

The Limburg Staurotheke: A Reassessment

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Dedicatory inscriptions on Middle Byzantine reliquaries have been analyzed for their documentary information, including prosopography, provenance, and date.¹ Relying solely on this data limits our understanding of these objects. The methodology in this paper recontextualizes Byzantine reliquaries and their dedicatory inscriptions by reassessing the meaning and function of the Greek text through its relationship with the form of the object and its relics.

The focus of this essay is on one case study—the Limburg Staurotheke, a reliquary of the True Cross now in the cathedral treasury of Limburg an der Lahn, Germany (Figures 1-3).² Three levels of analysis will be applied to the staurotheke and its inscription. First, the dedication functions as a record of patronage—the identification of names, titles, and gifts. Second, it is a typological comparison of the patrons and Christ as expressed in the precise terminology chosen for the dedication. Third, the placement of specific words is significant when viewed in relation to the form of the object and the precious stones and pearls that embellish it. These approaches together reveal the multivalent messages

conveyed through the reliquary's complex interrelationship of text, form, and relic.

The Limburg Staurotheke was constructed in two phases during the tenth century. The double-arm cross was made first (Figure 1). The front displays its relics—seven rectangular strips of wood of the True Cross supported by a wooden core.³ It is embellished with gems at the crossings and ends. The pearls that once adorned the intersections of the cross arms are now replaced by gold beads.⁴ The back of the reliquary is wrapped in gold and has a dedicatory inscription executed in repoussé. The inscription identifies the patrons as the Emperors Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos and his son Romanos II, dating it to 945-59, the period of their co-regency.

The *thēkē* (case) was produced a few years after the cross, between 968 and 985 (Figures 2-3).⁵ It is an enamel and silver-gilt shallow rectangular box with a sliding lid (Figure 2). The cross of Constantine and Romanos is displayed inside the *thēkē* and is surrounded by ten compartments that contain relics either of, or associated with, Christ, the Theotokos, and

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¹ The corpus of these reliquary inscriptions are catalogued in Anatole Frolov, *La Relique de la Vraie Croix: Recherches sur le Développement d'un Culte*, Archives de l'Orient Chrétien 7 (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1961); and Andreas Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Ikonen und Objekten der Kleinkunst*, vol. 2 of *Byzantinische Epigramme in Inschriftlicher Überlieferung*, ed. Wolfram Hörandner, Andreas Rhoby, and Anneliese Paul (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010).

² Diözesanmuseum Inv. Nr. D 1/1-3 (48 x 35 x 6 cm), see Frolov, *La Relique*, 233-37; and Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Ikonen*, 163-69. For a detailed discussion of the reliquary's contents and history, see Holger A. Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das 'wahre' Kreuz: Die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004), 105-12.

³ Each strip is 17 mm wide and between 2 and 4 mm thick. Their lengths vary so that they form the cross; see Johann Michael Wilm, "Die Wiederherstellung der Limburger Staurothek," *Das Münster* 8 (1955): 238.

⁴ Some of the gems are also modern replacements, but the restoration

preserves what is thought to be the original appearance; see Wilm, "Die Wiederherstellung," 240.

⁵ A dedicatory inscription wraps all four sides of the *thēkē*. There is a great deal of scholarly debate concerning the precise date of the *thēkē* and the sequence in which the inscription as arranged on the reliquary should be read; see Enrica Follieri, "L'ordine dei versi in alcuni epigrammi bizantini," *Byzantion* 34 (1964): 447-467; Johannes Koder, "Zu den Versinschriften der Limburger Staurothek," *Archiv für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte* 37 (1985): 11-31; and Bissera Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 160-70. I present the eight verses of the inscription according to the order accepted by Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Ikonen*, 166 (top, right, left, bottom):

† ΟΥ ΚΑΛΛΟΣ ΕΙΧΕΝ Ο ΚΡΕΜΑΣΘΕΙΣ ΕΝ ΖΥΛΩ
ΑΛΛ ΗΝ ΩΡΑΙΟΣ ΚΑΛΛΕΙ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΘΗΗΣΚΩΝ
ΟΥΚ ΕΙΔΟΣ ΕΙΧΕΝ ΑΛΛ ΕΚΑΛΛΩΠΙΣΕ ΜΟΥ
ΤΗΝ ΔΥΣΘΕΑΤΟΝ ΕΞ ΑΜΑΡΤΙΑΣ ΘΕΑΝ
ΘΕΟΣ ΓΑΡ ΩΝ ΕΠΑ[Σ]ΧΕΝ ΕΝ ΒΡΟΤΩΝ ΦΥΣΕΙ
ΟΝ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΟΣ [Ο] ΠΡΟΕΔΡΟΣ ΕΞΟΧΩΣ
ΣΕΒΟΝ ΕΚΑΛΛΩΠΙ[Σ]ΣΕ ΤΗΝ ΘΗΚΗΝ ΖΥΛΟΥ
ΕΝ Ω ΤΑΝΥΣΘΕΙΣ ΕΙΛΚΥΣΕΝ ΠΑΣΑΝ ΚΤΙΣΙΝ

In translation, it reads:

† He did not have beauty, the one suspended on wood, yet Christ was complete with beauty; and in dying he did not have form, but he beautified my appearance deformed by sin. Although being God, he suffered in mortal nature; eminently venerating, Basileios the *proedros* beautified the *thēkē* of wood, on which having been stretched, he (Christ) rescued all creation.

John the Baptist (Figure 3).⁶ Originally, the cross was removed and carried in procession during the liturgy.⁷

While the *thēkē* has been the focus of numerous studies, the dedication on the cross of Constantine and Romanos has received limited scholarly attention. The focus of this paper is the interrelationship between the cross reliquary and its dedicatory inscription, relics, and embellishments.

The Inscription as a Record of Patronage

The inscription, written in continuous script in majuscule letters, reads from top to bottom and from left to right. A cross marks the beginning. In translation the nine-verse inscription reads:

† On the one hand, God stretched out his hands upon the wood gushing forth through it the energies of life. On the other hand, Constantine and Romanos the despots with the synthesis of radiant stones and pearls displayed this same thing full of wonder. And on the one hand, Christ with this formerly smashed the gates of Hades giving new life to the dead. On the other hand, the crown-wearers having now adorned this crush with it the temerities of the barbarians.⁸

The Limburg dedication functions as a record of patronage. It identifies the patrons, the Emperors Constantine and Romanos, and the contents, the wood of the True Cross. It specifies “radiant stones and pearls” as their material contribution. The inscription states that the Emperors have “now adorned this,” indicating that this is not a commemoration of a past event, but rather a commission of the present day. The dedication also asserts that Constantine and Romanos defeat their enemies through the power of the True Cross.

⁶ These compartments are covered by gold and enamel hinged doors that have inscriptions and images of cherubim and seraphim. The inscriptions, read from left to right and from top to bottom, identify the relics as the swaddling clothes of Christ, the towel used to wash the Apostles’ feet, the crown of thorns, Christ’s purple robe, the burial shroud, the sponge, the maphorion of the Theotokos, the girdle from the Chalkoprateia, the girdle from Zela, and hair of the Prodromos. These relics are discussed in Klein, ‘wahre’ Kreuz, 106-07.

⁷ Koder (“Verschriften,” 16) suggests that the cross of Constantine and Romanos is the processional cross identified in the tenth-century Book of Ceremonies and housed in the Pharos chapel in the Great Palace: “the newly-made great cross of Constantine the Christ-loving and purple-born Emperor” (Ὁ νεοκατασκευάστος μέγας σταυρὸς Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ φιλοχρίστου καὶ πορφυρογεννήτου Βασιλέως); see Johann Jacob Reiske, ed., *Constantini Porphyrogeniti De Ceremoniis aulae Byzantinae*, Corpus scriptorum historiae byzantinae (Bonn: Impensis Ed. Weberi, 1830), 2:640. Nancy Ševčenko, “The Limburg Staurothek and its Relics,” in *Θυμίαμα στη μνήμη της Λασκαρίνας Μπούρα* (Athens: Benaki Museum, 1994), 289-95 suggests that the Limburg Staurothek was taken on military campaigns to protect the Emperor and aid him in battle.

⁸ †Θ[ΕΟ]Σ ΜΕΝ ΕΞΕΤΕΙΝΕ ΧΕΙΡΑΣ ΕΝ ΞΥΛΩ
ΖΩΗΣ ΔΙ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΤΑΣ ΕΝΕΡΓΕΙΑΣ ΒΡΥΩΝ
ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΣ ΔΕ Κ[ΑΙ] ΡΩΜΑΝΟΣ ΔΕΣΠΟΤΑΙ
ΛΙΘΩΝ ΔΙΑΥΓΩΝ ΣΥΝΘΕΣΕΙ Κ[ΑΙ] ΜΑΡΓΑΡΩΝ

The Inscription as Comparison

While the Limburg dedication is a record, it is not strictly a list of patrons and their contributions. Its form is typical for Middle Byzantine inscriptions, a twelve-syllable epigram.⁹ In content, it is a typological comparison of the Emperors and Christ.¹⁰ This is evident in the overall structure of the epigram, the pairing of specific actions, the indication of time, and the specific choice of names. This paper argues that the composition is deliberate, mimetically linking Constantine and Romanos with Christ in order to affirm their ability to wield the power of the relic.

The comparison of the Emperors and Christ is evident in the overall structure of the dedication composed using two *men...de* constructions. The Greek words *men* and *de* are used in correlative clauses to compare or contrast two different ideas or situations; the word *men* always prefaces the first clause and *de* the second. No previous translation of this inscription has taken these words into consideration; their meaning has been, one might say, lost in translation. Liddell and Scott’s *Greek-English Lexicon* render these words into the English phrases “on the one hand” and “on the other hand.”¹¹ The Limburg *men...de* constructions are fundamental to the epigram’s organization and message.

The first *men...de* construction is lines 1-5. The word *men* prefaces the actions of God in line 1, and the word *de* prefaces those of the Emperors in line 3. These words establish the correlation between the two clauses, God on one hand and the despots on the other. The second *men...de* construction is lines 6-9. As with the first comparison, the word *men* prefaces the actions of Christ, and *de* prefaces that of the crown-wearers. In sum, the words *men* and *de* structure the epigram so that the subjects of the inscription are related to one another.

ΕΔΕΙΞΑΝ ΑΥΤΟ ΘΑΥΜΑΤΟΣ ΠΕΙΤΛΗΣΜΕΝΟΝ
Κ[ΑΙ] ΠΡΙΝ ΜΕΝ Α[Ι]ΔΟΥ Χ[ΡΙ]ΣΤΟΥ ΕΝ ΤΟΥΤΩ ΠΥΛΑΣ
ΘΡΑΥΣΑΣ ΑΝΕΖΩΩΣΕ ΤΟΥΣ ΤΕΘΝΗΚΟΤΑΣ
ΚΟΣΜΗΤΟΡΕΣ ΤΟΥΤΟΥ ΔΕ ΝΥΝ ΣΤΕΦΗΦΟΡΟΙ
ΘΡΑΣΗ ΔΙ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΣΥΝΤΡΙΒΟΥΣΙ ΒΑΡΒΑΡΩΝ

⁹ *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), s.v. “Dodecasyllable,” by Michael J. Jeffreys, 1:643-44.

¹⁰ Synkrisis, the art of comparing, was a preliminary exercise in Byzantine rhetorical training. For more information on the Progymnasmata used in the Late Antique and Byzantine periods, see George Alexander Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, Writings from the Greco-Roman World 10 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003). The late fourth-century Progymnasmata of Aphthonios was a popular textbook in the Middle Byzantine period; see Henry Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 13-15. For the relationship between synkrisis and Middle Byzantine art, see Henry Maguire, “The Art of Comparing in Byzantium,” *Art Bulletin* 70 (1988): 88-103; and Henry Maguire, “The Mosaics of Nea Moni: An Imperial Reading,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992): 205-14.

¹¹ *Greek-English Lexicon* hereafter cited as *LSJ*, 9th rev. ed., eds. Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), s.v. “μέν.”

Within this structure, the specific deeds of the Emperors and Christ are compared. Lines 1-5 describe two physical actions that are each followed by a metaphysical effect. The first action is stated in line 1: “God stretched out his hands upon the wood,” referring to Christ’s crucifixion.¹² The focus is on God’s hands, and thus emphasizes the human nature of this act. Line 2 describes the outcome of the crucifixion: “gushing forth through it the energies of life.” The faithful believe that through Christ’s death and resurrection, he offers eternal life. The True Cross is an embodiment of this belief; the blood of Christ infused the wood and transformed this earthly substance into sacred matter.¹³

This cause and effect relationship is also found in the description of the Emperors’ deeds. Line 4 states that Constantine and Romanos displayed these relics “with the synthesis (*synthesei*) of radiant stones and pearls.” The word *synthesei*, which means “putting together” or “composition,” refers to their role as patrons who caused the material creation and fashioning of the Limburg reliquary and the embellishment of the relics.¹⁴ This physical action brings about the metaphysical effect—the cross is “full of wonder (*thaumatos*).” The word *thaumatos* is used in multiple contexts. While it references physical and visual splendor, it can also refer to something that is miracle-working.¹⁵ Just as the blood of Christ transformed the wood, the Emperors visually transform their relic with the *synthesei* of red jewels and white pearls, suggesting the blood and water gushing forth from Christ’s body.¹⁶ These embellishments are a testament to Constantine and Romanos’s ability to harness the wonder-working power of the relic.

The comparison of deeds is continued in lines 6-9. This portion of the inscription compares Christ’s victory over Hades with the topos of imperial victory over the enemy.¹⁷ The paronomasia (pun) on the words *thrausas* (smashed) and *thrasē* (temerities) further connects the actions of the crown-wearers and Christ.¹⁸ Just as Christ “smashed the gates of Hades,” the crown-wearers “crush...the temerities of the barbarians.” The Emperors defeat their earthly enemies because they have the True Cross and because they do it in imitation of Christ.

The subjects are also typologically linked through time. In line 6, the deeds of Christ are described as a past event: “Christ with this formerly *smashed* the gates of Hades.” This is paired with the present actions of the Emperors in line 8: “the crown-wearers having *now* adorned this crush with it the temerities of the barbarians.”¹⁹ Their actions in battle—spiritual and earthly, past and present—are linked through their wielding of the power of the True Cross.

The comparison of the Emperors and Christ is also suggested by the parallel taxonomy of names. The first comparison, lines 1-5, pairs *theos* (God) with the Emperors who are called *despotai* (despots). This term, meaning “absolute ruler” is also applied to God in Byzantine texts.²⁰ The Emperors’ mimesis of the heavenly court conforms to Byzantine imperial ideology. The earthly court, with the Emperor as its absolute ruler, was a reflection of the court in heaven, centered on God.²¹

The second comparison, lines 6-9, applies a different set of terms to the subjects. The word *christos* (Christ) replaces “God” and the imperial epithet *stephēphoroi* (crown-wearers)

¹² Walter Michel suggests that the author of the epigram used the word God in reference to the crucifixion to convey the theology of Christ’s divine and human nature; see “Die Inschriften der Limburger Staurothek,” *Archiv für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte* 28 (1976): 34-35.

¹³ John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei* 4.11.

¹⁴ LSJ, s.v. “σύνθεσις.” Bissera Pentcheva also associates this word with the manmade act of construction; see “Containers of Power: Eunuuchs and Reliquaries in Byzantium,” *Res* 51 (2007): 113.

¹⁵ *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, ed. G.W.H. Lampe (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), s.v. “θαύμα.”

¹⁶ Pentcheva suggests that the red jewels evoke the blood of Christ; see “Containers,” 110. The image of Christ dead on the cross with blood and water flowing from his side becomes standard Byzantine iconography after Iconoclasm; see John R. Martin, “The Dead Christ on the Cross in Byzantine Art,” in *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.*, ed. Kurt Weitzmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), 189-96.

¹⁷ For a discussion of this topos and its relationship to the cross, see Wolfram Hörandner, “Das byzantinische Epigramm und das heilige Kreuz: einige Beobachtungen zu Motiven und Typen,” in *La Croce: Iconografia e interpretazione (secoli I - inizio XVI); Atti del convegno internazionale di studi (Napoli, 6-11 dicembre 1999)*, ed. Boris Ulianich (Naples-Rome: Elio de Rosa editore, 2007), 3:107-25.

¹⁸ Rhoby notes the homonymy of these words; *Epigramme auf Ikonen*, 169.

¹⁹ A similar use of the past and present as well as the topos of imperial victory is found in the inscription on the Cortona Staurotheke, a reliquary of the True Cross produced approximately a decade after the Limburg during the reign of Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963-69); see Frolow, *La Relique*, 239-41; and Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Ikonen*, 331-34. The four verses of the cross-shaped inscription on the reverse reads:

Κ[ΑΙ] ΠΡΙΝ ΚΡΑΤΑΙΩ ΔΕΣΠΟΤΗ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΩ
Χ[ΡΙΣΤΟ]Σ ΔΕΔΩΚΕ ΣΤ[ΑΥ]ΡΟΝ ΕΙ[Σ] ΣΩΤΗΡΙΑΝ
Κ[ΑΙ] ΝΥΝ ΔΕ ΤΟΥΤΟΝ ΕΝ Θ[Ε]Ω ΝΙΚΗΦΟΡΟΣ
ΑΝΑΞ ΤΡΟΠΟΥΤΑΙ ΦΥΛΑ ΒΑΡΒΑΡΩΝ ΕΧΩΝ

In translation, it reads:

And formerly to the powerful despot Constantine, Christ gave the cross for salvation; and now having this (the cross), the Emperor in God Nikephoros puts to flight the tribes of barbarians.

²⁰ *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, s.v. “δεσπότης.”

²¹ Henry Maguire, “The Heavenly Court,” in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996), 247-58. Imperial mimesis of the heavenly court is given visual expression in the coronation image of Emperor Basil I (r. 867-86), Constantine VII’s grandfather and founder of the Macedonian dynasty, on folio of Cv of Paris.gr.510, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, M.S. gr. 510; f. Cv; see Henry Maguire, “A Murderer Among the Angels: The Frontispiece Miniatures of Paris. Gr. 510 and the Iconography of the Archangels in Byzantine Art,” in *The Sacred Image East and West*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Robert Ousterhout (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1995),

substitutes “despots.” The word *christos* is defined as the “the Anointed One” and refers to he who is chosen and anointed by God.²² The term “crown-wearer” is a title given to rulers, but here its context renders it significant.²³ It is a term associated with the Byzantine ceremony of coronation, the moment when the Emperor is crowned by the Patriarch and is symbolically anointed by God.²⁴

This nuanced pairing of names and personalization of an inscription is also found in other Middle Byzantine reliquary inscriptions. An example is the staurotheke once at Troyes Cathedral.²⁵ The reliquary’s inscription was recorded prior to its destruction during the French Revolution.²⁶ It identifies the Troyes Staurotheke patron as Constantine the *protoproedros*, a title designating the most important court officials and high-ranking senators.²⁷ Through his dedicatory inscription, Constantine beseeches Christ, addressing him: “master of judges, annul great errors.”²⁸ Constantine’s status as a civic leader and lawmaker is therefore paralleled with Christ’s role as a judge who has the power to punish or redeem offenders of the law.

This parallel play on names is also found on the twelfth- to thirteenth-century staurotheke of Manuel Komnenos, now in the treasury of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris (Figure 4).²⁹ The reverse of the cross features the inscription: “Jesus Christ, hanging on the cross, you exalted the nature of men. Manuel Komnenos crown-wearer writes (this).”³⁰ Like the Limburg dedication, the Notre-Dame inscription pairs the word “Christ” with the imperial epithet “crown-wearer.”

This pairing of names is reinforced visually by the placement of names inscribed on the reliquary. The inscription begins on the upper cross arm with the abbreviation for Jesus Christ. It concludes on the lower cross arm with the words “Manuel” and “crown-wearer.” The pairing of proper names and titles for “Jesus Christ” and “Manuel crown-wearer” is arranged on the cross arms, paralleling the Emperor, on the

lower, with Christ, on the upper (Figure 5).

The comparisons made between the Emperors and Christ in the Limburg inscription reveal more about this reliquary and the messages conveyed by the dedication. The structure of the epigram, the pairing of specific actions, the indication of time, and the specific choice of names combine to typologically link the Emperors with Christ. The power of the True Cross that Christ established through his death, defeat of Hades, and resurrection is continued and harnessed by the Emperors who embellish the reliquary and use it to aid them in the defeat of their enemies.

The Placement of the Inscription

The placement of specific words on the Limburg Staurotheke emphasizes imperial ownership of the True Cross and the power associated with the relic. The names of the Emperors are given prominent placement on their reliquary. They are displayed on the vertical arm and centered between the two cross arms, which isolate and frame the patrons’ names (Figure 6). The pearls, now replaced by gold beads, also drew attention to the names of Constantine and Romanos, thus linking the Emperors with their material contributions.³¹

The assertion of imperial ownership resonates in the rhyme of the word *margarōn* (pearls) in line 4. The homoiototon, or repeated word endings, are arranged so that the rhyme ends on this word: “*lithōn diaugōn synthesei kai margarōn*,” or “with the synthesis of radiant stones and pearls.” As the final word in the rhyming sequence, *margarōn* is given the verbal emphasis.

This stress is echoed visually in word placement. The fourth line of the inscription begins at the left end of the lower cross arm. The line ends with the word *margarōn* at the intersection of the vertical and horizontal arms (Figure 7a). Originally, this set the word next to the pearls embellishing the cross, uniting the text with the materials added by the

63-71; and Leslie Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium: Image as Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 158-62.

²² *LSJ*, s.v. “χριστός.”

²³ *LSJ*, s.v. “στεφανηφόρος.”

²⁴ For a discussion on the practice of unction for Middle Byzantine imperial coronations, see Gilbert Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 273-74. Ioli Kalavrezou notes the significance of the feast day of Christ’s Baptism (January 6) for ninth- and tenth-century Emperors; see “Helping Hands for the Empire: Imperial Ceremonies and the Cult of Relics at the Court,” in *Byzantine Court Culture* (see note 21), 72-75. In the fifteenth century, Symeon of Thessaloniki compared the anointing of the Emperor at coronation with Christ’s anointing by the Holy Spirit at Baptism; see *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, s.v. “Anointing,” by Michael McCormick, 1:107.

²⁵ Frolov, *La Relique*, 391-93; and Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Ikonen*, 189-92.

²⁶ Abbé Coffinet, “Recherches historiques sur l’origine des parcelles de la Vraie Croix, conservées dans le trésor de la cathédrale de Troyes,”

Mémoires de la Société d’agriculture, des sciences, arts et belles-lettres du Département de l’Aube 19 (1855): 183-217.

²⁷ *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, s.v. “Proedros as a Civilian Dignity,” by Alexander Kazhdan, Anthony Cutler, accessed 3:1727.

²⁸ According to Coffinet, verses 8 and 11 read: “πρωτοπροεδρος λαμπρύνας Κωνσταντ,” and “ᾠρχων δικαστῶν, λῦσων διαμαρτίας;” see “Vraie Croix,” 196. For different revisions of this text, see Frolov, *La Relique*, 392; and Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Ikonen*, 190.

²⁹ Frolov, *La Relique*, 483-84; Jannic Durand, ed., *Byzance: L’art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises, Musée du Louvre, 3 novembre 1992 - 1er février 1993* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1992), 444-45; and Rhoby, *Epigramme auf Ikonen*, 185-86.

³⁰ [Ι[ΗΣΟΥ]Σ Χ[ΡΙΣΤΟ]Σ ΣΤ[ΑΥΡ]Ω ΠΑΓΕΙΣ ΥΨΩΣΑΣ ΑΝ[ΘΡΩΠ]ΩΝ ΦΥΣΙΝ ΓΡΑΦΕΙ ΚΟΜΝΗΝΟΣ ΜΑΝΟΥΗΛ ΣΤΕΦΗΦΟΡΟΣ

³¹ For the significance of name placement in dedicatory inscriptions, see Brad Hostetler, “The Iconography of Text: The Placement of an Inscription on a Middle Byzantine Reliquary,” *Eastern Christian Art* 8 (forthcoming).

Emperors. The conscious placement of inscription and materials is also found in the position of the word *lithōn* (stones) at the end of the left cross arm (Figure 7b). This situates the word in the corresponding position of two radiant stones that embellish the front.

Just as word placement declares imperial ownership over the Limburg relics, it also emphasizes the source of their power. Centered on the lower cross arm is the instrumental dative phrase of line 6: “*christos en toutō*,” or “Christ with this” (Figure 8). While the demonstrative “this” references the True Cross, the instrument of the Limburg inscription, the placement of the phrase “*christos en toutō*” also associates these words with the reliquary on which they are inscribed. Its precise placement over the intersection of the vertical and horizontal arms sets it at the actual and symbolic center of the cross—the junction from which, as it states in line 1, “God stretched out his hands upon the wood.”

Lines 5, 6, and 8 each contain the word “this,” referring back to the very object and relic upon which the words are inscribed. Therefore, when the energies of life gush forth, they do so though *this* wood—the wood of the True Cross contained within the Limburg. It is with *this* relic that Christ was crucified, destroyed the gates of Hades, and gave life to the dead. It is for *this* very same relic that the Emperors fashion a precious reliquary and in turn use it to defeat their enemies.

In conclusion, the multiple messages conveyed through the Limburg Staurotheke’s complex interrelationship of text, form, and relic are much more nuanced than reading a dedication as a list of patrons and their material contributions. The Emperors are mimetically linked with Christ through the precise terminology chosen for the dedication. The placement of specific words on the reliquary emphasizes their actual

and symbolic possession of the True Cross and therefore the power associated with it. These analyses demonstrate the multivalent function of dedicatory inscriptions. Word, form, and relic are chosen, arranged, and composed together on one object, uniting the patrons with their reliquary and the sacred matter it contains.

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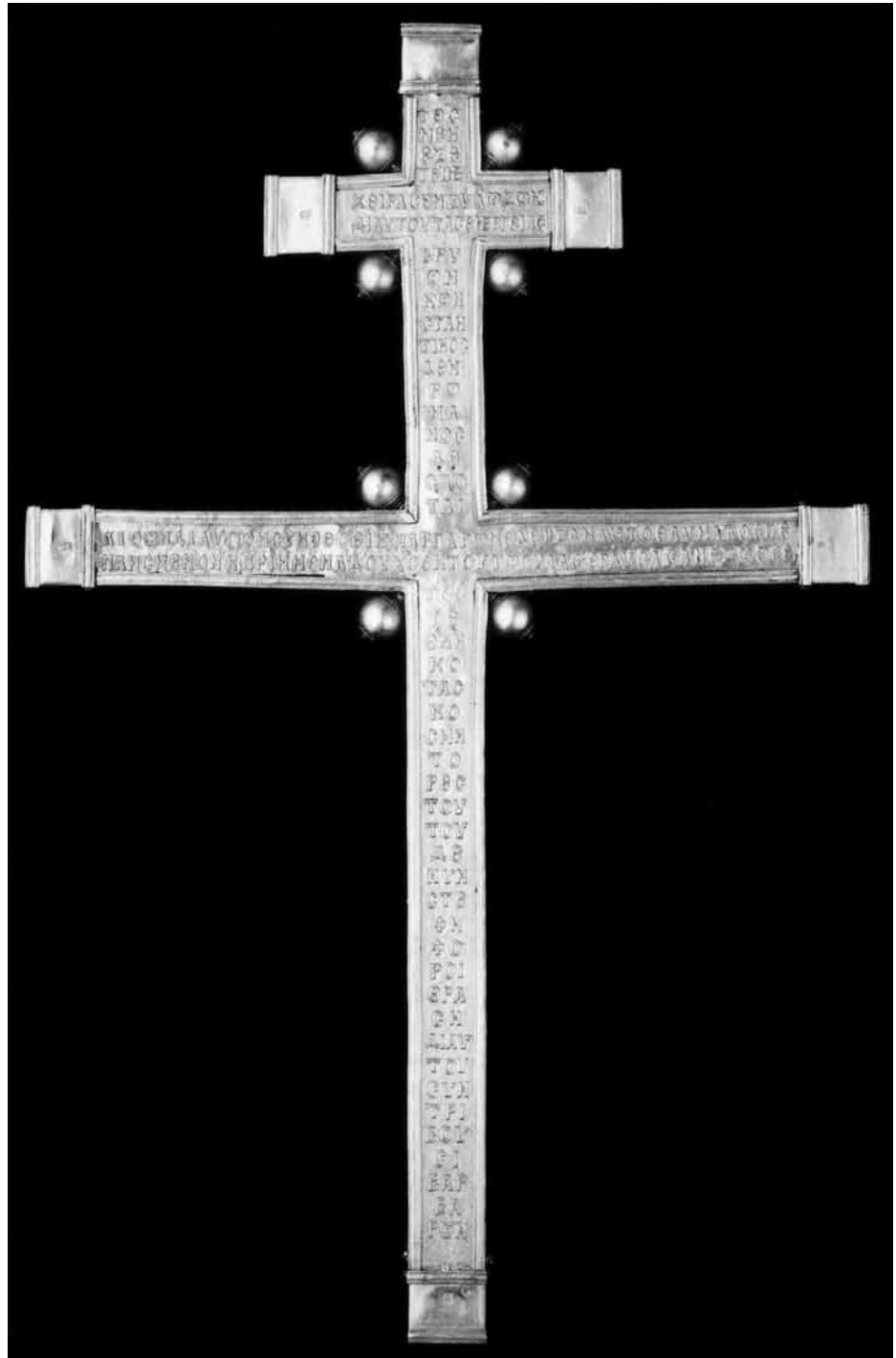


Figure 1. Limburg Staurotheke, cross reliquary, back side with inscription, 945-59, wood, gilded revetment, pearls, and gems, Cathedral, Limburg an der Lahn, Germany. Photo credit: Domschatz and Dözesanmuseum, Limburg.

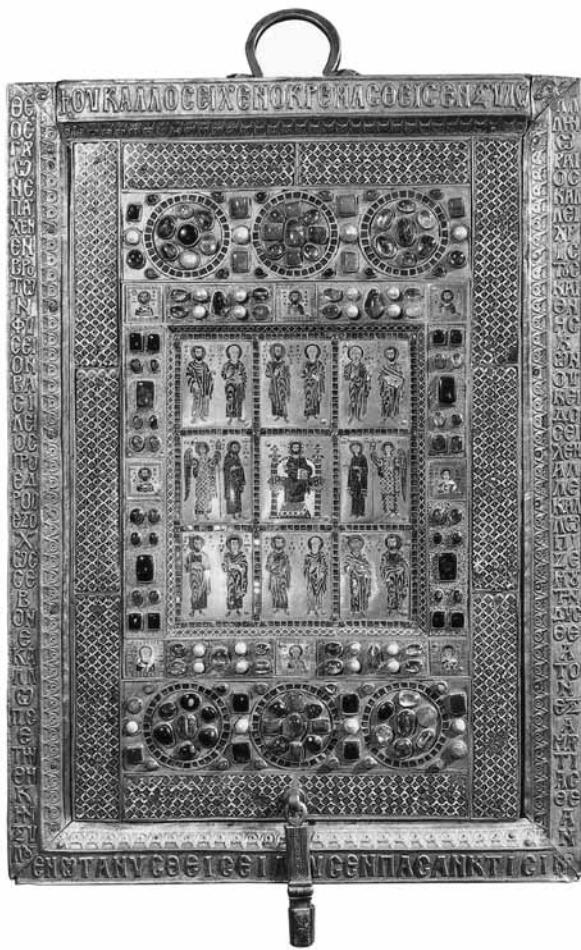


Figure 2. Limburg Staurotheke, case with lid, 968-85, enamel, gilded silver, gems, 48 x 35 x 6 cm. Cathedral, Limburg an der Lahn, Germany. Photo credit: Domschatz and Dözesanmuseum, Limburg.

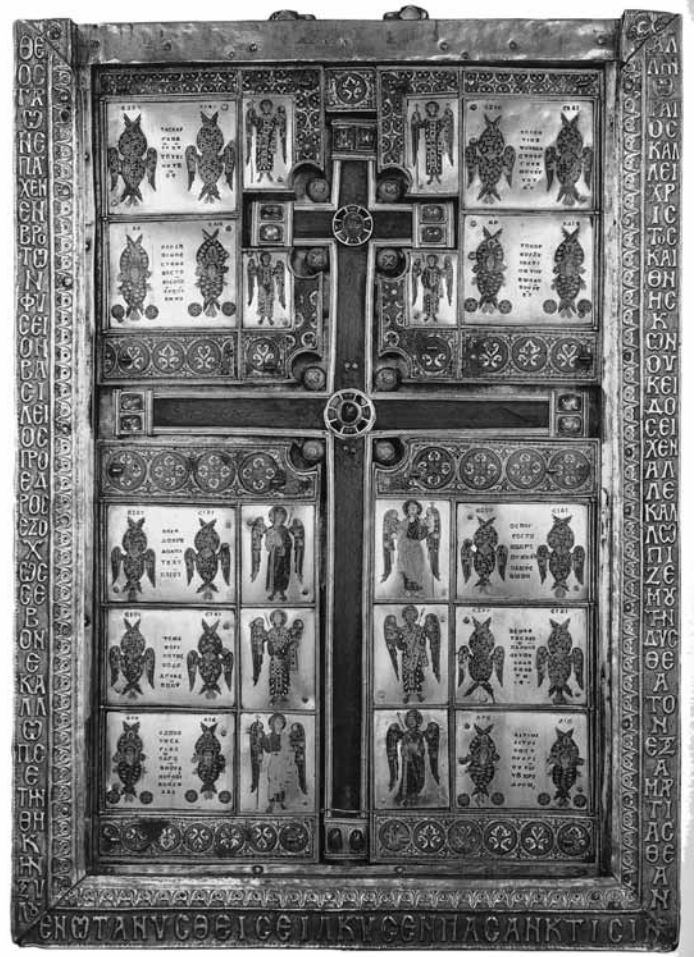


Figure 3. Limburg Staurotheke, case, interior, 968-85, enamel, gilded silver, 48 x 35 x 6 cm. Cathedral, Limburg an der Lahn, Germany. Photo credit: Domschatz and Dözesanmuseum, Limburg.

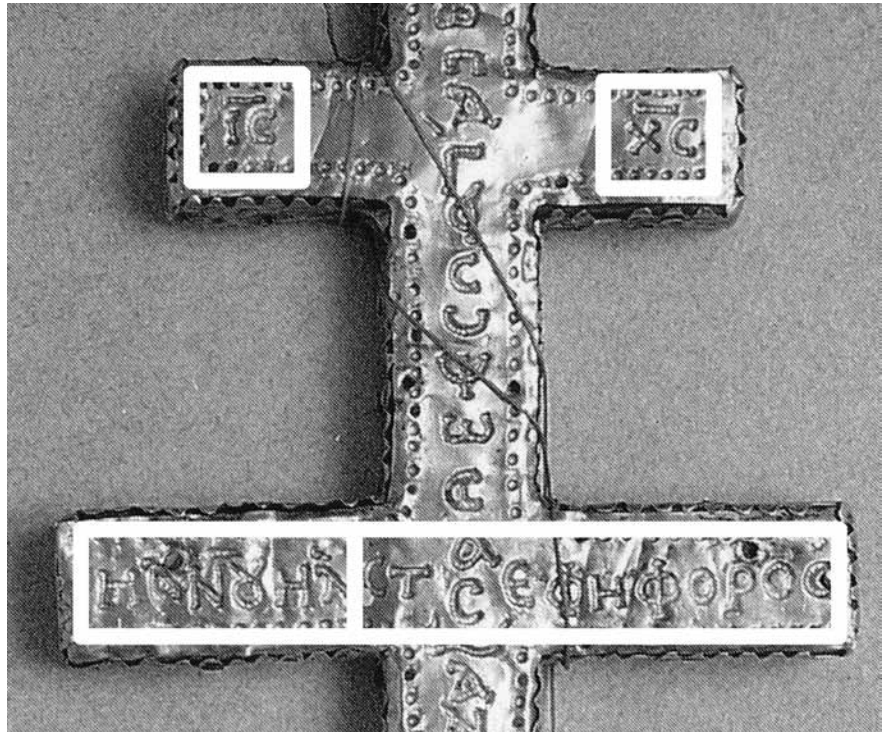
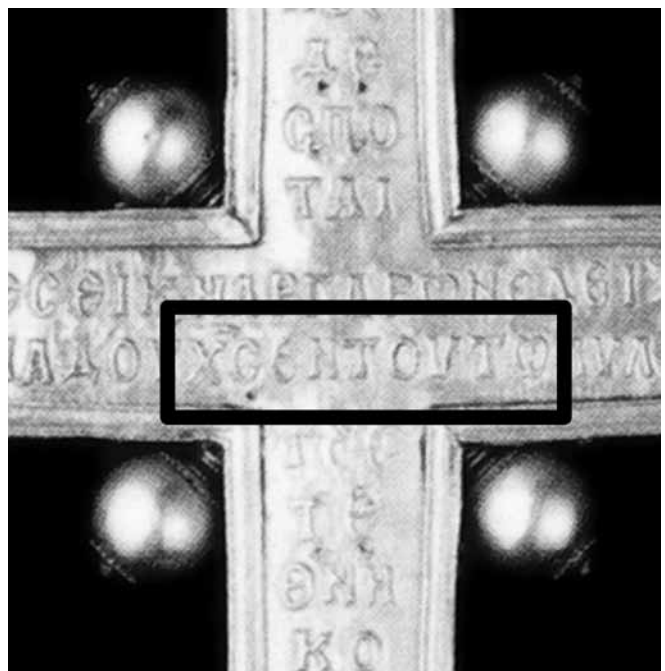
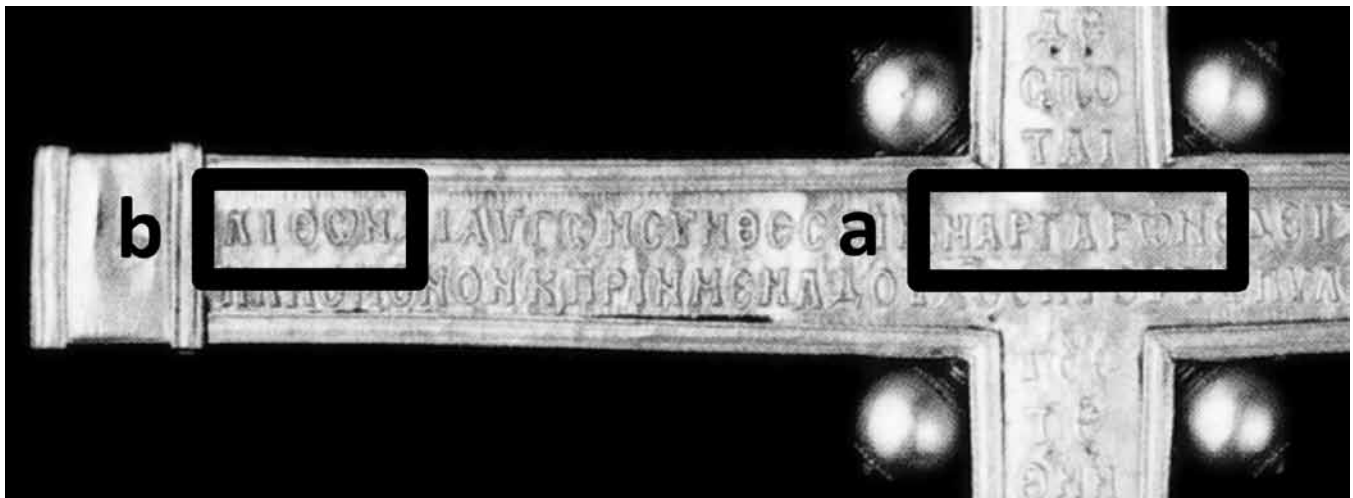
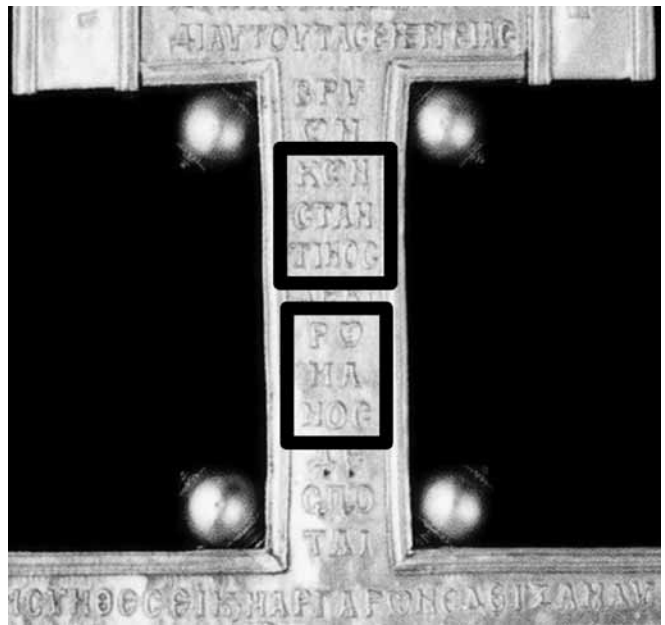


Figure 6. Limburg Staurotheke, cross-reliquary, back side with inscription, detail of names, 945-59, wood, gilded revetment, pearls, and gems, Cathedral, Limburg an der Lahn, Germany. Drawing by Brad Hostetler.

Figure 7. Limburg Staurotheke, cross-reliquary, back side with inscription, detail of the words *margarōn* (a) and *lithōn* (b), 945-59, wood, gilded revetment, pearls, and gems, Cathedral, Limburg an der Lahn, Germany. Drawing by Brad Hostetler.

Figure 8. Limburg Staurotheke, cross-reliquary, back side with inscription, detail of the words *christos en toutō*, 945-59, wood, gilded revetment, pearls, and gems, Cathedral, Limburg an der Lahn, Germany. Drawing by Brad Hostetler.



[facing page, bottom left] Figure 4. Cross of Manuel Komnenos, back side with inscription, twelfth or thirteenth century, wood, gold, and enamel, height 21 cm. Treasury of Notre-Dame Cathedral, Paris, France. After Jannic Durand, “La Vraie Croix de la princesse Palatine au trésor de Notre-Dame de Paris: Observations techniques,” Cahiers archéologiques 40 (1992): page 141, figure 4.

[facing page, bottom right] Figure 5. Cross of Manuel Komnenos, back side with inscription, detail of names, twelfth or thirteenth century, wood, gold, and enamel, height 21 cm. Treasury of Notre-Dame Cathedral, Paris, France. Drawing by Brad Hostetler.