

DECONSTRUCTING THE MYTH OF BYZANTINE CROWN: THE HEAD RELIQUARY OF SAINT BLAISE IN DUBROVNIK

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ABSTRACT: The head reliquary of Saint Blaise in Dubrovnik, made in 1694 by the Venetian goldsmith Francesco Ferro, has long been thought to replicate an earlier version that was mentioned in the 1335 inventory of Dubrovnik cathedral. The article examines the history of the head relic and the assumption that it may have replicated or connoted a shape of the Byzantine imperial crown, a *kamelaukion*. From the available evidence such reading has been rejected. Instead, it is proposed that it resembled the dome-shaped reliquary such as that of Saint James in Zadar dated to the end of the eleventh or beginning of the twelfth century. Furthermore, it is proposed that group I enamels that adorn the reliquary were not made in Constantinople, but in Dubrovnik between 1164 and 1180, given that they show a number of non-Byzantine stylistic and iconographical features and inscriptions in Beneventan script incompatible with enamel production in Constantinople.

Keywords: head reliquary, relic, Saint Blaise cult, Dubrovnik, enamel, *kamelaukion*, Byzantine reliquaries

Introduction

The head reliquary of Saint Blaise is an artwork that testifies to Dubrovnik's earliest history and to the continuity of its religious and artistic life (Fig. 1). The people of Dubrovnik believe that the head relic of Saint Blaise has not left



Fig. 1. Francesco Ferro, The Reliquary of the Head of Saint Blaise, Treasury of Dubrovnik cathedral, 1667 with 11th to 12th century enamel plaques, gold and enamel. Photo: Živko Bačić.

the city since the day in 1026 when it was found.¹ Since that date, the relic has been one of the sacred cornerstones of Dubrovnik's civic identity that developed around the cult of Saint Blaise, the city's patron saint. This relic, in its elaborate prosthesis is solemnly carried by the bishop of Dubrovnik in the procession on the feast day of Saint Blaise on February 3 of each year (Fig. 2). Despite the civic importance of the head relic of Saint Blaise, some key issues concerning the history of this reliquary before its seventeenth-century reconstruction, as well as the date, style and the iconography of its enamel decoration have not been fully solved. All of these aspects need to be re-examined, and, as any

¹ For the time of the relic arrival see further in the text. The feast day of Saint Blaise was first mentioned in pre-statutory documents in 1158 (*Codex diplomaticus Regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*, vol. II, ed. Tade Smičiklas. Zagreb: JAZU, 1904: doc. 82, p. 85). In 1190 the right of safe-conduct to debtors was allowed on the feast day of Saint Blaise, *ibidem*: doc. 227, p. 242. The Statute of the city of Dubrovnik from 1272 specifies that relics needed to be incensed on the feast day of Saint Blaise (*The Statute of Dubrovnik of 1272*, trans. Vesna Rimac, language editor Vesna Baće, ed. Nella Lonza. Dubrovnik: Državni arhiv u Dubrovniku, 2012: Book I, c. 2, p. 72-73).



Fig. 2. The Reliquary of the Head of Saint Blaise carried on the feast day of Saint Blaise, February 4, 2015.

thorough re-examination starts with a deconstruction of previously acquired assumptions, I intend to start here with the most entrenched misconception about this artwork: that the current *kamelaukion* form of the Saint Blaise reliquary replicates its presumed eleventh-century form, a Byzantine imperial crown. If the current reliquary is not a replica of the original crown form, as I hope to demonstrate in this paper, then the supposedly Byzantine origin of the re-used enamel roundels on the reliquary is also brought into question. Iconographical analysis of these enamel decorations casts a deep shadow of doubt on the claimed Byzantine provenance of these enamel plaques, further diminishing the possibility that the original reliquary was also a Byzantine work. Instead, I suggest that the reliquary most likely looked like the cylindrical reliquary of Saint James the Less in Zadar, which is an example of a Byzantinizing



Fig. 3. The Reliquary of the Head of Saint James, Zadar, Permanent Exhibition of Church Art, Zadar, early 12th century, wood, silver, embossed; height 16 cm; ø 16 cm. Photo: Živko Bačić

rather than a Byzantine work (Fig. 3). By removing the Constantinople origin of these enamels, the value of this splendid artifact will not be diminished. Rather, the re-examination of the Saint Blaise reliquary will contribute to a better understanding of cross-cultural exchanges and modalities for appropriating the Byzantine aesthetic in eleventh- and twelfth-century Dalmatia.

The Spolia Style

The misconception about the original shape of the Saint Blaise reliquary starts with the reliquary itself, which is the work of Venetian goldsmith Francesco Ferro. He left his signature “Fran.co Ferro Venet.o F. A. 1694” in golden wire

just above the bottom rim.² Ferro appropriated the *kamelaukion* shape of the Byzantine crown as a means to convey and enhance the perceived authenticity and value of this reliquary. By doing so, he drew on the Venetian tradition of “spolia style”,³ which primarily denotes the creative appropriation of Byzantine art and style in the late-medieval art and architecture of Venice. Venetian goldsmiths reused Byzantine enamels for restoration, or better stated, reinterpretation of Byzantine artworks in the late Middle Ages and even in the post-Byzantine period. A good example of a late medieval Venetian Byzantinizing assemblage is the book cover in *Biblioteca comunale* in Siena containing 38 Byzantine enamel plaques from the twelfth century, which originally came from 11 different sources.⁴ The treasury of Saint Mark keeps the largest collection of 15 detached Byzantine enamels dating to the tenth or the eleventh century that originally came from 12 different objects.⁵ In the post-Byzantine period a prominent example is the celebrated Nikopeia icon, a piece of Venetian war booty from the Fourth Crusade. When this icon was turned into an elaborate Baroque altarpiece in 1617 for St. Mark’s Basilica, 16 eleventh-century Byzantine enamel plaques of unequal quality and provenance were used to embellish the icon frame.⁶ Restoration work on the icon frame continued in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and at least one enamel plaque was made and added to the frame at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the goldsmith and

² For archival records concerning Francesco Ferro (Ferri) see Ivo Lentić, *Dubrovački zlatari 1600-1900*. Zagreb: Društvo povjesničara umjetnosti SR Hrvatske, 1984: pp. 63-64. Francesco Ferro came to Dubrovnik from Korčula. He was mentioned in Dubrovnik for the first time on 20 May 1678 when he was accused of inflicting physical harm on and attempting to murder Samuel Maestro. After that Ferro became a frequent party in brawls with Dubrovnik goldsmiths and other citizens. He was married to a woman holding property in Dubrovnik. His signed work is the reliquary head of Saint Blaise and the reliquary for the left hand of Saint Blaise which he signed F.co Ferro F.a Ano 1712.

³ For the use of the term see Fabio Barry, »*Disiecta membra*, Rainieri Zeno, the Imitation of Constantinople, the *Spolia* Style, and Justice at San Marco«, in: *San Marco, Byzantium, and the Myths of Venice*, ed. Henry Maguire and Robert S. Nelson. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2010: p. 26.

⁴ The book cover was an example of “Byzantinizing style by an artist for whom this was not a native tradition” from late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. Paul Hetherington, »Byzantine Enamels on a Venetian Book-Cover«, in: idem, *Enamels, Crowns, Relics and Icons: Studies on Luxury Arts in Byzantium*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008: pp. 117-142.

⁵ Paul Hetherington, »Byzantine cloisonné enamel: production, survival and loss«, in: idem, *Enamels, Crowns, Relics and Icons: Studies on Luxury Arts in Byzantium*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008: p. 207.

⁶ André Grabar, »L’oreficeria e le altre arti suntuarie bizantine«, in: *Il Tesoro di San Marco: Il Tesoro e il Museo*, ed. H. R. Hahnloser. Firenze: Sansoni Editore, 1971: pp. 22-23.

restorer Favro Buri.⁷ Baroque restorers of the Nikopeia altarpiece were not attempting to trick the audience into believing the frame was original by forging Byzantine style. However, similarly to Francesco Ferro, they were guided by plausible presumptions about the appearance of Byzantine sacred objects and inserted enamel *spolia* into a credible, but not authentic, setting.

“The Byzantine Crown”

The idea that the original reliquary vessel for the head relic of Saint Blaise was crown-shaped took hold in 1861 when Rudolf Eitelberger von Edelberg wrote in his work on medieval monuments in Dalmatia:

“According to Resti’s handwritten notes, the vessel in the shape of a crown in which the head of Saint Blaise was later placed, was brought by some Greek to Dubrovnik from the Levant in 1026. This reliquary has a shape of a Byzantine-Eastern crown. To some extent it lost its value because the names of the saints were added in the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries.”⁸

I was not able to locate or verify the existence of his handwritten notes, but in his published chronicle Junije Resti (†1735) mentions only the relic and not the reliquary. Resti states that a Greek from the Levant brought Saint Blaise’s cranium in 1026 and that he was paid good money for it.⁹ Other historians of

⁷ Rodolfo Gallo, *Il tesoro di S. Marco e la sua storia* [Civiltà Veneziana, Saggi, vol. 16]. Venezia – Roma: Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, 1967: pp. 152–153.

⁸ Rudolf Eitelberger von Edelberg, *Srednjovjekovni umjetnički spomenici Dalmacije u Rabu, Zadru, Ninu, Šibeniku, Trogiru, Splitu i Dubrovniku*, transl. Libuše Jirsak. Zagreb: Leykam International, 2009: p. 213. Originally the study was published under the title: *Die mittelalterlichen Kunstdenkmale Dalmatiens*, in: *Jahrbuch der Kaiserl. Königl. Central – Commission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale* in 1861. Following Eitelberger, T.G. Jackson refers to it as a “crown-shaped casket” without elaborating. He reports Eitelberger’s opinion that the inscriptions were added in the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries. He rightly observed that the enamels came from different time periods but provides a uniform dating for all of them—“the eleventh or more likely the twelfth century.” Thomas Graham Jackson, *Dalmatia The Quarnero and Istria with Cettigne in Montenegro and the Island of Grado*, vol. II. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887: pp. 348–354.

⁹ Referring to a previous discussion on the rise of Ragusan bishopric to the status of archbishopric during the office of archbishop Vitalis and the secular ruler, *conte* Lampridio, whom Resti considers to be Vitalis’ brother, Resti continues: “Attendevasi dunque dalla repubblica, non solo all’accrescimento delle cose temporali, ma eziandio di quelle che attenevano allo spirito; ed andando le cose con prosperità grandissima, non molto dopo fu portato il cranio del glorioso martire s. Biagio, protettor della repubblica di Ragusa, da un Greco di Levante, al quale fu donata buona somma di argento. (An. 1026.)”. *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii (ab origine urbis usque ad annum 1451)*, ed. Speratus Nodilo [Monumenta spectantia historiam slavorum meridionalum (hereafter: MSHSM), vol. 25]. Zagreb: JAZU, 1893, p. 41.

the Dubrovnik Republic also did not remember the reliquary as taking the symbolic form of a crown. For instance, the honorable Dominican Serafin Marija Cerva (1686-1759) in his *Prolegomena* (1744) saw in the reliquary the form of a human head.¹⁰

The idea that Ferro replicated the original reliquary endured and even became elaborated upon in imaginative ways in local tradition and modern scholarship. Thus, for instance, on the occasion of the nine hundredth anniversary of the translation of the relic of Saint Blaise, Dubrovnik archbishopric published a lecture by the local priest, Niko Gjivanović. He dated the reliquary and its enamels to the seventh century during the reign of Byzantine emperor Heraclius. Thus Gjivanović merged the crown myth with the historiographic tradition that favoured Heraclius as the emperor who prompted Croats to settle on its territory and under whose auspices Croats were baptized by priests brought from Rome.¹¹ Relying on the “opinion of the experts”, instead of attributing the goldsmith work entirely to Ferro, Gjivanović assumed that the work is original, but damaged by the Venetian “restorer’s” addition of some newer enamels.¹² He also alleged that the reliquary was decorated on the top with a cross and a globe, although no trace of damage by its loss or removal can be found. He assumed that the work must have originated in Constantinople, perhaps even in the church of Saint Blaise there. Thus, in Gjivanović’s interpretation, the reliquary became a perfect political and religious artifact endowed with the royal aura of *globus cruciger* and fashioned at the time of the Heraclius-sponsored conversion of Croats to Roman Christianity.

The myth of the Byzantine origin of the reliquary is, however, only a myth skillfully created by the Venetian goldsmith, which has led scholars past and present to believe that some enamels, if not also its golden body, must have originated in imperial workshops of Constantinople. Thus scholar Vinicije Lupis, for instance, recently wrote that the reliquary originally followed the form of the Byzantine crown and sees stylistic similarities between enamels on Saint Blaise

¹⁰ Serafin Marija Cerva, *Prolegomena za svetu dubrovačku metropoliju*, transl., intro. and commentary by Relja Seferović [Monumenta historica Ragusina, vol. 11]. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2012: p. 498.

¹¹ The Heraclius thesis on the conversion of Croats was developed on the basis of chapter 30 of Porphyrogenetus’ *De administrando imperio* and has a long track of scholarship in Croatian historiography.

¹² Niko Gjivanović, »Prigodom IX. stogodišnjice prenosa moći S. Vlaha, Mučenika, Dubrovačkog pokrovitelja«. *List dubrovačke biskupije* 16/2 (1926): pp. 13-14. I thank Ivan Vidjen for bringing this article to my attention.



Fig. 4. Saint Peter, Hungarian National Museum, 11th century, Byzantine (Constantinople), cloisonné enamel, ø 3 cm. Photo: courtesy of Etele Kiss.



Fig. 5. Saint Andrew, Hungarian National Museum, 11th century, Budapest, Byzantine (Constantinople), cloisonné enamel, ø 3 cm. Photo: courtesy of Etele Kiss.

reliquary and those found on the crown of Constantine IX Monomachos (r. 1042-55) in the National Museum in Budapest.¹³ However, the enamels depicting Saint Andrew and Saint Peter found *with* (not *on*) the Monomachos Crown¹⁴ have only

¹³ Vinicije B. Lupis and Božidar Gjukić, *Emajlni reljefi na moćnicima sv. Vlaha*. Dubrovnik: Matica hrvatska Dubrovnik, 2001: pp. 15-16; Vinicije Lupis, *Moćnik dubrovačke prvostolnice*, Ph.D. dissertation, Zadar: Odjel za povijest umjetnosti, Sveučilište u Zadru, 2003: pp. 168-169, 171; Vinicije Lupis, »Stilska slojevitost moćnika«, in: *Katedrala Gospe Velike u Dubrovniku*, ed. Katarina Horvat-Levaj. Dubrovnik – Zagreb: Institut za povijest umjetnosti, 2014: p. 409. Lupis claims that the government of Dubrovnik highly respected the Byzantine emperors' "privileges and gifts" and thus would not have allowed changes to the original shape of the reliquary. As there are no documented Byzantine "privileges or gifts" given to Dubrovnik prior to the reign of Manuel I Komnenos from which we could test this claim, we need to take a different course in thinking about this artwork. The summary of Byzantine contracts with Dubrovnik is given in Ivo Goldstein, *Hrvati, hrvatske zemlje i Bizant*. Zagreb: Filozofski Fakultet, 2003: pp. 47-48. These contracts refer to the trading privileges starting with 1169 and 1170 (during the reign of Manuel I Komnenos) and his successors.

¹⁴ Stylistic connections between the Saint Blaise reliquary and the Monomachos Crown can be outright rejected. The two enamel medallions showing Saint Andrew and Saint Peter on the Saint Blaise reliquary differ greatly from those showing the same figures found *with* (not *on*) the Monomachos Crown. They were probably, as Etele Kiss suggests, used on an icon frame. They were buried and found with the Monomachos Crown at a site identified with the village of Nyitraivanka (present-day Slovakia) in 1860. These enamels constitute part of a bigger hoard of enamels sold in four lots to the National Museum. Etele Kiss, »The State of Research on the Monomachos Crown and Some Further Thoughts«, in: *Perceptions of Byzantium and Its Neighbors (843-1261)*, ed. Olenka Z. Pevny. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art ; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000: pp. 61-62; Klaus Wessel, *Byzantine Enamels from the 5th to the 13th century*. Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society Ltd., 1967: p. 97.

superficial stylistic affinities with the Saint Blaise enamels and attempts to connect them with the crown have not been successful (Figs. 4 and 5). Additionally, there are no known crown-shaped reliquaries before the fourteenth century. Even then, as can be clearly seen in the reliquary of Abdon and Sennen from Kotor, it is a Byzantinizing rather than a Byzantine work (Fig. 6).¹⁵ Moreover, there are no known figural reliquaries in Byzantium before the fifteenth century, and even then, they are the product of Western influence on Byzantine art.¹⁶ The evidence, or the lack thereof, suggests it is impossible that a reliquary in the shape of a Byzantine crown may have been made before the fourteenth century. I will fully elaborate on this claim below, but first let us consider what available sources have to say about the head relic of Saint Blaise.



Fig. 6. Reliquary for the head relics of Saint Abdon and relics of Saint Sennen, Treasury of Chioggia cathedral, 1321, wood, gilded silver, height 17,5, ø 17 cm.

From: *Omaggio a San Marco. Tesori dall'Europa*, ed. Hermann Fillitz and Giovanni Morello. Milano: Electa, 1994: p. 209.

¹⁵ Abdon and Sennen were third-century roman martyrs. "Holy heads" of these martyrs were venerated in S. Tomà church in Venice, but no date is provided for their transfer from Foligno. Flaminio Corner, *Notizie storiche delle chiese e monasteri di Venezia e di Torcello*. Venezia: Arnaldo Forni, 1758 (reprint 1990): p. 345. For the dating and provenance, see Nikola Jakšić, »Un gruppo dei reliquiari trecenteschi da Cattaro a Venezia e Chioggia«, in: *Letteratura, arte, cultura tra le due sponde dell'Adriatico /Književnost, umjetnost, kultura između dviju obala Jadrana (Zbornik radova s međunarodnog znanstvenog skupa)*. ed. Guido Baldassarri, Nikola Jakšić, Živko Nižić. Zadar: Sveučilište u Zadru, 2008: pp. 219–237.

¹⁶ The only example is the reliquary head of Saint Andrew that was brought to Rome from Patras in 1462. Figural reliquaries are found only in Latin Christendom (Scott B. Montgomery, *The Use and Perception of Reliquary Busts in the Late Middle Ages*, Ph.D. dissertation, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers State University, 1996: p. 79).

A Forgotten Theft of Saint Blaise's Head Relic

Miletius, our earliest source on the history of Dubrovnik, says that the head relic of Saint Blaise was found (*esse repertum*) in 1026:

“Post modicum tempus Vitale Metropolitano,
Iudice Lampredio, residentibus urbe Rhagusa,
Corpora Laurenti, sed non illius adusti,
Andreaa, Petri, non Christi discipulorum,
Catharinis ostensa, simul translata fuerunt.
Cum quibus et Blasii constat caput esse repertum,
Millenus vicenus sextus cum foret annus.
Hoc verus edit Miletius hic, inde testis.
Vivant felices, quibus hic licet esse frequenter:
Tales reliquias videant, habeantque revera.¹⁷

In these verses Miletius reports that during the time when Vital was the archbishop and Lampridio was the judge, the bodies of martyrs Lawrence (not to be confused with Lawrence the deacon), Peter and Andrew (not to be confused with the Apostles Peter and Andrew) were translated to Dubrovnik. *With them* the head of Saint Blaise *was found*. Therefore, all these relics were transferred at the same time to Dubrovnik, in 1026, from the Kotor territory. What occurred in 1026 was a widespread medieval practice of going on a raid for relics to the neighbouring territory. The discovery and the transfer of relics were referred to in hagiographical texts as an *inventio* (discovery) and *translatio* (transfer) of relics.

The translation narrative, now lost, but recounted in later chronicles such as that by ‘Ragusan Anonymus’, Ragnina and Resti, reports the entire story

¹⁷ Parts of Miletius’ account (written in hexameter) have been incorporated in the sixteenth century chronicle of Nicola de Ragnina: *Annales Ragusini anonymi item Nicolai de Ragnina*, ed. Speratus Nodilo. [MSHSM, vol. 14]. Zagreb: JAZU, 1883: pp. 210-211. Opinions vary as to when Miletius lived, in the eleventh or even as late as the fourteenth century. The extensive linguistic analysis of Miletius’ account, however, shows that Miletius drew his information about history of Dubrovnik from the same source as Constantine Porphyrogenitus in his *De Administrando imperio*. For the linguistic analysis of Miletius, see: Radoslav Katičić, *Uz početke hrvatskih početaka: filološke studije o našem najranijem srednjovjekovlju*. Split: Književni krug, 1993: pp. 131-160, esp. 139. On the earliest layer of Roman Saints Pancratius, Nereus, Achilles and Domitilla as an evidence of the interest of Roman Church to extend its ecclesiastic policy on the South Adriatic coast during Pope Zacharias (741–752), see: Tibor Živković, »The Earliest Cults of Saints in Ragusa«. *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 44 (2007): pp. 119-127.

keeping the basic structure and purpose of medieval *translatio* texts essentially intact. Resti, however, discusses only the three bodies, and makes no mention of Blaise's head.¹⁸ We learn that the bodies of three Kotor brothers and local martyrs, Lawrence, Andrew and Peter, were found on S. Spirito island in the Kotor territory inhabited only by a hermit woman and her brother, both natives of Rome. The brothers had appeared to the woman and had asked to be buried within the city of Kotor, but Kotor turned a deaf ear to their plea. Then the brothers appeared again to the woman to declare that Kotor had refused their divine protection, and that they wished for Dubrovnik to receive their bodies instead. And so, Ragusans readied the galleys, gathered the clergy, and went on an expedition to retrieve the bodies. This is the legend in a nutshell. It clearly serves the purpose of justifying the theft and establishing the cult of these newcomers to Dubrovnik, while belittling their rival city, Kotor. Ragusans did nothing but save them from Kotor's negligence and receive them in Dubrovnik with all the pomp they deserved. And indeed, prayers in honour of the Kotor martyrs (and Saint Blaise) on their feast days were included in the local liturgy, as testified by the twelfth-century Missal written for the Dubrovnik cathedral. The church dedicated to these martyrs was, however, built much later, in 1363.¹⁹ Given that Dubrovnik and Kotor were often rivals in the centuries that followed—until 1328 there was even a ban on marriages with Kotor citizens and the people of Kotor were often slandered in Ragusan renaissance poetry²⁰—the legend safely lived through centuries.

¹⁸ Quoting Miletius, Ragnina is inclined to accept that the head was found with the Kotor martyrs, but adds that "some people believe" that the head was bought from some Greek for 500 ducats. It is clear that later writers were not in agreement about the origin of the relic. Nicolò Ragnina, *Annali di Ragusa*, in: *Annales Ragusini anonymi item Nicolai de Ragnina*, ed. Speratus Nodilo. [Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum Meridionalium, vol. 14]. Zagreb: JAZU, 1883: p. 210. The legend varies in details, but all writers ('Ragusan Anonymous', Ragnina, Resti) keep the main points. I have followed here *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii*: p. 41.

¹⁹ The Major Council of Dubrovnik named three patricians to find a site for building the church in 1363. It was damaged in 1667, but the Senate decided to rebuild it in 1676. The works on the church continued in 1705-6. It was finally destroyed in 1801. Lukša Beritić, »Ubikacija nestalih gradjevinskih spomenika u Dubrovniku«. *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji* 10 (1956): p. 58; Katarina Horvat-Levaj, »Ilija Katičić u baroknoj obnovi Dubravnička i Perasta – nove spoznaje o životu i djelu dubrovačkog graditelja i klesara«. *Analiza Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 44 (2006): pp. 189-218. The Missal is in Beneventan Notation and located in the Bodleian Library at Oxford (Canon. Liturg. 342). For full analysis (in Croatian and English) see Miho Demović, *Beneventanski notirani misal dubrovačke katedrale iz XII. stoljeća: The 12th Century Beneventan Notated Missal of Dubrovnik Cathedral*. Dubrovnik: Dubrovačke knjižnice Dubrovnik, 2011.

²⁰ M. Demović, *Beneventanski notirani misal*: p. 88.

When the bodies of Lawrence, Andrew and Peter and the head of Saint Blaise reached Dubrovnik, local negotiations over their meaning and value ensued and the three bodies and one head parted ways. The head relic of Saint Blaise was no longer mentioned as a part of the Kotor martyrs' narrative. The typical purpose of medieval *translatio* narratives was to create new civic identities for acquired relics according to the new owner's perspective of their value and use. That was especially true in the case of the three brothers, given that the Kotor martyrs were not universally-known saints and their cults were not recorded in *Martyrologium Romanum*. Their pedigree had to be established *ex nihilo*.

That was not the case with the head relic of Saint Blaise. It had to support an altogether different goal—to provide material evidence for a cult that already had a foothold in Dubrovnik. In other words, unlike the bodies of the Kotor martyr, the relic of Saint Blaise was sought and found in order to reinforce a collective memory created some fifty years earlier, ca. 971-977. According to later chroniclers, the cult of Saint Blaise began between 971 and 977 when Saint Blaise appeared in a vision to the priest Stojko (Stoicus), whom Blaise warned about the imminent Venetian occupation of Dubrovnik.²¹ Stojko was also identified as the priest of St. Stephen's Church. As the story goes, the Venetians were about to take the city using the masts of their galleys to climb the walls of Dubrovnik. The Senate took Blaise's warning seriously. They organized patrols surveying the city walls and gates and succeeded in deterring the Venetians, who calmly sailed away. The Senate acknowledged the efficacy of the new city protector, calling the priest to restate his vision in front of the public and the Senate.

The reference to the Senate betrays the late redaction of the legend, and should not concern us here. What is unusual for the period and departs from a more common pattern is the fact that in the fifty or so years the legend lived on the strength of its message alone, with no material evidence, unless we accept Resti's note that the image of Saint Blaise was quickly adopted for

²¹ The legend, as it is recounted here, follows Ragnina and Razzi writing in 1595. Razzi diverges in placing the event in 871 instead of 971, see: Serafino Razzi, *Povijest Dubrovnika*, transl. Iva Grgić and Stjepan Krasić. Dubrovnik: Matica hrvatska, 2011: p. 37. These discrepancies do not bear on the argument presented here that the legend had been created before the relic was acquired.

official use.²² A more common pattern was to acquire the material evidence (the relic) first, build or rededicate the church, and then leave the cult to take form and develop. For instance, Saint Mark of Venice had no cult there before his body was stolen in Alexandria and brought to Venice in 828 by entrepreneurial Venetian merchants.²³ The cult of Saint Anastasia in Zadar began with the relic transfer from Constantinople in the period between 804 and 811.²⁴ The cult of Saint Tryphon of Kotor was initiated in 809 when the local magnate bought his relics from the Venetians who stopped in the Kotor harbour. There was also a Venetian component to each of these Adriatic legends. Bishop Donatus of Zadar won Saint Anastasia in amicable competition with the Venetian doge Beatus,²⁵ relics of Saint Tryphon were bought by the local magnate for the price of 200 Roman solidi and a bejeweled crown worth 100 solidi from the Venetians in a rather amicable business transaction²⁶ and finally Dubrovnik legend credits saint Blaise as their saviour against the Venetians. All these legends were also created in short succession, leaving us with the impression that Dubrovnik was rather late in creating its master narrative of civic patronage. This conclusion would, however, be erroneous, as the prominence of each of these patrons was a matter of slow development and crystallization of their role among its constituency. Personal devotion and images must have had a place in this process leading to a wider, social acceptance of the saint. Nevertheless the Venetian-Ragusan relations are the historical core of the legend of Saint Blaise, as was the need for Dubrovnik to create a leader saint for his city in this time period. This is

²² Resti places the event in 971 and reports the image of St. Blaise was used on the official insignia of the Republic: "S'ordinò, che in tutti gl'impronti, e in tutte le insegne, si portasse la sua effigie come di confalone della repubblica". *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii*: pp. 29-30.

²³ This cult of Saint Marc in the context of relic culture in Venice is reviewed in: Ana Munk, »*Patrocinia Multa Erant Habentes*: The State, The Parrocchia, and the Colony – Relic Acquisition in Medieval Venice«, in: *Cuius Patrocinio Tota Gaudet Regio. Saints' Cults and the Dynamics of Regional Cohesion*, ed. Stanislava Kuzmová, Ana Marinković and Trpimir Vedriš. Zagreb: Hagiotheca, 2014: pp. 153-191.

²⁴ The most comprehensive analysis of the cult of Saint Anastasia in Zadar is by Trpimir Vedriš, *Hagiography as memory: Saints' Cults and the Construction of the Past in Medieval Dalmatia*, Ph.D. dissertation, Central European University, 2014. Vedriš concludes: "While it is not impossible that this Pannonian saint, martyred in Sirmium under Diocletian, might have been venerated in Zadar before the translation, it cannot be documented with any certainty". *Ibid.*, p. 105.

²⁵ Vedriš' reading of the *translatio S. Anastasiae* presents the competition over the possession of Saint Anastasia as an amicable agreement between the two leaders, T. Vedriš, *Hagiography as memory*: p. 153.

²⁶ The evidence for the cult of Saint Tryphon is in Ivo Stjepčević, *Arhivska Istraživanja Boke Kotorske*. Perast: Gospa od Škrpjela, 2003.

why the relic *had to be found* and rather soon, as without it no altar could be properly dedicated, and no narrative devised as this was not yet the time to build civic consciousness on personal visions alone.

As mentioned above, Stojko was identified as the priest of Saint Stephen's Church. Its central location in the urban life of Dubrovnik was confirmed by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus in his *De administrando imperio* where it is stated that it was "located in the middle of the city" and contained the relics of Saint Pancratius. Saint Stephen's Church was also the place where Ragusan relics comprising "the first layer of saints", were treasured. As Živković clarified, these included the relics of Saints Nereus, Achillius, Petronilla, Domitilla and Pancratius, all connected to Pancratius' cult in Rome, and which were transferred from Rome by iconophile refugees in 743.²⁷ Its relic treasury, its central location, and its earliest connections with the Church in Rome made it a place where a trustworthy vision of the wise man, Stojko, could have been born.

Yet, it was not Saint Pancratius or any other saint reposing in Saint Stephen church who were chosen to lead anti-Venetian awareness. It is not unusual for a medieval mind set to choose a new saint in new social or political circumstances. Civic authorities recognized the need for a new protector operating under new premises, in the light of the new problem, Venice. Stojko's vision also broke the tradition by bypassing the authority and the confinements of the monastic community in such matters and instead played it all out in the open, in the *civic* and *public* arena of Dubrovnik. Clearly, the potency of Saint Blaise's message was that the citizens of Dubrovnik needed to be self-sufficient in all matters of civic defence and able to protect themselves against armed enemies. The concept of a broad-based civic action undertaken to defend the city under Blaise's aegis continued to be a relevant model for civic behaviour in later centuries. Since the Venetians continued to pose a real threat to Dubrovnik, the legend, as created in 971-977, did not fizzle away, but grew stronger, and in my view, essentially unchanged.²⁸

²⁷ Tibor Živković, *Forging Unity - The South Slavs between East and West: 550-1150*. Belgrade: Čigoja štampa, 2008: pp. 147-156.

²⁸ A clearly anti-Venetian reading of the legend can be found in Resti's *Chronica Ragusina*. Venetian counter-reaction to the Ragusan political self-determination, demonstrated by Ragusa's election of their protector, was apparently conducted in writing as well: "Le dimonstrazioni, fatte dai Ragusei ad onore di san Biagio, furono causa d'aver scritto le chroniche antiche il mal animo dei Veneziani essersi saputo per rivelazione di detto santo". *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii*: pp. 29.

As it gained traction, the legend of Saint Blaise, the martyred bishop of Armenian Sebastea,²⁹ could not possibly be associated with Kotor, nor could the finding and transferring the saint's head from *there* fit any civic purpose. Miletius' straightforward account of a typical medieval raid of the neighbourhood, was simply not useful in creating Saint Blaise's hagiographical dossier. Material evidence of Blaise's presence was, however, absolutely necessary. Stojko's vision led to a decision to build a church dedicated to Saint Blaise. To consecrate it, Blaise's relic had to be acquired, but where and how? Saint Blaise was a bishop in Sebaste, and thus it had to come, if not from Sebaste, then definitely from Byzantium, but that was an impossible mission. Holger A. Klein's study of the Byzantine use of relics prior to 1204 demonstrates that Byzantine relics reached the West primarily as highly coveted diplomatic gifts: "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".³⁰ Byzantine relics were rare and circulated on the highest level of political interaction. Two examples of such diplomatic exchange from the surrounding region illustrate this point: the body of Saint Anastasia arrived in Zadar between 804 and 811 as a gift by Byzantine emperor Nikephoros I to Zadar bishop Donatus and the body of Saint Zachariah in Venice as a gift of Leo V the Armenian (813-20) to Venetian doge Agnello Partecipazio. Moreover, specifically in the eleventh century "the arrival of Byzantine relics in the West is only rarely attested".³¹

²⁹ In Ragusan historiography Saint Blaise's martyrdom is reported to have taken place in Sebastea (ancient Armenia), and today Sivas in eastern Turkey. This point was, however, debated in Dubrovnik and Epirus was also brought up as a possible resting place of Saint Blaise, see S. M. Cerva, *Prolegomena*: pp. 307-308. The priest Stojko was remembered to have been of Albanian origin, which explains why Saint Blaise may have been his saint of choice. For Albanian Saint Blaise's resting place (*Hibernum S. Blasii*) some evidence is available from the 14th century. See Robert Elsie, »The Christian Saints of Albania«. *Balkanistica* 13 (2000): pp. 35-57, <http://home.olemiss.edu/~mldyer/balk/article2.html> (accessed February 2016).

³⁰ Holger A. Klein, »Eastern Objects and Western Desires: Relics and Reliquaries between Byzantium and the West«. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): p. 313.

³¹ H. A. Klein, »Eastern Objects«: p. 296. We should, therefore, not assume that the relic of Saint Blaise was a diplomatic gift. There is no evidence for such claim. Neither were the relics of Saint Euphemia in Rovinj or Saint Tryphon in Kotor imperial gifts, as proposed by V. Lupis, *Emajlni reljefi*: p. 15. The only source for Saint Euphemia in Rovinj is the text of her translation, written in the end of the fourteenth or beginning of the fifteenth century, which claims that Euphemia came in her sarcophagus that on its own volition floated over the Adriatic in 800.

The Relic, a Commodity or a Gift?

The assumption that the relic was sold in Dubrovnik by an unidentified Greek appears in several accounts as a brief note. Now this statement has to be taken in the light of what we know of relic traffic or relics as gifts during the Byzantine rule in Dalmatia. The first recorded *strategos* of Dubrovnik in late eleventh century, Catacalon Clazomenites, is recorded to have ruled by maintaining personal relations and giving gifts to local lords (*archontes*),³² but he would have no authority to give relics. Two recorded examples of a local lord receiving gifts from the Byzantine emperor himself exist. Dobronja, the archon and *toparch* (district ruler) of Zadar and Salona, received gifts directly from Emperor Romanus III Argyrus (968-1034) in exchange for his loyalty. As Jakšić argued, these gifts were gold coins, referred to in local payment records as *solidus*, *solidus aureus*, *solidus romanus*, *solidus romanatus*, or simply *aureus* or *romanatus* and were used for payments, land purchases and church construction as late as the twelfth and even in the thirteenth century in Dubrovnik.³³ This is an important information as it provides a plausible explanation for the source of gold bullion necessary for making the gold surface for the enamel decoration.³⁴ Out of four hundred registered

³² P. Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900-1204*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993: p. 125.

³³ Following Cecaumenus' account of Dobronja's two visits to the court of Romanus III Argyrus, Jakšić argues that Dobronja is either proconsul Gregorius or his brother, both from the illustrious Madi family of Zadar. In various documents Gregorius is identified as the Byzantine ruler of Dalmatia during the reign of Romanus III Argyrus and Michael IV Paphlagonian. His titles include: *protospatario et stratico universae Dalmatiae* (in 1036); *Iadrensis prior et imperialis patrikyus at totius Dalmacie stratigo...* *imperialis protospatharii et dalmatiae strategii seu Iadere prioris* (in 1067), see: Nikola Jakšić, »Il caso dell'arconte Dobronja e del proconsole Gregorio«. *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 13/1 (2007): p. 138. The number of gold solidi from the reign of Romanus Argyrus is astounding in comparison with scarce findings of solidi issued by other rulers of the tenth to early eleventh century: Nikola Jakšić, »Solidus romanus na istočnoj jadranskoj obali«. *Starohrvatska prosvjeta*, ser. III, 12 (1982): pp. 173-184. For fourteen Romanus' gold coins in the collection of the Archeological Museum in Zagreb see Ivan Mirnik, »Zlatnici Romana III. Argira u numizmatičkoj zbirci Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu«. *Vjesnik za arheologiju i povijest dalmatinsku* 99 (2006): pp. 369-378. A catalogue of fifty-nine *histamanoi* of Romanus III Argyros in the Archeological Museum in Split is provided by Ivan Marović, »The Coinage of Romanos III Argyros in the Archaeological Museum in Split«. *Vjesnik za arheologiju i historiju dalmatinsku* 90-91 (1999): pp. 349-360. Additional information on the new findings of Byzantine coins in Dalmatia and western Herzegovina is provided by Tomislav Šeparović, »Nove spoznaje o nalazima ranosrednjovjekovnog novca u južnoj Hrvatskoj«. *Starohrvatska prosvjeta*, ser. III, 30 (2003): pp. 127-137.

³⁴ Mirković reports that he consulted a local goldsmith who established that enamel plaques are made of gold. Lazar Mirković, »Relikvijar moštiju sv. Vlaha«. *Spomenik Srpske kraljevske akademije* 81 (1935): p. 5, n. 1.

coins, eighty-five are preserved in Croatian museums, all coming from the short reign of Romanus III Argyrus (1028-1034). They were found at twenty locations as a single coin find, including a couple of hoards of which the biggest one near Mostar contained circa three hundred coins.³⁵ In comparison to very few Byzantine gold coins from the tenth and early eleventh century, the sudden influx of Byzantine munificence and its subsequent distribution in the local economy, had a definite impact on the development of art in Zadar and Dalmatia.

The second mention of imperial generosity to a local dignitary occurred during the recapture of Dalmatia in 1167 by Byzantine emperor Manuel I Komnenos. The extravagant sums Manuel spent on his network of loyal agents are well known. After the archbishop of Split Raynerius (Arnir) went to Constantinople to accept Manuel's claims to southern Dalmatia, he returned home rich. This was noted by Thomas the Achdeacon of Split, who had nothing but words of praise for Manuel's generosity "to all his subjects" dispersing his own riches very liberally among them and dispatching stipends to citizens of Split and even to "the infants laying in their cradle".³⁶ Some of this money was found in Dubrovnik as well.³⁷ We will return to Manuel I Komnenos later, but for now we should note that no relics were mentioned as gifts. This is quite expected given the fact that relics, unlike money, had the highest symbolic value and their distribution was "strictly controlled by the Byzantine emperor and thus out of reach for most western rulers".³⁸ They would not have made up part of the imperial largesse to "citizens". Nor would they have been political instruments in the hands of Byzantine governors in foreign lands. Relics would have remained in the possession of the recipient or been deposited in an existing church or, as was the case with St. Anastasia in Zadar³⁹ and St. Zachariah in

³⁵ The payment of ten *romantos* made in 1237 in Dubrovnik was for obtaining personal freedom (N. Jakšić, »Il caso«: p. 140).

³⁶ P. Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*: p. 263; Toma Arhidakon, *Historia Salonitana*, transl. and ed. Olga Perić. Split: Književni krug, 2003: pp. 111-113 (in Latin and Croatian).

³⁷ P. Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*: p. 263.

³⁸ H. A. Klein, »Eastern Objects«: p. 289.

³⁹ The translation narrative of St Anastasia (between 804 and 811) states that the altar was prepared and the church was being built. The church for St Anastasia's relics was most likely the ninth century rotunda (later dedicated to Saint Donatus) in Zadar that served as a memoria for Anastasia's relics. These points are fully discussed in Trpimir Vedriš, »Po čemu je u 9. stoljeću rotunda sv. Trojstva u Zadru mogla sličiti crkvi sv. Anastazije u Carigradu?«, in: *Zbornik radova znanstvenog skupa „Stjepan Gunjača i hrvatska srednjovjekovna povijesno-arheološka baština“*, ed. Tomislav Šeparović. Split: Muzej hrvatskih arheoloških spomenika, 2012: pp. 63-79.

Venice, a church would have been promptly built. The recipients of sacred relics were the most distinguished Western secular and ecclesiastical dignitaries—emperors and Popes, allies or potential allies—who received such a gift from their equals and had the ability to reciprocate the favour in some manner. The names and ranks of the recipients speak sufficiently of the rarity of relics as gifts. In chronological order, after the relics of Anastasia and Zachariah reached Zadar and Venice respectively, we note that patriarch Nikephoros of Constantinople gave a golden *enkolpion* with particles of the holy cross to Pope Leo III (750–816) in 811.⁴⁰ King Louis the German received a significant part of the holy cross in 872. In the centuries that follow, we note that recipients of Byzantine relics were mostly northern rulers and successors to Charlemagne as well as ecclesiastical dignitaries: King Robert the Pious of France (972–1031), Henry II (Holy Roman Emperor from 1014–1024), Conrad II (c. 990–1039), Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV (1050–1106), bishop Anno of Cologne (d. 1075), Eric King of Denmark,⁴¹ Henry the Lion and duke of Saxony and Bavaria (who was lavished with gifts and relics while visiting the court of Manuel I Komnenos in 1172). The last case was a calculated move to strike friendship with Henry the Lion, the rival of Manuel's enemy Frederick Barbarosa. While this list is certainly not complete, the picture that emerges confirms that relics were obtained directly from Constantinople by way of ambassadors or through personal contact with the emperor, and none of these relics were given away without a clear political motive for doing so.

To return now to the relic of Saint Blaise, it is quite safe to assume that the circumstances guiding this relic acquisition were local. We can also accept as valid Josip Belamarić's analysis of historical circumstances in Dubrovnik in the eleventh century and conclude that the acquisition of the head, the translation of Kotor's martyrs and the acquisition of Christ's swaddling cloth were all a part of the capable bishop Vitalis' programme to renew the archbishopric in Dubrovnik and create a pantheon of holy patronage in the city.⁴² Such an endeavour would be in keeping with what we know about the bishops' role in the eleventh century, whose duties included endowing the city with all the necessary tokens of prosperous

⁴⁰ This list of recipients is culled from H. A. Klein, »Eastern Objects« (with sources).

⁴¹ Sophia Mergiali-Sahas, »Byzantine Emperors and Holy Relic. Use, and Misuse, of Sanctity and Authority«. *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 51 (2001): p. 48.

⁴² Josip Belamarić, »Sveti Vlaho i dubrovačka obitelj svetaca zaštitnika«, in: *Tisuću godina uspostave dubrovačke (nad)biskupije*, *Zbornik radova znanstvenog skupa u povodu tisuću godina uspostave dubrovačke (nad)biskupije/metropolije (998.-1998.)*, ed. Nediljko A. Ančić. Dubrovnik: Biskupski ordinarijat Dubrovnik, 2001, pp. 703-731.

civic life. As Resti attests, speaking about Vitalis' project for the Benedictine monastery on Lokrum, a city with high aspirations needs to have all that a well-governed city ought to have. Establishing the identity of and acquiring a relic from the patron saint would have been a high priority.

A final consideration should be given to the Dominican Serafino Razzi (1531-1611), who also, despite all his efforts, was unsuccessful in establishing the origin of Blaise's head relic. Writing in 1588, Razzi evaluates the information he found in some ancient chronicles that stated that the head relic was brought from the Levant by a Greek in 1004 and that he was paid 500 ducats for it.⁴³ We first need to discard this possibility on the grounds that trafficking relics for monetary gain was mostly a Carolingian and Anglo-Saxon practice targeting Roman catacombs. A case of a Greek person trafficking in Byzantine relics would have been a unique occurrence in the eleventh century, assuming that Dalmatia was a fertile market for foreign relics, which it was not. Most of Razzi's account, however, focuses on the competing cult of Saint Blaise's head in the Dominican monastery in Penne, a city in Abruzzo where he had served as a prior. Motivated by his desire to find out the truth about these relics, Razzi was only able to explain the two heads, one in Dubrovnik and the other in Penne, by acknowledging that the relic in Dubrovnik is only a small bone the size of a silver coin. This also suggests that the container had a viewing hole, possibly on the top as in the example of Saint James reliquary in Zadar (Fig. 3). In his view, this did not disqualify either one as a true vehicle of God's will, just as other body parts of Saint Blaise are venerated in other European cities. Razzi also speculated that some friars brought it from Dubrovnik to Penne, although it would have been a sacrilege to do so. The things that Razzi did not say and was not able to find are actually most interesting. Although he was highly motivated to establish the history of the Dubrovnik's head relic, and he had much to say about celebrations of Saint Blaise's feast day, the vital information on the origin of the head relic he was seeking was not available to him. The most obvious explanation for this is that his search was not "culturally assisted,"⁴⁴

⁴³ S. Razzi, *Povijest Dubrovnika*, pp. 42-46. On the cult of Saint Blaise in Penne, Dominican agency in the development of the cult, with a note on Razzi, see also Antonio Alfredo Varrasso, »I santi che fanno la storia. San Biagio di Sebaste in Abruzzo«. *Notizie d'Abruzzo*, 15 January (2013), <http://archivio.notiziedabruzzo.it/itinerari-abruzzo/i-santi-che-fanno-la-storia-san-biagio-di-sebaste-in-abruzzo.html#VsC10vLhDIU> (accessed February 2016).

⁴⁴ On "cultural assistance to individual memory" see Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and memory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007: p. 146.

nor was he able to gain access to the city archives. Thus Razzi discarded his own assumption that the head was bought by stating that the information lacked detail, and thus, rightly so, he considered it suspect.

Among the many sources that try to pinpoint the origin of the Saint Blaise head relic in Dubrovnik, Miletius' account, the earliest extant account, appears the most convincing explanation for the murky origin of the relic. It was found in the Kotor territory and this information was deliberately suppressed in Dubrovnik as the importance of the patron saint's cult grew stronger. In the development of the memory of Saint Blaise as a divine protector of Dubrovnik's peace and liberty (*Racusii protector divinus et libertatis ac suae pacis custos*), as de Diversis put it c. 1440,⁴⁵ Dubrovnik had no use of Miletius' claim that the relic was acquired during some clandestine raid of the Kotor surroundings.

Kamelaukion

Razzi, and earlier sources including the French pilgrim Ogier, count of Anglure, who travelled to Dubrovnik in 1395,⁴⁶ reported that the reliquary was made of *silver*, and that the relic was enclosed within. This alone eliminates a possibility that the reliquary was originally gold or a gilded metal crown as Byzantine imperial crowns or even votive crowns would have been.⁴⁷ Also,

⁴⁵ Filip de Diversis, *Opis slavnog grada Dubrovnika*, transl. Zdenka Janeković-Römer. Zagreb: Dom i svijet, 2004: p. 147.

⁴⁶ *The Holy Jerusalem voyage of Ogier VIII, seigneur d'Anglure*, transl. and annotated by Roland A. Browne. Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1975: p. 78. The description of Dubrovnik says: "And in this town, the church of Milord Saint Blaise we were shown the following worthy relics: First, in the church of Milord Saint Blaise, the head of the latter very nobly mounted in silver. Item; his right arm with the hand, which is complete, even to the nails. Along with this there was, nearby, a coffer filled with other relics, all very nobly encased in silver, of which we forget the names". Ogier continues to describe the swaddling cloth of Christ in crystal glass container, noting that the people of the town "value it very highly." He mentions as well the finger of Saint Stephen and a piece of the True Cross and other relics encased in silver in "the Coptic church", which perhaps refers to the Church of St. Stephen. We should note that Ogier writes this description after his return from the Holy Land where he visited a number of Coptic churches and he probably misidentified some Byzantine features of its architecture and furnishing as Coptic.

⁴⁷ Speaking of crowns from Paleologian period, Hetherington emphasizes that "the emperor's headgear at this time is invariably depicted as being of a gold-coloured material". Paul Hetherington, »The Jewels from the Crown: Symbol and Substance in the Later Byzantine Imperial Regalia«, in: idem, *Enamels, Crowns, Relics and Icons: Studies on Luxury Arts in Byzantium*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2008: p. 162.

none of the sources, visual or textual, indicate that the Byzantine imperial crown was adorned with enamels or any sort of figurative decoration.⁴⁸ Two examples that apparently speak to the contrary, the *corona greca* of the Holy Crown of Hungary and Monomachos Crown in the National Museum in Budapest, were diplomatic gifts. As Paul Hetherington explains, enamels on these crowns do not betray the high value of these objects. On the contrary, enamels were less-costly substitutes for jewels meant to diminish the possibility of dismantling the crown for the value of the jewels. The cheaper enamel decoration helped ensure that the symbolic value of the gift would be respected.⁴⁹

The Saint Blaise reliquary in its current form takes the shape of a *kamelaukion*, a Byzantine imperial crown consisting of a high hemispherical metal cap with a closed, rounded top. The *kamelaukion* crown has a long and a complex history in Byzantium. It should be distinguished from the other type of imperial crown: the diadem (*stephanos*, *stemma*) with an open top. The fame of the *kamelaukion*-type crown derives from the supernatural *kamelaukion* of Constantine the Great. As an imperial insignia, the *kamelaukion* crown rivaled the *stemma* for centuries. It was mostly used as a special crown worn by the Byzantine emperor during liturgical ceremonies since the time of Alexius Komnenos (1056-1118), but it did not serve as an official imperial crown. It was only during the Paleologue dynasty that it became an official constitutional and royal insignia of the Byzantine Empire. By the thirteenth century the imperial *kamelaukion* was also no longer dome-shaped, but started to taper at the bottom resembling a pear-shape instead.⁵⁰

Rules directing the handling of a Byzantine crown were set by Constantine Porphyrogenitus in the thirteenth chapter of his *De administrando imperio*. He prohibits crowns to be used as gifts:

“Should they ever require and demand, whether by Chazars, or Turks, or again Russians, or any other nation of the northerners and Scythians, as frequently happens, that some of the imperial vestures or diadems or state robes should be sent to them in return for some service or office performed by them, then

⁴⁸ P. Hetherington, »The Jewels«: p. 166.

⁴⁹ P. Hetherington, »The Jewels«: p. 167.

⁵⁰ Elisabeth Piltz, *Kamelaukion et mitra: Insignes byzantines impériaux et ecclésiastiques* [Acta universitatis upsaliensis figura, nova series, vol. 15]. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1977: p. 61.

thus you shall excuse yourself : “These robes of state and the diadems, which you call ‘kamelaukia’ were not fashioned by men, nor by human arts devised or elaborated”.⁵¹

He mentions one example of an illicit use of royal insignia by a military governor who was “bribed by certain foreigners” and punished by death for his transgression. Clearly, exceptions were made as both the *corona greca* (the lower part of the Royal Crown of Hungary) and the crown of Constantine IX Monomachos were in fact Byzantine diplomatic gifts, distinguished from the imperial crown by the use of enamel instead of jewel decoration. Neither were dome-shaped *kamoulakia*, the most sacred crown of Constantine the Great.

To be frank, it should be mentioned that the *kamelaukion* crown was also, albeit exceptionally, documented as a mitre. Piltz’s study of the development of the *kamelaukion* shows that only in three examples dating from the tenth to the eleventh centuries were *kamelaukia* worn by saints, patrons of different metropolitan churches of Constantinople, as a sort of a bishop’s mitre.⁵² On these plumb seals we see bishop Saints Achilles and Basil wearing hemispherical mitres. These are, however, isolated examples. Only after the fall of the Byzantine Empire did the *kamelaukion* mitre expand through the Orthodox lands as a symbol of unity and consolidation of the Byzantine church in the post-Byzantine period.⁵³ Nowhere do we find, however, a reference to a *reliquary* in a form of a Byzantine imperial crown of any sort. Neither was any such crown found in monastic treasuries.⁵⁴ All this leads us to believe that neither the imperial *kamelaukion* nor *kamelaukion*-shaped bishop’s mitre was used as a relic container in the Middle Byzantine period that concerns us here. It is also unclear why the relic of Saint Blaise would have been encased in an Eastern-style mitre when in all other depictions—such as the seal of Dubrovnik chapter from the thirteenth century—Saint Blaise is shown wearing a typical Western-style

⁵¹ Ceremonial *kamelaukia* were supposedly not made by human hands based on the mythic account of Constantine the Great who received his *kamelaukion* from an angel. It was hung over the altar of St. Sophia, worn with other ceremonial vestments only on “a festival of our Lord and God Jesus Christ”. Whoever wore them without express permission of the patriarch could expect a full array of the greatest punishments. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, trans. R.J.H. Jenkins. Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1967: pp. 67-71; Cf. Cecily J. Hilsdale, »The social life of Byzantine gift: The Royal Crown of Hungary Re-invented«. *Art History* 31/5 (2008): p. 613.

⁵² E. Piltz, *Kamelaukion*: pp. 72, 79, Figs. 162 and 163.

⁵³ The Russian church, for instance, adopted the episcopal mitre only in 1589, E. Piltz, *Kamelaukion*: p. 79.

⁵⁴ E. Piltz, *Kamelaukion*: p. 65.

mitre.⁵⁵ Based on the available material evidence, the appropriation of the *kamelaukion* mitre for a reliquary is not documented prior to 1321, and the first and only known example comes from Kotor. It is the reliquary for the third-century Roman martyrs Abdon and Sennen (Fig. 6). The reliquary is now in the Chioggia Cathedral, but as Nikola Jakšić has convincingly argued, it was originally made in Kotor and taken as war booty to Venice in 1380.⁵⁶

Byzantine Head Reliquaries

To understand the original appearance of this Saint Blaise reliquary and, in the process, shed light on the enamels that adorn it, I shall first address what is known about the use of crowns in Western reliquaries and then explore what is known about head reliquaries from the Middle Byzantine period (867-1204) that came to reside in the West. As previously stated, there is no evidence of a reliquary mimicking a body form in Byzantine art prior to the fifteenth century. Nor would the shape of a *kamelaukion* have been appropriated for a reliquary prior to the Kotor reliquary from 1321. Only Western art continuously produced mimetic reliquaries beginning in the ninth century and, incidentally, the first documented head reliquary in the West took the shape of a crowned human head (with a Western-style crown). At least three crowned mimetic reliquaries were documented in Burgundy in the tenth century.⁵⁷ Western art produced a plethora of mimetic reliquaries in the shape of the human head shown with the neck or the whole bust and placed on some sort of a pedestal. Crowns were also used for healing rituals, and royal crowns were placed on relics as expressions of veneration throughout the Middle Ages. For instance, the crown on the

⁵⁵ The seal is kept in the Archive of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, reproduced in Ante Gulin, »Srednjovjekovni dubrovački kaptol: utemeljenje, ustroj i djelatnost«, in: *Tisuću godina uspostave dubrovačke (nad)biskupije: Zbornik radova znanstvenog skupa u povodu tisuću godina uspostave dubrovačke (nad)biskupije/metropolije (998.-1998.)*, ed. Nediljko A. Ančić. Dubrovnik: Biskupski ordinarijat Dubrovnik, 2001: p. 194.

⁵⁶ N. Jakšić, »Un gruppo«: pp. 219-237.

⁵⁷ The first mimetic head reliquary is known only through a drawing by Nicolas Fabri de Pieresca (ca. 1612). It shows a reliquary with two types of crown, one that was a gift of the Burgundian king Boson (879-87) and the other that was commissioned by Hugo of Arla, the king of Italy (926-47). Discussion in: *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, ed. Marina Bagnoli, Holger A. Klein, C. Griffith Mann and James Robinson. New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2010: p. 167. For Burgundian crowned reliquaries see Barbara Drake Boehm, *Medieval Head Reliquaries of the Massif Central*, Ph.D. dissertation, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1990: p. 50.

reliquary bust of Saint Valentine was used in healing rituals; on the feast day the crown was taken from the bust and placed on the heads of worshippers in order to transfer the healing power of the relic.⁵⁸ A special use of the Venetian ducal *corno* is described in reference to Saint Paul the Martyr (martyred in 748, during the reign of Constantine V). The body of Saint Paul the Martyr was translated from the monastery of Christ Pantepoptes in Constantinople in 1220. Upon its arrival in Venice, the incorruptible body of the Saint was displayed for the veneration of the people. Doge Pietro Ziani, expressing his reverence, deposited his ducal crown at the feet of the saint, and the ducal crown placed by his feet became Paul's attribute.⁵⁹ Other examples of royalty adorning relics with crowns are known to us from the Angevin period in Dalmatia in the second half of the fourteenth century. At that time Elizabeth, the wife of the King Louis of Anjou, adorned the head relic of Saint Christopher in Rab and the head of Saint Simeon in Zadar.⁶⁰ The origin of such Angevin practice can be traced to a royal gesture of gratitude when Elizabeth's husband, King Louis of Anjou, crowned the reliquary of his patron saint, Holy King Ladislás, as sign of his gratitude for surviving the battle wound in 1352.⁶¹ The crowned bust of Saint Ladislás can be seen in the Győr cathedral. Similar uses of royal crowns were not, to my knowledge, documented in Byzantium.

Head relics, however, had plenty of use in Byzantine religion and politics. The most famous relics in Constantinople, which had a key role in the coronation ceremonies of Byzantine emperors in the oratory of Saint Stephen, were the

⁵⁸ Such a custom was documented in Taurinya (French Pyrenees) in 1881, but the origin of the rite was probably much earlier. The ritual involved the copper head reliquary of Saint Valentine, a work that was described as "primitive", perhaps Romanesque. Valentine's relic arrived from Rome to Taurinya in the eleventh century and was kept in the now mostly destroyed church of Saint Valentine de Corts dating to the end of the eleventh century. François Font, *Histoire de l'abbaye royale de Saint-Michel de Cuxa (Diocèse de Perpignan)*. Rennes-le-Château: Philippe Schrauben, 1881 (reprint 1989): p. 98, note 1.

⁵⁹ F. Corner, *Notizie*: p. 478; Donald M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice: A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992: p. 185.

⁶⁰ Ana Munk, »The Queen and Her Shrine: An Art Historical Twist on Historical Evidence Concerning the Hungarian Queen Elizabeth, nee Kotromanić, Donor of the Saint Simeon Shrine«. *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 10 (2004): pp. 253-262.

⁶¹ This happened during a pilgrimage Louis undertook to give thanks for his recovery after a battle injury. S. B. Montgomery and A. A. Bauer, »*Caput sancti regis Ladislai*: The Reliquary Bust of Saint Ladislás and Holy Kingship in Late Medieval Hungary«, in: *Decorations for the Holy Dead: Visual Embellishments on Tombs and Shrines of Saints*, ed. Stephen Lamia and Elizabeth Valdez del Álamo [International Medieval Research, vol. 8: Art History Subseries, vol. 1]. Turnhout: Brepols, 2002: p. 80.

right arm of Saint Stephen and the hand and head of Saint John the Baptist; none of the containers for these relics were mimetic.⁶² Our knowledge is, however, hampered by the limited number of Byzantine head relics that came to the West after the conquest of Constantinople (1204) and the fact that many of these were altered to such an extent that they no longer had their original appearance. They arrived stripped of their original containers and in several cases they were incorporated into Western-style bust reliquaries. This was the case with the cranium of Saint Symeon the Stylite. It was enclosed in a Western-style bust and shortly thereafter, in the nineteenth century, it was moved yet again into a monstrance-like standing reliquary made of wood. The original rounded top of Symeon's cranium was placed on velvet cloth in the centre.⁶³ This relic shows the state in which most Byzantine head relics survived to this day: the nude relic affixed on a silver disc is firmly upheld with metal bands along which runs an extensive inscription in Greek. The inscription names Basil "the imperial agent",⁶⁴

⁶² The translation of the relics of Saint Stephen's arm is depicted in the sixth century Tier ivory and shows relics transported in a small sarcophagus-shaped reliquary. The translation of Saint John the Baptist's arm reliquary to Constantinople in 956 (by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus) is depicted in the Madrid manuscript (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, Vitr. 26-2, fol. 106v) illustrating Skylitzes' narrative of the event. It shows an elongated box with a pyramidal roof. It resembles the reliquary of Saint James, Chrysogonus and Arontius in the treasury of Nin cathedral from the eleventh century. Another depiction of the procession in the same manuscript (fol. 210v) shows a procession led by two crosses, three rectangular reliquaries with pyramidal roofs and two flat *thekae*. In fact, the closest parallel to these rectangular boxes is the reliquary of Saint Christopher in the treasury of Rab cathedral (dated to the twelfth century) and a group of later reliquaries in Zadar. For the depiction see Nancy Ševčenko, »The Limburg Staurotheke and its Relics«, in: *Thymiama ste mneme tes Laskarinas Mpura*, ed. R. Andreade. Athens: Benaki Museum, 1994: pp. 289–294. The mimetic arm reliquary of Saint John the Baptist in Topkapi palace museum is a fifteenth-century work bearing Venetian and Rhodes goldsmith stamps because the arm resided at Rhodes since 1484. For the history of these objects and their role in imperial ceremonies see Ioli Kalavrezou, »Helping Hands for the Empire: Imperial Ceremonies and the Cult of Relics at the Byzantine Court«, in: *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997: pp. 53–79; Holger A. Klein, »Sacred Relics and Imperial Ceremonies at the Great Palace of Constantinople«, in: *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft*, ed. Franz Alto Bauer [Byzas, vol. 5]. Istanbul: Ege Yayinlari, 2006: pp. 79–99.

⁶³ The history of this relic in Archicenobio de Camaldoli is reconstructed by Enrica Follieri, »Un reliquiario bizantino di S. Simeone Stilita«. *Byzantion* 35 (1965): pp. 62–82. Prior to its nineteenth-century reconstruction the relic with its inscription was enclosed in a bust. Wander, however, rejects Follieri's claim that the inscription identifies the emperor Basil. For discussion of Basil Lekapenos' patronage see Steven H. Wander, *The Joshua Roll*. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2012: pp. 96–97.

⁶⁴ The inscription runs as follows: "A column of fire once led Israel into the Promised Land from the land of Egypt, and a column for you, Symeon, divine father, (was) a guide from earth onto the celestial path. I adorn henceforward your venerable head. Basil, the imperial agent, with reverence". S. Wander, *The Joshua Roll*: pp. 96–97.

identified as Basil Lekapenos, the brother-in-law of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913-59), both known as great patrons of the arts. Basil Lekapenos, a eunuch chamberlain, spent lavishly on the metalwork in the most sophisticated of all periods of Byzantine art. His commissions include the famous Joshua Roll, the Limburg *staurotheke*, manuscripts and other goldsmiths' work such as the paten and chalice used to make a reliquary of Saint John the Baptist's head (in the treasury of Saint Mark's church in Venice).

Among the great works of art that Basil commissioned and that is particularly interesting as an example of a rhetorical use of a crown symbolism is a head reliquary of Saint Stephen the Protomartyr that ended up in Venice, but is now lost. Fortunately, the description of this reliquary has been preserved. As already mentioned, the arm relic of Saint Stephen was instrumental in the coronation ceremonies of Byzantine emperors and an oratory church (Hagios Stephanos) in the imperial palace of Constantinople was built specifically for this purpose. Thus Saint Stephen's head relic, commissioned by the sophisticated art lover Basil, must have been of the highest importance. Its history is documented only after the fall of Candia in 1699 (today Heraklion, Crete) when the reliquary was transferred from the church of San Francesco in Candia to the Franciscan convent of Santo Spirito in Venice. Here is a detailed description: "*Cranium S. Stephani protomartyris, bene in argentum ligatum cum multis ornamentis et lapidibus aliquantuli valoris, repositum in vase argenteo inaurato nobilis forme, cum plerisque imaginibus ac litteris grecis circa vas ipsum insculptis* [emphasis added]". Although it is tempting to interpret the term *vas* as a cup of some sort, the term was used in Latin sources for all sorts of containers, including boxes and flat *staurothecae*. *Circa vas*, however, suggests the possibility of a rounded-shaped receptacle with precious stones and figures made in repoussé technique. Yet, the dedicatory description for the relic shows that this reliquary was only meant to be metaphorically understood as the crown of a martyr. It runs as follows:

"O champion and glory of the martyrs, your head, which the stones of martyrdom once crowned, I too now crown [*stefo*, in original] with the material of gold and silver, thus showing my lavish devotion with a humble gift, in reward for which I request the *baioulos* and hold the office of *parakoimomenos*, I your Basil, O Saint".⁶⁵

⁶⁵ S. Wander, *The Joshua Roll*: p. 96, n. 15.

Thus the head reliquary in the tenth century was indeed meant to be understood as a martyrs' crown, a word play on Stephanos (Saint Stephen), which is the same as the word for a wreath crown of the martyr (stephanos). The vessel itself (referred to as *vas* in the Venetian source) was, however, not associated with an imperial crown.

Other genuinely Byzantine head relics preserved in Western treasuries have one attribute in common: the relic fragment has affixed metal bands identifying the relic. These metal bands with inscriptions could have served as proof of the relic's authenticity, *authenticae*, even when the relic itself ended up enclosed in a Western-style reliquary. The relic of Saint James, for instance, shows a skull secured on a metal plate with metal bands crossing the skull and a medallion with the image of the saint nailed on the skull (Fig. 7).⁶⁶ It was brought from Constantinople by the bishop of Halberstad, and placed in the treasury of his cathedral in 1208. The third known example of an authentic Byzantine head relic is that of Saint Akindos, which a French nobleman brought from the church of Saints Cosmas and Damian in Constantinople to the Cistercian abbey of Rosières. It shows the rounded top of the skull held with metal bands and an image of the saint with his name in the central medallion.⁶⁷ Its provenance from Constantinople is documented by the Russian pilgrim Anthony of Novgorod who saw it at its original location and described it as *crania Acyndini et Cosma, argento cooperta*.⁶⁸ All these relics were voluminous fragments that could not have been stored in a flat type of container. They were covered or enclosed in a more solid type of container and revealed to audiences in a liturgical setting.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Rainer Rückert, »Zur Form der Byzantinischen Reliquiare«. *Münchener Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst* 8 (1957): p. 10; Martina Bagnoli, »The Stuff of Heaven: Materials and Craftsmanship in Medieval Reliquaries«, in: *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, ed. Marina Bagnoli, Holger A. Klein, C. Griffith Mann and James Robinson. Cleveland, Ohio: Cleveland Museum of Art; Baltimore: Walters Art Museum; London: The British Museum; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010: p. 141.

⁶⁷ The circumstances of its finding were reported in Gustave Schlumberger, »Relique de saint Akindynos«. *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 35/5 (1891): pp. 355-356.

⁶⁸ Paul Riant, *Exuviae sacrae constantinopolitanae*, vol. 2. Genevae: Typis I.G. Fick; Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1878: p. 224.

⁶⁹ Bisera V. Pentcheva, »The Performance of Relics: Concealment and Desire in the Byzantine Staging of *leipsana*«, in: *Symmeikta: Zbornik radova povodom četrdeset godina Instituta za istoriju umetnosti Filozofskog fakulteta Univerziteta u Beogradu = Collection of papers dedicated to the 40th anniversary of the Institute for Art History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade*. Beograd: Filozofski Fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu, 2012: pp. 55-71.



Fig. 7. Skull Relic of Saint James the Younger, Domschatzverwaltung Halberstad, Byzantine (Constantinople), before 1204. From: *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, ed. Marina Bagnoli, Holger A. Klein, C. Griffith Mann and James Robinson. New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2010: p. 141.

Another fascinating type of Byzantine head reliquary has the cranium placed in the middle of an ornate disk. Three examples are documented, but none are preserved in their original shape. According to an inventory description, a disk once held the head of Saint Mamas, now in Langres. Later it was enclosed in the back of the head of a nineteenth-century bust reliquary. Similarly to the previous examples, it consisted of a rounded portion from the top of the skull with a Greek inscription on metal bands identifying the saint.⁷⁰ A second example of a disk-shaped reliquary is the famous head—in actuality the face bones—of Saint John the Baptist in the treasury of the cathedral of Amiens, brought from Constantinople in 1206 along with the head of Saint George. Both were originally centered in the middle of big silver disks, best described as ornate platters (*duos discos argenteos magnos, rotundos, cum sibi responentibus*

⁷⁰ The head of Saint Mamas reached Langres in 1205 and it is now preserved in a bust of nineteenth-century manufacture. Claire W. Solt, »Byzantine and Gothic Reliquaries«. *Byzantinoslavica* 45 (1984): pp. 212-213. For an illustration and some relevant notes see: »The Skull of Saint Mamas in Langres«, <http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2013/09/the-skull-of-saint-mamas-in-langres.html> (accessed Feb. 2016).

operimentis), which were later sold.⁷¹ Since the relic of Saint John is that of the face bones, the relic is today displayed upright as a striking icon of a face of a saint encircled by a halo, but it is very unlikely that this is how it would have been displayed originally. Most likely the relics lied flat on the disk which took the function of a supporting platter. Apparently, both relics that arrived in Amiens were covered with some type of domed lid, as Wallon de Sarton is described as uncovering the platters to discover the relics underneath. The head of Saint John was identified by the inscription, but also enamel (?) images. The head of Saint George, however, was documented in Marmoutier, but the whereabouts of the relic and the platter/disk do not seem to be known. Lastly, there was another Byzantine head bone of Saint George that was acquired for the church of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice where it was last documented by the American historian Kenneth M. Setton in the 1970s. Led by historical documents describing heated competition between Venice and Aragon kings for Saint George's head, Setton searched for it and finally, with the luck that follows stubborn researchers, found it in a dusty cupboard in San Giorgio Maggiore.⁷² Setton describes the relic as the top of the cranium, crossed with gold or gilded bands bearing a Greek inscription identifying it as the head of Saint George. If there was a domed lid or disk that encircled it, it has since been lost.

The evidence shows that all of these genuinely Byzantine head relics in Western church treasuries were plundered from the churches of Constantinople in the period after 1204. None of these head relics were gifts, and none were reported as purchased. These Byzantine head relics were removed from their original containers, some were kept "nude", and some were radically remade through Western-style reliquaries, but have preserved metal mountings that confirm their

⁷¹ R. Rückert, »Zur Form«: p. 12; Barbara Baert, *Caput Johannis in Disco (Essay on a Man's Head)* [Visualizing the Middle Ages, vol. 8]. Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2012: pp. 33-39. I thank Barbara Baert for the copy of her manuscript before its publication. The description and Greek inscriptions for both heads are reported in P. Riant, *Exuviae*, p. 28. According to Riant: "Mane factio, totam struem amovit, & duos magnos discos argenteos cum suis operimentis invenit...Nec dum mane factio illos in secretum tulit cubiculum, quibus apertis, in uno caput sancti Georgij ex superscriptione: *Agyos Georgyos* esse cognovit; in alio vero superscriptum erat: *Agyos Iohannes Apodromos*, quod non plene intellexit, donec perlectis multarum ymaginum superscriptis, sub Apodromos scriptum videret Baptiste: unde cuius caput esset agnovit". Wallon de Sartone, a canon of the collegiate church of Saint Martin of Picquigny near Amiens, found these heads in a vestibule situated between the Palace of the Arsenal and the church of Saint George in Constantinople. Wallon gave them to Bishop Richard de Gerberoy, who brought them to the Cathedral of Notre Dame of Amiens on 17 December 1206. The disk had been redone in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries.

⁷² Kenneth Setton, »Saint George's Head«. *Speculum* 48 (1973): p. 11.

Byzantine origins. Two cranium relics (that of Saint John the Baptist and Saint George) were covered with some sort of a lid and placed on a disk. The information about these lost disks or platters is valuable to us, as will be explained below.

“In bacino argenti”

If the original container for Saint Blaise's head was not a crown, then what did it look like? There are two possibilities. The relic could have been fixed in the middle of a disk and covered with a domed lid, or it could have been placed within a cylindrical container that was carried on its own round plate. This second possibility is more viable because we have an example of a cylindrical head reliquary of Saint James the Less in Zadar (Fig. 3). This second possibility also fits with the descriptions of the Saint Blaise reliquary in the earliest inventory of Dubrovnik cathedral from 1335 as: “*caput Beati Blasij epi. in bacino argenti*”.⁷³ Lupis believed that the *bacino* referred to the container, but actually *bacino* was a reference to a round ceremonial platter, just as the reliquary is carried today on its Baroque-style platter (Fig. 2). That *bacino* refers to a ceremonial platter, can be deduced from the description of the Easter ceremony in Venice. After the doge heard the vespers in San Zaccharia, the gem encrusted ducal *baretta*, which is the same as a *corno ducale*, the headgear of the Venetian doge, was carried in front of him on a *bacil* as illustrated in Matteo Pagan's *Procession in St. Mark's Square on Palm Sunday 1556–1569* (Fig. 8).⁷⁴ Therefore,

⁷³ *Ecclesiae et monasteria*, ser. 14, vol. 1 - *Reliquie s.s. corporum repertae in Ecclesia Cathedrali S. Mariae Maioris d.d. 1335*, Državni arhiv u Dubrovniku (State Archives in Dubrovnik). I thank Ana Marinković for her assistance in providing this source.

⁷⁴ The description comes from *Caerimoniale rituum sacrorum ecclesiae sancti Marci Venetiarum* (ms. lat. III 172, 2276) in Biblioteca Marciana. It is dated to the 1500's. The doge goes to the church of San Zaccaria to attend the vespers: “Et in tanto che si canta il Magnificat il serenissimo principe tiene il candellotto impizzado in man; et si porta la baretta ducal da le zoglie, quella del santuario, in uno bacil davanti el dose”. For a full description see Martin Canal, *Les estoires de Venise, cronaca veneziana in lingua francese dalle origini al 1275*, ed. Alberto Limentani. Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1972: Appendix III, CCCXXIII. It should be noted that in Canal's description of the same ceremony the end of the ceremony is not mentioned, but it could be assumed that the doge did not wear his *corno ducale* during the Mass and thus, at the end of the ceremony it was ceremonially carried for him. For the Byzantine origin of the ducal *corno* see Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981: p. 222. For the illustration (Museo Correr, Venice. Inv. M.42883/4) see E. Muir, *Civic Ritual*: p. 196. Illustration is also available at: Jeffrey Kurtzman and Linda Maria Koldau, »Trombe, Trombe d'argento, Trombe squarciate, Tromboni, and Pifferi in Venetian Processions and Ceremonies of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries«. *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* 8/1 (2002), <http://www.sscm-jscm.org/v8/no1/kurtzman/fig17.html> (accessed Feb. 2016).



Fig. 8. Matteo Pagan, Procession in St. Mark's Square on Palm Sunday, Frame 5: Patriarch, Doge's Candle, Doge's Crown, Secretaries of the Doge and Senate, 1556–69. From: Jeffrey Kurtzman and Linda Maria Koldau, »Trombe, Trombe d'argento, Trombe squarciate, Tromboni, and Pifferi in Venetian Processions and Ceremonies of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries«. *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* 8 (2002), <http://www.sscm-jscm.org/v8/no1/kurtzman.html>.

bacil is the same as *bacino*, a term for a metal plate for ceremonial and some secular uses including the use as collection plates or plates for washing hands. Thus the reliquary of Saint Blaise had to have a round base that could comfortably fit on such a platter.

The original *bacino* for the head of Saint Blaise probably looked like the one that is still preserved as part of the Kotor reliquary for the head of Saint Tryphon, and which is the oldest part of that reliquary (Fig. 9). Although several modifications have drastically changed the reliquary, the original design of a domed lid over a ceremonial plate it still preserved. Pierced holes visible along the platter indicate that some sort of decoration was originally affixed to it, perhaps stones or even enamel plaques. It was remade by Venetian goldsmith Benetto Rizzi in 1662 also assuming a *kamelaukion* form. From the available sources we know that the head of Saint Tryphon was brought from Constantinople

in 1227 by a Kotor merchant and for this service to his city he received lands and a number of other privileges.⁷⁵ The head has remained in Kotor since its arrival, and thus the plate in gilded silver upon which the later construction rests likely originated in Byzantium no later than 1227.



Fig. 9. The Head reliquary of Saint Tryphon, Treasury of the Kotor cathedral, before 1227 (the plate), 15th to 17th century modifications, 1662 (the domed container), gold, silver, enamel, turquoise, rock crystal, semi-precious stones, enamel; height 43 cm, ø 27 cm (plate). Photo: Stevan Kordić.

⁷⁵ The story of Saint Tryphon relics is too complex to be fully discussed here. According to a legend of much later date, the body arrived in Kotor in 809. Venetians sold his body to a local magnate Andreaci for an amount of 200 Roman *soldium* and one bejeweled crown. The body of Saint Tryphon, his central plan church and already established cult is mentioned in *De administrando imperio* by Constantine Porphyrogenitus. According to one version, the head was abducted by the Bulgarian emperor Samuil and then returned to Kotor through intervention of the Byzantine emperor Basil II. The other version claims that the head stayed in Constantinople until a Kotor merchant Matija Bonasci brought it to Kotor. Relevant documents are discussed in I. Stjepčević, *Arhivska istraživanja*: pp. 37-39. For the reliquary see: *Zagovori svetom Tripunu: Blago kotorske biskupije*, exhibition catalogue. Zagreb: Galerija Klovićevi dvori, 2009: catalogue entry with bibliography by M. Zornija: pp. 124-126.

Two cylindrical containers made in Zadar and dated to the beginning of the twelfth century provide the most likely comparison for the original shape of Saint Blaise's reliquary.⁷⁶ The shape of the Zadar reliquary of Saint James the Less derives from a Byzantine model, although it is made in a Western Romanesque style depicting figures of saints bearing Latin *tituli* identifying them. The dedicatory inscription that names the donor places the reliquary to the end of the eleventh or beginning of the twelfth century. Harmonious proportions between its cylindrical base and domed lid and its overall size suggest, without resorting to mimetic expressiveness, the compact volume and weight of a human head. It is a great example of restrained anthropomorphic imagination and the aesthetic impact of such reticence is powerful. Roundels containing busts of saints in granulated frames on the lid suggest that the artist may have had Byzantine enamel decoration in mind. Such granulated frames are a typical way to enhance and cover the sharp edges of enamel plaques in Byzantine works. The artist opted for images of saints in silver *repousée* technique while maintaining the appearance of more luxurious Byzantine enamel roundels.

From Zadar comes another comparable example, the reliquary for the head of Saint Arontius and his eleven brothers, saints honoured in Benevento.⁷⁷ It was made in the same Zadar workshop as the cylindrical reliquary for Saint James the Less in Zadar. The inscription names Sergius son of Madi, the Zadar tribune between 1067 and 1072.⁷⁸ Although it was later redone in a rectangular box shape, it was certainly originally cylindrical, showing saints in Byzantine costume with *tituli* written in mixed Greek and Latin alphabets. The audience for such a reliquary could have been Greek: at that time the military commander in Zadar was a certain Leon, *prōtopatharios* and captain of the entire Dalmatia in 1067. According to Katičić, Greek liturgy was held in Zadar until the end of the twelfth century, and thus we may assume that there was an audience for such artworks.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ EGO BOSNA IUSSI FIERI ANCH CAPSAM AD ONOREM SCS IACOBI MARTIRIS OB REMEDIUM ANIME CHASEI VIRI MEI ET ANIME MEE. Kaže, the prior and judge in Zadar, was mentioned in notary documents in 1096: *Prvih pet stoljeća hrvatske umjetnosti: The First Five Centuries of Croatian Art*, exhibition catalogue. Zagreb: Galerija Klovićevi dvori, 2006: catalogue entry by N. Jakšić: p. 188.

⁷⁷ *Prvih pet stoljeća*: pp. 185-187.

⁷⁸ +SERGIUS. F. MAI. NEPO / S ZALLAE. FECIT HANCCA / PSAM. SCO. CAPITI. ARONTII MA / RTIRIS. *Prvih pet stoljeća*: catalogue entry by N. Jakšić, pp. 186-187.

⁷⁹ Radoslav Katičić, *Litterarum studia: književnost i naobrazba ranog hrvatskog srednjovjekovlja*. Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1998: p. 239, n. 802. The information is based on the Pope Innocentius' III letter to Zadar canons.

The evidence is thus compelling; these two cylindrically shaped reliquaries for head relics made in Zadar, but based on an essentially Byzantine idea of a non-mimetic head reliquary with a domed lid that sits on a platter, serve as the best examples of how the head reliquary of Saint Blaise may have originally appeared. We can assume by analogy that Saint Blaise's head reliquary was originally cylindrical in form and carried on its own ceremonial platter (*bacino*).

The Enamel Decoration: Byzantine or Byzantinizing?

Twenty enamel plaques are affixed to the Saint Blaise reliquary. These stem from three different sources, and while Venetian goldsmith Francesco Ferro skillfully placed them in three rows around the head, he was not able to create a coherent iconographic programme since many original enamel pieces were missing.

The destruction of the Dubrovnik Cathedral and its treasury during the Great Earthquake of 1667, where the original reliquary was kept, was the reason why Saint Blaise's head reliquary needed to be remade.⁸⁰ When artworks were destroyed in the earthquake, the precious scattered enamel plaques were reused. The enamels included by Ferro on the head reliquary of Saint Blaise can be organized into three different sets, as already suggested by Lazar Mirković.⁸¹ The most enigmatic, group II, following Mirković's classification, consists of the four oldest enamel medallions, possibly dating to the tenth or eleventh century.⁸² This set is much damaged and bears no inscriptions. We should set them apart as these were probably reused enamels from some lost object which Ferro incorporated in the place of missing ones. Group III consists of four rectangular enamels Ferro took from the reliquary of the arm of Saint Blaise. These show the style of cloisonné enamels produced in Byzantine workshops patronized by Norman kings of Sicily, and date to the late twelfth century.⁸³

⁸⁰ Stjepan Skurla, *Moćnik Stolne crkve dubrovačke*. Dubrovnik: D. Pretner, 1868: pp. 9-11.

⁸¹ L. Mirković, »Relikvijar moštiju«: pp. 3-26.

⁸² L. Mirković, »Relikvijar moštiju«: p. 17. Upon closer examination, Mirković's conclusion that this set of enamels were Byzantine cannot be accepted, see Ana Munk, »Localizing Byzantium: Group II Enamels on the Reliquary of Saint Blaise in Dubrovnik«, in: *Scripta in onorem Igor Fisković, Festschrift on the occasion of his 70th birthday*, ed. Miljenko Jurković and Predrag Marković. Zagreb-Motovun: International Research Center for Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, University of Zagreb, 2015: pp. 75-87.

⁸³ For the right hand arm reliquary of Saint Blaise see *Prvih pet stoljeća*, catalogue entry by J. Belamarić: pp. 190-193.

Group I, however, can provide us with the most insight into the original decoration of the Saint Blaise reliquary. I will need to limit this discussion to several points that strongly indicate that these enamels are Byzantinizing rather than Byzantine works. Among the depicted saints in this group of enamels are Saint Blaise and Saint Zenobius, the first patron saint of Dubrovnik whose cult is documented in Dubrovnik beginning in 1017 (Figs. 10 and 11).⁸⁴ Saint Zenobius and Blaise appear almost identical; both are depicted wearing *omophor* that looks like a Western *pallium*. They wear no headgear as was common in Byzantium. Saint John the Evangelist, however, is depicted in a Western manner as a youthful, beardless man, a type we never find in Byzantine art (Fig. 12).⁸⁵ His oblique position, also used in the depiction of Saint Peter, is inconsistent with the strictly frontal positioning of saints on eleventh-century Byzantine enamel medallions.⁸⁶ Another exceptional depiction is that of Saint Peter, whose cult in Dubrovnik can be traced to the ninth or tenth century when his church was erected (Fig. 13).⁸⁷ He holds a key, which is *not* how he appears on Byzantine enamels and other decorative works, where he is represented with the cruciform staff of his martyrdom or with a scroll. Occasionally, Saint Peter is depicted in Byzantine works holding both the cross and the scroll in his left hand while blessing or “speaking” with the other. In fact, there is only one recorded example of a Byzantine enamel showing St. Peter with a key in a Western sixteenth-century drawing showing the cover of an eleventh-century Byzantine *staurotheke*,⁸⁸ and thus Peter’s key was most likely added by the Western artist. The rich treasury of Saint Mark in Venice, certainly the best

⁸⁴ L. Mirković, »Relikvijar moštiju«: p. 6; *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii*: p. 40. A Greek by name of Frontino brought the relics of Zenobius and his sister from Castel Provolo (unable to locate). Relics were received by Nikefor the archbishop and Vital Vetrano, the count of Dubrovnik, in 1012.

⁸⁵ L. Mirković, »Relikvijar moštiju«: p. 6.

⁸⁶ Exceptions are noted when there is a reason for movement, for instance, if Saint John is paired with Mary making a Deisis group, or if the Archangel Gabriel turns to Mary in the Annunciation.

⁸⁷ The church, now demolished, was located where the Music School is today and where the crypt and wall fragments are still preserved. A fifteenth-century description notes a Byzantine cruciform floor plan surmounted by a dome. Many high quality fragments of the church furniture date to ninth, tenth and eleventh century. Željko Peković, *Crkva Sv. Petra Velikoga: Dubrovačka predromanička katedrala i njezina skulptura / La chiesa di S. Pietro Maggiore: La cattedrale preromanica di Ragusa e il suo arredo scultoreo*. Dubrovnik – Split: Omega engineering, Centar *Studia mediterranea* pri Filozofskom fakultetu u Splitu, 2010. The earliest pictorial depiction of Saint Peter can be found in the twelfth-century frescoes in the Church of Saint John on the island of Šipan and the Church of Saint Nicholas on the island of Koločep. See further in Nikola Jakšić, »Il culto di san Pietro nella Dalmazia paleocristiana e medievale«, in: *San Pietro e San Marco - arte e iconografia in area adriatica*, ed. Letizia Caselli. Roma: Gangemi Editore, 2009: pp. 61-93.

⁸⁸ In Donauwörth, H. A. Klein, »Eastern Objects«: Fig. 8 (with provenance and bibliography).

collection of eleventh-century Byzantine enamels, contains no example of Saint Peter with a key.⁸⁹

Counting from the top, in the first row, we have four medallions depicting Saint Andrew, Archangel Michael, Saint Blaise, and Saint Peter (Figs. 10, 13, 14 and 15). This is the only line up of saints that make an iconographically coherent arrangement perhaps replicating the original placement of the enamels. If my reading is correct, Archangel Michael and Saint Andrew represent Byzantine Church and Komnenos dynasty, while Saint Blaise and Saint Peter the city and the Church of Dubrovnik and Rome. Although Archangel Michael is a ubiquitous presence in both Western and Eastern art, he was particularly connected with Komnenos dynasty who built the chapel dedicated to him in the Christ Pantokrator monastery, the most renowned in Byzantium. The chapel

⁸⁹ It is, of course, impossible to review the entire corpus of Byzantine art to prove the absence of a certain iconographical motif. There are always exceptions. We recall the sixth-century encaustic icon of Saint Peter in the Sinai collection which shows Saint Peter with keys and there is a late thirteenth-century Macedonian or Serbian icon showing Saint Peter with keys suspended around his neck on a golden cord: Kurt Weitzmann, *Saint Peter Icon of Dumbarton Oaks*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1983: pp.52-57. In the Middle Byzantine Period the absence of keys as Peter's attribute in decorative arts is, however, obvious, especially if we consider the works illustrating Saint Peter directly. For instance, a miniature on a single leaf from a Greek Psalter and New Testament from 1084 illustrating Peter's Epistle, shows Peter standing, blessing with one hand while holding the scroll in the other hand: http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1950.154?collection_search_views_fulltext=byzantine&collection_search_views_artist_full_name=&field_images_field_large_image_url=All&field_highlight_museum=All&page=1&collection_search_query=Byzantine&op=search&form_build_id=form-x9OMzdjWZ_1FbSnzb_wq7S7psytuJFPqJl8L2wk&form_id=clevelandart_collection_search_form (accessed March 2016). In numerous examples of enamels, ivories and paintings, Peter appears without a key. See, for instance, examples in: *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era: A.D. 843-1261*, ed. Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006: p. 76 (Peter with the cross, *staurotheke*, tempera on wood, tenth century, Museo Sacro della Biblioteca Apostolica), 79 (*staurotheke*, enamel plaque, 975-1025, treasury of Saint Mark), 162-163 (Peter standing blessing with a scroll, *staurotheke*, enamel, late tenth-early eleventh century, Museo della Cattedrale, Monopoli), 346-347 (Peter holding the cross and the scroll, and blessing, enamel plaque, late eleventh-early twelfth century, Metropolitan Museum of Art). Similarly we do not find Peter with a key in Byzantine artworks of the Middle-Byzantine period in the treasury of Saint Mark. Compare *Il Tesoro di San Marco: Il tesoro e il museo*, ed. H.R. Hahnloser. Firenze: Sansoni Editore, 1971: cat. n. 16, Fig. 16 (Peter holding a scroll and blessing on the enamel roundel on Saint Michael icon in gilded silver, mid. 11th c.). Other examples can be cited from the book cover in Siena, see: P. Hetherington, »Byzantine Enamels on a Venetian Book-Cover«: pp. 117-142. Peter appears on the enamel plaque on the front of the book cover standing, blessing and holding a scroll and a double cross in his left hand (twelfth century, Group II enamels in Hetherington's classification). On the back, he is depicted standing, blessing and holding a scroll, with two vegetable ornaments on each side (early twelfth century, Group III in Hetherington's classification).



Fig. 10. Saint Blaise, detail of the Reliquary of the Head of Saint Blaise, second half of the 12th century, cloisonné enamel, ø 2,6 cm.



Fig. 11. Saint Zenobius, detail of the Reliquary of the Head of Saint Blaise, second half of the 12th century, cloisonné enamel, ø 3 cm. Photo: Konzervatorski odjel u Dubrovniku.



Fig. 12. Saint John the Evangelist, detail of the Reliquary of the Head of Saint Blaise, second half of the 12th century, cloisonné enamel, ø 3 cm. Photo: Konzervatorski odjel u Dubrovniku.



Fig. 13. Saint Peter, detail of the Reliquary of the Head of Saint Blaise, second half of the 12th century, cloisonné enamel, ø 3 cm.

was a Komnenos dynasty mausoleum where John II Komnenos and his son and successor Manuel were buried, the latter in a most lavish tomb.⁹⁰



Fig. 14. Saint Andrew, detail of the Reliquary of the Head of Saint Blaise, second half of the 12th century, cloisonné enamel, ø 3 cm.



Fig. 15. Archangel Michael, detail of the Reliquary of the Head of Saint Blaise, second half of the 12th century, cloisonné enamel, ø 2,7 cm.

Unlike Saint Peter, there is no evidence that Saint Andrew was particularly venerated in Dubrovnik before the thirteenth century. The convent is first mentioned in 1234, but there is no evidence of the feast day before the fifteenth century.⁹¹

⁹⁰ John Freely and Ahmet S. Cakmak, *Byzantine Monuments of Istanbul*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004: pp. 211-212. The addition of the mortuary chapel dedicated to Archangel Michael was John II Komnenos' project. Eirene, his first wife, was reburied there, John's son Manuel, as well as members of Paleologus dynasty in the fifteenth century. Byzantine emperors were frequently connected to angels in court rhetoric and art and archangels and emperors often share the same elements of costume such as the imperial *loros*, see Henry Maguire, »Style and Ideology in Byzantine Imperial Art«. *Gesta* 28 (1989): pp. 217-231.

⁹¹ See the comparative table of Ragusan state holidays compiled by Nella Lonza, *Kazalište vlasti: ceremonijal i državni blagdani dubrovačke republike u 17. i 18. stoljeću*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: HAZU, 2009: pp. 230-233. Saint Andrew day as a state holiday appears in the feast calendar, *Liber omnium reformationum* dating to the fifteenth century, which is inconclusive as to when the feast day was first introduced. In the treasury of the Dubrovnik cathedral the earliest reliquary is dome-shaped and it is mentioned in the 1335 inventory of the cathedral. Then there are two dome-shaped reliquaries of Saint Andrew head that belonged to the convent of Saint Claire and both bear the coats of arms of the Sorento family. They can be dated to the fourteenth century. The fourth is the Western style mimetic head reliquary from the fourteenth century. There is also reliquary of his leg (early fifteenth century). There was an altar dedicated to him in the Dominican church in Dubrovnik in the mid-fourteenth century (no longer extant). Zdenka Janeković Römer, *Okvir slobode: Dubrovačka vlastela*

His reliquaries in the treasury of the Dubrovnik cathedral are late medieval. To single him out along with Saint Peter, in my view, indicates a particular moment in time.

In the depiction of both Saint Peter and his brother, Saint Andrew, who are placed next to each other, we find another unexpected motif: next to both figures appears a cross, an attribute of their martyrdom (Figs. 13 and 14). However, the placement is unusual because there is no Byzantine enamel, no matter which saint was depicted, that has the saint's attribute detached from the figure; they always hold their attributes. Since Byzantine enamel artists were unlikely to have worked in other media,⁹² the iconography of saints in the enamel medium was stable and rather conventional in enamel and other decorative arts. When saints are depicted with their crosses they firmly hold the cross in front of them or by their side—as for example with the onyx chalice of Emperor Romanos I or II in the treasury of Saint Mark's, (920-944 or 959-963), which shows Saint John the Baptist and Saint Peter with crosses by their side, which they, however, hold by their elongated handles. Here the artist freely and emphatically disconnected figures and their crosses, and the most likely explanation is that these crosses denote not only their martyrdoms, but also symbolically mark the figures as patron saints and founders of their respective churches, the Church of Constantinople (Saint Andrew) and the Church of Rome (Saint Peter). I am inclined to see these crosses as unique statements in the context of the pro-Western Byzantine Emperor Manuel I Komnenos' intense, but failed attempts to reconcile the Eastern and Western Churches. Given Manuel's well-documented policy to lavishly spend on his network of ruling agents in Italian towns (Ancona, Genoa, Ravenna, Pisa, Venice, Milano), a network too extended to be fully reconstructed,⁹³ one would be inclined to include artwork and enamels among such gifts. Although I argue here that group I enamels on Saint Blaise's reliquaries are twelfth-century works, for reasons explained below, I do not believe these enamels were a part of such imperial largesse. I do wish, however, to note a particular historical moment when such a favourable statement about the Church in Constantinople would

između srednjovjekovlja i humanizma. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: HAZU, 1999: p. 356, For archeological excavations and image of ruins of the convent of Saint Andrew, see Ivica Žile, »Archeological Findings within the Historic Nucleus of the City of Dubrovnik« *Dubrovnik Annals* 12 (2008): pp. 73-92.

⁹² P. Hetherington, »Byzantine Enamels on a Venetian Book-Cover«: p. 134.

⁹³ Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993: p.83.

have been possible in the twelfth century Mediterranean West.⁹⁴ Let us also recall that Manuel's army won a most decisive victory against the Hungarian army in 1167, which issued a short period of a stable presence of Byzantine rule in Dalmatia.⁹⁵ Manuel's victory won him southern Dalmatian cities, which stayed under Byzantine rule for sixteen years—from 1164 to 1180 without infringing on the development of municipal autonomy. As noted before, Thomas the Archdeacon of Split, an adamant supporter of Roman Catholicism, retained fond memories of Manuel. If for no other reason, this was because Manuel had no objections to Dalmatian towns maintaining their loyalty to the Papal See.

Based on the iconographical evidence, Mirković's conclusion that these enamels were *not* made in Constantinople, but could have been made only in Dubrovnik or Southern Italy, emerges as the most logical explanation.⁹⁶ However, Mirković proposed dating these enamels to the first half of the eleventh century without providing stylistic comparisons.⁹⁷ He based his proposal on the precision of drawing and finesse of cloison gold line, but the quality of these enamels does not compare to the best Byzantine examples. The hallmark of Byzantine quality consists in a tightly packed variety of decorative details and colours, controlled with precise draftsmanship executed with thin cloison gold line. This colorful variety, held together by a precise drawing that does not lose its firmness even when enlarged under the lens of a modern-day camera, is what gives them the appearance of a vibrant, luxurious ornament. We do not see that particular, we may say, aristocratic quality in these enamels. The *ductus* of the gold line of cloison is either too firm or "too fidgety," as Klaus Wessel

⁹⁴ The theme of unification of the Eastern and Western Churches characterized the reign of all three Comneni rulers. As stated by J. M. Hussey: "The conception of a single Empire under the East Roman ruler with a united Church, unrealistic as it was, continued to run through the policies of John II and Manuel I despite intermittent alliances between Byzantium and the German emperors". Manuel's offer to Pope Alexander III to take both the Churches of Rome and Constantinople (the see of Constantinople was vacant) was negotiated. The Pope's counteroffer asked that Constantinople should accept Roman primacy, and, interestingly, he asked to be commemorated in the diptychs. J. M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990: p. 171. For favourable reception of Manuel's reign in Dalmatia, see I. Goldstein, *Hrvati, hrvatske zemlje i Bizant*: pp. 37-46.

⁹⁵ On Hungarian and Byzantine relations following the disputes over the succession of the Hungarian throne in 1161, see P. Magdalino, *The Empire*: pp. 79-81.

⁹⁶ L. Mirković, »Relikvijar moštijuc«: p. 16. Mirković opted for Dubrovnik as a place where these enamels of Group I were made.

⁹⁷ Mirković's education was primarily that of a liturgical scholar and his attempts to compare this group of enamels to the known ones were tentative.

described later enamel production.⁹⁸ As the enamels depicting Saint John the Baptist and the Enthroned Christ show, the figures are too expressive and disproportionate to match the quality of most eleventh-century Byzantine enamel production (Figs. 16 and 17).

If we reject the prevalent assumption that the enamels were made in the imperial workshop in Constantinople, especially since the existence of workshops set within confinement of the imperial palace is highly questionable,⁹⁹ the relaxed iconographic and stylistic syntax of group I enamels could indicate their origin in Dubrovnik itself, as Mirković proposed. From Viktor Novak's "nota paleographica" addendum to Mirković's study, it becomes apparent that the inscriptions on the enamels in group I are in Beneventan script used only



Fig. 16. Saint John the Baptist, detail of the Reliquary of the Head of Saint Blaise, second half of the 12th century, cloisonné enamel. Photo: Konzervatorski odjel u Dubrovniku.



Fig. 17. Enthroned Christ, detail of the Reliquary of the Head of Saint Blaise, second half of the 12th century, cloisonné enamel, ø 3 cm. Photo: Konzervatorski odjel u Dubrovniku.

⁹⁸ K. Wessel, *Byzantine Enamels*: p. 192.

⁹⁹ Paul Hetherington, »La couronne grecque da la Sainte Couronne de Hongrie: le contexte de ses émaux et de ses bijoux«, in: idem, *Enamels, Crowns, Relics and Icons: Studies on Luxury Arts in Byzantium*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008: p. 36.

in Dalmatia or Southern Italy in the eleventh century.¹⁰⁰ Future study of these enamels should take into account that Byzantine artists working in regional goldsmith' workshops in the Middle Byzantine period and later, in Georgia or Kiev for instance, made enamels showing a mixture of Greek and native script, while maintaining a strong connection to Byzantine craft of enamel making both in style and technique.¹⁰¹ We noted such a mixture of scripts on the Zadar reliquary with Beneventan saints as well. Thus, there is no doubt, that the artist of the group I enamels was Greek, but worked in Dubrovnik or South Italy, and definitely not in Constantinople.

Although far from Constantinople, the artist still used the colour patterns typical for Byzantine enamels dated to twelfth century. Compare, for instance, the alternate use of blue and turquoise colour on the mantle over the lighter "chevron style" tunic on a twelfth-century enamel plaque showing Saint Peter

¹⁰⁰ Viktor Novak, »Nota palaeographica: de signaturis reliquiarii Santi Blasii Ragusini«. *Spomenik Srpske kraljevske akademije* 81 (1935): pp. 27-29. In his analysis Novak aimed to distinguish two types of scripts found on enamels, those from group I and those found on rectangular enamels from group III. For group I that mixes majuscule and minuscule letters he established the eleventh century dating and for group III using majuscule script he proposed advanced twelfth century dating. For group I he found similarities with the script found on the inscription in Selo near Split (after 1080) and believed that either Dalmatian or South Italian provenance of the script was possible. More recent research confirmed the late, rather than the advanced twelfth century dating for the group III enamels, that is, between 1185-1192, as proposed by Joško Belamarić, see: *Prvih pet stoljeća*: cat. entry no. 44, pp. 192-193. Since Novak did not commit to more precise dating of group I, other than establishing the provenance and the eleventh century, the analysis should be repeated in the light of newer research on Beneventan script and with a particular attention to the specificity of the enamel medium. The paucity of letters used in the inscriptions makes a more precise analysis difficult. In Dalmatian manuscripts, the eleventh century was the period when the Beneventan scripts was transmitted to Dalmatia, but it was used well in the thirteenth century and continued to be used in the fourteenth and the fifteenth century. As Vojvoda noted, since 1962 three manuscripts and seventy new fragments connected to Dalmatia have been discovered, and thus Novak's invaluable analysis should be taken in the light of a current and much extended knowledge of the widespread use of this script. For a review of Beneventan script in Dalmatian manuscripts see: Rozana Vojvoda, *Dalmatian Illuminated Manuscripts in Beneventan Script and Benedictine Scriptoria in Zadar, Dubrovnik and Trogir*. Ph. D. dissertation in Medieval Studies, Department of Medieval Studies, Central European University, 2011: pp. 7-21.

¹⁰¹ For instance, an exquisite gold necklace with cloisonné-enamel from Staria Riazan' (Kievan Rus) from late twelfth century shows a combination of Greek and Church Slavonic characters in enamel inscriptions. In local cloisonné enamel production in Georgia, we also find high-quality enamels in Byzantinizing style with inscriptions in Georgian script. See examples in: *The Glory of Byzantium*: cat. 209, p. 306 (Kievan necklace), pp. 340-341 (Crucifixion, enamel plaque, tenth century, The Georgian State Art Museum, T'bilisi; Saint Demetrios, enamel plaque, twelfth century, Georgian State Art Museum, T'bilisi).

(Figs. 13 and 18). Even the yellow stripe on Peter's right hand sleeve is the same in both examples. This Byzantine work depicts the same subject using the same style of two alternating colours in the folds. It, however, also has clarity and logic in layering the folds, as well as sound figure proportions that the Saint Blaise reliquary's Saint Peter lacks, appearing squat in comparison.¹⁰² Similarly, a detail showing Saint John from the Crucifixion icon in the treasury of Saint Mark shows blue and turquoise folds on the mantle combined with the light blue and red alterations for the undergarment (Fig. 19). The stiffness and wideness of the folds support the twelfth-century dating and non-Byzantine provenance of this enamel.¹⁰³



Fig. 18. Saint Peter, detail of the Archangel Michael Icon, Byzantine (Constantinople), cloisonné enamel, early 12th century (Saint Peter medallion), Inv.: Tesoro 6, Tesoro di San Marco, Venice.



Fig. 19. Saint John, detail of the Crucifixion icon, Byzantine, second quarter of the 12th century, Inv.: Tesoro 4, Tesoro di San Marco, Venice.

¹⁰² The enamel plaque is the only twelfth century addition to the original set of eleventh century enamels on the exquisite Saint Michel Archangel relief icon in the treasury of Saint Mark. K. Wessel, *Byzantine Enamels*: pp. 95, 128 (for chevron style). Grabar also considers it a later substitute for a missing enamel medallion due to its smaller size, see H. R. Hahnloser, *Il tesoro*: pp. 23-24.

¹⁰³ The icon is a Venetian assembly of diverse Byzantine enamels. The central scene showing the Crucifixion with Saint Mary and Saint John is dated to the twelfth or thirteenth century and its Byzantine origin is contested; H. R. Hahnloser, *Il Tesoro*: Fig. 22, cat. n. 18, 27-28. Wessel dates it to the second quarter of the twelfth century; K. Wessel, *Byzantine Enamels*: p. 168.

Permutations of the Form

The final argument I would like to present pertains to deliberate anachronisms in reliquary production that occurred as a consequence of these objects' function as mnemonic devices deeply rooted in the formative period of Dalmatian communes between the ninth and eleventh centuries. A twelfth-century copy of the ninth-century bursa reliquary in the Nin treasury provides evidence of anachronistic copying and replicating of an original sacred object. As the content of the treasury of Dubrovnik cathedral shows, Ragusan patrons preferred two shapes for head reliquaries. On the one hand, there are a great many Western-style mimetic body parts reliquaries of local manufacture, but out of forty-two head reliquaries, twenty-eight of them (dating from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries) are not mimetic, but variations on a shallow or high dome type. They are adorned with a whole range of Western-style decorative elements, including Western-style enamel decorations. As these domed reliquaries are unique to Dubrovnik, they must be understood as permutations of the sacred prototype, the reliquary for their patron saint, Saint Blaise, which, as argued here, was originally cylindrical in shape with a domed top. In a medieval, essentially mnemonic culture, such a slow metamorphosis of form is socially functional as it relies on and reinforces a broad-based communal consensus over the appearance of the sacred objects. In the process of introducing new surface elements on the old and tested baseline, reliquaries are safe keepers of the continuum of communal memory, mediating between past and present and allowing us to step stone back to the past.

Conclusion

By taking apart commonly-held assumptions about the shape and the dating of the most sacred object in Dubrovnik, new questions were raised. The head reliquary of Saint Blaise did not originally appear as a Byzantine imperial crown, nor was it meant to impart such a meaning. It was a cylindrical domed reliquary made of silver that could fit on a round platter (*bacino*), similar to the oldest preserved part of the Saint Tryphon reliquary in Kotor. The Saint Blaise reliquary originally resembled the reliquary of Saint James

in the Zadar Cathedral, of which the local provenance and late eleventh or early twelfth century date are secure. The companion piece to Saint James reliquary, the reliquary of Saint Arontius, was also cylindrical and bears more pronounced Byzantine features, but it is also a Byzantinizing work. We thus have a group of four reliquaries in Dalmatian treasuries that belong to the same type of head reliquary, which indeed is a valuable information, given the tremendous loss of these sacred objects in Byzantium.

As for the enamels on the head reliquary of Saint Blaise, Francesco Ferro assembled them from various sources, but the enamels in group I depicting the patron saints of Dubrovnik Saint Zenobius and Saint Blaise indicate that this group of enamels was commissioned or made locally. I proposed the date between 1164 and 1180, based on unusual latitude that the artist took in the depiction of Saint Peter and Andrew. Other Western iconographical motifs can be found on the depiction of Saint John the Evangelist that further supports a Western provenance. Their origination in a local enamel workshop is also reinforced by the presence of Beneventan script inscriptions. In contrast, enamels produced in Byzantium never bore inscriptions in a script other than Greek. Mirković already observed this fact, but he relied on Novak's assumption that Beneventan script was not used beyond the eleventh century, and thus Mirković was misguided in dating the enamels. Dating these enamels later than the eleventh century is possible because regional enamel workshops existed outside Constantinople, in South Italy and in Thessaloniki—as late as the thirteenth century. It is a common presumption that enamel production ceased or declined after 1204, but this, in fact, is the period when workshops were set up in regional centres and fine quality enamel production continued there.¹⁰⁴

A deeper understanding of the training of this Greek artist working for a Western audience, as well as a more precise dating of the group I enamels, needs to be postponed at this point. Nevertheless, by rejecting imperial Constantinople workshops as the provenance for the group I enamels from the head reliquary of Saint Blaise, a new, exciting possibility has presented itself: Dubrovnik may have had a goldsmith's workshop making beautiful cloisonné enamels, and that, in itself, is a gain and not a loss for Croatian art history.

¹⁰⁴ K. Wessel, *Byzantine Enamels*: p. 30.

