An Introductory Guide to Research in Medieval Hagiography

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A major scholarly enterprise under the direction of the Belgian scholar Guy Philippart is currently collecting a series of surveys of medieval hagiographic sources and the scholarly study of them; two of its volumes have already been published. When complete, it will be the most comprehensive guide to hagiographic scholarship: *Hagiographies. Histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1500* [Hagiographies: an international history of the Latin and vernacular literature of hagiography in the West from its origins to 1500], ed. Guy Philippart, 4 vols. (Turnhout, 1994-present). The individual articles are in English, French, German, and Italian. Philippart himself has written a thorough study of the etymology and development of the term "hagiography," see Guy Philippart, "Hagiographes et hagiographie, hagiologes et hagiologie; des mots et des concepts" [Hagiographers and hagiography, hagiologers and hagiology: concerning words and concepts], *Hagiographica* 1 (1994): 1-16.

For over three and one-half centuries, the Jesuit members of the *Société des Bollandistes* [Society of Bollandists], founded by Jean Bollandus (d. 1665), have been at the forefront of hagiographic scholarship. It is they who have edited the single most important collection of hagiographic sources, that is the *Acta Sanctorum* [Acts of the saints], the
first of whose sixty-eight immense folio volumes appeared in 1643. They continue their efforts to this day through the edition of the journal *Analecta Bollandiana* [Bollandist gleanings], which contains regular bibliographies and summaries of hagiographic scholarship. Their work is well documented at the site which they maintain on the World Wide Web: http://www.kbr.be/~socboll. Members of this group have compiled and regularly updated the standard guides to the primary sources of hagiography written in the clerical languages of Latin and Greek, as well as those of the Christian East: *Bibliotheca hagiographica latina antiquae et mediae aetatis*, 3 vols., Subsidia Hagiographica 6 and 70 (Brussels, 1898 and 1986); *Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca*, third edition (with supplement) by François Halkin, Subsidia Hagiographica 8 and 65 (Brussels, 1957 and 1984); *Bibliotheca hagiographica orientalis*, ed. Paul Peeters, Subsidia Hagiographica 10 (Brussels, 1910). In these reference works, each hagiographic source is provided a distinct number, and all extant editions of it (as well as important manuscripts in some cases) are listed. In the chapters which follows, every Latin or Greek primary source is identified by its number in the *Bibliotheca hagiographica latina* or the *Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca*.

An ambitious undertaking is underway to update and amplify the work of the Bollandists for hagiographic sources written in early medieval Gaul. *Sources hagiographiques narratives composées en Gaule avant l'an mil* is edited by François Dolbeau, Martin Heintzelmann, and Joseph-Claude Poulin. Joseph-Claude Poulin has described the project in "Les sources hagiographiques narratives composées en Gaule avant l'an mil (SHG). Inventaire, examen critique, datation (avec Annexe)," *Francia*, 15 (1987), pp. 701-31. The project is proceeding slowly. For examples of its intended results see Joseph-Claude Poulin, "Sources hagiographiques de la Gaule (SHG) II: Les dossiers de s. Magloire de Dol et de s. Malo d'Alet (Province de Bretagne)," *Francia*, 17 (1990), pp. 159-209.


In the decades around 1900, a Bollandist named Hippolyte Delehaye laid the foundations for modern hagiographic scholarship. Although Delehaye wrote in French, his seminal essay on hagiographic method has appeared in two separate English translations, see *Legends of the Saints*, trans. V.M. Crawford (from the first French edition; London, 1907; reprint, Notre Dame, IN, 1961) and trans. Donald Attwater (from the fourth French edition; New York, 1962). Also available in English is Delehaye's history of the Bollandist enterprise, see *The Work of the Bollandists Through Three Centuries, 1615-1915* (Princeton, 1922). Approaches to the history of medieval Christianity have changed greatly since the time of Delehaye, who was concerned to provide a Catholic response to positivist historicism. One of the most influential works in the development of medieval religious history has recently been translated into English; see Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages*, trans. Steven Rowan (German original, 1935; Notre Dame, IN, 1995). For an interesting, but controversial, study of these historiographical developments, see John Van Engen, "The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem," *American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 519-52.

**Sources:**

1. The major hagiographic collections.


2. Some other relevant handbooks and repertories:


Eligius Dekkers, "Vitae Sanctorum," Clavis Patrum Latinorum (Sacris Erudiri, 3; Bruges and The Hague, 1951), pp. 357-84. (Organized geographically; covers roughly from the Acts of the Martyrs to Bede; based largely on the BHL.)

Ferdinand Lot, et al., "Index Scriptorum Operumque Latino-Gallicorum Medii Aevi (500-1000)," Archivum latinitatis medii aevi, 14 (1939), pp. 113-230 (including supplement entitled "Vitae, Passiones, Miracula, Translationes sanctorum Galliae (500-1000" on pp. 183-225); Ferdinand Lot, et al., "Index Scriptorum Operumque Latino-Gallicorum Medii Aevi, saeculum XI (1000-1108)." Archivum latinitatis medii aevi, 16 (1941), pp. 5-59; Ferdinand Lot, et al., "Supplementum: Vitae, Passiones, Miracula, Translationes sanctorum Galliae necnon alia opera hagiographica saeculum XI in Gallia exarata (a. 1000-1108)." Archivum latinitatis medii aevi, 18 (1943), pp. 5-39. (The indices are organized alphabetically by author; the hagiographica supplements are organized alphabetically by saint.)


Patrick Geary, "Handlist of Relic Thefts (ca. 800-ca. 1100)," in Furta Sacra. Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages (Princeton, 1978; second edition 1990), pp. 149-56. (Organized alphabetically by saint.)
"Biographies spirituelles," *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, (Paris, 1937-present), 1:1646-78. (List of saints with significant *vitae*; organized by century.)


3. Relevant volumes of the *Typologie des sources*.


C. Bremond, Jacques Le Goff, Jean-Claude Schmitt, *L'exemplum* (Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental, 40; Turnhout, 1982).

4. Some other useful reference sources:


*Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques*, eds. Alfred Baudrillart, et al., 17 vols (Paris, 1912-present). (Note: complete to H.)

*Lexicon des Mittelalters* (Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1980-present). (Note: complete to L.)

Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie, vols. 5-8: Ikonographie der Heiligen (Freiburg, 1973-1976).

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Historiography - Methodology of historiography: This concluding section surveys contemporary historical practice and theory. As the previous section has demonstrated, there are many branches of history today, each with different kinds of evidence, particular canons of interpretation, and distinctive conventions of writing. This diversity has led some to wonder whether the term history still designates an integral body of or approach to knowledge. Although the emphasis of this article falls on what historians share, it is well to remember that deviations from these norms are al Hagiography is the writing of saints' lives. It comes from the Greek words ἅγιος; and γῆ = "holy writing" or "writing about the holy (ones).". Hagiography refers literally to writings on the subject of such holy persons; specifically, the biographies of persons publicly glorified (canonized) by the Church. Hagiology, by contrast, is the study of saints collectively, without focusing on the life of an individual saint.