**Chapter 3**

**Cult and Controversy: Relics of the Holy Blood of Christ in St. Mark’s Basilica**

***Introduction***

In what follows, we will investigate the reception history of the five relics presented in reliquaries in the walls of St. Mark’s Basilica, which we have been able to identify as relics that were plundered from Constantinople as documented in the late medieval Venetian sources. It is particularly important to expand our study beyond questions of how these relics were received in the lagoon city to consider what conclusions we can make about their prehistory in the eastern Mediterranean on the basis of the available sources.

Additional relics, which probably or certainly came from Byzantium and some of which are still preserved to this day, are mentioned in the earliest inventories of the Treasury of St. Mark’s Basilica as well as, for example, in the late medieval chronicles of Venice. However, in what follows we will only address these relics to the extent that they help to shed light on the history of the five relics that are presented in the walls of St. Mark’s Basilica. We reviewed their particularly prominent position and the special support that was afforded to their cult by the doges in late medieval Venice in the previous chapter.

The origin of all five relics, whose presence in Venice according to various sources was first attested just a few years or decades after the end of the Latin period in Constantinople (1261), as well as the circumstances of their acquisition for the Doge’s chapel are unknown. However, given Venice’s role in the Fourth Crusade and the looting of the Byzantine capital, the evidence more than suggests that the relics actually came to the lagoon city in the wake of these events. What seems more important than their actual provenance, however, is the fact that sources dating back to the late Middle Ages attributed the relics as part of the goods looted from Constantinople.

***Changing Legends Surrounding the Holy Blood Ostensorium***

The small rock crystal ampoule containing the Holy Blood is one of two blood relics that have been present in St. Mark’s Basilica since the late Middle Ages, with a provenance from Constantinople that is claimed either on the basis of sources or on the relic’s appearance.[[1]](#footnote-2) The crystal vial with the blood of Christ, together with a cross relic and the skull of John the Baptist, is mentioned for the first time in the record of miracles of Doge Ranieri Zen. At the same time, this item has been explicitly identified as belonging to the looted goods taken during 1204. The political implications of this claim can be understood from the specific context of the spring of 1265, as has been argued above. But how important was it to the doges to maintain this venerable provenance of the relic during the subsequent period?

The case of the blood relic in particular makes it clear that the link to Constantinople was by no means all that relevant for the Venetians, though other scholars have liked to claim that it was. We argued above that the doge conducted his diplomatic campaign to secure papal benevolence in the spring of 1265 primarily in order to achieve official recognition of the relic and its cult by the head of the Roman church as well as the institutionalization of indulgences through the issuance of a papal bull. As for the authenticity of the relics that were subjected to the wonderful “trial by fire” and thus their worthiness for veneration, Ranieri’s claim that the relics originally came from Jerusalem seems to me to be at least as important as his note that they were captured in Constantinople. This is especially true with reference to the Holy Blood.

Numerous texts since late antiquity report that after Helena found the Holy Cross on Golgotha, she sent a fragment of it to her son Constantine in Constantinople.[[2]](#footnote-3) On the other hand, there was no corresponding tradition with regard to the Holy Blood of Christ (just as there was not any for John the Baptist’s skull). Ranieri’s motivation to associate the blood relic in his possession with the story of the discovery of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem for the benefit of the Pope has a simple explanation: given this provenance, the blood relic in his palace church was associated with the Passion of Christ, and consequently it was identified as a body relic of the Lord. This corresponds to the statement in the doge’s record of miracles that the ampoule contains a portion *de vero Sanguine Domini* (“of the *true* blood of the Lord”).

In view of the effort that the Doge expended in trying to spread the time-honored story of his blood relic, it is remarkable that the propaganda concerning its alleged origin from Jerusalem apparently could easily be abandoned again when this was convenient: By the end of the fourteenth century a completely different story of the type and origin of the blood relic had established itself in Venice. The travelogue of the Florentine nobleman Simone Sigoli, who in 1384 went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land with a group of thirteen Tuscans, attests to this.[[3]](#footnote-4) When discussing pilgrimage sites in Syria, the author refers to the blood ampoule in St. Mark’s Basilica, and he is able to report about the history of this relic in detail. According to Sigoli’s testimony, the blood ampoule did not come from the Venetian looting of Constantinople. Rather, it reached the lagoon city directly from Beirut (Berytos), although it remains unclear at what time this was supposed to have taken place. According to Sigoli, there was a crucifixion icon in the house of a Jew in Beirut, and it miraculously began to bleed when Jews attacked it with weapons. Sigoli continues that a merchant from Bruges had heard an account of this story in the city, and he was able to obtain some of the blood from the icon. He left Beirut, sailed to Venice, and told a friend about the miracle of the bleeding icon. The Venetian then urged the merchant to give him half of this blood, prompting him to donate the valuable relic to St. Mark’s Basilica.[[4]](#footnote-5)

The blood relic of St. Mark’s Basilica appears in this narrative as a “twin” of the Bruges blood relic, because it is reported that the Flemish merchant donated the other half of the blood that he brought back to the West to his hometown. It was there that the relic was shown to worshipers every Friday and on high feast days.[[5]](#footnote-6) The cult of this relic of the Holy Blood of Christ, which was kept in the St. Basil Chapel in Bruges where it continues to be revered, enjoyed considerable official support, particularly over the course of the fourteenth century, and its reliquary was repaired twice during this period (in 1307 and 1388).[[6]](#footnote-7)

The accounts provided by the Florentine Simone Sigoli are clearly inspired by a legend of Byzantine origin that had already gained wide popularity at the time in the West. The story of the miracle of the bleeding icon of Beirut was first attested in the late eighth century in connection with the Byzantine Iconoclasm. At the Second Council of Nicaea (787), which temporarily reestablished the worship of icons, Bishop Peter of Nicomedia read a sermon with a description of the miracle of Beirut that allegedly had been first written by Athanasius the Great in the fourth century.[[7]](#footnote-8) The story was intended to serve as proof of the divine power inherent in icons, and the supposed authorship of the sermon by one of the most important teachers in Orthodoxy was intended to give the sermon both greater authority and a hallowed position in the distant past at the same time. Both of these strategies were very common in the Middle Ages.[[8]](#footnote-9) At the center of the story is the understanding of the biblical torture and crucifixion of Christ on his painted icon.[[9]](#footnote-10) Similar to the story told in the Gospel (John 19:34), blood and water flowed from the side of the painted Christ after members of the Beirut Jewish community stabbed the icon with a lance.[[10]](#footnote-11) It is striking that this condition of the liquid is mentioned several times in the homily.[[11]](#footnote-12) By doing this, the author of course intended to emphasize that the liquid escaping from the icon was the same as the Passion Blood that escaped from the side wound of Christ. It was precisely this blood produced by the thrust of the lance that was supposed to show that Christ died for the redemption of mankind. It was for this reason that it was referred to in Byzantium as “life-bringing” (ζωηφόρος) or “life-giving” (ζωοποιός).[[12]](#footnote-13) The escaping liquid was immediately caught in a vessel, and the miraculous power of this liquid was then revealed to the Jews in various miracles of the healing and raising of the dead, thereby finally leading to the conversion of the entire community.

This story was popular not only in the East, but also in the West. It spread first by means of a Latin translation that Anastasius Bibliothecarius, the papal librarian and envoy, prepared in 873 and dedicated to Pope John VIII. The translation freely added to the account found in the Acts of the Council of Nicaea.[[13]](#footnote-14) To commemorate the miraculous event, a special festival that was celebrated on November 9 (or on November 11 according to Anastasius) was institutionalized at various places in the West. The holiday was celebrated on a par with Christmas and Easter.[[14]](#footnote-15) While the Pseudo-Athanasius sermon, which was originally read at the Second Council of Nicaea, does not specify a time period when the Beirut Christ icon was created, a claimed date of origin can be found in the Latin version of Anastasius as well as in the later Western retelling of the legend, in which the icon is attributed to the personal hand of Nicodemus. According to this story, the icon is a portrait that was made in Jerusalem during Christ’s lifetime.[[15]](#footnote-16) Byzantine sources that date at the latest to around the middle of the ninth century also assumed that the miraculous icon dated from the time of Christ’s ministry.[[16]](#footnote-17)

In both the East and West, the legend of the Beirut icon of Christ was to inspire further stories about bleeding icons.[[17]](#footnote-18) The Markuskirche has housed a painted crucifix that is associated with a blood miracle since the late thirteenth century. In 1290, when the icon was still on display outside on St. Mark’s Square, it was said to have bled after it was punctured with weapons. It was then brought inside St. Mark’s Basilica and placed on an altar called the *capitello*, under a ciborium on the northeast pillar of the dome and above the west arm.[[18]](#footnote-19)

The perception that there was a natural association between the blood relics found in numerous church treasuries and the icon blood from Beirut in the West is illustrated by certain further embellishments of the Byzantine version of the legend by Pseudo-Athanasius that gained currency in the West: Anastasius Bibliothecarius added just such details to his “translation” of the Greek sermon. Namely, he elaborated that the bishop of Beirut had made “ampoules of glass” (*ampullas ... vitreas*), into which he poured some of the blood from the icon. He dispatched these ampoules via messengers to “Asia, Africa, and Europe.”[[19]](#footnote-20) Approximately four hundred years later, in the second half of the thirteenth century, the *Legenda aurea* of Jacobus of Voragine, which was soon to gain enormous popularity, also includes this embellished detail in its retelling of the legend of the blood miracle of Beirut. According to this version, “crystal and glass ampoules” (*ampullis crystallinis et uitreis*) were filled with the blood from the icon.[[20]](#footnote-21) The variations in the descriptions of the materials of the containers in the two texts definitely reflect the respective reality in which their authors lived: since the High Middle Ages, blood relics as well as other kinds of relics had increasingly been placed in valuable rock crystal vessels, which were often produced by Islamic or Byzantine manufacturers. This type of presentation possibly came into favor thanks to the sale of large parts of the Fatimid treasures, which were rich in such artifacts, in the 1060s.[[21]](#footnote-22)

The report of Simone Sigoli provides the first reliable evidence of a change to the legend of the origin of this blood relic from St. Mark’s Basilica. This is the dominant version that was found in the Venetian sources of the early modern period.[[22]](#footnote-23) Sigoli already knew that this blood was shown in St. Mark’s Basilica “twice a year with great solemnity,” namely on Good Friday and Ascension Day.[[23]](#footnote-24) The details presented in the letter from Ranieri Zen to the Pope and in the chronicle of Martin Da Canal, which speaks of the veneration of the said relic on either of these days, contradict each other, through they seem to find an explanation. At least the Doge in his letter could offer a simple explanation of why the icon ostentation ceremony took place on Ascension Day alone: the document was written on May 30, just a few days after this feast, making the Ascension fresher in the mind than Good Friday. The religious and political significance of Ascension Day in the lagoon city offers the best explanation of why Passion relics were worshipped on this feast (*Sensa*), since there is no immediate liturgical explanation for the practice. According to Venetian tradition, a papal indulgence from as early as 1177 allegedly promoted the association of these relics with the feast.[[24]](#footnote-25) The presentation of the blood on Good Friday (or during the vigil from Maundy Thursday to Good Friday) is hardly surprising, as this is the closest period of time from a liturgical point of view. The veneration of Passion relics on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday is attested in many places in the West and Byzantium in the Middle Ages.[[25]](#footnote-26)

The practice of worshiping the Holy Blood at St. Mark’s Basilica on the two days named by Sigoli, and more precisely on the vigil before these festivals, has been confirmed by numerous Venetian sources since the early modern period and well into the modern era.[[26]](#footnote-27) It is noteworthy that Venice’s pillaging of Constantinople no longer plays a role in this new story of the provenance of the blood ampoule, at least according to Sigoli’s testimony.

The wall of relics in St. Mark’s Basilica, as was argued above, presents the blood ampoule in the midst of the relics that were explicitly identified in the record of miracles of Ranieri Zen and in the chronicle of Andrea Dandolo as having been looted from Constantinople. Though the earlier source claimed the blood came from Constantinople, it was originally claimed that it was taken from Jerusalem to Venice, and it was subsequently clearly identified as Passion Blood. I believe that the Chronicle of Andrea Dandolo already establishes an association between the relic and the bleeding icon of Beirut: This account contains the claim that Enrico Dandolo captured the “ampoule with the *miraculous* blood of Jesus Christ” in Constantinople (*ampulam sanguinis miraculosi Iesu Christi*).[[27]](#footnote-28) The term “*sangue miracoloso*” for the blood that flowed from the icon of Christ prevailed in Venice no later than the early modern period as the usual name for the relic, and the same name is also encountered elsewhere, where it is applied to relics from bleeding icons of Christ.[[28]](#footnote-29) The adjective used by Andrea Dandolo therefore makes it probable that in Venice a few decades before Sigoli’s travelogue, and even before the middle of the fourteenth century, there was the idea that the contents of the rock crystal receptacle came from the miracle of the bleeding Christ icon of Beirut. Nevertheless, unlike what was claimed in the text by Sigoli, the Dandolo Chronicle continued to understand that the relic remained part of Venice’s pillaged relics from Constantinople. A Venetian author will naturally have placed more emphasis on this provenance than an outsider. However, the question still remains: why was the original story concerning the nature and provenance of the blood relic of St. Mark’s Basilica abandoned by Venice during the Ranieri Zen era?

The fact that the Holy Blood was understood to be no longer linked to the Passion at Golgotha, and thus no longer qualified as a body relic of Christ, appears to be even more important than the Holy Blood’s new association with the bleeding icon of Christ in Beirut. Blood relics of Christ had repeatedly become the subject of scholastic debates in Western Europe since the early Middle Ages. These debates centered on the practice of worshiping such relics in numerous places, but above all they also investigated the theological problems that were posed by such worship. The dispute essentially centered on the question of the extent to which parts of Christ’s body (including Passion Blood relics in particular) could have remained on earth after his physical resurrection.[[29]](#footnote-30) The explosive nature of the conflicts in the late Middle Ages elicited defenses of specific Passion Blood relics by major theologians. In the middle of the thirteenth century Robert Grosseteste, the bishop of Lincoln, wrote a tract entitled *De sanguine Christi*, presumably on behalf of the English King Henry III, in which he argued that the blood relic of Westminster was an authentic Passion Blood relic. This relic, which allegedly came from the Jerusalem Patriarchate, was solemnly deposited in the abbey in 1247 with a certain amount of pomp and ceremony that was intended to create an external impact.[[30]](#footnote-31) The *Tractatus de sacratissimo sanguine domini* by Gerhard of Cologne, which was written in 1280 on behalf of the Abbot Hermann von Weingarten, was prompted by comparable concerns. It was intended to counter skepticism about the authenticity of the blood relic that had long been revered in the Benedictine abbey on Lake Constance.[[31]](#footnote-32)

The change in the story of the provenance of the oldest blood relic of St. Mark’s Basilica from Passion Blood to blood taken from a miraculous icon in Beirut is, in my opinion, a direct attempt to quell doubts that had come to be more loudly voiced in the West concerning the authenticity and thus the practice of the veneration of relics of the Passion Blood of Christ. The most important voice to enter the debate about the Passion Blood in Italy was Thomas Aquinas, who wrote in the third part of his *Summa theologiae*, which was published before the end of 1273,

... that all the blood that flowed out of Christ’s body ... rose again with Christ’s body. ... However, that blood, which is worshiped as a relic in some churches, did not flow from Christ’s side, but, rather, was said to have miraculously flowed from a certain pierced icon of Christ.[[32]](#footnote-33)

Given the stage that the theological debate surrounding the blood relics of the Passion of Christ had reached in the thirteenth century, it is evident that Doge Ranieri hoped to be able to successfully promote the blood relic in his possession as an authentic relic of Christ from his Passion on Golgotha with the help of papal support. Given the vehement criticism that was voiced by theologians, we wonder whether this was not one of Ranieri’s main concerns for the entire undertaking of the spring of 1265. The reference to the miracle that the relic passed a “trial by fire” must therefore be read in particular in light of the scholastic debates about the questionable authenticity of relics of Christ’s body, including in particular blood relics.

As a result of the Fourth Crusade, the number of blood relics of Christ had increased significantly in the West due to the almost uncontrollable transfer of relics from Constantinople.[[33]](#footnote-34) However, as has been proven in some cases on the basis of the sources, this provenance was not considered to be entirely attractive, and therefore came to be openly challenged. After all, the Byzantine capital, at least as far as blood relics from the Passion of Christ were concerned, was only considered to be an intermediate stop of their veneration. Ranieri Zen’s attempt to skillfully combine the provenance of the blood relic in his possession with the “historical” context of the discovery of the cross in Jerusalem at the time of Constantine the Great vividly illustrates this attitude. The blood relic of the St. Basil Chapel in Bruges, which also made its way to the West via Constantinople as we mentioned above, provides a further example of an attempt to link an acquired blood relic of Christ with Jerusalem.

According to local tradition, King Baldwin III of Jerusalem presented this relic of the blood of Christ, which was brought from the Holy Land to Bruges between 1148 and 1150, as a gift to his brother-in-law Thierry d’Alsace, Count of Flanders. As Huyghebaert has shown, this story is first attested in the *Chronicon Sancti Bertini* of Abbot Jean d’Ypres (Iperius), which was written down around 1380. Earlier, and in particular contemporary evidence of the alleged transfer of the relic was no longer in evidence at the time of the Second Crusade.[[34]](#footnote-35) On the other hand, it can be considered certain that the blood relic must actually have come to Bruges from Constantinople during Latin times, namely before 1256.[[35]](#footnote-36) Apart from the evidence of sources, the reliquary in which the relic was originally housed, a rock crystal vial, also indicates a Byzantine origin.[[36]](#footnote-37) As the chronicle of Iperius suggests, knowledge of the actual provenance of the blood relic had been lost in Bruges by the late fourteenth century, and it was by then being worshiped as a Passion Blood relic of Christ, which had come directly from Jerusalem to Flanders.[[37]](#footnote-38)

The above-mentioned travelogue by Simone Sigoli shows that the type and origin of the blood relic that was highly revered in Bruges was thoroughly controversial in the late Middle Ages. Here the relic, just like the one owned by Doge Ranieri Zen, is associated with the miracle of the bleeding Christ icon from Beirut. This testimony, which dates almost to the same time as the chronicle of Iperius, has not been considered by previous studies of the blood relic of Bruges, and, accordingly, no one has previously discussed its fundamental deviations from the “official” local legend. Now, it is possible to assume that the Italian simply misunderstood the history of the blood relic that was revered in distant Flanders. It is more likely, however, that the blood in Bruges, just as is generally true of all relics that purport to contain the “true” blood of the Passion of Christ, was very much the subject of doubt. A passage in Iperius’ account also suggests that the relic contained in St. Basil’s Chapel in Bruges, just like the one owned by Ranieri Zen, definitely had to be defended as a body relic of Christ: Iperius strikingly emphasizes that only the blood relics of Bruges and Fécamp came from Jerusalem, whereas all other blood relics of Christ that were venerated in the West must be derived from the miraculous icon of Beirut.[[38]](#footnote-39)

An attempt was made to establish an authentic provenance not only for the blood relic in Bruges, but also for the relic in Venice over one hundred years later: people tried, perhaps in good faith in both places, to establish the authenticity of the relic by means of a fabricated story relating to the events of the Passion on Golgotha. However, attempts to establish Jerusalem as the place of origin for the blood relics, quite apart from the debates concerning the authenticity of the blood relics of the Passion of Christ that were based on theological grounds, were also problematic for a second reason: not only are all sources silent about the possible discovery of Christ’s blood by Helena, but there is also no evidence of the presence and worship of Passion Blood in Jerusalem for the entire period stretching from late antiquity through the Middle Ages.[[39]](#footnote-40) This problem comes to the fore in Iperius, who argues that after the Arab conquest of the city the blood of Jerusalem may have been moved to another, unknown place. However, when we consider this statement, we should note that his own account of the provenance of the relic of Bruges is not quite logical.[[40]](#footnote-41) It should be remembered that, as Nicholas Vincent has shown, this was one of the main reasons for the failure of the cult surrounding the Westminster blood relic in the thirteenth century, since it was also claimed to have originated from Jerusalem.[[41]](#footnote-42)

We can now return our attention to Venice: as was already mentioned above, the hoped-for papal reaction to Ranieri Zen’s advertisement for his relic in 1265 failed to materialize. Of course, this did not mean the end of the veneration of the relics involved in the miracle of the trial by fire at St. Mark’s Basilica. In particular, the Holy Blood Ostensorium continued to play a central role in the cult of St. Mark’s Basilica, as can be seen from its prominent display on the reliquary table of the Doge’s Chapel in the late Middle Ages and the testimony of Simone Sigoli. Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, we have increasing amounts of written evidence of this relic and its veneration at St. Mark’s Basilica in Venice. Some of these sources may allow conclusions to be drawn about the veneration of these relics and their involvement in the cult of St. Mark’s during the late Middle Ages. Therefore, let’s take a closer look at these texts.

As was already stated in the Dandolo Chronicle in the middle of the fourteenth century, Venetian authors were more concerned with identifying the blood relic as a prominent example of a looted relic from Byzantium, even after the association with the miracle of the Beirut icon of Christ was firmly established in the lagoon city. The authors of early modern texts in part devote themselves to reconciling the apparently contradictory information concerning the origin of the blood in the earliest sources. A prominent example is the description of St. Mark’s Basilica by Giovanni Stringa from 1610. The account dedicates a chapter to the relic that is entitled “Dell’Ampolla del Sangue miracoloso, & sua notabile historia.”[[42]](#footnote-43) It explains in detail the provenance of the blood from Beirut and its association with the miracle of the bleeding Christ icon. Stringa closely adheres to the medieval tradition surrounding the event, in particular to the Latin version of the sermon by Anastasius Bibliothecarius, which he translated into Italian in the respective chapter.[[43]](#footnote-44) In contrast, the account that part of the blood flowing from the icon was subsequently sent by the Bishop of Beirut in a crystal ampoule to Constantine the Great in Constantinople represents a more or less free interpretation of Stringa.[[44]](#footnote-45) This interpretation clearly refers to the miracle report by Ranieri Zen, because immediately thereafter Stringa recalls that the holy blood survived the “horribile, & spaventoso incendio,” referring to the incident of 1230, completely undamaged.[[45]](#footnote-46) Although the miracle of the bleeding icon of Stringa is moved to the Constantinian period, it is noteworthy that, unlike the case of Ranieri Zen, the association of blood with the finding of the cross by Helena in Jerusalem is left out along with any supporting logic.[[46]](#footnote-47)

The prominence of the Holy Blood in the cult of St. Mark’s in the early seventeenth century is evident from the fact that Stringa identifies it in his chapter on the *Santuario* as its most important relic. This can already be seen in the heading of the relevant section: “Del luoco, detto il Santuario, oue custodite sono diuerse notabili Reliquie, & in particolare vn’Ampolla del Sangue Miracoloso di Christo.”[[47]](#footnote-48) The priority accorded to this blood relic in the *Santuario* is evidenced by another text from the same period, which also contains detailed information on the occasions and ceremonies of its veneration. We are talking about the tract *Della Guerra di Costantinopoli* by Paolo Rannusio, which was published in 1604. Again, the blood from the icon of Beirut features as one of the items plundered from the Venetian crusade in 1204.[[48]](#footnote-49) According to Rannusio, the procurators made sure that the area around the door to the *Santuario* was constantly illuminated to honor this relic in particular.[[49]](#footnote-50) The author also reports in detail that the blood was presented to the faithful in droves on the nights before Good Friday and Ascension Day. It was displayed together with other relics, which Rannusio does not detail, in the brightly lit St. Mark’s Basilica by the canons and one of the procurators from the *pergolo* while the faithful knelt in veneration.[[50]](#footnote-51)

By *pergolo,* we mean the large pulpit on the south side in front of the St. Mark’s presbytery, which, as Antje Middeldorf-Kosegarten has shown, was constructed between around 1260 and 1268 under Ranieri Zen [Fig. ##]. This hexagonal pulpit, which was also known as the *pulpitum maius,* *pulpitum reliquiarum* or *bigonzo*[[51]](#footnote-52) in the Venetian sources and whose parapet consists mainly of porphyry slabs, was initially reserved for the doge and the magistrate. The doges sometimes attended services at this pulpit, and shortly after it was created it became customary to present thenewly elected doge before the people for acclamation there. It was used for the first time in this way for Lorenzo Tiepolo in 1268.[[52]](#footnote-53) In view of the evidence that Ranieri Zen promoted the relics from Constantinople and their cults, it seems entirely possible that the south pulpit, which he himself commissioned, had been used for the presentation of the relic from the very beginning, i.e., from around 1260, or it may have even been primarily built for this purpose.[[53]](#footnote-54) Of course, this assertion is hypothetical.

The practice of the ostentation of the reliquary from the “Doge’s Chapel,” which was described by Rannusio as taking place during the vigils before Good Friday and Ascension Day, is also described in the still unedited *Liber cerimoniale rituum ecclesiasticorum* of St. Mark’s Basilica, which the Presbyter and Master of Ceremonies Bartolomeo Bonifacio compiled from older liturgical sources between 1559 and 1564.[[54]](#footnote-55) Here, too, it is explained that the Holy Blood was brought to the pulpit from the *Santuario* together with other relics on the nights before Good Friday and Ascension Day, and from there it would be brought out to be presented for worship. The relic had to be shown seven times on Good Friday so that different groups could come to see it one after the other.[[55]](#footnote-56) For Ascension Day, on the other hand, it is specified that the relics would only be shown to women on this occasion.[[56]](#footnote-57) Before the middle of the seventeenth century, the practice of presenting the “miraculous blood” had apparently been further revisited, possibly in order to cope with the mass of people seeking to view it: As Giovanni Zittio wrote in 1655, women were now prohibited from participating at the Maundy Thursday vigil in St. Mark’s Basilica. Conversely, the night of Ascension Day was reserved for the worship of the blood relic.[[57]](#footnote-58) A document from the middle of the eighteenth century attests that the above-mentioned precious Byzantine silk fabric with the two great archangels was used regularly for the exhibition of the blood relic.[[58]](#footnote-59)

In any case, these and other documents attest to the prominent status of the *Sangue miracoloso* from Beirut in the relic cult of St. Mark’s Basilica during the late Renaissance and Baroque periods. It is clear from the late medieval sources that both the cult and the associated festivals date back to the thirteenth century. However, we are not able to determine exactly how far the details of the relic ostentation ceremony, which have been described in various texts by Venetian authors since the sixteenth century, go back in time. Likewise, none of the extant sources that have come down to us from the late Middle Ages and early modern times provide specific details about how exactly the *ostensio* took place: was the blood relic taken out of the Ecclesia so that only the transparent rock crystal ampoule was visible in its golden ostensorium, and how close were believers able to approach the relic?[[59]](#footnote-60)

***A Blood Reliquary from a Byzantine Manufacturer in St. Mark’s Basilica***

The fact that the legend surrounding the Holy Blood in the ostensorium was fundamentally changed is not the only piece of evidence that the doges hesitated (at least during the late Middle Ages) to place blood from the Passion of Christ on display for public worship. The story behind another government-owned relic is similar.

The earliest mention of a second container with the blood of Christ can be found in St. Mark’s Basilica in the Treasury inventory from 1325.[[60]](#footnote-61) Based on the detailed description that can be found in the document, this reliquary can be unequivocally identified with a small, cylindrical container from Byzantium, which was later integrated into an approximately 42 cm high ostensorium of Venetian manufacture [Fig. ## - ##].[[61]](#footnote-62) Renato Polacco was able to identify this large ostentorium as the work of the goldsmith Venturin del Cavalletto from 1626.[[62]](#footnote-63) On the other hand, its contents, namely the actual Byzantine reliquary, have been little studied.

The unpretentious Byzantine container made of rock crystal is only around four centimeters in diameter. It has a removable, lavishly designed lid made of Byzantine cloisonné enamel, and it presents a crucifix made of jasper in the middle. The following inscription alluding to the victory of the resurrection appears in white against a blue background around the crucifix: Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς Χ(ριστό)ς ὁ βασιλεὺς τῆς δόξη(ς)[[63]](#footnote-64) (“Jesus Christ, the King of Glory”). The same wording is sometimes found on the sign at the top of the cross in Byzantine depictions of the crucified Christ.[[64]](#footnote-65) A second inscription, an epigram composed in alexandrine form, is wrapped around the outside of the lid and suggests that the small reliquary was originally intended to be carried with its owner for his personal protection:Ἔχεις με Χ [ριστὸ] ν αἷμα σαρκός μου φέρων[[65]](#footnote-66) (“You own me, Christ, by carrying the blood of my flesh”). This inscription clearly identified the contents of the reliquary as the blood of the Passion of Christ. The epigram reminds us of inscriptions on liturgical goblets and patents in how it directly addresses the user as well as the formality of its soteriological statement. A verse (also a prosodic alexandrine) on a Byzantine chalice, which was made in Constantinople around 962/3 and today can be found in the Treasury of St. Mark’s Basilica, says: “Christ gives life-giving blood” (Χριστὸς δίδωσιν αἷμα τὸ ζωὴν φέρον).[[66]](#footnote-67)

According to the inventory that was taken in 1325, the cylindrical reliquary was housed in a “box of gold” (*busoletum... auri*) before it was placed in the baroque ostensorium.[[67]](#footnote-68) It is a 7.6-cm-high vessel made of gold-plated copper with a diameter of 4.6 cm [Fig. ## - ##].[[68]](#footnote-69) The Holy Blood pyx was housed in the cylindrically shaped lower part of the reliquary. The lid, which could be opened using a hinge, allowed for the pyx to be removed or at least for its decorated lid to be viewed or touched. A second vessel that was smaller in diameter (2.5 cm) is soldered to the center of the cylindrical lower part of the reliquary. The purpose that this vessel served is unclear. It has a dome-shaped lid that is also attached to a hinge. While the lower container, which houses the valuable relic, is secured with a lock, the upper dome-shaped lid can only be closed with a hook and eye. It has been suggested that the upper container may have been used to house *brandea*, which are substances that have been sanctified by contact with the blood relic.[[69]](#footnote-70) The dome shape of the container may have been selected because it represented an allusion to Christ’s tomb in Jerusalem.[[70]](#footnote-71)

A nielloed Greek inscription runs around the edges of the lower container. This epigram consists of two alexandrines that mark the contents as a relic of Christ’s Passion Blood, and specifically as blood from the lance thrust. These verses proclaim: Τερπνὸν δοχεῖον αἵματος ζωηφόρου / πλευρᾶς ῥυέντος ἐξ ἀκηράτου Λόγου,[[71]](#footnote-72) “Lovely vessel of life-giving blood flowing from the side of the undamaged Logos.” In doing so, they indicate that it contains a body relic of Christ as clearly as the enameled epigram of the inner reliquary.

There was still a third container dating to the early fourteenth century in addition to the two Byzantine reliquaries that claims to contain the Holy Blood of Christ, namely an ivory pyx (*uno busolo de lefanto*), which can be found in the inventory from 1325.[[72]](#footnote-73) This container has probably not survived, and it is unclear whether this third, outer shell was of Byzantine origin or only made its first appearance in Venice.[[73]](#footnote-74)

Guillou’s guess that inner rock crystal container dates back to the tenth century due to its enameled inscriptions seems plausible from the paleographic point of view, although the eleventh century is also an option.[[74]](#footnote-75) These texts were inscribed in capital letters of the type that has been termed epigraphic decorative majuscule. This style was very commonly used in Byzantium for epigrams and other inscriptions on artifacts of all kinds and to highlight certain text passages in manuscripts between the tenth and twelfth centuries.[[75]](#footnote-76) The inscriptions on the cover are mostly in broad, unaccented letters and are based on the phonetic pronunciation of the words and not on their “correct” spelling. The paleographic determination of the writing is difficult for technical reasons alone, and there are no comparable monuments of enamel art that can help us to confidently date the piece. Creating enameled letters on an enameled base, especially when these letters were so tiny, would have been a much greater challenge for the craftsmen than the much more common technique of inserting the molten material into prestamped depressions on the metal surface. In view of the particularly sophisticated technical process that was chosen here, it is worth noting how regular the letters of this reliquary cover are shaped. The restrained ornamentation of the piece, which is also commonly used on artifacts made of Cloisonné enamel, likewise does not provide us with any useful information about the possible date of manufacture.

The nielloed epigram on the outer reliquary was certainly not made by the same hand as the enameled one of the rock crystal container.[[76]](#footnote-77) Especially since the lock already present on the metal container was taken into account at the time when the epigram was applied, it is conceivable to propose – at least in theory – that the verses were only added later, some time after the original production of the artifact. The words are spelled flawlessly and have been accented, although the letters are relatively carelessly engraved in the same epigraphic decorative majuscule. Here, too, it is difficult to provide a more precise paleographic determination of the date of the inscription due to technical reasons in particular, although many of the details about the piece suggest the tenth to eleventh centuries.[[77]](#footnote-78)

In the case of the ostensorium with the rock crystal ampoule that survived the “trial by fire,” we have already shown that the original claim that this blood relic was associated with Constantinople and the time-honored story of the discovery of the cross by Helena in Jerusalem were soon abandoned. This was probably done to avoid uncomfortable questions based on theological concerns. The second blood relic of St. Mark’s Basilica with the striking Greek inscriptions on its two containers would have been presented as an excellent example of a prestigious object that had been looted from Constantinople. The Venetian sources from the late Middle Ages until the early seventeenth century, however, are remarkably taciturn as to the status and worship of this relic at St. Mark’s Basilica: When it was first mentioned in the Treasury inventory of 1325, it is striking that the blood in the pyx appears as only the seventh item in the list, whereas the blood ostensorium takes first place in both the earliest and all later inventories of the *Santuario*.[[78]](#footnote-79) After all, both blood reliquaries were kept in the “Great Reliquary Shrine” (*in arca majori*) of the *Santuario* according to the inventory of 1325 that was taken in the early fourteenth century.[[79]](#footnote-80) Although this also confirms that the Holy Blood pyx was esteemed, the entry does not allow us to draw any conclusions about the status of the blood relic from Byzantium at St. Mark’s Basilica.

The same applies to the early modern inventories of the *Santuario*: the Byzantine Holy Blood pyx is occasionally listed there, including as the sixth item in the third preserved inventory that is fairly short and that comes down to us from the early fifteenth century (after 1402): *Un Bossoletto con Sangue di Xpo*.[[80]](#footnote-81) The next document, from 1507, transcribes the inscription on the two Byzantine containers and also the outer ivory pyx: *Un bossolo di avolio in el qual è bossoleto tutto oro, in el qual è el Pretiosissimo Sangue de ms. Jesus Xpo et uno Agnus Dei d’oro* (No. 7).[[81]](#footnote-82) It is questionable what is meant by the last-mentioned “*Agnus Dei* made of gold.” According to a separate object, this wording is also found on the ivory pyx. The words “*Agnus Dei*” were usually used inscribed on small round pendants that contained wax from the Easter candle with the stamped image of the Lamb of God and were issued by the popes. Normally, these containers, which have been preserved in large numbers, were also decorated on the outside with the image of the Lamb of God bearing the cross. However, sometimes these containers depicted other representations. They could either be worn as encolpia by believers or presented in ostensoria.[[82]](#footnote-83) The artifact mentioned in the inventory may be the tiny golden container that was placed on top of the so-called *Basilis Maria Reliquary of the True Cross [Staurothek]* [Fig. ## - ##].[[83]](#footnote-84) The context clearly refers to Christ’s sacrificial death, and the small capsule itself, with its Greek inscription, indicates a direct connection with the Byzantine blood reliquary. The *Basilis Maria Reliquary of the True Cross*, as I have explained elsewhere, was present in Venice in 1517 as a replica of a Byzantine reliquary of the True Cross from the late eleventh or twelfth centuries. This was identical to the object that is said to have survived the “trial by fire,” or the Treasury fire, without sustaining damage according to Ranieri Zen’s record of miracles of 1265.[[84]](#footnote-85) What seems particularly instructive for the question of the reception of the Byzantine blood pyx made of rock crystal is the fact that the engraved epigram on its enamel lid repeats the wording found on the small golden pyx (although it corrects the spelling and adds accent marks). It is clear that the letter shapes of the rock crystal pyx were precisely based on the Byzantine model. This engraving was probably made in 1517, as the result of the production of a Renaissance “copy” of the original Byzantine reliquary of the True Cross.[[85]](#footnote-86) It is not clear whether this small cylindrical container is actually identical to the golden *Agnus Dei*, which is listed in the 1507 Treasury inventory in connection with the Holy Blood in the rock crystal pyx. However, the copy of the Greek epigram made of Cloisonné enamel inside the ensemble of *the Basilis Maria Reliquary of the True Cross* at least illustrates that the relic was revered in Venice as the “true” blood of Christ from Byzantium in the early sixteenth century.

In contrast, it is noteworthy that the Byzantine blood reliquary in the inventory of 1580 is no longer mentioned among the relics of the *Santuario*.[[86]](#footnote-87) Francesco Sansovino and Paolo Rannusio, authors who were generally familiar with the relic treasury of St. Mark’s Basilica, also ignore it in their publications from 1581 and 1604. A few years later, Stringa tells us nothing about the blood relic in the Byzantine crystal pyx.[[87]](#footnote-88) This is particularly noteworthy in consideration of the fact that Stringa, as was mentioned above, devotes the largest amount of space in his account to the Holy Blood from Beirut.

In fact, the blood relic appears to have been hidden from view for a long time. It was not until the spring of 1617 that we learn about the whereabouts of this relic. In fact, a large number of walled-in relics that had been completely forgotten and were located behind a wall of the *Santuario* above the altar were rediscovered on April 17 of that year.[[88]](#footnote-89) This important find is evidenced by a large number of documents that were subsequently written, and some of them have yet to be edited.[[89]](#footnote-90) In one of these documents, which lists all the relics that were found, it is stated that the “Holy Blessed Relics” (*Santissime Reliquie*) mentioned below were found accidentally, after any knowledge of them had been completely forgotten (*delle quali non vi era memoria, nè notta alcuna, nè si sapeva cosa fossero*).[[90]](#footnote-91) The first relic to be described, and in great detail, is the Byzantine rock crystal reliquary of the Holy Blood together with its outer reliquary (*d’oro massisso*).[[91]](#footnote-92) The inventory not only describes the two containers and their materials, but it also contains the first Latin translations of all of their Greek inscriptions.[[92]](#footnote-93) The sacred content of crystal pyx is also described for the first time, namely as “about two spoonfuls” of dried blood that have been partially mixed with textile fibers.[[93]](#footnote-94)

Apparently the miraculously rediscovered relics included St. George’s arm and the relic cross of Henry of Flanders.[[94]](#footnote-95) Since these two relics as well as the Byzantine pyx with Christ’s blood are still mentioned in the inventory of September 1, 1507, we have a *terminus post quem* for when the relics were interned in the wall. We have evidence to move this date further into the sixteenth century if we consider that the Greek epigram was exactly copied onto the enamel cover of the blood pyx, which was probably done in 1517, in connection with the production of the replica of the *Basilis Maria Reliquary of the True Cross*. Consequently, the relic was hidden from view for a maximum of one hundred years.

A Latin inscription with gold letters, which was placed on a marble slab in the *Santuario* in September 1617, commemorates the miraculous find of April 17, where the “very precious blood of Christ” (*Pretiosissimo Christi Sanguine*) was listed first.[[95]](#footnote-96)

Other pronouncements in the form of published tracts from 1617 are also dedicated to this event, which was heavily promoted in Venice. The main driving force behind this propaganda was the then Primicerio of St. Mark’s, Giovanni Tiepolo, who had ambitions for the office of Patriarch of Venice, which he gained only two years later. His *Trattato delle santissime reliquie* is essentially devoted to the Byzantine pyx with the Holy Blood, and it may have contributed significantly to the development of its cult in St. Mark’s Basilica. The first edition of this work sold out so quickly that it was reprinted in the same year.[[96]](#footnote-97) Two other tracts from the same year, one by the Treasurer Andrea Suriano[[97]](#footnote-98) and the other by the Master of Ceremonies of St. Mark’s Giulio Cesare Vergaro,[[98]](#footnote-99) were published on the occasion of the solemn procession of the rediscovered relics on May 28.

All three tracts from 1617 contain an engraving on the enamel cover of the Byzantine blood pyx, and they even twice adorned the title page in the tracts by Tiepolo and Suriano [Fig. ## - ##].[[99]](#footnote-100) This etching is the first ever pictorial reproduction of one of the Byzantine relics in St. Mark’s Basilica found on the late medieval reliquary table, which is now in the corridor of the entranceway to the Doge’s Palace, the so-called Andito Foscari. We will return again to these written documents, which served to propagate the blood relic and the Byzantine heritage of the lagoon city. At this point, we should point out that these texts contributed significantly to the initiation of the cult of the relic of the Holy Blood taken from the wound in Christ’s side in the possession of the doges. In particular, Giovanni Tiepolo’s tract “Delle Santissime Reliquie” sought to prove the unquestionable authenticity and worthiness of this blood relic and to dispel any possible theological doubts that such a relic could even exist on earth.

Significantly, according to Tiepolo, the relic of concern was not the blood in the ostensorium with the rock crystal ampoule, which had been highly revered in St. Mark’s Basilica for centuries, but the little pyx from Byzantium that was rediscovered in April 1617 and that had survived the miraculous “trial by fire” undamaged. This was the feat that had been trumpeted by Ranieri Zen. This was the relic that had once been found by Helena in Jerusalem and sent to Constantinople.[[100]](#footnote-101) The primicerio saw this miracle as clear proof of the authenticity of the relic that was found in 1617.[[101]](#footnote-102) The (false) identification of the blood relic from the miraculous “trial by fire” in 1230 with the one that was kept in the Byzantine rock crystal pyx is subsequently repeated more frequently in Venetian sources.[[102]](#footnote-103) In general, the two highly revered blood relics, including the details of their worship and presentation, are often confused in the literature.[[103]](#footnote-104)

In view of the new interpretation of the blood in the ostensorium as dating to the fourteenth century at the latest, it is suspected that the second blood reliquary with its compromising inscriptions was deliberately hidden by the late medieval doges. It was not until the early seventeenth century, as evidenced by Giovanni Tiepolo’s treatise in particular, that we find the beginning of more favorable times for the relic, although the questions about the authenticity of the Passion Blood of Christ had not gone away. Largely promoted by the primicerio and later patriarch of Venice, this relic now became the focus of public interest. We know that this relic was worshipped in St. Mark’s Basilica, between the Baroque period and at least the late nineteenth century; the relic was celebrated on May 3, which according to the Roman Catholic calendar was the liturgical Festival of the Discovery of the Cross (*Inventio s. crucis*).[[104]](#footnote-105) This festival provided a good match for this blood relic, since it was associated with Helena’s discovery of the cross in Jerusalem, which Giovanni Tiepolo actively promoted.[[105]](#footnote-106)

It seems remarkable that in the late nineteenth century the ostensorium with the Byzantine Holy Blood Pyx was kept in the normally tightly closed, gilded tabernacle on the altar in the *Santuario*.[[106]](#footnote-107) It is very likely that this prominent and particularly secure place for the relic was selected soon after the miraculous discovery of the pyx in 1617.

***Blood Relics in Constantinople***

At Byzantium, relics of the blood of Christ never seem to have been invested with the same meaning that they received in the West. Compared to the Latin West, where blood relics of Christ had become widespread at the latest by the middle of the seventh century,[[107]](#footnote-108) Byzantine textual sources relating to Christ’s blood relics have been relatively sparsely preserved. Moreover, what references we have are late. Blood relics whose provenance from Byzantium can be clearly proven, as is the case with the crystal pyx with the enameled lid in the Treasury of St. Mark’s Basilica, are rare. Latin sources, on the other hand, testify to the transfer of around a dozen blood relics from Constantinople to various locations in the West.[[108]](#footnote-109) Further cults of the Holy Blood can only be found in the West after the Fourth Crusade, in places from which the Crusaders came or to which they returned, so that the assumption that the respective relic was taken from Byzantium can obviously be made.[[109]](#footnote-110) However, it is questionable whether all these relics actually came from Constantinople.[[110]](#footnote-111)

The very first sources that explicitly relate to relics of the blood of Christ in Constantinople date only from the late tenth century.[[111]](#footnote-112) On January 24, 967, after the Syrian campaign of the Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas, a relic of the “precious and divine blood” that had flowed from an icon was brought to Constantinople together with the Keramion from Hierapolis. This is evidenced by an encomium of Nikephorus that was written on the occasion of these translations.[[112]](#footnote-113) It is likely that this relic is the same as the blood of the famous icon of Beirut, although the provenance of the relic is not specified, due to the historical context of its transfer.[[113]](#footnote-114) Interestingly, the imperial speech notes the singing of a hymn in honor of the blood of Christ, which flowed “from Christ’s immaculate and life-giving side” (ἐκ τῆς ἀχράντου πλευρᾶς καὶ ζωοποιοῦ[[114]](#footnote-115)) during the liturgy of the feast of the transfer. This explicit liturgical association of the relic of the icon blood with the Passion Blood of Christ reveals that both were equivalent or *even* identical in the eyes of the Byzantines. The same is shown not least by the title of this encomium on “the divine blood of our Redeemer and God, which flowed from the side (τῆς πλευρᾶς) of the holy icon”:[[115]](#footnote-116) Like Christ himself, his painted image has a “side” (or also “rib”) that the lance pierced. This wording, like the general story of the piercing attack on the Christ icon, clearly illustrates the idea that the person who is depicted is physically present in the image. This basic understanding of the nature of the Byzantine icon explains the idea that the icon blood and Passion Blood of Christ are in fact the same. The Horos [Rule] of the Second Council of Nicaea provides the following explanation of image worship: “... when an image is revered, reverence is paid to the original figure, and whoever reveres the image reveres the person depicted in it.”[[116]](#footnote-117) Likewise, logically, any abuse that is inflicted on an icon must therefore be transferred to the person depicted in it. The blood that flowed from the Beirut icon could therefore be regarded as identical to the blood of Christ. This idea differs significantly from the ideas attested in the Venetian sources, which differentiate between the “true” (“real”) or “venerable” blood, on the one hand, and the “miraculous” blood, on the other. The two names for the Passion Blood indicate that they were regarded as worthy of worship, while the one for the blood from the icon reminds us in a more neutral way of the miracle of the bleeding image. Similar conceptual distinctions between blood relics can also be found elsewhere in the West.[[117]](#footnote-118)

A few years after the icon was said to have bled, the Byzantine chronicles claim that in 975 the icon of Beirut was brought to Constantinople by John I Tzimiskes himself. There, along with other relics, it was placed in the Chapel of the Savior at Chalke Gate, which had been renovated and decorated by this ruler and acted as the main entrance to the Imperial Palace.[[118]](#footnote-119) This chapel, which was built by Emperor Romanos Lakapenos, came to house another miraculous image of Christ, the Mandylion, shortly after its construction, as Sysse Engberg has plausibly argued. The chapel was probably built by Romanos in 944 specifically for the purpose of accommodating this famous acheiropoiton from Edessa, which he himself had acquired for the capital.[[119]](#footnote-120) It seems that the Mandylion icon joined the Beirut icon as another miraculous portrait that was supposedly created during Christ’s lifetime as a “cult image” of the Chapel of the Savior. In 945, just a year after its arrival in Constantinople, the Mandylion came into the possession of Romanos’ successor, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, where it was installed in the Pharos Chapel, the “main reliquary shrine” of the Imperial Palace.[[120]](#footnote-121) In the same year, this acheiropoieton received its own feast day, August 16, to commemorate its transfer to Constantinople.[[121]](#footnote-122) In addition to its religious veneration, the Mandylion served as a palladium, or protective image, for the capital, and visitors to Constantinople reported that it was present and venerated in the city up until its capture by the Latin crusaders.[[122]](#footnote-123)

In contrast, there is no indication that the Christ icon from Beirut had a religious-political meaning in Constantinople that was even remotely comparable to that of the Mandylion. In Byzantium, the legend of the bleeding Beirut icon was read as one of several homilies on the Orthodox festival occurring on the first Sunday of Lent that was in part or even primarily dedicated to celebrating the reinstitution of image worship.[[123]](#footnote-124) As we explained above, this is remarkable given the relevance that the blood miracle of Beirut has had in the West since the ninth century. The Byzantine sources are silent about the icon itself, its history, and its reception after its transfer to the capital. All they note is the transfer itself. It is unknown what happened to the image after it was plundered by the Latin crusaders and the capital was pillaged.[[124]](#footnote-125)

Christ’s Passion Blood was present in the capital approximately ten years before the icon blood was brought to Constantinople under Nikephoros II Phokas. We know this from a speech that was written in the summer of 958 by the Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus and was addressed to his troops who were fighting against the Arabs.[[125]](#footnote-126) This letter was accompanied by holy water or, more likely, oil that the Emperor had placed in contact with the Passion relics he owned for the purposes of sprinkling on his army to protect them.[[126]](#footnote-127) The military speech contains the very first recorded mention of Christ’s Passion Blood in Constantinople, which is referred to as a relic of “life-giving blood that has flowed from Christ’s venerable side” (τοῦ ἐκ τῆς τιμίας αὐτοῦ πλευρᾶς[[127]](#footnote-128) ἀπορρεύσαντος ζωοποιοῦ αἷματος). This wording is strikingly similar to that of the epigram that we discussed above and was engraved on the outer, metal container of the Passion Blood from Byzantium found in the Treasury of St. Mark’s Basilica: Τερπνὸν δοχεῖον αἵματος ζωηφόρου / πλευρᾶς ῥυέντος ἐξ ἀκηράτου Λόγου. Accordingly, it seems natural to accept the above-mentioned tenth-century dating for the Venetian reliquary, not least because of the wording of its inscription. As the epigram on the enamel cover of the actual inner reliquary tells us, this blood relic, which later came to Venice, was also intended to protect its wearer, although it is quite likely to also have had a military association as well.

It is striking that the descriptors given to the blood of Christ that are encountered in the Byzantine sources, such as “venerable” (τιμίος) and above all “life-giving” (ζωηφόρος) or “life-providing” (ζωοποιός), had already established themselves at an early date as common adjectives for the True Cross and other relics of Christ in Byzantium.[[128]](#footnote-129) The identical terminology reveals that both the cross and the blood were equally associated with the resurrection of Christ. Greek texts since the early Byzantine period reflect the idea that the cross was sanctified through contact with the Passion Blood of Christ.[[129]](#footnote-130)

Written sources on the relics of Christ’s blood in Constantinople are generally rare. It is relevant to our discussion of the status of these relics in Byzantium to consider the fact that the tenth-century Imperial Book of Ceremonies, which was compiled under Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, nowhere mentions the blood of Christ. On the other hand, it does describe other relics related to Christ’s Passion in the imperial holdings and how they were used in ceremonies. It sometimes even provides detailed information.[[130]](#footnote-131) Likewise, during the tenth century, none of Christ’s Passion relics related to the True Cross, which were kept in the Limburg Reliquary of the True Cross—the most important such reliquary at the imperial court, created between 968 and 985—contain the blood of Christ.[[131]](#footnote-132)

Starting in the late eleventh century, the reports of foreign travelers to Constantinople occasionally mention blood relics of Christ, which were kept in various churches in the capital as well as in the Imperial Palace.[[132]](#footnote-133) However, it is usually not specified what blood a relic contained (Passion Blood or icon blood), and we lack any information on how these relics were worshipped. Here and there, blood relics from Constantinople are mentioned in the sources before the Fourth Crusade. However, these relics were Western in origin, and they were also sent to the West as gifts.[[133]](#footnote-134)

Of the relics that Baldwin II sold to Ludwig IX of France, which came from the Church of the Virgin of the Pharos in the Imperial Palace at Constantinople, there were a total of two blood relics, both of which arrived in vials that were made of rock crystal in Paris.[[134]](#footnote-135) According to a statement of authenticity that Baldwin himself issued in 1247, these were relics “of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ” (*Sanguine Domini nostri Jesus Christ*) and “blood that flowed as the result of an amazing miracle from a certain image of the Lord that had been pierced by an infidel” (*Sanguinem qui de quadam imagine Domini ab infideli percussa, stupendo miracolo, distillavit*).[[135]](#footnote-136) It is striking that the Latin ruler failed to specify which bleeding icon the relic came from. The same omission would be made by a Parisian author of some liturgical chants to honor the relics in the Sainte-Chapelle some years later.[[136]](#footnote-137) It is quite possible that the relic relates to the most famous image, namely the icon of Beirut.[[137]](#footnote-138) However, starting in the sixth century other icons of Christ, which were said to be associated with miracles of blood and various stories, appeared in Constantinople, elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean, and also in the West.[[138]](#footnote-139)

In the late tenth century, when blood relics, including both those collected from Passion Blood and bleeding icons, are first attested in written sources in Constantinople, the Byzantine capital was only one of many places in Europe where the blood of Christ was kept and preserved. On the other hand, the first mentions of Christ’s Passion Blood in Western churches date back to the first half of the seventh century.[[139]](#footnote-140) Stories of blood flowing from attacked images of Christ, however, were circulating in the West no later than the ninth century. One piece of evidence for this is the addition of the Byzantine legend of Beirut by Anastasius Bibliothecarius, according to which the bishop of Beirut had sent ampoules filled with blood from the miraculous icon in all directions.[[140]](#footnote-141) By around 1200, blossoming cults of blood relics had developed in numerous places in the West, some of which had considerable external reach, such as on Reichenau Island and in Mantua, Fécamp, Weingarten, Cappenberg, and Gandersheim.[[141]](#footnote-142)

In view of the fact that the looting of Constantinople helped to significantly increase the number of blood relics in the West between the years of 1204 and 1261 and to develop the associated cults around these objects, the preserved Greek and Latin text sources suggest that relics of the blood of Christ in Byzantium never had the same comparable prominence as they enjoyed in the West. The claim that Constantinople was a rich source of blood relics can largely be debunked as a Western construct resulting from the Fourth Crusade. It was possibly inspired by the position that the Byzantine capital held as the city protecting the “True” Cross, as attested by numerous sources of testimony from an early date.

1. For additional blood relics that were only first discovered in St. Mark’s Basilica at later times, see Polacco 2002. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. For the late antique and medieval versions of the legend of the discovery of the Holy Cross, see esp. Drijvers 1992, Part II; Pfleger 1994, pp. 15–18; Heussler 2006, pp. 69–101. In addition, in view of the enormous popularity of the legend of the discovery of the Holy Cross in the Middle Ages, it should be remembered that Helena’s association with the rediscovery of the cross is beyond historical proof; Drijvers 1992, pp. 81–93, 131, and 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Visit to the Holy Places, pp. 157–201, for the author, see Ibid., pp. 3–4. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Visit to the Holy Places, p. 194. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Visit to the Holy Places, p. 194. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. The authoritative and critical study of the sources for this relic remains Huyghebaert 1963; see also Vincent 2001, pp. 73, 135, and 181; for the reliquary foundations of the fourteenth century, see Ibid., pp. 145, 146, and 172; Vincent 2001, p. 73, Fig. 7. The blood relic of Bruges is still widely venerated. In particular, it is celebrated with a procession and spiritual drama on “Brugges schoonste Dag,” which was previously celebrated on the first Monday after May 3, and which is now celebrated on Ascension Day; see Kolb 1980, pp. 5 and 8–13, esp. 11. For more information about this relic, see also below. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. For the text of Pseudo-Athanasius, see Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum Collectio, Vol. 13, Col. 24–32; for the Second Council of Nicaea, see Dektrete der ecumenischen Konzilien, Vol. 1, pp. 131–156; Thümmel 2005, Ch. VII.; Brubaker/Haldon 2011, pp. 269–276. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. The text does not specify when the blood miracle was supposed to have occurred. Thümmel 2005, p. 207, assumes, of course, that the attribution of the text to Athanasius was known before the Council of Nicaea. However, this cannot be proven, nor does it have to be. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. The Greek text generally speaks of a full-length figure representation of Christ; Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum Collectio, Vol. 13, Col. 25. Later Byzantine sources speak of an icon of the crucifixion; Bacci 1998, p. 112, Note 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum Collection, Vol. 13, Col. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum Collection, Vol. 13, Col. 28–29. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. For a discussion of the terminology, see below in this chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum Collection, Vol. 13, Col. 580–585; Dobschütz 1899, p. 282\*\*; Bacci 1998, pp. 215 and 241. For the wide geographical distribution of the legend, see Galtier 1900, pp. 513–517; for the translation of the Acts of Anastasius, see Lamberz 1997, pp. 3–4. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum Collectio, Vol. 13, p. 585. For the widely-attested celebration of this festival in the West, see Dobschütz 1899, Note 1 on p. 282\*\*; Holtz 1997, pp. 67–68; Bacci 1998, pp. 241–243; Vincent 2001, pp. 46–49 (each with references). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. ... *quod Nicodemus qui ad Jesum nocte venerat, propriis manibus eam composuisset ...* ; Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum Collectio, Vol. 13, p. 583. Apparently, this is an allusion to the first meeting between the two, namely the nocturnal conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus that takes place in John 3:1–13 (see also John 19, 39). For Nicodemus as the legendary broker of images of Christ and relics that were sent to the West, see Dobschütz 1899, pp. 280\*\*–292\*\*; Vincent 2001, pp. 56–58 and 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Cormack 1985, pp. 121–129, esp. 124 and 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Dobschütz 1899, p. 281\*\*, Note 3; Vincent 2001, pp. 47–48. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Brenk 1999; Mariacher 1956, pp. 101–104. The miracle has only been attested in writing in the Venetian sources since the early modern period, although given the dating of the image and the ciborium it is probable that the tradition did indeed go back to the thirteenth century. Apparently, it was sometimes assumed that the rock crystal ampoule in the *Santuario* did not contain the blood from the icon of Beirut, but rather the blood of the crucifix of St. Mark’s Basilica; Goldoni (Zittio) 1655, pp. 228-233. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum Collectio, Vol. 13, Col. 585 (#This detail is not found in the Anastasius edition, Lamberz, Acta II!#). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Iacopo da Varazze, Legenda aurea 2007, p. 1042. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Kahle 1935, esp. pp. 329 and 323; Toussaint 2010, p. 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. E.g., Bonifacio, Liber cerimoniale, ##; Sansovino 1581, p. 38, partly misunderstood; Rannusio 1604, p. 95; Stringa 1610, p. 40r and Ch. XI; Goldoni (Zittio) 1655, pp. 229–233; Cordella ca. 1669, pp. 3–4; Meschinello 1753, Vol. 2, p. 36. As far as can be seen, Giovanni Tiepolo tried to defend the blood in the ampoule as blood that came from the wound in Christ’s side.Tiepolo 1617, pp. 31–33, esp. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. Visit to the Holy Places, p. 194. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. See above Ch. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. From the earliest times the cross relic was so venerated, for example, in Hagia Sophia, Constantinople; Arculf/Adomnanus, Ch. 3 (Jerusalem Pilgrims, pp. 202–203); see also Majeska 2003, pp. 216 and 118–121; for intensive worship of cross relics in Byzantium on other feast days, see Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Book of Ceremonies*, I. 22, I. 29, II. 8 and II. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. Concerning this, see below. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. Andreae Danduli Chronica, p. 280, lines 7–11. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. E.g., Stringa 1610, pp. 39r, 40r, 43v, etc.; Inventory from 1697; Gallo 1967, p. 324/no. 3. For a discussion of the terminology, see below. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. There are several recent and well-researched studies that are devoted to accounts of the blood of Christ and the story’s related protagonists. They include, in particular, Holtz 1997; Vincent 2001, esp. Ch. 5; Bynum 2007, esp. Ch. 4–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. For the Westminster blood relic, see esp. Vincent 2001; for the reasoning of Grosseteste, see Ibid., pp. 87–100; Bynum 2007, pp. 98–101. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. Bynum 2007, pp. 106–108. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. ... *quod totus sanguis qui de corpore christi fluxit ... in christi corpore resurrexit ... sanguis autem ille qui in quibusdam ecclesiis, pro reliquiis observatur, non fluxit de latere christi, sed miraculose dicitur effluxisse de quadam imagine christi percussa*; see Thomae Aquinatis opera, Vol. 2, p. 854, ST 3, q54, ar3, ra3. We find a similar observation in his *Questiones quodlibetales* (1271); Bynum 2007, p. 102, Note 87. For a more differentiated treatment of the position of Aquinas, see Bynum 2007, pp. 101–106; Vincent 2001, pp. 100–103. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. Huyghebaert 1963, p. 134 and esp. 150–153; Vincent 2001, pp. 65 and 67–69. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. Huyghebaert 1963. This source-critical essay has been mostly ignored in the subsequent research literature, and therefore others have reproduced the history of the relic inaccurately (an exception is Vincent 2001, esp. p. 73, Note 137). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. Huyghebaert 1963, esp. pp. 144, 147, 150, 153–156, 168, and 185. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. Vincent 2001, p. 73, Note 137 and Fig. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. Following Huyghebaert 1963, esp. pp. 123–124 and 126, we can say that it was by no means a deliberate attempt to manufacture a legend. Rather, it set down a popular belief that then existed in Bruges in the form of an official and fixed account. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. Huyghebaert 1963, p. 118; Holtz 1997, pp. 66–67. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. This was also firmly established by Huyghebaert 1963, pp. 133–134 and 139, although without any conclusions regarding the authenticity of the blood relic of Bruges. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. ... *Hoc vero dico sine praejudicio illius partis quae in Jerusalem hac vice remansit, quia possibile est quod sancta civitate per Saracenos conquista, pars illa pretiosissima fuit ad aliquem alium locum translata, qui ad nostram notitiam nondum venit*; MGH SS, Vol. 25, pp. 803–804. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. Vincent 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. Stringa 1610, Ch. XI. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. Stringa 1610, pp. 44v–51v. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. Stringa 1610, p. 51v; Here Stringa apparently – and quite logically – combines two aspects of the tradition: on the one hand, he tacitly transfers the miraculous event to the time of Athanasius as a traditional teller of the story. On the other hand, the legend in the West was enriched by the detail that the bishop of Beirut filled the ampoules with blood from the icon and sent them to all parts of the world. For more details about this story, see below. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. Stringa 1610, p. 51v, see also Ibid., pp. 41r–43v. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. Sansovino’s sketch of the history of this blood relic shows itself to be a far-reaching misunderstanding (“una ampolla del vero sangue di Cristo, il quale uenuto a Barutti dalla città di Ierusalem, fu quindi portato a Venetia”), Sansovino 1581, p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. Stringa 1610, p. 39r (Ch. X). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. Rannusio 1604, pp. 94–95 and 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. Rannusio 1604, p. 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. “Il sopradetto sacrosancto Sangue non si mostra mai in publico, se non nella santissima notte del Giovedì Santo, & nella vigilia dell’Ascensione del Signore, intorno alla prima, ò seconda hora di notte, con grandissima diuotione, & infinito concorso d’ogni sorte di gente. Qualunque volta si caua fuori, accesa buona quantità di lumi, che così è l’vsanza; i Canonici di S. Marco, & vno de’ Procuratori lo mostrano insieme con le altre reliquie dal pergolo al popolo, che ingenocchiati lo riuerisce”; Rannusio 1604, p. 96. Rannusio was obviously granted the privilege of private worship of the relic in the *Santuario* outside of this public ceremony: “Hauessimo commodità di vedere nel Sacrario questo medesimo Sangue, & di basciare il piè del vaso di cristallo ...”; Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. In the Venetian dialect it was also called “bigoncia,” which was used to designate an elevated round throne that could be used to deliver public speeches; Boerio, Dizionario, p. 80; it could also generally mean “vat” or “barrel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. Middeldorf-Kosegarten 2002, esp. pp. 17–20 and 22–23; Dale 2009, p. 119; Klein 2010, p. 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. Similar to Dale 2009, pp. 126–127; (implicitly) Klein 2010, p. 211 and Note 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. Bonifacio, Liber cerimoniale; more recently Middeldorf-Kosegarten 2002, pp. 20–23, with bibliography. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. Bonifacio, Liber cerimoniale, et seq. 8# and #61. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. Bonifacio, Liber cerimoniale, Fol. 61r. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. Goldoni (Zittio) 1655, p. 70, see also ibid., p. 229. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. Tesoro di San Marco 1971, No. 115, p. 94; for the textile, see above, Ch. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. At least in the Middle Ages, this uncertainty is typical due to the state of the sources; Diedrichs 2001, pp. 141–147. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. ... *busoletum unum auri, in quo est alius busoletus cristali cum cohopertura auri, in qua cohopertura est cruciula de asmaldo signata, in quo est de sanguine Christi; qui busoleti sunt in uno busolo de lefanto* ...; Gallo 1967, p. 276, no. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. Inv.: Santuario 68; Tesoro di San Marco 1971, No. 172, pp. 180–182. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. Polacco 2002, pp. 308 and 315. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. δόξι(ς). [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. See, e.g., a Byzantine relic cross made of gold in the Treasury of S. Maria della Scala, Siena; L’oro di Siena 1996, No. 5, pp. 111–112; an enameled relic cross in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection; Ross 1965, No. 159, pp. 109–110. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. EχιC με ΧριCτoν Eμα CαρκOC μου φEρον (sic); Guillou 1996, No. 78 (A), pp. 81–82; Rhoby 2010, No. Me91, pp. 272–274, esp. 273. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. Inv.No. *Tesoro 83* (Chalice of the Logothete Sisinnios);Tesoro di San Marco 1971, No. 57, p. 67; Translation of the epigram according to Rhoby 2010, No. Me84, pp. 258–259, here 259. For more comparable inscriptions on liturgical devices, see Krause 2008, p. 46, Note 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. See the quote above in Note ##. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. Inv.: Tesoro 62; Tesoro di San Marco 1971, No. 26, pp. 37–38. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. Tesoro di San Marco 1971, p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. Polacco 2003, pp. 314–315. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. Guillou 1996, No. 78 (B), pp. 81–82; Rhoby 2010, No. Me83, pp. 257–258. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. See the quote above in Note ##. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. An ivory pyx (Inv.: Tesoro 120) has been preserved in the Treasury of St. Mark’s Basilica, which, at least theoretically, would seem to match the outer container mentioned in 1325 due to its dimensions (H 14.5 cm, Ø 13.5 cm). However, this container may be a bit too large, and it also apparently depicts profane decor (painted hunting scenes); Tesoro di San Marco, No. 130, p. 119. If this pyx housed the blood relic with its double covering in 1325, it was probably a Venetian arrangement. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. Guillou 1996, pp. 82: tenth century; Tesoro di San Marco 1971, p. 180: tenth/eleventh centuries.; Rhoby 2010, p. 272 “tenth century?”. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
75. Hunger, Auszeichnungsschriften 1977, pp. 207–208; Hunger, Auszeichnungsmajuskel 1977. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
76. See also Rhoby 2010, p. 273. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
77. Guillou 1996, p. 82: tenth century.; Tesoro di San Marco, pp. 37: twelfth century; Rhoby 2010, pp. 257 and esp. 258. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
78. See those provided by Gallo 1967, Ch. 9, edited inventory of the *Santuario*. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
79. Gallo 1967, p. 276. For the use of the term *“arca”* to designate a box or shrine for relics, see the evidence in treasury lists, p. 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
80. Gallo 1967, p. 287, No. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
81. Gallo 1967, p. 289, No. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
82. Cherry 2003 provides basic information concerning these devotional items, which are widespread throughout Europe. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
83. This is based on Suriano 1617, p. 9, and Polacco 2002, p. 317, Note 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
84. Inv.: Santuario 56; Krause 2008. For this Byzantine reliquary of the True Cross and its Renaissance replica, see below, Ch. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
85. Krause 2008, pp. 46–47. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
86. Gallo 1967, p. 302. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
87. Stringa 1610. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
88. Pasini 1886, p. 12; Gallo 1967, p. 310. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
89. Padua, University Library, Cod. 2221.23. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
90. Gallo 1967, p. 310. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
91. Gallo 1967, p. 310. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
92. Gallo 1967, p. 310. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
93. *... circa doi cuchiari di Sangue congelato, et parte sparso sopra fili, velo o bombaso*; see also Pasini 1888, p. 246; Gallo 1967, p. 310. Guillou 1996, p. 81, indicates that he found the crystal container empty. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
94. Gallo 1967, p. 311, No. 37 and 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
95. Pasini 1886, p. 5; Pasini 1888, p. 245. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
96. Gallo 1967, p. 51, Note 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
97. “Breve Descrittione Del Sacro Thesoro Delle Reliquie Ritrovate nel Santuario della Chiesa Ducale di San Marco, & Honorate con Solenne Processione. à 28. di Maggio del 1617.” [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
98. “Racconto Dell’Apparato Et Solennità Fatta Nella Ducal Chiesa de San Marco Venetia. Con l’occasione dell’Inventione, & espositione del Sangue Pretiosissimo del Costato di Christo, del Latte delle Beata Vergine, con altre santissime Reliquie. Li 28. Maggio. 1617.” [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
99. The third treatise has this engraving at the very end; Vergaro 1617, p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
100. Tiepolo 1617, pp. 23–24; see also Ibid., pp. 25 and 31. These (incorrect) identifications of the blood relic that was originally designated by Ranieri Zen allow other authors who follow Tiepolo to shine through; #(complete!)#. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
101. Tiepolo 1617, p. 36 [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
102. Corner, Ecclesiae venetae 1749, Vol. 13/1, pp. 150–152, esp. 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
103. E.g., Pasini 1888, p. 246. Julien Durand, who was allowed to take a close look at the *ecclesia argenti* in the *Santuario* shortly before 1860, naturally (though erroneously) assumed that the reliquary inside was the Byzantine Holy Blood Pyx that was described by Tiepolo (Inv. *Santuario* 68) with its golden container; Durand 1960, pp. 308–309 (for a description of how the Islamic rock crystal ampoule with the blood of Christ was kept in the *ecclesia* since at least 1283, see Ch. 1) [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
104. Goldoni (Zittio) 1655, pp. 234–240, esp. 235; Pasini, Guide 1888, p. 246 (the fourth Friday of Lent is mentioned as an additional date for the worship of this relic). For the history of the Feast of the Discovery of the Cross in the West, see Pfleger 1994, pp. 22–24; Heussler 2006, pp. 91, 96, and esp. 133. Blood relics associated with the discovery of the cross were also worshiped elsewhere, e.g., in Bruges; Huyghebaert 1963, pp. 118 and 127, 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
105. A little later, at Cordella, c. 1669, p. 1, however, we know that this relic was venerated on the “Day of the Holy Cross” (“il giorno della Ss. Croce,” meaning September 14, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross). According to this author, it is the blood relic that was brought to St. Mark’s Basilica under the Doge Domenico Contarini from Candia, and it is venerated on May 3; Ibid. It is difficult to clarify whether this is simply incorrect information or a mstake. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
106. Pasini 1888, pp. 245–246. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
107. Vincent 2001, p. 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
108. Riant 1875, pp. 177–211; Huyghebaert 1963, pp. 150–153. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
109. Vincent 2001, pp. 67–69 and. 72–73. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
110. Historians tend to regard the sources as reliable evidence of this provenance. In fact, however, there was a lively trade in the Mediterranean that frequently featured counterfeit relics. The decisions of the IV. Lateran Council sought to address this problem (see Ch. 1). [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
111. Various older Byzantine texts that allude to the blood of Christ cannot be considered to be relics or their dating is in dispute; Vincent 2001, pp. 65–66. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
112. Dobschütz 1899, p. 218\*, No. 71a-b (τοῦ τιμίου καὶ θείου αἵματος; Ibid., p. 218\*, No. 71a.); Halkin 1963; concerning the date of translation, see Halkin 1963, p. 259, Note 11. The focus here is on the Keramion, as it has been passed down. These very brief references to the blood relic, which are practically confined to the title, may be the result of a later abridgement of the text; Halkin 1963, pp. 254–255 and Note 8. For more recent discussions of the transfer of the blood relic under Nikephoros, see Flusin 1997, pp. 57 and 60; Bacci 1998, p. 111 (other than as stated in those sources, it does not seem to me to be certain that the relic stayed in Constantinople based on the sources). [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
113. Given the huge number of such blood relics in the West, it is far from certain that this relic is the same one contained in the rock crystal ampoule from St. Mark’s Basilica, as Mango 1963, p. 151 claims. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
114. Halkin 1963, pp. 259–260. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
115. ἐκ τῆς πλευρᾶς τῆς ἁγίας εἰκόνος ῥεῦσαν αἷμα θεῖον τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν καὶ θεοῦ; Halkin 1963, p. 255; The same language occurs in the text of Pseudo-Athanasius’ sermon (κατὰ τῆς πλευρᾶς τῆς εἰκόνος); Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum Collectio, Vol. 13, Col. 28 and 29 (similar wording). [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
116. Translation taken from Dekrete der ökumenischen Konzilien 1998, Vol. 1, p. 137 (Greek text, p. 136, lines 26–30). [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
117. The terminology that was used for blood relics has not yet been systematically analyzed based on a larger number of sources. The texts cited by Mark Holtz in his dissertation (1997) on Passion Blood relics in the northern Alpine region use the adjective *pretiosus*, which is also reflected in the title of the book (“Cults of the Precious Blood in the Medieval Latin West”). On the other hand, the book title “Wonderful Blood” (2007; see the title text presented on the cover), which was chosen by Caroline Waker Bynum and generally refers to “the saving power attributed to Christ’s blood,” is somewhat misleading given the terminology for icon blood that was actually used in the Middle Ages. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
118. Dobschütz 1899, p. 174; Mango 1953, p. 150; Bacci 1998, pp. 112–113, with source citations in Notes 37 and 39. For the Chalke Gate, see Mango 1959; and for the Chapel of the Savior, see Ibid., pp. 149–169. It is strange that a contemporary source names “Gabaon” (the port city of Gabala) and not Beirut as the location where the icon was found; see Bacci 1998, p. 112 and Note 38; For a detailed, albeit partly uncritical, discussion of the sources, see Mango 1959, pp. 150–152. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
119. Engberg 2004. For the history of the Mandylion and the relevant sources, Dobschütz 1899, pp. 102–178, is still the fundamental treatment; for more recent discussions, see the various articles in Holy Face 1998. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
120. For the Pharoskirche as the final installation site of the Mandylion, see PG 113, 452. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
121. Dobschütz 1899, p. 178; Engberg 2004, p. 123 [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
122. For the sources, see Dobschütz 1899, pp. 176–178; Engberg 2004, pp. 124–126; Flusin 1997. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
123. The feast was established after the end of the Iconoclasm (843). For a source that is critical of the history and evidence supporting the existence of this feast, see Thümmel 2005, p. 281. For a lecture on the Beirut legend on this feast day, see Dobschütz 1899, Note 1 on p. 282\*\*; Dobschütz 1902, pp. 398 and 406. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
124. Mango 1959, pp. 151–152. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
125. McGeer 2003; for the date, see Ibid., p. 123; edited by Vári 1908, pp. 78–84. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
126. Vári 1908, p. 83; McGeer 2003, pp. 132–133, Note 86. The practice of sprinkling sacred liquids to gain protection goes back to at least the sixth century; see Vikan 1982, p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
127. Vári 1908, p. 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
128. See, e.g., the examples of edited epigrams provided by Hörandner 2007, pp. 113, 119, 120 and 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
129. Krause 2008, p. 46, Note 61. The argument can also be found in Western texts; for textual examples, see Bynum 2007, pp. 99 and 105–106. For the history of the worship of the True Cross in Byzantium, see Klein, Byzanz 2004, esp. Ch. 2; Klein, Constantine 2004; Klein, Sacred Relics 2006, pp. 89–91 and 94–96. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
130. For the use of relics in the imperial ceremony, see most recently Klein, Sacred Relics 2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
131. Ševčenko 1994, esp. pp. 291 and 292. The author probably thought that this reliquary of the True Cross containing numerous relics was intended to protect the imperial army on campaigns; Ibid., esp. p. 293. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
132. Flusin 2001, pp. 32–33; Trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle 2001, pp. 67–68 [Jannic Durand]. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
133. Vincent 2001, pp. 60–61. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
134. Trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle 2001, pp. 67–68 [Jannic Durand]. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
135. The original document has been preserved in later copies; it is cited here from the *Vidimus* des Tanguy du Châtel of 1315 (Paris, Center historique des Archives nationales, L 620 No. 2), which has been edited in Trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle 2001, No. 11, p. 49 (Inv. Nos. 3 and 6). [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
136. For the sequences of *De sanctis reliquiis,* see Gould 1981, for the two blood relics, see Ibid., pp. 330–331. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
137. Several authors considered this likely; Gould 1981, Note 54; Flusin 2001, pp. 22 and 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
138. Bacci 1998, pp. 52–53; Vassilaki 2003, pp. 124–127; Vincent 2001, p. 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
139. Vincent 2001, pp. 51–53. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
140. Vincent 2001, pp. 54 and 56, suspected that the relic of Mantua, which was already known in Carolingian times, was initially thought to be blood that flowed from an icon. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
141. For an overview of these and other places where blood relics of Christ were worshiped, see Vincent 2001, pp. 51–63. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)