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# The Sacred Economy: Devotional Objects as Sacred Presence for German Catholics in Aachen and Trier, 1832-1937

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There is a long-standing tradition within western Germany of religious journey, and more pertinent to this paper, of pilgrims requesting *Andenken* (remembrances) when they could not physically attend pilgrimages. In the following essay, I analyze pilgrim correspondence sent to the Catholic Pilgrimage Committees, groups of clerics who facilitated pilgrimage to Aachen and Trier, Germany. I argue that Catholic pilgrims participated in an 'economy of the sacred' through their requests for and use of various pilgrimage objects; including, commemorative cards, medals, and rosaries. Within this economy wealth, worth, and merit were determined by an item's physical proximity to the relics of these towns. Even as the number of objects available increased in diversity between 1832 and 1937, pilgrims continued to view *Andenken* as a tangible connection to the sacred - not as trinkets or souvenirs.

**Key Words:** Germany, remembrances, religio-consumerism, souvenirs, *Andenken*

## Introduction

Pilgrim salami, lighters, pens, pins, chocolates, pilgrim cookies, sweat towels, magnets, book marks, paper weights, T-Shirts, hats, and even pilgrimage wine - these were just some of the available items for purchase by travelers to the 2012 Heilig Rock Wallfahrt (Holy Coat of Jesus Pilgrimage) in Trier, Germany. There is a long-standing tradition within western Germany of religious journey, and more pertinent to this paper, of pilgrims buying *Andenken* (remembrances) or *Abzeichen* (badges) to mark their journey to a religious site. In this paper I argue that German pilgrims have long participated in an 'economy of the sacred' through their interpretation of and use of various pilgrimage objects. Within this economy, wealth, worth, and merit of these objects were determined by their physical proximity to relics in Aachen and Trier, Germany and not by their monetary costliness or physical size.<sup>[1]</sup> Even as the number and diversity of objects available for purchase increased between 1832 and 1937, pilgrims continuously thought of their *Andenken* and *Abzeichen* as part of the holy, a

connection to the sacred - not as trinkets or souvenirs. Between 1832 and 1937 the sacred economy expanded geographically, to include an increasing number of Catholics around the world who were able to participate in the sacred marketplace.

The economy, however, remained centered in Trier and Aachen, two foci of German Catholic piety and religious journeys within the Rhineland. Pilgrims visited Trier to look at and touch the Holy Coat of Jesus. Catholics maintained that this garment was brought to the city by the Roman Emperor Constantine's mother, Saint Helena, in the fourth century. The Coat (see Image 1) was an outer garment Jesus would have held in place with a belt at the waist. In Aachen, pilgrims traveled to visit four relics: Jesus' loin cloth from his crucifixion, Jesus' swaddling clothes from his birth, the beheading cloth of John the Baptist, and Mary's tunic. Aachen Catholics maintained that these four garments came to the city after Charlemagne purchased them from the Byzantine royal family. Aachen hosted a pilgrimage (the Aachen Heiligtumsfahrt) to revere these four objects every seven years - the final exhibition this paper considers occurred in 1937. Trier held pilgrimages with much less frequency, in 1844, 1891, and 1933. The Second World War disrupted Rhineland pilgrimage and that is why this paper and my dissertation end with the 1937 Aachen event.

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1 This paper is derived from research in 2011-2012 at the Bistumsarchiv Trier (BATr), Domarchiv Aachen (DAA), and Zentralbibliothek Aachen (ZBA). Where possible I have cited the page number of the relevant folder. For non-paginated folders I have included the date of the correspondence in the citation.

In this paper, I consider only one major participant group in the sacred economy - pilgrims who could not attend themselves, but requested sacred objects via letters. The sources for this article are letters sent to clerics in Trier and Aachen by Catholics across Europe and North America. Because of this focus, other key members of this marketplace: state officials, vendors, and clerics are set aside in order to give sufficient evidence for my main argument that pilgrimage objects, or Andenken, for letter-writing pilgrim participants, acted as a conduit to the divine. Throughout this paper I deliberately use the term Andenken for two reasons. First, Andenken is the term used by German speakers and letter-writers between 1832 and 1937. Like them, I employ it in the sense of 'remembrance,' or 'memory.' Second, Andenken, although it can also indicate 'souvenir' in German, here acts as a linguistic variant away from the touristic context of the term 'souvenir.' German Catholics understood Andenken as having metaphysical properties that could change their place in the world and bring them closer to God.

The sacred economy was predicated on the shared belief that God, through a divine plan, left pieces of the eternal on the earth to help the faithful. That is to say that the petitioners for and purchasers of Andenken viewed themselves as vessels, potential recipients of divine favor through religious objects: medals, relic silk, rosaries. They believed they could interact with and be part of the eternal. The meanings that pilgrims assigned to Andenken were not merely socially constructed (Cohen, 1988), but a reaching for God-in-the-world. This belief was not superstition, and not religio-consumerism (Kaufman, 2001), but the persistent conviction that the transcendent could change one's life if one could only get close enough to the sacred center. For petitioners and pilgrims to the

**Image 1: The Coat of Trier**



Source: Photo taken by Author, 13 April 2012

Rhineland region this center was either the Coat of Jesus in Trier or the four Aachen relics.

Participation in the sacred economy required that pilgrims undergo a process of presentification, whereby they were bodily linked to an object because it could heal, relieve suffering, convert a loved one, or provide a job (Gumbrecht, 2004). Thus, again, one of the key objectives of this paper is to explore why pilgrims requested Andenken. By analyzing correspondence from pilgrims unable to attend, this paper reconstructs the importance of Andenken to pilgrims to Trier and Aachen and explores how the requested items were present in the lives of pilgrims.

This paper, therefore, has three key objectives. First, to show that pilgrims participated in a 'sacred economy.' The 'sacred economy' was predicated on the shared belief that objects brought close to the Trier and Aachen relics could improve the life or spiritual state of the recipient. Second, to contend that the Andenken, for letter-writers, acted as a means of physically connecting to the divine. Third, I argue that pilgrim requests for Andenken are unique to pilgrimage and a separate practice from tourism. The authors of letters could not physically attend the Rhineland events. Therefore, letter-writers did not inquire about Andenken to remember their journey, rather they expected a multitude of physical and spiritual solutions from these items.

## Literature Review

Previous scholars have not yet fully considered why pilgrims acquired Andenken or devotional objects or how pilgrims understood these items (Gibson, 1989; Taylor, 1995). This neglect is in part a result of the debate on whether or not pilgrimage and tourism are similar activities in the modern period (Cohen, 1992). As scholars have entwined this discussion with an interest in the history of consumption there has been a tendency to merely point out that objects made available to pilgrims (rosaries, prayer books, holy water, etc.) in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were produced, shipped, and some would contend, consumed, in the same way as knick-knacks at touristic destinations. Suzanne Kaufman, for example, in her consideration of pilgrimage to Lourdes and its relationship to modern French tourism studied items that sold well, 'souvenirs, bottled water, and inexpensive religious trinkets,' but did not explore what pilgrims expected from their purchases (Kaufman, 2001: 70). For Kaufman, pilgrims consumed because touristic purchasing converged with pilgrimage practices in nineteenth-century France

Pilgrims through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century understood their Andenken as part of the sacred. Kaufman's material analysis of pilgrimage objects available for purchase at Lourdes relies on Walter Benjamin's theory of mechanical reproduction. Accordingly, like art in the nineteenth century, pilgrim items lost uniqueness and authenticity with the advent of photography and mass duplication. Just as anyone could possess a Manet painting as a print, pilgrims had access to replicated items like statues of Our Lady of Lourdes. Kaufman notes that

*A traditional Christian pilgrimage site and its sacred objects are endowed with both a sense of sacred aura and miraculous power by their association with a unique divine power: Jesus, Mary, or a saint. This sacred aura and miraculous power was thrown into question at Lourdes by the mass-marketing of the shrine and its goods* (Kaufman, 2001: 27 f., 87).

However, Aachen and Trier pilgrims make no mention of a diminished sacred presence due to the multiplicity of Andenken available, nor did they worry that their Andenken were cheap reproductions. In part, this important difference is a product of the fact that Aachen events only occurred every seven years and there were only three Trier pilgrimages in the nineteenth century, whereas vendors were able to set up year-round stores at Lourdes.

Erik Cohen has convincingly argued that commoditization does not necessarily change the meaning of cultural products because 'tourists entertain concepts of "authenticity" which are much looser than those entertained by intellectuals and experts' (Cohen, 1988: 383). For the pilgrims to Aachen and Trier, the devotional objects derived their authenticity from their proximity to the relic. Here one can think of Andenken value in terms of concentric circles with a Rhineland relic at the center - the closer an item came to the middle the more it was worth in the sacred economy (on circular motion and touristic flows, see Bhardwaj, 1973; Williams and Zelinsky, 1970). Thus, a rosary purchased at Trier or Aachen would tend to be more prized than one acquired at a non-pilgrimage location, and an item that physically touched a relic would be most highly valued.

Robert Orsi has previously studied mail-order devotion amongst US Catholics and linked this practice to a shift from space to time in devotional practices (from crossing distances to taking time to write a letter or petition) (Orsi, 1991: 223). Letters sent from the US to Trier and Aachen help explain that letter writing was established amongst US Catholics before Orsi's study begins in the early-twentieth century. Yet, Aachen and

Trier diverge from the Chicago St. Jude shrine in Orsi's study because petitions sent in were unbidden and the German church hierarchy did not encourage letters as a substitute for attending. Furthermore, American Catholics focused on the St. Jude shrine as a site of potential healing, even via letter, whereas Catholic hopes for what Andenken could accomplish in their lives were not limited to forms of bodily restoration.

This paper also responds to John Eade's call to look at the perspective of pilgrims themselves in order to ascertain the meanings attributed to commercialism at pilgrimage sites (Eade, 1992). For Eade, terms like pilgrim and tourist are problematic because 'behind the superficial analogies between pilgrimage and tourism, there lies a more complex world of dissonance, ambiguity, and conflict' (Eade, 1992: 31). In his examination of tourists and pilgrims at Lourdes, Eade found that when it came to the items for sale there was great uncertainty between pilgrim and tourist groups,

*Some would consider pouring Lourdes' water into a plastic container that is a copy of the Crowned Virgin statue, whose top is designed as the Virgin's crown, to be bad taste, bizarre, or even sacrilegious. But for others, it provides a warm memory of a special place and a visual link between themselves, Our Lady, and the shrine* (Eade, 1992: 27).

Rather than describing the process of commercialization, this paper interrogates letters sent to clergy who organized pilgrimages in Germany. In doing so, this paper seeks to move beyond Eade's conjecture about pilgrim or tourist opinions regarding the items for sale at a holy site and to present the sacred economy as it was understood and imagined by the participants.

Victor Turner, in his theory of pilgrimage, describes the pilgrimage experience as a 'threshold' where the participant

*hopes to have direct experience of the sacred, invisible, or supernatural order, either in the material aspect of miraculous healing or in the immaterial aspect of inward transformation of spirit or personality* (Turner, 1973: 214).

German Catholics, and Catholics abroad, understood the acquisition of items displaying the Trier and Aachen relics, or Andenken blessed by the bishop or commissioned by the Pilgrimage Committee, the cathedral and diocesan clerics in charge of coordinating pilgrimage events, to have authority in their lives. The Andenken acted as a tangible portal between the sacred and the temporal.

Jon Gross, in his theory of touristic consumption likens the purchasing of an object to a salvific story,

*The souvenir, like the relic of holy pilgrimage, attests to the persistence of our faith, or rather the intensity of our collective desire, for the material presence of meaning, for immanence of the world* (Gross, 2005: 59).

Pilgrims, at least those who wrote openly to officials, thought of these Andenken as a sacred presence, in a sacramental fashion. As William Egginton has stated, presence should be taken

*in its theological sense, as in the Real Presence of the body of God [because it signifies] that experience of space that subtends such diverse experiences as . . . the miracle of transubstantiation* (Egginton, 2003: 3).

The Andenken served as a means to connect to the divine, but are separate from Jon Gross' souvenirs because they offered hope and a living connection to the eternal, not a fulfillment of travelers' 'desire to experience the absolute authenticity of death' (Gross, 2005: 59). Though, like Gross' souvenirs in Hawaii, Andenken did close the space between the transcendent and mundane materiality for pilgrims to Aachen and Trier.

A better way to set this distinction is to think of the souvenir versus Andenken as one of subject culture versus presence culture (Gumbrecht, 2004: 81). Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht contrasts these two cultures by association: presence culture is bodily, and legitimate knowledge is revealed. Conversely, in subject culture the dominant human self-reference point is the mind and knowledge is validated when it helps explain the world and originates in the subject. For the pilgrims writing to church leaders the requested items were more than material objects, Andenken were linked to their body or were present in the sense that an item took on divine power. In this presence culture there was 'no clean distinction between the purely spiritual and the purely material' (Strathausen, 2006: 4).

Aachen and Trier pilgrims employed Andenken for the experiential threshold. This transcending was a commonly understood possibility as even those who could not attend recognized the potential power within an Andenken. Nelson Graburn has described souvenirs as 'tangible evidences of travel that are often shared with family and friends' (Graburn, 1989: 33). For Graburn, these objects are purchased in order to demonstrate where one traveled. However, for pilgrims writing to church officials - which included the bishop, cathedral canons, and parish priests in Trier and Aachen - Andenken were not solely about commemorating journeys, but, as will be shown in the

letters below, relayed commanding forces in their lives with the potential to heal bodies, repair careers, and bless interpersonal relationships.

Before turning to the letters, it is worth briefly noting that in both Trier and Aachen, pilgrims encountered a range of vendors and available objects. Pilgrims who failed to bring their own Andenken could purchase them in town, the most popular of these items included medals, rosaries, and images of the Coat (Trier'sche Zeitung, 1844). In 1874, in an article describing the chaos of the disembarking and embarking passengers at the Aachen train station, the Echo der Gegenwart newspaper noted the disorderly rush of pilgrims to the nearby vendors. Participants wanted to acquire last minute items such as pilgrim books and rosaries before heading home (DAA, PA 59).

In 1844 Trier, the pilgrims approached the Holy Coat by going up a flight of stairs behind the altar. At the bottom of the stairs pilgrims merged into a single file line. Participants had the opportunity to have an object touch the hem of the Coat. One contemporary described this process thus,

*on either side of the reliquary are stationed ecclesiastics, one of whom receives from each passer-by their rosaries or medals . . . brings them into immediate contact with the hem of the garment, and then returns them to the owners* (Plater, 1891: 86-87).

The practice of touching items to the relic continued through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Pilgrims who could not attend hoped that local clergy would help them have a similar encounter by sending back Andenken that touched relics.

To illustrate the scale of this practice, in 1933, Trier organizers had problems with the massive number of objects that pilgrims dropped and left behind as they went through the veneration line. Director Menke wrote to Trier cathedral canon Fuchs, who led the coordinating of the 1933 event, and asked him to come up with a new procession system. The items passersby left behind were causing an insolvable lost and found crisis for the local police. Pilgrims were bringing multiple objects to touch the Coat, but the quick tempo of the line meant that many Andenken were left behind, resulting in baskets full of displaced rosaries, medals and devotionals. Menke demanded new instructions be placed in the Catholic press organs throughout Germany, in the local churches, and on the plaza leading up to the cathedral line. Accordingly, pilgrims were instructed to bind or tie together their devotional objects (BATr, Abt. 90, Nr. 106: 17). Cathedral canon Fuchs complied with the suggestion

because it was important to keep the line moving through the cathedral as smoothly as possible.

### Long-distance Participation: Mail-Order Sacredness

Pilgrims first began sending mail-order requests for devotional items in the mid-nineteenth century and this practice became ever more popular into the 1930s. Writing in as a form of participation suggests that pilgrim understanding of the practice of pilgrimage was expanding. However, pilgrims did not think sending in letters was equal to attending. Indeed, the number of pilgrims at each festival increased by leaps and bounds during this time period. For example, about 500,000 people attended the 1844 Trier event and four times as many - about two million - traveled to Trier in 1933 (Paulinus: Die Tageszeitung zur Wallfahrt, 13 April 2012: 6).

Parallel to the rise in physical attendance was a widening of the correspondence participation base, as devout Catholics abroad could now access the German Rhineland sacred economy by writing to church authorities. Those who could not attend sought the same proximity to the relics as those who could - they wanted items that had physically touched the relics. Thus, within requests pilgrims explain their financial hardship or personal reasons for not being able to personally attend, even when letters were sent from nearby German-speaking areas such as Austria or Bavaria. In broad terms these petitions can be divided into two categories: material and spiritual. Material requests expected that possessing an Andenken would better one's worldly position and spiritual were to bring emotional healing.

Far and away the most commonly requested Andenken was a piece of relic silk, cloth that was used to wrap either the Trier or the Aachen relics (see Images 2 and 3). Each time church officials revealed the relics for veneration the silk they had been stored in was removed and used to make cards for pilgrims. Before putting the relics away at the end of an exhibition they were stored in new silk. Possessing a piece of this cloth was an honor. In 1860, a German Princess visited Aachen and was allowed to help display the relics to pilgrims from the outdoor gallery. Before she left Aachen, pilgrimage leadership gave her four pieces of the silk used to wrap the relics as a gift (DAA, PA 58: 22 Juli 1860). This same year, pieces of the cloth were sent out to bishops across Germany, including to Cologne, as a reminder of the pilgrimage (DAA, PA 58: 3 September 1860). In 1867, the mayor of Aachen asked for pieces of the relic silk for himself and his

Image 2: *Andenken* with relic silk, 1874



Source: © Domarchiv Aachen (DAA)

colleagues (DAA, PA 58: 30 Juli 1867). These requests and gifts reveal the high worth of the relic cloth to both civil and church authorities.

Laity also requested and received pieces of this silk. In 1874, H. Riedel of Aachen, asked for four pieces of the relic silk for his personal use. This same year J.N. Racke offered to buy new silk (for 15 Thalers) for the end of the pilgrimage in exchange for four small pieces of the cloth (DAA, PA 59: 22 Juli 1874). Similarly, Herr Mathey from Rensdorf was pleased to receive pieces of the cloth by mail post after his 1874 request (DAA, PA 59: 5 August 1874). Even after pilgrimages had concluded, the bishops and leadership received requests for pieces of relic silk. Agatha Miskowski, from Berlin, requested a piece of Trier cloth for her priest in 1936, three years after the 1933 Trier pilgrimage concluded. Miskowski explained that the priest's sister had sent him an Andenken that was touched to the Coat, and the priest treasured the gift. Cathedral canon Fuchs was able to comply with the request, but asked Miskowski to be content with only a very small piece because the cloth was almost all gone (BATr, Abt. 90, Nr. 128: 243-244).

**Image 3: Andenken with relic silk, 1888**

Source: Zentralbibliothek Aachen, 1888 Heiligtumsfahrt envelope © Zentralbibliothek Aachen

As mentioned previously, already in the 1840s, pilgrims who could not make the journey asked to participate via indirect contact with the Rhineland relics. For example, in 1845, a couple requested a picture of the Trier Coat to strengthen their eldest daughter (BATr, Abt. 91, Nr. 241: 170). This trend continued through the nineteenth century, Elisabeth, a self-described poor woman, assured the Aachen pilgrimage committee in 1881 that she only wanted pieces of the silk to help her grow closer to God. She wanted to ask for the pieces in person, but was too afraid. She hoped that her request would be granted, because obliging her would show that the power, grace, and light from Jesus were present in the pilgrimage (DAA, PA 60: 27 Juli 1881). For Birgid Rooney, of Castle Clayney, Ireland, the Trier relic was the last stage of a recovery from nervousness and other afflictions. Rooney previously spent over twenty days at Lourdes where she acquired an object she now sent to the bishop of Trier. Rooney expected 'to be restored to perfect health' after the sacred power of Lourdes was combined with that of Trier (BATr, Abt. 91, Nr. 249a.: 79). Pilgrims viewed the silk as a means to improve confidence, emotional well-being, and to

provide a link to the divine.

In the twentieth century, pilgrim interest in owning items that were physically near the relics, such as relic silk, greatly increased. For example, the nuns of Schwestern vom Armen Kinde Jesu asked an Aachen priest, Father Bellesheim for a piece of the silk in 1909. The sisters wanted as many Andenken with cloth as they could get for their 'numerous community' (DAA, PA 65: 7 Juli 1909). Eileen O'Harell from Dublin, wrote to Trier Bishop Korum in 1933:

*My brother and I are . . . most anxious to obtain some article that has touched the Relic of the Holy Coat. We feel so sure of good health if we can only succeed in getting some relic that has touched the Holy Coat. It is not possible for us to make the journey there, circumstances and illness prevent us. I trust my Lord Bishop that you will grant me this request. I enclose an offering of 1£ in thanks. (BATr, Abt. 90, Nr. 148: 205).*

Also in the twentieth century, as participants traversed ever greater distances so too did Andenken requests, which now came to Aachen and Trier from across the Atlantic, Asia, and across Europe.

One of the main pilgrim goals of mail-order Andenken was bodily healing. Rosina Benitz, a German speaker from Erie, Pennsylvania wrote to Trier in 1891 because she was plagued by headaches, the flu, and eye troubles, which she believed originated from an unnamed sin committed in 1848. Since returning to her faith she had heard about a series of miraculous healings at the 1844 Trier pilgrimage and hoped that if Bishop Korum would send her 2-3 Andenken it would help restore her relationship with God, and thus relieve her physical suffering (BATr, Abt. 91, Nr. 249a.: 15). Mrs. K. Kelly, from San Francisco, also asked for 'a card from the Holy Land Please have it blessed also pray for my Family.' (BATr, Abt. 91, Abt. 91, Nr. 249a.: 23). For Kelly, it was key that whatever the bishop sent be blessed on the Coat altar because the Andenken was for her deformed daughter. Mary Murphy, from Glasgow, Scotland in 1933, asked for a medal that touched the relic explaining, 'I am an invalid and would be very happy to receive such a relic.' (BATr, Abt. 90, Nr. 173: 190).

Germans also requested Andenken to aid in physical restoration. Margaretha Probst asked Bishop Korum to send a medal to Herr Benefiziat in Layern near Munich. Probst explained that Benefiziat had been lame on the right side of his body for three years and

could not make the trip. For Probst, the medal would help bring Benefiziat back into the fold of the Church, if only the Bishop would also pray for him at Mass (BATr, Abt. 91, Nr. 249a.: 71-73.).

James P. Molygan from Atalissa, Iowa, Muscatine County, USA, wrote to Weihbischof Fuchs in 1935 after he heard about the 1933 Trier pilgrimage. Molygan asked that they pray for him in Trier because he was out of work and had health problems:

*Kiss the Holy coat and make a novena to the Lord that I can get a good home of my own soon and get a good wife so i can have someone to care for me. Can you offer up a good mass to cure up this prostrate gland and blader trouble on me as i haft to beg how is your charity can you help me some can to cure me up in good health. Send me a bit of the holy coat so i can tuch it and kiss it. as it is a dogs life the way i haft get a long. So cure me up of this trouble i am a good catholic and Right by all. tuch and kiss the holy coat in my favor so i can get well so i can get a good study job of work at once in a good PLaCE and get good wages i want to get a good home of my own so i wont haft to work by the day all my life kiss and tuch the holy coat FOR me that i can get a good home soon (BATr, Abt. 90, Nr. 128: 272-274. Capitalization, spelling, and punctuation in original).*

Molygan's phonetic spelling, grammar, and punctuation suggest he had not completed school and was likely impoverished. Having lost his job and now his health he sought out divine intervention through the Trier Coat. He believed divine presence could be found in Trier. Fuchs was happy to oblige and prayed for Molygan during Mass, he also sent him a piece of the silk that was used to wrap the Coat between 1891 and 1933 (BATr, Abt. 90, Nr. 128: 275). Like Molygan, Fred Hallem from England, believed that acquiring an Andenken that contacted the relic would bring him work:

*be so kind to send me some small holy picture that had touch the Holy Coat and for me to receive Holy Communion on receiving it I feel I should get work (BATr, Abt. 90, Nr. 148: 221).*

These requests reveal how widely the Coat had become known and the hope that it represented for Catholics worldwide - a chance at a fresh start, a new job, and hope for a better future.

Petitioners often did not want the requested Andenken for themselves, but for friends or family. Maria-Magdalena Pfluzer, from Seifershan, asked for a

picture of the Trier relic to be touched to the Coat and sent to her in 1933. Pfluzer wanted the object for an unnamed man (BATr, Abt. 90, Nr. 128: 249, 'damit ich es demjenigen geben kann od. daß er es wenigstens in die Hand nimmt.'). She explained that she had already had many Masses said for this individual but they had not been successful (BATr, Abt. 90, Nr. 128: 249). In Pfluzer's letter it is not clear whether her loved one was suffering physically or spiritually, but she asked for discretion from the priest. Some Catholics understood the Trier Coat of Andenken as a path to convert their loved ones. John Hughes of Mobile, Alabama could not attend the pilgrimage, but wrote to Trier to request a

*little Relic a Chaplet or Crucifix that touched the Holy Garment [for] my Darling Wife who is not of our Faith. Pray for her that the Almighty God may soften her heart, convince her of her error and guide her Footsteps that she may be converted to our Holy Faith (BATr, Abt. 91, Nr. 249a.: 29).*

For Hughes, the Coat had the power to change his wife's Christian affiliation, just by being in proximity to her.

As the pilgrimage attendance expanded, the pilgrimage committee was not always able or willing to fulfill requests. In 1933, Milly Brosda from Nordhorn/Haan explained that she learned about the new pilgrimage from the Krefelder Zeitung. Brosda's mother had a rosary that was touched to the Trier relic, but her father lost it during World War I. Brosda asked if they could send a different rosary to the committee, have it touched to the Coat, and returned. In their response, the committee denied the request, noting that a large pilgrim group from the Hildesheim diocese was scheduled to visit Trier; it would be easier if Brosda sent the rosary with a trusted pilgrim in that group (BATr, Abt. 90, Nr. 128: 262-265.).

Not all pilgrims stated why they wanted the Andenken. Gillespie, a woman from Canada, posted an advertisement in the Catholic Record London, in which she requested Bishop Korum send her an item from the 1891 Trier pilgrimage (BATr, Abt. 91, Nr. 249a.: 14). Walburga Reinhart from Ingolstadt, Bayern also did not specify why she wanted an image. Reinhart could not attend because she had seven children and did not know anyone in Trier she could room with when she arrived (BATr, Abt. 91, Nr. 249a.: 75). In 1933, Sister Mary Zita, based in Cleveland, Ohio asked for permission to send in her own objects and promised to pray for Trier if she was obliged,

*Your Lordship this is the request will you please give me permission to send some goods*



*to be made up into scapulars that is the fine scapulars of the Sacred Passion of our blessed Lord. Will you dear good Bishop permit these pieces of goods to be touched to our Blessed Lord's tunic which He wore on his sacred Person and to other precious relics which you may have and I will promise I will pray for you every day* (BATr, Abt. 90, Nr. 128: 255).

The worship committee in Trier was more than happy to fulfill Sister Zita's request so long as she sent some money for the return shipping (BATr, Abt. 90, Nr. 128: 256). Zita's successful inquiry inspired the Ursuline sisters of Cleveland to send a medal and case to be touched to the Coat (BATr, Abt. 90, Nr. 125: 553-554).

For J.A. Menth, a first-generation child of two German immigrants to Cleveland, the Coat represented home, a link to the German-Catholic community left behind. Menth asked that Korum send him two Andenken, two rosaries, and two small crosses that touched the Coat for his parents. Menth's parents emigrated from Bausendorf, Kreis Wittlich, only 48 kilometers from Trier. Together, Menth's parents went to see the Coat twice in 1844, but now they lived in the US and could not attend the event (BATr, Abt. 91, Nr. 249a.: 45).

Some individuals requesting Andenken distributed the received goods. For example, Josef Fleck, in his request stated he had already received and distributed over 100 Andenken and that he had 80 more on the way from his friend in Trier (BATr, Abt. 91, Nr. 249 a.: 50-51). Fleck further requested they send him a picture of St. Helena for his church, so that he could remember his trip to Trier. Js. Smyth of Wine Tavern, Ireland was given 21 medals that touched the Coat in 1891. Smyth explained that after receiving the medals he was besieged by requests, from Jackman, a Franciscan priest; from his wife; four other priests; and nuns working in his community. Smyth apologized and asked for an additional 21 medals. In this correspondence it is clear that there was a demand for Rhineland Andenken and that these items were part of a larger, Europe-wide trade in remembrances. Smyth also mentions that he gave away some of the medals to the French nuns at St. Kestowed because they previously gave him water from Lourdes (BATr, Abt. 91, Nr. 249a.: 66-67). Unfortunately, the Smyth correspondence is an extremely rare glimpse into how Catholic objects could change hands in a trade-based sacred economy. J.B. Wijs, from Amsterdam, attended the 1909 Aachen event and wrote back when he got home to ask for a piece of the cloth used to wrap Mary's shroud. Wijs intended to give it to his sister for her twenty-fifth birthday (DAA, PA 65: 'Amsterdam, 22 Juli 1909'). Again, these letters suggest that

Catholics outside of Germany and France revered Andenken that were in contact with known relics or pilgrimage sites.

When Andenken were not distributed, sometimes Catholics made requests for whole groups who could not make the journey to Trier or Aachen. Friar Francis Jerome of Honesdale, Pennsylvania, explained in 1933:

*As I have read in American papers that your Lordship has this Sacred Relic (Holy Coat) enshrined in your Cathedral, so I thought by writing to you, we could obtain from your Lordship a particle of this Sacred Relic'.*

The acquisition of this piece of the Coat was not for Jerome himself but, 'for the veneration of the faithful.' Unfortunately for Jerome, the Pilgrimage Committee did not fully comply with his request, and instead offered to touch an object of his choosing to the Coat, so long as it arrived before the festival ended in August (BATr, Abt. 91, Nr. 128: 258).

Church leaders only touched devotional objects to the relics, and thereby regulated which physical items could convey the potential power of the artifacts. Fritz Winter wrote in August 1933 to the Trier officials and asked that they touch a draft of an important contract to the Coat. Winter made a solemn vow to God that he would help a penniless young person study theology if the contract came through and made it possible for him to pay for someone's schooling (BATr, Abt. 90, Nr. 128: 252). In their response the worship committee sent the unblest contract back, apologized, and said that they 'only touch Andacht objects (Andachtgegenstände) to the Holy Coat' (BATr, Abt. 90, Nr. 128: 252).

There was a shortage of relic silk and high demand in 1933, which helps explain the 1933 Committee preference to touch the Coat with objects which pilgrims sent in. As thanks to the 4,500 volunteers the Trier Pilgrimage Committee used the silk to make plaques commemorating each person's service to the community and church. Thus, when the Deutsche Mittelstandhilfe asked for silk in September, Fuchs informed them that after the 4,500 volunteer plaques, 'if any silk remains it is reserved for clergy and Holy Orders' (BATr, Abt. 90, Nr. 102: 152). As a quick aside, Bishop Bornewasser also issued images of himself to notable pilgrims. Thus, Bornewasser wrote to Father Hilterscheid in Zewen after the bishop read an article about a 96-year-old woman who had attended the 1844, 1891, and then the 1933 pilgrimages. As thanks for the woman's devotion to the Coat, Bornewasser was keen to send her a picture of himself, perhaps not her first choice of potential

Andenken (BATr, Abt. 90, Nr. 148: 124).

Even after the pilgrimages ended, potential pilgrims sent in requests for items that were touched to the Coat of Trier. In 1933, the Pilgrimage Committee responded to this problem by establishing a second-degree sacral proximity. This can best be seen in two requests sent from Catholics in England and Brazil. In November, two months after the closing ceremony, Helen Croft of Lancashire inquired about touching a piece of linen to the Coat because she could not afford to come to Germany in person (BATr, Abt. 90, Nr. 125: 562). Similarly, Yolanda Giordano from Campinas, near Sao Paulo, asked that Bishop Rudolph have mercy on her and send her a piece of the relic silk (BATr, Abt. 90, Nr. 125: 564). In response to these two requests, Trier officials stated that the Coat was put away and they did not know when it would next be revealed, even so, they were able to touch the sent materials to a piece of cloth that was used to wrap the Coat (BATr, Abt. 90, Nr. 125, 561: 565). Therefore, their Andenken were twice removed from the Coat, but still allowed those who could not personally visit Trier, and only heard about the event after the fact, access to the sacred economy.

### Conclusion

Andenken are a key part of the nineteenth and twentieth-century Catholic system of meaning. Both letter-writing and attending pilgrims understood their Andenken as spiritually powerful. They assigned unique meanings to their commemorative medals, rosaries, and images. The sources for this brief survey of the Andenken-centered sacred economy are limited, confined to those who took the time to actively write to officials in Trier or Aachen to request objects and the responses to these inquiries. Even though the authors of letters tended to be members of religious orders, sick, impoverished, or unemployed they were not the only recipients of official Andenken. As has been shown, bishops, aristocrats, and mayors also requested and/or accepted relic cloth and images.

Within these letters it is clear that pilgrims, both men and women, had great expectations for the Andenken and were convinced that objects brought into physical contact with the sacred, through a relic, could heal their bodies, repair their relationships, and improve their worldly position. In short, the objects were to be treasured, contained a divine presence, and became part of a pilgrim's religious worldview and practice. For Catholic petitioners, objects took on a sacrality upon contact with the Coat of Trier or the four relics of Aachen. Andenken, as understood by these correspondents, were not trinkets or souvenirs, but part

of the holy, a personal connection to the divine. In other words, the Andenken underwent a process of presentification for the pilgrims, in which participants understood themselves as being intellectually, spiritually, and bodily oriented toward the divine via their acquired items (Gumbrecht, 2004: 124).

Market forces did not control the sacred economy; instead, value within this system was determined by proximity to sacred sites, verification by clerical authorities, and the expectations of pilgrim participants, both those who went to Trier or Aachen and those who could not attend but wanted a physical connection to the relics. Thus, cloth that was used to wrap a relic for seven or thirty years was greatly prized, given to important pilgrims who could not attend, volunteers who sacrificed their time, and those in the most dire situations. The closer an item was to the sacred the greater its merit in the eyes of pilgrims and would-be pilgrims.

This above correspondence reveals an important aspect of pilgrim practices and expectations. Andenken allowed a pilgrim to experience the divine presence in the world; the act of touching an object to a relic had sacramental characteristics. What participants took home or had sent to them was a key component of the pilgrimage experience because it allowed pilgrims to possess a direct connection to Jesus, John the Baptist, or Mary. Future research should compare how different travelers view the items they purchase or acquire at pilgrimage sites. Do travelers who do not identify themselves as pilgrims, for example, place the same confidence in objects they collect at a holy site? Do tourists to non-pilgrimage sites also have transcendent hopes for the items they purchase? Historically, the sacred economy was not limited to letter-writers and included church hierarchy, vendors (see Image 4), and the pilgrims themselves. I will explore their roles in this exchange in my dissertation.

Finally, it is true that between 1832 and 1937 Andenken underwent some of the same transformations as souvenirs. Unfortunately, there was not space here to explore the fact that during this time the range of objects available for pilgrims to purchase as Andenken increased and there was a decline in homemade remembrances, nor to show how Rhineland clerics worked to define 'authentic' Andenken during this time. There was an increase in the selection of items available, and this also meant standardization, in the sense that pilgrims were less inclined to create their own objects to wear on the pilgrimage or to hang on their hat, or wall to commemorate the journey. Now they had easy access to affordable postcards and other

**Image 4: Selling *Andenken* in 1933**

Source: Bistumarchiv Trier, Abt. 100, Nr. 0004, Bd. 2.  
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celebratory items. Even here, though, *Andenken* were not equivalent to mundane souvenirs because clerics carefully regulated what was available to pilgrims and where vendors could set up their stalls. That aspect of the sacred economy, like the aesthetics of *Andenken*, is the subject of a different paper and also part of my forthcoming dissertation.<sup>12</sup>

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2 See 'Chapter 3: The Sacred Economy' in forthcoming dissertation, Skye Doney, *Moving Toward the Sacred: German Pilgrimage Practices 1832-1937* (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2014).