

Jerusalem as Narrative Space

Erzählraum Jerusalem

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A BYZANTINE JERUSALEM. THE IMPERIAL PHAROS CHAPEL AS THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

Alexei Lidov

Constantinople was perceived as a holy city, the Second Jerusalem—the expected place of the Second Coming. This is exactly how it was described by medieval pilgrims who moved in this city from one shrine to another, as in a spatial icon whose sacred meaning was much more important than its architectural and archeological realities. In this context the churches were rather perceived as unique repositories of relics and miraculous icons that were active in these particular sacred spaces.¹ It is noteworthy that saints' relics² were inserted into the domes, walls and columns of churches: this transformed the material architecture into a unique reliquary—a precious frame for the spiritual substance that existed in invisible, but internally organized and continuously changing, space.

In this study we shall examine the sacred space of greatest importance in Byzantium—the church of the Virgin of the Pharos (Θεοτόκος τοῦ Φάρου) which served from 864 until 1204 as an imperial repository of the main relics of Christendom. This most venerable church did not survive. It must have been completely destroyed during the Latin conquest of Constantinople and not re-used later. Even its ruins have not been found and its location can only be indicated approximately. That is probably why for a long time scholars did not fully realize the unique significance of this shrine: in a way it stands in the shadow of the visible magnificence of Hagia Sophia. However a large number of preserved written sources allow us to make an attempt at the historical reconstruction of this most important church-reliquary.³

¹ For a more detailed discussion of this approach see Alexei Lidov: *Sacred Space of Relics*, in: *Christian Relics in the Moscow Kremlin*, ed. by Alexei Lidov, Moscow 2000, pp. 8-10; id.: *Hierotopy. Spatial Icons and Image Paradigms in Byzantine Culture*, Moscow 2009.

² Natalia Teteriatnikova: *Relics in Walls, Pillars and Columns of Byzantine Churches*, in: *Eastern Christian Relics*, ed. by Alexei Lidov, Moscow 2003, pp. 74-92.

³ Jean Ebersolt: *Le Grand Palais de Constantinople et le Livre des Cérémonies*, Paris 1910, p.104-109; Rodolphe Guiland: *L'église de la Vierge du Phare*, in: *Byzantinoslavica*, 12, 1951, pp. 232-234 (id.: *Études de topographie de Constantinople byzantine*, vol. I, Berlin/Amsterdam, 1969, pp. 311-325); Raymond Janin: *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire Byzantin*, Part I: *Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat œcuménique*, vol. III, Paris 1953,

Recently, due to great interest in the subject of relics, the Pharos church became the centre of attention for many scholars.⁴

This church was located in the part of the Great imperial palace known as the “sacred palace” (*to hieron palation*), which Latin pilgrims often referred to as *Boukoleon* (fig. 1, 2).⁵ It stood on a high platform close to the *Pharos* (lighthouse), from which it derived its name. The church was located in a symbolically important place: in the heart of the Great Palace, to the south-east of the Chrysotriklinos (the Golden Chamber—the main throne room), the place where the main imperial ceremonies began and ended.⁶ Between the Chrysotriklinos and the church of the Virgin, there was a terrace that functioned as an atrium, from which the beacon could be seen.⁷ On the south side there was a bath (*loutron*). The north side was adjacent to the imperial apartments.⁸ A special architectural extension of the narthex on the north side also connected the church to the palatine treasury. Close to the church there were small chapels of Saints Elias and Clement, built by Basil I (867–886), and of Saint Demetrius, constructed a bit later by Leo the Wise (886–912).⁹

pp. 241–245; Romilly J.H. Jenkins/Cyril Mango: The Date and Significance of the Tenth Homily of Photius, in: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 9/10, 1956, pp. 125–140, here pp.131–140.

⁴ Ioli Kalavrezou: Helping Hands for the Empire. Imperial Ceremonies and the Cult of Relics at the Byzantine Court, in: *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. by Henry Maguire, Washington 1994, pp. 55–57. The problem of the Pharos chapel was reflected in the papers by Michele Bacci, Alexei Lidov, Irina A. Shalina and Gerhard Wolf at the Moscow symposium of 2000, see: Michele Bacci: Relics of the Pharos Chapel. A View from the Latin West, in: *Eastern Christian Relics* 2003 (as in n. 2), pp.234–248. See also: *Le trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle*, exhibition catalogue, ed. by Jannic Durand/Marie-Pierre Laffitte, Paris 2001; Paul Magdalino: L’église du Phare et les reliques de la Passion à Constantinople (VIIe/VIIIe–XIIIe siècles), in: *Byzance et les reliques du Christ*, ed. by Jannic Durand/Bernard Flusin, Paris 2004, pp.15–30.

⁵ On the Great Palace and its churches see Salvador Miranda: *Les palais des empereurs byzantins*, México1965, pp. 104–107.

⁶ On the Chrysotriklinium and surrounding rooms see still actual: D. F. Beliaev: *Byzantina*, vol. I, Saint Petersburg 1893, pp.10–45.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁸ On these chamber rooms there is evidence by Anna Komnena (a. 1105) who mentions that they were situated to the left of the palatine church of the Virgin and were connected with this church by a door: “This imperial bedroom, where the Emperors then slept, was situated on the left side of the chapel in the palace dedicated to the Mother of God; most people said it was dedicated to the great martyr Demetrius. To the right was an atrium paved with marble. And the door leading to this from the chapel was always open to all. They intended, therefore, to enter the chapel by this door, to force open the doors which shut off the Emperor’s bedroom and thus to enter and despatch him by the sword”. Anna Komnena: *The Alexiad*, trans. by Elizabeth A. Dawes, London 1928, XII, 6, p. 313.

⁹ *Guillard* 1969 (as in n. 3), vol. I, pp. 313–325. Two churches of the Virgin and of St. Demetrios shared the common door to pass through from one church to another (*Constantini*

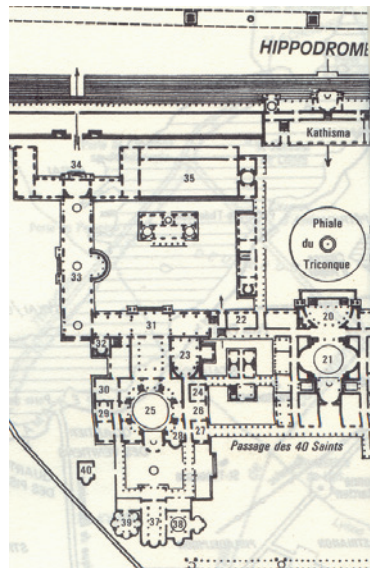


Fig. 1. Part of the plan-reconstruction of the Great Palace in Constantinople (nr. 37: the church of the Virgin of the Pharos)

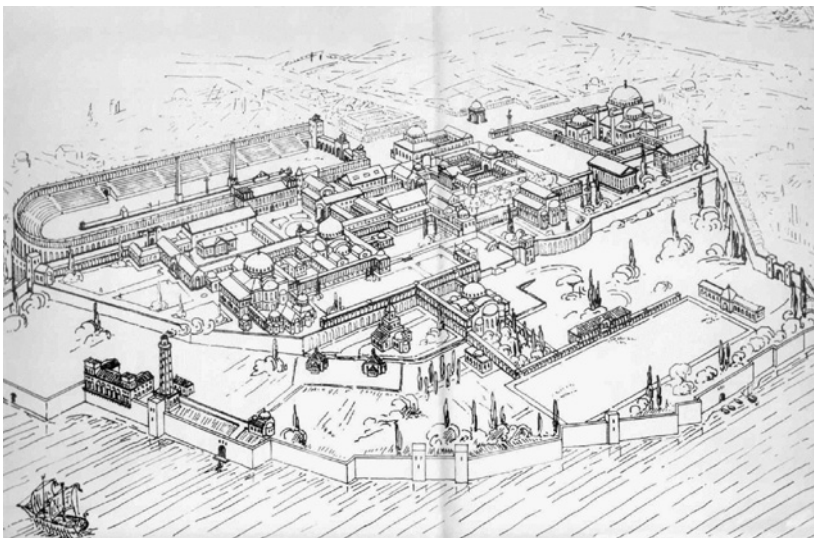


Fig. 2. Possible reconstruction of the Great Palace in Constantinople

The church dedicated to the Virgin ranked as the most important among about 30 other churches and chapels within the Great Palace. Apparently, it was built under Constantine V and was first mentioned in 769 in connection with the betrothal of Leo IV and Irene of Athens¹⁰ that took place in the church. Michael I and his family sought refuge in it after Michael's deposition by Leo V, who was killed in the same church seven years later.¹¹ Some scarce details indicate, however, that during this period the church already served as a personal church for the Byzantine emperors. Soon after the Iconoclastic controversy, Michael III (842-867) rebuilt the church and lavishly decorated it. Byzantine historians Simeon Logothetis, Leo the Grammarian, the Continuator of George Amartol and Pseudo-Simeon indicate the same thing: "Michael ordered to saw through the green coffin of Koprionymos and made barriers in the church built by him in the palace of the Pharos".¹² According to the date of Photius' homily X, the new church was probably consecrated in 864.

THE COLLECTION OF RELICS

In the meantime the church became the repository of the most important sacred relics of the Empire—the imperial church-reliquary and one of the manifestations of the Triumph of Orthodoxy.¹³ It is known that iconoclastic emperors refrained from venerating relics.¹⁴ Collecting relics from all over the eastern Christian world, especially in territories conquered by Muslims, became one of the first priorities under the rule of the Macedonian dynasty that pursued numerous and often successful wars on the eastern borders.¹⁵ Relics were sent to the different churches of Constantinople,

Porphyrogeniti imperatoris De ceremoniis aulae Byzantinae libri duo, ed. Johann Jacob Reiske, Bonn 1829-1830 [1. edition Leipzig 1754], 2. voll., I, 31, p. 171).

¹⁰ Theophanes: *Chronographia*, ed. Carl De Boor, Leipzig 1883-1885, p. 444. Magdalino believes that the church could exist in the seventh century: Magdalino 2004 (as in n. 4), p. 15.

¹¹ *Vita Ignatii*, in: *Patrologia Graeca*, 105, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, col. 493.

¹² Jenkins/Mango 1956 (as in n. 3), p. 135.

¹³ According to Magdalino's hypothesis this could be constructed as a reliquary for Jerusalem relics by the late seventh century in conjunction with the Arabic invasions and a necessity to create the 'Holy Land' in Constantinople (Magdalino 2004 [as in n. 4], pp. 24-27).

¹⁴ Cf. John Wortley: Iconoclasm and Leipsanoclasm. Leo III, Constantine V and the Relics, in: *Byzantinische Forschungen*, 8, 1982, pp. 253-279.

¹⁵ Bernard Flusin: Les reliques de la Sainte-Chapelle et leur passé impérial à Constantinople, in: *Le trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle* 2001 (as in n. 4), pp. 26-27.

while the main relics connected to the Redemptive Sacrifice and the Lord's Passion were placed in the church of the Virgin of the Pharos, which was open to numerous pilgrims from all over the world.

The collection, unique in its completeness, was formed over several centuries, and in the eleventh century it made a great impression on Christian pilgrims. Around 1200, Nicholas Mesarites, a *skeuophylax* (guardian) of the church of the Virgin of the Pharos, left the most detailed evidence about the ten most known relics of Christ's Passion, which he described in the rhetorical "decatalogue"¹⁶ using the topos of the Ten Commandments. He enumerates the relics one by one: the Crown of Thorns, the Holy Nail, Christ's collar shackle, the Burial Shroud, the Lention—the towel with which he dried the apostles' feet, the Holy Lance, the Purple Robe, the Reed, Christ's Sandals, and a piece from his tomb stone. Besides these ten relics of the Passion, Mesarites talks about the two most prominent miraculous images of Christ "not made by human hands," one on a cloth and the other on a tile, which were likewise kept in the palatine church.¹⁷

Mesarites's list is not complete, even in regard to the major relics. Pilgrims' descriptions complete it. We know of more than fifteen such accounts from the eleventh to the early thirteenth century.¹⁸ The majority of these are simply lists of relics, but there are also more complete reports, for example the *Pilgrim's Book* by Anthony of Novgorod,¹⁹ the *Mercati Anonymus*²⁰ or the recently published *Tarragonensis Anonymus*.²¹ The Pilgrims mention two segments of the True Cross (Robert de Clari talks about two pieces of the True Cross as large as the leg of a man).²² There

¹⁶ August Heisenberg: *Die Palastrevelution des Johannes Komnenos*, Würzburg 1907, pp. 29-32; Nikolai Mesarit: *Dekalog o relikviakh Strastei, khraiaschiesia v tserkvi Bogomateri Faroskoi* (Nicholaos Mesarites: *The Dekalog on the Passion Relics, kept in the church of the Virgin of the Pharos*), ed. and trans. by A. Nikiphorova, in: *Relikvii v Vizantii i Drevnei Rusi. Pismennye Istochniki (Relics in Byzantium and Medieval Rus'. Written Sources)*, ed. by Alexei Lidov, Moscow 2006, pp. 198-206.

¹⁷ Heisenberg 1907 (as in n. 16), p. 32; Nikolai Mesarit ed. 2006 (as in n. 16), p. 205.

¹⁸ See a list of all relics of the Pharos chapel as they are reflected in various pilgrims' accounts: Bacci 2003 (as in n. 4), pp. 234-248.

¹⁹ *Kniga Palomnik. Skazanie mest sviatykh vo Tsaregrade Antonia archiepiskopa Novgorodskogo v 1200 godu* (Pilgrim's Book by Anthony of Novgorod), ed. by Kh. Lopareva, in: *Pravoslavnyi Palestinskii Sbornik*, 13 (3), 1899, pp. 18-19, XLIX.

²⁰ A list of relics in the Pharos chapel see Krijnie Ciggaar: Une Description de Constantinople traduite par un pelerin anglais, in: *Revue des études byzantines*, 34, 1976, pp. 211-267.

²¹ Krijnie N. Ciggaar: Une Description de Constantinople dans le Tarragonensis 55, in: *Revue des études byzantines*, 53, 1995, pp. 117-140, 120-121.

²² Robert de Clari: *La conquete de Constantinople*, ed. by Philippe Lauer, Paris 1956, p. 82.

was also a phial with the blood of Christ, parts of the Maphorion, and the Girdle and footwear of the Mother of God. The most detailed list belongs to the *Mercati Anonymus*, the Latin pilgrim from the end of the eleventh century, who used a Byzantine guide to the shrines.²³ The collection of relics of John the Baptist stands out among numerous saints' relics: his head, his right hand "with which they enthroned the tsar" according to the report of Anthony of Novgorod, his hair, parts of his clothes and sandals, and his iron staff with a cross.²⁴

The history of the formation of this collection is a separate and rather complicated question. We possess only a few facts that can be accurately dated. It is known that after 614, under Emperor Heraclius, the relics of the Holy Sponge and the Holy Lance that had been kept in Jerusalem were sent to Constantinople.²⁵ In 944, on 16 August, the Holy Mandyllion was placed in the church of the Pharos²⁶—this event is celebrated annually by the Orthodox Church. In 967/968 the Keramion from Edessa²⁷ appeared in the palatine church. Under John Tzimiskes, in 975, the Sandals of Christ were brought from the Syriac town of Memptetze.²⁸ In 1032, Christ's letter to Abgar²⁹ was sent to Emperor Romanos III from Edessa. The final addition to the church's collection of Passion relics took place in 1169/1170, when the emperor Manuel Comnenus translated the Stone of Lamentation from Ephesus³⁰ to the Pharos church-reliquary.

²³ Ciggaar 1976 (as in n. 21), pp. 241-267.

²⁴ On the relics of John the Baptist see Kalavrezou 1994 (as in n. 4), pp. 55-57.

²⁵ Jean Ebersolt: *Les sanctuaires de Byzance*, Paris 1921, pp. 10, 24.

²⁶ Evelyne Patlagean: L'entree de la Sainte Face d'Edesse a Constantinople en 944, in: *La religion civique a l'epoque medievale et moderne*, Rome 1995, pp. 21-35; Alexei Lidov: Svyatoi Mandyllion. Istoria relikvii (The Holy Mandyllion. A Story of the Relic), in: Lilii M. Evseeva/ Alexei Lidov/ Natal'i N. Chugreeva: *Spas Nerukotvornyi v Russkoi Ikone (The Holy Face in Russian Icons)*, Moscow 2005, pp. 15-39.

²⁷ *The History of Leo the Deacon. Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century*, Introduction, translation, and annotations by Alice-Mary Talbot, Washington 2005, IV, 10, pp. 47-48, 119. Two different relics of the Keramion were discussed in: Alexei Lidov: The Miracle of Reproduction. The Mandyllion and Keramion as a paradigm of the sacred space, in: *L'Immagine di Cristo dall'Acheropiita dalla mano d'artista*, ed. by Christoph Frommel/ Gerhard Wolf, Citta del Vaticano/Rome 2006, pp. 17-41.

²⁸ *History of Leo the Deacon* ed. 2005 (as in n. 27), X, 4, pp. 27, 47.

²⁹ *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. by Hans Thurn, Berlin/New York 1973, pp. 386-387.

³⁰ Cyril Mango: Notes on Byzantine Monuments, in: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 23/24, 1970, III. Tomb of Manuel I Comnenus, pp. 372-375. It was an event of great significance—the emperor revealed the tradition of the translation of the Passion relics to Constantinople: Magdalino 2004 (as in n. 4), p. 29.

Despite the scarcity of exact dates we can be sure that the main Passion relics were already in the Pharos church by the second half of the tenth century. In a speech dating to 958, which Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus delivered to his army fighting in the East, he describes dispatching the holy water that emanated from the lavation of the Lord's relics. This is not only evidence of the existence of a special rite that later became widespread in the Orthodox world, but it also enumerates the relics that assured the exceptional quality of the sanctified water. The True Cross, the Lance, the Titulus, the Reed, the Blood which flowed from His rib, the Tunic, the swaddling clothes and the winding sheet were used in lavation.³¹

Another important document is the *Limburg Staurotheke*—a Byzantine imperial reliquary that, according to an inscription, dates to 968-985.³² The central relic of the True Cross (seven pieces incorporated in the sycamore cross) is framed by ten relics placed in separate sections with inscriptions. The majority of these relics come from the Pharos church, namely the winding sheets, the towel of the washing of the feet, the Crown of Thorns,³³ the Purple Robe, the Shroud and the Sponge. We have a description of another True Cross reliquary that was sent to Armenia in 983 by the Emperors Basil II and Constantine VIII. The main relic, the exceptional gift of the Byzantine sovereigns, was supplemented by pieces of the Holy Sponge, the Lention, the winding sheets and the Holy Nail.³⁴ The sanctity of the Pharos church was thereby distributed over the Christian world through the imperial gifts.³⁵

³¹ R. Vári: Zum historischen Exzerptenwerke des Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos, in: *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 17, 1908, pp. 83, 23-36.

³² Nancy Ševčenko: The Limburg Staurothek and its Relics, in: *Thymiamata ste mnemeta Laskarinas Mpoura*, ed. Rena Andreade et al., 2 vols., Athens 1996, pp. 289-294; Holger A. Klein: *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz. Die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer kunsthistorischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland*, Wiesbaden 2004, pp. 105-112.

³³ This oldest testimony of the presence of the Crown of Thorns in Constantinople suggests that it appeared in the Byzantine capital much earlier than 1063.

³⁴ Anatole Frolov: *La Relique de la Vrai Croix*, Paris 1961, no. 151.

³⁵ This appears to be a steady tradition and its eloquent example is a pectoral reliquary with the Harrowing of Hell from the Kremlin Armoury. It was produced in Constantinople in the 12th century and was later sent to Rus'; see I. A. Sterligova: *Ikona-moschevik s 'Soshestviem vo ad' (The Icon-Reliquary with the Descent into Hell)*, in: *Christian Relics in the Moscow Kremlin*, ed. by Alexei M. Lidov, Moscow 2000, pp. 36-39. The reverse of the icon-enkolpion with the enamel representation of Anastasis is decorated by the Greek inscription that enumerates the relics inside this little chest, namely Coat, Chlamys, Lention, Shroud, Crown of Thorns and Blood of Christ. This collection of relics, that also included the remains of selected saints, points out to the sacred objects of the Pharos church and to the Byzantine emperor as the only possible patron of the precious enkolpion. It was only

THE VENERATION OF RELICS AND LITURGICAL RITES

The Pharos church relics were especially venerated on certain days of the liturgical year. In *De Ceremoniis* by Constantine Porphyrogenitus (913-959), we read about the veneration of the True Cross and Holy Lance.³⁶ A very important rite took place on the Sunday of the Veneration of the Precious Cross, when the Emperor gathered in the palace with his friends to venerate the True Cross in the church of the Theotokos of the Pharos.³⁷ The same rite took place when the Sunday of Great Lent coincided with the feast of the Annunciation. After the *orthros* of 1 August, on the Feast of the Procession of the Venerable Wood of the True Cross, the Emperor kissed the Cross reliquary that was exhibited in the church for veneration, after which the Cross was taken out and put in front of the church of Saint Basil at Lausiac, where all the members of the *synklitos* could worship it.³⁸ The reliquary of the True Cross, according to some ninth- to eleventh-century Greek *menaia*, was taken to Saint Sophia where it was used in the rite of the Lesser Blessing of Waters on 1 August, and carried in processions around the city until 14 August, when this sacred relic was taken back to the Pharos church.³⁹ The Holy Lance was especially venerated during the Passion Week services, and it was exhibited for veneration on Great Friday.⁴⁰

De Ceremoniis gives us fragmentary facts about the services held in the Pharos church. There, on Sundays, the Emperor attended liturgy with his special guests. What's more, the chanting was done by eunuchs from the imperial chambers and by the special "imperial clergy" (*basilikos kleros*), who most likely served in the Pharos church and the surrounding churches.⁴¹ The rest of the court was probably at the church of Saint Stephen at the Hippodrome. According to the ceremony, the processions that moved

with his permission that the precious pieces could be taken from the great relics of the Pharos church.

³⁶ Hans Georg Thümmel: Kreuz, Reliquien und Bilder im Zeremonienbuch des Konstantins Porphyrogennetos, in: *Byzantinische Forschungen*, 18, 1992, pp. 119-126, 123-124.

³⁷ *De Ceremoniis*, ed. 1829 (as in n. 9), I, 29, 161. On the origins of this rite in Jerusalem after: Frolov 1961 (as in n. 35), p. 192.

³⁸ *De Ceremoniis*, ed. 1830 (as in n. 9), II, 8, 539.

³⁹ Mikhail Zheltov: Relikvii v vizantiiskikh chinoposledovaniakh (Relics in Byzantine ceremonials), in: *Relikvii v Vizantii i Drevnei Rusi. Pismennye istochniki (Relics in Byzantium and Medieval Rus'. Written sources)*, ed. by Alexei Lidov, Moscow 2006, pp. 67-108.

⁴⁰ *De Ceremoniis*, ed. 1829 (as in n. 9), I, 179-182; II, 242.

⁴¹ Magdalino 2004 (as in n. 4), p. 22.

along the Great Palace, with stations at different churches, the Throne room and other chambers, often terminated in the Pharos church. For example, on the eve of the feast of Saint Elias,⁴² people gathered at the Hippodrome, the gates of the palace were opened for them and the whole procession moved inside up to the Pharos church, where the vesper was served (next to the chapel of Saint Elias). We also find in *De Ceremoniis* a number of rites that took place in the imperial church. One of the most original rites being the emperor's giving away of apples and cinnamon on Great Thursday, which took place in the narthex of the Theotokos of the Pharos.⁴³ On the whole, scholars of *De Ceremoniis* notice that the Pharos church played a special role in the Holy Week liturgies, but the text contains no mention of the everyday services held in it. The services dedicated to the Mother of God in the church bearing her name are not mentioned either.⁴⁴

One of the most interesting clues about the services in the palatine church can be found in the Typikon of the Pantokrator monastery in Constantinople.⁴⁵ In the church of the Virgin Eleoussa of this monastery there was a special service called *tou agiopolitou* (of the holy city), "on the model of the great church that is in the palace". According to the liturgists, that was a rite of Palestinian origin going back to the service of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.⁴⁶

THE APPEARANCE OF THE CHURCH

We have given a brief overview of the history and liturgical functions of the church-reliquary, but we have not yet mentioned its appearance. There are written sources that make it possible to reconstruct the exterior, as well as the interior, of this church. One of the most important sources is the tenth homily of patriarch Photius, delivered at the consecration of the renovated church in 864. It contains a detailed description of the church

⁴² *De Ceremoniis*, ed. 1829 (as in n. 9), I, 19, 115.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁴⁴ Magdalino 2004 (as in n. 4), pp. 21-22.

⁴⁵ Paul Gautier: Le Typikon du Christ Sauveur, in: *Revue des études Byzantines*, 32, 1974, p. 77: 797-798.

⁴⁶ Aleksei M. Pentkovskii: Ktitorskie tipikony i bogoslužebnye sinaksari Evergetidskoi gruppy (Ktitors' typika and liturgical synaksaria of the Evergetis type), in: *Bogoslovskie Trudy*, 38, 2003, p. 311.

decoration including its new iconographical program.⁴⁷ According to the sources, the Theotokos of the Pharos was a small cross-in-square, three-aisled church with three apses, a dome supported on four columns, and a narthex and an atrium in front of the dome. Its main feature was its exceptionally rich adornment. Its façade was occupied by the even and smooth slabs of white marble that were fitted close together.⁴⁸ The quality of work impressed Photius, who saw in it “the continuousness of a single [piece of] stone with, as it were, straight lines ruled on it—a new miracle”.⁴⁹ This white marble revetment with a geometrical design is valuable evidence for the history of the architecture of the mid-Byzantine church façade. The inside of the church could be perceived in its entirety in one glance. Photius also remarks on the whirling effect as an important part of the interior design. We can vividly see the circling movement of arches, vaults and hemispheres: all that is typical for the Byzantine cross-in-square churches that became a landmark of post-Iconoclastic architecture.

The walls of the church were covered with polychromous marble, while the mosaic pavement was made with rare craft and showed fanciful figural images. The space that was not covered with marble was covered with gold and silver, as Photius puts it, “the one smeared on tesserae, the other cut out and fashioned into plaques”.⁵⁰ The capitals were adorned with silver and had golden girdles underneath. The entire sacred arrangement of the church was made of silver; not just the holy table and ciborium, but also the doors of the sanctuary.⁵¹ This feature made a big impression on everyone entering the church. Robert de Clari, one of the crusaders who captured the city in 1204, distinguishes the church-reliquary among the richest churches of the Great Palace:

Moreover, there were full thirty chapels there, both large and small; and there was one of these which was called the Holy Chapel, that was so rich and so noble that it contained neither hinge nor socket, nor any other appurtenance such as is wont to be wrought of iron, that was not all of silver; nor was there a pillar there that was not of jasper or porphyry or such like rich and precious stone. And the pavement of the chapel was of white marble, so smooth and so clear that it seemed that it was of crystal. And this

⁴⁷ Cyril Mango: *The Homilies of Photius Patriarch of Constantinople*, Cambridge/Mass. 1958, pp. 177-190.

⁴⁸ Photius: *Homilies*, X, 4 (ed. Cyril Mango: *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 312-1453, Englewood Cliffs/New Jersey 1972, p. 185)

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, X, 5, p. 185.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, X, 5, p. 185.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, X, 5, p. 186.

chapel was so rich that one could not describe to you the great beauty and the great magnificence thereof.⁵²

We know more about the Theotokos of the Pharos than we do about any other lost Byzantine church. Besides Photius' description and that of Robert de Clari, we also have a text by Nicholas Mesarites, who in 1200 composed a very detailed description of the holy table and ciborium (or *katapetasma* as he calls it), and the precious golden crosses and golden doves hovering over the holy table. They were adorned with precious stones and held the cross-shaped pearl branches in their beaks:

[...] magnificent church, expensive silver, costly pearls, priceless emerald, precious red gems (lychnitis), abundant gold. The *katapetasma* of the church is all silver and the columns supporting it are silver- and gold-plated, luminous, sparkling. From the tetragon [at its base] the *katapetasma* like a geometric pyramid recedes to a sharp point. Life-giving true crosses are covered with gold from one edge to the other. The precious stones are fastened to them in abundance, fixed, planted in are the pearls rounded off in perfect shapes. The doves hover over the holy table, they are not silver- or gold-plated, but entirely, and their backs too, shine with yellow gold. The wings are adorned with emeralds, illuminated by the pearls pierced through, the feathers are loose: as if they were hovering in the air and have just stopped for a rest. Their beaks hold young branches, not those with olives but with pearls and the branches are cross shaped [...].⁵³

In such a manner the palatine church resembled some precious jewel and the vision of the heavenly world pierced by a golden glare. This auriferous space is marked in Byzantine descriptions as a dominant feature of the church-reliquary.

THE ICONOGRAPHIC PROGRAM OF THE CHURCH

The image of the heavenly world was created by iconic representations in the mosaics on the walls of the church. The program of the Pharos church (864) is the earliest known post-Iconoclastic, monumental decoration (the first images of Saint Sophia appeared in 867).⁵⁴ It is possible that the mosaics of the Chrysotriklinos, which was close to the church, were made at the same time and followed the same conception. Its program included a

⁵² Robert de Clari: *La conquete de Constantinople* (as in n. 22), p. 82; *Three Old French Chronicles of the Crusades*, ed. Edward N. Stone, Seattle 1939.

⁵³ Heisenberg 1907 (as in n. 16), pp. 29-32; Nikolai Mesarit ed. 2006 (as in n. 16), p. 206.

⁵⁴ Jenkins/Mango 1956 (as in n. 3), pp. 139-140.

portrait of Michael III and is known from its description in a Byzantine epigram.⁵⁵ But the throne room, even though it had sacred meaning, was not a proper church. So the Theotokos of the Pharos can be justly thought of as containing the first example of figural decoration in a cross-in-square church, and thus it has an exceptional place in the history of Byzantine iconographic programs.

Photius tells that there is an image of Christ in the dome, though he does not specify whether it is a half-length or enthroned Pantocrator. He just notes the idea of the image—"the Creator's care for us", He watches and governs the world. Beneath the dome, he describes "the host of angels escorting the Lord of all". The Angels are escorting the Almighty God, thus the ekphrasis alludes to the liturgical worship. The apse "that elevates from the altar shines with the image of the Virgin who extends her hands over us and saves the basileus and gives him victory over enemies". It is clear that here we have one of the most venerable images of the Virgin Orans in Byzantine iconography, judging by the time of its creation and the significance of the church. Moreover, Photius mentions the images of martyrs, apostles, prophets and patriarchs that fill in the whole church. Some of the figures might have had scrolls in their hands with inscriptions, which allude to the revealed Holy Land and the temple as a house of God. The quotes on the scrolls that are mentioned in the tenth Homily ("My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord" [*Psalms* 84:2]; "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" [*Genesis* 28:17]) suggest that King David (*Psalms* 84:2) and his ancestor Jacob (*Genesis* 28:17) could have been among the depicted figures.

Photius does not mention any narrative scenes; nevertheless there is an established opinion among scholars that there was an evangelical cycle in the palatine church. This is usually supported by Nicholas Mesarites's description.⁵⁶ According to the editor of the Heisenberg text, it talks in detail about the original cycle. Mango, however, in his comments on Photius' homily, noticed a number of oddities and anachronisms in Mesarites's description that made him think the cycle could have appeared in the Comnenian period.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, we consider Mesarites's description as referring not to the images on the walls, but to the whole space of

⁵⁵ *Anthologia graeca*, I. 106, in: Cyril Mango: *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453. Sources and Documents*, Englewood Cliffs 1972, p. 184. The iconographic program appeared between 856 and 867.

⁵⁶ Heisenberg 1907 (as in n. 16), p. 32; Nikolai Mesarit ed. 2006 (as in n. 16), p. 205.

⁵⁷ Jenkins/Mango 1956 (as in n. 3), pp. 136-139; Mango 1958 (as in n. 47), pp. 182-183.

the church, saturated with the relics of the Holy Land. The whole fragment is quoted below:

This church, this place is another Sinai, Bethlehem, Jordan, Jerusalem, Nazareth, Bethany, Galilee, Tiberias, another washing of the feet, last supper, mount Tabor, Pilate's praetorium, Calvary which is in Hebrew called Golgotha. Here He is born, here He is baptized, here He walks on the sea, travels by foot, shows marvels, humbles himself beside the basin, the basin resigns itself and not one, two or many stinking Lazarus it raises from the dead, but thousands bodies seized by the death and souls swamping with sins for so many days and so many years, it raises them up from the graves and restores their health, and in this shows us the example of when to weep and how much to pray. Here He is crucified, the one who looks will see the foot of the cross, and right here they bury him and the stone, rolled back from the sepulchre, bears witness of the Word in this very church. In the same place He rises and His soudarion with the burial sheets are convincing.⁵⁸

Nicholas Mesarites describes the church as a symbolic image of the Holy Land and as a liturgical space where the dispensation of Salvation takes place. His description has close analogies in liturgical commentaries of the same period. This is, first of all, Mesarites' 'historical' interpretation. The concrete nature of the description is due to the liturgical tastes of that period and the presence in the church of the famous relics to which the text refers directly (the Sepulchre stone and the Burial sheets). Therefore the church of the Virgin of the Pharos, covered with marble up to the vaults, most likely contained only individual iconic images of Christ, angels, the Virgin and the saints, in the same way as the contemporaneous iconography of the Chrysotriklinos.

In the Middle Ages, the Pharos church was a sacred destination of every pilgrim coming to Constantinople. Its significance can only be compared with that of Hagia Sophia. But unlike the enormous Sophia, this small church could be overlooked in a glance.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Heisenberg 1907 (as in n. 16), p. 32; Nikolai Mesaritis ed. 2006 (as in n. 16), p. 205.

⁵⁹ Anthony of Novgorod especially noticed at the end of his list of the relics of the Pharos chapel: "all are in one small church of the Holy Mother of God" (*Kniga Palomnik* 1899 [as in n. 19], p. 19). Yet the church was relatively small, in the Holy Week the imperial family, clerics and a group of court people could attend the divine service there. Nicholas Mesarites mentioned a crowd of people inside this church.

THE SPACE FOR THE RELICS

The significance of this church as a venerable model for the Orthodox world was strengthened by its imperial status. In addition, its space, saturated with iconic images and precious radiance, contained the main relics of Christendom, open for viewing and worshipping. Even though the location of these relics could change during special services, their possible permanent location was in the chapel in the eastern part of the southern aisle. According to the *Narratio de Imagine Edessena*, it was there that the Mandyllion was placed on 16 August 944. This is confirmed, though indirectly, by Mesarites's story, in which he mentions the barrier with columns that separates the *diaconicon* from the southern aisle. While speaking to the insurgent crowd in the church, he leans on these pillars as if to protect this part of the architecture. The diaconicon-reliquary of the Virgin of the Pharos could have served as a model for other orthodox churches. This place had a unique framing in the church as evidenced by the other fragment of Mesarites's description:

On our return to the church after, as one might say, a brilliant victory we saw that the southern aisle was being preyed on again. It was made out of glass with inclining wooden beams. It was taking in the sunlight in the morning and was delivering it inside the church as if through the invisible pores in the pieces of glass.⁶⁰

The description indicates an unusual construction, a unique installation of wood and glass (or crystal) where refracted sunlight played an important role. The relics must have dwelt in the mystically shining, iridescent auriferous space. Most of the relics, unlike the Mandyllion and the Keramion which were placed in vessels, were open for contemplation, as stated at the end of the eleventh century by the *Taragonensis Anonymus*.⁶¹ Here we may recall the church's unusual whirling effect mentioned by Photius. It must have played an important role in the space of the Pharos church:

But when with difficulty one has torn oneself away from there and looked into the church itself, with what joy and trepidation and astonishment is one filled! It is as if one had entered heaven itself with no one barring the way from any side, and was illuminated by the beauty in all forms shining all around like so many stars, so is one utterly amazed. Thenceforth it seems that everything is in ecstatic motion, and the church itself is circling round. For the spectator, through his whirling about in all directions and being

⁶⁰ Heisenberg 1907 (as in n. 16), p. 32.

⁶¹ Ciggaar 1995 (as in n. 22), pp. 120-121.

constantly astir, which he is forced to experience by the variegated spectacle on all sides, imagines that his personal impression is transferred to the object.⁶²

The words that Photius uses introduce the subject of a sacred “dance” (*choros*)⁶³ that turns the static and material space into an organized sacred setting. Perceived as a whole, it presented an icon. It is quite possible that this effect could have not just an esthetical, but also a symbolical, meaning, as the descending, whirling light must have invoked the image of the Celestial Jerusalem—the city, with walls garnished with all manner of precious stones, descending from heaven at the end of time (*Revelation* 21-22).

It is possible that the unique exhibition in the southeast part of the Pharos church was designed to represent the spatial icon of the Holy Sepulchre that had its guarantee in the material evidences of Christ's Passion. To what extent this program was consciously created can be seen from another text by Nicholas Mesarites—his funeral oration in memory of his brother John. There we read that when John was young he wanted to visit the Holy Land, but his journey failed; Mesarites quotes the words of their father who was persuading his son that there was no need to go to distant Palestine, since the Holy Land was already in Constantinople:

Christ was known in Judea but He has not deserted us as well. There - the Holy Sepulchre, but here we have shroud and towels, the Calvary is there, but the Cross and the foot of the Cross are here, the crown of thorns is exposed here, the sponge, the lance, and the reed [...] Undescribable [...] imprinted on the cloth and carved on the tile [...] This place, my son, is Jerusalem, Tiberias, Nazareth, the Mount of Tabor, Bethany and Bethlehem.⁶⁴

It is interesting to note that the last sentence repeats another description of the Pharos church by Mesarites almost word for word.⁶⁵ In both texts he talks not about the wall decorations, but about the real presence of the relics. It is the latter that create iconic images of the Holy Land and hence make the Pharos church a self-sufficient iconic image of the Holy Sepulchre, which could serve as an adequate substitute of its prototype in Jerusalem.

⁶² Mango 1958 (as in n. 47), pp. 182-183.

⁶³ On the topic of the sacred dance in Byzantine culture, see Nicoletta Isar: The Dance of Adam. Reconstructing the Byzantine Choros, in: *Byzantinoslavica*, 61, 2003, pp. 179-204.

⁶⁴ *Neue Quellen zur Geschichte des lateinischen Kaisertums und der Kirchenunion. Der Epitaphios des Nikolaos Mesarites auf seinen Bruder Johannes*, ed. by August Heisenberg, Munich 1922, p. 27.

⁶⁵ Magdalino 2004 (as in n. 4), pp. 27-28.

We can recall in this connection the special service ‘of the Holy City’ that took place in the palatine church, and which, according to liturgists, went back to the order of the service of the Resurrection (Holy Sepulchre) church in Jerusalem.⁶⁶ And even though we do not know the details of this rite, the reference to the Holy Sepulchre ritual in the imperial Pharos church is quite eloquent. It seems there was a particular Jerusalem prototype to which the church-reliquary referred. There was a space in the galleries of the Holy Sepulchre complex in Jerusalem especially devoted to relics, mentioned in the writings of pilgrims from the seventh to ninth centuries. The *Latin Breviary* (*Breviarius de Hierosolyma*), compiled before 614 (before the church was destroyed by the Persians), tells us about the *sacrarium de basilica Constantini*, where the Passion relics were held: “Then one goes into the sacrarium of the Basilica of St Constantine. A chamber is there which contains the Reed and the Sponge, and the Cup which the Lord blessed and gave his disciples to drink, saying, ‘This is my body and my blood’”.⁶⁷ The Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem (ca. 630) ascended to this repository next to the church of the Invention of the Cross “in order to see there the Reed, the Sponge and the Lance”.⁶⁸ In the same century, the Armenian historian Movses Dasxuranci mentioned that “this gallery contains the Spear, the Sponge, and Christ’s Cup covered with gold”.⁶⁹ Arculf, at the end of the seventh century, told of a special recess (exedra) between the Golgotha church and the Martyrium (Constantine’s Basilica):

There is a chapel set between the church of Golgotha and the Martirium, and it contains the Lord’s Cup which he blessed and gave with his own hands during the supper which he had with the Apostles on the day before he suffered. This is a silver cup, it holds a French quart, and it is designed with a pair of handles one on each side. Inside the Cup is the very Sponge they ‘filled with vinegar put upon hyssop’, when they crucified the Lord ‘and brought it to his mouth’. It is said that from this cup that the Lord drank when he ate with the disciples after the Resurrection. Holy Arculf saw it and venerated it by touching it with his hand through the hole in the pierced door of the reliquary where it is kept. The whole population of the city makes pilgrimage to this Cup with the great reverence.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Pentkovskii 2003 (as in n. 46), p. 311.

⁶⁷ The Latin pilgrim tells this just after the description of the Holy Sepulchre and its Koubouklion; see John Wilkinson: *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusaders*, Warminster 2002, p. 119.

⁶⁸ Donato Baldi: *Enchiridion Locorum Sanctorum*, Jerusalem 1982, p. 641.

⁶⁹ Wilkinson 2002 (as in n. 67), p. 165.

⁷⁰ Adomnan: *The Holy Places*, in: Wilkinson 2002 (as in n. 67), pp. 174-175.

Arculf marked the placement of the shrine on his plan of the Holy Sepulchre complex: the exedra was right behind the Golgotha near the entrance to the church of the Invention of the Cross.

In the ninth century, the Byzantine pilgrim Epiphanius noted that the sacred space (*to hieron*) for these relics was over the gates of Constantine's basilica:

Between the guardroom and the Crucifixion is the door of St. Constantine, in which three crosses were found. And above the door is the sanctuary in which is kept the cup from which Christ drank the vinegar and gall. It is like a chalice of emerald plainly set. And in the same place is kept the basin in which Christ washed the feet of his disciples. It is made of marble. There are kept the Lance and the Sponge and the Reed: and the linen cloth which the Apostle Peter saw in the sky: which contained every known animal, the ones to be eaten on one side, and on the other side the ones not to be eaten—everything clean and unclean—which they say was displayed by the archangel Gabriel.⁷¹

Beginning in the late ninth century, the chapel-reliquary is not mentioned by pilgrims anymore. This may be connected to the fact that the relics of the Passion were translated to Constantinople, where they were placed in the Pharos church.⁷² And the Pharos church itself could be reconsidered as a replica of the Jerusalem reliquary-chapel, which received a new life in Constantinople.

We can notice that the relics in Epiphanius' list are the same as in that of the pilgrims of Constantinople. Among the rarities there is a Basin for the washing of the feet, which was mentioned by Anthony of Novgorod in his description of the Pharos relics.⁷³ Following the descriptions we can assume that the reliquary of Jerusalem, to the right of the galleries behind the great immovable relic of Mount Golgotha, had the form of a semi-circular building that recalled a chapel with the open exhibition of the instruments of the Lord's Passion. The particular space of the southern chapel-reliquary of the Pharos church could have had its iconic origin in the primordial sacred space near the Holy Sepulchre. The creators of the

⁷¹ Wilkinson 2002 (as in n. 67), p. 208.

⁷² If we are ready to trust the Russian Primary Chronicle, during the reign of Leo the Wise (886-912) these relics were located in the Great Palace and the Emperor demonstrated them to Russian envoys.

⁷³ *Kniga Palomnik* 1899 (as in n. 19), pp. 18-19. It is noteworthy that the great relic of the Chalice of the Last Supper (the legendary *Graal* of the Medieval West), which was sometimes identified with the Bowl of the Crucifixion, did not appear in the Great Palace in Constantinople.

palatine church bore in their minds not just the reference to the ideal Holy Sepulchre but also its concrete model, widely known in the Christian world, but that did not exist anymore in the church of Jerusalem by the tenth century.

The relics of the palatine church were movable. They were transferred, depending on the feast days, to Hagia Sophia, the Blachernae,⁷⁴ and other parts of the Great Palace, and they could be taken out to participate in special liturgical processions. During the reign of Michael IV, in 1037, there was a terrible drought that lasted six months. In order to prevent a catastrophe the Emperor organized the litia procession to pray for rain. It had to go from the Great Palace to the Blachernae. The relics were placed in precious cases that the Emperor's brothers carried in their hands. A miniature of the twelfth-century manuscript by John Skylitzes (fig. 3) illustrates this important event.⁷⁵ The text above and below the miniature reads:

The brothers of the basileus organized the litany. John carried the Holy Mandylion (*agion mandylion*), the grand domesticus—Christ's Letter to Abgar, the protovestiarius George carried the holy sheets (*agia spargana*). They walked by foot from the Great Palace to the church of the Holy Virgin Theotokos in Blachernae. And here the patriarch served the second liturgy. And still it did not rain.⁷⁶

The procession with the relics connected the most important sacred centres of the Byzantine capital. Christ, whose grace dwelt in the relics, was taken solemnly and with awe into the city's space. The members of the imperial family that carried the Miraculous Image on foot demonstrated their submission to the true Lord and higher Protector.

The other example of the spatial use of the Pharos relics is the *Limburg reliquary*, which was in all likelihood taken by the Byzantine emperors on their military campaigns.⁷⁷ The relics of the imperial church that framed

⁷⁴ *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. by Hans Thurn, Berlin/New York 1973, 400.41–44.

⁷⁵ André Grabar/Manusos Manoussacas: *L'illustration du manuscrit de Skylitzes de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Madrid*, Venice 1979, fig. 246, p. 108.

⁷⁶ In the Madrid miniature there are two men in long garments, reminiscent of *sticharia*, leading the procession. They carry processional crosses fixed on long sticks that probably contained parts of the relic of the True Cross. Behind them there are three other figures (the brothers of the emperor mentioned in the text) with the reliquary chests in their covered hands. Behind the members of the imperial family there are hierarchs who point to the liturgical aspect of the ceremony, and finally the praying people.

⁷⁷ This probable function of the reliquary has been discussed: Ševčenko 1994 (as in n. 38), pp. 292–294.



Fig. 3. *Procession with major relics of the Pharos chapel in 1037*, miniature of the *Chronicle* by John Skylitzes, 12th century. Madrid, National Library, Ms. gr. 2, fol. 210v

the central True Cross fragment created an icon of the Passion that symbolized the power of the empire.⁷⁸ As is known from *De Ceremoniis* by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, the relics of the True Cross were carried onto the battle field for the performance of special imperial ceremonies. The *Cubicularios* (bed chamber servant) preceded the emperor and carried “the True Life-giving Cross in a case (*theka*) hanging on his chest”.⁷⁹ He was followed by the standard bearer who carried the processional cross with the piece of the True Cross. The intimate connection between the emperor and the relics was shown by the status of the bed chamber servant. Apart from demonstrating the symbol of the higher power on his chest to the troop forces ready to fight, he was also pointing to the sacred space of the imperial chambers and the imperial chapel next to them, from which all the pieces of relics were gathered in the reliquary. During such rites, the entire army became part of the sacred space of the Pharos church that was embodied in the iconic image of the reliquary.

⁷⁸ On the iconic image of the small moving ‘Pharos’ see Gerhard Wolf: *The Holy Face and the Holy Feet*, in: *Eastern Christian Relics* 2003 (as in n. 2), pp. 285-286.

⁷⁹ *De Ceremoniis*, ed. 1829 (as in n. 9), I, 484.24-485.6; John Haldon: *Constantine Porphyrogenitus. Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, Vienna 1990, p. 124.

RELICS OF THE PHAROS CHURCH AND SAINTE-CHAPELLE

After the sacking in 1204, the collection of relics of the “sancta capella”, as crusaders called the Pharos chapel, was almost entirely preserved. It was purchased from Baldwin II for an astronomical sum by King Louis IX of France. In 1239-1241, the relics were translated to Paris, where they were placed in a Gothic replica of the Byzantine Theotokos of the Pharos—in the world-famous Sainte-Chapelle, consecrated in 1248 (fig. 4).⁸⁰ It was built as a royal court church-reliquary to house and demonstrate the relics arrived from Constantinople. This transformed Paris into a new sacred centre of Christendom, for it was not just a new repository that Saint Louis was trying to build, but the “holy chapel”, which represented the most important sacred space of Byzantium in the capital of France.⁸¹ This project was worth any expenditure and was highly ambitious: the possession of the most important relics, and a monumental reliquary modeled on the imperial church of Constantinople, gave primacy to France in the Christian world. It is noteworthy that the very title of “Sancta Capella (Sainte Capele)”, which Louis used in all references to the Parisian church from its consecration in 1248, was a traditional name of the Pharos church appearing in various Latin accounts of Constantinople. The idea of iconic space was reflected in the way the relics were exhibited in the Sainte-Chapelle. They were placed within a big chest, *Grande-Caisse*, on the second tier of a special altar-ciborium (fig. 5). During festive liturgies, the chest, with all its relics, was opened before the eyes of the faithful, who prayed to this great icon of Christianity, participating in the space of the Holy Land it embodied. By recreating in Paris the famous Holy Sepulchre of Constantinople, steeped in imperial glory, Saint Louis established the symbolic continuity of sacred spaces referring to the Jerusalem of the Gospels and to the eschatological image of the New Jerusalem.

Unfortunately, the majority of the relics disappeared in 1793, destroyed by revolutionaries. Nevertheless, some of the most important relics were transmitted for study to the National Library and have been preserved to

⁸⁰ See a detailed catalogue of relics brought from Constantinople in Jannic Durand: *La translation des reliques impériales de Constantinople à Paris. Les reliques et reliquaries byzantins acquis par saint Louis*, in: *Le trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle 2001* (as in n. 4), pp. 37-112.

⁸¹ On the concept of Sainte Chapelle and its connection with the Pharos Chapel see Daniel Weiss: *Art and Crusade in the Age of Saint Louis*, Cambridge 1998.



Fig. 4. Paris, Sainte-Chapelle, 13th century, view to the altar under the Ciborium for the demonstration of relics

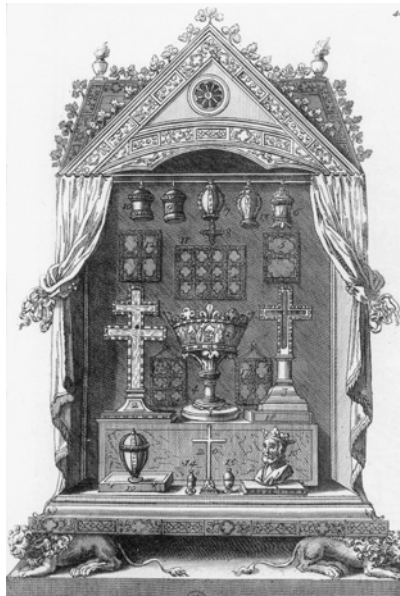


Fig. 5. Relics of the Pharos Chapel in the Grande Caisse from Sainte-Chapelle, French engraving, 1793



Plate IV. *The Crown of Thorns, the True Cross, the Holy Nail*, three great relics of the Pharos Chapel, now in the treasury of Notre-Dame de Paris



Fig. 6. *The Crown of Thorns* in the late 19th century glass case. Paris, treasury of Notre-Dame

the present day.⁸² First of all, there is the Crown of Thorns, encased in a neo-gothic reliquary of the nineteenth century, now in the treasury of Notre-Dame de Paris, a large part of the True Cross and the Holy Nail (plate IV, fig. 6).

THE RELIQUARY WITH THE STONE OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

The only preserved Byzantine reliquary from the Pharos church is a twelfth-century object in the Louvre, originally designed for a piece of the Sepulchre stone.⁸³ It is a repousse silver-gilt icon. The front of the plaque represents the Myrrh-bearing Women at the Tomb (fig. 7); on the reverse is a sliding lid with a preciously adorned flower cross in repousse (fig. 8). It is interesting to note that the distinctive feature of this image is its saturation with inscriptions, which is not typical for the iconography

⁸² Only four pieces have survived: the Crown of Thorns, a large piece of the True Cross and the Holy Nail in the sacristy of Notre-Dame de Paris, and the reliquary for the Stone of the Holy Sepulchre in the Louvre. The most recent description: *Le trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle* 2001 (as in n. 4).

⁸³ *Byzance. L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises*, exhibition catalogue, Paris 1992, pp. 333-334, no. 248; *Le trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle* 2001 (as in n. 4), pp. 72-77.



Fig. 7. *The Holy Women at the Sepulchre*, Icon-Reliquary with a Stone of the Holy Sepulchre from the Pharos Chapel, gilded silver, Byzantium, 12th century. Paris, Musée du Louvre

of the Comnenian period.⁸⁴ The borders are framed with an inscription of the Paschal chants that paraphrase the Gospel story of the appearance of the angel at the tomb (*Matthew* 28:1-7).⁸⁵ It starts with the words “In raiment the angel appeared before the women” and it ends with “singing: the Lord is risen”. In addition, each part of the composition has its own inscription: written above the angels we find, “Come, see the place where the Lord lay” (*Matthew* 28:6); above the women, “They trembled and were amazed” (*Mark* 16:8); above the Sepulchre, “Lord’s Sepulchre”; above the soldiers, “keepers as dead men”.

⁸⁴ It is interesting that these inscriptions played a great role in the fate of the shrine. As a monument of ancient paleography, the reliquary was not destroyed as most of the other objects from Sainte-Chapelle were, but was instead removed to the National Library.

⁸⁵ For the Greek inscriptions see: *Byzance. L’art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises* 1992 (as in n. 83), p. 333, no. 248.



Fig. 8. Front of the lid of the Icon-Reliquary with a Stone of the Holy Sepulchre from the Pharos Chapel, gilded silver, Byzantium, 12th century. Paris, Musée du Louvre

It would seem that these inscriptions can be connected to the desire to leave not just a visual record but a verbal one as well. The acoustic, evangelical and liturgical contexts surrounding the perception of the relic were enacted simultaneously, and transformed it into a spatial icon circumscribed into the 'holy land' of the imperial church. Thus a gilded inscription on the inside of the cover is significant (fig. 9). On the blue background we read the Angel's words addressed to Mariam: "Behold the place where they laid him" (*Mark* 16:6). According to the Byzantine system of representation, the inscription identifies the relic with the sacred space itself, as we can see in Nikolas Mesarites's descriptions. The Byzantine perception of this relic encompassed the whole system of the spatiotemporal associations that transformed the object into a timeless image of global significance. Fortunately, we have a rare opportunity to compare the preserved artifact



Fig. 9. Inner side of the lid of the Icon-Reliquary with a Stone of the Holy Sepulchre from the Pharos Chapel, Byzantium, 12th century. Paris, Musée du Louvre

with its Byzantine description in the so-called “decatalogue” of Nicolas Mesarites:

Of this Decatalogue the last number is the stone cut out of the tomb, the stone that shattered the altars of gentiles, made them shiver and reduced to ashes. This stone is another stone of Jacob, the witness of Christ’s resurrection from the dead. This stone is the cornerstone of the cornerstone Christ, that joined together the nations divided in their knowledge of God and united them in one unbroken solid faith. The stone that ministered as a tomb for the God-man. We slung this stone and strike the mental Goliath and mortify death.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Heisenberg 1907 (as in n. 16), p. 32; Nikolai Mesarit ed. 2006 (as in n. 16), p. 129.

Mesarites does not even mention the precious framing of the relic, but his vision gives us a better understanding of the icon-reliquary from the Pharos church. The relic of the Sepulchre stone becomes part of the sacred history and sacred spaces connected to it. As 'another stone of Jacob' it is reminiscent of the moment when heaven and earth were connected by the heavenly ladder, and of the stone that was the base of the first altar (*Genesis* 28:18).

It is no less important that in the Pharos reliquary, the venerated icon and the relic were indissolubly united and perceived as a microcosmic image of the whole sacred space of Jerusalem in the church of Constantinople. This acquired special meaning during Easter liturgies when the icon reliquary was supposedly carried out for special veneration. It could even initially be thought of as a necessary element of the feast liturgy. In such a context the relic itself, its iconographic representation and its inscriptions acquired their highest meaning by participating in the living and changing sacred space. We shall note that the golden repousse icon did not bear just a symbolic meaning, but from a purely esthetical point of view, being made of gold, it formed part of the auriferous atmosphere of the Pharos church. Here we come across a very important Byzantine approach to the spatial perception of the 'sacred object'. This approach contradicts our typical understanding of an icon as a representation on a flat surface and of a reliquary as a material object. A relic wasn't just an image of the sacred space, in a sense it was its integral part which could be translated to any remote part of the Christian world.⁸⁷

MANDYLION AND KERAMION

There is another, more convincing, example of the spatial rethinking of icon-reliquaries that made the Pharos church the most important model-archetype for sacred space: the display of the Mandylicon and Keramion icon-reliquaries. The famous cloth with the miraculous image of Christ (Mandylicon) was taken from Edessa to Constantinople where it was received with great celebration and put in the church of the Virgin of the Pharos on 16 August 944. The Keramion, the miraculous imprint of the

⁸⁷ The discussion of this phenomenon: Alexei Lidov: The Flying Hodegetria. The Miraculous Icon as Bearer of Sacred Space, in: *The Miraculous Image in Late Medieval and Renaissance*, Papers from the conference held at the Accademia di Danimarca in collaboration with the Bibliotheca Hertziana, ed. by Erik Thunø/Gerhard Wolf, Rome 2004, pp. 291-321.

Mandyliion on a tile, appeared in the Pharos church in 968.⁸⁸ There are numerous references to the presence of these miracle-working images in the palatine church. Nevertheless, only one of these allows us to conjure up the placement of the relics in the church space: the description by Robert de Clari, who was an immediate participant of the capture of Constantinople by the crusaders in 1204. Describing the sights of the palatine “Holy church” he reports seeing “[...] two rich vessels of gold which hung in the midst of the chapel by two great chains of silver, and in the one of these vessels was a tile, and in the other a towel”.⁸⁹ The understanding of the structure of the Byzantine church permits us to suppose that the Mandyliion and the Keramion hung from two arches and were placed facing each other. It is impossible not to see a special intention in such an unusual placement of the relics, and this requires further explanation.

The Mandyliion and Keramion were supposedly placed facing each other in order to evoke the great miracle that occurred in the niche over the gates of Edessa—the imprint of the divine face, without being drawn, on the tile covering this niche. According to the *Narratio de Imagine Edessena* (ca. 944), from the moment the niche was sealed until the invention of the relics centuries later there was a miraculous, continuously lit, lamp placed between the images, indicating perpetual divine service.⁹⁰ Exhibited in the midst of the church, and as if poised in the air, the two relics created a mystical space of the miracle—the reproduction of the image made without the aid of human hands, the visible revelation and Theophany. The sacred space of the gate niche of Edessa created by the two icons acquired a monumental dimension in the space of the palatine church-reliquary. Liturgical context also played an important role—the miracle of the image made without human hands correlated with the miracle of transubstantiation of the Holy Gifts during the Eucharist. The post-Iconoclastic Byzantine ideal found its perfect realization here: the interaction of the Icon with the Eucharist in the wholeness of the spatial image. It is believed that this authoritative and sacred model underlies all

⁸⁸ On two relics of the Keramion, translated by Nikiphoros Phoka from Hieropolis and Edessa to the Great Palace in Constantinople: Lidov 2005 (as in n. 26), p. 31.

⁸⁹ Robert de Clari: *La conquete de Constantinople* (as in n. 22), p. 82.

⁹⁰ Constantine Porphyrogenitos: *Narratio de Imagine Edessena*, in: *Patrologia Graeca*, 113, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, Paris 1864, col. 421-454, here ch 32: The bishop who believed in his dream-vision opened the niche over the gate of the city of Edessa, and “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 which has by chance been kept safe at Edessa up to the present time”.



Fig. 10. The Mandylion and Keramion on the domed arches, 12th century. Pskov, cathedral of the Mirozh monastery

Byzantine church decoration in the eleventh and twelfth century that places the images of the Mandylion and the Keramion on the eastern and western dome arches. One of the most famous and early examples is the iconographic program of the wall paintings of Mirozh monastery near Pskov, from the second quarter of the twelfth century (fig. 10).⁹¹ This spatial icon of the Pharos church with its original iconographic solution entered as image-paradigm into the sacred space of many churches all over the Christian world. It assured the union of every church with the space of the Holy Sepulchre of Constantinople and its prototype in Jerusalem. The topos of the miracle of Edessa's gates also played an important role, Edessa being the chosen sacred city that received protection from Christ himself in his renowned letter to Abgar.⁹²

⁹¹ For a detailed analysis see: Lidov 2006 (as in n. 27).

⁹² On the topos of the Edessa niche see Alexei Lidov: Holy Face—Holy Script—Holy Gate: Revealing the Edessa Paradigm in Christian Imagery, in: *Intorno al Sacro Volto. Genova, Bizansio e il Mediterraneo (secoli XI-XIV)*, ed. by Anna Rosa Calderoni Masetti/Colette Dufour Bozzo/Gerhard Wolf, Venice 2007, pp. 145-162.

TWO-SIDED ICON FROM NOVGOROD

The spatial image of the Pharos church could be realized in iconography. For example, Hans Belting and Ioli Kalavrezou have seen the connection between the twelfth-century Novgorod icon of the The Holy Face with the Adoration of the Cross on the reverse, now at the Tretyakov Gallery, with the relics of the Theotokos of the Pharos church (fig. 11, 12).⁹³ Belting considers the two-sided image to be the icon of Great Friday designed for the Holy Week.⁹⁴ He thinks that the Novgorod icon traces back to the Byzantine model of the early twelfth century and reproduces two of the most important Byzantine relics—the Mandyllion and the Cross reliquary, which was the measure of Christ's height from the *skeuophylakion* of Hagia Sophia. Kalavrezou goes even further by saying that the icon represents all the main relics of the Pharos church: the True Cross, the Crown of Thorns, the Holy Lance, the Holy Reed, the Holy Sponge and the Nails.⁹⁵ Kalavrezou even sees, in the white and gold background of the icon, the reproduction of the special marble and gold decoration of the palatine church. The latter interpretation is doubtless an exaggeration. Nevertheless, this approach makes sense and can be extended.

In the dynamic liturgical context, both sides of the icon were perceived simultaneously. The image of the Mandyllion on the obverse was supplemented by the series of relics of the Passion on the reverse. The icon's program evoked the real presence of the Mandyllion relic from the Pharos church. Thus, the images on the bilateral icon introduced the most important sacred space of the imperial church-reliquary into the liturgical context of the Novgorod church. One can assume that, according to the original idea, the icon must have embodied the connection and continuity of sacred spaces. We might even suggest that the unknown church could have had the monumental images of the Mandyllion and the Keramion on the dome arches. If so, the icon was, in a way, a mobile exegesis of certain historical

⁹³ *Gosudarstvennaya Tretyakovskaya Galereya. Katalog sobrania. Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo X—nachala XV veka (State Tretyakov Gallery. The Catalogue. Medieval Russian Art from the Tenth to Early Fifteenth Century)*, Moscow 1995, no. 8, pp. 50–54.

⁹⁴ Hans Belting: *Das Bild und sein Publikum im Mittelalter. Form und Funktion früher Bildtafeln der Passion*, Berlin 1981, pp. 182–183, fig. 68–69 (Hans Belting: *The Image and its Public in the Middle Ages: Form and Function of early Paintings of the Passion*, New Rochelle 1989, pp. 118–120).

⁹⁵ Kalavrezou 1994 (as in n. 4), p. 57. This aspect has been recently analyzed by Gerhard Wolf, who emphasized the spatial character of the two-sided icon from Novgorod; Gerhard Wolf: *Holy Face and Holy Feet. Preliminary considerations in front of the Mandyllion of Novgorod*, in: *Eastern Christian Relics* 2003 (as in n. 2), pp. 281–290.



Fig. 11. *The Holy Mandylion*, Front of the double-sided icon from Novgorod, 12th century.
Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery



Fig. 12. *The Veneration of the Holy Cross*, Back of the double-sided icon from Novgorod, 12th century. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery

and symbolic aspects of the main image-archetype in a concrete sacred space. Therefore, the reconstruction of the spatial context gives us a better understanding of the artistic intention of the Novgorod icon.⁹⁶

THE INSTRUMENTS OF THE PASSION

Interesting parallels to the preceeding case can be found in the iconography of Byzantine wall-painting. The Lamentation scenes in the frescoes of the church of Saint Panteleimon in Nerezi (ca. 1164) and the church of the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid (ca. 1296) include the relics of the Passion kept in the Pharos church, namely the Holy Lance, the Reed and the Nails, which are depicted next to the dead body of Christ (fig. 13, 14). It is remarkable that under Manuel Comnenos in 1169/1170, the Stone of Lamentation was triumphantly translated from Ephesus to Constantinople, and was kept in the Pharos church until the Emperor's death.⁹⁷ The new iconographical motif of the Stone of Anointment appeared in Lamentation iconography after the relic had been translated to the Byzantine capital.⁹⁸ The narrative was enriched with the new relics, which had a double symbolic meaning: it dramatized the image of the Redemptive Sacrifice and it also established an internal connection between the concrete church and the most important sacred space of the imperial reliquary. It is quite significant that at the time the Ohrid frescoes were created, the relics represented in them were no longer in Constantinople (they had been removed from there about half a century before they were taken to Paris), and the Pharos church must have been destroyed. But iconographers, with increasing persistence, remind us of the mystical presence of the relics of the Pharos church in the Lamentation scenes. The fresco in the church of Saint Demetrius in Pec is a good example: the Instruments of the Passion are gathered in a large basket, and the whole scene is dominated by the True Cross, with the Crown of Thorns at its center.⁹⁹ The relics of the Pharos church are seen as iconic images of the Holy Sepulchre that restores the memory of the lost sacred

⁹⁶ Lidov 2006 (as in n. 27), p. 39.

⁹⁷ After the death of Manuel Comnenos in 1180 the relic, which the emperor himself brought to the Pharos chapel on his shoulders, was removed to the emperor's tomb in the Pantocrator monastery: Mango 1970 (as in n. 30), pp. 372-375.

⁹⁸ Ioannis Spatharakis: The Influence of the Lithos in the Development of the Iconography of the Threnos, in: *Byzantine East, Latin West. Art-historical studies in honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, ed. by Doula Mouriki, Princeton 1995, pp. 435-446.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 440, fig. 10.



Fig. 13. *The Lamentation with the Relics of the Passion*, mural, c. 1164. Nerezi (Republic of Macedonia), St. Panteleimon's church



Fig. 14. *The Lamentation with the Relics of the Passion*, mural, late 13th century, Ohrid (Republic of Macedonia), Periblepta (St. Clement's) church

space in Constantinople, and Byzantium's supreme claim to the main sanctuaries of the Christendom.

CHRIST THE MAN OF SORROWS

Another great relic played an important role in Lamentation iconography—the shroud placed on Christ's body at the time of his burial. The shroud is represented as a cloth lying on the Stone of Lamentation. Sometimes, folded sheets are shown in the foreground. Pilgrims often mention the winding sheet (*sindon*) of Christ in the Pharos church, and some talk about two items—“his shroud and burial sheet” (*Mercati Anonymus*, eleventh century).¹⁰⁰ The guardian of the relics, Nicholas Mesarites, witnessed them in 1200: “The burial sheets of Christ (*entaphioi sindones*):¹⁰¹ they are of linen, cheap and simple material, still breathing with myrrh, defying destruction, for they were winding the uncircumscribed one, a naked body after the passion”.¹⁰² The most important eyewitness of the Shroud was Robert de Clari, who saw it in 1204, after the crusaders had captured the city:

But among the rest, there was also another of the minsters, which was called the Church of my Lady Saint Mary of Blachernae, within which was the shroud wherein Our Lord was wrapped. And on every Friday that shroud did raise itself upright, so that the form of Our Lord could clearly be seen. And none knows—neither Greek nor Frank—what became of that shroud when the city was taken.¹⁰³

This crusader's account contains three important facts that are not mentioned in other documents: 1) the Shroud was exhibited on Fridays; 2) the image of Christ could be seen on it; 3) in 1204 the Shroud was in the Blachernae, or was brought there from the Pharos church on Fridays.¹⁰⁴ Robert de Clari's report has been confirmed by some modern researchers. American physicist John Jackson, who carefully studied the specific transverse folds on the right and back sides of the Turin Shroud, came to the conclusion that the shroud was folded “into a configuration that allowed

¹⁰⁰ Ciggaar 1976 (as in n. 21).

¹⁰¹ *Matthew* 27:59, *Mark* 15:46, *Luke* 23:53 and 24:12.

¹⁰² Nikolai Mesaritis ed. 2006 (as in n. 16), p. 128.

¹⁰³ *Three Old French Chronicles of the Crusade* 1939 (as in n. 52).

¹⁰⁴ Perhaps the Shroud was removed to the Blachernae during the siege to be kept next to another great protective relic—the Robe of the Virgin.

it to be raised and lowered” and thus that it was exhibited to the faithful with a special device:¹⁰⁵ the figure of Christ rose vertically and was seen from the waist up (fig. 15). Jackson made a special model of the device he believes was used in Constantinople to demonstrate the imprint of Christ’s body. The image that was seen on Fridays—the day when the Lord’s Passion was remembered—could be the source of the iconography of the Man of Sorrows, which supposedly appeared under the influence of the liturgical service described by Robert de Clari. Irina Shalina came to the same conclusions when she paid special attention to the spatial aspects of the image.¹⁰⁶ According to her hypothesis, the shroud with the image of Christ may have been shown in the church of the Virgin of the Pharos with the relic of the True Cross, which was also there. This combination of the two most important relics (the Shroud and the Holy Cross) during the Holy Week services could become the main iconic image of Great Friday (fig. 16). It served as a model for the other churches of the Christian world. Incidentally, it recalls the established Orthodox rite when the liturgical Shroud (*epitaphios*) is taken out and displayed in the centre of the church on Good Friday. This rite existed in Constantinople and spread all over the Eastern Christian world.¹⁰⁷ It is quite possible that these textiles bearing the image of the dead Christ were initially connected to the ‘proto’-relic of the Shroud from the Pharos church. Furthermore, during the Passion services an icon of the Man of Sorrows (*Akra Tapeinosis*) was placed on a stand (*analoï*) with the image of Christ with his arms extended along his body and a big cross in the background. The two gospel narratives of the Crucifixion and the Lamentation are mystically unified in a single image of the relics of Constantinople.

The Eucharistic meaning of these Passion images has often been pointed out in iconographical research.¹⁰⁸ But we are primarily interested in the spatial aspect. In the same way, as brought to light in our earlier analyses of the Mandyllion, Keramion and Passion Instruments, the subject of the

¹⁰⁵ John and Rebecca Jackson: The Shroud of Turin as the Byzantine Shroud of Constantinople. The scientific evidence for the Man of Sorrows icon tradition, in: *Relics in the Art and Culture of the Eastern Christian World*, Material from the International Symposium, ed. by Alexei Lidov, Moscow 2000, p. 37.

¹⁰⁶ Irina Shalina: The Icon of Christ the Man of Sorrows and the Image-Relic on the Constantinopolitan Shroud, in: *Eastern Christian Relics* 2003 (as in n. 2), pp. 335-336.

¹⁰⁷ The influence of this image on Byzantine iconography is discussed: Demitros I. Pallas: *Die Passion und Bestattung Christi in Byzanz. Der Ritus, das Bild* (Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia, 2), München 1965, pp. 197-289.

¹⁰⁸ Pallas 1965 (as in n. 107), pp. 197-280; Belting 1989 (as in n. 94), pp. 91-129.



Fig. 15. *The Shroud with the Image of Christ*, possible reconstruction of this relic's presentation by John Jackson, Constantinople

Passion image does not simply refer to the illustration of a certain text or special iconographic motif, but it rather establishes a connection between the sacred space of a concrete church and its prototype in the church of the Virgin of the Pharos. According to this reconstructed conception the subject of the Holy Sepulchre of Constantinople, as well as its prototype in Jerusalem, must have appeared in a certain sacred context as an image-vision. The phenomenon analysed cannot be described simply as image copying. By stressing iconographic details, we only touch the surface of the deep and complex conception that was designed to reproduce the most important image-archetype of the sacred space of the Pharos church.

THE VIRGIN OIKOKYRA

Most likely, the main icon of the Virgin in the Pharos, with the eloquent name Oikokyra (the Lady of the Household), was one of the essential ele-



Fig. 16. *Christ the Man of Sorrow*, early 15th century. Prothesis of the Kalenic monastery (Serbia)

ments of the church space.¹⁰⁹ It is only recently that this most important icon, the protectress of the imperial house and “the Mistress” of the palatine church, has attracted researchers’ attention. This icon is mentioned by Nicholas Mesarites, who names it while describing the Pharos church: “this God’s house, the palace of our Lord Pantokrator, the church of our Mistress Oikokyra”.¹¹⁰ This statement clearly shows that the church was both consecrated to the Virgin, and also considered a shrine of this miracle-working icon. Most likely it is this icon that was mentioned in connection to the events of 1034, when, at the time of her marriage to Michael IV, Empress

¹⁰⁹ Bacci 2003 (as in n. 4); Michele Bacci: La Vergine Oikokyra, Signora del grande Palazzo. Lettura del un passo di Leone Tusco sulle cattive usanze dei greci, in: *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, Serie IV, 3 (1/2), 1998, pp. 261-279.

¹¹⁰ Heisenberg 1907 (as in n. 16), p. 32.

Zoe sent the Pharos church relics, namely the Holy Cross, the Mandylion, Christ's Letter to Abgar and the Virgin's icon, to the rebellious Constantine Dalassenos as a guarantee of his safe return to Constantinople. It is noteworthy that the icon of the Virgin was numbered among the main relics of the empire that were used as a pledge during critical political situations. The relics served as guarantors of oaths: their enormous material value and priceless spiritual importance validated the emperor's promise.¹¹¹

The most detailed account of the Virgin Oikokyra icon can be found in the Latin text by Leo Tuscus, "On the heresies and prevarications of the Greeks". Tuscus was an interpreter from Pisa at the court of Manuel Comnenos, and was thus well informed about the details of palace life. He says:

Now in the church of the aforementioned palace where the relics are kept, the icon of Our Virgin is placed behind the altar; by virtue of certain qualities she is called the Mistress of the household (vacant dominam domus - lat. gr. transl. Oikokyra.). Just as during Lent and till Great Saturday they keep the Holy Mandylion and Holy Keramion (*sancti mantellis, sanctique Koramidii*) covered with veils, so they keep them here from the beginning of Lent till Great Saturday in a closed room, covering the doors with a veil. They pray to the icon of Our Lady to give birth to children, and through it they address the Mother of God herself so that she might become godmother. That's how it is done. They join together with the icon by means of a thin cloth so that it accepts the child from the hands of a priest in the manner of a godmother. This superstition of theirs is glorified in their sermons. Does one not disregard God by a presumptuous claim of what the icon says, whether it pledges for the child or refuses to verify his baptism?¹¹²

The icon of the Virgin Oikokyra held pride of place in the church that was overwhelmed with the supreme holiness—it was placed behind the altar and in all likelihood could have been the model for all altarpieces of the orthodox world. The text talks about a special Lenten ritual in the palatine church, in which the empire's three main miracle-working icons were hidden from the eyes of believers, and especially from the eyes of the members of the imperial family, since it was their personal chapel. The Keramion

¹¹¹ Ernst von Dobschütz: *Christusbilder. Untersuchungen zur christlichen Legende*, Leipzig 1899, p. 176.

¹¹² "In Ecclesia utique dicti Palatii, ubi sanctae constituunt reliquiae, sanctae Dei Genitricis imago post altare sita, quam quodam excellentiae privilegio vocant dominam domus; statim a capite ieiunii in conclavi clauditur usque ad magnum Sabbatum, panno illius portae operiuntur, similiter autem sancti mantellis, sanctique Koramidii locos, Quadragesimae tempore, usque ad illud Sabbatum velaminibus tectos custodiunt", Leo Tuscus: *De haeresibus et praevaricationibus Graecorum*, in: *Patrologia Graeca*, 145, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, Paris 1865, col. 548C.

and Mandylyon, as we mentioned above, were placed in two vessels and hung on the dome arches, and it seems that they were simply covered with veils, while the icon of the Virgin was taken out from the church and placed in a separate room, supposedly adjacent to the imperial apartments.¹¹³ The uncovering of all three miracle-working images on Great Saturday was supposed to reveal the holy presence and be perceived as a revelation, a gift from God and a mighty feast. This fact also highlights the changing character of the sacred space in the Pharos church during different periods of the liturgical year. At the same time, this change could be borrowed as a paradigm—a model to imitate.

We know nothing of the iconographical type of the Virgin of Oikokyra. Yet the very fact that the venerated icon existed among the most important relics is highly significant. We might very cautiously ask whether the Virgin of the Passion iconography has any connection with the cult of the Virgin Oikokyra in the imperial church-reliquary (fig. 17). It should be borne in mind that this special image of the Virgin and Child, in which angels present to her the Passion relics (Cross, Lance, Reed and Sponge), has its origins in Constantinople and became popular under Comnenos. In its conception, we can clearly distinguish the spatial element (angels flying from the sky) and paradoxical juxtaposition of the different chronologies—the caressing of the Child and the demonstration of the evidence of his future Sacrifice. As in the aforementioned examples connected to the Pharos church, here we have the tendency to tie together in one image an icon, relics and their interaction in space. However, the absence of more concrete facts leaves this idea hypothetical and subject to further reflection.

It is noteworthy that the veils fixed to the miracle-working icons were themselves sacred objects that occupied an important place in special imperial rites. Leo Tuscus resentfully reports on the exotic ceremony of the Baptism of the royal children in the Pharos church, by presenting the newborn baby to the Virgin of Oikokyra as a godmother: “They join together with the icon by means of a thin cloth so that it accepts the child from the hands of a priest similarly to a godmother”. The miracle-working icon is perceived as a living being that takes immediate part in the rite and interacts with the priests through the cloth fixed to it. These veils covering the icons or placed under them were sometimes venerated by the Byzantines as separate miracle-working objects, to which they ascribed the healing of

¹¹³ Michele Bacci argues that it could be the emperors’ bedroom located to the north of the Pharos chapel according to the testimony of Anna Comnena (see n. 8).



Fig. 17. *The Virgin of the Passion*, fresco-icon, 1192. Cyprus, Lagoudera monastery

members of the imperial family. They were also celebrated in surviving poetic epigrams.¹¹⁴

Leo Tuscus's testimony records the significant role of the veils in the organisation of the space of the Pharos church. Here we deal with a very important tradition that was described in detail for Roman churches of the fourth to ninth centuries.¹¹⁵ It continued without interruption for centuries and found amazing correspondence in the inventories of late Medieval Russian monasteries. The significance of the veils placed before the icons was exceptionally noteworthy in 'royal churches'. The original structure and iconic image of the Tsar's church, the Kremlin court cathedral, which followed in this special decoration the great model of the imperial church-reliquary of Constantinople was radically changed by the removal of the

¹¹⁴ A tradition of the textiles covering the icon was studied in Valerie Nunn: *The Encheirion as adjunct to the Icon in the Middle Byzantine Period*, in: *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 10, 1986, pp. 73-102, 94-95.

¹¹⁵ A characteristic example—a system of veils in Santa Maria Maggiore: *Le Liber Pontificalis*, Text, introduction et commentaire par Louis Duchesne, vol. I, Paris 1981, pp. 60-63; *The Lives of the Ninth-Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis). The Ancient Biographies of Ten Popes from AD 817-891*, trans., introd. and commentary by Raymond Davis, Liverpool 1995, p. 27.

veils, the 'undressing' of the icons as such, that began in the seventeenth century and ended in the eighteenth.¹¹⁶ Thus the Tsar's church is only one of many proofs that the imperial church-reliquary continued its life after its destruction in the thirteenth century. Of course, here we are not speaking about architectural copies. The Pharos church became a mythologem of the church-reliquary, an image-paradigm of the sacred space that lived in the minds of authors of concrete architectural and iconographical projects.

To sum up the main points of this study: as I have argued, the exceptional role of the palatine church of the Virgin of the Pharos was not merely defined by the presence of the Passion relics, but also by the concept that it replaced the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem in Constantinople. The sacred emptiness of the Jerusalem Sepulchre was filled in this church by the completeness of the material evidence, which did not belong to the Muslim invaders but to the pious rulers anointed by the Lord. By gathering precious relics in the Great Palace next to their private apartments, Byzantine emperors created a new centre of power for the whole of Christendom. The Byzantine Holy Sepulchre framed within the precious cross-domed church, with an ideal iconographic program, must have become the ideal model to follow. It was the Pharos church that played the role of an intermediary between the 'proto'-church in Jerusalem and all the churches of the Orthodox world regarding the place of the burial and resurrection of the Savior. The sacred space of the Pharos church may be considered as an absolutely dominating iconic image of Jerusalem, which had a huge influence on the minds of master builders and iconographers, both East and West.

¹¹⁶ Irina Sterligova: *Dragotsennyi ubor ikon Tsarskogo khrama* (Precious Decoration of Icons from the Royal Church) in: *Tsarskii khram. Sytyini Blagoveschenskogo sobora v Kremle* (*The Royal Church. The Shrines of the Annunciation Cathedral in the Moscow Kremlin*), exhibition catalogue, Moscow 2003, pp. 63-78.