

ISTITUTO VENETO DI SCIENZE, LETTERE ED ARTI

LA STAUROTECA DI BESSARIONE FRA COSTANTINOPOLI E VENEZIA

a cura di

HOLGER A. KLEIN

VALERIA POLETTI

PETER SCHREINER

ESTRATTO

Il volume riporta le relazioni presentate alle giornate internazionali di studio *La stauroteca di Bessarione: restauro, provenienza, ambito culturale tra Costantinopoli e Venezia*, promosse da: Gallerie dell'Accademia, Istituto Ellenico di Studi Bizantini e Postbizantini di Venezia, Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, in collaborazione con: Centro Tedesco di Studi Veneziani, con il contributo di: Intesa Sanpaolo SpA nell'ambito del progetto Restituzioni, Fondazione Gerda Henkel (Düsseldorf), Venezia, 17-18 ottobre 2013.

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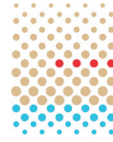
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FRA COSTANTINOPOLI E VENEZIA

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LA STAUROTECA DI BESSARIONE
FRA COSTANTINOPOLI
E VENEZIA

ABBREVIAZIONI

ASVe	Archivio di Stato di Venezia
ASVe, <i>Scuola della Carità</i>	Archivio di Stato di Venezia, <i>Scuola grande di Santa Maria della Carità</i>
ASSi	Archivio di Stato di Siena
ASPMVen	Archivio storico del Polo Museale del Veneto
BMCVe	Biblioteca del Museo Correr di Venezia
<i>Restituzioni 2013</i>	<i>Restituzioni 2013. Tesori d'arte restaurati. Sedicesima edizione. Guida alla mostra</i> (Napoli, Museo di Capodimonte, Palazzo Zevallos Stigliano, 23 marzo - 9 luglio 2013), a cura di C. BERTELLI - G. BONSANTI, Venezia 2013
<i>Restituzioni 2013-web</i>	<i>Restituzioni 2013. Tesori d'arte restaurati. Catalogo digitale delle opere</i> a cura di C. BERTELLI - G. BONSANTI, www.restituzioni.com

ANTJE BOSSELMANN-RUICKBIE

THE ORNAMENTAL DECORATION
OF THE LATE BYZANTINE BESSARION CROSS:
MEDIÉVAL CULTURAL TRANSFER BETWEEN
BYZANTIUM, THE WEST, THE ISLAMIC WORLD
AND RUSSIA

1. *Introduction*

The Bessarion Cross (Figs. 1, 16, Tav. 8-9) is decorated with ornaments executed in two different goldsmiths' techniques: filigree and repoussé, especially the filigree of fine quality. Furthermore, pseudo-enamelled medallions¹ with inscribed letters are inserted into the filigree of the cross' arms. Peter Schreiner has dated the cross on the basis of its inscription to the years between 1347 and 1354². He has identified the woman named Eirena who is mentioned in the inscription with a granddaughter of Emperor Michael IX and has come to the conclusion that the cross was, according to the inscription, a present for her spiritual father Gregorios, whom Peter Schreiner identified with the theologian and archbishop of Thessaloniki Gregorios Palamas (1296-1359).

The ornamental decoration is of high interest since this dated object can serve as an important case study for medieval cultural transfer between Byzantium, the West and Russia. This paper aims to study the genesis of the ornaments, to discuss their chronological setting and to compare them to objects from other cultural spheres.

As a preliminary remark it has to be mentioned that Byzantine ornaments have not been studied exhaustively so far, and there is no

¹ The green material is actually resin-based and only imitates enamel, see essay by A. CAGNINI *et al.*, *Le indagini scientifiche sulle parti metalliche e vitree*, in this volume.

² See essay by P. SCHREINER, *La croce della stauroteca all'epoca dei Paleologi*, in this volume.

comprehensive work on Byzantine non-figural decoration in general³. The subject has played a role in research into Byzantine arts and crafts, particularly Byzantine book illumination and ceramics, but less so in other genres of art. However, there is an increasing scholarly interest in Byzantine ornamental decoration, its genesis, style, function, aptitude for dating and/or attribution, as well as the role ornaments played within iconographic concepts⁴.

Nevertheless, it is unfortunate that it is mostly still the case that, as Restle characterised it in 2007⁵, ornaments cannot be used as the basis for dating. However, research has advanced and many more monuments and objects of art have been published. The basis for research on the elusive ornaments is far better now than it used to be. There are indeed some ornaments that can be confidently dated to a certain period. An example is a characteristic middle Byzantine form of a rosette, for example in the aniconic paintings in the bema of Hagios Artemios on Naxos (end of the 9th or first half of the 10th century)⁶, or on one of two enamelled bracelets found in Thessaloniki (first half to middle of the 10th century)⁷. According to Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, these rosettes appear in goldsmiths' and enamel works as well as paintings, especially book illumination, during a time span from c. 860 to the end

³ For an overview see *Ornament*, in *Reallexikon zur Byzantinischen Kunst*, VIII, Stuttgart 2013, col. 535-582; see also *Die Ornamentik in Spätantike und Byzanz*, proceedings of the conference 'Die Ornamentik in Spätantike und Byzanz' (Munich, 20 July 2012) («Mitteilungen zur Spätantiken Archäologie und Byzantinischen Ornamentik», 7, 2017), ed. by A. BOSSELMANN-RUICKBIE - Y. PETRINA, Munich 2017, forthcoming. A study on Late Byzantine ornaments by the author is in preparation.

⁴ See, for example, the conference 'Die Ornamentik in Spätantike und Byzanz', in Munich 2012 (*Die Ornamentik in Spätantike*, forthcoming).

⁵ M. RESTLE, *Das Gunthertuch im Domschatz von Bamberg*, in *Byzantina Mediterranea, Festschrift für J. KODER zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by K. BELKE - E. KISLINGER - A. KÜLZER - M. STASSINOPOULOU, Vienna-Cologne-Weimar 2007, pp. 547-568, p. 564.

⁶ M. CHATZIDAKIS - N. DRANDAKIS - N. ZIAS - M. ACHEIMASTOU-POTAMIANOU - A. VASILAKI-KARAKATSANI, *Naxos*, Athens 1989, p. 63; L. BRUBAKER - J. HALDON, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca 680-850): The Sources. An Annotated Survey*, Aldershot 2001, pp. 26-27.

⁷ A. BOSSELMANN-RUICKBIE, *Byzantinischer Schmuck des 9. bis frühen 13. Jahrhunderts. Untersuchungen zum metallenen dekorativen Körperschmuck der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit anhand datierter Funde aus Bulgarien und Griechenland*, Wiesbaden 2011 (Spätantike - Frühes Christentum - Byzanz, 28), pp. 46-47, 274-279, cat. no. 118b.

of the 10th century⁸. Although it seems to have survived well into the 11th century⁹, this ornament can still be dated to a comparatively short period of less than two centuries.

2. *The Filigree Decoration of the Front and the Back of the Cross*

The front and back of the Bessarion Cross are decorated with fine filigree work made of twisted wire (Figs. 1-2; Tav. 8-9). The wires are applied in parallel rows and form fern-like scrolls facing each other to create a heart-shape. On the inside, smaller scrolls are formed by single twisted wires.

2.1. *The Heart Motif*

The heart-shape, which was most likely derived from ivy-leaves, appears in many forms and genres of Byzantine art, especially on textiles and enamels, but also in architecture¹⁰. With regard to its use on imperial garments¹¹, especially those depicted on enamels, it has been called a

⁸ BRUBAKER-HALDON, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, pp. 26-27. The latest example they quote is the Bible of Leo, Vatican, around 940, see *Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana. Liturgie und Andacht im Mittelalter*, exhibition catalogue Erzbischöfliches Diözesanmuseum Cologne, hrsg. von J.M. PLOTZEK - K. WINNEKES - S. KRAUS, Stuttgart 1992, no. 18 (S. DUFRENNE); *The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843-1261*, exhibition catalogue Metropolitan Museum of Art New York, ed. by H.C. EVANS - W.D. WIXOM, New York 1997, no. 42 (T.F. Mathews).

⁹ One example is the so-called Patriarch's Chalice in San Marco, Venice, with comparable rosettes, dated to the 10th/first half of the 11th century, *Der Schatz von San Marco in Venedig*, exhibition catalogue Römisch-Germanisches Museum Cologne, ed. by H. HELLENKEMPER, Milan 1984, pp. 167-173, no. 16 (M.E. FRAZER).

¹⁰ U. KOENEN, *Herzblatt - Blattherz. Ein textiler Musterrapport als technische Hilfe der Emailleure. Einige Gedanken zur Übertragung von Motiven, in Philopation. Spaziergang im kaiserlichen Garten. Schriften über Byzanz und seine Nachbarn. Festschrift für A. EFFENBERGER zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. by N. ASUTAY-EFFENBERGER - F. DAIM, Mainz 2013, pp. 119-133, pp. 119-133; R. OUSTERHOUT, *The Byzantine Heart*, «Zograf», 17 (1986), pp. 36-44.

¹¹ For a comprehensive list see T. STEPPAN, *Die Artuqid-Schale. Emailkunst im Spannungsfeld byzantinischer und islamischer Kultur*, in *Die Artuqid-Schale im Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum Innsbruck: Mittelalterliche Emailkunst zwischen Orient und Occident*, ed. by T. STEPPAN, Munich 1995, pp. 13-35, p. 27, nt. 46.

‘courtly ornament’¹² and used to attribute objects to Constantinople. Since Asutay-Effenberger has come to the convincing conclusion that the famous Artuqid Bowl, which is decorated with heart-shapes, is Seljuk and not Constantinopolitan¹³, this idea has to be reconsidered, as Koenen has recently pointed out¹⁴. However, Koenen also comes to the conclusion that the heart-shape on enamelled depictions of the garments of emperors or high-ranking individuals can be found on objects attributed to imperial circles¹⁵. The Bessarion Staurotheke fits well into this environment, although the heart-shape is rather unspecific here. Unfortunately, the motif as such does not provide any tangible information.

The hearts were probably not intended as such: their shape is rather coincidental, since the vegetal scrolls were arranged symmetrically. It is much more likely that the scrolls are an allusion to the Cross as the Tree of Life, especially in the context of a reliquary referring to the True Cross, although no actual relic is contained in the cross¹⁶. Many examples of Byzantine crosses, cross reliquaries or (ivory) diptychs have survived which transfer this idea of the Cross as the Tree of Life, such as in the shape of leaves and palmettes growing from the foot of the cross¹⁷. A group of middle Byzantine processional crosses, for example, are decorated with spiral scrolls on the front¹⁸ and convey the same idea. The visual concept of the cross and spiral scrolls is

¹² STEPPAN, *Die Artuquiden-Schale*, pp. 27-28

¹³ N. ASUTAY-EFFENBERGER, *Überlegung zur Datierung und Lokalisierung der Innsbrucker Artukiden-Schale*, «Byzantion», 79 (2009), pp. 37-47.

¹⁴ KOENEN, *Herzblatt*, pp. 119-133.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

¹⁶ See essay by H.A. KLEIN, *Cardinal Bessarion, Philippe de Mézières and the Rhetoric of Relics in Late Medieval Venice*, in this volume.

¹⁷ For the cross as Tree of Life see: H.A. KLEIN, *Byzanz, der Westen und das ‘wahre Kreuz’*. *Die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland*, Wiesbaden 2004, pp. 115-117; also E. DINKLER - E. DINKLER-VON SCHUBERT, *Kreuz I*, in *Reallexikon zur Byzantinischen Kunst*, V, Stuttgart 1995, cols 1-219, cols 29-30; G. GALAVARIS, *Kreuz II*, in *Reallexikon zur Byzantinischen Kunst*, V, Stuttgart 1995, cols 219-284, cols 229-230, 233, 280.

¹⁸ For example *Byzance en Suisse*, exhibition catalogue Musées d’Art et d’Histoire de Genève, ed. by M. MARTINIANI-REBER, Geneva 2015, no. 357 (M. MARTINIANI-REBER; middle to end of the 11th century); no. 359 (G. ORTIZ; end of the 11th to 12th century).

also found in the 12th-century apse mosaic of San Clemente in Rome. Here, the cross in the centre is not decorated with but surrounded by huge scrolls¹⁹.

2.2. *The Filigree*

Filigree has been regularly used in Byzantine goldsmiths' work, next to repoussé and other techniques such as enamel or niello²⁰ although it was not employed as often as in goldsmiths' work of the Viking period²¹ or in the Fatimid Empire²², for example²³. Filigree is found on objects in gold, silver and bronze²⁴. Amongst others, we find this technique on one of the few large-sized metal icons that have survived from the middle Byzantine period: the famous icon of the Archangel Michael, Venice, from the first half of the 11th century²⁵. Here, the filigree is made of beaded wire that also appears on other objects²⁶. Byzantine filigree was also made from round wire²⁷ or more rarely from twisted wire²⁸. The latter was employed for the filigree of the Bessarion Cross.

¹⁹ J. POESCHKE, *Mosaiken in Italien 300-1300*, Munich 2009, pp. 211-219, with overview of research.

²⁰ See BOSSELMANN-RUICKBIE, *Byzantinischer Schmuck*, pp. 85, 87-89.

²¹ Examples in W. DUCZKO, *The Filigree and Granulation Work of the Viking Period: An Analysis of the Material from Björko*, Stockholm 1985 (Birka. Untersuchungen und Studien 5, Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien); H. EILBRACHT, *Filigran- und Granulationskunst im wikingschen Norden. Untersuchungen zum Transfer frühmittelalterlicher Gold- und Silberschmiedetechniken zwischen dem Kontinent und Nordeuropa*, «Zeitschrift für Archäologie des Mittelalters», ed. by W. JANSSEN - H. STEUER - G. BINDING, Cologne-Bonn 1999 (Beiheft 11).

²² Examples in R. HASSON, *Early Islamic Jewellery*, L.A. Mayer Institute for Islamic Art, Jerusalem 1987, no. 98, 100, 102, 108-114; *Schätze der Kalifen. Islamische Kunst zur Fatimidenzeit*, exhibition catalogue Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, ed. by W. SEIPEL, Vienna-Milan 1998, no. 76-79, 83, 85, 86-88, 90-92, 94-98.

²³ Overview on the technique: J. WOLTERS, *Filigran*, in *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, VIII, Munich 1987, cols 1062-1184, cols 1062-1184.

²⁴ Examples: BOSSELMANN-RUICKBIE, *Byzantinischer Schmuck*, cat. no. 1 (club-shaped pendants), 40, 53, 58, 59, 61, 69, 118, 217, 219, 220, 232, 233.

²⁵ HELLENKEMPER, *San Marco*, pp. 149-155, no. 12 (B. Drake Boehm).

²⁶ See, for example BOSSELMANN-RUICKBIE, *Byzantinischer Schmuck*, p. 233, no. 40.

²⁷ See, for example *ibid.*, p. 254, no. 69.

²⁸ See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 371, fig. 19.

In Palaeologan times the filigree technique was well-established and often used for high-class objects such as precious icon frames and revetments²⁹, although the majority of these was made in the repoussé technique³⁰, which was, in comparison, easier to fabricate. For the repoussé technique, a hammered gold sheet was shaped from the back; additional details were often embossed from the front. Some of the designs on Palaeologan icon revetments could be enhanced by enamel³¹, such as on the Esztergom Staurotheke (Fig. 3)³².

The filigree technique³³ is more laborious than repoussé: thin wires have to be drawn, possibly shaped into beaded or twisted wire and then placed on a recipient, such as sheet gold, silver or bronze. To attach the wire onto the basis, the temperature has to be perfectly controlled otherwise the wires melt before they connect with the ground and the whole work is ruined. On the Bessarion Cross the filigree was exclusively used on the front and back whilst the sides bearing the donor's inscription were decorated with less lavish repoussé in-between the writing.

As mentioned above, there are several examples of late Byzantine

²⁹ For example A. GRABAR, *Les revêtements en or et en argent des icônes byzantines du moyen âge*, Venice 1975, figs 68-87; see also examples in J. DURAND, *Precious-Metal Icon Revetments*, in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1453)*, exhibition catalogue The Metropolitan Museum of Art, ed. by H.C. EVANS, New Haven-London 2004, pp. 243-251.

³⁰ For example GRABAR, *Les revêtements*, figs 26-65.

³¹ For example GRABAR, *Les revêtements*, figs 39, 66, 67.

³² Selection of publications: KLEIN, *Byzanz, der Westen und das 'wahre Kreuz'*, pp. 134-137; G. PRINZING, *Zur Datierung der Staurothek von Esztergom aus historischer Sicht*, in *Ars Graeca – Ars Latina. Studia dedykowane Profesor A. RÓŻYCKIEJ*, Krakow 2001, pp. 87-91, pp. 87-91; P. HETHERINGTON, *Studying the Byzantine Staurothèque at Esztergom*, in *Through a Glass Brightly. Studies in Byzantine and Medieval Art and Archaeology*, ed. by C. ENTWISTLE, presented to D. BUCKTON, Oxford 2003, pp. 82-94 (reprinted in P. HETHERINGTON, *Enamels, Crowns, Relics and Icons. Studies on Luxury Arts in Byzantium*, Variorum Collected Studies CS 908, Farnham, Burlington 2008, IX); G. PRINZING, 'The Esztergom Reliquary Revisited': *Wann, weshalb und wem hat Kaiser Isaak II. Angelos die Staurothek als Geschenk übersandt?*, in *Philopation. Spaziergang im kaiserlichen Garten*. Since the 'enamel' on the Bessarion Staurotheke was fake enamel made of a resin-based material it remains to analyse the enamel of the roughly contemporary Esztergom Staurotheke frame to be definitive on the materials.

³³ For filigree in general see WOLTERS, *Filigran*, cols 1062-1184.

icon frames and revetments made in filigree³⁴. However, they differ from the Bessarion Cross in using either round or square wire to create the filigree, instead of twisted wire. Furthermore, the filigree mostly follows a different pattern: on the icons it is inscribed prevailing into squares or roundels. Typical examples are two 14th-century icon frames, found today in Genoa, Italy (Fig. 4)³⁵, and in Liège, Belgium³⁶. Amongst the Byzantine objects, there is – to my knowledge – only one *comparandum* for the filigree of the Bessarion Cross: a probably 15th-century repair work of the metal cover of an icon of the Annunciation in the Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos³⁷.

The best *comparanda* for the spiral filigree on the Bessarion Cross are today in Russia, apart from a casket in Trier, Germany, which will be discussed later. These are the frame of an icon of the Hodegetria, the so-called Vladimir Icon (Figs. 5-7), and the so-called Cap of Monomakh (Figs. 8, 9), both decorated with similar filigree shaped into fern-like scrolls. The design of scrolls with smaller scrolls inside is so similar to the Bessarion Cross that it cannot be accidental.

The Vladimir Icon³⁸ itself, today preserved in the Tretyakov Gallery,

³⁴ For example GRABAR, *Les revêtements*, figs 68-87.

³⁵ GRABAR, *Les revêtements*, no. 35 ('14th century'); WOLF - DUFOUR BOZZO - CALDERONI MASETTI, *Mandyllion*, especially the essay *Le Quattro lamine di rivestimento in filigrana* (F. DELL'AQUA), pp. 157-160, and a detail of the filigree p. 6. For the context of this icon see also *Intorno al Sacro Volto. Genova, Bisanzio e il Mediterraneo (secoli XI-XIV)*, a cura di A.R. CALDERONI MASSETTI - C. DUFOUR BOZZO - G. WOLF - A. NOVA, Venice 2007 (Collana des Kunsthistorischen Instituts Florenz, Max-Planck-Institut, XI). The Mandyllion icon arrived in Genua in 1388 and was according to an unconfirmed legend a present of Emperor John V Palaeologus (1341-1391).

³⁶ GRABAR, *Les revêtements*, no. 36 (advanced 14th century); *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1453)*, pp. 252-253, no. 150 (P. GEORGE); G. WEBER - L. MARTINOT - C. OGER - A. MARCHAL - P. GEORGE, *L'icône de la Vierge sous l'œil du cyclotron*, «Bloc-notes, Trésor de la Cathédrale de Liège», 26 (2011), pp. 5-11 (<http://tresordeliège.be/publications/pdf/026.pdf>) (first half of the 14th century). The icon in Liège has recently been dated earlier than GRABAR's suggestion (advanced 14th century) to the first half of the 14th century.

³⁷ A. BANK, *Prikladnoe iskusstvo Vizantii IX-XII vv.: ocerki, Kul'tura narodov vostoka*, Moscow 1978, pp. 156-157; GRABAR, *Les revêtements*, no. 40, fig. 87 (around 1400).

³⁸ BANK, *Prikladnoe iskusstvo Vizantii IX-XII vv.*, p. 328, no. 310-314; *Byzantine Antiquities. Works of Art from the Fourth to Fifteenth Centuries in the Collection of the Moscow Kremlin Museums*, ed. by I. STERLIGOVA, Moscow 2013, pp. 157-169, no. 17 (L.A. ŠČENNIKOVA - I.A. STERLIGOVA).

Moscow, was taken from Constantinople to the Rus' in the early 12th century, brought to Vladimir in 1158 and to Moscow in 1395³⁹. The revetment (Figs. 5-7), today separated from the icon and kept in the Kremlin Armoury, covers the frame, as well as the background of the depiction of Mary and Jesus⁴⁰. The frame consists of twelve chased scenes of the *dodekaorton* surrounded by intricate filigree design. The background of the icon proper is also covered with an *oklad* made of filigree, arranged in some areas in larger roundels and leaving out spaces for the *nomina sacra*.

The donor's monogram on the bottom margin of the frame consists of eleven letters and mentions the Metropolitan Photios, Archbishop of Moscow (Fig. 6-7). Although this monogram was made on a separate round plate inserted into the frame, researchers are unanimously of the opinion that the icon frame was commissioned by Photios when he bore the title of Archbishop⁴¹. Therefore, the frame was dated between 1410 and 1431, the tenure of the archbishop. There have been attempts to narrow down this two-decades time span, e.g., to the 1420s, assuming that Greek craftsmen came to Moscow in connection with the marriage of John Palaeologus with Anna Vasil'evna and the later visit of Photios to Vytautas with the Greek envoy⁴², but remain unproven.

In light of the similarities between the filigree on the Bessarion Cross and on the Vladimir Icon, the question of where the filigree of the Vladimir Icon frame was made is crucial, and it has been discussed extensively by scholars⁴³. While earlier Russian researchers had thought it to be Russian, Grabar and Bank in the 1970s, following the research of Postnikova-Loseva and Protas'eva published in 1963, assumed that the

³⁹ GRABAR, *Les revêtements*, pp. 68-69, no. 41; *Icons. Masterpieces in the Tretyakov Gallery*, ed. by the STATE TRETYAKOV GALLERY, Moscow 2012, p. 20.

⁴⁰ The icon itself is exhibited in the Tretyakov Gallery, see the catalogue *Icons Tretyakov Gallery*, pp. 20-23.

⁴¹ *Byzantine Antiquities*, p. 160, no. 17.

⁴² A.B. RYNDINA, *Oklad evangelija Uspenskogo sabora Moskovskogo Kremlija (K voprosu o juvelirnoj masterskoj mitropolita Fotija)*, in *Drevnerusskoje iskusstvo (DRI): Rukopisnaja kniga*, M. 1983, Sb. 3, p. 166; see STERLIGOVA, *Byzantine Antiquities*, no. 17.

⁴³ Discussion of the literature in *Byzantine Antiquities*, pp. 164-168, no. 17. See also M.G. KRAMAROVSKY, *The Origin and Influence of Spiral-filigree Jewellery*, in *The Art of Adornment: Jewellery of the Islamic Lands*, 2 vols, ed. by M. SPINK, London 2013 (The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, 17), II, pp. 404-411, p. 410.

filigree was of Byzantine origin but made in Moscow by Greek craftsmen⁴⁴; an idea that had already been proposed earlier by Kondakov⁴⁵. According to the latest publication on the icon frame, an extensive catalogue entry by Ščennikova and Sterligova in the catalogue of the Byzantine objects in the Kremlin⁴⁶, the frame was made in Moscow by Greek and Russian craftsmen in co-operation. This is convincing because there are elements pointing to a Russian environment, such as the ogee arches over the chased scenes of the *dodekaorton*⁴⁷. Notwithstanding this, the filigree was thought to have been inspired by Byzantine works of art as suggested by scholars such as Grabar and Bank. Kramarovsky, on the other hand, reckons that 'the spiral filigree of the Moscow school ... is in a direct line from the filigree that came into Europe with the Mongols'⁴⁸, a hypothesis that will be discussed later.

Other objects can be related to the same group: Rosenberg⁴⁹ in 1918 has pointed out the propinquity of the so-called Cap of Monomakh in the Kremlin Armoury, Moscow (Figs. 8, 9)⁵⁰, a casket in the treasury of Trier Cathedral, Germany (Figs. 10-13)⁵¹, and a

⁴⁴ M.M. POSTNIKOVA-LOSEVA - T.N. PROTAS'EVA, *Litsevoe Evangelie Uspenskogo sobora kak pamjatnik drevnerusskogo iskusstva pervoj treći XV veka*, in *DRI*, XV - načala XVI veka, Moscow 1963, p. 168; BANK, *Prikladnoe iskusstvo Vizantii IX-XII vv.*, pp. 156-157; A. BANK, *L'art byzantine dans les musées de l'Union Soviétique*, Leningrad 1977, p. 80; GRABAR, *Les revêtements*, pp. 71-72.

⁴⁵ N. KONDAKOV, *Pamjatniki christianskago iskusstva na Afone*, Saint Petersburg 1902, pp. 189-190.

⁴⁶ *Byzantine Antiquities*, pp. 157-169, no. 17, with extensive discussion of the state of research.

⁴⁷ As has already been noted by GRABAR, *Les revêtements*, p. 71.

⁴⁸ M.G. KRAMAROVSKY, *Krest Vissariona (okolo 1355 goda, Genezise Vizantijskoj filigrani spiral'nogo stilja*, in *Vizantija v Kontekste Mirovoj kul'turi. Material'y Konferencii. posvjacshennoj pamjati A.B. BANK (1906-1984)*, ed. by T. GOSUDARSTVENNOGO-ERMITAZHA 74, Saint Petersburg 2015, pp. 101-107, p. 411.

⁴⁹ M. ROSENBERG, *Geschichte der Goldschmiedekunst auf technischer Grundlage*, III, *Abteilung Granulation*, Frankfurt 1918, pp. 100-103.

⁵⁰ N. SHIELDS KOLLMANN, *The Cap of Monomakh*, in *Picturing Russia*, ed. by V.A. KIVELSON - J. NEUBERGER, New Haven 2008, pp. 38-41; *Byzantine Antiquities*, p. 31, with latest literature.

⁵¹ ROSENBERG, *Granulation*, p. 101, figs 181, 102, 183; P. CLEMEN, *Die Kunstdenkmäler der Rheinprovinz: Die Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Trier, I, Abt. 1: Der Dom zu Trier*, Düsseldorf 1931, pp. 324-326; *Schatzkunst Trier, Treveris Sacra. Kunst und Kultur in der*

Georgian book cover⁵². The Cap of Monomakh and the Trier Casket – not so much the book cover – share the similar filigree, again arranged in scrolls, that is very close to the filigree on the Bessarion Cross. However, it should be noted that there are differences in the execution of the filigree: the wires for the filigree on the Bessarion Cross (Fig. 2) and the Trier Casket (Fig. 13) are created from twisted wire made out of two round wires twisted together to achieve a rope-like appearance⁵³ that is similar to the effect of beaded wire. In the case of the Trier Casket, the wire is twisted rather tightly, the grooves are more distinct and the surface is, therefore, more pronounced. The wire on the Bessarion Cross is very similar to the one on the Trier Casket whilst the wires used on the Vladimir Icon are less tightly twisted. In contrast to these objects, the scrolls on the Cap of Monomakh (Fig. 9) were formed out of flat wires instead of twisted wires.

The so-called Cap of Monomakh in the Kremlin Armoury was used for the crowning of the Grand Princes and Tzars of Moscow since the time of Dmitri Donskoj (1359-1389), or so it is assumed, until Tzar Peter I introduced the Tzar's crown for his coronation in 1721. Since the 16th century, it was related to the Kievan Grand Prince Vladimir Monomakh (1113-1125), grandson of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine IX, Monomachus (1042-1055)⁵⁴.

The dates suggested for this headdress range from the 12th to the 15th century. Today, the Cap of Monomakh is mostly dated to the first half of the 14th century⁵⁵ whilst the Trier Casket is presented in

Diözese Trier, ed. by BISCHÖFLICHES GENERALVIKARIAT TRIER - F. RONIG, Trier 1984, no. 82, 143 (F. RONIG).

⁵² ROSENBERG, *Granulation*, p.103, figs 184, 184a.

⁵³ On the technique see J. OGDEN, *Techniques of Construction and Decoration in Islamic Jewellery*, in SPINK, *The Art of Adornment*, I, pp. 63-97, 68. OGDEN simply calls this wire 'rope'.

⁵⁴ SHIELDS KOLLMANN, *Cap of Monomakh*, pp. 38-41.

⁵⁵ Overview over dates hitherto suggested see I.A. BOBROVNITSKAYA, *Shapka Monomakha: K probleme proiskhozhdeniya formy (Cap of Monomakh. On the Origin of Shape)*, in *Filimonovskiye Chteniya*, I, Moscow, 2004, pp. 59-85, 61-63; also *Sainte Russie. L'art russe des origines à Pierre le Grand*, exhibition catalogue (Paris, Musée du Louvre, ed. by J. DURAND - D. GIOVANNONI - I. RAPTI, Paris 2010, pp. 358-359, no. 155 (J. DURAND); M.G. KRAMAROVSKY, *The New Style of Filigree in the Mongol Era: The Problem of Provenance*, in G. SEAMAN, *Foundations of Empire: Archeology and Art of the Eurasian Steppes*, Proceedings of the Soviet-American Symposia in Conjunction with Museum Exhibitions 3: Nomads: Masters

the cathedral treasury as 'Byzantine or south Russian, 13th century'⁵⁶. At the time of Rosenberg's publication in 1918, however, the Cap of Monomakh was thought to date from the time of Vladimir Monomakh in the 12th century⁵⁷ and the Trier Casket (called 'Byzantine' by Rosenberg) contemporary or slightly later, a view shared by Ronig in 1984⁵⁸. Later, Grabar grouped the Cap of Monomakh together with the 15th-century Vladimir Icon revetment and the Trier Casket⁵⁹, assuming that the revetment was dated to 1410 and that the other objects were slightly later⁶⁰. This view was recently repeated by Durand, who also stressed the similarities of the Trier Casket, the Cap of Monomakh and the Vladimir Icon frame, for example, the plaited ribbons and round petals. Therefore, he dated the Trier Casket to the 15th century and assumed that it was probably made in Moscow⁶¹.

In 2004, Bobrovnitskaya wrote that the Cap of Monomakh with its characteristic shape and decoration was an oriental artwork of the Muslim East (Golden Horde), dating from the first third of the 14th century⁶². Reasons are, for example, that the word 'shapka' came into use in the first half of the 14th century and is found in the last will of Great Prince Ivan Kalita, who died in 1340-41, and was used most probably to express the fact that the object was unusual⁶³. This date

of the Eurasian Steppes, Los Angeles 1992, pp. 191-200, pp. 191-198; KRAMAROVSKY, *Krest Vissariona*, p. 411.

⁵⁶ Visit 20 October 2014.

⁵⁷ ROSENBERG, *Granulation*, pp. 100-103.

⁵⁸ *Schatzkunst Trier*, p. 143, no. 82 (F. RONIG; 'Byzantine, 13th century'); B. MARŠAK, *Zur Toreutik der Kreuzfahrer*, in *Metallkunst von der Spätantike bis zum ausgehenden Mittelalter*, ed. by A. EFFENBERGER, Berlin 1982, pp. 166-184; MARŠAK, *Zur Toreutik der Kreuzfahrer*, p. 184, only mentioned the Trier Casket and dated it without explanation to the second half of the 13th century (see captions for fig. 28a, p. 183).

⁵⁹ GRABAR, *Les revêtements*, pp. 70-71, no. 41.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ DURAND-GIOVANNONI-RAPTI, *Sainte Russie*, pp. 359-360, no. 155 (J. DURAND).

⁶² BOBROVNITSKAYA, *Shapka Monomakha*, p. 82 and p. 85, nt. 80. This idea was not entirely new, see, for example, M. JENKINS, *Mamluk Jewellery*, «Muquarnas», 5 (1988), pp. 29-42, pp. 32, 35, who, however, thought the Cap was more likely of Mamluk origin and brought to the Golden Horde as a possible diplomatic gift. This is unlikely for technical reasons, see below.

⁶³ BOBROVNITSKAYA, *Shapka Monomakha*, p. 66 and nt. 42. I am deeply grateful to Dr Olga Shashina who helped me with translating this and other texts and – together with Dr

brings it chronologically very close to the Bessarion Cross (1347-1354), but creates a chronological distance to the Vladimir Icon revetment, which has been dated to 1410-1431. And it poses the question where this particular filigree originated from.

The motif of the filigree is so similar that this makes one wonder, and at first it seems likely that the Bessarion Cross as well as the Vladimir Icon revetment and the Cap of Monomakh would have come from a similar artistic environment at approximately the same time. The Vladimir Icon revetment and the Bessarion Cross both seem safely dated: the cross to the middle of the 14th century; the revetment to the first half of the 15th century. As mentioned above, the Trier Casket – recently attributed to Moscow – has been dated according to its similarities with the Vladimir Icon to the 15th century⁶⁴.

This would mean that the Byzantine Bessarion Cross was the prototype for this type of filigree, which would have been brought to Russia by Greek craftsmen. This assumption seems at first convincing, but there are flaws in the equation: first, this does not take into account the 14th-century dating of the Cap of Monomakh and its attribution to the Golden Horde on the Volga; second, there are several reasons to date the Trier Casket (Figs. 10-13) to the 13th or early 14th century (see below); and third, the technical differences between the execution of the filigree (and granulation) on the different objects has to be taken into account (see below).

Kramarovsky sees «the vector of influence»⁶⁵ as entirely different. In his opinion, expressed in several articles⁶⁶, spiral filigree had come from China to the Golden Horde, and from there to Russia, Byzantium and also to the Mamluks of Syria and Egypt: «this style of spiral filigree came to the jewellers of Damascus and Cairo via the Qipchaq steppe»⁶⁷, and thus influenced Mamluk goldsmiths' works in the area.

Irina Sterligova whom I would like to thank as well – discussed the issue of the Monomakh Cap in particular and cultural transfer between Russia and Byzantium in general with me extensively.

⁶⁴ DURAND-GIOVANNONI-RAPTI, *Sainte Russie*, pp. 359-360, no. 155.

⁶⁵ KRAMAROVSKY, *Spiral-filigree Jewellery*, p. 408.

⁶⁶ See especially ID., *New Style of Filigree*; ID., *Spiral-filigree Jewellery*; ID., *Krest Vissariona*.

⁶⁷ ID., *Spiral-filigree Jewellery*, p. 410.

Although Kramarovsky makes an initially good case with a chain of find spots of objects with filigree from China to the Crimea⁶⁸, he is focused on seeing the «vector of influence» exclusively from the east. This strictness is, in my opinion, not convincing, in light of the fact that the appearance of the particular spiral filigree discussed here and also on Mamluk goldsmiths' works should be taken much more into account; and this cannot be explained exclusively by «eastern influence».

The Mamluks in Cairo, a military slave dynasty, ruled over the areas of modern Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Israel from 1250 to 1517⁶⁹ and «encouraged the arts through important commissions [...]. Their patronage provided a significant boost to metalworking»⁷⁰, amongst them a substantial amount of jewellery⁷¹, often decorated with filigree. Filigree has been used for Islamic jewellery from its earliest stages, and in particular the «rope» wire as described earlier is very common in Fatimid and Mamluk goldsmiths' works as has been recently pointed out by Ogden⁷². Jenkins identified many pieces of Mamluk jewellery in her 1988 article; amongst them are pieces from the mid-14th-century treasure found near the Crimean city of Simferopol⁷³. One of the important characteristics defined by her is filigree made of flattened twisted or plain wire⁷⁴.

The historical background is revealing in this respect: the Mamluk rulers had extensive relations with the Golden Horde at the Volga River. Written sources state that, in the 13th century, the Mamluk court in Cairo traded slaves from Asia for jewellery, amongst other things, from the Golden Horde at their capital on the Volga River, first Old Sarai and later Serai Berke (gifts sent to the Golden Horde in 1263)⁷⁵. It

⁶⁸ ID., *Krest Vissariona*, pp. 103-105.

⁶⁹ Overview in R. IRWIN, *Mamluk*, in *Dictionary of Art*, ed. by J. TURNER, 34 vols. London-New York 1996, XX, pp. 225-231; more indepth: R. IRWIN, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate, 1250-1382*, Lexington 2013.

⁷⁰ J. DE HOND, *A Mamluk Basin for a Sicilian Queen*, «The Rijksmuseum Bulletin», 59 (2011), pp. 6-33, p. 10.

⁷¹ JENKINS, *Mamluk Jewelry*.

⁷² OGDEN, *Techniques of Construction*, pp. 68, 71.

⁷³ JENKINS, *Mamluk Jewelry*, pp. 29, 31; see also V. MAL'M, *The Simferopol Treasure*, Order of Lenin State History Museum, Moscow 1980.

⁷⁴ JENKINS, *Mamluk Jewelry*, p. 29.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

is important to note that the Mamluk Sultan Al-Nasir Muhammed (1293-94/1299-1309/1310-41) was of Mongolian descend⁷⁶. The Mamluks' connections with other rulers are also well-attested, for example, with Lusignan-ruled Cyprus in the 14th and 15th centuries⁷⁷ and with Sicily⁷⁸. There are also documented connections with Byzantium: for example, the Mamluk Sultan Baybars I (1260-1277) and the Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII (1259-1282) exchanged envoys to negotiate slave-trading from the territory of the Golden Horde through the Bosphorus and Byzantine lands to Egypt, leading to a treaty in 1281⁷⁹; and the Mamluk Ruler Fataj (1399-1405) was of Greek descend (he had a Greek mother)⁸⁰. As an intermediate result we can state that the Mamluks, with their well-attested 'international' networks, should not be underestimated when it comes to the influence on metalwork techniques in the medieval world, and in particular with respect to a long tradition of filigree goldsmiths' works strongly based on Fatimid⁸¹ and even earlier traditions. The genesis of the spiral filigree that is found on the Bessarion Cross can, in my opinion, only be explained with a strong Mamluk background⁸².

At this point, the Trier Casket⁸³ (Figs. 10-13), mentioned above, should be discussed in more detail since this object is crucial for the full

⁷⁶ IRWIN, *Mamluk*, p. 228.

⁷⁷ U. RITZERFELD, *Made in Cyprus? Fourteenth Century Mamluk Metal Ware for the West: The Question of Provenance*, in *The Harbour of all this Sea and Realm, Crusader to Venetian Famagusta*, CEU Medievalia, ed. by M. WALSH - T. KISS, Budapest 2014, pp. 107-133; U. RITZERFELD, *The Language of Power: Transgressing Borders in Luxury Metal Objects of the Lusignan*, in *Medieval Cyprus: A Place of Cultural Encounter*, ed. by S. ROGGE - M. GRÜNBART, Münster 2015 (Schriften des Instituts für interdisziplinäre Zypern-Studien, 11), pp. 277-308.

⁷⁸ DE HOND, *A Mamluk Basin*.

⁷⁹ IRWIN, *The Early Mamluk Sultanate*, pp. 52, 69; P.M. HOLT, *The Age of the Crusades: The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517*, London-New York 1997 (8th edition), pp. 159-163.

⁸⁰ IRWIN, *Mamluk*, p. 230.

⁸¹ See JENKINS, *Mamluk Jewelry*, pp. 31, 35.

⁸² Although the visual concept of a cross with scrolls was already known in Byzantium and Italy, see above.

⁸³ ROSENBERG, *Granulation*, p. 101, figs 181, 102, 183; CLEMEN, *Die Kunstdenkmäler*, pp. 324-326; *Schatzkunst Trier*, no. 82, 143 (F. RONIG).

understanding of the provenance of the spiral filigree on the Bessarion Cross.

This casket is made from silver sheet metal and gilded on the outside. The lid in the shape of a truncated pyramid and the sides of the casket are decorated with filigree and granulation (Figs. 10, 13), whilst the underside is engraved (Figs. 11-12). Comparanda for the casket's ornamental and figural decoration allow dating this casket to the 13th or early 14th century in my opinion⁸⁴ (see below). As has been pointed out earlier, its date has been disputed: Rosenberg thought that the Trier Casket was 'Byzantine' and contemporary or slightly later than the Cap of Monomakh, which he dated to the 12th century⁸⁵, a view shared by Ronig in 1984⁸⁶. Grabar grouped the Trier Casket and the Cap of Monomakh together with the revetment of the 15th-century Vladimir Icon in Moscow, assuming that the revetment was dated to 1410 and the other objects slightly later to the 15th century⁸⁷. This view was recently confirmed by Durand, who dated the Trier Casket to the 15th century and assumed that it was probably made in Moscow⁸⁸. Marschak in 1986 believed that the casket was related to the occupation of Syria by the Crusaders and dated it to the second half of the 13th century⁸⁹. In 2010, Auld noticed parallels for the casket in Sicily and dated it to the 13th century, but doubted that the casket and the bottom plate belong together⁹⁰. However, there is no indication for this; the casket itself and its bottom plate show no sign of a different production date⁹¹.

⁸⁴ A study on the casket is in preparation by the author.

⁸⁵ ROSENBERG, *Granulation*, p. 101.

⁸⁶ *Schatzkunst Trier*, p. 143, no. 82 (F. RONIG; 'Byzantine, 13th century'); MARŠAK, *Zur Toreutik der Kreuzfahrer*, p. 184, only mentioned the Trier Casket and dated it without explanation to the second half of the 13th century (see captions for fig. 28a, p. 183).

⁸⁷ GRABAR, *Les revêtements*, pp. 70-71, no. 41.

⁸⁸ DURAND-GIOVANNONI-RAPTI, *Sainte Russie*, pp. 359-360, no. 155 (J. DURAND).

⁸⁹ B. MARSHAK, *Silberschätze des Orients. Metallkunst des 3.-13. Jahrhunderts und ihre Kontinuität*, Leipzig 1986, p. 435.

⁹⁰ S. AULD, *Exploring Links between East and West in the 13th Century: Circles of Coincidence*, in *Islamic Artefacts in the Mediterranean World. Trade, Gift Exchange and Artistic Transfer*, ed. by C. SCHMIDT ARCANGELI, Venice 2010, pp. 131-146, p. 140: «it seems ... that the likelihood of the casket and base-plate being from the same area, or even the same date, is unlikely».

⁹¹ I have studied the casket in Trier in person, and have found no clues as to a later

This is an important observation because the decoration of the bottom plate, especially, makes the dating of the casket clearer: the floral spirals surrounding harpies and animals (Fig. 12) can be compared, for example, with the niello decoration of a silver vessel from the Resafa Hoard (buried most likely 1258-1260, Fig. 14 a-d)⁹², or later, in a different genre, on the decoration of the garments of the donor Bishop Danilo II (1324-1337) in the Hodegetria Church of Peć (Kosovo, Fig. 15)⁹³. This particular motif on the underside of the Trier Casket speaks for a much earlier date of the casket than the recently suggested 15th century, to the 13th or early 14th century, thus making it possibly the earliest object decorated with spiral filigree of the sort found on the Bessarion Cross and later the Vladimir Icon.

The question of where the Trier Casket was made can be answered by comparing it to similar caskets made in a different material: specifically, the group of Siculo-Arabic ivory caskets⁹⁴. Not only is the shape typical for this group of 12th-13th-century caskets, but particular details point to a production in the same environment of the ivory caskets in Sicily (or Southern Italy): the ivory caskets show similar round medallions with intertwined tendrils. The background is decorated with tiny ring-shaped punches, and exactly this detail appears in painting on the ivory caskets (Fig. 12, 16). The ivory caskets are mostly dated to the 12th and 13th centuries. However, this does not necessarily mean that the Trier Casket was made in exactly this period. It could have been made in this tradition, and on the basis of the motifs, a date in the (early) 14th century would also be plausible.

Another detail speaks for the attribution of the Trier Casket to an area with a strong influence of Arabic craftsmanship: as described before,

attachment of the casket's bottom plate (visits in 20 October 2014 and February 2017 with two goldsmiths).

⁹² T. ULBERT, *Der kreuzfahrerzeitliche Silberschatz aus Resafa-Sergiupolis*, Mainz 1990 (Resafa 3), pp. 5-6, pl. 2a-d.

⁹³ G. SUBOTIĆ, *Spätbyzantinische Kunst. Geheiligt Land von Kosovo*, Zürich-Düsseldorf 1998, p. 89 and fig. 9.

⁹⁴ This has already been suggested independently by AULD, *Exploring Links*, p. 137. On the Siculo-Arabic ivory caskets see *Siculo-Arabic Ivories and Islamic Painting 1100-1300*, proceedings of the international conference (Berlin, 6-8 July), ed. by D. KNIP, Munich 2011 (Römische Forschungen der Bibliotheca Hertziana, 36).

the filigree on the Trier Casket made from twisted wire differs from the Cap of Monomakh (made from flat stripes of wire) and is thus closer to the one on the Bessarion Staurotheke (and the Vladimir Icon). The granulation technique of the Trier Casket also differs significantly from the Cap of Monomakh: whilst the line granulation on the Trier Casket sits in a groove, on the Cap of Monomakh it is balanced on the top of a flat wire (compare Figs. 9 and 13). The technique of the Trier Casket's granulation finds its prototypes in Fatimid goldsmiths' works: many examples show that Fatimid goldsmiths' works are often constructed from filigree made of two twisted wires with line granulation set into the grooves between the wires⁹⁵. This supports a provenance from this cultural background, most likely Sicily due to the Casket's similarities with Siculo-Arabic ivory caskets. The overall appearance of the filigree on the Trier Casket is very much like granulation due to the tightly twisted wire, which is entirely different from the rather 'stern' effect of the filigree scrolls of the Cap of Monomakh. The details of the casket's filigree are so similar to Mamluk jewellery that JENKINS thought it belonged to this context as opposed to the Cap of Monomakh, which she attributed to the Golden Horde⁹⁶. The casket would, therefore, be neither Byzantine nor Russian nor Mongolian and date rather earlier than later, probably to the 13th or early 14th century.

The repercussions are significant. This would mean: first, it is probable that the particular form of the filigree scrolls found on the Bessarion Cross first appears on Sicily (Trier Casket, not exactly datable, but probably late 13th or early 14th century); and second, that it may be approximately contemporaneous (although differently executed) with

⁹⁵ A. BOSSELMANN-RUICKBIE, *Byzantinisch, Islamisch oder 'Internationaler Stil'? Email- und Körbchenohrringe aus dem östlichen Mittelmeerraum*, in *Grenzgänge im östlichen Mittelmeerraum. Byzanz und die islamische Welt vom 9. bis 13. Jahrhundert*, ed. by U. KOENEN - M. MÜLLER-WIENER, Wiesbaden 2008, pp. 83-119, p. 86 and figs 7, 8; OGDEN, *Techniques of Construction*, pp. 68-70.

⁹⁶ JENKINS, *Mamluk Jewellery*, p. 35. See also KRAMARVOSKY, *Spiral-filigree Jewellery*, p. 410, who mentions the Trier Casket as belonging to the «Mamluk group». He adds that the «Russian historiographical tradition sees [the casket] as Syrian». KRAMAROVSKY, *New Style of Filigree*, pp. 191-198, has also analysed very carefully the differences of the manufacture of the filigree but his conclusions is somewhat unclear and based on some vague datings, for example for the Trier Casket (p. 196).

objects of the Golden Horde (Cap of Monomakh, first half of the 14th century); third, that it then appeared in Byzantium (Bessarion Cross, middle of the 14th century), and later in Moscow in the first half of the 15th century, to where it might have been brought by Byzantine craftsmen, and/or more directly from the Golden Horde. According to Kramarovsky, this latter scenario was the «direct consequence of the collapse of the Golden Horde following its defeat by Timur in 1395, when craftsmen in need of stability and rich patrons forsook the cities of the steppe»⁹⁷. This might have been the case, but I would argue that, on the basis of the Fatimid goldsmiths' tradition of combining filigree and granulation, it is more likely that the prototypes for this particular filigree as found on the Bessarion Cross were made in Mamluk Egypt-Syria. The intensive exchange between the Mamluks and the Golden Horde contributed to a mutual exchange, meaning that the filigree in question was surely also inspired by the «eastern» goldsmiths' works from the Golden Horde. However, the strong Fatimid and Mamluk traces one can detect point to a centre of distribution in Egypt, and from there to Sicily, the Volga, the Crimea and Byzantium. I find it difficult to see just one «vector of influence» – from the east to the west – so strictly pronounced by Kramarovsky⁹⁸. The similarities with Mamluk goldsmiths' works and their Fatimid predecessors are too significant to be excluded from the discussion.

Independently of the genesis of the characteristic filigree, it is worth noting that this type of filigree has had a huge impact on early Russian art. Throughout the 15th century and later, comparable filigree was employed for many goldsmiths' works especially in Moscow and Novgorod⁹⁹. One dated piece is a pendant icon-reliquary with the depiction of the Mandyllion on the suspension eye above the reliquary

⁹⁷ KRAMAROVSKY, *Spiral-filigree Jewellery*, p. 411.

⁹⁸ ID., *Krest Vissariona*, pp. 101-107.

⁹⁹ E.g., *Das Gold aus dem Kreml. Russische Goldschmiedekunst vom 12.-20. Jahrhundert*, exhibition catalogue Übersee-Museum Bremen, Munich 1989, no. 15: Panagia pendant, Moscow, first half of the 15th century, frame of a mother of pearl relief, *Gates of Mystery. The Art of Holy Russia*, exhibition catalogue The Walters Art Gallery Baltimore and others, ed. by R. GRIERSON, Fort Worth 1994, no. 25 (I. PLESHANOVA): bone pendant showing the Archangel Michael, frame with inserted pearls and stones, 16th century; no. 26 (I. SOLOVEVA): miniature deesis triptych, Novgorod, late 15th to early 16th century.

that was made in 1456 by Master Amvrosij at the monastery Trinity Lavra of St Sergius at Sergiev Possad¹⁰⁰. Despite the smaller format, the filigree follows the same pattern of scrolls formed of parallel twisted wires with loops in-between.

Not only has the filigree of the Bessarion Cross found counterparts in Russian goldsmiths' works, but also the shape of the cross. Similar crosses with variations of the filigree, as well as precious stones and pearls appear in the art of the goldsmith in Moscow and Novgorod in the 15th and 16th centuries. Many examples are exhibited in the Kremlin Armoury¹⁰¹. Their common characteristic is the two upper bars of the cross. One example remarkably similar to the Bessarion Cross regarding its filigree is exhibited in the Kremlin Armoury labelled 'Novgorod, 16th century'.¹⁰² However, it shows so many stylistic and formal similarities, as well as comparable filigree to earlier pieces, such as the Vladimir Icon revetment, that this date might not be correct¹⁰³. More research needs to be done on the relation between Byzantine and Russian goldsmiths' works from Moscow and Novgorod. The many Russian examples dating later than the Bessarion Cross should be considered as evidence that the design of the Bessarion Cross and its ornamentation was also in Byzantium more common than today's rare examples lead us to believe. To conclude, we can state that although the visual concept of the cross decorated with (or surrounded by) spiral scrolls was known already in the middle Byzantine period, the particular filigree on the Bessarion Cross was not a Byzantine invention.

¹⁰⁰ A. LIDOV, *Holy Face, Holy Script, Holy Gate. Revealing the Edessa Paradigm in Christian Imagery*, in *In torno al Sacro Volto. Genova, Bisanzio e il Mediterraneo (secoli XI-XIV)*, ed. by di A.R. CALDERONI MASETTI - C. DUFOUR BOZZO - G. WOLF - A. NOVA, Venice 2007 (Collana des Kunsthistorischen Instituts Florenz, Max-Planck-Institut XI), pp. 145-162, p. 157, fig. 19

¹⁰¹ See also *Das Gold aus dem Kreml*, no. 24 («Novgorod, 1553»). See also *Dekorativno-Prikladnoe Iskusstvo Velikogo Novgoroda. Hudošestvennij Metall XVI-XVII Vekov*, ed. by I.A. STERLIGOVA, Moscow 2008, p. 319.

¹⁰² Moscow Kremlin, Armoury, inv. no. MP-1187; *Dekorativno-Prikladnoe Iskusstvo Velikogo Novgoroda*, pp. 271-272, no. 12 («Novgorod, end of 16th century»).

¹⁰³ This view was confirmed by Dr Irina Sterligova, Kremlin Museums, personal communication 24 September 2014. I am deeply grateful to Dr Sterligova for discussing these issues with me.

3. *The Repoussé Decoration of the Sides of the Cross*

The sides of the Bessarion Cross are decorated with the inscription and in-between the text with two overlapping bands of U-shapes (Fig. 17). Each peak is crowned by a trilobe and a palmette in alternation.

3.1. *Genesis of the Motif*

The motif can be traced back to Western architecture where it appears in the context of tracery windows, especially quadrilobe and rosette windows. Fortunately, architecture can often be dated better than goldsmiths' works and, therefore, provides a good basis for studying the development and then independent use of the ornament.

Some of the earliest examples of Gothic tracery windows where the tracery is adorned with trilobes reminiscent of the ornament in question are found in Paris and Amiens. In the Sainte Chapelle in Paris (Fig. 18), the six-lobed rosettes on the top of the windows of the upper chapel are ornamented with trilobes (1241/45-48)¹⁰⁴. A variation appears in the Cathedral of Amiens where the decorative elements of windows in the south transept and choir clerestory are reminiscent of fleurs-de-lys (1240s-1250s)¹⁰⁵. Other examples include the choir windows of Saint-Urbain in Troyes, Champagne, dated to 1262-1265-66¹⁰⁶, and the intricate design of the cloister windows of the Hauterive monastery in Switzerland (1322-30)¹⁰⁷.

The idea of decorating the tip of the tracery creating the Gothic windows, mostly trilobes or quadrilobes, was taken up more widely in the late 13th and the 14th century. At this time, tracery in general became increasingly detached from a mere architectural or statical function. The

¹⁰⁴ G. BINDING, *Maßwerk*, Darmstadt 1989, p. 54, fig. 37, drawings taken from E. VIOLLET-LE-DUC, *Dictionnaire Raisoné de l'architecture Française du XI^e au XVI^e siècle*, Paris 1866-1875. For an overview see D. KIMPEL - R. SUCKALE, *Die gotische Architektur in Frankreich 1130-1270*, Munich 1985, pp. 400-405.

¹⁰⁵ S. MURRAY, *Notre-Dame: Cathedral of Amiens*, Cambridge 1996, figs 82, 83, 90, 91, 100; BINDING, *Maßwerk*, p. 57, fig. 44; for the sequence of the building development see MURRAY, *Cathedral of Amiens*, pp. 63-64, pp. 100-101.

¹⁰⁶ BINDING, *Maßwerk*, p. 79, abb. 68; C. ONNEN, *Saint-Urbain in Troyes: Idee und Gestalt einer päpstlichen Stiftung*, Kiel 2004, pp. 15, 80 and 40, fig. 19.

¹⁰⁷ R. HOOTZ, *Kunstdenkmäler in der Schweiz*, Munich-Berlin 1970, p. 377, fig. 184.

windows were no longer incorporated into the architectural system and became more ornamental¹⁰⁸ and filigree-like in the course of the 14th century, and then even more elaborate in the 15th century. It is a matter of course that this is not a strictly evolutionary development as the chosen examples might suggest.

Not only in France, but also in what is today Germany, the tracery motif with crowning trilobes and palmettes was taken up, as we can see from a window in the south side of the main nave of St Catherine in Oppenheim on the Rhine finished between 1317 and 1331 (Fig. 19), for example¹⁰⁹. The quadrilobe window is decorated with two layers of U-shapes creating a second level that adds to the impression of filigree. The peaks of these bands are crowned with a trilobe each. A window that is almost identical to the Oppenheim window, and probably serving as an example for the former¹¹⁰, can be found in Cologne Cathedral (between 1270-71 and 1304)¹¹¹: the quadrilobe has an additional second layer that lies behind the outer layer. The inner quadrilobe is constructed of trilobes in each lobe, undercutting the outer ribs, in a manner similar to the intertwining U-shapes on the Bessarion Cross¹¹².

3.2. *Tracery in Goldsmiths' Works*

Architectural forms in general, and tracery in particular, were soon employed by Gothic goldsmiths, as can be shown, for example, by a

¹⁰⁸ BINDING, *Maßwerk*, p. 135.

¹⁰⁹ B. SCHÜTZ, *Die Katharinenkirche in Oppenheim*, Berlin-New York 1982, pp. 208-217, especially 213; DÖLLING, *Katharinenkirche Oppenheim*, Regensburg 2000, pp. 18, 20.

¹¹⁰ R. DÖLLING, *Katharinenkirche Oppenheim*, p. 20; M.C. SCHURR, *Gotische Architektur im mittleren Europa: 1220-1340. Von Metz bis Wien*, Munich 2007 (Kunstwissenschaftliche Studien 137), p. 274.

¹¹¹ SCHURR, *Gotische Architektur*, p. 318 (according to BINDING, *Maßwerk*, p. 239, fig. 270: 1277-1300); L. HELTEN, *Mittelalterliches Maßwerk: Entstehung - Syntax - Topologie*, Berlin 2006 (habilitation thesis Halle-Wittenberg 2001), pp. 202-211, especially p. 207; K.G. BEUCKERS, *Der Kölner Dom*, Darmstadt 2004, p. 32. Overviews of the building history of Cologne Cathedral: BEUCKERS, *Der Kölner Dom*; SCHURR, *Gotische Architektur*, pp. 79-87.

¹¹² BINDING, *Maßwerk*, p. 11, states that «Die Maßwerkfiguren [der Spätgotik] werden von der Architekturstruktur losgelöst und damit zum verselbständigten Ornament, das frei ist für bewegtere Figurationen ...».

reliquary of St Ursula in Cologne, Germany, dated to the second quarter of the 14th century (Fig. 20)¹¹³, and a chalice of Osnabrück Cathedral, Germany, which was made at roughly the same time, probably around 1320¹¹⁴. These objects display the employment of architectural forms very well, and many more examples could be named. In another case, tracery windows were included in the reliquary bust of St John in Aachen-Burtscheid made around 1360¹¹⁵. The four differently shaped miniature windows allowed greater visibility of the relics of the saint enclosed in the bust. More independent from the context of windows, the motif was employed during the second half of the 14th and the 15th centuries, e.g., on the rim of a drinking horn (third quarter of the 14th century)¹¹⁶, or the top of the enclosure of the bust reliquary of St Plechelmus (second quarter of the 15th century)¹¹⁷.

As much as tracery became more and more detached from its architectural contexts, the filigree motif became an independent ornament. In the form in which it appears on the Bessarion Cross it is separated from any architectural context and has turned into an arbitrarily extendable row of U-shapes that frame the cross and fill in space that has not been used for the inscription. It had become an ornament that could have been used in any context.

The detachment of tracery from its architectural context to an independent, extendable band-like motif can be seen in all genres of Western art. An early example in architecture is the reconstructed roof decoration of Cologne Cathedral from the early 14th century¹¹⁸. Within

¹¹³ J.M. FRITZ, *Goldschmiedekunst der Gotik in Mitteleuropa*, Munich 1982, p. 199, no. 106; *Goldene Pracht. Mittelalterliche Schatzkunst in Westfalen*, exhibition catalogue LWL-Landesmuseum für Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte und Domkammer der Kathedrale St. Paulus Münster, ed. by BISTUM MÜNSTER UND DOMKAMMER DER KATHEDRALE KIRCHE ST. PAULUS - MÜNSTER *et al.*, Munich 2012, p. 127, no. 13 (K.K. PETZEL).

¹¹⁴ FRITZ, *Goldschmiedekunst der Gotik*, p. 199, no. 107, 108 («second quarter of the 14th century»); *Goldene Pracht*, pp. 240-242, no. 95a (R. KARRENBROCK, «around 1320»).

¹¹⁵ FRITZ, *Goldschmiedekunst der Gotik*, pp. 197-198 («end of 13th century [?] and middle of 14th century»); *Goldene Pracht*, pp. 121-123, no. 8 (H. SCHÄFER, end of the 13th century and around 1360).

¹¹⁶ FRITZ, *Goldschmiedekunst der Gotik*, p. 234, no. 343.

¹¹⁷ *Goldene Pracht*, pp. 359-360, no. 199 (H. KEMPKENS).

¹¹⁸ For an illustration see M. HASAK, *Der Dom des heiligen Petrus zu Köln am Rhein*, Berlin 1911, pl. 13.

the field of painted decorations, the reconstructed vault paintings in the Church of St Nikolai in Stralsund, Germany (c. 1350), can be quoted. Here, single rows of U-shapes, in which the peaks are crowned by palmettes, follow the structure of the vaults¹¹⁹. On the outer bands, only every second peak is emphasized by a palmette; the others remain undecorated. A magnificent reliquary cross in Bad Kreuznach, Germany, dated to 1330-1340 (Fig. 21)¹²⁰, shows that the motif was also very early taken up by goldsmiths. Here, the outline of the cross was emphasized with the characteristic bands of U-shapes.

The motif can be found throughout the 15th century in many genres of art, often becoming more elaborate: in the Book of Hours of the Duc de Berry, *Les Très Riches Heures* (1410-1416)¹²¹, the scene of «Job mocked by his friends» is framed by what seems like an imitation of goldsmiths' work (Fig. 22)¹²². It is crowned by a similar motif of U-shapes, here much more intricate than in the case of the Bessarion Cross. Another folio (fol 71v) from the same book shows a roof decoration similar to the one of Cologne Cathedral, as seen before¹²³.

Many more examples could be mentioned to prove that this ornament, in many variations, became one of the most popular motifs in the 15th century for the decoration of haloes, altars, painting, etc. However, the motif does not follow a strictly evolutionary trajectory, which makes it difficult to date.

3.3. *Appearance of the Motif in Byzantine Art*

After having looked at the derivation and development of the ornament, one might have the impression that it appears exclusively in Western medieval art. However, it has also been used in Byzantine

¹¹⁹ S.-M. WEITZEL, *Die Ausstattung von St. Nikolai in Stralsund. Funktion, Bedeutung und Nutzung einer hansestädtischen Pfarrkirche*, Kiel 2011; p. 20 and pls 1, 12.

¹²⁰ FRITZ, *Goldschmiedekunst der Gotik*, p. 200, no. 114, 115.

¹²¹ For the date see R. CAZELLES - J. RATHOFER, *Das Stundenbuch des Duc de Berry Les Très Riches Heures*, with an introduction by U. ECO, Lucerne 2001, p. 225.

¹²² CAZELLES-RATHOFER, *Das Stundenbuch*, p. 116, see also in the same volume pp. 99, 130, 185.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 110. See also fol 137r, 146v (*ibid.*, pp. 142, 152).

art, although less often, but nevertheless in key pieces of art. One is an example of goldsmiths' works, the other in architecture.

The first is the well-known Esztergom Staurotheke, named after its current repository in the Cathedral Treasure of Esztergom, Hungary (Fig. 3). It is an exceptional piece in many respects and the cross reliquary is probably to be ascribed to an imperial workshop in Constantinople, since, for historical reasons, it was most likely a diplomatic gift to the Bishop of Esztergom in Hungary at the end of the 12th century¹²⁴.

The frame is stylistically different and was added at a later date, and it must have replaced an older closing mechanism¹²⁵. Judging from the colour of the green enamel, the intricate foliate design inscribed in roundels and squares, as well as the style of the figures, the frame is surely Palaeologan. Hetherington arrived at a date of around 1300 for historical reasons. However, the similarity of the inner ornament band of the Esztergom Staurotheke and the Bessarion Cross suggests something else. After we have seen where the ornament comes from, it seems improbable that it was made that early, as is suggested by the examples shown. A date comparable to the Bessarion Cross (but not much earlier) is more likely, however, with the necessary caution, since ornaments can be misleading, as we have seen before. The comparison between the two ornaments on the Esztergom Staurotheke and the Bessarion Cross shows that they were both embossed freely and not over a die, and that they were not made by the same hand, which, however, does not necessarily point to a different date or place of manufacture. In light of the similarities of the design, it seems unlikely that they have been made at an entirely different time, but rather in the same artistic environment.

The second example for the ornament in Byzantine art is found in an entirely different genre: architecture. The Pantanassa Church in Mistra on the Peloponnese is, in principle, a characteristic Byzantine church, but it reveals many Gothic features, such as the tower and the

¹²⁴ Most recent publication: PRINZING, *'The Esztergom Reliquary Revisited'*, pp. 247-256. For further literature see footnote 32.

¹²⁵ See KLEIN, *Byzanz, der Westen und das 'wahre Kreuz'*, pp. 136-137; HETHERINGTON, *Staurothèque at Esztergom*, pp. 91-93; PRINZING, *'The Esztergom Reliquary Revisited'*, p. 254 and nt. 33.

tracery design of the apse and the U-shaped band decorating the east side, which is unique in Byzantine architecture. The church has been dated on the basis of historical sources to 1428; the Gothic features belong to the same building phase as the belfry (after 1428)¹²⁶. The design here is much more elaborate than the ornament of the Bessarion Cross, although the scheme is comparable. The U-shaped bands are adorned by additional leaves; the undersides are decorated with palmettes that make the motif look more like a garland. The ornament apparently follows the trends in the West. As a comparison, the detail in the Book of Hours of the Duc de Berry (Fig. 22), dated a good decade earlier, can be mentioned again.

4. Conclusion

The filigree on the Bessarion Cross is comparable to objects attributable to Russia and Sicily and was probably inspired by Islamic goldsmiths' works, as can be shown by the example of the Trier Casket. The genesis of the particular filigree is traceable to Mamluk Egypt as well as the art of the Golden Horde, and it is probably not a Byzantine invention. On the other hand, the ornaments on the sides of the Bessarion Cross (and on the frame of the famous Esztergom Staurotheke, which should be dated to the same time as the Bessarion Cross) take up a Western motif that developed in the first half of the 14th century and can be followed back to Gothic tracery. From the 1330s or 1340s, ornaments similar to the Bessarion Cross appear in Western goldsmiths' works.

At first glance, the historical dating of the cross to 1347-1354 seems too early, as researchers usually tend to allow a couple of decades for a motif to migrate. That means that the ornament on the sides of the cross would have probably been dated stylistically rather towards

¹²⁶ S. SINOS, *Mistra*, in *Reallexikon zur Byzantinischen Kunst*, VI, Stuttgart 2005, cols 380-518, cols 437-441, 448-450. For detailed studies on the building history of the Pantanassa Church see also S. SINOS, *H Monē tēs Pantanassas*, in *Tā Mnēmeia tou Mystra. To Ergo tēs Epitrophēs Anastēlōsēs Mnēmeiōn Mystra*, Athens 2009, pp. 196-215; S. SINOS, *H Architektonikē tou Katholikou tēs Monēs tēs Pantanassas tou Mystra. Me mia Enotēta gia glypto Diakosmo tou Naou apo tē Geōrgia MARINOY*, Athens 2013.

the end of the 14th century, if there were no other clues for dating. Nevertheless, it is possible for the ornament to appear at this point in time in Byzantium, i.e., the mid-14th century.

As demonstrated here, ornaments are not as 'elusive' as has often been assumed and can be used as an important means for dating and attribution, as well as an indicator for the complex processes of cultural exchange in the Middle Ages. An important result of this paper is that, on the basis of the historical dating of the Bessarion Cross, it can be concluded that new fashions from the West, Islamic neighbours as well as the East, can be shown to have been assimilated rapidly in Byzantium. It remains to conclude that the Bessarion Cross is an important object that provides evidence for the vivid transfer of taste and fashions between the leading Mediterranean and Asian cultures in the 14th century.



Fig. 1 - Reliquary of Bessarione. Cross, back. Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia.



Fig. 2 - Reliquary of Bessarione. Cross, back, detail. Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia.

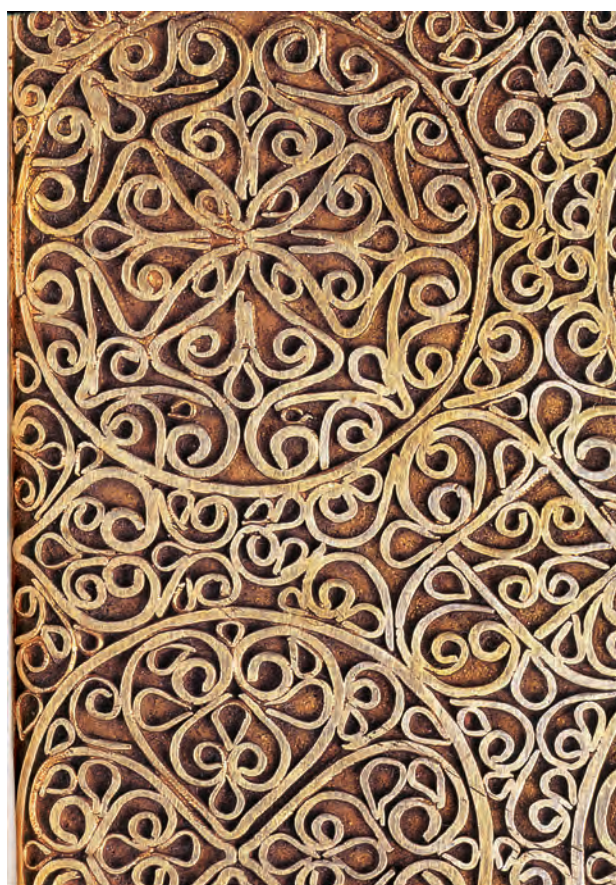


Fig. 3 - Estzergom Staurotheke, detail: frame, mid-14th century. Esztergom, Hungary, Cathedral Treasury (from PRINZING, *The Esztergom Reliquary Revisited*, p. 248, fig. 1).

Fig. 4 - Detail of the Mandylion Icon. Genoa, Church of St Bartholomew of the Armenians (from WOLF - DUFOUR BOZZO - CALDERONI MASETTI, *Mandylyon*, p. 6).



Fig. 5 - Revetment of the Vladimir Icon. Moscow, Kremlin, Armoury (© Moscow Kremlin Museums).



Fig. 6 - Detail of the revetment of the Vladimir Icon: monogram of donor Photios. Moscow, Kremlin, Armoury (© Moscow Kremlin Museums).



Fig. 7 - Detail of the revetment of the Vladimir Icon: monogram of donor Photios, reverse. Moscow, Kremlin, Armoury (© Moscow Kremlin Museums).



Fig. 8 - So-called Cap of Monomakh. Moscow, Kremlin, Armoury (© Moscow Kremlin Museums).
Fig. 9 - So-called Cap of Monomakh, detail of fig. 8. Moscow, Kremlin, Armoury (© Moscow Kremlin Museums).



Fig. 10 - Trier Casket. Trier, Cathedral Treasury (photo: Antje Bosselmann-Ruickbie).

Fig. 11 - Trier Casket, bottom plate. Trier, Cathedral Treasury (photo: Antje Bosselmann-Ruickbie).



Fig. 12 - Trier Casket, bottom plate, detail (photo: Antje Bosselmann-Ruickbie).

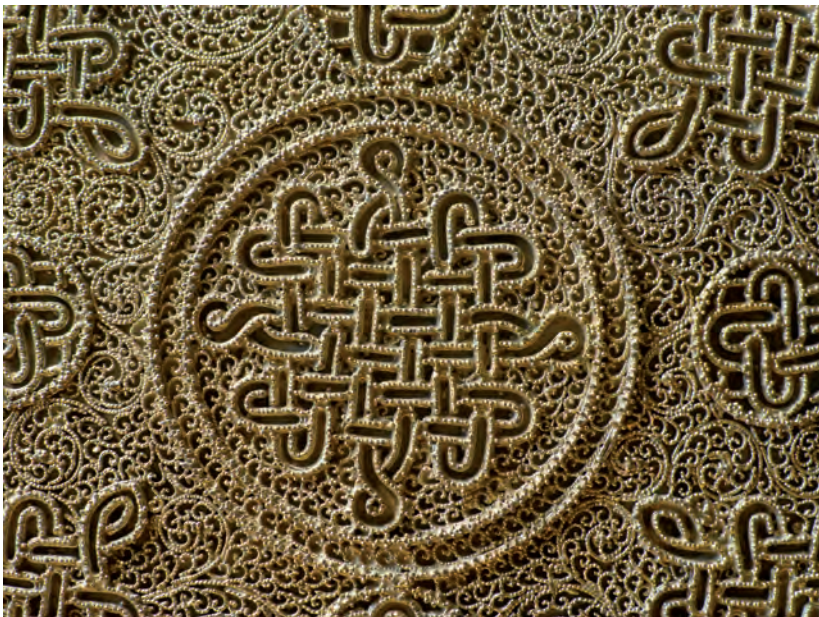


Fig. 13 - Trier Casket, detail of filigree and granulation (photo: Antje Bosselmann-Ruickbie).



Fig. 14 a-d - Details of a lamp or incense burner from the Resafa Hoard, buried probably 1258-60 (from ULBERT, *Der kreuzfahrerzeitliche Silberschatz*, pl. 2a-d).





Fig. 15 - Detail of donor Bishop Danilo II (1324-1337). Peć, Hodegetria Church (from SUBOTIĆ, *Spätbyzantinische Kunst*, fig. 9).

Fig. 16 - Detail of a Siculo-Arabic ivory casket. Athens, Benaki Museum (from ΚΝΙΠΠ, *Siculo-Arabic Ivories*, p. 323, fig. 6C, detail).

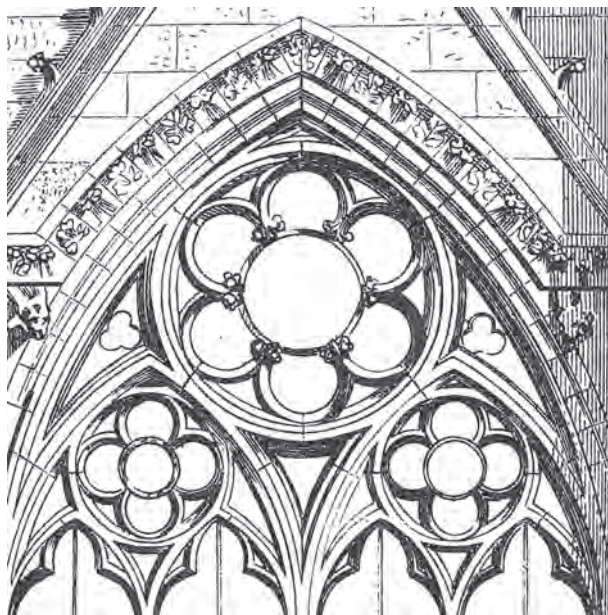


Fig. 17 - Reliquary of Bessarione. Bessarion Cross, detail of ornament on the side of the cross. Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia.

Fig. 18 - Paris, Sainte Chapelle, Upper chapel, north side, prayer niche of the queen (from BINDING, *Maßwerk*, p. 54, fig. 39).

Fig. 19 - Oppenheim, St Catherine, main nave (south side), between 1317 and ca. 1340 (photo: Bosselmann-Ruickbie)



Fig. 20 - Reliquary altar of St Ursula. Cologne, Catholic parish of St Agnes, Church of St Ursula, ca. 1320-30 (from *Goldene Pracht*, p. 127, no. 13).



Fig. 21 - Detail of monumental reliquary cross. Bad Kreuznach, St Nikolaus, Germany, 1330-40 (photo: Antje Bosselmann-Ruckbie).



Fig. 22 - Job Mocked by his friends, *Hours of the Duc de Berry*. Chantilly, Musée Condé, 1410-16, fol 82r.

TAVOLE

Stauroteca di Bessarione
Venezia, Gallerie dell'Accademia



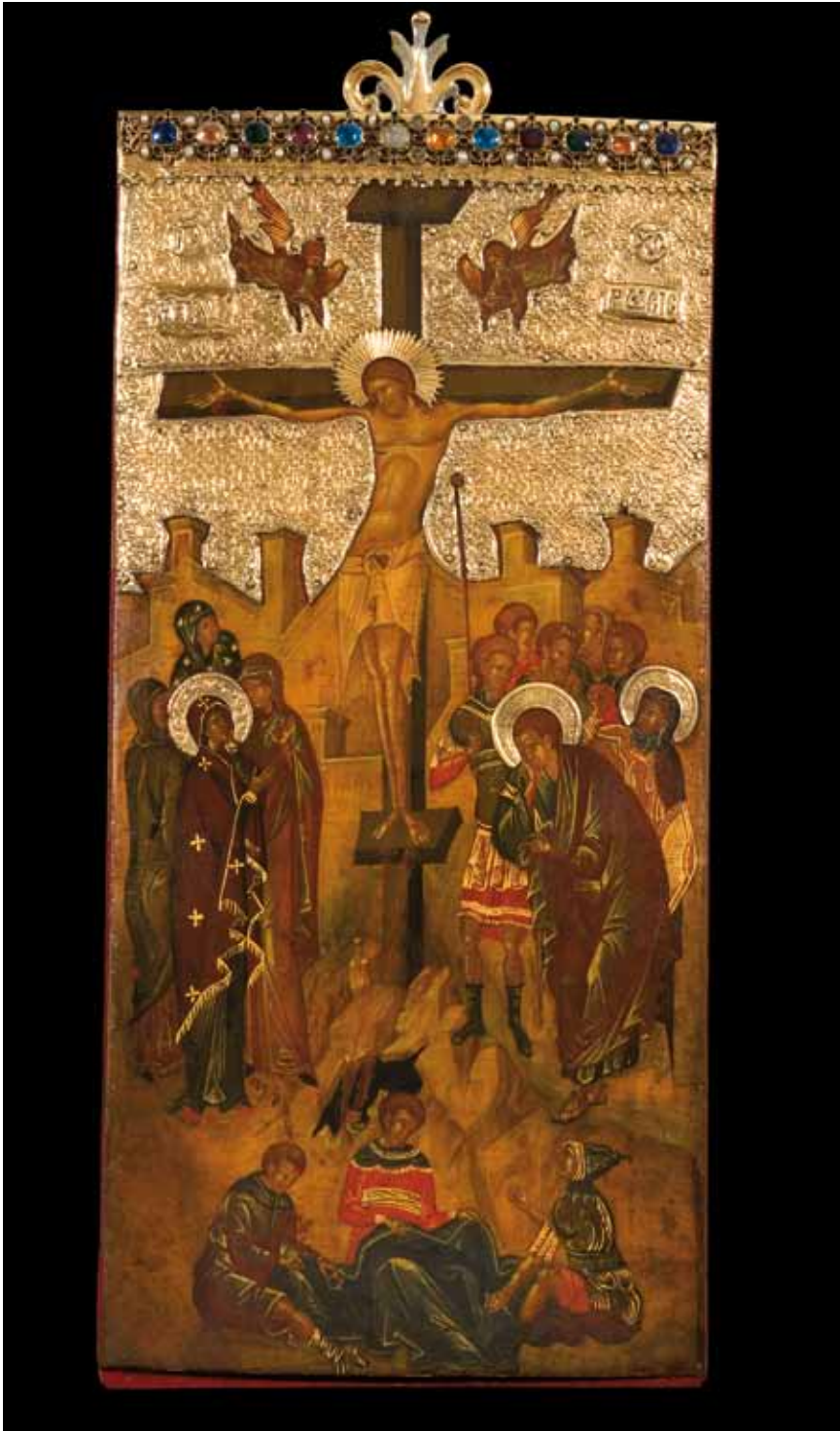
Tav. 1 - Intero aperto, recto.



Tav. 2 - Particolare con la tavola della *Crocifissione* inserita a scorrimento (prima del restauro).



Tav. 3 - Intero aperto, recto, particolare.



Tav. 4 - *Crocifissione*, tavola di chiusura, recto.



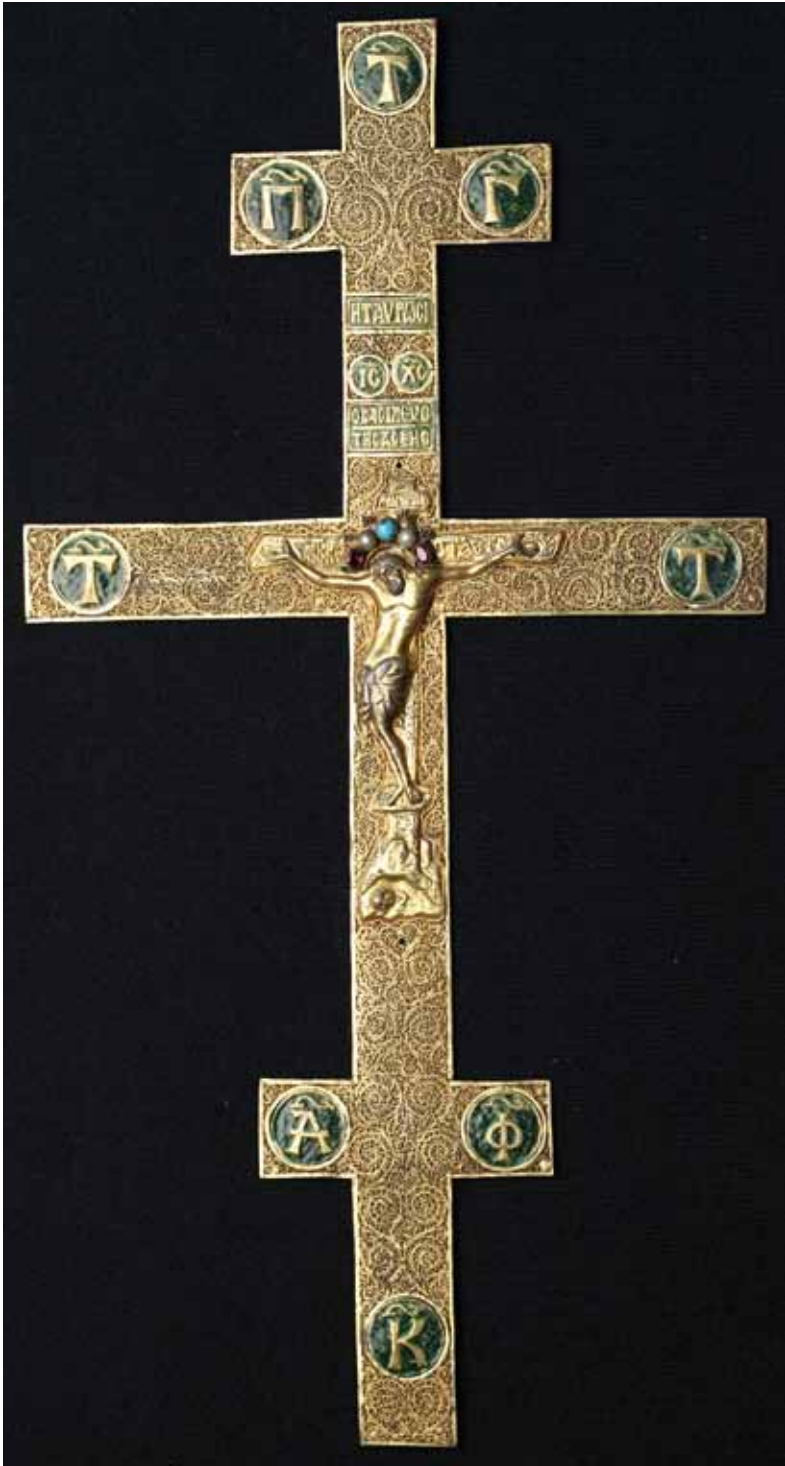
Tav. 5 - Tavola di chiusura, verso.



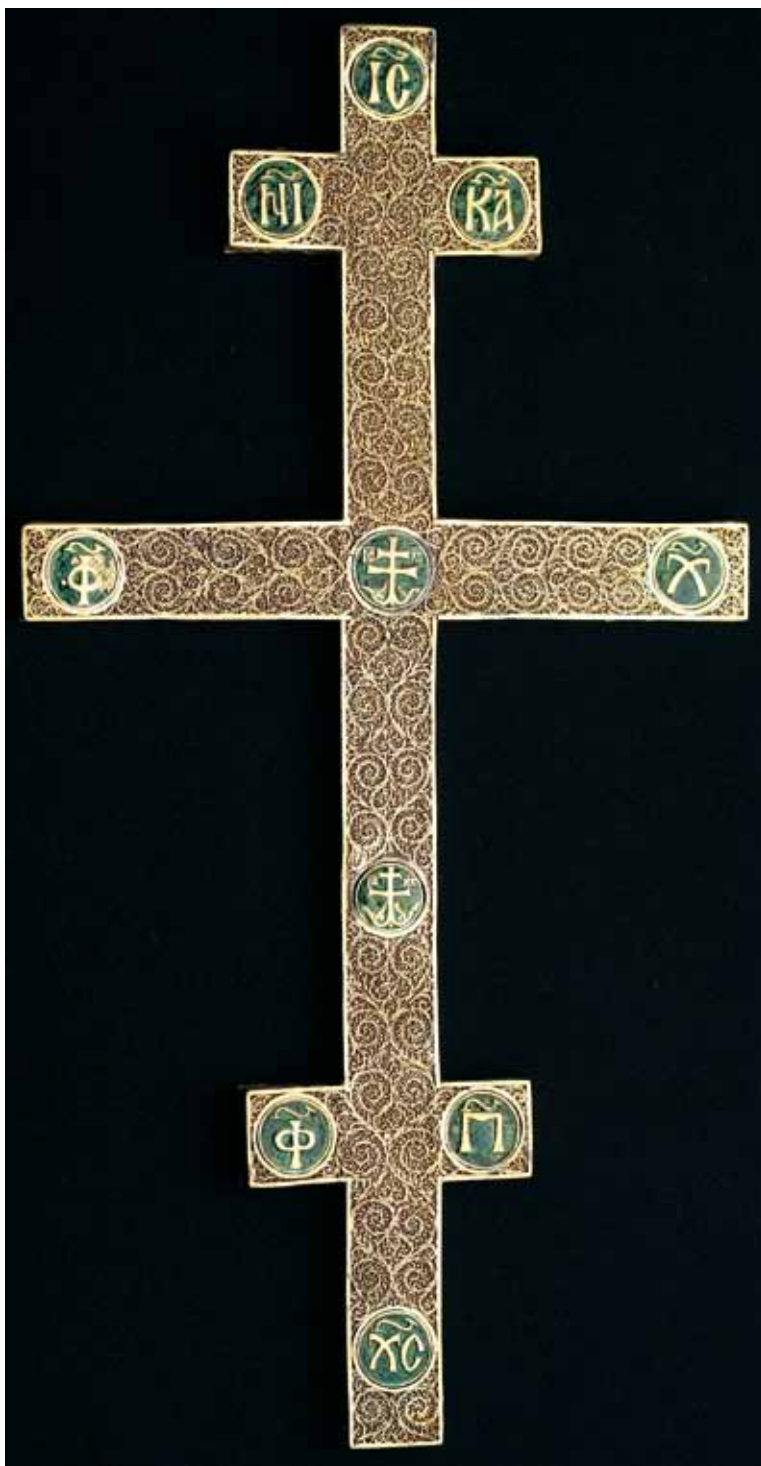
Tav. 6 - Intero, verso.



Tav. 7 - Iscrizione, verso, particolare.



Tav. 8 - Croce centrale, recto.



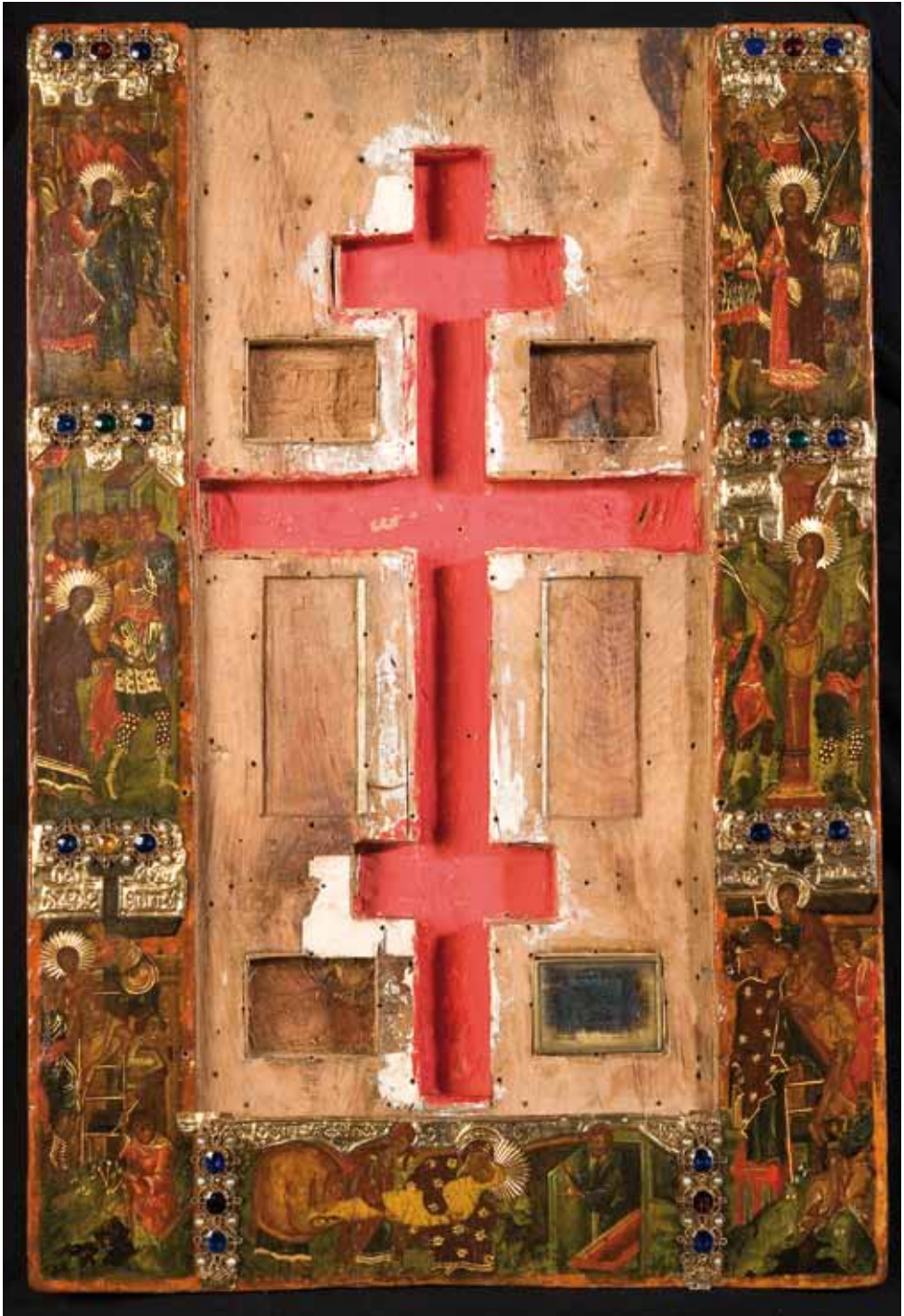
Tav. 9 - Croce centrale, verso.



Tav. 10 - *Costantino*, vetro dipinto.



Tav. 11 - *Sant'Elena*, vetro dipinto.



Tav. 12 - Parte centrale dopo lo smontaggio, recto.



Tav. 13 - Parte centrale dopo lo smontaggio, verso.



Tav. 14 a-c - Croce centrale, particolari della decorazione ad archetti lungo lo spessore.



Tav. 15 a-i - Croce centrale, particolari dell'iscrizione e della decorazione ad archetti lungo lo spessore.

