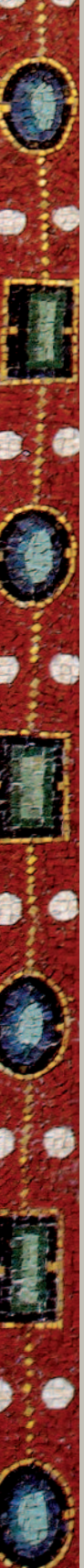
Byzantium and the West: Jewelry in the First Millennium



Byzantium and the West: Jewelry in the First Millennium

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This book is the second in a series we envision on medieval and Renaissance jewelry. The first "Toward an Art History of Medieval Rings" presented rings from c. 300 to c. 1600 A.D., spanning the period of late Antiquity to the beginnings of the Baroque. It placed most major types of rings in their art-historical context with comparisons to works of art in other media. Subsequent books, this one included, will explore specific themes within this time period. We have selected the theme "Byzantium and the West" in part because it focuses on cultural exchange in the pre-medieval era, on the phenomena of continuity and change. There is to date no comprehensive survey of Byzantine jewelry; see, however, the catalogues of Ross (2005) and the survey by Baldini Lippolis (1999). The study of Merovingian jewelry benefits from the excellent work by Hadjadj (2008). However, little has been done on the relationships between Byzantium and the West.

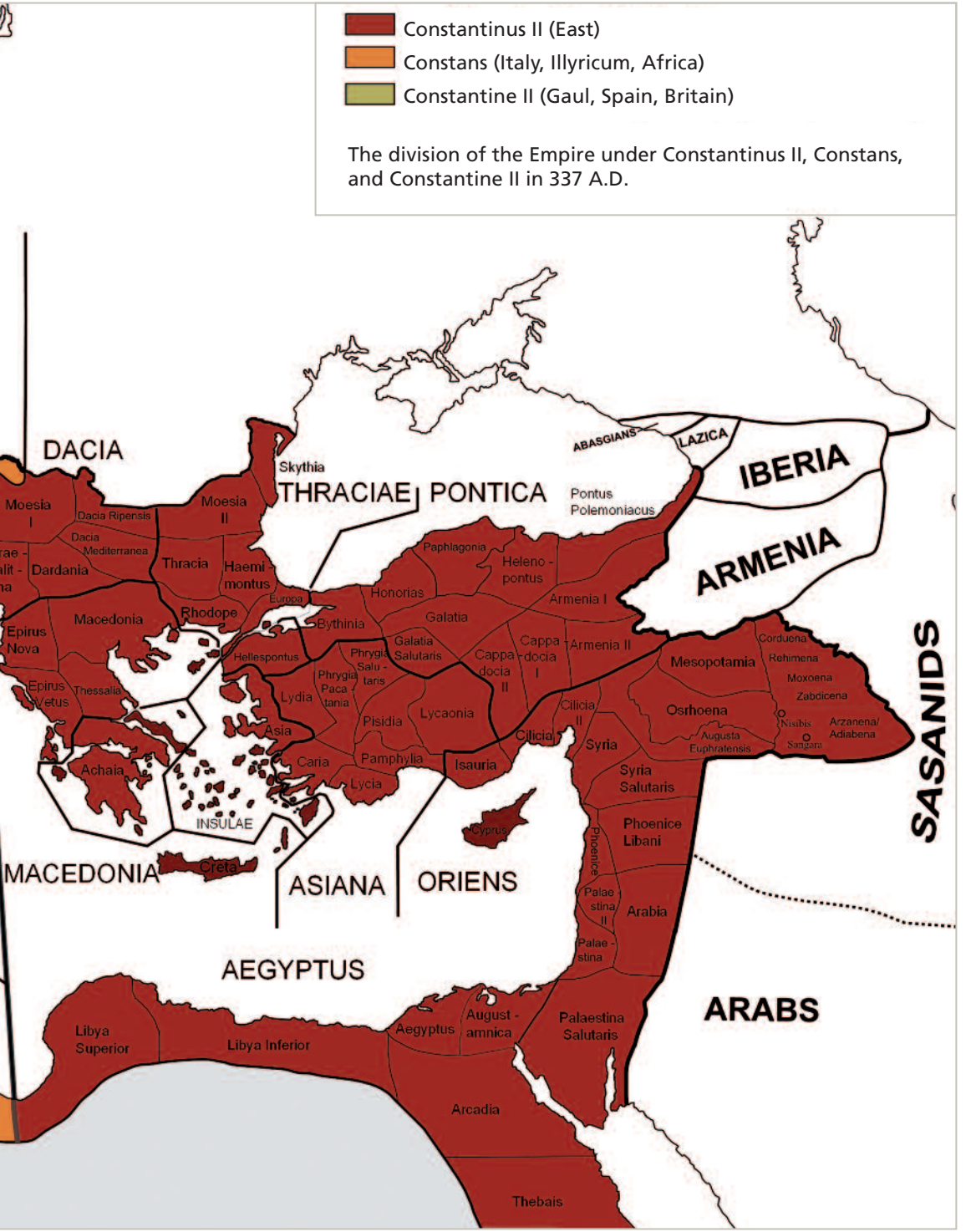
The approximately forty jewels, mostly rings, but also two significant parures (sets of matching pieces of jewelry), included in this book do not present a comprehensive overview of jewelry during this period. Nevertheless, they do demonstrate the continuity between Roman and Byzantine rings, for example, in the shared interest in marriage rings and the taste for fine gems. They also highlight some significant changes that took place in the early years of the Byzantine Empire, such as a loss of interest in engraved stones, an interest in polychromy and in complex construction, and a new religious iconography. The book also offers a glimpse at the influence of Byzantium on Western Germanic culture, a subject that still merits further study. Byzantine influence accounts for the persistence of certain forms in the West, architectural rings, double-bezel rings, and pyramid rings, for example. This phenomenon can surely be partially explained by the presence of actual Byzantine rings in German treasures as described in texts and supported by archaeological evidence.

Well-qualified to explore the theme of "Byzantium and the West" through his many admirable publications, Professor Spier has organized the diverse jewels in four roughly chronological and coherent groups: late Roman rings before Byzantium (3rd century), late Roman rings at the end of the western Empire (4th and 5th centuries), Byzantine rings and jewelry of the 6th and 7th centuries, and jewelry of the Migration-era in the 6th and 7th centuries. Some highlights are worth signaling. There is a parure (cat. no. 14) with carefully matched pieces that includes the only complete marriage ring assembled with an engraved disc portraying the couple (14d) and a pectoral cross and earrings of exceptionally high quality and clearly the work of a single goldsmith (14a-b). Fashionable among wealthy and pious Byzantine women, an embossed pectoral cross is one of the finest known (cat. no. 15). A finely made monogram ring presents the only known version of a complex hinge construction (cat. no. 23), found more typically in bracelets and necklaces. Most Byzantine monogram rings were made for men, but this group exceptionally includes two monogram rings for women, named Theodote and Anna (cat. nos. 21 and 22). A fine parure that belonged to an Ostrogothic woman (cat. no. 33) reveals parallels with both Byzantine and Anglo-Saxon jewelry, such widespread influences typical of Migration-era art. This study concludes with a remarkable Frankish disc brooch of the mid-seventh century (cat. no. 34).

Iconoclasm, the debate about the legitimacy of religious art, began in Byzantium around 730 and continued until about 787. During this period and for the last two centuries of the millennium, there is a paucity of surviving Byzantine jewelry and few rings of note. At the same time, goldsmiths in the West evolved, developing their own indigenous styles. As Jeffrey Spier eloquently states: "by the seventh century Byzantium was only a dim and distant presence to most of the Germanic people in the West."

Sandra Hindman


BRITANNIAE
Britannia II
Flavia Caesariensis
Valentia
Maxima Caesar iensis
Britannia I
GALLIAE
Germania II
Belgica II
Lugdunensis II
Belgica I
Germania I
Lugdunensis III
Lugdunensis Senonia
Aquitanica II
Lugdunen sis I
Maxima Sequanorum
Aquitanica I
Alpes Poeninae and Graiae
Viennensis
Liguria
Alpes Cottiae
Aemilia
Flaminia and Picenum Annonarium
Novem - populana
Narbonensis I
Alpes Mari - timi
Narbo - mensis II
Gallaecia
Tarraconensis
Lusitania
Carthaginiensis
Baetica
HISPANIAE
Baleares
Corsica
Sardinia
ITALIA
ILLYRICUM
Raetia II
Noricum Ripense
Panno - nia I
Val - eria
Raetia I
Noricum Mediterra - neum
Venetia and Histria
Savia
Pannonia II
Dalmatia
Tuscia and Umbria
Picenum Suburbicarium
Valeria
Sam - nium
Campania
Apulia and Calabria
Lucania and Bruttii
URBS ROMANA
REGIONES
SUBURBICARIAE
Sicilia
Tingitania
Mauretania Caesariensis
Mauretania Sitifensis
Numidia
Africa
Byzacium
AFRICA
Tripolitania


Constantinus II (East)
Constans (Italy, Illyricum, Africa)
Constantine II (Gaul, Spain, Britain)
The division of the Empire under Constantinus II, Constans, and Constantine II in 337 A.D.
DACIA
Moesia I
Dacia Ripensis
Moesia II
Dacia Mediterranea
Dardania
Thracia
Haemi montus
Skythia
THRACIAE
PONTICA
Pontus Polemoniacus
ABASGIANS
LAZICA
IBERIA
ARMENIA
Paphlagonia
Heleno pontus
Honorias
Armenia I
Europa
Rhodope
Macedonia
Bythinia
Galatia
Galatia Salutaris
Cappa docia I
Armenia II
Epirus Nova
Hellespontus
Phrygia Salu taris
Cappa docia II
Mesopotamia
Corduena
Rehimena
Moxoena
Zabdicena
Epirus Vetus
Thessalia
Lydia
Phrygia Paca tania
Lycaonia
Cilicia II
Osrhoena
Nisibis
Arzanena/ Adiabena
Asia
Pisidia
Cilicia I
Augusta Euphratensis
Singara
Syria
Achaia
Caria
Pamphylia
Isauria
Syria Salutaris
Lycia
INSULAE
Cyprus
Phoenice Libani
Phoenice
MACEDONIA
Creta
ASIANA
ORIENS
Palae stina II
Arabia
Palae stina
AEGYPTUS
ARABS
Libya Superior
Libya Inferior
Aegyptus
August amnica
Palaestina Salutaris
Arcadia
Thebais
SASANIDS


ASSAR + SCS MELCHIOR + SCS GASPAR

Greek East and Latin West: Rings in Late Antique Rome and Byzantium

Rings and Roman Society

In book 33 of his great work, *Historia Naturalis (Natural History)*, the Roman author Pliny the Elder (A.D. 25-79) traces the social history of rings in Rome[1]. It is not a flattering picture of Roman society, nor of the rings themselves, for to Pliny the increasingly widespread use of rings and other types of jewelry was a symptom of the corrupting influence of wealth and luxury that was destroying Rome. "The worst crime against man's life was committed by the person who first put gold on his fingers," he writes. Although Pliny's aim was to use the ring as a convenient symbol of social decline rather than to present an accurate history of rings, he is often quite informative about the actual use of rings. The Romans in the years of the early republic (that is, the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.) eschewed luxury and did not own gold. Only rings of iron were acceptable. A gold ring was worn only for official purposes by envoys on foreign missions and then returned to the state. Eventually, however, consuls and senators were allowed to wear a gold ring as a mark of civic status, and over time this honor was extended to the upper classes. In the early years of the Empire (early in the first century A.D.) laws decreed that only a freeborn citizen with substantial assets could wear a gold ring, a means of reinforcing the class structure of Roman society. Pliny, of course, was cynical about such laws and describes the abuses, where many citizens and even freed slaves who did not meet the

1. The Magi wear bracelets and fibula set with gems, and even their clothing is adorned with precious stones.
Mosaic of the Three Magi
c. 500-526 (Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna, Italy)

1. *Historia Naturalis* 33.8-31.

requirements of the law were able to bend the rules and obtain a ring. Pliny especially lamented the display of jewelry worn by women: "gold in their bracelets and covering their fingers and on their neck, ears, and tresses…gold chains run at random round their waists…little bags of pearls hang invisible suspended by gold chains from their lady owners' neck, so that even in their sleep they may retain the consciousness of possessing gems."[2]

Other critics of Roman society of the first century, such as the satirists Petronius and Martial, parodied the displays of wealth of the newly rich and those aspiring to high social status. Fortunata, the wife of the ludicrously ostentatious former slave Trimalchio in Petronius' *Satyricon*, makes an appearance at a banquet wearing every imaginable piece of jewelry. "Look at the woman's fetters…she must have six and half pounds on her!" quips Trimalchio.[3] An epigram of Martial mocks the dandy Charinus, who wears six rings on each finger and never takes them off because "he does not have a gem case" (meaning that he does not, in fact, own them; they are rented).[4]

The wealth that poured into Rome with the conquest of neighboring Greece, especially in the first century B.C. and the early years of the Roman Empire, brought the desire to possess jewelry of all types (as well as silver plate and other luxuries). Wealthy Roman women living in the newly acquired province of Egypt affected Egyptian tradition in being buried as mummies but had themselves shown as wearing jewelry of the latest style (ill. 2).[5] Similarly, in remote Palmyra in Syria, carved tomb reliefs depicted women covered in jewels (ill. 3).

2. *Historia Natuarlis* 33.40; translation by H. Rackham.
3. *Satyricon* 67.
4. Martial, Epigrams 11.59.
5. Susan Walker, ed., *Ancient Faces. Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt* (New York, 2000), pp. 98-99, no. 60.

2. **Painted mummy portrait**
100-110 A.D. (Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum, inv. 81.AP.42)

3. **Funerary relief, limestone bust of a woman named Herta from Palmyra, Syria**
3rd century (London, British Museum, inv. 1885, 0418.1)

The large amount of surviving jewelry dating from the first and second centuries discovered throughout the Roman Empire, from Britain to Syria, shows that gold jewelry often served as a mark of social status. Most of these discoveries are chance finds of hidden treasure or merely lost items, which allow only a partial picture of how the jewelry was used. Somewhat more informative are the finds of jewelry from Pompeii, Herculaneum, and the other cities in the region abandoned by residents who fled in haste or worn by those who died trying to escape the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79 (Pliny himself perished there).[6] The citizens there were no doubt very wealthy and owned a good amount of gold jewelry, although there is a general simplicity of style and not a great variety of ring types. The gemstones set in jewelry also tended to be of common varieties, mostly cornelians and agates. However, there were also many rings and earrings set with emeralds, garnets, and pearls, indicating that there was considerable interest in these rarer and no doubt more valuable materials.

It was not the practice of the Romans to bury their wealth with the dead (unfortunately for modern archaeologists), but there are some notable exceptions. In 1993 the remains of a young woman were discovered in a late second-century sarcophagus at Vallerano, northwest of Rome. A rich assortment of jewelry and other objects of extraordinary quality, including two gold necklaces, three brooches set with engraved gems and cameos, a bracelet, six gold rings, a silver mirror, and a gold embroidered robe was buried along with her (ill. 4).[7] It has plausibly been suggested that the furnishings of jewelry and personal

6. d'Ambrosio and De Carolis 1997 compile a large amount of material. See also Oliver 1996, which includes a list of dated finds of jewelry from the first through fourth centuries.
7. Bedini 1995, which also discusses eight other similar burials of young women of the late second and early third centuries; and see Oliver 2000, for the social significance of the burials.

belongings in this and several other burials of young women represented the dowry intended for a marriage that was prevented by untimely death. The collection of jewelry from Vallerano has no close parallel, however, and may well be an exceptional selection even among wealthy owners. The rings are remarkable for their unusual shapes and especially for their use of gems of great rarity and quality, including sapphires of deep blue color, emeralds, garnets, and even a diamond, which is very rarely encountered in Roman jewelry. The young girl's parents evidently took a special interest in gemstones of high quality and had them set in unconventional rings and jewelry. These new varieties of jewelry anticipate the marked changes of taste that would occur in the third and fourth centuries at the time the empire itself was undergoing radical transformation.

4. **Gold rings from Vallerano**
late 2nd century (Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano, inv. 414057,414056, and 394562)

The Roman Empire in the third century was in a near constant state of political turmoil, with a succession of short-lived soldier-emperors and usurpers, but there was still great wealth in private hands, as well as the usual desire for its display. Society itself was changing greatly, with many new citizens becoming prosperous. Service in the army brought citizenship to many, and the privilege of wearing a gold ring was granted to all soldiers in a decree of A.D. 197.[8] Rings still functioned as a mark of social status but that status had broadened greatly.

Fashion in jewelry continued to change and many new ring types appeared in the late second and third centuries. Rings with openwork or sculpted hoops are especially notable for their design and careful workmanship. Key rings in gold and silver inspired by functioning bronze examples served as signs of social status, too, suggesting that the wearer, unlike Martial's pretentious friend Charinus, did, in fact, have valuable property locked up at home (cat. nos. 1 and 2). Heavy rings set with gold coins were also popular, especially with soldiers, and demonstrated both an allegiance to the emperor depicted on the coin and the taste for gold.[9] There was a short-lived vogue for gems engraved with personal monograms in the first half of the third century in the eastern, Greek-speaking part of the empire, which anticipated the great love for monograms as decorative devices that would emerge in Byzantium in the fifth and sixth centuries (cat. no. 4). Despite engraved gems falling out of fashion over the course of the third century, the interest in fine quality, unengraved gemstones appears to have increased over time. Already in the first century especially attractive gems were set in rings with openwork bezels so that, as Pliny explains, "they may remain exposed on

8. Herodian 3.8.5.
9. For a selection of rings set with coins, see Marshall 1907, pp. 45-48, nos. 259-67 and 269-70; and Spier 2010a, pp. 61 and 309, nos. 40-41.

both faces, with only their edges clasped by the gold."[10] In the later second and third centuries, this fashion continued, and large rings with chiseled decoration on the hoop and openwork bezels were set with stones of unusual quality, including sapphires, emeralds, and diamonds.[11] One such ring in the present collection (cat. no. 3) is set with a large rock crystal, convex on both sides, so that the shape is easily visible. The identities of the owners of such rings are unknown, but they were likely connoisseurs of fine gems. This taste for exotic gemstones would continue for the next few centuries.

Rings and Precious Stones in Late Antiquity

Even with the conversion of the empire to Christianity over the course of the fourth century, the cultural traditions of the old Roman Empire endured. Despite Christian appeals for modesty, the display of gold jewelry to signify prestige and class continued unabated and perhaps even intensified as the old social divisions broke down.[12] Wealthy women wore jewelry of many types: gold necklaces strung with gems and pearls, heavy bracelets with finely chiseled openwork decoration studded with gems, earrings of many varieties, and, above all, rings.

The emperor himself used Christianity as a symbol of imperial power. The *chi-rho* monogram denoting Christ, once a humble symbol used by the early Christians even as they were persecuted, became a personal emblem of Constantine

10. Historia Naturalis 37.116; of course, Pliny also criticizes rings of this type as being a useless luxury, Historia Naturalis 37.17.
11. See, for example, the heavy gold ring with open back set with a fine sapphire, in the Ferrell Collection, Spier 2010a, pp. 56 and 309, no. 33.
12. For the complex question of how wealth and Christianity were reconciled, see Brown 2012, who notes the fashions worn by women as social indicators on pp. 27-28.

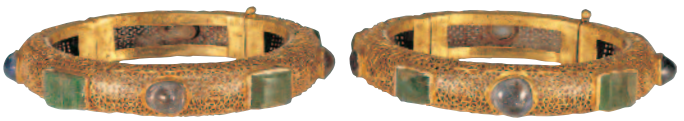
5. **Ring with sapphire portrait of Caracalla**
early 3rd century (Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, inv. 42.1061)

the Great and was placed on many luxurious objects that were presented as imperial gifts to dignitaries and military officers. Such official gift-giving became institutionalized in a vast bureaucracy under the authority of the *comes sacrae largitiones*, the "Count of the Sacred Largesse." The workshops under his control produced ivory diptychs, silver plate, gold medallions, fibulae, belt buckles, and other forms of gifts and military payments. Rings, too, were included for distribution to soldiers, usually inscribed with an acclamation of *fides* ("loyalty") to the emperor, although sometimes with added Christian acclamations as well (cat. no. 5). Jewelry produced for the imperial court quickly influenced the wealthy classes, who carefully followed the latest fashion trends.

The imperial court also took an interest in rare gemstones and restricted their use. An edict issued during the reign of Emperor Leo (457-474) specifically forbade the use of pearls, emeralds, and sapphires for the decoration of belts, fibulae, and bridles and saddles.[13] These gems were "exclusively destined for the use of the Emperor." It seems that sapphires, emeralds, and pearls served as symbols of imperial authority. Although the decree was issued in the late fifth century, its roots may go back as far as the early third century, when sapphires

13. Codex Justinianus XI.12.

were engraved with portraits of the imperial family (Caracalla, his mother Julia Domna, and his wife Plautilla), at a time when engraved sapphires were extremely rare (ill. 5).[14] The practice continued in the fourth century, when portraits of Constantine and his sons were engraved in sapphire.[15] The fifth-century decree is not entirely clear, however, for it does allow for some personal use of the gems in "ornaments usually worn by women, and the rings of both sexes." Perhaps this phrase can be interpreted as the emperor making a gift of the use of imperial gems on a small scale to his loyal subjects. In any event, it is clear that emeralds and sapphires were symbols of the highest social rank. Emeralds, sapphires, and pearls were often used in imperial jewelry of the time of Constantine the Great and his sons in the fourth century, notably on some spectacular gold openwork



6. **Pair of bracelets in gold with emerald and sapphire cabochons**
4th century (Richmond, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 67.52.31.1/2)

bracelets, where often the various gems and pearls would be placed together in an alternating pattern (ill. 6).[16] One such bracelet, now in Dumbarton Oaks, was discovered in a treasure from Libya with gold medallions of Constantine set in openwork frames that strongly suggest that the jewelry derived from an imperial

14. For the sapphire portrait of Caracalla, see Boardman 2009, p. 142, no. 302. The portrait of Julia Domna is in the State Hermitage, Saint Petersburg (unpublished), and the portrait of Plautilla is in a private collection.
15. See Spier 2007a, pp. 19-20, nos. 6-9 and 12.
16. Yeroulanou 1999, pp. 241-4, nos. 205-8, 213, and 223-4; and the fragmentary bracelet in the Ferrell Collection, Spier 2010a, pp. 49 and 308, no. 24.

7. **Gold ring with sapphires, garnets, and plasmas**
Roman Empire, 4th century (London, British Museum, GR 1917, 0501.858)

workshop.[17] This taste for polychromy in jewelry would continue into Byzantine times. Rings in this style, however, have not been found in hoards of jewelry of the fourth century and are difficult to identify. A ring in the present collection set with an emerald in an openwork frame (cat. no. 8) recalls the workmanship of some of the fine fourth-century bracelets and may have been made in a related workshop. Superbly made rings composed of joined cells set with either a mixture of fine quality gems for polychromatic effect (ill. 7) or a single type of gem (cat. no. 7, with emeralds) probably date from the early fifth century and may well be products of an imperial workshop. In general, however, rings dating from the later fourth and early fifth centuries are rare, and their typology remains unclear.

Rings in Byzantium

In the fourth and fifth centuries there was still great wealth in the Western Roman Empire—in Gaul, Britain, North Africa, and Rome itself—but the disintegrating political system and migrating barbarians took their toll (ill. 8). The Roman Empire gradually shifted eastward, slowly abandoning the great metropolis of Rome in favor of the new capital, Constantinople, founded by Constantine the Great in A.D. 330. Although modern historians call the new empire Byzantium, the ancient inhabitants always saw themselves as Romans and the inheritors of the old Roman Empire.

17. Ross 2005, pp. 166-70, no. 183.

The western empire finally fell to the barbarians at the end of the fifth century, but the Byzantine East continued to prosper. Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt were wealthy places, and the army soon reclaimed Carthage and Sicily, which had been occupied briefly by the invaders. Gold was in abundance, as the large quantity of surviving coins and jewelry datable to the later fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries attests. Jewelry took on even greater social significance than before. In the mid-sixth century the emperor Justinian and his empress Theodora, accompanied by their retinue, were shown bedecked in jewels, pearls, and sumptuous garments on the mosaics in the church of San Vitale in Ravenna, where the mosaics' brilliant gold and polychromy of the mosaics mirror the colors of the actual jewelry of the time (ills. 8 and 9). The display of wealth and splendor was intended to glorify God and the emperor as God's rightful regent.

Much Byzantine jewelry was, in fact, newly designed to exhibit the piety of the wearer, even if the splendor of the gold and gems was apparent. Ornate pendant crosses suspended from gold chains were worn around the neck. Earrings were embossed with images of peacocks or had pendant chains strung with pearls. Rings engraved with images of Christ, the Virgin, angels, and saints served as miniature icons, appealing for divine protection. Although found in all parts of the empire (in Constantinople, Syria, Egypt, Sicily, and the Black Sea coast) the style of Byzantine jewelry is remarkably consistent, and it is very difficult to determine where individual pieces were made. Certainly the workshops in Constantinople set the fashions, which no doubt followed imperial models.

8. **Mosaic of Empress Theodora and retinue**
c. 527-546 (San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy)

Although jewelry of the fifth century is not well documented, it is clear that by the end of the century goldsmiths were experimenting with a variety of new designs, including for rings. The present collection is well represented with examples of a particularly fine variety of ring that was short-lived but influential on later gold work (cat. nos. 10, 16, 18, and 20). These rings have a bezel in the form of an inverted square pyramid joined to hoop made from a gold band curved inward with flattened shoulders. Some examples have a smaller side element added to form a double-bezel. They are set with gems of unusual quality, including

9. **Mosaic of Emperor Justinian and retinue**
c. 527-546 (San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy)

sapphires, emeralds, garnets, and amethysts, and they clearly derive from a workshop of considerable importance, probably in Constantinople. Another experimental variety of ring, which survives in a number of examples all datable to the end of the fifth and beginning of the sixth century, has a bezel in the form of a floral cup with ribbing (cat. no. 14e). Rings of this type were sometimes set with engraved garnets from a workshop in Constantinople and have been found in hoards containing jewelry with imperial associations, suggesting that they, too, are products of an important workshop in the capital.

In marked contrast to earlier Roman examples the most characteristic feature of Byzantine rings of the late fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries, is their construction from several distinct pieces. The most frequent variety of hoop was a solid cylindrical bar bent into a circle. A separately made bezel was then soldered over the spot where the two ends join. Other hoop types were used as well, including bands that were curved inward; broad, flat bands, sometimes of octagonal shape; and openwork bands either with pierced decoration (*opus interrasile*) or constructed from filigree gold wire. The bezels take various forms. Some bezels are flat discs, squares, or rosettes engraved with images (nearly always religious), inscriptions (usually invocations for divine assistance), or personal monograms. Other rings have bezels set with gems or pearls. These bezels, always made separately from the hoop, usually rise high from the band in a conical, pyramidal, or floral shape. Floral bezels usually take the form of a calyx of six petals, sometimes ornamented around the top with a ring of small pierced pearls strung on gold wire. The complex construction of these rings gives them an architectural look, and some examples do indeed appear to allude to actual buildings (perhaps churches or the Holy Sepulcher) with columns of filigree wire and a dome of sheet gold ornamented with pellets (cat. no. 28). There are some unconventional rings as well, such as an example with a bezel in the shape of an oil lamp and an openwork floral hoop found in Egypt;[18] a ring with an openwork, hinged hoop and architectural bezel set with an engraved gem (cat. no. 23); and an unusual example with a cup-like bezel held by stylized birds (cat. no. 27). However, all these rings, too, are of the complex construction typical of the period.

18. Stolz 2010, p. 37, pl. 4.

The interest in fine quality and unusual gemstones continued in the Byzantine period. The sapphires, emeralds, amethysts, and garnets selected for the group of late fifth-century rings with pyramidal bezels noted above (cat. nos. 10, 16, 18, and 20) are of exceptionally fine quality, notably for their size, color, and clarity. Byzantine rings tend to be set with only a single gem rather than with the multiple, polychromatic settings seen on rings of the fourth and fifth centuries, but the same range of gems was used: garnet, emerald, sapphire, amethyst, and rock crystal being the most popular stones. The use of multiple gems for polychromatic effect is, however, evident in larger pieces of jewelry, such as necklaces and bracelets.[19] Rare occurrences of previously unattested gems, including yellow sapphire, pink tourmaline, and red spinel, suggest that there was a sophisticated market for exotic gemstones in Constantinople.[20]

A large number of Byzantine rings are not set with gems but instead have bezels engraved with figural images or inscriptions. Most of the devices derive from religious images found in church decoration, painted icons, ivories, or other works associated with the church and imperial patronage. Representations of Christ and the Virgin were especially popular (cat. nos. 19 and 20), but various saints and archangels also appear. Rings were often inscribed with invocations to Christ, the Virgin, angels, or saints to aid the wearer.

19. See the very fine bracelet with sapphires, emeralds, pink tourmalines, amethysts, rock crystals, and chalcedonies in the Ferrell Collection and the discussion there, Spier 2010a, pp. 234-7, no. 167.
20. The use of these rare stones in Byzantine jewelry has not yet been studied fully. For pink tourmalines, see Spier 2010a, pp. 234-7, no. 167; and pp. 240-1, nos. 179-1. For a ring with a yellow sapphire, see Marshall 1907, p. 138, no. 846.

The marriage ring is the other frequently found variety of ring with figural decoration. Generally marriage rings are engraved with a representation of the husband and wife, sometimes accompanied by Christ, and usually engraved with wishes for "concord, health and the grace of God." Rings of this type had been used since the late fourth century (cat. no. 6) and remained extremely popular in Byzantium in the sixth and seventh centuries (cat. nos. 14d, 16, 17, and 18). Marriage rings were constructed in the same way as other Byzantine rings, with a variety of hoops (usually cylindrical or octagonal bands) and bezels either attached to the hoop or set in conical or calyx elements.

Also very fashionable was the practice of engraving the bezel of the ring with the owner's personal monogram (cat. nos. 21 and 22). During the course of the fifth century it had become standard practice to seal official documents with a double-sided lead bulla impressed with a pincer-like instrument (ill. 10). These seals were decorated with a variety of devices and inscriptions. Monograms were also frequently used (ill. 11). At first the monograms were box-shaped, rectangular in form and usually based on the Greek letters Μ, Ν, or Π, but in the 520s, a new cross-shaped monogram was introduced, with letters added to the terminals of the four arms. The Christian allusion is typical of the pious imagery utilized for the decoration of all types of objects in Byzantium. Early examples of this type of monogram include those representing the names of Emperor Justin I (518-527), on coins struck at Antioch, and of Empress Theodora (wife of Justinian) carved on marble capitals in the Basilica of Saint John at Ephesos around the year 536 (ill. 12). These examples suggest that the design of the cruciform monogram was an innovation of the imperial court. The monogram type quickly became very

10. **Lead seal of Leo III with the Virgin Hodegetria**
c. 717-741 (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, inv. 55.1.4269)

11. **Lead seal of Andrea**
late 6th-7th century (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Zacos Collection, inv. 2782)

12. **Impost capital, monogram of Theodora, Basilica of Saint John, Ephesus**
536 (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, Nicholas V. Artamonoff Collection, Negative inv. RZ33, 1940)

popular for personal use as well, both on official lead seals and engraved on rings purely as decoration (cat. nos.21 and 22). Seizing on the popularity of personal monograms, a workshop in Constantinople engraved garnets with individual monograms and set them in rings (cat. no. 23).[21]

Judging from the relatively large numbers of surviving rings and their wide distribution within the Byzantine territories, it is clear that the wearing of rings was a common practice both for men and women, at least for those who were members of the wealthier classes. Women wore rings set with gems, marriage rings, iconographical rings, and sometimes rings with monograms (cat. nos 11 and 12). Most of the monograms found on rings, however, are of masculine names. Iconographical rings were also worn by men, as is shown by the names sometimes inscribed on them. Unlike in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, no rings dating from the sixth and seventh centuries have been identified as having special military or civic significance.

The extent of the wealthy Byzantine woman's parure is not entirely clear, given the fragmentary nature of the archaeological evidence, but several treasures of jewelry suggest that the most popular items were rings, earrings, necklaces (sometime with pendant crosses), and bracelets (often worn in pairs).[22] The set of jewelry in the present collection (cat. no. 14a-e) is an important example of the variety of ornament worn by a wealthy Byzantine woman around the year 500. The jewelry is not as ostentatious as some other surviving pieces, but the

21. For the garnets engraved with monograms and further literature on the origin of the cruciform monogram, see Spier 2007a, pp. 92-93 and cat. no. 23.
22. Lippolis 1999, pp. 29-43, lists twenty-five hoards containing jewelry, dating from the fifth through the eighth century.

quality is very fine, with carefully matched chains and the tasteful use of pearls on both the necklace and the earrings. The pendant cross is large and beautifully made. The woman wore a marriage ring, an important symbol, as well as a ring of the latest fashion set with an imported intaglio, perhaps an indication of wealth and sophistication. Other treasures of jewelry dating from the sixth and seventh centuries present a similar picture. One hoard now in Dumbarton Oaks contained a gold necklace strung with amethysts, a pendant cross, a pair of bracelets, and a marriage ring, along with a man's belt buckle.[23] A second treasure in Dumbarton Oaks, said to have been found in Syria, included two necklaces, one with pendant crosses, earrings, and two finger rings.[24] A third, larger treasure in same museum, again from Syria, contained four gold necklaces strung with emeralds and pearls, as well as another with a gold medallion, pendant crosses and engraved rock crystals, a bracelet, and six finger rings, including two with engraved bezels, one depicting the Virgin and the other a saint.[25] Very similar groups of jewelry were present in treasures from Mersin in southeast Asia Minor,[26] the Greek island of Lesbos,[27] Caesarea Maritima in Israel,[28] and Pantalica in Sicily.[29]

Two other treasures, one from Egypt and the other from Cyprus, preserve jewelry of the finest quality, very likely deriving from imperial workshops in Constantinople. The late sixth-century assemblage of jewelry thought to be from the vicinity of Assiut in Egypt, now divided between the British Museum, the Antikensammlung in Berlin, the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and the

23. Ross 2005, pp. 7-8, no. 4.
24. Ross 2005, p. 10-12, no. 6.
25. Ross 2005 p. 135-9, no. 179.
26. Bank 1985, pp. 286-9, pls. 95, 97-99, 102-5.
27. Touratsoglou and Chalkia 2008.
28. Frova 1965, pp. 235-44.
29. Orsi 1942, pp. 134-41; and Fallico 1975.

Freer Gallery in Washington D.C., includes gold torques with imperial medallions, necklaces, earrings, and bracelets, many executed in fine openwork and set with sapphires, emeralds, and pearls.[30] A necklace of hinged openwork elements set with emeralds, pearls, and pendant sapphires (ill.13) is strikingly like the piece of jewelry worn by an attendant of Empress Theodora on the mosaic in Ravenna (ill .9).[31] The similarity of this piece, along with the quantity of other fine items and the presence of imperial medallions presented typically to high officials, suggest that the jewelry from Assiut belonged to a woman of the highest rank, perhaps an imperial princess of the late sixth century.[32] The so-called Second Cyprus Treasure, now divided primarily between the Metropolitan Museum and the Cyprus Museum in Nicosia, must also have belonged to an important imperial official of the time of Emperor Heraclius (610-641), for it, too, contained gold medallions set in a belt, a group of famous silver plates depicting scenes from the life of King David, and a quantity of jewelry, including necklaces, pendant crosses, bracelets, and earrings.[33] Although the quality of the jewelry in these two hoards for the most part surpasses that found in the other recorded treasures, the style and technique of the jewelry is not so different. Especially notable is the presence in both hoards of the variety of earring with chains set with pearls suspended from hoops. These earrings are almost identical to the examples in the parure in the present collection (cat. no. 14b-c), demonstrating the close

30. Dennison 1918; and Greifenhagen 1970, pp. 65-71, pls. 45-52.
31. Greifenhagen 1970, pp. 65-71, pls. 45-52; pp. 68-69, pl. 49.
32. Stolz 2006 suggests the jewelry belonged to a member of the imperial family.
33. For discussions of the treasure see, Dalton 1906; Brown 1984, pp. 13-14; and Entwistle 2003; see also Weitzmann 1979, pp. 71-72, no. 61 (belt with medallions), p. 311, no. 285 (chain with cross), pp. 312-3, no. 287 (a medallion), and pp. 316-7, no. 292 (bracelets); and Yeroulanou 1999, p. 132, fig. 236, and p. 210, no. 39 (necklace of openwork elements and a pendant cross). Silver plates with monograms from the treasure are in Dumbarton Oaks and the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore.

13. **Necklace with hinged openwork set with gems**
mid-6th century (Berlin, Antikensammlung, inv. 30219.505)

relationship between jewelry from imperial workshops and jewelry worn by upper class, but not necessarily aristocratic, women. Unfortunately, neither the Assiut nor the Cyprus treasure contained rings.

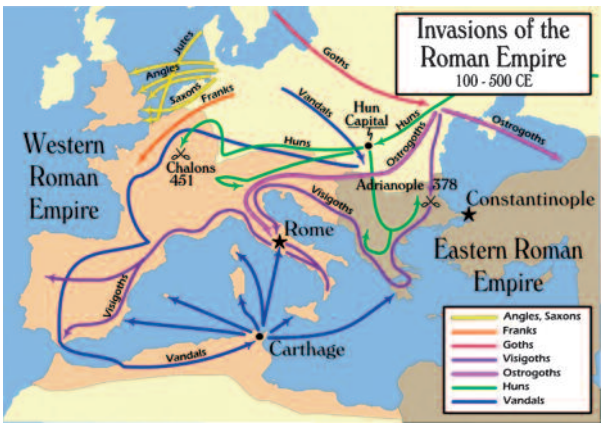
This very homogeneous style of Byzantine jewelry found throughout the empire continued until the end of the seventh century or perhaps slightly later (the latest datable hoard, from Pantalica, Sicily, was found with coins as late as 685), but both internal and external forces brought significant changes to Byzantium. The Arab invasions of the seventh century proved disastrous for the Byzantines, and many of their wealthiest provinces were lost. Syria fell to the invaders in 637, Egypt in 642, and Carthage in 698. In 717, Constantinople itself was

threatened, but the Arabs were driven back to eastern Asia Minor and the borders were stabilized. Internally, Byzantium in the early eighth century was divided by the iconoclastic controversy, during which time (c. 730-787) religious images were banned. Although there is no clear documentary evidence, iconoclasm appears to have severely affected the production of jewelry, for very few pieces dating from this period survive. When jewelry and rings were again produced in the later eighth and ninth centuries the style had significantly changed.

Rings of the Migration Period and the Germanic Kingdoms

The Romans had come into conflict with Germanic tribes on their borders already in the first century B.C. and hostilities continued for centuries. The great migration of Germanic tribes, however, began at the end of the third century A.D. as wave after wave moved westward, settling on the border of the Roman Empire and then invading its interior. At first the Romans attempted to form alliances, using the barbarian invaders as mercenaries, granting them status as *foederati* (allies under treaty), and rewarding them with gold. A federation of Germanic tribes (the future Merovingian kingdom) lived peacefully in Gaul, but in the late fourth century the Huns and Visigoths moved into Roman territory and then invaded Italy. The Visigothic king Alaric sacked Rome in 410, sending shockwaves throughout the empire. Although the Visigoths were driven out of Italy, they soon occupied Spain, one of the empire's most prosperous colonies. The Romans abandoned Britain early in the fifth century, allowing the Anglo-Saxons to claim the island. The Ostrogoths would next occupy much of Italy (in

the seventh century the Lombards would displace them), while the Vandals seized North Africa in 429 and sacked Rome again in 455. Finally, in 476, a Germanic officer in the Roman army, Odoacer, deposed the last Roman emperor



14. **Map, Invasions of the Roman Empire, 100 - 500 A.D.**

of the West, Romulus Augustulus, and Rome was then in barbarian hands. The kings of the new Germanic lands in the former Roman Empire would nominally acknowledge their subservience to the emperor in Constantinople, but in reality they were entirely independent.

Along with money paid to the barbarians, gifts in the form of medallions, fibulae, buckles, rings, swords, and other objects were presented to kings and dignitaries as a means of recognizing their official status as allies of the Byzantine emperor.[34] Jewelry of this type played an important role as marks of status in Germanic society. Barbarian goldsmiths themselves produced both copies of Roman

34. See Spier 2009; and Spier 2010a, pp. 10-11, for further commentary and literature on this subject.

items and jewelry of their own design for their particular fashions. A taste for garnet inlay, learned from Byzantine craftsmen but put to new uses, is especially characteristic of Migration-era work. Skilled Germanic goldsmiths throughout the barbarian territories produced garnet inlaid fibulae, disc fibulae ornamented with filigree and gems (cat. no. 34), belt buckles, and rings.

Perhaps the best example of the sort of jewelry in the possession of an important Germanic dignitary with close ties to Constantinople is the treasure discovered in Reggio Emilia, in northern Italy, in 1957.[35] The treasure is datable to the end of the fifth century by the presence of Byzantine gold coins as late as the reign of Emperor Zeno (474-491). A gold fibula from an imperial workshop indicates that the treasure belonged to a high official, and the superb necklace and garnet earrings, as well as most of the fifteen rings in the hoard, also were likely sent from Constantinople. Two of these rings (ills. 15 and 16) are like the one in the Byzantine woman's parure in the present collection (cat. no. 14e). But other items in the treasure were of barbarian manufacture, including a pair of gilt-silver fibulae, a polyhedral earring with garnet inlay much like the East Gothic woman's parure in the present collection (cat. no. 33a-c), and several rings. Three of these rings are especially significant, for two are engraved with Latin monograms that must have been for local officials and the third bears the names of the likely owners of the treasure, a man named Ettila and his wife Stafara, both names clearly of Germanic origin.[36]

Gifts of Byzantine jewelry to the Germanic aristocracy profoundly influenced their taste for rings. The creation of Latin monograms for barbarians in Italy,

35. Degani 1959
36. Degani 1959, pp. 56-57, nos. 2-3, pl. 17 (fibulae); pp. 65-66, no. 8, pl. 27 (polyhedral earring); p. 63, nos. 13-14, pl. 25 (rings with Latin monograms); and pp. 63-64, no. 15, pl. 25 (the ring of Ettila and Stafara).

15 - 16. **Rings from the late fifth-century treasure from Reggio Emilia in Italy**
late 5th century (Reggio Emilia, Musei Civici, inv. 41730, inv. 41737)

like those on the ring from the Reggio Emilia treasure, mimics the fashion in Constantinople. More typically, however, the Germanic goldsmiths embellished the basic design of Byzantine rings. Rings of architectural form, which were especially popular, were given elaborate ornamentation with the addition of filigree, granulation, and garnet inlay (cat.nos. 29 and 30). Even the hoops of the rings, usually relatively simple in the Byzantine originals, were decorated with twisted or braided wire and gold pellets (cat.nos. 29 and 31). The imitation of Byzantine prototypes was not merely for fashion, however, but served as an allusion to the wealth and power of the Byzantine court. A ring of Merovingian manufacture with double-bezel copying a Byzantine model (cat.nos. 12 and 13) was worn by a Frankish princess and buried with her in Cologne Cathedral (fig. 12.2). Rings of purely Germanic design, including seal rings with the portrait of the owner (such as that of the Frankish King Childeric) or rings with garnet inlay of extraordinary quality, were commissioned by the barbarian princes and found in their graves.[37] They attest to the importance assigned to rings in Germanic courtly culture, a tradition learned from the Byzantines.

37. For reconstructions of the jewelry worn by Germanic women from excavated burials, see Christlein 1979, pp. 77-82, figs. 52, 54, and 56; and Bott 1987, p. 245, no. V, 82 and pp. 371-2, VIII, 8, pl. 55.

Throughout the fifth and sixth centuries, Byzantine jewelry greatly influenced Germanic fashion, but Germanic goldsmiths continued to create their own distinctive works, which were often of brilliant design and execution. Indeed, Germanic fashion diverged considerably from that of Byzantium, especially in the types and styles of jewelry worn by women. Unlike the Byzantine Greeks, Germanic women were buried with their personal adornment, allowing a clear picture of the sort of jewelry they wore.[38] The diversity of Byzantine jewelry must be judged from treasures rather than tomb groups, although the surviving material is still representative of what was worn. In general, the aristocratic Germanic woman appears to have worn a more formalized parure with less variety than that worn by her Byzantine contemporary. The Germanic woman typically wore pairs of silver-gilt fibulae, sometimes inlaid with garnet, on her shoulders, bracelets of simple form, hairpins, and earrings usually of the polyhedral type (cat. no. 33b). There was a love of belts with fine buckles and various decorative elements suspended from straps and chains, and buckles and ornaments were worn on the shoes, as well. Disc brooches ornamented with filigree and garnets came into style in the later sixth century, produced by Germanic workshops in the Rhineland (cat. no. 34), and, in view of the large number of surviving examples, became de *rigeur* for fashionable women at least until the mid-seventh century. A sculpture of the French queen Clotilde shows her wearing a disc brooch similar to the one discussed here (cat. no. 34). Rings, which were always popular, show the greatest degree of variety.[39]

38. For reconstructions of the jewelry worn by Germanic women from excavated burials, see Christlein 1979, pp. 77-82, figs. 52, 54, and 56; and Bott 1987, p. 245, no. V, 82 and pp. 371-2, VIII, 8, pl. 55.
39. See Hadjadj 2008 for an excellent survey.

17. *Gisant,* **Saint Clotilde (475-545), Queen of France**
12th century (Paris, France, Musée du Louvre; originally from the west portal of Notre-Dame de Corbeil, France)

It is notable that all these new forms of jewelry, although displaying a degree of Byzantine influence (now somewhat remote), were now entirely the creation of Germanic goldsmiths. Although diplomatic ties between the Byzantine emperor and the Frankish king continued, by the seventh century Byzantium was only a dim and distant presence to most of the Germanic people in the West.

1.

Gold Key Ring with the Goddess Fides

Roman, mid-2nd to early 3rd century

Height 19.5 mm; exterior diameter of hoop 20.05 mm; weight 5.8 g; US size 2 ½; UK size E

Attached to the elongated bezel of a twelve-sided hoop is a cast, openwork element depicting the goddess Fides ("Loyalty") standing between two columns that support a triple arch. She holds a military standard (*vexillum*) in her right hand and an uncertain object (a palm branch?) over her left shoulder. The hoop has cusped facets on the exterior and is flat on the interior.

This type of ring, with the large decorative plaque attached to the bezel, is often described as a "key ring," for the shape was inspired by the simple bronze key rings that fit the locks on boxes and cupboards in the household (fig. 1.1). Key rings in precious metal likely served as a symbol of the wealth and status of the owner. Openwork key rings in gold and silver are typically of very fine work, with various degrees of decoration (see also the following, cat. no. 2). One particular group, which includes this example, uses cast figural scenes for the "key." Some of the images are simply decorative, while others have mythological or political significance. A fine gold ring from the Roman fort of Augusta Ruria in Augst, Switzerland, shows a pair of birds flanking a fountain. It was found with coins of Hadrian, suggesting a date in the mid-second century. A similar composition of two lions flanking a fountain (or vase) is seen on a fine gold ring from Trier, on another from Romania, and on two silver rings found in England. A charming example depicting Cupid and Psyche, now in the National Museum, Belgrade, likely served as a gift to a lover. A ring in the National Museum of Bosnia-Herzegovina in Sarajevo, however, is more likely that of a soldier

fig. 1.1
Surviving in great numbers, simple key rings made of base metals fit the locks on boxes and cupboards in Roman households.
Bronze key ring
Roman Empire, c. 100-300 (Private collection)

fig. 1.2
Some gold key rings, such as this one showing Jupiter presenting a Victor to a standing emperor, may have been presented to military officers on special occasions as tokens of imperial largesse.
Gold key ring
Roman Empire, 3rd century (Sarajevo, National Museum of Bosnia-Herzegovina)

(fig. 1.2). It shows the unusual scene of a seated Jupiter presenting a Victory on a globe to a standing emperor.

The present ring, too, is likely that of a military officer. The image, which is otherwise not found on rings, depicts a goddess holding a military standard draped with a flag, known as a *vexillum*. Although not identified by an inscription, she is likely the personification of Fides, or "Loyalty," symbolizing the mutual trust of the army and the emperor. Fides frequently appears on Roman imperial coinage of the second and third centuries, although not in this precise pose. Rings such as this and the example in Sarajevo may have been presented to military officers on special occasions as tokens of imperial largesse.

Notes:

For the typology of key rings, see Guiraud 1989, pp. 191-3; and Johns 1996, pp. 55-57. For examples of bronze key rings, see Henkel 1913, pp. 183-9, nos. 1922-72; and Chadour 1994, pp. 108-10, nos. 371-8. Functional key rings in gold are rare, but see the example from the late second-century tomb of the young woman named Crepereia Tryphanea, discovered in Rome in 1889, Bedini 1995, p. 73, no. 44.

For the ring from Augst, now in the Historisches Museum, Basel, see Yeroulanou 1999, p. 260, no. 334; and Henkel 1913, no. 92, pl. 5. The ring from Trier, now in the Rheinisches Landesmuseum in Trier, Yeroulanou 1999, p. 260, no. 335; and Henkel 1913, no. 93, pl. 5. The ring from Cluj-Napoca, Romania, Töth 1979, p. 160, no. 8. The silver ring from Essex, now in the British Museum, Marshall 1907, p. 187, no. 1184. For the ring in Belgrade, Popovi 1992, pp. 73-74, no. 18. The ring in Sarajevo, which is the also set with a cameo with the military phrase prokopte, "advance!," in a wreath, see Ward, Cherry, Gere and Cartlidge 1981, p. 39, no. 68. See also another silver example with cupids and a crater, found in London, Henig and Chapman 1985 (with further examples cited); and a silver ring with two dolphins and a trident, Henkel 1913, p. 50, no. 361. A gold ring in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston has a floral pattern on the key, Yeroulanou 2003, p. 39, fig. 12.

2.

Gold Key Ring with Inscription

Roman, mid-3rd century

Exterior diameter of hoop 21.91 mm; rectangular bezel c.16.5 x 12.2 mm; weight 8.67 g; US size 7 ½; UK size O ½

The ring is a ten-sided gold band with a double-height "key" joining the first two facets at the front, serving as the bezel. The entire band is decorated with carefully chiseled openwork, known as *opus interrasile*. Each facet is bordered with a thin, vertical band and carved with a letter between *pelta* (shield)-shaped ornaments. The inscription reads, VTERE FELIX ("use it with luck"). The bezel, which contains two of these letters, has an upper band containing a pair of finely worked ivy leaves.

***Opus interrasile* rings, which are always of fine quality and clearly of** considerable value in view of their heavy weight, are often inscribed, some in Greek and others in Latin. A number of examples bear personal names, others acclamations wishing the owner good luck (such as the present example). Several were gifts to loved ones ("Accept this, sweet one" and "May I be loved"), and one ring found in England bears a Greek inscription describing itself as the "love charm of Polemios." The fine ring set with a nicolo gem and now in a private collection is inscribed with the name of the owner (fig. 2.1). The acclamation *utere felix* was very popular in the second and third centuries and is found written on many types of personal objects, including rings, bracelets, fibulae, belts and buckles, drinking cups, and other vessels and utensils.

Most of the rings of this type have been found in the western part of the Roman Empire, including Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands,

fig. 2.1
Adorned with a gem depicting Victory, this key ring is inscribed M[ULIER] SUI P[UBLII] MARCI DAPENI HOMONOEA ("Homonoea, wife of Publius Marcus Dapienus").

Gold key ring with engraved nicolo gemstone

late 3rd to early 4th century

(Private collection)

fig. 2.2
The acclamation UTERE FELIX ("Use it with luck") was very popular in the second and third centuries and is found often on rings and on many types of personal objects.

Gold key ring

mid-3rd century (Brussels, Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, inv. B5554)

and England, although at least one example is from Egypt. A ring discovered in Belgium and now in the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels (fig. 2.2) is particularly close in style to the present example and bears the same inscription. Two rings were discovered in treasures that contained coins dating to the years around 250, which strongly suggests a date of manufacture in the second quarter of the third century.

Notes:

For *opus interrasile* jewelry, see especially Yeroulanou 1999; for technical aspects, see Tóth 2010. An especially fine pattern of openwork ivy leaves is found on late Roman gold belt ornament in the Ferrell Collection, Spier 2010a, pp. 118 and 312, no. 94 (with further notes).

Key rings of this type are listed by Yeroulanou 1999, pp. 260-1, nos. 338-42 (the last in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, set with cameos). See also the related examples with openwork bands but without the key element, Yeroulanou 1999, pp. 255-7, nos. 302-7 and 310-3. For examples from England, see Johns 1996, pp. 60-62. The ring in Brussels is Yeroulanou 1999, p. 260, no. 338. For the example set with a rectangular nicolo gem, see Christie's, New York, *Ancient Jewelry*, 6 December 2007, lot 472.

A large treasure of jewelry and silver plate from Nikolaevo, Bulgaria, now in the National Archaeological Museum in Sofia, included one ring of this type as well as coins as late as 248; Ruseva-Slokoska 1991, pp. 163 and 210-1, no. 177; and Yeroulanou 1999, p. 255, no. 302. A hoard from Augsburg, now in the Römisches Museum there, contained another ring, along with coins as late as the reign of Trebonianus Gallus (251-253); see Henkel 1913, p. 5, no. 19; and Yeroulanou 1999, p. 257, no. 311.

3.

Gold Ring Set with a Large Rock Crystal

Roman, 3rd century

Height 28.1 mm; exterior diameter of hoop 20.34 mm;
length of rock crystal 20.2 mm; weight 14.1 g; US size 8; UK size P ½

This gold ring is solid cast with a finely modeled shape. The lower part of the hoop is a narrow band ornamented with pairs of volutes. It joins a broader upper section with curving openwork holding a large rock crystal, both sides of which are sharply convex.

Other rings of very similar style dating from the third century are known, most of which have been found in the eastern part of the Roman Empire (notably Syria and Egypt). The degree of ornamentation varies, but all are characterized by their use of openwork around the bezel and the finely carved hoops, several of which display volutes like those on the present example. The rings are especially significant for their unusual selection of fine stones, including rock crystal, sapphire, emerald, garnet, and even the very rarely used diamond (figs. 3.1 and 3.2). The openwork around the bezel was carefully designed to display the shape and color of these gems. No doubt rings of this type were of great value and worn by connoisseurs of fine gems.

Notes:

For other fine rings of similar shape, see especially the examples in the Victoria and Albert Museum, Oman 1930, p. 55, nos. 127 (set with glass imitating sapphire?) and 128 (sapphire and emerald) those in the British Museum, Marshall 1907, pp. 129-31, nos. 787-90 (all with diamonds), 792 (emerald, with volutes on the hoop), 793 (from Egypt), 794 (emerald), and 798 (sapphire); Henkel 1913, p. 164, no. 1812 (diamond); Scarisbrick 2007, pp. 300-1 and 370, figs. 417-20 (two rings with diamonds); De Ridder 1911, pp. 385-6, no. 2049 (sapphire, from Syria) and p. 388, no. 2065 (diamond from Syria); Haedeke 2000, p. 39, nos. 42 (diamond) and 43 (garnet); and Yeroulanou 1999, p. 254, nos. 296-9.

fig. 3.1
No doubt rings of this type, especially significant for their unusual selection of fine stones, were of great value and worn by connoisseurs of fine gems.
Gold ring set with sapphire and emerald
3rd century (London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. 501-1871)

fig. 3.2
With its crisp openwork hoop, this ring is set with a crystal imitating a point-cut diamond.
Gold ring set with a rock crystal
3rd century (Private collection)

4.

Gold Ring Set with Red Jasper Intaglio Engraved with Monogram

Roman, mid-3rd century

Height 19.1 mm; exterior diameter of hoop 19.85 mm; jasper c. 9.4 x 8.4 x 3.5 mm; weight 3.4 g; US size 1 ½; UK size C

The gold ring was solid cast and then hammered into its final shape. The hoop is sharply carinated (ridged) and broadens at the shoulders, joining an oval bezel with collar holding a red jasper intaglio, which is a conical oval with a flat top. It is engraved with a box-monogram composed of the Greek letters, Α, Ε, Κ, Ο, Ρ, Τ, and Υ, which can plausibly be resolved as the name Κρατεροῦ, "(of) Krateros."

Monograms signifying personal names were used periodically in Greek and Roman times. They were popular in the Hellenistic period (late fourth-first centuries B.C.) and found, for example, on coins to denote the magistrate in charge of the mint or the particular issue of coins. Monograms seldom, however, appear on gems or rings. Only for a brief time in the early third century A.D. were gems engraved with the monograms of individuals. The gems are typically jasper or cornelian of the conical variety that rise above the bezel of the ring, as was fashionable at the time, and sometimes cut in an octagonal shape. The letters in the monogram are always Greek, suggesting, along with the evidence of the find sites, that the fashion was popular in the East, primarily in Asia Minor and Syria. A number of these monogram gems have been discovered in their original rings, such as the fine example set with a red jasper in Cologne's Museum für Angewante Kunst (fig. 4.1). All known examples of these rings, including the present one, are of well attested shapes dating from the early to mid-third century. Monograms of this type appear to have fallen out of fashion quickly and did not reappear in quantity until the fifth century, when personal monograms on gems and rings again became very popular (see cat. nos. 21, 22, and 23).

Notes:

This group of gems with monograms, including a brief catalogue, is discussed in Spier 2007a, pp. 193-5, nos. M1-39; see no. M2 for a silver ring of similar shape to the present example. For gold rings of very similar shape (but without a monogram gem), see Henkel 1913, p. 33, nos. 230-1.

fig. 4.1
Monograms of personal names were used periodically in Greek and Roman times, but only for a brief time in the early third century A.D. were gems (jasper or carnelian) engraved with the Greek monograms of individuals.
Gold ring with jasper
early to mid-3rd century (Cologne, Museum für angewandte Kunst, inv. G 1146)

5.

Gold Ring Engraved with the *Chi-Rho* Monogram

Roman, mid-4th century

Exterior diameter of hoop 18.08 mm; bezel c. 7.5 x 7.5; weight 4.7 g; US size 5 ½; UK size K ½

The bezel is square, in the shape of an inverted pyramid, and attached to a broad band that is slightly convex on the exterior and flat inside. The *chi-rho* monogram, composed of the Greek letters Χ and Ρ, is engraved on the bezel and inlaid with niello.

Rings of this shape came into fashion just before the mid-fourth century and remained popular into the early fifth century. They are most often engraved with the name and portrait of the owner. This example, however, displays the *chi-rho* monogram, signifying the name *Christos*, one of the earliest and most popular symbols used by the Christian community. The origin of the symbol is uncertain, but Christians in Syria were wearing rings set with gems engraved with the sign as early as the mid-third century. Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor, was said to have seen the *chi-rho* monogram in a vision before the decisive battle at the Milvian Bridge in Rome in 312, where he defeated Maxentius to become ruler of the Roman Empire. Thereafter Constantine adopted the symbol as his personal emblem and had it placed on the shields and helmets of his soldiers. It was also used to decorate all manner of imperial objects, including silver plate and jewelry.

During the fourth century the symbol was widely used by Christians, including on rings. Bronze rings engraved with the monogram are found in relatively large numbers, nearly always from the western parts of the empire (especially Italy, France, Germany, England, and the Balkans), although

fig. 5.1
Inscribed VIVAS IN DEO ("live in God"), this ring with its *chi-rho* monogram, signifying the name *Christos*, recalls Constantine the Great's vision on the Milvian bridge.
Gold ring with *chi-rho* monogram
4th century (Bonn, Rheinisches Landesmuseum für Archäologie, Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte, inv. 15024)

fig. 5.2
Bearing an inscription swearing allegiance to the emperor Constans (337-350), this ring may have been an imperial gift to a military officer.
Gold ring with *chi-rho* and inscription
c. 337-350 (Ferrell Collection)

examples in gold are rare. The present example is of exceptionally fine workmanship and is notable also for its niello inlay. A similar ring is in a private collection in Munich, and another, with the inscription VIVAS IN DEO, "live in God," is in the Rheinisches Landesmuseum in Bonn (fig. 5.1). A ring in the Ferrell Collection additionally bears an inscription swearing allegiance to the emperor Constans (337-350) (fig. 5.2). Rings of this type were distributed as imperial gifts to military officers, and the present ring may also have served this purpose. The letters of the monogram are of particularly elegant shape, very much in the style of official imperial examples.

Notes:

For other fourth-century rings with the *chi-rho* monogram, Spier 2007a, pp. 183-5, nos. R4-5 (from England), R11 (C.S. collection, Munich), and R15 (from Trechtingshausen, now in the Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Bonn). Another gold ring with square bezel is in the C.S. collection, Munich; see Demandt and Engemann 2007, no. II.1.125. For a ring in the Ferrell Collection engraved with the chi-rho monogram alongside the acclamation of loyalty to Emperor Constans, see Spier 2010a, pp. 62-63, no. 43. For other rings with bezels of this shape, see Finney 1994, p. 183. For the origins and political significance of the *chi-rho* monogram, see Spier 2007b, pp. 20 and 198, no. 28.

6.

Gold Ring with Busts of Married Couple

Roman, late 4th or early 5th century

Exterior diameter of hoop 21.75 mm; bezel c. 7.5 x 7.5 mm; weight 3.7 g; US size 6 ¾; UK size N

The hoop is thin and curved inward so that the exterior is convex and the interior concave. The bezel is an inverted square frustum, narrow at the hoop and widening at the engraved device. Draped busts of a man and a woman facing each other are engraved on it within a dotted border; between them is a pattern of four dots probably denoting a cross, which on other rings is typically placed in this spot.

Rings engraved with the busts of a married couple became very fashionable in the fourth and early fifth centuries throughout the Roman Empire, and the tradition continued into the sixth century in Byzantium (see cat. nos. 14, 16-18). Typically the portraits are generic and not particularly realistic, although often a fashionable hairstyle or jewelry is depicted to show the status of the couple. The Ferrell Collection includes a fine representative of this type (fig. 6.1). Sometimes these rings were personalized with the names of the couple, like the ring in Dumbarton Oaks collection (fig. 6.2).

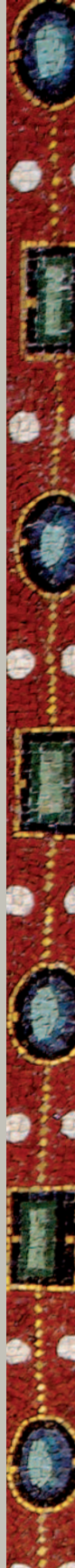
Notes:

Several rings of similar date are particularly finely engraved, including a ring in Dumbarton Oaks engraved with the names of the couple, Aristophanes and Vigilantia, Ross 2005, pp. 48-50, no. 50; another ring in the British Museum, Buckton 1994, p. 47, no. 27; and a ring of c. 400 in the Ferrell Collection, Spier 2010a, pp. 64-65 and 309, no. 46. See also Hindman 2007, pp. 30-33 and 210-11, no. 2. Of somewhat more summary engraving is a gold ring in the British Museum, which names the couple as Speratus and Beneria, Marshall 1907, p. 35, no. 208.

For the shape of the rings, see the previous example (cat. no. 5); and Finney 1994, p. 183; as well as pp. 179-80, fig. 7, a silver ring in Berlin; Wulff and Volbach 1923, p. 25, no. J 6679; another in a private collection, Demandt and Engemann 2007, no. II.1.63; and an unpublished example in the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto.

fig. 6.1
Rings engraved with the busts of a married couple became very fashionable in the fourth and early fifth centuries throughout the Roman Empire and continued in sixth-century Byzantium.
Gold ring with busts of a married couple
5th century (Ferrell Collection)

fig. 6.2
Typically the portraits are generic and not particularly realistic, but sometimes these rings were personalized with the names of the couple.
Gold ring with married couple and inscribed names
late 4th or early 5th century (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, inv. 47.18)



7.

Gold Ring Set with Emeralds

Roman, 4th- 5th century

Exterior diameter of hoop 26.5 mm; weight 6.8 g; US size 7; UK size N ½

The ring is composed of eleven oval gold cells, each containing a highly polished cabochon emerald. The gold elements are soldered together to form a band. The emeralds are closely matched in color and clarity.

Roman emeralds found in jewelry are typically cloudy and with many inclusions, and they were most often used in their natural crystal form rather than polished to a cabochon (convex) shape. The careful selection and working of the emeralds in this ring suggest they were of exceptional value. Several similar rings are known, all of which use gems of exceptional quality, including emeralds, sapphires, and garnets, all carefully cut and polished. Especially close in craftsmanship is a ring in the British Museum, said to be from Athens, set with emeralds, sapphires, and garnets (fig. 7.1). Another very similar example (in an unpublished private collection) alternates sapphires, emeralds, garnets, amethysts, and cornelians. A ring in the Koch Collection, set with emeralds, sapphires, and garnets, is slightly different in manufacture, elongating the space between each cell. Another example of this type, set with all emeralds, was once in the Cook Collection.

There are several other variants of this type of ring. On some examples, the cells are attached directly to a flat gold band rather than to each other. Several of these rings are known, some set with all emeralds, some with all garnets, and some with both stones. A ring in the Haedeke Collection introduces an unusual variety in which small gold pellets separate the ten cells set with emeralds, and an additional cell set with a ruby is attached

above one of the cells at the front of the ring and flanked by two pearls held by gold pegs (fig. 7.2). On what may be an earlier version of the shape, in the Koch Collection, polygonal cells set with pearls and a diamond (a very rare gem in Roman times) are separated by finely modeled elements inscribed with the acclamation, *Sabina vivas* ("Sabina, may you live!"), inlaid with niello.

This broad group of rings is certainly one of the finest of the late Roman period, but the exact date and place of manufacture is difficult to establish. The use of cells to set gems is a fashion that began in the third century

fig. 7.1
Set with emeralds, sapphires, and garnets, and said to be from Athens, this ring shows off a taste for gems of exceptional quality, all carefully cut and polished.
Gold ring set with gems
Roman Empire, 4th century (London, British Museum, inv. GR1917,0501.858)

fig. 7.2
A variant on the multi-celled ring included pellets between the cells and an extra cell above the hoop
Gold ring set with emeralds, pearls, and a ruby
late 5th century (Haedeke Collection, inv. AR84)

and became increasingly popular until the sixth or seventh century. This sort of cell work set with precious stones is found on a variety of jewelry, including earrings and bracelets as well as rings. On stylistic grounds, the Koch diamond ring may be the earliest example, best placed in the late third century, and the present ring set with emeralds likely dates somewhat later, in the fourth or fifth century. Unfortunately there is little evidence to provide conclusive dating, but a bracelet of similar construction, with twenty-six oval cells containing emeralds and garnets joined to form a band, was found in a late fifth-century treasure of very fine jewelry, probably from an imperial workshop, discovered at Tenes in Algeria. The fashion for polychromy, and specifically the use of the precious gems sapphire, emerald, and garnet, strongly suggests a date for the rings in the fourth or fifth century, for at an earlier date these gems were rarely used together.

Notes:

Similar rings include the example from Athens now in the British Museum, Marshall 1907, p. 140, no. 858; and Ward, Cherry, Gere, and Cartlidge 1981, p. 38, no. 66; the ring with emeralds, sapphires, and garnets in the Koch Collection, Chadour 1994, p. 113, no. 391; and the ring once in the Cook Collection, Smith and Hutton 1908, p. 8, no. 21.

For rings with cells attached to a band, see Marshall 1907, no. 140, no. 856 (set with pointed garnets); de Ricci, no. 912 (emeralds); Scarisbrick 2007, pp. 230-1 and 371, no. 313 (emeralds and garnets); and Hindman 2007, pp. 26-29 and 210, no. 1 (all garnets). For the ring in the Haedeke Collection, Haedeke 2000, p. 42, no. 48. The diamond ring in the Koch Collection, Chadour 1994, p. 113, no. 390 (as third century).

For the bracelet from Tenes, Heurgon 1958, pp. 47-48, pl. 5, 2.

8.

Gold Ring with Double Bezel, Set with Emerald and Rock Crystal

Roman, 4th century

Exterior diameter of hoop 18.3 mm; diameter of small, cup-shaped element 9.3 mm; weight 5 g; US size 2 ½; UK size E

The hoop is a thin band, convex on the exterior and flat on the inside. The terminals join a rectangular box-bezel set with a polished, slightly convex emerald, which has been drilled through. Three gold pellets decorate the join with the hoop on either side. An openwork (*opus interrasile*) frame of arches borders the bezel. Attached to the side of the bezel by means of a cylindrical bead is a round, cup-shaped element set with a rock crystal bordered along the rim with thin beaded wire. A single pellet marks the join.

No similar ring is recorded, but the individual elements, notably the box-bezel with openwork frame, are characteristic of jewelry of the late third and fourth centuries. Although cell work with *opus interrasile* is commonly found in the third century, the closest examples to that of the ring are found on bracelets of the fourth century, notably an example in the Römisch-Germanisches Museum in Cologne (fig. 8.1). The use of a small second bezel added to the side of the primary bezel is a fashion that appears to have originated in the fourth century and remained popular, both in Byzantium and the West well into the sixth century in ever more elaborate forms. A particularly fine early example in the Museum für Angewandte Kunst in Cologne has a solid-cast hoop with floral decoration, a diamond-shaped central bezel set with a garnet, and a side bezel set with an emerald. Other examples include a ring with embossed gold work set with emerald and garnet in the Koch Collection. Byzantine rings of c. 500 continued to

fig. 8.1
The box-bezel with *opus interrasile* finds close comparisons with fourth-century large openwork bracelets set with gems.
Gold bracelet with gems
4th century (Cologne, RGM, inv. 1498)

develop the shape, with a stepped rectangular bezel set with a variety of precious gems and a side bezel in the form of an attached cone, usually set with a pearl (cat. nos. 12 and 13). Merovingian examples are also known. The present ring is one of the earliest known examples, and its technique suggests that it derives from a workshop that produced other types of important jewelry, such as the large openwork bracelets set with gems.

Notes:

A fourth-century bracelet ornamented with emeralds with *opus interrasile* frames was discovered in a grave in Cologne (now Römisch-Germanisches Museum, inv. 1498); see Yeroulanou 1999, p. 241, no. 205 and fig. 148. For the ring in the Museum für Angewandte Kunst in Cologne, Chadour and Joppien 1985, p. 104, no. 154 (probably of fifth-century date). For examples in the Koch Collection, Chadour 1994, p. 124, no. 426 (with embossed bezel set with garnet and emerald); and p. 144, no. 484 (set with garnet and pearl). Another early example, set with an emerald and a pierced sapphire, is in the British Museum, Marshall 1907, p. 133, no. 815; and Johns 1996, p. 57, fig. 3.17.

9.

Gold Ring Set with Garnets and Pearls

Roman, late 5th century

Exterior diameter of hoop 24.82 mm; weight 8.7 g; US size 6 ¾; UK size N

The hoop is solid-cast in the form of a floral wreath. The bezel consists of four cells containing two convex, pointed garnets and two pearls that are pierced and held by prongs (one of which is missing). The cells for the pearls have no gold backing.

No particularly close parallel is known for this elegant ring, but several stylistic elements suggest a fifth-century date. The hoop in the form of a wreath is a fashion best attested in the late fourth and fifth centuries and rarely seen earlier. Although of somewhat different shape, a ring in an important late-fifth century hoard of jewelry from Reggio Emilia similarly uses cells to enclose the stones and pearls. The central cell on that ring is rectangular and set with an amethyst, and on either side is a round cell holding a pearl by means of prongs very similar to those on the present ring (fig. 9.1).

Notes:

For the ring from Reggio Emilia, see Degani 1959, p. 61, no. 7, pl. XXIII, 1 and 6.

fig. 9.1
Of a somewhat different shape, a ring in an important late-fifth century hoard of jewelry from Reggio Emilia similarly uses cells to enclose the stones and pearls.
Gold, amethyst and pearl ring
late 5th century (Reggio Emilia, Musei Civici, inv. 41729)

10.

Gold Ring Set with a Sapphire

Byzantine, early 6th century

Height 29.2 mm; exterior diameter of hoop 22.51 mm; bezel 12.2 x 10.2 mm; weight 6.9 g; US size 6 ½; UK size M ½

The ring is made in two parts. Its hoop is a gold band that curves inward, so that the exterior is convex and the interior concave. The shoulders are flattened. The bezel, made separately and pinned to the hoop (the join carefully conceals the pin), is a high, inverted square pyramid (or frustum) on a short plinth. It is set with a polished cabochon sapphire of deep blue color. A groove in the top of the bezel borders the gem.

This and several very similar rings (including the following example, cat. no. 11, and another in the Schmuckmuseum, Pforzheim) appear to be products of a single workshop, perhaps even the same goldsmith (fig. 10.1). The workmanship is highly accomplished and marked by the precision of the modeling, with sharply geometric bezels and gently curving hoops, as well as the skillful hidden join between the bezel and hoop, a technique rarely seen elsewhere. The gems, too, were carefully selected and polished. The present example is a large sapphire of a particularly fine color. Other rings are set with emeralds, amethysts, and garnets. Also closely related to these rings and likely from the same workshop are examples of identical shape but with an additional conical element set with another gem or pearl added to the side of the bezel (see cat. nos. 12 and 13).

The date of the rings is difficult to determine, since no example has been found in a hoard with datable material, but stylistic features suggest the late fifth century or beginning of the sixth century. The heavy, rectangular

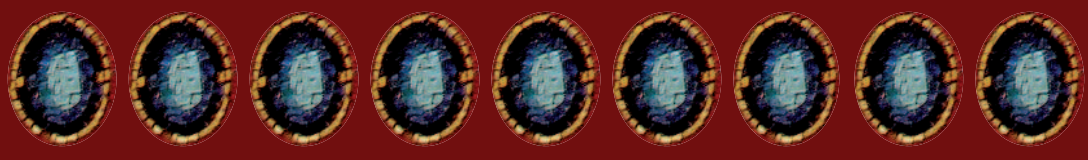
fig. 10.1
This and several very similar rings appear to be products of a single workshop, and perhaps even the same goldsmith, working around 500 A.D. in Constantinople.
Gold ring with amethyst
6th century (Germany, Schmuckmuseum Pforzheim im Reuchlinhaus)

fig. 10.2
A ring in the superb late-fifth century hoard of jewelry found in Reggio Emilia has a rectangular bezel set with an emerald and a hoop with *repoussé* floral decoration.
Gold and emerald ring
late 5th century (Reggio Emilia, Musei Civici, inv. 41725)

bezel appears to have developed from the cell-like box bezels popular in the later fourth and fifth centuries. A ring in the superb hoard of jewelry of the late fifth century found in Reggio Emilia has a rectangular bezel set with an emerald and a hoop with *repoussé* floral decoration (fig. 10.2). The carefully shaped sapphires, emeralds, and garnets are gems most typical of the fourth and fifth centuries as well. The closely related rings with double-bezels have been found in sixth-century contexts in the West and suggest an approximate date. Furthermore, the inverted pyramidal bezel continued to be used on Byzantine rings in the sixth and seventh centuries, although it was usually not so precisely crafted. In view of the related material, the present workshop most likely flourished around the year 500 and was located in Constantinople.

Notes:

For the ring in the Reggio Emilia hoard, see Degani 1959, p. 60, no. 3, pl. 21, 1 and 6. Another ring from the same workshop as the present example, set with an amethyst, is in the Schmuckmuseum, Pforzheim, Battke 1953, p. 41, no. 50, pl. 9. See also, Chadour and Joppien, p. 103, no. 152, an example in gilt-bronze, missing the stone; and Ross 2005, p. 62, no. 73, a similar gold ring but with a band with beaded wire, missing the stone, said to be from Constantinople. Two rings, less fine and without the plinth (missing stones), were included in the seventh-century Kratigos (Mytilene) treasure, now in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, Touratsoglou and Chalkia 2008, pp. 104-5.



11.

Gold Ring Set with Glass Imitating Emerald

Byzantine, early 6th century

Height 27.7 mm; exterior diameter of hoop 21.8 mm; bezel 11.8 x 9.5 mm; weight 6.9 g; US size 6 ½; UK size M ½

The shape is nearly identical to that of the previous ring (cat. no. 10), although the plinth is slightly higher and the bezel not so tapering. The convex green glass set in the bezel imitates a cabochon emerald. It is not uncommon to find glass imitations of gemstones set in Roman and Byzantine jewelry, even fine gold rings such as this. No doubt these rings would have been less expensive than rings set with gems, although still very valuable in view of the quantity of gold. The relative values of gems in the late Roman and Byzantine period are largely unknown, although there was clearly an increased interest in rare stones, such as sapphire, emerald, and garnet, as well as pearls, in late Roman and Byzantine times.

Notes:
See the previous entry, cat. no. 10.

fig. 11.1
Rings with the bezel in the shape of an inverted pyramid appear to originate in Byzantium.
Gold ring
c. 6th century (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, inv. 5312.83)

12.

Gold Ring with Double-Bezel Set with Garnet and Pearl

Byzantine, early 6th century

Height 30.0 mm; exterior diameter 21.2 mm; bezel 12.0 x 9. 0 mm (without the side piece); garnet c. 9.2 x 6.5 mm; weight 7.8 g; US size 7 ¼; UK size O

The shape is very similar to that of the previous two examples (cat. nos. 10 and 11) but adds a separately made conical element set with a pearl to the side of the bezel. The thin band-like hoop is curved inward and the shoulders flattened to a triangular shape at the join with the bezel. The rectangular bezel, an inverted pyramid, with straighter sides than the previous two examples, is joined to a double plinth with grooved decoration. It is set with a flat, rectangular garnet held in a plain gold collar. Attached to the side of the bezel is a gold conical element in the shape of a floral calyx with six pointed tips (each with a small piercing). The calyx holds a circular collar of twisted wire, within which is a pierced pearl clasped by two gold prongs. An S-shaped filigree element of flat wire decorates each side.

This ring and the following example of the same shape are also closely related to the previous two rings and were likely produced in the same workshop in Constantinople around the year 500. A third example, set with an amethyst and a pearl, is in a private collection (fig. 12.1). The use of an additional gold element set with a gem or pearl to form a double-bezel was a fashion already encountered in the fourth and fifth centuries (see cat. no. 8), but the distinctive conical form of the element and its S-shaped filigree decoration are characteristic of this early Byzantine workshop. Several other Byzantine rings are related in shape and decoration but may derive from a different workshop. Three nearly identical rings have a broad band ornamented with granulation in a triangular pattern and are set with garnets; the conical side element is covered with a hinged gold lid with an

fig. 12.1
One of a group of rings from an early Byzantine workshop, this example includes the distinctive conical form of the additional gold element and its S-shaped filigree decoration.
Gold ring set with amethyst and pearl
early 6th century (Private collection)

fig. 12.2
Imitating these Byzantine works and of exceptionally fine quality is a Western example discovered in a Merovingian royal tomb beneath Cologne Cathedral.
Gold ring set with a gemstone
7th century (Cologne Cathedral Treasury, inv. 537)

openwork cross, which may have covered a small relic. Another ring has a flat octagonal hoop and a bezel set with an engraved rock crystal and a small garnet in the conical element. All these examples are of excellent quality and are likely products of an important workshop in Constantinople that was active in the early sixth century.

These Byzantine works inspired Western imitations, which are also of exceptionally fine quality. Indeed, one example discovered in a Merovingian tomb beneath Cologne Cathedral indicates that such rings were suitable for a royal patron (fig. 12.2).

Notes:

A similar ring with amethyst and pearl formerly in the Content Collection and now in a private collection, Christie's, New York, Ancient Jewelry, 7 December 2006, lot 309; Hadjadj 2008, pp. 346-7, no. 473, with further notes.

For the group of similar rings with band hoop and granulation, see Kötzsche-Breitenbruch 1991; Amandry 1963, p. 289, no. 230bis, pl. 44 (Athens, Stathatos Collection); and another in a private collection. See also the example from Hungary, Garam 2001, pp. 84 and 209, pl. 51, 5, and color pl. 23, 8. For related rings with architectural bezels, see Spier 2010b, pp. 17-18, pls. 17-18.

The Western versions of this ring type are discussed by Hadjadj 2008, pp. 82-83, Type 10a and 10d; p. 187, no. 173 (a very ornate version from Ville-en-Tardenois, Marne); p. 312-3, no. 403 (from Lede, Belgium); and p. 326, no. 426 (from Ciply, Belgium); Hadjadj does not, however, address the probable Byzantine origin of the group. For other Western examples, see the example in the Victoria and Albert Museum, Oman 1930, 65, no. 239; and another formerly in the Guilhou Collection, de Ricci 1912, no. 913. For the ring from the tomb in Cologne Cathedral, now in the Treasury there, see Werner 1964.

13.

Gold Ring with Double-Bezel Set with Emerald and Pearl

Byzantine, early 6th century

Height 31.8 mm; exterior diameter of hoop 23.0 mm; bezel 13.6 x 11.0 mm; weight 9.8 g; US size 7; UK size O

The ring is of nearly identical shape and size to the previous example (cat. no. 12) and could well have been made by the same goldsmith. A small difference is that the circular wire that holds the pearl is beaded rather than twisted. The bezel is set with a highly polished, cabochon emerald of good clarity, which is not held in a collar like the garnet in the previous ring. The choice of an emerald of such high quality is typical of rings from this workshop.

Notes:

For similar rings, see the notes for cat. no. 12.

14.

The Parure of an Aristocratic Byzantine Woman

Byzantine, early 6th century

Consisting of a gold necklace with pendant cross, two pairs of pearl earrings, and two finger rings, this set of jewelry is of exceptional interest for its fine quality, stylistic unity, and relatively early date. The gold work of both the necklace and the earrings is of great delicacy and clearly the work of a single goldsmith. It is unusual in hoards of Byzantine jewelry to find such carefully matched pieces. The gold rings are distinctive as well. One has a gold bezel engraved with the busts of a married couple, an early version of the standard Byzantine marriage ring. The second ring, set with an imported Sasanian gem, is of a shape datable to the years around 500

14a.

Gold Necklace with Pendant Cross

Cross height 7 cm; gold chain approx. 82 cm; total weight 60 g

The chain is composed of links in the form of pairs of broad, ribbed bands soldered together at a right angle. At the two ends of the chain, a thicker gold loop is soldered to a ribbed band. The clasp is a circular open-work element of eight gold filigree cup-spirals at the end of eight radiating

spokes. Each spoke terminates in a gold pellet, and another pellet decorates the center. Soldered to one end of the clasp is a thick gold loop, which attaches to one end of the chain. At the other end of the clasp is a hinge made of two gold loops and a gold peg, which allows the attached gold hook to swivel. The peg is ornamented with two pierced pearls

.

Suspended from the chain is a hollow gold cross of thick, box-like construction. The arms have forked terminals. The front of the cross is decorated with a central green glass cabochon enclosed in a gold collar outlined with beaded wire; three small gold pellets arranged in a triangle are placed above. At the end of each arm is a cluster of twenty-one small gold pellets arranged as a triangle. Gold loops are attached to the bottom and the two horizontal arms, from which hang short gold wires each with a

loop at one end strung with a pearl and gold spacer beads in the form of a hollow globe between two rings of beaded wire. The cross has a finely modeled suspension hoop with triple ribbing bordered with two circles of beaded wire. The reverse side of the cross is decorated with engraved, hatched lines in a leaf pattern.

The chain of ribbed loops placed at right angles is one of several popular varieties introduced in the early Byzantine period. The clasp, with its use of filigree cup-spirals, is a type that is found in Roman examples as early as the third century but was still very popular in Byzantine times as late as the seventh century. For a similar chain and clasp, see the example in the Ferrell Collection (fig. 14a.1). The present example is notable for its exceptional decoration of applied gold pellets and the pearls attached to the hinge.

fig. 14a.1
The chain of ribbed loops placed at right angles and the clasp with its use of filigree cup-spirals are among several popular varieties introduced in the early Byzantine period.
Gold chain with openwork clasp
6th-7th century (Ferrell Collection)

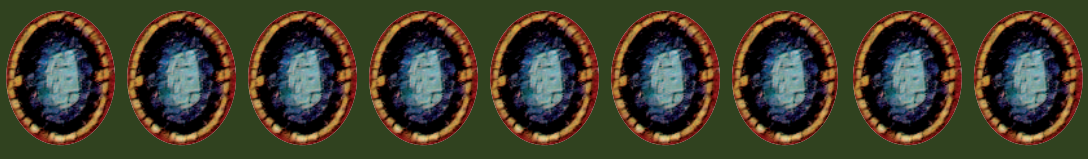
fig. 14a.2
Pectoral crosses became very fashionable as items of women's jewelry by the late fifth century, such as this similar but smaller cross on a gold chain with glass inlay, gold pellets, and an engraved back.
Gold pectoral cross and chain
5th century (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, inv. 50.20)

The cross too is of unusually fine workmanship, with its elegant proportions, engraved and applied decoration, and pendant pearls. Pectoral crosses became very fashionable as items of women's jewelry by the late fifth century and took various forms, some with embossed decoration (sometimes figural), others engraved or with applied filigree, granulation, or inset gems. The present example is the largest known of its type, with other examples generally much smaller, often only around 2 cm. A small (27 mm) but very similar cross on a gold chain in Dumbarton Oaks is decorated with a central glass inlay, clusters of gold pellets, braided gold wire filigree, and similarly engraved decoration on the back (fig. 14a.2). Another cross (only 18.5 mm in length) on a gold chain, in the Stathatos Collection in Athens, is also of similar construction, set with a central emerald and with triangular clusters of pellets decorating the arms.

Notes:

For chains and clasps of this type, see Spier 2010a, pp. 210-1, no. 154 (also with a pendant cross); and pp. 227-8, no. 162 (which has a similar clasp); and see the earrings with chains of this type in the Stathatos Collection in Athens, Amandry 1963, p. 285, no. 204, pl. 43; and in Berlin, Greifenhagen 1975, p. 68, pl. 51, 8 (from Tamassos, Cyprus).

For the pendant cross in Dumbarton Oaks, Ross 2005, p. 15, no. 10. For the cross in the Stathatos Collection in Athens, Amandry 1963, p. 289, no. 231, pl. 44. Small, hollow crosses of similar type are also found suspended from chains on earrings, for which see Spier 2010a, p. 242, no.172 (the crosses also have forked terminals). Small crosses are suspended from a very fine gold fibula in the late fifth-century treasure from Tenes in Algeria, Heurgon 1958, pp. 63-73, pl. 1. Another pendant cross in Dumbarton Oaks, from a treasure of jewelry said to be from Syria, is of similar shape, with forked terminals, a central glass inlay, enamel decoration, and an inscription in filigree, Ross 2005, p. 136, no 179H. For a discussion of Byzantine pendant crosses in general, see Brown 1984, pp. 9-13, and cat. no. 15.



14b-c.

Two Pairs of Earrings with Pearls Suspended from Gold Chains

Length 7 cm; weight 9.4 to 11.7 g each

There are two closely matched pairs of earrings. Each has a solid cast cylindrical hoop that is open, with one end plain and the other ornamented with a bulbous terminal. Soldered to the bottom of each hoop are three loops from which short chains are suspended. The links are pairs of broad, ribbed bands joined at a right angle, just as on the accompanying necklace. The last link of each chain is joined to a gold hoop, which in turn joins a loop on a short gold wire strung with gold spacer beads in the form of a globe bordered with circles of beaded wire and a pierced pearl.

The second pair of earrings is identical to the first except for the addition of peg alongside the three loops on the hoop on which a pierced pearl is pinned.

Earrings of this type—with circular hoop and either three or four pendant chains of various types set with pearls, glass, or gold beads—have been found in a number of hoards of jewelry dating from the sixth and seventh centuries, primarily from the eastern Mediterranean, including western Asia Minor, the Greek islands, Crete, Cyprus, Syria, and Egypt. Similar hoop earrings with suspended chains (usually of loop-in-loop type) with recorded provenance include those in the Stathatos Collection in Athens (fig. 14b-c.1). The relatively large number of extant examples suggests they were a very popular type for nearly two centuries. Earrings of this type also appear in two treasures of exceptional quality and importance: the Second Cyprus Treasure, which also contained gold medallions and silver plate of imperial

fig. 14b-c.1
Earrings of this type have been found in a number of hoards of jewelry dating from the sixth and seventh centuries, primarily from the eastern Mediterranean and in two treasures of exceptional quality and importance.
Byzantine parure from Chios
6th-7th century (Athens, National Archaeological Museum, Stathatos Collection, inv. St 518 a)

manufacture of the mid-seventh century, and the late sixth-century Assiut Treasure from Egypt, which may have been the property of a member of the imperial family.

Notes:

For earrings with this specific type of chain, see the examples in the Stathatos Collection in Athens, Amandry 1963, p. 285, no. 204, pl. 42; and in Berlin, Greifenhagen 1975, p. 68, pl. 51, 8 (from Tamassos, Cyprus).

Closely related varieties include *Stathatos* 1957, pp. 13-14, pl. 1, 1 (an unusual pair joined by a gold chain, found with two gold rings on Chios); Caramessini-Oeconomides and Drossoyianni 1989, pp. 162-3, pl. 16 (from Samos with a hoard of coins of the early seventh century); an unpublished pair in the British Museum from Kalymna (inv. 1856,0826.722-723); Greifenhagen 1975, p. 68, pl. 51, 9 (from Priene, now in Berlin); Baldini Lippolis 1999, p. 95, no. 4.e.1 (from Kutahya, now in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum); and p. 96, 4.e.10 (from Palmyra). See also the pair without provenance in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Gonosová and Kondoleon 1994, pp. 90-91, no. 26. For the examples from the Second Cyprus Treasure in the Cyprus Museum in Nicosia, see Pierides 1971, p. 55, pl. 38, 4-5. For the pair from the Assiut Treasure, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, see Dennison 1918, p. 151, nos. 16-17, pl. 41; and fig. 44, for another example in Cairo.

For the significance of the Second Cyprus Treasure and the Assiut Treasure from Egypt, see Spier 2010a, p. 12 (with further literature).

14d.

Gold Ring with Engraved Busts of a Married Couple

Exterior diameter of hoop 19.86 mm; weight 5 g; US size 6 ½; UK size M ½

The ring is of unconventional shape, with a hollow, cup-shaped bezel joining a separately made hoop with a flat interior and a convex exterior inlaid all around with braided wire filigree. The bezel is hexagonal with curving sides decorated on the top with six gold pellets. From the center rises a tall collar enclosing a thin gold disc engraved with the busts of a man on the left, a fibula on his shoulder, and woman on the right, her hair worn up in a fashion common in the fifth century; between them is a long cross.

The ring continues the tradition of wearing jewelry commemorating marriage by depicting the married couple, a fashion already current in the late fourth century (see cat. no. 6) and one that would continue in Byzantium until the late seventh century (see cat. nos. 16-18). The prominence of the cross emphasizes the piety of the couple, as well as Christ's protection. Several very similar gold discs detached from their ring survive, such as the one in Dumbarton Oaks (fig. 14d.1), but this is the only complete ring recorded. Although the shape of the ring has no exact parallel, oval, stepped bezels were introduced in the mid-fifth century and remained popular until the beginning of the sixth century. An early sixth-century Byzantine ring of more conventional type (in the University of Indiana Museum), with a cylindrical hoop, has a similarly engraved circular bezel inscribed in Greek with the name of the wearer, Maria (fig. 14d.2).

Notes:

For other gold discs of similar style, see Spier 2007a, p. 24, nos. 64-66 (two examples in Dumbarton Oaks and the third in a private collection). For rings with stepped bezels see cat. no. 24 and the notes there. For the ring of Maria, in the University of Indiana Museum, see Kalavrezou 2003, pp. 223-4, no. 125 (Jennifer Ledig Heuser), which is dated too early there.

fig. 14d.1
Several very similar gold discs detached from their rings survive, depicting the married couple framing a cross.
Gold disc from marriage ring
5th century (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, inv. 53.12.61)

fig. 14d.2
An early sixth-century Byzantine ring of more conventional type has a similarly engraved circular bezel inscribed in Greek with the name of the wearer, Maria.
Gold marriage ring
late 5th-early 6th century (Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Art Museum, inv. 76.86.19)

14e.

Gold Ring with Calyx Bezel Set with a Sasanian Intaglio

Exterior diameter of hoop 22.71 mm; weight 7.7 g; US size 7 ½; UK size O ½

This form of ring was introduced in the late fifth century by a workshop in Constantinople, probably with ties to the imperial court. The bezel is very distinctive, a hollow, ribbed calyx, the top of each rib decorated with a gold pellet, set with gem or intaglio enclosed in a gold collar. The bezel is attached to hoops of various types—solid cylinders octagonal hoops, or, as in this case, a band that curves inward.

The gem set in this ring was imported from Sasanian Persia. The device is a standing, winged sphinx with the head of a bearded, crowned king, an image frequently seen on Sasanian gems.

Rings of this type have been discovered in datable hoards, most notably the two examples in the late fifth-century treasure of coins and jewelry of the finest quality, including an imperial gold fibula, from Reggio Emilia in Italy that probably belonged to a high Gothic official (fig. 14e.1-2). Another ring of this type was found in a treasure of similar date at Istria in Romania, and other examples have come from Asia Minor and as far east as Georgia. Although some of the rings were set with engraved garnets from a contemporary Byzantine workshop, others used old stones, including an antique Roman intaglio of first-century date and an unengraved nicolo, also probably antique at the time of it reuse. The use of a contemporary Sasanian gem is not surprising, for they were produced in large numbers at a time when Byzantine engraved gems were rare. A good number of Sasanian gems found their way to Byzantine goldsmiths, who set them in rings.

figs. 14e.1-2
Two examples of rings of this type come from the late fifth-century treasure of coins and jewelry, from Reggio Emilia in Italy that probably belonged to a high Gothic official.

Two gold rings set with a nicolo and a garnet

late 5th century (Reggio Emilia, Musei Civici, inv. 41730, inv. 41737)

Notes:

For other rings of this type, see Spier 2007a, pp. 87 and 91, nos. 483-6 (including the examples from Istria and Georgia); and Spier 2010b, p. 13, pl. 1a-b (a ring set with a first-century Roman intaglio). For the rings from the Reggio Emilia treasure, see Degani 1959, p. 61, nos. 5-6, pl. 22, 2-5 (one set with nicolo, the other garnet).

For Sasanian gems with the device of the king-sphinx, see Gyselen 1993, pp. 147-9, nos. 40.B1-20; and Bivar 1969, pp. 81-83, nos. EH 1-8 and EHJ 1-10.

For Sasanian gems set in Byzantine and Anglo-Saxon jewelry, see Spier 2007a, p. 145, no. 15.

15.

Gold Pectoral Cross on Chain

Byzantine, 6th-7th century

Height of cross (with loop) 62.8 mm; length of chain (with clasp) 430 mm; diameter of circular element on clasp 18.4 mm; total weight 35.5 g

The chain is of fine loop-in-loop construction, terminating in ribbed caps with loops. A gold hook is attached to one loop; the other loop joins a ring attached to a gold element in the shape of a circular boss ornamented with three gold pellets in the center and a border of twisted wire in a braided pattern between two strands of beaded wire.

The cross is hollow, the top embossed in high relief and the back flat. At the top is a hinged loop for suspension. In the center of the cross is the frontally facing, bearded Christ as crucified, his arms outstretched and head inclined to the side. He wears a long tunic, detailed with engraved and punched decoration. Above his head is a *tabula ansata* inscribed, IC XC, signifying Ιησούς Χριστός, *Jesus Christ*. The arms of the cross splay and terminate in circular medallions each bordered with two pellets. Each medallion contains figures in high relief. On the left arm is a bust of the Virgin facing the crucified Christ, her hands raised. In the medallion on the right arm is John, also facing inward with his arms raised. The medallion at the foot of the cross contains two soldiers casting lots. The upper medallion contains two frontally facing busts of beardless men, whose identities are uncertain.

The fashion among the wealthy and pious women of Byzantium for wearing large gold crosses on chains around the neck encouraged a variety of types. Some crosses were richly decorated with

fig. 15.1
The fashion among the wealthy and pious women of Byzantium for wearing large gold crosses on chains around the neck encouraged a variety of types.
Gold pectoral cross on a chain
(Athens, Kanellopoulos Museum, inv. Π *234)*

fig. 15.2
Only three crosses with finely embossed figural decoration of very similar manufacture and probably from the same workshop are known.
Gold pectoral cross
6th-7th century (London, British Museum, inv.1949, 1203.1)

gems, filigree, or granulation (as cat. no. 14a), others were engraved or embossed. Among the more remarkable examples were crosses with embossed figural decoration, this example being among the finest. The crucified Christ is depicted in the center, while busts of the Virgin, John, or other saints or angels decorate the arms. Three other crosses of very similar manufacture, probably from the same workshop, are known (in the Kanellopoulos Museum in Athens, the British Museum, and in a private collection) (see figs. 15.1 and 15.2).

Notes:

For the very similar cross on a chain in the Kanellopoulos Museum in Athens (inv. 234), see Kypriaou 1997, p. 193, no. 217 (Nikoletta Saraga). For the cross in the British Museum (inv. 1949,1203.1), Tonnochy 1950. For the third example, in a private collection, Price 2008, p. 94 (Barbara Deppert-Lippitz). A similar cross with busts in relief but without Christ in the center is in the Cyprus Museum in Nicosia, Pierides 1971, p. 56, pl. 39, 1. Later examples with engraved rather than embossed decoration include an example in the Stathatos collection in Athens, Stathatos 1957, pl. 59, no. 44 (Manolis Chatzidakis); and in the British Museum, Dalton 1901, p. 47, no. 286 (from Alexandria). See also the group of very fine crosses with the embossed image of the resurrected Christ with similar busts in the terminals of the arms, and the openwork crosses, also with relief busts in the arms, Spier 2010a, pp. 218-9, no. 158 (openwork cross with relief busts), and pp. 220-1, no. 159 (resurrected Christ).

16.

Gold Marriage Ring

Byzantine, 6th-7th century

Exterior diameter of hoop 21.6 mm; bezel 9.7 x 9.1 mm; weight 10 g; US size 7 ¼; UK size O

The nearly square bezel was crafted separately and attached to a thick band with a flat interior and slightly convex exterior. Engraved on the bezel are the frontally facing busts of a married couple. The man on the left wears a fibula on his shoulder, while the woman on the right has ornamental pendants (*pendilia*) hanging from her temples, both of which were marks of high status. Between the couple is a star with eight rays. Below is engraved the word OMONOIA (ὁμόνοια), "concord," inlaid with niello. The engraving on the bezel is finely detailed, with carefully cut facial features, rows of drilled pellets in the hair, and well-modeled drapery.

Rings commemorating marriage were popular in late Roman times, especially in the fourth and fifth centuries. They typically depicted the busts of the married couple (see cat. no. 6). This tradition continued in Byzantium in the sixth and seventh centuries, and indeed rings of this type are probably the single most popular variety of ring worn by women. How the rings were used is uncertain, however. Although betrothal rings (the *anulus pronobus*) presented by the groom to the bride are cited in literary accounts, there is no evidence to suggest that the giving or exchange of rings was part of the marriage ceremony. Most surviving Byzantine rings appear to commemorate the marriage after the fact.

Although the Byzantine rings continued the Roman tradition, the imagery and inscriptions were revised to make them suitably Christian. On some rings (see cat. nos. 17 and 18) Christ appears between the married couple,


OMONOIA

fig. 16.1
A gold marriage belt depicts the bride and groom with Christ standing between them and the formula ΕΧ ΘΕΟΥ ΟΜΟΝΟΙΑ ΧΑΡΙC ΥΓΙΑ ("concord, grace, and health [come] from God").
Gold marriage belt
late 6th-7th century (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, inv. 37.33)

fig. 16.2
Square-bezel marriage rings are somewhat unconventional, but the iconography of the couple begun in Roman times continued in Byzantium, their imagery and inscriptions making them suitably Christian.
Square bezel gold marriage ring
7th century (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, inv. 55.14.269)

taking the place of the goddess Concordia who typically appeared in Roman depictions of marriage. The Greek word ὁμόνοια, the equivalent of the Latin concordia, denoting the harmony of the ideal marriage, often is engraved on the rings, but it is part of a longer formula, ΕΧ ΘΕΟΥ ΟΜΟΝΟΙΑ ΧΑΡΙϹ ΥΓΙΑ, specifying that "concord, grace, and health (come) from God." The phrase in full appears on the embossed medallions on a fine gold marriage belt, now in Dumbarton Oaks, that similarly depicts the bride and groom with Christ standing between them (fig. 16.1).

The present ring is exceptional for its fine engraving and for its somewhat unconventional shape, with square bezel and band hoop (for another square bezel example see fig. 16.2). The star of eight rays is also unusual and of uncertain significance, although it may have been a form of a Christian monogram, combining a cross and the letter X. These stylistic features suggest a relatively early date, probably in the early sixth century.

Notes:

There is no comprehensive study of the numerous specimens of marriage rings, but see Vikan 1990, p. 157, n. 97, for a partial list. Rings with square bezels and busts include the particularly fine example, Price 2008, p. 89, and another in the Ferrell Collection, Spier 2010a, p. 248, no. 180. Other notable examples of the two busts variety, most with circular bezel and inscriptions, include several in Dumbarton Oaks, Ross 2005, p. 7, no. 4E (found in a hoard with other jewelry), and pp. 57-58, nos. 67-68; the Archaeological Museum in Siracusa, Orsi 1942, p. 158, fig. 73 (from Sicily); the British Museum, Dalton 1901, p. 22, no. 133; the Kanellopoulos Museum in Athens, Spieser 1972, pp. 125-6, no. 9, figs. 18-19, and pp. 128-9, no. 11, figs. 22-23 (with the busts in relief and the inscription, ΧΑΡΙϹ, "grace"); Kalavrezou 2003, pp. 226-7, no. 128; and the Zucker Collection, Vikan 1987, pp. 33-39, fig. 9 (with the busts in relief and the inscription, ΧΑΡΙϹ, "grace").

Similar rings show Christ standing between the bride and groom, with examples in Dumbarton Oaks, Ross 2005, pp. 55-57, nos. 64-66; the State Hermitage in Saint Petersburg, Bank 1985, p. 288, pl. 103 (from the treasure of jewelry found at Mersin); Stiegemann 2001, p. 330, no. IV.67 (J. Spier); the Kanellopoulos Museum in Athens, Spieser 1972, pp. 126-8, no. 10, figs. 20-21; de Ricci 1912, pp. 99 and 102, nos. 845, 848, and 861, pl. 13; Boardman and Scarisbrick 1977, p. 51, no. 115; the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Gonosová and Kondoleon 1994, pp. 48-49, no. 8; Kalavrezou 2003, pp. 226-7, no. 129; Spier 2010a, p. 249, no. 181; and the Zucker Collection, Vikan 1987, pp. 33-39, figs. 10-11 (the second inscribed on the band with the names of the married couple).

There are also more ornate versions of the ring with the device inlaid with niello and inscriptions; see those in Dumbarton Oaks, Ross 2005, pp. 58-59, no. 69 (with the hoop engraved with scenes from the life of Christ, and with further literature) and pp. 176-9, no. 186; the British Museum, Dalton 1901, pp. 21-22, nos. 129-32; the Musée du Louvre and the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, Byzance 1992, pp. 131-2, nos. 86-87; the State Hermitage in Saint Petersburg, Bank 1985, p. 287, pls. 100-1; Stolz 2010, p. 33, pl. 1 (from Egypt); and Hindman 2007, pp. 34-37 and 211-12, no. 3.

For the marriage belt in Dumbarton Oaks, see Ross 2005, pp. 37-39, no. 38. On the imagery of belts, rings, and related objects, see Kantorowicz 1960; Vikan 1990; Denis 1995/96; Wamser and Zahlhaas 1998, pp. 207-11, no. 308 (a medallion set in a pendant mount); Walker 2001; Walker 2003; and Walker 2005. For the use of rings in the earlier Roman tradition, see Hersch 2010, pp. 41-43.

17.

Gold Marriage Ring

Byzantine, 6th-7th century

Exterior diameter of hoop 21.84 mm; diameter of bezel 11.8 mm; weight 8.5 g; US size 6; UK size L ½

The ring has a circular bezel made separately and attached to a solid cylindrical hoop. Engraved on the bezel are the frontally facing busts of the married couple, the man on the left with a fibula on his shoulder, and the woman on the right. Between them is a cross inlaid with niello and surmounted by a bust of Christ with cross-nimbus. Below is engraved ΟΜΟΝΟΙΑ, and above, ΘΕΟΥ, "concord from God," both words inlaid with niello.

The ring is a very fine example of the marriage ring most popular in early Byzantine times. The presence of Christ and the cross between the bride and groom emphasizes the piety of the couple and the protection of Christ. A ring of similar style was present in hoard of jewelry (now in Dumbarton Oaks), which contained in addition a necklace, a pendant cross, a bracelet, earrings, and a belt buckle, all of fine work and likely originating in Constantinople (fig. 17.1).

Notes:

For similar rings, see the previous, cat. no. 16. For the jewelry treasure in Dumbarton Oaks, see Ross 2005, pp. 7-8, no. 4.

fig. 17.1
The presence of Christ and the cross between bride and groom emphasizes the piety of the couple and the protection of Christ on a ring of a similar style present in a hoard of fine jewelry likely originating in Constantinople.
Gold marriage ring
7th century (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, inv. 59.60)

18.

Gold Marriage Ring

Byzantine, 6th-7th century

Exterior diameter of hoop 21.5 mm; diameter of bezel 11 mm; weight 13.4 g; US size 8 ½; UK size Q ½

The hoop is a solid cylinder that joins a separately made, circular bezel, on which is engraved the frontally facing busts of a married couple, the man on the left and the woman on the right. Christ, nimbate, stands between them, his arms outstretched, holding marriage crowns (wreaths). Engraved below is the word OMONOIA, "concord."

Like the previous ring (cat. no. 17), the present example belongs to a very popular variety of marriage ring. On this ring, Christ himself accompanies the couple, bestowing his blessing in the form of marriage crowns, which he holds over their heads, as in the example from Dumbarton Oaks (fig. 18.1).

Notes:

For similar rings, see the notes for cat. no. 16, as well as the fine marriage belt cited there. For the Dumbarton Oaks ring see Ross 2005, p. 57, no. 67.

fig. 18.1
Christ bestows his blessing on the couple as he holds marriage crowns over their heads, an allusion to the practice during the actual marriage ceremony.
Inscribed gold marriage ring
early 7th century (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, inv. 53.12.4)

19.

Gold Ring Engraved with the Seated Virgin and Child

Byzantine, 6th-7th century

Exterior diameter of hoop 22.73 mm; diameter of bezel 12.2 mm; weight 8.82 g; US size 8; UK size P ½

The bezel is joined to a solid, cylindrical hoop. The engraved image depicts the Virgin seated frontally on a broad, lyre-backed throne, holding a disc containing the bust of the Christ-Child. The engraving is particularly fine, with carefully detailed facial features and drapery.

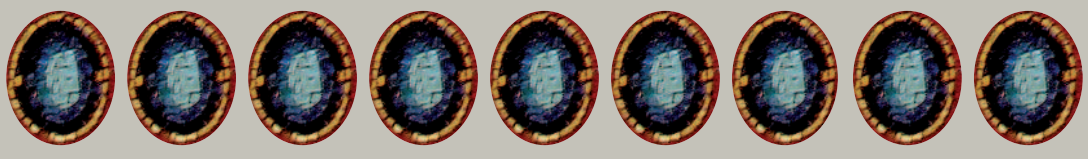
Byzantine rings often were engraved with religious images and served as personal, miniature icons. Typical representations included Christ, archangels, saints, and, above all, the Virgin and Child. The composition showing the enthroned Virgin derives from monumental church decoration but was popular on many small objects in the early Byzantine period as well. A more summary engraving of the seated Virgin is found on a ring in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (fig. 19.1).

Notes:

For the ring in the Metropolitan Museum in New York see Yeroulanou 1999, p. 260, no. 333 (with fine openwork hoop). Two others were recently on the art market: Christie's, New York, *Ancient Jewelry*, 11 December 2003, lot 503 (very similar to the present example); and Pierre Bergé, Paris, *Archéologie*, 15 December 2009, lot 314.

For the significance of representation of the Virgin in domestic art, including rings and other types of jewelry, see Maguire 2005.

fig. 19.1
Byzantine rings, often engraved with religious images derived from monumental church decoration, served as personal, miniature icons.
Gold ring with seated Virgin
7th century (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 17.190.1654)



20.

Gold Ring Engraved with the Virgin Standing, Holding the Christ-Child (the Virgin Hodegetria)

Byzantine, 6th-7th century

Exterior diameter of hoop 22.4 mm; diameter of bezel 11.9 mm; weight 7.61 g; US size 7 ¾; UK size P

The engraved circular bezel is attached to a solid, cylindrical hoop. On the bezel, the nimbate Virgin stands facing frontally, holding the Christ-Child on her arm. In the field to the right is a cross.

This image of the standing Virgin enjoyed remarkable popularity throughout the Byzantine period. It is likely that the composition was first used for icons, and according to popular tradition, the Evangelist Luke painted the original image. A greatly revered icon of this type was kept in the Hodegon monastery in Constantinople, thus giving the name to the image as the "Virgin Hodegetria," although its presence in the monastery is not recorded before the eleventh century. The painting was said to have miraculous powers and was carried onto the walls of Constantinople to protect the city in times of attack. The importance of the image, although not mentioned by early historical sources, is demonstrated by its appearance on the seals of the Byzantine emperors from the time of Constantine IV (681-685) until the rule of Leo V and Constantine (813-815), after which time the iconoclastic movement banished the image (fig. 20.1). After the Restoration of Icons, however, Methodios I (843-847), Patriarch of Constantinople, chose the standing Virgin and Child as his personal seal (the first image to appear on a patriarchal seal after iconoclasm), suggesting that this particular image had special significance for the defenders of icons. The frequent appearance of the image on rings demonstrates the importance of the icon already in the sixth and seventh centuries.

Notes:

For similar rings, see those in Dumbarton Oaks, Ross 2005, p. 138, no. 179O (from a treasure of very fine jewelry from Syria); and pp. 179-82, nos. 187-8; Syracuse, Museo Archeologico, Orsi 1942, p. 156, fig. 70 (a ring from Syracuse); Vassilaki 2000, pp. 294-5, no. 13; Christie's, New York, *Antiquities*, 4 June 1999, lot 117; a silver ring in Berlin, Volbach 1930, p. 133, no. 6398, pl. 5; and another silver ring in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (unpublished); also a bronze ring, Vikan 1987, pp. 40-41, fig. 19.

For imperial lead seals with the image, see Zacos and Veglery 1972, nos. 23, 25, 27-33, 43, 46, and 48. For the seal of the Patriarch Methodios I (843-847), see Zacos 1984, pp. 4-5, no. 5. On the icon of the Virgin Hodegetria, see ODB, pp. 2172-3.

figs. 20.1-2
The importance of the icon of the "Virgin Hodegetria," said to possess miraculous powers of protection, is demonstrated by the appearance of the image on the seals of Byzantine emperors.
Lead seal of Leo III with the Virgin Hodegetria (recto and verso)
c. 717-741 (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, inv. 55.1.4269)

21.

Gold Ring with the Monogram of Theodote

Byzantine, mid-6th-7th century

Height 29.5 mm; exterior diameter of hoop 22.34 mm; diameter of bezel 9.6 mm; weight 9.1 g; US size 6 ¾; UK size N

The hoop is a solid cast band terminating in stylized animal (or bird) heads with engraved eyes and nostrils. The terminals join to a round knob, which in turn supports an openwork calyx bezel of six petals. The petals enclose a flat disc engraved with a cruciform monogram composed of eight Greek letters, which can be resolved as the woman's name, ΘΕΟΔωΤΙC, "(of) Theodote."

The use of personal monograms on jewelry was periodically fashionable in Greek and Roman times but became especially popular in the early Byzantine period, especially on rings. At first the monograms were "box"-shaped, built typically on the Greek letters Μ, Ν, or Π, but in the 520s cross-shaped monograms were introduced on imperial coins and monuments and quickly became very popular for personal use as well.

The workmanship of the ring is particularly fine, with its ususual hoop, delicate calyx bezel, and elegantly cut letters. Other rings have animal-head terminals, but examples are rare. The calyx bezel is a relatively common type, although usually set with a gem or pearl rather than an engraved gold disc. A marriage ring of this type was present in the treasure of jewelry from Mersin now in the State Hermitage in Saint Petersburg; another ring with calyx bezel set with an amethyst intaglio was in a hoard of jewelry from Syria, now in Dumbarton Oaks (fig. 21.1); and two other rings of this type missing their settings (probably pearls) were in the hoard of mid-seventh century jewelry found on the island of Lesbos and now in the

Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens. The ring, cat. no. 25, which is set with a garnet, is another example of fine quality; see also cat. no. 26 for a related ring.

Notes:

For a marriage ring with animal-head terminals in the Zucker Collection, see Vikan 1987, 34, fig. 10. For rings with calyx bezel, see the examples in the State Hermitage in Saint Petersburg, Bank 1985, p. 288, pl. 103 (from the Mersin treasure); Dumbarton Oaks, Ross 2005, pp. 10-12, no. 6E (from the Syrian treasure in Dumbarton Oaks); the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, Touratsoglou and Chalkia 2008, pp. 106-7 (from the Mytilene treasure); and Yeroulanou 1999, pp. 258-60, nos. 323-6, 329, 333.

For Byzantine monograms and the date of their introduction, see Spier 2010a, pp. 92 and 193 (with further literature) and Introduction.

fig. 21.1
The openwork calyx bezel of multiple petals is a relatively common type, although usually set with a gem or pearl rather than an engraved gold disc.
Gold ring with openwork hoop
7th century (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, inv. 38.5)

22.

Gold Ring with Monogram of Anna

Byzantine, mid-6th-7th century

Exterior diameter of hoop 21.58 mm; diameter of bezel 14.5 mm; weight 13.38 g; US size 9 ½; UK size S ½

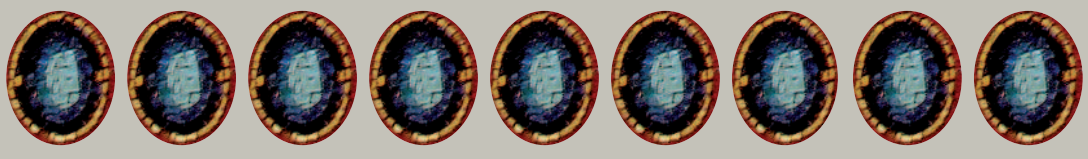
The ring has a thick, flat, octagonal band to which is attached a circular bezel engraved with a cruciform Greek monogram within a border of triangular-shaped gouges. The letters include A, N, H, and C, signifying ANNHC, Ἄννης, "(of) Anna."

The style and shape of the ring are somewhat unusual. The broad, octagonal hoop is most often found on finely made marriage rings notable for their extensive use of inscriptions and inlay. The border of triangular gouges was made by a wedge-shaped tool of a type frequently employed by the Byzantine goldsmith for inscriptions but rarely used for borders in this manner. A very similar ring, however, is in the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum in Mainz, which not only has the same type of octagonal hoop but also a similar border of triangular gouges, and different version of a monogram of the name Anna (fig. 22.1). A ring in a Munich private collection with a rectangular bezel engraved with a box-type monogram of the name Konstantinos also has this type of border.

Notes:

For the ring in the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, Mainz (inv. O.12716), see Frings and Willinghöfer 2010, p. 186, cat. no. 89 (Andrea M. Pülz); the name Anna is not recognized in the entry. For the ring of Konstantinos in the C.S. collection in Munich, see Wamser 2004, p. 329, no. 640.

fig. 22.1
A very similar ring has the same type of octagonal hoop, a similar border of triangular gouges, and a different version of a monogram of the name Anna.
Gold ring with monogram of Anna
7th century (Mainz, RGZM, inv. 0.28665)



23.

Gold Ring Set with a Garnet Engraved with the Monogram of Andrea

Byzantine, mid-6th-7th century

Height 26.1 mm; exterior diameter of hoop 20.33 mm; diameter of garnet c. 8 mm; weight 8.3 g; US size 7 ½; UK size O ½

The ring is of complex construction and very finely made. The openwork hoop is in the form of a finely modeled wreath held between two plain gold wires that are square in section. They terminate in a hinge of two loops that joins another loop on the base of the bezel, held by gold wire. The bezel appears architectural in shape. On a square gold platform stand four flat gold sides with arches, splaying slightly to support a circular opening in which is set a gold frame holding a garnet engraved with a monogram. Four gold floral elements decorate the four corners.

The garnet is flat with a slightly beveled edge. The engraved monogram is cruciform and composed of the Greek letters Α, Ν, Ρ, and Ε. The letter Α probably was intended to contain the letter Δ as well, which yields the name *Andrea*, "Andrew." A similar monogram is found on a lead seal of later sixth- or seventh-century date once in the Zacos Collection (fig. 23.1). Both the ring and the gem are unusual. The ring's unique hinge construction, attaching the bezel to the hoop, is a design more typical of bracelets of the period. The shape of the bezel is also without close parallel. Engraved gems of Byzantine date are very rare, although there is a notable group of garnets, all of the same distinctive shape (see cat. no. 24) and often engraved with personal monograms. These gems, however, are earlier in date than the present example, belonging to the late fifth or early sixth century, and always use a box-type monogram. The cruciform monograms were not introduced until the 520s or so and did not become widely used until the

middle of the sixth century. This garnet must be the product of a different workshop of slightly later date, probably of the later sixth or early seventh century. It is a rare example of a high quality piece of this date.

Notes:

For monograms on Byzantine gems from the "Garnet Workshop," see Spier 2007a, pp. 87-93, nos. 523-41; for cruciform monograms, see p. 93, nos. 542-6. For the date of the introduction of cruciform monograms, see p. 92 (note. 37) and the Introduction. For a lead seal with the monogram of Andrea, see Zacos and Veglery 1972, no. 2782, pl. 229, no. 21.

For Byzantine bracelets with hinges, see Yeroulanou 2010, esp. 45-47, pls. 18-24.

fig. 23.1
A similar monogram is found on a lead seal of later sixth- or seventh-century date, but gems of this period engraved with monograms are very rare.
Lead seal of Andrea
late 6th-7th century (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Zacos Collection, inv. 2782)

24.

Gold Ring Set with a Garnet

Byzantine, early 6th century

Height 27.4 mm; exterior diameter of hoop 15.95 mm; weight 2.7 g; US size 3 ½; UK size G

The simple hoop is of thin, round wire. It joins a large bezel in the form of a hollow gold cone from which rises a tall collar holding a garnet with curving sides and a flat top.

Both the shape of the ring and the garnet are distinctive and suggest a date late in the fifth century, as well as an origin in Constantinople. The stepped form of bezel is found on other rings of mid- to late-fifth-century date, most notably the important ring in the Ferrell Collection set with a large garnet engraved with bust of Emperor Theodosius II, surely a product of an imperial workshop in Constantinople just before 450. Closer in style to the present example is a ring with a thicker cylindrical hoop and two shorter steps on the bezel set with a garnet of the same shape engraved with a cross, which was found in small treasure of late-fifth-century jewelry in Bulgaria. Closest of all in shape, differing only in having a hoop of twisted wire, is a ring discovered near Cologne and now in the Rheinisches Landesmuseum in Bonn (fig. 24.1). It, too, is set with a garnet of this shape engraved with the standing figure of Christ holding a cross. The ring is surely of Byzantine origin, but it appears to have reached a Gothic owner in Germany, perhaps as a gift to a military officer.

The large and finely shaped garnet is a variety produced by a workshop in Constantinople that flourished in the second half of the fifth and early sixth century. The Byzantine workshop usually engraved gems with religious images or personal monograms, but sometimes gems without

fig. 24.1
Close in shape is a ring discovered near Cologne, surely of Byzantine origin (Constantinople) and perhaps the gift to a Gothic owner from a military officer.
Byzantine gold ring with engraved garnet
6th century (Bonn, Rheinischen Landesmuseum, inv. 1936.418)

engraving were set in rings or other pieces of jewelry. This particular shape of gem also reached barbarian jewelers and can be found in Ostrogothic, Visigothic, Merovingian, and Anglo-Saxon works, including rings, buckles, fibulae, earrings, pendants, and crosses.

Notes:

For the ring of Theodosius II in the Ferrell Collection, see Spier 2007a, pp. 25-26, no. 76; and Spier 2010a, pp. 66-67, no. 47. For the ring from the late fifth-century jewelry hoard from Vidin, Bulgaria, see Spier 2007a, p. 89, no. 512 (Vidin, Historical Museum). For the ring in the Rheinisches Landesmuseum in Bonn, Platz-Horster 1984, p. 53, no. 39, pl. 10; and Spier 2007a, pp. 89 and 92, no. 518. For a gilt-bronze ring with stepped bezel set with a plain garnet of this shape, see Spier 2007a, p. 91, note 13, pl. 138, fig. 8.

For garnets of this distinctive shape and their use in Byzantine and Gothic jewelry, see Spier 2007a, pp. 90-91; and the Anglo-Saxon pendant in the Ferrell Collection, Spier 2010a, p. 154, no. 125.

25.

Gold Ring Set with Garnet

Byzantine, 6th-7th century

Height 33.9 mm; exterior diameter of hoop 21.02 mm; weight 4.9 g; US size 6 ½; UK size M ½

The hoop of this ring curves inward and broadens at the shoulders. The bezel is a finely modeled calyx of six petals that joins the hoop at a knob. Petals hold a hexagonal gold base with a circular opening to allow light to reflect through the stone. Six pellets ornament the corners of the hexagonal base. A gold collar is attached to the base and holds a sharply convex garnet of deep red color.

Rings with elegant calyx bezels set with stones or pearls are well attested in Byzantine gold treasures of the sixth and seventh centuries. They typically are set with gems of good quality, including garnet, amethyst, rock crystal, and emerald. A similar ring, set with an engraved gold bezel with the monogram of Theodote, is described above (cat. no. 21). This ring is particularly well made, and the garnet appears to have been carefully chosen for its color and clarity.

Notes:

For rings of similar shape, see the notes to cat. no. 21 (the ring of Theodote).

26.

Gold Ring with Openwork Hoop

Byzantine, 6th-7th century

Height 33.6 mm; exterior diameter of hoop 21.2 mm; weight 6.9 g; US size 6 ¼; UK size M

Like the previous example (cat. no. 25), the ring has a bezel in the form of a floral calyx of six petals, which supports a hexagonal base and a collar ornamented with six gold pellets at the corners. The bezel again joins the hoop by means of a decorative knop. The hoop, however, is a broad band decorated with an openwork floral scroll bordered on either side with beaded wire. The original gem of calcified glass is lost.

The hoop is executed in the technique known as *opus interrasile*, in which the pattern is embossed and then cut out in openwork. A number of similar examples are known, some of which add a border of small, strung pearls around the bezel. Openwork bands without bezels or settings, such as a ring in Virginia, were also produced (fig. 26.1).

Notes:

For rings with calyx bezel, see the notes to cat. no. 21. Very similar rings with openwork bands include Yeroulanou 1999, pp. 258-9, nos. 323-6 and 328-9 (in London, Athens Naples, Virginia, and Mainz); see also Yeroulanou 2003, p. 38, nos. 10-11 (the latter, Stathatos collection, Athens). For openwork bands without bezels, see Yeroulanou 1999, p. 257, nos. 314-5.

fig. 26.1
Bands of opus *interrasile*, in which the pattern is embossed and then cut out in openwork, were produced with and without bezels in the sixth and seventh centuries.
Gold ring with openwork band
7th century (Richmond, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 66.15.5)

27.

Gold Ring with Floral Bezel set with an Amethyst

Byzantine, 6th-7th century

Height 23.4 mm; exterior diameter of hoop 25.21 mm; weight 10.1 g; US size 3 ½; UK size G

The hoop is thick and flat with terminals in the form of stylized birds with incised lines to indicate the wings and eyes. The birds hold the bezel, which is a hollow, cup-like element with flat bottom and splaying sides rising to a calyx of sixteen petals. On its top is a flat plate in the shape of a rosette of eight petals with a central collar holding a cabochon amethyst.

This ring is highly unusual, both in style and technique. Another ring of nearly identical form and certainly made by the same goldsmith appeared on the art market in 2010, but it provides no further clue to origin or date. The design of birds (or other creatures) holding a vase-like bezel does, however, have precedents in Roman jewelry of the fourth and fifth centuries. In the late-fourth century treasure of jewelry and other objects of precious metal discovered at Thetford (Norfolk) in England, now in the British Museum, were three gold rings of this general design (figs. 27.12). On one example, two plastically rendered birds hold a bezel in the form of a large, ribbed vase set with glass. Two other rings in the treasure have dolphin heads as terminals, which support flat bezels set with gems. Rings with dolphin-head terminals that hold bezels set with gems continued to be made in the fifth century, including a very fine example set with an amethyst, which was present in the late fifth-century treasure of jewelry found in Piazza della Consolazione in Rome.

Also notable is the sixth-century East Gothic ring, cat. no. 14e, which also continues the late Roman tradition. The hoop terminates in two

fig. 27.1
The design of birds (or other creatures) holding a vase-like bezel has precedents in Roman jewelry of the fourth and fifth centuries; in the late-fourth century treasure discovered at Thetford (Norfolk) were three gold rings of this general design.
Gold ring from the Thetford treasure
late 4th century (London, British Museum, Thetford treasure, inv. 1981,0201.7)

fig. 27.2
Gold ring from the Thetford treasure
late 4th century (London, British Museum, Thetford treasure, inv. 1981,0201.7)

stylized animal heads (birds or dolphins?) that hold the cup-like bezel set with a garnet. The East Gothic ring is very similar in conception to the present ring, and both likely copy Byzantine models.

Notes:

The other, nearly identical ring (set with a garnet rather than an amethyst) was sold at Christie's, New York, *Ancient Jewelry*, 9 December 2010, lot 443. For the rings in the Thetford treasure, now in the British Museum, see Johns and Potter 1983, pp. 82–85, nos. 5–7. For the ring from the Piazza della Consolazione treasure, see *Bedeutende Kunstwerke aus dem Nachlass Dr. Jacob Hirsch*, Adolf Hess AG and William H. Schab, Auction, Lucerne, 7 December 1957, lot 93 (the present location of the ring is unknown). A similar ring set with a cameo is in a private collection; see Spier 2011, pp. 200-1 and 205, Add. 71, pl. 46a-b.

28.

Gold Ring of Architectural Form

Byzantine, 6th-7th century

Height 34.6 mm; exterior diameter of hoop 23.16 mm; weight 8.8 g; US size 10; UK size T ½

The bezel of this ring is an openwork structure composed of a square gold base plate on which stand four sides of spiral filigree and four gold wire columns at the corners supporting another square gold plate on which rests a gold dome ornamented with three gold pellets. The bezel is joined by means of a reel-shaped knob to an openwork hoop of wavy gold wire between to plain gold wires bordered with two strands of beaded wire.

Rings of this type have sometimes been termed "architectural," since the tall bezel, constructed from filigree wire and foil, resembles a church or other sort of building. The origin of the style appears to be Byzantine. Examples in both gold and silver have been found in treasures dating to the sixth century. These include an example in gold, purportedly found on the island of Chios and now in the Stathatos collection in Athens (fig. 28.1), and several examples in silver from a hoard of jewelry now in the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto.

The fashion for rings of architectural shape spread quickly to Germanic patrons in the West. Numerous rings of this type, usually more ornately decorated with filigree and garnet inlay, have been found in East Gothic and Merovingian tombs (see cat. no. 30). Other Merovingian rings with pyramidal bezels, such as cat. no. 31, were probably also influenced by this shape (fig. 28.2).

Notes:

For the Byzantine origin of rings of this type, see Spier 2010b, pp. 16-17, pls. 12-13. For the ring from Chios, now in the Stathatos collection in Athens, see Stathatos 1957, pp. 15-17, no. 3, pl. 1 (Étienne Coche de la Ferté). Another example very similar to the present ring, with the same wavy filigree on the hoop, is in the Benaki Museum in Athens, Segall 1938, p. 162, no. 256, pl. 50. Other examples are in the Koch Collection, Chadour 1994, p. 147-8, nos. 495-6, the latter more likely Byzantine than Germanic (published also in Hadjadj 2008, p. 404, no. 594); and in a private collection, *Treasures of the Dark Ages* 1991, p. 56, no. 91. The same type of filigree hoop is found on a Byzantine gold ring with calyx bezel in Dumbarton Oaks, Ross 2005, pp. 61-62 no. 72. For Migration-era versions of these rings, see cat. nos. 29-30.

fig. 28.1
Rings of this type have sometimes been termed "architectural," since the tall bezel, constructed from filigree wire and foil, resembles a church or other sort of building. Their origin is Byzantine.
Gold architectural ring from Chios
6th-7th century (Athens, National Archaeological Museum, Stathatos Collection, inv. St 517)

fig. 28.2
This elegant architectural ring set with a garnet and with granulation and wires is of Merovingian origin.
Gold and garnet architectural ring
late 6th-early 7th century (Paris, Musée du Louvre, OA11015)

29.

Gold Ring of Architectural Form

East Gothic, 6th century

Height 28.5 mm; exterior diameter of hoop 20.07 mm; weight 5.8 g; US size 8 ¼; UK size Q

The ring has a flat gold hoop, the exterior of which is decorated with five strands of twisted wire (giving a braided appearance) bordered with two strands of flat gold wire. The bezel is a circular platform, decorated with four pellets at the join with the hoop, on which stands a structure of six arches composed of an interior gold wire and an exterior beaded wire ornamented with pellets at the base. The arches support another circular gold base, on which is a collar enclosing a cabochon purple stone (perhaps a later replacement).

The architectural shape of the ring copies Byzantine prototypes, such as the previous ring (cat. no. 28). Migration-era versions tend to be more ornate, with greater use of twisted wire filigree and granulation. Also characteristic of Gothic works is the use of flat gold hoops with the decorative filigree added to the exterior, as is found on the present example but rarely on Byzantine rings. East Gothic and Merovingian versions of the architectural ring have been found widely in central and western Europe (fig. 29.1). An East Gothic example with an engraved monogram on the bezel was discovered in a grave near Zagreb.

Notes:

For Merovingian versions of this ring type, see the discussions in Hadjadj 2008, pp. 74-77 (Ring Type 8); and Hindman 2007, pp. 70-81 and 217-9, nos. 10-11 (with additional literature). For the East Gothic example discovered in a grave near Zagreb, Bott 1987, p. 196, no. IV.8.a, pl. 16 (now in the

Archaeological Museum there); a very similar example is in the Koch Collection, Chadour 1994, p. 151, no. 507; and for a version in silver from the Lombardic cemetery at Castel Trosino near Rome, see Paroli and Ricci 2007, p. 98, no. 4, pl. 216, no. 168.4; another example is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, Oman 1930, p. 65, no. 235. A very elaborate ring of this type from the Church of the Madonna dell'Orto in Rome is now in the Louvre, Gaultier and Metzger 2005, p. 148, no. III.9. For the Byzantine prototypes, see the notes to cat. no. 28.

fig. 29.1
The flat gold colonnade adorned with beading is typical of Merovingian examples like this one found in La Garde
Gold architectural ring
mid-6th century (Paris, Musée national du Moyen Age, inv. CP.23853)

30.

Gold Ring with Pyramidal Bezel Inlaid with Garnet

Merovingian, 6th-7th century

Height 25.5 mm; exterior diameter of hoop 22.84 mm; weight 9.7 g; US size; 8 ½ UK size Q ½

The flat, broad hoop widens at the bezel, which is a pyramidal gold element with triangular cell work on the sides and a diamond-shaped cell at the top. Each of these cells is set with a carefully cut flat garnet. Around the diamond-shaped cell are triangular clusters of granulation and four gold pellets. On each shoulder of the hoop are two inwardly curving filigree gold spirals and two triangular clusters of granulation.

The ring is a very elegant and distinctively Merovingian version of the architectural ring. The Merovingian rings typically have bezels in the form of four-sided pyramids decorated with filigree, granulation, and sometimes inlay. One such example, in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, also has triangular garnet inlay (fig. 30.1). Usually the pyramid rests on a series of "columns" (as on the previous ring, cat. no. 29), but on this ring the pyramid is joined directly to the hoop. The finely cut garnet inlay on the sides is unusual for being set flush with the gold work rather than in a gold collar.

Notes:

For Merovingian rings of architectural form, see the notes to cat. no. 29. For the ring with a pyramidal bezel with garnet inlay attached to a broad hoop in the Musée d'Archéologie nationale, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, see Hadjadj 2008, pp. 360-1, no. 499. Other examples of rings with pyramidal bezels inlaid with garnet include Hadjadj 2008, p. 232, no. 259; p. 301, no. 378; and p. 376, no. 534.

fig. 30.1
Distinctively Merovingian versions of the architectural ring have bezels in the form of four-sided pyramids decorated with filigree, granulation, and sometimes inlay.
Gold architectural ring with garnet inlay
6th-7th century (Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France, Musée d'archéologie nationale, inv. 52749)

31.

Gold Ring with Filigree Decoration

Visigothic(?), 6th-7th century

Height 34.4 mm; exterior diameter of hoop 20.26 mm; weight 10.1 g; US size 8; UK size P ½

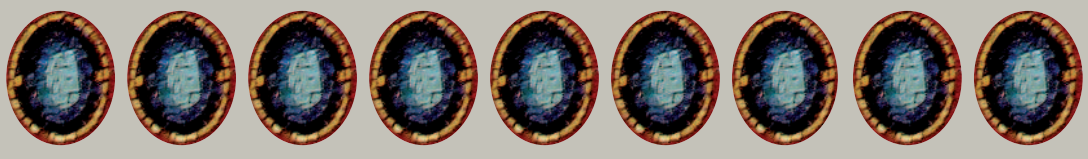
The bezel is an inverted, four-sided pyramid, each side decorated with four strands of twisted wire filigree. A border of gold pellets outlines the upper edge, and clusters of gold pellets ornament the corners. Rising from the center of the bezel is a high, square collar of gold foil enclosing a flat, banded agate gem (probably a later replacement). The bezel joins a broad, flat hoop, the exterior of which is decorated with a central band of three strands of braided gold wire between twisted gold wire and bordered on either side with flattened wire.

The ring is exceptionally ornate, with skillfully applied filigree and granulation. The degree of ornamentation suggests a Gothic rather than Byzantine origin, although Byzantine influence is apparent in the shape of the pyramidal bezel and use of braided wire. The closest parallel is a ring in a private collection believed to be a Visigothic work from Spain (fig. 31.1.). That ring has a very similar pyramidal bezel decorated with filigree spirals and bordered with gold pellets, and it, too, has a high collar enclosing a flat garnet. Its hoop, too, is a broad band, although the exterior decoration is different, consisting of a single strand of thick, twisted gold wire.

Notes:

For the similar Visigothic ring, see *Treasures of the Dark Ages* 1991, p. 125, no. 213, now in a private collection. Its Spanish provenance cannot be confirmed but is certainly plausible.

fig. 31.1
The degree of ornamentation suggests a Gothic origin, although Byzantine influence is apparent in the shape of the pyramidal bezel and use of braided wire.
Gold ring with garnet inlay
6th-7th century (Private collection)



32.

Gold Ring with Beaded Wire Decoration Set with an Amethyst

East Gothic, 6th-7th century

Height 24.0 mm; exterior diameter of hoop 19.2 mm; weight 5.9 g; US size 6 ¾; UK size N

The hoop of this ring is a flat gold band decorated on the exterior with an applied band of joined gold wire circles ornamented with gold pellets and bordered with beaded wire. The hoop joins a bezel composed of a circular gold plate decorated with three rings of beaded wire and a broad gold collar holding an amethyst, which has been pierced and cut flat at the top.

The ring is unusual for its style but clearly belongs to the sixth or seventh century and displays considerable Byzantine influence. Most notable is the band of openwork circles of gold wire, which is a type of hoop found on Byzantine rings, although rarely. A simple band of this type was included in a late sixth-century treasure of jewelry said to be from Syria and now in Dumbarton Oaks (fig. 32.1). Another Byzantine gold ring with a pyramidal bezel set with an emerald, in a private collection, also has a hoop of this type. The present ring, however, sets the openwork band on top of a flat gold band, a practice typical of Gothic rather than Byzantine rings. The use of multiple rows of beaded gold wire around the bezel is also a Gothic style and not typical of Byzantine work. The amethyst is pierced and was likely reused from another piece of jewelry. All these stylistic elements suggest that the present ring was made by an East Gothic goldsmith who closely copied (or perhaps even reused) Byzantine jewelry.

Notes:

For the openwork band of circular elements from a Syrian treasure now in Dumbarton Oaks, see Ross 2005, p. 138, no. 179R. A ring with a hoop of this type and a pyramidal bezel set with an emerald was once in the Melvin Gutman Collection, Parkhurst 1961, p. 197, no. 119.

fig. 32.1
Bands of openwork circles of gold wire are found in Byzantine rings of the late sixth century and confirm the considerable Byzantine influence.
Gold ring with openwork band
6th century (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, inv. 58.35)

33.

The Parure of an Ostrogothic Woman

East Gothic, 6th century

The set consists of a ring, a pair of earrings, and a pendant cross. It seems the items were discovered together, probably in a tomb. As a group they are consistent with other finds of jewelry from Gothic sites across Europe. The jewelry shares a common style, including the use of garnet inlay of relatively simple technique somewhat different from Merovingian gold work from Germany and France. Where the Merovingian work tends to be more complex in pattern and sophisticated in execution, this group is simpler and somewhat heavier in fabric. The group may better be considered products of an East Gothic workshop located on the Black Sea, in eastern Europe, or perhaps Ostrogothic Italy, although this attribution is tentative. There are stylistic links also to Byzantine models and to Anglo-Saxon work, although such widespread influences are typical of the Migration Period.

33a.

Gold Ring with Animal-Head Terminals and Cup-Shaped Bezel Set with Garnets

Height 28.3 mm; exterior diameter of hoop 22.8 mm;
diameter of bezel 12.4 mm; weight 8.6 g; US size 7 ½; UK size O ½

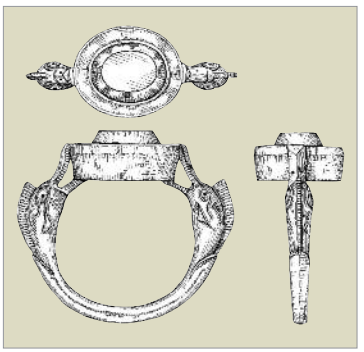
This heavy gold ring has a solid-cast cylindrical hoop terminating in bulbous, stylized animal heads (ducks or, more likely, dolphins) with pronounced open mouth or beak decorated at the tip with a gold pellet. The eyes are inset with small cabochon garnets. The open mouths hold a bezel of cup-shaped form with ribbing, resembling a rosette, which is set with a cabochon garnet bordered with beaded wire.

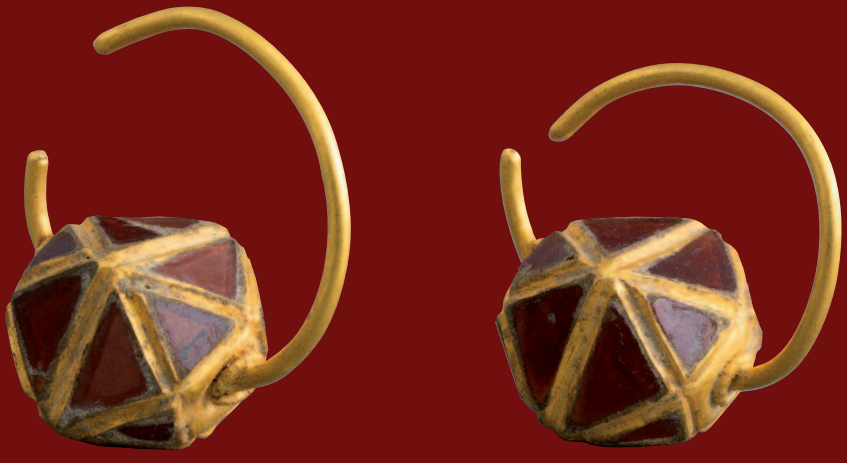
No comparable Gothic ring is known, but likely models for the shape of the ring can be found in late Roman and Byzantine examples. Some rings form the late-fourth century treasure of jewelry and silver objects from Thetford (Norfolk) in England, now in the British Museum, take the form of hoops with dolphin and bird-head terminals holding either a flat bezel set with gems or, in one instance, a bezel shaped like a vase (fig. 33a.1). The dolphin heads, with open mouths, are particularly similar, although far more realistically rendered. Rings with dolphin-head terminals supporting bezels set with gems continued to be produced in the early Byzantine period. The ribbed, cup-shaped bezel of the present ring recalls the ring from Thetford with the bezel shaped like a fluted vase (fig 27.1). Perhaps also related are Byzantine rings of c. 500 which have a hollow bezel in the form of a ribbed, floral calyx, such as the example in the Byzantine parure discussed above (cat. no. 14e). Also similar is the unusual Byzantine ring with flat hoop with bird terminals holding a floral bezel (cat. no. 27).

Notes:

For the rings in the Thetford treasure, now in the British Museum, see Johns and Potter 1983, pp. 82–85, nos. 5–7. For Byzantine rings with dolphin-head terminals, see the notes and illustration for cat. no. 27.

fig. 33a.1-2
Dolphin heads with open mouths and ribbed cup-shaped bezels are found on rings from the Thetford treasure
Two gold rings set with gems
4th century (London, British Museum, Thetford treasure, inv. 1981,0201.5, and 1981,0201.7)





33b.

Pair of Polyhedral Earrings with Garnet Inlay

Height 30.2 and 27.5 mm; weight 6.8 g each

The earrings are made of a gold frame of polyhedral shape with sixteen triangular cells holding flat garnet inlay. On two opposite sides of the polyhedral are square gold panels with holes cut to hold the hoop of solid cylindrical hoop, which passes through the frame; the holes are outlined with beaded wire. The use of two triangular garnets placed back-to-back on the four large faces, rather than a single diamond-shaped garnet, is unusual for this type of earring.

Polyhedral earrings of this type, usually set with garnets and sometimes ornamented with additional granulation, are well attested in East Gothic tombs of the fifth and early sixth centuries from south Russia (now in the British Museum, fig. 32b.1), the Balkans and Danube region, Germany, and Italy. There are also ornate versions from Merovingian burials in Germany, France, and Belgium. The fashion for earrings of this type appears to have waned over the sixth century, and they are not found in Lombardic tombs in Italy.

Notes:

For examples of polyhedral earrings from Ostrogothic Italy, see Bierbrauer 1975, pp. 162-3 and 166, fig. 14, for a distribution map. For other examples, see Andrási 2008, pp. 35-36, no. 7 (from Kerch, now in the British Museum); Quast 1993, pp. 75-77 (for a discussion of typology); and Damm 2000, pp. 107-9 (for polyhedral earrings and Gothic women's jewelry in general).

fig. 33b.1
Polyhedral earrings, usually set with garnets and sometimes ornamented with additional granulation, are well attested in East Gothic tombs of the fifth and early sixth centuries.
Polyhedral earring set with garnets
Crimea, end 5th-6th century (London, British Museum, inv. 1923,7-16,64)

33c.

Gold Pendant Cross with Garnet Inlay

Height 37.4 mm; width 28.9 mm; thickness 2.3 mm; weight 7.4 g

The cross is hollow, made of two thin gold sheets joined together and a simple suspension loop attached to the top. The shape is distinctive, with the four short arms of equal length splaying sharply and terminating in a convex curve. Each of the four arms is inset with a single flat garnet, cut to mirror the convex curve of the exterior. Inset in the center is a flat, circular garnet surrounded by two concentric grooves in the gold. There is no gold foil backing behind the garnet inlay, only a light colored cement of uncertain composition. The back of the cross is flat.

Remarkable for its shape and inlay, the cross has no close parallel among East Gothic finds, where pendant crosses are rare. The same shape, with the short arms terminating in convex curves, is found on some simple gold foil crosses with embossed designs from German sites. Closer in style are several exceptionally fine pendant crosses of Anglo-Saxon origin. Crosses from Ixworth in Suffolk (now in Oxford), Wilton in Norfolk (in the British Museum), and another example from the grave of a young woman dis-covered in Cambridgeshire in 2012, all have the same splaying arms with convex terminals (figs. 33c.1-2). Another cross found in the tomb of St. Cuthbert in Durham Cathedral has thinner, longer arms. All these crosses have step-cut garnets set in complex patterns of cell work, more sophisticated in technique than the present example. The Wilton cross, in addition, is set with a gold coin of the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius (610-641) (fig. 33c.1). Despite the difference in technique, the Anglo-Saxon crosses may well have copied East Gothic models, such as the present example.

fig. 33c.1
An Anglo-Saxon cross from Wilton in Norfolk preserves the same shape, with the short arms terminating in convex curves.
Wilton Cross
7th century (London, British Museum, inv. 1859, 0512.1)

fig. 33c.2
Found in the grave of a young woman discovered in Cambridgeshire in 2012, this cross displays the same splaying arms with convex terminals.
Cambridgeshire Cross
7th century

The single, large garnet pieces found on the present example recall the inlaid arms of the crosses on two seventh-century Merovingian reliquary caskets in Lucerne and Utrecht.

Notes:

For gold foil crosses of similar shape with embossed decoration, see Christlein 1978, p. 127, pls. 87-89. The Wilton and Ixworth Anglo-Saxon crosses are discussed by Kendrick 1937. For the two seventh-century Merovingian reliquary caskets (the Warnebertus Reliquary in the Stiftskirche, Beromünster, near Lucerne; and another in the Catharijneconvent, Utrecht), both decorated on the sides with crosses with garnet inlays in one piece for each arm, see Roth 1986, pp. 261-2, pl. 2a-b.

34.

Disc Brooch Ornamented with Filigree, Garnet, and Glass

Merovingian, early to mid-7th century

Diameter 39.2 mm; weight 17.7 g

The circular gold plate with central boss attaches to a backing plate of tinned bronze with a catch plate that once held an iron pin, now corroded away. The surface of the disc is covered with tiny circles of twisted filigree. On the central boss are gold cells, in the center a circular cabochon of blue glass surrounded by three triangles of flat garnet, all bordered with twisted wire. Around the outer flat area of the disc are three rectangular cells with flat garnets alternating with three circular cells with blue glass. Alongside the rectangular cells are small, circular cells set with white mother of pearl (or meerschaum?). There is an outer border of twisted wire.

Disc brooches of this type have been found in quantity throughout the Frankish (Merovingian) kingdom, which stretched from the Rhine valley through Burgundy, Belgium, and into the Netherlands. The Metropolitan Museum in New York has a number of fine examples (fig. 34.1). Disc fibulae of somewhat different style were common in Lombardic tombs in Italy. The large number of disc brooches from graves in Germany suggests that they originated in workshops there, although goldsmiths may have produced them elsewhere in the west as well. Analysis of tomb finds shows that women wore the brooches on the shoulder or at the neck to fasten an outer garment or cloak. These tombs are dated to the first half of the seventh century. Along with rings, earrings, straight pins, bracelets, and belt and shoe buckles, the disc brooch was an integral part of the wealthy Frankish woman's personal adornment (Introduction, ill. 17).

Notes:

This variety of fibula belongs to Group I.2, as categorized by Thieme 1978, pp. 415-7, pls. 3-5 (dated late sixth century to c. 640). For a previous study, see Rademacher 1940. Other examples include Haedeke 2000, p. 66, no. 83, and p. 68, no. 85; and Garside 1979, p. 137, nos. 384-5 (Baltimore, Walters Art Museum).

For similar disc brooches from Normandy, see Baudot 1860, pp. 43-46, pls. 12, 5-6; and 13,1-5. Other examples from France, now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, are discussed, along with women's costume in general, in Périn 2000, pp. 244-8, esp. fig. 21.16, for a brooch similar to the present example. See also Aillagon 2008, pp. 273 and 644, Cat. III.21, for an example from a grave at Arlon, Belgium. For Lombardic disc brooches from Italy, see Paroli and Ricci 2007, pls. 2. See also *Europe without Borders* 2007 for more disc brooches, their context, and reconstructions of Frankish fashion.

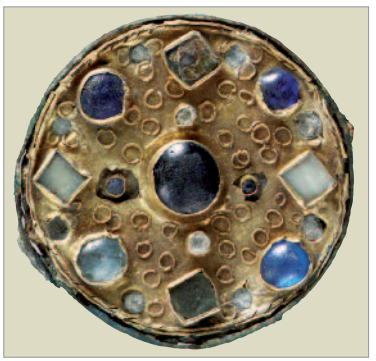


fig. 34.1
The large number of disc brooches from graves in Germany suggests that they originated in workshops there.
Frankish disc brooch
late 6th-early 7th century (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 17.191.135)

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