This paper presents three case studies related to the circulation of thirteenth- to fifteenth-century reliquaries. The objects discussed all have ties to Venice, but for different reasons and through different circumstances; as such, the paper addresses the matter of circulation from several viewpoints. The first two parts highlight the importance of the Venetian goldsmiths’ production as it was both in fact and in the eyes of contemporaries. The first case underlines analogies between late-fourteenth- and fifteenth-century artifacts in Giovinazzo (Bari), Venice, and Padua. The second calls into question a reliquary cross in Offida, which is generally attributed to Venetian goldsmiths. While not denying its supposed origin, a new point of comparison with a Tuscan object is offered here. The third part aims to shed new light on the still little-known thirteenth-century staurotheke preserved in the church of San Cassiano in Venice; this object testifies to the highly significant role of relics’ and reliquaries’ circulation in medieval and early-modern culture. This analysis entails an in-depth look at that phenomenon as it relates to the circulation of similar French and Mosan artifacts, and considers a hypothesis of an Eastern provenance.

/Keywords/ Venice, Adriatic Sea, Goldsmiths’ art, Reliquary, Processional cross

1/ Pisan goldsmith’s workshop, processional cross, detail, 1270–1280, Church of San Pietro Apostolo, Fosciandora, Lupinaia (LU)
Circulation in Venetian Medieval goldsmiths’ art: three case studies between Venice and the Adriatic*

Manlio Leo Mezzacasa

Goldsmiths’ art, often small and precious, and mainly conceived and designed to be handled, easily lends itself to circulation in various ways: in commerce\(^1\), processions or looting\(^2\). In this respect it has much in common with relics which in their turn are amongst the reasons for the mobility of valuable artefacts. Beautiful cases and shrines fundamentally affect the perception of sacred remains, underlining their valuable status and making their intrinsic preciousness extrinsic and visually legible\(^3\).

Mobility is a primary means of cultural exchange within which objects have a crucial function. When documents are lacking, artefacts can give us information on cultural and artistic context, testaments to events and the circulation of ideas. Needless to say, in Medieval Venice the circulation of objects, the movement of people, and the relations between different geographical areas were fundamental aspects of life because Venice was a state based on commerce\(^4\). Venice was also a crossroads of cultures, in its geopolitical position and economic role, and in the commercial power of its merchants. This can also be seen in the circulation of craftsmen which, along with the capacity for movement that marks precious art, is fundamental to understanding Venetian medieval goldsmithery. More generally, precious art has often been read as a meeting point of different cultures; the merging of different influences, as in the *opus veneticum ad filum*\(^5\) and its Mosan models, and the strong German influence in many 14\(^{th}\) century liturgical vessels\(^6\). Extensive trade networks and demand from every part of the Christianized world made Venetian artefacts

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operate as a common thread between the élite all over Europe, as is revealed, for example, by objects with miniatures under rock crystal’.

The conspicuous presence of Venetian and Venetian-inspired artefacts throughout North-East Italy and the Adriatic coast might suffice to give evidence of the fame and the reputation enjoyed by Venetian goldsmiths between 13th and the 15th centuries. To mention just a few but significant examples it is possible to name Christoforus aurifex de Veneciius, who in 1325 was paid by the Commune of Trieste to travel to Venice to acquire precious vessels for the Patriarch. It is also worthwhile remembering that at the beginning of 15th century Venetian goldsmiths were commissioned for some reliquaries for the cathedral of Siena, even though the Tuscan city was itself renowned for its great tradition in this artistic field. It is equally telling that the processional cross of the St. Francis convent in Dubrovnik (circa 1440), was inspired by Venetian models but made outside Venice by a Northern goldsmith, Johannes de Basilea who had previously trained in Venice and then moved to Kotor and Dubrovnik. This is a perfect and strongly symbolic example of circulation of craftsmen and the sharing of culture related to Venetian goldsmiths’ art.

For this occasion I intend to take into account the Adriatic context, focusing on three problematic cases which are evidence of this inter-connected cultural environment in different ways. Three reliquaries whose peculiarities demonstrate them to be the result of the circulation and sharing of artistic models and ideas are apt examples of cultural aggregation.

**On the circulation of Venetian goldsmithery:**

**Puglia – Venice – Padua connections**

An unpublished document I found at the Archivio storico del Patriarcato in Venice reflects the ease of delivering and selling products in any part of the Adriatic in the late Medieval period, as well
as the strong Venetian presence on its southern coasts. Signed in Durazzo on August 18th 1400 by the Venetian notary Antonio Nigro, the document relates a controversy between a certain Jacopo Barbo from Venice and a Jew called Mathia Zudio over a jewel described as “uno zoielo che xe in lo mezo 1 diamante e de torno tre piere rose dise esser rubini e tre perle”. Parties agree that: “dito zoielo sia mandato a vender a Corfù, in la Pugia et a Ragusi ove meio li parerà a rixiego de una parte e del’altra e quando in tuti questi luoghi no se podesse vender chel dito zioielo el dito ser Jacomo Barbo el debia vender secondo como a lui parerà”13.

All the places mentioned had artistic connection to Venice, but only Durazzo was under Venetian control, having been recently taken into the governance of Venice. Ragusa on the other hand was Venetian between 1205 and 1358 and subsequently became independent. Puglia had important and


8 The limited space does not allow me to give a full account of the impact of Venetian artefacts on the surrounding areas, which here I address by means of a few telling examples. A more detailed and complete discussion will be part of my Ph.D. thesis Oreficeria Liturgica a Venezia, circa 1325–1475, Università degli Studi di Padova.


13 Archivio Storico del Patriarcato di Venezia, Parrocchia di San Pantalon, Pergameni, Busta 3.”A jewel with a diamond in the middle and around it three red stones, said to be rubies, and three pearls. (...) This jewel must be sent to be sold in Corfù, or to Puglia and to Ragusa where it is considered better for them both, and if it not will be possible to sell it in those places ser Jacomo Barbo will be allowed to sell it as he shall wish”.

2/ Venetian goldsmith’s workshop, reliquary-cross, part., circa 1390–1420, Arci Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta, Giovinazzo (BA)

3/ Paduan goldsmith’s workshop, Reliquary of the finger of St. Anthony, circa 1390–1396, Basilica di Sant’Antonio, Padova

4/ Venetian goldsmith’s workshop, Reliquary of the True Cross, circa 1390–1420, Museo Diocesano di Sant’Apollonia, Venezia
well known commercial relations with Venice, but it is a region particularly worthy of consideration also for its goldsmithery heritage whose connections with Venice date back to at least the first half of the 13th century, when a document mentions the return of Vitale di Nadal from Puglia, with reference to his brother Marino and the crown Frederick II had commissioned him to make (1225). We also know the names of magister Raffaelli de Venetiis aurifabro working in Barletta (1277), and Nicolò Bianco from Venice (1316), working and dealing with precious stones, an activity which seems to have been common for Venetian merchants. Finally we can mention a certain Beltramo from Venice who, in 1334, was robbed of precious items during his travel from Puglia to the Kingdom of Naples.

The above mentioned examples give documentary evidence of the fame and mobility of Venetian goldsmiths. Now, turning to objects, we can see that many artefacts are still existing and supply further factual evidence of this mobility. Some of them are quite famous, such as the well known Venetian rock crystal chandeliers in Bari cathedral, which must have been considered highly valuable considering that they were presented by Charles II d’Anjou. Less known pieces have recently been investigated, but some objects still need to be more thoroughly studied. This is also the case for the base of the reliquary cross in the Giovinazzo cathedral, undoubtedly made in Venice because of the mark of St. Mark’s lion, which was only recently pointed out. A late 14th to early 15th century chronology has been suggested in consideration of similarities with the reliquary of the Holy Thorn in Rimini, made by a Venetian goldsmith for the bishop Leale Malatesta, and with a late 14th century crosier at the Diocesan Museum of Treviso. Here I would like to highlight some other points of comparison and extend the frame. The reliquary of the Sacra Arundine in San Marco and the reliquary of St. Paterniano in the church of San Luca deploy the same set of micro-architectural elements, such as the columned canopies hosting small figures; so does the reliquary of the True Cross in the church of San Salvador, which is also decorated with enameled rinceaux. This is a kind of goldsmith’s lexicon which must be understood in the light of the fruitful relationship between Venice and the German goldsmithery, such as the magnificent Clayton Cup in the Schroder collection. In the Venetian region it reaches its apex in Nicolò Lionello monstrance in Gemona. A further
interesting comparison can be drawn between the reliquary in Giovinazzo and the Reliquary of the True Cross in the Diocesan Museum of Sant’Apollonia in Venice (formerly in the church of San Pantalon) (Fig. 4/), dating to the first decades of the 15th century. On close evaluation of the overall aspect, these two seem to match stylistically. Even though the mixt-linear bases diverge in elevation and groundplan,

14 As fundamental starting points see: Francesco Carabellesse, Le relazioni commerciali fra la Puglia e la Repubblica di Venezia dal secolo X al XV: ricerche e documenti, Trani 1897; Gino Luzza, “Studi sulle relazioni commerciali tra Venezia e la Puglia: rassegna bibliografica”, in Nuovo Archivio Veneto, n.s., VII (1904); Roberto Cessi, Venezia, la Puglia e l’Adriatico, Bari 1938.
20 Giovanni Boraccesi, Orecferia sacra in Puglia tra Medioevo e Rinascimento, Foggia 2005; Sofia Di Sciascio, Reliquie e reliquiari in Puglia fra IX e XV secolo, Galatina 2009.
21 The so-called “leone in moeca” (a sitting lion with open wings) was a symbol of the Venetian state and the mark of the Venetian goldsmiths. For a collection of Venetian marks see Piero Pazzi, I punzonii dell’ar genteria e orecferia veneta, 2 voll., Venezia 1992, pp. 46, 174, cat. n. 594.
24 Sofia di Sciascio, “Reliquie della Vera Croce” (n. 22); Eadem, Reliquie e reliquiarii (n. 20), pp. 167–172.
7/ Venetian goldsmith’s workshop (?), reliquary-cross (recto), circa 1290–1310, Church of Sant’Agostino, Offida (AP)
they share the same ornamental taste; similarities can be spotted in some particular features, such as the small dragons, and the bust placed inside aedicules. The Diocesan Museum’s reliquary accounts also for the continuous connections between Venetian and Paduan goldsmiths as shown by a comparison with the reliquary of the finger of Saint Anthony, dating circa 1390–1396 /Fig. 3/ where the statuette holds an analogous miniaturized reliquary. Considered as a whole, the Sant’ Antonio reliquary is a peculiar and high quality artefact, and its meta-reliquary is the only example, as far as I know, which can be so closely compared to the Venetian one. Moreover the formal language of these items has much in common with the carpentry of Venetian polyptychs. Finally, in the same Paduan treasure we find the reliquary of a fragment of the flagellation column (later 14th century) whose base shows a similar formal and ornamental taste – small dragons included – to the reliquary in Giovinazzo, thereby closing the circle of this Venetian – Pugliese – Paduan connection.

The reliquary cross of Sant’ Agostino in Offida. From Venice: truth or legend?

As with Puglia, circulation of Venetian artefacts and people had a strong impact in the Marche region; studies particularly on paintings have highlighted this fact. There are several artefacts worthy of mention, mainly from the late 14th and 15th centuries, that bear witness to these relations. Here I would like to consider an older artefact however, the staurotheke of Sant’ Agostino in Offida /Fig. 7/. This metal processional cross, enshrining some miraculous particles of holy wafer, and a relic of the True Cross inserted in a painted piece of wood, is an intriguing artwork that legend claims to have been produced in Venice. The prior of the convent of Sant’ Agostino was sent there to have it made, in 1280, following an Eucharistic miracle in the nearby village of Lanciano, and the subsequent arrival of the relics in Offida. Nevertheless, it is difficult to weigh the historical reliability of this narration. This was handed down on a lost parchment, said to be from the late 13th century, reported in some local chronicles, but now known only from a notarial copy from 1788 – which mentions the original as “antichissima”. However it does not report the original date.

This artefact requires more attention than has been paid to it until now. Toesca considered the painted reliquary insert within the cross and the cross metal pieces to be made in two different phases, describing the latter as made slightly later with “Byzantinising” moulds. More recently, the cross has been briefly mentioned as an example of Venetian artwork in the Marche. However its supposed origin can be called into question. Indeed the shape of the cross is common in the Venetian environment, but not limited to it, as well as the kind of ornamental chains with sphere, which fits well in the Adriatic environment. The miniature paintings on the wood around the relic are stylistically related to Venetian illumination (image in Montvecchi 2006, p. 40), and thus might make a strong case in favour of the traditional interpretation. However, there is still some uncertainty about the Venetian attribution and the hypothesis of a local copy cannot be definitively dismissed. What is more, the Christ, far from being Venetian or Byzantinising, can be compared to a beautiful late 13th century metal processional cross in Fosciandora /Fig. 1/, near Lucca, which in turn was inspired by the sculpted icon hold by the

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31 I think of the recurring feature of the shell placed within the frame, as we see for instance in Paolo Veneziano’s polyptych in the church of San Giacomo in Bologna, or the Jacobello of Bonomo’s one in Santarcangelo di Romagna, and more in general I refer to the strongly architectural character of Venetian polyptychs woodcarving.
32 Collareta/Canova/Spiazzi, Basilica del Santo (n. 30), pp. 94–95, cat. n. 9.
35 Andrea Rosini, Compendioso racconto storico della Tiera di Offida (1654), Tipografia offidata, G. Anselmi ed., Offida 1908, reprinted in Offida: origini e storia, Antonio Marchionni ed., Offida 1979, pp. 13–237, esp. pp. 232–237; Rosini claims that the parchement is 375 years old. However it is likely that he deduced the date from the content of the text.
40 Ibidem; see also Spianore, Preziose trasparenze (n. 7), p. 150.
Archangel Michel in Nicola Pisano’s pulpit in the Baptistery of Pisa⁴¹. This Tuscan cross differs from the one in Offida due to the much higher quality and the highest definition that allows a precise comparison to the monumental prototype, and emphasizes the somewhat coarse rendering of the Offida repoussé work. However, in spite of stylistic differences the two figure of Christ match in every iconographical detail; from the type of perizonium which tied on the right flank opens like a fan, to the very same position of the body; from the head to the crossed legs, and even the type of halo. Therefore, the relation between the two cannot be rejected, though is likely to be an indirect one, possibly mediated by other artefacts which refers to a common archetype. Indeed, while the Fosciandora cross reveals a direct knowledge of Pisano’s sculpture, the Offida cross just gives evidence of its fortune and its impact on the artistic context. Interestingly the other figures of the Offida reliquary cross do not derive from the Fosciandora cross. Because of their simplistic style and rendering it is difficult to define a model or find precise terms for a comparison. As far as processional crosses are concerned, it is not unusual to find artefacts made up of pieces of different origins, employing older parts along with newer ones⁴². The moulds employed for the busts of Mary, St. John and the angels – all of which, moreover, show a clear disproportion with the figure of Christ – are possibly older than that used to emboss the Crucifixion. The Virgin, for instance, wears on her head an outer veil falling on the right shoulder, as we can see in Pisan and Siennese painting especially around 1250–1280⁴³, and also the Venetian illumination of the 13th century offers valuable comparisons⁴⁴. It would not be surprising if the figure of Christ matching with the lateral figures was substituted for no longer being coherent with the contemporary visual culture, namely not responding to the commissioner’s expectations.

If the Venetian origin was fully confirmed we could infer that in the last years of the 13th century there were moulds shaped from the Pisano archetype – even though by means of intermediary models – available in Venice, a fact worthy of further investigation. The painted inner case might have been commissioned in Venice or modelled on Venetian under-rock crystal illumination, and later added to the cross, as suggested by Toesca. However I consider this to be the less probable hypothesis. Either way, both cases would testify to the great appreciation for this kind of objects, and the reliquary cross as a whole, having been entirely made in one period but with pieces of different factual or conceptual origin would be an interesting material example of cultural aggregation. All things considered, whether this cross was properly Venetian, or made by a local craftsman and the “Venetian legend” created ex-post, in the mind of the Offidian citizen a Venetian commission might have added a surplus value to the object, a value worthy of the kind of relics enshrined⁴⁵. As such, this case, as with the previous one, adds a small but significant new piece of information to the mounting evidence that Venice was regarded as a leading centre for goldsmith’s art, whose products were generally characterized by a fairly high quality, and whose artisans seem to have been particularly sought-after for artefacts designed to host highly valuable relics.

**The cross-staurotheke in the church of San Cassiano in Venice**

Within this wide context of circulations and relations, a rather little known object stands out as an *unicum* with no terms for comparison in the area. (In this) I refer to the cross-staurotheke preserved in the church of San Cassiano in Venice /Figs. 6, 8/⁴⁶. The first clearly recognisable mention of this in documents dates back to 1526 when it is recorded as "Crosetta una d’arzeinto indorà dentro della qual è uno poco del legno della Crose del Salvador, lavorà alla greca, con alcune sogiette intorno non troppo bone"⁴⁷. The following inventory in 1531 omits “lavorata alla greca” but gives us information about the weight: “*non bone né de vagliuta, pesa marche do, onze tre e mezzo*⁴⁸. Its overall appearance lets us hypothesise that it was specifically designed on the basis of a non-Venetian tradition to host a relic of the True Cross. Indeed, the shape with two crossbars bears a reference to the Byzantine world where this was common and employed in a plethora of reliquaries of the True Cross. However, what we can appreciate in the altar cross of San Cassiano is the clear connection to a model widespread in French goldsmiths’ art of the 13th century, as Marco Collareta alone pointed out previously. He wondered whether it was a Northern French or Belgian original or a local copy⁴⁹. Here I intend to examine more thoroughly the objects and offer some new remarks.

The staurotheke of San Cassiano is a double bar cross with fleur-de-lis extremities. *Its recto* is decorated, but not completely filled, with semi-precious
stones and pearls mounted on small nails, regularly displayed on the surface. A metal cast figure of the Crucified Christ is placed in the middle on a two crossbar cross that simulates the True Cross. On the upper bar is the Dove of God. Both these parts are clearly more recent and likely to belong to a 19th-century restoration. The verso is engraved, depicting the Crucified Christ flanked by busts of the Virgin and St. John the Evangelist. At the intersection of the upper crossbeam, the Lamb is surrounded by the Evangelists’ symbols placed in the extremities, except for the ox of St. Luke, which is placed in the low end. Of note is the fact that the background was probably filled with niello inlay, as some traces seem to indicate. Eight metal globes resembling pine cones, are fixed into the profile, in correspondence to the extremities, and atop the artefact is a small reliquary cross – the actual staurotheke – which is probably either as late as the base on which the cross is mounted, possibly very late 15th or early 16th century, or dating to the 19th-century restoration. This contains the relic which is likely to have been originally displayed in the middle of the front side.

The fleur-de-lis shaped extremities as a feature of staurotheke-crosses seem to have originated in the first half of the 13th century in France, where many artefacts of this type are still preserved. The kind of elliptic extension before the extremities is also clearly typical of the same French models. This is found in the cross of Les Cars already mentioned by Collareta, as well as in the RELIQUARY CROSS OF THE CHURCH OF SAINT-MAURICE IN DARNETS. It also appears, slightly differently, in other crosses such as the Croix de Clairmarais at the Musée de l’Hotel Sandelin à Saint-Omer. Conversely, this type is not documented in Venetian goldsmithery until the end of 13th-century, when it begins to be employed in rock crystal crosses. Its place of origin notwithstanding, the present, the staurotheke of San Cassiano is the oldest evidence in Venice of this typology. Moreover, the analogies with the cross of Darnets and similar ones broaden the range of references to Southern France and suggest possible further chronological limits which up to now were restricted to the first half of the 13th-century. In addition, it is of note that unlike all the comparable crosses, this one is completely devoid of filigree ornamentation. A de visu analysis did not reveal any evidence of a previous presence of this decorative technique.

Of note are also some iconographic aspects. While the rendering of a Lamb of God at the inter-section, despite being frequent in French crosses, is too common a theme in reliquary crosses from diverse contexts, and does not tell us much, the figure of Christ is rather distinctive, above all as far as the posture and the kind of loincloth tangled on the side of the waist are concerned. It is based on a type certainly employed by the mid-12th-century in the area of Rhine and Meuse rivers, such as in the Alton Towers Triptych at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and afterwards in Limousine ateliers since the late 12th-century and until the middle of the following century. Most importantly, whereas a similar iconography does not appear to be documented in

41 Marco Collareta, “cat. n. 15”, Cimabue a Pisa: la pittura pisana del Duecento, exhibition catalogue (Pisa, Museo nazionale di S. Matteo 2005), Mariagiliana Burreci, Antonino Calcada eds., Ospeadetto (PI) 2005, p. 214. I am grateful to Luca Mor who drew my attention to this cross.


43 A few interesting examples in Cimabue a Pisa (n. 41), e.g. cat. nn. 27, 53, 54.

44 Especially depictions on crystal crosses for which see Amy Neff, “Miniaturi e “arte dei cristallari” a Venezia nella seconda metà del Duecento”, in Arte veneta, XLV (1993), pp. 6–19; Spiadore, Preziose Trasparenze (n. 7).

45 Rosini, Compendioso racconto (n. 35); Sergiacomi, Il miracolo eucaristico (n. 36).


47 Archivio storico del Patriarcato di Venezia (henceforth: ASPV), Parrocchia di San Cassiano, Catastici delle Scritture, reg. 2, p. 370. (A small silver gilded cross with a bit of the Cross of the Saviour, worked in Greek style, with some gems not so valuable [my translation].)

48 ASPV, Sezione antica, Inventari, Parrocchia di San Cassiano, 1531.

49 Collareta, “Vademecum” (n. 46), p. 122.


53 Unfortunately the cross recorded as “dite Croix de Venise [… en laquelle y a trois fleurons” once in the Saint-Chapelle in Paris is known only through the inventories, cf. Éva Kovács, “De Cathone in modum firmali”, Paragone. Arte, CCCCXV (1976), pp. 3–11.

54 Hahnloser/Brugger-Koch, Corpus der Hartsteinschleife (n. 7); Letizia Caselli, La croce di Chiara扶持 Milanesi e le croci veneziane in cristallo di rocca, Padova 2002; Marco Collareta, “Il cristallo nella liturgia religiosa e civile con qualche osservazione sulle croci veneziane in cristallo di rocca”, in Cristalli e gemme; realtà, fisica e immaginario, sinologia, tecniche e arte, Bruno Zane ed., Venezia 2003, pp. 495–512; Spiadore, Preziose Trasparenze (n. 7).

Venice at this time, it can be seen in the crosses of Clairmarais and Amiens\textsuperscript{56}, which also use the same technique, i.e. engraving, and are therefore an important basis for comparison for our cross.

The Evangelists’ symbols too seem to derive from French iconographies. They can all be compared, amongst others, to the niellos on the cross of the Trésor du Prieuré d’Oignies\textsuperscript{57}. The Angel kneeling and bowing toward the centre is particularly telling. It diverges from the half-length frontally portrayed iconography more prolific in the Adriatic.

As for the Virgin’s pose, recalling the interceding posture of the Deesis, it is less common than the dolens posture. Although in the Venetian region it has a point of comparison in a contemporary processional cross in Cividale\textsuperscript{58}, it is more interesting to highlight its analogies with the Crucifixion niello in the Chalice of St. Bernard, which is also in Oignies /Fig. 9/, where the Christ too is comparable to that of the San Cassiano cross\textsuperscript{59}. These analogies are nevertheless restricted to the iconographical and compositional aspects, for the cross in San Cassiano is likely to be some decades later than the chalice, which is also of a much higher quality and can, to some extent, be considered an instance of that transitional figurative culture sometimes defined as “The year 1200”\textsuperscript{60}. Unfortunately, the poor quality of the engravings of the former impedes more thorough analysis.

Although rinceaux are often rendered on the background, this specific leafy ornamental pattern does not seem to match with other French exemplars. Yet a similar idea can be seen in a cross at the Musée de Cluny (Cl. 998)\textsuperscript{61}. However, it is too common a motif to be fully helpful\textsuperscript{62}.

It must also be noted that the pine-cone elements which are placed all around seem to be typical of altar or processional crosses between the two coasts of the Adriatic from an early date – though not exclusively limited to this area –, whereas these cannot be found in French examples. Unfortunately these do not help to define a precise chronology though, and might have been added to the cross centuries later than its creation. Finally, we should pay attention to the mark placed in the recto’s lower part: a rampant lion /Fig. 8/, which is not documented elsewhere amongst Venetian marks\textsuperscript{63}. It is not necessary the mark of a specific workshop, it might also be an emblem of a place, that in case would not be Venice. Yet, it cannot be excluded that it is a workshop mark applied in the occasion of the later extensive restoration.

Notwithstanding its relationships with older and almost contemporary French objects, the cross under consideration does not seem to match any surviving exemplar. A thorough analysis has stressed similarities as well as differences. However, there is a great heterogeneity within the group of French-Mosan crosses, both in quality and technical details. Despite the fact that French artefacts were known, and perhaps copied, in Medieval Venice\textsuperscript{64}, there is not sufficient evidence to support the hypothesis of a Venetian copy. In the following lines I would like to put forward a further hypothesis about this artefact’s history.

As seen above, the cross is documented in San Cassiano only since 1526\textsuperscript{65}, when the Cross starts to be mentioned alongside other important relics of St. Cecilia, St. Lorenz and St. Dionysius the Areopagite. Thus, relying upon inventory records, it can be asserted that these relics entered the church collection between the end of the 15\textsuperscript{th} century and 1526. They were all kept in the Santa Cecilia chapel\textsuperscript{66}, whose patronage belonged to the Morosini Family. Accordingly, as observed also by Carlo Cavalli, they might have been donated to the church by the same family\textsuperscript{67}, probably by Piero or Gabriele who are mentioned as “procuratori” of the church and therefore must have been broadly involved in its management\textsuperscript{68}. It is however difficult to say where these relics came from. Yet we have some hints. The main one comes from the inventories which record that the saint’s relics carried Greek inscriptions. Unfortunately the gilded supports of the relics of St. Lorenz and St. Dionysius, or “branchemè”, as they are called, have disappeared and the inscriptions, placed on these silver supports – as we know also from Corner\textsuperscript{70} – has only survived thanks to Galliccioli’s transcription\textsuperscript{71}. Peculiarly, these are documented only since the 1531 inventory and not in the previous one (1526). Nevertheless it is difficult to imagine that Greek inscriptions were added in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, so we could surmise that those “branchemè” bearing the inscriptions were not proper reliquaries and therefore not worth being recorded for those who wrote the first inventory. Secondly we can rely upon a record in the 1699 inventory which references one of the relics as having been brought back from Costantinopole by the Morosini\textsuperscript{72}.

All things considered, an Eastern provenance is plausible for the relics of Cecilia, Lorenz and Dionysius. Despite being hypothetical it is not too far-fetched to think the same also for the Reliquary
cross, seeing that all the relics were probably given at the same time, as argued above. Although it is not possible to go too far with the hypotheses of

56 Christine Descatoire, “cat. n. 89; cat. n. 114”, Une Renaissance (n. 52), pp. 152–153; p. 173.
58 Ibidem; cf. also the cross in Amiens, Christine Descatoire, “cat. n. 114”, in Une Renaissance (n. 52), p. 173.
60 Autour d’Hugo d’Oignies (n. 57), pp. 360–365.
62 Elisabeth Taburet-Delahaye, L’orfèvrerie gothique au Musée de Cluny (XIIe – début XVe siècle), Paris 1989, pp. 87–93; cat. n. 28.
63 It recalls also analogue motifs in the northern Adriatic, from the Crypt of the Aquileia Cathedral through to examples as late as the as the ornamental band on the late 13th – early 14th centuries wooden casket of the Beato Giuliana di Collalto (especially on the back), in Venice, Museo Correr, Cl. I n. 2363, see La pittura in Veneto. Le Origini, Francesca Flores d’Arcis ed., Milano 2004, pp. 280–281, fig. 316.
64 Piero Pazzi presumably refers to this in his book, I puzazzi (n. 21), p. 160, cat. n. 524, where he reports the mark as dating to the end of the 12th or the beginning of the 13th c. but not giving any explanation.
66 Archivio Storico del Patriarcato di Venezia (henceforth: ASPV), Parrocchia di San Cassiano, Catastico delle scritture 1, p. 370.
67 ASPV, Curia Patriarcale di Venezia. Sezione Antica (henceforth: CP. SA), Inventari delle chiese di Venezia, fasc. 15 (San Cassiano), Inventario 1531; also in Parrocchia di San Cassiano, Catastico delle scritture 1, p. 377.
68 Carlo Cavalli, Oreficeria Sacra a Venezia: la Chiesa dei Santi Cassiano e Cecilia, Tesi di Laurea, Università Ca’ Foscari di Venezia 1999/2000, p. 236. I am grateful to C. Cavalli for having sent me his dissertation. I came to some similar hypothesis before having the opportunity to read it.
69 The relic of St Cecilia was contained in a chalice said to have been broken at the time of “delli quondam Messer Piero e Messer Gabriele Moresini procuratori” (1531). In the previous inventory we do not find any name but we read the chalice was broken in 1506: ASPV, CP. SA, Inventari delle chiese di Venezia, fasc. 15 (San Cassiano), Inventario 1531; I am currently carrying out research about these Morosini. The only available information to date is that Gabriele q. Francesco, in 1471 married a woman from the Veruzzi quondam Piero dal Banco family; amongst their three children Francesco became doctor, a distinctive sign of the family wealth. They lived in S. Cassiano, Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Marco Barbaro, Antonio M. Tasca, Arbori de’ patriiti veneti, V, p. 329. I am grateful to Prof. Giuseppe Gullino for his help.
71 Giovanni Battista Galiottici, Delle memorie venete antiche profane ed ecclesiastiche, 8 voll., VI, Venezia 1795, pp. 273–274 (λειψάνου του ἁγίου Δαυίδιου [...] τοῦ ἁγίου ἀναγόμενου) and 371 (λέιψανου τοῦ ἁγίου Δαυίδιου [...]).
72 ASPV, Curia Patriarcale di Venezia. Archivio Segreto, Visite Pastorali, reg. 17 (Visita Badoer 1690–1701, II), p. 317r.: “portata da Costantinopoli dalla Casa Morosina, come appare nell’anno 1631”. Cavalli, Oreficeria sacra (n. 68), p. 237, believes that the date 1631 refers to the supposed date of the relic’s donation. However it might refer to another inventory, as well as to a date applied on the reliquary, possibly in a cartiglio to record either a restoration or a similar intervention. Unfortunately the only existing inventory which is dated 1631 records only the objects held in the Pievean’s house (ASPV, CP. SA, Inventari delle chiese di Venezia, fasc. 15 [San Cassiano], Inventario 1631).
provenance, it is likely that this object has come from either what are the modern French speaking regions or a place where the French artistic culture was dominating or had cultural links strong enough and left material traces. One such area that might be taken into consideration – even if only a working hypothesis – is the Holy Land, which had a pervading French influence on the artistic context. Despite the scarcity of surviving material evidence both the work of Western goldsmiths and the importation of artefacts are documented all over the Kingdom of Jerusalem. That means there was an opportunity to find original French, Mosan and Limoges exemplars out of their original context.

In any case once brought to Venice, and even in the case that it was already there, a man at the beginning of the 16th century would not have been able to discern the true origin of such an object, whose relevant feature was predominantly its antiquity. This is indeed clear from the inventory description "ala greca".

It is interesting to note that by donating relics to his church, above all relics coming (or believed to come) from the East, one of the Morosini would have been following a well established pattern of behaviour. From the translation of St. Mark onwards, the history of Venice is filled with episodes of merchants, patricians or other notable men bringing sacred bodies and relics from the East to the city. Interestingly, and relevant to our case, this devotional practice was still alive and well in the late 15th century. The hand of St. Martha, for example, was acquired by the Venetian merchant Ambrogio Contarini in Lesbo in 1463 and presented to the namesake monastery in 1466. Its reliquary was commissioned in 1472, the same year Cardinal Bessarion donated his staurotheke to the Scuola Grande della Carità; also in 1472, a general inventory of all relics preserved in Venice was ordered by the Venetian government in order to adequately preserve and avoid losing the abundance of such items collected "per religionem et piam diligentiam progenitorum nostrorum." Along with the Bessarion’s staurotheke, another object able to excite great devotion toward the True Cross is the relic donated by Philippe de Mézières in 1369. Its celebration was enhanced in a date very close to the supposed Morosini donation, by means of the large teleri painted between circa 1496 and 1501.

Therefore I argue that the gift of some eastern relics must have been, for the Morosini, a factual statement of belonging to the city élite, and a great exhibition of devotion toward their church. Along with the other relics, the San Cassiano staurotheke was probably brought to Venice, and given to the church of San Cassiano for its ability, due to its ancient appearance, to convey a precise religious meaning. This in a period when Eastern relics were still able to exert a great interest and attract particular devotion.

This overview of precious artefacts scattered throughout the Adriatic coast is just a hint of the breadth of the phenomenon of circulation of objects and craftsmen with regard to the Venetian medieval goldsmith’s art. These objects easily bypass rigid categorisation due to their hybrid character and trace unexpected connections. Therefore they emerge as a metaphor for the continuous relations between Venice and other areas, traditions and cultures. They also demonstrate how necessary it is to look at Venetian works and craftsmen outside Venice to fully understand the Lagoon artistic environment. Whilst significant, these examples only touch on the surface of the vast complexities of the Venetian goldsmiths’ art.

74 Supra, fn. 47. Parrocchia di San Cassiano (n. 47).
76 Corner, Ecclesiae Venetae... Decas nona et decima, Venezia 1749, pp. 96–99.

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