

**Valentina Borniotto**

**Ancient Relics, New Images and New Saints in Early Modern Genoa**

In the context of the new emphasis given by the Council of Trent to the cult of relics, the case of Early Modern Genoa is of particular interest for the rereading of ancient objects of devotion in terms of identity formation and the subsequent generation of new iconographies. In the Middle Ages, Genoa became home to two extraordinarily important relics: the ashes of St John the Baptist and the Holy Basin. These invaluable objects were not associated with one another, however, until the Early Modern Period, when historiographic and literary sources began to put them in relation to the heroic feats of Guglielmo Embriaco. In parallel with this increased interest in votive objects that were already part of Genoa's history, the city also embarked upon the construction of a new cult, a process that involved acquiring a portion of the remains of St Desiderius of Langres in 1651. This event led to the inclusion of a hitherto almost unknown saint in the decorative program of the chapel of the Ducal Palace (frescoed in those same years), within the canon of the city's most important religious imagery.