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THE RELICS OF OUR LORD'S PASSION IN THE RUSSIAN PRIMARY CHRONICLE*

The *Povest' Vremennyh Let*, known in English as the *Russian Primary Chronicle* [=RPC] inserts, under the year of creation 6420, the text of a treaty concluded by fifteen envoys of the Russian prince Oleg with the Emperors Leo, Alexander and Constantine on 2 September of the 15th indiction 6420, i.e. AD 911. According to the *Chronicle*, after the Russian delegation had completed its official business, its members were given a tour of the Byzantine capital:

The emperor (Leo VI) honoured the Russian envoys with gifts of gold and silk and precious garments, and placed his men at their disposal to show them the beauties of the churches, the golden palace and the riches contained therein: much gold and silk and jewels, and the Passion of (our) Lord – the crown, the nails and the purple robe, as well as the relics of the saints, teaching them his faith and showing them the true faith¹.

This description is surprising on two counts. There were probably better ways to impress and to instruct the heathen Scandinavians (which is what Russians were at the time) than by showing them a selection of relics associated with Christ's passion and execution. Rather more to the point from our point of view is the fact that this alleged sighting of at least two of the relics in question, the Crown (of Thorns) and the Purple Robe, at Constantinople in 911, has no endorsement in any other source before or anywhere close to the date of the treaty, whose historicity is not in doubt. Thus, if the information about the relics contained in the RPC can be shown to be equally reliable as the text of the treaty, we have to accept a much earlier dating for the appearance of these significant relics at Constantinople than other data would allow. However, the *RPC* is an early-twelfth-century compilation, and it could well be that, when he speaks of this relic-sighting, the chronicler is not retailing a genuine tradition originating from the delegation of 911, but relying on the experiences of more recent visitors to the Queen of Cities. As we hope to show in this short study, there are in fact strong indications to that effect. Once it is set in its proper chronological context, however, the testimony of the *RPC* finds some illuminating parallels in the twelfth-century pilgrims' reports. These also provide some valuable insights into the chronicler's methods of editing and amplifying the historical material at his disposal.

* The authors are grateful to Marie-Helene Congourdeau and to Bernard Flusin for their valuable advice.

¹ Ипатьевская летопись / Под ред. А.А. Шахматова. СПб., 1908. Стб. 28; the Hypatian Chronicle often provides a superior version of the *RPC*. D.S. Lihachev edits this text: *Повесть временных лет*. Т. 1. М., Л., 1950. С. 29; 2-е изд. СПб., 1996. С. 20 – on the basis of Laurentius' Chronicle that separates the words “the Lord's Passion” from the following substantives by the conjunction “и” (and), but Lihachev's translation (p. 226/156) takes no account of the conjunction and thus does not differ from ours. By way of contrast, S.H. Cross and O.P. Sherbowitz Wetzor (trans.), *The Russian Primary Chronicle* (2nd edition, Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 68–69, maintain the conjunction in their translation and thus transform “the Lord's Passion” into a distinct set of relics, which makes no sense.

THE CROWN OF THORNS AND THE PURPLE ROBE

By the twelfth century it was common knowledge that one could then see the Crown of Thorns, the Nails and the Purple Robe in the “Golden” (i.e. Sacred) Palace at Constantinople: they were housed in the Palatine Chapel of Our Lady at the Lighthouse (*Theotokos tou Pharou*) to be precise². The existence of these relics was well known to the Franks; they are mentioned in the so-called “Letter of Alexios to Robert of Flanders”, convincingly shown by Einar Joranson (after Carl Erdmann) to have been forged in Bohemond’s retinue in the first decade of the twelfth century³. Other foreign visitors down to 1204 frequently note the same relics. (After the City of Constantine was captured by the Latins its treasury of relics was largely dispersed to the west.) Among the foreigners who saw and reported on the relics was Archbishop Anthony of Novgorod at the end of the twelfth century⁴, but it is not necessary to suppose that his Book of the Pilgrim was the first intimation of the relic-holdings of Tsargrad to Slavdom. The question of how much earlier the Slavs (or anybody else for that matter) could have known that the Crown and the Robe lay at Constantinople is, however, not easy to answer.

The survival of the Crown of Thorns as a relic is first mentioned in the early fifth century. In the sixth century Cassiodorus refers to it as one of the glories of the Holy City. It still lay at Jerusalem in 870 according to Bernard the Monk⁵, and there are some reasons to believe that, as late as 944, the Abbot Fulcher of Dijon could have obtained a thorn of it while on pilgrimage to the Holy Land⁶. Other thorns are known to have circulated separately in the East and in the West. Unless the relic in question was a similar fragment, the Crown’s presence at Constantinople is first intimated by the inclusion of a small portion of it in the Staurothek of Limburg though not as originally created for the Emperors Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus and Romanus II (946–959), but as subsequently reshaped and re-dedicated by the powerful eunuch Basil Lecapenus⁷. It is highly significant in this context that the Crown is not mentioned among the relics of the Lord’s Passion in the speech addressed by Constantine VII in 958 to the commanders of the Eastern front⁸.

² See R. Janin *La Géographie ecclésiastique de l’Empire byzantin* 1/3, Les Églises et monastères (2nd edition, Paris, 1969), P. 232–236.

³ E. Joranson, “The Problem of the Spurious Letter of Emperor Alexius to the Count of Flanders,” *American Historical Review* 55 (1949–1950), 811–832. Text in Riant, *Exuviae Sacrae Constantinopolitanae* (Geneva, 1878) 2: 203–210, see p. 208: *clamys coccinea qua fuit [Christus] indutus; corona spinea qua fuit coronatus; [...] clavi quibus affixus fuit*. Studies that integrate Joranson’s analysis are listed by M. De Waha, “La lettre d’Alexis I Comnène à Robert le Frison. Une révision,” *Byzantium* 47 (1977), 113–125, who argues, for his part, for the Letter’s authenticity. De Waha replaces the traditional addressee of the Letter, Robert I of Flanders, with his son, Robert II, thus solving, at a cost, a minor chronological difficulty, but he does not deal with the main problem of the text, which is that it basically appeals to the Latins to come and conquer the Byzantine Empire. Most recently, M.-P. Laffitte, in *Le trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle*, Paris, 2001, p. 36, maintains the view that the Letter as it stands is a forgery, probably based on a request for troops addressed by Alexios I to his good ally Robert I.

⁴ Антоний, архидиакон Новгородский. Книга паломника / Под ред. Х.М. Лопарева // Православный Палестинский сборник. 1899. Т. XVII/3. С. 18–19; cf.: M. Ehrhard (trans.), “Le Livre du Pélerin d’Antoine de Novgorod,” *Romania* 58 (1932), 44–65, p. 57.

⁵ PL 121: 572C, cf.: ODCC sv “Crown of Thorns” with references.

⁶ F. de Mély, *Exuviae Sacrae Constantinopolitanae* (Paris, 1904) 3: 190–192.

⁷ See most recently N.P. Ševčenko, The Limburg Staurothek and its Relics, in *Thumiana: stè mnèmè tès Laskarinás Mpoura*, Athens, 1994, p. 289–294.

⁸ Ed. R. Vari, “Zum historischen Exzerptenwerke des Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos,” *BZ* 17 (1908), 75–85, p. 83; commented by B. Flusin, “Les reliques de la Sainte-Chapelle et leur passé impérial à Constantinople,” in *Les reliques de la Sainte-Chapelle* (Paris, 2001), 20–33, p. 27. Cf. de Mély (cited n. 6), p. 174–181, who cites many pertinent sources, but does not take into account the Staurothek of Limburg and argues, following Riant, for a date of transfer possibly as late as 1063.

When Constantine VII assembled the relics of the Passion preserved in the Palace in order to sanctify by their touch the holy water that he then sent to the front, the omission of a major relic like the Crown, if it were available, would be difficult to explain. This would suggest that the transfer of the Crown to Constantinople took place between the time of Constantine's speech and the remaking of the Staurothek.

The *terminus post quem* for the remaking of the Staurothek by Basil Lecapenus is established by the inclusion of a hitherto unknown relic: the hair of the head of John the Baptist. The circumstances of the discovery of this treasure are described in John I Tzimisces' famous Letter to Ashot III, King of Ani. According to this testimony, the emperor obtained the hair, together with the Holy Sandals of Christ and a miraculous picture of the Saviour (which shed blood and water when pierced by a Jew), in the coastal Syrian city of Gabala (Jebel, south of Laodicea-Latakia) during his great eastern campaign in the summer 975⁹. Writing about twenty years after the event, Leo the Deacon relates the discovery of Christ's sandals and of the Baptist's hair during the same campaign of John I Tzimisces, but says they were found in Hierapolis-Manbidj¹⁰. Finally, John Scylitzes links the discovery of the Baptist's hair to that of another miraculous image of Christ, to wit the Holy Tile (*keramos* or *keramidion*) on which Christ's features had been impressed by contact with the Mandylion. According to Scylitzes though both objects were procured in Hierapolis by the Emperor Nicephorus II Phocas¹¹. The recovery of the Holy Tile by Nicephorus is described by Leo the Deacon, who locates the event at Edessa, on the eve of that emperor's march on Hierapolis, in 968¹². According to Yahya of Antioch, more reliable on this point, the Holy Tile was surrendered to Nicephorus by the people of Hierapolis in 966 and this location is confirmed in a recently published source, possibly contemporary with the event, which also credits Nicephorus with providing the Capital with a crystal phial of the effluent of a miraculous icon of Christ that was revered as the Holy Blood¹³. None of these last three witnesses mentions the Baptist's hair. By far the latest of our sources, Scylitzes is manifestly confused regarding the latter relic. Apparently aware that the hair was discovered together with a miraculous image of Christ, he links it to the best known image obtained during the eastern campaigns of 960–970s, Nicephorus' Holy Tile. The two earlier witnesses make it clear, however, that the Baptist's hair, whether it originated in Gabala (which is probable) or in Hierapolis, belonged to the spoils of John I Tzimisces; hence it could not have reached Constantinople before 975.

After the death of John Tzimisces in January 976, Basil Lecapenus became the most powerful man in the Empire and remained so until he fell out of favour with the young Emperor Basil II in the early 980s¹⁴. This was, no doubt, the only period in his amazing career when he could have appropriated a staurothek created by the Emperors Constantine VII and Romanus II, avail himself freely of the most precious relics kept in the Palace and combine them, for whatever purpose, in a new reliquary: the present Staurothek of Limburg. None of our sources credits either Nicephorus II or John I with

⁹ Matthew of Edessa, Chronicle I 20, trans. A.E. Dostourian, *Armenia and the Crusades, Tenth to Twelfth Centuries* (Lanham – New York – London, 1993), p. 32.

¹⁰ Leo Diaconus, *Historia* X 4, Bonn, 1928, p. 166.

¹¹ Ioannes Scylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. J. Thurn (CFHB 5, Berlin, 1973), p. 271.

¹² Leo Diaconus, *Historia* IV 10, Bonn, 1928, p. 70–71.

¹³ *Histoire de Yahya-ibn-Sa'id d'Antioche continuateur de Sa'id ibn Bitriq*, ed. trans. I Kratchkovsky and A. Vasiliev (PO 18/5), Paris, 1924, p. 107; F. Halkin, *Inédits byzantins d'Ochrida, Candie et Moscou*, (Subsidia Hagiographica 38, Brussels, 1963), p. 253–260.

¹⁴ W.G. Brokkaar, "Basil Lacapenus," in W.F. Bakker, A.F. van Gemert, W.J. Aerts eds., *Studia Byzantina et Neohellenica Neerlandica* (Byzantina Neerlandica 3), Leiden, 1972, p. 199–234, see p. 224.

obtaining the Crown. It could, however, have been procured by Basil Lecapenus in the late 970s, when Byzantine power extended over northern Palestine, thus giving the regent a strong influence over its Christian authorities. The silence of the Greek sources on so illustrious an acquisition might be due less to their unanimous hatred of the eunuch than to the fact that after Leo's *History* ends with Emperor John's death, these sources are late and poor.

The case of the Purple Robe is something of a mystery. Not only does the *RPC* supposedly give the first hint of its presence at Constantinople; it also appears to provide the first indication of that relic's very existence. Like the Crown, the Robe is first securely attested in Constantinople by the Staurothek of Limburg, but there is no previous mention of it at Jerusalem or in any other location. The Robe is, in fact, unique amongst the Constantinopolitan Passion-relics in having made its first known appearance at the Capital. How could this have come about? Falsification is a possibility, but it is not the only one. There could be here a case of an honest and understandable mistake.

Relics, it appears, were usually swathed in a textile covering. Already in the fourth century Jerome speaks of wrapping relics in fabric, maybe in silk¹⁵. Illustrious relics were sometimes accorded the prestige of the imperial purple. For instance, when Theodosius I went out to meet the Head of John the Baptist at Cosilaos, "he wrapped the box in which it was encased in a purple robe (*halourgidi*)" says Sozomen¹⁶. And when the soros of the Robe of the Holy Mother was first opened, possibly in 860, inside was found imperial purple fabric wrapped around the sacred *maphorion*¹⁷. There are other examples, but this one is particularly significant because the *soros* in question was believed to have come from the Holy Land, whence presumably came also the Crown. Considering how closely the Crown of Thorns and the Purple Robe are associated in the Gospel-story (Mc 15, 17, Mt 27, 28, *tacet Lc*), it is possible that an impressionable age jumped to the conclusion that the wrapping in which the Crown arrived was that very Purple Robe which the Saviour was obliged to wear when the Crown was placed on his head. It is the kind of mistake which it would be easy to make but which, once made, it would be difficult (even impolitic) to rectify. Now if this hypothesis is true, by linking the Robe inseparably to the Crown it means that all the indications concerning the date of the arrival of the one attach also to the other relic too.

THE HOLY NAILS

The history of the Holy Nails is by far the best documented, but also the most complex. The early tradition has it that Helen, the mother of Constantine the Great, found the Nails together with the Wood of the True Cross and sent them to Constantinople. According to both the Latin (Ambrosius, Rufinus of Aquilea) and the Greek (Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret) branches of the tradition, the Nails were then transformed into a

¹⁵ In *Adversus Vigilantium* Jerome speaks of a relic *in modico vasculo pretioso linteamine circumdatum* (PG 23: 358A) saying a little later: *dolet martyrum reliquias pretioso operiri velamine* (358B) and that Arcadius and the bishops translated the bones of the Blessed Samuel *in serico et vase aureo* (*ibid.*).

¹⁶ Sozomenus, *Kirchengeschichte*, VII, 21,5, ed. J. Bidez, revised by G.Chr. Hansen (Berlin, 1995), p. 334.

¹⁷ *Graecolat. Patrum Bibliothecae Novum Auctarium*, ed. F. Combefis (2 vols., Paris, 1648) 2: 774B–778A. See also J. Wortley, "The Oration of Theodore Syncellus (BHG 1058) and the Siege of 860," *Byzantine Studies/Etudes Byzantines* 4 (1977), 111–126.

diadem (*diadema*: Ambrosius) or a helmet for Constantine and into a bit for his horse¹⁸. Thus it appears to be fairly certain that the imperial palace would be where the Nails were conserved. In 550 Pope Vigilius was made to swear his rejection of the “Three Chapters” by the Nails and by the Four Gospels: *per virtutem sanctam clavorum, ex quibus crucifixus est dominus deus noster Iesus Christus, et per sancta quattuor euangelia ita per istam virtutem sancti freni et per ista sancta quattuor euangelia*¹⁹. The tautological formulation used by our source makes it clear that the Nails on which the Pope had to swear existed in no other form but that of the Holy Bit (*sanctum frenum*). Then this object disappears – as the helmet must have disappeared before – and is never mentioned in the later tradition.

By the late tenth century the Nails had regained their original shape. The *Patria of Constantinople* states that the Nails were actually inserted by Constantine in the head of the famous statue that stood a-top the great porphyry column in the Forum. (This statue of Apollo-Helios, brought from Asia Minor, was re-dedicated to Constantine.)²⁰ The logic behind this new development is obvious. The head-dress or the crown on the statue was surrounded by seven radiating spikes which, presumably, had the appearance of nails²¹. As already noted, the column on which the statue stood was said to enshrine the fragment of the True Cross which was received at the same time as the Nails. The consonance of *Helios* and *hèloï* (nails) is clearly present in the mind of the *Patria*-writer. Furthermore, the word used by Socrates and Sozomen to designate a helmet (*perikephalaia, perikephalaios*) could just as well apply to a crown with radiating spikes.

The insertion of the Nails in the crown of “Constantine’s” statue in the Forum was no figment of the *Patria*-writer’s imagination. The roughly contemporary Synaxarium of Constantinople retails the same tradition²². In the *Life of St Andrew the Fool*, the Nails built by Constantine into the statue become “a protection and a talisman for the imperial city.” When, at the end of the days, the whole city sinks into the sea, “only the column of the Forum will remain, because it contains the precious nails, (...) so that the ships will come and tie up their ropes to it and weep and wail for this Babylon”²³. A brave attempt to reconcile the old tradition with the new is undertaken in one of the late versions of the *Life of Constantine*. There the author claims that when Helen discovered the four nails that had pierced the hands and the feet of the Saviour, she made one of them into a bit, fixed another on the top of her son’s helmet and put the remaining two in the column that the people of Rome had originally dedicated to Constantine after his victory over Maximinus (i.e. Maxentius) and that Helen later brought to Constantinople and set up in the Forum²⁴.

¹⁸ Ambrosius, *De obitu Theodosii* 47, in Sant’Ambrogio, *Le orazioni funebri*, ed. O. Faller (Milano–Rome, 1985), p. 244; Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica* I, 8, PL 21, col. 477; Theodoret, *Kirchengeschichte*, I, 18,5, ed. L. Parmentier, revised by G.Chr. Hansen (Berlin, 1998), p. 64–65; Socrates, *Kirchengeschichte*, I, 17,9, ed. G.Chr. Hansen (Berlin, 1995), p. 57; Sozomen, *Kirchengeschichte*, II, 1,9, ed. Bidez and Hansen, p. 49.

¹⁹ *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum* IV, 1, ed. J. Straub, Berlin, 1971, p. 198–199.

²⁰ *Patria* 2–45, ed. Th. Preger, *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanarum* (Leipzig, 1901, 1907), p. 174. On the statue, see, e.g., G. Dagron, *Naissance d’une capitale. Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451*, Paris, 1974, p. 37–38; Av. Cameron and J. Herrin, *Constantinople in the Early Eighth Century: The Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* (Leiden, 1984), p. 263–264.

²¹ Georgius Monachus, *Chronicon*, ed. C. De Boor (2 vols., Leipzig, 1904), p. 500, indicates the number of spikes, but seems to know nothing of their identification as the Holy Nails.

²² *Synaxarium ecclesiae constantinopolitanae*, ed. H. Delehayé (*Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum Novembris*), Brussels, 1902, col. 673.

²³ *The Life of St Andrew the Fool*, ed. trans. L. Rydén (2 vol., Uppsala, 1995), p. 242–243, 276–279; cf.: L. Rydén, “The Andreas Salos Apocalypse,” DOP 28, 1974, p. 197–261, see p. 254.

²⁴ Ed. F. Halkin, “Une nouvelle Vie de Constantin dans un légendier de Patmos,” An. Boll. 77, 1959, p. 63–107, see p. 93–94.

Now, on 5 April 1106, in a severe gale, the Apollo-Helios statue was blown to the ground. A description of this event is interpolated, obviously by a contemporary, in the *Patria*; it is also described by Anna Comnena and later by Zonaras, who notes that “some” of the Holy Nails were attached to the statue²⁵. In all likelihood, the precious Nails were then salvaged from the wreckage. This would explain the sudden proliferation of Nails in twelfth-century Constantinople. Two twelfth-century monasteries, both dedicated to the Saviour, the Christos Philanthropos, founded by the Empress Irene very shortly before 1107, and the Anastasis, both possessed a Nail²⁶. The newly recovered Nails might have been initially deposited in the Lighthouse Chapel. The so-called *Anonymous Mercati* attests, like the *RPC*, to the presence of multiple Nails (*clavi*) in the Chapel²⁷. Later sources, however, mention only one Nail. A document of ca 1150 speaks of a single nail in the Palatine Chapel, *clavus quo crucifixus est in cruce Dominus*; and so does the anonymous pilgrim’s report dated between 1137 and 1185 (*clavum Domini*)²⁸. Another anonymous description of Constantinople, preserved in the *Tarragonensis* 55 and which should perhaps be dated not in the late eleventh century, as suggested by the editor, but a few decades later, also mentions *unus scilicet clavus unde fuit Dominus crucifixus*²⁹. Finally, a *Descriptio*, tentatively dated *ca* 1190, lists one whole nail and a fragment, *clavi, ad minus duo, abscisa transcupide unius*³⁰. It can easily be imagined that this fragmented Nail, difficult to relate to either helmet or bit, was a spike from the head of the Apollo-Helios statue, badly damaged in the fall. With this fragment included, the churches of Constantinople appear to have possessed in the twelfth century – not before – the complete set of four nails.

A more detailed study of the tradition is needed in order to establish the exact relationship between “old” and “new” Nails. What is important for our purpose is to emphasize the fluctuation between plural and singular in the description of the Nails conserved in the Lighthouse Chapel. The testimony of the *RPC*, using the plural, fits well with the early-twelfth-century evidence, before the Nails were dispersed.

²⁵ *Patria* 1–45a, ed. Preger, p. 138–139; Anna Comnena, *Alexiad* XII, 4,5, ed. trans. B. Leib, vol. 3 (Paris, 1945), p. 66 (with Du Cange’s extensive note *ad loc.* in the Paris edition, better accessible in PG: 131, col. 895–898); Zonaras, *Epitome* 13.3.26. Zonaras’ cautious reference to “some” of the Nails is no doubt due to the fact that he announces, by anticipation, the fall of the statue while describing the *inventio* of the Holy Cross and the Nails by Helen almost 800 years earlier. His source on the *inventio* probably mentioned the transformation of the Nails into a diadem and a bit, which Zonaras does not mention.

²⁶ See: *Лионский. Книга Паломник.* С. 25, 29; cf.: Janin, *Eglises*, p. 20–22, 525–527. One of *Kniga Palomnik*’s manuscripts lists only one nail (гвоздь) amongst the treasures of the Chapel *ca.* 1200 (p. 18, n. 50), and this reading might well be original.

²⁷ K.N. Ciggaar, “Une description de Constantinople traduite par un pèlerin anglais,” *REB* 34, 1976, p. 211–267, see p. 245. The editor opts for a late-eleventh-century date for the text – or rather for its Greek original – but admits that there is no compelling reason for dating it earlier than *ca.* 1120.

²⁸ Riant, *Exuviae* 2:2 11; K.N. Ciggaar, “Une description anonyme de Constantinople du XII^e siècle,” *REB* 31, 1973, p. 335–354, see p. 340, cf. p. 337–338 for the date.

²⁹ K.N. Ciggaar, “Une description de Constantinople dans le *Tarragonensis* 55,” *REB* 53, 1995, p. 117–140, see p. 120, cf. p. 128–131. We should note in passing that the description of Justinian’s statue in front of Saint Sophia as *tenens manum suam elevatam superbissime contra Iherusalem*, rather than announcing a forthcoming crusade, originates in the tradition of Justinian the builder of Saint Sophia as a rival to Solomon and his Temple.

³⁰ Riant, *Exuviae* 2: 217.

TOURING THE LIGHTHOUSE CHAPEL

The Lighthouse Chapel was closed to the public probably until *ca* 1100. Thus a Canterbury Monk at the end of the eleventh century was only able to gain access to it by his personal acquaintance with the Anglo-Saxon “Varangians” (*quosdam ibi viros de patria sua suosque amicos repperit qui erant ex familia imperatoris*)³¹. On the other hand, as the twelfth century progressed, the contents of the Chapel became known and references to them in the literary record abound. This, of course, was no coincidence. The installation of the imperial throne at the Blachernai palace by Alexios I Comnenos towards 1092 marks the first step in the transformation of that location into the main residence of the new dynasty. The old palatial complex and its churches, though never abandoned by the emperors³², then become more accessible to tourists and feature prominently in the pilgrims’ reports.

The score of witnesses who describe the relics of the Passion at the Lighthouse Chapel in the twelfth century list, in all, about twenty-four items, ranging from the Wood of the True Cross and the sacred Mandylion to the jar which held the vinegar³³. An analysis of the extant records shows that it was not those relics mentioned in the *RPC* which chiefly appealed to the twelfth-century writers. Hence one may legitimately wonder why the chronicler failed to take notice of some of the most popular and anciently revered items while mentioning the more obscure Purple Robe.

The selection of relics in the *RPC* entry has never been commented. A comparison with an anonymous twelfth century pilgrim’s report is, therefore, revealing. The report, produced in the middle of the twelfth century in Latin, is preserved both in the original language and in a Greek translation that often reflects a better Latin text than the one that came down to us. It describes the experience of a group of pilgrims who toured the Byzantine capital, including the Lighthouse Chapel. There they saw (*vidimus ibi*), in the Latin version, a Nail, the Crown of Thorns, the Chain (*ferream cathernam*) which attached Christ to the Column of Flagellation, the Purple Robe and many other relics of which seven more are named. The Greek list differs in a few details: it starts with the Nail, the Crown and the Robe (omitting the Chain)³⁴.

The congruence between the first items named and those mentioned in the *RPC* is so precise that there can be no coincidence. The chronicler’s informant and the western pilgrims might not have had the same guide, but they surely took the same tour. The choice and the sequence of relics in the Chronicle thus find an explanation. They were the first – or among the first – items shown to the tourists visiting the Lighthouse Chapel.

The *Povest’ Vremennyh Let*, rather improperly dubbed in English the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, was composed in the middle of the second decade of the twelfth century. In the part up to the mid-1070s, it is based on an earlier chronicle that can be reconstructed with help of a parallel source, the *Novgorodskaja Pervaja Letopis'*, and that, in fact, has a better claim to the name “Primary Chronicle”³⁵. The early chronicler knew

³¹ See C.H. Haskins, A Canterbury Monk at Constantinople, c. 1090, *English Historical Review* 25 (1910), 293–295.

³² P. Magdalino, “Manuel Komnenos and the Great Palace,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 4 (1978), 101–114, reprinted in Idem, *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Byzantium* (Aldershot 1991), n° V, see p. 109–111.

³³ There is a very useful table of these relics showing who reported what in A. Frolow, *La relique de la vraie Croix: recherches sur le développement d’un culte* (Archives de l’Orient 7, Paris, 1961), pièces justificatives No. 283, to which should be added the texts published by Ciggaar (*supra*).

³⁴ Ed. Ciggaar (cited n. 18), p. 340–341.

³⁵ The basic background data can be found in: *Теорогов О.В. Повесть временных лет // Словарь книжников и книжности Древней Руси. Т. 1: XI – первая половина XIV в.* Л., 1987. С. 337–343.

nothing of the treaty between Oleg and Leo VI nor of the subsequent treaties concluded by the Princes Igor and Svjatoslav. As a matter of fact, the text of the three treaties inserted in *RPC* was not preserved in the Russian princely archive, as was long believed, but was, as Jana Malingoudi has convincingly shown, translated from the copies kept, together with copies of other treaties, in the Byzantine diplomatic registry³⁶. It has been recently suggested that these texts only arrived in Kiev as late as 1104, brought by the newly appointed Metropolitan Nicephorus I³⁷. But even before recent scholarship produced new insights concerning the treaties, it had been admitted that an early-twelfth-century chronicler could hardly possess any real information on the stay of the Russian envoys at Constantinople two centuries before and must have based the story of their “guided tour” of the capital on the common experience of Russian ambassadors and pilgrims³⁸. The striking parallelism in the enumeration of relics in the *RPC* and in the twelfth-century pilgrim’s report shows that the tours of the Lighthouse Chapel followed a pretty standard itinerary. If the Nails on display were those recovered from the Apollo-Helios statue, the chronicler’s informant would have visited Constantinople after 1106, barely ten years before the composition of the *RPC*.

³⁶ J. Malingoudi, *Die Russisch-Byzantinischen Verträge des 10. Jhts. aus diplomatischer Sicht* (Thessaloniki, 1994), p. 79–87, 107.

³⁷ Каиштанов С.М. К вопросу о происхождении текста русско-византийских договоров X в. в составе Повести временных лет // Политическая структура древнерусского государства. VIII чтения памяти В.Т. Пашуто. М., 1996. С. 39–42.

³⁸ Айналов Д. Примечания к тексту книги “Паломник” Антония Новгородского // ЖМНП. 1906. Новая серия. Т. 3, Вып. 6. С. 233–276, see p. 235; cf.: Lihacev’s commentary to the *Povest’ Vremennyh Let*, 2, p. 280 (p. 425 of the reprint), citing the description of Vladimir’s embassy in 988 as the chronicler’s possible model.

РЕЗЮМЕ

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РЕЛИКВИИ “СТРАСТЕЙ ГОСПОДНИХ” В “ПОВЕСТИ ВРЕМЕННЫХ ЛЕТ”

Исследователи русско-византийских отношений давно подозревали, что описание приема Олеговых послов, содержащееся в летописной статье под 6420/911 г., отражает дипломатический опыт отнюдь не начала X в., а времени гораздо более близкого к составлению “Повести Временных лет”. В статье комментируются (кажется, впервые) перечисленные летописцем “стради Господни”: три реликвии страстей Христовых (терновый венец, гвозди и багряница), якобы показанные императором Львом VI послам Олега. В самом деле летописец называет лишь три из двадцати с лишним реликвий “страстей”, известных в Константинополе, объединяя столь древлепочитаемые, как гвозди и венец, с малоизвестной багряницей. Оказывается, что наличие венца и багряницы в Константинополе в начале X в. не только не засвидетельствовано, но и весьма маловероятно. Присутствие среди реликвий гвоздей (во множественном числе), возможно, связано с падением в 1106 г. статуи Константина-Гелиоса, в корону которой, согласно константинопольской традиции, были вделаны драгоценные гвозди. Что еще более важно, летописная подборка реликвий в точности соответствует началу анонимного описания посещения Фаросской церкви группой паломников в середине XII в.