

**Seeing in Stone:  
Recycled Treasures in the Middle Ages**

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**September 2000**

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## Abstract

The use of hardstones with various properties and histories in church objects was an iconographic statement in its own right. This iconography was shaped and manipulated through the new form or use of the object, usually through its new mounts. The pieces discussed contain layers and layers of meaning: religious resonances fitting for liturgical vessels or the political self-presentation of various patrons or institutions, exemplified by Roger II, Frederick II and Suger. Sometimes in investigating the core object conflicts seem apparent, like the use of Islamic vessels in the Church; sometimes a hardstone's provenance could be its most valued feature, other times mounts were designed to mislead the viewer, manipulating the meaning of an object, disguising its origin for iconographic purposes.

These objects were quotations, referring to specific powers or people, their properties either natural or created through craftsmanship, making each one part of a structured iconographic programme. These programmes involved the iconography of religion, the iconography of empire, or both. These hardstones were appropriated to refer to power, be it divine, ancient, royal or Byzantine.

Essay: 10,276

Bibliography: 3662

Total: 17,846

## Acknowledgements

Credit and thanks are due to: Dr. Michael Michael and Patsy Vanags for lending me guidance and books; my parents for their patience and support; my brother Matthew for his computer, photo and cynicism, Charlotte and Guillaume Pilain for their inexhaustible hospitality in Paris, Sarah Jane Raasveld for hers in Utrecht; Anne Steinberg for her interest, for fostering my interest, and for insider help; Theresa Semler for explaining the true meaning of 'schmuck'; Andreas Pampoulides, Julia Collins, and Armellede Laubier-Rhally for making the library so enjoyable, as well as the less frequent readers, Maria Alonso Gorbena and Marina Sajitz, who also put up with barrages of translation requests; June MacKay for letting me pooter about in her office; Norah Edwards for encouraging me to work faster; Warwick University for forcing me to live in Venice for three months-- Prof. Julian Gardner for perhaps unwittingly leading me down the Art Historical path. Marion Nagahiro Englished vital texts; Nicole Gilman provided food for thought, Patrick Sweeney provided vital books; Christie's Education provided vital support.

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## Chapter 1:

### Introduction

Hardstones (pierres dures, pietre dure) are so named because they are hard and durable. This obvious property has resulted in their relative survival-- wood and textiles perish; gold, silver and bronze can be melted and reused. A hardstone object can be smashed or lost shaped, but those are the limits of its transformation. The Medievals often treated old objects as raw materials (hence the melting down of metals); this was true of hardstones, but when reusing them, the limits of convertibility meant the hardstone object itself remained essentially intact: instead the surroundings were changed, be it different mounts or a more radical conversion of function.

These conversions were not random affairs: changes of function necessarily involved changes of meaning. The stone itself could contain, or be lent, meaning. This could be religious-- translucence invokes symbolism regarding light, or political-- porphyry is a traditionally imperial stone. Even where an object's function remains intact, as in Suger's Chalice (Catalogue Number 3), a remounted Alexandrian cup, new mounts and contexts prompt new interpretations. Although many of the objects here were not originally religious, all were converted to ostensibly religious use.

Religion in the Middle Ages was a political as well as spiritual forum, an arena for various monarchs or institutions. These objects, behind religious signification, often contain political resonances. The choice of stone or shape, even of provenance, were iconographic decisions and demands inspection as such. Modern and Medieval viewers have different methods of 'Seeing in Stone'; 'seeing in' is an act of interpretation, here applied to the recycled stone and the politico-religious iconographic decision its reuse represents-- understanding what the Medievals were saying in stone. Heckscher, in his pioneering article on recycled antiquities, referred to them as 'quotations' (Heckscher, 1937, pp.219-20). The implications and intentions behind these hardstone 'quotations' reveal much of the people and civilisation which created them.

Hardstone survival is relative: reading Pliny on the numerous agate vessels in Rome (Ball, 1950, pp.122-23) or Robert de Clari on the wondrous wealth of conquered Constantinople, one perceives the paucity of hardstones compared with the sometime plenitude (Clari, 1939, pp.226-27; more generally Vermeule, 1964, p.18). Many such items were destroyed as recently as the French Revolution, lost objects filling Félibien's engravings of the Abbey of Saint-Denis' Treasury and its old inventories (Félibien, 1706; Montesquiou-Fezensac & Gaborit-Chopin, 1973). It was only fractionally preserved as the Revolution began, as was the Sainte-Chapelle treasury, whose vestiges remain because Louis XVI gave them to the nation in 1791 (Gaborit-Chopin, 1974, p.67).

Those objects commissioned during Suger's abbacy at St.-Denis (1122-51) form the core of the objects to be discussed: several survive as parts of a cohesive artistic programme recorded by Suger in his writings (Suger, 1979). He claims mainly religious motivations, but political ones can be seen lurking, thinly veiled, in the background; these are thrown into high relief through historical inspection of Suger and his abbey's political position during his life. Being both a religious and political patron, Suger is a key to understanding the designs behind the reuse of hardstone objects elsewhere: through comparison of his objects and intentions with others, one begins to unlock the myriad meanings these treasures contain.

## Chapter 2

### Meaning in the Stone

As stated, the stone itself can contain a meaning, sometimes more than one<sup>[1]</sup>. This phenomenon is perfectly exemplified by porphyry, which has a long history of reuse, each occasion being prompted not by inherent aesthetic qualities but by traditional readings of the stone.

Porphyry has long been associated with Empire, largely because of its colour: deep purple was, until the Muslim invasion of the Near East, the most expensive dye. This led to an association with luxury, thence with Empire, via officialdom (Reinhold, 1970). In Rome and Byzantium, legislation limited the use of good purples-- the same went for porphyry, as reflected by the imperial status of the Mons Porphyrites quarries (Reinhold, 1970, p.63)<sup>[2]</sup>. Although Constantine used porphyry, evidently appreciating its resonances, the quarries were closed soon after his reign<sup>[3]</sup>. Constantinople, made the capital only in 330 AD, just before the quarries' closure, had a shortage extending to the imperial family:

The last ancient Emperor buried in a porphyry vessel was Marcian in 457, but such sarcophagi became fashionable for the burial of later emperors and popes who, after the quarries were closed, had to seek spolia (Greenhalgh, 1989, p.131).

Rome's buildings were effectively quarried for their porphyry (Greenhalgh, 1989, p.193; Deér, 1959, p.117); but later Byzantine Emperors had no access to Rome: 'The simple truth is that the Comneni no longer had any porphyry' (Deér, 1959, pp.134-35)<sup>[4]</sup>.

Porphyry's imperial meaning grew after the Eastern Imperial family adopted the name Porphyrogenitos-- 'born in the Purple' or 'Porphyra'. Anna Comnena (1081-1118), herself 'born and bred in the Purple' explains that the Porphyra was a room in the Imperial Palace lined with marble: 'This particular marble is generally of a purple colour throughout, but with white spots like sand sprinkled over it. It was for this, I suppose, that our forebears called the room porphyra' (Comnena, 1982, pp.17 & 219).

The great emphasis laid on porphyry by Imperial families resulted in the stone being used in other contexts, like the Tomb of Frederick II (Cat.1). It was one of two commissioned by Roger II (1095-1154) for the cathedral at Cefalù, one for his corpse, the other for his glory<sup>[5]</sup>. Cefalù gained Roger's special attentions because of its political signification, being a foundation of the schismatic Pope Anacletus (pope: 1130-38). After Anacletus' death Pope Innocent II refused to recognise his rival/predecessor's creations: Roger, to emphasise Cefalù's legitimacy and his own power, fashioned it into a dynastic burial place. He repeatedly promised to be entombed there, but his (relative) peace with the popes after Anacletus' death (and Innocent II's defeat) removed any reasons to support Cefalù-- he focussed on Palermo, where he was eventually buried.

His grandson, the Hohenstaufen Emperor Frederick II, acquired the tombs from Cefalù in 1215 and placed them in Palermo Cathedral: he was buried in one, Henry VI in the other (fig.1). Roger II had already been buried there in another porphyry tomb not nearly as grandiose as his original (Deér, 1959, pp.5-18). There were thus two significant processes of reuse: Roger II's reuse of the porphyry, then his grandson's reuse of the tomb.

Frederick was a native of Sicily, but came to be Holy Roman Emperor through his Hohenstaufen inheritance--it was as an Emperor that he had himself buried in porphyry<sup>[6]</sup>. By the time he was a grown man, Constantinople had fallen and was in Latin hands-- Byzantine mystique and power had dissipated. The contrary was true during Roger II's life: he wanted the Byzantine Empire. Frederick was an Emperor with great aspirations; Roger II began as a Count, with Royal then Imperial aspirations.

The Kingdom of Sicily was another of Anacletus' creations-- Roger had to kidnap a pope to gain its recognition. His island domain consumed most of Southern Italy and some of North Africa, threatening both Rome and Constantinople. Roger's use of porphyry is not aspiring, but reflects his need to reinforce his position. He needed the attributes of kingship, having begun as a mere count:

the parvenu is often eminently equipped to appreciate that which is old and venerable and hallowed by tradition, and to know how to make it serve his own ends (Deér, 1959, p.135).

This was true of many aspects of Roger's rule: the mosaic of Christ's Coronation of Roger II (Sicilian/Byzantine, c.1143, mosaic, 189 x 143.5cm, Church of Santa Maria de Martorana, Palermo (fig.2)) shows him in Byzantine imperial dress-- he wore the accoutrements of a specific, venerable power<sup>[7]</sup>.

The porphyry tomb, with its relief of Christ Pantokrator on the lid, is as much an iconographic statement as his royal vestments. The iconography of the coronation is Byzantine (Grabar, pp.112-20). Roger laid claim not just to Byzantine iconography, but to Byzantine concepts of power. His intention to surpass those concepts is reflected by his visible similarity to Christ in the Martorana mosaic. Although the Greek George of Antioch, Roger's most important aide, commissioned it, the similarity between Roger and Christ is alien to Byzantine representational concepts more served by the partner mosaic showing George kneeling in humility before the Virgin (fig.3)(Kitzinger, 1950, p.31)<sup>[8]</sup>. The Norman influence introduced overt politicisms to religious art, evident even in the Greek admiral's church.

Frederick II was buried not just in the Imperial stone, but in the tomb of his grandfather, an incredible man and empire-builder. They shared the idea of a Sicily-centred empire; Frederick, created Emperor, had to consolidate where Roger conquered, but both wanted to found an essentially secular power for themselves. Roger secured a position as apostolic legate, 'the closest any Western ruler ever came to the ecclesiastical authority held by the Byzantine emperors' (Breckenridge, 1975, p.53). Frederick tried to do something similar but had less success beating the popes into submission: to the Muslims he confronted in his (diplomatic) conquest of Jerusalem, 'It was clear from what he said that he was a materialist and that his Christianity was simply a game to him' (Sibt Ibn al-Jauzi, 1969, p.275). Aspects of this are reflected in his choice of tomb.

Suger's Eagle (Cat.2), a porphyry vase whose silver-gilt mounts transform a simple vessel into the torso of an eagle, also reflects Imperial allusions and delusions. Its conversion emphasises the stone's Imperial nature: the eagle is an Imperial symbol, this one strikingly similar to the repeated eagle motif on the Byzantine Shroud of St. Germain (Byzantine, c.1000, silk, 160 x 121cm, Musée St.-Germain, Auxerre (fig.4)(Byzance, 1992, no.285, p.337)) (Evans, 1932; Wixom, 1987, pp.295-98).

Assertions of empire were far from extraordinary in St.-Denis, especially under Abbot Suger, who during his abbacy cultivated firm links with the French crown. St.-Denis was the traditional burial place of the Kings of France, but when Suger rose to the abbacy he inherited an institution fraught with financial and status problems. The latter were largely incurred through the loss of interest in St.-Denis of King Philip I, who was not buried there; nor did he bequeath his crown to the abbey, as was the tradition (Rezak, 1987, pp.95-98)<sup>[9]</sup>. Suger had the great advantages of being an uncanny businessman and a friend of Louis le Gros, Philip's successor<sup>[10]</sup>. He even managed to convince Louis to hand over his father's crown.

Suger's plans for St.-Denis (after overcoming any financial problems) were filled with aspiration: he succeeded in increasing the status of abbey and abbot by using aspirations as a weapon in his campaign. He was uniquely acquainted with this weapon and used it with precision, converting St.-Denis into a wishing-well of French Royal hopes. By creating an abbey especially targeted at the use (and vanity) of the royal family, Suger managed to lure royal patronage. He created a new form of self-presentation for the French monarchy.

It is wrong to think of this self-presentation purely in terms of Suger seeking sponsorship: he was tailoring the monarchy as much as he tailored St.-Denis. Panofsky writes: 'not without reason has he been called the father of the French monarchy that was to culminate in the state of Louis XIV' (Suger, 1979, p.1). The reining in of the unruly barons, engineered, in Panofsky's mind, by Suger, exemplifies this: during the German Emperor Henry V's invasion, Louis VI went to St.-Denis before facing his enemy. There he prayed with St. Denis' relics then, taking the 'Oriflamme', the French national standard, he asked the French to follow it, not him. This resulted in their obedience and effective submission; Henry V expected a disunited rabble, but shrank away on seeing the French en masse. The standard belonged to Suger's abbey; he had handed it to the King-- it was probably his plan (Suger, 1979, p.5)<sup>[11]</sup>. The porphyry eagle is a telling detail in this all-encompassing programme involving reconstruction, redecoration and politics-- Suger was making the abbey an attribute of French royalty.

Suger's Eagle was primarily liturgical-- it had religious resonances too. Porphyry, the imperial stone, is far from out of place in a liturgical context: its purple can be seen in liturgical use as alluding to

the colour of the wine, hence to the colour of Christ's blood, into which the communion wine is transformed in Catholic thought. The choice of material is specifically linked to its function, a function which, given the vase's early Roman Imperial date, was not its original (Alcouffe et al., 1991, no.31, p.183).

This association of porphyry with wine is especially clear in an ancient fragment, now in a later mount, treasured as part of a Vase from the Wedding of Cana (Roman Imperial Egypt, the mounts German, 1662, red porphyry and silver, 21 x 26cm, Dom- und Diözesanmuseum Hildesheim, Hildesheim, Inv.No. DS 5 (fig.5)(Bernward, 1993, Vol.II, VIII-20)). At Cana, Christ transformed water into wine, reflecting the later Communion transformation of wine into blood (John 2, 1-11). Porphyry is linked directly to Christ's blood in a fragmentary porphyry column base in the Church of Santa Prassede in Rome, revered as the base of the pillar of the Flagellation.

The literal association between the Vase from the Wedding of Cana's colour and its (supposed) content extends to numerous portable altars which have a slab of porphyry as their core (eg. Portable Altar, Hildesheim, c.1160-70, Porphyry, wood, engraved partly gilt copper, vernis brun, 38.5 x 22.9cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 10-1873 (fig.6)(Williamson, 1996, pp.114-15)): the wine/blood motif is invoked by the altar upon which the transformation occurs<sup>[12]</sup>. Form follows function, or rather, the new function follows the stone's form.

A key difference separates the Altar and Eagle from the fragments of vase and column-- the latter are essentially linked by superstition, the link between stone and event being taken at face value<sup>[13]</sup>. With the altars and Suger's Eagle, the link is mental: symbolism, not actual contact. The column and vase fragments involve belief in place of understanding.

Such links between colour and meaning appear in other stones. Rock-crystal recalls the Immaculate Conception: it is hard and impenetrable, yet light penetrates it, just as God conceived Christ while retaining the Virgin's virginity (Ettinghausen, 1975, pp.19-20). Drops of blood appear on the spotted stone on the Portable Altar of Agrigento (Sicilian(?), poplar, brass, champlevé enamel, silver, Hertfordshire puddingstone, silk, mid-13th Century, 3.5 x 34 x 22cm, Museo Diocesano, Agrigento

(fig.7)). Metaphysical conflicts are perceptible in the many sardonyx vessels in the treasuries of San Marco and St.-Denis. Suger himself wrote of the sardonyx in Suger's Chalice,

The sard's red hue, by varying its property, so keenly vies with the blackness of the onyx that one property seems to be bent on trespassing upon the other (Suger, 1979, p.79).

This concept of trespass and battle in a translucent stone was understood in terms of (celestial) conflict, with darkness and light vying for superiority; the stone's translucence reflects God's victory.

Using a chalice with such qualities emphasises God's participation in the liturgy: when the communicant takes wine from a tilted chalice, the wine subsides; the communicant, looking up, sees much more light coming through the chalice while sipping. The effect is more than symbolic: at the moment of partaking of the blood of Christ, the vessel from which that blood is taken glows, seemingly imbued with Godliness, a Godliness extending to the communicant. At St.-Denis, the huge windows would make this even more effective.

The role of light at St.-Denis has been the focus of some scholarly attention: the Medievals there mistakenly believed their patron saint was also the 'Pseudo-Dionysius', a sixth-century religious writer (Suger, 1979, p.18). His writings present a hierarchy of existence involving light as the key factor: at the top is God, in the form of an intelligible yet invisible light; at the bottom, as the hierarchy descends into the sensual realms of humanity and below, is material light. Material light, while sensual, is nonetheless linked to God, a reflection of that invisible light beyond human comprehension-- vision blinds humanity. That miracles are perceived in material light illustrates its reflective nature: God is perceived, though not seen, through it (Suger, 1979, pp.19-24; Zinn, 1987).

Panofsky, the authority on St.-Denis, interpreted all of Suger's works and words in the light of this philosophy, his view remaining unchallenged until Kidson's reductive claim that Suger was only interested in beauty and glitter<sup>[14]</sup>. Dionysian value could arguably be seen in rock-crystal: it is clear (invisible) yet reflects light. The choice of material, the most basic level of construction, especially in the reuse of an older one, is a major artistic choice, an important factor in making these objects 'vehicles of

communication' (Calkins, 1986, p.124); it is hard, with the weight of evidence, to believe such critics as Schapiro and Kidson who claim the stones lacked meaning and were used only for their beauty (Schapiro, 1977, pp.16-17; Kidson, 1987)<sup>[5]</sup>.

## Chapter 3

### Lending Religious Meaning

Even in extreme cases, the form as well as the matter contains meaning: although in all the afore-mentioned objects the hardstone is the core component, the mounts change everything, manipulating its interpretation. Suger's Eagle demonstrates this: a mere vase is transformed into an eagle, a fairly humble vessel converted into a symbol of Empire.

The eagle is also the Evangelist symbol of St. John, already present in St.-Denis' choir, regilded by Suger after being 'rubbed bare through the frequent touch of admirers' (Suger, 1979, p.73). It is a singularly appropriate choice for a liturgical vessel (Verdier, 1982, p.355). Both its manner and material contain religious and Imperial meanings. The vessel has numerous possible interpretations, many of them linked to one another. Added to these various layers of meaning, the Eagle's inscription, quoted in Suger's writings, implies the actual process of transforming the simple vase into a splendid liturgical vessel, transforming a beaker into an eagle, is significant:

This stone deserves to be enclosed in gems and gold.

It was marble, but in these [settings] is more precious than marble (Suger, 1979, p.79).<sup>[16]</sup>

Suger transforms the value of the piece not only in its material worth, but also in its wealth of signification. By lending a simple vessel which 'had lain idly in a chest for many years' (Suger, 1979, p.79) manifold new meanings, Suger reflects in miniature the process of Creation: taking clay and of it creating something much more interesting. It is nothing so specific as the Creation Suger has recalled in this act, but a more general reference to the power of God. It may even be seen as referring to the pseudo-Dionysius, the vase rising in the Divine hierarchy through its new function and form.

While many of Suger's inscriptions can be read as references to this Celestial hierarchy, it is important to keep in mind Kidson's criticisms of Panofsky's theory, especially the simple observation that

Suger, who litters his writings with quotations from many sources, includes no identifiable quotation or even mention of the pseudo-Dionysius' writings (Kidson, 1987, p.5)<sup>[17]</sup>.

Suger's transformations were inspired and important, but not without precedent: the abbey's treasury already contained several examples of reuse, not least such wonders as St. Eloi's Gondola (Cat.4) and the Paten of Charles the Bald (plate: Roman, 1st Century BC or AD; mounts: Court School of Charles the Bald, second half of 9th Century, serpentine, gold, precious stones, green glass, 17cm (diameter), Musée du Louvre, Paris, MR 415 (fig.8)(Alcouffe et al., 1991, no.12, pp.88-91)). Only the reused component remains of the former, its legendary seventh-century mounts now missing; the latter is quite well-preserved.

Serpentine is not the great communication device in the Paten: the fish are the most significant (signifiant) constituent parts. The fish is a symbol of Christ, the Greek word for fish being used as an acronym for 'Jesus Christ, Son of God Saviour'<sup>[18]</sup>. Christ referred to the disciples as 'fishers of men' (Matthew 4, 19); he also fed fish to the Five Thousand (Matthew 14, 17-21). Christ's connection to eating is central to the Communion: the fish, Christ's symbol, are on the Paten, as is the Communion bread, Christ's flesh. Both fish and bread fed the Five Thousand; here they are juxtaposed. This is simple symbolism, the ornamentation, not the stone, invoking extra meaning.

Suger refined this method of decoration, of reinterpreting old treasures through their new contexts. Placing the St.-Denis Crucifixion Crystal (Cat.5), an engraved rock-crystal from Charles the Bald's era, in the decoration of St. Denis' and his companion martyrs' (Sts. Eleutherius and Rusticus) tomb demonstrates this<sup>[19]</sup>. Some would say it was merely a beautiful gem on an important object. Such a curved crystal is useful in a reliquary context because of its properties of magnification (Kornbluth, 1986, pp.61-62). Perhaps extra meaning was derived from its provenance (of which more later). Rock-crystal's religious resonances have been discussed: this remarkably large magnifying crystal, located in a key place, fulfilled both practical and symbolic requirements.

The clarity of rock-crystal and its supposed purity have led to its long being adapted to use in the Christian church<sup>[20]</sup>. Adaptation itself is the crux: the finest crystal vessels were from non-Christian

society. The great crystal carvers were Islamic, and many of the vessels found in Christian liturgical contexts were formerly Islamic.

There are examples of this in the St.-Denis and San Marco treasuries and elsewhere. The Eleanor Vase (Cat.6) from St.-Denis looks neutral but is probably Islamic. Its mounts are Sugerian (although with later alterations and additions) and the crystal itself has no distinctive decorative marks-- the surface is covered with gentle indentations, lending a textured feel to the crystal, permitting the passage of light in a diffracted and interesting way.

The Eleanor Vase has increased interest because its provenance is very Islamic. This provenance has been oft-disputed because of the inscription on the mounts:

HOC VAS SPONSA DEDIT. ANOR REGI. LUDOVICO. MITADOL. AVO MIHI REX. SCQ  
SUGER<sup>[21]</sup>.

The identification of the various donors is clear except that of Mitadulus, perhaps a misheard version of the dialect pronunciation of 'Mathilde', the wife of William IX of Aquitaine, or a phonetic rendering of Imad al-dawla Abd al-Malik ibn Hud, King of Saragossa (ruled 1110-30)<sup>[22]</sup>. The latter is more likely: he and William served together in King Alfonso's army at the Battle of Cutanda in 1120 (Beech, 1995, p.7). It also justifies Suger's build-up in the inscription.

Suger advertised the vessel's Islamic origin, a factor concealed in most ex-Islamic liturgical vessels. Pride in royal provenance may not be the only reason for Suger's mention of Mitadulus' gift. The vessel may represent a victory over Islam in the contexts of Cutanda, Mitadulus' collaboration and even of the vase itself, taken and put to use in the church: it is both vessel and vassal (Beech, 1995, p.8).

Christianising 'heathen' objects was no novelty: the fish on the Paten of Charles the Bald are probably only a few centuries later than the dish, put there in order to Christianise a Roman object. The Paten and Suger's Eagle do not represent Christian victories: they lack any overt link to pantheism; the adaptation of Eastern rock-crystal does. The Eleanor Vase was mounted in the age of the Crusades. Islam was a serious threat to Christian nations and to Christianity itself. It is hard to conceive of indifference in

the use of such vessels. They were not taken from the East merely for their clarity and purity. Some political signification was at work. While many Islamic objects were exported from the Holy Land already with a religious use (for example, reliquaries holding objects of veneration acquired there), others were gifts, purchases and spoils, trophies in a religious war.

Such vessels must have existed then in much greater numbers than those which remain like the Milhaguet Rock-Crystal Ewer (Cat.7), a Fatimid crystal flagon in twelfth-century mounts. It has an Eastern flavour, but is obviously designed for Christian liturgy although its medieval base, with Christian decoration, was added much later (Trésors, 1965, no.368). This, the Eleanor Vase, a Reliquary with figurative Islamic crystal panels (Crystal: Egypt 10th Century; Mounts: Germany c.1200, rock-crystal, silver-gilt, gems, mother of pearl, pearls, coloured glass, 11.3 x 14.8 x 9.7cm, Musée de Cluny, Paris, CL 11661 (Taburet-Delahaye 1989, no.1, pp.35-37)) and the many other objects incorporating Islamic crystal, reveal the vast number formerly extant<sup>[23]</sup>.

Shalem spends many words emphasising the exorcism of Islamic elements in reused crystal (Shalem, 1998). The 'heathen' essence needed to be drowned by Western mounts:

the lavish decoration, which mainly consisted of gold and gilded silver filigree bands studded with precious stones, reduced the Islamic character of these objects. Heavily adorned mountings concealed much of these objects, mainly their bases, necks and mouths (Shalem, 1998, p.132).

This view is countered both by the bland attempt to lend an Oriental feel to the Milhaguet Ewer, and by Ettinghausen, who states: 'there was no specifically Muslim iconography or overt religious symbolism, which would have been offensive to the Christian mind' (Ettinghausen, 1975, p.14). The truth lies farther yet from Shalem's views: in some cases the iconography provided the interest and inspiration for reuse, as in the Milhaguet Ewer, engraved with stately eagles, invoking both St. John and the aspirations of Medieval France (and the Abbey of Grandmont).

A better example of the Islamic design being conducive to Christianisation is the San Marco Treasury's Goat Ewer (Cat.8): its engraved decoration shows two goats crouching amongst tendrils and

palmettes-- adopted by the Christians as the 'ram caught in a thicket by his horns' sacrificed by Abraham in place of his son (Genesis 22, 13). This episode of sacrifice and transformation is of heavy topological significance, especially regarding the Communion and therefore the liturgical role of the vessel.

The treatment of this vessel's Islamic essence is distinct from the others. Its metalwork contains Western scrolls filled with small grotesques, but this patterning brings attention to the crystal carving: rather than making the crystal seem plausibly Christian, its decoration makes the Christian elements plausibly heathen. There is a decorative compromise in the remounting.

One reason for this is an appreciation of splendour. The two elements are, as a whole, greater than the sum of their parts, efficient as an aesthetic entity. The Ewer smacks of material value. The Eleanor Vase, with little decorative style to follow, makes itself distinctly French; the Milhaguet Ewer's mounts, arguably in tune with the core component in its pseudo-Islamic niello-work, are ultimately dull, overwhelmed by their crystal core. There is integrity in the Venetian example. Its decorations complement each other, one set of ornamental animals accentuating the other.

This display of both past and present virtuosity highlights the crystal's exotic nature, the scroll-work adding to this exoticism by gently restating the rhythm of the goats and floral motifs. This accentuates the flagon's clarity and purity. The mounts create a degree of homogeneity between figures and goats respectively, diffusing the foreignness of the crystal. This is religious rather than political, emphasising purity in a liturgical vessel.

The Venetians, however, are always political-- there is more at stake than decoration. Venice occupied a grey area between Italy and Byzantium. It was for a long time part of the Eastern Empire, but managed to cultivate an autonomy, followed by independence, eventually sacking and effectively conquering Constantinople in 1204. Venice was not only caught between two cultures, but two Christianities, the Greek and Latin faiths. The mounts draw attention to the crystal through the echoes in the metalwork. This emphasis of the pattern highlights the exotic, an exoticism infused with meaning-- it is part of a programme showing disparity between the church in Venice and the church elsewhere. The piece manages discreetly to show itself off as an object of worth, one which could only exist in Venice.

Venice sought not to fall under the influence of East or West, but rather to stake out its own cultural territory. As a powerful and wealthy city-state, Venice sought status, a status arguably hindered by the lack of descent from a Roman city, the lack of Imperial heritage. Yet Venice did not desire to be subordinate to Rome. Venice lacked for a long time any major ecclesiastical authority or representation. This was one of the contributive factors leading to the Translatio Sancti Marci, the ninth-century removal of St. Mark's body from Islamic Alexandria (Geary, 1990, pp.88-94).

This 'translation' put Venice on the religious map: an Apostle's relics could be seen as rivalling those of St. Peter in Rome. St. Mark lent Venice heritage and authority (as well as a new share in the revenue provided by pilgrimage)<sup>[24]</sup>. To maintain this new-found influence, Venice cultivated a religious atmosphere discreetly distinct from Rome, yet more Latin than Constantinople, employing tactics similar to Roger II's. Many Venetian objects can thus be seen as politico-religious statements, not least the Goat Ewer.

Just as the Venetian church and state sought to emphasise their autonomy through church decoration, so French churches used their liturgical vessels as weapons in internal feuds. One great argument in the Medieval French Church raged between those clergymen who believed in splendour, like Suger, and those like St. Bernard of Clairvaux who believed in Spartan restraint. Bernard wrote of the former sort:

Money is scattered about in such a way that it will multiply. It is spent so that it will increase. Pouring it out produces more of it. Faced with expensive but marvelous vanities, people are inspired to contribute rather than to pray. Thus riches attract riches and money produces more money. I don't know why, but the wealthier a place, the readier people are to contribute to it. Just feast their eyes on gold-covered relics and their purses will open... There is more admiration for beauty than veneration for sanctity (Clairvaux, 1996).<sup>[25]</sup>

Suger, in his De Administratione, posted a defence against such protestations:

To me, I confess, one thing has always seemed preeminently fitting: that every costlier or costliest thing should serve, first and foremost, for the administration of the Holy Eucharist (Suger, 1979, p.65).

Suger's own description of his uses for luxurious objects is reductive. More is at stake than the fitting nature of the vessels<sup>[26]</sup>. Barely concealed beneath oneupmanship, one perceives political statements aimed into as well as outwith the framework of the church. These passages show the amount of criticism publicly thrown around by church leaders against each other; they show how these objects were in the front line of a battle over the role of religious art in general. Not least amongst the vessels being attacked must have been those splendid, heathen crystals; Suger's inscription, revealing hidden value in the Eleanor Vase, revels in the extra splendour afforded by its Royal provenance, twisting the knife in Bernard.

These objects are political within and without the framework of the Church, as well as being fine liturgical vessels. They are integral parts of multifaceted propaganda programmes, their defiant glory part of arguments both territorial and theological.

## Chapter 4

### Byzantinising

These politico-religious statements are clearer in some of San Marco's non-Islamic vases: the Venetian-mounted San Marco Ewer (Cat.9) is a sardonyx vase made into an elegant ewer by being topped with mounts which alone would form the large part of a ewer. This filigree- and gem-encrusted work shows an amazing amount of creativity, equivalent to Suger's Eagle in its transformation of a simple vessel into a more complex entity. The quality of the vase is itself worthy of mention: few others reflect the ancient lapidary's skills as this, despite the apparent simplicity of shape (Delvoye, 1965, pp.201-02)<sup>[27]</sup>. Its gentle contours are echoed in the stone's concentric patterning on the ewer's one side; the other side has a similar effect to a lesser extent, nonetheless striking. This accentuates the tricks of light played by the vessel.

The general ewer form is of a later invention than the simple, elegant vase at its core. It is comparable in shape to several others like the Goat Ewer in the same treasury or the St.-Denis Ewer (Cat.10); in all these cases, despite occidental precedent, the inspiration is oriental (Alcouffe et al., 1984, p.252<sup>[28]</sup>). This is an extension of the reuse of the Islamic, exoticism being a major cause for the emulation and adoption of Eastern objects. The Goat Ewer's heavy Oriental influence accommodates its Islamic core; the San Marco Ewer also reflects Eastern influences, not least in its use of turquoise.

The Sack of Constantinople created a massive influx of hardstone 'raw' materials-- component parts-- and entire objects for the Venetians. This inundation of Byzantine spolia gave the development of Venetian crafts new impetus. The Byzantine, not the French, example inspired the Venetians to remount old hardstones<sup>[29]</sup>. It is known the Byzantines remounted precious vessels, shown in an account of the Empress Theophanou's death, before which she made a gift to 'the father' St. Euthymius:

Then this worthy queen took from her chest and gave him sacred vessels made of jaspers... And these same sacred vessels the emperor later asked for and had brilliantly decorated, afterwards sending them back to the father (Karlin-Hayter, 1970, p.44).

The San Marco Ewer continues this tradition. Venice's aspirations regarding Constantinople had recently been fulfilled; her new power and empire needed visible justification. Through the use of the Byzantine decorative precedent and the ornamentation of many churches with spolia, not least the Basilica di San Marco itself (fig.9), Venice sought to emphasise and justify Constantinople's submission<sup>[30]</sup>. Venice was acquiring and creating the attributes of power.

The Byzantinised iconography the Venetians formulated was not random. Venice had been Byzantine: the Eastern Empire's influence was already evident in many forms, especially in the churches. This influence was now twisted on its head. Venice displayed the old attributes of Constantinopolitan power in order to express visually the Venetian domination of the Byzantine world while leaving a specifically Venetian signature. The two ewers are attributes of a new 'Eastern' Empire, from both Western and Eastern perspectives<sup>[31]</sup>. The continued use of Byzantine vessels, their remounting, and the use of Islamic vessels displayed the extent of the Venetians' wealth and domains.

The Byzantine tradition also spawned St.-Denis' recycling-- Suger's earlier creation of a similar-shaped ewer reflects his own desire to emulate and surpass the Eastern iconography of power. Back then, Constantinople was still an impregnable, exotic and mysterious power. The city's wealth was legendary, a legend authenticated by the later testimonies of Robert de Clari and other Crusaders (Clari, 1939). This wealth was used as Byzantine propaganda in the West: Anna Comnena's Alexiad lists the vast array of treasures Alexis Comnenus sent to Emperor Henry IV, including one hundred purple cloths and countless other things. Among them were a sardonyx chalice and crystal vase (Comnena, 1982, pp.127-28). That these vessels were given singly, not by the hundred, reflects their worth; that Theophanou gave several to St. Euthymius reflects Byzantine wealth.

These solitary vessels, among the many other gifts, embodied Eastern wealth, especially in the Western perception. This and similar occasions would leave Westerners wondering at the scale of

Constantinopolitan splendour. Suger did not see Constantinople, having to settle for eye-witness accounts of Hagia Sophia's riches (although their worth was concealed from either the witness or Suger (Suger, 1979, p.65))<sup>[32]</sup>.

This type of extraordinary (by Western standards) magnificence and munificence was bound to have an effect on the Western imagery of power. Venice and Sicily were in constant contact and rivalry with the East: their use of Eastern manifestations of wealth and power were not alien, not entirely imported, but were adaptations of an iconography linked to their own powers<sup>[33]</sup>. There was no justifiable contact with St.-Denis, Royal Abbey, burial place of the Kings of France. Perhaps Suger's adoption of an Eastern iconography of power, which elsewhere displayed pointed political aspirations, was a simple stylistic choice.

Those holding that view (eg. Kidson, 1987) underestimate Suger: the iconography he invoked was not without aim. Here it was not targeted against or in conflict with the source of inspiration; instead, Suger borrowed the visual language in part and adapted it to his own specific uses, thereby creating an image designed to complement his new ideas for French Royal power. Suger aspired for his nation and king(s).

Suger's Eagle is the lynch-pin in almost every chapter: the conversion of a vessel made of the Imperial stone into a Byzantine Imperial eagle is one of several aspects of St.-Denis' contents and exterior invoking Imperial power. Among these is the Westwork, an architectural feature introduced by the Carolingians then developed by the Ottonians:

The westwork was the symbol of secular, royal authority, as distinct from the authority of the clergy, who presided over the church at the opposite or eastern end (fig.10)(Crosby et al., 1981, p.17).

This invokes a Western iconography of power. In Suger's mind there was no need to find Eastern and Western decoration incompatible, as he showed by placing in that westwork a 'mosaic which, though contrary to modern custom, we ordered to be executed there and affixed to the tympanum of the portal'

(Suger, 1979, p.47). Mosaic, especially at this period, was linked to Constantinople and its Empire, hence its use in Venice and Sicily<sup>[34]</sup>. It is not used because it is shiny and expensive-- its location in an expressly Imperial architectural feature is a statement, a manifesto on Suger's part, promoting his concept of Kingship and French power. This same recipe resulted in the Byzantine method and Oriental shape but Western style of the St.-Denis Ewer-- its workmanship is clearly not Byzantine in inspiration. Suger takes the manner but not the matter from the East.

This is even more evident in Suger's Chalice (Cat.3): it is impossible to ignore Byzantine vessels as the source (albeit second-hand) of inspiration for Suger. The Theophylactos Chalice (fig.11)(Byzantine, 925-1025, sardonyx, silver gilt, enamelled gold, pearls, precious stones, crystal cabochons, 27.3 x 18cm, Treasury of San Marco, Venice, no.69) is similar in overall shape, whereas the upper part recalls the goblet-style (without legs) chalices like the Two-handled Sardonyx Chalice (fig.12)(Byzantine, 975-1025, sardonyx, silver gilt, enamelled gold, pearls, gems, 11.5 x 20cm, Treasury of San Marco, Venice, no.79) and Sisinnios Chalice (fig.13)(Stone: 1st-2nd Century; Mounts: Byzantine, c.960, agate, silver gilt, 11 x 18.5cm, Treasury of San Marco, Venice, no.83)<sup>[35]</sup>. Interestingly, the Treasury of San Marco, the richest depository of Byzantine vessels in the world, has almost no chalices with both stems and handles-- the handles are superfluous. Suger's Chalice combines both vase forms, taking the Byzantine handles so expressive of wealth and elegance out of context, adding them to a vase type where they serve no purpose<sup>[36]</sup>.

The Chalice's decoration is distinctly Western; most interesting is the roundel on the base, the only survivor of the original five, depicting Christ Pantokrator. As on the Tomb of Frederick II, the Pantokrator is out of place. Despite its Western modelling, it is distinctly Eastern in iconographical terms (Wixom, 1987, p.295).

There is an almost constant Byzantinising prerogative in Suger's artistic programme. Despite patchy workmanship, there are no grounds for Lasko's accusation that 'one cannot help the impression that Suger's patronage is somewhat artificial, as well as ostentatious' (Lasko, 1994, p.243). Suger's commissions are ostentatious, but ostentation is his aim: he displays both Heavenly and, more importantly, Royal power conspicuously through these objects and his abbey. Artificiality is not a conclusion one can

draw: a lack of consistency in workmanship does not preclude consistency in patronage-- and Gaborit-Chopin insists the St.-Denis filigree is distinctive and consistent, although absent from the Eagle (Gaborit-Chopin, 1987, p.291). The mixture of Byzantine and Western elements is evident in most Sugerian objects.

Emulating Byzantine material display was no novelty: the Carolingians and Ottonians had done the same (Panofsky, 1960, pp.43-53). Suger's commissions innovate as well as imitating. The Byzantine aesthetic was not adopted wholesale as a patternbook for power; it was merely quoted. It was through Suger's personal efforts that the French barons were suppressed and a German invasion thwarted (Suger, 1979, p.5; Suger, 1999). The French nation was more dynamic, with more power to wield in European politics: France had shown herself a rival to the Empire. This led to imperial aspirations, aided by the alliance between the Papacy and French throne nurtured by Suger (and St. Bernard). The Byzantine Empire even called upon the French for assistance. This new France almost sacked Constantinople with Roger II of Sicily in 1147 (Curtis, 1912, p.227 & Kitzinger, 1976 (2), pp.310-11). She was an ally worth having, an enemy worth avoiding.

France's increase in power prompted an increase in splendour. St.-Denis was the stage Suger created on which to play out his statecraft, a stage equally for the King to play out his. As such, it needed an individual iconography, hence the inherently Western craftsmanship of the vessels: they imitate the Eastern precedents only in shape and subject. Aspiration and nationalism are at work: the combination of French and Imperial motifs, Suger's visual statement of power, is central to the new streamlined monarchy and Suger's Chalice alike.

The endemic nature of Constantinople's influence in expansionist iconographies is highlighted by its absence in the Victoria and Albert Onyx Vase (Cat.11); this is a simple yet elegant emulation of the Sugerian or Byzantine recycling technique, but is essentially meaningless. The metalwork exists, in the truly Byzantine tradition, merely to complement the onyx core. When a hardstone is used as a quotation, the mounts are its inverted commas; here, they are merely mounts. The simple, restrained bands serve no political agenda, merely showing the degree to which the vase is cherished. Here is a genuine display of

the belief that: 'every costlier or costliest thing should serve, first and foremost, for the administration of the Holy Eucharist' (Suger, 1979, p.65).

Not so the Gniezno Chalice (Cat.12), a Byzantine sardonyx cup mounted in several eras, the earliest being 12th Century Poland (the base and knob)<sup>[37]</sup>. The designs on the knob are the same as roundels on the Gniezno Bronze Doors (Polish, bronze, 2nd half 12th Century, 330 x 170cm, Gniezno Cathedral, Gniezno)<sup>[38]</sup>. These doors show the life of St. Adalbert, to whom the Gniezno Chalice reputedly belonged (Bernward, 1993, Vol.II, p.82). Here the expansionism is Polish, emphasised by the link between the Chalice and St. Adalbert-- he was at first a Bishop of Prague, but left and worked as a missionary in Poland, then more importantly went from Poland to Christianise the heathen Prussians, leading to his death at their hands. The modern reader cannot ignore the political subtext: the tennis which has been played with the Polish and German borders continued for centuries, leading to the Second World War.

Although Adalbert died in 997, the repercussions of his death were still being felt and indeed exploited in the 12th Century. He had almost immediately been canonised, and Gniezno had been raised to be an archbishopric by Otto III. This is referred to subtly in the doors' depiction of the investiture of Adalbert as Bishop of Prague by Otto II, a reference to episcopal authority through Gniezno's promotion by Otto III (St. Pasierb, 1980).

The sardonyx is here used as a symbol of Imperial consent and support. It may have been a gift given to Gniezno at its 'promotion' by Otto III and if so, could have come from Constantinople in Theophanou's (Otto II's wife's) dowry (Różycka Bryzek, 1992, p.365 FN). The importance of Byzantine iconography in Poland, resulting in the Chalice's decoration and veneration reflected in its (mythological?) provenance, was cemented by Otto III's coronation of Boleslas the Brave of Poland with his own diadem-- a Byzantine act conferring authority, giving Poland the kudos to be an international power (Różycka Bryzek, 1992, pp.360-61). Adalbert was the source of all this, the importance of his death gaining momentum, adding prestige and very real authority to the Poles, hence his continued influence almost two centuries later. All this is charted by the Chalice, 'à la fois oeuvre d'art, document

historique et symbole des aspirations politiques de la Pologne à la fin du XIIe siècle' (Stiennon, 1961, p.467)<sup>(39)</sup>.

## Chapter 5

### Other Resonances

The Gniezno Chalice refers to Byzantine power, to Ottonian power (although it was very Byzantinised during Otto III's reign) and to a martyr's power. The common theme is power, but the Poles perceived this through provenance as well as Byzantine style. Constantinople was not the only inspiration for references to power. Other powers, both past and present, were 'quoted', as in Suger's programme which included the St.-Denis Crucifixion Crystal and Dagobert's Throne (fig.14)(French, late 8th-9th Century, later additions, cast bronze, formerly gilt, 104 x 82cm, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles, Paris)(Alcouffe et al., 1991, no.5, pp.63-68).

Dagobert's Throne looks Byzantine or Classical in style, but its significance lies in its provenance, not its form. It recalls early French royal power; Suger intended it to be a prop in the coronation ceremonies where the King would receive homage (Rezak, 1987, p.98; Suger, 1979, p.73)<sup>[40]</sup>. This would increase the stature of his abbey (by making it feature in the coronation ritual) and the King, who would have the oaths of his subjects while sitting on the throne of an early King of France, emphasising the ancient nature of his power. Suger hints at this when discussing the Throne's restoration:

On it, as ancient tradition relates, the kings of the Franks, after having taken the reins of government, used to sit in order to receive, for the first time, the homage of their nobles (Suger, 1979, p.73).

He is relating the French image of authority to St.-Denis, but also to a specific pre-Carolingian era of French kingship. That Dagobert was pre-Carolingian is a reminder that Charlemagne was a French royal before becoming Emperor. The use of the Throne hints at Suger's Imperial aspirations for the French monarchy, or at least his desire to present the monarchy as Imperial, not merely regal.

The Crystal has a similar effect, being linked to Charles the Bald in its style and possibly provenance (perhaps some shred of evidence remained in Suger's day linking the stone to Charles; perhaps it was removed from an object which made the connection obvious) but also in its position on the martyrs' chasses. Suger's interest in resurrecting reminders of the patronage of that Carolingian Emperor is emphasised by his extra ornamentation of the Main Altar, 'where there was only one beautiful and precious frontal panel from Charles the Bald, the third Emperor' (Suger, 1979, p.61). His discussion of the lavishness of this redecoration reveals an interest not just in the altar but in its provenance-- it recalls St.-Denis' French Imperial patronage. The Crystal's location is as revealing as his writing.

Awareness of the Sugerian (or Venetian) system facilitates the modern viewer's interpretation of less documented objects. The Lebuin Gospels (Cat.13) is a Carolingian manuscript whose binding is ornamented with walrus ivories, gems and silver gilt rosettes and filigree. Its gems are very significant, not least the chalcedony Bacchus head in the centre of the cross. The various decorative elements recall various different periods and styles: the ivories recall Carolingian book-binding traditions. This is doubly relevant in the case of the Lebuin Gospels: St. Lebuin himself lived during the Carolingian period (Snijder, 1932, p.7). The manner of cover decoration is linked to this supposed provenance. Less comprehensible are the pseudo-cameos on the cover. Uncertainty still clouds their origin and analysis; they are thought to be Merovingian. On the cover they are strange go-betweens-- if Merovingian, one could interpret them as being included as Carolingian; possibly they were added merely because they were valuable<sup>[41]</sup>.

The binding's central figure is a Bacchus bust, a very real example of the craft the Merovingian artisans were trying to imitate, making the pseudo-cameos more meaningful in its presence. To the untrained Medieval eye, the objects may have blended together as examples of antique art; maybe the Bacchus highlighted the 'pseudo' nature of the cameos. Their juxtaposition refers to the Antique, to the 'Classical'. Attention to the Classical was evidently whimsical, hence the use of Bacchus as Christ.

The chalcedony head may, however, have been used, like the ivories, to invoke the Carolingian tradition. Its juxtaposition with the pseudo-cameos may reflect a belief that it, too, was Carolingian. Even

if it were believed Classical, that would not preclude its reuse in a manner considered Carolingian by the binders, reinforcing once more the provenance of the manuscript within.

The Bacchus makes a good Christ inasmuch as the iconographical traits (a child, vine leaves) are compatible with both Christ and Bacchus. There is a practicality in its reuse in this context. It is not a quotation referring to the similarity between the two, but is a way of putting a good stone to good use. It is a valuable bust, of (then) wondrous workmanship, as is demonstrated perfectly by its contrasting with the pseudo-cameos-- it is 'realistic'.

This is not the only use of an antique bust representing Christ-- the Herman Cross (Bust: Roman, 1st Century AD; Composition: German, 1150 with later repairs and additions, wood, engraved and filigree copper gilt, bronze gilt, rock-crystals, lapis lazuli, 41 x 28cm, Erzbischöpfliches Diözesan-Museum, Cologne) uses a portrait bust of Livia as the head of the crucified Christ (Ornamenta, 1985, Vol.I, B9, pp.157-58; Das Reich, 1992, Room 14, Case 4, pp.429-31). These antiquities are used in part because they are 'lifelike'. The stones are also valuable, materials fit for the representation of Christ, but difficult to carve to the degree of accuracy the ancients had. Snijder even posits that 'every gem, every amulet presented, stands for a victory of the Church, a triumph of faith scored over superstition' (Snijder, 1932,p.18).

The remounting of old hardstone objects continued through the Renaissance, but the resonances became diluted: the Renaissance, a rebirth of the 'Classical', necessarily interpreted the objects in a different, detached, archaeological sense. The rediscovery of meaning deprived many of the pieces of additional resonances. On the blurred borderline between Medieval and Renaissance is the Ste.-Chapelle Choral Baton (Cat.14), a remounted bust of the Emperor Constantine, put in new mounts between 1363 and 1368. Its interpretation depends on how much was known of the piece's origin. If Charles V, who commissioned the new mounts from Hennequin du Vivier, knew the bust was a portrait of Constantine, then it is a simple reuse of the first Christian Emperor's image; the bust may be another 'realistic' Christ, holding a crown of thorns and cross (the crown now lacks thorns and the cross is lacking entirely).

The former theory is supported by the bust's possibly being a copy of a statue in Constantinople of that Emperor. In the statue, the rays coming out of the Emperor's head were in fact nails from the True

Cross found by Constantine's mother. Jean Ebersolt believes the crown on the Baton refers to that, the cross in Constantine's hand to the Crucifix' discovery during his reign (Ebersolt, pp.25-26). Yet Ebersolt thinks the alterations performed at Charles V's request merely reiterated the original Byzantine composition-- its signification was already lost.

Hennequin's silver-gilt drapery, discordant with the cuirassed agate figure, hints at the present composition being new (in c.1368). The bust has been viewed according to (relatively) recent tradition as St. Louis, the two attributes references to relics he managed to secure for France (of the True Cross and a thorn) (Ebersolt, 1929 discusses but dismisses the idea). Probably, the bust was originally from a consular sceptre; that tradition may have been loosely continued, Constantine now representing Charles himself (Babelon, 1900, p.189; Gaborit-Chopin, 1974, p.79). The stone, a grey agate, gives no clues. Charles V's collecting habits disclose an early 'Renaissance' format (Gaborit-Chopin, 1996); this piece can be seen straddling the gap between Medieval and Renaissance. The modern viewer is left stranded, unsure whether to look at it as a meaningful Medieval piece or a Renaissance piece celebrating the first Christian Emperor-- taken at its original face value, its original meaning 'reborn'. The most recent recycled object thus proves itself no easier to decode. It is impossible to know from where the 'quotation' is taken.

The analysis of this last piece seems to lack any conclusion, but in fact shows the vast number of interpretations this and the other pieces allow. Each is valid, as demonstrated best by Suger's Eagle: the interpretations are not exclusive of each other. These objects, sometimes dismissed as mere objets d'art, contain layers of meaning, some lost to oblivion, but each revealing the Medieval mentality.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

The Medievals inhabited a world filled with references, reminders and overtones of Divinity, manifestations of God in things. Nature spoke to them heraldically: lions or nut-trees were more than they seemed; griffins were just as real as lions because, like them, they were signs of a higher truth (Eco, 1986, p.53).

The religious objects discussed illustrate a facet of Umberto Eco's 'heraldic' view of the world. Sometimes this view includes the territorial as much as the ethereal. Shade upon shade, layer upon layer of resonance coexist in the same object.

Marshall McLuhan said, 'The medium is the message' (McLuhan, 1996, p.7). This was truer (though in a different sense) in the Middle Ages. Each hardstone discussed speaks tomes through its material and mount. The disjointed construction of these pieces, sometimes stretching over a millenium, tells a story; importantly, there is usually a moral. Meanings and functions, probably relatively simple at the inception of each core object, were instilled and accrued, twisted through reuse.

If one looks at these objects 'heraldically', contemplating symbolisms hidden in the fabric of each vessel, one can discern the source and intention of each quotation. Suger left more evidence, written or otherwise, than other Medieval patrons; this allows the modern viewer to 'see in stone' and thereby analyse the intended message. The Sugerian system was strange only in the survival of Suger's text; the same analytical process, despite the lack of primary sources, can be extended to Venetian, Sicilian and other objects: they are brought to life; so too are the men, manifestos and mentalities which produced them.

## Glossary

**agate:** variety of hardstone, often grey in colour.

**cameo:** engraving technique by which the desired shape is sculpted in relief, as opposed to **intaglio**.

**chalcedony:** translucent hardstone variety.

**enamel:** decorative technique involving the application of glass to metal-- when melted they bond.

The reserve in **champlevé** enamel is hollowed out in the metal's surface; in **cloisonné** metal strips applied to the surface form the reserve's borders.

**glyptic:** the **lapidary**'s art, as seen in **cameos** and **intaglios**.

**lapidary:** stone- or gem-cutter.

**mosaic:** small pieces of stone or coloured glass applied to a surface to form a pattern or picture.

**onyx:** very dark variety of hardstone.

**porphyry:** prestigious purple stone of which no natural source was known in the Middle Ages.

**sardonyx:** hardstone like **onyx**, but with light-coloured shapes within, which lends great translucency.

**spolia:** booty, spoils of war.

## Notes

- [1]The Medievals believed stones to possess magical properties, as discussed in eg. Magnus, 1967. This aspect is too nebulous to be discussed here.
- [2]Regarding legislation limiting the use of purples, see especially Reinhold, 1970, p.65. Mons Porphyrites was the only known source of porphyry in the ancient world.
- [3]Reinhold places the closure of the quarries in the mid-4th century AD (ibid, p.63); others give a mid-5th century date (Butters, 1996 reviews both possibilities).
- [4]Deér states that the last imperial use of porphyry was during the reign of Basil I (867-86) (ibid, p.134).
- [5]Regarding Roger's life, see Curtis, 1912, a rollicking good read. Deér, 1959 gives much concise information about him; also Matthew, 1998, especially pp.31-61.
- [6]Regarding the life of Frederick, see Cleve, 1972 and Abulafia, 1992, although the former is superior: Abulafia tries too hard to 'debunk' Frederick and has shoddy textual annotations.
- [7]Although many works discuss this mosaic, the most comprehensive are Kitzinger, 1950 and idem, 1990, pp.313-16 (p.15 on dating of church). Also, Grabar, 1936, pp.112-20 on coronations by Christ, p.120 on this one.
- [8]Byzantine art was political (see Cutler, 1995), but this crosses the line.
- [9]On Suger's financial resuscitation of St.-Denis, see Suger, 1979, pp.8-10; also Frankl, 1960, especially P.3.
- [10]On his virtuosity as a businessman, see Suger, 1979, especially p.59 and Hanning, 1987, p.146.
- [11]Similar tactics lay behind the miracle of the donation of the rings (Suger, 1979, p.55). Suger, 1999 gives important accounts of the battles against the barons and in part reveals his bellicose opinions and Actions.
- [12]Another is the Portable Altar, Hildesheim, c.1000, oak and other wood, porphyry, engraved and gilt silver, niello, 26 x 10.5cm, Dom- und Diözesanmuseum Hildesheim, Hildesheim, Inv.No. DS 26 (fig.15) (Bernward, 1993, Vol.II, VII-22 (pp.478-79)).

[13]The myriad other vases reputedly from Cana tend to be alabaster, eg. the Cana Vase, Alexandria, 1st Century AD, alabaster, 46.5 x 39.5cm, Ev.St. Servatii Domgemeinde, Quedlinburg (fig.16)(Bernward, 1993, Vol.II, VI-49). See also regarding Cana vases Vogüé, 1853; The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1913, Vol.III, pp.226-27; Vila da Vila, 1983, esp. p.165.

[14]The challenge, in Kidson, 1987, will be discussed below.

[15]Calkins, 1986, p.121 gives the opposite view, finding meaning in everything.

[16]See also Alcouffle et al., 1991, no.31, pp.183-84.

[17]Kidson says the same of John Scotus, who translated the writings (Idem, 1987, p.5).

[18]ICHTHYS (rough transliteration) standing for Iesous Christos Theou Yios Soter (The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol.VI, p.83).

[19]The theory was first put forward in Montesquiou-Fezensac, 1954. There is a conclusive inventory entry for the crystal as part of the 'Tabernacle', Montesquiou-Fezensac & Gaborit-Chopin, 1973, Vol.I, Item 200, part 69, p.227.

[20]Pliny, well known in the Middle Ages, discussed the purity of rock-crystal (Ball, 1950, p.125). Certainly Theophilus believed him (Theophilus, 1963, p.189); Albertus Magnus, on the other hand, writing a century after Suger, believed that crystal's inability to float proved that it was not merely permanent ice, but contained impurities, like earth, despite its clarity (Magnus, 1967, p.12).

[21]Suger's account of the vase gives a fuller rendering of the inscription: 'Hoc vas sponsa dedit Aanor regi Ludovico, Mitadulus avo, mihi rex, Sanctisque Sugerus' (Suger, 1979, p.78).

[22]On 'Mathilde': Verdier, 1982, pp.353-54; the latter interpretation was convincingly suggested in Beech, 1995, picking up on doubts raised in Gaborit-Chopin, 1987, p.293, note 34.

[23]Shalem, 1998, no.74 gives a 13th Century German origin to the ensemble (no.74). Shalem, 1998 contains a catalogue of many extant Islamic works found in Western church treasuries, underlining the point.

[24]See Brown, 1996, especially the earlier chapters.

[25]Many authors point out Bernard's appreciation of (temptation by...) the art he here criticises (eg. Eco,

1986, p.7).

[26]Eco, 1986, pp.13-15 & 44-51 writes about the superficiality of Medieval art: 'Immediacy and simplicity characterised the medieval love of light and color' (p.44).

[27]See also Byzance, 1992, p.289 on the superiority of ancient stone-cutters.

[28]This mentions Hahnloser, 1971, Plate CXXVIII, an assembly of photographs comparing San Marco ewers to Eastern vessels.

[29]Some will be mentioned below; a modest example is the Fluted Sardonyx Cup (Byzantine, 9-10th Century, sardonyx, silver gilt, 16.6 x 14.5cm, Pitti Palace: Museo degli Argenti, Florence, No.556) in Piacenti Aschengreen, 1967, p.26 & p.135, no.108.

[30]See Demus, 1955 on the use of spolia pieces as stylistic precedents.

[31]See eg. Perry, 1977, p.40, note 52 on the occasional public display of the vessels.

[32]Runciman, 1966, p.11 discusses Suger's 'espionage' on Hagia Sophia.

[33]Hence Demus, 1970 calls Chapter 4 'Provincial Art', referring especially to Sicily and Venice, Pp.121-61.

[34]Demus, 1970, p.19: 'Mosaic... was seen as the imperial art par excellence and was therefore used by secular potentates, such as the kings of Sicily or the doges of Venice, and ecclesiastical ones such as the popes, who wanted to compete in some way with the Byzantine emperors'. With Suger there is more emulation than competition.

[35]Hahnloser, 1971, no.40, pp.58-59; no.56, pp.66-67; no.57, p.67.

[36]A notable exception is the Romanos Chalice with Handles (fig.17)(Stone: 1st Century BC or AD; Mounts: Constantinopolitan, 959-63, sardonyx, silver gilt, cloisonné enamel, glass cabochons, 25 x 28cm, Treasury of San Marco, Venice, no.70). Its handles, however, are not parts of the later mounts, but an integral part of the ancient hardstone core (Hahnloser, 1971, no.42, pp.60-61).

[37]A simpler name for the So-Called Adalbert Chalice from Tremessen-- Bernward, 1993, Vol.II, no.II-34, p.82.

[38]See Walickiego, 1956, Vols. I & III-- Volume III shows photographs where the first contains essays; also Stiennon, 1961.

[39]The quote is about the Bronze Doors.

[40]See also Greenhalgh, 1985, pp.188-89 on ritual as central to iconographies of power.

[41]The creators of the binding evidently valued the pseudo-cameos, as is shown by their central position. Another example of their worth is the central location of another pseudo-cameo on the Shrine of Saint Maurice (Undiho and Ello, cloisonné enamel, semi-precious stones, 7th Century, 12.5 x 20.6 x 6.6cm, Abbaye de Saint-Maurice-d'Agaune, Switzerland), in whose case they must have been of relatively recent manufacture.

## Catalogue

### 1. The Tomb of Frederick II

Sicilian, before 1145, porphyry, 143 x 236 x 92cm (with baldaquin: 365 x 360 x 245), Palermo Cathedral, Palermo.

The size of the tomb's monolithic trough is formidable, especially as the product of an age in which porphyry was in short supply. Medallions on the lid show the four Evangelist symbols, two on each side, with Christ Pantokrator between them on one side, the Virgin and Child on the other. A Byzantine style crown and imitation lion-handle are engraved at one end, a cross and rosette at the other. The tomb is reminiscent of ancient tombs in its use of porphyry and the lion supports, although their modelling and composition is extremely medieval. It was one of two originally made for Roger II at Cefalù; Frederick II later moved both to Palermo, taking one for himself.

Exhibited:

Andaloro, 1995 (1), pp.33-35.

Literature:

Deér, 1959, pp.1-23; 46-69; 127-36; 170-76.

Herklotz, 1994, p.326.

Andaloro, 1995 (2), p.25.

## 2. Suger's Eagle

Vase: Roman Imperial (Egypt?); Mounts: St.-Denis, before 1147, porphyry, silver gilt, niello, 43.1 x 27cm, Louvre, Paris, MR 422.

An inscription on the neck reads: INCLU[di] GEMMIS LAPIS ISTE MERE[t]UR ET AVRO MARMOR ERAT SED IN HIS MARMORE CARIOR EST.

The silver gilt was cast and carved. There is great finesse in the feathering. Suger mentions both the vase and this inscription in his writings. The Byzantine design is comparable to the Shroud of St. Germain (Byzantine, c.1000, silk, 160 x 121cm, Musée St.-Germain, Auxerre), possibly no coincidence (Evans, 1932). The Eagle was one of several treasures from the Abbey of St.-Denis put into the Bibliothèque Nationale in 1793, during the French Revolution.

Exhibited:

Alcouffe et al., 1991, no.31, pp.183-87.

Literature:

Félibien, 1706, p.544, Plate IV (Item EE)

Conway, 1915, p.118 & 140.

Evans, 1932.

Swarzenski, 1967, no.152, p.65, figs. 336-37.

Montesquiou-Fezensac & Gaborit-Chopin, 1973, Vol. I, no.28, p.150; Vol. III, pp.42-43.

Suger, 1979, pp.79 & 222.

Verdier, 1982, p.355.

Verdier, 1987 (1), p.180.

Gaborit-Chopin, 1987,

Wixom, 1987, pp.295-98.

Lasko, 1994, pp.242-43 & cover.

### 3. Suger's Chalice

Stone: Alexandria (?), c.2nd Century BC; mounts: St.-Denis, before 1147 & 19th Century, sardonyx, silver gilt, gems, pearls, glass, 19 x 10.8cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection C-1.

An inscription and other details have been lost in the various stages of repair and reconstruction. The handles and gems have been altered.

The Chalice's bowl is of superb quality, hence its ancient attribution-- it sent Suger into raptures over 800 years ago (Suger, 1979, p.78). The ancient stonecutters were superior to their Byzantine counterparts (see Cat.10). The sardonyx' luminosity is complimented by the mounts' almost endemic use of filigree and gems, making the whole Chalice shimmer. Its Byzantine inspiration extends to iconography-- the Pantokrator is shown on the base, albeit with Western modelling (Wixom, 1987, p.295). Deposited at the same time as the Eagle, it was stolen along with St. Eloi's Gondola (Cat.4) from the Bibliothèque Nationale, reappearing in the early 20th Century, having passed through the Towneley collection and suffered minor alterations in the stones, medallions and handles.

Exhibited:

Wixom, 1967, no.III-13, pp.70-71 & 353-54.

Crosby et al, 1981, no.25, pp.108-11.

Alcouffe et al., 1991, no.28, pp.173-76.

Evans & Wixom, 1997, no.296, pp.457-58.

Literature:

Félibien, 1706, p.541, Plate III, Item R.

Conway, 1915, p.143.

Montesquiou-Fezensac & Gaborit-Chopin, 1973, Vol.I, no.71, pp.164-65; Vol.III, pp.57-59.

Verdier, 1974, p.700.

Suger, 1979, pp.79 & 220-21.

Calkins, 1986, p.124

Verdier, 1987 (1), p.180.

Gaborit-Chopin, 1987, p.286.

Wixom, 1987, pp.294-95.

Verdier, 1993.

Lasko, 1994, p.242.

#### 4. St. Eloi's Gondola

6th Century (?), green aventurin, 5.8 x 22.7 x 8.5, Cabinet des Médailles, Paris.

Any (7th-century?) mounts are now lost.

The use of jade, little known in antiquity, prompted Conway, sceptical of the Gondola's aesthetic interest, to suppose its value lay in rarity and curiosity (Conway, 1915, pp.126-27). There is some debate as to whether or not this vessel is the one formerly mounted by St. Eloi-- with Suger's Chalice, St. Eloi's Gondola was stolen from the Cabinet des Médailles; this is probably the same vessel deprived of its 'verroterie cloisonnée' mounts (Suger, 1979, pp.79 & 219). Panofsky carelessly dismisses this idea by comparing the shapes of the vessel to Félibien's illustration without looking close enough (Suger, 1979, p.218; Félibien, 1706, Plate IV, Item CC; Alcouffe et al., 1991, p.154). The Gondola's extra curves in the engraving are of a different texture to the bowl-- they were mounts and need not have followed the shape of the stone.

Exhibited:

Crosby et al., 1981, no.23, p.106.

Alcouffe et al., 1991, no.23, pp.152-55.

Literature:

Félibien, 1706, p.543, Plate IV, Item CC.

Chabouillet, 1858, p.54.

Conway, 1915, pp.126-27.

Babelon, 1897, no.374, p.211.

Montesquiou-Fezensac & Gaborit-Chopin, Vol.I, no.74, pp.165-66; Vol.III, pp.60-61.

Suger, 1979, pp.77-79; 218-19.

Verdier, 1987 (1), p.180.

Wixom, 1987, p.302.

## 5. The St.-Denis Crucifixion Crystal

Court School of Charles the Bald, c.970, rock-crystal, silver gilt (modern), 15.8 x 10.3cm, British Museum, London, MLA 55,3-5,1.

The crystal is scratched and flawed; there are drill-holes in its sides.

The rock-crystal adorned the Tabernacle of the Tombeau des Corps Saints, the composite centre-piece of Suger's St.-Denis, repository of the bodies of Saint Denis and his companions Saints Rusticus and Eleutherius. The Crystal was converted into a reliquary after the Tombeau's destruction (as in Félibien, 1706, Plate III, Item D). During the French Revolution it was sold (1797), later bought from John Webb (Windus Sale) by the British Museum in 1855, but only linked to St.-Denis by Montesquiou-Fezensac in 1954 (Montesquiou-Fezensac, 1954).

The design is very similar to the Prayer Book of Charles the Bald (Court School of Charles the Bald, 846-69, manuscript, 13.5 x 11cm, Schatzkammer der Residenz, Munich, no.4)-- even the stomach leans the wrong way. Charles the Bald cultivated great links with the Abbey of St.-Denis and probably gave this crystal as a gift. Another comparable piece in the Abbey's former treasury is the St.-Denis Sacramentary (Ivories: Court School of Charles the Bald, 870-75; Manuscript: Arras, Mid-11th Century; cover: France, 9-17th Centuries, parchment, gold, walrus ivory, precious stones, pearls, silver, wood, 31.5 x 25.2cm, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Ms. Lat. 9436), whose St. John and the Virgin are very close to the crystal's. Most other crystals of this period are of questionable quality; despite criticism of the craftsman's skills, this is one of the greatest Carolingian rock-crystals (Dalton, 1915, p.80; Babelon, 1902, p.30).

Exhibited:

Crosby et al., 1981, no.24, p.107.

Alcouffe et al., 1991, no.17, pp.116-18.

Literature:

Félibien, 1706, pp.540-41, Plate III, Item D.

King, 1885, pp.85-86.

Babelon, 1902, p.30.

Dalton, 1915, no.561, pp.79-80.

Swarzenski, 1954, p.178.

Montesquiou-Fezensac, 1954.

Swarzenski, 1967, no.28, pl.13, p.39.

Montesquiou-Fezensac & Gaborit-Chopin, 1973, Vol.I, p.227, no.200:69; p.288, no.345; Vol.III, pp.114-15.

Suger, 1979, p.176.

Kornbluth, 1986, no.18, pp.207-18.

Lasko, 1994, pp.51-52.

Kornbluth, 1997.

Raulet, 1999, pp.82-84.

## 6. The Eleanor Vase

Crystal: Fatimid (?), 10-11th Century (?); Mounts: St.-Denis, before 1147, 13th & 14th Century additions, rock-crystal, silver gilt, champlevé enamel, niello, precious stones, pearls, 33.7 x 15.9cm, Louvre, Paris, MR340.

An inscription reads: HOC VAS SPONSA DEDIT. ANOR REGI. LVDOVICO. MITADOL[us]. AVO MIHI REX S[an]C[tis]Q[ue] SUGER[ius]. The crystal is cracked. The enamels showing the fleur-de-lys are later additions. A lid, still extant in 1706, is now lost (Félibien, 1706, Plate IV, Item Z).

The rock-crystal vase's origin is disputed: some attribute it to pre-Islamic, others to Islamic workshops (Alcouffe et al., 1991, p.169 & Shalem, 1998, p.129 vs. Montesquiou-Fezensac & Gaborit-Chopin, 1973, Vol.III, pp.63-64 & Lasko, 1994, p.242). Its provenance was almost certainly Islamic, Mitadolus being identified with a Muslim King of Saragossa (Beech, 1995, pp.7-8). It then went through the hands of people so distinguished-- William of Aquitaine, Eleanor, and the King, that Suger insisted on recording their ownership both on the vessel and in his writings (Suger, 1979, p.79).

Exhibited:

Alcouffe et al., 1991, no.27, pp.168-72.

Literature:

Félibien, 1706, p.543; Plate IV, Item Z.

Cortway, 1915, p.142.

Heckscher, 1937, ???.

Montesquiou-Fezensac & Gaborit-Chopin, 1973, Vol.I, no.28, p.150; Vol.III, pp.42-43.

Suger, 1979, pp.79 & 220.

Verdier, 1982, pp.353-54.

Verdier, 1987 (1), pp.180-81.

Gaborit-Chopin, 1987, pp.289-93.

Wixom, 1987, pp.301-02.

Lasko, 1994, p.242.

Beech, 1995.

Shalem, 1998, p.129.

## 7. The Milhaguet Rock-Crystal Ewer

Crystal: Fatimid Egypt, early 11th Century; Mounts: French, 13th Century, rock-crystal, nielloed silver, copper gilt, 28.5 x 12cm, Trésor de l'Église de Milhaguet, Haute-Vienne.

The crystal flask (18 x 15cm) is engraved with an eagle on a palmette on each side, with a scroll around the neck. The mounts include a medieval (14th Century?) base absent from a 1666 inventory (Trésors, 1965, no.368).

The Ewer was formerly in the Abbey of Grandmont's treasury (Arts de l'Islam, 1971, p.195). Although the decoration around the flask is relatively bland, consisting of nielloed geometric patterns and rosettes, its handle is in the form of a flattened serpent. There was an explosion in Egyptian crystalcraft in the late 10th and early 11th Centuries, due to the discovery of great crystal deposits near the Red Sea (Arts de l'Islam, 1971, no.270, p.195). In 1061 the Seljuk Turks broke into the Fatimid treasury, leading to the dispersal of many such vessels around the Mediterranean (Beech, 1995, p.8). Some went via the Holy Land and Constantinople to the West-- a good number were grouped together in the Limousin (Arts de l'Islam, 1971, p.195).

Exhibited:

Trésors, 1965, no.368.

Arts de l'Islam, 1971, no.271, p.195.

Arts of Islam, 1976, no.112, p.128.

Literature:

Gauthier, 1983, no.14, p.36.

Shalem, 1998, np.61, pp.215-16.

## 8. The Goat Ewer

Crystal: Cairo, late 10th Century; Mounts: Venice, 1250-75, rock-crystal, silver gilt, niello, 28 x 10.5cm, Tesoro di San Marco, Venice, no.86.

The Goat Ewer is so named because its crystal is engraved with two goats within a cascade of palmettes and tendrils-- Alcouffe refers to them hiding-- they are crouching with warily turned heads (Alcouffe et al., 1984, p.222). The crystal flask's integral handle was replaced by the present one in the form of a dragon; the spout is in the form of a serpent.

The mounts, under heavy French and Mosan influence, are decorated with a man fighting a dragon and various other human and animal forms in foliate roundels at the base and top; below the top layer is a ring of palmettes, below that a dragon on the neck. The false spout led Hahnloser to consider a secular origin for the piece (Hahnloser, 1971, p.115), but such an ornament is consistent with the splendid Treasury of San Marco, home of the vase for 700 years (Gallo, 1967, p.278, III, no.11).

Exhibited:

Alcouffe et al., 1984, no.31, pp.222-27.

Literature:

Gallo, pp.278, III no.11; 299 no.76 or 300 no.94; 353 nos.109 or 111; 360, nos.155-56 or 361 no.205; 371, no.1.

Hahnloser, 1971, no.125, pp.113-15.

Shalem, 1998, no.58, pp.213-14.

## 9. The San Marco Ewer

Stone: Egypt (?), 3rd Century; Mounts: Venice, 1250-1300, sardonyx, silver gilt, precious stones, 23 x 9.8cm, Tesoro di San Marco, no.81.

The extreme quality in this vase's craftsmanship, with its thin sides and contours echoed by its seams, points to an antique origin-- later craftsmen lacked these lapidary skills. The mounts form the upper half, entirely dictating a ewer shape alien to the vase, yet functioning perfectly as an ensemble. Above and below the fluted knob near the mount's centre are eight elongated leaf-shaped fields filled with filigree-work and precious stones, appearing as four fields with their centres hidden by the knob. The filigree forms tendrils within the fields, so that both tendrils and fields resonate with the rhythm of the stone's lines. The rest of the metalwork is unadorned-- the spout and handle have flattened edges, without decoration.

Exhibited:

Alcouffe et al., 1984, no.34, pp.252-57.

Literature:

Gallo, 1967, pp.278, III, no.22; 300, nos. 90 or 93; 350, no.23; 362-63, no.2.

Hahnloser, 1971, no.88, pp.79-80.

## 10. The Saint-Denis Ewer

Stone: Byzantium, 7th Century (?); Mounts: Saint-Denis, before 1147 & 15th Century, sardonyx, silver gilt, niello, precious stones, pearls, 35.7 x 11 cm, Louvre, Paris, MR 127.

An inscription around the base reads: DVM LIBARE DEO GEMMIS DEBEMVS ET AVRO HOC E[GO] S[UGERI]US OFFERO VAS DOMINO. Extensive repairs were made around 1500, the base being almost entirely work of that era, including its inscription (Gaborit-Chopin, 1987, p.289).

This ewer, another Sugerian object, comprises a sardonyx jug and later silver-gilt top and tail. The record of Suger's inscription in a manuscript of his work is in a later hand, prompting questions over its authenticity-- did the goldsmith and scribe invent or merely reiterate Suger's words (Verdier, 1987 (2), p.160)?

The ewer is less successful than its Venetian counterpart, hampered in part by the core stone's inferiority; the jug's shape is more suggestive of the ewer form into which it has been rendered, but the end result is less successful-- the jug acted as inspiration and limitation.

Exhibited:

Crosby et al., 1981, no.28, pp.112-13.

Alcouffe et al., 1991, no.29, pp.177-81.

Literature:

Félibien, 1706, p.542, Plate IV, Item E.

Conway, 1915, p.142.

Montesquiou-Fezensac & Gaborit-Chopin, 1973, Vol.I, p.150, no.27; Vol.III, pp.41-42.

Suger, 1979, pp.79 & 221.

Verdier, 1987 (1), pp.180-81.

Verdier, 1987 (2), p.160.

Gaborit-Chopin, 1987, pp.289-91.

Wixom, 1987, pp.301-02.

Lasko, 1994, p.242.

## 11. The V&A Onyx Vase

France, 12th (& 14-15th) Century, onyx, silver gilt, 20.4 x 9.7cm, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 397 1872.

This vase is simply ornamented with four vertical strips of metal, decorated with different repeating scrolls with interlinking rope designs, each joint at top and bottom to similar strips encircling the vase. One strip is a 14 or 15th-century replacement.

The stone is well cut, pointing to antique, probably Imperial Roman, origins. The vase lacks any iconography, and could therefore have served a secular purpose. It is simply adorned, subtly raising the status of an already beautiful object.

Little is known of its provenance-- it was bought from Mr. Webb who was told it came from the Cathedral of Sens, but there is no inventory entry from Sens to confirm such an origin (Lightbrown, 1978, p.2).

Literature:

Lightbown, 1978, no.1, pp.1-3.

Williamson, 1996, p.9.

## 12. The Gniezno Chalice

Byzantine, 10th Century; Mounts: 1170-1200 (& 1797 & 1960), agate, gold, 15.4 x 11.8cm, Museum Archidiecezji Gnieznienskiej, Gniezno, I.44.

The cup is Byzantine; the stem and knob are 12th-century Polish; in 1797 the basketwork at the base of the vase was added, and in 1960, the gold leaves around the side to consolidate the vessel.

It reputedly belonged to St. Adalbert, a Bishop of Prague turned missionary who worked in Russia, Hungary, Poland and was martyred while attempting to convert the Prussians (Rózycka Bryzek, 1992, p.365). The stone vase may have arrived in Poland by one of several means-- perhaps as part of Theophanou's dowry, given to Boleslas, Trzemeszno or Gniezno by her son Otto III. It was then given its base and knob, the latter decorated with roundels almost matching the Mosan-style figures on their contemporaries, the Gniezno Bronze Doors (Polish, bronze, 2nd half 12th Century, 330 x 170cm, Gniezno Cathedral, Gniezno).

Exhibited:

Bernward, 1993, Vol.II, II-34, pp.82-83.

Literature:

Katedra, 1970, Vol.I, pp.127-28.

Rózycka Bryzek, 1992, p.365.

### 13. The Lebuin Gospels

Cameo: Roman, 1st Century AD (?); Ivories: Cologne, 12th Century; Manuscript: c.835; Binding: North-Eastern France, 11-12th Century; parchment, oak, pigskin, silver gilt, copper gilt, chalcedony, walrus ivory, precious stones, glass, 35.5 x 25.6cm, Museum Catherijneconvent, Utrecht, ABM h1.

The cover is in a state of mild disrepair, with sections missing, including one of the four corner roundels.

The manuscript is reputed to have belonged to the Carolingian St. Lebuin, a not impossible supposition (Snijder, 1932, p.7). It remained in Deventer in the St. Lebuin Church, was later probably removed to Utrecht Cathedral, and then disappeared, rediscovered in Deventer in the 19th Century (Koers, 2000, p.10). The composite cover is complicated: the central silver-gilt cross is older than the rest of the metalwork, which was created around the 'sketchy style' ivories showing the Apostles (also later) (Lasko, 1994, p.187). The upper and lower ends of the cross are each adorned with Merovingian pseudo-cameos. In the centre of the cross is a chalcedony Bacchus head, used here as Christ.

The Lebuin Gospels were found with another less successful but comparable bookbinding: on the St. Bernold Pericopes (Manuscript: c.1040; Binding: Reichenau, 13th Century; Cameo: Roman, early 2nd Century AD, parchment, oak, silver gilt, chalcedony, enamels, precious stones, 31.3 x 22.6cm, Museum Catherijneconvent, Utrecht, ABM h3), a chalcedony woman's head tops its central cross. The Bernold metalwork is superior, but its composition inferior to the Lebuin Gospels, which raises the magpie's habit to an art-form.

Exhibited:

Art mosan, 1951, no.417

Rhin-Meuse, 1972, J39, p.305.

Literature:

Snijder, 1932.

Vogelsang, 1961, pp.96-104.

Steenbock, 1965, no.86, pp.179-81.

Goldschmidt, 1972, Vol.III, no.16, pp.13-14.

Canteren, 1988, pp.74-75.

Lasko, 1994, p.187.

Koers, 2000, p.10.

#### 14. The Sainte-Chapelle Choral Baton

Bust: Roman, 310-26; Mounts: Paris, 1363-68, agate, silver gilt, enamel (traces), 31 x 23.6cm,  
Cabinet des Médailles, Paris.

Only the top of the baton remains. Engravings show the figure formerly held a double Crucifix, and the crown had thorns. The bust is not at its intended angle.

The bust of Constantine conforms to Knudsen's portrait-type 3 (310-26) (Knudsen, 1988, pp.126-27). The mounts were made by Hennequin du Vivier for Charles V. They were considered repairs to the ebony baton, prompting speculation as to the piece's former form. The repairs may have been completely original, or may have reiterated an extant composition, possibly modelled on a statue in Constantinople (Ebersolt, 1929, p.26). The cuirassed agate torso's metalwork extension shows drapery: this misunderstood clothing points to originality. There are many other explanations of the bust's intended identification and iconography in its (relatively) new position.

This was among several objects from the Sainte-Chapelle given to the state in 1791 by Louis XVI, hence its preservation.

Exhibited:

Les Fastes, 1981, no.204, pp.250-51.

Byzance, 1992, no.33, pp.84-85.

Literature:

Chabouillet, 1858, p.55.

Babelon, 1900, pp.189-91.

Le Cabinet, 1924, pp.128-32.

Ebersolt, 1929, pp.24-26.

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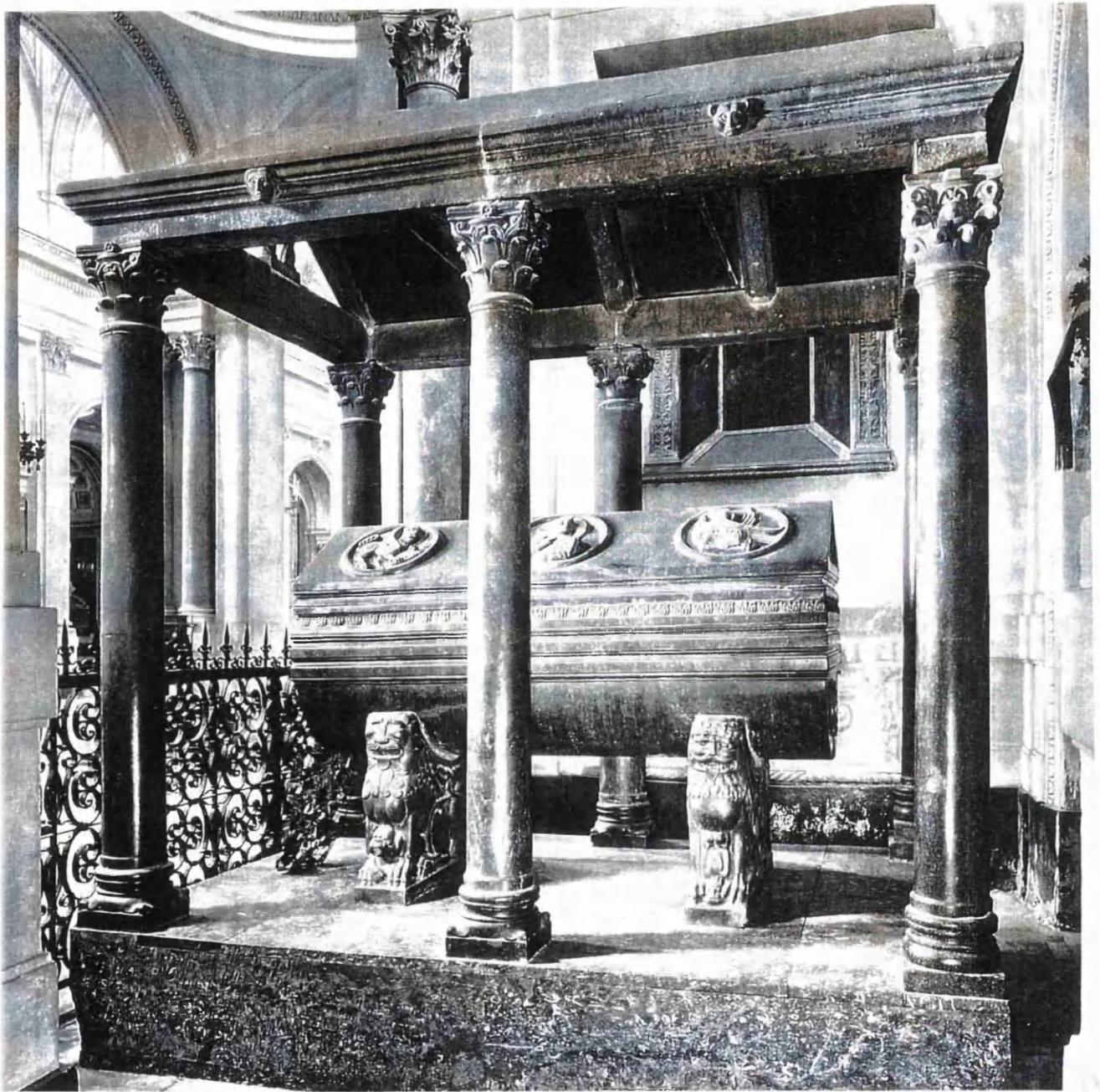
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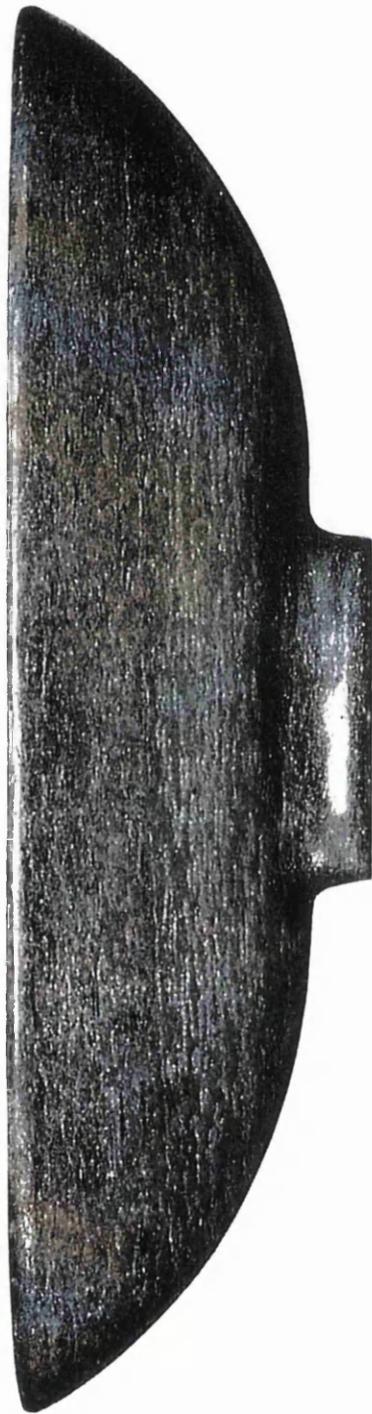
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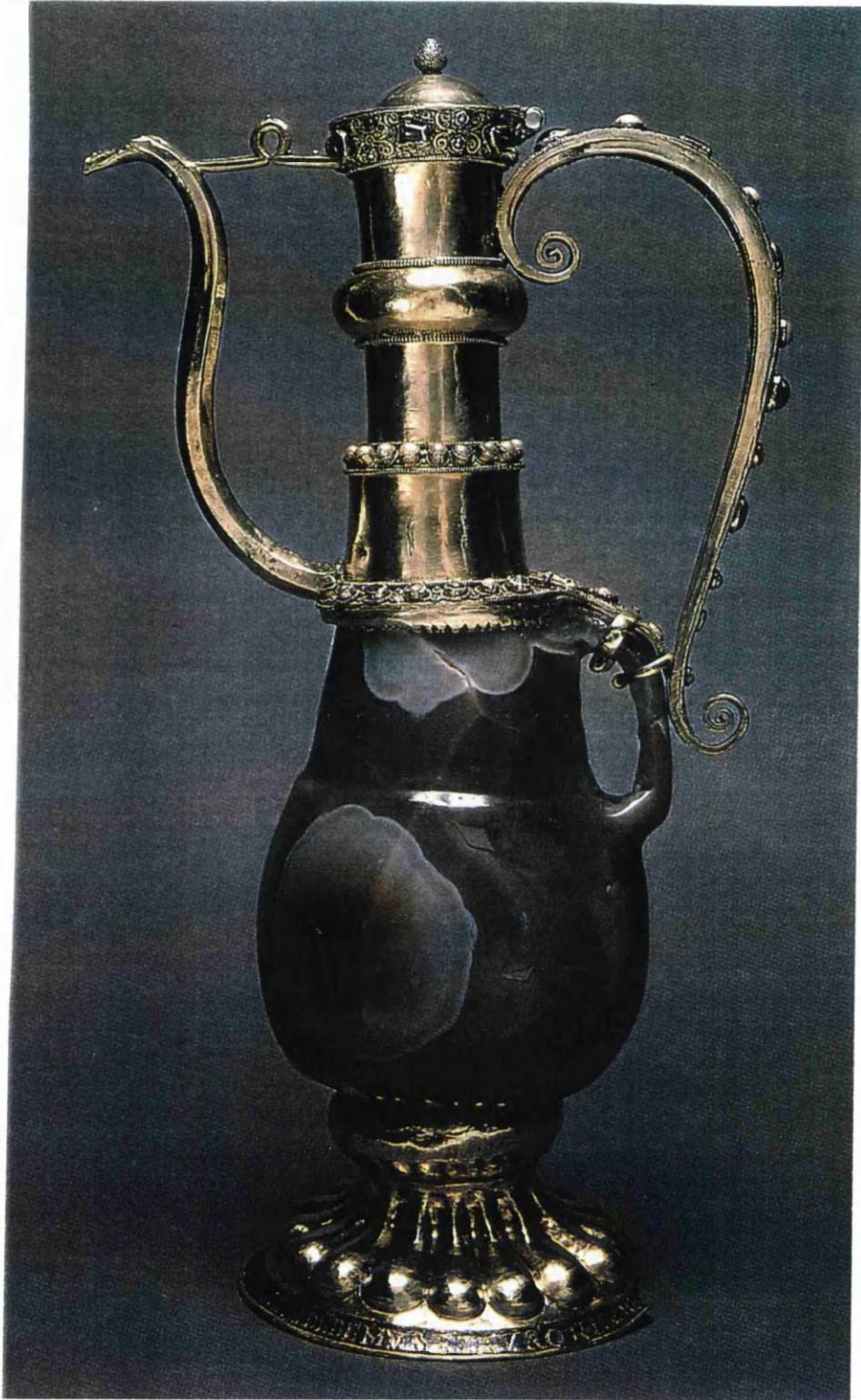
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Cat.10 (Alcouffe et al., 1991).



Cat. 11 (Alcouffe et al., 1984).



Cat.12 (Bernward, 1993).



Cat.13 (Koers, 2000).



Cat. 14 (Byzance, 1992).



Fig. 1: Tomb of Henry VI, Sicily, before 1145, porphyry, 164 x 236 x 118cm, Palermo Cathedral, Palermo (photo: Andaloro, 1995 (1)).



Fig.2: Christ's Coronation of Roger II, Sicilian/Byzantine, c.1143, mosaic, 189 x 143.5cm, Church of Santa Maria de Martorana, Palermo (Lowden, 1997).



Fig.3: George of Antioch with the Virgin, Sicilian/Byzantine, c.1143, mosaic, Church of Santa Maria de Martorana, Palermo (Lowden, 1997).

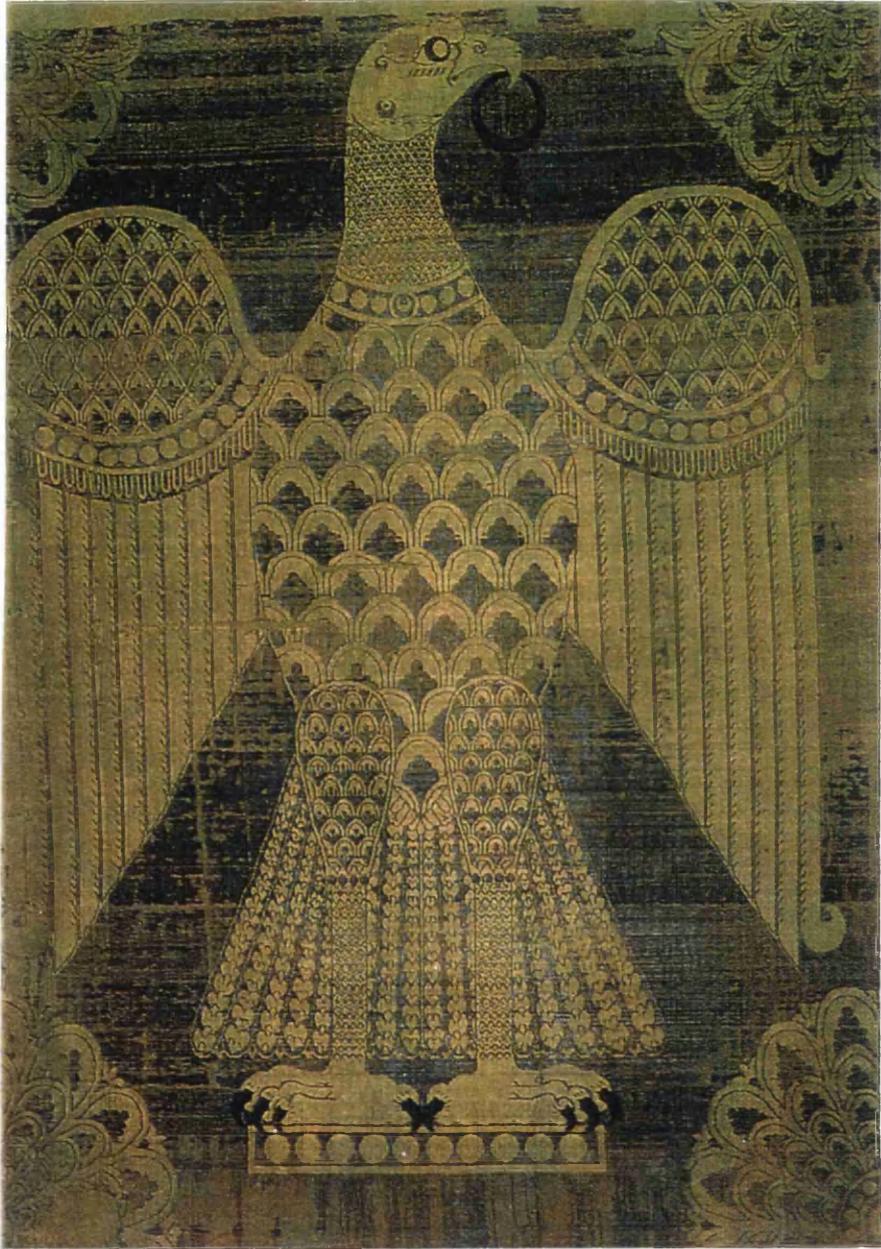


Fig.4: Shroud of St. Germain, Byzantine, c.1000, silk, 160 x 121cm, Musée St.-Germain, Auxerre (Byzance, 1992).

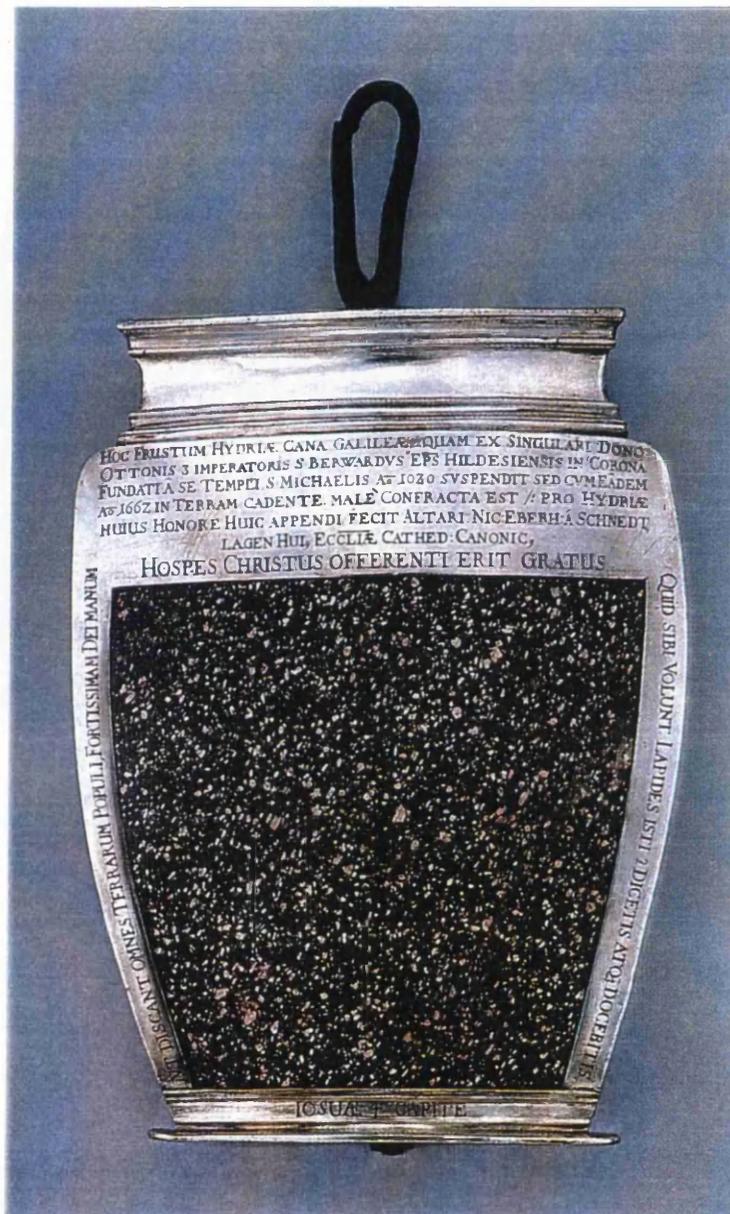


Fig.5: Vase from the Wedding of Cana, Roman Imperial Egypt, the mounts German, 1662, red porphyry and silver, 21 x 26cm, Dom- und Diözesanmuseum Hildesheim, Hildesheim, Inv.No. DS 5 (Bernward, 1993).



Fig. 6: Portable Altar, Hildesheim, c.1160-70, Porphyry, wood, engraved partly gilt copper, vernis brun, 38.5 x 22.9cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 10-1873 (Williamson, 1996).



Fig.7: Portable Altar of Agrigento, Sicilian(?), poplar, brass, champlevé enamel, silver, Hertfordshire puddingstone type stone, silk, mid-13th Century, 3.5 x 34 x 22cm, Museo Diocesano, Agrigento (Andaloro, 1995 (1)).



Fig.8: Paten of Charles the Bald, plate: Roman, 1st Century BC or AD; mounts: Court School of Charles the Bald, second half of 9th Century, serpentine, gold, precious stones, green glass, 17cm (diameter), Musée du Louvre, Paris, MR 415 (Alcouffe et al., 1991).

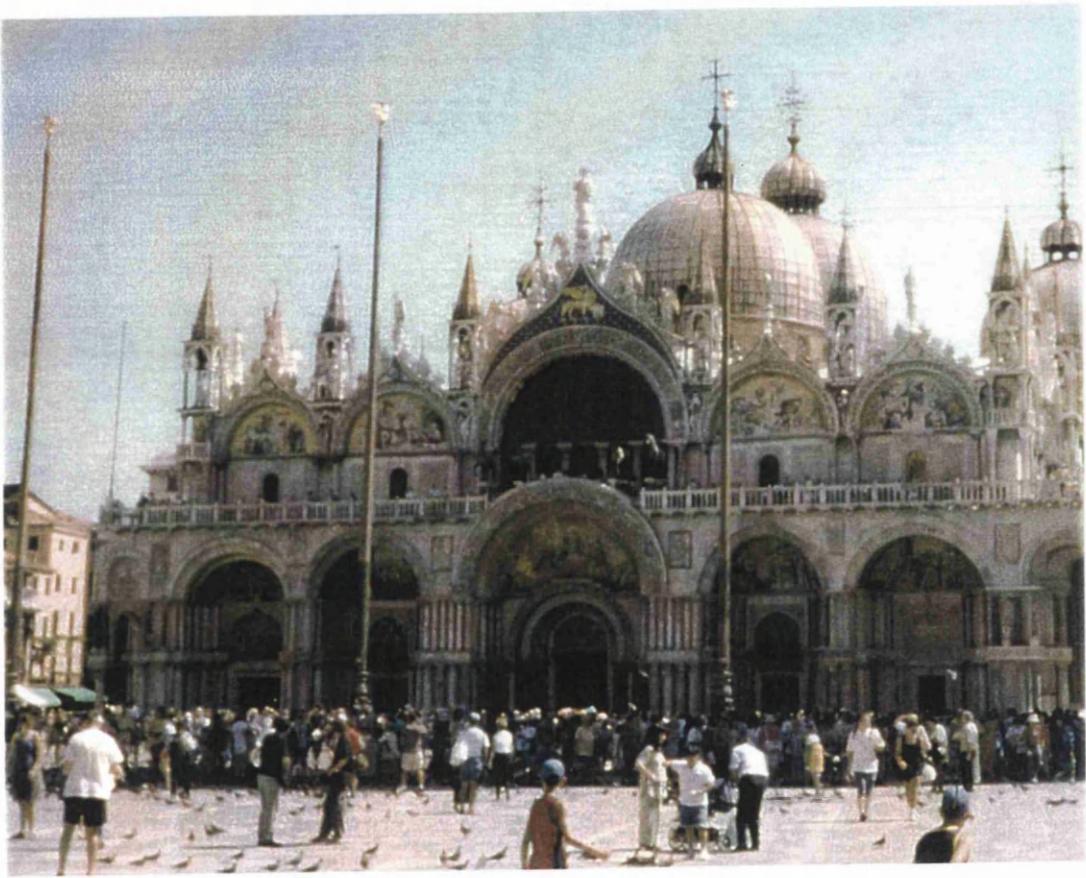


Fig.9: The Basilica di San Marco (C.M.G. Paton).

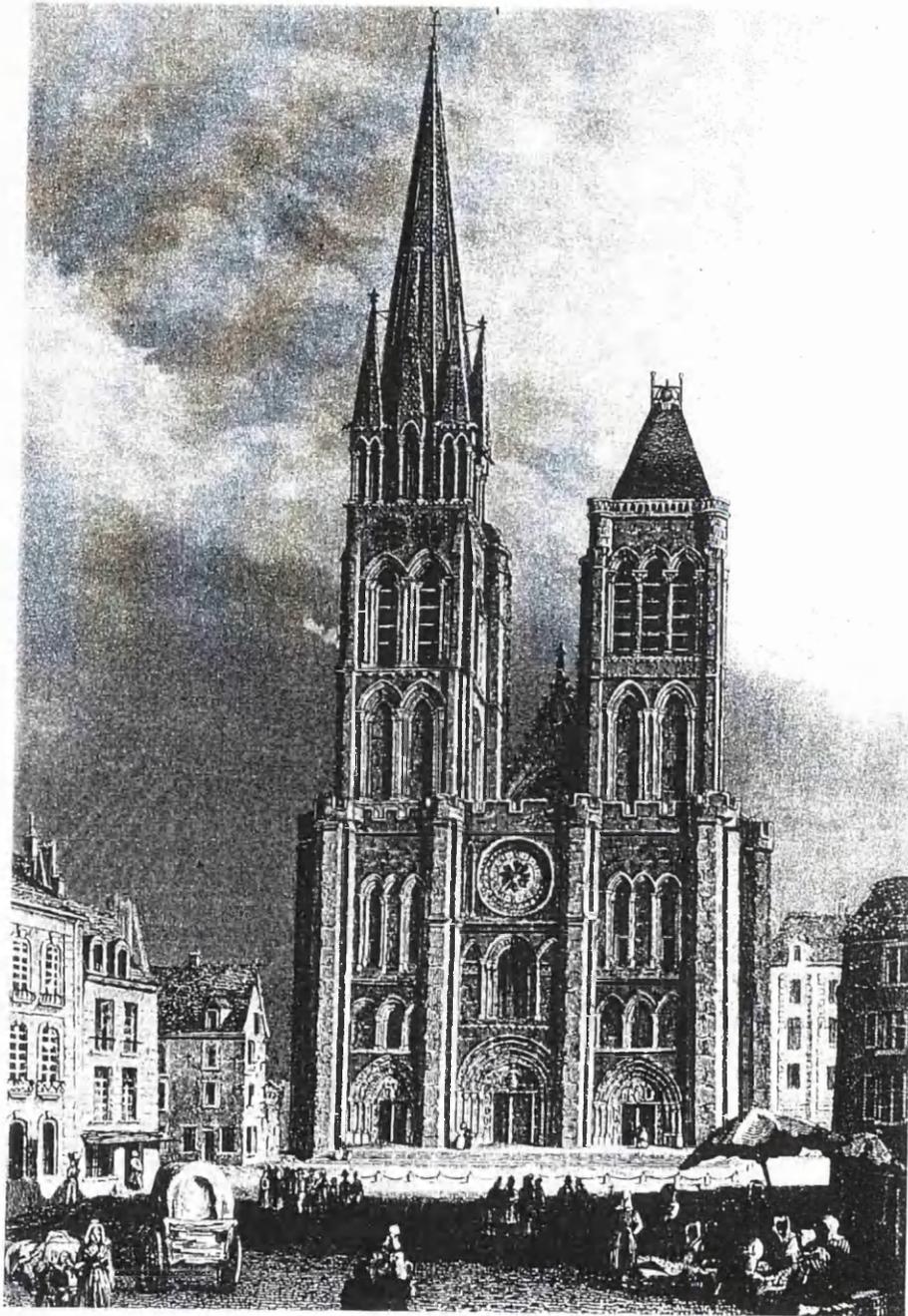


Fig.10: St.-Denis, West Façade, pre-1837 engraving (Suger, 1979).



Fig. 11: Theophylactos Chalice, Byzantine, 925-1025, sardonyx, silver gilt, enamelled gold, pearls, precious stones, crystal cabochons, 27.3 x 18cm, Treasury of San Marco, Venice, no.69 (Alcouffe et al., 1984).



Fig.12: Two-handled Sardonyx Chalice, Byzantine, 975-1025, sardonyx, silver gilt, enamelled gold, pearls, gems, 11.5 x 20cm, Treasury of San Marco, Venice, no.79 (Alcouffe et al., 1984).



Fig.13: Sisinnios Chalice. Stone: 1st-2nd Century; Mounts: Byzantine, c.960, agate, silver gilt, 11 x 18.5cm, Treasury of San Marco, Venice, no.83 (Alcouffe et al., 1984).

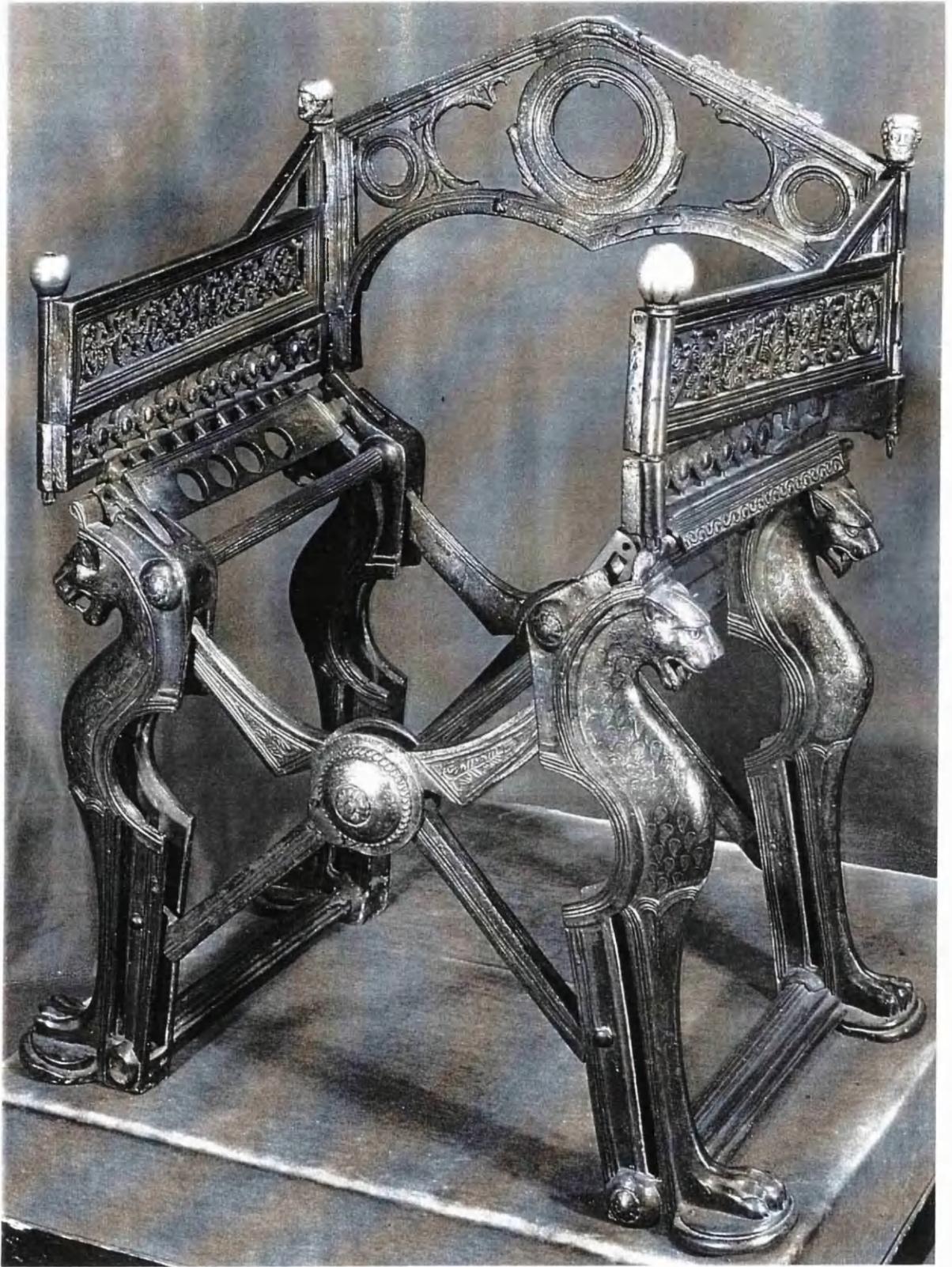


Fig. 14: *Dagobert's Throne*, French, late 8th-9th Century, later additions, cast bronze, formerly gilt, 104 x 82cm, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles, Paris (Alcouffe et al., 1991).



Fig. 15: Portable Altar, Hildesheim, c.1000, oak and other wood, porphyry, engraved and gilt silver, niello, 26 x 10.5cm, Dom- und Diözesanmuseum Hildesheim, Hildesheim, Inv.No. DS 26 (Bernward, 1993).

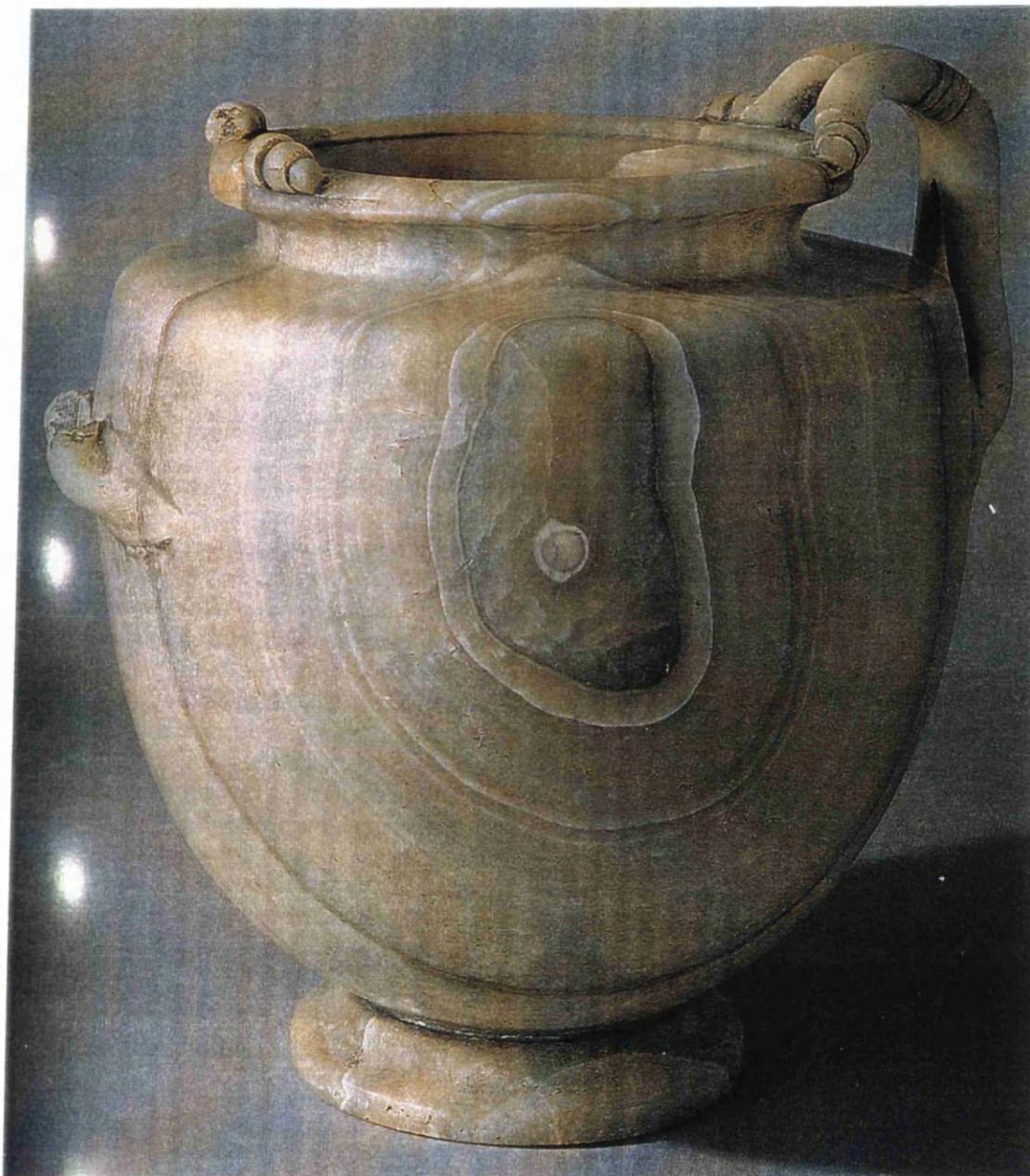


Fig. 16: Cana Vase, Alexandria, 1st Century AD, alabaster, 46.5 x 39.5cm, Ev.St. Servatii Domgemeinde, Quedlinburg (Bernward, 1993).



Fig.17: Romanos Chalice with Handles. Stone: 1st Century BC or AD; Mounts: Constantinopolitan, 959-63, sardonyx, silver gilt, cloisonné enamel, glass cabochons, 25 x 28cm, Treasury of San Marco, Venice, no.70 (Alcouffe et al., 1984).