

»The Incredulity of Saint Thomas« on a Byzantine Sapphire from the Cheapside Hoard, London: A Proposal for a New Dating to the Palaiologan Period

The news of the spectacular archaeological find of a wooden box containing a collection of precious stones and gems made headlines in 1912. The treasure was discovered in a rental house in the London district of Cheapside, the city's former centre of the gold and precious stones industry. This unique collection, dubbed the Cheapside Hoard¹, comprises more than 400 items dating back to the late 16th and early 17th centuries. High-quality processed jewellery and rich adornments with exquisite gems, such as rings, earrings, chains, broaches and scent bottles, etc., are featured among them. The collection also includes a host of carvings and reliefs, as well as various precious stones from all over the world. Speculation abounds about who the owner of these priceless articles was: a goldsmith or a jeweller's syndicate? A jeweller dealing with illegal merchandise and thus attempting to keep his treasure concealed, cannot be ruled out, either; or even a wealthy collector planning to embark on a long journey and looking for a safe place to stash his fortune during his absence could be part of the equation. The origin of most of the treasure still remains shrouded in mystery.

An Ear Pendant with a Byzantine Gemstone

This collection is today on exhibition in the Museum of London. One of its pieces, a precious drop-shaped ear pendant, which was assembled in the 16th century, encloses a carved Byzantine gemstone, a sapphire (fig. 1). Set in gold, this piece of jewellery boasts high-quality enamel adorned with floral motifs on the reverse side. The pendant itself is decorated with a pearl, which most likely came from the Persian Gulf². The eyelet on the bottom is indicative of some early ornament, which may have fallen off the pendant. The stone, measuring 33 mm × 22 mm × 5 mm, is a pale, light blue, translucent sapphire, with a biblical motif etching on one of its sides. The upper part of the stone had been shaped to

fit the setting. The gemstone was set with its relief facing the inside, therefore, the 16th-century jewel had a flat and smooth surface, showing the 16th-century jeweller's (or commissioner's) wish to use the stone without an interest in the carved scene. It is possible that the female owner was not deeply religious, or perhaps the visual appeal of the brilliant lustre of the precious stone was better expressed by a polished surface. Because the relief is only visible in reverse and through the stone, relevant data such as the relief height and the carving technique are difficult to judge, and it would be necessary to dismount the setting before conducting the analysis. Because of the flatness of the stone, it is more likely that the scene is engraved (intaglio), but it cannot be excluded that the stone is carved in low relief. Nevertheless, it is clear that the carving is Byzantine due to the Greek inscription and the iconography.

Previous Dating Estimates for the Gemstone

Up to now, various attempts have been made to establish the gemstone's age. Initially, the Cheapside Hoard catalogue placed the gemstone's origin in the 3rd century AD³. In an internet video interview, the curator of the Cheapside Hoard, Hazel Forsyth, suggested that the 6th or 7th century could also be possible⁴. In 1978, art historian Hans Wentzel had suggested an even later date of the 10th century for this tantalising piece of jewellery⁵.

One circumstantial argument for an early dating for this cut stone was the fact that in the Late Antique and Early Byzantine period, discoveries were numerous and well documented, thus offering much comparison. By contrast, reliable information in the field of Byzantine gemmology is scarcely available for the Middle Ages. No overarching directory or a comprehensive compilation has ever been assembled, rendering the task of tracing the stones' sources based on compar-

1 The History and Collections of the Cheapside Hoard, see Cat. London 2013 with additional literature.

2 References see Dirlam/Weldon, Pearls.

3 Cat. London 2013, 179 (H. Forsyth).

4 The Museum of London's Extraordinary Cheapside Hoard, www.gia.edu/gems-gemmology/FA13-cheapside-hoard-weldon (23.03.2016).

5 Wentzel, Kameen 915.

Fig. 1 Ear pendant with Byzantine sapphire, setting from the 16th century, Museum of London, inv. no. A14158. – (© Museum of London, Reproduction Licence Order no. 3746).



ative examples nearly impossible⁶. Only a few Late Byzantine gemstones have had their age consistently determined, so that for the majority of them the task of tracking down their origin by and large still appears to be elusive⁷. By the same token, relevant insights into their style evolution and iconography are also limited, mainly on the grounds that many items are scattered among different collections or often held privately.

The New Testament Scene on the Gemstone

The gem must be turned back-to-front in order to provide an accurate interpretation of the scene depicted. Unfortunately, the reverse-order setting blurs the contours and the inner design. A scene reconstruction was made by the author for a better understanding (fig. 2). There is no doubt that the episode in question portrays a post-Easter scene from the New Testament. It shows the risen Christ and the Apostle Thomas according to St John's Gospel 20, 19-29: the resuscitated Christ enters through a house's locked door and appears to his disciples. Thomas, who had not been present at Christ's first appearance, expresses doubt about his identity and was, therefore, urged to look at the nail stigmata in His hands as well as touch the wound in Christ's side as evidence of His rising from the dead. The English text⁸ is as follows:

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, »Peace be with you.« **20** After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. **21** Jesus said to them again, »Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.« **22** When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, »Receive the Holy Spirit. **23** If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.« **24** But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. **25** So the other disciples told him, »We have seen the Lord.« But he said to them, »Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.« **26** A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, »Peace be with you.« **27** Then he said to Thomas, »Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.« **28** Thomas answered him, »My Lord and my God!« **29** Jesus said to him, »Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.«

6 Also according to the following works of Hans Wentzel: Wentzel, *Mittelalterliche Gemmen*. – Wentzel, *Byzantinische Kameen*. – Wentzel, *Kameen Kassel*. Standard reference works for Early Christian gems, see Spier, *Gems*. An up-to-date essay on Middle and Late Byzantine gemstones regrettably is not yet available. The dissertation of Harrison, *Byzantine Carved Gemstones*, is still unpublished.
7 See Zazoff, *Antike Gemmen* 376.

8 Cited from REB; Greek text from NA28: **19** Οὕσης οὖν ὀψίας τῆ ἡμέρα ἐκείνη τῆ μιᾶ σαββάτων καὶ τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων ὅπου ἦσαν οἱ μαθηταὶ διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων, ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· εἰρήνη ὑμῖν. **20** καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἔδειξεν τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τὴν πλευρὰν αὐτοῖς· ἐχάρησαν οὖν οἱ μαθηταὶ ἰδόντες τὸν κύριον. **21** εἶπεν οὖν αὐτοῖς [ὁ Ἰησοῦς] πάλιν· εἰρήνη ὑμῖν· καθὼς ἀπέσταλκέν με ὁ πατήρ, κἀγὼ πέμπω ὑμᾶς. **22** καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἐνεφύσησεν

καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον· **23** ἂν τινων ἀφῆτε τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἀφείωνται αὐτοῖς, ἂν τινων κρατῆτε κεκράτηνται. **24** Θωμᾶς δὲ εἶς ἐκ τῶν δώδεκα, ὁ λεγόμενος Διδυμος, οὐκ ἦν μετ' αὐτῶν ὅτε ἦλθεν Ἰησοῦς. **25** ἔλεγον οὖν αὐτῶ οἱ ἄλλοι μαθηταὶ· ἐωράκαμεν τὸν κύριον. ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ἐὰν μὴ ἴδω ἐν ταῖς χερσίν αὐτοῦ τὸν τύπον τῶν ἤλων καὶ βάλω τὸν δάκτυλόν μου εἰς τὸν τύπον τῶν ἤλων καὶ βάλω μου τὴν χεῖρα εἰς τὴν πλευρὰν αὐτοῦ, οὐ μὴ πιστεύσω. **26** Καὶ μεθ' ἡμέρας ὀκτῶ πάλιν ἦσαν ἔσω οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ Θωμᾶς μετ' αὐτῶν. ἔρχεται ὁ Ἰησοῦς τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων καὶ ἔσται εἰς τὸ μέσον καὶ εἶπεν· εἰρήνη ὑμῖν. **27** εἶτα λέγει τῷ Θωμᾶ· φέρε τὸν δάκτυλόν σου ὧδε καὶ ἴδε τὰς χεῖράς μου καὶ φέρε τὴν χεῖρά σου καὶ βάλε εἰς τὴν πλευρὰν μου, καὶ μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός. **28** ἀπεκρίθη Θωμᾶς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου. **29** λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ὅτι εὐρακάς με πεπιστευκάς; μακάριοι οἱ μὴ ἰδόντες καὶ πιστεύσαντες.



Fig. 2 Byzantine sapphire with St Thomas scene: rotation and reconstruction. – (Reconstruction M. Horn).

The Description of the Scene's Image

The illustration captures St Thomas standing on the left side of the scene with his back slightly hunched and his legs astride. His head is surrounded by a halo and he is wearing a long tunic and a pallium. His right hand is reaching out and his index finger is pointing towards Christ's bare side wound. His downwards hanging left hand holds a rolled-up *rotulus*. St Thomas's head is slightly elevated and leaning sideways, depicting a three-quarter profile. Next to him, the bearded Christ stands facing forwards with a cruciform halo, also wearing a tunic and a pallium. He is angling his head towards the apostle and bending his right arm along his head, raising it upwards. He is showing his outstretched hand, where most probably the stigmata were inflicted, but the scars are not detectable in the carved illustration, probably due to the reverse arrangement of the stone⁹. His fingers are touching both his halo as well as Thomas's. With his left hand, Christ pulls his robe open across his right torso, so as to have the side with the visible wound exposed. Thomas's hand points to this spot.

The Scene's Greek Inscription

The image features Greek carved characters shown in capital letters on the top and middle of the picture, as well as behind the apostle Thomas (fig. 3). However, during the repurposing of the pendant, some letters were damaged, causing the original text to become blurred and sketchy.

Christ is portrayed with the usual overhead ligature for Jesus Christ: IC X[C]. The *sigma lunatum* on the right-hand side is severed. The inscription related to the Thomas scene is depicted below it, along the middle of the image. The corners on the top were somehow truncated, thus having left only the four middle letters ΛΑΦΗ intact. Three letters are lacking on each side. The remaining part of the existent inscription is vertically etched between the two persons: ΤΟV ΘΩΜΑ. The ΤΟV is written as an abbreviation. Therefore, based on these premises, a reconstruction of the full engraving can be achieved with the addition of the missing letters Η ΨΗ to the left of ΛΑΦΗ and CIC to its right, thus presumably reproducing its original text »Η ψηλάφησις του Θωμά«, i.e., the touch of Thomas. In the Painter's Manual of Dionysius of

9 The implied stigmata in the scene reconstruction emphasise this hypothesis.



Fig. 3 The Greek inscription on the sapphire, Museum of London, inv. no. A14158. – (© Museum of London, Reproduction Licence Order no. 3746).



Fig. 4 Byzantine sapphire with St Thomas scene, Museum of London, inv. no. A14158. – (© Museum of London, Reproduction Licence Order no. 3746).

Fournā, the full inscription is regarded as a compulsory title component for the scene depicting the doubting Thomas¹⁰. Visible behind the apostle are a few more letters, also ver-

tically engraved, suggesting an eventual loss of the stone's outer left edge, which may have also come about during the reworking. This flaw renders the letters rather unsuited for a meaningful interpretation. Possible options to consider for what may have filled the gaps are the full name of the Apostle Thomas, a bible quote or even the invoking of some patron or donor. This is tantamount to saying that quotations from St John's Gospel or references to philanthropists are definitely out of the question. The letters are not all clearly identifiable. In addition, this effort is further compounded by a crack in the stone, which probably ensued during restoration works. Hence, a designation such as »the Incredulity of Saint Thomas« would seem to constitute a sensible solution, this being the result of combining the ΘΜΣ ligature with the word ΑΠΙΣΤΟΣ. It is possible that the word »Hagios« (saint) had been carved on the top of the picture.

Stylistic Remarks

The picture's surface is amply shared by the two protagonists (fig. 4). They seem to be amalgamating into each other through layered arm holdings and an inwards swinging motion of their robes, as if building an intrinsic unity. The figures are well proportioned and tend to be more on the slim than stocky side. Their sleek head shapes seem to be morphing into a somehow oval-like elongation. Owing to the carving's reverse setting the inner design of both faces is not clearly discernible. The beams of the cruciform halo are jutting out somewhat and seem to be randomly filled with ornaments in the interstices. The contours of the arched and full-figured bodies are prominently outlined through the robe folds en-

¹⁰ Papadopoulou-Keramos, *Hermeneia* 116, §106. – *Malerhandbuch* 101 no. 314.

veloping them. Thomas's right leg, with its vigorous muscles vividly bulging under the slightly ruffled pallium, is lingering in a step posture. The skilfully elaborated drape is not particularly detailed or arranged in a strictly linear fashion, but rather harmoniously deployed in light undulations as it swirls around the aesthetically shaped bodies. In the middle of the picture, the extremities of the garment are sort of tapering off to function as a frame for the inscription grooved between them. The figures are not portrayed in a passive manner, rather they seem to be strongly interacting, thus creating an almost intimate atmosphere between them. Thomas is captured leaning slightly forwards to Jesus, while the latter is depicted touching Thomas's halo with his arm. At the same time, he is placing his thumb on his own halo, inducing his hand to forge a sense of bonding between the two characters. The way their faces are portrayed seems to be suggesting that there is eye contact. Overall, these elements of communication help to enhance the narrative, elevating it to an intimate level.

The Iconography of the Doubting Thomas

The Early Byzantine Period

The scene of the incredulous Thomas¹¹ pertains to the rarer examples of Early Christian art depictions (fig. 5). Dating the carving of the sapphire back to the 3rd century can be broadly discarded, since in those times there are no chronicles of art history dealing with the questioning of Thomas. The earliest available evidence emerges in three sarcophagus fragments from the 4th and 5th centuries. There, the portrayal is built into an abbreviated scene in a sequence of various healing and salvation paradigms, which was how early Christian funeral art¹² was usually represented in those days. A few samples are found on the sarcophagus of Celsus in Milan¹³ (fig. 5a), on a remnant in Ravenna¹⁴, as well as on a sarcophagus fragment made from African onyx, originally found in the Sant'Afra Church of Brescia's Angela Merici Abbey¹⁵. Still another instance depicting Doubting Thomas is on an ivory-carved panel in the Museum of London (fig. 5b), originating from Northern Italy. It features the Passion and post-Easter scenes (420-430)¹⁶. Trying to establish a reliable interpreta-

tion for a scene engraved on a wooden door in the Church of Santa Sabina in Rome (around 432) remains difficult¹⁷.

A few known images can be *de facto* traced back to the 6th and 7th centuries, among them are a Jerusalem pilgrim flask in Monza¹⁸ (around 600) (fig. 9a), a gold sheet in Berlin¹⁹ (6th-7th centuries), the mosaic cycle in the Church of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo (around 520) in Ravenna²⁰ (fig. 5c) and another gemstone from Gadara²¹ (6th-7th centuries) (fig. 5d). For the 8th and 9th centuries, testimonial evidence is present on a partially destroyed fresco in the Church of Santa Maria Antiqua (705) in Rome, on an ivory diptych (9th-10th centuries)²² in Milan and on a silver casket for a gemstone cross in the Vatican²³ (around 820). This is tantamount to saying that during the Early Byzantine period and before the advent of Iconoclasm, the pictorial theme of Doubting Thomas was not included in the standard repertoire of New Testament scenes. Rather, this honour is more often bestowed on post-Easter scenes depicting the women standing at the grave.

The Middle and Late Byzantine Periods

It is not until the 10th century that the Doubting Thomas theme increasingly begins to find favour in all different types of art genres (fig. 6). As it becomes widely known, the phenomenon reaches its heyday during the »Palaiologan Renaissance« when it experiences ever-growing popularity. The emergence of the Dodekaorton (Greek, »twelve feasts«) in the Orthodox Church rituals during the Middle Byzantine era paves the way for the Doubting Thomas scene to be enshrined in the circle of the great celebrations. This feast day of Doubting Thomas is called »Antipascha« in Greek and falls on the first Sunday after Easter. Developing out of these Twelve Feasts was the pictorial canon that would serve as a base for the decoration of churches and icons. Documentary proof in this respect is encountered on an ivory diptych from Constantinople²⁴ (end of 10th century/beginning of 11th century) (fig. 6b), as well as on a single ivory plate²⁵ (mid-10th century). Together with other preserved panels, this artefact shows a section of an icon portraying the entire cycle of the Great Twelve Feasts. Both ivory plates associate the Doubting Thomas scene with the Twelve Feasts of the Liturgical Church Calendar. The

11 For iconography of the Doubting Thomas, see Colwell, *Gospels of Karahissar* 415-421. – Réau, *Iconographie* 568-570. – Wessel, *Erscheinungen des Auferstandenen* 371-388. – Red., *Thomaszweifel* 301-303. – Schiller, *Ikongraphie* 108-114. – Schunk-Heller, *Ungläubiger Thomas*, with further bibliography.

12 See Engemann, *Frühchristliche Bildwerke* esp. 106-121.

13 For representation, see Dresken-Weiland, *Repertorium* 250 pl. 84.

14 For representation, see Kollwitz/Herdejürgen, *Sarkophage der westlichen Gebiete* cat. B2 pl. 26, 6.

15 In the museum of Santa Giulia in Brescia, MR5852; refer to Morandini, *Brescia*.

16 For representation, see Spier, *Picturing the Bible* 231 no. 57D.

17 See Jeremias, *Holztür S. Sabina*.

18 For representation, see Grabar, *Ampoules de Terre Sainte* no. 9 pl. XV; and an additional fragment no. 10; Vikan, *Pilgrimage Art* 63f. fig. 43. Another pilgrim flask with a similar conservative iconography is on exhibition at the British Museum in London; due to stylistic reasons a dating between the 11th and 13th cen-

tures was ascribed to it (Buckton, *Byzantium* 188f. no. 203); attributed to the Early Byzantine period by Wessel, *Erscheinungen des Auferstandenen* 376.

19 Effenberger, *Berlin* 144 no. 56. The gold sheet bears resemblance to the pilgrim flask from Monza and could hence be seen as a local pilgrim souvenir it could be credited to Palestine.

20 Fiorentini/Orioli, *Apollinare Nuovo*.

21 Henig/Whiting, *Gems from Gadara* 3 and 41 no. 451 – Spier, *Gems* 127 no. 714 fig. 101.

22 For representation, see Schunk-Heller, *Ungläubiger Thomas* fig. 29.

23 For representation, see Schiller, *Ikongraphie* 447 fig. 345.

24 In the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg, for representation see *Cat. New York* 1997, 149 fig. 94C.

25 In *Dumbarton Oaks*, for description and representation see *DOCat* III, 43-48 fig. 21 and pl. 4. – *Cat. New York* 1997, 145 fig. 91.



Fig. 5 St Thomas scene in the Early Byzantine period: **a** San Celso Sarcophagus, Milan (c. 400). – **b** Panel from an ivory casket (420-430), British Museum, London, inv. no. 1856,0623.6. – **c** Mosaic, Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna (c. 520). – **d** Gem from Gadara (carnelian) from Sa'd Collection, Gadara/JOR (6th-7th centuries). – (a www.santamariadeimiracoliesancelso.it/tl_files/immagini/sarcofago020.jpg [23.03.2016]; b British Museum Creative Commons 4.0; c <https://05varvara.wordpress.com/?s=Apollinare#jp-carousel-807>; d from Henig/Whiting, *Gems from Gadara* no. 451).

scene is also featured within the mosaic cycles in the principal churches (katholikon) of the Monasteries at Daphne²⁶ and Hosios Loukas dating back to the 11th century²⁷. Further evidence is provided in the 12th century by the Monreale²⁸ Cathedral in Sicily (fig. 6c) and by the San Marco²⁹ Cathedral (around 1190) in Venice. From the 9th century onwards, the

biblical Thomas episode also appears in several manuscripts in the form of illuminations. Only three masterpieces of Byzantine book illustrations figure prominently in this anthology: the Trebizond Lectionary³⁰ (fig. 6a), dating from the 10th century and both the closely related Palaiologan scriptures of the Karahissar Tetra Gospels³¹ (end of the 13th century) and the

26 Lazarides, Daphne 26.

27 In the crypt there is another fresco depicting the doubting Thomas next to the mosaic in the katholikon; for representation see Chatzidakis, *Hosios Loukas* 36 no. 23; 82 no. 83.

28 For representation see Chierichetti, *Monreale* 42.

29 Demus, *Mosaics of San Marco* 208.

30 Cod. Gr. 21 in the National Library of Saint Petersburg (Zakharova, *Trebizond Lectionary*).

31 Leningrad Gr. 105 in the National Library of Saint Petersburg; refer to Colwell, *Gospels of Karahissar*. – Willoughby, *Four Gospels of Karahissar*. – Bank, *Peinture* 91-101.



Fig. 6 St Thomas scene in the Middle Byzantine period: **a** Trebizond Lectionary, Cod. Gr. 21, National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg (10th century). – **b** Ivory diptych with twelve scenes from the life of Christ, Constantinople, The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (10th-11th centuries). – **c** Mosaic, Cathedral of Monreale, Palermo, Sicily (12th century). – (a www.nlr.ru/manuscripts/images/Sector_rus/6_21/6_21_06.jpg [23.03.2016]; b from Cat. New York 1997 no. 91; c from Chierichetti, Monreale 42).

Nikomedia Gospel³² (13th century) (fig. 14a-b). In the Late Byzantine period, the cherished Thomas image starts appearing on numerous murals and also frequently on icons, as it rides a wave of increasing popularity, as shown on the famous icon from Ohrid³³ (fig. 7). Entering the 13th century, numerous examples of minor arts and monumental wall painting de-

picting the doubting Thomas are unearthed in the dominion's Byzantine area of influence. Two of those murals are related to Greece, one in the Church of Mother of God Peribleptos at Mystras³⁴ (fig. 8a), and the other one in the Church of Apostles at Lithines, Crete³⁵ (fig. 8b). In the Serbian Empire, the Thomas scene was an integral part of the ecclesiastical

32 Both belong to the Chicago-Karahissar Group (Nelson, Paris Gr. 117, 1-22); for the manuscripts, see Bank, Peinture 94f. – Fonkič, Rukopisi. – Mokretsova, Nikomedia.

33 Radojčić, Icons from South Eastern Europe and Sinai.

34 Dated about the end of the 14th century, for representation see Acheimastou-Potamianou, Mistra 72 fig. 65.

35 Dated 1415, for representation see Spatharakis, Wall Paintings of Crete fig. 150.



Fig. 7 Icon with the Doubting Thomas from the Church of the Mother of God Peribleptos (St Clement's), Ohrid, painted by Michael and Eutykhios (1295-1317). – (public domain).

pictorial programme of the Palaiologan period³⁶. However, in terms of gemstones, there are only two pieces featuring the Thomas motif, namely the one on the London gemstone and the other one on the Gadara gemstone.

Evolution of the Pictorial Formula

A standard pattern for the Thomas scene was devised in line with the Bible text early on.

Christ

Apart from a few abbreviated versions of the scene on sarcophagi, the key figure of Christ always takes centre stage in the portrayal. Presenting evidence of his physical rising from the dead remains the picture's main theme. This is verified by

the wound mark resulting from the Roman centurion's spear thrust to the side of his body (John 19:33f), as well as the hands and feet stigmata caused by the crucifixion. In the early depictions, there are different art concepts for the position of both the arm and hand to show the side wound. The arm of Christ – often the left one – is raised, angled or crossed. Then in the aftermath of Iconoclasm, the slightly bent posture of his exposed right arm becomes established as the standard picture model as the hand is pointing towards heaven highlighting the scars from the nailing to the cross. Christ is using his left hand to bare his chest at the right side of his robe in order to reveal to Thomas the wound mark inflicted by the spear.

Thomas and the Disciples

Surrounding Thomas on both sides is a gathering of disciples, who are frequently laid out in a symmetrical arrangement. In

³⁶ Such as in the katholikon in the Monastery of Sopočani (1272-1276), in the Monastery of Žiča (13th-14th c.), in the Church of the Apostles (around 1250) and in the Church of Hodegetria (14th c.), both at the Patronate of Peč, in the Church of Hagios Niketas in Čučer (around 1320), in the Church of Hagios

Georgios in Staro Nagoričane (1318), in the Church of Mother of God Peribleptos in Ohrid (1294/1295), in the Monastery of Dečani (14th c.); refer to Wessel, *Erscheinungen des Auferstandenen* 384.



Fig. 8 St Thomas scene in the Late Byzantine Period: **a** Church of the Mother of God Peribleptos (St Clement's) Ohrid (1294/1295). – **b** Church of Hodegetria, Patronat of Peć (14th century). – **c** Church of the Mother of God Peribleptos, Mystras (14th century). – **d** Church of the Apostles, Lithines, Crete (1415). – (a Photo M. Horn; b Photo BLAGO Archives, Patriarchate of Peć, Church of the Virgin Hodegetria: www.srpskoblago.org/Archives/Peć/ [23.03.2016]; c from Acheimastou-Potamianou, *Mistra* fig. 65; d from Spatharakis, *Wall Paintings of Crete* fig. 150).

the beginning, the number of disciples varies. In the Middle Byzantine period, eleven apostles occur, but subsequently a total of twelve gains currency as the standard. Although a few exceptions spring up during the Early Christian years, Thomas is usually seen approaching from the left side and moving toward Christ's right in the process. Straddling his legs, with his body somehow stooped and his head bowed, the Apostle Thomas is seen striding in awe toward Jesus. At this stage, the halo of Thomas, such as the one depicted

on the gemstone, is only sporadically represented. A common trait encompassing all images is Thomas' extended and slightly elevated right arm with the index finger reaching out. Either the finger is directly poking into the wound, as rendered on the London sapphire, or it stops shortly before actually touching Christ's side. The options selected for the position of the left arm are multifarious, among them is the raised position toward Christ, or keeping the arm close to his breast or even holding an unfolded scroll containing



Fig. 9 Greek inscriptions: **a** Pilgrim flask from Monza (c. 600). – **b** Ivory with the »Doubting of Thomas«, mid-10th century, Byzantine Collection Dumbarton Oaks Museum, Washington, D.C., inv. no. BZ.1937.7. – **c** Mosaic, Katholikon of Hosios Loukas Monastery (11th century). – (a © Museo e Tesoro del Duomo di Monza, Foto P. Pozzi; b from DOCat III no. 21; c from Chatzidakis, Hosios Loukas no. 23).

the confession text from St John 20:28. The furred *rotulus* (scroll) in his left hand, symbolising his apostolate, as shown on the sapphire, is encountered throughout, such as on the London ivory from the 5th century (fig. 5b). The scroll is often regarded as a complementary element evoking the past in the »Palaiologan Renaissance«, as it is featured, both on the stone, and in the Apostles' Church fresco in Peć, Kosovo.

The Background

The background scene portraying Christ's appearance through closed doors is mostly fashioned according to St John's description in 20:26. During the Middle Byzantine period, the focus of the door motif is shifted to the middle of the picture, a good example being the mosaic in the Monreale Cathedral

Fig. 10 Church of Protaton (Koimesis), Karyes on Mount Athos, 1295. – (From https://iconreader.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/cathedral-protata_kars_athos13c.jpg [23.03.2016]).



(1179-1182). The Palaiologan wall paintings era then sees the emergence of an illusionistic backdrop combining urban architecture with gates; this scene is depicted in the Church of Mother of God Peribleptos in Ohrid (1294/1295)³⁷.

Summing up, one can say that the period ranging from the 10th to the 11th centuries is marked by a growing continuity in the application of the same pictorial formula and a consolidation of the iconography without, however, fully curtailing the freedom of adding additional details at the artist's discretion. During the Palaiologan era, the theme of Doubting Thomas sees a tremendous surge in popularity and dissemination.

Inscriptions in the Thomas Scenes

Earlier depictions of Thomas up to the 10th century are generally devoid of inscriptions. Neither the names of the protagonists nor the title of the scene are included. There are two specific exceptions to this general rule. The references to Thomas' confession according to John's Gospel 20:28 *ὁ κύριος μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου* (»My Lord and my God«) are found

on the Jerusalem pilgrim flask (fig. 9) and on the gold sheet in Berlin³⁸, thus avowing the pilgrim's belief³⁹. In the Gadara gemstone (see below) neither the portrayal nor Christ or Thomas are assigned a title or name⁴⁰. The scene receives an inscription for the first time in the 10th century on the Dumbarton Oaks ivory (fig. 9b) and the mosaic of Hosios Loukas (fig. 9c). With the inscription *ΤΩΝ ΘΥΡΩΝ ΚΕΚΛΕΙΜΕΝΩΝ* (»about the closed doors«), which is quoted from St John (20:19, 20:26), Christ's wondrous appearance to the disciples is described. In the Greek-speaking territories, this scene title remained the usual standard for the 10th to 12th centuries. The readable lettering *Η ΨΗΛΑΦΗΣΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΘΩΜΑ* (»the touching or palpation of Thomas«), which is etched on the London gemstone and also recorded in the Painter's Manual from Mount Athos, can only be tracked down to the Palaiologan era, but not before the 13th century. This is also consistent with the Thomas fresco in the Protaton Church at Karyes on Mount Athos (about 1300, fig. 10), where the title is clearly shown in the upper pictorial space, as well as in the Nikomedia Gospel illumination from the 13th century (fig. 14b). The scene inscription on the sapphire strongly suggests that it originated in the Late Byzantine period.

37 For the wallpaintings see Kornakov, Ohrid.

38 See above, p. 169, nt. 19.

39 Literature see note 18 and 19.

40 Another exception was made with the inscription »Apostoli« above the heads of Jesus's disciples in St Maria Antiqua, see Schunk-Heller, Ungläubiger Thomas figs 26-28.



Fig. 11 Steatite icon from Kievan Rus' or Byzantium, National Museum of Warsaw, inv. no. MNW SZM 7055 (formerly 32455), 12th-13th centuries, 37.4 mm x 25.5-27.6 mm x 6.4 mm. – (© National Museum of Warsaw).

Comparisons

The Gadara Gemstone

Since there is an absolute dearth of pieces allowing direct comparison to the unique Cheapside Hoard gemstone, a match with other artefacts featuring similar stylistic and iconographic traits can be utilised in a bid to deduce the dating. Basically, the Cheapside Hoard gemstone's scene reflects the classical canonical pictorial formula. With the omission of the other disciples – justified by a lack of space – the picture is solely confined to two protagonists: the Apostle Thomas and Christ. This shortened version is also reproduced in the Gadara gemstone (dated to the 6th or 7th centuries), although the two characters are standing next to each other in a taut posture showing no signs of any contact (fig. 5d). From the pictorial space, both are looking towards the viewer, while in the London gemstone the characters' mutual devotion,

presence and expressiveness help conjure up an image of an almost intimate atmosphere of togetherness between them. These two disparate renditions run counter to the assumption that the origin of both gemstones is concomitant. This is further substantiated by iconographic differences in the background layout. For example, a linear shape of a door-frame behind Christ and a cross behind Thomas are visible in the Gadara image, whereas no backdrop is present in the Cheapside Hoard gemstone, probably because both protagonists fully occupy the whole pictorial space. Furthermore, the surrounding inscriptions might explain the lack of architectural backdrop. Likewise noteworthy is the distinction in the stylistic execution. In the Gadara gemstone, flat and linear drapes cover the body and skewed figures with false proportions come to the fore. By contrast, in the London version the drapes are perceived to impart soft contours to the bodies as their vivid, space-filling and harmonically shaped frames seem to float gracefully in the air. Hence, it is fair to say that there must be a wide time gap between the two gemstones in terms of iconography and style.

Dating the gemstone to the aftermath of the Iconoclastic period, when the pictorial scheme became firmly entrenched, seems to be extremely likely. Making the most sense would be an association with the Palaiologan era as the Thomas theme becomes widely disseminated as its popularity increased.

A Steatite Icon from Warsaw

Supporting this claim is a small Byzantine steatite icon pendant, which is also dedicated to the Thomas theme and which is deemed to share a significant iconographic affinity with the Cheapside Hoard gemstone⁴¹ (fig. 11). Its origin can be traced back, either to the late 12th, or to the early 13th century. The London gemstone and the steatite icon boast a similar layout, with the characters filling the entire space and in exactly the same positions, although without an architectural backdrop. Compatible with each other are also Thomas' head and body postures, including the halo and Christ's lean and frontal frame with his head angled slightly sideward. With his arm raised and bent at the elbow, Christ is even touching Thomas' face. These striking similarities forge a close time relationship between these two objects⁴². In terms of style, however, an earlier dating of the steatite icon would be called for. The agitated curly folds reflect the late Komnenian style. With its jagged edges, giving it a somehow restive and curvaceous rhythm, the steatite icon's drape does not quite stack up against its London peer, which seems to exude a calmer, elegant and a more »easy-flowing« form.

41 For data concerning the icon, which is kept in the National Museum in Warsaw, refer to Cat. Warsaw 2006, 89 ll.77. It is assumed that this artefact was crafted by a Byzantine master due to its high manufacture quality, ibidem 89.

42 However, the steatite icon does not bear the inscription: Η ΨΗΛΑΦΗCΙC ΤΟΥ ΘΩΜΑ, only the characters' names are mentioned.

Fig. 12 Church of the Apostles, Patronat of Peć (c. 1260-1264). – (Photo BLAGO Archives, Patriarchate of Peć, the Church of the Apostles: www.srpskoblag.org/Archives/Peć/ [23.03.2016]).



Palaiologan Murals

The sapphire's pictorial style, characterised by plasticity, aesthetics and harmony, dovetails smoothly with the classicistic style of the »Palaiologan Renaissance«, which begins developing by around 1300. The Thomas scene in the Church of the Apostles in the Patriarchate of Peć (1260-1264)⁴³ provides a fine illustration of this »beautiful style«, which is how R. Hamann-MacLean⁴⁴ described it (fig. 12). The supple elegance, the fluid shape of the robe structure and the slight, modelled inclination of the bodies are also encountered in the London piece. Another example of this trend can be witnessed in the high-quality frescoes of the Parekklesion in the Chora Church (Kariye Camii, around 1320)⁴⁵ in Istanbul. They seem to go hand in hand with the sapphire's stylistic elements as capital city murals, following a more classicistic-»academic« approach, also begin to focus on a plastic and a subtly designed figure style showing harmonically proportioned body shapes clearly delineated under the garment.

Carved Gemstones and Book Illuminations

The peculiarity of the oval-shaped, yet delicate and lithe head type is another indication of dating the London gemstone

to the period around the year 1300⁴⁶. The same moulds are also represented in a sapphire cameo with a Maria Orans image⁴⁷, in a cameo with the depiction of Hagios Nikolaos in Moscow⁴⁸ and in another cameo with a half-length figure of Christ in the Louvre⁴⁹ (fig. 13a-c). In addition, two more contributions are recorded from the field of Palaiologan book illustrations: the Karahissar Four Gospels (fol. 210^v) and the Nikomedia Gospel (fol. 323^v) from the 13th century (fig. 14a-b)⁵⁰. Despite espousing diverse concepts in the composition of illustrative details, both these paintings share many iconographic analogies with the London gem⁵¹. Even the stylistic similarities in the figure pattern seem to be absolutely striking. The erect Christ frame, as well as the shape of the Thomas figure heavily underscoring his right leg side with the soft drape wrinkle, are also depicted in the cameo. One could almost say that the Thomas portrayal in the Nikomedia Gospel could have served as a painted template for the gemstone. All of these uncanny parallels have helped establish a place and time-related connection between all these three masterpieces of art. It is assumed that the Karahissar Codex was painted in a royal palace scriptorium in Constantinople⁵². By the same token, the cameo's exquisite craftsmanship reinforces the theory that the processing works were carried

43 For representation see: BLAGO Archives Patriarchate of Peć.

44 For the style description in the Church of the Apostles, see Hamann-Mac Lean, *Monumentalmalerei* 324-329; esp. 327.

45 For the the frescoes see Weiss, *Chora-Monastery*. – Ousterhout, *Kariye Camii* 1-22.

46 Wentzel, *Kameen Kassel* 90.

47 Wentzel, *Kameen Kassel* 90 and fig. 82, dated to around 1300.

48 *Cat. Moscow 2013*, 231-233 no. 39, dated to the early Palaiologan period (I. A. Sterligova).

49 For a representation see *Cat. Paris 1992*, 439 fig. 331, dated to the 13th-14th c. (J. Durand).

50 Literature referring to the Gospels see note 31 and 32.

51 The Karahissar Codex also shows a haloed Thomas, but this does not apply to the other disciples.

52 Colwell, *Gospels of Karahissar 4-5f.* – Bank, *Peinture* 92.

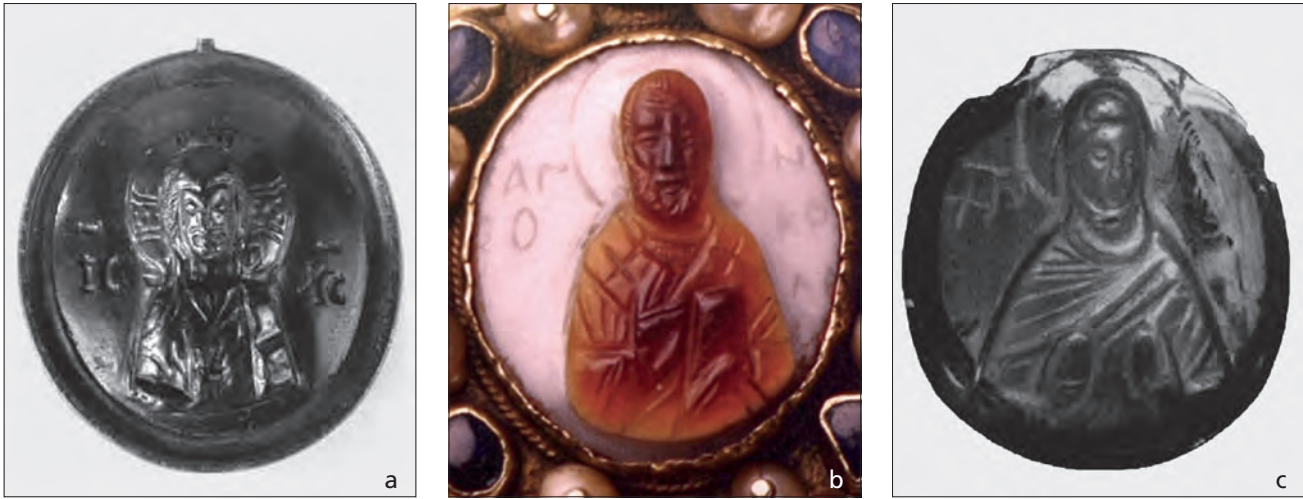


Fig. 13 Gemstones: **a** Jasper cameo with Blessing Christ, 13th-14th centuries, Musée du Louvre, Paris inv. no. MRR 220. – **b** Sardonyx cameo with Hagios Nikolaos, Constantinople, 13th-14th centuries, Kremlin Museum, Moscow. – **c** Sapphire cameo with the Mother of God Orans, c. 1300, private collection David Talbot Rice, Edinburgh. – (a from Cat. Paris 1992 fig. 339; b from Cat. Moscow 2013 no. 39; c from Wentzel, Kameen Kassel fig. 82).

out on the premises by an expert cutting master. Verifying this assumption once again is the gemstone's refined style, uniqueness and high esteem.

Proposal for a New Dating

The stylistic and iconographic findings of this review, as well as the chronology of the inscriptions, bear out the fact that the current valid dating for the gemstone's carving needs to be re-evaluated. It should be ascribed to the »Palaiologan Renaissance« somewhere between the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th century. Concerning the setting, the 16th century is the *terminus ante quem*. An allowance should be made for a longer hiatus between the gemstone's subsequent use as a pendant and the carving of the scene, though.

Sapphires in the Byzantine Glyptic

Precious gemstone types such as sapphires have been an extremely rare breed in the glyptic art domain⁵³. In view of their high value, the processing of the stones required continuous high-level expertise and was mostly performed in Constantinople⁵⁴ or alternatively in other capital cities. As

early as the 12th century, Theophilus Presbyter, a German monk who wrote about arts and crafts in the Middle Ages, emphasised how painstaking and intricate the task of cutting sapphires was⁵⁵. These difficulties notwithstanding, the Late Byzantine period left some pieces of cut blue sapphires, including cameos and intaglios, that have been preserved in scattered collections such as those in the Kremlin Museum in Moscow⁵⁶ and the Dumbarton Oaks Collection in Washington⁵⁷. The carved blue sapphires, the dating of which to between the 10th and 12th centuries is only tentative, tend to be regarded as a uniform group⁵⁸, but a light and transparent cut gemstone, such as the London piece, is no doubt a one-off specimen due to its size alone. No other similar artefacts exist. The unprecedented rarity and exquisiteness of this diaphanous sapphire could lead to the assumption that this is rather a re-utilisation of an old uncut stone perhaps coming from a crown, relic or some precious church adornment⁵⁹. The gemstone's donor, whoever he or she was, then proceeded to have the carving fashioned into the desired form, according to his or her own specifications. In any case, the 13th and 14th centuries saw the art of glyptic experience a renewed surge, not only in France and Italy, but also in Byzantium⁶⁰. In this period, many prestigious collections of Antique gemstones had their foundations laid as efforts were being focused on emulating classical traditions in the craft of carving and engraving.

53 Wentzel, Kameen Kassel 89. – Zwierlein-Diehl, Gemmen und ihr Nachleben 309.

54 Wentzel, Kameen Kassel 89.

55 In the second part of his »Schedula de diversis artibus« dealing with glass processing (Theophilus Presbyter, De diversis artibus 3,95). Reports on the hardness of diamonds and its processing with goats' blood, see Ohly, Diamant.

56 Cat. Moscow 2013. This is actually a sapphire cameo depicting a standing Christ Pantocrator from the 14th c., showing a resemblance with its figure style, although with a wider head shape. But the handicraft quality is not on a par with the London sapphire.

57 Bühl, Dumbarton Oaks 162-165.

58 Bank, Collections of Soviet Museums nos 153. 157. 160-161 or the blue sapphire cameo with Christ's half-length figure in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, Washington, D.C. (inv. no. BZ.1936.17), dated to the 10th c.

59 For the re-use of gemstones see Kornbluth, Intaglios Oddly Set with listed examples.

60 Theophilus reported on highly skilled stone-cutters in Italy during this period; in Paris stone-cutters set up their own guild (Gebhart, Gemmen und Kameen 124-127).



Fig. 14 Manuscripts: **a** Gospels of Kaharissar, Leningrad Gr. 105, fol. 210^v, National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg, late 13th century. – **b** Gospel Book of Nikomedia, Cod. 25, fol. 323^v, V. I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, Kiev, 13th century. – (a from Colwell, Gospels of Karahissar pl. CXXXII = public domain, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015001985475;view=1up;seq=22> [23.03.2016]; b <http://redkayakniga.ru/biblioteki/item/f00/s00/z0000010/st033.shtml> [23.03.2016]).

The Use of the Gemstone

The particular theme might hint to the owner of the precious gemstone: St Thomas could have been the patron saint of a member of the Byzantine aristocracy, who either commissioned the scene's carving on the gemstone or received the gemstone as a gift from a patron. St Thomas' halo and the deep association with Christ add relevance to the St Thomas character. Placing the main focus on the two protagonists rather than moulding the scene into an architectural context conveys a sense of intimacy and trustworthiness to the rapport between Thomas and Christ. During the heyday of Western art, in the Quattrocento period, this motif became very fashionable⁶¹. During the Palaiologan era, scenes capturing the Apostle Thomas enjoyed prominent status among donors, especially in imperial and aristocratic circles. One such instance is the wall painting in the Church of Timios Stauros in Pelendri on Cyprus (before 1375), which depicts a pair of donors standing with imploring hands before Christ, who is pictured guiding the hand of the incredulous Thomas to his side wound⁶² (fig. 15a). Another one is an icon from the Metamorphosis Monastery in Meteora (1367-1384)⁶³ with a slightly altered image due to the inclusion of a female imperial sponsor and a male individual⁶⁴ within the pictorial scene behind the apostle Thomas (fig. 15b).

The Gemstone as a Protection and Salvation Icon

The Thomas motif bears testimony to the personal piety and belief of surmounting any doubts its owner or donor may have harboured. The depiction of the physical wounds of Christ risen from the dead implies a sense of identity between his pre- and post-Easter body. For the owner of the gemstone, this amounts to proclaiming his allegiance to the Orthodox doctrine against heretical views, thus accepting both natures of Christ as well as his physical resurrection. Hence, he identifies himself with the Apostle Thomas, who is cast in a role model as the conqueror of incredulity. Together with Thomas, the sapphire's owner joins Christ's inner circle, feeling encouraged to take part in the quest for God's salvation. The gemstone is also deemed to act as a soteriological beacon of hope for the eternal redemption of souls at the end of time, fully relying on the Apostle's support and intercession to achieve this goal. All these aspects serve to assert the fact that during the Middle Ages precious gemstones were thought to possess a magical effect or play a protection role as an *apotropaion* or »luck charm«⁶⁵. This fascination is unequivocally corroborated by the Warsaw steatite icon, which was worn as a »pendant icon«⁶⁶ around the neck and was considered a symbol of

61 Refer to Schunk-Heller, Ungläubiger Thomas 58-64.

62 Concerning church matters, see Zarras, Pelendri, illustration on 48 fig. 43. The donors were allegedly aristocrats: John of Lusignan, feudal lord of Pelendri between 1353-1374/1375 and his spouse, *ibidem* 49. – Pursuant to Stylianiou/Stylianou, Painted Churches of Cyprus 224.

63 Garova, Meteora Icon 369-381 with further literature.

64 These persons are most likely to have been Maria Angelina Palaiologina and her spouse Thomas Preljubović (Garova, Meteora Icon 369f. – Likewise Agoritsas, Maria Angelina 171-185).

65 Zwierlein-Diehl, Gemmen und ihr Nachleben 252. – Gebhart, Gemmen und Kameen 127-129.

66 Cat. Warsaw 2006, 89.



Fig. 15 Donors: **a** Church of Timios Stauros, Pelendri, Cyprus, before 1375. – **b** Icon from the Monastery of Metamorphosis, Meteora, 1367-1384. – (a from Zarras, Pelendri fig. 43; b from Garova, Meteora Icon fig. 1).



private devotion for the upper class⁶⁷. Another hypothesis is that the gemstone was possibly set in the middle of an encolpion or fitted into a pendant, such is the case with the steatite icon and others⁶⁸. The cameo might have been

highly valued as possessing magical powers like an amulet. The virtues embodied in the gemstone represent a guarantee of current protection, everlasting salvation and future redemption for the bearer.

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67 The material deterioration of steatite was put into the right perspective by the analysis of Ioli Kalavrezou-Maxeiner. Steatite was not a cheap imitation of ivory, rather its soft-green version was precious and highly appreciated, see Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, *Steatite Icons*.

68 Ikonomaki-Papadopoulos/Pitarakis/Loverdou-Tsigarida, *Enkolpia nos 13*. 15-16. 20-21. 24-25 and others.

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Summary / Zusammenfassung

»The Incredulity of Saint Thomas« on a Byzantine Sapphire from the Cheapside Hoard, London: A Proposal for a New Dating to the Palaiologan Period

One of the objects in the spectacular Cheapside Hoard of the 16th century, found in London, is a large Byzantine sapphire set in an earring of the 16th century. The New Testament scene of »Doubting Thomas«, accompanied by a Greek inscription, was carved into the stone, but it remains unclear whether it is a cameo with a low relief or an engraved intaglio because the stone was set into the earring in reverse.

The unique sapphire was previously dated to between the 3rd and 10th centuries. However, the examination of the iconographic and epigraphic development of the Thomas scene suggests a much later date. Diachronic comparisons in style, iconography and formal aspects with pieces of art from different genres, such as monumental painting, book illumination and minor arts, leads to a re-dating of the gem to the »Palaiologan Renaissance« around 1300.

The cutting technique and outstanding exquisiteness of the stone point to a metropolitan, probably aristocratic context in Constantinople. The function further corroborates the later date: in Late Byzantine times, the theme of »Doubting Thomas« was very popular among donors. Possibly placed in an encolpion worn around the neck, the gemstone attests to the piety of the wearer and his wish for protection and salvation.

»Der ungläubige Thomas« auf einem byzantinischen Saphir aus dem Cheapside Hoard, London: Vorschlag für eine Neudatierung in die Palaiologenzeit

Eines der Objekte aus dem spektakulären Cheapside Hoard des 16. Jahrhunderts, der in London gefunden wurde, ist ein großer byzantinischer Saphir, der in einem Ohrgehänge des 16. Jahrhunderts gefasst ist. Die neutestamentliche Szene des »Thomaszweifels«, die von einer griechischen Inschrift begleitet wird, ist in den Stein geschnitten worden. Jedoch bleibt unklar, ob es sich um einen Cameo mit Flachrelief oder ein graviertes Intaglio handelt, da der Stein mit der Schauseite nach innen im Ohrring gefasst ist.

Der einzigartige Saphir war bisher zwischen dem 3. und 10. Jahrhundert datiert worden, die Untersuchung der ikonographischen und epigraphischen Entwicklung der Thomas-Szene erlaubt aber eine sehr viel spätere Datierung. Diachrone Vergleiche des Stils, der Ikonographie und formaler Aspekte mit Kunstwerken verschiedener Genres wie Monumentalmalerei, Buchillumination und Kunsthandwerk führen zu einer Neudatierung der Szene in die Zeit der »Palaiologischen Renaissance« um 1300.

Die Steinschneidetechnik und exquisite Qualität des Steins weisen auf ein hauptstädtisches, wahrscheinlich aristokratisches Umfeld in Konstantinopel. Die Funktion spricht ebenfalls für eine spätere Datierung: In der spätbyzantinischen Zeit war das Thema des »Thomaszweifels« sehr beliebt unter Stiftern. Vermutlich war der Edelstein ursprünglich in einem Encolpion gefasst und wurde am Hals getragen, was somit Ausdruck der Frömmigkeit des Trägers und seines Wunsches nach Schutz und Erlösung.