

PERCEIVING AMPULLAE: APPROACHES TO THE PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF ASIA MINOR FLASKS HOUSED AT THE PRINCETON UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF ART

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ABSTRACT

Ampullae were popular devotional objects and a type of travel art frequently associated with pilgrimage and cult sites in Asia Minor, Egypt, and the Holy Land. They reached the height of their production and popularity between the 6th-7th centuries CE, although they continued to be used until the 13th-15th centuries.¹ These flasks could be filled with holy water or oil that had ceremoniously come into contact with a relic from a specific holy site. In some cases, dust or holy earth cultivated from a saint's cult site took the place of water or oil.² Saints, evangelists, crucifixes, or biblical stories frequently appear on flasks that have been embellished with images.³ Nevertheless, ampullae too could be left undecorated, an indication that the possessor of the flask had access to its holy blessings with or without inscriptions or icons. Their amuletic properties made pilgrimage flasks a highly sought-after commodity for merchants, pilgrims, soldiers, government officials, etc.

Questions surrounding the production and distribution of ampullae, in addition to their status as *eulogiai* (blessings) have proved to be troubling for art historians, historians, and anthropologists alike. One of the main issue's scholars face is the lacuna of primary sources, both literary and archaeological, that directly addresses the production and distribution of flasks. Instead, we are forced to rely, partially, on proxy evidence, to secure dates and to suggest provenances.⁴ This paper seeks to acknowledge these issues and to synthesize evidence across fields of study to chronicle a more nuanced and interdisciplinary approach to the study of Byzantine material culture, primarily ampullae. I argue that the production and distribution of ampullae occurred at but was not limited to cult sites, contrary to popular belief. By employing data sets from archaeological and literary research, it is my goal to offer new insights on a little studied assortment of flasks housed in the Princeton University Art Museum.

VISUAL ANALYSIS

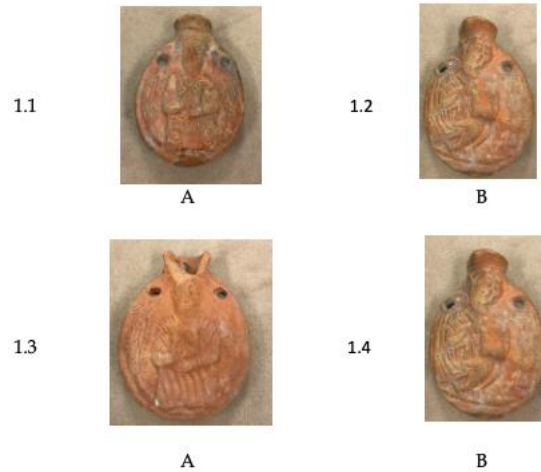
Figs. 1.1-1.4: Ampulla with Evangelist(s), Faces A and B, Asia Minor, 6th century. Terracotta. Princeton University Art Museum. Antioch 6.9 x 5.1 cm.

Face A: There are two iterations of the iconography presented in this group that are identical to one another. A frontal, bearded man, holds a codex whose cover is decorated with one dot in each quadrant of the dominating X, or, perhaps, cross.⁵ The evangelist's body is conceived of deep and crude drapery lines and outlining. The figure, at different times, has been identified as St. John the Evangelist because of its similarity to flasks from St. John's cult site at Ephesus. Otherwise, it has been referred to as a generic evangelist.⁶ Stylized trees, on either side, define the figure's space and appear to encompass him. It has been noted that this type of decorated tree commonly appears in illuminated Syriac manuscripts.⁷

However, this claim is problematic, as there are only a handful of extant illuminated manuscripts in Syriac- the *Rabbula Gospels* being the most complete book- to corroborate this claim. A symbolic reading for the trees may posit that they represented leaves of laurel, thus celebrating the pilgrim's, or depicted saint's, victory over corporeal struggle and the attainment of salvation. Additionally, I propose that the trees place the saint in the pilgrim's setting, thereby establishing a mimetic relationship between pilgrim and intercessor; the evangelist is placed among the same trees the pilgrim themselves walked beside.

Face B: A seated man in a quasi-three-quarter-profile, holds a writing implement and codex. To his right is a columnar stand, decorated by diagonal fluting, which, most likely, is a representation of an ornate ink

or lamp stand.⁸ Based on differing levels of relief, it appears as if the seated figure was a part of the mold and that the column was stamped into the clay before being fired in the kiln. The figure's body is defined by downward, diagonal lines. From the depth and coarse appearance of the drapery lines, we can be fairly certain that the craftsman used a stylus or stick to hand-etch the lines into the clay in an attempt to "touch-up" the figure after it was molded. The evangelist appears to have his mouth parted, as if attempting to speak.

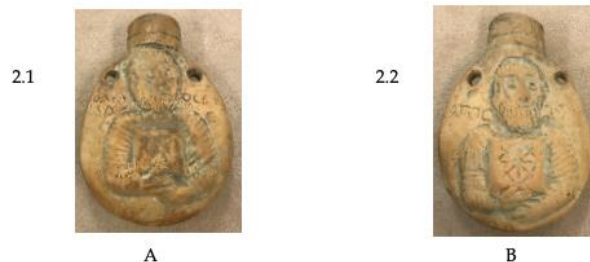


Figs. 1.1-1.4: Ampulla with Evangelist(s), Faces A and B, Asia Minor, 6th century. Terracotta. Princeton University Art Museum. Antioch 6.9 x 5.1 cm (fig. 1.1-1.2) and 6.9 x 5.1 cm (fig 1.3-1.4).

Figs. 2.1-2.2: Ampulla with St. Andrew, Faces A and B, Asia Minor, 6th century. Terracotta. Princeton University Art Museum. 6.7 x 4.8 cm.

Face A: A man in three-quarters profile, holds in his arms a codex decorated with an X, or, perhaps, a cross. An inscription bearing the saint's name was carved on the left and right sides of the figure. This ampulla is the only flask in the group with an inscription. In addition to the inscription, the figure's short beard and large eyes help to iconographically identify the figure as St. Andrew.⁹ Short diagonal lines and a roughly hewn outline compose the clothing and body of the figure. It appears as if the outline was emphasized by a craftsman using a stylus or stick.

Face B: This figure is an embossed image of St. Andrew, nearly identical to the image adorning Face A. The inscription, on this face, is virtually illegible on the right side of the saint. This iteration of St. Andrew depicts him wearing a tunic with vertical drapery lines on the left sleeve and diagonal drapery lines on the right sleeve. Also, the figure is shown with a longer beard than the figure on Face A.¹⁰ The ornamentation of the codex is strikingly different from the X motif that adorns side a of both of the *Ampulla with Evangelists* flasks. Here, the codex bears a Greek cross and overlapping X, framed by a diamond. There is an incorrect number of fingers on the saint's right hand; he is shown with six fingers. The molding is significantly pronounced and raised from the surface of the flask. This might be an indication of a craftsman accentuating design through the use of outlining.



Figs. 2.1-2.2 Ampulla with St. Andrew, Faces A and B, Asia Minor, 6th century. Terracotta. Princeton University Art Museum. 6.7 x 4.8 cm.

Figs. 3.1-3.2: Ampulla with Figures in a Boat, Faces A and B, Asia Minor, 6th century. Terracotta. Princeton University Art Museum. 6.7 x 5.0 cm

Face A: This flask depicts three nimbed figures in a boat and is the only flask in the group that explicitly depicts movement. The center of the flask is dominated by the large and geometric head of one of the sailors. In the background is a faint etching of the triangular sail of the ship. It is unclear whether the central figure is bearded or not.¹¹ The use of hieratic scale is employed, with the central figure being the largest, and two flanking figures being of a lower stature. Several iconographical interpretations have been made for this image. Pilgrimage tokens bearing images of boats typically are associated with the cults of Saints Phocas and Isidore, however, in their respective articles on pilgrimage tokens bearing the same image, Richard Camber and L.Y. Rahmani developed alternative explanations.¹² Camber theorized that the image is a representation of *The Tempest Calmed*, a biblical scene where Jesus tames a ferocious storm at sea.¹³ Rahmani, countered Camber, explaining that of the few verified early depictions of *The Tempest Calmed*, none are earlier than the 10th century, and most either depict Jesus sleeping beneath the ship, or at its prow raising his right hand to offer a benediction.¹⁴ Rahmani suggests that the scene may instead be *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes*, another biblical scene where Jesus conjures "...a great multitude of fishes...".¹⁵ Regardless of which interpretation is correct, if the scene even is one of the two proposed here, as long as a seafaring-early Christian understood that the subjects adorning their token or flasks were on a boat, they too could find substance in its miraculous, apotropaic abilities.

Face B: This side is almost entirely encrusted, though fortunately, still visible enough to tell that it is identical to Face A. It is very likely that same mold was used to cast both sides.



Figs. 3.1-3.2: Ampulla with Figures in a Boat, Faces A and B, Asia Minor, 6th century. Terracotta. Princeton University Art Museum. 6.7 x 5.0 cm

Figs. 4.1-4.2: Ampulla with Unidentified Figures, Faces A and B, Asia Minor, 6th century. Terracotta. Princeton University Art Museum. 7.0 x 5.0 cm.

Face A: A bearded man stands beneath an ornamented arch and holds what looks like a codex. Beside the man, on the left, an ornate Latin cross stands autonomously.

Face B: This side depicts a beardless, veiled figure whose hands are outstretched in the archetypal *orans* pose. It has been supposed that the figure may be the image of a generic pilgrim whose outstretched arms reach out to the divine intercessor on the opposite side.¹⁶ Alternatively, there may have been an interest among Christians to be represented in the flasks they purchased. Perhaps the efficacy of a flask's miraculous abilities was considered more accessible or potent if their image was incorporated into the design and pressing against the sacred contents inside. The exaggerated lines on the figure's clothing suggests that a craftsman used a stylus to stress the garment's drapery folds using a stylus or other type of pointy tool.



Figs. 4.1-4.2: Ampulla with Unidentified Figures, Faces A and B, Asia Minor, 6th century. Terracotta. Princeton University Art Museum. 7.0 x 5.0 cm.

Figs. 5.1-5.2: Ampulla with Cross, Faces A and B, Asia Minor, 6th century. Terracotta. Princeton University Art Museum. 8.4 x 2.7 cm

Face A: A Latin cross with flaring transepts divides the flask into quadrants. Within each quadrant are tear or petal-shaped lobes composed of concentric semi-circular rings.¹⁷ At the cross's central point, and at each of the ends, are now barely visible decorative roundels. This motif, similarly, was used to decorate contemporary processional crosses too.¹⁸ If a pilgrim were to wear this ampulla around their neck or hang it from another conspicuous place during a voyage, the flasks may have symbolized the pilgrim's walk with Christ. Additionally, the cross, as a generic Christian symbol, could be easily interpreted by Christians from a wide range of places.

Face B: This side is identical to Face A. Most likely, the same mold was used to cast the image on both sides.



Figs. 5.1-5.2: Ampulla with Cross, Faces A and B, Asia Minor, 6th century. Terracotta. Princeton University Art Museum. 8.4 x 2.7 cm.

THE PRODUCTION OF AMPULLAE: MOLDS, STAMPS, AND IMAGES

The flasks in this study are all constructed from fired clay, however, other materials, such as glass, lead, and precious metals, were all viable building materials. Although, for most handlers of these sacred containers its medium was much less significant than the actual holy dust, earth, or oil it housed.¹⁹ In the *Byzantium at Princeton* exhibition two different ampullae design types were displayed: Asia Minor and Egyptian. The easiest method of differentiating between the two is to look at its neck. Flasks from Egypt have handles, resembling a Greek amphora, whereas flasks from Asia Minor are characterized by two holes punctured on either side of the neck.²⁰ The Asia Minor flasks' punctuation with holes rather than the addition of handles is a significant structural difference to note. The design type affected how the flask fared in the archaeological record as well as how handlers interacted with the vessel. The handles of Egyptian flasks are incredibly fragile. Thus, many Egyptian flasks do not preserve their handles. In contrast, more Asia Minor flasks are preserved. Additionally, the holes would have allowed a pilgrim to insert a rope or a string through them and wear it around their neck or from their belt loop.²¹

To a certain degree, the production of clay ampullae was formulaic: a craftsman would have molded each half of the flask separately, fired them in a kiln, and then joined the two sides together.²² Pilgrims' souvenirs, namely flasks, tend to appear mass-produced and can be characterized as having a cheap and crude quality to them. Describing a clay amulet, Richard Camber noted that "areas of local reduction, [were] due almost certainly to careless firing."²³ Camber's description brings up an unanswered question in the scholarship on late antique travel art: was the careless firing of amulets and ampullae the result of an individual untrained craftsman, a consequence of mass-production, or possibly a combination of both? In practice though, consumers may not have been bothered much by their crude appearance; for them, the object's value was derived from its contents and the effort it took to obtain it.²⁴ To continue, molds, like the flasks themselves, could be made out of clay. Clay molds were not very durable and had rather short lifespans. After several uses the image would become blurred or indistinct and shrunk by 10% after each use.²⁵ To remedy this issue, craftsmen used fired ampullae as stamps, and a stylus or stick to sharpen outlines and drapery folds. It is likely that these handmade "refinements" are what give flasks their rough-hewn appearance.

Aside from molds, images could be stamped or hand-etched into an ampulla too. In the exhibition, only two of the Asia Minor-type flasks appear to be adorned with additional images. In order to establish which images were produced with a stamp versus which were produced with a mold, art historians have to analyze relief patterns. Molds are essentially shaped recessions or cavities that emboss predesigned images onto an object in high relief. Stamps press images into the surface of an object in low relief. In figures 1.1 and 1.3, the seated evangelist was sculpted in a higher relief than the podium. It would therefore be reasonable to believe that a craftsman used a mold to form the seated evangelist and a stamp to impress the podium onto the flask, however, the order in which the images were added is uncertain. Due to the former's domination of the space, I believe that the podium was added after the seated evangelist.

Inscriptions too were added to ampulla, albeit rarely in Asia Minor.²⁶ Inscriptions, typically were solely reserved for saints without a standard set of iconography.²⁷ The *Ampulla with St. Andrew* is the only Asia Minor-type flask that bears a hand-etched epigram. It is unclear when inscriptions were added though. Scholars concur that inscriptions could be incised by hand, after a flask was molded and stamped, and before it was placed in the kiln.²⁸ What remains unknown is how much time passed between molding a flask and carving an inscription into it, since scholars, i.e. Campbell and Pülz, have merely stated that inscriptions could be added at a later date.²⁹ It may also be the case that pilgrims intentionally purchased flasks with ambiguous figures and then crudely carved their own inscriptions into them. Though this theory is certainly hard to prove, there are several precedents to fortify this claim. First, along known pilgrimage routes, pilgrims and other travelers were able to, and frequently did, graffiti their names in Latin and Greek- among other ancient languages- onto stones and rock walls, materials less easily carved than wet clay.³⁰ Secondly, archaeological evidence has revealed that pilgrims sometimes used knives, or other sharp tools, to intentionally pare or scrape at the rim of tokens.³¹

Therefore, if generic images allowed many people to ascertain substance from a singular image, and if pilgrims were already known to epigraphically imprint themselves onto the late antique landscape, it may not be wholly abstract or futile to contemplate the likelihood of literate pilgrims choosing to incise the name of their preferred saint onto a personal, apotropaic vessel.

One of the biggest issues that previous scholars have faced in studying these flasks, is the obsessive need to identify figures. There is an exhaustive amount of research focused on trying to identify the figures that adorn ampullae from Asia Minor. It is quite ironic how focused modern scholars are on identification and how unbothered early Christians were without it. Apart from the *Ampulla with St. Andrew*, none of the flasks from the Princeton exhibition have figures that are iconographically identifiable. Instead of attempting identify these ambiguous figures, it may be more fruitful to recognize that craftsmen decided to deliberately produce flasks with generic figures. The late antique world was populated by incredibly diverse communities with different needs and therefore, preferred patron saints with particular skill sets.

Furthermore, labeling a figure has the unintended effect of confining an object's importance or value to select regions. For example, St. Andrew was popular among Christians in the East, achieving nearly the same eminence in the Eastern Church as Saints Peter and Paul were afforded in the Western Church.³² St. Andrew's popularity helps to explain why eastern craftsmen would have decided to inscribe the saint's name into ampullae and not the names of others; a pilgrim may be more inclined to purchase a flask adorned with St. Andrew's name than that of lesser known saint. Conversely, the *Ampulla with Figures in a Boat*, due to its vagueness, could have been understood in an assortment of ways, i.e. in relation to the cult sites of Saints Phocas, Isidore, and Menas, or with the biblical stories of the *Tempest Calmed* or the *Miraculous Draught of Fishes*.³³ The identity of the scene rests in the eye of the beholder. Since the majority of extant ampullae are adorned with non-specific images, the current picture that the archaeological evidence paints, is that early Christians could find meaning and value in generic figures of evangelists, saints, and biblical scenes without needing them to be explicitly named.

PRODUCTION CENTERS

The most commonly accepted theory in 20th century scholarship on Byzantine material culture is that ampullae were produced and distributed at or in proximity to pilgrimage centers. In many cases, scholars have assumed that the images decorating pilgrims' souvenirs were directly connected to the site of their production.³⁴ John Elsner captured this historical tradition, stating that, "...iconography and writing...are primary, for it is through the decoration in image and epigraph that the worshipper may *know* the greater whole to which the relic belongs, and may know moreover that the relic is a relic."³⁵ For Elsner, the potency of a holy place is channeled into ampullae via inscriptions, iconography, and a flask's contents, collectively working to elicit a greater sense of *gravitas* and metonymic connection to the holy source. Dina Boero holds too that incorporating the holy dust into the clay of objects during production at cult sites validates and intensifies its efficacy and holiness.³⁶ Therefore, if a flask or token was produced and distributed at a cult site, a coterminous relationship between holy place and holy matter developed. However, these idyllic circumstances do not reflect what the archaeological and textual evidence for production centers, or lack thereof, actually reveals.

There is, currently, a paucity of evidence that validates the existence of production centers for pilgrims' souvenirs in Asia Minor. Furthermore, much of our available evidence is often determined by places that interest archaeologists, particularly urban centers.³⁷ For this reason, the majority of ampullae found in archaeological contexts are predominantly from western Anatolia, namely from Ephesus, Pergamon, and Smyrna, among other major cities/towns.³⁸ At Ephesus the Basilica of St. John attracted a considerable number of pilgrims each year. One of the main attractions at the Basilica of St. John was the dust-miracle.³⁹ Many pilgrimage souvenirs have been found at or near the Basilica of St. John at Ephesus, probably as a result of pious pilgrims seeking to capture the sacred *manna* to bring it home with them.⁴⁰ Clay samples taken from ampullae found at Ephesus matched with clay samples from Ephesian lamps. Also, in conjunction with the aforementioned material evidence, iconographical similarities with lamps helped to identify the flasks as products made in Ephesus between the 5th and 7th centuries.⁴¹ Despite numerous excavations conducted around the basilica, there is insufficient evidence to prove that a

production center ever existed at the pilgrimage site. However, pilgrims' souvenirs could, perhaps, have been produced elsewhere in Ephesus. Similarly, at the cult site of St. Thecla in Seleucia, Aya Tekla, there is no evidence, both literary and archaeological, to prove there ever was an on-site production center.⁴² Instead of being produced at cult sites, it may be the case that ampullae, lamps, tokens, and other pilgrims' souvenirs could have been produced in proximity to pilgrimage centers, but not in conjunction with them, in a way similar to how modern tourist destinations develop economies around local attractions.

Rather than forcing cult sites to conform to a universal model of pilgrimage, a more nuanced approach should be taken so as to best understand the production of *eulogiai* throughout the Mediterranean. Accordingly, we should be wary to deduce that the absence of archaeological evidence for a production center at Ephesus mean that off-site production occurred universally.⁴³ In Egypt, at Abu Mina, and in Syria, at Qal'at Si'mān, evidence for the existence of production centers have been found via material-analysis and archaeological findings. Excavations at Abu Mina, the cult site of St. Menas, lead to the discovery of a kiln and flasks within the pilgrimage center.⁴⁴ It appears as if the production of St. Menas flasks at Abu Mina was a large-scale operation, which reinforces the notion of pilgrimage sites as environments conducive to both economic and spiritual profitability. Clay analysis from tokens attributed to St. Symeon the Stylite's cult site at Qal'at Si'mān, revealed "...that the mineral content of the clay is compatible with that of the local area."⁴⁵ However, at both Abu Mina and Qal'at Si'mān, archaeologists unearthed tokens bearing images of figures other than St. Menas and St. Symeon.⁴⁶ In ancient Scythopolis, a similar phenomenon was recorded where tokens were produced at one location to eventually be sold elsewhere.⁴⁷ These parallel phenomena suggests that the administrators of cult sites, and their respective production centers, recognized that they could economically benefit from creating pilgrims' souvenirs that exploited or appealed to the religious diversity of late antiquity.⁴⁸ For these reasons, it is clear that ampullae were not necessarily manufactured at a cult site they could then be linked backed to. By confining the production of ampullae to cult sites we risk losing the highly nuanced operations of late antique pilgrimage centers to aggregation.

DISTRIBUTION OF AMPULLAE

In late antiquity, the existence of a codified plan for the distribution of pilgrims' souvenirs does not seem to have existed. As previously stated, scholars working in the second half of the 20th century believed that both the production and distribution of ampullae occurred at pilgrimage centers. However, more recent archaeological and literary evidence suggests that the distribution of pilgrims' souvenirs could occur at but was not limited to these sites. Instead, distribution could take place in a number of different venues. The next portion of this paper attempts to string together evidence from a number of sources, in order to weave a more complete and nuanced narrative for the distribution of pilgrims' souvenirs.⁴⁹

AMPULLAE IN SHOPS

The foundation and consecration of cult sites catalyzed the development of tourist economies in the places near pilgrimage centers. Traders, who sold food and other basic necessities, potentially alongside sacred objects, were present in numbers comparable to those of pilgrims themselves, as pilgrimage was a "religio-commercial event," as coined by Speros Vyronis.⁵⁰ Elsewhere in the Mediterranean, the sale of flasks as a marketplace commodity is a fairly well-documented practice. At some sites, archaeologists have even unearthed the remains of shops and stalls. At Ephesus, several small, excavated buildings, near the Basilica of St. John, have been identified as shops.⁵¹ Literary sources corroborate these findings, referring to the buildings as "John's Market."⁵²

What has yet to be determined is when objects of popular piety were available for purchase. At Mamre, the sale of tokens and flasks took place in part with the pomp and festivities of the annual festival for Aphrodite of Aphaca.⁵³ Comparatively, in a Christian context, peddlers may have occupied shop stalls only on certain days, such as, perhaps on a saint's annual feast day or on canonical holy days.⁵⁴ An Anglo-Saxon pilgrim, Willibald (who later became a bishop and was canonized), wrote c. 724 after visiting Ephesus, that on May 8th, *manna*, or holy dust, was distributed annually.⁵⁵ Additionally, at Amastris, at the cult site of St. Hyacinth (also in Asia Minor), every year, the bishop distributed "...a

miraculous health-giving dust", on July 18th.⁵⁶ Whether at Mamre, Ephesus, or Amastris, the question of how pilgrims received and stored *manna* remains unanswered. Given the entrepreneurial spirit of cult sites and cities, it would not be inconceivable for pilgrims to have purchased an ampulla at a shop in the town a cult site was located in or near, as both a souvenir and receptacle for receiving *manna* on a saint's annual feast day. In the distributive context of shops, the non-specific imagery adorning Asia Minor-type flasks, particularly in those in the Princeton group, may best be understood as an artistic decision that enabled mold-made designs to appeal to a wide range of people, thereby increasing the object's profitability and popularity among pilgrims.

GIFTS

An ampulla too, may have come into one's possession by way of gift-giving. The most commonly cited example of this practice are the pilgrimage flasks at Monza Cathedral, gifted to the basilica by Queen Theodolinda prior to her death in 627 CE. However, during the pontificate of Pope Gregory, a certain John, brought to the Lombard court in Rome, fourteen glass ampullae filled with oils from various *martyria* outside the city walls.⁵⁷ Attached to each vial was a *pittacium*, or a small tag, containing the name(s) of the saint(s) from which the oil inside originated.⁵⁸ Since Queen Theodolinda did not visit the cult sites herself to retrieve these highly prized objects, "John" participated in a system of distribution by way of gift-giving. However, what exactly "John's" intentions were in doing so is debatable. On the one hand, the collection of ampullae for Queen Theodolinda may have been a genuinely altruistic endeavor in the greater context of Christian gift-giving in late antiquity. On the other hand, bestowing upon the Queen an assortment of vials filled with holy oils may have been a gesture made by "John" to curry favor with the Lombard court, perhaps in exchange for political or financial support. There too is the possibility of an unrecorded request between "John" and Queen Theodolinda. In this case, an individual who was not able to make a pilgrimage themselves, may have sent someone in their stead to obtain ampullae or tokens.⁵⁹

In the West, a new type of pilgrim emerged in the late Middle Ages. By the beginning of the 14th century, the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi had already become a major pilgrimage center, with the high altar of the Lower Church being the focus of a pilgrims' visit.⁶⁰ Testamentary evidence has been used to identify a pattern among testators who set aside money for a "good foot" to make a pilgrimage in place of the deceased.⁶¹ In 1292, the last testament of Donna Margherita, three lire was set aside for "a person to go for her and her soul to San Francesco in Assisi..."⁶² It appears "vicarious pilgrimages" could be made elsewhere as well, even if they inevitably terminated at San Francesco in Assisi. In 1289, Donna Rolandina left provisions in her will for pilgrims to travel to Compostela, Rome, and finally to Assisi "for the good of her soul."⁶³ What these 13th and 14th-century western pilgrims were interested in was indulgences, or pardons, rather than *eulogiai* though. Seeing as western artists and hagiographers in this epoch were looking rather intently at Byzantine models of saints and icons, it may be that western pilgrimage traditions emerged out of eastern precepts.

That individuals took on patronal roles and commissioned others to collect ampullae, and more importantly, the holy dust or oil they contained, in the east can be substantiated by pilgrims' travelogues. The travel diaries of Egeria and Poemenia have proven to be a promising start to begin expounding on the theory above, of which has yet to be proposed in the context of Byzantium. The Spanish noblewoman, Egeria, embarked on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land with her entourage in 380 CE.⁶⁴ Egeria was a widow who lived in a chaste community made up of other widows, unmarried women, and virgins.⁶⁵ Based on Egeria's travel plan, she, and the circle of women she lived with, seem to have spent a considerable amount of time studying the Bible, for Egeria knew specifically what it was she wanted to see and visit, especially sites or books related to baptism.⁶⁶ Hagith Sivan has proposed that the women in Egeria's circle expressed their piety through pilgrimage and close-reading subsequent pilgrimage accounts.⁶⁷ Since the women in Egeria's community were heavily involved in planning her pilgrimage, I propose that they too may have helped to finance her holy expedition, with the hope of acquiring any *eulogiai* and books she returned with, in addition to reading her travel diary. This is precisely what Egeria did: aside from keeping a meticulous itinerary, she also exhibited great interest in attaining *eulogiai* and books.⁶⁸

Similarly, when the pilgrim Poemenia began her journey to Thebaid, Egypt to visit the holy man, John of Lycopolis, in hope of being cured of her ailment, she received her *eulogia* by way of gift-giving.⁶⁹ Upon arriving at the holy man's cult site and enquiring about visiting John, Poemenia soon learned that he did not confer with women. Instead, she sent to him the bishops who accompanied her. After revealing to the holy man Poemenia's request, they returned "with a vial filled with oil that relieved her ailment."⁷⁰ In this case Poemenia dispatched the bishops on a "vicarious pilgrimage", albeit on a miniature scale. Distributing pilgrims' souvenirs, particularly ampullae, via gift-giving enabled a greater number of people to benefit from the healing abilities of sanctified, holy earth and oil, even if they could not venture to a cult site or visit a holy man themselves.

TRAVELING PEDDLERS

Distribution may also have taken place outside the context of cult sites. Due largely to the pioneering research of Sheila Campbell, Byzantinists are just now beginning to flesh out this underdeveloped theory. In her article, Campbell toils with a small group of flasks from Aphrodisias in Caria, quite similar to the flasks in the Princeton group, lacking in both iconographical and archaeological evidence for their production and distribution.⁷¹ What Campbell proposes is that travelling peddlers, who may have sold both secular and sacred objects alongside one another, distributed ampullae to customers who may never have left their homes.⁷² Furthermore, Campbell argues that generic images frequently adorning ampullae from Asia Minor, would have been beneficial, even preferable, for travelling peddlers and their consumer base, as they could be understood, by a wider audience and "allows for a multiplicity of interpretations."⁷³ If we imagine this to be true, the iconography, or lack thereof, of the flasks in the Princeton group, can therefore be seen less as ambiguous and incomprehensible and more so as accessible and multivalent.

While this claim diverges from the generally accepted theory on distribution, the work of later authors, i.e. Vikan, and more importantly, hagiography, can be employed as a preliminary effort to corroborate Campbell's "armchair pilgrim" theory.⁷⁴ In *The Life of Martha*, an early 7th-century text, a monk leaving the Wondrous Mountain, the cult site of St. Symeon the Stylite the Younger, claims that he had, "'wandered around carrying [Symeon's] clay tokens which have been stamped with his image."⁷⁵ Despite not being perfect equivalents, cross-examining tokens with ampullae is still a useful exercise for trying to answer unresolved questions in a data set. Therefore, if tokens were being distributed elsewhere, it is likely this practice was applicable for ampullae too.⁷⁶ Rather than viewing objects and the images that adorn them as indexical, historians, namely Byzantinists, have begun to recognize the importance of nuance, and that inscriptions and provenance are not necessarily the culminating factors of an object's perceived worth or identity. For ampullae distributed by traveling peddlers, a figure's identity and value was purely in the eye of the beholder.

CONCLUSION

The biography of a pilgrims' souvenir is far from universal. However, previous scholars have consistently limited the scope of the production and distribution for ampullae and tokens to pilgrimage centers and the hands of the faithful. This one-dimensional approach has had a significant impact on how later scholars have incorporated ampullae into their discussions and arguments about pilgrimage in Byzantium. In this light, the production and distribution of ampullae are seen only in the context of cult sites despite there being a paucity of evidence that actually proves this practice occurred at pilgrimage centers other than Qal'at Si'mān and Abu Mina.

This article has argued that pilgrimage centers are just one of a handful of locales that ampullae were produced at and distributed from. Ampullae could be produced at production centers specific to a cult site or in off-site facilities that may have utilized non-specific images to cater to the diversity of the late antique world. Apart from shop stalls in or near pilgrimage centers, ampullae too could be distributed by way of gift-giving and travelling peddlers. Instead of creating categorical boxes, whose etymologies are crafted out of modern historical motivations, Byzantinists should become acquainted with thinking just as creatively and fluidly as the societies and cultures they have set out to study. By presenting a range of conceivable methods for the production and distribution of ampullae, I hope to

have both enlarged the scope of previous studies and to have shown the importance of conversing with our evidence and recognizing nuance in art and history.

NOTES

¹ Sarah Blick, "Bringing Pilgrimage Home: The Production, Iconography, and Domestic Use of Late-Medieval Devotional Objects by Ordinary People," *Religions* 392, no. 10 (2019): 4; Andreas Pülz, "Archaeological Evidence of Christian Pilgrimage in Ephesus," *Herom* 1, no. 1 (2012): 238, <https://doi.org/10.11116/herom.1.9>; Susanne Bangert, "The Archaeology of Pilgrimage: Abu Mina and Beyond," in *Religious Diversity in Late Antiquity*, ed. Susanne Bangert and David M. Gwynn (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 306.

² J Elsner, "Replicating Palestine and Reversing the Reformation: Pilgrimage and Collecting at Bobbio, Monza and Walsingham," *Journal of the History of Collections* 9, no. 1 (1997): 119, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jhc/9.1.117>.

³ William Anderson, "An Archaeology of Late Antique Pilgrim Flasks," *Anatolian Studies* 54 (2004): 82–84; Sheila Campbell, "Armchair Pilgrims: Ampullae from Aphrodisias in Caria," *Mediaeval Studies* 50 (1988): 540–44, <https://doi.org/10.1484/j.ms.2.30366>.

⁴ Proxy evidence in this contexts is evidence from other forms of mobile objects that are closely related to ampullae, such as lamps, tokens, and coins.

⁵ I have chosen to employ "Face A" and "Face B" instead of "obverse" and "reverse" because, at this point in time, it is not possible to identify which side was considered to be which of the later set of terms, or, if the sides of a token, ampullae, or amulet, were at all, understood by that set terminology.; In the label, it is unclear whether this flask and the following were found in excavated in Antioch or purchased in Antioch in more recent times.

⁶ Vikan, "Byzantine Pilgrims' Art," 240–41.

⁷ Slobodan Ćurčić and Archer St. Clair, eds., "Terracotta," in *Byzantium at Princeton: Byzantine Art and Archaeology at Princeton University: Catalogue of an Exhibition at Firestone Library, Princeton University, August 1 Through October 26, 1986* (Princeton: Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, 1986), 120.

⁸ Slobodan Ćurčić and Archer St. Clair, eds., "Terracotta," in *Byzantium at Princeton: Byzantine Art and Archaeology at Princeton University: Catalogue of an Exhibition at Firestone Library, Princeton University, August 1 Through October 26, 1986* (Princeton: Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, 1986), 120–21.

⁹ Ćurčić and St. Clair, 121.

¹⁰ Ćurčić and St. Clair, 121.

¹¹ Ćurčić and St. Clair, 122.

¹² Ćurčić and St. Clair, "Byzantium at Princeton," 1986, 122.

¹³ Richard Camber, "A Hoard of Terracotta Amulets from the Holy Land," *Actes Du XVe Congrès International d'études Byzantines, Athènes, Septembre 1976* 2a (1981): 101.; Matthew 8:23-27.

¹⁴ L.Y. Rahmani, "Eulogia Tokens from Byzantine Bet She'an," *'Atiqot* 22 (1993): 110.

¹⁵ Rahmani, 111.; Luke 5:3-11.

¹⁶ Ćurčić and St. Clair, "Byzantium at Princeton," 1986, 122.

¹⁷ Ćurčić and St. Clair, "Byzantium at Princeton," 1986, 122.

¹⁸ Ćurčić and St. Clair, 122.

¹⁹ Blick, "Bringing Pilgrimage Home," 22.

²⁰ Ćurčić and St. Clair, "Byzantium at Princeton," 1986, 120.

²¹ Pülz, "Archaeological Evidence of Christian Pilgrimage in Ephesus," 234; Blick, "Bringing Pilgrimage Home," 2.

²² Ćurčić and St. Clair, "Byzantium at Princeton," 1986, 120.; Personal Conversation with Dr. Michael Padgett, Curator of Ancient Art, Princeton University Art Museum, May 14, 2019, Princeton University Art Museum.

²³ Camber, "A Hoard of Terracotta Amulets from the Holy Land," 100.

²⁴ Anderson, "An Archaeology of Late Antique Pilgrim Flasks," 89.

- ²⁵ Personal Conversation with Dr. Michael Padgett, Curator of Ancient Art, Princeton University Art Museum, May 14, 2019.
- ²⁶ Ćurčić and St. Clair, "Byzantium at Princeton," 1986, 121.; Inscriptions are frequently incorporated into molds for Egyptian ampullae a
- ²⁷ Ćurčić and St. Clair, 121.
- ²⁸ Campbell, "Armchair Pilgrims," 539; Pülz, "Archaeological Evidence of Christian Pilgrimage in Ephesus," 234.
- ²⁹ Campbell, "Armchair Pilgrims," 545; Pülz, "Archaeological Evidence of Christian Pilgrimage in Ephesus," 235.
- ³⁰ Pülz, "Archaeological Evidence of Christian Pilgrimage in Ephesus," 246.
- ³¹ Rahmani, "Eulogia Tokens from Byzantine Bet She'an," 109.
- ³² Ćurčić and St. Clair, "Byzantium at Princeton," 1986, 121.
- ³³ Ćurčić and St. Clair, 122; Camber, "A Hoard of Terracotta Amulets from the Holy Land," 101; Rahmani, "Eulogia Tokens from Byzantine Bet She'an," 111.
- ³⁴ Anderson, "An Archaeology of Late Antique Pilgrim Flasks," 80; Bangert, "The Archaeology of Pilgrimage," 293.
- ³⁵ Elsner, "Replicating Palestine and Reversing the Reformation," 121.
- ³⁶ Boero, "The Cultural Biography of a Pilgrimage Token," 6.
- ³⁷ Anderson, "An Archaeology of Late Antique Pilgrim Flasks," 85.
- ³⁸ Anderson, 84–85.
- ³⁹ Pülz, "Archaeological Evidence of Christian Pilgrimage in Ephesus," 230–31. As stated in the *Acta Ioannis*, when John died, he did not actually die, but instead is asleep in his grave, causing the dust around his burial site gently rise and fall when he breathed.
- ⁴⁰ Two ampullae found at Ephesus are quite similar to the *Ampulla with St. Andrew* and *Ampulla with Unidentified Figures* at Princeton. This may suggest that there was a common set of iconographies in use across Asia Minor. However, there is not enough evidence to determine if some of the flasks at Princeton were produced in or near Ephesus though.
- ⁴¹ Pülz, "Archaeological Evidence of Christian Pilgrimage in Ephesus," 233.
- ⁴² Bangert, "The Archaeology of Pilgrimage," 314.
- ⁴³ Bangert, 299.
- ⁴⁴ Boero, "The Cultural Biography of a Pilgrimage Token," 6.
- ⁴⁵ Bangert, "The Archaeology of Pilgrimage," 318.
- ⁴⁶ Bangert, 319.
- ⁴⁷ Boero, "The Cultural Biography of a Pilgrimage Token," 5.
- ⁴⁸ Bangert, "The Archaeology of Pilgrimage," 311; Rangar H. Cline, "A Two-Sided Mold and the Entrepreneurial Spirit of Pilgrimage Souvenir Production in Late Antique Syria-Palestine," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 29, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jla.2014.0017>.
- ⁴⁹ The following methods of distribution have been partitioned into three sections for accessibility and organizational reasons. In no way should any section be perceived as vying for supremacy over another. Instead, we should understand these sections as approaches that occurred parallel and not in contradiction of one another.
- ⁵⁰ Bangert, "The Archaeology of Pilgrimage," 295; William Anderson, "Menas Flasks in the West: Pilgrimage and Trade at the End of Antiquity," *AWE* 6 (2007): 222, <https://doi.org/10.2143/AWE.6.0.2022800>; Blick, "Bringing Pilgrimage Home," 7. Rebecca Stephens Falcasantos, "Wandering Wombs, Inspired Intellectuals: Christian Religious Travel in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 25, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 113, <https://doi.org/10.1353/earl.2017.0003>.
- ⁵¹ Pülz, "Archaeological Evidence of Christian Pilgrimage in Ephesus," 243.
- ⁵² Pülz, 243.
- ⁵³ Cline, "A Two-Sided Mold," 44.
- ⁵⁴ Clive Foss, "Pilgrimage in Medieval Asia Minor," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002): 141.
- ⁵⁵ Foss, 141.

- ⁵⁶ Foss, 141.
- ⁵⁷ Dennis Trout, "Theodelinda's Rome: 'Ampullae', Pittacia", and the Image of the City," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 50 (2005): 131.
- ⁵⁸ Trout, 131.
- ⁵⁹ Sweeney, "Holy Images and Holy Matter," 121.
- ⁶⁰ Donal Cooper and Janet Robson, "Imagery and the Economy of Penance at the Tomb of St. Francis," in *Architecture and Pilgrimage, 1000-1050: Southern Europe and Beyond*, ed. Paul Davies, Deborah Howard, and Wendy Pullan (Farnham, Surrey: Great Britain: Ashgate, 2013), 178.
- ⁶¹ Cooper and Robson, 178.
- ⁶² Cooper and Robson, 178.
- ⁶³ Cooper and Robson, 178.
- ⁶⁴ Vikan, "Byzantine Pilgrims' Art," 324.
- ⁶⁵ Hagith Sivan, "Holy Land Pilgrimage and Western Audiences: Some Reflections on Egeria and Her Circle," *Classical Quarterly* 38, no. ii (1988): 534; Hagith Sivan, "Who Was Egeria? Piety and Pilgrimage in the Age of Gratian," *The Harvard Theological Review* 81, no. 1 (January 1988): 68.
- ⁶⁶ Sivan, "Holy Land Pilgrimage and Western Audiences," 529-30.
- ⁶⁷ Sivan, 533.
- ⁶⁸ Falcasantos, "Wandering Wombs, Inspired Intellectuals," 112.
- ⁶⁹ Bernadette Mc Nary-Zak, "Problematizing Women and Holy Land Pilgrimage in Late Antiquity," *Magistra* 8, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 1.
- ⁷⁰ Mc Nary-Zak, 1.
- ⁷¹ Campbell, "Armchair Pilgrims."
- ⁷² Campbell, 544; Anderson, "Menas Flasks in the West," 222.
- ⁷³ Campbell, "Armchair Pilgrims," 545.
- ⁷⁴ Gary Vikan, "Guided by Land and Sea: Pilgrim Art and Pilgrim Travel in Early Byzantium," *Jahrbuch Für Antike Und Christentum Ergänzungsband/* 18 (1991): 92.
Charles Kuper, *Life of Martha, Mother of Symeon the Stylite the Younger* (Yonkers: New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, forthcoming, n.d.), chaps. 54-55; Vikan, "Guided by Land and Sea," 92.⁷⁵ Kuper, *Life of Martha, Mother of Symeon the Stylite the Younger*, chaps. 54-55.
- ⁷⁶ Elsner, "Replicating Palestine and Reversing the Reformation," 119-20; Vikan, "Guided by Land and Sea," 78; Boero, "The Cultural Biography of a Pilgrimage Token," 4; Sweeney, "Holy Images and Holy Matter," 121.

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