

# »Reading« the Images on Pilgrim Mementoes (Eulogies): their Iconography as a Source for the Cult of Saints in the Early Byzantine Period

»The martyr's body is in many respects different from other bodies [...] Indeed, to most people the remnants of the other bodies are disgusting and nobody gladly passes a grave [...] But somebody coming to a place like this one, where we are gathering today, where the memory of the just is kept alive and his holy remains preserved, is in the first place attracted by the magnificence of what they see. They see a house that, like a temple of God, is splendidly adorned by the size of the building and the beauty of its ornamentation. The carpenter shaped the wood until it had the form of animals and the mason polished the stones until they had the smoothness of silver«<sup>1</sup>.

The passage cited above comes from a homily by Gregory of Nyssa on St Theodore and is one of the earliest descriptions of the means, symbols and practices that make up the cult of a saint and the creation of a holy shrine<sup>2</sup>. Thus, the Cappadocian Church Father informs us that around the saint's tomb, a place that by its very nature would deter visitors, the first thing that is needed is a splendid structure to entice the believer. And he goes on:

»The painter colored the blooms of his art, having depicted on an image the martyr's brave deeds, his opposition, his continuous pain, the beastly appearance of the tyrants, the insults, the blazing furnace that was the athlete's most blessed end [...]«<sup>3</sup>.

So, apart from an elaborate building surrounding the tomb, there has to be a pictorial narration of the saint's life. This is a very important piece of information, since the earliest

surviving iconographical cycles of saints' lives are products of the middle and late Byzantine periods<sup>4</sup>. And Gregory's passage is not the only relevant reference from this early period. The *ekphrasis* of Asterios of Amasea on the painted panels with the martyrdom of St Euphemia in her church in Chalcedon is yet another testimony<sup>5</sup>. The latter also permits us a glimpse of the multiple functions that such pictorial cycles could serve. For example, the emphasis given to the description of St Euphemia bleeding may be hinting at a cult practice in her shrine, i.e. the miracle of the saint's blood flowing from her tomb<sup>6</sup>.

However, in addition to any suppositions we may make about the role of pictorial life cycles, Gregory of Nyssa gives a very clear answer to the question as to why such material means are necessary:

»Because the faithful Christian, having seen all these lovely works of art, will wish to approach the tomb too, being by then convinced that touching it results in sanctification and blessing«.

He also tells us that, since not everybody could take away something from the authentic relics, earth that had been placed on top of the saint's tomb was given away as a gift and was treasured as an heirloom<sup>7</sup>. This is one of the earliest references in the written sources to the so-called *eulogies*, i.e. the objects that pilgrims received as a souvenir of their visit to a shrine<sup>8</sup>. Gregory also clearly reveals the reason behind their creation that is the pilgrims' desire to take away with them the »blessing« received from contact with the relic<sup>9</sup>.

1 Greg. Nyss. enc. 737. Engl. transl.: Leemans et al., Greek homilies 84-85: Τα μὲν γὰρ ἄλλα τῶν λειψάνων, καὶ βδελυκτὰ τοῖς πολλοῖς ἔστι, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἡδέως παρέρχεται τάφον.... Ἐλθὼν δὲ εἰς τις χωρίον ὁμοιον τούτῳ, ἔνθα σήμερον καὶ ὁ ἡμέτερος σύλλογος, ὅπου μνήμη δικαίου καὶ ἁγίου λείψανον. Πρῶτον μὲν τῇ μεγαλοπρεπείᾳ τῶν ὀρωμένων ψυχαγωγεῖται, οἶκον βλέπων ὡς Θεοῦ ναόν, ἐξησκημένον λαμπρῶς τῷ μεγέθει τῆς οἰκοδομῆς, καὶ τῷ τῆς ἐπικοσμῆσεως κάλλει, ἔνθα καὶ τέκτων εἰς ζῶων φαντασίαν τὸ ξύλον ἐμόρφωσε καὶ λιθοξόος εἰς ἀργύρου λειότητα τὰς πλάκας ἀπέξεσεν.

2 Foskolou, Leipsana 168-169.

3 Greg. Nyss. enc. 737: Ἐπέχρωσε δὲ καὶ ὁ ζωγράφος τὰ ἀνθη τῆς τέχνης ἐν εἰκόνι διαγραφάμενος, τὰς ἀριστείας τοῦ μάρτυρος, τὰς ἐνστάσεις, τὰς ἀληθδόνες, τὰς θηριώδεις τῶν τυράννων μορφὰς, τὰς ἐπηρείας τὴν φλογετρόφον ἐκείνην κάμινον, τὴν μακαριωτάτην τελείωσιν τοῦ ἀθλήτου, τοῦ ἀγωνοθέτου Χριστοῦ [...].

4 On the iconography of the Lives of saints, see Ševčenko, Saint Nicholas 158-9. On Vita icons see also Ševčenko, Vita Icon. – Papamastorakes, Pictorial Lives. – Chatterjee, Living Icon.

5 Speyer, Euphemia-Rede. For engl. transl. and comments, see Leemans et al., Greek homilies 173-176.

6 Webb, Asterios of Amaseia 25-26.

7 Greg. Nyss. enc. 740: Καὶ τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς οὕτω φιλοτεχνήμασιν ἔευασθήσας τὴν ὄψιν, ἐπιθυμεῖ λοιπὸν καὶ αὐτῇ πλησιάσει τῇ θήκῃ ἁγιασμὸν καὶ εὐλογίαν τὴν ἐπαφὴν εἶναι πιστεύων.

8 Vikan, Pilgrimage Art 13-17. – Maraval, Lieux saints 237-241. It should be noted that the word *eulogia* can also be used in a general way to mean a gift in kind, and pilgrims might take away many different things from a *locus sanctus* as an *eulogia*, such as earth, oil from the church lamps, wax, or even some comestibles such as fruit or bread. For a brief account of the different kind of *eulogies*, see Stuiber, Eulogia 922-928.

9 Behind this custom lies the notion that holy places and relics were »receptacles of divine energy«, as John of Damascus tell us, while the wonder-working power of the saints stayed »alive« in their tombs and remains. Cf. Maraval, Lieux saints 147. – Vikan, Pilgrimage Art 23-25. These beliefs, combined with the pilgrims' need to take something away with them to represent the blessing that they received from their visit to the holy places or from their contact with the genuine relics, led to the creation of these tangible *eulogies* which functioned as substitute or secondary relics, »Ersatz- oder Sekundäreliquien«, as Engemann, Jerusalem 31-35 has characteristically described them. – Maraval, Lieux saints 143-144. 147.



**Fig. 1** Copper alloy stamp with image of St Philip (late 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> c.). – (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Richmond. Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund. Obj. no. 66.29.2; photo T. Fullerton, © Virginia Museum of Fine Arts).

The *eulogies* mentioned in the sources have been identified by modern-day scholarship with a series of objects: clay, metal or glass medallions and flasks for consecrated substances. The content and the material, along with the decorative motifs and inscriptions gave these – at first glance – paltry objects, made with very simple techniques and cheap materials, the force of an amulet with miraculous properties<sup>10</sup>. For example, in a later account of the miracles of St Theodore, the reference to the stamped wax tokens distributed in his church that could also protect a home from thieves shows the range of powers the pilgrim mementoes possessed in the minds of medieval people<sup>11</sup>.

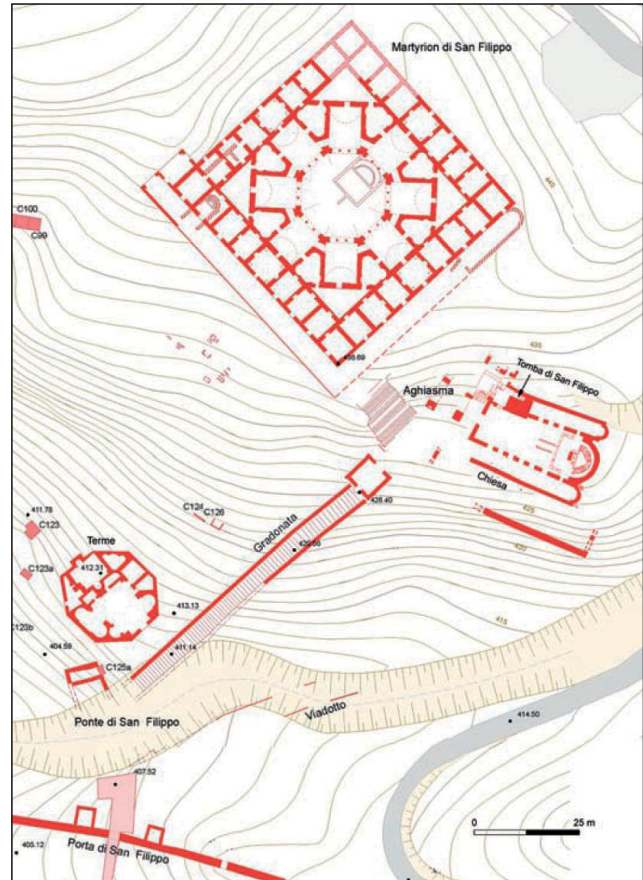
These objects can be a very rich source of information on many aspects of the pilgrimage scene. In an earlier article, I have examined their financial dimension, methods of production and distribution. Based on textual and archaeological evidence I have proposed that as a rule in the early Byzantine period pilgrim mementoes were either made in the shrine itself or in workshops near and under the control of the pilgrimage centres<sup>12</sup>. The well-known Menas ampullae, i.e. the clay flasks probably used for carrying holy oil away from the tomb of the saint<sup>13</sup>, are the most typical example of the former<sup>14</sup>, since they were probably made in pottery workshops in the pilgrimage centre of Abū Mīnā in Egypt<sup>15</sup>. A strong argument for the latter is given by the clay tokens found at Qal'at Sim'ān, as laboratory analyses have revealed that they were local products, made of soil taken not from the pilgrimage site itself but from the surrounding area<sup>16</sup>.

10 Vikan, *Pilgrimage Art* 15-17. 31-44. – Foskolou, *Blessing for sale*. – Sodini, *Terre des semelles*.

11 Sigalas, *Theodoros 73*, 18: Καὶ ἐν ὁποίῳ τις ἂν αὐτοῦ προσδράμη ναῶ ἢ μήνυσιν σὺλῶν ἐπιζητῶν ἢ οἰκετῶν δρασμὸν ἐπισηθῆναι δεόμενος, ἀρκεῖ τοῦτον ἑκατέρων σφραγιδα μικρὰν ἐκ κηροῦ λαβεῖν καὶ εἰς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ οἶκον ἐνηθασαυρίσασθαι καὶ δι' ἐκείνης ὁ μὲν ὑποχειρίου ποιεῖ τοὺς συλῆσαντας, ὁ δὲ ὡσαύτως τοὺς ἀποδράσαντας, Χρυσίππου πρεσβυτέρου Ἱεροσολύμων ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὸν ἅγιον μάρτυρα Θεόδωρον, ἔτι δὲ καὶ τῶν αὐτοῦ θαυμάτων μερικὴ διήγησις.

12 Foskolou, *Blessing for sale*.

13 Engemann, *Eulogien und Votive* 228. – Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrims' Art* 240.



**Fig. 2** Plan of the excavated area in the shrine of Apostle Philip in Hierapolis, Phrygia. – (After D'Andria, *Il Santuario* fig. 3; © Italian Archaeological Mission at Hierapolis in Phrygia).

In both cases the shrine must have had a monopoly over their distribution, which probably mainly involved giving them away, as various references in the sources suggest. Furthermore, recent excavations in the area of the road leading uphill from the nearby settlement of Telanissos to the Qal'at Sim'ān sanctuary have brought to light a number of buildings on either side of the road that most probably functioned as shops. However, no pilgrimage memorabilia were discovered in this area. Clay tokens and other objects of private devotion were unearthed only in the two reception rooms located next to the monumental entrance to the sanctuary, which means that they were offered to pilgrims after they had entered the shrine<sup>17</sup>. The total absence of these kinds of objects from the market area clearly suggests that the shrine controlled their distribution.

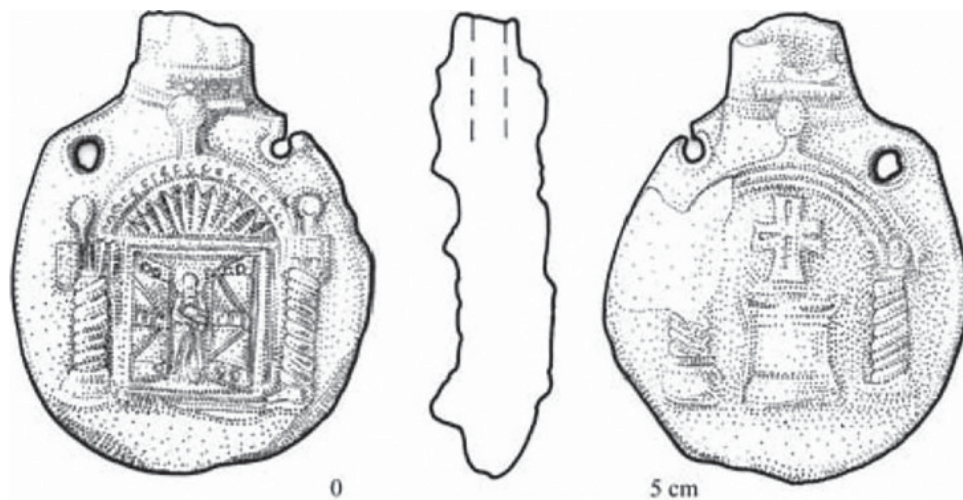
14 The literature on the St Menas ampullae is very rich. For a concise general presentation of these artifacts with earlier bibliography: Sodini, *Terre des semelles* 86-92.

15 More specifically the excavations of 1901 in Abū Mīnā discovered kilns and moulds, see Kaufmann, *La découverte* 56-60 fig. 39. 42. See also Leclerq, *Ménas* 376 figs 7975-7976. – Grossmann, *Abū Mīnā* 293. – Witt, *Menasampullen* 27-30.

16 Gerard et al., *Argiles et eulogies*.

17 Pieri, *Les bâtiments d'accueil* 1414-1418.

**Fig. 3** Drawing of a clay Asia minor flask with a representation of a tomb aedicula (6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> c.), found in the excavation of the shrine of Apostle Philip, Hierapolis, Phrygia. – (After D' Andria, *Il Santuario* fig. 35 © Italian Archaeological Mission at Hierapolis in Phrygia; drawing B.-H. Eketuft Rygh).



Leaving issues of production and distribution aside, in this paper I will examine the pilgrim souvenirs from a different angle. Focusing on their iconography, I will try to demonstrate how their sketchy representations, when studied alongside archaeological evidence and textual sources, can offer us sound information on the cult of saints and the topography of their shrines.

As a rule the images that decorate these mementoes recall, through topographical references, the holy place from which they came, often with a high degree of accuracy<sup>18</sup>. This applies, for example, in the case of the well-known circular bronze stamp for the pilgrim tokens of St Philip, which probably originated from his shrine in Hierapolis in Phrygia<sup>19</sup> (fig. 1). The round structure shown on one side of the saint has already been identified with the octagonal church in Hierapolis, known since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Recent excavations have also discovered a three-aisled basilica, which must be identified with the building depicted on the other side of the saint. Likewise, a monumental walkway with steps was uncovered that led from the shrine's entrance to the two church buildings at the top of the hill, a feature that is particularly emphasized on the »medallion«<sup>20</sup> (fig. 2). Thus, the sanctuary is suggested using both the most important points of the cult, such as the two churches, and other elements that were part of the pilgrim's experience and would perhaps recall their visit, such as the steps.

Another find from Hierapolis is similar in this respect. It is an ampulla, one of the so-called Asia Minor flasks, showing on the obverse a tomb aedicula with an open double door in the middle of which stands a figure and on the reverse a ciborium with a cross on a column (an altar?)<sup>21</sup> (fig. 3). A handful of examples of this iconographic type of Asia Minor flasks are



**Fig. 4** Clay Asia minor flask with a representation of a tomb aedicula (6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> c.). – (The Walters Art Museum no. 48.2521; photo © The Walters Art Museum, <http://art.thewalters.org/detail/19490/pilgrim-flask-2> [15.11.2017]).

known. The standing figure has been identified as Lazarus (i.e. the image represents the Raising of Lazarus<sup>22</sup>) (fig. 4). However, taking into account the finds of the excavations in Hierapolis, we now have to reconsider this identification. To be specific, inside the three-aisled basilica mentioned above a monumental tomb dating back to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD was discovered. This has been convincingly identified as the tomb

18 Weitzmann, *Loca Sancta* 48-55. – Vikan, *Devotionalia*.

19 Gonosová/Kondoleon, *Virginia Museum of Fine Arts* 270-273 no. 94. On the shrine of St Philip in Hierapolis, see D'Andria, *Il Santuario*. – Caggia, *La collina di San Filippo*.

20 D'Andria, *Il Santuario*. – D'Andria Hierapolis. – Caggia, *La collina di San Filippo*. I would like to express my thanks to Prof. D' Andria for putting at my disposal the newest publications about the excavations in the pilgrimage centre of Hierapolis.

21 D'Andria, *Il Santuario* 46 fig. 35. For the Asia Minor flasks, Anderson, *Pilgrim flasks*. – Sodini, *La terre des semelles* 105-126.

22 Metzger, *Ampoules* 47-48 no. 120-122. – Anderson, *Pilgrim flasks* 84. – D'Andria, *Il Santuario* 46 n. 77. For a different interpretation of the motif of the open tomb (i.e. as a metaphor for the pilgrims' passage to the afterlife) see Vikan, *Pilgrimage Art* 62-63.



**Fig. 5** The tomb in the basilica of St Philip, Hierapolis, Phrygia. – (Photo © C. Ras-mussen 2011; image courtesy of www.HolyLandPhotos.org).

of the Apostle Philip<sup>23</sup> (fig. 5). Its facade survives in very good condition to this day and it has many points in common with the structure depicted in abbreviated form on one side of the ampulla, such as the two spiral fluted columns and the gabled top. Thus the figure emerging from the centre of the structure, holding a book, must be identified as the Apostle Philip, not Lazarus. Thus, out of all the possibilities offered by a large complex covering a vast area with multiple buildings, the ampulla's iconography focuses on the most sacred destination for pilgrims: the tomb of the apostle.

This example confirms once again that, despite their abbreviated and abstract nature, the topographical references on pilgrim tokens are not generic but highly specific and symbolically loaded<sup>24</sup>. This allows us to attempt to extract similar information from other such objects, such as for example the bronze pilgrim token stamp depicting St Isidore of Chios who was venerated on the island in a holy place that remains virtually unknown<sup>25</sup> (fig. 6).

The iconographic references to the site functioned as the shrine's trademark, i.e. guaranteeing on the one hand the authenticity of the *eulogia* the pilgrims took away with them and on the other making it the »vehicle« that permitted them to constantly return to the sanctuary through their memories<sup>26</sup>. The *eulogiae* created a lifetime link between



**Fig. 6** Bronze stamp with image of St Isidore (6<sup>th</sup> c.). – (Foto The Walters Art Museum no. 54.230; © The Walters Art Museum, <http://art.thewalters.org/detail/22682> [15.11.2017]).

the token's owner and the shrine and by extension offered life-long protection. Thus, it is no coincidence that when St Symeon Stylites the Younger was confronted with a somewhat annoying pilgrim, who absolutely insisted on taking something of the saint himself away with him, he offered him a stamped clay token, explaining that his image on it was enough to ensure his protection and even his assistance in case of need<sup>27</sup>.

This information allows us to suppose that the depictions of holy figures on mementoes from shrines were believed to be authentic portraits. By extension, in the case of saints who, unlike Symeon, who personally certified the »truth« of the depiction, were no longer living, the pilgrim tokens probably copied a cult icon of the saint, directly related to her/his tomb and relics. From this point of view, these humble objects can offer indirect evidence of the existence of devotional icons of saints that have not survived from this early period<sup>28</sup>. This hypothesis is also supported by the mid-seventh-century Miracles of Saint Artemios. From this text, we learn that in the shrine in Constantinople where the saint's relics were kept, a pilgrimage destination for people suffering from diseases of

23 D'Andria, *Il Santuario* 13-23.

24 It is generally known that for medieval artists and their audience the depiction of certain emblematic architectural elements was sufficient to identify the visual copy with the original monument. This is also confirmed by the descriptions of monuments in the written sources in which medieval writers, like artists, focus their interest on certain architectural forms and shapes of buildings, highlighting and explaining their symbolic dimensions. For the representation of architecture in medieval art see the seminal study by R. Krautheimer, »Iconography«.

25 The Walters Art Museum no. 54230, βλ. See also, Vikan, *Guided by Land and Sea* 79 pl. 8g. On the basilica of St Isidore on Chios, see Pennas, *The Basilica of St. Isidore*. – Vogiatzes/Vasse, *Proskynēma Ag. Isidorou*.

26 Vikan, *Devotionalia* 282-283. – Foskolou, *Blessing for Sale* 58-59.

27 Van den Ven, *Symeon Stylite 206: Ἐγανάκτησε δὲ Συμεὼν κατὰ τοῦ πρεσβυτέρου εἰπὼν Ἵτι τοῦτο ἠπάτησέ σε ὁ ἀπατῶν ἐν τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ. – Πανταχῆ γὰρ ἐνεργῆς ὑπάρχει ἡ τοῦ Θεοῦ δύναμις. Λαβὼν οὖν τῆς κόνεώς μου τὴν εὐλογίαν, ἀπόμενε καὶ ἐν τῇ σφραγίδι τοῦ τύπου ἡμῶν βλέπων ἐκεῖνο βλέψεις ἡμᾶς. See also Vikan, *Art, Medicine and Magic* 72-73. – Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrims' Art* 245-247.*

28 Vikan, *Icon Pieti*. – Dal Santo, »Visionary Body«. – Foskolou, *Leipsana* 163-167. On the early icons and their origin in the funerary cult of saints, Belting, *Bild und Kult* 92-112.



**Fig. 7** Clay pilgrim token with image of St Phocas (6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> c.). – (Photo The State Hermitage Museum, S.-Peterburg, no. X-263; © The State Hermitage Museum, S.-Peterburg, Photo by S. Suetova).

the genitals, a wax seal with the imprint of the saint's figure, the so called *kerote*, was offered as a *blessing* to pilgrims<sup>29</sup>. Since the text explicitly mentions a devotional icon of St Artemios, hanging on the *templon* of the church, it is logical to assume the wax seals copied this icon<sup>30</sup>.

A large clay medallion of St Phocas from Cherson, today in the State Hermitage Museum, very persuasively reveals the relationship between pilgrim mementoes and cult icons<sup>31</sup> (fig. 7). St Phocas is depicted here in a special outfit: he wears trousers drawn tight at the knees, and a wide belt that encircles a tight-waisted overgarment like a shirt, giving him an appearance quite untypical of a saint in this period. The saint, who came from humble stock, was a gardener from Sinope<sup>32</sup>,



**Fig. 8** Clay pilgrim token with the Annunciation found in the excavations of Kolona in the island of Aigina (6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> c.). – (After Felten, Siedlung no. 142 pl. 27).

yet on the token he is depicted more like a sailor. This is also suggested by the sketchy but very convincing depiction of a ship with oars and a rudder on which the saint appears standing with his arms raised in prayer<sup>33</sup>. The reason for this is well known: as we learn from a homily dedicated to him by Asterios of Amasea<sup>34</sup>, seamen from all over the »Black Sea to the Adriatic, the Aegean, the Western ocean and the bays of the Eastern lands« considered him their protector<sup>35</sup>. The rhetor also informs us that they often saw Phocas before a storm at the helm of their ships »stretching the ropes and taking care of the sail, looking ahead from the prow to the shallow waters«<sup>36</sup>. The sailors' vision in Asterios' description and the portrait of the saint on the medallion correspond in almost every detail, a fact that allows us to assume that both

29 Miracles of St. Artemios 108-109: [...] ἀπὸ κηρίου σφραγιδίου ἔχον ἐκτύπωμα τοῦ ἁγίου, ἐν ἑαυτῷ γενόμενος ἔγνω τὸ οἰκονομούμενον ἐπ' αὐτῷ θαῦμα, καὶ ὅτι ὁ ἅγιος Ἀρτέμιος ἦν ὁ ὀφθαίς αὐτῷ. (he possessed a wax seal bearing an image of the saint, [and] coming to his senses, he recognized the miracle that was worked upon him and that St Artemios was the one who had appeared to him).

30 [...] πάλιν ἐρωτῶσιν αὐτήν· »Τὸν ἅγιον Ἀρτέμιον ποίῳ τρόπῳ ὄντα ἐώρακας«. – ἢ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῇ· »Ὁμοίος ἦν τῆς ἐστῶσης εἰκόνας ἐν τῷ εὐωνύμῳ μέρει τοῦ αὐτοῦ ναοῦ, ἐν τῷ τέμπλῳ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου [...]« (Again they asked her: »In what form did you see St Artemios?« She said to her: »He resembled the icon standing on the left side of the same church on the templon of the sanctuary [...]«.), Miracles of St. Artemios 180-181. See also Mango, Templon 42-43.

31 The token was found during the archaeological excavations at Cherson in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Cf. Latyšev, Etjudy 344-349. See also Vikan, Pilgrimage Art 20-21.

32 Another Phocas, bishop and martyr, also from Amasea, is known in the hagiographical tradition, but he might be a later derivation of the gardener: Van de Vorst, Phocas. – Oikonomides, Phōkas. – For Phocas the gardener see the material in BHG 1535-1540.

33 The image on the medallion is the earliest known portrait of the saint. On the iconography of saints named Phocas, see Starodubcev, Holy gardener.

34 The encomium of Asterios was delivered during a celebration held in Amasea in a shrine devoted to St Phocas, probably after 400. It constitutes the earliest written testimony on the martyr gardener from Sinope and the source for the Vita of the saint by Symeon Metaphrastes, see Van de Vorst, Phocas 252-253. – Leemans et al., Greek homilies 167.

35 Asterios, Enkōmion, col. 309: Ναῦται δὲ καὶ πλωτῆρες οἱ πανταχοῦ οὐχ οἱ τὸν Εὐξεινον Πόντον διαπλέοντες, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ τὸν Ἀνδριανὴν τέμνοντες καὶ ὑπὲρ Αἰγαίου φερόμενοι καὶ ὄσοι τὸν Ἰκεανὸν πλέουσιν τὸν Ἑσπέριον καὶ τοὺς Ἑψοῖς κόλποις ἐνθαλαττεύουσι, τὰ συνήθη κελεύσματα, οἷς τοῦ πλοῦ τὸν πόνον προσαναπαύουσιν, εἰς καινὴν τοῦ μάρτυρος μετέβαλον εὐφημίαν. Engl. translation, Leemans et al., Greek homilies 172: »The seamen and sailors everywhere, not only those who sail through the Euxine (Black Sea) but also those cutting through the Adriatic and the Aegean, or the Western ocean or the bays of the Eastern lands, have adapted the usual songs for the relief of their labour into a new eulogy of our noble man«. – The early cult of Phocas as a guardian of seamen and sailors is also attested by an eloquent invocation to the saint (Κύριε καὶ ἁγίε Φωκά σοσον τὸ πλοῖον Μαρία καὶ τοὺς πλέοντες ἐν αὐτῷ / Lord and saint Phocas save the ship called Maria and those who sail in it) found inscribed at a site called *Grammata* in Syros, a natural port on the south coast of the island, where numerous graffiti left by seamen since the Hellenistic era have been recorded: Kiourtzian, Recueil des inscriptions 144-146 no. 71 (5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century).

36 Asterios, Enkōmion, col. 309, 312: Πολλάκις γ' οὖν ὤφθη νῦν μὲν νύκτωρ προσδοκώμενου χειμῶνος διεγείρων τὸν κυβερνήτην τῷ πηδαλίῳ ἐπινοστήζοντα· καὶ ἄλλοτε δὲ πάλιν τοὺς κάλως διατείνων καὶ τῆς ὀθόνης ἐπιμελούμενος καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς πῦρας προοπτεύων τὰ βράχῃ. Engl. transl., Leemans et al., Greek homilies 172: »Often he has been seen at night, when a storm was expected, awaking the helmsman who was dropping asleep over his rudder, at another moment stretching the ropes and taking care of the sail, looking forward from the prow to the shallow waters«.



Fig. 9 Silver token with the Annunciation and the Holy Rider from Casarea Maritima. – (After Frova, Scavi di Caesarea Maritima fig. 299).

the text and the mementoes had a common source of inspiration, probably a devotional icon of the saint.

Furthermore, as the inscription on the clay token («St Phocas blessing the Poor House at Chersonesos») suggests, this icon would have belonged to a church foundation of a charitable nature dedicated to the martyr of Sinope and located in Cherson in the Crimea<sup>37</sup>. And indeed a clay mould for the production of similar medallions has been found in Cherson<sup>38</sup>. This foundation is not known from other sources, but the ecclesiastical orator gives us another piece of information that might account for the link between sailors, the saint in the guise of a seaman and a poorhouse in an area far away from Sinope, where the main centre of his cult was. In particular, Asterios tells us that it was a tradition among sailors to have Phocas as a guest at their table, i. e. to keep a portion of food for the martyr saint, for which one of them would substitute some money each day. The sum that was collected in this way was shared out among the poor each time they arrived in port and this was how the saint had also become a protector of the poor<sup>39</sup>. Asterios also reveals that it was in this way that the saint's cult crossed to the other side of the Black

Sea, as confirmed by the inscription on the token referring to Cherson<sup>40</sup>. One last detail seems crucial to the adoption of the explanation given above. As Asterios tells us, the food set for the holy martyr, which the sailors used to share amongst themselves, was a serving of fish<sup>41</sup>. This information could explain why a fish is depicted attached to one side of the saint's figure on the Hermitage token<sup>42</sup>.

Thus, the simple ceramic token from Cherson allows us to picture a devotional icon and makes clear that the images on pilgrim *devotionalia*, although exceptionally «economical» and abstract, could be bearers of multiple messages. It also reveals the importance of pilgrimage in the spread and transformations of local saints' cults and enables us to detect an otherwise unknown religious foundation and a charitable tradition.

Reading the multiple messages of the images on the *eulogies* could be a valuable source for early Christian religiosity and the following example confirms this view.

This is a clay token depicting the Annunciation, found in the coastal settlement of Kolona on the island of Aegina and dated according to the excavation data to the end of the

37 Latyšev, *Etjudy* 344: Εὐ(λο)γία τοῦ ἁγίου Φωκά τοῦ πτωχ(ε)ίου Χερσ(ῶ)νος. – On the meaning of the term πτωχεῖον as an institution designed to shelter and feed the destitute, see Miller, *Hospital* 26. On philanthropy, poverty, and the role of the Church in Late Antiquity, see Stathakopoulos, *Charity* 5-6 with earlier bibliography.

38 Jašaeva *Pilgerandenken* 479 fig. 1.3.

39 Asterios, *Enkōmion* 309-313. – Engl. transl. Leemans et al., *Greek homilies* 172: «It has become customary for sailors to have Phocas as a guest at table. And as it is impossible for someone incorporeal to share our life, hear how they contrived the impossible by pious consideration. Every day they reserve at table an equal part of their food for the martyr. One of them buys it for money, the next day another, and so on. So the buying is allotted daily to someone for acquiring a part. When a harbour receives them and they go on land, the money is divided among the needy: that is the part of Phocas, to look after the poor».

40 Asterios, *Enkōmion* col. 308-309, 313. – Engl. transl. Leemans et al., *Greek homilies* 172. 173: «But elsewhere also our martyr has established through small relics some colonies of the metropolis, remarkable places to be sought by Christians [...] The most uncultivated Scythians who inhabit the other side of the Euxine and dwell on the banks of the Maiotis and the Tanais river, also those who occupy the Bosphorus, stretching out until the Phasis river, all of them accompany as guards our gardener».

41 Asterios, *Enkōmion* col. 312: τὴν τῶν ὄψων μερίδα. – Liddell/Scott, *Lexicon* s. v. ὄψων, 1. cooked food, 2. relish, 3. fish. The diminutive form ὄψάριον is the usual word used in Medieval Greek for fish: Kriaras, *Lexiko* s. v. ὄψάριον.

42 It is interesting to note that on an Asia Minor ampulla found in Rhodes a beardless young man is depicted holding a small boat upright to his left and with a fish hanging from his belt, attributes that have led to his being identified as St Phocas. Cf. Katsiote, *Pēlina phialidia* 275 fig. 4.

6<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century<sup>43</sup> (fig. 8). The scene on the Aegina medallion recalls contemporary artefacts from the Holy Land: a silver token from Caesarea Maritima and a clay pilgrim ampulla with the same subject<sup>44</sup> (fig. 9-10). The Annunciation is also depicted on the Monza-Bobbio lead flasks and on small clay pilgrim tokens<sup>45</sup>. Despite their extremely abbreviated nature, all these examples share the same iconography: the Virgin Mary is shown standing or seated on a high backed throne, holding wool that she is unwinding from a basket while the angel stands facing her from the opposite side<sup>46</sup>. On some examples the scene is accompanied by an inscription giving the greeting spoken by the heavenly messenger according to the Gospels<sup>47</sup>.

The iconography of these pilgrim mementoes from the Holy Land permits us to attribute them to the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth<sup>48</sup>. Pilgrims' accounts mention two churches in the area, one on the spot of the well where Mary and the angel first met, and another in Joseph's house, where the Annunciation took place<sup>49</sup>. The version of the iconography with the Virgin spinning is inspired by the Protevangelium of James, which describes how »she returned home from the well terrified, put away the [water] jar, picked up the purple thread, sat in a chair and began to spin«<sup>50</sup>. It must have been depicted in the Church of the Annunciation, as several later sources describe a similar scene above the most sacred spot in the church, i. e. the place where the angel stood and uttered his salutation to the Virgin<sup>51</sup>.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century the theme of the Annunciation and this specific iconographic version became very popular. We often find it on personal objects – rings, cameos, pendants – mostly intended for women and especially as marriage gifts<sup>52</sup>, where it also had an amuletic function because it was connected with fertility and the fulfilment of the desire for a child<sup>53</sup>. By contrast, it was not widespread in monumental painting, since the only known example is found in the Basilica Euphrasiana in Parenzo (mod. Poreč)<sup>54</sup>. We also learn from written testimonies that a depiction of the Annunciation probably also decorated the apse of the Chalkoprateia church in Constantinople from at least the reign of Justin II (565-578)<sup>55</sup>.



Fig. 10 Drawing of a clay pilgrim ampulla with the Annunciation, from Palestine. – (Drawing Ph. Skyvalida after Rahmani, Two early Christian ampullae).

This last piece of information is quite interesting because it is not a subject we would expect to see depicted on an apse in this early period.

The medallion from Aegina can perhaps to some extent explain the significance of the previous example. More specifically, though it follows the iconographic type used in the *eulogies* from the Holy Land, it has a different inscription, i. e.: *Blessing of the Theotokos and the Archangel Michael of Pinnoulouphos*<sup>56</sup>. The wording leaves no doubt that this is a pilgrimage memento, but from where?

A search of the sources showed that it came from a church of the Virgin in Constantinople, known only from two references, one in the *Synaxarion* and the other in the *Typikon* of Saint Sofia, which mention a church »of the all holy Theot-

43 Felten, Siedlung 73-74 no. 142 pl. 27.

44 The silver medallion was part of a small hoard of jewellery and a reliquary, found when the city wall was excavated and dated to the late 6<sup>th</sup> century. Cf. Fropa, Caesarea Maritima 238-242 figs 298-299. The clay ampulla is also dated to the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Cf. Rahmani, Ampullae 71-74 fig. 1. Another example of the same type of ampulla is recorded in Sodini, Terre de semelles 81, n. 14.

45 Monza-Bobbio flasks: Grabar Ampoules 52 pl. VI, XLVII, LI. On the small clay tokens with the Annunciation see the latest publication in Cat. New York 2012 Nr 58a (B. Ratliff).

46 See also Cat. Jerusalem 2000, 148-149.

47 Rahmani, Ampullae 73: ΧΑΙΡΕ ΚΑΙΧΑΡΙΤΩΜΕΝΗ Ο ΚΥΡΙΟΣ ΜΕΤΑ ΣΟΥ (Χαίρε κεχαριτωμένη ὁ Κύριος μετὰ σοῦ / Hail, thou art highly favored, the Lord is with thee, Luke 1:28).

48 Rahmani, Ampullae 74. – Sodini, Terre de semelles 82. On the church of the Annunciation in Nazareth see Ovadia, Corpus 144-145 no. 147. Ovadia/de Silva, Supplementum 159-160 no. 46. – Pringle, Corpus 116-117 no. 169.

49 The church built over the site of the house of Mary and Joseph is mentioned in a short description of Nazareth by the Anonymus pilgrim of Piacenza dated around 570. Cf. Wilkinson, Jerusalem Pilgrims 79. The two churches are mentioned a hundred years later, around 670, by Abbot Adomnan. Cf. Wilkinson,

Jerusalem Pilgrims 109. On Nazareth, see also Maraval, Lieux saints 293. A clay token, now in the treasury of the Cathedral at Monza, which depicts the encounter between the Virgin Mary and the Angel at the well and bears the inscription: *Blessing of the Virgin of the stone (Boudiam?)*, is another indication of the existence of multiple centres of the Virgin's cult in Nazareth. On the Monza clay token see Grabar, Ampoules 31 pl. XXXI.

50 Hennecke/Schneemelcher, Apocrypha 380.

51 See, for example, the description of the scene by the pilgrim Ioannis Phocas (1185), PG 33, 936. – Engl. transl. Pringle, Corpus 120.

52 The most impressive example is a gold pectoral pendant, today in a private collection, with a marriage scene on one side and the scenes of the Annunciation, Visitation and Nativity on the other, Cat. Athens 2000, 290-291 no. 10 (J. Deckers). See also Geroulanou, É Panagia 228. 231 fig. 179. – Cat. Paris 1992, 89 no. 40-41; 277-278 no. 184 (M. Avisseau).

53 Penna, Zoe's lead seal 177.

54 Terry/Maguire, Dynamic Splendor 132-135.

55 Lackner, Marienmirakel 851-852. 847. – Mango, Chalkoprateia Annunciation 165.

56 Felten, Siedlung 73-74: Ευλογία της Θεοτόκου και του Αρχαγγέλου Μιχαήλ Πιννουλόφου.

okos beyond in Pinnoulophos»<sup>57</sup>. These notices constitute a *terminus ante quem* for the existence of this church, i. e. before the 10<sup>th</sup> century<sup>58</sup>, while the type of clay token involved suggests a relatively early religious foundation, i. e. from the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century.

Thus, the clay medallion from Aegina and the laconic references in the later liturgical sources allow us to add another early site of Marian cult in Constantinople, in which she was worshipped together with the Archangel Michael<sup>59</sup>. This shrine must have been located outside the city walls, on the northern side of the Golden Horn as the word πέραν (*beyond*) indicates<sup>60</sup>. Moreover, it was in an area called *Pinnoulophos*, which unfortunately is not attested in any other written source, as a search through the *TLG* has shown.

Assuming, however, that the word *Pinnoulophos* indicates a hill (*lophos*) with a particular characteristic, I suspect that this could be the *pinnoula*, a Hellenized form of the Roman word denoting a type of fern, the so-called *Adiantum* or maidenhair fern (ἀδιαντός), mentioned by Dioskorides in his *De materia medica*<sup>61</sup>. Therefore the medallion allows us to locate a sanctuary of the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century dedicated to the Virgin Mary and the Archangel Michael in a hilly region with a special kind of vegetation, i. e. with some kind of fern, on the far shore of the Golden Horn.

The otherwise unknown shrine of the Virgin and St Michael in *Pinnoulophos*, seems to have had the scene of the Annunciation as its symbol. Bearing in mind also the unusual mosaic with the same scene in the apse of the Chalkoprataia, the question arises as to why this subject was so popular in Constantinople at that period. The answer may lie in the devotional dictates of the time, and indeed on orders coming from very high up. In particular, in the 6<sup>th</sup> century the commemoration of the Annunciation was separated from the

pre-Nativity celebrations and a feast day was established on the 25<sup>th</sup> March. It seems that Justinian I himself was involved in these developments. In a surviving letter, the emperor clearly expresses the view that the 25<sup>th</sup> of March was the historical date of the event and therefore the fitting day for celebrating the Annunciation<sup>62</sup>.

Thus, the small find from Aegina allows us to identify one more early church dedicated to the Theotokos in Constantinople and to trace developments in the devotional practices of the imperial capital in the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>63</sup>.

Finally, there is one more point of interest on the token from Aegina, i. e. its shared iconography with the tokens from the Holy Land, and all the more so given that their extremely abbreviated character could very probably point once again to a common artistic model. And could that model have come from the church in Nazareth? This is a question that may serve as a starting point for re-examining the theory of Kurt Weitzmann and Ernst Kitzinger concerning the vital role that the decoration of the churches in the Holy Land may have played in shaping Christian iconography in the early Byzantine period<sup>64</sup>.

In conclusion, the above analysis of the three well-known pilgrim tokens with the addition of the new example from Aegina reveals once again the many levels of information that can be hidden in these humble objects. It also points to new research paths that the study of the *eulogies* could open up on issues such as the topography of the pilgrimage shrines, the existence of devotional icons and more generally of religious practices and the cult of saints. One only needs to take another look at them – from the right angle – for them to begin to »talk«!

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57 Synaxarium eccl. Cpel. 859: Καὶ σύναξις τῆς ὑπεραγίας Θεοτόκου πέραν ἐν Πιννουλόφῳ. – Mateos, Typikon: Καὶ τῆς ἁγίας Θεοτόκου πέραν ἐν Πιννουλόφῳ.

58 Taft/Kazhdan, Typikon. – Taft/Patterson-Ševčenko, Synaxarion.

59 For the early cult of the Theotokos in Constantinople, see Mango, Theotokoupolis.

60 Janin, Saint Michel 36.

61 Dioskorides, De materia medica 4, s. 134, l. 13, s. 135, l. 2: οἱ δὲ ἀδιαντον,..... οἱ δὲ ἄργιον, οἱ δὲ κόριον τὸ ἐν ὕδασι, Αἰγύπτιοι ἐπιπέρι, Ῥωμαῖοι κικιννάλις, οἱ

δὲ πίνουλα... ἀδιαντον ἕτερον· οἱ δὲ τριγομανές, οἱ δὲ πτέριον, οἱ δὲ εὐπτερον, Ῥωμαῖοι καπιλλάρεμ, οἱ δὲ πίνουλαμ, οἱ δὲ φιλικλάμ [...].

62 Taft/Weyl-Carr, Annunciation. Furthermore, the emperor's special relationship with the Annunciation could perhaps explain the fact that he chose this scene to decorate one of his seals, an unusually rare choice, almost unique in this period, Penna, Zoe's lead seal 176.

63 The church of *Pinnoulophos* is also listed by Janin, but he notes that it is known only by the reference in the *Synaxarion*, Janin, Églises CP 228 no. 105.

64 Weitzmann, Loca Sancta. – Kitzinger, Reflections.



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## Zusammenfassung / Summary / Résumé

### Lektüre der Bilder auf Pilgerandenken (Eulogien): ihre Ikonographie als Quelle für den Kult der Heiligen in frühbyzantinischer Zeit

Der Artikel will die vielen Informationsschichten enthüllen, die in den sogenannten Eulogien verborgen sind; er befasst sich also mit Gegenständen, die Pilger als Andenken an ihren Besuch von einem heiligen Ort erhalten haben. Ich versuche insbesondere anhand der Ikonographie zu zeigen, wie die skizzenhaften Darstellungen, wenn sie vor dem Hintergrund der archäologischen Befunde und der Textquellen studiert werden, fundierte Informationen über die Topographie von Wallfahrtschreinen, die Existenz verehrungswürdiger Ikonen und allgemeiner über religiöse Praktiken und den Kult der Heiligen liefern können.

### »Reading« the Images on Pilgrim Mementoes (Eulogies): their Iconography as a Source for the Cult of Saints in the Early Byzantine Period

The paper aims to reveal the multiple layers of information that are concealed in the so-called eulogies, that is, the objects which pilgrims received from a holy place as a memento of their visit. By focusing on their iconography, in particular, I try to demonstrate how their sketchy representations, when studied against archaeological evidence and textual sources, can offer us sound information on the topography of pilgrimage shrines, the existence of devotional icons and more generally on religious practices and the cult of saints.

### «Lecture» des images sur les souvenirs de pèlerinage (eulogies): l'iconographie comme source pour l'étude du culte des saints à la période byzantine précoce

Cet article a pour but de révéler les nombreux niveaux d'information que renferment les «eulogies», ces objets que les pèlerins recevaient dans un lieu saint en souvenir de leur visite. J'essaye, en mettant l'accent sur leur iconographie, de démontrer que leurs illustrations sommaires peuvent livrer une bonne information sur la topographie des sanctuaires de pèlerinage, l'existence d'icônes dévotionnelles, et plus généralement sur les pratiques religieuses et le culte des saints, quand on les compare à des témoins archéologiques et des écrits.