

# The Emperor Manuel's Cross in Notre Dame: On its Origin and Path

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**A**MONG THE MOST REVERED RELICS in the treasury of Notre Dame de Paris is an ancient reliquary cross that contains a small piece of the Venerable and Life-giving Cross of Christ. It is a double (or Jerusalem) cross; a golden plate attached at the back includes two iambic verses:

I(HCOY)C X(PICTO)C

Στ(αυ)ρῶ παγείς ὑψώσας ἀν(θρώπ)ων φύσιν.

† Γράφει Μανουήλ Κομνηνὸς στεφηφόρος.

Jesus Christ: nailed to the cross, he, who exalted humankind. So writes Manuel Komnenos the Crown-Bearer.

Experts from the Louvre thoroughly examined the cross in connection with the exhibition “Byzantium. The Masterpieces of Byzantine Art in the Public Collections of France” (Paris 1992/3).<sup>1</sup> The relic is known to have been in France since the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. From 1684 it was kept in the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, the oldest and most revered Christian cloister in France. After the French Revolution, the relic came to reside in the cathedral of Notre Dame.

<sup>1</sup> J. Durand, “Croix de la princesse Palatine,” in *Byzance – L’art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises* (Paris 1992) 444–445, no. 340, and “La Vraie Croix de la princesse palatine au trésor de Notre-Dame de Paris: Observations techniques,” *CArch* 40 (1992) 139–146; M. Derwich, “Le baiser de paix utilisé lors du couronnement des rois de Pologne et déposé au Trésor de Notre-Dame de Paris,” *Cahiers de civilisation médiévales* 38 (1995) 337–344.

*The royal treasury of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*

Before the late 17<sup>th</sup> century the reliquary cross had been in Poland, in the royal treasury of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. After John Casimir abdicated from the Polish throne, he left for France, taking a number of particularly precious relics from the treasury. Upon his death in 1672, Anna Gonzaga de Clèves (the Princess Palatine) inherited these. The Polish Seim and the new king Michał Wiśniowiecki tried but failed to get the relics returned to their homeland.<sup>2</sup>

The inventories of the Polish treasury confirm that the cross was there. Those of the late 15<sup>th</sup>–early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries more than once describe a precious cross with a piece of the Life-giving Cross and a Greek inscription. The latest inventory was compiled by P. Ossoliński, a judge (Lat. *succamerarius*, Pol. *podkomorzy*) from Sandomierz, and is dated to 1633. Ossoliński's account also offers testimony to the Russian origin of the relic: "The cross [with a piece] of the Tree of the Holy Cross, Russian crosses and relics were taken from the Russian treasury at the time of Casimir."<sup>3</sup> The inventories of 1609 (1611), 1607, 1532, 1510, and 1475 contain similar statements.<sup>4</sup>

Various hypotheses have been suggested about when and how the cross became the property of the Polish royal treasury. Some historians reject the Russian origin declared by Ossoliński and hold that the cross was brought to Poland not at the time of Casimir the Great (1333–1370) but later, during the

<sup>2</sup> L. Raffin, *Anne Gonzague, princesse palatine, 1616–1684* (Paris 1935) 286–287.

<sup>3</sup> "Crux cum ligno Vitae, krzyżyki Ruskie y Reliquiae z skarbów Ruskich za Kazimierza pobrane": J. U. Niemcewicz, *Zbiór pamiątek historycznych o dawnej Polsce III* [Collection of historical monuments of ancient Poland] (Warsaw 1822) 68.

<sup>4</sup> See E. Dąbrowska, "Królów polskich relikwiarz koronacyjny Krzyża Świętego" [Coronation Reliquary of the Holy Cross of the Polish kings], in D. Gawinowa (ed.), *Kultura średniowieczna i staropolska: studia ofiarowane A. Gieysztorowi w pięćdziesięciolecie pracy naukowej* [Medieval and Old Polish culture: Studies in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of A. Gieysztor's scientific activities] (Warsaw 1991) 67–87, here 81.

reign of Władisław Jogaila (1386–1434). Felix Kopera suggested that the relic was donated to the Polish royal treasury by Queen Jadwiga (1384–1399), who had received it among other gifts from her husband Władisław Jogaila. He was the Grand Duke of Lithuania and married her in 1385 under the terms of the Union of Krewo.<sup>5</sup> However, this hypothesis does not explain how the cross came to Lithuania from Byzantium.

According to Anatoly Frolov, the relic arrived in Poland as a gift from Manuel II Palaiologos (1391–1425).<sup>6</sup> In Frolov's time the Greek inscription was dated late 14<sup>th</sup>/early 15<sup>th</sup> century. He however made no reference to the sources: evidently the hypothesis was based on the fact that in August 1420 Manuel II's ambassador Manuel Philanthropinos visited Krakow to ask Władisław Jogaila for military assistance against the Turks.<sup>7</sup> During this visit the ambassador could have presented some gifts from the emperor. According to the inscription, however, the original owner of the relic was Manuel Komnenos. This contradicts Frolov's suggestion, for the family name of Manuel II who sent the embassy to Władisław Jogaila was Palaiologos.

Besides, the sources on the Byzantine embassy to Władisław Jogaila do not mention this precious gift. It is noteworthy that Jan Długosz, who had the most comprehensive information about the embassy of 1420, is also silent about it.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, he was highly interested in Christian relics, especially in the

<sup>5</sup> F. Kopera, *Dzieje skarbcza koronnego, czyli klejnotów i insygniów koronnych Polski* [The history of the royal treasury, or signs and insignia of the Polish kings] (Krakow 1904) 42.

<sup>6</sup> A. Frolov, *La relique de la Vraie Croix. Recherches sur le développement d'un culte* (Paris 1961) 484, no. 661.

<sup>7</sup> See O. Halecki, "La Pologne et l'empire byzantin," *Byzantion* 7 (1932) 41–67, here 54–56; J. W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus* (New Brunswick 1969) xxxiii.

<sup>8</sup> Joannis Długossii senioris canonici Cracoviensis, *Opera omnia IV Dziejów polskich ksiąg dwanaście* [History of Poland in twelve books], transl. K. Mecherzyński (Krakow 1869) 188.

relics of the Life-giving Cross in Poland.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, according to the available data, the cross was in Poland long before the embassy of Manuel Philanthropinos. The *Chronicle* of the archdeacon of Gniezno Janko of Charnkov, which describes in detail the death of Casimir the Great, summarized his will, which was made in 1370. Among other property it particularly mentioned an exceptionally precious cross: "In the church of Krakow there is a golden cross which is worth more than ten thousand florins."<sup>10</sup> The part of the *Krakow Calendar* that dates to the 14<sup>th</sup> century describes the cross in detail: it contained a piece of the Tree of the Holy Cross.<sup>11</sup> Jan Długosz mentioned in his *History* that Casimir granted the relic of the Life-giving Cross to the Krakow Cathedral in 1369.<sup>12</sup> The researches of Oswald Balzer showed that the church possessed the cross only briefly: in 1385 or 1386 it was taken to the royal treasury again.<sup>13</sup>

As is evident from the sources, the relic was in Poland in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, and this confirms its Russian origin. Casimir received it as part of the loot after Polish troops seized Lviv in 1340.<sup>14</sup> Together with other valuables of the Galician-Volhynian treasury the cross was brought to Krakow. *Rocznik Traski*, a Lesser Polish Chronicle compiled in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, reported: "There [in Lviv] numerous spoils of war [were taken that consisted] of silver, gold, precious stones, great treasures of

<sup>9</sup> See Joannis Dlugossii, *Opera omnia* III (Krakow 1868) 197, 317.

<sup>10</sup> "Item crucem auream pretiosissimam plus quam decem milia florenorum valentem ecclesiae Cracoviensi": *Joannis de Czarnkow Chronicon Polonorum*, ed. A. Bielowski, *Monumenta Poloniae Historica* II (Lviv 1872) 619–758, here 635.

<sup>11</sup> *Kalendarz krakowski*, ed. Bielowski, *Monumenta* II 905–940, here 910–911.

<sup>12</sup> Joannis Dlugossii, *Opera Omnia* III 317.

<sup>13</sup> O. Balzer, *Skarbiec i archiwum koronne w dobie przedjagiellońskiej* [The royal treasury and archive in the pre-Jagiellonian periode] (Lviv 1917) 444.

<sup>14</sup> See H. Paszkiewicz, *Polityka ruska Kazimierza Wielkiego* [The Russian policy of Casimir the Great] (Krakow 2002) 50 ff.

ancient monarchs, including a number of golden crosses, especially the one in which a big piece of the Tree of the Holy Cross was deposited.”<sup>15</sup> This report is repeated in *Rocznik of Lesser Poland* practically word-for-word.<sup>16</sup> Jan Długosz also cited it; but he reported “two golden crosses that contained a considerable piece of the Tree of the Holy Cross.”<sup>17</sup>

*The identity of Μανουήλ Κομνηνός στεφηφόρος*

In our opinion, these testimonies eliminate the possibility of tracing the relic to the Byzantine emperor Manuel II. Nevertheless, identifying Manuel Komnenos the Crown-Bearer in the inscription requires further clarification.

Initially he was identified as Manuel I (1143–1180).<sup>18</sup> Later opinion held that the inscription was made and the relic was owned by one of the rulers of the Trebizond Empire named Manuel. The supporters of this hypothesis point out a certain similarity between the inscription on the cross and the inscriptions on Trebizond coins of the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>19</sup> Recently new arguments were put forward for attribution of the cross to Trebizond. Some technical defects in the inscription and the use of non-transparent enamels of a comparatively low quality (in particular the use of jade green, relatively rare), it is claimed, could hardly have been acceptable in the work of

<sup>15</sup> “Ubi spolia multa in argento, auro et gemmis, thesaurum ducum antiquorum tollens, inter quod erant aliquot cruces aurae, principue unam, in qua magna quantitas de ligno crucis Domini fuit reperta”: *Rocznik krakowski*, ed. Bielowski, *Monumenta Poloniae Historica* II 827–860, here 860.

<sup>16</sup> *Rocznik malopolski* 965–1415, ed. Bielowski, *Monumenta Poloniae Historica* III (Lviv 1878) 135–202, here 200.

<sup>17</sup> “inter quae duos cruces aureas notabili portione ligni Domini insignes”: Joannis Dlugossii, *Opera omnia* III 197.

<sup>18</sup> B. de Montfaucon, *Palaeographia graeca* (Paris 1708) 309–310; J. Bouilart, *Histoire de l'abbaye royale de Saint-Germain-des-Près* (Paris 1724) 278–281, 313–316; A. Kirchhoff, *CIG* IV (1877) 8728.

<sup>19</sup> F. Guilhermy and R. Lasteyrie, *Inscriptions de la France du V<sup>e</sup> au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles* I (Paris 1873) 70–71, V (1883) 330; see also Frolov, *La relique* 483–484.

the jewelers in Constantinople and was more in line with the skill level of provincial enamellers. Jannic Durand and Antony Eastmond concluded that the relic or, more precisely, its enamel framework with the inscription, was made in Trebizond during the reign of its emperor Manuel I (1238–1263).<sup>20</sup>

However, these technical details cannot be sufficient grounds for such conclusions. After the fall of Constantinople in 1204, the ancient centers of jeweller's art, including that of enamellers, generally fell into a long decay across all of Byzantium. There is no evidence that any new centers arose.<sup>21</sup> No enameled objects of Trebizond origin are known. One cannot say for certain that enameller's art existed there at all. All surviving works of Byzantine enamellers came from the European provinces of the Empire or from Constantinople.<sup>22</sup> In addition, observes Elżbieta Dąbrowska, the range of enamel colors varies depending on the storage conditions. Finally, the decorations in the form of alternating points of different shades of blue, green, and red (“émaille continu des points bleu-rouge-bleu-vert-bleu”) are used very rarely. Analogies are found only on four items in the treasury of St. Mark in Venice (paten and three bowls) dating between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>23</sup>

On the initiative of E. Dąbrowska, a new palaeographic analysis of the inscription on the reliquary was carried out. It involved leading contemporary Byzantinists: Ihor Ševčenko,

<sup>20</sup> Durand, *CArch* 40 (1992) 143–144; A. Eastmond, *Art and Identity in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium: Hagia Sophia and the Empire of Trebizond* (Burlington 2004) 57–58.

<sup>21</sup> See K. Wessel, “Email,” *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst* II (Stuttgart 1971) 126–128.

<sup>22</sup> E. Dąbrowska, “Jeszcze o relikwii krzyża świętego i relikwiarzu koronacyjnym królów polskich” [More on the relics of the Holy Cross and the coronation reliquary of the Polish kings], *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 100 (1993) 3–13, here 5–6; and “Deux notes sur la croix appartenant à Manuel Comnène,” *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 40 (1997) 253–259.

<sup>23</sup> E. Dąbrowska, “Koronationsnyy krest-relikvarii pol'skikh korolei” [Coronation cross reliquary of the Polish kings], *Studia slavica et balcanica Petropolitana* 2 (2014) 5–15, here 8.

Cyril Mango, and Cécile Morrison. These unanimously concluded that the inscription could have been made no later than the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and most likely in the late 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The palaeographic argument is based primarily on the archaic form of some letters and ligatures and relies on comparison with other inscriptions of Constantinople in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>24</sup>

This confirms the initial hypothesis according to which Manuel Komnenos the Crown-Bearer is the Byzantine emperor Manuel I. That conclusion is accepted by other recent researchers.<sup>25</sup> Sergey P. Karpov, however, has returned to the thesis about Trebizond: according to him the cross was a diplomatic gift to France in 1253 via ambassadors of the Trebizond Emperor Manuel I to Louis IX.<sup>26</sup> This view does not explain how the cross came to be in the treasury of the Polish kings.

Only one relatively late relic of the Life-giving Cross at Trebizond is known.<sup>27</sup> Its inscription confirms that there was a tradition of making relics bearing emperors' names. But its appearance and the mention of Manuel III Megas Komnenos (1390–1420) with the titles ἄναξ and αὐτοκράτωρ are inconsistent with the Cross of the Princess Palatine in Notre Dame.

However, even if we agree with the suggestion that it was of Trebizond origin, the question remains: how did it come to Russia or Poland? During its entire history, the Trebizond Empire was geographically isolated from the European provinces

<sup>24</sup> E. Dąbrowska-Zawadzka, “La relique de la Vraie Croix appartenant a Manuel Comnène,” *BSAF* (1987) 91–110, here 106; and in *Kultura średnio-wieczna* 84.

<sup>25</sup> M. Salamon, “Polen und Byzanz – Wege der Begegnung,” in G. Prinzing and M. Salamon (eds.), *Byzanz und Ostmitteleuropa: 950–1453* (Wiesbaden 1999) 151–164, here 162; I. Augé, *Byzantins, arméniens et francs au temps de la croisade* (Paris 2007) 229.

<sup>26</sup> S. P. Karpov, *Istoriia Trapezundskoi imperii* [A history of the Trebizond's empire] (St. Petersburg 2007) 452–453.

<sup>27</sup> Frolov, *La relique* 529, no. 777.

of Byzantium and the European states, with only occasional contacts with them. There are no reported relations between the rulers of Trebizond and Russian or Polish princes in the 13<sup>th</sup>–early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The question of the origin of the cross thus requires further research. But the date of the inscription (late 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries) and the enamel (before 1204) is the most compelling to us. This dating leads to the conclusion that the relic was made probably in one of the provincial production centers of enamels and was dedicated to the Emperor Manuel I (1143–1180). It is well known that Manuel and especially his family revered the Life-giving Cross. Many relics of the Tree of the Holy Cross that were owned by this family have survived.<sup>28</sup>

Relics of the Cross were politically important during the entire history of the Byzantine Empire. The surviving reliquaries are among the most exquisite works of Byzantine art.<sup>29</sup> They betokened not only piety, but also the might of the emperors.<sup>30</sup> In this tradition, many enameled pieces found their way to the western states by way of pilgrimage and gifts from the imperial family in Constantinople.<sup>31</sup> The high value and relatively small size of enamel pieces meant that they were made for an aristocratic audience, most likely commissioned by the imperial family, often as gifts for other royals or for the churches they patronized.

In addition, relics served as diplomatic gifts, and this is the evidence of their political significance. In 1007, in an attempt to pull the newly baptized Hungary into the orbit of Byzantine

<sup>28</sup> Frolow, *La relique* 296–297, 317, 342–344, 426–427, nos. 273, 312, 367, 529; D. Gaborit-Chopin, “La Croix d’Anjou,” *CArch* 33 (1985) 156–178, here 157–160.

<sup>29</sup> See H. C. Evans and W. D. Wixom (eds.), *The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era* (New York 1997) 74–81.

<sup>30</sup> See A. Eastmond, “Byzantine Identity and Relics of the True Cross in the Thirteenth Century,” in A. M. Lidov (ed.), *Vostochnokhristianskie relikvii* [Eastern Christian relics] (Moscow 2003) 205–216.

<sup>31</sup> K. Wessel, *Byzantine Enamels* (Recklinghausen 1967) 8.



influence and prevent it from getting closer to Rome, a piece of the Cross was sent to King Stephen I (997–1038). In 1087, in response to the alliance against the Normans, another piece of the Cross was sent to Emperor Henry IV (1084–1106).<sup>32</sup> As shown by A. Eastmond, such a display of the emperor's generosity helped to establish the hierarchy of the Christian world, where the Byzantine emperor was at the top. He was the only monarch who could distribute holy relics.<sup>33</sup>

Another way of transmission of Byzantine enamels to the west came in the form of imperial marriages. In 927, the Emperor Otto II married the niece of the Byzantine Emperor John I Tzimiskes, princess Theophanou, and she supposedly introduced imperial goldsmiths and enamellers to the German church.<sup>34</sup>

*Possible paths of the emperor's relic to Halych*

There were a number of ways for the relic of the Cross to be brought from Byzantium to Rus'. This could have occurred during the reign of Manuel I. In 1164 he sent rich gifts to the Kievan Grand Prince Rostislav Mstislavich in order to reconcile him to the appointment of the metropolitan John IV (1164–1166), who was sent from Constantinople (the Kievan prince had wanted Klim Smoliatich to be reinstated).<sup>35</sup> The same year Manuel's nephew Andronikos Komnenos fled from Constantinople to Rus' and found refuge in Halych/Galicia with Yaroslav Osmomysl. Andronikos later became the Byzantine emperor.<sup>36</sup> In 1165 Manuel sent ambassadors to Rus' seeking the support of the Kievan prince Rostislav Mstislavich and the prince of Volodymir-Volynsky Mstislav Izyaslavich

<sup>32</sup> Frolow, *La relique* 260, no. 187; 282, no. 245.

<sup>33</sup> Eastmond, in *Vostochnokhristianskie relikvii* 208.

<sup>34</sup> M. Campbell, *An Introduction to Medieval Enamels* (London 1983) 17.

<sup>35</sup> See A. Soloviev, *Byzance et la formation de l'Etat russe* (London 1979) 294, no. IXa; 317–320, no. IXb.

<sup>36</sup> See O. Iurevich, *Andronik I Komnin* (St. Petersburg 2004), ch. 4.

against Yaroslav Osmomysl.<sup>37</sup> In the same year the *Ipatiev Chronicle* reports Manuel's embassy to Halych. This embassy consisted of two Greek metropolitans, and its purpose was to persuade Andronikos to return to Constantinople.<sup>38</sup> However, no Russian chronicle mentions that any of the Russian princes had received a piece of the Tree of the Holy Cross as a precious gift from the emperor, the most important sacred object in the Christian world.

According to some researchers, the nature of the inscription shows that it was most likely a family relic, i.e. meant for use by the members of the imperial family or their closest relatives. Therefore, it could have been most plausibly brought to Galician-Volhynian Rus' at the time of a dynastic marriage.<sup>39</sup>

The possibility cannot be excluded that the relic was brought to Halych from Hungary, coming there as the dowry of Byzantine princesses who married Hungarian princes. Such cases are known during the reign of Manuel I. In 1158 or 1159 the marriage was concluded between the future Hungarian king Stephen IV (1163–1165) and Maria Komnenos, daughter of the sebastokrator Isaak, Manuel's uncle.<sup>40</sup> Or Manuel could have given the relic to the future Hungarian king Béla III (1173–1196) in connection with his engagement to Manuel's daughter Maria. Or to Anna of Antioch in 1169, stepsister of Manuel's wife, for the alliance with Maria was not concluded; Béla became the basileus' brother-in-law and was granted one of the highest court ranks of caesar.<sup>41</sup>

The cross could have come from Hungary to Galicia either

<sup>37</sup> V. T. Pashuto, *Vneshniaia politika Drevnei Rusi* [The foreign policy of ancient Russia] (Moscow 1968) 193–196.

<sup>38</sup> *Ipat'evskaia letopis* [Hypation Chronicle], ed. A. A. Shakhmatov, *Polnoe Sobranie Russkikh Letopisei II* (Moscow 1998) 524.

<sup>39</sup> Dąbrowska, in *Kultura średniowieczna* 85.

<sup>40</sup> Gy. Moravcsik, *Byzantium and the Magyars* (Budapest 1970) 82–83.

<sup>41</sup> Moravcsik, *Byzantium* 83 ff.; see also F. Makk, *The Arpads and the Comneni. Political Relations between Hungary and Byzantium in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century* (Budapest 1989).

with Béla's grandson Koloman, who became the Galician king (ca. 1215). Or with his brother Andrew, or with the daughter of Béla IV (1235–1270) Constance, who in 1251 married Leo the son of Daniel Romanovich.<sup>42</sup> All these suggestions, however, are vulnerable. It is hard to explain what made the Hungarian kings part with such a significant relic, which was nothing less than an attribute of a monarch's power. What would induce them to turn it over to younger relatives who were leaving Hungary for the distant and restless Galicia, where the position of Hungarian rulers had always been unstable?<sup>43</sup>

In our opinion, it is more likely that Manuel's reliquary cross was brought directly to Halych from Byzantium. Perhaps the only possibility for that was the marriage between the Galician-Volhynian prince Roman Mstislavich (1199–1205) and Euphrosyne the daughter of the Byzantine emperor Isaak II Angelos (1185–1195, 1203–1204), which was concluded ca. 1200. This marriage did not find direct reflection in the Russian chronicles (owing to the loss of the initial part of the Galician-Volhynian chronicle), but it is confirmed by abundant indirect evidence in Russian and foreign sources.<sup>44</sup>

Our recent studies have shown that Roman Mstislavich became the main military ally of the Byzantine Empire in the early thirteenth century. The circumstances and the time of Roman's campaign (to protect the northern borders of the empire against the attacks of the Danube Cumans) in Niketas Choniates' account are the same as in the Rus' chronicles reporting the steppe campaigns of the prince. All the Byzantine

<sup>42</sup> See Dąbrowska, *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 100 (1993) 9.

<sup>43</sup> On Hungarian rule in Galicia at the end of the twelfth and first third of the thirteenth century see A. V. Maiorov, *Galitsko-Volynskaia Rus'. Ocherki sotsial'no-politicheskikh otnoshenii v domongol'skii period* [Galician-Volhynian Rus'. Essays on the socio-political relations in the pre-Mongol period] (St. Petersburg 2001).

<sup>44</sup> For details see A. V. Maiorov, "The Daughter of a Byzantine Emperor – the Wife of a Galician-Volhynian Prince," *Byzantinoslavica* 72 (2014) 188–233.

sources name Roman Mstislavich the “hegemon of Galicia.” This term, unlike other Byzantine titles of Rus’ princes, meant the emperor’s ally and relative (or in-law). The alliance between Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203) and Prince Roman led also to more stable relations with the Rus’ population of the Lower Dniester and the Lower Danube.<sup>45</sup>

The military aid that Roman rendered to Alexios III was guaranteed by Roman’s marriage to Alexios’ niece, the elder daughter of the overthrown emperor Isaak II. Alexios’ alliance with Roman did not lose its force after he fled Constantinople, besieged by the Crusaders. This is evidenced by reports of Western European sources of the 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries about Alexios’ visit in Halych in 1203.<sup>46</sup> The alliance between Rus’ and Byzantium founded by Roman retained its value at least until the mid-thirteenth century. Its consequences are manifested in the active participation of the Galician-Volhynian princes in the ecumenical proceedings of the 1240–1250s.<sup>47</sup>

The influence of Grand Princess Euphrosyne (second wife of Roman Mstislavovitch) explains the appearance among the Galician-Volhynian princes of the unusual and unique for the Rurikids Christian names *Daniel* and *Lev*. The first spread among the princes with the spread of the cult of St. Daniel the Stylite and the rising interest in stylitism. Thanks to the family links between the Galician-Volhynian and the Vladimir-Suzdal princes, this cult spread in north-eastern Rus’ and later to Moscow. That Euphrosyne of Galicia was the daughter of Emperor Isaak II explains the unexpected rise of interest in stylitism among the princes of Rus’ and their milieu. According to Ni-

<sup>45</sup> See A. V. Maiorov, “The Alliance between Byzantium and Rus’ before the Conquest of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204,” *Russian History* 42 (2015) 272–303.

<sup>46</sup> See A. V. Maiorov, “Angelos in Halych: Did Alexios III Visit Roman Mstislavich?” *GRBS* 56 (2016) 343–376.

<sup>47</sup> See A. V. Maiorov, “Ecumenical Processes in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century and the Union between Russia and Rome,” *ŽKG* 126 (2015) 11–34.

ketas Choniates, Isaak especially sympathized with the stylites and the ascetics and patronized them. This astonished his contemporaries, since the stylites had lost the influence over the emperors that they used to exert before the time of Iconoclasm.<sup>48</sup>

The second wife of Roman, princess Euphrosyne, who spent her childhood in a convent, was to become the owner of the holy cross with the name of the Emperor Manuel inscribed on it. According to Niketas Choniates, when Isaak II sent his elder daughter to the convent, he did what once “Empress Xene intended to do after the death of her husband, Emperor Manuel Komnenos.”<sup>49</sup> In other words, princess Euphrosyne in her early childhood was meant to be a ‘sacrifice to God’ made by her father in memory of another great Byzantine ruler, Emperor Manuel I. This sacrifice was made, probably, because Empress Xene did not keep her vow to become a nun in memory of her husband. Xene was the monastic name of the Empress Maria, the princess of Antioch in her girlhood, who in 1161 became the second wife of Manuel. In September 1180, after the death of her husband, she announced her intention to take the vows and change her name to Xene.

However, she did not withdraw from public life. Maria-Xene became regent for her eleven-year-old son, the new Emperor Alexios II (1180–1183). Soon she joined with the protosebastos Alexios Komnenos, nephew of her late husband. This caused a great scandal, as Alexios became her counselor and lover.<sup>50</sup> The relatives of the late Emperor Manuel conspired against the rule of Maria-Xene. First his elder daughter Maria was at the head of the plot, then his cousin Andronikos. The latter gained the upper hand over Maria-Xene’s supporters and shut her up

<sup>48</sup> See A. V. Maiorov, “The Cult of St. Daniel the Stylite among the Russian Princes of the Rurik Dynasty,” *Slavic and East European Journal* 59 (2015) 345–366.

<sup>49</sup> *Niketæ Choniatae Historia*, ed. I. A. van Dieten (Berlin/New York 1975) 419.

<sup>50</sup> *Niketæ Choniatae Historia* 224–225, 229–230.

in a convent, where she was killed by his order and buried secretly in a nameless grave. Andronikos crowned himself as a co-ruler of Alexios II and after the murder of the latter became emperor Andronikos I (1183–1185).<sup>51</sup>

After overthrowing the tyrant Andronikos, the new Emperor Isaak II considered himself to be the successor of Manuel and hastened to set right what was disrupted by Maria-Xene. To Isaak, her failure to keep her vow to become a nun in memory of Manuel was the reason for the terrible distress that fell upon her and the whole Komnenos family. This led to the end of the glorious dynasty. It was no accident that devoting his elder daughter “to God as a ewe lamb,” Isaak chose and rebuilt as a convent the same “Ioannitsa’s house” (καὶ τὸν τοῦ Ἰωαννίτζη λεγόμενον οἶκον) that Maria-Xene had once chosen for herself but never used.<sup>52</sup> According to Lynda Garland, Manuel’s widow could not rebuild Ioannitsa’s house as a convent because she always suffered financial difficulties.<sup>53</sup>

After Isaak II came to power, he emphasized in every way possible his peculiar mystical connection with Manuel I. He named one of his sons in Manuel’s honor. Moreover, he intended to leave the throne to him, passing over his elder son Alexios, who was born before Isaak became emperor. Isaak believed in the prediction once made for Manuel that the names of the emperors from the Komnenos family (among which the Angeli placed themselves) were to alternate in the order of letters in the magic word αἶμα.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, Isaak had to be succeeded by Manuel.<sup>55</sup>

Raised in this atmosphere and prepared to serve as a nun in memory of Manuel, probably for the sake of further glorifica-

<sup>51</sup> See further L. Garland, *Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium, 527–1204* (London/New York 1999) 199–209.

<sup>52</sup> *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* 419.

<sup>53</sup> Garland, *Byzantine Empresses* 207–208.

<sup>54</sup> *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* 228.

<sup>55</sup> K. Varzos., *He genealogia ton Komnenon II* (Thessalonica 1984) 814–815; C. M. Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West, 1180–1204* (Cambridge 1968) 97.

tion of this outstanding emperor who took the vows before his death, princess Euphrosyne could be the most probable owner of Manuel's holy cross, the family relic of the Komnenos-Angelos dynasty. She could have brought it to Rus'.

*The relics of the Cross in medieval Rus'*

From the first centuries of Christianity, the main and the most revered sacred object for all Christians was the Venerable and Life-giving Cross or True Tree of the Holy Cross. Over a period of many centuries, invaluable Christian relics were collected and strictly protected in the capital of the Byzantine Empire. In particular, after Iconoclasm was over and the worship of icons and holy relics was reestablished (843), the emperors of the Macedonian dynasty were able to obtain in the 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries the main relics of the Passion of Christ that had been kept in Jerusalem and other cities of the Christian East. These relics brought to Constantinople the glory of the New Jerusalem of the entire Christian world.

For newly Christianized Rus', Tsargrad became the place of pilgrimage of the Holy Passion. Hagia Sophia, the reliquary cathedral, became a place of adoration where many New Testament relics were kept and exposed for worship on certain days. The Church of the Virgin of the Pharos, situated in the centre of the Great Palace, became the depository of the main Christian relics in Constantinople. Over a period of many centuries it attracted numerous pilgrims from all over the Christian world.<sup>56</sup>

The princes of Rus' and then the tsars of Moscow believed it

<sup>56</sup> See M. Bacci, "Relics of the Pharos Chapel: A View from the Latin West," in *Vostochnohristianskie relikvii* 234–248; A. M. Lidov, "Tserkov' Bogomateri Farosskoi. Imperatorskii khram-relikvarii kak konstantinopol'skii Grob Gospoden'" [Church of the Virgin of the Pharos. The imperial relic temple as the Constantinople Holy Sepulcher], in M. A. Orlova (ed.), *Vizantiiskii mir: iskusstvo Konstantinopolia i natsional'nye traditsii. K 2000-letiiu khristianstva. Pamiati O. I. Podobedovoi* [The Byzantine World: The Art of Constantinople and National Traditions. On the Occasion of 2000 Years of Christianity. In Memory of O. I. Podobedova] (Moscow 2005) 79–108.

their holy duty to acquire Christian relics, especially the relics of the Venerable Cross.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, there are no data to prove that any of the rulers of Rus' in pre-Mongol times obtained a relic of the Cross. The two known holders of such relics in the late 12<sup>th</sup>-early 13<sup>th</sup> centuries were Euphrosyne, the nun-princess of Polotsk,<sup>58</sup> and Dobrynya Yadreikovich, the Novgorodian boyar, who also took the vows and later became archbishop Antony.<sup>59</sup>

No other owners of relics of the Cross are known in pre-Mongol Rus', and this in spite of the fact that chroniclers would record any such acquisition as an outstanding event. For example, under the year 1218 the *Laurentian Chronicle* described the festivities devoted to the arrival of a certain piece of "the Passion of Our Lord," the relics of St Longinus the Centurion ("the saint's two hands"), and the relics of St. Mary Magdalene.

<sup>57</sup> See I. A. Sterligova, "Novozavetnye relikvii v Drevnei Rusi" [New Testament relics in ancient Rus'], in A. M. Lidov (ed.), *Khristianskie relikvii v Moskovskom Kreml'e* [Christian relics in the Moscow Kremlin] (Moscow 2000) 19–93.

<sup>58</sup> Euphrosyne of Polotsk managed to get from Constantinople particles of the True Cross, Blood of the Lord, and stones of the Holy Sepulchre: see L. V. Alekseev, "Krest Evfrosinii Polotskoi 1161 goda v srednevekove i v pozdneishie vremena" [The cross of Euphrosyne of Polotsk 1161 in the Middle Ages and later times], *Rossiiskaia Arkheologiya* 2 (1993) 70–78; A. V. Sviatoslavskii and A. A. Troshin, *Krest v russkoi kul'ture: Ocherk russkoi monumental'noi stavrografii* [The cross in Russian culture: Essay on Russian monumental staurography] (Moscow 2000) 124–125.

<sup>59</sup> The ancient cross reliquary of Anthony of Novgorod with a particle of the Holy Cross, St. Sophia Cathedral in Novgorod, was completely redesigned in the restoration of the mid-nineteenth century, see I. A. Sterligova, "Pamiatniki serebriannogo i zolotogo dela v Novgorode XI–XII vv." [Monuments of the silver and gold craft in Novgorod of the 11<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries], in *Dekoratивно-prikladnoe iskusstvo Velikogo Novgoroda. Khudozhestvennyi metall XI–XV veka* [Decorative and applied arts in Veliky Novgorod. Metal arts of the 11<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries] (Moscow 1996) 130–134 (no. 7); T. Iu. Tsarevskaiia, "O tsar'gradskikh relikviiakh Antoniiia Novgorodskogo" [About the Tsarograd relics of Antony of Novgorod], in *Vostochnokhristianskie relikvii* 398–414, here 398–399.



They were brought by Nicholas the Greek, archbishop of Polotsk, from Constantinople to Vladimir for Grand Prince Konstantin Vsevolodovich.<sup>60</sup>

Novgorod appears to have been most interested in obtaining relics. Under the year 1133 the *Ipatiev Chronicle* reports that a certain Dionysius, who had been sent to the Holy Land by the *posadnik* (city governor) Miroslav Gyuryatinich, brought to Novgorod a “piece of the board” (“доска оконечная”) of the Holy Sepulcher.<sup>61</sup> An unpublished chronicle collection now in the Russian National Library contains an account concerning the receipt of certain relics by Ilya-Ioann, archbishop of Novgorod, in 1163/4.<sup>62</sup> The monument of Novgorod literature of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, *The Tale of St Ilya's Travel on the Devil to Jerusalem*, also mentions that the Novgorod archbishop had brought certain *eulogias* from the Resurrection Church in Jerusalem.<sup>63</sup> Today the Novgorodian encolpion cross with Palestinian relics that is called the Jerusalem Cross is in the Hildesheim Cathedral; the cross bears the inscription saying that it belonged to archbishop Ilya.<sup>64</sup> This cross was made in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century and underwent a radical restoration later.<sup>65</sup> However, we do not have any data to prove that among the mentioned Novgorodian relics of the 12<sup>th</sup> century there could have been

<sup>60</sup> *Lawrent'evskaia letopis'* [Laurentian Chronicle], ed. E. F. Karsky, *Polnoe Sobranie Russkikh Letopisei I* (Moscow 1997) 441.

<sup>61</sup> *Ipat'evskaia letopis'* 295; cf. A. V. Nazarenko, *Drevniaia Rus' na mezh-dunarodnykh putiakh* [Ancient Rus' on international routes] (Moscow 2001) 629.

<sup>62</sup> Nazarenko, *Drevniaia Rus'* 635.

<sup>63</sup> L. A. Dmitriev, *Žitiinye povesti russkogo Severa kak pamiatniki literatury XIII–XVII vv.: Evoliutsiia zhanra legendarno-biograficheskikh skazanii* [Hagiographical tales of the Russian north as monuments of literature in the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries] (Leningrad 1973) 179.

<sup>64</sup> Sterligova, *Žitiinye povesti* 87–88, 90–91, 195–201 (no. 32).

<sup>65</sup> O. E. Etinhof, *Vizantiiskaia ikona (VI – pervoi poloviny XIII veka) v Rossii* [Byzantine icons (6<sup>th</sup>–first half of 13<sup>th</sup> century) in Russia] (Moscow 2005) 173–174.

any relics of the Holy Cross. During his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Ilya, the archbishop of Novgorod, could only “kiss the life-giving wood.”<sup>66</sup>

The oldest among the now known relics of the Cross in medieval Rus' are the pectoral reliquary cross of Simeon the Proud, the reliquary of Dionysius of Suzdal, and Philotheus' staurotheke. All of these came from Byzantium. They were acquired later—in the mid- and late 14<sup>th</sup> century—at the time of the increasing political importance of Moscow and its rivalry with the Principality of Suzdal-Nizhny Novgorod.

The first known case when a Russian prince received a piece of the Cross directly from the Byzantine emperor was in 1347, the cross of Simeon. Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos sent to Grand Prince Simeon Ivanovich in Moscow a pectoral cross with a piece of the True Wood of the Holy Cross. In doing so John VI was trying to settle the dispute with Moscow concerning ecclesiastical issues.<sup>67</sup>

The reliquary of Dionysius of Suzdal is reckoned the largest and the most precious surviving reliquary of Old Rus'. It was brought from Constantinople ca. 1383 by the newly-ordained archbishop of Suzdal-Nizhny Novgorod, Dionysius. Dionysius' relics originated from the Monastery of St. George in Mangana, Constantinople. The most important relic is a piece of the True Cross. The reliquary contains in addition sixteen other relics. After 1401 the reliquary was brought to Moscow.<sup>68</sup> The reliquary, in the form of a Greek cross (39 × 39 × 2 cm), was made in 1383 by order of the prince of Suzdal-Nizhny Novgorod, Dmitri Konstantinovich. The materials used were wood, copper, silver, gemstones, pearls, glass, mother-of-pearl, and mica. The surface of the reliquary is gilded and decorated with colored enamels. The central square is the reliquary with

<sup>66</sup> *Velikie Minei Chet'i, sobrannye Vserossiiskim mitropolitom Makariem I* [Great lives of the saints, collected the All-Russian Metropolitan Macarius], ed. Archaeographical Commission (St. Petersburg 1868) 333–338.

<sup>67</sup> Miklosich/Müller I 264–265.

<sup>68</sup> Sterligova, in *Khristianskie relikvii* 48.

the piece of the Cross in the centre. It is surrounded by sixteen tiny reliquaries with mica windows where other relics are contained. The small reliquaries are encircled by inscriptions describing their contents. Images of the Passion cycle are also depicted.<sup>69</sup> After the reliquary of Dionysius was brought to Moscow, it became the most important relic of the grand princes, and then the tsars, of Moscow. It is often mentioned in their wills first among other relics. During the 15<sup>th</sup>–early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries the reliquary was kept in the treasury of the grand prince and then of the tsar. Most likely, it was placed in the prayer room, where the tsar prayed in the morning and the evening. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century it was taken to the Annunciation Cathedral of the Kremlin.<sup>70</sup>

Philotheus' staurotheke also survives to today. It is a flat wooden box covered with gilded silver. A hollow in the bottom contains a wooden six-point cross edged with silver. The wood of the cross has hollows for the pieces of the True Cross. On both sides of the cross are chased relief depictions of the healing Sts. Cyrus and Panteleimon (shoulder-length, in medallions) and Sts. Cosmas and Damian standing. On the narrow margins of the staurotheke are two small silver locks. They used to fix the lost sliding lid and a large chased Greek inscription that praises the relic and refers to Master Ioann who made the staurotheke.<sup>71</sup> Apparently the staurotheke was brought to Mos-

<sup>69</sup> T. V. Nikolaeva, *Prikladnoe iskusstvo Moskovskoi Rusi* [Applied arts of Muscovite Rus'] (Moscow 1976) 23–35.

<sup>70</sup> I. Ja. Kachalova, N. A. Maiasova, and L. A. Shchennikova, *Blagoveshchenskii sobor Moskovskogo Kremliia: k 500-letiiu unikal'nogo pamiatnika russkoi kul'tury* [The Annunciation Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin: the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the unique monument of Russian culture] (Moscow 1990) 88–89; I. A. Sterligova, "Kovcheg Dionisiia Suzdal'skogo" [The Ark of Dionysius of Suzdal], in L. A. Shchennikova (ed.), *Blagoveshchenskii sobor Moskovskogo Kremliia. Materialy i issledovaniia* [The Annunciation Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin. Materials and research] (Moscow 1999) 280–303.

<sup>71</sup> Frolov, *La relique* 93–102; A. V. Bank and M. A. Bessonova (eds.), *Iskusstvo Vizantii v sobraniakh SSSR II* [Byzantine art in the collections of the USSR] (Moscow 1977) 87, no. 549.

cow during the second tenure of patriarch Philotheus (1364–1376). But one cannot exclude the possibility that the grand princes of Moscow obtained it through the metropolitan Kiprian, who in 1390 returned to Moscow from Kiev bringing various relics.<sup>72</sup> The staurotheke is characteristic of the Middle Byzantine period. The lid certainly had the traditional image of the Crucifixion, and on the reverse the image of the flowering cross. According to Alisa V. Bank, Philotheus' staurotheke may be considered a monument of Byzantine art of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>73</sup>

Another small wooden staurotheke is now in the collection of the regional local history museum of Archangelsk. It is decorated with gilded silver plates with chased images of St. Clement (on the lid) and Sts. Constantine and Helen. The origin of the staurotheke is unknown. Research and restoration in the mid-1960s established that the wooden base of the staurotheke was made in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, while the metal plates with chased images of saints were probably created in the 12<sup>th</sup>–early 13<sup>th</sup> century. They most probably originated from Novgorod.<sup>74</sup>

Roman Mstislavich became the owner of the cross of Emperor Manuel when he married the Byzantine princess. It

<sup>72</sup> V. A. Kuchkin, "Sergii Radonezhskii i Filofeevskii krest" [Sergius of Radonezh and the Philotheus cross], in O. E. Etinhof (ed.), *Drenerusskoe Iskusstvo: Sergii Radonezhskii i khudozhestvennaia kul'tura Moskvy XIV–XV vv.* [Old Russian art: St. Sergius of Radonezh and artistic culture in Moscow of the 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries] (St. Petersburg 1998) 16–22.

<sup>73</sup> A. V. Bank, *Vizantiiskoe iskusstvo v sobraniakh Sovetskogo Soiuz*a [Byzantine art in the collections of the Soviet Union] (Moscow/Leningrad 1967) 312, pl. 195, and *Prikladnoe iskusstvo Vizantii IX–XII vv. Ocherki* [Applied art of Byzantium of the 9<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Essays] (Moscow 1978) no. 30.

<sup>74</sup> See A. F. Chervakov, "Stavroteka XII veka iz Arkhangel'skogo kraevedcheskogo muzeia" [Staurotheke of the twelfth century in the Arkhangel'sk regional museum], *VizVrem* 31 (1971) 188–193; A. A. Medyntseva, "Arkhangel'skaia stavroteka i kul't Klimenta na Rusi" [The Arkhangel'sk Staurotheke and the cult of Clement in Rus'], *Sovetskaia Arkheologiia* 3 (1991) 56–68.

distinguished the Galician-Volhynian prince from other princes of Rus' of that time, as they did not possess any relics of such importance. The relic of the Venerable Cross had not only liturgical but also political significance as one of the attributes of supreme power. The possession of that relic was apparently supposed to motivate Roman to take a more active policy and participate in the struggle for the Kievan throne. It also supported his claim to the leading role in the political life of Rus'.

We conclude that the Princess Palatine's Cross in Notre Dame is likely to have been made in memory of the Emperor Manuel I Komnenos. The evidence shows that this relic in Galician-Volhynian Rus' probably came with Princess Euphrosyne, daughter of Isaac II Angelos, who ca. 1200 became the second wife of Prince Roman Mstislavovitch.

To the evidence discussed above add one more: according to the Galician-Volhynian chronicle, the eldest grandson of Euphrosyne received in baptism the name Irakli.<sup>75</sup> None of the Rus' princes the Rurik's dynasty had this name. Undoubtedly it was a sign of veneration of the Byzantine emperor Heraclius (610–641), who captured Jerusalem and returned the Holy Cross from Persian captivity.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> *Ipat'evskaia letopis'* 732.

<sup>76</sup> See A. V. Maiorov, "O proiskhozhdenii i simbolike imeni kniazia Irakliia Danilovicha" [On the origin and symbolism of the name of Prince Irakli Danilovich], *Voprosy istorii* 3 (2011) 110–121.

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