemus, on the right, simultaneously removes a nail from his foot. Behind Nicodemus stands a mourning Saint John the Evangelist and, to the right, the remaining lower body of Mary Magdalene, the rest of her depiction having been damaged by the insertion of a 13th-century vault. The virgin's body was also damaged and, on the left, just her hand remains on Christ's shoulder.

Figure 1. Deposition and Lamentation/Entombment, east wall, Holy Sepulchre Chapel, Winchester Cathedral, ca 1180; © Cecily Hennessy.

Figure 2. Lamentation/Entombment, lower register east wall, Holy Sepulchre Chapel, Winchester Cathedral, ca 1180; © Cecily Hennessy.

The lower scene has a representation of the buildings of Jerusalem in the background, establishing the geographical space. In the foreground, the dead Christ is placed on a large stone with a crowned Virgin Mary at his side kissing his hand. To left and right, one by his head and one by his feet, Joseph of Arimathea and another man grasp the corners of the cloth on which he lies as they set down the body, with a further man to the right of the Virgin Mary, probably Nicodemus, pouring oil from a jug and rubbing Christ's left leg. Between the Virgin and Nicodemus, an angel holds the chains of a censer. The scene therefore is the embalming of Christ on the stone of unction before his burial at the site of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (on the identification of the stone of unction, see Hennessy 2022).

It also includes the three Marys coming to the empty tomb: beneath the stone is a seemingly empty sarcophagus with the lid shown to the left, depicted at an angle (Figure 3). To the side of this, an angel points to the empty sarcophagus as the three Marys (only two are visible but there were probably originally three) approach from the far left. Beneath the sarcophagus are the sleeping soldiers. To the far right, Christ appears dressed in white in three-quarters view, his right hand reaching down (Figure 4).

Figure 3. Marys at the Tomb, lower register east wall, Holy Sepulchre Chapel, Winchester Cathedral, ca 1180; © Cecily Hennessy.

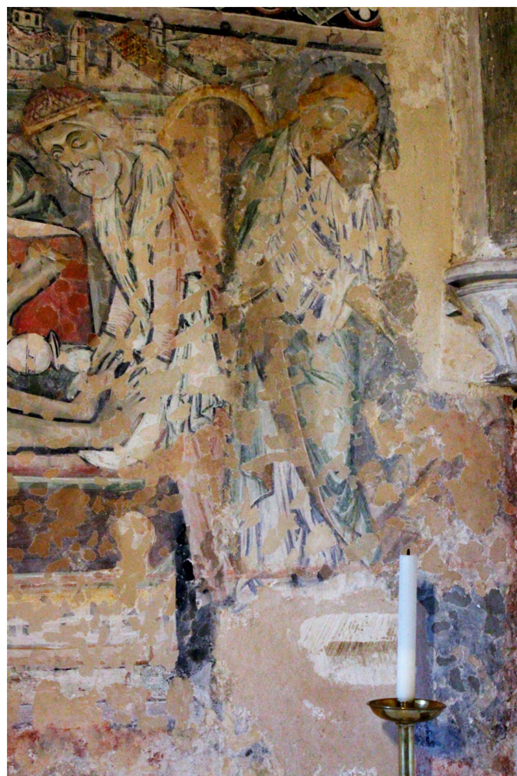

Figure 4. Harrowing of Hell (?), lower register east wall, Holy Sepulchre Chapel, Winchester Cathedral, ca 1180; © Cecily Hennessy.

This has been identified as the noli me tangere scene, in which Christ would put out a warning hand towards Mary Magdalene (Oakeshott 1972, p. 135; Oakeshott 1981, p. 12). However, other interpretations identify it as the harrowing of hell, including the restorers who recognised small people rising from their tombs and Park who could see the open mouth of hell (Park 1983, p. 39; Baker and Robert 1967, pp. 23–24). The current condition makes it very hard to decipher.

The scenes depicted on the east wall are appropriate for a chapel used in Holy Week with a focus on the events which directly led to the resurrection. They include the deposition and preparation for burial of Christ, commemorated in the liturgy on Good Friday, the women coming to the tomb to witness the resurrection on Easter Sunday, and either of two scenes elaborating on the theme of resurrection, the promise of universal resurrection evoked by the harrowing of hell or Mary Magdalene's encounter with Christ resurrected.

While the overriding intent of the paintings seems to be to depict the events as they took place in Jerusalem and it may well be that the Cathedral itself was intended to evoke Jerusalem (Whatley 2022), the paintings also make references to the relics from Jerusalem held in Constantinople. The Winchester paintings have previously been discussed in terms of the influence of byzantine art (Park 1983, pp. 43–45), which itself was influenced by the many relics that were brought from the Holy Land and elsewhere to Constantinople (for instance, Klein 2006; Carile 2006, pp. 88–91; Ousterhout 2006).

The relics of the passion received particular reverence. The collection in Constantinople, housed in the Great Palace, included parts of the cross, the lance and sponge, two nails, a phial of blood, Christ's tunic and the crown of thorns (Lidov 2012, especially pp. 66–69, 103). These are shown on a two-sided 12th-century icon in the Tretriakov Gallery, Moscow (Kalavrezou 1997, p. 57, figs 1a, 1b). The relics of Christ's passion were associated with Easter rituals, and from the 12th century included the stone of unction or *lithos* (Graeve 1958, p. 228). This had purportedly been taken to Ephesus and was retrieved from there by the emperor Manuel I (1143–80) in 1169–70 (Hennessy 2022, p. 97; Drpić 2019, pp. 2–3). Manuel was said to have carried it from the harbour by the palace on his shoulders

to the Chapel of our Lady of the Pharos, which already housed the other famous relics of the passion. Shortly after his unexpected death, it was moved to his family's mausoleum at the Pantokrator monastery, which had been founded by his parents. Described by Niketas Choniates, a contemporary historian, as red and as long as a human body, it was placed on a pedestal with Manuel buried next to it (Choniates 1975, p. 222; 1984, p. 125). The mausoleum commemorated not only Manuel and his dynasty but also Christ's burial and placed Manuel's body close to a spiritually efficacious relic. The presence of the stone in Constantinople influenced the iconography of the Lamentation (Spatharakis 1995). Knowledge of this stone and its representation must have reached the west very swiftly to be used in the paintings in the Holy Sepulchre Chapel in Winchester. It is also possible it is referenced in the *Cloisters Cross*, also likely dated to the 1180s.

The chapel at Winchester provided a vivid setting for ritual enactments during Holy Week, referencing the city of Jerusalem and the events of the passion as they were relived in the Easter liturgy. Its decoration also depicted revered relics associated with Christ's death and resurrection, helping to bring alive the reality of past events in the present.

3. Saint Cyriacus, Gernrode

Another place where it is likely early Easter liturgical enactments took place is the Abbey of Saint Cyriacus, Gernrode in Saxony, housing secular canonesses (Figure 5) (for a summary of key publications on the site, see (Schröter 2017, pp. 7–10); currently the most comprehensive publication is (Krause and Voß 2007); also see Ogden 2002, pp. 55–60, 117–19; Kroesen 2000, pp. 47–49; Voigtländer 1980; Dalman 1922, pp. 65–69). The Abbey has an 11th-century Holy Sepulchre Chapel with sculptural decoration suited to memorialising Christ's resurrection. Textual evidence survives indicating that Easter enactments, including roles taken by women, were taking place there in the 12th century (on women's role taking, see Ogden 2002, pp. 143–49).

Figure 5. Saint Cyriacus, Gernrode, view of exterior of Holy Sepulchre Chapel on left, facing west, 11th–12th century; © Cecily Hennessy.

The Abbey has a chamber representing Christ's tomb and is the earliest surviving permanent example of such a chapel in Germany. Part of it may have existed as a memorial to Christ's place of burial from its foundation in 959 by Gero I (ca 900–20 May 965), the Saxon margrave of the eastern march on the edge of the Harz mountains, and his son Siegfried. The Abbey was intended as a burial place for Gero and was overseen by aristocratic abbesses and housed 24 secular canonesses. Gero installed Hathui, Siegfried's

widow as the first abbess. Such Stiftskirchen were arenas in which women were able to wield power and influence. From its earliest time, the Abbey appears to have had a space within an arched recess replicating or evoking the Holy Sepulchre in the south wall of the south aisle (Figure 6) (Krause 2007, pp. 247–50, Figure 137). About a hundred years after the foundation, ca 1090, the recess was encased within a chamber representing the Holy Sepulchre Chapel in Jerusalem and was accessed via an ante chamber to the east (Krause 2007, pp. 250–53, Figure 239). The chapel in Jerusalem similarly has an inner and an outer chamber.

Figure 6. Saint Cyriacus, Gernrode, interior Holy Sepulchre Chapel, south niche, possibly late 10th century; © Cecily Hennessy.

Around this time, in Gernrode, the site on the south wall representing Christ's place of burial was moved and a sarcophagus or tomb bench was placed on the north wall of the burial chamber. The new position was in line with its position in Jerusalem (summarised in Schröter 2017, pp. 35–37; Krause 2007, pp. 253–56, Figure 141). The walls of the burial chamber each have a niche, bordered by columns with bases and capitals, which had supported a type of squinch that held the domed vault. This eight-sided vault was destroyed in the 17th century. This shape would have echoed the domed vault in Jerusalem.

Adjacent to the north wall, on the floor, is a panel or base plate indicating where Christ's sarcophagus was probably lain. Currently on this is a sculpture of the three Marys (Figure 7). They wear long robes and mantles and carry anointing vessels and their scrolls read 'Surrexit non est hic' and 'nolite expavescere', 'he has risen, he is not here' and 'do not fear' (Mark 16.6), (Schulze 1965, pp. 118–19). In the west niche there is also an over life-sized male figure (Figure 8). It has been suggested that he is a bishop, any of several saints or Christ resurrected, or that the sculpture was not originally part of the complex (the various views are summarised in Schröter 2017, pp. 47–55). In the first half of the 12th century the entrance from the east was also walled up and a new door made in the north wall of the antechamber (Krause 2007, Figure 143). This was due to the erection of a gallery over the eastern bay adjacent to the Holy Sepulchre.

Figure 7. Saint Cyriacus, Gernrode, interior Holy Sepulchre Chapel, Three Marys, ca 1090 © Cecily Hennessy.

Figure 8. Saint Cyriacus, Gernrode, interior Holy Sepulchre Chapel, standing male figure, not firmly identified, probably 12th century © Cecily Hennessy.

The walls on the exterior of the antechamber and the burial chamber in the nave were perhaps decorated in about 1090. The north wall, facing the nave, is divided into two sections: the eastern part has a chipped relief of two figures, destroyed either in the 12th century, when a door was inserted to the right, or during the 17th-century reformation (1616) (Figure 9). The sculpture represented Peter and John running to the tomb after being told by Mary Magdalene that Christ had risen (John 20. 3–10) (Möbius 1966, p. 17; Schulze 1965, p. 114). The western part of the north wall of the burial chamber is divided

into three sections. Above a now blocked door in the centre is a figure of Christ. To the left and right of the original opening is a noli me tangere scene, with Christ on the left and Mary Magdalene on the right. The western facing wall has a broad frame and a central panel, somewhat recessed. Between two stone posts in the centre, stands a female stucco figure who has been identified as either the first abbess, Hathui, the 12th-century abbess, Hedwig, another donor, or Mary Magdalene standing in front of the tomb (Figure 10). It is this latter view which is largely held. There is a complex border and within this in the upper corners are two male figures, John the Baptist, and probably Saint John the evangelist (Möbius 1966, pp. 17, 20, 24; Schulze 1965, pp. 116–17).

Figure 9. Saint Cyriacus, Gernrode, exterior Holy Sepulchre Chapel, north wall, running apostles, left, Noli Me Tangere with bust of Christ, right, ca 1090 © Cecily Hennessy.

Figure 10. Saint Cyriacus, Gernrode, exterior Holy Sepulchre Chapel, west wall, standing female figure, identified as Mary Magdalene, ca 1090 © Cecily Hennessy.

The chapel seems to have had the defined roles of intensifying an understanding of, and faith in, the resurrection of Christ, being a means to visualise the events that took place in Jerusalem, and providing the setting for the enactment of these events in the Easter liturgy. There is a focus on the roles of women as witnesses to the resurrection in both the three sets of sculpture on the exterior walls, on permanent view to the canonesses and in

the three Marys next to the tomb on the interior (Hennessy Forthcoming; Kahznitz 2007, p. 354). This sculpture also ties the function of the chapel to the Easter liturgy.

The earliest substantial manuscripts recording Easter liturgical enactments from Gernrode are dated about 1500 (Berlin, SBB, Mus. ms. 40081, Processional and *Liber Ordinarius* of the Convent of Gernrode, fols 16b bis 18b; 93b–95b; 239b–240a; 241b–243b and ms. 40080, fols 109b–112a; 223b; 225b bis 228a; (Lipphardt 1975–1990, vol. 5, 1976, pp. 1524–30), with further information in vol. 8, 1990, pp. 729–33; Krause and Schmitt 2007, pp. 39–40, no. 12; Lipphardt 1972). The processional gives detailed instructions for the actions and songs of the canons and canonesses during the Easter celebrations. The Abbey's library was destroyed about 1500, so few early texts survive. The processional describes in detail the movements of the canons and canonesses on Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. It includes the depositio crucis, the burying of the cross within the tomb on Friday evening, the Marys visiting the tomb, the elevation of the cross in the tomb on Easter morning and the noli me tangere scene, which takes place in the central nave.

Werner Jacobsen considers this is an excerpt from a now lost *Liber Ordinarius* from the Abbey that was made specifically for the singing master (Jacobsen 2003, p. 235). Because of the archaic character of the text, Walter Lipphardt dated its origins to around 1130 (Lipphardt 1975–1990, vol. 8, 1990, p. 729; 1972, pp. 9–10). If he is correct and this evidence from ca 1500 reflects an earlier text used in the 12th century, then the Gernrode Easter celebration is a very early example of this type of liturgy and evidence of the participation of women in liturgical celebrations (Schröter 2017, p. 80). Hans-Joachim Krause has argued that the early liturgical use of the Holy Sepulchre Chapel dates to the late 11th century (Krause 2007, p. 250, with additional references). If this is indeed the case, then the architectural form and the sculptural decoration of the chapel coincided with the development of the liturgical enactments and is a rare example of such a phenomenon in this period.

Of exceptional interest at Gernode is the role of women in developing the Holy Sepulchre space and on the selection of the iconography focusing on the holy women and on Mary Magdalene. In the Easter liturgical enactments, the abbess and her canonesses were able to relive the events of the passion within the confines of the Abbey and assume the roles of Christ's female followers.

4. The Cloisters Cross

Around the same time as the Holy Sepulchre Chapel at Winchester was decorated and the Holy Sepulchre Chapel at Gernode was being used in the Easter liturgy, the walrus ivory cross known as the *Cloisters Cross* appears to have been designed for use in the increasingly elaborate liturgical enactments. The *Cloisters Cross* is a double-sided walrus ivory cross, measuring 57.7 × 36.2 cm, decorated with over 180 figures and inscriptions with the shaft and crossbar taking the form of the *lignum vitae*, the legendary live palm on which Christ was crucified, which came to symbolise resurrection (Figures 11 and 12) (Parker and Little 1994, p. 13). This is also the theme of the front central medallion showing Moses and the Brazen Serpent (Numbers 21:5–9), a typological reference to the crucifixion and resurrection (https://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15324coll10/id/110139/rec/1) (accessed on 8 June 2024).

Christ stated that just as Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness so would he be lifted up in order that his believers would have eternal life (John 3.14–16). The theme of the back central medallion, the Lamb of God pierced by Synagoga, is a reference to Christ's sacrifice and the redemption of sin (https://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15324coll10/id/110140/rec/1) (accessed on 8 June 2024). On the three remaining front finials of the cross (the bottom finial is missing) are scenes depicting events of Christ's passion: the deposition with the preparation for burial, (https://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15324coll10/id/110142/rec/1) (accessed on 8 June 2024), the resurrection with the Marys at the tomb, and the ascension. On the reverse of each finial are the evangelist symbols of Mark, Luke and John, while on each of the four arms of the cross are carved

a series of prophets holding scrolls with words from their books. Evidence suggests that the cross was designed to be used during the Easter liturgy. The depiction of the living cross and the subject matter of the central medallions (on the front and back) and the complex compression of events from Christ's passion in the front finials, from the deposition to the ascension, combined with the selection of prophets and their texts on the back arms of the cross, are key to understanding the function of the cross.

Figure 11. New York, Metropolitan Museum, The Cloisters Collection, Acc. No. 63.12, *Cloisters Cross*, front view, second half 12th century (open access).

Figure 12. New York, Metropolitan Museum, The Cloisters Collection, Acc. No. 63.12, *Cloisters Cross*, back view, second half 12th century (open access).

The cross has no clear place of origin, but it has traditionally been held to come from Bury St Edmunds (Hoving and Rorimer 1964, p. 339; Parker and Little 1994, pp. 42, 226), although the connections to Bury are tenuous (Heslop 1994). Others have suggested Winchester (Mersmann 1963), St Albans/Channel style (Nilgen 1985), and Saxony (Munns 2013; Hennessy Forthcoming). The connections with Saxony are largely iconographic, although the widespread use of liturgical enactments in the area, including at Essen, Magdeburg, Braunschweig and Gernrode (Ogden 2002, pp. 41–51; Lipphardt 1975–1990, vol. 5, 1976, pp. 1489–1501) may reinforce evidence for its provenance from somewhere in the region. The textual liturgical evidence for this is later than the 12th century, but at Gernrode, as discussed, and at Essen the texts are thought to be based on earlier traditions (on Essen, see

Gerschow and Schilp 2003, p. 24). The date of the cross has been hard to determine, but it is currently considered to be the second half of the 12th century.

The liturgy for Holy Week included the enactments described in the *Concordia* and developed in various ways in Europe in the 11th and 12th centuries as described above. Use of the Easter drama was widespread on the continent in the 12th century (summarised in Ogden 2002, pp. 23–24). Because of this, Elizabeth Parker and Charles Little associated the cross with Benedictine monasteries and identified the iconography and the inscriptions on the *Cloisters Cross* with readings used during Holy Week (Parker and Little 1994, pp. 125, 149–69). The cross is very complex and has numerous short texts taken from the old and new testaments, many of which Parker and Little tie to the Holy Week liturgy contained in the canonical hours as well as to the *Concordia*. Without repeating here all their examples, the Easter liturgy may well explain the choice of iconography and inscriptions. Connections directly with the *Concordia* are particularly striking. For instance, in the veneration of the cross on Good Friday, prayers and penitential psalms are addressed to the unveiled cross by the altar, with the words 'Ecce lignum crucis', 'behold the wood of the cross' (*Regularis Concordia* 1953, pp. 42–43; Parker and Little 1994, p. 156). The emphasis on the wood is exemplified by the nature of the living tree on the *Cloisters Cross*. The inclusion of Moses and the serpent on the front central roundel is a connection with the light or fire in the serpent's mouth, known as the new fire appearing on Easter Saturday, as well as a reference to Christ's prophesy that he would be lifted up as the serpent so that his believers might have eternal life (John 3.14–15) (Parker and Little 1994, pp. 160–62).

The cross has marks suggesting that it had a corpus at some point attached to it (Parker and Little 1994, pp. 30–33). It may have had a removable corpus that could be 'buried' during the Easter liturgy. Furthermore, the cross is made from five separate parts: the side finials are removable, and the top bar and bottom bar are ingeniously designed to that they slot together and can be separated from the central roundels. In the Easter liturgy, an entire crucifix could be buried, and it is possible that the cross would have been taken apart and buried either alone or with the corpus.

In both the Winchester paintings and in the right finial with the preparation for Christ's burial on the *Cloisters Cross*, Christ appears to be laying not in a sarcophagus but on a stone, the stone of unction. One could argue that the necessarily abbreviated iconography in such a small object as the finial prevents depiction of the whole sarcophagus. However, the body of Christ seems to be laying on the stone, not being placed within the empty space of a sarcophagus. Rather than being anointed as in the Winchester painting, the body has already been prepared for burial.

The earliest extant byzantine image showing the stone of unction is in the refectory of the Monastery of St John, Patmos (Spatharakis 1995, p. 438, Figure 6). This has been dated by some to about 1200. In this scene, there are women mourning Christ, kneeling behind his body, with their covered hands raised to their faces in grief. Similarly, on the cross, there are two mourning women with their hands to their faces, behind Christ's embalmed body. This is a very early, if not the earliest, example of this iconography in medieval western art. The depiction of the mourning women and of the stone of unction on the *Cloisters Cross*, indicate a transference of the iconography from the east, possibly from the Holy Land or, more likely, from Constantinople since there is no record of a relic of the stone of unction in Jerusalem until the late 13th century (Ricoldus de Monte Crucis 1864, pp. 112–13; on the influence of the stone in Constantinople on that in Jerusalem, see Rachman-Schire 2017).

Further iconography on the right finial plaque draws attention to other passion relics. The hole made by the nail in Christ's left foot is made clearly visible. As he is loosened from the cross, his right arm over his mother's covered raised hand clearly displays the nail hole; his left arm, stretched out and raised above the cross is still pierced by the nail, which Nicodemus is removing with large pliers. In the top left corner, the centurion is standing clasping the lance with which he pierced Christ's side. The inclusion of the stone of unction, the attention drawn to the hole in Christ's foot, the nail in his hand, the massive plyers and the lance all refer to relics of the passion, many of which were held in Constantinople.

It was said that by 1204 more relics were in Constantinople than the rest of the world (Geoffrey de Villehardouin 1963, p. 76; Wortley 1999).

It is not possible to prove if and how this cross was used in the liturgy. However, its iconography and the selection of texts tie it closely to the events of Holy Week and the celebration of Christ's resurrection. That it is easily taken apart suggests that this had an intended purpose beyond making it more convenient to transport. It may well have been to bury it within the simulacrum of Christ's tomb as part of the liturgy.

5. Conclusions

The *Regularis Concordia* was put together using various sources in Winchester at the end of the 10th century and was disseminated throughout Europe. At the same time, in Saxony, the Abbey at Gernrode was founded with an area in the south aisle that may have represented Christ's place of burial and resurrection. The original decoration of that space is not known. However, some hundred years later, a chapel evoking the Holy Sepulchre Chapel in Jerusalem, was formulated with two chambers and sculptural decoration. This was further adapted in the 1130/50s with the placing of Christ's tomb altered to memorialise more exactly its location in Jerusalem. Probably in the 1180s at Winchester, the Holy Sepulchre Chapel was decorated with wall paintings showing the episodes in Christ's life and resurrection that took place in and around the *Anastasis* in Jerusalem. About this time the walrus ivory cross known as the *Cloisters Cross* was created, possibly also in Saxony, and may well have been used in the increasingly elaborate liturgical enactments which took place by the 12th century. The paintings at Winchester Cathedral, the sculpture at Gernrode and the walrus ivory *Cloisters Cross* each evidence the richness of evoking Christ's passion and how liturgical space and objects used in the liturgy served to invoke a living memorialisation of the events and restore them to life.

Funding: Research undertaken on the *Cloisters Cross* was generously funded by the Society of Antiquaries (Philips fund), for which I am most grateful.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analysed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Acknowledgments: I would like to acknowledge and thank Ute Engel, Shirin Fozi, Alexandra Gajewski, Chuck Little, Susan Littledale, Julia Perratore and Richard Plant for their help in researching and writing this article, and the anonymous readers for their many helpful suggestions.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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