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Circular Inspirations:

Medieval Mediterranean Influence in the Treasury of San Marco

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Thesis Submitted to the Department of Art

For the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

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I. Introduction

In the Treasury of San Marco, there is an object of three parts (Figure 1). Its largest section piece of transparent crystal, carved into the shape of a grotto. Inside this temple is a metal figurine of Mary, her hands outstretched. At the bottom, the crystal grotto is fixed to a Byzantine crown decorated with enamels. Each part originated from a dramatically different time and place. The crystal was either carved in Imperial Rome prior to the fourth century or in 9th or 10th century Cairo at the time of the Fatimid dynasty. The figure of Mary is from thirteenth century Venice, and the votive crown is Byzantine, made by craftsmen in the 8th or 9th century.

The object resembles a Frankenstein's monster of a sculpture, an amalgamation of pieces fused together that were meant to used apart. But to call it a Frankenstein would be to suggest that the object's parts are wildly mismatched and clumsily sewn together, and is to dismiss the beauty of the crystal grotto, for each of its individual components is finely made: the crystal is intricately carved, the figure of Mary elegant, and the crown vivid and colorful.

The object does not have an obvious function. It can neither hold holy water or wine to be used in the liturgy, nor can it burn incense or house a relic. Only three hooks around the edge of the votive crown suggest that the object was once hung, suspended, from the ceiling. These hooks imply one use: that the object was made for display. Like a piece in a contemporary museum, it is art in our own "modern" understanding of it: something to be looked at from a distance.

Not all of the objects in the San Marco treasury were made purely for seeing. Many were active participants in liturgies and feast days: chalices, cruets, and incense

burners.¹ However, a multitude of the treasury objects were tampered with in the same way as the crystal grotto, with Venetian bits added to rims, bases, and interiors. These “composite objects” inspire a number of questions, particularly about their creators’ feelings about the places, both temporally and spatially, from which the objects’ parts are from. Can these composite objects illuminate medieval Venetian attitudes towards the city’s cultural neighbors? What do these pieces suggest about Venetian stylistic identity if their works of art are composed mainly of pieces from other places, made by other people? Many of the non-Venetian parts that form the composite objects appear “whole” on their own, forming vases, bowls, and plates, and do not need the supplementation of the other parts to be functionally complete. The composite objects therefore present a mystery on a practical level: what did the treasury of San Marco gain by owning the compounded works of art?

These composite objects are a fusion of paradoxes. Their creation implies an interest in old objects, yet a disregard for their perfect preservation as the Venetians chose to drill holes into the objects to attach rims or sand down enamels so that they might be attached to smaller mounts in a different object. The composite objects display a reverence for valuable pieces from other cultures, yet many of those objects are obscured by Venetian metalwork additions. The Venetians sought out objects with a religious Islamic heritage, yet used them in Christian liturgies. The objects can be interpreted as triumphalist, championing Venice’s military and economic victories over other states, or they can be seen as “weak” and appropriative art, with Venice appropriating Byzantine exoticism rather than cultivating its own local artistic style.

¹ Mario Carrieri, David Buckton, Christopher Entwistle, and Rowena Prior. *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice* (Milan: Olivetti, 1984), 65-68.

San Marco's composite objects combine art of contrasting style and origin, resulting in a united piece made out of two or three discrete parts. The objects defy easy categorization; they were made into composite objects by the Venetians, far from where much of the source material was from, with specific intent. They coalesce into a whole that transcends the individual functions of their parts. These composite objects as a group have not yet been subject of a specific investigation in scholarship, though scholars have researched individual pieces. Avinoam Shalem's study of the turquoise glass bowl, Gudernath's research the Byzantine Painted Bowl, and Gerevini's work on the grotto of the Virgin have directly contributed to this study by demonstrating the numerous angles one can take when approaching these objects.

The treasury that holds these composites, the San Marco Basilica in Venice, today contains 283 objects that, in their origin and shape, suggest connections to a vast stretch of the Medieval Eurasian world. The treasury holds objects that have been classified as Classical, Byzantine, Fatimid, Abbasid, Northern European, Chinese, and Venetian, and the pieces have been attributed to a variety of times, ranging from the first century B.C.E. to the 17th century C.E.² These labels are by no means precise, however. Many of the objects are unique, without written records to describe their history, and can only be dated with speculation.

The seminal exhibition on the treasury of San Marco by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1984 sorts the treasury items into four categories based on their origin: Classical and Early Medieval, Byzantine, Islamicate, and Western. This arrangement seems overly simplistic in light of the fact that many of the objects within the categories contain elements that were not made in the categorizing region. The origin of the group

² *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, 5.

of composite objects in the treasury is, however, nearly impossible to trace. Only records of several relics' origins survive; the vast majority of chalices, incense boats, and cruets have lost their historical pasts.³ The erasure of their history may have occurred upon their entry into the treasury, or was a gradual process across the centuries. The lack of textual sources frustrates a study such as this; without them, it is nearly impossible to know the minds of their creators. Furthermore, any attempt to track the paths of these objects as they moved from various production sites across the Mediterranean must descend into speculation. The only certainty is that these objects have travelled. Medieval Venice was one of the world's preeminent trading cities with access to a global network of treasures, and many of the items that arrived in the city's ports had already been transferred through those of Constantinople, Jerusalem, Paris, or Genoa.⁴ They reflect a global commercialization, in which local styles are balanced with the tastes of the broader network.

I argue that the composite objects should be viewed as translations, which requires repositioning the object's exact origin point as only one component of its identity, rather than its defining aspect. As will be addressed further in this paper, the artistic identities of the objects' maternal locations were equally complex and fluid as Venice's. Therefore, rather than classify the objects by their "first life", I will instead organize them based on the different ways diversity was utilized in these objects, as the "foreign" elements of the composite objects either display a sense of shared global taste, with Venice imitating other Mediterranean composite styles, or a uniquely Venetian arrangement.

³ *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, 282.

⁴ Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 105.

This structure allows me to explore how the composite objects can relay both a unique cultural perspective and an aesthetic taste system found across the broader medieval world. The objects are culturally specific, yet suggest a larger system of shared values. I propose a different methodological framework that begins with the object in its current formation, before moving backwards and horizontally in time to understand how the individual pieces fit within the scope of Venetian trade, politics, and taste. I will demonstrate how the treasury was connected to the power of the state, for Venice's military victories and economic networks dictated what kind of objects entered the treasury and what styles were deemed valuable. The essence of the extant treasury is thus closely linked to Venice's sack of Constantinople and their subsequent state-building endeavors. Finally, I will study how the pieces suggest a preference for visual variety united by a Venetian frame and explain how the assimilated objects fit within a Venetian cultivation of *spolia*, the symbols of aesthetic triumph.

To complete this study, I propose a translation methodology. In his study on items translated across cultures, Akcan writes, "No translation has been devoid of the geographical distribution of power or capital... translation as a method develops a terminology to allow for the consideration of the sociopolitical context in globalization studies, and of the multiple agents in a given encounter."⁵ The translated object is not a "secondhand copy of which the original is lost," but an object both unique and derived. Sheldon Pollock writes, "There exist no cultural agents who are not always-already transcultured," and therefore translation methodology is the most effective route of study for moved objects. Barry Flood further defines translation as "both an explanatory metaphor and a dynamic practice through which the circulation, mediation, reception and

⁵ Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 146.

transformation of distinct cultural forms and practices is effected.”⁶ Translations takes places “both *between* and *within* cultural codes, forms and practices”⁷ and do not require textual sources because “unlike the words and sentences of conventional languages, created artifacts have concrete material presence and real spatial relations.”⁸ Such a method is therefore necessary for the composite objects, which lack primary sources to justify their creation.

The translated objects in the San Marco exist on a spectrum of appropriation translation, “the tendency to assimilate or absorb a foreign object into the local norms,” as seen in the objects from Byzantium whose shape was left untouched, and foreignizing translation, “the tendency to...introduce a new idea, a discontinuity,”⁹ as seen in the composite objects. Many of the composite objects insert an idea beyond reconfiguration: they include an additional element of Venetian metalwork, which localizes the object. Hoffman describes localization as “defined through zones of contact, situated at the intersection of cultural space along the networks of their circulation.”¹⁰ These metalwork additions may be either the sole addition to an object, or it will combine multiple parts. Instead of considering a culture as having an inherent style of artistic production unique to some specific essence that then mixes with the inherent style of another place, translation assumes a continuous process of development and exchange in which the resulting material objects are more than just copies, distortions, or combinations. Such a position seems most fitting for Venice’s position toward its art as it shifts and expands

⁶ Finbarr Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹ Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 158.

¹⁰ Eva Hoffman and Scott Redford, “Transculturation in the Eastern Mediterranean (1050-1250),” in Flood, Finbarr Barry and Necipoglu, Gulru, (eds.), *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture (2 vols)* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 409.

according to its socio-political position in the Mediterranean.

I will divide this analysis into three sections that are different in discipline but thematically overlapping. The first will explore the way evolving myths about the Venetian state corresponded to interest in with architectural and artistic patronage. The second will briefly explain the significance of the composite object's material mediums and the value of such pieces in medieval treasuries. The third section will analyze the influences and functions of the composite objects themselves.

II. Myths

A. Historical Myths

A great deal of scholarship has already been written about Venetian myths, particularly as they relate to the city's beginnings, military achievements, and artistic history.¹¹ These myths began to develop around the 9th century, inspiring the theft of St. Mark's relics. They gradually increased across the centuries and reached a fever pitch in the thirteenth century during a state development practice enforced by Doge Zeno (1253-1268). These myths reflect a state project of self-consciousness, in which the city's visual form morphed over time to reflect different symbolic currencies related to contemporary Venetian political and economic concerns. I will not attempt to revise or recontextualize these myths, but instead use them as a way of understanding what Venetians thought and felt about their city, neighbors, enemies. The myths reveal a motive for artistic decisions in and beyond the church of San Marco, which in turn situate the composite objects

¹¹ See Henry Maguire and Robert S. Nelson (eds), *San Marco, Byzantium, and the Myths of Venice*. (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010).

within a state-making effort to make visible objects that reflected Venice's status as the diverse, triumphant economic leader in the Mediterranean.

The myths reveal a subjective relationship to the city's history which could be changed according to the current events, within this context art such as the composite objects could act as a driving force of didactic remembrance and cultural celebration. Myths relating to art were most commonly about *spolia* objects, or pieces often taken as booty that were an amalgamation of styles. San Marco's composite treasury objects can be seen as an extension of such *spolia* for they operate under the same principles of recombination. This section will consequently be an amalgamation of history and story. The composite objects were created near the end of this chronology, but precursor objects reappear throughout the history, lending some context for the eventual creation of the composite objects. I will discuss how four reconstructions of the church corresponded to developments in Venice's foreign affairs and how the reconstructions set a stylistic precedent for the composite objects still to come.

The historical record of Venice begins in 568, when Venice was founded by refugees who settled in a fishing village on a Mediterranean lagoon.¹² These refugees fled a war between the Gothic tribes and the Byzantines, and held cultural ties to the latter group. The fledgling town was not constructed on a historical foundation, unlike Rome, Ravenna, or other cities with an extant, visible Roman heritage.¹³ The city thus lacked an extant mythology and had the freedom to construct an original one of its own, liberated from any past ideologies. The very earliest myths suggested that Venice began as a Byzantine province. Later, the myth shifted so that the Trojan hero Antenor founded

¹² Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 104.

¹³ Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venice and Antiquity: The Venetian Sense of the Past*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 6.

Venice after fleeing the fall of his city (and, even later, that Antenor came to Venice *before* the founding of Rome, establishing Venice's primacy in Mediterranean history).¹⁴

Mythologized connections to western powers came in following centuries, including a legend from the fourteenth century stating that Charlemagne granted special privileges to Venice, enfolding the city into his new Christian empire.¹⁵ In fact, Venice had violently resisted Charlemagne's military campaigns and was defended by Byzantine aid.¹⁶ G. Faoli argues that western myths like the Charlemagne legend were introduced following the 10th century to "counter Venice's real history as a dependency of the East."¹⁷ By portraying Venice as divided between, yet above, these two powers, these myths promote a theme from the eleventh century that sees "Venice as eternally free, in thrall to no power."¹⁸ By the 13th century, Venice saw itself as the representation of a mythological, unbroken bond between Classical Rome and the Holy Roman Empire, and was therefore a "city built with Roman stones and Roman thought" which was then protected by the Italian apostle, St. Mark.¹⁹ As time passed, Venice thus increasingly separated itself from other Mediterranean powers in order to establish the distinct power of the city.

The primary set of myths attributed to Venice's history relates to the role of St. Mark, the patron saint of Venice. Venice's first patron saint was St. Theodore, a

¹⁴ Debra Pincus, "Venice and the Two Romes: Byzantium and Rome as a Double Heritage in Venetian Cultural Politics," *Artibus et Historiae* 13 (1992), 105.

¹⁵ Pincus, "Venice and Two Romes," 106.

¹⁶ Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 104.

¹⁷ G. Fasoli, "Nascita di un mito," in *Strudi storici in onore di Gioacchino Volpe*, Florence, 1958, vol. 15, 44-79.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, 13.

Byzantine warrior martyred in Greece, to whom the first doge's chapel was dedicated.²⁰ Venice was also bound to St. Mark from its earliest years, as demonstrated by a myth from before the 9th century that stated Mark had been sent by St. Peter to Christianize the Northern Adriatic. After doing so, St. Mark then sailed to Alexandria, where he founded the Church of Alexandria, for which he is most known, and where he was martyred.²¹ As time passed and Venice transitioned to a mythology of a state separate from the east, the cult of St. Mark increased until, in 828, two Venetian merchants smuggled by boat the relics of St. Mark from Alexandria; the city was, at that time, under Abbasid rule.^{22,23}

Immediately following the “return” of the relics to Venice, Doge Justinian Partecipacius (825-829) wrote to his wife ordering the construction of a church dedicated to St. Mark. This new church served a propagandistic purpose affirming the legitimacy of the relic's new home, Venice. As Fabio Barry writes “the construction and adornment of San Marco became an exercise in authentication by adornment.”²⁴ The very impetus for San Marco was therefore the theft of objects located in a foreign land that Venice, via a web of mythmaking, believed were rightfully theirs. Such an act foreshadows Venice's theft of composites from Byzantium centuries later.

Doge Justinian Partecipacius intended for his personal chapel to be placed within San Marco, and with that act, definitively moved Venice away from patronage of St. Theodore to be instead under St. Mark. The church of San Marco was completed at some

²⁰ Maria Georgopoulou, "Late Medieval Crete and Venice: An Appropriation of Byzantine Heritage." *The Art Bulletin* 77, no. 3 (1995), 485.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 484.

²² Donald E. Queller, Ellen E. Kittell, and Thomas F. Madden, *Medieval and Renaissance Venice*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 47.

²³ The relics of St. Theodore were also taken by the Venetians in 1257. See *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, 8.

²⁴ Fabio Barry, “Disiecta membra: Ranieri Zeno, the Imitation of Constantinople, the *Spolia* style, and Justice at San Marco.” *San Marco, Byzantium, and the Myths of Venice*. ed. Henry Maguire; Robert Nelson, (Dumbarton Oaks, 2010), 64.

point in the 830s after Doge Justinian Partecipacius' death. Though there is no record of when the San Marco treasury itself began, the church required objects for liturgical use which may then have formed the earliest components of a proto-treasury. Demus has also identified two likely Venetian architectural predecessors to the church of San Marco: the church of San Teodoro (built 819 or earlier) for St. Theodore served as a model for a doge's chapel, while a tower or chapel in the city held saint's relics. Like the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, San Teodoro was created in a Greek layout, referencing the saint's eastern origin, and was covered in Byzantine-style mosaics.²⁵ Whereas structures built for St. Theodore, a Byzantine saint, might be expected to be eastern in style, the first San Marco construction did not attempt to differentiate the new church from these Byzantine structures, as might be supposed by Venice's adoption of a non-Byzantine saint.

The church of San Marco began its life as a composite building and set a precedent for the *spolia*-filled structure and city square it resided in. It was built from pieces of stone from abbeys and other sources, materials that Demus calls "prefabricated" and likely consisted of some *spolia*.^{26,27} Demus has identified three aesthetics in the first church that demonstrate an early integration of multiple cultural connections. By studying elements of the current San Marco that he has identified as being from the 9th century, such as capitals, friezes, and relief slabs, Demus writes that the decoration of these items appears in an interlacing "Lombardic" style, a low relief Greco-Byzantine style, and a

²⁵ Demus, *Church of San Marco in Venice*, 63.

²⁶ Otto Demus and Ferdinando Forlati, *Church of San Marco in Venice*. (Washington: Harvard University, 1960), 69-70.

²⁷ The church may have been modeled after the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, as they both share a cruciform pattern and a main altar placed in the middle of the central cupola.²⁷ The two structures were similar in function: both had to be a "martyrium, an apostles church, a dynastic chapel, and a state sanctuary." See Demus, *Church of San Marco in Venice*, 66.

Venetian style that imitates the Greco-Byzantine one.²⁸ This first church can be seen as a precursor for a tradition of combining diverse visual styles.

The first church burned down in 976 during a rebellion against Doge Petrus Condionu IV, after which it was again rebuilt in the model of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople.²⁹ This church, too, was a composite made of centuries-old fragments brought together under a “foreign” stylistic plan. Though no surviving floor plan remains of the first church, Demus argues that certain parts of the present-day San Marco appear to be from the 10th century reconstruction, particularly elements from the western side such as the west wall, the great niche in the west, and stairs leading from the entrance niche to galleries on the west, and the west part of the crypt.^{30,31} Also at this time, the first version of the *Pala d’Oro* (Figure 2) was commissioned by Doge Pietro Orseolo (976-8) who ordered from Constantinople a silver altar featuring St. Mark for the church.³² Once again, San Marco was constructed as a composite object furnished with Byzantine art.

As Venice’s trading empire continued to grow throughout the eleventh century, the Venetians gained access to more *spolia* with which to enrich their buildings.³³ By 1200, Venice had achieved several key trade alliances. In 1082, Venetian ships broke a Norman naval blockade around the Byzantine-ruled Balkans. In exchange for their aid, the Imperial Byzantine chancellery granted Venice the Golden Bull, a pact that gave the

²⁸ Ibid, 68.

²⁹ Barry, *Disiecta membra*, 8.

³⁰ Demus, *Church of San Marco in Venice*, 66.

³¹ Demus also suggests that parts of the first church were reused in the second, as the fire does not seem to have caused great damage; words more similar to “repair” than “rebuild” are used in relevant documents, and the work done on the church following the fire took only two years to complete. See Demus, *Church of San Marco in Venice*, 69-70.

³² Sergio Bettini, “Venice, the Pala d’Oro, and Constantinople,” in *The Treasury of San Marco Venice* (Milan: Olivetti, 1984).

³³ Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 105.

city full trading privileges in Byzantine provinces, exemption from tolls, and ownership of a district within Constantinople in which Venetians could settle and conduct trade.³⁴³⁵

This partnership elevated Venice to Byzantium's equal in the Mediterranean and solidified the cultural ties, visible in the architecture of San Marco, between the two.

Venice sent another naval fleet to assist the First Crusade in 1099. In return, the city was given one-third of the conquered towns' land, as well as trading concessions within the Crusader kingdom.³⁶ These strategic footholds in important capitals (Constantinople and Jerusalem) allowed Venetian spheres of interest to expand east, and trade rapidly increased as Venice gained further trade colonies in Ragusa, Thessalonica, Trebizond, Acre, Alexandria, and many other smaller cities across the Mediterranean in the 12th century.³⁷

Concurrent to these victories, Venice began a third rebuilding of the church in the second half of the 11th century, one which reflected their growing economic power. Construction began under Doge Domenico Contarini (r. 1043-1071) and continued with his successors.³⁸ A new atrium was introduced and the centuries-old wooden ceiling were replaced with brick vaulting. The church was built as a five-domed basilica, deviating from the Constantinople floor-plan of the previous two churches.³⁹ The new construction

³⁴ Ibid, 105.

³⁵ The Venetian quarter in Constantinople included churches, docks, areas to buy and sell, and houses for merchants to live in, in exchange for Venice's naval defense in the case of an attack on the Byzantine empire. This treaty would be renewed several times over the centuries as Byzantine, lacking a naval fleet, required Venice's ships to defend their territory, and the changing terms reveal, according to Livia Bevilacqua, "the gradual growth of the economic power of Venice." See Bevilacqua, "Venice in Byzantium," 138.

³⁶ Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 107.

³⁷ Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 107.

³⁸ Some historians have confused the second and third rebuildings of the San Marco, since the third construction did not result from any structural need and therefore is often attached to the more recognizable incident of the 10th century fire. See Demus, *Church of San Marco in Venice*, 71.

³⁹ Demus, *Church of San Marco in Venice*, 74.

covered up large windows in the church, causing a permanent lighting problem.⁴⁰

Functionality was sacrificed for visual power. Even in this middle period, San Marco was decorated with *spolia*, its interior covered in marbles from Sicily and other cities in the near Mediterranean.⁴¹

Maria Georgopoulou writes that myths of St. Mark, particularly tales of him preaching in the Northern Adriatic, were completed in the 11th century, precisely at the time that Venice cemented its status as a Mediterranean power of unique cultural right. These legends were revised by a succession of doges between 1200 and 1260. Pincus notes that the creation or modification of a historical past was part of a larger effort on the part of other cities on the Italian peninsula such as Florence, Milan, and Padua, to present themselves as “Second Romes.” Pincus writes that “The concept of the second Rome is a topos for the city states of Italy as they develop political self-sufficiency and search for individual identity.”⁴²

In this way, the new construction reflected Venice’s evolving self-image. St. Mark was a key component of the church from its first incarnation, and the references to him multiplied across the centuries. The life of St. Mark appeared in mosaics on the façade, atrium and presbytery of the third church,⁴³ and St. Mark’s image was added to Venetian coins.⁴⁴ The development of a state image was thus tied to economic and political growth. As Venice deepened its ties to other states, so too did it strengthen its own self-concept.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 87.

⁴¹ Ibid., 21.

⁴² Pincus, “Venice and Two Romes,” 109.

⁴³ *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, 8.

⁴⁴ Alan M. Stahl, *Zecca: The Mint of Venice in the Middle Ages*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press in Association with the American Numismatic Society, New York, 2000), 304.

The success of Venice provoked an escalating series of tensions with their old economic and military ally, Constantinople.⁴⁵ From the city's inception, Venice was culturally linked to Byzantium. Venice looked to Constantinople when building the first two San Marcos and styled their early coins in the model of Byzantine coinage. By the 12th century, Venice's trade empire rivalled but did not yet surpass Byzantium's. Byzantine merchants were aware of the Venetian threat, which provoked much anxiety. Internal tensions between Venice and Genoa led the Byzantine emperor Manuel Komnenus to imprison all Venetians in the empire in 1171. In response, Venice sent a war fleet to free their citizens, but the mission was unsuccessful: Venetian soldiers were decimated by plague during the journey. Doge Vitale II Michiel (r. 1156-1172) then sought peace, sending embassies to Byzantium to free the imprisoned Venetians. Yet by 1181, there was still no recognized peace. Venice therefore sought a military alliance with the Normans in Sicily, the threat of which succeeded in freeing all Venetian prisoners in 1181.⁴⁶ Byzantine anxiety towards the resident Venetian merchants continued into 1182, when a Byzantine mob entered the Latin quarters and massacred a group of Italians. Despite local animosity, Venetians moved back into the city five years later.⁴⁷

The relationship between Venice and Byzantium was thus not one of either allies or enemies, but some combination. They were rival siblings: Byzantium as the powerful

⁴⁵ The advancement of the Ayyubids in the Holy Land led to papal injunctions against trade with Muslims in the Eastern Mediterranean in the late 1100s, which the Venetians publicly pretended to follow. However, as much of their trade came from these regions, Venetian merchants continued importing and exporting goods out of Muslim ports through secondary locations such as Crete. As Venice alone continued trade with Muslims, the city experienced yet another wealth boom. See Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 108.

⁴⁶ Donald E. Queller, Ellen E. Kittell, and Thomas F. Madden, *Medieval and Renaissance Venice*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 104.

⁴⁷ Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 109.

eldest and Venice as the successful, ambitious younger. Understanding the way Venice's competitiveness with Byzantium coincided with its admiration helps contextualize Venice's actions in the next century. Venice's conflicting interests justify how they could decimate the Byzantine capital and then place Byzantine objects—some modified by the Venetians, some not—in places of honor, as well as imitate Byzantine composites with their own creations.

In 1202, Pope Innocent III called the Fourth Crusade to drive Muslims out of the Holy Land. European forces assembled in Venice, which provided the forces with ships charged at a steep price. As the Crusaders could not afford these heavy fees, Venice requested that their force sail first to Zara, a city now called Zadar in modern day Croatia coveted by Venice, as repayment. The Crusaders captured Zara, a Christian city, and were promptly excommunicated by the Pope. The spoils of Zara were split equally between the Venetians and their crusader allies, though the former claimed their debt was still unpaid.⁴⁸

After wintering in Zara, the Crusaders again strayed from their plan to continue to the Holy Land. Instead, they sailed to Constantinople, whose emperor, Alexios IV, had requested the help of the Crusaders in returning his co-emperor father to power.⁴⁹ In exchange, Alexios IV promised money to the Crusaders. Yet after the Crusaders answered his plea and reinstated his father, Alexios IV found himself lacking the funds needed to keep his promise. Between July 1203 and April 1204 the Crusader host camped outside Constantinople, demanding their payment. Just before Easter, 1204, the force invaded, defeated, and sacked Constantinople in an explosion of violence. Venice

⁴⁸ Queller, *Medieval and Renaissance Venice*, 79.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

claimed the best 3/8 of Constantinople and Byzantine Empire, including Crete, a key seat in the spice trade. Venice refused an offer of political office in the city, as their focus was more on trade than politics. Instead, Baldwin IX, Count of Flanders and Hainaut, was elected as the new Emperor.⁵⁰ In addition to new trade routes, Venice also emerged with many of Constantinople's treasures, including numerous Classical and Byzantine works of art, as well as raw silver, gold, and jewels. Doge Enrico Dandolo himself took from Constantinople the arm of St. George, relics of the blood of Christ, part of the holy cross, and a relic of the skull of John the Baptist.⁵¹

Much of the treasury of San Marco was acquired either from or following Venice's conquest of Constantinople.⁵²⁵³ Venice no longer had to copy Byzantine styles; it now owned them. As precious items flooded into the inner treasury, the exterior of San Marco underwent its fourth rebuilding. Demus does not categorize these changes as a "reconstruction", but they nevertheless dramatically altered the appearance of the church. San Marco's treasury was also radically transformed as Byzantine precious materials flooded into the city. The post-crusade additions occurred particularly under the rule of Doge Zeno (r. 1253-1268) as part of a larger *imitatio* Constantinople project. In addition to trying to start a crusade to retake Constantinople after the Genoese reconquered it in the 1260s, Zeno created numerous ceremonies in the style of those of Byzantine emperors

⁵⁰ Ibid., 97.

⁵¹ Ibid., 83.

⁵² Barry, *Disiecta membra*, 26.

⁵³ In response to papal criticism of the sack, Venice repeated their claim of divine assent that the city had used to justify the stealing of St Mark's relics. Venice also attempted to quiet complaints of sacrilege by changing traditionally holy objects into other, more harmless structures. For example, Christian sigma-shaped altar tables were placed in lunettes over the doorways to the south façade and the north transept. Roman, Jewish, and Muslim sources note an aversion to reusing materials from one kind of sacred space to build another. Fabio Barry has argued that Venice's reconfiguration was not in isolation, however, as altar tables transformed into lunettes from the 11th century have been found in Egypt and Syria in the 11th century and are similar in style to altars that have undergone the same process in San Marco. See Barry, *Disiecta membra*, 23-25.

and changed his costume to better resemble them. Even the construction around San Marco imitated Constantinople's urban planning.⁵⁴ Also during this time were the first recorded procession of icons, particularly the Virgin Nicopoia, which was a symbol of Byzantine victory. Scholars theorize that Byzantine emperors brought the Virgin Nicopoia into battle; therefore, Venice's procession both affirmed traditional religious festivities and championed their own military supremacy.⁵⁵

Zeno's rule bracketed the loss of Europe's empire in Byzantium in 1261, a defeat that provoked much anxiety in Venice. Pincus writes that "the concept of Venice as a city with a divinely favored destiny... was in jeopardy."⁵⁶ Perhaps for this reason, a new myth of St. Mark became associated with the expansion of the church during Doge Zeno's rule. When bishops sought to move the relics of St. Mark to a new location, they found that the relics had been lost. Miraculously, the spirit of St. Mark revealed that the relics had been hidden in a wall. Via this legend, the new church was consecrated by St. Mark himself, and the status of the church as a religious center was affirmed.⁵⁷

San Marco was given a new marble façade during Zeno's rule in the 1260s, and the exterior treasury wall was also covered in "plutei," border panels that were copies or fakes of Byzantine artifacts. Henry Maguire calls these panels pseudo-*spolia* which "promote the image of *spolia* assembly."⁵⁸ Alternatively, pseudo-*spolia* demonstrates the Venetian taste for Byzantine styles, in which exposure to the existing *spolia* fed a culture that already valued these visuals. The use of *spolia* suggests a preference for visual variety which translated to other objects inside the San Marco. Just as the Venetians

⁵⁴ Barry, *Disiecta membra*, 7-11.

⁵⁵ Georgopoulou, "Late Medieval Crete and Venice," 493.

⁵⁶ Queller, *Medieval and Renaissance Venice*, 18.

⁵⁷ *The Treasury of San Marco*, 66.

⁵⁸ *The Treasury of San Marco*, 6.

swapped mounts and decorative elements for columns, so too did they recombine bases and embellishments for composite objects in the San Marco treasury.⁵⁹ These combinations may look awkward to modern eyes, but Mary J. Carruthers has written, were considered beautiful to medieval viewers, “a balance between two extremes: proper ‘variety’ is the mean between ‘blend’ and ‘chaotic.’⁶⁰

A taste for diversity, for recognizable combinations of separate cultural spheres, is thus a reoccurring theme in Venetian art and architecture across the centuries. After over 300 years of such art, merging the styles of other places might be said to be a style in of itself. *Spolia* and pseudo-*spolia* explicitly advertise Venice’s connections to distant parts of the world, yet their jumbled composition clearly shows Venice’s hand in their assembly, ensuring that though a viewer’s mind might wander to Byzantium or the Holy Land, they would remember that such pieces were, ultimately, Venetian.

On and around the building in the piazza, the Venetians also placed many of the column *spolia* gained from Constantinople and the ruins of Roman cities along the coast of the Italian peninsula.⁶¹ Byzantine artifacts, formerly used to assert the supremacy of the Byzantine emperor, were reinterpreted; rather than advancing the power of one

⁵⁹ The piazza, the forecourt of the church, was also remodeled in the 1260s in the style of the Hippodrome in Constantinople. Horses taken from Constantinople were placed at the head of the piazza, which corresponded to their location in the Hippodrome.⁵⁹ Zeno also imitated the function of these sites by performing his Byzantine-inspired ceremonies there, creating an “arena for ritual encounter between ruler and people.”⁵⁹ Barry writes, “San Marco had become both façade and backdrop, presenting its own miraculous self and creating civic life: it was the response to, and occasion for, the rituals of the piazza, a republican forum overseen by a quasi-Imperial doge.” See Barry, *Disiecta membra*, 13-19.

⁶⁰ Mary J. Carruthers, “‘Varietas’: A Word of Many Colours.” *Poetica* 41, no. 1/2 (2009): 11-32.

⁶¹ In Constantinople, the columns had been used as sites for justice, both by the Byzantines, and by the Venetians after arriving: the Venetians executed the Byzantine emperor Alexios V Doukas by throwing him from the tallest column. Robert S. Nelson notes that column height was equated with authority, an idea that the Venetians assumed and reused to codify their own power. Nelson writes that by continuing to use the columns as sites of justice following their placement in piazza, Venice conducted rituals of purification consisting of the execution of criminals, which “restored and affirmed the power and purity of Venice.” See R. S. Nelson, “High Justice: Venice, San Marco, and the Spoils of 1204,” *Byzantine Art in the Aftermath of the Fourth Crusade: The Fourth Crusade and Its Consequences*, ed. P.L. Vocolopoulos (Athens, 2007), 150.

individual, their message was broadened to a claim for the supremacy of the entire city of Venice.⁶²

As these modifications were made to the physical space of San Marco, so too was the city's government and money being standardized. Venice's expanding wealth and population, doubling from 80,000 in 1200 to 160,000 in 1300, called for new regulations.⁶³ By the end of the 13th century, the principal legislative body in Venice was the Great Council (*Maggior Consiglio*) which appointed administrative and judicial officials. The elected Consilium Regatarum oversaw legislation related to trade and regulated the precious metals within the city. The doge himself was elected by the Great Council for life and was the figurehead of Venetian politics. He attended all council meetings and oversaw six counselors who each represented one sector of the Venetian city. His figure appeared on all Venetian coins of the 13th through 14th centuries. The doge, alongside the heads of the Consilium Regatarum, formed the Signoria executive committee, which set imagery for this coinage.⁶⁴

The Church of San Marco had an official Procurator position to oversee the

⁶² Fabio Barry writes of further translations that may have occurred through the supplanting of *spolia*. The porphyry statue of the four tetrarchs, taken from the Philadelphion, a public square in Constantinople, was placed on a corner of the San Marco's facade. Barry notes that statues in medieval Constantinople were seen to have magical powers that, according to literature, could guard treasuries.⁶² The tetrarchs, made of porphyry, a rare and very hard stone, made excellent guardians. Other statues the crusaders encountered in Constantinople, such as a statue of Athena and a porphyry statue called the Righteous Judges were intentionally destroyed or defaced, which Barry argues demonstrates that Venetians were aware of the powers associated with the objects, and sought to dispel them. By placing the tetrarchs on the San Marco, the Venetians may be both subverting and appropriating the power placed on the statues by the Byzantines. As the Venetians proudly displayed the stolen statues on the walls of their church and were not punished, they were shown to be superior over the statues' original owner, Byzantium. Venice also participated in the superstitions relating to the statues by placing them outside of a treasury, the context in which they were believed to be powerful. See Barry, *Disiecta membra*, 20-37.

⁶³ Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 125.

⁶⁴ Stahl, *Zecca*, 102-105.

administration of the church, its finances, its physical structure, and the Piazza.⁶⁵ The Procurator was closely linked to the Doge, as the Procurator was appointed by them and often went on to become doge themselves. Both doges and procurators are recorded ordering the *Pala d'Oro* and its many revisions. The *Pala d'Oro*, one of the most famous objects in Venice, was commissioned in the 10th century by Doge Pietro Orseolo (976-8). Doge Ordelafo Falier (1102-1117) then ordered the altar reworked, and a new altar made of gold was created by a Greek craftsman in Venice.⁶⁶ The *Pala d'Oro* was enlarged in 1209 with enamels from the sack of Constantinople at the direction of the Procurator of San Marco.⁶⁷ The final version of the *Pala d'Oro* was ordered by Doge Andrea Dandolo in the 1340s.⁶⁸

No known sources exist that reveal exactly who oversaw the complicated issue of the composite object's assembly. However, given the history of the involvement of doges and procurators with the valuable treasury object of the *Pala d'Oro*, I believe both the Doge and the Procurator were likely involved in encouraging the existence of the composite objects. The Doge similarly approved the images which appeared on Venetian coins. The proximity of the doge's palace to the treasury (as well as the Procurator's,

⁶⁵ Allison Sherman, "'Soli Deo honor et gloria'? Cittadino Lay Procurator Patronage and the Art of Identity Formation in Renaissance Venice," in Avcioglu, Nebahat and Jones, Emma, (eds.), *Architecture, Art, and Identity in Venice and its Territories, 1450-1750*, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), 17.

⁶⁶ Notably, only one composite object in San Marco references the image of St. Mark: the *Pala d'Oro*. However, the composite nature of this object lies in the Byzantine enamels added to a Venetian metal frame. Outside the San Marco stands the lion representation of St. Mark, but this statue does not display St. Mark's image, and has only a small amount of Venetian metalwork to cover damage on the tip of the tail. The Venetians created other silver works to honor St. Mark, including an antependium with scenes from the life of St. Mark, a cover for St. Mark's gospel, and reliquaries for the tooth and ring of St. Mark. Yet there are no enamels of him on any of the Venetian composite mounts, nor figural representations of him. The figure of Mary in the rock crystal grotto could easily have been a statue of St. Mark. The Venetians thus must not have seen value in converting a Byzantine or Fatimid item into one about St. Mark as the cultural referents did not perfectly line up. The Venetians preferred to surround St. Mark purely in their own silver.

⁶⁷ David Buckton and John Osborne, "The Enamel of Doge Ordelafo Falier on the Pala d'Oro in Venice." *Gesta* 39, no. 1 (2000), 43.

⁶⁸ *The Treasury of San Marco*, 42.

which was located off the piazza of San Marco) and the doge's involvement in other architectural projects around the San Marco, further supports the influence of these figures on the treasury. The Consilium Regatarum, a closely related government body to the doge, regulated precious materials and may also have had some say in what pieces entered the treasury, perhaps reserving materials of especially fine quality for San Marco's use.⁶⁹ For simplicity's sake, future mentions in this essay of Venetian decisions relating to the treasury of San Marco refer to this corporation of Doge, Procurator, Consilium Regatarum, and any other government officials who had influence over the treasury. The fact that treasury decisions were thus controlled by the Venetian government justifies how composite objects might be used for political means.

With the exception of two later objects, no composites in the treasury contain donor's inscriptions or heraldry that might tie them to a medieval Venetian family or individual. This is in contrast to the Byzantine and Fatimid objects, many of which were dedicated to rulers such as the Byzantine Emperor Romanos or the Caliph Al 'Aziz Bi-Ilah. The lack of inscriptions lends further credence to the theory that the composite objects were commissioned in-house by the Procurator of San Marco with few if any private donors.

I believe it is useful to now discuss Venetian coinage, as it was similar to the composite objects in its visibility and mutability, and records do survive of the Venetian government's active role in the visual decisions made about these objects. Coins are an easy conduit for tracking influence, as they were often adapted and reissued every few decades or so. The changes reflect Venetian officials' attempts to establish a powerful state through iconography and reflect a similar effort toward the composite objects.

⁶⁹ Stahl, *Zecca*, 102-105.

Prior to the 12th century, Venice had a state penny (the *denaro*) modeled after Carolingian coins, featuring Greek crosses and temples, but the coin was little used.⁷⁰ Venice used the Verona penny after the 1140s for trade at home, and the Byzantine *hyperpyron* for trade abroad.⁷¹ However, soon after, the coin of the Crusaders in Jerusalem, which was minted in the style of Islamic *dinars*, grew weaker as the Ayyubids (1171-1260) slowly began to retake the Holy Land in the 12th century. The *hyperpyron* was also debased in the latter half of the 12th century. Venetian minting returned in 1172 to compensate for this deficit. Doge Enrico Dandolo (1192-1205) introduced the *grossi*, which featured two full length figures holding a standard between them. This format is based on the Byzantine *electrum aspros* coin, in which the two figures refer to the co-emperors of Constantinople.⁷² Rather than displaying imperial figures, Venetian *grosso* featured the Doge and St. Mark, with Christ on the reverse. Stahl compares the style of this figure to mosaics added to the inner central dome of the San Marco in the 13th century, referencing the three-quarters view of Christ's body and his star-studded border.⁷³ There is no comparable coin image in either European or Byzantine coinage. The coin thus no longer assimilated other styles, but instead self-referenced Venice's own stores of mythology.^{74,75}

⁷⁰ Stahl, *Zecca*, 304.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷² Stahl, *Zecca*, 303.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 308.

⁷⁴ The figure of the doge also proved to be an effective way to promulgate Venetian political material. Ernst Kantorowicz describes the way the liturgical acclamation of the doge—which in itself was modelled after the Byzantine ceremony—was imposed upon Venice's colonies during Christian feast days, including those of both St. Mark and the city's own patron saint. The religious ideology of the conquered was integrated, not extinguished. This approach is further reflected in the Venetian treatment of their artistic materials. See E.H. Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae: A Study in Liturgical Acclamations and Medieval Ruler Worship* (Berkeley, 1946), 151.

⁷⁵ Economic motivations may also justify some of the approaches taken to the treasury at this time. The Venetian government was run by merchants for merchants; Abu-Lughod writes that the Venetian government functioned like a corporation, though she is hesitant to call it state capitalism, noting its “strong

The name of Venetian coins reflected another kind of influence. In the second half of the 13th century, the Mamluk State replaced the Ayyubid dynasty in northeast Africa and west Asia, and claimed Acre, the last Crusader city.⁷⁶ As Venice solidified their trade relationship with the new state, their money, formerly referred to as *moneta*, became *zecca*, the name of Islamic coins.⁷⁷ The adoption of this term suggests a pro-Muslim attitude and may have been influenced either by the profusion of Venetian trade with the Mamluks or a shifting desire to display Islamic cultural elements in visible settings. Abu-Lughod writes of European idealization of Muslim culture in the *chansons de geste* and romances from 12th and 13th century France, ideas that may potentially be applicable to Venice as well. She writes, “The elements of the pattern are the cosmopolitanism of the world of Islam, its power and wealth, the splendor of its cities, the cleverness of its people...”⁷⁸ This admiration for Islamic culture may explain why art from the Islamic Eastern Mediterranean also began to be incorporated into the San Marco architecture during this time, unconnected to the proto-Byzantine campaigns by the doges.⁷⁹

Venice’s relationship with its trading partners thus continued to shift across time, flowing from Byzantium to the Islamic Eastern Mediterranean, and their composite

subcomponent of individual enterprise.” Venetian shipbuilding was sponsored by the state, and pooled ships and capital to reduce risk. Rather than taxing its subjects, Venice used public debt – in which private citizens gave money to the city in exchange for government stocks – to fund infrastructure. Wealthy families were forced to contribute funds to this debt based on their liquid value, and therefore many rich families funneled their money into valuable material objects. The consequent profusion of these objects may be one of the contributing factors to the size and richness of the San Marco treasury, as Venetian families would donate their pieces to the church across the centuries. See Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 114-115.

⁷⁶ Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 121.

⁷⁷ Stahl, *Zecca*, 306.

⁷⁸ Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony* 106-107.

⁷⁹ Thomas Dale describes Islamic influence in the ogee arches and raised outer shells of the domes of the San Marco. See Thomas E. A. Dale, "Inventing a Sacred Past: Pictorial Narratives of St. Mark the Evangelist in Aquileia and Venice, Ca. 1000-1300," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 48 (1994): 101.

objects reflect the close contact between states. Material objects and viewers' taste for them spread from port to port, and there was no larger port than Venice's. Venice became a city that reflected the art of their connections and the San Marco treasury was thus a crucible for the entire network Mediterranean art. Crusades, wars, and economic threats did not seriously impact the health of the treasury. Though Venice's wealth and power diminished on a global scale following the 16th century, the doge's church had already acquired a substantial treasury by this time, and new objects continued to be donated into the 18th century.⁸⁰

B. Treasury Myths

In the Middle Ages, treasuries were physical spaces dedicated to the storage of valuable materials that could be regularly removed for practical use or stored for material wealth. Treasuries were useful political tools, allowing ruling bodies and religious institutions to amass and display visual proof of their authority.⁸¹ The divide between ecclesial treasuries and other treasuries, such as those of kings, was narrow.⁸² This is particularly true in the case of San Marco, which functioned as both a state treasury and the primary religious location in the city.⁸³ The treasury contained objects of religious, historical, and/or material value. None of these delineating categories are mutually

⁸⁰ Guido Perroco, "History of the Treasury of San Marco," in *The Treasury of San Marco Venice* (Milan: Olivetti, 1984), 66-68.

⁸¹ Pierre Alain Mariaux. "Collecting (and Display)." *A Companion to Medieval Art*, (2006), 216-220.

⁸² The ecclesiastical potential of treasuries has been studied by Mariaux in "Collecting (and Display)", in which he divides the treasury's contents into two kinds of objects: *ornamenta*, materials used for decorating the sacred space, and *apparata*, objects used in the liturgy. The contents of ecclesial treasuries could include reused objects, *spolia*, miraculous materials, and objects of curiosity. Beyond the mere treasure room, an ecclesial treasury would also contain all the church's holdings, such as its buildings and land, as well as monetary reserves – any entity that added value to the church. In this way, the treasury had both a practical, material value as it held capital, and a conceptual, instructive one. See Mariaux. "Collecting (and Display)," 220.

⁸³ The treasury was also an economic tool for the people: private citizens and public officials alike would place valuable objects and relics within the treasury as collateral for loans. After a period of time, many of these objects would return to their former owners, though if an individual defaulted on a loan, the object would remain in the treasury. See Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony* 114-115.

exclusive; indeed, these categories were vague and often overlapped, as history was defined by its connection to religious life, and the materiality of an object often held a spiritual purpose. The San Marco treasury was a typical example of one of these stores. The treasury functioned as a depository of memory, visually reconstructing the past for present viewers. The treasury conserved moments or people in the past of special significance, such as heroes and saints, through figural representations, symbolic references, or by use of relics, which contained fragments of the person's body typically held in an ornamental reliquary.⁸⁴

Nearly half of the surviving San Marco treasury consists of composite objects—objects made of two or more disparate parts from different times and places. They were not confined to their own group within the treasury; the treasury inventories neither separate composite objects from non-composites nor refer to them by a special term. The objects were not treated as unusual within text or in practice. We must therefore explore the treatment of the average treasury object to extrapolate the usage of composite objects within San Marco.

In “Collecting (and Display)” Mariaux writes of the change treasuries underwent in the 12th century as they moved from miscellaneous collections stored in rooms within churches to more purposeful and more visible collections that prioritized relics or objects that could evoke the physical body of Christ.⁸⁵ As the San Marco treasury was primarily assembled after 1204, a change in the 12th century toward deliberate collecting corresponds neatly. The most valuable items in a treasury were “those that touched the

⁸⁴ Mariaux, “Collecting (and Display),” 220.

⁸⁵ The entrance to the treasury rooms is covered with a 13th century mosaic depicting the fire of 1231, suggesting an interest paid to the treasury in this time that corresponds to Mariaux's delineation. See Mariaux, “Collecting (and Display),” 223.

tangible divine, i.e., chalices, patens, ciboria, and reliquaries”); the rest of a church’s treasury was organized around these items.⁸⁶ The value of an object was defined by its ability to be put to sacred use. The majority of objects in San Marco were stored in a series of rooms between the church and the ducal palace, while the most prized objects were displayed on the altar of St. Mark.⁸⁷ The San Marco composite objects were scattered between these two spheres, with certain objects of especially high value, such as the rock crystal cruet, kept on the altar. Other valuable pieces, such as the *Pala d’Oro*, an elaborately decorated composite high altar, were placed immediately above the altar, while the Throne of St. Mark, an Alexandrian reliquary throne then thought to have belonged to St. Mark, sat behind the *Pala d’Oro*.⁸⁸

We have no records of what medieval viewers thought of these specific objects until the 15th century. These sources demonstrate that medieval viewers were aware of the historical value of treasury objects. Regardless of the accuracy of their beliefs, viewers held appreciation for old objects or items of significant material value, including those decorating the San Marco.⁸⁹ Mariaux writes that the older and more seemingly venerable an object was, the easier it was to associate with a glorious past, such as a sardonyx vessel in St. Maurice Abbey that allegedly belonged to St. Martin.⁹⁰ As the

⁸⁶ Joseph Ackley, "Re-approaching the Western medieval church treasury inventory, c. 800-1250." *Journal of Art Historiography* 11 (Dec. 2014), 4.

⁸⁷ "The Treasure of St. Mark's." Basilica San Marco.

⁸⁸ *The Treasury of San Marco*, 6-8.

⁸⁹ Erik Inglis "Expertise, Artifacts, and Time in the 1534 Inventory of the St-Denis Treasury," *The Art Bulletin*, 98:1, 11.

⁹⁰ The value of treasuries could also be projected into the future, as present patrons would gift items to ensure the treasure’s lasting value, as well as the continuation of the patron’s own name through the prayers of the church’s clergy. Philippe Buc writes of the “object conversion” these items consequently undergo, as an object of special beauty inhabits the role it was predestined to upon its adopted by the church. See Philippe Buc, “Conversion of Objects: Suger of Saint-Denis and Meinwerk of Paderborn” *Viator* 28 (1997): 100. For these reasons, Mariaux defines treasuries as a “visible expression of the temporal or spiritual power of the authority that assembles it.” By emphasizing their connection to the past, treasuries presented a strong claim for eternal life: both that of their patrons, who hoped to ensure religious approval, and that of

specifics of an object's history were lost to time, myths arose to provide explanations for how and why the object came into being.

These myths, primarily remembered through the journals of pilgrims travelling through Venice in the 15th century, establish a sense of how Venetian identity was perceived. Venice was a multicultural commercial sphere with connections across the Mediterranean, as foreign traders and travelling pilgrims settled throughout the city.⁹¹ Venetian ships transported pilgrims to the Holy Land, and so they naturally accumulated and rested in the city, occasionally offering written reactions to their stay. Pilgrims consistently emphasized the magnificence of San Marco, highlighting its color, primarily through the use of mosaic, size, and legendary history.⁹²

Visitors were capable of noticing when a piece of art was Venetian in origin, versus what was acquired from foreign territories. These reactions are useful for understanding if the composite objects were meant to be recognized as such. Legends of the four horses taken during the sack of Constantinople usually correctly identified their Byzantine origin, though some confuse the exact city. A common story in the late 15th century told of their capture from Acre. Other stories describe Frederick Barbarossa I as threatening to turn San Marco into a stable for his horses; in response, Venice allegedly commissioned the bronze statues from Constantinople. Later iterations of the story replace the Roman ruler with an Islamic one.⁹³ The focus on San Marco reveals Venice's own protective instincts towards it; it would be the ultimate affront to Venetian life if the

the material treasury itself, as its high status would preserve it across the centuries. See Mariaux, "Collecting (and Display), 216-224.

⁹¹ Francisco Appelániz, "Venetian Trading Networks in the Medieval Mediterranean," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2, vol. 44 (Autumn 2013): 157.

⁹² Mariaux, "Collecting (and Display)," 217.

⁹³ Erik Inglis and Elise Christmon, "The Worthless Stories of Pilgrims"? The Art Historical Imagination of Fifteenth-Century Travelers to Jerusalem." *Viator* 44, no. 3 (2013): 282.

church was degraded in this way.

Many of the pilgrim stories included a further distinction: that the horses were originally created in Classical Rome, and were attained by one or another of these figures later in their lifespan, sometimes from Constantinople. In his account of these stories, Erik Inglis and Sheila Christmon write that "The shifting story registers both stability and change: the horses' retained their status as remarkable objects that sparked visitors' curiosity and demanded explanation along martial lines, while the Muslim culture to the east became increasingly prominent in the imagination of Venice's residents and visitors."⁹⁴

Similar confusion surrounds the statue of the Four Tetrarchs on the facade of San Marco, though audiences also consistently identified them as foreign works. By the 16th century, pilgrims and Venetian citizens alike commonly believed that the statue represented four thieves who had attempted to rob the treasury. Inglis has identified the importance of this story, despite its inaccuracies: "This audience recognized that the tetrarchs were not integral to the building's fabric, but were a later addition—like the horses on the facade. The legend attempts to explain this addition... The tetrarchs' dress was (eventually) recognized as alien, with geographic and cultural differences perhaps clearer to viewers than historical ones."⁹⁵

Other *spolia* provoked awe in viewers, such as the columns from Constantinople placed in the piazza. The two main pairs—one near the church, the other on the waterfront—were known to be Byzantine. However, two aspects of these columns are not entirely foreign-made: the two statues on top of the waterfront columns, one of a lion

⁹⁴ Inglis and Christmon, "The Worthless Stories of Pilgrims?" 284.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

representing St. Mark, and another of St. Theodore, which was seen by some pilgrims as St. Michael.⁹⁶ These statues were in fact composite objects. The lion of St. Mark was a bronze cast probably from 6th century B.C.E. Anatolia, with wings, a gospel book, and an extended tail added by the Venetians. The St. Theodore statue was created by a Venetian sculptor in the 14th century, though it incorporates a Greek head and pieces of Roman and Medieval armor.⁹⁷

These stories thus tell us that examples of modified, identifiable *spolia* in and around San Marco, beyond just the composite objects, abound. Notably, most of these *spolia* items feature some form of Venetian alteration, whether it is literally a change in their placement from a piazza in Constantinople to one in Venice or a more specific unification of various, often disparate, pieces. Mounts and tops of the columns plundered from Byzantine buildings were swapped, interchanged with Classical pieces found along the Italian coast. These *spolia* were composite objects, combinations of separate physical parts that show cultural influence more explicitly than stylistic influence on coinage. They are explicit mergings of separate places and times. *Spolia* was moved around, modified, and tinkered with by their owners. The four bronze horses, for example, were originally kept in the Venetian arsenal, and were only added to the facade of the San Marco by the middle of the 13th century. Robert S. Nelson writes that these objects have a "second life" in Venice, though it seems that in fact these objects had many lives, with multiple occurring in Venice alone.

On certain festival and ceremonial days, the treasury objects were taken into the

⁹⁶ Pincus, "Venus and Two Romes," 102.

⁹⁷ G. Mariacher, "Postilla al S. Teodoro, statua composita," *Arte veneta I* (1947), pp. 230-31.

public square to be gazed at by the people of Venice.⁹⁸ This display would include the composite objects. Their audience consequently included not only special guests of San Marco or members of the clergy, but the entirety of the city. The treasury was not a purely private store, but a public site of admiration for the three classes of Venice: the hereditary nobility, the citizens, the laboring class, visiting traders, and colonial subjects.⁹⁹

Even as objects were accumulated in the treasury over the centuries, so too were many lost. In 1231, a fire broke out in one room in the treasury, destroying many of the precious objects within. Supposedly, only a fragment of the True Cross, a relic of the blood of Christ, and a relic of St. John the Baptist survived.¹⁰⁰ These relics are three out of the four that Doge Enrico Dandolo brought from Constantinople following the 1204 sack and were, alongside the relics of St. Mark, some of the most holy objects in the church. A 13th century mosaic of the 1231 fire appears on the door to the treasury, emphasizing the miraculous survival of the True Cross fragment. Following the loss of many treasures, an influx of Venetian-made objects appear in the treasury to take their place. Excluding the 1231 fire, the bulk of the treasury remained untampered with until the end of the Venetian Republic in the late 1790s, at which time many objects made of precious metals were melted down.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Holger Klein, "Refashioning Byzantium in Venice," in Henry Maguire and Robert S. Nelson (eds), *San Marco, Byzantium, and the Myths of Venice* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010), 194.

⁹⁹ See Sherman, "'Soli Deo honor et gloria?'" 15. Francisco Appelániz also divides Venetian citizenship into two groups: "de extra citizenship implied the right to engage in maritime, wholesale commerce, whereas de intus citizenship, often conferred on naturalized Venetians, granted limited access to retail, local trade." Colonial subjects had trading rights on par with de intus citizenship. See Appelániz, "Venetian Trading Networks in the Medieval Mediterranean, 164-165.

¹⁰⁰ Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, "Venetian Filigree," in *The Treasury of San Marco Venice* (Milan: Olivetti, 1984), 233-235.

¹⁰¹ Perroco, "History of the Treasury of San Marco," 69.

III. Mediums and Materials

Objects in treasuries were purposefully diverse, as churches wished to exhibit pieces that were unique, something only that church could own. As a result, treasuries were filled with miscellaneous items, including fragments of treasures which were kept to be reused at a later date.¹⁰² The treasury of San Marco predominantly consists of five materials: hardstone, glass, rock crystal, enamel, and metalwork. The crafting of these materials was not unique to Venetian artisans, nor were they associated only with a foreign culture. The Byzantines, for example, were expert enamel workers, hiring out their workers across the Mediterranean. The Venetians, though they too created enamels, more frequently recycled Byzantine enamels for their objects.

Venice's rock-crystal, glass carving, and metal smith guilds appear to have risen simultaneously in the 1230s. Rock-crystal and glass workers were careful to keep their techniques separate to prevent confusion between the mediums; rock crystal was a kind of transparent quartz resembling glass cut like precious stone. The guilds benefited from the stream of rock-crystal arriving from the Fatimid caliphate (909-1171), and adopted rock-crystal carving techniques from regions in the Rhine in 1250, where the practice had also developed.¹⁰³ Rock crystal was mined in Iran and Mesopotamia, after which it either was carved or sent in blocks to be processed in other regions.¹⁰⁴

Rock crystal was a cosmopolitan commodity. The technology of rock crystal was not invented independently at multiple locations; the practice diffused across the Mediterranean, eased by the influx of objects at specific trade hubs. Any rock crystal

¹⁰² Mariaux, "Collecting (and Display)", 217.

¹⁰³ *The Treasury of San Marco*, 30.

¹⁰⁴ Avinoam Shalem, *Islam Christianized: Islamic Portable Objects in the Medieval Church Treasuries of the Latin West*, (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1998), 29.

object crafted in Paris and Venice would have been shaped in some large or small way by the Fatimid objects that inspired the practice. If the assumption that rock crystal technology followed trade routes, it would be reasonable to expect Constantinople, a main cosmopolitan center, to also have the practice. And indeed, five items in the San Marco treasury are composed of Byzantine-made rock crystal.

Shalem has documented an exchange of Islamic and Christian materials, beginning even before the First Crusade as part of diplomatic gifts between Charlemagne and Harun al-Rashid, and Queen Bertha of Rome and the caliph al-Muktafi.¹⁰⁵ The Crusades spread Western desire for Islamicate art, whether in the form of previous relics or cheaper souvenirs. Since European rock carving practices only took root in Paris and Venice at the end of the 11th century, Shalem writes that most of the rock crystal objects in church treasuries probably reached Europe as a result of the dispersal of the Fatimid treasury immediately before the same date.¹⁰⁶

Glass was perhaps the most versatile medium. It was the cheapest and least labor intensive to produce and therefore the most commonly used material. Glass is used in the San Marco treasury as ornamentation, attaching together pieces of Venetian metal in a pair of candlesticks, or shaped to hold a relic. In the San Marco treasury inventories, glass and rock crystal were often confused for one another. Glass was also used to match rock crystal, as is the case with a Venetian glass twin to a piece of Fatimid rock crystal. Venice also imported glass and rock-crystal from contacts in the Islamic Eastern Mediterranean to form bowls, lamps, and vases. Demus contrasts Venetian use of Islamic devices with Sicily, where “the Islamic element was a strong and all pervading, fostered

¹⁰⁵ Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, 39.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

by royal patronage” and created by Islamic craftsmen. It does not seem as if Venice used any such workmen, preferring instead to rely on their own state workshops to create mediums developed in the Islamic Eastern Mediterranean world.¹⁰⁷

Hardstone was an exceptionally sturdy, semi-precious stone that was, like rock crystal, a rare substance. By the 13th century, many of the kinds of hardstone in the San Marco treasury were no longer found naturally in the world.¹⁰⁸ The treasury hardstones are the largest known pure portions of their respective stone to ever be used. The Venetians must have known that the stone was rare if no new slabs of the materials were flowing into the trade networks from anywhere in the world. The first reaction to the hardstone vessels may therefore have been a recognition of their scarcity and age. The works came from a time in which such pieces of stone were more readily available, unlike the material of rock crystal, which was still plentiful. Even the porphyry of the Tetrarchs on the outside of the San Marco, which is a duller and less colorful hardstone than distinctive sardonyx, was recognized by pilgrims as being “old”. Due to their recognizable age, many of the hardstone vessels may still have been correctly associated with a classical origin. Much of the hardstone in the treasury arrived as part of a Byzantine composite object.

Enamels were considered a Byzantine art.¹⁰⁹ Enamels were typically used as decoration, depicting holy figures or containing text that labelled the object or its donor. Their production declined after the sack of Constantinople, and the Venetians, though capable of producing their own, preferred to recycle Byzantine pieces of enamel in their

¹⁰⁷ Demus, *Church of San Marco in Venice*, 105.

¹⁰⁸ *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, 75.

¹⁰⁹ Sergio Bettini, “Venice, the Pala d’Oro, and Constantinople,” in *The Treasury of San Marco Venice* (Milan: Olivetti, 1984), 135.

objects. These enamels would be swapped between objects, sometimes sanded down so they might fit into new mounts.

Mosaic was like enamel, originally a high Byzantine art, but was later used by Venice for their own constructs.¹¹⁰ The San Marco treasury contains no examples of mosaic; the art was reserved for architecture. An anonymous French pilgrim from 1480, who, upon viewing the church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, noted that it was "painted in the fashion of Saint Mark in Venice, that is to say in mosaic."¹¹¹ Just as mosaic was referred to as "the fashion of Saint Mark in Venice", so too was elaborate filigree called "Venetian work" or *opus veneciarum ad filum* in other medieval Western European treasuries due to its quality and renown.¹¹² This term does not appear in any of the San Marco inventories; Venice does not need to name its own filigree, though surely they must have gained great pride from their expertise.

Hahnloser has attributed the filigree of the sardonyx cruet to the same workshop from the second half of the 13th century that produced the rock crystal vessel, its twin, the Fatimid red glass bowl, and a glass amphora.¹¹³ These vessels all feature cable filigree, in which strands of metal are twisted and detached from the surface, in lanceolate patterns, a common style using pointed oval shape to resemble a leaf that Shalem has identified as also on Fatimid rock crystal vessels from the first hundred years of the dynasty.¹¹⁴

I believe the filigree of three other composite objects were also made by this workshop: an alabaster pitcher, silver chalice, and the two handled sardonyx vase that so resembles Byzantine sardonyx chalices.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Inglis and Christmon, "'The Worthless Stories of Pilgrims?'" 279.

¹¹² Gaborit-Chopin, "Venetian Filigree," 235.

¹¹³ Hans Robert Hahnloser, *Il Tesoro Di San Marco*. (Firenze: Sansoni, 1965), 143.

¹¹⁴ Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, 29.

IV. Mergings

Out of the 283 objects in the San Marco treasury, 58 are obvious composites. Out of this total, 23 contain obvious insertions of Venetian metalwork. Four of these objects were likely modified later than the 15th century, and so fall beyond the time frame relevant to this paper. The 35 other composites were assembled in Byzantium and do not have Venetian additions. There is no record of when these objects were combined; they appear sporadically in the inventories as fully formed items. It is also important to note the limited sample size of the composite objects. As many pieces of the treasury were lost in the 1231 fire and later across the centuries, we must assume that the collection of composite objects has diminished as well.

The Venetian additions to Byzantine hardstone objects were made in the same era as the metalwork on Islamicate—particularly Fatimid—materials, suggesting that both groups were also acquired through the sack of Constantinople. However, so too may these objects have been bought as older items in the 13th and 14th centuries. Therefore I believe we should view the treasury as an evolving accumulation of materials across the centuries built atop a foundation of Byzantine loot, rather than as a transplant of Byzantine treasure. Indeed, objects differ so radically in their style, point of origin, and age, that the only connecting factors between them is their resting place in the San Marco and their likely acquisition in the 13th and 14th centuries.

The documented reactions of the pilgrims suggest that viewers of *spolia* read stories into them that often showed awareness of the general transfers and histories of the object, even if that awareness was not exactly factual. This established awareness can be

projected onto the objects in the treasury of San Marco, particularly ones that combined two or three pieces of different times and places to create new works.

The consistency in metalwork across the composite objects suggests that San Marco favored certain workshops when it came to mounting their objects, and the lack of metal inscriptions in the composite objects suggests that they were combined at the direction of the San Marco, rather than by an individual, secular patron.¹¹⁵ The decisions made about the objects can be seen as institutional decisions by the group of figures surrounding the Procurator of San Marco, most likely made across several decades.

In the following two sections, I will examine how the composite objects fit into a Mediterranean culture of diversity. I seek to understand how and why these combinations of items were seen as valuable, and which qualities contribute to this perception. In the second section, I explore how, despite this shared taste, the composite objects also reflect uniquely Venetian cultural attitudes, primarily through the addition of Venetian metalwork. The first section therefore normalizes the objects, while the second demonstrates how they still may be unique. Contrary to efforts to precisely classify the individual parts of the objects, I seek to determine what the *kind* of item meant to a Venetian audience. Specific facts supported by connoisseurship about place or time of origin are secondary to this effort; such details do not directly matter if the medieval viewer would not know them.

For the purposes of this paper, I am using literal descriptions of the works as their name, since most do not have commonly recognized titles and, as Shalem writes,

¹¹⁵ *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, 256.

taxonomy implies ideology;¹¹⁶ in that sense, I wish to use a clean slate.

A. Shared Taste

1. Global Networks

The San Marco composite objects, despite the differences in their color, shape, and function, speak to a shared set of values that inspired their creation. By displaying a preference for visual diversity, they raise questions relating to what Venetian culture found valuable. In this section, I seek to explore how these objects illustrate shared Mediterranean cultural taste, both at the location of the objects' creation and at their "final" resting place. How do these objects specifically reference other cultures yet still possess cross-cultural appeal?

San Marco treasury records do not describe the composite objects beyond a simple list of materials, consequently it is difficult to ascertain the Venetian's specific thoughts about visual diversity. The first extant inventory of the treasury of San Marco was made in 1283, long after the 1231 fire. Successive inventories followed in 1325, 1571, and 1733.¹¹⁷ The inventories, while useful, are imprecise, with objects disappearing and reappearing across the documents. Their descriptions change so that it is difficult to determine consistency and when exactly the objects were introduced into the treasury. In his record of the 1325 inventory, Gallo writes that it is incomplete because it does not list the items that were used in the church's daily liturgical service.¹¹⁸ Certain groups were thus left out. The inventories also do not describe the items in great detail, and as many of

¹¹⁶ Avinoam Shalem, "Histories of Belonging and George Kubler's Prime Object." *Getty Research Journal*, no. 3 (2011): 3.

¹¹⁷ *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*.

¹¹⁸ Gallo, *Il Tesoro Di S. Marco*, 22.

the objects are made from the same types of hardstones, crystal, or silverwork, known objects can be difficult to discern from the inventory descriptions. A typical inventory description is object 72 in the 1325 inventory: “Vasculum unum de cristallo disvarnitum” which translates to “vessel with crystal and varnish.”¹¹⁹

The treasury of Saint Denis in France, which was consolidated in a slightly earlier period, contains descriptions of the kind the San Marco lacks. These descriptions can be usefully applied to the San Marco objects. Abbott Suger (1081-1151) added nine composite objects to this treasury for liturgical use, one made from a piece of porphyry he found “lying idly in a chest for many years.”¹²⁰

Abbot Suger helpfully added labels to the works he commissioned. On one, he writes: “This stone deserves to have mounts of gold and gems. It was marble. Its settings are more precious than marble.”¹²¹ This is the only definitive piece of insight we have on why composite objects were made. Suger’s statement gives the sense that the mounts enhanced the beauty of an object, while also multiplying its value significantly. A high quality stone “deserves” adornment, which does not subtract from the state of the original object but improves it. Such a perspective can be applied to the objects in the San Marco, though as I will discuss in the case of the rock crystal vessel, there was at least one exception.

The treasury of Saint-Denis contained rock crystal vessels from Fatimid Egypt

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 29.

¹²⁰ Suger employed the goldsmiths of Saint Denis, who were an international workforce from across France and Germany. These goldsmiths created mounts with double filigree, much like that which was used by the Venetians a century or so later. Verdier notes that this style represents the accumulation of a style used in Merovingian, Germanic and Viking jewelry, yet so too was this style used in Islamic jewelry after the 10th century, with the Byzantines adopting the style shortly after. The overlap in style and confusion in sourcing it demonstrates the interrelation of these Mediterranean cultures, in which workmen and objects were uprooted and seen by many. See Philippe Verdier, “The Chalice of Abbot Suger.” *Studies in the History of Art* 24 (1990), 14-15.

¹²¹ Philippe Verdier, “The Chalice of Abbot Suger.” *Studies in the History of Art* 24 (1990), 13.

and an agate incense boat mounted in Byzantium, both of which arrived in the treasury *before* the dispersal of the Fatimid treasury in the 1060s and the sack of Constantinople in 1204. Thus, cataclysmic events were not the only way for vessels to move, nor were they the only way to provoke interest in the “foreign” styles or a desire to create composites. Such a pattern of behavior was steady, widespread across Europe, and was only augmented by such events.

Abbot Suger’s comments shed light on the San Marco composites, suggesting visual value over practicality. The rock crystal cruet (Figure 3) especially illustrates this preference. This cruet consists of a 10th century Fatimid rock crystal ampulla translated into an ewer by the addition of a 13th century Venetian base, lid, handle, and spout.¹²² It was placed on the altar of San Marco, one of the most highly visible places in the church, yet was not functional: its spout is real but is not actually connected to the body of the vessel. The object looks like a cruet but cannot perform a cruet’s action. In other words, the addition of a spout was only for show.

To understand the purpose of “fake” *spolia*, we must turn to Eva Hoffman’s “Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian Interchange from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century,” in which Hoffman argues that the visual style of objects traded in the Mediterranean was created and defined by shared elite tastes across geographical regions. This shared culture explains why many treasury objects, such as the rock crystal vessel and its Venetian glass twin, resemble one another to a great degree. The Venetians may have admired the style of the original and attempted to recreate it with their own technology, though were unable to do so due to the technical expertise of the original.

¹²² The San Marco rock crystal object is quite large for an ampulla, so the inventories may have used the term to refer to its general shape rather than function.

The constant interchange of goods and people did not create a single, perfectly uniform style, however, and instead “operated at different levels of intensity and within varying political, social, and cultural networks and boundaries.”¹²³ Each individual location on the larger map infused the visual culture with their own influence. As an example, Hoffman describes a palmette motif used in both Byzantium and Umayyad Spain that appeared visually identical but was used differently within a composition. Possession of these objects signaled an owner’s participation in the broader systems of trade and power in the Mediterranean, for the pieces were frequently transported in great quantities in the form of gifts.

The treatment of zoomorphic themes within the rock crystal cruet illustrates this shared taste. The object’s design is self-reflexive, as the Venetian additions incorporate the zoomorphic elements of the rock crystal engraving but regularize them into a filigree pattern on the spout and handle. These additions reference Hoffman’s conception of a shared Mediterranean taste in design elements that was then synthesized with unique, locationally specific needs. Through their incorporations, Venice both imitates the style of another culture’s material objects and declares the visual result as their own. The impractical spout further allows Venice to take part in this conversation.

In “Christian-Islamic Encounters on Thirteenth-Century Ayyubid Metalwork: Local Culture,” Eva Hoffman further complicates the idea of separate culture, describing Ayyubid workshops that produced objects for the Mediterranean market. Hoffman argues that the Islamic and Christian craftsmen coexisted within workshops in Ayyubid society to the extent that their products were indistinguishable. Both combined Christian and

¹²³ Eva Hoffman, “Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian Interchange from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century.” *Art History* 24 vol. 1 (2001), 23.

Islamic visual elements in their works, which Hoffman believes were specifically used to appeal to Crusaders, with attractive Christian elements intertwined with Islamic ornamentation that evoked an “exotic” view of the holy land. The latter was a way of “authenticating” the work so that it truly seemed to come from a distant, foreign location, that, as shown by the Christian elements, remained both the heartland and site of conquest for the Christian forces.¹²⁴ Shalem also cites textiles created in royal Abbasid workshops with references to the Trinity, thus appealing to Christian audiences.¹²⁵ Islamic Eastern Mediterranean craftsmen also travelled to west to Christian sites like Sicily, or Muslim-ruled al-Andalus, spreading styles and technology.¹²⁶

Hoffman believes that when works were carried back to Europe by the Crusaders, they were often given additions in order to “naturalize the works” and enable them to fit in better with the objects already held in the treasuries. She cites several basins commissioned for Hugh IV of Lusignan, a king of Jerusalem, which were engraved with both French and Arabic inscriptions. She also compares the reworking of these objects to the Crusaders’ destruction of metal idols in the Dome of the Rock. In Raoul of Caen’s *Gesta Tancredi* from the late 11th or early 12th century, he writes that “The metal [of the idols] when its shape is lost is changed back from vile to precious.”¹²⁷ Hoffman compares unworked objects to idols, with the additions essentially neutralizing dangerous foreign qualities in their original, “pure” form.¹²⁸

Hoffman’s argument, while conceptually persuasive, is lacking in evidence.

¹²⁴ Eva Hoffman, “Christian-Islamic Encounters on Thirteenth-Century Ayyubid Metalwork: Local Culture, Authenticity, and Memory.” *Gesta* 43, no. 2 (2004), 129-42.

¹²⁵ Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, 95.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹²⁷ Muratova, “Western Chronicles,” 48, quoted in Camille, *Gothic Idol*, 144.

¹²⁸ Hoffman, “Christian-Islamic Encounters,” 139.

Melting supposed “idols” to purify the metal is the opposite kind of act to what the Venetians did to the composite objects: *forming* metal to add to the objects. Furthermore, the triumphalist perspective effectively undermines Hoffman's argument in "Pathways of Portability," in which she proposed a multicultural Mediterranean taste. It may be that this "taste" applied to objects which were already more palatable to a broad audience, such as the rock crystal cruet's accessible animal imagery, and did not need "naturalization". So too may the international taste have existed side-by-side with a locational pride, in which objects were acquired for certain appealing features, such as quality of rock crystal, and any less desirable traits were then compensated for by local embellishment.

Hoffman provides a useful framework for viewing objects associated with Crusader interest. Hoffman's suggestion that visual divides were complicated even at an object's origin points further problematizes an attempt to ascertain a composite object's provenance. Rather than attributing foreign objects to a complex trade network, Hoffman defines them through the tastes of their Christian owners.

The rock crystal cruet illustrates this dichotomy. Venice made additions to the Fatimid rock crystal portion, “naturalizing” the work so that it fits in with the other Venetian-mounted and rimmed objects in the treasury, yet their additions of elongated, stylized spouts and handles reflect a sensitivity to Fatimid styles. The object therefore looks different from another cruet in the treasury, made of hardstone sardonyx with an added jeweled lid and spout (Figure 4), which has neither the zoomorphic spout nor its exaggerated curves.

The rock crystal cruet also reflects the stylistic “confusion” at the object's point of

origin. The rock crystal portion of the object is referred to in early inventories as an ampulla, a rounded flask often purchased by Crusaders as a souvenir from the Holy Land; these objects would then be used to store holy water or oil in the Christian west. The water or oil would often have been used to anoint relics, so that rather than purchase the unobtainable relics themselves, the pilgrims could acquire a cheaper substitute. From the 8th century onwards, Muslim craftsmen in the Holy Land manufactured these ampulla for sale.¹²⁹ The Venetian additions to the rock crystal do not obscure the vessel's ampulla shape. Instead, they call attention to it via additions, potentially encouraging viewers to recognize the bowl as coming from the Islamic Eastern Mediterranean.

The turquoise glass bowl (Figure 5) additionally highlights Mediterranean taste for Islamicate objects lacking explicitly religious imagery. It consists of a glass bowl from 9th-10th century Iran or Iraq fitted with a Venetian base and rim in which enamels are inlaid. The interior of the rim is made of four pieces of metal battered together; in design, they resemble metalwork on the two chalices of the Emperor Romanos and is therefore likely Byzantine.

This bowl likely passed through multiple locations, and was in each considered valuable. The bowl has inscription beneath its foot that reads "Khorasan" in 9th or 10th century Kufic script. The Khorasan region was located in northeastern Iran and was known for its turquoise production, though not for the colored glass the bowl is actually made of. Scholars such as Carboni have suggested that "Khorasan" was inscribed on the foot in order for the bowl's owners to market it as pure turquoise, not glass, though there

¹²⁹ Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, 17.

is no grantee that non-Muslim audiences could read Kufic script.¹³⁰

Shalem has written of the bowl's multiple translations across the Mediterranean in "New Evidence for the History of the Turquoise Glass Bowl in the Treasury of San Marco." Shalem believes that the bowl is mentioned by 11th century author al-Qāḍī al-Rashīd in the work *Kitāb al-Hādāya wa al-Tuhaf* ("The Book of Gifts and Presents"). Al-Qāḍī al-Rashīd writes of a small turquoise bowl of the same liquid capacity as the San Marco bowl, which was looted from Khorasan pilgrims during a 1022 riot in Medina. The San Marco bowl is the only known surviving opaque turquoise glass bowl. Several other green glass bowls exist, but even they are smaller and more transparent. Though we must assume that once more bowls of this kind existed, the San Marco bowl remains unique due its size and color, and was valuable enough to have been believed to be the primary gift from the Shah of Iran, as will be discussed. Therefore, I find the identification of the turquoise bowl in the records of al-Rashīd persuasive.

Shalem suggests that the Khorasan pilgrims were either trying to sell the bowl in Medina (and had inscribed the name of their region in order to increase its price) or to gift the bowl to a shrine.¹³¹ According to al-Rashīd, the bowl then passed through Syria, before arriving in the treasury of the Fatimid caliph al-Zāhir (r. 1021-36).¹³² From 1061-1069, the treasury was sold off, stolen, or burned due to political unrest, with much of it transported across the Mediterranean by Fatimid merchants who first marketed their

¹³⁰ "Now Arts of the Islamic World Evening Sale: Including the Harvey B. Plotnick Collection of Islamic Ceramics Part One." Dishes ||| Sotheby's L11229lot6746sen.

¹³¹ See Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, 93. If true, perhaps then the pilgrims were labelled as being from Khorasan due to the inscription on the bowl, and were not in fact from that region. Regardless, the second explanation seems more likely, as the chronicler explicitly refers to the group as "pilgrims," a label that does not arise from the bowl itself.

¹³² Following the riot of 1022, al-Rashīd writes that the bowl was then brought to Palestine by a soldier, where it was acquired by the Syrian governor Sadīd al-Dawla. The governor was later killed, likely between 1022 and 1024, and the bowl changed hands again, somehow arriving in the treasury of the Fatimid caliph al-Zāhir (r. 1021-36). The sources for this record are unknown.

wares in Egypt, before offering them to Muslim Spain, Sicily, and Constantinople.¹³³

Shalem writes that this bowl is first clearly mentioned in the 1571 treasury as “A bowl of turquoise color, the material of which is unknown, has around it a frieze of garnets of which some garnets are missing.”¹³⁴ Other scholars have affirmed the object's 16th century arrival in the treasury, citing the tradition of the Shah of Iran story as historical evidence. This story was first recorded by the 17th century writer Gradenigo, who authored *Commemoriali*. It describes the Iranian shah's presentation of the bowl to the Signoria of Venice in 1472. At the time, the Venetians were indeed trying to create an alliance with Uzun Hasan (r.1453-78), the ruler of the Aqqoyunlu (White Sheep) confederacy of Tabriz, in order to weaken the Ottomans.¹³⁵

While the specific facts of this story are persuasive, I do not believe the turquoise bowl's place in the inventory resulted from this trip. The pilgrim stories as well as the records of St. Denis reveal a tendency to attach objects to a notable historical figure or event in order to contextualize their beauty, uniqueness, or cultural signifiers. The turquoise glass bowl could be associated with Middle Eastern art, and, through the use of the term “Khorasan” if they could read it, even a specific region within Iran. It may have made sense to conflate the arrival of an Iranian object with the visit of an Iranian ruler.

Shalem suggests that there may be a listing of the bowl in the 1325 inventory, which he

¹³³ From 1061-1069, the treasury was sold off, stolen, or burned due to political unrest, with much of it transported across the Mediterranean by Fatimid merchants who first marketed their wares in Egypt, before offering them to Muslim Spain, Sicily, and Constantinople. Another object from the Fatimid treasury which ended up in the San Marco treasury is the rock crystal cruet, also a composite object. Shalem writes that this object was seen in Tripoli which was a trading partner with both Venice and Byzantium by the end of the 11th century. Both objects may therefore have travelled through Byzantium before arriving at Venice, or been traded directly to the latter city. See Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, 93.

¹³⁴ Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, 91.

¹³⁵ Shalem has also noted how gift exchange between Christian and Muslim powers were “part of an unwritten diplomatic code,” in which the gifts were considered in Christian settings as “exotica” consisting of gems, textiles, spices, perfumes, and flora and fauna. However, no contemporary records of gift exchanges between these two regions exist. See Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, 92.

translates as “One bowl of turquoise mounted with gilded silver.”¹³⁶ Furthermore, I have found no other bowl or other item of turquoise color in the current treasury. The visual description in the 14th century inventory is also an accurate one, though it does not mention the gems or enamels present on the object.¹³⁷

I think it most likely that the bowl reached Venice through Byzantium. Shalem describes the frequent exchange of gifts between the Byzantine court and the Islamic world, particularly the Fatimid and the 'Abbasid dynasties. al-Qadi al-Rashid (ca. 1052-1071) in *Kitab al-Haaya wa al-Tuhaf* wrote of the profusion of Islamic objects in Byzantine treasuries as a result of these gift exchanges.¹³⁸ These transfers demonstrate Mediterranean desire for the bowl. It was valuable enough to be recorded by al-Rashīd, acquired by the Byzantines, and taken by the Venetians and assigned a story that increased its historical value.

Like the rock crystal cruet, the turquoise glass bowl's relief also depicts a secular design: without a Qur'anic inscription in Arabic, the running hares can be easily enjoyed by diverse audiences.¹³⁹ In "Cross-Cultural Reception in the Absence of Texts: The Islamic Appropriation of a Middle Byzantine Rosette Casket," Alicia Walker describes these kinds of objects as "ideology without text" which were open to multiple readings dependent on the individual observing it.¹⁴⁰ The bowl is a particularly potent example of

¹³⁶ Shalem is tentative to confirm that this item is indeed the turquoise glass bowl, as the marking suggests that the bowl is made of turquoise, not glass.¹³⁶ However, mistaking the bowl as turquoise appears to be a common occurrence throughout the bowl's history, and even the 1571 treasury does not definitively state the material of the object, only its color. See Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, 92.

¹³⁷ As shown by an 18th century drawing (Figure 20), however, gems were missing and in a different arrangement, so perhaps at this early date they were not present on the item or were of a different kind of stone, one not significant enough to be mentioned in that inventory.

¹³⁸ Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, 45.

¹³⁹ Other objects, such as the rock crystal vessel, in the San Marco do have such inscriptions without obvious consequences, but their inscriptions are highly stylized and may not have been recognized as text.

¹⁴⁰ Alicia Walker, “Cross-Cultural Reception in the Absence of Texts: The Islamic Appropriation of a

this effect, especially if the interior rim is of Byzantine, not Venetian origin. The acanthus and palmettes design matches nearly exactly one on the stem of the Chalice of the Emperor Romanos (Figure 6), which was constructed at the end of the 11th century, matching the timeline of the bowl's exit from the Fatimid treasury. The Venetians therefore either acquired the bowl with a pre-existing Byzantine rim which they then added to, found the bowl bare and incorporated a free-floating Byzantine rim, or made a new rim in the Byzantine style. Either way, it represents a conscious engagement with two separate cultures within the limited space of one bowl.

Walker argues that its combination of secular motifs would make the design palatable across cultures, its unassuming patterns leaving the viewer to extrapolate an individualized reaction to it based on their own particular awareness of the object's cultural origins.¹⁴¹ Islamic motifs functioned particularly well for these purposes, as they were often non-figural, and therefore unobtrusive in content. Pilgrim stories of the Tetrarchs or the four bronze horses on the facade of the San Marco show that viewers were aware of which objects were foreign, though they are not always correct about where the object is truly from. Walker names this effect cultural receptivity: "the way in which an artist or patron is attracted to a foreign artistic element because it resonates with his own aesthetic or semantic values, eliciting 'either pre-existent similarities or spontaneously-generated affinities'"¹⁴²

Walker's ideology-sans-text approach assumes that the objects telegraph their meaning without needing it stated specifically. The turquoise glass bowl is the only one of its size, quality, and ornamentation; if it was indeed worthy of enough notice for al-

Middle Byzantine Rosette Casket." *Gesta* 47, no. 2 (2008), 107.

¹⁴¹ Walker, "Cross-Cultural Reception," 117.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 107.

Rashīd to take note of the bowl's history among the tens of thousands of objects in the Fatimid treasury, then one can imagine its enormous value. A Venetian viewer did not have to know the bowl was unique in all the Mediterranean in order to admire it—it is already the only one of its kind in the San Marco treasury. No other object has its bold, untarnished turquoise color and turquoise objects were certainly not manufactured in Venice. The rareness of the form would surely then have struck the Venetian viewer.

The turquoise bowl's interior rim is also assembled of four pieces of metal hammered together, a style which is not replicated in any other treasury object. The clumsiness of the turquoise bowl's interior rim seems antithetical to the perfectly fitting Byzantine and other Venetian rims, and leads me to believe that the interior rim was assembled in Venice out of Byzantine parts. As Abbot Suger wrote, further adornment only reinforces the sense of these objects' rarity.

The number of additions the Venetians applied to the turquoise glass bowl raise another question: did the bowl's origin in a Muslim-ruled area affect its treatment? Shalem notes that Christians did not show any discomfort in having Muslim objects within their churches, as there are no records of special consecration ceremonies to erase their "Islam-ness". Rather, Shalem writes that "the act of mounting... might be regarded as an act of Christianization."¹⁴³ These objects were then used as active parts of the liturgy, such as the green glass bowl discussed in conjunction with the turquoise glass bowl, which has a Greek inscription of the Eucharist on its Venetian mounted rim, or as passive relic containers.¹⁴⁴ Shalem's concept of "Christianization" is similar to that of Hoffman's "naturalization", as both suggest that Western European owners changed

¹⁴³ Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, 132.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 130.

Islamicate objects through physical modifications. Shalem does not mention Hoffman's idols example; rather, he points to the lack of fanfare surrounding the introduction of Islamicate objects into treasuries.

Shalem writes that these Christianized objects enact a kind "of 'aesthetization' by way of exhibition" in a manner similar to a museum environment, in which "the fact that they were being displayed to the public called the attention of the beholder to them, and this process revealed their artistic merits which did not attract attention before."¹⁴⁵ This statement presumes that these objects were made to be used by the people at their source of creation, an idea that has already been contested by Hoffman in her analysis of commercial workshops that intended their wares to be sold to Christian audiences from their inception.

Six out of eight (three-fourths) of the composite objects with Islamicate elements were given Venetian additions. Only two objects of clear Middle Eastern origin (two rock crystal plates) were not modified. Venice did indeed "naturalize" the Islamicate objects, subjecting them to a composite process as they did to much of the hardstone vessels seized from the Byzantines. However, though Shalem suggests that the Venetian mounts obscure the Islamic-coded shape of the objects, I have not found the Venetian mounts to cover more of the Islamicate objects than Byzantine or others. It seems to be an act applicable to all the composite objects. As such, while the objects underwent a translation upon arriving in Christian treasuries, the translation often acted as much to highlight the interest and value of the Islamicate object as much as to make it fit into the eclectic aesthetic of the treasury. As such, I suggest a milder interpretation of Shalem and Hoffman's terms, in which we consider the items "processed" to fit into the visual variety

¹⁴⁵ Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, 131.

of medieval treasuries, rather than stripped entirely of cultural signifiers.

A third vessel also falls into this category of translated and stylistically open objects: a rock crystal bowl (Figure 7). The bowl is made of cracked rock crystal from either 14th century Paris or 10th century Fatimid Cairo. Like the previous two objects, the rock crystal bowl has a silver Venetian base and top from the 14th century. It lacks a definitive stamp of origin in the form of text or religious imagery. It has been attributed to a Parisian workshop, which was feasible due to the vast trade networks of Venice as objects entered their treasury from across the medieval world. The treatment of the Paris bowl's metalwork is dramatically more simple than the previous two bowls, however. If Islamicate objects were given more Venetian adornment, they in may have been more in need of Venetian embellishment to "naturalize" them. Alternatively, and in my opinion more persuasively, the turquoise glass and rock crystal cruet were more valuable than the plain maybe-Parisian rock crystal and therefore their metalwork was made more lavish to match.

The rock crystal bowl's attribution to Paris is, additionally, uncertain. The rock crystal of the bowl may have been Fatimid, like that of the rock crystal cruet. The difficulty in attributing the rock crystal portion of the bowl points to the shared visual culture of the Mediterranean and beyond to Western Europe, and the power of large object dispersals such as the dissolution of the Fatimid treasury and the sack of Byzantium had on influencing Christian Europe's valued mediums. Shalem has documented an exchange of Islamic and Christian materials, beginning even before the First Crusade as part of diplomatic gifts between Charlemagne and Harun al-Rashid, and

Queen Bertha of Rome and the caliph al-Muktafi.¹⁴⁶ The Crusades spread Western desire for Islamic Eastern Mediterranean art, whether in the form of previous relics or cheaper souvenirs.¹⁴⁷

The rock crystal portion of the bowl is also damaged, with much of the top broken off. The Venetian metal additions mend the damage, covering up any cracks and extending the rim upwards so that the object could be functional again. The Venetian additions therefore had some practical reasons for existing as well.

2. Byzantine Influence

The Byzantine objects gained from Venice's sack of Constantinople and through trade likely inspired Venice's creation of their own composite objects, reinforcing a pattern of embellished objects across the medieval Mediterranean. Historical records note the quantity of Venetian plunder taken from Constantinople (slightly over a quarter of the total booty), as well as the fact that it was looted from churches across the city. Objects similar to those in the San Marco treasury can be found in treasures related to the other Crusader groups, such as the French treasury of Saint Denis. Meanwhile, extant Venetian additions or unique Venetian works are nonexistent before the 13th century—most date to between the 13th and 15th centuries. Each of these facts supports the theory that the Venetians and Crusaders took composites from Constantinople which then influenced their own works. Of course, there is also the possibility that objects arrived peacefully in Venice due to the long history of trade and gift exchange between the two cities, but in all likelihood, these objects only supplemented a treasury of sacked *spolia*.

¹⁴⁶ Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, 39.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

The San Marco treasury has more surviving Byzantine composite objects (composites without Venetian metalwork, assembled by the Byzantines) than Venetian composites, with 35 Byzantine composites to 23 Venetian ones. The Byzantine composites, like the Venetian, modified hardstone, glass, or rock crystal, and predominantly shaped them into chalices or vases. Most were likely taken from the altars and treasuries of churches in Constantinople.

In this section I will explore how Venice displayed Byzantine influence in their composites, not by directly replicating Byzantine styles, but by imitating their stylistic patterns. The general idea of combining older objects with contemporary metalwork may have transmitted from Byzantium to Venice, with the mass influx of Byzantine objects in to the treasury inspiring the Venetians to morph their own objects to match the variety of the new objects. As Barry Flood writes, “Sudden shifts in established sociopolitical orders can produce new patterns of circulation and contact or the preconditions for established patterns of encounter and exchange to undergo radical transformation of intensity or scale.”¹⁴⁸ The sack of Constantinople caused one such radical transformation to San Marco: an idea that the visual variety already prized in *spolia* across Venice could be extended to treasury objects as well.

Because of these connections between the Byzantine and Venetian composite objects, it may be tempting to say that the Venetian composite objects copied Byzantine ones. Venice certainly copied two trends in the composite process: the use of hardstone for composite objects, and the addition of metal rims and bases. However, the stylistic dissimilarity between the Venetian and Byzantine composites, as well as the variety within the Venetian group itself, suggest that the Venetian combinations assimilated the

¹⁴⁸ Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 5.

idea of composition without replicating Byzantine objects entirely.

It must be noted, however, that much of the scholarship on Byzantine metalwork uses the Byzantine objects in the San Marco treasury as the main source of information, as the treasury currently holds the largest collection of such metalwork. This presents another potential bias, as in order to compare Venetian metalwork to Byzantine, we must reference the Byzantine objects that the Venetians themselves chose for their treasury and therefore do not represent an unbiased sample of general Byzantine craft. Rather, there may be a correlating factor between the two groups based on Venetian taste. Venice may have chosen the composite items from Constantinople that best aligned with their preference for visual variety. As such, it is difficult to precisely tract Byzantine influence on Venetian composites.

The serpentine chalice (Figure 8) most closely resembles the majority of the Byzantine composites. It consists of a hardstone Byzantine bowl from the 12th century and Venetian metalwork from the 13th or 14th centuries. Primed by the mass amounts of Byzantine hardstone composites, the Venetians also almost uniformly modified all pieces of hardstone that did not already have Byzantine frames. The Venetians replicated the Byzantine practice of adding rims and feet to pre-existing hardstones vessels, but the Venetians then extended this practice to glass and rock crystal works. The integration of Byzantine objects from multiple times into a “single Venetian frame,” Klein argues, reinforces Venetian’s status as Byzantium’s heir and cultural superior.¹⁴⁹ This perspective suggests a triumphalist approach to the objects, for though they demonstrate multicultural taste, they serve to reinforce Venice’s superiority.

Notably, the serpentine chalice is one of only three composite objects featuring

¹⁴⁹ Klein, “Refashioning Byzantium in Venice,” 210.

Venetian enamels. Each object with Venetian enamels also contains Byzantine components, suggesting that Venetian additions may have paid some respect to the kinds of material that would have been used in one part of the object's place of origin. Though the core of the turquoise glass bowl is from the Islamic Eastern Mediterranean, it was given a Byzantine interior rim, and is the only composite object with an Islamicate section to have an enamel addition, just as it is the only composite object with both an Islamicate and Byzantine section.

Also in the treasury is a sardonyx cruet (Figure 4) consisting of a Classical hardstone cup from the 3rd century and a Venetian metal mount from the late 13th century. Hardstone bowls such as the serpentine chalice and sardonyx cruet were blank slates for the Venetians to experiment with new forms of composites, particularly ones influenced by Islamicate objects such as the Fatimid crystal cruets. The sardonyx cruet is one of two Venetian hardstone cruets in the treasury (See Figure 9). There are no Byzantine hardstone cruets.¹⁵⁰ As such, while some Venetian hardstone composites like the serpentine chalice imitated the functional use of the Byzantine composites, which were almost entirely chalices, the Venetians also used the materials for different liturgical uses.

I do not believe that these shared stylistic molds mean that Venice intended for the objects they created to be viewed as Byzantine. The Venetian metalwork is distinctive in its intricacy and detail; Byzantine filigree features none of the cable twisted spirals so favored by the Venetians, preferring instead to augment it with enamels (See Figures 6 and 21). For Venice to try to pass it off their work Byzantine, as if it were a forgery rather than a legitimate achievement, would be to diminish Venice's own triumphant

¹⁵⁰ Though there are no Byzantine cruets in the San Marco treasury, there is a Byzantine stone chalice with a prominent pouring lip in the style of some Sasanian silver cruets,¹⁵⁰ displaying the ways these techniques were filtered into other objects in less rigid stylistic forms. See *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, 95.

accomplishments. The single Byzantine component of the turquoise glass bowl is in the interior rim, where it could not be as easily seen from more than a few feet away. Rather than pursuing imitation, the Venice composite appealed to an overall aesthetic preference of complimenting crystal and glass bowls with metal embellishments, which simultaneously made them beautiful and functional as chalices, incense boats, or, in the case of the Serpentine Chalice, a mortar. The Venetians took the Byzantine practice of creating composite objects and made them suitable for a newly vast state treasury filled with a surplus of raw materials.

We know from Holger Klein's citation of a 15th century Byzantine diplomatic traveler that visitors could recognize the origin of certain objects from Constantinople. The diplomat, Sylvester Syropoulos, wrote that "These objects were brought here according to the law of booty right after the conquest of our city by the Latins... Among the people who contemplate this icon of icons, those who own it feel pride, pleasure, and delectation, while those from whom it was taken—if they happen to be present, as in our case—see it as an object of sadness, sorrow, and dejection."¹⁵¹ This anecdote provides a series of useful information. First, that the objects taken from Constantinople inspired pride in their Venetian owners; these formerly Byzantine items belonged to them, the Venetians, now. Furthermore, viewers could distinguish Byzantine-made objects from Venetian ones even centuries after the sack of Constantinople.

The Byzantine mounts for treasury objects, with their large, square cut stones, thick filigree, double handles, and often bulky rims and bases, were noticeably dissimilar from the more delicate metalwork of the majority of Venetian mounts. As demonstrated by the Venetian interest in souvenirs from the Holy Land, the Venetians were invested in

¹⁵¹ Klein, "Refashioning Byzantium in Venice," 194.

antiquity, particularly as it pertained to the religious past. The classical stone arose from the first Christian empire, Rome, of which Byzantium and Venice both considered themselves to be the successor states. The classical stone was a literal reminder of Christian heritage, and the Byzantines treated these objects with according respect, transforming them into chalices. When these objects entered the Venetian stores after the massive influx from the Fourth Crusade, the stylization of the classical objects surely primed the Venetians to treat their own in a similar way. To see them all in one place, concentrated, is to prime the eye to expect objects of similar materials to look the same way. An unmounted piece of stone without the shine of a silver rim could have been found lacking and a disrespectful way to treat items with a meaningful past. As Abbot Suger wrote, a valuable stone “deserves to have mounts of gold and gems.”¹⁵²

By referencing Byzantium through the adaptation of hardstone vessels, these Venetian composites evoked a Christian past that Venice actively continued. In the same way, Venice’s treasury objects from the Islamic Eastern Mediterranean world evoke the Holy Land. Together, these sets of referents position Venice as a site of religious cultivation. As such, even though the composite objects illustrate the shared processes of artistic production across the Mediterranean, they contain more specific references to broad areas and a mythologized past. Despite the myriad of shared interactions and transactions across, Venetian treatment of the objects reveals a desire to retain what made each object uniquely valuable.

B. Unique Taste

¹⁵² Verdier, “The Chalice of Abbot Suger,” 13.

The specific references to histories across the Mediterranean contained within the composite objects raise questions about what these pieces illustrate about Venice's unique cultural taste within a swath of global networks. What specifically did Venice gain from combining these works, and what do they illustrate about the functionality of objects in the San Marco treasury? By separating this section from the previous, which examined shared taste in the treasury objects, I do not mean to suggest that the next objects discussed are the only examples of Venetian "innovation". Each Venetian object contains deliberate decisions made to supplement the composite's preexisting components. However, the items that follow differ most dramatically from the Byzantine pieces, and therefore are most useful in illustrating what, exactly, is "Venetian" about these works. Each of these objects serves a ideologically useful purpose as created by its composite additions.

This concept can be seen in the hardstone incense boat (Figure 10), which consists of a shallow 12th century Byzantine bowl and a Venetian base and rim from the 14th century. Prior to the addition of Venetian metalwork, the bowl did not have the characteristics, such as a thurible, of something made to burn incense. The boat's function as an incense burner appears to have been added by the Venetians through the addition of the composite parts. The stone incense boat may have been selected to be a boat due to its wide, shallow shape, which it shares with the other three boats. Its imperfect, off-center mounting, highlights the physical process of adaption and suggests a more pressing need for incense boats than for a perfect composition. The metalwork additionally altered the object so that it matches the other mounted hardstones, and, with metal filigree and figurines, increased the value of the object.

This incense boat is the opposite thematically from the rock crystal cruet. The latter item is nonfunctional, a decorative arrangement of eastern signifiers. The former is functional, a hardstone bowl given an imperfect mount and rim with minimal embellishment and indistinct metalwork figures. The rock crystal cruet evokes the Holy Land, while the hardstone bowl may, barely, suggest a classical history. There is little to “naturalize” with the plain hardstone surface of the bowl. Function or nonfunctional, however, both objects were translated across cultures. The Venetian additions were given whether or not they were practically useful, suggesting an order of action: first, Venetian additions were assumed as necessary; second, they were determined to be either for purely visual use or for visual *and* functional liturgical use.

The crystal grotto with the Venetian figure of Mary (Figure 1) confuses the two values defined in the previous chapter: the common preference for diversity, yet diversity in order to refer to other places. The grotto’s rock crystal is either 4th-5th century Classical or 9th-10th century Fatimid. The votive crown is Byzantine, from the late 9th or early 10th century, and the figure of Mary is from 13th century Venice. This object is clearly identified in the 1325 inventory as “Ecclesiolam unam de cristallo furnitam arg[ent]o deaur[at]o” which translates to “A small church made of crystal decorated with gilded silver.”¹⁵³ This grotto combines three objects from three dramatically different places and times and is therefore one of the most “diverse” objects in the treasury, yet seems to serve a purely functional purpose. Gerevini has written extensively about the grotto, and strongly believes that the object's "aesthetic eclecticism need not be equated with confusion or lack of meaning", as the parts of the object were likely assembled around

¹⁵³ Stefania Gerevini, "The Grotto of the Virgin in San Marco: Artistic Reuse and Cultural Identity in Medieval Venice." *Gesta* 53, no. 2 (2014), 205.

the Venetian figurine in order to be of symbolic value to a feast of purification associated with the Madonna.¹⁵⁴

Gerevini does not suggest that elements such as the votive crown were chosen for triumphant, ideological purposes. The placement of the Venetian statue of Mary over the Byzantine votive crown cannot simply be interpreted as a symbol of Venice's subjugation of the east. As Gerevini argues, "practical utility could be crucial in determining artistic reuse" and the objects' "origin point does not seem to have conditioned their alteration."¹⁵⁵ Individual components, such as the votive crown or the rock crystal, were used like raw materials for the function they could provide rather than as specific cultural signifiers. The Grotto would have functioned as a lamp, with a candle presumably placed in front of Mary's outstretched hands to symbolize Christ. The crystal would be used to distill candlelight, while the votive crown served as a functional base. The votive crown was also useful because it provided a space to add enamels relevant to the iconography of the feast of Mary. Gerevini stresses that "reuse and religious diversity should be seen as a cultural option and as a conscious, defining, and affirmative component of the public image of the city" and concludes that "the Grotto is a Venetian artwork because of the functional and semantic unity that resulted from the irreversible process of appropriation that it underwent and from the consequent capacity of this artwork to interact with its Venetian context."¹⁵⁶ Gerevini thus stresses the importance of local context, the final goal.

Gerevini's interpretation assumes that the votive crown was added at the same time, with the same purpose, as the figure of Mary. The rock crystal portion is uneven on

¹⁵⁴ Gerevini, "The Grotto of the Virgin," 198.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 218.

¹⁵⁶ Gerevini, "The Grotto of the Virgin," 218.

its base, and therefore required some form of mount in order to be displayed. However, as demonstrated by the numerous mounted objects in the treasury, the Venetians could easily have crafted one up in the San Marco workshops to fit the object exactly. The addition of the votive crown seems random: they needed a mount for the object, noticed that the crown fit nearly exactly, and decided to use it to spare effort designing something new. The crown was a raw part to be used. For this reason, I believe the figure of Mary was added later. The statue is made of Venetian metal. If the Venetians were looking to add a piece of Venetian metalwork to the object, it would have been easy to craft a base at the same time as the figure. However, if a base was already in place, there would be no need to. The other alternative would have been that the Venetians were intentionally trying to combine different cultural elements, and therefore wished to have a Byzantine piece in addition to their Venetian and Classical ones.

Few composite objects have parts from three different locations; the only other one to have three in this list is the turquoise glass bowl, made of turquoise from Iraq or Iran, a Venetian silver mount, and Byzantine enamels. The enamels on the turquoise bowl are a decorative element, not a structural one like the votive crown is for the grotto. Making the composite objects was not a task of throwing as many different elements from different origins as possible. The grotto is an example of functional combination of foreign parts, each made more valuable by their juxtaposition with the others.

The reliquary of the arm of St. George (Figure 11) additionally utilizes cross-cultural pieces for a functional, potentially political purpose. The relic consists of a Byzantine interior case from pre-1204. The exterior case is Venetian and was made before 1324. The finial of St. George and the dragon was made after the time frame of

this study in the 16th century.

This relic arrived in Venice following the sack of Constantinople, taken from the city by Doge Enrico Dandolo himself. The relic was originally contained within a Byzantine-made silver sheath, which can be seen in a relief commissioned by the doge Zeno following the fire of 1231 to commemorate the miraculous survival of three relics, including the St. George arm.¹⁵⁷ The Venetian exterior was added following the fire and before the 1325 inventory, which records the object as “Item notamus quod branchium s[anct]i Georgii circumdatur auro et argento laboratum ad smaldum cum uno sa[nct]o Georgio equitanta a parte superiori, et cum uno pede argento laborato” (“We note that the arm of St. George is covered in gold and silver and enameled, with, at the top, a St. George on horseback, and with a base worked in silver”).¹⁵⁸ News of the relic accompanied pilgrimage to Rome in 1265, when Pope Zeno sent a letter to the Pope extolling the miracle of the relics’ survival of the 1231 fire. This was part of a Venetian propaganda effort against Genoa, which had recently reconquered Constantinople.¹⁵⁹ St. George was, not coincidentally, the patron saint of Genoa; he was also the third patron saint of Venice following St. Mark and St. Theodore.¹⁶⁰ Though there are records of the relic’s pilgrimage, there is no description of what the relic looked during the propaganda campaign.

The St. George reliquary is the only composite of the five San Marco arm relics, as well as the only one not to be shaped like an arm. The Venetian metalwork additions

¹⁵⁷ There are no records of what is written on the Byzantine sheath, and therefore it is impossible to read without handling it in person. It is also unclear how the object was meant to be displayed. Its outside inscription suggests that at least this portion of the object was meant to be visible.

¹⁵⁸ *The Treasury of San Marco*, 198.

¹⁵⁹ David Perry, “St. George and Venice: The Rise of Imperial Culture.” *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*. Eds. James Robinson and Anna Harden, (London, UK: British Museum Press, 2014), 18.

¹⁶⁰ Perry, “St. George and Venice,” 16.

compensate for the shape of the sheath, raising it so that it is as tall as the other reliquaries. Rather than dispose of the Byzantine sheath entirely, they kept the sheath visible through hinged panels. Whether as a signifier of age or of “foreign” origin, the sheath was a valuable component. St. George is linked to the east, and the Byzantine object may have been a useful signifier of the object’s history. Via the Venetian additions, the simple Byzantine sheath was reworked into a triumphant display of Venetian expertise in metalwork, suitable to one of the prized relics of the San Marco collection.

Venetian additions could move beyond modifiers of an object: in the case of a rock crystal vessel (Figure 12), the Venetians also created a twin glass vessel of matching proportions (Figure 13). The rock crystal portion of the vessel is from 10th century Iraq, while the Venetian mount was made in the later 13th century. Both the rock crystal vessel and its glass twin have a long clear vase with curved handles, a round top with a raised sphere at the tip, and identically patterned cable twisted filigree. The basic shape was therefore seen as valuable and worthy of replication. The glass portion of twin vessel is not engraved, unlike the rock crystal original. In a later inventory created between 1816 and 1826, it was valued at far lower prices: the rock crystal vessel was 2500 lire while the glass twin was only 300.¹⁶¹ Their Venetian base, handles, and tops are nearly identical, which suggests that the price of these Venetian components was later deemed negligible. The low price of the mounting is in opposition to Abbot Suger’s statement that the settings of a composite object “are more precious than marble”, the material of the object’s core. The rock crystal vessel may therefore have been more highly valued due to the fact that rock crystal was considerably rarer than glass and came from a demonstrably foreign location. The rock crystal vessel is also carved, whereas the Venetian twin is

¹⁶¹ *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, 264.

plain, unembellished glass, which may contribute to its higher pricing. Perhaps the price reflects a Venetian acknowledgement that for all their talent at carving rock crystal, they did not have the technological skill as the rock crystal vessel's original craftsmen.

The rock crystal vessel was indeed subjected to what Hoffman would consider a “naturalization” and Shalem a “Christianization” process, given the additions of the lid, handles, and base. Furthermore, the creation of a Venetian glass pair to the object doubles the effect, as the foreign object was given a less evocative, natural Venetian twin to integrate it into the canon of Venetian objects. If the rock crystal vessel was selected for its exotic elements that recall the Holy Land, such as the Kufic writing, the decision was tellingly not repeated for its Christian twin. To replicate the Kufic writing that tied the rock crystal vessel to the Holy Land would be to fake a history for the glass twin. An abundance of objects referencing the Holy Land must have not been deemed necessary. The Kufic engraving is inherently tied to the Islamic religion, and to remove it is to open the new object to Christian use. On the engraved rock crystal vessel, the top band that connects its handles to its base somewhat obscures the Kufic text, suggesting that its visibility was not prioritized.

Though “naturalization” and “Christianization” are both strong terms, I believe the composite process served to make new objects entering the treasury fit a Venetian aesthetic. So called “raw materials”—preexisting bowls, enamels, and the like—were embellished with Venetian metalwork both to add value to the item and to mark the item as “Venetian”. Venice created additions for works which were bare, additions which allowed the material object/s to remain visible but ensured that they were bracketed with Venetian metal. Venetian additions transformed the objects into something functional,

both ideologically and practically, as they created new liturgical uses for objects which previously might have been purely visual.

V. Conclusion

To study the composite objects requires different modes of categorization than time and space delineations. To focus on the specific details of an object's origin is to suggest a "pure" culture that generates the objects and ignores the complex networks that connected the people and places of the medieval world. A translation approach requires a reframing of traditional modes of categorization. Rather than view objects as belonging to moments, separated from their context, Avinoam Shalem in "Histories of Belonging and George Kubler's Prime Object" suggests a network "built out of varied layers intersecting, crossing, or running parallel to other imaginary vectors of time" in which an object is "given value through...connections."¹⁶² A quote from Latour, also employed by Shalem, articulates the efforts of this project:

"We are going to regroup the contemporary elements along a spiral rather than a line. We do have a future and a past, but the future takes the form of a circle expanding in all directions, and the past is not surpassed but revisited, repeated, surrounded, protected, recombined, reinterpreted and reshuffled. Elements that appear remote if we follow the spiral may turn out to be quite nearby if we compare loops."¹⁶³

Venice contributed admittedly superb metalwork to the composite objects, but neither the style nor usage of the metalwork is truly unique. Similar patterns of silver filigree as well as metalwork mounts and bases can be found on French and Byzantine objects. Their creations did not exist in a cultural void, but rather one that was fed by

¹⁶² Shalem, *Histories of Belonging*, 11.

¹⁶³ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1993), 75.

shared contact. This shared contact cultivated a cross-cultural taste for composite objects and for the materials they were made of: hardstone, glass, rock crystal, and enamel. The objects replicate a technique used by the Byzantines; some of the objects appear to directly copy this technique, others recombine it in new ways. The objects also illustrate stylistic conflation in both the object's workshops and in the homes, churches, or treasuries that later housed them. These global patterns coalesced in many places, of which Venice was only one.

Composite objects were present in Venice from nearly the city's inception. The Venetians filled the established cross-cultural composite mold with pieces they had in their own collection and combined them with their expert metalwork, placing them in areas of high display or in the treasury vaults where they kept their most valuable items. In this way, international objects were used as demonstrations of locational pride.

The objects signal the city's military triumphs, its interest in religious capital, and its propensity for cross-cultural artistic adaptations due to its extensive exposure to other cultures. The composite objects correspond to a larger series of projects intended to enhance the Venetian state by evoking religious legitimacy through the use of symbols of their Byzantine-Roman heritage and their connection to the (Ayyubid-ruled) Holy Land. They continue a Venetian history of reuse and appropriation; they display the artistic skills unique to Venice. The objects are functional, decorative, exotic, triumphant, derivative, unique, and quotidian.

Shalem articulates this framework as one that is polytemporal, in which the "original" object, i.e. the object as a pure cultural entity when it was first created, is an

"imaginary projection" that displays a "fixation of time."¹⁶⁴ Much of Shalem's framework is in turn based on George Kubler's idea of the prime object, about which he writes:

"Historically every work of art is a fragment of some larger unit, and every work of art is a bundle of components of different ages, intricately related to many other works of art, both old and new, by a network of incoming and outgoing influences. These larger units, these bundles of components, and these interrelations across time and space, constitute the study of historical style..."¹⁶⁵

The objects in the San Marco treasury reflect these layered, corrugated histories, in which one cannot, without specific sources to articulate these aims, definitively state what one object meant to one people at one time, let alone the combination of multiple objects into one construct. We might say how an object was used in 1283—the rock crystal cruet was placed on the altar of San Marco—but for how long we cannot precisely know, nor what particular emotions it inspired in its viewers. Instead, this study makes use of a jumble of fractured, often unconnected information to integrate individual pieces into a polytemporal, polylocational conversation, of which Venice is the nucleus.

By referencing locations such as Constantinople, Cairo, and Jerusalem, the composite objects included Venice via their metalwork within a historical lineage of great cities. Fabio Barry writes that these objects display Venice's "triumphalism, continuity, and authenticity" and suggest that "for the San Marco to be the sum of all possibility it must incarnate the many in one."¹⁶⁶ Due to the interconnected networks of the Mediterranean, each of these locational and historical referents recalled still others. Venice's two main sources of inspiration, Byzantium and the Muslim-ruled Eastern Mediterranean, suggest Christian pasts. Remnants from the Holy Land recalled the places

¹⁶⁴ Shalem, *Histories of Belonging*, 9.

¹⁶⁵ George Kubler, "Style and Representation of Historical Time," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 138, pt. 2, no. 2 (1967), 849-50.

¹⁶⁶ Barry, "Disiecta membra", 18.

of Christ's birth and death. Byzantine objects were connections to the still-older empire of Rome, where the first Christian empire was founded. Christopher Wood presents this idea as one of dichotomy: "Venice delivered the East ... and the East was the living archive of the vanished West."¹⁶⁷ By owning valuable objects from each of these locations, Venice advertised itself to the Mediterranean as a successor state of a glorious past, rich in trade and Christian history. The composite objects were visual combinations of this past, now in the custody and care of Venice.

Venice was also unique because of its sheer stockpile of visual materials via trade networks, gift exchanges, and the sack of Constantinople. This backup ensured that Venice had plenty of opportunities to experiment with the ideas transfused through global exchange. They could create composite objects, like those they acquired from Constantinople, on a grand scale. The city had such a quantity of valuable objects that they could combine two of them to create something even more highly regarded. They also had the stylistic expertise to contribute something of their own to them, frequently in the form of metalwork, thus further aggrandizing the piece.

Venice did not need to refer to this metalwork in their inventories as *opus veneciarum* because to do so—to isolate only one part of the composite objects as their own—would be to miss the point: *each* part of the object was Venetian, belonging to Venice, appealing to their artistic styles, and contributing to their ideological message. The metalwork was their way of embellishing things which already belonged to them.

In short, the explanation for the composite objects is twofold: they demonstrate a cultural perspective unique to medieval Venice, and they are representative of a larger

¹⁶⁷ Christopher S Wood, *Forgery, Replica, Fiction: Temporalities of German Renaissance Art*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 272.

pattern of behavior across the medieval world. Their interpretation is contingent upon time, place, and manner of display. Each object is not one style or one thing. The composite objects share only two characteristics: that they have been translated across different spheres, and that one of these translations occurred in the San Marco.

Appendix

1. Turquoise Glass Bowl**Glass:** Iran/Iraq, 9th-10th century**Enamel:** Byzantine, 11th century**Other Metal:** Venice, late 10th-15th century*First recorded in the 1325 inventory or the 1571 inventory*

Figure 4

The bowl section of this object consists of five lobes of colored glass, the style of which is rare; only four medieval Islamic five-lobed glass bowls are known to exist.¹⁶⁸₄₃

The San Marco bowl is the only one of these four to be colored turquoise rather than a translucent green. The other three bowls are greener and more transparent (Figures 14-15). The other three bowls are located in the Shosoin Todaiji temple, Nara, Japan, the Corning Museum of Glass, New York, and an unknown private collection. The latter bowl, and the Corning bowl both display stylized animals cast in high relief, one on the outside of each lobe. Like the San Marco bowl, the animals on the Sotheby's bowl are surrounded by a thin relief border. The Corning Museum bowl animals (birds) are larger and have no such border, though interspersed between the birds is a tree of life design.

The San Marco bowl is the only one to feature hares, which are depicted as running to the left, with long, angular ears and subtle hatching on the body. The transparency of the two emerald bowls allows the animal motif to be visible from the interior; the glass of the San

¹⁶⁸ "Now Arts of the Islamic World Evening Sale: Including the Harvey B. Plotnick Collection of Islamic Ceramics Part One." Dishes ||| Sotheby's L11229lot6746sen.

Marco bowl is too opaque for a similar effect to occur.

Carboni lists approximately seven objects made of turquoise glass in addition to the San Marco bowl, including a small Egyptian cosmetics jar in the Met Museum collection from the 8th-9th century, and two bowls in the Corning Museum of Glass from the 11th -12th centuries, which originated from Egypt, Western Asia, or Iran. In The Hague collection, there is a turquoise glass one-handle bowl and a pitcher decorated with a chicken head and a few ridges around the neck. Both are from the 11th-12th century Iran. In the British Museum, there is a broken long, narrow flask with a small zigzag design along the base from the 11th century and an undecorated one-handle jug from the 12th-13th century. The dates and original locations of these objects was provided by the museum's online database, and I have been unable to find corroborating research. Two of these items, the chicken head pitcher and the British Museum one-handle jug have matching objects of the same design made in silver. None of these turquoise items bear any inscription, nor do they have zoomorphic reliefs, or lobes of any form.

There are several other pieces of colored Fatimid rock crystal in the treasury: an incense boat made of dark red crystal that resembles ruby (Figure 16), also given a Venetian mount, and a green crystal bowl in a Byzantine mount of about the same size as the turquoise bowl (Figure 17), though less shallow. The latter object is, like the turquoise glass bowl, engraved with running hares. The shared motif suggests that it was a thematic pair to the turquoise bowl, and, given its Byzantine setting, reinforces the theory that both arrived in Venice from Byzantium, probably soon after 1204. If the Venetians acquired the two bowls simultaneously, the juxtaposition between the mounted and unmounted bowls would have been apparent, and could have easily inspired the Venetians to set for

the turquoise bowl for the same treatment. Their mounts are stylistically dissimilar, however. The green bowl was transformed into a chalice, with a long unadorned stem over a flat foot inlaid with gemstones, beaded edges, and a pearl border. Three bands connect the foot to the rim, partially obscuring the bowl's pattern of four hares. The exterior of the rim has the same beaded and pearled bands, punctuated with gemstones above each of the bands. Below each gemstone is a small hoop; perhaps the bowl was once hung. The inside of the rim is unadorned.

If the turquoise glass bowl's interior rim was added in Byzantium, it was not made by the same silversmith as that which made the green bowl's rim, for there is no sign of the acanthus and palmettes design in the latter. Indeed, the Venetian mount for the red crystal incense boat is more similar to the green bowl's Byzantine mount, with a long stem and foot and rim connected by thick bands and punctuated by large stones. The red crystal boat differs from the Byzantine bowl, however, through the inclusion of Venice's recognizable raised, palmette filigree. Venetian metalwork was so distinctive that filigree in other medieval Western European treasuries was referred to as *opus veneciarum*-- "Venetian work." This term does not appear in any of the San Marco inventories.

2. Rock Crystal Bowl

Rock: Parisian, mid-14th century (?)

Metalwork: Venetian, 14th century

First recorded in the 1733 inventory

Figure 7

Like the turquoise glass bowl, the rock crystal bowl is also made of crystal in a high quality design, bordered at the base and top with Venetian silver, and lacking a definitive stamp of origin in the form of text or imagery on the object. It may further reflect the vast trade networks of Venice, for it may come from the opposite end of the Venetian sphere, Paris, rather than the Middle East. However, the treatment of the Paris bowl's metalwork is dramatically different from that of the turquoise bowl's. Unlike the turquoise bowl, which features a rim adorned with enamel plaques and gemstones arranged in standardized groupings, designs that bear no resemblance to the hare and border relief on the turquoise, the metal rim of the Parisian rock crystal bowl extends the spiral gadroons carved into the object's rock-crystal. The rim was created to both imitate the object exactly and then embellish upon it.

While the turquoise bowl's base consists only of a metal circle, the rock crystal bowl is given an extended neck, raising the crystal portion of the object so that the general shape resembles that of a chalice. The metalwork features little decoration beyond the shape of the neck, which gracefully widens into 8 lobes at the base, as well as some honeycomb stamping immediately under than rock crystal and lined stamping at the lobed base of the foot. The lobes of the foot recall those of the turquoise glass bowl, and demonstrate a taste for the style in Venetian culture.

The only clue about the original state of the crystal bowl lies in a large crack along one side: the damage suggests that the now-shallow bowl may originally have been far taller, and the Venetian metal rim may have been added to replace the damage done to the glass. The top additionally has a hinge, suggesting that the object formerly had a lid.

There is also a heraldic dragon shield at the bottom of the rock crystal bowl,

attached through the crystal to the foot. Hahnloser attributes the heraldry to the Buoncompagni family, which did not exist in Venice until the 16th century.¹⁶⁹ If this assessment is accurate, then the item could not have been acquired by the San Marco treasury until after that date. If, prior to the Buoncompagni family ownership, the bowl was held by private owners, then interest in composite objects extended beyond the church of San Marco. Private ownership may also account for the lack of enamel in the object's decoration, as it appears that the San Marco had a stockpile of the medium to use in their refurbishments.

Hahnloser's attribution of the dragon quest to the Buoncompagni family is disputed. The family's crest is of the upper half of a dragon, while the engraving in the rock crystal bowl depicts a dragon in its entirety. Furthermore, until the 16th century, the seat of the family was located in Bologna.¹⁷⁰ However, as this city is also located in the north of Italy, and Venice's trade influences spanned far beyond the north most portion of their country, the family may have bought the bowl—or portions of it—from Venice. Furthermore, I have found one other example of the Buoncompagni using a full length dragon symbol. On the cover of Angelo Boncompagni's book on the family's genealogical history, *La vera Genelogia dell'Antichissima Famiglia de Buoncompagni di Bologna, d'Arezzo and di Visso o Fuligno* (1619), is a raised seal of the dragon, the bottom half of which appears to have been painted over, though traces of the legs and feet remain.¹⁷¹ The short legs and claw-like feet are identical to those on the rock crystal bowl seal. The family may therefore have used the full dragon symbol for a period of time in

¹⁶⁹ Hahnloser, *Il Tesoro Di San Marco*, 1971.

¹⁷⁰ L. Alonzi. (2003). *Famiglia, patrimonio e finanze nobilari. I Boncompagni (secoli XVI-XVIII). Manduria-Bari-Rome: Lacaita.*

¹⁷¹ "The Dragon's Tail: "Branding" the Boncompagni Family (Part 1 of 3)." Archivio Digitale Boncompagni Ludovisi. April 01, 2018. Accessed April 18, 2019.

the early 16th century, and following the *La vera Genealogia* book and the rock crystal bowl seal's creation, returned to their demi-dragon, leading to the painting over of the *La vera Genealogia* dragon's bottom half. So while unconfirmed, the attribution is not impossible, and there are no records of another medieval Venetian family with a dragon seal.

The family shield in this item prompts the question: why do so few of the objects have inscriptions from donors? One other object, a porphyry basin from late medieval Venice, also has a coat of arms in the interior center of its basin (Figure 18). The only objects with the name of an Italian on them are a processional cross inscribed with Giacomo di Filippo from Padua—notably Giacomo is not from Venice—and a pair of candlesticks with the coat of arms of Doge Cristoforo Moro (r. 1462-1471). Judging by the ornate, gothic filigree of the Giacomo processional cross and the 15th century rule of Doge Cristoforo Moro, these objects were created later than most of the composite objects discussed.

Otherwise than these two pieces, the Venetian objects have no record of their donors, in contrast to the Byzantine and Fatimid objects, of which many are dedicated to rulers such as the Byzantine Emperor Romanos or the Caliph Al 'Aziz Bi-Ilah. Local donors would therefore have had visible precedents for such inscriptions, though they may not have been able to read them. Carving familial names into the pre-existing, non-Venetian hardstone or glass portions would have been more difficult than doing so with Venetian-patronized creations, as it would tamper with the original design. Inscriptions into the metalwork be easier, yet still there are only the two family bowls.

The two family bowls with heraldry are likely the exception to this rule,

assembled outside the treasury and donated long after their creation. The rock crystal bowl does not appear in inventories until 1733; the family shield was added sometime between the 14th century assembly and this donation. Given the dearth of such inscriptions, the heraldry was probably added closer to its donation than its combination, as by 1733 the majority of the San Marco's treasury was in place.

Lamm and Pazaurek have identified this bowl as being one of seven bowls cut from similar pieces of pure rock crystal and carved with flat spirals.¹⁷² Three of these bowls, including the San Marco one, are in Italian collections and made by Venetian rock crystal workmen, while the other four are currently located in Germany and Spain. Similarly cut bowls have been used as lids for reliquaries in the collections of Charles V and his brother, the Duke of Berry. This last category has spiral carvings most similar to that of the San Marco bowl, leading Alcouffe to attribute the bowl to Parisian craftsmen, though given the scarcity of surviving comparisons, these attributed is not thoroughly convincing.¹⁷³ The San Marco bowl is the largest in size out of these examples.

3. Serpentine Chalice

Stonework: Byzantine, 12th century

Metalwork: Venetian, pre-1325

First recorded in the 1325 inventory

Figure 8

This object consists of a serpentine rock body which, thanks to the soft quality of

¹⁷² Hahnloser, *Il Tesoro Di San Marco*, 1971.

¹⁷³ *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, 305.

the stone, has been heavily damaged over time. The base is silver-gilt; originally the object had a matching silver twin made by the Venetians that was listed in the 1325 inventory, yet disappeared before the 1571 catalogue. The rock has eight lobes, with ten figures in low relief spread between them. The figures are: St. Basil, Michael, Christ, Gabriel, St. Nicholas, St. John, Uriel, the Virgin, Raphael, and an unidentified saint. Above them on the damaged portion of the rock is an inscription in Greek for the consecration of the wine, suggesting that the original use of the object was as a chalice.¹⁷⁴ However, in the 1325 inventory, the object is mistakenly listed as a mortar.

Two handles extend outwards from the lobes, carved in the shape of winged cheetahs or leopards. These zoomorphic animals recall Islamic ceramics, such as the turquoise glass vase topped with the head of a chicken that seems to have been created in conjunction with the Turquoise Glass Bowl. Venetians have also added zoomorphic additions to the handle and spout of the Rock Crystal Cruet. The style of the serpentine rock—a flared spherical shape with double handles—has been found in Classical chalices from the first few centuries B.C.E. and appears to have been revived in 12th century Byzantium.¹⁷⁵ Damage along the rim of the bowl suggests that, like with the Parisian rock crystal bowl, the object once had a rim to hide imperfections.

The base, added by the Venetians, has eight lobes and eight points, matching the gadroons of the bowl. The base of the mount is nearly as wide as the bowl's handles, though the serrated edge that attaches the two sections is considerably less wide. A quatrefoil shape contains a design of foliage on pounced ground, intermixed with eight different birds (a pelican, two herons, two hawks, a peacock, a bird feeding chicks, and a

¹⁷⁴ *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, 286.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 290.

hunting bird), which both reflect the theme of eight as well as the zoomorphic element of the handles. The quatrefoil has a stamped edge, and the collar attaching it to the rock is patterned with sharp, serrated leaves. The mount is fitted with enamel symbols of the Evangelists.¹⁷⁶ The Evangelists thematically match the ten symbols of religious figures carved into the rock portion of the object, and support the object's function as a chalice. Yet if they were added by the same Venetians who believed the chalice to be a mortar, their inclusion becomes less easy to explain. Perhaps the object was misreported in the treasury inventory, which attests to the unreliability and inconsistency of the inventories. Alternatively, perhaps the Venetians knew of the object's original function as a chalice, given the clear inscription upon the bowl, and chose to use it as a mortar anyway.

4. Stone Incense-Boat

Stonework: Byzantine, 12th century

Metalwork: Venetian, 1320-1340

First recorded in the 1733 inventory

Figure 10

This bowl appears to have been constructed as a pair to the Serpentine Chalice, for though they are carved out of different kinds of rock, the material appears very similar, with the same mottled gray-purple surface. The rock was recorded in early Venetian inventories as serpentine, though in reality it is steatite, a softer stone commonly used in Byzantine objects. However, the Venetians did not know this.¹⁷⁷ Both objects also

¹⁷⁶ *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, 286-291.

¹⁷⁷ Gaborit-Chopin, "Venetian Filigree," 292.

have eight gadroons, which are matched by their eight-lobed bases. The silver figures rising from the bowl's metal lid function as handles and though they are not animals, they recall the handles of the Serpentine Chalice. A relief at the bottom of the rock bowl shows St. Demetrios.

Despite these similarities, Danielle Gaborit-Chopin in the Metropolitan Museum of Art Catalog has noted key differences in the style of the bases, suggesting that one was made to imitate the other—probably the serpentine chalice as the one copied.¹⁷⁸ The quatrefoil base has an edge stamped out with quatrefoils; in the Serpentine Chalice, this element was cast, not stamped. The collar attaching the base to the mount repeats the serrated leaves used in that of the Serpentine Chalice, but they are slightly different in length and spacing on the Stone Incense Bowl. Parts of the mount also appear to have been added later; Gaborit-Chopin has dated the bowl's lid to before 1300 based on the treatment of the figures and medallions.¹⁷⁹ The base attaches clumsily to its collar and is off-center. The style of the silver-work vines also differs in thickness of the relief and its arrangement, and no enamel has been added to the metal.

The style of the incense boat's filigree is similar to that of the reliquary of the tooth of St. Mark (Figure 19). Both have the same stamped out quatrefoils and scaly, pounced ground, which is more delicately wrought in the serpentine chalice. The tooth reliquary is not a composite object (unless the tooth relic counts as a foreign-made item). However, it still demonstrates a desire to encase an object in Venetian mountings, particularly an object from Venice's patron saint, St. Mark. Venice is quite literally claiming ownership over the tooth, in a similar way to its treatment of Christian-coded

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 293.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 293.

Classical and Fatimid bases which were similarly enveloped in Venetian metal.

There are three other incense boats in the treasury: two matching mother of pearl ones with Venetian bases, and the red Fatimid glass crystal bowl. They vary in size, with the mother of pearl boats at 7 cm, the stone incense boat at 10 cm, and the red glass crystal boat as the largest, at 18 cm. Incense boats can thus be many sizes. The stone incense boat may have been selected to be a boat due to its wide, shallow shape, which it shares with the other three boats. None of the other three bowls have the hinged lid of the steatite bowl, however, not to mention the figures acting as lid handles.

5. Rock Crystal Vessel

Stonework: Iraq, late 10th century

Metalwork: Venice, 2nd half of 13th century

First recorded in the 1325 inventory

Figure 12

This bowl is composed of a Fatimid rock crystal core with the now traditional Venetian additions of a base and rim. Two handles, attached by a ring around the rock crystal core, have also been added and connect to the base. The vessel also has an unattached top with a small bulb tip. The rock crystal is decorated with friezes on the top and bottom portions of the bowl: the upper frieze written in Kufic that translates to “never-ending power and copious favor, and well-being to our lord.”¹⁸⁰ The bottom frieze is a pattern of fifteen leaf shapes that point toward the top.

This figure also has a glass twin. The low relief metalwork is of the same palmette

¹⁸⁰ *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, 264.

style with inserted gemstones. However, this vessel has only one handle, though it is in the same elongated curved shape of the rock crystal vessel. The glass portion of this vessel is also not engraved, and, in later inventories, was valued at far lower prices. Their Venetian base, handles, and tops are nearly identical, which suggests that the price of these Venetian components is negligible. The low price of the mounting is in opposition to Abbot Suger's statement that the settings of a composite object "are more precious than marble", the material of the object's core. The rock crystal vessel may therefore have been more highly valued due to the fact that its core came from a demonstrably foreign location, and was not merely home-grown glass. The rock crystal vessel is also carved, whereas the Venetian twin is plain, unembellished glass, which may contribute to its higher pricing. Perhaps the price reflects a Venetian acknowledgement that for all their talent at carving rock crystal, they did not have the technological skill as the rock crystal vessel's original craftsmen.

6. Rock Crystal Cruet

Stonework: Fatimid: Late 10th century

Metalwork: Venetian, 13th century

First recorded in the 1325 inventory

Figure 3

The rock crystal portion of the object again repeats the secular zoomorphic themes seen in items such as the turquoise glass bowl, featuring a stylized ram surrounded by foliate motifs that envelop the rounded body of the cruet. Evidently

inspired by these devices, the Venetian additions further incorporate animal and palmette imagery, though they notably include several small figures. Zoomorphic motifs are present in other objects made entirely of Venetian silver, such as a pair of rock crystal candlesticks with bases engraved with images of birds of prey, dragons, and culminating in statues of three lions.

The added Venetian neck of the rock crystal cruet is divided into three sections: the top features two men fighting a dragon, the middle consists of a pattern of palmettes, and the bottom, which connects to the rock crystal by a collar of leaves, shows a serpent amidst a foliate motif. The serpent imagery is then repeated in the snake head of the spout, which is further engraved with palmettes, and the handle, a serpentine dragon with delicate wings and a leafy tail. The Venetian base also depicts figures battling lions and dragons, and is connected to the rock crystal by the familiar metal collar of spiked leaves.

7. Sardonyx Cruet

Stonework: Classical, 3rd century

Metalwork: Venice, 2nd half of the 13th century

Figure 4

This is one of 15 works in the San Marco Treasury made of sardonyx hardstone. Three of these 15 have Venetian mounts, two are unadorned, and the other ten have Byzantine mounts. The Byzantine sardonyx items are all chalices, with either an elongated stem or added double handles. At least one of the unadorned sardonyx bowls has pierced holes along the top, suggesting it once had a rim. Furthermore, in the 1571

inventory, the object is described as having a second silver handle, with the pre-existing one coated in silver to match.

Only one of the Byzantine sardonyx vessels has natural stone handles, and they are thinner and more delicate than the others. The Venetian sardonyx vessels, however, all have at least one large handle. This suggests that the Byzantines may have viewed the two handled vessels as complete and functional, while the Venetians wished to make them match the Byzantine sardonyx objects and therefore added their own mounts.

Unlike the chalices that form the bulk of the Byzantine sardonyxes, only one Venetian sardonyx is a chalice; the other two are cruets. The two Venetian cruets are quite different; the former has an elaborately filigreed and gem-encrusted top half with a small serrated edge connecting it to the sardonyx cup. The latter's mount encases the bowl, connecting a plain top and spout to an equally unadorned foot by way of thick metal bands (Figure 9). It has no filigree or gems, though the mouth of its spout has a similar dragon head to the rock crystal cruet. Rather than compare these two cruets to each other and the Byzantine chalices, it may be more productive to view the cruet category as a whole.

The cruet hardstones are no larger or smaller than the average chalice. Why, then, were they the ones chosen to model into cruets rather than chalices? The third sardonyx vessel with a Venetian mount *is* a composite chalice, of the same format as many of the Byzantine composite chalices: a short, thick base connected to a rim of similar thickness with wide bands, all of which are decorated in the same, simple filigree style and encrusted with large gems. This is not the only way Venetians styled their chalices: there are at least four that have mounts that consist only of the bottom half of the chalice.

Therefore, when transforming the hardstones, the Venetians had more than one option.

Hahnloser has attributed the filigree of the sardonyx cruet to the same workshop from the second half of the 13th century that produced the rock crystal vessel, its twin, the Fatimid red glass bowl, and a glass amphora.¹⁸¹ These vessels all feature cable twisted filigree in lanceolate patterns, which Shalem has identified as common on Fatimid rock crystal vessels from the first hundred years of the dynasty.¹⁸²

I believe three other objects were also made by this workshop: an alabaster pitcher, silver chalice, and the two handled sardonyx vase that so resembles Byzantine sardonyx chalices. Therefore, the differences in hardstone use cannot be attributed to the passage of time; rather, they exemplify Venice's conflicting influences at the time of the objects' creation. Viewing the numerous two-handled Byzantine chalices may have primed Venetian silversmiths to see the two handled sardonyx vase and think of it as a chalice. However, so too does the second hardstone cruet have stone two handles, so this would not have been the only requirement for a chalice setting.

There is also the possibility that the vase did indeed have a Byzantine mount that had been damaged, and so the Venetians sought to create their own similar mount to replace it. The two hardstone chalices, however, may have been uncombined when they arrived in Venice; the sardonyx cruet's bowl portion has a stone foot cut into it and therefore would not need a metal one. These bowls may have been blank slates for the Venetians to experiment with new forms of composite, ones influenced by Islamic cruets. They were evidently interested in the form, given that the third cruet in this trio, the rock crystal cruet, was also made in the second half of the thirteenth century. Though there are

¹⁸¹ Hahnloser, *Il Tesoro Di San Marco*, 143.

¹⁸² Shalem, "Islam Christianized," 29.

no Byzantine cruets in the San Marco treasury, there is a Byzantine stone chalice with a prominent pouring lip in the style of some Sasanian silver cruets,¹⁸³ displaying the ways these techniques were filtered into other objects in less rigid stylistic forms.

8. Rock Crystal Grotto

Stonework: Classical or Fatimid, 4th-5th century

Crown: Byzantine, late 9th-early 10th century

Figure of Mary: Venice, 13th century

First recorded in the 1325 inventory

Figure 1

This object is composed of a silver-gilt base likely originating from Byzantium. Either a votive crown or the displaced rim of a chalice, the circular base is decorated with 14 enamel figures: Christ, the Byzantine emperor Leo VI (866-912 C.E.), and saints. Gerevini has persuasively argued that these enamels were rearranged in the 19th century, basing her argument on surviving images and inventory descriptions from that time so that the remaining enamels were positioned in the front.¹⁸⁴ In this way, the object has undergone an even later translation, and the modern arrangement of the enamels cannot be parsed for an explanation of the object's medieval use. The enamel figures are encircled with pearls, and top and bottom of the crown/rim is similarly decorated with lines of small metal spheres. A small circular opening has been stamped under each figure. Two peacocks (there seems to have been a third, now lost) have been placed atop

¹⁸³ *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, 95.

¹⁸⁴ Gerevini, "The Grotto of the Virgin," 211.

silver-gilt straps that connect the crown to the rock crystal. The peacocks have rings on their backs to hold a suspending wire, as well as rings in their mouths to potentially hold other decorative elements.¹⁸⁵ The rock crystal is cut in a single block and resembles an architectural space.

Gerevini has argued for a Fatimid origin for the crystal, as the carvings are far more ornate than are typically found in Classical crystal designs.¹⁸⁶ She compares it to a Fatimid flask in the Victoria and Albert Collection, which features no architectural designs but has similar relief carvings of feathery swirls. This argument is not particularly convincing, as at least two examples of Classical stone carved in architectural manners exist compared to the zero Fatimid ones. Furthermore, one of the architectural pieces of Classical stone forms part of another composite object for Recceswinth, a Visigothic king, now in the Madrid Archeological Museum. The other is a far smaller, columned structure used as a saltcellar, found in Carthage and now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gerevini also cites small rock crystal columns in the Vatican.¹⁸⁷ The rock crystal of the Grotto also does not resemble the Fatimid rock crystal objects in the treasury, which typically form plates or vases, and contain vegetal and calligraphic motifs rather than architectural. The Grotto is also the only piece cut in a jagged, interlace manner, with an inclined top and a planed surface with recessions. The difficulty sourcing the rock crystal further points to the interrelation of Mediterranean styles. The practice of rock carving was not unique to one location, and in fact fed from what survived from earlier eras or was being produced in other parts of the Mediterranean. The pieces travelled, and their original homes and functions were lost in the process of what one can imagine were

¹⁸⁵ *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, 120.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 117-133.

¹⁸⁷ Gerevini, "The Grotto of the Virgin," 203.

numerous transfers.

Gerevini also suggests that the rock crystal is upside down in the new object, as the now-top of the crystal has piercings that suggest it used to be fixed to another object, and the traditional top of ionic columns is now at the bottom.¹⁸⁸ Daniel Alcouffe has suggested that the crystal may have indeed originally been the upper part of a scepter. According to Constantinople inventories of church objects, late classical scepters sometimes contained figures,¹⁸⁹ though there is no surviving example comparable to the Grotto and so this theory remains only that – a theory.

A familiarity with this style may explain why the statue of Mary has been placed within the edifice. Like the base, the statue of Mary is made of silver-gilt and attached to the crystal by a silver pin, which connects her to the silver-gilt base. Grabar writes that Mary is similar in style to a marble relief of the Virgin on the north wall of the basilica, also likely crafted in the 13th century.¹⁹⁰ The crown is as wide as the rock crystal, and the figure is fully contained in the rock architectural space. The peacocks fit neatly underneath the crystal.

9. Reliquary of the Arm of St. George

Interior Casing: Byzantine, pre-1204

Exterior Casing: Venetian, pre-1325

Finial of St. George and the dragon: Venetian, 1325 and 16th century

Borders: Modern

First recorded in the 1325 inventory

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 202.

¹⁸⁹ *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, 120.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 123.

Figure 11

The Venetian exterior significantly embellishes upon the Byzantine interior, encasing it entirely. Of all the Byzantine objects, this one is the least adorned and therefore the best candidate for complete modification. The object has a “base” and “rim” in a similar manner to objects in the first category, yet they are synthesized into the overall design, which nearly doubles the length of the Byzantine reliquary. The base consists of three branches adorned with leaves that spread out at the base like roots; they are attached to the reliquary by a disk that supports a panel inscribed with the name of the relic. The case is divided into vertical sections, alternating between enamels of saints and protruding lightly filigreed rosettes, often embellished with jewels, though many are now lost. Small metal figures of saints alternate between the flowers, and horizontally follow the enamels of saints. Beside the top row of enameled saints, two stems curve upwards, atop of which are two more figures of saints. The two vertical sections of rosettes are hinged, allowing the panels to be opened so that one might see the original Byzantine reliquary case inside. As there are no public images of the relic with the panels open, it is difficult to describe how visible the Byzantine portion truly is.

Atop the relic within the metal sheath is a curve pane of glass through which the bone of the relic can be viewed. A metal dragon, original to the 1325 Venetian exterior, perches on a rod across the glass, while a later statuette of St. George riding a horse faces the dragon. This statuette was likely made in the 16th century, as it appears to be modeled after Leonardo da Vinci’s prototypes for a Sforza equestrian statue. William D. Wixon

notes the Gothic quality of the filigree, noting its separation from Byzantine influence.¹⁹¹ So too, however, does it differ from the other reliquaries in the treasury made in the same century. The reliquary of the true cross resembles a book cover, with a long, flat shape, while a reliquary of the column of flagellation is far small and composed primarily of a figural narrative scene.

This reliquary the only one of the five arm relics to not be contained in an arm-shaped vessel. The other four are all between 50 cm and 60 cm in height (the St. George arm is 52 cm), are bedecked in jewels and filigree, have a silver hand placed at the top. They are wider at the base than the top, whereas the St. George reliquary's proportions are the opposite due to the shape of the Byzantine sheath. The Venetian tree root base raises the relic the few inches necessary for it to stand as tall as its peers.

¹⁹¹ *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, 282.

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Figure 2
Pala d'Oro



Figure 3
Rock Crystal Cruet



Figure 4
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Figure 5
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Figure 6
Chalice of the Emperor Romanos (with handles)



Figure 7
Rock Crystal Bowl



Figure 8
Serpentine Chalice



Figure 9
Onyx/Sardonyx Cruet



Figure 10
Stone Incense-Boat



Figure 11
Relic of the Art of St. George



Figure 12
Rock Crystal Vessel



Figure 13
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Figure 14
Sotheby Bowl



Figure 15
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Figure 16
Ruby Glass Vase



Figure 17
Green Glass Bowl



Figure 18
Porphyry Basin



Figure 19
Reliquary of the Tooth of St. Mark



Figure 20
18th Century engraving of San Marco Bowl

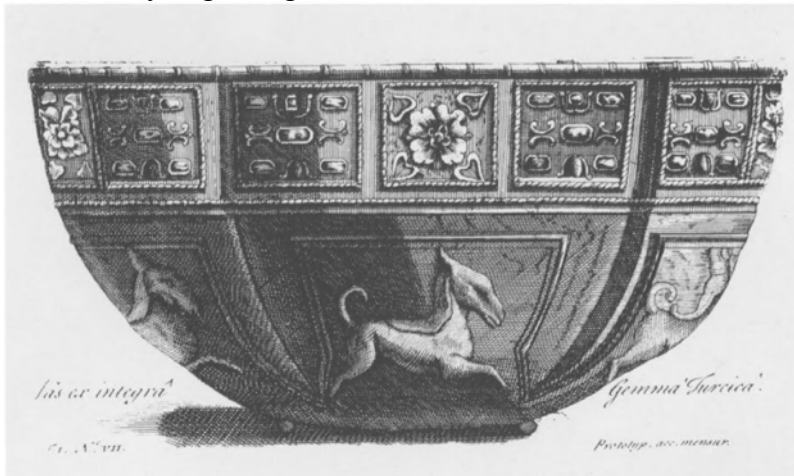


Figure 21
Chalice of the Patriarchs



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I have adhered to the Honor Code in the completion of this assignment.
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