A gem with the representation of the anastasis in the Burton Y. Berry Collection

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Early Christian gems are a genre that Jeffrey Spier has brought together and fundamentally elaborated in a comprehensive work published in 2007.[1] Now available to the scholarly community, their significance for the development of early Christian art is gradually being worked out.[2] In their use as amulets and pieces of jewellery, gems bear important and interesting pictorial themes. Among the variety of gems, the group of rock crystal gems is of particular importance because they are late pieces and for the most part depict Christian scenes.[3]

One among these is a quartz gem from the *Burton Y. Berry Collection* in the *Eskenazi Museum of Art* (Inv. 76.62.34) in Bloomington at Indiana University (fig. 1–3). It features a rare pictorial subject, the *anastasis*, which is referred to in English as the 'harrowing of hell'. The *anastasis* is the Eastern Church's Easter image, depicting as it does Christ's descent into the netherworld.

The piece measures 4.4 × 3.6 × 1 cm and is in a gold mount. It comes from the art trade. The gem's dating and authenticity have been discussed. In the first publication dedicated to the piece, Paola Leveto dated it to the 11th or 12th century for iconographic reasons.[4] Genevra Kornbluth reviewed the piece in an article on fakes of early Byzantine rock crystals that came on the market in the early 1960s.[5] According to her judgment, *"The style is early Byzantine, the iconography is middle Byzantine, and the objects are probably modern."* [6] Jeffrey Spier places this gem among the 'Beirut forgeries', Beirut being the location in which, he believes, this and other pieces were made.[7]

When her article appeared in 1995, Kornbluth could not yet have known the results of Thomas Weigel's research on the sculpted ciborium columns of San Marco. Publishing his

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1 Spier 2007. – My sincere thanks go to Juliet Rose Istrabadi Graver of the *Eskenzai Museum of Art* at Indiana University for kind and dedicated assistance; thanks also go to the Eskenazi Museum for the permission to publish the gem and photographs from the museum's holdings here. I gratefully thank Harald Buchinger and the Fellows of the DFG Research Group "Beyond Canon. *Heterotopias* of Religious Authority in Ancient Religion" (FOR 2770) at the University of Regensburg for important hints as to the theological development and understanding of this image theme. My sincere thanks to Nathan Betz for the correction of the English translation.

2 For example Dresken-Weiland 2021b, Dresken-Weiland 2023.

3 Spier 2007, 115–126.

4 Leveto 1977, 52; see also Rudolph 1979, 39 no. 42.

5 Kornbluth 1995, 24 no. 28.

6 Kornbluth 1995, 26.

7 Spier 2007, 182 no. X136.

work in 1997, Weigel reassigned the columns, which originated in Constantinople, to the 6th century[8] and systematically rejected the long-accepted 12th century dating[9]. The four marble columns show scenes from the Apocrypha and the New Testament. The scenes begin with the prehistory of the birth of Mary on column A (from the Protevangelium of James). On columns B and C are depicted scenes from the life of Christ. Finally, column D depicts the Passion. The scenes on column D show also the women at the grave, the Ascension of Christ and the enthroned Christ returning for the Last Judgement. In this context, the raising of the dead and the *anastasis* are represented, which are thus attested for the Justinianic period. Since the quartz from the Burton Y. Berry Collection in the Eskenazi Museum of Art has similar themes, it is worthwhile to examine whether it could have been made in the early Byzantine period.

Kornbluth remarks on the assessment of early Christian and early Byzantine gems:

"When a stone's iconography is reasonable in terms of the broad lines of sixth/seventh-century Byzantine development, that gem is probably secure. If, however, a crystal shows iconographic errors unlikely at the time of supposed production, if it exactly reproduces the composition of another work (particularly from a non-Byzantine culture); or if its early style is contradicted by iconography that could only be middle Byzantine or later, then it must be rejected." [10]

It will be shown below that the iconography of this piece can probably be dated to the early Byzantine period and that the gem can be placed in the group of authentic rock-crystal gems of the 6th–7th centuries.

Description

In the centre of the quartz crystal stands Christ, who is dressed in a long-sleeved tunic and with a cloak wrapped around his waist. His head is surrounded by a nimbus in the shape of a cross. In his right hand he holds a cross staff, in his left a scroll. Christ is balancing on two slightly sloping elongated rectangles, the gates of the underworld, which he has broken open. To his right is the torso of a male figure, facing left, who is extending both arms towards Christ and with his left leg is about to step out of the sarcophagus in which he is standing. Behind the male is a female figure with a cloak pulled over her head. She has raised her arms at an angle; they are covered by a garment. On Christ's left side, three frontal male torsos are visible. The two shown side by side in the foreground are bearded, while the head behind them in the top row, which like Christ's has a triangu-

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8   Weigel 1997.

9   Lucchesi Palli 1942.

10   Kornbluth 1995, 23.

lar, stylised outline, is less clearly visible. The figure in the front row next to Christ seems to be distinguished with a nimbus, perhaps also the figure above it. A ribbon-like diadem can be seen on the forehead of the two front heads. The narrow oblong object in front of them is probably a sarcophagus, below are fragments of other sarcophagus lids.

The Resurrection of the Dead: the two figures to the right of Christ

On the gem in Bloomington, the two figures to the right of Christ offer clear points of reference to the iconography of the raising of the dead (Mt 27:52-53) that is found on column D in San Marco in Venice.

The ciborium columns of San Marco were brought from Constantinople to Venice after the Fourth Crusade; there is widespread agreement about their manufacture in the Eastern Roman capital. The four sculpted columns each have the nine registers with nine arcades each, i.e. 324 niches. On them, a total of 382 figures are depicted in 97 scenes. This makes them the monument with the greatest number of figures and scenes from the early Christian and early Byzantine period. Even so, the columns have not yet been studied in detail from an iconographical perspective. Their high-quality reliefs make it clear that the craftsmen who created them were not making this kind of work for the first time and in fact were highly professional. In view of the extremely sparse tradition of sculpture in Constantinople, they make obvious what must have been lost in the course of time. Several pictorial themes are preserved on the ciborium columns for the first time.[11]

On column D, in zone 7, niche 6 depicts a man who – like the figure on the quartz – is about to climb out of a sarcophagus. He has moved one leg out of the coffin and is supporting himself with one hand; the figure on the quartz in Bloomington for his part already has both hands outstretched to Christ. The standing woman, wrapped in a cloak and with her hands covered, is found on column D in the adjacent niche 7. These two figures show that pictorial elements of the gem are already known in Justinianic times on another artwork.[12]

This depiction on column D, where it is placed, is visible to a liturgist standing behind the altar, and thus only to a limited circle of people. Here, the images of the raising of the dead and the *anastasis* serve to express the hope of the commissioners, who are depicted at the same height in biblical roles on column B and C. It is a reminder of the prayers that were to be said for the commissioners at this place, and which each celebrant surely also said for himself.[13]

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11   A monograph on the ciborium columns is in preparation by the author, with a planned publication date in 2024.

12   For an illustration, see Lucchesi Palli 1942, pl. V a–b.

13   Dresken-Weiland 2020, 208–213; Dresken-Weiland 2021a, 89–95.

The representation of the raising of the dead and *anastasis* was certainly not the only one to be found in church interiors and elsewhere. If the pictorial theme is also found on jewellery, it may be assumed that it was also depicted in other genres and contexts. Accordingly, the centuries-wide gap until the next known depiction of the raising from the dead and *anastasis* will have been filled by numerous other images that have not survived.

The depiction of the raising of the dead has its next preserved example in the 8th century.[14] The motif of the dead raising their covered hands is depicted for example on a 10th century Middle Byzantine ivory box in the Württembergisches Landesmuseum in Stuttgart.[15] For the dead rising from the sarcophagus and stretching out his hands to Christ, the Vyšehrad Codex (the coronation gospels of Vratislav II), probably written in Bohemia around 1085, offers a good comparison. In this codex, a separate page is dedicated to the resurrection of the dead.[16]

The *anastasis*: Christ with cross staff and scroll

On column D in San Marco, the *anastasis* shows Christ freeing Adam from Hades by grasping his wrist as Hades and Satan watch in dismay and in bondage respectively. Christ pulling Adam out of Hades by grasping his wrist forms the core element of the iconography of this scene; Hades and Satan, however, are rarely (and also much later[17]) depicted together in this scene.

The gem in Bloomington chooses a very different iconography. Christ does not grasp the wrist of the figure standing next to him; rather, he stays in the middle of the scene with the cross staff and scroll. He turns his head towards the deceased climbing out of the sarcophagus on the right, while on the left three busts witness this event. This composition of Christ standing between two groups of people is known in other representations of the *anastasis* and is already described as a separate type by older scholarship.[18] This iconography was probably designed to represent the resurrection and redemption as a 'non-corporeal' action.[19] It remains rare and could not establish itself alongside the one with the grip on the wrist: Possibly this is because one did not want to abandon the idea of the physical reality of the resurrection, which includes the raising of the body.[20]

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14 Folgerø 2009.

15 Fey 2017, 792 f. nr. 251. For an illustration see https://www.landesmuseum-stuttgart.de/sammlung/sammlung-online/dk-details?dk_object_id=390 [18.03.2023].

16 For an illustration see https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Codex_Vysse gradensis?uselang=de#/media/File:Rakve.jpg [27.01.2023]. To the codex most recent https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Vyssegradensis [27.01.2023].

17 Loerke 2003, 73 f., 77 f.

18 Loeschke 1965, 50 f., here "Typ 2"; Kartsonis 1986, 9, 152–164, here "Typ 3".

19 Loeschke 1965, 51.

20 Loeschke 1965, 52.

Again, the next example of this iconography, different in its details, is preserved only centuries later. It is found in the Chludov Psalter,[21] which was created in the middle of the 9th century. This image can be compared with the Bloomington gem only in that it depicts Christ in the middle between two people. Later manuscript illuminations offer better possibilities for comparison – namely Christ standing on the unhinged doors of Hades, as in the gem in Bloomington. A depiction in the *homelia* of the 'liturgical collection' of Gregory of Nazianzus in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris (12th century)[22] shows Christ standing at the doors of Hades with both arms slightly raised, situated between two figures who are rising from the tombs on one side and two kings and a prophet standing on the other.

A Greek-influenced depiction of the *anastasis* from the late 9th century that is found in the lower church of San Clemente in Rome can be cited for the cross staff that the gem depicts Christ as holding in his right hand.[23] The scroll being held in Christ's left hand is so ubiquitous in early Christian art that evidence hardly needs to be adduced. In the scene of the *anastasis*, Christ holds it in Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome in the depiction on the Palatine ramp, which was made in the early 8th century[24], and in the 'Chapel of the Forty Martyrs', namely in the atrium on the outer wall in front of the church[25]. The three paintings show Christ in a wide pacing position, much as he is depicted on the gem in Bloomington. The cross staff is also a frequent attribute of Christ in this scene in later depictions.[26]

Christ holds a double cross-staff in the midst of very similar iconography in an eleventh or 12th century Psalter manuscript of the Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos[27] and in a 14th century *Sticherarion* of the Koutloumousiou Monastery, also on Mount Athos.[28]

The spectators on the left

The two bearded figures depicted to the left of Christ behind a sarcophagus can be compared with two figures, also shown to the left of Christ, that are visible as a bust on the inside of the Fieschi Morgan staurotheque (early 9th century) in the Metropolitan Museum

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21   *Fol.* 82v, Kartsonis 1986, 152 f. fig. 44b.

22   Cod. gr. 550, *fol.* 5v, Kartsonis 1986, 153 f. fig. 51; for these texts see Some-Auwers 2002.

23   Osborne 1981; Guidobaldi 1998.

24   A good illustration in: https://twitter.com/giogasbarri/status/1249287312208470016?lang=zh-Hant [01.01.2023]; ultimately Montgomery Labatt 2019, 60 f.

25   Kartsonis 1986, 70–78 fig. 14b.

26   Numerous examples: Bagatti 1982, passim.

27   *Fol.* 119v, Kartsonis 1986, 154 fig. 54.

28   *Fol.* 232v, Kartsonis 1986, 154 fig. 53, see also 205–207.

of Art in New York (fig. 4).[29] Unlike the figures on the gem, they are unbearded. They are also distinguished by a horizontal line on the forehead – a band. It very probably represents a diadem. Accordingly, like the busts on the gem, they are special and highlighted figures. The place of the event is the underworld, where all the deceased dwell. According to apocryphal texts, the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are the first of these.[30] On the Bloomington gem, we have three figures which can match these. Although the head of the third person is not clearly visible, the line visible to the left of this head may be nimbus enclosing this head, so that he also is a patriarch. All elements can thus be brought into a meaningful and coherent context with the traditional iconography of the scene.

Classification in the group of rock crystal gems of the 6ᵗʰ and 7ᵗʰ century.

The dating of the gem is based on the fact that it belongs to the group of rock crystal gems that were produced in the 6ᵗʰ and 7ᵗʰ centuries. Most of these pieces are flat on the engraved side and convex on the other. As other specimens preserved with their setting show, the incision was backed with gold and covered by a second, unengraved rock crystal (fig. 3).[31] The appearance of the translucent stone with its golden background in the light would have demonstrated the piece's splendour and preciousness.[32] The transverse oval format is used by some gems that require more space for multi-figure scenes.[33]

Jeffrey Spier assigns the rock crystal gems of this group to a workshop in Syria based on the find locations as well as on the iconography[34], which depicts scenes from the life of Jesus and the Passion, including the women at the tomb and the Ascension. The *anastasis* fits into this thematic range, and one can well imagine that such a gem could have been ordered in this workshop. No other gem by the hand of this gem cutter has survived, and this is also true of a number of other pieces for which no parallels are known.[35] 'Single

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29 Kartsonis 1986, 94–125, 199 fig. 24G; Mathews 1997, 74 f. no. 34; Bagnoli – Klein – Griffith Mann *et al.* 2010, 81 f. no. 37.

30 I refer only to two texts that narrate the *anastasis*. See for example the "Questions of Bartholomew", in which in one version "all the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" are mentioned (Markschies 2012, 713), and the Gospel of Nicodemus. Here it mentions Father Abraham with the patriarchs and prophets, Schärtl 2012, 257, 2./18.(1).

31 See Leveto 1978, 47 fig. 4.

32 Leveto 1978, 52.

33 Spier 2007, no. 706, 709–711. They are preserved without setting.

34 Spier 2007, 115 f.

35 Spier 2007, 125 f.

pieces' are by no means a rarity among late antique and early Christian gems – they are also found in other genres of late antique art as well.[36]

The gems of this group and the piece in Bloomington belong to the late groups of antique gems; they therefore stand at the end of the antique gem cutting art. Perhaps the triangular, reduced-looking heads of Christ and the patriarch standing in the second row indicate a late date of origin within the group, but this can only be a conjecture.

The setting of the gemstone

The setting has loops through which a chain was pulled.[37] The gemstone was therefore worn as a pendant.[38]

The framing is decorated with a finely twisted gold cord on its inner and outer rim.[39] Framing with one gold cord is more common, and so the double framing with a gold cord on the gem in Bloomington seems unusual at first glance. Given the variety of different ways in which to frame such a jewel, this option is one of many: A gem found in 2008 at the Yenikapı excavations in Istanbul – one depicting the Annunciation to Mary and also backed with gold – has a smooth, slightly wider frame that is surrounded by another ring of *lapis lazuli* beads.[40] On our piece, the decoration of the frame with applied spheres, of which two have survived,[41] is thus one of probably numerous ways of framing a piece of jewellery during the period. Spheres as decorative framing elements, on the other hand, are frequently found on, for example, late antique silver or marble reliefs[42]. They are a framing motif with a 'longue durée' and are still preserved on the work of Avar goldsmiths from the 6th and 7th centuries,[43] as well as on Byzantine jewellery (fig. 5).[44]

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36   See for example decorated table tops, Dresken-Weiland 1991.

37   Cfr. the loop of a framed gold *multiplum* in Berlin, Radnoti-Alföldi 2013, 48 f. no. 28a–b.

38   Spier 2007, 115. Leveto 1978, 45 fig. 3 gives an illustration of the back.

39   Spier 2007, nos. 668, 672, 677, 680, 683, 686, 692bis, 698, 700.

40   Kızıltan – Çelik 2013, 132 no. 79.

41   For a reconstruction of the setting see Rudolph 1979, 39.

42   On silver vessels from the Mildenhall treasure in the British Museum or from the Traprain Law treasure, Hunter et al. 2022; decorated marble table tops, luxury items which refer to these silver vessels, also show these beads as a finishing border, Dresken-Weiland 1991, Kat. G 8 fig. 16, Kat. G 11 fig. 26, Kat. K 6 fig. 38–42, Kat. Z 2 fig. 4, Kat. Z 6 fig. 53, Kat. SP 2 fig. 59, Kat. 2 fig. 134, Kat. 4 fig. 136, Kat. 6 fig. 144.

43   Samu 2022, 170 f., 294 f.

44   For example in Kiev: Pekars'ka 1997, 71 fig. 10.

Significance of the *anastasis*, its origin, history and theology

The descent of Christ into the netherworld with the liberation of Adam is the Easter image of the Eastern Church. While it cannot depict the event, at which no one was present as a witness, it wants to proclaim the mystery of the resurrection and express that through it Christ ends the reign of death over man and makes it possible for all people to be raised from death.

Christ's descent into the Hades is already mentioned in texts of the 2nd century – for example in a paschal homily by Melito of Sardis,[45] who died around 180. In this homily, the elements important for the later image are mentioned: the raising of the dead, the victory over Hades and a bound Satan, and the leading of man *"to the heights of heaven"*[46]. Closely related to Melito's text is a passage in the context of the Eucharistic Prayer in the *Traditio Apostolica*, whose date and place of origin are still discussed[47]. It is placed immediately before the words of institution and underlines by its placement how important the descent of Christ must have been for the Christian liturgy and those celebrating it.[48] The rich and differentiated way that the poetic imagination depicts, for example, Christ's death, descent into the netherworld and resurrection, is impressively shown by the Madrasahs of Ephræm the Syrian[49]. The elements that appear centuries later in preserved images are thus present early on in various texts and probably also in people's minds.

Subsequently, the *theologoumenon* of Christ's descent into the netherworld spreads rapidly throughout the Oikumene and is known around the Mediterranean by the end of the 3rd century.[50] It is discussed in detail in soteriological and Christological terms by a large number of Greek and Latin authors,[51] although many of them show little interest in the significance of this deed for the fate of the dead.[52] Since the beginning of the 4th century, it can be observed that the theologoumenon gradually solidifies as a statement of faith; indeed, since the 4th century, Christ's descent into the realm of death is mentioned in professions of faith.[53] Since the 4th century it is therefore possible that Christ's descent into the netherworld was depicted figuratively.[54] It is represented in the liturgy and in

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45   Grillmeier 1975, 81–90; Rouwhorst 2018, 58–60.

46   Grillmeier 1975, 82.

47   Rouwhorst 2018, 69 f. opts for the 3rd or 4th century and thinks that the place of origin or writing is unknown.

48   Grillmeier 1975, 90–100.

49   Rouwhorst 2018, 60, cites from *On the Crucifixion* 11–12, cf. also the mention of the resurrection of Adam in a series of proofs for the resurrection from the Old Testament in *Carmen* 71, 8, see the German translation in Beck 1963, 105.

50   Gounelle 2000, 59.

51   Gounelle 2000, passim, a list of authors 72–74; Gounelle 2017.

52   Gounelle 2000, 74 f.

53   Gounelle 2000, 11, 257–319.

54   So already Loeschke 1965, 53.

hymns in northern Syria in the fourth and fifth centuries and in Constantinople in the first half of the 5th century[55]. Indeed, as homilies by Proclus, Archbishop of Constantinople from 434–446, indicate, the arrival of Christ in Hades and his deeds there were celebrated in Constantinople on Holy Saturday.[56]

By the middle of the 6th century, Christ's descent into the netherworld is common in the world of late antiquity around the Mediterranean[57] and is echoed both in Latin sermons and in the hymns of Romanos the Melodist.[58] If an iconographic theme has already arrived in preaching and liturgy, and if it stands for an item of content that is important to people and their hope for salvation, it seems obvious that it was also depicted.

Who was the wearer or owner?

The last question that remains is who wore such a piece. The elaborate setting leaves no doubt that it was worn visibly. The two attachments on the left and right show that it was presented broadly on the upper body of the wearer with a chain. While it could have been worn by a woman, a man is also a possibility; one is reminded of the golden Berlin pectoral, for which a eunuch in the service of the Byzantine emperor was suggested a few years ago.[59] The collar rings with pendants that were worn by Justinian's military attendants in San Vitale[60] offer a suitable opportunity for comparison. The light-reflecting pendant of the left soldier of the bodyguard indicates that this piece is a gem,[61] here mounted on a hoop.

Such hoops were considered insignia of honour and rank of the imperial court guard; however, they occur also in the military and in the private sphere.[62] Women adorned themselves with hoops in earlier depictions.[63] In Justinianic times, on the mosaic in San Vitale, they wear shorter necklaces, partly close to the neck, or a jewelled collar.[64] Representations of women with such a wide neck hoop are, as far as I know, unknown in this period. In view of the depiction in San Vitale, it may be assumed that the bearer of the gem was a male, even if this cannot be proven. Unfortunately, nothing can be said about

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55 Gounelle 2000, 159–166.

56 Gounelle 2000, 162 f.; Leroy 1967, 222 (hom. 30,7,27–29).

57 Gounelle 2000, 21, 241–249.

58 Gounelle 2000, 244.

59 Radnoti-Alföldi 2013.

60 Dresken-Weiland 2016, 242, 244.

61 Dresken-Weiland 2016, 242, 244.

62 Schmauder 2019, 992; von Rummel 2007, 229.

63 Dresken-Weiland 2016, 248.

64 Schmauder 2019, 992.

his social status, since the choice of a piece of jewellery and the expenditure one wants to make with it are always a very personal decision.

The choice of this pictorial theme or the wearing of such a pendant would have suited both a layman or a priest – perhaps even a higher-ranking cleric[65] who wanted to wear on his chest an important as well as a hopeful statement about his faith.

Let us summarise the arguments in favour of placing the origin of the quartz gem in the Eskenazi Museum of Art in Indiana in the 6th or 7th century:

1. The pictorial theme of the *anastasis* is already preserved in Justinianic times on the relief of ciborium column D in San Marco. Thus, the *anastasis* is already known in early Christian art in the 6th century. The *theologoumenon* of Christ's descent into the netherworld was known throughout the Mediterranean since the 4th century and may already have been depicted since this time. Comparisons for all elements of the iconography can be found in various, although mostly later representations.

2. The gem fits into the group of rock crystal gems in form and style.

3. The setting with its suspension has parallels in the 6th century, although an origin in the 7th century cannot be ruled out.

Thus, an important iconographic testimony for the early Byzantine art and period has been recovered and may be included in further discussion of Early Byzantine art.

Zusammenfassung / Summary

Eine Gemme mit der Darstellung der Auferweckung der Toten und mit Christi Abstieg in die Unterwelt in der *Burton Y. Berry Collection* im *Eskenazi Museum of Art* in Indiana war bisher sowohl in ihrer Datierung als auch in ihrer Echtheit umstritten. Eine Parallele für die Auferweckung der Toten bietet eine Szene auf Ciboriumsäule D in San Marco in Venedig, die aufgrund einer Untersuchung der Ikonographie aller Szenen in die justinianische Zeit datiert werden kann. Eine Durchsicht der theologischen Texte, die sich mit dem Abstieg Christi in die Unterwelt auseinandersetzen, zeigt, dass dieses Theologumenon in der Welt der Oikumene gut bekannt gewesen sein muss. Vergleiche für alle Elemente der Ikonographie lassen sich in verschiedenen, wenn auch meist später entstandene Darstellungen finden. Der Edelstein passt in Form und Stil in eine Gruppe eng vergleichbarer Bergkristall-Gemmen. Die Fassung mit ihrer Aufhängung hat Parallelen im 6. Jahrhundert, wobei ein Ursprung im 7. Jahrhundert nicht auszuschließen ist.

<u>Schlüsselworte:</u> Gemme, Auferstehung von den Toten, Höllenfahrt, Abstieg in die Unterwelt, Venedig, San Marco, Ciboriumsäulen, justinianische Zeit

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65   So already Leveto 1978, 52.

A gem depicting the resurrection of the dead and Christ's descent into the netherworld in the *Burton Y. Berry Collection* in the *Eskenazi Museum of Art* in Indiana has been controversial in both its dating and authenticity. A parallel for the raising of the dead is provided by a scene on Ciborium Column D in San Marco in Venice, which can be dated to the Justinianic period on the basis of an examination of the iconography of all the scenes. A review of the theological texts dealing with Christ's descent into the netherworld shows that this theologumenon must have been well known in the world of the Oikumene. Comparisons for all the elements of the iconography can be found in various representations, albeit mostly later ones. The gemstone fits into a group of closely comparable rock crystal gemstones in form and style. The setting with its suspension has parallels in the 6th century, although an origin in the 7th century cannot be ruled out.

<u>Keywords:</u> Gem, resurrection of the dead, Christs descent into the netherworld, Venice, San Marco, ciborium columns, Justinianic period

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Fig. 1: Quartz gem in the Burton Y. Berry Collection, Eskenazi Museum of Art, Indiana University, Inv. 76.62.34, © Eskenazi Museum of Art/Kevin Montague

Fig. 2: Quartz gem in the Burton Y. Berry Collection, Eskenazi Museum of Art, Indiana University, © Eskenazi Museum of Art
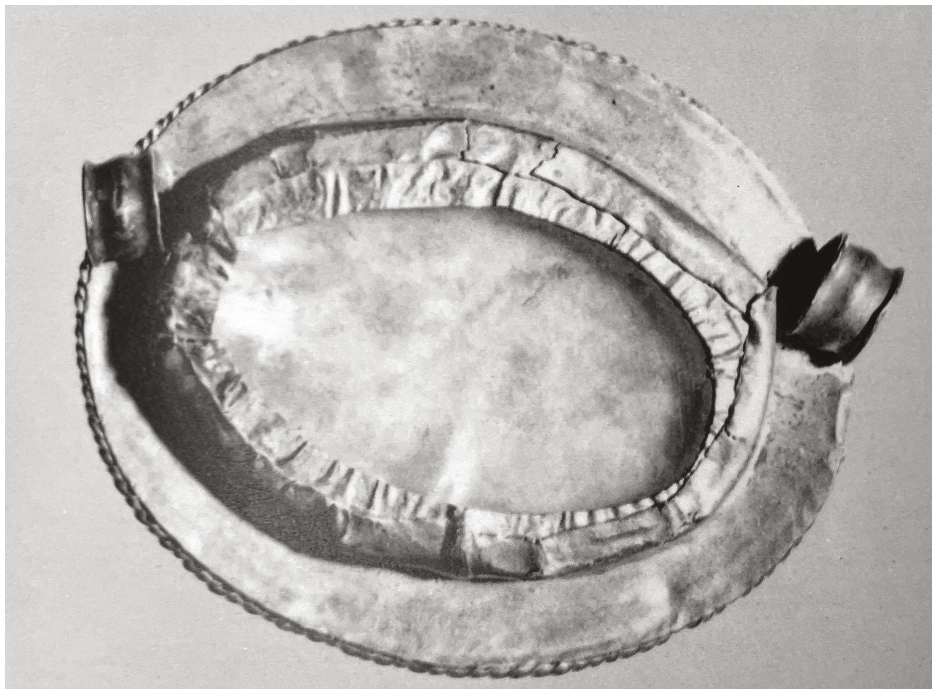
Fig. 3: Quartz gem in the Burton Y. Berry Collection, Eskenazi Museum of Art, Indiana University, © Eskenazi Museum of Art

Fig. 4: Fieschi Morgan staurotheque, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art

Fig. 5: Gold pendant from Kiev, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art