TABERNACLE SHRINES (1180–1400)
AS A EUROPEAN PHENOMENON: TYPES, SPREAD, SURVIVAL

LOS RETABLOS-TABERNÁCULO (1180-1400),
UN FENÓMENO EUROPEO: TIPOS, DIFUSIÓN, SUPERVIVENCIA

Justin Kroesen
Universitetsmuseet i Bergen
Justin.Kroesen@uib.no
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4141-4221

Peter Tångeberg
Independent scholar
peteriiitange@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5148-7272

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Abstract
Tabernacle shrines from the period 1180–1400 are rare today, and not a single one is entirely preserved with its original polychromy and in the context for which it was made. Most examples are found in Scandinavia, Italy, and the Iberian Peninsula, which indicates that such shrines were a European phenomenon. This is confirmed by isolated survivals found in intermediate locations in France, Germany, and Slovakia. The similarities between these objects from the north, center, and south of Europe enable us to follow their Europe-wide development. The one country that possesses by far the largest number of preserved tabernacle shrines is Sweden. This is why the present study refers to Swedish examples to identify European types. The first type is the ‘Appuna-type’ shrines, dating from c. 1200, that contain an early sculpture of the Sedes Sapientiae. The second group are shrines of the Fröskog-type, which are characterized by the presence of reliefs on the interiors of their wings. The third type, more vertical and of architectural character, is called the ‘Kil-type’ and had its largest spread during the fourteenth century. It was in the relative periphery of the continent, and in modest churches.
in isolated locations, that tabernacle shrines had the best chances of surviving. The fact that academic art history was not invented precisely there has largely prevented tabernacle shrines from making it into our art-historical handbooks to date.

**Keywords**
Medieval art, liturgy, altar, altarpiece, tabernacle, sculpture, reliefs, panel painting, Sweden.

**Resumen**
Los retablos-tabernáculo del período 1180-1400 son raros hoy en día, y ninguno se conserva entero, con su policromía original y en el contexto para el que fue producido. La mayoría de ejemplos se encuentran en Escandinavia, Italia y la península ibérica, lo que pone de manifiesto que se trataba de un fenómeno europeo. Esta dimensión viene confirmada por algunos ejemplos aislados en territorios intermedios, en Francia, Alemania y Eslovaquia. La similitud de las obras en el norte, centro y sur de Europa es tal que permite esbozar su desarrollo en términos generales. El país europeo que posee la mayor cantidad de retablos-tabernáculo conservados, es, con diferencia, Suecia. Es por esta razón que, en este estudio, nos referimos a ejemplos suecos para identificar tipologías europeas. El primero es el “tipo Appuna”, de alrededor de 1200, que contiene una escultura temprana de la *Sedes Sapientiae*. El segundo es el “tipo Fröskog”, que se caracteriza sobre todo por la presencia de relieves en el interior de las alas. El tercer tipo, más vertical y con marcado carácter arquitectónico, se denomina el “tipo Kil” y tuvo su mayor difusión en el siglo XIV. Fue en la relativa periferia del continente, y en iglesias modestas en localidades aisladas, donde los retablos-tabernáculo tuvieron las mayores probabilidades de sobrevivir. El hecho de que la Historia del Arte como disciplina académica no fuese escrita precisamente allí ha influido en que hayan permanecido poco estudiados hasta hoy en día.

**Palabras clave**
Arte medieval, liturgia, altar, retablo, tabernáculo, escultura, relieves, pintura sobre tabla, Suecia.
I. AN OVERLOOKED OBJECT TYPE

Existing literature on medieval altars and their decorations focuses almost exclusively on altarpieces or ‘retables’. This object type has come to dominate the aspect of the medieval altar to such an extent that ‘altar’ and ‘retable’ are often used as synonyms in various languages, particularly German. Altarpieces, including the widespread Antwerp triptychs, the imposing late Gothic carved Flügelaltäre of Germany and Austria, and the fine painted polyptychs of central Italy, have thus become part of the inner canon of medieval art history. Altar retables fill the medieval sections of some of the world’s greatest art galleries, including Berlin’s Gemäldegalerie, London’s Victoria and Albert Museum, and Florence’s Galleria degli Uffizi, and many beautiful books have been published about them (Limentani Virdis/Pietrogiovanna, 2002; Kahsnitz/Bunz, 2006; Boodt/Schäfer, 2007).

Other categories of altar decoration have remained conspicuously under-represented. An example is the oldest continuous form of altar furnishings, the canopy or baldachin, which has hardly been studied on a European level since the publication of Joseph Braun’s seminal work Der christliche Altar in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung in 1924. The same is true of altar frontals, among which the painted ones were the object of a more recent multi-disciplinary Norwegian research project (Plahter/Hohler/Morgan/Wichstrøm, eds, 2004). A common aspect of research in the above-mentioned categories is that they have generally been regarded as mere forerunners to the altar retable; canopies and frontals would have been replaced by triptychs or polyptychs as if these were the natural outcome of all developments (Kroesen, 2014a; Kroesen, 2014b). It has been suggested that canopies were physically ousted by the growing dimensions of altarpieces, while some frontals might have ‘jumped up’ to the top of the altar to be reused as retables (Kroesen/Schmidt, 2009, with bibliography).

Much in this rendering of things is problematic, for a number of reasons. First, canopies and baldachins were much more widespread than is often assumed, and they were sometimes successfully combined with fully-fledged altarpieces. Second, it is impossible to distinguish altar frontals formally from early altar retables, and it is almost always uncertain exactly if, why and when the former may have been moved. Moreover, frontals remained in vogue long after the retable had emerged, and a considerable number of cases are known where both were com-

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1 The spectacular Iberian ‘wall retables’ (such as in Toledo, Sevilla, and Oviedo cathedrals) have received conspicuously less attention. See Berg Sobré, 1989 and Kroesen, 2009.

2 Chapters on canopies and baldachins in vol. 2, pp. 185–275. See now also: Kroesen, 2019a.
bined (Schmidt, 2009). Third, retables themselves show a great variety of forms and types; for example, altarpieces without wings may have been much more common in Central and Northern Europe than is often acknowledged. Even more problematic is the fact that the pluriformity and multi-mediality of altar decorations is hardly ever taken into account. In many churches, it was wall paintings, stained glass windows and textiles rather than painted and sculptured panels that served as visual backgrounds to high- and side altars (Kroesen, 2014a).

Another category that, despite its European spread, has remained largely overlooked is the so-called tabernacle shrine. This is the most common name to designate a saint’s sculpture standing inside a cupboard that is equipped with a baldachin and moveable wings. Scandinavian authors including Karl Meinander in Finland (Meinander, 1908), Harry Fett in Norway (Fett, 1911) and Evert Wrangel in Sweden (Wrangel, 1915) were the first to study this object type in their respective countries. However, it was fully ignored in Joseph Braun’s earlier mentioned 1924 European survey. In 1967, Mojmir Frinta published a short but seminal article on what he called ‘the closing tabernacle’, followed by two pieces by Claude Lapaire on ‘retables à baldaquin’ and ‘retables à tabernacle polygonal’ in 1969 and 1972, respectively (Frinta, 1967; Lapaire, 1969; Lapaire, 1972). Over the last three decades, the most valuable contributions to the study of the subject have been on tabernacle shrines in Sweden (Tångeberg, 1989) and central Italy (Krüger, 1992), on their role as constituents in composite ‘altar ensembles’ (Fuchß, 1999), their relationship with early (winged) altarpieces in Germany (Wolf, 2002) and France (Le Pogam/Vivet-Peclet, eds, 2009), on Marian tabernacles in Scandinavia (Andersen, 2015), and, most recently, on tabernacle shrines in medieval Castile (Gutiérrez Baños, 2018).

There are various reasons for the relative silence about this type of medieval altar decoration. The first is the fact that scholarship never developed a proper technical term to designate such objects. In medieval texts, the object type cannot be easily retrieved, since the word *tabernaculum* could have more than one meaning, including that of ‘sacrament house’ – the receptacle in which the Host was stored. The medieval Icelandic description of sculptures standing ‘in husi oc hurðum’ (in

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3 This is best evidenced by stone retables in France whose study remains a desideratum to date, as well as by fourteenth-century altarpieces preserved in Sweden, see Tångeberg, 2005.

4 It was in the framework of Gutiérrez Baños’s research project entitled ‘Retablos-tabernáculo de la Baja Edad Media en la Corona de Castilla: estudio, documentación y difusión’ that the international symposium The Saint Enshrined: European Tabernacle-altarpieces, c. 1150–1400 took place in Valladolid on 7–8 June, 2019, the fruits of which are published in the present volume.
a little house with doors) found in the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century máldagar inventories is perhaps the most explicit and clearest of all (Wallem, 1910, p. 44). For medievals, the shrine was certainly the least interesting since it was its holy contents that mattered most. ‘Tabernacle shrine’ is the most commonly used term in scholarly literature, along with ‘closing tabernacle’; ‘Tabernakelschrein’ and ‘Baldachin-retabel’ in German, while in that language ‘Turmretabel’ (tower retable) has also been proposed (Steinmetz, 1995). The French usually speak of ‘retable à baldaquin’, while Spanish uses ‘retablo-tabernáculo’ and also has the term ‘retablo-templete’. Most Scandinavian authors use the short but accurate terms ‘helgonskåp’ (Swedish) and ‘helgenskap’ (Norwegian, Danish) meaning ‘saint’s cupboard’. For the sake of clarity, this article will use the most widespread term ‘tabernacle shrine’.

Another reason for the oblivion surrounding medieval tabernacle shrines as altar decorations is their relatively poor survival. Today, most medieval shrines survive in a severely damaged or even fragmentary state. Many wings are lost, as well as their original carved or painted decorations; many crownings are now missing; and figures and shrines have often been moved or overpainted. Almost none of the over seventy Italian Marian shrines listed by Klaus Krüger in his pioneering study of 1992 has retained its wings (Krüger, 1992, pp. 219–230). While the situation is somewhat less dramatic in Scandinavia and Spain, there too, hardly a single tabernacle shrine is preserved in its entirety. This is aptly expressed by the title of Fernando Gutiérrez Baños’s recent survey of medieval tabernacle shrines in Castile: ‘pasear entre ruinas’ (walking among ruins [of what once was]) (Gutiérrez Baños, 2018).

In addition, not a single tabernacle shrine from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries is preserved entirely in situ inside a medieval church anywhere in Europe. Perhaps the closest is the Marian shrine from around 1290–1300 in the crypt of the church of Notre-Dame de l’Assomption at Mont-devant-Sassey on the river Meuse in northern France (Fig. 1). Here, the height of the shrine perfectly matches its spatial setting under the vaults and the base fits precisely behind the removable stone slab (ara) to fill the depth of the altar mensa. However, the wings are now lost, although they can still be recognized on old photographs (Locatelli/Pousset, 2014). By far the most tabernacle shrines are decontextualized as a result of them having been moved around, hidden and rediscovered. In Sweden, for example, most tabernacle shrines are now in churches that were rebuilt after the Middle Ages, while many others were transferred to museums.\footnote{The collections of the State Historical Museum (Statens Historiska Museet) in Stockholm include more tabernacle shrines than any other European museum.}
Another aspect that has caused the oblivion of this category of altar decorations is the uneven spread of examples across the continent. Most early tabernacle shrines are preserved in central Italy (Tuscany, Umbria, Latium, Abruzzo), northern Spain (Castile, the Basque Country and Catalonia) and Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden and Finland). It was here, in the relative periphery of the continent, that they clearly had the best chances to survive, sheltered, in many instances, by mountainous environments. The seclusion of places that are remote and hard to access, a certain degree of poverty, and, by consequence, the low turnover of artistic renewal have, together, resulted in the over-average survival of tabernacles in these regions. The relative rarity of extant tabernacle shrines in the countries where academic art history was largely written – Germany, France and Britain – has certainly also contributed to the research bias of largely ignoring tabernacle shrines as medieval altar decorations.\(^6\)

The European country that preserves by far the richest stock of medieval tabernacle shrines is Sweden, which possesses about 35 per cent of all extant examples in Europe: in an ongoing research project we have been able to register 495 medieval tabernacle shrines (up until around 1530) in all of Western Europe, of which c. 170 are found in Sweden.\(^7\) This means that, contrary to what is often believed, many shrines were maintained in churches through the Lutheran Reformation.\(^8\) Moreover, the Nordic country possesses some of the best specimens of all types of shrines that can be distinguished based on their date, number of doors, ground plans, etc. For these reasons, it can be stated that Swedish tabernacle shrines are a European phenomenon, and this is why in our project we have named each type after its best Swedish representative. Among the early shrines from the period between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, we distinguish the ‘Appuna type’, the ‘Fröskog type’ and the ‘Kil type’. Common aspects to all three types are a more or less square ground plan and the presence of four hinged doors, of which the two narrow outer ones together covered the front of the shrine.\(^9\)

\(^6\) Typically, an early researcher of medieval altar decorations, Eberhard Hempel, considered the tabernacle shrine as a ‘nordisches Gebilde’ (a nordic phenomenon), see Hempel, 1938, p. 140. On their survival in the north and south, see now Sureda i Jubany, 2019, pp. 53–55.

\(^7\) Our research project, which is funded by the Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation (San Francisco, USA) and the Böckler-Mare-Balticum-Stiftung (Bad Homburg, Germany), was started in 2015. The book with the results will be published in 2021.

\(^8\) For this topic, see Kroesen, 2018.

\(^9\) In this article only those shrines are discussed that are completely preserved or can be reconstructed. A small number of Italian shrines from the fourteenth century with only two doors or polygonal groundplans have not been taken into account.
2. THE APPUNA TYPE

The Appuna type, the earliest of the three mentioned types, was in vogue between c. 1180 and c. 1250. It is named after the enthroned Virgin and Child from c. 1180–1200 that originates from Appuna (Östergötland) and is now preserved in the State Historical Museum in Stockholm (Fig. 2).\(^\text{10}\) Characteristic features include the strictly frontal pose of the Mother and Child and the shape of the throne with rounded posts and knobs (Andersson, 1975, p. 11). Behind the throne is a 117 cm tall back panel or ‘dossal’ that ends in a pointed gable. Preserved paint fragments on the sculpture and the panel clearly indicate that both originally belonged together, as is further confirmed by the fact that the back posts of the throne are flattened in order to make them fit better to the dossal (Tångeberg, 1989, p. 33).\(^\text{11}\) At the backside of the panel are four rectangular notches, two on each side, that remind one of the presence of hinges. This indicates the former existence of a shrine with folding doors, two wider shutters covering the sides and two narrower ones that together covered the front.\(^\text{12}\) Wooden pins at the top of the dossal indicate that there was originally a baldachin. While its shape is unknown, the pointed back gable would suggest a saddle roof or perhaps a composite form of two crossing saddle roofs. Traces of nails at the bottom of the throne indicate that it rested on a pedestal.

The tabernacle shrine from Appuna is the earliest of its kind in Sweden and one of the oldest examples in Europe. By far the most and the closest parallels are found in Italy, but none is better preserved; therefore, the shape of the baldachins of the Appuna type must remain unclear. Of some seventy-three Italian Madonna shrines listed by Klaus Krüger, around sixty-five are dated to around 1200 or the first half of the thirteenth century.\(^\text{13}\) These Italian shrines show a number of striking similarities to the example from Appuna, including the four hinges that are mostly fixed at the backside of the dossal. Only about 10 per cent of the Italian Appuna shrines are preserved to a degree that allows for a general reconstruction. Among the best survivals is a Marian shrine of Umbrian origins from

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\(^\text{10}\) Stockholm, Statens Historiska Museum, inv. nr SHM 7890.

\(^\text{11}\) The same feature is also found in other contemporary Virgins including the famous Viklau Madonna in the same museum, inv. nr SHM 18951.

\(^\text{12}\) Aron Andersson (Andersson, 1975, p. 11) described these features without concluding that this makes the Appuna shrine the oldest known example of a tabernacle shrine, a fact that was first acknowledged by Norberg, 1939, pp. 85–86.

\(^\text{13}\) Krüger highlighted the fact that the Italian shrines represent a type that was spread over large parts of Europe, see Krüger, 1992, p. 19.
1200–1220, now preserved in the Bavarian National Museum in Munich (Fig. 3) (Krüger, 1992, p. 225). The Virgin sits before a dossal (h. 147 cm), the front of which is decorated with a painted pattern of yellow circles filled with birds and fantastic creatures on a reddish background. Traces of a saddle roof along the upper rim show that the sculpture was originally protected by a baldachin.

The Virgin and Child from Appuna represent a type of the Mother of God enthroned that is found throughout Scandinavia, all the way up to Finland and Iceland, as well as in western Germany and in the southern Netherlands (Kunz, 2007). There are no reasons to believe that Appuna should have been an exception, so that tabernacle shrines may be assumed to have known a considerable spread as early as the late twelfth century. In Sweden, besides Appuna, the only contemporary Virgins that preserve parts of their back panels are found in Tveta (Södermanland) and Hilleshög (Uppland). In Norway, a late-twelfth-century wing, now kept at the University Museum in Bergen, belonged to a shrine that probably contained the Virgin from Urnes (Vestland) from around the same date preserved in the same museum. Arches in low relief divide its surface (h. 129 cm) into four fields that seem to have been filled with a combination of paintings (above) and reliefs (below) (Blindheim, 1993; Andersen, 2015, p. 171).

Although most Appuna shrines hold (or held) a sculpture of the Virgin and Child, some contain other saints. In Näsby (Småland, Sweden) we find an enthroned bishop (St Nicholas?) with a hinged dossal (h. 92 cm) of the same type as in Appuna. Another enshrined bishop, originally from Edestad (Blekinge, Sweden) and now kept at the Blekinge Museum in Karlskrona, marks the transition to the second type (Fröskog, see below) and can be dated to c. 1230 (Fig. 4). The pointed ending of the back panel (h. 143 cm) corresponds to the shrine from Appuna; its saddle roof with a trefoil arch spared out from the gabled front and round arches from the sides may provide an impression of what the baldachins of many other Appuna shrines could have looked like. The Edestad shrine has preserved one of its doors that ends in a round arch, corresponding to the side of the baldachin. Carved out from the inside of the door are two trefoil-arched niches.

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14 Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, inv. nr MA 4054.
16 Bergen, Universitetsmuseet i Bergen, inv. nrs MA 297b (shrine door), MA 46 (Virgin), and several smaller fragments.
17 Karlskrona, Blekinge museum, inv. nr 1246.
that once held relief scenes, now lost; at the top sits a lunette. Other than in Appuna, the hinges are attached not at the back but to the edges of the dossal.

3. THE FRÖSKOG TYPE

The (original) presence of reliefs on the insides of the door of the Edestad shrine constitutes the most characteristic feature of the second type, called the Fröskog type after the Marian shrine (h. 170 cm) from that village in Dalsland, western Sweden, now preserved in the State Historical Museum in Stockholm (Fig. 5) (Andersson, 1975, p. 28). Another shared feature of the Edestad and Fröskog shrines is the incised decoration of the dossal with carved rhombs and often also a halo. The Fröskog shrine originated in the second half of the thirteenth century; apart from the vanished left outer door, all elements are preserved; the present polychromy is Baroque. The insides of the doors contain reliefs showing five scenes from the life of the Virgin and the youth of Christ: the Annunciation, Visitation, Adoration of the Magi, the Announcement to the Shepherds and the Presentation in the Temple. All figures are framed by trefoil arches with architectural crownings. The equally trefoil-shaped lunettes at the top, filled with angels’ busts, correspond with the sides of the flat-topped baldachin that is supported at the front by two (renewed) slender columns. The throne stands on a pedestal decorated with arched openings resting on a square base.

Shrines and shrine parts with similar characteristics – origins in the second half of the thirteenth century, square ground plans, flat-topped baldachins, dossals with carved rhombs, four doors with reliefs set in niches – are preserved from twenty-three churches in Sweden. Of these, only four are more or less entirely preserved. The Marian shrine in Jällby (Västergötland) is remarkable for its small dimensions, measuring only 85 cm in height; the only lacking element here is the pedestal. In Norra Ny (Värmland), carved rhombs are not only found on the dossal (h. 152 cm) but also inside the niches on the only preserved wing, the narrow outer shutter on the left side (the one on the right is a modern copy). The baldachin was originally crowned by a painted church model kept in the same church (Lange, 1994).

From the shrine in Dädesjö (Småland), only the reliefs from the trefoil-arched niches inside the doors are missing (Fig. 6). The shrine contains an older sculp-

18 Stockholm, Statens Historiska Museet, inv. nr SHM 14965.
tุre of St Olaf enthroned from c. 1200. The baldachin with trefoil arches on all sides is crowned by attached slats with (damaged) crenellations; the dossal (h. 162 cm) does not feature the usual chequered decorations. The shrine stands on the southern side altar in the nave of the church, which may well be its original setting. The Marian shrine in Glava (Värmland), now without wings and with a renewed baldachin, is remarkable for its size: it measures over two meters in height and must have spanned a width of c. 215 cm when opened, which leaves the high altar in the chancel of the vanished medieval church to which it most probably belonged as the shrine’s only plausible location.19

Tabernacle shrines of the Fröskog type have been preserved in all Nordic countries. Strikingly similar to the Fröskog shrine is the one from Urjala (Tavastia, Finland) which is now preserved at the National Museum of Finland in Helsinki (Fig. 7).20 Dating from the last quarter of the thirteenth century, it survives intact except for the right outer door.21 As in Norra Ny, the back panel (h. 121 cm) and the niches inside the wings are all decorated with carved rhombs. The sides of the flat-topped baldachin are filled with coarsely carved decorations in architectural shapes. When opened, the Urjala shrine largely featured the same iconographical programme as the Fröskog shrine.22 The same is true of the tabernacle shrine in Kumlinge (Åland, Finland) from 1250–1275, of which only the dossal and the four doors are preserved. The insides of the doors have trefoil niches containing inserted reliefs, the placement of which has been altered over time. Like the shrine from Fröskog, the decorative pattern of incised rhombs has remained limited to the front of the dossal.

In Iceland, one Marian shrine has been preserved, from the (demolished) church at Múli on the north coast and now kept at the National Museum in Copenhagen. It has a height of 145 cm and can be dated to the second half of the thirteenth century (Fig. 8).23 Since there is no suitable wood found in Iceland, the shrine was probably imported ready-made from elsewhere, most likely Norway (Trondheim?), to which the island belonged politically, culturally and ecclesi-

19 The small medieval wooden church of Glava was demolished in the eighteenth century but excavated in 1941. On the question of Marian tabernacle shrines on high altars, see the chapter by Stephan Kuhn in this volume.
20 Helsinki, Suomen kansallismuseo, inv. nr KM 4563:1.
21 The Virgin and Child were restyled as St Anne and the Virgin during the late Middle Ages. The similarities between the Fröskog and Urjala shrines were already observed by Meinander, 1908, pp. 95–97.
22 Some individual figures are now missing.
atically during this period. The Virgin and Child are seated under a flat-topped canopy with a trefoil arch at the front and round arches on the sides to which the upper endings of the four wings correspond. The shutters are filled with niches built up from small columns and arches, all of the reliefs from which have been lost. Although the use of pinewood for the sculpture and the tabernacle makes a Norwegian origin most plausible, the Virgin shows a strong resemblance to other contemporary Marian figures around the North Sea, including examples from the Low Countries, France and England.

A rich stock of tabernacle shrines of the Fröskog type is found in Norway, where fifteen examples have survived, although nowhere in their entirety (Andersen, in this volume). The shrines in Hedalen and Reinli (Oppland), both dating from 1250–1275, can be more or less reconstructed (Stein, 2010, pp. 58–90). In Hedalen, the Virgin is preserved together with the back panel (h. 162 cm), four wings with trefoil niches and a painted church model that served as a crowning (Fig. 4 Kuhn, in this volume). While the Virgin and Child and the church model have kept their original polychromy, the wings were deprived of their relief scenes, repainted in the Baroque style and used as a fixed retable together with a large crucifix. The Virgin and the church model are kept separately in the church. From the shrine in Reinli only the four wings and the painted church model survive. As in Hedalen, the wings have lost their reliefs and were repainted to be used as an altarpiece. The church models from Hedalen and Reinli are strikingly elaborate and greatly contributed to the monumentality of the shrines; the total height of the Hedalen shrine is estimated to have been c. 3.5 m (Kollandsrud, 2018, p. 25). When opened, both structures must have dominated the chancel of the modestly-sized stave churches (Kuhn, in this volume).

A third Norwegian Marian shrine of the same type, originally from Hove/Vik (Vestland) and now preserved at the University Museum of Bergen, has been dated to 1230–1240 (Fig. 7 Kuhn, in this volume) (Kaland, 1973; Blindheim, 2004, pp. 48–49). The lower part of the Virgin and the shrine (including the pedestal) were sawn off (the actual height is 125 cm), and the wings are now missing. Remarkably, not only are the Virgin and Child largely gilded, but the baldachin is also entirely covered with ‘imitation gold’ (silver with a glaze). Unn Plahter has pointed at the striking similarity between the precious Hove Virgin

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24 For a recent survey, see Andersen, 2015.
25 The church model is now kept at the Kulturhistorisk Museum of the University of Oslo, inv. nr C 7292.
26 Bergen, Universitetsmuseet i Bergen, inv. nr MA 27.
and the contemporary sculpture known as Notre-Dame des Miracles in the cathedral of Saint-Omer in northern France (Pas-de-Calais), which is historically a part of Flanders (Plahter, 2014). It may be assumed that this sculpture, whose present polychromy dates from the nineteenth century, was also set in a tabernacle shrine that was subsequently lost. Although it cannot be ruled out that the enshrined ‘Hove Madonna’ originated in Norway, it seems more likely that she was produced in northern France or Flanders and then exported to Norway (Kroesen, 2019b).

Other Norwegian shrines have been connected to England on stylistic grounds. An example is the enshrined Virgin from Dal (Telemark) that dates from c. 1260. The small shrine, with a height of only 87 cm (to which a crowning church model should possibly be added), has a flat canopy and has lost its wings. Under the canopy sits a remarkably shallow sculpture of the Virgin and Child, in which Unn Plahter and David Park observed ‘unmistakably English features’ (Plahter/Park, 2002, p. 63). Similar characteristics are found in a Virgin and Child from Giske (Møre og Romsdal) from the end of the thirteenth century, now preserved at the University Museum of Bergen; that museum also holds a sizeable shrine (h. 165 cm) from the same church, now without wings, to which the sculpture probably belonged (Bendixen, 1911, p. 11). The partially preserved ceiling under the baldachin features a circle with a sun and moon; similar motifs are found in the earlier mentioned shrines from Hove (a crescent and ten stars) and Dal (a five-pointed sun or star in a circle) (Kollandsrud, 2018, pp. 234–235). If these Norwegian examples were indeed imported from overseas, this would provide a rare glimpse of tabernacle shrines in their respective countries of origin, where no contemporary parallels survive. The same is true should they have been made in Norway; in that case, they clearly reflect the reception of foreign stylistic influences.

Examples found further south, in Italy and Spain, illustrate the spread of the Fröskog type across the European continent. The church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Alatri (Latium, Italy) possesses a seated Madonna and four large wings (h. 155 cm) with twelve relief scenes shown on the insides (Fig. 1 Pasqualetti, in this volume). These shrine parts are generally dated to 1225–1250 (Krüger, 1992, p. 219). Strikingly, the iconographical programme largely follows the same pattern as in the Nordic examples, with the Annunciation, Visitation and the Adoration of the Magi shown on the left wings. The enthroned Virgin and Child rest on a

27 Sculpture and shrine: Bergen, Universitetsmuseet i Bergen, inv. nr MA 334 a-b.
pedestal with openings at the bottom that are reminiscent of the same element in Fröskog. Of a second Italian tabernacle shrine of the Fröskog type, originating from St Stephen’s church in Aosta (Valle d’Aosta) and now in the Turin City Museum of Art, only the four relief wings (h. 100 cm) survive. However, the style of these carvings suggests later origins, possibly during the first half of the fourteenth century (Andersen, 2015, p. 182).

The best preserved tabernacle shrine of the Fröskog type in the Iberian Peninsula is the imposing example from Castildelgado (Burgos province) preserved in the Frederic Marès Museum in Barcelona, while the Virgin and Child are still in situ in the parish church of this Castilian village (Fig. 10 Gutiérrez Baños, in this volume) (Lapaire, 1969, pp. 174–175, 187; Krüger, 1992, p. 19; Yarza Luaces, 1991, pp. 393–394). The shrine measures 203 cm from the base to the top and can be dated to around 1300. The baldachin is composed of three pointed gables decorated with crockets and openwork rose windows. Below are wide openings filled with trefoil arches carved in the round. On the insides of the four wings are twelve relief niches showing scenes from the Nativity cycle with the left wings again featuring the Visitation (above) and the Adoration of the Magi (bottom).

A striking feature is that the niches and reliefs are monolithically carved from the wooden planks. Four surviving wings of a Marian shrine in Yurre/Iurre (Álava province, the Basque Country) are similar in size (h. 191 cm), style and iconography to those from Castildelgado. However, here the reliefs are carved separately and inserted in the niches (Franco Mata, 2007).

Of a number of Castilian Marian shrines of the Fröskog type, only the wings survive (Gutiérrez Baños, in this volume). These include three panels (h. 105 cm) from the so-called Wildenstein altarpiece dating from c. 1300 and now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (The Cloisters), from which all reliefs are lost from the insides (Gutiérrez Baños, 2018). These do survive inside four shrine wings (h. 139 cm) dating from c. 1320 that were formerly part of the John D. Rockefeller collection and are now known as the ‘Chiale altarpiece’ (Mor, 2016). Both the Wildenstein and the Chiale wings carry paintings on the outsides, showing Passion scenes (Wildenstein) and portraits of Sts Peter and Paul (Chiale), and both with castles and lions (the heraldry of the kingdom of Castile-León) on the edges.

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28 Turin, Museo civico d’arte antica, inv. nr 1050/L.
29 The parallel between Fröskog, Uurjala and Castildelgado is also observed in Kroesen/Leeflang/Sureda, 2019a, p. 13.
Further east, in Catalonia, in 2014, important parts of a tabernacle shrine of the Fröskog type were discovered in Santa Maria de Cap d’Aran in Tredòs, in the Pyrenean Aran Valley. These include a dossal, a wing and a number of microarchitecture fragments (Velasco González/Ros Barbosa/Gràcia Tarragona, 2013-14; Velasco González, in this volume). The reconstruction of this Catalan shrine was carried out with the help of Scandinavian parallels, which is illustrative of the similarities between all Fröskog shrines found across Europe. Four further wings (h. 145 cm) with similar characteristics from an unknown church in Catalonia are now preserved in the National Museum of Catalan Art in Barcelona. These originated around 1330–1340 and feature a combination of carved (below) and painted (above) representations perhaps similar to the above-mentioned shrine door from Norwegian Urnes.

Two thirteenth-century shrines have baldachins that are carved from a single piece of wood. The first one is a tabernacle shrine (h. 180 cm) from Högsrum (Öland, Sweden) that dates from c. 1250 and is now preserved in the State Historical Museum in Stockholm (Fig. 9). The raised centre is surrounded by crocketed arches and finials at the corners. The second example, the earlier mentioned Marian shrine in Mont-devant-Sassey near Verdun (Meuse, France), is even entirely carved out of one piece of oak; the base, back panel and baldachin together possess a height of 214 cm (Fig. 1). While the Virgin and Child may date back to the mid-twelfth century, this enclosure has been dendrochronologically dated to 1290–1300 (Locatelli/Pousset, 2014). The baldachin (h. 108 cm) is covered by two crossed saddleback roofs supporting a square tower with a groin vault beneath. Applied elements include corner turrets and crocketed openwork traceries at the front and side gables. A historical photograph from the beginning of the twentieth century shows the shrine still in possession of two of its wings with niches for carved scenes under trefoil arches on the insides.

31 The shrine is believed to have held a seated deacon preserved in the Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya in Barcelona, inv. nr MNAC 3925.
32 Barcelona, Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya, inv. nrs MNAC 9780–9783.
33 Stockholm, Statens Historiska Museet, inv. nr SHM 19663.
34 It was established that the tree (with a diameter of c. 75 cm) from which the shrine was carved had fallen east of Paris between 1272 and 1281. The Virgin and Child are a copy of the original now in the Musée de la Princerie in nearby Verdun. On this figure, see Forsyth, 1972, p. 51 (and footnote 68).
4. THE KIL TYPE

The baldachins of the youngest Fröskog shrines discussed, including Castildelgado and Mont-devant-Sassey, stand out for their architectural appearance. This feature would become a characteristic aspect of tabernacle shrines after 1300. They thus announce the rise of a new, more slender type of tabernacle shrine that would remain in vogue during much of the fourteenth century. It usually houses a standing figure and is mostly equipped with wings in the shape of flat painted panels. In Sweden, this type is epitomized by the shrine in Kil (Närke) from c. 1350 (Tängeberg, 1989, p. 37). Measuring 202 cm in height, it contains an unidentified standing apostle and is marked by a strong vertical thrust. Of the four wings only the wider one on the right side survives, decorated with (heavily worn-off) secondary paintings divided over two registers. The baldachin is composed of four pointed gables lined with crocketed decorative slats and round arches at the bottom.

The baldachin gables of Castildelgado and Mont-devant-Sassey are pierced through with traceries – rose windows in the first and openwork wimpergs in the latter – and both have round-carved trefoil arches inside the openings below. The same characteristics recur in several Swedish shrines from the first half of the fourteenth century. An example containing the enthroned St Olaf in Tidersrum (Östergötland) has a height of 209 cm and was dated by dendrochronology to 1320–1330. The construction of this shrine is strongly reminiscent of Mont-devant-Sassey, with its cross-saddle roof carrying a painted square tower at the crossing and inserted corner turrets. A Marian shrine of the same type from c. 1340–1350 originally belonged to the church at Ny (Värmland) and is now preserved in the Såguddens museum in Arvika. Its back panel (h. 162 cm) ends in a pointed gable, the form of which corresponds with those at the front and sides. All gables except for the one at the rear are pierced with rose windows containing quatrefoils on the sides (the one at the front is damaged).

Similar characteristics are found in the shrine from Vanaja (Tavastia, Finland), which houses a sculpture of St Olaf enthroned. It dates from around 1320

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35 The painted rosettes on the base and the baldachin, the rhombs and nimbus on the dossal and the angels with banderoles on the gables were all added in the late Middle Ages.
36 Research conducted by the Östergötlands museum in Linköping (Sweden). It is not entirely certain if the shrine and the figure originally belonged together.
37 Arvika, Såguddens museum, inv. nr 385.
38 The fact that the front gable is higher and the back gable lower than those on the sides makes it unlikely that the baldachin ever had a roof.
and is now preserved in the National Museum of Finland in Helsinki (Fig. 11).³⁹ The shrine, with a height of 170 cm, has a cross-shaped baldachin covered with saddle roofs with crocketed slats at the front gable. Its front rests on two slender columns with finely carved bases and capitals and inside is an elaborate eight-part ribbed vault with a round disc at the apex. Three sides of the shrine have lancet openings lined with round-carved pointed trefoil arches that reinforce its architectural appearance. The shrine from Vanaja still possesses the inner pair of originally four wings; as in Swedish Kil, these are carried out as flat wooden panels and here too, the paintings have almost fully vanished.

The European spread of the Kil type is illustrated by examples from Slovakia and Germany. The first one, dating from c. 1300, originally belonged to the church of Vojňany (Spiš, Slovakia) and is now preserved in the National Gallery of Slovakia in Bratislava (Fig. 12).⁴⁰ It measures 148 cm in height; the figure it contained — probably representing the Virgin and Child — is now lost. The front and side gables of the baldachin are decorated with crocketed slats and their architectural appearance is reinforced by painted black windows on a white background, a motif that is also found on several thirteenth-century shrines from Norway. The baldachin is supported at the front by two (renewed) thin columns. The relief decorations on the insides of the doors — standing figures of two unidentified female saints on the inner doors (St Agnes on the left?) and Sts Peter and Paul on the outer ones — are still reminiscent of the Fröskog type, although here they represent individual saints rather than narrative scenes.

A now wingless shrine with a statue of St Pancras from Steinkirchen (Brandenburg, Germany) dating from c. 1300 is preserved in the Bode Museum in Berlin (Fig. 1 Kemperdick, in this volume) (Kunz, 2014, pp. 219–227).⁴¹ It measures 175 cm in height and has a baldachin that rests on two slender columns with bases and capitals at the front. While there are trefoil arches in the openings on the sides, the round-arched opening at the front is filled with a round-carved trefoil arch, as in the above-mentioned contemporary examples from Tidersrum, Vanaja, Mont-devant-Sassey and Castildelgado. Other than in those cases, however, the ground plan of the German shrine is not more or less square but rectangular,

³⁹ Helsinki, Suomen kansallismuseo, inv. nr KM 5039:1.
⁴⁰ Bratislava, Slovenská Národná Galéria, inv. nr P 131–134. Dates suggested for this object vary from c. 1260 to the first half of the fourteenth century. Comparison with other shrines of a similar type makes the mentioned date around 1300 most plausible.
⁴¹ Berlin, Bodemuseum, inv. nr 3198. The actual paintings found on the shrine and figure are late medieval.
and its baldachin is flat-topped. An architectural feature is added by the crenellations that line the top of the shrine.

A similarly shaped baldachin is found in a shrine from an unknown church in the province of Huesca (Aragon, Spain), now preserved in the National Museum of Catalan Art in Barcelona (Fig. 17 Velasco González, in this volume) (Frinta, 1967, p. 100; Krüger, 1992, p. 24; Favà Monllau, 2019; Velasco González, in this volume). It is relatively small (h. 122 cm) and can be dated to the second quarter of the fourteenth century. As in Steinkirchen, this shrine also holds a standing figure – in this case St Nicholas – and here too the front of the baldachin is supported by two slender columns while the top is decorated with crenellations. The arches are filled with round-carved traceries of five-lobed arches at the front and three-lobed ones on both sides. The painted rhomb pattern on the back panel reminds of the Fröskog shrines, while the flat painted wings correspond with the Kil type. Only the two wide inner shutters are preserved, showing four scenes from the life of St Nicholas, separated by text bands.

Two fourteenth-century examples from the Basque Country, both now without wings, show that tabernacle shrines with a vertical thrust and gabled baldachins also spread further west on the Iberian Peninsula. The example in Villamanca (Álava province), dating from c. 1330, is relatively high (h. 174 cm) and narrow and holds a figure of the standing apostle James the Greater (Fig. 13) (Portilla Vitoria, 1995, p. 855; Gutiérrez Baños, 2018, p. 46). The three gables of the baldachin, which rests on slim round columns at the front, are decorated with rosettes on a red background and crowned with pointed crockets. Of a contemporary shrine from Gazeta in the same province and now kept in the Diocesan Museum of Sacred Art in Vitoria/Gasteiz, only the baldachin and part of the back panel survive (López de Ocáriz/Sáenz Pascual/García Maudes, 2006; Gutiérrez Baños, 2018, p. 51). The Gazeta shrine closely resembles the one in Villamanca, but here only one of the rosetted side gables is preserved while the front carries the Face of Christ. The ceiling features a painted star, a motif that is also found in the above-mentioned shrine from Norwegian Dal.

The Diocesan Museum in Donostia/San Sebastián possesses a fourteenth-century shrine from Arrasate/Mondragón (Gipuzkoa province) containing a

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42 Barcelona, Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya, inv. nr MNAC 24041.
43 Vitoria, Museo Diocesano de Arte Sacro/Elizbarrutiko Arte Sakratuaren Museoa, inv. nr 619.
standing figure of an unidentified male (probably Dominican) saint. The box-shaped baldachin that rests on slender columns at the front has three gables lined with coarsely shaped crocketed slats. Five painted panels from c. 1400 originating from Zuazo de Cuartango/Zuhatzu Kuartango (Álava province), now kept in a private collection, can be interpreted as the back panel (h. 109 cm) and four wings of a tabernacle shrine of the same type. They feature scenes from the life of St Peter on the insides and portraits of two standing saints on the outsides of the outer wings. These panels are an important indication that such fourteenth-century Basque-Castilian shrines were usually equipped with flat painted wings, as was common with shrines of the Kil type also elsewhere.

Some Italian shrines may also be classified as Kil type; although their four painted wings do correspond with the Swedish namesake, the architectural shape of the canopies is much less pronounced. The best preserved example is a Marian shrine from c. 1330 now kept in the Diocesan Museum of Foligno that originally belonged to the chapel of Santa Maria Giacobbe in Pale di Foligno (Umbria) (Fig. 14) (Krüger, 1992, p. 226; Pasqualetti, in this volume). The back panel (h. 147 cm) is crowned by a simple rectangular baldachin in the shape of a flat panel painted with stylized stars; of the four hinged shutters in the shape of painted panels only six fragments returned after repeated thefts. Of two similar shrines only the central figure and the four wings survive. The first one, containing a standing image of St Eustace, originated around the same date and belonged to the church at Campo di Giove (Abruzzo) (Krüger, 1992, pp. 23, 33, 83; Nicoletti, 2014). A further example with roughly the same characteristics from c. 1330 featured St Christina and originally stood in the church of the same name in Caso (Abruzzo) (Krüger, 1992, p. 23; Delpiori, 2015, p. 138). Both shrines were equipped with four wings of equal width, as in Pale di Foligno, which indicates that these shrines must also have had a rectangular ground plan. The wings all feature painted scenes from the life and martyrdom of the titular saints.

In Germany, the only surviving tabernacle shrine that belongs to the Kil type is the so-called ‘Kleiner Dom’ (little cathedral) from 1360–1370. It originally belonged to the convent of the Poor Clares in Cologne and is now preserved in the Bavarian National Museum in Munich (Ringer, 2001; Ralcheva, in this volume). The conspicuously wide rectangular shrine (h. 148 cm) has a marked

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44 Donostia/San Sebastián, Elizbarrutiko museoa, s.n. Thanks to Jesús Muñiz Petralanda who brought this shrine to our attention.
45 The current paintings are post-medieval.
46 Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, inv. nr L MA 1968 a-d.
architectural appearance caused by its crowning in the shape of two openwork buttressed spires. It contains a sculpture group showing the Annunciation under a baldachin decorated with pointed gables at the sides and a wide ogee arch at the front, all with intricate traceries. The shrine has four hinged doors that carry painted figures and scenes from the life of the Virgin on a golden background on the insides and – again – the Annunciation on the outsides. Stephan Kemperdick has identified a number of panels carrying paintings from c. 1360–1370 on both sides now preserved in various German museums as the remnants of another four tabernacle shrines of the same type (Kemperdick, 2002a; Kemperdick, 2002b; Kemperdick, in this volume).

Two tabernacle shrines of exquisite execution from Burgundian-Netherlandish origins show that similar characteristics – architectural canopies, painted wings – were also common in these regions around 1390–1400. The first is a narrow Marian shrine (figure lost), possibly from around the Burgundian ducal court at Dijon and now in the Museum Mayer van den Bergh in Antwerp, which has a height of 137 cm (Denef/Peters/Fremout, eds, 2009, pp. 83–124).47 The gabled canopy rests on slender columns and is crowned by a soaring openwork buttressed spire; the wings show four scenes from the Life of the Virgin on a golden background. The small, so-called ‘Chapelle Cardon’ (h. 99 cm), now in the Louvre Museum in Paris, was probably produced around the Lower Rhine around 1400 (Fig. 15) (Le Pogam/Vivet-Peclet, eds, 2009, p. 171; Ralcheva, in this volume).48 The enthroned Virgin is crowned by an intricate baldachin with traceries under crocketed ogee arches that surround a openwork buttressed spire ending in an elegant finial. The insides of the wings show six scenes from the Birth and Infancy of Christ, all against a golden background. Both shrines may have served as crowning elements for winged altarpieces (Kroesen, 2017, pp. 241–244).

5. SOME CONCLUSIONS

It is not easy to gain a comprehensive understanding of the development and spread of tabernacle shrines between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries in Western Europe. Preserved examples are scattered out and mostly preserved in

47 Antwerpen, Museum Mayer van den Bergh, inv. nr MMB 0002.
48 Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. nr. RF 2314.
an incomplete state. When plotted on the map of Europe, three clear concentrations come to light: in Scandinavia (across Sweden, Norway and Finland as well as in Iceland), on the Iberian Peninsula (especially in northern Castile, the Basque Country and Catalonia) and in central Italy (Umbria, Abruzzo) (Fig. 16). The shrines show a considerable variety in size, design, refinement and use of materials. Although most tabernacle shrines contain a figure of the Virgin and Child, they were also used to display other saints.

Much more striking than their variety, however, is the remarkable degree of similarity found in shrines from the north and south (Kroesen/Leeflang/Sureda, 2019a, pp. 13–14). All examples are (or were) equipped with four wings, of which the outer pair together covered the front. They all consist(ed) of a plinth, back wall and canopy with arched openings on three sides. In their painted decorations, several motifs, including black windows on a white background and celestial bodies on the ceiling under the baldachins, are found across Europe. Moreover, the formal development of the shrines roughly followed the same lines from north to south. In Scandinavia, Spain, Italy and elsewhere they evolved from a Romanesque model in the twelfth century to an early Gothic one with relief scenes inside the wings during the thirteenth century to a more vertical, more architectural structure with painted panel doors in the fourteenth. These three models – called Appuna, Fröskog and Kil after their best representatives among the rich Swedish material – appeared on the scene around the same time in all parts of Europe.

Since no direct connections existed between Scandinavia, Spain and Italy during the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries – at least none more specific than those between all parts of the continent – these shrines in the north and south must be regarded as the rare surviving examples of what was once a common type of early altarpiece throughout the Latin West, from Iceland to Italy and from Spain to Slovakia. This is confirmed by the discussed ‘lone survivors’ found in countries that lie in between: Mont-devant-Sassey (France), Steinkirchen (Germany) and Vojňany (Slovakia). It was in the periphery of the continent, mostly in small and modest country churches and often helped by a certain degree of isolation and economic stagnation, that such examples had the best chances of survival.49 The fact that academic art history was not invented precisely there

49 Europe’s ‘empty centre’ may be explained by the ravages of iconoclasm, wars and revolutions, as well as by large-scale artistic renewal, especially during the Baroque period.
has largely prevented tabernacle shrines from making it into our art-historical handbooks.

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Fig. 1. Mont-devant-Sassey (France),
church of Notre-Dame de l’Assomption (crypt), Marian tabernacle shrine, 1290–1300; the figure is a copy of the twelfth-century original (photo Justin Kroesen).
Fig. 2. Virgin and Child with dossal from Appuna (Sweden), elements of a tabernacle shrine from 1180–1200, now in Stockholm, Statens Historiska Museet (photo Peter Tängeberg).
Fig. 3. Virgin and Child with dossal from an unknown church in Umbria (Italy), elements of a tabernacle shrine from 1200–1220, now in Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum (photo Justin Kroesen).
Fig. 4. Tabernacle shrine with a holy bishop from Edestad (Sweden), c. 1230, now in Karlskrona, Blekinge museum (photo Ebbe Nyborg).
Fig. 5. Marian tabernacle shrine from Fröskog (Sweden), 1250–1300, now in Stockholm, Statens Historiska Museet (photo Statens Historiska Museet).
Fig. 6. Dädesjö (Sweden), parish church, tabernacle shrine with St Olaf, 1250–1300; figure c. 1200 (photo Justin Kroesen).
Fig. 7. Marian tabernacle shrine from Urjala (Finland), 1275–1300, now in Helsinki, Suomen kansallismuseo (photo Suomen kansallismuseo).
Fig. 8. Marian tabernacle shrine from Múli (Iceland), 1250–1300, now in Copenhagen, Nationalmuseet (photo Justin Kroesen).
Fig. 9. Tabernacle shrine from Högsrum (Sweden), c. 1250, now in Stockholm, Statens Historiska Museet (photo Justin Kroesen).
Fig. 10. Kil (Sweden), parish church, tabernacle shrine with an unidentified standing apostle, c. 1350 (photo Peter Tångeberg).
Fig. 11. Tabernacle shrine with St Olaf from Vanaja (Finland), c. 1320, now in Helsinki, Suomen kansallismuseo (photo Suomen kansallismuseo).
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Fig. 12. Tabernacle shrine from Vojňany (Slovakia), c. 1300, now in Bratislava, Slovenská Národná Galéria (photo Slovenská Národná Galéria).
Fig. 13. Villamanca (Spain), parish church, tabernacle shrine with St James de Greater, c. 1330 (photo Justin Kroesen).
Fig. 14. Marian tabernacle shrine from Pale di Foligno (Italy), c. 1330, now in Foligno, Museo Diocesano (photo Kasya Popova).
Fig. 15. The so-called ‘Chapelle Cardon’, Lower Rhine (?), c. 1400, now in Paris, Musée du Louvre (photo Musée du Louvre).
Fig. 16. Map of Europe with the spread of tabernacle shrines from c. 1180–1400 (drawing Justin Kroesen & Meindert Spek).