

# HOLY FACE, HOLY SCRIPT, HOLY GATE

## Revealing the Edessa paradigm in Christian imagery

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According to a tradition, which was established by the seventh century, the *Holy Mandyllion* was the only image miraculously created by Christ himself, as a kind of self-portrait “not made by human hands”<sup>1</sup>. The *Letter to Abgar of Edessa* was the only text written by Christ himself as a kind of a divine autograph<sup>2</sup>. This unique status determined the outstanding role played by the Holy Face and the Holy Script in the Christian culture. The stories of these two major relics were closely interwoven. Both have appeared in the same circumstances and were venerated for centuries in the city of Edessa. Both were transferred from Edessa to Constantinople and situated in the Pharos chapel – the imperial church-reliquary of the Great Palace in Constantinople. Both were perceived as *apotropeia* and magic objects, which sometimes were fused in a single whole. This specific phenomenon of a magic fusion of relics will be discussed in the present paper. I will argue that it influenced considerably Byzantine church iconography as well as the practice of icon-worship. Furthermore, the combination of two relics, revealing a topos of the Edessa niche, emphasized the spatial aspects of the Christian imagery and created for centuries an established paradigm.

Allow me to begin with one significant example, which will be a protagonist of our discussion. An impressive representation of the *Mandyllion* in the eleventh-century wall-paintings of the cave church Sakli kilise in Cappadocia (Göreme) has already drawn attention of scholars as one of the earliest and most characteristic *Mandyllion* images in Eastern Christian iconographic programs<sup>3</sup>. The image is situated above the arched passageway in the sanctuary barrier. To the left is depicted the Virgin enthroned from the *Annunciation* scene. To the right, appears the representation of the prophet Isaiah, pointing to the *Mandyllion* by a gesture of blessing and holding an open scroll originally inscribed with his famous prophesy (Is. 6:14) that Immanuel would be born of a virgin (fig. 1). That inscription gave a clue for the interpretation of the message: the *Mandyllion* between the Virgin and Isaiah is depicted as a sign of the Incarnation, and a visual confirmation of God’s presence on earth. Another aspect of the concept, recently revealed by Herbert Kessler, was connected with the theory of icon veneration. In a statement of the Second Council of Nicaea, the icon is «the fulfillment of the prophetic reflection», an embodiment of Isaiah’s prophesy that «a virgin shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a son»<sup>4</sup>.

A powerful *Mandyllion* program of Sakli kilise, representing some important Middle Byzantine models has been correctly perceived in general. However, there is a

very significant feature which, to the best of my knowledge, has been never discussed in the scholarly literature. It concerns the peculiar iconography of the *Mandyllion* image. Beside the *Holy Face* there are seven roundels painted with a reddish pigment that contrasts with the white background. Combinations of three and four roundels separated by vertical strips from Christ’s face are shaped as tablets. The articulation of the subject suggests that it is not just an ornamental motif but a quite special concept with a particular meaning. The form of roundels provides an answer. Most probably, they represented seven seals. Yet why do the seals appear on the *Mandyllion* cloth? The origin of the motif can be explained by the literary tradition according to which Christ’s *Letter to Abgar* was imprinted by seven seals, which belonged to Christ himself, and these seals embodied through the sacred signs His mystical characteristics. Thus, the creator of iconographic device in Sakli kilise intended to present not merely the *Holy Face* but also the *Holy Letter*. If my interpretation is correct, the images of Christ and his Script were fused in the single whole – the single icon representing two great relics at once.

It is important to understand the relationship of the *Mandyllion* with the *Letter to Abgar*. Certainly, the presence of the *Letter* stressed the apotropaic function of the *Mandyllion* image. Since Early Byzantine period the *Letter* was one of the most powerful protective relics of the entire Christian world.

The story of the exchange of letters between Christ and Abgar, the toparch of Edessa, came down to us in the early and developed version of the Ecclesiastic History of Eusebius (ca. 260-ca. 340) who claimed to use authentic documents in the archives of Edessa<sup>5</sup>. The text of Christ’s letter according to Eusebius ends by the promise to «send one of my disciples to heal your suffering and give life to you and those with you»<sup>6</sup>. The letter appears as a substitute of Jesus who could not come himself to heal Abgar in Edessa. However, in this oldest version the healing power belonged not to the object-relic but to the disciple producing miracles on behalf of Christ.

A significant alteration was made in the *Letter to Abgar* during the fourth century. A new sentence had been attached at the end of the text: «Your city shall be blessed and no enemy shall ever be master of it»<sup>7</sup>. Edessa became the only city in the world blessed by Christ himself, under the formal divine protection guaranteed by God’s promise.

By the end of the fourth century the protective power of the Letter was a well established tradition in Edessa

as we learn from the famous Latin pilgrim Egeria<sup>8</sup>. She retells us the legend recorded by the bishop of Edessa that at the moment of a Persian siege Abgar took the *Letter*, and

with all his army prayed in public. Than he said, Lord Jesus, you promised us no enemy will enter yonder city; but behold the Persians are attacking us. When he said this, holding that letter in his raised hand, suddenly such thick darkness appeared outside the city

so that the Persians could not approach the walls<sup>9</sup>. Since that time whenever the Persians appeared before Edessa the *Letter* was produced and read at the gate, and the enemy was repelled.

Egeria provides extremely interesting information about the veneration of the gate through which the *Letter* was brought to Edessa. The bishop of Edessa took Egeria to that gate where he prayed and recited Christ's *Letter*. He informed her that since the *Letter* was brought into the city «until the present day no unclean and no one in sadness passes through that gate, and no dead body is taken out through that gates»<sup>10</sup>. It is noteworthy that by late fourth century the *Letter* itself was considered as a protective relic connected with a special sacred space of the gate. Edessans created a most holy place of the special veneration, and of the reciting of Christ's protective blessing. As a kind of *eulogia* (memorial blessing) of Edessa Egeria received a copy of Christ's *Letter to Abgar*, which she found more complete than that she read before (most probably, at that moment the new last sentence of the *Letter* was unknown in the West).

One may notice the existence of a sacred complex. Christ's *Letter* was viewed in three different ways: the holy text itself was venerated and a special emphasize was placed on the final blessing; the *Letter* was revered as a special relic-object; and finally, the sacred space of the gate was consecrated by the *Letter* passing through it.

The point of the additional sentence in the *Letter* remained crucial two centuries later. In the mid-sixth century the Byzantine historian Procopius, telling about Edessa and Christ's *Letter* mentioned:

[Christ] added also that never would be the city liable to capture by the barbarians. The final portion of the letter was entirely unknown to those who wrote the history of that time, for they did not even mention of it anywhere; but the men of Edessa claimed that they found it with the letter, so that they even caused the letter to be inscribed in this form on the gates of the city instead of any other defence<sup>11</sup>.

Thus, the *Letter to Abgar* was visualized in a monumental inscription on the gate with the clear apotropaic function, the sacred text was regarded as more powerful than «any other defence». The blessing inscription over the gate could be perceived as a kind of image-dec-

laration, structuring the entire sacred space of great significance. In the fifth-sixth centuries protective inscriptions with Christ's *Letter to Abgar* became wide-spread in the Christian world<sup>12</sup>. The most impressive epigraphic evidence of the fifth century survived in Philippi, Macedonia, where the *Letter* was engraved on the city gate, at the same place that it was in Edessa<sup>13</sup> (fig. 2). The inscription included both letters, which were found in several fragments, now preserved in the local archeological museum of Philippi<sup>14</sup>.

At the first glance the appearance of this inscription looks strange since Christ's *Letter* with the protective blessing was originally addressed not to Philippi or any other city, but specifically to Edessa. The paradox can be explained in terms of iconic vision. By replicating of the holy inscription in a Macedonian town, the authors of the concept pointed to the iconic character of that place in relation to Edessa as a holy city. The special sacred space of the Edessa gate could be copied and translated elsewhere. The logic is the same as in the cases of the Holy Sepulchre and other sites of Jerusalem, which were often reproduced in geographically distant areas.

No less important was an apotropaic meaning of the *Letter* encouraging the private usage of the sacred script. In the fifth century the holy inscription occurred above the door of a private house in Ephesus<sup>15</sup>. In the same period magic amulets with the complete text, or citations, of Christ's *Letter to Abgar*, inscribed on different materials, spread all over the Christian world<sup>16</sup>. It deals with an extremely popular tradition, which survived until the present time in some regions of the Eastern Christendom (for instance, in contemporary Georgia<sup>17</sup>). An early example is provided by a Coptic papyrus from the British Museum (Oriental 4919/2), which contains a copy of the Abgar's letter and the first words of each of the Four Gospels. Another papyrus in Greek was found in the village of Nessana to the south of Jerusalem – one of the first amulets mentioning the seals with letters<sup>18</sup>. It is noteworthy, that the protective blessing to the city has been converted into the individual devotion of a person, mystically participating in the iconic space of Edessa and sharing its sacral value of the best shelter in the world.

By the second half of the sixth century, when Christ's *Letter to Abgar* had acquired the status of the most renown relic and the palladium of Edessa, a new process started. The story of the *Holy Mandylion* took shape and became a focus of veneration. One may remind that Eusebius, Egeria, and Procopius in their detailed accounts on the *Letter to Abgar* never mentioned the portrait of Christ. The first evidence about the image «not made by human hands» appeared at the end of the sixth century in the *Ecclesiastical History* by Evagrius (ca. 592), who records the story of miraculous discovery of the *Mandylion* during the Persian siege of 544. According to this tradition, the relic, hidden after Abgar's death, was in oblivion for some centuries<sup>19</sup>. In the seventh to ninth centuries the *Mandylion* and the



1. The Holy Mandylion between the Virgin and the Prophet, 11th century, Cappadocia, Göreme, Sakli kilise, over arched passageway in the sanctuary barrier

*Letter* existed side by side in Edessa. Yet, the status of the Holy Image gradually superseded the *Letter*, replacing it at the city's palladium. When in 944 the Byzantines were able to obtain the major relic of Edessa, they requested the *Mandylion* but not the *Letter*.

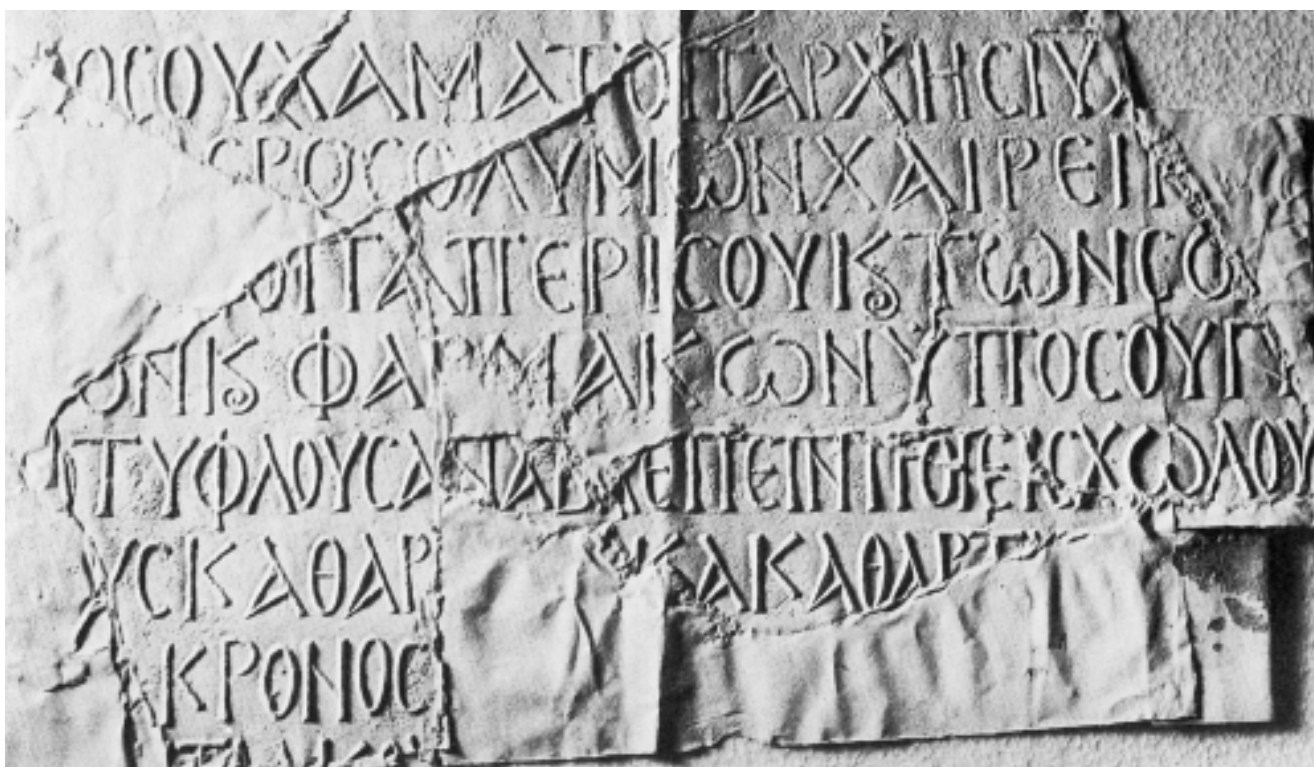
It is interesting to note, how the *Mandylion* mythology adopted the paradigms of the more ancient cult of the *Letter*. One may examine from this point of view the *Narratio Constantini*, the most important Byzantine source on the *Mandylion*, written, or at least edited, by the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenetus himself, soon after the Translation of the relic from Edessa to Constantinople in 944<sup>20</sup>. The *Narratio* accentuated the connection of the *Mandylion* with the sacred space at the city gate – an old powerful topos of the *Letter* tradition. The *Mandylion* was situated in the niche over the city gate. It was created as a shrine for the miraculous image by the king Abgar himself, who to that end destroyed an apotropaic statue of a Greek god in the same place. The *Narratio* records:

[Abgar] set up this likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ not made by hand, fastening it to a board and embellishing it with the gold which is now to be seen, inscribing these words on the gold: "Christ the God, he who hopes in thee is never disappointed". And he laid down that everyone who intended to come through that gates, should [...] pay fitting reverence and due worship and honor to the very wondrous miracle-working image of Christ, and only then to enter the city of Edessa (*Narratio*, 25)<sup>21</sup>.

This niche and the *Mandylion* hidden there, according to the same story, were miraculously discovered in the sixth century at the crucial moment of the Persian siege:

The bishop was convinced by the clearness of the vision which appeared to him [...] and found this sacred image intact, and the lamp which had not been extinguished over so many years. On the piece of tile which had been placed in front of the lamp to protect it, he found that there had been engraved another likeness of the image (*Narratio*, 32).

The significance of this topic is stressed in the *Mandylion* pictorial cycles, i.e. on the Genoa frame



2. The inscription with the Letters of Abgar and of Christ, 5th century, Macedonia, on the gate of the city of Philippi

where we may see in three scenes the representation of the huge niche on the column in front of Edessa gate<sup>22</sup> (figs. 3, 4). The old topos of the *Letter* is recognizable, the protagonist, however, has been changed. The holy inscription was replaced by the image-relic, which, moreover, was adorned by the golden case with an invocative inscription praising the all-mighty of God. Characteristically, the expression itself was borrowed from one of the versions of the *Letter*<sup>23</sup>: the powers of the image and the inscription were combined in a single item. The story emphasized the holiness of the passageway into the city as a place of special veneration. The niche with the *Mandylion* was presented as a miraculous space with the ever burning lamp and a revelation of the new image “not made by human hands”, this time on the tile.

The *Letter* gradually became a supporting relic, though closely connected with the *Mandylion*. It is noteworthy, that the *Narratio Constantini* mentions the translation to Constantinople in 944 not only of the *Mandylion*, but as well as of Christ’s *Letter to Abgar*, most probably, a copy of the famous relic, which remained in Edessa until 1032. This letter was kept with the *Mandylion* in the casket, which the author compared with a new Ark, and later both items were placed together on the altar table of Hagia Sophia (*Narratio*, 56, 61-62). One may assume that the presence of the *Letter* in the story of the *Mandylion* and in its imagery was a significant part of the Byzantine concept.

With this premise in mind, the iconography of the *Sinai diptych*, created about 944 and reflecting some princi-

pal Byzantine ideas of the *Mandylion*, might be reconsidered<sup>24</sup> (fig. 5). The gesture of the king looks quite artificial and demonstrative: Abgar holds the cloth with the *Holy Face* as a kind of open scroll, recalling the story, according to which Abgar received simultaneously two great relics of Christ. We have here one more “metaphoric” and “magic” fusion of miraculous items, which could be perceived as an established topos.

The idea of deep connection of the *Holy Face* and the Holy Script was emphasized in Byzantium after 1032, when presumably Christ’s “original” *Letter to Abgar* was translated to Constantinople<sup>25</sup>. According to Ioannis Scylitzae, the Byzantine commander George Maniakes captured Edessa and sent the relic to the Emperor Romanos III<sup>26</sup>. The *Letter* was deposited in the imperial Pharos chapel of the Great Palace – the major church-reliquary of the Christian world<sup>27</sup>. The *Mandylion*, since 944, and the *Keramion*, since 968, had been placed there. Thus, Byzantine emperors had collected a complete set of most precious Christ’s relics from Edessa, which were settled among other greatest relics of the Passion (such as the Crown of Thorns, the Holy Nails, and the Shroud)<sup>28</sup>. In conjunction with these events a new version of the Abgar story has appeared, and soon became wide-spread throughout the Byzantine world<sup>29</sup>.

This version was taken from the so-called *Epistula Abgari*, in which Christ’s *Letter* was complemented by a large new section at the end<sup>30</sup>. First of all, Christ clearly confirms the miraculous power of the *Letter* itself, saving people in all types of circumstances and healing



3. The discovery of the Mandylion in the niche at the Edessa gate, a scene of the silver frame of the Genova Mandylion, early 14th century, Genoa, church of San Bartolomeo degli Armeni



4. The bishop of Edessa bears the Keramidion, a scene of the silver frame of the Genova Mandylion, early 14th century, Genoa, church of San Bartolomeo degli Armeni

them from all kinds of illness. This version includes a statement purportedly by Christ stating that the letter was written by his own hand and imprinted by his own seals. The number of seals is seven. No doubts that it is a literary source of the iconographic motif of the *Mandylion* image in the eleventh-century murals of Saklikilise, which was the starting point of our discussion. Moreover, we learn from the *Epistula Abgari* that every seal bears its own sign or a letter, having a particular meaning. The acronym reads as following: +ΨΧΕΤΡΑ.

The first cross and every of six letters reveal different aspects of Christ as the Son of God<sup>31</sup>. A new version of Christ's *Letter* presents a ready-made apotropaic formula to be used in the amulets<sup>32</sup>. The most characteristic example of such magic objects is the fourteenth-century amulet-roll of the Pierpont Morgan Library, which recently became a subject of Glenn Peers' fundamental study<sup>33</sup>. It includes not merely the new version of *Epistula Abgari* but a special guarantee of the efficacy of those signs: anyone carrying these signs, who puts them on his house or possessions, would be protected from all danger and suffering<sup>34</sup>.

However, the most striking characteristic of the New York Amulet Roll is representation of these magic seals-signs, which appeared in the middle of the text of Christ's *Letter to Abgar* (fig. 6)<sup>35</sup>. All the letters are inscribed in the 10 squares-tablets of the grid – an ancient amulet scheme. Six central squares contain seven seals (a sign of cross, in the centre of the second row, and six letters of Christ's acronym). A special character of the image was emphasized by the letters IC XC NI KA (Christ's *nomina sacra*) in the top two squares and in the lowest register, framing the sacred acronym of Christ in the centre of the grid. The picture looks like a typical amulet and a big seal made of a number of smaller seals, which presents a symbolic version of the entire Christ's *Letter to Abgar*. Even more important is that this image could be perceived as an icon of Christ created of letters, each with a specific meaning revealing the multifacets nature of Christ.

It is noteworthy, that the framing inscription IC XC NI KA appears in some instances of the *Holy Face* iconography (the *Keramion* of 1199 from the Nereditsa murals, fig. 7). As I have argued elsewhere, it was not merely a reminder of Constantine the Great's vision and victorious theophany, but an allusion to the Byzantine Eucharistic bread, on which these letters were traditionally imprinted<sup>36</sup>. In this context the form of the rectangular scheme might also recall the square-shaped eucharistic Lamb, cut from the round bread of offering (*prosphora*). The real presence of Christ in the miraculously transformed Eucharistic bread as well as in the miraculous *acheiropoietos* icon, and its paraphrase of the Amulet Roll, were evidently emphasized through such visual combination. The protective grid with sacred letters from the New York Roll creates an iconic image, in which the verbal and the visual were fused in the single whole.

As it seems, this decision had its origin in some earlier examples. For instance in the twelfth-century Georgian manuscript of the *Gelati Gospels* (Tbilisi, Inst. of Manuscripts, Cod Q-908), which includes the *Epistula Abgari* with 10 miniatures of pictorial cycle<sup>37</sup>, there is the same magic acronym of Christ +ΨΧΕΤΡΑ (fig. 8). This time it is not inscribed in a grid or any other amulet scheme. However, just above this inscription of capital letters there is a miniature depicting the Hand of God appearing from the segment of the sky and blessing the holy letters – most powerful seals of Christ (fol. 289r),

who is giving the *Letter* to a messenger in the miniature on the opposite page of the manuscript (fol. 288v). In the twelfth-century *Gelati* version the holy inscription and an iconic image were juxtaposed but still separated visually in two parts. From this point of view the icon-acronym-grid of the New York Amulet Roll presents a further evidence of that syncretism.

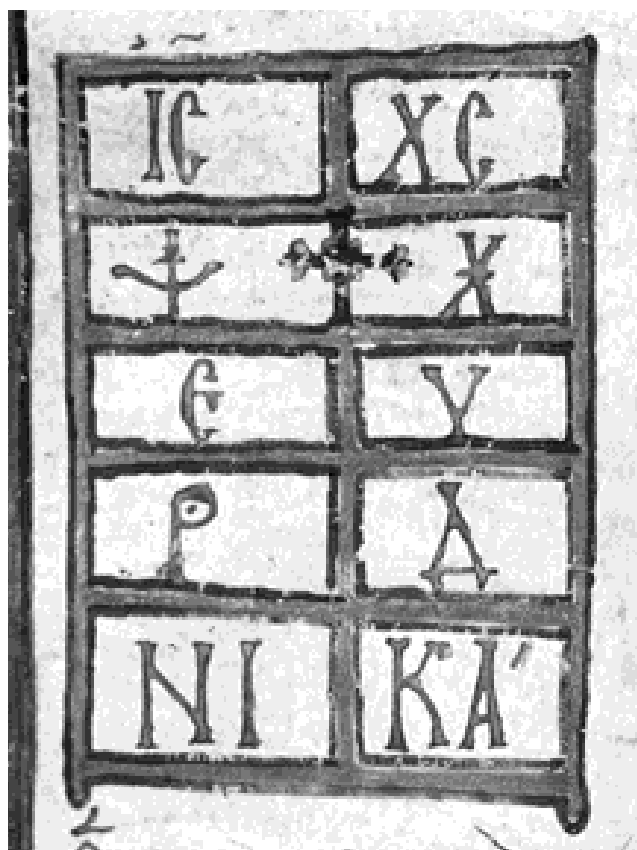
As it seems, imagery of this type could be a direct source of inspiration of the creator of the *Mandylion* image in Sakli kilise. His intention was to present the *Holy Face* and the Holy Script in one inseparable image, duplicating the protective powers of both relics and recalling apotropaic symbolism of seven seals, which in turn could be considered as another image of Christ. Characteristically, that in the Byzantine cultural context of the eleventh century it was a powerful concept reflecting the growing influence of Christ's *Letter to Abgar*, recently translated to Constantinople and reunited with the *Mandylion* in the Pharos chapel. It is noteworthy, that in the *Mandylion* cycles Abgar's reception of the *Mandylion* and of the *Letter* could be represented in two clearly juxtaposed scenes (fig. 9), or in one composition: i.e. Abgar is kissing the *Mandylion* in presence of Ananias holding the *Letter* (from the frame of the Genoa *Mandylion*, fig. 10)<sup>38</sup>.

There are some other symbolic aspects of the *Mandylion* in Sakli kilise. Certainly, the seven seals revealed eschatological associations going back to the Book of Revelation (5:1): «And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals». The image of the scroll imprinted by seven seals occurred in the Early Byzantine iconography in conjunction with the images of Christ. The San Vitale mosaics in Ravenna provide a characteristic example (fig. 11)<sup>39</sup>. Christ on the spherical throne holds the scroll with the seven seals as the Great Judge of the Second Coming. It is interesting that the subject of the Last Theophany played a principal role in the Byzantine hymnography on the feast of the *Mandylion's* translation from Edessa to Constantinople (August 16). In the liturgical context the image “not made by human hands” has been interpreted as a true shining face of God in the moment of Revelation. The apocalyptic associations of seven seals could emphasize the theophanic aspects of the *Mandylion* imagery.

Another aspect of the *Mandylion* symbolism one may see in the roundel form of Christ's portrait. The *Holy Face* looks like a huge seal among others. Christ's image inscribed in the roundel reveals in memory the iconography of the seal of God which appeared in the sixth-century murals. In the fresco of Antinoia in Egypt the Virgin Mary holds a seal-shaped item with the cross in the centre<sup>40</sup>. In the ninth-century *Chludov Psalter* one finds the similar roundel in the hand of the Patriarch Nikiphoros, a renown defender of icons<sup>41</sup> (fig. 12). The seal became a most appropriate metaphor of the Logos and its presence in the world<sup>42</sup>. In conjunction with the *Mandylion* Herbert Kessler convincingly explained this “seal imagery” through the influence of an iconophile



5. Diptych with Abgar holding the Mandylion, ca. 944, Sinai, St. Catherine's monastery



6. Seal of Christ, Ms. M 499, 14<sup>th</sup> century, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, illustrative unit 7



theory of images. According to the principal statement of St. Theodore of Studios, the creation of images can be compared with the process of Incarnation:

A seal is one thing, and its imprint is another. Nevertheless, even before the impression is made, the imprint is in the seal [...] Christ's own image is in Him as He has human form, nevertheless when we see His image materially depicted in different ways, we praise His greatness more magnificently<sup>43</sup>.

From this point of view the *Mandyllion* could be considered as an ideal divine seal imprinted miraculously without human hands. A miniature from an early twelfth-century Vatican manuscript of John Climacus' *Heavenly Ladder* (Vatican, Cod. Ross. 251, fol. 12v) is carefully examined to demonstrate this idea (fig. 13). The *Mandyllion* and *Keramion*, inscribed as new "spiritual tablets" (*plakes pneumatikai*), call to mind the perfect original – the face of Christ himself – that lies behind them and indeed behind all icons<sup>44</sup>. The *Holy Face* imprinted on the different materials of cloth and clay illustrates the iconophiles' argument that icons reflect the Divine Archetype as "a seal in wax" in all material versions. Moreover, two images "not made by human hands" relate to each other as a seal and its imprint (the *Keramion* is depicted in a reverse form).

The comparison of the *Mandyllion* with the tablets of Moses is clearly emphasized in the inscription of the Vatican miniature and in some other examples. The inscriptions with ten commandments on the tablets as well as the image on the cloth were created miraculously by God himself. This parallelism had been already expressed in the *Epistula Abgari*: Christ himself claims that he made the seals on the *Letter* as he did before on the Tablets of Moses. The allusion to the Tablets and a metaphora of the Holy Script became an established motif of Byzantine hymns on the feast of the *Mandyllion*. The powerful topos was certainly known to the image-maker of Sakli kilise who remembered both the Holy Tablets inscribed by the hand of God and the *Letter to Abgar* – the only text written by the hand of Christ, and imprinted by his personal seals.

The aspects of the *Mandyllion* in Sakli Kilise, described above, were contextually important but not crucial for the pivotal message determined, in my view, by two Edessa relics and their imagery. One more Edessan element of the concept was the location of the *Mandyllion* above the arch of the passageway led to the sanctuary. It is connected with the topos of the Edessa holy gate and the sacred niche where the *Mandyllion* was miraculously reproduced. As I argued elsewhere<sup>45</sup> there are numerous testimonies that Byzantine image-makers constantly had this topos in mind. A type of the niche imagery might be found in all the earliest depictions of the *Mandyllion* and *Keramion* in Byzantine iconographic programs. For instance, in the eleventh-century churches in Cappadocia<sup>46</sup>, the *Mandyllion* is represented in the following positions: above the *prothesis* niche, the place for the prepa-



7. The Holy Keramidion, 1199, Novgorod, Saviour church on Nereditsa



8. The miniature with the Hand of God over seven signs-seals, 12th century, Georgia, The Gelati Gospels

ration of the holy gifts (the chapel Göreme 21 and Sakli kilise), or inside the southern apse-niche, just above the altar table (Karanlik kilise, fig. 14), or above the main entrance into the church (Karabash kilise, precisely dated to 1060/61)<sup>47</sup>, or, as in our case, above the arched passageway in the sanctuary barrier in the Sakli kilise<sup>48</sup>. All of these earliest examples prove convincingly that the eleventh-century Byzantine image-makers not only remembered the miracle which occurred over the Edessa gate, but also established deliberate allusions to it with specific liturgical connotations.

The Cappadocian depictions are eloquent examples. However, the most significant example recently came to light<sup>49</sup>. It concerns the images over the main entrance, leading from the narthex into the *naos* of the cathedral of Saint Sophia in Ohrid, Macedonia. The images, most







10. Abgar receives the Holy Face and the Holy Letter at once, a scene of the silver frame of the Genova Mandylion, early 14th century, Genoa, church of San Bartolomeo degli Armeni

probably, were commissioned by archbishop Leo of Ohrid around 1055<sup>50</sup> (fig. 15). Thus in Saint Sophia of Ohrid is the earliest precisely dated example of the *Mandylion* theme in the Byzantine church imagery. No less significant is the fact that it was introduced by the same person who, as it seems, determined iconographic development in mid-eleventh-century Byzantium<sup>51</sup>.

The topos of the Edessa niche is expressed there by an especially designed architectural niche, into which the bust of the *Pantokrator* is inserted. The *Mandylion* is represented just above the niche as a rectangular white cloth with fringes (fig. 16). The wish to stress the unity of the two images of Christ explains the juxtaposition of two images over the doors of Saint Sophia in Ohrid, as well as the placement of the miraculous cloth above the architectural niche with the more traditional Pantokrator image. The positions and postures of the two flanking angels, simultaneously venerating both icons of Christ, indicate their equal status. The *Mandylion*, like an unfurled banner, accentuates the apotropaic and liturgical connotations of the Heavenly Ruler's image. Furthermore, the *Mandylion* could be perceived as a kind of sacred inscription, alluding to the remainder of the *Letter to Abgar* which was at one time inscribed above the Edessa gate. Characteristically, the cloth is decorated by ornamental bands imitating kufic script, which stressed an allusion to a kind of sacredness. It is noteworthy, that beneath the niche originally was a dedicatory inscription that had to be perceived in conjunction with Christ's blessing (this type of practice became traditional for the *Holy Face* imagery above entrances, i.e. the Lagoudera murals of 1192). In some cases the images of the *Holy Face* are represented as a kind of in-

scription, incorporating the imagery of the Moses Tablets and Christ's *Letter to Abgar*<sup>52</sup>.

Thus, in the *Mandylion* program of Ohrid's Sophia one may see the origin of this paradigm. An important factor of the Ohrid program is a sacral environment of the main door to the *naos*: the frontal half-length images of angels, depicted on the vault in front of the cathedral entrance, establish the theophanic context and convey the idea of the church as the Heavenly city. A system of images, concentrated in a particular space at the main door evokes an icon of the ideal church-city with clear allusion to the Edessa city gate. Edessa could serve as such a highly esteemed prototype, because it was the only earthly city, which formally received the protection and blessing of Christ himself expressed in his famous letter to King Abgar. From this point of view the status of Edessa could be compared with that of Jerusalem.

The Edessa topos, combining spatial presence of the *Holy Face* and the Holy Script, may be identified even in manuscript illumination and in the so-called *ars sacra*. A characteristic example is the Russian miniature *The Veneration of the Mandylion* from the Lobkov's Synaxarion of 1282 (Chludov 187, fol. 1. State History Museum, Moscow. Novgorod. 7,6 X 17 cm.)<sup>53</sup>. In the centre of the miniature the *Mandylion* is represented on an ornamented cloth with a semi-circular upper portion, inscribed within an arch-shaped frame (fig. 17).

Two arches are most interesting detail of this miniature: a large one, framing the *Holy Face*, and a small one beneath it. These unusual architectural elements were intended to make an iconographical allusion to the entrance or gates. The large arc united the ideal images of the altar apse, and at the same time, of the niche. Most probably, the Russian miniature-maker, depicting the *Mandylion* above the arched door, kept in mind the location of the original proto-relic in the niche above the gates of Edessa, where, according to tradition, it was presented as the apotropaic image and palladium of the city. At the beginning of the liturgical manuscript it might convey the same meaning through the depiction of the architectural gates to the sacral space of the book.

In the Russian *ars sacra* of the late Middle Ages century an amazing phenomenon has been recently noticed. It concerns the extremely wide use of medallions representing the *Holy Face* (the *Mandylion*) in the upper parts (heads) of Russian objects of private worship – personal icons and pendant reliquaries from the mid-fourteenth to the sixteenth century (fig. 18, a-b). Too large just to be worn on a string, these medallions resemble small containers to preserve relics. Some scholars suggest that this particular form might go back to the amulets with Christ's *Letter to Abgar* (written on small pieces of paper or parchment), which were wide spread in that period in Muscovy, as well as in Greece and in the Christian East<sup>54</sup>. The late fourteenth century *Prayerbook of Metropolitan Cyprian* strictly prohibited the wearing of "Abgar's epistles" on the neck<sup>55</sup>. At the same



11. Christ with the Scroll, 6th century, Ravenna, San Vitale, altar conch



12. St Nikiforos holding an image of Christ looking like a seal, Chludov Psalter, 9th century, Moscow History Museum



13. The Mandylion and Keramidion as spiritual tablets and seals, from the Heavenly Ladder of St John Climax, 12th century, City of Vatican, Vatican Library



14. Mandyllion over the altar-table, 11th century, Cappadocia, Göreme, Cappadocia, Karanlık kilise, apse-niche



15. The arched niche with the images of Christ, ca. 1055, Ohrid, Saint Sophia, over the main entrance from the narthex to the naos

time Christ's *Letter to Aghar* remained highly venerated. The presence of the *Mandyllion* on the top of Russian carved icons, crosses and reliquaries may be regarded as a substitute of that suspicious amulet tradition, however, surviving ancient apotropaic meanings, and still actual intention of the visual fusion of major relics of Edessa.

Characteristically, the spatial imagery of Edessa has also survived: in the pendant icon-triptych of 1456 by the master Ambrosii (from the Trinity Sergeev Monastery near Moscow) the *Mandyllion* appears on the gilded silver head above the wooden carved icon (a reliquary case) with the *Crucifixion* flanked by twelve feasts (figs. 19-20, a-b)<sup>56</sup>. The image of the icon-relic with allusion to the Holy Script is represented above the doors-wings of the triptych. So, the idea of the gate is clearly expressed. Moreover, this "iconic passageway" leads to the relic of the True Cross at the centre within the scene of the *Crucifixion* and to the ideal church space presented by the combination of main feasts. The ideas of the *Mandyllion*, Christ's *Letter*, the protective Edessa gate are combined in this small pendant object for private use. All these themes are incorporated in more general context of the apotropaic miraculous space, which was intimately shared by a bearer keeping the item on his body.

The presence of the Edessa paradigm in the late medieval Russian imagery, looking strange for a first

glance, was actually very well established, as we may see in the depictions of ideal cities, where the *Mandyllion* was quite often represented over the main entrance (for example, the depiction of the Novgorod Kremlin in the sixteenth-century icon with *The Vision of Tarasj*, fig. 23). The source of this iconographic device might be found in the cycles with the *Mandyllion* story in the manuscripts and on the margins of icons, which became widespread since the sixteenth-century. In these pictures the "blessed city" of Edessa looked like a medieval Russian town (figs. 21-22). In a way any sacred entrance to the city or to a monastery revealed a topos of Edessa living in minds of beholders.

The powerful Edessa imagery that I attempted to reveal in the present paper, leads to an important methodological issue. In many cases the discussion of visual culture can not be reduced to a positivist description of artifacts, or to the analysis of theological notions. Some phenomena can be properly interpreted only on the level of images-ideas, I prefer to term them "image-paradigms", which do not coincide with the illustrative pictures or ideological conceptions (figs. 21, 22, 23). This special notion seems a useful *instrumentum studiorum*, which helps to explain a layer of phenomena. As I attempted to show in the present paper, three relics of the *Holy Face*, the Holy Script and the Holy Gate, fusing in the single whole, created an image-paradigm

of the holy city Edessa – a particular miraculous space, existed in the minds of Byzantine image-creators and their beholders. That image-paradigm was not connected with the illustration of any specific text, though it is a part of a continuum of literary and symbolic meanings and associations. It is hard to see in this paradigm just an embodiment of a theological concept though the depth and complexity of its structure is quite obvious. The image-paradigm belonged to visual culture, it was visible and recognizable, but at the same it was not formalized in any fixed state, either in a form of the pictorial scheme or in a mental construction. In this respect the image-paradigm looks similarly to the metaphor that loses its sense in re-telling, or in its deconstruction into parts. For the Byzantines such an irrational and at once “hiero-plastic”<sup>27</sup> perception of the world could be the most adequate reflection of its divine essence. It does not concern any mystic but a special type of consciousness, in which our categories of the artistic, ritual, intellectual were interwoven in the inseparable whole.

The absence of the image-paradigm as a notion in contemporary scholarship does not allow us to reveal a number of phenomena which determined several symbolic structures as well as numerous concrete pictorial motifs. One point seems clear – this phenomenon is



16. The Holy Mandyllion (*detail*). *Saint Sophia, over the main entrance from the narthex to the naos*



17. The preface miniature of the Lobkov Prolog (Sinaxarion), 1286, *Moscow History Museum*





18a-b. Pendant double-sided stone icon with the Dormition and St Nicholas, late 14th century, Moscow, Museum of the Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra



19. Pendant icon-reliquary, 1456, Moscow, Museum of the Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra

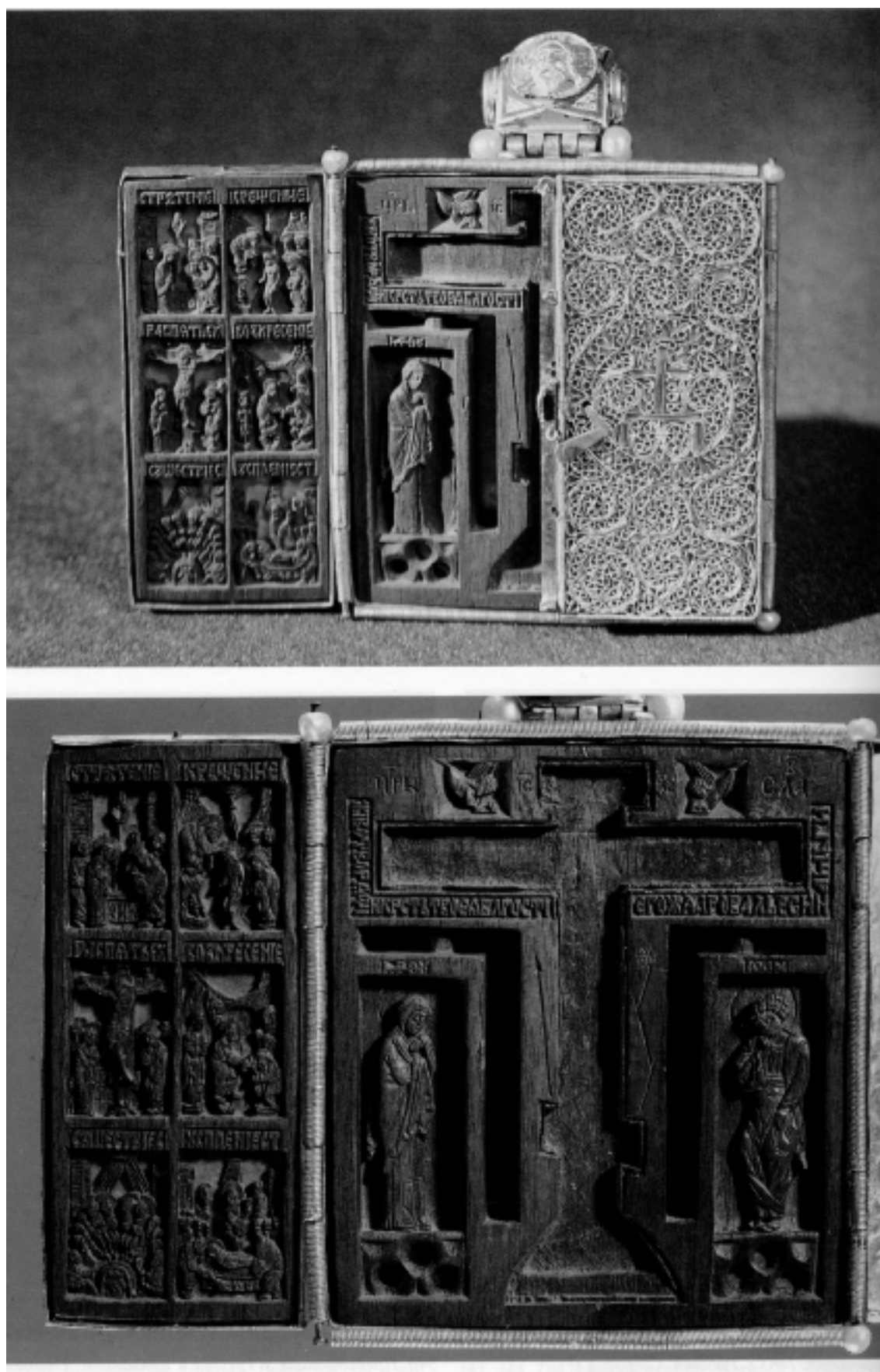
quite distinct from what one may call an iconographic device. We still do not have a proper language to operate with image-paradigms that challenge our fundamental methodological approach to the image as illustration and flat picture. In my view, beyond the image-paradigms our discussion will remain foreign to a medieval way of thinking and any analysis of style, iconography or hierotopy would be limited to merely the external fixation of visual culture. However, the recognition is important in and of itself, and further studies in this direction may reveal some practical approaches and renew our vision of Medieval phenomena.

To sum up, some main points of the present paper include the following:

1. According to the evidence of the Byzantine iconography and some written sources, the relics of the *Holy Face*, *Holy Script* and *Holy Gate* might be considered as a single interwoven whole.
2. That complex entirety could be perceived as an image-paradigm of the holy city of Edessa, which for centuries influenced the minds of the Christian world.
3. The image-paradigm of Edessa remained lost to contemporary scholars because they did not consider a category of this type, and furthermore, the topic of the blessed city of Edessa disappeared in the shadow of a grandiose panoramic view of the Earthly and Heavenly Jerusalem.

<sup>1</sup> Up to the present moment the best collection of written sources concerning the Image of Edessa: E. von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder. Untersuchungen zur christlichen Legende*, Leipzig 1899, 3 vols., vol. I, pp. 102-196, 158-249; vol. II, pp. 39-85; A. Cameron,





20 a-b. Pendant icon-reliquary, details



21. Fyodor Zubov, Leontiy Stepanov, Sergey Rozhkov and others, Discovery of the Mandylion over Edessa Gate, scene from the frame of a Russian icon with the Mandylion, 1678-1679, Moskow, Kremlin Museums, Armoury Chamber

«The History of the Image of Edessa: “The Telling of a Story”», in: *Okeanos. Essays Presented to Ihor Sevcenko. Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vii, 1983, pp. 80-94; A. Lidov, *Sviatoi Mandilion. Istoria relikuii (The Holy Mandylion: A Story of the Relic)*, in: L. Evseeva, A. Lidov, N. Chugreeva, *Spas Nerukotvornyi v russkoi ikone (The Holy Face in Russian Icons)*, Moskva 2005, pp. 12-39.

<sup>2</sup> E. von Dobschütz, 1899 (as in nota 1), vol. i, pp. 203-207; Id., «Der Briefwechsel zwischen Abgar und Jesus», in: *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*, xliii, 1900, pp. 422-486; the story of the letter was discussed in: J.B. Sigal, *EDESSA “The Blessed City”*, Oxford 1970, pp. 62-65, 73-76; and most recently in the dissertation: I. Karaulashvili, *The Epistula Abgari. Compositions, Redactions, Dates*, Ph.D. diss. (CEU, Budapest), 2004.

<sup>3</sup> N. Thierry, «Deux notes à propos du Mandylion», in: *Zograf*, xi, 1981, p. 17; C.J. Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce. Le programme iconographique de l'apside et ses abords*, Paris 1991, pp. 85-87; this program was recently discussed by Kessler: H. Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing. Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art*, Philadelphia 2000, p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> H. Kessler, 2000 (as in note 3), p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> Eusebius Caesariensis, *Historia ecclesiastica*, vol. i, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Dobschütz, 1900 (as in note 2), pp. 422-486.

<sup>7</sup> Sigal, 1970 (as in note 2), p. 73.

<sup>8</sup> The most popular editions with French and English translations: *Éthérie, Journal de voyage*, latin text, ed. by H. Petry, Paris 1943 (Sources chrétiennes 21); J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travel to the Holy Land*, Jerusalem-Warmingster 1981; *Egérie. Itinerarium / Journal de voyage*, ed. by P. Maraval, Paris 1982 (Sources chrétiennes 296); most scholars agreed that Egeria's travel to the Holy Land took place in 381-384.

<sup>9</sup> *Egérie. Itinerarium*, 1982 (as in note 8), pp. 17, 1; 19, 16; Sigal, 1970 (as in note 2), p. 74.

<sup>10</sup> *Egérie. Itinerarium*, 1982 (as in note 8), pp. 19, 16.

<sup>11</sup> Procopius, *De Bello Persico*, vol. ii, pp. 12, 26.

<sup>12</sup> One of newly discovered examples was presented recently at the exhibition *Mandylion. Intorno al Sacro Volto* (Genoa 2004) – a marble plate from Deiva Marina with the *Letter* inscribed in Latin (vii-viii c.): M. Cavana, «Lapide con presunta lettera di Gesù Cristo», in: *Mandylion. Intorno al Sacro Volto*, ed. by C. Dufour Bozzo, G. Wolf & A.R. Calderoni Masetti, Genoa 2004, pp. 68-71.

<sup>13</sup> P. Lemerle, *Philippes et la Macédoine orientale à l'époque chrétienne et byzantines. Recherches d'histoire et d'archéologie*, 2 vols., Paris 1945, pp. 86-90; C. Picard, «Un texte nouveau de la correspondance entre Abgar d'Osroène et Jésus-Christ gravé sur une porte de ville, à Philippes (Macédoine)», in: *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*, xlii, 1920, pp. 41-69; F. Nau, «Une inscription grecque d'Édesse. La lettre de N.-S. J.-C. à Abgar», in: *Revue de l'orient chrétien*, xxi, 1918-19, pp. 217-218; Dobschütz, 1900 (as in note 2), pp. 422-486.

<sup>14</sup> For the most comprehensive publication of the inscription, see: D. Feissel, *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de Macédoine du III<sup>e</sup> au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris 1983, no 222, pp. 185-189, pl. LI-LII.

<sup>15</sup> Dobschütz, 1900 (as in note 2), pp. 422-486; Gregoire, *Recueil*, no 109; for a comparison with the text in Philippi: Feissel, 1983 (as in note 14), pp. 186-187.

<sup>16</sup> The topic is discussed in a forthcoming book by G. Peers, *Orthodox Magic: An Amulet Roll in Chicago and New York* (with extensive bibliography on Late Antique and Early Byzantine amulets); I am very grateful to Glenn who offered me a rare opportunity to read his manuscript before the publication.

<sup>17</sup> I mean special pendant amulets called *avgarozhi*, containing the text of the letter (the name acquired the meaning synonymous of a protecting amulet). On the origins of this tradition in Georgia, see: Z. Skhirtladze, «Canonizing the Apocrypha: the Abgar Cycle in the Alaverdi and Gelati Gospels», in: *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*, ed. by H. Kessler & G. Wolf, Bologna 1998, pp. 69-93.

<sup>18</sup> L. Casson & E.L. Hettich, «Letter of Abgar to Christ and Christ's Reply», in: *Excavations at Nessana*, vol. ii, Literary papyri, Princeton 1950, pp. 144-145; Karaulashvili, 2004 (as in note



22. Deposition of the Mandylinion over Edessa gate, 1796, scene from the frame of a Russian icon with the Mandylinion, Yaroslavl, Museum of Arts



23. The Novgorod Kremlin with the Mandylinion over the gate, fragment of a Russian Icon “The Vision of Tarasii”, 16th century, Novgorod Art Museum

2), p. 129; in 1998 another magical papyrus from Oxyrynchus was published (Oxy. pap. 4469), which also contains letters of Christ's acronym though the number (four) and characters vary considerably of the later tradition of seven seals.

<sup>19</sup> Evagrius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, iv, p. 27.

<sup>20</sup> Dobschütz, 1899 (as in n. 1), vol. i, pp. 102-196, 158-249; E. Patlagean, «L'entrée de la Sainte Face d'Édesse à Constantinople en 944», in: *La religion civique à l'époque médiévale et moderne*, Rome 1995, pp. 21-35.

<sup>21</sup> Dobschütz, 1899 (as in note 1), vol. ii, pp. 59-60.

<sup>22</sup> *Mandylion. Intorno al Sacro Volto*, 2004 (as in note 12), pp. 55-57; for the description, see: C. Dufour Bozzo, *Il "SacroVolto" di Genova*, Rome 1974.

<sup>23</sup> One may find it in MSP of the *Epistula Abgari* and in the Georgian and Armenian translations: Karaulashvili, *Epistula Abgari*, 2004 (as note 2), p. 161.

<sup>24</sup> K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai. The Icons*, vol. i: from the sixth to the tenth century, Princeton 1976, cat. B.58, pp. 94-98; K. Weitzmann, «The Mandylion and Constantine Porphyrogenetos», in: *Cahiers Archéologiques*, xi, 1960, pp. 163-184; A. Lidov, *Vizantijskie ikony Sinaia (Byzantine Icons of Sinai)*, Moscow-Athens 1999, p. 48, no 7; A. Lidov, «Il Dittico del Sinai e il Mandylion», in: *Mandylion. Intorno al Sacro Volto*, 2004 (as note 12), pp. 81-85.

<sup>25</sup> Sigal, 1970 (as in note 2), pp. 217-218.

<sup>26</sup> Ioannis Scylitzae, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. by H. Thurn, Berlin/New York 1973, pp. 386-387.

<sup>27</sup> The *Letter* remained in the chapel until 1185 when it was stolen and disappeared for ever.

<sup>28</sup> For a new catalogue of relics see: M. Bacci, «Relics of the Pharos Chapel. A View from the Latin West», in: *Eastern Christian Relics*, ed. by A. Lidov, Moscow 2003, pp. 234-248. For the role played by this church-reliquary in Constantinople, see: A. Lidov, «Bogomater' Farosskaya. Imperatorskii khram-relikvarii kak konstantinopolskii Grob Gospoden' (The Theotokos of the Pharos. The Imperial church-reliquary as the Constantinopolitan Holy Sepulchre)», in: *Vizantijskij mir. Iskustvo Konstantinopol'a i natsionalnye traditsii (The Byzantine World. The Art of Constantinople and National Traditions)*, Moscow 2005, pp. 79-108.

<sup>29</sup> The new version could be connected with the new translation of both letters from the Syriac original, as the Arab historian Yahya of Antioch informs us: R.J.H. Gottheil, «An Arabic Version of the Abgar Legend», in: *Hebraica*, vii, 1890-1891, pp. 268-277.

<sup>30</sup> *Acta Apostolorum Apokrypha*, ed. by R.A. Lipsius, Leipzig 1891, pp. 281-285; Dobschütz, 1899 (as in note 1), vol. i, pp. 203-207; Id., 1900 (as in note 2), pp. 422-486.

A most recent discussion of the *apocrypha* with a new dating of the text to the sixth century, see: I. Karaulashvili, *The Date of the Epistula Abgar, Apocrypha*, xiii, 2002, pp. 85-111. According to this author, the *apocrypha* was known long before 944 and, probably, included a story of seals. Yet a new version, as Dobschütz suggested, could appear after 1032 when the original Syriac of the letters was translated into Greek.

<sup>31</sup> The text follows: «For the entire letter was written by my own hand with my seal. I have sealed it with seven seals that are below: +ΨΧΕΥΡΑ. And this is the meaning of the seven seals. The Cross shows that I will be voluntarily nailed to the Cross. The ψι shows I am not a mere man, yet in truth perfectly man. The χη shows that I rest above the Cherubim. The Α shows that I am the first God, and after me there is no other God. The Ϟ shows I am the High King and God of Gods. The σθ shows that I have become the redeemer of the race of men. The δ shows that I live entirely and perpetually and forever and I shall abide throughout the ages. I am a bulwark of those who hope in me and I have validated (or: sealed) infallible promises. Christ our Lord. Whoever hopes in You, does not fail. Amen», (Karaulashvili, 2004 [as in note 12], p. 128).

Peers comments the text: «The signs described in the text are a kind of acronym: the meaning of the first sign, the cross, is obvious; Christ stated that he is not man merely or apparently but

truly, the *psi* standing for *psilos*; the *chi* states that Christ stands over the cherubim; the *epsilon* that Christ, the *ego*, is God, that is above all and except for him no other God exists; the *upsilon* represents his status as high king, the *upsilon basileus* and God of Gods; the *rho* stands for him as deliverer, *o rystes*, of humanity; and the *alpha* designating his primacy and eternity», Peers, forthcoming (as in note 16), p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> Similar apotropaic formulas were widely known in the Mediterranean since the ancient times: D. Frankfurter, «Amuletic Invocations of Christ for Health and Fortune», in: *Religions of Late Antiquity in Practice*, ed. by R. Valantasis, Princeton 2000, pp. 340-343; R. Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets. The Inscribed Gold, Silver, Copper, and Bronze Lamellae*, Opladen 1994, pp. 331-346.

<sup>33</sup> G. Peers, forthcoming (as in note 16); the pictorial cycle of this Amulet Roll was discussed: S. Der Nersessian, «La légende d'Abgar d'après un rouleau illustré de la Bibliothèque Pierpont Morgan à New York», in: *Actes du IV<sup>e</sup> congrès international des études byzantines*, Sofia 1936, pp. 98-106 [= *Études byzantines et arméniennes*, Louvain 1973, pp. 175-181].

<sup>34</sup> Peers, forthcoming (as in note 16), p. 8.

<sup>35</sup> For analysis of this characteristic, see: *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>36</sup> A. Lidov, «The Miracle of Reproduction. The Mandylion and Keramion as a Paradigm of the Sacred Space», in: *L'Immagine di Cristo. Dall'Acheropita alla mano d'artista*, ed. by C. Frommel, G. Morello, G. Wolf, Città del Vaticano 2006, pp. 17-41. This inscription, known since the fourth century, became a well established formula in the Middle Byzantine period; «The prosphora is distinguished from ordinary bread only by the rectangular impression on it which contains the letters IC XC NI KΑ ("Jesus Christ conquers, or is victorious")», hereinafter referred to as the eucharistic formula of John Chrisostom»: G. Galavaris, *Bread and the Liturgy. The Symbolism of Early Christian and Byzantine Bread Stamps*, Madison/London 1970, p. 65 ff.

<sup>37</sup> Skhirtladze, *Canonizing the Apocrypha: the Abgar Cycle in the Alaverdi and Gelati Gospels*, 1998 (as note 17), pp. 80-82, pl. 10-16; a cycle of miniatures of the Abgar *apocrypha* placed at the end of the Gospel text (cc. 287r-292v).

<sup>38</sup> As an example of juxtaposition of two scenes, see the Moscow *Menologion* of 1063 (A. Lidov & A. Zakharova, «La storia del re Abgar e il Mandylion nelle miniature del Menologio del 1063», in: *Mandylion. Intorno al Sacro Volto*, 2004 [as in note 12], pp. 72-77); two relics are presented in one picture: *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>39</sup> C.O. Nordström, *Ravenna Studien*, Stockholm 1953, p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> I. Nikolajević, «Le "sceau du Christ" sur une mosaïque de Dures», in: *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti*, xxi, 1985, pp. 3-12.

<sup>41</sup> M.V. Schepkina, *Miniatiury Khludovskoi Psaltyri*, Moscow 1977, c. 23v.

<sup>42</sup> For the Judaic and Middle Platonist backgrounds of the seal as the image of God, see: M. Barker, *The Great High Priest. The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy*, London/New York 2003, p. 282.

<sup>43</sup> Kessler, 2000 (as in note 3), p. 70.

<sup>44</sup> The Vatican miniature was carefully examined by Herbert Kessler in his entry of a recent catalogue of the Roman exhibition: *Il Volto di Cristo*, ed. by G. Morello & G. Wolf, Rome 2000, p. 93.

<sup>45</sup> A. Lidov, 2006 (as in note 36), pp. 17-42.

<sup>46</sup> N. Thierry, «Deux notes à propos du Mandylion», in: *Zograf*, xi, 1981, pp. 16-19; C.J. Lévy, 1991 (as in note 3), Paris 1991, pp. 85-87, 126-127, 134, 268.

<sup>47</sup> A fresco fragment on the western wall of the nave reveals a part of the cloth which identifies it as the *Mandylion* image: J. Lévy, 1991 (as in note 3), p. 268; the placement of the *Holy Face* in the niche above the doors to the church remains traditional in the twelfth century (the cathedral of the cave monastery Vardzia in Georgia, the Lagoudera church on Cyprus and others).

<sup>48</sup> In this church the *Mandylion* was depicted twice; another time it appeared over prothesis niche on the northern wall behind the sanctuary barrier; see: Thierry, 1981 (as in note 3), p. 17; J. Lévy, 1991 (as in note 3), pp. 85-87.

<sup>49</sup> A. Lidov, 2006 (as in n. 36), p. 38, fig. 7.

<sup>50</sup> H. Gelzer, *Der Patriarchat von Achrida*, Leipzig 1902, p. 6; the archbishop Leo was earlier chartophylax of the Great Church and one of the most powerful persons in the Constantinopolitan hierarchy.

<sup>51</sup> In his iconographic program archbishop Leo realised many of the new pictorial devices connected principally with the Great Schism of 1054, which he himself initiated. A. Lidov, «Byzantine Church Decoration and the Great Schism of 1054», in: *Byzantion*, LVIII/2, 1998, pp. 381-405; on the crucial role played by Leo of Ohrid in the theological polemics with the Latins, see: M.H. Smith, «*And Taking Bread...*»: *Cerularius and the Azyme Controversy of 1054*, Paris 1978, p. 107.

<sup>52</sup> A good example is provided by the fourteenth-century wall-paintings of Maligrad in Albania (the Prespa lake): the *Mandylion* and the *Keramion* are displayed there as a declaration on the eastern wall beneath the *Deesis* and just above the altar apse – the entrance into the most sacred zone of the church.

<sup>53</sup> This liturgical book, called *Prolog* (a *Synaxarion* with short lives of saints arranged according to the feast days of the church year), was intended for the *Holy Mandylion* church in Novgorod; the rare iconography of the headpiece miniature may be explained by the dedication of the church to the *Holy Mandylion*, where the *Prolog* was certainly read; see: A. Lidov, «La venerazione del Mandylion nel Prologo Lobkov», in: *Mandylion. Intorno al Sacro Volto*, 2004 (as in note 12), pp. 92-95.

<sup>54</sup> A. Ryndina, «The Image-Reliquary. The Holy Face in Russian *Ars Sacra* from the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Century», in: *Eastern Christian Relics*, 2003 (as in note 28), p. 580.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*; W.F. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight. Magic in Russia*, University Park, Pennsylvania 1999, pp. 293-294.

<sup>56</sup> V.I. Baldin & T.N. Manushina, *The Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra*, Moscow 1996, figg. 348-351, p. 533.

<sup>57</sup> The *hieroplastia* – a visible presentation of spiritual phenomena – appears in the terminology of Pseudo-Dionisius Areopagitus: G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexikon*, Oxford 1961, p. 670.