

# ВОСТОЧНОХРИСТИАНСКИЕ РЕЛИКВИИ

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# **EASTERN CHRISTIAN RELICS**

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**RELICS OF THE PHAROS CHAPEL:  
A VIEW FROM THE LATIN WEST**

**A**lthough the present paper will focus on the most important shrine of christological mementoes in the Central Middle Ages, i.e. the skevophylakion of the Great Palace, the church of the Theotokos of the Pharos in Constantinople, it is necessary to start with a preliminary remark, just in order to point out how several collections of Christological relics — claiming to reproduce, more or less convincingly, the aura of the most sacred shrines in Jerusalem and the Holy Places — spread throughout Europe from the late 10th through the 13th century; meaningfully, their public veneration was always sponsored by the leading institutions of the continent.

In the first instance, this was caused by the far-off geographic location of Palaestine, whose distance was undoubtedly enlarged by its being in the hands of the detested Infidels. By the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century the number of pilgrims from both Byzantium and the West going to the Holy Land had decreased and the destructions of Christian buildings promoted by the Mad Caliph al-Hakim made a very bad impression on Europe's public opinion and probably stimulated people to rely more intensively on the 'New Jerusalems' arousing in their own lands.

The main sponsors of the sacred mementoes of Holy Scripture and evangelical times were, in the Western world, the major monasteries, connected with the royal courts, and the Kings themselves, usually through the means of royal foundations: this was the case, e.g., of Asturian Kings's patronage of Oviedo Cathedral and its precious *Arca Santa*, which was provided, as early as the beginnings of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, of a rich relic treasure, including an ampulla of the blood issued from Christ's icon in Beirut and several fragments of the True Cross and the Sepulchre, the crown of thorns, the shroud, the sudarium, the tunic, the cloths of Jesus' infancy, pieces of the miraculous bread as well as that of Last Supper and also some handfuls of ground of Bethany and the Mount of Olives. Here as elsewhere, christological relics constituted the most valuable group of the mementoes preserved in the altar-reliquary — allegedly a relic itself because of its manufacture by the twelve apostles; they were venerated, however, in conjunction with equally precious mementoes of the Virgin Mary (her milk, her hair, etc.), the Old Testament, the Apostles and other saints. The aura of the shrine, which was also expected to

express its royal supporter's glory and power, benefited from the addition of extraordinary *magnalia Dei*, "God's wonders"<sup>1</sup>.

Probably already Charlemagne had provided his "Palatine Chapel" in Aachen, Germany, with some sacred collection of such kind, although we are no exact witness of its contents<sup>2</sup>. In any case, this building was soon regarded as a *repositorium* of exceptionally holy objects and such monasteries as Charroux and Cassino claimed to possess relics handed down by Carolingian Emperors; in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, texts like the *Iter hierosolymitanum*, telling a fanciful journey of the Emperor to the Holy Land and his encounter with the holy bishop Daniel of Nablus, attributed to him the translation to Aachen of such precious cult objects as the crown of thorns and one of the nails (later handed down to the royal abbey of Saint-Denis near Paris), the chalice, the bowl and even the knife of the Last Supper, as well as St. Peter's beard and hair<sup>3</sup>. Such literary works stressed the association of the Roman Emperor, both as a man and an institutional subject, with Christ as the Saviour of mankind and fulfilled that process of *christomimesis* which had got under way already under the early Carolingian sovereigns.

This well-known trend of Western royal ideology had its deeper roots, as scholars have often pointed out, in Byzantium and its conception of power so often labelled as "caesaropapism". The basileis' alleged sacredness, relying on a nearly explicit comparison with Christ as the Lord of the universe, as it was brought out by both court ritual and literature, constituted the necessary premise and model for every other institution aiming at asserting an equivalent authority; and in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century such claims were most strongly laid by a religious institution, the Papacy, which longed for both spiritual and political primacy. The Gregorian Church, while promoting the Popes' role as legitimate holders of power over Western Europe, clashed more and more increasingly with both the German Empire and Byzantium over its temporal claims, which were inevitably intermingled with its growing independency from the other Patriarchal sees. It was no accident that, in the shaping and refining of its symbolic apparatus, the Papacy appropriated both Imperial habits and religious models and reworked them, by conveying the idea of Rome as the sole heir of both St. Peter and Constantine.

The very center of such a symbolic contamination is to be recognized in the basilica of the Holy Saviour on the Lateran, which was the town cathedral and also a 'palatine church', because of its direct connection with the Pontifical Palace nearby. Officiated by a congregation of canons which was a sort of vanguard army of the Gregorian Reformation, the church housed the most solemn Papal ceremonies and was more and more frequently described by authors as "the mother of all churches", "the most holy shrine of the Divine Roman Church", boasting its "domination and primacy over all the churches on earth" and its title of "Apostolic

On the *Arca Santa* relics, see esp. de Gaiffier B. Le plus ancien catalogue des reliques d'Oviedo // *Analecta Bollandiana*. 1927. Vol. 45, p. 93-95; see also Frolov A. La relique de la Vrai Croix. Recherches sur le développement d'un culte. Paris, 1961, p. 277-278, with further bibliography.

Frolov, La relique... p. 198-210.

Castets F. *Iter Hierosolymitanum* ou Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople // *Revue des langues romanes*. 1892. Ser. IV, vol. 6, p. 417-487, esp. 452.

head and Roman Empire": all these privileges had been motivated, according to John the Deacon's 12<sup>th</sup> century description of the basilica<sup>4</sup>, by the donation of Constantine, who was also the founder of the church itself.

As the Popes' influence became stronger, their cathedral had to be provided with more evident signs of their power, whose aim was to stress both the Roman See's apostolic roots and the legacy of the Constantinian Empire. Major emphasis was given to the Pontiff as Christ's vicar, while local alternatives to ancient Byzantine legends and rituals were worked out by the Lateran clergy, as is witnessed, for example, by the shift, already in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, from the commemoration of the Beirut miracle on November 9<sup>th</sup> to its substitution with the feast of the dedication of the Lateran basilica on the same date<sup>5</sup>. Almost contemporaneously, Rome claimed to possess the most ancient portrait of Christ, by attributing to St. Luke's hand the ancient acheiropoietic panel preserved in the Sancta sanctorum, the Palatine chapel entitled to St. Lawrence<sup>6</sup>. There as well as on the main altar of the Lateran church a great number of relics connected with the Saviour's deeds and Passion were listed by the sources from the 11<sup>th</sup> through the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The basilica, which boasted of the most important Old Testament relics (from the Ark of the Covenant to Aaron's and Moses' rods), deserved praise for preserving such *magnalia Dei* as the towel of the Washing of the feet, the tunic, the purple chlamys, the blood, the sudarium, as well as several other memorabilia of the Apostles and the martyrs. The Pontiff's oratorium, instead, housed several particles of the True Cross, the Child's prepuce, the sandals, one bread and thirteen lentils of the Last Supper, fragments of the reed, the sponge and Zacchaeus' sycamore. Under Christ's image were a lot of "sacred stones", sanctified by contact with Jesus, the Blessed Virgin or the Angels, as well as many pieces of the Column of the Flagellation, the Sepulchre, the Holy Lance, some earth of the Lithostrotos and other holy places of Jerusalem and Palaestine<sup>7</sup>.

Such a selection of sacred mementoes was probably meant to shade every other relic collection in the West and competed with a powerful French institution, the ancient Carolingian abbey of Charroux, for the possession of the prepuce, the most celebrated item according to John the Deacon. Nonetheless, the emphasis accorded to the Passion relics reflected more clearly Rome's wish of confrontation with the most celebrated shrine housing such a kind of objects, i.e. the church of the Theotokos of the Pharos, which was located in the very centre of the Great Pal-

<sup>4</sup> John the Deacon. *Descriptio lateranensis ecclesiae* // Codice topografico della città di Roma / Ed. Valentini R., Zucchetti G. Rome, 1942. Vol. III, p. 326–373. See also *Petrus Damiani*. *Epistula I* // PL 144. Col. 253.

<sup>5</sup> See Bacci M. The Berardenga Antependium and the *Passio Ymaginis* Office // *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*. 1998. Vol. 61, p. 1–16.

<sup>6</sup> Bacci M. Il pennello dell'Evangelista. Storia delle immagini sacre attribuite a san Luca. Pisa, 1998, p. 250–254.

<sup>7</sup> On the Lateran collections see Grisar H. *Die römische Kapelle Sancta Sanctorum und ihr Schatz*. Freiburg am Breisgau, 1908, and Lauer Ph. *Le palais du Latran. Étude historique et archéologique*. Paris, 1911. See also Wolf G. *Laetare filia Sion. Ecce ego venio et habitabo in medio tui: Images of Christ Transferred to Rome from Jerusalem* // *Jewish Art*. 1997–1998. Vol. 23–24, p. 419–429, esp. 422–424.



ace of Constantinople, inside the complex of Boukoleon, and constituted, already in the late 10<sup>th</sup> century, the private chapel of the Basileis, frequently involved in court ritual and religious liturgy, especially on Easter time. It was contiguous with a series of structures pertaining to the Emperors' private apartments and other two small adjoining buildings had been constructed by Macedonian sovereigns (Basil I and Leo VI) in honour of St. Demetrius and the Prophet Elijah: we are probably right to expect that they were *parekklesia* directly communicating with the major church<sup>8</sup>.

The treasure housed there<sup>9</sup> was often praised by Latin pilgrims and other authors, although it is not clear if free entry was allowed to everybody; in any case, its renown was widespread and contributed to shape the idea of Constantinople as "a very safe palace" for the most precious relics of Eastern Christendom, as the historian Robert the Monk put it<sup>10</sup>. For the *Anonymous of the Terragonensis 55*, writing by the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the town was to be praised "especially because of the sacred mementoes (*sanctuariorum*) of our Lord Jesus Christ that are believed to be there more than in any other part of the world"<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, one should remember that in the highly controversial *Letter of Alexius Comnenus to Robert of Flanders* Passion relics played a key-role in stimulating the Westerners' intervention against the Turks<sup>12</sup> and two 12<sup>th</sup> century historians of the Crusades, Hugh of Lechtenberg and Hugh of Fleury, wrote that Pope Urban II, in his speech pronounced at the Council of Clermont in 1092, had expressly stated that it was a duty for all Christians to fight for Constantinople's safety, since the Great Town housed the column of the Flagellation, the purple chlamys, the crown of thorns, the whip, the reed and the cloths<sup>13</sup> —

<sup>8</sup> *Guilland R.* L'église de la Vierge du Phare // *Byzantinoslavica*. 1951. Vol. 12, p. 232–234; *Idem*, Études de topographie de Constantinople byzantine. Berlin–Amsterdam, 1969. Vol. I, p. 311–314; *Miranda S.* Les palais des empereurs byzantins. México, 1965, p. 104–107; *Janin R.* La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire Byzantin. I. Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat œcuménique. Paris, 1969. Vol. III, p. 232–236.

<sup>9</sup> See the material collected by *Frolow*, La relique... p. 301–305, which lacked important information provided by the texts subsequently published by *Krinje Ciggaar* and others (*Ciggaar K. N.* Une description anonyme de Constantinople du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle // *Revue des études byzantines*. 1973. Vol. 31, p. 335–354.). See now *Flusin B.* Construire une nouvelle Jérusalem: Constantinople et les reliques // *L'Orient dans l'histoire religieuse de l'Europe. L'invention des origines*. Ed. M. A. Amir-Moezzi and J. Scheid. Turnhout, 2000, p. 51–70; *Idem*, Les reliques de la Sainte-Chapelle et leur passé impérial à Constantinople // *Le trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle. Exhibition catalogue* (Paris, Louvre, 2001) / Ed. J. Durand and M.-P. Laffitte. Paris, 2001, p. 20–31.

<sup>10</sup> *Robert the Monk*. *Historia hierosolymitana*, II, 20 ("De Constantinopolitana urbe") / *Recueil des historiens des Croisades, Historiens Occidentaux* (hereafter *RHC, Hist. Occ.*). Paris, 1844–1895. Vol. III, p. 750–751.

<sup>11</sup> *Ciggaar K. N.* Une description de Constantinople dans le *Tarragonensis 55* // *Revue des études byzantines*. 1995. Vol. 53, p. 117–140, esp. 120: "[...] maxime ob sanctuariorum Domini nostri Iesu Christi que ibi maiora esse creduntur quam in omnibus orbis partibus".

<sup>12</sup> Text edited by *Riant P.* *Exuviae sacrae Constantinopolitanae*. Genève, 1878. Vol. II, p. 203–210; on its interpretation see *de Waha M.* La lettre d'Alexis I Comnène à Robert I le Frison // *Byzantion*. 1977. Vol. 47, p. 113–125.

<sup>13</sup> *Hugh of Lerchenfeld*. *Breviarium passagii in Terram Sanctam*, 2 // *RHC, Hist. Occ.* Vol. V, p. 380–381; *Hugh of Fleury*. *Itineris Hierosolymitani compendium*, 1 // *Ibidem*, p. 363.

left out the column, each relic was preserved in the Pharos chapel. As we know, such treasures tempted so much the Westerners' greed, that they were in great part depredated and later bought by King Louis IX of France for his own Palatine chapel<sup>14</sup>, which retained the same appellation of 'Sainte-Chapelle' attributed by the Crusader historian Robert de Clari, in his description of the town conquest in 1204<sup>15</sup>, to the Pharos church.

In its double dedication to the Saviour and the Virgin Mary, St. Louis' *Doppelkirche* probably reflected a tradition of court architecture going back to the models of Aachen, Oviedo and others<sup>16</sup>; possibly, he also took into account the strict interaction of Marian and christological symbols expressed by court rituals involving the Pharos church. As Evelyne Patlagean and Gilbert Dagron have pointed out<sup>17</sup>, the political meaning of the Palatine chapel was emphasized by its direct association with the most personal, private moments of the Emperor's life, as revealed, e.g., by its involvement in such occasions as the engagement and marriage rites; moreover, it was credited to express the sovereign's special veneration for both the Saviour, the Emperor of Heaven, and His Mother, the special patron of the Byzantine Empire. I should like to stress further such a point, but first it is necessary to take a step backward.

By the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the Great Palace, although it did not lack relics, was not yet conceived as a sacred shrine housing the most precious memorabilia of the Evangelic times; although according to the *Book of Ceremonies* the Cross and the Lance were already in its treasure<sup>18</sup>, it was mainly after the victorious Oriental campaigns of the second half of the century that, step by step, the most renowned objects were introduced inside the Boukoleon walls. As the 'Nea', the church founded by Basil I, was enriched with *spolia* of the Old Testament and Constantinian memoirs, the Pharos chapel started housing relics specifically connected with Christ, so that, step by step, it was meant to be perceived as a 'New Holy Land' — a metaphor which was also stressed by the Jerosolimitan liturgy employed there<sup>19</sup>. The Edessan Mandyion arrived in 944, followed by its copy on brick, the *Keramidion*, in 967<sup>20</sup>; in 975 John Tzimiskis added the sandals, while Christ's letter to King Abgar was obtained in 1032 and the crown of thorns, ac-

<sup>14</sup> *Frolow*, Reliques... p. 427–430.

<sup>15</sup> *Robert de Clari*. La conquête de Constantinople, 82–83 // *Historiens et chroniqueurs du Moyen Âge*. / Ed. Pauphilet A., Pognon E. Paris, 1952, p. 72–74.

<sup>16</sup> See esp. *Verbeek A.* Die architektonische Nachfolge der aachener Pfalzkapelle // *Karl der Grosse. Lebenwerk und Nachleben* / Ed. W. Braunsfels. Düsseldorf, 1967. Vol. IV, p. 113–156.

<sup>17</sup> *Patlagean É.* L'entrée de la Sainte Face d'Édesse à Constantinople en 944 // *La religion civique à l'époque médiévale et moderne (Chrétienté et Islam)* / Ed. A. Vauchez. Rome 1995, p. 21–35.

<sup>18</sup> *Thümmel H.* Kreuz, Reliquien und Bilder im Zeremonienbuch des Konstantins Porphyrogennetos // *Byzantinische Forschungen*. 1992. Vol. 18, p. 119–126, esp. 123–124.

<sup>19</sup> As we learn from the Typikon of the Pantokrator monastery in Constantinople, where the Jerosolimitan *akolouthiai* are described as a feature of the churches inside the Great Palace: *Дмитревский А.* Описание литургических рукописей. Киев, 895. Т. I, с. 678–679.

<sup>20</sup> See now *Flusin B.* Didascalie de Constantin Stilbès sur le Mandyion et la sainte tuile (BHG 796m) // *Revue des études byzantines*. 1997. Vol. 55, p. 53–79.

cording to François De Mély<sup>21</sup>, in 1063. Still in 1169–1170 Manuel Comnenus placed there the slab where Christ's body was laid down during the Deposition<sup>22</sup>, but in the meanwhile, probably already by the middle of the 11th century, the chapel had acquired almost all the Passion relics, although we cannot ascertain if they were identical with the original ones formerly venerated in Palaestine or simply replicated them.

The sources listing relics in the Pharos church or, more generically, in the Palace are both Latin and Greek or Russian. If we compare all the witnesses (I consider here a group of sixteen texts dating from the 11th through the 13th century), we obtain that the more widely known cult objects in the collection were the Passion relics, although the building housed also some remains of the apostles (John the Baptist, St. Andrew, St. Philip, St. Paul, St. Luke, etc.) and some Marian mementoes: her sandals and belt were often mentioned, while the veil and robe (usually known to be preserved in the Chalkoprateia and Blachernae churches) are recorded only by the *Mercati Anonymous*<sup>23</sup>, although they may be identified with the forehead band described by Anthony of Novgorod<sup>24</sup> [see Appendix A].

Among Christ's relics, a small group drew more frequently the visitors' attention: usually, they were those being mentioned explicitly in the Holy Scripture and playing a role of protagonist in the history of Salvation; the skevophylax of the Pharos church Nikolaos Mesarites, writing short after 1201, selected ten such treasures in order to praise the richness of the building, and labelled them as a δεκάλογος<sup>25</sup>. First of all, he mentioned the crown of thorns, by far the most frequently cited relic in the pilgrims' list and the primary object of interest also in St. Louis' sacred collection in Paris; the bramble was still green and blooming, according to the rhetorical topos, going back to St. Paul, of the incorruptible crown of Victory, of Christ's and the Christians' sacrifice. Such a topos did affect many later devotional practices involving sacred thorns: in the *Iter Hierosolymitanum*, those obtained by Charlemagne were described as periodically blossoming, as were those venerated, in the Later Middle Ages, in the cathedral of the Order of St. John in the citadel of Rhodes, which blossomed every year on Holy Fridays<sup>26</sup>.

Moreover, there were a large portion of the True Cross and the whip, φραγέλλιον, of the Flagellum. The latter, admittedly a fairly uncommon relic, is described in Mesarites' ekphrasis as an iron tool "open when it is held in one's hands, closed when it is preserved, being untouched, inside a box (θήκη)"; rather than as a whip,

<sup>21</sup> *de Mély* F. *Exuviae sacrae Constantinopolitanae*. Paris, 1904, p. 174–175.

<sup>22</sup> *Mango* C. Notes on Byzantine Monuments // *DOP*. 1969–1970. Vol. 23–24, p. 272–275.

<sup>23</sup> Text ed. by *Ciggaar* K. N. Une description de Constantinople traduite par un pèlerin anglais // *Revue des études byzantines*. 1976. Vol. 34, p. 211–267, esp. 245: "vestimentum sanctae Mariae genitricis Dei, velamen eius".

<sup>24</sup> Text transl. by *Ehrhard* M. Le livre du Pèlerin d'Antoine de Novgorod // *Romania*. 1932. Vol. 58, p. 44–65, esp. 57.

<sup>25</sup> Text ed. by *Heisenberg* A. Nikolaos Mesarites. Die Palastrevolution des Johannes Comnenus. Würzburg, 1907, p. 29–31.

<sup>26</sup> *Frolow*, La relique... p. 530, 555.



it is conceived as a ring or collar, κλοιὸς ἐπαυχένιος, i.e. "a yoke weighing on the shoulders", which now, in a sort of retaliation, bends the haughty devil's neck inside its circular form: ὥς κρίκον κάμψας τὸν τράχηλον τοῦ ὑπαύχηνος Σατανᾶ, an expression borrowed from Isaiah (58:5). This is not only a rhetorical device aiming at mixing different Biblical passages, since we find its countercheck in Western pilgrims' texts, where the term employed is both *flagellum* and *collarium*: the *Anonymous of ca. 1150* speaks of "an iron collar, by which his [Christ's] neck was bent while being whipped, fastened to the column"<sup>27</sup>. Such detail is also confirmed by the Latin Emperor Baldwin II's 1247 letter to Louis IX, concerning the relics handed down to the King of France; among these is recorded "a chain or iron bond, made as a sort of ring, by which it is said that our Lord was bound" ("catenam etiam, sive vinculum ferreum, quasi in modum annulli factum, quo creditur idem Dominus noster fuisse ligatus")<sup>28</sup>.

The sepulchral bands or sindons were the linen cloths, still scenting of balms, employed by John of Arimathaea to bury Christ's body; then there was the λέντιον, or *lintheum* in Latin texts, i.e. the towel of the Washing of the Feet, still preserving the dampness of the wiped apostles. The holy lance, on its side, had the appearance of a double-edged sword, in the scheme of a cross: this was credited by the Byzantines and also by many Westerners to be the original one, although a new one had been found by the Crusaders in Antioch as a consequence of the very suspect revelation of a visionary named Peter Bartholomew. In the same way, the purple himation which, as well as other relics, constituted one of the main treasures preserved in the Lateran, was also one of the most holy objects venerated in the Pharos chapel. Moreover, differently from the reeds growing in Greece, the κάλαμος of Jesus' mockery had a great size, likened by Mesarites to the "arm of a man with great hands" (παχὺς ὅποιος ἀνδρός τινος βριαρόχειρος βραχίων ἐστί), while the Saviour's sandals were absolutely well-proportionated.

Apart from the sacred mementoes mentioned in the skevophylax's *Decalogue*, the Pharos treasure preserved other important and fascinating relics. There is no agreement between medieval authors as regards the number of holy nails venerated in the skevophylakion: some spoke of only one *clavus*, others of more *clavi*. A reason of such a disagreement among the Latin writers may have been due to their knowledge of other nails venerated in the West; since these could not be more than three, the author of the *Descriptio sanctuarii Constantinopolitani*, writing, according to Paul de Riant, towards 1190, made it clear that there were two nails, but one of them had been deprived of its point which was actually preserved in the royal abbey of Saint-Denis near Paris, while the third one constituted the main cult object in the chapel of the Kings of Jerusalem<sup>29</sup>: as known from other

<sup>27</sup> Riant, *Exuviae...* p. 211: «collarium ferreum, quo astrictum fuit collum eius dum flagellaretur, ad columnam ligatus».

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, p. 134–135.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, p. 217: "Clavi, ad minus duo, abscisa transcuspide unius, quod in Gallia, apud Sanctum Dionysium, ex dono Karoli regis, reverentissime habetur; tercius, inquam, cum tenallis quibus devotissime Nichodemus, cum Ioseph, corpus Domini Ihesu avulsit de ligno, in capella regis Ierusalem, cum corpore ipsius Ioseph, habetur".

sources, this relic, as well as Joseph of Arimathaea's body and Nichodemus' pincers, had been found short before 1130 in Ramleh (which was currently identified with Joseph's birthplace)<sup>30</sup>.

The Pharos church also preserved an ampulla of holy blood from Christ's side, while the Beirut blood was honoured in the Chalke chapel: such different kinds of holy liquids were assembled together only in Palaeologan times, in the treasure of St. John the Baptist in Petra, as witnessed by Clavijo<sup>31</sup>.

Other memorabilia, moreover, were the marble basin (*pelvis*) of the Washing of the Feet, Christ's belt and laces, a portion of the bread of the Last Supper, the Child's hair and cloths (maybe the latter being fragments of the relics preserved in Hagia Sophia), the tunic, the sponge, and the sudarium; the stone where Christ's head was leant after the Deposition cannot be identified with the slab transferred from Ephesus to Constantinople by Manuel Comnenus in 1169–1170, since it is witnessed by written sources well before that date.

We know very little about the location of the relics among the furnishings of the church, which was for its part an absolutely 'de luxe' building, full of golden and silver ornaments hanging from the ceiling, and displayed a richly decorated floor, a golden and silver templon and ciborium, as well as sumptuous mosaics on its walls, apse and dome.

Mesarites writes that the *φραγέλλιον* was preserved inside a noble metal box, and, after the conquest of Constantinople, Nikolaos of Otranto informs us that the bread of the Last Supper was included in a rich golden reliquary embellished with pearls and precious stones and displaying an inscription which declared the authenticity of its content<sup>32</sup>.

The Holy Mandylion, as we learn from the Emperor Baldwin II's letter to Louis IX, was included inside a 'tabula', i.e. a panel or, more probably, a metal-work icon: *sanctam Toellam tabule insertam*, in his own words<sup>33</sup>. Such an object was probably intended to screen and completely conceal the image "not made by human hands", since it was commonly believed that nobody could stare back at it. According to the *Anonymous of the Tarragonensis* 55, not even the Emperor himself was allowed to open the *vas*, i.e. the 'reliquary', of the Edessan image, since, when in the past it had been displayed to people, a terrible earthquake had devastated the town<sup>34</sup>.

Probably an almost identical container housed also the Mandylion's *pendant*, the Holy Keramidion: Robert de Clari records that, in the *Sainte Chapele* of the Boukoleon,

<sup>30</sup> Mayer H. E. Die Hofkapelle der König von Jerusalem // Deutsches Archiv für die Erforschung des Mittelalters. 1988. Vol. 44, p. 489–509, esp. 494–495.

<sup>31</sup> Janin, Les églises... p. 426; cf. also Cirac S. Tres monasterios de Constantinopla visitados por Españoles en el año 1403 // Revue des études byzantines. 1961. Vol. 19, p. 358–381, esp. 372.

<sup>32</sup> Riant, Exuviae... p. 233–234. According to the same text, the relic was destroyed by the Crusaders since it demonstrated that the Latin usage of unleavened bread in the liturgy; cf. Papadopoulos-Kerameus A. Documents pour servir à l'histoire de la IVe croisade // Revue de l'Orient latin. 1893. Vol. 1, p. 551–555.

<sup>33</sup> Riant, Exuviae... p. 135.

<sup>34</sup> Ed. Ciggaar K. N. Une description anonyme de Constantinople du XIIe siècle // Revue des études byzantines. 1973. Vol. 31, p. 120–121.

there were two rich golden reliquaries (*vaisseaus*) hanging by two great silver chains in the middle of the chapel. Inside the former there was a tile (*tuile*), inside the latter a cloth (*toele*)...<sup>35</sup>

It is quite noteworthy that such a location was attributed to the two *acheiropoietoi*, since it possibly imitated the canonical display of some of the most precious Passion relics in the churches of Jerusalem. Before the destruction of the Holy Sion building by al-Hakim in 1009, the crown of thorns hung over the iconostasis, as we learn from the 9<sup>th</sup> century pilgrim Bernard the Monk and by a 10<sup>th</sup> century text quoted by the Armenian writer Movses Daxsuranci<sup>36</sup>; the taste for hanging reliquaries, in any case, was still alive in Crusader times, since some 12<sup>th</sup> century authors recorded with some amazement that "a *vas* of golden brightness and skill" hung by a chain fastened to the dome of the Templum Domini and possibly contained a golden urn or Christ's blood or also the holy manna<sup>37</sup>.

The *vasa* containing the Mandylion and the Keramidion had undoubtedly a prominent position in the Pharos church and their mutual association and interaction were strengthened by their involvement in the same ceremonial moments. As we learn from Leo Tuscus<sup>38</sup>, a Pisan author writing in Constantinople under the reign of Manuel Comnenus, both were covered with cloths during the entire period of Lent [see Appendix B], and such a custom was distinctive of a specific kind of cult objects in the chapel, i.e. miracle-working images. As I have pointed out elsewhere<sup>39</sup>, another icon was involved in such Lent rituals, that of the Mother of God which, according again to Leo Tuscus, was usually preserved on the back side of the altar and was given the title of *domina domus*, i.e. 'Lady of the House', corresponding to Mesarites' term Οἰκοκυρά. This image, which played a role of protagonist in a sort of fertility practice sponsored by the court, was venerated as the eponymous cult object of the church and as the special patron of the Emperors' private life and residence; as such, it constituted one of the dominant symbols inside the skevophylakion and stressed the symbolical meaning of strictly associated Marian and christological mementoes in the most holy shrine of Byzantine empire.

<sup>35</sup> *Robert de Clari*. La conquête de Constantinople, 82–83 / Ed. Pauphilet, Pognon, p. 73: «... car il avoit deux riches vaisseaus d'or qui pendoient en mi la chapele à deux grosses chaines d'argent. En l'un de ces vaissiaus si avoit une tuile et en l'autre une toile...». On the importance of such a location in the Byzantine tradition, see Lidov A. Relics as Icons in the Sacred Space of Byzantine Church // Relics in the Art and Culture of the Eastern Christian World / Ed. A. Lidov. Moscow, 2000, p. 28–29; Lidov A. The Mandylion and Keramion as an Image-Archetype of Sacred Space, in the present book.

<sup>36</sup> *Bernard the Monk*. Itinerarium [c. 870], 12 / Ed. Tobler T., Molinier A. Itinera Hierosolymitana et descriptiones Terræ Sanctæ bellis sacris anteriora. Paris, 1879. Vol. I, p. 315; *Movses Daxsuranci*. History of the Albanians, 2, 51 / Transl. by Wilkinson J. Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades. Warminster, 1977, p. 200–201.

<sup>37</sup> *Albertus of Aachen*. Historia Hierosolymitana, 6, 24 // RHC, Hist. Occ. Vol. 2, p. 480.

<sup>38</sup> *Leo Tuscus*. De haeresibus et praevaricationibus Graecorum // PG 140. Col. 544–550, esp. 548.

<sup>39</sup> *Bacci M*. La Vergine Oikokyra, Signora del Grande Palazzo. Lettura di un passo di Leone Tusco sulle cattive usanze dei Greci // Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. 1998. Ser. IV, vol. 3, p. 261–279.

# Appendix A. The Holy Relics of the Pharos Chapel in the Great Palace of Constantinople according to the Medieval Sources

## List of sources

1. *Anonymous of the Tarragonensis 55* [1075–1099] / Ed. Ciggaar K. N. Une description de Constantinople dans le *Tarragonensis 55* // *Revue des études byzantines*. 1995. Vol. 53, p. 117–140.
2. *Mercati Anonymous* [12<sup>th</sup> century, based on a previous Greek source] / Ed. Ciggaar K. N. Une description de Constantinople traduite par un pèlerin anglais // *Revue des études byzantines*. 1976. Vol. 34, p. 211–267.
3. *Alexius Comnenus*. Letter to Count Robert of Flanders [1092] / Ed. Riant P. *Exuviae sacrae Constantinopolitanae*. Genève, 1878. Vol. II, p. 203–210 (although the text speaks of Constantinopolitan relics in general words, it emphasizes the christological relics known to be preserved in the Pharos Chapel).
4. Διήγησις τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως [1136–1143] / Ed. Ciggaar K. N. Une description anonyme de Constantinople du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle 1973. Vol. 31, p. 338–341.
5. *Anonimous of 1150* / Ed. Riant, 1878. Vol. II, p. 211–213.
6. *Nikolaus, abbot of Munkathvera in Iceland*. *Catalogus reliquiarum C.P.* [1157] / Ed. Riant, 1878. Vol. II, p. 213–216 (he speaks of relics housed in “ancient palaces”).
7. *William of Tyrus*. *Chronicon* [1171], 20, 23 / Ed. R. B. C. Huygens. Turnhout, 1986, p. 944–945 (‘Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis’ 63a).
8. *Leo Tuscus*. *De haeresibus et praevaricationibus Graecorum* [1177 ca.] // PG 140, col. 544–550.
9. *Descriptio Constantinopolis* [late 12<sup>th</sup> century] / Ed. Ciggaar, 1973, p. 335–354.
10. *Descriptio sanctuarii Constantinopolitani* [1190 ca.] / Ed. Riant, 1878. Vol. II, p. 216–217.
11. *Anthony of Novgorod*. *Pilgrim Book* [1200] / Ed. Лонарев X. Книга паломник. Сказание мест святых во Цареграде Антония Архиепископа Новгородского в 1200 году // *Православный Палестинский Сборник*. 1899. Vol. 51, p. 1–111, esp. 18–19; French translation by Ehrhard M. *Le livre du Pèlerin d’Antoine de Novgorod* // *Romania*. 1932. Vol. 58, p. 44–65.
12. *Nikolaos Mesarites*. *John Comnenus’ Palace Revolution* [1200 ca.] / Ed. Heisenberg A. *Nikolaos Mesarites. Die Palastrevolution des Johannes Comnenus*. Würzburg, 1907, p. 29–36.
13. *Robert de Clari*. *La conquête de Constantinople* [1204 ca.], 82–83 / Ed. Pauphilet A. — Pognon E. *Historiens et chroniqueurs du Moyen Âge*. Paris, 1952, p. 72–74.
14. *Nikolaos of Otranto*. *Tractatus de communione* [1207 ca.] / Ed. Riant, 1878, vol. II, p. 233–234.
15. *Rigordus*. *Gesta Philippi Augusti* [1208 ca.] / Ed. Riant, 1878. Vol. II, p. 235–236.
16. *Baldwin II, Latin Emperor of Constantinople*. Letter to Louis IX of France [1247] / Ed. Riant 1878. Vol. II, p. 134–135.



Relics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Basin of the Washing Feet	•	•			•	•					•					
Christ's belt		•									•					
Christ's footprint												•				
Christ's hair															•	
Christ's Letter to King Abgar	•	•		•	•	•										
Christ's saddlebag					•											
Christ's sandals	•	•				•	•		•		•			•		
Christ's shoelaces											•					
Christ's side blood		•			•	•			•				•			•
Elijah's clavis											•					
Fragments of the Sepulchre										•						•
Holy Bread														•		
Holy Chlamys		•	•	•		•			•		•	•			•	•
Holy Cross(es)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•			•	•	•
Holy Crown of Thorns	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Holy Innocents' relics										•						
Holy Keramidion		•						•					•			
Holy Lance	•	•			•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•			•
Holy Mandylion	•	•			•			•		•			•			•
Holy Nail(s)	•	•	•		•	•	•		•	•		•	•	•		
Holy Reed	•	•	•		•		•			•	•	•				
Holy Sepulchral Bands		•	•			•				•		•		•		
Holy Shroud/ sudarium		•			•	•	•									•
Holy Sponge		•					•			•						•
Holy Tunic		•	•			•					•		•			
Holy Whip		•	•		•	•			•			•				•
Icon of St. Demetrius													•			
Icon of the Mother of God								•								
John the Baptist's clothes		•														
John the Baptist's hair		•	•													
John the Baptist's head		•	•							•			•			•
John the Baptist's right hand	•	•			•	•					•					
John the Baptist's stick											•					
Pillow-stone of the Sepulchre	•	•			•	•										
Relics of several apostles		•								•						



[illegible]

### Appendix B. Leo Tuscus (1177 ca.) on the Pharos Chapel in the Great Palace of Constantinople

Leo Tuscus, a cultivated layman from Pisa, lived at the Imperial Court of Constantinople from the 1160s to 1181 ca., under the reign of Manuel Comnenus (1143–1180). While his brother Hugo Etherianus became the Emperor's personal advisor in the field of Latin theology, Leo worked as an official translator; among his works, the treatise *On the haeresies and abuses of the Greeks* has been preserved in the miscellaneous collection of texts selected by the Dominican Friars of Constantinople in 1252, which has been handed down to us under the title *Contra Graecos* (ed. PG 145, cols 487–574). Cf. Dondaine A. 'Contra Graecos'. *Premiers écrits polémiques des Dominicains d'Orient* // Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum. 1951. Vol. 21, p. 320–446. *Idem*. Hugues Éthérien et Léon Toscan // Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge. 1952. Vol. 19, p. 67–134.

In order to point out that Greek superstition was rooted in the customs of the Imperial Palace, Leo Tuscus provides us with a detailed description of the ceremonial usages which involved the Pharos Chapel during Lent, when the Mandylion and Keramidion were covered with veils and the icon of the Virgin *Oikokyra* was transferred into the nearby bedroom of the Emperor. For an interpretation of this passage in the context of the Great Palace topography, cf. Bacci M. La Vergine Oikokyra, Signora del Grande Palazzo. Lettura di un passo di Leone Tusco sulle cattive usanze dei Greci // Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. 1998. Ser. IV, vol. 3, p. 261–279.

*Leo Tuscus*. De haeresibus et praevaricationibus Graecorum. Ed. PG 145. Col. 548c.

In fact the Greeks charge the Latins for doing what they are in the habit of doing very carefully inside Constantine's Great Palace. In a church of this Palace, where the holy relics are preserved, an image of the Blessed Mother of God, named 'Lady of the House' (*domina domus*) because of the distinctive status attributed to it, is placed behind the altar. From the beginning of Fasting time to Holy Saturdays, it is locked inside a bedroom, whose doors are covered with cloths, as well as, during Lent, the places both of the Holy Mandylion (*sancti mantellis*) and the Holy Keramidion are sheltered with veils till Holy Saturdays. Moreover, they compel the image of the Mother of God to give birth to their [expected] children and, by means of Her mediation, they get the Virgin Herself as godmother in this way: they apply a shroud to the image, so that She may receive the baptized children from the celebrant's hands; when they speak, they explicitly show what kind of superstition is widespread among them. In fact, whoever could claim, without insulting God, that an image is able to speak, or may stand surety for a child, or is a witness at the baptism? Since they don't want to neglect any kind of superstition and hate their alive brothers, they acquire new brothers among the reluctant saints, by means of their images. The person who does not love his brother, whom he can see, how could love God, whom he cannot see nor know? All the more because such a brotherhood is artificial, feigned and disunited: they bribe a priest, when he sings Mass, and prayers which cannot be fulfilled are said in favour of such an abominable brotherhood — being an animal, not a spiritual one. They light at least two candles, while the false brother is anointed with oil and embraces the holy image, which he dares name 'brother': and this man proves to be a murderer, since he hates his alive brothers.