



Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages. (Revised Edition)

By Patrick J. Geary

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To obtain sacred relics, medieval monks plundered tombs, avaricious merchants raided churches, and relic-mongers scoured the Roman catacombs. In a revised edition of *Furta Sacra*, Patrick Geary considers the social and cultural context for these acts, asking how the relics were perceived and why the thefts met with the approval of medieval Christians.

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Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #832602 in eBooks
- Published on: 2011-06-27
- Released on: 2011-06-27
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Saints are special kinds of heroes. They are of little interest as everyday people; their real significance lies in the way they exemplify universal values given by God. In *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*, Patrick J. Geary devotes microscopic attention to the way medieval Christians and merchants raided tombs, plundered churches, and scoured the Roman catacombs in order to obtain sacred relics. Although Geary rejects the notion that cults of saints were "pure manifestations of religious devotions" devoid of cultural associations, he honors the religious impulses of some truly outrageous behavior. Geary's study is academic and a bit of a brain stretcher, but it's fairly short and worth close attention. In describing how hagiography mirrored the values of medieval society, he provides a helpful road map for alert readers interested in contemporary cults of saints. When Evangelicals honor C.S. Lewis, for instance, or South American Christians remember Eva Peron, or even when movie memorabilia collectors pay big bucks for Dorothy's ruby slippers, they relive a very old dream of bringing humanity's highest ideals down into earthly form. --*Michael Joseph Gross*

Review

"[This] is a superb book, original and immaculate in scholarship, elegant in style and thought."--**R. I. Moore**, *Times Higher Education Supplement*

"A shrewd, interesting, and helpful study."--**C. N. L. Brooke**, *History*

"Geary is at his best in unraveling the tangled accounts of individual thefts to suggest the reasons for their occurrence and in describing the central role of saints and their relics in this age. His exposition of the medieval view that saints resided with and participated actively in the affairs of the communities possessing their relics is essential to understanding the function of saints in this society and the desire of communities to steal or, as he argues, to 'kidnap' them."--**John M. McCulloh**, *American Historical Review*

"This is a fascinating study of a medieval way of thinking which in certain circumstances countenanced thefts of sacred relics from tombs, churches, and Roman catacombs. . . . *Furta Sacra* is a truly impressive history shedding much light on a difficult dimension of popular Christian piety in another age."--**Michael Connors**, *Church History*

From the Back Cover

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