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Eastern Objects and Western Desires: Relics and Reliquaries between Byzantium and the West

HOLGER A. KLEIN

Among the many eastern objects that reached western Europe between the seventh and the fifteenth century by way of gift-giving, theft, or trade, sacred relics hold an important, if somewhat unusual, position.¹ Unlike other commodities and luxury goods such as silk, gold, ivory, and precious stones, whose inherent value is intimately tied to their material worth, a relic's value is not as easily quantifiable and tends to resist a definition in purely monetary or economic terms.² Rather, as Patrick Geary pointed out, its value rests on the communal acceptance of a set of shared beliefs that determine its authenticity and efficacy in a particular social and cultural environment.³ If a relic's value is thus not defined by material worth, but is the result of complex social, cultural, and religious interactions, one may ask, how, in the specific case of eastern relics, their value was constructed—or rather reconstructed—in the social and cultural environment of western medieval Europe.⁴ Likewise, one may ask in what ways a relic's value was affected by the circumstances of its acquisition and mode of transfer, to what extent it was tied to an attested or alleged eastern provenance, and in what ways it could change as the result of an increasing western knowledge of and familiarity with its eastern cult history or place of origin. If one accepts Georg Simmel's more general definition of the construction of value and calls "those objects valuable that resist our desire to possess them,"⁵ one may further ask how

¹ On gift-giving and theft as principal means of the distribution of luxury goods in the early Middle Ages, see P. Grierson, "Commerce in the Dark Ages: A Critique of the Evidence," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9 (1959): 123–40; G. Duby, *The Early Growth of European Economy* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1974), 48–72. For a recent evaluation of the role and significance of gifts and gift exchange in the Byzantine, Arab, and western economies, see A. Cutler, "Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine, Arab, and Related Economies," *DOP* 55 (2001): 247–78.

² Despite the fact that a complex system for the evaluation and assessment of gifts and goods of all kinds existed in Byzantium and formed an integral part of the diplomatic process, the only instance in which a specific monetary/economic value is assigned to a relic is found not in a Byzantine, but in an Arabic source, Yahya b. Sa'īd Antākī's *Ta'riḫh* or *Chronique universelle*, ed. and trans. I. Kratchkovsky and A. Vasiliev, PO 22 (Paris, 1932), 770. For a discussion of this and related sources, see Cutler, "Gift and Gift Exchange," 252. For the Byzantine evaluation and assessment of luxury goods as specified in the *Book of Ceremonies*, see *ibid.*, 257–58.

³ P. Geary, "Sacred Commodities: The Circulation of Medieval Relics," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Social Perspective*, ed. A. Appadurai (Cambridge, 1986), 169–91.

⁴ On the social construction and reconstruction of the value of relics, see *ibid.*, 174–81 and 186–87.

⁵ G. Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, 2d Eng. ed. (London, 1990), 67; original German edition: *Die Philosophie des Geldes*, 2d rev. ed. (Leipzig, 1907), 13 (further references to the German edition are in square brackets).

an increasing western knowledge of and desire for these sacred objects affected their value and status as items of economic and noneconomic exchange.⁶ It is the aim of this study to explore these and related questions by examining, on the one hand, the literary evidence for the transfer of relics and reliquaries from Byzantium to the Latin West and, on the other hand, the artistic responses they prompted in the new social and cultural environments in which they were placed. While eastern relics, particularly fragments of the True Cross, are known to have reached western Europe as early as the fourth century as sacred souvenirs and personal gifts, the time frame chosen for this study stretches from the Arab conquest of Jerusalem in 637/38 to the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453.⁷ Such a choice is warranted by the fact that it was during these centuries that the Byzantine emperor established and asserted himself as the safekeeper, defender, and distributor of the most sacred relics of Christendom, namely, those associated with the Passion of Christ, the Virgin, and certain eastern saints. It was the possession of these relics that confirmed the emperor's close ties with the divine powers, guaranteed his victoriousness in battle, and lent his office a political and spiritual prestige that other Christian rulers could hope to acquire only if they themselves gained possession of these precious, and truly priceless, objects.⁸

SACRED GIFTS AND PRICELESS TREASURES

I begin with a brief historical narrative or, rather, a piece of historical fiction, recorded in Arnold of Lübeck's early thirteenth-century *Chronicle of the Slavs*.⁹ The passage in question describes the visit of Henry the Lion, duke of Saxony and Bavaria, at the court of Emperor Manuel I Komnenos on the occasion of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.¹⁰ Like other western noblemen and pilgrims before him, the duke had arrived in Constantinople in early April 1172, shortly before Easter, and planned to continue his journey by boat from the Byzantine capital. Upon his arrival, the duke presented the emperor, as was customary in his native lands, "with many and splendid gifts, beautiful horses with saddles,

⁶ Value, according to Simmel, "is never a quality of the objects, but a judgement upon them which remains inherent in the subject"; *ibid.*, 63 [8]. For the construction of value, see *ibid.*, 59–101 [1–29]. For an analysis of Simmel's concept of "value" in the context of "commodities" and their exchange, see A. Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *Social Life of Things* (as above, note 3), 3–63.

⁷ The earliest record for the dissemination of relics of the True Cross is contained in the works of Cyril of Jerusalem, who in his fourth *Katechesis* claims that "small fragments of the wood of the cross meanwhile filled the whole world." See Cyril of Jerusalem, *Opera Omnia*, ed. W. K. Reischl and J. Rupp, 2 vols. (Munich, 1848–60), 1:100 (= PG 33:469). The earliest transfer of a relic of the True Cross north of the Alps is attested to the years 402/3 when Paulinus of Nola sent "part of a small fragment of the wood of the divine cross" to his friend Sulpicius Severus in Gaul. See Paulinus of Nola, *Epistulae*, ed. W. von Hartel, CSEL 29 (Vienna, 1894), 268.

⁸ For the most recent assessment of the place and function of relics in the Byzantine imperial ideology, see S. Mergiali-Sahas, "Byzantine Emperors and Holy Relics. Use and Misuse of Sanctity and Authority," *JOB* 51 (2001): 41–60.

⁹ Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica Slavorum*, ed. G. M. Pertz and J. M. Lappenberg, MGH, *ScriptRerGerm* 14 (Hannover, 1868; repr. 1995), esp. 10–36. For an assessment of the fictional character of Arnold's account, see J. Fried, "Jerusalemfahrt und Kulturimport. Offene Fragen zum Kreuzzug Heinrichs des Löwen," in *Der Welfenschatz und sein Umkreis*, ed. J. Ehlers and D. Kötzsche (Mainz, 1998), 111–37.

¹⁰ For a detailed analysis of Henry's pilgrimage as recorded in Arnold's chronicle, see E. Joranson, "The Palestine Pilgrimage of Henry the Lion," in *Medieval and Historiographical Essays in Honor of James Westfall Thompson*, ed. J. L. Cate and E. N. Anderson (Chicago, 1938), 146–225.

cuirasses and swords, as well as robes of scarlet and vestments of finest linen.”¹¹ Henry, in turn, was invited to participate in the courtly festivities arranged to celebrate the holy feast of Easter and was given a splendid reception at court.¹² On this occasion, the duke and his entourage were presented with precious counter-gifts.¹³ While Empress Maria supplied Henry with “enough velvet to clothe all his knights and also added for each knight various pelts and a small sable skin,” the emperor provided the duke with “a strong ship copiously supplied with all things necessary” to carry him and his men to Acre.¹⁴

Thus far, Arnold’s account of the duke’s reception and treatment at the Byzantine court contains nothing unusual, neither in terms of the types of gifts exchanged nor in terms of the way they were distributed.¹⁵ However, Arnold’s description of Henry’s second encounter with Manuel—after his return from the Holy Land—deserves closer attention. “Much delighted about the duke’s return,” thus records our chronicler, “Manuel gently urged him to stay for another couple of days, presenting him with fourteen mules loaded with gold, silver, and silken garments. The duke thanked him greatly, but refused the gift by saying: ‘My lord, I have much if I only find favor in your eyes.’ Since the emperor kept urging the duke no less than the duke kept refusing the gifts offered, Manuel finally gave him many of the saintly relics he had requested earlier. He also added much glory of precious stones. Thus released, the duke departed in peace and went on to Niš.”¹⁶

Despite the fact that the historical reliability of Arnold’s account has justly been questioned in recent scholarship, his description of the duke’s double encounter with the Byzantine emperor is nonetheless of importance since it reveals much about the relative value attributed to specific types of gifts and the complex mechanisms that governed their

¹¹ Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica* 18: “Premiserat autem dux munera multa et optima iuxta morem terre nostre, equos pulcerrimos sellatos et vestitos, loricas, gladios, vestes de scarlacco et vestes lineas tenuissimas.”

¹² While there are no other accounts of Henry’s reception at the Byzantine court, surviving Byzantine and western descriptions of similar receptions during the reign of Manuel give us a fairly good idea of how it must have been conducted. For the visit of King Louis VII of France, see Odo of Deuil, *De professione Ludovici VII in orientem*, ed. and trans. V. G. Berry (New York, 1958), 58–61 and 66–67; *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus* by John Kinnamos, trans. C. M. Brand (New York, 1976), 69. For the visit of King Amalric I of Jerusalem, see William of Tyre, *A History of the Deeds Done beyond the Sea*, trans. E. A. Babcock and A. C. Krey, 2 vols. (New York, 1943), 2:377–83; S. Runciman, “The Visit of King Amalric I to Constantinople in 1171,” in *Outremer. Studies in the History of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, ed. B. Z. Kedar et al. (Jerusalem, 1982), 153–58.

¹³ Similar exchanges of gifts and counter-gifts are described in other contemporary sources. King Amalric, for instance, received “an immense weight of gold and quantities of silken fabrics together with most excellent gifts of foreign wares . . . while upon his retinue, even to the youngest, presents without stint were showered.” Translation quoted after William of Tyre, *A History*, 2:383.

¹⁴ Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica* 20–21: “Regina autem donavit duci samittos plurimos, ita ut omnes milites suos vestiret samittis, quibus addidit regina cuilibet militi pelles varias et pelliculam zobilinam. 6. Porro rex dedit ei navem firmissimam necessariis omnibus copiose ditatam, et ingrediens dux cum suis navigare cepit.” See also Joranson, “Palestine Pilgrimage,” 187.

¹⁵ Compare, for instance, the gifts brought and received by Liutprand of Cremona and other western embassies in the middle of the 10th century. See Liutprand of Cremona, *Opera Omnia*, ed. P. Chiesa, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 156 (Turnhout, 1998), 147–50.

¹⁶ Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica* 30: “Qui [sc. Manuel I] multum letatus est reditu eius, et cum honestissime detinisset eum per aliquot dies, dedit ei quattuordecim mulos, oneratos auro et argento et sericis vestibus. Dux vera immensas gratias agens, noluit accipere, dicens ad eum: ‘Habeo plurima, domne mi, inveniam tantum gratiam in oculis tuis.’ Cumque nimis cogere eum, et ille nulla ratione consentiret accipere, dedit sanctorum reliquias ei multas et preciosas, quas postulaverat. Addidit etiam multam lapidum preciosorum gloriam, et ita valedicto dux in omni pace discessit et venit in Niceam.” For a discussion of these gifts and their significance, see Joranson, “Palestine Pilgrimage,” 212–17.

exchange.¹⁷ Henry's refusal of Manuel's initial gift—the size of which seems deliberately exaggerated by the western chronicler—betrays more than the duke's moral integrity.¹⁸ It shows, at least in the fictional context of Arnold's account, a mutual awareness of the fine line that separates the "good" gift from the bribe: both the outspoken intentionality and the lavishness of the emperor's gift seem to make it at first unacceptable for Henry. Manuel in turn substitutes for his initial gift one that is characterized less by its monetary value than by its spiritual significance and restricted accessibility. In fact, the emperor now offers his guest the gift the duke had requested on an earlier occasion (not further specified by the chronicler) and was thus more likely to accept.¹⁹ It follows the logic of Arnold's account that it is only after the separation of the "gift" from the "request" that the emperor adds to the relics "much glory of precious stones," a gesture that can now be read as an act of Manuel's generosity rather than a blunt attempt to purchase a favor.²⁰

What the duke carried home with him, however, was still more than the emperor's gift of relics and precious stones. Knowingly or not, Henry's acceptance of Manuel's presents without offering anything in exchange left him with an inherent obligation to reciprocate the imperial gifts and favors received.²¹ This additional baggage did not—and here we leave the fictional context of Arnold's account—remain unnoticed by the duke's political opponents in Germany.²² As stated in Godfrey of Viterbo's *Gesta Friderici*, they began to mistrust Henry's loyalty and accused him of having been bribed by the "munera Greci."²³

¹⁷ Still basic for any analysis of the mechanisms that govern the exchange of gifts and counter-gifts in pre-modern societies is M. Mauss, "Essai sur le don. Forme et raison d'échange dans les sociétés archaïques," *L'Année sociologique* n.s. 1 (1925): 30–186, trans. W. D. Halls as *The Gift. Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London, 1990). Following the publication of Mauss's essay, the principles and mechanisms that govern the exchange of gifts and commodities have become a central topic among anthropologists and sociologists. See, for instance, C. Lévi-Strauss, "Introduction à l'œuvre de Mauss," in idem, *Sociologie et anthropologie* (Paris, 1950), i–lii, trans. F. Baker, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss* (London, 1987); P. Bourdieu, *Esquisse d'une théorie de pratique . . .* (Geneva, 1972), trans. R. Nice, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, 1977); *The Social Life of Things*, ed. Appadurai; N. Thomas, *Entangled Objects* (Cambridge, 1991); A. B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley, 1992); M. Godelier, *Le mystère du don* (Paris, 1996), trans. N. Scott, *The Enigma of the Gift* (Oxford–Chicago, 1999). On gift exchange as economic rather than ritual behavior, see Cutler, "Gifts and Gift Exchange," 247–78.

¹⁸ A decidedly political motivation for Arnold's account is suggested by Fried, "Jerusalemfahrt," 134–37.

¹⁹ For a brief evaluation of Byzantine attitudes and reactions toward foreigners requesting gifts, see Cutler, "Gifts and Gift Exchange," 255–60.

²⁰ While the chronicle leaves no doubt that Henry had previously asked for a donation of relics, the duke never asked for precious stones as implied by Fried, "Jerusalemfahrt," 134. Considerations about the Byzantines' usual treatment of foreign emissaries and the reasons behind Manuel's gift-giving miss the point. Manuel's behavior follows the logic of Arnold's narrative and reflects the chronicler's understanding of the practice of Byzantine gift-giving, not its reality. This, of course, does not mean that there was no gift of precious stones. On the contrary, one is reminded of a similar present Frederick I Barbarossa allegedly received from Manuel a few years later. According to Albert of Stade, *Annales Stadenses*, ed. J. M. Lappenberg, MGH, SS 16 (Hannover, 1859; repr. 1994), 349, Manuel had sent the emperor "munera preciosa, inter quae fuit cantarus smaragdineus, capiens sextarium balsami pistici, et plurimae gemmae preciosae."

²¹ A different view is presented by Joranson, "Palestine Pilgrimage," 213, who stresses that "the precious stones which Manuel added to the relics, and the velvet and furs presented by Empress Maria, . . . assume the aspect of a reciprocation."

²² Joranson, "Palestine Pilgrimage," 213–20; Fried, "Jerusalemfahrt," 135.

²³ Godfrey of Viterbo, *Gesta Friderici*, ed. G. H. Pertz, MGH, SS 22 (Hannover, 1872; repr. 1976), 332. Godfrey's accusation, of course, should not be seen as an immediate result of Henry's alleged failure to reciprocate Manuel's gifts. Considering the deteriorated state of relations between the Byzantine and German em-

While one may be inclined to doubt the usefulness of Arnold's account for the purpose of defining the realities of gift exchange between Byzantium and the West in the later twelfth century, I would insist that it can nonetheless be taken as a reliable indicator of the most common western attitudes, perceptions, and—perhaps more than anything—misconceptions of the Byzantine Empire and its splendor. Like Henry, many western dignitaries before him had passed through Constantinople on their journey to the Holy Land longing to see with their eyes what they had previously only heard of through accounts of pilgrims, travelers, and ambassadors to the imperial city: namely, the opulence of its palaces, the ingenuity of its craftsmen and architects, and the many saintly relics housed in its churches.²⁴ According to Odo of Deuil, chaplain of King Louis VII of France and later abbot of St. Denis, it was those churches, “unequal to Saint Sophia in size but equal to it in beauty,” that most attracted the attention of western visitors.²⁵ The privilege of seeing the most sacred treasures of the empire, however, was a favor granted only to the most distinguished foreign visitors. King Louis himself, who passed through Constantinople in 1147 on his way to the Holy Land, was fortunate enough to have been granted such an honor. Surprisingly, it was not Odo who recorded the king's visit to the imperial relic chamber, but the Byzantine historian John Kinnamos. He states that, after the king had been received in the imperial palace—the reigning emperor is again Manuel Komnenos—and “had heard what was proper,” he was taken “to the palace in the southern part of the city to investigate the things there worthy of awe and behold the holy things in the church there: I mean those things which, having been close to the body of Christ, are signs of divine protection for Christians.”²⁶ Knowledge of what the king could expect to see during his visit had, by that time, already spread through much of western Europe by way of the

pires and the proverbial treacherousness of the Greeks, the mere fact that Henry had accepted gifts from the Byzantine emperor—a practice after all not unusual in the diplomatic process—would have been enough of an allegation to question his loyalty. See also T. Lounghis, “Die byzantinischen Gesandten als Vermittler materieller Kultur vom 5. bis ins 11. Jahrhundert,” in *Kommunikation zwischen Orient und Okzident. Alltag und Sachkultur*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Kl. 619, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit 16 (Vienna, 1994), 49–67.

²⁴ One may recall Abbot Suger's famous statement that he “used to converse with travelers from Jerusalem . . . to learn from those to whom the treasures of Constantinople and the ornaments of Hagia Sophia had been accessible whether the things here could claim some value in comparison with those there” and that “from very many truthful men, even from Bishop Hugues of Laon, [he] had heard wonderful and almost incredible reports about the superiority of Hagia Sophia's and other churches' ornaments for the celebration of Mass.” See Suger of St. Denis, *De rebus in administratione sua gestis*, in *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of Saint-Denis and Its Art Treasures*, trans. E. Panofsky, 2d ed. (Princeton, 1979), 65. For slightly earlier descriptions of the wonders of Constantinople, see Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, ed. H. Hagenmeyer (Heidelberg, 1913), 176–77, and his *Gesta Francorum expugnantium Iherusalem*, ed. C. Bongars, RHC HOcc 3 (Paris, 1866), 494.

²⁵ Odo of Deuil, *De profectione* 64–65: “Multas quoque habet ecclesiae sanctae Sophiae magnitudine impares non decore, quae sunt admirabiles pulchritudine sic sunt etiam numerosis sanctorum pignoribus venerandae. Ad has intrabant qui poterant, alii curiositate videndi, alii devotione fideli.” Translation after Berry in *ibid.*, 65–67.

²⁶ Johannes Cinnamus, *Epitome rerum ab Ioanne et Alexio Comnenis gestarum*, ed. A. Meineke, CSHB (Bonn, 1836), 83: ἐπειδὴ τε εἴσω τῶν ἀνακτόρων ἤδη ἐγένετο ἔνθα βασιλεὺς ἐπὶ τοῦ μετεώρου καθῆστο, χθαμαλή τις αὐτῷ ἐκομίζετο ἔδρα ἦν σελλίον ῥωμαῖζοντες ὀνομάζουσιν ἄνθρωποι . . . ὀλίγω δὲ ὕστερον καὶ ἐς τὰ πρὸς νότον τῆς πόλεως σὺν τῷ βασιλεῖ ἦλθεν ἀνάκτορα, ἰστορήσων ὅσα τε ἐνταῦθα θαύματος ἄξια καὶ τοῖς ἐπὶ τὸν τῆδε νεῶν ἐντευζόμενος ἱεροῖς· φημὶ δὴ ὅσα τῷ σωτηρίῳ Χριστοῦ πελάσαντα σώματι Χριστιανοῖς ἐστὶ φυλακτῆρια. Translation adapted from Brand, *Deeds*, 69.

famous letter allegedly written by Alexios I to Robert of Flanders:²⁷ “the column to which Christ was bound, the lash with which he was scourged, the purple robe in which he was arrayed, the crown of thorns with which he was crowned, the reed which he held in his hands in place of a scepter, the garments of which he was stripped before the Cross, the larger part of the wood of the cross on which he was crucified, the nails with which he was affixed to it, [and] the linen cloths found in the sepulcher after his resurrection.”²⁸ These and other more accessible eastern relics were the objects a distinguished visitor to Constantinople desired to see and to behold—this was the Byzantine stuff of which western dreams were made.

While few western travelers could expect to be shown the emperor’s sacred treasures, even fewer could hope to obtain such highly prized and truly priceless objects during their stay in Constantinople. If at all, they could be received as gifts, which—as Arnold of Lübeck’s story shows—were difficult to ask for and, once received, almost impossible to reciprocate with even the most splendid western counter-gifts. As much as the creation of a stage-set atmosphere that never allowed foreign visitors to look behind the elaborate scenes put up for their receptions, the giving of such rare gifts formed part of the Byzantine diplomatic ritual and stressed, more than anything, the emperor’s superiority over his western visitors.²⁹ Gifts of relics, however, were not restricted to visiting dignitaries and ambassadors to the Byzantine court. Already during the late antique period relics were sent to the West as imperial gifts. One of the earliest such gifts is a relic of the True Cross allegedly given by Emperor Constantine the Great to the church in the Sessorian palace in Rome.³⁰ Following Constantine’s example in the later sixth century, Emperor Justin II sent relics of the True Cross from Constantinople to both Rome and Poitiers in Gaul.³¹ What is particularly interesting about the latter donation is that it was apparently granted

²⁷ For the *Epistula Alexii I. Komneni ad Robertum comitem Flandrum*, see *Epistulae et chartae ad historiam primi belli sacri spectantes quae supersunt aevo aequales ac genuinae. Die Kreuzzugsbriefe aus den Jahren 1088–1100*, ed. H. Hagenmeyer (Innsbruck, 1901), 129–38; Eng. trans. in E. Joranson, “The Problem of the Spurious Letter of Emperor Alexius to the Count of Flanders,” *AHR* 55 (1949–50): 811–32. For an assessment of the authenticity and historical value of the letter, see most recently P. Schreiner, “Der Brief des Alexios I. Komnenos an den Grafen Robert von Flandern und das Problem gefälschter byzantinischer Auslandsschreiben in den westlichen Quellen,” in *Documenti medievali greci e latini. Studi comparativi*, ed. G. De Gregorio and O. Kresten (Spoleto, 1998), 111–40; C. Gastgeber, “Das Schreiben Alexios’ I. Komnenos an Robert I. von Flandern. Sprachliche Untersuchung,” *ibid.*, 141–85. I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Peter Schreiner for kindly drawing my attention to these studies. On the historical value of the letter, see also A. Cutler, “From Loot to Scholarship: Changing Modes in the Italian Response to Byzantine Artifacts, ca. 1200–1750,” *DOP* 49 (1995): 239–40.

²⁸ *Epistula Alexii* 134: “statua ad quam fuit ligatus; flagellum, a quo fuit flagellatus; chlamys coccinea, qua fuit indutus; corona spinea, qua fuit coronatus; harundo, quam uice sceptri in manibus tulit; uestimenta, quibus ante crucem exspoliatus fuit, pars maxima ligni crucis, in qua crucifixus fuit; clauī, quibus adfixus fuit; linteamina, post resurrectionem eius inuenta in sepulcro . . .”

²⁹ On the creation of Byzantine superiority in the “environment of diplomacy,” see R. Cormack, “But Is It Art?” in *Byzantine Diplomacy. Papers from the Twenty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Cambridge, March 1990*, ed. J. Shepard and S. Franklin (London, 1992), 219–36, esp. 221–27.

³⁰ The earliest reference to Constantine’s donation is in *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. L. Duchesne (Paris, 1886), 1:179. For a discussion of the circumstances of the donation, see S. De Blaauw, “Jerusalem in Rome and the Cult of the Cross,” in *Pratum Romanum. Richard Krautheimer zum 100. Geburtstag*, ed. R. Colella et al. (Wiesbaden, 1997), 55–73.

³¹ For the relic sent to Rome, see A. Frolov, *La relique de la Vraie Croix* (Paris, 1961) 180–81, no. 34. While Frolov suggested Pope John III as the recipient of the cross, the ambiguous phrase “dat Romae” in the reliquary’s dedicatory inscription seems to indicate that the circumstances of the donation might have been more complex. For an analysis of the reliquary’s present state of preservation and original makeup, see C. Belting-

in response to a direct request of Queen Radegunde, the widow of King Clothar I, and that her counter-gift consisted of a poetic homage paid by Venantius Fortunatus, whose famous hymns in honor of the Cross were composed for the solemn reception and translation of this very relic.³² Considering the priceless nature of the emperor's gift, the value of which superseded any worldly treasure, such an ephemeral counter-gift seems most fitting indeed.³³

It was this same notion of priceless and restricted accessibility that made relics a particularly powerful gift on Byzantine diplomatic missions to the Christian rulers and heirs of Charlemagne's empire in the West.³⁴ For unlike precious silks and other luxury objects that could be obtained by way of commerce, the distribution of relics, especially those of Christ, the Virgin, and certain eastern saints, was strictly controlled by the Byzantine emperor and thus out of reach for most western rulers.³⁵ Inevitably, western recipients of such sacred treasures must have found themselves in a position of inferiority—a reaction undoubtedly intended by the giver as part of his political message.³⁶ Several Byzantine embassies are recorded to have reached Carolingian rulers already in the eighth century, but it is not until the ninth century that relics are specifically recorded among the gifts carried by Byzantine diplomatic delegations.³⁷ One of the earliest gifts of this sort is

Ihm, "Das Justinuskreuz in der Schatzkammer der Peterskirche zu Rom," in *JbZMusMainz* 12 (1965): 142–66. For the relic sent to Poitiers, see Frolow, *La relique*, 179, no. 33. For the later history of the relic and its middle Byzantine container, see J. Durand, "Le reliquaire de la vraie croix de Poitiers. Nouvelles observations," *BullSocAntFr* (1992): 152–68.

³² For the poem in honor of the imperial couple, see Venantius Fortunatus, *Opera Poetica*, ed. F. Leo, MGH, AA 4.1 (Berlin, 1881; repr. 2000), Appendix 2, 277; for the hymns in honor of the cross, *ibid.*, 1:27; 2:27–28; 6:34–35.

³³ For a discussion of the role of poems and letters as counter-gifts in late Roman society, see I. Wood, "The Exchange of Gifts among the Late Antique Aristocracy," in *El disco de Teodosio*, ed. M. Almagro-Gorbea et al. (Madrid, 2000), 301–14.

³⁴ For a short assessment of the role of relics as Byzantine diplomatic gifts, see Mergiali-Sahas, "Byzantine Emperors and Holy Relics," 47–48. Byzantium was, of course, not the only source for relics during the Carolingian period. Despite papal hesitancy, Rome played an important role in the "production" and dissemination of holy relics across the newly Christianized areas of northern Europe. On the changing modes of the production and distribution of Roman relics, see J. M. McCulloh, "From Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Continuity and Change in Papal Relic Policy from the Sixth to the Eighth Centuries," in *Pietas. Festschrift für B. Kötting*, ed. E. Dassmann and K. S. Frank (Münster, 1980), 313–24. See also P. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1978).

³⁵ The Byzantine emperor's role as guardian of the most important relics of Christendom is the result of a historical development that seems to have gained momentum during the reign of Emperor Justin II, who not only rebuilt the churches of the Virgin in the Blachernai and Chalkoprateia in order to create new settings for the veneration of her most prized relics, her robe and girdle, but can also be credited with the removal of the *acheiropoietos* icon of Christ from Kamoulia and the relic of the True Cross from Apamea. During the reign of Herakleios, the Persian and Arab conquests of Jerusalem necessitated a more permanent translation of dominical and other eastern relics into the Byzantine capital. On the emperor's role as the guardian of relics of Christ's passion, see most recently H. A. Klein, "Constantine, Helena, and the Cult of the True Cross in Constantinople," in *Byzance et les Reliques du Christ*, ed. B. Flusin and J. Durand (Paris, 2004), 31–59; Mergiali-Sahas, "Byzantine Emperors and Holy Relics," 43–48. On the accessibility of Byzantine silks in the West, see Liutprand of Cremona, *Relatio de Legatione Constantinopolitana*, in Chiesa, ed., *Opera Omnia* (as above, note 15), 211–12; and Jacoby, above, 197–240.

³⁶ On the concept of "one-upmanship" in Byzantine practices of gift exchange, see A. Cutler, "Les échanges de dons entre Byzance et l'Islam (IXe–XIe siècle)," *JSav* (1996): 55–56.

³⁷ For earlier Byzantine missions and the gifts they carried, see J. Herrin, "Constantinople, Rome, and the Franks in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries," in *Byzantine Diplomacy* (as above, note 29), 91–107, esp. 100–107.

mentioned in Andrea Dandolo's thirteenth-century *Chronicon Venetum*, which states that "Doge Agnellus, a catholic man, received from Emperor Leo the body of St. Zachariah the prophet, a particle of the wood of the Cross, and vestments of Christ and his mother, with many treasures."³⁸ But already in the ninth century, the *Annals of Fulda* record that a Byzantine embassy sent to King Louis the German by Emperor Basil I arrived in Regensburg in January 872 with equally precious gifts, among them "a crystal of miraculous magnitude, decorated with gold and gems, and a not modest part of the lifegiving Cross."³⁹ As is attested by the unusual specificity of the Fulda chronicler's account, the lavishness of the Byzantine gifts was not lost on their western recipients.⁴⁰ Whether relics were again among the gifts brought to Germany by a Byzantine delegation that arrived in Regensburg in November 873 under the leadership of a certain Archbishop Agathon is not recorded in the *Annals*.⁴¹ It can, however, not be ruled out with certainty either.

Sending sacred relics along with other precious gifts to western rulers remained a Byzantine diplomatic custom well into the Ottonian and Salian period.⁴² A short reference in the early twelfth-century *Chronicon S. Andreae Castri Cameracesii*⁴³ may suggest that relics of the apostle Andrew reached Germany by way of a Byzantine embassy sent to Emperor Henry II in the early years of his reign.⁴⁴ More Byzantine relics seem to have reached western Europe between 1025 and 1028. According to the early eleventh-century history of Rodulfus Glaber, Bishop Odelricus of Orléans, passing through Constantinople on his way back from Jerusalem, received from Emperor Constantine VIII not only a great number of silken hangings, but also "quite a large part of the venerable Cross of our Lord the

For a more comprehensive study of diplomatic missions between Byzantium and the West, see T. C. Lounghis, *Les ambassades byzantines en Occident depuis la fondation des états barbares jusqu'aux croisades (407-1096)* (Athens, 1980), esp. 143-241. Given the generally hostile attitude toward relics and their veneration during the age of Iconoclasm, it seems unlikely that relics were among the gifts carried by Byzantine delegations of that period. For a critical evaluation of the role of relics during Iconoclasm, see J. Wortley, "Iconoclasm and Leipsanoclasm: Leo III, Constantine V and the Relics," in *ByzF* 8 (1982): 253-79, esp. 274-79, and S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Constantine V*, CSCO 384, Subsidia 52 (Louvain, 1977), 157-62.

³⁸ Andrea Dandolo, *Chronicon Venetum*, ed. L. A. Muratori, RIS 12 (Milan, 1728), bk. 8, chap. 1, 142: "Agnellus dux, vir catholicus, a Leone imperatore suscepit corpus sancti Zachariae prophete et partem Ligni Crucis et indumentorum Christi et Matris eius, cum plurimis thesauris." See also *Urkunden zur älteren Handels- und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig, mit besonderer Beziehung auf Byzanz und die Levante*, ed. G. L. F. Tafel and G. M. Thomas, *Fontes rerum Austriacarum* 12.2 (Vienna, 1856), 1.1: no. 1, 1-3; F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches von 565-1453. 1. Teil: Regesten von 565-1025* (Munich, 1924), 1: no. 399, 49; Lounghis, "Die byzantinischen Gesandten," 58-59. For the historical circumstances of the donation, see D. M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice* (Cambridge, 1988), 23-24.

³⁹ *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. G. H. Pertz, MGH, SS 1 (Hannover, 1826; repr. 1976), 384: "Mense Ianuario circa epiphaniam Basilii, Graecorum imperatoris, legati cum muneribus et epistolis ad Hludowicum regem Radasbonam venerunt, atque ei inter caetera exenia cristallum mirae magnitudinis, auro gemmisque praeciosis ornatum, cum parte non modica salutiferae crucis obtulerunt."

⁴⁰ For this embassy, see *Annales Fuldenses*, 337-415, esp. 384. See also Dölger, *Regesten*, 1:59, no. 489.

⁴¹ For Basil's second embassy to Louis the German, see *Annales Fuldenses*, 387, and Dölger, *Regesten*, 1:59, no. 491. For the role of ecclesiasts as leaders of Byzantine embassies to the West, see Lounghis, *Les ambassades*, 335-45.

⁴² For the diplomatic contacts in this period, see Lounghis, *Les ambassades*, 215-37.

⁴³ *Chronicon S. Andreae Castri Cameracesii*, ed. L. C. Bethmann, MGH, SS 7 (Hannover, 1846; repr. 1925), 529-30.

⁴⁴ For such a view, see W. Ohnsorge, "Die Legation des Kaisers Basileios II. an Heinrich II.," in idem, *Abendland und Byzanz. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Geschichte der byzantinisch-abendländischen Beziehungen und des Kaisertums* (Darmstadt, 1958; repr. 1979), 300-316. See also Lounghis, "Die byzantinischen Gesandten," 59.

Savior” which he was asked to deliver to his master, King Robert the Pious of France (996–1031).⁴⁵ The same emperor is said to have granted a relic of the True Cross to Count Manegold of Werd, the secular leader of an embassy sent to the Byzantine court by Emperor Conrad II in 1027.⁴⁶ Similarly, Conrad II himself is said to have received relics as gifts from the Byzantine emperor—at least they are recorded as such in a later charter issued by his mother, Adelheid.⁴⁷ A final example may show that relics of the True Cross were by no means the only category of relics presented to western rulers in the course of the diplomatic process. Alexios I’s letter to Henry IV, cited at length in Anna Komnene’s *Alexias*, is one of the few cases in which a Byzantine source provides a detailed list of gifts sent to a western ruler.⁴⁸ The letter records that Alexios, in a final attempt to convince Henry to take action against Robert Guiscard, had sent 144,000 nomismata and 100 silken garments to Henry and further reveals that he was to receive another 261,000 nomismata as well as other payments once he had sworn an oath to support the emperor’s case against Robert.⁴⁹ After a lengthy discussion of the more specific details involved in the settlement of the affair, the letter ends with an expression of hope for future military and family ties. As if to stress the sincerity of his wishes, the letter concludes: “For now we are sending your Highness as a token of our friendship a golden pectoral cross decorated with pearls, a golden container with relics of several saints, each of which identified by an attached card, a chalice of sardonyx, a crystal goblet, a bloodstone set in gold, and some opobalsamon.”⁵⁰ It is interesting to note, especially with regard to Arnold of Lübeck’s account, that within Alexios’s letter this so-called “token of friendship” is carefully distinguished from the money and the silken garments offered to Henry as a stimulus and prize for his campaign against the Normans.⁵¹

Gifts of relics such as those just mentioned were of course not restricted to imperial recipients. This is attested by a number of ecclesiastical documents that record the exchange of gifts and letters between the patriarchs of Constantinople and the popes in Rome. In 811, when Patriarch Nikephoros of Constantinople sent a synodal letter to his colleague

⁴⁵ *Rodulfi Glabri historiarum libri quinque—The Five Books of the Histories*, ed. and trans. J. France (Oxford, 1989), 202–3: “Detulit etiam Roberto regi partem pregrandem uenerabilis crucis Domini Saluatoris, missam a Constantino imperatore Graecorum cum multitudine palliorum olosericorum.” See also Frolov, *La relique*, no. 155, 244.

⁴⁶ For a discussion of the circumstances in which Manegold received the sacred gift, see below.

⁴⁷ *Wirtembergisches Urkundenbuch*, ed. Königliches Staatsarchiv Stuttgart, 11 vols. (Stuttgart, 1849–1913), 1: 254–55, no. 215. See also Frolov, *La relique*, 265–66, no. 204. Apart from the relic of the True Cross, none of the relics mentioned in Adelheid’s charter are likely to be gifts from the Byzantine emperor. For a discussion of the circumstances in which Conrad seems to have received the cross relic, see B. Schwineköper, “Christus-Reliquien-Verehrung und Politik,” in *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte* 117 (1981): 183–281, esp. 224–33.

⁴⁸ Anna Komnene, *Alexiade: Règne de l’empereur Alexis I Comnène (1081–1118)*, ed. and trans. B. Leib, 4 vols. (Paris, 1937–76), 1:133–36. See also the new German edition, *Annae Comnenae Alexias*, ed. D. Reinsch, CFHB 40, 2 vols. (Berlin, 2001), 1:112–14. On Alexios’s gift for Henry IV, see Cutler, “Gifts and Gift Exchange,” 251.

⁴⁹ Anna Komnene, *Alexiade* 1:134.

⁵⁰ Anna Komnene, *Alexiade* 1:135: Τῇ μέντοι εὐγενεΐᾳ σου νῦν ἀπεστάλησαν δεξιωμαίων ἕνεκεν ἐγκόλιον χρυσοῦν μετὰ μαργαριταρίων, θήκη διάχρυσος ἔχουσα ἔνδον τμήματα διαφόρων ἀγίων, ὧν ἕκαστον διὰ τοῦ ἐφ’ ἐκάστῳ αὐτῶν ἐντεθέντος χαρτίου γνωρίζεται, καυκίον σαρδονύχιον καὶ ἐμπότης κρύος, ἀστροπέλεκιν δεδεμένον μετὰ χρυσαφίου καὶ ὀποβάλαμον.

⁵¹ The role of relics and other luxuries as “sweeteners, addenda to the specie that constituted the major portion of a gift,” has recently been stressed by Cutler, “Gift and Gift Exchange,” 251.

Pope Leo III in Rome, he enclosed with it a “golden enkolpion containing particles of the glorious wood.”⁵² As the letter further indicates, the enkolpion was decorated on one side with crystal and on the other with images of Christ’s Passion in niello. It is perhaps not too far-fetched to assume that the gift resembled the so-called *Pliska Cross* and other enkolpia of its kind.⁵³ About two generations later, in 880, Patriarch Photios sent a similar gift “as a sign of his friendship” to the bishop and future pope Marinus of Ceri, who had visited Constantinople on at least four occasions as a papal diplomat and had participated in the eighth ecumenical council of 869.⁵⁴ Northern bishops, too, claimed to have received particles of the venerable wood from the Byzantine emperor. The *vita* of the late eleventh-century bishop Anno of Cologne (d. 1075), for instance, records “that the legates he had sent to the king of Greece with letters had come back with quite a large particle of the wood of the Lord and other kinds of royal gifts the king had presented to them.”⁵⁵ Although attempts to identify a Byzantine cross relic in the treasury of Cologne Cathedral (Fig. 1) as the one allegedly received by Anno must be treated with caution, there can be little doubt that relics of the True Cross were indeed presented to western ecclesiastical diplomats.⁵⁶ The relics contained in two Byzantine reliquary triptychs (Fig. 2), incorporated in the larger Stavelot Triptych, may serve as a prominent example.⁵⁷ While there is no direct evidence to support the assumption that Wibald of Stavelot received these reliquaries as gifts during one of his diplomatic missions to Constantinople, the workmanship

⁵² V. Grumel and J. Darrouzès, *Regestes des Actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople*, vol. 1. *Les Actes des Patriarches*, fasc. 2–3: *Les Regestes de 715 à 1206*, 2d ed. (Paris, 1989), 39–40, no. 382. For the text, see Mansi 14:56: ἀπεστείλαμεν . . . ἐγκόλιον χρυσοῦν, οὗ ἡ μία ὀψις κρυστάλλου ἐγκατακεκλεισμένη, ἡ δὲ ἑτέρα εἰκονισμένη δι’ ἐγκαύσεως, καὶ ἐντὸς ἔχον ἕτερον ἐγκόλιον, ἐν ᾧ εἰσι μερίδες τῶν τιμίων ξύλων ἐντετυπωμένα. See also Frolow, *La relique*, 214–15, no. 86.

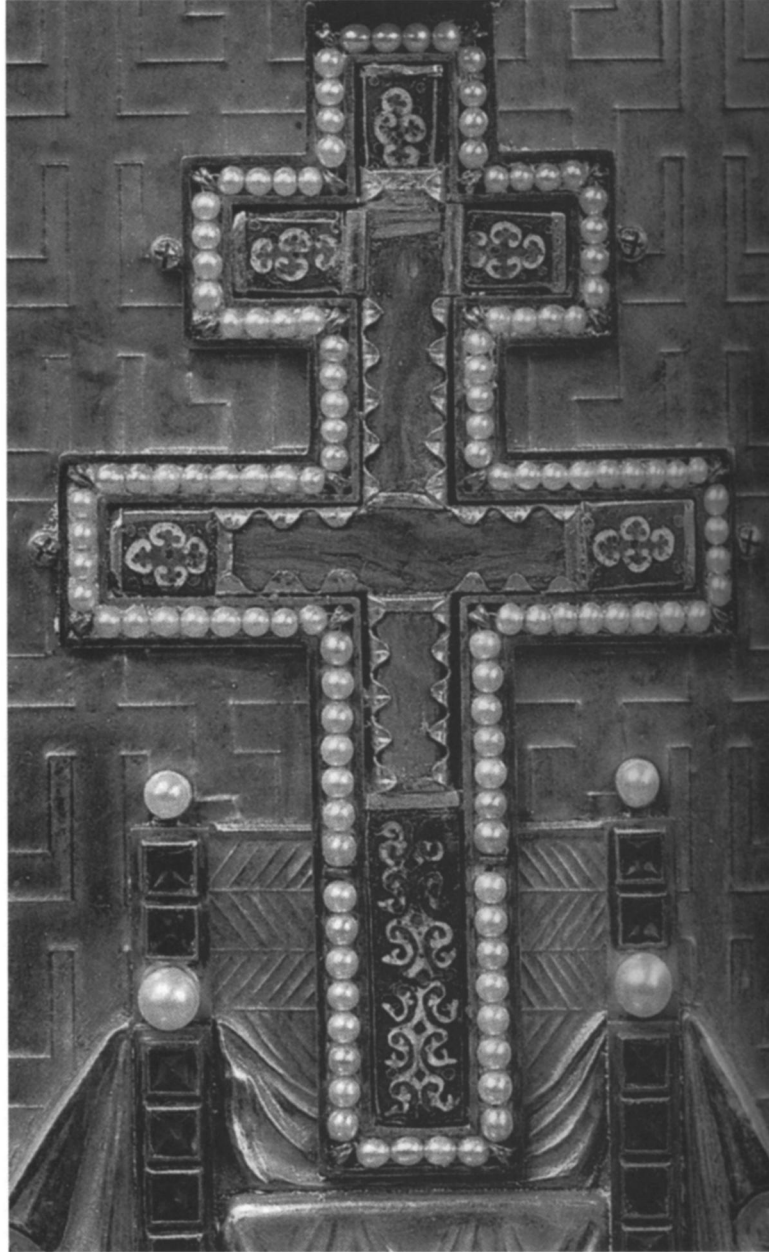
⁵³ For the Pliska Cross and related enkolpia, see L. Dontcheva-Petkova, “Une croix pectorale-reliquaire en or récemment trouvée à Pliska,” *CahArch* 25 (1976): 59–66; eadem, “Croix d’or-reliquaire de Pliska,” in *Bulletin de l’Institut d’Archéologie* 35 (1979): 74–91.

⁵⁴ Grumel and Darrouzès, *Regestes* (as above, note 52), 147, no. 554 [523]. See Frolow, *La relique*, 223, no. 110.

⁵⁵ *Vita Annonis Archiepiscopi Colonensis*, ed. R. Koepke, MGH, SS 11 (Hannover, 1854; repr. 1994), 479: “quod cum epistolis legatos suos ad Graeciae regem direxit, qui reversi dominici ligni partem non modicam aliaque regalium donorum insignia rege transmittente ipsi praesentarunt.” According to the late 11th-century chronicle of Hugh of Flavigny, Archbishop Gero, one of Anno’s immediate predecessors on the cathedra of Cologne, had received relics of St. Pantaleon in Constantinople while on his mission to negotiate the details of the marriage between Otto II and Theophano in 971/72. Since such an event is unknown in the textual tradition of St. Pantaleon, this information needs to be treated with caution. See Hugh of Flavigny, *Chronicon*, ed. G. H. Pertz, MGH, SS 8 (Hannover, 1848; repr. 1992), 374; F. J. Böhmer and E. von Ottenthal, *Regesta Imperii II. Die Regesten des Kaiserreichs unter den Herrschern aus dem Sächsischen Hause (1. Lieferung)* (Innsbruck, 1893), 234, no. 533a; F. J. Böhmer and H. L. Mikoletzky, *Regesta Imperii II. Die Regesten des Kaiserreiches unter Otto II. (2. Lieferung)* (Graz, 1950), 270, no. 597d; F. W. Oedingen, *Die Regesten der Erzbischöfe von Köln im Mittelalter, 313–1099* (Bonn, 1954–58), 155, no. 504.

⁵⁶ *Ornamenta Ecclesiae. Kunst und Künstler der Romanik*, ed. A. Legner, exh. cat., Schnütgen Museum, 3 vols. (Cologne, 1985), 3:120–21, no. H38; *Monumenta Annonis*, ed. A. Legner, exh. cat., Erzbischöfliches Diözesanmuseum (Cologne, 1975), 163, no. D1.

⁵⁷ For a short summary of the state of research on the triptych, see *The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843–1261*, ed. W. D. Wixom and H. C. Evans, exh. cat., Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, 1997), 461–63, no. 301; see also K. Holbert, “Mosan Reliquary Triptychs and the Cult of the True Cross in the Twelfth Century” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1995); *The Stavelot Triptych. Mosan Art and the Legend of the True Cross*, ed. W. Voelkle, exh. cat., Pierpont Morgan Library (New York, 1980).



1 Cologne, Cathedral Treasury, cross relic, 11th century (photo: Rheinisches Bildarchiv, Cologne)



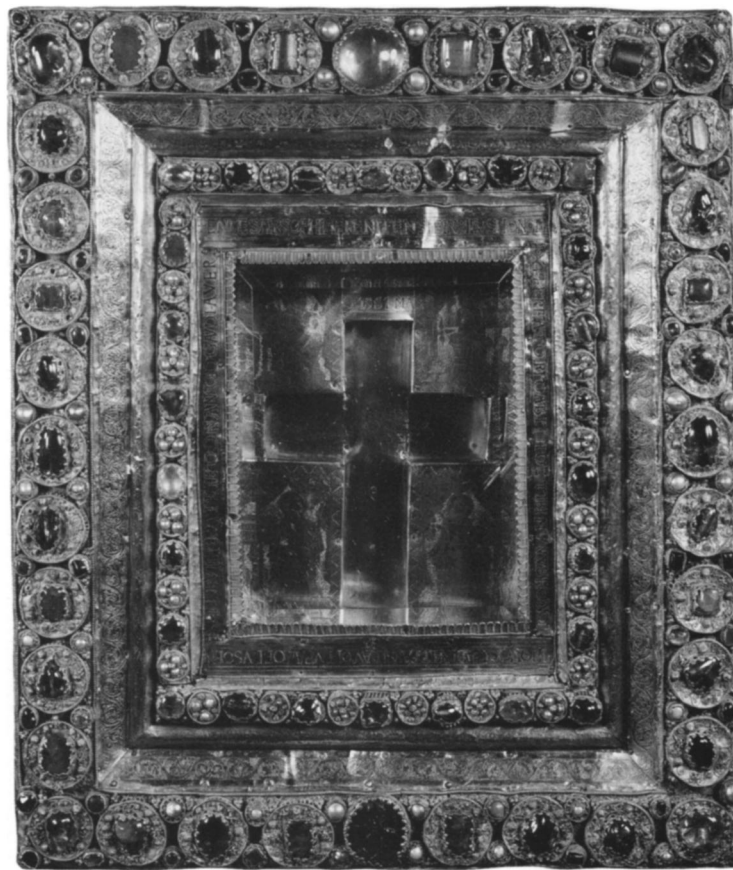
2 New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Stavelot Triptych (detail), enkolpia, 11th–12th century (photo: courtesy of The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York)



3 New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Stavelot Triptych, ca. 1160 (photo: courtesy of The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York)



4 Reims, Cathedral Treasury, Talisman of Charlemagne, 9th century (photo: A. Münchow, courtesy of the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, Munich)



5 Munich, Treasury of the Residence, cross reliquary of Henry II, early 11th century (photo: Bayerische Verwaltung der Staatlichen Schlösser, Gärten und Seen, Munich)



6 Donauwörth, Pädagogische Stiftung Cassianeum, *stauwotheke* (front), 11th century (photo: Wolf-Christian von der Mülbe; Pädagogische Stiftung Cassianeum, Donauwörth)



7 Donauwörth, Pädagogische Stiftung Cassianeam, *staurotheke* (detail), 11th century (photo: Wolf-Christian von der Mülbe; Pädagogische Stiftung Cassianeam, Donauwörth)



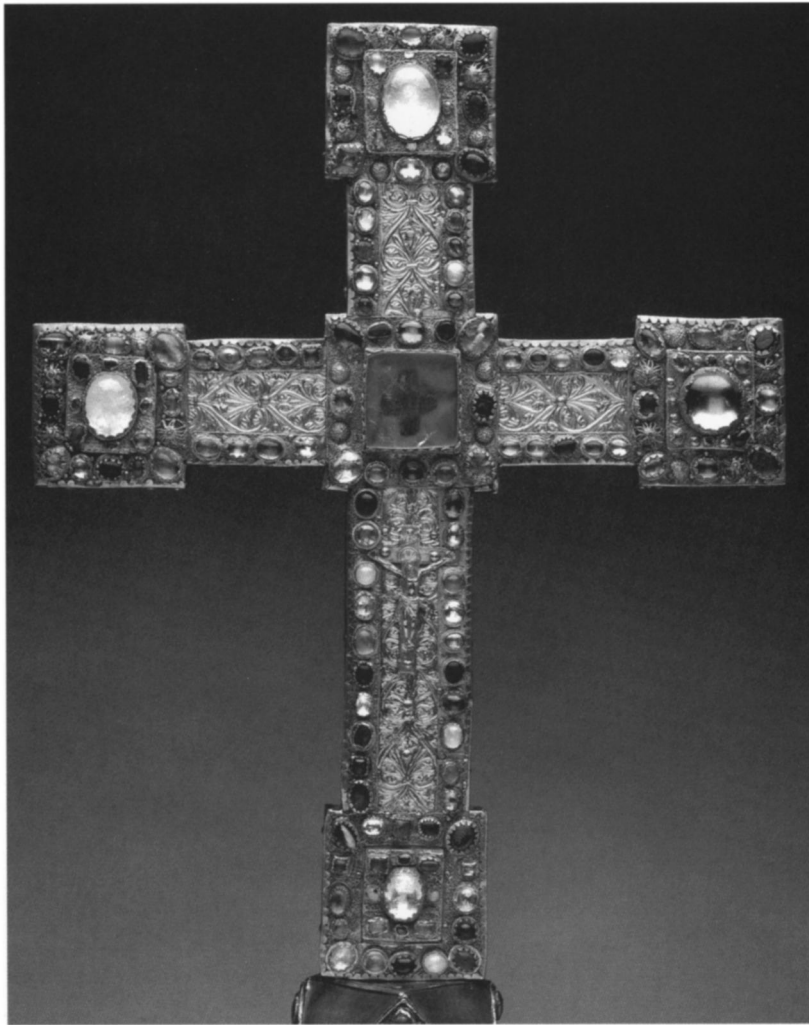
8 Formerly Donauwörth, original lid of *staurotheke* (photo: after C. Königsdorfer, *Geschichte des Klosters zum Heiligen Kreuz in Donauwörth* [Donauwörth, 1819])



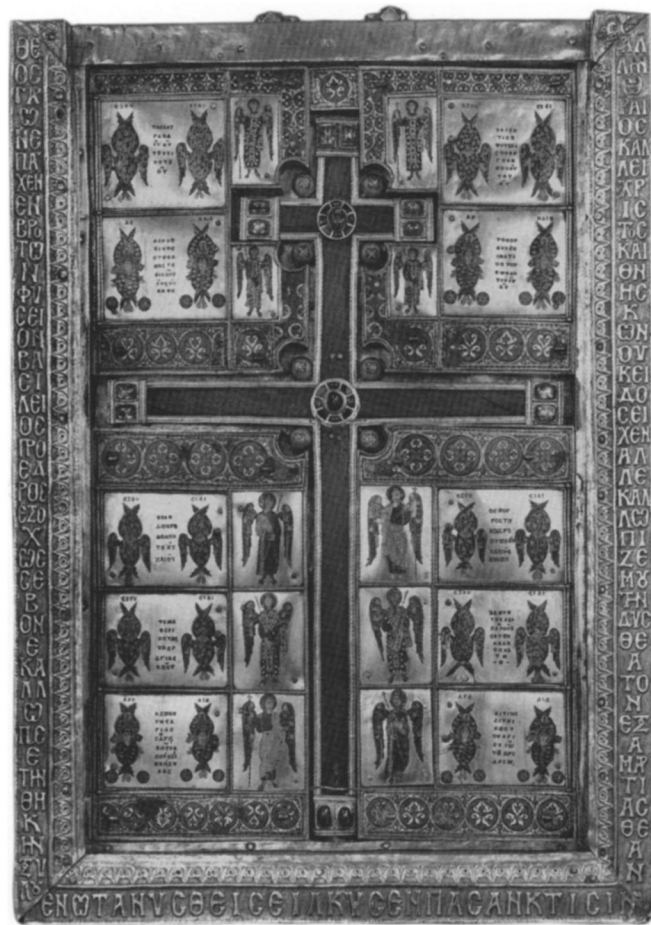
9 Kala, St. Kvirike (on loan from the Museum for History and Ethnography of Saventia), *staurolitheke*, 11th century (photo: after L. Khuskivadze, "La staurolithèque byzantine de la Svanéti," in *Byzantine East, Latin West. Art-historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, ed. C. Moss and K. Kiefer [Princeton, 1995], Fig. 1)



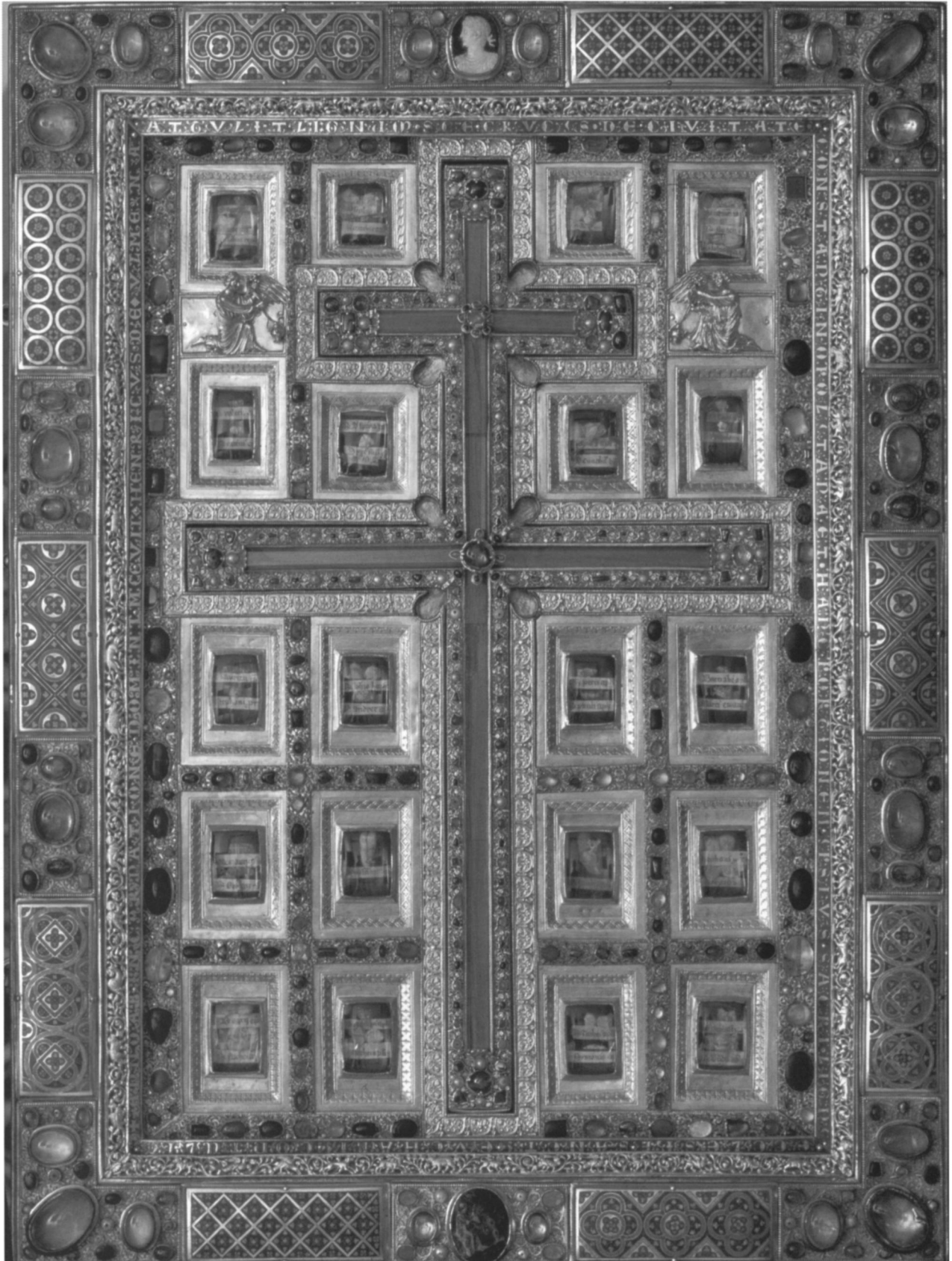
10 Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, arm reliquary, 12th century (photo: courtesy of The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland)



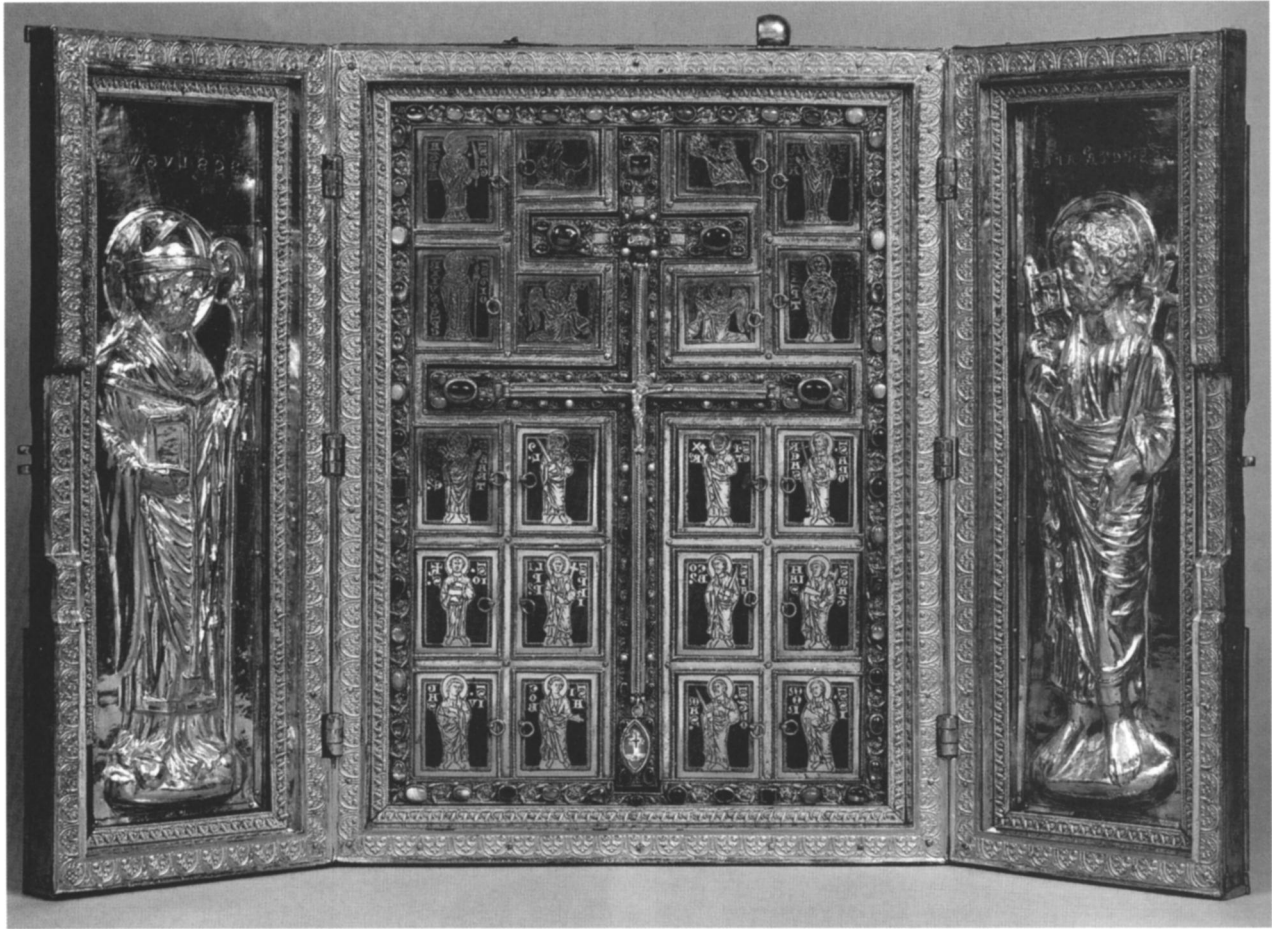
11 Hildesheim, Dom- und Diözesanmuseum, reliquary cross of Henry the Lion, 12th century (photo: courtesy of the Dom- und Diözesanmuseum, Hildesheim)



12 Limburg, Dom- und Diözesanmuseum, Limburger Staurothek, 968–985 (photo: Jutta Brüder, Braunschweig; courtesy of the Dom- und Diözesanmuseum Limburg)



13 Trier, St. Matthias, Treasury, cross reliquary, ca. 1230–40 (photo: Rita Heyen; Amt für kirchliche Denkmalpflege, Trier)



14 Mettlach, St. Petrus und Lutwinus, cross reliquary, ca. 1220–30 (photo: Rheinisches Bildarchiv, Cologne)

of the framing Mosan triptych (Fig. 3) makes such a scenario indeed highly likely, as has long been argued on technical and stylistic grounds.⁵⁸ Art historical considerations about the Stavelot Triptych's patronage are further supported by the fact that friendly ties had been established between Wibald and the Byzantine emperor long before the abbot's first mission to Constantinople. As revealed in his letters, Wibald had received a costly silken garment from the emperor already in 1151.⁵⁹ The assumption that Wibald received two precious reliquary triptychs during his later visit to Constantinople thus gains plausibility. What seems to have made relics, particularly those of the True Cross, a highly effective diplomatic gift was not only their significance as powerful tokens of Christ's promise for salvation, but that they could serve a variety of different purposes and appealed to a wide range of potential western recipients: emperors, kings, and dukes, as well as popes, bishops, and abbots.

It is worth noting, however, that the artistic impact of those Byzantine reliquaries known to have reached the West between the middle of the ninth and the beginning of the twelfth century seems to have been rather limited—a fact that may largely be due to their relatively small size and intended personal rather than liturgical use. Of all surviving reliquaries produced in the West during the Carolingian period, there exists only one object that was likely created with the intention to emulate such Byzantine imports, namely, a rock crystal pendant formerly in the possession of Aachen Cathedral but now preserved in the Cathedral treasury of Reims (Fig. 4).⁶⁰ However, the fact that the reliquary's design recalls the description given for the Byzantine reliquary received by Louis the German in 872 does not suffice to corroborate such an assumption.⁶¹ Perhaps surprisingly, the situation does not seem to have changed dramatically during the Ottonian period, traditionally considered a first climax of Byzantine artistic "influence" in western Europe—

⁵⁸ Wibald visited Constantinople twice, in 1155 and 1157, as Frederick Barbarossa's ambassador to the court of Manuel I Komnenos. His diplomatic missions are mentioned in both western and Byzantine sources, notably in Otto of Freising, *Gesta Frederici seu rectius Cronica*, ed. F.-J. Schmale, 4th ed. (Darmstadt, 2000), 362–63, 382–83, and John Kinnamos, *Epitome*, 135. For the political circumstances of Wibald's embassies, see F. Chandon, *Les Comnènes. Études sur l'Empire byzantin au XIe et au XIIe siècles*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1912), 2:343–75, esp. 346–52, 374–75. For Wibald's patronage of the Stavelot Triptych, see *The Stavelot Triptych*, 10–11.

⁵⁹ See *Monumenta Corbeiensia*, ed. P. Jaffé, Bibliotheca Rerum Germanicarum 1 (Berlin, 1864), 454–55, no. 325: "Missum est tibi examitum megalogramon diplarion album." See also Wibald's response, 550, no. 411: "Immensas gratias ego et fratres mei referimus pro exsamito albo nobis transmisso." For further letters exchanged, *ibid.*, 561, no. 424, and 568, no. 432.

⁶⁰ P. Lasko, *Ars Sacra*, 2d ed. (New Haven, 1994); E. G. Grimme, "Die 'Lukasmadonna' und das 'Brustkreuz Karls des Großen'," in *Miscellanea pro Arte. Hermann Schnitzler zur Vollendung des 60. Lebensjahres am 13. Januar 1965* (Düsseldorf, 1965), 48–53; P. E. Schramm and F. Mütterich, *Denkmale der deutschen Könige und Kaiser* (Munich, 1962), 120, no. 17; P. E. Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik*, MGH, *Schriften* 13.1 (Munich, 1954), 309–10. See also Schweineköper, "Christus-Reliquien," 204–5.

⁶¹ The date of the pendant, which originally contained relics of the Virgin's hair and milk, is controversial, but must generally be assigned to the 9th century. Although 17th-century sources record that it was one of three enkolpia found around Charlemagne's neck during the opening of his tomb by Emperor Otto III, such an identification is not supported by the account of Thietmar of Merseburg, the earliest witness of the event. Attempts to date the reliquary with regard to the 17th-century tradition must therefore be taken with caution. For the passage in Thietmar's chronicle, see *Die Chronik des Bischofs Thietmar von Merseburg und ihre Korveier Überarbeitung*, ed. R. Holtzmann, MGH, *ScriptRerGerm* n.s. 9 (Berlin, 1935; repr. 1996), 186–87; for the 17th-century tradition, see Petrus a Beeck, *Imperialium ecclesiarum Aquis in B. Mariae canonici . . . Aquisgranum* (Aachen, 1620), 75; Joannes Noppius, *Aacher Chronik* (Cologne, 1643), 11.

especially after the arrival of Princess Theophano, the Byzantine bride of Otto II and future regent for Otto III.⁶² While Ottonian artists developed an increasing interest in the use of Byzantine spolia and the adoption and adaptation of Byzantine techniques, pictorial motifs, and iconographic formulae, there are few sources—and even fewer objects—that would suggest an active western interest in copying Byzantine reliquary forms or adopting certain liturgical or ceremonial practices. One such source, the tenth-century *consuetudines* of the abbey of St. Emmeram in Regensburg, specifies that during processions on Sundays and certain feast days “the priest should carry around his neck the phylactery with the Lord’s wood.”⁶³ Whether this means that the monastery possessed a larger Byzantine *staurotheke* and consciously emulated what was perhaps considered Byzantine liturgical practice is hard to tell.⁶⁴ Similarly, it is difficult to interpret a notice in Thangmar’s *Vita Bernwardi*, which records that the bishop himself created a “container (*thecam*) richly decorated with gold and precious stones” for a particle of the True Cross he had received from Emperor Otto III as a gift.⁶⁵ While the unusual term *theca* may be taken as an indication that Bernward’s reliquary was in some way based on a Byzantine exemplar, the miracle story that follows in Thangmar’s account rather points to a cruciform reliquary, fragments of which may still form part of the so-called *Bernwardkreuz*.⁶⁶ The only Ottonian reliquary that has been considered to derive in its form more or less directly from a Byzantine model is the panel-shaped cross reliquary associated with Emperor Henry II in the treasury of the Residence in Munich (Fig. 5).⁶⁷ Attempts to reconstruct the reliquary’s original ap-

⁶² For a cautious assessment of the impact of Byzantine minor arts on western artistic production during the Ottonian period, see H. Westermann-Angerhausen, “Did Theophano Leave Her Mark on the Ottonian Sumptuary Arts?” in *Empress Theophano: Byzantium and the West at the Turn of the First Millennium*, ed. A. Davids (Cambridge, 1995), 244–64.

⁶³ *Consuetudinum saeculi X/XI/XII Monumenta non-Cluniacensia*, ed. K. Hallinger, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis 7.3 (Siegburg, 1984), 208: “In processione uero illa nihil aliud feratur nisi aqua benedicta, crux, missalis ante presbiterum et ipse sacerdos in collo suo phylacterium cum ligno domini gerat.”

⁶⁴ In fact, the word “phylacterium” seems to indicate that it was rather a reliquary enkolpion. Whereas the use of imported Byzantine enkolpia is attested in both the Latin East and West in a military context, the use of such a reliquary in a liturgical procession is, to my knowledge, unique.

⁶⁵ Thangmar, *Vita Bernwardi Episcopi Hildesheimensis*, ed. G. H. Pertz, MGH, SS 4 (Hildesheim, 1841; repr. 1982), 762: “Nam venerabilis pontifex Bernwardus thecam auro gemmisque lautissimam, in qua vivificum lignum includeret, paravit, et cum ex tribus particulis sancti ligni quartam si fieri posset excidere temptaret, ut per singulas absides singulas conderet portiones, . . . ecce subito inter manus ipsius antistitis quarta particula sacratissimi ligni angelico ut creditur ministerio delata apparuit. Mox igitur praesul laetus lignum sanctum per quatuor absides paravit.”

⁶⁶ Hildesheim, Domschatz, inv. no. DS L109. The surviving Ottonian fragments of the (extensively remodeled) cross suggest that the original was cruciform in shape and richly decorated with gold filigree and precious stones, i.e., purely western in concept. See *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen*, ed. M. Brandt, exh. cat., Dommuseum Hildesheim (Hildesheim–Mainz, 1993), no. VIII-34, 587–89 with bibliography. The so-called “Silbernes Bernwardkreuz,” while reflecting Byzantine traditions at least in its shape, was decorated with neither gold nor precious stones and thus cannot be identified with the *theca* mentioned by Thangmar. For this cross, see *Byzanz. Die Macht der Bilder*, ed. A. Effenberger and M. Brandt, exh. cat., Dommuseum Hildesheim (Hildesheim, 1998), no. 72, 138 and 159; *Bernward von Hildesheim*, no. VIII-31, 578–81, both with bibliographies.

⁶⁷ Munich, Treasury of the Residence, inv. no. Res. Mü. Schk. 9WL. See most recently G. Suckale-Redlefsen, “Goldener Schmuck für Kirche und Kaiser,” in *Kaiser Heinrich II.*, ed. J. Kirmeier et al., exh. cat., Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte (Bamberg, 2002), 78–92, esp. 79–82; H. Fillitz, “Das Kreuzreliquiar Heinrichs II. in der Münchener Residenz,” *MünchJb* 9–10 (1958–59): 15–31, esp. 29: “Die Staurothek Kaiser Heinrichs ist die älteste abendländische, die erhalten geblieben ist.”

pearance, however, have proved to be difficult and do not permit the identification of a specific Byzantine prototype.⁶⁸ Considering the often attested Ottonian practice of dismantling Byzantine ivory triptychs for their inclusion on book covers and other liturgical objects, one may be inclined to doubt that the occasional Byzantine reliquary that reached German lands during the tenth and eleventh centuries was spared a similar fate and instead used as an artistic model for the production of similar *vasa sacra*. The form and decoration of Emperor Conrad II's famous *Reichskreuz*⁶⁹ in Vienna at least suggest that German artists and their patrons remained generally conservative in their tastes even after the alleged advent of more and larger particles of the True Cross from Constantinople.⁷⁰

Whereas there exists, to my knowledge, not a single work or document that would prove an immediate artistic response to the arrival of Byzantine reliquaries in the West during the remainder of the eleventh century, there can be no doubt that western interest in the Byzantine ceremonial and liturgical use of relics, especially relics of Christ, started to increase considerably during the Salian period. This is suggested by the eleventh-century *Ordines Coronationis Imperialis* and a passage in Benzo of Alba's famous panegyric in honor of Emperor Henry IV, which, for the first time, mention the presence of a relic of the True Cross during the procession that precedes the emperor's coronation.⁷¹ As Berent Schweineköper has shown, it must have been during the early years of Salian rule that the relic of the True Cross—most likely the one enclosed in the *Reichskreuz*—assumed a status similar to that held by the Holy Lance ever since Otto I's defeat of the Magyars at Birten when it became a prime symbol of imperial power and victory.⁷² That Byzantine customs and practices need to be considered as possible sources for these changes is suggested by other passages in Benzo's panegyric. In the preface to Book VI, for instance, he reflects upon the military tactics of the "Byzantine king Nikephoros [i.e., Nikephoros II Phokas], a man wise and experienced in war, who surrounded Antioch with a siege wall and terrible

⁶⁸ Fillitz, "Kreuzreliquiar," 23–30. Although Fillitz's proposal for the Ottonian reliquary's original form is generally convincing, his formal comparisons with Byzantine *staurothekai* remain rather vague. His arguments for a conscious adaptation of Byzantine reliquary forms and ceremonial practices are, for the most part, based on developments not documented in the West before the early Salian period.

⁶⁹ See H. Fillitz, *Die Schatzkammer in Wien* (Salzburg–Vienna, 1986), 166–67, no. 2; Schramm and Mütterich, *Denkmale*, 170, no. 145.

⁷⁰ Schweineköper, "Christus-Reliquien," 224–47. While Schweineköper states "Es kann also kein Zweifel daran bestehen, daß Konrad II. durch ein Geschenk des byzantinischen Kaisers in den Besitz einer Kreuzpartikel gelangt ist," he admits "daß darüber bisher keine über die . . . Öhringer Quelle hinausgehenden schriftlichen Nachrichten vorliegen." His conclusion, "daß also die heute in Wien aufbewahrte Kreuzreliquie als Geschenk des byzantinischen Kaisers nach dem Westen gekommen sein muß" should be treated with caution, especially considering its enormous size (31 cm).

⁷¹ For the coronation *ordines*, see *Ordines Coronationis Imperialis*, ed. R. Elze, MGH, *Font* 9 (Hannover, 1960; repr. 1995), 34: "[Tunc] pappas sustentat imperatorem in dextra, et archiepiscopus Mediolanensis in sinistra, et tunc imperatorem ante portatur crux plena ligno dominico et lancea sancti Mauricii, et sic imperator vadit versus ecclesiam, ubi debet coronari." For Benzo of Alba's description of the coronation of Henry IV, see Benzo of Alba, *Ad Heinricum IV imperatorem libri VII*, ed. H. Seyffert, MGH, *ScriptRerGerm* 65 (Hannover, 1996), 124–26: "Processio vero Romani imperatoris celebratur talibus modis. Portatur ante eum sancta crux gravida ligni dominici, et lancea sancti Mauricii. Deinde sequitur venerabilis ordo episcoporum, abbatum et sacerdotum, et innumerabilium clericorum, tunc rex indutus bysino podere, auro et gemmis inserto, mirabili opere."

⁷² For the king's use of the lance during the battle, see Liutprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis* 111: "Rex denique tantam suorum constantiam non sine divino instinctu esse considerans . . . , cum populo lacrimas fundens ante victoriferos clavos, manibus domini et salvatoris nostri Iesu Christi adfixos suaeque lanceae interpositos, in orationem dedit."

machines for seven years. Twice a week he went around the city with many of his people, as once in Jericho. And a cross with the Lord's wood preceded him, through which he hoped to gain victory."⁷³ How closely the new western interest in the military and ceremonial role of the True Cross and other relics of Christ was linked to the reception of Byzantine gifts is expressed only slightly later in the same book: "The basileus," records Benzo of Alba, "sent him [Henry] many saintly things, necessary in churches as much as in wars—no gift on earth equals them: [fragments] of the shroud, of the cross, and of the crown of thorns, through which the vineyard that turned bitter deluded its king. Such a treasure is not corrupted by the moth."⁷⁴

Considering the increasing western interest in the military and ceremonial use of relics of Christ's Passion, it may not come as a surprise that distinguished visitors to the Byzantine capital were particularly eager to obtain such rare and incorruptible gifts. Unfortunately, the arrival of Byzantine relics in the West is only rarely attested during the eleventh century. A notable exception is, as already mentioned, a relic of the True Cross said to have been brought to Germany by Count Manegold of Werd during a diplomatic mission in 1027/29.⁷⁵ The mere fact of Manegold's acquisition of the relic "decenter auro et gemmis ornata, tunc ab autocratore Constantinopoleos nomine Romanos dono data"⁷⁶ is documented in a papal bull issued by Leo IX on 3 December 1049 on the occasion of the pope's consecration of a convent founded by Manegold to safeguard the sacred relic.⁷⁷ It is only through the twelfth-century account of a certain monk Berthold, sent to Constantinople by his abbot Dieterich to research the facts surrounding Manegold's acquisition, that we

⁷³ Benzo of Alba, *Ad Heinricum* 508–9: "In Atticis enim legitur hystoriis, quod Byzanzenus rex Nikephorus, vir sapiens et bellicosus, circumcinxit Antiochiam vallo formidandisque machinis plus minus septem annis. Et bis in hebdomada coronatus circuibat civitatem cum multis populorum turmis ad similitudinem Hyerechontine urbis. Crux denique ligni dominici precedebat eum, per quod sperabat victoriae tropheum."

⁷⁴ Benzo of Alba, *Ad Heinricum* 548–51: "Basileus misit et multa sanctuaria, / Quae in templis seu bellis sat sunt necessaria— / Nulla dona super terram his habentur paria: / De sudario, de cruce, de corona spinea, / Qua delusit regem suum amaricans vinea. / Huiusquemodi thesaurum non corrumpit tineae." Although relics of the shroud and the crown of thorns are not recorded elsewhere, it seems that Benzo is referring to those relics received in 1082 from Alexios I. For the military use of relics in Byzantium, see Mergiali-Sahas, "Byzantine Emperors and Holy Relics," 49–51; Klein, "Cult of the True Cross," 40 and 55–58.

⁷⁵ Contemporary evidence for this embassy, sent to Constantinople by Emperor Conrad II in the fall of 1027, is scant. See Wipo, *Gesta Chuonradi imperatoris*, in *Die Werke Wipos*, ed. H. Bresslau, MGH, *ScriptRerGer* 61, 3d ed. (Hannover, 1915; repr. 1993), 1–62, esp. 42; P. Jaffé, *Regesta* (Paris, 1885–88), 1:535, no. 4207 (3202); *Annales Augustani*, ed. G. H. Pertz, MGH, *SS* 3 (Hannover, 1839; repr. 1986), 125. For an evaluation of the sources and an assessment of the reasons for Conrad's embassy, see most recently H. Wolfram, "Die Gesandtschaft Konrads II. nach Konstantinopel," *MittIOG* 100 (1992): 161–74; O. Kresten, "Correctiunculae zu Auslandsschreiben byzantinischer Kaiser des 11. Jahrhunderts," *Aachener Kunstblätter* 60 (1994): 143–62, esp. 143–44. See also H. Bresslau, "Ein Beitrag zur Kenntnis von Konrads II. Beziehungen zu Byzanz und Dänemark," *Forschungen zur deutschen Geschichte* 10 (1870): 606–13; idem, *Jahrbücher des Deutschen Reiches unter Konrad II. Erster Band: 1024–1031* (Leipzig, 1879), 234–36, 271–75.

⁷⁶ Jaffé, *Regesta* 1:535. For the full text of the bull, see PL 143:637–39.

⁷⁷ According to later sources, the relic was first kept in a chapel built around 1034 inside the precinct of Manegold's castle. The chapel was destroyed shortly after its consecration, and Manegold II rebuilt the church and a convent outside the castle walls. At the beginning of the 12th century, Manegold III reformed the monastery and, with the help of Bishop Gebhard III of Constance, refounded it with twelve monks from the Benedictine abbey of St. Blasien. The events surrounding the refoundation are recorded in a papal bull issued by Innocent II on 19 June 1135. See Jaffé, *Regesta* 1:867, no. 7719 (5507); PL 179:240. For a summary of the history of the monastery of the Holy Cross, see A. Steichele, *Das Bistum Augsburg. Dritter Band: Die Landkapitel Dillingen, Dinkelsbühl, Donauwörth* (Augsburg, 1872), 827–32.

learn more about the circumstances in which Manegold is said to have received the imperial gift.⁷⁸ His report can be summarized as follows: After much maltreatment by Byzantine officials, Manegold, the secular leader of the diplomatic mission, is able to gain the attention of the Byzantine emperor [Constantine VIII].⁷⁹ Soon he wins his friendship and is allowed to enter and leave the Byzantine palace as he pleases. One day, in a moment of weakness, the emperor promises Manegold to grant him whatever he wished. Manegold immediately asks for an imperial relic of the True Cross he had seen on an earlier occasion. At first the emperor refuses to grant the gift, stressing that the relic played an important role in the Byzantine coronation ritual, but, realizing that he is bound by his word, the emperor finally honors Manegold's request. Shortly thereafter the emperor falls sick and dies. During the preparations for the coronation of his successor [Romanos III], the reliquary is discovered missing. Immediately Manegold, whose close ties to the previous emperor had already aroused suspicion, is accused of theft and his quarters are searched. Since Manegold had already secretly sent the reliquary back to Germany, he is able to convince the new emperor of his innocence. He declares his mission to be finished and returns to his native lands, where the precious relic has long since arrived.⁸⁰

Although Berthold's account is as fantastic in its assessment of the historical details as it is revealing of the most common western stereotypes concerning the Byzantine court and its rituals, it generally confirms what earlier sources—especially the papal bull of 1049—outlined as a likely course of events: Manegold received a relic of the True Cross, richly decorated with gold and precious stones, while serving on a diplomatic mission to Constantinople sent by Emperor Conrad II to negotiate a marriage between his son Henry III and a yet unnamed Byzantine princess. In one important detail, however, Berthold's account differs from the information given in the bull of Pope Leo IX. According to Berthold, Manegold received the relic not from Romanos III, as recorded in the bull, but from Constantine VIII, whose untimely death in 1028 not only forced Manegold to smuggle his sacred treasure out of Constantinople, but also led him to break off the marriage negotiations he had come to conduct.⁸¹ Following the course of events as they are recorded by Berthold, scholars usually assume Constantine VIII to be the donor of the relic, thus suggesting an error on the part of Leo IX.⁸² Considering the early date of the

⁷⁸ See *Bertholdi narratio quomodo vivifica crux Werdam pervenit*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH, SS 15.2 (Hannover, 1888; repr. 1991), 767–70. The date of Berthold's account is much debated. C. Königsdorfer, *Geschichte des Klosters zum Heiligen Kreuz in Donauwörth*, 2 vols. (Donauwörth, 1819), 392, assigns a date of 1122 based on a notice in the early 17th-century chronicle of the monastery's prior Georg Beck according to which Berthold left Donauwörth in 1118. The date is now usually given as "before 1155." For a discussion of the date, see Bresslau, "Beitrag," 606 with nn. 1 and 2. For information on Abbot Dieterich, see Steichele, *Bistum Augsburg*, 843–44.

⁷⁹ Although Berthold never mentions Constantine by name—he calls him "rex Constantinopolitanus"—the general chronology of events recorded in his account leaves no doubt that Constantine VIII was considered to have granted Manegold the relic. See Wolfram, "Gesandtschaft," 168.

⁸⁰ For an assessment of Berthold's account and his knowledge of Byzantine sources, see Bresslau, "Beitrag," 607–10.

⁸¹ Constantine VIII died 11 November 1028, shortly after Bishop Werner of Straßburg, who died 28 October. For the date of Constantine's death, see P. Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, CFHB 12, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1977), 141; see also Kresten, "Correctiunculae," 154 n. 10.

⁸² An error on the part of Pope Leo IX was first suggested by Bresslau, "Beitrag," 610: "Die Echtheit dieser Bulle selbst zu bezweifeln, ist kein Grund vorhanden. . . . Auffällig könnte nur sein, daß Leo den Kaiser Romanos statt Constantin [als Adressat der Gesandtschaft] nennt, aber nachdem 20 Jahre seit jener

bull and the fact that Leo IX was present at Donauwörth for the consecration of the convent of the Holy Cross, such an assumption seems not at all warranted. Indeed, the wording of the bull is misleading in that it conflates Manegold's receiving the relic of the True Cross "ab autocratore Constantinopoleos nomine Romanos" and the original goal of his mission "cum ad eum missus esset ab imperatore Chuonrado, ut filiam suam nuptum traderet eius filio." Especially the passage "ut filiam suam nuptum traderet" seems to indicate that Leo was well aware that the original addressee of the embassy was Constantine VIII and not Romanos III, who had only sisters to offer for a potential marriage.⁸³ Since it is highly unlikely that the name of the relic's imperial donor had already been forgotten at Donauwörth in 1049, I would suggest that it was Romanos III who granted Manegold the particle of the True Cross before he departed from Constantinople. Such an assumption is further suggested by Berthold himself, who stresses that Manegold, after having been offered the new emperor's sister as a potential bride, returned home "magnis a rege illo [Romanos III] honoratus muneribus."⁸⁴

This, however, is only half the story—the part told by the literary sources. The other half is told by the relic of the True Cross itself and its panel-shaped container (Fig. 6), both still kept in the church originally founded for its safekeeping and veneration.⁸⁵ Although Manegold's reliquary has suffered from extensive loss, remodeling, and restoration, neither the surviving sheets of gilded silver that decorate the reliquary's sides with bands of intricate floral medallions (Fig. 7), nor the reliquary's sliding lid (Fig. 8), lost during the middle of the seventeenth century, but recorded in a late sixteenth-century painting and an early seventeenth-century description, leave any doubt about the Byzantine provenance of the ensemble as a whole.⁸⁶ Especially the reliquary's lid with its precious enamel decoration recalls the arrangement and iconographic program of similar Byzantine *stau-rothekai*, datable most likely to the late tenth or early eleventh century.⁸⁷ The general composition of the reliquary's interior with its incised cruciform decoration finds its closest parallel in a Byzantine *staurotheke* formerly kept in the convent of Sts. Quiricus and Julitta in Svanetia (Fig. 9), but the somewhat simple and unrefined decoration of Manegold's reliquary seems puzzling and may contradict its alleged imperial provenance.⁸⁸

Until a more detailed study of these two reliquaries' physical makeup and decoration reveals further clues to determine their provenance, we are left with the information pro-

Begebenheit vergangen waren, wird man diesen Irrthum erklärlich finden, zumal es ja Romanos war, der durch ein eigenes Schreiben dem Kaiser in Betreff seines Anliegens antwortete."

⁸³ *Bertholdi narratio* 770.22–25. Berthold's account is supported by a notice in Wipo, *Gesta Chuonradi* 42, which records that "legationis tamen causam postea imperator Graecorum aureis litteris imperatori Chuonrado rescripsit." See Kresten, "Correctiunculae," 144; Wolfram, "Gesandtschaft," 168; Bresslau, "Beitrag," 610–11.

⁸⁴ *Bertholdi narratio* 770.45–48.

⁸⁵ Donauwörth, Pädagogische Stiftung Cassianum. For a short summary of the state of research on the reliquary and a full bibliography, see my catalogue entry in *Rom und Byzanz. Schatzkammerstücke aus bayerischen Sammlungen*, ed. R. Baumstark et al., exh. cat., Bayerisches Nationalmuseum (Munich, 1998), 131–36, no. 27.

⁸⁶ Schweineköper, "Christus-Reliquien," 234–35.

⁸⁷ For related examples, see H. A. Klein, "Treasures Lost and Treasures Found. Four Closely Related Byzantine Reliquaries of the True Cross," in *Mitteilungen zur spätantiken Archäologie und byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte* 3 (2002): 75–102.

⁸⁸ L. Khuskivadze, "La staurothèque byzantine de la Svanéti," in *Byzantine East, Latin West. Art-Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, ed. C. Moss and K. Kiefer (Princeton, 1995), 627–32; Frolow, *La relique*, 484–85, no. 662.

vided by the literary sources. What these, especially Berthold's fairy-tale account of Mane-gold's adventures, reflect most clearly is the almost mystical quality that Constantinople had acquired in the eyes of most westerners by the beginning of the twelfth century.⁸⁹ More than the liberated Jerusalem, it was the imperial palace in Constantinople where western travelers could hope to obtain authentic relics of Christ and his saints. It was there that the most important relics of Christendom were known to be kept, and it was there that relics of Christ's Passion were known to play an essential role in the rituals and ceremonies of the court.⁹⁰ What Berthold's story further reveals is the western eagerness and willingness to gain possession of these same relics and their precious containers even by cunning and trickery.⁹¹

Around the same time, western artistic responses to the arrival of such Byzantine treasures become more clearly measurable in the West. This is attested not only in Abbot Suger's famous chalice,⁹² a work that reflects the knowledge of similar *vasa sacra* in Byzantium, but also in reliquaries such as the Stavelot Triptych (Fig. 3), which utilizes the "Byzantine" triptych format in an innovative and otherwise unattested way. Although the exact circumstances of its commission are uncertain, the workmanship and style of the reliquary's champlevé enamel and repoussé decoration suggest that it was created in a Mosan workshop shortly before or around 1160. It was conceived as a precious frame for the two so-called "Byzantine" triptychs, which, in their turn, function as shrines for the sacred relics they contain. To utilize the functional qualities of the Byzantine triptychs' format as well as their images, the Mosan artist did not hesitate to dismantle the original Byzantine reliquaries available to him. He carefully took them apart and rearranged them in a manner inspired by their original appearance. The importance of this observation, which is supported by the 1973 examination of the Stavelot Triptych, can hardly be overestimated, since it proves that the western artist consciously used the devotional quality inherent in the reliquaries' triptych format to set the stage for the relics' display and veneration. The re-creation of the reliquaries' original appearance further suggests that the Byzantine

⁸⁹ As recently pointed out by A. Cutler, precious objects and luxury goods shared in the mystique of the Byzantine capital and could function as tokens or visual reminders of its splendor when placed in a different cultural context. See Cutler, "Gift and Gift Exchange," 264–65.

⁹⁰ Whereas Benzo of Alba's account of the military use of relics of the True Cross by Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas derives from the study of texts, as he himself indicates, distinguished western visitors to Constantinople are often attested to have witnessed important religious or secular ceremonies. Apart from Bishop Arculf's early eyewitness account of the veneration of the True Cross on Good Friday, we know that Liutprand of Cremona witnessed the public veneration of the True Cross on 14 September 996. For Arculf's account, see *Adamnani de locis sanctis libri tres*, in *Itineraria et alia Geographica*, ed. P. Geyer, CCSL 175 (Turnhout, 1965), 175–234, esp. 228–29. For Liutprand's participation in the feast of the Exaltation of the True Cross, see Liutprand of Cremona, *Relatio de Legatione*, 208–9.

⁹¹ That westerners did not hesitate to steal sacred relics from the imperial palace is attested by the Chronicle of Monte Cassino, which states that a certain man from Amalfi, who entered the monastery during the abacy of Desiderius, donated to St. Benedict "partem non exiguam ligni salutifere et vivifice crucis auro et lapidibus preciosis ornatam et in auro ycona locatam, quam ipse de palatio Constantinopolitano abstulerat in coniuratione, que contra Michaelem [VII] imperatorem facta est." See *Chronica monasterii Casinensis*, ed. H. Hoffmann, MGH, SS 34 (Hannover, 1980), 436. See also Schwineköper, "Christus-Reliquien," 192–93, with n. 45.

⁹² Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Widener Collection, inv. no. 1942.9.277 [C-1]. For Suger's chalice, see most recently *The Glory of Byzantium*, 457–58, no. 296. For a comparable Byzantine chalice, see *ibid.*, 71, no. 31.

parts were not merely incorporated as a visible proof of the relics' eastern origin and authenticity, but that they were designed to play an active role in the enactment of the holy. Functioning as a means of concealing and revealing the precious relics, the Byzantine triptychs enhanced the cult value of these sacred objects by limiting and controlling their display and veneration. The rhetoric employed in the visual exegesis of the relics' historical and eschatological meaning relied on the combined use of the Byzantine triptychs' original images and the two newly created picture cycles on the western triptych's interior wings. Using both western narrative and Byzantine iconic images, the Stavelot Triptych was designed to accompany and guide its viewer while he unfolded the various triptychs and drew nearer to the sacred relics that lay at the core of his devotional desire.⁹³ By subjecting the dismembered and rearranged Byzantine reliquary fragments to a larger western frame, the designer of the Stavelot Triptych moreover created a theatrical stage for the liturgical veneration of objects originally intended for personal use.

Such a sophisticated and creative response, however, seems to have been an exception in the second half of the twelfth century. Little is known, for instance, about the artistic impact of another sacred treasure, namely, the arrival of Henry the Lion's relics in Saxony. Arnold of Lübeck merely records that Henry "ditavit domum Dei reliquiis sanctorum, quas secum attulerat, vestiens eas auro et argento et lapidibus pretiosis"⁹⁴—a statement that seems to indicate that most, if not all, relics arrived in Brunswick without a precious Byzantine container. Where reliquaries survive, as is the case with an arm reliquary⁹⁵ from the Guelph Treasure (Fig. 10) and a cross reliquary⁹⁶ donated to the monastery of the Holy Cross in Hildesheim (Fig. 11), their type and decoration usually follow a decidedly western tradition and show little or no sign of Byzantine artistic impact.⁹⁷

PRICELESS GIFTS AND SACRED BOOTY

With the fall of Constantinople in 1204, the modes and realities of the transfer of relics radically changed. Before the Latin conquest, as we have seen, a rather limited number of relics, most of them enclosed in small-scale reliquaries intended for personal rather than liturgical use, reached the West as sacred gifts, granted by Byzantine emperors and patriarchs in grand gestures of generosity that left no doubt about the superiority of the giver over the recipient. After the conquest, a great number of large-scale and most precious Byzantine reliquaries fell into the hands of westerners, were divided among them and then taken to their countries of origin.⁹⁸ That the "treacherous Greeks," in fact, did not de-

⁹³ Considering the provenance of the Stavelot Triptych and its assumed association with the abbey of Stavelot, there seems little doubt that it was created for a male audience.

⁹⁴ Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica* 30.

⁹⁵ Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art, acc. no. 30.739. See *Heinrich der Löwe und seine Zeit. Herrschaft und Repräsentation der Welfen 1125–1235*, ed. J. Luckhardt and F. Niehoff, exh. cat., Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum (Braunschweig, 1995), 1:246–47, no. D60.

⁹⁶ Hildesheim, Dom- und Diözesanmuseum, inv. no. DS L112. For the reliquary, see most recently *Heinrich der Löwe und seine Zeit*, 1:283–85, no. D89 with bibliography. For the donation itself, see *Die Urkunden Heinrichs des Löwen, Herzogs von Sachsen und Bayern*, ed. K. Jordan, MGH, *DD* 1 (Hannover, 1941–49; repr. 1995), no. 95, 145–46.

⁹⁷ For Byzantine reliquaries of a similar type, see I. Kalavrezou, "Helping Hands for the Empire: Imperial Ceremonies and the Cult of Relics at the Court," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829–1204*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington, D.C., 1997), 53–79.

⁹⁸ *Chronica Regia Coloniensis (Annales Maximi Coloniensis)*, ed. G. Waitz, MGH, *ScriptRerGerm* 18 (Hannover, 1880; repr. 1999), 203: "Capta igitur urbe, divitiae repperiuntur inestimabiles, lapides preciosissimi et incom-

serve better was a prejudice deeply rooted in the western psyche since at least the days of Liutprand and nourished by the political developments that led to the failure of the Second Crusade.⁹⁹ Thus it is hardly surprising that western nobles and clergymen felt little remorse when looting Constantinople in 1204 to deprive it of its sacred treasures. The righteousness of the western attitude is most clearly expressed in Gunther of Pairis's early thirteenth-century *Hystoria Constantinopolitana*, in which he states:

If we are not mistaken, God so arranged it that the army of Christ would triumphantly break into this faithless city on the very day on which Christ, arriving for the triumph of his Passion, entered the Holy City. Break in! Now, honored soldier of Christ, break in! / Break into the city that Christ has given to the conqueror. / Imagine for yourself Christ, seated on a gentle ass, / The King of Peace, radiant in countenance, leading the way. / You fight Christ's battles. You execute Christ's vengeance, / By Christ's judgment. His will precedes the onslaught . . . / Christ wished to enrich you with the wrongdoers' spoils, / Lest some other conquering people despoil them. . . . / Immediately upon the enemy's expulsion from the entire city, / There will be time for looting; it will be proper to despoil the conquered.¹⁰⁰

While Godfrey of Villehardouin and other Latin chroniclers give us a clear idea of how the Constantinopolitan booty was assembled and split up among the emperor-elect, the Venetians, and the French contingent of the Crusader army, little is known about the realities of looting proper.¹⁰¹ There is, of course, Niketas Choniates' vivid account of the behavior of the western invaders, or Gunther of Pairis's description of the actions of his abbot Martin, who, upon threatening an old Orthodox monk with immediate death, "quickly and greedily stuffed the sacred sacrilege into the folds of his habit."¹⁰² But how, for instance, Henry of Ulmen gained possession of the magnificent Limburger Staurothek (Fig. 12) and other important relics is still a mystery.¹⁰³ Despite the fact that Villehardouin

parabiles, pars etiam ligni dominici, quod per Helenam de Iherosalimis translatum auro et gemmis preciosis insignitum in maxima illic veneratione habebatur, ab episcopis qui presentes aderant incisum, et postea eis revertentibus ad natae solum, per ecclesias et cenobia distribuitur."

⁹⁹ Compare, for instance, the verses Liutprand of Cremona claims to have inscribed on a table before he left Constantinople on 2 October 969: "Argolicum non tuta fides; procul esto Latine, / Credere, nec mentem verbis adhibere memento! / Vincere dum possit, quam sancte peierat Argos!": Liutprand of Cremona, *Relatio de Legatione* 213.

¹⁰⁰ Gunther of Pairis, *Hystoria Constantinopolitana*, ed. P. Orth, *Spolia Berolinensia* 5 (Hildesheim–Zurich, 1994), 155: "ni fallimur, ita disponente, ut eadem die Christi exercitus hanc triumphaliter perfidam urbem irumperet, qua Christus veniens ad triumphum passionis sanctam ingressus est civitatem. Irrue nunc, Christi venerabilis, irrue, miles, / Irrue, quam Christus victori tradidit urbem! / Finge tibi Christum sessorem mitis aselli / Pacificum regem leto precedere vultu! / Christi bella geris, vindictam iudice Christo / Exequeris, Christi tua prevenit arma voluntas. / . . . Te voluit Christus spoliis ditare reorum, / Ne spoliaret eos gens que libet altera victrix. / . . . Protinus e tota depulsis hostibus urbe / Tempus erit prede, victos spoliare licebit." I cite the translation of A. J. Andrea, *The Capture of Constantinople. The Hystoria Constantinopolitana of Gunther of Pairis* (Philadelphia, 1997), 105–6.

¹⁰¹ For the details concerning the distribution of booty, see Godfrey of Villehardouin, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, ed. and trans. E. Faral, 2 vols. (Paris, 1938), 2:34–37 and 56–61; Robert of Clari, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, ed. P. Lauer (Paris, 1924; repr. 1956), 68–69. For the text of the actual contract, dated March 1204, see Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden* (as above, note 38), 1.1:444–52, nos. 119–20.

¹⁰² Gunther of Pairis, *Hystoria Constantinopolitana*, 160: "[Quem videns abbas] festinanter et cupide utrasque manus inmersit et, uti strenue succinctus erat, sacro sacrilegio sinus suos implens." Translation after Andrea, *Capture*, 110.

¹⁰³ On the Limburger Staurothek, see most recently N. P. Ševčenko, "The Limburg Staurothek and Its Relics," in *Thymiana ste mneme tes Laskarinas Mpoura*, ed. R. Andreade et al., 2 vols. (Athens, 1996), 1:289–94; see also A. Frolow, *Les reliquaires de la Vraie Croix* (Paris, 1965), 233–37, no. 135; J. Rauch, "Die Limburger Staurothek,"

lists Henry of Ulmen among the “mult bone gent de l’empire d’Alemaigne,”¹⁰⁴ he was hardly more than a minor player in the grand scheme of things. Considering the harsh punishment of Latin thieves immediately following the sack of Constantinople as well as Henry’s late return to Germany in 1207/8, it seems quite unlikely that he himself stole the splendid imperial objects that formed part of his treasure.¹⁰⁵ More likely, as was first suggested by Hans-Wolfgang Kuhn, he received them a year or two after the conquest, and not in Constantinople but Thessalonike, as a reward and payment for his services in the retinue of his overlord Boniface of Montferrat.¹⁰⁶ According to the sources, such “rewards” or “payments” were not at all unusual in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade and attest to the notoriously thin boundaries that existed among payment, gift-giving, and theft. For his services to the later Latin emperor Baldwin of Flanders, for instance, Count Hugh of Beaumetz was rewarded with a reliquary of the True Cross.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, Baldwin’s brother and successor on the throne, Henry of Hainault, bestowed a tear of Christ on Count Bernard of Moreuil in reward for his service.¹⁰⁸ Other relics formerly kept at the Boukoleon palace were sent to Henry’s brother Philip of Namur—“fraterne dilectione affectum” as the surviving letter records.¹⁰⁹ They included “a golden container with a part of the Wood of the Lord in the form of a cross, mounted and decorated in gold” as well as relics “of the thorns of the crown of the Lord, of the purple vestment of Jesus Christ, of the swaddling clothes of the Savior, of the linen with which he girded himself at the Supper, of the girdle of the Virgin, [and] of the head of St. Paul and St. James the Younger.”¹¹⁰ The list of objects looted from the churches and palaces of Constantinople and subsequently bestowed upon the subordinates, friends, and relatives of the leaders of the Fourth Crusade could easily be expanded. However, the examples cited here may suffice to show how

Das Münster 8 (1955): 201–18; E. Schenk zu Schweinsberg, “Kunstgeschichtliche Probleme der Limburger Staurothek,” *ibid.*, 219–34; J. M. Wilm, “Die Wiederherstellung der Limburger Staurothek,” *ibid.*, 234–40; A. Boeckler, “Zur Restaurierung der Staurothek von Limburg,” *Kunstchronik* 4 (1951): 209–14.

¹⁰⁴ Godfrey of Villehardouin, *La Conquête*, 1:74–75. See also J. Longnon, *Les compagnons de Villehardouin. Recherches sur les croisés de la quatrième croisade*, Hautes études médiévales et modernes 30 (Paris, 1978), 242–50.

¹⁰⁵ For a contemporary note on the punishment of thieves, see Godfrey of Villehardouin, *La Conquête*, 60–61.

¹⁰⁶ H.-W. Kuhn, “Heinrich von Ulmen, der vierte Kreuzzug und die Limburger Staurothek,” *Jahrbuch für westdeutsche Landesgeschichte* 10 (1984): 67–106, esp. 86–96 and 102–5. Although I would agree with Kuhn’s assumption that Henry did not obtain the *staurotheke* illegally, at least under the laws of the conquerors, his hypotheses concerning the fate of Boniface of Montferrat’s treasures seem perhaps a bit too farfetched. The fact that Henry is not known to have received a land grant in exchange for his services, as did some of his compatriots, can perhaps better explain how he received his sacred treasures.

¹⁰⁷ For Count Hugh of Beaumetz, see Longnon, *Les compagnons*, 156–57. Until the French Revolution the relic and reliquary were preserved at the abbey of Mont St.-Quentin; see the description in C. DuCange’s *Dissertation XXVI sur l’Histoire de saint Louys*, in *Histoire de S. Louys IX. Du Nom Roy de France, écrite par Jean Sire de Ioinville, Sénéchal de Champagne: enrichie de nouvelles Observations et Dissertations Historiques . . .* (Paris, 1668), 314; see also P. Riant, *Des dépouilles religieuses enlevées à Constantinople au XIIIe siècle et des documents historiques nés de leur transport en occident* (Paris, 1875), 202–3; P. Riant, *Exuviae Sacrae Constantinopolitanae*, 2 vols. (Geneva, 1877–78), 1:192–96, esp. 196. For a summary, see Frolow, *La relique*, 397–99, no. 473.

¹⁰⁸ For Bernard de Moreuil, see Longnon, *Les compagnons*, 123. Upon his return, he donated the relic to the abbey of St. Pierre at Sélingcourt. See also Riant, *Exuviae*, 1:189–92, esp. 190, and 2:240.

¹⁰⁹ Riant, *Exuviae*, 2:74.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*: “vobis mitto . . . vas aureum pulchrum et pretiosum, in quo continetur maxima pars de Ligno Domini, in modum crucis, auro circumligata et ornata. . . de spinis corone Domini, de veste purpurea Ihesu Christi, de pannis infantie Salvatoris, de linteo quo precinxit se in cena, de zona beate Marie virginis, de capite sancti Pauli et sancti Iacobi minoris.”

quickly sacred relics could be transformed in status, being at one time sacred loot, and commodities and gifts at another.¹¹¹

Apart from more personal acts of gratification and gift-giving, it is interesting to note that the new Latin rulers of Constantinople continued the Byzantine tradition of sending relics as gifts to western rulers, bishops, and popes. Already shortly after his election on 9 May 1204, Baldwin of Flanders, for instance, sent gifts to Pope Innocent III as a sign of his reverence. Unfortunately, the emperor's present, which consisted of "two icons, one worth three gold marks, the other ten silver marks, with the wood of the life-giving Cross and many precious stones,"¹¹² was captured by Genoese pirates and in turn given to the commune of Genoa.¹¹³ A letter addressed to the *podestà* of Genoa preserves the pope's bitter complaint about the incident and his request for the immediate return of the sacred relics.¹¹⁴ What is interesting here is not so much that such a high price was placed on these icons, whose worth is, perhaps surprisingly, measured in purely monetary terms, but that the "priceless" relic is listed here amid objects that are clearly and unambiguously defined by their economic value.¹¹⁵

Other sacred objects sent to the West in the wake of the Latin conquest suffered a fate similar to that of the emperor's present to the pope. A cross relic from the Venetian booty, for instance, decorated with "Greek letters ('littere grece') and stripes of silver, gold, and pearls," was stolen by Genoese pirates while on its way to Venice.¹¹⁶ According to Jacopo de Voragine, the pious robber, a certain Dodeus (or Deodedelo), presented this so-called Relic of St. Helena to the commune and to the church of St. Lawrence, where it is still kept today. The land route was apparently not much safer. A shrine with "relics and a golden cross, which comprised [a fragment] of the wood of the Lord," sent to Rome by Benoît de Saint-Suzanne, bishop of Porto and papal legate to the Crusader army, for instance, was stolen in Hungary. Again the pope intervened and, in a letter to King Andrew, demanded the return of all sacred treasures.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ Such transformations in status may be described as markers of distinct phases in the "career" or "biography" of objects as they pass from one social and cultural context into the other. As in the case of relics, the attested "biography" or "career" of such objects could play an important role in the process of authentication and the reconstruction of value in the new social and cultural environment. For the notion of a "biography of things," see I. Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things* (as above, note 3), 64–91. For the relevance of this approach in the realm of relics, see Geary, "Sacred Commodities," 181–90.

¹¹² Riant, *Exuviae*, 2:56: "Duas iconas, unam habentem tres marcas auri, et aliam decem marcas argenti, cum ligno vivifice Crucis et multis lapidibus pretiosis." It cannot be decided with certainty whether the objects described here were painted icons with precious frames, or themselves made of gold and silver; the latter seems more likely.

¹¹³ *Chronicon Genuense* 9.44: "Dodeus . . . illam crucem sanctam cum certis reliquiis Ianuam deportavit, quam quidem crucem communi Ianue, et ecclesie Sancti Laurentii magno munere dedit." Cited after Riant, *Exuviae*, 2:276, no. 59; see also 275–76, no. 57.

¹¹⁴ A. Potthast, *Regesta Pontificum inde ab anno post Christum natum MCXCVIII ad annum MCCCIV* (Berlin, 1884–85), 1:199, no. 2318; PL 115:434.

¹¹⁵ On the construction of value and the "pricing of the priceless," see Kopytoff, "Biography of Things," 73–83.

¹¹⁶ Frolov, *La relique*, 381–82, no. 449.

¹¹⁷ Jaffé, *Regesta*, 1:220, no. 2567; PL 115:703: "unum scrinium, ubi erant reliquiae et crux aurea, in qua erat de ligno Domini."

The enormous artistic impact that the dissemination of some of the most precious Byzantine objects had on the development of contemporary western, especially Mosan and Rhenish, art has long been recognized and is far too complex to be rehearsed here in detail.¹¹⁸ However, I would like to revisit one of the most prominent western responses to the arrival of a Byzantine reliquary, namely, the creation of two western *staurothekai* closely modeled on the so-called Limburger Staurothek (Fig. 12), which is believed to have arrived in the Eifel region near Trier in the spring of 1208.¹¹⁹ Less than two decades after the reliquary's arrival and subsequent donation to the convent of Stuben, where Henry's sister Irmgard was prioress, the Benedictine abbeys of St. Matthias (formerly known as St. Eucharius), one of the most prestigious and powerful monasteries of Trier, and Sts. Peter and Luitwinus in Mettlach, a lesser-known seventh-century Benedictine foundation, commissioned two precious cross reliquaries—presumably in the same Trier workshop—that leave no doubt about their artists' conscious use of the same Byzantine model.¹²⁰

While the reliquary commissioned for the abbey of St. Matthias¹²¹ (Fig. 13) features a lengthy inscription that identifies Henry of Ulmen as the donor of its sacred relic, thus revealing a clear link to its Byzantine model, the triptych commissioned for Mettlach¹²² (Fig. 14) bears no such inscription.¹²³ One can either assume that the latter reliquary was made

¹¹⁸ H. Belting, "Die Reaktion der Kunst des 13. Jahrhunderts auf den Import von Reliquien und Ikonen," in *Il medio Oriente e l'Occidente nell'arte del XIII secolo, Atti del XXIV Congresso Internazionale di Storia dell'Arte*, vol. 2, ed. idem et al. (Bologna, 1982), 35–54; C. W. Solt, "The Cult of Saints and Relics in the Romanesque Art of South-West France and the Impact of Imported Byzantine Relics and Reliquaries on Early Gothic Reliquary Sculpture" (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1977). See most recently H. A. Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz. Die Geschichte einer Relique und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland* (Wiesbaden, 2004).

¹¹⁹ For the date of Henry's return and the circumstances of his donation, see Kuhn, "Heinrich von Ulmen," 67–106; P. Brommer, "Die Staurothek von Stuben," in *Zeugnisse rheinischer Geschichte. Urkunden, Akten und Bilder aus der Geschichte der Rheinlande. Eine Festschrift zum 150. Jahrestag der Einrichtung der staatlichen Archive in Düsseldorf und Koblenz* (Neuss, 1982), 304–5.

¹²⁰ The Mettlach reliquary is usually dated around or shortly after 1220. The dating of the reliquary from St. Matthias is more complex. P. Becker, *Die Benediktinerabtei St. Eucharius-St. Matthias in Trier*, Germania Sacra. Das Erzbistum Trier 8 (Berlin, 1996), 63–64, assigned a date after 1246; Henze, *Kreuzreliquiare*, 90, for different reasons, a date before 1222.

¹²¹ Trier, St. Matthias, Treasury. See most recently Becker, *Benediktinerabtei*, 63–64; Becker, "Überlegungen." See also C. Sauer, *Fundatio und Memoria: Stifter und Klostergründer im Bild, 1100–1350*, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 109 (Göttingen, 1993), 299–306; U. Henze, "Die Trierer Kreuztafeln des frühen 13. Jahrhunderts," in *Schatzkunst Trier. Forschungen und Ergebnisse*, ed. F. Ronig (Trier, 1991), 101–15; idem, *Die Kreuzreliquiare von Trier und Mettlach. Studien zur Beziehung zwischen Bild und Heilium in der rheinischen Schatzkunst des frühen 13. Jahrhunderts* (Münster, 1988); *Ornamenta Ecclesiae*, 3:124–29, no. H 41; *Schatzkunst Trier*, ed. F. Ronig, exh. cat., Dom- und Diözesanmuseum Trier (Trier, 1984), 135, no. 73; *Die Zeit der Staufer. Geschichte—Kunst—Kultur*, ed. R. Haussherr, exh. cat., Württembergisches Landesmuseum, 5 vols. (Stuttgart, 1977), 1:432–34, no. 566; *Rhein und Maas. Kunst und Kultur 800–1400*, ed. A. Legner, exh. cat., Schnütgen Museum, 2 vols. (Cologne, 1972), 1:346–47, no. M2; Frolow, *La relique*, 413–14, no. 504; and the early publication by E. Aus'm Weerth, *Kunstdenkmäler des christlichen Mittelalters in den Rheinlanden*, 3 vols. (Leipzig–Bonn, 1857–68), 3:99–101.

¹²² Mettlach, Katholische Pfarrgemeinde St. Luitwinus. See most recently *Byzanz. Die Macht der Bilder*, ed. A. Effenberger and M. Brandt, exh. cat., Dommuseum Hildesheim (Hildesheim, 1998), no. 83, 144–47 and 160; Sauer, *Fundatio et Memoria*, 306–11; Henze, *Kreuzreliquiare*; *Ornamenta Ecclesiae*, 3: no. H42, 130; *Schatzkunst Trier*, no. 74, 136; *Zeit der Staufer*, 1:431–32, no. 565; Frolow, *La relique*, 412–13, no. 503.

¹²³ The text of the inscription reads: ANNO AB INCARNATIONE DOMINI MCCVII HENRICVS DE VLMENA ATTVLIT LIGNVM S(AN)C(TA)E CRUCIS DE CIVITATE CONSTANTINOPOLITANA ET HANC PORTIONEM IPSIVS SACRI LIGNI ECCLESIAE SANCTI EVCHARII CONTVLIT.

to house a relic already in the monastery's possession or that it had recently received a relic, perhaps without a proper container.¹²⁴ In both instances it is interesting to observe how and to what extent the artists followed their Byzantine model. They not only adopted the Byzantine tradition of arranging the particles of the relic in the form of a patriarchal cross, but also copied very closely the formal disposition of the Byzantine *staurotheke* itself with its twenty characteristic *loculi* for secondary relics. Moreover, both western reliquaries were made in such a way as to permit the main relic to be taken out and used separately in a liturgical or ceremonial context.

It is interesting to note that the artist in charge of the reliquaries' execution did not copy his model slavishly, but introduced several features that betray a close adherence to western artistic traditions. While the Limburger Staurothek, a flat, panel-shaped box with a sliding lid, follows a reliquary type common in Byzantium at least since the ninth century, the reliquary for St. Matthias features no lid, but presents the relic openly in a splendid setting adorned with gems, precious stones, and filigree work. The secondary relics are not hidden behind small doors but made visible behind small pieces of rock crystal.¹²⁵ In the case of the reliquary for Mettlach, the artist decided to take a different approach. Although the Byzantine *staurotheke's* proportions and formal disposition are clearly replicated, the artist transformed the Byzantine panel into the central part of a triptych, flanked on both wings by the repoussé figures of the monastery's patron saints Peter and Luitwinus. Closely following its model, the central relic of the True Cross is surrounded by secondary relics. However, these are not made visible under rock crystal, as is the case with the reliquary for St. Matthias, but hidden behind small doors, each showing the full-length figure of the saint whose relic was concealed behind it.

Although the leaders of the Fourth Crusade had taken immediate and careful measures to restrict access to the more important churches and palaces as well as to their sacred treasures, the charters, necrologies, and inventories of many western churches, abbeys, and other religious foundations attest to the flood of relics that swept over much of western Europe immediately following the sack of Constantinople. However, not all participants in the Fourth Crusade who claimed to have come into the possession of sacred relics were necessarily credible. This is reflected perhaps most clearly in a decree of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which admonished that "some people try to sell saintly relics and show them around everywhere. This belittles the Christian religion. To prevent this for the future, we declare by this decree that old relics may not be exhibited outside of a container or exposed for sale. And let no one presume publicly to venerate new ones unless they have been approved by the Roman pontiff."¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Unfortunately, little is known about the presumed donors of the relic, a certain *custos* Benedict and a cleric named William, both represented jointly with a patriarchal cross at the feet of Christ on the reliquary's back. Of the two, Benedict is attested in the monastery in 1222. See Sauer, *Fundatio et Memoria*, 310 with n. 381.

¹²⁵ In making the relics visible, the Trier artists followed a trend attested in western art from the later 12th and early 13th century onward.

¹²⁶ *Constitutiones Concilii quarti Lateranensis una cum Comentaribus glossatorum*, ed. A. Garcia y Garcia, MIC ser. A, corp. gloss. 2, 2 vols. (Rome, 1981), 2:101–2: "(62) Cum ex eo quod quidam sanctorum reliquias uenales exponunt et eas passim ostendunt, christiane religione detractum sit sepius, et in posterum presenti decreto statuimus ut antique reliquie amodo extra capsam nullatenus ostendantur nec exponantur uenales. Inuentas autem de nouo nemo publice uenerari presumat, nisi prius auctoritate Romani pontificis fuerint approbate."

In order to prove the authenticity of a relic, it was particularly helpful if it was still preserved in its original container—a fact often stressed in contemporary sources by descriptions such as “opere greco factum” or “litteris grecis ornatum.” This was, in fact, true for the relic that Henry of Ulmen donated to the convent in Stuben, and for a large number of other relics that were brought to the West by bishops, abbots, and noblemen directly involved in the conquest. But what about relics that reached the West as mere splinters or pieces without a proper reliquary, as was likely the case with the cross relics that arrived in Trier and Mettlach? In both instances, the decision was made to provide the relic and its precious container with a Byzantine, or rather “eastern,” appearance for which the reliquary in Stuben provided the model. For the reliquary in St. Matthias it was furthermore decided to insert a lengthy inscription that associated the relic with the name of its donor, whose authority could hardly be questioned since he had brought back a great number of relics which he in turn donated to such prestigious convents as St. Pantaleon in Cologne, Maria Laach, Heisterbach, and Münstermaifeld.¹²⁷ In terms of effectiveness, however, the visual authentication of both relic and reliquary was perhaps even more important than the literal one, since it enabled people traveling from one cult center to the next to recognize the close similarity and ultimate connection between the objects presented. The form of the patriarchal cross, which, by the beginning of the thirteenth century, was clearly associated with relics that had been imported from either Jerusalem or Constantinople, and the formal disposition of the “eastern” reliquary were consciously used by the Trier artists to reassure a potential western viewer of the authenticity of the sacred relic displayed.

While it was in the patrons’ interest to prove the authenticity of the relics in their possession, it was certainly in the artists’ interest to engage in an artistic competition with the imported Byzantine objects, which were undoubtedly greatly admired for their refined material quality and workmanship. However, as the reliquaries from St. Matthias and Mettlach show, these western artists attempted to emulate and supersede their Byzantine model by employing their own techniques and working methods. That they succeeded in their ambitious task is revealed not only by the artistic quality of their work, but also by the numbers of pilgrims they were able to attract with it well into the sixteenth century and beyond.¹²⁸

PRICING THE PRICELESS: RELICS AS COMMODITIES

Byzantine relics and reliquaries continued to arrive in western monasteries as gifts or bequests of former participants in the conquest of Constantinople for several decades, but the modes that had governed their acquisition and transfer in the early years of the Latin Empire soon began to change.¹²⁹ This development was largely due to the increasing mil-

¹²⁷ For Henry’s various donations, see Kuhn, “Heinrich von Ulmen,” 69–71, 85–86.

¹²⁸ In the early 16th century, the cult of the relic had grown so popular at St. Matthias that a relic chamber was installed in the church’s northern transept. In 1514 it was dedicated to “the holy cross and all other saintly relics contained in the tablet.” See F. Ronig, “Die Schatz- und Heiltumskammern,” in *Rhein und Maas* (as above, note 121), 1:137; N. Irsch, *Die Trierer Abteikirche und die trierisch-lothringische Bautengruppe*, Germania Sacra Abt. Rhenania Sacra B, Rhenania Sacra Regularis 1, *Die Abteien und Canonien A, Die Benediktinerklöster*, vol. 1 (Augsburg, 1927), 254–58. See also Sauer, *Fundatio et Memoria*, 313 n. 395, and Henze, *Kreuzreliquiare*, 30.

¹²⁹ Like Bishop Conrad of Halberstadt, who donated a number of relics and Byzantine *vasa sacra* to the cathedral of Halberstadt only three years after his return from Constantinople, many Crusaders—for instance, the above-mentioned Bernard of Moreuil—parted from their treasures only with delay. For a detailed

itary and financial pressures faced by the new rulers of Constantinople.¹³⁰ By the time Baldwin II ascended the imperial throne in 1240, the distribution of relics can no longer be described in terms of either gift-giving or theft, but must rather be considered in terms of sale and purchase as an immediate result of the empire's dire economic situation. The circumstances that led to King Louis IX's acquisition of the relic of the Crown of Thorns reflect this change from noncommercial to commercial transfer quite well.¹³¹ According to the contemporary account of Archbishop Gauthier of Sens, the Latin Empire's desperate financial situation had led Baldwin II—who had stayed in Paris between 1237 and 1239—to offer this most precious imperial relic to his relative, the king of France, in exchange for financial help to defend his empire.¹³² When the Dominican monks Andrew and James, sent to Constantinople “pro complendo negocio,” arrived in the capital, however, the barons of the empire had already pawned the crown to the Venetian banker Nicola Quirino in exchange for funds to ward off the approaching armies of Bulgarians and Greeks.¹³³ The monks were thus asked to accompany the relic to Venice, where it was safeguarded in the treasury of San Marco until the necessary sum of money was brought to redeem the relic and permit its *translatio* into France. In the following years, King Louis was able to secure two additional lots of important relics by way of purchase. The first, which had previously been pawned to the Order of the Templars, consisted of a relic of the True Cross, which had been brought from Syria by a certain knight named Guido, together with several other precious relics including “the most holy blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the vestments of his infancy, a large fragment of the Lord's Cross not arranged in the form of a cross, . . . the blood that miraculously flowed out of the beaten image of the Lord, the chain that had tied Christ [to the column], a panel which kept the imprint of his face, when he was taken from the cross, [and] quite a large stone of his sepulcher.”¹³⁴ The second lot was acquired in Constantinople by two Franciscans, who arrived in Paris probably in early August 1242 with a sacred treasure consisting of “the most glorious iron of the lance, a medium-size, but no less virtuous cross, which is called ‘triumphant,’ the purple robe, in which the soldiers clad the Lord to mock him, the precious rod, the sponge, a

list of Conrad's gifts, see B. Bischoff, *Mittelalterliche Schatzverzeichnisse. Erster Teil. Von der Zeit Karls des Großen bis zur Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts*, Veröffentlichungen des Zentralinstituts für Kunstgeschichte in München 4 (München, 1967), no. 149, 150–52. For Bernard of Moreuil's delayed donation, see Riant, *Exuviae*, 1:189–90.

¹³⁰ For an overview of the political and economic development of the Latin Empire, see M. F. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy, ca. 300–1450* (Cambridge, 1985), 519–25; R. L. Wolff, “The Latin Empire of Constantinople,” in *Studies in the Latin Empire of Constantinople* (London, 1976), 187–233.

¹³¹ See most recently J. Durand, “Les reliques et reliquaires byzantins acquis par saint Louis,” in *Le trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle*, ed. idem, exh. cat., Musée du Louvre (Paris, 2001), 52–54; idem, “La translation des reliques impériales de Constantinople à Paris,” *ibid.*, 37–41.

¹³² For a full account of events, see Gauthier Cornut, *De translatione Coronae Spineae*, in Riant, *Exuviae*, 1:45–56. *Le trésor*, 45, no. 7. See also Durand, “La translation,” 38.

¹³³ The original document issued in Constantinople on 4 September 1238 has been preserved in Paris at the Centre Historique des Archives Nationales, J 155, Sainte-Chapelle-du-Palais, no. 1 (AE III 187). For a short bibliography, see *Le trésor*, 44, no. 6.

¹³⁴ F. Mely, *Exuviae Sacrae Constantinopolitanae, III. La Croix des premiers croisés, la Sainte Lance, la Sainte Couronne* (Paris, 1904), 107: “sacrosanctus sanguis Domini et Salvatoris nostri Ihesu Christi, vestimenta infancie ipsius, frustum magnum Crucis dominice, non tamen ad formam crucis redactum, . . . sanguis etiam qui mirabili prodigio de ymagine Domini percussa effluxit, cathena qua idem Salvator ligatus fuit, tabula quedam quam, cum deponeretur Dominus de cruce, ejus facies tetegit, lapis quidam magnus de sepulcro ipsius.” See also Durand, *La translation*, 39; *Le trésor*, 46, no. 8.

piece of the sudarium, the linen cloth girded with which the Lord, performing an act of humility, washed the feet of his disciples . . . , and finally a piece of the veil of the most glorious Virgin and the rod of Moses.”¹³⁵

While the commercial character of these transactions was explicitly noted by contemporaries such as the English monk and chronicler Matthew Paris,¹³⁶ the official transcript of the events reads somewhat differently. Although the emperor, in a chrysobull issued at Saint-Germain-en-Laye in June 1247, acknowledged that the relics had previously been pawned to the Venetians “out of urgent necessity” and then bought back by Louis “for a large sum of money,” he nonetheless stressed that all this was done according to his own “will and permission.” He continued by saying that it was only now that he conceded the relics to Louis, not out of necessity, but as a “spontaneous and free gift.”¹³⁷ In my view, such a statement reveals more than just an emperor’s misjudgment of the political and financial realities of the day; it reveals a desperate need to disguise, if only in words, the commercial nature of a practice that had become a necessity and basis for survival: the commodification of the empire’s most sacred treasures.¹³⁸

It may be seen as an irony of history that a practice introduced by the Latin rulers of Constantinople would find a close parallel in the last century of Byzantine rule in the capital. On 28 May 1359, Andrea Gratia, a syndic of the Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala in Siena, and Pietro di Giunta Torrigiani, a Florentine-born merchant residing in Constantinople, came together in Venice to sign a contract stipulating the conditions of the transfer of a collection of relics and other precious objects recently acquired in Constantinople.¹³⁹ While it may be surprising to note that western interest in the acquisition of eastern relics had not entirely faded after the end of the Latin occupation and the successive dispersal of the most prized relics of Christendom, it is perhaps less surprising to notice that the tactics to disguise the commercial character of such transactions remained valid. The surviving textual records of the Venetian relic purchase and its Constantinopolitan prelude offer a rare insight not only in the way western expectations and attitudes toward Byzantium had changed following the looting and deportation of its most sacred

¹³⁵ Mely, *Exuviae*, 108–10: “gloriosissimum Lancee ferrum . . . quedam crux mediocris, sed non modice virtutis . . . dicitur triumphalis . . . vestis videlicet coccinea, qua . . . milites illudentes induerunt Dominum . . . arundo preciosa . . . spongia . . . pars quedam sudarii . . . preciosum lintheum quo precinctus in cena Dominus, peracto humilitatis obsequio pedes discipulorum extersit . . . denique pars quedam de peplo gloriosissime Virginis et virga Moysis.”

¹³⁶ Matthew Paris, *Cronica majora*, ed. H. R. Luard, *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores* 57, 7 vols. (London, 1872–82), 4:75 and 90. Also available in Riant, *Exuviae*, 2:242–43.

¹³⁷ For the full text, see Riant, *Exuviae*, 2: no. 79, 133–35, esp. 134: “pro urgenti necessitate . . . magne pecunie quantitate . . . nostra voluntate et beneplacito . . . spontaneo et gratuito dono.”

¹³⁸ R. Nelson, “The Italian Appreciation and Appropriation of Illuminated Byzantine Manuscripts, ca. 1200–1450,” *DOP* 49 (1995): 209–35.

¹³⁹ Siena, Archivio di Stato, Archivio Spedale Santa Maria della Scala, no. 120, fols. 2r–9v. For a transcript of the document, see G. Derenzini, “Le reliquie da Constantinopoli a Siena,” in *Loro di Siena. Il tesoro di Santa Maria della Scala*, ed. L. Bellosi (Siena, 1996), 67–78, esp. 73–78, and P. Hetherington, “A Purchase of Byzantine Relics and Reliquaries in Fourteenth-Century Venice,” *ArtV* 37 (1983): 9–30, esp. 29–30 (app. 2). For an evaluation of the documents, see also G. Derenzini, “Esame paleografico del Codice X.IV.1. della Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati e contributo documentale alla storia del ‘Tesoro’ dello Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala,” *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell’Università di Siena* 8 (1987): 41–76. For an assessment of the historical and artistic significance of the transaction, see A. Cutler, “Loot to Scholarship,” *DOP* 49 (1995): 244–45. For a photograph of the original document, preserved in the Ospedale, see Derenzini, “Le reliquie,” 68.

treasures, but also in the way Byzantine rulers had to adjust to new economic and political realities.¹⁴⁰

Information concerning the provenance of Torrigiani's relic collection is provided by a document that may well have accompanied the Venetian contract of 1359 as some kind of authentication.¹⁴¹ Issued at Pera on 15 December 1357 by the Apostolic *nuntio* to Constantinople, the Carmelite Pier Tommaso, and witnessed by three other Latin bishops as well as the Dominican inquisitor Philip de Contis, the document recounts that the *nuntio*, having heard about Torrigiani's relic collection, had visited the residence of the Venetian *bailo* to examine with eyes and hands "the precious relics, among which there were to be found even those of Christ and the True Cross, on which he had hung."¹⁴² The document further states that in order to assure the authenticity and provenance of the relics, Tommaso had sent two of the bishops and the inquisitor to the Byzantine empress—most likely Irene, wife of John VI Kantakouzenos—who in turn testified that the relics had indeed come "from the imperial palace," that they had been put up for sale in the Loggia of the Venetians "out of necessity," and that there were no relics more precious in the whole empire than these.¹⁴³ After presenting a list of the relics examined, Tommaso asserts that "it seems as if the Lord Jesus Christ himself had led the aforementioned Peter [i.e., Torrigiani] to Constantinople in order to take the relics out of the hands of the schismatics and bring them to a holy place just as the children of Israel were led out of Egypt by divine mandate."¹⁴⁴ The document concludes with the plea that Torrigiani may "bring the relics to our Lord the pope and the most serene prince and Lord emperor of the Romans, since such priceless objects suit them best."¹⁴⁵

Although the original purpose of this document is somewhat difficult to determine, it may nonetheless serve as an indicator of how radically the status of Constantinople, and the Byzantine emperor as the most prominent distributor of sacred relics, had changed.¹⁴⁶ Not only had Constantinople ceased to be regarded as a *locus sanctus* by westerners, the distribution of relics was also no longer an act of imperial favor but an act of economic necessity. The consequences of this development for the western recipient of the sacred

¹⁴⁰ For a short assessment of the political and economic situation that led to the relic's sale, see Hetherington, "A Purchase," 18.

¹⁴¹ Siena, Archivio di Stato, Archivio Spedale Santa Maria della Scala, no. 120, fols. 10r–11v. For a transcript of the document, see Derenzini, "Le reliquie," 72–73; Hetherington, "A Purchase," 28 (app. 1).

¹⁴² Derenzini, "Le reliquie," 72: "nos ibi perspeximus oculis et tractavimus manibus tam pretiosas Sanctorum Reliquias immo quedam quae ad ipsum Dominum Nostrum Jesum Christum pertinent et de ipsa vera Cruce, in qua Ipse pependit, quae in mundo non possunt esse pretiora." For the names of the other people involved in the inspection, see *ibid.*, 67–69.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*: "et misimus duos de predictis Episcopis tum Inquisitores [sic] hereticae pravitate ad imperatricem uxorem Cathecuzinos, ut scirent ab ea si fuerant de domo imperiali, et asseruit cum grandissimo singultu, cordis dolore, quod pro necessitate fuerunt expositae venditioni in Loggia Venetorum, et quod imperium iocalia non habebat tam pretiosa, nec de perditione aliqua tantum dolebat, quantum de alienatione earum." Thus already remarked by Cutler, "Loot to Scholarship," 244–45.

¹⁴⁴ Derenzini, "La reliquie," 73: "enim venerabilem virum dominum Petrum predictum videtur Dominus Jesus Christus in Constantinopolim posuisse ut de manibus scismaticorum tam dignas auferret Reliquias et ad loca transferret sancta, prout filii Israel de mandato Domini Egiptiorum portaverunt bona."

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: "et rogavimus eum quod ad dominum nostrum Papam et ad serenissimum principem dominum Imperatorem Romanum portaret, vel faceret deportari, quia talia eos decent, quae sunt caeteris digniora."

¹⁴⁶ As the document itself clearly shows, the future of Torrigiani's relic collection was still uncertain at the time it was drawn up. This was first noted by Hetherington, "A Purchase," 18.

commodity are complex. On the one hand, it created the need for institutional authentication, in this case, by the former Byzantine empress and the apostolic *nuntio*; on the other hand, as we have seen, it developed the need to disguise the commercial nature of the transaction. Instead of “purchase,” for instance, the Venetian contract between Torrigiani and the Ospedale—not the emperor or pope as Tommaso had hoped—repeatedly speaks of a “donatio” despite the fact that the merchant was to receive a purely monetary compensation of 3,000 gold florins and a lifetime residence in Siena as stated in the hospital’s “Libro Vitale.”¹⁴⁷

As regards the distributors of relics, and here I restrict myself to the imperial sphere, Byzantine rulers soon faced the same difficulties as the Latins before them. After Empress Anna of Savoy, in 1343, had signed away the Byzantine crown jewels to the Republic of Venice for 30,000 ducats to pay off her debts, the selling and pawning of relics became once again a last resort to secure the financial and military survival of the empire.¹⁴⁸ On 9 December 1395, after having experienced more than a year of siege by the Turks, Emperor Manuel II was ready to offer the tunic of Christ and other relics as securities for a loan he hoped to receive from the *Serenissima*.¹⁴⁹ Venice, however, as we know from surviving documents, refused the emperor’s offer, arguing that the transfer of such exquisite and revered objects might result in violent popular protests in Constantinople, a concern, true or not, that the Byzantine emperor himself apparently did not share.

Four years later, when Manuel embarked on his famous voyage to the West, he took with him the very relics Venice had previously rejected.¹⁵⁰ Once settled in Paris, Manuel immediately started to send out ambassadors with letters and presents to the various courts of Europe in an effort to muster financial and military support against the Turks. Probably in order to give his pleas more weight, Manuel decided to add gifts of relics to his letters. According to these letters and other surviving records, King Martin I of Aragon received a relic of St. George already in June or July 1400, the authenticity of which he, at first, mistrusted.¹⁵¹ In early October, Manuel’s envoy Alexios Branas appeared in person before the king, carrying a chrysobull and two more relics, namely, a fragment of the bluish

¹⁴⁷ Siena, Archivio di Stato, Archivio Spedale Santa Maria della Scala, no. 120, fols. 33r–36r. For a transcript of the document and the list of payments, see Hetherington, “A Purchase,” 30 (app. 3). For an evaluation of the evidence, see *ibid.*, 20–21; Derenzini, “Le reliquie,” 70–71. For the money value, see W. M. Bowsky, *A Medieval Italian Commune: Siena under the Nine 1287–1355* (Los Angeles, 1981), xvii and 184–259, as already cited in Hetherington, “A Purchase,” n. 55.

¹⁴⁸ On the pawning of the Byzantine crown jewels, see F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches von 565–1453. 5. Teil: Regesten von 1341–1453* (Munich, 1965), 9–10, no. 2891. See also D. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice. A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations* (Cambridge, 1988), 199; T. Bertelè, “I gioielli della corona bizantina dati in pegno alla repubblica veneta nel sec. XIV e Mastino II della Scala,” in *Studi in onore di Amintore Fanfani*, 6 vols. (Milan, 1962), 2:91–177. I would like to thank Cecily Hilsdale who kindly drew my attention to this transaction.

¹⁴⁹ E. Thiriet, *Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Roumanie*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1958–61), 1:210, no. 892. For the circumstances of the negotiations, see J. Barker, *Manuel II Palaiologos (1391–1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1969), 130.

¹⁵⁰ For Manuel’s voyage to the West, see Barker, *Manuel II*, 123–99; A. Vasiliev, “Puteshestvie vizantijskago imperatora Manuila Palaeologa po zapadnoi Evrope,” *ZhMNP* n.s. 39 (1912): 41–78, 260–304.

¹⁵¹ This becomes clear from a letter King Martin sent to the Viscount of Rhodes on 23 July 1400. For the text, see A. Rubió i Lluch, *Diplomatari de l’Orient català (1301–1409)* (Barcelona, 1947), no. 656, 683–84. For Manuel’s relations with the court of Aragon, see C. Marinisco, “Manuel II Paléologue et les rois d’Aragon,” *BSHAcRoum* 11 (1924): 192–206; *idem*, “Du nouveau sur les relations de Manuel II Paléologue (1391–1425) avec l’Espagne,” in *Atti dello VIII Congresso Internazionale di Studi Bizantini*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1953), 1:420–36.

tunic of Christ that had healed the woman with the issue of blood and the sponge of Christ's Passion.¹⁵² From the court of Aragon, Alexios Branas continued on to the court of King Charles III of Navarre, where he arrived probably in early 1401 with another chrysobull, a particle of the True Cross, and a piece of the same tunic of Christ that King Martin had already received.¹⁵³ According to a somewhat uncertain tradition, Manuel sent yet another chrysobull to King John I of Portugal on 15 June of the same year, this time accompanied by a larger number of relics: a particle of the True Cross, a piece of the already mentioned tunic of Christ, a piece of the Holy Sponge, and relics of Sts. Peter, Paul, and George.¹⁵⁴ During the same month of June, the emperor's envoy Alexios Branas delivered letters and yet another particle of the bluish tunic of Christ to the anti-pope Benedict XIII.¹⁵⁵ One month later, to keep all options open, another particle of Christ's tunic was sent to Pope Boniface IX.¹⁵⁶ Although it is hard to believe, there was apparently still enough left of the bluish tunic of Christ for Manuel to send a last piece to Queen Margaret of Denmark in November 1402, shortly before he returned to Constantinople.¹⁵⁷ But even then the dispersal of relics did not stop. In two letters, both dated 17 August 1405, King Martin of Aragon, who had already received several relics in 1400, addressed both the patriarch and the emperor with a request for more relics, which were to be entrusted to Pere de Quintanes, a merchant functioning as the king's envoy in this matter.¹⁵⁸ It is only through Manuel's much-delayed response, dated 23 October 1407, that we hear what happened to the king's request.¹⁵⁹ Having taken counsel with the patriarch as well as the barons and magnates of the empire, Manuel had decided to send Martin several relics associated with Christ's Passion as well as a relic of St. Lawrence.¹⁶⁰ However, instead of sending the relics back to Spain with Pere de Quintanes—who incidentally drowned in a storm

¹⁵² Although Manuel's chrysobull itself has not survived, the gifts are mentioned explicitly in the king's response, dated 16 October 1400. For the text, see Rubió i Lluch, *Diplomatari*, 686–87, no. 660.

¹⁵³ Manuel's bilingual chrysobull, dated 30 August 1400, is preserved in the archives of the cathedral of Pamplona. For the text, see Marinesco, "Du nouveau," 422–23 (Latin), 424–25 (Greek). See also Dölger, *Regesten*, 5:87, no. 3282.

¹⁵⁴ Dölger, *Regesten*, 5:87–88, no. 3284, based on a note in K. Hopf, *Geschichte Griechenlands vom Beginn des Mittelalters bis auf unsere Zeit*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1867–68; repr. New York, 1960), 2:65. This tradition has been questioned by Marinesco, "Du nouveau," 426 n. 1, but the recorded text of the chrysobull (in Portuguese translation) leaves little doubt that such a donation took place. For the text, see L. De Sousa, O.P., et al., *História de São Domingos*, 4 vols. (Lisbon, 1623–1733), 1: fol. 335.

¹⁵⁵ About a year later, 20 June 1402, Manuel issued a chrysobull to certify the relic delivered by Branas. Both chrysobull and relic are preserved at the cathedral of Palma de Mallorca. For the text, see Marinesco, "Du nouveau," 428–30, and S. Cirac Estopañan, "Ein Chrysobull des Kaisers Manuel II Palaiologos (1391–1425) für den Gegenpapst Benedikt XIII (1394–1417/23) vom 20. Juni 1402," *BZ* 44 (1951): 89–93. The circumstances of the donation are somewhat obscured by the fact that Marinesco, "Un nouveau," 427, and Barker, *Manuel II*, assume that the relic had been sent together with the chrysobull. However, the text of the bull leaves no doubt that the pope had received the relic on an earlier occasion, in July 1401. See Dölger, *Regesten*, 5:88, no. 3285, and, 88–89, no. 3290.

¹⁵⁶ The chrysobull itself is lost, but a copy of its Greek text is preserved in the Gennadius Library in Athens. See G. Dennis, "Two Unknown Documents of Manuel II Palaeologus," *TM* 3 (1968): 397–404, esp. 402–4.

¹⁵⁷ The bilingual chrysobull, dated 20/23 November 1402, is preserved in the Escorial, Cod. Scorial. gr. 0–IV–19. For the text, see Dennis, "Two Unknown Documents," 399–401.

¹⁵⁸ See Rubió i Lluch, *Diplomatari*, no. 687, 711 and no. 688, 711–12. For the role of merchants as carriers of precious gifts, see most recently Cutler, "Gifts and Gift Exchange," 266.

¹⁵⁹ Rubió i Lluch, *Diplomatari*, no. 694, 716–18.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 717: "videlicet de columna in qua ligatus fuit Salvator noster; de lapide super quem Petrus incumbens post trinam Xpi. negacionem amarissime flevit; de lapide in quo post deposicionem a Cruce ut ungeretur positus fuerat humani generis liberator, ac etiam de craticula super quam sanctus Laurencius fuit assatus."

on his way back from Constantinople—the emperor had intended to entrust them to an embassy led by Manuel Chrysoloras, who left the capital with much delay in late October 1407. The relics Chrysoloras carried to Spain seem to have been among the last ones sent to the West by a Byzantine ruler before the empire's collapse.

One may legitimately categorize Manuel's presents to western rulers as diplomatic gifts, but there can be no doubt that the character of diplomatic exchange between Byzantium and the Latin West had dramatically and irrevocably changed by the beginning of the fifteenth century. In a radical reversal of the Byzantine diplomatic ritual that had once rendered King Louis VII of France, Duke Henry the Lion of Saxony and Bavaria, and other western visitors to Constantinople inferior to the Byzantine ruler, the journey of Manuel Palaiologos to the West and his splendid receptions at the courts of Milan, Paris, and London now rendered him a petitioner and hopeful recipient of western gifts and favors.¹⁶¹ What he brought to the West as tokens of his friendship and imperial favor were, as in earlier centuries, eastern relics, next to books and ancient learning the last truly priceless yet still affordable Byzantine gift.¹⁶² At least in theory, one might add. For the relics the emperor had to offer no longer carried the mystique that had once defined their value. Deprived of their aura by the historical events that had led to the destruction and dissemination of Constantinople's most sacred treasures, such objects had long lost their universal appeal. There was no point in presenting the king of France, who was already in the possession of the most important remains of Christ's passion, with further and much less important relics.¹⁶³ Instead, Manuel offered his gifts to potentates on the fringes of western Europe, regions that had profited little or not at all from the wave of eastern relics that had swept over large parts of western Europe in the aftermath of the Latin conquest of Constantinople.¹⁶⁴ The fact that the emperor's gifts were met with considerable skepticism in both Spain and Avignon reveal how much the Byzantine emperor's reputation as a trusted keeper and distributor of relics had suffered from the developments of the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Unfortunately, there is no way of telling whether Manuel's gifts arrived in precious Byzantine containers. If they did, their artistic impact in the cultural environments in which they were placed remained immeasurable, as was in fact true for other sacred treasures that reached the West as Byzantine gifts and commodities during the same period.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ For a description of the emperor's reception in Paris and the gifts received on this occasion, see *Chronique du religieux de Saint-Denys*, ed. M. L. Bellaguet, 3 vols. (Paris, 1842; repr. 1994), 1:755–59. That the emperor was well aware of his situation becomes clear from the two letters he sent to his friend Manuel Chrysoloras from France and England in 1400 and 1401. See *The Letters of Manuel II Palaeologus*, ed. and trans. G. T. Dennis, CFHB 8 (Washington, D.C., 1977), nos. 37–38, 98–104. See also Barker, *Manuel II*, 174–75, 178–80.

¹⁶² On the emerging Italian interest in Greek books and ancient learning, see Cutler, "Loot to Scholarship," 247–48; Nelson, "Italian Appreciation," 218–35. See also N. G. Wilson, *From Byzantium to Italy: Greek Studies in the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore, 1992), 8–12; idem, "The Book Trade in Venice ca. 1400–1415," in *Venezia. Centro di mediazione tra Oriente e Occidente (secoli XV–XVI): Aspetti e problemi*, vol. 2 (Florence, 1977), 381–97.

¹⁶³ We know that Manuel sent presents to Charles VI through his uncle Theodore Palaiologos Kantakouzenos already in 1398, but the emperor's letter does not specify which kinds of gifts were handed over. We do know, however, that Charles himself presented his guest "auro, vasis sumptuosius, tam materia quam artificio admiracione dignis, olosericis quoque mire estimacionis." See *Chronique du religieux de Saint-Denys*, 559–63. For more information on the embassy, see Barker, *Manuel II*, 154–56.

¹⁶⁴ The gifts for Pope Boniface IX and anti-pope Benedict XIII fall into a different category altogether and should not be considered along the same lines as gifts for secular rulers.

¹⁶⁵ For the relic collection of Pietro Torrigiani, this was first pointed out by Hetherington, "A Purchase," 23, and again stressed by Cutler, "Loot to Scholarship," 244. For the illuminated copy of the works of Dionysios

CONCLUSION

The transfer of sacred relics between Byzantium and the Latin West followed, as we have seen, mechanisms that also governed the exchange of other precious commodities and luxury items originating in the East: gift-giving, theft, and trade. Although the biographies of some of the objects treated in this study suggest that the boundaries among these categories could be fluid at times, certain historical trends are nonetheless visible. From the time Byzantine emperors assumed the role of safekeepers, defenders, and distributors of the most sacred Christian relics in the late fifth and early sixth centuries until the end of the twelfth century, gift-giving on a decidedly personal and rather high social level was by far the most common means of transfer of sacred relics between Byzantium and the Latin West. Incidents of cross-cultural relic theft are recorded only rarely and can thus be considered an exception rather than the rule. With the beginning of the Crusades and the increase in pilgrimage traffic to the Holy Land, Latin sources attest to a rising western interest in eastern relics, particularly those in the possession of the Byzantine emperor. However, until the beginning of the thirteenth century, gift-giving remained the only means by which western rulers, noblemen, or church officials could legitimately gain access to such priceless tokens of victory and salvation.

The Crusader conquest of Constantinople and the plundering of its churches and palaces mark a clear turning point in the historical development. One of the most obvious results of the systematic looting of Byzantine sacred treasures was the transfer of a large number of Byzantine religious objects, most notably relics and reliquaries, into the various regions of France, Belgium, Italy, and Germany, from which the more prominent participants in the Fourth Crusade had come. Here the newly acquired relics had to prove their authenticity and effectiveness. They did so in part through the oral or written testimony of their carriers, and in part through their precious eastern containers, which not only referenced their earlier cult history, but also reaffirmed their inherent economic and emblematic value.

Although the gifting of relics remained a common practice among the Latin rulers of Constantinople and the leaders of the Venetian and Crusader contingents, the plundering of the Byzantine capital and instant commodification of its most valued secular and ecclesiastical treasures deeply affected the ways in which eastern relics were acquired, evaluated, and exchanged in subsequent years and decades. The exchange of relics for money or other commodities must have started fairly early as an immediate result of the large-scale plundering of smaller Byzantine monasteries and churches, but it was the Latin Empire's dire financial situation that led to the pawning and outright sale of the most important eastern relics. However, as efforts to hide the purely monetary character of these

Areopagita, presented to the abbey of Saint-Denis by Emperor Manuel's trusted envoy Manuel Chrysoloras in 1408 and its lack of artistic impact, see J. Lowden, "The Luxury Book as Diplomatic Gift," in *Byzantine Diplomacy* (as above, note 29), 249–60, esp. 251–53. The manuscript is preserved in the Musée du Louvre, Dépt. des Objets d'Art, MR 416. See I. Spatharakis, *Corpus of Dated Illuminated Greek Manuscripts*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1981), no. 278, 68 with bibliography. See also E. Lambertz, "Das Geschenk des Kaisers Manuel II. an das Kloster St. Denis und der Metochitesschreiber Michael Klostomalles," in *Lithoströton: Studien zur byzantinischen Kunst und Geschichte. Festschrift für Marcell Restle*, ed. B. Borkopp et al. (Stuttgart, 2000), 155–65; *Byzance. L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises*, ed. J. Durand, exh. cat., Musée du Louvre (Paris, 1992), no. 356, 463–64; *Le trésor de Saint-Denis*, ed. D. Gaborit-Chopin, exh. cat., Musée du Louvre (Paris, 1991), no. 60, 276–77.

transactions reveal, there was a certain hesitancy and unease that accompanied the outright commodification of the holy.

While late Byzantine attitudes toward the gifting, pawning, and sale of sacred relics may be considered a mere extension of the social and economic practices established by the Latin rulers of Constantinople, western attitudes toward eastern relics dramatically changed during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. As eastern relics and reliquaries failed to resist western desires to acquire and possess them, they gradually lost their mystique and priceless value.

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