

***Capse pro reliquiis* – The Relics and Reliquaries of the Turku Cathedral (summary)**

The cult of relics reached Finland approximately one thousand years after it had come into being within the Catholic Church. The exhibition of the relics as well as their hidden place within the reliquaries is an essential part of the cult of relics.

The most important relics of the national sanctuary of Finland, the Cathedral of Turku (Åbo), probably contained parts of Bishop Henrik's and Bishop Hemming's corpses. As far as is known, there have been valuable reliquaries in the Cathedral, like the silvery monstrances that Bishop Magnus Tavast allowed to be made of Saint Henrik's skull and arm bones. Even more relics have been hidden inside the altars in order to "seal" them. Reliquaries made of valuable metals as well as other articles of value have been lost, since the Cathedral has been ransacked several times and what was left intact was confiscated by King Gustav Vasa at the beginning of the Reformation era.



One preserved artefact is a wooden sarcophagus consisting of two parts. It has been assumed that it was the coffin of the beatified Bishop Hemming. The sarcophagus contained relics wrapped in cloth; similar objects have been found in the recess of the vestry. The most important of these is a bone construction that has been sewn together to imitate a human skull. It is wrapped in red silk, and on the cloth can be seen an embroidered "*martyrium*" depicting a beheading. Because the picture does not contain any saintly attributes at all, it is difficult to identify the person, but nowadays it can be assumed that it belonged to Saint Erik, who was Bishop Henrik's

companion on the first crusade to Finland and later martyred as a king of Sweden. Other relics presented include those of Saint Henrik, Saint Birgitta, Saint Margaret, the stone of Gethsemane and the Holy Innocents. All these relics are small fragments furnished with "*authentica*" strips that reveal their origin.

Preserved documents cast more light upon the history of the relics in the Cathedral of Turku. Reliquaries are mentioned in two altar inventories and as a payment in an estate sale. The festivities, during which the relics were commemorated, are reflected in melodies from the *Festum reliquiarum* of Turku, in the saints' calendar and in the description on the beatification of Bishop Hemming.

Sofia Lahti, M. A.

slahti@abo.fi